

4.1.2021 Hoarusib Dry River

We are in the southern part of the Kaokoveld, where the Himba live. From our camp at the Gomatum dry riverbed it's only about 5 km to Purros, a settlement of tin huts scattered around a large area. Here the two dry rivers Gomatum and Hoarusib converge. We enter the dry riverbed Hoarusib where desert elephants are to be found and drive north, while we keep our eyes open for wildlife.



The standing of a Himba is determined by the number of animals he owns. They mainly farm goats and fat-tail sheep but cattle are of highest regard. The main diet of the Himba is corn porridge 'pap' and curdled milk. Sometimes they slaughter a goat, but mainly the goats are traded for goods, for example a sack of corn flour.

Cattle are only slaughtered or rather sacrificed at special occasions like weddings or funerals. The esteem of the deceased can be seen by the number of animals sacrificed for this person. The skulls of the sacrificed animals are tied to a tree to show how many animals have been sacrificed.



Soon we discover some elephant droppings as well as marks, but not animals, yet. As we drive around a riverbend we see a green grassy area and here they are: Our first desert elephants. They stand next to some donkeys and baboons, what an odd combination of animals... Carefully we drive a bit closer.



Desert elephants dig holes in the dry riverbed where water is accumulating, so they can drink it with their trunks. They can go without water for several days, considerably longer than “normal” elephants which are not adapted to these dry conditions. They also cover larger distances – up to 80 km – in order to find water.





After the elephants quench their thirst and move back into the bush, the baboons take advantage of the freshly dug waterhole and have a drink as well.



We explore the dry riverbed a bit further and find a few desert giraffes. At the same time, we look for a good spot to set up camp.



We pick a spot not far from the waterholes, hoping that the elephants or other wildlife may return later. But soon the wind gets so strong, that we are showered with sand blown about by the strong gusts. It becomes impossible to stay outside, so we decide to look for a better place. We are lucky and find a spot nearby which is sheltered from the wind by a rocky hill and even has some grass. For dinner it's oryx filet.



5.1.2021 Kaokoveld

In the morning we find out that also the Himba are using the waterholes dug by the elephants to get their water.



We are just breaking down our camp and packing up as Dewi suddenly shouts loudly "elephant, elephant"! The elephant approached from behind our car so we did not see it coming, meanwhile he is already as close as 40 meters at a waterhole having a drink. We have never been quicker in our cars ever before. Also the Himba retreated up the hill quickly for safety and - just like us - left all their gear behind.



After some time, the elephant has quenched his thirst and moves on. We can finally pack up and are on our way, too.

We enter the vast emptiness of the Kaokoveld. Suddenly there is a person sitting on a hill watching us. Or is this just a fata morgana?



As we look through our binoculars, we conclude that this is not a fata morgana, but it isn't a person either... it is a stone sculpture. How interesting, who would have built it out here? For a short while we are pulled out of the meditative monotony of this landscape.



As we continue, we find two more of these sculptures. Now our ardor of the chase is awake, we are vigilantly looking out for more of these sculptures. Actually, it is a good idea to keep the driver awake...



One has the impression to be all alone in this wide and vast wilderness, but from time to time a few animals appear on the horizon, a springbok or an ostrich or a large flock of goats. At the road sign for the Orupembe shop we turn from the D3707 onto a track leading to the Hartmannsberge and Marienflusstal. Orientation points in the desert are few, so people have put up old oil drums as markers and painted them in different colors: green, orange, blue and red. Our first target is the „Bloudrom“, the blue drum.



It is time to find a camp for tonight and we drive up closer to some of the hills until we find a suitable spot which protects us from the strong winds starting up in the desert every afternoon as the sun sets.

By chance there is another one of our friends and here we can have a closer look. The sculpture is made from rocks which are supported by a professionally welded iron frame. A small sign is attached saying only “No. 17” and „Meeting in the Shade“. Later, we try to find out more about the artist but the only information we can get is that he/she lives in Onjuva.



6.1.2021 Camp Synchro, Kunene Fluss

The landscape consisting of sand, stones and rocks is changing colors from black and white to more reddish tones.





It is not far to the Bloudrom and we are excited to finally have reached one of these famous markers we have heard a lot about. Some funster have even taken the effort to carry an old satellite dish and a coin operated public phone up here.



At the Bloudrom we turn east to reach the next marker the red drum ,Rooidrom', about 20km away.

North of the Rooidrom lies the Marienfluss Valley, south is the Joubert Pass, which we will have to cross later on our return drive back out, if we don't want to drive back the whole same track.

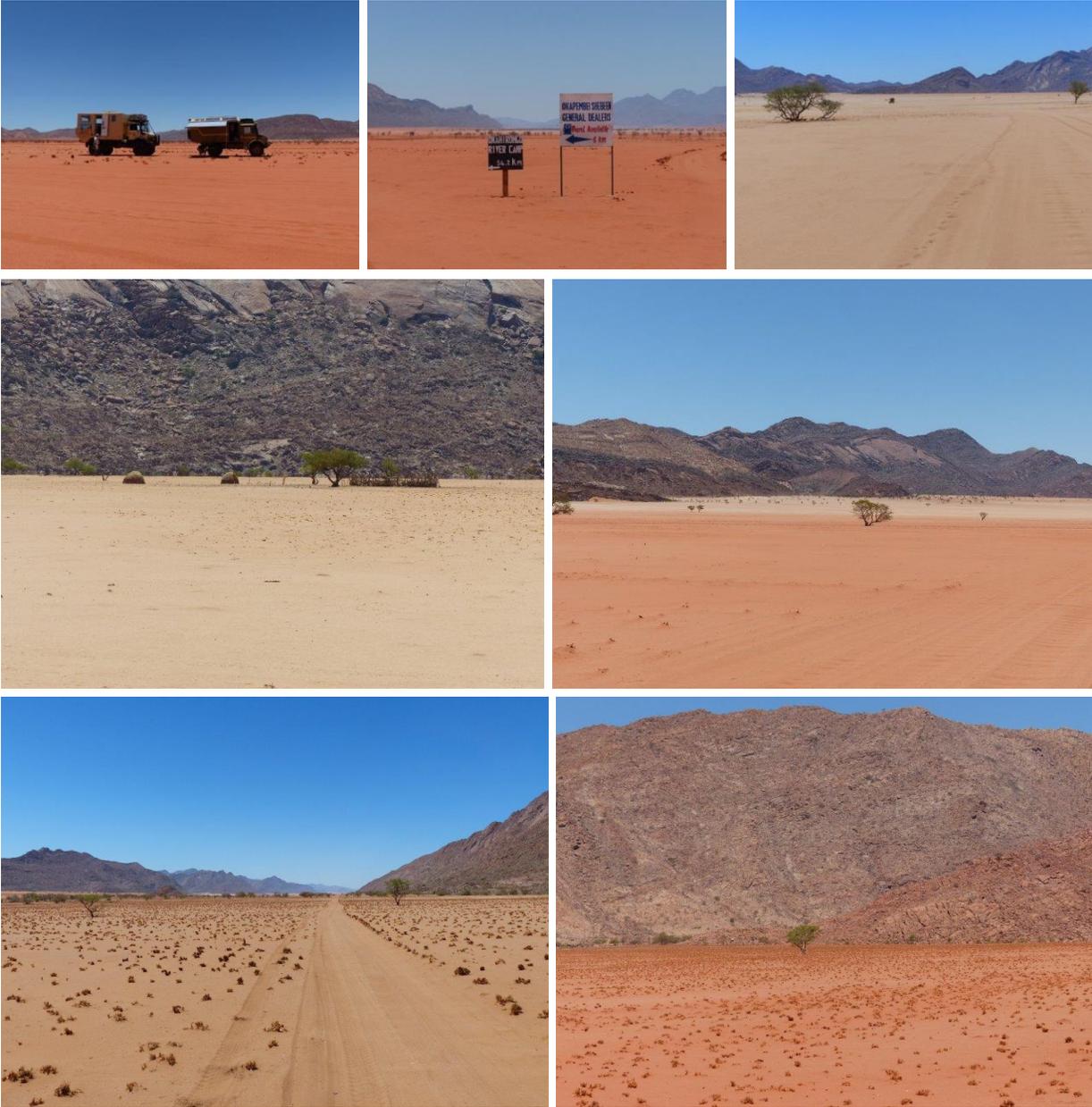


We are in the middle of Himba country and pass quite a few Himba settlements. Typically, they consist of round clay huts and a Kral in which life stock is kept safely for the night. The Himba are partly nomads so they move with their animals between their settlements – which is why some places are not occupied and look deserted.

All the time we ask ourselves how can you survive here and where do you get your water from. Not being able to obtain water is the biggest threat out here. This becomes even more evident as we find many cattle carcasses in a valley, obviously they have died of thirst. Someone mentioned, that it has not rained here for the last eight years.



Again, the landscape is changing dramatically and the ground is getting more sandy, changing colors between red and white. The Marienfluss river bed is clearly visible as a white band within the red-sand landscape. Truly impressive landscape.





Our destination is Camp Synchro, located at the end of the Marienfluss Valley and build next to the Kunene river which marks the border to Angola. The colours of the sand are still alternating between red and white, some hills are even white on one side and red on the other side.

Close to our destination we cover considerable distances where the wind has blown the tracks away. It is like driving over fresh snow, we make our own new tracks – it is real fun. But thanks to our Quo Vadis navigation system, we always know where we are and where we are supposed to go.



So far we have not seen a single road sign pointing to Camp Synchro. It is just marked on our map. What if it doesn't exist anymore. Finally, there is a sign advertising cold drinks and then the sign to the camp. We made it. We have reached one of the remotest corners of Namibia.

Camp Synchro was built up by a Swiss couple. However, they have returned home and are trying to sell their camp. Wifi, shop and the bar are all not operational anymore, but there still is the basic camp with showers and a fire place, located idyllically under some huge trees giving shade on the shores of the Kunene river at the Angolan border.

