

TRIP REPORT – RICHTERSVELD & SOUTHERN NAMIBIA – JUNE/JULY 2011

Day 1

The intention was to camp in Kammieskroon, but heavy rain reduced our speed to around 30km/h at times. By 16h00 we were in Van Rhynsdorp, the Garmin indicated there was a self catering place and not liking setting up camp in the rain nor the dark, we decided to go find out what the 'Vanrhynsdorp Self-cater' had to offer. For R460 we got a fully equipped house capable of accommodating 4 people. Included an en suite bedroom and TV. (Tel 072 453 6766 Mobile)
We were slightly behind schedule, but dry and warm.

Day 2

Port Nolloth – McDougalls's Bay (R107 Tel 027 851 1110)

After stopping in Springbok to refuel and do some last minute retail therapy we set off for a part of the world we'd never been to.

The weather cleared as we came down the escarpment and it turned out to be a glorious winter's day. McDougall's has got a fantastic setting – we camped about 15m from the high water mark. Certainly closest I've ever camped to the sea (note this is different to sleeping close the sea on the beach). Even beats camping at Tiwi Beach in Kenya, where you are also right on the beach.



1 McDougall's Bay -our campsite taken from high water mark

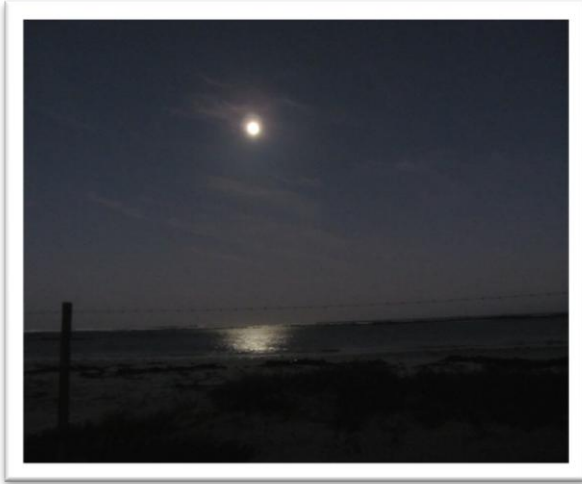
The facilities are tired, but clean. We were the only campers and it cost R107 plus R20 for your ablution key deposit, which was refunded when we left.

Day 3

Alexander Bay – Brandkaros (R182.40 R91.20pp Tel 027 831 1445)

We were back on schedule and after doing a quick tour of Port Nolloth, which allowed time for our tent to dry after heavy overnight dew we set off for Alexander Bay.

However, the sunrise – or rather the moon-setting was spectacular. This is what greeted when we got up the third day



2 Moon setting - McDougall's Bay

Alexander Bay looks pretty run-down. There is a road marked 'Rivier Monding' which takes you to the beach about 2 km from the river mouth. I saw tracks through the dunes, so it's clear that vehicles do drive to get closer to the river mouth. I was not in the mood to unhitch my trailer, reduce my tyre pressure and drive the 4km's to see a muddy river disgorging its brown contents into the blue ocean.

Brandkaros is some 30km from Alex Bay. The facilities are a bit run-down, but clean. Hot water is available at all times as is electricity. Cost was R182.40 (R91.20p/p). Weird pricing, but true. We set up camp on the grassed area closest to the office. There is another nice grassed area further from the office, near the bungalows. Thankfully we did not choose this as it is illuminated by a concentration camp spec spotlight that makes the sun look dull. The lady running the camp, it also has self-catering chalets, Aneline du Toit, is most helpful. There is firewood for sale

Days 4-6

Kokerboomkloof Richtersveld NP (R153/d plus park fees)

We traveled via the Helskloof Gate to the park reception at Sendelingsdrift.

This was where we'd intended crossing into Namibia after our 6 days in the RNP. However the pont was not operating due to the high water level in the river. While this was receding, there was no guarantee that we'd be able to use this route into Nam.

At any rate we set off for our camp site having been told that some of the route has steep sections and sharp bends and that it would take about 5 hours to cover the 70 odd km's.

It took about 4.5 hours. Some of the sections – Akkedis Pass and the 9.1 km Route 14 required high concentration and slow, deliberate speed. Other than for a very steep section descending into the junction with Route 15 I was in high range. Some sections of the tracks are very badly corrugated. One bit of evidence of this is that the single tracks have in places become multi lane tracks as each driver seeks some relief from the bone-jarring ride.

Arriving at the campsite we were greeted by absolute solitude – and stunning beauty. There are four designated sites (although the NPP info says there are eight – looks like there is provision for two sets of campers at each site). Each of the four sites has a small, neatly constructed ablution facility with a flushing toilet, basin, scullery and

shower cubicle. However, the park info says there is no water, so finding flushing toilets was a bit disconcerting. I was expecting pit latrines. More about this later.

Finding a reasonably level area to set up camp was quite a challenge, but we settled on campsite 3 as it afforded some protection from the wind and good access to sun for our solar panel.



3. Kokerboomkloof Campsite RNP

We were exceedingly fortunate in having chosen this site, as we discovered the next day that it was the only one that had water – ie you could flush the toilet. It looks like the water is brought up from the river as there is a water trailer parked near one of the ablutions. This water is then fed into an underground tank and pumped, using a solar system into a header tank – see grey object on left side of picture above.

There are no taps in the scullery or shower – so it is true that there is no water. The water in the toilet was muddy, so looks like it gets pumped directly from the river into the trailer and then into u-ground tank.

We had 80 litres of water – 40 in the trailer tank plus 2x20 containers. We used about 30l in the three days we were there and this included me taking a full shower (3.5 l) and my wife taking a bucket bath – she did not own up as to how much water she used for this.

Oral intake was restricted and we resorted to beer, wine and the odd G&T as part of our ongoing contribution to water conservation.

Are there quiver trees – yes, but not in the numbers I envisaged. However, the plant life in the area is abundant in terms of its diversity, both around the campsite, but in the park in general. A short walk into the veld and you come across a variety of plants, all very different. My botanical knowledge is very limited, but this experience has stimulated me to find out more. So I've now got the book, which I can add to the one on trees and birds – I should be pretty busy for a while!

There had been recent rains in the Richtersveld and it was green with a profusion of flowers varying in colour from white, yellow, blue, mauve, red, violet and a number of shades in between.



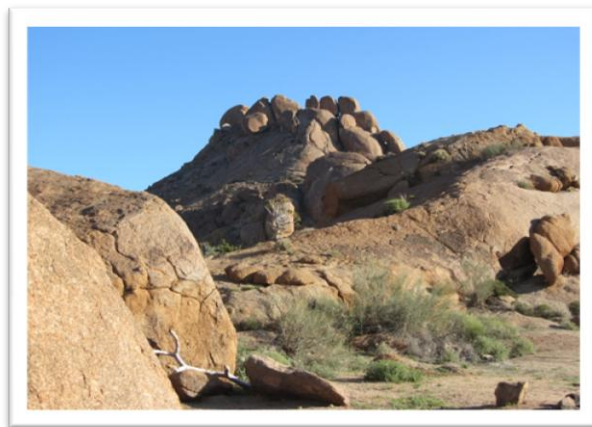
4 Flowers of Richtersveld

The nights are a riot of stars – those of us who live in urban areas - simply have no conception of what is above us at night.

And then there was the incredible rock formations – the igneous granite rocks that have been weathered over the millennia to create this incredible landscape (no, geology and astrology is not on the bucket list - yet).



5 Granite rocks.



6 Rock formations at Kokerboomkloof

In the three days we were camped at Kbk we saw two cars – day trippers. We were looking for solitude and our wish came true!

Days 7&8

De Hoop – Richtersveld NP

The 52km to De Hoop took just over 2.5 hrs, and other than the last approx 2km there was nothing untoward along the route.

De Hoop is on the banks of the Orange(Gariep) River and has two ablution blocks with cold showers and running water – not suitable for drinking forcing us to stick to the bwgt regimen.

Nothing special about the site. There were three other campers but more than enough space not to get in each other's way.

The park staff arrived on both days to clean the ablutions; refill the water tanks and collected our refuse.

Day 9

Namuskluft – Rosh Pina – Namibia (70p/p)

As we'd been informed by the park staff the pont would not be open and we were faced with the prospect of an additional 400km trip to get into Namibia, we decided to leave a day earlier and headed back to Sendelingsdrift over the Akkedis pass.

At the park HQ, the manager was very helpful and made a number of calls to see whether we could transit to Rosh Pina via Oranjemund – a permit is normally required. He could not get a definitive answer, but said he'd been told that tourist had been granted permission to drive through the area between Oranjemund and Rosh Pina.

So off we went – it had been raining steadily since early that day – through at times mud pools to the border near Alex Bay.

No problem on the SA side. ON the Nam side we were told to go speak to the security officials at the entrance to Oranjemund. A few phone calls, the production of our passports, a briefing on the do's and don't's and we were on our way to Rosh Pina. You clear through a security gate about 80km from Oranjemund, the road is generally very good, but because of the rain was very muddy, and at times treacherous. We passed many white and black crosses along the way – white=vehicle lost; black=life lost. So it is really in your face.

We arrived in Rosh Pina, my wife went and got her retail therapy done at the very well stocked Spar shop, we got our vehicle 'demudded' at the Engen s/stn and then headed for the Namuskluft campsite some 16km out of town.

A neat campsite with a stunning setting - contact Dawie kluft@iway.na

There is also a 4x4 trail.

Very soon Hendrik had the donkey going, and we were tucking into some of the good red juice from the Fairest Cape – it was cold and wet, but very grateful that we only had to drive an additional 160km and not 400 to get where we'd got to.



7 Trailer before 'demudding'

Days 10 & 11

Luderitz – Shark Island (R200/d)

Arrived in Luderitz - surprise, surprise – it was windy. A brisk southerly caused us to debate camping or B&B. Settled on the former, found a reasonably protected site, set up – with some difficulty, while others came and departed. A nice hot shower a good meal at a great little pub – The Barrell – and we were ready to take on the elements.

Turned out that the wind had abated and we woke to a magnificent clear wind-free day.

Got some laundry done at Joyces (behind the OK Grocer) and went to do the tourist thing. Kolmanskop, the drive to Diaz Point where there is a coffee shop that serves a mean toasted sandwich and cold Tafel (there are also camping facilities), ended with a drive through town to take in the German architecture and were off to Aus.

Must say Luderitz has a lot to offer and it is on my 'visit-again' list.

Some images below



8 Architect's residence Kolmanskop



9 Diaz Point



10 Luderitz

Day 12

Aus – Namib Garage (Tel +264 63 258 029 – namibaus@mweb.com.na)

Left Luderitz late afternoon on Day 11 and checked into Namib Garage camping site.

Unpretentious and rather noisy, but ablutions are clean – although bedeviled by intermittent water supply – and campsite is neat.

Eagles Nest at Klein Aus Vista is a much better site, although no electricity, but it was fully booked. We were now into Cape school holidays.

The wild horses were something to behold – estimate the herd to be about 120. There is some interesting history around Aus about the 1914-18 war. The war graves – Commonwealth Cemetery – left me with a burning desire to find out more about these events. My history at school consisted of about 5 years of repeated indoctrination about the Great Trek and never ventured into other world changing events.

So something else goes onto the list of knowledge expansion.



11 Feral horses near Aus



12 Commonwealth War Cemetery

Days 13 & 14

Lovedale Farm – Helmeringhausen (Louisa Campbell Tel +264 63 83031 lovedale@iway.na www.lovedale.iway.na)

What a delightful place! About 125km from Aus along the C13, turning left 4 km from Helmeringhausen onto the C27 and then about 16km to the farm turn-off.

Malcolm Campbell was the Young Farmer of the Year in Namibia in 2006 – it is very evident why as this is a really well run farm with hands-on management by Malcolm.

The accommodation side is equally well managed. Our campsite, Barn Owl, was nothing short of superb – very private, but you can see all the farm activities, with your own ablution and scullery facilities. Cost R80/d for campsite plus R35pp/pd – Total for 2 people R150/d).

Their info says electricity is available from 18h00-10h00. While we were there it was available all the time.

Days 15 & 16

Hobas – Fish River Canyon

We stopped in Helmeringhausen for coffee and apple crumble (it was excellent!) .

It's approx 230km to Hobas from Helmeringhausen on mainly dirt roads – all in a generally good condition.

The campsite – Namibia Wildlife Resorts operated – is located in a dry river bed, spacious with plenty of shade. The Ablutions are clean. Generally well run – bins are emptied regularly (to discourage baboons foraging) electricity is available in mornings and evenings – generator driven. Cost R200/d.

I had not visited the canyon for over 20 years. It is spectacular!

We took the drive along the canyon – designated as a 4x4 route – and were greeted by another riot of floral colours. The recent rains had resulted in a spectacular display of yellow and blue flowers.



13 The flowers of the Fish River Canyon



14 The Canyon

Days 17-19

Ai Ais – NWR – R250/d R125pp

Big mistake.

It was like a busy street bazaar. But it was school holidays in SA and everyone who has one form of camping equipment was there – there could not have been many people left in SA.

Not hurrying back to Ai Ais.



15. The parking lot

Day 20

Home.