

13.10.2019 New Kalala Camp at Itezhi-Tezhi Stausee

An early morning game drive is on the agenda as we have to exit the park by 9a.m. A circular track leads along the shore of the Itezhi-Tezhi dam where we see antelopes. Our guide book explains, that the Kafue national park is the only park with 21 different antelope species. But mostly we see Pukus and the most common species Impalas.



Meanwhile, the track is gradually disappearing and soon we are completely offroad. Luckily the soil is very dry and hard so we have no problem to drive cross country. A few kilometers later we find a track again which leads us back to the main road.



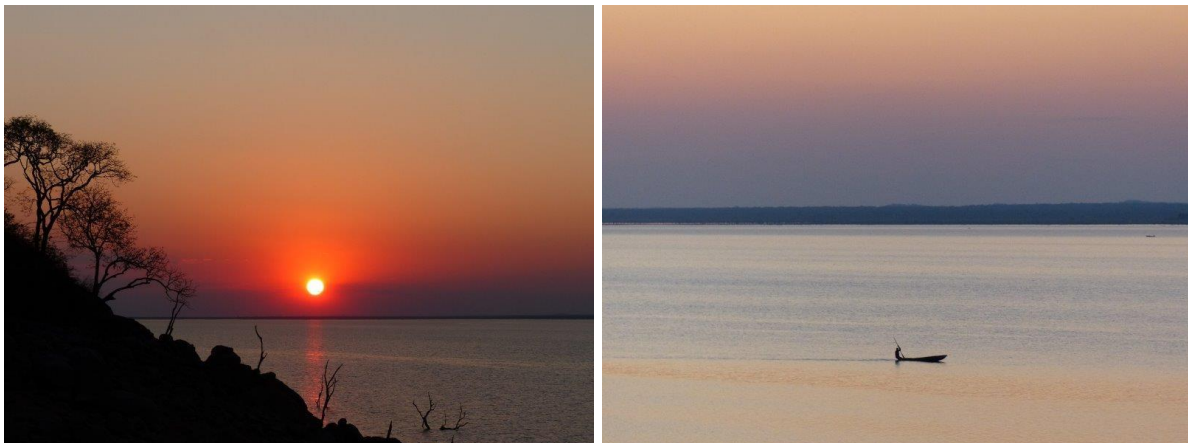
On time, shortly before 9a.m. we leave the Kafue Park through the Musa Gate and have only 3 kilometers to go until we reach the New Kalala Campsite located directly at the dam wall of the Itezhi-Tezhi reservoir. Our destination for today.



What a beautiful sight, to be able to see water up until the horizon, it feels like being at the Mediterranean Sea.



We have a fantastic view from the camp. We are the only campers, enjoy the quiet atmosphere and watch the fishermen trying to catch their evening meal until sunset – unfortunately with nets way too small for any juvenile fish to survive.



15.10.2019 M-Fungata Camp

A full day's rest was good, now we can continue our journey to the northern part of the Kafue Park. The road is heading along the dam and over the dam wall, from where we can see several Bald Eagle and other birds waiting below the dam walls for a feed. We suspect that they are waiting for the fish (pieces) which have not survived going through the turbines. After the dam we pass through the settlement Itezhi-Tezhi.



One tomato seller in Itezhi-Tezhi is happy now. There are so many tomato stalls and sellers that it is hard to decide where to stop. One little pile of 5 to 6 tomatoes costs only 2 Kwacha or ~0.17USD.



Our next destination is the M-Fungata Camp, located about half way to northern Kafue NP. The map shows a small track along the Kafue river to get there, with about 70 km this track is much shorter than the 200 km eastern detour. Did we make the right choice? The road is slowly deteriorating to a rough track which is getting narrower all the time. Finally, there is only a footpath in front of us. We debate whether to turn back, but decide to carry on as we have done so many kilometers already.



It looks like no car has been through here for years or perhaps never ever? As we reach the village Chief Kaingu we end up in the middle of the village square. We already imagine angry villagers running towards us complaining, but they are all very relaxed. Two elderly men approach us, saying it is no problem, we should just continue along the wall and then keep to the left. They must have been wondering what kind of huge vehicle suddenly comes rumbling through their village.



Indeed, after a few hundred meters off road we find the track again. Slowly paddocks and agricultural land come to an end and the forest is getting denser. We again have trouble with low branches and trees and our axe is heavily in use to clear the way. No, we did not take that small wooden bridge but drove through the dry riverbed instead!

At least here are much less annoying Tsetse flies. The blue and black Tsetse-fly traps are helping with controlling this pest. The flies are attracted to the blue-black colour and the fabric is infused with an insecticide...



Finally, we reach the camp pretty exhausted. We receive a very warm welcome with even a cold drink. However, the best days of the M-Fungata Camp are long gone, all is a bit in a rundown stage. The grass thatched bungalows have not been in use for a long time, we are the only guests, they have no money for change and serve beer in bottles without opening it or without a glass, a broken down 4-wheeler is parked in the restaurant area.

16.10.2019 Mumbwa

The road to the camp yesterday was in a very bad stage and unfortunately today it continues the same. We had hoped that the access road from the north would be used

more frequently, and would therefore be a bit more cleared out. Trees which fall over the road are not removed, nobody cares, they all rather drive around the fallen trees through the bush. However, the drive around the obstacles through the bush is very often to low and narrow for us.

Eventually we run out of luck. With the track being narrow on both sides we have to pass around a rotten tree which did not give in as easily as expected. Suddenly there is the sound again – air escaping our tyre. The tree has caused a side damage to our front left tyre. In the heat of the day and with lots of Tsetse flies, we have to change the tyre. With our new manual winch, it is much easier to bring down the spare tyre. After about three hours and many liters of sweat we did it and can continue our trip.



The tyre change cost us a lot of time and we somehow have enough of these low trees and overgrown tracks in Kafue. Also, we do not have a spare tyre anymore and need to fix the broken one first, before we can or rather want to go on any further adventures. The travel group therefore agrees unanimously to change course and instead of turning left to the North Kafue NP, we turn right to the next city called Mumbwa. Maybe we have a chance to get our tyre fixed in Mumbwa.



As we could not go to the camp we had planned for, we have to look for a place to spend the night in Mumbwa. Since we pass by at the Nalusanga Gate of the Kafue NP anyways we ask there, if we could park at the gate. We know from the iOverlander-App, that it was possible for others and it also worked well for us at Dundumwenze Gate.

However, the guards here are not very friendly and ask for the full park entry fees to be paid, although we only want to park in front of the gate.



Mumbwa is a bigger place, but has no campsite. It turns out that the filling station is our only option. We fill up the truck and ask if we can stay here for the night. They are so kind to let us stay in an usually blocked off area. Unfortunately, the night turns out to be very noisy, as most trucks let the engine run during fueling up.



17.10.2019 McBrides Camp

Actually we had planned to visit the McBrides Camp before leaving the Kafue area. Chris McBride is a well-known lion researcher. The problem is that his camp is located in the eastern part of the Kafue Park and we have no spare tyre, as we could not get our tyre fixed in Mumbwa. To drive all the way to the capital Lusaka to fix the tyre and back to McBrides is too far. Therefore, we decide to take “full risk” and drive the more than 100 km to McBrides Camp without a spare tyre.

We have mixed feelings as we see the piste D181 – the only access road to the camp! Just behind Mumbwa it turns into a real bad road with huge pot holes, sand pits and corrugation. We drive with utmost care and like a snail to not risk another flat tyre.



As everywhere else in Zambia, deforestation for charcoal production is at frightening levels and is very often illegal. The bags filled with charcoal are placed and sold next to the road. Almost every truck driver buys a few, as they have to cook their meals while on the road. But many resell them in the next city for a small profit. Looking at the amount of charcoal produced, we wonder why in fact any trees are still left. Even very close to the National Park we see many trucks fully loaded with charcoal.

Just as we enter the Kafue National Park our friends the Tsetse flies are back. *Sigh*



When we reserved the camp Chris told us that there is a new access track to the McBrides Camp where we maybe could spot some Sable antelopes. Again, it is a fight

through the Mopane forest. We drive very carefully and do not take any risks, but rather get the axe out a few more times.

At one point, the landscape opens up and we drive through yellow grass filled plains with grass higher than the Unimog. We later learn that this grass is 'sour' and therefore not eaten by any animals.



Finally, we arrive. It has taken us six hours to drive here, a distance of 108km! Our roof looks like we took half of the Kafue NP with us. The branches are good for a large camp fire. While fighting our way through the bushes we were swearing and hoping that the efforts are worth it. Luckily, there were worth it.



With our arrival we wake up Chris McBride from his afternoon nap and he (still) welcomes us very friendly. He is real character, an utter animal lover and has a classic English dry humor, it is a lot of fun to spend time with him. In his main profession he is lion researcher and has published several books about lions. One of his books was even made into a movie, and still he is really down to earth.

One notices immediately the many birds constantly swirling around him, in fact there are nine birds to be precise. These Yellow Greenbul birds are imprinted on Chris, love cheese and all go by the same name „Linda“ as their mother. Exactly, cheese loving birds!

We get an introduction of the camp, he shows us where „Lone Ranger“, a juvenile hippo bull sleeps during the day, as the mature bull called „Pol Pot“ does not allow him near him in the water or would otherwise kill him. „Jasper“, the elephant, leaves his droppings everywhere in the camp... So many interesting names and stories, it is hard to follow.



While chatting with Chris we almost forget the time, move in on our campsite rather late, and have not much time before heading out again for our night drive. As McBrides Camp is charging very fair prices for game drives or other activities we treat ourselves to our first night game drive.



The night game drive reveals many different animals compared to what you can see during the day. We see a Night Jar bird, White Tail mongoose, genets, bush babies, hares, but unfortunately no large predators.

