

#8

go!

CAMP FOOD ALL WRAPPED UP p.94

MARCH 2018 | ISSUE 8

Drive & Camp

Camp boffin

*Keep your
water clean*

Off-roading in the
Vleesbaai dunes

DRIVING IMPRESSION

Are the
Kuga's claws
for climbing?

Unhitch in the
KRUGER

Camp at Skukuza, Pretoriuskop and Berg-en-Dal

The new **Merc G-Class**
What's changed?

WE TEST

- Armadillo Shack
- Fiat Fullback

Baboons Pass
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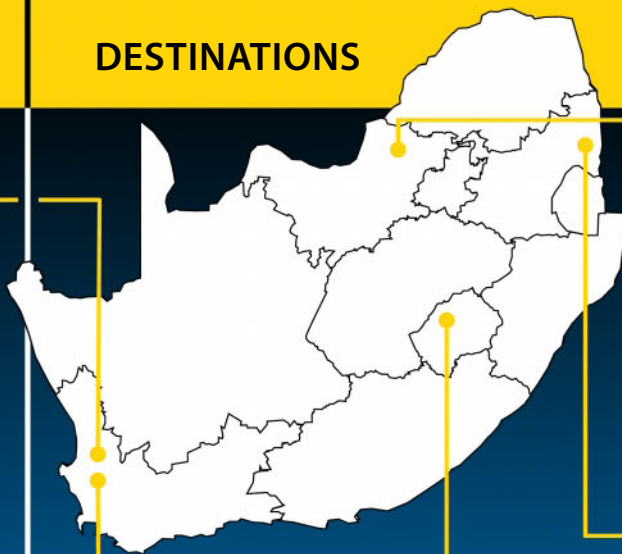


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Things are happening



This year really started with a bang, and that relaxing December holiday is nothing more than a distant memory.

Here at *go! Drive & Camp* we've been running around like blue-arsed flies the past few weeks. Kyle's family probably doesn't even remember what he looks like. The man went camping in Porterville for this month's Weekend Break, searched far and wide for gas braais to test for our Gear section, spent several hours on the phone to get tips for the Camp Boffin piece on storing water safely, and he had to write a feature about Baboons Pass in Lesotho.

Cyril had to cut his summer holiday with his family short to fly to a wintry Germany to check out the world's biggest travel and outdoor show, and in between he had to find out whether the Ford Kuga is a serious off-roader. And that's not even mentioning all the research he had to do for this month's 4x4 Professor.

Leon in turn had to take his family to the Kruger and show them the real meaning of heat, and he also had to make time to camp with the Armadillo Shack and tow with the Fiat Fullback.

But it's not only here that things are happening. Read our News section to see all the goings-on in the caravan industry. There are a few interesting months ahead and we will keep our fingers on the pulse to bring you all the latest info.

The bakkie is still moving along...

Just a quick note about the Bakkie Project. After we added everything from a bullbar to a steel rear bumper to the Mazda BT-50 (our long-term vehicle) we drove with it so much in the last two months that we didn't have time to take it for more upgrades. But in the coming weeks there is a gap and we agreed that most of the heavy things were done already.

We can therefore now continue to replace its suspension with a system that can carry all the additional weight. We're taking the bakkie in shortly and will tell you more about it next month.

Safe travels!

Schalk

EDITOR

schalk.jonker@media24.com

There's definitely a high attrition rate if conditions aren't favourable, and depending on the weather and condition of the road, those taking on the trail have to be prepared to take two days to finish the route as a precaution.

p.52



Cover photos Leon Botha (Kruger National Park and Franschhoek Pass)

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BREAK AFTER A ROUGH YEAR

Last year had more than its fair share of challenges, so we decided to escape from Port Elizabeth for a long weekend.

It was our first camping trip after a two-year hiatus. We weren't sure how to go about camping with our one-year-old daughter but we decided to give it our best shot. We packed everything but a baby changing table – just in case.

As soon as we arrived at Kudu Kaya, a camp retreat near Patensie, our senses picked up the smells of blooming flowers and the sound of water running over cobble stones in the river. It had an immediate calming effect on us.

We set up camp close to the river, on a wooden deck. The site was surrounded by river gravel. Our daughter was captivated by her surroundings and keen to start exploring. But she didn't like the feeling

of the gravel and stones under her knees while crawling. Needless to say, she decided her crawling days were over. It may have been either the gravel under her soft little knees or the fact that she wanted to step up a level on the food chain in the wild environment we found ourselves in.

We enjoyed the camp so much that we stayed an additional night (four nights in total).

Breaking away from the comforts of home has proven to be a brilliant way for us to relax as a family, and it's excellent for our baby's physical development too. Next time, though, we'll pack a bit lighter.

EUGENE, DIAAN AND IMMEKE NEL

Port Elizabeth



Winning letter

Eugene and Diaan win a go! Drive & Camp lunch bag cooler and a handy saddle bag worth R410. The cooler can comfortably hold a packed lunch and a 1,5-litre bottle in the main compartment, with extra space in the lid for a coffee flask.

The saddle bag fits over a gear lever (like a saddle) and is made from durable ripstop material. Keep your passports and important documents in a large pocket and store charger cables, keys or wet wipes in the smaller pockets.



TWO SIDES OF THE STORY...

SOME OBJECTIVITY, PLEASE

I refer to Mic van Zyl's column "Which bakkie for me?" in the January issue in which he explains how he decided on his choice of double cab bakkie.

I read Mic's columns carefully and I believe he's a specialist in his field. He focusses on being technically accurate and won't trip himself up with untruths – or, as he puts it, "there is an awful amount of misinformation out there". In this specific column Mic briefly compares the features of the bakkies he considered. You understand that it's an overview and not an in-depth analysis because the piece is about his experience buying a new vehicle. It will therefore reflect his own personal preferences to a certain degree.

You accept that Mic explains his choice and I accepted his opinion as objective... until the words "shockingly poor ride of the Hilux suspension". Is the suspension too hard or is it unsafe? Mic's use of the word "shocking" is too crass for someone who calls himself an objective columnist.

It reminds me of an Afrikaans motoring programme on TV that compares bakkies with each other. They did an in-depth comparison of the various bakkies, and if I remember correctly they weren't that unhappy with the Hilux's suspension.

Mic prefers the Ford Ranger and I don't have a problem with that. It's an excellent bakkie, but as someone who also represents a brand name in the 4x4 industry he needs to be objective as a columnist. His opinion can influence less-informed buyers.

Mic hits the nail on the head

I was so pleased when I read Mic van Zyl's letter in *go! Drive & Camp* #6 about the bakkie he ended up buying.

Like Mic, I am (or was) an avid Toyota fan. I've had the 3.0 d4d bakkie, the Land Cruiser 70" series, and now the 2.8 new double cab 4x4. Clearly, Mic has not used one of these on a long trip or else he would have noted more let-downs. Without a doubt it has the very worst suspension of any bakkie. In fact, I've had to install air max air balloons at the rear, because I tow a Conqueror Companion caravan. Trip 1 saw my electrics ripped out at the tow bar because of the way the tail drops. Toyota should also sell gas masks with each vehicle as standard equipment. You can't imagine

the dust. Toyota tried to fix the issue by removing the carpets and seats and sealing holes in the back panel and floor. I tried to explain to the factory rep that the dust comes in through the vents. Not so, says he. "Always leave the recirculating button on and presto, problem solved." They wish. It's as bad if not worse than before. And it's already had a factory mod done to the gearbox because of the struggle to shift in and out of fifth and sixth gear.

When I traded my Cruiser in for this vehicle I did so because it was a suicide mission trying to overtake while towing my caravan. Admittedly, the Hilux solved that problem. Its engine and comfort are excellent. Another huge

Which bakkie for me?

Bakkies from the seven mainstream manufacturers in South Africa are all great vehicles. They are, however, not all the same, says Mic van Zyl.

MIC'S MEMOS



That said, I hope Mic enjoys his Ranger for many worry-free kilometres through our beautiful country.

WILLEM VAN BRED A
Pretoria North

reason for selling the Cruiser was dust. I should rather have kept the dust from the Cruiser, which came in only through the back doors. I remember telling a friend that I would do a couple of trips before forming an opinion. Well, it's formed. This is a real bad attempt by Toyota. The mind boggles.

By the way, we have just completed a 9 500 km trip through Zambia. There are roads on the map that can't be considered roads. Especially up north. Anyway, this was about Mic's article and he has my sympathies. Ranger, here I come, when I can.

PETER EMMANUEL
Knysna >

ANITA'S STORY

All's well that ends well

You shouldn't measure the success of your camping holiday by how it started but rather by how it ended, says Anita Homann.

We've been camping for 20 years and in all that time we had never visited the beautiful Storms River Mouth Rest Camp. It was time to rectify the situation. We paid the deposit, bought a Wild Card, and started counting down the days.

At the end of winter we pulled the caravan out of the garage, spring cleaned it, and packed everything we needed. Everything was carefully ticked off a list, just to make sure that we didn't forget anything. We had recently bought mountain bikes. People say that cycling is good for you and an excellent way to de-stress.

To say I was extremely excited at the prospect of exploring the Tsitsikamma on my bike is putting it mildly. We even converted one of the caravan's cupboards into a space for our cycling gear.

The morning we left a hot Kimberley, all we had to do was load the bikes onto the carrier, hitch the caravan, and hit the road. **BUT THE HOLIDAY** started on a different note than we had planned. The bike carrier didn't fit onto the drop plate at the tow bar. I tried to convince my husband, Christo, that we had to make a plan with the bikes, but we've been married for 32

years and I knew what the answer was going to be. The bikes were either going to damage the caravan or the bakkie. Since it was a brand new Black Edition Hilux, the bikes were left behind.

If you're wondering why we didn't just load the bikes in the caravan, you



obviously don't know Christo. Everything inside the caravan is packed neatly. No loose items allowed. End of story!

There was an awkward silence between us as the wheels started turning towards the Garden Route. My mind was racing and the disappointment over the bikes still lingered. I was so excited about a week's worth of cycling in one of the most beautiful parts of our country, but my stubborn husband selfishly put an end to that plan.

While we were driving, I tried to hide all the emotions I felt, but the anger, hurt and disappointment welled up often.

We drove in silence in the Black Edition. Stupid bakkie, I thought. And stupid man. And stupid bike carrier.

WE STOPPED OUTSIDE Three Sisters at a farmstead and I ate a farm breakfast in silence. I'm an emotional eater. Christo told his best to make conversation, but his questions were answered by silence. Every attempt at explanation was ignored.

After a while I realised that it was probably time to clear the air. I didn't want our long-awaited holiday to kick off on such a sour note. What if we were involved in an accident? By the time we reached Outshoors, we'd started talking to each other again. Gradually we progressed from curt responses to complete sentences.

The other thing that had been bugging us since we left was the wind. It had been blowing non-stop all the

It became clear we would not be getting a break from the squall as we had hoped. But were we going to leave? No way!

way from Kimberley and was spoiling our towing experience. And it also appeared as if the new bakkie was extraordinarily thirsty.

We stayed over and by the time we hit the road the next day, all emotions were back in check, our weaknesses and sins confessed, and a new lead turned. But the wind didn't get the memo, and when we arrived in Storms River early afternoon, it was still howling. We stopped at a beautiful paved stand with the sea on our doorstep. All the campers around us also had beautiful sea views, and I thought to myself that if the wind didn't bother them then it surely wouldn't bother us.

IT WAS TIME to pitch the tent, and what a struggle it was. I clung desperately to the poles and ropes. It felt like the caravan and I were both about to blow into the stormy sea.

As he hammered in the pegs, Christo realised that the pegging stones were spaced too tightly and it was all but impossible to drive the storm pegs in between them. At every swear word a peg received a heavy blow – with little effect.

"Would you please control your anger? The neighbours are watching," I mumbled through a grimace. But the wind blew away my request and I watched helplessly as my husband exacted his pent-up anger over his demanding wife, the bikes, the wind and the bakkie's fuel consumption on the hammer and the hard, rocky ground.

Three hours later, the rally tent was pitched. It was a new record for us – the longest it had ever taken. Needless to say, we were dead tired and on our first evening at our dream destination we are in bed by eight. Christo had to swallow two pain pills for his aching wrists.

The relentless wind didn't subside for three days. Eventually we decided to

abandon the stand for one that offered more shelter. Our camping experiences up to this point had been positive, but with the fierce wind we were no longer loving it. The wind berided in a storm and it felt as if we were camping during a European winter. It was freezing, and we noticed that most of our neighbours had traded their caravans for wood cabins. It made us feel a bit better to see that others shared in our misery.

RETREATING was equally eventful. The neighbours had to help with the tent. We moved the caravan back about 50 m and again started the cumbersome process of pitching the tent. This time at least we were on grass and getting the pegs into the ground was a lot easier.

We went to bed early again, but the wind never tired. It became clear we would not be getting a break from the squall as we had hoped. But were we going to leave? No way! Christo and I both realised that we would have to adjust our expectations. Things weren't how we thought it would turn out, but that didn't mean we couldn't enjoy our holiday.

One cold, windy day Christo made a delicious paella and the next morning I threw some of the leftovers on the grass in front of us. A seagull came to partake and afterwards became a daily guest. Sometimes he hovered in the air before the wind allowed him to land, but he came every day. One late afternoon, while we were huddling underneath blankets looking out over the restless sea, the gull flew overhead to introduce his new girlfriend. I grabbed a camera and started taking pictures of their mating ritual. I became aware of the wonder of nature, of the love language of birds... and all thoughts of the weather faded.

My diary contains only positive remembrances, and as we headed home – on a beautiful sunny day, of course – I came to realise that even though there were a lot of disappointments, there were also many enjoyable moments which added a different dimension to a cold and windy camping trip.

We met interesting people (and birds) and our neighbours probably thought the same about us. Later I admitted that the bikes would have been unusable, and the new bakkie wasn't that heavy on fuel. It was just the wind.

WHAT CAMPING FRIENDS ARE FOR

I took a special interest in Anita Homann's column "All's well that ends well" in your January issue.

We too spent a couple of days at Storms River Mouth Rest Camp last year. This was part of a 5 000 km, two-week road trip.

We first arrived at Storms River one afternoon and went to our allocated campsite right next to the sea. The wind was howling and we realised that it would make things very unpleasant for us in our rooftop tent.

While deciding what to do, we noticed a couple with a caravan packing up and moving to a more protected area a little "inland". So we also moved "inland" and set up camp next to the couple with the caravan. And, as they were battling with the parachute-like rally tent, we went over and held it down for them.

When we chatted to the couple afterwards they told us they live in Kimberley, which is where I was born. The next day we watched seagulls eating some leftover food near our campsite and even saw two gulls mating. The couple next to us snapped some photos.

Anita and Christo, it was so nice to meet you guys and to camp next to you.

Our time in Storms River was awesome, despite the wind. We loved the walk to the suspension bridge and having a beer at the restaurant afterwards. The scenery in all directions is magnificent. The park is clean and staff are very hands-on. It's a highly recommended destination, but be prepared to be blown away – literally.

STEVE NUNS AND DELWYNNE SWARTZ
Roodepoort

Homeward bound (for now)

When times are tough and you have to swop holidays away with holidays closer to home, there is no excuse not to camp. And so we camp...

WILNA AND ULRICH JENSEN
Roodepoort



CAMPING FRIENDS GEORGE

Piet
082 461 8291

Emma
082 857 8341



SHARING IS CARING

We've been camping for almost 50 years and over time we've learned a lot about 4x4 driving and camping. I used to be a transport officer in the army and gained a lot of experience that way.

We drive a Land Cruiser bakkie with an Infanta Inkunzi at the back (its number plate reads "Kaspaas WP"). We prefer it to a caravan because we often drive on bad and sandy roads.

Often camp friends that you meet at campsites want to know where you're from and where you're going. Then you have to jot down names and numbers on pieces of paper. And it's often not long before the piece of paper goes missing.

We had a card with our details printed and we now hand this out instead. It also has a photo of Kaspaas on it. Camp friends can even phone us if they want advice on anything.

We suggest other campers do the same. It's a good way to make friends and support each other when you're in trouble. We keep the cards in Kaspaas and store it between our *go! Drive & Camp* magazines.

PIET AND EMMA DYZEL

George

QUICK WARM-UP

I'd like to add my two cents regarding one of Mic van Zyl's earlier columns where he explains what is good for your engine before you pull away.

The argument for letting your engine warm up before driving stems from years ago when this was the prevailing wisdom. (*Mic says to wait for 15 seconds after starting your car before driving and then getting going slowly. – Ed*) Today we know that the engine oil reaches its optimal protective role at 82 °C, and it's best to reach this temperature as quickly as possible.

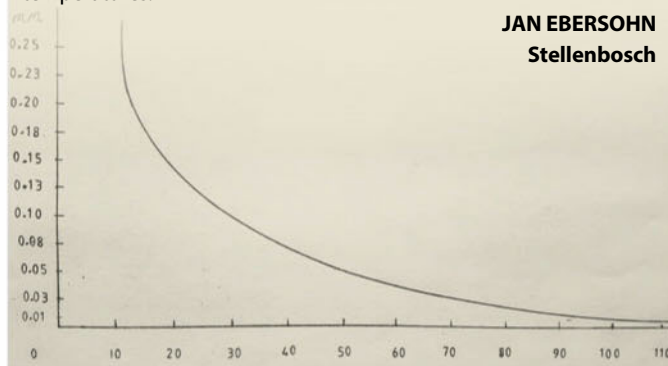
Because not all the diesel ignites when you switch on a cold engine, some of it runs past the cylinder and thins the oil viscosity, which in turn causes increased wear and tear.

Diesel engines operate on the compression ignition principle. Take for example a large 500 kVA generator's engine: It has built-in heaters that keep the liquids in the engine warm for when you switch it on. Once started, the engine revs up immediately.

For the least amount of wear and tear you should accelerate gradually after starting the car until the engine is hot.

On the graph below you can see the wear and tear measured against the temperature. Wear and tear is therefore less at higher temperatures.

JAN EBERSOHN
Stellenbosch



We were there too!

When we recently paged through the December 2017 issue of *go! Drive & Camp*, we were pleasantly surprised to see a photograph (page 47) of our annual family camping trip at Augrabies Falls included in your article "Northern Cape calling".

We feel truly honoured to be featured in your article. We remember that day clearly as the rain was a welcome relief from the heat and the gnats. Unfortunately we too did not come prepared with mosquito nets.

Our trip to Augrabies Falls was a memorable one and has been made even more unforgettable by your article. Your article, along with the photograph, shall be cherished by our 15-member family camping group for many years to come. Thank you for affording us this opportunity.

Wishing you many more happy camping trips.

Tina Hermanus
Cape Town

Petrol or diesel?



Does the difference between petrol and diesel engines play a role when you're choosing your new set of wheels?



Danie Joubert

I enjoy the torque of a diesel engine, but some of them feel like you first have to use an inhaler before they properly come alive. The secret is to regularly service your diesel engine and to look for the best price before filling up at the pumps. And always take an extra diesel filter where ever you're going, especially if it's to remote areas.



Roelof Basson

A car with a diesel engine sounds and smokes like a tractor.



Delray Delpont

I prefer a diesel engine. My first car was a diesel and I'm crazy about that distinctive sound.



Piet Botha

I first had a Renault Scenic 1.9 dCi and then changed to a petrol engine when I bought the Renault Koleos 2.5. This was quickly exchanged for a Renault Scenic III 1.6 diesel model. Petrol models are "weaker" and the fuel consumption higher.



Trevor Mathews

I travel a lot for work and usually tow with a heavily loaded vehicle. I drive a Land Cruiser 76 and the torque of its diesel engine is incredible and perfect for my purposes.



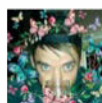
Gert Venter

Even though my Isuzu sounds like a tractor, I won't tow with a petrol engine again. We tow with an Isuzu KB250 and VW Caddy 2.0 TDI. I must say, they don't smoke as much as Fords and Toyotas and they tow without any problems.



Coenie Stoltz

I'd choose a diesel engine over a petrol engine for towing. I don't agree with Roelof; we're in 2018 and diesel bakkies don't smoke and definitely don't sound like a tractor. I'd say diesel is best.



Cathy Kettlewell

I have a diesel Polo and its fuel consumption is fantastic.



Ernie Fourie

My E-Class Mercedes-Benz has a 2,7 l diesel engine and my Honda CR-V a petrol engine. The Honda is significantly heavier on fuel and more expensive to service. The best I've ever done with it was 7,1 l/100 km while the Mercedes quickly drops to 5,4 l/100 km on the open road.



Mike Botha

There's just one for me and that is petrol.



Arries Viljoen

I removed my Prado's petrol V6 engine and replaced it with a Lexus 4.0 V8 petrol. Sure, I might not have the torque of those strong diesel engines but if you know how to use the revs it's just as good.

COMMENT OF THE MONTH!

(The air out there)

Thomas Lehman

The article is fake news. BF's don't go flat.



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- Wash basin and drying rack
- *Fire Extinguisher
- Fold down counter
- 100kg Fridge slider
- *40-90 Litre fridge/freezer
- *Cooker wind deflector
- Microwave

- Chassis**
- Vehicle standard with adaptor
- Wheels & Suspension**
- Vehicle standard
- Storage**
- 4x Underbody storage boxes

- Specifications**
- Overall Width: 1850mm
- Overall Length: 2700mm
- Overall Height: 2160
- Overall Weight: 590kg

- Electronics**
- EPP3 Mk1 (power panel)
- 12 Volt system
- 12 Volt pressure pump
- 74 Amp Hour
- *Solar panel and mounting
- *220 Volt extension cable 20m
- *220 Volt caravan adaptor

- Body**
- Fibre glass monocoque outer shell
- Colour impregnated
- Corrosion free body
- Stainless steel bolts, nuts & hinges
- Load area tie down rails
- Automotive style door rubbers
- Industrial interior carpeting
- Rain gutters
- Manoeuvring handles
- Mud flaps

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Know the dangers

Organisations in charge of wilderness areas where potentially dangerous animals can roam freely into camping areas should do more to educate visitors, says Mic van Zyl.

I have just returned from a long weekend break at a private lodge in the Madikwe Game Reserve.

Sadly, we didn't do any four-wheel driving, but it was a good break nonetheless.

We went on a few early-morning and afternoon game drives, and our game ranger was in constant radio contact with all of the other vehicles. This resulted in a couple of great sightings. It really is marvellous to be spoilt once in a while.

I am not really into the whole walking and hiking thing. I did my fair share back in the day dressed in "Browns" and carrying a rifle and a backpack. However, mid-life is upon me and with

much encouragement from my lovely wife I am exploring avenues of enhanced fitness and health. So when the option to do an early-

morning game walk rather than a drive presented itself, I gave it a try.

We walked for around three hours and covered a number of kilometres. The distance covered was recorded by a watch-like device worn by a colleague. It recorded the amount of steps that she took on the walk and it was fascinating. I realised while walking though that she was the shortest person in the group taking the shortest steps.

THE JURY IS STILL OUT on how far we actually walked. There were six of us plus a ranger carrying a large rifle and a handful of rounds. The previous evening we had spotted a number of animals in the area that could potentially spoil our day. Slow, tasty human on foot had to be on the menu.

That's the theory that was milling in my head anyway. I must state though that at no point did I feel in any danger and I had total confidence in the knowledge and abilities of Dave, our ranger and guide. Notwithstanding his thorough briefing on the dos and don'ts should the lions or rhinos take too much of an interest in us, I found myself always scoping out the surroundings for the biggest tree should things become exciting. I was certain that I was not the slowest in the group.

This experience made me realise how fortunate we are here in Africa to be able to get close to wild and potentially dangerous nature. Not only is it thrilling, but I am in constant awe of nature both big and small and it presents great photographic material for this budding amateur.

Sometimes, however, things can go wrong. Spare a thought for the very unfortunate couple who recently had a horrific encounter with a leopard in the Kgalagadi. I cannot imagine the absolute horror of the encounter and I sincerely hope that the lady fully recovers. I am not going to add to the deluge of comments about what these people did or did not do or about the actions of the leopard leading up to the attack.

WILD ANIMALS DON'T

FOLLOW a book of rules. They are wild, act mostly on instinct, and are unpredictable. An old or wounded predator or worse, one that has been fed by humans, will certainly go for an easy, out-of-the-ordinary meal.

I am surprised that there are not many more such incidents happening with the increase in the amount of people visiting these areas.

I do feel that the organisations in charge of these wilderness areas, especially those that have potentially dangerous animals that can roam freely into unfenced camping areas, should do a lot more to educate and assist the visitors to these areas. I do not think that the people involved in the incident were stupid or acted carelessly. I think they were inexperienced and ill-informed about where they were and what the potential dangers are.

Personally I would not sleep in a ground tent, nylon or canvas, in an area where lions, leopards, hyenas, hippos and elephants roam free. It's a roof-top tent for me every time.

It's called the "Wild" for good reason. Stay safe. 🐾

Sometimes, however, things can go wrong. Spare a thought for the very unfortunate couple who recently had a horrific encounter with a leopard in the Kgalagadi.

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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Where was Frank Seekoei?

Caravan builders used to take pride in their work.
Are those days over? asks Neels van Heerden.

A sign in my 1992 model Jurgens Wimpi proudly states that this specific caravan – which years ago cost R20 000 – was built under the personal supervision of someone named Frank Seekoei.

This past December holiday I bumped into one of my camping acquaintances on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast. For many years he looked after his beloved 2003 model Exclusive like it was his baby, but in October last year he traded it in on a whim for a modern luxury caravan that cost him R400 000.

The general consensus was that no one was going to trade their older caravans for a newer range any time soon.

The pleasantries were not even out of the way when he forced a beer in my hand and started telling me about the new caravan. Someone named it "Blink Stefaans" because of the poor workmanship and the struggle with the manufacturer and dealer. Apparently the dealer refused responsibility for any issues because according to him he only sells the vehicles. He then told my friend to contact the factory directly.

Blink Stefaans was riddled with problems. Since October no fewer than 30 factory faults were fixed and the finishes inside are equally questionable. Hinges were fitted skew causing the doors to warp.

The manufacturer's technical team even had to drive all the way to Rustenburg to fix the issues. The hinges' short screws were replaced with longer ones; the inside light didn't want to switch off; the outside tap was stuck; the factory forgot to put in shelves; the containers for the crockery weren't installed; the shower floor wasn't sealed; and the spare wheel came undone.

My friend is still waiting for the caravan's manual.

THE BIGGEST HEADACHE, however, is the water system that apparently was put in back to front – when you connect the water supply the water tank drains. The factory eventually had to replace dozens of systems. With the first camp weekend at the end of last year the water system almost burst open. When the technical team performed follow-up maintenance they had to replace the whole system and that's when they realised that the non-return valve was installed incorrectly.

After the repairs my friend was hopeful of a December holiday without any troubles. But he hadn't even parked his car in the campsite when his neighbour on a higher terrace called to him and showed him how terrible Blink

Stefaans' roof looked. The factory taped the roof seams with fabric and paint – the kind you use to seal seams on corrugated roofs – and here and there it was already coming apart.

It wasn't long before Blink Stefaans was the main attraction in the campsite, with people coming from all over to witness the spectacle. People expressed their surprise and wondered whether the factory lost the plot. The general consensus was that no one was going to trade in their older caravans for a newer range any time soon.

SOME OF THE LEADING caravan manufacturers in Europe have a philosophy that less than a quarter of bad products are due to mistakes on the factory floor. The biggest section of the blame can be attributed to poor process management.

Of course, everyone on the factory floor should have good technical skills, but the end result – the caravan on the dealer's floor – is not the place to pick up errors for the first time. The entire production process contributes to poor quality in terms of finishes and performance. By only focussing on targets, short cuts are usually taken.

Maintenance to machines on the factory floor is kept to a bare minimum and staff don't do courses to improve their skills.

I wonder where Frank Seekoei was when Blink Stefaans was put together.



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Jurgens Ci heavyweight now at Conqueror

Clive Cox, one of the most experienced caravan designers in the country, has joined Conqueror. He was previously at Jurgens Ci where he was involved with development and design.

Conqueror, which focusses mainly on off-road caravans and trailers, has recently launched a new caravan project.

Clive was appointed as head of product development and will now be responsible for Conqueror's standard caravans. Conqueror has been working on its ordinary caravan model, the Roadster, for the past year or two and launched the prototype at the end of last year.

They're also planning to build a light Roadster that you can tow with a code 8 licence

(meaning a GVM of less than 750 kg).

During his stint at Jurgens Ci more than 20 000 caravans were built in the Jurgens factory. Clive also redesigned and refreshed the company's entire range, including brand names like Gypsy, Sprite, Safari and Jurgens itself.

"I am incredibly excited about the light caravan project that lies ahead and I already have quite a few ideas.

"Caravans in this weight class are a huge challenge: There needs to be a balance between the technology, building material, and retail price. Remember, lighter means smaller and therefore cheaper."

Clive studied mechanical engineering before entering the world of caravans.

A BUS AND A HALF

Mercedes-Benz announced at the 2018 CMT fair that it will start selling the popular Sprinter panel van in three forms: The complete panel van, a stripped-down ladder frame chassis with a cabin, and a cabin without a ladder-frame chassis with only front wheels, an engine, gearbox and related controls. This will allow motorhome manufacturers to bolt their own structures onto the "tractor" without paying for

a body they won't be using.

The three different variations will be launched in South Africa in 2019 and should be popular with local coach builders who want their own customised vehicles. All the Sprinters will be available in front-wheel drive, which reduces guesswork regarding the mechanics. Rear-wheel drive is also available but only if you're buying the complete Sprinter or the bare chassis-and-cab. >



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LAND ROVER: FIRST...

Land Rover's first prototype, the Huey, drove out of the workshop on 11 March 1948 and you can still have a look at it in the British Motor Museum in Gaydon, England.

A total of 48 prototypes were built, the third one (chassis #3) being sent to the 1948 Amsterdam Motor Show.

After the show, #3 was sold and it had quite a few owners before disappearing without

a trace in 1988. In 2016, a deteriorating #3 was spotted in someone's garden and Land Rover bought back the wreck.

Restorers will repair and replace #3's mechanical parts in this year, but unlike Huey, #3 won't be fully restored. The oxidation on the aluminium and steel will be arrested and the patina and paintwork will be left undisturbed.



... AND 'LAST'

Land Rover has quite a few irons in the fire this year. Aside from the restoration of #3, they are also celebrating their 70th birthday with a special (and final) **Works V8** version of the Defender 90.

Owners who bought the "final" Heritage Edition Defender will probably be livid to find out that their vehicle is in fact not the promised swansong. South Africans will struggle to get their hands on the Works V8 though

because it will only be available in the UK, North America and the Middle East, and only 150 units will be built.

You are, of course, welcome to contact Land Rover UK directly and arrange special shipment, but it's going to cost a pretty penny and there is no guarantee that this version is going to the last of its kind – in a few months

another final version might rear its head again. (*Almost like the Springbok Nude Girls who have a farewell concert every two years.* – Ed)

And finally there's the brand new Defender that should be launched at the end of 2018. But as we've come to learn, it's best not to hold your breath until the new Landie actually appears. >



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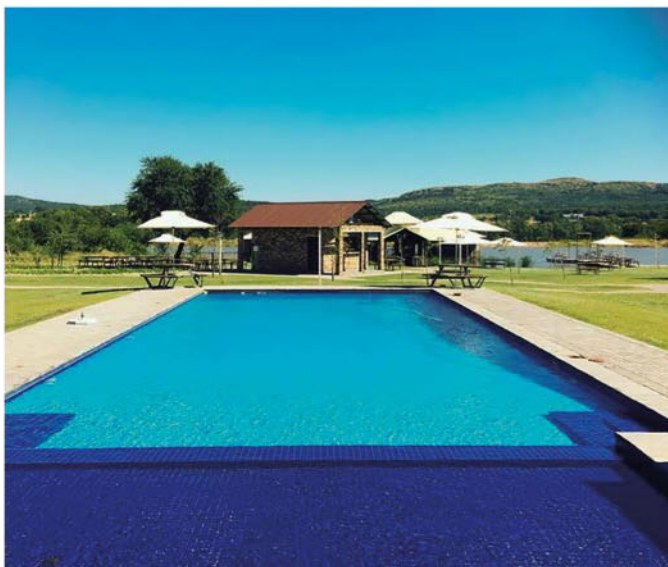


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A new campsite on the Vaal

Campsites next to the Vaal are sought-after, and in and around Parys there are quite a few good examples. The Casa Cara Lodge has joined the party with new stands that include private ablution facilities.

Casa Cara is 7 km outside Parys in the direction of Sasolburg and also focusses on events like weddings.

There is a restaurant plus chalets and self-catering units. The 13 stands are new and next to the water. Each stand has paving, a braai and power socket as well as a shower and toilet in your bathroom.

The stands line the riverbank and each has a clearing from

where you can fish. If you want to test your abilities with the rod before tackling the river there's a small dam close to the restaurant where you'll catch carp and catfish (but you have to release them).

The kiddies play area is near the main buildings (and pool) and campers are welcome to come relax here.

Price R350 p.n. per stand for 4 people (Sundays to Thursdays); R450 over weekends. Additional campers will cost R60 and R80 p.p. respectively.

Contact 056 817 1251 or 083 554 9204

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It's show time

We attended the world's largest outdoor trade fair, the CMT in Stuttgart, Germany. It was interesting to see how the European camping culture differs from South Africa's – there were mainly motorhomes and surprisingly few caravans. Off-road caravans or trailers were totally absent. The closest we found was the odd truck camper.

Our own Alu Cab had a stall at the exhibition where they showcased their campers.

Europeans who yearn to travel through Africa or around the world did have dozens of

Unimogs and four-wheel drive Ivecos to choose from.

Another trend that's taking hold abroad is delivery vans – so-called white vans – that are converted into motorhomes. It's popular amongst the younger crowd who don't have the cash or a heavy motor vehicle licence for a big motorhome. Vans like the Volkswagen Kombi and Mercedes's V-Class Marco Polo are popular amongst weekend campers and adventure sport enthusiasts.

The CMT fair is held every January in Stuttgart. Make a turn if you're in the vicinity. >



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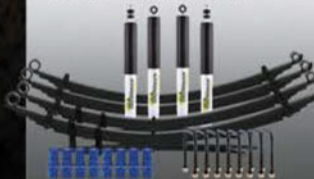
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Poor sales in December

Significantly fewer new vehicles were sold in December 2017 than in the corresponding period in 2016 – 1 008 less, to be exact. And, 1 333 fewer new vehicles were exported.

NAAMSA attributes the drop in sales to consumers choosing to wait for new generation vehicles – like the brand new VW Polo.

Sales over the December period was also lower than in November because consumers would rather wait to register their vehicles in the new year to increase resale value.

Toyota's top seller in December 2017 was the Hilux (3 382 units), which is also the most popular vehicle in the country. A total of 1 108 Fortuners found a new home while Toyota managed to swing only 7 FJ Cruisers.

Ford's big money maker was the Ranger, with 2 681 units sold, and its runner-up was the Ecosport, with sales of 892. Of the Kuga only 66 were sold.

Volkswagen's Polo was their best seller, but in terms of SUVs and bakkies only 432 Tiguans, 315 Amaroks and 17 Touaregs were sold. Audi's most popular Q-model was the Q3 with sales of 125, and the least popular Q was the Q7 with only 31 sales.

Nissan sold 869 NP300s but the near immortal Hardbody could only reach 95 versus 260 Navaras that drove off the showroom floor. The X-Trail didn't do too badly at all: A total of 231 units were sold.

Land Rover's new Discovery and Range Rover Sport sold 94 and 93 units respectively while the well-heeled preferred the new Range Rover Velar (68) over the Jaguar F-Pace (48).

Another surprise was Alfa's Stelvio that sold 11 units. It might not sound like a lot but it's more than all of Alfa's other vehicles put together.

BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Porsche didn't supply their individual model figures, which is why we're unable to determine how many X-Series, G-Class and Cayennes found new homes.

The stragglers were Jeep's Cherokee, of which only five were sold; Suzuki could only field four Grand Vitaras; three Fiat Pandas were sold; two people bought Chev Trailblazers (*Didn't these two read the papers? – Ed*) and only one person was interested in the Volve V90 Cross Country.

January is bound to look much better because it's traditionally a month in which people buy new vehicles. >

NEW VEHICLE SALES AND EXPORTS DECEMBER 2017

	Local	Export
Toyota	9 958	3 880
Ford	5 431	2 558
Volkswagen group	5 343	0
Nissan	4 004	428
Hyundai	2 336	0
Renault	2 184	0
Mercedes-Benz	1 725	7 934
KIA	1 618	0
GM-Isuzu	1 379	231
BMW	1 372	2 130
Mazda	1 168	0
Suzuki	742	0
Jaguar-Land Rover	506	0
Honda	499	52
Mahindra	280	0
GWM	209	0
Mitsubishi	157	13
Tata	154	0
Porsche	152	0
Volvo	139	1
Chrysler	124	53
Fiat	120	53
Peugeot-Citroën	108	0
Subaru	67	0
Maserati	18	0
Bentley	7	0

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A NEW HEAD HONCHO AT AL-KO

After six years as managing director at AL-KO Trailco, Ralf Dreithaler is handing over the reins to Walter Mech.

Ralf is returning to Germany where he'll be joining the company's commercial sales team.

Walter was the head of Garmin in South Africa for the past 10 years and is now heading to Vereeniging, to AL-KO's South African head office. AL-KO is one of the



biggest suppliers of caravan parts in the country.

Jaguar E-Pace: models and prices

Jaguar recently announced the model range and prices for its upcoming E-Pace. There will be a total of 38 variants of this vehicle, all with four-wheel drive and a 2 l engine. Petrol and diesel versions will be available.

Jaguar will offer the E-Pace in four trim levels: Base, S, SE and HSE. Then there's also a so-called Special Edition that will be available on request and only during the first year of sales.

The cheapest E-Pace (2.0 diesel D150 Base) will start

at R598 500 and go up to R851 600 if you want a First Edition diesel model. The petrol version kicks off at R667 800 and its First Edition version costs R895 700.

The E-Pace will be launched in South Africa on 18 March of this year.



RENT OUT YOUR CAMPING GEAR

The modern trend to rent rather than buy is becoming increasingly popular.

If, for example, you can't pay the bond on a spot by the sea you can join Airbnb and rent a beach house anywhere in the world – and you can rent out your home to other travellers.

At GoGet you can rent camping equipment like backpacks, tents and bikes.

After registering on the website you can search for equipment near your holiday destination, contact the owner of said equipment, and then

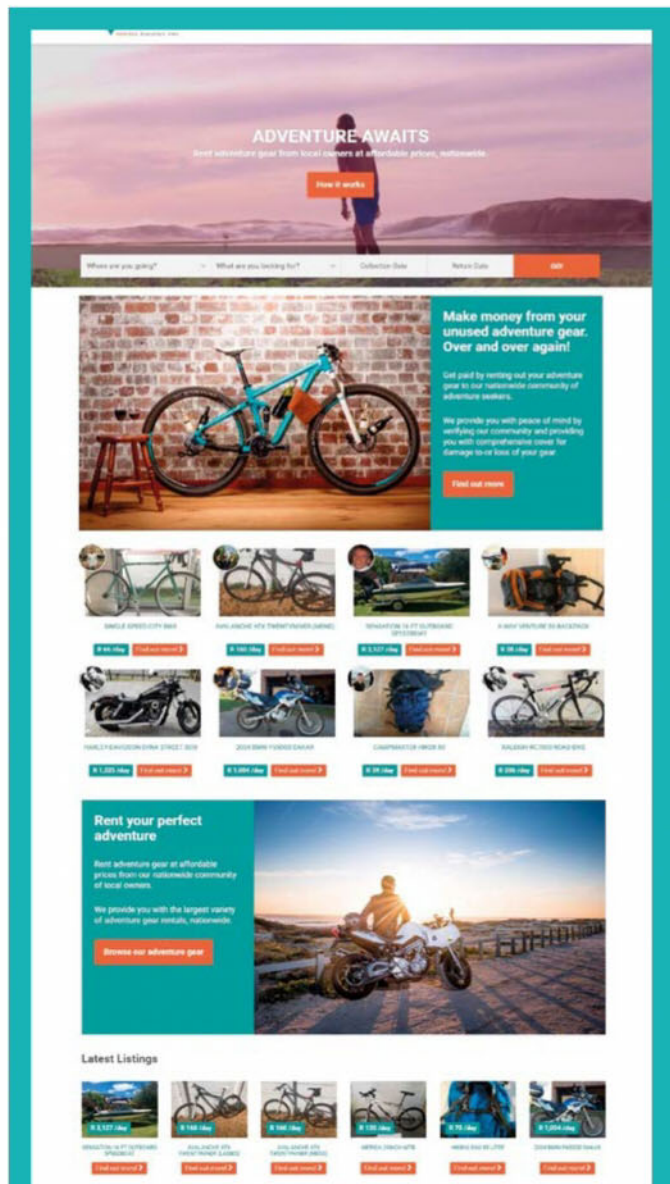
pick it up when you arrive. Payment is done via the website, which means you don't have to hand over cash.

At the time of going to print you could rent a bicycle in Langebaan for R120 per day and use some guy's speedboat in Harrismith for R3 200 per day.

As soon as you're registered you can also rent out your own equipment while you're not using it.

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The Ranger returns to the States

It's a fact: Americans like big bakkies. Take, for example, the giant Dodge Ram and Ford F150 that are considered full-size bakkies. Smaller – or medium – bakkies like the Toyota Tacoma and Chevrolet Colorado's popularity are, however, steadily growing.

Ford's Wayne plant in Michigan will be manufacturing the Ranger for the US, and although it's based on the Ranger that we know so well, there will be important differences and the model will be unique to America.

The American turbocharged 2,3 l engine will get a 10-speed auto transmission. Ford hasn't revealed stats like fuel consumption and towing capacity but it probably won't be vastly different to our own.

Why is this news? Because the Yanks will be using technology like reverse sensors for the bakkie and the trailer, pedestrian detection and autonomous brakes. These gadgets could make their way to our Ranger and we can also expect a slew of new accessories like bullbars, roll bars, etc.



Invading the market

Cape-based off-road caravan manufacturer Invader has expanded its dealer network with no fewer than five outlets across the country.

Invader has offices in Cape Town and Pretoria, and five of the bigger caravan dealers in the country will now also be stocking their caravans:

Cara-Camp Caravan & Outdoor Centre (Somerset West), CampGuru (Kempton Park), Natal Caravans & Marine (Pinetown), Loftus Caravan

City (Randburg) and Pretoria Caravans.

Both Invader's off-road caravan models, the Duo and Quattor, will be available and the dealers will also sell parts and service the vehicles.

"We're currently building 6–7 units a month, but with the new stores that have been added we're increasing that figure to 20," says Dan-Pierre Louw, Invader's executive head. The company has also doubled its staff in the last year.

• While Invader is girding for bigger things, Quintus Lategan has joined the company to see to marketing and sales.

Quintus was the MD of Jurgens Ci after Imperial sold it to Paul Kyriacou.

Contact 0861 468 2337 or 082 781 3977 invader.co.za

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Pondoland paradise

When the great African coastline was formed one part of it was left rugged, wild and untamed. This section of our coastline has known many names and was the birth place of one of the greatest tribes in all Africa: the Xhosa. The Xhosa of this part of the Wild Coast are known as the Pondos.



ADVENTURE ITINERARY

DAY 1

We meet in outskirts of the town of Lusikisiki (an hour's drive from Port St Johns or Kokstad) early afternoon and then proceed to our first lodge on the Mbotyi River where we will spend the next two nights.

Mbotyi River Lodge is a nature lover's paradise and the perfect place for relaxing away from the everyday stresses of life.

The Lodge has an extensive range of facilities that include a swimming pool, mountain bikes, canoes and a multitude of sunny decks for relaxing.

DAY 2

After early-morning coffee and rusks there will be a little free time to walk along the beach or go for a paddle on the magnificent Mbotyi Estuary.

Our day trip, with a picnic lunch en route, will take us to a Cape Vulture colony (the rarest vultures in Africa) of over 170 birds nesting on cliffs of a magnificent gorge. We then head on to the meandering jeep tracks that will take us along the coastline. We will only be using existing legal tracks and never drive along the beach. We will visit the wreck site of the *Grosvenor* and get some insight into the unbelievable treasure-hunting tactics that people have attempted over the years to get to her alleged secret treasure.

We return to the lodge in the late afternoon in time for a beach sundowner before dinner and bed.

DAY 3

We pack up after breakfast.
Our route for the



day, which leads to our next hotel, will take us through the local tea plantations and past some awe-inspiring waterfalls. We will also visit a World War II airstrip and bunker complex used by airmen to bomb German U-boats off the coast.

Our hotel for the next two nights is the Ocean View Hotel in Coffee Bay, right on the beach. Accommodation at Ocean View is characterised by light airy rooms overlooking spectacular beaches and sea views. All the rooms are comfortably furnished and have en-suite bathrooms.

After check-in there is time for a late afternoon beach walk or a cast or two.

DAY 4

After a hearty breakfast we once again pack the vehicles for a day trip that takes us to one of the unspoilt estuaries in the area and a visit to the famous and awe-inspiring Hole-in-the-Wall rock.

DAY 5

After breakfast we say our goodbyes and you have an hour long drive to reach the N2 just west of Umthatha.

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DATES 6–10 May 2018

11–15 May 2018

COST: R 7 850 per person (half price for children under 10)

THE ADVENTURE

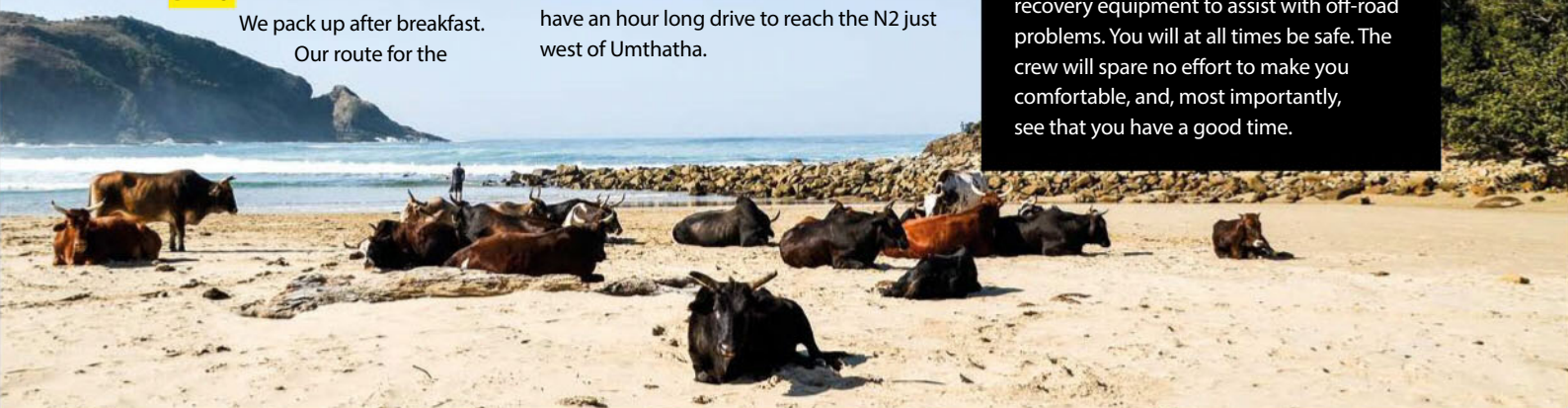
For 300 years the Xhosa have been the custodians of this gem in our country, living in their little beehive huts that dot this green, pastoral landscape. The area is still very rural, traditional, with a very basic road network. It is on these roads, and many kilometres of legal jeep tracks, that we will explore the rugged coastline, shipwrecks, pristine estuaries and crystal waterfalls.

The whole area lends itself to safe walking, mountain biking and wonderful fishing, so bring your toys along as there is time during the tour for these environmentally friendly and fun activities. We will stay at Mbotyi River Lodge and the Ocean View Hotel while on our adventure.

THE TEAM

Your tour leader is an experienced nature conservationist and adventure guide. He will be in radio contact with you at all times and impart a wealth of biological, cultural, historic and four-wheel drive knowledge.

This is not a very "technical" 4x4 trip, but should you experience any difficulty, the Bhejane crew do have the know-how and recovery equipment to assist with off-road problems. You will at all times be safe. The crew will spare no effort to make you comfortable, and, most importantly, see that you have a good time.



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G-force

Mercedes-Benz's Geländewagen has been left virtually unchanged for 39 years, as its supporters like it. But alas, a new G-Class is on its way.

Text Cyril Kloppe

The story began with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last Shah of Iran, who approached Daimler-Benz to conceptualise a military vehicle for his army. Development started in 1972 with a focus on off-road driving abilities and comfort.

Daimler-Benz's engineers in Stuttgart saw to the design while Steyr-Daimler-Puch in Austria built the prototype.

A hand-built Geländewagen was completed in 1974 and was tested in German coalfields, the Sahara Desert, and the Arctic Circle.

In 1975 a completed product was presented to the shah, and the first consignment was supposed to ship to Iran in 1979 but shortly before the delivery

date Ayatollah Khomeini put paid to the shah's plans...

What do we have here?

The shah's loss was our gain. Because the Geländewagen lost its primary client it was offered to the public and it wasn't long before 4x4 enthusiasts heaped praises on the vehicle. The main goal behind the new G-Class (we don't call it the Geländewagen anymore) was to continue building on its predecessor's off-road abilities.

It's an unusual objective as there was nothing wrong with the Geländewagen's abilities. The old-school ladder frame chassis remains but has been improved, and the three diff locks are still there as well as low-range gears if things get hairy.

The new G-Class can climb a 45° slope,



the ground clearance has been increased by 6 mm to 241 mm, and the fording depth is now 70 mm – 10 mm more than before. Its tilt angle is now 35° (7° more) and its approach/departure angle is 1° more – 31° and 30° respectively. It therefore looks like Mercedes succeeded

in making the G-Class even more competent than its predecessor.

The exterior

At first glance it doesn't seem like they made many changes to the bodywork. It remains boxy, the front indicators still sit on top of the fenders, the side

MERCEDES-BENZ G-CLASS





The main goal behind the new G-Class was to continue building on its predecessor's off-road abilities.

windows are huge, and the door hinges are clearly visible. The bodywork, however, is actually brand new, although you really have to look closely to see the differences. The biggest changes are perhaps the headlamps and brake lights that now look thoroughly modern.

The body is 53 mm longer and 121 mm wider than before, which is welcome news for occupants since it affects leg and elbow room.

Underneath

Things might look familiar from the outside but underneath Mercedes really went to town on the G-Class. The circulating ball steering has been replaced with a rack-and-pinion setup. It should stabilise the handling on highways and allow precise steering input on technical terrain.

The transfer case is bolted directly to the nine-speed automatic transmission and 40% of the power is sent to the front and 60% to the rear wheels in normal driving conditions.

The front live axle with coil springs and control arms have been replaced with an independent wishbone suspension

but they've kept the rear live axle. The front struts are attached directly to the ladder-frame chassis, and apparently allows for more articulation than before.

The rear axle has been raised a few millimetres to slightly improve ground clearance and is kept in place by four control arms as well as a Panhard rod to stabilise the suspension.

The G500 model is powered by Mercedes's newest M176 4 l twin turbo V8, but a G63 model will also be available.

The G-Class offers five driving modes: Comfort, Sport, Eco, Individual and G-Mode. The modes control the suspension, engine revs, steering action, fuel injection and air flow, just like its GLC and GLE cousins. G-Mode, however, takes matters further and also controls the low-range transmission.

By the way: You can switch from high to low range on the fly as long as you keep the speed below 40 km/h.

The interior

There are grab handles above each door that passengers can hold on to if the driver gets a bit carried away. The upholstery is

beyond neat and is reminiscent of the S-Class's interior.

The gear lever is gone and has been replaced with a stalk on the steering wheel with which you control the automatic transmission.

The handbrake lever has also been removed and replaced with an electronic brake button on the dashboard. Because the levers are gone there are now cup holders neatly concealed beneath a lid.

As before there are three large knobs in the centre console – each engages one of the three diff locks. The remaining buttons on the panel are lifted from the E- and S-Class.

The speedometer and tachometer in the dashboard

are digital displays and you can change their appearance. On offer are three designs: Classic, Sport and Progressive. Other info includes height above sea level, compass direction, tilt angle, climb angle, and which diff locks are engaged.

Conclusion

Nearly all car manufacturers are dialling back on the ruggedness of their off-roaders, citing owners not using the 4x4 abilities as an excuse. Mercedes's G-Class rejects this pretext and is a vehicle that will satisfy its fans in terms of appearance and off-road ability.

We're keeping an eye on Land Rover to see if they will follow suit with the new Defender.



SPECIFICATIONS

Model G500

Engine 4 l twin turbo V8

Power 350 kW

Torque 700 Nm

Transmission 9-speed automatic

Gear ratio 1:0 (high range) and 2:93 (low range)

Ground clearance 241 mm

Fording depth 700 mm

Lean-over angle 35°

Climb ability 45°

Approach/departure angle 30° and 31°

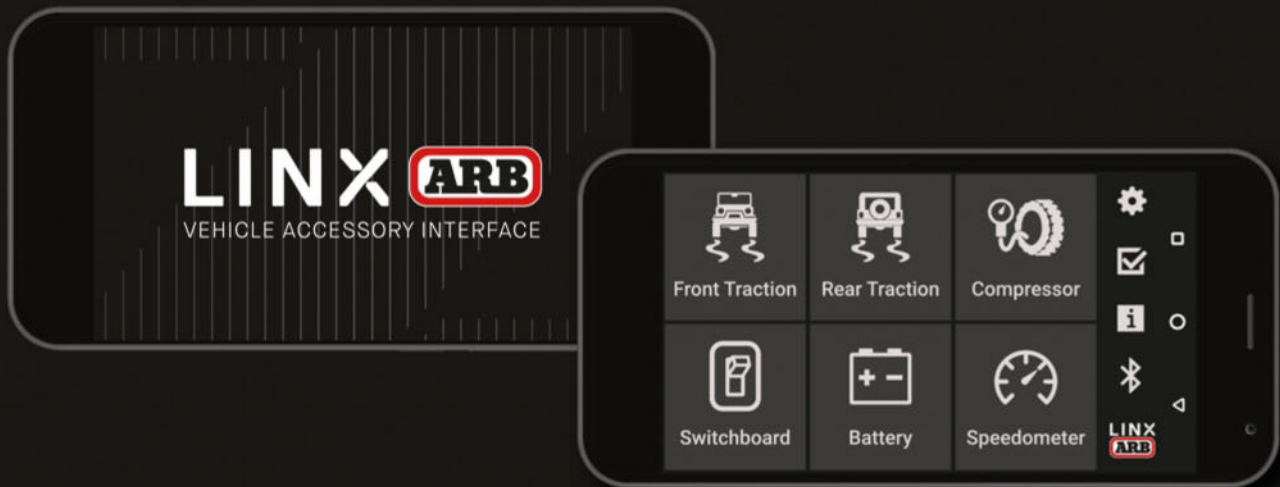


BACK TO THE FUTURE. Mercedes ditched the floating touch screen and integrated it into the dashboard instead. Nice. The tail lights lend a modern look to the retro body.

PRICES

At the time of going to print, Daimler had not yet released prices. Our guess is that you'll need to have almost as much dough as Christo Wiese or Johann Rupert to be able to afford a G-Class.

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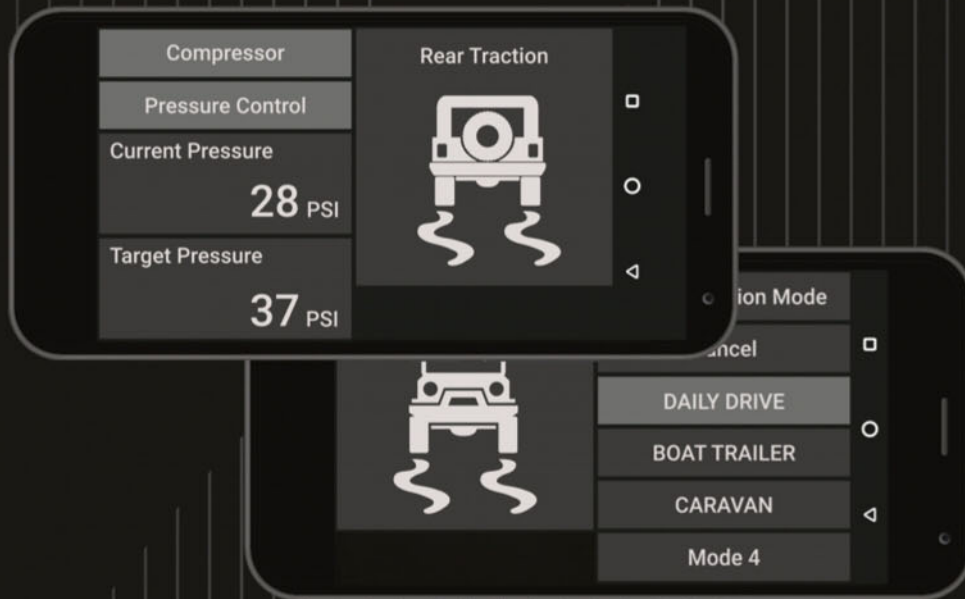


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Mum's (not) the word

Most Ford Kugas serve as kid or grocery transporters, but Cyril Kloppe did some rock-hopping with a Kuga to see how far you can push the all-wheel-drive version.



FORD KUGA 2.0 AWD

Every off-roader has a niche where it makes its mark. The Jeep Wrangler is the king of rocks, the Nissan Patrol is master in the Sahara, and the Toyota Fortuner is a jack of all trades. The Ford Kuga isn't as tough as the Fortuner – that's a job for big brother, the Everest – but the Kuga 2.0 AWD definitely won't shy away from a rutted gravel road and a mild obstacle or two.

The exterior

The second generation Kuga was launched in South Africa in 2013 – a year after the European launch – and this revamped model has reached the half-way mark of its lifespan. When viewed from the front and side the body looks all but identical to the 2013 model. Seen from the rear, the tailgate with a new crease line below the number plate does look different. From the front the hexagonal grille also looks completely different than the narrow air intake from before and the bonnet is also new. The overall image now fits in better with Ford's other vehicles.

The interior

There are no major changes to the dashboard, but the concerns regarding the 2013 model's instruments were given some attention. The tiny screen in the old Kuga has been replaced with a large 18" touch screen. The radio's buttons were also too small and are now nice and big and easy to press. The handbrake lever has also been replaced with an electric brake button.

The steering wheel has three spokes instead of four, and the buttons on it conform better with the rest of the dashboard. The paddle shifters behind the steering wheel for sport mode on the automatic transmission is a nice touch.

Under the bonnet

The Kuga has three engine options, all from the 2013 model: There's the 1.5 Ecoboost and the 2.0 Ecoboost (both petrol) and the 2.0 TDCi (diesel). Ford succeeded in pulling an extra 12 kW and 60 Nm from the 2.0 diesel engine, enough to increase the Kuga's maximum towing capacity by 300 kg without increasing its fuel consumption.

How does it drive?

With a ground clearance of 150 mm (170 mm according to our own measurements when it's parked in the driveway and empty), the

Kuga is definitely not the epitome of an off-roader. There isn't even a 4x4 button that you can push when things get tough.

But nobody buys a Kuga to tackle Van Zyl's Pass. The Kuga's all-wheel drive is rather meant for snow if you live in Europe (or rain if you live anywhere except the Cape), but it does cling to dirt roads. The drive hasn't changed much since the 2013 model, but it seems as if the wind and road noise inside the cabin has decreased. The engine noise is without a doubt less, especially in the diesel model. You can almost not hear it at all. The automatic transmission shifts when it should and there is very little tardiness, nor does it change gears too soon.

We tested the Kuga in the Boland. The worn dirt road through the Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve was smoothed over thanks to dexterous suspension (MacPherson struts in front and multi-link at the back) despite the 19" alloy wheels with low-profile tyres.

Although the pearl of Paarl was too steep for the Kuga (conservationists would lock us up if we attempted it), there were other challenges in the vicinity where we could test the Kuga. Sand, rocks, dirt – nothing could stop the Kuga (within reason, of course).

>

“
Sand, rocks, dirt –
nothing could stop
the Kuga (within
reason, of course).
”

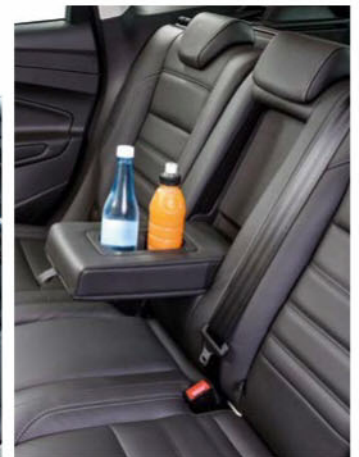


SPECIFICATIONS, THEN AND NOW

Year	2013	2017
Model	2.0 TDCi Titanium PowerShift AWD	
Engine	1 997 cc, inline-four	Unchanged
Power	120 kW @ 3 750 rpm	132 kW @ 3 500 rpm
Torque	340 Nm @ 2 000 rpm	400 Nm @ 2 000 rpm
Fuel consumption	5,5 l/100 km	5,4 l/100 km
Tank	60 l	Unchanged
Maximum towing capacity	1 500 kg	1 800 kg
Approach/departure angle	21° and 27°	Unchanged
Tare weight	2 230 kg	Unchanged
Warranty	4 years/120 000 km	Unchanged
Service plan	5 years/90 000 km	Unchanged
Service intervals	15 000 km	Unchanged
Price	R419 900	R506 900



OLD AND NEW. The facelift has dramatically changed the Kuga's nose. There have even been comprehensive enhancements in the cabin. The fold-down trays are useful for keeping the kids' refreshments and toys on. The Kuga isn't a hardcore off-roader, but can manage minor obstacles.



That price

The listed price of half a million looks a bit stiff, but if you compare it to its competitors it's not such a jagged pill to swallow. A similar competitor (engine around 2 000 cc, diesel and four-wheel drive) like a Toyota RAV4 2.2 D costs R557 900, the Volkswagen Tiguan R551 900, the Mazda CX-5 R561 700, the Kia Sportage R592 495, a Hyundai Tucson will set you back R599 900, and a BMW X1 2.0d will make your eyes water at R628 400. It's only the Renault Kadjar which at R454 900 is about R50 000 cheaper.

Conclusion

You'll quickly learn to love your Kuga. Yes, the design and styling is starting to look a bit dated, even with the facelift, but it's chock full of gadgets such as autonomous brake control, automated parking, and a powered tailgate to make life both simpler and safer.



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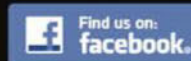
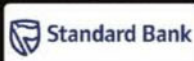
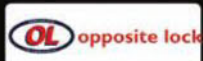


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FINANCING AVAILABLE



The wild wild south

The iconic Kruger National Park isn't your average camping destination – if you want a stand you'll have to book early.

Text and photos **Leon Botha**



The Kruger National Park tops many campers' must-visit destinations list – and not only South African campers.

International tourists flock here in their thousands in search of the Big Five.

There are 13 campsites to choose from, and these are all decent places to unhitch, even if they are weren't in one of the most popular game reserves in the world. The campsites differ significantly from one another, but you know what to expect at each one. You can reach all of them with a standard caravan but a kitted-out 4x4 with two roof tents will be equally at home.

Aside from the smaller camps like Balule and Tsendze, you'll find fuel at all the larger campsites. 50 ppm diesel, which at one stage wasn't available, is now common. The same goes for swimming pools, braais with grids, as well as excellent service at the reception offices.

You'll notice that some of the campsites' bathrooms aren't exactly brand new, but they're always clean. Few campsites in the country can compete with the Kruger's shops. Whether you're camping far north in Punda Maria or down south at Berg-en-Dal, the shops can't be beat. They're not all the same size but you won't be able



to fault the selection: You'll find anything from magazines and fresh produce to plush toy lions, hard tack and even Kruger fire lighters.

Get there early

The earlier you get to the campsite, the better your chances of staking your claim on a great stand. But that of course depends on what your definition of a great stand is. Where one person prefers a giant shade tree, the other might prefer camping closer to the fence, the bathrooms or a power socket. Or maybe a level stand is your only requirement.

Regardless, try to arrive earlier rather than later, because you can't book a specific stand. SANParks have been doing it like this for years, although this rule has been a bit more flexible lately. It would seem that some of the more sought-after stands next to the fence are no longer intended for the average Joe.

Also, don't come here expecting a stand on manicured lawn. In the Kruger you camp on a bare patch of ground. Have a look at where the taps are located – you're not always sure if there's one close to or on your stand and in certain instances you'll have to walk to the kitchen to fetch water.

And remember to pack a blue caravan plug and an extension cord.

The Kruger is as close to Utopia as you'll find, but how are things when the place is bursting at the seams with campers who have travelled here from far and wide? Will you have to sacrifice good service and a clean site? Are people packed in like sardines?

We were very lucky and managed to secure one of the last spots in the south a month or so before our visit during the busy December holiday period. And our visit started with a traffic jam in front of the gate.

>

“
Don't come here expecting a
stand on manicured lawn.
In the Kruger you camp on a
bare patch of ground.”



Stanley, Maphefo and Kgotso (14) Montjana from Boksburg camp with their 1998 Gypsy Rapier and 2017 Toyota 2.8 Fortuner.

They say:

“ We're camping for nine nights, and Skukuza is nice and central. You can see a lot of animals at the nearby Sabie River – even wild dogs. Kgotso sleeps in his own tent because the games on his cellphone keep us up! ”



SKUKUZA Queue here

If you want to know how popular a campsite is, have a look at how busy it is when circumstances are not ideal for a visit. In the middle of summer, temperatures hover around the 40 °C mark, the summer rains bring lush green bushes, and the risk of malaria in the region is higher. When we visited there

was in fact a warning from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases regarding people with malaria symptoms visiting the area.

But it's holiday and few things dampen the spirit when you're en route to the Kruger. The Kruger gate, the one closest to Skukuza, is not 35 km from Hazyview.

A traffic jam in the Kruger is nothing unusual, especially if one of the Big Five

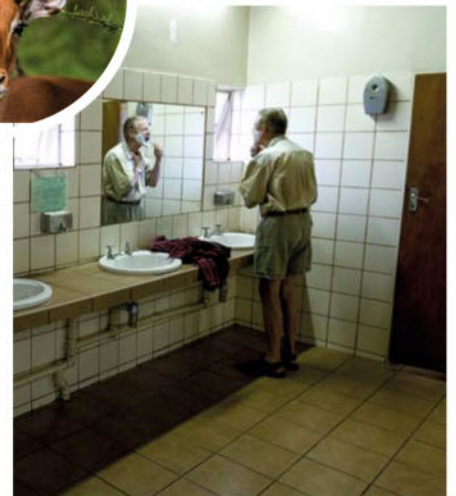


is parading next to the road. But half a kilometre in front of the gate a long line of cars stand dead still as if a road block could be the reason. Our plans to arrive early to bag one of Skukuza's better stands seem to have been foiled.

An official in her dark green uniform approaches and says that the computers in the office are offline and visitors' details are captured by hand. Luckily, we booked our accommodation beforehand, and we and the campers in front of us with their Exclusive – complete with a life-sized picture of the Big Five on the back – are given permission to pass the cars in front of us.

Where R5 is king

Skukuza is the Kruger's capital. Here you'll find everything you need – from a post office (with pigeonholes) to a full-fledged FNB branch. To the right of the reception office there's a piece by sculptor Phil Minnaar: three faces that remind you that Paul Kruger isn't the



RUB SHOULDERS. Skukuza is a busy place during the holidays and the best stands get scooped up quickly. Fortunately, the ablution facilities are large enough that you don't have to fight for space.

only person who should be lauded for the existence of the park. On one side of the late statesman is the proud face of Piet Grobler, former minister of lands of the Union of South Africa, and on the other the face of Lt.col. James Stevenson-Hamilton, the Kruger's first manager.

There's usually a queue here too, and it's unlikely that you'll reach the counter without a wait. At least you can refresh yourself with some water from an upright water cooler.

Against one of the walls there's a large framed photo of a lion sinking his claws into a buffalo, and on the counter there's an eagle carved out of wood.

The campsite is divided in two and lies on both sides of the road as you drive in. Each side has its own bathroom, scullery and laundry. (When you get your resort map from the receptionist, ask for R5 coins if you intend on using the laundry later. Next time, remember to bring your piggy bank.)

Monkey business

The people with the Big Five air-brushed on the back of their Exclusive bagged a spot opposite us – the woman has already started cleaning the mesh floor mat under the rally tent.

“Hey!” shouts our neighbour while a vervet monkey makes a run for it, loot in hand. Remember: You need to keep everything tightly locked up when you’re camping here.

The swimming pool is next to the campsite so it’s not odd to see someone walking past your stand shirtless with a towel draped over his shoulder.

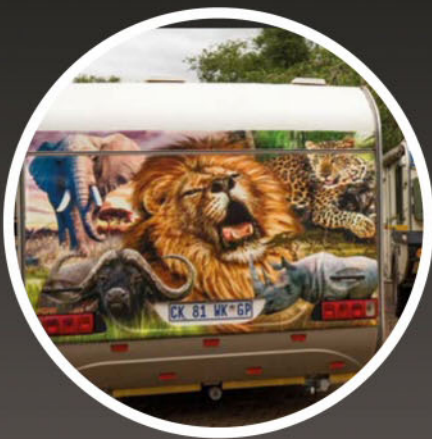
Don’t arrive without an electric fan because it can get scorching hot here. Some campers have upgraded and even installed air con in their caravans.

The nosecones are open and air con pipes hang like trunks over A-frames. The campers diagonally behind us even have air con in their dome tents!

The fires are lit early evening. Opposite us, our neighbour’s fire is going strong. But this fire is purely for ambiance because he’s actually braaiing on the gas skottel next to the fire.

Just after 4 am the following morning we’re awakened by the neighbours starting their diesel van. It’s still pitch dark (except for the lights that help you find your way to the toilets). Surprisingly, there’s a lot of action in the campsite this time of the morning: One guy is sitting neatly dressed under his rally tent, working on a laptop. Next to him on the table is a crossword puzzle and a extra-large magnifying glass.

The bathrooms are also a hub of activity – it feels like a family gathering.



Strangers greet as you walk into the bathroom. Even though it’s busy, you don’t have to wait for a shower.

By 9 the campsite is quiet, and the two nice big stands next to the bathrooms are open. Lesson learnt: Arrive earlier at the next campsite.



Briefly | Skukuza



Campsite 85 stands on both sides of the road (more or less divided in two). The fence is to the right and the pool to the left.

Ablution facilities You’ll have to make do with small shower cubicles and shower curtains. There are facilities for the disabled.

Price Depending on the season R285–R330 for the first 2 people. After that it’s R88 p.p. (R44 for kids). There’s an additional conservation fee of R82 p.p.p.d. (R42 for kids) if you don’t have a Wild Card.

Arrival and departure times 7 am and 10 pm.

Contact ☎ 013 735 4196 🌐 sanparks.org

Road condition Tar all the way to the camp.

GPS S24.995909 E31.592021

go! Drive & Camp says First pack your R5 coins and fan, then the rest.

HEADS UP. The Mathekenyane Grano koppie can be found just a few kilometers from Skukuza. It’s safe to climb it before resuming your search for the Big Five.



PRETORIUSKOP

Distinction is good enough

Pretoriuskop is the oldest of all the Kruger camps and also the farthest down south, if you exclude the satellite camp Malelane.

The reception office at the gate feels modest if you compare it to the one at Skukuza, and it's also a lot quieter.

If you look at the noticeboard behind the counter you'll see that Pretoriuskop's management isn't ashamed of their goals and achievements.

The feedback from visitors between April and October last year has been written down with a magic marker and includes comments about service at the gate, the campsite itself, and the activities that are on offer – and it's mostly rated above 80% positive.

Opposite the shop is a Wimpy, but it has a completely different vibe to the branches in town. On its stoep are small bungalows styled akin to the campsite.

There are four groups of stands next to each other, all more or less next to the fence.

You're not first

These days about half of the 20 or so stands next to the fence have permanent tents. These stands have been rezoned, if you will, with an outside company that sub-lets it to visitors who specifically want to overnight here. All the tents have parking for a car next to them – and on the stoep of one there



KEEP IT CLEAN. Some of the stands next to the fence have permanent tents. It reduces the options available to campers. The laundry room is in the centre of camp and the washing machines accept R5 coins.

is even a gym set. The fence stands shouldn't be too high on your list because many of them are already taken. Quite a few of the campers in Pretoriuskop are grumpy about these new developments in the Kruger.

Nevertheless, it's a neat campsite with two bathrooms: one near the first stands and the other at the farthest stands. The former has fewer bugs inside because there's a mesh door. The other one doesn't even have a door.

The laundry is in the middle and also operates with those valuable R5 coins. For dishes you have to walk past the first bathroom.

>



Joe and Rina Chadinha from Pretoria camp with their 2007 3.0 Toyota Hilux and a 1989 Gypsy 5 caravan.

They say:

“ We camp at the Kruger every year and remember the good old days when there wasn't electricity at Skukuza's campsites. This year it feels less busy in the game reserve than before. ”



The kitchens in most of the Kruger's campsites are square buildings without walls – there are, amongst other things, a basin, a few electric two-burner stoves and then, a winner: a instant boiling water dispenser where you can quickly get water for your morning tea.

Animals on your doorstep

Even if you're not next to the fence, you can still see game. We found a spot underneath a large old sycamore – you'll be hard pressed to find better than this. Our neighbours' Off-Trax sums it up perfectly: printed on the caravan are the words "Kani Wagi" (can't wait).

The guinea fowls are tame and run slowly from the one stand to the next – you can snap them from close up. (Don't get a fright when you zoom in, because their shrivelled heads look like something you'd find on a prehistoric bird. It's the proverbial pretty from afar but far from pretty.)

Not all the monkeys in the camp are up to no good. Some of them simply hang around in the tree next to your stand, like they're also just relaxing.

A young meerkat plays with the ball of a swingball set next to the tent. Across the road a few of his mates are raiding a tent's kitchen section. The young woman in her camo three-quarter pants shrugs and says: "These animals have probably adopted us..."

Outside, a red-chested cuckoo's calls seem never-ending, and elsewhere you can hear the "krrrrr" of an osprey.

Time to cool down

Pretoriuskop deserves top marks for its pool. It may be far from the stands but the five-minute walk is worth the trouble. It's built on the side of a rock that extends a few metres above the ground and the water is crystal-clear. There's a



Pretoriuskop deserves top marks for its swimming pool. It may be far from the stands, but the five-minute walk is totally worth the effort.



splash pool on top of the rock for the little ones, with a stream that runs into the bigger pool. Even when the campsite is packed to the brim and the heat is almost unbearable, the pool is never too full.

You feel completely refreshed when you walk back to your stand, and the ice cream you bought at the shop won't even get a chance to melt in your hands.

It's sunset and time for an early night and wake-up. Seven minutes later than

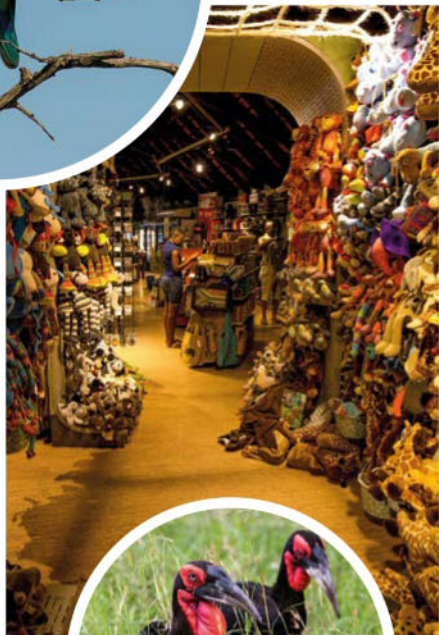
yesterday, at 4:25 am, someone switches on their car.

Early-morning game drives remain a fantastic experience and luckily the ablutions are less cramped than those at Skukuza.

Berg-en-Dal is next, but then you see something that you really don't want (or expect) to see in the Kruger or any other park: campers feeding cheese curls to the guinea fowls...



EVER-PRESENT NATURE. Pour yourself a drink, sit down, and wait for nature to come to you. Birds in particular aren't stopped by game fences.



NUMBER ONE. If you are undecided about visiting Pretoriuskop, consider the swimming pool. And then book early.



Briefly | Pretoriuskop



Campsite 43 stands of which about half are next to the fence, but half of these are permanent tents.

Ablution facilities A bathroom on both ends of the campsite, a laundry in the middle and a kitchen at the top end. There are also facilities for the disabled and small showers with curtains.

Price Depending on the season R285–R330 for the first two people. After that it's R88 p.p. (R44 for kids). There's an additional conservation fee of R82 p.p.p.d. (R42 for kids) if you don't have a Wild Card.

Arrival and departure times 7 am and 10 pm.

Contact 013 735 5128/32

sanparks.org

Road conditions Tar all the way to the camp.

GPS S25.169613 E31.268690

go! Drive & Camp says Bring an extension cord of at least 10 m to avoid a power struggle. >



BERG-EN-DAL

Second again!

The fence is to the right of the stands, and by this time you've made peace with the fact that you won't snag one of the sought-after spots.

The lady in the reception office, however, isn't fazed about the stands next to the fence. For her it's more important to warn you about the baboons and monkeys in the campsite. You'd think a full campsite would be a deterrent, but here at Berg-en-Dal the primates reign supreme.

While the receptionist gives you a pamphlet with tips on keeping these pests away from your campsite, she emphasises the problem areas: "Please be careful of the animals because they are a huge problem. That counts for campers with tents as well as caravans. Don't leave any food in the tent. They smell it and will tear the tent to get to it.

"Also lower your caravan's pop-up roof when you're out and about because they can climb through the canvas section between the roof and the body of the caravan. These guys think the campsite belongs to them..."

The pamphlet further warns you to lock your food in your trailer or boot and to never ever confront the animals. Rather leave them alone, even if



WATER WORKS. The pool is in front of the stands, to the left of the road, and the laundry room is right next to it if you need a change of clothes.





ON THE BRIGHT SIDE. Berg-en-Dal isn't well lit at night. Bring your own lighting if you don't want to stub your toe.



they take your food, because they can become aggressive.

We drive through the full campsite again and then choose one of the last stands that will satisfy everyone in the car. They are big and level, but we're holding thumbs that lady luck is on our side. And wouldn't you know it... underneath one of the biggest shade trees in Berg-en-Dal is one open stand next to the fence. It's far right as you drive into the campsite.

On the other side of the fence, only 40 m away, a herd of elephants come walking past. When you're this close to them you realise how enormous these beasts really are.

Space for everyone

Even though the campsite is full, the stands are laid out in such a way that you have enough space around you. Again, bring a long extension cord (at least 10 m) because the power sockets and shade trees aren't always spaced close together.



Ilona Visser and Rory and Sheenaugh-Lee Thompson are camping neighbours at Berg-en-Dal.

They say:

“ The variety of animals you see next to the fence is astounding – there's everything from rhinos to leopards. The pool also deserves high praise. ”

There are also lights at the sockets but they're low and slightly hidden. Instead of lighting up the spot at the power socket it shines onto the ground and basically serves no purpose.

Bring your flashlight if you want to walk to the bathrooms after sunset. There are three ablution facilities and each of them have facilities for the disabled with basins for dishes at the back.

It's not even half a kilometre from the office to the campsite – you'll go past the laundry and pool, then find the stands.

The washing machines also work with R5 coins and the pool has a few shade trees around it if you want to watch your kids enjoy the water. Again, it's not cramped and everyone – young and old – gets to splash around and have fun.



Briefly | Berg-en-Dal



Campsite 82 stands with a fence to the right of the campsite. The first stands are away from the fence but closer to the pool and reception office.

Ablution facilities 3 bathrooms spread out in the camp, with spacious washing-up areas. The shower cubicles are small, also with a curtain.

Price Depending on the season R285–R330 for the first two people. After that it's R88 p.p. (R44 for kids). There's an additional conservation fee of R82 p.p.p.d. (R42 for kids) if you don't have a Wild Card.

Arrival and departure times 7 am and 10 pm.

Contact 013 735 6106/7 sanparks.org

Road conditions Tar all the way to the camp.

GPS S25.426679 E31.449743

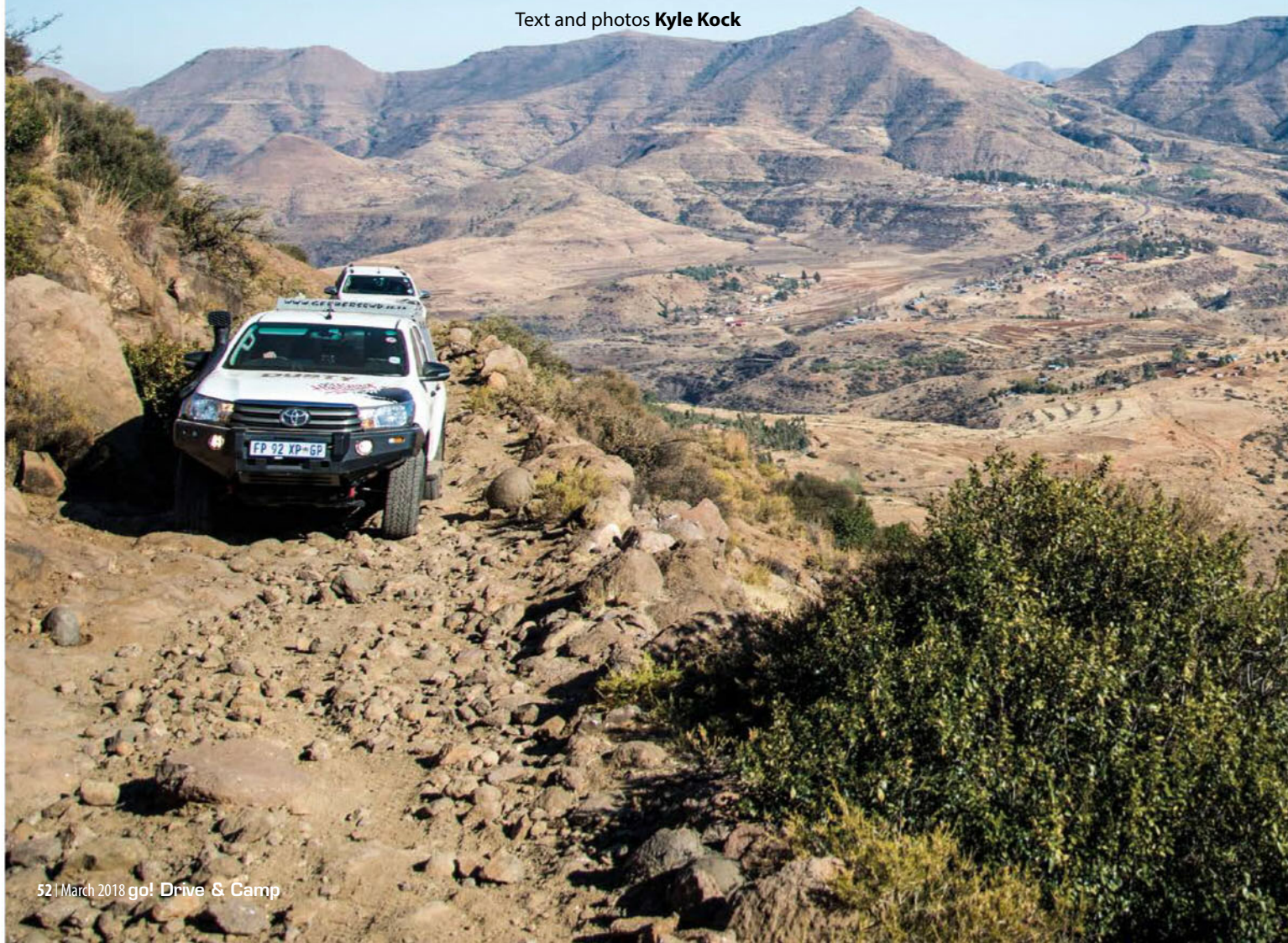
go! Drive & Camp says Follow the path all along the fence – nothing compares to the feeling of walking this close to an elephant and her calf.

Next month we travel to the north of the Kruger where a few campers tell us how to get a stand next to the fence.

Roof of Southern Africa

The infamous Baboons Pass in the Lesotho Highveld is on the bucket list drives of many local off-road enthusiasts. We ride shotgun while attempting a sub seven-hour trip.

Text and photos **Kyle Kock**





This is a first for him too, admits Riaan Kotzee from behind the wheel of his Toyota Hilux 2.4 diesel manual double cab 4x4 while we're en route to the Mountain Kingdom for the next few days.

Riaan is a salesman at Halfway Toyota's Fourways branch and part of the dealer network's off-road experience team. We're driving in convoy with two other bakkies from the same brand and dealership. We're on our way to scout the Baboons Pass as a possible location for customers to experience just how capable their bakkie or SUV is.

Crossing the border at Peka Bridge goes off without incident and we hit the road south through the town of Roma. We're headed to the Ramabanta Trading Post, a lodge that serves as the ideal base camp for those looking to tackle the pass or explore the region's many trails on foot or on horseback.

We're hoping to get there before sunset – where the other half of the Halfway team from KwaZulu-Natal will meet us.

The prospect of 21 km of the toughest off-road terrain in Africa is daunting. A quick YouTube search doesn't exactly

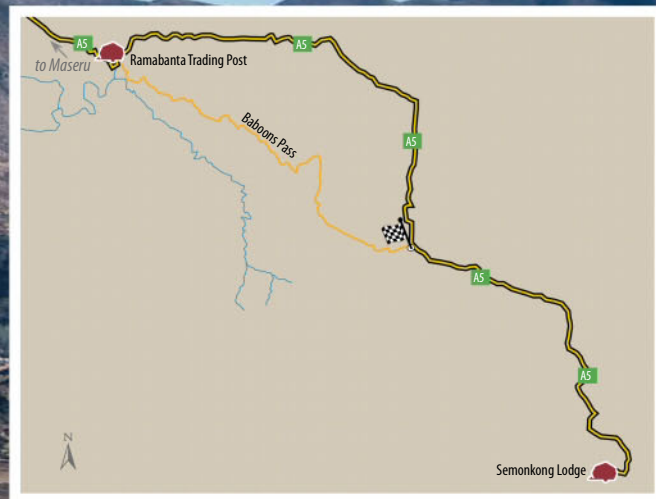
help to reassure you. There are endless failures and trips that ended in tears. There's definitely a high attrition rate if conditions aren't favourable, and depending on the weather and condition of the road those taking on the trail have to be prepared to take two days to finish the route as a precaution.

RAMABANTA TRADING POST

We reach Ramabanta Trading Post after 4 pm and meet up with the guys from the coast. All in, we'll be trying to get six vehicles through the pass: four Hiluxes, a Land Cruiser 76 and a 2002 model short-wheelbase Jeep Wrangler.

From the terraced stand you can make out Baboons Pass in the distance on the mountainside. The snaking route starts just a few kilometres from Ramabanta and threads through some of the country's most treacherous terrain.

The guys are optimistic about tackling the mountain. The last time they were here, about a year ago, they were snowed in and had to wait out the storm for more than a week before driving home with their tow bars between their tailgates. >



It's cold, but at least this time there's no snow and ice, which would definitely be pretty but wouldn't bode well for off-road driving without tyre chains.

Our late arrival means that we start losing light fast. Fortunately, these guys abide by the first rule of camping and they start pitching tents and pumping up air mattresses for a decent night's rest. Also, there are strict instructions from Gerald O'Brien, de facto leader of the excursion and most senior off-roader here, to not get boozed up. Misbehaviour that could lead to failure to perform the next morning will not be tolerated.

Ramabanta looks like one of those alpine resorts you see in Hollywood films. There's cabin-style accommodation for those seeking more private stays and little cottage-like chalets. We're here right at the end of winter so the valley Ramabanta falls in is still in the grip of a cold snap – which means one sleeping bag under the cover of a nylon tent just isn't enough. Temperatures overnight this high up in the mountains easily drops below freezing, so you need to make sure you are adequately prepared.

NO FAULT FACILITIES

Because the lodge caters mainly to those who want to sleep under roof, some of the cabins have their own hot shower facilities. Those who opt for chalet accommodation and tent camping use a rustic old ablution block, about 30 to 40 metres away depending on which terrace you're parked on.

It's a simple affair. The door on the men's side opens up to reveal a raw concrete table that serves as a bench for your clothes or toiletries. A narrow door leads to the showers and toilets to the left and right, with a single basin and mirror at either end. Interestingly, the zinc dishwashing basins aren't located at the ablution block but closer to the campsites, with a double zinc basin perched right next to two deeper zinc basins for washing your clothes.

The facilities are very well kept. The grass is short and though not green at this time of the year, very neat and tidy. Benches hewn from different materials like old bath tubs, wood and rock can be found all over the ground. The restaurant has an outdoor eating area on a wooden deck that overlooks the region's valley. A children's jungle gym can be found on



EASY CROSSING. Going through the border at the Peka Bridge post was an effortless affair. The vehicles are inspected for any contraband and passports are stamped without any drama. Driving from any one of the major cities in South Africa will require a full day on the road to get to the Ramabanta Trading Post, from where you can see the pass on the mountainside.



the far northern end, complete with three swings, a climbing rope, tyre obstacles and raised wooden deck.

The braai areas are also scattered all over the Trading Post's grounds. Some are flat and round so you can attend to your meat from the comfort of your chair, while others are more table-like where you will need to stand and grill. There are two separate braai areas housed under the same structure that hosts the wash basins. These also have a large work surface for preparing your food and drinks and are also under cover.

ON TO THE PASS

With daybreak the team starts getting out the gas bottles and soon breakfast is ready. Ten minutes before the agreed-upon departure time of 8 am the group



“
Snow and ice would be pretty,
but definitely wouldn't suit any
off-road exercises.”



PIT STOP. The Ramabanta Trading Post also serves as a service stop on the famous Roof of Africa motorcycle enduro. Right at the end of winter the grounds are devoid of human life, with the exception of our convoy of off-road enthusiasts and a bunch of motorcyclists on a training camp for the race later in the year.



Briefly | Ramabanta Trading Post



Campsite Stands aren't demarcated and the lodge is set against the side of a hill, with terraced grassy sections for camping that have little shade. You have to share electricity with your neighbours.

Price R110 per person per night.

Ablution facilities Rustic but neat and clean. The male side has a raw cement table to put your clothing and toiletries on.

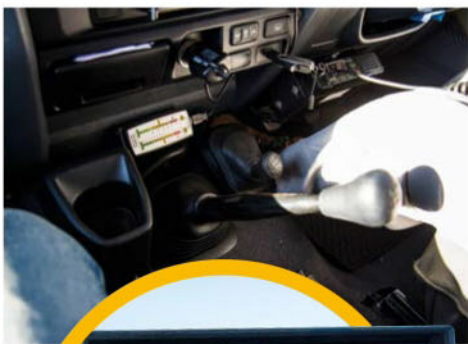
Arrival and departure times 2 pm and 10 am.

Contact ☎+266 2234 0267 ☎+266 2234 0202 📧tradingpost.co.za

Road condition The A5 runs right by Ramabanta, with another 500 m of good gravel road to the Ramabanta Lodge.

GPS S29.665368 E27.795989

go! Drive & Camp says The ideal launch pad for your 4x4 or hiking adventures in Lesotho. >



PANORAMIC. Throughout the pass the views are simply breathtaking. The Halfway Toyota team were the only vehicles on the pass and could drive through relatively quickly. Be prepared to meet cattle, donkeys and plenty of friendly children along the way.





assembles and Gerald doles out the day's instructions. Driving what is arguably the most capable vehicle of the bunch, a Land Cruiser 76, Gerald will take the lead. We're riding shotgun with him, at least for the first stretch.

The South Coast guys have the start of the pass mapped out beforehand on their GPS units – because signage from the highway isn't all that clear. On the way we come across a rather large group of hikers who seem to be headed in the same direction we are – except that they look prepared to spend a night or two in the mountains somewhere.

Just before the official start of the trail the convoy slows to a halt for final preparations. Looking up at the slit of road that appears to be the start of the arduous course, the atmosphere around us erupts into what sounds like the hissing of a pit of poisonous snakes. The source of this fear-inducing sound is nothing more than the simultaneous and rapid deflation of the vehicles' tyres to a pressure more suited to rock-hopping later on – around 1.5 bar.

At about an hour in we have already covered the first three and a half kilometres. The going is easy and the only times we have to stop is when we have traffic in the opposite direction in the form of packed donkeys. Obviously that means they are followed by the occasional shepherd or guide who looks to be carrying supplies to the various villages and homesteads dotted around the pass.

In the first two hours it's possible to make ground quickly, even though Riaan's GPS system shows that we have already passed two sections in the first quarter that showed that the path would need to be built with rocks. A previous group must have already done that for us because we get through without a fuss.

The only hiccups are that the Hiluxes seem to miss their step on one or two sections, possibly because of an incorrect line, or possibly due to insufficient momentum. We're able to drive the route in sections, with Gerald occasionally stopping to inspect an obstacle. A couple of times the road has to be packed with rocks, but the work isn't backbreaking because the packing takes no more than a few minutes each time.

With a fairly high average speed the convoy reaches the halfway point in two and a half hours. And the drivers pose >

EASY DOES IT. The consequences will be severe if you get it wrong in certain places. Building the road with rocks is part and parcel of attempting the pass. Drivers will definitely have to call upon spotters or assistance when the bonnets are pointing to the sky.



for a photograph and enjoy a short break. At this point we're riding with Jaco Hane-kom from Fourways whose 2.8 manual Hilux is still sporting its standard plastic bumpers. He points out that the first thing he advises new customers to do is add rock sliders and bash plates if they plan on doing any serious off-road work.

Seconds after he completes that sentence, the Hilux lands heavily onto the underside of the front bumper. Luckily the damage is limited to a few scrapes and a small dent in the bumper.

The second half is significantly rougher, with larger boulders and bare rock faces with little grip that can give 4x4 vehicles a hard time – one example of the latter is the infamous Goliath's Rock, which requires traction and torque to get up. It's also located on a tight left-hander, which is impossible for the likes of a modern double cab to get up in the same motion.

We did encounter one particularly difficult section in the third quarter of the pass that we were forewarned about. Gerald had gone up the steep and rocky incline first with the Land Cruiser. In 4 low, Gerald faces the wall of rocks and

dives right in without locking any of the differentials. The axles start to spin and he simply reaches left of the steering wheel, switches on the front and rear diff locks and the Land Cruiser climbs up. Easy as pie.

Ryan Otto, also from Fourways, in his automatic 2.8 Hilux was right behind and attempted it too but only got up about halfway. And he tried two more times before choosing to back out. The rest of the Toyotas went up the other side while the Jeep Wrangler managed it on the second attempt.

The highest point is reached on the second half: 2 689 metres above sea level. While the human element is huffing and puffing up here, the vehicles are enjoying the cool air. Some of the older local children who lined up to watch these strange folk driving up the mountain are running around with little ones on their backs, laughing at us.

It turned out to be a perfect trip. No vehicles were badly damaged or were forced to turn back or stop. And no recoveries had to be performed. We didn't know who had been there before us but surely as a group passes through

or there's a big storm the trail changes – making no two attempts exactly the same. Perhaps lady luck was on our side, as conditions were ideal enough to enable the convoy to finish the pass in six hours and 30 minutes.

The end of winter isn't a bad time of the year to come if the trail isn't snowed in. Baboons Pass may have gained notoriety over the years but barely showed us its fangs this time around.

NO WRONG IN SEMONKONG

Seemingly popular, not just among local adventurers but international clientele as well, Semonkong Lodge is an outdoor lover's haven. It's located in a ravine on the edge of Semonkong, with some of the chalets and lodgings on the hill on the other side of the river. To reach it from the A5 you drive through town and down a steep gravel road and across a single vehicle bridge.

Coming in under the sign there's a post that reminds you of the plethora of things to do from the lodge. The nearby Maletsunyane Falls boasts the world's longest commercially operated single drop abseil (a dizzying 204 m) – and >

“
The road has to be packed with rocks in certain rough sections, but fortunately the work isn't backbreaking.”





I WANT TO DO IT TOO

You'll firstly need a valid passport to cross the border into Lesotho, and no visa is required.

The gravel road leading up to the Peka border post in the Free State is in poor condition. If you're coming from KZN you'll first do Sani Pass before reaching the border right at the top.

If you have a fear of heights or aren't keen on squeezing your vehicle through narrow gaps between boulders, don't attempt Baboons Pass.

At a bare minimum your vehicle should be kitted out with proper off-road tyres. You needn't go too large – the size that came fitted to your SUV or bakkie should be fine.

A raised suspension, low-range gearing, and a rear diff lock are also highly recommended. Steel bumpers, rock sliders and a winch are nice-to-haves but not a necessity.

Also, it's not advisable to attempt this sort of thing on your own. Besides, it's way more fun in a group.



NO TURNING BACK. The team poses for a picture at the halfway point, which was reached in just two hours of steady driving. The second half was significantly tougher on the group, with large boulders, narrower sections and steeper inclines the order of the day. Courtesy dictates that you first wait for oncoming traffic to make their way down past you before continuing.





Briefly | Semonkong Lodge



Campsite 5 flat stands with very little shade next to the river. You'll share the braai area and bin with your neighbours. R150 per person per night.

Ablution facilities One small building with one toilet, two urinals, and two spacious showers.

Arrival and departure times 10 am and 2 pm. Flexible depending on bookings after your stay.

Contact info@semonkonlodge.com

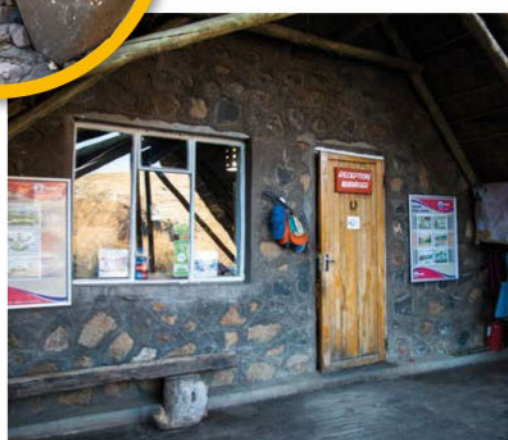
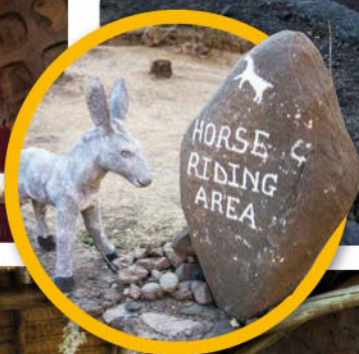
+266 6202 1021 +266 5888 1021

Nearest town Semonkong is a mere 500 m away.

Road condition Rough gravel to the lodge.

GPS S29.842919 E28.043633

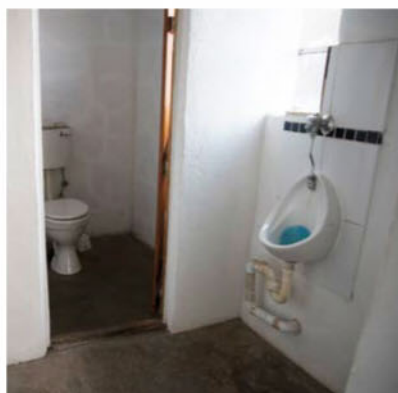
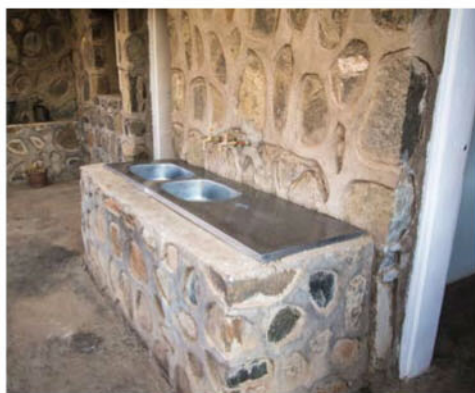
go! Drive & Camp says We definitely recommend the pub crawl by donkey and abseiling down Maletsunyane Falls.



“
It turned out to be a perfect trip, with no recoveries required and no significant vehicle damage.”



WELL-EARNED REST. The Semonkong Lodge campsite is small but was a welcome sight after a day's off-roading on one of the most notorious mountain passes in Southern Africa. There's plenty to do in this area of Lesotho, and the lodge is popular with thrill-seekers from around the world. The facilities are neat and kept clean.



is Guinness-certified. You can arrange horseback rides or simply rent a mountain bike for under R90 and explore the variety of jeep tracks and horse trails to your heart's content – provided you're fit enough to pedal at an altitude in excess of 2 200 m above sea level.

The area features rock climbing ranging from novice to expert level, though you'll bring your own climbing equipment. You can swim in the river and you're also allowed to fly-fish in it. If you're a fan of racing, the local horse and pony owners organise one every week.

The lodge also offers guests and tourists a donkey pub crawl where you get to explore the local taverns (on the back of a donkey) and are entertained by the Basotho locals. Obviously, you pay for your own beverages.

ENJOY YOUR STAY

Because there's a large variety of lodging at Semonkong, including chalets, rooms and two dormitories for backpackers, the campsite is slightly more modest. There are only five stands, located right next to the river through a boom that separates the stands from the general parking area. The stands have electricity points and share a bin and braai area right on the riverbank. The ground is flat and is sparsely covered in grass but is at least firm and the barren trees are large enough for a sprinkling of shade. The camping area itself is rather small, so caravans are frowned up, unless you have the smaller off-road trailer variety.

There's a restaurant at the lodge that also caters for vegetarians, and the Duck & Donkey Pub is only 50 m from the campsite, behind reception. This is also the area where you are most likely to pick up a wi-fi signal, which is available for a small fee.

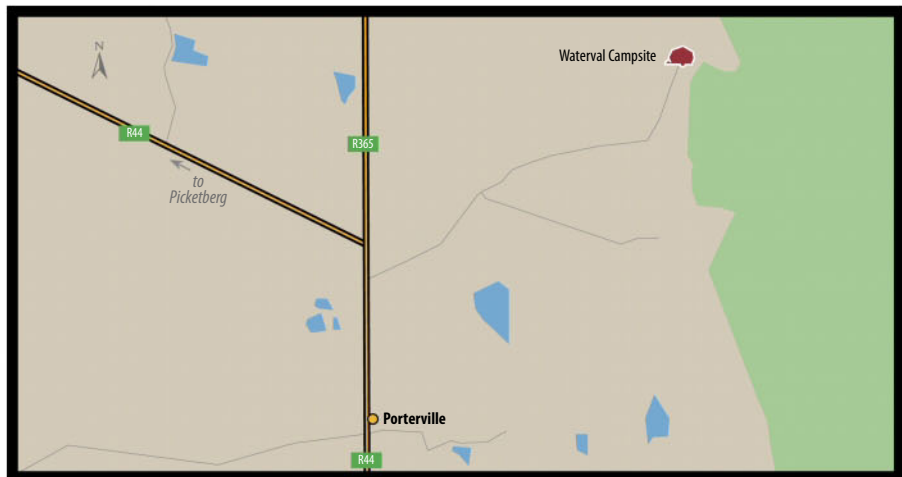
The ablution facility at Semonkong is also tiny but has guesthouse-like fittings and style. From the campsite you go up a set of steps onto a terrace into a cottage-styled building. There are two showers, two urinal basins, a toilet and single hand basin. Because the campsite is so small, you expect these facilities to be kept clean, and you won't be disappointed. There's hot water all the time and between the men's and women's sections there's a double zinc basin where you can wash your dishes and clothes.



Stairway to heaven

Nestled at the foot of the mountains overlooking the Olifants River, only 4 km from Porterville, 22 Waterfalls is a true camping oasis.

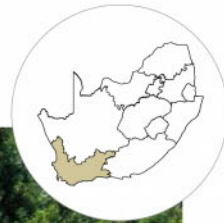
Text and photos Kyle Kock



When you want to escape the crippling drought and worsening water crisis in Cape Town, a campsite with not one, not two, but 22 waterfalls is pretty appealing for a weekend away.

“Yes sir, here our water runs for 13 months a year,” jokes Joey Schoonraad at the front desk with a prospective camper who is also looking to get away from wherever it is they’re from.

She’s jovial, but the booking system isn’t much fun. You cannot, for example, book on the website and you have to call ahead to ask about space. Once



UNOBSTRUCTED (CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT). From the campsite you can see as far as Piketberg in the distance. The zinc camp houses are perfect for couples. There are three mountain bike trails to explore and challenge yourself on. The waterfalls are the biggest attraction and are a relaxing way for the entire family to spend the day.



management is satisfied with the information you've given them, you're allowed to deposit the full amount or half – the latter with the understanding that you'll pay in full when you arrive.

Unfortunately, our stand was double-booked and we had to be moved to another spot. That happened to at least two other groups of people who were camping here at the same time as us.

The rest of the experience at 22 Waterfalls made up for the hiccup at reception. Joey explains the very simple no music policy, that pets aren't allowed,

and that the gate is locked at 9 pm on a Friday. Also, she advises that you familiarise yourself with emergency service numbers because the trails are a bit treacherous.

Getting there

Porterville is just short of 160 km from Cape Town's city centre. You make your way north on the N7 until you get to Piketberg, where you take the third exit at the circle onto the R44 towards Porterville, which is another 28 km away. At the T-junction turn right onto the R365 and you'll be right on the edge of town.

Just before you enter Porterville, however, take the first left onto a gravel road where the brown sign points in the direction of the Waterval Campsite and neighbouring Laatson farm. It's not very well graded, and even though hatchbacks and sedans won't have a problem coping on the road, it might be a good idea to slow down if you don't want your head to bump against your car's roof or all your gear to go flying around.

You pass through an old gate that directs you to the campsite and then up at the T-junction you turn left. Just before you get to the reception area you pass >



“
The main camping stands are the most generous – spacious, with access to two ablution facilities, electricity and water.

QUAINT (FROM TOP). The stands in the main camp are terraced, with the stream flowing just below. The second ablution block is simple and kept clean, but there's just one basin so you need to get there early to brush your teeth.

the first of the farm's two reservoirs on the right. This is the allocated fishing area at 22 Waterfalls, with freshwater bass the catch of the day.

Right after the reservoir are the stables and then you'll see the reception office between the barn and farmhouse up on the right. You'll have to stop there first because you have to sign for an electronic tag that will allow you access to the camping area through the boom at the lower end of the reception forecourt.

While at reception you might as well stock up on ice and wood, which are the only items for sale there. You can find the former in the large chest freezer in the office at R16 a bag, while you'll have to fetch the latter – bags of rooikrans – in the barn at R40 each.

Spoilt for choice

The road splits at the boom, and it's a 100-metre walk from here to the nearest chalets on either side, with some of the camping stands a bit farther away depending on

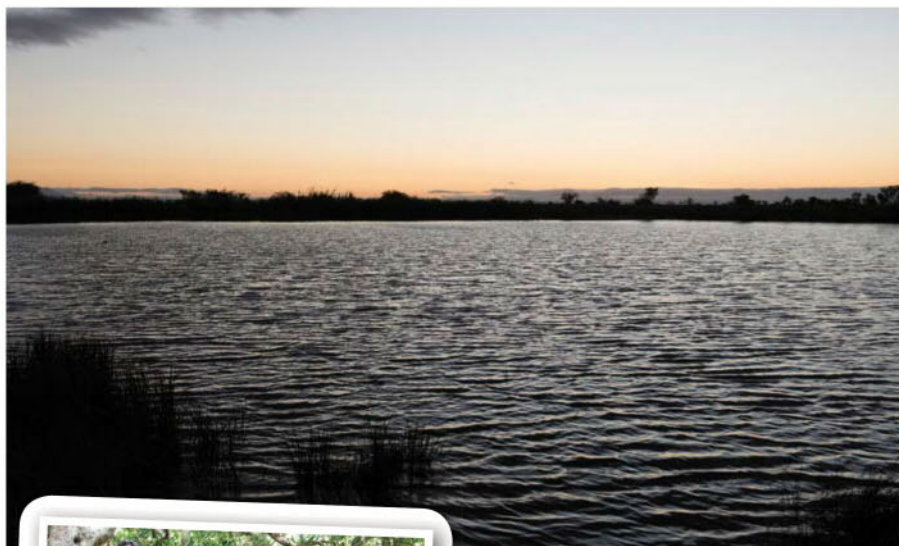


where you choose to stay. The camping stands are grouped into six sections, all of which run adjacent to reception and parallel to the stream running down from the rock pools.

Those farthest away are the 4x4 and Stomp camps, left as you go through the boom. On the way there you'll pass between some of the farm animals, including goats, chickens and horses, and also cross some shallow water. There used to be an obstacle course for budding 4x4 enthusiasts to put themselves and their vehicles to the test, but according to Joey it fell into decay when people stopped using it. Now it's overgrown and mostly used by those who have brought their mountain bikes or BMXes along.

Between those two and the main campsite is the Lêbos section, which is well shaded no matter what time of day. The main campsite is numbered from 16–34. These are generous in size considering their location, measuring about 10 paces across and 12 deep. It is also the only section at 22 Waterfalls that has access to electricity. Across the lawn, on the other side of the gravel path, are some of the chalets and little zinc houses, perfect for a romantic getaway.

Further along are Die Eiland and Die Sirkel. If you choose to be as close to the waterfalls and many rock pools as possible you'll camp here, slightly up the slope. There's plenty of shade, but the units aren't that big. There's no electricity and there isn't really any grass because the stands don't get much sunshine – though the same could be said of all the other stands really. One vehicle and two two-man tents fill up the space here >



The Christians, Johnstons, Bresendales and Van Wyks from Strandfontein brought the kids along.

THEY SAY:

“ We liked that we could sit in the flowing water freely all day and that there's plenty to do. Our experience here was nice. They could market this place a little better though. ”

NO WATER SHORTAGE. The dam used for fishing (above) is large, as you would expect. You have to leave the campsite to get to it. There's a smaller reservoir that overlooks the campsite and is just behind the first two ablution blocks.



This is what it costs

(3 adults)

Fuel	50 ppm diesel @10.8 ℓ/100 km and R13.80/ℓ and 340 km (there and back)	R506
Accommodation	(2 nights)	R560
Food	(3 people)	R431
Total		R1 497



quickly. Apart from being on intimate terms with your neighbours, the other caveat that comes with camping at these stands is that you're guaranteed to get plenty of traffic as people make their way up the hiking trail.

Although there's no grass to speak of, the stands mostly consist of soil firm enough to secure your tent pegs. Each stand has its own braai made of cement, rocks and bricks, and a bin. At the main campsites you share the electricity point – two domestic three-prong sockets – with your neighbour. Each stand is cleaned thoroughly prior to your arrival – the ground has been raked, the braai cleaned and the bin emptied.

Bathrooms above board

There are four ablution blocks at 22 Waterfalls. The one closest to the waterfalls trail is the largest. The structure has been smartly put together from rocks in the area, with a painted scullery between the men's and women's sections. At the men's end, as you walk through the door, you have three showers on the left and three toilets on the right. The showers here have a dry section with a little bench where you can sit and tie your laces, while bamboo lattice lets the steam out as you bathe. No matter what time you decide to clean up, there will always be hot water as the geysers are gas-heated and are switched on all day.

Straight ahead from the door are three ceramic basins above which are mirrors smaller than the square tiles used in the bathrooms but adequate enough to neaten your hair. Between the basins are two ledges just large enough for your toothpaste and comb.

The scullery section has two sinks for washing your dishes in and two work surfaces so you can clean a day's worth of crockery and cutlery. This is also where you can collect your drinking water from because there aren't any taps at the stands.

The next ablution block is smaller, with a similar scullery setup but one less toilet and shower and has been constructed with a lot more bamboo. There's no dry section for the showers and you'll have to jump onto the runner to dry off. There's also only a single basin here.



Johan van Niekerk and Deon Pieterse from Durbanville came to camp here for the first time after camping at a different spot in the area for a few years.

THEY SAY:

“ We like the facilities here; they are neat and clean and everything's working. We like the setting, being so close to the water. And even though there are people here it's not too cramped at our stand. The booking experience wasn't great because our stand was changed a few times. ”

The remaining two ablution blocks, in front of the Lëbos stands and at the 4x4 camp, are more Spartan, with two wash basins located on either side of the zinc units and unisex toilets and showers on either side of the scullery – with doors that open out facing the stands. The facilities are also cleaned every morning.

Outdoor junkies

Some of the stands are located so close to the water it's not uncommon on hot days to see campers with their chairs perched right in the stream, which at its deepest sections doesn't even get up to the average person's knees.

Those seeking more adventure can head up to the main attraction: the plethora of waterfalls. The hiking trail starts next to



the main ablution block. The first three waterfalls and rock pools are where you'll find the majority of your fellow campers because you have to be fairly fit and a bit gutsy to continue to the rest.

There are sections that require climbing up old wooden planks, balancing along rusty old metal ledges and finding finger-and footholds on the rock faces. It's worth going a little further than the third waterfall if you're able to because there are some more secluded spots and rock pools that are very picturesque and a lot more private.

It will take about four hours to get to the top and back down, so be sure to take sufficient hydration with you. You can always stop and cool off in one of the many little pools along the trail as well. Don't leave your hike too late though – 95% of the route is shaded and the darkness under the canopy of trees can make you miss the crucial yellow-painted checkpoints. It would be difficult to find your way up or down in the dark.

As a rule of thumb the further you are from the water the more in trouble you're likely to be. And be wary of baboons



Dawie Geustyn and Emma Besaans from Milnerton are definitely coming back after camping here for the first time.

THEY SAY:

“ We like everything here. The stands have lots of shade. Because Emma's pregnant we can't climb the ladders so we used the flatter hiking route to get to waterfall three, which was very nice. A detailed map of the hiking trail would be nice and a more formal booking system because we were initially double booked. **”**

because they also seem to be fond of finding their way onto the trail.

Remember to bring your bikes because you can cycle freely around the campsite. There are three trails you can choose from, graded by the green, orange and red markings respectively. The starting point is just outside the campsite, on the other side of the barn. The green trail takes you on a fairly flat ride in the direction of Porterville before cutting back. The red trail is the big daddy and requires serious cycling fitness. This one has technical sections, fairly fast downhill and even takes you past a waterfall.

If you're not into crowds that much, you can also swim in the reservoir that overlooks the campsite, or simply take your rod, snack and drinks with you to the dam next to the stables and wait for bass to bite to pass the time in peace.

VIEW TO A THRILL. The higher you're willing to climb, the better the view gets. The waterfalls that are more difficult to get to run into rock pools that are more secluded and private.

Briefly | 22 Waterfalls



Campsite 56 flat stands – 16 with electricity – with no grass on a slight slope. The stands have all-day shade.

Ablution facilities Simple and neat, with gas geysers.

Cost R280 per stand (up to four people), with electricity, R240 without.

Contact 0828781358

bookings@22watervalle.co.za

Arrival and departure times 2 pm and 10 am.

Nearest town Porterville, 4 km.

Road condition The last 4 km gravel road has very bumpy sections. Drive slowly.

GPS S32.985516 E19.025589

go! Drive & Camp says Try to book units 18–33 in the main campsite – these are the largest stands, have electricity points, and are close to two ablution blocks and drinking water. 📶

Dune buggy

The days of driving on South African beaches are long gone. Today, there are only a handful of places where you can still drive a 4x4 next to the ocean. Vleesbaai is one of those places.

Text and photos **Evan Naudé**

Vleesbaai is a tiny holiday town roughly 35 km from Mossel Bay. There's only one small shop and a beautiful unspoilt beach. Over Christmas and Easter the place is bursting at the seams, but it's close enough to take a day trip to Dana Bay, Mossel Bay or Hartenbos.

The Vleesbaai 4x4 dune trail is on the farm Misgunst, a short distance outside of town. It lies in the Fransmanshoek conservancy, and the 16 km circular trail meanders through a stretch of dunes located above a concealed beach between the Fransmanskraal peninsula to the north and the Kanon Private Nature Reserve to the south.

The trail is open year-round and is guided. The people who live on the farm will accompany you and explain the tricks of dune driving (or recover you if you get stuck). It's a working farm, which is why it's essential that you book, especially in December. And, of course, the trail gets very busy – from 12 December a group departs every two hours.

The trail starts at the farmhouse, where you have to deflate your tyres. The correct tyre pressure will differ from vehicle to vehicle but you should start with at least 1,2 bar. The first 3 km is pretty tame and gives you an opportunity to get used to the sand. Close to the 4 km mark there's an area marked "Hardebaard" (hardcore) and the name is very fitting: There's >





SEA VIEWS. Vleesbaai is a popular place during the summer time, as it's one of the last places you can legally drive a 4WD virtually on the beach. But you can't just show up and expect to be allowed onto the dunes because the route is located on a working farm and bookings are essential. You are also required to stay above the high-tide mark when driving.



a set of demanding dunes with narrow turns and short run-ups that will really test your abilities. It's not only a challenge for experienced drivers but with the instructions from the guide it's an opportunity for beginners to learn how.

Over the next 5 km the trail takes you in a south-westerly direction down to the beach. You're not allowed to drive on the beach itself and you should be above the high-tide mark at all times, but if you feel like a quick dip in the sea there's a parking area near Langduin (long dune). As the name implies, this is

a monster of a dune with a mild incline but it's a long climb that will test your bakkie's abilities. Langduin is the last obstacle before you head back to the farmhouse.

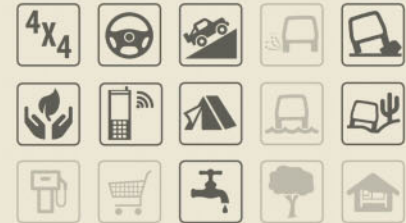
While you wait for the adrenaline rush to subside you can make a stop at the Fransmanshoek lookout point next to the farm or go relax on Vleesbaai beach. You can also bring some meat and have a braai next to the ocean. And if you feel like staying longer, there are campsites with a view over Vleesbaai, a lapa, hot showers and ice chests.



TO THE TEST. The Vleesbaai dunes will challenge a wide variety of off-road enthusiasts, from relative beginners to the truly experienced 4x4 fundis. Four-wheel drive and low-range gearing are a must.



What you need to know



4x4/low range/diff lock? You definitely need 4WD and low range but you should be fine without a diff lock.

Maximum amount of vehicles allowed

At most 12 vehicles at one time.

Do I get a map? Yes.

Will I damage my vehicle? Unlikely.

Should I take a compressor? It's always a good idea to take a compressor and tyre pressure gauge for sand driving, but there is also a compressor at the end of the trail if you don't have one.

Can you braai next to the road? No, but there is a braai area on the beach off the trail.

Can I turn around halfway? Yes.

Will I see game? There is quite a bit of small game in the conservancy. Keep your eyes peeled for caracal, porcupines, bushbuck, grysbok and duiker.

Is there cellphone reception? Yes.

THE ROUTE

Best time to go In the summer months, from November to April.

Can I take my family? Yes, definitely.

For the day or for the weekend? The trail requires about 3 hours.

Are there ablution facilities? Only off the trail.

Directions Turn off the N2 12 km outside of Mossel Bay towards Vleesbaai. Before you pass through the gate, turn right and look out for Vleesbaai 4x4 on your right.

GPS S34.296776 E21.912042

Price R450 per vehicle, guide included.

Contact 082 784 8238





Girls just want to have fun

After not seeing each other for more than a year, **Lynnqwinda Scott** from Brackenfell and her sister, **Mariska van Niekerk**, decided to spend some quality time together at the Jamaka Organic Farm in the Cederberg.

“My sister, Mariska, lives in Johannesburg and came to visit recently. We planned to camp together at Jamaka, and because it's slightly less than three hours from Cape Town, we decided to make a mini road trip of it by taking the long way round.

Tell us more about Jamaka.

It's paradise! It truly is a hidden gem in the middle of the Cederberg. There are lush green lawns and trees everywhere. The atmosphere, scenery and everything else takes your breath away.

Describe the campsite.

The stands are really big compared to other places we've camped before. Each one has a built-in braai, river water tap and electricity point. Most are covered by big shade trees. Some stands are closer to the river and river pools and some are closer to the mountain. The stands cost R200 per night.

Are the ablution facilities adequate?

There's only one ablution block with hot water. At the other you'll have to make do with cold showers. They are cleaned every morning and are neat and tidy. The showers each have a dressing cubicle. There's more than enough basins to wash dishes and there is also a fridge and freezer at the main ablution block. You have to take your own toilet paper, however, and the use of hair dryers and kettles aren't allowed.

How do you keep yourself occupied here?

There are three big river pools in which you can swim, five hiking trails, a volleyball court erected during summer months, donkey cart rides to explore the farm on, and there is plenty of space for mountain bikers.

What other kind of accommodation is there?

There are cottages and caravans that are permanently on-site that you can rent.

Any tips for those wanting to go there?

If you don't want to share space in the communal coolers you will need to bring your own fridge or freezer. Take sufficient drinking water and inflatables for the river pools.

Can you stock up there?

The shop at the office will cover the basics like snacks, sweets, beverages,

ice and wood. But make sure you buy enough food and fill up on fuel in Clanwilliam or Citrusdal.

How did you get there?

We drove in my Volkswagen CrossPolo. Halfway between Citrusdal and Clanwilliam you'll see the sign "Cederberg Algeria" where you need to make a right turn onto a gravel road that becomes a scenic pass, crossing the Olifants River. After 18 km you get to the Algeria Forest Station where you turn left toward Clanwilliam once again. After another 5 km you'll see signage for Jamaka.

What's the road like?

The gravel road is rugged and more ideal for people towing bush caravans and trailers. It's definitely not meant for smaller vehicles, those with low profile tyres or regular caravans.



Contact ☎ 027 482 2801

📍 jamaka.co.za

GPS S32.341164 E19.028404 📶

WIN

Lynnqwinda wins a **Camp Cover Bundu Bag** worth R500.

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

📍 campcover.co.za



Far-flung in Rustenburg

Pack your fishing gear and head to Swartruggens Dam where you can hook carp, catfish, bream or black bass.



FISHING RESORT SWARTRUGGENS DAM

Fish buffet

The small town of Swartruggens lies between Rustenburg and the Botswana border, and the campsite reminds one of those old-school municipal resorts.

Fortunately, it's anything but, and Dawie Vorster has been managing the resort for the past 18 years. He keeps things so neat and tidy that you'll definitely camp here more than once.

Judging by how busy it gets over long weekends you have to jump to

get one of the stands next to the water. These stands are on a beautiful lush lawn where old willows dug their roots into the earth long ago. In fact, Dawie planted the trees himself.

Back when he took over there were only two stands and no electricity, trees or grass. He got rid of the wild grass and the swampy areas next to the water and turned it into the neat stands that you see today.

The stands away from the water are against a slight slope. They're close to

the office and underneath a lane of trees on a nice piece of even grass.

Electricity points (standard domestic) are scattered throughout and the same goes for the fixed steel braais and taps.

The bathrooms are on the opposite end of the reception building.

Opposite the showers are basins, each in their own cubicle with a high wall between them. There isn't a scullery though and you'll have to make do at your nearest tap or in a bucket next to your caravan.





The four most common freshwater species are all present in the dam: carp, catfish, bream and black

bass – the latter you'll find in shallow water. Whatever you catch needs to be returned to the water.



Briefly | Swartruggens Dam



Fish Carp, catfish, bream and black bass.

Campsite Stands for 30–40 caravans, about half with shade.

Ablution facilities Old, but close by.

Price R100 p.p.p.n. (half price for kids 5–10) and R50 for your towing vehicle.

Arrival and departure times

No fixed times.

Contact 072 172 8646

vorsterdawie775@gmail.

com

Nearest town Swartruggens 1,5 km.

Road condition The last 360 km is a decent dirt road.

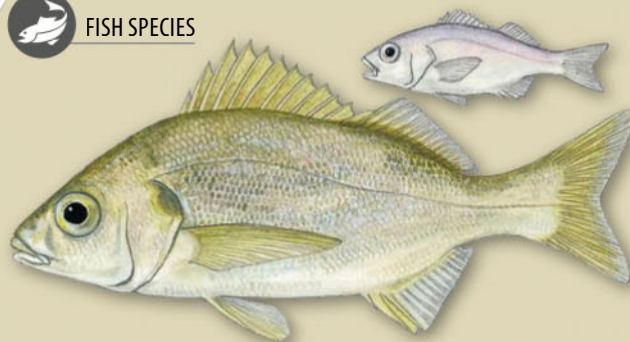
GPS S25.662491 E26.691184

go! Drive & Camp says

A carp weighing 8 kg was caught here last December.



FISH SPECIES



Piggy *Pomadasys olivaceus*

Piggy (also known as the olive grunter or "varkie") is a member of the *haemulid* or grunter family and is widespread in the Indian Ocean, occurring off India, Arabia, Madagascar and the entire east coast of Africa.

Piggy are a silvery olive-grey colour with yellowish fins as juveniles that turn a dusky colour in maturity. The name refers to the grunting noise they make when caught.

Size and biology Piggy are one of the smallest of the grunters, reaching a maximum length of only 31 cm. They can live for up to 10 years and reach sexual maturity after three years. Spawning takes place throughout the year in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

Habitat Piggy are a shoaling species that are fairly abundant in coastal waters, with

juveniles found in the mouths of estuaries, surf zones and over both sandy and rocky areas up to 10 m. As they grow this species moves further offshore, with adults found on offshore reefs and over soft substrate (sandy) banks from 10–90 m.

Where to catch them This species is caught by inshore anglers in KwaZulu-Natal and along the Eastern Cape coast as well as a by-catch in the prawn trawl fishery in KwaZulu-Natal. It is often caught and used as bait because of its small size.

That's a record 400 g (heaviest recorded weight)

SASSI status None, because they are not endangered. You're allowed to catch and take home 10 per day.

Text Dr. Nikki James **Illustration** Elaine Heemstra © SAIAB





Wonder woman

Gerrie Cilliers tows and pitches her caravan all by herself – for more than 19 years now. The fact that she is 86 old makes it even more impressive. We go camping with her.

Text and photos Liela Magnus



About 40 km outside of Brits in the North West, Gerrie Cilliers sits in front of her Jurgens Surfer Delux on one of those camping chairs with the built-in footrest. The thick see-through plastic tablecloth protects the pretty blue-and-white one underneath it. Clamps on the sides keep the wind from blowing it away. Three white chairs stand ready for dinner and the hot tray is switched on. Here at the Thaba Morula campsite, Gerrie Cilliers is at her happiest.

But call her Gerrie. Not Mrs Cilliers, doctor Cilliers, or founding member of the



WILLING AND ABLE. Gerrie Cilliers is happiest when she can simply relax next to her caravan, knitting clothes for the next church bazaar. At her house in Pretoria she hitches the caravan all by herself before embarking on her next adventure (above). Gerrie uses a caravan mover to perfectly manoeuvre her Jurgens into place at a campsite (right).



Tuks Alumni caravan club. And definitely not “tannie”. She’s just Gerrie, no matter how old you are.

She’s been camping with caravans for 53 years. First with her husband, Arnold, and their kids. Later it was just her and Arnold. But since 1998, after Arnold passed away, it’s only her in the caravan.

“My husband taught me well. When his health started to wane he suggested that I learn how to tow our caravan and taught me how to do it. The last time I towed it with him, before he passed away, he congratulated me on how well I towed.

It did a lot for my confidence. I had a fantastic husband.”

When she hitches her caravan to her Peugeot 407 with its automatic gearing and hits the road, her husband’s lessons are always in the back of her mind. “He taught me to shift gears in time before the engine labours, and to take a wider turn.”

After all these years, though, she still struggles to make a turn in reverse with a caravan in tow. “I know all the theories. You have to turn the wheel to the right if you want to go left, but I just can’t do it. I can reverse straight but a turn is too much of a challenge. >

Technology to the rescue

But this reversing thing doesn't bother her much. Initially fellow campers helped Gerrie to get the caravan to where it had to be when she arrived at a campsite, but all the while she kept her eyes peeled for a way for her to do it herself. The solution came in the form of a caravan mover.

Now when she arrives at her stand she first walks around the caravan twice (first one way, then the other). Then she stands with arms akimbo before she manoeuvres the caravan into place. "Sometimes I have to look in the mirror to remind myself how old I am," she says with her cordless electric drill in one hand.

She uses the drill to lower the corner steadies so the caravan is level; she then uses a latchkey to loosen the caravan's roof so she can lift it and finally she uses a gadget to pull the rally tent through the slot. The diamonds in her wedding ring sparkle in the sunlight as she drives tent pegs into the ground with a rubber mallet.

"I just realised that I can't always depend on other people. But I actually am still a little bit dependent because I can get the caravan out of the garage and hitch it and connect the stabiliser, but I can't disconnect it myself because my hands are a bit small. I can't pull the lever that loosens the knob and turn the wheel at the same time. This is why I always have to ask a fellow camper to help me out."

Gerrie's new caravan

Gerrie bought her Surfer Delux about 11 years ago. She towed the previous caravan – a Sprite Musketeer – by herself for a while, but her friend Jannij Stander saw the Surfer Delux and decided that this caravan had Gerrie's name written all over it.

Jannij brought the sales brochure to a lecture at their church – a lecture about focussing your mind. "He (the guy who presented the lecture) said your mind is like a butterfly: It flies all over and every time you have to bring the butterfly back to the starting point. During the interval, Jannji told me about the caravan and I couldn't get that butterfly back to its place," laughs Gerrie.

The next morning I called in reinforcements and took the church minister – who used to be an engineer and is himself a keen camper – with me to have a look at the caravan. "I said to Jan [the minister]



HOOKED ON A FEELING. Gerrie camps out with Henriëtte Magnus at the Thaba Morula campsite (main image). When she pitches the tent (opposite page) you have to stand aside and not get in her way. The caravan mover (below left) is one of Gerrie's favourite gadgets and helps her a lot. Gerrie knew she had to embrace technology if she wanted to continue with this type of lifestyle.





“
Sometimes I have to
look in the mirror to
remind myself how
old I am.”

that he must ask the technical questions; I would ask the general ones.”

Gerrie added extra plug points to the outside of the caravan, had an extra power socket installed inside and insisted on space for her freezer. All the work was completed within a week – the kids were on their way from England and the caravan had to be ready.

Over the past 11 years Gerrie put her personal touch on the caravan. A brightly coloured quilt that she made herself covers the bed, the plates are kept in cloth bags so it doesn't get dusty, in the toilet a doll hides a roll of toilet paper under her knitted frock; and glass mugs and cups are protected by cloth so they won't crack. Gerrie only drinks out of glass when she camps.

A stormy night at Aldam

When Gerrie and Arnold bought their first caravan in 1964 – a Venter with tent sidewalls – they had two boys and an infant daughter. In those years glasses were definitely not a priority.

They chose the Venter because it was spacious and the family could tow it with



their light-blue Mercedes-Benz 180 diesel. “We went to a show where my husband showed me which caravans we could tow with this weak car – and they were all such small things. And I said: ‘No thanks, not for me. I’m claustrophobic; none of these will work for me.’”

“That’s when we saw the Venter and it felt like it was as big as a hall and I said: ‘That one I can see myself in’. We camped with it for quite a while.”

With that Venter the family explored the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast, North Coast, interior, and the Kruger National park until they found a stand at Allemanskraal Dam near Winburg in the Free State.

“That night there was a terrible storm. The boys and a friend each clung to the tent poles like bushbabies. Then the wind raised everything 15 cm into the sky and with a ‘whoosh’ brought it back down. I was lying in the caravan with my daughter, praying. Later I was praying that if we had to go tonight, that we at least all go together so no one stayed behind alone.”

That storm was the Venter’s death knell. The Cilliers family began looking for a >

Gerrie’s camping memories



ALL OUR YESTERDAYS. The Cilliers family started exploring the South Coast in their Jurgens (third from the top). It was mainly her late husband, Arnold, and their eldest son who pitched the caravan. After that they used a Camp Pride (second from top) followed by a Constantia (top, fourth and fifth). The former also served as a “camp school” when their eldest daughter, Elma, played teacher to younger kids.

caravan with solid walls and decided on a Camp Pride.

Gerrie says this caravan served them well. But also only until the family grew and they couldn't lift the roof easily. Next on the list was a Constantia.

"It was an excellent caravan. It was so big three adults could stand next to each other in the small passage. It was wider than a car."

Their camping adventures, however, came to an abrupt standstill when the Valiant they used to tow the Constantia was stolen. For four years the caravan stood in the yard, and when Arnold bought a bakkie, the caravan was sold to road workers to use as a place to live. The Musketeer followed – a stalwart after the Cilliers family welcomed two more kids.

The heart and soul of the club

These days Gerrie tows her caravan about once a month together with the Tuks Alumni caravan club to a campsite about 200 km from Pretoria.

"The best is being outside in nature. The caravan is so nice – easy to clean and everything you need is close at hand, you don't have to walk far to get anything. It's much better than a chalet. You sleep in your own mess – you don't have to clean someone else's."

Gerrie is dearly beloved amongst the fellow campers. Everyone comes to say hello, but by now they know you can offer to help but otherwise stay out of her way when Gerrie starts to pitch camp.

Tracy Coetzee has camped with Gerrie a few times. She helps with the poles as Gerrie pitches her caravan. "Gerrie is such a cheerful person and she does her own thing. She is a shining example that you should never stop living and should never back down from something that looks difficult."

Zaaiman Stander has been camping with Gerrie and the club for almost 20 years. He says they haven't just learned a lot from her but she's also the heart and soul of the club. "She's the moral compass of the group and keeps the conversation on a respectable level. She has a wonderful sense of humour."

When people ask why she still goes on camping holidays, Gerrie replies that she will continue until she can't anymore. "It's a way of life for me. It's who I am."



CARRY ON CAMPING. Zaaiman Stander (top) says Gerrie is the heart and soul of their caravan club. Tracy Coetzee (above) says Gerrie is an example of what can be achieved if you remain young at heart. Gerrie prepares her signature dish: pies (left). She bakes them on the first day of camping and they are a firm favourite among her friends.



Gerrie Cilliers wins a **Camp Cover** Bundubag worth R500. The multifunction bag has been designed so that you can use it as a first-aid kit or simply as a suitcase. Have a look at Camp Cover's range of excellent protective covers on their website.
campcover.co.za



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A Fullback with kick

Fiat's first double cab is still relatively new on our roads but it's already showing its mettle in front of a caravan.

Text and photos **Leon Botha**



FIAT FULLBACK 2.4 LX (4X4 AUTOMATIC)

Fiat's double cab is here, and due to its Italian heritage it finds itself in distinguished company – think sports cars such as Lamborghini, Maserati and Ferrari (the latter two are Fiat subsidiaries).

When you look under the bonnet you'll see "FCA Italy S.p.A" written at the top of the engine plate, but Fiat's Fullback is more of a team effort. It doesn't require a lot of imagination to see that it's basically a clone of the new Mitsubishi Triton, and, moreover, the engine is actually supplied by Mitsubishi.

Partnerships amongst vehicle manufacturers are nothing new. Think of Renault and Nissan, Peugeot and Citroën, Ford and Mazda. What does matter, though, is how the towing vehicle behaves in front of the caravan. We hitched and towed to find out.

Strong yet modest

We coupled the top model Fullback to our caravan. At half a million bucks you're impressed with the 430 Nm torque, but any caravan will have to brace itself if the Fullback sends all of its power to the wheels, even if it's a 4x4 automatic. Fiat, however, reined in the Fullback: You're not allowed a towing weight of more than 1 405 kg.

That's relatively light if you compare it to other double cab bakkies – the trend amongst some of the bigger names is more than 3 t. You'd at least expect the Fullback to be able

to tow its own tare weight (1 850 kg) because the engine is certainly strong enough for it. (The Fullback's GCM, or gross combination mass, is only 4 285 kg; that's the permissible maximum weight of the bakkie and the caravan on the tow bar. The gross vehicle mass, or GVM, of the bakkie itself is 2 880 kg. If you subtract the two figures from each other, the permissible maximum tow weight is 1 405 kg.)

This limit isn't the end of the world because many of the caravans/trailers on our roads don't weigh 1 400 kg (even though the GVM might be 1 500 kg or higher). The caravan's GVM just shouldn't exceed the tare weight of the Fullback.

Hitch to it

The tow bar's allowed weight matches the 1 405 kg and is also certified for it. That said, the tow bar does look equally sturdy compared to those of other bakkies and is made by Bosal.

The tow bar doesn't form part of the bumper – it's separate with an arm that emerges from below the bumper. The end is detachable if you won't be using the tow bar for a while. The top of the ball is 51 cm above the ground and the flange plate bolted to it has a second pair of holes 8 cm higher if you want to lift the ball. A drop plate also fits onto the tow bar.

In contrast to the modest towing limit that Fiat has given the Fullback, they are far more generous when it comes to nose weight: 112 kg (12 kg more than is legally allowed). >



Something new

The Fullback is packed with cool innovations, same as with any new bakkie. Firstly, you don't have to step on the brake pedal when you start the car like you would with many other automatic vehicles; in the Fullback you get in and switch on while the car is in Park.

A nice safety feature is that all the doors lock the moment you turn the key, and unlock when you kill the engine. The Fullback also doesn't complain if anyone removes their seat belt while the car is in motion (there's no warning light either). It's a small mercy because there are few things as irritating as an annoying alarm when you unbuckle and you know it's safe to do so.

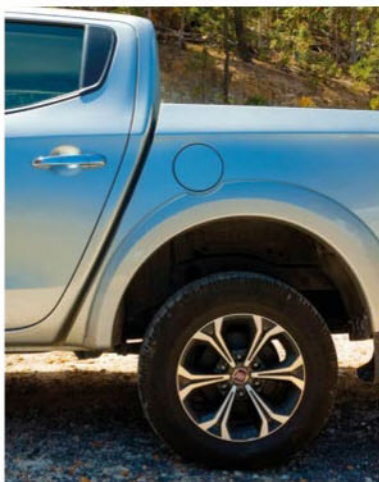
The headlights' beam angle is also adjustable – you can choose between five settings depending on how heavy the weight on the ball and the size of the load in the Fullback.

The rear-view camera's screen (13 cm wide) is right at the top of the centre console above the gear lever. You also have a decent view of the tow bar. But like with so many other manufacturers, the image of the ball isn't in the middle of the screen but rather on the two-third line because the lens is 18 cm to the left of the tailgate's mid-point. It complicates matters when you reverse. (It's safer to also use the mirrors anyway.)

The screen also has static index lines – actually more for decoration because you can't see the turn angle when you turn the steering wheel. There are also no proximity sensors.

The button for the rear diff lock is in the panel in front of the gear lever and next to it is a USB socket (a flimsy flap covers the socket when it's not in use). It's disappointing that there's only one socket and not one for the rear passengers.

The gear lever's shift pattern is staggered which means you don't move the gear lever



ONE IN FIVE. New vehicles – especially SUVs – use six speed automatic gearboxes, but that's not the case with the Fiat Fullback. When you tow a caravan you'll find that five gears are perfectly acceptable.



downwards in one uninterrupted motion from Park to Drive. It can be a hassle if you want to change gears rapidly.

Above the dashboard's electronic screen is a smaller screen that shows in which driving mode the Fullback is. It's a simple diagram, exactly like the Mitsubishi Pajero, which shows whether it's the rear wheels, all the

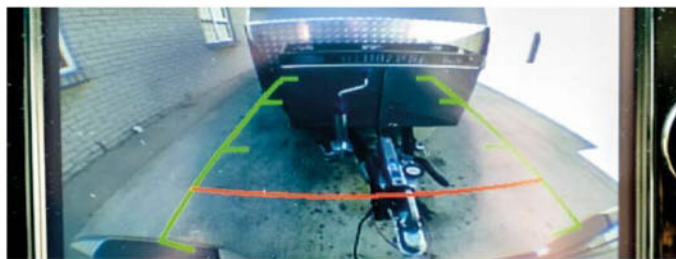
wheels, the centre or rear diff lock that are engaged.

Although a five-speed transmission is almost old-fashioned these days, Fiat decided on using it. But that's not a problem at all because the Fullback runs quite comfortably at 100 km/h in fifth and 1 900 rpm. You hardly feel the caravan.



A nice safety feature is that all the doors lock the moment you turn the key.





OFFSIDE. The reverse camera isn't placed in the centre of the tailgate. That means the hitch doesn't appear in the centre of the display.



Pieter Crous
and caravan towing are like twin brothers. Here's what he thinks.

“ I'm astounded by how comfortably you sit in the Fullback – the leather seats kind of give you that Gommagomma feel. It offers the necessary support where it should and it's perfect for the open road.

The digital display in front of you in the dashboard is very simple, but you can see what you need to see – even if the sun falls directly on it. Strangely enough you can't change the different options for the screen with the buttons on the steering wheel. Next to the screen there's a long plastic pin that you press to display info like fuel usage, range, and the odometer – something you won't find anymore on some of the newer vehicles.

Judging by how little the Fullback's tail dropped when we hitched the caravan, I expected a bumpy ride. But that wasn't the case. The Fullback

drives just as comfortably as a Mitsubishi Triton.

The automatic transmission is very eager and when you put your foot down to accelerate it does so immediately. The engine has no sign of turbo lag, which means that its turbo assists over a wide range of revs.

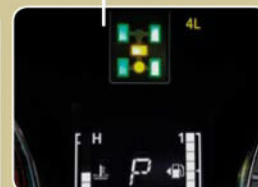
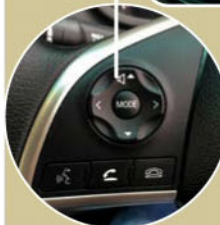
I have to agree: A five-speed transmission is less common nowadays, but at 120 km/h and 2 300 rpm you can't complain with a caravan on the tow bar. The engine also doesn't labour. Even if you regard its smooth acceleration from 80 km/h to 120 km/h, it doesn't hold back. At 80 km/h and in fifth the engine turns at 1 500 rpm. If you put your foot down it immediately drops a gear and pushes the revs into the red (4 000 rpm) as it fuels the engine. After only 14,7 seconds you're at 120 km/h. It's better acceleration than some of the other bigger towing engines we've tested.

Still, it feels like the Fullback's top model isn't finished off properly. I would compare it to the cheaper double cab bakkies like the GWM Steed.

Other things that bother are the price and the fairly heavy fuel consumption. Of course, the test vehicle only had 3 500 km on the clock and the engine probably isn't broken in yet. At least the Fullback tows comfortably. **”**



NOT AHEAD. Buttons on the steering wheel manage your phone and cruise control, not the centre info screen.



WHAT WHEELS? A diagram lifted straight out of a Mitsubishi shows which differentials are locked and whether one or both axles are driven.



On the tow bar

Make Armadillo

Model Shack

Year model 2017

GVM 1 800 kg

Loaded weight on the axle at time of test 1 060 kg (weighed hitched to the Fullback).

Nose weight 42 kg

go! Drive and Camp borrowed the Armadillo Shack from Eko Veld Gear. Phone Fanie Botha on 021 981 5999 for a closer look. ekoveldgear.co.za. (Also see this month's caravan test on p.86 where we have a proper look at the Shack.)



UP AND AWAY. The tow bar has a flange onto which the ball is bolted in the upper or lower position. A drop plate can be added if needed.

Before you open your wallet

What does the book say?

Fuel Diesel

Engine 2,442 ℓ

Cylinders Inline-four

Power 133 kW @ 3 500 rpm

Torque 430 Nm @ 2 500 rpm

Transmission 5-speed (automatic)

Drive chain Rear wheel or four wheel with high and low range as well as central and rear diff lock.

Tare 1 850 kg

GVM 2 880 kg

GCM 4 285 kg

Fording depth 500 mm

Payload Up to 1 405 kg (445 kg less than the tare weight)

Dimensions 5 205 mm (l); 1 815 mm (w); 1 780 mm (h)

Wheelbase 3 000 mm

Track width 1 520 mm (front); 1 515 mm (rear)

Ground clearance 205 mm

Fuel tank 75 ℓ

Price (new) From R494 052

Price (second-hand) The cheapest one we could find on autotrader.co.za was a 2017 model with 28 km on the clock at R479 494.

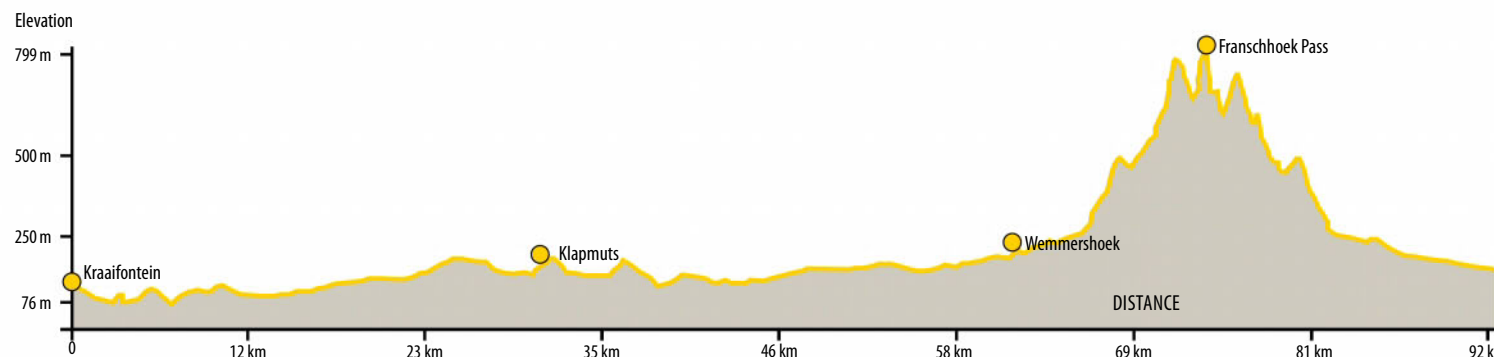
Fast facts

The tow bar It's standard and removable. It is a Mopar part that's manufactured by Bosal. The tow bar is certified for a load of 1 405 kg and the nose weight on the ball shouldn't exceed 112 kg.

Suspension Wishbone and coil springs in front and leaf springs at the back. The tail didn't even feel the Armadillo's nose weight and only dropped by 12 mm.



TOW PROFILE



What does the scale say? 2 100 kg with a full tank of diesel, the caravan's nose weight on the tow bar and the driver in the car.

Interior With the front seat adjusted high you have four fingers above the crown of your head. On the backseat you have two fingers above the crown and four in front of your knees.

Speed At 100 km/h and 120 km/h the speedometer was out by 7 km/h – the GPS showed 93 km/h and 113 km/h respectively.

Fuel consumption According to calculations, 13,2 l/100 km (7,6 km/l). The Fiat's computer didn't differ much: 13,4 l/100 km (7,5 km/l).

Finishes Predominantly black inside with simple and solid trim as well as shiny black plastic bits around the centre console and the gear lever.

Extras Metallic paint R3 500.

Other double cab models? 2.5 4x2 R397 793 and 2.5 4x4 R463 952 (both diesel and manual)

go! Drive and Camp says The fuel level warning light blinks on when there's roughly 10 l diesel left in the tank. This means you'll have a little more than 70 km to go before you hit the automotive equivalent of day zero.

The test

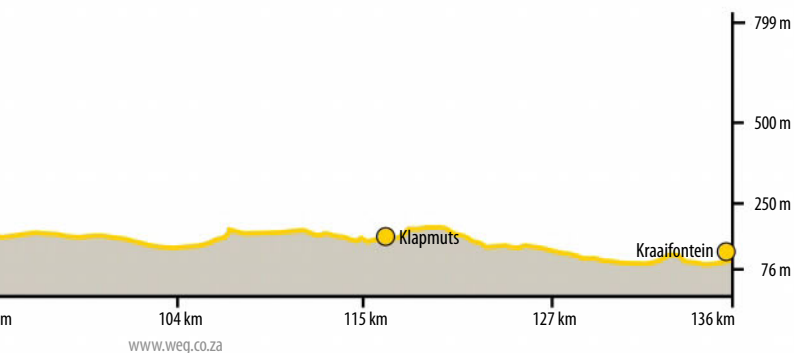
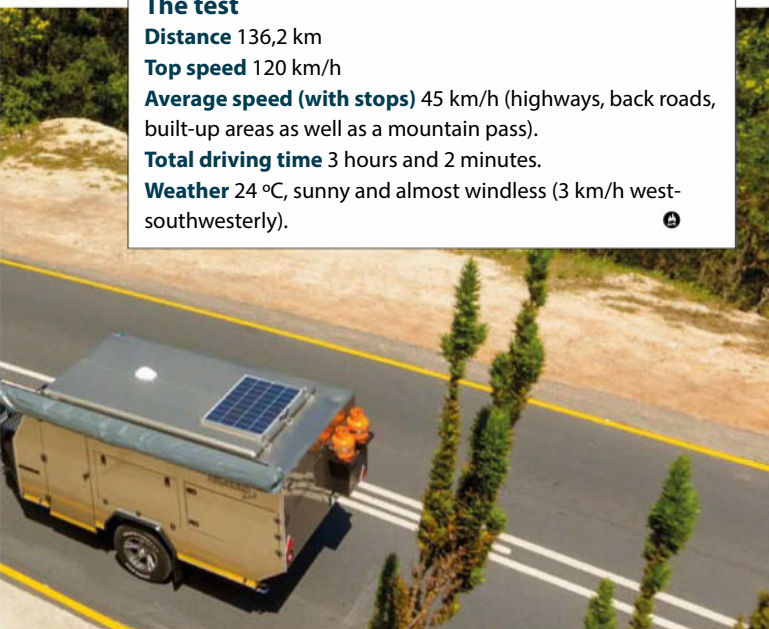
Distance 136,2 km

Top speed 120 km/h

Average speed (with stops) 45 km/h (highways, back roads, built-up areas as well as a mountain pass).

Total driving time 3 hours and 2 minutes.

Weather 24 °C, sunny and almost windless (3 km/h west-southwesterly).



Some of the competitors (double cab, 4x4, diesel and automatic)



Nissan Navara 2.3D LE
R594 900

450 Nm



Ford Ranger 2.2 TDCi XLS
R536 900

385 Nm



Volkswagen Amarok 2.0 TDI Comfortline
R570 900

340 Nm

Shack up

With its painfully neat finishes and excellent workmanship, Eko Veld Gear's latest offering is anything but a shack on wheels.

Text and photos Leon Botha



ARMADILLO SHACK



The Cape-based Eko Veld Gear immediately attracted attention when it entered the off-road camping trailer market with its Armadillo in 2015.

With this caravan the father-and-son team Fanie and Riaan Botha came up with a few cool creative ideas.

The double bed, which folds flat over the A-frame, folds over the edge of the pop-up roof when it's in the closed position and prevents the roof from lifting while the vehicle is in motion.

Fanie and Riaan also use aluminium as base material for the body, which means you don't have to worry about rust.

And, like with so many other trailers, their caravans are available in brown, but they use

a metallic paint, which creates a more striking look.

Fanie and his team have continued building on the Armadillo's success, with a second model, the Armadillo Shack, recently joining the family.

At first glance the Shack looks like a clone of the Armadillo, but it's significantly different and boasts a range of innovations.

Its body is the same size, but the bed is inside and the door in the back has been moved to the side.

This makes the Shack more compact and just the thing for couples who want to explore the African bush. >





Pitched in a jiffy

The Shack is basically sleep-ready when you unhitch at the campsite. Simply lower the corner steadies, lift the roof and plug in the electrical cord at the nearest point. Within five minutes you'll be sitting back in your camp chair, enjoying your break.

On each rear corner is a Burquip corner steady, the drop-down type that folds out in one movement. You simply pull the blue handle where the corner steady has been fastened to the body and loosen the bolt at the handle with a crank lever to push the foot out a bit further. A loose corner steady also fits onto the A-frame close to the jockey wheel if you want the Shack to be planted even firmer on the ground.

Unlike the Armadillo, where the pop-up roof lifts like that of a conventional caravan, the Shack's only lifts in the front. There are two clips, the kind with a built-in safety mechanism, on the corners of the body. You have to unclip it first before climbing in to lift the roof (the door is in front on the left). The roof lifts easily

and so high that it's completely out of the way when you stand in the door.

In front of the roof's sailcloth section is a large window with a sailcloth canopy that stretches over it. There are two spring-loaded steel rods next to the roof clips to keep the sailcloth canopy open and keep sun and rain out.



Time to eat

As is customary, all the kitchen cupboards have been built into the left-hand side panel, but this excludes a cupboard with a freezer that slides out of the trailer. This is inside to the left against the nose section of the body. That means it's slightly removed from the kitchen section but it's convenient if you want something cold while you're in bed.

The kitchen is to the right of the door and has two cupboards. The door of the one closest – above the wheel – folds flat to form a work surface. It's made of stainless steel and doesn't have raised edges, making it easy to clean. Inside, behind the cupboard door,

are various-sized open shelves lined with carpet. There's ample packing place – from space for crockery to containers for groceries. The one shelf bottom right is even deep enough for a few bottles of wine to stand upright. There's a double three-prong socket (220 V) to the far left in the cupboard and is perfect for a kettle or toaster.





The cupboard door to the far right doesn't fold flat, but opens to the side. Behind the door are more shelves lined with carpet.

The light at the top of the body of the Shack is LED and doesn't work with a sliding

switch that forms part of the light; this one has a touch switch and you can adjust the brightness levels.

The winner is the stove on the inside of the door. The door opens square against the body

of the Shack and the stove top then folds out towards you. The gas stove is fixed on the right of the surface.

This is one of the most practical ideas when it comes to off-road trailers and where the gas stove is mounted. Quite a few manufacturers put the stove on the work surface, but then you lose valuable space. With the stove out of the way you don't just have more space, the door behind the stove also serves as protection from the wind.

A section of the surface to the left of the stove is open for you to put your utensils on. You put a loose pole underneath the stove top and support the surface

against the body of the caravan to keep it sturdy while you mix your marinade. The stove isn't connected to the gas bottle and you'll have to lug one of the gas bottles (on the shelf in the back of the caravan) closer.

If you need more packing space in the kitchen, Fanie includes a loose fold-up aluminium table that you store in a shelf behind the nosecone where it fits in on its side. The table is quite narrow (120 x 47 cm) but it's a very good spot to put the plates when you're dishing up.

A loose steel frame that fits the dishwashing basins hooks in to the left of the door – out of the way of the kitchen. >



The rear

Besides the two gas bottles in the back (at the top, right) an extra-narrow door opens up top left and the shower cubicle folds out of this. It's similar to the one that Fanie and his team use in the original model.

The spare wheel is also in the back and fastened to a frame underneath the body; it's neatly placed between two corner steadies so you can easily reach

it. The jerry can is in its holder right below the gas bottles and doesn't stand upright like you're used to, but is on its side.

Around the corner, in the right-hand side panel behind the nosecone, is the in-line gas geyser on the inside of the cupboard door. Carry the second gas bottle here and you'll be ready to jump under a hot shower.



Front and centre

The nosecone is simply a square box with aluminium tread plate with a door on both sides.

It doesn't have shelves inside; it's one big open space with room for things like a tarp or loose corner steadies, the washbasin frame and its loose water pipe.

The top of the cupboard is also an

open shelf that can fit a bag or three of braai wood. It's a comfortable place to stand if you want to reach the clips at the top of the pop-up roof.

A protective cover stretches over the nosecone so that loose stones flying up don't damage the front of the trailer.

It consists of two parts that's joined in the middle with a strip of velcro.



In the bedroom

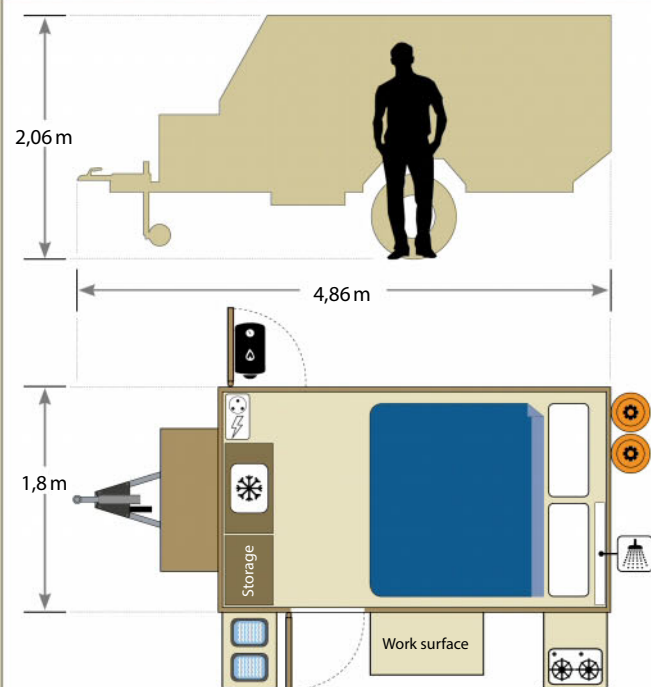
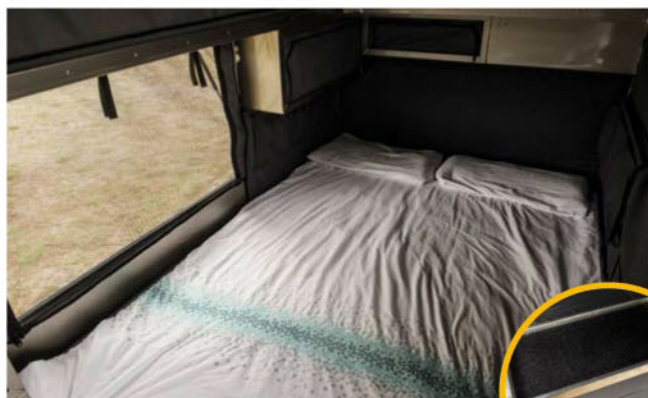
The bed stretches from the door to the back of the caravan. It's 216 x 147 cm – just bigger than a standard queen-size bed – and reaches the left- and right-hand side panels as well. To the right of the bed at the top are narrow cupboards for clothes and there are two modern reading lamps above your head when you lie down. These LED lights don't have switches like you're used to but works with a remote-controlled switch – in the approximately 120 caravan tests we've done the past decade, this is a first. Not only can you stand at the door and switch on the lights but the remote can even adjust the lights' brightness level. Now you're the cat's whiskers.

Another door opens to the left to the outside. That's the "window" and the same that Fanie and his team used in the original Armadillo. It doesn't have a see-through panel like glass or Perspex, only a mesh net. And you can unzip it if you want to sleep even closer to nature.

The middle section of the bed folds up to form a small table – and you can sit on both sides of the tabletop. It's 78 x 49 cm and a good solution if you don't mind sacrificing your bed when you don't want to sit and eat outside. An awning stretches over the kitchen section in case of inclement weather.

There's an upright cupboard with four shelves directly to the left of the door. One canvas door zips closed in front of the cupboards – here is space for a microwave on one of the shelves. In the bottom cupboard is a double 220 V socket.

The freezer is to the left of the cupboard in the middle of the floor against the nose of the Shack, and the electricity box is fastened to the right-hand panel. That includes all the circuit breakers, a battery charger and another 220 V double socket. A smaller cupboard is to the right of the electricity box and knee height next to the cupboard is a set of 12 V sockets. There's also a USB socket.



The technical stuff

Length 4,86 m

Width 1,8 m

Height 2,06 m

Apex (inside) 2,4 m

Nose weight 42 kg (standard, before loading cargo)

Net weight 1 060 kg (including all standard equipment)

Payload 740 kg

GVM 1 800 kg

Price From R235 000



Plus

- The stove stands on its own surface and creates space in the kitchen.
- The stove is protected from the wind.
- The spare wheel is out of the way but still easy to reach.
- The remote-controlled reading lights are great.
- The window with the mesh inside is a winner.



Minus

- The freezer is a bit far from the kitchen, but it's still conveniently inside.

- The nosecone cover is in the way of the cupboard doors if you need to get something out quickly.
- Keep the light nose weight in mind when packing – pack the heavy stuff in front.

go! Drive & Camp says

Delivery time is 6–8 weeks.

go! Drive & Camp borrowed the Armadillo Shack from the manufacturer.

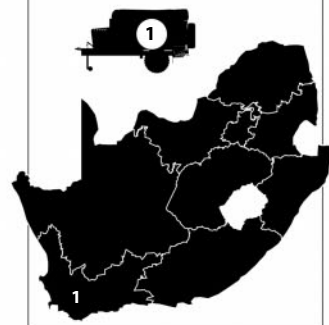
Dealership

Eko Veld Gear is a partnership with a factory in Cape Town.

Contact 021 981 5999

info@ekoveldgear.co.za

ekoveldgear.co.za





Disconnect ... to reconnect



Next time you get away from it all make sure you *really* get away from it all.

Feeling physically exhausted and mentally fatigued? Try to disconnect from your electronic devices more often. Research confirms what outdoor enthusiasts have known all along: We need more time away from our screens (TVs, laptops and cellphones).

When was the last time you went 24 hours without checking your phone? What about 12? The downside of keeping your phone switched on 24/7 could outweigh the benefits of having it at all. Studies show that spending tons of time online can actively harm relationships, interpersonal communication skills, and mental health.

But that is something 4x4 and camping communities have known for decades. We have to spend more time away from our devices and more time in nature.

Adults, like children, need to play outdoors. It's not only good for the soul but also for your health. And the wonderful thing about living in South Africa is that we have plenty of options right on our doorstep. So pack your tent and trailer and head for the woods or the Bushveld.

But camping in the wild doesn't mean you have to give up your creature comforts. It's possible to rough it without *really* roughing it! And that's why sturdy, reliable camping gear is so important. If you want to relax around the campfire, connecting with good friends over a braai, you'll need a decent chair and a reliable cooler box for starters. And after a hard day of 4x4 driving, you want to sleep comfortably. Camp Master understands that high quality doesn't have to equal high price. So maybe it's time you switch off your phone and make Camp Master your new best friend.

Camp Master range



Tents
Gazebos



Sleeping bags
Mattresses
Camp beds



Chairs
Cupboards
Tables



Cooler boxes
Cooler bags
Thermo coolers



Charcoal
Briquettes
Braais
Firelighters



WILDERNESS 310 TRAILER (WITH TENT)

6-foot trailer
3070 (l) x 1740 (w) x 1540 (h) mm
Capacity 1 690 ℓ Tare mass 360 kg

Payload 390 kg GVM 750 kg
One-year warranty
Available at Makro



SAFARI DOME 505

Sleeps 5
300 (l) x 300 (w) x 225 (h) cm
1 000 mm water column
300 g ripstop canvas

Roof ventilation
Posket socket
19 kg packed weight
One-year warranty
Available at Makro

SAVANNAH DIRECTOR CHAIR

150 kg weight support
Padded
Side table

Includes cup holder
and cellphone holder
Built-in cooler bag
One-year warranty
Available at Makro



SAVANNAH DELUXE ARMCHAIR

150 kg weight support
lightweight
Solid armrests

Padded
Includes cup holder
One-year warranty
Available at Makro



SAVANNAH SOFA CHAIR

130 kg weight support
Padded

Includes utility pocket
One-year warranty
Available at Makro



DELUXE PADDED STRETCHER

198 (l) x 91 (w) x 34 (h) cm
150 kg weight support
Adjustable legs
Padded
One-year warranty
Available at Makro



45/60 L SAFARI COOLER

Holds ice for five days*
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40 L THERMO ELECTRIC COOLER

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Cooling performance Up to 20 °C below
ambient temperature
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One-year warranty
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Accessories



Lighting

Available at



www.campmaster.co.za

Packed with goodness

The French call it *en papillote*: to cook food in a parcel. It keeps the food juicy and enhances the flavours. And the good news is that you can do it over the coals too.

Recipes and styling **Aletta Lintvelt** Photos **Myburgh du Plessis**
Food assistant **Merrill Buckley**

SWEET POTATO WITH YOGHURT CHEESE

Like a hot (sweet) potato

You can make yoghurt cheese anywhere. Simply drain thick unflavoured yoghurt overnight outside the fridge in a dishcloth. The next day you eat the cheese with sweet potato from the fire.

Ingredients

(enough for 6)

- 1 ½ Greek yoghurt
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon chilli flakes
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 6 sweet potatoes
- salt and pepper, to taste

Here's how

1 Pour the yoghurt into a clean dishcloth, tie the ends together and hang it somewhere outside the fridge with a bowl beneath it. Leave to drain overnight. Scrape out the yoghurt and put in the fridge.

2 Heat the olive oil, chilli flakes, thyme and parsley until lukewarm – it shouldn't boil. Remove from the heat and put to the side.

3 Wrap the sweet potatoes in foil and bake over medium coals until soft.

4 Serve the baked sweet potatoes with yoghurt cheese and chilli oil.

go! Drive & Camp says Roll any leftover yoghurt cheese into balls and put in a jar. Cover with olive oil and put in the fridge. It will keep for 1–2 weeks.

PORK IN BANANA LEAVES

Pull in

This leg of pork is wrapped in banana leaves and then put directly onto coals to steam until cooked through. Pull with two forks and serve with onion, salsa and wraps.

Ingredients

(enough for 6)

- 1 kg pork shoulder or leg
- A banana leaf or three

FOR THE MARINADE

- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- ½ cup olive oil
- 4 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon fine cumin
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon smoked chilli flakes
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- salt and pepper to taste

Here's how

1 Mix all the ingredients for the marinade together and marinate the meat overnight. The next morning wrap the meat in the banana leaves and use kitchen string to secure it.

2 Put the parcel in a kettle braai and use the indirect cooking method – that means the coals are moved to the sides and isn't directly underneath the meat. The braai shouldn't be too hot – about 130–150 °C. Put the lid on and steam the meat for 3–4 hours. It's done when you can pull it apart with two forks.

3 Pull the meat apart and pour the remaining marinade over the meat. Serve warm with wraps, tomato salsa and onion.

go! Drive & Camp says If you can't find banana leaves, use baking paper and then wrap it in foil. >





PARCELS WITH CHICKEN, OLIVES, FETA AND PEPPADEWS. Beyond juicy

Chicken breasts are an excellent ingredient to prepare in a parcel because the meat remains juicy and the olives and peppadews give ample flavour.

Ingredients

(enough for 4)

- 4 chicken breasts
- 16 olives
- 8 peppadews
- 2 wheels feta cheese
- 1 teaspoon dried origanum
- 4 tablespoons olive oil

- salt and pepper, to taste

Here's how

1 Put each chicken breast on a piece of baking paper. Divide the rest of the ingredients between the 4 parcels and season with salt and pepper. Wrap each parcel loosely in foil.

2 Bake the parcels for about 10 minutes over medium coals and leave to rest for 5 minutes before serving.

go! Drive & Camp says

If your chicken breasts have not been deboned it will take longer to cook.



FISH PARCELS WITH PAPRIKA AND LEMON Gone fishing

Fish tastes delicious when you cook it in a parcel.

Ingredients

(enough for 4)

- 2–4 small, whole fish, cleaned and butterflied (we used snapper)
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 lemon, cut in thin slices
- ½ cup butter, cut into blocks
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon smoked chilli flakes
- 1 teaspoon dried origanum
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- salt and pepper, to taste

Here's how

1 Rinse the fish off with clean water. Pat dry with kitchen towels and place each fish in the middle of a piece of baking paper.

2 Put the green pepper, lemon and butter inside both fish. Season with the spices.

3 Wrap the fish in the baking paper and then also loosely in foil. Bake for about 10 minutes in a kettle braai over medium coals with the lid on.

4 Open the parcels on a plate and put another block of butter on each fish before serving.

go! Drive & Camp says The baking time over the coals will depend on the size of the fish – check after 8 minutes if it's a small fish while thicker fish will take about 15 minutes.



RED CABBAGE AND BACON PARCELS Of cabbages and kings

This warm “salad” completely changed my mind about cabbage. It can be enjoyed warm or at room temperature.

Ingredients

(enough for 4)

- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 3 tablespoons olive oil (plus extra for drizzling)
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1 small red cabbage, finely chopped
- 6 rashers bacon, cut into pieces

- salt and pepper, to taste

Here's how

1 Mix the garlic, olive oil, vinegar and parsley together and put to the side.

2 Place the cabbage and bacon in a piece of foil and season lightly with salt and pepper.

Drizzle over some olive oil and close the foil parcel.

3 Braai the packet for about 15 minutes or until the cabbage and bacon are cooked. Tear open the parcel and drizzle over the garlic mixture. Serve warm.

go! Drive & Camp says You can replace the cabbage with spinach or any other veggie of your choice.



TIN CUP PRAWNS Not your average cup of joe

These prawns are steamed in tin cups together with garlic butter and then you dip your bread into the sauce.

Ingredients

(enough for 4)

- 24 prawns
- 1 cup butter
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 6 tablespoons flaked almonds
- 3 tablespoons chopped parsley
- black pepper, to taste

Here's how

1 Clean the prawns – remove

the vein and then remove the heads and tails.

2 Divide the butter and the rest of the ingredients between 4 tin cups and put it over the coals so the butter can melt.

3 Put 6 prawns in each cup and cover the opening of the cup with a piece of baking paper or foil. Use a piece of kitchen string to keep the paper in place.

4 Steam the cups for 4 minutes over hot coals – when the prawns are pink, they're done.

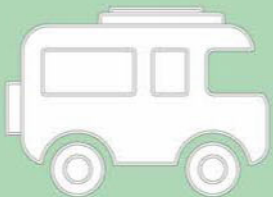
5 Serve hot with bread that you can use to dunk into the garlic sauce.

go! Drive & Camp says Add a pinch of cayenne pepper or chopped fresh chilli if you like a bit of bite.



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Cooking with gas



There are alternatives to wood and charcoal when it comes to braaiing. Sure, it might not be your first choice, but you can't deny the convenience of a handy gas braai in the campsite.

Text **Kyle Kock**

What happens when you're out in the wilderness or a nature reserve and you realise you haven't brought along any firewood? It's not like you can just pop into the nearest supermarket, because there isn't one. And that bag of charcoal you thought was in the boot must have found its way into the kettle braai at home or in a friend's yard. Some campsites even stipulate that you're not allowed to make a wood fire.

In instances like these you'll be grateful that you remembered your trusty gas bottle and braai.

The age-old argument that wood and charcoal make the best fuel for a "real" braai is slowly being silenced by the convenience and popularity of the modern gas braai. And you don't have to go for one of those cumbersome, oversized American BBQ-style units. You can carry these eight gas braais with you to your favourite holiday destination.

MEGAMASTER 3 BURNER PLANCHA ▶

Por favor, señor

The Spanish plancha method basically means that no flames touch the food. The ingredients are seared to keep flavour, vitamins and minerals in. This unit features a removable drip tray for easy cleaning, enamel-coated cast iron cooking plates, and three stainless steel burners. It weighs 21 kg, is 700 mm long, 440 mm wide and 26 mm deep.

Price R3 500 at Megamaster

go! Drive & Camp says It definitely is something different from the norm.



◀ CHEF MINI SPIT

Semi-pro style

Now you can have rotisserie-style meat at your favourite camping or caravanning resort thanks to the mini spit's portable and compact size. It's made of 304-grade stainless steel and has a chrome-plated rotisserie basket. The ceramic infrared burner is designed to be heated by 3 kg or 4.5 kg gas bottles and the motor is built-in.

Price R4 290 at Chef

go! Drive & Camps says Who doesn't like the way meat from a spit just falls off the bone?

LK'S 2 BURNER GAS BRAAI ▶

Simple Simon

Constructed from a combination of mild steel and cast iron with a chrome-plated grid, this unit is 480 mm wide and 570 mm long, so it's on the smaller side for this particular style of braai. It has a simple box design with uncomplicated fittings, so it should be easily serviceable.

Price R2 550 at Outdoor Warehouse

go! Drive & Camp says Fuss-free design and easy to use. What more could you ask for? >





ALVA PORTABLE GAS BRAAI GRILL

Sleek and unique

Because of its slimline design and folding cart, the Portable Gas Braai from Alva can be easily stored away once you've finished cooking. The lid can be secured with a latch so you can safely transport it, and the single rotary control knob makes operation simple.

Price R1 040 at Braaishop

go! Drive & Camp says This one's particularly handy when you're short on storage room.



CADAC SAFARI CHEF LP

Tiny wonder

Makers of the legendary skottel, Cadac, have come up with an even more portable solution. The Safari Chef is portable, weighs less than 4 kg, has an automatic piezo push-button ignition, and comes with three interchangeable cooking surfaces. These are the non-stick ribbed griddle, flat griddle, and pot stand with dome lid – all of which fits into a carry bag.

Price R1 700 from takealot.com

go! Drive & Camp says You'll have to purchase an EN417B threaded gas cartridge (R90) that fits directly into the braai.



WEBER Q2200 GAS GRILL

Brand bias

Famed for their line of enviable charcoal braais, Weber also has a few gas options. The Q2200 is their flagship model without a stand. It has a large working surface, two folding work tables, boasts a built-in lid thermometer for the best temperature control, and has a single stainless steel burner. It's 1 300 mm wide, 660 mm tall and 640 mm deep.

Price R6 200 at Weber

go! Drive & Camp says The Q2200 is backed by a monster five-year limited warranty, for peace-of-mind ownership.





ALVA MONDO 1 BURNER GAS BRAAI COMBO

Dual design

This model can be easily separated from its mobile cart and used as a tabletop braai. It boasts a built-in thermometer, accessory hooks on both side tables, cast iron grids with enamel finish, and the company's signature flamethrower ignition system.

Price R4 800 at Braai Culture

go! Drive & Camp says Alva recommends that you use a 9 kg gas bottle with the Mondo.

LK'S STEAK BRAAI 4-BURNER

Medium rare, double quick

Entirely put together from stainless steel, this unit is quite attractive. The four-burner is on the large size, but because you can get a lot of food on this model, at least everyone will eat at the same time. Its 560 mm long and 340 mm wide. It also has a lid and can be wall-mounted.

Price R4 600 at Braaishop.

go! Drive & Camp says You'll have no problem with heat on this model, and the stainless steel is easy to clean.



GET THE PRODUCTS HERE

Braaishop braaishop.co.za

Braai Culture braaiculture.com

Chef chef.co.za

Megamaster megamaster.co.za

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DUAL-BATTERY DIAGNOSTICS

If your dual-battery system isn't working, don't blame the system itself. You may need a good maintenance charger.

The experts at **National Luna** explain...



QUESTION

My dual-battery isn't charging. I had a solenoid system installed in my 4x4 just over a year ago. The setup seemed to work fine the first time, but now there's very little power in my auxiliary battery when I get to camp. On my most recent trip, I spent three to four hours driving between camps, but by the following morning the battery was flat and my fridge wasn't running.

I've heard reports that a solenoid-based dual-battery system doesn't work with some vehicles, and that I should switch to a DC-DC system. But before I fork out thousands of rands on a second system, can you offer some advice?

ANSWER

We hear these complaints daily, and the answer is surprisingly simple: You need a 220V maintenance charger.

Some time back, a leading safari rental company ran into a similar problem with their fleet of vehicles. Each vehicle was fitted with a National Luna Intelligent Solenoid dual-battery system, along with a wet-cell 105 A deep-cycle battery. This setup worked well initially, but as the

months went by the auxiliary batteries weren't providing enough power – even after a long drive. The problem had nothing to do with the vehicle's alternator or with the solenoid dual-battery system, and everything to do with the fact that the batteries weren't lasting.

The problem is two-fold: A deep-cycle (wet-cell) battery is not necessarily the best choice, and all batteries need maintenance!

Visit their new website at www.nationalluna.com

THE NOT-SO-RIGHT CHOICE

The 105 A deep-cycle (wet-cell) battery is arguably the biggest selling unit in the dual-battery market, but if you look at the graph featured here, you'll see that in many cases this battery is not an ideal choice.

The graph shows typical recharge rates for a 105 A deep-cycle battery at various alternator outputs. There are two important lessons to be learnt:

- It takes more than just a few hours to restore full power to a deeply discharged deep-cycle battery.
- Because a 20 A DC-DC charger limits the current output to 20 A, in many cases – if your alternator's output is 13.7 V or more – it slows down the recharge rate and becomes a limitation, not an advantage.

HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO BATTERY MAINTENANCE?

Most holiday travellers don't drive for more than a few hours a day, which means most deeply discharged (deep-cycle) batteries are in a permanently discharged state. Or to put it another way, their auxiliary battery is sustaining long-term damage and losing its ability to hold a charge.

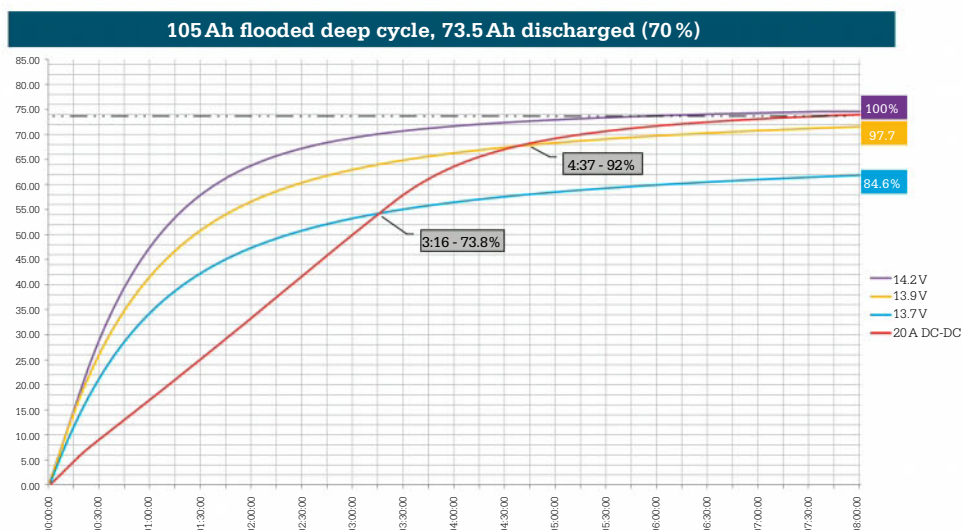
This is why the dual-battery system worked the first time, and perhaps even the second, but if you don't maintain the charge between trips, your battery's ability to hold a charge will diminish with every passing month. Contrary to popular belief, it takes a surprisingly short period of time for a battery to sustain permanent performance damage if left in a discharged state.

Likewise, in the case of the safari rental company, after spending considerable money fitting new DC-DC systems, the problem got even worse due to the limited 20 A output. It was only solved when the company went back to a National Luna solenoid system and upgraded the batteries from wet-cell units to dry-cell (AGM) batteries. The company also invested in a set of 220V maintenance chargers and since then their dual-battery problems have been solved.

WHAT'S THE VERDICT?

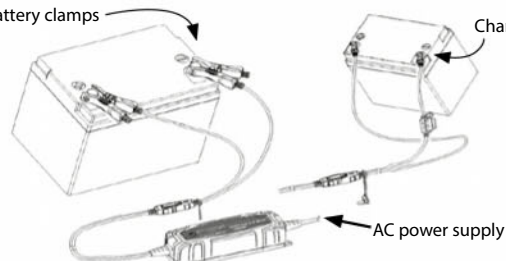
If your dual-battery system is giving you trouble, there's a good chance your battery is to blame – even if it's less than a year old. If you suspect your battery is in a partially discharged state, invest in a 220V maintenance charger before the battery suffers permanent damage, along with a subsequent loss in performance.

In 2016, National Luna conducted dozens of laboratory tests on a variety of battery types and split-charging setups. The results led to



Charging using battery clamps

Charging using M6 eyelets



the recent launch of a brand new National Luna Maintenance Charger, built specifically for overland travellers.

The charger is designed for motorcycle and 4x4 applications and it features an eight-step recharge process that includes an analysis of your battery's charge state, along with the option to select a boost mode in cold conditions.

More importantly, it's programmed so that it can be left connected to your battery for an indefinite period, and you'll never have to worry about the battery heating up or "overcharging".

At R1 595, it's one of the most affordable intelligent maintenance chargers on the market,

and an essential piece of equipment if you want to get the most out of your auxiliary battery, while avoiding future dual-battery problems.

Boasting the largest range of 12V fridge/freezers in the world, National Luna is the only commercial manufacturer of off-road fridges in SA, and the preferred supplier to all major off-road trailer and caravan manufacturers.

The National Luna 220V Maintenance Charger is available at all major outdoor stores and 4x4 fitment shops.

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



WATER

wise



Fail to store drinking and freshwater correctly and you're setting yourself up for a toxic time.

Text **Kyle Kock** Illustration **Dominic Wienand**

Many of us experience something similar to Day Zero when we go camping or head off the beaten track, especially when we're camping at places where water quality is uncertain and our own water supply needs to be stored for long periods of time.

Whatever your reasons for needing to store water, particularly for drinking, it's absolutely imperative that you learn how to do this properly. Whether supplying your home or making sure you have enough for the month that you'll be overlanding through Botswana, you need to understand these basics.

How much water do we need?

Most of us have heard the parable that man cannot live on bread alone. Well, there's some truth to that because while the average human could theoretically last up to three

weeks without the ingestion of food, the same cannot be said for water. Water makes up more than 60% of our body's composition and we won't survive more than a few days without it.

A more accurate example would be to more or less calculate how much water each one of us needs to survive according to how much we weigh – or mass we carry. That would mean around 30 ml per kg. In a 100 kg man, that's 3 litres of water. Of course, that can never be an exact number because of the variables out of our control, but when we lose about 5% of our total water, symptoms of dehydration begin to show. That could be in the form of headaches, nosebleeds, and dry and itchy skin, while continued loss can lead to premature ageing.

Bear in mind that the average human adult loses about 2.5 litres a day just by living, breathing and functioning healthily – and

that's for consumption at a bare minimum. The amount of water we need increases when we take into account basic hygiene such as a daily shower and brushing your teeth.

Water does not expire

We are all very dependent on this vital resource, and fortunately for us we can depend on water being drinkable for quite a long time. There are no concrete studies to show that water that's been kept in storage for a long amount of time is unsafe for human consumption.

Any water that's been exposed to air will start to absorb carbon dioxide, and a small percentage of that water will turn into carbonic acid, which in turn lowers the overall pH level of the water. A practical example

would be when you pour yourself a glass of water when you go to bed at night. You might only consume half and when you wake up the next morning, the water has a slightly acidic taste. Is it bad for you? Well, that depends on what the water is exposed to in your bedroom.

When does water become dangerous?

As we've just mentioned, water doesn't really expire, but its chemical makeup may become influenced by its surroundings. Sugars, protein and microbes are some of the culprits that can change the makeup.

Exposure to these pathogenic bacteria, which like any other living thing needs water to survive, will drastically change the water's composition.

This is why you shouldn't store water in a container that has been used for something other than the storage of water. Contaminated water isn't just water that comes from a dubious

source like a stagnant dam. Contamination could come from the introduction of bacteria to water. That's why you should never, for example, store water in a bottle that used to contain Oros concentrate, Powerade or other sugary drinks.

If you live in an urban environment the water that runs out of your taps will have been treated at a plant that supplies the city or town, with additives to ensure your water is as clean as possible.

What's the story with plastics?

You might have a say as to what kind of tank is fitted into your brand new caravan, or may even be able to retrofit one that's suitable to your tastes, but the freshwater tanks on your caravan, trailer or motorhome are unlikely to be fitted to the exterior where it can be exposed to the sun. The chances are higher that it's tucked away safely underneath or in cupboards.

We chatted to Philip de Vries of Conqueror Off-Road Campers about the water tanks in his company's trailers and caravans.

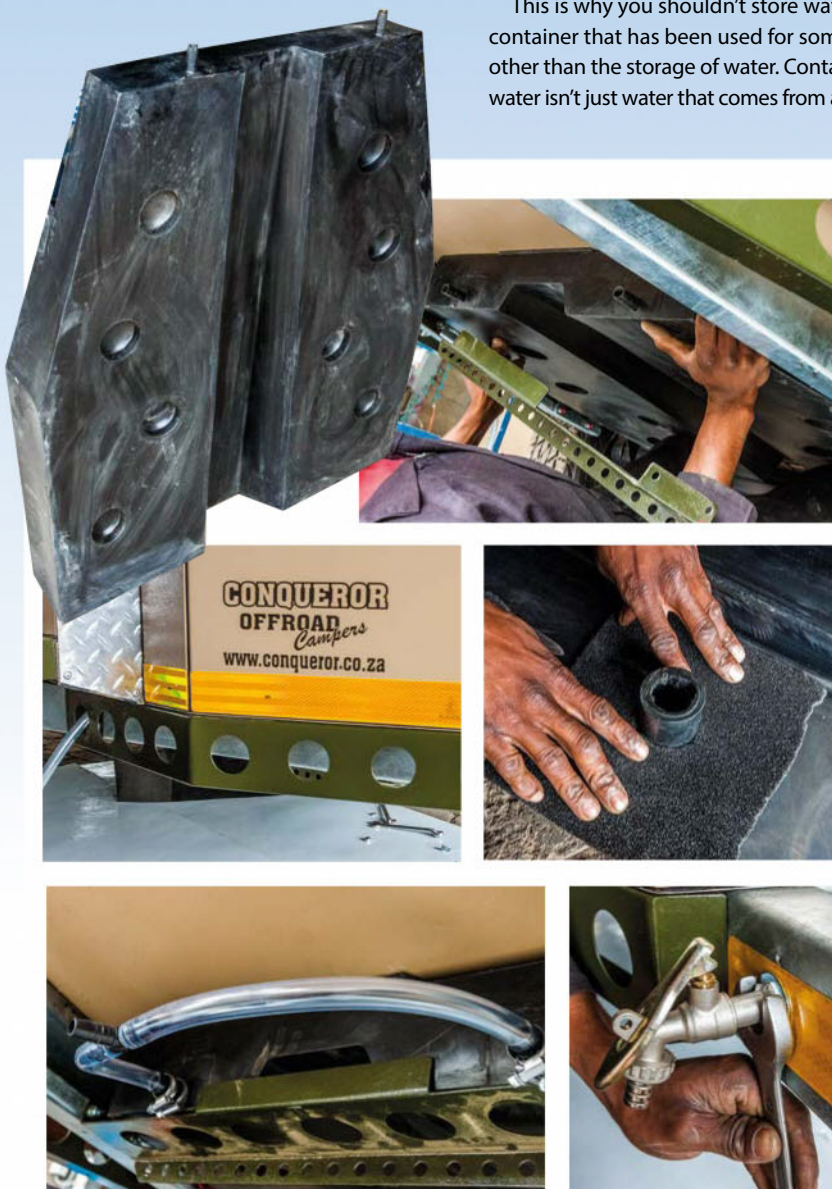


“We fit our caravans with polyethylene food-grade plastic for the purposes of water storage. We've been in the market since 1994 and haven't had to replace a single tank yet. The biggest factor from our point of view would be that the tanks aren't exposed to direct sunlight and we avoid this by storing the tanks inside and underneath caravans.

“We encourage customers not to store the trailer with water in it, therefore they would need to drain the tanks and store them as dry as possible.

“People can also put contaminated water in the tank, let's say for example on a trip through Africa. If they want to use that tank for drinking water they would then need to flush it out sufficiently and then drop in some sort of chloride solution. Then again, some people only carry drinking water in their camping fridges and keep water reserved for showers and washing dishes in the trailer's water tanks.

“From a safety point of view we position the tanks as low as possible to create a low centre of gravity as well as fit the tanks with baffles to keep the water from swishing around too much – all of which helps to make the trailer more stable while towing. > ”





Leon Ras, head of sales at Mobi Lodge, had this to say about water storage in their caravans.



“Our caravans have built-in 150 l freshwater tanks as well as 20 l auxiliary drinking water tanks, plus the option of an additional two 20 l drinking water tanks.

“Our recommendation to campers is that they keep their drinking water containers to a manageable size, like 10 or 20 l formats so that even kids or teenagers can fetch water. You would normally store that at the back of the towing vehicle – that’s on top of the usual freshwater that you would use for showering and other cleaning.

“The most important thing with drinking water would be to keep it out of direct sunlight.

“Our new Maxmo motorhome range will also feature the option of metal water storage tanks, with 150 l of freshwater storage and 50 l of grey water storage.”

go! Drive and Camp says Plastics are carefully constructed materials with a chemical composition that can be affected by what’s around it. Plastics are permeable so do not store your water around spare cans of fuel or pesticides.

The cheaper, disposable plastic that bottled water comes in tend to be hazardous. Some of these plastics release a chemical called Bisphenol A (BPA) when heated, like when the bottle is exposed to direct sunlight or left in a closed vehicle.

BPA has been shown to be a hormone disrupter, and there have been efforts to remove this chemical in the production of plastics that are meant to contain food or fluids meant for human consumption.

It would be far safer to purchase larger BPA-free water containers that can be stored in safe conditions. If you have no choice but to keep water in a container that was used to store something else in, then make sure you sterilise it with a product like the Milton



STAY AWAY. While BPA has been getting a bad rap in recent times, it’s not the only bad chemical. Generally, plastics that fall in the type 2, 4 and 5 categories are safe for limited use.

sterilising tablets used for baby bottles and pacifiers. Type 2 and Type 4 plastics (determined by a number surrounded by a recycle symbol) don’t contain BPA or phthalates, another harmful chemical.

Worried about contamination?

When you’re worried about the water in particular, you can always boil the amount you want to consume when camping, for example. If you’re extra paranoid or uncertain if that has been effective enough, then there are a number of water-purifying chlorine tablets available on the market that can do the job just fine – taking out harmful micro-organisms in the water that cause illness and disease.

SOURCES

H2O.co.za

Freedrinkingwater.com

Banthebottle.net

Frequencyrising.com

Livestrong.com

Livewithoutplastic.com

camp where you drive :)



Tourer

Compact cross-over
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Suspension of disbelief

Why does a vehicle need a suspension system, how does it work, and what type is best? We went in search of answers.

Text and illustrations Cyril Kloppe

Leaf springs have been around since ancient Egypt when a devoted engineer presented a chariot with a suspension system to the legendary pharaoh Tutankhamun. For some reason the leaf spring largely disappeared until the Greeks rediscovered it at around 400 BC. The Greek tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse, however, used the leaf spring in siege weapons that shot enormous spears at other Greeks rather than fit it to his vehicles. The Romans inherited the leaf spring from the Greeks and oddly also didn't think to fit it to their chariots.

Two thousand years later in 1804, Obadiah Elliot from Plaistow, England, patented the leaf spring suspension for horse-drawn carriages. Better late than never, we guess.

Naturally they were fitted to the first automobiles, but they were almost abandoned again because leaf springs bounced too much (shock absorbers didn't exist yet) and so early cars used leather strap suspension instead. French automobile company Mors was the first to combine metal leaf springs with shock absorbers in 1901, the coil spring



was invented in 1906, and what followed was a rapid evolution of suspension types.

Today, vehicle suspension systems consist of a dizzying array of linkages, arms, pivots,

stress members, springs and dampers. To simplify things we've chosen 20 suspension systems and then divided them into three categories: dependent, semi-independent and independent.

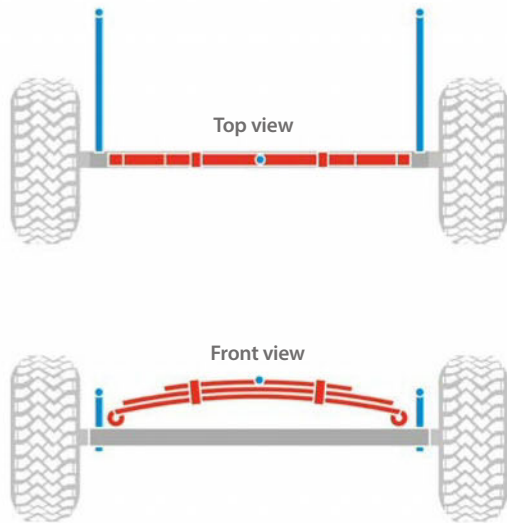
DEPENDENT SUSPENSION (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

This system uses a solid axle between parallel wheels. When you traverse an obstacle and one side of a solid axle is forced up or down, the other side is forced in the opposite direction, resulting in excellent traction.

The drawback is that solid axles are heavy and offer relatively poor ground clearance. Also, when one wheel gets

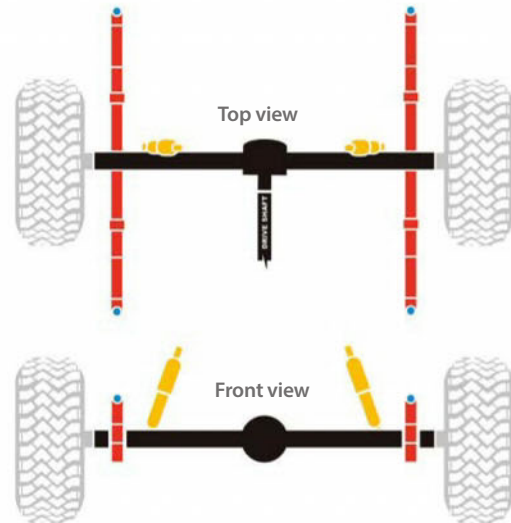
knocked, the other wheel is affected as well and this often causes wobbling and other handling issues at high speeds.

Since it offers a constant camber (the wheels never angle in- or outwards), dependent rear suspension is most common on vehicles that need to carry heavy loads – even if it's just camping gear, braai wood and beer.



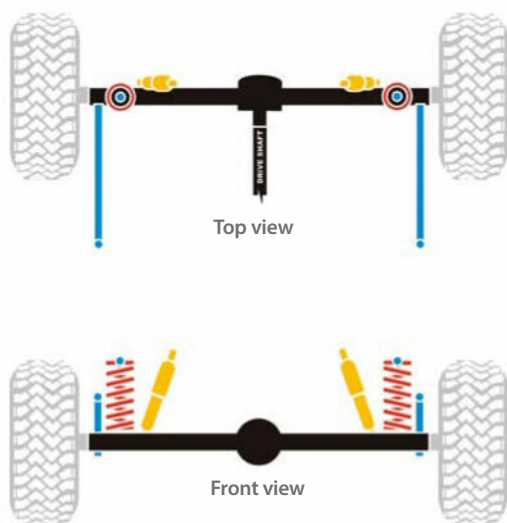
1. Solid axle, transverse leaf spring

This system uses a single leaf spring mounted transversely along the length of an axle. To say that it's a bad idea is an understatement. Henry Ford can be forgiven for using it on his Model T, but some car manufacturers (cough, Chevrolet, cough) continued using it until fairly recently. It may not be ideal in road cars but it's actually well suited to an off-road vehicle since a transverse spring allows for unprecedented axle articulation, which is why custom-built rock crawlers often use them.



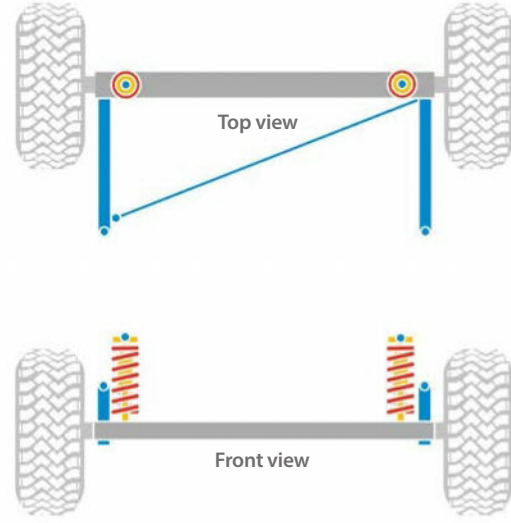
2. Solid axle, longitudinal leaf springs

This system was standard in most automobiles until coil springs were invented. The rear drive axle is clamped to twin stacks of leaf springs and the ends of the leaf springs are attached to the vehicle's chassis. It's a simple system that can support a lot of weight, which is why it's popular in bakkies to this day. The biggest disadvantage of this arrangement is that it allows a small amount of lateral (side-to-side) axle movement, which is partly why some bakkies handle so sloppily compared to cars.



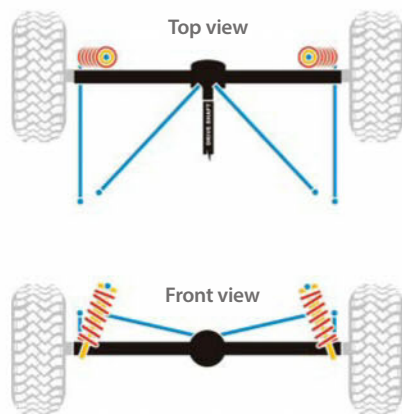
3. Solid axle, coil-sprung

Driving an off-roader with solid axles with leaf springs front and rear on corrugated roads can be a harrowing experience. Coils offer a much smoother ride. Unfortunately, coils allow even more lateral movement than leaf springs, which is why a coil-sprung suspension needs a pair of control arms (or trailing arms) to keep the axle in check. Coils also like to oscillate, which is why this type of suspension absolutely requires shock absorbers. Cars that use this system include the Suzuki Jimny.



4. Beam axle

This type of suspension is only used by front-wheel-drive cars given that the rear beam axle is nothing more than a hollow, square tube – that's why it's often called a dead axle (as opposed to a live axle). It attaches to a car via two struts and to two trailing arms. Since there are just four attachment points, it requires a pan-hard rod to run diagonally from one end of the beam to the tip of the opposite trailing arm. This braces the beam and stops it from rocking side-ways. You won't find this in any 4x4. >

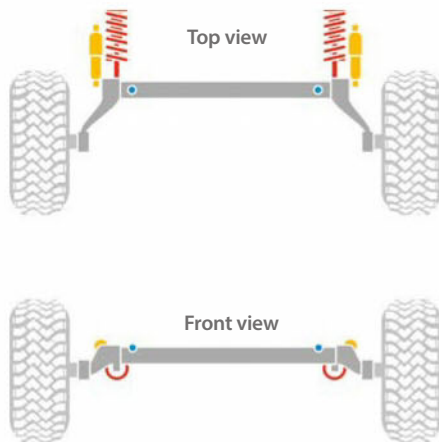


5. 4-Bar

There are numerous variations on the 4-bar system and we cannot hope to cover them all. It is essentially a live axle that attaches to the chassis via two (or more) shocks and four (or more) rods that triangulate outward to various points on the chassis. You are unlikely to find this on a 4x4 unless it's a custom-built rock crawler. Instead you'll typically find it on hot rods where the suspension is minimalist yet strong enough to handle rapid acceleration on smooth roads.

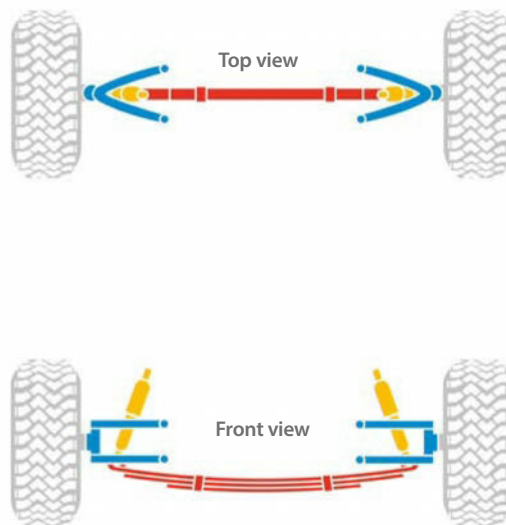
SEMI-DEPENDENT SUSPENSION (6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

There aren't many semi-dependent front suspension systems. Up front it's either a live axle or an independent wishbone setup (more on this later). Some car manufacturers dabbled with semi-dependent front suspensions in the hope that it'll offer the comfort of a fully independent suspension but at a reduced cost. None succeeded. They fared better with semi-dependent rear suspensions, though, and you'll find these on the back-ends of quite a few modern cars.



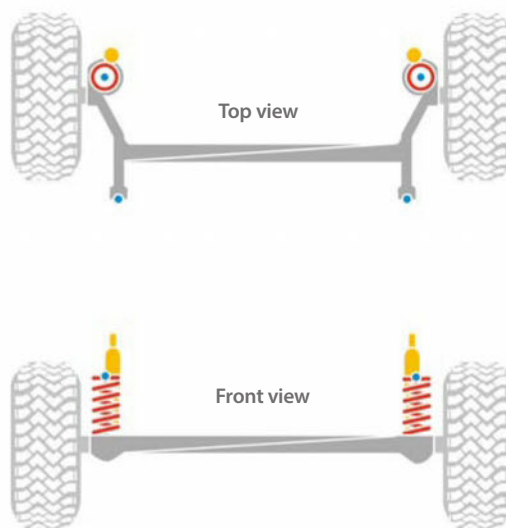
7. Trailing arm suspension

Sometimes referred to as a trailing link, a trailing arm is connected between the axle and a pivot point on the chassis. It can be found on the rear axle of a motor vehicle while a similar device called a leading arm is used on the front axle. The trailing arm's extremely long travel offered the iconic Citroën 2CV a plush ride and some off-road capability. In fact, the design brief specified that the 2CV should "be able to drive over a ploughed field without breaking any eggs".



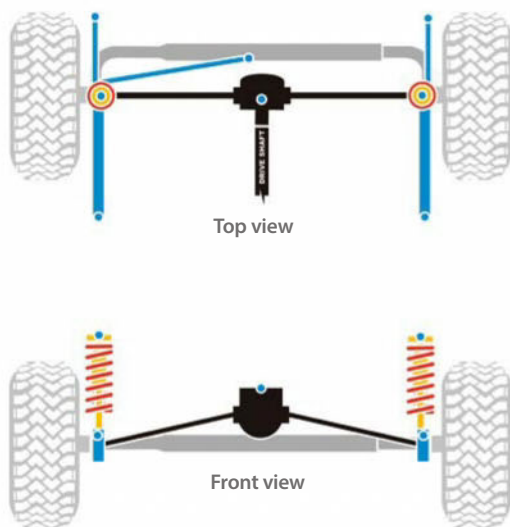
6. Double wishbone and transverse leaf spring

This system uses double wishbones up front and combines it with a transverse leaf spring. British car maker Triumph used it during the 1950s and '60s, but after numerous complaints and some deaths they rightly abandoned this abomination. In the case of the much-loved Triumph Spitfire the front spring was bolted to the differential rather than the chassis. If you braked during a turn the first batch of Spitfires would suffer massive over-steer and twirl violently off the road.



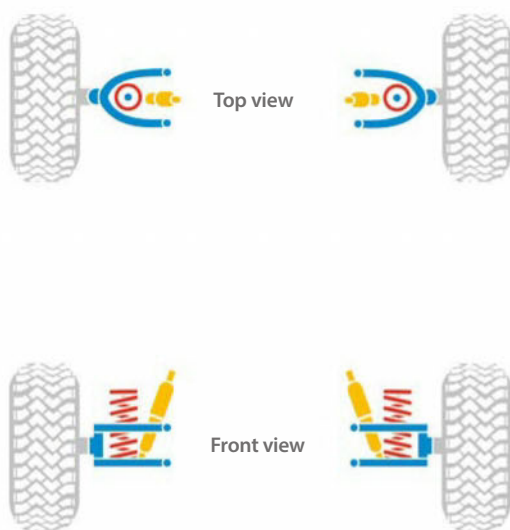
8. Twist/torsion beam

Similar to the beam axle, the beam-end of this U-shaped member is attached to the chassis while the "trailing arms" are attached to the back wheels – an inverted beam axle if you will. The entire device is designed to deform and return to its original shape (hence the name twist beam). This suspension system contains no drive shaft and is therefore limited to front-wheel-drive vehicles. An example of a car that uses this system is the Volkswagen Golf Mk3.



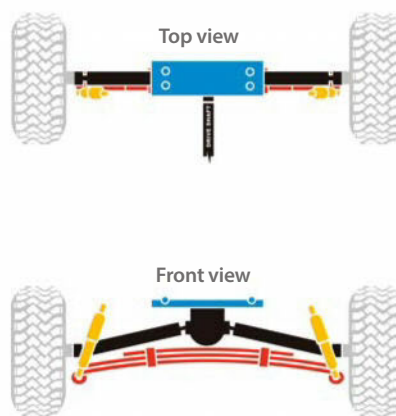
9. De Dion Tube

This weird setup was created to offer rear-wheel drive without a rear live axle. The rear wheels are connected via a U-shaped dead axle that can extend laterally to allow the wheels to stay parallel to each other (with no camber change) during suspension movement. The differential isn't on the "axle" but instead bolted to the chassis, with twin drive shafts leading to the wheels. This unnecessarily complex device could be found on certain Rovers built in the 1970s.



11. Double wishbone

It's two wishbone-shaped arms, each with two mounting points to the chassis and one to the wheel, stacked above and below each other. A shock absorber and coil control the vertical movement. Engineers love this system because they can carefully control camber angle, toe pattern, roll centre height, scrub radius and other mind-boggling parameters.

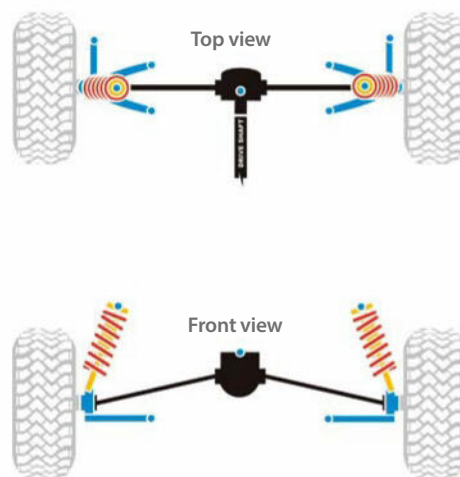


10. Corvette leaf spring

We've already learnt that a transversely mounted leaf spring isn't ideal, and yet Chevrolet used it on the Corvette's rear wishbone suspension for ages. The reason for this is because it's cheap. There are no redeeming qualities other than that it reduces the cost of the car so that more people can afford it. It's perfectly fine for a dead-straight US interstate highway but race a vintage Corvette down a twisty mountain pass at your peril.

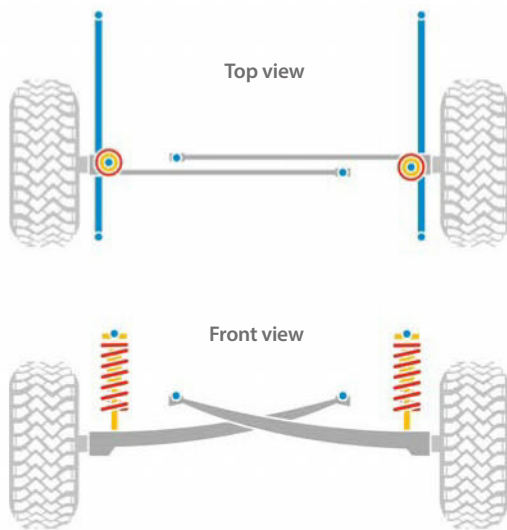
INDEPENDENT SUSPENSION (11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17)

Due to its very nature there is little need to differentiate between front and rear independent suspension. What works at the front should work on the rear as well – with a few adjustments, of course. Independent suspension is the holy grail of suspension systems, but they haven't always worked for off-road vehicles, bar a few exceptions such as the Mitsubishi Pajero. They are, however, slowly but surely taking over the 4x4 scene.



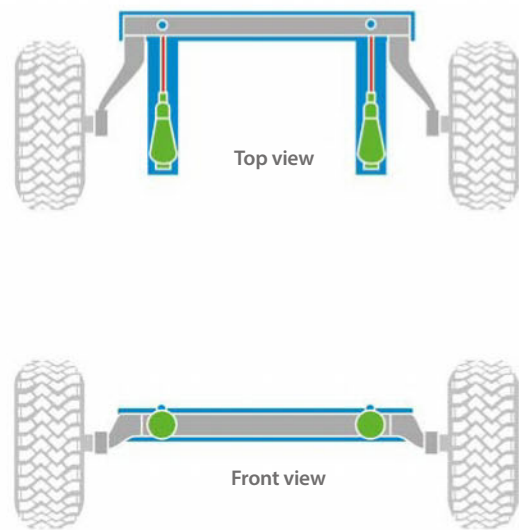
12. MacPherson strut

Part shock absorber, part coil spring, the strut is a staple in modern vehicles. It is bolted onto the car on one end and to the wheel at the other. The only other elements are a control arm that keeps the strut in place and the odd rod or two to help with stability. Thank Earle S. MacPherson from Chevrolet for this simple marvel. >



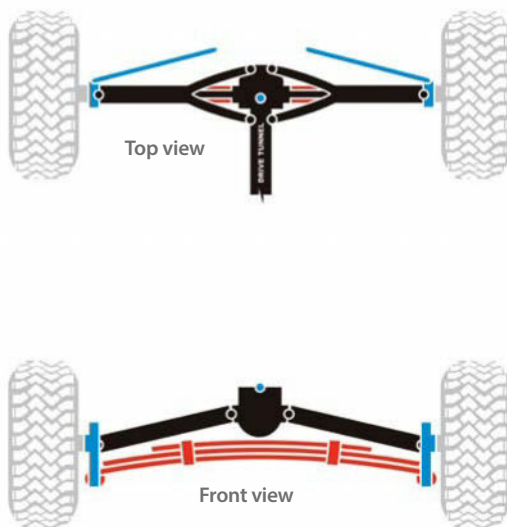
13. Twin I-beam

Developed by Ford for their full-size trucks, this system uses solid axles that scissor past each other. It allows each wheel to rise and fall without affecting the position of the opposite wheel. The 4WD version is called Twin Tractor Beam. The pivot point is off-centre, and although it appears to be a clever idea, it's also monstrously heavy.



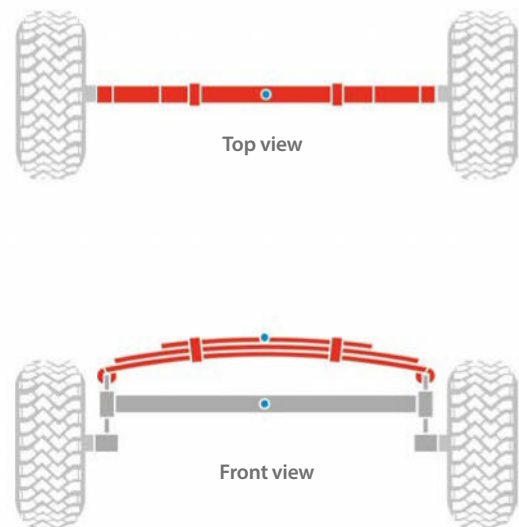
14. Moulton rubber suspension

Also called hydrolastic suspension. It seemed like a good idea when rubber expert Alex Moulton replaced metal springs with a glob of rubber, and for a time it was used extensively in cars such as Morris, Austin, Wolseley, MG and the original Mini. It didn't survive the great vehicle suspensions wars of the 1960s and ended up fitted to bicycles.



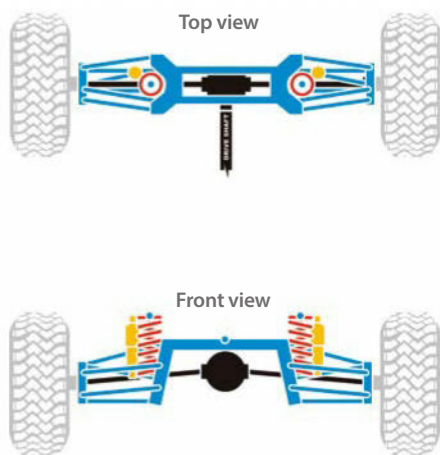
15. Swing axle

This revolutionary invention was patented by Edmund Rumpler back in 1903, and Mercedes-Benz was the first major manufacturer to adopt it. The rear differential is attached to the body and pivoting drive shafts lead to the wheels. It's not a perfect system though and several braces and rods must be employed to reduce wheel camber and severe over-steer.



16. Sliding pillar

This rare suspension type didn't make it into the 21st century. A stubby axle is attached to a vertical pillar which slides up and down through bushes which are in turn attached to the vehicle via a cross-beam and a leaf spring. The drawback is that the wheel track changes when one or more wheels move up or down. It's not a train smash but it's certainly less than ideal.

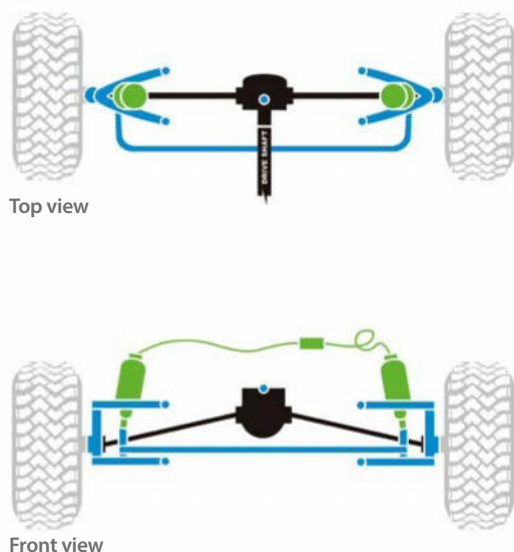


17. Multi-link suspension

If the MacPherson strut is genius, then the multi-link is art. It moves easily to conform to the varying angles of off-road terrain. Multi-link-equipped vehicles are ideally suited for desert racing. It's not something you can build in your back yard because the mathematics behind the movement of the various parts is Einstein-level smart.

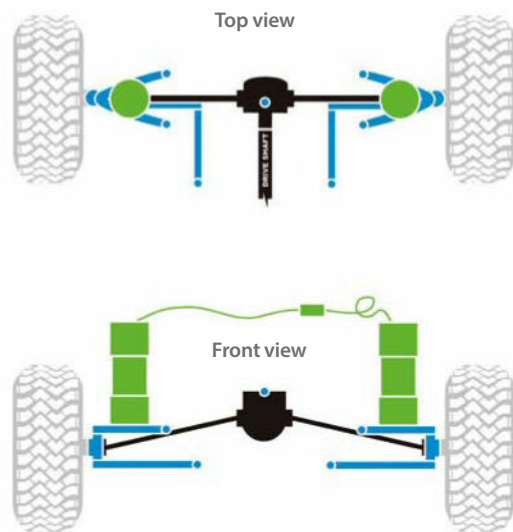
EXOTIC SUSPENSIONS (18, 19, 20)

You may have noticed that we didn't cover every suspension system out there. This is because there are simply way too many of them. There were also several one-hit wonders during the dawn of the automobile era that didn't withstand the test of time. The following systems are engineering marvels that deserve special mention, even though some of them went the way of the dodo.



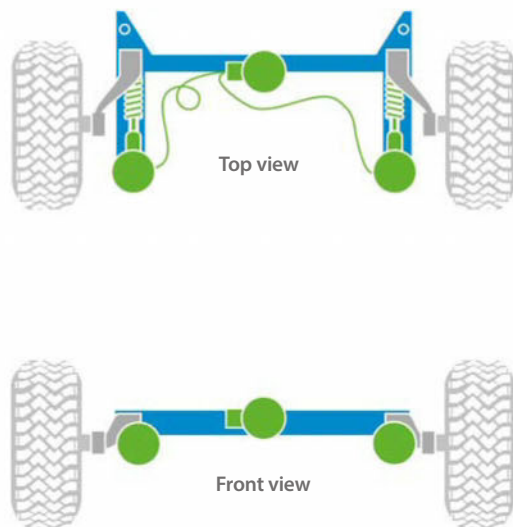
19. Adaptive air suspension

Air suspension has been around for decades, but Audi's adaptive air suspension is arguably the best. It consists of a shock absorber enclosed by an air bag. A computer regulates the air pressure to lower or raise the car. It also adjusts the shock absorber to deal with surface conditions. It's not as sci-fi as Bose's suspension, but it works.



18. Linear electromagnetic suspension

Audio company Bose invented an astonishing system that combines powerful magnets and amplifiers to create a car that doesn't nose-dive when you brake, lean when you turn, or lurch when you drive over speed bumps. It could even jump over small obstacles à la KITT from *Knight Rider*. Sadly, it was too expensive to mass produce.



20. Hydropneumatic suspension

Leave it to the French to come up with this complex yet cool suspension system. Citroën's ultra-smooth hydraulic system was powered by a pump, belt-driven by the engine, which – in the case of the 1955 Citroën DS – powered the steering, brakes, automatic gearbox and the suspension. It's a triumph in engineering the likes of which rarely comes around.



THE WINNERS: 2017/18 #CARSAWARDS SA'S 13 BEST NEW CARS REVEALED!

Mercedes-Benz, Toyota, BMW, Volvo and Mazda were among the manufacturers that won awards at this year's Cars.co.za Consumer Awards, but it was Suzuki that popped a bottle of well-deserved sparkling wine: Not only did they walk away with the Brand of the Year award, they also won in the categories for Budget Car and Compact Family Car.

The Cars.co.za Consumer Awards, sponsored by Wesbank, was held at the Galleria conference centre in Sandton. The ceremony was hosted by radio presenter

Anele Mdoda. Her fellow host for the evening was Art, short for Artificial Intelligence. Art is a cheeky computer that announced the nominations and winners in each category. The trick underscored just how innovative the motoring industry has become.

During the awards ceremony, 20 manufacturers and 39 models battled it out to win the top spot in one of the 13 categories.

The judging panel consisted of a respected group of motoring journalists and radio personalities, but they too had to wait until the

ceremony to find out who had won. In five of the 13 categories, the judges' favourite did not win. This is due to the unique judging system of the Consumer Awards – 50% of the final score is based on feedback given by the public in the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. After-sales service plays a decisive role.

"With 50% of a vehicle's final score determined by a brand's performance in the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, a car only really stands a very good chance of winning if it is a good product,

in the eyes of the judges, and if the brand delivers solid after-sales service," says Hannes Oosthuizen, the consumer experience manager of Cars.co.za.

"We think this is a crucial distinguishing feature of the #CarsAwards because buying a car is ultimately about much more than just the product. Consumers buy into a brand and essentially enter into a relationship with that brand," he explains.

Celebrities like Derek Watts, Gareth Cliff, DJ Fresh and Boity Thulo attended the red-carpet ceremony.

MEET SA'S *Adventure SUV*

OF THE YEAR
WINNER



TOYOTA

Toyota Fortuner 2.8GD-6 4x4 Auto



(FINALIST)

MITSUBISHI

Pajero Sport 2.4 D4 4x4 Auto



(FINALIST)

FORD

Everest 3.2 4WD Limited

Check out all 13 categories and finalists on www.CarsAwards.co.za

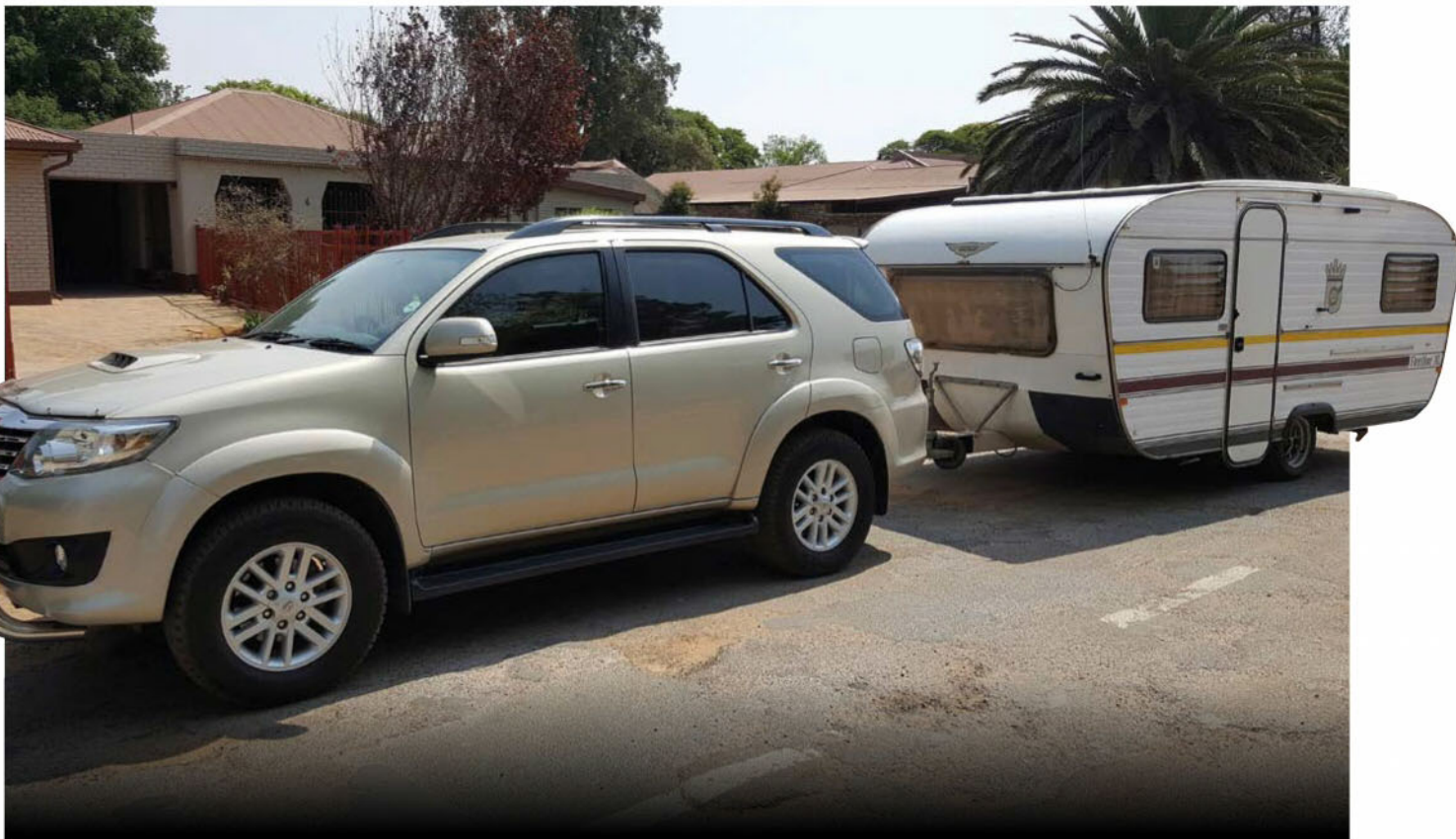
The winners are chosen by a panel of judges
and based on the findings of the Cars.co.za
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www.CarsAwards.co.za | #CarsAwards

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**CONSUMER
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Different strokes



Some people hit the nail on the head the first time while others have to go back to the drawing board. Either way, these readers are quite happy with their vehicles and caravans.

Tough enough

2015 TOYOTA FORTUNER 3.0 D-4D

He might have to wait a few years before owning his dream Prado, but **Johann van der Merwe** from Schweizer Reneke is quite content with his flawless **Fortuner**.

“A good towing vehicle needs to be powerful enough to pull a caravan, and after briefly looking at the **Ford Ranger**, I decided on this used **Fortuner** that I picked up for **R320 000**. I have been towing my **1986 Jurgens Fleetline XL** with the Toyota using a standard Toyota tow bar for a year without any issues.

The Jurgens might be an older model but it is every bit as comfortable and spacious



Show us your wheels

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drivecamp@gomag.co.za and tell us about what's in your garage.

as its modern counterparts. The Toyota has given nothing but great service, but my only bugbear is that it doesn't have cruise control, so my right foot has to keep on working.

The Fortuner tows without strain at **120 km/h**, and with the caravan hitched it manages an average fuel consumption of around **10,5 l/100 km**. Without the Jurgens that figure easily drops to **8,3 l/100 km**.

Our favourite getaway with this towing combination has to be the **Rietspruitdam Holiday Resort** near Ventersdorp. It's very cosy there and the resort also has a heated swimming pool.





Sedan's the man

2010 CHEVROLET CRUZE 2.0D LT

Many people are under the impression that you need a large SUV or double cab to be able to tow comfortably, but there are many sedans that can do the job just fine, says **Danie Snyman** from Roodepoort.

“I used to tow my 2006 Sprite Splash with a 2011 Hyundai Santa Fe, but because I earned my driving stripes with manual vehicles I just couldn't get used to the feel of an automatic transmission. So after **two 140 km trips** I looked around for a replacement vehicle with sufficient low-down torque that didn't require the engine's

neck to be wrung on the highway en route to our destination. I was also looking for great fuel consumption for everyday driving around town.

Four years ago I purchased a used **Chevrolet Cruze 2.0d LT** for R160 000. I also considered other diesel options such as the **Ford Focus 2.0 TDCi** and **Volkswagen Jetta 1.9 TDi**. Being a diesel sedan fan, my dream vehicle is a **Volvo S90 D5**.

The Cruze is spacious, well built, and is solid on the road. The interior finishes are of top quality. Fourth gear has a particularly good ratio for towing and you seldom have to drop a gear. The Cruze

is in its element on the open road and I find towing between **110 and 120 km/h** a breeze. The fuel consumption varies between **6,7 l/100 km** and **4,3 l/100 km** for urban and highway driving respectively, while hitching the Sprite takes the figure up to **10,7 l/100 km**. I also tow with a **Yellow Blade stabiliser**.

ATKV Buffelspoort remains a favourite camping destination of ours. The management is very helpful, the resort is always clean, there are enough swimming pools for everyone to enjoy, and they make a huge effort to keep the young ones happy as well.

Dust buster

2006 JEEP CHEROKEE 2.8

Their **BMW 316** might have been big on luxury but it just couldn't go all the places **Christo and Alida Laing** from Paarl wanted to go.

“After driving an executive sedan for five years we decided to get something a little hardier to carry us off the beaten track. We purchased “**Smurfie**” for **R145 000** six years ago and haven't looked back since because it's been quite reliable and is a pleasure to drive.

I've had to change the tyres to a brand and type that's more readily available so they can be replaced on a whim, but otherwise I haven't had to alter what the manufacturer's put together. My only source of

irritation is the rear hatch that rattles on poor gravel roads. If I had a spare **R10 000** I'd put the funds into a **new suspension system** – particularly for more ground clearance.

The **Jeep** has more than enough power for our usual journeys, but you pay for that at the pumps. Smurfie averages around

11,7 l/100 km on tar, and on 4x4 trails it can climb to as much as **20 l/100 km**.

Our favourite trip with the Jeep was our **month-long tour of Namibia**, a beautiful country occupied by friendly and hospitable people. We visited the **Skeleton Coast, Etosha, Damaraland** and several other places.





TRY, TRY AND TRY AGAIN

It's good to experiment with your photos because that's how you improve your chances of snapping an unusual, striking image. Just like these three readers.



**WINNING
PHOTO**

From a different angle

He always carries his camera bag with him, says Petri Steyn of Krugersdorp.

"I was on my way from Pretoria to Krugersdorp when a thunderstorm

passed in front of me. The sun broke through the clouds and reflected off the wet road. There were roadworks in the left lane where I pulled over to capture the beautiful scene. I squatted next to the rear tyre and snapped four frames. Some were with and some without a car in the right lane. I prefer the low angle because it's unusual. I also like to play around with the third lines to help with the composition."

Petri's photo is a perfect example of a beautiful photo that you have to think about to figure out why it's so striking. It's slightly abstract

but you do recognise the sun. The rest of the elements on the photo are not instantly recognisable – the photo, therefore, leans more towards the artistic side.

Because you instinctively notice the lightest part on a photo first, your eye immediately knows where to look. This photo has a definite focal point. Beneath that is the next shape you'll recognise – the outlines of a car driving past. Then your gaze moves and you see the rest of the detail in the photo. The car's rim and body far left doesn't even take up quarter of

Canon EOS 600D; Canon EF-S-18-55 mm-f3,5-5,6 lens on 18 mm; 1/250 of a second; f14; ISO 400

the photo but it's so clear it forms the anchor for the space in the rest of the photo. Then the wet roads draws your focus – you can almost feel it.

The sun shines from the back and you can see the texture of the road clearly. Your eye jumps back to the passing car and you can't help but appreciate the photo again. This is outstanding.



The dust bowl

Only a camera with a long lens comes in the way of Duke Parker of Pretoria and a grumpy elephant bull...

"I camped in Balule in the Kruger National Park and encountered this bull early one morning about 2 km from camp. I saw him again the next morning while he was on his way to Bangu Dam. He circled the dam and quietly drank water when it looked like he was heading towards the bushes. But he was walking straight towards me. I was thinking it's quite deliberate of him, but I got a few nice photos."

Canon EOS 7D; Canon 100-400 mm-f4,5-5,6 lens on 400 mm; 1/1 000 of a second; f6,3; ISO 640

It feels like trouble is headed straight towards you when you look at Duke's photo. You can feel the animal approaching; the ears are flapping, the one giant foot in the air... and the cloud of dust in front of the beast are all frozen moments showing how he's coming closer.

The cloud of dust gives the photo life, because besides that you don't know where it comes from, it also hides parts of the elephant. If you have a closer look at the cloud you can even see pebbles flying through the air – something that gives the photo extra energy.

Duke doesn't say what happened directly after he took the photo but chances are good he didn't wait around to hear what was on the elephant's mind...

Like cats in the Kalahari

It doesn't matter what's in front of Harald Spiwak of Pretoria's lens. His finger is always on the button.

"This was one morning early in the Kalahari when we stopped for a quick coffee and rusk while the sun was coming up. It was cool and my friend Rudi Kriedemann joked that we should turn our bodies towards the sun for some heat – almost like meerkats. It was the perfect opportunity for a photo. When I look at it now it has a comical element and it's a reminder of all the places we've visited with our friends over the past two decades."

"What's happening here?" is your first reaction when you see the photo. And it's exactly why you have a second look at it. It draws your attention and you glance at it again. You wonder why the people are standing so still in the veld – like islands, with no interaction between them.

And then you see the pattern: Everyone is standing with their back to you, looking in the same direction, and everyone's hands bent downwards, which makes you think of meerkats, as Harald explains.

The photo remains strange, but before you know it you're looking at it again.

SEND YOUR PHOTO!

If you have a nice photo, send it to us and we might publish it here. All photos are welcome: from one where you're stuck in the dunes with your new 4x4, or one of a cheeky vervet monkey or a solitary windmill next to the road. You can use any type of camera – from professional cameras to mobile phones.

Petri wins a Camp Cover camera bag to the value of R595 with his photo – congratulations! Send your photos and contact details to
leon.botha@media24.com 



Nikon D200; Sigma 18-200 mm f3,5-6,3 lens on 18 mm; 1/2 500 of a second; f3,5; ISO 100

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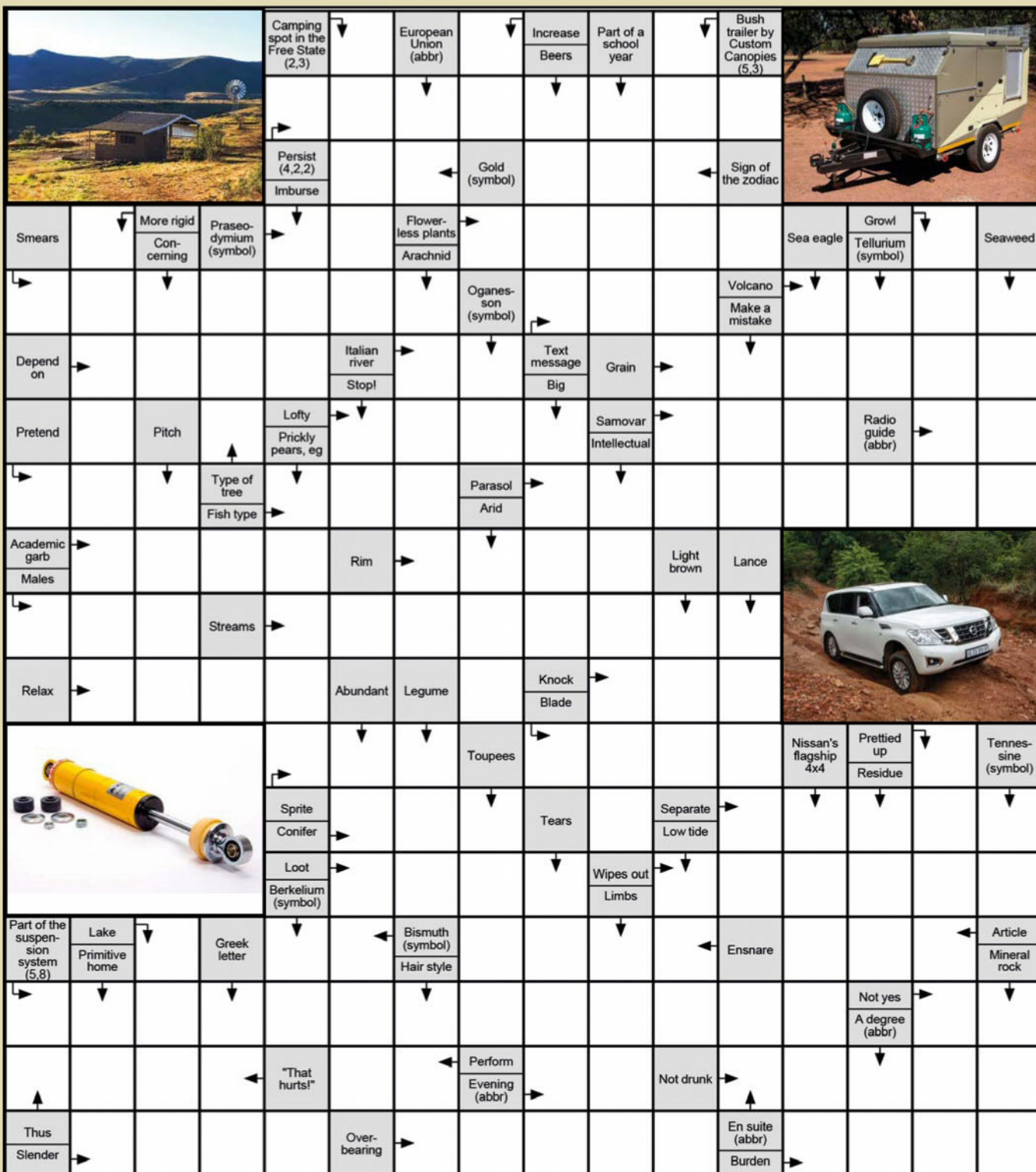


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CROSSWORD

Here's some good news for **Freda Delport** from Port Elizabeth. You have won a Camp Cover Lunch Box Cooler worth R290 for your correct entry in the crossword competition for February 2018. You can also be a winner. Complete the crossword, take a picture of it, and send it to us at drivecamp@gomag.co.za. Remember your contact details. Or complete it online at <http://bit.ly/2ExXpaF>. The solution to last month's crossword is on p. 131.



COMPILED BY GERDA ENGELBRECHT

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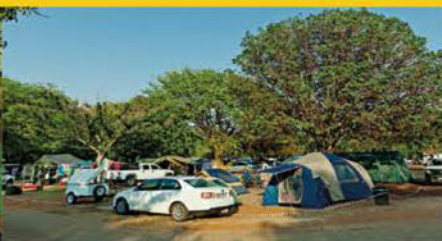
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ITINERARY

FRIDAY EVENING

- Wine tasting/Sundowners
- Listen to the *go! Drive & Camp* and *go!* teams talk about their many travels.
- Snacks will be served.

SATURDAY

The following optional activities are on offer

- Walk in the veld with a flora and fauna expert or explore the area on your bicycle. Remember to bring a camera and binoculars.
- A workshop on the best and most challenging 4x4 trails in the country.
- A photography workshop (see sidebar)

SATURDAY EVENING

- Enter our exciting potjiekos competition. There are great prizes to be won!
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SUNDAY

- Our travel writers will host a breakfast workshop on all you need to know to plan a trip to Botswana or Namibia.
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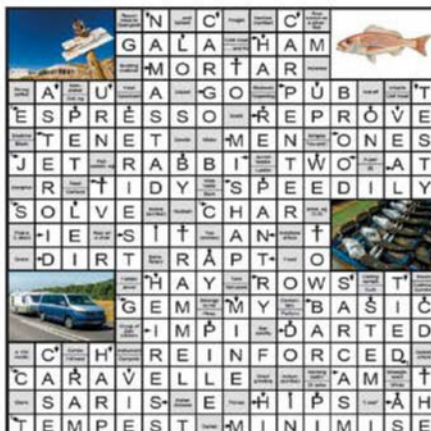
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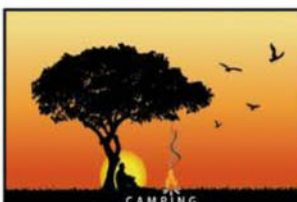
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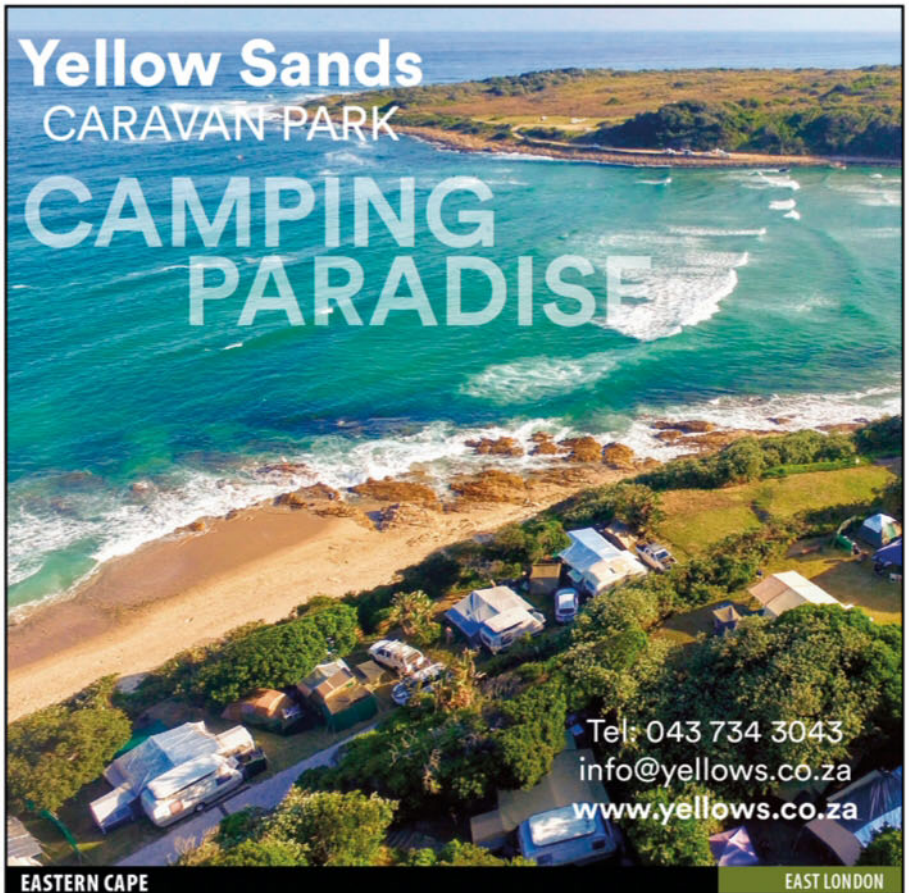
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Pass the potjie

He struggles to understand why people love potjiekos so much, says Schalk Jonker.

South Africans love potjiekos. It's part of our heritage, they'll tell you, and the best way to entertain guests around a fire. "Sociable" and "delicious" are seemingly the buzz words to describe potjiekos. Anton Goosen wrote a song about it and claims even Queen Victoria said the best thing in South Africa was the potjiekos.

The late Matie Brink, our very own potjiekos king, wrote several books on the topic, numerous local TV shows with potjiekos as theme have been produced, and if you turn to Google you'll have more than 35 000 recipes to choose from in the blink of an eye. Yes, people really love potjiekos.

I'm not one of them. I will probably be hanged, drawn and quartered in the town square for saying it, but I'm sorry... I'm not easily impressed with a potjie. I just

can't muster as much enthusiasm as you over a stew that you're cooking on the coals.

Whether it's a chicken potjie or a leg of lamb with sweet and sour sauce, oxtail with peaches or a seafood potjie with a

twist, I always see the same thing when you proudly lift the lid: vegetables in a watery sauce with some pale

pieces of meat and a bone or three somewhere at the bottom.

There are, of course, also the usual suspects when it comes to vegetables. Carrots are number one, followed by things like onion and butternut. And somehow it always ends up with a flotilla of patty pans on the surface. "Pete, these patty pans are delicious!"

The humble potato is also an honorary member of the potjie. But I won't diss it here because it's usually the one thing that saves me. If it wasn't for the potatoes all I would have is a pile of rice with searingly hot carrots on my plate. On a beautiful summer's day next to the pool.

And to make matters worse, this watery affair is often dished up on a paper plate. Bon appétit!

IT'S ALSO THE fanfare that goes along with the making of potjiekos that irks me. Everyone thinks their potjie is unique, but in reality they're all more or less the same.

Still, the potjie makers are so secretive about their recipes... especially if it's one with a "twist". "Wow, Carl. This lamb shank potjie with a twist is amazing. What's your secret?" Carl of course shakes his head and says with a sly grin: "That's my secret." Oh, Carl. Don't ever change.

AND WHY MUST THERE always be a twist? I'm sorry, but dried peaches, dates or prunes or brandy with chilli will not transform what is essentially an outdoors stew into a unique meal that cannot be

equalled. It simply means that together with the oxtail, carrots and onion there are also now dates, prunes and brandy in your pot.

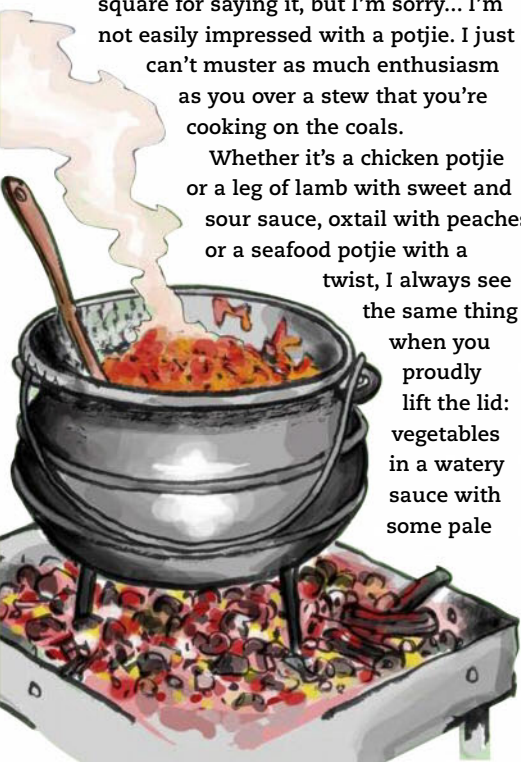
I was watching a local cooking show once where some or other potjie master was invited to cook for the presenter and studio audience. At one stage the presenter asked the chef to share a potjie secret with the viewers. "Something that will always guarantee a successful potjie," explained the expert, "is to first fry your onion and garlic together in a bit of oil in the pot."



That potjie wasn't nearly big enough to ensure that everyone got something of everything, so I told one of my brothers to guard the pot.

Wow! Really? The big secret to a tasty potjie is something that almost everyone who has ever wielded a wooden spoon knows is the basis of any meal. Thanks for the inside info!

Another thing that gets my blood boiling is when people invite you over for a braai but when you arrive they "surprise" you with a potjie. I'm a man with simple tastes and few things make me happier than a chop, some boerewors, a braaibroodjie, and spoonful of potato salad. And chances are good I'm on my way to your house with a mental image of exactly that on my plate.



I have a hard time hiding my disappointment when I walk in and I see a potjie squatting over the coals. My wife knows this and will usually take my arm and whisper something like: "Calm down. Maybe they're steaming mussels for a starter."

She's often wrong. When we (eventually) sit down with the sloppy meal on our plates in front of us, she has to kick me a few times underneath the table to also – like everyone else – complement the proud chef. I don't like telling lies, which is why I'll utter something like: "I really like it when the rice is soft yet firm."

BUT THE THING that bothers me most about potjiekos is that no one is ever equally satisfied after the meal. The earlier you get to the potjie, the better. You get the meat and potatoes, the people who dish up after you be damned.

We once visited my aunt on the farm, and that Sunday afternoon a bunch of people from the district came over. It was my aunt's birthday or something, and she was making a game potjie. (Probably also with a twist, but I can't remember what it was.) I was 13 or 14

years old and my two younger brothers were still in primary school. In those days the kids were served last; the adults were front and centre when the potjie was finally done.

One of the adults was a guy called Willem. Willem wasn't one of the real adults like my dad and mom. He was one of my cousin's friends and I think they knew each other from the army. But he was older than me and therefore in front of me in the queue.

I checked out the potjie and the informal queue and quickly did the math in my head: That potjie wasn't nearly big enough to ensure that everyone got something of everything, so I told one of my brothers to guard the pot. The plan was to wait for the adults to dish up and then to slip in in front of the soldiers, students and older kids in an attempt to get some meat on our plate.

After all the adults had dished up, my brother came over to say that I didn't have to worry. There was still loads of

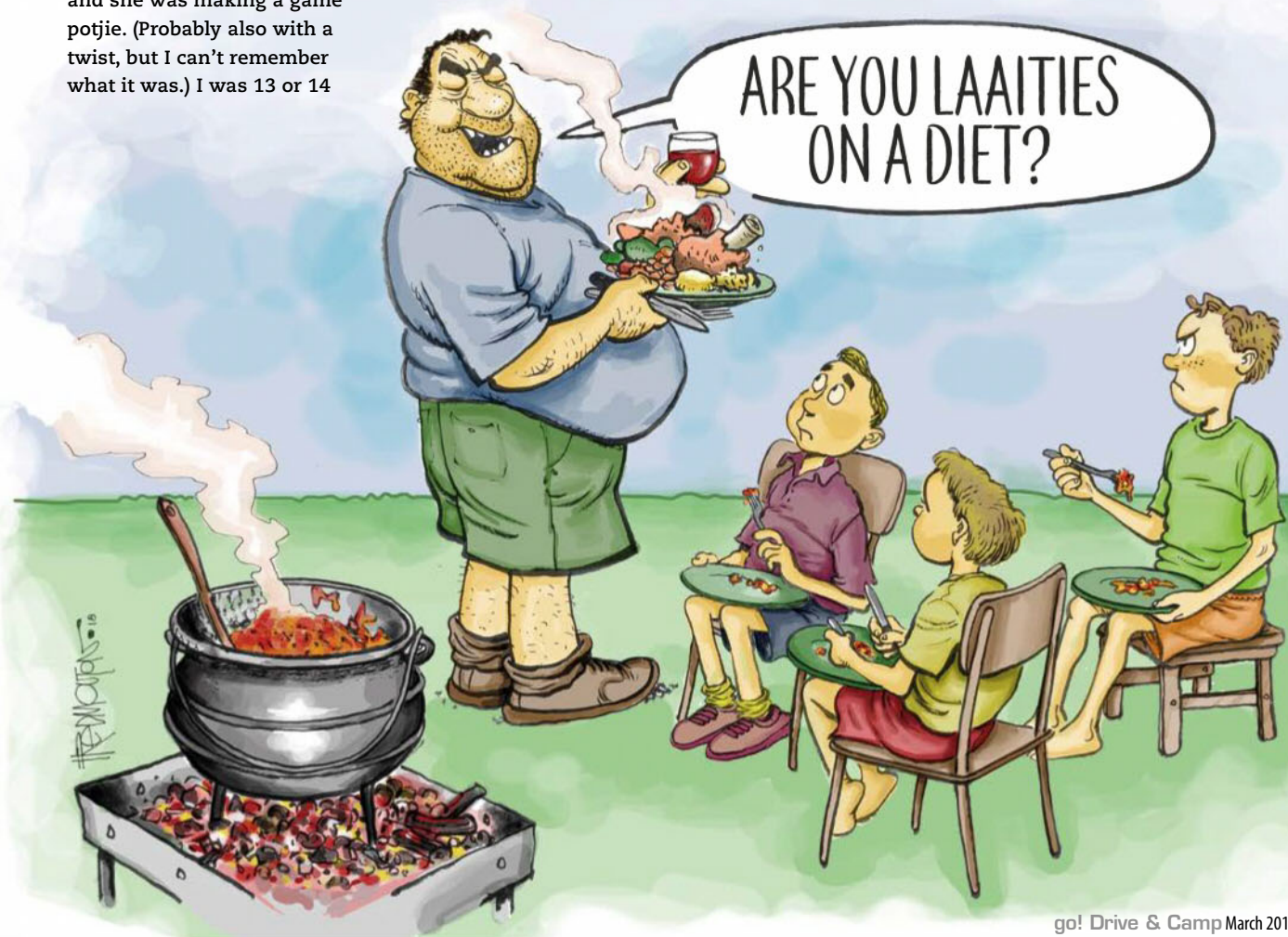
meat left and we would definitely not lose out. But there was one thing we did not take into account: Willem's appetite.

Willem dished up. No, Willem loaded his plate like you would load an ore train. He dug deep, looking for the meat, and if there was a pesky carrot clinging to the spoon he scraped it off on the side of the pot. His plate was piled sky high – and there wasn't a patty pan or carrot in sight. It was just rice and meat.

Eventually our turn came and we looked miserably at what was now basically a mushy vegetable soup at the bottom of the pot. None of us were particularly fond of vegetables, so we dished up very sparingly. We lost this round.

And while we were sitting with our sad portions on our laps, Willem walked past with his stacked plate and asked: "Are you laaities on a diet?"

Food fit for a king? Tradition? Sociable? Delicious? I don't think so. Thanks to Willem and people like him I'll gladly pass up a potjie. 





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I bought mine from US Trucks. They're based in Richards Bay. They convert the bakkies from left-hand drive to right-hand drive, register it, and provide after-sales support that includes servicing and parts.

The Laramie specification means it comes with a fair amount of bells and whistles, like the UConnect infotainment system with touch screen display, full-length curtain airbags, hill-start assist, and a pinch protection system on the windows that reverses the mechanism when it senses an arm in the way. It's also very spacious inside.

I have been towing with the Ram only for a few months, but everything I have hitched has been pulled along effortlessly. It has the company's famous 5.7 l HEMI V8 under the bonnet. The motor produces a massive 295 kW and 552 N.m of torque, and not even my new Jurgens Exclusive or my 24-foot Sensation boat or Cobra Cat 625 deep-sea boat has made the Ram break a sweat. I tow with the cruise control on.

The Ram is so heavy you hardly feel what you're towing, but maybe that's also down to the suite of electronic safety features it has, like trailer sway control, traction control and stability control.

With a powerful petrol V8 you can't expect thrifty consumption figures, and

the Ram is no exception. It drinks between 16 l/100 km and 20 l/100 km. With that in mind, I had a 150 l fuel tank fitted so that I could get decent range.

One of my favourite things about the Ram is that, purely by chance, the wheels I got it with are almost exactly the same as those fitted to the Jurgens range-topper and they complement each other nicely.”



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