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We Are All **Africans!**

An overland trip in Africa is the ultimate adventure and proved to be an addictive continent for our adventurous couple.

Words by **Akis Temperidis** Photos by **Vula Netu** and **Akis Temperidis**



Girls performing traditional dance in Swaziland.



A boy surviving deep in the Sahara desert, Mauritania.



The couple visit an old witch doctor at the outskirts of Mbabane, Swaziland.

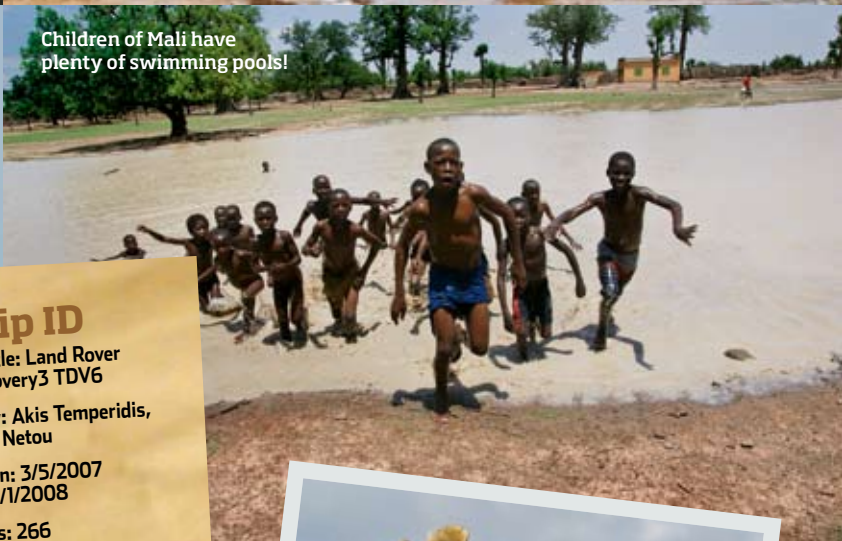


Pasta, rice, 'The Laughing Cow' cheese and eggs was the basic diet in Africa.



"Playing with chimpanzees in Cameroun was the highlight of our trip so far," Vula says.

“Africa is an absorbing place, energetic, vibrant, rough and diverse!”



Children of Mali have plenty of swimming pools!

Trip ID

Vehicle: Land Rover
Discovery3 TDV6

Crew: Akis Temperidis,
Vula Netou

When: 3/5/2007
- 25/1/2008

Days: 266

Countries: 26

Total distance: 53,488km

Border crossings: 33

Refuellings: 84



The diva of Serengeti National Park.



Leading a family of elephants at the Masai Mara park, Kenya.

Stuck on the golden sand dunes of Em Hammid, Morocco.

I still dream of Africa. This was our maiden adventure, the grand opening of our epic trip around the world. Given the rough character of the continent this was a weird – if not risky – choice, but we both were confident and determined to face the hazards of the place.

We knew that Africa is not easy but we also knew that it's considered dangerous more than it really is. Stereotypes apply to Africa more than any other continent, in other words.

Our schedule for this overland adventure was rather optimistic. We thought we could cover Africa in six or seven months. We did it in nine months and, believe me, it felt fast! Other Overlanders we met on the road did the same route in roughly two years. Some are still there! Africa is an absorbing place. Energetic, vibrant, rough and diverse! It is black or white, fertile or arid, rainy or completely dry, poor and rich. In nine months, from north to south and vice-versa, we experienced eight climatic zones. It was like simulating two years' time in fast forward. I remember we were surviving 45 degrees in June in Mauritania and freezing two months later while we



An unexpected welcome at the cape of Good Hope, South Africa.



Kenyan beauty...





Driving by night in Sahara.



Flying over Okavango delta, Botswana. The ultimate heaven on earth!

Tips for crossing SAHARA

1. Never travel alone.
2. Secure enough fuel for 1000km.
3. Visit www.saharaoverland.com for GPS waypoints.
4. Proper tyre pressure on sand is 50 percent or less (1,2-1,5 bar).
5. Never drive on high dunes before checking them by foot.
6. It is harder to escape flat sand if you get stuck. One second of spinning means one minute (more) of digging.
7. Feel the traction and the drag of the sand every moment. If the car decelerates dramatically when you release the gas, it means you are on deep sand. Keep the engine on torque all the time.
8. Sand is softer in the afternoon than early in the morning.
9. Tracks are softer than untouched surfaces.
10. Potholes and gravel irregularities are less visible at noon when the sun is up.
11. Sun reflections can be dangerous after sunrise and before sunset.
12. Drive fast (80 km/h) on corrugations to save your car's integrity. Control can be tricky though...

“ Africa is the birthplace of mankind. Our ancestors were African, so we are all Africans! ”



The famous drummers of Burundi - the essence of African soul at the shore of Lake Tanganyika.

A two-day camel trekking was the perfect introduction to the magic of Sahara.



The World Off Road Pt 2

River crossing on the Atlas mountains, Morocco.



Children have primitive but extremely amusing toys in Africa.



were crossing the Namibian desert! The landscapes we encountered were dramatic enough to fill our hard disks and our memories with wonderful, everlasting pictures. The

diversity of African landscapes blows your mind. The alpine feeling of the Atlas mountains, the huge sand dunes of Sahara, the desperately arid soil of Sahel, the photogenic sunsets in savannah, the mist of the tropical forests, the blend of red, yellow and white soil at Kalahari desert, the deep blue sky, the three dimensional clouds, the curvy, vivid starlight, all are essential elements of Africa.

After nine and a half months in 26 African countries, we could tell this was the mother of all continents and the ultimate escape for adventure seekers. Not just for the dramatic landscapes, the harsh roads, the remote villages and the mud brick huts, but for its people as well. Africa is the birthplace of mankind. Our ancestors were Africans, so we are all Africans! This is how the swahili script on our windshield – 'sisi sote ni waafrica!' – is translated. We still have it and are proud of it.

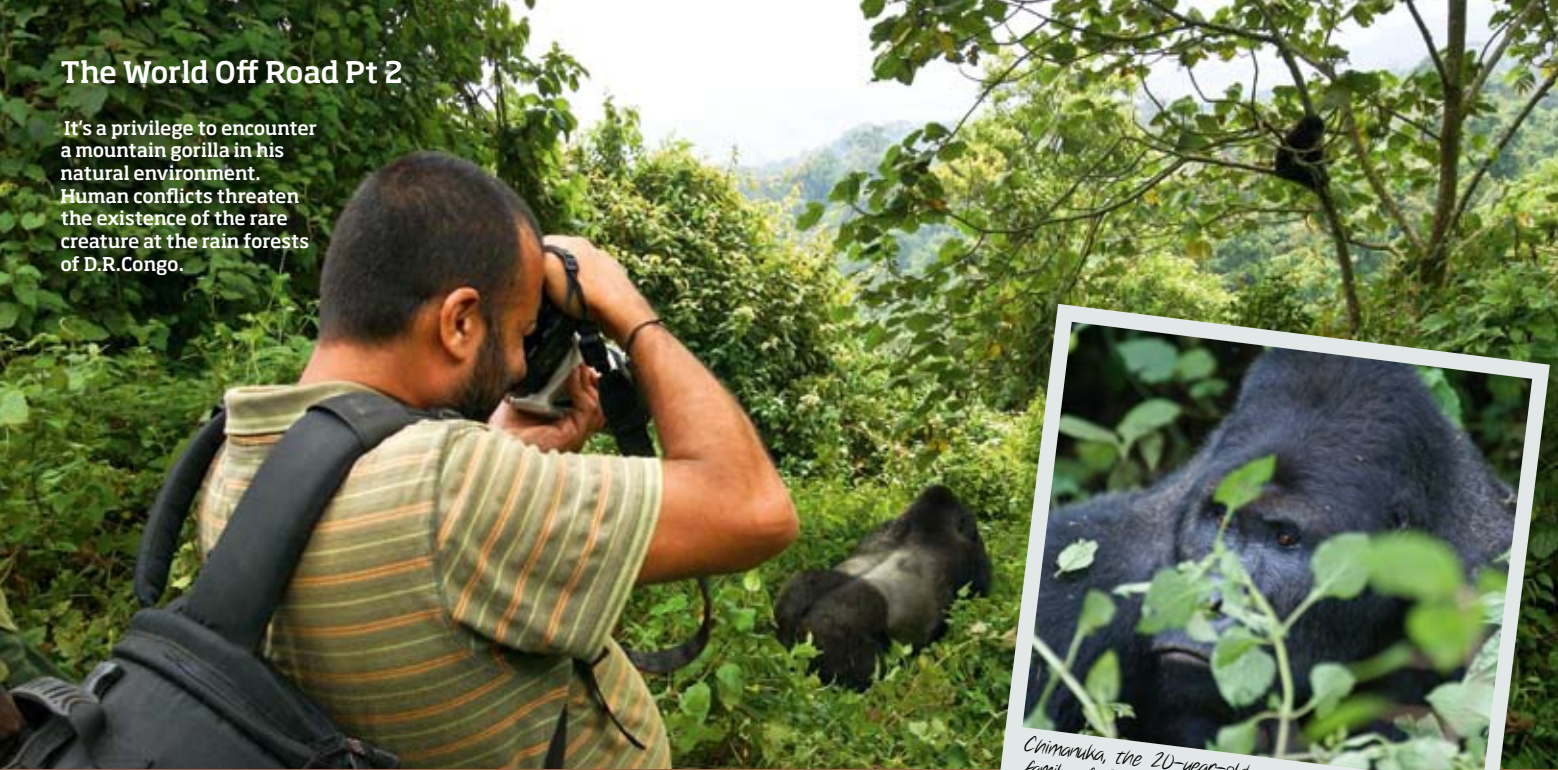
The ruined pyramids of Karima, in northern Sudan, still wait to be discovered.



A rare, four-week-old lion encountering a weird creature...

The World Off Road Pt 2

It's a privilege to encounter a mountain gorilla in his natural environment. Human conflicts threaten the existence of the rare creature at the rain forests of D.R.Congo.



Is it safe?

This is a question that needs to be answered. Is Africa safe for independent travellers? From our personal experience we can say, yes. Africa is not dangerous or at least it's not as dangerous as most people in developed countries believe it is. For sure it is a risky environment, especially for its own people. You can easily have a road accident there. You can get malaria from a mosquito bite or dysentery if you drink tap water. HIV is another threat. You can be in the wrong place at the wrong time and get intimidated or even robbed for money or whatever. Clashes are common during elections. We have witnessed some violent incidents in Kenya but you know what? When people with sticks and rocks realised we are 'mzungu' - white foreigners - they

stepped

aside and let us go.

African hazards are all avoidable. You need common sense and positive energy to travel safely in Africa and totally enjoy its natural and cultural grace. If you behave yourself, in the end all the hazards will be just the spice of a dreamlike trip.

This is what we did. As we were going on, every fear we had beforehand was drifting more and more into our subconscious. We were no more afraid of Berber bandits, as Berber proved to be honest and proud people. We had not the minimum problem with Nigerian authorities despite the image of the country as notoriously corrupt. In D.R.Congo we were expecting to be intimidated by police officers but the one we remember most was a funny old man with a yellow helmet who performed a theatrical dance to make us stop. He just wanted a chat with us 'white people'.

Chimankaka, the 20-year-old grey back gorilla supports a family of 31 at the Kahuzi Biega National Park. There are no more than 30 like him in the world.

Mosi-oa-Tunya - the mist that thunders - at the Zambezi river was discovered by Scottish explorer David Livingstone in 1855 and is famously known as Victoria Falls.

“Africa is not dangerous or at least it's not as dangerous as most people believe it is.”

The World Off Road Pt 2

Magkadigadi salt pans at Kalahari desert, Botswana; the most privileged camping in the world!



“ We love Africans for many reasons. They don't give a damn about tomorrow, they just live every moment as it comes. ”

Enjoying the crystal clear water of Lake Malawi.



Survival Tips

Do's

1. Take off your sunglasses (to be seen better).
2. Smile, salute and handshake the officer.
3. Keep handy all your documents.
4. Be calm and patient if you get delayed.
5. Ask for a receipt if asked for money.

Don'ts

1. Never show you are in a hurry even if you really are.
2. Don't exchange jokes with the officer.
3. Don't speak in the local language - sometimes lack of communication will save you hassle.



Police controls are frequent in Africa.

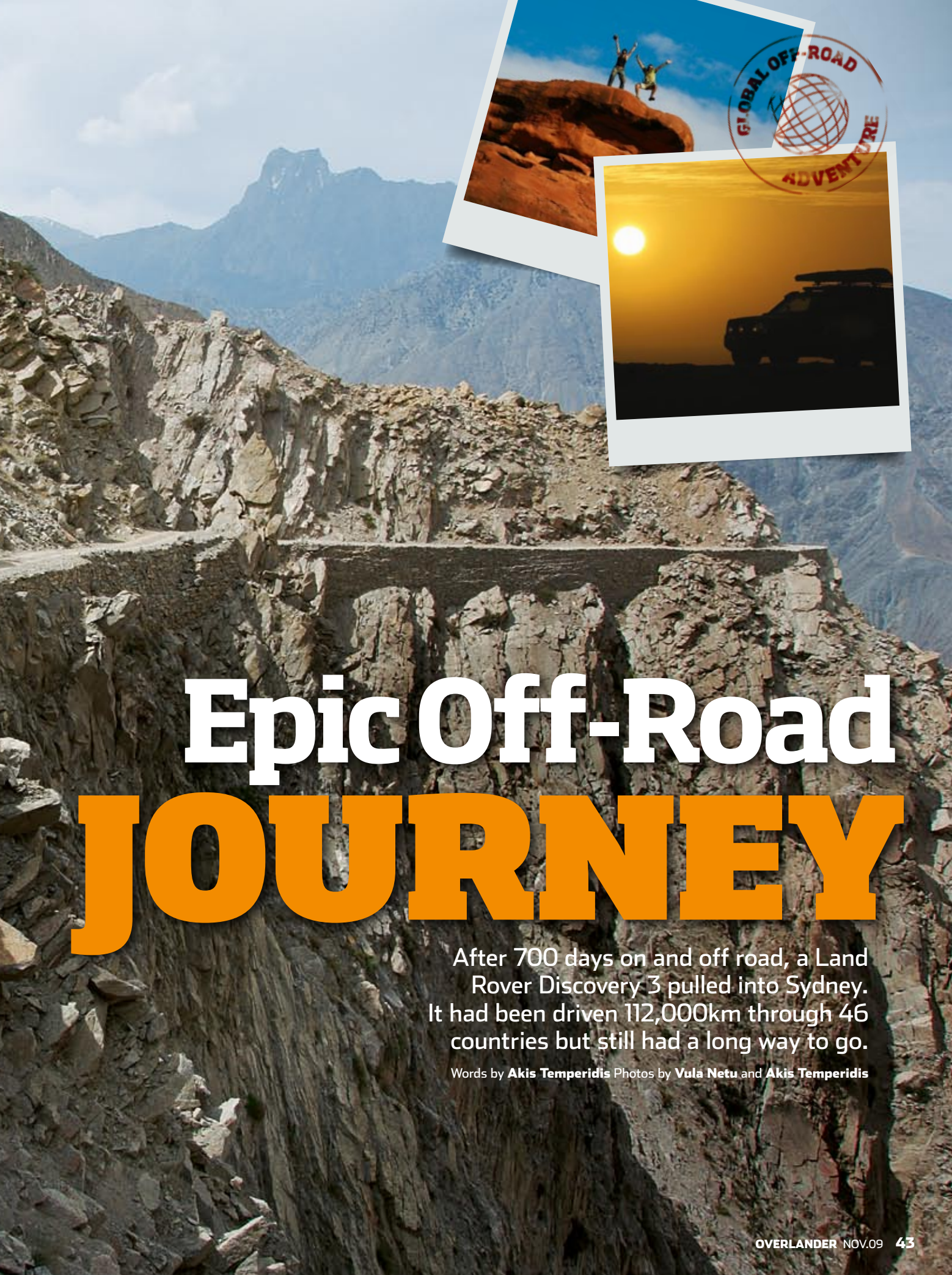
We gave him a bag of rice... At the national parks we approached rhinos, lions, buffalos, crocs and elephants. Even though we were intruders, most animals were calm, even bored, and wouldn't attack a human. We had one attack in Botswana from a hungry hyena though. She climbed on our table and ate our sausages. Africa is like this. If you don't protect yourself everybody will take advantage of your food, your money, your belongings. You are the white, wealthy man and this is logical. On the other hand, this stimulates your survival instincts. You have to be tough but not rude. You have to smile and never be in a hurry. You must understand these people and forgive them for their naive approach to life.

We love Africans for many reasons. They live on the edge every single day of their life but they survive. They don't give a damn about tomorrow, they just live every moment as it comes. They will smile most of the time and are positive in front of illness and death. That's why we love African people. That's why we still dream of their country. Go to www.theworldoffroad.com to see where we are now! 📍

*Next month...
Vula and Akis head to the Middle East,
through Egypt, Jordan, Syria,
Turkey and Iran!*







Epic Off-Road JOURNEY

After 700 days on and off road, a Land Rover Discovery 3 pulled into Sydney. It had been driven 112,000km through 46 countries but still had a long way to go.

Words by **Akis Temperidis** Photos by **Vula Netu** and **Akis Temperidis**



Before we get too far into what became an epic journey, let me introduce the two of us. We are a couple from Greece. A motoring journalist and a dance teacher. We had a dream for many years to travel the world without a return ticket but we never had the money, the time or the guts to

take that dream seriously. That pretty much made us, just like everyone else that has a dream but never really makes the sacrifice to follow it.

One day we said to each other, that's it, we have to do it and it has to be now or never. It was not simple to make this wide ranging and rather ambitious dream come true but 23 months later we were in a brand new, fully sponsored Land Rover Discovery 3, departing to, well departing to wherever we wanted pretty much. Our trip had a name and an official site as well. Anyone that wanted to know where we're and what we were up to, could log onto: theworldoffroad.com and we'd come up with a motto as well, 'Explore the earth in 800 days!' Off road, possibly...

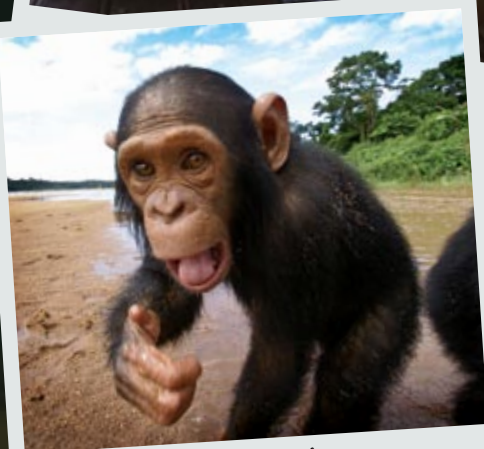
We had planned from the start to cross Europe, get to Africa and drive around the African continent for six months. In the end, we spent almost ten months eventually getting back to Greece for a break. That meant 41 border crossings, 58,000km, 45,000 photos, 70 hours of video filming and more than 150 pages of travel stories published in different magazines around the world. In 291 days, we had not put a single scratch on the car or experienced a tyre puncture. (That's it Akis, you're coming on tests with us from now on with that kind of luck Mate. TN)

After that ten-month epic and a two-month break back in Greece, we thought, now we are strong enough to challenge Asia. So we hit the roads of Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. Three very hospitable countries, which was somewhat surprising for us given two of these countries' horrific images and portrayal worldwide. Yes,



Vula tries on traditional neck coils in Asia.





The baby chimps in Cameroun were very welcoming.

“

We had a dream for many years to travel the world without a return ticket but we never had the money, the time or the guts...

”

FAQ

Where do you service the car?

There are more than 1500 Land Rover official workshops around the world. So far we have serviced our Discovery in Morocco, Senegal, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Pakistan, India, Malaysia and Thailand.

How do you wash your clothes?

We give them to a laundry or wash them by hand and dry them in the car. This is a picture you'd rather not see!

What do you eat on the road?

Most evenings, Vula cooks. Our menu includes pasta, noodles, rice, eggs, fried vegetables, fruits and Greek salad (tomatoes, olives, onions) with olive oil is a must. In Asia, we cooked less, as the local cuisine is great even at the cheapest stalls. In Australia we discovered barbecues and it was great!

How do you know where you will camp by night?

We don't! We search on our guides and if there is nothing, we try to find a shelter anywhere. In Australia, anywhere means where there is not a 'no camping' sign. We have had no police arrests so far.

Do you carry a gun?

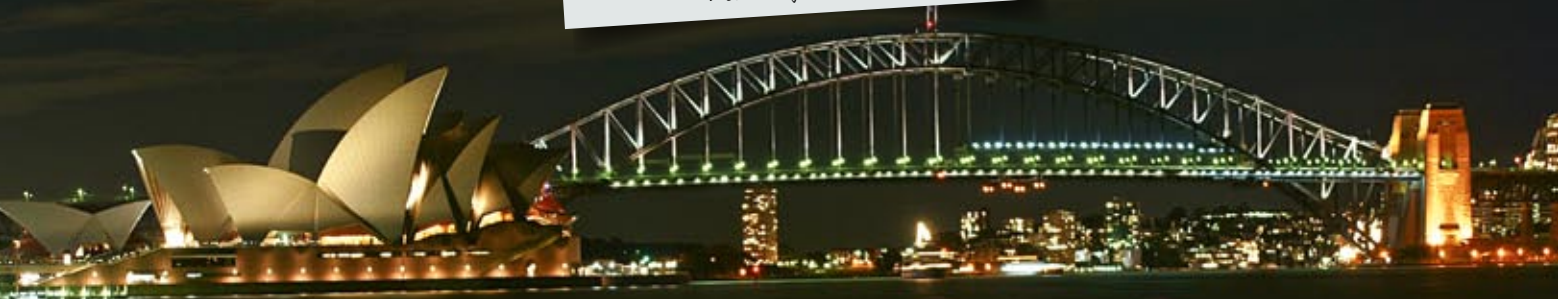
No. People are good and a smile is the best protection from the few bad ones!

The worst moment of your trip?

Akis' brother died in Greece when we were in Kathmandu. In Sumatra our car stalled completely.

The best moment?

Difficult to say. Just take a look at the pictures in this article!



The World Off Road



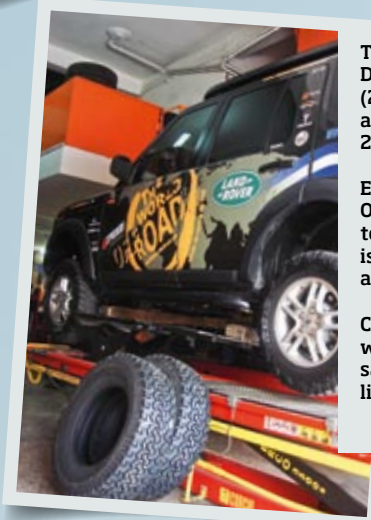
Position reporter. It transmits automatically the real position of the car to a satellite so that you can see where we are on the web.



75W solar panel by Conergy provides 220V electricity through an auxiliary 45A dry type battery and a 500W inverter.



Snorkel, protective sliders and 10mm sump shield.



Tyres used, Cooper Discoverer STT (245/70-17) in Africa and BF Goodrich 245/75-17 in Asia.

Engine CPU is tuned by Overfinch - for better torque at low revs. It is combined with a TGI air filter.

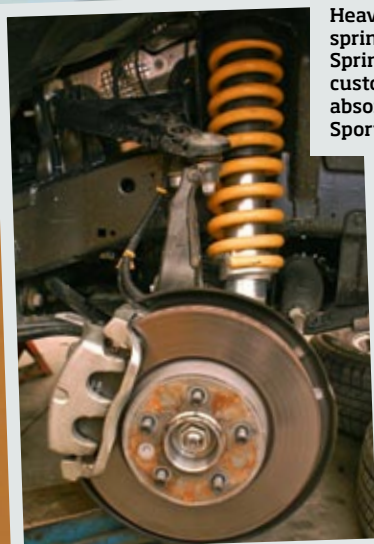
Car interior: rear seats were. Two customised safe boxes and a 55-litre water tank fitted.

The 4WD

Land Rover Discovery 3 TDV6 S, MY 2007, Tonga green colour, provided by Land Rover Greece (KEDO S.A.) with manual gearbox, coil springs and 17-inch wheels. Technical support by Roverland Gabletsas, Athens, Greece.



Garmin 276C GPS.



Heavy-duty coil springs by King Springs and custom made shock absorbers by Jam Sport of Greece.



Bullbar with auxiliary headlights.

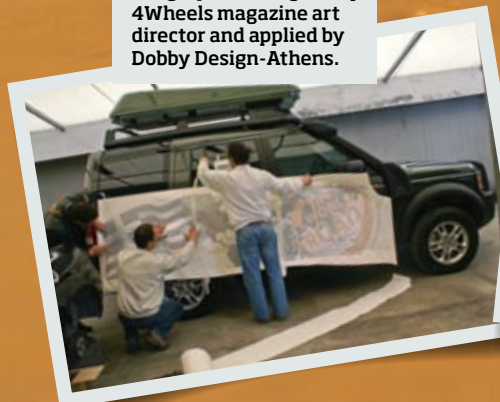


Warn winch.

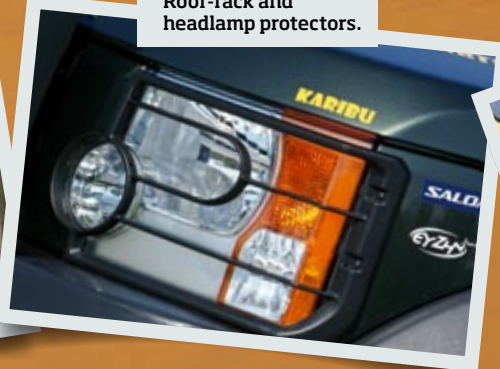


Thrane Explorer 300 Inmarsat satellite antenna, provides broadband (492kbps) internet connection wherever in the earth (98 percent coverage). Provided by Navarino Telecom-Greece.

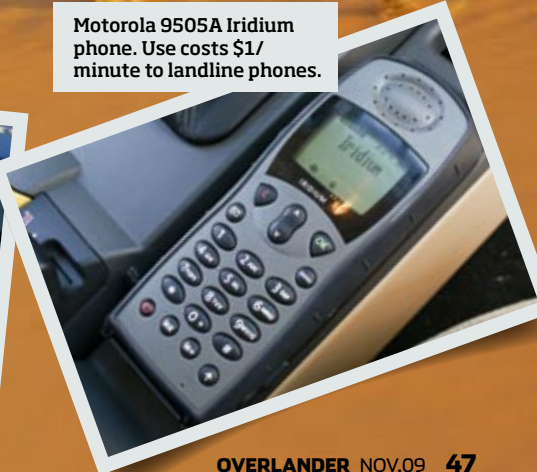
Car graphics designed by 4Wheels magazine art director and applied by Dobby Design-Athens.



Roof-rack and headlamp protectors.



Motorola 9505A Iridium phone. Use costs \$1/minute to landline phones.

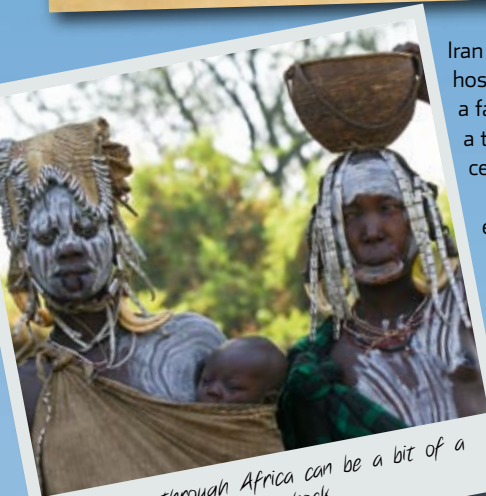


How do we survive?

We are not rich, so we have to work on the road. We write articles for different magazines, report on the radio and have our site, www.theworldoffroad.com. This way we earn a salary that permits us to go on exploring. Our daily budget is basic. We spend on average AU\$10 per night for accommodation. Sometimes we bush camp (for free!). In Asia we would stay in basic hotels paying maximum AU\$20 per night for a decent room with air-conditioning, wireless internet and hopefully a toilet and TV.

Food costs us about another AU\$10 per day in cheap food stalls in Asia or in local markets in Africa. In Australia, supermarkets cost us a little bit more but we gain weight here, thanks to the rump steaks! Most of our money is spent on diesel fuel (12.5 litres/100km on average), visas, shipping (like the 30-day shipping from Sydney to LA).

Car repairs cost almost nothing as long as the 'Disco' was under guarantee. Luckily, the engine failure was covered by Land Rover, despite the car having done 102,000km. How do we access cash? From VISA compatible ATMs that are spread everywhere in the world except embargoed countries like Sudan and Iran. In case of emergency, we have \$1000, well hidden in the car. Don't tell this to the burglars in your neighbourhood though!



Travelling through Africa can be a bit of a culture shock.

Iran and Pakistan are some of the most hospitable countries in the world. That's a fact we discovered first hand. As a traveller, they make you feel like a celebrity there.

We then took a deep breath and entered India. We were overwhelmed by this country from our very first experience. India is a challenge for any traveller. Despite our experience, the cultural shock was unavoidable there. It is a tough country to digest. You need a strong stomach, strong eyes, strong ears, a strong nose and a big heart to survive there.

Driving is literally like being in hell.

You just can't snooze – you can't even sneeze and take your eyes off the road for a second. Something will happen for the millisecond you clear your nose – there are so many threats around just about every corner. Communicating with people is tricky. At the beginning it's a love/hate relationship between you and this incredible

melting pot of people, cultures, religions, languages and spices. At the end, India proves to be addictive. I still don't know why.

Next destination was Malaysia. We had to ship the Land Rover there as it was not possible to cross Burma. 'No way', we were told by the Burmese embassy in Delhi. From Kuala Lumpur we did a long roundtrip through Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and back to Thailand and Malaysia. 13,000km in two months across one of the most diverse, historic and cultural places in the world. In the end we could easily distinguish a Vietnamese hot pot from Pad Thai (Thai egg-fried rice) and knew much more about the Khmer Rouge genocide, the Vietnam War, the Laos bombings and the opium trafficking out of the mighty Golden Triangle.

Back to modern Kuala Lumpur we were feeling like we were home as we had to cross the Melaka straights by a wooden vessel and get to Sumatra. What a thrill that was, watching our valuable car hanging from a crane by rotten ropes. For a moment I was sure we would lose it in the sea.

It was on the road to Bandah Aceh – where the tsunami hit in 2004 killing more than 220,000 people – that a 'tsunami' hit the engine of our car. It must have been

It's a love/hate relationship between you and this incredible melting pot of people, cultures, religions, languages and spices.





Living the off-road lifestyle



The locals were all very friendly and welcoming.

something like that as there was no other reason to seize. That was like ground zero for our expedition. Where should we take our car? And how?

For how long should we wait for a new engine? And how much would the repair cost? Finally, we decided to carry our Disco back to Kuala Lumpur, the closest place where we could replace the unit.

Towing and loading the car for 1200km was a painful adventure for eight days. After two months of great effort by the people at Land Rover, we were able to start our new engine and travel to Australia. Luckily, the replacement of the engine was covered under warranty by Land Rover, despite our car having more than 100,000km on it. We were told that this was a unique case that should be inspected thoroughly. We are proud that our car will

We spent the next three months in a completely different lifestyle. No more noodles, we could have the best rump steak here on a daily basis.

possibly make turbo-diesel engines better in some way after our break down.

So, one morning we arrived in Australia by plane and the car came afterwards in a container. We spent the next three months in a completely different lifestyle Down Under. No more noodles, we could have the best rump steak here on a daily basis. No more traffic, the roads were open, long, deserted. (Obviously you didn't drive through Sydney Mate! TN) No more people! Just one roadhouse every 400 to 500km, where the beer was as cold as anywhere in Sydney.

That was the Outback. A 10,000km trip from Perth, to Broome, to Alice Springs, to Birdsville, to the Great Barrier Reef. What's left from this trip? Thousands of pictures, four destroyed tyres, 43 new friends and four flies in my stomach. Outback flies are a problem for any traveller in this vast country. A real 'pain in the arse', to use an Australian term that we learnt on our trip.

As far as the other myths about the Outback, leave them for the campfire. For sure, if you want to cross the Tanami desert, you have to take it seriously but there is nothing horrific there, just an endless nothing for 1100km. If you want to cross the Simpson Desert, this is even more serious. You need a proper 4WD, the right mental approach and good company as well. You need the right season as well and we didn't have it, so we feel real sorry that we had to circumnavigate the French line dunes and follow the Oodnadatta and Birdsville Track.

For more reasons, we felt sorry that we had to leave Australia but we are hitting the American roads and off-road tracks next. Possibly from LA to Chicago through Route 66 and on to Mexico. Or maybe we will go to Alaska first, we really don't know. This is the way we travel. We are Overlanders, which means we are like rolling stones. So stay tuned to *Overlander* and follow our adventures from now on. For updated info you can also log onto: www.theworldoffroad.com to see where we are in real time! 📍

Next month, Akis and Vula document the first part of their epic journey through Africa. As you can see from these photos, it's a visually spectacular voyage as well as a fantastic story.



Apocalypse NOW!

This is a 13,000 km. adventure from the developed Malaysian peninsula to the former war zone of South East Asia, which is now a heavenly destination for hard core travelers.

Words by **Akis Temperidis** Photos by **Vula Netu** and **Akis Temperidis**





2

It is un7etf878me87f usdgfeygndgdv
ugdnuyfgdnndufgjn



3



It is un7etf878me87f swg wjgfgfngfngnnd
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1



12th century Ta Prohm temple was constructed into the jungle and was invaded by the jungle after the decline of the Khmer empire. This mystic place was the set for famous Hollywood movie Tomb Raider, starring Angelina Jolie.

After the Indian experience – a cultural shock on a daily basis – Malaysia seems to be so easy, reliable and affordable. The same goes in Thailand as well. Tourism is so developed here that the real colour of the country is paled. Motorways, neon signs, mini markets and malls are spread everywhere from Phuket to Bangkok. Even the monks are busy with their fancy mobile phones most of the time. Thailand and Malaysia would be identical if the former wasn't a Buddhist society and the latter a Muslim one. Malaysia is 90% Muslim but is more multicultural, thanks to the Chinese and Indian minorities. Chinatowns and Little Indias are distinct neighborhoods in Kuala Lumpur, Melaka or Georgetown, the busy port of Penang island. Malays have the political power but Chinese have the money. In other words, Malaysia aims to be a bigger Singapore. You probably know Singapore; A rich, dollar oriented society, which survives in huge malls, fancy sushi restaurants, tennis courts and golf courses in a strategically situated island at the tip of the Malaysian peninsula. If you have no money you are nobody here. Singapore was very expensive for us, so we had to sleep in car



An old Cambodian lady could have told many horrific stories about the genocide if it wasn't for the language barrier.

park at East Coast Park (the only beach for Singaporeans) in order to save money. Mall societies like this are not suitable for our adventure, that's why we changed our mind there and decided to divert our route. Given we couldn't find a car ferry to Indonesia we turned to the north, crossed Malaysia and southern Thailand and from Bangkok, we drove towards the border of Cambodia.

Khmer grandeur and Khmer Rouge atrocities

This was an eye opening experience. A long, hard drive through countries we all got to know from Hollywood war movies, like Apocalypse Now, Platoon, Killing Fields and Deer Hunter. Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos; we were excited to make this roundtrip right from the start of our 'around the world' dream.

I remember well the day we entered Cambodia. It was like entering the third world with all these porters pushing



This guy grew up in the Vinh Moc tunnels and survived the American bombardments. He is deaf but he works as a guide there.

4

“kehgrire iurg8egfewiru
yewfer8gyug uyvg
uygdw8 gv dygwudyg
wduyg7wd fydg”



Singapore zoo is one of the best in the world - orangutans are hanging around you with no fence in between.



A bus accident on a muddy road in Laos delayed our trip to Luang Prabang.

5



6



their wooden, overloaded carts with goods carried from prosperous Thailand.

As long as we were driving through the rice fields we were enthusiastic to explore the marvels of Angkor like Lara Croft did in her first movie. We could not imagine the mass development the ruins generated at nearby Siem Reap though. In a rural country like Cambodia this is a Western parenthesis of luxurious resorts, spa and sushi restaurants. Siem Reap is

the major money machine for this poor country as everybody flies here from Bangkok to visit the Angkor temples and go back. And you know what? The temples are worth it. This is one of the most breathtaking archeological sites in the world, along with the pyramids of Giza and Acropolis of Athens. Angkor is by far the biggest one. We did 150km in two days to see the temples that extend for tens of kilometers into

the jungle. We were astonished by what the Khmer created. The next day, in Phnom Penh, we were disgusted by what the Khmer Rouge regime brought to this country in 1975. It was a painful experience visiting the 'killing fields' and the Tuol Sleng museum, a school transformed to notorious S-21 prison. These were two places where thousands of people died of torture as enemies of the communist utopia that the KR wanted to bring in the country. One third of the population (1.7 million people!) died during the four years the Khmer Rouge dominated Cambodia until the Vietnamese army invaded the country for good. This genocide was so inhuman and so recent that nobody should forget. More than anybody, the people of Cambodia can't forget. Looking in their eyes, you can see only pain. They are discreet, though, polite and generous. They don't like reminding their past to foreigners. People of Cambodia are a personification of humanity. We admire them.

No more B52 and napalm bombs

We were told that foreign vehicles were not allowed in Vietnam. You need a special permit, local plates and insurance that you can't get issued if you don't present a guarantee

Visiting the S21 prison and the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge period is a thrilling experience. 14.000 people are said to be tortured to death in this former school of Phnom Penh, during the four years of the Khmer Rouge regime.



Young monks study early in the morning in front of the famous Bayon temple -



Children are adorable, especially in Laos. We loved them!

100,000 Km. in a Land Rover Discovery3

Car km.: 101,626
Trip km.: 92,626 Kuala Lumpur-Singapore-Bangkok-Ho Chi Minh-Hanoi-Vientiane-Chiang Mai-Kuala Lumpur 12,947 km. Refuellings: 23
Diesel lt.: 1701 lt/100 km.: 13.1

3/1/2007: Car manufactured in Solihull, England.

26/2/2007: Development works at Roverland-Gabletsas, Greece

22/4/2007: defected clutch slave cylinder replacement, oil change

25/4/2007, 7500 km.: The adventure begins!

22/5/2007, 11627 km.: second clutch slave cylinder replacement in Morocco

18/6/2007, 17.625 km.: Service in Dakar-Senegal

4/9/2007, 33.699 km.: Service and handbrake repair in Namibia

5/10/2007, 37.567 km.: Clutch master cylinder replacement in East London, S.Africa

7/10/2007, 38.343 km.: 4 new Cooper tyres provided by Dunlop S. Africa in Durban

8/11/2007, 45.473 km.: Service in Tanzania

22/1/2008, 59.919 km.: front brake pads change, Egypt
20/2/2008, 66.000 km.: Big service at Roverland Gabletsas. Clutch, brakes, belts changed. Rack and pinion replaced (after we hit a baobab root in Malawi) and distorted (by touching the ground) exhaust finals replaced well. New Kaymar double spare wheel base provided by Outback Import of Greece. New BF Goodrich A/T tyres 245/75 17 provided by Michelin Hellas.

3/4/2008, 67.500 km.: brand new rear shock absorbers by Jam Sport - Bilstein Greece. Front ones just serviced.

2/6/2008, 78.574 km.: Clutch master cylinder replacement and handbrake setup in Pakistan.

26/6/2008, 82.232 km.: front brake pads replacement, Nepal

22/7/2008, 85.076 km.: Clutch slave/master cylinder and hand brake unit replacement in Navnit Motors-Mumbai

24/10/2008, 93.845 km.: Oil and rear brake pads change in Cambodia.

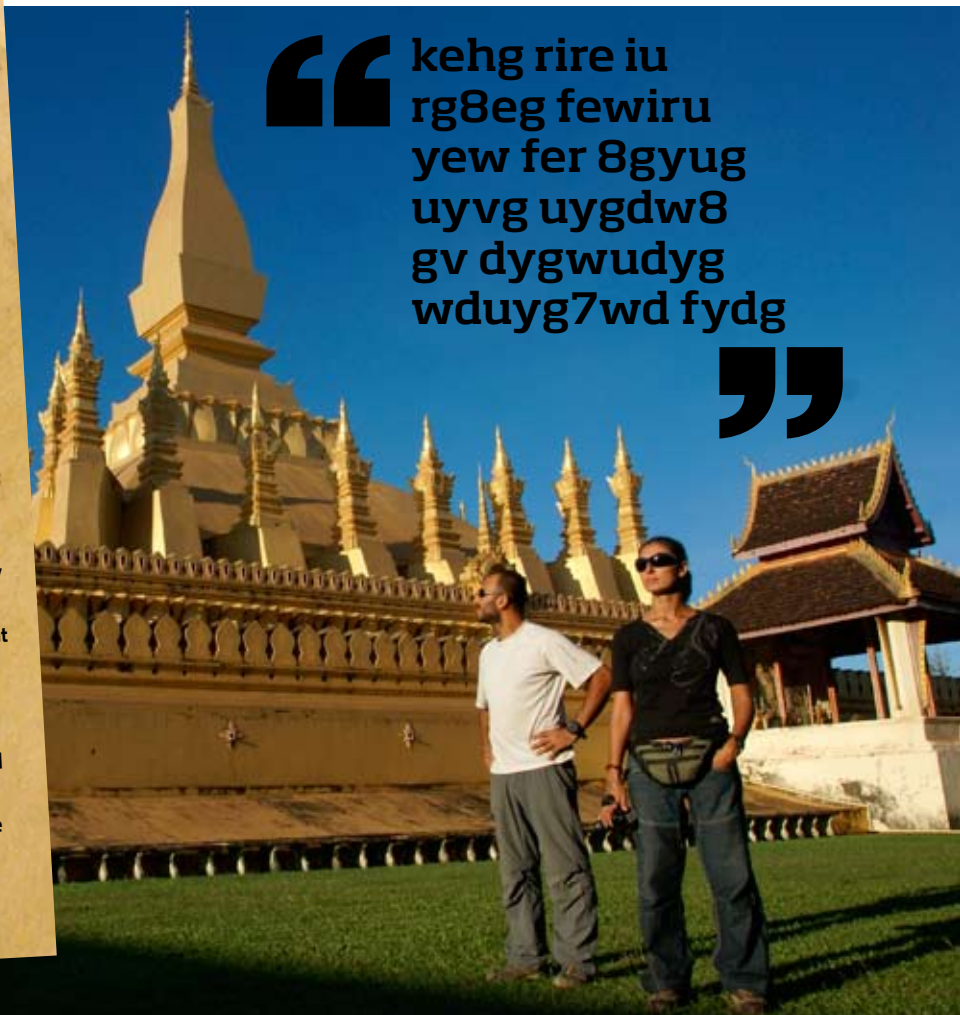
23/11/2008, 100.736 km.: hand brake unit, rear diff oil sealer and turbo replacement from Land Rover Malaysia

BELOW:
Vientiane is the most laid back capital in SE Asia. Pat that luang - the golden Buddhist temple - is the highlight of the city.

letter from your embassy at Vietnamese customs. Embassies don't grant documents like this so the only other way was to pay money. That's what we did. Thanks to a local tour operator, we managed to drive our Discovery in the country and it was worth the 250USD we were charged, after a hard bargain. They were asking for 700 USD...

Vietnam is a totally different country to what you expect. The painful civil war that resulted to heavy military offensive by the Americans is hardly distinguishable today. A decade after its reunification in the 80's, Vietnam decided to reform from a rural underdeveloped communist state to a fast developing economy. They imitated the Chinese model. Tourist development is impressive as well. We could not believe our eyes when we visited beach resorts like Mui Ne and Nha Trang. This is the Copacabana of Rio or Surfers Paradise with chop sticks. We traveled through the country, from the former capital Saigon (renamed to Ho Chi Minh, after the famous Viet leader) to Hanoi and what we saw was a great effort by everybody. Nobody seems to remember the war. There is no hate against Americans at all. Vietnamese are hard workers and forward-thinking entrepreneurs. Some of them give a bad reputation to this splendid country, as they like to take advantage of tourists. Overpricing is common, so you have to bargain for everything, even for a cup of coffee. Apart from this, our Vietnamese adventure was more than satisfying. We will never forget driving through the DMZ (demilitarized zone) at the 17th parallel, hiding like the Vietkong into the Vinh Moc tunnels, walking into the streets of old Hoi An or biking into the imposing citadel in Hue.

“ kehg rire iu
rg8eg fewiru
yew fer 8gyug
uyvg uygdw8
gv dygwudyg
wduyg7wd fydg
”





Laid-back countries

Laos is the most heavily bombed country on earth. By Americans – who else? Hundreds of innocent people still lose their lives every year from UXO – unexploded ordnance. Driving through the country, though, is a refreshing and much safer experience. Traffic is low on the twisty roads that run through the forested, hilly landscape. People are more relaxed than the Vietnamese – they actually have a Thai style. Expatriates are more than the tourists in the country and the hot spots are distinct here; Vientiane, Vang Vieng and – French style – Luang Prabang were the only places where we felt as if we were in

the famous Kao San road of Bangkok. You know what I mean: strips full of cafes, guest houses, tour agencies and massage parlors. Every other place gets you back to a 19th century rural and peaceful lifestyle. We fell in love with Laos and we will go there again to meet more tribal people.

Northern Thailand is much more developed than Laos but is laid back as well. This country is incredibly organized. Wherever we traveled, roads were perfectly paved, towns well signed and lively from dawn until late at night. Don't



Saigon is a motorbike hell!

get panicked by last year's political turbulence in Bangkok. Thailand is as safe for its visitors as eight airbags in your car. Police are always there to protect foreigners. Thai people are peaceful, permissive and respectful. In their every day life, they adore food and socializing through dining, which they like to do all day long. Stalls are spread everywhere and they serve a dazzling variety of food. After a long walk in Chiang Mai – our favorite town in Thailand – you can always have a Thai massage before dinner – possibly in a Buddhist temple. It's like an exhilarating aperitif that costs no more than five Australian dollars! From Chiang Mai, you can take the motorway and travel safe and sound to the Malaysian border but what we did was more exciting. We followed the old hippy trail to Pai village and from there to Mae Hong Son where we met some of the hill tribes living there. Visiting a village of 'long neck' women is a must even if you do it in a package tour. The women that came 13 years ago as refugees

“

kehg rire iu
rg8eg fewiru
yew fer 8gyug
uyvg uygdw8
gv dygwudyg
wduyg7wd fydg

”

Kayan - Karen women do not have long necks as people believe. Wearing the heavy brass rings, pushes down their collarbone and the final result is mostly an optical illusion.

The World Off Road Pt 5

from Burma live here under the surveillance of the Thai government and make a living thanks to the tourists who arrive to see them in daily basis. Many people say this is an 'anthropological zoo' and maybe they are right. Try to change this whenever you go there. Don't just take photos and go on, take some time and speak with these lovely ladies. They have heartbreaking stories to tell...

Most hill tribes of northern Thailand are of Burmese origin. They were forced to leave their country to escape the repression of the military junta. This regime altered the history of a beautiful nation and diverted our route as well. Restrictive laws for foreigners had obliged us to ship our car from Chennai to Malaysia as independent travelers are not allowed in the country. Burma was a country we missed and that's why we wanted to enter there. Entering Burma from Thailand is straightforward. You just need to leave your car at Mae Sot, cross the bridge and take a temporary permit, valid for one day. We visited the Myawadi, a border town, and we saw that the standards of living are much lower than in neighboring Thailand. Dusty streets, bustling markets, pedal rickshaws and a blend of Indian and Asian faces, these are our memories from our short visit to Burma.

Getting back to Kuala Lumpur after a three month, 13,000 km. roundtrip to SE Asia, was like getting back home. We felt nostalgic in a way as this was a familiar place to us but we were already missing the bustling towns of Vietnam, the rice paddies of Cambodia, the fresh air of mountainous Laos and the hippy lifestyle of northern Thailand. Malaysia was like home with all these malls, fancy restaurants and multiplex cinemas but we didn't want to go home yet. We were looking forward driving through Indonesia to East Timor and – yes! – get to Australia. A down under adventure is yet to come! 📷

Go to www.theworldoffroad.com to see where we are now!

In Chiang Mai we celebrated the colorful Loi Kratong festival among thousands of locals.



We travelled under torrential rain in Vietnam.



Stuck In The Middle...

The Middle East is a mind-blowing adventure through history, exquisite tastes and surreal landscapes but mostly an encounter with real life characters.

Words by **Akis Temperidis** Photos by **Vula Netu** and **Akis Temperidis**



Ayatollah Khomeini and current spiritual leader Khamenei are respected figures by most – but not all – Iranians.



Old but stylish woman from Sirince, Turkey.

Geology in Cappadocia, Turkey is surreal. The minaret-like rocks around Goreme are volcanic deposits and are used as houses, depots and monasteries for centuries.



Iconic figures at Apadana hall, Persepolis, 70 km north of Shiraz.



Young students visiting Persepolis, Iran.

This time we were completely lost. There aren't GPS maps for Iran, so our Garmin screen looked blank. We knew we were driving high on the Albortz Mountains but had no clue which direction to follow. We had left Masouleh, a scenic mountain village of red coloured houses near the Kaspian sea and were heading to Qazvin off road. We were driving on slippery mud and were obliged to use the hill decent control system for keeping our 3.5-ton Discovery on the road. It was supposed to get dark soon and Vula was uneasy. "Don't bother", I told her, "we will camp somewhere on the roadside". She never liked the idea.

I was feeling home in Iran. Right from the start, this country proved to be extremely friendly to us despite the hostile reputation of its Islamic government to the west. I was calm despite being lost in the mountains. After a while we arrived to a small village. It was a no through road. Two young women approached us. I tried to explain to them we needed a campsite but they didn't understand. One of them invited us to her house and we accepted. We discovered the real meaning of hospitality for the rest of the night. The young lady was staying with her old parents; poor but genuine people. They offered chicken, fries and naan (Iranian flat bread) for dinner. The father smoked opium right after. His wife assisted him to burn the paste held on a skewer. By night we slept in the daughter's room. We used many woollen blankets as it was freezing outside but this was the warmest feeling we had during our trip. The girl's name was Hamide Natzafti from Dastandar. We will never forget her family.

Salam alekum!

Salam Alekum; "Peace be with you". Wa alekum es salam; "And upon you be peace". These are the words you learn from the moment you enter the Arabic world. Given we got there coming from Africa, Egypt seemed to be a part of the developed world for us. I remember the day we arrived in Aswan, after a 17-hour ferry trip through Lake Nasser. Everything was so different compared to Wadi Halfa, the dusty, remote town of Sudan in the Nubian desert. Egyptian roads are tarred, buildings are modern, people live in

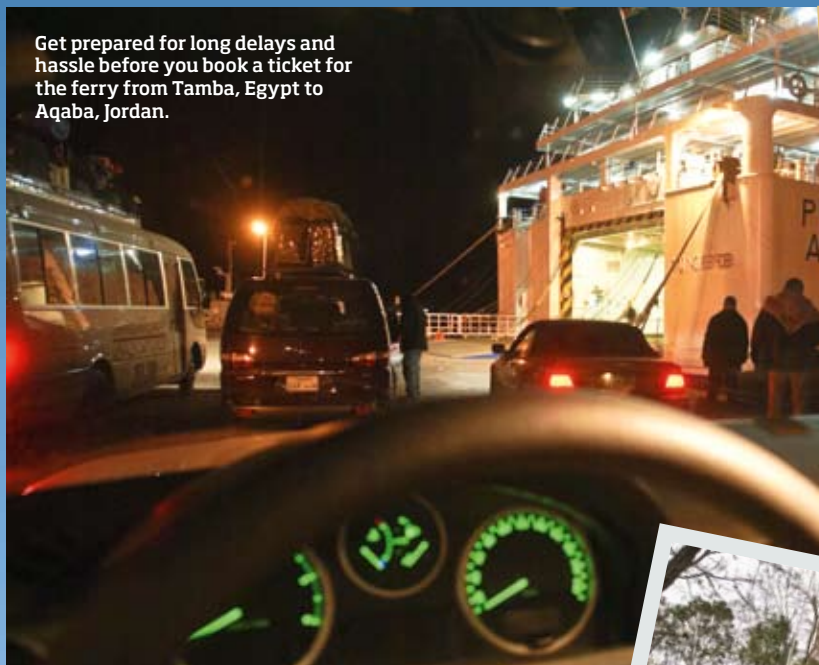


Simple but hearty dinner is the ultimate culinary experience when offered by genuine people, Iran.





Hard work at Grand Bazaar of Esfahan, the most historic city of Iran. This is the perfect place to bargain for a Persian carpet.



Get prepared for long delays and hassle before you book a ticket for the ferry from Tamba, Egypt to Aqaba, Jordan.

Trip ID

Vehicle: Land Rover Discovery3 TDV6

Crew: Akis Temperidis, Vula Netou

When: 24/1 - 8/2/2008 & 5/4 - 8/5/2008

Days: 51

Countries: Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Iran

Total distance: 12,066km

Border crossings: 6

Refuellings: 20

“ This country proved to be extremely friendly to us despite the hostile reputation. ”



In front of the famous Ayia Sofia basilica, Istanbul. It was like getting back to our roots here.



Off-road driving is limited but rewarding in Cappadocia, Turkey

The World Off Road Pt 3

Driving on the remote Alborz Mountains was the perfect way to discover real Iran.



Hijab, the dress code for Muslim women, is a state law in Iran.

“ We were obliged to use the hill decent control system for keeping our Discovery on the road. ”

apartments, markets are lively and fragrant and fast food restaurants are plenty. Driving along the Nile route needs to be done in a convoy – a safety measure taken by the government after a bloody terrorist attack in Luxor. If you want to go from Aswan to Cairo you need to be at the outskirts of the town at 8am or 2pm, stay in line with hundreds of tour buses and then follow the police patrol through the traffic, at 120-130km/h! This is a crazy concept. The convoy is a perfect target for any bomb loaded fanatic but this is Egypt, a country of crazy rules. Of crazy people too! At every step somebody approaches you on the road with a different proposal; to show you his art shop, take you for a ride in a felucca (the classic sail boat on the Nile) or invite you to taste “for free” the best chawarma (doner kebab) in town. The ‘avoid tourist places’ rule is not valid in Egypt. Everything is about tourists here and how can you skip sites like Luxor, Giza or Abu Simbel? But don’t get frustrated. Street vendors are real characters. They do this for a living but it is like a theatre of life and you, as a visitor, are starring as well. Just play your role calmly, take nothing personally and you will have fun. Egyptians like women and they will often ask for yours, offering camels and goats. This is their favourite game with foreigners.

Egypt is built along the Nile. Far from the river that supported ancient Egyptian civilisation in a way that changed human history, this is a desert country. You feel the contrast when you escape traffic locked Cairo and drive through the

Suez Canal. In one hour you get from the craziness of 16 million souls to the remoteness of the Sinai desert.

Sinai is a holy land and has been a battlefield during the six days war. It offers majestic beaches and world class diving. It is famous for St Catherine orthodox monastery and the bombings at Sharm El Seikh resort. We spent one night among the monks instead of staying at a resort before leaving the country. We had to get through the complicated customs procedures and clear our car first. Nobody spoke English at the port of Tamba and there were no guidelines. Given our no bribing policy we spent half a day getting the exit stamp on our Carnet de Passage. At the end I was so pissed off that I yelled angrily to a poor police officer; “I will never, never come to your country again!” He laughed understandably. I didn’t mean it actually...

Land of hospitality

Many people are afraid of the Middle East. They consider it a hostile environment because of the explosive politics and frequent conflicts in the area. Travelling here is not only about the excellent cuisine, the breathtaking landscapes, the vibrant markets and the historic monuments, it is mostly about people. Don’t believe stereotypes about the behaviour of Muslims. We spent nearly two months in the region and we never had a negative reaction from locals. We can only recall open-hearted people. Like the Bedouin family at Wadi



You are mostly welcome in Iran.



Don't miss a balloon flight over Cappadocia "fairy chimneys".



Fesh-fesh, the powder gravel of the Nubian desert proved to be the nemesis for the electric handbrake of our Discovery.

Driving tips

If you plan to drive in the Middle East get ready for the worst. Drivers are notorious in most countries and bureaucracy frustrating. Fuel is bloody cheap though and you can easily find a good mechanic anywhere.

EGYPT: Carnet de Passage obligatory. Entering the country, you may spend a whole day getting through customs procedures. You need to insure the car to get issued a local plate for about \$AU220. Drivers are reckless, defy traffic lights, rarely use lights by night and have badly kept cars. They are always alert though. Traffic is hell in the big cities and most traffic lights don't work. Fuel is bloody cheap (diesel: \$AU0.20/litre) but of bad quality. "Solar" is the name for diesel at the pumps.

JORDAN: Entering the country is straightforward with a Carnet but you need to buy local insurance. Drivers are much better but traffic is still chaos in Amman. Diesel costs about \$AU0.5/litre. Stations are frequent.

SYRIA: Carnet de Passage obligatory - no check for insurance. Traffic conditions similar to Egypt but drivers are a little bit better. Entering the country you will be asked, "benzin or diesel?" If you drive a diesel you will get charged \$US100 per week of driving, as the fuel is subsidised. The price of diesel is the same as Egypt. Often you have to be in a line to refuel but locals always give priority to any foreign car.

TURKEY: Carnet de Passage optional. You need Green Card insurance. Custom procedures are straightforward. Expect a quick luggage check. Drivers and roads are getting better year by year but still safety is an issue. Istanbul has high tech traffic lights with a timer. You can cross Turkey practically by highway from Syria to Greece but travel is costly; Turkey has the most expensive fuel in the world - at times exceeding \$AU3.50/litre!

IRAN: Carnet obligatory and Green Card (European) is valid here. Roads are wide and decently maintained but drivers are aggressive and restless at times. They respect traffic lights but not all the other rules. Fuel is incredibly cheap; you could buy seven litres of petrol or 40 litres of diesel for \$AU1. Petrol stations are state business and exclusive to petrol or diesel. Border stations don't refuel outgoing cars with foreign plates. Normally you need coupons to buy fuel but locals will help you get through this.



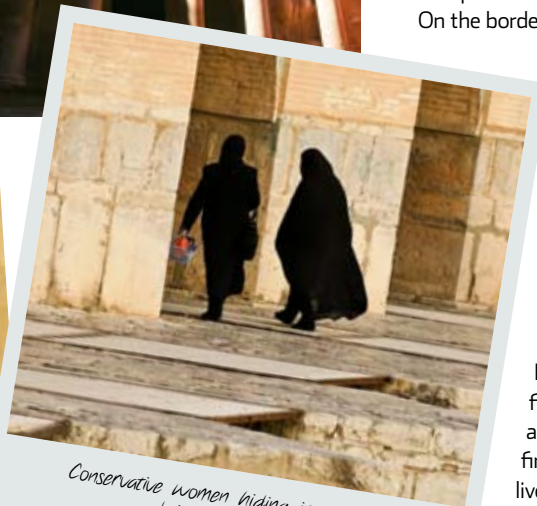
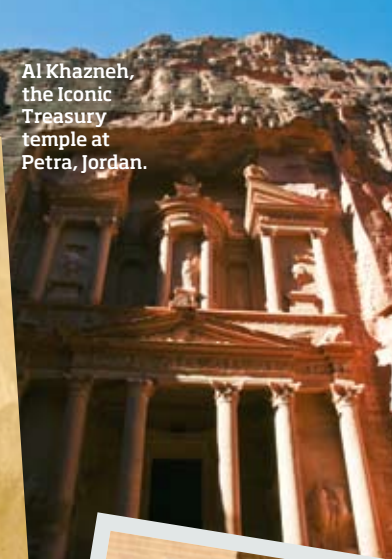
Meeting the ultimate 4x4 at Wadi Rum, Jordan.

Muslim code

You will have a warm welcome and full respect by locals given that you respect some basic rules

- Respect people's time of prayer. Sunni Muslims pray five times a day. Any business you have with a local will be interrupted at the time of prayer.
- Never use your left hand to touch your food or somebody else. Left hand is used for your personal hygiene only.
- Men don't shake hands with women, especially in Iran.
- Iranians are mostly Shia Muslim and don't pray five times a day.
- Couples often will be asked if you are married and have children. It's better to declare so even if not, to avoid possible harassment by young men.
- Foreign women should cover their hair and curves by law in Iran
- Everywhere in the Middle East, exposed flesh is to be avoided and modest dress code will be appreciated. Keep handy a light, colourful veil. Men shouldn't enter a mosque with short pants.
- Always take off your shoes before entering a mosque or other religious site.
- In Iran "Taarof" – a code of cordiality – is the essence of everyday life. You may get invited for dinner, you may be offered goods for free but most of the time this is just a cordial gesture. So, don't accept a proposal if the local doesn't insist two or three times. After that, you know the proposal is real.
- Be prepared for slow service and harsher manners by locals during Ramadan (month of Muslim fast).
- Don't hide your religion. Christians are welcome everywhere.

Al Khazneh, the Iconic Treasury temple at Petra, Jordan.



Conservative women hiding in one of the bridges of Esfahan.

Rum who offered us breakfast in the desert. Or the Syrian biker who escorted us through the hectic traffic of Damascus and found us a cheap hotel, after he offered us hot konafah (a delicious fried dessert with ricotta cheese) on the road. Another Syrian, of Armenian origins, in Aleppo left his company and spent half a day just to find a local workshop where they could clean our diesel filter. In Turkey, we were welcomed enthusiastically, especially when they realised we were 'Yunani' – Greeks. We were offered free kebabs or coffee more than once and one night, the mayor of Ulalar in Anatolia, arranged for us to camp safely in the municipal garage. We realised that we were positively discriminated despite the chronic political issues between Turkey and Greece.

On the border of Iran a police officer enthusiastically helped us clear our car through customs. They just checked if we carried alcohol, but we didn't. Vula was already wearing her red scarf and looked pretty in it and respectful to the Hijab dress code. Hijab is enforced by the Iranian constitution that is written according to the sharia – the Islamic law. Iranians are Shia Muslims but are not Arabs, so don't consider calling them so. They will be offended. Generally they are noble people with values of life lost in the west. Everybody wants to be your friend there. Our first friend was a teacher who helped us refuel as we didn't have the essential coupons. Our first night in Tabriz – where we camped in a lively municipal park – we made more friends; students who were taking pictures of us from their cell phones and were curious to know more about the world. For the next three weeks we



Waking up in the wild - this is the best part of our trip.

The World Off Road Pt 3

Our brand new BF Goodrich A/T were a match for the muddy roads of northern Iran.



had more invitations than in any other country. Thanks to the genuine hospitality of the locals and the ridiculous price of diesel, our trip through Iran was the cheapest overall. We spent \$AU70 per week! We were sleeping anywhere as this is one of the safest countries. One night, in Qazvin, our fancy Land Rover was parked in a little park next to a central avenue. A police officer stopped for a check at 2am. He was apologetic for waking me up and when I asked him if he considered our campsite safe he told me; "sleep good, very safe. Iran safe, no terrorist!"

The gentle policeman was not the only one who wanted to fix the bad reputation of this country. Every Iranian wanted to know what we thought about it. It is a pity because these people practically can't travel, so they feel isolated. For conservative Iranians, the Mullah regime doesn't feel



Bedouin beauty!

oppressive. They have a decent life, good principles, safety and good education for men and women. Young people, though, are those who feel they can't breathe. We met some courageous students in Yazd who were pretty outspoken. This is the generation that protested during the last elections. They were speaking for freedom of speech, love and travel – the basic values they miss. We felt guilty after meeting some bright young Iranians. We can travel, write and speak freely. We dance, drink and choose our partners with no restrictions. They have only the national sport of Iran, which is picnic, by day or by night.

Heading to the border of Pakistan we felt we would miss this region – formerly called Mesopotamia – which is considered more a battlefield than the cradle of civilisation that it is. We stayed one night in Bam – a town that was devastated by an earthquake in 2004 – and proceeded to Zahedan, through the notorious Sistan – Balochistan region. We were escorted by gentle police officers all the way to the border that was closed after 3pm. We should stay one more night in "no man's land" on the frontier between Middle East and Central Asia. We camped next to a blue mosque. God willing, we should enter Pakistan tomorrow and hopefully survive it. Inshallah, as the people of this region say. 🕌



Living in a family is easy in Iran. This is the most hospitable country in the world by far!

*Next month...
It's time for the ultimate cultural shock as
the couple cross Pakistan and enter India.*

G'day Mates!

Greek overlanders cross the Outback all the way from Perth to Sydney adding 16,000km on their Discovery. Read an Australian epic from a foreigner's point of view...

Words by **Akis Temperidis**

Photos by **Vula Netu** and **Akis Temperidis**





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Malcolm Douglas Crocodile Farm: "Salties" are huge here, newborn crocs are cute.

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e are completely on our own in a hostile environment. The soil is eroded by salt, heat is unbearable and flies are annoyingly aggressive. Even if we wear full face nets they still manage to infiltrate our ears,

eyes and mouth – I've already eaten a dozen of them! Vzzz, vzzz, vzzz, this is the soundtrack of our trip for the last days in the Outback. We are in Dalhousie Springs on the western side of mighty Simpson Desert. We dive naked into the warm water lake and, yes, the tiny monsters don't dare to come near us. We face a great dilemma where we are. To cross the Simpson Desert or not to cross? At Mount Dear roadhouse, the only one in hundreds of kilometres, we were told that the notorious French line path is closed. We call the ranger from our Iridium phone and the man advises us to avoid the trip: "Nobody has entered the desert for six months, the flooding extends for about 30km. The desert will be closed for two more months at least!"



In less than three months we did 16,000km and we were only stopped once by police for an alcohol test.





Quarantine Matters!

Before leaving Malaysia we knew how strict Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service (AQIS) rules are, so we proceeded in a thorough cleaning of the car, which kept us busy for three days! Thinking Greek, we contacted AQIS (www.aqis.gov.au) asking for details and for making a report on it. The feedback was clear; "the car should be clean like new". We thought we might have a less rigorous confrontation from them in Fremantle – given we were journalists but when the car was checked, traces of soil and seeds were found into the ladder frame. The car was moved to a special cleaner who worked on it with pressurized water for three hours after which our car passed the test. The process cost us 570 AUD for no more than 100 grams of contagious(?) soil but most importantly, mum's honey should be fumigated. Our press identity didn't make any difference or it did; our shoes were cleaned by the director of AQIS in Perth himself, who gave us an interesting interview. The officer convinced us that quarantine matters for the bovine production and the health of the sensitive Australian ecosystem.



Creeks spoiling Australia...



Welcome to Fraser Island, as far as dingoes are concerned they are not so bad but don't feed them please!



You will never see any Aborigines around Uluru, only sacred places of their ancestors.



You should first call Birdsville Hotel before attempting Simpson desert.



Uluru is very touristic but still overwhelming.



We felt defeated but chose to do the right thing knowing that getting stuck into the desert would mean several days of delays plus 1000 AUD per wheel, for a possible recovery, according to an unwritten Outback law. We would reach Birdsville from the famous Oodnadatta and Birdsville tracks, a 1200km loop through South Australia. "No worries mate!", Vula said to comfort me, "Next time"!

Cultural shock the other way

When we arrived in Australia, three weeks before, the sky seemed crispy clear and the prices exorbitantly high in comparison to our former life in SE Asia. We wanted to cross the Outback but which way? Whatever route we chose, we would miss something else. We preferred to do it the long way, driving up to Broome. We would decide what to do next from there...



Vula would like to work at William Creek roadhouse - in another life maybe...

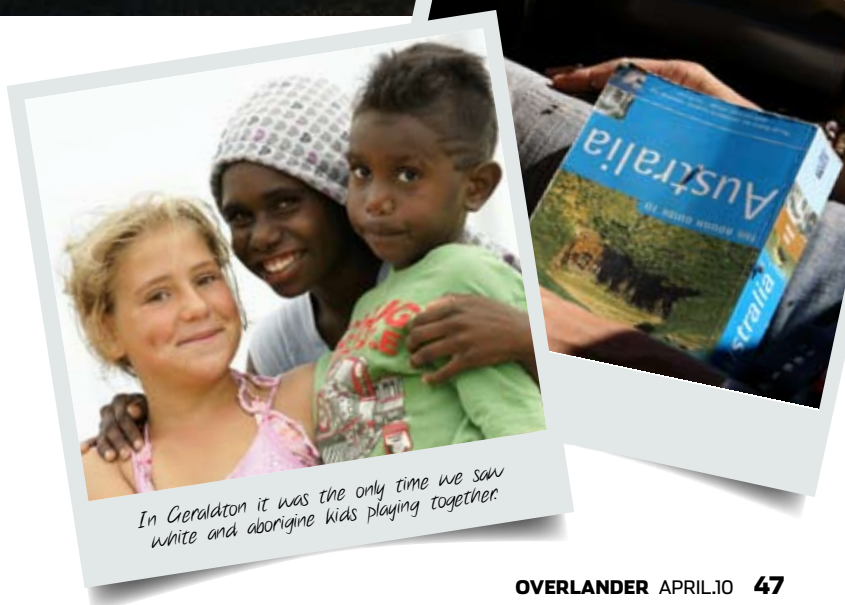
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We decided to head to Birdsville through the famous Oodnadatta tracks.

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It was incredible... 50km north of cosmopolitan Perth there was nothing – nothing! – till Geraldton. It was an endless stretch of tarmac with no cell phone or radio signal, no fuel or food for every 400 to 500km, until the next town or the next roadhouse. We were traveling for hours and our dot seemed still on the map screen of our GPS. North of Geraldton we diverted to Shark Bay and Monkey Mia until we got back to the main road, we had 650km added on our odometer. What a huge piece of land! On our route to Broome we passed Carnarvon and Port Headland, of course, but the best part was Karijini National Park. It was like a naturalistic amusement park but so hot, mate! After we drove a bit on the 80-mile beach, we arrived in Broome. We knew it was the most interesting little town in WA but it seemed so depressingly empty that day. At noon you the only people was saw were at the Coles supermarket. In Broome we met an



In Geraldton it was the only time we saw white and aborigine kids playing together.

TRIP ID

Vehicle: Land Rover Discovery3 TDV6
Crew: Akis Temperidis, Vula Netou
Days: 85 (69 driving)
Total distance: 16.412
Refuellings: 24
Litres: 1872
Lt/100 km.: 11,4

You need to deflate seriously to drive on the sandy path towards Steep point, the westernmost one of Australia.

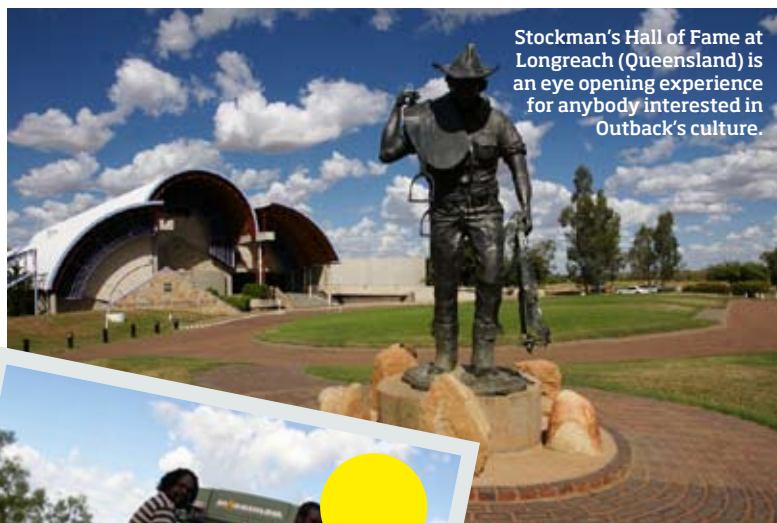


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We saluted the Indian Ocean which we had followed from Capetown!

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Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach (Queensland) is an eye opening experience for anybody interested in Outback's culture.



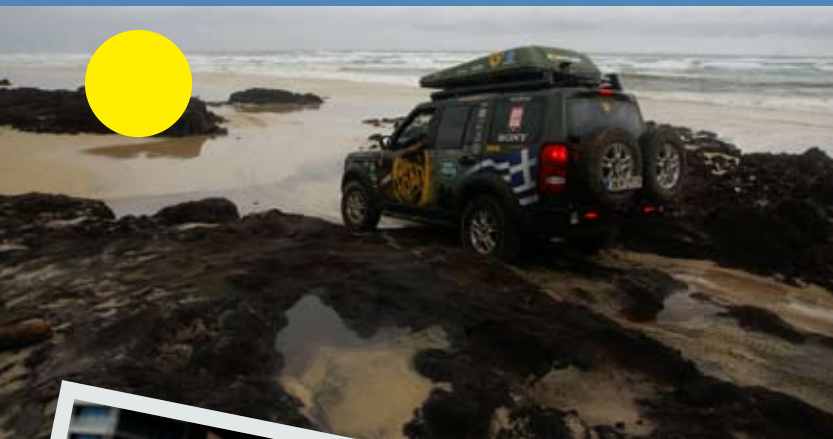
Australian celebrity, Mr. Malcolm Douglas, an adventurer and cinematographer who runs a serious business with crocodiles. Malcolm still makes adventure documentaries like the ones that made him an Australian institution in the 60's. Like a real star, he was not really interested in meeting with us until we told him we had travelled all the way from Greece to meet him. Finally, he spent all day with us and he told us juicy stories from his life in the Outback and delivered some crocs in front of our eyes. We loved this guy!

From Broome we saluted the Indian Ocean which we had followed from Capetown! And now what? Cross the Kimberley and arrive to Darwin or cross the Tanami desert, the most remote part of the country? As the going gets tough, the tough get going, so – you guessed it – we were probably the first to tackle the muddy track at the southern-most part of Kimberley (from Derby to Fitzroy crossing through Windjana



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National Park) after the rain season, when state signs still prohibited it. After an oil change at Halls Creek we entered the Tanami and crossed it all the way to Alice Springs in two days time. It was an epic driving in an arid environment where we met only two cars and more than forty carcasses in the middle of nowhere. On the way, we visited two Aboriginal villages without a permit. It was worth the risk to see what the flip side of a model country looks like: Well, it looks like delapidated houses, street fires with unemployed youngsters surrounding an old man, rusty cars parked everywhere and lost souls drinking beer all day. We tried to talk with some of them but they were hostile with us. It was the first time on our trip we couldn't establish communication with local people. We don't blame them. Aborigines have experienced the rudest cultural shock and human rights violations than any other tribe in history, by the advanced white man of course. Sorry mates but truth is hard to digest...

Roadhouse Country

We were happy to arrive in Alice Springs safe and sound with only some scratches on the tyres. We were confident to consume more of the Outback, and we were actually addicted to the rusty color of the soil and the unique palette of the sky before sunset. The roundtrip to Uluru via Finke Gorge and Kings Canyon was a piece of cake. Back to Alice, we were prepared psychologically for the Simpson Desert. We followed the route to Finke, the same run by the famous Finke Desert Race, along the Ghan, the old train rail that was made by Afghan cameleers. At parts we were driving on the

“

It was the first time on our trip that we couldn't establish communication with the local people.

”

Walking around Kings canyon was a breathtaking experience.

Discovery News

We were in Sumatra when our engine broke down completely. We had just replaced the turbo in Malaysia, the TDV6 had only 102,000km and was running perfectly, so we felt frustrated with this unexpected incident which was judged as 'unique worldwide' by Land Rover. A breakdown is a perfect opportunity for a great adventure on a trip like ours. We needed eight days to pull or carry our car all the way from remote Northern Sumatra back to Kuala Lumpur. Land Rover impressively reacted to our problem. One week after, a brand new TDV6 was shipped by air to Malaysia. Three more weeks were needed to assemble everything back, including the car body which was completely removed according to the LR technical requirements. Why did the engine blow off with no warning? It was probably a domino effect. The engine had run for long time with a broken turbo, from which tiny metal remnants must have entered the engine and stuck in the oil pump. After the pump went off, it was a matter of hours to get the engine 'dry' and blown off. So, in Australia, we tested our new TDV6, which should have cost us around 20,000 AUD. Land Rover of Australia was very generous with us for as well. In Perth we got the driver's door lock replaced under warranty. At Trivett of Parramatta (Sydney) the rear diff and semi axles were replaced as the crown had come loose and we were provided a full service, always for free.



parallel 4WD track, used for the rally, just for fun! For the next four days we met only a handful of people, exclusively at the famous roadhouses on Oadnadatta and Birdsville tracks; Mount Dare, Pink House, William Creek, Mungerania and finally the famous Birdsville Hotel. In the Outback we realized that the roadhouse is the absolute Australian institution, it represents the country better than anything else. Remote but unbelievably organized! We couldn't believe we could find diesel, a mini market, restaurant, bar, pool, memorabilia, even an ATM, all in one and so far away from anything else. We were wondering how the families that run these places can make it. We found out that their kids attend the school of the Air, via radio on a daily basis. Incredible Australia. You can expect anything from a country where cattle has been guided by helicopters for the last 40 years...



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Back to the Real World

23 days after we had departed from Perth, we arrived to Longreach, where our Outback epic ended. Two days later, at Rockhampton, we felt as if our trip had ended, exactly where Australia starts for 90 percent of Aussies. We lived more adventures after that, like the off-road driving at Fraser Island, a skydive on the beach south of Sydney and a climb of the iconic Harbor Bridge, but we were missing the Outback which represents the original Australia for us. From Brisbane to Sydney, to Melbourne and back to Sydney, from where we finally shipped our car to the USA, we felt like home thanks to the hospitality of different fellow Greeks and Australians as well. We put on some kilos thanks to greek moussaka, feta cheese and Australian barbecue. Funniest part was when we were asked where we were come from;

"We come from Greece"..

"You shipped your car here? Why didn't you rent one here"?

"We are on a world tour – we crossed Iran, Pakistan, India, SE Asia. We drove from Perth..."

"YOU CROSSED THE OUTBACK? How many kangaroos did you hit? Did any crocodiles attack you? It is full of dingoes there... Many people died there after they ran out of fuel... or water..."

Crazy Australians... The Outback is a far away country more than any other for them. A place reached by few who like to amplify its myth. The beauty is there, same as on photoshopped pictures, but the dangers are hyped. The Outback needs respect but you have nothing to fear there, its always Australia, the most organized country in the world. By the way, we never hit or nearly missed a kangaroo mates! 🐨

Shark Bay: The westernmost point of Australia feels like the end of the world, which is not so far from truth. Great for camping, fishing and off road driving.

Overlooking Simpson Desert from an iconic red dune, near Birdsville.



We kissed Australia goodbye in a classic style, climbing up the Harbor Bridge in Sydney.



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