

GRAVEL TRAVEL!

#1 4X4 MAGAZINE IN SA

DRIVE OUT

When the heavens
open up in the
KGALAGADI

DISCOVER THE
KLEIN-KAROO

Anysberg • Seweweekspoort
Swartberg • Gamkaskloof

FIRST AID

What to pack,
how to help

GEAR

High-lift jacks:
all you need to know

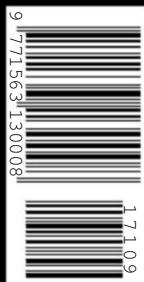
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The Elephant Coast

Northern KZN (and a quick beer in Ponta)

MARCH 2017
#109



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It's a sand lover's Nirvana up here



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Tour with us!

Join *Drive Out* and Bhejane 4x4 Adventures on an unforgettable tour to Botswana. More on p. 43.



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KLEIN KAROO

When going to hell and back isn't a bad thing at all.



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MY WHEELS

Not just any roof tent for this Land Cruiser.

Spiders, serenity and... salad

When I think about KwaZulu-Natal, I'm reminded of my childhood years in Newcastle and Durban. I think back to our family farm near the town of Ingogo, not too far from Utrecht, and a university holiday that me, my brother and a couple of other guys took in a Volkswagen Baja Bug.

We drove all the way from Pretoria to the North Coast in it, and there spent a few days in Sodwana.

Now those days Sodwana was still a wild place. And by that I don't mean there were rough oaks. One day, we stopped near the town to buy firewood. One of the other guys and I were sitting in the back, so the wood was stacked on our laps. But not long after we set off again, a spider suddenly appeared from the bundles.

Everyone started screaming like girls and there was pandemonium. Needless to say, the wood (along with us) was out of that Bug much quicker than it got in.

Luckily, Evan's visit to the north of KZN for this month's magazine concluded without any such incidents. I must admit that I was a bit jealous of him, because as you'll see, he visited one of the most beautiful parts of South Africa. And just to add a bit more, he jumped over the border into Mozambique to see what's cooking at Ponta do Ouro when it's not filled with bucket loads of South Africans in high season.

We also went to check out the dirt roads north of the R62 between Montagu and Oudtshoorn a while ago, and drove down to Gamkaskloof, or 'Die Hel', while we were in the area. It's a different, rougher sort of beauty than the north of KZN but charming in its own way.

Then we've added a new section to the magazine this month, called Six of the Best. In this edition, we highlight six of the best destinations to visit with your 4x4 and bush trailer. We'll tackle something new every month and you'll end up with tons of destinations and ideas.

Mic van Zyl gives his opinion on the Swedish "Moose Test" with the new Hilux,

as well as our own test. Read it, his explanation makes a lot of sense. And I hope people read it carefully, because one or two letters following our article about the Moose Test late last year made it clear that not everyone read that piece so well. It's a shame, because in spite of a lot of hard work, careful measurements on the test track and clear findings, some people still believe that we were paid by Toyota. Then again, there are people who still believe the earth is flat and jet planes spray "chemtrails" in the air to control our minds," so I guess one shouldn't be surprised.

As usual, Charles wrote a great Hot Topic article, this month looking at the way to prepare for the day someone gets hurt on tour. It's more than two Panados and a swig of brandy, but it's not so difficult that

you need a degree either.

Then Gerrie had a look at high-lift jacks for our Gear section. If there's one thing just as dangerous as it is useful, this jack is it. That's why this article is so valuable.

And lastly, Lise Beyers puts four delicious salads together in Boskos. Yes, you got that right: salad. I don't think anyone loves meat more than I do, but few things complement a delicious steak or chop like a good salad. If you don't believe me, you haven't tasted one of Lise's salads yet.

So buckle up and hold on. Here we go. 🚗

Jaco



PHRASE of the month

WOUTER LABUSCHAGNE ON A K GALAGADI'S LION, P. 52



I hoped quietly that he was roaring from a full stomach and not an empty one."

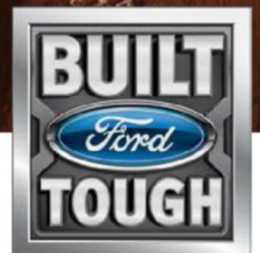
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Contributors



JACQUES LOURENS

HOT TOPIC, P. 20

A special thanks goes to the paramedic Jacques Lourens for approaching *Drive Out* with tons of information for this Month's Hot Topic on overcoming medical emergencies in the bush. Your generosity might save a life, Jacques.

What is your earliest travel memory?

Going down to the coast near Sedgfield over December holidays, where we stayed at Trail's End on the Swartvlei Lake.

The best place you've ever visited?

One of my most unique experiences was a week on a houseboat on Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe. We caught tigerfish and watched game from the river. That was real Africa.

What is your number one travel tip?

Based on my experiences as a medic, I'd say preparing for a medical emergency and having a plan in place for these eventualities is key.

Do you plan your trips in detail or just go with the flow?

I love exploring maps and Google Earth by zooming in to places. You can switch to various layers to show pictures, topographical info and places. Most of my trips are planned in a fair amount of detail like this.

Which destination in Southern Africa would you like to visit?

I'm planning an East Coast round trip, starting from the Garden Route (where I stay) up towards Coffee Bay and then north towards the Drakensberg. I hope to do some climbing and hiking.



BOET GROBBELAAR

MY WHEELS, P. 30

Boet Grobbelaar has the outdoors in his blood. Before retiring, he used to be a farmer and professional hunter. These days, he tours widely with his wife Marina in their custom-modified Toyota Land Cruiser.

Do you plan your trips in detail or just go with the flow?

We travel with a guide to dangerous places like the Doodsakker in Angola and Namibia's Skeleton Coast. But

to other destinations we travel as the spirit guides us.

What is your earliest travel memory?

As a young man in my two-man tent in the bushveld.

The best place you've ever visited?

Mana Pools, Zimbabwe.

What is your number one travel tip?

Make sure your fridge is up to the task and always carry enough water and fuel with you.

Do you have a favourite travel writer?

Jan Joubert.

What music do you listen to on the road?

Hits from the seventies and eighties and Country.

On my bucket list...

Lake Malawi and Gonarezhou.

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WINNING LETTER



WHEN SHOULD YOU REPLACE YOUR SHOCK ABSORBERS?

Once I came across a motoring programme on TV where an expert on shock absorbers was saying how "irresponsible" some motorists are because they don't change their shock absorbers every 40 000 km.

I suddenly realised that I am one of those, as I'd driven 90 000 km with my original set of shocks. I decided then and there to change the shock absorbers on my sedan.

Shortly afterwards, I went to fetch my car one night after work. I was full of expectation, but after a few kilometres I realised that nothing felt different. I wiggled and pulled the steering wheel around a bit and took a few sharp corners, but I couldn't detect a difference in the vehicle's ride quality.

The next day I went back to the dealer. I was only convinced that he'd changed the shock absorbers once he'd shown me the old set. So I phoned my brother-in-law for advice. He said you should only change your shocks when your car drives like a dream: "Every turn is a nightmare".

So I'd like to know, how does one tell when your shocks are finished? I don't feel comfortable with waiting until my car "drives like a dream".

I bought my current bakkie new in 2011, and I've since put 162000 km on the clock. According to my log-book, I towed the bush trailer for about 4000 km of those, and later we did about another 25000 km with the

bush trailer hitched to the tow bar.

My bakkie is entirely standard. I don't drive over many obstacles, but I definitely change to 4x4 if I need to reach my destination. The terrain we usually tackle ranges from poor gravel road to places where you need low range. We often camp at spots you can't reach with a sedan. These places are usually without electricity, so we take everything we need. Thus it's often heavily laden.

Even with 162000 km on the clock, I can't tell if there's been a difference in my bakkie's ride quality or not. That makes me wonder: What would an honest shock absorber merchant look at if he had to give me advice about changing the shocks?

Based on the advice of tip #7 in the article "33 plans to hit the road in 2017" (*Drive Out* #107) I'm not going to say which manufacturer's bakkie I drive. But it's not one of the top two manufacturers in the country.

ROLAND BARNARD
Ladybrand

Mic van Zyl of Ironman SA answers:

You're asking a very important question, and the answer isn't so simple. Here's my opinion on the matter.

The function of a shock absorber in a vehicle's suspension system is to control the action of the springs. Strictly speaking, the shock absorber doesn't absorb the "shocks" or unevenness of the road surface. It's the work of the springs to

keep the vehicle at its optimal ride height without weight, to be able to carry the vehicles prescribed weight and then to also absorb and isolate unevenness on the road from the cabin.

So a vehicle's tyres are also part of the suspension system. Hard tyres lead to a hard ride while softer tyres drive better, but don't handle as well. The better you control the up-and-down motion of the suspension with the shock absorber, the more you maintain the tyres' contact with the surface of the road. This ensures better and safer vehicle control, and improves the ride quality.

I should add that a shock absorber is a changeable, serviceable part. In other words, a shock absorber suffers wear and tear through daily use, just like a clutch and brakes. It's a slow process, and happens without you realising it. You might only realise it's happening when you suddenly drive in a brand new version of your vehicle.

The effect of the original shock absorbers, especially on bakkies, is often nothing special. Sometimes we feel that drivers almost forget about shock absorbers, and add them as an afterthought. I'm probably exaggerating, but there is a noticeable difference in the ride quality and handling, even on a new bakkie, when you install a set of specialist shock absorbers.

Back to your question. There is only one accurate way to test a shock absorber. It needs to be removed from the vehi-

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WEN!

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cle and be tested on a shock absorber system. The system pumps the shocks up and down at various speeds and measures the damping of the shocks against its up-and-down motion. These results then need to be compared with the specifications of the original shock absorbers (provided that the original specifications were measured on the same shock absorber system). A more practical approach would be to compare the test results of the used shock absorbers with those of new shocks from the same manufacturer and with the same part number.

Please note that any shock absorber test that is done with the shock absorbers still attached to the vehicle is subject to a range of factors that can and will influence the results. That includes, among other things, tyre pressure, wear and tear on the steering and suspension components, and wear of the shock absorber mounting points. In my experience it's almost impossible for a test like this to deliver accurate results. So what should you do?

There are indeed a few things you can look at to see if your shock absorber is finished. An oil leak on the shock is an

obvious one. Flat-ish patches of wear on your tyres is another good indication. And any technician worth their salt will be able to tell you relatively quickly that there's a problem if he drives your vehicle. But in my experience such technicians can be quite scarce.

If you still don't find a fault, consider the terrain you usually drive your vehicle over, how hard it works and for how long. But I've been in this industry for 23 years and I still don't have a reliable answer for this.

You say that the bakkie has already done 162 000km with the original shock absorbers. You also say you see no difference in the bakkie's ride quality. I have no reason to doubt you, because that is often the case with bakkies that have been cared for properly. Just remember that the wear and tear of shock absorbers is a very even and slow process, and not something you would suddenly notice.

The problem is that you might only realise it when you have to swerve out for a child or animal. That's happened to me! Then you suddenly realise you have no control over your vehicle. My and my family's safety is my biggest priority – and

I'm sure it is for you too, that's probably why you're asking these questions.

I'm the director of Ironman 4x4 Africa. We sell shock absorbers and suspension systems. It's my job to sell as many of my products as possible, but in my career of longer than 25 years, I've learned that if you try trick someone into buying something he doesn't need, it will come back to haunt you. So I find it quite difficult to try convince someone to buy something he doesn't necessarily need. I can also say that in all these years, I have not tested a shock absorber after 162 000km and found that it didn't need to be changed. In cases where bakkies mostly drive on tar, the shocks have lost 50% and more of their effectiveness after driving 100 000km.

It's possible that your shock absorbers are not completely finished, but they are definitely not in a good condition anymore. If you suddenly need them to work, there's a good chance that they may let you down. The most important question is about safety, and not ride comfort.





Fill up when you can

We were recently in Botswana with a tour group when our Hilux took on water far up in the north of Seronga. We had to hire a car there and got a Volkswagen Polo. We were glad, because the Polo is supposed to be light on fuel.

On our way back to Maun, we passed a fuel station, but our tank was still half-full. We drove past thinking we could fill up at the next town.

I saw a Shell sign at the T-junction where you turn left to Maun and turned in, because by then the Polo had started using its reserve tank. When we got there, we saw that the fuel station was being

run by goats! So we had to push through to Maun.

We crawled into Maun and were relieved to reach another fuel station. But once again there was no fuel available. The Polo finally stopped at the Toyota dealership in Maun and wouldn't go further, and the Toyota staff took me to a fuel station where I could buy petrol in cans.

So here's my warning: When you're travelling in Botswana, never drive past a fuel station without filling up if you don't have extra fuel with you.

KOBUS SCHOEMAN
Pretoria-East

Kobus, I want to add that your lesson isn't just relevant when travelling in Botswana, but also for all neighbouring countries and large parts of South Africa as well. We had the same experience this holiday in Middelpos, in the Karoo, when the local fuel station's diesel had run out. Luckily I had an extra 25-litre jerry can full of diesel, and we could ensure that a friend's somewhat thirstier vehicle could reach the next big town, where he rewarded my kindness with lots of KFC! – Jaco



IT'S A FOUR BY WHAT?

In Swakopmund we often see people from Namibia and South Africa who come fishing in their fancy 4x4s. But I've also seen this home-built '2x2' around here many times.

The family who owns it often walks past our house on their way to the beach, and one day they asked me to take this photo. You can see that they ate a hearty dinner that night!

JERMANNEKE HAVEMANN
Swakopmund

ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

f What mods do you need?



In reaction to *Drive Out's* post on the 5 most important modifications to your 4x4, **Paul Henry** from Cape Town wrote: The 70 Series Cruiser with the 4.2 diesel engine is the best vehicle for Africa. Parts are available almost anywhere and it's not fussy about what diesel you pour in.

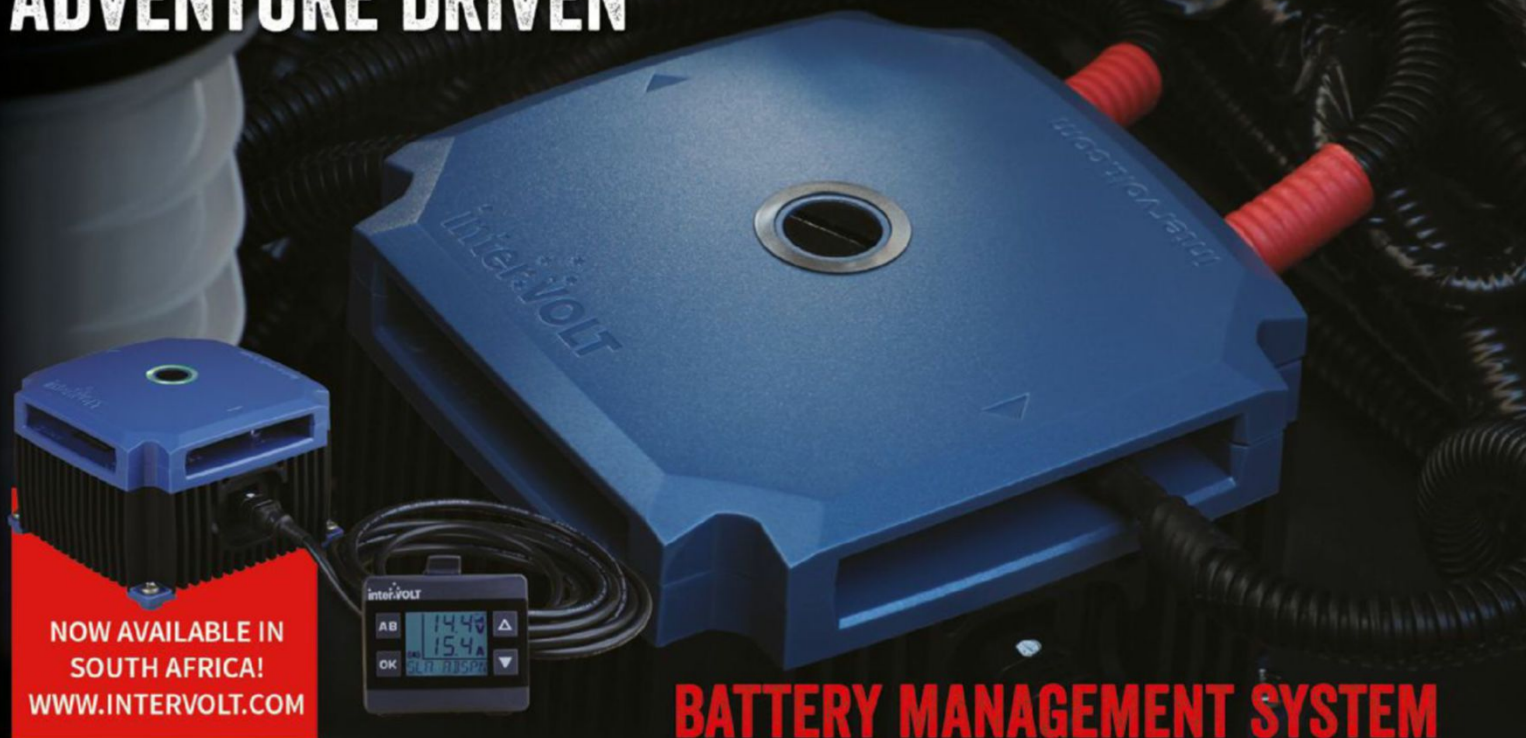
Remember, in Africa you get lots of paraffin in the diesel.

Forget about winches and bull bars. You'll use the winch mostly to recover other people in any way. Rather invest in a roof rack. Jerrycans work just as well as an extra fuel tank, and you don't want to travel with diesel inside your vehicle. Spotlights are also a good purchase.

I travel a lot and I've been in Namibia, Botswana (10 times), Zambia (5 times), Malawi (3 times), Mozambique (5 times), Tanzania and Kenya. Angola and Uganda are also on my wish list.

Don't believe that you need all the fancy 4x4 gear to have a good tour. But invest in some locks and chains; otherwise you might go home in an empty vehicle!

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I get chills just thinking about it

Once you've set up camp there's a certain natural order of events. Some guys pitch their tents first, others begin with their toilet space, or inspect the condition of the ablution block. Other guys, with the precision of a drill sergeant, check that the chops and wors for to-night's braai are ready to take their marching orders.

But at some point in this series of events, the guys will pour themselves a drink. Whether you enjoy ice cold beer, a brandy and Coke or perhaps a glass of white wine, at some point you're going to recline in your camp chair and enjoy a

“Ag old buddy old pal, it looks like all my ice is finished. Can I use some of yours?”

refreshing gulp or two. Ya okay, within three minutes (you can practically time it) someone's kid will walk into a tent pole, and emit a spine-chilling howl. Or your buddy Frikkie will start issuing expletives because he's just realised that all his brandy bottles broke during that rough patch of corrugation that you drove through earlier.

Or, and this is the worst, someone approaches, abashed, and says something to the effect of “Ag old buddy old pal, it looks like all my ice is finished. Can I use some of yours?”

It's not that I mind helping my fellow man. Indeed, I do so gladly. Whether it means stopping in Namibia to help a stranger repair his tyre because he doesn't have the right equipment, or pouring some of my own diesel into another guy's vehicle because he didn't plan ahead, it's all good.

What bothers me about the ice thing is not that I'll be a few blocks shorter. Rather, it's the fact that few people seem to have what I term “ice discipline”. What is “ice discipline”? you ask. It's when you only open the cooler box with ice in it when it's really necessary. And when you have to open it, to do so as quickly as possible. Not like a sloth that's been smoking some ‘good stuff’.

I was once on a Namib trip with a photographer that a) liked to often top up his whiskey in the evenings with more ice b) was very slow c) enjoyed having entire conversations while he opened the cooler box and dug around inside it. As a consequence of a, b and c, our entire cooler box of ice lasted less than a day.

People are strange. It didn't bother him in the least that for the next four nights I had to go and beg for ice from fellow campers. Each time I felt like the earth could swallow me whole. It was a matter of principle for me, a skill that I have practiced and refined for years.

In fact, I've reached the point where I memorise where everything is packed ahead of time so that I can open the cooler box with the lightning fast hands of a bantamweight boxer, grab my beer with the accuracy of a spitting cobra, and close the lid again with the focus of an executioner.

Another consequence of this discipline is that I notice other people's behaviour when they dig around in their cooler boxes. Some stroll nonchalantly towards a cooler box, open it up and then start to wonder what it was they actually wanted there. Then they turn around and ask, “Hey Bob, what did you say you wanted again?”

All while the cooler box is left wide open.

Then they'll turn around, walk back to their chair to get a glass and scratch their heads again about what they really feel like drinking. After this they'll fill – and I mean fill – their glass with ice, and take a few steps to where they just left the Richelieu lying in the sun.

And once there's enough ‘Riekie Louw’ in the mix, they'll saunter back to the cooler box and add some Coke. After that they'll put the glass back on the table and return to calmly put away the Coke.

But just before the cooler box finally gets closed, Bob will pipe up with “Ag, buddy, won't you also pour me one of those beauties?”

And so the whole atrocity is repeated. In slow motion.

At this point I'm at the end of my rope. And then I walk over to my own cooler box, pour myself a stiff Red Heart and Tab, with five blocks of ice. All in a rather pedestrian 3.24 seconds.

Cheers! 





About that Moose Test...

Late last year, *Drive Out* performed an evasive maneuver test (a.k.a. "the moose test") with the new Toyota Hilux. Suspension guru **Mic van Zyl** weighs in on the results.

WegRy doen die "moose test" met die 2016 Toyota Hilux

Deur **WegRy-span** | Donderdag, November 17, 2016 14:47



WATCH DRIVE OUT'S MOOSE TESTS HERE:

- [HTTP://BIT.LY/2IETICB](http://bit.ly/2iETICB)
- [HTTP://BIT.LY/2IETICB](http://bit.ly/2iEPUYT)

I have met a few Scandinavian people over the years and two things have always struck me. They are generally quite meticulous, and pretty handy behind the wheel of a race car on ice.

So it was with much curiosity that I noted how badly the new Toyota Hilux performed against its direct competitors in a recent "moose test" on YouTube.

The test was done by a leading Swedish motoring magazine, *Teknikens Värld*, who've been doing these tests for years. The subsequent social media meltdown and scathing voices from owners of competing brands was both immediate

and brutal. Unlike the Fortuner "roll-over" fiasco some years ago, I haven't heard anything about the new Hilux having an innate tendency to roll over. This, of course, begs the question: How accurate was the test and of what relevance is it?

Not all moose are equal

The "moose test" attempts to see how well a vehicle will react while executing an evasive maneuver to avoid a collision with, amongst other things, a moose. The test is quite specific and has been standardised in international vehicle testing (ISO3888-2 of 2011). The new Hilux isn't its first casualty either – in 1997 a Mercedes A-Class rolled spectacularly, causing the manufacturer to relook the rear suspension.

I have watched the Swedish video with the European Hilux a great number of times and compared it to the *Drive Out* test with the South African Hilux. I've also studied images of another handling test done by Ironman 4x4 in Australia on the Australian spec Hilux.

The bakkie in the Swedish video behaves very differently to the South African and Australian vehicles. But why? The most telling difference is that the tyres on the Swedish vehicle seem very underinflated, and this is the consensus with most motoring journalists I've spoken to. This would certainly contribute to the ill handling that one sees in the video.

I seriously doubt that the Swedish magazine has a hid-

den agenda, but *Teknikens Värld* doesn't clarify at what tyre pressure the test was performed. According to sources, however, the tyres were inflated to the manufacturer's specifications for a full load.

The devil's in the detail

Some very respectable journalists that I have spoken to blame the Hilux outright. But few people are aware of the fact that the South African-built Toyota Hilux has uprated suspension that's different from the European-spec vehicles. Firmer springs with different valving in the shock absorbers will certainly make the Hilux handle better than the softly sprung vehicles overseas. We also tend to inflate our tyres more due to our higher driving speeds. Sweden, on the other hand, only has about 300 km of 120 km/h highway. The majority of its open roads are limited to 100 km/h.

It is my opinion that the different suspension, tyre size, tyre type and tyre pressures used here in South Africa make for a better handling vehicle. I have driven the new Hilux hard (even in anger) and as far as I'm concerned, there's nothing wrong with its handling. 🇿🇦

Mic van Zyl is the general manager of Ironman 4x4 Africa, the sole importer and distributor of the full range of Ironman 4x4 products.
📍 www.ironman4x4.co.za

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

REACH FOR A DREAM 4X4 FUN DAY

Where: Base 4, 25 km from Centurion

When: 11 March

Why you should go: This event is not only crammed with 4x4 action, but is also a great family get together. There will be a 4x4 challenge with a short wheelbase, long wheelbase and ladies division, team challenges, a host of activities for children and overnight camping.

Cost: R350 per vehicle.

More information:

☎ marketingpta@reachfordream.org.za or ☎ 012 346 0811/0373.

CLOCOLAN PLAASKULTURFEES

Where: Clocolan, Free State

When: 24 and 25 March

Why you should go: The activities, demonstrations

and exhibitions at this festival will take you back in time with things like ploughing competitions, vintage tractors, sheep shearing and *boeresport*. Clocolan is close to the Lesotho border and some of the best 4x4 trails in the Free State (Koranna, Moolmanshoek and Rebellie), so there's plenty to keep you busy otherwise.

BRIDGESTONE CHALLENGE

Where: Wolwekloof 4x4,

35 km east of Pretoria

When: 18 and 25 March

Why you should go: The popular Bridgestone 4x4 Challenge kicked off earlier this year. Round three and four of the qualifying stage (determining the top 40 drivers for the elimination rounds) take place in March. It's a true test of 4x4 skills and even as a spectator you're never short of entertainment!

More information:

☎ www.4x4clubchallenge.co.za/calendar-2017

APRIL

WINDPOMPFEES

Where: Naboomspruit

When: 27 to 29 April

Why you should go: This annual festival is full of activities, including a long list of guest artists like Andries Vermeulen and Adam Tas, food stalls, exhibitions, a ploughing competition, a mini circus and a 4x4 challenge.

More information:

☎ www.windpompfees.co.za

BLOEMSKOU

Where: Bloemfontein show grounds

When: 27 April to 7 May

Why you should go: This festival is chock-a-block with more than 400 exhibitors, 30 food stalls, live music, horse, sheep and cattle championships and a 4x4 obstacle course, of course. Bring the whole family because there are plenty of things and plenty of time (it's on for 10 days!) to keep you entertained.

MAY



OUTDOOR X

Where: Malonjeni Guest Farm, Vereeniging

When: 27 and 28 May

Why you should go: This show focusses on everything related to the outdoor lifestyle – whether you love to camp, hunt, fish, bowhunt or drive a 4x4. Apart from the exhibitions you'll also find musical performances, stalls and loads of activities for children.

More information:

www.outdoorx.co.za

DRIVE OUT PICK OF THE MONTH:

KLEIN-KAROO NATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

Join us on a day trip through the Klein-Karoo!

WHERE: Oudtshoorn

WHEN: 8 to 15 April

Like previous years *Drive Out* will once again host a day trip at the Klein-Karoo National Arts Festival. On 9 April you can bring your vehicle and explore the region with Mpafa Travel and Bhejane 4x4 Adventures. The Swartbergkronkels day trip is suitable for 4x2 vehicles with good ground clearance. The route follows the southern slopes of the Swartberg Mountains from Calitzdorp via

the Groenfontein road and on to the tar road near the Cango Caves. It costs R280 per adult and R100 for children under 16. The price includes a picnic lunch and bottled water. The meeting point is at the Bella de Karoo farm stall on the R62, about 28 km west of Oudtshoorn. It is a day trip from 08:30 to 15:00.
MORE INFORMATION: Bookings at ☎ 044 535 0065 or ☎ info@mpafa.com



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When things go **SOUTH**

The further you travel, the more you need to prepare. That's why it's important to take the necessary steps for any medical emergencies you may encounter along the way.

WORDS: CHARLES THOMPSON
AND JACQUES LOURENS

As the miles tick over and the signs of civilisation fade in the rear-view mirror, you finally begin to relax. You've meticulously planned your trip and tried to think of every eventuality. As you go further into the unknown, the dirt roads become tracks where few dare to venture.

But Murphy's Law will make sure that disaster strikes in the most inaccessible setting. So while no one wants to go through an entire trip expecting the worst, you need to be prepared for certain emergencies that could happen when you least expect it. In fact, that's when they usually happen.



HELLO, DOCTOR?

The importance of backup medication cannot be stressed enough, especially if you're travelling far from medical facilities. Ask your GP for telemedicine: broad-spectrum antibiotics, strong pain and anti-histamine pills, and specific treatments for the areas you'll travel to, for example Coartem malaria antibiotics.

In the event of an emergency you can then call him (hence the name 'tele'-medicine) for authorisation to take this prescribed medication, which would otherwise not be available to you without prior authorisation.

Also make sure before you leave that everyone in your group has packed sufficient amounts of their prescription medication, as well as a copy of the script or a letter from the doctor (especially when crossing borders).

Your first-aid kits obviously also needs the basics like over-the-counter pain, anti-inflammatory, anti-histamine, gastro and flu medication. But make sure you check the expiry dates before you leave, read the leaflets and know the dosages.

Something as simple as aspirin can be harmful, as it is an anti-coagulant and contra-indicated in pregnant women and children. It could even aggravate asthma attacks. Pain pills and anti-histamines can also cause drowsiness – certainly not something you want to risk before attempting a Grade 5 obstacle.



PLAN LIKE A PARAMEDIC

Jacques Lourens is a paramedic with Advanced Life Support training and 12 years' experience in private ambulance services in South Africa and remote site clinics throughout Africa. He breaks the possible medical emergencies down into scenarios, so that one can be prepared for as many medical emergencies on a 4x4 trip as possible.

It is not too far-fetched that any of the below scenarios can play out two days' drive from the nearest proper hospital. And when calling an ambulance is impossible and the terrain too fierce to drive their quickly yourself, you and your first-aid kit need to be ready to provide at least basic help. That's why we've also roped in an old face at *Drive Out* – Dr Jacques Malan, a trauma specialist from Cape Town.

Here's their advice for the day when things go pear-shaped in the bush:



SCENARIO 1

Open wounds and blunt trauma

During a difficult vehicle recovery, a spade slips, hits someone on the leg and leaves a wide cut. When you finally get the bleeding to stop, you quickly wrap it with a bandage and leave it at that. You have a long day's driving ahead of you and the clock's ticking.

But two days later, you remove the bandage to find the leg swollen, painful and oozing green stuff. You've neglected the wound and now it's badly infected.

> Best response

With wounds and blunt trauma, remember the simple rule of direct pressure, elevation and indirect pressure, says Lourens. "Apply direct pressure on the wound with your hand and bandages. If it continues to bleed, elevate the limb. But if the bleeding still doesn't stop and constantly soaks the wounds, you need to try and stop the blood flow from the nearest artery," he says. It is practised by advanced paramedics, but the layman should familiarise himself with at least the most obvious arterial pressure points, he says.

The brachial artery, from the inside of the arm, and the femoral artery from high in the groin supply blood to the limbs. You can feel your pulse there, just like under your wrist. If you cut the blood flow at these pressure points, the bleeding lower down the limb will stop.

In life-threatening situations, a tourniquet can also

be used, but both warn that this is a last resort.

"It stops the flow of blood completely and kills the flesh around the wound," says Dr Malan. "If you use a tourniquet, do it when you're on your way to hospital already and release the pressure every 10 minutes. But rather use elastic bandage," he advises.

Deep wounds will need stitches as soon as possible. But Lourens says he's heard of people using Superglue in extreme situations. "Just keep at it, says Malan. "People often give up applying pressure too soon. With enough pressure, you can usually stop the bleeding from a deep or wide wound if you just apply it for long enough."

Once the worst is over, you need to clean and dress the wound regularly. "Even a simple wound can easily fester and become a systemic infection," warns Lourens.

WHAT TO PACK

- A variety of bandages (small to big)
- Plasters
- Gauze
- Steri-Strips
- Medical tape
- Scissors
- Dettol/Savlon
- Saline solution
- Food-grade hydrogen peroxide (great all-purpose cleaning fluid effective on very dirty wounds that need irrigation)
- Surgical gloves
- Tweezers



SCENARIO 2

Dehydration, sunburn and burn wounds

You reach camp and two members of the party decide to climb a koppie for that perfect photo opportunity. Several hours later as the sun is setting, they return. They had neglected to take water and adequate sun protection, and in desperation drank from a small not-so-flowing stream.

The walk back included many unscheduled toilet stops with both vomiting and suffering from diarrhoea. Both are severely sunburnt and by nightfall they're badly dehydrated, cramping up and flushed.

➤ Best response

With dehydration, prevention is better than cure, says Lourens. Once you develop symptoms like nausea, cramps and headaches, fluid replacement will take hours to correct.

"Not only do you lose water, but electrolytes too – salts, sugars and minerals which are essential to bodily functions," he adds.

Monitor urine output and if the person hasn't passed for a few hours, the warning lights should flicker. Also check urine colour: The lighter, the better.

When it comes to sunburn – and this may sound like stating the obvious – it's remarkable how many people venture into the blazing sun without hats. Don't be those people. "Covering your skin and wearing a hat slows the evaporation of moisture off your body, so

simply dressing in appropriate clothing goes a long way in avoiding sunburn, sun stroke and ultimately dehydration," ensures Lourens.

But what about serious burns, such as those from an open fire or engine?

Dr Malan says it's firstly important to get away from the source, then do the following:

- 1 Cool the wound under (clean) running water and remove obvious soiling.
- 2 Apply a Burnshield dressing and wrap the wound in sterile gauze. Clingwrap also keeps an open wound clean and protected.
- 3 After about 10-12 hours, start to apply Flamazine and keep the wound wrapped in soft bandages.

WHAT TO PACK

- *In extreme conditions, consider 5 to 7 litres of water per person per day*
- *Electrolyte replacements (e.g. Game sachets) or make your own rehydration drink – 1 litre of water (boiled and cooled if you suspect contamination), 6 level teaspoons of sugar, teaspoon of salt*
- *Sunblock (and add sunblock to your first aid kit as a backup)*
- *Burnshield (it's good for both mild sunburn and direct heat burns)*
- *Aloe moisture bandages. They dissipate heat from the burnt area and provide a germ barrier.*
- *Flamazine ointment*
- *Normal bandages (when moistened, they also soothe burns)*
- *Gauze*



SCENARIO 3

Severe insect bites

You've stopped for lunch somewhere without cell phone reception. One of your party upsets a swarm of African bees. They attack and sting several members of your party before they can scramble into the closest vehicle. Peter, with stings all over his face, frantically tells you he's highly allergic to bees.

➤ Best response:

Anyone who's allergic to insect bites should carry an EpiPen, says Dr Malan. "It's a stick filled with a small adrenaline shot that you can administer yourself and it's very effective," he says.

EpiPens are pretty expensive at R1 000 per stick, Lourens adds. But if you are allergic to stings and at risk of anaphylactic shock, get

some. For those not allergic to insect bites, a strong anti-histamine should do the trick. "Use something like a bank card to carefully scrap off any stings stuck in the skin and give the person anti-histamine or cortisone if you have it. If the person's blood pressure falls, keep their legs in the air until they feel better," says Dr Malan.

WHAT TO PACK

- *EpiPen*
- *Anti-histamine medication*


HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

In its simplest form, an MERP is a piece of paper with emergency contact numbers. This should include both private and provincial ambulance services, your GP's after-hours number and any other numbers of importance where you're travelling (e.g. Mountain Club SA, Wilderness Search & Rescue or the NSRI), says Lourens. "Knowing where the closest hospital is and what its capabilities are, is also a good idea. You don't want to drive 100km only to find out that the 'hospital' is actually a rural TB clinic." Also, prepare your plan around the medical emergencies you anticipate in the specific area, like extreme temperatures (dehydration), malaria or high accident zones.

Make sure you have a friend at home who has a copy of all this information. And if you're travelling in really extreme areas, consider a daily check-in time to contact them and report if everything is still okay with your group.

CHRONIC MEDICATION AND CONDITIONS

Lastly, Lourens says it's important that your info sheet contains medical information of everyone in your group: Pre-existing medical conditions and appropriate responses, medical aid numbers, blood groups and personal details/next of kin.

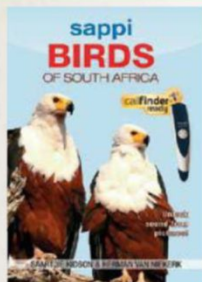
"Diabetics, for example, carry a Glucometer with them to test blood sugar levels. Let them show you how to use it and make sure the group knows what the symptoms and treatment of hypoglycemia are. GlucoGel is a good backup to have." 



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NEWS FLASH



FORD BRONCO

The OJ Simpson 4x4 makes a comeback

Do you still remember that television broadcast of OJ Simpson back in 1994, speeding away from the American police in his white Ford Bronco after the bodies of his estranged wife and her boyfriend were found? Well, barely two years after that, Ford stopped production of the Bronco (of which the first generation saw the light in 1966) mainly because of slumping sales. The Bronco, by the way, was a two-door SUV on a shortened platform of the F150 pickup truck.

Now for the good news. At the Detroit Auto Show, Ford said the Bronco is coming back. It will only be in 2020, but that means the

R&D is well on its way.

Ford doesn't want to let the cat out of the bag just yet, but there are two possibilities. The Bronco could be built on the Ranger's platform, which will be introduced to the US market a year before the new Bronco, incidentally. Or, it could be based on a modified Raptor's chassis.

Raj Nair, Ford's Executive Vice President, Product Development, put it this way in Detroit recently: "The customers have an idea of what a Bronco should be. We have an idea of what a Bronco should be – and we look forward to bringing that to our customers."

We think Mr Nair would make a great politician!

OPEL MOKKA X

A neat little cross



Opel describes the MOKKA X, the replacement of the MOKKA, as a "fashionable sub-compact SUV." That's the first sign that this isn't exactly an overlanding vehicle.

Nonetheless, the X also alludes to the fact that this Opel is a bit more than just a standard hatchback. Opel's X emblem will from now on be used to indicate all the company's SUV and crossover products, and the MOKKA X therefore falls into this category.

The new MOKKA has been upgraded inside and out and boasts LEDs, a rear-view camera, a voice-controlled navigation system as well as hill ascent and descent control.

There are two models available – the Enjoy and the more luxurious Cosmo. Both are powered by a 1.4 litre petrol engine (103kW and 200Nm) coupled to a six-speed manual or six-speed autogearbox. The manual Enjoy costs R317 500 (R328 400 for the auto) while the manual and automatic Cosmo will set you back R357 400 and R368 100. Luxuries like navigation, extra LEDs or a sunroof cost extra.

CHEVROLET COLORADO ZR2

No zzz's for the ZR2

Other big bakkie news from the States is the launch of GM's ZR2 – an off-road-biased version of the Colorado as an answer to Toyota's Tacoma TRD Off-Road. What distinguishes the ZR2 and Tacoma TRD Off-Road from their normal counterparts is their special suspension and ground clearance. The ZR2's track width is also 3.5 inches wider than the standard model and it has a front diff lock too.

The Chevrolet is powered by a 3.6 litre V6 petrol or a 2.8 litre Duramax turbo diesel – the same great engine (147 kW and 500 Nm) that we've come to know in the Trail-blazer. The Duramax is gaining a steady following in the US, especially since the Tacoma is only available with a 3.5 litre petrol engine.

Toyota dominated the market for "medium-sized" pickups in the US (the same size as our bakkies) with the Tacoma. But with the introduction of the Colorado, a sizable chunk of the market has moved to Chevrolet, in no small part thanks to the diesel engine as an option.



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finally here

After a long wait Mitsubishi South Africa finally launched the new Triton locally, more than a year after it was launched in other markets such as Australia. **JACO KIRSTEN** got behind the wheel.

There are usually a couple of questions people ask about the new Triton, such as why it wasn't launched earlier.

The reason for this is the knock our currency took after Nenegate. Unlike companies such as Toyota and Ford, who build their bakkies locally, the Triton is fully imported from the East, so Mitsubishi wouldn't have been able to sell them profitably.

But with the rand's value having improved a bit lately, Mitsubishi was able to go ahead and start ordering them.

The other question people ask is how much it differs from the Fiat Fullback, which is based on the Triton. The simple answer is that the proportions and interior spaces are identical, but as far as engine and transmission are concerned, there's a huge difference. The reason for this is the fact that the Fiat uses the previous generation

2.5 turbodiesel and a relatively old five-speed gearbox, compared to the new Triton's 2.4 litre power plant and six-speed transmissions.

Exterior design and interior

As far as appearance is concerned, the Triton isn't just a major redesign, but the load bin is now also bigger and deeper than that of its predecessor. But these are obvious things one can judge with a measuring tape. What is interesting is Mitsubishi's claim of the Triton being the most aerodynamic double cab on the market. One of the reasons for this is the upper part of the nose and bonnet's downward slope. This isn't achieved at the expense of approach angle though, as it also has a class leading approach angle of 28 degrees. The other consequence of this design is the driver's good forward vision, especially when negotiating tight





FANCY (top). The interior is on par with that of the competition. • **CLEVER** (left). Mitsubishi's Super Select II 4x4 system lets you choose between 2H, 4H with an open centre diff, 4H with a locked centre diff and 4L. That's unique in its segment. • **LAZY DAYS** (right). The J-shaped curve of the rear of the cabin made it possible for designers to let the rear seats to have a much more relaxed backrest angle than those of other double cab bakkies, allowing a much more comfortable ride for passengers.

technical terrain. Combine that with the smallest turning circle in class (5,9 metres) and you have a fairly nimble bakkie in confined spaces.

One characteristic that has been carried over from the previous generation Triton is the J-shaped curve at the back of the cab. For a long time I thought that it was just an aesthetic thing, but it turns out I was wrong. Owners of double cab bakkies know that the shape of the cab results in a very upright seating position at the back. Over long distances this makes for a very uncomfortable trip.

However the J-shaped curve affords designers the opportunity to increase the slant of the rear bench to a more ergonomic position, but without sacrificing load space at the back or having to increase the wheelbase.

On a practical level, this means that they were able to stretch the cab by another 2 cm and offer 4 cm more legroom at the back than the Ford Ranger, for example, even if the latter looks bigger.

The interior, and here we're referring to instrumentation, looks very similar to that of the Fiat Fullback, but that's not

necessarily a bad thing. As far as the opposition is concerned, we still maintain that the Ford Ranger and Amarok have the most aesthetically pleasing interiors, with the new Nissan Navara, Toyota Hilux and Triton basically being on equal footing. In other words, it is functional, tells you what you need to know and isn't an eyesore, although they might not win awards for beauty.

Engine and transmission

The old Triton was available with two engine choices; one was the 2.5 D-iD that developed 100kW and 314Nm.

That's nothing earth shattering, but okayish. If you wanted more oomph, you had to buy the 3.2 D-iD that developed 118kW and 347Nm. But there was one catch: You could only get the great Super Select II 4x4 system with the 2.5 D-iD model.

With the new Triton, Mitsubishi has, just like so many other manufacturers, also moved towards a smaller capacity engine without sacrificing any power. In the case of their new 2.4 D-iD it develops 133kW and 430Nm. The new engine is just 30kg lighter than the 2.5, but also 20% more fuel efficient. Speaking of fuel, the 2.4 D-iD can run on 500 p.p.m. diesel.

Both the automatic and manual models have the now obligatory six-speed transmission and although our experience was limited to driving them for just a few hours, the impressions were positive. As quick as that of the Toyota Hilux's auto box, but definitely faster than the Ford Ranger's.

Last year we tested the Fiat Fullback manual against the equivalent Hilux on a rocky 4x4 route and it soon became obvious that its low-range gear ratios are a bit high. During the Triton launch, where I only drove the 6-speed manual on the Heidelberg 4x4 route in Gauteng, it again felt as if first gear, low range, wasn't quite low enough for the really technical work. Bear in mind that the market is moving towards autos, but it would be interesting to compare it to its direct rivals.

Then there's the Super Select II 4x4 system. Most 4x4 bakkies give you three modes; 2H, 4H (when the engaged transfer box effectively locks power between front and rear axles like a central diff-lock, bearing in mind that such vehicles do not actually have centre differentials) and 4L.

The problem lies in the fact

that you cannot use 4H on tar. Maybe there's been a drizzle and you want the added traction of 4WD. But because 4H locks the power in a 50:50 ratio between front and rear wheels, you could end up with transmission windup because the front and rear wheels do not travel the same distance around any given corner.

Mitsubishi's Super Select II system gives you a fourth option and thus offers 2H, 4H (with what is effectively an open centre differential), 4Hlc (centre diff locked) and 4Llc.

This means that you can employ 4WD safely on any surface in 4H, making it unique amongst part-time 4WD bakkies with high and low range gearboxes.

Handling

Mitsubishi's suits refer to the Triton and its competitors as Sport Utility Trucks (SUTs), an

accurate designation. Sales of double cabs are rising globally as more people realise what South Africans have known for quite some time: It offers a semi-luxurious vehicle that gives you the opportunity to break away from the city every now and then.

As a result, designers are faced with contradictory aims: good on-road handling, as well as the ability to idle over rocks and through dongas. Common sense dictates that this will result in a number of engineering compromises and once one bears that in mind, the Triton, like many of its rivals, manages to meet these divergent requirements quite comfortably.

The standard tyres are road-biased highway terrains, which offer good on-road grip, but which most of our readers will immediately change for something more appropriate for off-road use. And fortunately

Mitsubishi stuck to 17-inch wheel sizes, unlike Isuzu who recently fitted the aging Isuzu with 18-inch wheels.

The other characteristic that is worth noting, is the fact that when it's in 4WD, the power is split in a 40:60 ratio between front and rear axles, unlike the customary 50:50 distribution, helping to improve handling around corners.

It braked well, the suspension absorbed speed hobbles, there was good body control around corners and it was fairly quiet inside at 140 km/h. What more could one ask for in a bakkie?

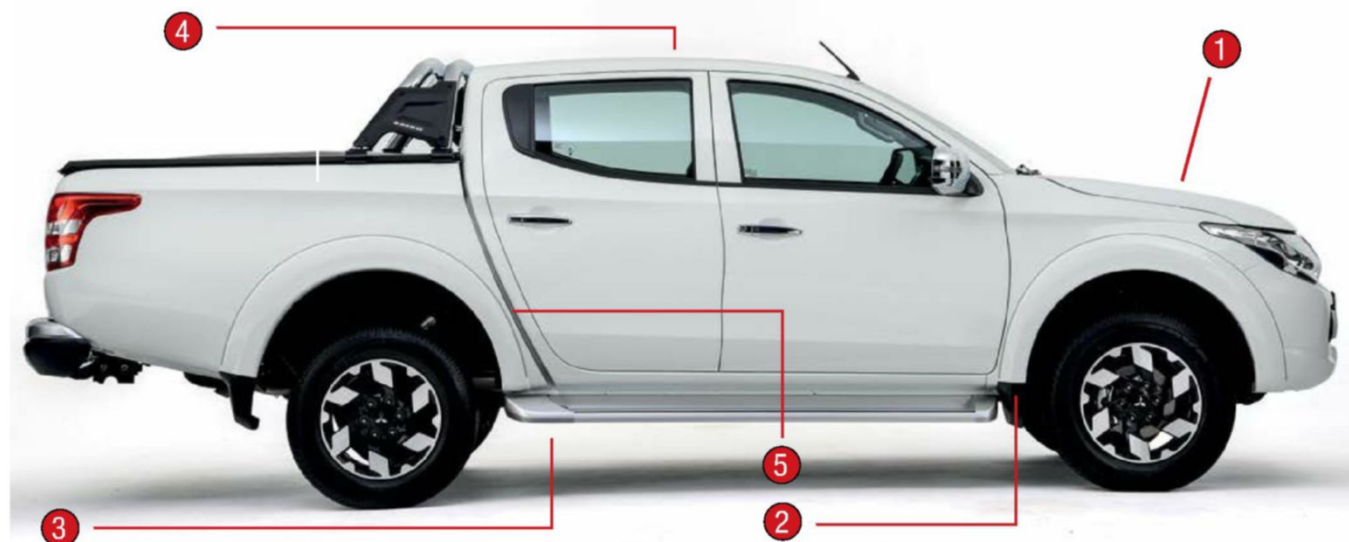
Verdict:

The Triton faces stiff competition from the Hilux, Navara and the Ranger. But Mitsubishi, like other Japanese manufacturers, have a reputation for reliability and loyal support. More good news is that Renault/Nissan have acquired a controlling stake in Mitsubishi, so expect a better, rather than worse, future for the company. My only criticism – and this is very subjective – is the grille. It's a bit too much chrome for my liking. But that doesn't make it a bad vehicle. So go and test drive one yourself and see if I'm talking baloney. 🚗

PRICES:

2.4 D-ID 4X2 MANUAL	R479 900
2.4 D-ID 4X2 AUTO	R499 900
2.4 D-ID 4X4 MANUAL	R539 900
2.4 D-ID 4X4 AUTO	R559 900

5 things you need to know about the new Triton



1 ENGINE: The output of the new 2.4 D-ID (133 kW and 430 Nm) is markedly stronger than the old engine, and it's quite a bit more fuel efficient.

2 TRANSMISSION: The Super Select II system lets you choose between 2H, 4H (open centre diff), 4Hlc (locked centre diff) and 4Llc.

3 GROUND CLEARANCE: 215mm isn't class leading, but it's enough for most applications.

4 SLIPPERY SHAPE: The Triton has the lowest wind resistance in its class.

5 J-LINE: This shape makes a more relaxed backrest angle for the rear passenger bench possible without necessitating a longer wheelbase.

TOYOTA LAND CRUISER 76 LX



A stoep on the roof

Boet and Marina Grobbelaar don't just use their Land Cruiser for touring. With a custom roof tent, they can sit on their very own open-air veranda and watch Mabua's big cats in safety.

Boet and Marina Grobbelaar from Dealesville in the Free State hail from the Kalahari, so their hearts long for it when they plan a holidays. "We farmed with cattle and game, and I was a professional hunter who took other hunters to Namibia and Botswana," says Boet.

Now that they are retired, they once again have the time to do what they love most: touring to faraway places. "We like going where other people don't usually set foot. The wil-der and rougher, the better!" laughs Boet. "Those places where, in the mornings when you get down from the

tent, you have to wipe away the tracks from hyena and lion who came looking for leftover bones during the night."

Their first touring vehicle was a 1989 Hilux 2.8 4x4. "After that, we got our first 4.2-litre Land Cruiser 76 station wagon. It was an amazing vehicle, but in the high

dunes of the Namib it ran out of power before it could reach the top. So we upgraded to the much-anticipated V8 turbo-diesel 76 station wagon," Boet explains. "It is without a doubt the best 4x4 expedition vehicle for Africa and nobody can argue with you on that!"

When and where did you buy the vehicle and how much did it cost?

We bought it in February 2014 from Hannes Berg at NTT Toyota, Mokopane. We paid R600 000.

What are your favourite destinations?

South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Angola. Pretty much any place that is far and wild. But our favourite camp sites are Halali in Etosha and Mabuasehube in Botswana.

So why a Cruiser?

Have a look at the worst deserts and most isolated places – which vehicles do you see there? Land Cruisers. And they say you can keep a Cruiser going with only a pair of pliers and some wire!

Tell us about the modifications on your vehicle.

I designed a custom roof rack. It slides forward towards the nose of the vehicle on 20 rollers and then rests on the front bumper. My DIY 80-litre steel tank for shower water is right at the front of the roof rack and the roof tent fits right behind it. They are of equal height and the water tank was built with a curve for less wind resistance.

Since the roof tent slides forward, it leaves a “stoep” of about 2m where we can fit two chairs and a table. We need this roof stoep because we regularly camp at places like Moremi, Savuti and Mabua, where you need to be above the ground by sunset. Otherwise the lions and hyenas might have you for dinner!

The stoep is also a safe place to get dressed and the perfect spot to film the most spectacular sunsets over the Mabuasehube pans.

All the aluminium welding was done by Schalk van der Merwe, a wonderful man from Bloemfontein who isn't hampered by the fact that he doesn't have legs.

The addition of the Bundu Top and the other accessories

– Ironman bullbar, airbags, duel battery system, winch, two 40-litre water tanks – would not have been possible without the help and advice of a close friend, Nellis of Safari 4x4 in Bloemfontein.

How long did it take to do the modifications?

More than two years. We did them bit by bit as we got the money together. After every trip, we came back with more ideas for modifications.

Which modification is your favourite?

Probably the Power Flex 160W solar panel that we can roll open on the roof of the Bundu Top. It provides enough power for an 800W converter, which is hooked up to my double battery system. My fridge, lights and even TV work off it, so I could watch the Olympic Games in Mabua!

Is there anything that is made specifically for your needs?

Yes, the electric winch that sits inside the roof of the Bundu Top. With the press of a button I can have the tent pitched within 3 seconds. I like the fact that you can leave things like your bedding, pills and Bible inside the tent when it closes.

What do people say when they see your Cruiser?

Everyone is surprised at how fast the tent rolls forward and opens up. 📷



FRONT ROW SEATS (main photo). With space for chairs and a table on the roof, Boet Erasmus and his wife Marina can watch lions in peace, quiet and safety.



NEAT AND TIDY (left). A Front Runner drawers system in the rear keeps everything tidy, but leaves enough space on top for large pieces of luggage and gear.



FROM SCRUMMY TO LOCK (bottom left). A removable step that hooks onto the bumper helps them to get on the bonnet of the Cruiser to anchor the roof rack on its nose.



BOET'S MODIFICATIONS


ROOF RACK WITH TELESCOPIC LADDER	R21 000
BUNDU TOP TENT	R18 000
IRONMAN BULLBAR	R13 000
T-MAX WINCH	R12 000
LED SPOTLIGHTS	R3500
80 LITRE WATER TANK ON ROOF RACK (DIY)	R1500
2 JERRY CANS WITH ROOF RACK MOUNTS	R1300
GEYSER MADE OF OLD GAS BOTTLES (DIY)	R1500
HIGH-LIFT JACK AND SPADE MOUNTS	R2000
2M EASY OUT AWNING	R2500
40L NATIONAL LUNA FRIDGE AND FREEZER.....	R8500
FRONT RUNNER DRAWER SYSTEM.....	R9500
DUEL BATTERY SYSTEM	R4500
FIRESTONE AIRBAGS	R4500
REVERSE CAMERA	R3800
TYRE PRESSURE MONITORING SYSTEM	R2700
SEAT COVERS	R3700
SHOWER ENCLOSURE.....	R600

TOTAL

R114 100

DESTINATION | ELEPHANT COAST





Turtles, tracks, beaches (and a bit of Mozambique)

In the upper north-eastern corner of South Africa lies an unspoilt and protected coastline known as the Elephant Coast. **EVAN NAUDÉ** explored it, and even had time for a quick visit to Mozambique.

PHOTOS: Evan Naudé

It is just after 05:00 on a Monday morning when Roy, my taxi driver, picks me up in the dark outside my house in Cape Town. His shift is over after he drops me at the airport, he says, but my whole day is still ahead of me.

It's going to be one of those long days that happen now and again in the life of a travel journalist, and goes more or less like this: At the airport it's one long queue onto the plane because the flight is chock-a-block with business people migrating to Johannesburg for the week. I sleep like a log the whole flight and only wake up as we touch down at O.R. Tambo.

Here I'm greeted by Derryck Mitchell from Front Runner and we head through to their factory in Kyalami. Jaco Nel, Front Runner's sales manager, hands me the keys to a Jeep Rubicon with enough 4x4 gear to make a cash-strapped guy like me drool. For the rest of the day I drive through Gauteng, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal to reach the coast.

On the way I pick up my co-pilot, Miena Steyl, and by the time we reach St. Lucia it's already dark.

A taxi, an aeroplane and three provinces in a 4x4 later, I am finally ready to explore the Elephant Coast, which lies between here and the Mozambican border. But that'll have to wait, because right now I need some sleep.

Don't feed the crocodiles

The next morning I see the town in the daylight. I've never been to St. Lucia before and I immediately like the place. At the town's entrance there is a sign warning me that hippos roam the streets at night, at the lake there's another notice asking me not to feed the crocodiles and in front of the supermarket I see a gang of vervet monkeys and later a family of mongoose scurrying across the street.

The lush gardens in the neighbourhoods are neatly kept, but the town clearly still has a bit of a wild side. However, I'd like to get to the proper wild places as soon as possible so we head out of town towards Cape Vidal in the

NATURE'S GARDEN. There are various gravel loops on the way to Cape Vidal that take you through some lush indigenous vegetation.



Isimangaliso Wetland Park.

From the Bhangazi gate it's about 31km on tar to the campsite. The landscape is a rich green and from the tar there are a number of gravel loops with viewpoints that are worth a visit.

We go to have a look at the campsite. It is a tidy camp with loads of tree cover, clean ablution facilities and separated from the beach only by a small dune. A bushbuck's grazing next to a duiker while vervet monkeys run around them.

After dipping our toes in the ocean we walk back through the handful of tents of the diehard campers from the recent holiday season, or perhaps they are the ones that knew better and only came after the seasonal stampede. At one of the camps a barefoot man in shorts and a t-shirt with pictures of fish on it is fiddling with a fishing rod. He looks like he's settled in here, so I decide to introduce myself.

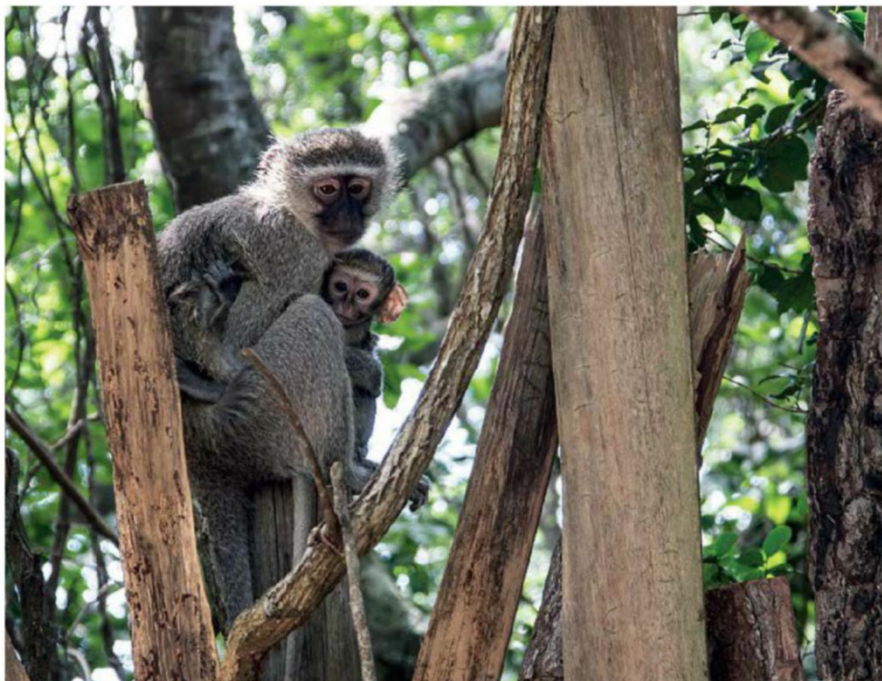
Nico van Staden tells me he and his family have camped a fair bit on this stretch of coastline. The closer they can be to the ocean, the better. For the fish-



ing, of course. It's their first time here, but it sounds like they've found the perfect balance between camp comfort and proximity to the beach. "This campsite is the best!" he proclaims.

Nico shows me a photo on his phone of a tremendous kingfish he caught here a few days ago. He reckons the sea further north has been fished out a bit, but here where the coastline is under the nature reserve's protection is the best place to fish. "I read the *Tight Lines* magazine and see the guys catch fish like this," he says and spreads his arms. "But that was ten years ago I tell you! Here it is still lekker, because there aren't people living here and the fish are protected in the reserve."

I ask if I can see the fish, but apparently it's been eaten already, so we say goodbye and head back to St. Lucia.



It's a cow-spiracy!

In recent months there have been various reports in the news about safety in the remote parts of the Elephant Coast with cases of theft and even hijackings specifically targeting 4x4s. It is something I enquired about when I booked

LIFE'S A BEACH (top). Nico, Martie and Mieke van Staden and Dewald Coetzee from Belfast believe Cape Vidal's campsite is idyllic.

GOING WILD. Hippos left their footprints on the footpaths of the Isimangaliso reserve outside St. Lucia (top left) and at the lake outside St. Lucia (top right) a sign warns that it's not a good idea to feed the crocodiles! Vervet monkeys (left) are abundant all along the coastline, so make sure your tents are closed properly if you are sharing a campsite with them.





i FIVE MUST-DO-THINGS!

1 SEE THE TURTLES

December to February is breeding time for loggerhead and leatherback turtles. It is the only place in the country where you can see these unique creatures lay their eggs and witness the babies hatch.

2 DIVE OR SNORKEL

This part of the coast is also known for stunning coral reefs and a variety of fish species. In Sodwana Bay and Ponta do Ouro there are various operators that will take you to the best diving spots. *(You don't have to be Jacques Cousteau either. I've snorkelled a kilometre or three offshore with a diving operator and the water was a balmy 28°C. – Jaco)*

3 TAKE THE BACK ROADS

The unspoilt nature of this coastline is the reason for a mass of sand tracks that cuts through beautiful scenery from one

place to another. Just remember your GPS with a Tracks4Africa map. It's easy to lose your bearings on this cobweb of tracks.

4 RELAX ON THE BEACH

The unspoilt beaches on this route are some of the most spectacular in the country and they are mostly deserted. After driving for a day or two to reach these places you deserve to treat yourself and enjoy the solitude in all its glory. I mean, who doesn't love the beach?

5 HOP OVER THE BORDER

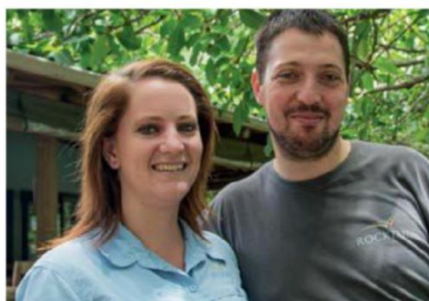
If you are travelling to Kosi Bay you might as well bring your passport and drive across the border to Mozambique. Ponta do Ouro and Ponta Malongane are only about 25km from Kosi Bay, so soon enough you'll be sitting on the beach with an ice cold 2M beer or even the infamous R&R (rum and raspberry cooldrink)!

my stay at Mabibi campsite. "We've never had problems at Mabibi," says the woman on the phone. "But if you are coming from the south it is best not to drive the Lake Sibaya road on your own. It's not safe."

I considered this for a long time because I've driven this road on my own before. There is also a beautiful jeep track through the forest down to Nine Mile Beach, but I was warned not to drive alone or leave my vehicle by the beach here either. In the end I decide to heed the advice of the woman on the phone, because even if I just pick up car trouble here, where there is no cell phone coverage, the rest of my trip might be in jeopardy. It's a shame, but instead

I take a detour along the R22 around the lake towards the D1849 gravel road that leads to Mabibi.

Dark clouds hang in the sky as we follow the road through eucalyptus plantations and I can tell it rained recently, because we keep finding pools of water in the road. I'd be lying if I said I don't enjoy charging through them with waves shooting up on either side of the Jeep, but I still make sure I pick my line carefully as some of the pools are quite deep. It is here that I also discover that Miena, who lives on a game reserve and is a qualified game ranger, has an irrational fear of Nguni cattle. Every time I come across a herd of them in the road she is convinced they are conspiring against her. "See the way they look at me... Evan! Just drive please!" a panicked voice bombards my left ear. I comply,



GOOD RIDDANCE TO CITY LIFE

(left). Daniel Morganti and Lizette van Deventer have no regrets in swopping Sandton for the coast.

WATER SPORTS (main photo).

Recent rains left the road to Mabibi with many pools of water.

even if it is just to free my arm from her vice grip of terror.

And then the rain came

The last few kilometres to Mabibi is a sandy jeep track and with the pools of water the road is actually an enjoyable experience. By the time we reach the camp in the late afternoon, a stiff breeze has come up and the sky is a deep grey. There isn't a single soul in the camp and I'm glad we opted for a chalet, because less than an hour later the rain comes down and drowns our braai fire.

The next morning the sky is open again and after a quick dip in the ocean (and a steep climb back up to camp with

130 odd stairs!) we leave Mabibi on the same road until we reach the turn-off to the D1848, which continues north parallel to the coast. From here we continue to the reserve's Manzenzwenya gate and after we've paid our entrance fees we head for a sand track that runs along the coast up to Bhanga Nek.

Before I set off however, I notice a sign outside the access gate that reads "Rock-tail Camp" and I decide to go have a look. It turns out it is not a campsite, but rather a lodge with a swimming pool, bar and luxurious accommodation. I meet Chef Daniel Morganti and ask him about the area. And it's a good thing too, because he immediately informs me that



ALL TO YOURSELF. At Mabibi there is a steep set of steps to reach the beach, but your reward is an unspoilt, often deserted paradise.

the road that I was planning to drive to Bhanga Nek is not passable at the moment. "We tried to go to Lala Nek this morning, but we couldn't make it. We recently had a big storm and the road is full of branches. That high Jeep of yours won't get through!" he says. He shows me photos on his phone and indeed, those aren't just branches, they're tree stumps.

What money can't buy

We join Daniel as he drives down to the beach to have a look at the damage done by the storm to a ramp they use when doing turtle tours. Here, Mother Nature is clearly the boss, but if you can

get used to this fact, living here can be heaven on Earth. Today is Daniel's 40th day here and he and his partner, Lizette, have not looked back for a second after swopping Sandton for the Elephant Coast. "All the money in the world can't bring you happiness, but this place has," he tells me. He shakes his head when I ask if he would ever move back to the city. "Not unless something drastic happens!"

Daniel tells me of the Gugulesizwe campsite just outside the border of the park, not too far from Rocktail. I decide to go have a look and follow two other staff members who happened to be on their way there. For a while we

i CAMP HERE

In St. Lucia, Sodwana and Kosi Bay there are a host of accommodation options, from guest houses and self-catering units to backpackers.

1 CAPE VIDAL

A neat campsite with good ablution facilities. The beach is only a short walk over a dune. It's packed in season, so book early or come a week or two later. **MORE INFO:** 📞 www.kznwildlife.com/camping-cape-vidal

2 MABIBI

Mabibi is a basic campsite close to the more luxurious Tsonga Lodge. It's close to the beach, but you need to walk down about 130 steps to reach it. Pack light for a day by the sea or make sure your cooler is empty when you come back! Bring your own drinking water. **MORE INFO:** 📞 www.mabibicampsite.co.za

3 GUGULESIZWE

There are modern en-suite self-catering chalets here with a communal kitchen, braai lapa and bar, and a separate campsite. Even though it's not on the coast, the beach is close enough for day visits and it's ideal if you want exclusivity when camping in a group. **MORE INFO:** 📞 www.gugulesizwe.co.za

4 BHANGA NEK

The campsite is basic (no electricity) and the tap water smells. However, it is a magnificent part of the coast and one of the most popular places to see turtles nesting. **MORE INFO:** 📞 www.bhanganek.co.za or 📞 www.extremenaturetours.co.za

5 PONTA DO OURO

At the Tande Beach Resort you can see the beach from camp. There's a bar and restaurant, and diving, fishing and dolphin-tour operators next to the camp. **MORE INFORMATION:** 📞 www.tande-beachresort.com



DESTINATION | ELEPHANT COAST

drive under a thick canopy, then swing west over wide open grasslands with no sign of civilization in any direction. Then, over a last hill, we arrive at a tidy yet empty campsite. It looks like the ideal spot to escape from the crowds of the bigger camps if you don't mind that it is not situated close to the beach. You can however reach the beaches easily enough on the sand tracks for day visits.

A bit of Mozambique

Outside the camp my GPS picks up on a road that runs through Malangeni to Manguzi. You can turn off here to Sodwana Bay, but that'll have to wait for another day and we keep going to Manguzi. Here we get on the R22 tar road again and before long we reach Kosi Bay on the shores of Lake Kosi. From here a network of coastal lakes stretches north to Kosi Bay Mouth. The mouth is definitely worth a visit to see the traditional fish kraals which are only found here in the whole of South Africa. Bring a picnic basket and make a day of it, even if it is just to make it worth paying the entry fee of R75 per vehicle and R75 per person.

I've been to Kosi Bay before and even though it is already mid-afternoon, a suggestion from Jaco is sticking in my head. He recommended that we bring our passports and pop over the border if we have the time. And since the distance to Ponta do Ouro, just over the Mozambican border, is only 25km from the mouth, we decide to grab the opportunity to go and see a new place. In any case, there is a campsite right on the beach and the road leading there is a network of sand tracks only fit for a 4x4. Like they say in the ads: "I'm sold!"

It is late afternoon when we drive through Ponta do Ouro to the Tandje beach resort and here too the campsite is deserted. It stands in stark contrast to the beehive of activity a month ago during the December holidays, I hear from the locals. The peace and quiet actually suits me well.

Later, with an icy 2M beer in hand, I watch the setting sun stain the sky a deep red and the adventure of the last few days has a chance to set in. The Elephant Coast is a jewel on the South African coastline – wild, beautiful, one of a kind, and as a World Heritage Site it is a place that will remain that way. I promise myself to return for more sand tracks and unspoilt beaches one day. And who knows, perhaps for a bit more of Mozambique, too. 🇲🇵



OFF-ROADERS ONLY. The sand tracks between the border and Ponta do Ouro are only passable in a 4x4.



I WANT TO GO TOO!

WHAT DID YOU DRIVE? Front Runner's fully kitted Jeep Wrangler Rubicon. With its roof rack and tent, extra fuel tank, three water tanks, fridge and suspension lift it is the perfect vehicle for the sand tracks and remote camps on this part of the coast. For Front Runner's full range of 4x4 accessories visit www.frontrunneroutfitters.com.

BEST TIME TO GO? September to March, but during school breaks and public holidays the beaches can get very crowded.

HOW MUCH TIME DO I NEED? I did this route in four days, but at every place I stopped I wished I could stay longer to explore. If you

love to fish or dive, give yourself at least a week.

WHERE CAN I FILL UP AND BUY FOOD? There are filling stations and supermarkets in St. Lucia, Sodwana Bay, Kosi Bay (Manguzi) and Ponta do Ouro. You'll need to bring all your own supplies and drinking water, and remember a tyre pressure gauge and a compressor to adjust your tyres for the terrain.

WHAT DO I NEED TO CROSS THE BORDER?

Your passport, vehicle license and a letter of permission from the bank or rental company if the vehicle is not paid for or doesn't belong to you. Most places in Ponta accept rands.

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DESTINATION | KLEIN KAROO

IT'S HEAVEN IN DIE HEL

The R62 is the most popular route between Oudtshoorn and Cape Town. If you have time, though, do yourself a favour and take a day or two extra to explore some of the Klein Karoo's other jewels. That's what **EVAN NAUDÉ** did.

PHOTOS: Evan Naudé en Kirstie Liu



I always knew the Karoo was vast, but not how vast until I started travelling the region thoroughly. America has its Great Plains, Australia the Outback and here we have the Karoo. It is a place that takes your breath away even if you just pass through, but its real jewels are often hidden at the end of a long gravel road. And to explore those gravel roads you can't just be driving through, you'll need to take your time.

The gate to the Klein Karoo

The R62 between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn is often described as an alternative to the N2. With its interes-

ting towns and beautiful landscapes the R62 is definitely the better call, though I couldn't help but wonder if there's an alternative to this alternative with a vehicle suitable for gravel. And indeed, in a strip just north of the R62 there's an unspoilt area where you'll encounter even less people and more spectacular scenery.

North of the R62, in the direction of the N1, lie two beautiful Cape Nature reserves – Anysberg and Swartberg. What's more, there are a number of proper mountain passes linking them. And the cherry on top: One of those jewels at the end of a gravel road: Gamkaskloof, also known as Die Hel.

It's late morning when I drive

through the rock arch at the old English fort on the Kogmanskloof Pass just outside Montagu. Some people reckon this "gate" in the mountain is the entrance to the Klein Karoo and it is indeed a suitable welcome.

My passenger for this trip is my friend Kirstie Liu, a Californian who's been living in Cape Town for a while. So she's caught on to the importance of *padkos* and learned the word "biltong", which she promptly shouts out as soon as we enter the town.

We make a quick stop for provisions before heading towards the Langkloof Pass, which connects to the Ouberg Pass and then continues north over the Karoo's mountains.

Where peace and quiet are infectious

We keep going north over the passes and about 52km after Montagu we reach the western gate of the Anysberg Nature Reserve. From here it's another 27km to the camp, roughly in the middle of the park. The reserve is oblong and sits snugly in a valley between the surrounding mountains.

We reach camp just before sunset and the office is already closed, but the key to our cottage is waiting in the front door. The heat of the day still lingers, so we make a beeline for the large swimming pool – the perfect oasis for a sundowner.

The next morning I pop into the office where I meet Adri and Marius Brand. They have been living and working here for the past eight years, says Adri, and tells me of all the activities in the park. “The older folk enjoy bird watching and the plants, since we have a lot of rare

flora here. Then we also have hikes and mountain biking,” she says. “We are the only Cape Nature reserve that offers horse riding and it is one of the few places where you can ride out, sleep over and come back the next day.”

Tapfontein has four cottages 21km away from the office, only accessible by 4x4. There's also an 80km long 4x4 trail over the mountain, but Adri tells me it's temporarily closed. “We are in the process of repairing it,” she says. “In December and January we usually get thunderstorms, but we don't like that type of rain since it floods all our roads. As dry as it is here, the water can come down in force!”

Adri enjoys living here, but says one needs to be able to adapt to other places, too. “I can, but Marius doesn't even want to go to the other side of the mountain!” she laughs. I can understand

that, because I can see how one can get used to the peace and quiet here.

We say our goodbyes and get in the bakkie to head for the eastern gate. Outside the gate I take a left at a T-junction. Turning right takes you to Ladismith and Zoar on a slightly shorter route, but by keeping north and then taking the R323 further east I can drive through the Seweweekspoort Pass.

The road to Hell

So far, the landscape has gradually revealed itself with wide open plains and moderate mountain passes. But here, in the Seweweekspoort, the rocky cliffs on either side of the road reach up into the sky in dramatic fashion. I have to drive slowly because I'm mesmerised by the landscape either side of the narrow gravel road trying to find a way out of the folds in the mountain.



West of Zoar the road joins the R62 again and on tar it's a quick 28km to Calitzdorp. From here you can continue on the R62 to Oudtshoorn and then turn north to the Swartberg Pass, but there is a shorter and prettier gravel road that takes you past the Calitzdorp dam and over the Huis se Hoogte Pass to the start of the Swartberg Pass.

I've been over the Swartberg Pass a few times before, but the spectacular scenery still takes my breath away every time. I can understand why it is on so many people's bucket list.

ACROSS THE PLAINS (right) In the Anysberg Nature Reserve you'll find nature unspoilt.

KAROO WINDOW (bottom right). Even though this farm house in Anysberg is in ruins, the view has remained unchanged.

UP THE MOUNTAIN (below). It's views like these that make the Swartberg Pass a bucket list item.





Today however, I have my own bucket list item to tick off: Gamkaskloof. The sign at the top of the Swartberg Pass that reads “Gamkaskloof 37 Travelling time 2 hours” has always tickled my curiosity, and now I finally have the chance to go see it for myself.

Almost immediately the landscape opens up in front of the bakkie and I can see the road curl over the creases of the mountains all the way to the horizon. The road is in a good condition and you could probably do it in less than two hours, but you don’t want to do that. Scenery like this should be appreciated.

So I take my time, and it’s a good thing too, since around every other corner I come across a couple of klipspringers in the road. They are clearly not very concerned with oncoming traffic, but I guess this is their territory after all.

In Greek mythology it is Cerberus, a monstrous three-headed dog, who guards the gates of Hell. Here in Gamkaskloof it seems we have a gang of klipspringers.

About 33km down the road we round a corner and suddenly the Gamkaskloof reveals itself to us in all its glory. From where I stand I can see the last 4km of road wind down to the valley in a series of hairpin bends and then disappear un-



AMONGST THE CLIFFS (above). The Seweweekspoort Pass is not a difficult one, but the scenery is dramatic.

RELIEF FROM THE KAROO HEAT (left). The swimming pool in the Anysberg Nature Reserve is a true oasis in the arid landscape.



i FIND REST HERE

1 ANYSBERG

This Cape Nature reserve has a camp site with five camping spots (maximum 6 people per site). The camp does not have electricity, but has communal ablution facilities with warm water. Bring your own toilet paper.

Near the camp site there are also five self-catering cottages with solar power, gas stoves, own bathrooms and equipped kitchens. Bedding and towels are included. Tapfontein is only accessible by 4x4. There are four cottages here (without electricity) with small kitchens that sleep two people each. Bring your own bedding, toilet paper, towels, wood and torches. The communal bathrooms have warm water.

PRICES: Camping from R170 p.p.p.n. Self-catering from R300 p.p.p.n. A daily conservation fee of R40 per adult and R20 per child applies.

CONTACT: ☎ 021 483 0190 or ✉ reservation.alert@capenature.co.za.

2 GAMKASKLOOF

In Die Hel you have three options for accommodation: Fonteinplaas, Ouplaas (Cape Nature) and Boplaas. Each has a camp site and self-catering houses.

FONTEINPLAAS

PRICES: The self-catering farm houses at Fonteinplaas cost R250 p.p.p.n., camping is R200 per site (maximum 6 people) and to stay in an equipped caravan (maximum 4 people) costs R100 p.p.p.n. There’s also a shop with basic supplies and a restaurant, but it’s best to bring your own supplies for longer stays in Gamkaskloof.

CONTACT: ☎ 023 541 1107 or ✉ info@gamkaskloof.co.za.

OUPLAAS

Has 11 self-catering houses. The camp site has 10 sites, each with their own ablutions. The Bush Camp can house 12 people.

PRICES: Camping costs from R150 p.p.p.n. and a cottage from R380 p.p.p.n. A daily conservation fee of R40 per adult and R20 per child applies.

CONTACT: ☎ 021 483 0190 or ✉ reservation.alert@capenature.co.za.

BOPLAAS

At Boplaas you can stay in one of four self-catering cottages or you can camp.

PRICES: The cottages start at R600 p.p.p.n. and to camp is R200 per night per site (maximum 6 people).

CONTACT: www.diehel.co.za

der a green strip of trees running into the distance. Die Hel is green and beautiful.

Once again it is almost sunset when we reach our accommodation for the evening – the Skoolmeester cottage in Cape Nature's Ouplaas section of the valley. And once again the key is waiting for us in the front door. I'll go sign in tomorrow, I think while lighting a fire. "Hell has a splash pool!" Kirstie calls excitedly from the other side of the house.

In the Valley of the Lions

The next morning I meet the reserve manager, Martin Botha, at the information office. "What can one do here? Well, there is a bit of history at each of our houses," he starts. "We have two walking trails, you can rent mountain bikes and if you like to fish we sell the licenses here too. And when it is new moon, it's so dark here that you can't see your hand in front of your face. Then we have the best

starry skies outside of Sutherland."

Everything sounds great, but why does one really want to 'go to Hell,'? I want to know from Martin. "Man, it's for the peace and quiet, the food for the soul," he answers. "In town you can easily live past one another. I won't say you should come and sort your marriage problems out here, but it has happened!"

Martin tells me there are less than 25 permanent residents in the Kloof. The only original 'Kloower' still left is Tannie Annatjie Joubert from Fonteinplaas. The rest are 'incomers,' but perhaps they are just the start of a new generation of Kloowers, because Gamkaskloof has a way of taking hold of you.

"In April I will have been here for 10 years. Then I think I finally qualify as a Kloower!" laughs Martin. "You need a heart to live here. It's *lekker*, but not always easy. Our telephones have been off for the last three weeks, for example.

So you can't even communicate with your family."

Die Hel is a nickname that apparently originates from the steep gradient of the surrounding mountains ('hellings' in Afrikaans), the searing heat and the stories of visitors about how difficult it was to reach this once isolated place. "The Kloowers weren't fond of the name at all. For them it was just Gamkaskloof, The Valley of the Lions. That was the Khoi name for it, even though there weren't any lions here," says Martin.

I say goodbye to him to explore the walking trails, but the heat soon has us heading back for the cool(er) shade of our cottage.

The new Kloowers

After lunch we swing by the shop at Fonteinplaas. We've just missed Tannie Annatjie, I hear, because she left the Kloof for a break this morning. Instead I meet her daughter-in-law, Marinette Joubert. She has been living here for 14 years with her husband Piet. "This place is very special. Firstly there's the road leading here. It's beautiful and it's nice to say that you have driven to Hell and back!" she laughs.

“To explore these gravel roads you can't just be driving through, you'll need to take your time.”



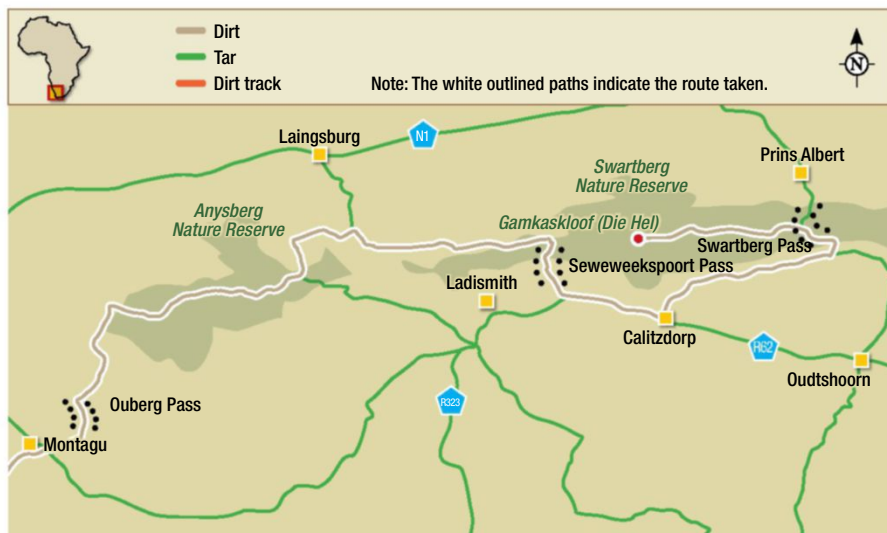


THE ROAD TO HELL. When you turn off onto the road that leads to Gamkaskloof, nicknamed Die Hel, a sign warns you about its dangers (opposite). At the other end of the road, however, you are rewarded with a spectacular view over the lush valley tucked away between the folds of the Swartberg mountain range.

Marinette reckons you have to spend at least two nights in Gamkaskloof to truly appreciate it. "If you like history you should talk to the people here, because it is really intense. And then, of course, there's the atmosphere when you stay here. You have your preconceived ideas of the place, but it is great to sit around a fire at night and think about what it must have been like to live here in the old days."

The isolation doesn't really bother Marinette. In fact, she says her days are chock-a-block. "There are always things to do on a self-sufficient farm," she explains. "A lot of people come with old ideas about the Kloowers who lived totally isolated from the outside world, but it is not true today," says Marinette.

"If you like history you should talk to the people here, because it is really intense."



I WANT TO GO TOO!

DO I NEED A 4X4? No, you can do this route in a sedan with good ground clearance if you drive carefully. The pass to Gamkaskloof is however much more comfortable in a bakkie or soft-roader.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GO? Autumn and spring, when temperatures are milder.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING? Camping gear, wood and everything else you want to eat and drink. The cottages in Anyenberg and Gamkaskloof

Nature Reserve have solar power, gas stoves and well-equipped kitchens.

WHERE CAN I FILL UP NEARBY? Montagu, Calitzdorp, Oudtshoorn or Prins Albert.

HOW MUCH TIME DO I NEED? Anyenberg is 3,5 hours (250 km) from Cape Town. From Oudtshoorn you can drive down to Gamkaskloof and back in a day. It is therefore the ideal destination for a long weekend as well as longer visits to truly appreciate the isolation.

"At home we have Wi-Fi, so with things like Facebook we have contact with friends and family. And with Google we know exactly what goes on in the world," she explains.

I ask her if she would ever live somewhere else. "We are the fifth generation to live on this property and I hope our children would one day like to live here, too," answers Marinette.

Later that evening I am sitting next to the fire and I think about my conversation with Martin and Marinette.

Yes, life was probably quite hard in this valley. But the unspoilt beauty of the place is enthralling. Could I live here? Perhaps.

And even though the building of the road back in the day contributed to the

LIVING IN THE KLEIN-KAROO



ADRI AND MARIUS BRAND

ANYSBERG

"It is very lekker here, but it's not a place where everyone can live. For our lifestyle, however, it works very well and we are both very happy."



MARTIN BOTHA

GAMKASKLOOF

"Most people who come here had heard or read somewhere about Die Hel and when they come to have a look it is actually a paradise. Many say: If Die Hel looks like this, I'll go live there any time!"



MARINETTE JOUBERT

"We often go to Mossel Bay and get perspective in town. Sometimes your life feels boring, but then you realise that's it's the same for city people – they're just somewhere else. You can live anywhere with the right attitude."



Come camp and join our 4x4 workshop **IN THE TANKWA-KAROO!**

Have you ever dreamed about pitching your tent under the crystal clear night skies of the Tankwa-Karoo and chuck some meat on the braai? If so, we have the perfect 'excuse' for you to experience this part of the country at its best. From 26 to 28 May, *Drive Out* will be hosting a series

of 4x4 workshops at the Tankwa Tented Camp. You'll gain practical knowledge and training under the watchful eye of 4x4 instructors, learn about navigation and radio procedures, up your recovery skills and get to listen to a 4x4 tyre specialist. Families are welcome.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:

FRIDAY AFTERNOON you arrive and finish the paperwork. That night, we'll have an introductory workshop covering the basics of 4x4 driving and recovery, followed by a Q&A session. Then we braai (obviously!)

SATURDAY will see five different workshops.

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When you're done with this workshop you'll know just about everything about jacks – how to use them, what to watch out for and what to keep in mind when you buy one.

WORKSHOP 2:

KINETIC RECOVERIES

Recoveries with a kinetic rope are dangerous if you don't do them right. But sometimes they're the only option. That's why it's important that our quali-

fied instructors show you how to do a kinetic recovery correctly, safely and as easily as possible under the circumstances you face. After this workshop you'll be able to do a kinetic recovery with confidence.

WORKSHOP 3:

WINCHES

A winch is another handy piece of equipment that needs to be used with great care, otherwise people, vehicles or both could get hurt. Our instructors will show you how to do it right.

WORKSHOP 4:

NAVIGATION AND RADIO PROCEDURE

After this workshop you'll be a better navigator and know how to use a two-way radio correctly on tour or in convoy.

WORKSHOP 5:

TYRES

If you think all tyres are the same, just wait until you hear what the legendary Johann "Tyre" Viljoen has to teach you in this workshop.

And you have an alternative!

If you don't want to attend all the workshops, you're welcome to go for a drive on one of the relaxing and easy trails in the area around Stonehenge Nature Reserve, located within the Tankwa National Park.

WHEN? 26–28 May

WHERE? Tankwa Tented Camp, Tankwa-Karoo

HOW MUCH? R1990 standard cost for all workshops and weekend activities, breakfast, dinner and a goodie bag. The instructors supply all the recovery gear. Just bring your own vehicle and fuel. Special rates for kids apply.

ACCOMMODATION: En-suite cabin with bedding R1632 per couple; Fixed tent with bedding R1248 per couple; Own tent (and bedding) R240 per person.

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Book NOW!

When it rains in the Kalahari

A holiday in the Kgalagadi is always exceptional, but when the rain falls in this arid area, it becomes a magical experience, says **WOUTER LABUSCHAGNE**.

PHOTOS: Dewald and Nellie Tromp, Wouter Labuschagne

My wife Glynnis, my daughter Liza and I arrived in the Kgalagadi on the morning of 28 December last year. We entered the park via the Twee Rivieren gate and would be camping at Rooiputs for the next five days. Our camp companions were Dewald Tromp (Trompie), a passionate amateur wildlife photographer, his wife Nellie and their two daughters Gamay (13) and Anja (11).

One of my preconceived notions about the Kalahari was promptly dealt a death blow on our arrival. When I thought of the Kalahari, I always imagined a dry, barren, semi-desert of red sand. But here we were surrounded by a landscape of green in the red dunes, with roads that looked like rivers in some places.

Apparently it had rained cats and dogs the two nights before we arrived, and it was as if you could feel the animals' exuberance, because the springboks were leaping playfully around. (*I think there's a reason that they call them "springboks". – Jaco*).

We saw pools of water all over the place, and that corrected another misconception of mine. I thought that the animals would disappear because water was available everywhere, but in the following few days we saw more game than I ever thought was possible.



OVER THE RAINBOW: A very special place for a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow – the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

The Day of the Lions

Rooiputs has a reputation for lions popping around for visits. So we pulled in carefully and checked in every direction before we set up camp. Was there a lion in the grass watching us? But another, much smaller danger would threaten us at this camp: scorpions. As soon as the sun set, and especially if a breeze was blowing, these dangerous goggas would seek our company. We soon realised that this was not flip-flop country, but a place for proper *velskoene*.

The lions were also not shy. Every morning around 5am we were up and on the go, and not without reward. On the very first morning, we came across two engorged male lions about 200 meters from the campsite. They were lying calmly against a red sand dune, beautiful in the light of the rising sun. It looked like they were giving their full stomachs a chance to digest.

It was as if these proud predators were posing for a few great photos in the perfect glow of the early morning sun. The water was also close by, and when they went to take a drink at Rooiputs's dam, it looked like these two were trying to empty it.

We christened our first day "The Day of the Lions," because barely a kilometre further we came across a mating pair with all the roaring, chasing and biting typical of lions during the mating season. It was a photographer's dream.

After this, at Kij-Kij, probably about 20 kilometres north of Rooiputs, we came across the "protector" of the Rooiputs crowd. A huge male lion was lying under the sign that read "Rooiputs residents only" – as if he was personally guarding the entrance.

Wind and dust

The following morning we went exploring. We drove down the dune road from Kij-Kij past Tierkop, and stopped for a picnic at Auchterlonie, a restored house that has been turned into a museum. South African soldiers also stopped here during the First World War to replenish their water supplies.

We aimed northwards again at Samevloeing (where the Nossob and Ayab rivers converge) on the lookout for game. Later that afternoon Glynnis, Liza and I were heading back to camp earlier than the rest to get the campfire started for dinner. We had just gotten started when Trompie and the gang arrived at camp in a fluster. "Look behind you!" he said and



FAMILY MATTER (top). A male and female lion have a 'serious' chat about the important task ahead: creating some offspring.

WATER OBSTACLES IN THE KALAHARI?! (above). This is what some roads in the Kgalagadi look like after a decent bout of rain in the area.

I turned around to see what's going on. Behind me, the eastern horizon was dark red, an ominous sight – a Kalahari sandstorm was brewing. I simply admired the view, but Trompie and his team had ten years of experience in the Kalahari, and quickly started to mobilise the lot of us.

The food preparation had to stop immediately and everything that was outside had to be brought into the tents before the sandstorm hit us. The scrambling became something that I think would make any meerkat proud of his brood.

Within ten minutes everything was moved inside and the tents were an-

chored as well as possible. It wasn't a minute too soon, because just then a full-blown Kalahari sandstorm hit us with all its might.

The tents on my Jurgens trailer and Trompie's Desert Wolf were laid flat against the onslaught of wind and sand. Liza's Tentco dome also weathered the storm well, but we would later discover that the scorpions also thought it was a good hiding place.

Tent pegs don't fare very well in the Kalahari sand. That's why I decided to anchor my tent ropes to my Fortuner's wheels. The idea worked well, because the tent held fast, but the fury of the

wind was so bad that it almost bent the poles. So we each just grabbed a pole and held on for dear life.

That night we had to cook dinner on a gas braai inside the tent, and paired it with a Paul Sauer Kanonkop to help swallow the extra grains of sand (*Paul Sauer is always part of a winning game plan! – Jaco*), and gained new respect for how our trailers' tents withstood the forces of nature.



GOTCHA! An oryx and a flock of birds playfully chase each other. The writer found many of the Kgalagadi's animals in this state of joy after the rains.

New Year in the Kalahari

It was New Year's Eve and we decided to see 2016 out with some fun in the sand of the Leeuwardil 4x4 route. It was a great pleasure and a special privilege to spend the final hours of the year on the dunes of the Kalahari. After the late afternoon photo session we appreciated the windless night in the camp, where we could sit outside and gaze at the stars. The night sky was so clear that we could see the Small and the Large Magellanic Cloud alongside the Milky Way.

While we occasionally threw another log on the fire, we reflected on the previous days' excitement and waited for the New Year to dawn. But hey, if an expedition starts out exciting, then it stays exciting! Suddenly the silence was broken by the soft, deep call of a lion in the darkness. We were still trying to guess how far away he was when he blew the life into our bones with a proper roar. This guy was close!

The light from our torches found him about 50 meters away – calm, but heading straight for us. It didn't take much convincing to get us all into our



REASON TO CELEBRATE. Wouter, Glynnis and Liza Labuschagne, and Gamay, Anja, Dewald and Nellie Tromp say 'Cheers' after successfully saving their tents and trailers from a vicious sandstorm.

tents like lightning. We sat dead still and listened, but Simba wasn't in a rush. He took his time walking between our tents, growling now and then while he investigated our campsite. I hoped quietly that he was roaring from a full stomach and not an empty one.

Apparently he didn't find our camp very interesting and was quiet from then on, but we also didn't want to go check whether we could still see him.



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THE LION'S SHARE (top). The Leeudrill 4x4 trails isn't particularly challenging, but the dunes and sand patches are loads of fun.

HOLD ON GIRLS! (above). You need a bit more than tent pegs when a Kalahari sand storm wants to take your camp!

And so we saw the New Year in with a male lion in our camp. The Rooiputs reputation didn't disappoint!

Happy beginnings

New Year's Day in the Kgalagadi went just like all the others. We got up at five in the morning, went to go take photos, came back to camp and enjoyed a late

breakfast, took a nap and began to pack up a few things here and there. We went for another drive at five that evening, but Trompie and I chose different routes. We were still happy with the loads of animals that we saw, but it wasn't the end of the adventure just yet.

We were in radio contact with each other, and around 7 pm I heard Trompie's voice over the radio. "Have you seen the horizon?" he asked. Indeed, I had seen the dark orange skyline and was already on my way back to camp when he contacted me.

This mass of clouds looked worse than the first one, because the storm was approaching us on two fronts.

It's disturbing how quickly a storm can move. It didn't matter how fast I drove to get ahead of it, it was always just behind me. I stayed ahead only by about 50 meters but I couldn't gain any more distance. The reason for this was the surprising behaviour of the animals. All of them, big and small, fast and slow, were heading in the same south-western direction. It would seem that we had all bought the same Tracks4Africa map! Where you usually see tortoises alone, we found them on the move in little families, from big to small.

It once again opened our eyes to the animal kingdom – a place where we are just visitors. We drove past the most beautiful photo opportunities, but our biggest priority was saving our camp.

By this time we had experience in saving camps, and we moved like a well-oiled machine to rescue what we could. This storm was different from the first one, because it was accompanied by rain. But we didn't mind – it was raining in the Kalahari, and we were part of it.

Fortunately, the worst was over soon, but it rained throughout the night, and the last light of the day gave us another opportunity for a few special photos.

The next morning it was time to pack up, and once again the scorpions reminded us that this was their place and we were just visitors. We didn't mind, because it was such a privilege to have this kind of experience in the wild.

That night we slept in the Van Zylsrus Hotel, which has its own sort of charm, and the following morning at 3 am we were woken up by the sound of rain on the corrugated roof. But we just crawled in a bit deeper under the covers, comforted by the fact that we were richer than before as a result of our expedition to the Kalahari. 📷

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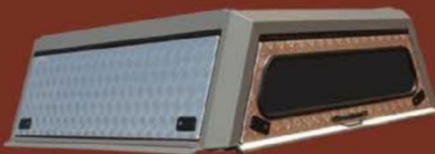
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SPECIAL READER OFFER

Baobabs & waterfalls

Join a self-drive guided tour from southern Botswana to Victoria Falls with Drive Out Tours, in conjunction with Bhejane 4x4 Adventures.

DAY 1 We meet in the town of Letlhakane and refuel. Then we head out into the bush and onto the vast, flat expanse of the Makgadikgadi Pans where we spend our first night on Kubu Island.

DAY 2 Early birds and keen photographers will relish watching the sun rise over the pans while enjoying coffee and rusks. After breakfast we hike around the island with its fascinating rock formations and baobabs while the logistics team strikes camp. Then it's time to head north to our overnight camp outside Maun.

DAY 3 We spend the morning in Maun for shopping and fuel. There's an opportunity for an hour-long flight over the delta (not included in the tour price). Then we depart for our next overnight stop on the banks of one of the delta's main channels. The logistics team will have set up camp and the pots will be simmering.

DAY 4 After a few days' driving it's time to relax. We have a late start with a big brunch. The camp is known for birding, including

the resident Pel's Fishing Owl. In the late afternoon, we explore the waterways of the Okavango Delta on a boat cruise in comfortable aluminium speed boats on the waterways of the Pan Handle.

DAY 5 We head north into Namibia via Tsodilo Hills with their magnificent rock art. Here, we visit the museum and enjoy a picnic lunch. Our campsite for the next three nights is a shady camp on the banks of the Okavango River.

DAY 6 We enjoy a big brunch and then you're free to explore on your own or relax in the camp. Go for a game drive in the nearby Bwabwata National Park, do some bird watching, go on a dug-out canoe trip, do a village tour or cast a line in the water. We meet in the late afternoon for a sun-downer cruise. (The cruise is the only activity for the day included in the price.)

DAY 7 We visit the Mohango Game Reserve, which boasts four of the big five and is well-known for large numbers of roan antelope and sable.

DAY 8

We break camp and head for the Zambezi Region (Caprivi) and our next camp is just outside Kasane, on the banks of the Chobe River. We spend our last three nights in this former war-torn province, now a national park.

DAY 9

We go on a bus trip to Victoria Falls and have a picnic lunch, do some sight-seeing and shopping in the village of Victoria Falls. There are a number of adventure activities, such as bungee jumping and helicopter flights (not included in the tour price).

DAY 10

We take a drive on an open game drive vehicle through Chobe National Park, and enjoy a sunset boat cruise on the Chobe River. We spend our last night around the campfire enjoying the unique bond of friendship that can only be made by fellow travellers who, together, have experienced the magic of the African bush.

DAY 11

It's time to say our good-byes as we head to our different towns and cities.

COSTS & DATES

HOW LONG IS THE TOUR?

11 days, 10 nights

WHEN? 2-12 April; 30 June to 10 July; 4-14 August; 10-12 October 2017.

WHERE DOES THE TOUR DEPART FROM?

Letlhakane, just south of the Makgadikgadi Pans in Botswana.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PROVIDE

- Your own vehicle and fuel
- Stretchers or mattresses, bedding and camp chairs
- Drinks and snacks
- Medical insurance and evacuation insurance cover
- Border-crossing fees and road taxes

(Bhejane provides all tents, tables, cutlery and crockery)

WHERE WILL WE SLEEP? Tents (which Bhejane's logistics team will pitch and dismantle daily).

AND THE FOOD? Bhejane's experienced bush chefs make three tasty meals every day.

COST? R13 250 per person (Half price for children under 10 years)

THE PRICE INCLUDES:

- All camp and park fees
- Three meals per day, prepared by Bhejane's experienced bush chefs.
- The use of two-way radios
- The services of a professional tour leader and guide.

Yes, I want to go!

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SleepSeker Prestige

- SleepSeker cover
- SleepSeker contents (worth R30 000)
- SleepWeg roadside assistance

SleepSeker Ekono

- SleepSeker cover
- SleepWeg roadside assistance

Benefits

- **SleepSeker cover:** Comprehensive cover for your vehicle, including accidental damage, malicious damage, storm damage, theft, hijacking and fire.

- **SleepSeker contents:** Cover for your valuables worth R30 000 in total is included in the Prestige package. You also have the option to insure the contents of your caravan or trailer for R45 000 or R60 000 at an extra premium. Contents covered includes bedding, kitchenware, clothes, electrical appliances, caravan and tent accessories and equipment, as well as tents (dome tents and awnings).
- **SleepWeg roadside assistance:** Includes towing your vehicle and trailer in a road emergency, plus:
 - **Roadside assistance:** For when you have a flat tyre, locked your keys in your vehicle, run out of fuel or were involved in an accident.
 - **Return of vehicles from neighbouring countries:** Including Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi and Zambia. It also covers emergencies like car accidents.
 - **Medical evacuations:** General advice and a customer care help line plus medical emergency services.

Why choose *WegSleep*?

- *WegSleep* is in partnership with CaraSure, a company specialising in leisure vehicle insurance in South Africa.
- The SleepSeker Prestige and Ekono packages include top-up cover (credit shortfall) options. This covers the outstanding amount plus interest in the event of the total loss of your vehicle.
- *WegSleep* and CaraSure, specialists in the industry, understand the needs of campers and can meet their requirements.

How do I apply?

Visit wagsleep.co.za for more information and the application forms, or call 0860 107 772 for quotes and queries. Fax your application form to 086 607 0494 or e-mail it to wagsleep@carasure.com. Claim forms can be sent to wagsleep@carasure.com. For SleepWeg roadside assistance call 0861 111 215.



This policy is underwritten by Natsure (Pty) Ltd. (FSP 4578) and Guardrisk Insurance Company Ltd (FSP 75), both authorised financial service providers





HOOK UP AND GO!

Many of our readers like to tow trailers when they head into the great unknown. But not everyone is keen to schlep a bush trailer over Van Zyl's Pass. And while it's not impossible, it's not always the best idea. Here's a list of destinations where you can really enjoy nature without worrying about your bush trailer getting stuck or tipping over.



1 The Richtersveld

The corrugated dirt roads that take you to the gate of this well-known national park are often in a worse condition than the roads inside the park itself. Once you're through the gate, the roads within the park lead to beautiful campsites nestled in the impressive rocky mountains of the ancient Richtersveld area. The distances between camps are small, so you can change your view with minimal effort during your visit.

The park has five campsites: Sendelingsdrift, Potjiespram, De Hoop,

Richtersburg and Kokerboomkloof. Sendelingsdrift can get busy during peak season, so if you're looking for a more peaceful atmosphere the Potjiespram camp is a good alternative, because it's just 9km away from the main camp. De Hoop, with its ideal location on the banks of the Orange River, is the most popular site of the bunch, but if it's too busy for you Richtersburg, 8km further east along the riverbank, is a good option. But be warned, the road between these two camps along the river is sandy in places, so you need to know what

you're doing, especially with a trailer.

Kokerboomkloof is the only campsite not situated on the riverbank, but spending a night here is definitely worth the effort. The rock formations and remote location of this camp, especially on a moonless night when the stars are at their brightest, make staying here a really unforgettable experience.

The Richtersveld is also a good place to stop over if you're heading further north, because Sendelingsdrift has a border post where you can cross the river into Namibia by ferry.



2 Namaqua Eco Route

The Namaqua Eco Route starts at Pella in the Northern Cape and follows the Orange River to Vioolsdrift. From here it leads over the Helshoogte Pass to the southern section of the Richterveld and then Alexander Bay on the West Coast. The N7 cuts it in two, so you can do only half.

There are no official campsites on this route, so you need to bring everything you might need with you, and make sure you take all your rubbish when you leave. The unspoiled places along the route, such as Melkboom, Ramansdrift and the Kamgab Riverbed, are precisely what make this route so special.

The terrain includes rocks,

sand and corrugation, so bring a compressor and tyre pressure gauge, and secure everything to your trailer. There are patches of thick sand in the course of the Kamgab River and you'll have to choose your line carefully over the rock banks.

You'll find the infamous Road to Hell just before Vioolsdrift, but this trail is

to be avoided, even if you're not towing. Around the route there are loads of interesting places. Stop at the Catholic Church in Pella, taste dates at Klein-Pella or do a succulents tour in Eksteenfontein. Namibia stretches ahead of you on the other side of Vioolsdrift's border post, and to the east is Riemvasmaak and the Augrabies National Park.



3 Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

The Kgalagadi is one of those places where a bush trailer comes in handy, because it's likely that you'll spend the whole day game viewing, and won't have to set up an entire camp.

Some of the best campsites in the park are very remote and you have to take all your own water and supplies, so a bush trailer makes life substantially easier for longer stays. And if the lions come sniffing around your camp at night, a sturdy bush trailer is certainly a better barrier than just a canvas tent.

Depending on your route, you'll

come across deep sand, moderate dunes and serious corrugation. So it's a good idea to check your suspension, trailer coupling, tow bar and the trailer's hubs (for heat from the bearings) every few kilometres or so.

Don't overload, and make sure your jockey wheel is firmly attached, or take it off and pack it in a safe place. And lastly, remember to deflate the trailer's tyres to the correct pressure.

Note that the 4x4 trails to Bitterpan and Gharagab are exclusively for the use of guests that sleep over, and no trailers are allowed on these routes.



It is the ingenious offroad trailer/caravan solution for the adventurer who travels off thebeaten track but likes fuss-free convenience.



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4 West Coast 4x4 route

The West Coast is popular for a reason. It's remote, beautiful and offers just enough of an off-road challenge to have fun without damaging your vehicle and ruining your holiday.

Geographically, it's a large piece of land, that's why we're focussing on the West Coast 4x4 route, which starts along the sea near Lutzville and reaches the Groen River mouth 88km later.

From here it's a further 80km to Hondeklip Bay, and the first part is relatively sandy with sharp turns in places. So if

you're not intending to deflate your tyres (1 bar for an empty vehicle) you're going to get stuck. Of course you can also do the route from north to south, in other words, from Hondeklip Bay to Lutzville.

It's worthwhile no matter how you tackle it. All along the route there are beautiful "wild" camps such as Delwers Camp, Kwass se Baai, Varswater, Koringkorrelbaai and Spoegriviergrotte, where you and your buddies can spend time relaxing in total isolation. Just remember to leave these spots as pristine as you found them.



5 Southern Namibia

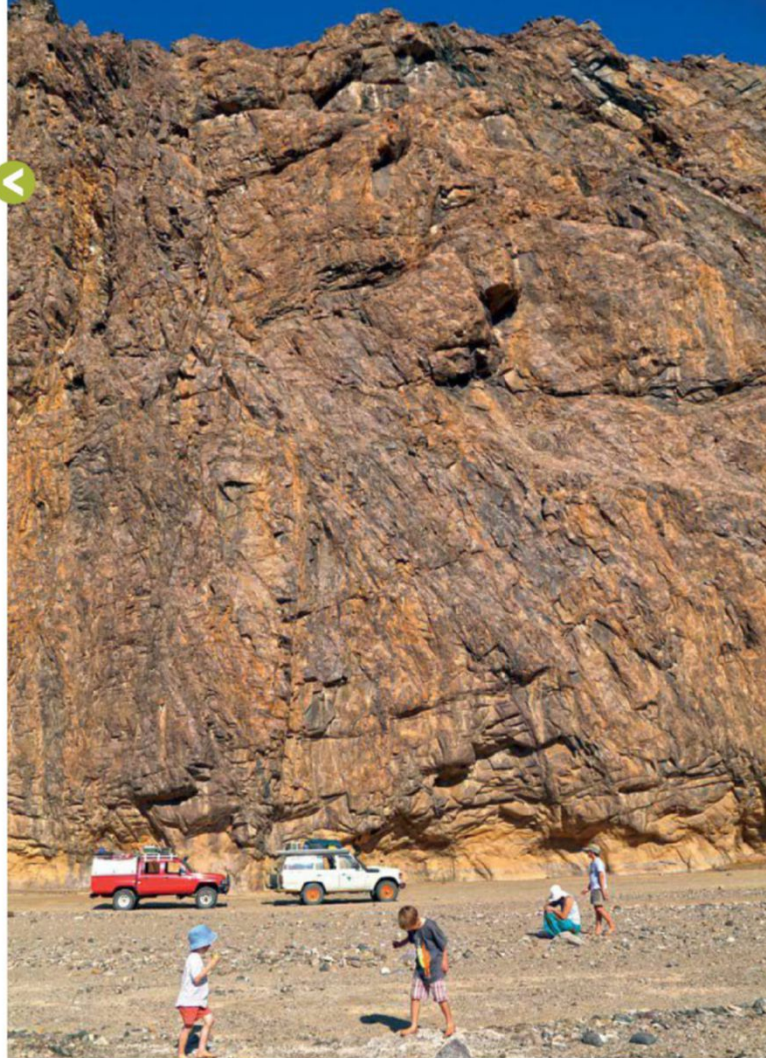
One of the biggest mistakes people make is to cram their vehicle full and do a whirlwind tour of the whole of Namibia in 10 days. It's actually silly, because Namibia is an enormous country with lots of attractions, some of which are hundreds of kilometres apart.

The south of Namibia itself is very large, that's why we recommend that you aim for the southern section of the south, in other words, everything north of the Orange River and south of a line between Keetmanshoop and Lüderitz.

One of the best places is the course of the Gamchab River, just before it flows into the Orange River. You can camp here for large portions of the year, surrounded by the impressively high cliffs. Plus, it's just 67km from the Vioolsdrift/Noordoe-wer border post en route to Rosh Pinah, so you can start unhitching and set up camp less than an hour after stamping your passport.

And once you're done there, you can relax for a couple of nights at Ais-Ais before you unhitch again at Hobas rest camp and visit the Fish River Canyon's lookout point. You can also stop a little way further at the famous Cañon Roadhouse for a lekker meal – or to stay at their campsite.

From here you can travel to Lüderitz, or if you have some extra time you can aim further north on excellent gravel roads to visit places like Duwisib Castle, Sossusvlei and Sesriem.



6 Mozambique

Just like Namibia, Mozambique is a large country – or rather, a long country – and you have to be specific about what parts you want to visit. The EN1 highway is tar and runs from the south to quite far north. But if you're looking for a great trailer-friendly adventure, rather leave South Africa via the Pafuri border post at the top of the Kruger National Park and drive through the bush to Vilanculos, where you can relax properly for a couple of days.

Once through the Pafuri border post, you have to drive south-east until you reach Mapai. Here you turn left (north-west) and cross the Limpopo – if it's not flowing too strongly!

Then follow the route on Tracks4-Africa until you reach Machaila, where you can spend the night in a community campsite before you push through to Vilanculos the next day via Offiso, Mabote and Mapinhane.

The route isn't technically difficult, with only some thick sand in places. If you're towing a big caravan, it could get scratched. But for most bush trailers it shouldn't be a problem.

Scorpion stings & broken bearings

Heading into the Mozambican interior can reward you with unspoilt bush, fantastic birding and limited game. But it's no place for sissies, as **James Nelson** found out.

Leaving sunny, palm-fringed Morrungulo Beach, situated roughly 90 km north of Maxixe in Mozambique, my son Harry and I headed for Zinave National Park. Lying on the southern bank of the Save River, this national park is roughly halfway between the coast and the Zimbabwe border. Turning right onto the EN1 we were glad to have left behind the cicada-like clatter of children screaming “sweets” and headed north.

At the town of Muchungue we stopped to take a photo of a luxury bus that had been sliced in half, lengthwise, when it drove into a broken down logging truck. Just as our finger was about to depress the shutter, two policemen rushed out bellowing and waving their arms, as if we'd been discovered taking shots of a secret and sensitive security installation. Puffed up with self-importance one cop sauntered up to us, but the stern lecture and demand for cash he was about to deploy evaporated into pleasantries when he recognised me. He had previously been stationed at Massinga, the nearest town to our lodge at Morrungulo Beach. Greetings ensued and we left with photos in hand.

Things get a little rough

North of the Inhassoro turnoff we passed through the town of Pande, where just on the outskirts we turned left onto a good gravel road. We travelled for some time until the road branched into a large Y, where we stopped at a *banca* (small shop) to ask directions.

I was greeted by a very pleasant jovial man in his late 50s, sporting short Rasta hair, a larger copper ear-

ring and numerous copper and bead bracelets. He somehow reminded me of an African version of Jack Sparrow, admittedly though somewhat older and more debauched. He sent us on our way indicating the right-hand, better-used road and not the left less-used one that was the original way. We proceeded well, crossing the Cao River, but the well-maintained road came abruptly to an end becoming an overgrown track basically following the Save River. We wound our way along this track until we found Tondo Camp, overlooking the Save River.

At Tondo we met Trevor Landrey, a long-time friend employed by the Peace Parks Foundation, who are in the process of rehabilitating Zinave National Park. Having been on site for only two and a half months Trevor himself is still in the process of exploring and getting to know the area properly.

Almost none of the park's roads have been used since 1975 and they can only be found using the old “blaze” (notch) marks cut into the trees at the time the tracks were made. This is where the saying “blazing a trail” comes from.

There is game, but they're rather

PARADISE POSTCARD (above). James and Harry Nelson left this idyllic view behind to explore the interior of Mozambique.

scarce and nervous, having been ravaged during the 17-year civil war. However, an aggressive re-introduction programme is in progress. While we were there 200 waterbuck, 200 reedbuck and 200 warthog were introduced into the conservancy. Elephant, giraffe, buffalo, kudu, nyala, impala as well as an assortment of smaller antelope can also be seen. With protection now being offered the animals are returning off their own accord, too, but it's the pure unspoilt bush with its varied vegetation that is truly breathtaking – forests of fever trees, mopane woodland, leadwoods, pod mahogany, baobabs and iron wood, and pans, vleis and riverine vegetation can all be seen.

The next couple of days we just explored the area, with Trevor taking us into a Stone Age site he had stumbled upon. The area had an eerie and ancient feel to it, stunted ironwood trees jutted out of the crumbling rocky outcrops and all around these outcrops lay pebbles and stones of varying sizes. Amongst these were flint chards, unfinished arrow heads and cutting implements, as well as the stone tools used to make the flints.

Off the beaten map

On the morning of our departure we were awoken by a commotion coming from the river. Upon closer inspection we realised it was kids putting well-intentioned donated mosquito nets to “good use” by netting every last living creature in the diminishing pools.

We departed camp with Trevor and his son Justin, who had joined us for the last leg of the journey, and headed south to the town of Mabote where fuel was available. After filling up we continued south, but left the modern main dirt road to take an old track. This road was the old original main road in the sixties linking Mabote to Banhine National Park.

We set up camp on the southern tip of Lake Banamana, which was only one third full due to the drought. That evening just before dusk we were startled to hear what we thought was an aircraft suddenly above us, only to realise that the loud humming sound was coming from a huge flock of flamingos overhead. They descended rapidly from some altitude towards the lake where, at the last minute, they gracefully glided onto the shallows.



STAYING AT ZINAVE NATIONAL PARK

Zinave National Park has five spacious tents sleeping two on raised foundations. Power is supplied for a couple of hours in the evenings and there's an ablution block with flush loos and showers. At present there are no other campsites available, but Trevor Landrey is investigating potential sites as well as opening up roads for 4x4 enthusiasts.

If you would like to visit please contact: James on ☎ +28 84 246 7533 for further information as there is no cell signal at Tondo Camp.



AND RELAX! (above left). Night time at Zinave camp calls for a pensive mood and a refreshment on the tent's stoep.

GET USED TO THIS ANGLE (left). The animals in Zinave National Park are generally scarce and skittish, but their numbers are improving as new game gets introduced to the park.

BUSH OASIS (above). With summer temperatures soaring way above comfort levels, a dip in the Save River is a welcome reprieve.

The following day we spent exploring Lake Banamana and its surrounds and were surprised at the beautiful bush and fantastic birdlife on and around the water. Here we found the mozzie nets being used as fly screens over bubbling palm wine.

Our water reserves were running very low and as we were unable to use the brackish lake, we decided the following day to head south again on the old original main road that nowadays isn't marked on any map. We headed for the Changane River and Banhine National Park where we were sure we would find water. As we progressed the heat became worse (approximately 40 degrees) and the impact of the drought became more and more apparent – abandoned villages, dry wells and parched earth – so we named the area the Bad Lands. Unsure of our route we pulled up to a tiny settlement and asked directions from a grizzled old man stooped in a broken plastic chair, but got no response. He just stared at us, which both scared and intrigued me – was it because of the language barrier, the apparition of four whites in a vehicle, or just the combined effects of the drought, heat and palm wine? Realising we were wasting our time, we ventured on none the wiser of our route. Four hours later we broke through the mopane forest and onto the bone dry flood plain of the Changane.

Throwing some shade

A couple of kilometres further along we came upon the boomed entrance to Banhine National Park camp site. The gate guard, who sat about 30 metres away under a shady mango tree, eyed us intently for what seemed an eternity before he decided he'd better relinquish his shady position and attend to us. After slowly ambling up and opening the boom he pointed us in the direction of the reception office, which we found locked shut and abandoned. Sitting some distance away under a shady tree were the Reception staff with their radio blaring. We proceeded to stare at each other, us not

wanting to leave the air-conditioned Landie, and them the shady tree. After about five minutes we realised that they were definitely not prepared to venture out into the sun and attend to us tourists, who had had the audacity to interrupt their midday lunch break.

With tempers literally reaching boiling point we cracked first and left, heading back out of the park towards the Changane River. We thought that this would be the place to find water and a good camping spot for the night. But after driving for two hours down the river, leaving billowing clouds of black dust in our wake, all we could find was the skin and bones of dead cattle.

Finally, in the middle of the river were two large marula trees offering a little shade, so we headed there in desperation. From one o'clock to sunset all we did was lie in single file behind

the largest tree's trunk, adjusting our position as the sun and shade adjusted theirs. The oppressive heat finally lifted and life became bearable again, until we noticed the constant movement of centipedes and scorpions scuttling in and around the camp. Justin, who was the first to be stung, decided the best place to sleep was on top of the trailer.

Trailer trouble

Camp was broken very early so we could beat the upcoming inferno and we set off for Chigubo. From there, we took the Funhalouro track, not sure if it was the correct one, but we finally stumbled upon a sign pointing us in the right direction. Harry decided to take a photo of the sign and after photographing it realised the right tyre of the trailer was at a precarious angle – the bearings had given up.



MUD MINUTE (top). The team gets stuck in the mud at Laka Banamana, which was only a third full due to a heavy drought in Mozambique.

THE VENTER SLED (above). When the trailer's bearings broke, James and Trevor converted it into a makeshift sled with mopane stumps. But bad roads chewed through those and the trailer was left behind.



HOPE SPRINGS. In the searing heat the group headed for Banhine National Park, where they hoped to find water.

After brewing a pot of tea, also known as “Empire Juice,” and feeling refreshed Trevor and I set off looking for any sign of a settlement, and only after a number of kilometres we came across footprints heading off into the bush.

Following these we finally found a rather sad looking group of huts sitting in the middle of a dusty clearing, and boy was it hot. The first thing that caught our attention was unbelievably a Venter trailer propped up on some mopane logs. It was rusty, had both rims missing, along with the tow hitch, lid and tail lights but it had the same bearings!

Next – who to talk to? Looking around again we noticed motionless dark humps under a stunted monkey orange tree some distance off. When we walked towards the tree the shapes materialised into a number of old dusty women, scabby children, some dogs, goats and a handful of poorly looking chickens. No, everything and everyone under that old tree looked poorly, including us!

I squatted on my haunches as I chatted to the old women and gathered quite quickly that the most ancient of them was the “owner” of the trailer.

The whole time we conversed she never once altered her position, one of lying prostate on a reed mat. The only thing that moved occasionally was her mouth when she talked, or her hand when she drew deeply on a roughly rolled cigarette.

It eventually transpired that the trailer was her husband’s and we would need his permission to buy the bearings, but he was now dead (probably of depression from living here)!

In fact, it seemed as if everyone between 16 and 60 had fled this area, especially the men. No matter how much we pleaded, the old girl would not budge – either in her position on the mat or concerning the bearings. I was becoming just as annoyed as the flies on her face, who were frustrated at having to keep re-adjusting their position every time the thick, pungent smoke from the cigarette escaped from her nostrils. It seemed that the trailer and the old lady were destined to just wither away together in this awful place. I also asked where we could find water and was told it was quite far, which in Africa generally means a hell of a distance.

Finally a stroke of luck

Annoyed and deflated, Trevor and I trudged back to the car muttering obscenities. But then we noticed disselbooms which had been cut from sturdy mopanes. We commandeered two, tied them with our tow straps behind the Landie and headed for the downed trailer. One hour later we had the trailer converted into a sturdy sled-like contraption.

All was fine while we meandered down the sandy track for an hour or so, but as we crossed the new Bailey bridge over the Changane River we hit a hard gravel road which in no time wore the substantive logs into toothpicks. We pulled up to a huge shady pod mahogany. We were now out of the Bad Lands, but we finally had to accept defeat and abandoned the trailer.

We noted the GPS co-ordinates, crammed all its contents into the vehicle and headed home via Funhalouro and Massinga, arriving at our lodge at 7.30 p.m. that night.

Yes, we had returned without our trusty trailer, but the sight of hot baths and plentiful water washed away our worries almost immediately. 📷



James Nelson wins a WegRy/Drive Out Escape Gear travel bag worth R950! This bag is ideal for long overlanding trips and is made from the same tough, heavy-duty canvas material as Escape Gear’s legendary seat covers. It has a volume of 65 litres, and comes with tough zips, rubber handles, a shoulder strap and three side pouches for all your loose extras like maps, passports and travel documents. For more overlanding gear go to <http://winkel.weg.co.za>.

How JACKED are you?



We've all seen them. The bundu-bashing 4x4 with a brightly coloured jack fastened to it. But do you know all the uses of a high-lift jack?

WORDS & PHOTOS:
GERRIE VAN EEDEN

A high-lift jack is probably the most useful, multi-purpose piece of equipment that you can take with on a 4x4 excursion. But it can also be dangerous. Broken jaws, snapped wrists, chopped fingers and blue toenails are just a few of the injuries you can get if you aren't extremely careful when using a high-lift jack. But it's not all bad news. You can use it for more than just changing a tyre. This month we'll show you how to use a high-lift jack properly – and also what you shouldn't be using it for.



FLAT FOOT. The strength of a high-lift jack means you can lift your vehicle high into the air, but make sure to put it on a base plate on softer terrain.

VERSATILE IMPACT PLAYER

Just like Bobby Skinstad, who could come from the bench and play for the Bokke as an eighth man, flank, or even help out as a lock, a high-lift jack can be used for more than just raising your vehicle. The original high-lift jack, the Hi-Lift Jack®, has been sold since 1915, and was used for a variety of tasks, primarily on farms. From the lifting of heavy equipment, pulling out fence poles, straightening bent poles and putting up wire fences. Even emergency teams used high-lift jacks to force open car wrecks before the invention of hydraulic Jaws of Life.

These days, they are primarily used in 4x4 applications. Whether it's to help with a recovery, to raise your vehicle or just to look cool while you drive to the mall, a 4x4 and a high-lift jack go together like peanut butter and jam.

SAFETY FIRST

The damage that a high-lift jack can do to you and your vehicle can often put people off using them. There are a few points to remember to ensure your safety.



STAND ASIDE. Stand well away from the lever and operate it from the side. If your hand slips and it shoots up, you'll be safely out of the way.

1 HAND PROTECTION

Even if you've got tougher hands than Kiewiet from Kakamas who catches porcupines barehanded, it's smart to wear gloves when you're using the high-lift jack. Not only will it help keep your hands clean, but if your finger gets stuck in one of the moving parts of the high-lift jack, chances are better that you'll just have a blue nail, instead of a missing finger.

2 CHIN UP (AND AWAY)

If you're using the lever to pump the jack up and down, always stand with your head and jaw far away from the arc that the lever moves in. If you are lifting a vehicle, the force is concentrated in the

downward-motion of the lever. If you are lowering your vehicle again, the force is concentrated in the upward motion of the lever. Should the lever slip out from under your hand, there is a large amount of the vehicle's weight moving the lever up and down, and you can just imagine how much damage such a lever could do to a jawbone or wrist that gets in its way. A handy tip to ensure that you keep all appendages out of the danger zone is to bend your back and knees when pulling the lever, instead of using your body weight to push or pull it up or down.

3 STAND UP STRAIGHT

When you're finished lifting the vehicle and you aren't using the jack, stow the lever away in the upright position. You can even use a rope or strap to keep it there.

The lever just needs the slightest touch to fall, and if that happens you can get pinned under your vehicle. NEVER work under a vehicle that has been raised with a high-lift jack. It's a very unstable type of jack, but there's a reason for that (we explain why on the next page).



▲ HOW IT WORKS

A high-lift jack consists of a long steel or cast-iron track, a base and a mechanism that runs up and down the track. The mechanism has two pins that run into sequential holes with the up-and-down motion of the lever, and in such a way moves the mechanism up or down, depending in what direction you want it to work. To choose between up or down is as simple as setting the small lever switch. If the switch is turned upwards, the jack's mechanism will move up, and if it's turned downwards, then the mechanism will move down. With each motion of the lever, the entire mechanism moves one hole further up or down along the track. It's as easy as that.

STAND FIRM

To ensure that your high-lift jack works properly when lifting your vehicle, first make sure that the base is standing firmly on the ground. And yes, at first the base will feel somewhat unstable, but it's designed that way. The reason is that it allows the track to lean in the right direction when weight is placed on it, without bending the track or lifting the base off the ground. Always be careful when you raise your vehicle, as the track will move closer to the vehicle's body with every stroke. This can mean that it ends up pressing against the body, causing damage. Use a base plate for sandy terrain to prevent the jack's base from sinking into the ground and leaving your vehicle stuck where it is.

SLIP AND SLIDE

One of the handiest functions is the ability to get your vehicle out of a hole. Say one wheel is stuck in a rut and you have no traction. Using your high-lift jack, you can lift the vehicle and move it out of the hole by knocking the jack over in the right direction. You can move the vehicle to one side by lifting it alternatively at the front and rear and shifting

it sideways. You can even turn it around completely if you have enough time and patience. But always make sure that there are rocks behind the wheels on the axle that you're not lifting to ensure that the vehicle doesn't roll away. Also be careful that the vehicle doesn't slip back into the hole. And be sure to keep a good distance and that people stand clear.



◀ KEEP IT CLEAN

As everyone knows, high-lift jacks are often mounted onto vehicles, but seldom do you see the mechanism being protected against the elements. Rain and dust can get between the moving parts and stick to the grease, which makes the moving parts as sticky as the Springboks' game plan.

There are a variety of bags, covers and other ways in which you can protect it and keep the moving parts of your jack clean. It's important, because you don't want to realise your jack's not working just when you need it most.

A bag like this costs less than your first beer in Chobe, so buying one is a good investment.

PRICE: R13

CONTACT: 4x4 Megaworld

☎ 011 454 2875 (Gauteng)

☎ 021 511 3311 (Cape Town)

🌐 www.4x4megaworld.co.za



▲ WINCH THIS WAY

As the name suggests, a high-lift jack is usually used to lift things. But if you turn it sideways and use strong chains and anchor points (and a lot of patience) your high-lift jack can be used as a very simple winch system. How does it work? By anchoring the points of the jack with a chain, and anchoring the mechanism with another chain to your vehicle, you can get yourself out of a sticky situation.

However, it is important that you only move it a metre at a time. Make sure that the chain is firmly anchored before you loosen it and shift the mechanism back to move it further, otherwise you might lose any progress you made. Chains work best for this, because they don't stretch. A normal tow-rope is elastic, which could mean that the metre you shift your vehicle becomes a half-metre each time.

PULL TOGETHER

The top point of a high-lift jack is an extra piece of cast-iron that can be unbolted and fastened in different positions to the track. This has a dual purpose: If you need to clamp something in the bush in order to weld it, this function can turn your jack into a type of vice. The other purpose is that if something is bent and needs to be straightened you can fasten it between the two points and use the power of the jack to straighten it out again.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The famous Hi-Lift Jack® is a registered trademark. Colloquially, all high-lift jacks are called "hi-lift jacks", but there is actually more than one brand of jack. We got hold of three brands to show you. All three are high-lift jacks, but only one is the Hi-Lift Jack®.

The other brands' high-lift jacks shouldn't be written off as inferior. Just make sure that if you buy one, it's the correct type for your vehicle. If your Jeep has 37-inch tyres with extra-long suspension, then a 48-inch jack won't be long enough to get the wheels off the ground. In that case, you should consider a high-lift jack that is 60-inches or longer.



HI-LIFT JACK

The original red man is made of cast-iron, while the black version of the Hi-Lift Jack is made from a combination of cast-iron and steel. The mechanism is as strong as an ox, and the only limitation on its use is how hard you can pull on the lever.

PRICE: R2 850 (48 inches)

CONTACT: Safari Centre Cape Town
☎ 021 595 3910

IRONMAN HIGH-LIFT JACK

It's old news that Ironman is taking the 4x4 market by storm. There is an Ironman version of almost any piece of equipment you can think of that can do the task just as well, if not better, than the original brand. The same goes for the Ironman high-lift jack. It's a solid piece of equipment that won't let you down.



PRICE: R1 995 (48 inches)

CONTACT: 📞 www.ironman4x4.co.za



T-MAX FARM JACK

T-Max also has a version of the high-lift jack that comes in their iconic yellow colour. It does precisely the same thing as other high-lift jacks, and at a lower price, it's a good option to consider if you're not going to use it a lot, but want the peace of mind that having one brings. Just make sure that the extension for round holes fits. The extension on the one we tested didn't.

PRICE: R1 369 (48-inches)

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ACCESSORIES HELP

It can be a great help to lug along a large and dangerous high-lift jack if you're going to explore the Caprivi, but without the right accessories or accompanying tools, it will mean nothing when you need it in an emergency. Without the right high-lift jack points in front, behind or on the side of your vehicle, the jack will cut open the bodywork like a can opener, instead of just raising your vehicle.

Most bull bars and rear bumpers have built-in jacking points with a round slot. You need an ADAPTER that fits over the high-lift jack's lifting end and into the round slot.



PRICE: R359 (for a T-Max adapter); R440 (Hi-Lift adapter)

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 🌐 www.4x4megaworld.co.za; Safari Centre Cape Town ☎ 021 595 3910

There is a way to use it without a special bumper or fitting a high-lift jack point. The LIFT MATE/JACK BUDDY is a product that you can use to connect the jack directly to the wheel, and thus lift the vehicle. It has two hooks that

connect to the rim. This is then fastened to a support plate that is connected to the point of the jack and so lifts the vehicle with each stroke.



PRICE: R554 (T-Max); R495 (Hi-Lift)

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You should also make sure that the jack can stand firmly. A BASE PLATE is a plate that widens the footprint of the jack's stand so that it has a wider area on which to distribute the pressure of the jack.



PRICE: R365 (4x4 Megaworld); R550 (Safari Centre)

CONTACT: 4x4 Megaworld
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LOOK WHAT WE FOUND!

WILD COOLERS

BOMB-PROOF BEER BOX

Warm beer is one thing, but losing an entire holiday's meat to a broken cool box is no fun.

These cool boxes by Wild Coolers are built to take almost any knock that a 4x4 trip can throw at them. Available in 40, 60 and 80 liters, they're made of a tough polyethylene, which the manufacturer says won't go brittle or decolour for more than 20 years. The walls are 50 mm thick with a 75 mm lid for added strength and great insulation.

On the sides you'll find army-style polyester roping for easy grip and carrying. And the units won't slide around on any decent floor surface thanks to their 'eagle-claw' feet.

We also like the anchor latches (practically unbreakable and will never pop open by themselves), the double interlocking, stainless steel

hinge system and the locking points to keep prying claws (of the animal and human sort) away from your precious stash of rump steaks.

Other nifty additions include a stainless steel bottle opener with under-lid storage, secure tie-down slots and moulded channels to hold a snacks basket or bait tray over the ice.

There's even a tape measure on the lid to quickly measure that big one at Lake Kariba,

PRICES: Wild 40 (616 x 464 x 456 mm) R4 995

Wild 60 (699 x 507 x 500 mm) R5 995

Wild 80 (771 x 534 x 526 mm) R6 995

AVAILABLE in white, grey and blue. 📧 info@wildcoolers.com



SAFARI CENTRE WINE GLASS CAMP WITH CLASS, NOT GLASS

Whether it's in a campsite or around the pool, we all know how dangerous glass can be. But you're a civilised person, so you refuse to drink your Cabernet from an enamel cup, right? Yes, there are plastic wine glasses on the market here and there. But let's be honest, they're either horribly ugly or horrible to drink from, with sharp

edges that hurt your lips.

These 'glasses' from Safari Centre are the most stylish and comfortable plastic wine glasses we've come across. And they're so cheap, you won't even bat an eyelid if someone accidentally sits on it or drives over one with their Cruiser.

PRICE: R20 per glass

AVAILABLE AT: Safari Centre Cape Town (021) 595 3910

DIE GROOT 4X4-GIDS

THE INSTRUCTION MANUAL TO BECOME A 4X4 BOFFIN

Right, so you've bought a 4x4. But what sort of modifications do you need to consider for off-road driving? What skills do you need to master? You'll find the detailed answers to these questions, and many others, in our Afrikaans special edition *Die Groot 4x4-gids*.

It covers a list of topics such as the right recovery gear, how to fix a punctured tyre, what to put in your first-aid kit, and how to deal with wild animals on tour and in your camp.

PRICE: R45

AVAILABLE AT: winkel.weg.co.za



BALANCE OF POWER

Camping technology has evolved radically over the years, but nothing has revolutionised the outdoor life quite like the portable fridge/freezer. The ability to keep food cold for an indefinite period has not only changed our camping experience, but has also given us the option of travelling further, for longer.

However, with the introduction of the portable fridge/freezer came the need for additional battery power. This need opened the door to another form of important camping technology: dual-battery systems.

Generally speaking, dual-battery systems come in two forms: on-board units, (typically mounted within a vehicle's engine bay), and those packaged in a portable-power pack. The problem lies in deciding which solution is best.

To be clear, there's no right or wrong

answer, as both systems have their strengths and weaknesses. The trick is to figure out which auxiliary battery system best suits your needs. While the table on the next page may seem to favour the portable-power pack, you need only run out of boot space to realise the true value of an onboard dual-battery system.

SPACE VERSUS MOBILITY

That said, the two most significant features of these two systems are space and mobility. What you need is to decide which aspect of these systems is more important to you.

There are various dual-battery systems available on the market, but in National Luna's case, we've opted for the tried-and-trusted durability of an intelligent solenoid system. In fact, 18 years ago, we were one of the first companies to develop such a setup.

This unit is designed to be a compact, fully-automated split-isolator system that piggy-backs off your vehicle's main battery. In other words, the dual-battery isolator runs parallel to your vehicle's OE wiring and features zero interference.

What's more, the isolator is designed as a low-loss, high-current system that places particular emphasis on simplicity, rate of recharge, and long-term reliability.

Some of the competing, more electronic-savvy dual-battery systems (such as an intelligent DC to DC charger), are often three times the price. Even more important is that while these so-called intelligent chargers are great at prolonging battery life (due to their trickle-charge feature), in reality they often recharge your battery at a much slower rate, in some cases requiring up to 48 hours to replenish a deep-cycle battery. In comparison, a high-current solenoid system (when paired with the right battery type), can restore full battery power within six hours or less.

In terms of price, you can expect to pay approximately R2945 for a National Luna Portable Power Pack, while the National Luna On-Board System typically retails for R1 999 (excluding the battery itself). Both of these products can be found at all major outdoor and 4x4 stores.



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VS

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- ✓ Once installed you never have to worry about it
- ✓ Price
- ✓ Simplicity and rugged build quality
- ✗ Sold with vehicle
- ✗ Engine bay heat and diminished battery life



- ✓ Mobility around camp
- ✓ Household use during load shedding or black outs
- ✓ Ease of installation
- ✓ Mobility with solar panel
- ✓ Can be used as a mobile jump-start pack
- ✓ Easily removed when the vehicle is sold
- ✓ Can be lent to a friend
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Automatic or manual for the bush?

Until quite recently you couldn't buy bakkies with automatic gearboxes in South Africa. But these days they're getting more and more common. So, can they match a manual gearbox when it comes to off-roading?

THE QUESTION

I'm looking for a new 4x4 to replace my manual 2007 Hilux 3.0 D-4D double cab. It seems to me that automatic vehicles are becoming increasingly popular, but can they do everything that a manual vehicle can do off-road? They don't have the same engine braking ability as manuals, do they? And aren't they also heavier on fuel?

THE ANSWER

If you asked this question 10 years ago, when your Hilux was still brand new, one would have said that a manual was better in many instances. But the automatic gearboxes that you find in today's 4x4s are so good that – apart from making the vehicle slightly more expensive – there are plenty of arguments in favour of an automatic over a manual, 4x4 or not.

IT MAKES OFF-ROADING EASIER

Whether you'll admit it or not, it's almost too easy to off-road with an automatic vehicle. All you have to do is control the brakes, accelerator and the steering.

The other advantage is that someone with little or no off-road experience can get behind the wheel of a 4x4 and manage to drive it with some instruction. Say, for example, that you injure your ankle in camp, would your wife or children be able to drive your manual 4x4?

Another plus of automatics is that, in some cases, a vehicle can get away with having no low range. One thinks of the excellent 8-speed gearbox of the Volkswagen Amarok in particular. The automatic gearboxes in plenty of so-called "soft" off-roaders help them to pull away on steep obstacles without causing the wheels to spin – something that's not possible with a manual vehicle.

THERE ARE FEW NEGATIVES

Yes, it's true that an automatic doesn't have the same braking power on a steep descent as a

manual does. That's why some manufacturers have developed technology like Hill Descent Control (HDC) or Downhill Assist Control (DAC). Just as electronic traction control assists in automatically braking spinning wheels, and so compensates for a lack of diff-lock, the above systems also control a vehicle's wheels individually to manage their speed on a steep descent. It happens

automatically and requires no action on the part of the driver.

The other con to an automatic vehicle is that you can't push-start it if the battery is flat. Thus your options are jumper cables or a portable battery pack. These cost between R2 000 and R3 000, are about the size of a thick paperback and you can jump-start anything in a jiffy, even your buddy's manual vehicle.

And let's not even mention that two people (unless it's two young, fit guys) will struggle to push-start a vehicle without a decent downhill anyway.

THEY'RE VERY ADVANCED (AND THAT'S A GOOD THING)

Manual vehicles don't have more than six gears, because you can imagine just how many gears you'd have to negotiate if your bakkie had seven or eight of them. On the other hand, nowadays there are few automatic vehicles

that have less than six gears. The more gears you have, the better. Because more gears mean closer gear ratios, which provides better fuel consumption and acceleration.

The new Nissan Navara has a 7-speed automatic gearbox, as does the pending Mercedes-Benz X-Class bakkie, while the VW Amarok has a whole eight gears, as mentioned.

When last did you hear of an automatic gearbox packing up? Probably further back than when you last heard of someone having trouble with their vehicle's clutch.

TOUGH 4X4S HAVE HAD AUTOMATIC GEARBOXES FOR SOME TIME

If you think that "proper" 4x4s don't have automatic gearboxes, think again. The Mercedes-Benz Unimog U5223 has one, with eight forward and six reverse gears. The Mercedes-Benz G300 CDI Professional also has an automatic gearbox, just like the legendary Nissan Patrol, that has been available with an automatic gearbox for years, as has the Toyota Land Cruiser 200. 🚙

When last did you hear of an automatic gearbox packing up?"

A TIP FOR 4X4S WITH AUTOMATIC GEARBOXES

If you perhaps have an older 4x4 that doesn't have HDC or DAC – or you haven't activated these features on your vehicle, please keep the following in mind when you come across steep descents:

- Shift your vehicle back to first gear, low range and not "D". Keep your foot on the brake pedal and begin the descent as slowly as possible. You can always ease off the brake if you're going too slowly, but if you have picked up too much speed, it's almost impossible to slow down again.
- Another trick you can easily learn is to drive an automatic vehicle with both feet, so that you press the brake with your left foot and the accelerator with your right foot, just like racing drivers. In such a way you can switch much faster between braking and acceleration, and vice versa.



Internet “experts” and facts

My wife tells me that I argue *at* people, rather than with them. I strongly disagree!

The internet has done many things for mankind, and somewhere near the top of that list stands the venerable community forum. Social media is full of these: dozens of shared-interest groups in which novices seek advice, and self-proclaimed experts jump at any chance to... well, jump on a soapbox. Forums can be an invaluable source of information and facts, but they’re also full of uninformed opinions, subjective perceptions, and just plain bad advice.

The way I see it, there are three opinions frequently found on forums or social-media groups:

- 1 An opinion based on (or substantiated by) fact
- 2 An opinion based on experience, and
- 3 An opinion based on assumptions.

HERE ARE A FEW MADE-UP EXAMPLES:

“Cooper offers better value for money than BF Goodrich.” That’s an opinion that is possible to have substantiated with facts. But, until that is done, it is not a fact.

“In my experience, BFGoodrich tyres last longer than Maxxis.” That’s an opinion, based on a personal experience, not a fact.

“Maxxis tyres offer no grip on gravel.”

This is the scourge of the internet: An opinion based on

assumptions, and written as if it were a fact. This is what draws me from my forum shell, and admittedly turns me into an argumentative type of person (*Like most of us on the internet!* – *Jaco*).

The problem with many social media groups and community forums is this: He who talks most, gets listened to. What this means is that all it takes is one opinionated, ill-informed member to spread bad advice. You’ll very often find subjects such as tyres, dual-battery systems, suspension, and auxiliary lighting to be riddled with daft statements and blatantly untrue facts (or badly written opinions).

You see, an opinion that’s written as a fact is very often picked up by a novice and then later shared as if it were a fact.

The thing I love most about the 4x4 community is that we all share different opinions. What works for me, doesn’t necessarily work for you. And I enjoy the fact that people get

heated and brand-loyal about certain topics; it’s what makes this industry exciting – we’re passionate folk.

But should any of this matter, and is it really a train smash if so-called “bad” opinions are in the mix? Well, I often receive phone calls from newbie 4x4 enthusiasts who have been duped into making a bad purchase...

BAD ADVICE = BAD CHOICES

Tyres are a great example. They’re expensive, and sometimes the person who buys them ends up stuck with an unwanted set.

I once met a new off-road enthusiast who’d bought a BMW X5, but when he wanted to drive it at his local 4x4 trail, the trail owner said, “Sorry, buddy; only 4x4s allowed.”

Can you imagine how duped this poor oke must’ve felt after spending R900k on what he’d thought (and had been told) was the “best 4x4 by far”. Instead, he’s told he can’t drive it off-road because no-one wants to pick up the pieces.

But as the number of forums and online interest groups grow, so will the bad advice – quickly and contagiously spread through the powers of social proof. Humans are inherently social, which means that we often believe (or blindly follow) what we see and hear from our peers.

Countless consumer studies have proved just how effective testimonials are at selling a product. In fact, social proof is

a leading sales tactic for most online/e-commerce businesses.

NEW SOURCES OF INFORMATION


In the past, consumers would only turn to magazines and other publications for reasons to buy a product.

Nowadays however, more buyers are seeking purchase-justification from their peers, and they’re using forums and social-media sites to source information as well.

Of course, it’s not all bad advice – far from it, but you should be alert to how an opinion is pitched. Generally, I’d disregard anything that sounds like a fact disguised as an opinion. Also, I find that people who frequently use the word “I” are worth listening to, it usually means they’re willing to stand by their views.

BE CRITICAL

Lastly, on the subject of tyres: Don’t believe everything you hear. And that includes whatever opinion I’ve shared with you. We’re all partial to certain brands and beliefs, and as I’ve said, what works for me won’t necessarily work for you. So, again, before you ask for another person’s opinion, know your application and exactly what it is you want from the particular product.

If you know your needs, you’re far less likely to make a bad purchase. So, do your research, surf the forums, and tread lightly through the internet’s minefield of “facts”. 

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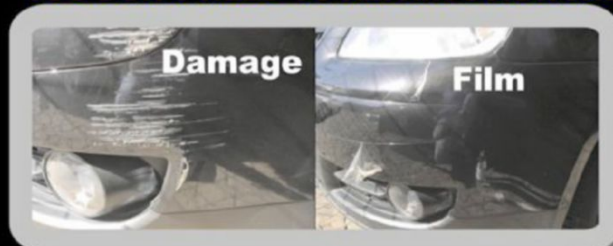
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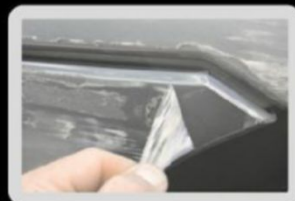
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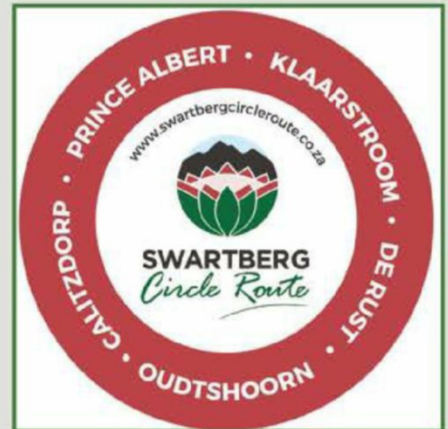
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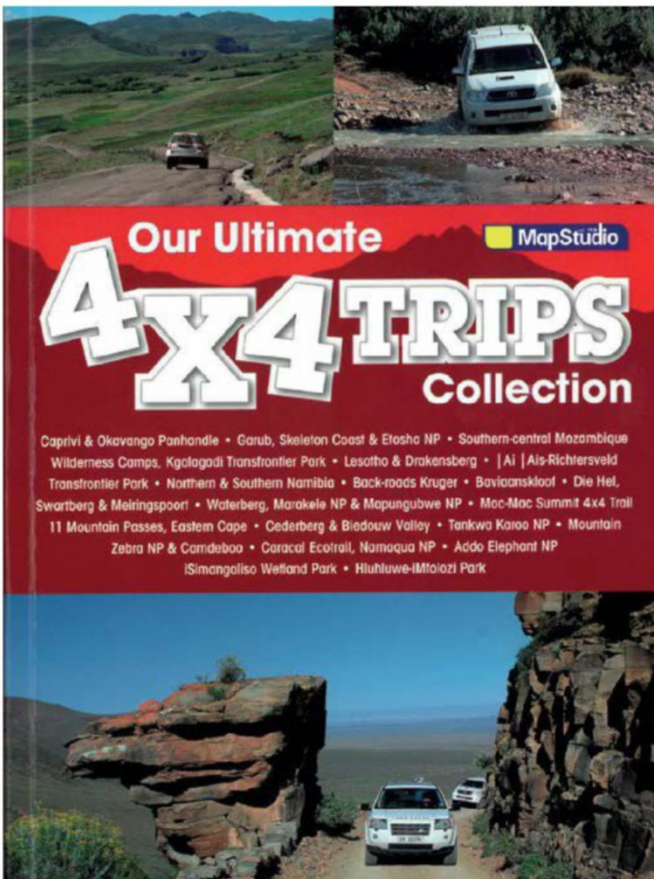


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Guide books for Africa

This month, we discovered two great travel guides – one to find 4x4 trips, the other to get a grip on the Kruger's birdlife.

BY CHARLES THOMPSON



MAKE YOUR BUCKET LIST LONGER OUR ULTIMATE 4X4 TRIPS COLLECTION

BY: MARIËLLE RENSSSEN
PUBLISHER: MAPSTUDIO
PRICE: R295

The story of how Mariëlle Renssen and Hirsh Aronowitz's 4x4 adventures started is told regularly. A good friend of Hirsh, Keith Titly, convinced him to buy a 4x4 so that the group could

explore gravel roads in Southern Africa together.

And after many thousands of kilometres, their love for fresh air finally produced a 4x4-travelguide, compiled by Mariëlle.

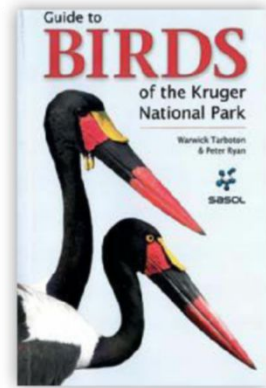
One of the great things about *Our Ultimate 4x4 Trips Collection* is that it almost reads like a series of adventure travel articles.

Mariëlle writes in first person about each of the 22 routes that she and her travel companions travelled. That way, she places the reader with her in her Landy as she describes the routes day by day, turn by turn. She also made an effort to use their best photos.

Our Ultimate 4x4 Trips Collection is, however, a worthy travel guide with road conditions, detailed maps, must-see places on each route, distances and time duration, and the best time of the year to visit. You also get a CD with GPS-coordinates and a PDF map of each route.

The writer and her friends are interested in anything from geology to animals, so you'll see which type of boulders, birds and flowers you should encounter on each route.

I also like her "Best and worst move of the trip." In this short section she writes about what they did best and what their biggest mistake was. For example they stayed over in an old sheep shearing barn in the Baviaanskloof, which they enjoyed, but forgot to ask for a picnic basket when they left, since they didn't realise the shops next to the roads had little to no supplies.



BETTER BIRDING SASOL GUIDE TO BIRDS OF THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

BY: WARWICK TARBOTON
AND PETER RYAN
PUBLISHER: STRUIK/
RANDOM HOUSE
PRICE: R250

The Kruger National Park is one of South Africa's most enjoyable destinations for Big 5 lovers. But did you know that the Kruger has an impeccable collection of predator birds?

According to the authors, 67 species have been recorded, including 10 mating pairs, 10 types of owls and at least 12 species that visit annually from abroad.

Right at the beginning and end of this user-friendly guide, you'll find the same alphabetical lists for quick references no matter which side of the book you grab on to. And at the back you will also find the Afrikaans, English and scientific names for each bird.

In between there's a comprehensive guide, neatly divided into groups of species. It keeps, for example, all the storks, woodpeckers or eagles together, and each bird's appearance, measurements, sounds and diet are explained, with a clear photo, as well as the area where you should see them. 📸

The Brits make a blunder

No matter how brave you are, some vehicles are just not made for gravel travel. **Mei Capes** learnt that the hard way.

I should start by saying that I'm a British expat living in South Africa, since it might explain how I managed to get myself into such a pickle in the first place. You see, us Brits have a tendency to make bad decisions – and then worry about the “completely unforeseen” consequences later. Take Brexit, for example, or our incomprehensible attraction to the midday sun despite our pale skins.

We may not be known for the most cheerful of dispositions, but what we lack in positivity, we compensate for with sheer delusion, followed by a lot of grumbling once we've made a blunder.

The warm weather in South Africa has defrosted my Londoner soul though, and as I've slowly relinquished my grip on my umbrella, I've started to loosen up. So it was – armed with a dangerous combination of British bravado, newfound optimism and a Johnny Clegg album – that my husband and I journeyed from Cape Town to Namibia in our snot-coloured 2008 Chevrolet Spark. We would go where few would dare to venture in a city car: Sossusvlei, on the edge of the Namib desert.

Many of Namibia's main gravel roads are very well maintained and initially we were fine, zooming at 60 km/h up the B1 in the direction of Windhoek (as long as we kept foot to floor, the windows closed and the air conditioning off).

But other than the power of negotia-

ting tight spaces and being fuel efficient, the Spark offers very little for those who wish to take the road less travelled.

As soon as we turned left off the C12 to Canyon Road, we were in for a tough ride. We took a dirt road for as long as it takes to be helped by Telkom. And when we finally reached the Canyon Road campsite, it was clear that our dust-covered Batmobile was not quite as omnipotent as we had anticipated.

Luckily the fantastic campsite eased the blows of the 'African massage' getting there. My only experience of camping until our first night in Namibia had been at the Glastonbury music festival, so I was pleasantly surprised when I didn't have to wade through mud and vomit to my tent that night. Waking up without backache the next morning was another welcome change and, feeling fresh as a daisy, we headed off early to reach Fish River Canyon before sunrise.

As we slowly chugged along, a dazzle of zebras appeared in our headlights and we witnessed an actual zebra crossing. And we realised just what a long way we were from Leicester Square.

But the downside of being so far away from the bright lights of Soho became apparent in the following five minutes when we ungracefully drove straight into a pile of sand.

As Brits, we're also faced with the issue of not having the foggiest idea what to do in situations such as these. A stern letter of complaint was of no use and,

having grown up in suburban London, I've been taught very few skills that have equipped me for anything useful in life.

So we did what any sensible Brits in a conundrum would do – we stiffened our upper lips, resumed a state of calm, and carried on in our futile attempt to dig ourselves free with a tin cup and a camping spork. After half an hour, however, we accepted defeat and braced ourselves for a long wait.

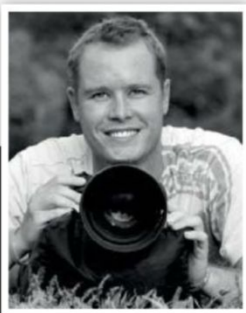
The universe took pity on our pathetic attempts at wilderness survival, however, and along came a car to save us from ourselves! After soaring over the same patch of sand that had been our downfall, we looked on flabbergasted as four tiny American girls jumped out of their sedan. Dressed in pastel-coloured Abercrombie shorts, they started pushing our car without missing a beat. They couldn't have been more than 5 feet tall and 20 years old, but we learnt a very valuable lesson from them that day – never judge a book by its cover. And don't drive through sand in a Spark!

We made it to the canyon just in time for sunrise, where we celebrated our freedom with a tin of baked beans and a cup of tea. But powered by a one-litre engine and a trusty jar of Marmite, and sweating in our mobile hotbox, we had to change our travel plans quicker than Zuma changes ministers. We decided it was best to stick to the main roads for the rest of our trip, forfeiting Dune 45. It turned out to be one of the best holidays we've ever had, though. We feasted on N\$5 oysters in Lüderitz and kayaked down the Orange River instead.

So the moral of the story? Sometimes, being unprepared can work out wonderfully. After all, dealing with the “unforeseen” makes for the best stories. 📷

“ We resumed a state of calm, and carried on in our futile attempt to dig ourselves free with a tin cup and a camping spork.

Right as rain



Some of the most striking wildlife images you'll ever see were photographed in wet conditions, so why not pack your raincoat and get out there when it's pouring?

Wildlife photographers are probably some of the only South Africans who secretly hoped that the thunderstorms continue to stay away during the past two drought-stricken years, at least during game drives.

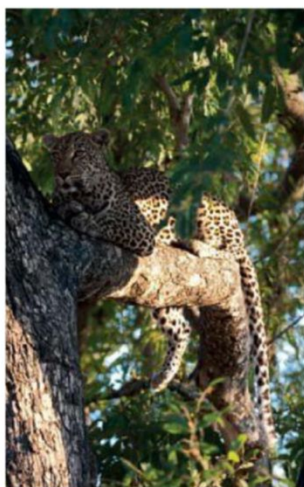
BECAUSE YOU CAN'T GET GOOD SHOTS WHEN IT RAINS, RIGHT?

1 EMBRACE THE CLOUDS

As a photographer, I always smile when the weather forecast predicts overcast conditions for the days when I shoot. Yes, I miss those early morning and late afternoon golden colours, but have you ever stopped to consider the advantages of not having bright sunlight? Firstly, you don't have to worry about high contrast in your images. This is a very common problem in most game reserves and parks, where dense foliage casts dark shadows on parts of the animals below or between it.

Take the leopard photos below for instance. In the first photo, taken on a sunny day, only the leopard's hind quarters are visible because the rest of her body is in deep shade. The camera simply cannot expose for both the dark and the light areas simultaneously.

The second photo was taken on an overcast day. Not only can you see the leopard's whole body clearly (because scenes with little or no contrast are easy to expose for), but she is also more active than on a hot, sunny day. That brings me to my second point: Cool, cloudy weather means you can photograph for longer during the day and have a bigger chance of bumping into active predators.



TOO MUCH TO HANDLE (left). On sunny days, it's almost impossible to get the right exposure between dark shade and bright sunlight.

JUST ENOUGH (right). Overcast days provide an even spread of light which makes it much easier to take evenly exposed shots.



2 CAPTURE CHARACTER

As long as it's not bucketing down most DSLR cameras and their lenses should be able to handle getting a little wet. Having said that, I always try to keep my equipment dry by covering it with a towel or plastic layer, even during a light sprinkle.

Great opportunities often present themselves when you're

photographing animals in the rain. Some look miserable and try to hide their faces, others embrace the cool relief. Some, like many antelope, even have fun in the rain, running and bouncing around like children on a playground. These story-telling photos capture the creatures' character and personally I enjoy taking them much more than simple portraits.

3 SPECS OR STRIPES?

To best capture raindrops you have to choose the right shutter speed. Shoot too fast (1/500 sec) and the droplets will appear as little specs. But shoot too slowly (1/20 sec or slower) and they will appear as stripes. There's also the added risk of blurry photos. Switch over to Shutter Priority (S/Tv) and play around with shutter speeds of between 1/60 sec and 1/200 sec. The faster the shutter, the shorter the droplet stripes. If, however, you want to freeze the droplets completely, for instance when they're flying off a lion's mane when he shakes his head, you'll have to use fast shutter speeds of 1/1000 sec or more.



Improve your wildlife photography skills by downloading Villiers's wildlife photography app, *Learn by Example – Wildlife Photography*, in the App Store or Google Play Store. Available for smartphones and tablets.

Add some colour to your braai!

Is there anything more versatile than a salad? Here are four tasty ones that offer more than just leaves and cucumber.

RECIPES AND PHOTOS: LISE BEYERS



I've always believed that every meal should be accompanied by a big bowl of good salad. But to write about salad is actually difficult for me, because even here I don't believe in adding bells and whistles. Even just a few salad leaves and a proper French vinaigrette count as a delicious salad in my book. And when all the salad has been eaten and bowl is almost empty, you enjoy the leftover

sauce with a nice piece of soft, fresh bread.

In fact, I believe the salad dressing is the most important part of a salad, and I'm not referring to the thick, unhealthy bottles of sauce bought off a store shelf. That's why I always have a jar of home-made salad dressing in my fridge. I'll tell you how to make it at the end of these four recipes.



CURRIED POTATO SALAD

Who'd have thought you could jazz up potato salad with a popular Indian flavour?

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 medium-sized potatoes
- 1 medium-sized sweet potato
- 3 tablespoons of white wine vinegar or apple cider
- 1/3 cup of olive oil
- 1 tablespoon medium curry powder
- 1/2 tablespoon sugar
- 1 cup finely chopped coriander leaves
- 2 finely chopped spring onions

HERE'S HOW:

Peel the potatoes and sweet potatoes and chop them into large blocks.

Place them in a pot, cover with water, add 1 tablespoon of salt

and heat up. When the water starts to boil, turn the heat down and allow it to simmer for 15 minutes until the potatoes and sweet potatoes are slightly soft. Remove from the heat, drain the liquid and rinse with cold water.

Now mix the vinegar, oil, curry powder and sugar together and whisk it well. Pour the curried sauce over the potatoes and carefully stir it through using a spoon. You need to have the sauce cover all of the blocks. Let the salad marinate for at least half an hour at room temperature.

When you're ready to eat, mix in the coriander leaves and spring onions.



THAI BEEF SALAD

Don't think that beef is only good for big steaks and biltong, because this salad isn't just filling, it also has a bite!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 packet mixed salad leaves
- 1 of your favourite steaks
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 1 red pepper, sliced into thin rings
- 1/2 cucumber, sliced into cubes
- 1 cup baby tomatoes, sliced in half
- 1/4 cup fresh coriander leaves, shredded
- 1 small red chilli, finely chopped (optional)

For the dressing, mix the following together well:

- The juice of two limes

- 1 teaspoon grated lime zest
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce

HERE'S HOW:

Mix all your salad ingredients together in a large bowl and pour the dressing over.

Now braai the steak on hot coals until medium-rare, in other words, 3-4 minutes a side.

Remove the meat from the coals and allow it to rest for about five minutes. Then slice the meat into thin strips and add it to your mixed salad. It just couldn't be easier!





PANZANELLA SALAD WITH MARINATED CHICKPEAS AND CHIMICHURRI

Panzanella is an Italian salad made with bread, and chimichurri is a sauce that Argentines pour over their meat. But just add chickpeas and see how good the three taste together!

For the chickpeas, you'll need:

- 1 tin chickpeas (drained)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons shredded basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ¼ tablespoon oregano
- ¼ tablespoon chilli flakes
- Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all the ingredients, except for the chickpeas, to create a sauce. Place the chickpeas in a bowl and pour the marinade over them. Cover and allow the chickpeas to marinate for at least one hour, but the longer the better. After a few days it is even more delicious.

For the chimichurri, you'll need:

- 1 cup fresh coriander leaves
- 1 cup fresh parsley leaves
- ¼ cup oregano
- 2 large garlic cloves
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 red chilli (optional)
- ⅔ cup olive oil

HERE'S HOW:

Place all the ingredients, except for the oil, in a food

processor and pulse until fine, but not pasty. Then add the oil in increments until you have a fairly smooth mixture.

For the panzanella, you'll need:

- 4 slices of thick bread
- olive oil
- 1½ cups baby tomatoes, sliced in half
- 1 small head of butter lettuce
- 1 cup feta cheese, broken into small blocks
- Also keep your chickpeas and chimichurri close at hand.

HERE'S HOW:

Smear the bread lightly on either side with the olive oil. I just toast it over the coals or in a toaster until golden brown on both sides, it should be slightly dried out (like croutons).

Cut the bread into large blocks and allow it to cool.

In a large salad bowl, mix the tomatoes, salad leaves and chickpeas together, as well as some of the chickpea marinade. Place the toasted bread cubes on top, then the feta and lastly a few dashes of the chimichurri. It's a meal on its own!

* TIP FOR THE CARNIVORES:

The chimichurri also pairs deliciously with braai meat, and it stays fresh in the fridge for a while. You can easily make some before your big holiday and take it with you.





EASY FOUR BEAN SALAD

A lekker bean salad is like that unassuming forward in a rugby team. You don't always realise he's there, but the day that he isn't, the wheels come off. This salad is great for the road, since it stays fresh for a while. In fact, it just gets better and better, as long as you keep it chilled.

INGREDIENTS:

For the sauce:

- 1/3 cup tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup chutney
- 2 tablespoons Worcester sauce
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic

- 1 cup fresh green beans, chopped
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 red sweet pepper, cut into small blocks
- 2 chillies (optional)

HERE'S HOW:

First blend all the sauce ingredients together. Then place the beans, onion, sweet pepper and chilli in a large bowl, pour the sauce over them and mix well.

For the salad:

- 1 tin red kidney beans
- 1 tin butterbeans
- 1 tin small white beans (all 3 drained)

* MAKE YOUR OWN SALAD DRESSING!

The basic rule for a vinaigrette is one part red wine vinegar or apple cider to two parts quality olive oil. Add one or two spoons of English mustard, the same amount of sugar, half a teaspoon of dried, mixed herbs and a teaspoon of chopped garlic. Make sure the container is firmly sealed, shake well and taste to see if you want to add more garlic, vinegar or sugar. The longer the dressing stands, the better. Then just shake it well before use. For a creamier dressing, pour a bit of sauce in a container and blend it with the same amount of plain yoghurt.

The silver submarine

We all love to braai, but **Francois Everton** learnt a valuable lesson: If you're too eager to hear the steaks sizzle, you might not be focusing on that last obstacle.



It was a typical bushveld morning in Lephalale (Ellisras), so hot that the only thing between us and Hell was the Mogol River. Nonetheless, a few friends and I decided to go play around on the sand banks and in the water pools with our 4x4s, and have a braai when we were done.

The route was easy: We would meet at the old bridge and drive through the river to the new bridge. There we would erect our gazebos and enjoy the rest of the day.

With all our gear and refreshments loaded and my wife and two daughters in the Navara, we set off. Everyone at the meeting point was in good spirits as we deflated our tyres and hit the road.

Who could wish for a better day?

One by the one the vehicles ploughed through the water and made their way through the thick sand. Eventually there was only one more thing between us and a bit of braai meat – a final water crossing and a sand bank. The first vehicle made it through easily, but then it was my turn.

I was about halfway through the water when the sand under the tyres suddenly disappeared. I was stuck, or should I rather say, I was taking a dive!

The line that I had chosen was about half a meter away from the first vehicle's (correct) line, so it landed me in a hole. None of the other vehicles could get me out – the mud was sucking on my bak-

kie harder than a young calf on a cow. Luckily some of the world's friendliest people live in Ellisras. So it wasn't long at all before some other folks who were playing around in the area came to lend a hand.

They couldn't move the Navara either, but one phone call later a friend with a winch arrived on the scene. About an hour and a half after that the bakkie was free and the meat done.

The Nissan needed a thorough drying and cleaning, and the diff oil had to be replaced, but now it feels like a new bakkie again. 📷

FRANCOIS EVERTON
Lephalale (Ellisras)

WIN!

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Have you experienced an Oops? Send your story with photos to editor@driveout.co.za. **Francois Everton** wins a **WegRy/Drive Out Escape Gear** map holder worth R200 and a **solar charger** valued at R340. Keep all your important travel documents and maps safe and neatly tucked away in this durable Escape Gear map holder, and make sure that all your vital electronics stay powered-up with this nifty solar charger. For more great gear visit <http://winkel.weg.co.za/>



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GETTING DIRTY IS ONLY **HALF** OF IT

THE OTHER HALF IS VISITING YOUR NEAREST HALFWAY TOYOTA
DEALER OR GOING TO HALFWAYTOYOTA.COM FOR THE FULL PICTURE
ON OUR RANGE OF 4X4s.

Contact Ryan at Halfway Toyota Fourways on offroad@halfway4ways.co.za (for Gauteng regions), Daan at Halfway Toyota George on sales7@halfwaygeorge.co.za (for Garden Route region) or Gerald on gerald@halfway.ws (for KZN regions) to book a FREE 4x4 Driver Training Course and enquire on the cost to do a 2 day 4x4 Driver Accreditation Course, Unit Standard's 254135 & 254154.

Halfway™

Halfway Toyota Ottery Tel: 021 703 9174

Halfway Toyota Shelly Beach Tel: 039 315 3000

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Halfway Toyota Ngami Tel: 00267 686 0252

Halfway Toyota Fourways Tel: 011 317 8888

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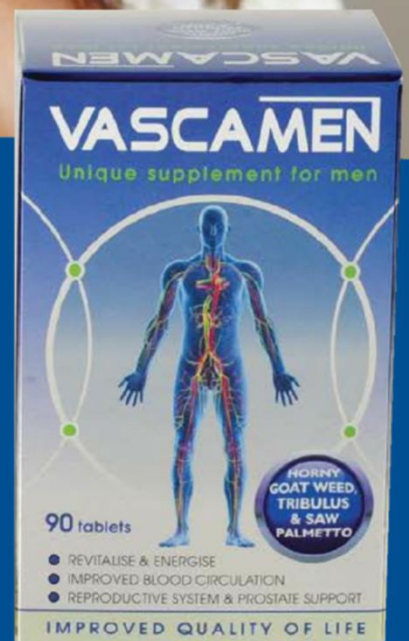
Reclaim your confidence

For most men their sexual performance and physical condition are closely linked to how they feel about themselves. Vascamen can put the spark back in your sexual desire and performance. It's a natural supplement that contains Epimedium or Horny Goat Weed.

Vascamen also contains ingredients that may help with the "stage fright" that many of us experience at urinals. Another cause of a lack of self-confidence. Slow or weakened urine flow is often associated with prostate conditions. The saw palmetto and lycopene (responsible for the red colouring in tomatoes) in Vascamen are excellent contributors to prostate health.

Lastly, Vascamen contains Ginkgo biloba, hawthorn and selenium - all highly potent anti-oxidants. They improve blood circulation, strengthen the immune system and combat free radicals, helping you stand up to the challenges of life in the fast lane and the ageing process.

Vascamen is beneficial to men of all ages and will allow them to feel younger no matter what their age. It is to be taken daily as a supplement.



Vascamen is available from Dis-Chem, Clicks and your local pharmacy.

IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE



Consumer line: (011) 480-4916 or visit www.loockpharmaceuticals.co.za