

TOFFS TOUR 2012 : NAMIBIA AND/OR BUST

DAY 3

A good sleep and another leisurely start to the day.

We rode out of Luderitz, a town I really enjoy with all the old buildings and gravel roads, and headed towards Aus, but first Dias, where the coffee shop is owned by the mother of Birdie, who rides a super bike and is the owner of the Bay Hotel where we stayed in Luderitz.

I think Birdie's mom might have known Diaz!





then to Kolmanskop (or Kolmanskuppe) for hot chocolate balls served by the very attractive manageress of the restaurant – who actually recognised Frans and me from last year.

Kolmanskop is a must see, and if you have time, do the tour; it is fascinating.

It's a ghost town now, but in 1908 a black worker, Zacharias Lewala found a diamond lying in the sand and showed it to his supervisor, August Stauch, an inspector on the railroad between Luderitz and Aus.

By 1920 the area was booming with about 100 German miners working claims in the area, where they built a hospital, ballroom, power station, school, skittle alley, theatre, casino, bakery, butchery, ice factory and even an x-ray station.

They had a railway / tram track linking all the houses to deliver a daily quota of ice to each resident – it was really sophisticated and it is all still there today, only nobody lives there and the sand has claimed back most of the town.

The government declared a “sper gebied” and the families mining the diamonds sent their finds to Germany, where most of the money was made. As individuals they didn't make as much money from diamonds as might be expected, and when new finds were made and a consolidation of miners was formed at the Orange river mouth in 1954, the miners packed up and moved to Oranjemund, which became known as CDM – Consolidated Diamond Mines or De Beers.

Much of their furniture is still stored at Kolmanskop, which is still pretty much as they left it!





While having refreshments in the restaurant, we did a comparison of a busman statue, a descendant of the bushmen, and our very own Marius ... quite a difference in size :



And then on to Aus, turn left towards Maltahohe and ... we experienced our first real offroad!

We were relaxed in the saddle up till now, but soon discovered there are different grades of sand road in Namibia:

- Solid Packed
- Loose on Top
- Soft and Predicatable; and
- FFS!!!!!!

Unfortunately there wasn't much time for photo shoots on this stretch of road, but we learnt that red road is FFS category, heavy going and don't record your voice in your helmet!

We had one off, which resulted in the rider's pillion footpegs and spot lights being re-arranged, with some bits being left behind in Namibia, and we were pretty relieved to reach Helmeringshausen for lunch and refuel.



HELMERINGHAUSEN

With such a small group we rode quite quickly ... about 90Km/h to 130Km/h on the good stuff (faster speeds at the back, as is normal), which meant that when you hit the soft stuff you really had to be focused when you opened up to keep the bike on course. Crazy speeds (for me anyway – 100Km/h is fast for me in sand) and I was pretty tired when we stopped for lunch. Temperatures weren't too high at that stage, probably only about 35 deg C, but they'd increase later in the trip to around 45 deg C.

If you slowed down the bike really became unmanageable so you just had to keep going and hope for the best. I can honestly say that I now know how to ride the soft stuff, but I think my preference will always be for slower more technical riding, especially if conditions are unpredictable, primarily because you get more chance to rest and look around.

Fortunately the condition of the road improved between Helmeringshausen and Maltahohe and we were able to look around and see the wildlife in the area. A really beautiful stretch of road with a good surface; very fortunate because we had to push at between 110Km/h and 130Km/h to make sure we made it to the hotel in time for the WP vs Sharks game – or should I say the WP vs Sharks and Ref game.



FRANS' GPS?



It was a day of mixed emotions: confidence dips on the way to Helmeringshausen, wondering what the rest of the trip was going to be like on the way to Maltahohe, irritation at the poor refereeing for the rugby match, relief that WP won and disappointment that Adrian's barmaid has been replaced by a male counterpart!



LANCE COMMENTS ON REFEREE

I washed the sweat out of my kit before supper and it was dry by the time I got back to my room.

Supper was a mixture of different braaied meat pap – gemsbok, kudu and home-made wors and I must have drunk gallons of beer to quench my thirst.

I think everyone must have been feeling quite tired because we were all happy to turn in after supper, though that doesn't mean there were no jokes, laughter and violin.

There were two characters on this trip who always had energy for music and hilarity – Lance and Gerhard!

All the guys on this trip have a "Can Do" mentality – it reminded me very much of my years in the Defence Force – a great bunch of guys who I'd be happy to tackle any conditions with ... though I'm not sure I'd take some of them home to meet my Mother!!!! 😊

I slept well with a full stomach and despite a dive bombing mosquito. (There was a mosquito repellent gadget in the room but I only found it the next morning).