

29.10.2019 Mfuwe

The 'Old Petauke Road' follows along the Luangwa Valley at the southern boundary of the South Luangwa National Park. The slash and burn of the forest continues right until the wildlife gate. After this gate the Luangwa GMA (Game Management Area) starts, the dense population ends and the trees only get damaged by elephants.



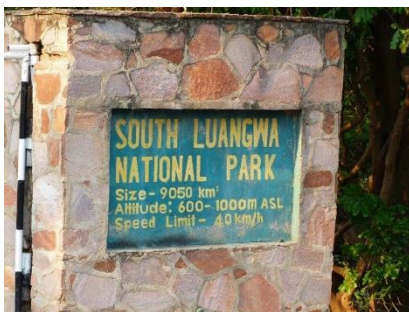
Coming from the south, the first campsite we encounter is the "Wildlife Camp", but it is fully booked. The young Overlander travelers are running around at the reception half naked (we sound like old people now), but we find this party mode a little out of place for a national park. Maybe it is not so bad that the camp is fully booked. The next camp "Track and Trail" is only 8 km down the road. The pool is built on an elevated platform

and we can see the hippos in the river. Now we are happy that we end up here as this is a much more relaxed and nicer camp. The water level in the river is extremely low and the hippos are jammed together at the few remaining deeper spots of the river.



30.10.2019 South Luangwa Nationalpark

The gate to the South Luangwa National Park opens at 6:00 a.m. and we arrive punctually. We have heard a lot about this park, as it is known for its many predators. Indeed, early into our game drive we spot the tail of a leopard. Unfortunately, he walks behind some thick thorn bushes and does not make a move anymore.





In the western parts of the Park we encounter very little wildlife, in the east we see many more animals but also more Safari operators. The guides of course know where the animals are. Suddenly, we find them! A whole lion family. We stay close for almost two hours, such a good opportunity will for sure not come anytime soon again.





For the evening we treat ourselves to a guided night game drive. We enjoy being driven around and not having to watch out for low hanging branches or to navigate. The guides have pretty good eyes they say they have „Bush Eyes” and indeed they spot the animals very quickly.

We also learn new facts, for example that elephants like human beings are either right-handed or left-handed and therefore use one tusk more than the other. Hippos do take turns to go on land for grazing while the others remain in river to defend their spot against any other hippo who might try to take over their place while they are all away grazing. Hippos live in close groups and are very territorial.

A specialty of the South Luangwa are the many tusk-less elephants. From the 70's until the 90's poaching was so out of control that the rhinos became extinct and the elephant population was reduced from 100.000 to less than 9.000 animals. The less attractive elephants – the one without tusks – were useless, therefore not poached and survived.

During the evening drive we find the pride of lions again, see one hyena and finally come close to a pack of wild dogs. Today is surely our predator day!





31.10.2019 Nsefu Sector, Zikomo Camp

At 5:30 a.m. we wake up from the loud 'bang' of monkeys jumping on the roof of our cabin and on our table. The monkeys here are rather aggressive, and we have to constantly watch all our belongings, especially our food.

Before we leave the South Luangwa National Park, we want to visit the Nsefu Sector about 27 km away, which is supposedly of interesting scenery. We come through the village of Mfuwe, where we stock up more supplies. Tomatoes, onions, cabbage and potatoes are the usual staple always available everywhere. After Mfuwe we turn onto a badly corrugated road, pass a few small villages and already harvested cotton fields.



Shortly before we reach Zikomo Camp, a truck carrying workers is heading towards us on the small track. We make space to let him pass and the driver honks at us – we assume to say Thank You. However, he honks again and starts to reverse, obviously he wants to talk to us. Reaching us he asks, whether we have seen the lions, lying not far from here. He explains us how to get there and we of course immediately start searching for the lions. What a nice chap, he specially reversed his truck on this narrow path to tell us about the lions. So far, we have made only good experiences with our Zambians!

Indeed, soon after, we spot the pride of lions under a tree and it is clear what we are going to do this afternoon. This pride is in a much better condition than the one we saw yesterday; cleaner, less roughed up and with a shiny coat. Maybe they are the better hunters and have a healthier diet?





In the late afternoon, we reach the Zikomo Camp and first have to take off the entrance sign to be able to fit through. We see impalas, pukus and in the distance two giraffes.



1.11.2019 Track and Trail

Most likely we will not be able to beat yesterday's sightings of the pride of lions and therefore decide to skip the game drive in the Nsefu Sector and save the park entrance fees. This part of the park we will explore more in detail during our next visit.

As we don't visit the Nsefu sector, we drive back to the Track and Trail camp, our new favourite camp. It is much better set up than the Zikomo Camp and costs half the price. Camping within the South Luangwa NP is not allowed and if one wants to visit the northern part of the park, Zikomo is the only option.



Except for begging children and bad road conditions we do not encounter anything else on our trip back, also not the lions what we had secretly hoped for....

2.11.2019 Track and Trail

In the afternoon while trying to cool off in the pool, we discover a hippo in the river of odd colouring and in a strange posture. Soon, our suspicion is confirmed, the hippo is dead.

The other hippos are obviously bidding farewell to the deceased one and also guard it against the crocodiles. Again and again they come back to the dead hippo and chase the crocs away who are getting into position for the big feast.

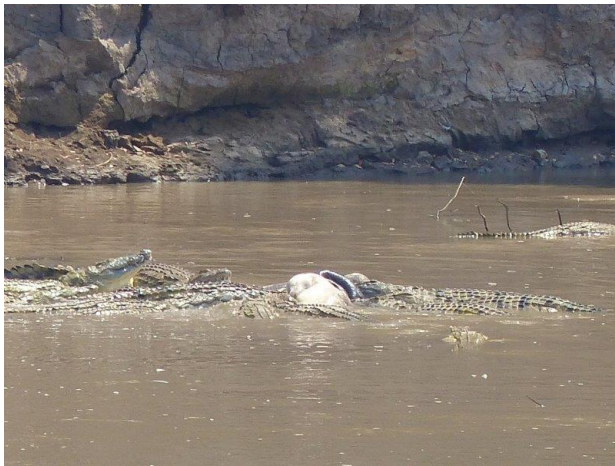
We watch the happenings until it gets dark and assume that the next morning there will be nothing left of the carcass.



3.11.2019 Chipata

First thing in the morning we check what's left of the hippo. More than 50 crocs are still busy feeding on it. What a show! The crocs rip the carcass into bits and pieces and in their typical feeding behavior, bite into the flesh and turn around their own axle to rip out a piece.

Meanwhile, the "German Bird" (we named him so because the colours on the beak resemble the German flag), stands next to it and watches the party go on.



Well, we have to leave the scene at one point as today we still want to drive to Chipata. It is time to move closer to the Mozambican border, as our visa time for Zambia unfortunately comes to an end.

Really, it is too hard to pass by the many mangos on sale on the road side, we can't resist. The entire bowl costs only 10Kw, which is 0.70Eur!



Chipata is at 1000 m altitude, suddenly the landscape is green and the temperatures are much cooler, there is even some drizzling rain. We pass by many kiln producing bricks. The way how the kiln function is really smart. The unburned bricks are stacked to a pile and a fire is started inside the pile to burn the bricks. This is a very flexible way of producing bricks and they can be burned where ever they are needed without much transport.



At the Mama Roula Campsite in Chipata we meet Simone and Jochen, who travel with their Mercedes G through Africa. It is really nice to meet fellow long-term travelers, as so far we have been mostly by ourselves on the campsites hardly meeting any other travelers. Of course, in the evening we have to chat about our adventures.