

Gero's Bush Diary #5

One day in Lokichoggio

05:30 I am turning around in bed for 2 more hours. Today, I don't have a flight, which is rather rare. To get up, though, wouldn't have been a bad idea; my task list is usually longer than the daytime hours. And if there should be nothing on the list, then I could write newsletters, prayer letters, diaries like this one ...

First, I am going to equip a round hut next to my house with furniture; in 1 week's time, a volunteer will arrive here for 3 months, in order to help with the school project of my colleague's wife. I still have a 2nd set of furniture, kitchen stuff etc. from the time, when MAF pilots stayed in my house overnight. So I can give that to her, as the pilots are now staying in one of our hotel camps in Lokichoggio.

Before that, I have to do some duty.

08:15 Arrival at our MAF office at the airport, to support our ground staff. Our base manager is on holiday, so I have to keep the moral up ...

9:00 Our Nairobi pilot in going to change airplanes on his arrival in 1:30 h. To speed things up, I am doing the pre-flight check and refueling for him.

Now I have time for emails until the plane arrives.

10:28 Landing 2 minutes early.

10:35 Pre-flight check handover to my colleague. All I have to mention is, that we have refueled 100 lbs. too much. Still, better than too little ...

Almost all the cargo has to be reloaded, while the passengers are busy with customs & immigration. One of the "pax" shoots questions at me; I enjoy helping him, but at the same time I regret that all the reloading has to be done by my colleagues now.

11:22 Departure towards Torit and Juba, I am staying behind. More mails have arrived; as soon as you start once, there is no end.

12:47 Luckily, the battery of my computer has run empty :-). So I have to go. A quick shopping stop on my way back home.

At 11:00 I was supposed to have a meeting with our compound manager for some more furniture for the round hut. He is still in his office, just after 13:00, but I let him have his lunch break, to meet him 15:00.

14:20 My house helper, Eunice, arrives. We are starting to move stuff from my house to the hut.

A propos house helper: what sounds like luxury, enables a living for another family for (relatively) few money. Thus I am happy to employ Eunice for 6 afternoons, even if 3 would be enough for the work to do.

15:07 Meeting with the compound manager. Besides furniture, I ask him whether it's possible to borrow the solar batteries from my empty neighboring house, until my new ones arrive (since my batteries have died, I am sitting in the dark every night); he agrees.

16:10 Not so easy to fit a round hut with rectangular furniture. After a few attempts, it looks great.

16:20 I am changing my solar batteries. The bigger problem is, to remove the totally corroded screws from the contacts. An iron saw is the solution (luckily, the other batteries have separate screws).

17:10 Everything is connected: batteries, solar panels, voltage inverter, house power line. And it works!

17:20 I see that my stock of full gas bottles (for stove and fridge) is down to 2. Let me get some.

17:35 Empty gas bottles are in my base manager's car; Our guard at the gate confirms that it is early enough to still get bottles.

I don't want to drive the bad road to my supplier, as I couldn't fix the bottles in the car. Let me try at the fuel station on the main road (8 speed bumps ahead). Indeed they have them. When I am about to leave, I realize that the fuel tank is almost empty. Tomorrow is a holiday, so I fill it up right away.

While paying, somebody check my tire pressure; that should be everything then.

I don't have enough money. No problem: I can pay with my phone! Credit "booked" onto my cellphone No. can be used for shopping. A great system, I wonder why it's not available worldwide. Beyond that, money on your phone can't be stolen out of your pocket ...

Going back, somebody greets me (a lot of people do, even with my name, although I don't recognize theirs), and too late I remember it is our night guard. Reversing: „Unakwenda Across?“ [You go to the Across compound?] and give him a lift.

18:00 is past, and Bono needs his dry riverbed walk. Every now and then, we even run there. My house lady is almost finished, she will lock and put the key out.

Bono runs after the tennis balls I throw, suddenly my phone rings: Franz, a relative from Germany, has arrived in Nairobi and looks very much forward to his MAF flight to Lokij in 2 days. He does a round-the-world tour with limited travel arrangements (but it is cheap). Yesterday he was still in Mumbai.

19:00 After sunset, it is quickly dark, almost as if somebody has switched the light off. I am glad for my fresh solar illumination.

19:50 2 liters of cold drink and 2 slices of bread, that is my dinner. Eunice had cooked for Bono, I am adding dog sausage and dry fish. My gas fridge is not doing a proper job today.

20:20 I am trying to remove the chalky coating from the water filter for the round hut. Works pretty easy with citric acid, and doesn't taste as bad as when using vinegar.

My newsletter is overdue, and I didn't translate the last diary on my homepage into English yet. let's do it.

The gas fridge burner gets some cleaning, as well.

23:00 Into bed, tomorrow is another day. I note:

Even on the ground, no time for boredom!

