

Trip Report – Mabibi – KZN North Coast.

After reading hearing about other peoples visits to the area, and it being the middle of winter I decided I needed a beach getaway. My thinking was the North coast would be warm and it being winter the weather would be mild.

After consulting a few mates to see who would like to join, a booking was made via email and the dates were set, 17 to 20th August.

Day 1 – Durban to Mabibi

Friday the 17th turned out to be cold and wet, (so much for my ideas of mild weather) but 2 vehicles, myself in my Hilux and a good friend Ed and his wife in their GWM Hover were steadfast in our desire for a weekend getaway, even if it meant spending the entire weekend in our tents, sleeping and reading.

After filling the Hilux in Umhlanga, I headed for the Mvoti ultra city where I was meeting with Ed, and just after 10h00 we were on our way through some fairly heavy rain. It rained in patches all the way up the coast but we were in no rush and just pottered along.

After a quick top of the tanks just outside Hulhulwe, we headed up the R22 toward Mbazwana where we headed toward the Baya gate which is the Southern entrance to Costal forest reserve and Lake Sibaya arriving just before 14h00.



Then the fun started.

I had arrived at the gate a minute or two ahead of Ed, who had stopped so Debbie could take some photographs. So, I filled in the register and pulled off the track to wait for them. Interestingly and as an aside, the last people to enter the forest reserve before us were 2 days before us. A busy gate 😊.

Ed arrived, we had a quick chat and I got into my vehicle to continue the journey. Checking my mirrors, I see Debbie waving frantically, beckoning me to come back. The

Hover was unhappy and was overheating. Considering the track ahead of us, I began to think this would be a long afternoon.

I suggested we let the vehicle cool a little before continuing to an area where we could stop for lunch about 600m past the gate. There we could let the Hover cool right down while we ate.

The idea was adopted with no dissenters and shortly after some soft drinks at the gate to let the Hover cool, we travelled to the shore of Lake Sibaya where we had some cheese, biscuits, pate and grapes accompanied by a well deserved Gin and Tonic. Despite the somewhat ominous sky and a cool wind, the scenery was great and we settled in for a while.



After lunch, we continued with the 14Km toward Mabibi. The track conditions were fun. The sand was fairly thick and soft but it appears Ezemvelo KZN wildlife have been doing some fairly aggressive track maintenance. The last time I visited the area as a day tripper, the track was very narrow with vegetation brushing long the sides of the vehicle. It has been considerably and aggressively widened. No bush rash on my vehicle then 😊



The Hover was not happy with the conditions and quickly overheated again. It appeared the aux fan which is an electrical unit is not switching on and the low speed high demand sand driving was taxing the cooling system. It overheated another 3 times on the way to Mabibi, each time requiring a brief stop on the side of the track to allow it to cool. We arrived at Mabibi at around 16h15 to find the office locked, but seeing we knew what site was ours, No. 9, we headed to the camp site and set up camp.



That evening was spent having a magic braai and some good red wine. Good times!

Day 2 – Mabibi

It rained fairly consistently during the night and Saturday dawned very damp, which resulted in a rather slow start to the day. The forecast was for it to be partly cloudy, so we were hopeful the weather would clear. Later that morning, we took a walk to the beach as the weather was clearing.

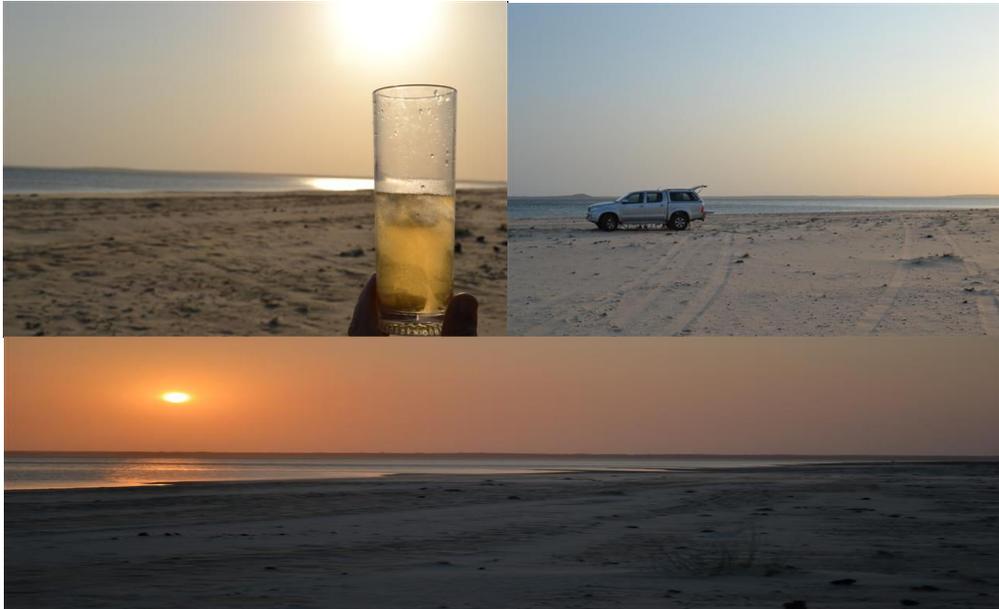
From the camp site to the beach, while not a hike, was too far to easily head back to pick up something you had forgotten. I also feel for those with small kids, because carrying them up and down the hundreds of stairs between the beach and the top of the dune would be pretty challenging for even the most energetic of parents.

The beach itself is lovely and the water was clear and I looked forward to doing some snorkelling.



I explored the rock pools and watched some local spearing fish for a while before heading back to the campsite for a late breakfast. We spent the day lounging around the camp site and walking along the beach.

That afternoon, we took a drive back to Lake Sibaya to watch the sun set over the lagoon and to have some well deserved sundowners. It appeared to be a popular idea as a few of the local upmarket lodge's vehicles buzzed by while we were there. What a great way to end the day.



That evening, Ed made a remarkably tasty supper which was a wors, tomato and potato dish. It must have been pretty good because while we were eating, we were visited by a large spotted genet that settled in and kept us company for a while.



Day 3 – Mabibi to Durban

Sunday dawned bright and beautiful. I was due to depart for Durban as I needed to be back in the office on Monday. Ed was supposed to stay but with the Hover miss behaving he decided to follow me as far as Hulhulwe where he would find accommodation in the Hulhulwe Imfolozi park.

I had planned a late departure so we went down to the beach for some snorkelling.





The water was refreshing the visibility was fairly good and a few hours were spent snorkelling around the rock pools. Late in the morning we headed back to camp, had a small snack and broke camp, leaving just before 13h00.

We drove out on the North side of Lake Sibaya as I had driven that route before and it was likely to be less challenging for the ailing Hover. For the first few Km, the track was thick-ish sand, but it firmed up and opened out and took us past some forestry areas toward the R22. Despite a few close calls, we were travelling fast enough for the air flow to keep the Hover from overheating.



We reached the R22 near Mseleni just before 14h30 and headed for Hulhulwe where we parted ways. I headed back to Durban and Ed and Debs managed to get accommodation in Hulhulwe at hillside camp.

While the weekend was shorter than I would have liked, it was still quite enjoyable and I think this is a place that I will visit again in the near future.