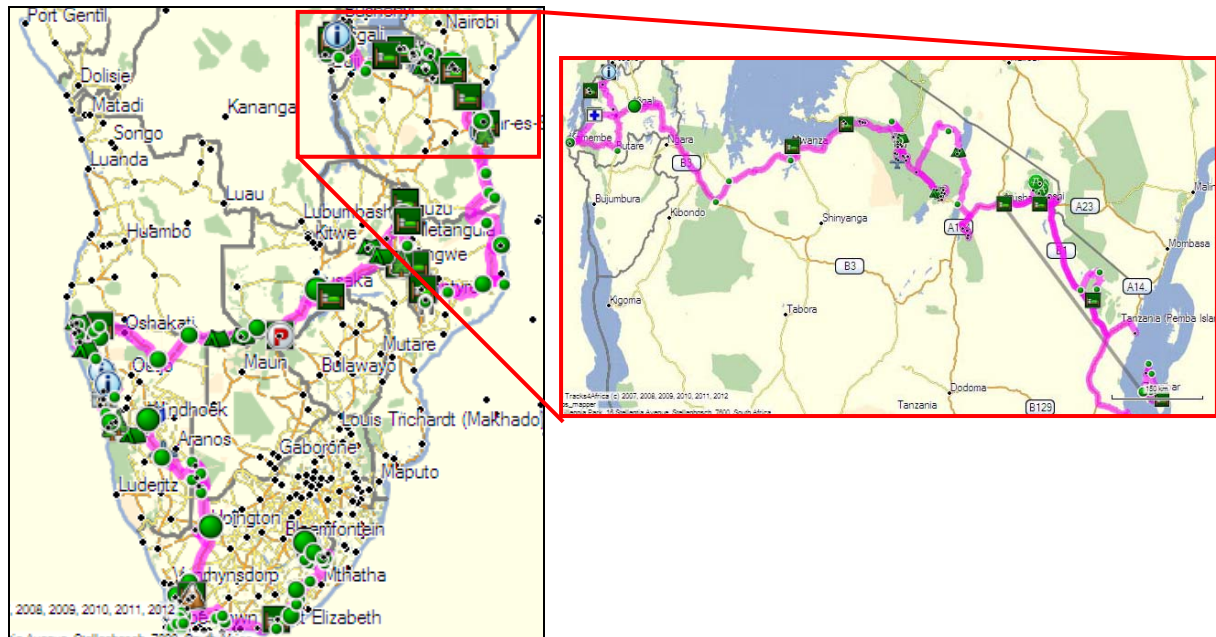
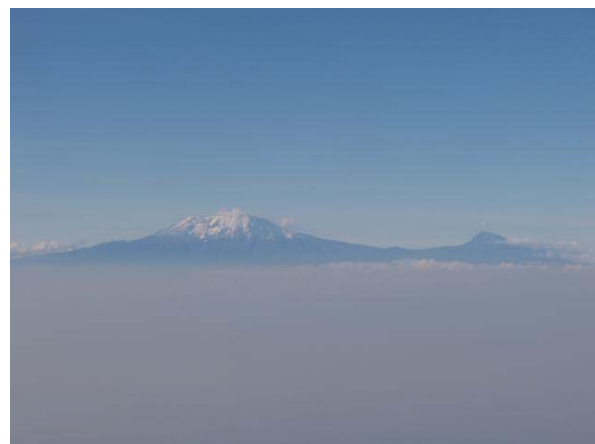


Dear All,

After mountains in Tanzania, this time we rather concentrate on beaches, beasts and as usual some hills. After our steep climb up to Kili, we had to recover from mountain sickness, high altitude and our tour operator's food.



Considering the world's political situation, our remaining time to travel and the money already spent for climbing Kili, the only decision was to go to Zanzibar (the Seychelles and the Maldives have to wait a little). So we took one of Precision Air's planes from Arusha and an hour later we were in Stonetown.



On the way we could admire our efforts from above, Kili was clearly visible and still very, very high.

We arrived in a completely different world, filled with plenty of American and European tourists; we even observed a few local people. We did not fully consider the beginning of the holiday season in Europe and got one of the last rooms in town.



Nevertheless we moved to a small restaurant at the beachfront having a few dead animals from the sea and some bottles of local beer. The next 2 days we had to discover the town, the small alleys, the old houses with their carved doors and their inhabitants. Most of the time we found our way back to the hotel, sometimes we just found ourselves on the other side of town.



During our visit we discovered that the whole economy of Stonetown seems to be based on an offer of all kind of paintings - mostly with the exactly same motif in slightly different colours and a demand created by people just visiting Zanzibar in order to exchange these paintings against an incredible number of greenish coloured banknotes. Another important source of income is obviously the production and sale of T-shirts. Definitely they must be very special – even the most fancy and exclusive boutique on New York's 5th Avenue would not dare to ask such prizes.



To change from urban life, we rented a car (Suzuki Harakiri, model 1935, automatic transmission and a kind of steering wheel, 35 US Dollars per day without fuel and all imminent repairs). We headed northwards, to Kwenda Beach. Famous for its beach and all related activities, just a place to relax for a few days; to forget about Kili, paintings and T-shirts. Later on we drove to the East coast; some more beaches, incredible turquoise water and our rented car definitely crying for an emergency organ transplantation in an excellent hospital. Somehow we managed to drive it back to Stonetown, promising it an excellent treatment in a private car clinic, exchanged it to a similarly sick patient and finally arrived at the east coast (activities see Kwenda beach).



Next day we flew back to odd Arusha. We had to change the plane in Dar-Es-Salaam. Here our sincere thanks to our colleagues in Lesotho who specially sent a plane to bring us back to Maseru. There were rumours that the pilot had to be back by early afternoon for a former Ministers emergency trip to Ghana to buy a small house next to the sea in a suburb of Accra.

Teresa and Peter may soon make a visit and discuss the importance of road construction. So the pilot could not wait for our delayed arrival from Zanzibar. Well, we were slightly disappointed; nevertheless, we highly appreciated your symbolic of this. Dear friends in Lesotho, don't be discouraged, we'll inform you as soon as we



will approach another airport, take a second chance, send the plane again and coordinate it with the exile plans of ex-minis.

First we had to get our car, which was covered by a solid layer of dust after a week waiting for us in Arusha. However, after some tough cleaning and lots of shopping – well, just the normal food stuff – we drove on towards the promising wildlife parks of Tanzania, such as Ngorongoro and Serengeti. And here the beasts...

Our first stop was Tarangire National Park. We left a lot of money at the park entrance; foreign visitors are supposed to pay about 50 times more than locals – probably just to prove Tanzania's Government eternal love for foreign visitors. Nevertheless, we were rewarded with plenty of lions. The roads, completely corrugated, made our awning brake down in the middle of the park. One bolt cracked and finally the awning's cover scrapped the car's paint in quite an imaginative way. Martin managed to mend it temporarily, accompanied by loud roar of lions; we left the awning afterwards at the camp site for future use or misuse by any other foolish guy in favour of the company *Easy Awn* (so far our pub for certain manufacturers).





Wherever there was a special sight of wild animals, within seconds, minutes all safari cars joined for a special meeting - but, we have to recognise, even in the most dense traffic jams we could not state any accident – maybe the proof that the world could even live without any robots (= the odd, stupid traffic lights for non SA-English speakers).



But besides lions there also were lots of other animals – among others mice, rats, mozzies and tsetse flies, but also some elephants, buffaloes and wildebeests (gnus).



After all these wild beasts life had to go on. We headed on to Lake Natron. The center of livelihood of these Maasai people. We drove up this dusty road towards the Kenyan border. On the way we saw these herd boys in their red or blue nylon cloths (made by Pink Lucky Lotus Maa Sai Cloth Company in Shanghai), herding their cows and watching the *bundles of dollars on legs* (common expression in Maasai language for foreign tourists) passing the road to Lake Natron. In order to improve communication and thus better know and appreciate foreign tourists visiting Lake Natron, the Massai Department of Finances and Dollar Related Relationship built some road blocks at each District border (there are 3 or 4 Districts before reaching Lake Natron). At each of these road blocks there was a guy politely greeting the visitors, showing the wonderfully painted board which welcomes all foreign tourists and explains

them, that this welcome costs between 20 and 50 US Dollars pp, independently whether anybody wants to visit the District or just is on transit. Alternatively the so much appreciated visitor may return immediately and never show up again. For the honour of handling a neglectable amount of Dollars to these guy, he registered it in a book and after some nice conversation on governance, Maasai Local Government and legality of council decisions even a receipt is produced as a souvenir (without serial number or copy). This procedure repeated several times, finally and after having spent somehow 130 US Dollars we happily arrived at Lake Natron with lots of receipts and empty pockets.



Of course there were also some highlights: the nice campsite, the lake with its flamingos and a landscape resembling to the moon.



After this nice afternoon with lots of sightseeing we had some more interesting conversation with our Maasai friends in the evening. The main issue was a quite heavy request to pay all sorts of entrance fees and guide salaries. After some nice conversation of a village delegation with us and our South African neighbours on the campsite, we concluded that it might be a real challenge to overcome the cultural differences between the Maasai in this village and us. Somehow we run short of arguments regarding our role as huge bundles of



dollars on legs supposed to slim as quickly as possible. Therefore, we changed our initial plan to stay a little longer – maybe to climb I Doi Nyio L'Engai crater - and decided to move the next day.

So we followed the next morning the road towards Kenya along Lake Natron. Later we learned that on that very road bandit activities occur quite regularly – we were lucky; either the bandits did not like us, or they don't want left-hand driven cars, or they were still drunk of yesterday's party. Later we turned westwards in the direction of Serengeti and after 5 to 6 hours on dirt roads (and sometimes just grassland) we arrived at the western border of Ngorongoro Reserve.



Here we joined the main tourist road between Serengeti and the Crater. 60 km – the absolutely worst road ever driven in Africa. Probably the entrance fees to the park are too high to be used for a grader. 2 hours later we arrived at the edge of Ngorongoro Crater, settled at the campsite at an altitude of

2500m and, after a long day, had a nice meal accompanied by rotten grapes.

The next day we had to get up early. Every car driving down to Ngorongoro Crater pays 200 US Dollars plus entrance fee for each visitor plus rescue fee in case of being cannibalised by a lion tired of humans taking pictures without paying some money. Another reason for entering the crater at 6 am was the fact that all these organised tour groups – literally there are hundreds of them – are not able to leave until their esteemed passengers had their beloved breakfast. So, between 6 and 9 am we were pretty lonely in Ngorongoro crater, sharing the whole space with a great number of lions, a cheetah, more lions and other animals like elephants, buffaloes, the ever present wildebeests (Gnus) and some tsetse flies.



However, after 9 o'clock the other tourists invaded. Every lion was shared by a minimum of 25.6 cars – and the lions did not care at all...



We left Ngorongoro for the same terrible, corrugated road towards Serengeti National Park. At the entrance gate Martin checked the shocks and burnt his fingers - at that time we did not know that our famous and expensive Australian *Old Man Emu* shock absorbers were burnt after only 25'000km.



We handed over another huge amount of money for being allowed to enter Serengeti and to camp on one of their campsites we had to share with 4 Overlander trucks; imagine all those people with only 2 showers and 4 toilets...

Wildlife in the Serengeti was less impressive – just lions, and lions, and lions



Even elephants and springbok (Impala) were few during our 1st day. Nevertheless, lions are not the main reason to visit Serengeti (this is rather interesting for these thousands of pre-booked tours, which have to economise fuel for their respective tour operator). Without any fuel constraint we headed to the western corridor of Serengeti in search of the wildebeest-migration – the trek of up to 2 million of Gnus within Serengeti and Maasai Mara.



On their way they have to cross Grumeti and Mara River where thousands of hungry crocs await them. Rumours claim, that the whole migration is just about nourishing the poor crocs. So we headed towards one of these croc feeding places at Grumeti River to observe wildebeests committing suicide to feed their starving friends. After a few hours drive and several stops along the river (where we

could observe some of the fattiest crocs ever seen), we finally found the wildebeests on their migration. One animal behind the other - a queue of several kilometres just besides the road - on their way to meet the crocs. Finally we found the place where they crossed the river – not all of them, but still a few thousand trying to move to the other side of the river and having its



neighbouring colleague eaten by a croc. Strangely, we were almost alone observing this spectacle, sharing the place only with all the animals and one single safari car from one of these super exclusive tour operators which seem to be slightly less limited by fuel constraints. The 2 super visitors – of course in a fully fledged safari outfit they bought in Tokyo's Ginza, seemed to be a little disappointed by having 2 odd tourists with old, washed-out T-shirts and a dirty car with Lesotho number plates as a foreground to all their pictures. Consequently, we took the pictures of the wildebeests on migration and they probably took the pictures of us taking the pictures of wildebeest...

Enough of animals expect if they are on the braai. After Serengeti we needed 2 days to clean ourselves, our cloths and the car. For this purpose we misused a campsite next to Serengeti Western Gate. Afterwards, all clean, we drove on to Mwenza near Lake Victoria and on to Kigali in Ruanda. Shortly after Mwenza we discovered a leak on our fuel tank. We observed, we calculated and we concluded: 500 km to Kigali, loosing half a liter per hour and consuming some diesel on the way – should be enough fuel without removing all the protection covers, closing the leak with a chewing gum, fix the gum with some tape and place all the protections again – and then having to drive on with all cloths full of diesel. So no repair on the way, we rather drove on. After crossing the border and paying the entrance fee to Rwanda we arrived in the late evening in Kigali, where we met our long-standing Australian fellow-travellers. Next morning Martin searched for somebody to repair the fuel tank. It was a Saturday, so normally all garages were closed. Nevertheless, the one often repairing cars from the DRC was open. The tank was welded within 2 hours and for only a few Rwanda Francs. Martin could not help having a look at the bottom of the car – you never know what surprises you discover after the Serengeti road. Of course, the Serengeti road proofed its reputation. The front axle full of grease – a broken sealing of the transmission rod and what surprise: one shock in the back looked like melted cheese in an oil bath.

At this place our very special thanks to *Old Man Emu*, the manufacturer of the world's toughest shock absorbers, specially designed for the Ozzie's Outback and the Serengeti Road. Maybe we should send them our picture of the braai'd shock (age 25 000 km) for their excellent webpage.



Monday was car repair day again. In the evening we had all repaired. We left happily after paying some 1000 Dollars for all kind of parts including original Toyota shocks and labour. The tires still look a little bit worn, but this is a project for the future...

After visiting the Genocide monument and enjoying the shopping mall, German butcher and some nice restaurants we left Kigali and continued to Nyungwe National Park in the South of the country.

Driving in Rwanda is somehow a little bit special. The country is densely populated, no comparison to Lesotho or Switzerland but to Bangladesh, and all streets are filled either with people, bicycles or motorcycles. One village follows directly after the other. In addition the country is very hilly and the roads are very bendy. Maximum speed to be on the safe side is approx. 60km/h – luckily the country is small.



In Nyungwe NP we wanted to see the Chimpanzees. However, we learnt that everything was booked out for weeks – peak holiday season in Europe. Hence, we concentrated on forest walks and – as one of the last bits of indigenous mountain rain forest - it really was beautiful (but strenuous: up and down!).





We stayed in a small guesthouse in the middle of tea plantations. Here we took a rather courageous decision and shared a bottle of original Rwanda red wine. To really appreciate this, we still need to compare it with other opportunities. Maybe we will develop a *Rotten Grape Barometer*, once we tasted a bottle of the famous Ethiopian Red Wine – unfortunately we missed the Tanzanian one.



After 2 days we continued to Lake Kivu and drove along its Eastern shore from South to North, stopping in Kibuye and Gisenyi.



We were tempted to pay a short visit to Goma in DRC, next to Gisenyi, however ongoing rebel attacks to this town made us change our idea and stop at the Rwanda - DRC border.



Rwanda is famous for their mountain gorillas. However, the fees for visiting those beasts for just one hour are exorbitant and we just invested this amount for our new shock absorbers. Hence, we decided to go for one more of those hills in the "Parc des Volcans", where all those gorillas supposed to be. The planned hill is a volcano with a crater lake on top and at an altitude of approx. 3700m. Nothing special for us, but the path simply was terrible. Imagine a 1300m high very slippery staircase with every step at a different height! After 2 hours and accidentally having passed one of those gorillas on



the way, without even having paid for it, Monika resigned and went back to the village. Martin, accompanied by friendly soldiers made it up to the top (and still tells everybody that this was the worst and most strenuous walk he ever made). Soldiers always accompany the climbers as a protection against rebellious buffaloes, elephants and maybe others which may stroll

over the DRC border just a few meters away ...

The next day we left for Uganda, but read more about those adventures in our next newsletter.

Cheers,

Martin and Monika