

16.12.2020 Windhoek

A little exhausted from the long overnight flight we still arrive well in Windhoek. Blue sky and sunshine welcome us upon arrival. We are allowed to disembark the plane in groups and the immigration takes place in the newly renovated arrival hall. This hall is more spacious and it helps that we pass in groups through immigration, the procedure is quicker than before. The immigration officer is friendly and much nicer compared to our previous experiences. We have to show our Covid-Test in total three times.

As usual Manfred picks us up from the airport and brings us directly to our Unimog. It starts at the first turn of the ignition key and our tires have not lost much air, all is good. We load our luggage and drive to "Urban Camp" where we stow away all our stuff and relax, happy to be back in Namibia.

17.12.2020 Windhoek

Today we first have to do some maintenance on the Unimog. We drive back to Manfred where Werner changes the engine oil and filter, replaces the diesel filters, cleans the air filter and checks the wheel hubs, their oil and many more things...



We finish all work and want to head back to town in the afternoon when we see that the road to Windhoek is blocked. After yesterday's mega traffic jam on our way to Frankfurt Airport this is the second blocked road in 24 hours. A gyrocopter crashed on the main road leading to a two hours road block. After an hour wait, the traffic is slowly guided past the crash site in a single lane. Later we read that unfortunately both persons on board died in the crash.



In the Urban Camp we meet a French couple. They still continue with their planned world tour despite Corona. Unfortunately, the many required Covid-Tests and quarantine requirements become a burden on their budget. In Botswana they had to go into a one-week-quarantine and had the choice between a hostel for 100 Euro per night or jail...

18.12.2020 Windhoek

After the Unimog is all fixed up, we have to take care of the administrative issues. We pay the road tax at the RFA Administration Office and then look for the Main Customs Office to get our new Carnet stamped. But the Customs Office has moved out from their old location near Pupkewitz Megabuild. After some research we find out, that we have to go the Ministry of Finance, Customs & Excise near the Transnamib Office.

The office is hidden in a small and a bit run down building next to the cargo rails. First we are asked to donate for the Jakob Soul Primary School („Strive to Wisdom“). The donation will be used for masks and disinfectants. The stamping of the old and new Carnets goes smoothly. The last page of the Carnet must be copied, the office lady tells us it costs 5N\$ and calls the guard to help us. The guard however claims the copy costs 10N\$ because this is a special page... He is back quickly and it could well be, that he just went through the back door to the copy machine of the office...

Back at the Urban Camp we find that our Unimog has a play date. The Unimog „Ubelix“, an Unimog 1300L ex German army, from Peter and Conny is parked beside us.



19.12.2020 Elisenheim

We spent the weekend in Elisenheim. Unfortunately the restaurant is already closed for Christmas break, but self-catering campers are still welcome. After so much action we have to sort ourselves and urgently do a travel plan, as have no clue yet where we want to start to travel to.

On Sunday we get a lot of rain; this year the rainy season seems to start on time. In the last few years the rain had started to come later and later, often in January or February only.



21.12.2020 Windhoek, Glücksland Farm

Today we visit Markus, we want to get to know him and his farm Glücksland, as we have been in contact with him for some time. He also offers camping and shows us his favourite spot with a great view. A few minutes after arrival, a huge thunder storm goes down on us. The pitch-dark clouds were announcing this for some time already.



22.12.2020 Windhoek, Otjiwarongo

Today we awake to bright sunshine and blue sky. The good news is: the heavy rain has filled up all dams on the farm with precious water.



The bad news is: the heavy rain has washed away the access track of the farm to the main road C23. The real bad news is: during our attempt to drive around the washed out track a concrete pipe breaks and rips a hole into the side of our right back tire.

Actually, we wanted to drive today via Otjiwarongo towards Etosha National Park. But it looks very much like that we can forget our plans now. With the help of Markus and his team we first get the Unimog out of the ditch to a more even part of the track to be able to change the tyre. The rain has softened the soil and it is very hard to get the hydraulic jack in a stable enough position to lift the Unimog. We need several attempts; it is quite exhausting.



After we are able to drive again, we ask Kai, the son of Manfred where we store our truck, for their preferred tire dealer. It will be a challenge to find a truck tire our size in Windhoek without preordering it. Our tire is mainly still used by the military and not by commercial trucks anymore. On top of this it is close to Christmas and most companies and wholesalers are already closed for Christmas holidays. Most Namibians go to the coast over Christmas where there is a cool breeze to escape the heat further inland. To our great relief Kai manages to source a tire in our size.

We drive to Trentyre and have to wait for about 1.5 hours for the tire to get delivered from some warehouse. Mounting a new truck tire, especially on split ring rims like ours, poses a high risk to burst. As a safety measure, the tire is therefore always inflated in a cage. Some bad accidents have happened already.



We are only finished in the late afternoon but we decide to still drive the 260 km to Otjiwarongo. The road is empty and we closely follow another truck for a long while to reduce our wind load and reach the horse riding club in Otjiwarongo in 3.5 hours just before it gets dark. This morning still being stuck with a flat tire we would have never dared to imagine that we could still make it to Otiwarongo today.

There is some light in the bar of the horse riding club, although it should be closed today. Inside we see the bar owner Patrick, whom we have met two years ago, with his mates who work hard to help him empty his last beer barrel before the Christmas holidays. Of course we volunteer to help out as good as we can.

23.12.2020 Tsumeb, Onguma

After a relaxed start we drive 180 km to Tsumeb, the last chance to buy groceries and fill up diesel before we enter Etosha Nationalpark. The landscape is green, we have not yet seen Namibia this green. The road is rather boring, the only distraction are a few wart hogs along the road and an obviously huge bankrupt investment in form of a castle.



As we are in the supermarket Pick'n'Pay in Tsumeb a staff approaches Werner smiling broadly at him and says „Hello, how are you Sir, I am so pleased to see you“.



We have heard that the Namibians meanwhile are happy to see tourists again and the first travelers who came into the country were highly welcomed and almost celebrated. The Corona induced break in tourism has obviously led to a higher appreciation of tourists again. After all, tourism is one of the main sources of income for Namibia.

Our destination is the Onguma Tamboti Camp, near the entrance of the Etosha National Park ‚Von Lindequist Gate‘. From here, we can enter the park quickly tomorrow morning



The camp has restaurant at the water hole, but neither the water hole nor the restaurant are highly frequented. No animals come to visit the water hole. Lately there has been some decent rain pouring down so there are water puddles everywhere. That means the animals do not need to walk far distances to the water hole. Only huge moths are annoying us relentlessly.



As it gets dark the waiter approaches us and asks us to switch off the lights when we leave. He will go home now.

24.12.2020 Onguma

Merry Christmas! We have a lazy day today and take care of our Christmas mail. As a Christmas present the Robert Koch Institute declares Namibia a “high risk country” in terms of Corona again.

Finally, we light a camp fire to barbeque our Christmas steak.



25.12.2020 Etosha Nationalpark, Halali Campsite

Quite a few people have told us that a visit to Etosha Nationalpark is currently worthwhile. There are far fewer tourists in the country, therefore it is now much less crowded than usual. Normally one has to book a campsite months in advance. The Etosha is the largest National park in Namibia and is on the to-do list of every tourist in Namibia.



Upon entry at the Lindequist Gate we have to register. From here, it is a 12 km drive to the Namutoni reception, where we have to pay the park entry fees for us and the truck. As the name reveals, here is the location of the old Namutoni Fort. In 1904 seven German cavaliers soldiers defended themselves against an attack of 500 Ovambo warriors. The Fort is currently closed due to urgently needed renovation. There is a big discussion in the country about the poor state of the Namutoni fort.



From Namutoni it is 75 km to our camp in Halali. Two days ago we have tried to book our camps with Namibian Wildlife Resorts NWR via phone. One day later we got an email saying that all campsites are fully booked. On the NWR webpage we try our luck with an online booking and it works without any problems, all campsites are available.

Now we wonder if the NWR online booking page is not updated, that would mean we paid, but don't have a campsite or if the lady on the phone has just told us nonsense and in fact there is space available...

A few kilometers behind Namutoni we encounter a road block. We are told that plastic bags are forbidden in the park. This seems to be a new regulation, we have never heard about this before, there were also no signs or information about this. A few plastic bags are confiscated from the cars in front of us. As a result, later a few of the confiscated plastic bags fly around in the park... We are not checked as we tell them truthfully, that a few supplies are in plastic bags but this is packed food from the supermarket.



The National Park covers an area of about 22.300qkm and is entirely fenced (1640km!). It covers nine different vegetation zones (savanna, grassland, thornbush, arid forest areas and more...). There are several natural springs which usually dry up during dry season.

The Etosha Pan (in Ovambo language Etosha means a „large white place“) was millions of years ago a lake. The lake was over time filled with sediments the so called „Kalahari Top Layer“. After a heavy raining season the pan still fills up with water. In the heat of the day, the horizon flickers so much it looks like that the pan is still filled with water.





Mama is the best here she provides a bit of shade for the young foal.



When we arrive at the Halali Camp the camp site is half empty and – as expected – far from „fully booked“. We wonder why the booking lady from NWR Reservations claimed that it is full. A lot of income is missed by NWR through this poor service, but of course there is work involved to process a booking and it is easier to claim that it is fully booked.



Our evening game drive leads us the two waterholes ,Helio' and ,Nomias' which are both dry. Maybe because of the raining season they have stopped the pumps? All over the park we see large puddles of water where we encounter more animals than at the established waterholes...



Shortly before the gate closing time at 19:30 h we are back in the camp and visit the Moringa waterhole near the campsite. Here we find all the animals we were looking for during our game drive...



