

Through the Omaheke Area of Eastern Namibia – an Alternative Route to the TUCSIN Tsumkwe Lodge – as driven on 26/9/2016

Normally visitors approach TUCSIN's Tsumkwe Lodge via Grootfontein or even from Rundu via the B8 and C44. As a rule their return trip follows the same route, unless they choose to continue on to Botswana. Being Namibia fans, we three Germans (Martin, Sabine and Cornelia) asked ourselves: Why not try the eastern approach?

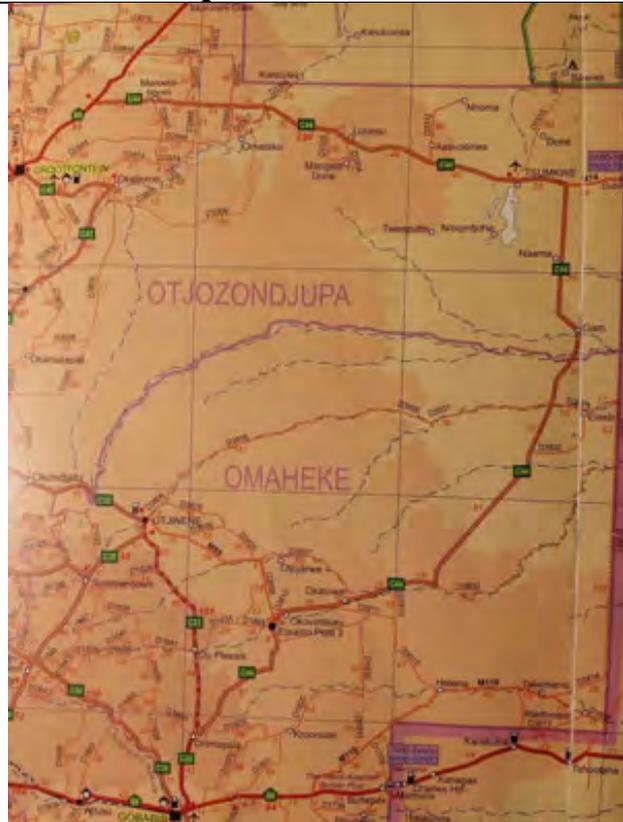
The route from Gobabis to Tsumkwe via Drimiopsis, Epukiro and Gam is a total of 456km (C22 and C44), which we covered in 9 hours including breaks. It proved to be a far more variable route than the commonly used B1 starting from Windhoek.

To follow a comparison:

- Northern route: Windhoek-Tsumkwe on the tarred B1 and B8, C44 gravel: 708km
- Eastern route: Windhoek-Gobabis: 205km, Gobabis-Tsumkwe: 456km, in total: 661km

Here the full text:

What Backup did we use?



Close-up view of our Route

Our main aid was the map of Namibia compiled by Uwe Jäschke, which clearly outlines the route and demarcation of roads: from Gobabis onwards shortly the B6, followed by the C22 as far as Drimiopsis, followed by the C44 via Epukiro (Post 3) and Gam to Tsumkwe. To be on the safe side we checked our intended route on GoogleEarth, the Namibia Tourism Bureau in Frankfurt, as well as friends and acquaintances & their friends and acquaintances... Our research proved that only two out of six questioned knew someone who had driven this route before. Responses warned that road conditions were uncertain, sometimes erratic particularly from Epukiro onwards, as was the naming and courses of the roads. In fact, GoogleEarth the extent was irregular and confusing.

In conclusion, one could drive this route, but one should be well supplied with water, food and petrol. We were further relieved by Martin taking along his navigational system, equipped with the map of Namibia by Tokkie-Tracks (Namibiana by Tokkie-Tracks (Namibiana Buchdepot: www.namibiana.de).

Our Trip began in Gobabis

On the afternoon of 25 September 2016 we arrived in Gobabis and unloaded at our simple B&B. Finding an establishment serving dinner became somewhat problematic. Obviously on a Sunday virtually the whole of town is closed. We had to be satisfied with a cup of coffee at a Burger-chain at the local service station. Here, too, we were forced to later partake of an alcohol-free dinner. We used the location to fill up with gasoline.

With our Fortuner filled to the brim with diesel and some `padkos´, we left Gobabis the next morning shortly after 6.00am: first the B6, then the C22 direction north (Photo 1).



Photo 1: Turnoff from B6 onto the C22 shortly after Gobabis

Photo 2: Turnoff from C22 onto the C44 at Drimiopsis

For 40 km we enjoyed the smooth tar of the C22 as far as Drimiopsis. We were so entranced by the glowing red sunrise that we completely forgot to take a photograph of it.

Drimiopsis

We saw little of the spreading small, loosely structured settlement, surrounded by some re-settlement farms and followed the turnoff onto the C44 to Tsumkwe (Photo 2). A sign post informed us that it was still 395km to Tsumkwe. On some older maps the C44 is still specified as the former M131.

After a few meters on the tarred C44, we found ourselves on reasonable gravel. After 50km we passed the entrance to the Harnas Wildlife Foundation (Foto 3, 3a). The sun had in the meantime disappeared behind some clouds.



Photo 3: Stop on the C44, Harnas



Photo 3a: Harnas

Epukiro

After a few kilometres and at about 8.30am we arrived in Epukiro/Post 3. We could have visited the Ovambanderu Cultural Centre (Photo4), but the uncertainty of the condition of stretch ahead of us (339km) and the desire for a cup of coffee, pushed us to a short cruise through the town of Epukiro (Photo 5 & 6).



Photo 4: Epukiro: Directions to the Ovambanderu Cultural Centre



Photo 5: Epukiro



Photo 6: Epukiro: In the blue building housing the Minimark the standard cool drinks are available.



Photo 7: The Building of the Omaheke Regional Council in the far back

Epukiro is the moderately-sized district capital of the Omaheke Region. It has a few new administrative buildings. In close proximity of the Omaheke Regional Council, Martin discovered a newly opened café/restaurant serving fresh coffee, and very good chips as well (Photo 7, 8 & 8a).

Initially we had hoped to spend the night at the Tijiri Lodge in close proximity to Epukiro. On second thought this seemed too impractical, since the lodge had recently changed over to a self-catering establishment. In the light of the photographs on Facebook, this might be an interesting stop over when not pressed for time.



Photo 8: Epukiro: The newly opened Eastern Restaurant –here some advertising for it

Photo 8a: Epukiro: Inside the Eastern Restaurant

After an hour (9.30am) we continued north from the town. Soon we arrived at a confusing crossing with no mention of the C44 (Photo 9 & 10).



Photo 9: On the edge of town two gravel roads point northwards. The easterly one, namely the MR114, is the correct one.

Photo 10: Epukiro: From this point onwards one simply continues straight to Tsumkwe.

We were still discussing the direction, when a car with NamWater signs stopped next to us. We decided to follow the advice of the locals and chose the MR114 to the right, the more easterly route. We were told that for years now one was waiting for the proper signposts.

Further Stretches

The course of the MR114, later named the C44, runs through not only some small villages, not always indicated on the official map, but also some larger ones such as Gam to the north. In spite of the tree and bush savanna of the northern Kalahari seeming withered and dusty due to the long drought, the many full-grown Camel thorn trees gave it a green appearance.



Photo 11: Approximately 10 Minutes outside Epukiro: a good gravel road, running for about 80km in an easterly direction.

Photo 12: Reference to the Otjimanangombe Clinic: From here it is another 25km to the 45 degree bend in the C44 northward at the Okatumba Gate.

Every now and then ‘private’ farms or plots were announced by road signs – and then suddenly clinics, none of which were clearly visible (Photos 12, 13 &14).



Photo 13: Okatumba Gate, a settlement not mentioned on the official map of Namibia. The yellow sign in the background indicates the location of a tyre repair workshop.

Photo 14: At the edge of the Settlement of Okatumba Gate finally the signpost for the C44 appears. Continuing straight on the D3830 is the 156km stretch along the river to Botswana.

The next 118km run straight stretch north/northeast (photo 15) until the junction with the D3831 from Otjinene (Photo 16). From here it is another mere 35km to Gam.



Photo 15: Straight but undulating due to the Kalahari Dunes running diagonally towards it, the C44 proceeds ever closer towards the Botswana border.



Photo 16: T-junction - the D3831 from Otjinene; for a district road the D3831 looks exceptionally good at least at its junction to the C44. Next time we will try it....

Gam

The surprisingly large village of Gam presents itself as widely spread with schools and sporadic street lighting. We were intrigued by the Uazuva Lodge, which we could see through its open gate (Photo 17, 18, 19).



Photo 17: In the centre of Gam on the C44 lies the ghost estate of the Uazuva Lodge.



Photo 18: Gam, here nobody will be welcomed anymore. The lodge is empty.



Photo 19: Gam Lodge and deserted Picnic Spot

The abandoned lodge in Gam appears ghostly. The original good intentions are evident in the expensive building materials used. In rows of attached rooms containers still stand filled with furniture. The outside is generously painted in red and white.

Entrance to the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy

Half an hour later we arrived at the gate to the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy Area (Photo 20, 21). A sign informed the public that a police station is being built on the spot. Just after the gate the gravel road deteriorated.



Photo 20: C44: The Gate to the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy



Photo21: Nyae-Nyae Conservancy - some rules to be abided by.

Tsumkwe

We arrived in Tsumkwe just in time for an afternoon coffee, but before enjoying this treat we first stopped at the only gas station for diesel. Had we needed petrol, we would not have been able to buy any on that day, because of a malfunctioning petrol pump. Every once in a while the gas station has problems with supplies or other technical issues. For this reason it is

advisable to fill up on arrival. Similarly, a spare fuel canister, might be useful, in order to get to Grootfontein or Gumare in Botswana in case of local fuel shortage.

After 9 hours driving (661 km) including short breaks we arrived at the TUCSIN Tsumkwe Lodge and settled into our accommodation.



Photo 22: Waiting for something to happen; the local youth at the Gas Station



Photo 23: TUCSIN Tsumkwe Lodge and its accommodation



TUCSIN Tsumkwe Lodge & Staff

Information on and activities surroundings the lodge can be read on their Homepage: <http://tsumkwe-lodge.com>

Best regards Martin, Sabine and Cornelia



©Photos: Schütze – Hannover