

Post Trip Report

The Mother of All Safaris:

An overland trip from the UK - Kenya - Cape Town - Kenya

21 August 2013 – 21 December 2014

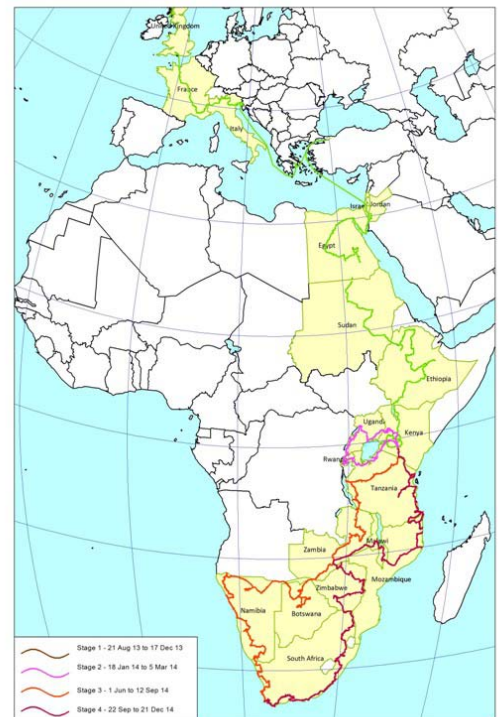
About Us

Hugh and Morag Macnair, a retired couple, mid-late fifties, based in Wiltshire, UK. Morag was born and raised in Kenya, where her mother and brother still live. Having travelled extensively in East Africa over the years, we had long wished to do something more ambitious, and spotting the opportunity, planned extensively for this great experience.

The Route

We had intended on taking three months to get from the UK to Cairo, spending time in Eastern Europe, Turkey, Syria and Jordan. However, with the Syrian crisis, that route was not possible; neither was the route through Libya.

Getting to our start point in Africa – Egypt – was problematic. After considerable research on getting across the Mediterranean, we came up with two options: either to ship the Land Rover in a container from Greece to Alexandria, or take a moderately unreliable ferry from Iskenderun in Turkey to Port Said/Damietta in Egypt. We had made the decision to ship from Greece and had been in contact with shipping agents in Piraeus; however, in March 2013, we heard that the fuel situation in Egypt was desperate – particularly diesel – and rationing is due to be implemented from July. As fuel tanks need to be drained for a container, we therefore decided to go for the ferry. But in mid July 2013 with the overthrow of the Morsi government in Egypt and the resulting turmoil, the ferry ceased to operate. Plan E had to be implemented and we booked on a cargo ship from Monfalcone near Trieste in Italy to Ashdod in Israel. We took this cargo ship in early September 2013. From Israel, we crossed into Jordan and then got on the ferry from Aqaba in Jordan to Nuweiba in Egypt. We were extremely fortunate to be possibly the last foreign 4x4 vehicle allowed into the Sinai in late September 2013. One week after we made this crossing into Egypt, a new military order came in, and we read of other overlanders turned away and frantically trying to ship their vehicle from Aqaba to anywhere in Africa. Clearly, given the volatility of this region, this is a changing picture, and our experience is not necessarily useful for future travellers. Nonetheless, we offer it in case the situation changes again.



The route was planned around a few fixed pegs: Ethiopia in November 2013 to walk in the Simiens when the flowers should be at their best; Nairobi by Christmas 2013; Uganda-Rwanda in January and February 2014 and back to Kenya via northern Tanzania; a break in the UK during the East African long rains in March-May 2014; N Luangwa, Zambia in late June 2014; the Northern Cape to see the flowers in early September 2014; and back to Nairobi for Christmas 2014. Within this framework, where possible on roads less travelled, we fitted in a variety of game parks, botanical, ornithological and historic sites, and friends and family joined us in Ethiopia, Uganda/Rwanda, Zambia, Botswana and Namibia/Northern Cape.

This worked well. We spent, at the most, seven months non-stop on the road, and this was enough. We were fortunate in having a base in Nairobi which offered a welcome rest and a secure place to leave the vehicle for two months mid-journey. In our 14 months on the road, we covered 34,811 miles (55,698 km) through 18 different countries.

Bureaucracy

Carnet de Passage: This is a must, and works well, saving much time and expense at borders. The UK Carnet is organised through the RAC, and is expensive due to the requirement to take out indemnity insurance. However, it is worth the money.

Visas: Before leaving the UK we acquired Egyptian visas. We then, with surprising ease, acquired Sudanese (one day) and Ethiopian (30 minutes!) visas in Cairo. On the way back up, as we were uncertain of our crossing point and the availability of visas at the border, we chose to get a Mozambique visa when we passed through Harare. All other borders had visas available, or had no requirement for British citizens.

Insurance: Comprehensive Vehicle Insurance was arranged through Campbell Irvine (Insurance Brokers) Ltd in London. Third Party Insurance was arranged through a Kenya firm, who provided a COMESA certificate covering our route from Ethiopia southwards. In fact, looking at the COMESA Certificate, this could also have covered Egypt and Sudan, but we were unaware of this, and purchased the in-country policy available at borders. Foolishly, we had assumed that the SADC countries (Botswana, Namibia and South Africa) were still members of COMESA (which they aren't) and it wasn't until we had left these countries that we realised we had been driving through them without Third Party Insurance, which is a lesson, but fortunately we had no incidents.

Border crossings experiences:

- Entering Israel was difficult for three reasons: (1) Ashdod is not a normal port of entry, and does not have facilities for arranging insurance. The normal customs official was not present, and his stand-in was uncertain of how to arrange this. However, eventually he managed to establish that we needed to visit Jaffa to procure this, which was a 40 minute taxi ride away. (2) Israel does not accept a Carnet de Passage, which means a full temporary Import Permit must be arranged and paid for. Once Insurance had been acquired, the process took 5 hours. (3) Yom Kippur was about to start as we arrived. In fact, we were unable to clear the vehicle before Yom Kippur started, and we had to leave it in port, go away and return three days later to complete the process.

- Once in Africa, the only difficult borders were those in North Africa - Egypt and Sudan. We have heard of those who try to tackle the system without a fixer. Our advice is 'Don't!' – certainly fixers are crucial when entering each country. Unless you can read and speak Arabic, and have a reasonable understanding of how the processes should work, you will find yourself lost very quickly. In Nuweiba, Egypt, an official attached himself to us and guided us through a complex of different offices. It was dark, late and confusing, and took a couple of hours. Without help, it would have been impossible. At Aswan and Wadi Halfa the fixers, Mohammed and Mazar respectively, gave excellent service. Mazar even managed to help a motor-biker who entered Sudan on the same ferry as us without a proper carnet, by organising, at short notice, the issue of a Sudanese carnet for him. What a star! We understand that the land crossing between Egypt and Sudan may now be officially open, and clearly this will be an easier option for travellers. Seek advice from more recent travellers on the practicalities of this.
- No fixer was needed leaving Sudan, although some help was needed from friendly locals in just pointing out which office to go to. Thereafter, no border crossing presented any difficulty. Entering Uganda at the little-used border crossing at Suam, the Customs official needed a little guidance on how to fill in the Carnet, and entering Tanzania over the Unity Bridge from Mozambique, the Customs official insisted on filling in, very slowly, a full Temporary Import Permit (which we did not need) on his computer. This was frustrating – it took about two hours. We believe the official was poorly trained, none too bright, and did not understand the system. Apart from that, no border crossing took more than an hour for all paper work.
- We made a habit of dressing conservatively and attempted to look clean and respectable. We took care to treat officials with respect, courtesy and friendliness, and almost invariably it was returned (grey hair probably helps). We were never asked for any sort of a bribe, and were several times asked by officials, earnestly, whether we had encountered any difficulty or harassment on our visit to their country. Almost all border crossings were positive experiences.

Police

There are a lot of police check points throughout Africa, and I was done four times for minor traffic offences (2 x speeding; 2 x crossing the central line). One of these was bit unkind, but technically fair, and I did not attempt to argue. Each offence was professionally and courteously handled, and the proper paperwork was issued. So, no complaints. Other police checkpoints were friendly and curious, and it was not until our last week that we received an open demand for money ('It is Christmas, do you have anything for me?'). I stared him down, and he waved us on. We have, also, received a lot of salutes from police, and much kindness and courtesy.

Security

We never felt threatened or had any attempt to rob us or the vehicle, but we took sensible precautions: not wild camping in populated areas without permission; always locking the vehicle; not carrying conspicuous valuable items. In Egypt, security was tight, especially in the Sinai, where a plain -clothes security officer warned us not to stop for anyone or anything on the way round the Sinai to Suez. Also in Egypt, we were warned by a friendly local to stay in camp across the river from Aswan on one week-end. Sure enough, elsewhere in Egypt over 50 people were killed that week-end. But that was in September 2013, when the post-Morsi unrest was at its greatest.

Costs

We have not attempted to come up with a full and final cost of our trip, but it was not cheap. I would not wish to deter the young and adventurous traveller from exploring Africa, but I would recommend that those planning to do so, work out why they wish to do so, what they want to see, and budget accordingly. It has been sad to see some travellers rushing down the main roads, unable to afford the time or money to actually explore some of the top sites. Some things are cheap: fuel in North Africa is laughably so; elsewhere in the continent, it is generally slightly less than in the UK. Basic food stuffs locally bought are cheap; imported items and wine or spirits cost. With accommodation, you get what you pay for. However, clearly one of the major attractions of the continent is to see wild game, and to do that at its best, you will have to enter some of the great game parks. These will cost you money. We had several discussions on our trip, primarily with South Africans, many of whom complained about the costs of game parks in East Africa. I accept that the East African governments need to be wary of pricing themselves out of the market, but would make the following points:

- In South Africa, central government funds much of the costs of conservation. Many of the costs are therefore hidden, and paid by other means. In East Africa, there is comparatively less central government funding, and more has to be raised by visitors' fees.
- South Africans who remark that a day in the Maasai Mara equals 20 days in the Kruger forget that they pay Residents' rates in the Kruger, but Foreign Visitors' rates in Kenya. We, of course, paid more for the Kruger than does a South African citizen.
- Tourists damage any ecosystem. Too many tourists in a Game Park could destroy what they seek. One simple way to control numbers is through pricing. The East African Parks are merely charging what the market will bear, having made a conscious decision to go for high-value low-throughput tourism.
- The alternative is to control what the tourists do. The Kruger NP has taken this latter course - with a large number of fenced-off camps - which we estimated must be able to accommodate up to 10,000 people. However, the experience is not what many people seek from a safari. For those who seek a sense of isolation, of untouched natural Africa, the Kruger can be disappointing; but to camp wild in an East African Park is exhilarating, and worth a great deal.
- Conservation costs. Not only do Wildlife Authorities have to pay for infrastructure, personnel and equipment, they must deal with the local people whose livelihoods can be affected by the presence of wild animals. Without their support, no conservation effort has a hope of success. This is more of a problem in East Africa than in Southern Africa. Population densities in East Africa can be intense (Kenya has 45M people in 581,309 km²: Botswana has only 2.1M in 581,730 km²), and the societies are less regulated and historically controlled. The costs of spreading the tourism benefits locally are therefore higher.

Game Parks/Reserves

We have now, from both this and previous trips, seen a good number of Game Parks, and here, for what it is worth, is our deeply subjective view of some of the Game Parks and Reserves in East and Southern Africa. It is not comprehensive (we have not seen them all), does not include specialist parks/reserves for botany, birds or other features (such as Sibiloi, Lake Bogoria, Saiwa Swamp, Semliki, Kibale, Sossusvlei, Ai-Ais, Richtersveld, Namaqualand, West Coast, De Hoop, Matopos, Chimanimani, Nyanga, Mulange, Udzungwa etc) but includes those we have visited on this trip, and on previous occasions (marked with a *). It is in a rough order of merit, and will, I am sure, arouse ire in some quarters.

Name	Comment
*Maasai Mara, Kenya/ *Serengeti, Tanzania	Lumped together as part of the same ecosystem and broadly similar in cost. For density and variety of plains game (and the following predators), the ecosystem is unique. There are some great special camping spots and lovely (if not very dramatic) scenery. The density of tourists can be a problem in some areas, but we have been for all-day drives in the Mara without seeing another vehicle.
Moremi, Botswana	Rich in game, you can get to areas where you feel very remote. Astonishing ecosystem, with lush lagoons, marsh and channels bordering dry scrub, open pans and woodland. Good public campsites, but some special ones are available (possibly only through exclusive tour operators?). Habituated elephants liable to enter campsites.
South Luangwa, Zambia	Didn't see enough of this, and would dearly love to return, especially to do some walking safaris - possible in some areas, at a cost. Many large open areas near river, and very rich in game.
*Ruaha, Tanzania	Vast and very wild, with large parts inaccessible. Rich in game, including Sable and Roan. Lovely camping along the riverfront.
North Luangwa, Zambia	Lovely walking and a very remote feel to it. No independent camping, but community camps outside. Three luxury seasonal camps within the park (prior booking essential). Closed from November to June due to rains. Lacks the open plains of S Luangwa, and did not get an impression of the density of game (although still good).
Katavi, Tanzania	Again scores high on remoteness – our best wild camping experience. Vast herds of elephant in swamps. Remoter areas of Park difficult to access and suffering from some poaching.
Chobe, Botswana	Riverfront and Savuti both rich in game. Good public campsites. Habituated animals liable to enter campsites.
Murchison Falls, Uganda	This is doing well, particularly in the delta triangle North of the Victoria Nile, where plains game is abundant. The Falls themselves are spectacular and worth the visit. One public campsite North of River, and another at the top of Murchison Falls (although this is some distance from where the game is concentrated north of the Nile). Special campsites need exploration, but there are some wonderful spots opposite the delta.
Mana Pools, Zimbabwe	Riverfront rich in game, especially in dry season, some very habituated and liable to enter campsites. Good public campsite, and multiple special ones along riverfront. Walking allowed in designated areas.
*Tarangire, Tanzania	Dramatic Baobab dotted landscape with much game. Can be a bit infested with tsetse fly.

*Tsavo, Kenya	Vast. The larger Tsavo East has denser bush and fewer tracks, but is wilder. Plains game mostly visible in more accessible Tsavo West. Nice special campsites, lodges and <i>bandas</i> available in both parks. Tsavo West does have the ultimate backdrop of Kilimanjaro.
Aberdare, Kenya	Stunning mountain range with Afro-montane moorland. Good wildlife viewing of mountain specialities. Waterfalls and unique Afro-montane flora. Public and special campsites, fishing <i>bandas</i> , and hotels (Treetops and the Ark).
Lake Manyara, Tanzania	Small but beautiful park, rich in bird-life and game (including tree-climbing lions). Nice public campsites in woodland, with decent facilities.
*Selous, Tanzania	A very remote feel to it, despite being not that far from Dar es Salaam, possibly due to the poor roads. Dense bush makes animals harder to see, and most are shy and skittish. Basic but well-sited public campsite on Lake Tagalala. Rufiji riverfront is stunning.
Amboseli, Kenya	A small but wonderfully dramatic Park, with permanent swamp set below the magnificent backdrop of Kilimanjaro. Open plains make game easy to see. Good for Cheetah. Public campsite with facilities within Park HQ complex. Lodges and <i>bandas</i> also inside park.
*Meru, Kenya	Remote, little visited Park on NE side of Mt Kenya. Open areas near gate with plains game, and large area of Acacia/Commiphora scrub where game hard to spot (except Dikdik) towards the Tana River.
Queen Elizabeth NP, Uganda	Lovely scenery around the Kazinga channel, with special campsites, and some decent game. But overall the Park has still not fully recovered from the bad old days. Ishasha sector is lovely savannah country, and famed for tree-climbing lions – on border with DRC.
*Ngorongoro, Tanzania	A surprisingly low placement for this stunning location with a rich density of game, but the small size, the density of tourists and the sheer expense (especially if you take your own vehicle down into the crater) detract from it.
Etosha, Namibia	An extraordinary landscape, albeit dusty. Game abounds around the waterholes. But well-maintained dirt roads on which people drive fast, and large, well appointed, enclosed rest-camps detract from any wilderness experience.
Kruger, South Africa	Good for game, but only in the Northern sector does one get any feeling of wilderness. Tarmac roads and enormous rest camps, all behind the wire, detract from the safari experience. We did see the “Big Five”, though.
Akagera , Rwanda	Definitely not the Serengeti, but of interest and attractive if you are in the area.
Awash, Ethiopia	Like Akagera, not worth a special trip, but some nice campsites (no facilities) along the river. A useful overnight stop between Addis Ababa and Harar.

Accommodation

Where possible, we prefer to wild camp. Sadly, this is more difficult to do these days, although we suspect that often, had we had a better understanding of local culture and some command of the local language, we might have been able to do so with the agreement of locals. But in much of Africa the density of population and security concerns militate against just picking a spot and setting up. The places we camped wild were:

- Egyptian and Sudanese desert areas.
- A remote bridge in Ethiopia (tipped off by a friend who lives in Addis).
- By Lake Turkana in Northern Kenya.
- Below the Mbulu Highlands, Tanzania
- Katavi National Park, Tanzania
- Kaokoland, Namibia

Otherwise, we used designated campsites or places negotiated with the owner. The latter included farms, gardens, or car-parks of guesthouses, hotels, missions or clubs, who would make ablution facilities available.

There is a notable North-South trend in the quality of ablutions: the further North one gets, the more basic, and often challenging, they are. In southern Africa, hot water showers seem to be *de rigueur*; the furthest North that we encountered hot water in a camp site shower was southern Tanzania. In Kenya, showers are still comparatively rare. Some campsites have nothing more than a long-drop.

We thoroughly enjoyed the community campsites that we stayed in: sometimes the facilities were a bit basic, but they were always in good positions and the service was invariably overwhelmingly friendly - frequently outdoing more commercial places with free firewood or, at one place, hot water brought in by bicycle.

Hotels/Guesthouses/Lodges: We occasionally stayed in hotels. At one point this resulted in a medical problem (see below), and we only resorted to hotels as a very occasional treat when we were confident of their standards, or when there was no acceptable camping spot.

Food and Shopping

Throughout our trip, there were always some staples available: rice, pasta, pulses, tomatoes, onions, aubergines, eggs, etc. Those of a vegetarian persuasion need have no worries. Those who prefer to shop in supermarkets will have to prepare themselves for a significant gap between mid-Zambia and Kenya, and then a vacuum further North. In Kenya (and Entebbe, Kampala and Kigali) Nakumatt is an excellent supermarket chain. In southern Africa, you will encounter the large South African chains, including Shoprite and Pick 'n Pay. Throughout the region, those who prefer not to shop at supermarkets - or for whom no supermarket is available - can derive much pleasure at the local markets, which are always picturesque and generally friendly and enjoyable. Local markets are good for fresh fruit and veg, which will vary according to place, and we generally sterilised fruit and veg before use (Milton or sterilising tablets). Most towns have a decent general *duka* (Swahili for shop), often run by Indians, which will be good for dry goods and basic supplies such as soap, sodas, biscuits etc. Many also have freezers for meat. If what you seek is not available in the Indian *duka*, they will generally be able to advise you where it can be found. We generally preferred to buy meat at reputable sources, so a vegetarian diet predominated. The local butchery kiosks can be challenging for the faint-hearted, although we did use one in Western Tanzania: it was less fly-blown than the norm, and the meat was tough as a steak, but better the following night in a stew. In southern Africa one encounters the South African obsession with *braais*, and every supermarket holds vast stocks of *braai*-packs: assorted cuts and sausages with rubs and marinades for grilling. (By

the way, have you ever noticed that those who are most keen on - and proudest of - their local meat are the first to smother them in strong tasting unguents?)

Money

We did carry a considerable wodge of US dollars secreted around the vehicle. These were needed in places, but in general we relied upon ATMs (when available). In Sudan, no ATMs accept foreign cards and credit cards are not accepted anywhere – we changed US dollars. VISA rules OK in most of Africa, but it is worth having some back-up cards, and don't forget to warn your bank of your movements. Generally we were able to change money at borders: a grubby and furtive business with touts and not a great exchange rate, but better than trying to find a bank in a town several days hence. Cash is King.

Technical Report

The following paragraphs contain some remarks on equipment that we took with us and on its performance.

Vehicle: We bought a 2010 Land Rover Defender 110 TDCi Station Wagon. We had owned a TDi in Kenya before and were nervous about the electronics in the new Puma engine. However, as it was always our intention to import the vehicle into Kenya at the end of our trip, and Kenya will not accept vehicles over eight years old, we decided to go with the new model. And it was fine: it does have a lot of electronic sensors, but with one exception (see below) they gave no problem. We chose a basic model: no electric windows or central locking, and even had the alarm and immobiliser disabled. We chose not to have air-conditioning for two reasons: (1) It draws a lot of power and therefore fuel; (2) In hot climates it is better to acclimatise; leaping out of a cool box into the blazing heat is not conducive to setting up camp. It did mean that we spent a lot of the journey driving with the windows open. Again this is no bad thing, particularly when dealing with officialdom, when an open window presents a more friendly face.

We had a range of modifications done:

- The usual under body protection was fitted, with rockslider steps on each side. Additional weight, but worth it.
- An ARB Rear Diff-lock was fitted. This was occasionally used, but was probably not essential. However, its major benefit was the compressor required to operate it. This fitted under the driver's seat, along with a hose for the tyres. This was invaluable for inflating tyre pressures after punctures and loose sandy stretches.
- An additional 35 litre fuel tank, giving a total capacity of 105 litres in the tanks. We also carried 3 x 20 litre jerry cans. This gave us, for planning purposes, a range of just under 1500kms. We would have needed the jerry cans in Botswana had we not managed to buy an additional 60 litres from a friendly tour operator in the next door camp.

- We fitted an additional Stanadyne FM100 2 micron fuel filter to help protect against dodgy fuel. It required a minor modification, shifting the power-steering fluid reservoir, but also allowed an in-line hand pump to be installed for priming. We had no problems, but am not expert enough to know whether this was due to the filters or good luck in not encountering poor fuel.
- A 35 litre water tank in rear left wheel arch, with tap. More below.
- Roof rack. We had a Brownchurch roof-rack fitted, but with reduced depth so that the vehicle could, if necessary, be fitted in a shipping container without removing the rack. Two large aluminium boxes were fitted to the rack to carry bedding.
- Side awning from Howling Moon. Good, not frequently used, but when we needed it, we really needed it.
- IBS Dual Battery System with Optima red and yellow batteries, and additional power points in the back. In hot weather, the auxiliary battery needed recharging after about 18 hours, and therefore had to be monitored on non-motoring days. Leaving the vehicle for several days required the fridge to be emptied and switched off.
- Internal Storage. [Trek Overland](#), in Yorkshire, undertook the bulk of the modifications, and also fitted out the interior. We wished to be able to carry friends and family for parts of the trip, and so left the rear seats intact.
 - A metal security grill on windows and behind the rear seats created a secure area in the back.
 - A sliding metal drawer filled the floor and was opened from the back door. This carried all routine kitchen equipment and worked well. However, there is one design fault which could have been a problem: as constructed, the drawer was not extractable without a major dismantling of the whole set-up. At one point a mounting screw came loose and jammed the drawer open. This effectively rendered the vehicle undriveable as the back door could not then be closed. Fortunately, the screw was dislodged by shaking. However, the design should be altered to ensure that floor above the drawer is easily removed to allow access to the drawer mechanism.
 - A drop down gas cooker was mounted on the rear door, with a 6kg gas bottle held just inside, with a clip-hose to join the two. Not ideal to carry a gas bottle internally, but it worked well.
 - A 40 litre National Luna fridge was fitted. No problems, and good capacity. We managed with this for three people for 12 days with gourmet (-ish) meals.

Overall, we could have fitted some stuff differently, possibly creating access from the side walls to make items more accessible. We chose to limit the modifications to the bodywork, but it was a bore having to unload boxes just to get access to, for instance, the fridge.

- **BF Goodrich All Terrain tyres** did sterling work, and we had only 3 punctures the whole trip. Both the Ethiopia/Northern Kenya and the Namibian stretches punished the rear tyres in particular, and we chose to buy 2 new tyres in both Nairobi and Cape Town.
- **Spare Tyres:** 2 spare tyres were carried on a South African double wheel carrier made by [Outback Extreme](#). This was good, but it does stick out a bit from the rear of the vehicle.

Although this allowed room to fit in some narrow cupboards to carry lubes, it did put extra weight on the rear axle.

- **Recovery equipment:** We had a Goodwinch winch, sand ladders and carried a towrope, strop and shackles. The only time we got stuck in mud, there was, of course, no point to which to attach the winch, but it served as a useful towrope for the efforts of a dozen strong young men. Otherwise it only got used to clear a fallen tree. The other equipment never got used.
- **Tools:** We carried a range of tools sufficient to undertake basic repairs and maintenance. This included a Hawkeye Diagnostic Tool. This is useful in suggesting an area to look at when a problem occurs, but rarely, if ever, defines the exact problem.
- **Roof Hatch:** On arrival in Nairobi (after 9500 miles from the UK), we had a roof hatch installed by Schumachers. He costs but does good work. The roof rack was adapted so that, above the hatch, a large metal table top became part of the rack, and was removed and then used as an extra table when in camp.

Mechanical Problems: We had the following mechanical problems on our journey:

- **Fuel line.** At one point in Uganda the engine died. The fuel line was drawing in air slightly. Checking the all the joints of the fuel line solved this.
- **Suspension and transmission.** With 16 months driving 35,000 miles over African roads, this, unsurprisingly, was the major issue.
 - On starting we had Terra Firma double shock absorber mounts fitted on the rear axle, with OME shocks. This mount carries two shocks in parallel just forward of the axle. In Sudan, some friends ran into the back left of the vehicle: not hard, but sufficient to cause the spare wheel carrier to open, without other visible damage. However, I suspect, the shock through the chassis affected the shock mounting. In Ethiopia this started to fall apart. We nursed it through to Kenya, where we had the whole system replaced with double shocks in a V-formation. These worked well, and gave no further trouble.
 - The left rear link assembly gave up in Uganda. The plate attached to the chassis cracked and the mounting bracket of the assembly likewise. The garage in Fort Portal (called 'Stitch and Sew', curiously) did a sterling job, welding the chassis plate and replacing the mounting bracket with an older, more robust model. I suspect the bang in Sudan had weakened the system.
 - One of the grease seals on the rear axles started leaking in Tanzania. A local garage in Sumbawanga was able to replace both seals.
 - In Harare, a thorough check revealed problems also with the upper link assembly, and, more seriously, excessive wear of the teeth on the rear axle half shafts. Both half-shafts, the rear axle top link joint, 'A' frame bushes, lower link stabiliser mounts and front axle radius arm bushes and rubbers were replaced. The wear was ascribed to the distance travelled on rough tracks with a heavy load on the rear axle.
- **Speed sensor.** In Zambia, on arriving back on tarmac after a long 6 hours on rough tracks, the turbo and speedometer appeared to be operating sporadically and then died completely. Consultation by phone with an expert friend in UK suggested we look at the speed sensor which is fixed into the back of the gear box. Sure enough, the wire to the sensor had come adrift in the bumps, and had fallen onto the drive shaft, and chafed through. I was able to cut and rejoin the

wires, re-secure the repaired wire and the problem was solved. This was the only problem we had with any of the feared Puma engine electronics.

- **Bonnet catch.** This is a perennial Land Rover issue. The bonnet catch is unreliable, partly due to lateral rattle of the bonnet on rough roads loosening the hinges and opening the catch. After it first arose in Uganda, no expert I found was able to solve this fully, although sometimes it held for a hundred miles or so. However, it is a good use for a ratchet strap.
- **Isolation switch.** In front of the passenger seat we had a removable isolation switch which cuts off power to the alternator and starter motor. This makes the car unstartable even with the key (although it can be started with a bump start). In KwaZulu-Natal, during a hasty evacuation of the vehicle in bad weather, we knocked the isolation switch without noticing. When the vehicle failed to start, we forgot all about the existence of the isolation switch, and never checked it. With a bump start, we were able to get to the nearest town and garage, where eventually, having stripped down the alternator to check it, the mechanic spotted the problem. Embarrassing. We never actually felt the need to secure the vehicle by removing the isolation switch. I am sceptical of its value.

Fuel Consumption: We used a total of 6854 litres (1810 gallons). Average consumption was 8.15 kpl (19.17 mpg).

Navigation: We took paper maps, which were of variable reliability. Some of the minor roads shown on Reise WMP maps proved to be works of imagination, particularly in Ethiopia and Mozambique. Michelin maps were useful for large scale planning but not reliable for navigation – many roads missing, and fictional roads marked. Nelles maps proved to be the most reliable in East Africa. We had a **Garmin Montana 650 GPS**, and this was excellent, with a phenomenal memory – it still holds every track since the day we left. The standard mount that came with the device was sturdy, only occasionally falling off when left parked and exposed to strong direct sunlight. We had Tracks4Africa mapping on the GPS. This gives confidence that what is shown does actually exist, but it is sadly lacking outside Southern Africa, and we often had to venture forth into ‘white space’.

Communications: Each of us carried smart phones. I left mine on my UK number, while my wife bought a new SIM for each country and did the routine calls. In addition we carried an Inmarsat Isat Phone Pro. This was rarely used in practice (but when we did use it, it always worked), but was a reassurance when no mobile phone coverage was available. We also carried a laptop: a Durabook U14M, which survived well, despite endless shaking, a couple of drops and much dust. We bought a 12v adaptor to allow it to be charged directly from the vehicle battery. A Zead Z250 3.5G dongle allowed us to go-online with a local SIM where 3G or better coverage was available. In many countries, however, 3G was confined to major cities only, and the local telecoms companies made a healthy profit on the unexpended airtime. Sadly, the Z250 does not allow one to use the laptop as a hotspot, nor can it fit into a router, which is a disadvantage. But it can take any 3G SIM in any country we tried. We also had a Zead Z-200 High Power Wireless-N USB Adapter which improves the ability of the laptop to pick up wi-fi. It worked, but, on balance, the improvement in reception was not needed frequently enough to justify its presence.

Water: In addition to the fitted 35 litre water tank, we carried a 20 litre Lifesaver jerrycan, which includes a filter. This was rarely, if ever, used, but again provided useful reassurance in remote areas. Drawing directly from the main tank, we had an in-line Whale pump and a Nature Pure water

filter, which we used for drinking water. This worked extremely well, and we had no stomach problems due to water, even though, at one stage, we had had to draw water directly from the Nile. The filter is advertised as good for 2000 litres. We did not achieve this, and of course the throughput possible will vary according to the cleanliness of the water. In practice, when using Nile water, the filter lasted only a couple of weeks – probably less than 200 litres. On the other hand, the current filter has lasted us 3 months through Southern Africa.

Medical: Having done a two-day “Far from Help” First Aid course (through Wilderness Medical Training in the UK), we were issued with prescription drugs through their affiliated Nomad Pharmacy (UK), and we carried their comprehensive expedition medical pack. The medical equipment was all packed into a red backpack and attached above the rear seats for ease of access. If anyone wants a list of the contents, please email us. Luckily, we didn’t have to use it often except for minor cuts and scrapes, but we did use it to treat locals in Ethiopia (babies with appalling burns having fallen into open fires). The only nasty medical problem we had was when we contracted Mango Fly (AKA Putsi flies) maggots from sleeping in a Rwandan guesthouse where the sheets had obviously been laid out on the grass to dry and hadn’t been ironed in order to kill the Mango fly eggs (which is the reason we prefer our own facilities in camp). These manifested themselves as large, painful swellings, but they are easily dealt with by smearing the swelling with Vaseline until the maggot pops out for air, then squeeze them out, clean up, and take a preventative course of antibiotics.

Camp Equipment: We are of an age when we like to stand up in a tent, have camp beds on which one can sit, and have comfortable seats. We chose a ground tent on the basis that (a) I have no wish to break my neck getting up for a pee in the middle of the night and (b) having set up one can leave in the vehicle without taking down the tent – useful for early morning game drives. We are more than happy with this decision; we never found ourselves without the space to pitch the tent.

- We used an Oztent RV4, which we carried on the side of the roof-rack. This was excellent, being extremely easy and quick to erect and take down.
- We also carried outer panels for the front awning, which made a great difference in inclement weather, as the Land Rover could, if necessary, be backed into the front, providing a warm enclosed space. The outer door zip of the tent needed replacing in Maun (after 8 months travel) and then both outer and inner door zips eventually gave out at 0400 hrs on our very last night. The frame is not baboon proof (what reasonably portable tent is?), but new frame parts can be ordered and fitted without excessive difficulty. On the second part of our journey, I actually carried a few lengths of spare frame (just light-weight aluminium) in case of further encounters.
- We also carried a 2 person Vango tent for guests, and an Oztent loo/shower tent. This latter was used trekking in the Simiens (carried on a mule and used in lieu of revolting communal long-drops), but otherwise hardly at all. But a potentially very useful item that took up little space.
- Two Vango Alloy Campbeds gave excellent service. Quick to erect, light, robust and comfortable.
- Sleeping rolls. Heavy duty canvas sleeping rolls (the Australians call them swag-bags) held thin foam mattresses, pillows, sheets and duvets, and could just be zipped up, rolled and put in the roof boxes. In the right conditions, they were great for sleeping directly under the stars.

- Trug. A bit of a secret weapon this: a semi-flexible plastic garden trug holding 20 litres of water served as a washing up bowl, general purpose bucket, refilling the water-tank etc, etc.
- Two sturdy Higeer folding armchairs took up space but survived the trip without damage. They provided comfortable seating for both lounging and eating at a table. We carried two small cheap camp chairs for guests: they needed much repair but made it to the finish line
- A folding table with adjustable legs also proved up to the task, despite initial pessimism about the fragility of the adjusting mechanism.
- Other camp equipment included a folding fire grill, chapatti pan on legs, a large pot with lid (used as a campfire oven), folding bucket, LED lights on long lead, hose, camp shower, spades, axe, etc.

Boxes and Storage: A range of boxes were bought from the excellent [Solent Plastics](#), Southampton. Everything was carried in a box for convenience and ease of stowing; the result being we could set up - and dismantle - camp very quickly. We took the vehicle to Solent Plastics so as to buy the correct size of box for each available space in the vehicle.

- Two “Scuba Box black water resistant storage trunks” were strapped to the roof rack and carried lighter items such as spare mattresses, small tent etc. They were water-tight and dust-proof.
- A large Gorilla “foot locker” carried dirty items such as fire grill, camp oven, buckets, etc – this was also strapped to the roof rack.
- We carried our clothes in “Really Useful” sturdy plastic boxes (one each) which were predominately dust-proof, but these were stowed in the back of the vehicle.
- A further “Really Useful” box carried dry rations and other non-perishable foodstuff – again, stowed in the back of the vehicle.
- A small cooler box – although rarely cool – was a useful box for stowing daily waterbottles, snacks etc. This was strapped down in the middle of the back passenger footwell.
- A non-dustproof industrial stacking box with lid carried bottles and/or cans - stowed neatly in the back of the vehicle.
- A further “Really Useful” box carried guidebooks, maps, books, manuals. This stowed neatly on top of the industrial stacking box containing bottles.

Summary

A wonderful experience which we would highly recommend to all. It is not difficult to travel these days in Africa – the major challenge is to find the time and resources, and to get organised to do it. We are very happy to provide more detail on any aspect, including GPX tracks for any part of our journey, if required. If you would like more information, please contact us through the forum.

Hugh Macnair
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