

An Ethiopian Trip

27 November 1999 - 17 January 2000

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Introduction

This trip was not a single purpose trip. I was undertaking it as an opportunity to visit Ethiopia for the first time, and to learn a bit about the country and people, by travelling around as many areas as practical. Obviously I also wanted to visit the main historical sites, and other areas of interest. Finally, it was an opportunity to see the birds and animals of Ethiopia.

In trying to combine all the above, it was easier to start with ensuring that I was going to pass through all the areas where endemic species occurred, and to visit the eastern, northern and western limits of the country, so that I would maximize the coverage of the species' range. Once this objective was set out, it was relatively easy to combine it with the general travel objective and the historical sites.

The original intention was to make the trip longer (although work pressure - especially the boss - mitigated against this). I was always aware that extending the trip to Eritrea was highly improbable given the political situation between the two countries. However, it seemed quite possible to go still further north and visit Sudan. In theory, this was all arranged, but then a communication failure with the Ambassador's secretary in Pretoria meant that I didn't get the visa before leaving. However, arrangements were in place for me to get one quite quickly in Addis Ababa. However, before I was ready to apply, I heard of the declaration of a State of Emergency in Sudan, so I gave up any idea of visiting Sudan.

I have undertaken a variety of trips in my Landrover over the last 15 years, covering South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia extensively. I also spent some time in Mozambique, and made one extended trip through Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Hence I was under the impression that I was sufficiently well experienced on the area, and was well-prepared. To some extent this was true, but life always manages some surprises.

Setting up the Landrover

The Landrover was a last of the Series 3 Pickup Landrovers made in South Africa, and has certain parts from the replacement R6 version (such as brakes and wheel rims). However, the engine and gearbox were the original 4 cylinder 2 250 cc petrol engine. Because of my height (6 foot 8 inches / 2.03 metres), I had converted the Landrover into a station-wagon, with the rear canopy forming a single unit with the front cab. This allowed me to push the driving seat back to provide enough leg-room.

On this structure, I had put a roof-rack with an Easi-Awn roof-top tent. On the back I fixed two No. 10 Cadac gas cylinders and a spare wheel (independently mounted from the door). I also fixed two long-range fuel tanks under the front seats. This gave me a total petrol capacity of just over 200 litres - or between 1100 and 1400 km, depending on the road conditions. There were two 130 watt halogen spots mounted under the roof-rack where they were safe from branches, etc.

In addition to this, I carried 6 25-litre water cans (not quite full), and an MSR water filter (which I never actually needed). Obviously I carried a wide variety of tools. The most well used were the 3 jacks - a high-lift for lifting the vehicle to change tyres and/or springs, a small 2-ton hydraulic jack which was invaluable in adjusting the springs to fit them, and a scissor jack, which was used to position the axle horizontally to fit the lugs on the springs.

The roof-top tent was fitted with the normal mattress, as well as a 2-inch ultra-high density foam under-mattress. This increased the comfort level very substantially. Rather than using a sleeping bag, I took along a light-weight duvet, which is the most comfortable option in warmer climates. However, in the highlands I also used a sleeping bag as an extra blanket - and in the mountains I slept in the sleeping bag with the duvet as a blanket. This worked fine (except for Bale). Although I took along a lightweight normal tent, I never used it.

I used the Cadac gas only for light, using a 100 candle-power light. Cooking was carried out on an MSR dragonfly multi-fuel cooker, which I ran on Paraffin. Note: petrol is called Petrol, Blend or Regular south of Ethiopia, but Benzene in Ethiopia. Similarly Diesel is called Gas-Oil in Ethiopia, and Paraffin is called Kerosene. A Garmin 3 GPS with internal map was invaluable. While the map was largely useless in terms of roads and villages (it seemed to have only small villages - with all towns and cities were missing), the mapping and way-point facility was invaluable, especially if one had co-ordinated of towns, national parks, etc to orientate one.

Other than that, I took along sufficient cold and hot food to mean that I didn't need to stop to buy supplies. I also took along two pairs of binoculars - my favourite Minolta 12 x 50's and a lightweight pair of Nikon 9 x 25's. Both were extensively used, depending on the conditions. In the latter part of the trip the Minolta's developed a fault in the focussing mechanism, so I was most grateful to have a backup pair. My new Kowa TSN821 scope with the 32x wide-angle eye-piece was used on the lakes to search for waterfowl..

What I deliberately did not take was a camera - as a keen photographer I find that if I have a camera I spend too much time composing photographs, and didn't want to be restricted in this manner. With hindsight, I still believe my decision was right, as there are plenty of photographic guides that have excellent photographs covering most of what I saw.

Travel Documentation

Research

I used a significant number of books to research the possible routes on the trip - see the reference Books section below. However, most information was gathered through the SA Bird Net list server. While it is mainly about southern African birding, many of the subscribers have travelled extensively in Africa, and are able to help, or provide contacts of others who can help. For details on the list server, go to www.birdlife.co.za

Documentation

The following is a brief list of the documents that I obtained for the trip, and the requirements at the various borders. I often heard of horror stories of people being held up at border posts for hours, but have yet to experience this myself. Allow 30 to 45 minutes to cross through any border, and be prepared to visit up to 6 different officials who each fill in your details in various registers. However, all were most pleasant and friendly on the whole of the trip.

I should also record that during the whole trip, no-one asked for - or even intimated they might be interested in - a bribe.

General

Before leaving I obtained a variety of documents from the AA. First was a ten-page carnet. This is not actually needed for Zimbabwe or Zambia, so it is rarely necessary to apply for the more expensive 25-page version.

I also obtained an international driving license (required one in Zambia), and an International Certificate for Motor Vehicles (which was never required, but might be in Sudan)..

I arranged about 20 ID photos, as these are often required at border posts for visas, etc - but I only used two getting the second Ethiopian visa in Djibouti.

I arranged a comprehensive medical insurance through Europ Assistance which, while not required on the trip, was required to get a visa to Djibouti, and is a good idea to carry. Remember to make sure the contact details are easily visible should you be unconscious!

Other than that, I arranged visas for Tanzania, Ethiopia and Djibouti through the respective embassies (France for Djibouti). I was, of course, travelling on a South African passport.

Zimbabwe

South Africans do not require a visa, but must pay the toll for the new bridge, which was R41-40. One the way north I used a temporary vehicle import permit, which is very quick and simple to use, although one must declare all ones personal belongings. From previous experience I have a typed up and photocopied list, which is countersigned by the customs officers. There is no charge for the vehicle import. On the way back I used the AA carnet as I had spare pages left - and to my amazement they then asked me to fill in details of the contents on a separate form. Clearly this is the only country that understands how a carnet is supposed to work - it is only for the vehicle. While I was impressed with this at Chirundu, it was made up for the fact that the customs officer at Beit Bridge had never seen a carnet before, so I had to fill it out for her - and stamp it. I took out a 3-month insurance policy for less than double the costs of a 30-day policy.

You cannot change money at the border, but several of the new large service stations near Beit Bridge and Masvingo have small forex bureau that can change money cheaply and quickly, even using a credit card. A credit card can be used to buy petrol in many areas, including at Makuti near Chirundu.

Zambia

South Africans do not require a visa in advance, and it is free. The completion of the carnet was a formality, and allowed the vehicle and all its contents to be imported without any other paperwork. On entering I arranged a 2-month insurance at the border (ZKw 26 250)- although when travelling through Kariba in the past, the insurance office is often closed, so one needs to arrange it in Lusaka. It is easy to change money at the border, especially since the insurance must be paid in Zambian Kwacha.

On the way back there were two differences. First that the Nakonde District Council levies a small tax (ZKw 5 000), and I was issued with an driving permit free of charge. This latter is a recent innovation that one has to approve of - it was the only time anyone asked to see my driving license on the whole trip. It was then asked for at almost every roadblock.

Since I was planning no bird-watching in Zambia on this trip (other than areas I had previously visited) I only contacted Carl Beel about campsites in the extreme north.

Tanzania

Although one can buy a visa at the border, I obtained a single-entry visa in advance, which seemed to be valid for both legs of the trip, as I was not required to pay on my return. The AA carnet removed all customs problems, for the vehicle contents as well as the vehicle itself. A road tax is payable, and normally a payment of US\$ 25 is required for one month. However, on my return I was able to obtain a 7-day tax, which only costs US\$ 5. Insurance is required - and regularly checked. It was cheaper (and possible) to buy a two-month cover for TSh 26 250 than buying the monthly cover twice. On the way back, it would have been possible to buy the yellow PTA insurance card. This is the one to get, since it covers Zambia to Kenya on a single policy. However, I had never previously been able to find a way of buying it. Money is best changed at the border, where the rates appear to be very similar to that offered at the banks.

Since I was planning no bird-watching in Tanzania on this trip, I didn't try to find out any information in advance, although I did spend some time chatting with Dave Moyer, who is the expert on the eastern arc mountains.

Kenya

I did not obtain any papers for Kenya, since visas are issued free of charge to South Africans at the border. The standard AA carnet removes all border hassles for the vehicle contents as well as the vehicle itself. A vehicle permit is required, and the 2-month permit cost me US\$ 20. At neither border post was insurance available, and one had to get it in Nairobi. Money is best changed at the border, where the rates appear to be very similar to that offered at the banks.

Other information was not forth-coming on the northern desert, with Steve & Don Turner unable to provide any specific information on the larks of the area. However, I was lucky enough to find two of the three hoped for larks.

Ethiopia

Before leaving, I obtained a single-entry visa from the Ethiopian Embassy in Pretoria. I had requested a multiple-entry visa, but was informed that they could only issue a single-entry visa. The embassy also provided a letter in Amharic, which was supposed to assist me through customs. This was all that was required, and entry cost US\$ 1. More problematic was getting back after visiting Djibouti. It is not possible to get a multiple-entry visa unless you have a permanent residence permit, so you must first leave Ethiopia before applying to re-enter. This is very problematic for overland visitors who might wish to go to Sudan or Djibouti - since from both countries it is essential to return to Ethiopia - unless you wish to ship your vehicle out by air or sea.

No carnet was required at the border, the letter was sufficient. It is necessary to declare all your currency, and there is no reason not to do this, since you cannot change any money other than dollars in Ethiopia, and the black-market gives worse rates than the banks. The only black-market money available was at the Moyale border post, and this is only necessary if (like me) you cross over on a Saturday afternoon. No insurance could be bought at the border, but most towns have an insurance agency. Unlike most countries to the south, there are very few checkpoints, generally only near the Moyale border, and at strategic bridges (not unreasonable for a country at war).

Other information was gained from various people who had visited the country, all but Carole Roberts & Chris Hines who had driven up. Much useful information was gained from the SA Bird net list server. I had met Mengistu Wondafrash when he visited South Africa to study the White-winged Flufftail population here, and although we corresponded regularly, he was away on field work too often for me to arrange to meet him again while in Addis Ababa. However, in the end it was Steve Spawls who provided the most information, and gave me the necessary information on local conditions of roads.

Djibouti

Before leaving, I obtained a single-entry visa from the French Embassy in Pretoria. I had no other documents in advance, nor had to obtain anything at the border - there were no customs, so the Carnet was not required. No money changed hand at the border post. There were no visible facilities to purchase insurance other than in Djibouti city, and I was never asked for any documentation.

The only other information I received was from Hilary & Geoff Welch, who have spent much time birding there, but always flown in, and travelled around using local transport. I never came across anyone who had driven overland to (or from) Djibouti.

Reference Books

The following books were used by myself in researching the trip, and many were taken along for the trip itself. This list is not comprehensive as to what is available in the market, but I found to be more than adequate for my purposes. The ones high-lighted by → were considered absolutely essential, and any traveller should take these along as a minimum.

If a keen birder, I cannot recommend too strongly taking along the heavyweight Birds of Africa. Having access to that wealth of information in the field is invaluable – but obviously this will only apply to people taking their own vehicle. I had considered scanning the information onto a small laptop, but I am certain that no laptop would have survived the trip – the vibrations and bumps would have been too much for any but highly specialized industrial instruments.

The list of books used for planning is not restricted to Ethiopia, as my original plans included Sudan. I am also a realist, so I had planned for problems in northern Kenya or Ethiopia that would lead to me having to abandon the trip as planned, and then restrict my trip to Kenya, Tanzania & Uganda. Hence, some key books for these areas are included in this list.

Travel

→ **Guide to Ethiopia, Philip Briggs**

1995, Bradt Publications, ISBN 1-56440-814-0

an excellent guide that has hardly dated. Has information on virtually every town or village that I passed through. Indispensable.

Spectrum Guide to Ethiopia, Camerapix

1995, Camerapix Publishers International, ISBN 086190-535-0

contains excellent photographs and some useful information. In my case, my attitude was that I was unlikely to take better photographs, so I didn't take a camera, rather showing friends this book.

Guide to Eritrea, Edward Paice

1996, Bradt Publications, ISBN 1-56440-951-1

Since I was unable to get to Eritrea, I am comment on its accuracy, but the information seems to be up to the usual Bradt guide standard.

Visitors' Guide to Kenya and East Africa, Philip Briggs

1995, Southern Book Publishers, ISBN 1-86812-533-5

A brief light-weight guide, suitable for a quick visit to Kenya (with short sections on Tanzania and Uganda) on the way to (or from) Ethiopia, but a better guide could, I am sure, be found for a more extensive trip to these countries.

Kenya, Hugh Finlay & Geoff Crowther.

1994, Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit, ISBN 0-86442-202-4

I find the Lonely Planet guides to be much less informative than the Bradt guides, and this one seems to have aged badly, with all the information on Moyale (the only place I needed it) to be out-of-date, and so useless.

Guide to Tanzania, Philip Briggs

1993, Bradt Publications, ISBN 094-698-3-99-2

Not required unless serious excursions are going to be undertaken in Tanzania, in which case it is essential reading.

Birds

→ **Collins Illustrated Checklist of East African Birds – Ber van Perlo**

1995, Collins, ISBN 0-00-219937-8

illustrates every species, but not always accurately, with minimal text, and with maps that are all too often inaccurate. However, there is no alternative.

- **A Checklist of the Birds of Ethiopia, Emil K. Urban & Leslie H. Brown**
 1971, Addis Ababa University Press
contains a list of every species & sub-species to be seen in Ethiopia, with broad geographical ranges and habitats where each is likely to be found - but no specific sites mentioned. No illustrations.
- **Trip report - Ethiopia 15th December 1995 to 6th January 1996, Richard Webb et al**
 1996, African Bird Club
contains excellent site guides to 33 of the best sites in central and south-east Ethiopia, providing sites to all of Ethiopia's endemics. Also provides a list of species seen, with some details as to where they were seen. However, there is no information on the northern or western parts of the country.
- Ethiopia's Endemic Birds, Emil K. Urban**
 1980, Ethiopian Tourist Trading Enterprise
contains paintings and a brief description of 23 of Ethiopia's endemic species.
- Important Bird Areas of Ethiopia: A First Inventory, Ethiopian Wildlife & Natural History Society**
 1996, Ethiopian Wildlife & Natural History Society.
An excellent briefing document on IBA's, although these are not necessarily the best bird-watching sites.
- The Birds of Africa, Volumes 1-5, Leslie H Brown, Emil K. Urban & Kenneth Newman**
 1982 & onwards, Academic Press, ISBN 0-12-137301-0, *et al*
Essential reading, especially if more detailed information on behaviour, etc is required, as well as the taxonomy, identification & distribution of sub-species is wanted.
- African handbook of Birds: Series 1: Birds of Eastern and North-Eastern Africa, Volumes 1&2, C. W. Mackworth-Praed & C. H. B. Grant**
 1952, Longman, ISBN 0-582-46082-4
Essential reading for those species not yet covered in The Birds of Africa series. Seriously outdated, with poor illustrations, but often the only reference for Ethiopia and its neighbours.
- Finches & Sparrows: An Identification Guide, Peter Clement *et al.***
 1993, Russel Friedman Books, ISBN 0-9583223-4-1
Essential reading for detailed information for these families, at least until volume 7 of The Birds of Africa is published.
- Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania, Dale A. Zimmerman *et al.***
 1996, Russel Friedman Books, ISBN 1-875091-04-1
A good source of more detailed information than can be obtained from van Perlo's book. A bit bulky, and only covers 80%+ species to be found in Ethiopia, but well worth taking if space (and weight) allows.
- A Bird Atlas of Kenya, A Lewis & D Pomeroy**
 1989, A. A. Balkema Publishers, ISBN 90-6191-716-6
A useful atlas for more extensive birding in Kenya.
- Birds of East Africa: their Habitat, Status and Distribution, P. L. Britton (ed)**
 1980, East African Natural History Society
Useful if the trip is going to cover any of the countries south of Ethiopia. Possibly a bit dated, and partially superceded by the next publication.
- Annotated Checklist of the Birds of East Africa, Lester L. Short *et al.***
 1990, Proceedings of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Volume 4, No. 3
The latest comprehensive publication for Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

Where to watch birds in Africa, Nigel Wheatley

1995, Russel Friedman Books, ISBN 1-876091-02-5

contains useful information in the planning phase, but not essential to carry on the trip – there are no sufficiently detailed site descriptions or routes that require the original.

Distribution Atlas of Sudan's Birds with Notes on Habitat and Status, G. Nikolaus

1987, Bonner Zoologische Monographien, No 25, ISBN 3-925382-25-9

Virtually the only information on Sudan's birds.

The Birds of Britain & Europe, Hermann Heinzel *et al.*

1972, Collins, ISBN 00-212034-8

There are no doubt newer and better guides, but this proved better than none for assisting with the identification of the palearctic migrants found in Ethiopia. A European guide is recommended, as their ID information on migrants is better than any other African book.

A Field Guide to Zambian Birds not found in Southern Africa, Dylan Aspinwall & Carl Beel

1998, Zambian Ornithological Society, ISBN 9982-811-00-2

an excellent guide to be used as a supplement to the southern African guides (Newman's, Roberts, or Sasol).

Newman's Birds of Southern Africa, Kenneth Newman

1996, Southern Book Publishers, ISBN 1-86812-611-0

my favourite of the southern African guidebooks, which still covers nearly 50% of the species to be found in Ethiopia. Others may prefer the Sasol Birds of Southern Africa, or Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa. Useful if you are used to using one of these guides.

Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions, R. J. Dowsett & A. D. Forbes-Watson

1993, Tauraco Press, ISBN 2-87225-000-X

Useful for relatively updated information on species level distribution

Trip report - Ethiopia 24th October to 18th November 1996, Jon Hornbuckle

1996, African Bird Club

Adds little to Richard Webb's trip report, other than for different timing of the visit, so producing a slightly different species list

Ethiopia: In search of endemic birds: Julian Francis & Hadoram Shirihai

1999, Julian Francis, ISBN 0-9534762-0-1

excellent information on the endemics, with good photographs.

Animals

→ **A Field Guide to the Mammals of Africa, Theodor Haltenorth & Helmut Diller**

1980, Collins, ISBN 0 00 219778 2

I haven't found a better compact book covering the larger mammals of the continent.

Maps

→ **North East Africa & Arabia - Michelin map # 954 - scale 1:4 000 000**

People who haven't travelled extensively in Africa might think that the scale is inappropriate. However, all viable roads are marked, and I would not suggest using the "minor tracks" marked - in many cases they don't even exist.

Central & South Africa - Michelin map # 955 - scale 1:4 000 000

Essential if side-trips are planned on the way north, although not really necessary in order to reach Nairobi (i.e. the southern limit of map #954).

Ethiopia: Ethiopian Mapping Agency - scale 1:2 000 000

I found that this map contained no more useful or up-to-date information than the Michelin map, with the sole exception of the road from Dilbe to Lalibela (which is now closed anyway).

Tapes

Steve Smith's Bird Recordings from Ethiopia (1996)

Approximately 50 species to be found in Ethiopia, including many of the endemics.

Guy Gibbon's Southern African Bird Sounds (1991)

Approximately 900 species found in southern Africa - many of which also occur in Ethiopia.

Federation of Ontario Naturalists Birds of the African Rain Forests

Covers a few forest species that can be found in Ethiopia

While I took all the above and listened to them on the drive northwards, I never found it necessary to refer to them while in Ethiopia - any bird heard calling proved easy to see within minutes - so there was no point in luring any of them out with a tape.

GPS reference points

OVERNIGHT LOCATIONS: (key to facilities on Page 13)

Location	Northing	Easting	Facilities
Johannesburg	S26° 02' 59.2"	E 28° 01' 1.3"	
Orange Grove Hotel, Chinhoyi	S 17° 21' 30.1"	E 30° 11' 0.5"	SH TF LO
Forest Inn, Mkushi	S 13° 43' 19.6"	E 29° 9' 25.2"	SH TF BC FM LI CO
Kapishya, Shiwa Ngandu	S 11° 10' 10.5"	E 31° 35' 59.9"	SH! TL BC FM CO LO
Riverside campsite, Iringa	S 7° 47' 50.9"	E 35° 47' 47.1"	SH TL BC LI
Masai campsite, Arusha	S 3° 23' 6.3"	E 36° 43' 12.9"	SH TF BC FM LI CO
Bomen Hotel, Isiolo	N 0° 21' 48.3"	E 37° 35' 1.3"	AM SH TF BC FB
Abdul #2 campsite, Marsabit NP	N 2° 19' 12.6"	E 37° 59' 37.2"	SC TL CO
<bush> near Yavello, Yavello	N 4° 32' 22.3"	E 38° 15' 45.5"	nil
Wabe Shebele #2 Hotel, Lake Awasa	N 7° 2' 55.6"	E 38° 27' 34.1"	TL BC
Beke Mola Hotel, Langano	N 7° 32' 55.4"	E 38° 41' 3.1"	SH TF BC FB LO
Sanford English School, Addis Ababa	N 9° 2' 9.2"	E 38° 46' 21.1"	
<bush> in Jemmu Valley	N 9° 54' 47.3"	E 38° 55' 30"	nil
Helen Hotel, Debre Birhan	N 9° 41' 1.4"	E 39° 32' 28.7"	AB SC TF BC FB
Bekele Mola Hotel, Nazret	N 8° 31' 57.8"	E 39° 17' 37.7"	AM SC TF BC
Hippo campsite, Awash NP	N 8° 50' 51.7"	E 40° 0' 17"	nil
Auberge du Palmeriae, Dikhil	N 11° 6' 25.5"	E 42° 22' 27.1"	AB SC TF BC FB
Dittilou Tourist Camp, Forêt du Day	N 11° 46' 51.6"	E 42° 41' 34.2"	SC TL
<bush> near Tadjoura	N 11° 34' 37.1"	E 42° 30' 35.2"	nil
Menelik Hotel, Djibouti city	N 11° 35' 42.2"	E 43° 8' 47.9"	AG SH TF BC FM
Total Garage, Logia	N 11° 39' 17"	E 40° 57' 23.2"	TL BC
<bush> near Lake Heyk	N 11° 20' 17.1"	E 39° 41' 27.8"	nil
Seven Olives Hotel, Lalibela	N 12° 2' 7.6"	E 39° 2' 50.3"	SH TF BC FB
Gorgora Hotel, Gorgora	N 12° 14' 18.9"	E 37° 18' 4.9"	AM SH TF BC FB
Sankaba campsite, Simien	N 13° 13' 55.6"	E 38° 2' 16.4"	TL LI
Tana Hotel, Bahir Dar	N 11° 36' 11.4"	E 37° 23' 40.5"	SH TF BC FM LI CO
<bush> near River Anger	N 9° 41' 45.6"	E 36° 38' 11.6"	nil
Wanza Hotel, Addis Ababa	N 9° 0' 21.4"	E 38° 46' 8"	AM SH TF BC
Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa	N 9° 1' 8.7"	E 38° 45' 52"	AG SH TF BC FG
<bush> near Bedele	N 8° 21' 34"	E 36° 13' 44"	nil
<bush> near Gambela	N 8° 9' 34.2"	E 34° 35' 8.1"	nil
Ghibe Hotel, Jima	N 7° 40' 30"	E 36° 50' 6.6"	AM SH TF BC FM
Nechisar river camp, Nechisar NP	N 5° 59' 49.1"	E 37° 34' 20.9"	nil
<bush> in Nechisar Plains	N 5° 57' 59.8"	E 37° 39' 22.6"	nil
Wabe Shebele, Wondo Genet	N 7° 5' 0.9"	E 38° 38' 14.7"	SH TF BC LI CO
<bush> near Robe	N 7° 10' 22.2"	E 39° 58' 34.7"	nil
<bush> on Sanetti Plateau	N 6° 53' 21.1"	E 39° 54' 34.1"	nil
<bush> near Negele	N 5° 17' 52.7"	E 39° 39' 21.2"	TL
Beke Mola Hotel, Moyale	N 3° 32' 41"	E 39° 2' 55.8"	AM SH TF BC
Abdul #2 campsite, Marsabit NP	N 2° 19' 12.6"	E 37° 59' 37.2"	SC TL CO
Timau River, Mt Kenya	N 0° 3' 51.4"	E 37° 13' 27.5"	SH TF BC FM LI CO
Riverside campsite, Iringa	S 7° 47' 50.9"	E 35° 47' 47.1"	SH TL BC LI
<bush> near Isoka	S 10° 6' 31.8"	E 32° 40' 40.5"	nil
Horizon Hotel, Kabwe	S 14° 26' 27.5"	E 28° 26' 39.6"	AB SC TF BC FB
Orange Grove Hotel, Chinhoyi	S 17° 21' 30.1"	E 30° 11' 0.5"	SH TF LO
Johannesburg	S 26° 02' 59.2"	E 28° 01' 1.3"	

OTHER CAMPSITE NOTED ON THE ROUTE

Facilities given where I have previously camped there - (key to facilities on Page 13)

Location	Northing	Easting	Facilities	Description
Africo???, Arusha, Tanzania	S 3° 22' 2.6"	E 36° 43' 29.8"		Unknown
Andrews Motel, Lusaka, Zambia	S 15° 28' 47.4"	E 28° 15' 28.1"	SH TF BC FM LO	Campsite next to good hotel
Badeco ??? Hotel, Msata, Tanzania	S 6° 20' 0.8"	E 38° 23' 22.5"		Campsite next to hotel
Caves Motel, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe	S 17° 21' 23.9"	E 30° 7' 43.7"		Campsite next to hotel
Clouds End Hotel, Louis Trichardt, SA	S 23° 0' 37.1"	E 29° 55' 35.8"		Campsite next to good hotel
Coffee, Lembeni, Tanzania	S 3° 27' 28.6"	E 37° 32' 7.2"		Unknown
Eagle Nest Lodge, Kariba, Zambia	S 16° 32' 8.6"	E 28° 43' 44.6"	SH TF BC FM LI CO	Nice place to stay
Estate ???, Mikumi, Tanzania	S 7° 24' 26.1"	E 36° 58' 22.3"		Unknown
Eureka, Lusaka, Zambia	S 15° 30' 15.3"	E 28° 15' 34.7"	SC TF BC	Good facilities
Fringi???, Lusaka, Zambia	S 15° 0' 22.6"	E 28° 9' 16.9"		Campsite next to hotel
Genesis, Mikumi, Tanzania	S 7° 23' 51.3"	E 36° 59' 46.5"		Unknown
Karoi, Karoi, Zimbabwe	S 16° 49' 14.7"	E 29° 41' 22.5"		Unknown
Kasanka NP, Kasanka, Zambia	S 12° 29' 49.5"	E 30° 4' 51.3"	SC TL	Typical national park
Kilime???, Arusha, Tanzania	S 3° 20' 36.6"	E 36° 38' 42.3"		Unknown
Kisola???, Iringa, Tanzania	S 8° 8' 16.9"	E 35° 24' 36"		Reportedly good
Kundalila Falls, Kundalila, Zambia	S 13° 4' 12.7"	E 30° 38' 0.6"		Unknown
Lake Assal, Lake Assal, Djibouti	N 11° 31' 36"	E 42° 29' 0.9"		Unknown
Lion & Elephant Hotel, Bubi, Zimbabwe	S 21° 42' 25.7"	E 30° 29' 59.8"		Campsite next to hotel
Lwamba, Nakonde, Zambia	S 9° 21' 6.7"	E 32° 44' 58"	TL BC CO	OK for transit
Melela???, Morogoro, Tanzania	S 6° 58' 16.2"	E 37° 16' 55.7"		Unknown
Menagesha-Suba FR, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	N 8° 57' 50"	E 38° 32' 35.3"	Water tap only	Typical national park
Messina, Messina, SA	S 22° 21' 33.8"	E 30° 2' 2.3"		Unknown
Mikumi NP, Mikumi, Tanzania	S 7° 20' 55.9"	E 37° 8' 6.5"	TL	Outrageously expensive
Mountain ???, Mombo, Tanzania	S 5° 9' 47.6"	E 38° 27' 30.4"		Unknown
<not named>, Nakonde, Zambia	S 9° 21' 10.7"	E 32° 43' 26.3"	TL CO	Appears abandoned
Namanga, Namanga, Kenya	S 2° 32' 39.8"	E 36° 47' 20.2"		Unknown
Naromo???, Mt Kenya, Kenya	S 0° 15' 6.7"	E 37° 0' 45.4"		Unknown
Oldoin???, Namanga, Kenya	S 2° 28' 27.3"	E 36° 50' 33.3"		Unknown
O. N. A., Namanga, Kenya	S 2° 31' 58.8"	E 36° 48' 59.5"		Unknown
Otter Bay, Kafue, Zambia	S 15° 52' 51.6"	E 28° 18' 20.6"		Unknown
Pangan???, Same, Tanzania	S 4° 37' 12.4"	E 38° 0' 47.2"		Unknown
Rangel???, Mt Kenya, Kenya	N 0° 17' 27.9"	E 37° 33' 34.7"		Unknown
River Motel, Kafue, Zambia	S 15° 48' 21.2"	E 28° 12' 39.6"		Unknown
Spring???, Karoi, Zimbabwe	S 16° 47' 33.1"	E 29° 39' 3.5"		Unknown
Sweetwaters, Mkushi, Zambia	S 13° 33' 24.9"	E 29° 38' 50.6"		Reportedly good
Tanzanite Hotel, Arusha, Tanzania	S 3° 22' 9.1"	E 36° 51' 59.8"		Unknown

NOTE: Where there are ???, this indicates that I noted the first 6 letters of the name as the GPS identification, but can't remember what the rest was!

OTHER KEY POINTS

1st turnoff to Masai campsite, Arusha, Tanzania	S 3° 21' 55.8"	E 36° 42' 25.8"
2nd turnoff to Masai campsite, Arusha, Tanzania	S 3° 22' 37.4"	E 36° 42' 10.8"

KEY TO FACILITIES

AG = Accommodation - Good
AM = Accommodation - Medium
AB = Accommodation - Bad
SH = Showers - Hot
SC = Showers - Cold
TF = Toilets - flush
TL = Toilets - long-drop
BC = Beers - cold
BW = Beers - warm
FG = Food - gourmet
FM = Food - average
FB = Food - basic
24 = 24 hour service
LI = Lighting provided
CO = Cover for rain
LO = part of Lodge / hotel

Estimate of costs incurred

This is a rough summary of the costs incurred on the trip (in US dollars)

Preparation of Landrover prior to departure	\$ 1 400	Servicing	\$ 200
		4 new springs, shackles, U-bolts, etc	\$ 500
		4 new tyres	\$ 500
		Assorted spares	\$ 200
Consumables taken from S. Africa	\$ 500	Canned food, gas, paraffin, oil, etc	\$ 500
Documents obtained in S. Africa	\$ 750	Visas, carnets, license, medical insurance	\$ 750
Documents on trip	\$ 200	Permits, road tax, insurance, visa	\$ 200
Travel costs	\$ 2 300	Petrol	\$ 2 000
		Hotels	\$ 150
		Restaurants	\$ 150
Repairs to Landrover	\$ 1 350	Welding shackle in Marsabit	\$ 50
		Fixing brakes in Shashamene	\$ 20
		Re-welding shackles in Addis Ababa	\$ 150
		Replacing rear drive shafts in Addis Ababa	\$ 750
		Repairing roof in Dese	\$ 50
		Welding front springs in Nekempte	\$ 20
		Re-welding front springs in Arba Minch	\$ 20
		Replacing both front springs in Moyale	\$ 200
		4 puncture repairs	\$ 10
		Replacing 2 U-bolts in Marsabit	\$ 65
		Replacing one pair shackles & 2 U-bolts in Johannesburg	\$ 15
Approximate total cost of trip	\$ 6 500		\$6 500

In summary, I spent \$ 2 650 in South Africa preparing for the trip. I took \$3 000 in cash to cover the expected expenses. In fact I spent \$ 2 500 in travel expenses, but the high additional cost of repairs destroyed my budget, and caused the problems in obtaining the additional money while in Ethiopia.

Currency table

As of mid-January 2000

Country – currency	Currency unit per US \$	Petrol price in local currency	Comments
South Africa – Rands	6.15	R 2.8	Credit cards cannot be used for petrol
Zimbabwe –Dollars	40	Z\$ 20	Credit cards can be used for petrol at most garages
Zambia – Kwacha	2100	ZKw 2000	Credit cards can only be used for petrol in Lusaka
Tanzania – Shillings	800	TSh 500	Credit cards not in use, even at banks
Kenya – Shillings	72	KSh 50	Credit cards can be used in Nairobi for petrol, and at any bank
Ethiopia – Birr	8	B 3	Only US\$ in cash or travellers cheques can be converted. Bank transfers take several weeks. No credit cards are accepted anywhere, except Hilton Hotel for accommodation. Strict currency control
Djibouti – Francs	175	DFr 160	Credit cards can only be used at banks and hotels, not for petrol.

NB: obviously the above will be out-of-date, but it should give indications of what sort of rates exist.

Highlights

Birds heard or seen on waking up - always a good way to start a day:

- Ross's Turaco – at Riverside campsite, Iringa, Tanzania
- Djibouti Francolin – on escarpment next to camp at Dittilou, Djibouti
- Stone Partridge – at least 5 individuals woke me up on 1 January 2000
- Yellow-fronted Parrot – very noisy over the campsite at Wondo Genet
- Mountain Nightjar – in the bush near Robe
- Simien Fox – noisily scuffling around my Landrover in the middle of the night on Sanetti Plateau

Views of animals and birds that I will remember for a long time:

- General - the tameness of almost all birds due to the fact that Ethiopians rarely eat any birds other than chickens, so hunting is rare
- Lammergeier - While I was watching over the escarpment of the Jemmu Valley, a Lammergeier approached me from behind and passed over only feet above my head. It then soared round nearby - I presume hoping that it's "attack" on me had pushed me over the edge!
- Djibouti harbour - the sheer number of birds that were lifers to me
- Walia Ibex - one of the rarest species in Ethiopia. We saw one sleeping on its side on the ground, but after a few minutes it got up and then wandered off. Although it was nearly a kilometre away, it seemed much nearer - probably because it was only 100m away horizontally - and about 1000m below the ridge where we were watching from
- Simien Fox - four animals seen just after dawn on the Sanetti Plateau were of such a beautiful colour in the frosted landscape
- Ruspoli's Turaco - after a long search, it was such somehow the most memorable lifer that I saw on the whole trip
- Elephant - not what one normally expects to meet when leaving the Zimbabwe customs office!

Scenic views that are hard to forget:

- Jemmu Valley - walking along the top of the escarpment gave amazing views, comparable to the Fish River Canyon (Namibia) and Grand Canyon (US)
- Fantalle Crater - although I arrived after dawn, the lava flows, the crater itself and the greenness of the vegetation were an unusual sight
- Gulf of Tadjoura - the vegetation-free black lava flows reaching right down to the azure blue sea was unlike anything I have seen before
- Blue Nile Falls - after a short walk, they were impressive, but not somehow not equal to the more accessible Victoria Falls, or the powerful Murchison Falls on the White Nile
- Simien Mountains - it is impossible to describe the eroded escarpments - the road passed along a narrow col only a 100 metres wide.
- Bale Mountains - the opportunity to drive up to a elevation of 4350 metres was something I wasn't going to miss. The vegetation changes were quite extraordinary

People who will be remembered:

- General - the Ethiopian people are incredibly friendly and pleasant as individuals, but soon becoming very wearing when in groups
- Steve Spawls - letting me stay for three nights, even though we had never met before, and providing me with a huge amount of information on the country, its people, fauna & flora
- Guard at Jemmu - this person, who was watching over my Landrover when I camped in the Jemmu Valley typified the rural peoples' attitude. He was armed with a rifle, with plenty of ammunition slung over his shoulder, but when I emerged from my tent, all he did was to walk down, shake me by the hand, and then vanished off into the bush - we were unable to exchange a word due to our language differences
- Truck drivers from Djibouti - who assisted me when I ran out of fuel
- Eshetu Bedane - proved to be an absolute mine of information on the local history, and made my visit to Lalibela such a wonderful experience
- Farmers at Negele - who wouldn't allow me to camp in the bush on the edge of their farm, but insisted I stay at their farmstead so they could guard me and the vehicle, while refusing any form of payment or gift.
- Dave Moyer - who was prepared to lend me a considerable sum of cash to get me out of Tanzania (perhaps that was his motivation?) and on to Zambia where I could use my credit card

Historical sights:

Lalibela monolithic & cave churches - Unique, you have to visit them yourself to understand what unbelievable structures they are

Small roadside "churches" - these miniature shelters which could only fit one person inside to pray, each with their silver cross and icon showed a greater level of religiousness than the largest European cathedrals

Gonder - The architectural style was not what one expects to find in Africa

Other memorable events:

Filwoha hot-springs - the setting amongst palms was beautiful, but I have never seen such clear blue water even in a swimming pool

Swimming in Gulf of Tadjoura - relaxing in the humid climate

Eaten by flies in Gambella - it was extremely hot and humid, and the flies only left at dusk, to be replaced by mosquitoes. Thankfully it was mid-winter

Wondo Genet hot-springs - lazing in this hot water - which at the source was uncomfortably hot - I was still able to see Sharpe's Starling - a lifer

Frozen on Bale - I have never been so cold in my life. While it was still warm enough to wear shorts at 17:00, by 19:00 it was below freezing, and the temperature continued dropping. When I woke up the tent was frozen solid, and I had to leave it for a few hours in the sun before it could be packed - even by 09:00, when driving down, I found one puddle on the road with ½" of ice still on it.

Impressions of the countries

These are limited to travelling conditions for most, with a more detailed description of Ethiopia and Djibouti.

South Africa

In many respects, South Africa is very easy to travel through, with plenty of petrol stations and 24-hour fast food restaurants on the main roads. The only problem is that it is not possible to buy petrol or diesel with a credit card. South African banks issue special "petrol" credit cards, which can be used, but this facility is restricted to South African bank account holders. Potholes are rare, unless a road is undergoing major resurfacing, and diversions exist.

Zimbabwe

All major roads are tarred and virtually pothole-free. Petrol is (was) freely available, and most large garages accept credit cards. However, days after I left, Zimbabwe hit a fuel crisis, with virtually no petrol or diesel being available, and some commentators expect this to remain for the remainder of 2000.

There are very rarely road-blocks, although radar speed-trapping is used. If there is a road-block, they will require papers, and carry out some basic checks on lights, brakes, etc.

Zambia

The main road from Zimbabwe to Tanzania is fully tarred, although with potholes - some serious - in places. Petrol & diesel are freely available in the south, and a credit card can be used at some garages in Lusaka. However, from Serenje northwards, no fuel is available on the main road itself. It is available in Mpika and Isoka, but these towns are reached via unsign-posted side-roads.

Road-blocks are common at all major junctions, and papers may be requested. However, at most road-blocks you will simply be asked where you have come from, and where you are going.

Tanzania

The main road from Zambia to Kenya is tarred, and generally in good condition. Petrol is available, but there are few garages along the route. None accept credit cards yet (although there are a few in Dar-es-Salaam, and they are likely to spread quickly).

There are road-blocks at major intersections, but most vehicles are waved through without requiring you to stop. You must however slow down, and be prepared to stop if required. Radar speed traps exist.

Kenya

Kenyan roads are, in general, in an appalling state of repair. Tanzania to the south and Ethiopia to the north are both poorer countries, but their roads are better maintained than Kenya's. Petrol and diesel are freely available, and credit cards can be used in Nairobi.

A "convoy" system runs from Isiolo northwards, but while I was there it was on a very informal basis. Occasionally they step up security, and may even close the road altogether.

The major surprise to me was the dramatic reduction in fees within the national parks. They used to be the same as Tanzania, but are now far lower.

Ethiopia

To someone from southern Africa, Ethiopia is not "African". It has a large population of around 60m - at least 50% more than South Africa. The vast majority of its population is rural, and towns (other than Addis Ababa) appear to survive on markets and a few shops. I doubt that any town outside Addis Ababa has a population of over 50 000. This is probably due to the lack of industrialization. An curious example of this is the fact that virtually every branch of the Commercial bank uses computers, yet nowhere are credit cards usable - and international bank transfers take weeks.

While there is little sign of any real wealth - even in Addis Ababa - there are equally few signs of abject poverty (although I didn't visit the Ogaden). It just appears that everyone lives on the land, and that self-sufficiency is the key to survival. Only in the area to the north of the Bale mountains did I see any mechanical

harvesting equipment in the form of tractors and combine harvesters. Elsewhere, large fields of teff were harvested by hand, and threshed on the ground by cattle or horses.

There were few signs of any transport system for goods, and the only products I was aware of that were traded internationally were the coffee exports and fuel imports. All other vehicles on the roads were busses. Private cars hardly exist outside Addis Ababa, and there were some 4x4 vehicles seen in rural areas, generally the local taxis.

Throughout the rural areas, the majority of men carry rifles. However, throughout my whole trip, no-one ever pointed one at me, nor was I threatened by anyone. Theft was not an issue that ever concerned me, even when I had to leave my Landrover with two side windows missing. The general attitude of the population, if one was walking in the bush - or in any environment outside tourist areas or a vehicle - was of assistance. Even in towns, if children or beggars started to surround one asking for money, etc, invariably people would try and push them away. However, when driving through towns, in the northern parts, large numbers of people would often shout "You". Curiously this was a crowd reaction - individuals rarely did this, nor was it common south of Addis Ababa (and never in Addis itself).

There was little sign of the Italian colonial period other than the fact that western food offered in hotels was usually based on pasta. In Addis Ababa there were a number of Italian and Greek expatriates, but they didn't seem to dominate any field other than restaurants.

Overall, I felt that Ethiopia was a country that was truly at ease with itself - it worked at its own pace, was proud of its achievements, and was trying to overcome its problems. Aid agencies weren't in evidence, yet a whole varieties of projects were underway, usually involving large number so the local population. Sometimes they are overconfident, and always know the answer - rarely listening to advice or suggestions. However, the religious side of the country is very strong - and the number of pilgrims to be found around Lalibela was quite remarkable.

Overall, Ethiopia is a country that needs to be explored, and the longer one can dedicate to the process the better. It is so different from Kenya and the other countries to the south that it takes time to begin to understand the differences.

Djibouti

Djibouti was totally different from Ethiopia in virtually every respect. The country remains a French colony, even if they pretend otherwise. The differences between the expatriates and the locals couldn't have been more odious. The locals live in very basic huts, while the French live in huge mansions - especially along the east coast. There are hundreds of taxis looking for hire, while there seemed to be very few mini-buses able to carry the locals. I didn't see any local driving a vehicle (other than a taxi), yet there were hundreds of new 4x4 vehicles. Shops in the centre of Djibouti didn't stock local goods, only French haut couture and other imported goods. In the local hotels and restaurants, even the butter is imported from France.

It appeared there were two Djibouti's. The local one living in abject poverty, with no agriculture, no industry and no hope. The other one is dominated by French Foreign Legion camps (I passed 5 in half an hour driving round Djibouti city) and commerce orientated entirely towards the expatriate community. It was also noticeable that the road to the local beaches was tarred and in excellent condition, yet they were now resurfacing sections of the road - while the major trading route to Ethiopia was in serious disrepair, with no effort to repair it.

Prices for even the basics were at least 3 times higher than in Ethiopia. Beggars in the city centre weren't selling food or cigarettes as is the norm in the rest of southern and eastern Africa, they were selling postcards! On arriving in at the Menelik Hotel, over 10 different people tried to sell me postcards. Why was nothing else being offered? I just got the feeling that the African Renaissance was passing by Djibouti, and that the French were happy to have locked the country into a '60s culture.

This is not a country I felt happy in, and have no intention of returning to - unless the country achieves its independence in the near future.

Recommendations

Take a diesel-engined vehicle. Diesel is more easily obtainable, and generally cheaper. Fuel economy is generally better as well, so the vehicle's range is increased.

Ensure that the vehicle has independent fuel tanks, so that should one become damaged, it is possible to use the others - not as easy with diesel as with petrol.

Ensure that the vehicle has a fuel capacity for at least 1000 km.

Take a full toolkit, with all the necessary tools required for the vehicle.

Take plenty of spares and repair supplies (including wire, bolts, gasket tape, welding rods, etc).

Take a minimum of three jacks if using leaf springs.

Take a GPS.

Allow for a multitude of spellings of place-names. Pairs such as Yabelo or Yavello, or Nekempte or Neqept are all common.

Ask locals to confirm route, in sign language if necessary - there are no signposts.

When asking directions from locals, try many different pronunciations - it is not only their spelling that is non-standard, one person may pronounce a name one way, such that if you repeat it faithfully in the next village, you will get a blank look. For example "Gore" was pronounced "Gor" or "Gorey - people who used one, couldn't recognize the other.

Take a good supply of drinking water, and a filter or other water-purification system. No "clean" water was available, even in Addis Ababa.

Take an adequate supply of tinned food, since none is available outside of a few shops in Addis Ababa, and fresh food does not keep long.

Drive slowly, and don't expect to cover more than 300 km per day at best in Ethiopia.

On tar watch the side of road to spot potholes - people drive onto the shoulder to drive round the potholes (also works in Zambia and Kenya). This is often more reliable for trying to spot potholes at a distance.

In Ethiopia, don't drive in other vehicle's wheel tracks - while this is sound advice to the south, in Ethiopia, the odds are that the vehicle will be a large truck, with a higher clearance than even a 4x4. This means that you will regularly hit rocks.

Don't expect facilities at camp sites - or even campsites. It is usually possible to camp at government hotels, but camping facilities are only provided at Lake Langano.

Take plenty of cash or travellers cheques - don't rely on credit cards or transfers from overseas.

Change money "legally" in Ethiopia. Only consider using the black-market if entering Ethiopia on weekend - otherwise the banks are cheaper.

Acknowledgements

Several people provided me information both before and during the trip, especially Steve Spawls, Mengistu Wondafrash and Tadesse W Mariam, the latter two from the Ethiopian Wildlife & Natural History Society. I was also given advice from Hilary & Geoff Welch on Djibouti, and Peter Ryan provided an extensive list of where to look for virtually all Ethiopian species - which provides much of the basis for the details of the list of species not seen. A host of others who were contacted through the SA Birdnet also contributed. For details on this excellent list-server, see www.birdlife.co.za

I am also indebted to Dave Moyer for lending me the additional cash in Tanzania, and to Jan Otto, the General Manager of Coca-Cola in Ethiopia - who was seconded from South Africa -and was able to change some Rands for me, as well as to the man from the UN (whose name I forgot to write down), who was able to change some Kenyan Shillings.

If I can assist anyone who is planning such a trip, I will be most willing to help with advice, and can be contacted by E-mail on gmulholl@gautengleg.gov.za.