

THE CHELINDA LOOP



GRADING: DIFFICULT

DISTANCE: 36.6KM

ESTIMATED DURATION: 5 HOURS

As with most bike rides on the Nyika, the Chelinda Loop is a challenging one. It is suggested that this ride only be done by those that have a good level of fitness, bike riding fitness that is. As you can tell by the elevation plots it is a tough decision to make which direction you attack this loop from. You will be clocking up roughly 850 climbing metres either way. Enroute you will pass Chelinda Hill (place where the Tumbuka tribe had a vantage point over the advancing Ngunis), cross Chelinda Bridge from where a short walk takes you to the Chelinda Falls and pass Dams 2 & 3. As usual there are breathtaking views in all directions and general game is all around. Be sure to take a pair of binoculars and a camera for game viewing as well as bird-watching. At Chelinda Hill you might see some Red Rock Hare and Klipspringer. A good spot for birding would be around the Chelinda Bridge area where the Wattled Crane and Scarlet-tufted Sunbird can be seen. There are signs of leopard and hyaena along the way and if one is lucky you might spot these elusive nocturnal predators. There is usually a congregation of wildlife around Dams 2 & 3 so be sure to take a moment as you rush down to the respective bridge crossings. As always it is advised to take a raincoat in case of the unexpected shower. This is also one of the areas with a high frequency of fog. We strongly recommend that when this occurs on your trip to stop cycling and push your bicycles until it clears.

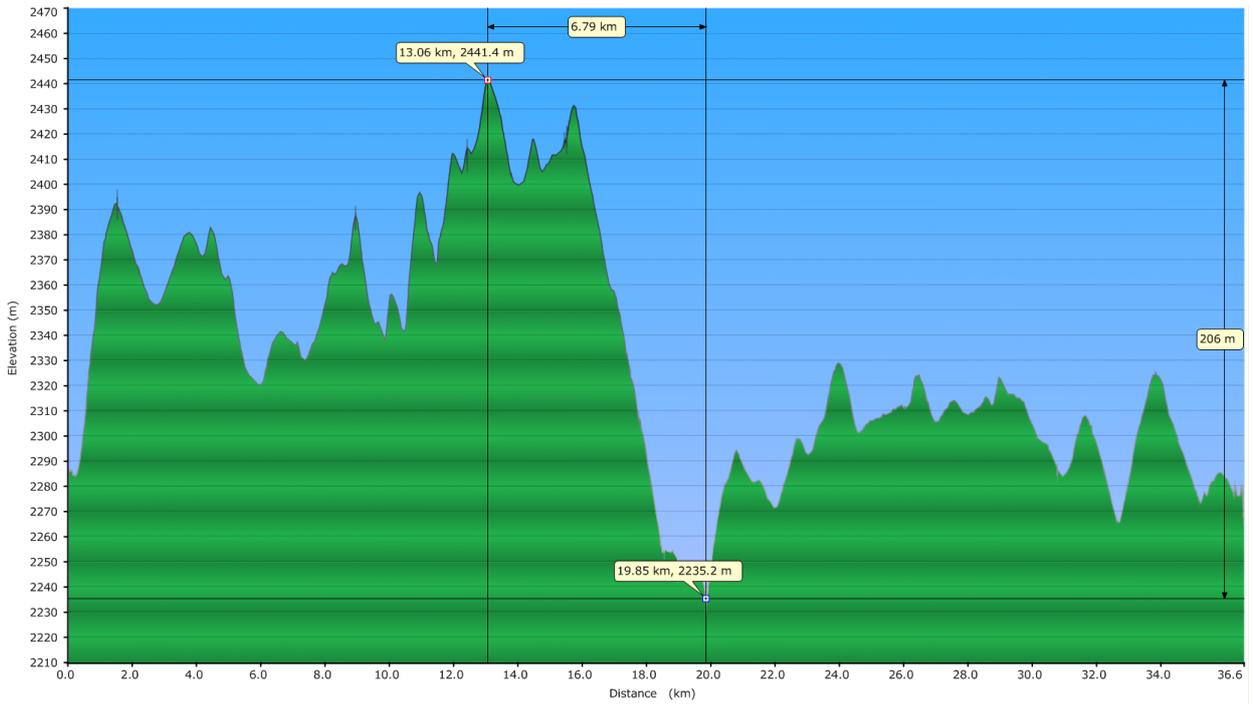
Loop starting via lodge:

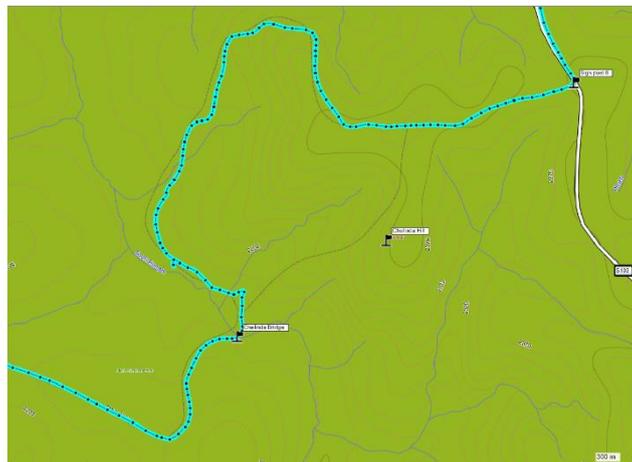
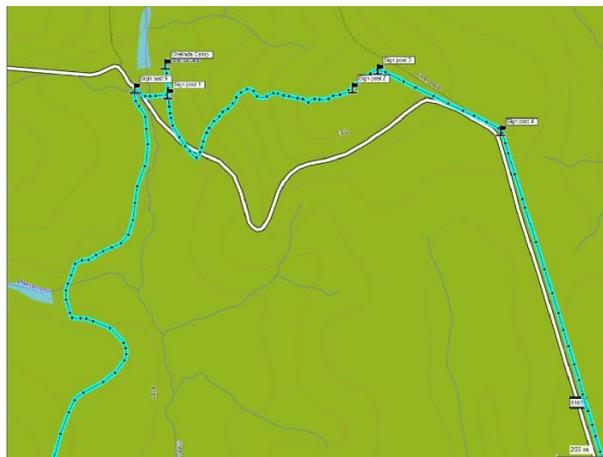
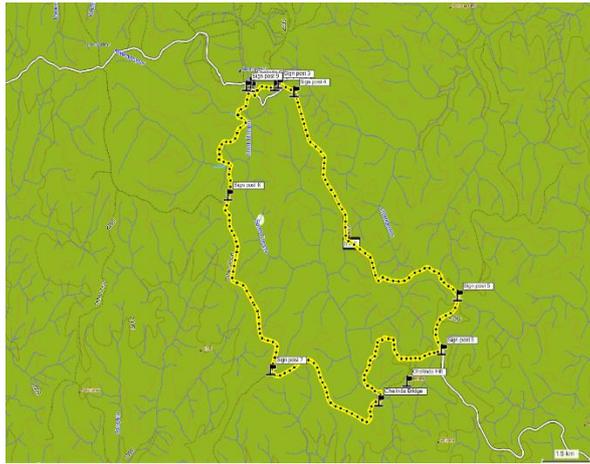
Going around this way you are faced with some tough little climbs but have a rewarding 4km descent to Chelinda Bridge. As you start out you pass sign post 1 (Chelinda Camp, Chelinda Lodge, etc) and climb +/-100m over about 1.5km. At sign post 2 (Chelinda Lodge – Residents only) you continue straight until you exit the pine forest. Turn right at sign post 3 (from here follow directions to Chelinda Bridge until you reach the bridge). You will pass behind the lodge in a southerly direction heading straight past sign post 4. The next 11km sees you climb 50m

but very undulating with some very short, steep ascents which might require some bike pushing. At sign posts 5 and 6 be sure to keep right. Before the long descent you will have Chelinda Hill on your right. Once you get to the bridge you are just over half way and this could be a good opportunity to take a lunch break. Take a short walk downstream to find the Chelinda Falls. The stretch home is relatively flat with a few long, but not so steep inclines. As before, keep right at sign posts 7 and 8. On reaching Dam 3 you are almost home with the last major climb standing in your way. At sign post 9 turn right before getting back to sign post 1 again. Riding up to reception would complete the 36.6km ride. For the cyclist of average fitness the ride should take 3 hours (riding time) but set aside 5 hours (riding + stoppage time) to be comfortable.

Loop starting via dams:

If you head out past the dams first you have a relatively easy ride all the way to Chelinda Bridge and that's when the 4km climb starts. You will follow the sign posts in reverse order. At sign post 1 you will go right and cross the dam wall. Soon after the crossing you will turn left at sign post 9 (Dam 2 & 3, etc). After climbing the hill up from Dam 3 you will turn left at sign post 8 (from here follow directions to Chelinda Bridge until you reach the bridge). Remember to keep left at sign post 7. If you look in an Easterly direction when you are at the bridge, you will be looking up to Chelinda Hill. A short walk downstream will reveal Chelinda Falls. Once you have made the long climb, you will pass the Chelinda Hill summit on your right. At sign posts 6 and 5 keep left following directions to Chelinda Camp. After negotiating a few more tough climbs you will see the pine forests ahead. Pass sign post 4 but turn left at sign post 3 taking you into the pine forest. It's then a free wheel all the way back to camp.





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