

A Road Trip through Southern Africa – Part II - Namibia, Botswana & The Kalahari Desert

August 2018: I started the day in the middle of a beautiful vineyard at the Melkboomsdrift Lodge in Vredendal, South Africa. I was up early for what was planned to be my longest drive of the trip. My intention was to reach the Canyon Lodge in Namibia by night fall. Then fate took a turn. My trusty Google Maps, which served me well over the years wasn't knowledgeable of the idiosyncrasy of South African roads. Directions seemed reasonable at first even when I was directed to turn off the paved highway and onto a gravel road. The road soon became a dirt path, but Google was clear, continue and I did. I knew there were problems when I was directed to make numerous turns, but the roads were always blocked by locked gates. Then I was directed to take a road alongside a railroad. Seemed sensible but 15 miles later the road ended, and I needed to turn around. An hour later I passed an occupied farmhouse and asked directions. Google begrudgingly agreed with the farm lady and after another hour of dirt roads I found the highway. By this time, I was low on gasoline and the next filling station was 50 miles. By 2:00pm I made it to the station, but they had been out of gasoline for two days, but they expected a delivery soon. Four hours later the truck arrived, and I was soon back on my way across the Kalahari to Namibia. It was getting dark, but I was determined to press on. After a few hours of night driving, dodging cars, trucks and animals I got to the Orange River and the Namibian border. At last I had a reasonable thought, I stopped for the night at the Vioolsdrift Lodge, a place popular with river rafters and campers. I had a mutton burger and beer in the restaurant tent. The sign said, "No Wi-Fi, Talk to Others." There were no others, so I went to sleep,

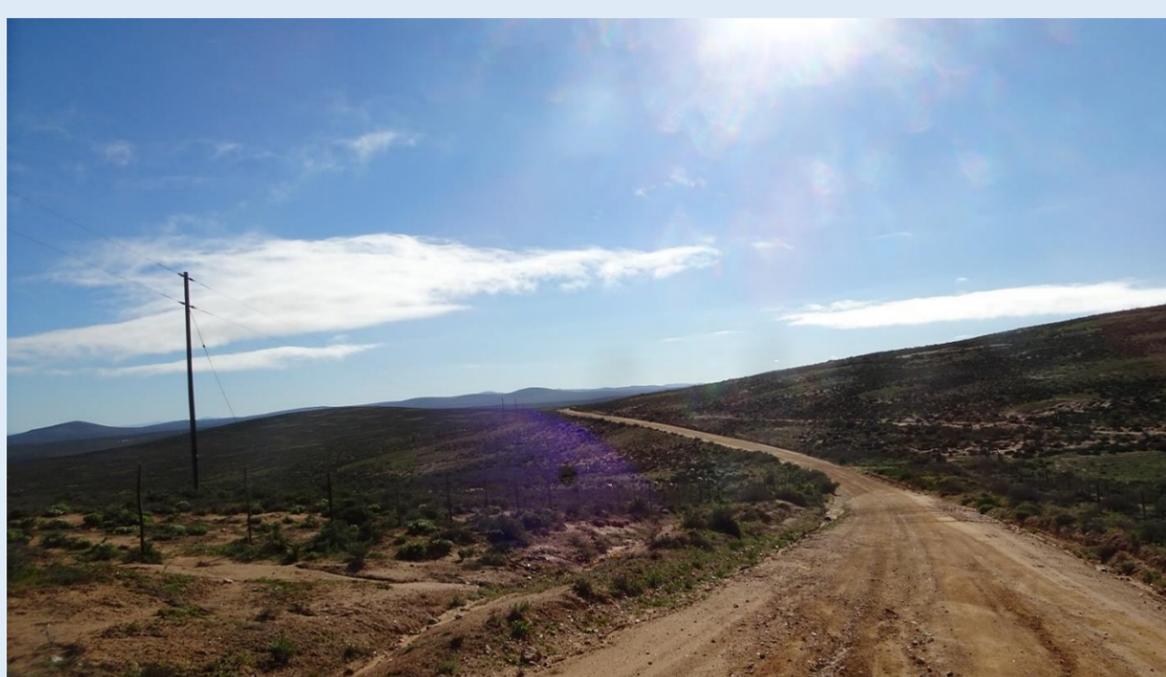
The next morning, I crossed the border and continued my journey to Canyon Lodge. It was over three hours of very rough dirt road with no distinction between road and desert. It was desolate, nothing but desert and only a couple of passing vehicles the entire time. I felt very happy I didn't try this drive in the night. The Canyon Lodge sat in an oasis in the middle of nowhere. Fifty cottages and a restaurant. I managed to book a four-hour evening tour for one (me) to the Fish River Canyon. At 100 miles long and 17 miles wide it is the largest canyon in Africa and the 5th largest canyon in the world. A most impressive sight even before the driver pulled out some jerky, cheese and a bottle of wine as we watched the sun set.

I spent the next two days driving across Namibia and South Africa through the Kalahari Desert to Botswana. Most of the road was paved and there were occasional gas/food stops. Most of the traffic was big trucks making their deliveries. There were a few small towns.

Gaborone was planned to be the capital of Botswana following independence in 1966. With a population of 250k, it is designed to grow. The National Art Gallery was impressive. I wanted to see the city since I was impressed with my 1987 African trip that included the north of Botswana. If you are interested in that trip, follow this link:

<http://www.djflybynight.com/videos/africa1989.mp4>

You may need to download the MP4 file if the video doesn't stream.



Lost In The Kalahari



Entering Namibia



Namibia Roadside



Fish River Canyon



Moon Over Namibia



Namibia Highway



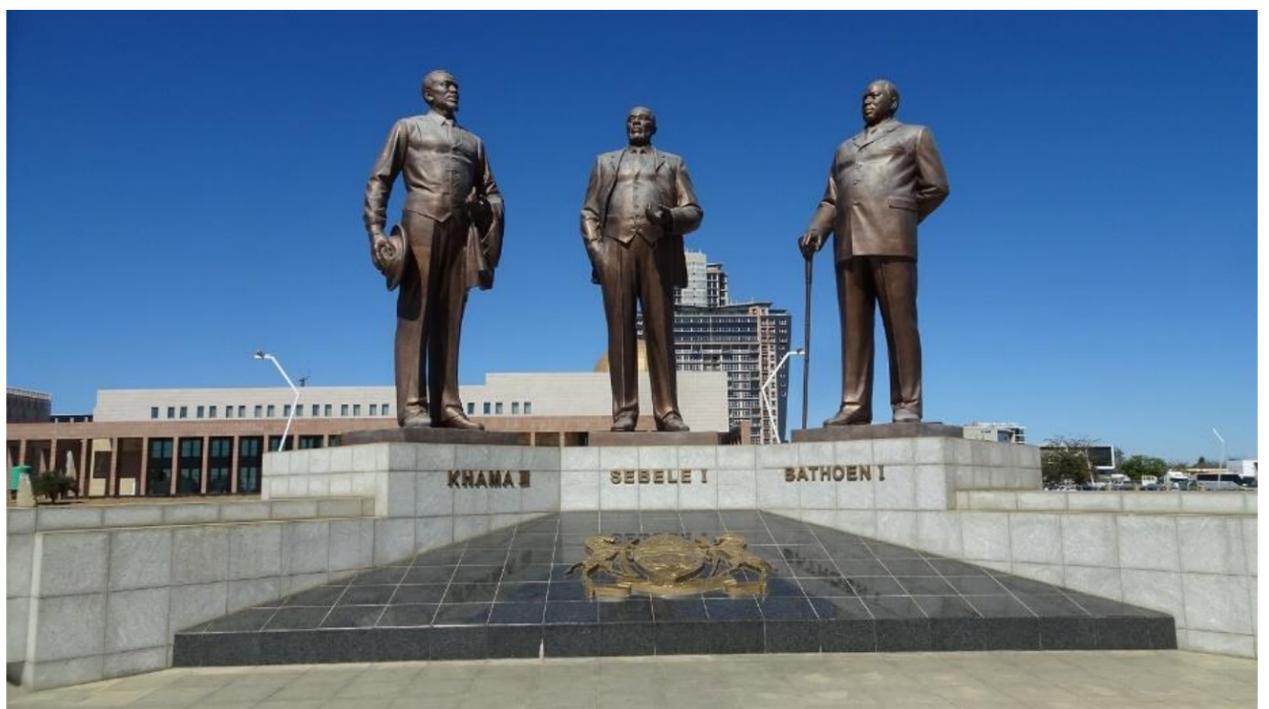
Filling Station



Tree on the Kalahari Desert



Sociable Weaver Bird Nest



Three Tribal Chiefs of Botswana Independence



Hard Knock Life



Portrait