

Bev & PC – 2012 Africa Safari 2

Zambezi – Kafue – Mighty rivers

Katima (Namibia) is on the border with Zambia and the two countries are linked by a magnificent bridge across the Zambezi.

The Namibian border was reasonably chaotic – Zambians streaming across to shop.

By comparison the Zambian side was chaotic. After having been ruled ‘ultra vires’ by a very erudite snip of a girl who sells vehicle insurance, we did get the correct order of how things should be done. Once I thought I’d established my ‘bona fides’, and informing the lass accordingly, she made a very good attempt to rip me off on the insurance charges. What started at ZK680 000 ended up at around ZK364 000 (R600). It however took a bit of shopping around to establish the correct price. I had also kept my receipt from our 2010 visit to Zambia, so had a benchmark. The whole process of getting through the two borders took around 2 hours.

The road to Livingstone was reasonable tar with pot holed patches.

Peregrines Bush camp is really special. Taita Lodge overlooks the Zambezi valley and must have the best view of the along full length of the river. Faan Fourie takes a personal interest in every guest. He allows campers to use the Lodge facilities, but does not like large crowds (laager camping). He certainly is a larger than life character. We did not meet his wife, but her influence in the way the lodge has been fitted out is very evident. We had dinner on our second night there – outstanding Zambezi bream! The shopping in Livingstone is good – Shoprite and Spar. The best place for an internet service is Fawly Towers – opposite the Shoprite car park.

We had developed a problem with connection between the Pajero and the trailer so the trailer batteries were not being charged while we were driving. This is a key connection as we would rely on charging the batteries between stops – most of which do not have electricity – and our solar panels to keep us going during our stops. I’d cleaned up the contacts at Peregrines, tested these and thought they were ok. However, by the time we were about 30 north of Livingstone, it was clear that something more fundamental was wrong. A few calls to QAD in Kleinmond, it was clear that the problem was probably with the connection on the vehicle side. We decided to head back to Livingstone and camp at Bushbuck River Lodge. We’d stayed there in 2010 and knew we could connect to electricity to charge the trailer batteries, while we got the problem sorted. It turned out that the Brad Harrison plug on the Pajero was cracked and both trailer and vehicle points were badly corroded.

We headed to Nanzhila in the south of the Kafue National Park with a fully charged set of trailer batteries and the vehicle talking to the trailer again. We were told to allow 8 hours for the trip. It took 6.5. The first 120kms to Kalomo is very good tar. There was no fuel at Kalomo (a feature in rural Zambia) and we did not look for the vendors as we had 40l in our jerry cans. After Kalomo the 70kms to KNP is good gravel, but there were a number of heavily laden trucks – the cotton and maize harvest was being moved to market, so not possible to get over 60km/h while towing. At the Park gate we were shown the

circular that all pricing should be in ZK (A really BIG hassle and completely bizarre!). The fees were quoted in US\$, converted into kwacha at a rate I've not yet seen in the banks. Having handed over our vast amount of kwacha and having been informed that the shortcut to Nanzhila was dry, we headed off. It is a lovely drive through the woodlands – watch out for the tsetse flies though. The track is firm with two dry river crossings, very dusty through the cotton soil patches and a few sandy sections requiring H4D.

Nanzhila is a charming campsite with two sites – a great location, new ablution block with flushing toilets, good showers and Steady who provides firewood, ensures there is hot water and washes your dishes – all makes for a truly memorable stay. The option of using the old long drop and bucket shower is still available, but hardly used. Unfortunately we could only stay one night, but Nanzhila warrants 3 nights. We saw roan, impala, elephant, waterbuck, zebra and baboon. Were told there had recently been lion around, nor did we see the black cheeked parrot.

We took the eastern track to Ngoma – it joins up with the Cordon Road near the Ngoma landing strip. The track is sandy in parts and there are a couple of dry river crossings. As you approach the exit gate you get first sight of the Itezhi Tezhi dam. This is probably the best kept secret in this part of the world. An earth wall that dams the mighty Kafue river. We regret not having spent any time on the lake shore, but it certainly goes on the list of things to do. The fueling arrangements at Itezhi are rather bizarre, but it works. You pay at the ZESA offices on top of the hill then collect your fuel at the bottom – if you've paid for more than you can take on board, tough. There is an ATM in Itezhi and using a SA card works.

The road north out of Itezhi is poor – a previous tarred road that has now, fortunately, been grade – a long time ago. The Chinese are evidently installing turbines at Itezhi – there is some mystery as to why this dam was built. There might be a very simple explanation, but there is no power generation nor any nearby agricultural scheme that I'm aware of. It's around 60km to the Kaingu turn off. The 40km track to the lodge is splendid, but be very aware of the tsetse invasion if you stop for a comfort break. The Kaingu campsite, with each of the two river sites having their own ablutions, is simply charming. Tom Heineken – a Fish Hook High man who worked for Cape Nature and the CSIR before moving to Zambia to build the camp – runs a very good show. We took the sunset cruise on the river and Tom was most informative about the efforts to involve local communities in conservation - \$10 for every visitor that photographs a predator whose location was reported by the community (although they've lost 14 elephant over the past 3 years to poaching), the Kafue river, the Donnafish (a local river legend) and the birds. No words can describe the river as it makes its way through the Mweenge (meeting place) – some photos below will help, but do not do justice – make the effort and look for yourself.

McBrides was our next stop – from Kaingu we headed back to the Itezhi road, then around 60k's of bad gravel until you join the great west road. Mumbwa is the last town before heading back into KNP. There was no diesel at the service station so I was forced to negotiate with the vendors for 40l. Beer is available at a bar located on the first traffic circle as you enter the town (McBrides does not have a bar), as is the filling station with no diesel. The road to KNP is not sign posted, but is the first exit off the circle. The first 37 k's are very bad gravel, but the road improves, marginally, as you approach the park. The route to McBrides is well signposted and the just over 90kms takes from Mumbwa takes around 3

hours. The whole set-up at McBrides is very laid-back, but the showers are good, flushing toilets and a hand basin for each of the 3 campsites – in short very authentic. Chris McBride is rather eccentric and Charlotte is charming and a real authority on birds. We took a boat cruise down to their fly-camp (some 14km downstream on the Kafue river) and returned in the banana boat. We had a very good dinner in the lodge on our third (and last) night there. As we were reversing out of the parking area to head back to the campsite after dinner, we spotted a leopard. On our second night an elephant came through the campsite, there were bushbuck around the campsite every day, as well as lots of impala and puku. A lion was very active on the other side of the river, the bird life is prolific – bohms bee eater and 2 pairs of African skimmers being the highlights. On our drive out of the park a herd of sable antelope crossed the road including a magnificent ram. All-in-all a great bush experience.

The Kafue National park with this magnificent river is well worth visiting and the Zambezi is as mighty as ever.



1 View from Taita Falcon Lodge

Peregrine Falcon Campsite - Kanniedood 1



Nanzilha - KNP - Roan 1



Kaingu - Puku 1



Kaingu - Sunset on Kafue 1

McBrides - Bohm's Bee eater 1



McBrides - Baobab 1



McBrides - On banks of Kafue 1