

WHAT I WOULD CALL: A DAY IN A LIFE OF A RURAL NAMIBIAN VET

To anyone that might find this interesting.

My first thoughts before flying across the world were filled with nervousness, I was scared of travelling alone, facing Africa alone. Or so it was in my head, because what I thought would be two a bit difficult weeks turned out to be one of the best in my life ever.

Nick was a big help. He answered all of my questions I had before hand but I could see how difficult it must had been to explain the awesomeness of being the only student instead of part of a group program. As I arrived to Namibia I actually had the first weekend as a quick intro to this amazing country by visiting Sossusvlei with a personal tour guide. I could not imagine a better start, as the view from the top of a 45' was breathtaking. On Monday Nick then came to pick me up personally to take me to Rest, introducing me to everyone and helping me settle in comfortably. Immediately I felt welcomed and everyone I met there were superbly nice, kind and full of interesting stories to tell. I stayed at the student house which is still building itself up, but it has everything you need, most importantly hot water. You have to set the fire for it but luckily I was sharing this household with 3 boys that took care of it for me. We bonded the first night already and only got closer with days to come. At the end of my trip I basically experienced quite a few proper briberies. And I am a vegetarian, so that should say a lot. But nevertheless warming up next to the fire, listening to old 80's classics and talking whatever came to our mind made the nights in Namibia the perfect endings of days filled with learning experiences.

On my second day at Rest I finally got to meet Lindsay, one of the best people on this planet. She was the vet that I spent everyday since with and learned more from than my first 3 years in college. Our days were then filled with interesting vet stuff, from doing both wildlife work and going to farms to work with cattle or operating dogs and cats. I had the opportunity to help with tuberculosis testing, taking blood from 72 cows and 10 bulls, castrating kittens on my own, also actually doing an OVH operation on a pyometra dog. I had the chance to experience stuff I only learned from books so far. Because I was the only student I got to do it all. From every blood smear needed, to drawing blood itself, measuring medicine and applying it either s.c., i.v. or i.m., even setting up infusions on my own and taking care of anaesthesia. I got to do pregnancy diagnostics on lots of cows which I've never done before, experienced a live version of lumpy jaw and abscesses. Moreover I

experienced hands on vet work on wildlife as well. I got to catch an eagle on my own, learned how to do a physical on it, did an ultrasound on a pangolin, did a physical examination on a jackal, drew blood and gave vaccines and almost went on a lion catch and collar job, which was sadly cancelled because of lions acting like lions and not being at the expected location when needed. But the fun thing about it was the not knowing what would happen tomorrow and where would we end up.

To add even extra I got to visit Etosha with Lindsay and her husband Alex. We went together for a whole day, filled our car with picnic goods and they really made me feel accepted or like at home. To make it even more freakingly better we got to see leopards twice. And not like on a tree so away you would need binoculars, but like next to the road, giving us a show. We saw the first one stalking his pray and on our second luck we saw a male and a female mating. Call us lucky or call it the awesomeness of Namibia, anyway it was pretty unforgettable. To top it up we saw black rhinos crossing the road in front of us, whole families of elephants and more of the amazing safari inhabitants.

One afternoon Lindsay and I visited an amazing lady that started rescuing baboons, taking them in from poachers and black markets, and went from knowing absolutely nothing about them to devoting her life to saving them. She is actually accepted by the wild groups now and walks with them daily, learning more and more about this amazing creatures that are like so many others misunderstood. But despite the difficulties of living that way she was one of the kindest people I got the chance to meet.

I keep saying kind, but there is no better way to describe people from Namibia. Wherever you go everyone would be friendly, helpful, generous and full of positive energy. They are accepting of who you are or who you want to be and they all want to do good. By following Lindsay I got to meet so many wonderful and amazing people, even lots of really highly respected vets in Namibia as well as in South Africa, which could one day mean little opportunities for me as well. Nick made all of this possible and I will forever be grateful.

Nevertheless my two weeks would not be as memorable if it weren't for Lindsay herself. She is amazingly sweet and kind but at the same time determined when it comes to her patients, superb vet that knows what to do in a second. She thought me so much not only about vet work but also what it all means, how important it is to do what you enjoy doing, giving it your best but believing in yourself and taking care of yourself too. We spent many hours in a

car together, driving to different places and within those road trips have we bonded, laughed, singed and shared stories you only share with your close friend. She has become my inspiration, someone who has thought me so much, who I could ask anything anytime and we would talk it over, regarding either simple medicine or heavy operation techniques. She is a mentor you can only dream of and an idol I will always look up to.

To sum up, my days were always different, sometimes more chill, staying at the clinic and taking care of its residents, and some were full of traveling to farms and active on vet opportunities. But they were all equally interesting and fun. If you are open to it, you can experience more than your mind could imagine. The right people are already here, you only just have to join them.

Kindest regards,

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