

## THE SWIMMING HOLE

During a sabbatical from their work, my foot-loose daughter's family from NJ stayed with us in Tanjay for a whole year starting mid 2015. And they explored the regular tourist trappings, and found a few more. They told us about a nice swimming hole in the small river of Amlan, next town to Tanjay. They had brought the kids there a few times, after a visit to the main attraction in that area, the town's zoo. It had some imports, and local interesting flora and fauna.

There's a 3 mile rustic concrete road that runs alongside the river, into a barrio with the melodious name of Tanbohangin.



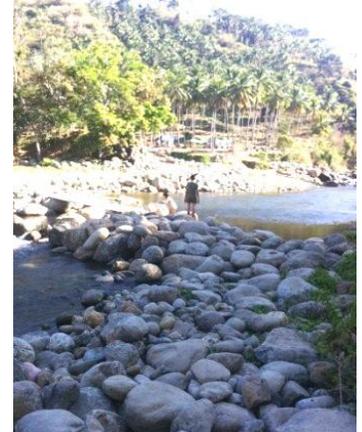
Pictures on left show the two grandkids enjoying themselves at the swimming hole, while nanny looks on. It really is nothing more but a deeper outlet channel with sandy bottom under the steel and aluminum pedestrian bridge. Apparently, the river had been bulldozed so the natural large boulders and stones were made to form some sort of dam that created a placid, knee deep, though silty lagoon upriver, below.

The lower right of the Google map shows the end of the concrete road, that forks up to the right towards the zoo, and also forks and loops to the left at a steep grade towards the river under the foliage of trees.

The map clearly shows a bridge crossing the river but it is just a dam of boulders (see right pic). The dark slit across the bridge is a deeper water channel that is the swimming hole, located



under the metal bridge for pedestrians. Takes adept balancing to walk on the boulders to get there. It is worse when rainy.



Vehicles have to ford the river to get to the other side which dead ends at a camp site.

I enjoy wedging myself on the rocks at the downstream end of the swimming hole where the gushing water massages my back and limbs.

Yesterday, I did a very stupid and dangerous thing.

I was driving back from Dumaguete and noticed that many of the rivers were brown and muddy, indicative of the recent constant rains. But at Amlan, the river looked clear. I decided to drive up to Tambohangin and see the swimming hole. Besides, I was using the newly purchased used Suzuki utility vehicle popularly known as Ezride, and I wanted to test it on steep roads.

Two photos on right (which matches the pictures from last year) show that everything was washed away. No dam, bridge and fording passage. At least someone had placed a road barrier, shown below.



But when I turned around and reached the steep portion after the tight right turn, the wheels started spinning. I figured I needed more momentum, so I backed up to start anew, but didn't turn tight enough and got stuck on the roadside beside the steep embankment where a few inches away was a 20 foot drop. See photo at right. Luckily, my left rear wheel was blocked by a large boulder. My forward and backward jockeying only made it worse.



As I inched my way out of the seat, my heart was pounding, my breath raspy, and my gut churning, though the feeling to throw up was more to throw down. So for the first time in many years, I went to the river and did the latter.

After I calmed down, I took stock of my situation. Definitely, I had to get help. If I couldn't retrieve the Ezride today, I could come back tomorrow. But how to get home? The cell phone had no signal. And it started showering. Fortunately, I had an umbrella. So I slowly walked uphill, pausing frequently to rest, aiming for the fork in the road where there was a guardhouse.

And indeed, the person manning it was a minor barragay official of Tambohangin. He was most helpful. He told me where in the vicinity was there a cell signal. He suggested options of getting a barragay vehicle to tow, or a group of men to push. He said he was an expert driver and could handle everything. Then he drove off in his motorcycle to see his barragay boss stationed near the zoo. When he came back, he said he had arranged for a group of men from the zoo to come over and help. In the meantime, I managed to call the house and told Lisa.

Six men came in their motorcycles, and literally lifted the back end of the Ezride to align with the road. Then the barragay fellow backed up to the level area further below, gunned the engine and spurted uphill, made the crucial right turn, but also got stuck with rear wheels spinning at the steep portion, so the men ran up and pushed hard, and succeeded.

I thanked them profusely and tipped them generously, and everybody was happy.

In retrospect, if the men had ridden on the Ezride, the added weight on the rear wheels could have propelled it up. The white vehicle shown fording the river is an Ezride, but could have been a 4-wheel drive. And my van used last year has big wheels, and road was dry.

The photo below is at another swimming hole, a hot one, but that's another story to tell.

