

7.1.2021 Camp Synchro, Mariental

We have one day break at Camp Synchro as we have been driving a lot lately – through breathtaking landscape. In the morning some Himba set up their merchandise next to us, subtle buying pressure is being built up. In the name of development aid we buy a few things, but also because we do not want to test how long they would sit there waiting for us to buy something.

Himba rub their skin with a mixture of butterfat and ochre paste called „Otjize“ to prevent loss of moisture and as protection against heat and cold. This is where they get their distinctive red skin and hair color from. The hair styles and jewelry all have a special meaning. Necklaces and foot bracelets in different colors show for example if a woman has already children and how many. There are millions of varieties of hair styles: Long and thin braids, extensions, formed like two horns, covered with ochre paste or clay and many more. All these hair styles point out a social status or a development stage for example before or after puberty, single status or married, in mourning... Actually, these women walk around like open books. Makes dating a bit easier...



There are crocodiles in the river, however they are very cautious. They dive into the water as soon as they hear or see something unusual. Only after a few hours we are able to spot one, but also this one dives away quickly. The camp dog is an illegal immigrant from Angola, who has crossed the river and decided to stay at the camp.



The showers are extra-large, the biggest we ever had on a camp and we find out how easy it is to make your own dumbbells. Just cut plastic pipes in the right length, fill them with concrete and put in an iron rod...



In the late afternoon the local kids play at the river and one boy caught a small fish. Obviously, they know the spots where they are safe from the crocodiles. As the little boy realizes that we take photos of him he gets a bit naughty...

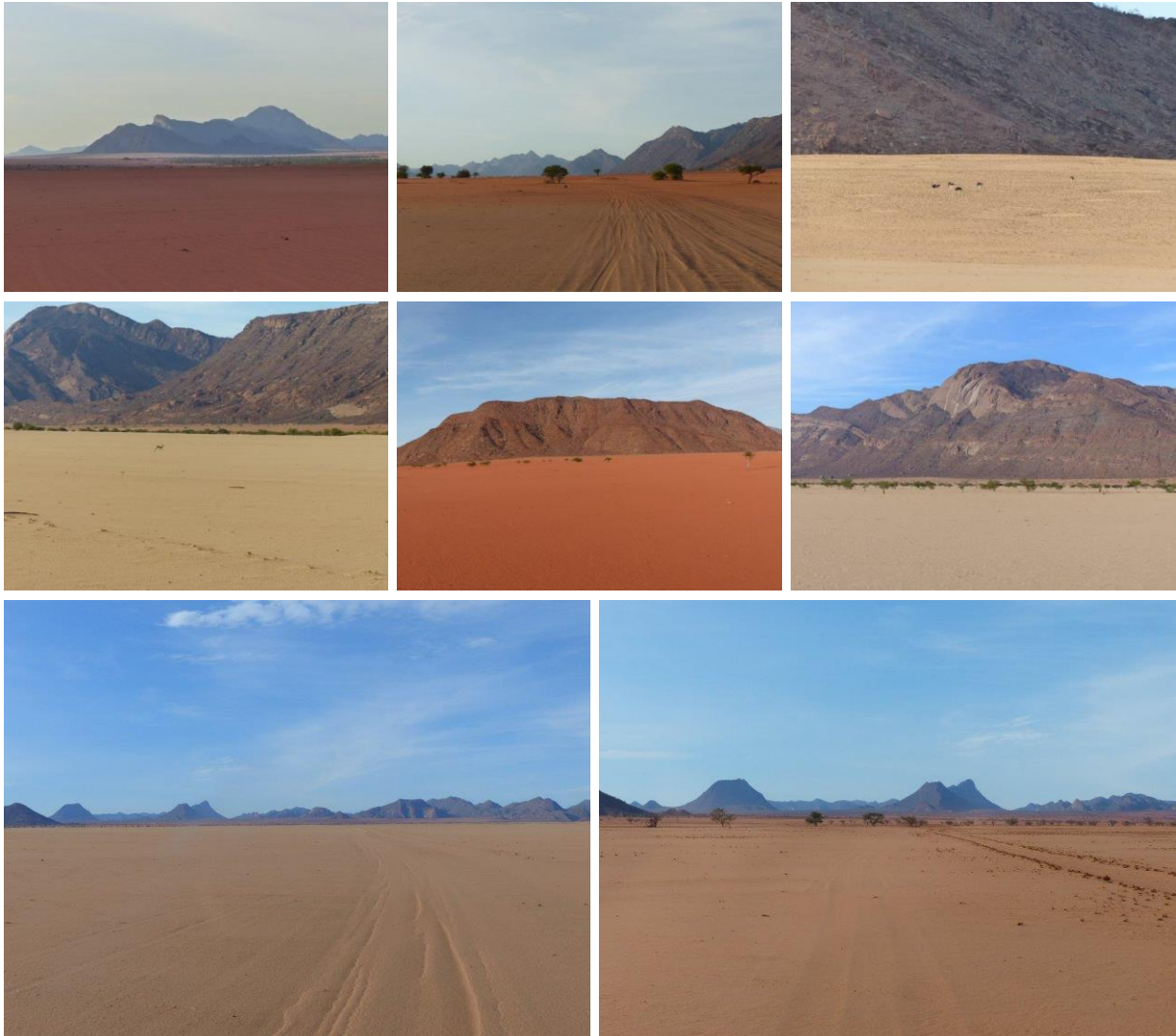


8.1.2021 Joubert Pass, Marble Mine

After a day's rest we start our drive back out quite early. A long day of driving is ahead of us and we worry a little bit about crossing the Joubert Pass, as we do not exactly know if the pass is drivable for us.

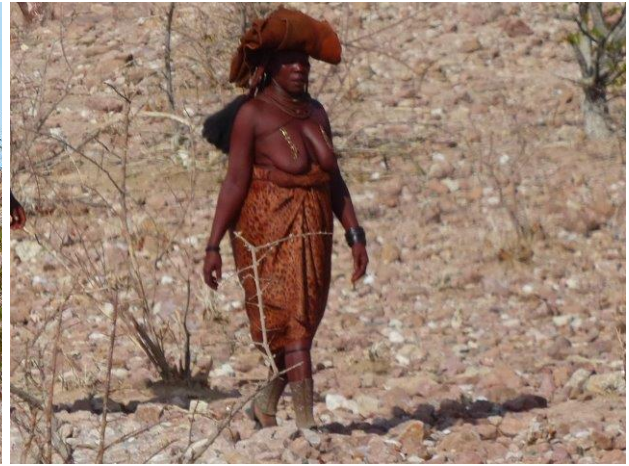
In the early morning light, the landscape looks different. Again, we can draw our own tracks in the white sand of the Marienfluss river bed.

A few ostriches and Springbok cross our path; one rock just looks like the Ayers Rock in Australia including the red soil.



Soon we are back at the Himba settlements and we see some of them walking for miles, balancing their bundles on the head with a baby tied to their backs.





After about two hours we are back at the red drum ,Rooidrom', where we turn south. We find another sculpture; he is relaxing on a rock.



Finally, we are at the Joubert Pass. There are a few very narrow passages where we have to be extremely careful not to hit any sharp rocks with our tires, which are most vulnerable on the side walls. All in all, the pass is manageable. We take it very slowly crawling up in first gear. It takes us 45 minutes to get up there. Driving southbound is mainly climbing up and we think uphill the pass is easier to drive than downhill.



We make a little detour to an abandoned marble quarry. The snow-white blocks of marble shine very white from a far distance away.





We discover another “wanderer” and soon after have lunch break at the white drum. After all, there is a fifth colored drum.



Through fantastic landscapes we continue to drive towards Opuwo. On the horizon a mighty thunderstorm is building up. Luckily, the thunderstorm does not cross our path, although it looked different in the beginning. About 45km before reaching Opuwo we set up camp in the bush and remain undisturbed.





9.1.2021 Opuwo, Epupa Falls

Today we reach Opuwo, the only town and administrative center of the Kaokoveld. Here we say goodbye to Conny and Peter, who want to return to Kamanjab. We, however, turn north to the Epupa Falls. Opuwo is not a very attractive town, but it is the main turnstile for traffic from all directions as well as to and from Angola. Therefore, it is a major hub for stocking up on supplies, has two supermarkets and two filling stations. The 'Spar' supermarket is surprisingly well stocked with a bakery section and a good selection of cheese. You wouldn't expect it at such a place.

Opuwo is also interesting because Himba and Herero live here, walking through town in their traditional costumes which look somehow much nicer than the modern jeans and T-shirts. There is so much to see, you don't know where to look first. And as chance would have it, we meet again Piro and Harry, who we got to know at Camp Synchro. Namibia is a village...









Yesterday it had rained so much, that the road to the Epupa Falls was flooded and impassable. The rain caused the rivers to fill up very quickly and the water flows with such strong current, it would easily wash away a car (which happens regularly). But as quickly as the rivers rise, as fast everything is gone again, the water seeps away in the sand. With the sun shining the road dries quickly and today is passable again. Epupa is about 200 km away and the road is heavily corrugated, we need more time than anticipated. We are glad to finally arrive.





The Epupa Falls Camp lies directly next to the river and looks very idyllic with the many Makalani palm trees. At the riverbank we see a dead crocodile which already disseminates a foul smell of decay. Luckily the wind is strong so the smell is still bearable. Because here is the only space in the camp which fits us, mainly due to the palm trees and their falling nuts. The nuts could damage our solar panels or roof windows so we better stay clear of them. So, let's hope it stays windy.



But now it is time to light our camp fire and have a sundowner.



10.1.2021 Epupa Falls

In the morning, we discover that the river has more water than yesterday evening and the dead crocodile was swept over the falls disappearing downstream. No more foul smell. The Makalani palms have dropped a few nuts over night, but luckily none has hit us.



The nuts of the Makalani palms are used for carving souvenirs which are sold to tourists. The seller asks for your name and carves it onto the nut faster than you can look, so you feel obliged to buy it. During the day the river is rising even higher, there must be strong rain further east or in Angola. This year the raining season in Namibia has started very strong and most dams are filling up well. Only here in the northern Kunene region there was hardly any rainfall so far.

From our camp we have the perfect overview of a natural pool right above the falls which is very popular with the locals. It is quite interesting to watch who is coming by during the day to have a bath or do their laundry.



The camp is also home to the cool looking Redhead Agama. During daytime, after they have warmed up preferably at a higher spot they become colorful, at night all agama look grey.





In the late afternoon when the light is at its best we finally visit the Epupa Falls, just a short walk from the camp. “Epupa” means “falling water” in Herero language. We wanted to have come here for quite some time, finally we are here. At the end of the raining season, the falls would fall down the 60 m drop more spectacular than now.



Most interesting are the huge Baobab trees, which cling to the steep cliffs with all their power as if not to fall down into the gorge.



And naturally it's time again for... exactly, our camp fire!

Before:



After:



During dusk we spotlight around the camp from time to time. Because during check in the lady told us that we have to watch out for crocodiles coming to shore during the night. But we should not worry too much, they are only the small ones, just about a meter long or so...