

22.10.2019 Lusaka

First thing today we visit Carsten from “German Truck Tech”, to get the blocked tyre in/deflation system checked. In his workshop we disassemble the electro-pneumatic valve which controls the central tyre in/deflation system and clean it. The tyre balancing powder found its way into the valve and blocked it. Indeed, after the cleaning the in- and deflation works much faster.



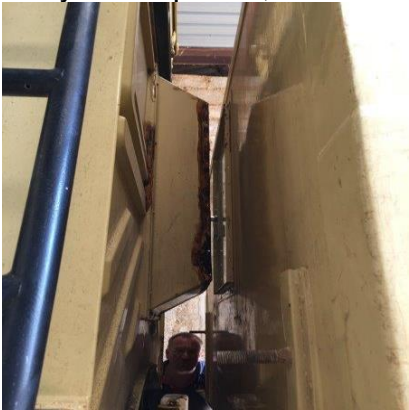
As we are in the workshop anyways, we want to take the opportunity to repair the torn bellows between the drivers cab and the cabin. The raining season may start soon and we have to be prepared, although we would love to procrastinate as this will be a terrible job to do. Conveniently, Carsten knows a tailor who can copy the bellows with ripstop fabric, which is commonly used for covers in the safari world. To get it out 70 small screws have to be taken out, while holding them from both sides as the nut would always turn as well. And there is not much space in between the two cabins.



After four hours and a few liters of sweat we finally get the bellows out. Without the help of Breyton we would have never made it. You have to find such a skinny mechanic in the first place!

23.10.2019 Lusaka

Our tyre is repaired, all has been done very professionally. Well, we can only recommend Bennie and his company Power Tyres.



After the tyre is put back onto our truck we drive to Carsten's workshop. As the bellows is taken out we use the opportunity to get rid of some rust in the emergency hatch. Our homework for today: Grind the rust off, put on rust converter and finally paint it with a primer.

In the afternoon the tailor calls and says he is not finished, yet. Due to frequent and long power cuts his sewing machine does not work. We have to stay another day in Lusaka.

We come across the so-called load shedding (planned power cuts) since we arrived in Zambia. It has been introduced because the dams are at very low levels - or even dried out completely - to produce any power. Almost 90% of the electricity in Zambia is produced by hydropower. The state-owned electricity company Zesco is meanwhile publishing a monthly plan outlining which area will have when no power. However, this does not always work out and even at times when there should be power there is none. Currently even the capital Lusaka is for 12 hours a day without power and it may be extended to 18 hours a day. Almost everybody and every business is therefore running generators. Some locals without generators would just switch off their fridges. In 2015 the power shortages were so bad that Diesel was in short supply as everyone had to run their generators. The load shedding obviously has a huge impact on the economy as work can't get done and production comes to a standstill. The manager of our campsite was very unhappy as his freezers thawed down, spoiling all the content.



Without the new bellows we can't continue our project and call it an earlier day today. The last few days we have been so often and so long at the workshop we have the feeling, that we work here already...

24.10.2019 Lusaka

Happy Independence Day! On this day in the year 1964 the British colony Northern Rhodesia gained independence and became the Republic of Zambia. Kenneth Kaunda, the first president of Zambia, was in power until 1991. He still lives in Lusaka and is highly regarded by his people.

There is not much we can do but wait, however at 11 a.m. the tailor calls that he is on his way to the workshop. Unfortunately, he has made the bellows a little too short and we can't fold it over the edge anymore. Well, we have to make work with what we have. We are quite worried now how to get the whole thing back on. A bolt, a washer and a nut have to be screwed on at the same time while the fabric and the aluminum cleat have to be held down and at the same time someone has to push from the other side. Actually, it is basically impossible. The space is also too tight, especially at the bottom, where the gear box is blocking the access. We especially asked whether Breyton, "the skinniest of the skinny mechanics", would be working today as fortunately not everyone is taking the day off on this public holiday.

We are still debating how we could do it best when Carsten has a great idea: Why do we not attach the bellows from the inside and why do we not rivet it instead of screwing it on? There should no reason to why not attach it from the inside, it would be much easier. To use rivets saves us fiddling around with the tiny nuts, washers and bolts. Ok, we go for it. The rivets are too big and we have to drill the wholes a little bigger which is done quickly. In order to get it water proof and to seal it we apply Sikaflex as well.



Unbelievably, we are finished in the afternoon although we had expected to be working on this project well into dark. One thing is for sure, Werner will get a riveting pliers for Christmas!

We are finished so early, that we even have enough time to still drive to the Pioneer Camp at the eastern end of Lusaka, as our next destination is the South Luangwa National Park. Due to the national holiday traffic is less than normal without the usual traffic jam. As we have to drive right through Lusaka we get an impression of the city.



On the way to the Pioneer Camp we get lost and end up at a beam. Maps.me wanted to drive right through the middle again. The guard at the beam explains us the correct way very detailed and wishes us a continuous good journey and says „Welcome to Zambia“. The Zambians do not stop to surprise us. We find the camp without any further problems.

25.10.2019 Lusaka

The Pioneer Camp is quite relaxed, they have space and a bit of shade where we can take care of a few smaller issues. The headlights are not water tight anymore and



water accumulates inside (although it has not rained since we started to travel) and destroys the reflector. We also cover a broken cable casing and fix a broken frame of our solar module on the roof. The branches and low trees destroy absolutely everything which is not covered. Also, our backlight had “bush damage” and needs to be sealed again. Driving in Africa needs constant attention and fixing of the truck.

26.10.2019 Rufunsa

The South Luangwa National Park is about 500km away, we want to drive there in two to three days. After the usual grocery shopping and filling up on diesel we have to get into the boiling hot truck and out of the city.

Finding a camp for the night and before dark is always a challenge. We want to avoid driving during darkness by all means, as one cannot see pot holes, animals and many other obstacles, such as trucks with no lights. Also, at night the bad guys are out on the roads and the risk of drunk drivers is increasing. Rather late we find the restaurant „Food Cave“, which is now closed but for us an ideal camp site. The next option would have been a filling station, but after our sleepless night in Mumbwa, fuel stations are not our preferred camp sites anymore.

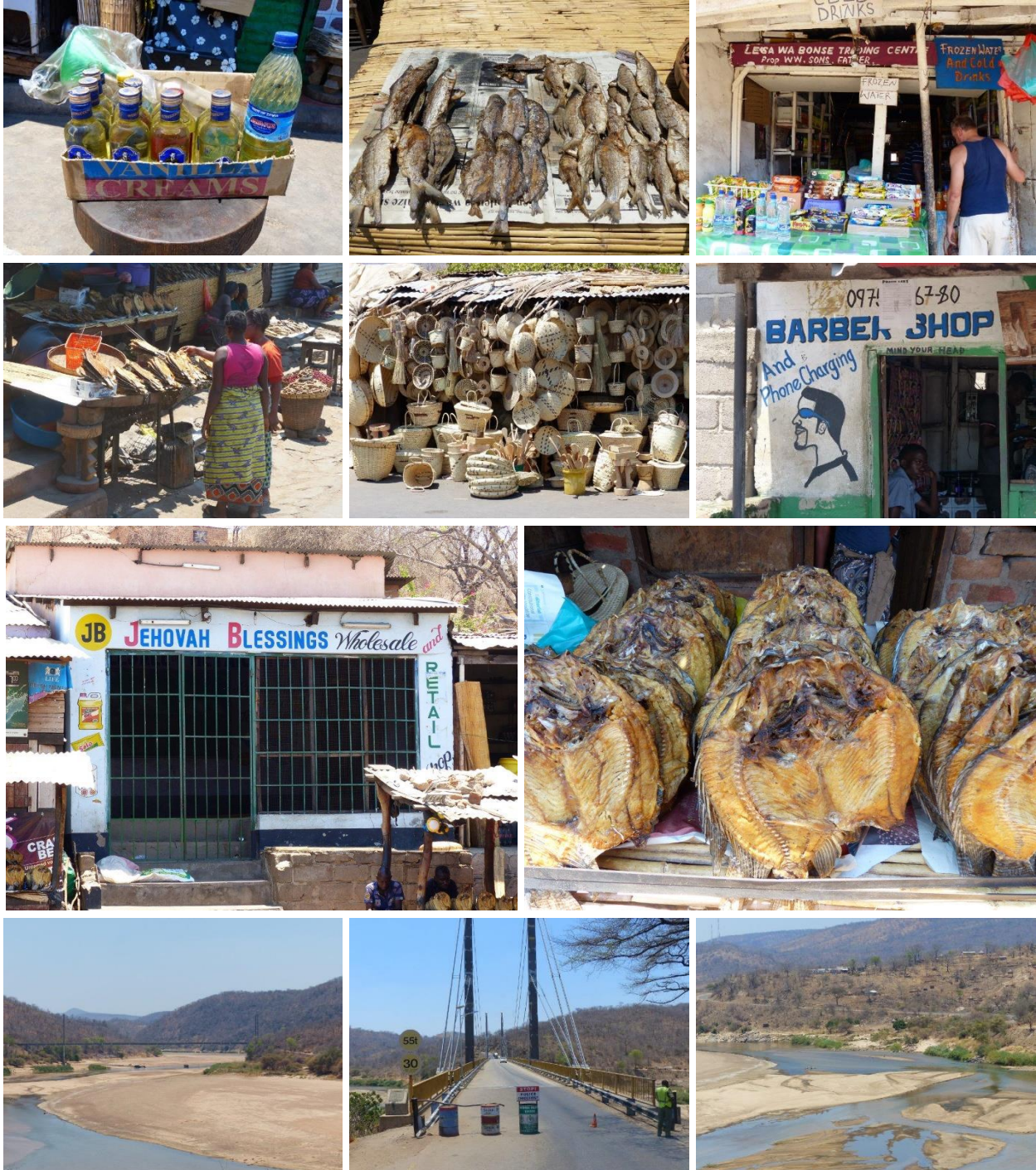


27.10.2019 Petauke

We continue along the Great Eastern Road and pass through villages like Rufunsa, Kacholola, Nyimba; there are numerous police checks along the Great Eastern highway, but as tourists we are always waved through.



We have to cross the Luangwa Bridge, at the check point there is a small village, where we have a break to stretch our legs. A lot of fried fish is on offer as well as handicraft, cooking oil is very precious and is sold in small bottles.



After crossing the bridge, the road is brand new. Signage tells us that the road was built with loans from the EU. There are more and more huge mango trees along the road all

boasting with fruits. A whole bag of mangos costs only 10KW, approx 0.70USD! We are in paradise!



We cruise along through the villages and finally reach Petauke, today's destination.



Mid-afternoon we arrive in our camp at the Chimemwe Lodge where we enjoy our newly bought treasures.



28.10.2019 Old Petauke Road

Instead of following the tarred road to Chipata where to turn towards the South Luangwa National Park, we choose to take the „Old Petauke Road“ a 170 km 4x4 sand track. It sounds more like an adventure and we would have to drive the tarred road on our return way anyways.

The area is quite densely populated, we pass through many villages. As soon as they hear us, children come running from all corners of their villages to the road demanding loudly „Sweets Sweets“. They hope that we will let it rain sweets like during a carnival parade. So far, in Zambia we did not encounter a lot of begging, the children were just waving at us. However, on this track the children are quite aggressively begging for sweets, although - so we assume - very few tourists come along this track!?





We are bumping along the - in parts heavily washed out - track, which is however not a big problem for us. In fact, we were expecting a more difficult ride similar to the Kafue National Park. Luckily, here are no low hanging branches blocking our way.





Also here, the forest is being burned down in a huge scale. We don't understand why the wood is not collected as fire wood and for cooking. Instead, they just burn down whole trees which burn for days and are polluting the air.



It will be dark soon and we have to look for a camp for the night. We find a levelled site at an unpopulated stretch of the track and can even make a small camp fire. We are now on a much lower elevation at around 500m above sea level, this night is one of the hottest so far. The temperature during the night does not drop much below 30C...

