

#20

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MARCH 2019 | ISSUE 20

Drive & Camp

KLEIN KAROO

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4x4 PROFESSOR

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on NCAP tests

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Stealth Evolution XR6
Inside and out

22

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HILUX

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CARAVAN TEST



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TRAIL GUIDE

There are many activities near the Vaal Dam – this one's a 4x4 obstacle course at a popular wedding destination.



Go on, surprise yourself



It's always great when something surprises me. Or maybe I should clarify: when something surprises me in a good way. Should the petrol price rise unexpectedly by R10/ℓ at the end of this month, it will be quite surprising, but certainly not enjoyable. Also not if Des van Rooyen is appointed as finance minister again.

I come across something in just about every issue that delivers a healthy dose of surprise, and this month was no exception. I was surprised when Cyril arrived at the office and reported that he drove 22 passes in just two days. And I was equally surprised that Leon was able to hitch the brand-new Stealth Evolution XR6 to go camping for a weekend. He and his family are among the first people to

sleep in this road caravan.

Mingled with the surprise, there was also relief when Kyle's partner Stacey gave birth to their first-born. Little Kade is healthy, and if that apple doesn't fall far from the tree, it's likely that high-octane petrol already flows through his veins. Welcome, young man. We share in your parents' joy and wish you the very best for the future. May be your road be without sharp stones; your stand level, on grass and under shade trees; and your off-road tyres always remain on their rims.

I also enjoyed our reader story about the journey the Venters from Halfmanshof took through the north of the country. What amazes me is how much they managed to fit into such a short time.

The March holiday is around the corner, and the Easter weekend follows hard on its heels. Where will you be going? What have you always wanted to see or experience? And why are you still waiting?

If there is one thing the Venters can teach us, it's that you don't have to wait for a long holiday to go on a proper trip. So make your plans and hit the road. You may just surprise yourself...

Safe travels!



Schalk

EDITOR

schalk.jonker@media24.com

...the tar road is actually a dirt road with pieces of tar here and there. It is pothole after pothole, and in places it's better (and safer!) to drive next to the road.

p. 81

Cover image **Leon Botha** (De Hoek Mountain Resort)

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We love hearing what you have to say! Please write to us at drivecamp@gomag.co.za, and do remember to include your full address and contact details. *go! Drive & Camp* reserves the right to edit and shorten letters – and to use them in the magazine, on the website and elsewhere.

IT AIN'T HEAVY, IT'S MY CARAVAN

We recently got a trendous fright when the towbar of my 2006 Nissan X-Trail, the diesel model, recently broke near Ngodwana on the N4. I've been towing a Jurgens Fleetline with the X-Trail since 2009. Just outside Nelspruit, I heard a knocking sound, but I thought it was the luggage in the back of the car making a noise. I decided to stop and make sure everything was okay, however. To my dismay, I saw that the right side of the towbar appeared to be loose. It's also the side where the Yellow Blade stabiliser's arm fits. I decided to drive at a snail's pace up to the Machado Shell petrol station, about 100 km away. With only another kilometre or three to go, I heard an abrasive noise as we rounded a bend. It was the stabiliser dragging on the road.

We couldn't go any farther. My wife, Ellie, wanted to put out the emergency triangle to warn oncoming traffic, but it was buried under all our luggage. She jogged around the bend with a red bag... and just there one of her shoes broke. Then, as a 70-year-old, I realised how difficult it is to unhitch a caravan when one side of the towbar is pushing down on the road. But I eventually managed, then moved the car away and let the caravan run backwards a little against a small embankment. Just then, two vehicles stopped and told me Ngodwana was just around the corner. One of the vehicles was a bakkie and he towed our caravan to Ngodwana.

Our Samaritans helped to unscrew the towbar, and we saw that it was cracked on both sides. The right side broke at the one



crack and the left side's remaining piece is bent between the cracks.

Vusi Nkanga helped us and welded both sides. Three hours (and R1 500) later, we were grateful to be on our way to Roodepoort.

Back home I called the towbar manufacturer and they replaced it for free.

According to the specifications, the towbar is certified for a 75 kg nose weight and 2 000 kg towing weight. Our bathroom scale shows the caravan's nose weight to be 122 kg (with the battery and an empty gas cylinder in the caravan and the tent with its poles and pegs). It's a 1996 model with its standard fridge, and our cutlery is packed in the kitchen. The caravan's spare wheel is in the X-Trail. At the weighbridge, the scale shows 1 320 kg, but according to Jurgens the GVM is 1 100 kg.

Furthermore, it seems as if a caravan's nose

weight is not readily available, and you also don't carry a scale around when shopping for caravans.

PIET RAUTENBACH
Roodepoort

The X-Trail's tare weight is around 1 500 kg, which means you can legally tow a heavier caravan. According to Piet's figures and that of Jurgens, the caravan is overloaded, but still within the limits of the towbar. The problem is the nose weight, because the law limits you 100 kg, and in this case 75 kg. The 122 kg is almost double that. Nose weights differ, and the onus is on you to pack so that the nose weight limit isn't exceeded. But it's a good idea to have the caravan's nose weight as heavy as possible for a more stable tow. – Ed >



Winning letter

Piet wins a cooler bag worth R220.

Whether you're a camper, fisherman, or sports fan next to a cricket pitch; this cooler bag has room for lunch box and a 1,5 l cool drink bottle. The lid also has space for a koffee flask. The interior is lined with PVC which makes it easy to

keep this bag clean and hygienic. The bag has a short strap that reaches over the top and attaches with a Velcro strip, and also a longer shoulder strap if you're going to carry it over longer distances. It's an ideal picnic accessory or a *padkos* bag for a road trip.





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ORANJEMUND IS A DUNE PLAYGROUND

I refer to the article “Through the diamond diggers’ backyard” in the September 2018 issue.

Thanks to this article, we decided to go check out Oranjemund and surrounds. So we booked our spot in December at the Op My Stoep Lodge and also booked a dune ride with Fanie Smit. Camping at Op My Stoep ran smoothly and we joined three other vehicles for the dune ride. Before we started, Fanie played the role of Oranjemund ambassador and told us about the area’s rich history.

The ride was a proper adventure: we ran the gamut of fear, excitement, joy and tears, but thanks to Fanie’s thorough briefing, everything went swimmingly. It’s an experience to slide down the dunes in your vehicle, and with Fanie’s expertise, we even felt at ease.

Oranjemund is a special place. There are even gemsbok walking around the town. Many of the activities in the area are free and you can drive right up to the beach where the guys are fishing.

DOT CHALMERS
Centurion



THE AMAZING WALL-TO-WALL INFLATABLE MATTRESS

We went camping with some friends at Tietiesbaai once. One of them, Pieter van Kraayenburg, was on his way and called to ask which camping mattress to buy. I advised him to buy a double-bed size, but when he arrived at Tietiesbaai and unpacked, he only had a two-man tent. What’s more, he bought a king-sized mattress. This wouldn’t work, so I suggested swapping mattresses. He took my single-bed inflatable mattress and I slept really well on his king-sized one.

GRETHA LAURENCE
Moorreesburg



AND WHEN A NEIGHBOUR IS SAWING LOGS?

I write about readers’ opinions on your Digital page in the January issue, “The sound of silence”. The subject deals with noise in the campsite and whether you’d report your neighbours to management.

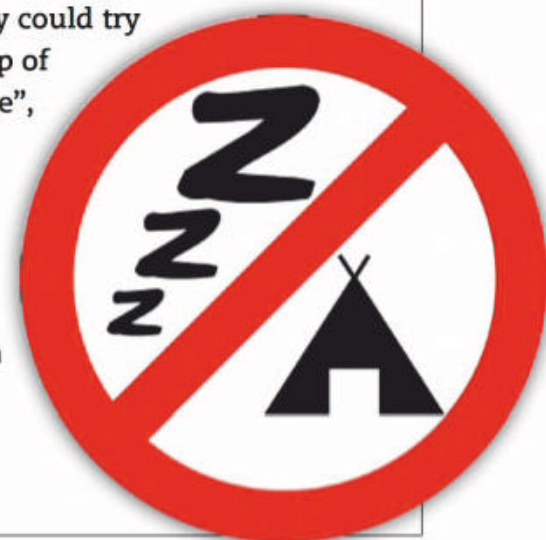
I have another question: does this also apply to people who snore? I would like to know how campers act when someone next to you snores so loudly every night that nobody can sleep within 100 m. Should we lie awake or do you ask the snorer to set up camp elsewhere?

I’m thinking about a time when earplugs didn’t even help. Shouldn’t that camper think of his fellow

man and try to do something about it? They could try to snore less by using, for example, the help of a “continuous positive air pressure machine”, a device that keeps the throat more fully open throughout the night and reduces snoring. Or do other campers have to resign themselves to a sleepless night?

DANIE UYS*
Port Elizabeth

* “Danie” decided it’s safer to use a pseudonym! – Ed



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Let's talk about food



How do you plan your meals when camping? Do you bring as many ingredients as possible from home and wing it, or do you decide what you want each day and then get only what you need at your destination?



Suzette Lambrechts

I don't plan in advance, but pack our meat and groceries at home. I make sure there's potjie meat, chicken to braai and bacon for breakfast. So we braai and cook as we please. We need to eat at least one or two cooked meals, as you get enough of braaiing if that's all you do.



Willem Brits

We don't plan much either. We do take a lot of stuff from home and then decide at the campsite what we want to eat.



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11 DECEMBER 2018 · SEE TRANSLATION



Esme Gerber

I bring the basic ingredients from home, but we only decide on the day what to eat when camping.



Piet Botha

No, we just take meat and especially sausage. The rest we buy where we camp. I don't want to load unnecessary weight, and if you're out of season, prices are more reasonable. That's why we can do it this way.



Trudi Young

We usually take most of the ingredients we'll need with us. It's easier on the wallet. However, we don't pack much meat and buy it at our destination as we need it.



Hendrik Petrus Goosen Coetzee

I plan what to take along and what we'll eat every day. You save a lot of time and fuel if you do this – especially if you're far away from the shops.



**COMMENT
OF THE
MONTH!**

"I say there's bad signal and forget about the thing."

Social media nowadays keeps us up to date on everything and everybody's doings. Following on from Schalk Jonker's column on how he had to compete with Whatsapp and Facebook even while in the bush, we wanted to hear from you what you do with your smartphone when you camp. Clearly, Irene du Plessis feels strongly about this issue.



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A year of Ranger ownership

He's had his Ford Ranger Wildtrak for just over a year now and it's time to share a couple of thoughts about the bakkie, says Mic van Zyl.

Fourteen months ago, I took delivery of a Ford Ranger Wildtrak 4x4 Auto as a new company vehicle. At the time, it was a decision I took with plenty of trepidation as I am still an avid Toyota fan.

The one aspect that doesn't get covered in magazine tests and comparisons is long-term ownership. While you may be able to gain some insight into this by speaking to current long-term owners of your prospective bakkie of choice, this could easily be tainted by brand loyalty, luck or, in some cases, bad luck.

My overall enjoyment of the Ranger has been great, as expected. The ride and feel of the vehicle are top notch. I still prefer it to the Hilux, even one that has an aftermarket suspension upgrade fitted. When I drive the Hilux, I know I'm in a bakkie. The Ranger is just so much more comfortable, and I have yet to find anything lacking in the list of luxuries that the Ranger has as standard.

My Ranger is even more enjoyable than when I first got it, thanks to some massive upgrades. It now sports everything that we at Ironman 4x4 could fit to it, including Foam Cell Pro suspension, a Full Rockford Fosgate sound system and a 200 kW power and 650 Nm torque upgrade, courtesy of Ford Performance Centre.

SADLY, IT IS not all good news. Over time, several gremlins have appeared to spoil the party. I, for one, am not very tolerant of such vehicle issues, especially not on a new vehicle. Since October 2017, the Ranger has been back to Ford no less than eight times for various issues. All of them have been addressed but it is my opinion that they should not have been there in the first place. Having only owned Toyotas after converting to 4x4, visiting the dealership workshop between services to have issues rectified is a new experience for me. It is very near the top of my list of unwelcome chores.

The issues have been mostly electrical. Items that failed and were replaced include the exhaust gas temperature sensor, crank position sensor, tyre pressure sensor and adaptive cruise control module. The Wildtrak has several complex electronic systems, from engine and gearbox management software to safety equipment as well as all those luxury items. All the more reason to ensure that these systems are well manufactured and will continue to work faultlessly over the lifespan of the vehicle.

At 30 000 km, the main rear crank oil seal blew out, which meant the gearbox had to be replaced. Up to that point the gearbox felt sluggish and a bit rough, but normal for a Ranger. After this job, the gearshifts are

even rougher than before and steadily getting worse. I suspect that at some point in the near future this will require attention.

I KNOW SOME of you may be thinking that perhaps the performance upgrade is possibly to blame for some of these issues. I must state however that the performance upgrade is an official Ford Performance product and was co-developed with Ford engineers. The upgrade operates strictly within the parameters as specified by Ford.

The issues I've experienced are relatively common on non-performance upgraded vehicles according to some of the Ford technical people that attended to me during my various visits to the dealerships.

Some folks have told me that they have owned several Ford Rangers over time and never had any issues. Other people have told me about woes that they have with their Toyotas. It is quite possible that I've been a bit unlucky and, so far, the positives still outweigh the negatives.

Time will tell. 🙄

Mic van Zyl is the director of Ironman 4x4 Africa, the sole importer and distributor of the full range of Ironman 4x4 products.

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I, for one, am not very tolerant of such vehicle issues, especially not on a new vehicle.

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About tyres and jacks

A caravan's corner steady is not a jack, and make sure you understand the fine print on your car's tyres, says Neels van Heerden.

Exactly one day before a family member of mine left on his annual holiday by the sea, he decided to quickly check his caravan's tyres.

He lifted the caravan with the corner steadies, but when he removed a wheel, a corner steady broke and the caravan ended up lying on the ground.

The lesson we can learn from this is that you shouldn't wait until just before your departure to check your tyres.

And, of course, that a corner steady is not a jack. It's simply not designed to lift a whole caravan, only to level it.

A corner steady is not a jack. It's simply not designed to lift a whole caravan, only to level it.

Getting your caravan level on an uneven stand is a science in itself. I've already learnt to use a level-up ramp to get the width of caravan close to plumb. Then use the nose wheel to do the same lengthwise.

People who get heartburn at night claim it brings some relief

if you angle the caravan so their heads are slightly higher than their feet.

I have also met people who say that certain caravans crack just above the door because the corner steadies aren't being used properly. This damages the shell of the caravan and can even warp an axle.

BUT LET'S GO BACK to the tyre my family member wanted to check. It actually did have a tear in it – at the back, of course, where it's more difficult to spot.

The life cycle of a caravan's tyres is the kind of topic that amateur scientists love. One such theory is that tyres have to be replaced every five years.

Take a look at what your caravan insurance says. Is the recommended age of the tyres specifically mentioned? There seems to be nothing in road traffic legislation about the maximum age of tyres.

Rubber loses its flexibility after 5-6 years and starts to harden. If you drive over a cat's eye with such a tyre, the harder and less flexible rubber of an old tyre will more easily develop a tear in its tread.

Another contributing cause is the effect of those grooves in the middle of a tar road in order to wake up a sleepy driver should he start crossing the line.

These grooves are so close together that the hard rubber cannot adjust fast enough to absorb the vibrations.

I SPENT SOME TIME browsing the Internet and two issues on this topic struck me. One is the availability of a tyre monitor.

It's a technological tool that keeps a close eye on your towing combination's tyres. Sensors are installed inside the tyre or on the tyre valve. A monitor near the driver gives a warning sign as soon as a tyre loses pressure or gets excessively hot.

The other aspect is the carrying capacity of tyres. Somewhere on the outside of the tyre there is valuable information that sets out the load index and the date of manufacture of the tyres.

Carrying capacity is specified in kilograms, and one of less than 1 000 kg per tyre is probably not suitable for medium to larger caravans. Tyres that can carry more than 1 100 kg can easily be pumped up to 3 bar.

I believe salespeople at trailer and caravan merchants need to up their knowledge to provide authoritative and safe tyre advice.

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St Francis Bay gets a snazzy new campsite

There aren't many campsites in St Francis Bay, but now a brand-new one has opened its gates to holidaymakers.

Waterberry Park used to be called the St Francis Bay Caravan Park, a caravan park that went under several years ago. According to one of the new owners, David Glanvill, the piece of ground was overgrown with pine trees when he and his partner, Gary Gilbert, bought the caravan park, so they overhauled it from the ground up.

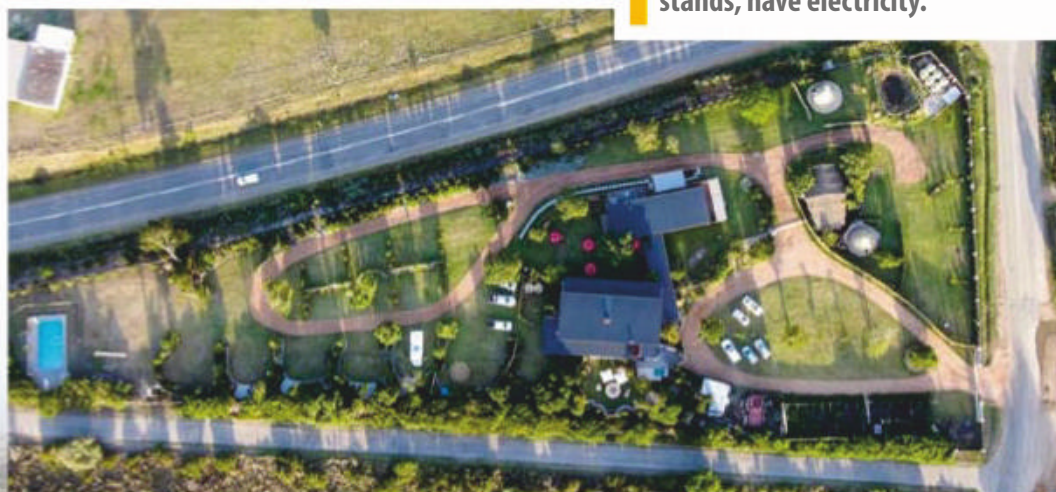
David is a horticulturist and you can tell – not just in the neat gardens but also by the layout of the resort. There are four camping sections, including caravan stands, tent stands, campsites for motorhomes and luxury stands. The latter section is bigger than the rest and you have your own paving and braai area. Except for the 10 tent stands, all have their own power outlets.

Price Depending on the season, R500 or R1 000 per site for the luxury stands, R450 or R900 for the standard caravan stands, R400 or R800 for the motorhome stands, and R300 or R600 for tent stands. Prices apply to the first two people; thereafter it is R200 p.p.p.n. extra (R100 for children). No more than four people per stand.

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David is a horticulturist and you can tell – not just in the neat gardens but also by the layout of the resort.

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Hoefer comes to Witbank

The Hoefer group, a US caravan manufacturer with a factory in Swaziland, has just announced that GC Caravans in Witbank will be its local dealership.

For the foreseeable future, says the CEO of Hoefer, Charles Hoefer, his caravans will be available solely at this dealership, where Michael Hammond and Neil Volschenk are the helm.

Michael and Neil have been designing a super-luxury caravan – the Azzero Premium All Terrain caravan – with Charles for the past year.

The Azzero, which will be equally at home on tar and dirt roads, will be one of the longer caravans on the market and is 7,57 m long, 2,4 m wide and 2,6 m high. The anticipated tare weight is 1 200 kg, which, according to Charles, includes the two fridges (193 ℓ

and 93 ℓ), air-con, spare wheel and tent. It may sound far-fetched, but Charles says the secret lies in the materials used for the hull and the chassis.

The chassis consists of a unique aircraft aluminium that's 8 mm thick. The floor forms a unit with the chassis and is 80 mm thick. It consists of a special material that Charles doesn't want to say too much about, but it's as strong as fibreglass of 14-16 mm.

The coupler, brake system and axle are supplied by Al-Ko and then the entire caravan is put together with glue – even the nose wheel is glued to the A-frame. All windows, doors, water pump and basin, and the two-burner gas stove are supplied by Dometic,

while the microwave, air-con and fridges are all Defy.

The caravan has an island bed and bathroom, and the set of benches with their leather upholstery flatten to make another double bed. The GVM is 1 510 kg with a 1,8 t axle and 2,7 t coupler.

The caravans should be available at GC Caravans for around R600 000 from April 2019.

Charles, who has been developing a super-light caravan for some time, says this project has been put on ice for now.

Contact 013 697 5121

gccaravans.co.za



New Vigus on its way

The Chinese manufacturer JMC has just launched its latest Vigus bakkie. We're going to get it for a test drive soon, but here's what we know about it so far: it's a second-generation bakkie (the first Vigus was launched here in 2014) built in China and sold in Africa, Australia, Asia and South America.

Prices start at R201 880 for a single cab and the double cab costs R282 880, making it the cheapest double cab in South Africa. And then there's a 4x4 version that costs R348 990 – still not punishing your wallet too harshly.

The Vigus is powered by a 2,4 ℓ turbo diesel, which generates 290 Nm of torque, and a 2,4 ℓ petrol engine. >



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Six popular SUVs *not* destined for SA

If you travel overseas regularly, you'll have seen vehicles that you won't find here. Take as an example the Cadillac XT4, Lincoln Nautilus and Toyota 4Runner, all SUVs in the US that aren't sold locally. But there are vehicles built in right-hand steering markets such as Japan, Australia and England that we would also like to have. Here are six popular new SUVs that we unfortunately won't get.

2019 FORD EDGE



The Edge is a medium-sized SUV built in Canada since 2006 and sold in North America, Europe, New Zealand and Australia. A facelifted version has just been unveiled and it now boasts a droolworthy 2,7 ℓ

EcoBoost dual-turbo V6 engine. The Edge is branded in Australia and New Zealand as the Ford Endura where it is quite popular. We think it would sell better than the Ford Kuga in South Africa.

2019 SEAT TARRACO



Spanish car company Seat made a brief appearance in South Africa before its parent company, Volkswagen, kicked it out. The Seat Tarraco has just been launched in Europe to great acclaim from their

media. The Tarraco is powered by a 1,5 ℓ and a 2 ℓ turbo-petrol as well as a 2 ℓ turbo-diesel. It's available in manual and auto, and with front wheel or all-wheel drive. We hope Seat returns to SA one day.

2019 INFINITI QX50

Nissan is suspiciously quiet about the well-being of its Infiniti brand in SA, but we suspect the writing is on the wall. According to NAAMSA's new vehicle sales figures, one Infiniti was sold to us in January 2018 and none

since then. Infiniti SA's website still shows the first generation of QX50, but a new front-wheel drive version is being built in Mexico and China, and gets a 2 ℓ petrol engine and CVT gearbox.



2019 ŠKODA KAMIQ



This Czech car manufacturer launched its small SUV at the Beijing Motor Show last year. The Kamiq is built in China and sold there, in Europe and in other Far East countries, but not in South

Africa. Size and pricing wise, it competes with the Hyundai Creta, which is available in SA. The ŠKODA Kamiq gets a 1,5 ℓ petrol engine and a five-speed manual or six-speed automatic gearbox.

2019 ACURA RDX



Just like Lexus is a larney Toyota and Infiniti a fancy Nissan, Acura is the luxury brand of Honda. The third generation Acura RDX has just been launched in the US and will be built in China and the US for the Asian and North American markets.

The RDX is powered by a 2 ℓ turbo petrol engine and a 10-speed automatic gearbox, and buyers have a choice between all-wheel or front-wheel drive. The Acura is only available in left-hand drive; so we can forget about it.

2019 CHEVROLET BLAZER

General Motors left the country, and with it our dreams that the Blazer could one day find its way to our shores. The chances of that was always slim, but we've been wanting one since Chuck Norris drove his Chevy Blazer K5 from a shallow grave in *Lone Wolf*

McQuade. Americans are getting a brand new Blazer with a 2,5 ℓ four-cylinder and 3,6 ℓ V6 petrol engine this year. Four-wheel is standard, but in terms of appearance, the new Blazer differs significantly from Chuck's. >





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Kennis expands

For the Gauteng caravan and motorhome dealer Kennis Caravans & Motorhomes, 2019 is already turning out to be a busy year. Managing director, Allan Vos, says since he discontinued the business relationship with Campworld, Kennis is now a LeisureWorld dealer – and also an approved Echo4x4 dealership since January.

What's more, they recently established a 4x4 fitment centre. For this, Allan took Morné Claassens on board. Morné has a long track record in the 4x4 world and was previously a partner in a fitment centre for 10 years. The facility at Kennis is known as 4x4@Kennis, and according to Morné, they support all brands when it comes to accessories – from roof racks, 12 V fridge/freezers and dual-battery systems to bullbars, air suspension and snorkels.

Kennis has been doing business as a caravan dealer for several years and is also an independent dealer of the country's largest motorhome manufacturer, Motorhome-World.

Contact 011 664 7000 knowledge.co.za
info@kennis.co.za or 4x4@kennis.co.za



THE 4X4@KENNIS TEAM. From left to right is Thekios Chadi, Morné Claassens, Leratho Mokuane and Marlon Jafta.



Trailer sailor

Dolphin Trailers was founded about 20 years ago, but lost momentum over the years until the company finally closed its doors. Now, however, new owners Deeven and Leshani Pather gave it new life when they bought Dolphin Trailers' original fibreglass moulds and tooling in May 2018.

Dolphin Trailers make three trailers: the Dolphin Lite weighing a mere 120 kg, the streamlined Dolphin Sport, and the Dolphin Trailer-Boat. It's the latter that attracts the most attention, as it gives double service as a trailer and an 8-foot dinghy. Remove the lid, attach an outboard motor and you're ready for the fishing waters!

You don't need a skipper license for this flat-bottomed dinghy and the vessel has a SAMSA category R buoyancy certificate for freshwater use.



The trailer-boat comes standard with a spare wheel, two removable seats and a set of oars. The dinghy alone weighs 48 kg and can carry 400 kg on the water. The towing combination weighs 160 kg, has a load capacity of 590 kg and a volume of 1 700 l. There is a waiting period of four weeks after your order has been placed, and Deeven and Leshani can send your trailer anywhere in the country by courier.

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10 Candles for Ewiks



Caravan-mover manufacturer Ewiks celebrates its tenth birthday this year. And today these movers are no longer a luxury, but essential says Erik Warburg, owner of Ewiks. *(We agree – nobody's getting any younger and a caravan is heavy. If you've ever tried to move a double-axle caravan on your own by hand, you'll know it's an almost impossible task. – Ed)*

Erik is a mechanical engineer who

designed the Ewiks mover himself. He says it is strange to him that caravan manufacturers don't include movers as standard on their larger caravans.

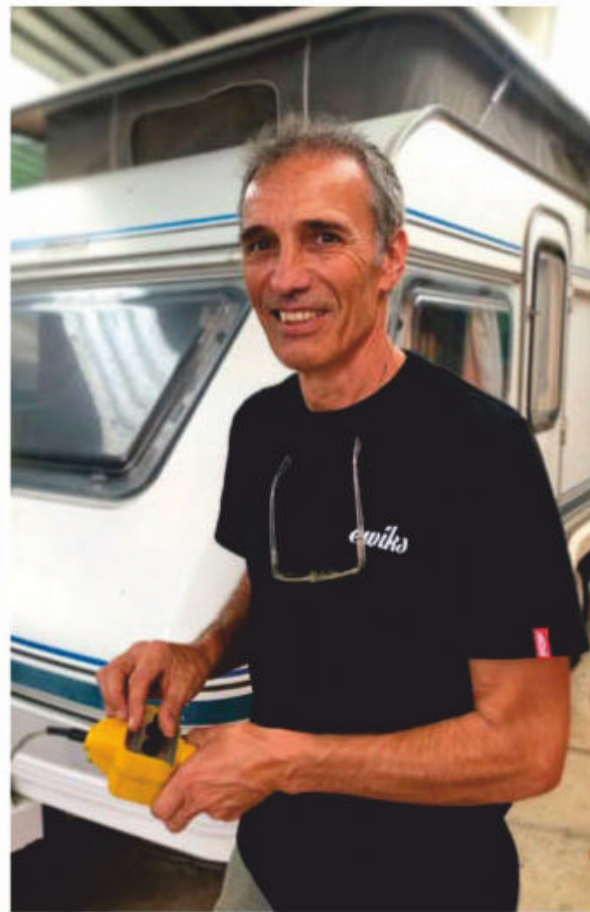
The Ewiks mover works with a remote control that lets you move your caravan without a single drop of sweat. The system has an electric motor at each wheel and uses the power of the 12 V battery in the caravan. If your caravan

doesn't have its own battery, then Erik installs a small battery in the caravan specifically for this.

Ewiks movers fit most of the newer caravans on the market, and a self-assembly unit is also available if you want to install it yourself.

Contact ☎ 082 487 4950 ✉ ewiks.co.za

📧 sales@ewiks.co.za



Local car sales in decline

NAAMSA announced the new vehicle sales figures for December 2018 and it doesn't look good. The 39 984 units sold represent a drop of 1,9% down from the December 2017 figure (40 751). The annual total for 2018 was also weaker than in 2017, but at least slightly better than in 2016.

The new vehicle sales record was in 2006, when a total of 714 315 new vehicles were sold. The economy grew by 5,6% in that year. By contrast, there was less than 1% growth in 2018.

The good news is that market analysts expect a slight turnaround in the economy for 2019.

New vehicle sales are also forecast to be around 558 000 by December 2019. Other good news is that South Africa's new car exports are growing year after year. Vehicle exports currently contribute 7,7% to our gross domestic product and 351 154 vehicles were shipped to other countries in 2018. In 2017, 338 096 were exported – thus a 3,9% increase. >



YEAR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Passenger	438 938	412 397	361 265	368 114	365 246
Light commercial	173 492	174 812	159 316	163 317	159 452
Medium commercial	10 780	10 522	8 436	7 890	7 913
Heavy commercial	20 534	19 919	18 535	18 382	19 579
Total	643 744	617 650	547 552	557 703	552 190

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Hyundai, Kia gets solar power!

Hyundai and Kia have announced they will be installing solar panels on certain models.

The first generation of these panels will be relatively ordinary and attached to the roof of cars with hybrid propulsion. The next generation will be semi-transparent and found on hybrids and cars with internal combustion engines. The third generation of solar panels will be integrated on the roof and bonnet of all Hyundai and Kia cars and be almost indistinguishable from regular body panels.

The purpose of the solar panels is to recharge the vehicle's battery and provide a charge to electrical systems while the vehicle is turned off. It's a system that's long been used by the off-road community, but Hyundai's goal is to make it standard equipment and part of a vehicle's structure.

You'd be insane to take a Lamborghini Urus into the bush, but if you purchase the new official off-road package, you could consider it. This package consists of underbody protection, a steel exhaust system, metal trim on the bumpers and a lift kit.

The ground clearance of the upgraded Urus is now 248 mm, 35 mm higher than a standard Urus, and has approach and departure angles of 27,9° and 28,3° respectively. There are also two extra drive modes, Terra and Sabbia (Italian for "earth" and "sand"), so that the Urus can adapt to rough terrain.

The Urus is powered by a V8 twin-turbo engine that generates 850 Nm and 478 kW. Its top speed is 305 km/h and it accelerates from 0-100 km/h in 3,6 s. Theoretically, you would be able to do the 500 km stretch between Maputo and Inhambane in 1½ hours. But with all the cattle and donkeys on the road, the Urus's large grille would suffer...

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- And much more...

Conqueror off-road campers are – for good reason – number 1 in South Africa!



Conqueror boasts a solid 25 years' experience in manufacturing off-road campers. They are the market leader in South Africa, due to their own manufacturing processes, export and good after-sales service.

Conqueror is at the forefront with their innovative designs, relentless field tests and unique manufacturing processes. Africa's roads are definitely not for sissies, so Conqueror campers are built strong enough to withstand not only the African bundu, but any bad road in the world. You can tow a Conqueror with absolute peace of mind; and with all its built-in luxuries, you'll camp like a king.

Conqueror initially focused on building military products, and in the early 1990s they applied this know-how to building new campers. The first Conqueror campers went on sale during the Nampo Harvest Day, and within six months they became South

Africa's top seller. The company's methods have even been incorporated by other manufacturers in the industry.

Conqueror stays ahead of the pack by being cognizant of the latest trends.

Four highly specialised engineers and three programmers have now joined the design team, to set the bar even higher.

Conqueror's factories encompass almost a full hectare (10 000 m²), where more than 170 well-trained staff bring these campers to life with streamlined and unique manufacturing processes. These include materials such as galvanised steel, aluminium and stainless steel, hot-dip plating on the chassis and epoxy powder-coating for the panels. These panels are joined, among other methods, with a special polyurethane sealant – the same method used in aviation. The layer is strong enough to absorb all the stress on the bodywork from severe towing conditions.

Conqueror campers, unlike most other campers on the road, do not just have a spare wheel. The wheel includes a complete wheel boss with the bearings. A high-pressure fan ensures the camper stays dust-free while you're sleeping, and the harness coupling to the towing vehicle is made of waterproof rubber. The 24 A power pack is custom-made and is able to work with either alternating and

direct current (AC/DC), and you are able to see how much power the system is drawing and supplying. In fact, this system is so sophisticated and modern that it even works with an app on your smartphone for you to control. Conqueror also uses patented, independent suspension that has been tried and tested time and again, and the tent material is of military grade. To emphasise the quality, Conqueror backs their products with a three-year structural guarantee.

Conqueror has built almost 17 000 campers since 1996, some of which have been exported all around the world, including Australia – where it won Camper of the Year – Canada, Europe, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and the USA. Conqueror also took top honours as the *The Great Outdoors Guide's* Caravan of the Year 2017!

Conqueror does not let the grass grow under its feet, and is launching a road caravan project mid-year. In so doing Conqueror is getting a firm foot in the door, enabling it to take over the reins in the road camper market.

📞 conqueror.co.za 📞 016 349 6533



CONQUEROR DEALERS

Bloemfontein (Moto Inn) 051 430 5951

Cape Town (Safari Centre) 021 595 3910

Heidelberg (Headquarters) 082 925 4218, 083 654 0116 or 016 349 6532

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Pretoria 012 567 1378 or 082 442 5713

Southern Cape (Mooiwa George) 044 050 0071

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At last... an X5 for gravel travel

The fourth generation BMW X5 proves its mettle where none of its predecessors could earn any kudos. Yes, this beast is at home in the dirt.

Text Cyril Kloppe

BMW X5

BMW likes nothing better than to lead a convoy of motoring journalists on some or other gravel road during a launch of their X range. This is to prove that a BMW, according to them, can go “off road”. And every time the resulting reviews follow the same tune: “Yes, it can drive on dirt, but it should rather stick to tar.”

At a recent launch, BMW sent us up the Montagu Pass and down the Prince Alfred Pass – both gravel mountain passes in the Garden Route – so we could test the latest X5’s dirt-road capability. And it is gratifying to finally return from a BMW launch with news that the X5 is just as good on gravel as it is on tar.

An X5 bundu basher?

Easy, now! Although the new X5 works brilliantly on gravel roads, we wouldn’t go so far as to claim that it competes with Land Cruisers and Patrols. Not even BMW would tell such porky pies.

Our test vehicle was equipped with an optional off-road package that includes off-road driving modes, air suspension and an electronically controlled rear diff lock. But even if you choose the base model X5, you get dynamic damper control (DDC) that fights body roll and vibrations caused by corrugated iron roads.

The air suspension uses a compressor and an air reservoir to lift and lower all four corners of the X5 individually. The air suspension also continuously weighs the X5 (with its occupants and their luggage) to determine the appropriate braking force and stability control the computer should apply considering the load. Also included in the off-road package are front and rear underbody protection that don’t only look good, but offer at least some protection for the bodywork.

Each standard X5 comes with 18” tyres that are kinder on your body when driving on gravel roads than low profile tyres, but our test vehicle was equipped with 20” General Grabber AT3 off-road tyres. The aggressive tread pattern clings to gravel roads, but how do they behave in mud? To test them and all of the aforementioned gadgets, we entered a gravel quarry on the Prince Alfred Pass to play in a mud pit at the bottom of the quarry – without the consent of BMW. We were barely ankle deep in the mud when the traction control, the electronic diff lock, and the air suspension began to voice their collective disapproval.

It turned out the 4x4 gadgets don’t work as well as we’d hoped. Nevertheless, we were able to extract the X5 from the mud (one wheel was fortunately still on hard ground, and it could pull us out). In pouring rain we headed down the mountain to Knysna. The X5 didn’t tussle with the nasty dirt road at all. Even the pot holes created by thousands of tourists before us could not upset the X5.

Yes, we’re impressed by its gravel road ability. No, we don’t suggest you visit the Skeleton Coast with an X5, but nothing stops

you from driving the Sani Pass in the winter or even watching the wildebeest migration on the Liuwa Plains in Zambia in your X5.

A delightful roar

The new X5 has only one engine option: a 2 993 cc six-cylinder in-line diesel but it is offered in two derivatives: an xDrive30d with two turbochargers and the M50d with an astounding four turbochargers.

In the latter, two low-pressure turbochargers spin up early to deliver 450 Nm at a low 1 000 rpm. No, it’s not as strong as a Nissan Patrol 5.6 V8’s 560 Nm nor the Land Cruiser 4.5 V8’s 650 Nm, but wait... As soon as the M50d’s 3 l six cylinder is in full stride, the third and fourth chargers boost the torque up to 760 Nm and maintains that impressive figure from 2 000 to 3 000 rpm. If you wish to tow a Destination Dream caravan (the heaviest in SA at 1 950 kg) at 250 km/h, then the M50d is tailor-made for your needs. (Please don’t ever do this!)

The M50d accelerates from 0-100 km/h within 5,2 seconds. This makes it faster than the Mercedes-Benz G-Class 65 AMG 6.0 V12.

Conclusion

The fourth generation X5 performs better on gravel roads than any of its predecessors. It doesn’t only do better, it does so really well. And if you take the optional off-road package, you’ll almost be able to keep up with a Toyota Fortuner 4x4 – almost, but perhaps not quite. The 20” General Grabber AT3 off-road tyres are expensive at R62 468 (excluding VAT), but you get special alloy wheels with them and you can keep your standard wheels if you want to save your off-road tyres for weekend fun or holidays to exotic African destinations.

It’s great to be able to conclude that a BMW X5 can not only handle tar, but that it belongs on a dirt road.





LIKE A COCONUT. Nothing complements a clean interior like a dirty exterior. BMW has scaled back significantly on push buttons, relegating many of the functions to a large digital display. We think the 20" off-road tyres look great, but they do feel a little squirmy on tar roads when traveling at speed.



SPECIFICATIONS

Model	BMW X5 M50d
Engine	6-cylinder in-line quad turbo diesel
Torque	760 Nm @ 2 000 rpm
Power	294 kW @ 4 400 rpm
Transmission	8-speed automatic
Acceleration (0-100 km/h)	5,2 s
Top speed	250 km/h
Fuel consumption	7,2 l/100 km
Tare weight	2 350 kg
Approach and departure angles	25,2 ° and 22,3 °
Breakover angle	20,2 °
Wading depth	500 mm (at 7 km/h)
Ground clearance	214 mm
Safety rating	★★★★★ (EuroNCAP, 2018)

Price

R1 493 600*

* without off-road package, off-road tyres and other optional extras





TYRE EXPERT:

MUD-TERRAIN OR ALL-TERRAIN?

A common question heard on any 4x4 forum, the question usually goes something like this:

“So, I’m in the market for a new set of tyres and I can’t decide between mud-terrains or all-terrains. I really like the look of a MT, but I’m worried about road noise, fuel consumption and wet-tar performance. What should I do?”

Of course, no one can answer this question for you, but the answer may be... “neither”.

If you consider the terrain designation of most mud-terrains, you’ll find they hover around the 80-20 mark, that’s to say they’re designed for 80% off-road use and 20% on-road. In the case of all-terrains, that ratio swings the other way into a typical 70-30 split, where the tyre is designed primarily for 70% on-road use and 30% off-road.

This is true for most off-road tyre products,

but oddly, these percentages leave a noticeable gap in the market which very few (if any) tyre manufacturers manage to fill.

ENTER: The Cooper Discoverer S/T Maxx, a tyre that’s so unique, it’s largely competitor-less.

With a 60-40 terrain application, the S/T Maxx was designed as a hard working tyre for off-road adventurers, overlanders, farmers, miners, tour operators and commercial 4x4 fleet vehicles... while retaining great on-road performance, too.

That said, the primary features of the S/T Maxx focus around durability, load-ability, puncture resistance, and longevity.

A CUT ABOVE THE REST

Cut & chip is a leading cause of tyre damage off-road, the question is: what makes one tyre more resistant to cut & chip than another? Well, let’s forget the technical jargon for a moment

and look at tyre design from a common sense perspective.

Most of us will agree that a large tread block is going to be more impact resistant than a small tread block, and therefore, less likely to break apart.

Similarly, the same can be said about siping, where each sipe groove creates a potential cleave-off weakness within the tyre’s tread design. One possible way to get around this is to incorporate internal sipes that don’t exit the side of the tread block. This feature radically reduces the chance of cut & chip damage, while retaining wet-weather performance on-road, too.

These features, along with the S/T Maxx’s *silica-infused compound, all add to the S/T Maxx’s unique ability to provide aggressive off-road traction, without compromising



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WHY SILICA?

As far as modern tyre technology goes, very few materials have had as big an impact on tyre performance, quite like silica. These benefits includes

- Reducing rolling resistance
- Increasing fuel economy
- Better mileage and durability
- Vast improvements in traction

Yet, despite the well-known benefits of this sand-like additive, many tyre manufacturers don't use silica. This is because the process of infusing silica (into the rubber compound) is notoriously difficult and costly – which is why most budget tyre brands don't use the additive.

on-road performance and safety.

PRESSURE POINT

A reduction in tyre pressure will significantly increase your tyre's impact resistance, and therefore, reduce cut & chip damage off-road. However, if you deflate too much, you stand the chance of overheating the tyre and weakening it. For these reasons, tyre's with a high load index and stronger sidewalls are better suited to deflation, as they're less likely to overheat than thinner, weaker all-terrains.

With this in mind, the S/T Maxx boasts a payload capacity that ranges between 1 350 kg and 1 700 kg per tyre (depending on your selected tyre size), as well as an 'E' tyre-load rating that is equivalent to 10-plys. In contrast, most other all-terrains feature a load capacity of just 1 100 kg, or even less. Of course, this makes the S/T Maxx perfectly suited to...

- Cross country off-road racing
- Towing of trailers or caravans
- Heavily equipped camper vans
- Hard working double-cab vehicles
- Large size SUVs with high GVMs
- And dedicated 4x4s that are exposed to extensive gravel-road driving

Throw in the S/T Maxx's heavy-gauge carcass construction, durable (Silica) compound and cross-ply technology, and you start to get a sense as to why the S/T Maxx is now the



ABOVE: The S/T MAXX is neither a mud-terrain nor an all-terrain, but rather, a 60-40 hybrid tread pattern that's designed for heavy-duty off-road applications, as well as on-road performance.



preferred tyre amongst most major 4x4 rental companies, tour operators, instructors, miners, hunters, game rangers and remote off-road travellers.

We often get questions about the S/T Maxx's terrain designation and whether it's a MT or AT, but the truth is, it's neither, it's an S/T Maxx, a tyre so uniquely engineered it has no rivals.

Next month, we'll be looking at a brand new Cooper tyre that's so unique, it drives like an all-terrain, but looks like a mud-terrain.

Until then, feel free to send your tyre-related queries to marketing@tyrelife.co.za, or, for more expert tyre advice visit www.tyrelife.co.za

Regards,
The TyreLife Solutions Team



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The boss from Baoding

Can the Chinese match the levels of luxury of European car manufacturers? Certainly, says Cyril Kloppe.

Baoding is the capital of Hebei Province in China and according to a 2010 census, it is home to more than 11 million people. This is where Haval operates from, in the GWM headquarters on 2266 Chaoyang Street.

Across the road from the head office is the enormous "Number 3" plant that dominates the Nanshi Qu industrial neighbourhood.

We don't know what goes on under its 190 000m² roof, but we imagine it's a mix of hyper modernity and manual labour – the same mix you'll find in the Haval H9.

The Haval H9 is striking when viewed from a distance. And if you walk a little closer, you'll notice that Haval borrowed a few elements from other manufacturers. The air vents on the bonnet are from a Mercedes-Benz ML, the side windows have a similar profile to that of a Toyota Prado, and there's something

Volvo about the brake lights. Get closer still and crawl underneath the car, you'll see that most of the welds on the chassis are flawless (the work of a robot no doubt), while those done by a human are far sloppier. But only a nitpicker would find such deficiencies in the Haval H9.

We've already shared our first impressions shortly after the Haval H9 launch (*go! Drive & Camp* #17), and now we're testing its off-road and road-holding capabilities.

Behind the wheel

You'd expect the H9's 2.0 petrol engine to struggle to get the hefty body rolling, but the turbocharged four-cylinder engine delivers good performance. You will get punished at the petrol pumps if you regularly drive with a lead foot though, because that busy 2.0 engine gets thirsty when it works hard.

On the highway, we didn't struggle to overtake other vehicles – even uphill – and sometimes there's even a pleasant roar from the exhaust pipe. The engine, however, feels like it's constantly working hard, and as we've mentioned, fuel consumption is often high.

The multi-link rear suspension and double-wishbone front suspension provide a comfortable ride, especially on corrugated dirt roads. We also tackled a number of axle twisters on a local 4x4 obstacle course, and it seemed the ladder-frame chassis was rigid enough that the bodywork didn't creak.

The H9's Eaton rear axle with an electronic limited-slip differential works well, but it's not as good as a fully lockable diff in extraordinary situations. The obstacle course exposed the Haval H9's biggest shortcoming: its clearances. At 23°, the departure angle is relatively shallow, and we sometimes heard the rear >

HAVAL H9





SOMETHING BORROWED... The interior features both analogue dials and digital displays. There's nothing revolutionary about the dashboard and the switchgear layout is comfortably familiar. The styling is perhaps a little too contemporary and we predict it'll look old in less than a decade.



“
Only a nitpicker would find deficiencies in the Haval H9.



GILDED CAGE. Chinese car manufacturers aren't known for their stellar safety records, but Haval is different. It achieved a 4-star NCAP rating, which is pretty good for an SUV.



bumper raking the ground. Due to a ground clearance of just 206 mm, the H9's breakover angle is also not great and the side steps knock easily. The car's wading depth of 700 mm is commendable though and the eight-speed automatic gearbox (from German manufacturer ZF) delivers smooth transitions.

What is a sports utility vehicle without a drive-mode button? The H9 has six driving modes: Automatic, Sport, 4L, Mud, Sand and Snow. You'll probably stick to Sport mode to get the most out of the engine, and if you hit a gravel road, the Auto mode does a good job. We couldn't really feel much of a difference between the Mud, Sand and Snow modes, but 4L definitely

made the H9 feel like an ox in front of a plow. It delivers 2,48 times more torque to the wheels than usual.

The Haval H9 has permanent four-wheel drive and the torque distribution is controlled by a Borg Warner transfer case with low-range gears. The system decides how much torque to send to which drive shaft. Torque is typically divided into 15/85 on tar roads, 30/70 on gravel roads and 50/50 for both axles when things get tough or you select 4L mode.

Conclusion

The Haval H9's closest rival is probably the Toyota Prado. The Prado has a larger fuel tank (150 vs 80 l) and better ground clearance (215 mm), and, of course, the Prado has a larger interior and, most importantly, a 3 l diesel engine. But the Prado costs R850 000 compared to the H9's R600 000 – and then the H9 has modern equipment that make the Prado look ancient by comparison.

It's too early to comment on reliability, but feedback from owners in Australia (where the H9 has been available since 2015) sounds largely positive.

Is the Haval H9 a pukka off-road vehicle? It performs well, similarly to a Toyota Fortuner and a Ford Everest, but it's more of a luxury gravel road tourer than a bundu basher. 🚗

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Haval H9 2.0 Petrol 4WD Luxury
Engine	2.0 l 4-cylinder turbo petrol
Power	180 kW @ 500 rpm
Torque	350 Nm @ 1 800 rpm
Transmission	8-speed automatic
Acceleration (0-100 km/h)	10,8 s
Fuel consumption	12 l /100 km
Tank	80 l
Ground clearance	206 mm
Approach and departure angles	28 ° and 23 °
Breakover angle	23 °
Wading depth	700 mm
Tare weight	2 300 kg
Service plan	5 years/60 000 km
Guarantee	5 years/100 000 km
Safety rating	★★★★ (ANCAP, 2015)
Price	R599 900



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A feather in *Oudtshoorn's* cap

With a range of activities and a variety of campsites to choose from, Oudtshoorn belongs on every camper's list.

Text and photos Leon Botha

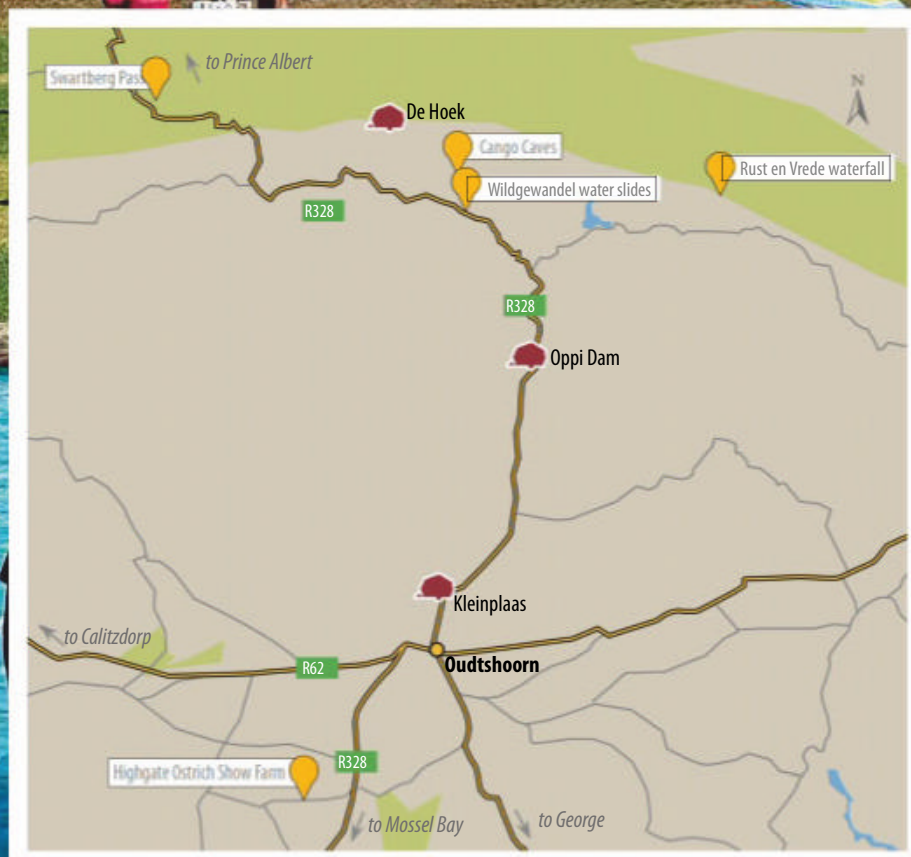


Oudtshoorn is not only the largest town in the Klein Karoo, but also the cornerstone of this vast region. The R62, one of the world's longest wine routes, runs through the town; you'll find the largest ostrich population in the world here; and our country's biggest caves, the Cango Caves, are just outside the town. And this time of year, Oudtshoorn of course also welcomes thousands of guests from across the country for the annual Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK).

Regarding the seasons, it's probably better to visit in autumn – March and

April. It's considerably cooler then than December to February, when the crows yawn even in the shade with daytime temperatures above 30 °C. But, if you want to come and camp here in the first school holiday of the year, you should hurry: with the KKNK and Easter weekend shortly thereafter, chances are you'll be disappointed if you don't book early.

We set up camp at three different campsites in and around Oudtshoorn. We also meet ostriches, stroll around in the caves, drive over one of the most beautiful passes in the country and find the hidden smaller brother of the Lowveld's Mac Mac waterfall. >



DE HOEK MOUNTAIN RESORT

KLEINPLAAS HOLIDAY RESORT

171 Baron van Reede Street

Kleinplaas is in Oudtshoorn, on the main road, Baron van Reede Street. The street was named after Baron Pieter van Reede van Oudtshoorn, the then newly appointed governor of the Dutch Cape Colony in the late eighteenth century who died at sea while on his way to his post. (Yes, the town was also named after him.)

The entrance to Kleinplaas, however, is in North Street. At the entrance, in a garden, there are flags from Britain, Germany and the Netherlands, plus a smaller South African flag at an electronic key pad of the boom on the way to the camp sites.

The staff in the office will assign a specific stand to you and, together with your stand number, you also get a bathroom key and an electronic tag for the gate.

Shade is king

The tar road after the boom runs between chalets toward the bathrooms 90 m down the road. Here you go left or right depending on where your stand is. The road now runs in a large U with the two legs on either side of the bathrooms and the turning point about 140 m away.

The sites are laid out on either side of the road, and it's clear from the location of the shade trees – large old white karee trees – that the place was designed as a campsite from the very beginning. The trees are planted in rows and demarcate the stands. A clear stand number indicates yours. The shade is welcome, but it also prevents grass from growing properly in certain spots.

The stands are nice and big – about 15 x 15 steps accross – and you can easily fit a large caravan with its full tent plus your tow vehicle. There'll even be room left over to unpack all your camp chairs under the blue sky if you want to get out from under the rally tent.

There are also a further six stands to the one side on a 20 x 30 m lawn, also with shade trees. It's peaceful if you're camping alone here, but things will soon get cramped if more people show up.

Kleinplaas has ordinary house plug points, and if you don't have a tap on your stand, there'll be one



next door or with the opposite neighbours – still conveniently close. There are also some portable steel braais on wheels if you want to drag one closer. However, there aren't enough for every stand – so bring your own just in case. There is a plan B though... in-between the middle stands you'll find two rows of communal braai areas with grids.

Get wet

The fenced swimming pool is open from 7 am to 10 pm, and the bathroom's entrance is next to the fence. The bathroom facilities are for the use of campers, but you only get one

bathroom key per stand – so if someone's gone to brush her teeth, the rest will have to hold it in until she gets back.

The bathrooms are spotlessly clean, and in the men's side we even had a flower arrangement during our visit. There's plenty of storage space around the sunken basins and the row of showers is against the opposite wall. But don't rush into the first cubicle, because it's actually meant for kids and too cramped for adults. The rest are spacious and there are benches and hooks for clothes. The bath is in the last booth, but also has a shower above it that's height adjustable.

The sinks for washing dishes are in





Briefly | Kleinplaas



Campsite 44 level stands. Most are spacious with decent shade.

Ablution facilities 1 neat bathroom building in the middle of the resort. Each site gets its own key.

Price Depending on the season, R320-R390 per site for up to 4 people. Then R65-R78 p.p.d extra (maximum 6 people per site).

Arrival and departure times 2 pm and 10 am.

Contact 044 272 5811

kleinplaas.co.za kleinpls@mweb.co.za

How far from Oudtshoorn? In the town.

What does the road look like? Tar all the way to your stand.

GPS S33.575665 E22.205490

go! Camp & Drive says Behind the office are animal enclosures with a few turkeys, ducks, etc. There's also an ostrich and its feeding trough is against the fence. He's fairly friendly as ostriches go.



Jocelyn and Neville Pheiffer from Ocean View in Cape Town tow their Gypsy 4 Caravette with a BMW X5.

They say

“ It's our second time camping here. It's the only campsite in the Karoo with so many shade trees. We use Kleinplaas as the hub to explore the area's attractions. ”

the same building, but their entrance is around the corner. There is also a tub for emptying your cassette toilet and a laundry room with automatic machines. The tokens (R10 each) and washing powder are available at the office. >



KEY TO SUCCESS Each party of campers receive one set of bathroom keys per stand. This is a good thing as you know the bathroom will be clean and people can't simply walk in and out at random. The flower arrangement on the counter is a thoughtful touch.



DE HOEK MOUNTAIN RESORT

Around the corner

With the Swartberg that towers around you, De Hoek's location alone is enough to make it an exceptional campsite. This resort belongs to the Garden Route District Municipality and you turn off the R328 onto a meandering road that's only 2,3 km long. This 2,3 km road, however, takes you far enough to shield you from any cellular network. There is little to no cellphone signal in the campsite.

Perpendicular cliffs rise up to the left before the gate, and if you look closely, you may see a speck that's a person climbing up there. During our visit, there were fellow campers who braved those vertical heights.

At the gate sits an old fashioned brick building that looks a bit like a two-storey apartment block – the reception is here. The road runs underneath the building and then between a row of aloes until just before the campsites. There you go right to get to the stands.

Uptown, downtown

The stands are laid out on two terraces, which are reminiscent of those old drive-ins. Instead of a screen, though, you're

Briefly | De Hoek



Campsite Place for about 20 caravans and 20 tents. The stands are level, on grass, with little to no shade.

Ablution facilities Old, clean with open shower stalls.

Price Depending on the season, R365-R400 for a caravan stand, and R305-R375 for a tent stands.

Arrival and departure times 2 pm and 10 am.

Contact 044 272 8214

✉ dehoek@edendm.gov.za

✉ dehoekmountainresort.co.za

How far from Oudtshoorn? 34 km.

What does the road look like? Tar into the resort, then gravel to your stand.

GPS S33.371095 E22.176547

go! Camp & Drive says Pack an extension cord, and don't forget a grid if you're not bringing your own braai.

faced with the surrounding mountains.

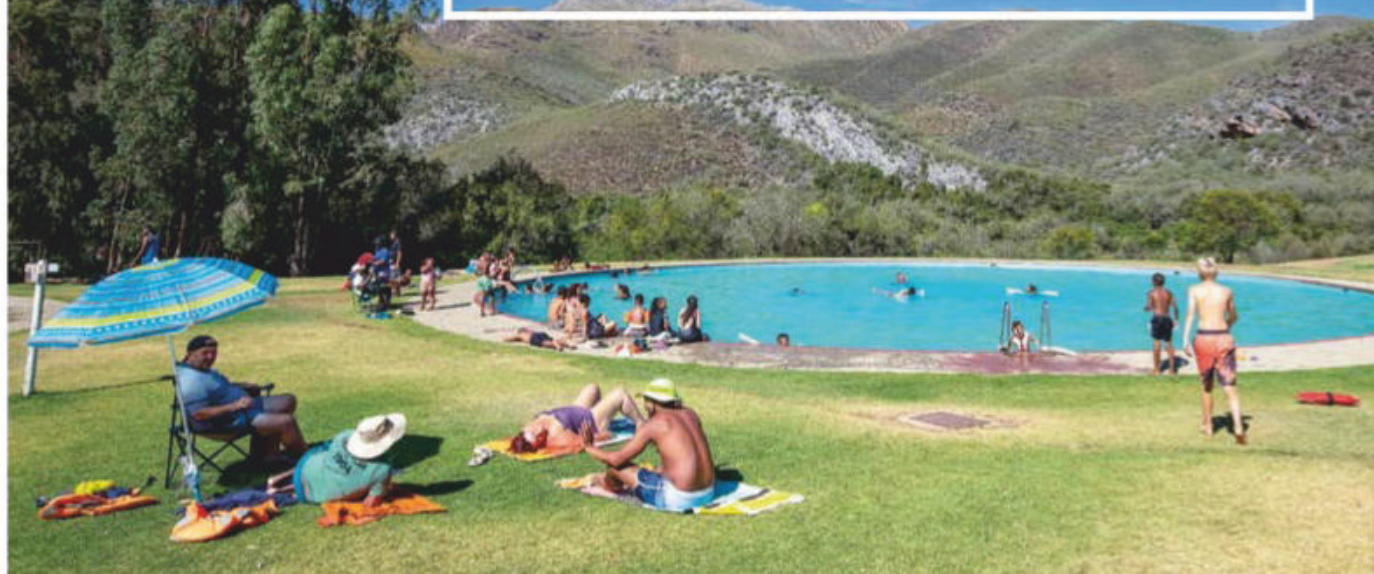
The upper terrace is for caravans, while tent campers settle on the lower terrace, although this rule seems flexible: during our visit we were the only caravan among all the campers (and the whole campsite was almost full).

A straight gravel road runs along the middle of each terrace, with the stands on either side of it. Along the road are street lights that illuminate the campsite at night. The sites aren't demarcated, but the built-in braai at the back of each site gives you an idea, more or less, where to camp. Only the top terrace has power points (regular home plug points), and there aren't many of them, so bring an extension cord.

The stands are level and have lush green grass, but not much shade. There are a few big trees, but the rest don't really give any shade. So, chances are you won't have shade at your stand.

De Hoek's taps are spread through the campsite (each is next to a white pole), but they're very close to the ground; you have to bend low to get the kettle full of water.

“
You often see pool noodles at resorts, but
at De Hoek they’ve got a bunch of them
next to the pool that anyone can use.



It's their first visit to
De Hoek say the Kiewitz,
Williams, Fredericks and
March families. They're
all from Eerste River
in the Cape.

They say

“ The reception at the gate is
warm and the resort people are
very friendly. We like the neat
lawns, but the campsite could do with
more power points. ”



NO SECRETS The
shower stalls (left)
bizarrely offer no
privacy.



Time for a shower

On the lower terrace are two similar
ablution buildings. The one sits roughly
in the middle of the stands and the other
one is the furthest from where you drive
in. The latter also looks newer.

The buildings have nice high ceilings
and, coupled with the large rooms, and
feel spacious. The sinks stand in a row in
one room, the toilet cubicles in the next,
and then the shower room waits.

The walls separating the shower
“cubicles” are hip-height and so you have
no privacy – everything gets wet when all

six stalls are in use. So, you need to leave
your clothes outside the shower room.

In the older building, there’s a bench
outside the shower room, but the showers
are finicky: not all the heads have the
same pressure (including hot water).

The dishwashing sinks are at the back
of the bathroom buildings.

Swimming in circles

You’ve got two swimming pools here, in
line with the bottom terrace. They are to
the right of the road where you turn off
to get to the stands. Both are round and
the one closest to the road is shallower, so
kids can play in it.

You often see pool noodles at resorts,
but at De Hoek they’ve got a bunch of
them next to the pool that anyone can
use. With our visit, they even had a
lifesaver on duty, but swimming after
sunset is not allowed.

Next to the shallow pool there’s
a jungle gym, swings
and a slide. >



NO SWIMMING @ NIGHT



OPPI DAM

Where peace reigns

It's just as well Oppi Dam's signpost is oversized and next to the road that leads from Oudtshoorn to the Cango Caves, because even though the campsite is right next to the road, you can't see it. You turn down (coming from the caves, it's a hairpin bend) and then drive downhill to the campsite a little further along. Here you are much lower than the road and you barely hear passing cars.

The office is just after the turnoff, to the right, with its own parking space, but don't go in with your tow combination. At the entrance is a sign indicating caravans should keep left and rather park there.

When you check in, you'll get a key for your own bathroom at your stand. The key fob also has your stand number on it plus a remote control for the gate. Next to the office is a nursery and, at the other end, a liquor store where you can also buy ostrich meat.

From here you must drive farther down the hill – the next hairpin bend awaits you 70 m further on, keep it wide if you have a long tow combination. The sliding gate is just around the corner. Beyond the gate is a small (and fenced) swimming pool to your left.

Briefly | Oppi Dam



Campsite 26 stands, each with its own bathroom and 8 with decent shade trees. Stands are allocated.

Ablution facilities Your own shower, basin and toilet.

Price R350 p.n. per site for 2 adults. Then R105 p.p. (R55 for children 5-10 years; R75 for children 11-15 years; free for under 5s).

Arrival and departure times 2 pm and 10 am.

Contact 044 279 1082 or 082 252 2630

schoempa@mweb.co.za

oppi-dam.co.za

How far from Oudtshoorn? 15 km.

What does the road look like? Tar to the office.

GPS S33.474801 E22.249382

go! Camp & Drive says

Any fish you catch in the dam needs to go back into the water.

The road continues straight along the embankment of a 300 m long dam. Between you and the water is a lovely green grass carpet with palm trees. On the water, a canoe or two and a few inner tubes float.

Just past the dam lies the last slope with two more hairpin bends. You can choose which one you want to take, because both lead to the road that runs past the stands. The first one is 50 m after the gate at the dam, but at its bottom the turn is so sharp that you won't be able to make the corner when someone has set up camp right next to the bend. If you drive about 70 m straight past the last turn, the road does one last sharp turn back to the campsite. You won't battle making that turn.

The old and the new

The oldest stands at Oppi Dam are in a row to the left of the paved road, and you'll spot eight undercover verandahs about 10 m from one another.

Between the road and the buildings is a neat lawn where you can park your caravan. There's paving under





Sammy and Kathy Doubell and their son, Dave, camp with their Isuzu 2.5 diesel and 2000 Gypsy Raven caravan.

They say

“ Oppi Dam is first class. Even in the busy December holiday, it's quiet in the campsite, even though it's fully booked. ”



POSH NEIGHBOURHOOD One only has to look at the neat garden to know what to expect from the Oppi Dam resort. The older stands are well established with plenty of shade, but at the newer stands (opposite page) you have to create your own shade. What you do get here, though, is a roof over your head, concrete furniture and a private bathroom (above).

the roof and you'll have a concrete table and two benches plus a dishwashing sink with cold water. The 220 V power point is close by.

The one corner is covered to head height with wooden panels. The toilet, basin and open shower cubicle are here, with a gas geyser that provides warm water. The taps for the shower are outside the cubicle. The roof above you is high and, in the bathroom, it feels like you're in an outside room.

In the space between the structures are white stinkwood trees that give shade – the perfect place to pitch a dome tent. Your steel braai with its adjustable swinging grid is also here. A lane of Kei-apple trees (*Dovyalis caffra*) run behind your stand and in December the sweet smell of the ripe yellow fruit fills the air.

The newer stands are a little further away: with two rows of structures – nine in each row – on an enormous lawn. They are similar the older stands, but the roofs are slightly smaller. The left-hand side row's side walls are masonry, whereas the right-hand's sides are enclosed with corrugated iron sheets. The roofs are also lower and the bathrooms are more enclosed than the others. There are also some small white stinkwood trees, but they need a few years before they'll cast significant shade. The braais are portable, each with its own grid.

There's a larger swimming pool at the back. It has a shallow end for young ones, and shade nets provide shelter from the sun for lazing bookworms.



“ The pool has a shallow end for young ones, and shade nets provide shelter from the sun for lazing bookworms. ”

STUFF TO DO

Oudtshoorn and surrounds have more than enough attractions to keep you busy for a few days. None of these places are further than an hour's drive away.

Cango Caves

These well-known caves are overwhelming, and every time one comes here, it feels like your first visit, even if it's not.

It's very humid inside the caves – even more so than in Durban. You can choose between two tours, with the easier one that lasts an hour. You'll see enough, but if you want the full experience of crawling through corridors and cracks in a few spots, join the second tour.

The guide tells you about the stalagmites and stalactites... with the usual joke. At one point, our group gets to a rock formation that looks like dozens of feelers that stretch to the ground. It's the Petrified Weeping Willow Tree formation, and the guide offers R200 for anyone who can estimate its age. It's dizzying to hear the answer is 1½ million years.

Price R120 p.p. for the regular tour (R75 for children). The Adventure Tour costs R180 and R110 respectively.

How far from Oudtshoorn? 29 km.

GPS S33.392851 E22.214668

Highgate Ostrich Show Farm

Oudtshoorn boasts several ostrich farms, but Highgate is apparently the oldest ostrich show farm in the world.

The ostrich tours start at a pepper tree with a trunk circumference of close to 3 m. The guide, Jean Samboer, tells you about the four pillars on which the ostrich industry rests: meat, feathers, skin and chicks. Jean explains that ostrich feathers are charged with static electricity, which contributes to their flightlessness.

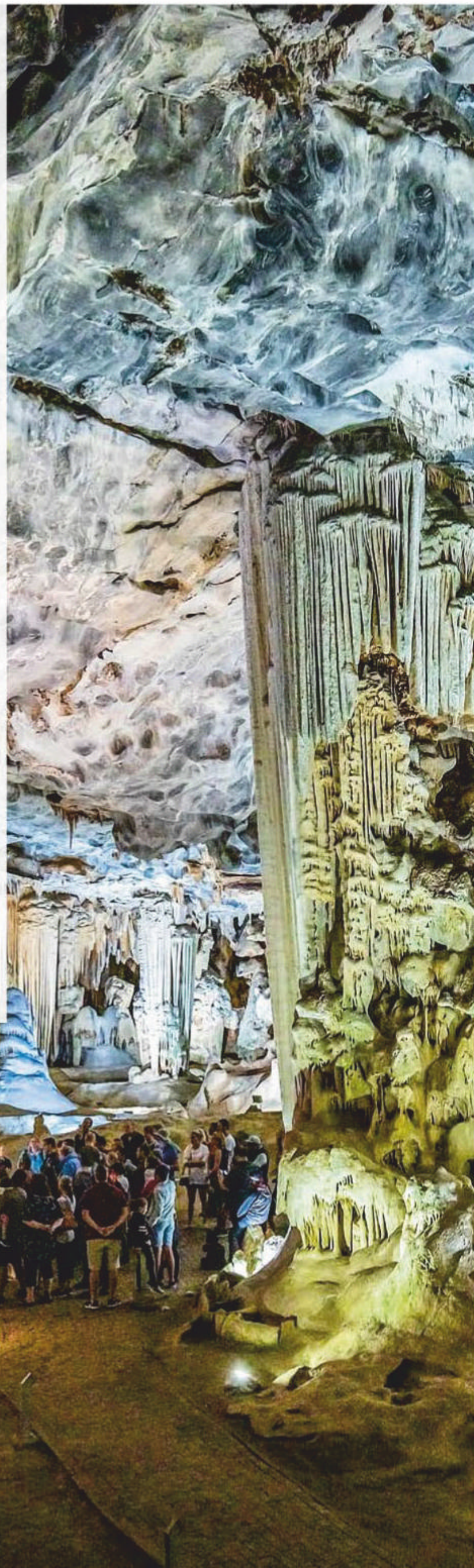
You walk through the incubator room to Mervin May, who has been working at Highgate for three decades and shows you how to make a feather duster within a short time.

While Mervin's busy, Jean explains how people use an ostrich duster incorrectly: don't swipe it as if it were a broom, but rather brush it against a static material and then just hold it over the dust. And voilà! The feathers pick up all the dust like a magnet!

Afterwards, you can buy a bag of corn for R2 at the shop and feed the birds. **Price** The standard tours cost R187 p.p. (R110 for children 6-12 years; free for under 6s).

How far from Oudtshoorn? 12 km.

GPS S33.657869 E22.135989





HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING The caves (left) obviously don't have windows, but the artificial lighting transform the chambers into truly magical spaces.

Rust-en-Vrede waterfall

The turnoff to the waterfall is 7 km before the Cango Caves when you drive from Oudtshoorn. Then it's another 11 km to the waterfall – the first 3 km is a narrow tarred road that winds along the Klein Lerouxs River to the municipal Cango Mountain Resort. After that it's a rocky gravel road that heads into the mountains. (Judging by all the people who come and go, you can drive it with any vehicle.)

The entrance gate is 2,5 km before you get to the waterfall, and the road ends in a small parking lot for six vehicles. The waterfall is barely 300 m further, but the surprise awaits just a few metres from the parking lot: the footpath enters a small jungle and is made of concrete, but narrow steel pedestrian bridges take you over rocky sections and heights until you reach a concrete barrier. There is a sign that asks you not to pollute the water, because it's drinking water for Oudtshoorn.

Then, the footpath takes you to upright cliffs where two streams plunge down 40 m into a large pool at the bottom. The water is crystal clear and the two waterfalls side by side remind you of the well-known Mac-Mac waterfall in the Lowveld.

Price R61 for up to 6 people in one vehicle.

How far from Oudtshoorn? 35 km.

GPS S33.396109 E22.356501

Swartberg Pass

If you want to view the area from up high, you won't get any better than the Swartberg Pass. This 27 km gravel road runs over the mountain from De Hoek's side to Prince Albert. This pass is one of the last projects by renowned *padmaker* Thomas Bain and is today a national memorial. You'll marvel at how he managed to get a road built over this imposing mountain during the late nineteenth century. >





No Heavy Vehicles
or Caravans

It's a popular pass and you'll often encounter cyclists. As you climb, the view of the Klein Karoo in the direction of Oudtshoorn

gets better and better, and when you summit, the Great Karoo lies towards Prince Albert in front of you.

Even though it's a gravel road, you can drive it with a regular family sedan, but heavy vehicles and caravans are prohibited. If you examine the hairpin bends, you'll understand why.

At the highest point of the pass is a sign post with a lot of stickers applied to it – you can barely make out the words "Die Top" on it. It takes about an hour to drive the pass.

Price Free.

How far from Oudtshoorn? 50 km (the top).
GPS S33.352374 S22.046117

Wilgewandel water slides

Water is synonymous with holiday fun, but in this dry world you wouldn't expect an abundance of it. That's why the seven brightly coloured water slides next to the road (barely 1,6 km from the Cango Caves) are an unanticipated surprise. It's part of the Wilgewandel Holiday Farm where you can ride anything from a donkey cart to a camel.

The water slides with various gradients are a firm favourite among youngsters. One of the first rules is that you must get out of the water immediately once you reach the bottom so that the next slider doesn't slam into you. You also have to sit upright and no monkeying around is allowed. The slides are open from 11 am to 5 pm.

Price R40 for 30 minutes, R50 for 60 minutes and R60 for 90 minutes.

How far from Oudtshoorn? 27 km.

GPS S33.403569 E22.217124



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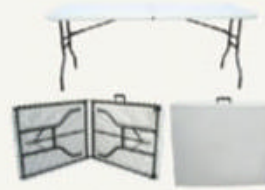


Max weight 180 kg
R656

SPECIFICATIONS
Ripstop canvas
Powder coated
Steel frame

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180cm x 74cm x 74cm (H) **R725**
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SPECIFICATIONS
Filling 350 gsm
210 Polyester Nylon outer
Cotton inner
Complete with stuff sack
Size: 2.1m
R535



FISHERMAN-STOOL



Max weight 150kg
R335

SPECIFICATIONS
Ripstop canvas
Powder coated
Steel frame

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R695

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Bag, each
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120LT - **R4235**
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1,22 x 1,22 x 11mm **R200**
1.2 x 2.4m² x 7mm
R265 (Eva Roll up mat)

BIG BOY CHAIR



SPECIFICATIONS
Nylon Ripstop
Steel frame
Max weight: 150kg
R535

POP-UP GAZEBO



3 m x 3 m **R1450**

CAPRIVI 2



SPECIFICATIONS
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INNER TENT: 190T
POLYESTER NYLON
FLYSHEET & FLOOR: 210D
OXFORD NYLON
R699

CAPRIVI 3



SPECIFICATIONS
3m x 3m x 1.8m
INNER TENT: 190T POLY-
ESTER NYLON
FLYSHEET & FLOOR: 210D
OXFORD NYLON
R1299

DIRECTORS DELUXE CHAIR

SPECIFICATIONS
Heavy duty Oxford Nylon
Black powder-coated steel
frame
Padded armrests
Collapsible side table
Side pockets
Max weight: 180kg
R640



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2,0 x 2,0m **R1945**
2,5 x 2,5m **R2050**
280g ripstop canvas

TENTCO 270° AWNINGS



420D Oxford Nylon **R5200**

TENTCO KITCHEN CABINET DELUXE



R925

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A long and winding road

How many gravel-road mountain passes can you drive before your vehicle gets a flat tyre? We hit the road to find out.

Text and photos Cyril Kloppe

The Western Cape's mountains teem with mountain passes, and nowhere in South Africa is the concentration as high as in the Cape Fold Mountains between Heidelberg and Uniondale.

The route starts in the Klein Karoo, runs south to the Garden Route and back to the Karoo plains, then leads west over the Langeberg to the edge of the Overberg. The purpose of this trip is to see how many mountain passes – preferably dirt roads – you can drive with a standard SUV in two days without paying for a permit and

without repairing a punctured tyre. The objective is demanding but achievable. Of course, if you want to take this route a little easier, you're free to tackle it in smaller sections.

From arid to the verdant

Uniondale is notorious for its paranormal activities. The more renowned of which are the two maiden apparitions: a blonde that unexpectedly materialises on the back seat of your car and the a raven-haired girl who hitch-hikes but disappears when you pull over to offer her a lift. Then there's the

elderly gentleman on the Willowmore road who likes to walk out in front of your car in the dead of night. There are poltergeists in Rico Classen's theatre and there is a cursed house in which three consecutive owners took their own lives.

It is with this foreboding that you pitched your tent last night in the derelict caravan park on the outskirts of the town, but luckily you survived the night, even if you barely closed an eye thanks to an annoying dog yapping all night long.

With all your camping gear back in your car, you follow Queen Street to the first



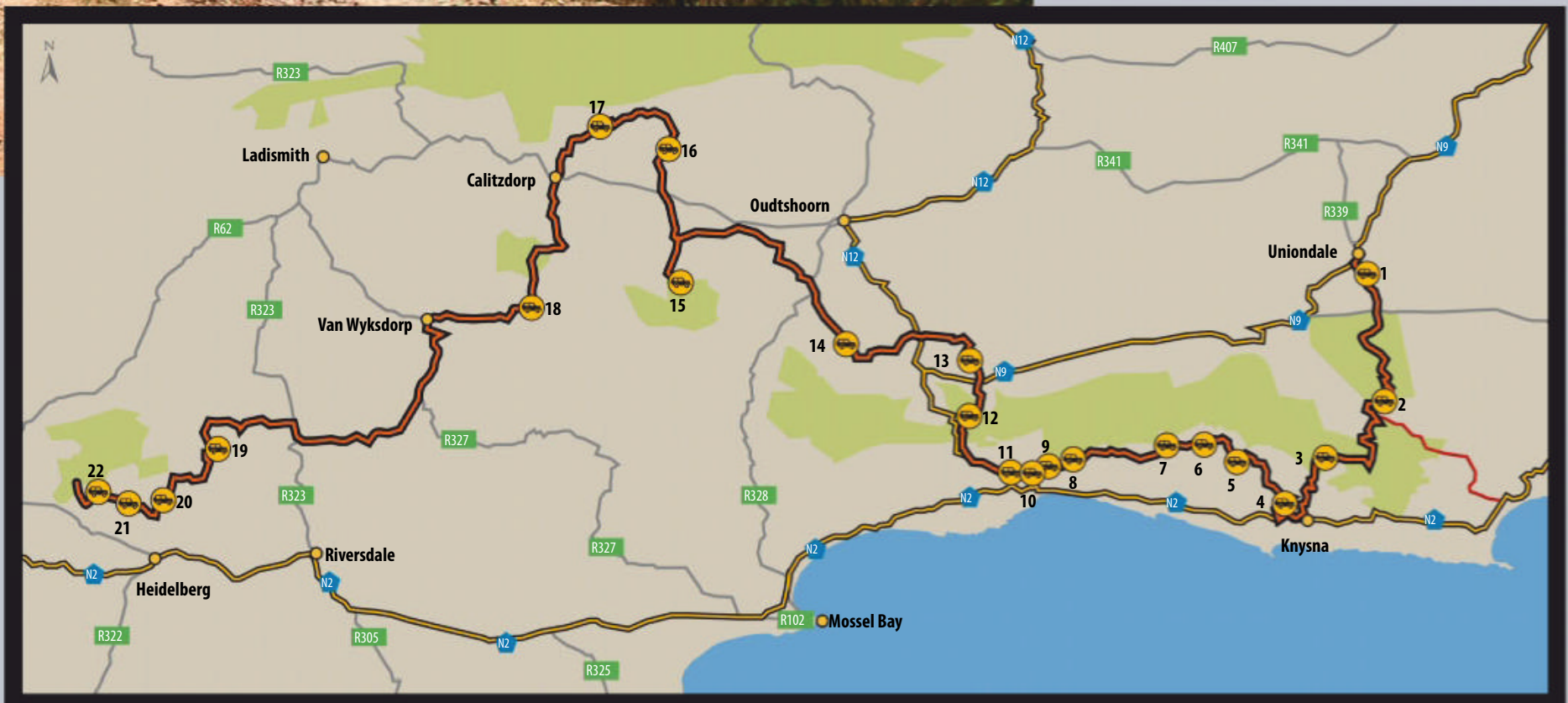
pass on this trip: The Uniondale Poort. Try to leave town no later than 7am as you've got a lot of driving ahead of you.

Uniondale Poort may not be as impressive as its nearby sister passes, Meirings and Seweweeks Poort, but it's still a lovely road with a rich history. The poort follows a shepherd's path of the first inhabitants of this region, the Khoikhoi, along the Holdrif River. The first driveable gravel road through the poort was bulldozed in 1925 and it was given a tar topping in 1960. A flood swept the old road away in 2007, but a properly engineered pass was opened four years later and this is the one you're driving on now.

Barely 2 km after Uniondale Poort, you'll come across the R62 and the Avontuur farming community. This is where the **Prince Alfred Pass** begins, arguably the best work of the famous *padmaker*, Thomas Bain. At 68 km it is the longest mountain pass in South Africa, and as an added benefit it has an excellent gravel surface. Enjoy a cup of rooibos tea with milk tart at De Vlugt's tea garden, about a quarter of the way into the pass.

There's another tea garden at the Diepwalle forestry station if De Vlugt is closed – here you can sample delicious vetkoek with cheese and jam or savoury mince. Just after the forestry station, take a turn-off to the right on Kom-se-pad road.

The **Kom-se-Pad Pass** takes you through the dense Knysna forest. As soon as you see a spot where you can pull over safely, stop and walk into the forest. Chances are you'll see chameleons and bushbucks. South African author Dalene Matthee >





spent several days on Kom-se-Pad to get inspiration for her bestselling novel *Circles in a Forest*. Near the end of Kom-se-Pad you will encounter a settlement called Gouna, formerly a community of Italian silk farmers. Although the Italians have long since moved away, their traces were the inspiration for another of Matthee's books, *The Mulberry Forest*.

It'll be shortly after 11 am when you enter Knysna. Here's your chance to run into to a shop to buy provisions for lunch and tonight's braai.

A road across seven gorges

The **Phantom Pass** is first on the Garden Route's well-known passes road and it winds up a hill next to the Knysna Lagoon. The pass isn't named after an opera ghost or a purple-clad superhero, but rather

BETWEEN A ROCK... Pickaxes to dynamite, constructing a mountain pass in the 19th century was tough and dangerous work, but the growth of the former British colony depended on these roadways.

after the phantom moth (*Leto venus*) that emerges from its cocoon here each spring.

You'll reach the **Homtini Pass**, also known as the Goukamma River Pass, 9 km after you summited Phantom Pass. This narrow pass has hairpin bends, so watch out for oncoming traffic that unexpectedly appear out of the forest. Straight after Homtini is the **Karatara Pass**. The inhabitants of the settlement Karatara are the inspiration for *Fiel's Child*, yet another of Dalene Matthee's bestsellers. The townsfolk are descended from the original woodcutters who were relocated here in 1939 by government to halt the deforestation of Knysna.

Next up is the **Hoogekraal Pass**, a gorgeous pass with a Victorian era stone bridge that is barely wide enough for two



2 PRINCE ALFRED PASS

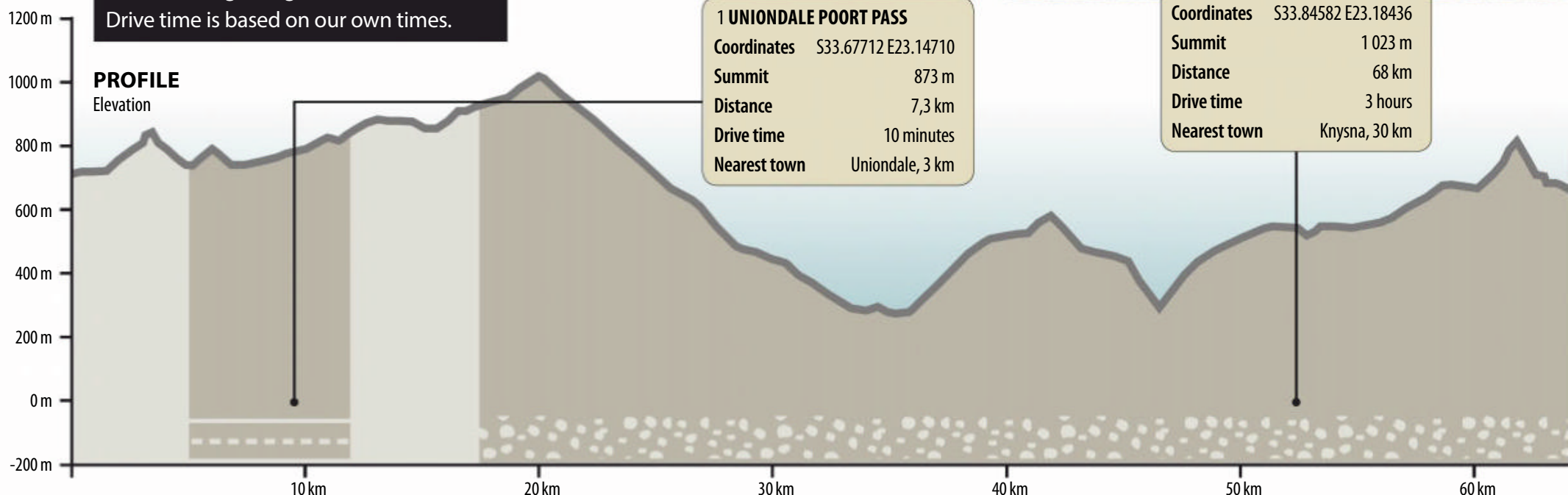
Coordinates S33.84582 E23.18436
Summit 1 023 m
Distance 68 km
Drive time 3 hours
Nearest town Knysna, 30 km

THE PASSES

The coordinates of the following passes were taken in the middle of the pass and not at the beginning, summit or end. Drive time is based on our own times.

PROFILE

Elevation





vehicles can edge past each other. There's a parking spot near the bridge – pull over for photos and dip your toes in the chilly water of the Hoogekraal River. The route now flattens out and leads you past several cattle farms. There are also a few guesthouses if you decide to overnight in the area and perhaps take on the nearby Louvain 4x4 trail (see *go! Drive & Camp* #9).

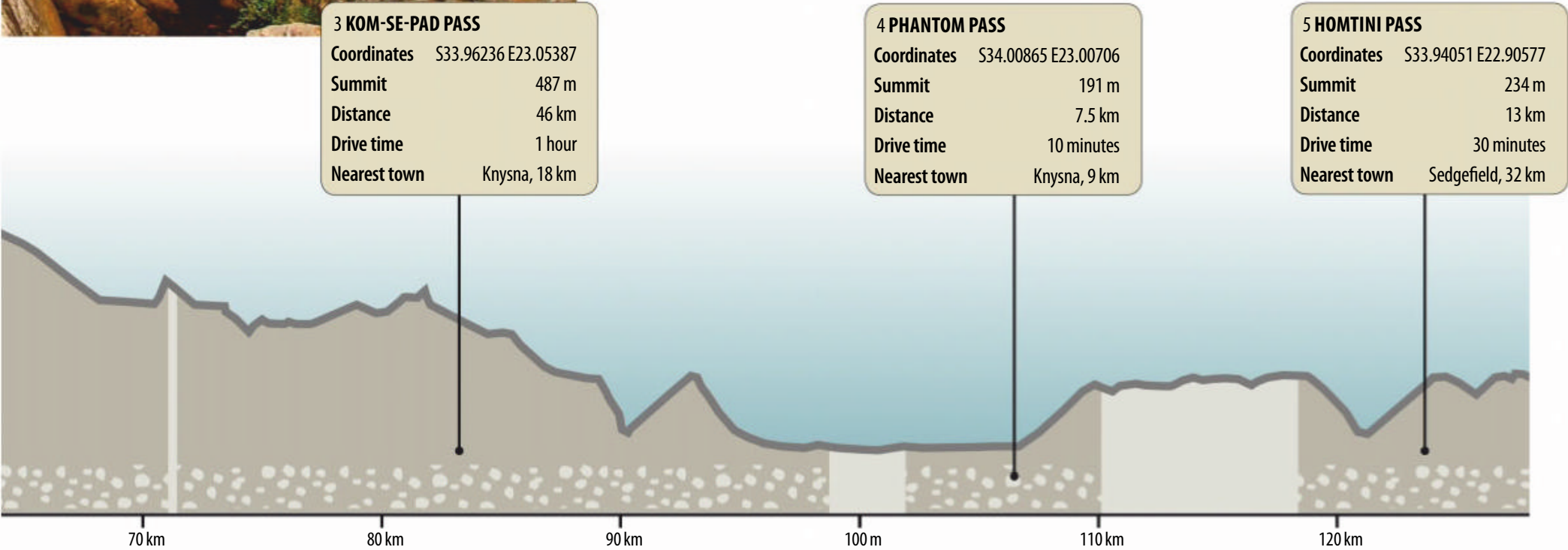
After the Hoogekraal Pass, on the Hoekwil road, be on the lookout for the turnoff to the **Touw River Pass**. It's easy to miss, particularly since the signpost indicating the turnoff went missing, and you may need to enter these coordinates into your GPS: S33.94782 E22.62104. The Touw River Pass is the last dirt-road pass on the passes road and, at 2,5 km, also the shortest.

The next pass on your route is the **Silver River Pass**. In just 2,7 km, this pass has no less than 30 bends – and because it's tarred – you will likely encounter tourists and motorcyclists. The Victorian stone bridge over the Silver River is narrow and motorists must take turns to cross it.

The **Kaaimansgat Pass** follows next. Both bridges across the Kaaimans and Silver river gorges were originally made of pine, but they barely lasted a decade and were replaced with stone bridges in 1904 – both remain standing today.

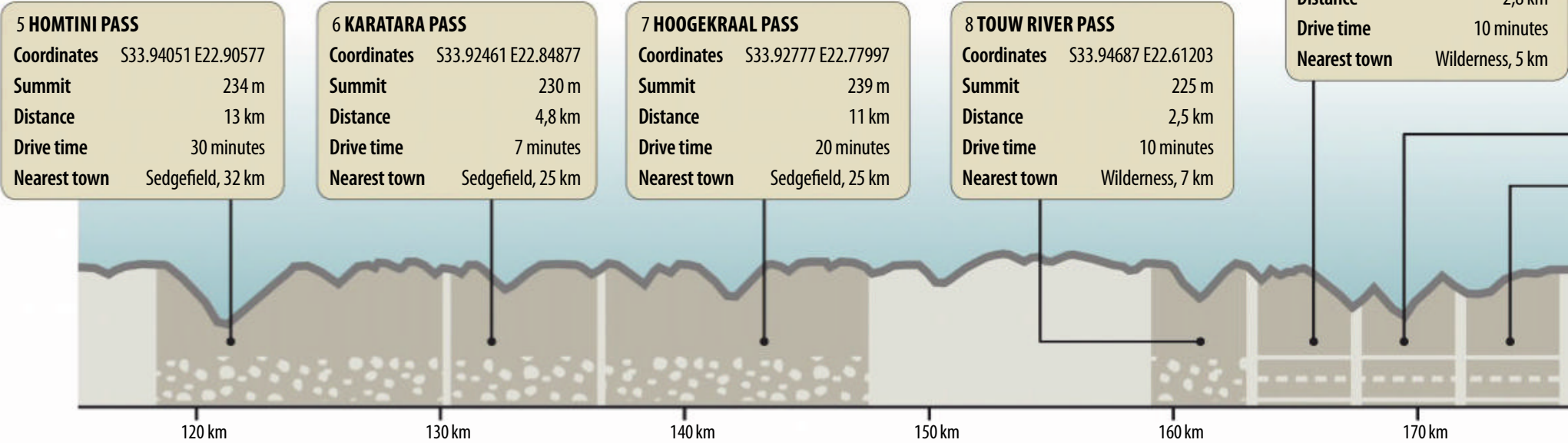
The last pass on the passes road is the **Swartrivier Pass** (originally called the Zwartriviershoogte Pass) that brings you to George, the largest town along this route.

The passes road is also referred to as the Seven Passes Road, but if you pay close





INTO TREES. The passes road through the forest is undeniably pretty, but it can turn into a muddy nightmare when it rains.



attention, you will see that there are eight passes on the road. The mix-up is probably because the tourism official who came up with this name made the common mistake of assuming the Kaaimansgat and Silver River passes are one and the same because they run seamlessly into each other.

The eight passes were constructed between 1867 and 1882 by Thomas Bain and his brother-in-law Adam de Smidt. Bain started on the Knysna side while De Smidt began in George. According to legend, the two had such heated disagreements about the route that they refused to talk to each for the rest of their lives. Bain, being the senior engineer, got his way though.

Back to the Karoo

If you didn't buy chops and wors for tonight's braai in Knysna, you should do so in George because you won't see another town for the remainder of the day. The **Montagu Pass** starts on the outskirts of George and winds 17 km up the Outeniqua Mountain. It was completed in 1848 by Henry Fancourt White (now you know where the Fancourt golf course gets its name) and in more than 170 years the pass hasn't changed one bit.

There are quite a few stop-off points where you can take photos, including the train bridge at Stinkhoutdraai and Amanda's Grave where the ashes of Amanda Pienaar and her husband, Pieter, are buried. You are officially back in the Klein Karoo once you reach a settlement called Herold at the top of the pass. Continue north and after 2 km you will find the **Paardepoort Pass**. There's nothing

remarkable about this pass, but if you examine the far side of the Doring River, you will notice a stone retaining wall of a much older pass. These are the remains of the original Paardepoort Pass, which was completed in 1850. However, the pass on which you're driving now replaced it in the 1930s. The Paardepoort and Montagu passes were the original link between George and Oudtshoorn, a busy route that eventually led all the way to Kimberley when diamonds were discovered there.

Head west on the Zebra road and cross the Great Doring River. Here you will find a forgotten 5 km pass, the **Leopoort Pass**. The road is unremarkable and it isn't even marked on most maps, which means you'll probably be the only guy in your circle of friends who can boast that you drove it.

All that remains is to take a shortcut through the Volmoed farming community and cross the Olifants River in the direction of the Gamkaberg Nature Reserve, your accommodation for the night. You'll have to hurry because the reserve's gate closes at 4pm, but fortunately you can call the duty officer after hours to let you in – the number is posted on the gate.

Up and down the Overberg

You don't have to drive far today but do get up early if you want to tackle the Lawson's Pass inside the reserve – this is the only pass on your route where four-wheel drive is essential.

It's not clear who built this pass, but it was probably a farmer's road on the original farm before it was incorporated into the reserve. Our Subaru Forester could barely manage it and we had to be >



STEEL YOURSELF. The Touw River Pass got its name from the Dutch word for rope. Ox wagons once needed to be pulled through the gorge using ropes before the bridge was built.



10 KAAIMANSGAT PASS

Coordinates S33.97098 E22.54787
Summit 191 m
Distance 2,6 km
Drive time 10 minutes
Nearest town George 6 km

11 SWARTRIVIER PASS

Coordinates S33.96769 E22.51808
Summit 200 m
Distance 3,9 km
Drive time 4 minutes
Nearest town George, 4 km

12 MONTAGU PASS

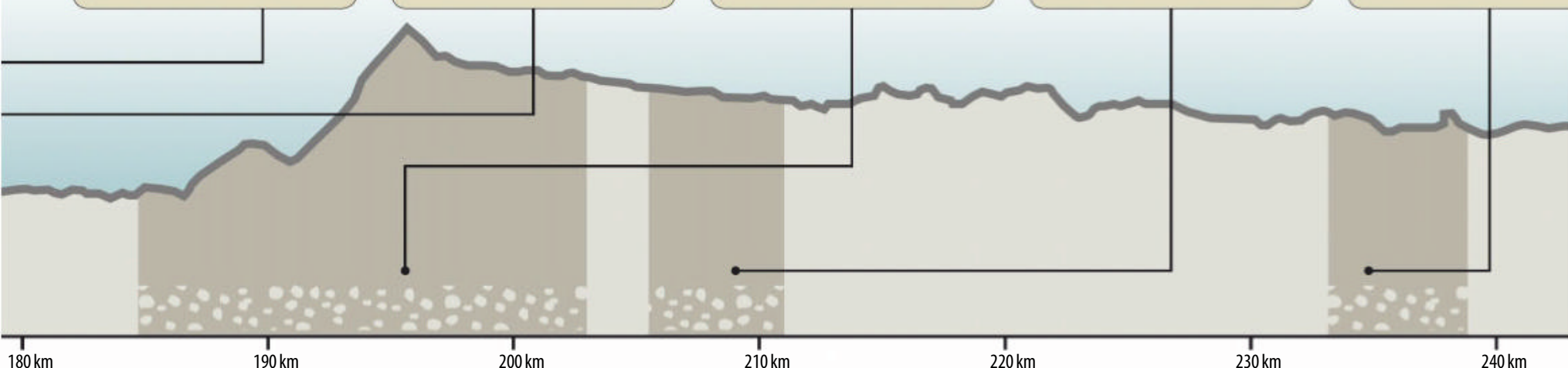
Coordinates S33.89347 E22.42213
Summit 724 m
Distance 17 km
Drive time 30 minutes
Nearest town George, 12 km

13 PAARDEPOORT PASS

Coordinates S33.79313 E22.42514
Summit 552 m
Distance 7 km
Drive time 8 minutes
Nearest town George, 22 km

14 LEOPOORT PASS

Coordinates S33.77788 E22.20837
Summit 477 m
Distance 5,5 km
Drive time 10 minutes
Nearest town Oudtshoorn, 25 km



extremely careful. First ask a ranger whether he thinks your vehicle can make it – the ranger we asked had serious reservations about our Subaru, but he did cautiously allow us to try.

After returning unharmed from Lawson's Pass, head north, across the R62 towards the Swartberg. You're going to need your GPS again, because many roads in these parts aren't signposted.

After passing Buffelskloof's farm school, you will encounter the **Coetzeespoort Pass**. Keep your eyes peeled for leopard tortoises crossing the road – they can reach the size of a beer keg! Coetzeespoort follows the winding Kruis River to Groenfontein. If you turn right at the T-junction, you'll end up in Oudtshoorn, but you should turn left toward Calitzdorp instead.

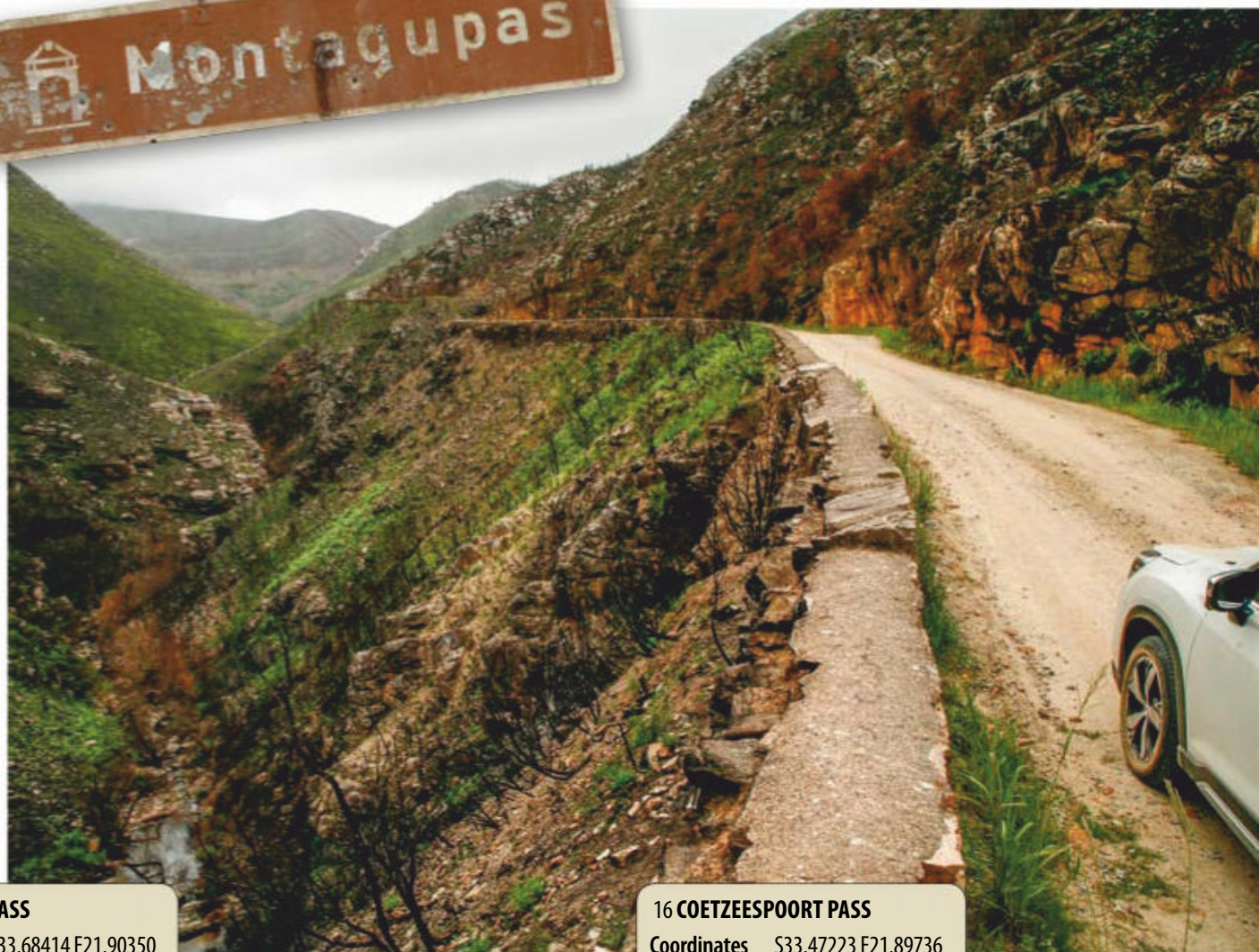
The **Kruisrivierpoort Pass** is a 26 km gravel road that follows the Nel's River to Calitzdorp Dam – which was a popular fishing destination before the drought hit. It's a narrow road with dozens of hairpin bends. If you ignore the sign warning you to not tow a caravan or drive a heavy vehicle here, you will soon regret it. You should arrive at Calitzdorp around noon, just in time for lunch. With a tank full of fuel, it's time to drive south through the Gamka Valley towards the Groenfontein Nature Reserve.

The **Rooiberg Pass** starts at the nature reserve's fence and winds across the Rooiberg for 35 km. It is an impressive pass with 180 ° turns and sheer cliffs. The pass ends 5 km outside Van Wyksdorp: population 700 and falling.

Now head south on the R327 dirt road and take the turnoff that leads to the R323. At the R323, you can turn south and drive the tarred Garcia's Pass, but then you'll miss one of the highlights of the route. Rather turn right and drive 2,7 km inland, now take the Brandrivier/Barrydale turnoff and drive 15 km westward

to the Kortfontein/Kanetberg turnoff. Turn left here.

Moments ago, you were surrounded by the inhospitable Karoo plains, sizzling rocks and dry shrubs, but here on the **Gysmanshoek Pass** you're suddenly in a lush valley covered in fynbos and wildflowers. Perhaps you, like us, will get a lump in the throat and wish you could build a house here, but this Eden is managed and protected by Cape Nature. The Gysmanshoek Pass terminates at a T-junction and gravel farm road along the Duiwenhoks River. If you turn left, you go to Heidelberg; right takes you to the **Wadri Pass** – and that's where you want to be.

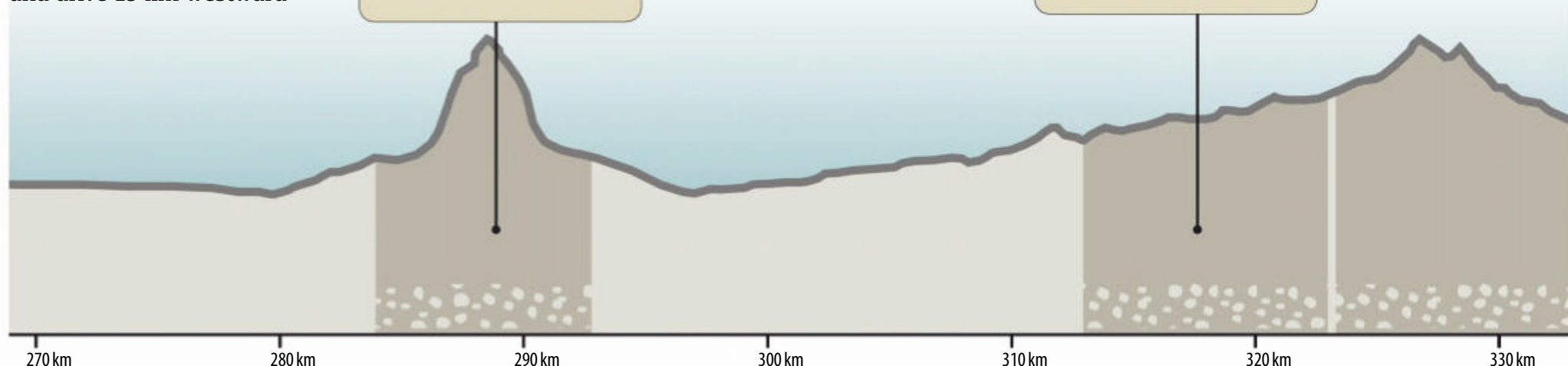


15 LAWSON'S PASS

Coordinates	S33.68414 E21.90350
Summit	688 m (vantage point)
Distance	2.4 km
Drive time	20 minutes
Nearest town	Calitzdorp, 36 km

16 COETZEESPOORT PASS

Coordinates	S33.47223 E21.89736
Summit	524 m
Distance	8,9 km
Drive time	10 minutes
Nearest town	Calitzdorp, 23 km





Three short, gravel passes – **Wadrift**, **Seekoeigat** and **Doringkraal Pass** – runs through the foothills of the Langeberg and connects the region's farms.

Your destination is 11 km farther on: the Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve. It's a wooded reserve on the edge of the Overberg and it offers a welcome break after the 22 mountain passes you conquered in 2 days. Give yourself a pat on the back and be proud of a country where you can accomplish such a feat. >

HIGH AND DRY. There are fewer passes in the Karoo than in the Cape Fold Mountains, but they are nonetheless impressive. It is remarkable how these passes connect regions and climates.



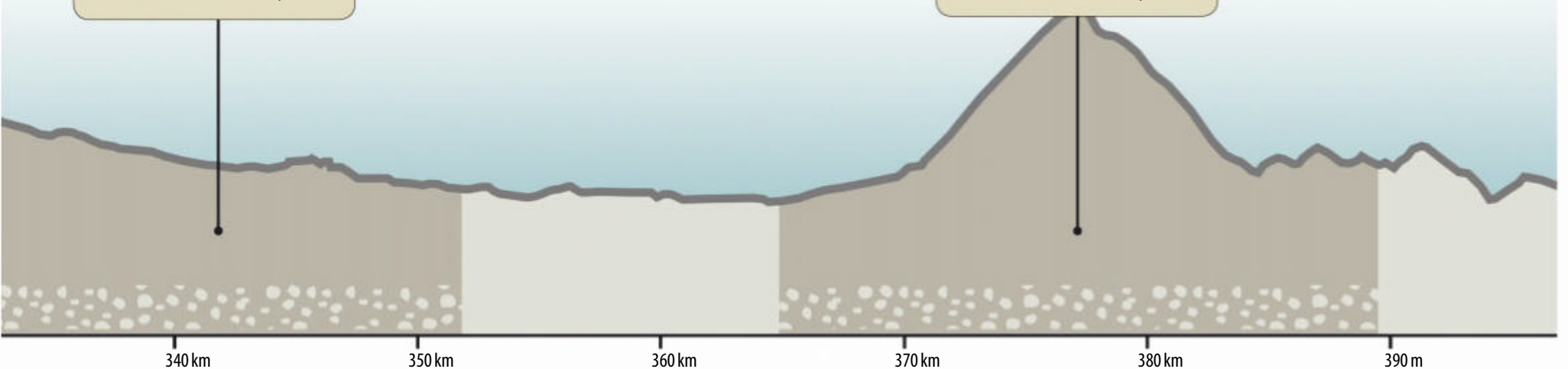
“Keep your eyes peeled for leopard tortoises crossing the road – they can reach the size of a beer keg!”

17 KRUISRIVIERSPOORT PASS

Coordinates S33.45094 E21.76446
Summit 692 m
Distance 26 km
Drive time 45 minutes
Nearest town Calitzdorp, 15 km

18 ROOIBERG PASS

Coordinates S33.71418 E21.64648
Summit 784 m
Distance 35 km
Drive time 1 hour 30 minutes
Nearest town Calitzdorp, 30 km



WHAT WE DROVE

Subaru South Africa loaned us a 2019 **Forester 2.0i-S ES**. At first glance, the new Forester looks exactly like the previous model, but there are genuine differences. We

like the improved X-mode that now completely turns off the traction control and works like a diff lock.

The Forester performed well, but at the end of our journey,

at Moodies Pass just outside Grootvadersbosch, the Forester finally got a flat tyre, after all those gravel passes! We share our driving impression in an upcoming issue.



I WANT TO GO, TOO!

WHERE? The route leads from Uniondale in the Klein Karoo to Grootvadersbosch near Heidelberg in the Cape. You'll visit Knysna, George, Calitzdorp and Vanwyksdorp, but you may not encounter another soul for long stretched between.

PROVISIONS The bigger towns all have fresh produce, but it is advisable to bring a 12 V fridge or a cooler box. Because a substantial part of the route consists of gravel roads, you should check your spare wheel in advance and pack a tyre-repair kit and compressor.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Uniondale police, 49 Voortrekker Street

☎ 044 752 6600

Knysna police, Queen Street ☎ 044 302 6600

George Police, 37 Courtenay Street

☎ 044 803 4700

Oudtshoorn police, 36 Baron van Reede Street

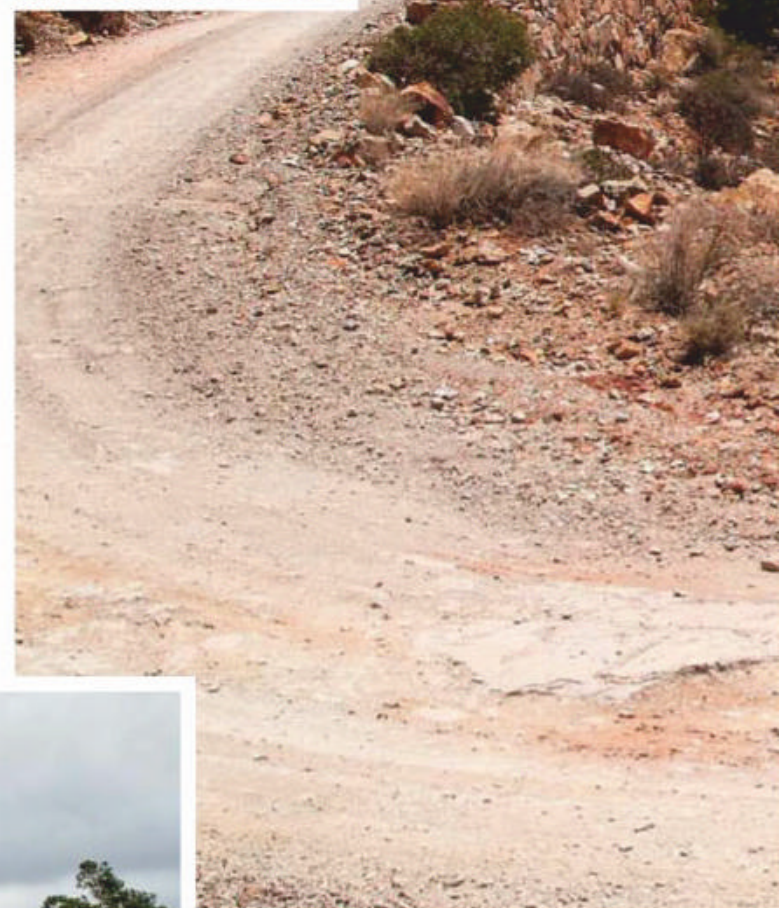
☎ 044 203 9014

Calitzdorp police, 13 Queen Street

☎ 044 213 3320

Heidelberg police, 54 Van Riebeeck Street

☎ 028 722 1910



18 ROOIBERG PASS

Coordinates S33.71418 E21.64648

Summit 784 m

Distance 35 km

Drive time 1 hour 30 minutes

Nearest town Calitzdorp, 30 km



HOT TO COOL. The sunbaked Rooiberg Pass (above) seem worlds away from the fertile valleys of the Wadrikt and Seekoeigat Passes (left).

390 km

400 km

410 km

420 km

430 km

440 km

ACCOMMODATION

There are numerous accommodation options along the route, but these are the three spots where we pitched a tent:

Uniondale Caravan Park

You'll find 17 stands, of which eight have power points. The stands encircle an ablution block and poplar trees provide shade. The place is run down, but it's safe, clean and everything works. Do bring earplugs, because dogs in a nearby neighbourhood bark throughout night.

Contact 082 774 0004 (Ken Dodds)
Price R100 per tent and R20 p.p.p.n.

Gamkaberg Nature Reserve

This nature reserve in the Klein Karoo doesn't offer stands for caravans, but there are two

small concrete slabs on which you can pitch a tent. Each campsite has garden furniture, a braai, a three-prong power outlet and a shelter for shade. The ablution facilities are spotless, there's a labyrinth for introspection, and access to Lawson's Pass is free if you overnight (R200 for day visitors).

Contact 044 213 3367 (park office) or 072 202 3438 (gate) capenature.co.za
Price R140 p.n. for 2 (R300 in holidays) plus a conservation fee of R40 p.p.

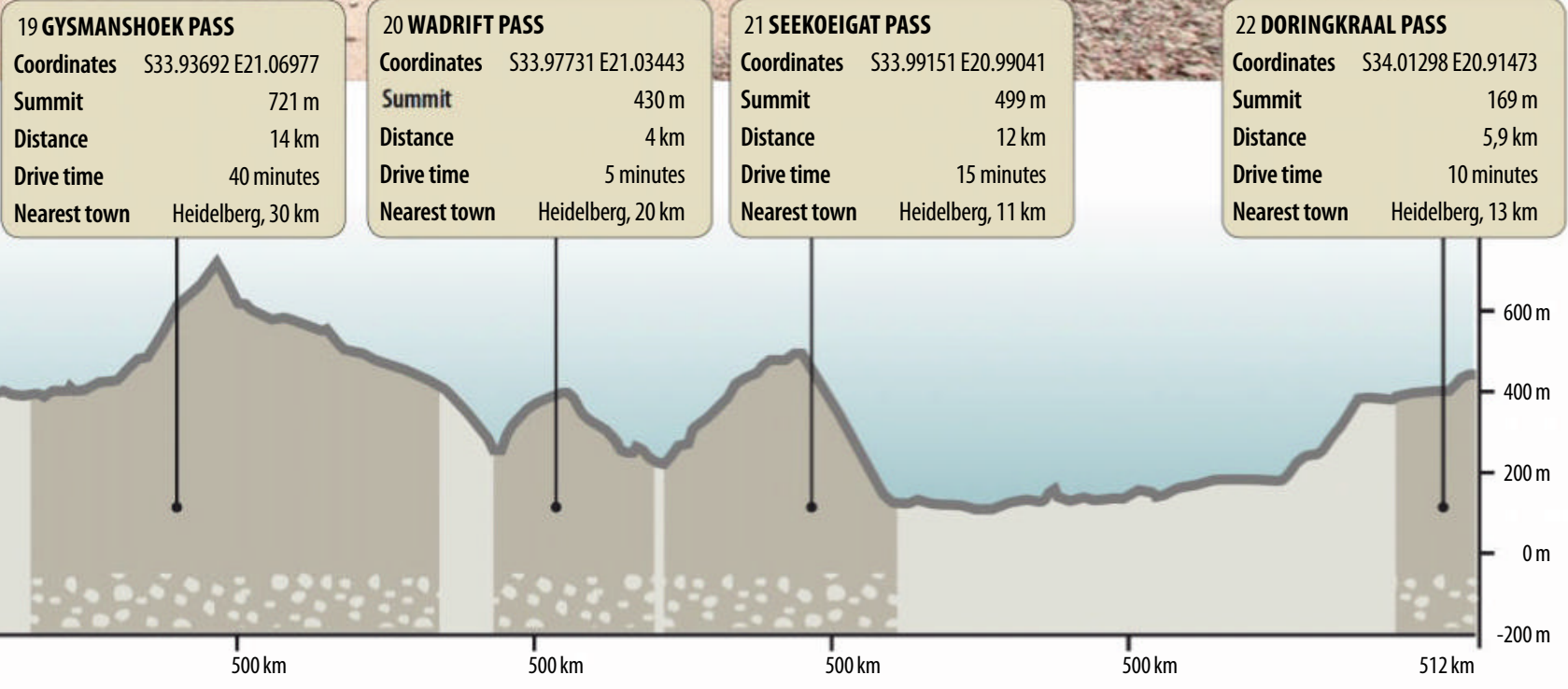
Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve

Grootvadersbosch has 14 sites, of which two have private bathrooms. The communal ablution facilities are spotless, there's a lapa with fridges, a children's playground and braai areas. The biggest attractions are the



hiking and mountain-bike trails. The trails take between three and six hours each to walk or ride and should occupy you for days.

Contact 021 483 0190 (reservations)
capenature.co.za
Price R180 p.n. for 2 (R300 in holidays) plus a conservation fee of R40 p.p.



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DAY 1

We meet at 2 pm in the campsite at Ithala Game Reserve, giving us enough time to settle in and do a short 4X4 sundowner route in the game reserve. Ithala is an easy half day's drive from Gauteng, and the reserve is unique in that it has the feeling of the Natal Drakensberg in its high-lying areas and the Zululand bushveld in the valleys.

DAY 2

After a nice big breakfast we do another 4X4 route in Ithala Game Reserve. This gives us the opportunity to really explore the reserve and be on the lookout for black and white rhino, among other wildlife. We return back to camp in the late afternoon.

DAYS 3 & 4

Today we head towards the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Game Reserve which was once the private hunting ground of King Shaka. Due to a pilot project we are involved in with conservation authorities, we get to camp in a private campsite on the banks of the river, in the heart of the reserve. We are also allowed controlled access to a 4x4 route not available to the general public. The reserve has the Big Five and the game viewing is excellent. This experience gives us the opportunity to feel like real game rangers as we trek into the heart of both black and white rhino conservation. The proceeds of this unique off-road and camping experience go directly to rhino protection in the reserve.

DAY 5

Today it's time to visit the tropical Zululand coastline. We enter the iSimangaliso Wetland Park (Greater St Lucia Wetland Park) and do a sandy 4X4 track around Lake Sibhaya, South Africa's largest freshwater lake, on the constant lookout for hippos and crocs. Our route takes us along the edge of the highest vegetated dunes in Africa and into narrow tunnels of coastal dune forest. Our campsite for the next two nights is on the beach at Mabibi.

DAY 6

Today we have a well-deserved rest day to enjoy the Zululand coastline. The Mabibi camp site has a pristine beach and you can swim, snorkel, fish and just relax. Weather permitting, there is an opportunity to take a rubber dinghy boat ride out to sea (this activity is not included in the tour cost). Later we go back onto the Lake Sibhaya shoreline for sundowners.

DAY 7

We head further north up the coast to the Kosi Bay Mouth on the border of Mozambique, where the traditional fish traps are still being used. Our campsite for the next two nights is in Ndumo Game Reserve with its huge natural pans and prolific birdlife.

DAY 8

Today we visit Tembe Elephant Park, winding our way on the sandy 4x4 tracks in the reserve on the lookout for Africa's biggest tuskers. We enjoy our last afternoon together driving along the narrow tracks along the riverine forest and pans of Ndumo Game Reserve.

DAY 9

After breakfast it's time to say goodbye and head out on the tar road that crosses over the Jozini Dam wall and meet up with the N2 near the town of Mkuze.

8-NIGHT/9-DAY ADVENTURE (TENTED ACCOMMODATION)

DATES 18 to 26 May 2019

COST R 11 350 per person (half price for children under 10)

ON THIS SPECIFIC TOUR BHEJANE SUPPLIES/PROVIDES

- All camp fees
- All park entrance fees
- All advertised activities
- Tents, cutlery and crockery
- Coffee and tea all day every day while in camp

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING/PROVIDE

- Your vehicle and fuel
- Mattresses and/or stretchers and sleeping bags and pillows
- Fold-up chairs
- Drinks and in-between snacks
- Out of country/medical emergency and evacuation insurance cover
- Border crossing fees and road taxes

Yes, I want to go!

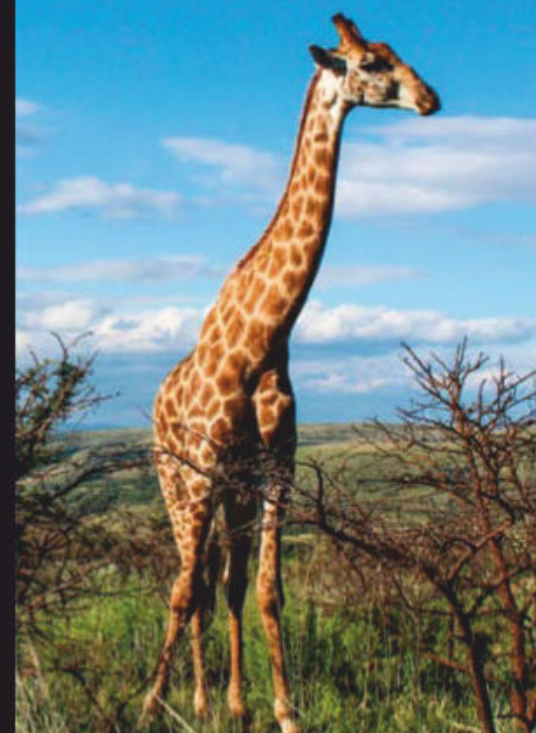
To book, call

☎ 044 535 9033 or e-mail

✉ bookings@bhejane.com

Find out more at

✉ bhejane.com





At home with the hornbills

South Africans really are spoilt for choice when it comes to planning a camping weekend. Every province or region has its own unique landscape, climate and character, and everyone has their own favourite campsite, a place with that “something” that differentiates itself from others and beckons you back time and again. Some are fun, some ultra-luxurious while others boast heavenly nature and silence.

Some people, however, look for a little bit of everything... a little silence, something to keep the kids occupied and neat ablution facilities in a place that is more bush than resort.

Koro-Koro Safari Lodge, about 20 km west of Bela-Bela, is such a place. It is also one of just a handful of resorts where you can choose from three different types of campsites. The camp has a peaceful, yet cosy atmosphere and you can choose between rugged bushveld stands or soft grass lawns.

Koro-Koro's name is derived from the call of the red-billed hornbill – if you listen

carefully, they sound as if they're calling “koro-koro-koro” when they hop around the grass in front of your tent looking for a worm.

Owners, Daan and Anneke Olwage, took over Koro-Koro in November 2014. Right away they got renovating and established some game in the game camp.

You can tell that they're dedicated to personal attention, and Anneke is always ready to start a conversation. Late afternoon, when the Bushveld sun approaches the horizon, she and Daan and CZ, their German shepherd, will briefly visit to make sure everything is still okay.

This is also the time of day when three of Koro-Koro's staff, Joe, Abraham and Big Boy arrive with the Land Rover packed full of ice and firewood to hear if you need anything.

Something for every taste

Shortly after your arrival at your stand, Diesel, Koro-Koro's Staffie, comes to say hello as if he's making sure you're in

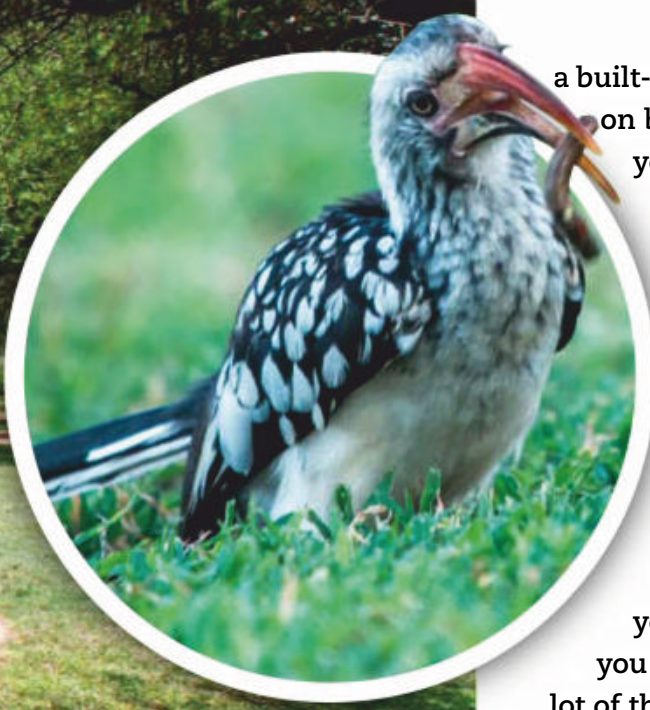
the right place. Diesel is a friendly dog who likes to walk with you through the campsite and loves to swim with the kids.

Your stand is pre-allocated, but you can ask for a specific one when you book. The main camp with its 31 sites has a traditional camp layout where you camp right next to your neighbour, with a white lime strip between the two of you. If you love grass under your feet, this is the camp for you. All the stands are covered in a mixture of LM, couch and buffalo grass. The ones in the middle of the camp (numbers 1 to 5) are surrounded by other stands and walkways, so you don't have much of a view from them.

If you want to see the veld in front of you, you'll need to pitch your tent on the stands that run along the side of the camp. The best ones here are numbers 8 to 12, 14, and 21 to 25.

The stands of all three camps in the resort measure on average 12 x 12 m and each has a 220 V power point (blue plug), a light, tap and rubbish bin.

In the main camp, you braai on



At Koro-Koro Safari Lodge you experience much more than just the Bushveld's summer heat and beautiful sunsets. There's something for everyone, regardless of your camping preference.

Text and photos Helenus Kruger

BIRDS OF A FEATHER. This is *not* a bustling seaside resort. Instead you'll find peace and quiet that is only interrupted by the raspy call of a hornbill. Kids won't get bored, though, because there's still plenty to do and new friends to meet.

a built-up braai with a grid that rests on bricks. It can be a bit tricky if you want to adjust the height of the grid, so bring your own adjustable tripod and folding grid along.

The camp is covered in trees – monkey thorns, umbrella thorns and sickle bush – and although your caravan won't be in the shade all day long, there is always a shade tree nearby for you to sit under. Be careful when you walk barefoot, as there are a lot of thorns... Joe, Abraham and Big Boy work all day long to sweep the camp, but with the lush grass there is always a chance that a thorn or two is waiting for their next barefoot victim.

Bird watchers will be delighted: the trees attract many feathered friends, though it's sometimes difficult to locate the smaller ones among all the fine twigs of the thorn trees.

The layout of the ablution building at the main camp is not something you see every day in a campsite. The building has 16 small shower cubicles – eight on each side of the building. Inside, they are identical, and as with the rest of the camp's ablution facilities, men and women share the bathrooms. A short corridor takes you to a toilet on your right and a shower room in front of you, each with its own door (no baths here). You hang a string at the entrance of the corridor so nobody

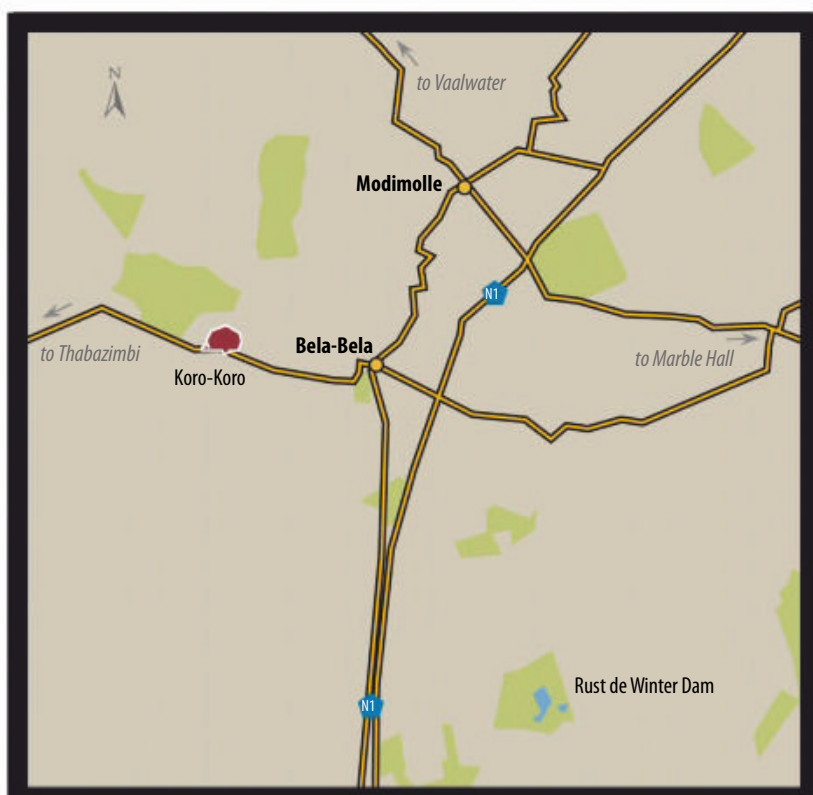
will surprise you while you're inside. The shower is standard in size (85 x 85 cm) and has a shower curtain and shelf for soap and shampoo.

The shower cubicle is tiled, but the rest of the room has unplastered brick walls. An oval basin is sunk in a marble top and there's a mirror, 220 V socket, hooks and a small shelf in the corner of the room. The light above the sink makes things easier if you're shaving or applying makeup.

The laundry room is in a building next door, but it wasn't open during our visit. The dishwashing area is outside on the one side.

If you prefer a stand with soil rather than grass, there are 15 bush stands a short distance from the main campsite. (The two sites are separated by wild grass and trees.) These sites are divided into two with a large piece of veld in between. Stands H to O and A to G are grouped together. Most of the stands have a tree or two on them, but many of them are too small – you certainly won't be able to park a caravan under them. There's also a piece of veld in-between the stands, which means you won't have to camp on your neighbour's doorstep.

Unlike at the main camp, you've got barrel braais, each with a grid. The barrels are deep and you have to make a big fire to get enough heat to the grid. Pack your own braai if you >



don't want to use all your wood on the first night.

The bush stands share three ablution buildings. Each has two rooms (1,9 x 3,8 m), one with a shower and the other with a bath. There's a small basin, mirror, hooks, a bench to sit on and a toilet. The shower has a curtain and a shelf for soap and shampoo. Each ablution block has a sink for dishes and one for washing on the side.

The third campsite, Haak en Steek, is located near the main building, about 200 m from the others. Here you'll find six sites in a circle and this camp offers the best of both the others: there is grass just as in the main camp, but there is space between each site and open veld in front of you. Stand numbers 1, 5 and 6 are good choices here.

You will need to set up your caravan or tent on a 4 x 6 step gravel square – no solid groundsheets are allowed on the grass. The braai section is on the side of the stand and has a small concrete slab on which the barrel braai and a rubbish bin are placed.

The single ablution block with three bathrooms is also shared by men and women. It's can get a bit tight in the shower rooms (1,7 x 1,8 m), but the glass cubicle has a soap rack and there's a basin, mirror, bench, hooks, bin and toilet. The floors and walls are tiled.

You wash your dishes behind the building where two stainless steel basins are deep enough to fit your skottel braai. The emptying point for portaloos are here, as well.

The heartbeat of the camp

The Bushveld heat is no one's friend, and at some point you'll be seeking relief in the cold water pool next to the main camp. If you're not lucky enough to get one of the plastic loungers on the grass, you can spread out your towel under a thorn tree. Just remember to check for thorns first.

A small kiddies' pool (50 cm deep) lies next to a larger pool (1,4 m). Leave your food and drink with your towel, as it's not allowed in the pool.

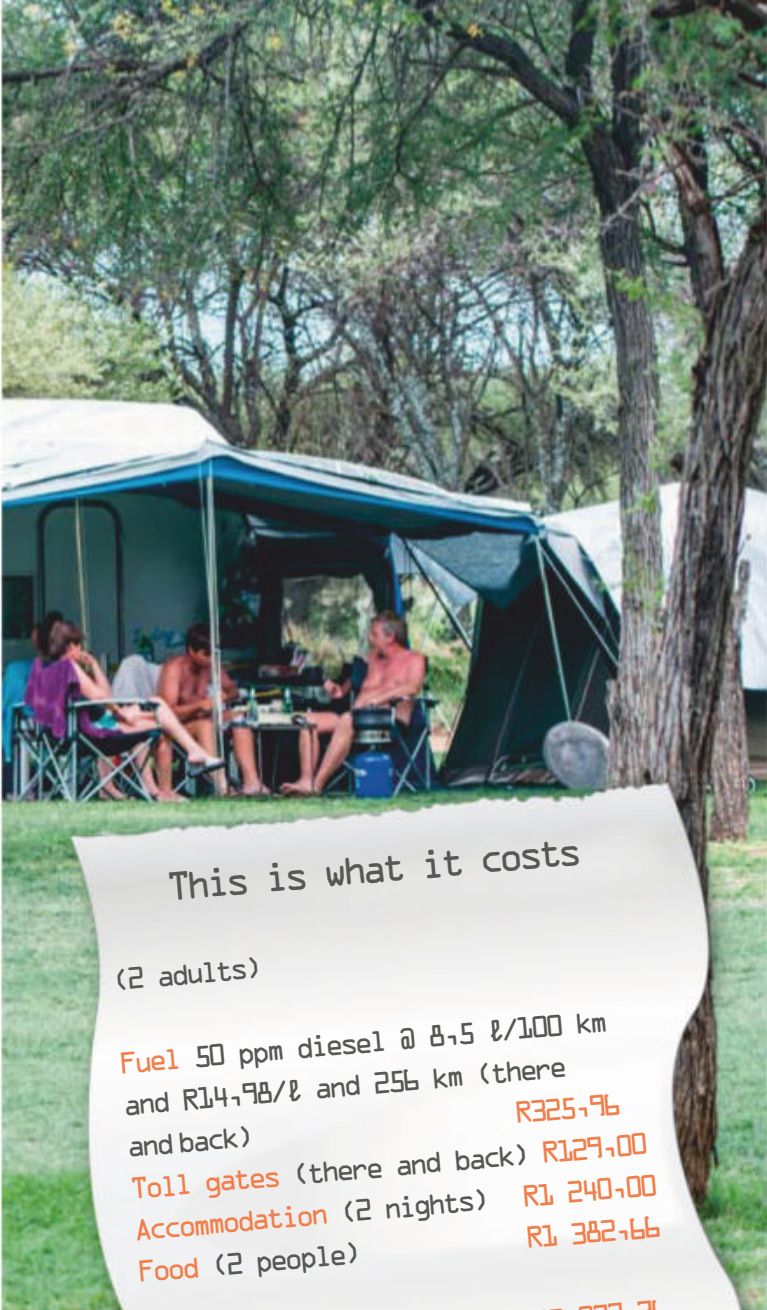
All the other activities are at the main building, about 150 m from the campsite. There's a heated pool, table tennis under a small lapa, an outdoor chess set, a boma, reception hall and



If you love grass under your feet, this is the camp for you. All the stands are covered in a mixture of LM, couch and buffalo grass.

TIME TO RELAX. There's a sense of community at Koro-Koro, but if you're less socially active you can always get a bush stand with more privacy. If the midday heat becomes oppressive, head to the pool to cool down.





This is what it costs

(2 adults)

Fuel 50 ppm diesel @ 8.5 l/100 km
and R14.98/l and 256 km (there
and back) R325.96
Toll gates (there and back) R129.00
Accommodation (2 nights) R1 240.00
Food (2 people) R1 382.66
Grand total R3 077.76

bar. They all lie in a circle around a large lawn, which is painfully neat like the rest of the grass in the resort. Remember to leave your bike outside this area, as no bicycles are allowed on the grass.

You'll also see a camp with a pond where the ducks and geese find refreshment and where the emus, who like to walk through the camp, come to spend the night.

In front of the main building lies a large old marula tree on its side. Anneke says the tree was about 420 years old before being uprooted in a storm in January 2014 (the termites, she says, also played their part). Next to the tree, a retired windmill keeps an eye on matters.

The heated pool is heated to anything between 28 °C and 30 °C, and in the high summer, the cold-water pool isn't much cooler.

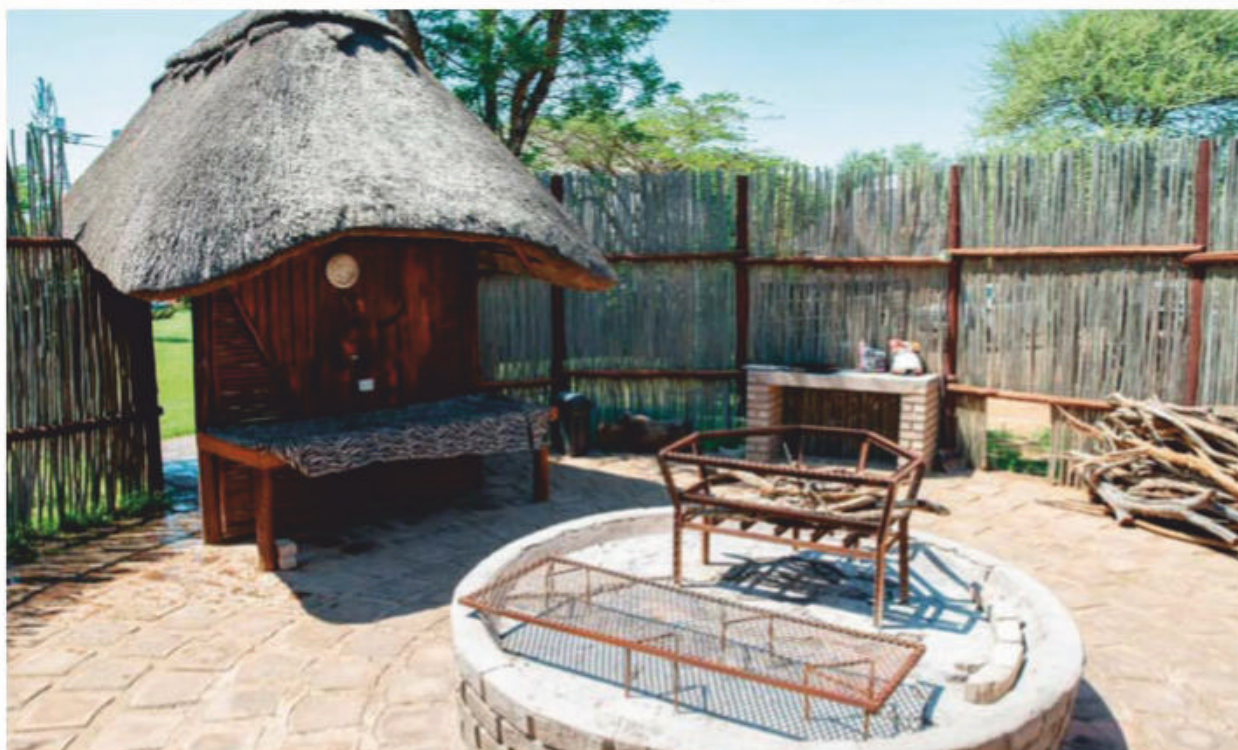
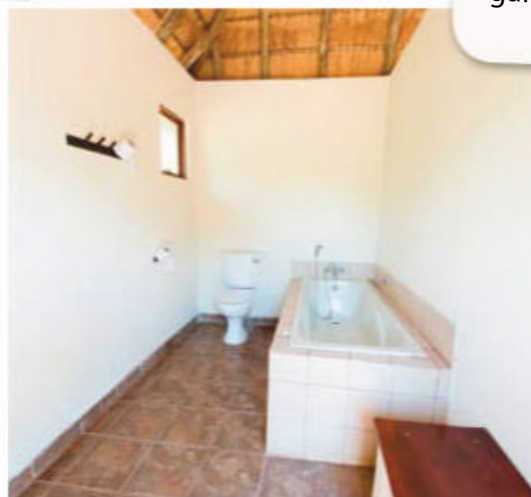
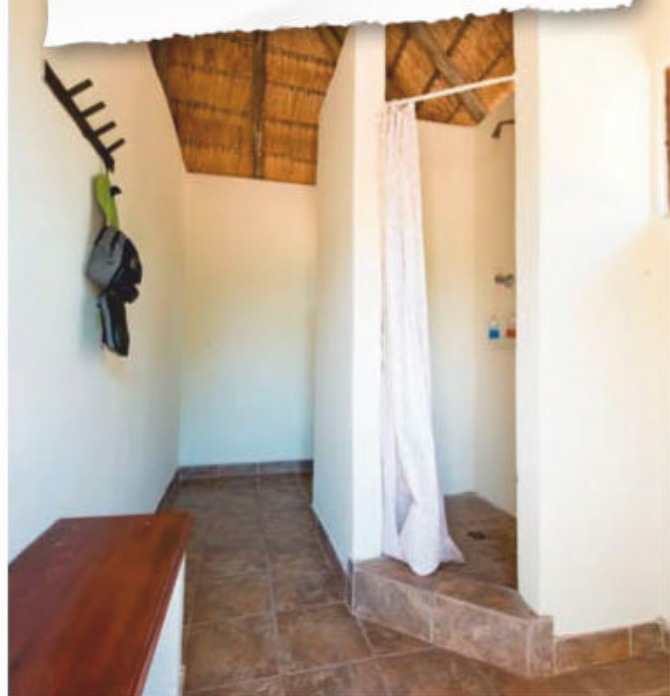
At the Hooligan Bar you can get something cold to drink under the torpid glare of taxidermied buck and wild pig heads, sink a couple of pool balls (R5) and watch your the game on a big screen. >



Erika and Fanie Hartzenberg, their son Simon and his friend Louis du Plessis camp with bosTokoloshe, their home-built camping trailer, which they tow with a Mitsubishi Triton.

They say

“ We love the camp's tranquillity, the great variety of birds and the night sounds. You hear the foxes talking right through the night. The boys participated in all the activities and especially enjoyed the table tennis and spending the day in the pools. The hike through the game camp was a highlight. ”





Briefly | Koro-Koro



Campsite 3 different campsites with a total of 52 stands with and without grass.

Ablution facilities Each camp has its own facilities. Men and women share bathrooms.

Price From R250 to R620 per site (for up to 4 people and 1 vehicle) depending on the season.

Contact 082 908 4448

info@koro-koro.co.za korokoro.co.za

Arrival and departure times 12 pm and 2 pm, but you may use the facilities up to 3 pm.

What does the road look like? Tar road, with the last 1 km to the gate a good gravel road.

GPS S24.890823 E28.119686 (reception)

go! Drive & Camp says At the Haak en Steek camp you're spoilt rotten: you have manicured lawns underfoot and wild grass in front of your verandah.

If you prefer a stand with soil rather than grass, there are 15 bush stands a short distance from the main campsite.





ACTIVE LIFESTYLE. There are several activities for kids to keep them out of your hair. Even restless grownups will find enough diversions here to keep them occupied.



And, should the hunger pangs hit, you can order a takeaway at the bar, but only when it is high season. For between R15 and R30, you can order quick meals including toasted sandwiches or chips and Russians.

Along the bar counter is a set of basic items including firelighters, ice, soft drinks, ice cream and sweets.

During holidays, a different activity is on offer each afternoon. There are bingo evenings, late afternoon tractor and trailer rides through the game camp, and a braai evening at the boma where campers can get to know one another better. For the kids, there are treasure hunts, country sports and art classes. The night hike with lanterns through the game camp is one of the children's favourite activities.

Koro-Koro's game camp is a few hundred metres from the campsite and you can walk on the network of paths or ride along the marked cycle route. The cycling route is just under 5 km long and on level ground, which means the little ones and the unfit can join the fun.

Game drives on the trailer (R50 p.p.) last about an hour and include a free drink. 📞

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Weekend fun on the rim of the Highveld



There are many activities near the Vaal Dam – this one's a 4x4 obstacle course at a popular wedding destination.

Text and photos Cyril Kloppe

The Lekoa Lodge is on the farm Wolwefontein, about an hour and a half's drive south of Johannesburg. When you visit this lodge, it's likely because you're attending a family member's wedding or a business conference. This is an attractive establishment with verdant lawns, a rock pool and neat thatched chalets.

Lekoa Lodge doesn't market itself as a 4x4 destination, but one of the activities offered is indeed an off-road track – so feel free to bring your rig if you're invited to

a cousin's wedding but can't see yourself waiting all day long in your chalet while Justine from the beauty parlour pretties up the bride.

The route is unmarked and the reception staff provides no map. When you ask about the trail, the people behind the counter look at you blankly and suggest you to follow the track and use your discretion.

The route starts at a gate in a tall fence behind the lodge. A dirt road runs a short distance northward, past a family cemetery, to an obstacle course. This

course is actually designed for quads and your bakkie won't fit on the tracks. However, nothing stops you from braving the mudholes and embankments with your truck but be warned: your vehicle must have good breakover, approach and departure angles.

The gravel road runs further north to an airstrip, but we drove east from the quad obstacle course and followed one of several narrow trails to a farm dam. Drive over the dam's wall, up an incline to a crossing in the road. Here you turn right and cross the



main dirt road that serves the farm. Apart from the quad obstacle course, there are no significant challenges up to now, and you could probably tackle the twin track with a regular sedan.

After driving over the Wolwefontein Road, the trail starts to descend to the Waterval River. This is where things get more technical, because suddenly the road runs straight up an embankment. The surface of the twin track here is littered with potato-sized stones, and you will definitely not make it in two-wheel drive. Even all-wheel drive will struggle here, and

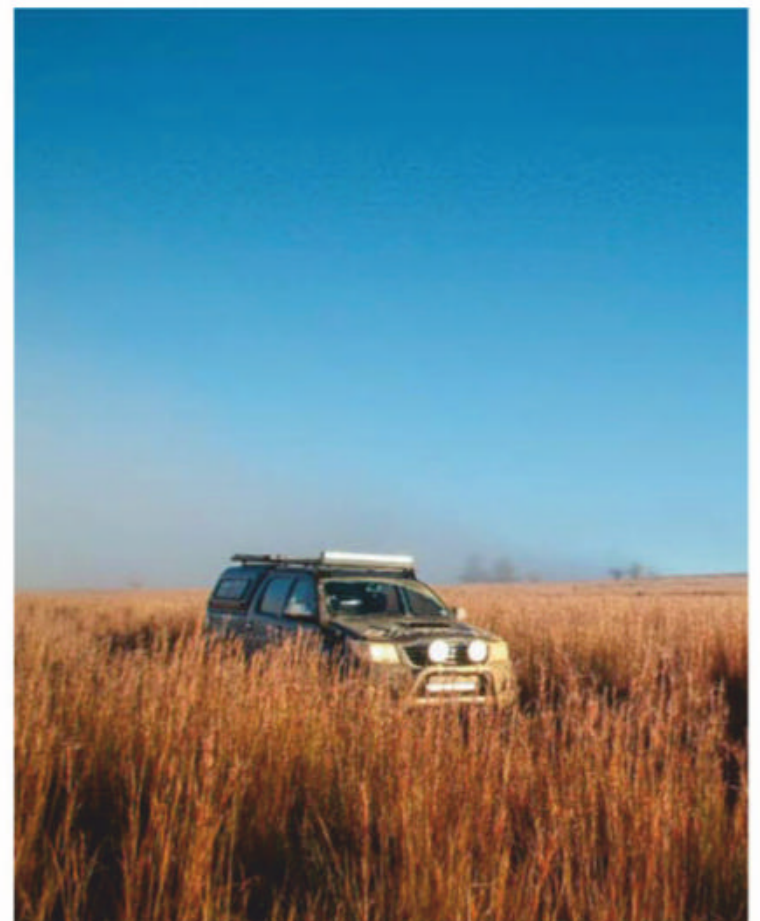
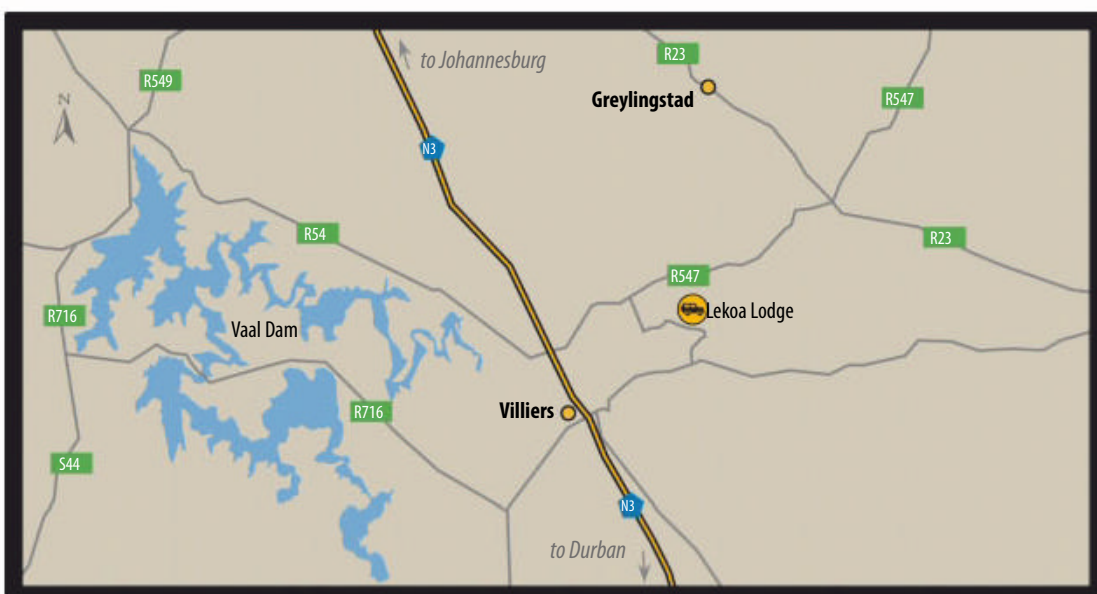
you might need to engage a diff lock.

All that remains now is a final obstacle: a muddy hole next to the Waterval River. During our visit, the hole was fairly dry, so it didn't pose much of a threat, but the telltale sign of a recent battle was still visible in the drying clay.

Now the trail returns to the Wolwefontein road. Across the road, you drive up a smallish hill above the lodge – from here you can take in the stunning vista. Then it's down to the farm dam and back to the lodge. >



HOME ON THE RANGE. Lekoa Lodge might be in Mpumalanga but the landscape here is pure Free State. Truly challenging obstacles are few and far between, but you can head over to the quad track (above) if you require a bit of action.



TRAIL GUIDE | LEKOA LODGE

The route is by no means gruelling, and the few challenges you'll encounter can be circumvented by taking chicken routes. It is therefore not worth a trip from Johannesburg to Lekoa Lodge just to visit the trail. But it's good to know you can get dirty on the morning before the wedding. Or arrange a team-building weekend with quads for your employees.

Accommodation

If you don't want to stay in the self-catering chalets, you can tow your caravan here. There is a large lawn with ablution facilities, a braai area, electricity and trampolines for kids. In addition to the outside swimming pool, there's a heated indoor pool plus a restaurant and a bar.



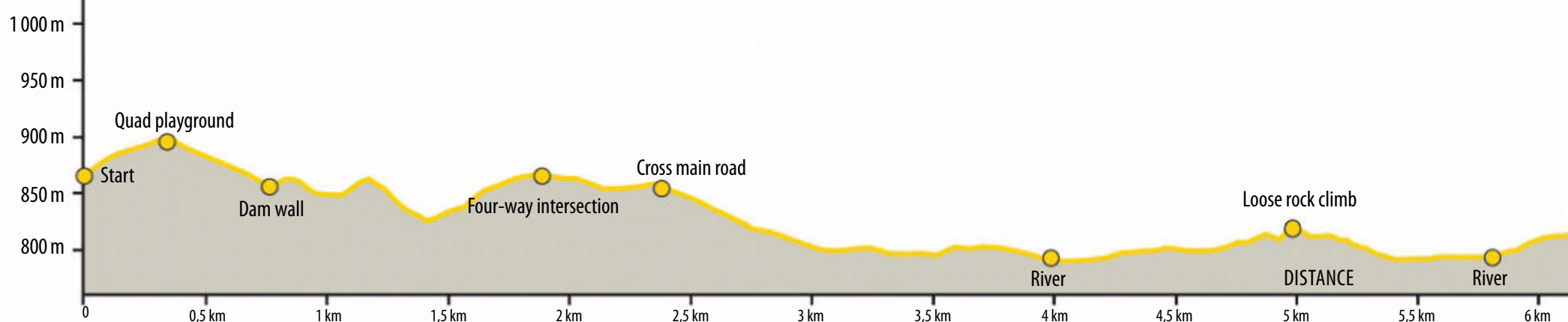
MONSTER FROM THE BOG. No one minds a bit of mud, until you get desperately stuck in it. Fortunately the mud pits at Lekoa Lodge aren't that extreme and if you do get stuck help is only a phone call away. Keep in mind that Lekoa Lodge is on a working farm, so please mind the herd of cattle that you might encounter on the trail.



The surface of the twin track is littered with potato-sized stones, and you will definitely not make it in two-wheel drive.



PROFILE





What you need to know



4x4, low range, diff lock? You will need 4WD and good ground clearance if you want to tackle the more challenging parts of the trail, but you should be okay without a diff lock and low-range gears if you know your vehicle or avoid the obstacles.

Maximum number of vehicles? Unlimited.

Do I get a map? No.

Will I scratch my vehicle? No.

Should I take a compressor? No.

Can we braai along the way? No, but there are facilities at the campsite.

Can I turn around halfway? Yes.

Is there a cellphone reception? Yes.

THE TRAIL

Best time to go? All year.

Can I take my family? Yes.

For the day or the weekend? Weekend.

Are there ablution facilities? At the lodge and campsite, yes.

Directions From Johannesburg, take the N3 highway towards Villiers. About 6 km before Villiers, take the R547 turnoff east and drive 10 km. Turn right at the first intersection, cross the Hexspruit and take the Wolwefontein Road to Lekoa Lodge.

GPS S26.95436 E28.72105 (gate)

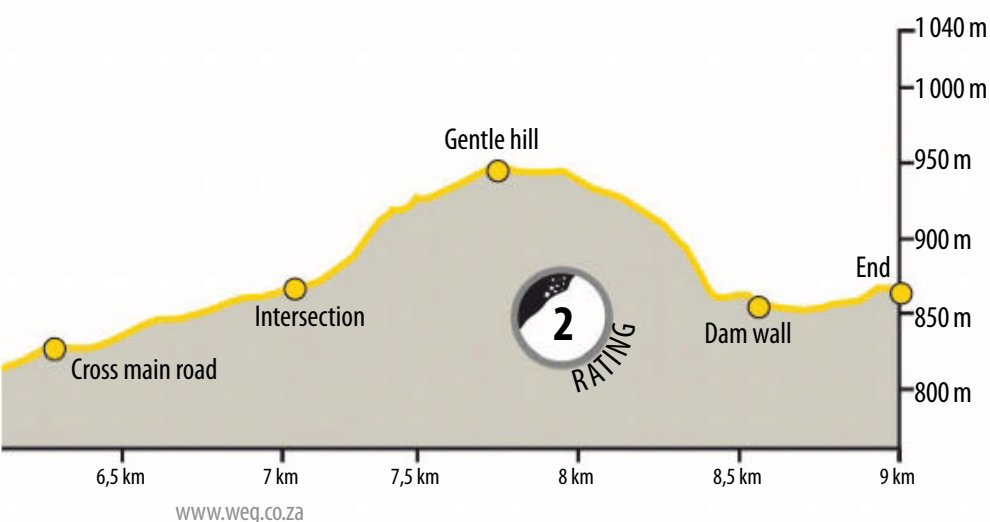
S26.95133 E28.72084 (start of route)

Price? Free for guests (no day visitors).

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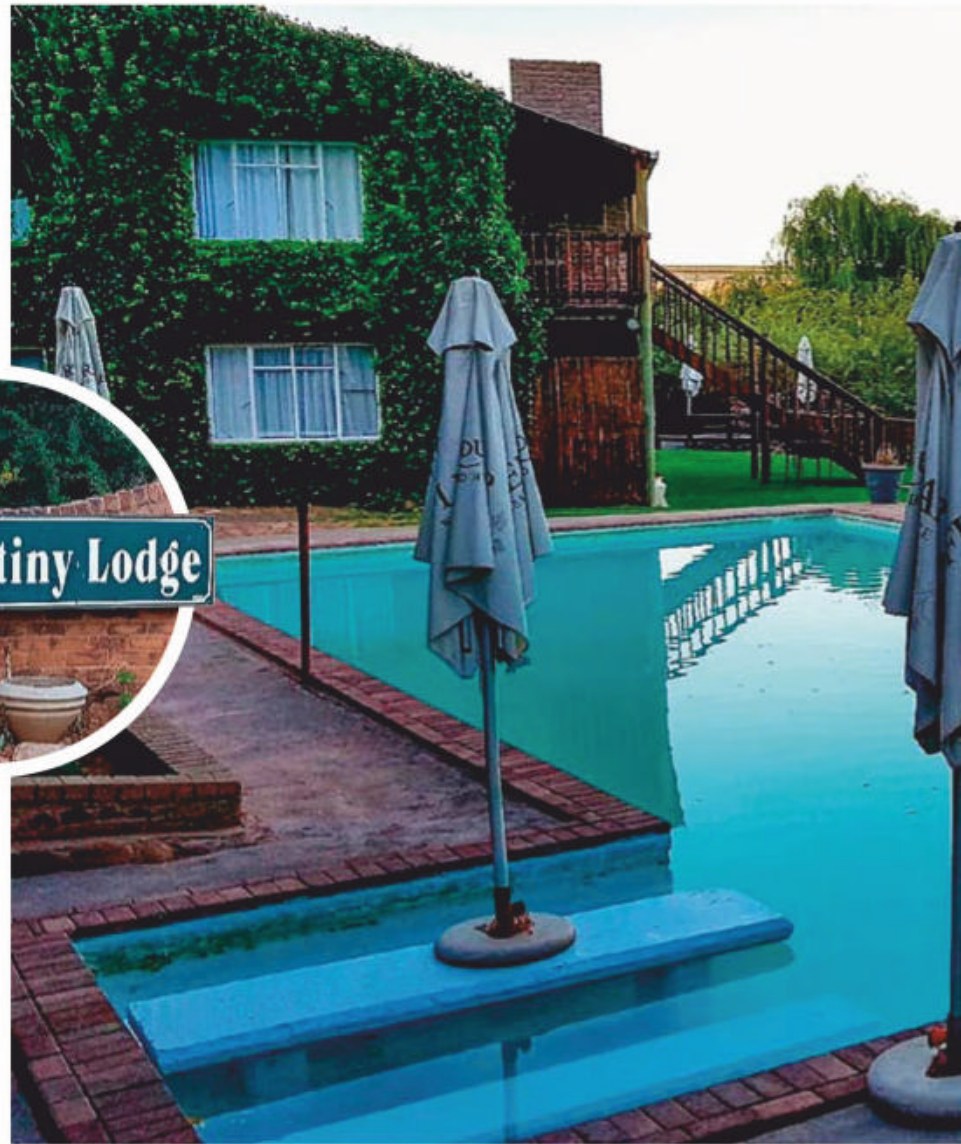
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River Destiny Lodge



River along the road

Topping off their annual family vacation, Jaco and Lizl van Tonder stopped at River Destiny Lodge outside Colesberg on their way home to Pretoria.

“The van Tonders usually camp in Elands Bay for three or four weeks during the summer holiday, but this holiday was a particularly sentimental one as it was the first time in eight years that two of their three children didn't join them. Towards the end of their stay, their youngest daughter boarded a flight from Cape Town to California.

After saying goodbye, Jaco and Lizl decided not to return home via the N1 but to take an extended vacation by stopping at Die Dam, Jongensfontein, Victoria Bay and Buffalo Bay, before finally pointing their 2016 Toyota Prado and 2007 Jurgens Classique toward home.

What's the route you took to get there, and how long did it take you?

We packed up early and left Buffalo Bay at 9 am, drove through George to join the N9



towards Graaff Reinet, where we stopped for a cool drink at a friends' place. We got to River Destiny Lodge at 6 pm.

Where did you hear about this place?

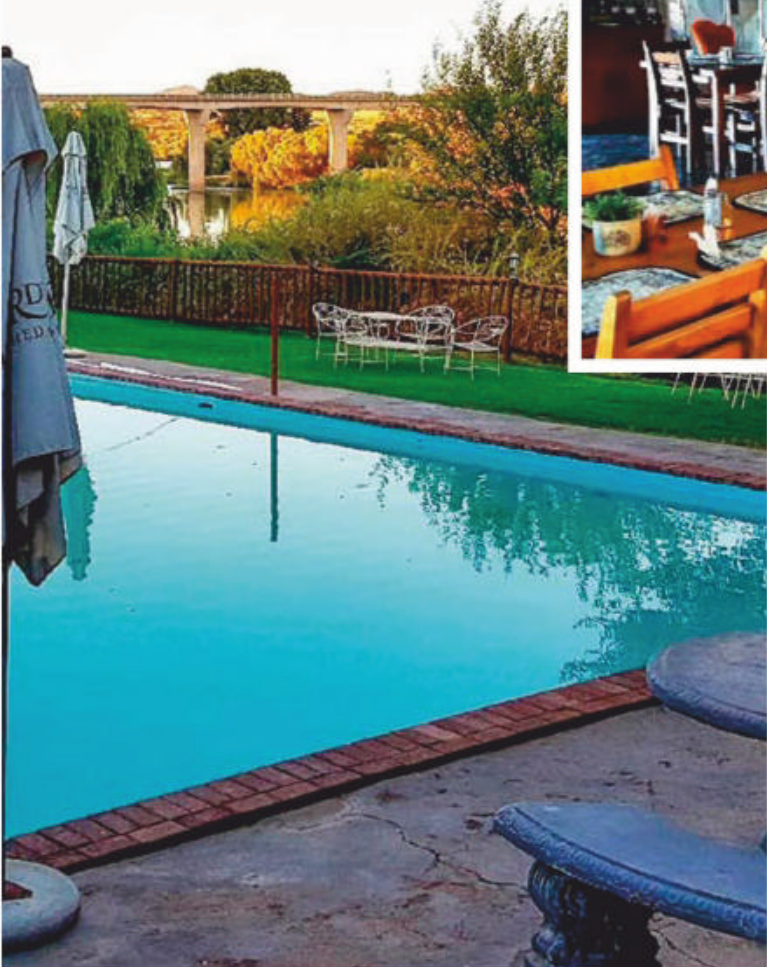
I visited here a few years ago during a weekend celebrating the 10-year anniversary of our motorcycle forum, Wild Dog Adventure Riders, and always kept it in the back of my mind for a family vacation stopover.

What does it look like there?

It's indescribably beautiful, with lush lawns, massive weeping willow trees and it's right on the banks of the Orange River. It's really the kind of place that makes you want to return here again and again. The stands are generously sized and all have electrical outlets.

What about the ablution facilities?

Very neat, and always kept clean. There's



also a scullery where you can wash your dirty dishes.

What activities are there to do?

If you're a keen angler, then you'll be able to fish to your heart's content. You can also canoe in the river or take a dip in the large swimming pool. Bring your binoculars if you're a birdwatching enthusiast, and your hiking boots to take on a trail.

What about food and fuel? Is there a shop in the campsite or nearby?

The nearest fuel pumps are in Gariep,

which is 10 km or so from River Destiny's gate. There is a shop on site which stocks the bare necessities, but you'll be able to stock up at a supermarket in Gariep. There is also a restaurant with a bar on the premises, which is very inviting after a long day on the road.

What does it cost to camp there?

For a camping stand, it's R200 per night, plus an additional R20 per person.



WIN

Jaco and Lizl wins a Camp Cover Bundu Bag worth R500.

Check out the superb range of protective covers on their website:

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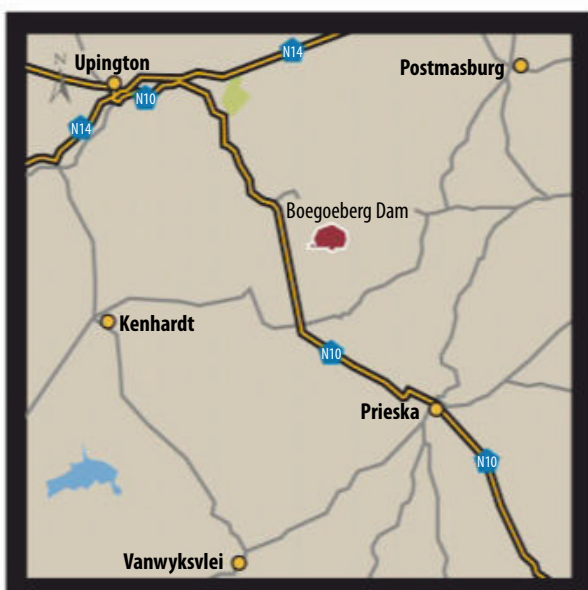


LANDWIND



A pond to ponder upon

Cast a line at the Boegoeberg Dam and hook one of the Green Kalahari's big ones.



BOEGOEBERG DAM HOLIDAY RESORT Plenty of fish in this dam

The Boegoeberg Dam lies 158 km southeast of Upington in the Northern Cape and, along the canal, 35 km from Groblershoop. This area with its arid landscape is known for its mutton chops, various cattle breeds, red sand dunes, raisins and wine.

The dam was built between 1929 and 1933 in the Orange River and is the beginning of a long canal that extends 121 km to Upington. Driving the gravel road to the dam, you're surrounded by

green vineyards before it suddenly turns into a rocky landscape with aloes and buchu against the ridges. And then, just around a bend, the Boegoeberg Dam appears like an oasis in the desert.

The hills around the Boegoeberg holiday resort get their name from the eponymous shrub, buchu, which is abundant here. The 11 hectare resort lies next to the dam and you can camp right on the shore. Big shade trees and green lawns take the worst bite out of the fierce



FISH DISH

TEA-SMOKED FISH Smokin' hot

You can smoke almost any fish this way in your skottel braai, but snoek works very well. You can also replace the tea with sawdust from a supermarket.

You need

(enough for 4-6)

- 1 large fish of about 1 kg, cleaned (we used trout)
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- a handful parsley chopped (or use 2 teaspoons dry parsley)
- 2 tablespoons honeybush or rooibos tea
- 1 teaspoon honey

- 1-2 cups water
- 1 lemon, sliced

Here's how

1 Season the cavity of the fish with salt and pepper. Then spread the butter and pack the onion and parsley in layers in the stomach cavity.

2 Line a skottel pan with foil. Sprinkle the tea on the foil layer and drizzle with the honey. Place a metal cooling rack or grill over the tea in the centre of the dish. Put the fish on top and close the whole skottel tightly with foil.

3 Heat the skottel over low heat and smoke the fish for 10 minutes. Turn off the heat and leave for 3-4 minutes to continue

smoking. Remove the top layer of foil and set it aside.

Lift the fish off the dish and remove the bottom layer of foil. Now return the fish to the grid and pour the water into the bottom of the clean skottel.

4 Replace the foil cover and heat the dish on high heat so that the fish cooks further. It takes about 10 minutes until the meat is white and firm. Serve with lemon slices.

go! Drive & Camp says Add more water if needed while steaming the fish.



Briefly | Boegoeberg



Fish Carp, barber, yellowfish and mudfish.

Campsite 20 stands with electricity close to the riverbank as well as a handful of stands away from the water next to the pool. There are also three private stands (no power) and another campsite one kilometre long on the banks (no power).

Ablution facilities 1 building near the gate, as well as toilets at the dam's weir. A new open-air shower is under construction.

Price R120 p.p.p.n. for a stand with power (R110 without it).

Arrival and departure times 2 pm and 10 am.

Contact 083 257 4730

boegoebergdam@gmail.com

boegoebergdam.co.za

What does the road look like? The last 15 km is a gravel road on which you have to drive slowly if the grader hasn't been for a while.

GPS S29.046982 E22.201277

go! Drive & Camp says There are a number of annual fishing competitions hosted here. The Boegoeberg Bonanza takes place over Easter.

Northern Cape sun and you'll even see some springbok grazing next to the water.

The ablution blocks are close to the gate where you enter, and the riverbank is 330 m further on. The pool is 150 m from the gate and there are a handful of stands in the open (with power) if you don't want to camp near the water. The 20 stands on the shore are next to each other and have power points and shade.

If you're looking for a quieter camping spot along the water, you can choose one of three other sites – they're further down the shore and fairly isolated. There are no power points here, but there is water and a flush toilet. The names of these sites are Swartstomp, Koegelenberg and Nuwegat. You need a 4x4 vehicle to get to Koegelenberg to master the sand road. Langgras is a little further down the shore. It is a 30 m wide grass strip that's about one kilometre in length next to the water's edge.

Here is where you'll find Boegoeberg's most sought-after stands for anglers, but you don't have electricity, though there are flush toilets and taps.



FISHING TACKLE

Cooling chair

You see the humble cooler box everywhere in the camping and 4x4 world, especially among anglers. A day next to the fishing waters can be long and, of course, you've got to keep your chicken and mayo sandwich and drinks cool while staring at the rods. One of the big negatives points of a cooler box is usually its size, as it often takes up a lot of space in your vehicle.

Adrenalin Importers has launched a pop-up cooler box. It folds small enough to fit under your car's seat, but when up, the 15 l box is 30 cm high. It has a loose but sturdy bottom, and the round loose lid (along with the sides) is so strong you can use it as a chair. That's if you don't weigh more than 85kg.

After the day's fishing, simply rinse it out and wipe it dry before packing it away. It's only available in olive green.

Price From R229 at most fishing shops.

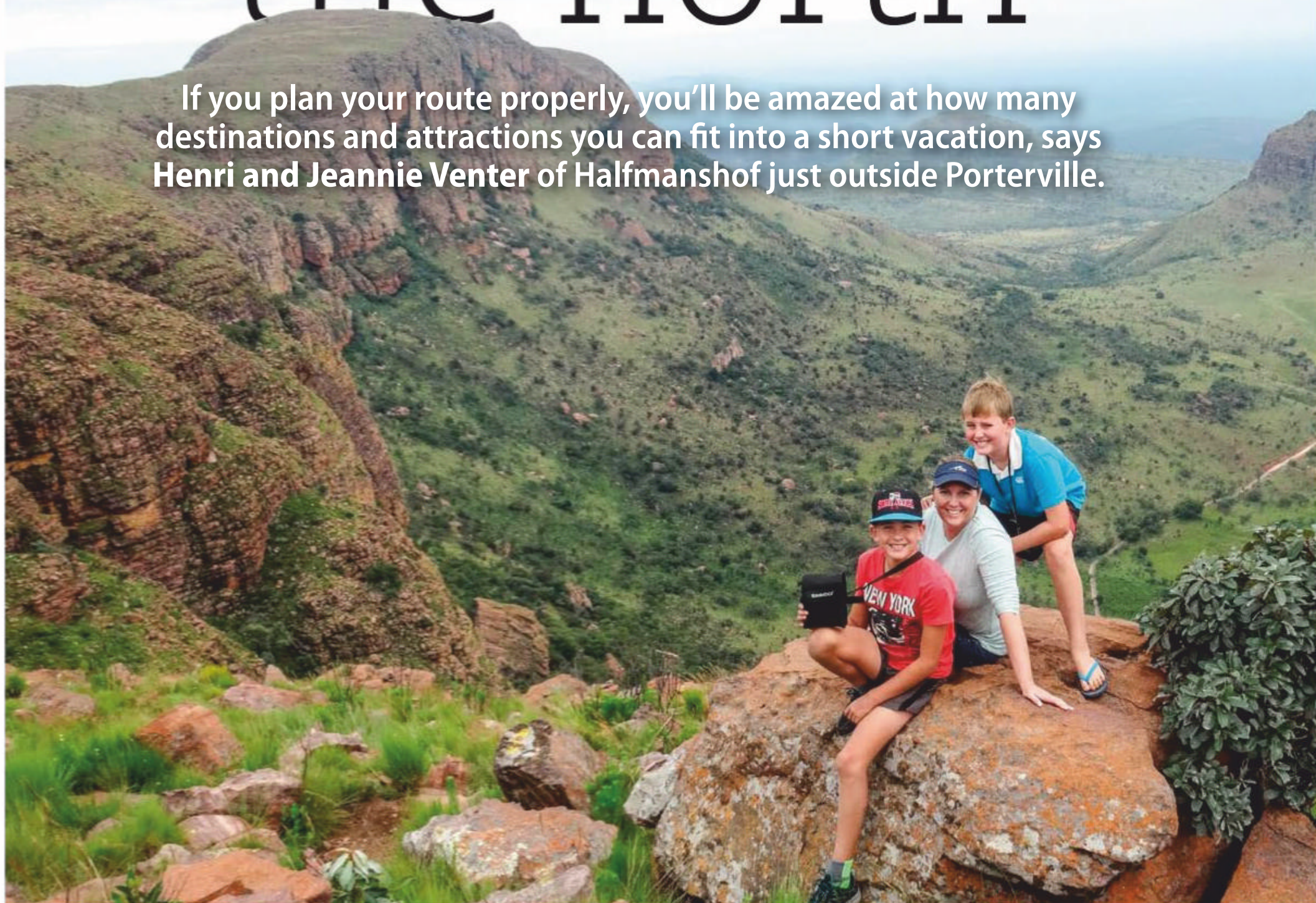
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Journey to the north

If you plan your route properly, you'll be amazed at how many destinations and attractions you can fit into a short vacation, says **Henri and Jeannie Venter** of Halfmanshof just outside Porterville.



Henri and Jeannie's oldest son, Hanri (11), learnt about the history of Mapungubwe in the first quarter of grade 6, including the story of the famous golden rhino found in a royal tomb in the 1930s.

So when the Venters decided in March last year to visit three of Sanparks' northern reserves with Hanri and his brother, Johan (10), Mapungubwe was also part of their travel plans.

They had to see this rhino statue for themselves. Followed by a couple of days in the Kruger, of course, says Jeannie.

See you at the airport

“We tour with our Toyota Hilux 2.8 GD-6 4x4 Raider and our Bush Lapa Vlooi off-road trailer. Our friends, Jacques and Christa Hill, from the hamlet Botha on the shores of the Breede River are to travel with us for the first week along with their two baby girls. They have the same vehicle and rent a Bush Lapa Miskruier.

Because the March holidays are so short, we want to take full advantage of the time available and we decide the men will hitch the trailers and drive ahead,

while the women and kids fly north three days later.

On Saturday morning we land at Lanseria where the two men pick us up. At last! We can now set off on our exciting adventure.

Mountain water in your bottle

The Marakele National Park in the heart of the Waterberg is our first destination, where we camp for two nights. When we arrive, it's clear that there's been a lot of recent rain and the veld is lush and beautiful. We camp in the fenced Bontle



camp and, at night, we hear bucks run past our camp. The ablution facilities are very neat and clean.

We do a self-drive through Marekele and marvel at the scenery. You've got majestic mountains, grasslands, trees and streams where you can fill your water bottle with fresh mountain water. The view from the Lenong viewpoint is one of the most beautiful sights I've ever seen... it's green, green and more green – especially for someone from the dry Western Cape.

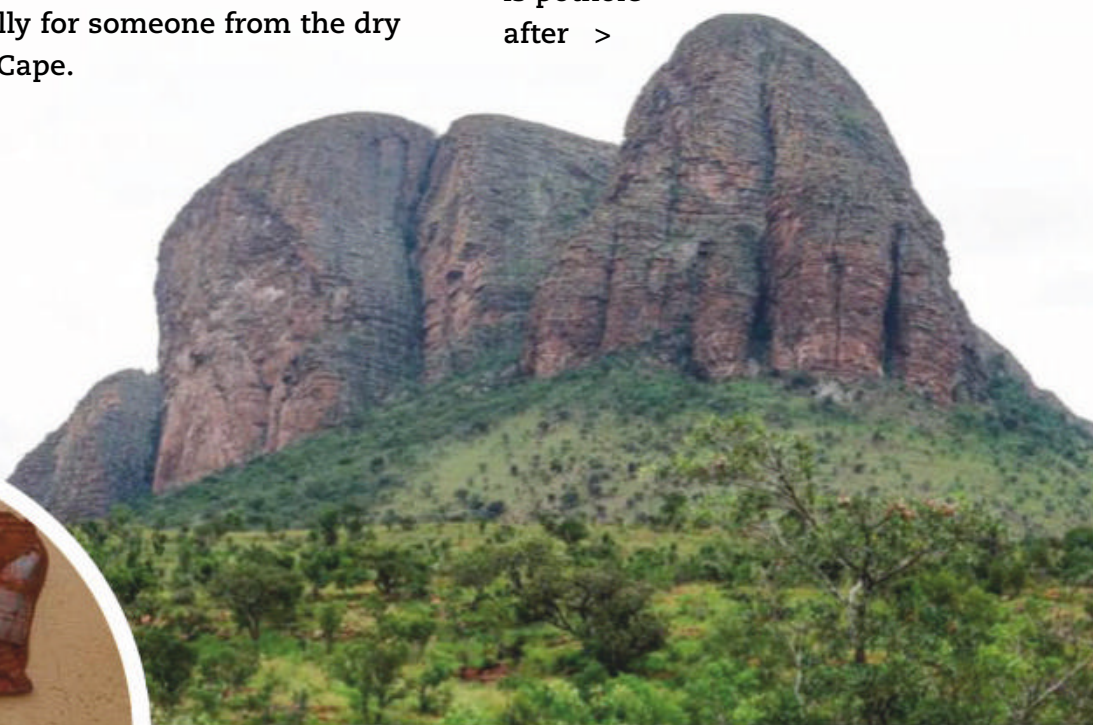
Monkey, nyala... and a golden rhino!

We leave for our next Sanparks destination: the Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site. On the way there we drive over the Tropic of Capricorn.

We take the R572 past Lephalale, but from Swartwater to about 30 km before Alldays, the tar road is actually a dirt road with pieces of tar here and there. It is pothole after >



CLEAN GREEN. The Venter family travelled to the north of the country and visited three SANParks nature reserves. Each reserve had its own charms and the Venters had the time of their lives.





pothole, and in places it's better (and safer!) to rather drive next to the road. It makes you feel despondent, but there's no turning back.

We camp two nights in the Mazhou campsite on lovely spacious stands under shade trees. But the monkeys in those regions are troublesome and don't leave us alone. Luckily, the domesticated nyalas and bushbucks compensate for the monkeys' mischief.

At Mapungubwe we visit the museum to see the golden rhino. It is an experience, even though it's just a replica. The real rhino statue is at the University of Pretoria.

We drive on the park's self-drive routes, stroll along the Treetop Walk among the treetops and enjoy the beautiful view of the Limpopo River with its crocodiles and beautiful bird life. We also visit the spot where the Limpopo and Shashe Rivers merge and take photos from the vantage point where South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe meet.

To the Kruger!

From Mapungubwe we leave for the Kruger National Park where we spend a full 10 nights. Our plan is to drive the park from the top at Pafuri to the bottom at Malalane.

On our way to Punda Maria, we eat lunch at the Pafuri picnic spot and visit the confluence at Crooks Corner where South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique meet.

We sleep in a chalet at Punta Maria on the first night because we have some catching up to do regarding dirty laundry and we also just want to sleep between crisp, white sheets for a change. At Punda Maria's laundromat, you pay a mere R8 to wash a bundle of clothes and R5 to use



the tumble dryer. It's a bargain.

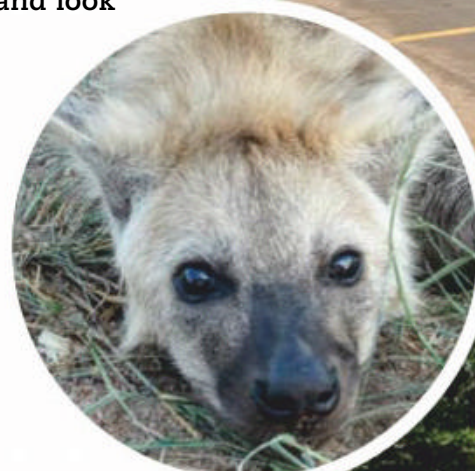
From Punda Maria, we drive to the Tsendze Bush Camp, and for the second time we drive over the Tropic of Capricorn. Tsendze is just south of the Mopani camp and the highlight of the holiday for us.

The camp has a friendly caretaker who comes to greet us every night and makes sure everything is in order. They clean your braai every morning and look after every camper.

The ablution facilities are relatively new, and although the camp has no electricity, the bathrooms are lit and the showers are equipped with hot water. The stands are also laid out so that you can barely see your neighbour.

During our three days at Tsendze, we drive every single road around Mopani and Letaba, where we see huge herds of elephants and buffalo. We also see a herd of about 15 wild dogs on the H14 road.

It's always great to see the Big Five, but for us, the wild dogs are a personal milestone.





A picnic and an unwanted visitor

Our next overnight stay is at Letaba, where we book into a chalet again. We visit the Elephant Museum and eat an ice cream in the Tindlovu restaurant with its beautiful view of the Letaba River.

Later in the afternoon we picnic at Masorini near the Sable waterhole while we watch game. You can rent a gas braai here for R20 to prepare a nice lunch.

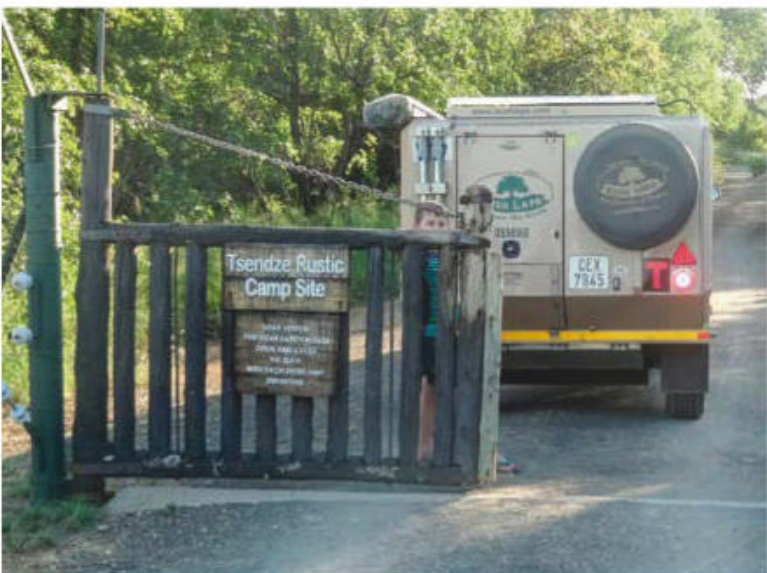
At Letaba we park in front of the restaurant and walk around to explore the camp and visit the shop. When we return, bystanders warn us not to get into the bakkie: they'd spotted a Mozambican spitting cobra get into our bakkie's chassis. The kitchen staff and holidaymakers flock together to watch what we would do.

Fortunately, one of the rangers is a trained snake handler, and when

the snake comes out from under the bakkie, he is there to catch it. It's not a Mozambican spitting cobra, but an Egyptian cobra. The ranger takes the snake and says he is going to release it somewhere in the veld... far from Letaba's parking lot.

From here we travel to Satara where we will camp for two nights. The stands aren't demarcated or numbered and you can camp where you want. The ablution facilities aren't new anymore, but clean and tidy.

Satara is known for its lions, and it instantly lives up to its reputation: not even 800 m from the camp gate, just off the tar road, two lions lie sleeping next to a zebra carcass. The cars gather around this scene and before long, there's a traffic jam that makes Johannesburg's peak traffic look tame by comparison. >



WELCOME TO JUNGLE. The Venters and their friends drove from the top all the way down through the Kruger National Park. Both parties towed Bush Lapa trailers behind Toyota Hilux bakkies. One of the highlights of the Kruger was a 15-strong pack of wild dogs near Tzendze.





A true experience

After our two nights at Satara we leave for Skukuza, but we first drive to the southernmost baobab tree in the park to take a photo. We decide to drive via Lower Sabie because we haven't seen a single rhino yet. A guy at Satara told us the rhinos are more prevalent in the south, at camps such as Lower Sabie and Berg-en-Dal. We can't be in the Kruger for 10 days and not see every member of the Big Five.

With some luck, and thanks to Henri's razor-sharp eyes, we see two of them. We stay there almost an hour and see how they get closer and finally cross the tar road. It's an experience money can't buy.

You're very aware of rhino poaching when in the park. They no longer indicate on the notice boards where people have spotted rhinos and at the park gates they search your car, while the anti-poaching bakkies are a common sight. As a result, you are grateful for every rhino you see.

Pilgrim's Rest and Graskop

On our second day at Skukuza we decide to leave the park through the Paul Kruger gate and head for Pilgrim's Rest and Graskop. After eight days of never driving faster than 50 km/h, 120 km/h feels really fast.

We drive to Pilgrim's Rest and walk

PREDATORS. When it comes to game, the Kruger doesn't disappoint. In one game drive the Venters saw all the members of the famous Big 5.



through the village. It's sad to see how many of the buildings are closed. We talk to the lady at the coffee shop, and she says the buildings belong to the state and that they put out tenders for maintenance. But the place is deteriorating and there are fewer tenants.

It's a great pity.

We take family photos at the Kuzullos Emporium. It is a wonderful experience we'll never forget.

We also visit the new Graskop Gorge lift that opened in December 2017. It's the only one of its kind in the Southern >





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HOW HIGH. The Graskop Ravine should be on everyone's bucket list. The lift down the cliff face is the only one of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. It opened in 2017 and is well worth a ride.

Hemisphere, with a lift down 51 m to a cliff. Here you walk 600 m on elevated paths in a rainforest to the Panorama Gorge waterfall.

There are suspension bridges on the way and you can walk it at your own speed. It costs R175 p.p. (R120 for children). There's also a lovely restaurant and an art market. After lunch we decide to visit God's Window. The clouds are threatening, but fortunately it doesn't rain and we get beautiful photos and

the most beautiful views from there.

After Skukuza, we head through Pretoriusskop to Berg-en-Dal where we spend the last night. We drive the Old Wapad, or the "Jock of the Bushveld" road as it is known. Henri loves history and we stop to read every plaque.

We book a sundowner game drive at Berg-en-Dal to end our holiday. It costs R306 p.p. (R153 for children). We see many animals and even the leopard, which is usually very shy, was easy to spot. We are very happy to see four of the Big Five on our game drive in the space of 15 minutes.

The long way home

After 10 days in the Kruger we leave the park at the Malalane gate and tackle the 1 786 km home. As my one friend always says: "The Kruger has a magical effect on a person. For a few days after a visit to the park you are on your own planet." I think it's partly because of all the expectation; in the Kruger you could come across a big cat, rhino or elephant at any moment. You just have to be in the right place at the right time.

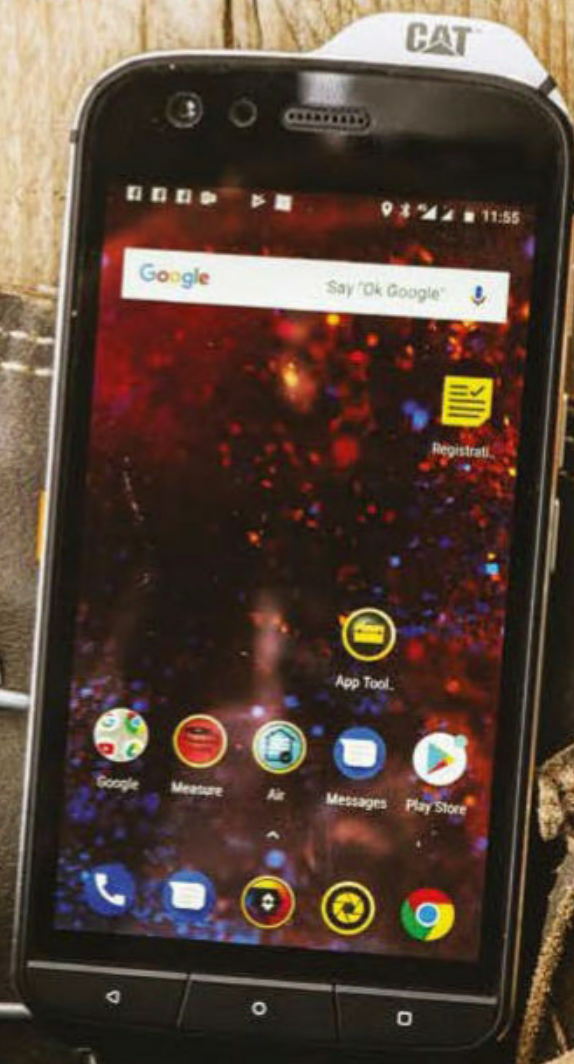
I read once there are three types of campers: those currently camping in the Kruger National Park, those who are on their way, and those who are on their way back there again. I think I'm now in the third group, hoping to return back up north soon.



Jeannie wins a **Camp Cover** Bundu-bag worth R500. This multifunctional bag is designed to be used as an emergency medical supplies bag or simply a suitcase. Go check Camp Cover's full range of protective covers on their website. campcover.co.za



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mu-X

success

After 20 years, Isuzu is back in the SUV market. We take their mu-X on a tow test to see how it performs.

Text and photos **Leon Botha**

ISUZU MU-X 3.0 4X4



The mu-X is Isuzu's only sports utility vehicle on our roads and follows in the footsteps of the old Frontier. This model was known in Japan as the Isuzu MU, or Mysterious Utility.

Today, you get to choose between two models. Both have a 3 l diesel engine and automatic gearbox. It's just the drive train that sets them apart – a 4x4, like our test vehicle, and a 4x2, which costs R62 000 less.

What big eyes you have...

Yes, the mu-X is a big car – it feels as if it belongs in the company of a Toyota Prado.

Inside, the mu-X is surprisingly spacious, especially in the rear. It's even got two extra seats

in the loading space. The spare wheel is a full-size alloy wheel and, as with bakkies, is stowed underneath the car against the undercarriage.

Below the cargo bay floor is a shallow box with a lid and



of the bumper (this means it also doesn't interfere too much with the mu-X's departure angle if you're about to tackle a steep incline on a 4x4 obstacle course).

Also, you can use a drop plate if you want to adjust the ball height.

The towbar is built by Brink Towing Systems and is certified for a 2 965 kg towing weight. That's in line with what Isuzu permits – on the towbar there's a warning sign that your caravan's GVM may not exceed 2 965kg.

Usually, the D-value – a number referring to a specific cargo test – appears on Brink's towbars, but Brett Zietsman of Brink Towing Systems says Isuzu asked them to rather show the GVM value.

The nose weight may not exceed 100 kg. >

FRACTION. The tow bar is optional and its cost equates to less than 1% of the mu-X's value. Considering the Isuzu's pulling power, it makes perfect sense to have one fitted.

“
The towbar is built by Brink Towing Systems and is certified for a 2 965 kg towing weight.

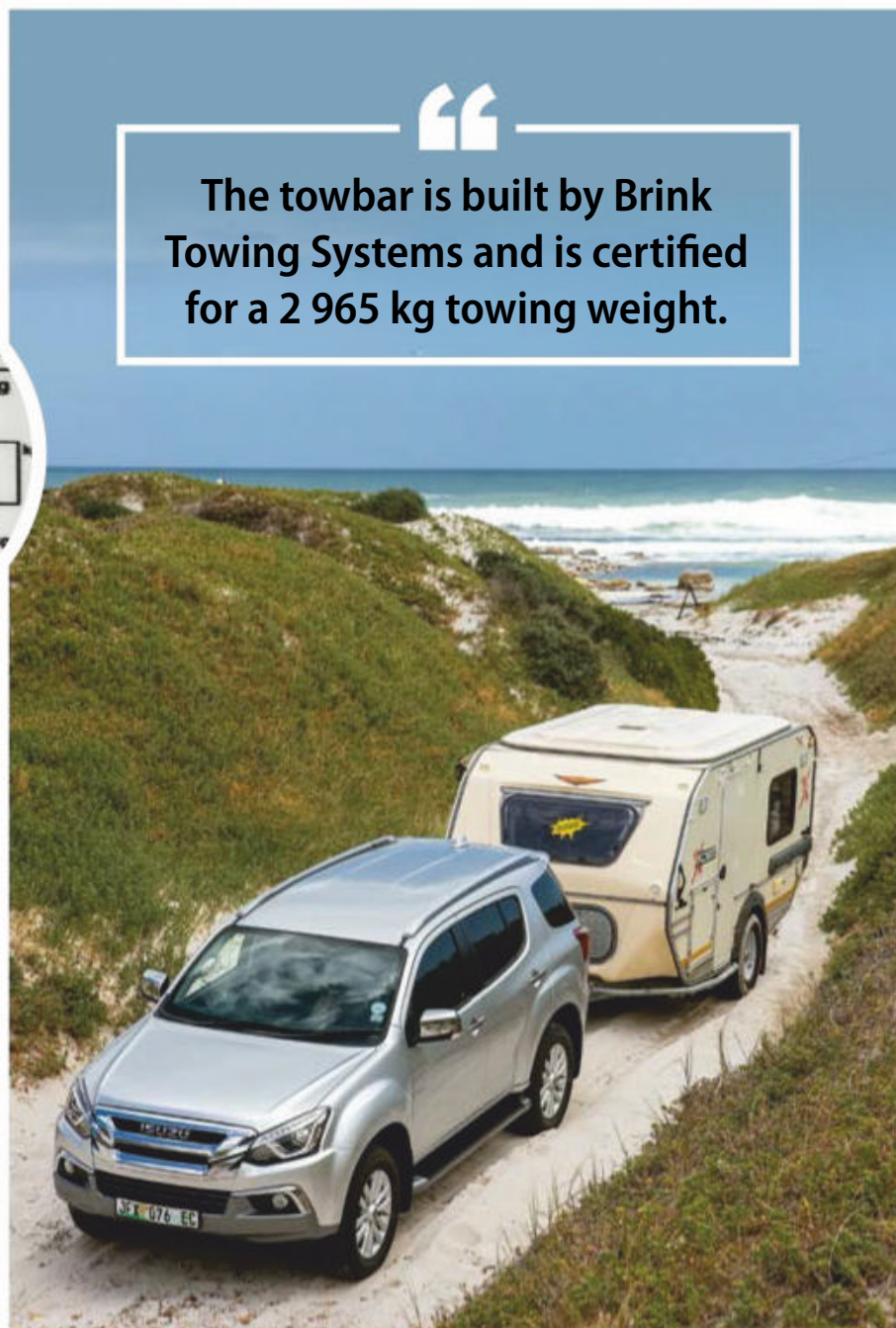
three compartments. The box runs the width of the cargo bay, is 11 cm deep and is a useful storage space for a first aid kit or valuable items you want to keep out of sight.

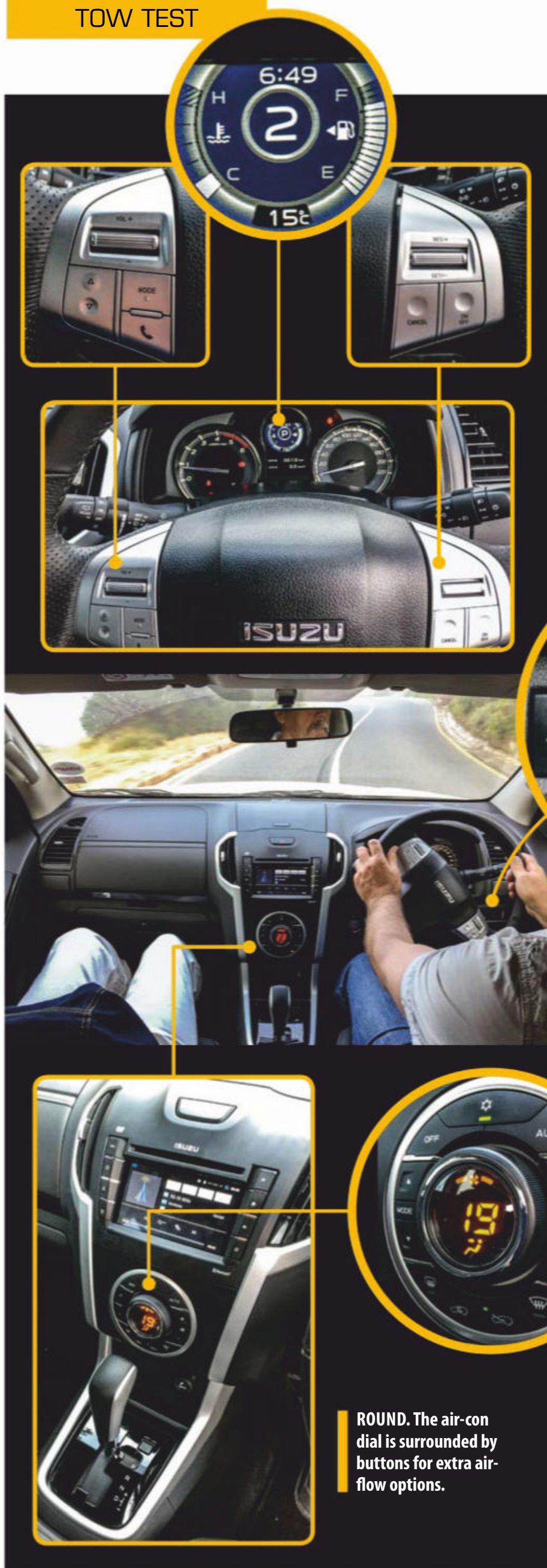
From the get-go, place one of those blue Fredlin plugs for a caravan in there now... it's something that's easily

forgotten. (We know this from experience. – Ed)

A modest giant

The towbar could hardly be any more robust. Most of it is nicely hidden behind the bumper – it curves around the spare wheel and the ball section fits neatly to the bottom





Step inside

Although it's roomy, the mu-X's interior looks a tad ordinary. The panels look plasticky, but there is leather upholstery covering the top panel box.

The rear-view digital display looks lost in the enormous centre console and the image is barely 14 cm across and only 7,5 cm tall.

The screen's index lines are not animated and won't curve as you turn the steering wheel while reversing.

You can see the ball of the towbar on the screen – right in the middle of the image.

The computer cannot register a caravan that's on the towbar and the park sensors shriek when reversing with a caravan it tow. We couldn't find a way to deactivate this system.

In front of the gear lever, in the panel below the air-con button, are three USB ports.

Each of the ports has a rubber cover that you need to hook with a fingernail to open, but it's difficult to get your finger in there as the panel of the air-con runs right up against the ports.

There's an additional USB port by the middle row seats with a similar cover, but it's more easily accessed.

The passengers in the middle row are not at the mercy of the driver when it comes to adjusting the air-con.

They have access to a knob in the ceiling that allow the passengers to adjust the air-con (there's a vent near it).

Above the fold-up seats in the luggage space are two more vents, but no control.



ROUND. The air-con dial is surrounded by buttons for extra air-flow options.



FANCY PANTS. The seats are upholstered in leather, and yet they appear modest. The under-floor stowage bin is a welcome addition.



There aren't many vehicles **Pieter Crous** hasn't used to tow something. Here are his impressions of the mu-X.

Pieter says

“The instrument panel in front of you looks a little squeezed and flattened, but all the information is clearly legible, and the computer's readings are very simple – it's just a distance meter and a feature that shows your fuel consumption. The round meter

above it is multi-purpose: here you see several readings at a glance. This includes items like time, outside temperature, engine temperature, fuel level and gear mode. When you switch the gearbox to manual mode, it also shows you which gear you're in.

Furthermore, the interior is basic but neat. I like the round adjustable knob of the air-con with all the settings around it. This include the speed of the fan and the control the specific air vents.

The seats are comfortable but pretty hard and I suspect you'll feel it on long journeys.

The suspension is excellent, especially for towing, and it feels as if you're floating across the road – you're not even aware of the caravan.

The engine is noisy, and you can hear it clearly if you sit

inside. It's far too loud – Isuzu can do better to isolate the cabin to limit the noise. At a 100 km/h the wind noise inside the cabin is really bothersome.

I like the Rev-Tronic gearbox, because it works against the compression of the engine. So, if you reduce speed – or tow downhill – it will shift to a lower gear as you would with a manual towing vehicle. This also means that you don't have to rely the brakes when driving down a mountain pass.

In addition, the car stays in a gear longer and doesn't run as quickly as possible through the gears to get into sixth.

The gearbox hunts around for gears when you remain at tow speed. However, when you need to accelerate, the gearbox responds immediately and instantly selects the correct gear. > ”

Before reaching for your wallet

What does the book say?

Fuel Diesel

Engine 2,999 ℓ

Cylinders 4

Power 130 kW @ 3,600 rpm

Torque 380 Nm @ 1

800-2 800 rpm

Transmission 6-speed automatic

Drive train Rear wheels or all four wheels (with low-range gears) without diff lock, but caravan sway control is standard.

Tare 2 085 kg

GVM 2 750 kg

GCM 5 750 kg

Wading depth 600 mm

Towing ability for trailer with overrun brakes Up to 3 000 kg

Dimensions 4 825 mm (l);

1 860 mm (w); 1 860 mm (h)

Axle distance 2 845 mm

Track width 1 570 mm (front and rear)

Ground clearance 230 mm

Fuel tank 65 ℓ

Price (new) R638 600

Price (second hand) We saw a 2018 model with 14 735 km on [autotrader.co.za](https://www.autotrader.co.za) for R465 750.

Fast facts

The hitch Not standard and costs R4 432 extra (excluding labour).

Suspension Independent coil suspension in front and multi-link rear coil suspension at the back. This explains why the tail dropped a good 4 cm when

hitching the caravan.

Weight? 2 280 kg with a full tank of fuel and the driver in the car (without the nose weight of the caravan on the tow bar).

Interior On the back seat, a six-foot person will have the width of a hand in front of the knees and four fingers above the crown.

Speed The speedometer shows 5 km/h faster than the GPS's 95 km/h.

Fuel consumption 12,7 ℓ/100 km (7,9 km/ℓ) according to our calculations – the computer says 13,5 ℓ/100 km (7,4 km/ℓ). So, you can tow 500 km before you need a petrol station.

Finishes Interior finish predominantly black with shiny black and dull silver parts.

Extras Apart from the tow bar, these include a stainless steel nudge bar R5 387, stainless steel side steps R6 163 and a tyre-pressure monitor system R2 850. All prices exclude installation. See [isuzuaccessories.co.za](https://www.isuzuaccessories.co.za) for the full list.

Other models?

Just the 4x2 R576 600

go! Drive & Camp says

Isuzu recommends a 90 km/h towing speed, and you should also not tow with cruise control on.



The test

Distance 119 km

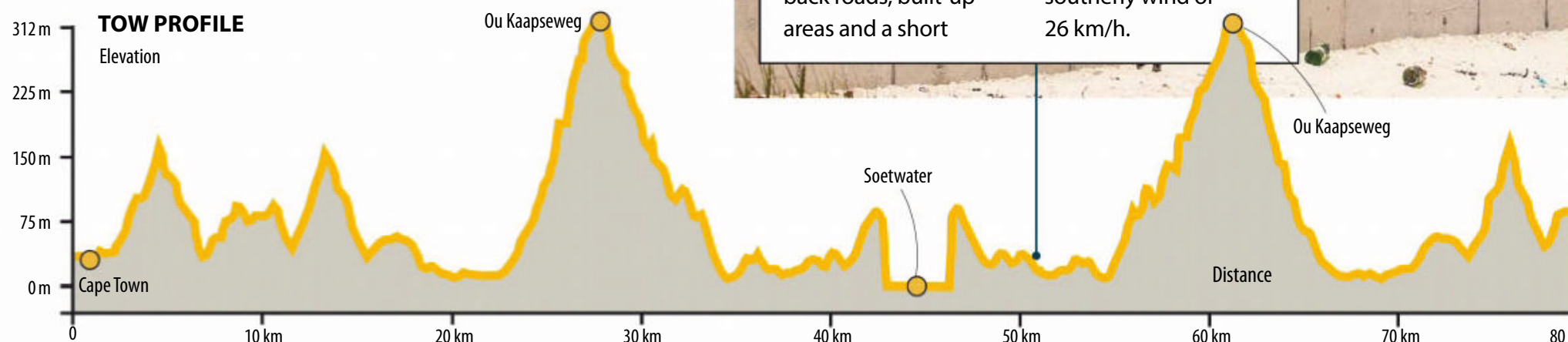
Top speed 112 km/h (GPS)

Average speed 58,6 km/h (highways, back roads, built-up areas and a short

stretch of sand road).

Drive time 2 hours and 2 minutes.

Weather 18 °C, partly cloudy and a strong southerly wind of 26 km/h.





What we towed

Make Jurgens Safari

Model Xplorer Xcell

Year model 2013

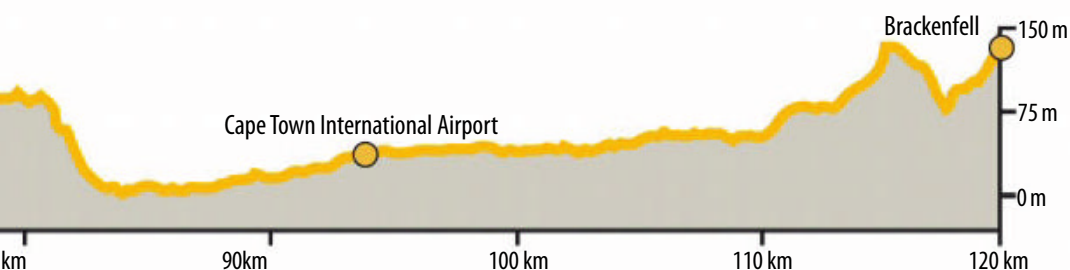
GVM 1 650 kg

Loaded weight on the axle

at time of testing 980 kg

(hooked to the mu-X).

go! Drive & Camp loaned the Jurgens Xcell from Tygerberg Caravans. Call Wesley Dempster at 021 982 4670 if you want to see the Xcell up close. Visit their website tygerbergcaravans.co.za



From the competition

(diesel, automatic and 4x4)



R696 900

Ford Everest XLT 3.2

470 Nm

+9%

+23%



R678 200

Toyota Fortuner 2.8 GD-6

450 Nm

+6%

+19%



R519 995

Mitsubishi Pajero Sport 2.4 D4 Mivec

430 Nm

-1,5%

+13%

Stealth puts its best foot forward

The KwaZulu-Natal caravan manufacturer Stealth has launched its first model. The Evolution XR6 boasts a fresh approach and an innovation or two.

Text and photos **Leon Botha**



When talking about older caravan models, there are three shortcomings. Firstly, they're too tall to fit into a standard garage; secondly, there's always the possibility of wood rot; and lastly, the indoor kitchen doesn't appeal to everyone.

This is where Stealth approaches things differently with its Evolution XR6 road caravan because it fits in your garage, has no wood in the panels and its exterior kitchen has more than one unique feature. The caravan's panels have a high-density polystyrene core with fibreglass outer skins, and the galvanised duplex steel chassis is three times stronger than an ordinary steel chassis.

We hitch the Evolution and go camping for a weekend to try one out of the newest caravans on our roads.



STEALTH EVOLUTION XR6



Food prep

The door and outside kitchen are on the left side of the caravan, with the door to the right of the wheel. An outside cupboard, the door of which becomes a worktop, is diagonally left above the wheel.

Two poles support the door as worktop (51 x 61 cm) when you swing it down – one

fits left between the worktop and the hull, and the other is an extendable leg that stands on the ground.

A rubber strip that's part of the door seal, runs around the worktop and forms a lip around it – crumbs will hide here when wiping down the surface. A smooth edge would

be more practical, but then the seal becomes obsolete. However, the worktop is at a comfortable hip height when you fold it down.

In the cupboard are three shelves with a 220 V double socket to the left of the middle shelf – a good spot for a kettle or toaster's plug.

Below the worktop is a rain-resistant 220 V socket. On the two upper shelves is place for a lunch box or three plus spice bottles, and the crockery sit on the bottom shelf.

Here, the plates, cups, glasses and pudding trays fit into a cut-out sponge mould, so they don't rattle around while driving. It's a bit cramped and the upright plates can be tricky to get out.

Above the shelf against the hull is an LED.

Strut its stuff

The Evolution has a corner steady at every corner, but the front and rear sets differ: at the back you have scissor types, while at the front are the swing types you see more often on off-road trailers. These front steadies set up easier and quicker than the scissor type but have their limitations when standing on a slope. The steadies have a fixed length and work well when the caravan is on level ground. But when the ground slants up under the front steadies closer to the hull, the steadies can't swing down to be at a right angle before cranking down its foot. >



Get those pots simmering

A sliding drawer containing a two-plate gas stove and a loose plastic wash basin for the washing dishes pulls out from the left cupboard near the nose. It slides out a good 116 cm from the hull, and the worktop surface is lower than that of the other one above the wheel. This one sits just over 80 cm above the ground, which is nice for a pot on the stove. The sink is at the far end from the caravan and is sunk into the worktop. Next to the sink is a nozzle that's attached to a flexible water pipe, but because the sink is submerged, you need to lean over slightly when doing the dishes.

With the drawer pulled out, the stove sits crosswise in the worktop. Between the stove and the sink at

the other end there's a 44 cm open piece, which gives enough workspace next to the stove. Stealth gets a thumbs up for the wind shield that protects the gas stove from the wind. A screen as wide as the stove folds up against the caravan and stops fat splashes from landing on the caravan. Another screen then folds up from the opposite corner and hooks into the other screen. It forms a 36 cm high L-shaped cover that keeps away the wind. We had the Cape Doctor pumping at almost 40 km/h and the stove's flame never went out.

Just like the other appliances (including the microwave and fridge), the stove is a Defy. It's not connected to the gas cylinder; you have to remove the loose cylinder from the nose cone and bring it closer. The

stove works with a gas regulator that provides a modest flame (unlike a high-pressure stove without a regulator).

A cutlery tray pulls out between the stove and the sink, with a loose stainless-steel top (74 cm long and optional at R1 323) that hooks next to the washing up basin as an extra worktop. Unfortunately, the hooks are two flimsy hinges.

At the front

The Stealth's nose cone is nice and practical. The lid lifts so it is completely out of the way, and the opening (151 x 50 cm) is about the size of the space itself, which means you can effortlessly load and unload camping equipment.

The 25 l water bottle stands to the left in the nose-cone and the 5 kg gas cylinder to the right. There is still room for your camping chairs and

The quieter side

In the right-hand side of the hull there is only one cupboard that is an extension of the kitchen storage space. The rail for this drawer sits nearly a meter deep, away from the door, and the space is great for extra storage – items including your tent pegs, a small fan and your handheld drill, for example.

The Evolution's power plug also sits on the side, close to the wheel.



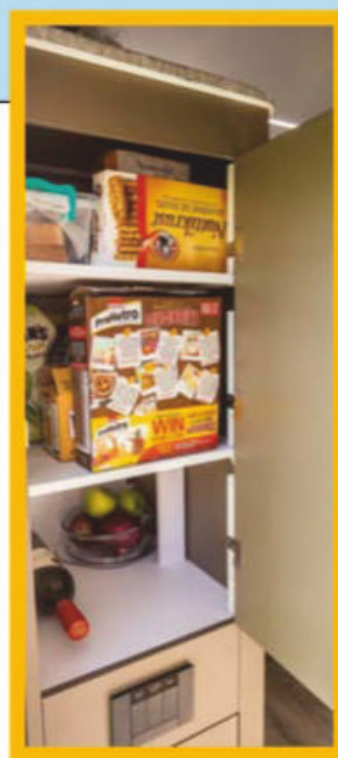
groundsheet. The spare wheel is not in the middle of the cupboard as usual, but on a rack at the back under the hull.

When the nose-cone door is open, it rests on a thin metal strut. Gas struts – or even a second strut on the left – would work better. In front of the nose cone (and over the A-frame) is a fibreglass cover with two

flattened
surfaces
on the

sides. It acts as a stepping platform for when you want to reach for something by the roof.

On either side of the nose cone, at the bottom corners of the hull, are white lights that work with your vehicle's lights. When you look in the side mirrors, you see both just past your car's body. They come in handy if you want to reverse in a straight line backwards in the dark, because should the caravan twist, you wouldn't be able to see both lights.



Let's go inside

The door has a sunken stair that's 30 cm high, which means you don't need a loose step. Standing outside the door, the top of the door frame is 1,82 m from the ground – high enough and out of the way.

Inside the caravan, directly to the left of the door, is a grocery cupboard with three shelves that you can reach from outside the caravan too. The switches for the internal and external lights and the water-pump are just below the cupboard (above the fire extinguisher). The interior lights are two flat LED strips against the pop-up roof that illuminates the interior.

The pop-up roof lifts 46 cm which raises it to 1,91 m above the floor. For this size caravan, the interior space is amazing. As you get in, the fridge is in front of you, against the panel. To the right

is a dining nook and to the left you'll find the island bed with its head on the side of the A-frame. The open area in front of the door is a good 1,1 x 1,35 m and two people can comfortably stand here.

When you get in and look back at the door, there is a cabinet to the right of the door with four cupboards. The cupboard on the top left opens to the same space as the one you open from the door. The cabinet directly underneath it doesn't have shelves, but houses the circuit breakers (and the wheel arch takes up space). The top right cabinet also has three shelves, of which the bottom two are the open shelves of the outside kitchen. This cupboard, as well as the one below it, has two sliding doors each. The plates and the rest of the crockery, which you can also get to from outside, are on the bottom shelf (this is also the top shelf of the bottom cabinet).

>

An almost indoor kitchen

The 158 l fridge has two plastic clasps with nylon belts that together secure the doors while towing. The microwave oven is chest height to the left of the fridge with a large cupboard for pots and pans under it.

The vanity basin (R2 748) is optional and fits left of the microwave on a lower surface. There's also a 220 V socket for two- and three-point plugs as well as two USB ports. A mirror on the wall would be nice.



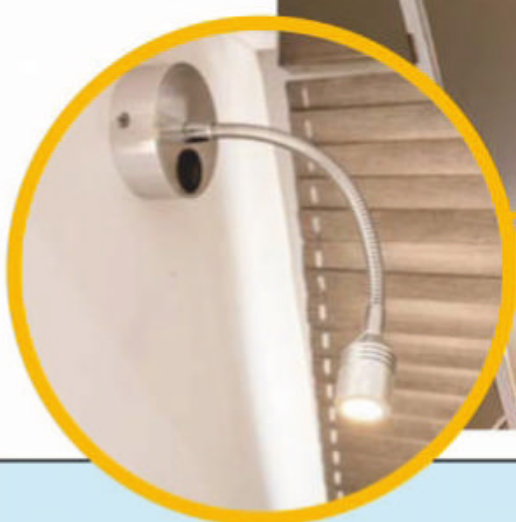
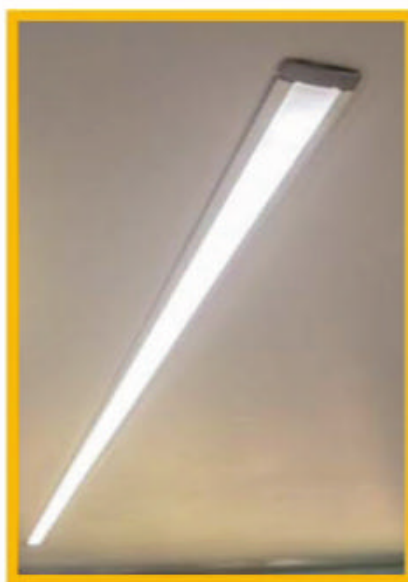
Sweet dreams...

The island bed is a queen size (1,4 x 1,94 m) but tapers towards the foot-end, where it is only 58 cm wide. You have to turn sideways to get past the corners of the mattress.

Along and above the bed are no less than 15 cupboards or drawers for your clothes, and something you don't see often are two drawers that pull out on both sides from under the bed. Furthermore, each person gets their own bedside table.

Above the bed's head are three cupboards across the entire width of the caravan. Your pillows are directly underneath it (about 60 cm) – so take care when sitting up that you don't smack your head. In the left-hand cabinet is a power socket (the same as at the sink). On each side is a reading lamp with a flexible arm.

The Evolution has four windows with aluminium frames and 4 mm safety glass, and all can open. All the windows have aluminium blinds.

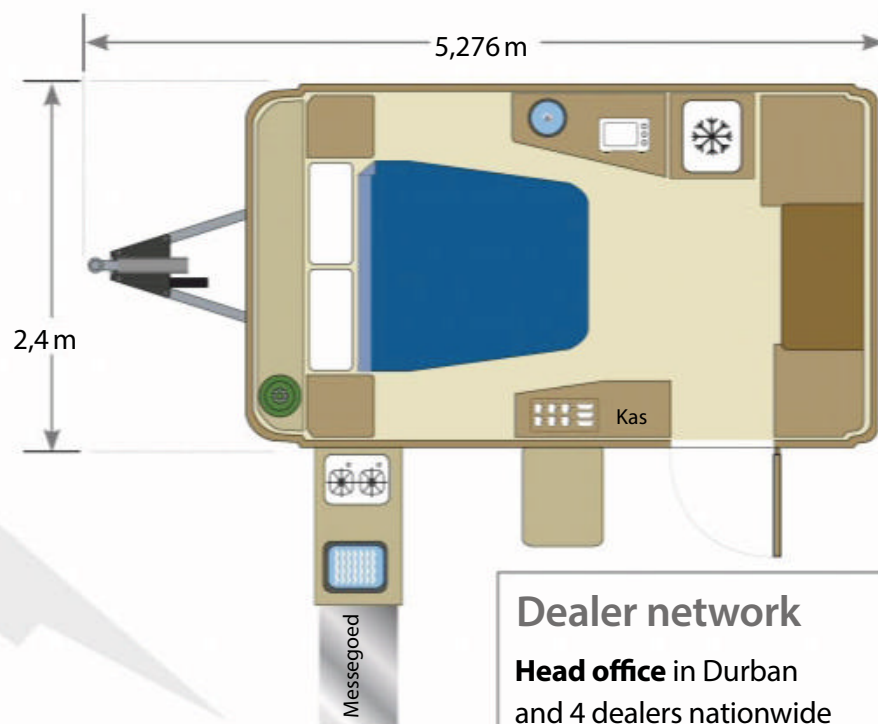
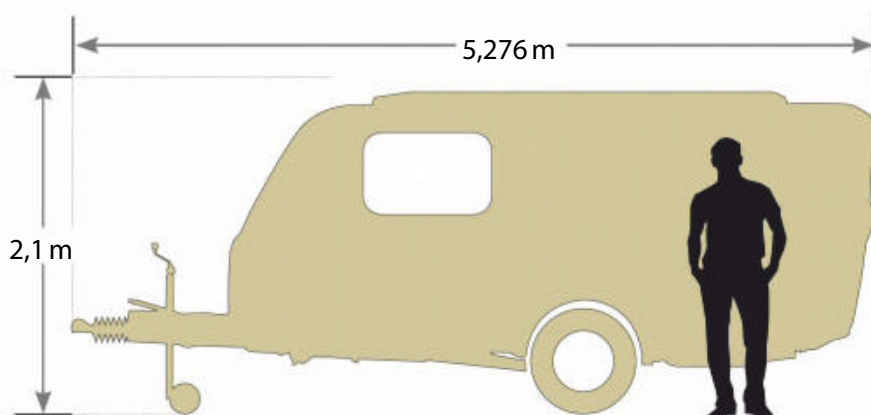




Grub's up!

The dining area is at the back, to the right of the door as you enter. On each of the back corners is a bench with a collapsible table in between. It's spacious for two people, but the top of your head is close to the roof. Underneath each of the two benches is storage space – ideal for winter bedding or items such as long-life milk and canned food.

The table top can be folded down if you need a bed for a third person. This bed extends over the entire width (229 cm) of the caravan and is at its narrowest 65 cm.



The technical stuff

Length 5,276 m

Width 2,4 m

Height 2,1 m

Ceiling height inside 1,91 m

Tare weight 1 050 kg

Payload 450 kg

GVM 1 500 kg (1,6 t-axes)

Price R285 000



Plus

- There's no wood in the panels, and the fibreglass finish means minimal maintenance.
- The screen around the stove works well.
- The caravan has ample open space for two people.
- With all the cupboards above and along the island bed, plus the drawers under the bed,

there is more than enough storage space.

- The nose cone's door is big and you can easily reach into the entire space.



Minus

- The worktop has an edge that could collect dirt and crumbs.
- The front corner steadies work well, provided you're on a level stand.
- The crockery drawer is slightly cramped.
- The vanity sink could do with a mirror.

- The electrical equipment won't operate without external 220 V power supply. A 12 V conversion, however, is available at R11 686.

go! Drive & Camp loaned the Stealth Evolution XR6 from Tygerberg Caravans in Cape Town. Call Wesley Dempster at 021 982 4670 if you want to see it up close.

go! Drive & Camp says The Evolution comes with 14" tyres (185/R14) with steel rims. A spare wheel is included. 🚗

Dealer network

Head office in Durban and 4 dealers nationwide (Loftus Caravan City in Randburg, Kempton Caravans in Johannesburg, Natal Caravans & Marine in Pinetown, Tygerberg Caravans in Cape Town).

Contact 031 713 8900

stealthcaravans.co.za



Sweet and SOUR... *and delicious!*

South Africans love a bit of sweetness with their sour, and these dishes are all a celebration of that particular food heritage.

Recipes and styling **Aletta Lintvelt** Photos **Michelle Parkin**

🔗 BEEF ON THE BONE POTJIE

Slowly does it

Beef on the bone makes for a very flavourful potjie. But you must simmer the meat slowly and for a long time so the bones can release all their flavours and the tendons in the meat soften and melt.

Ingredients

(enough for 6)

- 1,5 kg stewing beef
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tins (410 g each) chopped tomato
- 2 carrots, finely grated
- ½ cup brown vinegar
- ½ teaspoon fine nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 tablespoons Worcester sauce
- 4 tablespoons strong chutney
- salt and black pepper to taste

Here's how

1 Heat some oil in a pot and braai a few pieces of meat at a time until beautifully golden brown. (Don't try to braai the meat all at once, as it will steam, draw water and won't brown.) Remove the meat and set aside. Keep about 2 tablespoons of fat in the pot and dispose of the rest.

2 Add the rest of the ingredients to the fat in the pot. Heat to boiling, cover and simmer over moderate coals for 30 minutes.

3 Return the meat to the pot, put the lid back on and simmer for 2-3 hours or until the pot is fragrant and the meat comes off the bone. Check it after 2 hours: if the meat is almost right but the sauce is too thin, remove the lid and simmer for another 30 minutes. If the meat is not quite ready yet, but the sauce is getting low, add ½ cup of water and simmer with the lid for another 30 minutes or until soft and fragrant.

go! Drive & Camp says One or two chopped red chillies (without seeds) elevate this potjie from yummy to extraordinary.



🔗 CHICKEN THIGH POTJIE

Lip smackin' good!

A winning combination of apricot, port and deliciously tender chicken thighs...

Ingredients

(enough for 6)

- 1,5 kg of chicken portions on the bone
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 can (410 g) apricots
- ½ cup sweet wine or port
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons apricot jam
- juice and zest of 1 lemon
- salt and black pepper to taste

Here's how

1 Heat some oil in a potjie and braai a few chicken thighs at a time in the oil until the skin is golden brown and crisp. Remove, set aside and braai the next batch.

2 Place all chicken pieces back into the potjie, add the onions and sauté everything for about 5 minutes.

3 Stir in the rest of the ingredients, cover and simmer slowly over moderate coals for 90 minutes. Check after 60 minutes and remove the lid if the sauce is too thin.

go! Drive & Camp says Thicken the sauce with 1-2 tablespoons of cornflour – dissolve them in 2 tablespoons water first. >



COLOURFUL CABBAGE SALAD

Cabbage with crunch and zing

The sweet and sour tropical flavours of this cabbage salad work well with any chicken dish.

Ingredients

(enough for 4)

- 2 cups shredded red cabbage
- 1 carrot, coarsely grated
- ½ pineapple, cubed
- 1 red pepper, cubed
- 4 tablespoons coconut shavings (or dessicated coconut)
- 2 tablespoons wholegrain mustard
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- Fresh lemon juice to taste
- salt and black pepper to taste

Here's how

1 Mix together all the ingredients, taste and season. Keep it in the fridge until you need it.

go! Drive & Camp says You can also replace the coconut with peanuts.

SWEETCORN BAKE

Maize ablaze

This recipe is as old as the hills, but here it gets yoghurt and sriracha sauce to give it a bit of a kick while making it healthier.

Ingredients

(enough for 6)

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 eggs
- 3 cups whole kernel corn (fresh or canned)
- ½ cup Greek yoghurt
- 1 tablespoon sriracha sauce
- 1 cup grated cheddar
- a pinch of salt
- black pepper to taste

Here's how

1 Melt the butter in a 20 cm flat-bottomed potjie or cast-iron pan with a lid and sauté the onions until soft and glossy.

2 Beat the eggs with the corn, yoghurt, sriracha sauce and half the cheese in a mixing bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper and add it to the potjie. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese.

3 Cover and place the potjie over lukewarm coals – remember a few coals on top of the lid. Bake for 30 minutes (or slightly longer) until set.

go! Drive & Camp says For breakfast, add three chopped cooked pork sausages or ½ cup cooked bacon to the mixture before baking.





🍌 BANANA PUFFS Banana republic!

These puffs taste amazing served with ice cream or store-bought caramel sauce instead of cinnamon sugar. For breakfast, I serve them with fried bacon!

Ingredients

(enough for 6)

- 3 ripe bananas
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 egg, beaten
- 4 tablespoons milk
- 1 cup flour
- a pinch of salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- oil for braaiing
- cinnamon sugar

Here's how

- 1 Mash** the bananas and mix the pulp with the lemon juice, egg and milk.
- 2 Mix** together the flour, salt and baking powder. Stir the banana mixture into the flour mixture until just mixed.
- 3 Heat** 2 cm of oil in a cast-iron potjie and fry spoonfuls of batter until golden brown and cooked.
- 4 Sprinkle** the puffs with cinnamon sugar and eat while still hot.

go! Drive & Camp says Add ½ cup chocolate chips to the batter for a yummy twist.

🍖 CAMP SAUSAGE ROLLS A showstopper

A pack of pork sausages and a plain white bread... the perfect snack to enjoy as a starter before the main braai.

Ingredients

(enough for 4)

- 10 pork sausages
- 10 slices white bread
- 10 teaspoons chutney
- 10 teaspoons wholegrain mustard
- 3 eggs
- salt and black pepper to taste
- butter

Here's how

- 1 Braai** the sausages over the coals until just cooked – you can also cook them in a pan. Because you will braai it again later, don't let them get too dry now.
- 2 Roll** the slices of white bread once lightly with a wine bottle to make them slightly flatter to make them easier to roll around the sausages.
- 3 Spread** a thin line of chutney and mustard in the middle of each slice. Put a sausage on the mustard and roll the bread around the sausage.
- 4 Beat** the eggs and season to taste with salt and pepper. Dip the sausage rolls in the egg mixture.
- 5 Melt** enough butter to cover the bottom of a pan and fry a few sausage rolls at a time until golden brown. Serve immediately with extra mustard and chutney.

go! Drive & Camp says For extra yumminess, wrap each sausage in a slice of cheese before placing it on the bread!



Tough talk

If you're camping in extreme weather or will be using your smartphone in an unforgiving environment, then consider one of these rugged phones for peace of mind.

Text **Kyle Kock** Photos **James Garaghty**

CAT S61

Tradesman's tool

The Caterpillar brand has become synonymous as the choice for tough outdoorsmen such as lumberjacks. Living up to that kind of image is a tall order, so you can take it to the bank that these are hardy devices. The S61 is a traditional looking phone with the kind of antenna stump that the cellphones of 20 years ago used to have, and it's also quite thick.

It's tough, of course, but S61 has a trick up its sleeve: a forward-looking infrared lens (FLIR) that acts in conjunction with the rear camera to sharpen up images taken in the FLIR app. There are nine "filters" in the FLIR app that give you options such as night vision, white hot imaging and blue cold spot (ideal for

If you're a smartphone user, there's a good chance that you've dropped the thing while doing something as simple as crossing the road, or perhaps a toddler decided to skate with it across the bathroom tiles, or maybe it was engulfed by the soft sand of a 4x4 trail while you were digging your off-roader out of the powder. Heaven forbid it slides out of your shirt pocket and into the toilet bowl...

We've assembled four of the toughest phones on the market right now. To make your choice easier, they're all IP68 rated and at the upper end of the market.

IP68 – what's it to you?

IP is short for Ingress Protection, and the first number generally refers to how well your device will be able to resist being exposed to substances such as dust, sand and dirt. For the entry to mid-level devices out there, this number might be a five, which means that it won't be able to completely keep dust or sand out, but the device should still be able

to work to a satisfactory level with some dust present. If the first number is a six, then it's pretty much safe in dusty conditions.

The second number is the really interesting one because this represents how resistant your device is to water. Most affordable devices come with a rating of three or four, which means it's good for when your phone is exposed to cloud bursts or when that boisterous kid at the resort's pool manages to soak you and your phone with a huge cannonball splash.

A rating of five or six means that the device will withstand continued projection of water from specific size nozzles, 6,3 mm and 12,5 mm respectively.

A number seven for liquid resistance means that the device can be submerged for a set time (around 30 minutes) and down to a depth of 1 metre – without the ingress of water. When the number is eight, that indicates that the device is submersible beyond 1 metre. This doesn't mean that the device is completely waterproof though,

because nothing ever is.

The current highest rating is a nine, but that's reserved for equipment that's pretty much airtight.

The moral of the story is that you don't need to worry about a minor spill on your device if it has an IP rating of 3 and up. If



your device is packing a rating of 7 or 8, then you can take it to the resort pool without having to worry too much about whether it falls in the drink. If it does, get it out quickly and dry it as soon as possible, though.

The IP tests are done in controlled (laboratory) environments with fresh water. The chemicals present in a pool or the salt content of the ocean may have an adverse effect on the water resistance of your device, especially when it gets exposed to them for long periods of time.

We've assembled four of the toughest phones on the market right now. To make your choice easier, they're all IP68 rated.

detecting leaks behind walls).

Another cool app called Measure uses a laser beam to measure distances up to eight metres. You simply need to calibrate it first using a known distance and then aim the laser at, for example, your Conqueror Commander.

It will not only show you the distance between you and your caravan, but after you've captured the image through the app, you can then check the dimensions of everything in the image.

Then there's an app called Air, which uses a sensor to measure the quality of the air around you, and also inform you of the temperature, humidity and how long you can remain exposed to that environment without

suffering serious effect.

As if all of these features aren't impressive enough, you're can also operate the touch screen wearing gloves or with wet fingers.

go! Drive & Camp says
It's the Swiss Army Knife of mobile phones.

Length	 163 mm
Width	 78 mm
Thickness	 13 mm
Weight	 260 g
Screen size	 5,2"
Battery capacity	4 500 mAh
Rear camera	 16 MP
Front camera	 8 MP
Price	 from R16 675
	from CAT Phones SA >





AGM A9 PRO

Bang for buck

If you're a fan of large screens and seamless designs, but also want a device that's tough as nails, then look no further than the AGM A9 Pro. The Gorilla Glass covers almost the entire face of the device, with only the slightest bit of the aluminium case and rubberised corners sticking out. Given the physical size, they could have added loads of onboard memory and RAM capacity, but for the price, it's still a decent offering, with the Android 8.1 Oreo operating system installed and impressive visuals offered by the almost six-inch screen. The battery is also quite impressive, allowing you to easily push to way over a day on a single charge and still be able to use a full suite of apps. You might think that a screen of this size is a handicap for a rugged phone, but the AGM held up during our own drop test – face down on ceramic tiles from a height of 1 metre. *(Kyle just doesn't want to admit he dropped the phone. – Ed)*

Length	168 mm
Width	81,4 mm
Thickness	12,6 mm
Weight	245 g
Screen size	5,99"
Battery capacity	5 400 mAh
Rear camera	16 MP
Front camera	8 MP
Price	R7 250 from Rugged SA

If your hands aren't Bakkies Botha-sized, then you don't need to worry, because this phone encourages you to wrap your hand around the device, slightly higher than you do with a smaller mobile. The fingerprint sensor is mounted quite high up, just under the flash for the rear camera, and you would need to use your index finger to unlock the phone. Your hand position is then actually perfect.

go! Drive & Camp says A very agreeable price makes this hard to ignore.

LAND ROVER EXPLORE

Outdoors come standard

It's a name that's revered in off-roading circles, but not so much when it comes to mobile devices. Well, the Land Rover phone was launched to much acclaim in 2018, as the first from an automobile manufacturer.

This one has tough shoes to fill, and the pressure's especially high because this is the company's first real attempt. Obviously, it's not meant for everyone and if your idea of being adventurous is adding pineapple and banana to your pizza after your morning yoga session then this is probably not the phone for you. No, this is for the hairy chested explorers who delight in the idea of rafting down the most treacherous stretches of white water.

The phone also comes with an Adventure Pack. Simply put, it's like a powerbank that clips onto the back of the phone with



magnets. Not only does it nearly double the phone's battery life, courtesy of its additional 3 620 mAh, but it also comes with a proper GPS antenna – just like your Garmin or TomTom unit does.

The Land Rover Dashboard also enables you to customise your adventures according to the type of activity that you find yourself driving to on the weekend, including kayaking, hiking, mountain biking and all sorts of other thrills. Each tab in the dashboard has recommended apps that you can access on Google Play that will enhance the experience of using your phone.

go! Drive & Camp says This one's ideal for the extreme sportsperson.

Length..... 152 mm
Width76.5 mm
Thickness..... 12 mm
Weight..... 405 g
Screen size5"
Battery capacity.....4 000 mAh
Rear camera 16 MP
Front camera8 MP
Price..... R13 500 from Agent Zero



AGM X2 SE

Fashionably tough

This is without a doubt the prettiest unit to look at out of this bunch. With polished metal bordering the glass screen and faux crocodile leather on the back cover. Its dual rear camera system, supplied by Sony, will also guarantee the fanciest landscape photos. Social-media conscious types will also be grateful for the 16-megapixel selfie camera.

Looks and images aside, the X2 SE is still a pretty tough device, with black aluminium construction and a Gorilla Glass 5 screen cover to take the hardest of knocks. Without the use of an aftermarket cover, the X2 SE has enlarged rubberised corners that come built in.

If you don't want the hassle of carrying two mobile devices around for business and personal use, then you'll be pleased to hear that the X2 SE has

Length.....168,5 mm
Width83,4 mm
Thickness14 mm
Weight260 g
Screen size5,5"
Battery life6 000 mAh
Rear camera dual-lens 12 MP
Front camera 16 MP
PriceR11 000 from Rugged SA

capacity for two sim cards, so you can switch between profiles, but only one will have access to 4g connectivity – depending on where you find yourself.

The one caveat of this device is that it uses a version of the Android operating system that is now two generations old, but it does make up for that by featuring the largest standard battery pack here, and in a relatively sleek body. You should be able to use this for more than two full days.

go! Drive & Camp says Ideal for when you want to get your hands dirty, but still like to look good.



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CAT Phones SA catphones.co.za

Rugged SA ruggedsa.co.za

Agent Zero agentzero.co.za

Keep calm in the storm

ILLUSTRATION DOMINIC WIENAND



Don't turn the car around because the weather won't be the way you want it. Here's how to camp in our worst local conditions.

Text **Kyle Kock** Photos **Getty Images**

You've booked a stand at that exclusive campsite a year in advance, but now that it's around the corner it seems you're in for inclement weather. Here's how to make the most out of your holiday even when others might think you're crazy for going anyway.

The lay of the land

Maybe you weren't paying attention during Grade 6 geography lessons or weren't particularly interested. Either way, there's an element of common sense that applies when it comes to where you pitch your tent or

park your caravan. For example, you can't complain about there being a lack of grass on your stand when yours is the one that has shade all day.

Some knowledge of what the weather patterns are like before you actually go and pitch camp won't hurt, either. To know, for example, how the months of November, December and January are particularly notorious for being extremely windy in Cape Town, turning what should otherwise be a pleasant summer's afternoon into a battle against the elements and throwing all consumables behind a shelter for

fear of having your drink laced with white beach sand.

Up north on the highveld, summer rains, especially in the late afternoon, are a common occurrence. The downpours don't last long, but the potential of muddy roads and camp stands definitely affects where you decide to camp.

You can use a smartphone app like Windy.com, which is free on the Apple App Store and Android's Google Play, to help you prepare for the week ahead. Not only does it give you a temperature forecast, but also cloud cover, rain and thunder,

wind, gusts and what the waves at your favourite surf spot will be looking like.

At the beach, or in the Karoo

Sand. It's fun when you're building castles with tunnels and moats, but it's not so much fun when it starts getting in the places you don't want it to. You need to keep it out of your tent and caravan, first of all. If you don't like the idea of a small electric handheld vacuum, which would be the most effective method of getting rid of any sand, then invest in a dustpan and brush. To help get the sand off your body, or those

of your kids, generously apply some baby powder to assist with dusting off the day's activities.

The sun will be out during the day, nice and hot. But the adverse effect of having prolonged exposure to the sun in an arid region or even on the coast is that you will especially feel the drop in temperature when the sun goes down. You will need to layer your clothing at night so you can keep warm when the mercury lowers.

Hot dang

Heading to a hot spot? Check fluid levels and service the towing vehicle and the caravan on time. Make sure the parts that are supposed to be lubricated are, so that you don't have failure as a result of excess heat.

Under-inflated tyres can generate massive amounts of heat. That coupled with extremely hot weather is a recipe for disaster. Distribute the weight of your gear evenly, and then check tyre pressures before a journey, preferably in cooler conditions.

Location is key. Look for a shady spot when you get to the campsite, under large trees or even shade netting where possible. Even better, call ahead to find out what will suit you and try to book a spot in advance. Park the side where the fridge-freezer is in the shade, and don't leave the fridge door open for long periods.

The voltage at a campsite could potentially fluctuate during the

summer months when people use air conditioners. Use a surge protector to protect your power system when the electricity spikes or drops.

Pull out the awnings and use the blinds and curtains to prevent direct sunlight from invading your stoep, and open the windows and vents to allow for proper circulation. Be sure to take along a heat reflective sheet. The coated type boasts a lot of longevity and generally results in a five-degree reduction in temperature. The laminated ones result in a much cooler area underneath it, and do so faster, but they generally don't last as long.

Camping in the cold

Make sure to drink warm liquids. Tea, coffee and hot chocolate all have their own fans, but soup takes the first prize. Not only will it keep you warm, but you'll also get a healthy dose of vitamins and minerals.

You're going to have to urinate often as well. Why? Have you ever relieved yourself into a container and had that container feel cold? No, we didn't think so. The longer you keep the pee in, the more energy your body uses keeping that fluid warm. Let it out so your body can reserve energy for heat.

Inside your tent or caravan, keep the vents open if you're going to burn some form of fuel in a small heater. And use a little USB-powered fan to keep the air moving inside your tent or caravan. The moving air also



helps with condensation. As far as possible, avoid air mattresses, because that massive pocket of air robs your body of warmth. Try to use a camping stretcher with a foldup or self-inflating mattress if you're in a tent, for example.

There's nothing quite like warm clothes when you're getting dressed the next day. You might not have an iron in your >

LOCATION, LOCATION. Finding the right spot can be as crucial as packing your favourite chair. Consider sand, sun and general convenience when picking a spot.





caravan, but you can fold tomorrow's outfit and keep that under your sleeping bag or sheet so that they can absorb some of your body heat. Also use a sleeping bag liner to get a few degrees more.

Waterwork

The obvious way to keep most of your campsite dry would be to stretch a tarp out over your tent and belongings if you aren't keen on sitting in a wet camping chair the following morning.

Lay one out underneath everything to make sure your floor is dry as well. Awnings and rally tents will do the job if you're in a caravan.

Before it starts to rain, take a walk and collect some a few dry pieces of kindling and keep them in a large Ziplock bag, so you won't have to struggle over the braai later on after



everything else is soaked.

If you're one of the lucky ones who managed to book a stand right on the banks of a river, you're going to want to monitor the water levels when it rains. Phone ahead to ask about the possibility of the river flooding its banks.

Those big black plastic bags aren't just for refuse. You can keep a few items, such as chairs, dry

and you can also just cut holes in the bottom and sides and wear it like a poncho.

When you're camping in an area that recently received heavy rain, be wary of pools and puddles of stagnant water as that's the perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes. You can burn sage around your campsite to keep the mozzies at bay.

COLD, WINDY & WET. Facing the elements puts any hardy camper to the test and, if not prepared for, could ruin an otherwise great time.

Wardrobe woes

There's no such thing as bad weather, though you can certainly some poor clothing choices – especially when it's very cold.

Fog comes in at night time, and the moisture content of the air is much higher than during the day. Certain synthetic fabrics do a better job of keeping the damp out, but good old wool is also warm and breathable. A windbreaker and rain jacket are non-negotiable as well. Try to pack a warm change of clothing, such as pyjamas or thermal underwear, so you can sleep in dry clothing at night, instead of just going to bed in the T-shirt that absorbed your perspiration all day.

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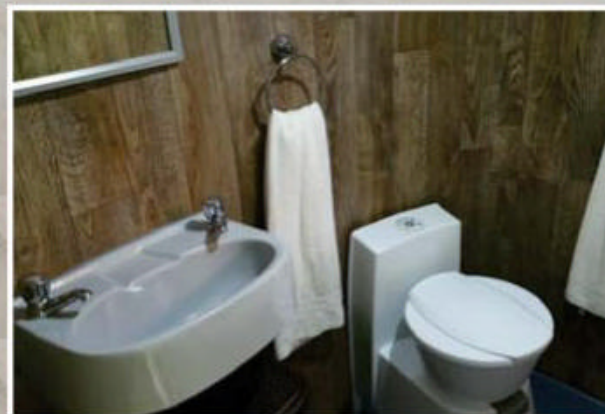
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School of Hard Knocks

How are crash tests performed, what does the crash-test rating mean and how does it affect your off-road vehicle?

Text Cyril Kloppe

More than 1 600 people died on South Africa's public roads between 1 December 2018 and 8 January 2019 according to the AA. During the course of just one Christmas holiday, there were about

400 more road deaths in our country than Australia's annual figure.

It seems as though neither the Minister of Transport's promises nor the Arrive Alive campaign could make our country's roads safer.

A reader, Nigel Amschwand, made

a suggestion in a letter that, going forward, we give the crash-test rating in the specification list of our car reviews. Good idea, Nigel, but let's first talk about the different kinds of crash-test authorities and the types of crash tests.



What is NCAP?

The very first New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) was established in the USA in 1979. Its original aim was to carry out standardised crash tests and thus encourage vehicle manufacturers to build safer automobiles.

Initially, NCAP's effectiveness was debatable, and vehicle manufacturers and motorists were not particularly concerned about the programme.

In 1993, the Australian government decided to do something about that country's dreadful reputation for road death rates and established its own version of the American assessment programme – ANCAP, followed by Japan's JNCAP in 1995.

NCAP eventually got some clout when the UK Department of Transport, with the support of the European Union, established the EuroNCAP.

Suddenly everyone focused on road safety and today there is KNCAP (Korea), C-NCAP (China), LatinNCAP (South America), ASEAN-NCAP (Southeast Asia) and GlobalNCAP (for Africa and India).

South Africans are still struggling to embrace NCAP. We only recently learnt of GlobalNCAP, and only when this organisation raked our beloved Nissan Hardbody over the coals.

How does NCAP work?

Vehicle manufacturers usually ask NCAP to test their vehicles. The manufacturer must

supply NCAP with four identical vehicles, have them delivered to the test laboratory and pay for the test procedure. The vehicles may be supplied 12 months ahead of the official vehicle launch, and if the manufacturer isn't happy with

the results, it may improve its product and have it re-tested before launch. The result of any test is published three months thereafter, regardless of whether the manufacturer is satisfied with it or not.

NCAP will often test a vehicle without the manufacturer's consent. The vehicles are then bought anonymously from a dealer and, once the vehicles arrive at the testing laboratory, NCAP will notify the manufacturer and ask that the vehicle identification numbers be verified. The manufacturer is then invited to sponsor this test should it want to.

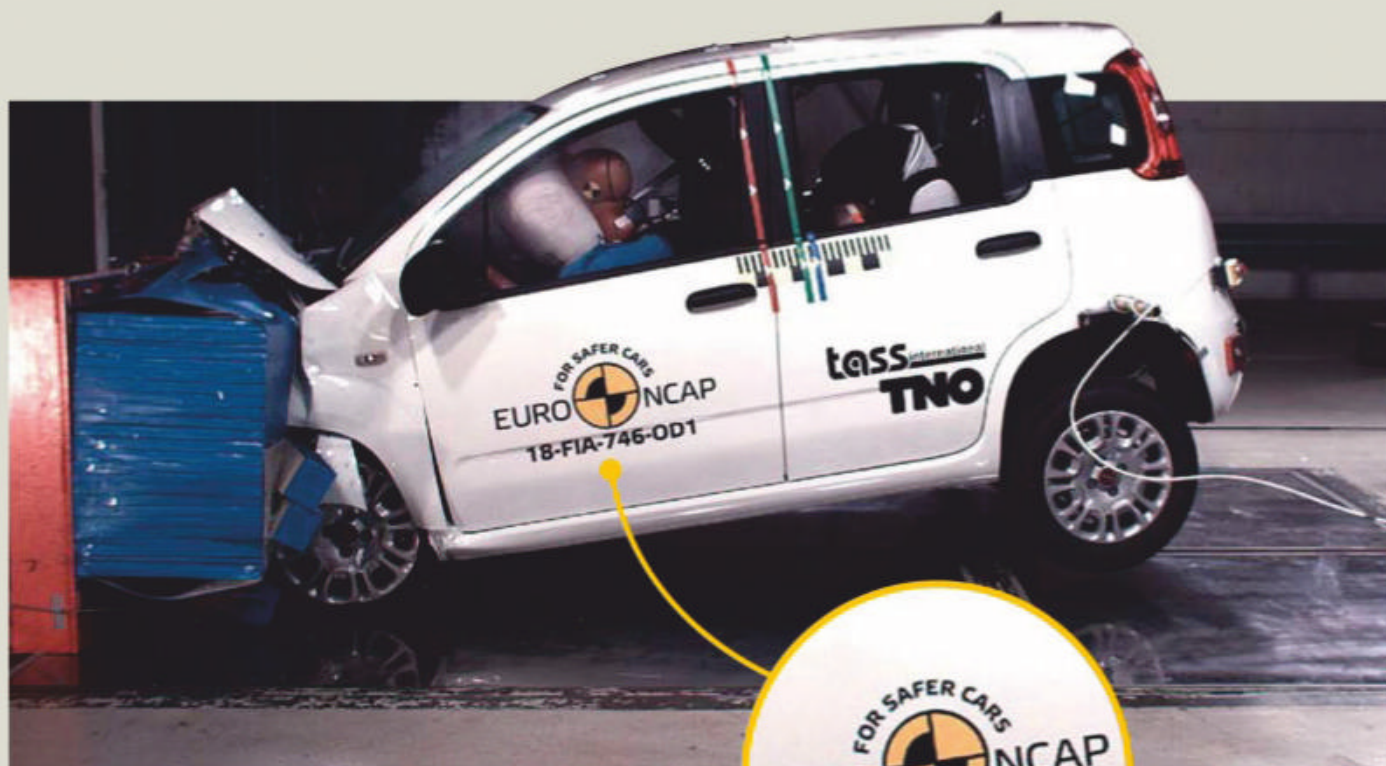
NCAP is also funded by its

members consisting of insurers, non-governmental organisations, charitable institutes and various national traffic departments.

These members must each propose at least one vehicle model per year and pay for the test should a manufacturer decline to do so.

The vehicles should preferably be standard (no optional extras), but NCAP will accept optional safety equipment if that particular model sells better than its base version.

However, mention will then be made that the crash-test result applies only to a specific model. >



GOOD LUCK, CHUCK. Before the introduction of crash test dummies, cadavers (left) were used. Fortunately this macabre practice is no longer common.

Initially, NCAP's effectiveness was debatable, and vehicle manufacturers and motorists were not particularly concerned about the programme.



540 mm
1 000 mm
40% overlap

Impact point: 40% overlap of the width of the widest part of the car on the driver side.



Test 1 The test vehicle is pulled with a high-speed winch to a velocity of 64 km/h over the crash-test laboratory's floor and crashed head-on into a solid obstacle off-set on the driver's side.

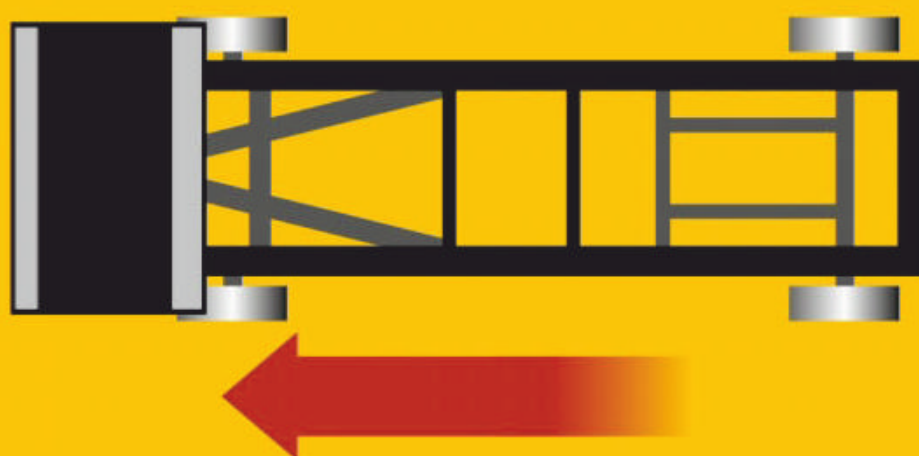


THE TEST

Various new car assessment organisations use their own test criteria. Tests conducted by ANCAP and EuroNCAP, for example, on the same vehicle will therefore not always match. Because South Africa doesn't have its own version of the new car assessment programme, we usually accept the findings of the EuroNCAP (or these days the GlobalNCAP). The EuroNCAP test looks something like this:



Test 2 A weighted trolley is crashed into the stationary test vehicle at 50 km/h. The impact point is the driver's side door, more or less where the driver's hip would be.

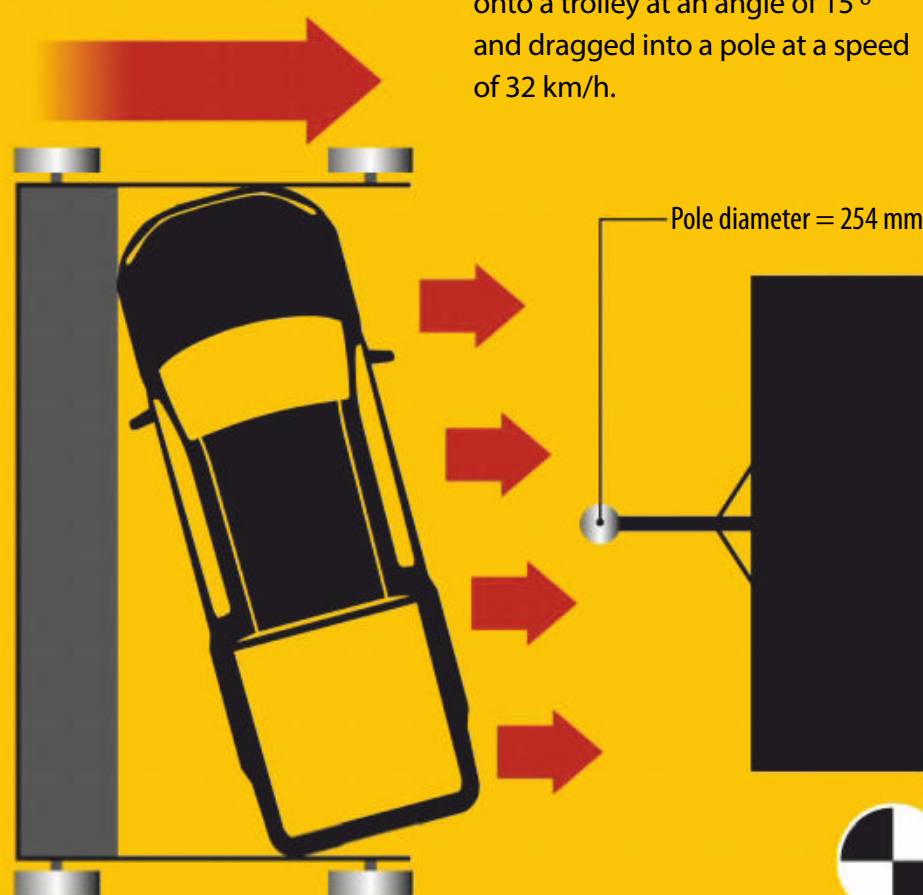


Impact point: Hip position of a 95th percentile male.

Test 3 The test vehicle is crashed into a device that mimics the impact point of a person's legs as well as a child and adult's head. Sometimes crash-test dummies are also used in this test.

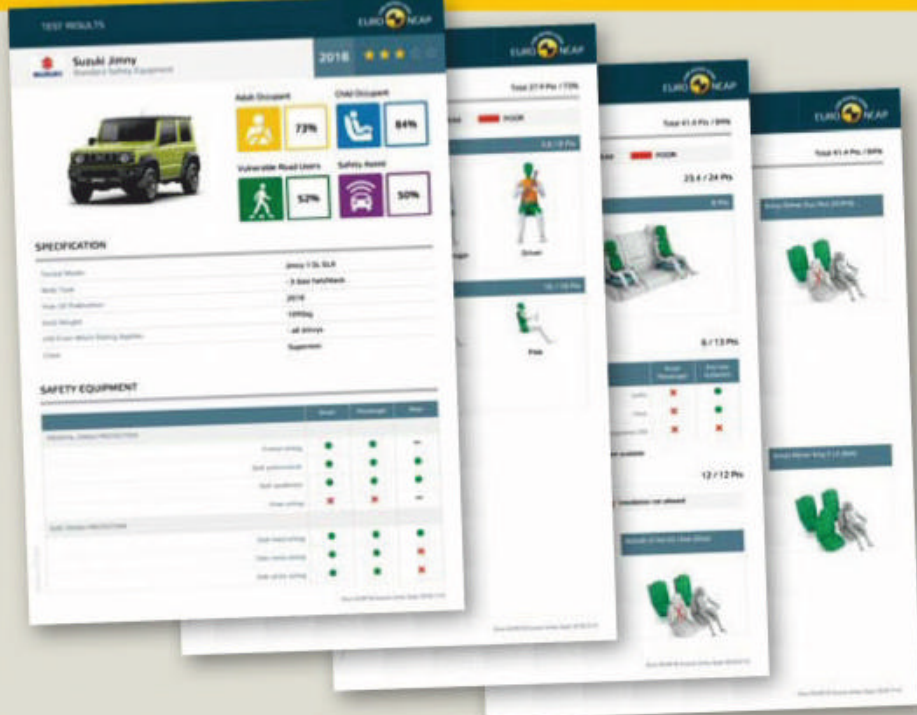


Test 4 The test vehicle is loaded onto a trolley at an angle of 15 ° and dragged into a pole at a speed of 32 km/h.



Pole diameter = 254 mm





After the crash test, points (out of five stars) are awarded. In the EuroNCAP test, the vehicle gets an overall five-star rating plus a percentage figure in four categories: adult occupant, child occupant, pedestrian safety, and electronic safety equipment. With the GlobalNCAP, there are two ratings: one for adult-occupant safety and another for child-occupant safety. GlobalNCAP does not focus on pedestrian safety nor on electronic safety measures. The effectiveness of airbags, anti-lock brakes and anchor points for baby seats are,

however, discussed in the report.

The tests, therefore, aren't exactly the same for all new car assessment programmes. It is generally accepted that the EuroNCAP is the most stringent of all the NCAP crash tests and that the LatinNCAP and GlobalNCAP are the most lenient, supposedly because Europeans apparently own more expensive (and better) vehicles, while developing countries like us cannot afford the same calibre of vehicles.

Outside Europe and Australia, a poor test result often has no significant impact on vehicle

sales. If the public don't care about NCAP, the result is reduced to a discussion around a braai fire. Few governments, other than the European Union, Australia and sometimes the US, insist that a manufacturer improve its vehicle after NCAP awarded it a low score.

Things, however, are changing, and since the World Health Organization has declared road deaths an epidemic, the European Union is considering legislation that may prohibit the sale of new vehicles with a low NCAP rating.

What does NCAP have to do with your off-roader? As we've already seen with the Nissan NP300 Hardbody, NCAP don't distinguish between a VW Polo and an off-road vehicle, and they are trying hard to persuade governments to prevent the sales of new "unsafe" vehicles.

Note that NCAP doesn't want to take away the keys of your existing off-road vehicle. Also bear in mind that vehicle

manufacturers are quite capable of building off-road vehicles with a five-star safety rating – cars such as the BMW X5, Mercedes-Benz X-Class and Range Rover Velar – but this is likely to raise prices and, ultimately, only the wealthy will be able to buy a new 4x4 bakkie (that's actually already happening).



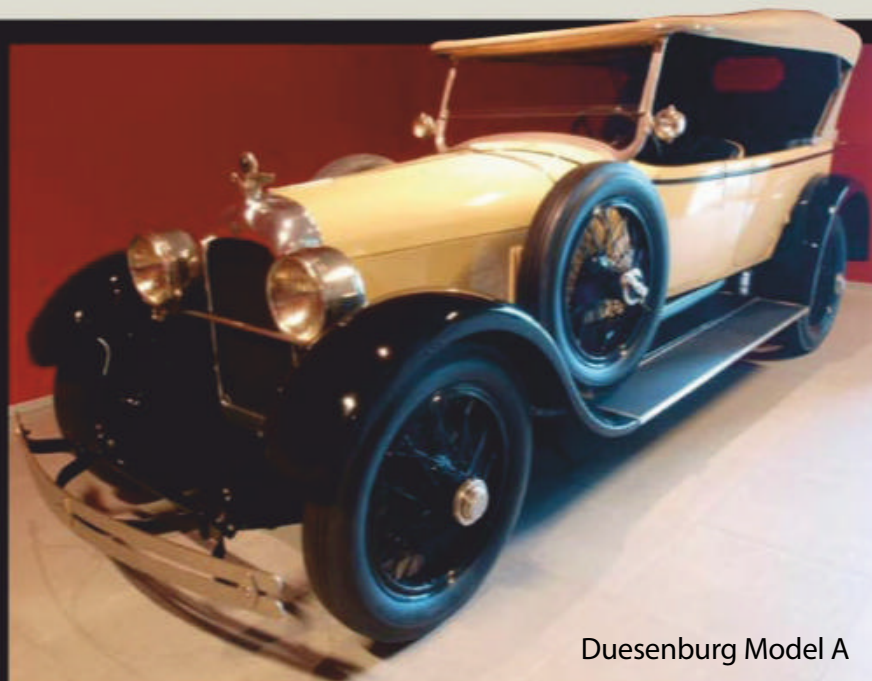
ASK THE PROFESSOR

Do you have a question for the 4x4 professor? Should a winch be bolted at the front or the back of your vehicle? Is a front or rear diff lock better? If the professor doesn't know the answer, we ask an expert.

Send your email to editor@driveout.co.za

History

- **1869** In Ireland, Mary Ward falls from the passenger seat of her cousin's steam-powered car and ends up under the wheels. She's the first person to be killed by a car.
- **1891** American John William Lambert loses control of his car and runs into a hitching post – this is the first recorded collision. Fortunately, his injuries are minor.
- **1896** A demonstration car hits Bridget Driscoll in London, England, at about 7 km/h. She is the first pedestrian to be killed by a car.
- **1899** Englishman Edwin Sewell falls from his moving Daimler automobile and becomes the first driver to die because of his own vehicle.
- **1922** The American Duesenberg Model A is the first car to get hydraulic brakes – the automotive industry's first safety device.
- **1930** Henry Ford orders that his cars' windshields are to be made from safety glass.
- **1934** General Motors of America carries out the first vehicle crash test to see how safe its products are.
- **1949** American Samuel W Alderson builds the first crash-test dummy – before that cadavers were used.
- **1958** The United Nations establishes the World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations. This is the first vehicle safety organisation.
- **1959** Swedish car manufacturer Volvo introduces the seat belt, although the first proposal for this type of device was made by an American doctor in 1930.
- **1977** Wearing seat belts in passenger cars becomes mandatory* for the driver and



Duesenberg Model A

front passenger in South Africa.

- **1979** The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in the USA establishes NCAP to conduct crash tests, the results of which are disclosed to the public.
- **1987** Wearing seat belts becomes mandatory* for all occupants of a vehicle, excluding children under the

age of three in South Africa.

- **2014** Seat belts or age-appropriate harnesses are mandatory* for all occupants of a vehicle, regardless of age, in South Africa.

* Wearing seat belts is not mandatory for paying passengers in minibuses, midibuses and buses.

Hello, again!

Toyotas are well loved in this country, and for good reason. Ewald Spies has had a flawless experience as an owner.

A dream come true

TOYOTA LAND CRUISER 4500 EFI

It broke his heart to see the vehicle of his dreams slip out of his grasp when **Ewald Spies'** father, **Johan**, sold his **Land Cruiser** to an acquaintance in Worcester five years ago. At the time, Johan was the third owner and according to Ewald, kept the Land Cruiser in **pristine condition** and so clean you could eat off the engine. But, at the time, Ewald couldn't afford to buy it and Johan let it go.

“A year ago, a mate who was balancing the wheels on my **Prado** told me about a guy who had visited the shop the previous day and was looking to swop his Cruiser for a Prado. Would you believe it was my dad's old Cruiser? And the new owner had racked up a mere 20 000 km in five years. I did the deal there and then. It worked out to a cost of around **R190 000** on my end.

I believe an automobile has to meet the requirements of your life at the time, and it depends on what you need it for. For me, with three small children and a wife who enjoys packing in everything but the kitchen sink, the most important aspect is space.

Before the **Land Cruiser** found its way back into my life, I considered another **Prado** or **Fortuner**, but ultimately, they don't quite

have the space and ground clearance of the Land Cruiser. I also wouldn't dare drive those two in some of the rough terrain where the Land Cruiser is at home. It's also an impressive towing vehicle.

The only modifications that have been added are the **off-road bumpers** front and rear, **Old Man Emu lift suspension**, **drawer system** and **dual battery set-up**.

This is one vehicle you can take anywhere. Whether you're driving mountain passes

covered in snow or driving through water and mud, nothing fazes the Land Cruiser. Sand dunes are its natural habitat, of course, but it's just as comfortable on the open road. You must just be prepared to slake its thirst at the pumps, because it averages between **20 and 22 ℓ/100 km**.

We haven't had much opportunity to drive very far with Cruiser yet, but we have visited the **Riverside Holiday Resort and Caravan Park at Little Brak River**, and thoroughly enjoyed our stay thanks to the neat stands and there being plenty to do and explore for young and old. The rules and regulations may be strict, but the service is provided with a smile. They also allow fishing on the river, which is why I have a boat hitched behind the caravan as well.



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Wait a moment...

With a camera in your hand, you have the ability to freeze time. That's exactly what these three readers did.

Up and away

When you swap your attorney's office for hillarious the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast, you may find more than just sea and sand, as John Christie of Pietermaritzburg found out.

"I took this photo around Christmas on Pennington Beach. It was hazy and I was taking pics while my son Andrew and my grandson Luke Bok tried to get the kite in the air. In this photo, the kite flies out of Luke's hands. The bright colours of the kite against the grey environment are what makes this so striking for me."

The bright colours of the kite are what makes this photo stand out rather than just being an ordinary pic. In fact, the kite looks even brighter against the background and an environment filled with monotone shades of brown, grey and white to almost black.

The focal point lies in the interaction between Luke and the kite, and you can feel his anticipation as the kite rises. His hands are in the air with his head back, and then his one foot is also lifted up. You can see the wind has just lifted the kite, and if you look at Andrew in the background, it looks as if he is relieved.

The longish focal length of the lens creates

Nikon D7000; Nikkor 55-300 mm lens at 98 mm (147 mm in 35 mm format); 1/5 000th of a second; f18; ISO 5 000

a flatter perspective in the photo and, for example, brings the grey overgrown dune in the background closer to the foreground. Even though it stretches over the focal point, it doesn't bother you because of the hazy light between the dune and Luke and Andrew.

The photo is a good example of the rule of thirds that works – here the focal point sits on the vertical line to the right.

There's water!

Her idea of a beautiful day in nature involves her beloved dog, Astro, at her side and her Nikon camera in her hand, says **Laura Beukes of Thabazimbi.**

"Astro, my pointer, and I went for a walk in the veld one day. Rain had fallen after a long drought, and the water in which Astro is playing is a pan that had been dry for a year. Every now and again, I threw a stick or pebble into the water to draw Astro's attention until I could take this lovely photo."

Technically you could hardly find fault with Laura's photo. Astro is the focal point and his face is as sharp as can be. The low bright light also makes for a better picture. In addition, Astro jumps towards the viewer and you look straight into his eyes.

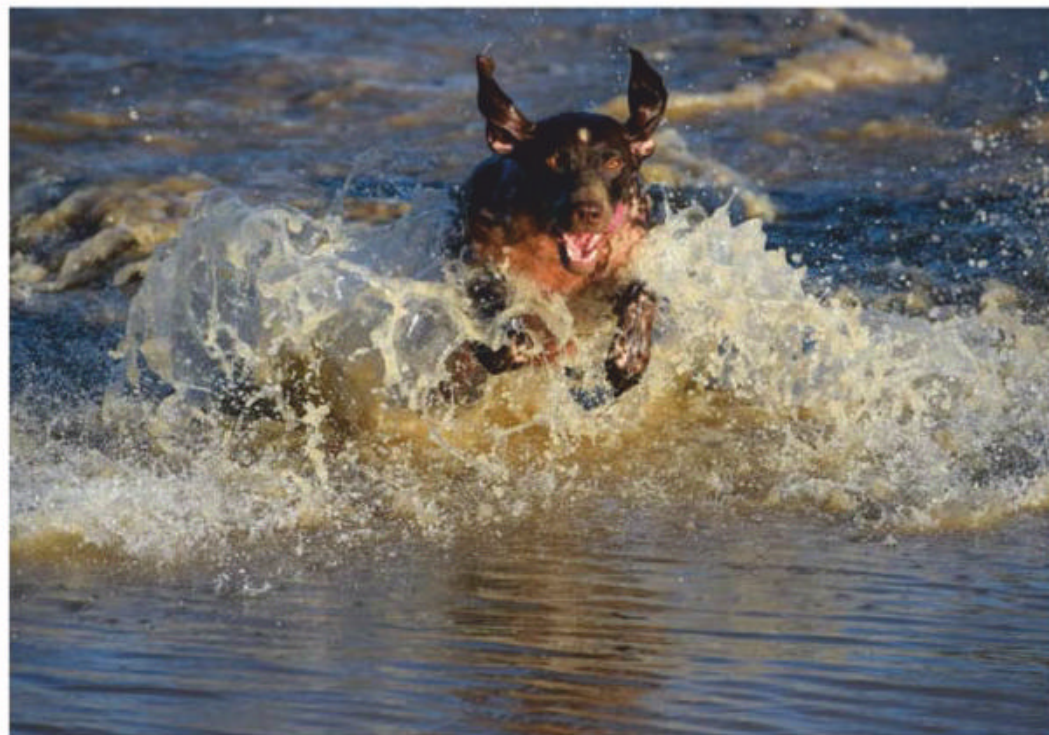
His curved forelegs, tongue

Nikon D3300; 55-200 mm lens at 200 mm (300 mm in 35 mm format); 1/600th of a second; f5,6; ISO 400

blowing from his mouth, and the ears pulled back, all tells you Astro is rushing out of the water. The shutter speed of the camera freezes the water splashing and underlines all the energy of Astro in the water.

You have to be careful to place the focal point of a photo on a centre line, as it gives the picture a static feel. All the action compensates for Astro being on the vertical centre line, however.

The water in the foreground is not necessary for the photo's composition. The photo would be even more alive if you crop out the bottom third of the pic.



SEND YOUR PICTURES

to us and we might publish them here. We're looking for regular pics that you love. Think of the type of pic you'd use as your Facebook cover photo; or something charming, like kids warming their hands over a campfire. If it is good enough for your family photo album, it's good enough for us. JOHN CHRISTIE wins a *go! Drive & Camp* camera bag worth R520 – congratulations!

Send your photos and contact details to leon.botha@media24.com



Canon EOS 750D; 150-600 mm lens at 600 mm; 1/800th of a second; f8; ISO 200

space in a photo. Although the silhouettes of the branch and birds stand out against the background, the photo would lose its impact without the negative space.

The focal point is, of course, the vulture sitting on the tip of the branch, but it's not long before your eye wanders down to where the stump enters from the right. Your eye then follows the branch back and you spot another three bird silhouettes.

There's just one slightly distracting element: the lowest vulture on the branch breaks the flow of the image as your eye follows the branch. It's not as if you can tell the birds where to sit, but Marie might have moved just a tiny bit to the left or right to get the bird's body away from the stump.

But overall, it remains a beautiful photograph.

Waiting for better days

She lives in Pretoria but **Marie le Grange** never misses an opportunity to capture a great photo when on holiday in the Kruger National Park with her husband, Koos.

"Photography is a passion of mine. Every year Koos and I have to go to the Kruger National Park to get close to nature. Koos has now also caught the photography bug. I took this pic late one

afternoon near Satara just before the gates closed."

Marie's picture is a good example of how minimal elements balance the negative

via.

DStv channel 147



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CROSSWORD

Congratulations to **Gerrit Snyman** from Mookgophong. You have won a **Camp Cover Lunch Box Cooler** to the value of R290 for your correct entry in the January 2018 crossword competition. If you want to win like Gerrit, complete the crossword, take a picture, and e-mail it to drivecamp@gomag.co.za. Please include your contact details. Or complete it online at <https://bit.ly/2Gczm4B>. The solution to last month's crossword is on p.129.

			Elephant reserve in Mozambique		Relax		Grimace	Byte (abbr)		Town in Limpopo (4-4)			
					Scroll material			Printing measure					
								Primate					
			Records							Unit of pressure			
Insolent		Side dish at the braai	In Situ (abbr)	On standard (2,2,3)							Barium (symbol)	Serious	
Irreverence												Zulu regiment	Hard work
							Spider's trap				Particles		
							While				Almond, eg		
Rural									Tooth layer				
									Give up				
Increase			Oganesson (symbol)	You and I				Lutetium (symbol)			Winter ailment		
Compact disc (abbr)				1 000 litre							Expert		
		Trees					Detesting						
		Wildebeest					Gala						
Ovum				Volcanic mount		Stole				On top of	Tellurium		
Small hotel				Low tide		Steam bath							
			Other-wise					Received					
Harbour craft								Single one					
								Rotate					
									Music genre		A 4x4 brand name	Perform	
									Teases			With little effort	X
													Slept noisily
			Indium (symbol)			Schemes							
			Arenas			Fathers							
									(Have) consumed				
									Guide				
4x4 trail in the Karoo Park		Cougar		Camp shelter		Aspects						Negative answer	
		Mental acuity		Compete		Fellow							
								Hectare (symbol)					Iridium (symbol)
Countryman or Clubman					Fire residue				Brownish colour		Left (abbr)	That is (L abbr)	
Serve							Combine				Cloth measure		

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Charging Systems Africa (CSAF) has just introduced two compact, light, tough, advanced dual battery management systems to the South African market, to help power up your on-board battery banks, whatever their size. Both are from Australian-based Projecta, a leading player in the DC-DC charger market.

The Projecta IDC25 "Intelli-Charge" 25A 9-32V, 3 Stage DC/Solar Battery Charger provide a host of intelligent features for safer and more reliable charging than its competitors, including charging simultaneously from solar and alternator inputs.

The new Projecta IDC45 will help meet the demand of high power DC-DC charging. It is the first DC-DC charger on the market

that provides 45A output current, so it can fully charge a 300Ah battery dual systems from empty in less than seven hours.

And, having been developed with the design experience of the Projecta IDC25, it is also able to charge simultaneously from both solar and alternator inputs, with no manual switching. It allows customer to charge their 12V second/auxiliary deep-cycle battery on the go.

The retail packs for both the IDC25 and IDC45 include the charger, 1 x bag cable joiner and heat shrink tubes plus 1 x bag cable ties.

The RRSP for the Projecta IDC25 retails for R4484,00 and the IDC45 for R 6889,00. Both are backed by a two-year warranty and available at leading automotive and four-wheel drive outlets.

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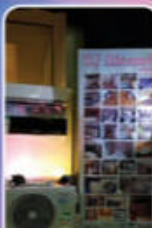


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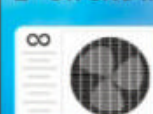


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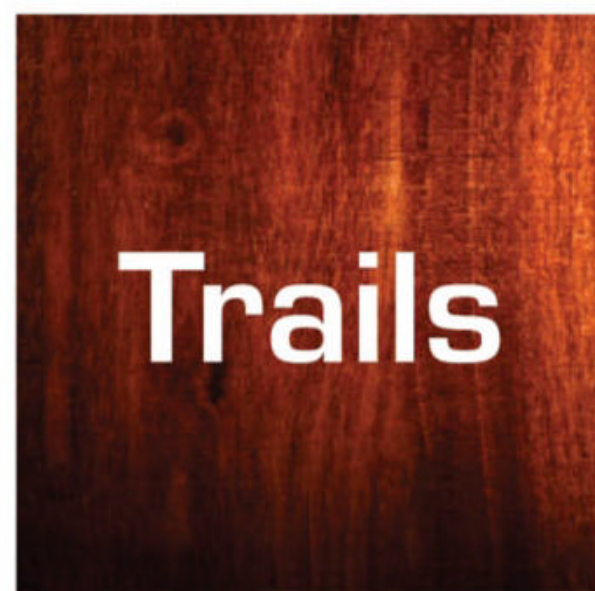
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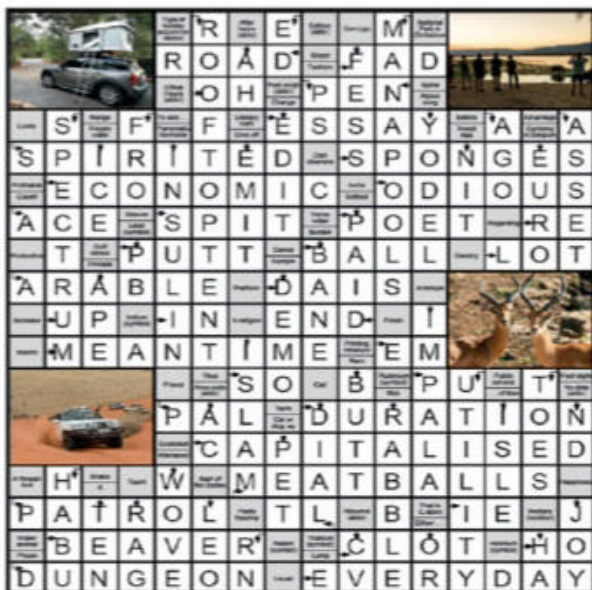
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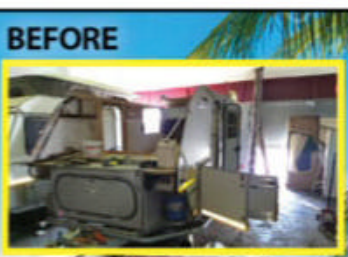


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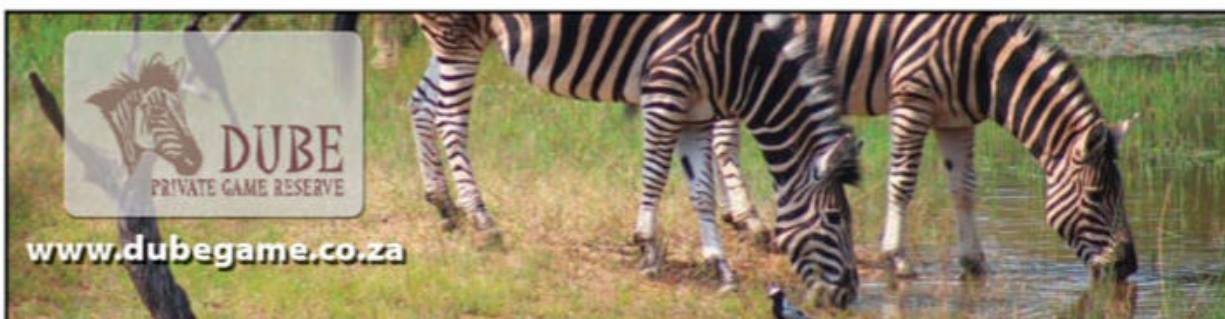
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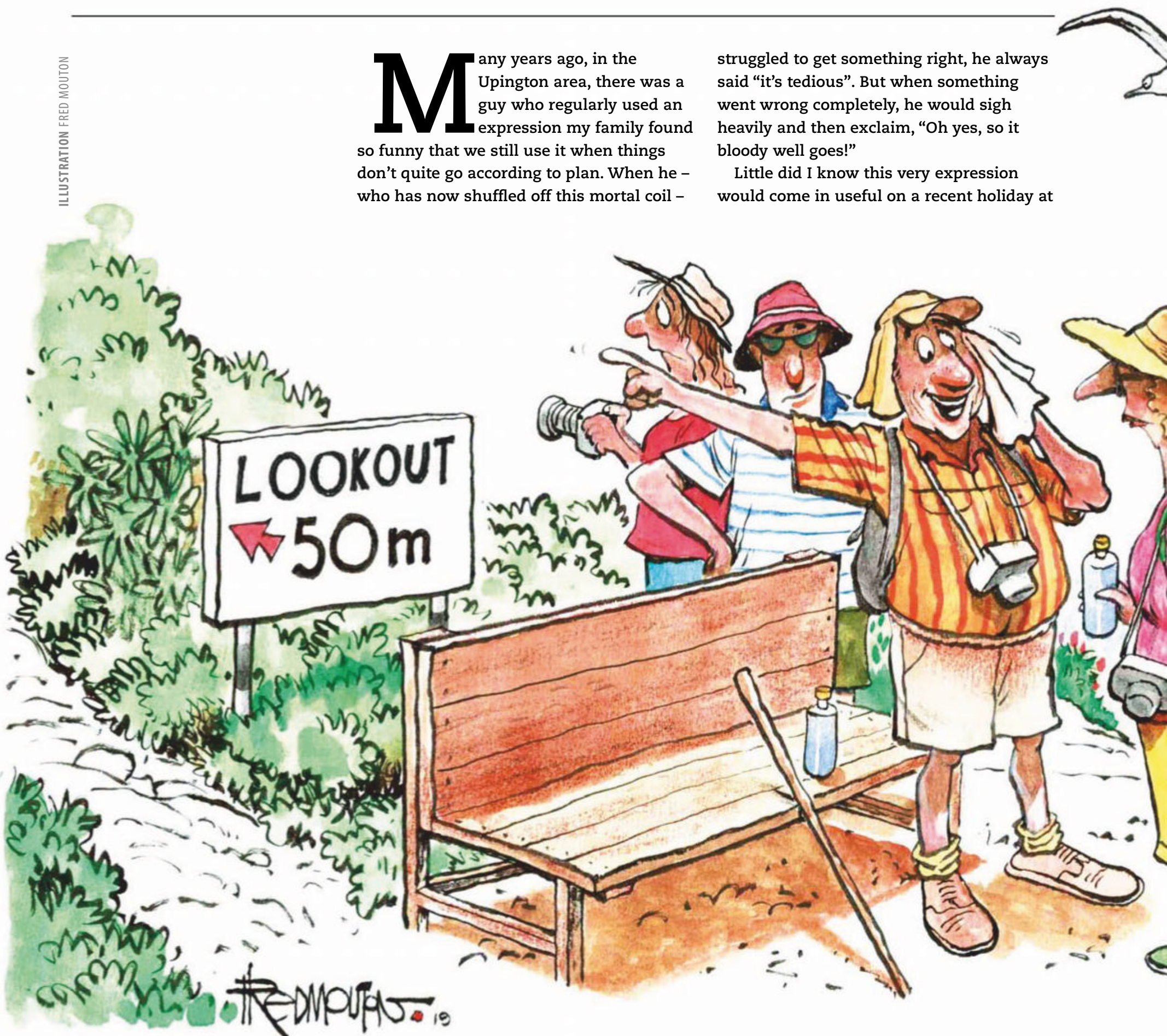
The last thing you expect is that a signpost will tell you an outright lie, says Johann Barnard.

ILLUSTRATION FRED MOUTON

Many years ago, in the Upington area, there was a guy who regularly used an expression my family found so funny that we still use it when things don't quite go according to plan. When he – who has now shuffled off this mortal coil –

struggled to get something right, he always said “it’s tedious”. But when something went wrong completely, he would sigh heavily and then exclaim, “Oh yes, so it bloody well goes!”

Little did I know this very expression would come in useful on a recent holiday at



Storms River Mouth. I find Storms River Mouth to be one of the most beautiful places in South Africa. The caravan park is almost on the Indian Ocean. The view of the sea is unobstructed, and it is never completely quiet here as the roar of the ocean is ever-present. With high tide, the waves often clap as loud as gunshots against the rocks with white foam

that shoots up metres into the air. Spectacular.

Behind the caravan park, in the dense, lush green Tsitsikama forest, there are many hiking trails along the coastal slopes. The Loerie and Blue Duiker hiking trails wind through nature and you can delight in the beautiful flora and the rich bird life.

It's always a bonus to see the timid Knysna loerie. The iconic Otter trail also starts close to the campsite. This hike lasts five days, but for a day out it is nice to walk a short section to the beautiful waterfall and huge water pool. This is where only brave souls and little ones who don't know any better dare enter the cold water to cool down.

DIE MOND trail, which starts at the restaurant, is by far the most popular hiking trail here. Hundreds of visitors arrive daily by bus, and almost everyone

tackles it – up the neat wooden path through the beautiful dense forest with the deep blue waters of the estuary and the sea to the right.

Eventually the path leads to the three suspension bridges. Along the way, people take hundreds of photographs, but on the bridge over the river, they number in their thousands. You'll often hear someone

“
At 300 steps, I stopped counting and voiced my displeasure at the audacity to erect a sign that claims it's 50 m, when it's clearly not the case.”

screaming when one of the walkers deliberately causes the bridge to swing from side to side, because then it's just about impossible to take a photo.

Most of the hikers – let's rather call them walkers – turn around at this point and walk across the other two bridges back to the restaurant for a well-deserved break and a meal. Not many people enjoying a leisurely holiday at Storms River Mouth are eager to struggle up the long and steep Misty Mountain on the other side of the bridge that crosses the estuary. Misty Mountain towers above you, and if you see hikers at the summit from down below, they will look tiny.

We've always been among those who turn back after the bridge, but this time we were determined to make it all the way to the top, come what may.

Early morning, before it got too hot, we tackled the steep climb, armed with water and energy drinks in a backpack, wide hats for the ruthless sun, and cameras around the neck.

It's a lovely route, because every step takes you a bit higher and the view of the sea and the surrounding area gets more and more beautiful. We paused when we ran out of breath, with the excuse of taking a photo or looking more closely at some kind of fynbos.

As we went higher, the intervals between these “photo sessions” got shorter and shorter. It was hard work. My handkerchief got wet as I walked and wiped the sweat from my brow, but we eventually saw a bench at a vantage point. When we got there, it felt like a small victory. We sat down, took a few more sips of an energy drink, snapped more photos and congratulated ourselves on reaching the top.

BUT THEN we saw it... We hadn't yet reached the top! Just behind the bench was a sign indicating that the actual lookout point was still another 50 m on.

But, hey, it's not a problem. What's so bad about an extra 50 m. Filled with courage we immediately set off on the final push.

I didn't even want to take a break, I could do this, the destination was just up ahead. Initially, I counted the steps as we progressed. There was still no sign of the vantage point after fifty steps. But I wasn't worried, because I knew a step measures less than 1 metre when you're clambering and climbing over rocks.

But after yet another 50 steps, there was still no lookout point in sight.

How was this possible? Surely, we'd gone more than 50 m by now? We continued, ever onwards and upwards.

At 300 steps, I stopped counting and voiced my displeasure at the audacity to erect a sign that claims it's 50 m, when it's clearly not the case. Eventually, in the distance, we saw a wooden deck overlooking the sea. This was finally it. We had made it!

We gulped down another cool drink and took another batch of pics of the stunning views. Our annoyance about the additional 50 m was all but forgotten.

AFTER A SHORT break, we headed back down. The descent was not too demanding. Back at the bench and the offending sign, we paused again for a break. I scrutinised the sign and noticed that other hikers had similar frustrations about the 50 m claim. Someone had wittily scratched a zero after the 50. Yes, 500 m feels closer to the truth. But then I saw that someone also added a five in front of the original five – it read 5 500 m!

And would you believe it, someone pushed the joke by adding a nine ahead of the first five. Clearly, that “50 m” felt like an eternity for some people who suffered before us.

Suddenly, I found the whole affair hilarious. I laughed about the misery this 50 m sign caused. It may have been tedious, but it was also funny.

And all I managed to say was: “Oh yes, so it bloody well goes!”

Renovating the Vagabond

Owning an old-school pop-up caravan is cool, but what do you do when it's not exactly how you want it? Hein O'Kennedy from Durbanville took matters into his own hands.

“ I've been camping with my 1970 Roamer Rand Vagabond caravan for about five years, after picking it up for R10 000.

But I realised that the extra-large original hinges were not only very difficult to handle but somewhat dangerous as well, so I decided to make them a little smaller, and raise the walls by 500 mm.

I replaced the three-quarter bed with a king-size one and lined the raw fibreglass walls with plywood. The modifications added about another R10 000 to the Vagabond's overall cost.

Making the improvements has been a wonderful experience and I have many other plans. With a bit more money, I would probably have a new tent made, with larger windows throughout, and then also add beefier tyres so we can venture off the beaten track.

Thus far, the Vagabond has lived up to my expectations, and I've only recently had a dent on the side repaired and taken it in for a thorough service.

I tow the caravan with a 2003 Mitsubishi Colt Clubcab 2.8 TDi and my favourite place to camp is the Riverside Resort at Little Brak River near Mossel Bay. It has everything that a caravan park should, complete with spacious stands, rules, a river right alongside it, a swimming pool, tennis court, putt-putt course, and indoor games including table tennis and pool tables. There's also a restaurant and there are safe cycling routes in the vicinity – and did I mention that it's close to the sea? **”**



Have you spotted any whacky wheels on your travels? Tell us about it and send a photo to drivecamp@gomag.co.za or go! Drive & Camp, PO Box 740, Cape Town, 8000.

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