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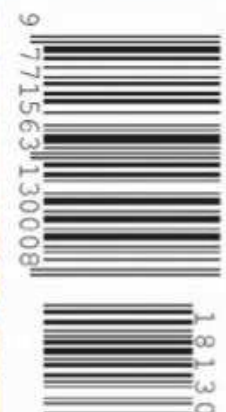
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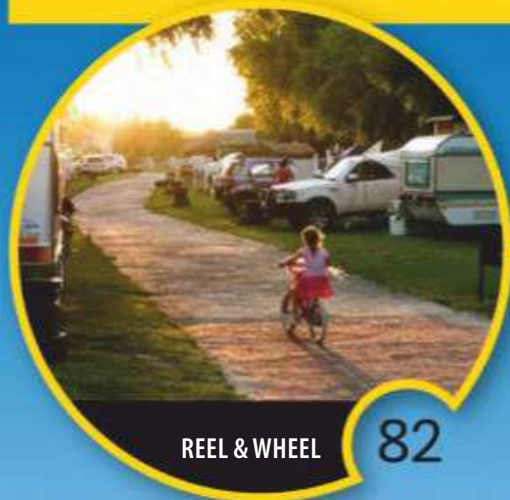
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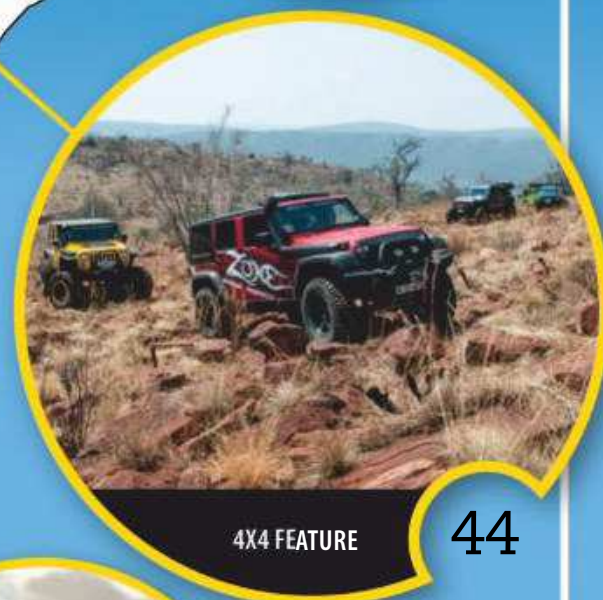
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TOW TEST



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TRAIL GUIDE

Where Pongola, Piet Retief and Vryheid form a triangle, there are kloofs filled with mountain aloes, and challenging 4x4 trails surrounding a deep, deep dam.

A busy year



When I was at school, we had to sit patiently through the annual prize-giving, listening to the headmaster's yearly report before all the academic and sports trophies – and the all-important certificates for attendance – were handed out, and the following year's prefects were announced. (By the way, was I the only one who thought that Victor and Victrix Ludorum were a brother and sister who broke some or other impressive sports record back in the 60's?)

In his annual report, the headmaster would give a blow-by-blow account of everything that had happened at school during the year. Not a single event – no matter how seemingly insignificant – was excluded from this. “Early in June the urinals in the boys' bathroom on the first floor were upgraded, thanks to a donation from the local Lions Club, and with the remaining money, the broken window in the woodwork class was repaired. The under-13b netball team ended 12th in their league, and Miss Shannon treated them to a soft-serve ice cream. Maude Powell was absent that day, so she didn't get an ice cream.”

That yearly report was soul-destroying – and that's why I'm resisting the temptation to bore you to death by doing the same, while reflecting on the year that was 2018.

But it has been a busy year, especially among the caravanning fraternity, and unfortunately it wasn't always good news. There's been much concern around what went down at Jurgens Ci; and with rumours flying around about closed factories, unpaid salaries and pending court cases, there really are more questions than answers.

It's a rather sad state of affairs, as Neels discusses on pg. 14, but it's also been encouraging to see how the industry has rolled up its collective sleeves and jumped into action. Various manufacturers have extended their ranges; new manufacturers such as Okto and Stealth have appeared on the scene; and a large group of dealers have joined forces to establish the LeisureWorld network, so that caravan owners can still get aftersales service.

It's this type of initiative that really proves the mettle of the local caravanning industry, and it gives many of us a great sense of peace and security.

You'll notice that this month, 4x4 Professor and Camp Boffin have taken early leave, and so you won't find them on these pages. But we've swapped them out with two very special additions: our report on this year's Bull Run, on pg. 74, and our Christmas Wish List, where we've partnered with Outdoor Warehouse to spoil a whole bunch of our loyal readers. Go and check out pg. 110, to see if you're one of the lucky ones. Safe travels!

EDITOR

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The crashing of the waves below you is a constant white noise that drains away all the worry and stress of daily life.

p.56



Main photo **Sven Hugo** (Buffalo Bay, Western Cape)

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No fear of a flat tyre

A girl's got to be tough out here in the Kalahari, whether you're dressed for a party or not.

We farm 80 km outside of Askham, and those who are familiar with this part of the world will know that no place is "just around the corner". My three-year-old daughter Elmé and I recently visited my friend Petra Knoetze's. Petra and her husband live about 70 km on the opposite side of Askham, which means that it's roughly 150 km from our place to hers.

We are used to these distances, but on the way back, near the Grootaar Pan, I could feel the bakkie shuddering, so I stopped. The right rear tyre was flat, but of course there's nothing unusual about that around here either. My daughter and I stood next to the road, with a load of

salt lick in the back of the Isuzu. I got the wheel spanner, the crank and the jack out so that I could change the tyre. The trickiest part for me is to free the nuts; but I learned long ago that if you give the wheel spanner a good kick, the nuts should loosen. It's also difficult to thread the crank through the hole and into the pulley so that you can lower the spare wheel from underneath the bakkie.

While the bakkie was safely parked and the hand brake secured, little Elmé crept underneath it in her prettiest dress (and veldskoen shoes, of course) to get the crank in position. That's when I noticed a photo opportunity. I hope the young man who takes her to be his bride some day knows what he's getting into!

LIZ-MARI MARAIS
Askham



Winning letter

Liz-Mari wins a Booxe Original Boot Box, valued at R1 695. This handy storage chest fits in the boot well of a Toyota Fortuner, and sits level with the floor when the lid is closed. It's just the job for storing your recovery equipment and emergency kit. Made of durable ABS

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Sweet with the sour

We enjoyed a recent camping trip at the ATKV's Goudini Spa, but I think in future we'll be avoiding it over long weekends. During the Heritage Day weekend in September, we went camping there from the Thursday. It was bitterly cold on the first night – probably due to the nearby mountains that were covered with snow! Luckily the weather soon changed, and the following days were lovely.

Thursday was peaceful and quiet in the campsite, but that only lasted until Friday around lunch time. The okes with their caravans and tents descended on the campsite, and with their arrival, the peace and quiet left.

I think in future we'll be avoiding this

popular area during long weekends and holidays. There were traffic jams in the bathrooms, and the facilities struggled to cater for the hordes of people using them. Myself, my wife Lameesh, and our two children, Isaiah (10) and Nesha (8), enjoy visiting different campsites over weekends, but we also prefer quiet spots. I hope that my kids will pass their love of camping onto my grandchildren.

Anyway, although the Goudini weekend wasn't exactly what we were hoping it would be, every camping weekend is an experience in its own right.

ANDRÉ VAN DER BERG
Bellville



Future game viewer?

My wife, Dorothea and I were in Salzburg, Austria in June, when we found an interesting article in the magazine *Wirtschafts Nachrichten*. The article is about self-driving mini-buses. The city council is planning to improve congestion on the roads by making use of these vehicles. They're automatic, and move without drivers on demarcated routes. The busses can drive in both directions, meaning they look the same at the front and the back.

But I have a question: Could we not use a similar bus to make a motorhome? Perhaps SANParks could make use of them as game-drive vehicles in the Kruger Park? They could even transport tourists to and from the airport.

There are a lot of electric vehicles on the roads of Austria, and we saw plenty of power points where you could charge these cars around town. Perhaps these little mini-buses are the transportation solution of the future, or "mobilität von morgen", as they say in German.

NICO STEENBERG
Kleinfontein, Rayton

The source

After reading the brilliant article about the Richtersveld in the October issue, I can give the author an answer as to how the water tanks at Kokerboom Kloof get filled.

Dave Buchanan writes: "Eventually, we found the source of the water: four giant 10 000-litre tanks, skilfully disguised by the equally giant rocks around them. Who knows how they're filled – a borehole?"

Well, the water is transported all the way from the Orange River using a Bell 6x4 truck. On the back of the truck there's a water tank from which the water gets pumped across to the tanks at Kokerboom Kloof.

I work at a tyre supplier, and when this photo was taken, we were in the process of putting new tyres onto the truck.

WILLEM VAN DER MERWE
Springbok





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First impressions count



If you haven't heard of Stealth Caravans yet, it's probably because they're brand new. We asked you to share your thoughts on their first prototype, the Evolution XR6.



Benita Trytsman

Is there a fridge inside? The outside is really great, while the inside is not what we're used to; but things change, and can't always stay the same.



Izak Holtzhausen

It's really pretty... the cabin works for me!



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edwardbath A typical lunch stop between Kwhai and Savuti, the perfect situation to use my @frontrunnerza pro stainless steel table and expander chairs to prepare a quick lunch before heading further north, my @takla_products seat covers, takmats and load liner protected my vehicles interior and kept everything inside looking brand new



Gerhard Besselsen

I don't like the little pop-up roof.



Pieter Le Maitré

Are they going to build a caravan as large as the Penta, Classique and Palma?



Marliese Olivier

The outside is very attractive, but those cupboards inside aren't exactly my taste.



Ané Kleu Zeelie

It looks like my grandmother's kitchen cabinets, with those green doors and white panels.



Gerah Venter

Not for me, thank you. The price is too high.



Jan Henning

The location of the plug bothers me. It should be positioned at the back, not right next to the door.

COMMENT OF THE MONTH!



"It was an incredible privilege to be there and participate in the Bull Run. We will definitely be there again next year. Regards, Team Moonshine Hooligans."

We shared a highlights video of the 2018 Bull Run on our YouTube channel, and it seemed to be the most fun that **Bonsai Jansen van Vuuren** had had in a long time.



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The right suspension for your touring off-roader

There are many different types of suspension available for your off-roader. Sadly, not everyone ends up with the correct product under their truck, says Mic van Zyl.

The past two weeks in the life of yours truly have been fantastic. The first week was spent crossing the Makgadigadi pans in Botswana. I did this trip in my fully-equipped Ford Ranger Wildtrak 4x4. It's a proper overlanding bush truck.

The following week I jetted off to Melbourne, Australia for our annual Ironman 4x4 Board meeting; and as luck would have it, I got the opportunity to briefly drive the new Ranger Raptor. Both were wonderful experiences, and sitting behind the wheels of these two vehicles in such quick succession was a great opportunity for me to draw some comparisons.

Sitting behind the wheels of these two vehicles in such quick succession was a great opportunity for me to draw some comparisons.

Both of these trucks are obviously Ford Rangers, and while there are a number of similarities between the two, there are also some significant differences that are not apparent until you park them side by side.

Sitting in the Raptor's driver's seat, it all looks very familiar, and it takes a few moments to start noticing the subtle differences. The instruments feature a proper analogue rev counter and the

bucket seats are much better. There are paddle shifters for the gearbox behind the steering wheel, and a red tag at the top centre of the steering wheel to help with steering orientation when you're racing and drifting across the desert.

SADLY, I DIDN'T GET to drive the Raptor in anger. However, I did go down a very bad rural road with some pretty serious bumps and ditches. I won't say how fast I was going, as I'd certainly be detained on my next visit Down Under.

The new 2.0 twin turbo-diesel engine, combined with the 10-speed automatic gearbox, is exceptionally good. This coupling is also available in non-Raptor PX3 Ranger models in Australia.

We know the Raptor is coming to SA, and will in fact be built here. So there's a good chance that the 2.0 will be available in non-Raptor models too, when the updated PX3 Ranger is launched locally in the near future. I'm going to stick my neck out and say that the Raptor may even be quicker than a couple of the current 3.0 V6 diesel competitors.

Of course, the Raptor is all about its ability to cover very rough terrain at high speeds. This is accomplished by its trick racing suspension. Was I impressed? Hugely!

A LOT OF TIME, effort and money was spent on developing and tweaking this set-up, and it shows. It's so good that I was constantly looking for jumps and obstacles to attack, just to feel how well the

suspension worked.

While bombing down that very rough road, on the extremely wayward side of the speed limit, just for a moment I thought how fantastic it would be to race this truck down the sandy, rolling and corrugated roads of the Makgadigadi that I'd been on just the week before. Impractical, yes; but huge fun.

Sitting on the plane going back to South Africa, I was thinking about my own 3.2 Ranger Wildtrak, and the trip across the pans and through the Makgadigadi. I realised that I was equally impressed by the suspension under my touring bush truck.

When the going got really rough, I could dial in a little bit of extra speed, and get the suspension working as intended.

But I also realised that the trick racing suspension from the Raptor would be rendered pretty useless on a truck like mine.

There are many different types of suspension available for your off-roader. Sadly, not everybody ends up with the correct product under their truck – and this is not a cheap mistake to make.

Next month we'll be looking at different types of shock absorbers, and which is best for different applications.

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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A sad state of affairs

It's in no one's interest that Jurgens Ci, once the heartbeat of the South African camping community, has come to nothing, says Neels van Heerden.

The recent turmoil at the Jurgens Ci factory in Ga-Rankuwa threatens to throw the legacy of Geert, Dirk and Rieks Jurgens under the bus.

The Jurgenses built their first caravan – which was drawn by two horses – in the Netherlands in 1938, and immigrated to South Africa in 1950. Their original local offerings were bread delivery wagons and mobile libraries, but in 1952 their first caravan, the Bokkie, rolled out of their Germiston factory.

The Jurgenses built their first caravan – which was drawn by two horses – in the Netherlands in 1938, and immigrated to South Africa in 1950.

Their caravans, and the wheels of time, rolled on; and Jurgens, or Jurgens Ci as the company later became known, came to establish itself as the foremost manufacturer in local caravan circles – a rich history indeed. But their recent history is less impressive...

In 2008, Jurgens Ci was sold to the Imperial Group, achieving mixed results until it was sold again in 2017. The new owner is an established supermarket chain and property developer, with vested interests in the caravan industry.

If an expert had analysed Imperial's financial statements between 2010 and 2017, they would have noticed an underlying trend. Shortly thereafter, there were increasing reports of the pressure that the caravan market was under.

I can't help but wonder what Imperial did to stimulate the market for caravans. Far too little, if you ask me.

RUMOURS AROUND LABOUR

DISPUTES began to surface, and one gets the impression that production targets were pursued to the detriment of quality. Complaints about quality control became more frequent. Tradesmen were promoted into management positions, and as a result the factory processes suffered, due to a lack of skill on the factory floors – or so it would seem.

The factory fumbled on, and dealers had to become prepared to find solutions to consumer complaints about problems that were in fact factory faults. The worst was that the latest range of Jurgens caravans was forced on dealers at a high price for shoddy workmanship.

A face-value discussion between senior decision-makers relating to the factory resulted in an increase in dealer dissatisfaction, and consumers vented their frustrations on social media. One example: the lame story that caravans would no longer be kitted out with a full standard tent, supposedly

because campers want to pitch camp more quickly and easily.

The factory couldn't offer any research that backed this claim; it sounded more like an easy excuse to justify a cost-cutting exercise. On a consumer complaint website, Jurgens Ci has an average rating of 1,85 out of a possible 5.

A further indication of problems within the group is the inactive Howling Moon website.

IN JUNE THIS YEAR the factory was closed temporarily, and rumours of bankruptcy did the rounds. Dealers received no communication from senior officials at the factory, and they took their frustration out through the creation of a new body earlier this year: LeisureWorld.

Here they put their shoulders to the wheel to try and save their livelihoods through a brand-new business model, which operates independently of the well-being and outcomes of Jurgens Ci.

On 30 July and 6 September 2018, matters against Jurgens Ci were heard in the High Court; but at the time of going to print, there has still been no outcome.

It's a sad state of affairs. It's in no one's interests that Jurgens Ci, once the heartbeat of the South African camping community, has come to nothing.

Let's collectively hold thumbs, and hope that there will be light at the end of this particularly dark tunnel.

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Conqueror lifts the lid on their new range

Conqueror is going to add four more bush caravan models to its existing range. According to Philip de Vries, managing director, these new caravans will be super-luxurious; but he didn't want to give too much away about the materials that they will be using.

He did reveal that for these caravans Conqueror will be moving away from the traditional steel and aluminium hull, and have imported a non-metal material that is light, yet surprisingly strong.

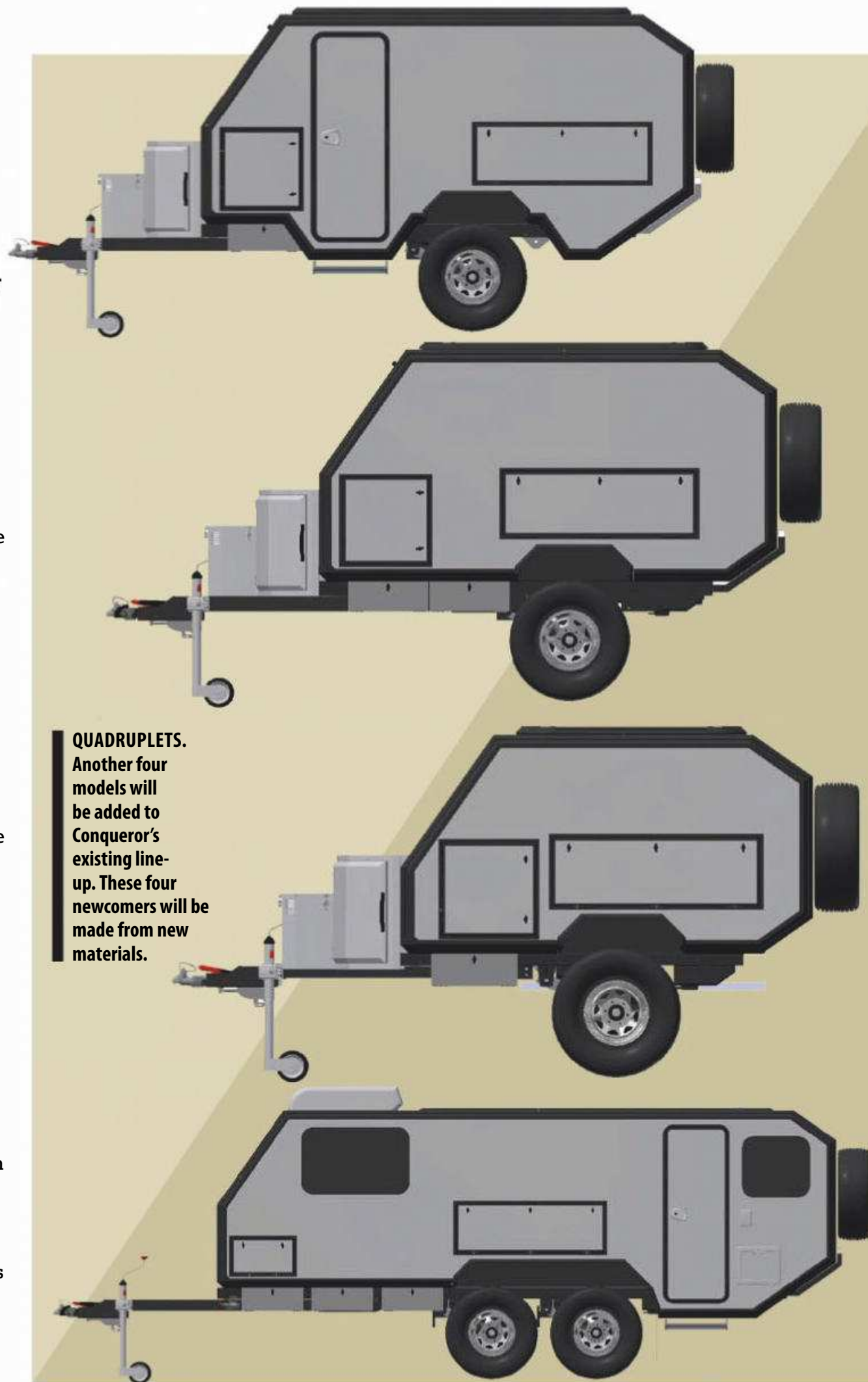
Because the material is naturally white in colour, the caravans will be left unpainted. Best of all is that, thanks to this material, Conqueror is considering providing a lifetime warranty.

Three of the four models in the new range are aimed at families of four, with the smallest one designed for just two people. The largest of the bunch will be a double-axle caravan.

All the caravans will have independent suspension. The two smaller models' doors are in the rear panel; the larger ones have the door in the left side panel.

If everything goes to plan, the first models will be introduced at the Camp & Destination Show (previously the Beeld Holiday Show). Currently a large number of Conqueror caravans and trailers are exported to Australia and America, and the latest models will also be introduced to these markets.

Contact 016 349 6531 [conqueror.co.za](mailto:info@conqueror.co.za)
info@conqueror.co.za



QUADRUPLETS. Another four models will be added to Conqueror's existing line-up. These four newcomers will be made from new materials.



KINGS OF ACCESSORIES

Africa Automotive Aftermarket Solutions (AAAS) recently held their Franchise of the Year Awards. AAAS, a division of the Imperial Group, markets and distributes aftermarket parts to vehicle accessory dealers, and has been in business for 64 years. The following franchise owners were rewarded at a gala dinner in Lanseria: Auto Care & Diagnostics

Pretoria, Motolek Upington, Silverton Brits, ADCO Port Elizabeth, and CBS Germiston.

"The awards are a highlight on our calendar," says Brett Ferreira, national franchise director of AAAS. "It's at this ceremony that we're able to step back and truly reflect on the great work our Franchise Partners have achieved throughout the year."

>

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ORNATE NEWCOMER IN THE LION'S DEN

Custom Canopies has created a luxury version of the Lion's Den De-lux bush trailer. According to Jan Venter, owner of Custom Canopies, this model will be known as the Lion's Den Supreme, and boasts five new features that the De-lux model doesn't have – including, among other things, a gas braai that slides straight out of the hull.

As with the other models, the outer kitchen is in the tail, where a door lifts upwards to form a roof over the kitchen. Two spare wheels are mounted on this door (the De-lux's spare wheel is on the A-frame). Gas struts help support the door, and you don't have to be the size of Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson to lift it. The Supreme has space for an 82 l fridge/freezer, compared to the De-lux's 60 l model.

Besides this, the Supreme has a nose cone in which you can store two gas cylinders. The power supply is also rigged in here, and there's a rack for wood on top. Inside there's a basin, and there's extra space above the island bed.

The figures 4,2 (l) x 1,9 (w) x 2,1 m (h); tare weight 720 kg; payload 780 kg; GVM 1 500 kg (with a 1 500 kg rubber axle).

Price R280 000 (without fridge).

Contact 083 281 7800 customcanopies@mweb.co.za
customcanopies.org



Mobi Lodge showcases their pole-less tent

Mobi Lodge has recently introduced their Air Tent, a unique awning that can be pitched without any poles. Instead of poles to give the tent panels tension, the tent has air bladders that give the awning its shape.

The tent stretches across the length of your Mobi Lodge – you zip it near the roof at the top of the hull, after which you connect the compressor (which is built in to the caravan). The tent is firm and upright after about 4 minutes and it comes with a removable floor (which may be attached using a zipper). The tent also fits on older Mobi Lodge models.

Leon Ras of Mobi Lodge says the prototype has already passed the wind and water tests with flying colours. The tent has three doors that are covered with gauze, and there's also a door that can be zipped up. As with conventional tents, it is a separate component to the Mobi Lodge. It will be optional for new caravans, and the price has not yet been determined.

Contact 082 899 9999 leon@mobilodge.com mobilodge.com



A BOOXE FOR EVERY BOOT

Booxe, the manufacturer who originally built underfloor toolboxes for the Toyota Fortuner, now makes plastic containers with aluminium hinges that will fit into almost any vehicle's luggage space.

The box is designed so that you can keep a first-aid kit and emergency gear together neatly, but obviously you can also use it to store other items. The container is made of ABS plastic, which, according the manufacturer, will last for many years.

This Booxe container costs R1 695. Go to booxe.co.za to order yours.

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Raptor shows its claws

In October 2018, the first batch of Ford Ranger Raptors rolled out of Ford South Africa's Silverton plant near Pretoria.

Ten high-speed off-road bakkies have been built as part of the Tooling Trials build-up phase. According to Ockert Berry, Vice President of Operations for Ford in the Middle East and Africa, no less than R3 billion was invested in upgrading this facility so that it could manage special projects such as the Raptor.

The Raptor is powered by a brand-new 3,2 l twin-turbo engine that kicks out 157 kW and 500 Nm and is being built at Ford SA's Struandale plant in Port Elizabeth. The power is sent to the wheels via an advanced 10-speed automatic transmission.

The suspension has been provided by FOX and offers position-sensitive dampers, while the advanced terrain management system (TMS) includes a rally mode labelled "Baja" mode.

The chassis is reinforced, the brake system has been upgraded, and the Raptor gets specially developed BF Goodrich tyres.



OKTO START PRODUCTION

After the introduction of Okto's first prototype caravan, the Villa, their production line is now ready to go. The plant is in Rosslyn in the north of Pretoria, and the first caravans were built during the middle of October. Woody Loftus, who manages marketing for Okto, says that by the end of December there should be at least ten complete caravans – the end goal is 20 a month.

There have been some adjustments to the model since the release of the prototype. Besides the fact that with the pop-up roof down the caravan will fit into a standard garage, the improved caravan is also slightly narrower, so getting it into your garage is even easier.

The figures Tare weight 1 180 kg; payload 320 kg; GVM 1 500 kg

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THE START OF THE EVOLUTION!

Last month we reported that Stealth Caravans had recently introduced their Evolution caravan. Well, if everything stays on track, the first model should be made available to the public this month.

A team of no fewer than 29 people has spent the last couple of months grafting hard to bring the Evolution to life, and according to managing director Garry Coady, they're expecting the team to grow to 60 people within the next 12-18 months.

The exterior fibreglass skin of the Evolution's panels is 2 mm thick, the inner layer is 1,2 mm, and between these two is a high-density polystyrene layer of 23 mm. The hull is thus almost maintenance-free. Besides this, the chassis is made from 2 mm galvanised duplex steel that is three times as strong as regular steel – and 30% lighter.

This steel is so hard that you can't drill a hole through it. Garry explains that it wouldn't be necessary anyway if, for example, you want to install caravan movers at a later stage, because they've already added the mounting holes for the Ewiks model.

In some similar caravans with rubber axle systems, the chassis tends to tear close to the axle mount. Thus, Garry and his team have secured the axle in such a way that the forces acting on it don't impose unnecessary strain on the chassis.

The chassis also has jack points where you



PROGRESS WITH NOSTALGIA.

The name of this specific Evolution model is "XR6". One can't help but remember the famous Ford XR6; but the "XR" actually stands for "Extreme, Road" and the "6" denotes the length of 5-6 m, explains Stealth managing director Garry Coady (left).



can use a hydraulic bottle jack – for example, if you need to change a wheel. (The coupler, brakes and axle come from Al-Ko.)

The nose cones of many conventional caravans have two

shortcomings: the doors don't open all the way, and they're supported by a loose strut. The Evolution's doors open all the way upwards, and the hinges are of such a design that the doors stay open.

The spare wheel isn't stored in the nose cone, as is more usual, but fits at the back, underneath the caravan.

>



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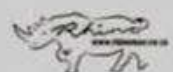
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Inside the caravan, a smart system manages the opening and closing of the pop-up roof's H-arms – working almost like a person's elbows.

The canvas sides of the pop-up roof run at an angle towards the hull, so that water can run off easily. At the bottom it drains into a gutter that leads it off the hull.

Three LED-light strips are placed on the inside of the pop-up roof, and light up the caravan beautifully.

The Evolution has aluminium shutters in front of the windows, which are constructed from 4 mm safety glass.

The floor is the largest single example of wood in the caravan, but it's made up of several special layers, of which the lowest is a 3 mm-thick water-repellent layer with a 20-year warranty.

Because the Evolution is just 2,096 m high, it fits in a standard garage; but you'll need to watch the sides carefully, because it has a leeway of just 3cm on either side.

Price R285 000.

Dealers Loftus Caravan City in Randburg, Kempton Caravans in Johannesburg, Natal Caravans & Marine in Pinetown, Tygerberg Caravans in Cape Town.

Contact 031 713 8900

admin@profibre.co.za



A KOMBI FOR GRAVEL TRAVEL!



A new edition of South Africa's favourite van, the Volkswagen Caravelle, was released recently.

The PanAmericana combines the comfort of the Caravelle with Volkswagen's tried-and-tested 4Motion all-wheel drive – almost like the old Syncro.

This edition boasts underbody protection, stone-guard plastic film along the lower sides of the bodywork, and 17" Devonport alloy wheel rims.

Besides these practical additions there are also cosmetic differences, such as tinted windows and brake lights, a chrome grille, and

PanAmericana decals.

The vehicle is specifically designed for gravel roads – just don't go too crazy, because the ground clearance is basically unchanged.

Stainless steel floor panels don't just give it a butch appearance; they also resist mud-smeared hiking boots and dirty mountain bikes.

The Caravelle PanAmericana is powered by Volkswagen's 2.0 BiTDI-4Motion engine (132 kW) with a 7-speed DSG gearbox. The engine makes 400 Nm at 1 500 r.p.m.

and accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in 12,1 seconds. Top speed is 188 km/h.

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Our own D-Max!

The Isuzu KB is reborn as the D-Max. We received a customised long-term test model – a month before the official launch – and it came equipped to conquer continents.

Text Cyril Kloppe Photos Leon Botha

Isuzu South Africa is 11 months old. That's right, the company as we now know it was established on 1 January 2018, after General Motors pulled out of South Africa.

We've obviously been familiar with Isuzu products for a number of years. The first Isuzu truck appeared locally in 1964, and the KB Bakkie was launched in SA in 1979.

The name "KB" was given to

Isuzu bakkies sold outside of Japan between 1972 and 2002. In 2002, the name was changed to "D-Max" all around the world except in South Africa; until earlier this year, when the decision was made to conform to the international nomenclature.

To celebrate the D-Max, we've partnered with Isuzu South Africa to create a special edition, one we could use to collect travel stories, explore 4x4 trails, and tow bush

trailers. We gave Isuzu SA a 4x4 accessory wish list – based on the preferences of *go! Drive & Camp's* readers – and they in turn created this excellent rig.

What do we have here?

The D-Max underwent more than just a name change. There are

brand-new models to choose from, including the chassis cab (without a load bin), and the dropside (with side-hatches on the load bed), and of course the customary single cab, extra cab and double cab versions.

The 3.0 LX model received the more extensive facelift. It has a >

ISUZU D-MAX



interVOLT

DCC Pro In-Vehicle DC-DC Battery Charger

The InterVOLT DCC Pro has proven to be the best in-class performance for a charger this size, with a maximum 25amp charge from even the smartest alternator available on the market. The DCC Pro is also Solar ready and can handle a peak of 300 watt of power with up to 30% greater efficiency than a standard PWM regulator.

This Charging System is IP67 rated which makes it submersible, completely dust proof and designed for under bonnet fitment with a temperature tolerance up to 85°C.*

As an additional option the in-cab monitor is available and will allow you to monitor your complete Charging System from both DC and PV charge from the comfort of your Driving seat.

Without using the monitoring System, the unit has a LED Glow ring with a variety of colors to easily identify the Charging status of the InterVOLT DCC Pro Charging System.

	GlowRing Colour	GlowRing Frequency	Status
☼	White	Intermittent (8 seconds)	Standby
○	Aqua Green	Continuous	Primary Solar
☼	Aqua Green	Intermittent	Silent Solar
☼	Purple	Intermittent	Set-up
○	Blue	Continuous	Boost
☼	Blue/Green	Alternate	Absorption
○	Green	Continuous	Float
☼	Red	Intermittent	General Fault
☼	Yellow	Intermittent	Low Voltage
☼	Orange	Intermittent	High Temperature

* Will operate at 20% power at 80°C



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NEW WHEELS

new grille, new Bi-LED headlights and a tow hitch as standard. But perhaps the most important of all is that it now boasts an improved 6-speed automatic and a 6-speed manual gearbox. The 2 999 cc four-cylinder turbo-diesel has been retained, but it now meets more stringent Euro 4 emission standards.

Isuzu has also changed the badging. The model number is now indicated on the front door, rather than the tailgate, and the D TEQ badge has been removed.

The 3.0 LX models gets welcome electronic aids such as trailer sway control and a brake override system, which ignores the accelerator and prioritises the brake if you inadvertently hit both pedals in a blind panic.

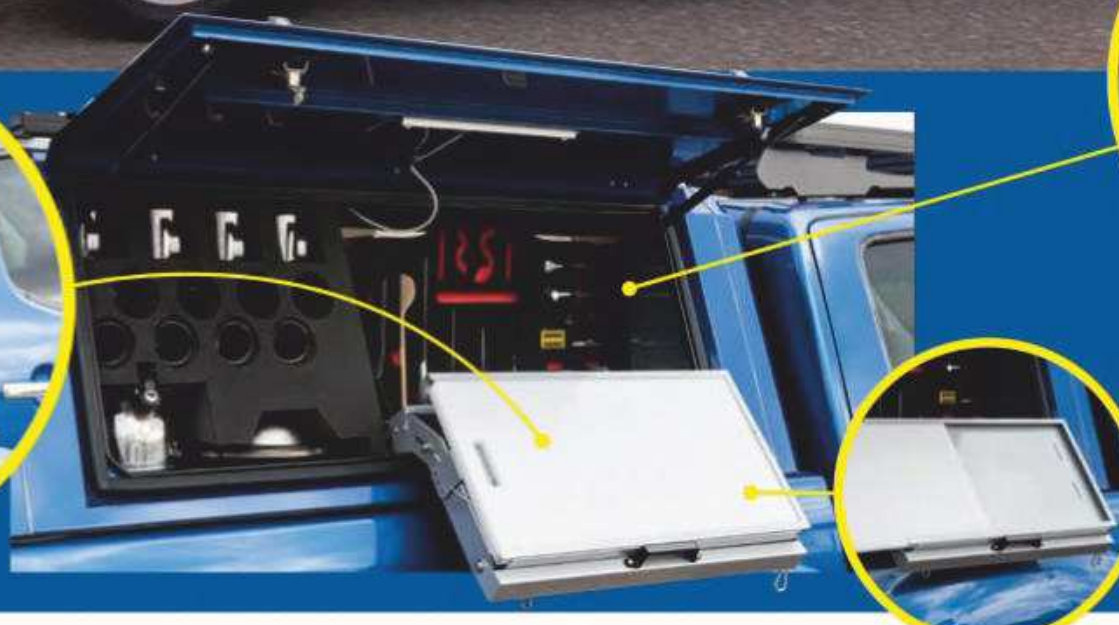
Inside the cab, the changes are apparent.

There are soft-touch panels throughout the interior, and the hard

VERANDA. The roof rack over the canopy is split, and the two halves slide out and fold over either side of the canopy.



FOOD TRUCK. The kitchen is fully kitted out, with a twin-plate gas stove, kettle, cutlery, and even a bread board.



panels housing the instrument gauges are piano black with chrome and silver finishes. Three types of centre console are available (depending on model), and these vary between basic, mid-range and hi-tech. The 3.0 LX's 8-inch touchscreen features Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and satellite navigation,

plus USB, HDMI and Aux ports. You can even direct the sound from the loudspeakers around the cabin so that it focuses on the rear passengers, or everyone, or just the driver.

What's the ride like?

The suspension system and tyres on our test vehicle were replaced,

so it doesn't drive the same way a standard D-Max would. We'll share our driving impressions of a standard D-Max in an upcoming issue though.

What we can tell you is that the 6-speed automatic gearbox shifts a little sooner than the previous 5-speed, and you're no longer wishing for an extra gear at higher

speeds. The engine is still rowdy, especially on cold mornings, but it adds to the diesel character of the D-Max rather than detracting from it.

Is Isuzu South Africa planning to join the power battle between Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen and Ford? "Certainly not," insists Dominic Rimmer, Isuzu's

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D-MAX (NÉE KB). We asked Isuzu to ditch the side steps and rather fit rocksliders to the chassis. In the end we received the best of both worlds.



Executive: Technical Services. “We build bakkies that are reliable and durable. Let the others carry on with their fight. We’ll see whose bakkie works throughout Africa on fuel of questionable quality.” Dominic is referring to the 2000-model Isuzu 280 D-TEQ 4x4 belonging to Fanie Olivier from Pennington, KwaZulu-Natal, which recently won the Living Legend competition. Fanie’s KB has travelled across both Africa and Europe, collecting half a million kilometres on the clock in doing so. At times, when he couldn’t find proper fuel, Fanie had to add homemade diesel (essentially enriched cooking oil) to his KB’s tank.

This is the hardcore reliability we were looking for, to enable us to venture far and wide.

Added benefits

Isuzu approached 4x4 Megaworld, and they fitted the following

accessories to our D-Max: an ARB bull bar, T-Max 12 500 winch, IPF sport XS spotlights, Desert Armour bash plates, Old Man Emu suspension, a snorkel, Desert Armour rock sliders and a Front Runner roof rack with a T-Max 48” farm jack. On the load bin there’s an RSI canopy with an RSI roof rack, traction boards, LED illumination, a Front Runner drawer system, ARB compressor, Desert Products double battery system, an Engel fridge/freezer on a Desert Armour slide, a picnic table, fire extinguisher, burglar bars and a fully equipped kitchen including a gas cooker. At the rear is a Desert Armour steel bumper, and underneath there’s a 60 ℓ fuel tank that supplements the standard 80 ℓ tank (which gives us a theoretical range of 1 200 km). Our D-Max is shod with General Grabber AT 255/60 R18’s. What more could you ask for? Maybe some frosties in that fridge...

Conclusion

Our D-Max isn’t perfect. It drifts like a ship at sea, but the vague steering is great for technical terrain where you don’t want kick-back from a steering wheel.

The brakes feel spongy, probably because our D-Max is loaded with so many outdoor goodies. But they have a tactile feel to them, and they bite sharper the deeper you depress the pedal.

We followed ACVVSCEROJ-4008226’s progress from inception until we took delivery. We were even invited to pick the colour. But weeks later, we still haven’t decided on a nickname – perhaps with time it will earn one. (My suggestion of ‘Samurai Schalk’ was shot down. – Ed.) Over the coming year, you’ll get to know this bakkie well, because we’ll be exploring with it, far and wide.

This is the hardcore reliability we were looking for, to enable us to venture far and wide.



SPECIFICATIONS

Model	3.0 LX 4x4
Engine	2 999 cc, four-cylinder turbo-diesel
Power	130 kW @ 3 600 rpm
Torque	380 Nm @ 1 800 rpm
Transmission	6-speed automatic
Fuel consumption	12,5 ℓ/100 km (8,5 km/ℓ)
Tank	80 ℓ + 60 ℓ
Approach and departure angle	30,0° and 22,7°
Wading depth	600 mm
Ground clearance	220 mm
Warranty	5 years/120 000 km
Service plan	5 years/90 000 km
Price (standard)	R594 500



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TYRE EXPERT:

THE INS AND OUTS OF OFF-ROAD TYRE DESIGN

Sand, rock, gravel, grass and mud are just a few examples of how varied off-road terrain can be – not to mention that many of these surfaces vary in depth and consistency.

Given this nearly infinite range of terrain possibilities, it's no wonder that tyre manufacturers don't quote off-road traction figures. In fact, the only recognised tyre-traction test is one that's conducted on asphalt (tar); and even then, the asphalt has to comply with a globally recognised (industry) standard.

Considering the above, the subject of traction is the most controversial of all tyre-design topics – particularly off-road, where many terrain types are loose in terms of traction, as opposed to firm, like asphalt. Because of this, off-road tyres need to possess design features that address the added problem of loose, rutted, and abrasive terrain. So, what are these design features? Well, the answer lies in what we call TCC: Tread, Carcass and Compound.

TREAD

Without wanting to over-simplify the subject: the looser the terrain, the more aggressive the tread pattern needs to be. But what does "aggressive" mean? In general terms, an aggressive tread pattern is one that features a large percentage of open space (voids) between the tread blocks, as well as deeper tread grooves.

Although deeper tread is often associated with on-road mileage and value (which is absolutely correct), in the off-road sense, a deeper tread pattern will increase a tyre's traction, puncture-resistance and durability.

Siping also plays a fundamental role in how well a tyre performs off-road. A common misconception is that the role of siping is restricted to wet-tar performance, when in fact, it also plays a key role in the flexibility of the tread when driving over rocky terrain.

However, the drawback of siping is that each sipe-groove acts as a potential breaking point and tread-block weakness. Put another way: cut and chip damage typically occurs where the sipe groove exits the tread block.

Fortunately, sipe technology is evolving. In some cases, rather than exiting the side of the



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ABOVE: The Cooper AT3 LT is a great example of a tyre with deeper treads, as well as micro-gauge sipes that are both internal, and that exit off the tread block. All of these features vastly improve the tyre's off-road traction, longevity, and cut and chip resistance.

LEFT: A shoulder flex groove not only helps to absorb shock and bump forces; it also radically enhances the STT PROs sidewall flex on rocky terrain, while reducing the chance of incurring pinch damage.

tread block, modern sipes are often cut internally, within the tread block. This radically improves cut and chip resistance off-road.

Another major breakthrough in sipe technology is the introduction of micro-gauge siping, which is just a fancy way of saying "thinner sipe grooves". However, the benefit of a thinner-gauge sipe is that the groove can now be cut much deeper into the tread block, and thus provide better grip throughout the tyre's life and not just for the first few thousand kilometres.

The additional benefit of a micro-gauge sipe is that the tyre is far less likely to pick up stones that then become trapped within

the groove, leading to potential stone drilling and punctures.

Another major advancement in off-road tread design can be found on the sidewalls of certain tyres such as the Cooper STT PRO, where a purposely-engineered flex groove is moulded into the tyre's shoulder. This groove helps to dampen impacts on uneven

terrain; but more importantly, it dramatically improves sidewall flexibility at low pressures, which means more grip and better off-road safety.

However, the subject of traction isn't solely dependent on tread block shape and size; which brings us to...

CARCASS

Much like the foundation of your house, the carcass of a tyre accounts for up to 70% of the tyre's strength. It's also where much of the force and friction (acting against the tyre) is absorbed.

Load-carrying capacity, pressure performance, heat tolerance and puncture resistance are all features directly linked to the construction of a tyre's carcass.

But the list doesn't stop there; the rigidity of your tyre's carcass will also play a role in your 4x4's steering response, particularly when it comes to large-size vehicles and SUVs that need to perform emergency manoeuvres or evasive steering action. A strong carcass will reduce fishtailing and body roll, while allowing the vehicle to return quickly to centre steering.

To sum up, buying a tyre with a weak carcass is a lot like building your house on sand.

COMPOUND

Rubber is rubber, right? Well... no.

Most of us accept that plastic composites come in a variety of densities, strength and flexibility, and the same applies to rubber. It all comes down to what mix (or "recipe") is used.

Various additives play various roles in how well (or badly) a tyre's compound reacts to the demands of off-road terrain. The problem with many of these additives is that they're either

costly to buy, or the process of getting them to mix evenly into the rubber is costly. Ultimately, it's a game of economics and market positioning: some tyre brands aren't out to create the world's toughest off-road tyre, and therefore position themselves as a budget alternative, made from budget ingredients.

A great example of a costly additive is Coupled Silica. Although silica has largely revolutionised the performance of off-road tyres, very few manufacturers choose to use this additive, because of its high cost and the difficulty of getting it to chemically infuse so that it's evenly distributed within the rubber compound.

So, what's so great about silica? Well, most low-quality rubber compounds have high rebound characteristics. If you think of a solid rubber ball being dropped from head height, the ball will bounce back almost as high – let's say, to 70% of the original height. If you infuse the same ball with silica, the rebound rate could drop to half of that.

In terms of performance, this means: more contact with the road, less bounce, less friction, more grip, and more mileage.

Next month, we'll take an in-depth look at carcass construction; as well as the subject of load index, and why it's more important for 4x4 owners than they may realise.

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

Regards,

The TyreLife Team



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Bruiser on a budget

It's been a little over a decade since Chinese automakers first established a presence in South Africa, and the Haval H9 is by far the most expensive and most impressive Chinese vehicle we've seen to date.

Text **Kyle Kock**



HAVAL H9

So you've heard of GWM, but not Haval. To place the brand in context, think of the relationship between Lexus and Toyota, or Infiniti and Nissan; in this case, Haval is GWM's own brand of premium SUVs and crossovers. The H9, the company's range-topping SUV, was thrown right into the deep end on a 4 500 km excursion through and around South Africa – and we were at the wheel.

So what's it look like?

Overall, the design is pleasing, and we're happy to report that the H9 doesn't appear to be just another carbon copy of everything else out there. So they're already earning points for originality. It's similar in size to the likes of Toyota's Fortuner, the Isuzu mu-X and the Ford Everest – with decent approach and departure angles,

judging by sight. It also has steps integrated into the side sills for easier access in and out the vehicle.

There's just enough chrome trim in the front grille bordering the glasshouse and on the body panels to give the H9 a touch of quality without making it seem tasteless. It's also fitted with 18-inch alloy wheels.

Packed with features

This is arguably where the H9 packs the most punch, with features that you normally see on more premium SUVs that would cost you close to a bar. The ventilated front seats both have a massage function, with 8-way electrical adjustment for the driver and 4-way adjustment for the front passenger.

All three rows of seating have their own controls for the aircon, so that each zone is as comfortable as possible. The last row folds 50:50 electronically via buttons in the

boot, and the second row folds manually, 60:40. Each row also has plenty of drink holders and storage nooks for odds and ends.

There's an 8-inch touchscreen in the middle of the fascia, with integrated GPS, that doubles as the reverse camera display, and a punchy Infinity sound system to play tunes in the cabin. A tyre-pressure monitoring system allows you to keep an eye on your rubber. Above the front- and second-row occupants, there's a panoramic roof.

You also get a parking assistance programme that activates automatically when you select reverse gear, which in turn activates the reverse camera, and a voice prompt will ask you to select your mode of parking – assuming you want to alley dock or parallel park. It's doesn't have the self-steer system that many of the Europeans are offering, but it does show you how to turn >

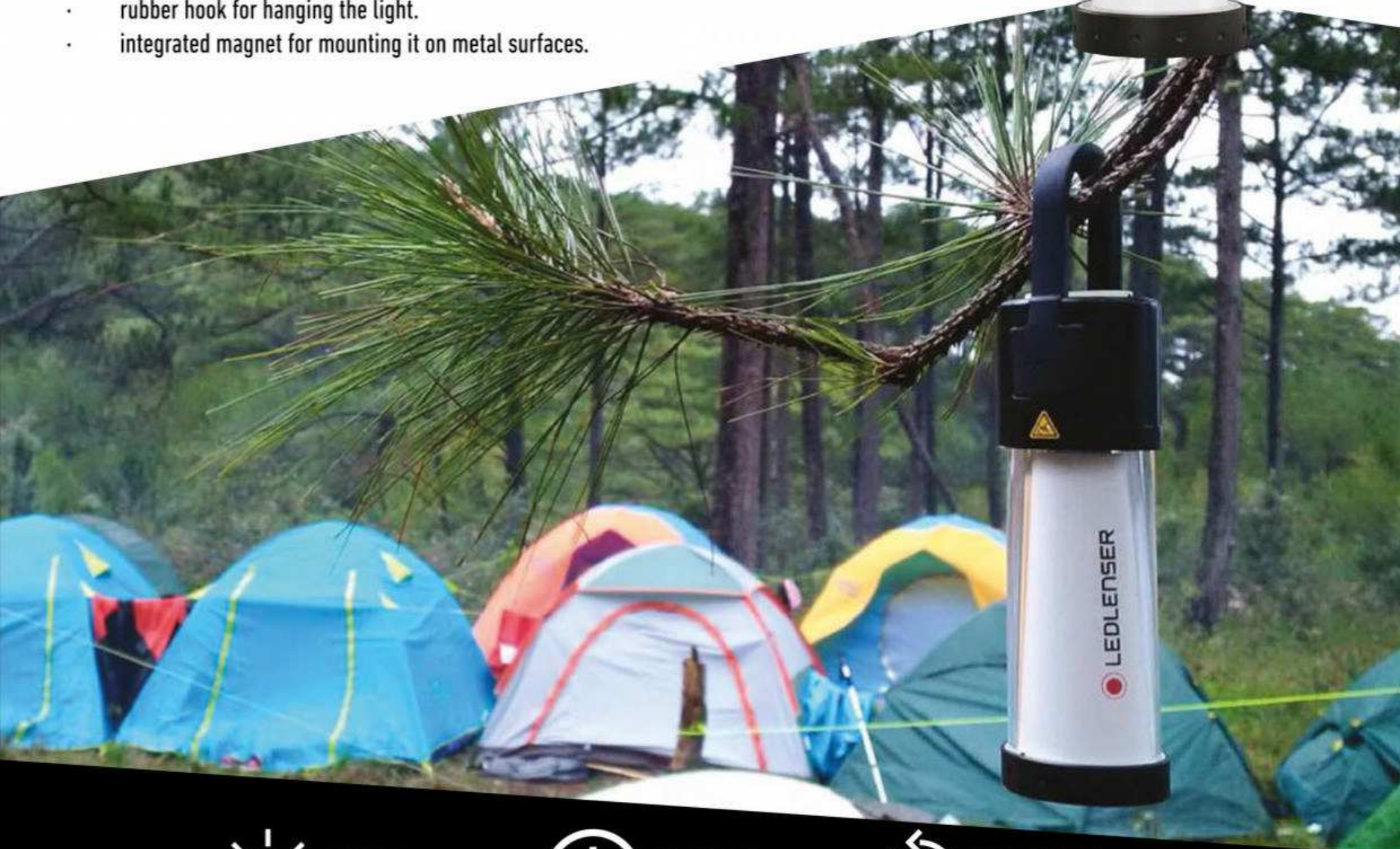


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Now there's nothing to stop you from creating a warm and pleasant atmosphere, wherever you are.

- power bank with USB connection for recharging electronic devices like cell phones, etc.
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- integrated magnet for mounting it on metal surfaces.



750LM
BRIGHTNESS



70 HOURS
RUNTIME



CHARGE IN /
CHARGE OUT



The H9 doesn't appear to be just another carbon copy of everything else out there, scoring points for originality.



A PLEASANT SURPRISE. Haval's been making a bit of a name for itself for cabin quality, but the H9 takes it up a few notches. You have soft-touch surfaces, brushed faux-alloy trim, leather upholstery, and plenty of electronic gizmos and tech to keep you entertained.



the steering wheel to position the car perfectly in front of your caravan. The radar system on the H9 also allows for blind-spot detection and reverse cross-traffic warning.

And underneath

There's only one model available in South Africa, and it comes with a 2ℓ turbo-petrol under the bonnet that produces impressive outputs of 180 kW and 350 Nm of torque. The engine is paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission developed by German drivetrain specialists ZF that sends drive to all four wheels.

There's also a drive selector next to the shifter so you can choose the mode applicable to your needs: Auto (the default setting), 4L (low-range), Sport (significantly sharpened throttle response), Sand, Snow and Mud. The transfer case is supplied by BorgWarner and there's an Eaton limited-slip differential at the rear end, with locking function.

The H9 is a body-on-frame SUV like many of its rivals, with double-wishbone front and multi-link rear suspension.

What about safety?

The H9's electronic stability control system was developed by Bosch, which manages systems like traction control, ABS with brake assist, hill-start assist, hill descent control, and roll-over intervention. In a collision, the H9 keeps the occupants safe by way of crumple zones, side-impact bars, six airbags, and ISOFIX child seat anchor points.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	H9 2.0 Petrol 4WD Luxury
Engine	2 ℓ turbo-petrol four-cylinder
Power	180 kW @ 5 500 rpm
Torque	350 Nm @ 1 800 rpm
Gearbox	8-speed automatic
Fuel consumption	10.9 litres/100 km
Tank	80 ℓ
Ground clearance	208 mm
Wading depth	700 mm
0-100 km/h	10.8 seconds
Warranty	5 years/100 000 km warranty
Service Plan	5 years/60 000 km service plan
Price	R599 900



Are they here to stay?

In the short time that the Chinese have been a presence in South Africa, quite a few have fallen by the wayside. But Great Wall Motors has been on the radar since the very beginning. Haval itself has grown from just three dealerships in May 2017 to just over 30 by the time you read this. We've noticed an increase in Havals on the roads in the last few months, and it's easy to see why.



BEHIND THE TIMES

Why it took National Luna 10 years to launch
a DC-DC dual-battery system

We've heard the gossip... "National Luna is behind the times. National Luna is stuck in the past. National Luna uses old technology." Admittedly, there is some truth in these statements, but there's more to the story than meets the eye...

WHY WE STUCK WITH THE OLD FAITHFUL SOLENOID

The story goes back some 21 years, to when our Intelligent Solenoid system first hit the market.

Before that, off-road travellers were using a manual switch to isolate the auxiliary battery from their vehicle's cranking battery. Sometime in 1997, we saw an opportunity to automate this process by isolating the two batteries with a heavy-duty, supremely reliable, intelligent solenoid switch.

We were one of the first companies to offer a commercially available dual-battery solution to the global off-road market; and, for many years, we continued to pioneer industry firsts in terms of dual-compartment refrigeration, battery

monitors, 12V fluorescent outdoor lighting, and more.

However, with the dawn of the electronic age, new technology was rapidly progressing in the fields of LED lighting, blue-tooth fridge controls and, of course, the introduction of the DC-DC dual-battery system.

The market's response to this new technology was startling. We immediately heard reports of DC-DC superiority, and how much "better" it was than the old faithful solenoid switch.



Visit nationalluna.com or
call ☎ 011 452 5438 to find a dealer near you.

“If your solenoid system is getting the job done, then there’s no good reason to change it.”

Things were not as they seemed, and it wasn’t long before chinks appeared in the feature-filled armour of many DC-DC systems. For starters, many of them were incredibly heat-sensitive, and once engine-bay temperatures topped 50°C (a very normal under-bonnet temperature), many DC-DC units shut down.

To make matters worse, because most of the DC-DC chargers were 20A to 25A units, it meant the majority of them failed to deliver the necessary power when it was most needed: i.e. within the first few hours of driving.

We were particularly interested to know why so many DC-DC systems weren’t delivering what they promised, so we started comparing DC-DC chargers against our traditional solenoid setup.

Our tests concluded that in certain instances, if the vehicle’s alternator output delivered a constant voltage of 13.9V or more, then the 20A to 25A DC-DC systems were slowing down the recharging process. In fact, above 13.9V, the solenoid system was radically out-performing any 20A or 25A DC-DC charger on the market within the first few hours of driving.

To further complicate things, our tests showed that the chosen battery type (wet-cell, deep-cycle, AGM and lithium) played a fundamental role on how well the DC-DC system worked. Put another way: If the DC-DC charger was unable to change its charging profile to suit certain auxiliary battery types, it could potentially ruin the auxiliary battery.

But there was just one problem: Without the necessary laboratory equipment to test each battery type, there was no way of analysing the data. And up to this point, our tests had been largely anecdotal, rather than scientific.

We turned to battery manufacturers for help, hoping that they would offer some insight into how their products performed under certain charging conditions. However, the response was overwhelmingly vague – either they didn’t have the knowledge, or they weren’t prepared to share it. Fortunately, one battery supplier had the confidence to do so: the South African agents for Discover® batteries. With the Discover® SA folks involved, we invested heavily in highly sophisticated and costly battery-testing equipment.

Comparison of the charging profile of a 13.5V, 13.7V & 13.9V alternator

115Ah AGM Battery discharged 70% (ie 80.5Ah removed from the Battery)



This graph highlights just how influential the alternator’s voltage is on the overall charge of the auxiliary battery. Just a 0.2V drop can have a noticeable effect on the charging rate.

Comparison of the charging profile of a 13.5V alternator vs a DC-DC charger

115Ah AGM Battery discharged 70% (ie 80.5Ah removed from the Battery)



This graph shows the obvious advantage of a DC-DC system once the alternator’s output is as low as 13.5V. Although the solenoid switch is still outperforming the DC-DC system within the first couple of hours, the bigger issue is that the Intelligent Solenoid noticeably fails to fully recharge the battery, and even after 8 hours of driving, the best it can do is an 86 % recharge state. Once you hit the 2-hour mark, the DC-DC system starts to drastically outperform the solenoid switch.

Comparison of the charging profile of a 13.9V alternator vs a DC-DC charger

115Ah AGM Battery discharged 70% (ie 80.5Ah removed from the Battery)



This graph clearly highlights how our Intelligent Solenoid system rapidly outperforms our very own 25A DC-DC setup – within the first 3 hours of driving. You’ll also note, that at this voltage (13.9V), the solenoid switch doesn’t quite make it to full capacity (98 % charged). However, in saying that, it will also take the DC-DC system more than 5 hours of driving time to fully recharge the battery. For this reason, we strongly recommend the use of an Intelligent Maintenance Charger no matter which system you install.



National Luna teamed up with a global electronics manufacturer to develop the most advanced DC-DC system currently serving the off-road travel market.

Today, our lab at National Luna boasts some of the most technologically advanced battery-testing equipment on offer. We immediately got to work...

For several years, we discharged, recharged, and analysed reams of data. The results were incredible, and (in some instances) damning of market-leading batteries that crashed and failed to deliver their quoted figures. Apart from Discover® SA, we started to realise why so many battery suppliers and manufacturers were unwilling to divulge their technical data.

THE AVIS SAFARI EXPERIENCE

At roughly the same time, Avis Safari Rentals approached us to equip their fleet of 110 vehicles with 90-litre fridge/freezers. To cut a long story short, the fridges were shutting down within six months because of premature battery-failure.

Because these vehicles were equipped with the "latest and greatest" 20A DC-DC chargers (coupled to a 105Ah deep-cycle battery), it was believed that the fridges were to blame. Fortunately, our ongoing battery tests had pinpointed the importance of battery type and alternator-charging voltage.

After determining that the Avis rental vehicles had all been delivering a constant voltage output above 13.9V, we soon realised that an Intelligent Solenoid (coupled to a 140Ah Discover® AGM battery),

would immediately offer the best recharge performance, while providing a very cost-effective solution to a fleet-based problem.

Because the Avis vehicles had previously been equipped with 20A DC-DC chargers, and as the vehicle's alternators had been delivering more than 13.9V, it was obvious that the DC-DC system was acting as a power restrictor, and thus adding unnecessary driving time to fully recharge the battery.

Of course, a 40A DC-DC charger could paint an entirely different picture, but at nearly 10 times the price, one has to consider economics, too.



The old faithful Intelligent Solenoid system is 21 years old and still going strong! *Not to mention that it can be up to 5 times cheaper than a DC-DC setup.*

The optional NLDC-25 Battery Monitor gives the user detailed information as to how the system is operating.

Nonetheless, the Avis Safari application conclusively proved that even after 21 years of service, the Intelligent Solenoid still has its place in the market, and currently runs (without a hitch), in thousands of safari vehicles across Africa.

However, aside from the 13.9V threshold, our tests did highlight a growing need for DC-DC chargers within the modern-vehicle market, and their increasing use of variable voltage alternators. Our tests also picked up some of the inherent weaknesses within many DC-DC chargers, particularly their inability to match the charging profile to a particular auxiliary battery type.

Once we could conclusively prove all of this, we then started the long process of designing and engineering a truly unique DC-DC system that addressed all of the above-mentioned problems, and more.

Today, we offer a host of dual-battery solutions (including DC-DC and solenoid), as an answer to a growing list of applications. No matter what the future holds for dual-battery power, the important thing to remember is: Just because something is new and more expensive, it doesn't automatically make it better. And that applies to our very own DC-DC system, too.

So, be wary of tall-tale marketing and new-technology hype. If your solenoid system is getting the job done, then there's no good reason to change it.

call ☎ 011 452 5438 to find a dealer near you.



What a Volvofull world

Volvo's trophy cabinet is filling up nicely. There are accolades for this and awards for that – and the manufacturer's latest honour is the XC60's title of 2018 World Car of the Year. Cyril Klopper finds out what makes this car so *lekker*.

The Volvo XC60 is a top seller in the European market for luxury SUVs, and more than a million units have been sold worldwide since 2009.

Volvo is hoping to build on this success with the second generation XC60, since it's responsible for 30% of Volvo's total sales.

It's a mid-sized vehicle that compares with – among others – the Mercedes-Benz GLC and the Audi Q5, both of which offer more than the XC60 when it comes to luggage space and luxury gadgets. For example, the Q5's boot (550 l) is larger than the XC60's (505 l), and

the GLC's all-wheel drive works brilliantly.

What does count in the XC60's favour is its exceptional traction control system and host of safety features. Neither the Audi nor the Merc can hold a candle to the Swede's obsession with safety systems. The XC60's electronic eye keeps constant watch over the surroundings, and it has a finger on the button ready to deploy everything from seatbelts to emergency lights, automatic brakes and airbags.

But does this make it a better vehicle than its competitors?

How does it fare on gravel?

To test this, we visit the Cederberg

in the Western Cape with the XC60, and tackle the route between Matjiesrivier and Wupperthal.

The roughly 20 km to Eselbank takes you through causeways, around a few sharp bends and over bumpy, rock-strewn twin tracks. When we reach Eselbank, the local community watches us wide-eyed. It's not every day that such a dashing car comes driving through this dusty town.

The road becomes increasingly difficult as we head further north from Eselbank. After the town's last sheep pen, there's a road sign that proclaims, almost proudly, "4x4s only". If you haven't yet twisted the driving mode dial



Volvo XC60



SCREEN TIME. The touch screen displays camera views from all four sides of the bodywork. Stitched together, the display resembles a bird's-eye view of your surroundings – handy for avoiding hidden rocks.



to off-road mode, now is the time to do it.

The XC60's ground clearance is sufficient for this route, but it's touch-and-go, even with help from the air suspension. The downhill assist inches us warily forward down the mountain pass en route to Wupperthal in the distance far below. It actually feels over-cautious, and you're tempted to turn it off and put your trust in the brake pedal instead.

The people of Wupperthal have higher expectations and pay scant attention to the Volvo. Every other weekend there's a horde of tourists here in expensive cars, come to visit this little mission station town. The XC60's demure appearance is unlikely to impress anyone around here.

It starts to drizzle while we're tackling the Kouberg Pass. This pass recently got a concrete slab makeover so that ordinary sedans can reach Wupperthal. It reverts to gravel once we're on top of the pass, and the rain begins to pummel down harder. It's a wide, winding road over Hoek's Mountain Pass, and we decide that this is a good place to test out the traction control. No matter how hard you try to upset it, the XC60 clings to the muddy road like our lives depend on it... and maybe they do. We ease off when we reach Moerkop, and so does the rain.

How does it fare on tar?

The gravel road reaches an end when it meets the R364 tar road. Here we turn left and drive past the Englishman's Grave, accelerating southwards, in the direction of Clanwilliam. In seven seconds we fly from 0-100km/h, but the hairpin bends of the Klipfonteinrand Pass won't allow for high speeds. Probably a good thing, because slight body roll is noticeable. Not a lot, but definitely more than from a Jaguar F-Pace or even the new VW Touareg.

Near the memorial to the poet C Louis Leipoldt, we suddenly realise just how quiet it is inside the XC60. The white noise of the tar road beneath the wheels is almost absent.

Occasionally there's a truck transporting citrus or rooibos to the ports of Cape Town, and you have to wait patiently behind them until it's safe to overtake. When overtaking on the Pakhuis Pass, you have to rely on the automatic gearbox to accelerate hard enough to get you past the trucks. But when you put >

pedal to the metal, very little happens for a nerve-wrecking moment. It's as if the XC60 is distracted by the beauty of the Cederberg and is blissfully unaware of the need for speed in that moment.

Then it suddenly wakes up and rockets past the slow-moving traffic. The delay is inconvenient, though you can correct it by always driving in Dynamic mode. But if you do, you'll also be penalised at the fuel station, and the engine revs remain uncomfortably high, as if you're making the XC60 anxious by pressing that "Dynamic" button.

Conclusion

Besides a Volkswagen Kombi, we can't think of a better vehicle to load up a family and hit the road for a holiday to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The ride is comfortable, and you sit high enough to spot lions behind the berms alongside the road. We also like that the XC60 is just as lavish as its older brother, the XC90, but in a smaller, more agile package.

If we weren't into dirt roads, then the Audi Q5 would have topped our list, above the Volvo. The Merc GLC – with air suspension, and optional off-road package – is also a great choice, and fares better on technical terrain than the XC60. But few vehicles can compete with the secure traction control of this Volvo.

The XC60 is a *lekker* car, especially on graded gravel roads. The primary reason to consider the vehicle is for its road-holding ability and safety features, but bear in mind that Volvos generally don't have great resale value. 🚗

The downhill assist inches us warily forward down the mountain pass en route to Wupperthal, far below.



LIGHT UP. The hatch can be set to rise to a preferred height. The boot isn't enormous, but it's large enough to serve the average family. The tail lights have that familiar L-shape found on all Volvo SUVs.



SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	1 969 cc, four-cylinder, double turbo-diesel
Power	173 kW @ 4 000 rpm.
Torque	480 Nm @ 1 750 rpm.
Transmission	8-speed (Geartronic) automatic
Top speed	220 km/h
Fuel consumption	5,6 l/100 km
Tank	71 l
Ground clearance	216 mm
Packing space	505 l
Tare weight	1 904 kg
Maximum towing weight	2 400 kg
Service plan & warrantee	5 years/100 000km
Service periods	Yearly/20 000km
Test model	D5 Geartronic AWD Momentum
Price	R 732 600

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(Lesotho as part 1: **R7150pp** / Wild Coast as part 2: **R7150 pp** / Both safaris in one trip **R13900 pps Less 10%**)

SAFARI #2: 1-16 MAR 2019: BOTSWANA 1: KAPRIVI 5 REGIONS VIA KAPRIVI - 16 DAYS

(Starts in Zeerust, included Okavango Delta scenic flight and 2 boat cruises on Okavango **R14450 pps**)

SAFARI #3: 22 MAR-6 APR 2019: KAOKOLAND DOWN VAN ZYL'S PASS - 16 DAYS

(Starts in Kang or Ruacana, Epupa Falls, Van Zyl's Pass, Marian Fluss, Hoarusib River **R11900/R10500**)

SAFARI #4: 13-28 APR 2019: NAMIBIA FROM NORTH TO SOUTH AFTER KAOKOLAND - 16 DAYS

(Starts Windhoek to Swakop, Walvis Bay via Kuiseb to Sesriem / Sossusvlei to Luderitz **R12500 pp**, but if you do Safari 3 & 4 together for 30 days and a mid-rest week between the safaris **R19500 pps for both & Save 10%**)

SAFARI #5: 5 MAY-8 JUN 2019: SERENGETI MIGRATION TOUR - TANZANIA - 35 DAYS

(Pretoria return. Visit Malawi, *Zanzibar, Kilimanjaro, 6 nights in Serengeti, Ngorongoro, from **\$4100 pps**)

SAFARI #6: 15-30 JUN 2019: BOTSWANA 2: SAVUTI: 5 REGIONS AND ONLY 4X4'S - 16 DAYS

(Starts in Zeerust, included Okavango Delta scenic flight and 1 boat cruise on Chobe River **(R15700 pps)**)

SAFARI #7: 5-20 JUL 2019: ZIMBABWE HOUSE BOAT AND MANA POOLS - 16 DAYS

(Starts Elephant Sands Botswana. Hwange NP, Matobo Hills, Kariba, Mana Pools, Ruins **\$1700 pps**)

SAFARI #8A: 4 AUG-24 AUG: NEW! ANGOLA WITH TOWING TO CONGO RIVER - 21 DAYS

(Starts Tsumeb Namibia. Namibé, Lobito, Kwanza, Luanda, N'Zeto & Congo River mouth **R23900 pps Less 5%**)

SAFARI #8C: 28 AUG-9 SEP: ANGOLA MILITARY TOUR LUBANGO TO CUITO CUANAVALLE - 13 DAYS

(Starts Tsumeb Namibia. Calueque, Lubango, Xangongo, Mupa, Longa, Menongue, Cuito Cuanvale **R8500 pps**)

SAFARI #8M: 13-22 SEP 2019: NAMIBIA MEMORY LANE: KATIMA TO RUACANA - 10 DAYS

(Starts Elephant Sands Botswana. Katima, 32Bn, Nkongo, Okalongo, Ruacana, Ombalantu, Oshikati **R5900 pps**)

SAFARI #9: 4-19 OCT 2019: BOTSWANA 3 KAPRIVI: 5 BIG REGIONS - 16 DAYS

(Starts in Zeerust, included Okavango Delta scenic flight and 2 boat cruises on Okavango **R14450 pps**)

SAFARI #10: 23 NOV-8 DEC 2019: ZAMBIA LIUWA PLAINS AND THE WILDEBEEST - 16 DAYS

(Starts Elephant Sands Botswana. Kasane, Kabula, Ngonja, Luiwa NP, Kafue NP to Livingstone **\$1000 pps**)

SAFARI #11: 15 DEC-30 DEC 2019: NAMIBIA YEAR-END TOUR NORTH & CENTRAL - 16 DAYS

(Starts Zeerust. Gobabis, Windhoek, Etosha, Ruacana, Epupa Falls, Outjo, Swakop, Walvis Bay **R12500 pps**)

SAFARI #12: 25 OCT-2 NOV: KALAHARI KGALAGADI ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN SIDE - 8 DAYS,

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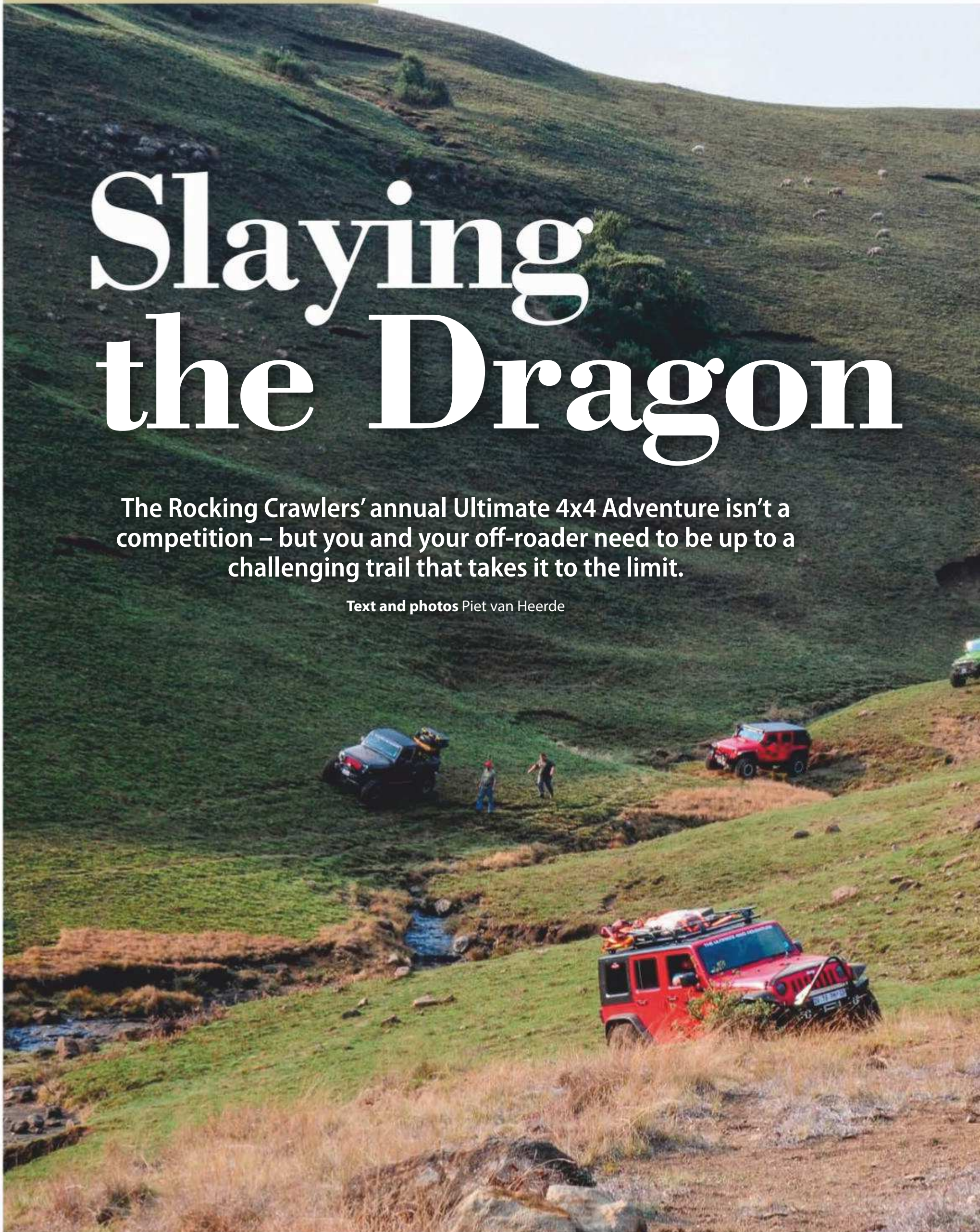
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Slaying the Dragon

The Rocking Crawlers' annual Ultimate 4x4 Adventure isn't a competition – but you and your off-roader need to be up to a challenging trail that takes it to the limit.

Text and photos Piet van Heerde





It's clear right from the get-go that this isn't your average adventure. We leave the head office of LA Sport in Gezina, and head up the N4 highway in the direction of Middelburg.

We're quite the spectacle: a convoy of 25 heavily modified off-roaders, and the huge red LA Sports truck. Appearances not being enough, we're also accompanied by the screaming sirens of the Tshwane metro police. The officials pull off at every major intersection and stop the oncoming traffic, so that the Rocking Crawlers can make their way through the city without any hindrance. Banana republic dictators, eat your heart out.

Adventure ready

We're all familiar with the average 4x4 enthusiast. You know, the guy who camps at a different spot every other weekend, and when he doesn't, he's playing on a local 4x4 trail.

And then there's the overlanding enthusiast – the guy who

kits his rig so he can travel for long distances to reach remote places such as Kaokoland and Damaraland, while being completely self-sufficient.

But then you get these guys... a unique species that flourishes within the off-roading subculture. They derive from an American group that goes by the name of the Rock Crawlers, which has now spilled over into South Africa. The goal of the Rocking Crawlers, as they're known locally, is to adapt their vehicles so that they can literally crawl almost vertically, up and over rockfaces. These vehicles get bigger tyres, stronger axles, diff locks and superchargers; and most importantly, upgraded suspension that raises the body sky-high.

The highlight of their year is the Ultimate 4x4 Adventure – a hardcore trek to an unknown destination, and would-be participants must apply to enter. The criteria are simple: huge tyres, a diff lock, and plenty of power and enthusiasm from everyone who makes up the adventure team. >



DAY 1

Reporting for duty

All the participants arrive on the Tuesday evening at LA Sports head office in Pretoria – to register for the event, and to braai and camp together.

The organisers give no hint as to the destination; but while the participants fill out indemnity forms, all the vehicles are carefully inspected, to make sure they're safe and meet all the event's requirements. The campsite is on LA Sports' property, between an obstacle course and a railroad track... it's a good foretaste of the "hold on tight" that awaits the participants in the days ahead.

DAY 2

Drive this way

The drivers gather early the next morning. We are told that we will be driving eastwards on the N4, in the direction of Middelburg. The vehicles line up in convoy, with LA Sports' red truck taking the lead. The owner, Lionel Lewis, drives this colossus himself, and its primary function is to carry extra gear, tools and fuel to the overnight destinations. Lionel has his modified Land Cruiser bakkie on a trailer behind the truck, for the off-road sections where this truck just won't reach.

There's a variety of Jeeps in the convoy, as well as an 80-series Land Cruiser and Henk de Klerk's very special Pajero. Qualified paramedic Corrie Botha heads up the emergency team, with his Expat Rescue Jeep. Behind him is Corné van der Merwe from Zone and his tech team, who will provide mechanical support, spare parts, and tools. The media vehicle completes the convoy, ready to document the entire affair, with cameras and notebooks at the ready.

The conga line of off-roaders makes good progress, without causing any unnecessary inconvenience to regular road users. However, we never miss the opportunity to stop at a fuel station. We pass Witbank, then turn off the highway and drive through Middelburg, in the direction of the Loskop Dam.

We pull over and pitch a tent-town by the Hôkaai pub and bistro, where we'll be spending the night. It's still a long time before lights-out, and the off-roaders are stripped of any extra weight before we all move to the neighbouring farm. This is the Waterval Safari Lodge, part of the Forever group, and waiting for us are Hans



READY TO RUMBLE. Participants congregate at the LAS grounds, champing at the bit to get going on their 5-day adventure. Aside from the organisers, no one has a clue as to where they are going. All they know is that it's going to be tough as nails, and that the obstacles will no doubt put a lot of strain on their vehicles.





Strydom and Wollie Wolmarans who will guide the group, along with their team. Tyres are deflated to 0,8 bar; the guys with bead lockers go as low as 0,3 bar.

The convoy is barely through the security gate when Nicholas Harris uses the two-way radio to instruct us to engage low range. Suddenly, we start to climb. It feels like we've gone perpendicular, but the organisers tell us not to get too excited. Apparently, we ain't seen nothin' yet.

Before long we come to a stop. Corné's off-roader is stuck in low range. There's a grinding and scraping and a bit of stress, but a little while later the problem is solved, and we can hit the trail again. The guys who know their business say that it's just a bit of stiffness from lack of use.

Next, we turn off the well-worn route, and Wollie indicates where we're heading to – straight up a ridge. A few guys start preparing themselves for the Grade 5

route that winds up the ridge with sharp bends, but Wollie pulls out a wild card: "You're not going around these rocks, boys. You're going over them."

It's a hot day – the mercury has already reached 37°C, and the sweat is pouring off the marshals showing us the lines over the rocks, while the vehicles strain to reach the top. This is one thing you'll notice about this group: they crawl over the rocks, no unnecessary wheel spin. They are literally moving inch by inch, without leaving a single skid mark.

We make our way piecemeal over the trail; and as soon as we're done, the guys decide to take the fight down to some rocks in a gully below. It's amazing how their minds work. If there's even a small chance that their vehicle will fit into a gap, they'll take it. And the suspension and chassis simply do what is expected of them. There are some hairy moments when it appears as if things are going to

fall by the wayside – literally. Especially when a 40" front left tyre gets stuck against a mud guard while the rear right wheel is trying to find traction on a rock. I wasn't sure if the expression on the driver's face was one of pleasure or pain.

The group reaches a waterfall. It's noticeably cooler here, and everyone jumps at the chance to stick sweaty heads underneath the icy stream of water, fill up water bottles, and generally just take a breather.

The peace is disturbed by Nicholas and his Jeep. He drives unceremoniously up the river bed, towards the waterfall. It's the furthest anyone has managed to drive up this riverbed. A pile of boulders stops him from going any further; Nicholas maintains he would have conquered them, if he'd had more time.

The day's heat clings to us like a damp blanket as we return to the campsite, but before long >



MOUNTAIN MEN. Archie Coetzee's Jeep (above) is fitted with every 4x4 accessory you can think of, and it makes short work of the first batch of obstacles. Nicholas Harris (left and below) starts off well, but runs into a spot of bother when his Jeep gets hung up on a boulder.



“
But then you get
these guys... a
unique species that
flourishes within
the off-roading
subculture.”



ROAD TO HELL. The convoy heads to Harrismith via a tar road (top) and frequents every garage along the way to keep their fuel tanks topped up (left). Tents are pitched at Dirk van Reenen's place (right) where everyone socialises around the fire and speculate on what awaits during the days ahead.



– and after a much-deserved shower – everyone is relaxing around the braai fire with cold beverages in hand.

DAY 3

All in a day's work

This morning, the group is informed that we'll only be driving on highways until we reach our next destination: the Drakensberg, near Harrismith.

We hit the road and head south – with the customary stops at anything that resembles a fuel station. Here we encounter some colourful staff, not just at the pumps but also in the shops. There's a range of delicious treats that you suddenly crave when you're on the road. At the end of the day we pull in at Dirk van Reenen's. This former rally driver now spends his time as a 4x4 guide in the mountains. He's also a direct descendant of the Van Reenen after whom the nearby pass, on the other side of the N3 in the direction of Durban, is named.

Everyone finds a spot to pitch their tent. The chilly breeze is in stark contrast to yesterday's scorching heat, and all the



participants have to dig around in their bags for warmer clothes.

That night the participants are called together. They are read the riot act as to the programme for tomorrow: this is not a game. Our lives may be in danger, because one small mistake could lead to a car tumbling off a cliff. Dirk tells the group that this has already happened to him, and he's lucky to be here to share the story. "From here on out, it's tough, guys," he warns. "There are no more demarcated campsites or ablutions, just fresh mountain water. And start mentally preparing yourself now for any conceivable incident."

After the braai, in dribs and drabs, everyone starts to head for their beds. It's clear that we'll need to be well rested for tomorrow's adventure. No doubt all the talk of sheer drops and mud affects the dreams of more than one participant.

DAY 4

Erosion and adversity!

Shortly after we decamp, Dirk is on the radio to say he's having problems. He's



PLEASED TO MEET YOU. The group meets 95-year-old Phineas Kele (below) on his farm, Roodebloem. This farm has plenty of obstacles to challenge modified off-roaders such as these. In fact, the Pajero quickly falls victim, as its ball joint is sheared off by the challenging terrain.



struggling to keep his Jeep going, but it miraculously restores itself as soon as we hit gravel, and is now running as smoothly as butter. “Probably just a bit of tar road syndrome,” Dirk explains over the radio.

A little while later the group reaches Enoch Saba’s farm. Here there’s a trove of erosion ditches – Enoch doesn’t believe any vehicle could conquer them. But before he can stop us, the first Jeep is already in one of the ditches. Dirk takes the lead, but suddenly there’s a “clunk” from beneath his car. It looks like an entire strip of his front right rim has hit a rock and simply snapped off. A freak accident, if we’ve ever seen one. It doesn’t take long to repair, but it costs a lot in effort and sweat to get a spare wheel into the ditch.

The group plays for a bit longer in the dongas, and then moves on to the next farm. Phineas Kele is 95 years old, and farms full-time on his land, Roodebloem. Because the group is driving over his property, it’s important that we go and greet him. His son, Samson, has come to braai with him for the day.

The convoy has just begun driving again when someone comes across a snake. Everyone wants to go and see it, but it’s already slithered off. Probably a rinkhals, says Dirk. You mainly get rinkhals and puff adders in this part of the world.

The group moves on again for a while, and a kilometre or three further on, it’s the Pajero’s turn to bring proceedings to a halt. It’s stuck in the gate, with its left front wheel lying horizontally beneath the vehicle. The bottom ball joint has snapped off. “Give us about 45 minutes” comes the request. Three quarters of an hour later, the ball joint has been replaced, and the Pajero is ready to roll.

In a few minutes the group encounters our first major obstacle for the day. It looks absolutely impossible to drive up this massive sandstone rock, and Dirk recommends that the two-door Jeeps find an easier route around.

It’s all about picking the right line, at the right moment, with the right amount of power on the wheels, if you want to clamber up and over this steep boulder. There’s a fine line between keeping momentum and easing your foot off the pedal if a wheel starts to spin. If you get the balance right, you can reach the top >

of this obstacle, no problem.

Shortly after this, the group is led to the slope known as the Monkey Puzzle. It's an incline of about 120 m with fixed rocks, but the guys must drive carefully, and stay off the grass – it's as slippery as a politician. After this we need to find the trail that will take us down the other side; that's the "puzzle" in the name.

Our men and women are fairly nervous, because one small mistake means you go tumbling to the ground below. But everything goes well; until the rear of Lourens Rautenbach's vehicle suddenly starts to slide. His wife and child have already climbed out to safety. He keeps his cool, and steers towards the slopes where there are fixed rocks, so he can find his "footing" again. It was a narrow escape, but his experience kicked in and he did the right thing. The rest of the vehicles tackle this slope with a lot more respect, and everyone makes it safely to the other side.

Throughout the struggle the convoy is surrounded by the most magnificent scenery – in particular, there's a straight

edge that's been burned into the grass that catches the eye. Dirk explains that this phenomenon occurs when the mountain is on fire, and then the mist descends. The mist causes the fire to burn only up to a straight border.

Late that afternoon we start looking for a flat piece of ground where we can set up camp for the night. We find a spot between two grassy outcrops, and the evening is an uneventful one.

DAY 5

Mountains and thunderstorms

It's early morning, and Dirk has already led the group over every conceivable rock or rubble pile where your average off-roader would fear to tread. Over rocks, down trenches, and through water. We follow a pipeline all the way to the wall of the Swartwater Dam. Here the guys decide it's time to drive along the watercourse and see how far they can get. It goes well, and the vehicles clamber out along the rocks.

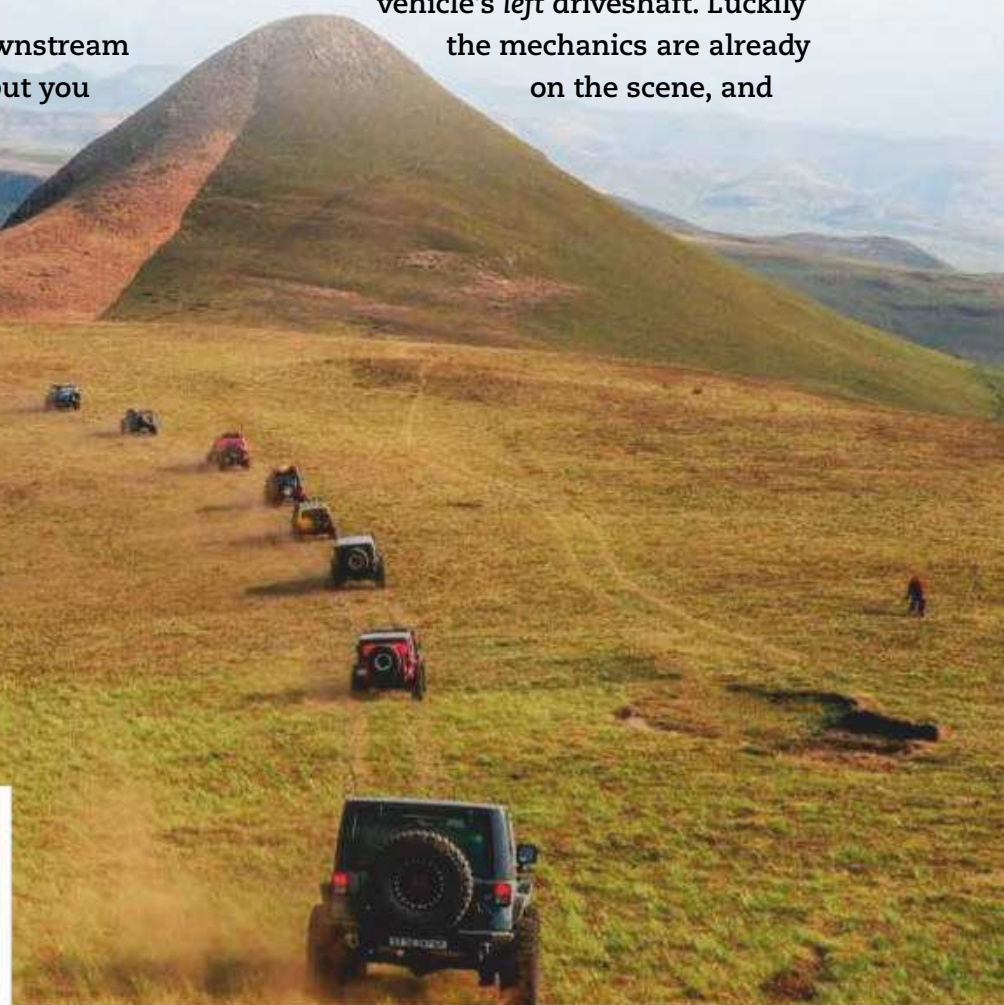
A few hundred metres downstream is the first large waterhole; but you

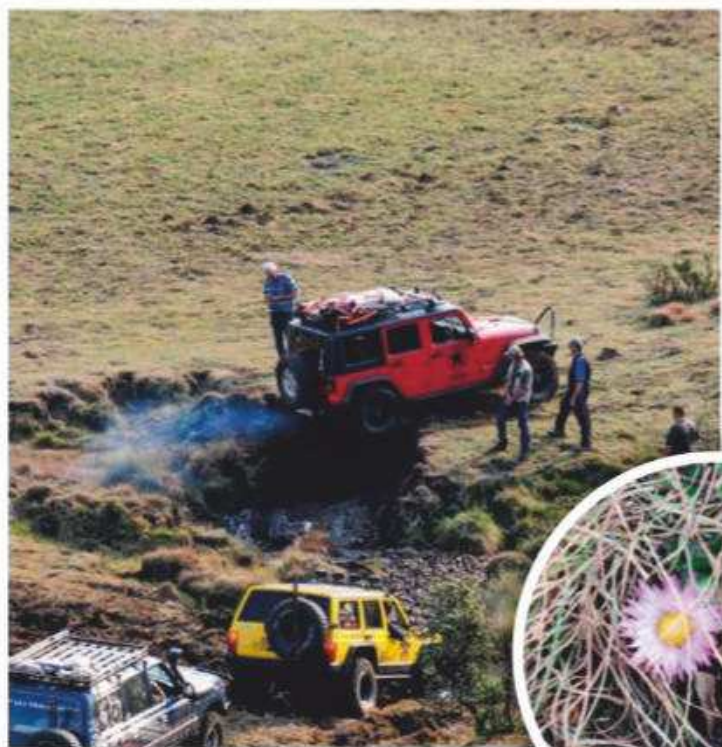
can see that the water is shallower in one section. "Drive on the left side to where the rocks stick out, then swing to the right," is the advice from Nicholas before he tries to get through the first hole. But he swings right too late, and lands up in deeper water. He first tries to extract himself, before he hears a crunching sound from under his Jeep. The right driveshaft has given up the ghost.

By now we know that's not an insurmountable problem, as with the rest of the misadventures on this trail, and the spare parts are at the ready. The mechanics get to work, and before long the broken parts are removed. There's just one problem: they're missing the seal they need to get the vehicle moving again. A temporary one is made of cloth, and hopefully it will hold for now.

While they are busy repairing Nicholas's Jeep, Hansie Coetzee gives it a go – and makes exactly the same mistake. The only difference is that he breaks his vehicle's left driveshaft. Luckily the mechanics are already on the scene, and

Throughout the struggle the convoy is surrounded by the most magnificent scenery.





BEAUTIFUL BUT DANGEROUS. The Ultimate 4x4 Adventure takes participants to some of the most scenic parts of the Drakensberg. But it's definitely no holiday, and the drivers can't afford to be distracted, even for a minute. Dirk van Reenen cautions that one misstep can lead to disaster, perhaps even loss of life. But that's exactly how the Rocking Crawlers like it. As somebody put it: "You're given one life – live it."



prepared. They solve the problem in a jiffy.

After this, the group heads to one more obstacle. The watercourse consists primarily of sandstone, but the driving surface is mostly smooth and uniform. The challenge here is to find the right amount of torque and the correct line to get through.

Dirk gets the combination wrong, and he loses his universal joint. Once again, it's clear that no challenge is too tough for this group of rock crawlers. They drag three batteries closer and weld the pieces carefully together, and then strengthen the whole unit with U-bolts. Now this patched-up part is almost working better than the original.

For the last part of the day, the group slips and slides down a steep descent to reach the campground for tonight. The weather forecast says it's set to rain,

and the guys quickly make a fire so that they can braai. It's not too long before a thunderstorm forms and the heavens open. The next morning, everything is soaked: tents, sleeping bags, clothes, everything! But what else would you expect? After all, this is the Ultimate 4x4 Adventure.

DAY 6

Homeward bound

Dirk is up and out with his Jeep first thing in the morning. When he returns, he has bad news. "No, guys, we won't be able to go that way – the rain has washed it away."

It's time to point our vehicles in the direction of home. Some people stop along the way for lunch – everyone stops for fuel – but the route back to Gauteng is a straight and uneventful one.

The adventure has come to an end, and everyone has survived. Until next year. 🚗

At home on the *Garden Route*

When it comes to camping, the Garden Route ticks all the boxes on your wish list. Camp to your heart's content at Buffalo Bay, Plett and Storms River Mouth.

Text Schalk Jonker **Photos** Nellie Brand-Jonker

There's a stretch of earth between Mossel Bay and the Tsitsikamma Mountains where it seems as if nature has reverted to the days of Eden. It's perpetually green here, there are mountains and cliffs that take your breath away, and it appears that the Indian Ocean is forever trying to show off with its beauty.

Plus, along the Garden Route there's an abundance of Blue Flag beaches, a heap of fun activities, and even more premier campsites to visit. We kicked back at three of them.

>



FOREVER PLETTENBERG BAY

Pretty-Berg Bay

When it comes to location, it often seems as if chalet-dwellers have it better than campers; but the tables have been turned at this holiday spot on the banks of the Keurbooms River. You can practically park your caravan in the water here, while the chalets have to be content with less spectacular placing.

And with 116 stands of every shape and size, chances are good that you can stake out a spot that fits squarely within your tastes. (But judging by your column on pg. 144, it may not be to your wife's taste! – Editorial team.) Whether you want to take your fishing rod down to the water, enjoy the peace and quiet of the hillsides, keep an eye on the kids in the pool or on the trampoline, or have an entirely secluded camping experience, you'll find what you're looking for here.

The campsites are generally similarly sized, and most of them have enough space to take a double-axle caravan. However, there are several in the centre of the campground where the trees grow closely together, and the branches droop low. If this could present a problem for you, then chat to the folks at reception when you make your booking.

The campsites also differ in terms of what you get. Not everyone has the same amount of space, lawn, shade or light; but there is a concrete braai with a grid at each stand, and a plug point. Taps are located between stands, which can create a mud puddle if you don't use a basin underneath when rinsing your dishes.

The trees at the river-front campsites are a bit wispy and sparse, especially at the first group of stands as you drive into the campground. Remember your storm pegs and ties, because the wind can be vicious when it blows in off the sea. But there is a paved surface to camp on, and a built-up braai faces the river.

There's also a small beach at the water's edge where the children can play in the shallows, and you'll have the best view of anyone in the campsite.

The first stands in the centre of the grounds enjoy the most shade, but also have the poorest lawn – remember your groundsheet, if you're going to set up camp here. They are also closest to the children's playground, and there's a putt-putt course, a swimming pool (and a smaller one for the toddlers), a volleyball



BRING THE FAMILY. Forever Plettenberg Bay is one of those places that will satisfy the needs of every family member. There are stands that suit every type of camper and plenty of activities to keep young and old alike entertained.





The Landsbergs from Lydenburg came to camp here for the first time with the Nels from Hartenbos, and everyone except the men fitted in the Jurgens XT160 and its tent.

They say

“It’s our first time here, and we had a great camping experience. There’s enough to keep the kids busy for hours, and the men caught some good grunTERS for the braai. The facilities are clean and neat, and we felt safe. That peace of mind is important to us. We do have to mention that the wind caught us off guard sometimes.”

court, two trampolines, a jungle gym and swings.

At the campsites on the left-hand side, you’re guaranteed shade; but there is barely any grass here, and monkeys play in the thick trees.

Bath time

The campsite’s three ablution blocks have a similar layout, and each has separate facilities for men and women. As you’d expect at a popular place such as this, the ablutions are kept constantly neat and clean.

The first is the biggest of the three, with four basins, three urinals, six toilets, one bath and four showers. The showers are big, with a curtain that divides wet from dry, but you have enough space so that the curtain doesn’t stick to you when you’re standing under the showerhead. There’s a soap dish, and you can put your shampoo on the windowsill. In the dry section there’s a bench, a rail and hooks for your towels, and enough space to change.

All the basins have large mirrors, a socket for electric razors, and handwash soap dispensers.

The other two ablution blocks are similar, but smaller. The third one

Briefly | Forever Plettenberg Bay



Campsite 116 campsites of which 33 are situated next to the river. All campsites have power and aren’t far from a tap, but not all of them have shade.

Ablutions: 3 neat and modern ablution blocks.

Price R101-R172 p.p.p.n. depending on when you’re camping. In peak season you’ll pay between R908-R1 170 for the first 4 people, and R146 p.p. after that.

Contact 044 535 2034 or 012 423 5600 (central bookings) plett@foreversa.co.za foreverplettenberg.co.za

Nearest town Plettenberg Bay, 8 km.

Road condition Tar road all the way.

GPS S34.000260 E23.398871

go! Drive & Camp says There’s a special long-term price for pensioners, but it’s not valid during peak season.

is almost at the furthest point of the campground, to service the stands that are furthest away from everything.

Hello, Bigfoot

There are plenty of activities around here to keep you occupied while you’re camping. It’s about 10 minutes’ drive to any of Plettenberg Bay’s picture-perfect beaches. Go and suntan for the day, eat in one of the outstanding restaurants by the sea, or book yourself a boat ride to view whales and dolphins. Or climb in the car, and drive back in the direction of Knysna to have one-of-a-kind experience with an elephant – you can walk with a herd of rescued elephants at the Knysna Elephant Park. You’ll learn more about these animals, and you can handfeed them and even touch them.

The park is open daily between 9am and 3pm, and there’s a tour group that leaves every half an hour. It costs R320 p.p. (R230 for pensioners and students, R160 for kids aged 5-12; and free for children under 5).

>



DO AS YOU PLEASE.

Remember your fishing gear, and see if you can catch one of the Keurbooms River's slippery customers. Or get back in your car and pop down to Knysna to see the elephants. You've probably never been this close to the world's largest land animal.



STORMS RIVER MOUTH

Between the trees and the sea

Leave the Western Cape behind you for a while. Head in an easterly direction, cross the Bloukrans River into the Eastern Cape, and go and hammer your tent pegs in at Storms River Mouth in the Tsitsikamma Nature Reserve.

Storms River Mouth is one of SANParks' more popular destinations, and with the sea on your front step and the unspoiled Tsitsikamma Forest behind you, it's easy to see why. You camp so close to the sea that you want to spend the first few days of your holiday just sitting in your camp chair, looking at the ocean.

Later, when you light the fire in your built-up braai, and the flames leap into the air as the sun dips westward into the Indian ocean, you get a sense of just how special this place is. You're here for the scenery, and you'll experience it in spades. The crashing of the waves below you is a constant white noise that drains away all the worry and stress of daily life.

When you're eventually ready to explore the world around you, there are hiking trails to test and try, for every fitness level. The Waterval Trail is the first 5 km of the famous Otter Trail, and its starting point is a few minutes away from the campsite. You walk along a winding path through the forest, and the odds are good that you'll encounter a few tame buck.

The Blouduiker Trail of 3,7 km is towards the back of the campsite, and if you head in the opposite direction – towards the restaurant side – you'll come to the start of the Storms River Mouth Trail, where you can cross the river on a 77 m long bridge. Make sure your camera's battery is fully charged!

Pick your place

There are more than 80 paved stands here, and each has enough space for your caravan and canvas awning. There's a plug point and braai for each stand, but you have to bring your own grid with you. As is to be expected, the stands by the sea are more expensive than the rest. But if you've ever wanted to fork out a bit more to treat yourself and your loved ones, this is the place to do it. There's a magic about the booming sound of waves breaking over the rocks, with sea spray so high, you almost don't need to salt the meat on your braai.



Briefly | Storms River Mouth



Campsite More than 80 paved campsites with power and a braai. Remember your grid. Shade is sparse.

Ablutions 5 ablution blocks that vary in size. Mostly neat and tidy.

Price R323-R485 per campsite for 2 people. After that it's an extra R89 p.p. (R45 for children). You also pay a daily conservation fee of R55 (R28 for children).

Contact 012 428 9111 (central bookings) reservations@sanparks.org sanparks.org

Nearest town Storms River 16 km.

Road conditions Tar road until you reach your campsite.

GPS S34.022394 E23.896270

go! Drive & Camp says If you're keen for adventure, you can book a kayaking experience on the river mouth. It costs R600 p.p.



ON YOUR DOORSTEP.

There are 80 stands on which to pitch your tent at the Storms River Mouth campsite, but do try to get one right in front. It may cost extra, but it's totally worth the expense. Just remember to bring along your storm straps, or you're likely to lose a tent.





Charlotte Peters, Martin Kusel, Daniela Scriba, Michael Lilje and Ellen Filter are Tuks students, travelling together all along the coast down to Cape Town.

They say

“It really is an outstanding place. The beautiful scenery of the forest takes your breath away – and then you also spot the dolphins and whales cresting in the ocean, while you’re enjoying a sundowner and watching the sun dip behind the horizon. You can hardly get closer to nature than this.”

There’s a magic about the booming sound of waves breaking over the rocks.

THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR WALKING. You can’t camp at Storms River Mouth and not do the hiking trail. At least walk across the suspension bridge. If you’re into hiking, you’ll find more trails here than you can shake a walking stick at.



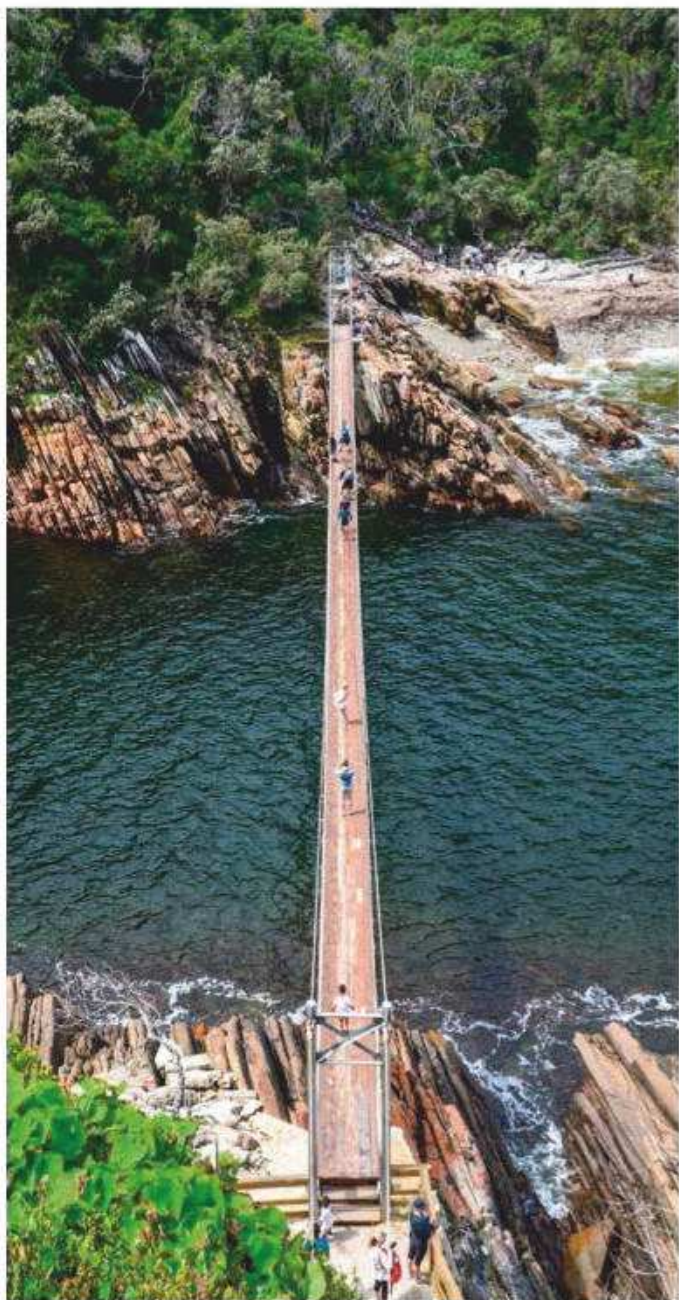
The campsite is laid out on two terraces, and if you camp in the first row, you’ll need to remember your storm ties. We were lucky on our visit, but we heard more than one person complaining about how bad the conditions can become if the wind starts howling.

You’re more sheltered on the furthest stands, and although you’re further away from the water, you don’t lose any of the charm of your natural surroundings. The sea stretches out before you and the emerald green forest is so close, you can almost feel the leaves tickling you.

We camped near a small ablution block with separate facilities and a washing-up place, and only when we left did we realise it was probably the most run-down ablution block here. When we took a walk around later, we could see why SANParks ablution blocks are so highly regarded.

The other ablutions are neat, modern and clean. There are five bathrooms in the campsite – three big ones and two small ones – so you’re always near one.





POPULAR PLACE. You need to jump to it if you want a spot at Buffalo Bay's campsite over the holidays. The grounds are on a peninsula, which means you're surrounded by ocean. In fact, you can't camp any closer to the water's edge than you do here.



BUFFALO BAY CARAVAN PARK Surrounded by the sea

When it comes to size, the holiday town of Buffalo Bay can't really compete with the likes of Plettenberg Bay or Knysna; but when it comes to scenery, nothing can hold a candle to this destination.

It's easy to box the town in as nothing more than a handful of holiday houses, a general dealer, a pizza parlour and a caravan park with two beaches on a small strip of earth. But when you've camped here, you'll know why it's near impossible to book a spot in peak season.

Buffalo Bay is in the Goukamma Reserve, just before Knysna if you're coming from Cape Town along the N2. The caravan park is on a small peninsula at the tip of the bay, so there's no shortage of seafront stands. You're basically surrounded by water, and you couldn't get a better view of the Indian Ocean if you tried.

The two sides of the campsite stretch along the water to a point furthest from the gate, almost in the shape of a flat triangle. You'll have an unencumbered view across the water from any of the

stands. Just remember your binoculars, because dolphins leap from the water right here, in front of your tent. There's also a wide range of birdlife in this part of the world.

The 85 stands all have grass, a plug point and a brick braai (without grid), with taps nearby to grab water for coffee. They also have slabs of gravel where you can level your caravan and set up your gazebo. It's under these gazebos that you can while away your time with a book, listening to the roar of the ocean. Or take the kids and walk to the beach at Buffalo Bay, hit the waves on your surfboard, or hook some bait and try to catch some fresh fish for dinner

There's a handful of stands in the middle of the campground, but they don't have a concrete slab or a brick braai area as the seaside ones do.

In the middle of the campsite is a small jungle gym to keep the kids entertained, but it's clear that with all the other things to do around here, it takes second place. There's also no camp shop here, but you can buy wood at reception and the town isn't too far away.

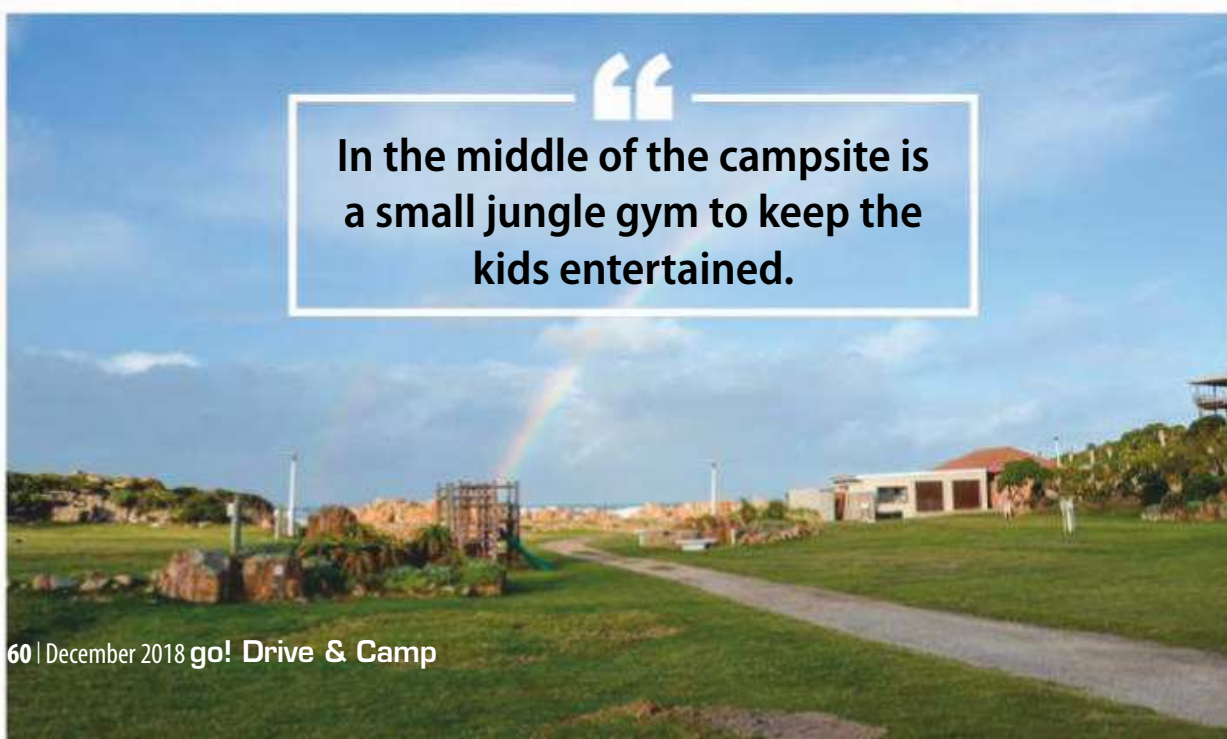
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UNDER THE WATER AND NEXT TO WATER. The walls of the bathrooms are tiled from top to bottom, and the facilities are kept sparkling clean. There's no shortage of seafront stands, and when you light a fire in the evening, the crackling flames are accompanied by the roar of the Indian Ocean.



In the middle of the campsite is a small jungle gym to keep the kids entertained.



Briefly | Buffalo Bay Caravan Park



Campsites 85 stands; those along the sea have a concrete slab surrounded by grass, and the ones in the middle are on grass. There's no shade here.

Ablutions 2 clean and neat ablution blocks. Only one of these is open outside of season.

Price R300-R750 per stand for 2 people, depending on when you're there. After that it's R50-100 p.p.p.n. (free for children under 4). Maximum 6 people per stand.

Arrival and departure time 2 pm and 10 am.

Contact 044 383 0035 buffalobay.co.za

Nearest town The caravan park is in Buffelsbaai.

Road conditions Tar until you reach the gate.

GPS S34.08908 E22.97613

go! Drive & Camp says Bring enough cash with you to cover your campsite fees, because this caravan park doesn't have card facilities.

Remember to remember

Buffalo Bay's two ablution blocks are in the middle of the campsite, but when we visited, just one of these was open. The other one, at the furthest point of the campsite, is only open in peak season.

The ablution block nearest to the gate has separate facilities for men and women, and there's nothing to complain about. They are modern, tiled, clean, and large enough for everything you need.

The showers are big, the water pressure is good, and you'll never accidentally bump into your neighbour while he's brushing his teeth at the basin. There were also no problems with the hot water supply during our visit.

Two important things that must be on your camping list when you're heading here are your reflector sheet and your storm ties, because there are no trees for shade here, and the weather on the coast is as unpredictable as a moody teenager.

If you want to shelter out of the wind, try the stands near the entrance; but then you won't have a view, and that's the main reason you came here.

go! Drive&Camp



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Wild camping in Dinokeng

Everything comes to check you out at Kyleu Bush Camp, from giraffes to plains game and sometimes even lions. Come pitch your tent at this Big 5 campsite.

Text and photos **Helenus Kruger**



Over the past few years, the Dinokeng Game Reserve has become a popular weekend and holiday destination – for two primary reasons: firstly, you’ll spot the Big 5 here; and secondly, Gautengers can reach it in under two hours.

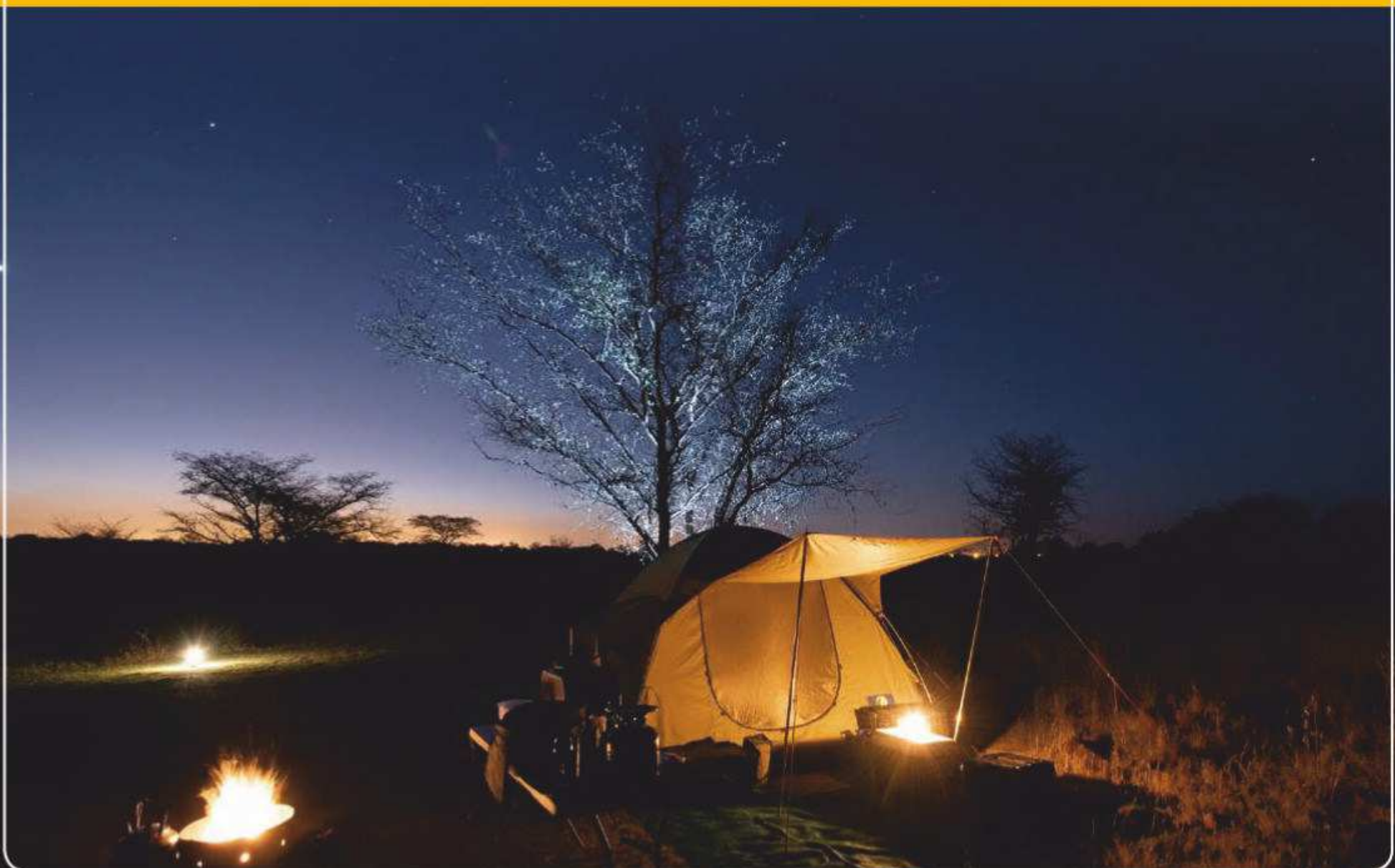
It’s the only Big 5 reserve in the country that’s within a developed metropolitan area, and since it opened in 2001 there’s been an ever-increasing number of both tourists and animals around here.

You start spotting game as soon as you’re through the gate, on the side of the tar road.

So keep your binoculars and camera ready, because you never know what might cross your path – literally.

It’s in this region that Devon and Sherri Symons built the Kyleu Bush Camp, and it’s one of just a handful of campsites in this reserve where you can pitch your tent in an unfenced camp area. The name “Kyleu” comes from blending together the names of Devon and Sherri’s two sons, Kyran en Leuan.

Devon, a pilot by trade, flew for a year in Botswana before settling here. He worked closely with tourists visiting the area and got a good understanding of what their



requirements are. This is when the idea for a camping destination took root, and before long the opportunity to buy a piece of ground in Dinokeng arose. And so Kyleu was conceived, almost a year ago now.

Tough guys or softies

Kyleu has six stands in the bush camp and three at the river camp. The stands at the bush camp are set apart from each other, and while you may get the occasional glimpse of your neighbours, the grass, trees and bushes between you provide some privacy.

Usually when you hear the words “bush camp”, your mind unwittingly conjures up images of pit latrines. This is not the case here, because every stand has its own bathroom with running water, a gas geyser, a shower, and that essential item: a flush toilet. You also have a rubbish bin on your stand, and a braai with a grid. You even get a complimentary bag of sicklebush wood. However, there’s no electricity here, and you’ll have to bring your solar panels or your coolerbox full of ice to keep your chops, cheese and Chianti cold.

The circular campsites are surrounded by trees and veld, and they vary in size – the smallest is about 25 paces in diameter. The planted LM grass hasn’t grown to cover the entire area yet, and there’s a lot of barren ground in between. Each stand has at least one tree, but most are still too small to provide significant shade just yet, while others are on the perimeter of the camping area and are unlikely to provide relief for your stand. But everyone has at least a little shady spot where they can sit back and relax.

Stand number 4 is the smallest of them all. You’ll only be able to fit one caravan here. But with all the trees around it, it’s nice and private. Number 5 is off to one side, and you can fit your caravan in between two trees on the side of the campsite. Here you’ll get early morning and late afternoon shade. There’s also enough space for a second caravan, but it’ll be exposed to sunshine all day.

Stand number 2 is the least private and has no shade, and number 3 has a large tree that you can shelter under in the afternoon. This stand is big enough for two bush trailers, just like campsite number 1.

It’s not a good idea to go wandering around the campsite at night. Remember, this is Big 5 country, and there have been lions in the camp before. Rather take a drive if you want to visit friends in the evening.

Although the stands are numbered, there



WILD FROM THE GET-GO. Dinokeng is an authentic Big 5 destination, and you will encounter the locals as soon as you drive through the gate, just along the roadside.

aren’t any signs to indicate which is which. Devon says he’s planning to add more stands in the near future, and that means that the numbers could change.

For those tough okses who are entirely self-sufficient, there are three river stands to choose from. They look onto the Kaallaagte stream, and are on an open plain with no facilities. You’ll have to bring everything you need with you, and take your rubbish away when you leave. These spots, which are a lot bigger than the bush stands, are about 100 m away from the bush camp, on lower ground; which means that you won’t catch a glimpse of the guys in that camp, and vice versa.

The first two spots of the river camp are right next to each other, and you have to choose between shade and privacy. >



Coenie Strydom and Chrissanda Saayman and friends Vleis and Vanessa van Graan from Alberton camp with a 1988 and 1989 Volkswagen Caravelle Syncro, respectively

They say

“ We often go to Dinokeng to relax, preferring to rough it rather than opting for luxury. We like places that are more basic and bushy, like Kyleu. The ablution blocks have everything you need. ”

Both have big trees for morning shade, but you have just 40 m of veld between you and your neighbour.

The only tree at stand number 3, which is a lot further away, is still small, and the sun will punish you if you don't have an awning or shade of some kind. The benefit of this spot is that you have your own entrance road and are surrounded by nothing but veld, with the river in front of you. The stream isn't perennial, and only flows if there's been a good downpour. But you're camping on elevated ground, and a little way away.

About ablutions

The bush camp's facilities, with basins, copper pipes along the wall and stop taps, are something between bush-chic and rustic. The little building with its roughly-plastered walls has a zinc roof, and the light brown paint helps it blend in well with the surrounding environment. There's a good chance that an impala or blue wildebeest will come and check in on you while you're showering – there's a space of 40 cm between the walls and the roof.

Inside, the bathroom measures 2,2 x 2,3 m, with the shower taking up about half of this space. The shower doesn't have a door or curtain; but it's not noticeable, because the dry side stays dry, thanks to its size. Inside the shower there's a wooden rack where you can put your soap, and your towel can hang neatly on the copper peg near the entrance.

The zinc basin is embedded into a wooden surface that is connected to the wall by a rope. Above the sink there's a mirror, and there's a rubbish bin and toilet paper in the toilet. Lighting is taken care of by two 12 V LED lights, one inside and one outside, near the washing-up area.

The dishwashing area is outside the bathroom block and consists of a zinc basin and wooden surface. The gas geyser is in the corner, and there's a firehose outside the building – just in case a rogue spark sets the surrounding veld on fire.

Look for the Big 5

Dinokeng has a network of about 120 km of wild trails on the self-drive routes. The majority of these are designed for sedans, and it's only on the eastern side of the reserve that you'll need a vehicle with high ground clearance.

The routes are clearly marked, and with the trail map at hand, you won't easily get lost. There are concrete beacons with numbers at each intersection where various



trails merge. The numbers are also indicated on the map, so you can easily determine where you are on the route. The trails often meet up with the main routes in the reserve, and you can take a short cut back to camp if it's time to prepare breakfast. You can also pack a picnic basket and enjoy a snack at one of the picnic spots, or grab something to eat at one of the lodges that are open to day visitors.

There's plenty of game in the reserve, and you'll see lots of black wildebeest, impala, kudu, zebra and giraffe. If you want to spot the Big 5, you'll need to be a bit more patient and have your bush-eyes ready. The three lion prides each have their own territory that they move in. According to Devon, the leopards are seldom seen; you'll have a better chance of spotting the roughly 70

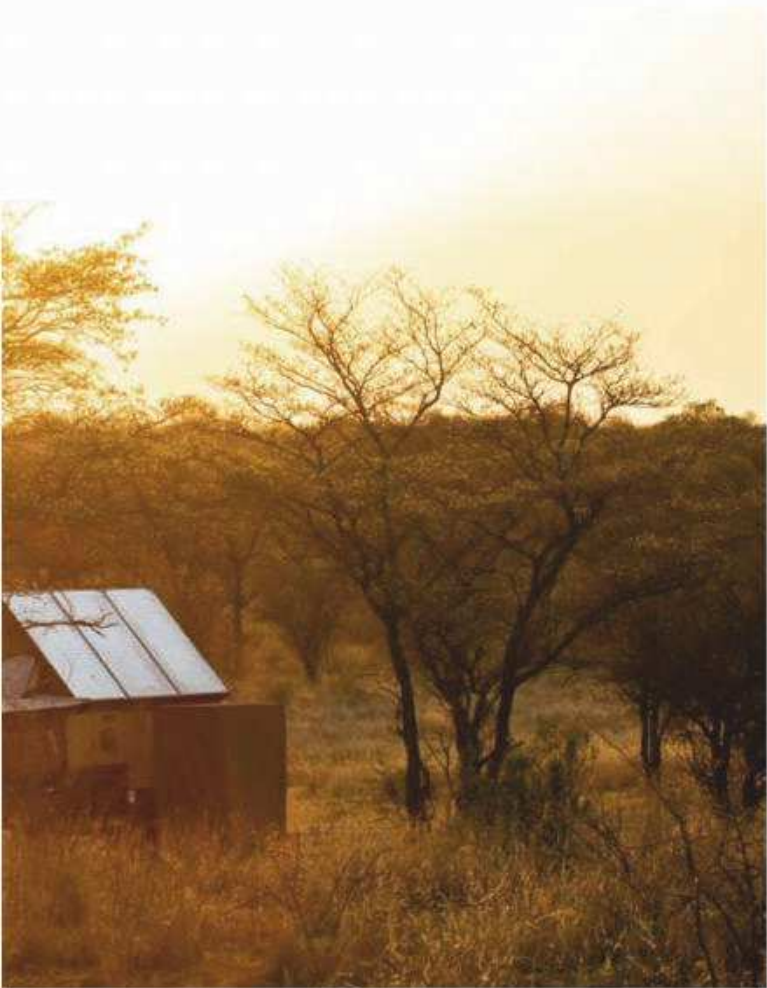
buffalo that live here. There are also black and white rhinos and cheetahs to be sighted.

The self-drive route permit costs R250 per day per vehicle for 10 people. Devon's team can make the booking for you when you book at Kyleu. Remember to take the permit with you when you go for a game drive.

Kyleu also offers a guided game drive. It lasts about 2½-3 hours, and costs R175 per person (R85 for children under 12; free for children under 6).

Dinokeng's own mall

You can buy wood (R20) and ice (R10) at Kyleu, but for anything else you'll have to head to the Safari Mall, about 7km away from the camp. Here you can stock up on supplies at the small supermarket, butchery and liquor store.



This is what it costs

(2 adults)

Fuel 50 ppm diesel @ 8 1/2 /100 km
and R15.80/1 and 104 km (there
and back) **R131.46**

Toll gates (there and back)
R72.00

Accommodation (2 nights, bush
camp) **R680.00**

Conservation fee (2 days) **R80.00**

Food **R1 532.29**

Grand total **R2 495.75**

VISITING HOURS ALL DAY. Keep your eyes peeled and your binoculars at the ready because there isn't a shortage of wildlife to feast your eyes on at Kyleu Bush Camp. Shade trees are intermittent in the campsite.

Briefly | Kyleu Bush Camp



Campsite You have a choice between the bush camp with private ablutions, and the river campsites where you need to be completely self-sufficient.

Ablution facilities Private, with hot water, shower and toilets. Or bring your own shower, if you're pitching at the river camp.

Price Bush camp R120-R200 p.p.n. depending on the season; river camp R110 p.p.n. (R100 for pensioners, but only during the week and off-season). The conservation fee for Dinokeng is R40 p.p.d. (R25 for children).

Arrival and departure times During season 2pm and 12pm; out of season 2 pm and 2 pm. You can organise to leave later, as long as no one has booked the site after you.

Road condition Highway until the Hammanskraal turn-off; after that it's a good tar road into the reserve, and the last 2 km to camp is a gravel road with some corrugation.

Contact 060 458 4478 info@kyleu.co.za

GPS S25.372028 E28.356116 (turn off from the Kaallaagte road) S25.372044 E28.356121 (reception)

go! Drive & Camp says In summer you can bring the kids' portable pool with you. Devon will fill it for you, and at the end of your visit he'll empty it.





Take a load off



Don't leave your creature comforts at home this summer. With Camp Master's affordable range of trailers you can take everything and the kitchen sink!

We've all stood looking into the back of our boots, scratching our heads and wondering whether we really need to include that extra-large fold-away table, our potjie or braai for the upcoming camp holiday. But in the end, you can only fit so much into your car, and as much as you may want to take the fishing gear with you, you can't really leave the tent, suitcases and food crates behind. The trick to successful camping is to find that sweet spot between packing too little and packing too much. And no one in the family wants to have to fight for the only two decent camp chairs that you managed to squeeze into the boot with all the other essential camping gear.

Fortunately, there is a simple solution to your packing problems: get yourself a trailer.

If you go to your nearest Makro, you'll see that there are plenty of high-quality, affordable trailers available to suit your budget. You should consider buying one to avoid the holiday squish this year.

And remember, you don't need a special licence to tow all trailers. With a normal B licence, you can tow a trailer with a gross vehicle mass (GVM) of 750 kg or less. The trailers at Makro all fit that criteria.

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APEX 500 (6 FT)

Dimensions: 2965 (L) x 1545 (W) x 1050 (H) mm
Tare mass: 220 kg
Pay-load: 430 kg
GVM: 650 kg



ELITE 1150 (5FT)

Dimensions: 2400 (L) x 1380 (W) x 1050 (H) mm
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Pay-load: 290 kg
GVM: 450 kg



ROADSTER 200 (5 FT)

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Tare mass: 160 kg
Pay-load: 290 kg
GVM: 450 kg



ROADSTER 500 (6 FT)

Dimensions: 2965 (L) x 1380 (W) x 1545 (H) mm
Tare mass: 220 kg
Pay-load: 430 kg
GVM: 650 kg



TOWN AND COUNTRY 300

Dimensions: 3220 (L) x 1600 (W) x 1300 (H) mm
Tare mass: 360 kg
Pay-load: 390 kg
GVM: 750 kg



WILDERNESS 310 WITH TENT (6 FT)

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Tare mass: 360 kg
Pay-load: 390 kg
GVM: 750 kg



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In the hills of KZN

Where Pongola, Piet Retief and Vryheid form a triangle, there are kloofs filled with mountain aloes and challenging 4x4 trails surrounding a deep, deep dam.

Words and photos **Cyril Kloppe**

About 50 km to the north-east of Vryheid in KwaZulu-Natal, in a narrow rift valley, lies the 700 ha Bivane Dam. This irrigation dam was completed just after the dawn of the new millennium, and is owned and managed by the Impala Water Users Association.

There are 5 main trails here through the nature reserve and around the dam that you could tackle with a soft-roader or a normal two-wheel-drive bakkie.

Route 1 takes you from the entrance

gate to Bivane Dam's main camp. Routes 2-6 fork off from the main trail and lead to various 4x4, quad bike and hiking trails. To prevent 4x4 vehicles from accidentally ending up on the quad bike trails, the 4x4 routes are indicated by the use of F-signs. Routes F1 and F2 are in the south of the Bivane Dam Nature Reserve, while routes F3 to F6 are on the west side. All the F-routes require 4-wheel-drive with low-range gearing; you won't be able to manage these trails with a soft-roader or a two-wheel-drive bakkie.

But first, a practice round

First tackle the newbie-friendly Naauwkloof trail (F2). Take Route 6 from the main trail for about 500 m until you see the F2 road sign. Turn left here and follow a pleasant twin-track through a wooded ravine. There's a fork in the road about 700 m further, where you should turn left and follow along the side of a cliff, cresting at the top of a hill.

It's a moderate climb, starting at 800 m above sea level and leading up to 960 m above, over a total distance of 2,3 km.





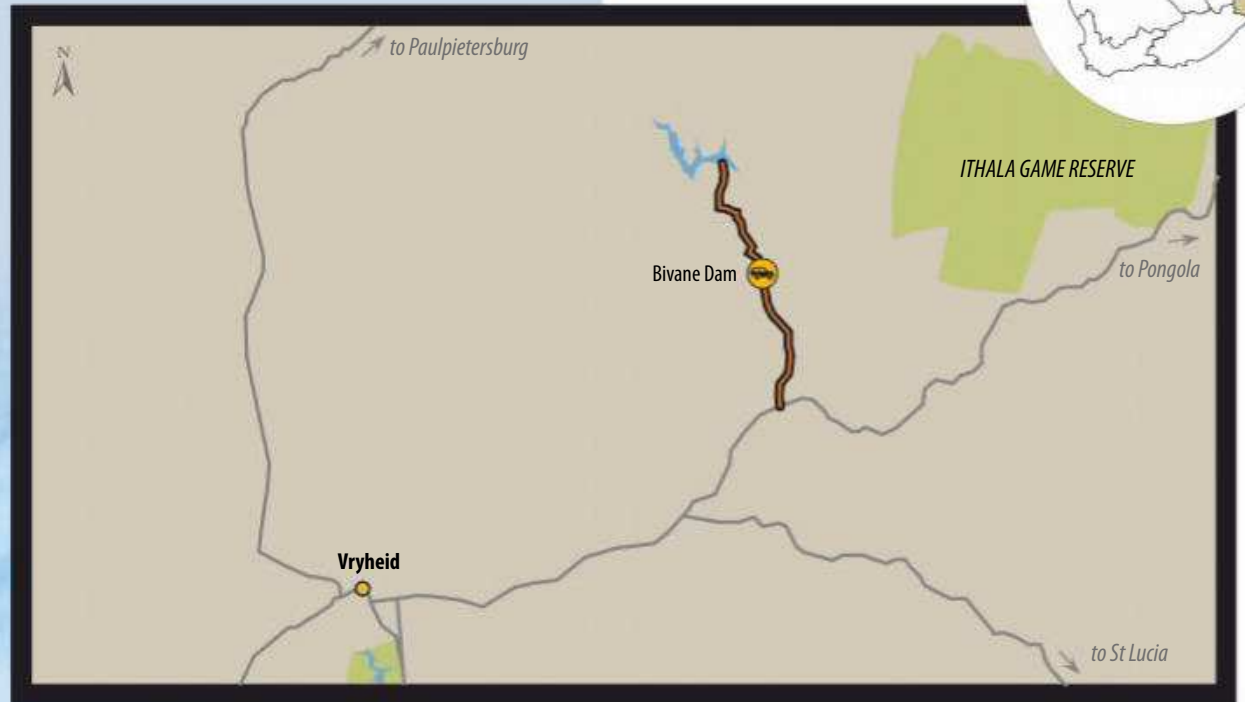
There are no extreme obstacles here, but occasionally you'll have to engage 4x4 high-range gearing and perhaps lock up a diff or two if the stones have been loosened by other 4x4 vehicles that have used the trail before you.

After 2,3 km you'll reach the end point at the top of a ridge, with a beautiful view across the eastern section of the reserve. The ridge is coloured with red mountain aloes blooming out of the flat, waist-high *tamboekie* grass. After you've taken your fill of photos, you'll have to retrace your steps to the crossroads where you turned left earlier.

If you keep going straight, you'll get to another grass-covered hill. On top of this hill you'll need to turn around again and head back to the crossroads. There's no real reason to drive up to this hilltop, except for the fact that you'll be rewarded with more beautiful views over the reserve. The trail should take you about an hour to complete, if you don't rush it, and offers a taste of what lies ahead.

Tougher challenges await

After you've turned back to the crossroads, you can turn left or right, because both roads lead back to Route 6. Now you need to keep your eyes peeled for the F3

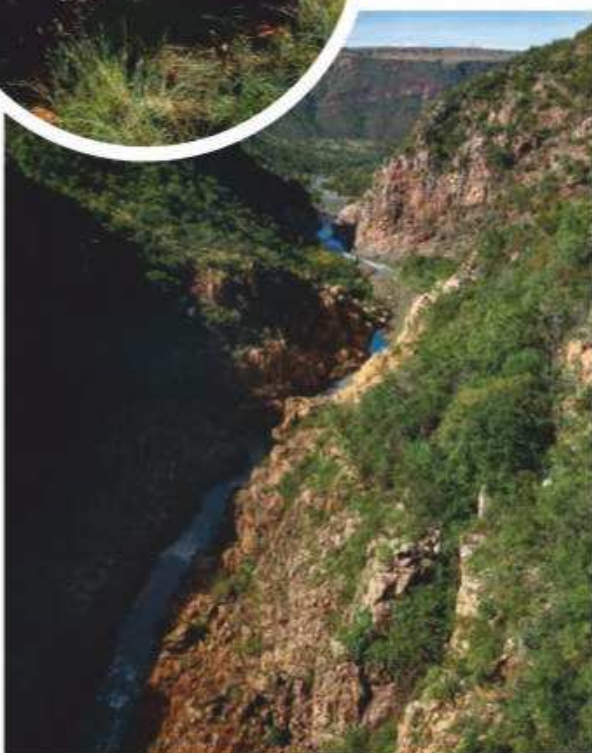


THE GRASSY KNOLL. The scenic Naauwkloof route isn't overly demanding, and offers terrific views over the reserve. The river crossing isn't challenging either, unless it's in flood.

signpost. You'll cross the Manzaan River about 100 m after you've started driving the F3 route. If the water level is low, you can follow a clear line between the boulders, but if it's in flood you'll have to probe your way across carefully, and hope that you don't strike a rock or drive into a submerged hole.

On the other side of the Manzaan River there's a picnic spot with a pit toilet. Here there's also a neat shelter where you can overnight if you bring your own mattress. If you lie quietly in your sleeping bag at night you might be lucky enough to get a visit from a curious serval. Bikini Beach, on the riverbank near the picnic spot, is a swimming spot where you can cool down in the Manzaan River.

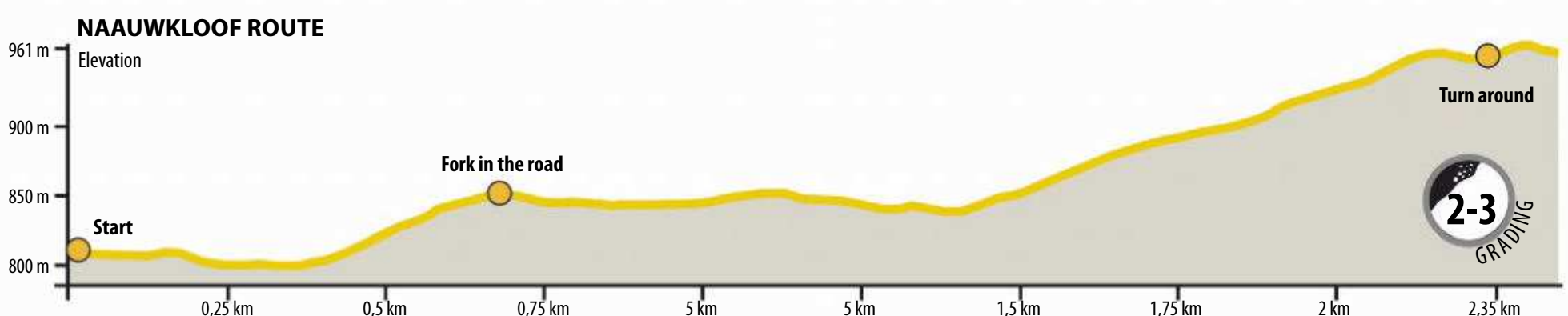
Shortly after the Bikini Beach picnic site you come across an obstacle called Schurweberg. Here you'll leave the river's flood plains and climb along the rocky >

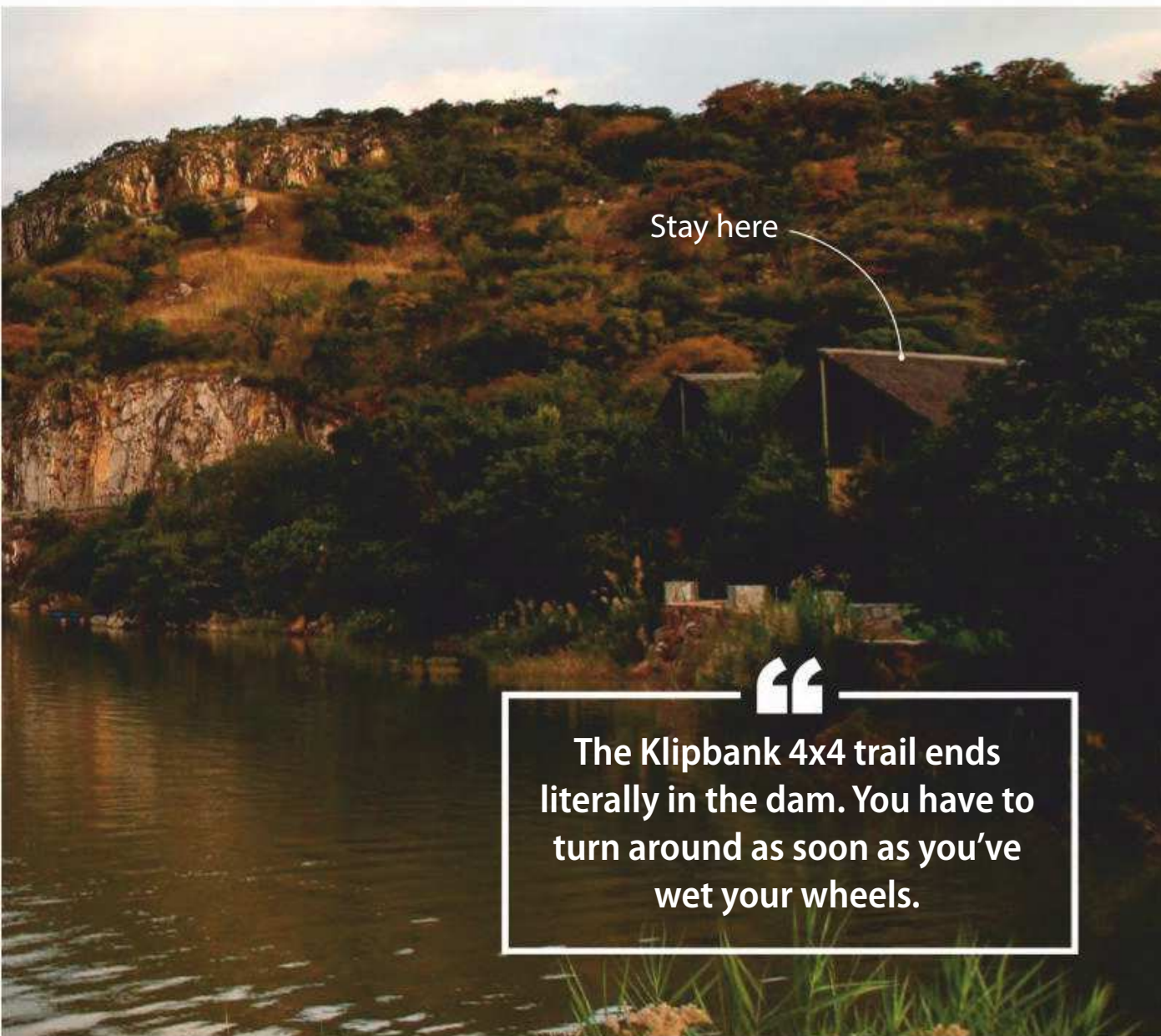


ridges. It's only a moderate obstacle, but you'll need to be careful that the bushes alongside the trail don't scratch the paintwork on your bakkie.

After the Schurweberg obstacle you'll spot an F4 route marker. This leads to the Kiaat bush camp in the Manzaan rift valley, where the river runs into the Bivane Dam. Kiaat bush camp has a braai area, a toilet, and hot water for showering. There's enough space for a large group of friends to camp here comfortably.

If you carry on past the turn-off, you'll soon encounter the last noteworthy 4x4 obstacle: Helpmekaar Hill. It's a gnarly mountain pass with loose shale and hairpin bends. Low-range is essential; and a diff lock would also come in handy, were





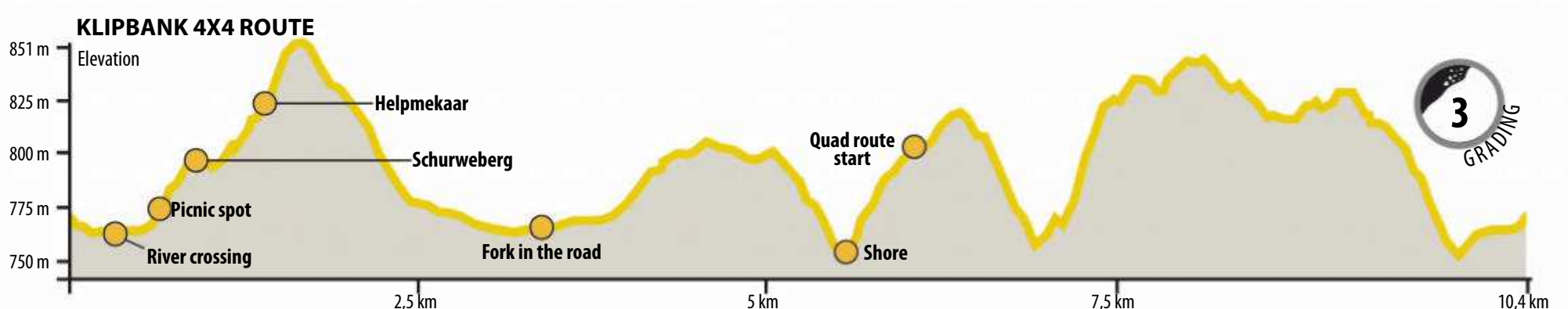
it not for the sharp, twisting turns.

From here the route heads downhill to a grassy plain. Keep a lookout for grey and mountain rhebok, and European fallow deer. You might even encounter a martial eagle gliding high above the valley. The F6 route, also known as the Klipbank 4x4 trail, ends literally in the dam. You have to turn around as soon as you've wet your wheels and go back the way you came.

If you visit Bivane Dam Nature Reserve during the week or out of season, you can also ask to drive the Beestekraal quad-bike trail (Q5 route). An off-road vehicle can just fit on the narrow track, and if you engage high-range 4x4 you should be able to handle the sharp turns, as long as your vehicle isn't too long. It's definitely worth the trouble driving the Q5 route, because it traverses the most beautiful part of the nature reserve.

The other Q-routes aren't suitable for 4x4 vehicles, and are described as "highly technical".

A DAM FINE DRIVE. The dam empties quickly during the dry season, but fills up just as rapidly when it rains. The veld looks healthy thanks to limited grazing.





Linger longer

There's more than enough accommodation options to stay over in the Bivane Dam Nature Reserve itself. Besides the bush camps, the main camp offers 15 campsites that can accommodate 7 people each. Prices vary from R160 per stand for 4 people with an extra R30 per person off-season, to R420 for 4 and R100 per extra visitor during peak season. Pre-school kids camp for free.

During the holidays, visitors fish from boats and catch fresh water mackerel, perch, bream, barbel and Vaal/Orange River yellowtail.

If you'd prefer to stay in a house, there are 4 two-bed chalets, equipped with cutlery, a fridge, two-plate stove, microwave oven and other essentials. Each house has its own braai area and a view over the dam. Prices vary from between



ROCKY ROAD. The trails are well maintained and your vehicle shouldn't suffer any damage if you take it easy – even in the more challenging sections.



R330 (off-season) and R780 during the holidays.

There are also larger houses higher up, set against the ridge of a hill with unbeatable views over the Bivane Dam. These units can accommodate 5-6 people, and you pay between R560 and R1 480, depending on the season.

What you need to know



4x4, low-range or diff lock? You'll definitely need 4x4 and some of the obstacles also require low-range, but you should be okay without a diff-lock.

Maximum number of vehicles allowed? Unlimited.

Do I get a map? Yes.

Will I scratch my vehicle? Unlikely.

Should I take a compressor? Not necessary.

Can we braai next to the road? No, only at the picnic sites or in the camps.

Can I turn around halfway? Yes.

Is there cellphone reception? A weak signal

THE TRAIL

Best time to go? October to March, when the veld is at its most beautiful and the dam is full from the summer rain.

Can I take my family? Absolutely!

For the day or the weekend? Definitely a weekend.

Are there ablution facilities? Yes, at the campsites

Directions From Vryheid drive 36 km eastward on the R69/Louwsburg road. The gate to Bivane is on your left-hand side. After that it's another 18 km to get to the camp area, but remember the speed limit here is 50 km/h.

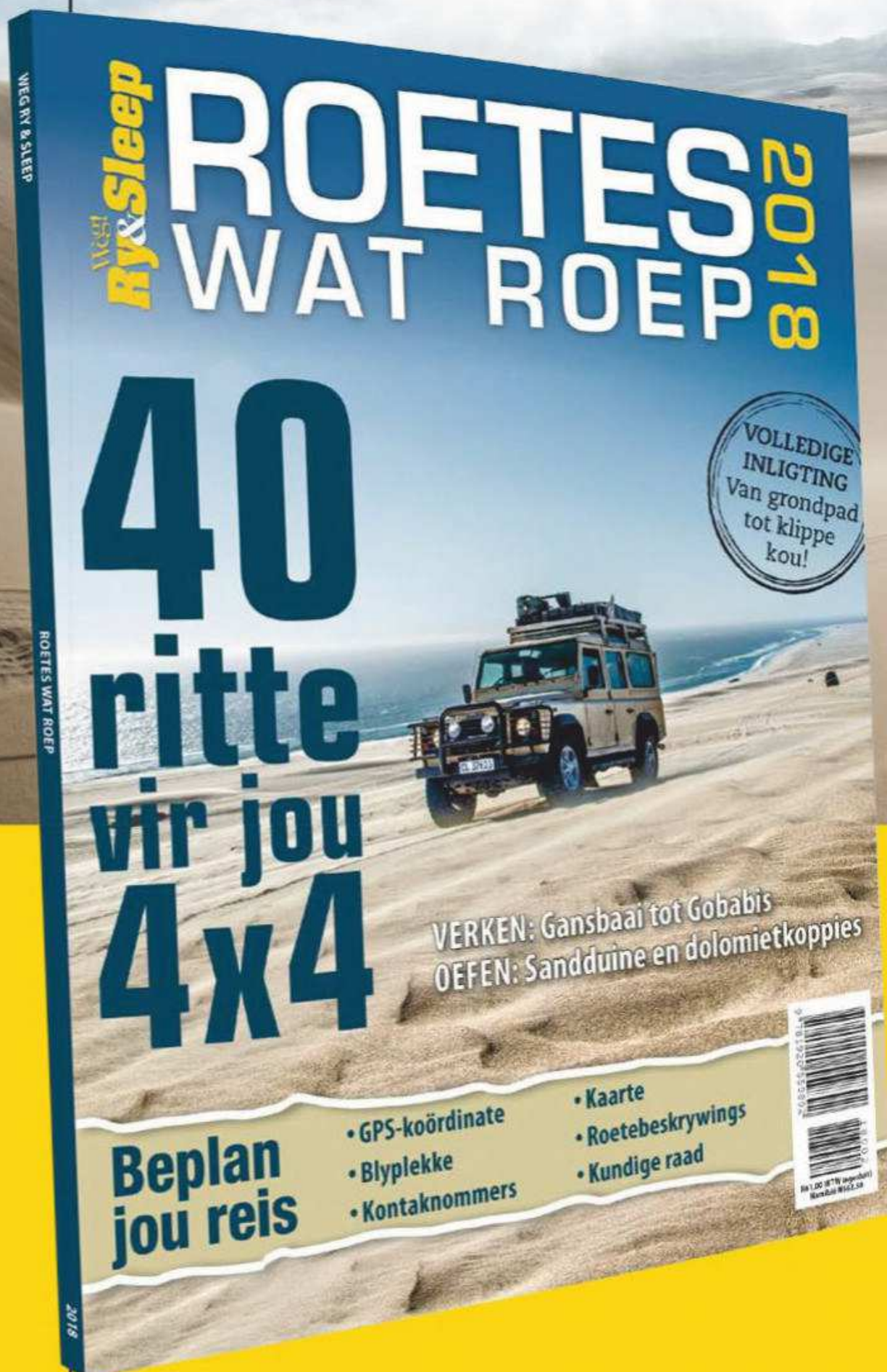
GPS S27.66121 E31.09247 (gate), S27.52003 E31.05238 (office)

Price Day visitors pay R120 per vehicle, but overnight guests can drive for free.

Contact Corlia Muller or Antoinette Potgieter on 083 283 8291; admin@bivanedam.co.za; bivanedam.co.za

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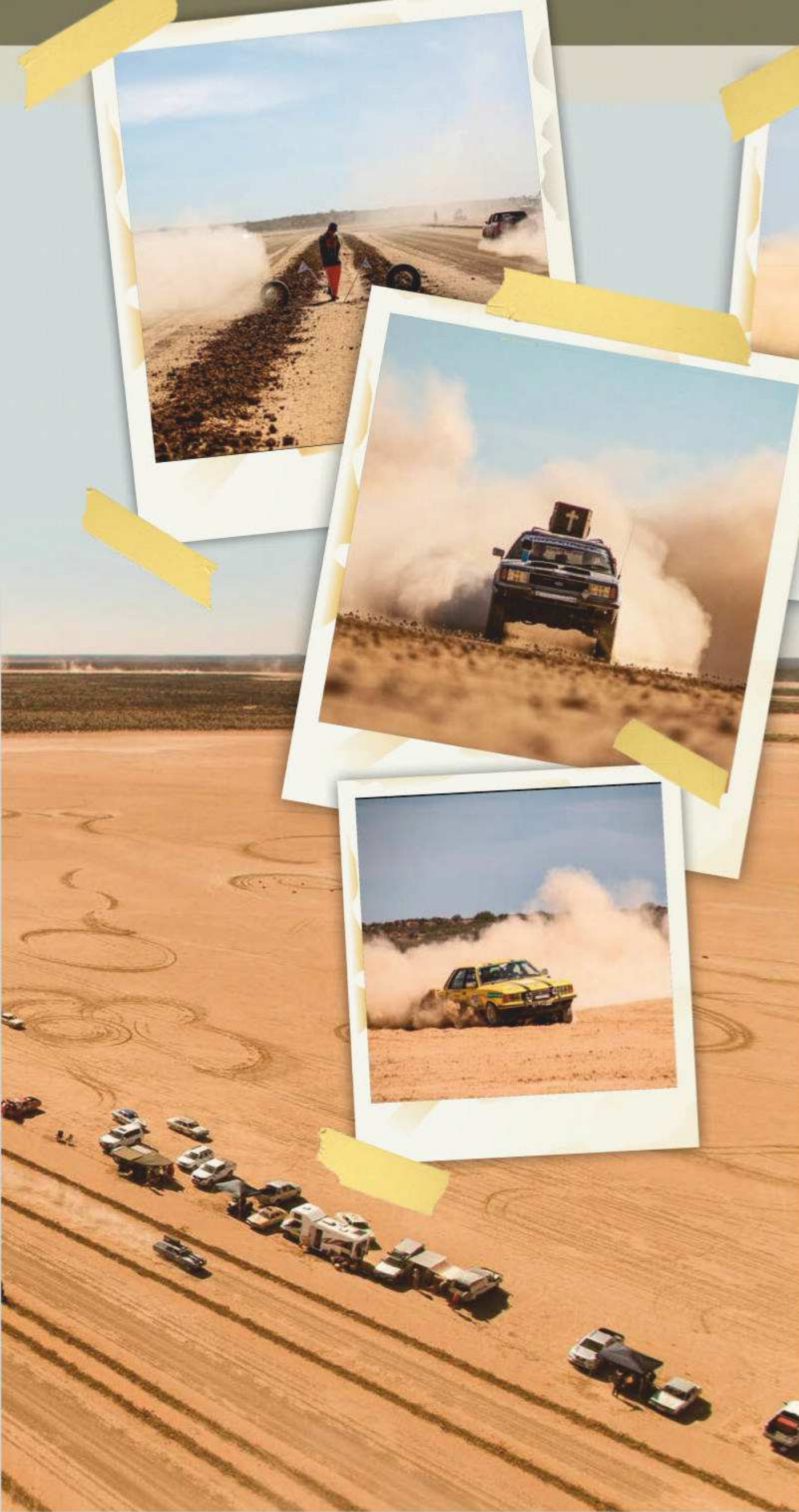
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Riders on the dust storm

This October, the *Bull Run* once again descended on the Northern Cape town of Vanwyksvlei... and as per tradition, it was a weekend packed with action – and lots of dust.

Text **Schalk Jonker** Photos **Evan Naudé, Piet van Heerde** and **Piet van Wyk**



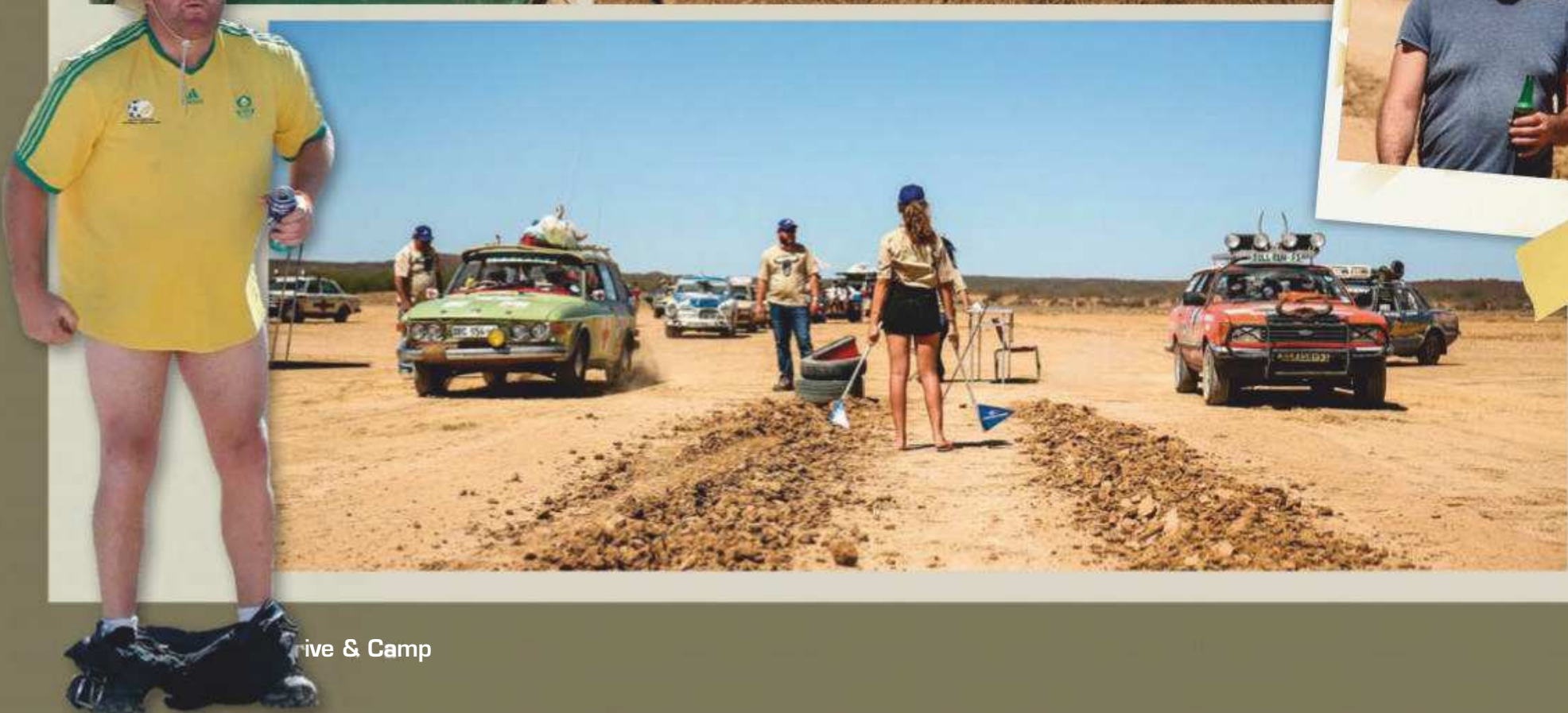
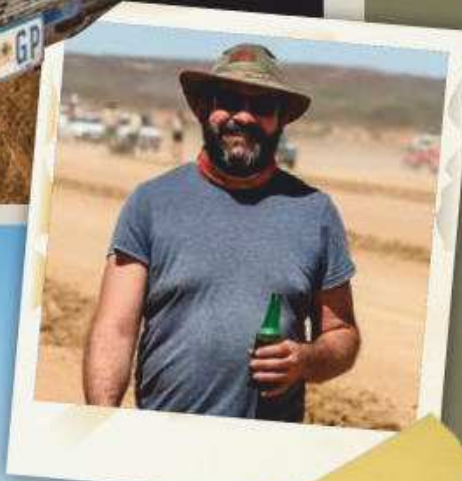


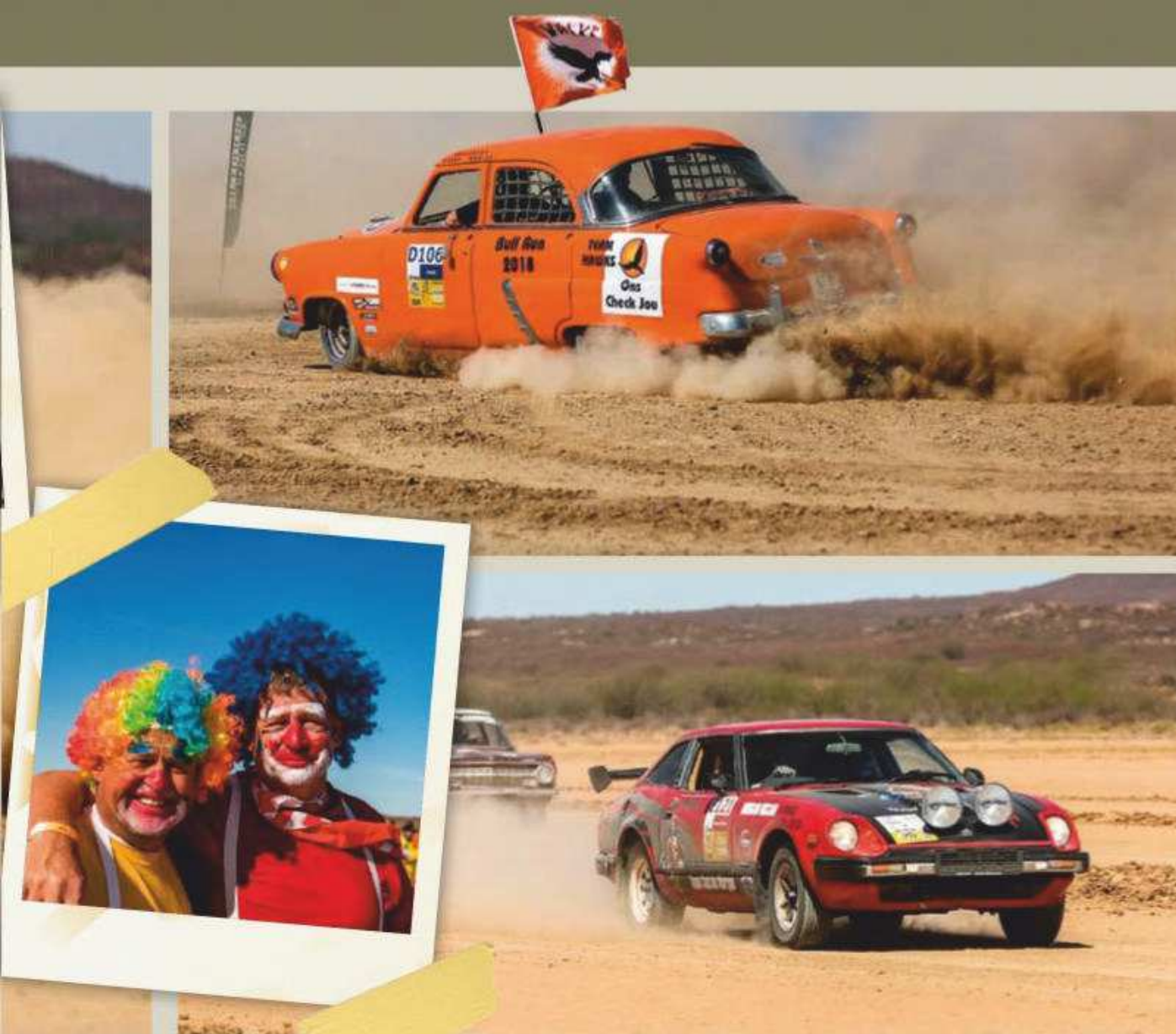
The Bull Run is an event without equal in South Africa. This September, at the end of the short, third-term school holidays, nearly 150 teams from across the country put thousands of kilometres behind them to come and play with their vehicles in the dust of Vanwyksvlei. The rules are simple: your car must be a year-model older than 1980, and it may not cost you more than R25 000.

Then you gather a bunch of teammates – we advise choosing at least one person who understands the inner workings of a car engine – invite a group of cheerleaders to support you, and then (proverbially) shoot the lights out, as you experience this colourful annual festival over the course of three days. As is to be expected, there was lots of dust. But this year there was also more excitement, and participants took the fun and adventure to the next level.

The town of Vanwyksvlei has become synonymous with the Bull Run, thanks to the ongoing success of this event. And this town has a special place in the heart of every Bull Runner, because you don't encounter hospitality like this often. We wanted to find out a bit more about the town and its inhabitants, so we sat down for a chat with Jan la Grange, a farmer in the area, and a friend of the Bull Run.

"Here at Vanwyksvlei, on the edge of the Karoo and Boesmanland, we largely farm sheep," he explains. "Not many people know about our little town, because Vanwyksvlei isn't on any main roads or >





routes. Obviously, the exception to this is the Bull Run participants and their supporters!

"The biggest source of employment around here is primarily the agricultural sector, which makes use of farm labourers. Besides this, a large section of the local community is dependent on some form of government grant. In terms of agricultural production, things are still quite tough here, as the region is in the process of recovering from the worst drought in over a century.

"In the Vanwyksvlei area there are about 20 active farmers (and their spouses), who live on their land and derive their primary income from farming. So things have been difficult, and it's easy to fall into the trap of despair and self-pity.

"But the annual Bull Run gives us a degree of escapism. There are about 10 farmers who roll up their sleeves each year and get stuck in to making the Bull Run a success by helping at the campsite and cooking meals, without expecting any compensation for it. They work together >

Eezi-Awn Rooftop Tents are manufactured of ripstop canvas, double stitched throughout and stretched onto aluminium bows, which are fixed to top quality polyurethane coated plyboards, supported with anodised aluminium hardware and stainless steel hinges, mattress which is fabric covered SABS approved 65mm laminated hi-density foam. Board locking mechanism - anodised custom designed aluminium extrusions - the only rooftop tent in the industry that has this system. Mosquito mesh both entry doors and side windows. Zip-up privacy panels both sides to cover windows internally. Patented anodized aluminium retractable extension ladder.

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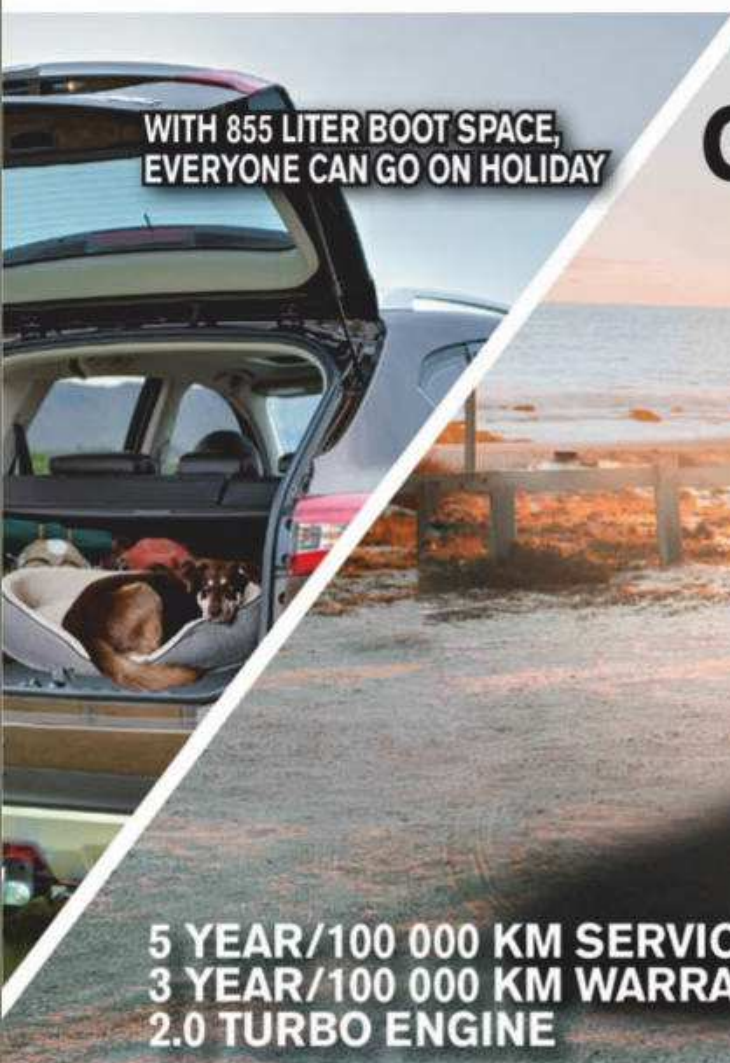


for months to improve the Bull Run experience.

"Why? Because it benefits the people of Vanwyksvlei. This event provides gainful employment for about 40 members of the community."

In previous years, participants of the Bull Run were expected to bring gifts and essential items with them for the community. But this year, we did things a little differently. The original founders of the Bull Run, Hermie Koen and Rieger van Rooyen, have decided to create a non-profit organisation that will provide sustainable job opportunities for the people of Vanwyksvlei.

"The Bull Run doesn't just bring a bunch of people into town; it also provides unbelievable opportunities in the form of donations, feeding, job opportunities, and above all, marketing," says Jan. "And for that, we are thankful."



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Make your way to Montagu

The Guano Caves campsite near Montagu is the perfect spot to keep the whole family entertained, says Maryke Tredoux from Kuils River.



“The beautiful mountains around the Little Karoo town of Montagu are the stuff of legend, rejuvenating some and giving others the inspiration to write poems. And after hearing about Montague Guano Caves via word of mouth, we (three couples and five children) set out from Cape Town in the direction of Worcester along the N1, passing through Robertson and Ashton on the R62, en route to Montagu. The turn-off to Guano Caves is about 8 km after you pass through Montagu itself on the R62. The road is tarred all the way, and the gravel road from the gate to the campsite was no effort for our Toyota Hilux and Venter trailer.

What's it like?

The campsite is at the foot of the Guano Caves Mountain with lots of trees giving shade to the large stands, which are very neat and well-kept. There is an electricity point and a tap for water, and each stand also has its own braai and garbage bin. The campsite is about 500 m from the reception/shop, and if you love walks then I would definitely recommend taking a stroll.

Were the ablution facilities to your liking?

As a family we appreciated the ablution facilities. There are family showers and bathrooms, which means everybody can wash together and actually enjoy it. (Mom doesn't have to do all the hard work, because bath time with two toddlers can get crazy.) They are spacious, neat, clean, and there is plenty of hot water.

What activities are there to do?

Where do I begin? Animal lovers can feed and pet the rabbits, horses, pigs, camels and alpacas. They even have emus. Those who enjoy being in the water can splash about in the big outdoor pools, complete with a super-tube and smaller slides, and in cooler weather you can also opt for a warm indoor pool. For the older kids there's entertainment in the form of a zipline and a volleyball court, while the little ones can choose between all sorts of swings and wooden obstacles in the massive playground. The premises are walker- and jogger-friendly, and if you're a bit adventurous then there are plenty of trails surrounding the campsite. The main attraction is to climb up to the caves.



A tractor takes you up the mountain for most of the way, but then you have to climb to enter them. It's a slippery affair, so I recommend that people with children younger than 3 rather stay behind.

Do I need to stock up before camping there?

There is a small shop for basic provisions, but they also have a restaurant and cocktail bar next to the swimming pools. Montagu is also just down the road if you've forgotten your favourite packet of biscuits, or need to refuel your vehicle.

What does it cost to camp?

During the week it's R60 per person per night, while weekends are R120 per person and R100 for children under 12. During high season, like school and public holidays, the fee is R140 per adult and R120 for under-12s. ”



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WIN

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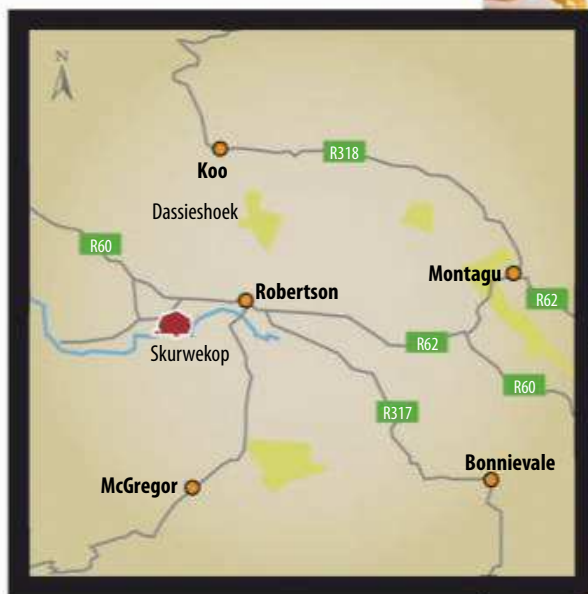
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FISHING RESORT



Teach your children well

A campsite next to a river can mean only one thing...
bring your fishing gear!

SKURWEKOP CAMPSITE

Even flow at Skurwekop

This place is next to the Breede River, at the foot of a high mountain peak. The campsite gets its name from this summit, because from a distance it appears as if there are round marbles in wave patterns etched into the side.

When you check in at reception, you get your ablution block key, a sticker with your campsite number which you need to apply to your rear window, and a roll of toilet paper. Make sure your cellphone is always charged, otherwise you won't be able to get in or out of the gate. You dial the number on the sign at the entrance to get in, and if the office computer recognises your number, it opens the gate automatically. Impressive.

Order, order!

A path divides the first group of campsites (1-23) into two rows, all on the grass. One row is next to the river, and the other row is 20 m from the shore. There's more shade along the back row of campsites, and you don't need to fuss about the river view too much. That's because the river reeds grow so high that most of the campsites don't have a view anyway. It's not a huge inconvenience, because the reeds themselves are home to many small birds that keep you company.

On the other side of this grass strip lie the majority of the campsites (24-56) on an open grassy plain. The river campsites in this section are generally bigger than those near the entrance, and a whole group of them also have their own beaches and shady trees. Each campsite has a power point and braai (without grid), and you and your neighbour share a rubbish bin and a tap.

Between the two sections there's a slipway where you can launch your dinghy into the water. It's also a good, safe spot to wet your line and teach the little ones how to cast without worrying about the hook getting tangled up or caught in something.

The campsites on the sides of the slipway are first prize. They're big, and they have a panoramic view of the river.

Avoid the shrubbery

There's a big ablution block situated between the two campsite sections. But there are also three toilet stalls around the outer areas of Skurwekop, so you don't have to walk too far if the need becomes pressing. The primary ablution block is tiled, with a row of toilets on one side, and showers and basins on the other two walls. Be sure to take your ablution block keys with you – you'll need them to use the block.



In Brief | Skurwekop Campsite



Fish Among others, carp, black bass, eel and barbel

Campsite 62 campsites on grass with an additional space for a group of 10 caravans

Ablution facilities Clean and spacious ablution block, and toilet stalls on the outskirts of the campsite

Price R265-R530 per site per night, depending on number of people, with a maximum of 4, R130 extra per person over 12, and R69 under 12.

Arrival and departure times 12 pm and 11 am. (and up to 5 pm on weekends).

Contact 023 626 5588; info@skurwekop.co.za skurwekop.co.za

Nearest town Robertson, 8 km

Road conditions Tar road all the way.

GPS S33.824761 E19.809356

go! Drive & Camp says The perfect place to teach your kids to fish.

Playtime

To one side of the ablution block you'll find "Pa-se-winkel", which is a tuck shop, as well as the jungle gym and swimming pool on the far side. Between the campsite and the play area is a water conduit. There's a shallow swimming pool for the little ones (1 m at its deepest), and a deeper pool next to it (1,6 m) where you can cool off – it gets bloody hot in Robertson.



SEAFOOD

PRAWNS WITH LEMON BUTTER SAUCE

Crayfish's cousin as a kebab!

Try this flavoursome and easy prawn-on-a-stick as a starter and enjoy with a glass of white wine. You'll never want to open a packet of chips again.

Ingredients

- 1 box of prawns, with heads and tails, but insides removed
- The juice and zest of two lemons
- 1 cup of cream
- 1 cup of butter

Here's how

1 Start by putting the prawn tail on a bamboo kebab stick so that they're stretched out along the length of the stick.



2 Put the lemon juice and zest in a pot, and cook until about half the liquid has reduced. Add the cream and reduce it by half again. Remove the mixture from the heat and whisk the butter in incrementally until it forms a sauce.

3 Braai the prawns over relatively hot coals, and turn them

regularly.

4 Place the sauce in a large container so that you can dip the prawn kebab into the sauce and enjoy.

go! Drive & Camp says Lemon zest gives the sauce its flavour, but don't use the lemon pith – it's very bitter. 

RECIPE TIAAN LANGENEGGER PHOTO RUVAN BOSHOFF



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T is for Touareg, touring, and towing

The new Volkswagen Touareg's 4x4 capabilities may have been somewhat diluted, but you'll search far and wide for a more versatile towing vehicle.

Text and photos Leon Botha



VOLKSWAGEN TOUAREG 3.0 TDI EXECUTIVE



Volkswagen recently released the third generation of their Touareg, and they claim that when it comes to technology, this flagship SUV is their most advanced vehicle yet. When you hop in behind the wheel, you know exactly what they mean.

For some time now, Volkswagen have made use of the Active Info Display instrument panel, which is an entirely digital display. But the Germans have now improved upon this with a larger, additional screen. This screen is in front of the driver, and extends to the left – forming a unit of over half a metre in length. It makes you feel like you’re captaining a spaceship from a sci-fi movie, and clearly the suits at Volkswagen agree, because they’ve dubbed it the “Innovision Cockpit”.

And with the Touareg’s towing capacity, nothing is lacking. In fact, it’s lighter than its predecessor, which was available in several engine options (from a 3,6 l petrol engine to the 3 l and a 4,2 l diesel engine). Today you can choose from just two models, both with the 3 l diesel engine that kicks out 190 kW and 600 Nm – that’s 10 kW and 50 Nm more than the previous 3 l engine.

And then there’s the Touareg’s tow bar, which was previously optional, but now comes standard on both models.

The welcome wagon

The towing capability of the 3 l model that we tested three years ago was set at 3,5 t, with a maximum nose weight of 140 kg. The new Touareg’s figures look the same, but the new model’s Bosal tow bar deploys electrically. The tow bar is tucked away behind the bumper, and when you push the button at the back right of the boot, the tow bar swings out and locks into position. This whole action takes 8 seconds (when stowing itself under the bumper, it requires 9 seconds). The hitch itself has a D-value (which refers to a specific load test) of 16,4 kN, which is comparable to 1 672 kg.

A computer detects when you’ve hitched a caravan – the alarm system even keeps an eye on it when activated. But if your trailer has LED rear lights, the alarm won’t be set off if someone tries to detach your trailer or caravan. According to the Volkswagen manual, the reason for this is “of a technical nature” (*read: because we say so – Ed*). When you connect the caravan’s plug to the socket, the onboard computer’s blind spot sensors and the reverse camera sensors that warn you of cross traffic are both >

deactivated.

As expected, the Touareg is kitted out with Trailer Sway Control. There are a few things that need to be in place before this system works the way the engineers intended: your caravan must be equipped with overrun brakes; the nose weight must be the prescribed maximum weight on the ball of the tow bar; and you need to tow faster than 60 km/h.

The Touareg's Trailer Assist system (a system that we also encountered in the Volkswagen Tiguan and Arteon) comes in handy when you need to reverse a caravan down a tight alley.

Other adaptations

Both models are automatic, but Volkswagen have done away with the traditional gear selector. The new gear shift has a flat head and is about as wide as the palm of your hand, but the shaft doesn't slide back and forth; you push the head forward if you want to change from Park to Neutral or Reverse, and pull it back if you want to put the gearbox into Drive. You push the button on the right of the lever when shifting gears, and press another button to put the vehicle into Park.

When you switch off the Touareg in any of the gears (except for Neutral), the gearbox automatically puts it into Park. And



SPORTY SPICE. The R-Line package offers a bit extra over a standard Touareg. The white stitching on the seats, the special emblems and trick alloys speak of a playful nature rather than a conservative approach.



if you switch the Touareg off in Neutral, it stays in this mode for 30 minutes before automatically switching to Park.

The Touareg that we towed with had four height settings for the air suspension – the button for this is also in the centre panel by the gear lever. For towing, Volkswagen recommends the Street ride height.

The Touareg also has seven ride modes, including Eco, Comfort, Sport and Off-road. For example, if the suspension is set to Street height, and the ride mode is on Comfort, the air suspension will automatically drop when



Pieter Crous

The new VW Touareg is one of the best vehicles he's ever towed with, he says.

Pieter says

“Anyone will easily find their place and pace in the new Touareg, if you look at the number of settings available on the driver's side.

Once you've made yourself comfortable, you soon realise that this engine doesn't have

a lazy bolt in its body: It can tow until the cows come home. But we all know that a large engine with this sort of power means only one thing, and that's a heavy bill at the fuel station. The power has to come from somewhere... (Judging by the computer's "1000 km" remaining in the tank, it must have a very large fuel tank).

We chose to tackle the Franschhoek Pass to see how it fared towing on the steep inclines. Even if you're flying with the caravan in tow, you're still pressed securely and firmly into the seat. Remarkable.

The gear lever's head is wide, and your hand rests comfortably on it – which suits me fine. And thanks to the suspension, the ride isn't bumpy. Despite the size of the

vehicle, we didn't experience any body roll. You know you're towing a caravan, because your rear view mirrors tell you so, but I hardly felt it. No sway was detected due to the weight on the hitch; in fact, you don't even feel much wind resistance, despite the height of the Quantum Comfort that we were towing.

The new Touareg really is a computer on wheels. The Lane Assist function works well, and the system keeps the Touareg between the lines of your lane beautifully if you allow it to steer. Even in a corner it follows the lane, but it also soon tells you to take over the steering. It can be tricky on a narrow road without a shoulder, where it keeps you away from the middle line, because then it

feels like you're riding too close to the left side of the road.

I love the extra-large navigation system on the left-side screen – you can see and read it easily. The centre cubby under your left elbow is generous, although I did struggle to clip in my seatbelt because of its positioning.

Accelerating between 80-120 km/h doesn't disappoint. It took 9,5 seconds in normal mode, and 9 seconds in Sport mode. If you take a look at its counterparts, there are few other vehicles that could tow a caravan of this size as easily, unless of course you're willing to fork out a wad of extra randelas.

If there was ever a vehicle designed for towing, I'm sitting in it.



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TOW TEST



What we towed

Make Quantum Leisure

Model Comfort

Year model 2018

GVM 1 660 kg

Loaded weight on the axle at time of testing

1 260 kg (weighed when

hitched to the Touareg).

go! Drive and Camp borrowed it from Tygerberg Caravans.

Call Wesley Dempster on

021 982 4670 if you want more information on the Quantum.

tygerbergcaravans.co.za



TOW OF TOMORROW. Hitching a trailer by yourself no longer needs to be dreaded. With the computer's help it's a doddle, and after enough practice you won't even have to get out of the car.



Before reaching for your wallet

What does the book say?

Fuel Diesel

Engine 2,967 ℓ

Cylinders V6

Power 190 kW @ 3 250-4 250 rpm

Torque 600 Nm @ 2 550-3 250 rpm

Transmission 8-speed automatic (DSG, Tiptronic)

Drive Train All-wheel

Tare 1 930 kg

GVM 2 810 kg

GCM 6 310 kg

Wading depth 570 mm (air suspension).

Towing ability for trailer with overrun brakes Up to 3 500 kg

Dimensions 4 878 mm (l), 5 008 mm with the tow bar; 1 984 mm (b); 1 702 mm (h)

Axle distance 2 894 mm

Track width 1 669-1 653 mm (front); 1 658-1 669 mm (rear)

Ground clearance Not available

Fuel tank 90 ℓ

Standard price (new) From R1 142 200

Price (second hand) On Autotrader, we found a 2018 model with just 200 km on the clock for R1 079 000

Fast Facts

The hitch This is standard – it's certified for a towing load of 3,5 t and a nose weight of 140 kg.

Suspension Adjustable air suspension. Considering the 140 kg nose weight limit, we added a kilogram or two above this restriction to see how much the tail would dip. Not a centimetre – that's pretty impressive.

Weight? 2 520 kg with a full tank of fuel, the driver in the car as well as the Quantum Comfort's nose weight on the ball of the tow hitch. The combination was 780 kg – altogether, 2 530 kg short of the allotted GCM of 6 310 kg.

Interior Both front seats have electronic setting options. The passengers in the back seats have four fingers of space open in front of the knee and two above the head.

Speed The odometer differs by 4 km/h compared to the GPS reading: When the Touareg says you're driving 100 km/h, the satellite navigation indicates 96 km/h.

Fuel consumption A pretty decent 14 ℓ/100 km (7,14 km/ℓ) according to the onboard computer, and 13,7 ℓ/100 km (7,3 km/ℓ) according to our calculations.

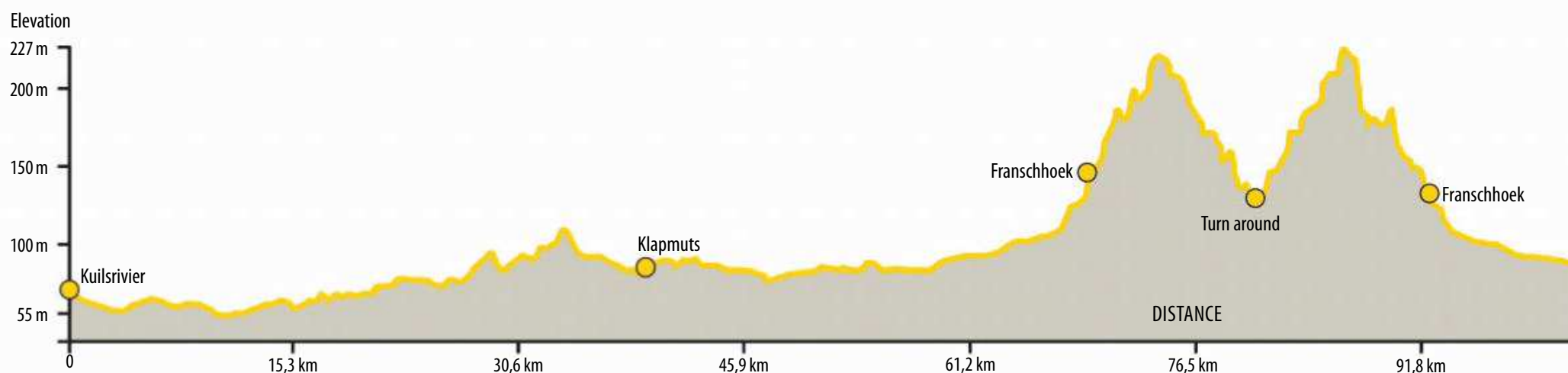
Finishes Dark, stylish and solid.

Extras With metallic paint R4 950, 21" rims R35 350, the Innovision Cockpit R74 900 and the Advanced Safety Package R59 150, which includes the Lane Assist function and Head-up Display with navigation.

Other models? Just one, the Luxury (R999 800).

go! Drive and Camp says A bike rack also fits onto the tow bar – the total weight of the rack and the bikes may not be more than 75 kg.

TOW PROFILE



The test

Distance 153 km

Top speed 120 km/h (odometer)

Average speed 44 km/h (that includes driving and stopping on highways and back roads, in developed areas, and on a challenging mountain pass).

Total driving time 3 hours and 28 minutes.

Weather 16 °C, mostly cloudy with a strong 31 km/h north wind.

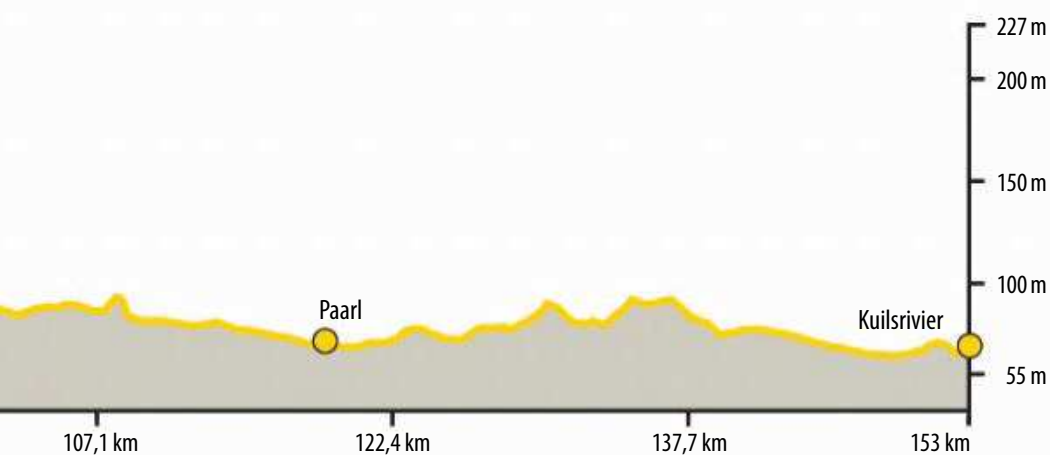


LEISURE & LUXURY. The Touareg can tow just about any caravan on the market. The only thing holding it back is its 'low' tare weight. And the law.

you drive faster than 140 km/h. If you then drive for longer than 20 seconds at 100 km/h, the suspension returns to the original setting.

Volkswagen has taken its Head-up Display a step further in the new Touareg. In other Volkswagen models we tested recently, a small glass pane emerged from the panel in front of the driver, near the windscreen. Information such as the speed limit, cruise control detail and current driving speed is displayed on this glass pane so that you can see it without having to look down at your instrument panel. The Touareg doesn't have the glass pane – the information is displayed on the windshield itself. Even the onboard navigation system's info can be displayed here.

The system is easy to use, and of course is also safer. However, this intelligent display does have an Achilles heel: if you're wearing polarised sunglasses, they may filter out the details on the screen.



From the competition (3 ℓ diesel, automatic and with a tow bar)



700 Nm

16%

Jaguar F-Pace Pure 3.0 V6
R960 585

17%



560 Nm

5%

BMW X5 xDrive 30d
R1 205 796

-7%



600 Nm

7%

Range Rover Sport TDV6 S
R1 246 406

=



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KwaZulu-Natal
Natal Caravans & Marine
Tel: 031 702 7291

Gauteng
Kempton Caravans
Tel: 011 974 5595

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www.echo4x4.co.za
for your nearest dealer



Find us on



Easy tow

Quantum Leisure's Comfort model is designed for a small family. It has sleeping space for four, and you can tow it effortlessly with a medium-sized SUV.

Text and photos **Leon Botha**

Quantum Leisure has gained ground in the local market; and after being open for business for little more than a year, this manufacturer has to scramble to keep up with demand. When you take a good look at Quantum's caravans, it's easy to see why they're so popular: the workmanship is of outstanding quality.

The trademark feature of Quantum's products is the finishing on the hull's outer layer. Instead of using go-to aluminium, Jurie Pienaar – the man behind the winning formula – uses fibreglass, a material that's also popular in the European market. The side panels, front and rear, and the

roof are all manufactured from a single sheet of fibreglass. Jurie does use aluminium and solid, waterproof, high-density wood where the roof and walls meet.

The outside kitchen differs from the traditional caravan kitchen. Our test caravan's kitchen was located to the right of the door; and when you climb in, there's another surprise to your right – besides the island bed in the nose, there's also a bunk bed at the back. You don't get that in many caravans.



Quantum Comfort



Side effects

Left of the door there's an external storage compartment that utilises the space under the bed, and it's just the place for clunky camping gear such as fold-up chairs and crates. This storage compartment, with its door size of 76 x 39,5 cm, stretches 1,7 m under the bed, which means that even a 3 x 3 m dome tent in its bag – with poles – fits easily.

In the upright cupboard to the right of the door there are four racks, the bottom three of which have foam inserts to help you organise your crockery. As a distinctive touch, the wine glasses have the letter "Q" engraved on them; and even the coffee mugs have a unique design, also featuring a large "Q" with some quirky phrases printed on them.

Behind the three top racks there is a door – one that also opens from the inside, which is convenient if, for example, you need to reach a glass from inside the caravan to pour yourself >





a cooldrink. Under this cupboard there's an extra narrow hatch with a frame that slides out to reveal a cutlery drawer (on the newer models this is also a sliding compartment, but instead of a cutlery drawer, you pull out a gas stove). You may opt for either a gas cooker or an induction stove top.

Jurie designed a unique drawer for the kitchen basins: it pulls out of the hull with the basins placed parallel to the body of the caravan. Once you've pulled this drawer out, you can adjust the height to your liking.

The outside LED light is above the glassware shelf and has two settings. One is a typical clear white light, and

the other has a soft amber glow.

The Comfort has no cupboards in the right panel; instead, the power sockets and the filter for the 60 l water tank are here. The nose cone opens, as with conventional caravans; and (among other things) this is where the gas cylinder is stored.

On each corner of the caravan there's a solid recessed handle that you can grip to shift it once you've unhitched from your tow bar.

You don't need a separate step to climb into the Comfort, because the space in front of the door has been recessed into the floor, which makes it easy to get in and out of this caravan.





On an island

The Comfort's island bed is to the left of the door as you enter. The bed is placed crosswise, and when you look at the nose, the head is against the left panel. So the person who sleeps on the furthest side must walk around the bed. The corners at the foot of the bed have been cut away diagonally, to allow more standing and walking space around it. It's 1,4 m wide (standard king-size) and 1,88 m long.

On either side of the bed there's a small reading light, with an adjustable head, so you can shine it directly on your book. The switches for both lights are at the base of the light, and you can easily reach them from the bed. Above the lights are two open racks that look almost like the slots of a postbox – a convenient place to store your book before calling it a night. Above these are two larger cupboards, each with its own door accessing the same space.

At the foot of the bed there's a cupboard in each corner. The right-side one has six shelves with enough packing space for anything from T-shirts to socks, and the one at the nose has even more storage space.

One of the three LED lights in the caravan is placed to the left of the cupboards, above the bed. Besides the opaque covers on these lights to prevent them from blinding you, the dimmer works as soon as you press your finger on the switch. A power socket (220 V) for one three-point and two double-point plugs is placed next to the furthest sleeper, at the same height as the bed. There's also a USB socket.

>

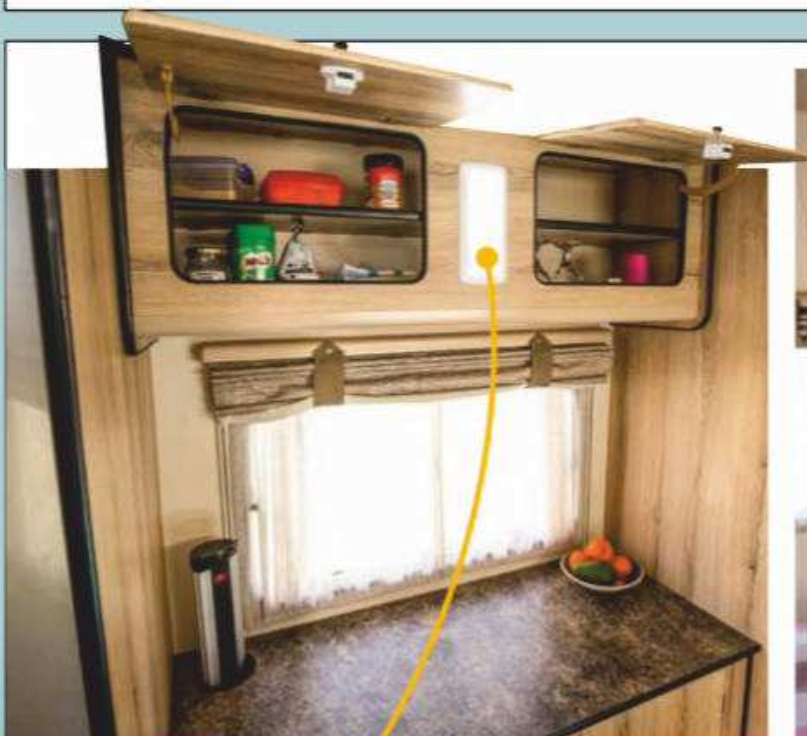


Tail side

The bathroom is right at the back left of the caravan, with more space to sleep across from this in the back-right corner. It's not a full bathroom; there's just a small basin for washing your face, and a cassette toilet that pulls out from the cupboard.

The extra sleeping space is a bunk bed, which is great for two kids. There's a window next to each bed, which can be opened, like all the other windows in the caravan. All seven of the windows have curtains, and material blinds that can be dropped. Each also has a reading light. There's 61 cm between the bottom and top bunks; and if you're sitting on the top bunk, there's 55 cm between the mattress and the roof. The top bed is 1,35 m from the ground, and the beds are 187 x 74 cm in size – so they are short single beds. Note that the person who sleeps on top will have to scramble to get up there, because there's no ladder.

Between these beds and the bathroom there's a vertical cupboard that's 49 cm wide and offers space to hang things (the cassette toilet takes up the bottom section of this cupboard).



Heavyweights in the middle

The Hisense double door fridge (239 l) stands almost directly above the caravan's axle, against the right panel and in front of you when you climb in. There's a good, big work surface (116 x 51,5 cm) against the wall to the right of the fridge, with grocery cupboards up against the wall and under the work surface. From behind the work surface you can pull out a multi-plug socket that resembles a little tower.

The wheel arch and geyser take up a lot of space in the bottom cupboards, but you're not short of storage.

There's a melamine work surface (62 x 46,5 cm) to the right of the door, and the cupboard door above this is the one you can access from both inside and outside the caravan. The other power socket tower sits to the right, behind this surface; it's a good place to put your kettle, because the coffee cups are stored conveniently in this cupboard. As with the other socket tower, this one has space for two two-prong and two three-prong plugs.

The microwave is above this surface and placed roughly at eye level in front of you, and one of the LED touch lights is embedded into this wall.



Air and light

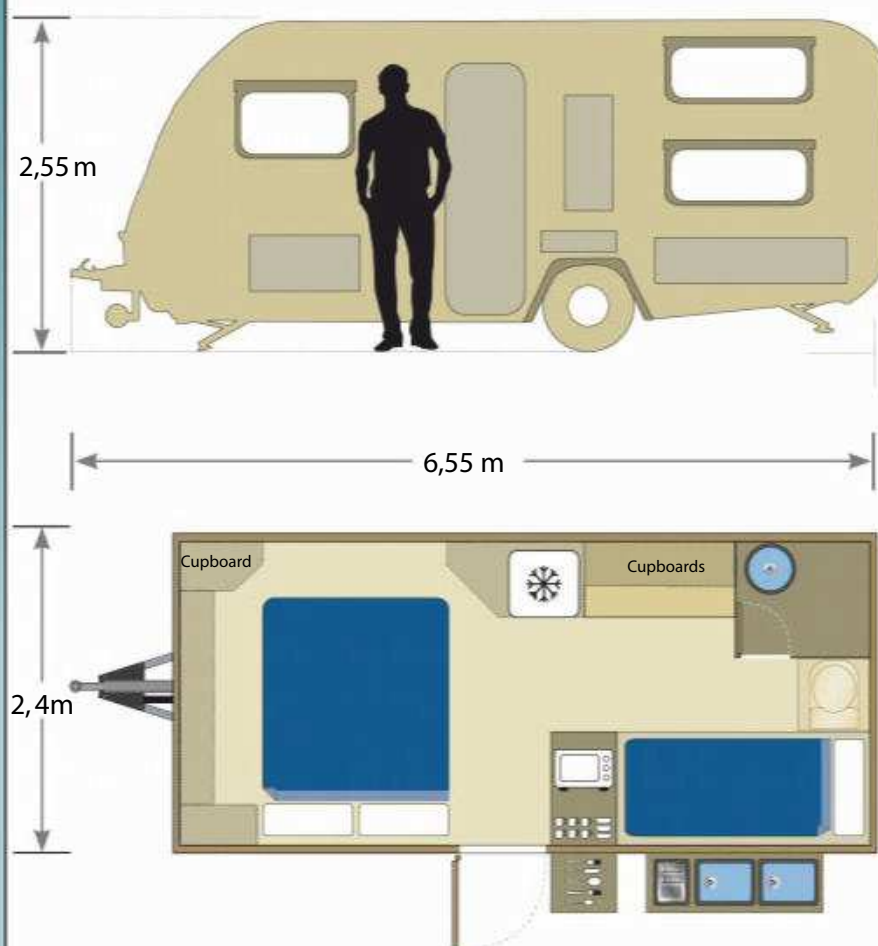
In the middle of the roof there's a hatch that you can open for fresh air, but it also lets light in, because it's made of transparent Perspex. On the inside it has a mesh screen that can be moved out of the way, as well as a blind to block out the light.



Extras

Full tent	R32 000
Add-a-room	R10 995
Tent sides (per pair)	R4 623

From behind this work surface you can pull out a multi-plug socket that resembles a little tower.



The technical stuff

Length 6,55 m
Width 2,4 m
Height 2,55 m
Ceiling height inside 1,9 m
Tare weight 1 360 kg
Payload 300 kg
GVM 1 660 kg
Price R349 500



Plus

- The bunk bed is practical and saves space.
- The external storage unit is big enough for bulky camping stuff.
- It has both internal and external kitchens.
- A big plus is the many power points in the caravan.
- The lighting is excellent, from the reading lights to the room lights.



Minus

- The bathroom is small, and doesn't have a shower.
- The bunkbed doesn't have a ladder.
- Venetian blinds would perhaps be a better option

than traditional curtains.

go! Drive & Camp says

You can also fit a two-bike bicycle rack on the Comfort, for an extra R2 250.

go! Drive and Camp borrowed the Quantum Comfort from Tygerberg Caravans. Call Wesley Dempster on 021 982 4670 if you want a closer look at one of these Quants.

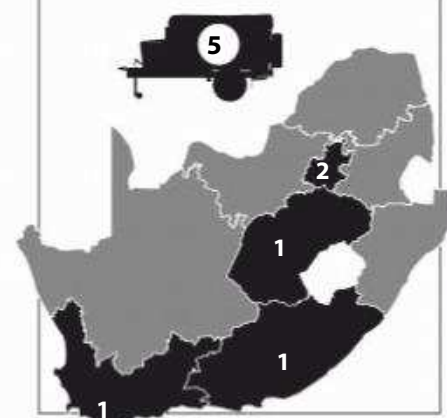
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Dealer network

Head office in Kempton Park, with 4 dealers countrywide.

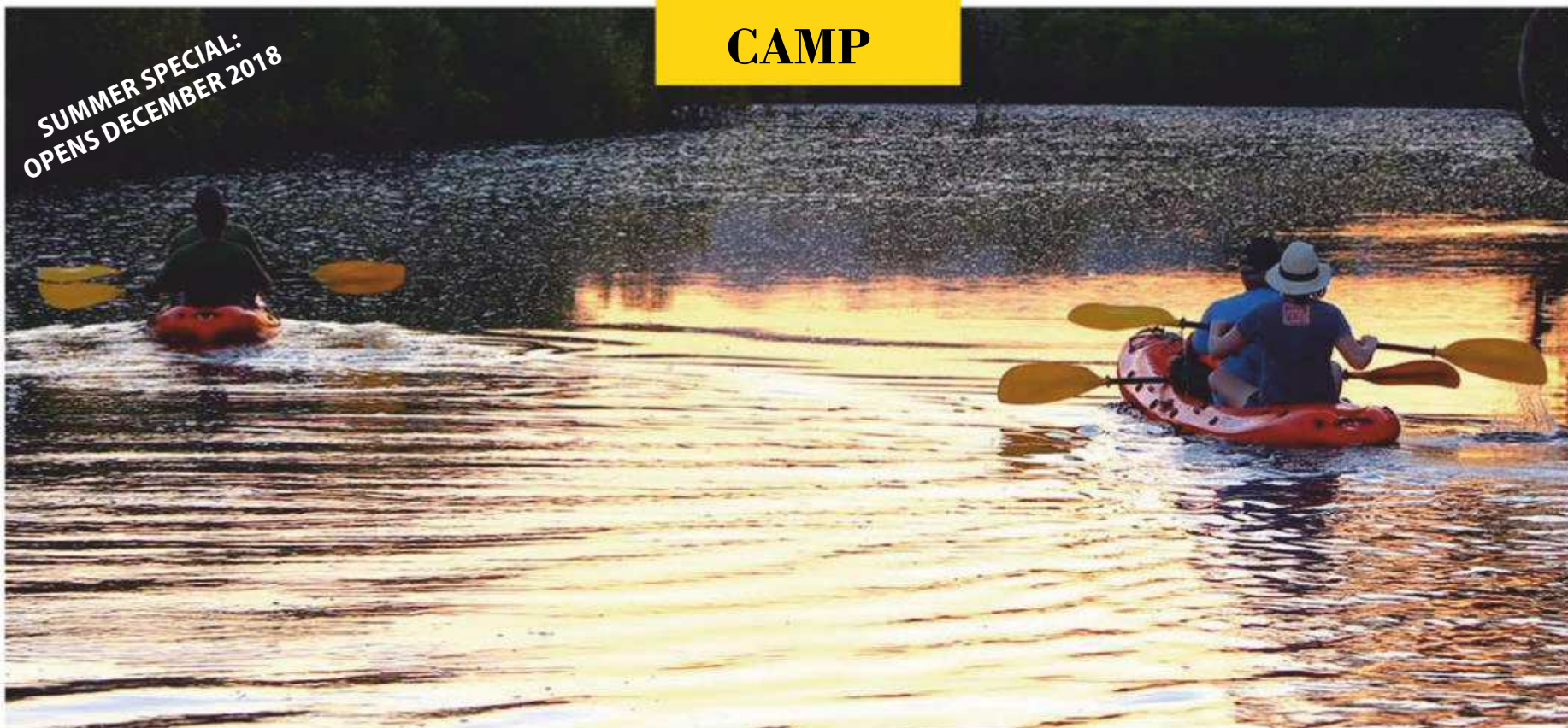
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SUMMER SPECIAL:
OPENS DECEMBER 2018

CAMP



Bitou Valley Bush Camp

designed by people, inspired by nature

Set in the heart of the Bitou Valley, near Plettenberg Bay, this biomimicry designed mobile camp offers a uniquely natural experience.



At this family getaway all you are required to do is relax and immerse yourself in the natural environment. This experience is enhanced by your accommodation in a luxury tent, sheltered amid an ancient forest.

Our locally sourced food is prepared and served alongside a meandering river. Enjoy a guided walk, paddle, cycle or birding adventure, or simply relax and recharge your soul in this beautiful corner of South Africa.

INCLUDED IN THE RATE*

- Two healthy home-cooked meals a day
- A guided coastal nature walk
- A guided experience in the indigenous Knysna Forest in our concession area of the Garden Route National Park
- The camp has its own mountain bikes and kayaks for your use
- A bird hide is situated near the camp, perfect for sundowners and photography

The following optional extras are not included in the price, but a low-cost shuttle service is available.

- Outing to Plettenberg Bay and its beaches
- Keurbooms River ferry
- Surf and SUP lessons
- Bungee jumping off the Bloukrans Bridge

RATES

R1 380 per person per night sharing, including dinner and breakfast.

Kids under 10 pay half-price; single supplement costs 20% extra.

Early booking is recommended as this is an intimate camp.

*A minimum two-night stay is required.

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CAMP FOOD

Christmas *on the coals*



Recipes and styling **Aletta Lintvelt** Photos **Michelle Parkin** Food assistant **Tani Kirsten**

You don't need to settle for second best when it comes to making Christmas dinner on your camping holiday. Here's a delicious al fresco menu for 6 – and the great news is, all you'll need is your camp fire.

GINGER GAMMON

Ham it up

This ginger gammon can be made at home and frozen; then all you need to do is heat it up over the coals on Christmas Day.

Ingredients

(serves 6)

- 1,5 kg ham, deboned (gammon)
- 3 carrots, roughly chopped
- 2 celery sticks, roughly chopped
- 2 onions, peeled & halved
- 4 cups ginger beer
- 2 cups water or stock (use chicken or vegetable stock)
- 5 black peppercorns

Here's how

1 Place the gammon in a large pot with the carrots, celery and onions. Add the ginger beer. Then add the water or stock until the gammon is entirely covered. Add pepper to taste.

2 Bring the pot to the boil and cover with a tight-fitting lid before reducing the heat so that the pot can simmer slowly for 1 hour. Turn the meat over in the pot, add extra liquid if you need to, then put the lid back and simmer slowly for another hour.

3 Remove the pot from the heat and allow the gammon to cool down in the liquid before removing it. Wrap the ham in clingwrap and stick it in the fridge or freezer. You can throw out whatever is left of the liquid.

4 Slice the skin off with a sharp knife, but make sure to retain the fatty layer. Bring the gammon to room temperature before braaiing.

5 Braai the gammon over moderate coals, with the fatty side down until it begins to brown and bubble, and the meat is cooked through. Cut the gammon into thin slices and serve with the cranberry sauce (recipe on this page).

go! Drive & Camp says How big is your gammon? Here's how to determine the cooking time: 30 minutes/500 g meat, plus another 30 minutes.

CRANBERRY SAUCE

Sweetest perfection

This sauce is traditionally served with gammon, but it's just as tasty enjoyed with lamb or chicken.

Ingredients

(serves 6)

- 1 tablespoon cornflour (Maizena)
- 100 ml cranberry juice
- 150 g jar cranberry sauce
- 3 tablespoons marmalade
- 3 tablespoons port or red wine
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 lemon

Here's how

1 Mix the cornflour with 2 tablespoons of

cranberry juice to form a smooth paste.

2 Stir the rest of the juice, cranberry sauce, marmalade, port and mustard through the corn flour, in a small pot.

3 Heat the mixture over lukewarm coals until it begins to simmer and thicken. Use a potato peeler to peel away a strip of zest from the lemon. Place this in the pot and simmer for about 10 minutes, or until the sauce thickens. Stir regularly to prevent it from burning or sticking to the pot.

4 Remove the lemon peel, and serve the sauce with warm or cold slices of gammon and/or lamb.

go! Drive & Camp says This sauce can be made at home and frozen in a Ziploc bag or jar to take with you. >



Cranberry sauce



Herb-marinated roast

HERB MARINATED ROAST**So nice, you'll eat it twice**

Extend the enjoyment of roast lamb to the next day, when you can eat cold slices of lamb with mayonnaise and cranberry sauce on a roosterkoek. That's why it's always a good idea to make both gammon (see recipe on page 101) and lamb, even if it seems like too much meat for Christmas Day.

Ingredients

(serves 6)

- 1.5 kg leg of lamb deboned
- ½ cup olive oil
- Handful of fresh parsley, finely chopped
- Small handful of fresh oreganum, finely chopped
- 1 bunch of fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 2 bunches of mint, finely chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, finely grated
- 3 tablespoons of white wine vinegar
- 1 lemon, juiced and with zest grated
- Salt and pepper to taste,

Here's how

1 Butterfly the leg of lamb with a sharp knife so that it lies open and flat on the braai grid, more or less at the same thickness. If you're not used to doing this, ask your butcher

to do it for you.

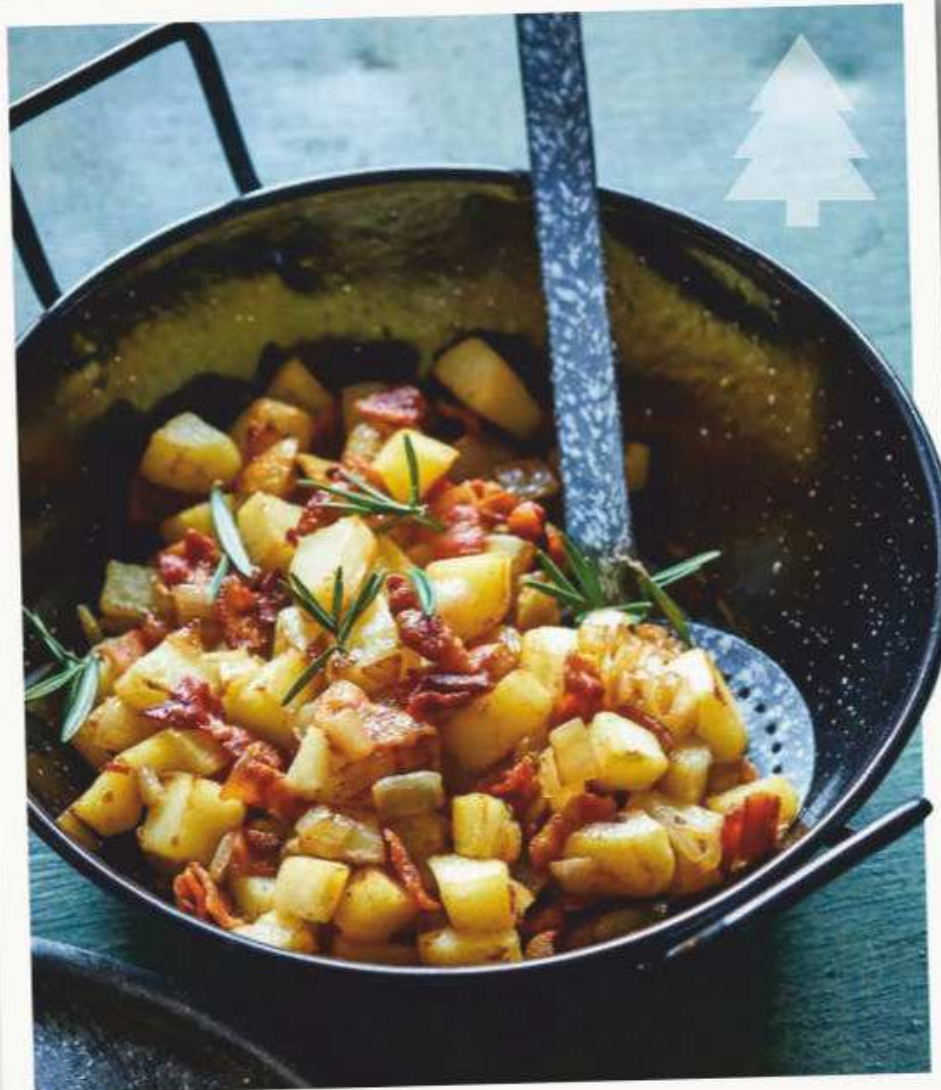
2 Rub the meat with the olive oil, parsley, oreganum, rosemary, mint, garlic and lemon zest. Put the meat in a container or plastic bag and add the lemon juice and white wine vinegar to the bag. Let it marinate overnight in the fridge, or freeze it to take with you on your trip.

2 Take the meat out of the fridge and let it return to room temperature before braaiing. Season the meat on both sides to taste, with salt and black pepper.

3 Braai the leg of lamb, skin side down, over hot coals for 5 minutes or until it begins to crisp and turns golden brown. Turn the leg and braai it for another 10 minutes if you enjoy your meat medium. Take it off the heat.

4 Wrap the leg in tinfoil and let it rest to one side for 15 minutes before you begin slicing it. This ensures that the juices stay inside the meat and don't run out all over the place when you start cutting. If the meat is still too rare for your taste in some places, just chuck it on the fire for a couple more minutes before slicing it.

go! Drive & Camp says If you don't have access to fresh herbs, then you can replace all of the green herbs in this recipe with 1 jar of shop-bought pesto.



Bacon potatoes

BACON POTATOES**Two unbeatable flavours**

You won't be longing for your crispy baked potatoes if you make this dish in the campsite!

Ingredients

(serves 6)

- 3 tablespoons sunflower oil
- 2 onions, chopped
- 250 g streaky bacon, chopped
- 8 large waxy potatoes
- salt and pepper to taste,

Here's how

1 Heat the oil in a large flat-bottom pot or pan. Add the onions and bacon and fry over moderate coals for 5 minutes, or until the fat from the bacon begins to render and the

onions soften.

2 In the meantime, peel the potatoes and slice them into blocks of about 2 cm in size.

3 Add the potatoes to the pot and stir through once. Sauté the potatoes until they begin to turn brown and crispy. Keep stirring to prevent them from burning, but not so much that you end up with mashed potato.

4 Season the potatoes with salt and pepper. After about 15-20 minutes of braaiing them, they should be well cooked and deliciously flavoured with the bacon. Serve immediately.

go! Drive & Camp says For more flavour, add a tablespoon or three of butter to the pot when you chuck in the potatoes.

GREEN BEAN SALAD

Add some colour

Summer is no time to indulge in cooked vegetables – that's why I make this delicious fresh salad instead.

Ingredients

(serves 6)

- 300 g green beans
- 300 g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 wheels of feta cheese
- Handful of fresh basil, roughly chopped

SALAD DRESSING

- 125 ml olive oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley (or 1 tablespoon dried parsley)
- 4 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 clove of garlic, finely grated
- 2 tablespoons finely grated

parmesan

- 1 tablespoon honey

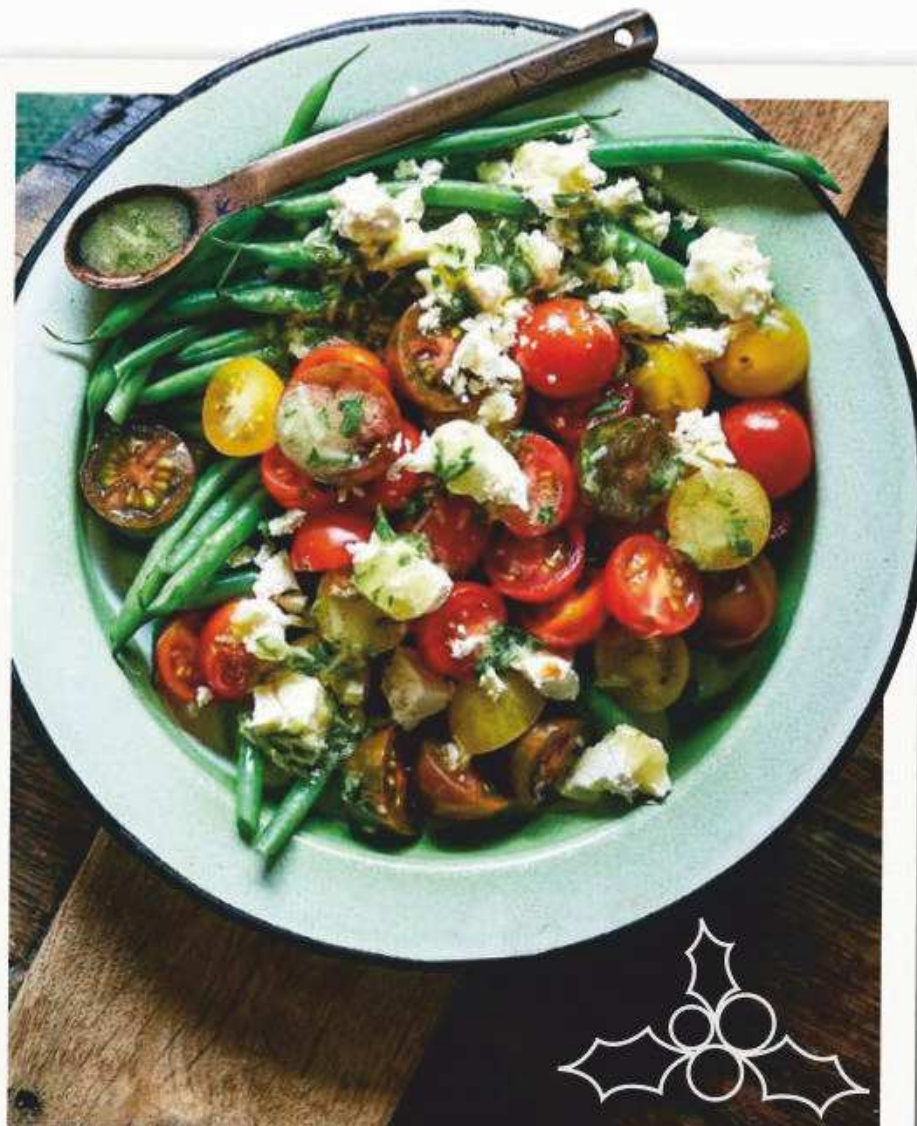
Here's how

1 Blanche the green beans in a pot of boiling water for 1 minute. Drain them and immediately run them under cold water to stop the cooking process. Place the beans in a Tupperware container.

2 Mix the salad dressing ingredients together and toss this over the green beans. Place it in the fridge (if possible) for at least 1 hour. Keep it in the fridge and use it within 4 days.

3 Mix the cherry tomatoes, feta and fresh basil leaves through the beans, and serve.

go! Drive & Camp says Crispy fried bacon makes this salad even more delicious!



Green bean salad

CAMP TRIFLE WITH AMARULA

Pudding for Africa!

Amarula custard makes this pudding a winner.

Ingredients

(serves 6)

VANILLA MUFFINS

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 1 large egg
- ½ cup milk
- 1/3 cup sunflower oil
- 1 tablespoon vanilla essence

AMARULA CUSTARD

- 4 tablespoons custard powder
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups milk
- ½ cup Amarula
- 400g strawberries, sliced
- Whipped cream to serve

Here's how

1 Mix the flour, sugar and salt in a large mixing bowl

2 Whip the eggs, milk, oil and essence together, and fold into the dry ingredients so that everything is combined together properly.

3 Divide the mixture in a lined or oiled 12-muffin pan, and bake in a preheated oven at 180 °C for about

10 minutes until cooked. Cool the muffins completely and wrap them in clingwrap before freezing.

4 Make the Amarula custard by combining the custard flour and sugar with 3 to 4 tablespoons of milk to form a smooth paste. In the meantime, heat the rest of the milk in a small pot until it's just below boiling point. Add the custard flour to the milk and stir it quickly until it begins to thicken and has cooked for 2 minutes. Remove the custard from the heat and add the Amarula to it. Cover with a piece of clingwrap or paper towel to prevent the custard from forming a skin as it cools down.

6 Build the trifle by slicing the muffins and layering them in one large container or individual glasses or bowls. Add a layer of custard to the layer of muffins, then a layer of strawberries, and finally a layer of whipped cream. Repeat this process with the rest of the ingredients. Allow the trifle to cool before serving.

go! Drive & Camp says

Simply swap the muffins for shop-bought vanilla muffins or undecorated cupcakes if you don't want to make them from scratch.



Camp trifle with Amarula



Hot diggity!

Charcoal or briquettes? For some, that's like having to pick your favourite child. We made 20 fires over a weekend – to help make your next braai decision a little easier.

Text and photos **Kyle Kock**

Do you ever really think about which bag of briquettes or coal you grab when you're in a hurry to get on the road before the Friday traffic? No? Neither did we, and that's exactly why we grabbed 16 of the most popular brands out there and put them to the test. We also went full hipster, and threw four boxes of infused briquettes into the mix.

The conditions were the same

for each fire, with an ambient temperature of 20 °C and the same cut of meat on the grill for all the brands (a matured sirloin about 1,5 cm thick).

We used a braai pit that we split into quadrants, with the meat resting on a grid 18 cm from the bottom of the pit.

All the fires consisted of a 1kg pile of charcoal or briquettes which were lit using two standard blocks of Blitz firelighter.

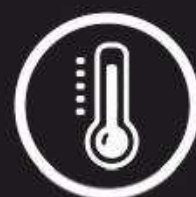


RATINGS

We rated the charcoal and briquettes according to dirt and temperature factors. The mucky hands indicate how much residue rubs off on your hands, so if you prefer not to get dirty, choose the brands with the lower ratings. The thermometer shows you the internal temperature of the meat after cooking on each side for four minutes.



Dirty hands score (0 for "not a speck", 5 for "black as soot").



Temperature in degrees Celcius.



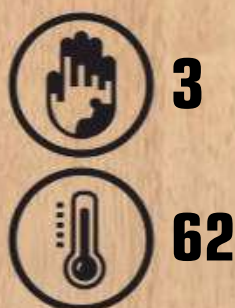
NAM-CHAR NAMIBIAN HARDWOOD BRIQUETTES Attention seeker

These burn through evenly from the bottom, then around the edges and neatly over the top. Once the meat was on, the Nam-Char briquettes held their own for a while, but they needed to be stoked and moved around a bit in order to get maximum efficiency from them. The result was medium-rare meat after four minutes on each side.

Price R40 at Checkers.

go! Drive & Camp says

A cheaper option that doesn't disappoint when you're on a budget.



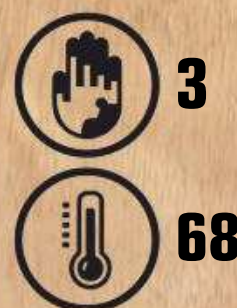
PNP BRAAI TIME BRIQUETTES Close, but no cigar

These take a while to get going, so you're exposed to the smoke for a lot longer. The charcoal starts to change colour after 8 minutes, developing a pinkish glow, but they're very crumbly and don't last very long. We got medium to medium-well done steak after four minutes on each side.

Price R50 at Pick 'n Pay.

go! Drive & Camp says

Relatively cheap, but you're going to have to use close to a full bag to get the maximum effect and ideal cooking time.



WOOLWORTHS RESTAURANT-GRADE CHARCOAL Premium quality

The Woolies brand starts burning almost immediately, and provides a constant flame as soon as the fire is lit. It also retains heat for longer. It definitely burned the hottest of all the charcoal we tested. The meat cooks hotter and faster, and gets a nice flame-grilled look. It was ready to cook at around 20 minutes, and the steak was medium-rare after four minutes.

Price R60 at Woolworths.

go! Drive & Camp says

Ranks up there with the best.



TJ'S LEKKA BRAAI CHARCOAL The right stuff

These pieces are particularly small, which helps them burn through more quickly. This also resulted in the largest pile of coals. They burn hot, and had the meat singing immediately. Definitely a good choice, and after four minutes our steak was medium-rare.

Price R50 at Pick 'n Pay.

go! Drive & Camp says

Affordable, and punch way above their weight in rands. >





CAMP MASTER BRIQUETTES Hitting the mark

After 15 minutes the Camp Master briquettes were burning through nicely, and after about 35 minutes, all the lumps had achieved a full white hue. Our steak had a nice brown colour just before it was ready to come off, and was done medium.

Price R40 at Game.

go! Drive & Camp says Another cheaper brand that really impressed, especially with how hot the fire burned.

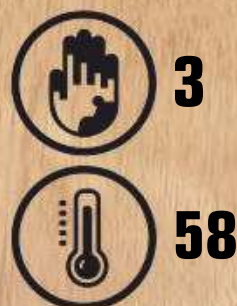


CHARKA BRAAIMEESTER LUMP CHARCOAL As good as it gets

There's a fair bit of smoke in the beginning, but it dies down considerably at around 10 minutes, and most of the lumps are white after 15 minutes. The fire was ready after just 26 minutes, and the Braaimeesters cooked a perfect medium-rare steak.

Price R70 at Pick 'n Pay.

go! Drive & Camp says This is the pick of the Charka bunch.



CHARKA PREMIUM INSTABRIKS Rocket fuel

These come in individually wrapped bags of 1 kg each. They require no firelighters; you simply light a corner of the paper bag and let it burn through. They start flaming immediately, and the pile changes colour after just five minutes. The downside is that they're quite smoky. Charka claims that your fire's ready in just 20 minutes, but it's actually more like 25. 4 minutes each side on these resulted in a medium-rare steak.

Price R90 at Checkers.

go! Drive & Camp says They're pretty pricy, but handy when you're in a hurry.



PNP BRAAI TIME CHARCOAL Trustworthy option

The majority of the charcoal burns white at around 10 minutes. At around 25 minutes, they're ready, at an almost snow-white colour. After 45 minutes, there's still the occasional bit of flame. Expect medium-rare to medium steak.

Price R60 at Pick 'n Pay.

go! Drive & Camp says A great option when you want to get things on and off a fire within an hour.





WEBER HARDWOOD CHARCOAL BRIQUETTES Great expectations

Okay, so we didn't use the Webers in a kettle braai, but they lit easily and big flames came out of the pile. They die down after 6 minutes, and the red glow from the centre is quite impressive. After 40 minutes, the Webers are still holding their size and burning red hot in the centre.

Price R60 on Takealot.

go! Drive & Camp says They live up to the name, but would probably be more impressive when used in an actual Weber.



3



70

TJ'S LEKKA BRAAI BRIQUETTES Not quite there yet

These definitely surprised with how quickly they started to burn through, and the majority were burning white after 22 minutes. This piece of meat was slightly smaller than the rest, so we expected the briquettes to cook it faster, but by the time we turned the meat over at 4 minutes, the edges were still quite rare. The meat was definitely more rare than medium-rare, so these coals take a while to get going.

Price R40 at Pick 'n Pay.

go! Drive & Camp says Not quite as impressive as we'd hoped. They need around 45 minutes to get going.



3



54

CHARKA BRIKETTE Teary eyes, but flavoursome

These took noticeably longer than the others to get going, and needed some stoking. There's a very consistent flame once you've got them burning.

But it's very smoky, even 25 minutes after being lit. Still, these definitely gave us the best colour on the meat (probably because of all that smoke), and the result was a proper medium-rare steak.

Price R75 from Pick 'n Pay.

go! Drive & Camp says They're on the expensive side, and we doubt people want their eyes watering for too long – even if the meat looks A-grade.



2



59



NAM-CHAR NAMIBIAN HARDWOOD CHARCOAL Dynamite in a small package

These were still flaming after 28 minutes. They retain a lot of heat for quite a long time. They were pretty much on par with other high-end brands, with a lot of colour in the steak after four minutes. More than 45 minutes after being lit, there were still a few pieces that had yet to burn through, and were still pitch black. These coals could burn hot for well over an hour. The meat was medium to medium-well done after 4 minutes on each side.

Price R40 at Checkers.

go! Drive & Camp says The smallest bag here had quite a lot to offer, and is one of the best of the bunch.



4



68





BLITZ TRIQUETTES One of the best

As the name suggests, these are triangular briquettes. They don't make a lot of flame, and they burn through slowly and consistently. Blitz says that the triangular shape retains heat for longer. You're supposed to wait until they're beige before cooking, but there's still a little smoke. The coals were hot and there was no smoke after 30 minutes, and the result was a medium-rare steak.

Price R60 at Pick 'n Pay.



go! Drive & Camp says Because we used Blitz firelighters, we expected nothing less than a perfect combination, and they didn't disappoint.



BRAAI STAR HARDWOOD CHARCOAL Serious contender

Right from the beginning there's a lot of smoke out of this pyramid, but there's a continuous flame for more than 18 minutes and the result of the heat is that the coals are ready at around 23 minutes. We pulled off a medium steak after 4 minutes each side.

Price R40 at Game.

go! Drive & Camp says We honestly didn't expect much from this brand, and were thoroughly impressed.



WOOLWORTHS BRAAI BRIQUETTES In for the long haul

These are very dense, so the pyramid we made from these looked smaller than the other briquette piles. It starts turning white after 32 minutes. After 4 minutes, the meat was medium, and the coals were still hot enough to cook a lot more meat afterwards.

Price R60 at Woolworths.

go! Drive & Camp says Great for when you need to braai for a whole lot of people and it's going to take more than an hour.

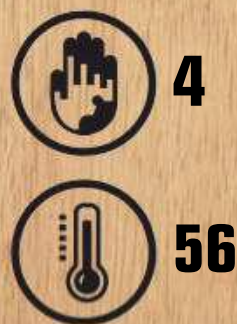


BUSH BABY CHARCOAL BRIQUETTES Forgettable attempt

It's a very powdery sort of briquette, and breaks up quite easily and quickly. They also take quite long to burn through. At 30 minutes, half of the stack was still black. After waiting for about 38 minutes for the coals to be ready, the result was a medium-rare to rare steak.

Price R40 at Checkers.

go! Drive & Camp says Rather have a look at others for the same price.





SPECIAL MENTION

Franca Gourmet Briquettes

A box of these infused charcoal briquettes arrived at our offices for us to try out, and we thought it would be a good idea to include them in our test. This company uses natural ingredients and spices, so that you can smoke your meat safely right after the charcoal is lit. We used a kettle braai for this test, and an entire box (2kg) of infused coals for maximum effect.

They do recommend different kinds of meat for the four different flavours on offer, but we stuck to steak to try and determine the difference between them – except that this cut was a bit thicker, so that it could absorb more flavour. We let the meat cook on for 22 minutes on each side before lifting the lid.

Onion: Definitely our pick of the bunch, with a mouth-watering sort of pork scent in the air – and the taste was not far off. Franca recommends making pizza with this one.

Garlic & Herb: A very fragrant smell as soon as you light them, and a distinct taste. Franca recommends using these with fish, chicken and vegetables.

Garlic: Only a very mild hint of garlic

Rosemary: Also mild; chicken or lamb would probably have been a better choice of meat for this one.

Price R200 for four boxes from Takealot.

go! Drive & Camp says This is a very hipster sort of idea, and the boxes are quite pricey; but give it a try, and impress your mates with the instant flavour.



2



63



Dear Father Christmas...

The Festive Season is just around the corner; and for us at *go! Drive and Camp*, the greatest gift of all is to be able to spoil our readers.

Text **Schalk Jonker**

It's nearly Christmas time, and we know all too well just how hard it is to pretend you're happy about the soap-on-a-rope/socks/golf balls that you've found waiting for you under the Christmas tree, instead of that brand-new camp chair, pair of hiking boots or solar panels that you

actually wanted.

That's why this year we've partnered with Outdoor Warehouse to spoil a bunch of our readers, and also just to say thank you for your constant support over the years.

Via our Facebook page, we asked readers to take a look at the Outdoor Warehouse

website – to choose the Christmas presents that they wanted, and to tell us why.

We really want to give a huge thank-you to Outdoor Warehouse, who have helped us make this festive season just a little bit brighter for some of our readers. Merry Christmas, all!



GARMIN DRIVE 40LM

Which way you goin', Billy?

Willie Gummow from Port Elizabeth says "At the end of the year, we're planning on hitting the road to see all the wonderful destinations that we read about in *go! Drive and Camp*. With a decent GPS, we know we won't be taking any wrong turns."

This GPS system is easy to use, and thanks to its large screen and perfect maps, you'd actually have to *try* to get lost. It comes with a range of features, and already has detailed maps of South

Africa pre-loaded. Plus, you can update the maps free. It also searches for places of interest, keeps you in the right lane at large intersections, and even warns you of speed cameras on your route.

Price R1 899

***go! Drive & Camp* says** You can start plotting your route, Willie. With this Garmin, you won't easily get lost.



NATURAL INSTINCTS LAZY CHAIR Relax to the max

Ronelle Ehlers of Witbank says "My life partner and I are mad about camping, but my camp chair is old and worn down by life's travels. I can imagine just how comfortable it would be to sit back and relax in this brand-new chair in the bush."

The seat of this Natural Instincts Reclining Chair is padded for extra comfort, and even has a

removable cushion for when you want to take a quick nap under your tent's awning. The sturdy frame is made from steel, and it has a carry-weight of 120 kg.

Price: R1 399

go! Drive & Camp says Ronelle, here's your Natural Instincts Reclining Chair, just in time for Christmas – enjoy it!



CAMP MOR DISHWASH STAND It's so easy

Gerda Slabber of Bloemfontein says "I really want to get my hands on one of these dishwash stands. I currently use a basin on our camp table to wash up, but my back gets sore quickly. This stand is higher, and will make my camping experience far more pleasant."

This foldable washing table is perfect for campers who prefer to do their washing up at their

campsite. It has space for two basins and a drying rack. It's both stable and tall, thanks to its sturdy steel frame.

Price R899

go! Drive & Camp says Gerda, with this new dishwashing stand, you won't have to break your back washing up anymore. Outdoor Warehouse is also giving you two basins and a drying rack!



ADIDAS TERREX AX2-HIKING BOOTS Walk this way

Timothy Burdett from Bellville says: "I'm planning on hiking the Fish River Canyon next year, and these hiking boots are exactly what I need for that!"

Adidas knows a thing or two when it comes to making shoes, and the Terrex AX2 hiking boot is on the cutting edge of technology. These shoes are light and flexible, and the clever combination of materials ensures that they

are simultaneously waterproof and breathable. They also provide great support for your ankles, while remaining extremely comfortable.

Price R1 999

go! Drive & Camp says Hey, Timothy – best you book your spot in the south of Namibia, because you're getting this pair of hiking boots for tackling the canyon!

TRAILBOSS TYRE GAUGE AND DEFLATOR Under pressure

Henriëtte Bright of Stellenbosch says "This year, I'd really like to find a Trailboss Tyre Gauge and Deflator in my Christmas stocking, instead of body lotion and bubble bath. This gauge has been on my shopping list since 2015, because it'll be perfect for when I need to deflate my tyres for exploring the gravel roads of our beautiful country."

With the Trailboss Tyre Gauge and Deflator, you can effortlessly measure the air pressure in your vehicle's tyres and deflate them if you need to. It's made from high-quality materials, and it's just the thing



for anyone who loves exploring remote back roads.

Price R199

go! Drive & Camp says Here's not one, but two Tyre Gauges and Deflators for you! Safe travels, Henriëtte! >

CHRISTMAS WISH LIST



NATIONAL LUNA DUAL BATTERY SYSTEM I've got the power

Hardus Oberholzer of Witbank says: "I'm nearing retirement, and once I become a pensioner we really want to go camping at remote places where there's no power. That's why I'd love to find this National Luna dual battery system underneath my Christmas tree."

This system from National Luna contains all the items you could possibly need in order to install a dual battery system in your

trailer or off-roader, including everything from a dual battery isolator and controller to heavy-duty cables, power fuses, cable ties and screws.

Price R2 100

go! Drive & Camp says

Now you guys can take the long way round and reach those remote campsites. Hardus, congrats – here's your dual-battery system.



NATURAL INSTINCTS REFLECTO SHEET Reflections of my life

Hester du Raan from Bloemfontein says: "It would be great to get one of these reflectors, so that we can keep our camping trailer and tent cool in the hot sun this summer."

The Natural Instincts Reflecto sheet is made from UV-resistant material, which means you can keep things nice and cool in your tent or trailer. It's 5,6 x 4,8 m in

size, with eyelets along the reinforced seams. This means that you can fasten it down firmly if an unexpected wind pumps through the campsite.

Price R1 419

go! Drive & Camp says

The summer heat won't be a problem for you anymore, Hester! Here's that reflector from Outdoor Warehouse.



NATURAL INSTINCTS EASY-PITCH GAZEBO Whiter shade of pale

Rudolf Weyers of Alberton says: "We're planning on spending a few days camping at Skukuza, and this gazebo will provide welcome relief in the Kruger heat."

This Deluxe Gazebo has a folding steel frame that has been integrated into one unit for effortless assembly. So you don't need to worry about figuring it out and trying to

fit a bunch of poles together. The roof is made of heavy-duty, water-resistant material, and the entire thing fits into a durable carry bag with wheels for easy manoeuvrability.

Price R2 599

go! Drive & Camp says

Don't worry about Kruger's infamous heat, Rudolf – you're getting this great gift



NATURAL INSTINCTS KITCHEN STAND WITH BASIN Hands across the table

Jacques van Wyk of Centurion says: "A proper camp kitchen like this one would make our lives a lot easier."

This nifty design from Natural Instincts ensures you can have a fully-equipped kitchen at your campsite. You have a work surface to prepare food on, a basin for washing up your dirty dishes, a lantern pole for

light, pegs for clothes, wire storage for spices and sauces, a wire-storage bottom shelf for pots and pans, and even a handy rubbish bin.

Price R1 299

go! Drive & Camp says Hey Jacques, here's your portable kitchen for Christmas! Time to get cooking! >



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CHRISTMAS WISH LIST



TRAILBOSS 2 000 W INVERTER

Power to the people

Dirk van der Merwe from Centurion says "We usually spend our holidays by the sea, and bring as much fresh seafood back to Gauteng as we possibly can. With an inverter like this, we won't have to worry about power supply at our overnight stops, and can transport our valuable seafood back home with peace of mind."

Couple this inverter to your vehicle's 12 V power socket, and

it kicks out 230 V for you. It has built-in protection against short circuits, or when the power supply is precarious. It even has a USB slot where you can charge your cellphone.

Price R1 899

go! Drive & Camp says

Load up all that seafood Dirk, because with this inverter from Trailboss, it's going to make it safely from the coast to your home.



TRAILBOSS 3W-ALUMINIUM TORCH

You light up my life

Jaun Labuschagne of Pretoria says "I would really like to get this torch for Christmas please. I hope I'm one of the lucky ones."

This compact torch from Trailboss weighs a mere 127 g, but its beam shines an impressive 120 lumens strong

over 80 m distance. It has three settings, and on the lowest of these its AAA batteries last for 8 hours.

Price R199

go! Drive & Camp says You are indeed one of the lucky ones, Jaun! Here's your torch!

SETSOLAR 105 W SOLAR PANEL

Don't let the sun go down on me

Jomarie Willemse from the West Coast says "With Tietiesbaai and Trekoskraal on our doorstep, we prefer to camp self-sufficiently in the bush. A solar panel would be a brilliant Christmas present."

This 105 W solar panel from SetSolar provides 18 V power at a current of almost 6 A. It's 1 000 x 670 mm in size, has a 35 mm frame of silver anodized aluminium, and weighs 8 kg. It also comes with a 10-year warranty.

Price R1 699

go! Drive & Camp says Time to head to the bush,



Jomarie! Outdoor Warehouse is giving you one of these.



NATURAL INSTINCTS 360 ML DOUBLE-WALLED WINE MUG

Cheers to Christmas!

Monique van Vuuren from Bloemfontein says "How do you keep a wife who loves camping happy? You give her a glass of wine that she won't have to share with the campsite midges."

This wine mug is made from stainless steel and has a volume of 360 ml. The double insulation keeps the wine

refreshingly cool inside. It also comes with a tight-fitting lid, to ensure those bugs don't end up in your drink.

Price R259

go! Drive & Camp says Cheers, Monique. You're getting a set of four this Christmas, to the value of R1 036. Enjoy the drinks! 🍷



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Golden oldies

Some of our readers make sure they upgrade every few years or so – while others stick with a trusty old workhorse that can do the job over and over.

Old Ironside

1998 TOYOTA PRADO 3.0 KZTE

There is no other vehicle as competent as a Toyota, according to **Attie Meintjes** from Reitz in the Free State. So much so, he'll only consider letting go of his for another one.

“ I purchased ‘Big Grey’ 11 years ago as a used model, for R140 000. I was looking for something that was sturdy and stable enough to tow when the need arose, so I looked at double cab bakkies like the **Toyota Hilux** and **Isuzu KB**; but the **Prado**’s price and quality eventually won me over.

Over the years I’ve particularly come to appreciate the ride quality, and just how much packing space there is inside. Another Prado, preferably a brand-new one, is my dream vehicle.

The one thing I would complain about is the fuel consumption. The average consumption has gradually increased to around **16,3 ℓ/100 km**. I have also had the engine overhauled, and if I had another **R10 000**, I’d probably spend that on touch-ups to the paintjob.



Show us your wheels

Send an email to

drivecamp@gomag.co.za and tell us about what’s in your garage.

My previous vehicle was an old Isuzu KB 250D, but it laboured when it was asked to tow, felt quite old and rickety, and also smoked excessively.

I’m fond of visiting the coast, and the flowers and mountains of the **Western Cape** are primarily responsible for ensuring that I return to the region; and I can honestly say that I’ve never been to a bad campsite there. >



go! *Braai Time*

A collection of lekker recipes from go!

ALETTA LINTVELT



We've selected some of the most popular braai recipes from the magazine and put them together in this new cookery book.

From steak and seafood to potjies and bread, *Braai Time* is a carefully curated compilation of dishes with local flavour for the campfire or your kitchen at home.

The delicious recipes and beautiful photographs will inspire many a feast, including salads, sauces and sides and new takes on old favourites like miso lamb chops, fajita chicken kebabs and angelfish tacos. *Braai Time* is a recipe book filled with fresh ideas for summer, winter or any time the coals beckon.

ON SALE NOW

go! Braai Time is on sale now for R330.
Available at good bookstores and from
takealot.com

Early alternative

2008 KIA SORENTO 2.5 CRDI

The Korean brands have been improving steadily, and **Talbot van Rooyen** from Pretoria recalls that his first-generation Kia Sorento was comfortable in front of a Jurgens Penta.

“I purchased my **Kia** second-hand for **R150 000** five years ago, and was fortunate enough not to have experienced any issues. What I really wanted was a **Ford Ranger**, and I seriously considered one. I have since upgraded to a second-generation BMW X5, though.

My **1995 Jurgens Penta** was hitched to the back of the Sorento with a Tando stabiliser and I could comfortably tow at **120 km/h**, with the Kia returning a fuel consumption average of around **12 ℓ/100 km**. Without the caravan, the Sorento could get as low as **8,3 ℓ/100 km**.



Because I'm deaf, I couldn't really pick up on any noises or rattles that might have become annoying, so I can't comment on that. But I feel that an SUV should be able to take you almost anywhere, and the Kia definitely didn't disappoint.

Through the **Kamp-Mal Facebook** group, we have been able to make use of special offers on resorts in the **North West** and **Limpopo** provinces. ”



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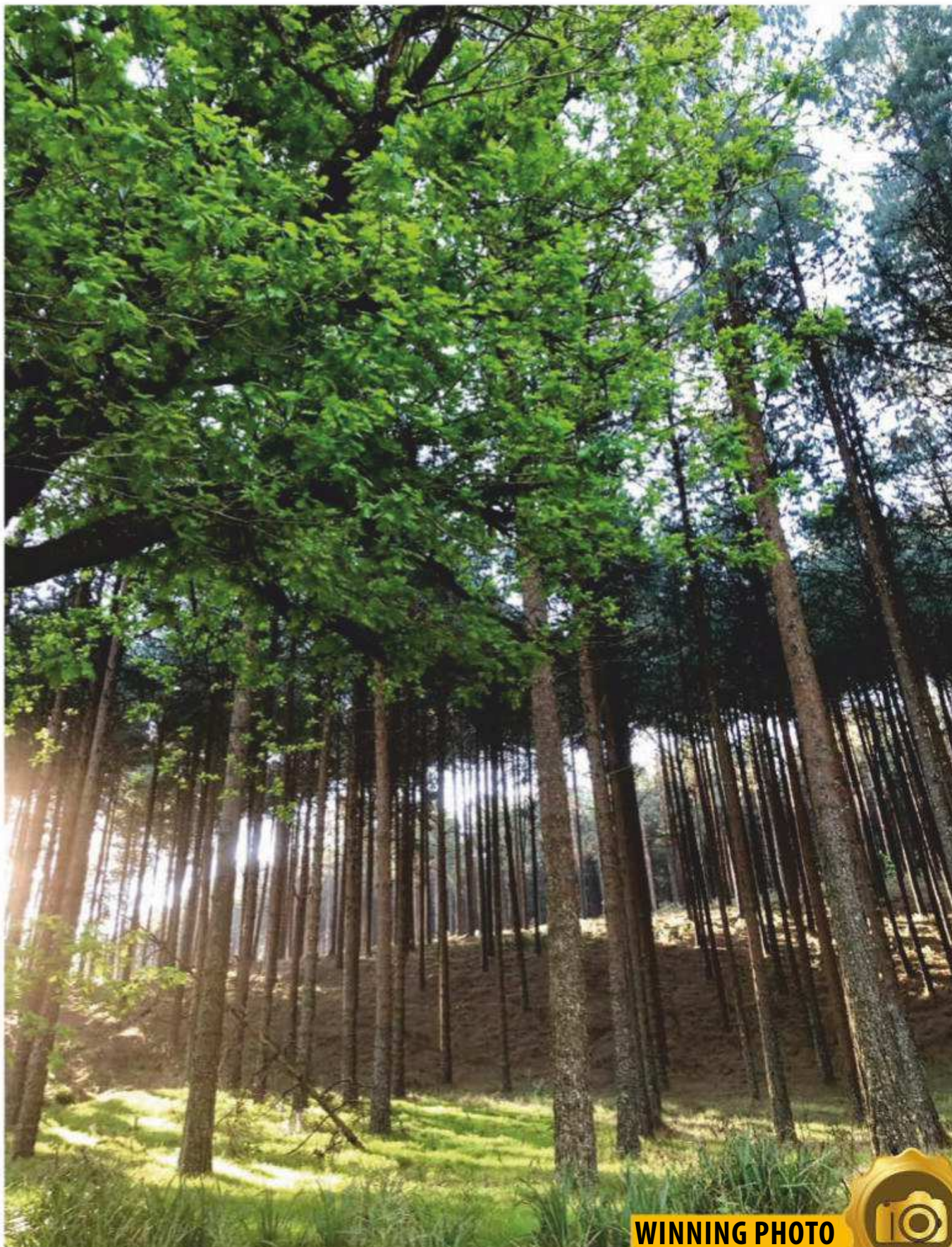
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Web: www.quantumleisure.co.za



iPhone8; 3,99 mm lens
(28 mm in 35 mm format);
1/30th of a second; f1,8; ISO 25

WINNING PHOTO



Soulful shots

This month our readers' eyes were drawn to a giant chair, an elephant's wrinkles, and sunshine in a forest. Luckily, all three of them had their cameras to hand.

By Leon Botha

Pincushion of light

With just one photo, **Renette Botha** from Pretoria managed to capture all the beauty of the Magoebaskloof forests.

"For my birthday, my husband Jacques spoilt me, and we spent the long weekend in the area around Magoebaskloof and Haenertsburg. We went driving through the forests, among other things, to see the variety of flora. At one place I noticed how the rays of sun broke through the trees...and this was the moment that I grabbed my cellphone to snap this shot. The lines, colours and sunshine work together perfectly in this image. You realise just how magnificent nature is when you look back at photos like these."

As a rule, a photo should have a focal point, as this is what first draws your eye. Renette's photo works well without a focus point, because it's rich in detail and grabs your attention as a whole. Too much detail is also not a good thing, because you can get lost in the image – to such a degree that you don't bother looking at the photo again. In Renette's case, the detail is ordered in such a way as to form groups of patterns, which your eye then interprets as units.

The top half of the photo is visually heavier than the bottom half and you can almost feel the trees holding the canopy up. This gives the photo life and motion. The bough that holds the leaves and branches to the left of the foreground is out-of-frame and it looks almost as if these are floating, but because of the pattern that the other trunks form, you instinctively know that the trunks pull leftwards out of the frame.

To complete the photo, a ray of light ignites the subtle composition elements of the image by stretching across the photo. The streak runs diagonally under the canopy and gives the image an anchor point. This element is repeated by the ray of light lower down on the ground – and creates this beautiful shot.

Old soul

He had to sit dead still and not move an inch. But his effort was rewarded with this beautiful elephant image, says **Hein Henning of Brackenfell**.

"My wife Jeanine and I took a trip to Victoria Falls earlier this year to celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary. We also explored a bit of Chobe, and went on a boat ride. Two elephants crossed the river near us to reach an island in the water. These two swam behind the boat, and were about 30 paces from us when the furthest one decided he wanted a closer inspection. We were told to keep very still and not move at all. He swam over to the boat and was very close to us before he lost interest. That's when I grabbed my camera and took these photos."

Elephants are perfectly photogenic, with their awkward, wrinkled bodies. If you want to take a more abstract photo of these amazing animals, it's always a good idea to zoom in and focus on a specific section of their bodies – just as Hein did here.

Because everyone knows what an elephant looks like, you get



Sony ∞230;
180 mm lens
(270 mm
in 35 mm
format); 1/320
of a second;
f5,6; ISO 250



enough detail to recognise the animal easily. At first glance, and without realising it, your eye is drawn to the background – the section of water to the right – and your eye jumps between the two areas of the photo.

If you cut the water out, the abstract nature of the image doubles; to such an extent that you have to take a moment to carefully understand what it is you're looking at. As soon as you recognise the image as an elephant, there is tons of detail that you can see and enjoy across the image: from the tufts of hair at its ear and the two bumps of its skull that you can identify under the skin, to the eyelid that looks as if it's made from rubber.

Because this photo is primarily monochrome, nothing competes for your attention.

SEND US YOUR PICTURES

and we might publish them here. All photos are welcome: from mud-covered kids in the campsite or a colour photo of a street vendor's towels, to a solitary cactus in the desert. Whether it was taken with a big DSLR camera or your cellphone, if you can put it in your family photo album it's all good. **RENETTE BOTHA** wins a Camp Cover camera bag to the value of R520 – congratulations!

Send your photos and contact details to leon.botha@media24.com 📧

Dwarfed

A chair that threatens to touch the heavens can't escape the lens of her camera, says **Fredalaine Harmse of Hopefield**.

"I took this photo at the Plaasmol farmstall just outside Hopefield. Left of the image is a large chair that is known as Poplap se Stoel. This chair is 11,5 m tall, weighs 2,7 t and is apparently the tallest chair in Africa."

Fredalaine's photo is a good example of the difference a human form can make to an image. When you first look at the photo, there's a lot of detail to take in, and then your eye is drawn to the straight lines of this enormous chair. Here you recognise the silhouette of two people, and it pulls everything into focus. Without these figures you'd have no sense of scale, and you would also have no idea how near or far the trees on the horizon are.

The water below gives meaningful negative space to the composition, but you could also crop the image across horizontally... which would give the same photo a completely different feel.

Canon EOS 2000D; EF-S
18-55 mm lens op 18 mm;
1/125 seconds; f8; ISO 6 400





Spectacular Lesotho

See Sani Pass, Katse Dam, Maletsunyane Falls and Thaba Bosiu on a six-day, guided self-drive tour with *go! Drive & Camp Tours*, in conjunction with Bhejane 4x4 Adventures.



DAY 1

Our adventure starts in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands town of Himeville, where we meet at the Stone House Café.

For the rest of the day we do the awe-inspiring drive up Sani Pass. After clearing customs on the South African side, we have a picnic lunch and then make our way up the pass, with more than enough time to enjoy the scenery and take pictures.

Our accommodation for the night is the cosy Sani Mountain Lodge. It feels like you're literally on top of the world at this lodge, which is built on the edge of the Drakensberg and affords breathtaking views into KwaZulu-Natal.

DAY 2

Our route to Katse Dam takes us along the highest roads in Southern Africa. We cross the Senqu River, which becomes the Orange River when it enters South Africa.

The houses that we stay in at Katse overlook the dam. We relax tonight with dinner in the restaurant.

DAY 3

After a big breakfast, we do a guided tour of the Katse Dam wall and learn more about the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. We spend the

rest of the day driving a circle route around the dam, with a picnic lunch on the way, and return to our accommodation in the late afternoon.

DAY 4

Today we traverse mountain passes such as the God Help Me and Blue Mountain passes. We get a glimpse of the Mohale Dam, which is also part of the Highlands Water Project.

In the late afternoon we arrive in the small town of Ramabanta, where we stay over at the Trading Post Lodge for the next two nights and get spoilt with homemade food.

DAY 5

We take it easy today. We'll visit Maletsunyane Falls at Semonkong, where the water drops 192 m down a cliff, have a picnic lunch, and return to the lodge to relax for the afternoon. There are some lovely walks in the area, and you can go horse riding.

DAY 6

After our last big breakfast together, we make our way towards Maseru. We drive around Thaba Bosiu before we say our goodbyes at the visitor centre near Maseru Bridge Border Post, and then everyone goes their own way.

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CROSSWORD

Well done, **Mariska Brand** from Bredasdorp. You have won **Van Loveren's Tangled Tree** wine for your correct entry in the crossword competition in our November 2018 edition. If you want to win like Mariska, simply complete the crossword, take a picture of it, and e-mail it to us at drivecamp@gomag.co.za. Remember to include your contact details. Or simply complete it online at <https://bit.ly/2CBW3wh>. The solution to last month's crossword is on p.129.

			An ATKV resort	Perform	Hair coverings	Genre of rock music	Camp in the Kruger Park (5,5)			
					Plutonium (symbol)		European Union (abbr)			
			Antelope		Ceylon, eg					
			Riches							
Form of government		Space	Snoop	Parody (4-2)				Panel	Serenity	
					Alias (abbr)		Primates	Maths symbol	Wound cover	
							Mature			
BA and MA, eg			Muslim festival (short)	Twitch	Unit of electrical resistance	Fanatic				
Settle						Negative answer				
Increase			Spying							
Antimony (symbol)			Whirl					Calcium (symbol)		
		Drink			Broccoli and spinach, eg			Part of WWW		
		Intimidate								
Chihuahua, eg					Duty	Weather conditions	A Ford Ranger model			
A fruit					En suite (abbr)					
			Mineral rock			Vehicle				
Cores					You and I	Silicon (symbol)				
				Consumed				Bit of smoke	Rice dish	Personal assistant (abbr)
								Betray (4,2)		
			Tantalum (symbol)	Morning (abbr)	Discharge			Pinnacle		
					Greeting			Equals		
			Fire residue			Lair	Carmen, eg			
			Clique				Tickle			
Trailer by Echo 4x4	Pipe		Samarium (symbol)		Completely					Short sleep
	In which way?				Flipper					
				Armada				Spirit		
Osmium (symbol)			Springs			Halo				
Sugary										
				Groove				Cut		

OPGESTEL DEUR GERDA ENGELBRECHT

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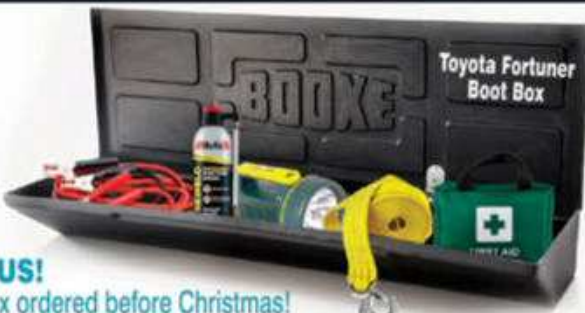
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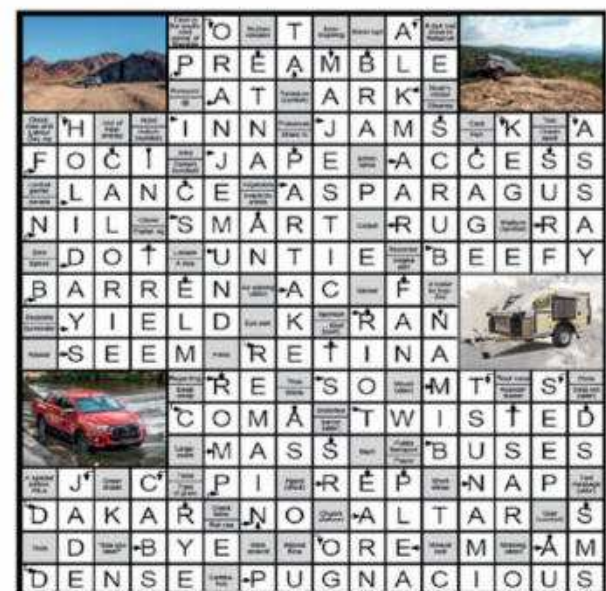
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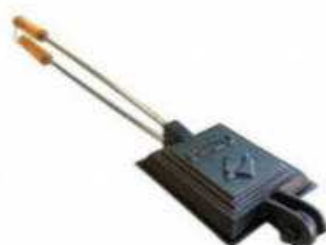


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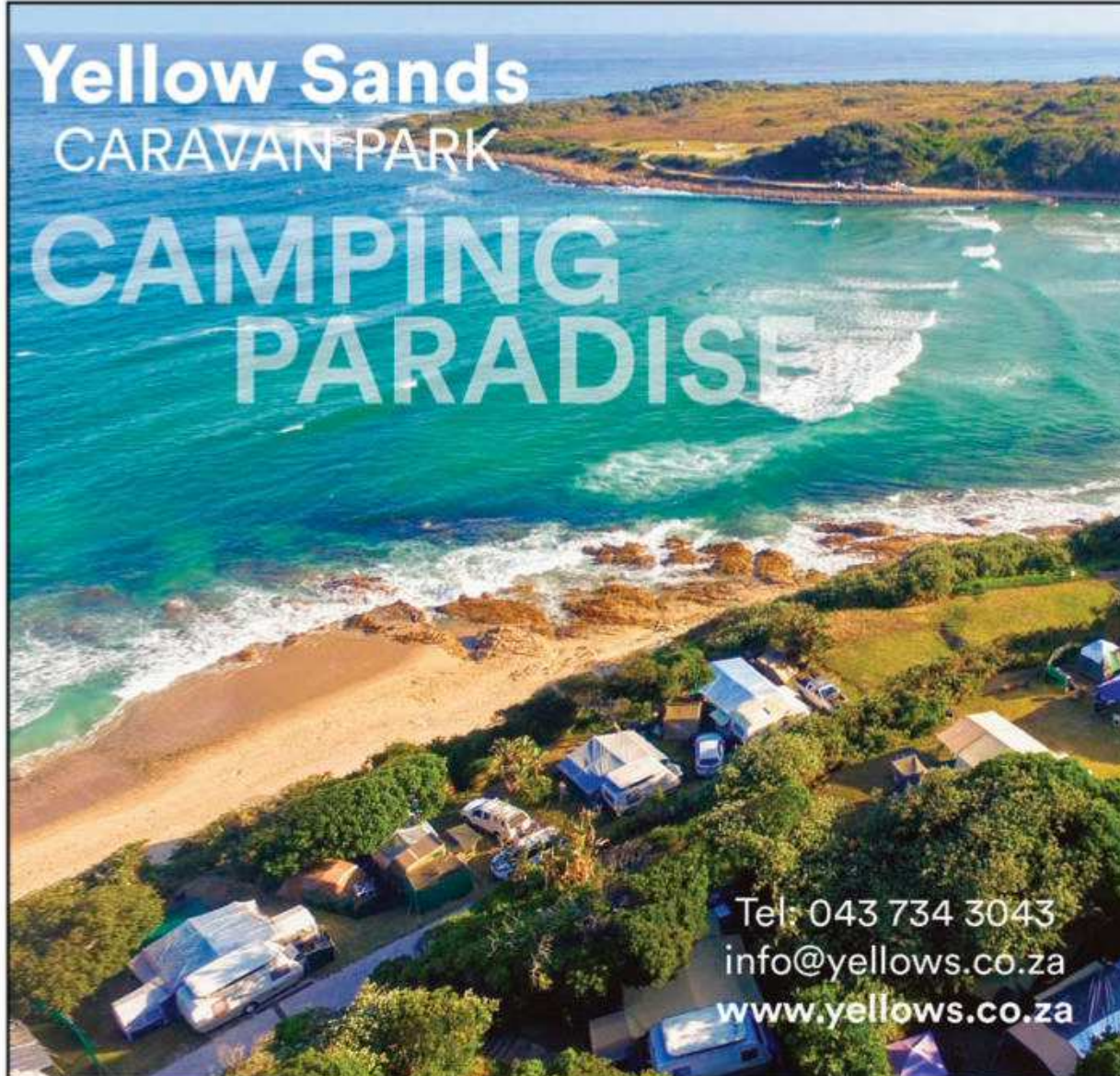
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How about that one?

When it comes to picking a campsite, he'd rather take the risk of a bad decision, than the angst of indecision, says Schalk Jonker.

A friendly woman at reception pushes my proof of payment across the counter towards me, along with a photocopied map of the grounds. "You're here," she says, indicating "here" with an orange highlighter. "Drive through the gate and follow the road to the swimming pools," she explains, dragging the broad orange line up and along the road on the map. "Here you'll turn left, and drive over the little bridge and past the putt-putt course and kiosk until you get to the campsite. Because it's so quiet at the moment, only the top bathrooms are open."

"Which stand are we on?" I ask, as my misgivings grow. But I already know what her answer will be. "Sir, you're welcome to choose any spot," she says – and my stomach turns, and drops into my shoes.

FIRST, LET ME take a moment to explain something about my wife: you'd have to look far and wide to find a more organised person. Every little thing is planned, down to the finest detail. She flourishes on order, and is a chronic list-maker. (I recently caught her creating a list of all the lists she needs to make!)

Whether it's our household budget, a grocery list or camping essentials, she will sit in front of the computer, or with a piece of paper and at least two pens (different colours) to carefully compose and organise the matter at hand. In our house, absolutely nothing is left to chance.

She takes a similar

approach to any decision she has to make. The pros and cons are carefully thought through before she considers the possible outcomes.

All good and well, when – for example – you're deciding to buy a new coffee machine; but this sort of indecision can be debilitating at a campsite.

THE AMERICAN WRITER Napoleon Hill once described indecision, doubt and fear as three closely related members of an unholy trinity. If you encounter one of them in a situation, the other two can't be far behind.

While I'm standing here at reception, considering my options, my wife, daughter and niece are waiting in the car, and I know that I'm about to turn that triangle into a square – because I realise that in this situation, confrontation is unavoidable. The next hour or so is going to put our marriage to the test.

Under normal circumstances, it's good news when you can pick your own camping spot, especially during the off-season. But not with us. Not if my wife has anything to say about it.

"We can pick our own stand," I say as I climb back into the car. "That's good news," she says. I bite my lip, and resist the urge to mutter "No, it isn't".

We drive through the gate and follow the road to the swimming pools, just like the orange stripe on the map commands. We turn left, cross over the little bridge and go past the putt-putt course and the kiosk ahead

of us to reach the camping grounds.

"Only the top ablution block is open – so we should probably park somewhere near here." I fire the first volley in the unavoidable skirmish that threatens to break out between us.

"Why would you want to camp here," she asks indignantly, "when all those spots near the river are still available?"

We drive at a snail's pace, and nod our heads in greeting to those people already settled under their tent awnings. "Yay, there are trampolines!" the little ones alert us. "Can we climb out so long?"

I stop to let the innocents out and aim for a campsite with a fairly large tree, next to the river. "No, the wind is going to blow us away here. And this tree will give us hardly any shade in the afternoon," she says. I completely agree with her: I've spotted the storm ties that other riverside-campers are already using against the strong late-afternoon breeze that's blowing off the sea. But she wants to take a look; and so, we take a look.

"How about that one?" I ask. "It has grass, shade, and protection from the wind." She looks at me, shaking her head. "You're not serious?! That's way too far from the ablutions and the playground. We have to keep an eye on the kids, and I don't want to have to walk for miles when I need to go to the loo in the middle of the night."

So I suggest the stands closer to the ablution block and play area; but these don't have a lawn, and are too "cold" (I'm still not sure what this means). And she really doesn't want to camp right here where the children will drive us crazy.



“Great,” I sigh. “We’ve been standing around here for half an hour already. That spot in the corner is now our last option.” She looks sideways at the indicated site – you’d swear it had insulted her mother. Then she shakes her head, and says: nope, not that one.

“What’s wrong with it?” I ask, exasperated. It’s pretty much between the ablution block and the playground, and there’s shade for tomorrow’s all-important midday nap; and while there’s little grass, I remembered to bring a ground cover, thanks to her comprehensive camping list. “I don’t know...” she says, “...it just doesn’t feel right.”

I WISH I COULD say we eventually reached a compromise based on carefully considered factors with a mutual acceptance of each other’s perspectives. But then I’d be lying. The stand we eventually chose basically came down to which of us first threatened to “turn around right now and drive home”.

So, I unpack the car – tables, chairs, crates, gazebo – and then I start pitching the dome tent. As I’m busy banging in the pegs (that firm breeze has since

Indecision, doubt and fear are three closely related members of an unholy trinity. If you encounter one of them, the other two can’t be far behind.

transformed into a south easter), she nonchalantly sidles over and asks why we don’t rather camp at one of those stands between the playground and the ablution block. And with her finger, she points out the exact spot that I suggested forty-five minutes ago.

That’s when you wish that the campground officials would always just assign you a stand, and be done with it. Though in the end, that’s not so easy either. Because in truth, there’ve been times when we’ve arrived at our designated spot (in December, in the bush,

in a jam-packed campground), and there’s not a shady tree in sight. Then she stomps around the area disapprovingly, looking at every possible gap before she says, “Go and tell them we’d rather camp there.”

BUT TONIGHT, WHEN the fire burns hot and we’re enjoying its cheerful flickering, listening to the children play on the trampolines or splash in the pool, it won’t matter where we’re camped. Because any spot out here is better than being at home; and despite the indecision, life is still more peaceful here than in the city.

Until tomorrow afternoon, when the baking sun spoils her afternoon nap. 🌞



Cuppa-Camper

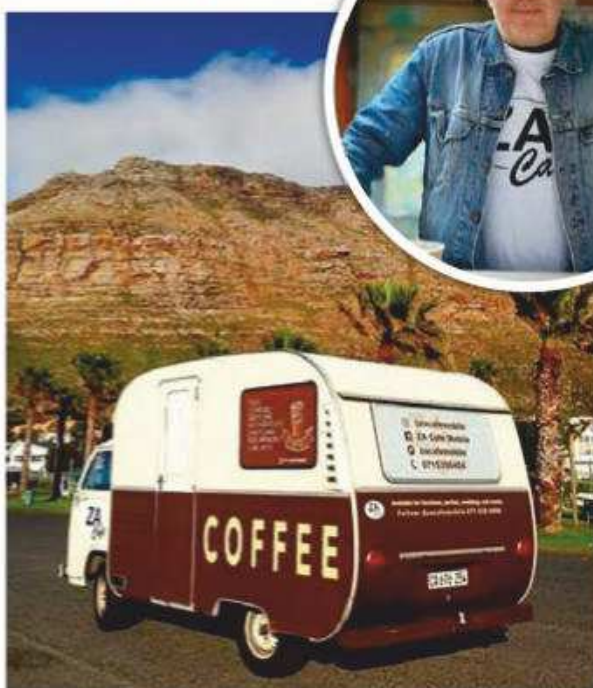
Jack-of-all-trades **Derek Harrison** from Fish Hoek says that what fuels his tank is driving around in Sally, his mobile coffee shop, and giving people their caffeine kick – along with tasty treats.

“I’ve been a teacher, tour guide, guesthouse manager, salesman, restaurant owner twice, coffee-shop owner twice, and even developed a children’s nature awareness programme. Needless to say, I love reinventing myself, and have been fortunate enough to be fairly successful in some ventures and excellent in others.

I loved the restaurant and coffee-shop businesses, but the hours and rentals are tiresome and prohibitive; so when I started ZA Café Mobile, I was looking for fun and an adventure that could generate the lifestyle I wanted. It would be a mobile eatery and coffee stop that could also double as a travelling marketing vehicle. This means I can stop outside a barber or design emporium or small material shop, and in exchange for electricity and water, I can help promote the business via the van’s social media channels, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

I found Sally about three years ago. She looked a little sad and rough around the edges; but on the upside, she was in running order, so I purchased her for a mere R10 000. Sally is a 1974 Volkswagen Jurgens Autovilla – basically the lovechild of two South African favourites, the Kombi and the Jurgens caravan – making the ideal family weekender.

I had very little capital to start the business with, so friends with carpentry skills and tools helped cut a hatch and set up a counter. I borrowed an espresso machine and a grinder, and began trading



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even before Sally received her first new lick of paint.

Apart from the standard services, I’ve only spent R25 000 so far on various mechanical repairs and upgrades, and that included having the engine reconditioned after more than 30 000 km of my own mileage. She’s paid her way through all the upgrades by selling cups of liquid gold to people all over the greater Cape Town region. But one of the biggest challenges of working at the coast is managing the rust!

So far we’ve been as far as Melkbos, Cape Point, Franschhoek and Wellington, as well as the occasional venture into the CBD and the Deep South. Long-distance trips are limited until I can get the mechanicals to a level at which I’m fairly confident of everything. Our regular haunts are Muizenberg main road from Mondays to Fridays, the Range Market in Constantia on Friday nights, the Kommetjie Market fortnightly; and we also do events such as weddings, sports days, birthdays and corporate functions.

In addition to americanos, espressos, chai lattes, red cappuccinos, mochas and tea, we also sell vegan rotis and croissants.

Instead of upgrading to a more modern vehicle or adding vehicles to the business, I’d rather focus on my five Cs of Coffee: Connection, Community, Collaboration, Creation and Celebration. My dream is to travel all across South Africa. ”



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