

We Are in Lesotho – 25 June 2022 – Lesotho

Yesterday was another birding day but with a different bird guide named Aldo. Not only was Aldo a great guide but he was willing to talk about anything and everything when it came to South Africa.

A friend dropped him at our place. To keep the cost down I drove the 4Runner and at the end of the day we left Aldo at his home. Of course, he had bird feeders and therefore birds in his yard and we picked up one last new bird at his house.

I took no photographs of our birding trip – my mistake. Like so much of South Africa the area we drove and birded was beautiful. So, I am going to talk about our birding trip and what we learned from Aldo about South Africa in between photographs of our drive up the Sani Pass and into Lesotho.



This road sign was less than five minutes from our lodging.



The new paved road to the Sani Pass Border Control Station. Good day to drive; no one was working and we basically had the road to ourselves.

We asked Aldo how long he had been bird guiding, etc. He answered he began birding in his teens with two friends and had been guiding since his early 20's. He then went on to explain of the three teen birders he was the only one still living in South Africa. His two friends had left for the United Kingdom and Canada believing South Africa was no longer a place for them to live – their children had left and they were following their children.



Looking back toward Himeville.

He later told us his daughter-in-law and son had immigrated to Australia. His son was in banking, had been promoted, and then moved back to his old position so a black banker could take his place. His son realized he was no longer going to move up and his wife and he decided it was time to leave. He took a better position with a bank in Australia and his wife, a doctor, was welcomed and is practicing in Australia.

Later Aldo told us that people his age when they meet friends they haven't seen in several years almost always the first question is: "Where are your children living now?"

And the answer is usually: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, UAE, and the U.S.



The road isn't paved all the way to the border patrol station but its an easy road to drive.



The 4 x 4 rule is enforced.

We stopped, showed our Covid test results from our stop two days earlier, had our carnet policy for the 4Runner signed off as leaving the country of South Africa, passports stamped showing we had left South Africa, back into the 4Runner and now it's time for us to drive the Sani Pass Road.

On our trip up the Sani Pass with Peter driving two days ago we met a taxi on its way down the Pass. We watched it stopped, the passengers get out, and the driver slowly drive 25 yards over and through a very rutted area of road trail. The taxi was a 4-wheel drive but too low to the ground – no oversized tires or lifts like the 4Runner. As the passengers caught up with the taxi, they all piled back in and the taxi resumed its drive down the mountain pass. I am guessing the passengers had to get out of the taxi at least three or four times or the taxi would bottom out.







Driving towards Lesotho.

The road doesn't look bad but the higher you drive the rougher the road and the narrower the road. The road gets narrow enough that Nancy keeps telling me to get closer to the mountain on my side and when the drop off is on my side Nancy has no problem picking flowers off the mountainside from her seat in the 4Runner.





We are getting higher and it's getting colder.

This is about where we came across ice patches, deep ruts, and narrow trail. Being a big believer in "safe is better than sorry" I had the 4Runner in 4-wheel drive. Good thing because the 4Runner rear wheels began to slide on one of the patches of ice but the front wheels kept us moving forward and on the trail.



Very vertical mountains.





Looking back at South Africa. Don't know if we are in South Africa or Lesotho. There is about eight to ten miles of no-man's land between the South African and Lesotho border control stations.



Lesotho Border Control station. Stop and get our passports stamp as legally arriving in Lesotho.

This isn't the most dangerous drive we have made but I wouldn't want to make it when the road was muddy or icy or its inclement weather. Note the sunshine in the photographs. If the weather had been bad I hope I would have had the good sense to drive any other road out of Himeville other than the Sani Pass.

May all your drives be as good as ours was today.