

#67

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JUNE-JULY 2025 | ISSUE 67

go! Drive & Camp

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Visit a showroom near you to truly experience the spaciousness and class of the Mobi Lodge Quattro.

Mobi Lodge

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Kalahari



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The Mobi Lodge Continental caravan isn't just a mode of transportation; it's a mobile haven with all the luxuries anyone could ask for.



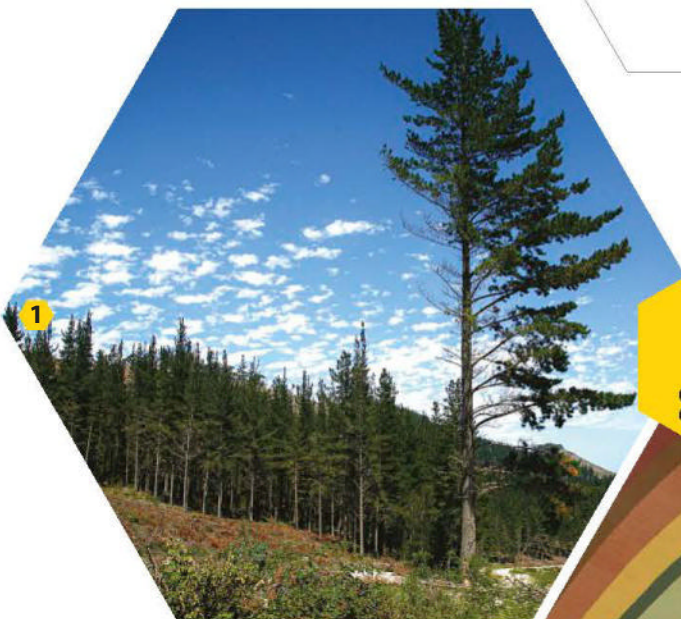
MOBI LODGE XL

Tow small & camp BIG!

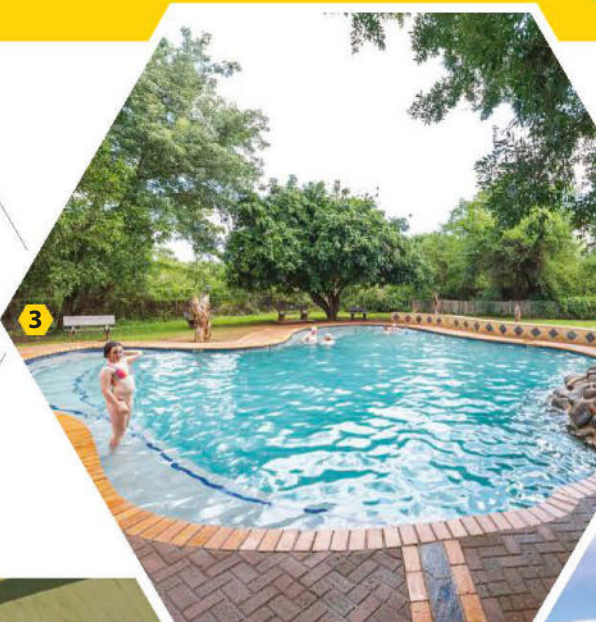
The Mobi XL is a revolutionary off-road caravan that redefines luxury camping with its compact yet heavy-duty design.

Contents

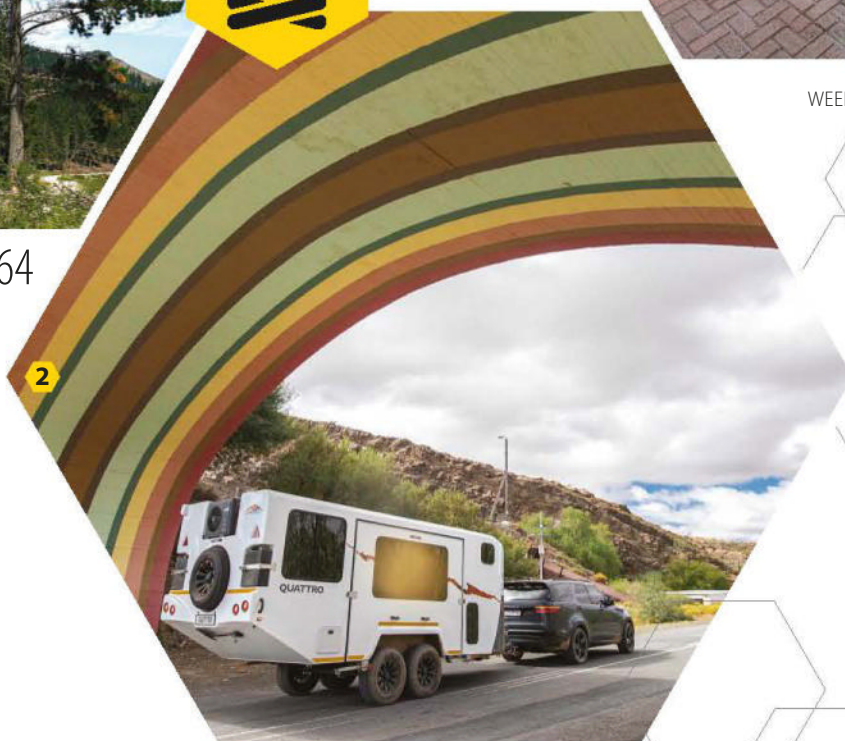
#67 | June-July 2025



TRAIL GUIDE 64



WEEKEND BREAK 56



DESTINATION 34

4

EVERY MONTH

8 EDITOR'S LETTER

10 INBOX

14 NEW CARAVANS

24 NEWS

32 NEW WHEELS

70 READER STORY

76 PET-FRIENDLY CAMPSITES

80 RIDING IMPRESSION

84 TOW TEST

88 CARAVAN TEST

92 CAMP BOFFIN

96 4x4 PROFESSOR

100 GEAR

104 CAMP FOOD

113 CROSSWORD

114 KIDS' CORNER

116 MIC'S MEMOS

118 NEELS' RALLY TENT

120 COLUMN

122 ...AND FINALLY

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MEDIA24

go! Drive & Camp June-July 2025 | 5



ACROSS THE BORDER 62

JOURNEY 46

#67 COVER IMAGE – LEON BOTHA

“The N1 through the Karoo is boring to drive, but nothing stops you from seeking an alternative route. Not far from Laingsburg – in the direction of Touwsrivier – you’ll find a lovely 63 km-long gravel road winding through stunning landscapes. It’s only a 10 km detour and it’ll be well worth your time.”



Camera settings Canon EOS 6D Mk. II; f8;
 800th of a sec; 35 mm; ISO 640

SENIOR GAZEBO



3.0m x 2.8m x 2.3m
R3 410⁰⁰

- > 260GSM SAFARI RIPSTOP CANVAS
- > YELLOW PASSIVATED ELECTROPLATED STEEL FRAME
- > NYLON CORNERS

SNR GAZEBO
END WALL SOLID
R720⁰⁰



SNR GAZEBO
END WALL WITH DOOR
R830⁰⁰



SNR GAZEBO
SIDE WALL SOLID
R800⁰⁰



SNR GAZEBO
SIDE WALL, 2 WINDOWS
R1 150⁰⁰



SNR GAZEBO
SIDE WALL, DOOR & WINDOW
R1 220⁰⁰



GAZEBO & SNR BOW
CONNECTOR
To fit all Tentco's 2.5m x 2.5m bow tents



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SNR GAZEBO
SHADE NET INNER
R3 620⁰⁰



R1 330⁰⁰ **R1 500⁰⁰**
Gazebo and Bow Tent not included

SAVANNAH 3
BOW TENT



2.1m x 2.1m x 1.5m
R3 790⁰⁰

SAVANNAH 4
BOW TENT



2.5m x 2.5m x 1.9m
R4 900⁰⁰

SAVANNAH 5
BOW TENT



3.0m x 3.0m x 2.2m
R5 790⁰⁰

RANGER SAFARI
BOW TENT



2.1m x 2.1m x 1.8m
R4 510⁰⁰

JUNIOR WANDERER
BOW TENT



2.5m x 2.5m x 1.9m
R5 200⁰⁰

SENIOR WANDERER
BOW TENT



3.0m x 3.0m x 2.2m
R6 000⁰⁰

JUNIOR SAFARI DELUXE
BOW TENT
3 WINDOWS



2.5m x 2.5m x 1.9m
R6 510⁰⁰

SENIOR SAFARI DELUXE
BOW TENT
3 WINDOWS



3.0m x 3.0m x 2.2m
R8 150⁰⁰

JUNIOR SAHARA



4.5m x 2.9m x 2.65m
R12 510⁰⁰

SAHARA DELUXE



6.0m x 2.9m x 2.65m
R17 340⁰⁰

SAHARA LODGE



8.0m x 2.9m x 2.65m
R23 300⁰⁰

SAHARA GRAND



8.0m x 2.9m x 2.5m
R24 620⁰⁰

JUNIOR TRAILER TENT



BED: 2.0m x 1.4m
ROOM: 2.0m x 2.0m
1.3m & 1.45m HIGH TRAILER
R18 540⁰⁰

SENIOR TRAILER TENT



BED: 2.0m x 1.4m
ROOM: 2.0m x 2.2m
1.6m HIGH TRAILER
R23 600⁰⁰

FAMILY TRAILER TENT



BED: 2.0m x 1.4m
ROOM 1: 2.0m x 2.2m
ROOM 2: 2.0m x 2.0m
1.6m HIGH TRAILER
R27 160⁰⁰

ROOFTOP TENT



2.4m x 1.2m x 1.25m **R14 700⁰⁰**
2.4m x 1.6m x 1.25m **R17 490⁰⁰**
2.4m x 1.4m x 1.25m **R16 660⁰⁰**

**1.4m ROOFTOP
DELUXE**

2.4m x 1.4m x 1.25m

R17 500⁰⁰



Star gaze
opening

ROOFTOP PRO TENT



2.4m x 1.4m x 1.25m
R22 150⁰⁰

FAMILY ROOFTOP TENT

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R22 390⁰⁰



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R1 599⁰⁰

SL-1



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Max carry weight: 150kg
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DIRECTORS DELUXE



Max carry weight: 180kg
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BIKINI STOOL

Max carry weight: 130kg
R350⁰⁰



FISHERMAN STOOL

Max carry weight: 150kg
R470⁰⁰



DIRECTORS CHAIR

Max carry weight: 180kg
R870⁰⁰



SINGLE 3D FOLD UP MATTRESS



R650⁰⁰

DOUBLE 3D FOLD UP MATTRESS



R1 260⁰⁰

SINGLE ROLL UP MATTRESS



R650⁰⁰

SINGLE BEDROLL SWAG



R1 490⁰⁰

SELF-INFLATING MATTRESS 5CM



R1 030⁰⁰

SELF-INFLATING MATTRESS 10CM



R1 450⁰⁰

BIG WHEEL TROLLEY



R1 999⁰⁰

WINDBREAKER



R930⁰⁰

EVA FOAM MAT



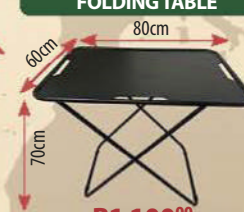
R350⁰⁰

PICNIC TABLE



R399⁰⁰

STEEL MULTI FUNCTION FOLDING TABLE



R1 100⁰⁰

6FT FOLDING TABLES



R1 200⁰⁰

3-SHELF DELUXE CUPBOARD



R1 150⁰⁰

4-SHELF DELUXE CUPBOARD



R1 700⁰⁰

*Contents not included

KITCHEN CABINET DELUXE



R1 599⁰⁰

ALUMINIUM DOUBLE DISH WASH STAND



R1 780⁰⁰

BIO SANITARY FLUID 1 L



R110⁰⁰

BIO SANITARY RINSE 1 L



R110⁰⁰

BIO FRESH 2 IN 1 1 L



R230⁰⁰

PORTA POTTI CARRY BAG 20L



PORTA POTTI 20L

R1 299⁰⁰



R380⁰⁰

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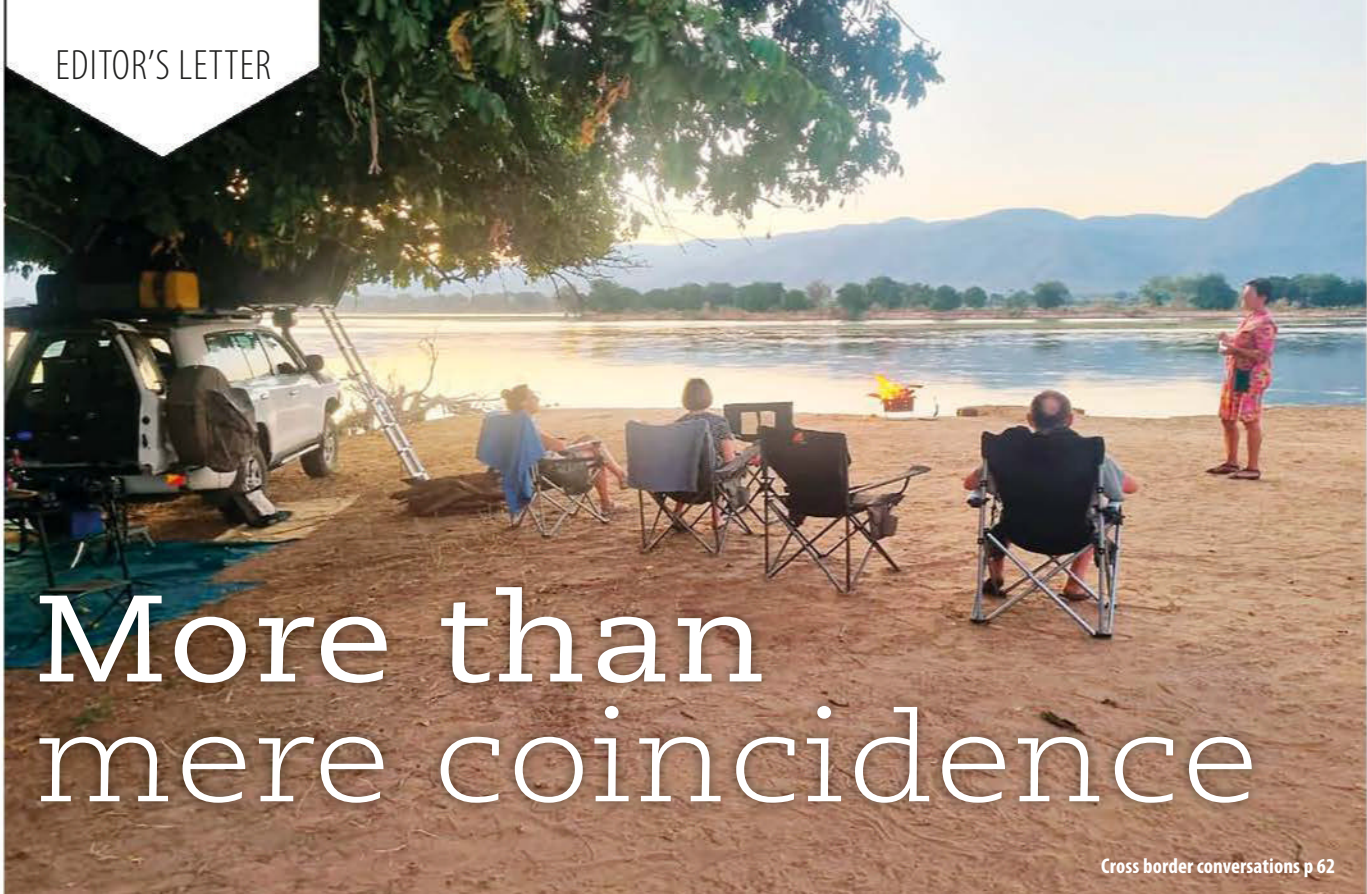
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More than mere coincidence

Cross border conversations p 62

Every now and then, something unexpected happens – and the timing is just too perfect to chalk it up to coincidence. That's exactly what happened to me earlier this year at the Caravan Show in Midrand. I stepped away from the *Drive & Camp* stall for a bit to wander among the other exhibitors on the Saturday afternoon – not really looking for anything or anyone in particular, just wanting to catch up with familiar faces, see what clever new products our local manufacturers had come up with, and get a general feel for where our industry's at.

And then I found myself in conversation with Lea Erasmus from Ultimate Routes, after she called me over to their stand. She told me more about what they do, and the overlap between their offering and what our magazine aims to share was too obvious to ignore: a shared love for wide open spaces, gravel roads, border crossings and the freedom of self-drive travel.

Lea introduced me to her husband Francois, and together they told me – with great excitement – how their business started and how they came to specialise in planning and booking self-drive adventures throughout South Africa and beyond.

No guided tours or off-the-shelf

packages. No one telling you what time to leave in the morning or where to stop for lunch.

Their recipe is simple: tailor-made trips for people who prefer to travel at their own pace, with their own family or friends, but who don't have the time, confidence or contacts to put that kind of trip together themselves.

I'm pretty sure that sounds familiar to many of us. I've come to realise that while this community is full of people with adventurous spirits who long to travel and experience new things, it's often the planning part that stops a trip from becoming reality.

The idea of a route through Botswana, Namibia, Zambia or Zimbabwe with your loved ones sounds amazing – but the logistics? That's where most people stall. Figuring out your route, calling campsites, working out park fees, getting your border documents in order... it's overwhelming. And just like that, the excitement vanishes.

Francois and Lea, however, thrive in that world. Their experience with route planning, knowledge of our neighbouring countries, trusted network, and constant client feedback mean they're exactly the kind of people who can turn your dream trip into a real one. After just a few minutes of chatting to them, I knew they had to become part of

the *Drive & Camp* family.

Which is why I'm so excited to introduce a brand-new column in this issue. "Cross-border conversations" will appear in every issue from now on, with Francois and Lea sharing practical advice, border tips and helpful info. We're kicking things off with Zimbabwe on p 62.

For me, that chance encounter at the Caravan Show was a fresh reminder of what I value most about this community: We may come from different parts of the country, from different backgrounds and cultures – but we share the same map. One with gravel roads, endless skies, quiet campsites and stories waiting to be told.

Safe travels,

Schalk

EDITOR

✉ schalk.jonker@media24.com

WINNER!

Congratulations to **Gerrit Duvenhage** of Sinoville, Pretoria – the lucky winner of the bakkie canopy worth R24 000 we gave away in *Drive & Camp* #65, with compliments from Wild Accessories.

✉ wildacc.co.za



***New OKTO, caravans. Afrispor, Metalian, Nayela and Freeline Maverick Off-road caravans. Edgeout and Vagabond Rogue Teardrop trailers. Metalian gravel road camping trailers!**

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We love hearing what's on your mind! Write to us at drivecamp@gomag.co.za and please remember to include your full address and contact details. *Drive & Camp* reserves the right to edit and shorten letters – and publish them in the magazine, on the website and elsewhere.

Fresh meat and a brand-new road

In March, we spent a week camping in Botswana with four other families, and I'd like to share two useful tips with fellow travellers. Because we were aware of the regulations around taking meat across the border, we decided to place an order ahead of time and collect it on the other side.

We ordered from the modern new Spar at the Palapye Junction shopping centre. It's a large, upmarket store with everything you'd expect to find back home – plus a fantastic butchery. The staff at the Palapye Hotel, where we'd stayed before, recommended this Spar and its butchery. We ordered all our meat and groceries by email and picked it up en route to Nata Lodge.

Everything was ready, vacuum-packed and frozen by friendly,



professional staff – and the prices were very reasonable. The butcher's name is Moetedi, and you can send your order to palapyejunction@trg.co.bw.

After our first night at the hotel, we camped for four nights at Nata Lodge. From there we visited local highlights including the Nata Bird Sanctuary, Elephant Sands, Planet Baobab and Baines' baobabs near the Nxai Pans.

We camped the last two nights at Khama Rhino Sanctuary near Serowe and discovered there's a brand-new tar road running from just south of Serule to Paje. It's so new you won't even find it on Google Maps yet – but it makes the drive to Khama a lot shorter.

JACQUES GREEFF
Pretoria



WINNING
LETTER

Jacques wins a cooler bag worth R220. Whether you're a camper, fisherman, or sports fan next to a cricket pitch, this cooler bag has room for a lunch box and a 1,5 l coldrink bottle. The lid also has space for a coffee flask. The interior is lined with PVC, which makes it easy to keep the bag clean and hygienic. The bag has a short strap that reaches over the top and attaches with a Velcro strip, as well as a longer shoulder strap if you're going to carry it over longer distances. It's an ideal picnic accessory or a padkos bag for a road trip. winkel.weg.co.za



STEALTH CARAVANS

RENOSTER

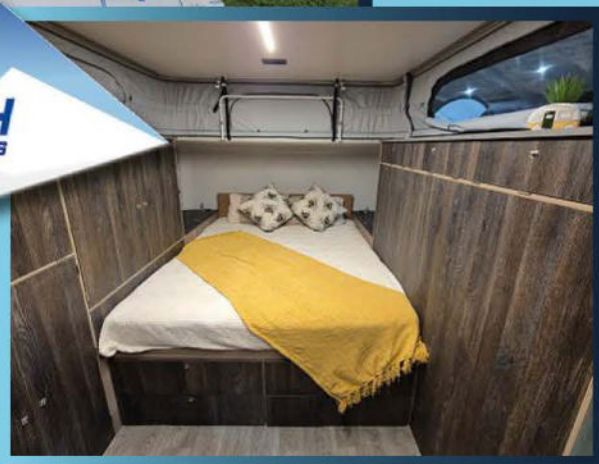
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Allow everyone their spot in the sun



I know this is a tricky topic, but for those of us who head to a campsite to unwind for just a few days, the behaviour of some long-term campers can really sour the experience.

I understand and appreciate that long-term campers provide a steady income for campsites over time, but it does bother me that they so often occupy the best stands – and then take up almost two stands with all their shade netting, gazebos, vehicles and trailers. I've even seen some of them hijack communal water taps with garden hoses, running water all the way to their stand.

As an ordinary camper, I'm told my dog must be on a leash and within my sight at all times – yet it often feels like those same rules don't apply to the long-term campers, whose pets run around the whole site unchecked.

I'd like to suggest that caravan parks and campsites create a separate section for long-term campers. I truly believe this would reduce frustration and make it easier for groundskeepers to maintain the space. I've seen how hard it is, for instance, to mow the grass between the setups of permanent residents.

Recently, our group of 14 caravans camped at a resort and had to squeeze in-between the long-term campers. Right from the start, there was friction when one of their vehicles was parked where it shouldn't have been. It could have been resolved easily, but instead, it left such a bad taste that not one of our 14 families will ever return to that resort.

It's a real pity.

SOLLY DE VILLIERS
Meyerton 🇿🇦





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INVADER
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Pleased to meet you!

A handful of impressive new caravans were on display at the recent kykNET Outdoor Expo outside Malmesbury in the Western Cape.



BUNDU LODGE

Bundu Lodge is a new caravan manufacturer based in Paarl, and they came to show off two offroad caravans: the Rhino 2 and the Elephant 4.

The team behind Bundu Lodge, Ebbie Lambrechts (design) and Jacques Calitz (manufacturing), say that in the competitive offroad caravan segment, campers are looking for ones without canvas panels that are quick to set up, with an indoor bathroom and dining space, and the ability to be self-reliant. That's why Bundu Lodge's models are solar-ready and equipped with a water system and geyser.

The bodies and chassis are made from stainless steel, while the doors and pop-up roofs are aluminium. At first glance, the two models look similar, but the Elephant has two beds while the Rhino has one. The second bed in the Elephant slides out on a rail from the front body at the nose cone. In that space, the Rhino instead offers extra packing space and an 85 l internal fridge (12 V) – a luxury, as the fridge-freezer is usually part of the external kitchen. You do have the option of adding an extra single bed in this area.

Inside, the two models are identical. The centre of the hull, side bed and rear



bathroom are all the same. It's a semi-island bed, and the ceiling over the slide-out is high enough to sit upright in bed. The bed also converts into a dinette.

The bathroom stretches the full width of the body – the shower is on the right, and the toilet in its partition is on the left.

The external kitchen cupboards are recessed into the left panel, and dishwashing happens at the back of the van with its own counter and a double-basin rack. The design for the loose step that fits in front of the

door is clever – it's almost like a half-step, supporting your first step until you reach the recessed platform inside for your second step. The door is a generous 685 mm wide.

Both caravans have a GVM of 2 200 kg, with a tare weight of 1 330 kg and a 2,5 t axle.

Prices* The Rhino 2 costs R555 000 and the Elephant 4 is R585 000. (Their standard items differ.)

Contact 079 842 8400 • info@bundu-lodge.co.za • bundu-lodge.co.za

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*Main image features the Rhinoman Xpedition Canopy.

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OBIQUA

The Cape-based slide on-slide off campers manufacturer Obiqua has built its first offroad caravan: the Drifter 2. Owner André van der Merwe says it's the result of several requests for a rugged offroader that sleeps two and boasts a full bathroom.

For a caravan this size, an indoor bathroom is a luxury. In the Drifter 2, it stretches across the full width of the rear, with the door in the centre. There's a porcelain basin and vanity cupboard, with the shower on the left and the toilet on the right.

The bed slides out on the right-hand side of the body. André has installed benches in the nose area where two people can sit comfortably, but a section of the nose can also be extended by 30 cm to fit a transverse bed.

The external kitchen's worktop folds down above the left wheel, with space for a microwave and several pots in the shelves behind it.

At the back, the Drifter offers a near full-on dishwashing station: a large, deep lid covering about half the rear opens upwards like a roof, giving access to the gas geyser. A countertop with space for two plastic basins and a drying rack folds down, and you can comfortably stand underneath the lid while doing dishes.

The Drifter's pop-up roof lifts about 70 cm. The body is made entirely of fibreglass, and the galvanised steel chassis comes with leaf springs, shock absorbers and 16-inch wheels.

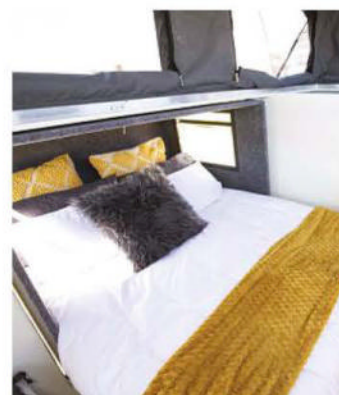
Its GVM is 1 600 kg, and the estimated tare weight is 820 kg.

Price* R545 000.

Contact 083 275 7016

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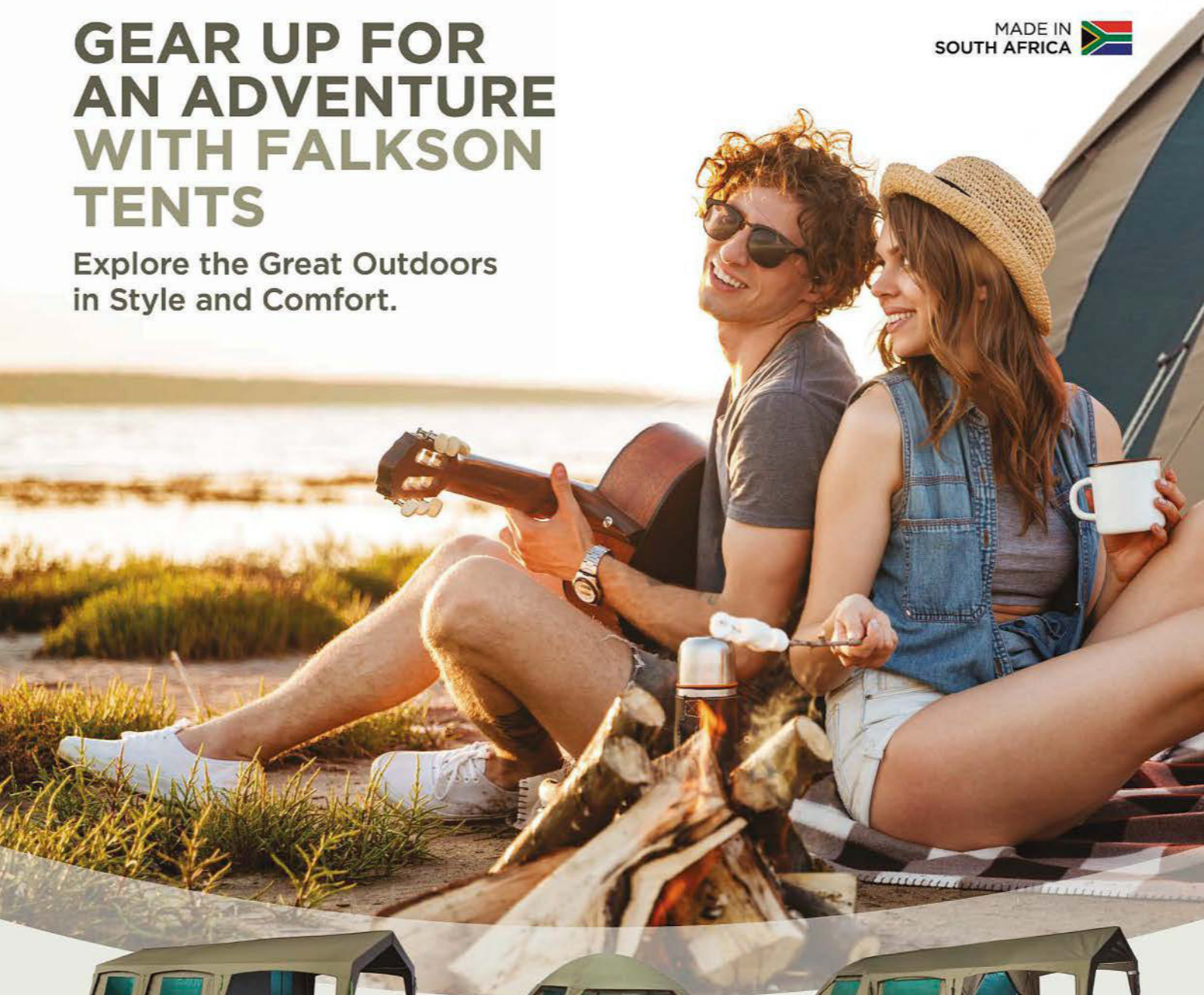
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SILVERBACK

The Lunar, a new offroad caravan from Cape-based manufacturer Silverback, is essentially a bed on wheels – given that the built-in bed takes up most of the interior space. Designed by Hein Burnett, the caravan's roof lifts only at the front, and two doors are fitted opposite each other in the side panels near the A-frame. As you climb in, there's ample headroom, and the door in front of you opens to the outdoor shower setup.

Large drawers slide out from under the bed, and the curved nose section opposite the foot end forms a wide surface – big enough to convert into extra sleeping space for kids.

The shower is a square panel that lifts at the rear and forms the roof of the cubicle. A canvas curtain surrounds you for privacy.

The dishwashing station is tucked around the corner at the back, with a loose shelf and two basins.

The entire left-hand panel is lined with shelves offering generous storage – including space for a second fridge-freezer.

Standard equipment includes a 100 Ah battery, a 50 l water tank with pump and level gauge, the shower panel, a 3 kg gas cylinder, the dishwashing station with mixer tap, the bed with drawers underneath, LEDs and USB ports and a spare wheel.

Optional extras include a second door, the shower cubicle canvas and tap, a 100 Ah or 200 Ah lithium battery, a 270° swing-out awning with side panel, Victron 30 A smart charger with solar regulator and 455 W solar panel, a 25 l fridge-freezer and a 55 l freezer, gas stove and a 14 l gas-electric geyser.

The Lunar's body is aluminium, the chassis is galvanised and it's fitted with 15-inch wheels. Tare weight is 880 kg, and GVM is 1 650 kg.

Price* R368 000.

Contact 062 106 1245

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MISSION CARGO



MISSION LITE



MISSION LITE+



MISSION LITE+

MISSION

In the December 2024-January 2025 issue, we featured Mission Outdoor's new Mission X offroad trailer. Mission revealed three more variants at the expo: the Mission Lite, Lite+ and Cargo.

Christie Coetzee of Mission says they've expanded the Mission X line-up with three additional options aimed specifically at offering better pricing and reduced weight.

The Lite, for instance, has an axle certified for 900 kg, while the Lite+ and Cargo models both have 1,6 t axles. The Lite has a GVM of 750 kg, the Lite+ comes in at 1 250 kg and the Cargo – like the original Mission X – has a GVM of 1 500 kg.

All the variants come with braked axles,

which means even the Lite and Lite+ can be towed by some of the smallest cars on the market. And, by the way, all the axles use a torsion-bar concept, which provides an independent suspension system. Unlike the X, which has a stainless steel chassis, these new models feature galvanised chassis.

Aside from weight differences, the two Lites are kitted out almost identically: from the 2 000 kg coupler and 15-inch steel rims to two 20 ℓ slide-out fridge-freezers, a dishwashing station with drying rack and tap, a food-grade water tank, corner steadies, stainless steel-finished kitchen, two-burner gas stove and a 1 008 Wh battery

setup. The Lite+ gets a Raptor-coated body, just like the Cargo.

The Lite comes standard with a Comfy Roofpod rooftop tent, while the Lite+ is fitted with a Bush Company LX27 tent.

The Cargo, meanwhile, has almost no drawer systems – offering buyers a pure luggage trailer with loads of space. It also comes with a 3CR12 stainless steel roof rack that can carry up to 300 kg.

Prices* Lite R238 900; Lite+ R268 900; Cargo R110 700.

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*The prices listed here were valid for the duration of the expo and may differ from current retail prices.



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New campsite at Vanderkloof

Campsites in the Northern Cape are few and far between, which makes the news of a new one at Vanderkloof – opened in December – especially welcome.

The Vanderkloof Damwal Caravan Park lies on the banks of the Orange River, with stands right beside the waters of the Vanderkloof Dam and opposite the highest dam wall in the country.

Owner Gerrit Crous, who also owns the Monte Crous Hotel in town, says Vanderkloof has taken on a holiday atmosphere in recent years, and he saw a gap for a decent campsite. So, he transformed this 2,5 ha patch of land into a neat caravan park. The water is clean and offers excellent fishing.

There are 25 grassy stands, each with amenities like a power point, tap and built-up braai with a grid. The grass was trucked in all the way from Gauteng.

The ablution facilities – two separate buildings for men and women with showers and toilets – are across from the stands. Right next door is a swimming pool and kiosk where you can buy basic supplies like wood and charcoal.

Right now, Gerrit and his team are working on phase two. This group of 40 stands will have its own bathroom building, and this side also boasts more shade trees and shelter from the wind.

There is cellphone reception at the

campsite, and if all goes according to plan, there'll be WiFi soon too. Pets are welcome, and since it's a tar road all the way to the campsite, it's accessible to all types of caravans.

Prices Depending on the season: R450 or R550 pn per stand for up to four people; thereafter R150 pp. For tents, the rate is R150 pp.

Contact 📞 067 394 0025 📧 karavaanpark@vanderkloof.co.za 📧 vanderkloof.co.za

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The Landie that won't stay dead

The demand for the classic Land Rover Defender is far from over, and British conversion specialist Land Rover Classic has just unveiled its latest Landie – now with a removable soft top.

Land Rover Classic, an affiliate of JLR, caters to die-hard fans who aren't quite sold on the new Defender and would rather keep their original Landie in mint condition.

This latest soft-top model features a fully restored body – the 90 Series, built between 2012 and 2016 – fitted with a replica of the original soft top. All come with a modern petrol-powered 5,0 l V8 engine and an eight-speed ZF automatic gearbox.

The price is quoted in British pounds only: the £195 000 price tag does sound steep (roughly R4,7 million), but it includes the donor vehicle.

These previous generation Defenders are becoming scarcer by the day, and shipping yours to the UK to be sold to a collector or official converter like Land Rover Classic could turn out to be a profitable move.



BorderX is growing

BorderX has already built more than 160 caravans since manufacturing started in 2019 with a 200 m² floor space in Hennopspark. But it wasn't long before they had had to double that to 400 m², says owner Werner Pretorius. Now, demand has grown so much that they had to relocate the business.

BorderX is now based in Highway Business Park at 95 Park Avenue, Rooihuiskraal, where they have 1 100 m² to breathe. It's roughly 2,5 km from the previous site, right next to the N1 highway.

Contact 📞 082 929 0824 📧 info@borderx.co.za

🌐 borderx.co.za

GPS S25.896993 E28.163018



Versatile fold-up braai

Outdoor gear manufacturer Snowva, which caught attention a few years ago with its unique ice-maker, has now launched this clever braai contraption. The Braaitas consists of a unique fold-up braai stand (with three height settings and two-sided braai options) and a folding grid with slide-out handles. This means you can fold and flatten all your braai essentials neatly into a PVC bag.

It doesn't take up much space, and best of all, it won't mess up your caravan or off-roader when you pack it away. The stand and grid are made of stainless steel – so you can braai hard and often, no problem at all.

Price R1 500.

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The apple doesn't fall far...

Coastal Escape is a new caravan rental business in Scottburgh, KwaZulu-Natal.

Marque Barwise, who heads up the business, explains that prospective campers book a caravan from them and it's set up at a chosen campsite on the South Coast. You simply arrive at the campsite with everything ready and waiting.

Caravan Fitment Centre KZN operates from the same premises at 7 Cordiner Street, just around the corner from Scottburgh

Caravan Park. They offer basic repairs and have a camping shop stocked with all sorts of gear – from camp chairs, drying racks and steps to general spare parts.

Caravan Fitment Centre is owned by Sukie Barwise, Marque's mother, who also owns Pretoria Caravans & Outdoor.

Contact 061 474 5563

✉ kzn@caravanfitmentcentre.co.za

📍 Caravan Fitment Centre KZN

GPS S30.282986 E30.757652



Junior Boks land new sponsor

Hyundai South Africa will sponsor SA Rugby's national under-20 men's and women's teams for the next four years. The agreement also includes youth tournaments like the under-18 and under-16 rugby weeks for both boys and girls.

SA Rugby CEO Rian Oberholzer says he's excited to partner with Hyundai. He believes the car manufacturer's involvement will help discover and develop future rugby stars.

Gideon Janse van Rensburg, head of Hyundai South Africa, says he felt especially proud when the Junior Springboks took to the field against Argentina in May this year with the Hyundai emblem on their kits – and then went on to win the match.



Loftus welcomes fifth shareholder

Loftus Caravan City is one of the largest dealerships in the country, and the Loftus brothers – Woody, Joel and Neil – have nearly 40 years of caravan experience behind them.

Four years ago, they welcomed Nicole Ostrom as the fourth shareholder. Now, Jacques Otto joins the team as the fifth.

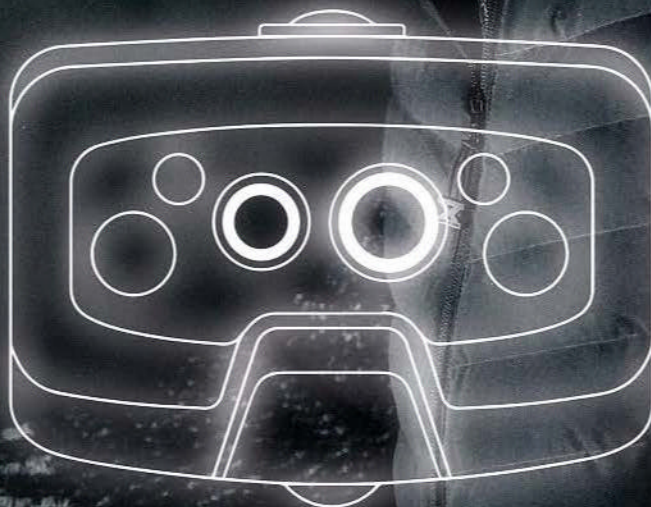
Like Nicole, Jacques is an employee and a skilled salesperson, but he's equally knowledgeable when it comes to the technical side of caravans. "It's about continuity," explains Woody, "and keeping our long-term plans in mind."

The company currently employs 34 people, and customers can find well-known caravan brands here, including Okto, Nayela, EdgeOut, Afrispor, Freeline, Metalian, Vagabond and the imported Swift.

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Welcome to George, Mobi Lodge!

Mobi Lodge has expanded its operations in the Cape. In addition to its dealership in Malmesbury, there's now also a branch in George. This service centre and showroom is located at 65 Laing Street in George Industria, and the manufacturer's Mobi G golf carts are also available here.

Marius Ras, owner of Mobi Lodge, says they have many clients along the Garden Route, so the expansion made perfect sense. Monique Ras, Marius's daughter, has been appointed as manager, and the branch

itself is an extension of the Malmesbury dealership, Cape Mobi Adventure.

Contact 044 124 0243 or 082 925 3582

monique@capemobi.co.za

mobilodge.com

GPS S33.974877 E22.469586



Echo4x4 moves back to Derdepoort

Echo4x4 has moved its head office and factory in Centurion back to Derdepoort, where the company was founded 34 years ago.

The premises in Centurion had belonged to Echo4x4 since 2004, but according to owner Willie Grobler, they've sold the property and the company is relocating to Rooipensreier Street in Derdepoort.

The entire operation is moving – including the showroom, fibreglass plant and production line. The new premises are just 2,3 km from the N1 highway, so still easy to access.

Contact 012 345 3333

sales@echo4x4.co.za echo4x4.co.za

GPS S25.680880 E28.300613



Toyota and Chiefs lend a helping hand

The partnership between football club Kaizer Chiefs and automotive giant Toyota began on Mandela Day in 2023 with their "Heart on Sleeve" initiative.

This year, their focus is on the Kliptown Youth Program in Klipspruit, Soweto. Toyota is sponsoring the purchase of sports equipment, toys, laptops and first aid

kits, which will be donated to the youth programme. The aim is to uplift children in underprivileged communities through sport and education.

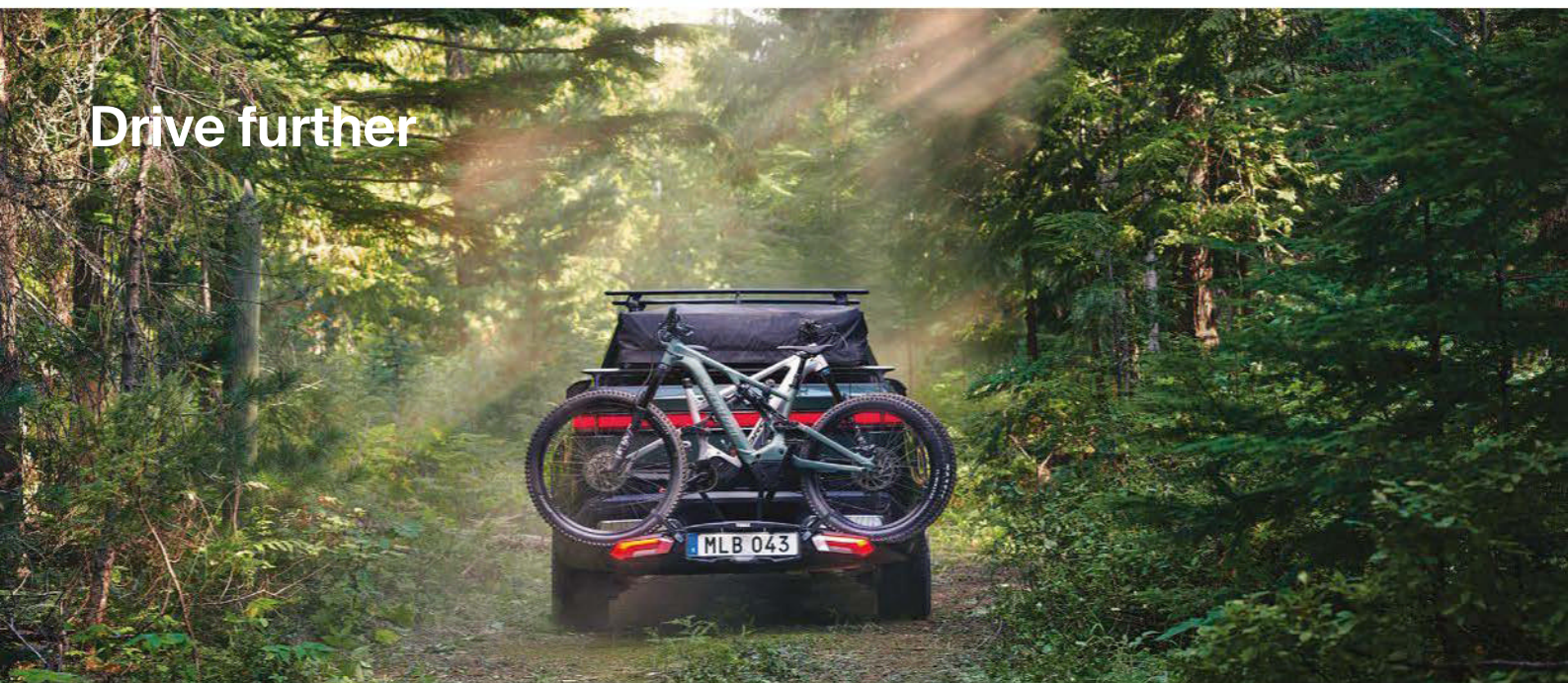
Jessica Motaung, Marketing Director at Kaizer Chiefs, says the sponsorship will bring joy and hope to a community that is otherwise struggling.

Pack smarter

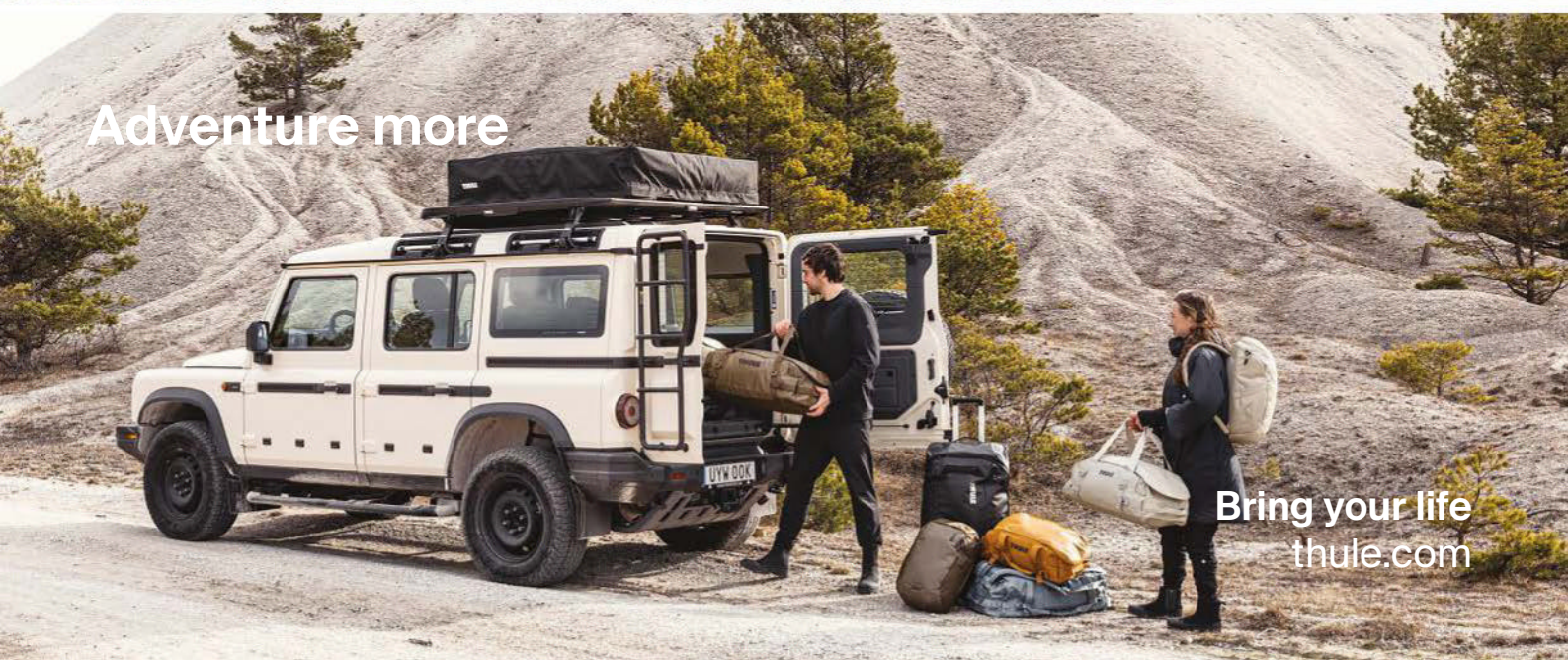
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Dirt-road chic

Although the Lexus GX is already in its third generation, this is the first time it's made its appearance in South Africa. **Cyril Kloppe** takes a closer look.

The GX is based on the Toyota Land Cruiser Prado and has been available in South Africa since April this year. The GX is the fifth addition to Lexus's X-range of off-road capable vehicles; the others are the compact UX, the midsize NX, the sleek RX and the full-size LX, which rubs shoulders with the Toyota Land Cruiser 300.

The GX is available in three trim levels: the Overtrail (R1 766 000), the Overtrail Bi-Tone with a black roof (R1 776 200), and the SE flagship model (R1 829 000), which places more emphasis on luxury than off-road ability.

What do we have here?

As mentioned, the GX is based on the Prado, but instead of a 2,8 l diesel engine and an eight-speed gearbox, the Lexus version gets a beefy 3,5 l V6 with twin turbos and 10 forward gears (from the Land Cruiser 300).

The visible differences between the Lexus and Toyota include the GX's hourglass-shaped grille and a brake light that stretches across the full width of the rear – a design that's all the rage among carmakers these days.

Because Lexus is the upmarket brand in Toyota's stable, the GX's interior is more



SPECIFICATIONS

Model	GX 550 Overtrail
Engine	3 445 cc, turbocharged V6 petrol
Power	260 kW @ 4 800 rpm
Torque	650 Nm @ 2 000 rpm
Gearbox	10-speed automatic
Fuel consumption	12,3 ℓ/100 km
Tank	80 ℓ
Payload	595 kg
Towing capacity	750 kg
Dimensions	5 015 (l) x 2 000 (w) x 1 870 mm (h)
Ground clearance	220 mm
Approach and departure angles	27° and 22°
Tyre size	265/70 R18
Safety rating	★★★★★ (ANCAP 2024)
Service plan	Seven years/100 000 km
Warranty	Seven years/100 000 km
PRICE	R1 766 000

refined than the Prado's – not that the latter is any kind of budget SUV. Differences inside include a larger 14-inch touchscreen in the centre console versus the Prado's 12,3-inch one, fewer physical buttons than in the Prado, and semi-aniline leather upholstery in the GX.

The Mark Levinson sound system pumps your favourite music through 21 speakers and you can use the GX Overtrail's six drive modes – Auto, Dirt, Sand, Mud, Deep Snow and Rock – to handle any road surface. Other electronic features include, but not limited to, a pre-collision warning system, lane departure alert and adaptive cruise control.

The GX is available with either five or seven seats, which means there's plenty of space for passengers and gear.

Lexus says the GX is designed for the toughest road conditions and is therefore equipped with a range of advanced off-road technologies to ensure grip and stability. Lexus also claims its engineers finely tuned the chassis and suspension, while improved body rigidity and aerodynamics ensure

leading noise suppression. Active noise control is said to guarantee a peaceful and comfortable ride, whether you're on a highway or a dirt road.

And its rivals?

In our view, the Jeep Grand Cherokee and Land Rover Defender 110 are the Lexus GX's main rivals. The Jeep also has a V6 engine like the Lexus, but it delivers just 210 kW of power and 344 Nm of torque compared to the Lexus's 260 kW and 650 Nm. The Defender's straight-six engine pushes out 294 kW, but its torque figure is lower (550 Nm).

In terms of looks, the Toyota Land Cruiser Prado is obviously closest to the Lexus GX, but it's hard to compare the two as they have wildly different engines and gearboxes.

All four vehicles mentioned here are great options, but the Lexus GX Overtrail combines the Defender's luxury, the Jeep's comfort and the Toyota's off-road ability – and that's why we think the Lexus GX Overtrail is a smart choice.



FROM THE COMPETITORS
Luxury 4x4 SUVs with punch



R1 485 300 Toyota Land Cruiser Prado 2.8 GD VX-R

The Prado's big 4 ℓ V6 engine has been replaced by the 2,8 ℓ diesel, and we're not hearing any complaints from Toyota fans.



R1 671 604 Jeep Grand Cherokee 3.6 Overland

We recently tackled the Baviaanskloof with this beast and our only gripe was its 20-inch tyres that are easily damaged.



R1 929 300 Defender 110 3.0 P-400 X-Dynamic

The P-400 has a beast of a straight-six engine that delivers more power than the GX's V6, but its torque figure is lower.



The gentle charm of Laingsburg



When you stumble upon an oasis in a dry, desolate landscape, you make sure to tell everyone about it. And here in the Great Karoo, there are two.

Words and photos **Leon Botha**

The first thing people usually ask when you say you're off to camp in Laingsburg is: Where?

This modest little town sits in the heart of the Great Karoo – arid land – and most people only find themselves here because they're on the N1 heading somewhere else. But it's a pleasant surprise to discover you can park your



caravan here for a few days at not just one but two campsites. They're both the kind of spots you'll rave about to your friends.

The Buffelsrivier campsite is on the farm Opzoek, 9 km outside town. You drive along the dry riverbanks of the Buffels River to reach it. It's a lovely place where you can camp on a patch of grass

or drive into the mountains until it's just you and the stars.

About 44 km on the other side of Laingsburg, on the farm Elandsfontein, you'll find Potdeksel Karoo 4x4 campsite. Here, you'll camp among pretty ridges where the grass is so green it looks almost fake. It's the kind of place that will tempt you to stay longer than planned.

BUFFELSRIVIER Upstream

The road through the Moordenaarskaro (Murderers' Karoo) winds out of Laingsburg next to the Buffels River. Half a kilometre out of town, you leave the tar behind for a good dirt road that leads to the Buffelsrivier campsite. After about 6 km, you cross a single-lane concrete



bridge. To your right, the remains of the old bridge lie in ruins, washed away during the 1981 floods. You're now driving on the Wiegmannskraal Bridge – named after an ox that apparently fell into a hole here years ago. Some locals also call it the Honeymoon Bridge. Whatever its name, the surface is uneven due to damage from the 2008 floods.

Once you've swayed across, the entrance to Buffelsrivier is on your left. Follow the road for 2,4 km – you'll cross the riverbed twice (so if it's in flood, you might have trouble getting through). If a freak storm hits during your stay, don't worry – Izak van der Vyver, who runs the place, says there's an emergency road off the farm and you won't be stuck. The road was in good condition during our visit, and we even saw campers in a Suzuki Swift. Your car should be fine.

Where the road splits, keep right for the reception. Izak will meet you there to show you where to pitch. The stands are back toward the entrance, but there's ample space near reception to turn your towing combination with ease.

We stayed at one of the standard stands, which are grouped into three clusters. (If you prefer seclusion, there are more options elsewhere on the farm.) The

“

You're now driving on the Wiegmannskraal Bridge – named after an ox that apparently fell into a hole here years ago

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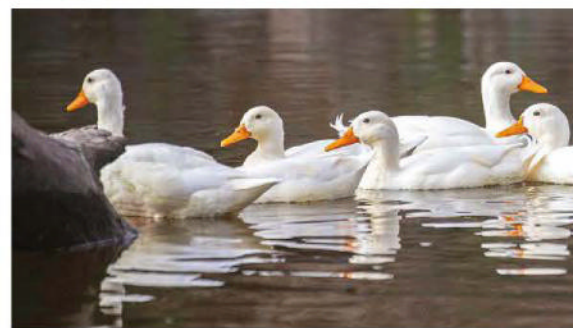
ablution block sits in the centre, flanked by a green lawn and three power points. The stands are open, but you're basically on the bathroom stoep. There's also a circular splash pool.

The other two clusters are behind the bathrooms and one level lower. Three stands are secluded, deeper into the bush and farthest from the bathrooms. The other five sit on a neat lawn closer to the facilities.

The three bush stands are to your left. For longer towing combinations, Izak recommends the second. The back is dense with thorn trees and the second stand has a patch of lawn and a braai area. This is a small clearing with a steel braai drum (bring your own grid). It's a great hangout spot.

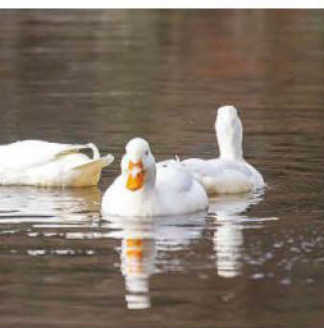
On the other corner is a pole with a light on top, a tap and a bin.

The neighbouring stand is also in the bush but offers more privacy, and the surface is covered in fine gravel. The third stand was occupied during our visit but looked similar from a distance.



Back at the other sites, the grassy strip has five stands divided by four shade-net screens. The first four have overhead shade-netting, and all five have individual lights you can control.

Behind the first stand, a path leads up to the ablution block, where you'll also find a communal firepit and small circular splash pool.



They say

Jacolene Fourie, from Paarl, camps with her Suzuki Swift and a three-man tent, accompanied by Kiwi the cockatiel and Mango the canary.

"Kiwi is one year old now and Mango is nine. Mango always rides up front in the cage when we go camping. As soon as I arrive, I open the cage so he can explore. This is my first time here – I don't like crowded campsites, and this place is amazing. I can't wait to go for a walk."



Next to the last stand is an open room with a chest freezer, and across from it – toward the bathrooms – is a loo and a huge cold-water shower. At the back of the bathrooms is a separate kitchen with sinks and a freezer stocked with meat. Lamb chops are R180/kg and a pack of boerewors costs R50. Help yourself and settle at reception on checkout.

A FEAST OF OPTIONS. Buffelsrivier offers a mix of campsites: from an open lawn with grouped stands, to clearly demarcated sites on lush grass, a few tucked-away spots in the bush that aren't too far apart, and some in the far corners of the farm.

DESTINATION



The bathrooms are around the corner: three showers on the left, three toilets opposite. In between is a covered communal area. The shower cubicles are an open and long passage – your stuff stays dry at the entrance. Loads of hooks and possibly the tallest showerheads in the country – you won't reach them even with arms outstretched. It feels like you're showering under a cloud.

Two basins sit on the opposite wall in the communal area.

For a scenic view of the campsite, hike up the small hill at the far end – a quick two-minute walk.

From the top, you'll spot a duck pond near the first stands and lots of four-legged campers. We counted six families during our visit – all had brought their pets along.



CONNECTION POINT. The ablution block is the hub of the standard stands, with everything laid out around it. It's also your connection to the outside world – the WiFi hotspot is here. There is no cellphone reception at the campsites themselves.





Briefly | Buffelsrivier



Campsite Options from grassy stands to cleared spots in the bush.

Ablutions One shared bathroom block. WiFi available here.

Rates R150 pppn (R50 for kids 5-12).

Arrival and departure No fixed times.

Contact 082 929 3091 (WhatsApp)

✉ info@buffelsrivier.co.za

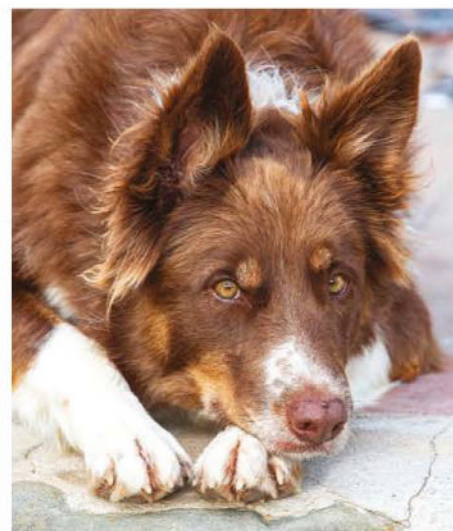
🌐 buffelsrivier.co.za

Nearest town Laingsburg, 10 km.

Road conditions The last 8,7 km is a dirt road, mostly in good condition.

GPS S33.124563 E20.884504

Drive & Camp says There is no cellphone reception at the stands, but there's free WiFi at the ablutions.



POTDEKSEL

Around the mountain

To get to the Potdeksel Karoo 4x4 campsite from Buffelsrivier, take the shortcut through Laingsburg – it lies beyond the town and the Witteberg mountains.

Keep right once you're back in Laingsburg and across the river via Van Riebeeck Street. The road continues for 800 m under a railway bridge – one of the few structures to survive the 1981 flood. According to the Flood Museum, water backed up against this bridge, submerging three-quarters of the town. When the embankment gave way, the water's force flattened most of Laingsburg. Victims were swept as far as the Floriskraal Dam (21 km away), and some were found as far as Mossel Bay.

You'll pass under the first arch of the bridge, now colourfully painted into a public artwork.

The turn-off to Potdeksel is 4,8 km after the bridge where the dirt road starts. This road stretches 63 km between Matjiesfontein and Touws River and ends at the N1. You'll pass a few cattlegrids, but the surface is well maintained. Watch your odometer closely: after 38,5 km you'll see the turnoff. There's no obvious sign, but you'll recognise it by an old white house on your left with two green doors and a flat roof with some rocks on top.

Ahead, a gorge in the mountains marks the entrance. Just 100 m later, you'll punch in a code to open an electric gate. From there, it's another 440 m to the campsite. The road is suitable for all vehicles – unless you're trying to bring a low-slung sports car.

The stillness of the mountain landscape is almost overwhelming – until your eye catches the wind turbines being erected on a distant ridge, reminding you of the world you left behind.

As you arrive, the ablution and dishwashing area is on your right in a long stone building with four doors and a stoep. In front of it is a circle – handy for long towing combinations. You don't have to circle around it though: turn sharply right and drive "against the flow" to enter the campsite area. The circle is a thoughtful addition that makes life easier for long towing combinations.





They say

Natale and Tanya de Candia (left) camped with a Toyota Land Cruiser CX 105 series, alongside Anél Liebenberg and Jean Nortier with a Toyota Hilux GD-6 2.8. Both couples are from Paarl and each towed a Stealth X-Country 594.

"It's an incredible place – we'll definitely be back! The view is stunning, and in our case, we didn't have anyone camped in front of us. You could even camp here in winter, and thanks to the limited number of stands, you won't feel crowded."



The campsite is a lawn lover's dream. You'll want to ditch your shoes and sink your feet into the plush greenery. Stands are marked by upright stones with numbers. Each has a power box and light, their reddish colour likely due to iron-rich water. They blend perfectly with the surroundings. You also get a wheeled braai drum (with a grid). The only bins we saw were by the bathrooms.



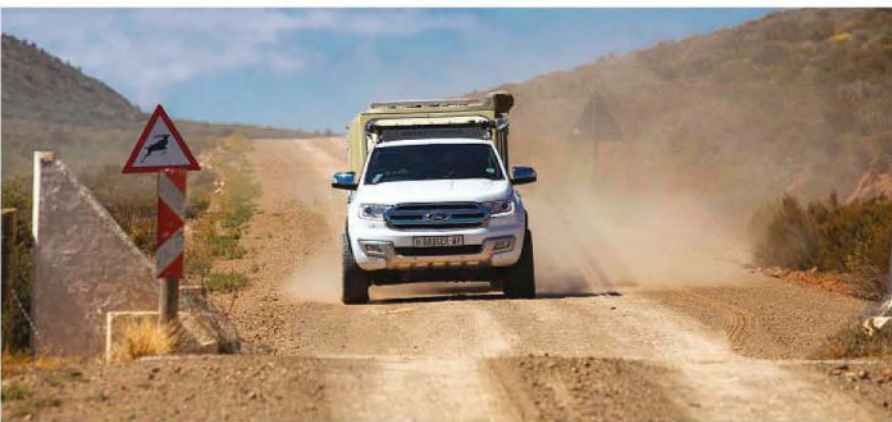
The most sought-after stand is the first on the right – it has the most shade thanks to karee trees, some apparently a century old. A few trees grow behind the opposite stands, but most stands are exposed to full sun all day. There's a slight slope toward the front, but nothing too tricky to level your caravan. Raised grassy ridges divide the stands, so there'll be no tripping over your neighbour's guy ropes. Some campers even used them as parking spots.

Near the right-hand edge of the campsite is a shallow splash zone with three small pools. Water flows from

DESTINATION



POTDEKSEL Camping & Glamping



one to the next. It's not a full-blown swimming pool, but it's perfect for kids to play in or for a lazy float to cool off. On either side there are taps on pillars

here, and the water is safe to drink.

The closest stand is 20 m from the bathrooms; the farthest is just over

100 m away. Dishwashing sinks are on the one corner of the building. The showers have strong water pressure and electric geysers – do be mindful of hot water usage so your fellow campers get some too.

Each of the four doors leads to a family bathroom. Step inside and you'll find a toilet on the left, a shallow stone basin ahead, and a mirror on your way to the open shower around the corner. There are two windows with mountain views. Your dry gear stays safe – there's no splash over.

Late afternoon, a tractor rumbles in and stops at our stand. A bunch of kids are aboard for a joyride. The driver



AN OASIS OF CALM. When you tell people about Potdeksel, it almost sounds too good to be true. Yes, it's probably the greenest patch of grass in the entire Karoo. A patch you can claim as your own – just bring your tent or caravan.

“

Stands are marked by upright stones with numbers. Each has a power box and light, their reddish colour likely due to iron-rich water

”



delivers bags of firewood (R65 each) to our neighbours, and our pre-ordered pot bread (also R65). The next morning some fresh vetkoek is on the house.

Our neighbours had hiked out to explore the foothills, and there is a sign near the entrance that marks a 4x4 trail. We, however, simply set out our camp chairs in the silence and beauty around us. That kind of peace can't be bought.



Briefly | Potdeksel



Campsite Nine separate stands on grass. Half of them offer shade.

Ablutions One bathroom block with four family bathrooms for everyone to use. The washing-up area is also here.

Price R800 pn per stand for up to four people (or R700 per night for two nights or more); R900 for five (R800 per night for more than one night); R1 000 for six people (R900 per night for more than one night).

Arrival and departure 12:00-17:00 and 11:00.

Contact 064 915 9066

info@karoo4x4camping.co.za

karoo4x4camping.co.za

Nearest town Laingsburg, 44 km (Touws River and Matjiesfontein, 52 km).

Road conditions Depending on where you're coming from (Touws River or Laingsburg), it's 24 km or 39 km of well-maintained gravel road.

GPS S33.300214 E20.501539

Drive & Camp says The campsite's name refers to a nearby pot-shaped peak.



They say

Earvine and Cheryl Cornelissen (left) of Durbanville camped with their Ford Everest and Imagine Comfortvan, alongside friends Tamlyn and Llewellyn Syster of Table View with a Ford Everest and Infanta Enkulu 2.

"We were pleasantly surprised! You expect a dry place with rustic amenities, but it looks just like its pictures online. The stands do have a slight slope and it's very dark at night. More bathrooms would be nice, but the little pools are so soothing – that sound of running water is so healing."



Town of the '81 flood

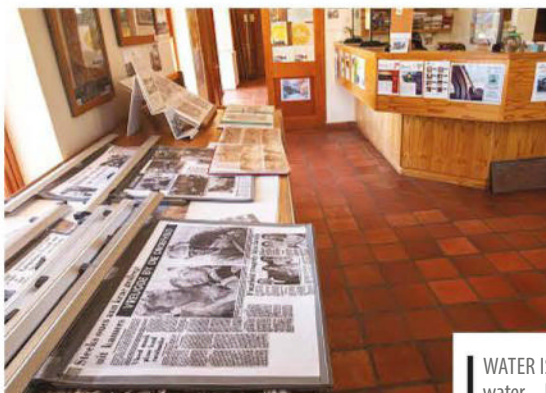
Laingsburg is best known for the 1981 flood – one of the worst natural disasters in South Africa's history.

It's worth stopping at the Flood Museum. Coming from Cape Town, it's just past the Buffels River bridge on your right. Ironically, the river is usually dry, but 44 years ago it was a life-and-death matter when three-quarters of the town was swallowed by water.

As you drive through town, look out for a mustard-coloured marker indicating where to turn off. A stripe at the top indicates the height the water reached. The museum is a neat building with a shop and a memorial to the 104 victims – 72 of whom were never found.

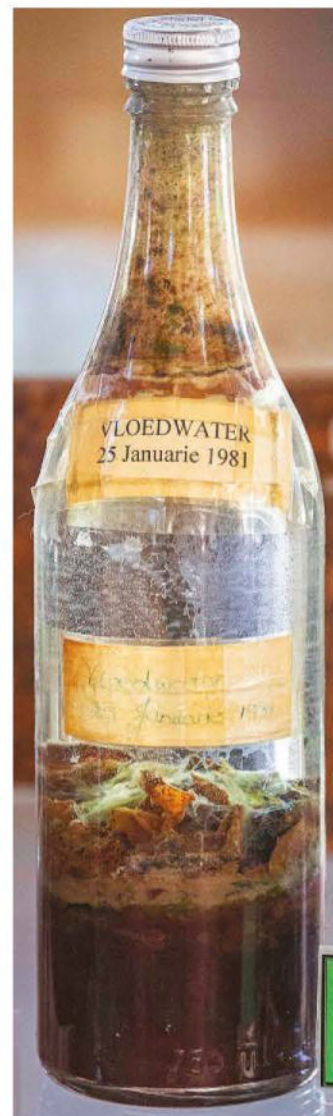
In the museum entrance, several pieces of driftwood hang from the ceiling in a suspended art installation. A water level mark is visible here too – and that's when you realise you're standing almost two storeys below the 1981 water level.

Dozens of recovered objects are



displayed in glass showcases. One of the strangest is a water-filled bottle – the bottom half packed with what looks like gravel and mud, green silt wedged in between the two layers. The label reads: Floodwater, 25 January 1981. And more: shoes, a Bible and the pedals from a tricycle.

If you've got time to spare, dig into the stack of newspaper clippings on the table to the right of the entrance. (Leon says he



WATER IS LIFE. No living being can survive without water – but it can also bring destruction... as it did one fateful Sunday, 44 years ago.

came across a photo of Theuns du Plessis, his wife Sally and their children Lisa (11), Sanita (8) and Piet (12), captioned as taken just before Theuns disappeared. That's when Leon realised he had known Piet from primary school days' in Rustenburg. He remembers cycling out with his brothers to visit Piet at their resort, Ananda. If memory serves, Leon recalls Theuns was swept away in his blue BMW when the flood hit the bridge. – Ed

What we towed with

Land Rover Discovery Dynamic HSE

Land Rover's genes are rooted deep in the bush, and these days the brand offers a solid lineup of luxury vehicles, including the Defender, Discovery and Range Rover.

But flashy and fancy doesn't mean they shy away from the bundus – as we were reminded when we took this Discovery off the blacktop. Even with its 22-inch mag wheels, there wasn't a remote corner deep in the Karoo that it couldn't handle.

And we weren't travelling light either – we were towing Mobi Lodge's new flagship model, the Quattro. This double-axle giant gives the scale a proper workout, so the Discovery had nowhere to hide.

As expected, the Discovery comes kitted out with every gadget imaginable – everything that can open and close. And the new D350 engine is a towing dream. With 700 Nm of torque, the twin-turbo diesel allows you to almost set the pace with ease on the highway, even with a caravan in tow – and off-road, it barely feels as though you've left the tar.

But what really caught our attention is all the towing tech. You can deploy the electric towbar from the driver's seat, or walk to

the back and watch it swing out with the push of a button in the load bin. The reverse camera's guidelines help you line up the tow ball in one smooth motion, and there's even a built-in scale in the towbar that shows you exactly how much weight is resting on it.

The onboard system automatically cycles through each trailer light, switching them

on and off so you can stand behind the caravan and check what's working – and what's not. It even helps with the biggest headache of them all: reversing around a corner. We'll go into detail about that in our next issue (August–September 2025).

And then there's the fuel consumption – because a big engine towing a heavy load means only one thing, right? 

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Dynamic HSE
Engine	Six-cylinder twin-turbo diesel
Power	257 kW
Torque	700 Nm @ 1 500-3 000 rpm
Transmission	Eight-speed automatic
Drivetrain	All-wheel drive
Tank	89 ℓ (reserve approx. 8,5 ℓ)
Tare (licence disc).....	2 292 kg
GVM (licence disc).....	3 220 kg
GCM	6 745 kg
Towing capacity	3 500 kg
Tow bar test load	1 688,65 kg (D-value 16,56 kN)
Max nose weight	150 kg
Is the tow bar removable?	No, but it swings away electrically
PRICE	R2 115 500 (test vehicle R2 203 101)



A secret in the Eastern Cape Karoo

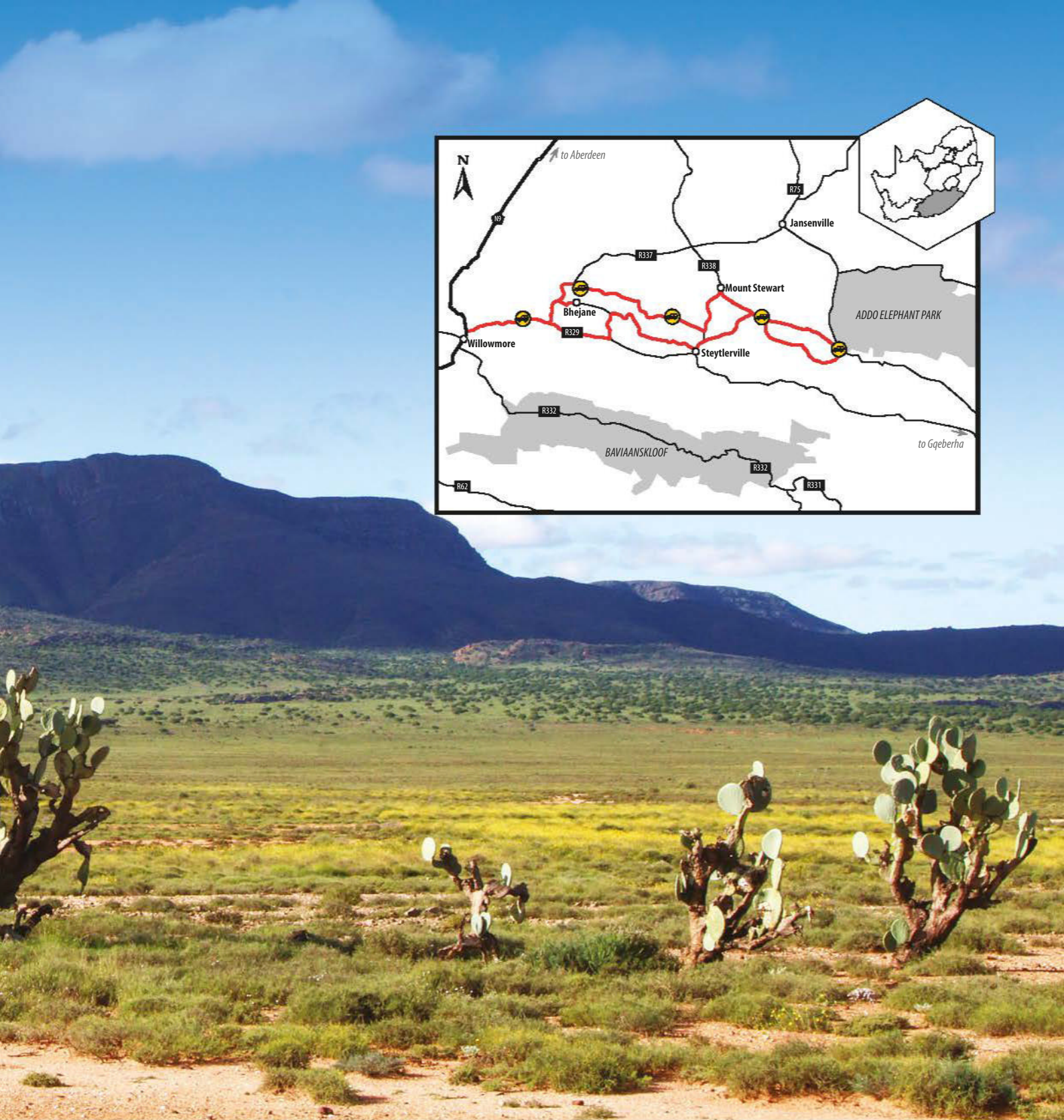
What has ten passes and one neck?
The Groot River Mountains! Come take a drive
through the lesser-known Eastern Cape Karoo.

Words and photos **Cyril Kloppe**

The Karoo town of Willowmore was founded in 1862. The name is a combination of farmer William Moore's name and that of the farm he owned at the time, The Willows. Look around as you drive into town – you might spot the “Willow Limo” in Knysna Street. This flower-adorned donkey cart is pulled by Sweetness and

Suzy, with Jim Makwena holding the reins. Jim says he also has two other donkey mares, Sweetland and Patrys, but they were enjoying a day off at the nearby Finchley Farm guesthouse. Rides cost R10 per person (the cart seats six), last about 15 minutes, and Jim says he and his Willow Limo only come to town if the weather is good.

Leave Willowmore and follow the N9 north. On the town's outskirts, turn right onto the R329, the Steytlerville road. This concrete road is wide enough for only one vehicle. When you see an oncoming car, both of you move over so that your left wheels ride on the gravel shoulder and your right wheels stay on the concrete slab to allow each other to pass.



Along this route, you'll notice several signs warning you about kudu. Piet Viljoen, who runs a towing service and workshop in Willowmore (more about Piet later), says he's hit 14 kudu in the 18 years he's lived here. It's best not to use these roads after dark.

Exactly 30 km after you turned onto the concrete road, turn left onto the R337

towards Fullarton and Klipplaat. This broad gravel road leads into a hidden valley tucked away in the folds of the Groot River Mountains. On the banks of the Groot River you'll find the lonely livestock post of Fullarton; turn right here towards Bhejane Game Reserve – your base for exploring the area.

This private reserve belongs to

Philip and Adriana Theunissen, and it's managed by Morné Grové. When you arrive at the reserve's gate, Morné greets you, neatly dressed in a pressed uniform with a pistol holstered on his right hip.

With his chin strap beard, Morné reminds one of an old-timey frontier preacher. He originally hails from Brakpan, but left the East Rand mining

JOURNEY

town after school to train in security and conservation. He's also a qualified professional hunter and a plant expert who leads guests on game drives and hunting trips within the reserve.

Bhejane is divided into several camps, including a main camp with buffalo and giraffe, and the long camp where you may drive around in your own 4x4 vehicle. For accommodation, there are campsites as well as various self-catering houses with electricity and hot water.

During our visit in April 2025, the veld was lush and green – a welcome sight after seven years of severe drought. Morné says one of the best experiences in Bhejane – and something his employer Adriana is particularly proud of – is tracking giraffe on foot and walking with them through the bush.

Although the reserve's focus is on American hunters, prices are still affordable for South Africans. Morné mentions that Springbok rugby players and other South African sports stars often visit Bhejane for a break.

Tonight, we light a fire next to the Groot River and camp under thick thorn trees. Let's be grateful for access to such a slice of natural beauty – and if you're truly lucky, Manie Libbok might jog past and you'll get the chance to ask him how on earth he missed that penalty kick against Argentina!

The next day, we tackle a circular route around and through the Groot River Mountains. Head back to Fullarton and turn right onto the R337 towards Klipplaat. You'll cross the Groot River via a low-water bridge (provided the water level is low enough), followed by the Plessis River and the first pass of our tour, Naroe gaspoort (625 m above sea level).

This is a narrow pass that threads through the mountain range, crossing the Plessis River three times. Immediately after the third low-water bridge, turn sharply right onto a twin-track. There's no road sign, but the turn-off is at GPS coordinate S33.12520 E23.89108.

Engage four-wheel drive and cross the railway track just a few metres after the turn-off. Here you'll find a railway stop called Eensaam (Lonely), but the station building is completely in ruins and a nearby farmhouse has seen better days.

The twin-track heading into the mountains from Eensaam is rough,



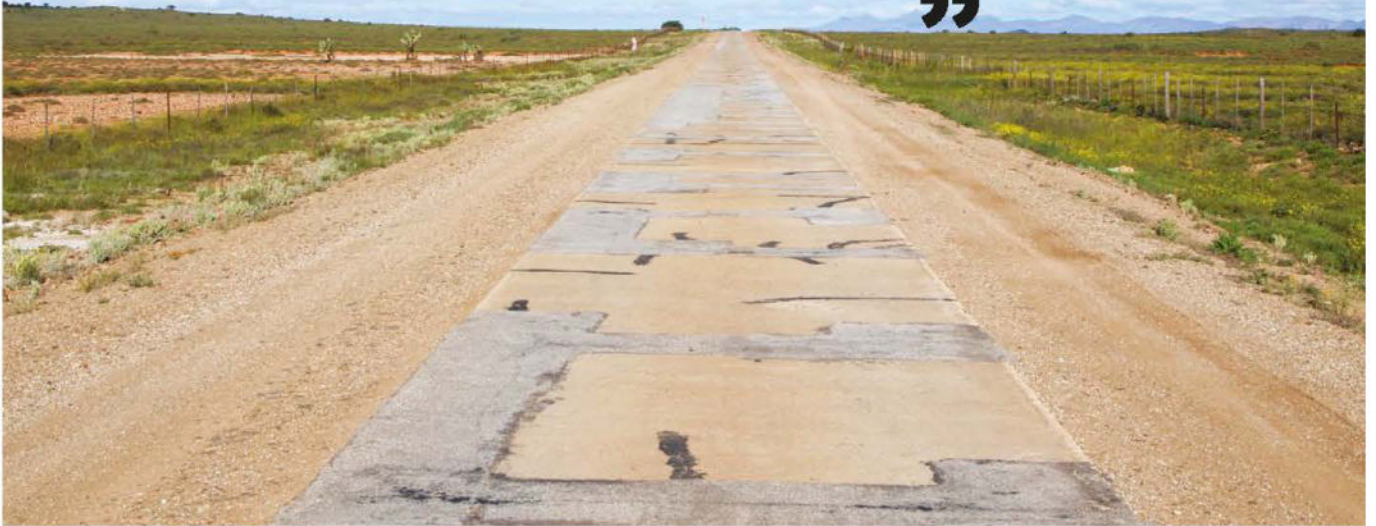
SECRETS. You'll find the Willow Limo (top) parked near the hotel on sunny days, while the Bhejane Game Reserve offers a welcome respite in Mother Nature's embrace.



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When you see an oncoming car, both of you move over so that your left wheels ride on the gravel shoulder and your right wheels stay on the concrete slab

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especially if there's been heavy rain recently. You'll definitely need 4x4 engaged. From here, we encounter the second and third passes of our tour. Beerpoort (654 m) climbs only 95 m above the surrounding area and is just 4 km long, but it was badly washed out during our visit. The 2 km long Bikammapoort (566 m) follows immediately after Beerpoort and is in much better shape, as several farms lie along this stretch and the farmers maintain the road.

Back at the Groot River, we drive west until we reach the Heuningklip River. Here there's a turn-off to the left leading to Kamferpoort, but because the farm gates are locked and access to the poort is restricted to a local farmer, we don't count it among our 10 passes and rather

continue through the Heuningklip River to the fourth pass on our route.

We eventually reach a four-way junction (S33.27036 E24.37587) at the start of Kranskoppoort (488 m). The pass is named after a nearby farm – you're welcome to turn right here to go take a look, but you'll be forgiven for simply snapping a quick photo and turning left towards Mount Stewart instead.

The fifth pass is Pienaarspoort (895 m) – its road surface is rocky heading toward Mount Stewart. You won't necessarily need a 4x4 here, but a regular city sedan might rattle itself apart or lose a tyre. The summit of Pienaarspoort is at S33.22060 E24.39720 if you're struggling to locate this obscure mountain pass on a map.

Mount Stewart is a lonely little

hamlet that emptied out years ago. The houses are abandoned, the doors and windows stripped, and the railway platform overgrown with Karoo bushes. Next to the station stands the ruins of the Cawood trading store, built in 1937. Incidentally, Cawood is a common surname in this area – the family has been farming in the Eastern Cape Karoo for at least seven generations, especially in this corner known as the Noorsveld.

It's grazing land all around you, and almost every farm raises angora goats. During severe droughts, the noors plant (*Euphorbia heptagona*) comes to the farmers' rescue. It's a tough, thorny plant that must be hacked out, drained of its milky sap, left to wilt, the thorns burned off, and then chopped into animal feed.

It's a laborious process, but the goats love it. In wetter years, however, the noors is seen as a pest, because angora fleece snags on the thorns, and goats can starve if they become entangled and trapped, unable to reach food or water.

Across Mount Stewart's main street is an Anglican church with a cornerstone stating it was built in 1904. Inside the church, a plaque thanks one Carey J Hobson for his service as pastor – dated 19 September 1974. Hobson may well have been the last minister to serve Mount Stewart. The village isn't completely abandoned, though – at one of the old houses, laundry hangs on a line, a dog barks, and there's life at a farmstead just beyond the hamlet.

From Mount Stewart, we follow the R338 gravel road eastward towards the Addo Elephant National Park. The R338

eventually dead-ends at the tarred R329 regional road, where we turn left, still heading east, towards the village of Wolwefontein.

The village is known for two things: a historic hotel dating back to 1920, and a brand-new wind farm completed in 2024. The hotel was a popular watering hole for travelling salesmen and railway passengers. According to local lore, one Saturday night a gunfight broke out between farmers and salesmen. The bullet holes in the hotel walls have been plastered over through the years, but some old-timers still jokingly call it the Revolverfontein Hotel.

Wolf Wind, a private wind farm, installed its first turbine in November 2024, and a total of 17 turbines are planned, generating a combined 85 MW of electricity to be sold to both the

Eastern and Western Cape.

Exactly 6 km beyond Wolwefontein, at a four-way junction on the R75 tar road, lies Kleinpoort. However, this "poort" is really just a tiny settlement consisting of a farm stall, a co-op and a handful of houses – so it doesn't make the cut as one of our 10 true mountain passes. There's not much to see here, but the farm stall does have WiFi.

From here, we start looping back to where we set off this morning. At the four-way crossing in Kleinpoort, we take the Springbokvlakte road south, passing the Blaaubosch Game Reserve. Barely 8 km after Kleinpoort, we turn right at GPS coordinate S33.36816 E24.81372 – but if you don't have a GPS, look out for the signpost to Karoo Wild Safaris and Haaspoort Nature Reserve and follow it.





FLOOD. The roads in the Groot River Mountains cross several rivers and intermittent streams. Be prepared to wade through the waters to see if it is safe to cross by vehicle. Cars have been washed away in the past.





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The houses are abandoned, the doors and windows stripped, and the railway platform overgrown with Karoo bushes

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This decent gravel road is suitable for almost any vehicle and follows the winding Haaspoortspruit through Haaspoort (S33.32928 E24.74791) – the sixth pass on our route. The road eventually ends at the P1852 farm road. Here we turn right, heading back towards the R329 we drove earlier. But before we reach the R329, we pass through Seekoeinek (760 m above sea level), the only “neck” on our journey. It’s hard to imagine hippos once grazed in this arid landscape; we’re not entirely sure where the name originally came from.

From here, we follow the R329 all the way to Steytlerville. This tarred road first takes us through Waaipoort (319 m), where we cross the Soutkloof River three times via small bridges. About 15 km past Waaipoort we reach Noorspoort, the eighth pass. Here you’ll find a tall cliff on the left and the Groot Rivier, almost overgrown, on the right.

Painted onto the cliff face at Noorspoort is a sequence of flags telling the history of South Africa – from Bartolomeu Dias’s Order of Christ ensign (a red cross on a white background),

through various colonial flags and the old Boer Republic flags, ending with the rainbow nation flag that has flown over South Africa since 1994.

Steytlerville was established in 1876 on the farm Dorsfontein and named after Rev Abraham Steytler. According to local lore, Dorsfontein had a reputation for heavy drinking, thanks to a travelling brandy cart that made monthly visits, causing trouble in the community. Rev Steytler – a German missionary – banned the sale of alcohol in the town.

The original hotel, built outside the



LONELY. The region might seem empty, but all the farms are occupied and the large community has known one another for many generations. If your car breaks down on a back road, it'll only take a short while until help arrives.



town's limits (and outside Steytler's jurisdiction), continued selling liquor but eventually fell into ruin after the ban was lifted and the new Royal Hotel was built inside the town. In 2003, the decaying old hotel was rescued by Jacques Rabie and Mark Hinds, who renamed it the Karroo Theatrical Hotel (the extra "r" is not a typo).

By day, you'll might find Jacques fixing a leaking tap in the garden while Mark checks in guests. But come evening, Jacques transforms into Dame Leyla Lamborghini, glittering in an evening

gown, while Mark becomes Freddy Ferrari, tinkling away at the piano as Dame Leyla entertains the audience with a drag cabaret show. Performances take place every Saturday night – booking is essential. Details and prices are available at karroohotel.co.za.

Steytlerville's main street, Piet Retief Street, is impressively wide, with lamp posts on the central island, each bearing banners of local family crests. Some black families who didn't have heraldic coats of arms, like the Amaradebes, got creative: theirs shows rugby posts and

WHERE TO STAY Bhejane Game Reserve

The reserve has a hunting area of 700 km². You hunt the traditional way; you have to track, stalk your antelope and shoot it yourself with your hunting rifle. Provision is also made for bow hunters, with platforms in trees where they may wait for hours for their prey.

There are several self-catering houses that can each accommodate between four and nine guests, and they are equipped with a/c and Wifi. There are also permanent tents, a hunting hut and stands for your off-road caravan or ground tent. All the accommodation has electricity, hot water and braai facilities.

Price R700 pn for two (camping), R1 500-R2 500 pn for two (in the self-catering chalets).

Contact 087 700 8386 • bhejane.co.za
• info@bhejane.co.za



a woman carrying a clay pot on her head. The Amacethes have a Xhosa shield with greeting black and white hands, while the Barkhuizens and Cawoods of European descent display traditional crests with knight's helmets and flowing mantling.

There are several eateries and coffee shops in town – perhaps the most interesting being The Veranda, which doubles as a motor museum and animal hospital. Michelle and Jurie Prinsloo, originally from Noordhoek in the Cape, moved to the Eastern Cape Karoo 18 years ago.

Jurie's first love was the motor museum, where he displays cars like an Opel Manta and a Ford GT40. But these days, his heart lies with the animal hospital's patients. In one corner sits an owl with a damaged wing and just one eye. In another, a bat-eared fox, hit by a car and left with ruined hips, lives out his days in the sanctuary. Jurie also introduces us to Misty, a domesticated fennec fox (*Vulpes zerda*) that knows nothing of the Sahara's desert sands.

The coffee shop, museum, and animal hospital are open daily from 09:00 to 16:00, and entrance is free – although Michelle and Jurie appreciate donations to help feed their rescued animals.

In the heart of Steytlerville is a monument dedicated to the townspeople who fell during the Great War. Here, we turn left into Middleton Street, drive past the town cemetery, and take the P1865 dirt road that leads us back towards the Groot River Mountains.

It's a bumpy road that doesn't necessarily require four-wheel drive but is far too rough for an ordinary sedan. About 30 km outside Steytlerville, we reach the penultimate pass on our route: Medenpoort (620 m). It's a relatively flat mountain pass that follows the Groot River upstream until the road dead-ends at the P1861 farm road.

Turning right would take you back to Bhejane Game Reserve, but we turn left instead to reach the tenth and final pass in the Groot River Mountains. Sandkraalpoort (576 m above sea level) is only about 10 km long, with no real challenges apart from a low-water crossing over the Kommissie River, which could become tricky if the river comes down in flood.

The farm road eventually joins the R329 concrete road where our journey first began. All that's left now is to head back towards Willowmore, following the signs for Bhejane until we're safely back at the game reserve.

And there you have it – a corner of South Africa few people ever get to see. A corner where a drag queen is welcomed, where an old Brakpan boy feels at home, where animal activists and hunters sit around the same fire... and where people like you and I can roam freely and safely.

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Painted onto the cliff face at Noorspoort is a sequence of flags telling the history of South Africa

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HISTORY. The graffiti in Noorspoort (above) tells the story of South Africa's colonial past and the banners in Steytlerville (below) celebrate the families of the Noorsveld.





What we drove

Cyril set off from Cape Town in his own Suzuki Jimny to write this article, but got stuck 40 km before Willowmore in the sticky mud of the Traka River. The Jimny's clutch started slipping while he tried to get out of the muck, and eventually it would neither grip nor disengage properly. Things quickly escalated into a cloud of smoke and a motionless vehicle...

We called on the towing service of Piet Viljoen Motors in Willowmore and they managed to tow Cyril and his Jimny out of the mud. Piet Viljoen took pity on the journalist and offered him his own Isuzu bakkie so that he could complete the trip for this article (*Drive & Camp* paid R1,50/km for the use of Piet's Isuzu and returned it to him with a full tank of diesel). Piet's Isuzu KB 280 had nearly half a million kilometres on the clock and ended up being more reliable than a Suzuki. Cyril was grateful and annoyed in equal parts.

We'd like to thank Piet and can recommend him if you ever experience car trouble in the area. The towing service is available 24 hours a day, and Piet or his son Hennie will fetch you as far as the Baviaanskloof.

If you get towed in after dark and Willowmore's usual accommodation is already closed, there's a flat behind the workshop with two three-quarter beds, a kitchen, braai facilities and a bathroom where you can stay over. *Drive & Camp* received no discount for mentioning Piet Viljoen Motors in this article and we also paid for the accommodation.

Contact 082 659 2499 (Piet) or 072 445 4427 (Hennie)

Address Knysna Street 25, Willowmore.

Rates R850 call-out fee plus R12/km (towing service). Accommodation in the flat is R450 pppn.



Kruger's southern superstar

Lower Sabie, in the south of the Kruger National Park, is always popular, even during quieter times. No matter the season, you'll struggle to book a few days in a row unless you plan well in advance.

Words and photos **Helenus Kruger**



The Kruger National Park is one of South Africa's most popular holiday destinations, and for many locals, a break here is a family tradition. Once the bush bug bites, it never really lets go, and love for the Kruger is often passed down through the generations.

Over the years, many traditions have taken root. Camps start stirring early – usually before sunrise – as guests prepare for a game drive. Early rising means early to bed too, and by dusk a hush already settles over camp. And of

course, sightings are freely shared with fellow travellers.

Another favourite is stopping for a picnic – many people plan their day's game drive around the picnic spots.

The park spans almost 20 000 km² (as the crow flies, it's 360 km from south to north and 65 km from west to east) – roughly the size of Wales.

If you enter at Pafuri Gate in the north and follow the H1 and H3 main roads, you'll exit 441 km later at Malelane Gate in the south. Along the way, you'll drive through 11 of the park's 14 ecozones.

One reason for Lower Sabie's popularity is its easy access from the N4 highway. From towns in Mpumalanga, Crocodile Bridge Gate – the closest gate to Lower Sabie – is just a few hours' drive, making it an ideal weekend destination. Even for Gautengers, the 450 km journey isn't too far for a long weekend. (Just note the camp is 35 km from the gate, so you'll need to add at least 45 minutes to your travel time.)

The camp is set on the banks of the Sabie River, and the water draws plenty of wildlife, especially during the dry



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The camp is set on the banks of the Sabie River, and the water draws plenty of wildlife, especially during the dry months

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months. Many believe the south of the park offers the best chance of spotting the Big Five and wild dogs. The H4-1, which hugs the Sabie River towards Skukuza, and the H4-2 to Crocodile Bridge, are considered top game-viewing roads.

Before you set up camp, you need to check in at reception on the river side of the parking area. Don't forget the paperwork you received at the park gate, and grab a camp map while you're there.

The reception is located next to the camp shop and restaurant. The shop –

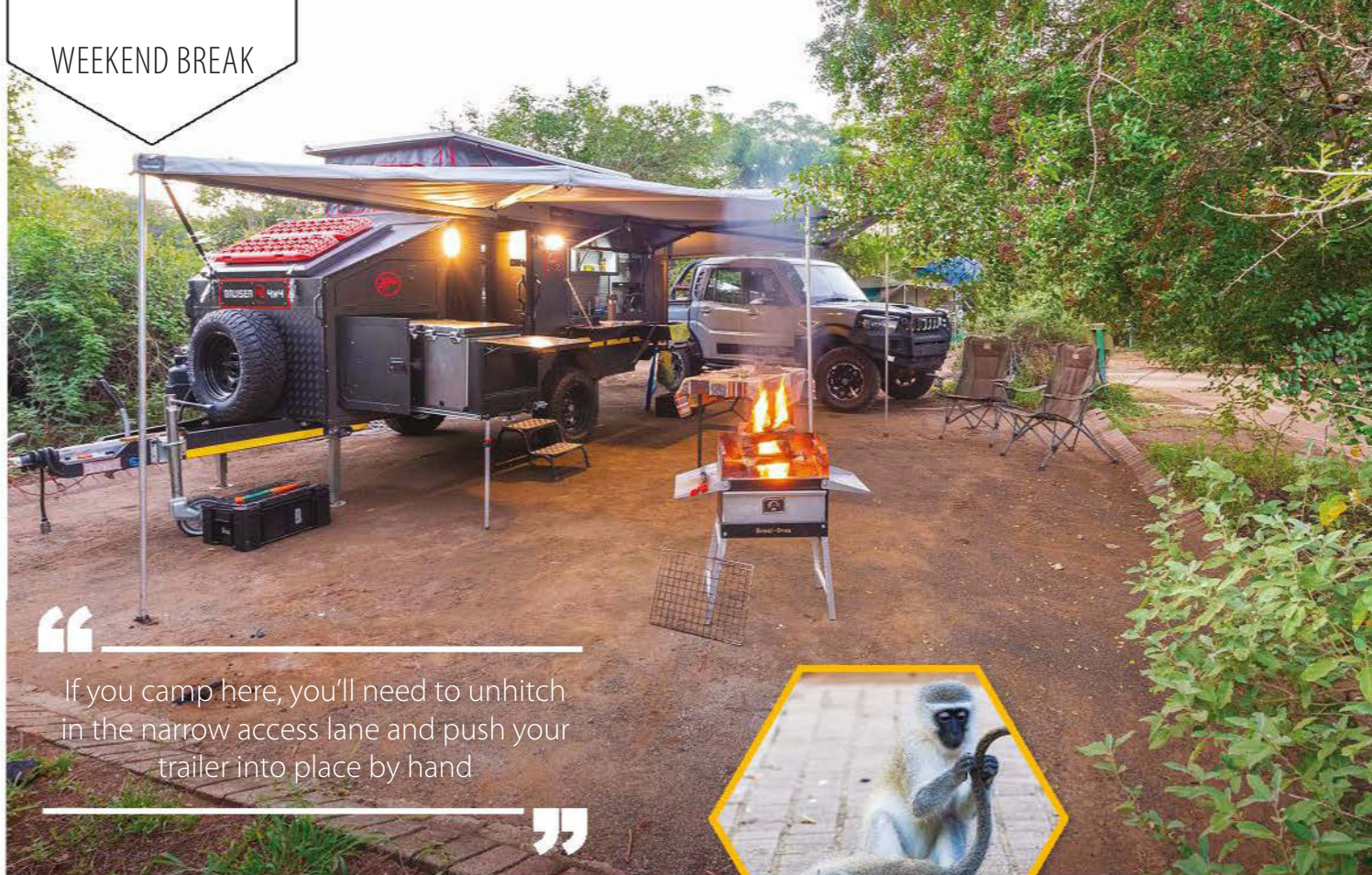
more of a mini supermarket these days – is open from 07:00 to 19:00 and stocks most groceries, including fresh fruit and veg, frozen meat, braai tongs, batteries, headlamps and binoculars. You'll also find wood, charcoal, firelighters and a big range of souvenirs.

There's a Mugg & Bean restaurant open from 07:00 to 20:30 – you can sit out on the deck overlooking the Sabie River while enjoying a meal or drink. (The takeaway kiosk is open between 07:00 and 17:00.) Lower Sabie even has a filling station with petrol, diesel, tyre repair

services and a spot to recharge your vehicle's battery.

The variety of large trees here is impressive – you'll find buffalo thorn, false marulas, tree wisteria, jackalberries, long-tail cassia and toad tree. The campsites are laid out beneath these giants, which means most spots offer lovely shade in the summer months.

The road to the campsite also leads to the self-catering units, so it sees plenty of traffic. Some of the stands are located close to the road, but luckily the bushes between the road and the campsite



“ If you camp here, you'll need to unhitch in the narrow access lane and push your trailer into place by hand ”



SPOTLESS. The park's campsites are known for their clean, well-kept ablutions. Campers who prefer to travel light can cook and/or boil water for tea or coffee at the communal kitchens.



provide privacy. There are three small entrances through the shrubbery, each leading to narrow dirt paths connecting the 34 campsites. Signs at each entrance indicate where the tent and caravan stands are. Sites are not allocated – so the earlier you arrive, the better your chances of securing a good one.

The stands at Lower Sabie are small and close together, and your off-road trailer or small caravan plus vehicle will just about fit. The boundaries are marked with paving stones and about half the stands are enclosed on three sides by walls of bush, which separate you from

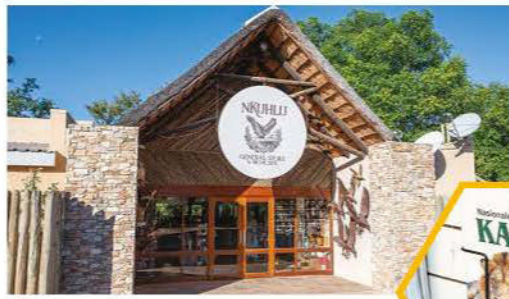
your neighbours and provide some privacy. These bushes, however, make it impossible to reverse your rig onto the stand. If you camp here, you'll need to unhitch in the narrow access lane and push your trailer into place by hand. The campsite also has a slight incline which makes matters more tricky. The stands closer to the river have fewer bushes between them and are spaced slightly further apart.

It would make sense to distinguish more clearly between tent stands and caravan stands. The stands should also be properly numbered and allocated according to the type of rig you're

camping with. This would help prevent tents and small off-road trailers from occupying the large open stands while caravans and motorhomes that arrive later struggle to get into place.

Each stand has a power point (the blue socket) and a skottel braai with a grid. Taps, camp lights and rubbish bins are spread across the camp.

The campsite has one ablution block with separate facilities for men and women, and a separate bathroom for wheelchair users. The men's and women's facilities are similar, with the exception of a bathroom on the women's side and urinals for the men. There are



TAKE IT EASY. Often, just staying in camp is part of the holiday. Swapping your usual morning or afternoon game drive for a guided walk or drive with the camp's rangers can be just as rewarding.



four shower cubicles with doors, four washbasins and three toilets, and the floors are fully tiled with the walls tiled to head height. The showers have shower curtains, towel rails and soap dishes. At the basins you'll find mirrors, shelf space next to the basin, hand soap, paper towels, a hand dryer and a rubbish bin. The toilets have toilet paper and a spray for sanitising the seat.

The bathroom for wheelchair users is spacious enough for easy movement. The floor and walls are tiled and the shower cubicle has a fold-down seat, handheld shower and grab rail. The washbasin has extended tap handles. There's also a grab

rail next to the toilet.

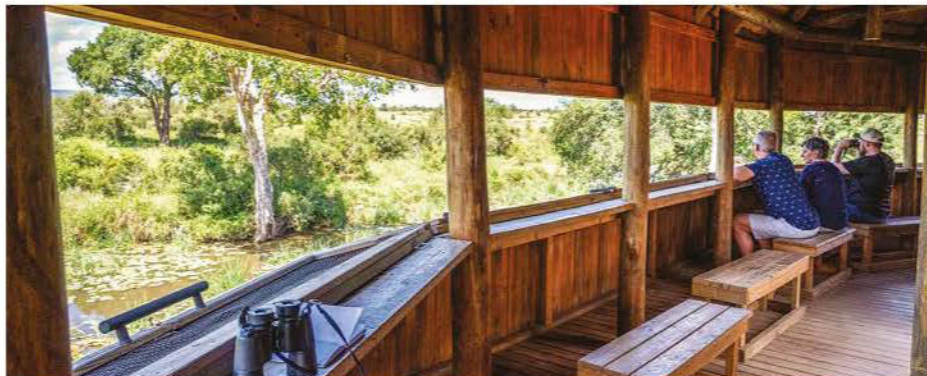
At the back of the ablution building there's a place to rinse out your cassette toilet.

The large dishwashing area is opposite the entrance to the bathrooms and includes dishwashing sinks, two wall-mounted kettles for boiling water, three two-plate stoves and a microwave. The campsite also has two small huts with a dishwashing sink, two-plate stove and kettle.

Lower Sabie offers a range of guided game drives and bush walks. On the morning walk (R733 per person;

3,5 hours) you cover between 3 km and 5 km. The route is flat and not challenging, but you do need a basic level of fitness. The guides are experts in their field and the group stops regularly at fresh animal tracks, carcasses, interesting plants and smaller insects and bugs. On our visit we got within photo distance of elephants, giraffes, zebras and even a hippo. A young male lion gave us a thrill when he sprang out of the grass about 25 metres ahead. Luckily for us, he chose to make a run for it in the opposite direction.

Other activities include a three-hour game drive at sunrise or sunset (R428 per



person; minimum two people) and one that keeps you busy for eight hours and includes breakfast and lunch (R1 691 per person; minimum nine people). There's also a bush braai under the stars that includes a night drive (R959 per person; minimum four people).

Because the temperatures in the park are fairly high even in winter, a swimming pool is always a win. Lower Sabie's is tucked away among trees on the eastern boundary of the camp, behind the last row of cottages, and it's easy to miss. From reception you first pass the campsite and then most of the cottages before you can jump in and cool down. The pool is paved all around, with a built-in bench on one side and benches under the trees. The small ablution building here has an outdoor shower.

After cooling off in the water, take a few steps towards the river. There are several benches along the boundary fence, most of them under the trees, where you can sit and gaze out over the river.

Picnic spots are almost as much a part of the Kruger experience as impala. This is where you get to stretch your legs, admire the view, unpack the basket, hire a skottel, buy roosterkoek and dodge the naughty monkeys.



Briefly | Lower Sabie, Kruger National Park



Campsite A leafy campsite with 34 small stands that are close together.

Ablutions One ablution block with separate male and female facilities, and a separate bathroom for wheelchair users.

Price R425-R481 for two, depending on the season; thereafter R116 per additional adult (R58 for children). If you don't have a Wild Card, you'll also pay a conservation fee of R128 per person per day (R61 for children).

Contact 012 428 9111 • reservations@sanparks.org • sanparks.org

Arrival and departure 14:00 and 10:00.

Nearest town Nelspruit, 148 km.

Road conditions Tar all the way.

GPS S25.119986 E31.914370

Drive & Camp says Don't forget to stop at Sunset Dam just outside the camp gate on the H4-1 on your way back from your game drive. The parking area is on the bank and the dam is known for the wide variety of game that comes to drink here.

There are three of them in the Lower Sabie area: Mlondozi, Nkuhlu and Afsaal, all between one and four hours' drive from the campsite. Mlondozi is the closest (16 km north of Lower Sabie). From here you look down onto the Mlondozi Dam, and if you settle in on one of the benches under the thatched lapa with your binoculars, you'll see plenty of game coming to drink. There are tables with benches, you can hire a skottel, braai meat on your own charcoal fire and buy a cold drink or water.

Nkuhlu lies 22 km north of Lower Sabie on the popular H4-1 road on the banks of the Sabie River. This leafy picnic spot is set on terraces and has benches and tables with umbrellas. There's also a restaurant where you can order breakfast, pies, toasted sandwiches, pizzas or cake and coffee. There's also a small camp shop which, along with the restaurant, is open until 16:00.

Afsaal's picnic area is large, popular and busy. It's also the farthest one from the camp. You picnic under the trees and, just like at Nkuhlu, there's a restaurant and small camp shop. Afsaal is known for its roosterkoek with a variety of fillings. Or buy a few without fillings to enjoy with your evening braai.

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Zimbabwe's calling

Her dad Kobus Smit always says that you should prepare for the worst and expect the best, says **Lea Erasmus**, who runs Ultimate Routes along with her husband Francois. That basically sums up the best mindset when you cross the border to Zimbabwe on your self-drive adventure.

Photo Iwan Schelbert

Let's start with the infamous Beitbridge. Is this the nightmare people think it is?

Zimbabwe has several border crossings, each with its own character. Beitbridge and Chirundu (between Zimbabwe and Zambia) are historically the most challenging and to ease the process, we advise that you have all documents printed, remember to bring black pens, and to stay calm and friendly.

Iwan Schelbert is one of our clients who visited Zimbabwe recently and he said they had an easy return crossing at Beitbridge, particularly on the Zimbabwean side. Another client, Roelf Louw, said it took 90 minutes to enter Zimbabwe via Chirundu and recommended using the ZIMRA eTIP app to pre-apply for your Temporary Import Permit (TIP). 📱 ecustoms.zimra.co.zw/etip/

Francois often recommends smaller, less congested border posts (including Pandamatenga via Botswana or Kariba Border Post via Zambia) when possible, as Beitbridge and Chirundu are constantly busy with trucks and foot traffic.

There has also been some encouraging news recently, with the Zimbabwe Immigration Department introducing a mandatory online immigration

declaration form (📄 evisa.gov.zw/app/index.html#/sign-in-kiosk) that all travellers must complete prior to arrival at the border post (including Victoria Falls Airport) in an effort to streamline entry procedures, reduce waiting times and improve guest experiences on arrival.

What is the general condition of the roads in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's roads are a mixed bag. Major routes, especially those serving Zambia's copper belt, carry heavy truck traffic, and poor government and municipal funding means road maintenance is limited. That said, we've heard reports of upgrades near major towns.

Routes that deserve a mention because of their poor condition include the road between Karoi and Chirundu; from Binga to Karoi (the road south of Kariba); and Bulawayo to Victoria Falls via Hwange.

Even so, don't allow poor roads to deter you from visiting, as traveller Andrew Schoeman points out. He says patience is key. Just keep to a slow and steady speed and enjoy the experience.

John Lansdell shared some encouraging news with his discovery of a backroad from Hwange to Chizarira National Park. He says it's a (much) more

adventurous but worthwhile alternative.

Careful planning is key and we help with that, as we gather regular client feedback to refine routes with stopovers for rough stretches.

We strongly advise you take at least one additional spare wheel along on your journey. If you find yourself in trouble, the locals can usually offer friendly support.

Do you need take extra precautions for fuel?

In six years of business and travel, we have had almost no reports of major fuel shortages in Zimbabwe. Most towns and main centres, even Hwange Main Camp, have working fuel stations. You can usually pay by card, but in Zimbabwe cash (in US dollar) is king. Always buy from reputable fuel stations and steer clear of roadside sellers offering fuel in unmarked jerry cans as there's a real possibility it may be contaminated. Your long-range fuel tank or jerry cans offer peace of mind – just remember to fill up at every opportunity.

Tell us a bit more about the people of Zimbabwe.

Graham Grewcock visited the country in October, and he describes the people

“

...people were friendly and helpful. The youth smile and wave... a warming experience

”



Photo Ultimate Routes

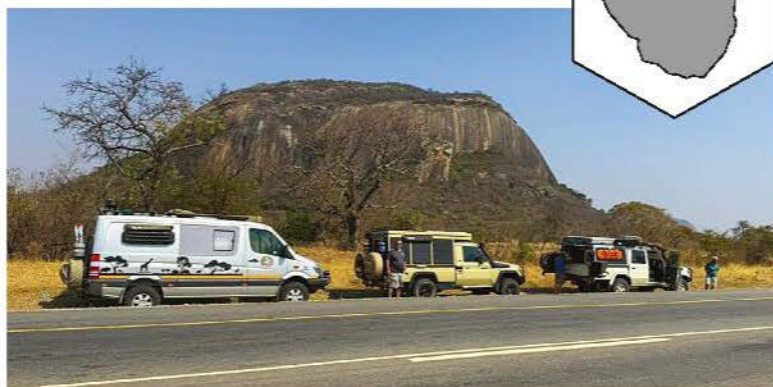
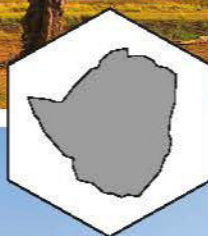


Photo Ivan Schelbert



JUST GO! Lea and Francois recommend Gonarezhou with its exclusive campsites and true wilderness, as well as Bvumba and Nyanga in the eastern highlands – a birder's paradise. Matusadona, Chipinda Pools and Hlaro are popular among their guests as well as Mana Pools and Chizarira.



Photo Ultimate Routes



Photo Ultimate Routes

amazing fresh food, everything is cheap and the vendors are incredibly friendly. Zimbabwe also has some fantastic butcheries, charming coffee shops and hidden gems worth a stop along your journey.

Some law enforcement officers have a reputation of being a nightmare for tourists. What have you experienced in Zimbabwe?

Always be friendly and it will come right back to you. All reports over the past six years of our experience have been positive – news of helpful officials, only checking for TIPs, asking about your next destination and even offering advice about routes and roads. Frank and Di Kruger also praise Zimbabwe's friendly people, noting that despite frequent police roadblocks, they encountered no issues.

What is the general standard in terms of accommodation rates for camping and self-catering visitors?

Zimbabwe's camping costs vary significantly. The use of the US dollar isn't the main challenge, it's the fact that most of Zimbabwe's National Parks charge per campsite, not per person. Rates typically range from \$60 to \$200 per night, with different parks setting their own base rates.

This is why we recommend travelling in groups of two to three vehicles to make camping more affordable. Upgrading to self-catering or catered accommodation is generally expensive, although some camps offer discounted SADC rates. You just need to know who to ask.

Do I need to carry much cash?

It's always good to have cash on hand when travelling in Zimbabwe. While larger towns accept cards at grocery stores and fuel stations, the situation is different in smaller towns, villages, local markets, SIM shops and toll gates, where they often accept cash only. National parks generally accept cards, but power outages and poor connectivity can cause issues. So have a solid cash backup but carry that in small denominations. How much cash depends on your route and time spent in Zimbabwe. We suggest a minimum of enough dollars for one full tank of fuel, conservation fees and toll road fees, general expenses and extras like guided activities and local curios.

of Zimbabwe as “fantastic to say the least. Everywhere on the travels, in the spaza shops, along the road, in the SIM shop, at the borders and even at the one police check we encountered on the whole trip, people were friendly and helpful. The youth smile and wave... a warming experience.”

Many clients have commented on the neat school-going children, well-spoken and proud nation as well as the friendly disposition of everyone they meet. Even in the most remote of places we enjoyed lively conversations with local farmers and game rangers.

What is the standard of the shops and supermarkets?

Zimbabwe currently allows raw meat and vegetables for personal consumption across the border. Just leave your braai wood at home, because untreated wood is strictly forbidden. Shopping in Zimbabwe is much better than it once was.

Roelf says they could buy fresh foods in all major towns and pay by card. It was harder in outlying areas, but beer was always available.

Fresh produce, nuts and fruit are often best bought at roadside markets. According to Graham, Binga's market has

Contact

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✉️ hello@ultimateroutes.co.za



The crown prince of mountain passes

The Prince Alfred Pass is the finest 68 km of road engineer Thomas Bain's life's work. Drive it to the Garden Route from the Klein Karoo.

Words and photos **Cyril Kloppe**

The tiny town of Avontuur, home to just 238 people, lies on the rain-shadow side of the Outeniqua Mountains in the Western Cape. The name 'Avontuur' sounds like a promise of what lies ahead, but it actually means something else. In *Place Names of South Africa*, researcher Ann Gadd explains that the town was named after a nearby river, whose Khoi name *lui//ai* means "evening time" – which

in Dutch became *avonduur* (evening hour).

About 4 km south of Avontuur, you'll reach Die Kruin (the Summit) and, as the name suggests, it's the highest point of the pass at 1 035 m above sea level. There's ample space to pull over if you want to stop for photos.

The Prince Alfred Pass was surveyed in 1857 by Andrew Geddes Bain and his son Thomas. Father and son spent months in the mountains, using old elephant

trails to pick the best line up the slopes. Three years later, young Bain and a crew of 250 convicts armed with pickaxes, hammers, saws and spades tackled the mountainside, completing the pass in just four years – and you're still driving it almost exactly as they built it.

After Die Kruin, the road winds through a series of sharp bends with charming names like Rooielsdraai, Kouewaterdraai and Tiekiefdraai. The last one is



a corruption of the English “Ticket of Leave”. The convicts struggled with English, and one of the few things they looked forward to after months or even years of forced labour was a “tiekrielief”.

The steep descent starts to level out about 12 km from Avontuur. Look closely at the dry-stone retaining walls supporting the road – they’ve been standing firm for 160 years, untouched since Thomas Bain and his men packed them. The road narrows here, and there will be times you need to pull over to let oncoming traffic pass. Uphill traffic has right of way.

The narrowest section of the pass is at Die Kerf, 16 km from Avontuur, but it’s also one of the most breathtaking parts of the pass, with waterfalls cascading down the cliffs. Less than a kilometre past Die Kerf you’ll cross three concrete bridges where you can pull over to stretch your legs and take more photos. (Bain’s original wooden bridges were replaced after 50 years.) You’ll spot a roadside sign here marking “Convict’s Grave”. Bain was said to be a strict but fair boss who treated his workers with respect, and the convict who died here was buried with dignity.

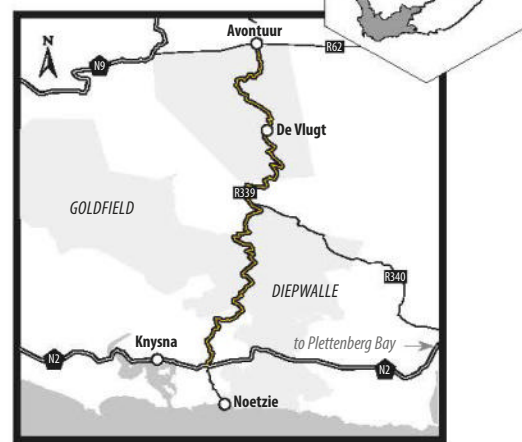
Next up is Tata Riet se Gat, a hollow in the cliff where cyclists can shelter from

heavy rain. Look out for a natural rock pillar in the cliff to your left – it’s called Bain’s Pillar.

About 18 km from Avontuur you’ll cross the Keurbooms River and roll into the hamlet of De Vlucht. There are three brilliant spots to pull over and relax: at Die Plaaskind Farmstall, Adri van Rooyen serves up a hearty plate of lamb chops, pumpkin fritters, roasted potatoes, savoury rice, cauliflower with cheese sauce and Greek salad for just R150 pp, including malva pudding for dessert.

Another stop is Angie’s G-Spot, where Harold and Angie Beaumont will draw you a cold beer and share tales of Angie’s former life as a private detective – and her appearance in *Scope* magazine. Fair warning: you might get stuck here, but if you do, you can overnight in one of Angie and Harold’s cottages. A beer and burger costs R100, and accommodation for two is R1 000 per night.

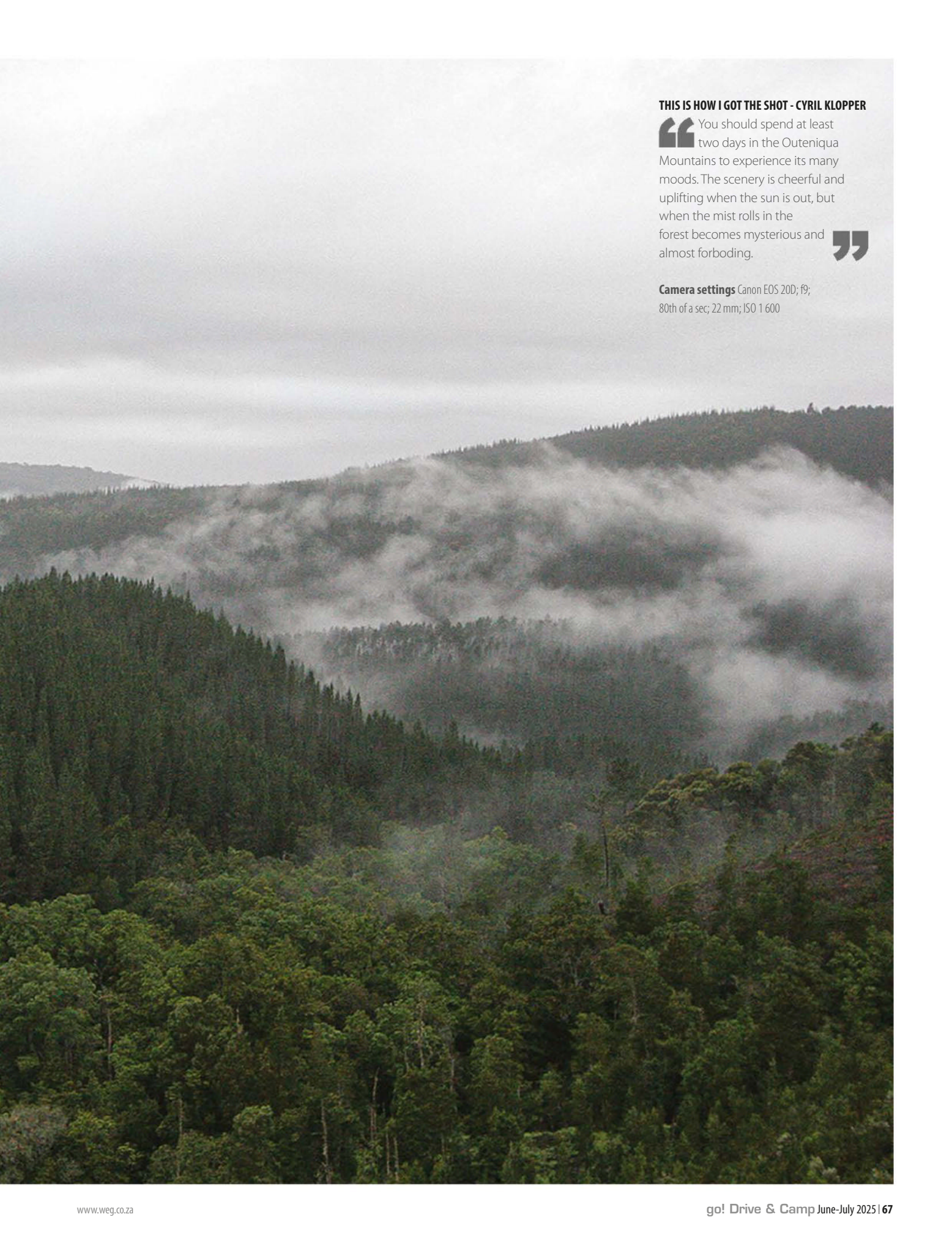
Just a few metres along the road is a trout farm called Outeniqua Mountain Lodge, where you can overnight in, among other options, Thomas Bain’s original cottage. Rates range from R1 200 pppn to R4 320 for six people sharing a house. Camping costs R770 pppn.



Roughly 28 km from Avontuur, you’ll come across a picnic spot next to the Diep River. There’s a memorial plaque dedicated to Thomas Bain here. Punch S33.86074 E23.17287 into your GPS, as the turnoff isn’t marked. The land between the picnic spot and Avontuur, where your journey began, is known as the Middle Keurbooms Conservancy and is managed by the local community together with CapeNature. But from here you leave the conservancy area and continue on state land.

The road begins climbing again into the Buffelsnek plantation, where the

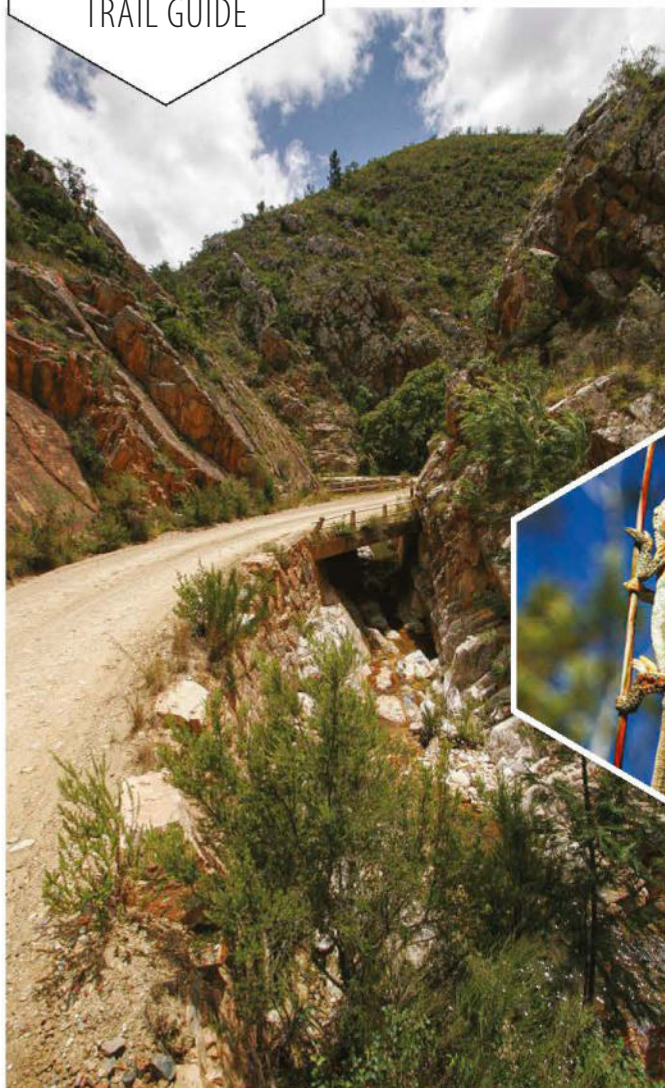




THIS IS HOW I GOT THE SHOT - CYRIL KLOPPER

“ You should spend at least two days in the Outeniqua Mountains to experience its many moods. The scenery is cheerful and uplifting when the sun is out, but when the mist rolls in the forest becomes mysterious and almost forboding. ”

Camera settings Canon EOS 20D; f9;
80th of a sec; 22 mm; ISO 1 600



environment turns greener and wetter. On the edge of the plantation is an unusual artwork that looks like a cluster of trumpets. You can actually blow into one if your lungs are strong enough – the sound it makes symbolises the trumpet call of an elephant.

You exit the Buffelsnek plantation and enter the indigenous forest of the Ysternek Nature Reserve. Watch the left-hand shoulder of the road for a small sign pointing to the Spitskop viewpoint. On

a clear day, you'll get an unbeatable view over the Knysna forest – although often it's wrapped in mist.

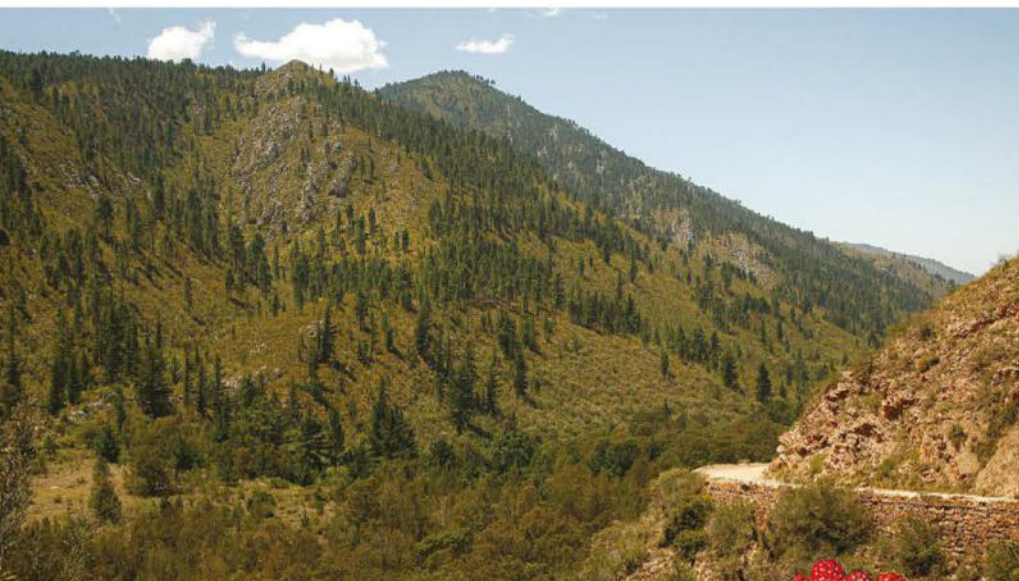
Diepwalle Forest Station is 52 km from Avontuur, and there's plenty to see here: a museum, a tea garden, the King Edward Tree, and a permit office where you can arrange to hike through the forest or explore Kom se Pad in your own 4x4 vehicle. It's a birdwatcher's paradise, and if you search carefully enough, you might even spot a chameleon or two.





The last 15 km of the Prince Alfred Pass winds through plantations of pine and gum trees – still beautiful, if less wild. The dirt road eventually gives way to tar, and you'll arrive at the Khayaletu township, where minibus taxis race around recklessly, cattle wander across the roads and litter mars the landscape.

The pass ends at the N2 highway. By now, you're probably already nostalgic for the peace of Diepwalle's forests, Harold and Angie's company, and Thomas Bain's magnificent road. Don't worry – there are oysters and craft beer waiting at Knysna's waterfront to lift your spirits... and you can always drive the pass again tomorrow!



Need to know



Maximum number of vehicles It's a public road with unrestricted access.

Do I get a map? No, but the road is well marked with signs.

Will my vehicle get scratched? No, the road is wide enough.

Do I need to take a compressor? It's unlikely that you'll get a puncture.

Can I braai along the way? You can braai at Angie's G-Spot and the Outeniqua Mountain Lodge but definitely not in the plantations.

Is there cellphone signal? Sporadic.

Best time of year Any time Just be cautious in winter when it can rain hard and non-stop.

Can I take my family along? Definitely.

Day trip or weekend? You can tackle the route in a day but it's great to overnight at De Vlucht.

How long does it take? The route as we describe it here is 68 km long and you could speed through it in 70 minutes. That, however, would not only be foolish but also dangerous.

Are there ablution facilities? Only at the guest facilities.

Directions The R339 or Prince Alfred Pass runs from the R62 tar road at Avontuur to the N2 outside Knysna.



Where absence is everything

The beauty of travel is that it doesn't just take your body to another time and place – it also moves your soul, says **Antoinette Olivier** from Paarl.

They've never shied away from a road trip. Whenever the chance comes up, Antoinette and her husband Faan are quick to hit the road in their trusty old Isuzu bakkie. Like recently, when they left Paarl to explore the West Coast and Boesmanland in search of fresh adventures. Antoinette takes us along on their trip...

“ Faan and I hit the road and headed through the Swartland, our country's breadbasket, in the direction of the West Coast. Our first stop was Vredendal, where we visited my niece and her husband on their farm.

We followed the N7 to the Klawer turnoff. The Cederberg rose to our right, with the sea somewhere out of

sight to the left. We made our way past citrus orchards and stopped at the biltong shop in Trawal. The irrigation canals shimmered in the sun, but the dam wall at Clanwilliam – which was meant to be raised by 13 metres back in 2018 – still hadn't been completed.

All along the roadside we noticed strange, barren patches in the veld. These little mounds were the

remnants of enormous termite nests from tens of thousands of years ago. Nothing grows on them; everything was calm and it felt as if time itself had come to a standstill.

On the farm, the tomato harvest was nearly complete: a full 600 tonnes destined for juice and sauce production.

The next day we drove via Strandfontein to Doringbaai for a glass of wine and a bit of exploring. Far out at sea, navy personnel moved up and down on a warship, and the bay was dotted with rubber ducks and fishing boats.

At Fryer's Cove cellar, we watched wine ageing in a glass tank submerged under the cold West Coast water. It was surreal to see the wine bottles – floating among abalone – bobbing up and down in the water, with tiny shells clinging to the bottles and the sides of the glass container. The corks had been sealed with wax. But take note: ageing wine this way is not cheap. It costs a pretty penny.

Our host in Doringbaai, like all West Coast farmers, had a valid permit, and that evening we gorged ourselves on crayfish, which he expertly cracked open and served to us on newspaper plates. Absolutely delicious.

The following day we headed through Lutzville towards the Namaqua National Park, where a semi-wild camping experience awaited us... It was almost primeval – like the earth before it was



ABOVE. The park's facilities consist of stone bomas and eco-style stone ablution blocks. That's it. Campers carry everything else in – and out – themselves. LEFT. The Fryer's Cove cellar in Doringbaai, where West Coast water is used to age the wine. BELOW. Traffic is light on these coastal roads beyond Lutzville.



tamed. The road was badly corrugated and rattled us to the bone. We watched crows nesting and marvelled at the huge communal nests on the telephone poles.

We left the tar and took the dirt road and then sand tracks, letting down the tyres of Faan's ancient Isuzu to 1,2 bar. This vehicle, affectionately dubbed "Living Legend", has only a working fuel gauge and rev counter on its dash. Our faithful Garmin, which has guided us for 18 years, had finally packed up, so we now relied on phone directions. But then we lost signal – and had no map.

We continued north along the coast. I opened farm gates and we

followed the paths between the camping sites: Brand se Baai, Gert du Toit se Baai, and all those legendary Waterval spots I'd heard so much about, the ones that need to be booked years in advance. There was Skurfbaai, Skulpbank, Volwater, Viskas, Hoogstaan. Maybe one day. We took a shortcut via Garies and Kotzerus se Rissebiekie. Sometimes we drove on the deep ruts left by big 4x4s, sometimes on the ridge in the middle or the soft sandbanks at the side. First on this side of the road, then that. We didn't see another vehicle the entire day. Eventually, we reached the lighthouse at the Groen River mouth and entered the park.

At last, we had a proper map in hand. There were only a handful of campsites here – just 31 stands in total. We were headed to Kwass se Baai to spend the night. We pitched our tent between the bakkie and a fire pit... keeping one eye on the West Coast wind and the other on the elegant longdrop toilet a short walk away. We pumped the mattress and made up our bed.

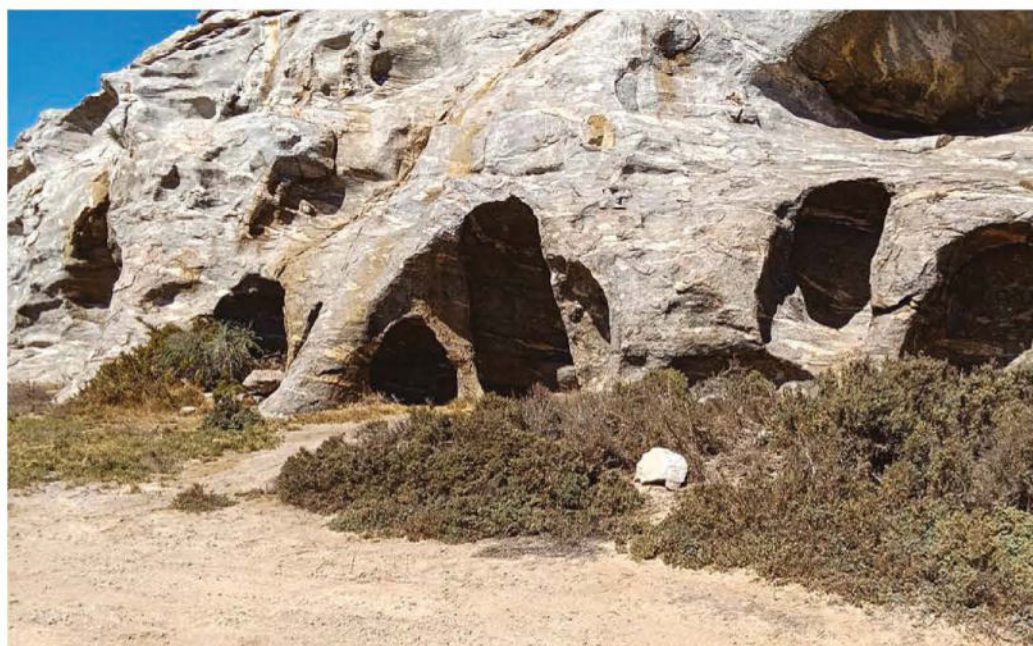
The ocean was a stone's throw away. It was windless and impossibly beautiful. We set up our chairs and folding table to watch the sun go down. Faan poured us a glass of wine and we nibbled on Trawal's beef biltong. Paradise found.

The next night, we camped at Koringkorrelbaai, once again positioning the tent to shelter us with a ring of stones.

The next morning, we said our goodbyes to this coastline. Boesmanland lay far beyond last night's stars. Before exiting at the park office on the Hondeklipbaai road, we made a quick 8 km detour to the Spoegrivier Caves, where the Khoi – the area's first sheep farmers – once roamed some 2 000 years ago. We were awestruck.

Eventually we hit the main road. The plan was to reinflate the tyres at the first available stop. But it looked set to become a blue Monday – we struggled to find a place that could help. We headed for Hondeklipbaai, but no luck, no service station there. Between Koinaas and Kleinsee we finally got sorted.

We found ourselves on old mining haul roads, and Kleinsee was still far off. Earlier we'd heard someone had driven that way in the morning and reported the road was fine. But some distance before Kleinsee, a grizzled roadside





COSY CRAYFISH. When the crayfish lie this snugly together, you can almost believe that old saying that they get used to it. Luckily, we haven't! **BOESMANSAT.** Stone tools from the Khoi era lie scattered across this ancient landscape – maybe even with a diamond chip among them. This hole's just waiting for a brave archaeologist...

sign indicated the turn to Komaggas. This stretch of dirt road was indeed in good condition, and the village is one of many small settlements. The landscape began to change – the road turned to tar, the hills rolled in, and eventually the mountains arrived. Suddenly, we were on the Spektakelberg Pass, a delightful surprise. And then, there was Springbok.

From Springbok we made for Aggeneys, then veered southwest to visit my cousin – a farm manager – on Smousvley for a few days. We were running late, and the farm folk phoned, worried we might've lost our way. We made a quick detour into Aggeneys to take a look at the town

– founded just 50 years ago as a base for the surrounding zinc, lead, copper and coal mines.

We were nearly there. Off the N14 we went again, back onto dirt. The first turnoff after Loop 10, 160 km south. It had rained in Boesmanland. The veld was green with new growth, dotted with yellow devil's thorns. Mud and washaways couldn't dampen our excitement. The veld buzzed with joy, and even the sheep seemed to sing.

Some time later, we reached a crossroads. Were we meant to turn right here? The signs had weathered away – like everything out here – and I

had to get out and check. Yes, there it was: Bitterfontein. We were now on the R358, the main road linking the N7 and Pofadder. For locals, this was the shortcut to Upington.

We headed west again, chasing the sun, and it was still light when we reached the gate to Smousvley. Near a place called Stoflappies, my phone picked up signal again. Almost there... just two more gates to open.

We spent four days breathing easy here. Reconnecting. Faan happily helped with the farming. The Namaqualand sheep farmers move their flocks here in late summer. In the old days, the herds were



driven along the road; now they arrive by double-decker truck. But the old trek path still exists – a servitude cutting across farms where no gate may be locked. I suspect one farm here is the size of the whole of Paarl. If you want to walk the entire fence line, you'll need to set aside a full day – and pack snacks and coffee.

All over, you see traces of the people this region was named after. Every second rock looks like a tool, and holes in the earth hint at archaeological treasures

waiting to be studied. One morning, 1 400 sheep suddenly appeared – the ewes in lamb. There were a dozen pregnant cows, and even a few round-bellied horses. The fences were taut, the jackal hunter had made his rounds, and the windpumps were spitting water into tanks and troughs everywhere.

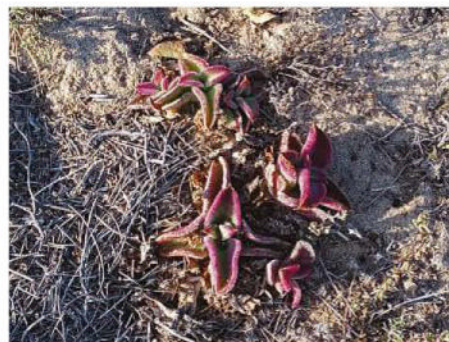
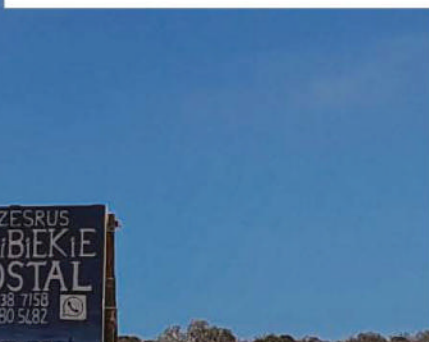
It rained across the land – sometimes softly, sometimes nearly a thumb's depth overnight. As always, unevenly. The farms

were so vast that one paddock stayed dry while its neighbour lay gleaming with puddles.

The rain had wreaked havoc on some roads – flood damage and complete washaways in places. The road to Bitterfontein was closed, and we had to go back via Aggeneys and Springbok. It was a massive detour, but we had signal and Faan studied the maps. "Look here,"



SPOEGRIVIER. Inside one of the "caves". They're actually deep overhangs – perfectly north-facing if you're after a bit of winter stoep-sitting. **BELOW.** The northern part of the park is one of the most popular spots during the Namaqualand flower season. But all year round, it's the little things that catch your eye.



he said. "Just a bit ahead, a road cuts straight south. Through Boegoefontein to Loeriesfontein. From there, we know the way."

We ventured into the unknown. The place names on all the road signs had faded to nothing, but we stayed on course. One name I could make out was "Krommaag." We drove carefully – a breakdown out here meant being stuck for a long time.

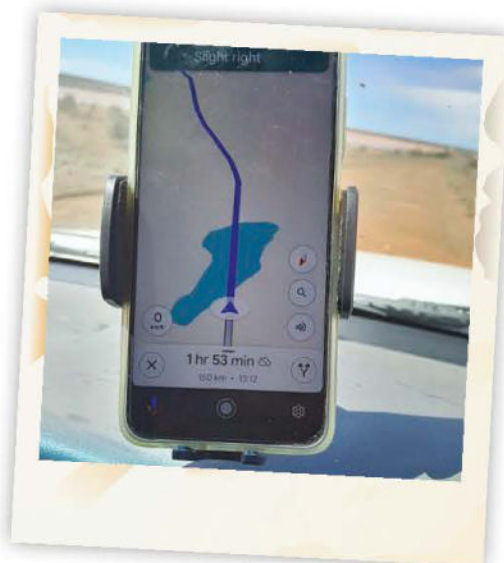
Sometimes, there were glimmers of life even when no one was around. We were warned that abnormally long vehicles – up to 41 metres – might cross our path. Suddenly, we passed a narrow entrance gate: Boesmanland Gypsum Mine. A turning circle the size of a wine farm showed how those giant trucks had to manoeuvre to get through. Somewhere beyond the mine lay Boegoefontein, but we missed it without even knowing.

Far in the distance, we spotted the blades of several wind turbines and stopped to take pictures. They appeared again now and then, until we crested a hill and found ourselves in the middle of the wind farm. This was Khobab – one of the many massive electricity-

generation projects in the Northern Cape. We knew then that Boegoefontein was behind us, the unknown now behind us too, and Loeriesfontein – so to speak – just around the corner.

Soon Nieuwoudtville came into view, then the sign for "Oorlogskloof", and the roads began to get busy again. It was Sunday – the end of the long weekend. We held our breath at the bend on the escarpment. The plain that lay before us, spilling into the sea, was where our journey had begun. The Knersvlakte to the right, and the Sandveld stretching out on the other side.

We descended the Vanrhyns Pass, down into a different kind of reality. A new smell. A new taste. But missing those long, deep silences. The sound of the sea. And the little white flecks of sheep dotting the veld.



WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING. The road cuts straight through the vlei – just like our phone's signalless GPS route decided it should.



Antoinette wins a Camp Cover Bundu bag worth R400. This multi-purpose bag is designed for use as either a first-aid kit or a toiletries bag.

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MEERKAT



Sit. Stay. Camp.

When you're camping, you want to relax – and at these eight getaway spots, your pets are welcome to come along for a breath of fresh air.

Compiled by **Leon Botha**

KARNMELKSPRUIT



Pet terms Make arrangements in advance if you're bringing pets – this is a working sheep farm.

Have we visited? Yes, June 2018 (*Drive & Camp* #11).

Campsite 25 stands along the banks of the Karringmelkspruit. Stands are unmarked – you camp on grass and there are plenty of trees. Loose-standing braais with grids are provided.

Ablutions Separate facilities for men and women with gas geysers. The dishwashing area is also here.

Arrival and departure Not fixed.

Contact 📞 084 584 7036

✉️ elizekrr@gmail.com

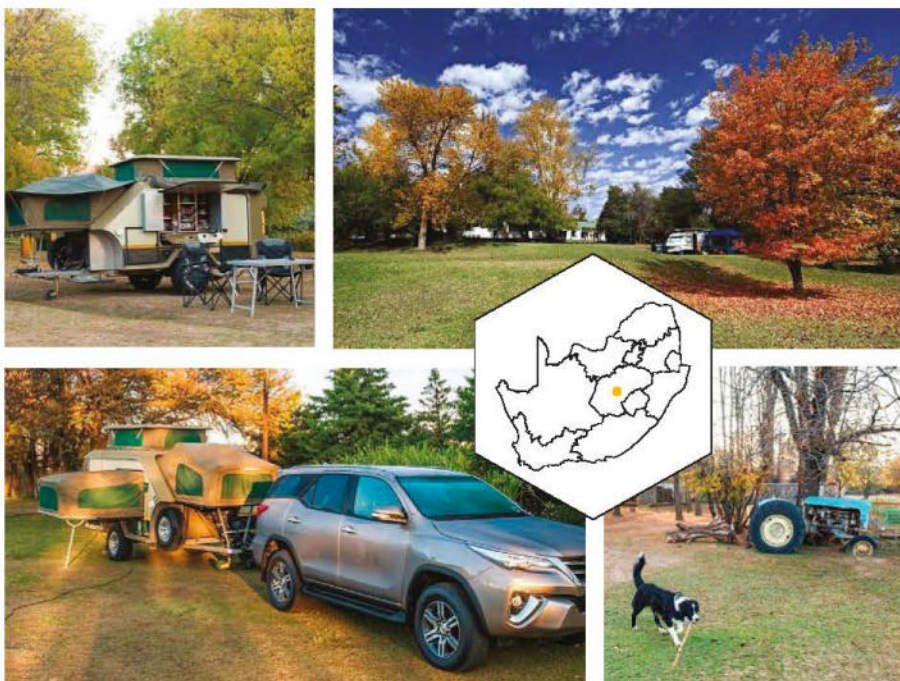
📍 Karnmelkspruit River Resort

Nearest town Lady Grey, 22 km.

Road condition A 2 km good gravel road.

GPS S30.805388 E27.267470

RIVER OF JOY



Pet terms Your dogs are welcome as long as they're obedient and you're willing to pay the additional fee.

Have we visited? Yes, June 2013 (*WegSleep* #56).

Campsite 20 grass stands with shared power points. Some stands are closer to the river, and the amount of shade varies. Braais with grids are provided.

Ablutions One block with separate facilities for men and women. There's also a dishwashing area and laundry facilities.

Arrival and departure Not fixed.

Contact 📞 083 462 7522 or 083 451 6558

✉️ riverofjoyhs@gmail.com

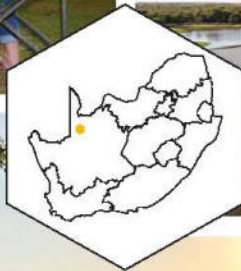
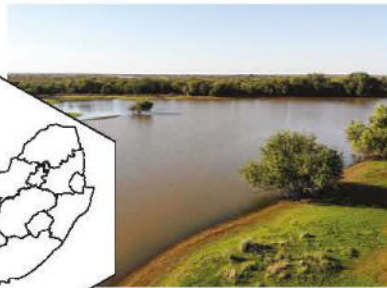
🌐 riverofjoy.co.za

Nearest town Bloemfontein, 25 km.

Road condition It's 1 km from the N1; the last 500 m is a well-maintained dirt road.

GPS S28.960654 E26.350573

KALAHARI GUEST HOUSE



Pet terms All pets welcome, but arrange in advance if they're joining you.

Have we visited? No.

Campsite Five separate stands next to a dam, on Kalahari sand under camelthorn trees. Each stand has a power point, tap, light and firepit (with a grid). The farm stall, where you check in, sells fresh meat.

Ablutions Two separate blocks with gas geysers. One is for shared use and includes showers and toilets; the other has separate facilities for men and women. The lapa has a kitchen with basic equipment, including a two-burner gas stove and kettle, plus there's a braai area.

Arrival and departure Not fixed.

Contact 073 194 2864

bookings@kalahariguethouse.co.za

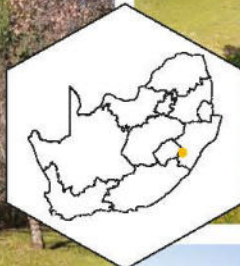
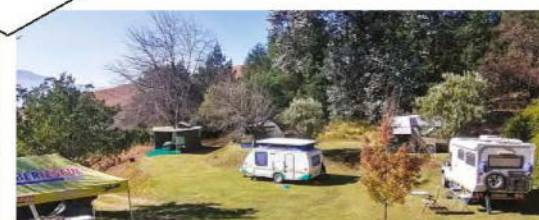
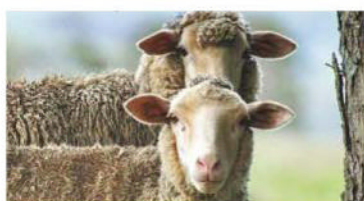
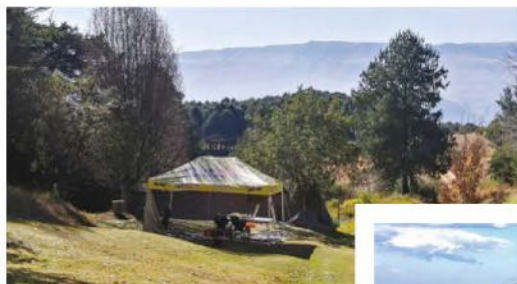
kalahariguethouse.co.za

Nearest town Upington, 50 km.

Road condition Less than 200 m of dirt, suitable for any type of caravan.

GPS S28.059682 E21.025787

HIGHLAND NOOK



Pet terms Arrange in advance – small pets only. An additional fee per night per pet applicable. Cattle and sheep on the farm, use a leash when necessary. The pets are the owner's responsibility.

Have we visited? No.

Campsite 15 stands on grass mostly with shade. Central power points, remember your extension lead and braai grid.

Ablutions Includes showers and bathtubs, a scullery and a washing line.

Arrival and departure 14:00 and 10:00, but flexible.

Contact 079 351 0901

highlandnook@yahoo.com

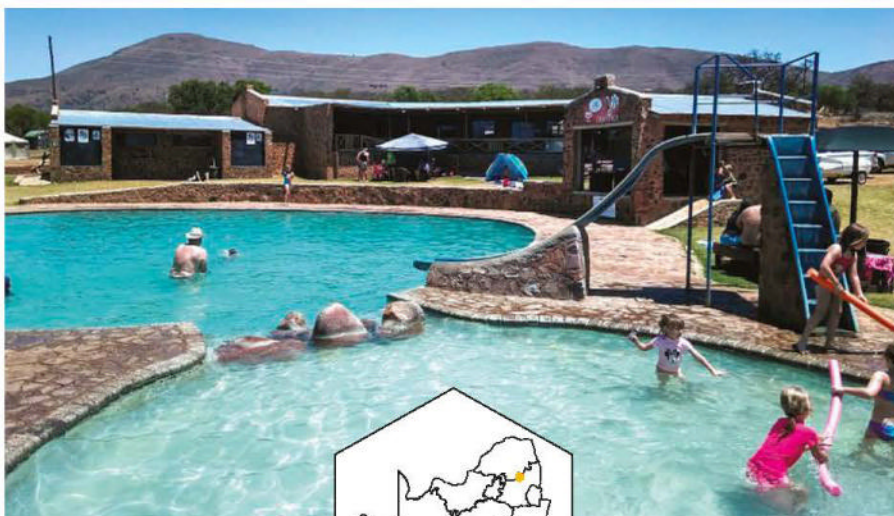
highlandnook.co.za

Nearest town Underberg, 37 km.

Road condition 14 km dirt from Impendle and its condition is weather depending. No road caravans, only off-roaders and high-clearance vehicles advised.

GPS S29.551875 E29.574155

KROMKLIP



Pet terms Your small dogs, cats and feathered little ones are welcome, but the doggies must be on a leash.

Have we visited? No.

Campsite 40 general stands and five stands next to the water. You camp on grass, and some stands offer shade. You can choose between built-in and loose-standing braais, both with grids.

Ablutions Communal facilities and family bathrooms available. There's a laundry room on site, and a laundry service is also offered.

Arrival and departure 11:00 and 10:00 for waterside stands. No fixed times for the rest.

Contact 013 004 0048 079 264 4075

kromklip.oord@gmail.com

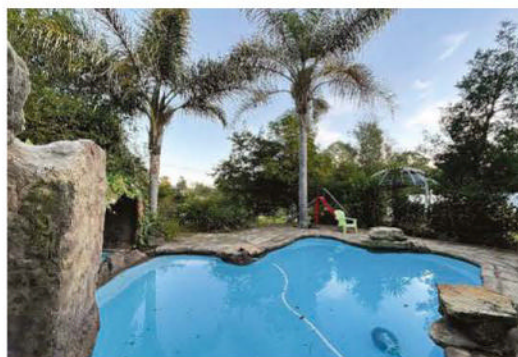
kromklipoord.co.za

Nearest town Mashishing (Lydenburg), 12 km.

Road condition 1,1 km of well-maintained dirt road.

GPS S25.070689 E30.373184

KWA-RIE



Pet terms Small dogs are welcome, and you may also bring other small pets like birds. Keep in mind there are small animals like bunnies in and around the campsite.

Have we visited? Yes, October 2006 (WegSleep #4).

Campsite 27 grass stands with power and plenty of shade. Loose-standing braais with grids provided.

Ablutions A range of options, including separate bathrooms for men and women, private facilities and a family bathroom. There's also a dishwashing area and a self-service laundry with machines.

Arrival and departure From 09:00 and before 12:00.

Contact 082 490 2231

kwarie@gmail.com

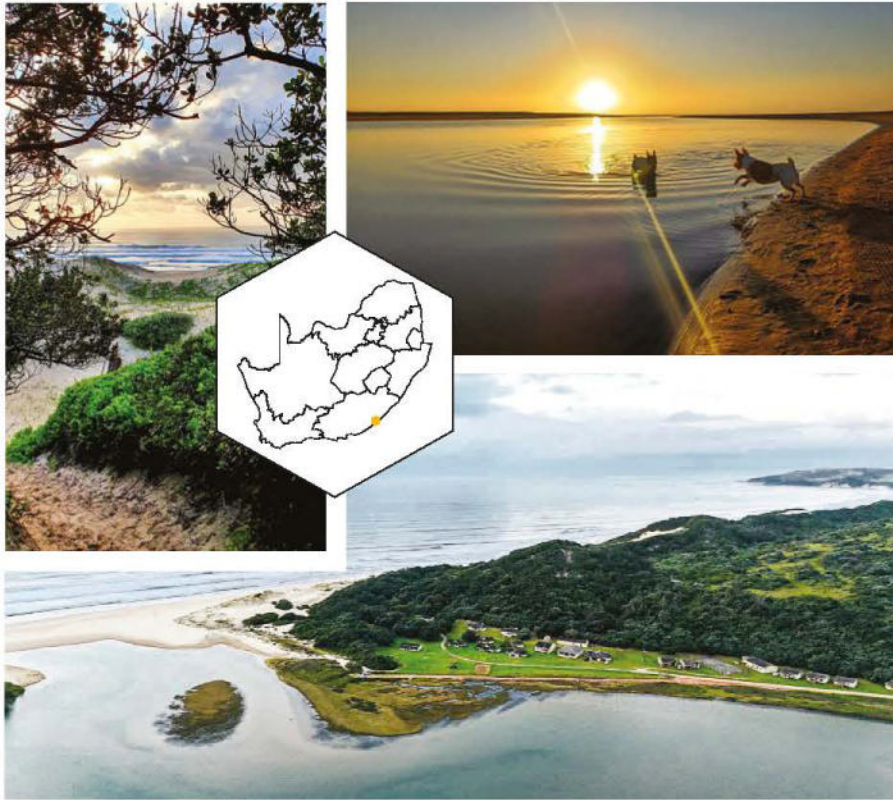
kwarie.caravanparks.co.za

Nearest town In Dundee.

Road condition Tar all the way.

GPS S28.171747 E30.222560

CEFANI MOUTH



Pet terms No specific pre-conditions and a daily rate per pet applies.

Have we visited? No.

Campsite 27 numbered sites on lawn, and shade on some spots. You might need an extension lead for electricity. Freestanding braais available with grids.

Ablutions One building with separate amenities for men and woman. This includes a scullery, laundry facilities and a family bathroom.

Arrival and departure Flexible during quiet times, otherwise 14:00 and 10:00.

Contact 📞 082 369 0571

✉ info@cefanimouth.co.za

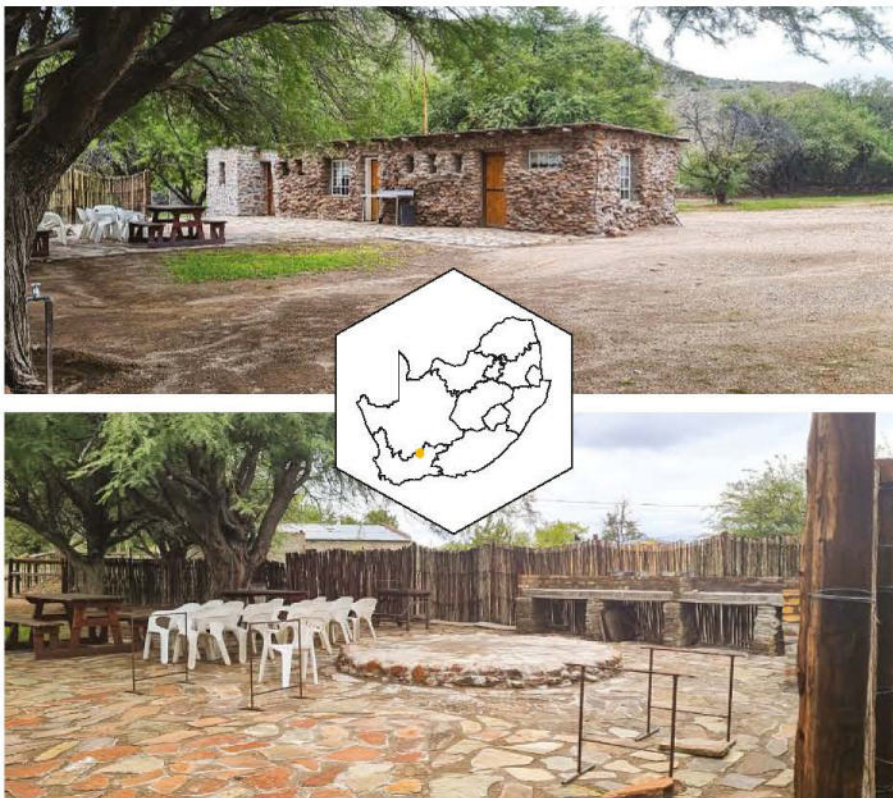
🌐 cefanimouth.co.za

Nearest town Cintsá East, 5 km.

Road condition A 3 km municipal dirt road generally in a good condition fair enough for a standard road caravan.

GPS S32.808256 E28.133725

ROOIHEUWEL



Pet terms All pets are welcome to join the camping trip, but arrange in advance. The campsite is fenced, and pets must be on a leash when you go walking.

Have we visited? No.

Campsite 12 stands on soil with power, water and thorn trees for shade. Cellphone reception isn't great.

Ablutions Separate facilities for men and women, with the hosts heating up a donkey boiler for your hot shower.

Arrival and departure Not fixed.

Contact 📞 083 387 6699

✉ flip.marge.vivier@gmail.com

🌐 rooiheuwel.com

Nearest town Beaufort West, 65 km.

Road condition You'll need to drive 36 km on dirt to get here. Although it's in good condition, it's not suitable for road caravans.

GPS S32.374506 E21.886109

A small crossover with a big attitude



MAHINDRA XUV 3XO

With lower price tags than full-size SUVs, crossovers are hugely popular with drivers who love a bit of gravel. Mahindra has a pretty decent one on offer here.

Words and photos **Cyril Kloppe**

A big reason why the XUV 3XO came into being is because Mahindra wanted to benefit from a Indian tax break on cars shorter than 4 m. Although Mahindra already made tiny cars – like the KUV100 – it was cheaper to use the chassis of a SsangYong Tivoli.

Mahindra owned the brand from 2011 to 2020 and mounted the reworked body of the outgoing Mahindra XUV300

onto it. Eight trim levels of the XUV 3XO are available in South Africa, all fitted with the same turbocharged 1,2 l petrol engine.

Prices start at R255 000 for the entry-level manual and go up to R405 000 for the flagship model with its automatic gearbox.

We got behind the wheel of the latter – the XUV 3XO AX7L – to see whether this crossover can handle a holiday and how it fares on the open road.





Exterior and interior

At 1,8 m wide, the Mahindra XUV 3XO has a noticeably broad body, and the 2,6 m wheelbase pushes the front and rear wheels far apart. These dimensions make for a roomy cabin for you and your passengers, and the rear legroom in particular is impressive, all things considered.

The boot (364 ℓ) is relatively big for a compact crossover, but admittedly a little small if you're planning on using the XUV 3XO for long-distance travel. That's easily solved, though, with a roof box or a light trailer.

Our test model had leather seats (well, synthetic),

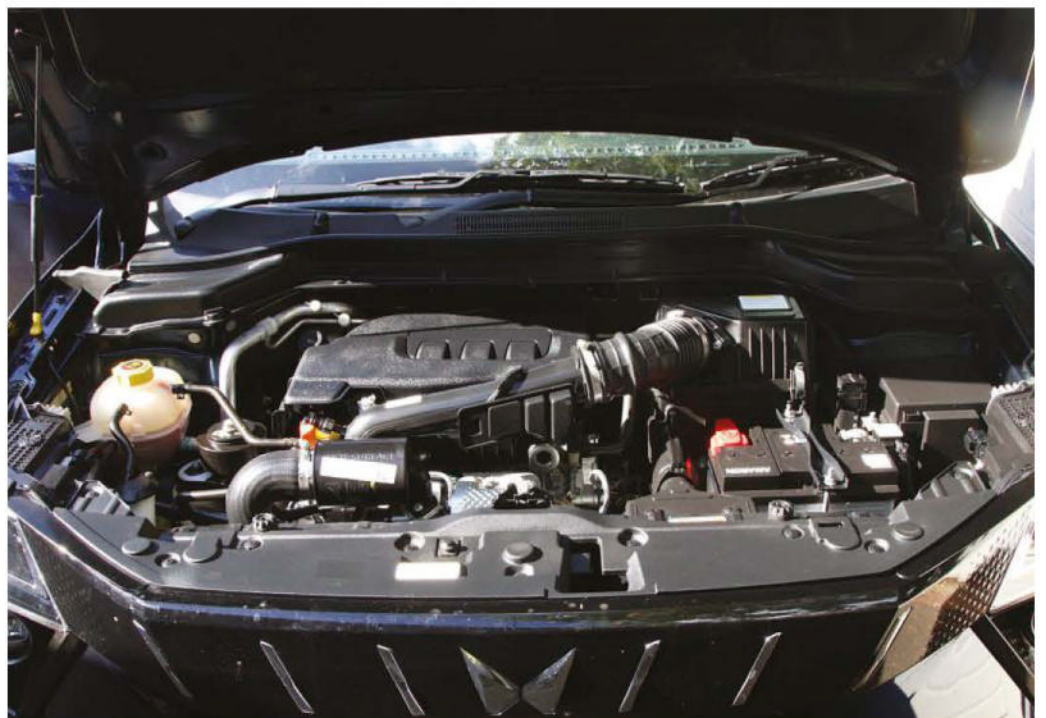
an electrically operated sunroof, a cooled cubby hole and a Harman Kardon sound system – fancy! All four of these luxuries are welcome on a road trip, and if it's just the two of you, you can fold down the rear seats for more luggage space.

We also liked the number of buttons on the centre console – not too many and not too few. There's a button for everything you might want to adjust on the fly, without having to dig around in the touchscreen menu. The less-used settings are hidden deeper in the 9-inch infotainment system.

One bit of tech that proved annoying was the ADAS 2 safety

system (short for "Advanced Driver Assistance Systems Level 2"). ADAS doesn't just tug gently at the steering wheel if you don't stay exactly in the centre of your lane, it also sets off an alarm every time you swerve to avoid a pothole or rock in the road. You can switch it off, sure, but it resets every time you start the car up again.

That said, the system did help the Mahindra XUV 3XO pass the Global NCAP safety test with flying colours – but we're not convinced all the automated inputs would help in real-world conditions. In some situations, they *might* cause more harm than good.



How does it drive?

Mahindra deserves credit for its choice of engine and gearbox. The three-cylinder engine has loads of character, as is often the case with engines running on an odd number of cylinders. The six-speed torque converter automatic gearbox, built by Aisin, works brilliantly and shifts at exactly the right moments.

There are three electronic drive modes named Zip, Zap and Zoom. The first prioritises fuel efficiency and the last focuses

on power delivery. Since this wasn't our car and it came with a full tank, we mostly drove it in Zoom mode, which is more fun.

The XUV 3XO's tare weight of 1 389 kg is on the heavy side, especially considering its engine size, and the performance is acceptable rather than thrilling: in Zoom mode, it goes from 0-100 km/h in 12 seconds.

As for gravel roads, we were impressed by its general road-holding and good traction control, but the suspension is

too stiff for corrugations. Still, this is a typical drawback in this segment and Mahindra's rivals don't fare much better.

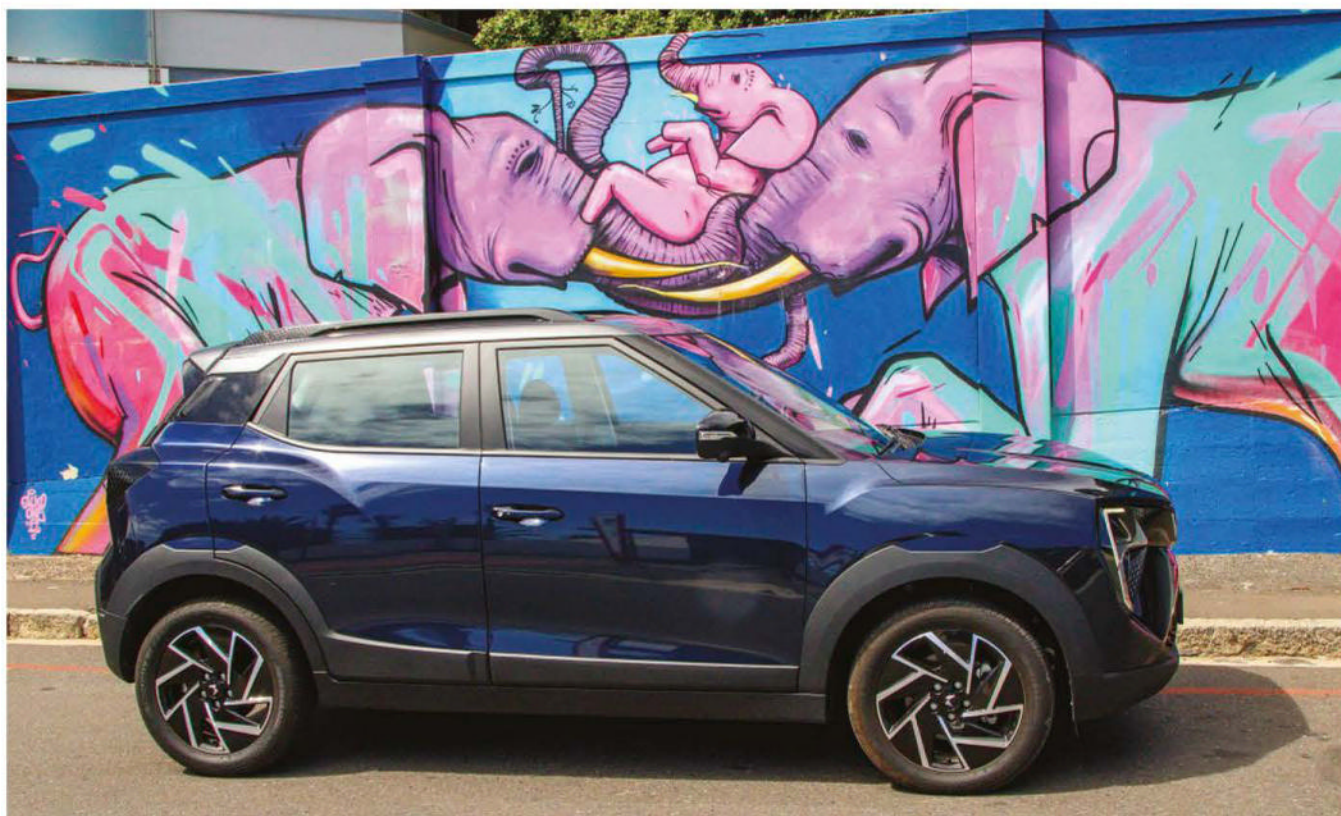
The electric power steering feels accurate – not as silky as hydraulic steering, granted – and its resistance adjusts depending on how fast you're going.

We achieved an average fuel consumption of 7 l/100 km, which is in line with others in this class. The claimed 6,5 l/100 km on Mahindra's spec sheet was out of reach for us.

The rivals

The XUV 3XO goes up against the Suzuki Fronx, Toyota Starlet Cross and Kia Sonet. At 3 990 cm, the Mahindra is the shortest of the lot, while the Kia is the longest at 4 110 cm. The Starlet and Fronx are essentially the same vehicle with different badges, and their boots measure 304 l, 60 l smaller than the Mahindra XUV 3XO's.

All three rivals run 1,5 l petrol engines, but the XUV 3XO's 1,2 l unit boasts the highest



torque figure. The Suzuki Fronx and its Toyota twin put out 77 kW and 138 Nm, which is a fair bit lower than the XUV 3XO's 82 kW and 200 Nm. Still, you wouldn't guess it from behind the wheel as the Suzuki feels more lively and responsive than the Mahindra. That's likely because the Suzuki is a full 374 kg lighter than the XUV 3XO.

Mahindra offers the best warranty and service plan – five years/150 000 km and five years/100 000 km respectively. That's miles better than Toyota's three-year warranty or Kia's three-year service plan.

Our verdict

The Mahindra XUV 3XO can definitely work as a compact holiday vehicle – especially if it's just the two of you. Its body is 30 cm wider than its nearest rival (the Kia, at 1 790 cm), and yet we'd still hesitate to hit the open road with five people and all of their luggage in this car. Large vehicles are simply still best for long road trips.

Its excellent warranty and service plan, lovely gearbox and extra torque do help make up for its few flaws, and so it's definitely worth considering as your next long weekend runabout.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model tested	1.2T AX7L automatic
Engine	1 197 cc, three-cylinder turbo petrol
Power	82 kW @ 5 000 rpm
Torque	200 Nm @ 1 500 rpm
Gearbox	Six-speed automatic
Fuel consumption	7 l/100 km
Tank	42 l
Boot capacity	364 l
Payload (GVM - Tare)	411 kg
Dimensions	3 990 (l) x 1 821 (w) x 1 647 mm (h)
Ground clearance	201 mm
Wading depth	350 mm
Tyre size	215/55 R17
Safety rating	★★★★★ (Global NCAP 2024)
Service plan	Five years/100 000 km
Warranty	Five years/100 000 km
Price	R405 000

TARDIS. Like Dr Who's time-travelling phone booth, the XUV 3XO is larger on the inside than it is on the outside. It's still quite wide, though, so mind your parking.

From the competitors

Petrol-powered crossovers for around R400 000



R355 900

Suzuki Fronx 1.5 GLX (auto)

It's quite a bit cheaper than the Mahindra and, in our view, more fun to drive.



R368 500

Toyota Starlet Cross 1.5 XR (auto)

For some unknown reason it's more expensive than its Suzuki sibling, but you do get access to Toyota's huge dealer network.



R391 995

Kia Sonet 1.5 LX (auto)

The Sonet boasts the biggest boot (385 l), which certainly counts in its favour when it comes to touring.





A brawny bakkie with a bold attitude



MAHINDRA PIK UP KAROO DAWN

Mahindra's Karoo special edition doesn't try to impress with fancy extras. It simply gets the job done – and looks good doing it.

Words and photos by **Leon Botha**

The first thing you notice about the Karoo Special Edition Dawn are the bullbars front and rear – and the rugged roof rack. It's the kind of bakkie that gets your imagination going: you can almost see yourself behind the wheel, exploring new tracks through the African bush without breaking a sweat.

The Dawn is one of four models in the Karoo range's special edition line-up, and the good news for campers is that every one of them comes with a tow bar.

We put this bakkie through its paces and racked up 1 800 km in total. We hitched an off-road camper and drove it through just about every weather condition

imaginable. We toured the sandstone koppies of the Eastern Free State, camped in the calm of the Gariep Dam and even braved a few days of city traffic, commuting between Pretoria and Johannesburg. With every kilometre, this bakkie grew on us – and when it was time to hand it back to the Mahindra team, we did so a little reluctantly.

Four of a kind

The four Karoo models are named the Dawn, Dusk, Dew and Storm, and each one gives off serious American monster truck energy.

Aside from the roof rack on the Dawn, our test model, the differences between the four aren't immediately obvious. That said, you'll want to watch your



A SOFTER SIDE. It may look like the Dawn is hauling a load of testosterone, but it comes with some genuinely handy features. The reverse camera is one of them.

clearance with that roof rack – its highest point is 2,173 m off the ground, which is too tall for some parking garages. (The tyres also play a role here, but more on that later.)

The side rails, made from 60 mm pipe, are solid – sturdy enough to stand on when accessing the roof rack. The Dawn, Dew and Storm each come with a tonneau cover, while the Dusk is fitted with a roller shutter. The Storm also stands out with off-road wheel arches at the back.

The Dusk and Dew are priced at R643 000, while the Dawn and Storm will set you back R658 000. Across the board, you get the following as standard: steel off-road bumpers, a rubberised load bed, mud tyres, off-road suspension, rubber mats, leather upholstery and a 9-inch touchscreen.

All four also come with a heated rear window, mud flaps, automatic aircon, 12 V sockets front and back, cruise control and a reverse camera.

Under the bonnet

All Mahindra Pik Up double-cab bakkies are fitted with a turbocharged 2 179 cc diesel engine producing 103 kW and 320 Nm of torque. According to the manufacturer, fuel consumption is the same across the range at 9,3 ℓ/100 km. All 4x4 models have a load capacity of 995 kg. Interestingly, our test vehicle was rated at 1 070 kg on paper – the result you get when subtracting the tare weight (2 080 kg) on the licence disc from the GVM (3 150 kg).

Dimensions and towing capacity (2 500 kg) are the same across all models, and each has an 80 ℓ fuel tank, diff lock and a turning circle of 6,7 m.

Apart from the cosmetic differences between the four models, all are automatic and 4x4-driven. But unlike the rest of the Pik Up range, the Dusk, Dew, Dawn and Storm come fitted with mud tyres and sit slightly wider on 265/75R16 tyres (compared to 245/75R16 on the standard models).

“

We hitched an off-road camper and drove it through just about every weather condition imaginable

”

Second opinion

Helenus Kruger took the Karoo Storm for a getaway to the Kruger Park, towing a Bruiser 4x4 off-road caravan. Here's what he had to say.

“ The ride is comfortable, with the suspension striking a good balance between firm and soft. The seat is just as comfortable and absorbs the rattling of corrugated dirt roads well – as if there's built-in cushioning. You sit high, looking down over the bonnet, which means you always know exactly where the body ends, a big help when parking in tight spaces. The cabin is spacious, with more than enough legroom for even the

tallest travellers. The Storm is well specced, with plenty of luxuries, including a large touchscreen with multiple audio options, cruise control and a reverse camera – a real winner when you're travelling solo and need to hitch the caravan.

The mud tyres aren't necessarily better than standard ones – they're noisy on tar, and the constant hum starts to get on your nerves after a few hours. Plus, you're unlikely to get high mileage out of them if you mostly drive on paved roads.

Fuel consumption over 760 km was 13,4 ℓ/100 km.

”



TOW TEST

Towing features

An integrated drop plate is built into the rear steel bumper, with a tow ball bolted on. The drop plate has two sets of mounting holes – 44 cm and 52 cm from the ground. The tow ball itself sits roughly 10 cm higher than these holes. The trailer plug is mounted near the tow ball, and the reverse camera sits 43 cm higher, nicely centred in the tailgate.

Something you don't often see on double-cab bakkies is the front bumper mount for a removable towbar with a 50 mm square-tube arm. It comes in handy for launching a boat or parking into a tight storage spot at home. The rear tow bar is bolted directly to the bumper – something Mahindra could rethink, as Karoo owners would benefit more from a removable version.

The hazard lights switch on automatically when you lift the bonnet and flash while the two gas struts hold it open. They switch off when the bonnet is closed again.

Inside, the top of the dash is noticeably narrow, and the windscreen is more upright than in most modern bakkies – it's reminiscent of the old Land Rover Defender.

A few things bothered: we drove hundreds of kilometres in the rain, and the noisy wipers were at the top of this list – you can hear the motor cranking the arms. The ignition slot is hidden on the right side of the steering column, and we struggled to find it at first. Lastly, the window switches on the door are positioned awkwardly close to your elbow, making them uncomfortable to use.

Both front seats have a centre armrest that folds down – a very comfortable feature, especially on long drives. The driver's armrest does obscure the handbrake slightly, but it's still easy enough to grab.

The GT Radial Adventuro M/T tyres are loud – from pull-off to towing speed – but that's to be expected with mud tyres and off-road capability. A bit of road noise is a small price to pay.

The ball of the towbar is clearly visible and centred on the reverse camera screen. The guide lines are static, so reversing onto a trailer coupler is easy and precise. The steel rear bumper doesn't have reverse sensors, which means no alarming beeps while backing up.

One thing buyers should be aware of – and it's not something you expect on a bakkie like this – is how the fuel flap opens. The first time we stopped to fill up, we had no clue how to open it. A whole battalion of petrol attendants gathered to help us look for the button. Eventually, someone thought outside the box and held down the unlock button on the remote for a few seconds. Success!

The fuel figures aren't quite what you'd expect – even factoring in the 4x4 drivetrain and mud tyres. We did most of our towing at 100-120 km/h on the open road. Our average fuel consumption over 1 448 km was 14,1 l/100 km. The worst was 16,1 l/100 km and the best 12,3 l/100 km.

For regular commuting – without towing – in a mix of traffic and peak-hour driving over 292 km, we measured exactly what Mahindra claims: 9,3 l/100 km. That brings the combined average to 11,7 l/100 km.

What we towed

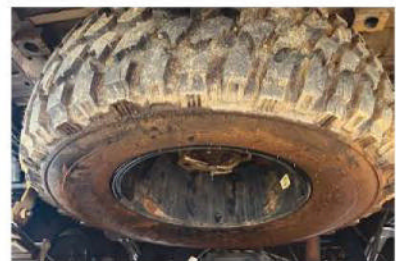
Manufacturer	BunduTec
Model	BunduTrail
Model year	2025
GVM	1 100 kg

Drive & Camp borrowed the new BunduTrail from the manufacturer in Benoni. Don't miss our full impressions in the Caravan Test feature in the next issue, August-September 2025.

Contact 066 174 6906

info@bundutec.co.za

bundutec.co.za

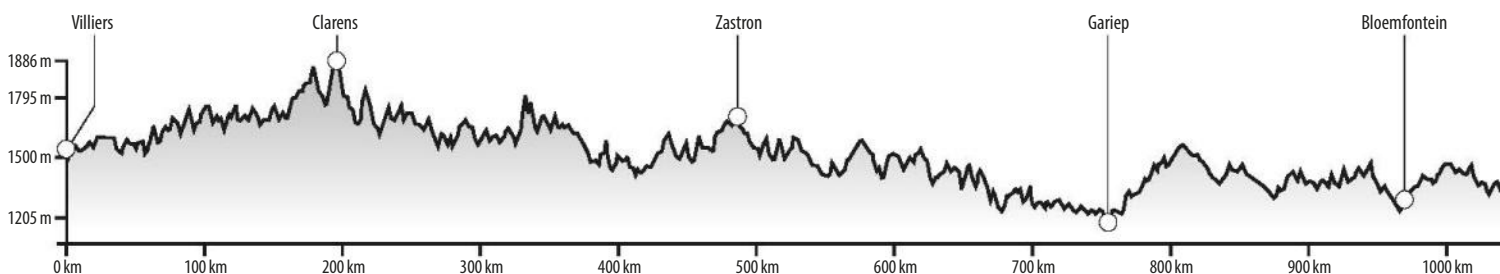


TOW PROFILE

Elevation

Distance 1 740 km **Route** Highways, public roads, rough back roads and gravel roads – right through to built-up areas.

Total towing period 10 days **Weather** Ranged from sunny to heavy rainfall.

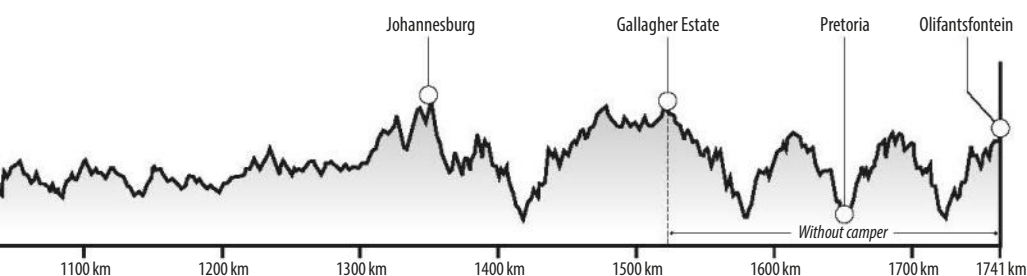




GOOD ENOUGH. If brand loyalty wasn't a thing, you'd go straight for the Karoo Dawn. It's a bakkie that gets the job done – and feels like a bargain when you compare it to the price of other double cabs.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Karoo Dawn
Engine	Four-cylinder turbo diesel
Power	103 kW @ 3 750 rpm
Torque	320 Nm @ 1 500-2 800 rpm
Gearbox	Six-speed automatic
Drivetrain	4x4 with diff lock
Tank	80 ℓ
Fuel consumption (with caravan)	14,1 ℓ/100 km (7,1 km/ℓ)
Range (with caravan)	568 km
Tare weight (licence disc)	2 080 kg
GVM	3 150 kg
GCM	5 650 kg
Towing capacity	2 500 kg
Towbar load test rating	Unknown
Towbar max vertical load	Unknown
Is the towbar removable?	No, only the ball
PRICE	R658 000



“

Drive & Camp says

The Karoo Special Edition variants are around R100 000 more expensive than the standard 4x4 Karoo – but they're head and shoulders above that model.

”



From the competitors
4x4 double-cab bakkies in the same price range



R661 100 Isuzu D-Max 1.9 Ddi L **350 Nm**

You'll pay R6 100 less for Isuzu's cheapest 4x4 double cab.



R659 900 JAC T9 2.0 L DTI Super Lux **410 Nm**

It's R1 900 cheaper – and that's JAC's top-of-the-range model.



R657 900 Toyota Hilux 2.4 GD-6 SR **400 Nm**

There's only a R100 difference – and that's also Toyota's cheapest 4x4 double cab.

Take a breather

At first glance, the AlphaGo S6 looks like any other camper trailer – but take a closer look and you'll notice something different.

Words and photos by **Leon Botha**

At first glance, the AlphaGo S6 doesn't seem out of the ordinary. It looks like a typical flat camper trailer that opens lengthways along the body, much like the GT Camper Exclusive or the Summit Everest. But once you pitch the tent, it becomes clear what sets the S6 apart from its competitors.

Instead of traditional tent poles, the tent uses inflatable air beams, pumped up to 5 bar. We know – it's normal to be a bit sceptical. But consider this: your car tyres are usually inflated to somewhere between

2 and 3 bar. And how heavy is your car? If the S6's air beams are inflated to 5 bar, your tent will stand solid and strong. Plus, you no longer need to worry about bent poles when a coastal gale blows through your campsite.

If it can inflate, it can deflate. This kind of tent is probably not completely thorn-proof, but the manufacturer has thought of that and includes a repair kit with your purchase.



ALPHAGO S6 AIR V4

Pump it up

The big advantage of a trailer designed like this is the extra packing space on top when you're towing. The test model came with an large roof rack that can carry up to 300 kg. The roof rack is split into two sections, each fixed to a lid that opens either to the front or to the back.

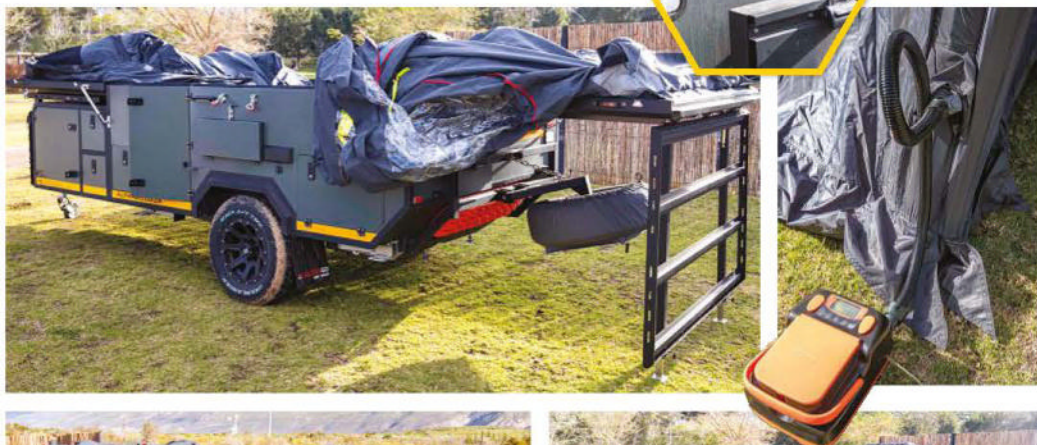
Before you open up the trailer, you'll need to offload whatever gear is on the rack – and get the spare wheel out of the way. It's mounted on its own frame at the rear of the trailer.

Both lids are fitted with gas struts, so they lift easily and swing open smoothly to where they need to be. The front lid opens forward and rests on the nose cone. When you swing the rear lid open, the roof rack lowers to the ground and doubles as a support base. The manufacturer has added adjustable feet to this section, in case you're parked on uneven terrain. The roof rack support also makes a great spot to hang wet towels.

Before inflating the tent, you'll need to walk around the trailer and pull the loose canvas away from the body so it can unfold properly. The compressor switch is located in the door, but make sure the supply pipe is connected to the nearest air beam. Also double-check that all the other valves are closed – there's one directly above the main inlet, and others on the ends of the side beams. Each room's beams are linked, so you only need to inflate at one point.

The main tent stretches over the camper, but you can also purchase optional add-ons, including an annex for the kitchen area and one for a bathroom. These two extras aren't connected to the main tent's air beams and must be inflated separately using a portable compressor.

Even the guy ropes are different – they attach to the tent with a quick-release buckle.



The main cabin

You don't have to crouch to step through the door, and once inside, it's genuinely spacious. The roof height is an impressive 2,7 m. The roof panels can also be unzipped to allow sunlight in.

To your left as you enter, there's a bench that stretches across the full width of the camper; on the right, a U-shaped bench. Both offer loads of storage underneath.

To get onto the front bed, you step up from the left-hand bench, and to reach the rear bed, you use the middle of the opposite bench. You sleep crosswise on both beds, and each has a canvas door that can be zipped up for privacy. *(I'm already looking into ways to temporarily sabotage those zips for when your student child brings along their latest flame. – Ed)*

The beds differ slightly in size: the front bed is somewhere between a double and a queen,

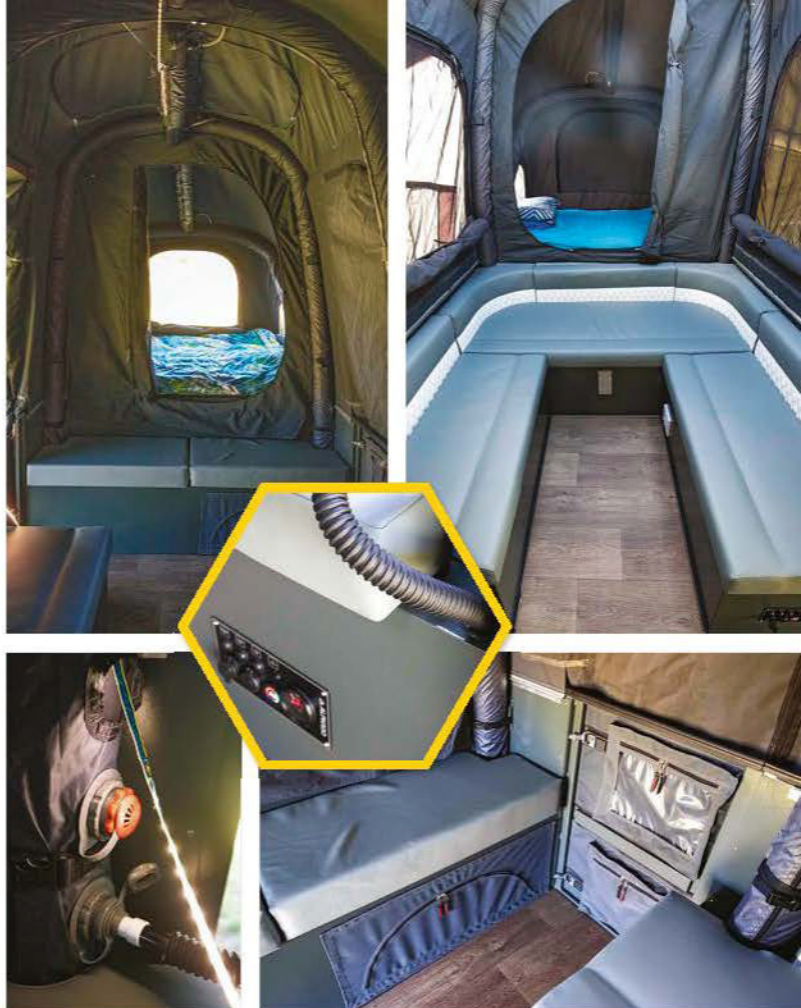
while the rear one is slightly narrower than a double. Both are about a centimetre shorter than a standard mattress.

The benches are comfortable to sit on, with space for up to six people. The removable swivel table fits into the centre section when you're sitting inside and need a spot for that tray of tea and biscuits. When night falls, the benches can be folded out to form a double bed.

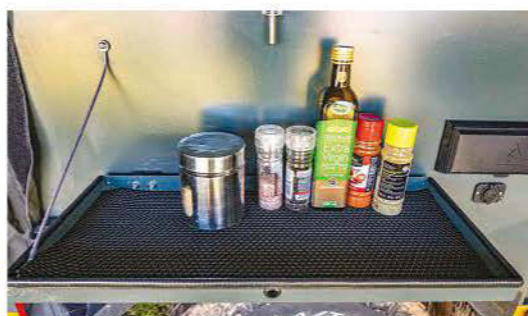
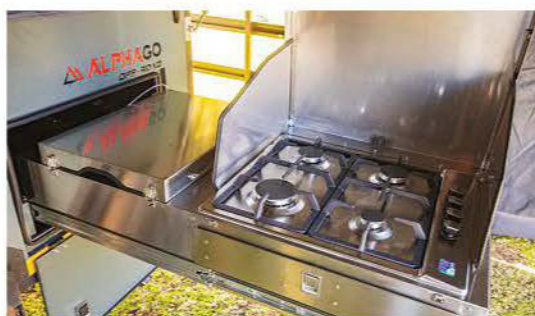
The test model came with an LED strip light on the ceiling, but future models will also have mood lighting along the lower edge of the benches.

You'll find USB and cigarette lighter sockets near the door, and USB and 220 V sockets at the foot of the far bench.

The canvas panel between the kitchen and the interior can be unzipped, turning the cabin into an extension of the open kitchen space.



Drive & Camp says An inflatable tent may seem like a strange concept, but it gives buyers more choice. Electric vehicles were once just as unfamiliar – and look where we are now.



Kitchen, sorted

The fridge-freezer slides out of the cupboard on the far left. Next to it are three deep drawers that extend 90 cm from the body – two stacked above each other, and the third alongside. Cups and glasses go in the top drawer, which has custom sponge cut-outs, while the other two are perfect for groceries. It's striking how smoothly and solidly the drawers glide – a definite mark of quality.

A narrow shelf folds down

above the left wheel, ideal for your sugar, oil and spices near the stove. The stove drawer pulls out from the adjacent cupboard, and the glide rails feel just as secure. The sink is built into this same drawer, and its lid flips over backwards to become a drying rack – smart!

The four-burner gas stove, a luxury in any caravan, sits at the end of the slide-out. It has a lift-up cover that forms a windscreen with two side panels.

Around the sides

The 5 kg gas cylinder stands on an open shelf in front of the nose cone, and the geyser is mounted on the right-hand side. Around the corner, two cupboards in the right-hand panel open into the space opposite the fridge-freezer – perfect for extra camping gear. The smaller door on the left is 33 cm wide, while the larger one opens to a space 62 cm wide and tall, and 110 cm deep.

The power inlet is on the back right corner, and the battery (100 Ah), charger and circuit breakers are in the next cupboard – located at the back end of the bathroom section. The bathroom door is directly opposite the entry door. It's a spacious setup, and you don't need to walk through the entire camper to get there – the bathroom has doors at both ends.

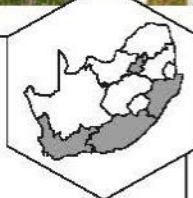
Inside the bathroom, a shelf folds down above the right wheel where you can place your toiletries. The shower head with its extended hose is in the adjacent cupboard. The taps (hot and cold) are also recessed into this cupboard, and the water tank holds 75 ℓ.

In the shower tent, a long drawer slides out of the body from the side near the door – perfect for storing clothes.



SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer	AlphaGo
Model	S6 Air V4
Sleeps	Six
Dimensions	5,8 x 1,95 x 1,62 m
Tare	1 500 kg
Payload	500 kg
GVM	2 000 kg
Axle	2,5 t
Wheel size	16 inch
Chassis	Galvanised
Body	Galvanised steel and aluminium
Price	R449 995



Dealer network Head office and factory in Cape Town. Viewings by appointment in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape.

Contact ☎ 072 362 3175 ✉ info@alphago.co.za 🌐 alphago.co.za



R449 995

ALPHAGO S6 V4

GVM 2 000 kg

COMPETITOR

AlphaGo and Opus are the only manufacturers currently offering an inflatable tent system.



R545 000

OPUS OP4*

GVM 1 600 kg



The price is for a standard model, and how each unit is equipped varies from one manufacturer to the next.

** As listed in the 2024 Buyers' Guide.*

Drive & Camp borrowed the AlphaGo S6 from the manufacturer.

What comes standard?

Included in the price: the four-burner gas stove, external shower, 75 ℓ water tank (with a 150 ℓ option), 5 ℓ geyser, 12 V/220 V power system with charger, and a 100 Ah deep-cycle battery.

Optional extras include an HB air-con, 100 Ah lithium battery, 60" home theatre system, annex and bathroom tents, a bed extension for the king-size bed, recovery kit, DC-DC charger, cassette toilet, 200 W solar system, 2 000 W inverter, SnoMaster 80,5 ℓ fridge-freezer, and movers.

From blueprint to blacktop

The very first paperwork assigned to you in life is your birth certificate. The same goes for caravans. But does today's paperwork still match up with the "newborns" of yesteryear?

Text **Leon Botha** Photos **Leon Botha** and **Helenus Kruger**



Before a newly built caravan model is allowed on the road, it needs the green light from the authorities. The process is called "homologation" and it's overseen by the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS).

It's a straightforward procedure that determines whether a new caravan model meets the prescribed specifications – and if it does, it's legally approved for use on South Africa's public roads. According to the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications Act, homologation refers to

"a process for establishing the compliance of a model of a vehicle and the approval being granted by the regulatory authority, prior to it being introduced for sale."

The same principle applies to all vehicles on the road – every one of them was once a brand-new model introduced to the market. Making changes to your vehicle is second nature; after all, it might not come standard with a tow bar or rock sliders.

When it comes to caravans, modifications are even more common. A built-in air conditioner or an extra set of

batteries, for example, might not be part of the original specifications. But these changes can affect the caravan's original weight figures submitted to the NRCS – and that can have legal consequences, especially if the gross vehicle mass (GVM) is affected.

We spoke to Themba Kaula, who heads the vehicle approval section at the NRCS – the regulatory body responsible for, among others, caravans – to get a clearer understanding of the homologation process up to the point where responsibility shifts to the private owner.

“

Strictly speaking, you're not even allowed to fit a rooftop tent as a fixture to your newly bought trailer without official approval

”

One of many

They approve “samples”, explain Themba, and the idea of the sample is that the production models are exact copies going forward. But down the line your actual caravan could have changed and might not be up to standard anymore. Themba says as soon as you change a regulated item, the relevant NRCS documents must be updated.

The NRCS operates within a regulatory framework and is not involved in enforcement – so it doesn’t “police” possible unlawful modifications. That responsibility lies with law enforcement. For example, if you’re pulled over at a weighbridge, officers might spot discrepancies between the caravan’s actual weight and what’s stated on the licence disc or data plate. It’s important

to note that the homologation process focuses on the gross vehicle mass (GVM) – that is, the fully loaded weight – rather than the tare weight. The tare weight comes into play during the registration process.

The NRCS do have random follow-ups regarding the homologated samples, which is meant to be once a year, but between this and law enforcement it is impossible to have a hand on every caravan on the road.

Keep standards in mind

Strictly speaking, you’re not even allowed to fit a rooftop tent as a fixture to your newly bought trailer without official approval. Doing so changes the tare mass but, more importantly, it alters the trailer’s dimensions, which is one of the prescribed criteria in

the homologation process.

Owners must apply for a Letter of Authority from the NRCS to note the changes that has been made. This applies to individuals – not businesses – and the NRCS will then determine whether the alterations still meet the compulsory standards and whether the vehicle is still compliant to the Road Traffic Act.

The applicant needs to present various documents: their ID; an affidavit from the South African Police stating the “details of the work carried out”; a police clearance; a road-worthy certificate; a weigh-bridge certificate; a brake report if the trailer’s GVM is above 750 kg; photos showing the full rear, side and front; and finally, proof of payment to the amount of R1 800.

What else?

We referred to **weight** and **dimensions**, but what other criteria is used by the NRCS to homologate a caravan?

The actual standards are prescribed in various South African National Standards or SANS documents. This is the technical standards developed by the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS). But some items are compared to regulations established by the Economic Commission for Europe, or ECE standards, which applies to the United Nations that South Africa has adopted.

The regulator will be looking at the **data plate**. This must be permanently affixed to the caravan and visible from its left side.

The **parking brake** – if the trailer is equipped with one – must be able to hold the trailer or caravan at a 12° gradient, and the **axle** must also have a data plate that includes the serial number and the load capacity.

In some cases, as with the **coupling device**, the regulator may compare the standard to either SANS or ECE, and in this instance the documents are referred to as SANS 20055:2003 or ECE R55.

The static load on the ball coupling – including the height; the trailer articulation clearance; the stability of certain trailer-towing vehicle combinations and the data plates must comply with the Compulsory Specifications for Motor Vehicles (category O₁ and O₂). “O” relates to trailers, “1” to single-axle trailers with a mass not exceeding 750 kg, and “2” a mass not exceeding 3 500 kg.

These specifications determine that the static vertical load at the centre of the ball socket of the coupler may not exceed 100 kg or be less than 25 kg. This is determined by the manufacturer and is applicable when the trailer is loaded.

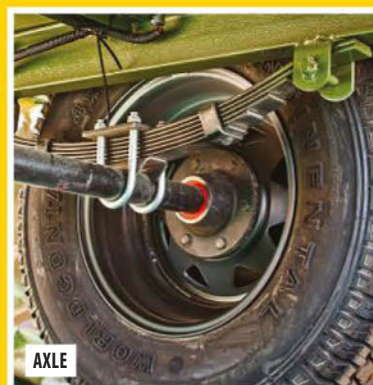
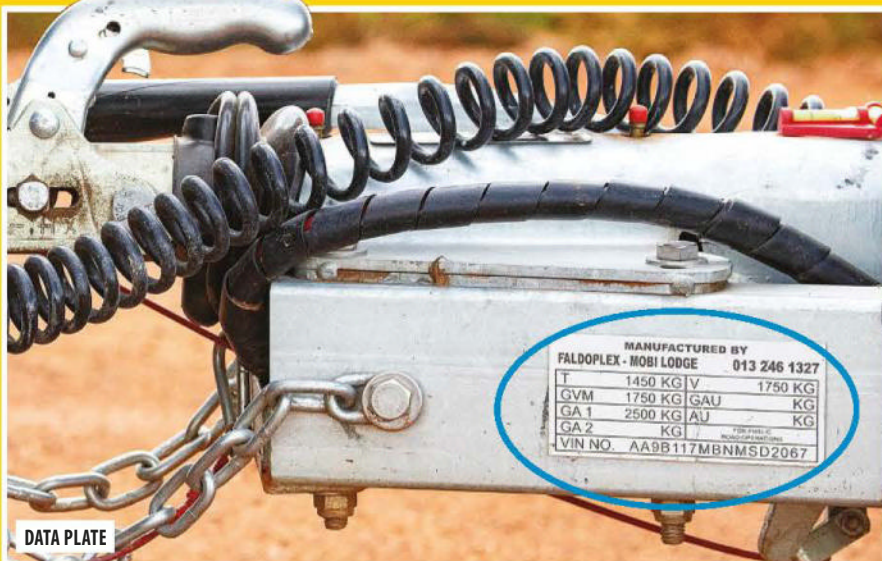
The height of the coupler – also at the centre of the ball socket – when the trailer is parallel to the road should not be less than 350 mm or exceed 465 mm from the ground. This must be the case fully laden, but exceptions are made for trailers with a wheel diameter that exceeds 665 mm or where the GVM exceeds 3 500 kg.

As for the position of the coupler on the A-frame, there must be at least 1 m space between the coupler and the body of the trailer at a maximum angle of 30° on either side of it.

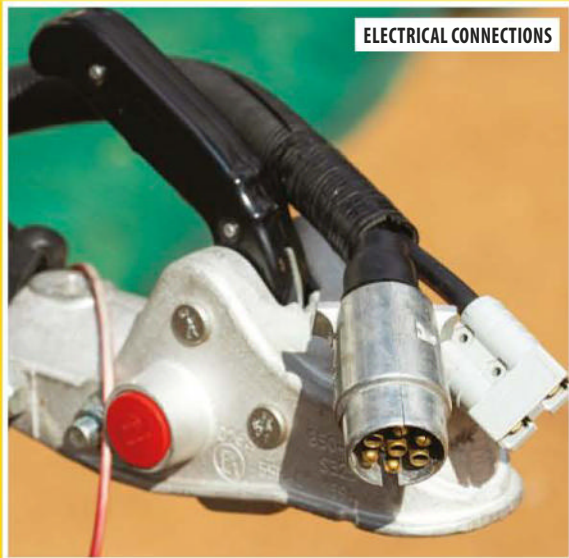
A caravan's stability requirements are directly linked to its overall height, centre of gravity and rear overhang.

The height may not exceed the lesser of 1,8 times the track width or 3 m. For example, if the track width is 1,5 m, the height may not exceed 2,7 m.

The caravan's centre of gravity is a point above the floor and in front of the axle, and must adhere to two ratios: horizontal and vertical. The ratio of the distance between the centre of gravity and the coupler should be no more than 0,96 if divided by the distance between the coupler and the axle. In theory, this means



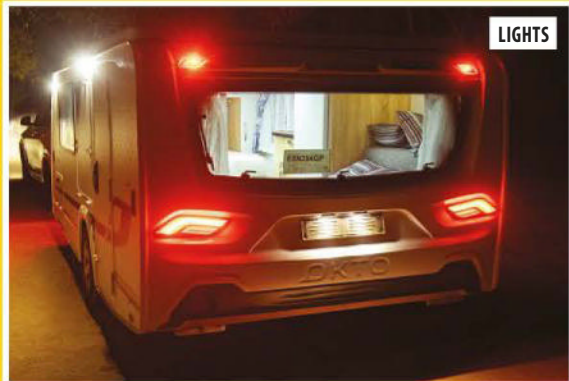
ELECTRICAL CONNECTIONS



RED REFLECTORS- (REAR)



LIGHTS



WHITE REFLECTORS- (FRONT)



Drive & Camp says

Now that your new caravan is compliant with the NRCS' specifications and the Road Traffic Act, who oversees the compliance of added equipment like gas, electrical and plumbing installations? Should caravan manufacturers furnish owners with a Certificate of Compliance for this added equipment, or not? We shed more light on this in our next issue.

TRIANGULAR REFLECTORS



NUMBER PLATE



TYRES



WINDOWS



this point should be no more than 2,88 m away from the coupler if the coupler-axle distance is 3 m. The ratio between the height of the centre of gravity above the ground to the track width of the caravan should not exceed 0,725. This gives you a maximum of 1,0875 m above the ground for a track width of 1,5 m.

The ratio of 0,7 may not be exceeded for the rear overhang. This is calculated by the distance between the axle and the rear of the body divided by the distance between the axle and the coupler. For a caravan with 3 m between the coupler and the axle, the distance from the axle to the rear may not exceed 2,1 m.

If we make our own calculations according to the above measurements, this imaginary caravan will be 5,1 m long – the average length of off-road caravans listed in our 2024 *Caravan Buyer's Guide* is 4,57 m – and the track width in this example is typically that of a double cab bakkie. The distance between the coupler and the axle of the caravan would be at the 59% point in terms of the total length.

The stability of the caravan must also be checked in two laden aspects. This is with the minimum vertical load on the coupler stated by the manufacturer when the caravan is at its tare weight and fully equipped according to the manufacturer's specification, and at its gross weight with the load distribution as recommended by the manufacturer.

The electrical connectors; the tyres; the position of the rear lights and warning sign; the reflectors and contour marking; the caravan's windows and partitions and the **fire extinguishers**, are among the other elements to be checked.

There are other details, including the make of the **tyres**, load and speed index that must adhere to the standard. The **lights** should be 350-1 500 mm from the ground and the indicator lights not more than 400 mm from the outer edge. Both sets of lights may not be less than 600 mm apart.

The rear of the caravan must either be fitted with a chevron board, a reflector pattern, or triangular reflectors. The **board** must be red and yellow and not higher than 1 100 mm from the ground, and 400 mm from the outer edges and a width of 200 mm (±5 mm). The **reflector pattern** must be made up of seven red reflectors with a vertical gap of 230-300 mm apart and not more than 600 mm apart vertically. This pattern must be 300-1100 mm from the ground. The **triangular reflectors** must be 150 mm in size.

The **contour marking tape** – that yellow reflective strip on the side of the caravan – should be 250-1 500 mm from the ground, cover at least 80% of the length and be at least 50 mm wide.

There must be two **red reflectors** at the rear and two **white ones** at the front. The rear ones must be 300-900 mm from the ground and the white ones 350-900 mm.

If the **windows** consist of glass, it should be marked with the wording "toughened" or "tempered".

Caution... wild animals!



One of the greatest fears for campers in the wilderness is a predator attack. But how likely is it on an overland trip – and what should you do if the unthinkable happens?

Words **Cyril Klopfer**

Experts say there are three main reasons why a wild animal will attack: if it feels threatened, if it is desperately hungry or if you've come too close to its young.

We take a closer look at five of the most dangerous animals in southern Africa... and yes, we know statistically malaria mosquitoes and venomous snakes are more dangerous, but here we're sticking to the big beasts

that fuel our nightmares.

We're certainly not trying to scare you off from camping and exploring the wild; we simply want to remind you to keep your wits about you as you head into the bush.



Hippos

According to statistics, hippos are the world's most dangerous land mammals, killing an average of 500 people every year. A hippo is extremely territorial, and if you surprise

one, its first instinct is to defend itself rather than flee.

Former Miss South Africa Diana Tilden-Davis was attacked by a hippo in the Okavango Delta in December 2003. Her

husband, Chris Kruger, recalls that various animals in northern Botswana were restless at the time due to a severe drought. The hippos in particular were extremely grumpy because of the low water levels and lack

of grazing. When Tilden-Davis accidentally stumbled upon a hippo, the animal capsized her canoe, bit her lower leg and tried to drag her off. Fortunately, she managed to escape, but she very nearly lost her foot.

The most recent attack on home soil happened on 21 January this year in the Kruger National Park, when a suspected poacher near Pretoriuskop was killed by a hippo.

If you're in an area where hippos occur, listen out for the call of the red-billed oxpecker – it may indicate that hippos are nearby. Stay well clear, and if one charges at you – and yes, they can run faster than you – immediately dive into your vehicle or scramble up the nearest tree.



A hippo is extremely territorial, and if you surprise one, its first instinct is to defend itself rather than flee



Crocodiles

In a shocking incident earlier this year, seven-year-old Johandré Blom lost his arm after a crocodile attacked him at Rodekopjes Dam near Brits, North West. Just before the attack, Johandré and a friend were playing in the shallow water while their parents fished nearby. Johandré's father, Corné Blom, managed to save him from an even worse fate. Johandré is already recovering and undergoing skin grafts.

There's honestly not much you

can do to escape a crocodile's jaws. Corné Blom is a big man, and even he was flung around by the crocodile several times before Johandré lost his arm. Experts say you can try gouging at a crocodile's eyes with your fingers – but success isn't guaranteed.

It's unclear exactly how often people are attacked by crocodiles, but globally the number is estimated at no fewer than 700 incidents a year – including attacks by

Asian saltwater crocodiles and American alligators. Nile crocodiles – the type found in Africa – are the most dangerous; according to the Guinness Book of Animal Facts, 63% of attacks by Nile crocodiles are fatal.

If your boat capsizes in crocodile-infested waters, the most important thing is to stay calm and swim purposefully to the shore. Splashing and panicking will only attract crocodiles. Nile crocodiles are opportunistic predators that will

try to eat anything from fish to giraffes. Males grow to between 3 and 6 m in length and can weigh anything between 300 kg and 1 tonne.

Our advice? Stay away from dams and rivers where crocodiles are known to occur. However, if you have to wade into a river to check the depth before you drive across – and you're unsure whether that "log" near the reeds might actually be a crocodile – toss a stone at it now and then to see if it moves.

Elephants

These giants are generally peaceful and calm – but when one loses its temper, all hell can break loose.

An elephant won't attack you without reason; most charges are just to scare you off. Watch an elephant's body language carefully: if its ears are flared, it's stomping its feet and holding its head high, a mock charge is probably on the way.

But if its ears are pinned back and it's deadly quiet, you're in serious trouble.

Never drive your vehicle between a cow and her calf; in fact, if you come across a herd of elephants, it's better to stop, keep quiet and wait for them to pass.

You might even have to reverse to give them more space. If an elephant does attack your vehicle, it's safer to stay inside and hope those massive tusks don't pierce the bodywork – and you.

Under no circumstances should you get out of your vehicle when there's an elephant nearby. On 25 January this year, 59-year-old

Shaik Adam Shabir Ammed from eMkhondo, Mpumalanga, made this very mistake.

Ammed was visiting the Kruger National Park with his two grandchildren (aged 5 and 11) and got out of their vehicle to take photos of an elephant.

The animal charged, and Ammed and the children tried to flee on foot. The 11-year-old fell, and Ammed tried to shield him by stepping between the boy and the elephant.

Ammed was fatally trampled, but the children managed to escape.



Buffaloes

Like hippos, Cape buffaloes are extremely territorial – and downright grumpy. There's good reason why the buffalo is included in the Big Five: 50% of their attacks are fatal.

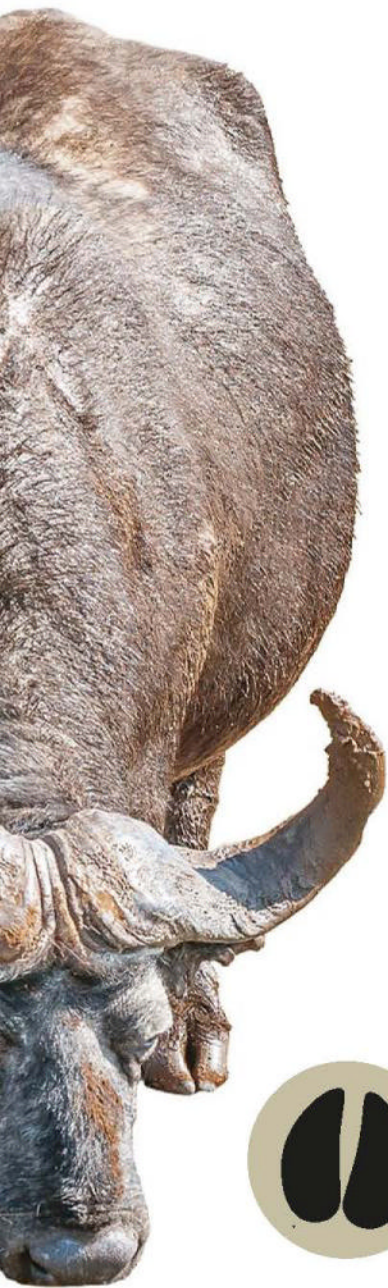
Wildlife experts who work with these animals every day know to tread lightly because of their unpredictable behaviour.

On 13 August 2024, a ranger was attacked by a buffalo while on patrol in the Pretoriuskop area of the Kruger Park. The man, whose name was withheld by SANParks, survived thanks to a technique that would make a rodeo cowboy proud – he clung to the buffalo's horns to



If an elephant does attack your vehicle, it's safer to stay inside and hope those massive tusks don't pierce the bodywork – and you





avoid serious injuries.

SANParks spokesperson Ike Phaala says the ranger held on long enough for his colleague to shoot the enraged buffalo.

Although he survived, the ranger was seriously injured and had to be airlifted to the nearest trauma unit.

Buffaloes are frequently hunted by lions, and their instinct is to fight rather than flee – hence their foul tempers.

To avoid an attack, stay inside your vehicle. If a buffalo approaches your campsite, move away slowly so that it doesn't see you as a threat.

Lions

Of all animals, people are probably most afraid of lions. In reality, lion attacks are rare – perhaps because we're so wary of them.

According to research conducted by the organisation PLOS Biology in 2023 (PLOS stands for Public Library of Science), only 282 lion-related deaths have been recorded worldwide in the past 70 years – that's four people per year across the entire globe.

The research does however show that 65% of big cat attacks are fatal, and that the Bengal tiger in India – one of the deadliest predators on Earth – accounts for most of that percentage.

That doesn't mean lions are harmless; they still rank in the top 10 list of Africa's most dangerous animals. The most recent lion attack on a human was on 1 January 2024 in

Kenya, when a motorcyclist near Shimba Hills National Park was pulled off his bike by a lion.

As far as we know, the last fatal lion attack in South Africa was in 2015, when an American tourist wound down her car window to take photos of a lion. The tragic incident happened at the Lion & Safari Park in Gauteng. The lion jumped through the open window...

The big question: will a lion drag you from your tent? It's unlikely – but it has happened. Helge and Irene Denker were camping at Brandberg in Namibia on 23 April 2021 when a male lion attacked them inside their dome tent. Helge says the tent door had been left unzipped when the lion

charged. He managed to scare the lion off by shouting and shooting at it with his revolver, but the animal later returned and chewed on their tent while the Denkers took shelter in their Land Cruiser. We suspect they've since invested in a proper off-road caravan.

Both the lion and the Denkers came through unscathed – but their experience is a reminder that lions sometimes associate campsites with free food... and that's when things can get dangerous.

Our advice? Travel responsibly and use common sense when dealing with wild animals. And remember – you're still safer in the bush than you are in the city! 🌿



Welcome, winter

With Jack Frost knocking at the door, there's no need to stay home. Here are six camping essentials to keep you cosy – plus our tips for dressing warmly in cold weather.

Words **Cyril Kloppe** Photos **Cyril Kloppe** and supplied



Winter may not be the ideal time to camp, but if you do brave the cold, you'll often be rewarded with an entire resort to yourself and your travel partner. Some areas do get bitterly cold, though – especially on the Highveld and the plains of the Free State. The West Coast and most of the Western Cape are slightly warmer, but the rain can be relentless and dreary.

All is not lost: Here are some ideas to help you stay snug while camping inland or on the coast.

CADAC SAFIRE HEATER Ring of fire

This old favourite screws directly onto any Cadac gas cylinder, and the amount of heat it puts out is impressive for something with a modest diameter of just 32 cm. It uses gas at a rate of 170 g per hour, which means it'll burn for almost 30 hours on a 5 kg cylinder. You light it using a Piezo igniter at the back of the reflector plate – far safer than trying to strike a match with trembling hands at the front...

Price R900 at Outdoor Warehouse (gas cylinder not included).



FIRST ASCENT ICE BREAKER SLEEPING BAG Snug as a bug

According to climbing.co.za – a forum where mountaineers and other tough types chat – First Ascent's Ice Breaker is one of the best sleeping bags in living memory! It'll keep you cosy down to -3 °C, and you'll only start to feel the cold at around -8 °C – more than sufficient for local conditions.

It's filled with genuine duck down, and at 2,25 m long, it'll keep you warm from head to toe. There are inner pockets for items like your phone and camera batteries, and it has a zip at the bottom for those who prefer to sleep footloose.

Price R5 000 at Outdoor Warehouse.

K-WAY MMXXI STRIDE PUFFER JACKET Dressed for success

This South African brand released this jacket in April this year, just in time for winter. The goal was a warm coat that still allows you to move freely – good news for those of us who wrestle with roof-top tents and ground tents in icy weather. It's made from durable nylon with a TPU membrane, making it water-resistant. Granted, it's not as waterproof as a proper raincoat, but it'll keep you dry in light drizzle.

Price R1 800 at Cape Union Mart.





NALGENE WATER BOTTLE
Canned heat

A surfer on the West Coast fills this 1ℓ bottle with boiling water and wraps it up inside their wetsuit – and by the time they arrive at the beach, it's toasty warm. It's better than an old-school hot water bottle because the cap won't leak, and the Tritan plastic it's made from won't melt or release chemicals or funky smells when filled with boiling water. Roll it up in your sleeping bag in the early evening so your bed is warm when it's time for beddy-bye-bye.

Price R400 at Cape Union Mart.

FIRST ASCENT SHERPA PERUVIAN BEANIE
Llamas are chill, yo!

This beanie is based on a chullo – a hat originating from the Andes mountains in South America. Chullos are usually made from llama wool, but First Ascent uses Sherpa fleece. This type of fleece is a polyester fabric that's smooth on the outside and fuzzy on the inside – ideal for lining blankets, gloves and beanies. This beanie will keep your ears warm and has a cord to pull the fleece snug around your chin.

Price R300 at Outdoor Warehouse.



LA CROSSE DIGITAL RAIN GAUGE
It's bucketing down, Boet!

Okay, this gadget won't keep you warm nor dry, but it will bring joy to a family member who loves telling everyone exactly how much it rained last night – most of us have an uncle like that. You place the funnel on your caravan's roof where it collects raindrops, and the digital gauge remains inside where it's nice and dry. The funnel and gauge communicate via radio signal with a range of 90 m. Both run on AA batteries, and the gauge displays temperature, time, and rainfall per hour, day, week, month and year. Your uncle can now tell you precisely how much rain fell at the Tugela Falls campsite – in June of all months!

Price R1 500 at Global Marine Sea Tech.

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DRESS LIKE AN ONION

Many South Africans love nothing more than wearing a simple shirt underneath a vintage German army surplus parka in winter. We admit it's a cool fashion statement, but doff the jacket outside and you'll freeze. Wear it inside and you're roasting. (As for your lower extremities, you can wear two pairs of short shorts over each other – like a Boertjie, or wear proper long pants – we won't judge!)

Another suggestion is to wear several thin layers of clothing – like the layers of an onion. You can then add or remove each layer as needed until your body temperature feels just right. Here's how:

Base layer

Your innermost layer should be made of wool or synthetic fibres – never cotton! Wool works brilliantly, but if you prefer something lighter, go for polyester blended with antibacterial bamboo or silver weave. You can sleep in your base layer, too, as long as you have a good sleeping bag.

INSULATION LAYER

Middle layer

The second layer can also be wool – merino is ideal – or a synthetic fleece, again such as polyester. This is the kind of thing you'd wear next to a fireplace in a populated mountain cabin, but you can strip down to the base layer if you're just among friends in a private cabin.

Insulation layer

A puffer jacket works great. South Africans can often be identified abroad by their K-Way puffer jackets with the tell-tale logo on the upper right rear shoulder.

This is the layer that keeps you warm

when it's bitterly cold – though it's optional if the mercury doesn't dip below zero.

Outer layer

This layer keeps you dry in the Cape winter and stops the wind from cutting straight through you on the highveld. You'll probably take this greatcoat off once you're safely inside your bakkie or caravan, because it's way too warm to wear under cover. In Southern Africa, you can usually get by with either the insulation or the outer layer – but do wear both if the weather's really acting up.



Kerala and Tamil Nadu

Beat the winter chill with these flavour-packed curry dishes.

Recipes and styling **Johané Neilson** Photos **Ed O'Riley**

MASALA LAMB CURRY

Mary braai'd a little lamb

The coconut masala paste used in this recipe brings the most delicious depth of flavour. Make it ahead of time and take it along to the campsite.

Ingredients

(serves 6)

- 1 kg lamb ribs and neck slices, mixed
- 200 ml buttermilk
- ½ cup coconut masala paste (see recipe alongside)
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 large onion, thinly sliced
- A sprig of curry leaves (optional)
- 1 tin (400 g) chopped tomatoes
- 3 potatoes, diced small
- A sprinkle of fresh coriander
- Rice and tomato sambal, to serve

Here's how

1 Marinate the lamb in the buttermilk along with a heaped tablespoon of the curry paste for at least an hour – overnight is even better.

2 Heat the oil in a flat-bottomed potjie and fry the onion and curry leaves until soft and glossy. Stir in the rest of the curry paste and fry until those rich, spicy aromas fill the air.

3 Add the lamb to the mixture and brown everything together for a few minutes. Add the tomatoes and a tin of boiling water – just enough to cover the meat. I usually add a pinch of salt at this stage so the flavour can cook through – you could also mix in a beef stock cube or powder. Put the lid on and allow to simmer gently for 1½ hours.

4 Stir in the potatoes. Make sure there's enough liquid (but not too much), and allow to simmer gently for another hour until the meat is fall-off-the-bone tender.

5 Sprinkle with fresh coriander and check for seasoning. Serve with rice and tomato sambal – and an ice-cold beer for those who are allowed.

Drive & Camp says If you like your sauce creamy, stir in a small tin of coconut milk (180 ml) when you add the potatoes.

COCONUT MASALA PASTE

Spice up your life

There's something satisfying about making your own spice blends – you get to decide exactly how much bite it should have. This one isn't just brilliant in a curry pot; it also makes a fantastic marinade for braai chicken – just mix a spoonful with a splash of lemon juice and a bit of olive oil.

Ingredients

(makes 1½ cups)

- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 thumb fresh ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 1 tbsp ground coriander

- 2 tsp masala of your choice
- 2 tsp chilli powder (or to taste)
- 2 tsp paprika
- ½ cup desiccated coconut
- ¼ cup water
- 2 tbsp olive oil

Here's how

1 Combine all the ingredients except the oil.

2 Blitz with a stick blender until it forms a thick paste – add a little more water if needed.

3 Divide the paste into three 125 ml airtight containers and pour a little olive oil over the top. It will keep in the fridge for up to a week.

Drive & Camp says If you freeze it, it'll last even longer.





CURRIED LENTIL SOUP WITH MARROW BONES

Put some marrow in your mission

Curried lentil soup – or dhal – is usually a vegetarian dish, but in winter, add a marrow bone or two. They make the soup so much richer, tastier... and a bit more festive too.

Ingredients

(serves 4 generous portions)

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 red pepper, quartered and sliced
- 1 tsp crushed garlic
- 1 thumb fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 1 green chilli, halved lengthwise
- 6–8 marrow bone slices
- 1 tbsp masala
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 500 g dry red lentils, well rinsed
- 4 cups boiling water
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 cube beef stock powder
- 2 tomatoes, grated

Here's how

1 Heat the oil in a pot and fry the onion, red pepper, garlic,

ginger and chilli for a few minutes until fragrant.

2 Stir in the marrow bones and spices, and cook until the mustard seeds start to pop and release their aroma. Don't add salt yet.

3 Add the lentils and boiling water, and bring everything to the boil. Lower the heat and let it simmer for about 30 minutes until the lentils are soft and cooked through.

4 Stir in the turmeric, stock powder and tomato, and simmer for another 5 minutes. I like to add another pinch of masala here to refresh the flavours. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed.

5 Remove the chilli and serve the soup hot. I like to finish it off with a sprinkle of fresh coriander and a few drops of chilli oil.

Drive & Camp says Dried lentils are a pantry staple, but they need loads of water to rinse properly. If there's a water shortage at your destination, rather pack two or three tins of lentils instead. They work just as well – just remember to halve both the water quantity and the cooking time in the recipe.

RED CURRY MUSSEL POTJIE WITH CHIPS

Red hot and ready!

This mussel potjie is so quick and easy, you might find your crew has devoured the lot before the chips are even done.

Ingredients

(serves 4)

- 1 onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp each chopped garlic and ginger (optional)
- 1 tbsp ready-made Thai red curry paste (or to taste)
- 1 tin (400 ml) coconut milk
- 400 ml chicken stock
- 800 g frozen half-shell mussels (use more if you're very hungry)
- 2 tsp brown sugar
- 2 large tomatoes, diced
- Juice of ½ a lemon
- Golden, crispy chips to serve

Here's how

1 Fry the onion slowly in the oil until first glossy, then beautifully golden. Stir in the garlic and ginger along with the curry paste, and cook for a few more minutes.

2 Add the coconut milk and stock, and simmer for 5 minutes.

3 Add the mussels, sugar and tomatoes, and simmer until the mussels are cooked through. If they weren't defrosted beforehand, keep the heat low and let them warm through gently – it doesn't take long.

4 Squeeze over the lemon juice and check if the dish needs salt. Serve hot with chips and mayo. If you don't feel like the fuss of hot oil, use an air fryer – or simply serve with a lovely loaf of bread instead.

Drive & Camp says If you're struggling to find ripe tomatoes in winter, leave them out or use half a tin of chopped tomato.



CURRIED MINCE

Stuff it like you mean it

You can serve this filling hot or cold – and use it to seriously jazz up vetkoek, roosterkoek or jaffles.

Ingredients

(enough filling for about 12 vetkoek)

- 1 large onion, finely chopped or grated
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 500 g mince
- 1 tbsp mild curry powder
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 2 tbsp peach or mango chutney
- 1 tbsp vinegar
- ½ cup beef stock

Here's how

1 Fry the onion in the olive oil until glossy and soft. Push it to one side and brown the mince in one solid block – like you're cooking a giant frikkadel. Flip

and brown the other side too. Then break up the meat with a spatula and cook until all the little bits are golden brown. This method avoids dull, grey mince.

2 Add the curry powder, sugar, tomato paste and turmeric, and fry everything together for a few more minutes.

3 Stir in the chutney and vinegar, and give the mixture another good stir or two.

4 Add the stock and allow to simmer gently for about 10 minutes, or until you've got a saucy consistency – don't let it dry out. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and serve right away. Or let it cool and store it in the fridge until your campmates start giving you those hungry looks.

Drive & Camp says This curry filling freezes well – so make it at home and take it along. Then all you need to do is whip up the vetkoek, and boom: an easy Friday night feast!



PEANUT BUTTER CHICKEN

Fireside flavour bomb

Peanut butter isn't only for slathering on roosterkoek around the campfire....

Ingredients

(serves 6)

- 1 kg chicken thigh fillets, halved
- ½ cup thick double cream yoghurt
- 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp each turmeric, chilli powder and ground cumin
- 1 tsp each fresh garlic and ginger
- 1 tbsp each olive oil and butter
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 cinnamon stick and 1 piece of star anise
- 1 tbsp chicken masala
- ½ cup beer (or use chicken stock)
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 1 tin (400 g) tomato purée
- 1 cup cream
- Fresh coriander leaves (optional)
- Steamed rice and rotis, to serve

Here's how

1 Marinate the chicken for at least 30 minutes in the yoghurt, lemon juice, turmeric, chilli powder, cumin, garlic and ginger.

2 Thread the chicken onto

skewers, season with salt and grill over the coals until nicely coloured – it doesn't need to be cooked through just yet, as it'll finish cooking in the sauce.

3 Heat the oil and butter in a pot and fry the onion with the cinnamon stick and star anise until fragrant. Keep the heat low and stir often until the onion is deep golden. **4 Stir** in the masala and beer, and boil for a few minutes until reduced by half. Add the peanut butter, tomato purée and chicken. Rinse out the tomato tin with a splash of water and add that too. Allow to simmer gently for 10-20 minutes until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce has thickened. You can keep the chicken on the skewers or remove them before adding.

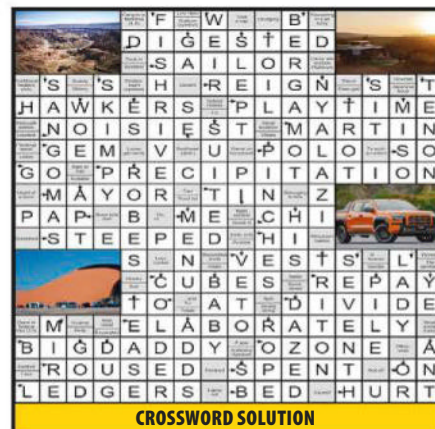
5 Pour in the cream, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Let it warm through gently. Top with fresh coriander and serve with steamed rice and rotis. For a proper spoil, sprinkle over some roasted salted nuts like peanuts or cashews. Delicious!

Drive & Camp says You can also brown the marinated chicken in a griddle pan if you don't want to thread and braai the skewers. ●



go! Drive & Camp

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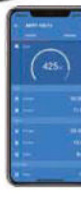
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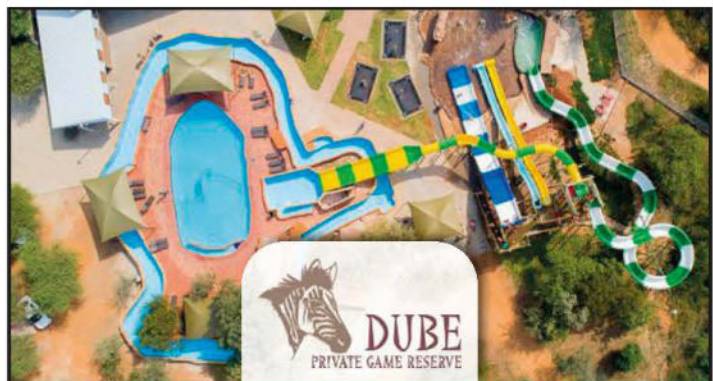
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CROSSWORD

This crossword puzzle is just the ticket to give your brain a bit of a workout while you kick back and relax in your camping chair. Research has shown that crosswords have several benefits, and they're great for memory and concentration. So, keep your mind sharp – just like your pencil – and tackle this one! At the very least, it'll keep you busy until your eyes get heavy. The solution to the previous issue's crossword appears on page 108.

			Hiking trail in the Baviaans	↓	"Hello!"	↓	Mythical beast (like Shrek)	Born (French)	↓	Waterfall in Angola			
					Heavy weight	↓							
			Country-wide				Hairstyling project	→			Rear part of an aircraft		
			... and fro	→			Formerly						
Independence	↓	22nd Gr letter	↓								However	↓	Faction
Writer		Attempt		Implore	→						Foot digit		Shred
↓		↓				Helium (symbol)	→		Mother ...	→	↓		↓
						Secular	↓		Copied	↓			
Drip	→							Foolish	→				
Happiness													
↓				Family group	→			Stubborn beast	→			Payment (abbr)	→
				Not VHS				Pismires					
Lively dance		Float	→					Afflict	→			Camp in the Tankwa Karoo Park	
		Sheltered side	↓										
						Ready to be poured (2,3)	→						
Came together	→			Happen		Twist	→	Tantalum (symbol)	→		In ... and twos		
						A thing	↓						
Yes (inf)	→												
				Came up	↓							SMS messages	↓
												Let go	↓
												"I do"	↓
				River in Germany		Animal's trail		Terminate	→			Clair-voyant	→
								Frosts	↓			Demons	↓
						Obsession (4,4) (French)	→						
				Cape ... (cycling)	→			Short dresses	→				
				Against				Skilful	↓				
Town in Angola	↓	Blend	Pressed	→						Dregs	→		
		Small amount	Fire residue							Dove's call	↓		Music genre
		↓	↓										
						Not out	→						It's not you, it's ...
						After first	→						
Three ... (town)	→						↓	In order					
Procedure								Rations	→			Modus operandi (abbr)	→
						In disagreement (3,2,4)	→						

COMPILED BY GERDA ENGELBRECHT

Colour in



COLOUR IN

Get your crayons and colouring pencils out and bring life to this line drawing.

WORD SEARCH

Search for the hidden words in the list and tick them off as you find them.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

There are at least 10 differences between the two illustrations. See if you can find them all!

MAZE

Show the maze who's boss. Remember to first do it in pencil, just in case you make a mistake.

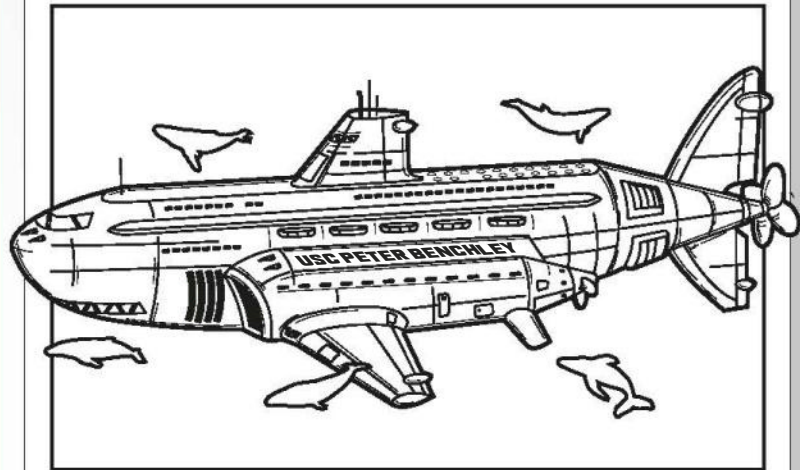
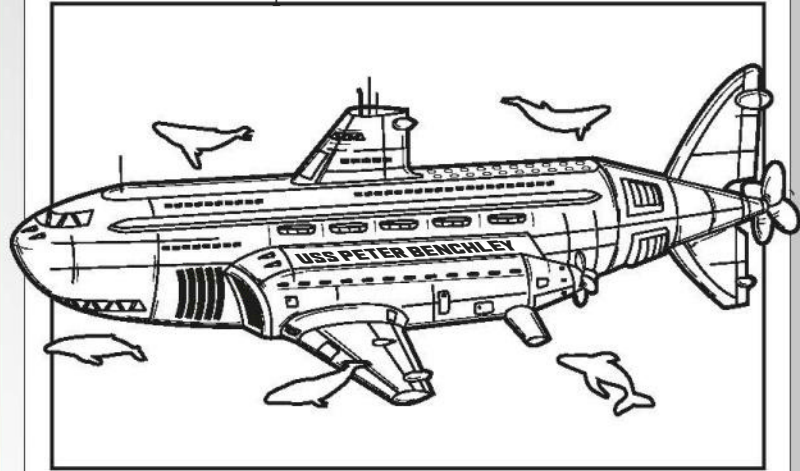
Word search

T G D W B Y N J P J N W J S P M U X S O G U
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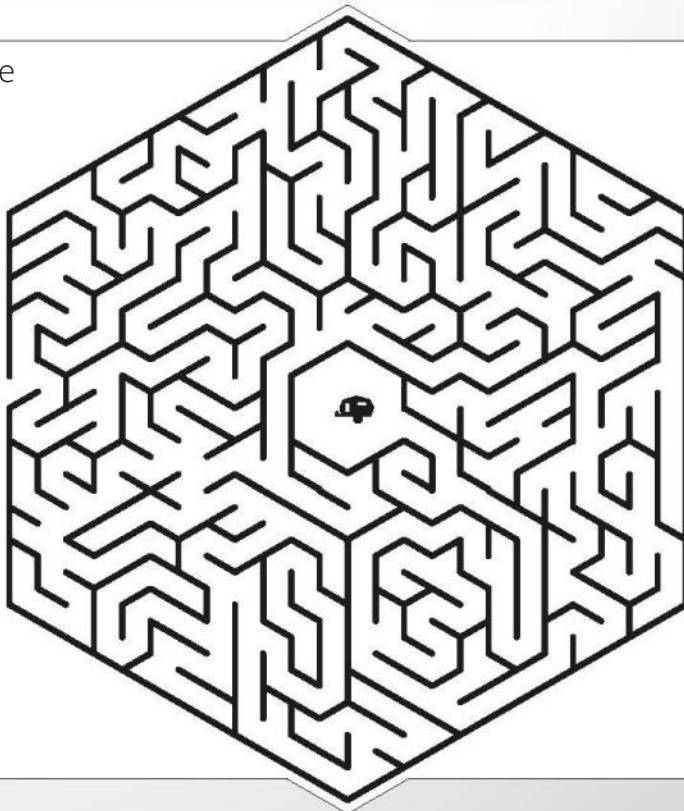
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Demon Slayer	Record of Ragnarok	Naruto

Spot the differences



Maze



Animal facts



AFRICAN WILD DOG (*LYCAON PICTUS*)

- Their unique stripe pattern is like a fingerprint, no two dogs have the same markings on their coat.
- This coat has red, black, brown, white and yellow patches of fur, creating the perfect camouflage.
- Their ears are like satellite dishes, large and rounded that swivel to detect minute sounds in the distance.
- In the wild, speed is essential and wild dogs can sprint after prey at speeds of up to 70 km an hour.
- African wild dogs are highly social beasts and work together in packs of six to 20 or more to hunt.
- Not exactly man's best friend, African wild dogs count among the world's most endangered mammals with humans as their biggest threat.

On a personal note

Spending time in nature gives us the quiet we need to reflect on things that often remain unresolved amid the hustle and bustle of city life, says **Mic van Zyl**.

One of the things I enjoy most is chatting to customers – or anyone, really – about overlanding and all things 4x4. As a passionate outdoor and overlanding enthusiast, I know that feeling all too well – when you're out in the bush and something extraordinary happens.

To see this feeling manifest itself on another individual's face as they describe their experience is so enjoyable and fulfilling. As I've mentioned before on these pages, we are truly blessed in this country and region with the spectacular richness and beauty of our fauna and flora.

Some of you may recall from the previous issue my recent personal battle with

a bout of throat cancer. From its discovery in August last year to the completion of treatment at the end of February of this year, it has been a rather tough and trying journey. Sadly, during this time, I was unable to leave my home thus there was no overland touring or camping.

My recently acquired offroad caravan got dusty and my family and I soon tired of being cooped up in our home in the city. With my recovery well under way and a fortuitous bonus school holiday break over the Easter period, an opportunity presented itself for us to hitch our offroad caravan and head out of the city for a week.

Our expedition was mild and easy by most standards and involved visiting a game farm with stunning campsites and facilities just under three hours from Johannesburg. This was very much a question of easing back into things to see what I could manage. Heading out of the city, caravan in tow, was a profound experience considering what we'd just been through for us all.

My wife and son were visibly and audibly elated to get out, as was I. I should mention that we have only recently switched from touring with a rooftop tent to camping in a medium-sized offroad caravan. It is perfect for the three of us. Having only been able to use it once prior to this trip, we were looking forward to becoming more familiar with it.

Camping at a venue with like-minded people in proximity, one cannot help but have the odd conversation with fellow campers who are complete strangers. It was during these conversations that I again got that old familiar feeling of fulfilment in seeing the expressions on my fellow travellers' faces.

I also realised that it's this very feeling – the elation we experience while exploring and travelling through the great outdoors – that fuels the outdoor

industries so many of us are part of. This publication, my company supplying 4x4 gear, the manufacturer of my caravan, the owner of the game farm that established the stunning campsites and facilities, all exist to allow anyone to experience the wonders of our fauna and flora. What a privilege it is to be part of the only species on the planet that can orchestrate and enjoy such a profound thing.

Apart from the enthralling effect that overlanding and camping can have on us emotionally, for many of us, it also affords us the quiet time to think about things, especially those things that don't seem to get resolved in and amongst the hustle and bustle of everyday life in the city.

For me, this has proven to be invaluable at my current juncture in life. This quiet time in the bush allowed me to reflect on my past and what was yet to come.

After a 30-year career at my current employer, I have taken the decision to leave and establish a company of my own. It is a big move, but the advantages of this for me and for my family are significant.

I also realised that I need to make a much better effort of getting away and enjoying what I have attempted to describe here. A job and a career may be of importance from a financial point of view, however, in my humble opinion, experiencing what our natural world has to offer right here on our doorstep is as important if not more.

Let's get out there more often, folks! ●

“

What a privilege it is to be part of the only species on the planet that can orchestrate and enjoy such a profound thing

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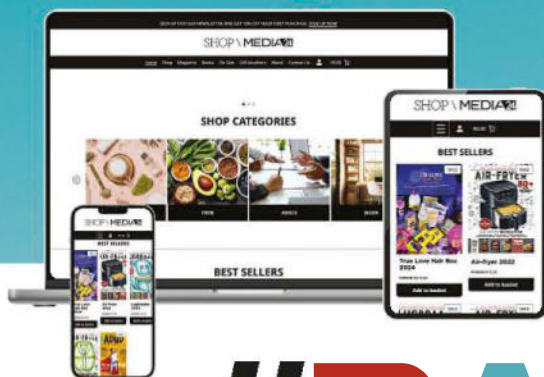


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A lighter footprint

Campers – and the campsites they visit – all share a responsibility to treat the environment with care, says **Neels van Heerden**.

I'm one of those people who often remind myself how lucky we are to live in a country with such unique natural beauty. That's why it's so important for the local camping industry to actively work toward minimising its environmental impact.

The good news? An eco-friendly approach doesn't have to be expensive or complicated. There are plenty of simple, smart ways to make a campsite greener.

The most obvious is to make better use of solar energy. Solar panels on the roofs of offices and ablution blocks can cover a large chunk of a campsite's energy needs – from hot water to lighting in communal areas. And as a bonus, you become less dependent on the grid. Energy-efficient bulbs and appliances, along with motion sensors that switch lights on and off as needed, will also help cut costs.

South Africa has many areas where water is scarce – but not all campsites are in dry regions like the Northern Cape or Karoo. Even in wetter zones, water-saving shower heads, dual-flush toilets and low-flow taps go a long way in reducing water use. You can also install tech to harvest and store rainwater for gardens and even for ablutions.

It's worrying how few campsites make use of greywater. Yet there are systems that can treat it well enough to reuse for flushing toilets, for example. As for gardening, indigenous plants are always the best choice – they're drought-resistant and often attract local birds and insects, creating an authentically South African camping experience for guests.

I'm often shocked at how much rubbish my family and I generate when we go camping. Campsites should set up recycling stations where people can separate their plastic, glass, paper and organic waste. The latter can be turned into compost for the gardens. Plastic is always a tricky one, but

you can encourage guests to bring their own reusable water bottles and food containers. Alternatively, stock biodegradable products in your shop.

Sustainability is about people as much as it is about "green" infrastructure. Train your staff to promote environmentally friendly practices, and share easy tips with your guests – on a beautiful noticeboard, or even during an informal walking tour.

You could also involve local communities by selling their fresh produce or handmade goods – that way you support the local economy while offering guests something special.

Greening a campsite doesn't have to be a major, expensive undertaking. Every small change – from a solar panel to a compost heap – contributes to a healthier environment. It's good for the planet, and it's good for your guests. Help your visitors become more conscious and eco-minded in how they camp.

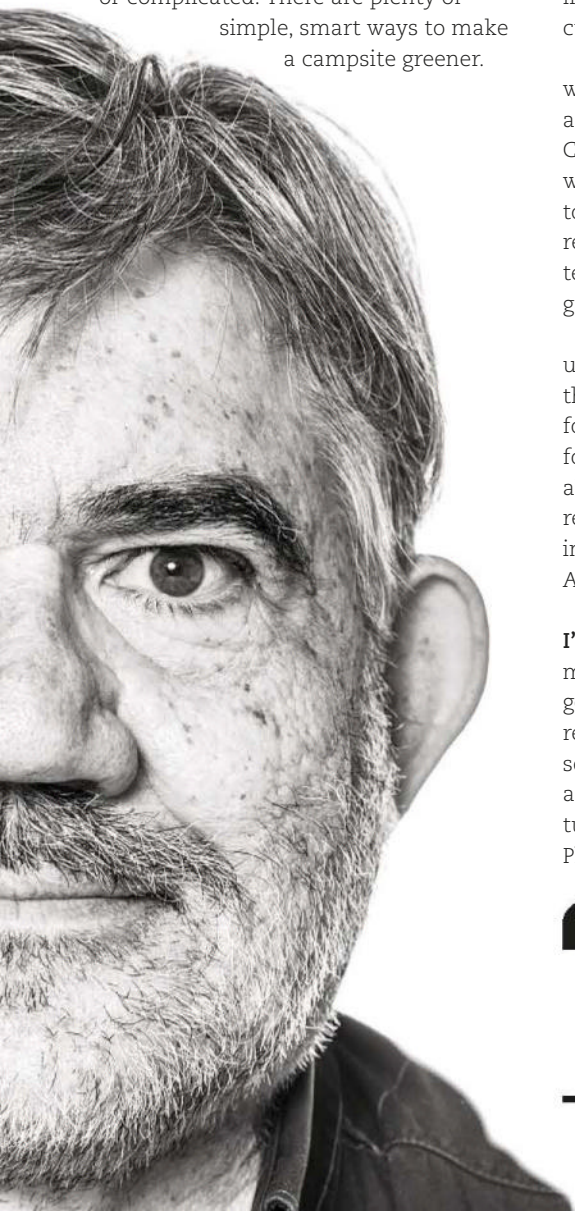
Speaking of footprints... When it's time to pack up and leave, make sure you and your group leave behind only two things: your footprints and great memories.

I recently read that there's a global trend towards greener, more sustainable, responsible and ethical travel. One result is a new programme encouraging private tourism businesses to make better use of renewable energy. The government is even offering funding for this – but only to those with a star grading. Whether campsites qualify is up for debate. 

“

...make sure you and your group leave behind only two things:
your footprints and great memories

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My wish for my child

One moment she's trying to convince her teenage daughter to put her phone down, the next **Nellie Brand-Jonker** is reliving the seaside camping holidays of her Namibian childhood.

This past Christmas we were visiting family in Namibia. We drove from our farm near Outjo, in the north of the country, to Palmwag, where we would spend a few days at a lodge with luxury tents.

It's a four-to-five-hour drive from the farm, running almost directly west. "We're

going to see the desert elephants," I tried to drum up some excitement in my teenage daughter for the long road ahead.

She's at that age where the goings-on of whoever happens to be on her phone screen at any given moment are a lot more interesting than anything I have to say. We later stopped at Kamanjab to refuel and

I tried bribing her with ice cream to put the phone down and look at the scenery.

The road between Kamanjab and Palmwag takes you over the Grootberg and when we pulled over at the top of the pass for padkos and coffee, I took in the stark beauty of the landscape, shimmering in the dry heat. I was reminded again

how deeply I love this part of the world. I also realised that this stretch of road feels a lot less terrifying today than it did when I was little.

“Look how far we’ve come,” I said, pointing back in the direction of Kamanjab, where the road disappears into the distance. On the other side of the mountain, it hugs the steep slope with a sharp drop-off on the left. “Emma! Look how high up we are,” I called again, trying to lure her attention from her phone. She showed a bit of interest, but what really perked her up is when I pointed out that you could also see our destination far off in the distance.

As we drove on, I told her about our childhood holidays at the sea, how we used to camp in army tents at Jakkalsputz and made do with long-drop toilets. Just the thought of a “long drop” gave her the creeps.

At Palmwag, the elegant tents and the lodge’s swimming pool awakened her sense of adventure enough that I started to feel like I could stop complaining about her screen time.

It’s exhausting being the mother of a teenager, and even though they seem to believe we enjoy nagging and scolding them all day, the opposite is true. This was my holiday too, and I wanted to enjoy it without being on constant phone patrol.

That evening around the fire, we discussed the drive – the deep ruts and sharp bends of the Grootberg Pass dirt road, and how today’s tourists don’t realise how dangerous it can be. Especially when it rains. It was hot, but by sunset a lovely sea breeze started cooling the red rocks around us and I asked my dad how far we were from the coast.

Directly west from here, where the sun is setting, lies the Skeleton Coast, he explained. If you look at the map, you’ll see Palmwag is basically halfway from Kamanjab to the sea. From here, he said, you could drive to Torra Bay.

Torra Bay... it’s one of those legendary names that kids from our region grew up with. People from our part of the world used to convoy over the Grootberg Pass to camp at Torra Bay during the holidays.

Back then the road didn’t look the way it does today and you had to rely on a twin-track. It was no joke – to put it mildly – but the farmers in our area were a wild bunch and not easily put off. They weren’t shy of hard work. Besides the droughts that crippled them for years on end and the



All I remember are endless days of sunshine, swimming and fishing in the icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean.



long distances to the nearest town, lions and elephants often made farming even harder. My mother grew up on a farm near Etosha and my grandfather, Fred Siemens, said the lions caused endless trouble.

So it comes as no surprise that something like the Grootberg wasn’t going to stand in their way when it came to a well-earned break at the sea. My mother remembers how massive the packing mission was every year for the trip. Tents, fuel, water, meat – often a live goat or sheep – and chickens. It was basically a trek. And when they arrived at Torra, the people would jokingly steal one another’s chickens, goats and pigs...

They had to leave the farm at four in the morning, because the old cars back then groaned under the load and would inevitably overheat and boil over somewhere along the way. Then everyone had to stop, lift the bonnet, and wait for the engine to cool down. Back then, according to my mother, there wasn’t a shop or fuel station at Torra Bay. There wasn’t even fresh water.

Remember, in the sixties Torra Bay wasn’t as well known as it is today, and it was mostly fishermen who went there. But even back then, despite its obscurity, Torra Bay appointed mayors. My mother remembers that Oom Frikkie Bester was the first to hold this unofficial title – and he was succeeded by Daantjie “Weerlig” van Vuuren. There was even a candidate named Bul Brand. I’m too scared to ask if we’re related...

Oom Frikkie even had a mayoral chain, one decorated with the symbols of a tent, a fish, two fishing rods and the words “Stywe Lyne” (tight lines). Frans Lotter and Ysterbek Lambert had the chain specially made in Johannesburg. My mother found a newspaper clipping of the article about the history of the chain and Torra Bay’s “mayoral election”.

Later, around the fire, my father told us about a spot on the road to Torra Bay that is known as Dopsteekhoogte

(Tipple Peak). The name had us chuckling. Even my daughter, who seemed to have forgotten about her phone. She asked her grandfather where the name came from.

Once, he said, on a trip to Torra Bay, someone’s heavily loaded bakkie had a close encounter, almost tipped over and lost its cargo down the mountain. Everyone had to jump in to help recover it.

Hours later, once everyone was safely at the top, the men decided they needed a drink. Stopping there on the way to the coast turned into a tradition.

My mother recalled it had been Uncle Frikkie’s bakkie and sent a text message to his daughter Anita to ask if she remembers what happened. “Absolutely,” Anita replied on WhatsApp.

“The bakkie’s rear wheel landed in a drainage ditch and the entire load slid down the mountain after two 200 l barrels of water and fuel smashed through the bakkie’s rails. Eleven cars behind us were stuck on the incline and had to help. After hours of work, it all was reloaded and the bakkie was back on track. When we finally reached the top, my dad pulled out a bottle of red wine and poured everyone a glass, which they toasted right there. That’s how Dopsteekhoogte got its name.”

My dad recalled that Oom Nick Robberts used to recount how, whenever the convoy reached Dopsteekhoogte, the men would all agree their cars needed to cool down while they had a drink. Their wives would always ask whether it wasn’t too early to pull over. Then Oom Nick would respond it’s never too early, only too late.

As a child, I didn’t know about cars boiling over, or sneaking a tipple, or live animals being driven to the coast, or mayoral chains being handed over. All I remember are endless days of sunshine, swimming and fishing in the icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean. (Though, as little kids, we mostly just held the rods, and my dad still reminds us he had to bait the hooks and cast the lines.)

I remember playing with my cousins until we were starving, then being rewarded with a paper plate of potjie that my mother had cooked right there on the beach. I remember the toasted sandwiches and coffee in the mornings, the togetherness, the ease, and that feeling of love, joy and being cared for.

My wish for this holiday was that my child experienced that too. Judging by how long her phone lay in the tent while we chatted around the fire, that started to feel like a real possibility.

...AND FINALLY



If dreams could be ordered...

Concept cars are often heartbreakers. They either never make it into production or arrive looking nothing like as promised. As for this one? We're crossing fingers.

The Toyota FJ Cruiser was first revealed in 2003 at an American motor show as a concept vehicle. At the time, Toyota had no real plans to put it into production – but Americans were so obsessed with it that the company eventually decided to make the FJ Cruiser a reality.

It looks like history might just be repeating itself with the Toyota Land Cruiser ROX. ROX stands for "Recreation Open eXperience", and while we're certainly not holding our breath for it to hit the road, it does sound like the Americans are just as smitten with this concept as they were with

the FJ Cruiser 22 years ago. The chassis is based on the new Land Cruiser Prado, and the angular styling echoes that of the Prado as well. Only one prototype exists – but it's fully operational.

That alone has us intrigued, because manufacturers don't usually go to this much effort for something that's only going to be displayed on a car show floor. You get the sense they actually want to build it... but are still testing the waters before they commit.

Another promising sign is that the ROX was built by Toyota's own Caltex design

and research studio in Michigan, USA.

The roof comes off like a Jeep Wrangler's, and if you fold the rear seats flat into the floor, you basically get a short bakkie. It's different, no question about it – and we can only hope that it makes it to market.

Come on, Toyota, pretty please? 🙏



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