

Our 70 day trip through Namibia, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania 29 May to 6 Aug 2011

Ok I suppose this trip report is long overdue....but if you are retired you do not have all the time in the world for writing reports.....☺

So here is PART 1 of our trip report....the rest will probably follow early next year....hopefully before the next trip..

Deon Kotze and Philna van Tonder

The planning of this trip started one Sunday behind a laptop. Philna and I decided it was now time for a 2-3month trip, and she was going to show me Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania. As she has been there before, and knew that the roads were in bad shape, we decided we would to the trip with her Prado 4L V6...comfortable soft IFS ride not the bumpy Bokwa ride..;-). Maybe it was a good decision... ☺

We tried to get other vehicles to do the trip, or just part of it with us, but nobody came forward so we decided to do it on our own.

An itinerary was drawn up, many books and trip reports consulted, medical and travel insurance, carne de passage, international driving permits and certificate of vaccination was acquired and the day of departure arrived.

The costs quoted below was for 2 persons and the kilometres every day includes km driven in the parks as well, where applicable.

Our Triplog



Day 1, 29 May 2011

Durbanville to White House Guest House Grunau, S27.60640 E18.39742, 807km. Accommodation: 1 x R230pppn= R460

We left at 05h00 for Namibia, a few raindrops fell but nothing serious. The border-crossing went swiftly, we paid the road tax of R220 and had our DA65 forms stamped without even showing them our cameras and other stuff, and soon we were in the land of Tafel Lager!

We had booked to overnight at the White House just north of Grunau and had a venison dinner at R80p/p, which was even brought to our room. Grunau was just like I have experienced it before...very cold.... Later on our trip we heard that it snowed there a week later.

Day 2, 30 May 2011

White House Grunau to Kings Highway Restcamp, Okahandja, S21.99959 E16.92265, 718km. Accommodation: 1 x R70pppn= R140

We left at 7h00 and at the Spar in Mariental we bought some firewood, meat and salads. (I am the meat man and Philna the salads..;-))

Every time I travel this road I have a beer at Mandy's Pub in Rehoboth, and this time was no exception....

We reached King's Highway at about 17h00. There I met a niece of mine from Langebaan that I have not seen in many years and we caught up with some family news. It was very cold but luckily the ablutions were in good shape and a hot shower before bed did wonders.

King's Highway Restcamp, Okahandja



Day 3, 31 May 2011

Okahandja to Sarasungu river lodge Rundu, S17.88997 E19.78148, 648km. Accommodation: 1 x R85pppn= R170

Since Philna and I are avid bird-watchers we are finding it difficult to get packed in the mornings with all the birds in the trees....

The early morning was still chilly and after coffee we left about 9am for Rundu.

In Grootfontein we had some hamburgers and coffee at the Purple Fig Bistro and then we were on our way again. We had booked camping at the Sarasungu Lodge on the Okavango River, the same place where we stayed over on our way back from Angola in 2010. And of course there were many trees and all sorts of little birds waiting to be photographed...

That night we had a lovely dinner at their restaurant and reasonable prices.

Day 4, 1 June 2011

Rundu to Namwi Island Lodge Katima Mulilo, S17.49362 E24.34422, 519km.

Accommodation: 1 x R95ppn= R190

This morning Philna had to see to some banking arrangements and after buying a few things at Pick and Pay, including meat and some Drostdy Hof red wine, we left town only at 10h30.

The weather was now also a lot better and it was time for shorts and tshirts.

The Caprivi main road went without any incident, only some work being done at the Divundu bridge, and it was the first time that I noticed the name of the park through which we were travelling....Bwabwato National Park..

At Katima we filled the tank to the brim as this was the last time we would get "cheap" petrol before we arrive back in Katima again...

Then we took the sand road to Namwi Island lodge where we also had a booking. A few weeks ago the road to the camping site was still under water but now it was dry. I can really recommend Namwi Island lodge, very nice camping on the Okavango river, good ablutions, electricity at paved stands and braaiwood for sale. They also have chalets, the tap water is unfortunately not drinkable and there is no restaurant.

At night you must watch your step, they have a smallish "tame" hippo that leaves the river to come and eat the lawn.....watch you step Stompie is not that tame...

Lots of birds to be seen again and a beautiful view on the river.

Namwi Island Lodge campsite, Katima



African Pied Wagtail



Days 5-7, 2-4 June 2011

Leaving Namibia to Waterfront Lodge/camping, Livingstone, S17.88724 E25.84448, 222 km. Accommodation: 3 x \$10ppn = \$60

Today we will leave Namibia and enter Zambia at Sesheke. I don't know why but I just always dread these border crossings...

We reached the "offices" at about 10h00 with moneychangers all around you. All went rather well, friendly people and not a lot of chaos. We had our Carne stamped and paid the following:

Carbon tax R333, Council levy R50, Insurance for 3 months \$60 and Road toll for now as well as our entry again from Tanzania \$40.

Future travelers please note: Zambia do not take our R200 notes!!

In under an hour we were on our way again...

From here onwards into our trip we made no bookings and also never had any problems in finding accommodation.

The speed limit in Zambia is 100km/h and at the little towns it drop to 50km/h.

We reached Livingstone and found camping site at the Waterfront Lodge.

We parked and decided to first test the bar...and this would become a practice at every camp we stopped. The bar has a lovely view over the Zambezi, I had a Mosi at Zkw 10 000 (about R16) and Philna a Savana at Zkw 12 000.

We decided to stay here for 3 nights, do washing, get some groceries as well as exchange dollars for Zambian Kwachas. The South African wine is Zambia is very expensive, about twice the price as in South Africa....but the Mosi beer is good.. ☺

At the Bureau de Change opposite Ocean basket in Livingstone we exchanged our first \$1000 for 4 670 000 ZkW, and we felt like millionaires! We split the money into a few places in the vehicle for safety reasons....but luckily we never felt as we were in any danger. Very friendly and helpful people in Zambia.

Petrol was 8647ZkW/l and it was a terrible feeling having to hand over 650 000 ZkW for fuel at a garage...you count over and over again...

We stocked up with meat and groceries at the Shoprite as well as the Spar and also had some fish and chips at the Ocean Basket.

Just a few prices at Ocean basket as a matter of interest:

Graca is R110, Durbanville Hills Chardonnay R182...and a packet of Dunhill cigarettes....R14.!

Next day we went to the Victoria Waterfall, \$20 p/p and \$5 for parking. I had a bit of a cold and running nose and we did not stay long. Luckily it was not our first time at the falls.

Although our camping was not that expensive, I just felt that they could have done a bit more with the ablutions but I suppose if you have all the overlanders visiting everyday then it might be a difficult task. The ablutions was however for my liking not up to standard.

We had electricity at the stands, but no drinking water.

Zambezi River sunset, Livingstone



Waterfront Lodge Campsite



Victoria Waterfall



Day 8, 5 June 2011

Livingstone to Kariba Bush Club(on Kariba dam), S17.45022 E27.38212, 375 km. Accommodation: 1 x \$9pppn = \$18

The previous name for this place was Clubhouse lodge. The T1 to Batoka was not that bad, we turned south towards Sinazonwe on a bad tar road and the last 27km of bad gravel took us to the Kariba Bush Club.

We had our drinks at the bar and then pitched camp on a lovely big lawn. The ablutions were ok, no electricity but borehole water.

The Club is run by Peter Nel and Chennay Jordaan, lodging is available as well as meals and a bar.

A very nice place on the Kariba dam.

Kariba Bush Club camp



Lake Kariba



Day 9, 6 June 2011

Kariba Bush Club to The Moorings, S16.19400 E27.54346, 188 km.

Accommodation: 1 x \$5pppn = \$10

Today it was back to Batoka and then on the T1 to just outside Monze where we turned off for The Moorings. Also a nice big camp with drinkable borehole water and good ablutions. They have a bar and restaurant with very affordable prices.

The Moorings Campsite



Yellow-breasted Apalis



Day 10, 7 June 2011

Moorings camp to Gwabi Lodge, S15.95162 E28.85910, 209 km.

Accommodation: 1 x \$10pppn = \$20

So it was back on the T1, bought some stuff at the Shoprite in Mazabuka and at Turnpike we turned south-east on the T2 towards Chirundu. This road is BAD with very big potholes and many trucks on this road as it leads to Zimbabwe. As you are nearing the border post the road becomes even worse, with trucks everywhere. Just before Chirundu we turned north onto a bad sandy road onto Gwabi Lodge.

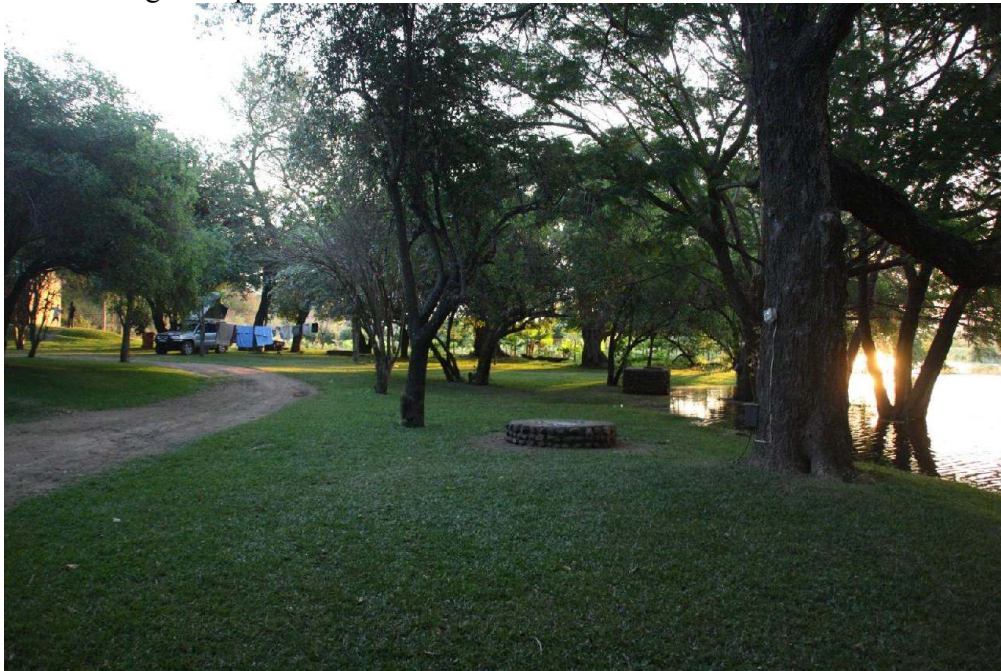
Lovely place on the Kafue river, very green with a beautiful lodge, bar and restaurant and swimming pool.

Half of the camp was flooded due to the fact that they opened the sluice gates and the Kafue river was coming down in force. We maneuvered to a nice spot near the ablutions, electricity available but again no drinking water. This was of course not a problem at this point in time as we had enough drinking water with us.

We did some laundry and then it was off to the swimming pool with some cool beverages...

That evening we had some drinks on the deck, chatting to the owner and watching the sunset over the Kafue River. Later it was lovely steaks in their restaurant, some wine and some more drinks....again a lovely place, would love to spend some more time here...

Gwabi Lodge campsite



Sunset on the Kafue river, Gwabi Lodge





Day 11, 8 June 2011

Gwabi Lodge to Eureka Camp, Lusaka, S15.50331 E28.26513, 145 km.

Accommodation: 1 x \$7pppn = \$14

We leave early as we are on our way to the LZNP. When we reached the ferry to take us across the Kafue we met people coming out of the park who

told us that the park is closed as a result of the high water level. We were very disappointed and had to turn back. So now it was back on the gravel road towards Chirundu, and then that terrible potholed road, which continued until Kafue. We encountered many police checkpoints, but never had any problems at all, most of the time just waved through.

Just before we reached Eureka camp, I saw on my gps a warning that someone was caught in a speed trap before. They now have a permanent camera manned by a cop here at S15.54325 E28.26439, be warned!...max speed 65km/h...saw it on our way back as well...

I was not very impressed with this place, the upkeep was way behind, the ablutions not up to standard.....but at least there was drinking water. Next time I would rather check out Pioneer camp north of Lusaka.

A green Landrover parked next to us, and we would meet up with the young couple later again where we would hear that they are from Australia, bought the vehicle in Cape Town and now travelling through Africa. They will eventually get back to Cape Town where they would sell the vehicle again

Eureka Campsite, Lusaka



Day 12, 9 June 2011

Eureka Camp, Lusaka to Bridge Camp near Luangwa river, S15.00508

E30.21515, 250 km. Accommodation: 1 x \$10pppn = \$20

We have heard horror stories about the traffic chaos in Lusaka and left at 8 from Eureka camp as we wanted to go to the new Manda Hill Complex for some shopping. To our surprise the traffic was not that bad, very busy but a lot more order exists, even taxis made way for us...☺

We saw quite a lot of Toyota models that you do not get in RSA.

We were out of Lusaka at 10h00 and onto the Great East Road which was rather narrow but not too potholed. At about 60km before the Luangwa river the road became twisting and winding with many potholes. Before the river crossing, at the local market we turned off to Bridge Camp.

This place must have been a good one in it's days, but the deterioration was evident. I believe it is now for sale for a couple of years but no maintenance is being done. Lots of "muggies"no eating could be done in daytime....

It must also have the most expensive bar in Africa!! One double whiskey with soda and one gin and tonic put us back R99!

The donkey ablutions were fantastic, no drinking water and electricity only between 17h00-22h00.

But this is Africa.....so who is complaining.....at least I knew what I was in for... Hakuna Matata...☺

Bridge Camp



The most expensive bar in Africa!



Day 13, 10 June 2011

Bridge Camp to Mama Rula's, Chipata, S13.58263 E32.61000, 343 km.

Accommodation: 1 x \$7ppn = \$14

We left early again, it was now getting hot on the road.

A road report on this stretch would be useless as it is very potholed, then suddenly you get a beautiful stretch, and just when you relax....back into the potholes....then good again, then potholes.....

Mama Rula's is a great camp, lots of trees, nice ablutions...and we even found an electricity point to plug into...

I read somewhere that Mama Rula's has the best steaks in Africa.....and we can bear witness to that! The peanuts you buy here are also special.....should have bought a lot more...and of course all the south-african rugby flags fly in the bar..

That evening some overlanders arrived, and our young couple in the Landrover, Geoff and Nina also arrived later.

A camp to be recommended.

Mama Rula's Bar and restaurant, Chipata...note the flags...



Mama Rula's campsite



Days 14-17, 11-14 June 2011

Chipata to Croc Valley Camp , Luangwa river, SLNP, S13.10037 E31.79389, 292 km. Accommodation: 4 x \$7.50ppn = \$60, Parkfees(2):\$30p/p 24hrx2+\$15 veh=\$150

The road from Chipata to the South Luangwa National Park is bad....deviations and the more road works up to Chisengo and then bad gravel with terrible potholes to Mfuwe.....but funnily enough coming back 4 days later was a lot better...☺

It wont be long before the road up to Chisengo will be tarred completely. Croc valley camp is also run by 2 South Africans, Louis Visser and his lady friend Liezel. The camp is on the Luangwa river, and offers full lodging with a very good bar, restaurant and swimming pool and a lovely view on the SLNP. You have to keep a good lookout for the elephants and other animals that occasionally walk through the camp.

Again we met Geoff and Nina in the Landrover...

Electricity and drinking water is available, but with a lot of power cuts the reservoir sometimes do run dry..

As usual we had drinks at the bar, ate something and Louis took us for a sightseeing walk through the camp.

Beautiful sunset over the river and then it was off to bed.

The next morning we were up early to get into the SLNP. After paying the fees we decided to first take the tracks near the river and later do the rest. We saw plenty hippos, crocs, buffalo, elephants and birds, as well as the Thornicroft Giraffe which is only to be found in SLNP. We had a bit of an altercation with an elephant that did not want to let me pass, so I had to reverse which resulted in some scratches on the Prado as well as two mud flaps gone....

We were back in the camp just after 14h00 as we had booked a night drive with Louis from 16h00 to 20h00 (\$40 p/p).

The night drive was a major success, saw inter alia 3 leopards ...luckily we had a very strong spotlight and with ISO set at max I could take about 80 photos... ☺

Back at the camp, after a nice shower, it was late dinner again at the bar...this was now getting heavy work...all this eating and drinking...☺

The next day we would go into the SLNP at 13h00 until evening in order that we can do the last day in the park an early morning until 13h00. Small

problem when we woke up...the Prado would not unlock and looking inside I could see that the battery monitor did not even show one red light..... Open the door with the key...and luckily no alarm because....the negative battery clamp had slipped off the battery terminal. Tightened it and all was well again...

We entered the park again at 13h00 and saw a lot more animals than the day before. As I went through a ditch I saw a leopard lying in the shade. He picked up his head and looked at us and after a while he moved on in the ditch. Unfortunately I could not follow him as you are only allowed to stay on the existing roads and tracks.

This evening we had a braai next to the Luangwa river.

The next day was our last in the park. We entered early morning, drove around and again lots of animals and birds. This really is a wonderful park and I would like to visit the SLNP again. Next time I would want to enter from the Great North road side, I believe the roads on the north side is quite a challenge....

During the night I heard a buffalo as well as lions roar, and we knew somewhere in the park was a kill. Luckily another visitor stopped us and told us where the kill was, and we saw quite a few lions feasting on the Buffalo carcass. Just as my luck would have it they were in high grass and it was quite a challenge to get good pictures.

The afternoon we spent some time chatting to the folks at the bar about the good time we had at the SLNP. I can really recommend Croc valley Camp if you would want to come to the SLNP and not stay inside the park.

Croc Valley Camp, SLNP



Sunrise on the Luangwa river



The elephant that had me in a corner...on the bank of the river...I could only reverse..



Crocodile



Hamerkop



Puku



Leopard, SLNP



Sunrise on the Luangwa river



Croc Valley Bar and restaurant



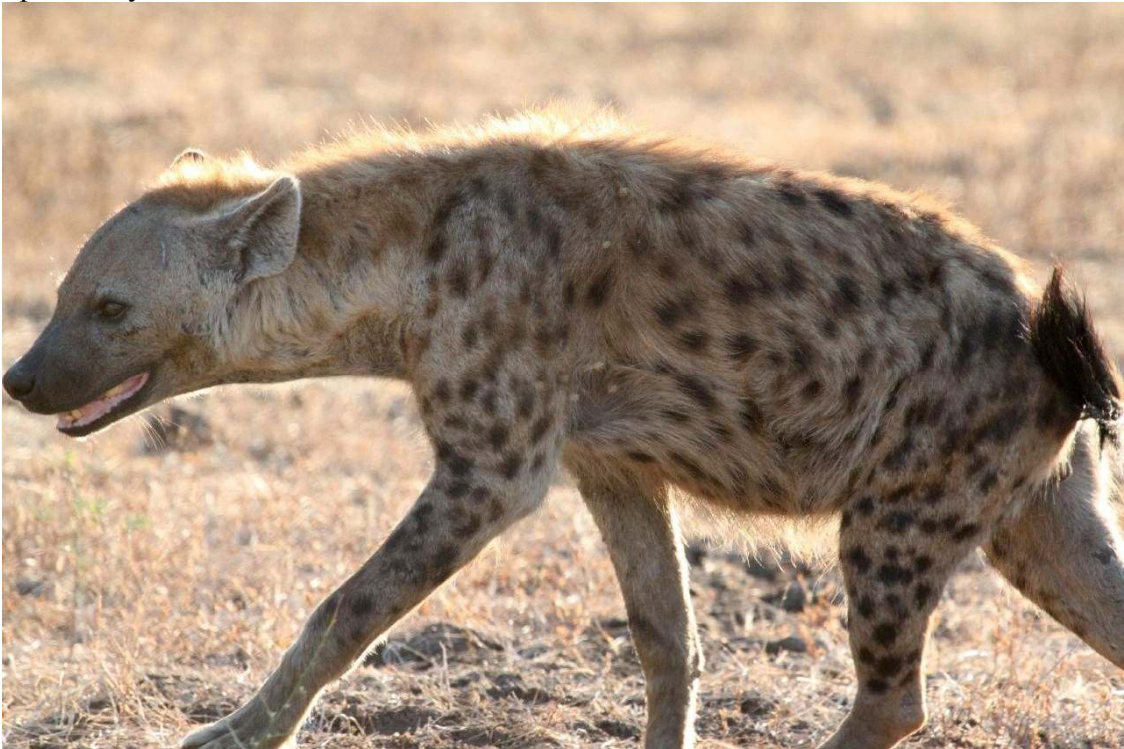
Leopard



Thornicroft Giraffe



Spotted Hyaena



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Impala



Croc Valley Campsign



Day 18, 15 June 2011

SLNP to Mama Rula's, Chipata, S13.58263 E32.61000, 140 km.

Accommodation: 1 x \$7pppn = \$14

Now it was back on the same bad road again towards Chipata and at 12h30 we booked in at Mama Rula's again....for the steak and peanuts... ☺ We then went to buy some groceries etc at the Spar as well as Shoprite, but although both had previously confirmed on email that soda water and tonic was available, it really was a problem to get hold of. Later during the trip I switched from whisky to brandy as coke was readily available. I also wanted only local beer in all the countries that I visit, but it was a problem getting Mosi in cans. Bottles become a problem when you travel.

It was the night of the lunar eclipse and everybody was out on the grass with their cameras.

We had heard from people at Croc Valley camp that there was a fuel shortage in Malawi, and when we spoke to the Overlanders who arrived from Malawi at Mama Rula's they also confirmed the fuel shortage. This was sad as we planned to go to Liwonde Nat Park first and then north along the shores of Lake Malawi. So we decided that we will have to cut out the LNP and maybe Cape McClear as well. If the situation was really serious we will just have to drive straight north.

We will assess the petrol situation at Lilongwe.

Days 19-21, 16-18 June 2011

Leaving Zambia at Chipata to The Steps at Senga Bay, Malawi S13.71600 E34.62839, 272 km. 3 x \$7ppn =\$42

Today we had to do another border-crossing....and I am no friend of this...

We first went to the State Insurance Corporation to buy the Comesa for Malawi as well as Tanzania for 2 months, price 145000ZkW.

We also exchanged \$100 on the street for Mkwachas, the rate was not bad at all but you have to watch those hands handing you the money....they are sharp!...be warned...

We left Chipata for the border, and to my surprise we were in Malawi an hour later!

My first impression of the Malawian people is that they are not as friendly as the Zambian people...maybe because of the fact that they are a lot poorer than their neighbours.

Take note that the speed limit in Malawi is 80km/h, and in towns 50km/h.

When we reached the first garage at Lilongwe I saw a tanker on the forecourt and the attendant told me that they had just received petrol but we have to wait a while. I believe they first had to pay for the fuel before they could start selling and while we waited the queue just grew....

The attendant confirmed the fact that Malawi had a fuel crisis, but petrol was more readily available than diesel. The price of petrol was 290MkW(R14,50) from the south to the north of Malawi.

After waiting about an hour we could fill up with petrol and be on our way, and we decided that we will fill up at every fuel station we can get petrol.

At Salima we filled up again and proceeded to Cool Runnings at Senga Bay. We noticed on the T4A map that The Steps was just 4km away so we decided to go and have a look there first.

What a lovely place and we decided to stay here for 4 nights. We did not know beforehand what happens at The Steps on a weekend..... ☺

We met some South-Africans in the camp that left the next day but said that they had spent quite a nice time here. The setting was just beautiful...my first encounter with Lake Malawi...and I just loved it! There were plenty birds in the trees, we took a few pictures and then without exception we visited the bar for the local beer...Kuche Kuche...and it was 500ml bottles... ☺

Then a shower and we were off to bed. The ablutions are quite good, drinking water and a few electricity points as well. The Livingstonia hotel with full lodging is within walking distance.

Next day was Friday and we just relaxed, strolled around, took photos, swam in the lake and just enjoyed Malawi.

Then it was Friday eveningand suddenly the place came alive...the locals came for a chat and a dop at the bar! Oh well, grin and bear it, it is their country and they can do what they like.....

Then it was Saturday!!...The locals arrived in buses, taxis and cars....to party!. And every vehicle brings his own amplifier and speakers...and then play his own music too...a cacophony of sound.....they eat, drink and dance...but I must admit we did not see many drunk people, nor did they worry us at all....it felt as if we were completely ignored as if we were not there...☺

They even had a fashion show.....

Like I said before...it is their country and we are only visitors...so grin and bear it...

So future visitors to The Steps just be warned.....it is a very nice camp on the beach with good facilities....but do not camp there over a weekend... ☺

As nighttime fell most of the day-visitors left, except some at the bar. During the night the weather changed and the next morning it was quite unpleasant with a strong wind blowing so we decided to cut our visit short here and move on to Cool Runnings which was a lot more sheltered.

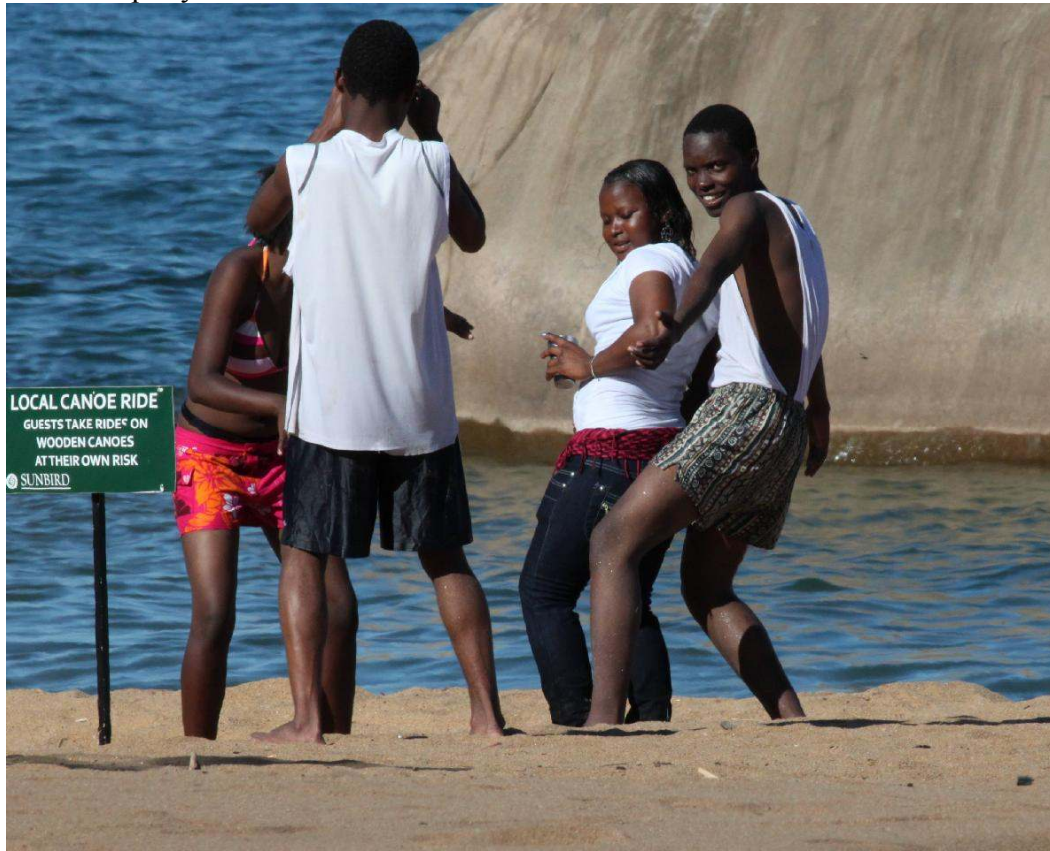
Sunrise at The Steps, Senga Bay



The Steps campsite, Senga Bay



Weekend party



The Bar



The Steps



Day 22, 19 June 2011

The Steps to Cool Runnings, Senga Bay, S13.73065 E34.61924, 4 km.

Accommodation: 1 x \$5pppn = \$10

We said goodbye to The Steps and drove 4km to Cool Runnings. Very nice sheltered and no day visitors allowed.....so quiet weekends.....

The camp do not have a sea view, but very good view from the bar.... ☺

We spent a nice quiet Father's Day and had a very good seafood meal the evening. The ablutions are ok, good bar and restaurant and lodging also available.

Cool Runnings campsite



Relaxing at Cool Runnings



Tropical boubou



To be continued.....