Travelling in Malawi (Part 1)—We Only Had 2 Weeks But Managed to Visit All These Amazing Places | Not a Mean Feat!

Level B1-B2

Topic : At the beginning, we had two suitcases and our passports. We came back with one more suitcase and heads full of memories. All this happened within two weeks.

Let's travel together to Malawi and experience the extraordinary variety of this small nation. Put on your seatbelts, because it won't be a smooth ride, but that's the definition of adventure, isn't it?

"A good traveler has no fixed plans and is not intent on arriving."

~Laozi, Chinese Philosopher

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TRAVELLING IN MALAWI: LET'S BEGIN THE JOURNEY

Rome was not built in a single day, so I am starting my writing journey with a single sentence.

I have been struggling to begin writing this article. I now understand why. How do you squeeze fourteen days of Malawi into a few paragraphs?

The last time I stepped on Malawian soil was eight years ago, in 2018. I had gone to Malawi for my younger brother's funeral and came back to Poland, heartbroken and utterly lost. The days that followed were total darkness. I walked in a haze, unable to understand what had happened.

It took me eight years to process that grief.

March 2026 was the turning point. My body told me that it no longer wanted to suffer. I had to make changes. Serious changes. Going back to my home country was part of the healing process.

I waited and finally summoned up my courage to tell my husband to book our air tickets in July. For August. For two weeks of holidays. I didn't know exactly where I was going and I planned nothing because being in Malawi would be enough. Whatever we did there would be a bonus.

So, yes, we were going to Malawi. Finally.

On the plane, my husband voiced out his worries: "But Sweety, we have no plans. What are we going to do there exactly?"

I told him: “Don't worry. *Les gens sur place* (the people there) will recommend what to do. The first four days have already been taken care of by my elder brother. Locals know best. In fact, I just want to see my family and visit the places of my childhood.”

My husband shook his head, and I could see that I had not managed to dispel his worries. What if he were right? Was it reasonable to just book tickets and leave? At least he had booked accommodation in Blantyre, so we could relax. For how long, you might ask.

Before leaving, I had been apprehensive about the trip. What would it feel like to see Malawian blue skies and deep red soil? Would I recognise the vegetation, the people, the customs, the new trends? Would I feel out of place?

On the plane, I had felt quite disconnected from Malawians and the language. I watched them as a foreigner would and could not picture myself as one of them.

I realised what twenty-six years of living abroad had done to me. I had become a tourist going to my own homeland. Even my core mannerisms had changed. I noticed that I had become demanding like the French and reserved like the Polish. I could not find my Malawian traits and became worried that the whole trip was going to be a disaster. A cultural shock.

Yet, the moment the plane touched the ground and I saw the familiar landscapes, my heart started to dance again. My feet followed the cue, and I saw myself literally hopping to the entrance of the airport building.

My lungs opened wide to receive the Malawian air and my body felt complete. It was as if one piece of a missing puzzle was being placed where it should have been, and I felt whole once again.

I screamed, "*Takulandirani ku Malawi*" (Welcome to Malawi) as my eyes fell on the painting in the corridor that leads to passport control. Home sweet home!

All the while, my GoPro camera immortalised the moments so that I could retrieve them in the safety of my home when I returned to Poland.

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TRAVELLING IN MALAWI: ARRIVAL IN THE COUNTRY AND FIRST WEEK

Once the formalities were done, I spotted my elder brother and younger brother waiting for us. What a joy it was to see them again, and everything fell into place. This was home.

We would be travelling to Blantyre on the very same day. I felt really grateful that they had come all the way from Blantyre to welcome my husband and me.

On our way to Blantyre, we marvelled at the changes. Eight years is a lot for a person and a country. The country had kept moving while my world had stopped when I was grieving.

My eyes took in the new sights: brand-new roads, new neighbourhoods, shopping malls. But also pothole-filled roads and rundown areas that needed to be rehabilitated at the earliest opportunity. Loud billboards screamed from afar, and the hustle and bustle of Lilongwe drew me into its frenzy.

We stopped twice by the roadside at places that called themselves stopovers. There, we enjoyed raw cassava and nsima with fish. And so, our Malawian trip began on Saturday, August 9th, and gave us some of my best visual memories.

The week rushed before us. On Sunday, we visited my elder brother's house and his family. We had our first nsima meal, and I revelled in the details and the customs. The food was amazing and the hospitality top-notch.

In the evening, we found ourselves at the famous Amaryllis Hotel and enjoyed Blantyre's views and their tea and honey. An unforgettable experience!

Monday saw us heading to the beautiful Mulanje Mountain. We were lucky to find a seasoned guide who took us climbing to Dziwe la Nkhalamba.

It was amazing to see him walk in his flip-flops while we huffed and puffed our way up. As if to totally show off his skills, he graced us with a dive and a clean swim across the cold-water-filled pool. We clapped our hands and cheered, wishing we had brought our own swimsuits.

Later on, my sister-in-law took us to her home village nearby. What a pleasure it was to drink thobwa at her house and visit their farm, with the help of her passionate aunt, who showed us all the ropes. This was one of the highlights of the trip. The meal was delicious, and we ate heartily and talked as if we had known each other for years.

Tuesday took us to the stunning tea plantations of Thyolo. Dear Lord, here we realised that there is paradise on earth. The greenery was astounding, and the vegetation looked lush and tempting.

We did some tea tasting at Satemwa Tea Estate and visited the imperial Huntingdon House, a colonial house that now serves as accommodation. The rooms were fit for kings but exorbitant and exclusive. At Satemwa, we also met French tourists and spoke to them in French.

Just afterwards, we made a quick stop at Thyolo House, another tea estate with a rich Italian history. We learned about the Conforzi family and even spoke Italian with one of the descendants. It was surreal. Here, the rooms were slightly more affordable but still out of our pockets' reach.

As a small consolation, we ate at their restaurant, where they serve first-class meals. We ate and gave a standing ovation to their starter featuring chicken livers. Heaven on earth!

Wednesday proved to be quite adventurous as well. Thankfully, my brother and his wife were free again, so we drove to Zomba Mountain. Lo and behold, whom did we meet there again? The French tourists from Satemwa! The fun thing about touring Malawi is that it is small, and you can visit many attractions in a short amount of time.

Zomba Mountain delivered its beautiful vistas, and we stood at its feet in awe. We saw two waterfalls and picnicked at one of them, soothed by the gentle breeze and peaceful lull of the water.

We were impressed by some local girls who had walked all the way up and declared that they were friendship goals. Of course, there were a few couples here and there, as well as peddlers of mountain goods who tantalised us with berries and flowers.

On our way back, we bought some crafts and stopped at the majestic Ku Chawe Inn, which really looks like Hotel Żubrówka in Białowieża. They could be twins. We had a few drinks while enjoying the views. Later, we stopped at my sister-in-law's sister's house, where we were treated to yet another delicious meal. Her clever son entertained and wowed us, and before we knew it, it was time to head back to Blantyre.

In the evening, we met one of my dear friends and her husband at Casa Mia, a chic restaurant in Blantyre that they had recommended to us. The food and décor were out of this world. No kidding!

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I joked that we were on something because I did not know where I got the energy to do all this in such a short time. I did not feel an ounce of exhaustion, and each day I woke up, I looked forward to visiting yet another place, yet another town. *C'était un pur régal*. It was a real pleasure.

However, we decided to be reasonable on Thursday and solemnly called this day Rest Day. The rest of the places would have to wait. We dedicated this day to friends and family.

So, I met my beloved former school friends at Mijn Kitchen and we had a blast going down memory lane. Before meeting them, we had time to visit my former childhood home in Chilomoni and take some beautiful pictures. There, I saw old faces and old places, and I was transported back to the past, where games and fruit hunts deliciously haunt my memories.

With my school friends, I relived our Chichiri days and caught up with the present. We marvelled at how we had all transitioned into adulthood, with all its twists and turns.

Later that afternoon, we visited my Asisi and her son, who graciously took me into their fold when I lost my parents in a car accident at the age of 13. We joked about the past, and she treated us to her addictive signature *mandasi* (African doughnuts) and other meals.

As dusk approached, we left her home in my brother's car. It was the first time my husband had driven in Malawi during this trip. The experience looked daunting, but he managed. We went to see other family members, and it was heart-warming to reconnect once again. Later on, we drove to our rented apartment, happy that we had seen so many people and heard so many stories.

The evening was spent watching a game in which the Malawian women's football team, nicknamed the Scorchers, were playing. At the time, they were all the rage, and they won their game with the help of the star sisters, Temwa and Tabitha Chawinga.

On Friday, we hit the road again. This time, we wanted a bush experience, so we opted for the picturesque Kutchire Lodge in the heart of Liwonde National Park. If we wanted to be thrilled, we got thrilled all right. Boy! This was one of the scariest experiences I have ever had in my life!

So stay tuned for Part 2!

Until next time!



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