

Rat of the Bus

In Uganda, 2019, I took an overnight Jaguar Kisoro to Kampala bus to Kabale, 75 km. First it left 30 minutes late, but this is normal; but it then took 2.5 hours of very slow speeds in the rain; I was already wet and cold from a heavy shower, vainly searching for share-taxis, and thought I'd never arrive. I knew that if I was late the kitchen where I stayed would be closed and I'd get no dinner, an expectation that was depressingly fulfilled.

I was on the aisle, the window seat was soaking wet and the conductor made some luckless individual sit there. In the two seats opposite were two friends who spent much of their time moaning and complaining about the service much to annoyance of the conductor and some other passengers.

Suddenly: WTF! During a quiet lull, they both stood up yelling and whacking their seats with whatever they had handy. WTF!

And then I saw a rat scurrying across the aisle towards the front of the bus. It had appeared on the window sill at shoulder height before it was spotted.

I was able to gleefully join in with the news of where it had gone and we made size comparisons that got bigger in the telling. It passed the time.

Later, twice, the conductor turned off the lights as was normal on a night bus so people could sleep. But almost immediately there was a wail of Noooooos!!! From the panicky complaints a significant number of people didn't want the light off with a rat on the prowl.

I sure was glad to get off that bus and not go on to Kampala, at the rate it was going it probably took another 12-15 hours instead of the average 8-9.

It still took over another hour to organise a boda-boda (motorbike taxi) for the ten km to Bafuka and make the slow journey over a mucky steep hill and around by the lake and then walk, slip and slide the last km, as it was too muddy and steep for the bike, to arrive at midnight.



I thought afterwards that it would have been fun to stand up and announce some sinister warnings.

The first would be how rats have anaesthetics in their teeth; they make a small nip on your foot to immobilise it so you feel no sensation. You only notice your foot has been eaten when you fall over trying to get up.

Secondly they like to hide in handbags, you may be looking for something and put your hand in and find one or more of your fingers has been bitten off. You then have to keep the handbag firmly closed otherwise you won't get your fingers back, because they run away with them.

Though, like humans, they have families to feed and you wouldn't begrudge their hungry crying children a bit of nourishment, would you?

If you look first and see a rat with lipstick or nail varnish on you should not make any assumptions as to their sex lives or gender preferences. For them: chemical goodies act as a welcome spice to their penis desserts.

But, be warned! Those you never get back. And, because of the anaesthetic, you won't know until you go to the toilet later and wonder "Where's my penis gone?" – You know you had it several hours ago.

And another thing: Do you know that rats have a bone in their penis? That's another thing to worry about. But because there are susceptible women and children on the bus you won't go into the details – Let their fertile imaginations run riot.