

**ZIMBABWE AND MOZAMBIQUE
MT NYANGANI AND CHIMANIMANI
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By Karen Hauptfleisch

Going to Zimbabwe's mountains seemed like a great and crazy idea. For more than a year people have warned me not to go – this time I didn't ask questions. I found another mountain lover and we left Pretoria on the 25th at 22h00 with 145l petrol in jerry cans. The Beit Bridge border experience was not that horrendous – we arrived at 3 and were on our way again by sunrise. We paid the following: R45 for the bridge toll, R60 for carbon tax, R100 for 3rd party insurance, R140 for TIP, Zim\$1000 per liter petrol (it was less than R8 for our 145 l) – and let's not forget about the R60 for the "missing" carbon paper which was necessary to fill in one of the forms.

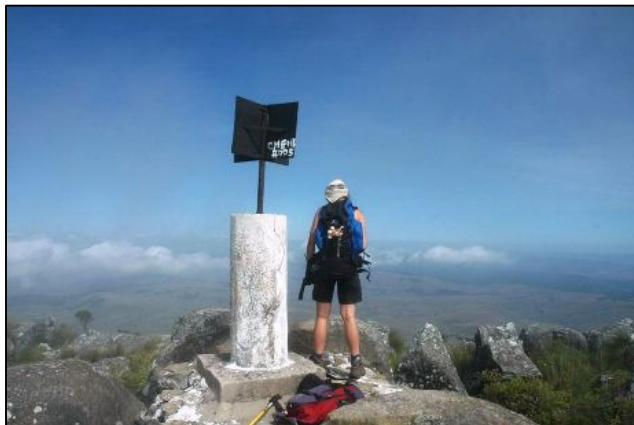
We had breakfast at the Lion and Elephant Motel and arrived in Mutare at 14h00. The locals were very friendly and we spend two nights at the Ndundu lodge in Vumba (R84 p.p.p.d in a lovely room).

On the 27th we were up at 5 and on our way to Nyanga. It was a very pleasant drive – there were not a lot of vehicles on the road and we were surrounded by beautiful mountains most of the way.

We paid \$10 p.p and \$5 for the vehicle at the Nyanga National Park and it took us 90 minutes to get to the top of Mount Nyangani (2593m). Mount Nyangani is a charming "soft" shy mountain and clouds covered her most of the time. She was very clean and we only picked up a small bag of rubbish. An awfully big piece of my heart was left behind. Touring through the Honde valley afterwards was spectacular and we saw a lot of birds.



Nyanga National Park



On top of Mt Nyangani

The next morning we were up early but our plans to see the sun rise in the Vumba botanical gardens had to be postponed because of the mist/rain. We did spend some time with Wilfred Mbowe, the birding guide at the Leopard Rock Game Reserve (R35 per person per hour). It was a remarkable experience.

On our way to Mutare later that afternoon a speed cop jumped in front of us with the biggest smile I have seen on a person's face.

He greeted us with "I'm going to lock you up". It was also the quickest I have seen someone's smile disappear when he noticed Wilfred in the vehicle with us. We paid R20 for driving 69km/h in a 60km/h zone. The Chimanimani is raw beauty on a vast scale. We arrived at Chimanimani

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks – Zimbabwe and Mozambique

national park at 15h30 and because of the mist rolling in we pitched our tents at the car park. (\$12 entrance fee per person, \$5 per vehicle and \$6 camping p.p.p.n.).



Chimanimani National Park

The next morning we started our hike to Mt Binga at 08h00. We arrived at the spotlessly kept hut at 10h30. Two scouts came to chat to us and explained that the rifles they were carrying were meant to shoot the illegal miners, which left me speechless and feeling much safer. They told us that the path to the top was clearly marked and we should reach Mt Binga by 15h00.

When we were still hiking at 15h00 with Mt Binga nowhere in site we came to the mutual agreement that we were lost. We also agreed that we must have followed one of the thousands of paths made by the

illegal miners (there were at least 15 of them panning for gold in the river but we didn't stay to find out if they were friendly). The mist was rolling in and taking Jimmy's thumb as a measuring tool, we came to the conclusion that we were very far off the map in Mozambique. Since we didn't have Mt Binga's coordinates, Jimmy decided to calculate it using his thumb, my hiking stick, a book and the waypoints of the hut and camp.

By 17h00 it was confirmed! We were totally lost. Keeping in mind the warning about the land mines we decided to pitch the tent in a spot we hoped were safe from the smugglers. We must have looked a sight moving around on the rocks trying to avoid "possible landmines". Once the mist cleared we were greeted by trillions of bright stars.

The sunrise was spectacular and we started our hike shortly afterwards. We followed a path going in the general direction of where we thought Mt Binga must lie and an hour later we were very close to the peak. We didn't read the manual properly and decided after an hour of struggling to get to the top that there must be an easier route. Walking around we soon found a clearly marked path – straight to the top! What a fine-looking site!



Another Spectacular sunrise

I did warn Jimmy that I can't help crying when I have to go down a beautiful mountain so he didn't seem very concerned when my tears came. We were back at the camp by 15h00.

Chimanimani is a beautiful mountain and my only regret is that we didn't spend more time on her. The scouts keep her clean and we could only fill a small bag with rubbish – apparently left behind by the smugglers. According to the register the following hikers were on Chimanimani in 2006: 217 from Zimbabwe, 6 from South-Africa, 2 from England, 2 from Denmark, 3 from Finland, 4 from Italy, 2 from Israel, 1 from Germany, 1 from Netherlands and 1 from America.