


CAPE TOWN | DAY ZERO | WATER CRISIS

I am Sridhar Ramachandran originally from Cuddalore, South India now a permanent resident living with my family (wife and 2 kids 8yo & 6yo) in Johannesburg South Africa. This is a real life experience of me and my families stay in Cape Town during **Day Zero** water crisis. Our holiday was planned during Mar/April 2018 to tour South Africa with our family and to drive to Cape Town by road. My parents (Dad & Mum) came from India in February 2018. My Sister's family (Sis, BIL & Niece) came from Germany in last week of March 2018. We were to set off to Cape Town by end of March and return first week of April 2018 which is when the Day Zero was about to be implemented and was spoken everywhere. We were 9 persons in total 6 adults and 3 kids. The distance from Johannesburg to Cape Town was about 1400kms. We hired a Toyota quantum 11-seater van to be more convenient. Me and my brother-in-law were going to take turns driving. We are aware of the drought situation in Cape Town through media and never really knew how worse the situation was until we arrived. We didn't feel a thing about scarcity of water due to our water supply in Johannesburg was never interrupted. Our plan was to drive and have a night stop on the way and to arrive in Cape Town the next day. Spend 5 nights in Cape Town and to return home via Kimberley (Diamond mining town - Big Hole & Diamond Museum) allowing a night stay there.

Reservation



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Fri, March 30, 2018 Wed, April 4, 2018



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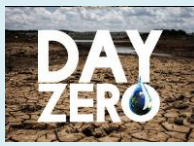
I did all the car hire & accommodation bookings in early part of the March 2018 just to avoid last minute disappointment. The main stay in Cape Town was a four bedroom 2-storey house which will be big enough to fit all of us. Later we came to realize that the house belonged to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's daughter Mpho who currently lives in Netherlands. This was also evident from the photos displayed all around the house and confirmed by the caretakers of the property. It was listed in AirBNB and was managed by one of her friends (The pic above shows the establishment and our reservation dates).

We set off from Johannesburg on 29th Mar 2018 and stopped at our first night stopover Beaufort west (Wagon Wheel Country Lodge) after driving close to 900kms. The facility had fixed notes in bathrooms about saving water. The bath tubs water connections were disconnected. The showers were fitted with water saving heads which will only make a mist of water using a fraction of water but served the purpose. The effect of drought in Western Cape Province is evident 500kms farther from Cape Town.

The next morning 30th March we left Beaufort West and drove towards Cape Town. We had breakfast and lunch on the way, almost all establishments we saw had notes of water shortages. We arrived at the house we booked around 2:00pm and met with the host. They explained to us about the water shortages and showed us the meter recently fitted by Cape Town Municipality. The house originally had 4 adults listed in the household. So the house had allowance of 200 litres per day for 4 persons which works out to 50 litres per person per day.

That means every day the water meter will add 200 litres in to the counter and once we had used that amount it will shut off the valve. Prior to our arrival the house didn't had any guests for past 5 days hence the meter had 1000+ litres waiting to be used. This was a bonus for us. Although we were 9 persons who will be staying we will only get 200 litres for all of us per day due to meter pre-programmed by Municipality. Back in Johannesburg we are used to using close to 800 litres for 4 of us. We also had a garden back home. We were used to the 200 Litres per person per day in Johannesburg and we need to shift to 200 litres for 9 persons per day.

We had a family meeting about the water crisis and everybody agreed to support with the sparing usage of water. We decided to keep a check of the water meter every day. The next morning we all got ready and the last ones were in the shower and the water stopped suddenly, we then went to check the meter to our surprise the meter (pictured below) showed close that means we have used that 1000+ litres plus the days allowance of 200Litres in just one day. Most of the day will be spent out of home due to holidays so we encouraged ourselves we will be OK. We also added in our shopping list to buy some bottled 5L cans in case of emergency and from that time we constantly had to buy bottled water to drink and wash. The supermarket was just around the corner.



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Luckily the house had a swimming pool which had water and it was disinfected with chlorine. We had to bring water in buckets from swimming pool to toilets and shower etc which was upstairs as the 200 litres per day was not even enough for flushing toilets. We notified about this to the hosts.



This crisis continued for the next 5 days which is all of our stay in Cape Town and deep in our minds the water rationing and conservation became our nature of life. Not only for the adults but also the kids knew how precious water is and wasting water is such a sin. This will never be forgotten. We would go places during the day and spend most of the days outdoors and when we return in the evenings the water problem will haunt our stay. Reading in media and watching in television will not bring about much change until you experience it for yourself it won't be understood. Everyone we spoke to in and around Cape Town had already got used to water saving measures and economical usage of water.

On 4th April 2018 we left Cape Town with lot of memories of the struggle for water and arrived in Kimberley. After our visit to the Kimberley Diamond mines the next day 5th of April we came home late in the evening and had a proper shower back home and it was a big relief for all of us. This was a very memorable holiday as it was a grand re-union for all my family, my parents and sister's family at the same time in one place after 10 long years and it was also the day zero trip.



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What are the strategies me and my family used to minimize and conserve.

Although our stay of 5 days was short to implement a drastic change whilst we were there, but it gave a very good insight for all of us of how precious water is?

- We can now conserve water better than before
- We do not leave tap open when brushing or shaving
- We prefer quick showers, Instead of bathing in a bathtub.
- Replaced shower heads with aerated water saving shower heads
- Stopped doing car wash and spraying water in yard.
- Watering garden with water can instead of hose.
- Educate anyone who will be wasting water

What is Day Zero?

Day Zero does not mean that there is no water in our dams. It does mean, however, that the dams are at a crucial low. This crucial low means that dam storage will be at 13.5%. This is when the City will turn off most taps, leaving only vital services with access to water. "Some key areas will be prioritized to stay connected, but these areas will be extremely limited. The areas which will stay connected will be the majority of densely populated informal settlements," the City of Cape Town said in a statement.

"Most schools will have to close if they don't have their own safe supply from boreholes or rainwater tanks. Many businesses will not be able to operate unless they can provide temporary (off-mains) toilets and drinking water,"

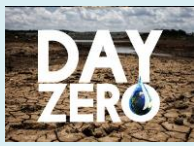
What happened with day zero in SA?

Day Zero was first announced by the City of Cape Town in 2017, the 2018 date for Day Zero has been changed numerous times – March, May, then forward to April, pushed back to June, and later to July 9 2018.

Day Zero was Cape Town's imminent doomsday, the date the taps may run dry and residents begin queuing for water.

Day Zero is a planned response to the worst drought the city has experienced in 100 years.

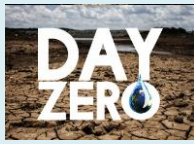
Capetonians were warned that if residents continue to use more than 50-litres per day per person, the City may have to switch off taps on day zero.



What you can do with 50 Liters of Water?

Although the below chart explains how you can use 50 litres of water effectively per day, but if you are not really careful 50 litres can be finished in a matter of couple of minutes. For several months in a row with day zero approaching, the rationing water strategy of City of Cape Town achieved to pass this doomsday without closing the taps, This was a big success achieved by educating people constantly.





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What were the alternative options available to get water?

There was always bottled water available for drinking purposes which is not always affordable for all. Bottling was done in other parts of South Africa and transported to Cape Town. Alternative water sources are groundwater and desalination.

An improbable idea is being floated to solve Cape Town's water crisis: towing an iceberg from Antarctica over 2,000 kilometers to the South African city. But to prevent that reality, Nick Sloane, a marine salvage expert says towing an iceberg from Antarctica could solve the problem. The ideal iceberg would need to be one kilometer in length, 500 meters across and 250 meters deep with a flat surface. If successfully towed, melted water from the iceberg can potentially provide 150 million liters of freshwater every day for a year. While it won't solve all of Cape Town's water problems, it could make a huge dent and supply up to 30% of the city's annual needs, Sloane estimates.

What is the current situation?

The City of Cape Town implemented significant water restrictions in a bid to curb water usage, and succeeded in reducing its daily water usage by more than half to around 500 million litres per day in March 2018. The fall in water usage, combined with strong rains in June 2018, led dam levels to steadily increase, and for the City to continually postpone its estimate for "Day Zero". In September 2018, with dam levels close to 70 per cent, the city began easing water restrictions, indicating that the worst of the water crisis is over.

What is the prognosis?

One very recent case that cities around the world are watching is Cape Town's severe drought and the threat of "Day Zero" when the city's taps were due to run dry. Although the city came close to having to turn off the taps, they managed to avoid it. After better rains in 2018 and significant reduction in water use across the city, the dams are now reassuringly fuller than they were in 2017 and 2018, although caution is still needed ahead of the winter rains.

Day Zero can return again due to rising global temperatures, make droughts in the region more likely (or) if the usage exceeds the availability.

"WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO GET USED TO USING LESS WATER ON A PERMANENT BASIS."



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