

Northern Mozambique / Trip Expedition

30 Nov

Final planning meeting. The group gets together and Mike and Kobus present route options to the group. Vital information like recovery equipment, medical supplies, communication and food were all part of the discussions.



12 Dec

Mike puts some final touches to Mark's trailer. Little did we know at this stage just how much time we would spend on trailer repairs during the trip.

13 Dec

D-Day, after a full day of packing, the first two vehicles, Mark's Fortuner and Mike's Mazda set off for the boarder at Beit Bridge. Driving the N1 north at night can be quite an experience in December with lots of very overloaded trailers and accidents.



14 Dec

Beit-Bridge Border post is a never ending night mare. The worst part, some of the very unfriendly South African staff who either tried their luck for bribes or were sleeping on the job.

We took 5 hours to get through the boarder and headed directly for the Lion and Elephant Motel where we planed to have breakfast and spend the night. It was very hot and the traffic was loud, so we made a snap decision to head for Lake Mutirikwi.

27 hours after leaving Jo'burg we arrived at Lake Kyle Boat Club, don't tell any one about this place, R10 per site, hot showers, shady campsites, great views and fishing.



Some were a bit



15 Dec

Spent the day at Great Zimbabwe. We were the only tourists at this magnificent historical site. Hire a local guide, at R20, they really enhance your experience. Take plenty of H₂O as temperatures soar on the rocky terrain. Kobus and Jen arrive at 8 that night and tell of the rain on its way.



16 Dec

Who would have guessed RAIN! All day and the next. Thank goodness for the hall at the boat club where we entertained ourselves. Kobus even found time to brush up on his mowing skills.



17 Dec

Rain! After a very wet night we set off for Mozambique border near Mutare, or at least that was the plan. Just past the dam wall is a turn off to some caves, it was on this road that the trailer gave us our first workout. The rear right spring broke at the bush. This was a result of the spring having to work overtime because there were no shocks to absorb the energy of the spring after it has absorbed the impact of the bump. (Mark has since installed shocks and the difference is remarkable.)

After removing the spring Mark and I made the 60km trip to Masvingo to find a replacement. We eventually found a place that could make a blade for R300; I think they saw us coming. Later that afternoon we reinstalled the spring and the decision was made to wait for the rest of the group at Lake Mutirikwi.

Zieg, Debbie, Fred and Elise arrive and so does a lot more rain.



Note the local mechanic giving

18 Dec

The group makes its way to Mozambique via Mutare. Once we got through the border post a quick stop in Chimoio to find a bank or shop to change money turned into a nightmare for some in the group. They elected to go with the better exchange rate of the money changers 3 to 1 as opposed to 2.6 to 1 at the petrol station. Despite being seasoned travellers three of the couples were taken for about R2000 each. Rule of thumb, STAY AWAY from money changers but if you must, stick to small amounts like R500. And then came the rain and darkness and we were still without accommodation. Eventually we found the Coplexo Arcos Iris Hotel just outside Inchope and the manager kindly let us sleep on the grounds with the use of the toilet in a chalet.

19 Dec

Plan for the day; head for Gorongosa N.P. to find out about the state of the roads in the park as it is the rainy season. The park roads were closed and so we moved up our schedule and decided to move on to Mount Gorongosa. Using T4A maps we followed a relatively muddy track to the camp site and along the way we got the opportunity to test our recovery techniques and equipment as a few of the vehicles slipped off the road into the lands. It was heartbreaking to see many thousands of hectares of forest cut down to make way for subsistence farming and their methods were not very productive.



20 Dec

Mud glorious mud; it would be our undoing on this day.

Love it or hate it mud can provide every man and his 4x4 with a great campfire story, here's one that kept us busy for 11 hours.

- 9:15 Time to go.
- 9:21 Fred's Mitsubishi gets stuck and has to be winched(at the camp site)
- 9:40 We're on the road.
- 10:30 Mike hits the "hill" and make it to the top first time.
- 10:32 Zieg makes his attempt but the trailer pulls the Cruiser back just short of the top.
- 11:00 We finally recover the Cruiser minus its trailer. The rain starts.
- 11:30 We recover the trailer. At this point the Mazda is tied to the Cruiser to stop it slipping as it pulls the trailer.
- 11:37 Mark races up the hill but by now the heavy rain and recovery efforts have messed up the road and the Fortuner falls short.
- 11:48 By now we have our technique taped; the Fortuner and trailer are recovered in double quick time.
- 12:01 After some road building Kobus get his Discovery 3 going, but the fancy electronics pull him off the road at the bottom of the hill, 80m away. (We have since discovered that they can be turned off) Now well out of reach of the winches our only option is to join 5 snatch straps to the winch on the Fortuner which was attached to the winch on the Cruiser which was held by a tow strap to the Mazda. Trying to pull a heavy vehicle up a muddy slope with 5 snatch straps is not an easy task as the amount of stretch created does not pull the vehicle, a long rope would have been better. Lifting the Discovery out of the mud with an air jack, to reduce the suction, proved to be futile as the Discovery has a double exhaust system. (Go Landrover Design Engineers) The high lift jack shattered the rear windscreen when it slipped off its plate in the mud and so we ended up digging the chassis out in order to extract the Discovery.
- 16:54 We finally get the Discovery 3 up. Now it's the turn of the Imagine Caravan and it's pouring.
- 17:47 The Imagine reaches the top.
- 18:00 The road is no longer drivable and the recovery crew, now experts, set about "snatch winching" Fred and his Mitsubishi to the top.
- 18:30 The Mitsubishi arrives.
- 19:00 We are all hitched up and after a short meeting the men decide to tackle the next 14km of track at night in case the rain gets any worse and the road becomes impassable. The Mazda goes first(no trailer) as it's the lightest followed by the Fortuner and Cruisers who have winches then the Discovery and Mitsubishi.
- 20:15 We reach the EN1. Jubilation, exhaustion and pride cause our chests to swell to twice their size. Our wives could not believe that we'd been able to get this far with out any fights.





We eventually found a lay-by on the side of the road where we spent the night

21 Dec

We find ourselves surrounded by trucks loading timber for the markets and the rain has stopped. Today we are bound for the Zambezi crossing at Caia. Our journey is uneventful but the temperatures are rising the further north we travel. At the Zambezi we find that the new bridge is well on its way to being completed. After a few very juicy pineapples we make our way on to the ferry for the short trip to the other side. We stop on the side of the road for brunch and as we finish a massive down pour hits without warning. I take the opportunity to “shower” in the middle of the road much to the delight of the kids. We head in the direction of Nicuadala and find a school with a nice shady tree and toilets, after failing to find the headmaster to negotiate a camping rate we set up camp and the woman get busy with the washing. All across Mozambique hand pumps have been installed and water is freely available. Don’t forget your manners and ask first, the locals will also pump for you for a small fee.



22 Dec

We leave early for our long drive to Cuamba +/- 500km. Our route takes us through Nicuadala, Namacurra, Mocuba, Gurue, Mtuali to Cuamba. The route takes us through some stunning scenery and massive mountains of granite. The tea plantations of Gurue and the old colonial buildings are spectacular. All was going just too well and Marks trailer broke its second spring just beyond Gurue. Thankfully a few kilos’ away we found a settlement, Uptwo, with a welder who was able to braise the spring and two hours later we were on our way. Unfortunately our route to a bush camp outside Cuamba was blocked as the bridge over the Lúrio was washed away and we had to travel on a badly corrugated road via Mutali. This caused us to arrive at 22:00 and we eventually found accommodation in a very dodgy “Lodge” but we were all too tired to complain.



23 Dec

The plan is to travel north on the 248 until we find a suitable camp in the bush but first we need to change money. Now very shy of money changers we try the only bank in town Millennium, however, they are not interested as we don’t have an account. Sonja eventually finds a Portuguese businessman who can speak German and he agrees to change our money for us, even this takes 1 ½ hours. We hit the road and the mood is very relaxed as we stop for photos on an old T54 tank and then take a leisurely drive in search of a camp site.



A beautiful spot among the trees was found and while some rested others went exploring and found a river in which we were able to cool off in.



24 Dec

Destination Niassa. After a long dusty drive and a few rickety wooden bridges we reach the Lugenda river and the entrance to the park. What a disappointment the park is full of people and after 100km we reached Mecula where we were finally able to enter the bush. By this stage the kids and our wives had had enough and we were forced to find a camp on the other side of the Rio Nampuanda where we found a large pool to swim and bath in. That evening Zieg prepared a fantastic dinner unfortunately as dinner was served the mother of all storms hit and literally washed our camp away.



25 and 26 Dec

The bridge was now in danger of washing away and we hastily packed up camp and decided to head for Pemba via Marrupa and a seldom used road (242) that runs below the park. This road comes out at Montepuez and with the trailers it took a toll on the speed that we could travel at. The road is very bad at times and requires 4x4, in the rain it might become impassable at points. We ended up camping in the bush amidst millions of little flies that flew into our eyes and mouths driving half crazy. The next day we drive through to Pemba arriving in the early evening and find that the popular Russels Camp is closed. We meet a SA couple who live in Pemba and they volunteer to take us to a friends camp and so a wild ride through the dunes starts, it turns out the the “friends” don’t offer camping so we decide to find a spot along the beach. What a surprise awaited us the next day.



The original road.

27 to 28 Dec

The photo says it all.

Later in the day we moved to Brenda’s Camp (Nicola Jardim) and camped under the boababs for several days and explored the town of Pemba.



Very high temperatures meant that it was not very comfortable even at night.



29 Dec

We set off for Ilha de Moszambique and camp at Coral lodge just North of the Island. The owner puts us in touch with a South African Engineer who owns a place at Quinga. Louis gives us directions to his place and we agree to see him the next day after visiting the Island.

30 Dec

A day of delays due to trailer problems. Just before the island Ziegs trailer breaks a spring and we have to get it welded. We only get to the island after 13:00 and take in the site of this famous site. We leave at 15:45 and have to make haste as we have misjudged the distance to Louis. Just before sunset Marks trailer breaks a spring. We decide to let one half of the group go ahead while Kobus remains to guard the trailer and Mark and I drive 50km back to Monapo to find a welder. Thank goodness I brought some welding rod with as the welder has none.



We return in the dark, fit the spring and set off only to arrive at Louis around 23:00 that night.

31 Dec to 2 Jan

Wow what a place very rustic, and very isolated just what we need to relax. We spend our time driving up the beach to picturesque bays where we stop to cool off and cast a line. Louis really treats us, providing drums full of water, generator power, a fishing trip and so much more. We can’t believe his hospitality as he refuses to take a cent for all his effort.



3 Jan

We leave Louis with sad hearts and vow to come back one day. The road to Nampula is about 200km long and its not long before Zieg’s trailer breaks and we have no option but to travel very slowly in order to protect the springs. We reach Nampula later that afternoon, buy supplies and leave to find a camp in the bush. pours as we set up camp and this means an early night for all.



It

4 Jan

The road is full of potholes and detours as we make our way to Quelimane, Mosquito capital of the world. We enter to town and all the warnings we received are realised, it was filthy



and full of potholes and we decide in the pouring rain to drive through the coconut plantations to a Zalala Camp where the rain has thankfully stopped.

5 Jan

The rain has now set in and the group decides to head for home. And we return via the same route. Caia, Chimoio, Mutare, Masvingo, Beitbridge and Jo'burg

Brunch on the side of the road has become a routine and we must seem like a strange bunch to the locals.

We reach the Coplexo Arcos Iris Hotel and decide to book into their chalets as we did not see the chance to pitch camp in the rain.



6 Jan

We make the long trek to Beit Bridge and come across many police road blocks. Mostly they are very friendly and we pass through without any problems. We spend the night at Tshipise.

7 Jan

Just one last stop and then the run for home. Would we do it again, in a heartbeat if our wives would let us.



Tropic of Capricorn