

Survivors Wandering In Africa

Our Jimny in Namibia Experience

April 2010

We had a wonderful time despite having to adjust our itinerary according to the weather. The Jimny was absolutely marvelous. We had no mechanical problems whatsoever and sat listening to the horror stories of others about broken axles and destroyed tyres at night at the camp sites. We didn't even have a flat tyre despite not getting our new Goodriches before we left (they still haven't arrived...)! The Jimny is totally unknown to the Namibians – the first dealership only opened in Windhoek last month. Everywhere we went, we got comments like: “You can't go there in that thing, the terrain is too rugged” or “You need a 4x4 to do that route” or “What is that?” Well by the end of our tour, the Namibians were very impressed with our “midget” 4x4 – as they should be! Photo 1 (right): River before the floods.



The annual rains were very late this year and as luck would have it – the rivers came down in flood while we were there. We experienced the most amazing pyrotechnic storms with huge deluges and a few hours later – roads and rivers impassable.

This photo above was before a rain storm – but just a few yards further, the mud was knee deep – the Jimny just sped over the top of it!!!! Jimny was clean and we were filthy as we walked sections of the river bed before driving over it.

Photo 2: Loaded to the brim..

As you can see we were loaded to the brim and also had 90 litres of fuel in jerry cans with us. But there was space for everything including deep freeze and porta potty!



Rucana and Epupa Falls were majestic sights. One can hardly believe that there is so much water in such a barren region. Its like a tropical forest up there at the moment. There was so much that the sluices were opened at Rucana and this caused further havoc downstream.



Rucana is the last stop for fuel before heading west along the Kunene River and down into the desert. At the garage we enquired about the state of the road to Kunene River Lodge where we wanted to camp that evening. The owner of the garage, June Anne, took one look at our Jimny and said “You cant do that route in that thing, you need a 4x4. The river is in flood. Our friends couldn’t even come through to visit us this morning”. Then she said that what we should do was go to the first river crossing and if we could get through that we would make it. Little did we know that the first river was just a trickle compared to what lay ahead!

Off we went – walked through the first river – no problem only knee high. Continued a few ks and then we hit the first obstacle. The river runs through a ravine all the way down to Swartbooisdrift where the Cunene River Lodge is. If you cant get through there is no other road except to return to Opuwa and make a detour of approx 300 ks! At that stage it was getting dark and we couldn’t turn back – we had to continue. The whole valley was one enormous river – road totally immersed! The only way forward was to make our own track. We took turns - one of us would walk up the hill and find a cattle path and the other would drive the Jimny up the “route”. Talk about extreme 4x4! In this way we slowly continued onwards. Luckily (?) we had a satelite phone with us and could phone the lodge to say that we would be late and arrive after dark. “No problem, the road is fantastic – the scenery is wonderful! Just take the cattle paths and you’ll be alright. Do you want us to keep supper for you?”. This was the advice that we were given by the lady in the office. Little did we know that we were talking to the Windhoek office about 800 ks away! She had no idea that the river was in flood.

When it got dark, we used our little head lamps to find the paths and eventually at 9 pm we reached the notice board “Cunene River Lodge 1 km”. Only one small problem – the river was flowing so high that it was impassable. The GPS showed another entrance to the lodge about 5 ks down the track. When we arrived there we found that the water was even higher and it was just too deep to cross. Out came the sat phone again and the lady in Windhoek then told us that she was in Windhoek but that she would ask someone from the lodge to come and help us. By this time we had decided that if they didn’t arrive within half an hour, we would find a place somewhere and pitch our tent and decide how to proceed to the lodge in the morning. We were just about to leave when we saw a light come over a hill. The manager of the Lodge, Gert had arrived via another cattle path!! He showed us a shallower crossing and in real extreme 4x4 mode we arrived at the Lodge.

By midnight we had pitched our tent in a place that we would discover to be a paradise the next morning. We had the most wonderful time there – a dozen or so semi tame leguanes wandering around and helping themselves to fruit or whatever left overs there were. They were like pets. Apparently they keep the snakes away – eat their eggs!!! It was such a great place that we spent 3 days there. We couldn’t go anywhere anyway because the river rose further and there were even more humungous storms – more impassable roads and rivers in flood. As a result we had to make changes to our route, but as there is so much to do and so many tracks to travel, it made no difference to our enjoyment of it all.



Everywhere we went, we searched for the elephants. While at Palmwag, we were told that the ellies were up at Grootberg Lodge. Off we went to find them. This lodge is at the top of a plateau. The road to the top can only be reached in a 4 x 4. The guests of the lodge park their cars at the bottom and they and the luggage are fetched by the lodge 4 x4s. All the supplies for the lodge are off loaded at the bottom of the mountain and fetched by the lodge vehicles. Of course the Jimny had no problem to get to the top and what a magnificent



view! On a clear day you can see forever. Of course the elephants weren't there. They had gone walkabout....



The Spitzkoppe

We had a great time driving around the mountains that form the Spitzkoppe. The routes take one around one of the "koppe" and then the next and so on. There are also camping sites there although we didn't camp there. The ablutions consist of long drop toilets and nothing else.

I think this photo says it all....

Of course the Jimny had to climb the moon rocks. One evening we went up such a hill for sundowners – arranged by the owner of the camp site where we spent the night. No words to describe the beauty of the sun setting behind the Brandberg. As it gets dark very quickly after sunset, we had to leave almost immediately as the vehicles have to descend in a



very short period of twilight. Also a never to be forgotten experience.

All in all – a great trip! We are considering going back next year – would like to do the sections that we couldn't do this time because of the rain and to return to our favourites. We like to do a trip every year, but usually to new places. This time, we just want to go back again!



Sent by Boeka and Allyson via e-mail.