



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.



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

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



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.

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...

“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.

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.



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

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



Driving by night in Sahara.

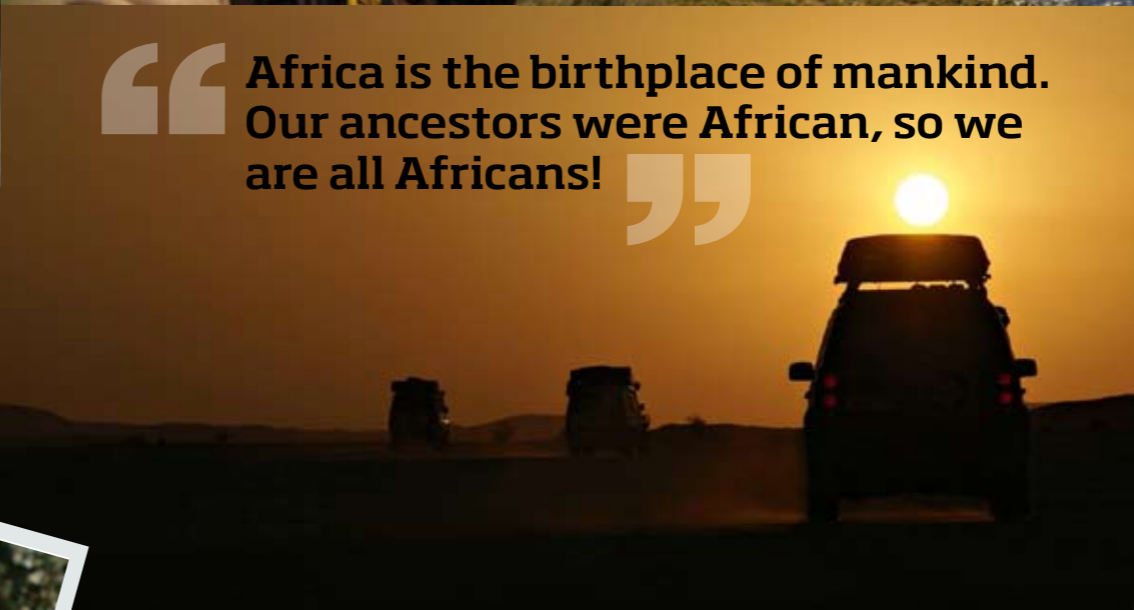


Flying over Okavango delta, Botswana. The ultimate heaven on earth!

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

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...



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



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



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.



Chimanku, 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.

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'.

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

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.

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!

