

LOGISTIC OF THE TRAVEL IN BOTSWANA AND NAMIBIA SINCE 10TH SEPTEMBER TO 12TH OCTOBER 2011

Logistic before travel

I book from internet site of British airways a ticket Paris Orly-Johannesbourg via London for a fee of around 900 euros. Good service except for the delay of the flight Paris-London. So I missed the flight London-Johannesbourg. BA pay me the hotel and the meals to expect one day. I take the flight London-Johannesbourg the friday 9th September and I arrive in Johannesburg the 10th september at 7h am.

At airport, I go to Hertz desk to take the car I have booked from internet site www.elocationdevoiture.fr for a fee of 460 euros. It's a Nissan micra with only 2000 km.

Detail of travel

I go directly to Botswana via Pioneer where I arrive around 3h pm. I pay 150 Pula for customs fees (around 17 euros). I arrive in Mokolodi nature reserve around 5h pm where I stay for the night in camping. There is only one other family. The sites are very big with individual braai, WC, and shower. The entrance and the night cost me 100 Pula. With my 2 wheels drive car, it's possible to drive all the gravel roads inside the park, excluded roads reserved to 4 X4. But it's enough to see many birds. In Gaborone, I visit Gaborone game reserve (50 Pula) where there are works. So it's not very interesting. All gravel roads are possible for 2 wheels drive car.

I visit Tsholofelo sewage ponds and Phakalane sewage lagoons where I see many birds and I arrive in Khama rhino sanctuary for the night. The cost for entrance and night is 160 Pula. The only possible track for my car is the road to camping. It's sandy but it's fine.

On the morning, I try a road to go to pan, but after 1 km, it's too sandy and my car is stunk. I go back by foot to the entrance where guard of the reserve help me.

So I decide to leave the sanctuary and go to Maun, a long way.

I put my tent in Audi camp (57 Pula), but I advise to stay in Island safari lodge, cheaper and where it's possible to find birds on the camping and on the bush around.

The Maun game reserve is closed due to floods. This year, the rivers (**water levels**) are very high and it's the same around Shakawe, where there are no wading birds and no Skimmer.

The day after, I take the road to Shakawe where I stay in Shakawe lodge (100 Pula). There is a new owner and no guide to do a boat tour to see birds. But I am enough lucky to see Pel's fishing Owl (1 adult and 1 juvenile) with the help of the woman owner.

From Shakawe, I go to Tsodillo hills. The gravel road is fine for 2 wheels drive car. The guide is mandatory to see the paintings. It's 50 Pula for 2 hours. The paintings are numerous and beautiful.

After 3 days in this area, I take the road to Nata where I stay in Nata lodge (62 Pula). I visit the Nata sanctuary (50 Pula) where there are many birds. All the tracks are accessible with my car.

In Kasane, I stay in 3 Tseebe river lodge (77 Pula) and book via Kalahari holydays tours (close to the golf) a boat tour for the next morning. The cost is 140 Pula, and 70 Pula of entrance fee in Chobe NP for 3 h between 9h30 and 12h30. It's better to book via a company like Kalahary holydays tours because they have their own boats, and small boats (max 10 people) where it's better to see animals. I book morning tour because I am most interesting by birds than to see elephants in the river. If you want to see elephants, it's very easy. You take the free tarred transit road in Chobe NP early on the morning (between 6h and 8h) or late afternoon (since 4h30 pm).

I leave Botswana after this trip for Namibia.

After paying the customs fees in Katima mulilo (200 namibian dollars, around 20 euros), I go to Kalizo lodge (85\$). The lodge is close to a Carmine Bee-eater nesting site. It's accessible with 4X4, or by foot (around 2 km from the lodge), or by boat tours, for a fee of 20\$. The boat tour cost 120\$ for 2h and half.

I did another boat tour (280\$ for 3h) in Kwando camp (100\$ for camping), but it's not very interesting (very few and shy birds).

Close to Mahango reserve, I stay in Nunda lodge which has very nice camping sites (100\$). In Mahango, the most interesting track to see animals (close to the river) is fine with my car. The waterhole on the other track is accessible by one side, but it's dry.

On the way to Etosha, I sleep in Roy's camp (90\$). Very nice with a waterhole and 2 foot tracks for observation of birds and a few mammals.

Etosha is magic but it's expensive, even in camping : fees 80\$ per day per person and 10\$ by car, and 200\$ by site in camping and 100\$ per person. But it's a great place for birds and mammals. In each camping, there is a waterhole with light all night. Halali and Okaukuejo are very interesting with Leopard, Lion, Rhinoceros, Elephant, Owl, Nightjar, gecko and others). Namutoni is very poor (1 Elephant in 2 nights). I am staying 3 nights in Namutoni, 3 nights in Halali and 1 night in Okaukuejo. I leave Etosha for Waterberg where I advise to stay in Waterberg Wilderness lodge (150\$ for entrance fees and camping ; be careful, there is only 11 sites). There are many foot tracks. It's possible to see Southern lesser Galago (Bushbaby) in the garden of lodge. The landscape is great at sunset.

In White lady lodge (90\$), it's possible to do excursions to see desert Elephants. I did the excursion to see the painting of the White lady (who is a man, a chaman). The mandatory guide (60\$ per people and 10\$ per car) knows flowers and birds too.

One of the beautiful place in Namibia is Spitzkoppe. The camping sites (60\$) are fantastic (in the wild). The rocks are most nice at sunset and sunrise. Great observations of birds and mammals difficult to see on other places.

In Erongo mountains, there are many birds. I stay in Omaruru rest camp which is noisy but it's a day of fest in Namibia. I find the next day a very wild camping, Erongo plateau camp ; the track is a little hard but it's possible with a 2 wheels drive car if you drive slowly.

In Walvis bay and Swakopmund, it's difficult to find nice camping. I have sleep in camping of Desert sky backpackers (100\$), nice but noisy, because it's close to main road. The coast is the only place where there is not blue sky for morning to evening. It's the Skelleston coast. It's interesting to go to Cape cross, where there is a very big colony of fur Seals (50\$). For birding, it's 2 weeks early and there is no great numbers of birds, but I find Damara Tern.

From Swakopmund, it's very nice and interesting to do Welswitschia drive (50\$, accessible with 2 wheels drive car). This track is very beautiful for landscape and for endemic flowers. I have seen on the way a very nice camping, Goanikonntes guest farm (50\$).

Another very beautiful site is Sossusvlei, even if it's very touristic. The gravel road which begin in Walvis bay cross 2 pass, mainly Gaub pass. In Sossusvlei, the entrance fee for the tarred road which give access to the 2 wheels drive car parking is 90\$. After, for the 4 or 5 last km, you can take the shuttle for (90\$ return), or you do it by foot. The camping fee is 125\$. On the evening, I climbed the dune 45 and on the morning, I have try GrandPa Dune. But it's very windy, and I stopped around 100m of the top, but the sighting is the same. I walk on the Deadvlei and around the GrandMa Dune. Around Sossusvlei, I drive on gravel road in Namib's desert, by Spreetshoogte pass and Remhoogte pass.

In Lüderitz, the weather is the same as in Walvis bay, smoke. On the road, in Garub, it's possible to see »wild horses » which are not very wild.

To go in Fish river canyon, I drive to Rosh Pinah, and after the gravel road towards Noordoewer. Just before Aussenkehr, I take the gravel road to the canyon. The camping fee is 100 \$ and the entrance fee to the canyon is 90\$. It's the 2nd largest canyon in the world. The landscape is great, mainly on sunset and sunrise. Many places are accessible with 2 wheels drive car. A gravel road of 14 km is accessible for 4X4, but I think it's possible with 2 wheels drive car if you drive very slowly because of the rocks. I made the 2 first km by car and after walk 1 km. I did not have enough time to do more. On my way back to Johannesburg, I visited 3 sites in South Africa that I knew from my 2 previous trips in SA : Augrabies national park (entrance fee 100R and camping fee 155R), Barspespan (entrance fee 40R and camping 100R) and Wolfhuiskraal farm (100R) around 100 km north of Johannesburg.

I leave Johannesburg without problem and arrive in France on Wednesday afternoon.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, it's possible to drive on gravel road with a 2 wheels drive car, but it's necessary to adapt your speed to the road and the car. So I drive at least 20 km/h slower than the authorized speed, and often slower to see animals and take pictures of them.

On the tarred roads, be careful to the speed, because there are many radars, mainly around villages and towns.

For camping, there is no safety problem . Sites are often very big and sanitary are clean.

For rental car, I think it's better to have a 2nd spare wheel, because on most of the cars, the spare wheel is a little wheel with which it is only possible to do around 100 km, and because on some areas, the distance between towns or petrol stations is around 200 km or 300 km. But during all my trip, I did around 13000 km with I think about 7000 km on gravel road and I did not have any problem with the tires.

In Botswana, it's not possible to go with a 2 wheels drive in big national parks (Central Kalahari, Chobe, Moremi). But even with this car, it's possible in Botswana and Namibia to see many birds (around 250 species) and mammals (more than 40 species). The number of species can be greater if you don't take pictures. On many places, I spent many time to take pictures.

I enjoyed this trip and plan to go again next year in southern Africa. I think I will rent a 4X4 to go to the main national parks in Botswana and visit Zambia.

Have a nice day

Jean-Marc