Hard to believe that after nearly a year waiting this short trip into Khutse is fast coming to an end. Sunday, it will be our last night in camp, expect that is for Charlotte who has decided to stay on for another few nights, clearly she has her priorities sorted 😊

Being a Sunday and that fact that I’m getting old and that we are going exploring I give the water hole a miss this morning. Big mistake but more of that later.

I’m also the designated chef tonight so it’s going to be a full day, let’s get going.

Turning South West from camp site we (Gasman, Carolyn and I) head off towards Moreswe pan. Charlotte, an old hand in Khutse has opted for a more relaxing day in camp, she’ll pay a visit to the waterhole.

All of the roads that we travelled on in Khutse are probably best described as single track. If you meet somebody coming the other way one of you will have to give way.

Thankfully we had the road to ourselves, stopping for a “been there, done that, got the t-shirt picture”

we have a (bl*&dy corrugations excepted) pleasant drive down to Moreswe, stopping of at Moreswe2 (KHMOR02) to use the “facilities”.

It’s a nice camp site, relatively flat but with limited views out across the pan due to the shrubs and bushes. Its proximity to the pan and the water hole does however make it a potentially interesting site if we come back.

Driving onto the pan we are treated to another small group of Kudu making their way slowly down to the water hole.
Game at this time of year has been scarce something that was expected based on other trip reports and information gathered.
Compared to Molose waterhole, Moreswe is almost like a small puddle with no vegetation around it, not as photogenic but I’m sure the animals that depend on it for water are not too fussed.

Movement in the distance catches the attention of the Kudu, a jackal is wanting to share the waterhole
Initially both are wary of each other but eventually the Kudu accept that one little Jackal is not going to be too much of a threat and he’s allowed in to take his share.

Leaving them to their water we head off west coming across what looks like the first woollen weavers nest that I’ve ever seen.
Remembering how cold the previous night had been I can imagine that the occupants of this nest are more than content regardless of how low the temperatures drop. Not so sure the other nest was as warm though.

It’s an easy drive around the Pan, which includes Mabuakolobe Pan. Spoor in the sand have us optimistically guessing at having just missed seeing cheetah.

And then a short distance further on the more distinct impression of Ostrich.
A quick stop to check out Moreswe 4 (KHMOR04) and we are on our way to Gwia Pan. Once more the road is best described as a single track and now with the odd patch of deeper sand.

I was driving in low range 3 and 4 although it was more of a precaution than a necessity. Gasman swears the D4 didn’t even notice the change in road conditions 😊

27 Kms on from Moreswe Pan is the turn off back to Molose, Gwia is a further 22 kms up the road. There’s a 3 km stretch just past the Molose turn off that rated as the worst section we drove on, would have been nice to have recorded it on the gopro, will have to make do with the iPhone. YouTube link posted in thread.

Gwia pan opens up after a drive through mopane shrub, time to stop for a tea break, some obligatory Landies in the veld shots.
And once again reverting to the iPhone for a panoramic shot.

Really going to think long and hard about the DSLR when I get back.

As much as we would like to linger at Gwia duty is calling, I have a pot to prepare and so we turn around and head back to camp, stopping at Molose waterhole and are rewarded by a gathering of Whitebacked vultures with a couple of Lappet-faced mingling amongst them. No sign of any carcasses just a social gathering.
A lone Bateleur struts his stuff at the water’s edge, happily ignore the noisy Defender that is maneuvering slowing back and forth looking for one of those wings out shots. He’s not playing today but nevertheless he’s still an impressive looking raptor with his red, black, grey and chestnut colouring.
Back at camp, Charlotte has a smug look on her face. We’ve been gone for most of the day, hard driving along corrugated roads, for me in Jaeger Defender suffering without air conditioning and hard suspension. It really is tough being “out there” sometimes. The alternative being stuck in an office in the middle of the city is far far worse though 😊

Anyway back to Charlotte; “So what did you see you asks?” Oh some of those, a couple of these, just missed a Cheetah oh yes and a nice Bateleur at the water hole but you just know it’s not going to compare to her news.

Sure enough, the one morning I forego the waterhole Charlotte turns us all green with envy. 5 lionesses and a young male all to herself for a couple of hours. Naturally many pictures were taken but I promised you three backsides earlier so here they are 😊
We’ll go and check the waterhole out later, for now while the other toere(ists) relax in the late afternoon sunshine I slave over the potjie.

A fully kitted kitchen is now part of Jaeger Defender, complete with more herbs and spices that I know what to do with and curry powered. This time I remembered it!

Oh yes and so as not to give the impression that I really know what I’m doing, a recipe book 😊

Now those that have followed my ascension from Rooinek to half way capable of surviving in the bush Saffrican will recall my previous experience with bread making.

Today I’m happy to announce I have graduated, if not quite Cum Laude, at least to being able to produce a passable end product.

Under Gasman’s keen eye and using the time honored method of gooi some of this and a little of that with a pinch of salt, don’t forget the yeast and sugar and much kneading and pounding, finally a bread that not only rose but fairly exploded out of the pot!
With kitchen duties completed and with the sun starting its descent over the western horizon we set off to the waterhole in search of Charlottes lions.

In typical cat fashion they have not moved far.

They are completely at ease with the vehicles and treat us to our own private viewing session as the small pride do what cats do so well...
Laze around in the shadows, grooming each other and occasionally, very occasional and very reluctantly moving as the shadows grow longer and thinner behind the sparse trees.

The general consensus amongst us is that there is one older female and five younger animals. The oldest looking lioness carry a tracking collar, clearly the subject of research work, the young male still to develop his full mane.
Given the apparent scarcity of game they all appear to be in excellent health, looking well-conditioned and certainly not showing any signs of stress.
With the veld about as dry at it can possibly get the lions with their tawny coats blend in perfectly, ambush predators in their element. You can image how easy it would be to walk into this pride not knowing they were there until it’s way too late.

Sundowner time as we retreat to the far side of the waterhole, Guinea fowl cackling amongst the bush oblivious to the potential dangers just meters away, perhaps they sense the pride are not up to hunting anything.
Being an apex predator comes with its challenges, today though it’s a chill day for this small pride.

Offering a silent thank you to mother nature we head off back to camp where a potjie is calling.

Driving back a flock of Guinea fowl refuse to leave the track, I slow down they slow down, I speed up they speed up, I stop they stop! Eventually they get the message and dart of into the veld.
Pot bread accompanied by a chicken potjie is served with a sense of pride and trepidation. Nobody died on the trip so I'll chalk that one up to an acceptable effort 😊

Today has been an excellent day, we've seen more of Khutse, enjoyed some interesting roads and reveled in the company of lions. With full bellies it's time to hit the sack. Just over 1700 kms on the clock, Port Nolloth to

Sunday night, tomorrow we pack up and head back to JHB. An uneventful dash back, of course not this is a Vetgat Toere 😊