

Distance: Approximately 560km
Fuel stops en-route: Kasungu, Chikangawa, Mzuzu, Rumphu
Time: Allow 8-10 hours

Join the M1 and head north past the airport to Kasungu and Mzuzu. The road between Lilongwe and Kasungu (about 100km) is quite potholed, but the remaining 270km to Mzuzu is good road.

Please note that Chikangawa does not always have fuel but Kasungu and Mzuzu usually do and Rumphu usually has even when Mzuzu runs out. At Mzuzu, you will reach a large roundabout in front of Shoprite shopping centre – turn left at the roundabout and head out past the airport.

If you want to stretch your legs, we suggest going to the Mzuzu Sunbird Hotel. To do this, keep straight through the Shoprite roundabout, go straight through the next (clock tower) roundabout and up the main road past all the banks. At the next roundabout turn left and follow the road until you see the green Sunbird sign. Alternatively, A1 restaurant provides good meals and is especially good for Indian dishes. You can find the A1 by turning right just before Peoples supermarket before you get to the banks on main road, and following this little road to its end – you will see the purple A1 building in front of you.

Follow this good tarmac road for about 65 kilometres and then turn left at the sign to Rumphu. This junction is heavily signposted with signs for businesses in the area. 2 kilometres further on, turn right and follow the road for another 3 kilometres until you reach a bridge. Over these 3 kilometres you will be driving along the banks of the Rukuru River at Njakwa Gorge and keen birders should look up for Black Eagles and look to the river rocks for Mocking Chat. This is also a nice area to have a packed lunch or stretch your legs. Cross the bridge and turn left and you will reach Rumphu approximately 5km after that, with the fuel station being on the outskirts of the town on your right.

Drive straight through town and the tarmac road will turn into a dirt road once you reach the outskirts. Please note that there is no fuel at Chelinda and the distance from Rumphu to Chelinda and back is about 240 kilometres with up-and-down gear changing meaning slightly heavier fuel usage, so please make sure you have enough fuel to cover this distance.

Follow the dirt road for 55 kilometres to Thazima gate. About 9 kilometres before the gate, you will see a large split in the road, overlooked by a large billboard which states 9km to Nyika Park – make sure to take the right-hand side of the split.

If you are in a 4x4 and it is out of rainy season, there is a shortcut which can be taken advantage of. Around 33 kilometres from the end of the Rumphu tarmac, look out for a sign on the left for the village of Mwazisi (do not turn here). Almost immediately after that, on your right, you will see a small, green sign which says "NOT MORE THAN 4 TON". Turn right at this sign and follow a narrow dirt track through farmland for 9km. Along the way are some steep hills, both up and down, and rickety bridges to cross. The reason for 4x4 is not the terrain, but the need to sometimes use Low Range for extra power and control on the hills. At around 9km, you will reach a split in the road – bear left and 2km further on you will reach a junction and see Thazima gate about 200m to your right. This takes about half an hour and 10km of travel off your journey.

Thazima Gate is the main park entry and you are expected to pay your park fees to the gate attendant if you do not have a voucher. Allow for 2 hours 20minutes to get to camp.

Once past the gate, the road is signposted and scenic. Please stay on the main road – do not take any alternative roads marked along the way: you may get stuck in mud (rainy season) or have your path blocked by trees pushed over by elephants. Continue straight ahead until you see the first sign for "Chelinda Lodge: 18km" - stick to the right hand side, as indicated; continue straight until you see another sign for "Chelinda Lodge: 7km", still staying to the right. You will eventually reach a sign just before the start of the pine plantation and will continue to bear right, following this last winding road all the way down to Chelinda, about 4km.

If you need to contact Chelinda Camp & Lodge for any reason along the way:
Office: 0881 08 51 77
Paul (Manager):