

Sani Pass – 23 June 2022 – South Africa/Lesotho

Yesterday was a long drive for us. We drove from Umngazi River Bungalows & Spa to a guest house in Himeville. This was 300 km/180 miles or a five hour drive if you make no stops; we stopped.

But this was a worth while drive. We had two days of birding with guides lined-up, the first guide was to take us up the Sani Pass and into Lesotho and then back and the second bird guide was to show us the birds around Himeville. The following day we were to make the drive up to and over the Sani Pass, into Lesotho, and find a place to stay.

We arrived at our guest house late in the afternoon. Our lodging was a guest house inside a gated compound that consisted of a living area with small fireplace, a kitchen, a bedroom and bathroom plus the owner's home. Nancy didn't waste any time in our guest house before asking the owner, "Do you have a heater?" Her reply was no but she would go next door and borrow one for us. Even with the heater and two blankets we slept very close to each other.

That evening while I was keeping the fire in the fireplace going Nancy got creative with the food we had in the 4Runner and made dinner.



The next morning the owner arrived with our breakfast about 8:30. It was a large English style breakfast. We skipped the baked beans and most of the sausage but the remaining dishes we cleaned to the bottom of the serving dishes.

Peter, our bird guide and driver, arrived at 9:00. Peter was outgoing, knew his birds but most importantly knew the Sani Pass road/trail.



Basically, the road from our guest house to the South African Border Patrol Station was paved or under construction to be paved. It begins relatively flat but from the border patrol station to Lesotho it is a steep uphill climb.



It was a beautiful drive – especially sense I wasn't driving.





At the Border Control Station we had to take the dreaded up the nose Covid test – we all passed. Next we had to have our passports stamped as exiting. The road is signed from here as “4-wheel drive vehicles only”.



At this point the drive begins to quickly change from a slight uphill drive to a steep uphill drive and from pavement to dirt, rock, some ice, and a deeply rutted road. The road gradient is 1:3 and overall the elevation change is from 5,000' to 9,000+ feet.

What I found interesting is Google Maps shows this to be a less than one hour drive and everyone you talk to including guides will tell you it is a two-to-four-hour drive. We found the drive to be much closer to three hours than one hour.

Another interesting thought is as you drive this portion of trail I am not sure where we are. Our passports have us leaving South Africa but it is another hour before we are stamped in as having arrived in Lesotho.



Driving toward the pass and Lesotho.





The views were incredible.





Every traveler has their own bucket list – I just crossed another off my list. We stopped at the Highest Pub In Africa for lunch and in my case a beer.





If you look carefully you will see the trail we had driven in the lower middle to right of the photograph.



Yes, that is snow. Snow on the mountains wasn't a problem but that same snow is ice on the trail.



Nancy in her new coat we bought in East London.



On our way down they were burning old tires to melt the ice on the road. Note, no steering wheel on the left because South Africa is a right hand drive country.



If it is snowing or raining I understand why this is considered one of the most dangerous roads in the worlds. However, it wasn't raining or snowing and it was a difficult road but maybe not what I consider a dangerous road.

More when we drove the road two days later.