



## 2. NAMIBIA

(5 to 9 & 16 to 20 December 2010)

### 2.1. A Beguiling Portal (Linda; Namibia; December 2010)

Northern Namibia stands in juxtaposition to the sandy south. It's been drenched with rain and is a cloak of rich greens.

Just look at that beguiling gateway to Africa!

We are flanked by wall-to-wall sturdy green bush hiding Africa's treasure trove of animals. Ancient ant-heaps stand like sentries along the side of the road. They have unearthed the red soil into tall skinny stacks and are straining their necks, like giraffes, over the tree tops.

Swallows swirl around behind Harry all the while catching insects. They dip, glide, dive and power themselves over me. Just because they can!

It's mesmerizing. It's promising. But it's not really convincing.

It's that touristy 'safari' face of Africa. You only have to scratch a little below the surface to find the other side with its real resilient 'big 5'; the nguni cow, the goat, the pig, the dog and the chicken. It endears.

But it feels good to be fooled, to be invited on safari by Africa. To be drawn in like a sailor by a mermaid to an island.

And just beyond, this beguiling gate, stand Elsebie and Michnus. It's an electric reunion. The next day we head off to Angola to the other side of that beguiling portal .....



## 2.2. Border Posts and Other Trivia (Harry; Namibia; December 2010)

### Of war and things:

We have been now the road for a few days now and are nearing the Namibian border.

Namibia (for those folk outside of SA) used to be a South African protectorate named South West Africa. This was back in the days of apartheid. As we approached I wondered about the futility of the conflicting “isms” of the time- capitalism and the west vs. socialism /communism all vying clandestinely for a foothold on the continent, to further their self serving agendas.

And the pawns in between. I myself was one of them. In the late 70's SA had a military conscription law that ensured that as soon as one was 18 years old one became legally/morally (?) bound to serve your country in the military for 2 years. If you refused the options were pretty limited and generally amounted to imprisonment or self imposed exile to a country that was willing to accept you.

What is a teenager at that time expected to know or be able to offer at that point in time anyway?

SA supposedly represented “capitalism” and all its values (albeit for a small minority) and it was “our duty” to defend this, rifle in hand and not too much in terms of understanding or genuine commitment for a bewildering cause.

To the north always Angola and the “enemy”, SWAPO, MPLA, FNLA- liberation forces, backed by the USSR and its satellites. The so called “rooi gevaar” (red danger). My mind wondered to the friends that lost their lives in this conflict and to those folk in Namibia and Angola that we would soon be visiting the very folk that we were trained to kill. After all they were not human, so they said...

As the miles rolled by for some reason I could not get this rollercoaster of thoughts and trepidation in meeting these folk out of my mind.

The meeting is inevitable. The consequences are unpredictable. Hopefully in a future posting there will be some peace on this front.

### Road Kill:

One is soon jolted back into reality by another form of carnage the wildlife that aimlessly runs out in front of you with little or no warning. We call this road kill and measure it in terms how many sittings it would take to eat it.

Two sittings or less and the potential severity is manageable. Three or more sittings and one has problems.

### A typical road menu:

**Entree:** Guinea fowls, chickens, snakes in all sizes and colours, dogs, small pigs, birds.

**Main course:** goats, donkeys, cows, bush pigs, bigger birds of prey.

Thankfully to-date the above have all been near misses and remain in the bush and not on our dinner plates.

### Border posts:

We crossed into Namibia with little hassle. The border officials seemed more interested in reading their magazines with anecdotal life enriching articles such as “is your job killing you” and “how to look good this summer”. Neither of these I thought had any bearing in the middle of nowhere; Aruimsvlei @ 40C. At least they had air-conditioners!

As we progressed down the dusty Namibian roads it felt like an unholy alliance between man and nature with nature in the main winning the battle. Dry and unforgiving landscapes that stretch as far as the eye can see, one solitary straight arthritic rail line that I am sure would snap at the slightest induced bend. This complemented by an equally straight gravel road. At least one has a bird's eye view of any impending road kill.

Every now and then nature would let you know who was in charge here.

Countless dust devils (mini cyclones) would pick up what ever was in their path and deposit it elsewhere; not that it mattered.

Burnt out trees still clinging to life regardless. Evidence of mankind and animals surrendering to this harsh environment.



Still clinging to life ...



Plastic flowers made sense. Nothing else would survive.

The list goes on as did Petula Clarks' melody “Downtown” in my helmet jolting my senses back to some sort of familiar reality.

“The lights are much brighter here. You can forget all your troubles and forget all your cares”. Surely not here I thought.

By the time we reached our first stopover for the night I had changed my mind.

The lights ARE much brighter here. And you CAN forget all your troubles.

Downtown Southern Namibia.