

CAMPING IN KHAUDOM

An adventure | Old friends | Barefoot in the bundus

List of essentials

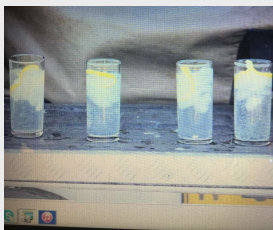
No that I am a list maker, I prefer the "bring what you have, then we make a plan", but nonetheless, here are the top three bare minimum requirements, per traveler

Talita: whatever you need to sleep comfortably, Drinking water, Bombay sapphire gin, Duct tape (I know, it's 4, but it was a savior)

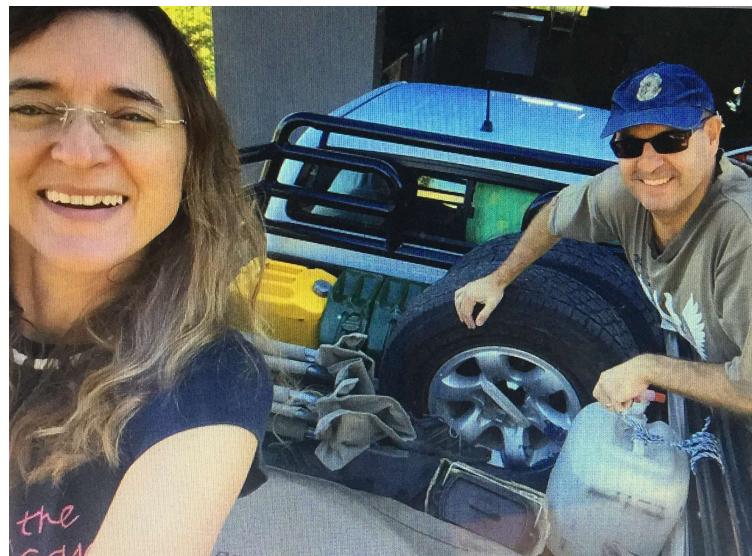
Fanie: Good friends (who have ice), Toyota, Gin

Annette: good lighting (dicky's new solar powered 3x lights birthday present to thank, good ground coffee (water is an essential element of life, for without it, you can't make coffee), Bring your own wood (but you can't take it out again, because of the red line veterinary fence)

Dicky: a bottle of gin pp per week, with an appropriate balance of tonic (am I seeing a trend?), "I'm not leaving without a fridge", Books - of trees, grasses, birds. Given the lack of game.



Assembling the traveling tribe



So one balmy summers evening, I casually mentioned to my husband, we have 3 public holidays in one week coming up, and I will be taking leave. Not to my surprise, he mentioned hunting, to which I quickly replied, "well, then I will grab a friend, and go cooking in France". Said friend had just recovered from a series of weddings, and as host & hostess to 4 daughters who were the brides, they needed a break. Without much drama, we were suddenly a group of 4. Which is awfully useful when you are planning to camp in Khaudom. Given they recommend you don't enter the park with just one vehicle.

I don't need stress relief, I need to camp





Other distance tips

Shankara to the turnoff at okere, was a little longer than expected, but it gave the troupe a chance to settle down. 40km of tar, plus 40km of "deep sand". Work on a day's traveling

Khaudom is approximately 100km long, but the distance and time you take, depends entirely on yourself.

The hour (excl lunch) to tsumkwe is easy, with occasional deep sand stretch.

Nyae-nyae was relatively quick. 27km long, but maybe 70km worth of detours. Camping was self sufficient.

The route

Depart Windhoek.
Approximately 5 hours to Roy's Camp.

An easy 3 hours, including stops, to ?rundu?

An easy 100km to the turnoff for khaudom. Shankara.

Then the hard part starts, slow driving, sit back, relax, enjoy the scenery. (Don't mind the screeching noises - "the branches are tickling your car") - give or take 150km.

Immediately south of the park, the sand intersperses with gravel, so about

Commencing countdown, engines on

Dawid Bowie would approve -

It's kind of a good thing that we could not depart together. The dear husband was a bit of a grumpy bear to start with. Let me just say, there was duct tape in the garage after all, and thank goodness for my insistence to find some, despite his protestations, because we had not even travelled 2km, and it was required for "rattle noise dampening" purposes.

Roy's camp was a good place to stop. We could have gone further, given the time and the distance, but our travels all over the world taught us one infallible lesson - make camp by 3pm. The site was well spaced, and the fire wood was substantial. I recommend it, whether you are camping, or like a spot of bungalow luxury.



In my profession, I used to rate clients by the coffee they serve. In this dream job, I would rate camp sites by the barefoot discomfort endured. Roy's makes the cut.

Another grading criteria to apply, is friendliness of staff. My boss once shared a video, which boiled down to empowering your team. By using 3 basic questions, your team could make a difference, without first having to call head office. Let me put this in a practical sense:

We arrived at a campsite on the Kavango river. Hakusembe lodge. Did they have camping space? No. So we have our problem statement. Could Yvonne do something about it? Did it cost the company anything? Would it make the customer happy?

- A. Yes, she commandeered the skipper to take us up river to find an available camp site
- B. It cost a little bit of boat fuel
- C. We were the happiest campers in the region.

Gondwana - you are doing something right.

I still have to determine the name of this campsite we "found", and it's friendly dogs. I don't think they have been operating long, but I am so very jealous of the green fingered owners. Lush vegetation and beautiful gardens surround each site, and the staff I would poach, for their client orientated service.



Shankara was also a pleasant surprise. Donkey for hot water, and yes, they get the barefoot nod of acknowledgement. Here is where we met our friends, and here is where the testosterone got wild, in preparation of the really wild 4x4 trail to follow. Things like - chain your mudguards to the rear bumper, grass net for the Car's cooler, deflate the tyres to 0.8. 0.8?!? Yes, 0.8 I tell you.

Into the groove...

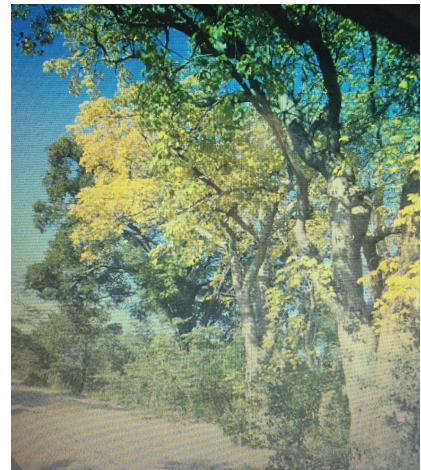
Is there a saying in English, for "dou voor dag"? Because that is when we were awoken with brisk greetings, farm baked rusks and hot coffee. The husband's nerves showed in him singing German pub songs in the car - he doesn't speak German.... Come what may, the devil sands on Khaudom would not get the better of us.

After about 30km, the gps told us to turn right and prepare for deep sand. That, my dear fellow adventurers, is an understatement. A strong vehicle, (and of course, my 2004 Terios is included in this category), is a must, along with deflated tyres and knowing how to drive in low range.



It was beautiful.

So much green, gold, red in the leaves, offset by russet, brown and silver bark. Take a moment, take a snapshot for your soul.



All the on line and friendly guidance is right. It took about 4 hours driving (excluding the essential replenishing beer stops) to get to Khaudom camp. And the rumors are true. They have built a luxury camp. It is expensive by Namibian camping standards, and despite the lodge not yet operating, each and every campsite, road and turnoff was raked to haku precision standard. This of course gets extra points from the barefoot brigade. We had prepared for showering out of a tin can, so the donkey hot water was a special treat.

Khaudom camp is expensive, but site number 2 was so worth it. We had a sundowner plateau view over an omuramba, and saw elephant, lion, and roan. As I write this, the lion is heading in our direction, she is wearing a collar, and looking right at us.....that's how close it is If you find this iPad, the passcode is xxxxx.





My travel companions tell me it is time for some fact checking, so here goes:

Average speed through the park: 13km/h (actual travel time, excluding stops)

The park is about 100km long. (You can tell I'm not fond of exact details).



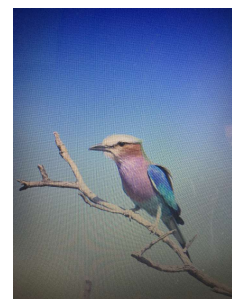
You can't really get lost, there are a few, simple tracks.

Elephants galore, but you must wait at water holes.

Bargain on about xxxxx liters water per person. That includes a little bit of dishes, a cup of water

to "shower", ok, 2 cups, if you're showering with someone 😊, and a little bit of drinking water). We did find water at Khaudom and Sikereti, contrary to the rumors, but just in case...

Last day out, was somewhat easier driving. More hard earth in between the soft sands. The flora was more Savannah like. Fauna? Not so much. I remain convinced that the game is poached. The few antelope we saw, were extremely skittish, and we saw far too few tracks given the abundance of food. The remoteness, and relaxed access controls unfortunately also means easy pickings for poachers.

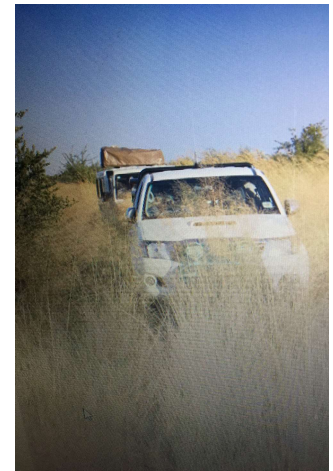


Somewhere between Khaudom camp, and Sikereti camp, we lost 2 days. I can't quite explain it, but suddenly it was near the end of the week getaway. We did not need to rush, to get from Khaudom to

Nyae-Nyae pans, including a leisurely lunch stop at the famous Dorsland Trekkers baobab tree. Tsumkwe was a one horse town, but the essentials you could get. Petrol. Ice and the likes. I was looking forward to the pans, I was told the birdlife was abundant and spectacular. Unfortunately, it was dry. We did find the occasional lilac breasted roller, or fish eagle, and a number of lbj's. The bushmanland 4x4 trail was a little nerve wrecking. Not for the technical difficulty, but more for the "are you sure this is an actual route?". I will deny it in public, but for once, I was actually quite relieved to have a very accurate gps, as opposed to a well worn, missing a few details, paper map.



Perhaps because of the previous rainy spells, the track was not well travelled. In fact, I bet it was a one car touring party, that followed the GPS with absolute conviction prior to our visit, and I mean, "with absolute conviction".



There were times

where I had to boost the bravado: "no, no, don't worry, we're just taking a small detour, we know where the official track is".

We made camp, very responsibly, away from the only water hole we found. There are very many sites that are just perfect for picnicking, and for camping, and I think it is fair to say that you should not expect any bypassing visitors.

We did come across a few tribes of real bushmen, digging for Devils Claw. Now I have heard of the health benefits, and I have tried it, and I can tell you, it is the world's most bitterest (yes, that is how bitter it is) medicine. But seeing the whole family, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, brothers, sisters etc involved in the exercise, it gives new meaning to the concept of family enterprise. Next time, don't complain when you have to pay for Devils Claw. Rather ask about sustainable responsible supplier practices.



All too soon we reached proper gravel roads again. I heard once, that Namibia has the second best gravel roads in the world. And at one of the veterinary checkpoint along the road, they were almost blasé about the conditions of the road ahead of us. Rightly so, the roads to the south of the park are a breeze. You should decide whether you want to start your journey with ease, or end it with ease. That will determine whether you enter the park from the south, or from the north.

Ps, it helps to speak a word or two of Herero, the officers appreciate it.

It is not fair, having to concentrate such a wonderful holiday, with such wonderful friends, into a small article that takes maybe 3 minutes to read. I hope you got the merest whiff of adventure, a slight sneeze for the dry dust, and a few cents worth of longing for the wanderlust that besets a fair few of us.

Good karma : for you, and those who cross your path

This is the end

Beautiful friend

This is the end

My only friend, the end



