

Zimbabwe May 2012, Part 8

Day Eleven: Lupane - Bulawayo - Plumtree - Embakwe 431 km

The plan for today was to follow the route that Ronelle and I had done last year, which was to turn right at Lupane and cut south, between the Ngamo and Gwayi State Forestry areas, to Tsholotsho and then Plumtree, all nice rugged dirt roads. When we got to Halfway House, 51 km from Lupane, we found the filling station dry, and were told that Lupane had none either. To do the route to Plumtree via Tsholotsho the 990R needs a full fuel tank at Halfway House in order to make it to the next fuel at Plumtree, so we were a bit stuck!



The garage attendant calls over his friend, says if we give him US\$45 he will take his 20 litre container, hitchhike the 60 km back up the road to collect petrol at Dingavivi and hitchhike back...

Mmm, with my very sceptical nature I start to smell a con! Basically this means he makes himself US\$10 for his troubles (US\$35 for 20 litres petrol)...if he comes back. If not then we're US\$45 poorer! Ronelle, Nolan and I chat and decide to trust this guy with our US\$45. He collects his 20 litre tin and moves off to stand on the road. After about an hour and three cars pass a car stops for him and in he jumps. After almost another hour the garage attendant comes up to us, now sitting under the bougainvillea in the picture below, and says his friend has got to the filling station but there is no power so they can't pump petrol! So, remember my sceptical nature, I'm thinking this is a convenient story and we've just been conned out of US\$45! The garage attendant says his friend can wait there until the power is restored or come back...what do we want? I consult the GPS and work out that if we travel slowly (conserve fuel) we could make Bulawayo (i.e. not take the dirt to Plumtree) on the petrol we have so I say send him back to us with our US\$35 (US\$10 for his efforts remember). He jumps on his cell phone again and tells his friend to come back. We resume our wait under the bougainvillea, order coffee and (TRY) to relax.

After about 20 minutes up comes the garage attendant again, this time with another guy I saw stroll up to the filling station a few minutes earlier. He says that this new guy is a friend of the guy who left to hitchhike (...ok so now I'm expecting a lekker con story, wait for it...) and that he will give us the US\$35, to save us time so that we can get on our way, and he'll get the money from the other guy when he gets back here! I felt rather silly for being so sceptical and not trusting, and no, I do not think that this was a whole elaborate con to get just US\$10; he could have kept the whole US\$45.



So we hit the road to Bulawayo, where there are dozens of fuel stations, all full of petrol, and power with which to pump, and head off for Plumtree. This detour did mean that it was a long and boring tar road all day! After another fuel stop in Plumtree we turn south to Embakwe, to a friend's farm, and our last night in Zim (for this trip).





Day Twelve: Mphoengs - Matsiloje - Mmadinare - Selibi Phikwe - Zanzibar (Zazoe Lodge) 333 km

Well fed and rested, we were ready to leave for Botswana the following morning. These Rhodesian Ridgebacks had kept an eye on our bikes for the night!

