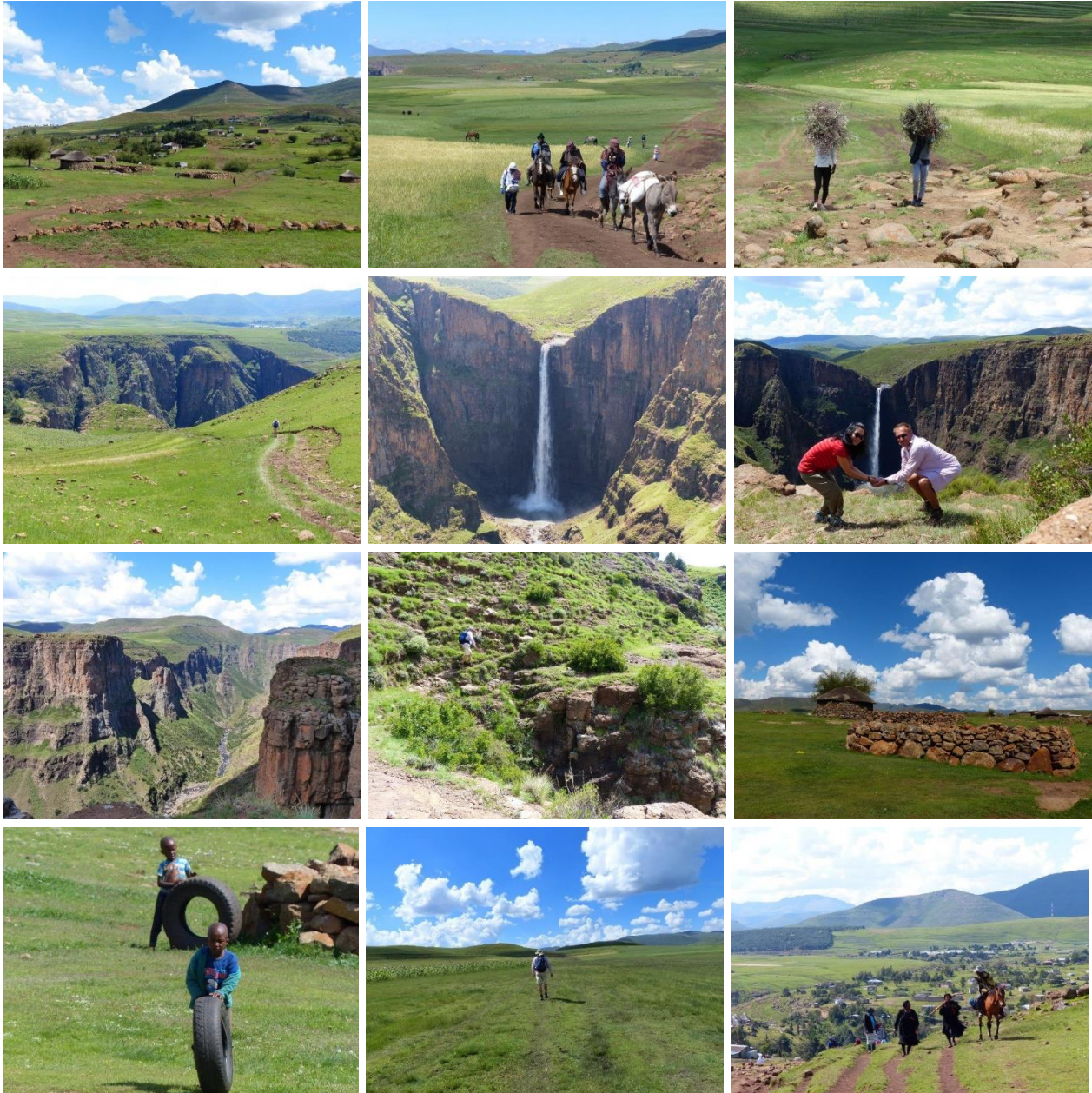


### 2.3.2018 Maletsunyane Falls, Semongkong

The Maletsunyane Falls, close to Semongkong, are at 192 m one of the highest waterfalls in Africa. A nice hiking track leads to the waterfall about 5 km away, alternatively one can also do a horse riding trip to the waterfall. The track leads through green pastures, through a local village, over a creek and suddenly we see the deep valley where the water fall is hiding. The waterfall is not huge, but it's the highest in Africa. On our way back, a small boy is blocking the creek crossing and demands a fee for letting us cross. We decide to ignore him - don't let him get away with this new trade.



### 3.3. 2018 Mafeteng, Fort Hartley

At the camp site we get to know Yuko und Yoshi. The two Japanese are travelling with their minivan for 2.5 years and came overland to Africa. It is amazing how they negotiate African roads with their very little clearance and an only 660 cm2 engine. Even the access road to this camp site is a challenge for them....



Woolen blankets are a frequent sight and a major piece of clothing for the Basotho. They got introduced by the first European settlers and since then they can't go without. The blankets keep warm, protect from the wind and one can comfortably sit or lie down on them.





We leave Semongkong continuing our travel up and down the mountain passes. As we drive around a corner, we see many people gathering in a village. An initiation or coming-of-age ceremony is celebrated. We watch the ceremony from far away at the road side as we do not dare to go closer and certainly do not want to disturb them. We would have loved to learn more about this custom, but can't find out much.



For the first time in Lesotho we experience rather aggressive begging children. We want to stop at a view point but instantly the children come running towards us from quite far away as they see us parking. They shout „Sweets, Sweets“ or „Money“. Unfortunately, also here in all remoteness they learn to beg rather fast. Well, we decide not to stop anymore.



We continue driving to Fort Hartley, a small quiet village, with no (begging) children in sight – an ideal overnight spot. We park a bit daringly in the center of the village. Some locals are eyeing us, but no one is complaining or chasing us away. We buy something in the local shop and are only staying in our camper, as a thunderstorm is passing by with some rainfall.



### 4.3.2018 Mafeteng, Maseru, Ladybrand

In Mafeteng we stop for lunch and then continue to the capital Maseru where we want to depart Lesotho today. We fill up our diesel tank one last time, as diesel is about 2 Rand cheaper here than in South Africa. The closer we get to the capital, the better and fancier the people are dressed, mainly with modern western fashion. We also notice that in Lesotho almost all women have short hair.



We had hoped that the border crossing in Maseru Bridge is a bit more professional, being the capital city, but that proves to be wrong. The border crossing is very busy and rather chaotic, cars are trying to squeeze in and jump the queue from all sides. First, we

have to wait to even enter the border facilities then we have to search for the customs office to get our Carnet stamped. In a huge traffic jam we cross the Maseru bridge, to go through immigration on the South African side. The queue for the passport control is huge and we have to wait in the blazing sun. Only two counters are open but one is reserved for South Africans only and of course does not process other people if it is idle. The customs officer is rather chatting and playing on the smart phone. The poor people who want to cross the border on foot have to wait even longer in the relentless sun. The customs officer even has a whip to “control” the immigrants!



We only continue to Ladybrand about 15km behind the border. The camp site has an entry gate which is too low for us to pass. Therefore, we camp right in front of the camp site and nobody takes notice off. We are rather exhausted from the border crossing in the heat and the long drives of the past few days.



### **5.3.2018 Clocolan, Ficksburg, Clarens, Golden Gate Highlands NP**

We continue northeast via Clarens to the Drakensberge. Thereafter we want to visit the Kruger National park and continue towards Botswana. But today we have an easy start, as we discover the „Cranberry Coffee Shop“ in Ladybrand, where we spent the morning. A nice place with a shady terrace, ideal to recover and wind down from our Lesotho adventure.

Between Clocolan and Ficksburg many fruit sellers have built up their little stalls along the road. We are in the fruit growing region of the Free State province. Mainly cherries, but also apples, pears and peaches are grown here. We visit the fruit farm Ionia, try their cherry liquor and buy some cherry jam. Also, we make one peach seller happy buying a big bucket of his peaches.



Along mainly corn fields, we drive via Fouriesburg to Clarens. Clarens is a nice little village at the foot of the Maluti mountains, in winter they even get some snow here. Clarens was named after the city of Clarens in Switzerland where the former president of the Republic of South Africa Paul Kruger lived in exile from 1883 until 1900 and where he died in 1904.

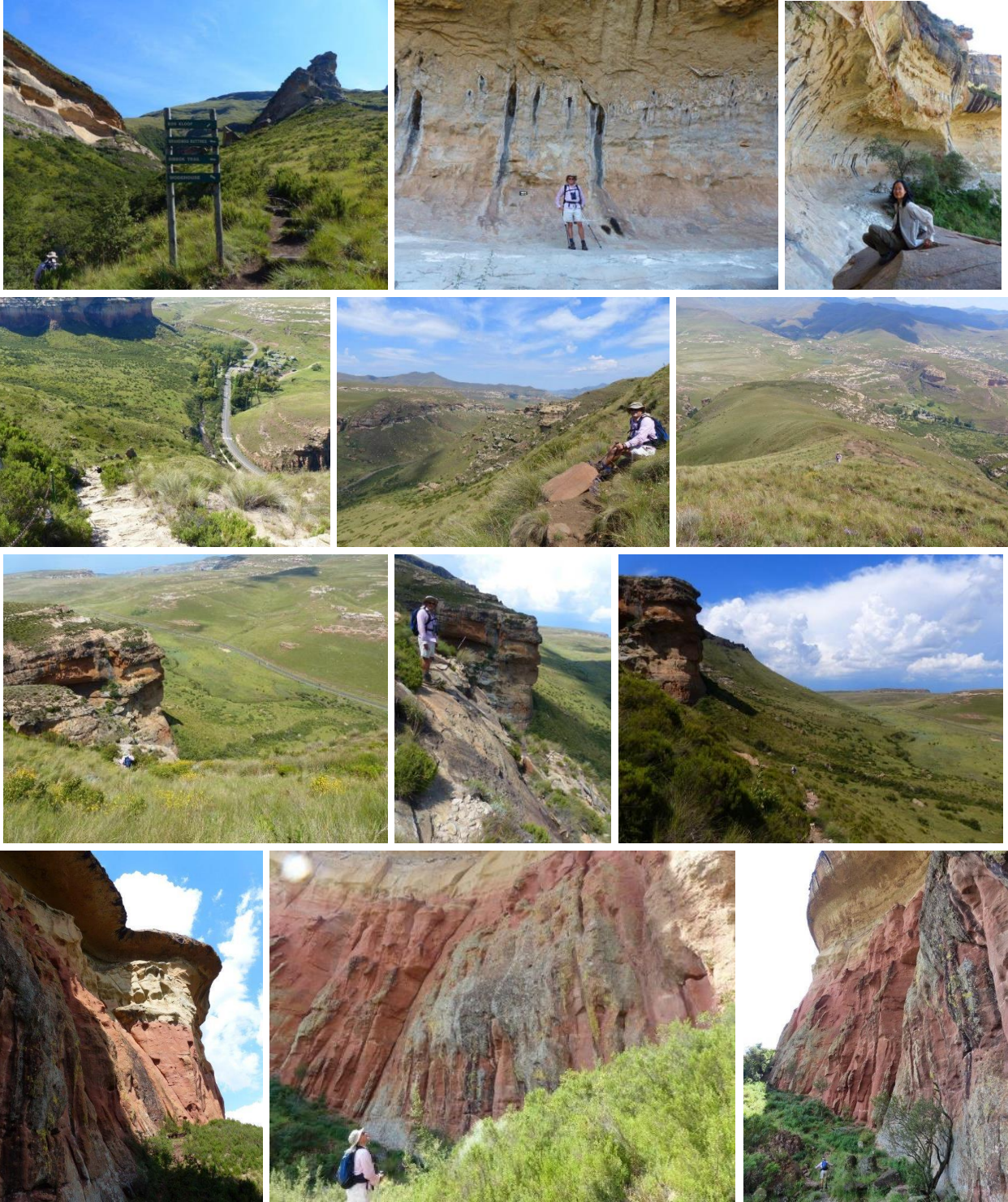
Clarens is only 20km away from the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, where we stay at the Glen Reenen Rest Camp. The unique „Mushroom Rocks“ are illuminated by the setting sun and we end the day with a big steak on the braai.



**6.3.2018 Glen Reenen Rest Camp**

The Golden Gate Highlands National Park offers many nice hiking tracks and we decide to hike the Wodehouse Peak Trail. The trail is about 10km long and leads through

amazing landscape with a few steep inclines and descents which require some climbing. As we reach a plateau we see many animals such as Blesbock, Wildebeest and two Zebras. The hike leads back to the camp in a circle via the famous „Mushroom Rocks“, impressive rock formations which can be hardly caught on camera.





As we are back in the camp late afternoon, a huge thunderstorm forms, just where we have been hiking not long ago. We were quite lucky not to be on the top of the mountain without shelter in such a thunderstorm. Unfortunately, we can not spent the rest of the evening at the camp fire anymore.

### 7.3.2018 Clarens

Cloudy sky and sizzling rain do not allow for many activities today. We decide to return to Clarens, we like this little town. It has a relaxed atmosphere, in town are many restaurants, coffee shops and galleries – ideal to spent a rainy day.

In the afternoon we drive to the eastern end of the Golden Gate Highlands National Park and park just behind the park boundary fence. This will be a good starting point for tomorrow.



### 8.3. 2018 Harrismith, Ladysmith, Dundee

Unfortunately, the rainy conditions have not cleared overnight, we therefore cancel our plan for another hike in the Drakensberge. The hike would be at altitudes of around 3000 m above sea level, but if the weather conditions down here at 1500 m are already that bad it will be even worse up there. So we do not take the turn to the Royal Natal National Park – what a pity, but this hike has to wait till our next visit. Instead we drive directly to Harrismith, a small town with a nice coffee shop called „Grounded“, located in a church!

The only exciting thing happening today are the most stubborn cattle beasts we have ever encountered, who think they own the road. They stand in the middle of the road and won't move a centimeter. Even our very loud truck horn does not scare them.



In Ladysmith we stock up on supplies before we continue to Dundee and the Blood River Monument. We arrive in the early evening and are allowed to camp right at the entrance of the monument.

### 9.3.2018 Blood River Monument

In 1838 at the banks of the Blood River the largest battle between Boers and Zulu took place. The „Vortrekker Boers“ wanted to get away from the hated British who had taken over power at the coast and organized long marches inland to find new places to settle. The Boers wanted to buy land from the Zulu, but while at the Zulu village to sign the sales contract the Boer delegation was murdered. During the revenge battle lead by Andries Pretorius 3000 Zulu got killed. Although the Zulu outnumbered the Boer manifold, they had no chance against the Boer who were well armed with rifles and cannons. The blood of the fallen Zulu warriors turned the Ncome river red, hence the name ‚Blood River‘.

The main attraction of the Blood River Monument are the covered waggons rebuilt in their original size and set up in the battle position.



Interestingly, on the other side of the Ncome river the Zulu have built a “counter museum” in a huge building. Here the Zulu explain their point of view of the events. There are a few details which seem to be important for the Zulu people.

The Zulu question the sales contract of the land to the Boer, as the former Zulu chief was illiterate. There are also three different versions of the contract: one with a cross, one with a finger print and one with a real signature... They claim, the real reason for the battle was not the advance of the Vortrekkers, but rather internal disputes between the Zulu and so forth...



Right at the entrance a museum guide gets hold of us, and we can't get rid of him anymore. At the beginning he explains a few interesting facts - as mentioned above - or for example the buffalo horn attack formation, but then he goes veery much into detail. He starts in 1760 with King Senzangakhona and tells us all he knows about his many wives, secondary wives, his many legitimate and illegitimate children and mysterious twin-births... He just wouldn't stop talking....

After 20 minutes we get a bit scared that we will have to spent here all day as we still have at least four more kings to go .... Frantically we start thinking of exit strategies – how can we get out of here without upsetting our tour guide too much? To our relief a new visitor arrives and our guide is visibly torn – to whom should he talk now? This is our chance, we say loudly 'Thank You', put the requested donation into the donation box and storm out of the museum.





We still drive until Piet Retief, capital of the timber growing area. The town was founded in 1883 and renamed in 2010 to Mkhondo. Piet Retief was the former leader of the Vortrekker Boers whose murder by the Zulu under King Dingane led to the battle at the Blood River.

