



Hikes to and from

Zulunkhuni River Lodge

A short guide for the hike from
Usisya Beach Eco-Lodge

to

Zulunkhuni River Lodge

(or vice versa)

in 1 or 2 days.

Bookings and information:

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QUICK FACTS

This challenging but beautiful and fun hike leads you from the beautiful Usisya Beach Eco-Lodge in Usisya (+265995636585 or d.kartscher@gmx.de) to the paradise-like Zulunkhuni River Lodge in Ruarwe (but can also easily be walked the other way around). The route is about 20 kilometers but do not

underestimate it as the terrain and the heat can make it feel longer. If you do the hike in one day you can expect to take

between 5 and 8 hours. If that seems too long, or if you want to have an enjoyable village experience,

you can decide to stay over at the hospitable Chiumi Family in Katula. The hike will lead you through

flatlands where you will see a lot of agriculture, through fishing villages and small hamlets, past beautiful

beaches and through mountains with jungle-like vegetation. Throughout the hike you have beautiful

views over the lake. You do not need a compass or a map as long as you remember one rule; if the lake

is on your right and the mountains on your left, you are traveling north and in the direction of Ruarwe. If

the lake is on your left and the mountains on your right, you are traveling south and in the direction of

Usisya.



Walking on the foot path with Mbowe Island in the distance.

It is possible to organize a porter if you have heavy luggage or if you feel more comfortable with a local guide to show you the way.

WHAT TO BRING?

- Enough drinking water.
- Money.
- Protection against the sun.
- Plasters in case you get blisters.
- Snacks. On the way you are able to buy sweets, biscuits and cool drinks but you may want to bring some (dried) fruit, nuts or bars for extra energy.

THE ROUTE



The shop in Lupilu where you can buy cold drinks and snacks.

It is difficult to give a precise description of the route as rain seasons, erosion and time make small and big changes. Instead of giving a step by step description we list the villages and settlements that you will walk through. If you want to know how you are doing or if you feel that you are getting lost just ask the

local people in which village you are and they will be happy to help you along. The description is given from Usisya to Zulunkhuni but we trust that you will be able to find your way if you do it the other way around.

- Usisya Beach Lodge is on the foot of the Mphande hill in Usisya. From here you can walk along the beach (not recommended as the walk through the sand is very heavy, but beautiful) or in the direction of the mountains towards Nkhutu. We prefer this route as it leads you through friendly villages and nice roads.
- Lupilu has a nice store where they sell cold drinks and, if you are lucky, delicious fresh buns.
- Chiweta is where you will join the lake shore path (or follow that path when you opted for the beach route). This path has been used for centuries and is still used every day by locals and eager walkers like you.
- You will see Mbowe island getting closer. Mbowe is the half-way point between Usisya and Ruarwe.
- Right opposite Mbowe island is Katula village. If you choose to do the hike in two days, this is where your journey ends for day one.
- After Katula you will reach Chiwisi (marked by the concrete bridge and the big two storey 'upstairs house') followed by Kawanda. You will recognize Kawanda by the long wide beach. Here you can choose to follow the beach path towards Ruarwe or follow the route through Bunga Village in the mountains. The latter is recommended as it is slightly shorter and provides you with the most beautiful views. To reach Bunga you follow the electricity line up the hills to the Bunga schools. You pass the primary school on your left and later the secondary school on your right. Follow the path over several hills and through some rivers (this part is pretty exhausting) until you see a biggish road that leads uphill into cassava fields and a small path leading left into a valley towards the lake. Follow this path to the left and you will arrive in Ruarwe village. Go towards the main beach and follow the lake path to the North. From Ruarwe it will take you about 20 to 30 minutes to reach the Zulunkhuni River Lodge.



Walking into Katula, the house on the left is where you can sleep.



Chiumi's house in Katula village.

SLEEPING ON THE WAY

If doing the full hike in one day seems overwhelming or if you would like an authentic and awesome village experience, sleeping over in the Chiumi's house is a great option. Chiumi is the village headman of Katula and he and his family will welcome you in their home on the beach where they can prepare a simple bed for you. They will cook a traditional meal

in the evening and you can enjoy calm and quiet village life while you rest from your hike. The meal and a bed will cost you 5,000 Kwacha per person.

This is also a perfect option if you can only leave Usisya in the afternoon, as the hike from Usisya to Katula should take you maximum 3 hours.

INTERESTING FACTS

- The land around Usisya is remarkably flat compared to the surrounding mountains. The flatlands are extensively used for agriculture, not because the soil is remarkably fertile, actually the opposite, but because farming in flatlands is much easier than farming in the mountains. Ruarwe used to have similar flatlands, although not as big, but they got swallowed by a flood in the 1940s.
- The people in this area prefer farming cassava over maize because sand is better for cassava and monkeys can't dig and destroy the harvest.
- The half way mark (in distance) is the small mountain island that rises up from the lake a few hundred meters from the shore. This island is Mbowe island and rumour has it that it has played an important role in the history of the Tumbuka people. Around 1840 King Shaka in Kwazulu Natal (South Africa) was a mighty warrior and his soldiers went all the way up to Malawi. When they were fighting the Tumbuka many fled to the island, where they were at an advantage as they had boats. King Shaka's fighters did not know how to swim and many Tumbuka survived by staying on the island until the coast was clear.
- You will come past a place called Kawanda that you will recognize by the long white beach. The local youngsters call this place 'Norway' because Norway also has long white beaches, apparently.

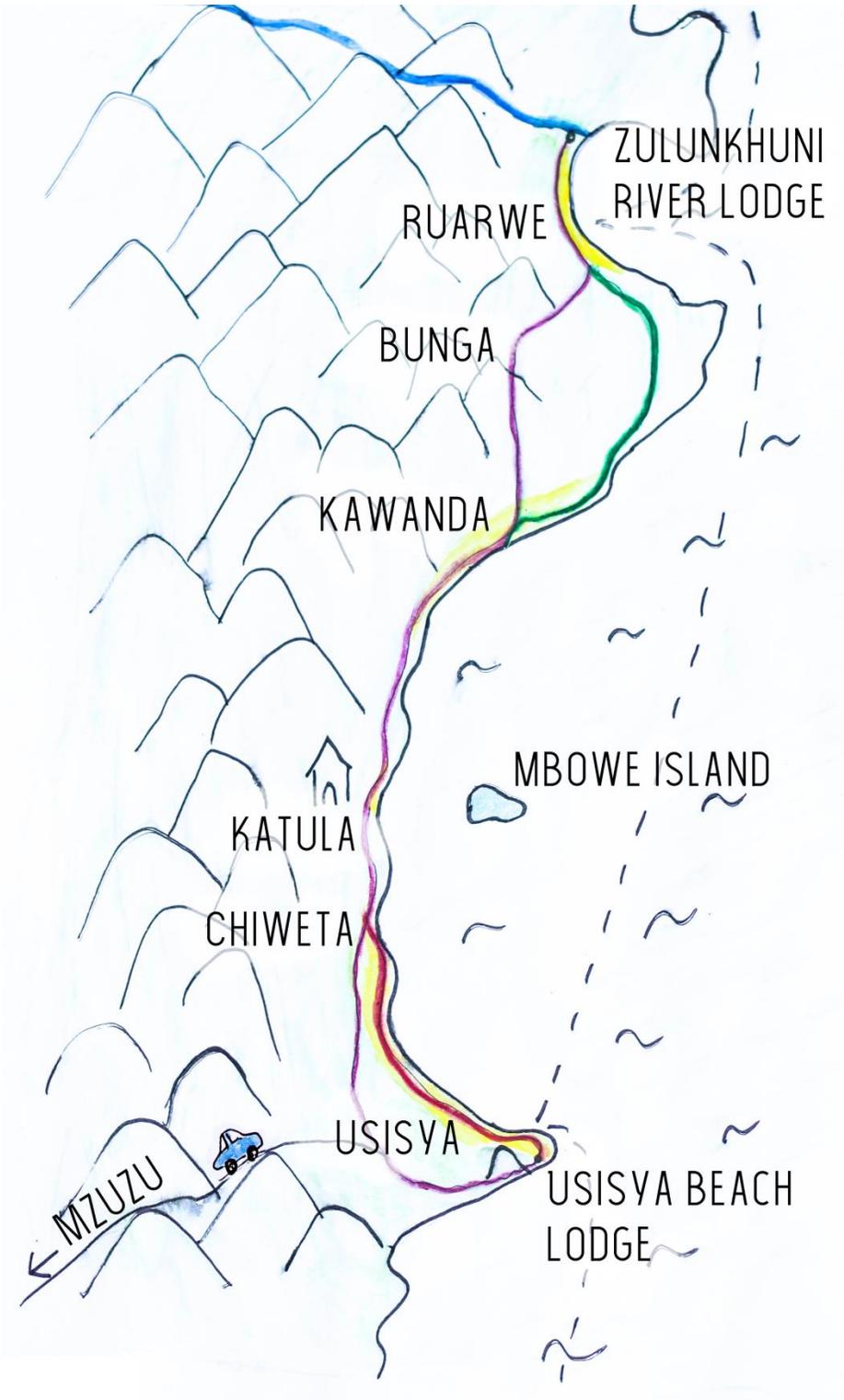


The 'upstars house' in Chiwisi. Owned by the local MP.

USEFUL CHITUMBUKA WORDS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Hello Madame/Sir | Monile Bamama/Badada |
| • Thank you very much | Yewo Chomeni |
| • How are you? | Muli uli? |
| • I am well, and you? | Nili makola, kwali imwe? |
| • How did you wake? | Mwawuka uli? |
| • I woke well, and you? | Nawuka makola, kwali imwe? |
| • How did you spend your day? | Mwatandala uli? |
| • I spend my day well, and you? | Natandala makola, kwali imwe? |

THE MAP OF THE HIKE



The purple route is the regular route. The green route is the diversion if you choose to follow the lake path at Kawanda and the red route is you choose to follow the beach route in Usisya. Enjoy!

(This map is not an accurate depiction of distances and mountains that are present etc, but just a tool to help you along the way.)