

Dxpedition to Mpumalanga and Umbuso we Swatini

by Anker Petersen

Very few of our members have probably visited these countries, so I will share some of my recent Dxperiences with you.

But where are they located ? Their names sound African and indeed they are ! MPUMALANGA is both the original and the present name Zulu name of the Northeastern Province of the Republic of South Africa. In colonial times the Boers called it Eastern Transvaal. UMBUSO WE SWATINI is the SiSwati name for the small Kingdom of Swaziland.

After a long night's flight with Iberia via Madrid I arrived with a group of Danes on this package tour to the international airport outside Johannesburg on 24 November, 1999. We were in the highlands some 1700 metres above sealevel and it was nice springtime there on the southern hemisphere. Although we were just 27 degrees south of the Equator, the temperatures were just about 25 Centigrades because of the height, and everything was beautifully green. We drove by bus right away to the capital, Pretoria which was fascinating with all the red blooming Jacaranda trees along its streets.

After an interesting historical sightseeing tour, I was picked up in the evening at our hotel by DSWCI member no. 3404 Godfrey Clemitson who lives nearby in a nice bungalow. After a delicious dinner prepared by Mrs. Clemitson and their daughter, Godfrey demonstrated to me the DX-conditions in South Africa.

On the International SW-bands you can hear Broadcasters from all parts of the World with their transmissions beamed towards Africa. Thus I was able during my Dxpedition to hear Radio Denmark via Norway very well at various times day and night.

Domestic African Broadcasters are heard well on MW and SW up to a line from Kenya to Angola, but not much further north. A few domestic stations in the Middle east and around the Indian Ocean could be heard as well. During the following days I made DX-ing myself in the evenings at various places to the extend the guided tour allowed. My listening confirmed the propagation conditions just mentioned and you can find my tips published in SWN/JAN 2000.

The next day our bus brought us through the vast highlands to the mountaneous and very beautiful rim at the eastern part of Mpumalanga. In the lowlands between this rim and Mozambique the famous Kruger National Park is located with all its wild animals. We spent four days in this area, enjoyed its fantastic scenery at Blyde River Canyon and the thrill of meeting at a few meters distance a lot of wild animals in their right environment, like the hundreds of cute Impalas and several other types of antelopes, zebras, giraffes, elephants, hippopotamus, buffaloes, warthogs, 7 meter long crocodiles, rare wild dogs and last, but not least, sleepy lions at uncomfortable close hands (We could have clapped him, but ...)

At the tropical nights in the restcamps with malaria mosquitoes buzzing around and having seen the long crocodile in the river 50 meters away, I was able to enjoy some DX-ing on my

portable Radio Shack DX-375. Mozambique was only 10 km away, but I found out that only very few stations were on the air on SW and MW ! So it is not only in Europe that we cannot hear several of these African stations. They simply are not on the air !

The guided tour also brought us to Swaziland which is the most primitive country out of the 52 countries I have visited so far. A big part of the one million inhabitants do not have water or electricity in their houses, so their living and farming is very primitive. Despite that they are a proud nation and looked happy. Except for being a British Colony in 1900 – 1940, they neither have been controlled by other nations, nor had Apartheid.

The kingdom is reigned by King Mswati III who is 31 years old. According to tradition, each year he selects a new wife at the Lady's Parade and last November he found his wife no. 7 ! His late father had 20 wives and got 100 children !

Back in South Africa, our final stop was in Johannesburg where we visited the active Goldmines and went down in one of them some 250 metres below the surface ! That was exciting, but we learned that black mine workers were still drilling gold 4000 metres down in terrible heat and dust! Upstairs we witnessed fantastic folklore dancing by mineworkers and other native black people. Finally we drove through the famous township of Soweto which nowadays is a city in good development.