30.1.2021 Brandberg

Yesterday we did not come across any desert elephants, but this morning we find fresh elephant marks. What a pity, we must have missed each other narrowly. Our plan was to do a game drive following the Ugab river bed, but soon it gets too narrow and the river bed is totally overgrown, finally we have to turn around.


Maybe the western part of the Ugab river is more accessible to vehicles? In order to reach the western section, we drive a side arm of the river southbound and have to circle half the Brandberg massif on its southern side. The landscape changes its colors continuously, the track changes between sandy and rocky. We are very careful not to touch any sharp rocks, to not risk any side damage to our tires. It seems it has rained recently in this area, one slope shows a touch of green.









Suddenly, there is a strange sound, as if one tire is losing air. But that is impossible, we were constantly on watch for any sharp rocks. Well, we have no clue which rock caused the puncture, but fact is we have a puncture and our tire is losing air. It's a small one but still it's a hole and needs repair. This is our 4th change of tire since we started our trip in 2015.

Practice makes perfect. We improve the time needed for a tire change to less than three hours. Afterwards we are not keen anymore to continue our drive and look for a suitable camp spot off the main road. However, there is not a lot of traffic passing by anyway.







Our today’s campsite, in the middle of nowhere with the Brandberg massif still in sight....

31.1.2021 Brandberg Mine, Ugab River West

Yesterday, the flat tire did not allow us to reach the Ugab river, but today we are on our way.




From the Pad D2342 we turn north onto the Pad D2303 and pass-by the decommissioned Brandberg West Mine. From 1946 – 1980 ore was extracted in an open-cast mine. We spent some time to explore the old mine site and try to figure out the story behind the ruins.



Not far behind the mine the track is forking of, one track leads to the „Save the Rhino Trust Camp“, the other one into the Ugab riverbed. We take the left track leading us into the riverbed through a spectacular gorge. High almost vertical rock walls welcome us, one never knows what to expect behind the many narrow curbs and bends.






Finally, we reach the Ugab riverbed. Unfortunately, the riverbed is getting very narrow soon and there are still wet spots. There must have been water in the riverbed not long ago. Therefore, we decide to not explore any further but camp on the spot where we are standing. Not too far from our camp we find the remains of a zebra. Smartly we put together, that a herd of zebras must have moved through this riverbed not long ago, but who may have killed the zebra?





Later we find the marks of a large cat near our camp, she must have something to do with the dead Zebra.


In the afternoon Werner explores the area and climbs a high rock face. Through his binoculars he spots the back of a leopard, just 200 m from our camp! The leopard also spots him and disappears quickly into the bush. Now we know who killed and ate the zebra and that he rested close to our camp. Just to be on the safe side, we prefer to have dinner in the truck.


1.2.2021 Messum Crater

Out next destination is another natural attraction of the Damaraland: the very remote Messum Crater in the Dorob National Park. The crater in the Goboboseb Mountains measures more than 20km in diameter and dates back 130 million years ago, they say. A ring of about 200m high volcano hills surrounds the collapsed crater.





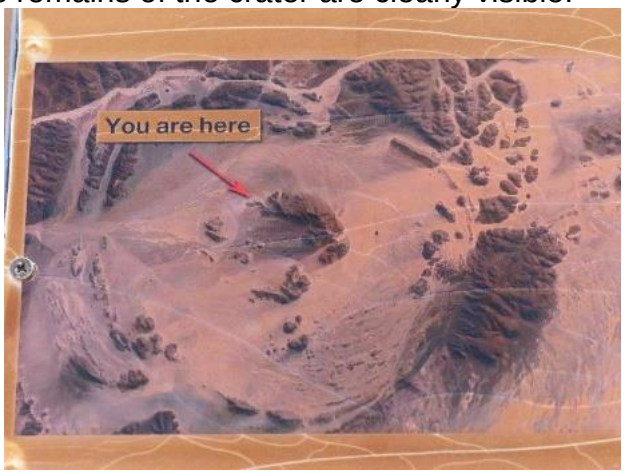
There are plenty of Welwitschia Mirabilis when approaching the crater and huge lichen fields. Lichen are organisms, a combination of algae and fungi. In Namibia there are at least 100 different species of lichen. They play a very important role for the Namib desert because they stabilize the upper layer of the surface and prevent soil erosion. Lichen can survive long periods of drought as they survive on the moisture from the sea fog. It is estimated, that some of these lichen fields are hundreds or even thousands of years old.








The Messum Crater was discovered 1939 by the well-known geologist Henno Martin. Its name originates from Captain W. Messum, who explored the area around the Brandberg massif in the 19th century. When driving through the crater, one hardly notices being in a crater. But looking from above the remains of the crater are clearly visible.


The best is the 360 degree panoramic view over the wide and untouched plain of the crater, with no human soul in sight.

From our camp we would be able to spot any other vehicle from hundreds of kilometers away.

In the evening all of the sudden a gigantic front of fog is pushing into the crater. Soon we are sitting in front of a white-grey wall of fog and the temperature is dropping quickly. We pack up and retreat into the cabin. It is unbelievable how quickly the weather can change from hot desert climate to cold and foggy conditions typical for the Namibian coast.

2.2.2021 Messum Crater

After breakfast the fog is quickly clearing under the Namibian sun. The fog brought a considerable amount of moisture, on our truck are still big drops of water. Also, we believe, that the mini-grass has grown a bit over night.

We like it here so much that we decide to stay for another day. We explore the area and climb the hills. Not long ago, this usually very arid area must have received some rain as some little plants are growing and fighting for survival.