

BUKSIE, ESMIA AND JOHAN SNYMAN'S DAMARALAND TRIP : 4 to 13 AUGUST 2017

BACKGROUND

We were invited to accompany friends from Argentina, and their family, on their holiday to Namibia. Due to time constraints we would only be able to join them for the Damaraland part of their trip.

Although I am an old hand at overlanding (more than 1m km since 1994), Esmia is very new to this and, at 4 months of age, Buksie takes everything in his stride. However, he has no comprehension of his diminutive size (780mm from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail, and 4.5kg) and has the heart of a lion. We would therefore have to protect him from himself To prepare for this trip we undertook a few weekend excursions to the Messum Crater, Valley of Desolation and the Spitzkoppe, but this would be the first trip where they would be on the road for more than 3 days.

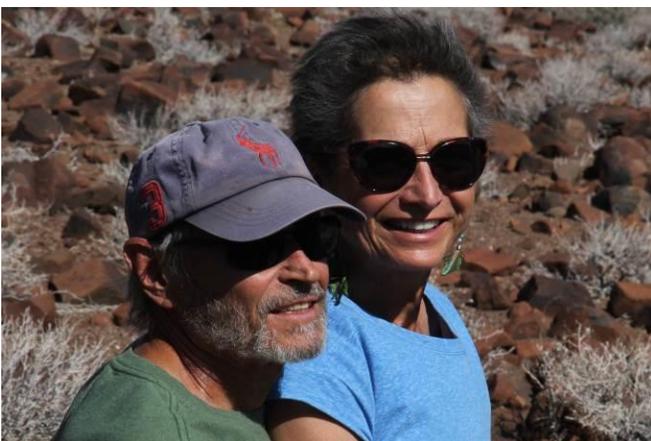
PARTICIPANTS

The participants on the tour were the following :

Eliane Tchantz and Max Stocker, from Argentina, in a rented Toyota Land Cruiser.



Marielle and Hans (Max's brother) Stocker, from the USA, in a rented Toyota Land Cruiser.



Terra, Mark (Hans's son), Jake, Eric and Luke Stocker, from the USA, in a rented Toyota Land Cruiser.



Buksie, Esmia and I in our Isuzu.



STATISTICS OF THE PARTICIPATING VEHICLES

Eliane and Max's Toyota Land Cruiser V8 Diesel Double Cab

Rented from Savannah Car Hire in Windhoek, with 59 000km on it's odometer at the onset of the trip.

Fully equipped Alu-Cab camper unit fitted onto load bay

ARB bull bar

Warn 10 000lb winch

Maxxis Bighorn 764 MT tyres on the front axle and Nankang Mudstar MT tyres on the rear axle

Kenwood VHF radio (one of my radio's) with magnetic base antenna

Garmin Nüvi 1450 GPS

Marielle and Hans's Toyota Land Cruiser V8 Diesel Double Cab

Rented from Savannah Car Hire in Windhoek, with 38 000km on it's odometer at the onset of the trip.

Fully equipped Alu-Cab camper unit fitted onto load bay

ARB bull bar

Warn 9 000lb winch

General Grabber MT tyres

Kenwood VHF radio (one of my radio's) with magnetic base antenna

Terra and Mark's Toyota Land Cruiser V8 Diesel Double Cab

Rented from Savannah Car Hire in Windhoek, with 15 000km on it's odometer at the onset of the trip.

Oryx canopy

Outback drawer system

2 x Rooftop tents

Bundu bull bar

Warn 10 000lb winch

Dunlop Grandtrek AT1 tyres

Kenwood VHF radio (one of my radio's) with magnetic base antenna

Our Isuzu KB300 Extended Cab :

2016 model with 62201km on its odometer at the onset of the trip.

Goodyear Wrangler AT/SA tyres

Stofpad rocksliders

Outback aluminium canopy

Outback Penthouse rooftop tent

Eezy Awn side awning

60 ℓ Auxiliary diesel tank

40 ℓ Water tank

National Luna Dual battery system

52 ℓ National Luna Weekender fridge/freezer

17 ℓ Engel fridge/freezer

Kenwood VHF radio

Garmin Nüvi 500 GPS

PREPARATIONS

Preparation is the key to the success of a trip of this nature.

On a personal level you have to be prepared to endure long hours within the confines of your vehicle and you need to be at peace with your travelling companions and especially the other person(s) travelling in your vehicle.

As we would be travelling in a fairly remote area, I spent a considerable amount of time preparing my vehicle and our equipment for this trip. For the rental vehicles, you just had to trust the rental company

I carried a comprehensive set of tools, recovery equipment, some basic spare parts for my vehicle, and a 1st Aid kit with enough supplies to treat emergencies for a number of days, if needed.

We had to carry enough food and water as shops would be few and far in between. Fuel was not a problem as we would not need to travel more than 500km between reliable refuelling points.

LEGALITIES

We did not need any special documentation from CRAN for our radio's as all the vehicles would be using my VHF radio's and private Namibian frequency on this trip.

We would be crossing the veterinary control fence along the Otjitheka trail and no raw red meat or dairy products may be taken through it.

THE TOUR

Day 1 : Friday 4 August

We left Windhoek and travelled via the B1 and B2 to Swakopmund, where we stayed at the Secret Garden Guesthouse for the night. Buksie's portable bed was placed on top of the storage box behind my seat to enable him to see us both as well as outside through the windows. He was a happy chappie



Total distance for the day was 373km (all of it on tar) and our travelling time was 4¼ hours. (Moving time and average = 3h 59min and 93.6 km/h)

Day 2 : Saturday 5 August

We made an early start and travelled north along the coast, refuelled at Henties Bay, and then visited Cape Cross. From there we travelled via the Messum Crater and the old Brandberg West mine to the Ugab Rhino Camp.



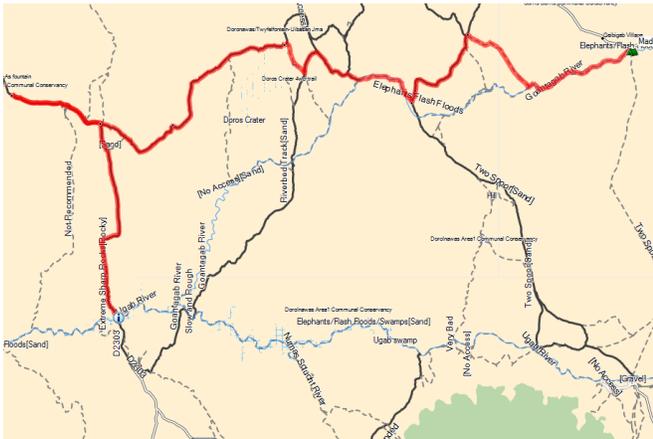




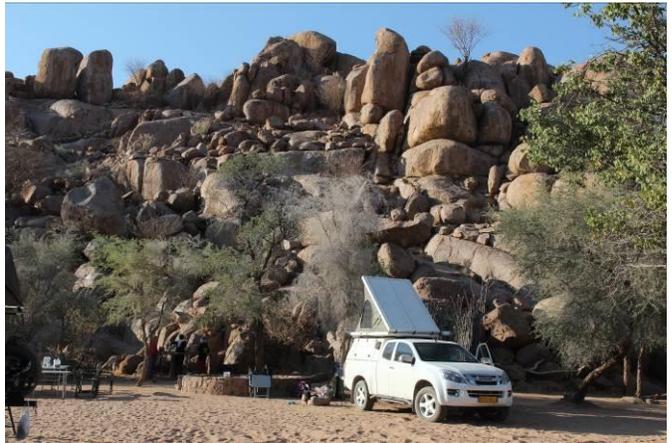
Total distance for the day was 263km (all of it on gravel and sand) and our travelling time was 8¼ hours. (Moving time and average = 5h 02min and 52.3 km/h)

Day 3 : Sunday 6 August

We made our way north to the Valley of Desolation and visited Klein Gai-As, some petrified trees and the Gai-As fountain. From there we made our way east past the Doros Crater and then travelled along a section of the Goantagab River. Near Sorris Sorris we found cairns of white stones all along the mountains slopes and signs of serious exploration work being done. According to the workers, they are mining for tin and it is sad to know that this place will now be spoilt for ever. From there we made our way to Madisa Camp.



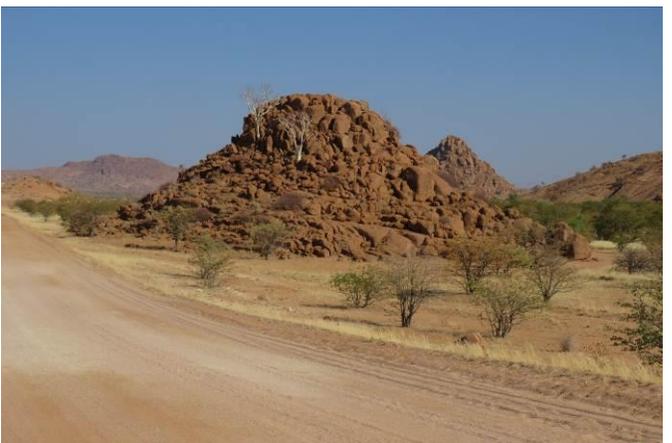
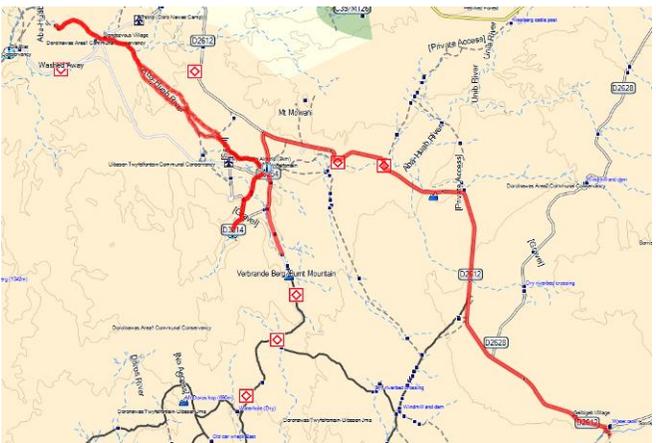


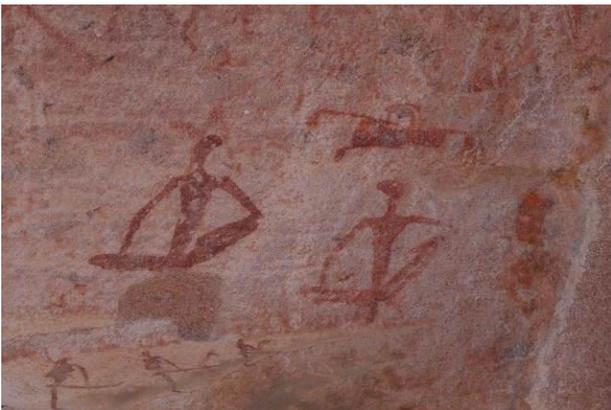


Total distance for the day was 134km (all of it on gravel and sand) and our travelling time was 8 hours. (Moving time and average = 5h 27min and 24.6 km/h)

Day 4 : Monday 7 August

We travelled along the D2612 and D3254 to Twyfelfontein. The condition of this two roads, as well as the others in the region, are the worst that I have seen for more than 10 years, and many motorists are now travelling next to the roads. We visited the rock engravings at Twyfelfontein and the Cultural Village of the Damara people near Aba Huab. We also explored the Aba Huab River. We slept at the Aba Huab Community Campsite and viewed a partial eclipse of the moon that night. Some elephants wandered around in the campsite that night and it was only with some effort that I restrained and calmed down a very excited Buksie.







Total distance for the day was 69km (all of it on sand and gravel) and our travelling time was 6¼ hours. (Moving time and average = 1h 29min and 46.5 km/h)

Day 5 : Tuesday 8 August

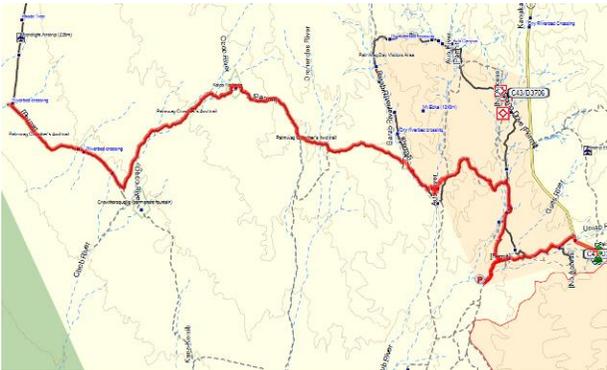
We explored the Aba Huab Riverbed a bit more before making our way to the Organ Pipes rock formation. From there we returned to the Aba Huab Riverbed and then made our way to the C39 which we followed to Bergsig, and then on the C43 to Palmwag. Once again the roads were in a terrible state, with motorists resorting to driving next to them. At Palmwag, Max's Land Cruiser suffered brake failure. The innovative personnel at the Palmwag workshop located a leaking brake line and repaired the pipe by welding it. That night an elephant walked around in the campsite and it was quite shocking to see the blatant disregard for their own safety displayed by some tourists. They even approached the elephant and touched it The elephant was at ease amongst the people, but the fact remains that it is a wild animal. If it should lose its temper and hurt someone, it will be branded as a problem animal and pay the ultimate price when it is shot. Once again, Buksie had to be restrained to prevent serious injury to the elephant !



Total distance for the day was 177km (all of it on sand and gravel) and our travelling time was 7½ hours.
(Moving time and average = 5h 40min and 31.2 km/h)

Day 6 : Wednesday 9 August

After visiting Van Zyl's Gat (dry at the moment) we headed west and north along the Crowther Trail, and slept alongside the track that night.



Total distance for the day was 103km (all of it on sand and gravel) and our travelling time was 7¼ hours. (Moving time and average = 5h 01min and 20.6 km/h)

Day 7 : Thursday 10 August

We headed north along the rest of the Crowther Trail until we reached the Hoanib River and then followed the river upstream until we turned north into the Obias River, which we followed to Signal Hill, where we set up camp. We saw a lot of game along the way and also elephants in the Hoanib River.

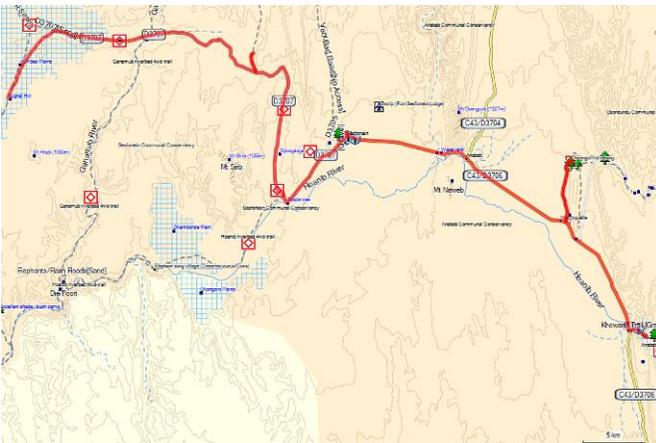




Total distance for the day was 103km (all of it on sand and gravel) and our travelling time was 6¼ hours. (Moving time and average = 4h 52min and 21.2 km/h)

Day 8 : Friday 11 August

We headed north over the Giribes Plains until we reached the D3707 where we turned east to Fort Sesfontein (no fuel) where we drank some cold drinks. From there we made our way along the C43 to the Warmquelle at Ongongo where we had our lunch stop and some fun in the pool. From there we travelled to the Khwarib Schlucht and the Community Rest Camp. Buksie was beside himself every time he encountered water.

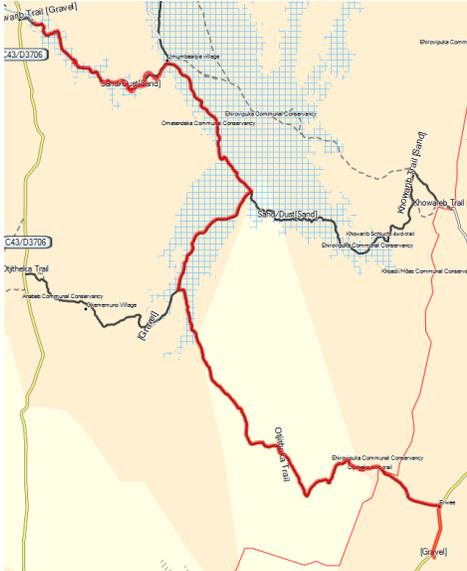




Total distance for the day was 103km (all of it on sand and gravel) and our travelling time was 8 hours. (Moving time and average = 4h 18min and 24.0 km/h)

Day 9 : Saturday 12 August

We followed the Hoanib River upstream through the Khowarib Schlucht and found swampy areas as well as areas with very thick dust. We turned south through Klein Serengeti, and then followed the Otjitheka trail to Erwee where we passed through the Veterinary control point. From there we travelled south on the C40 to our overnight stop at Hoda Camp.



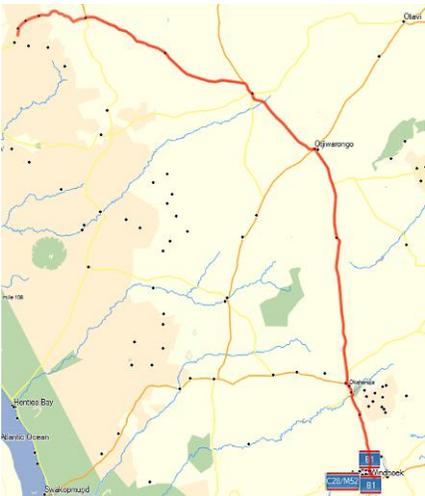




Total distance for the day was 111km (all of it on sand and gravel) and our travelling time was 9 hours. (Moving time and average = 6h 13min and 17.9 km/h)

Day 10 : Sunday 13 August

It was time to head for home We followed the C40 to Kamanjab, where we refuelled the vehicles and then had a farewell lunch at the Oppi Koppi Guesthouse. From here we headed home on the C40 to Outjo and the B1 to Windhoek, while the rest of the group headed north to Etosha.



Total distance for the day was 554km (70km on gravel and 484km on tar) and our travelling time was 8½ hours. (Moving time and average = 5h 39min and 98.1 km/h)

CONCLUSION

This was a great trip with my new travelling companions, 2 old friends and 9 brand new ones.

On this trip, we drove a total distance of 1990km in 10 days. Of this, 857km was on tar and the remaining 1133km on gravel and sand. The average fuel consumption of the Isuzu was 8km/l.

How did the vehicles do ?

No problems, except the broken brake line on the Toyota Land Cruiser. As the approach-, departure-, and rampover angles, as well as the ground clearance, of the Isuzu is a lot less than the Defenders I am accustomed to, the going was a bit slower in the very rocky areas. The packing system is also not as organised.

How did the tyres do ?

We had no punctures or any other tyre trouble. The Dunlops looked like new at the end of the trip. The General Grabbers suffered from minor chips and cuts. The Goodyear Wranglers suffered from a lot of small chips and cuts. The Maxxis Bighorns suffered from a lot of small chips and cuts. The Nankook Mudstar MT's suffered from severe breakages of the tread blocks and some had a rounded appearance and others had large chunks missing.



Dunlop Grandtrek AT1



General Grabber MT



Goodyear Wrangler AT/SA



Maxxis Bighorn 764 MT



Nankook Mudstar MT
