

Do you have Job's patience and Solomon's wisdom?

On a self-drive tour of Africa you can't spend all day spotting birds and taking pictures. Some days you spend crossing borders, chatting with crabby traffic officials and dodging potholes. **Villiers Steyn** and **J.I. de Wet** are tested to the extreme on the third shift of their trip to the Serengeti.

So far, Villiers and J.I.'s 70-day trip to the Serengeti has gone without serious incident. The second shift through eastern Botswana and Zimbabwe was filled with game and adrenalin.

But Africa isn't just moonlight, roses, fishing expeditions and lazy prides of lions. In Zambia and Tanzania they nearly had their comeuppance – its called corruption. And en route they had to drive through and around a few potholes.

From Victoria Falls through Zambia to Morogoro, Tanzania (6 days, 2403 km)

Day 13 Show me the money

It's just after eight and it feels as if Schalk Burger used my body as a tackle bag yesterday. The white-water rafting has put us through the mill. But sore chests are not our only problem.

On the Zambian side of the Victoria Falls border post an unfriendly official refuses to accept American dollars as payment for carbon tax – this after his two friendlier colleagues had no problem when we paid the road tax and third-party insurance in US dollars.

The only place where we'll get Zambian kwacha now, is from the dodgy money changers in the parking area, but we're afraid we might land in jail if we

Concentrate now. The Great North Road in Zambia, especially the part north of the village of Serenje, is full of crater-sized potholes.

change dollars here on the border. In desperation we convince one of the friendlier officials to do it for us.

"Hmm, I see you've made a quick visit to the local bank," Old Grumpy remarks, having finally developed a sense of humour when we pay the carbon tax in kwacha.

"TIA, my friend, TIA," J.I. reminds me as we walk back to the car. Indeed, This is Africa, and we have to get used to it that this is not a simple little jaunt down to Cape Town.

Eight hours later, near Lusaka, Africa deals us another blow, this time below

the belt. I'm pulled over for speeding – 73 km/h in a 65 zone – and that after I've made doubly sure I stayed within the speed limit. Of course the traffic official has already erased my reading from his camera. Now it's my word against his.

"You can either pay cash now or go and defend yourself in court tomorrow," a woman explains from the back seat of an air-conditioned BMW that she has turned into her "office". Forty-five American dollars and a few silent swear words later, we push on.

Day 14-15 The mother of all shifts

We spend two lazy nights with friends in Lusaka, and the good company, homemade lasagne, clean washing and a Debonairs pizza are a small price to pay for having to share a double bed. But now it's time to cross Zambia.

Initially we planned to spend the night with researchers in North Luangwa, but a crisis forces them to go to Lusaka. We decide to push through to the Kapishya Hot Springs in northern Zambia, a whopping 793 km leg on the Great North Road. After 11 hours on the road we decide it should rather be renamed the Almost Undrivable North Road.

Initially, the tar road looks like the N1 – in good condition with clear road markings and a wide shoulder – but north of the village Serenje things change dramatically.

If you'd thought the potholes in Van Niekerk Street, Vryburg, were impressive, wait till you see this place. Potholes the size of DSTV dishes force us >

Lessons from the third leg

Make sure you can see. Don't tackle the roads of Zambia and Tanzania in the dark. There are far too many potholes and people in the road.

Beware. Be extra careful if you see one of Tanzania's colourful buses. These drivers are much worse than South African taxi drivers. They won't hesitate to push you off the road if there are potholes in their lane.

Phone a friend. Ask the owner of the camp you're staying in whether he knows of a good place to spend the night at your next destination. First-hand information is always the best and most up to date.

Swap your tent for a bed. It's amazing what a comfortable night or two does. Spoil yourself by staying in a guesthouse or cheap hotel at least once every two weeks, or stay with friends.

to zigzag across the road. Then things become ridiculous. The road changes into a muddy battlefield with potholes, or rather craters, the size of my Hilux. J.I. and I christen them the Truck Roller, Tyre Eater and Bottomless Pit as we crawl past the craters one by one.

To break our speed even more, we are stopped at roadblocks before and after every village. Just about every official asks for “gifts” – magazines, food, drinks and even one of my cameras. Fortunately, all our documents are in order and it only costs us two packets of cookies and a handful of sweets to get through.

South of Mpika I see a man with an enormous white umbrella under a tree. Or wait... it's a mushroom! We quickly page through the Bradt guide to get more information and realise it's the world's biggest mushroom (*Termitomyces tianicus*). With an edible head of up to one metre in diameter it's easily one of the most impressive things I've ever seen.

We finally arrive at Kapishya Hot Springs at 5.30 pm. The fort-like entrance road leaves us speechless and helps us to forget about the poor Great North Road. Exhausted, we pitch our tent next to the Manshya River.

Day 16 Heaven on earth – until we're washed away

Today we sleep late. After breakfast we wander down to the hot spring, where we spend most of the day. The cool, cloudy weather makes it even nicer to lie in the steaming water.

This little spring might not be as popular as the Makgadikgadi Pans or the Victoria Falls, but it's easily just as impressive. The water is crystal clear and stays at 40°C all year round. What's more, it doesn't smell of rotten eggs.

You're surrounded by a lush forest of raffia palms that lure Ross's turaco and other rare bird species. It's moments like these that make this tour, with all its challenges, worthwhile.

Just after 4 pm J.I. lights a fire. Thank goodness for the gas bottle extension, because not even two bags of Blitz would get the damp wood burning.

Soon the rain forces us to build a corrugated iron awning over the fire. But then it starts bucketing down and J.I. and I flee for the shelter of one of the palm-leaf

Lick your lips so long. On the turnoff to Kapishya Hot Springs in Zambia. It compensates for the frustration of getting there.

awnings. Drenched and ravenous, we manage to salvage a few coals – just enough for a collapsed pot bread and a piece of boerewors each.

While we try to dry ourselves by the fire, we realise this trip is not for sissies. It has rained 150 mm in the past three hours and with all the potholes, road blocks and corrupt traffic cops we were sorely tested the past two days.

Fortunately, we survived and now Africa can throw anything our way. We'll survive that too, not so?

Day 17 A chilly welcome in Tanzania

A good friend had warned us against Tunduma, the border post between Zambia and Tanzania. “That place is crazy. There are hundreds of people all around you, and everyone wants to be your agent.”

Now, five hours after we've left Kapishya, Tunduma is barely 3 km ahead. A seemingly endless line of trucks blocks the left-hand lane, and a seemingly endless stream of traffic flows in the right-hand lane. Finally, a group of men tell us to cross over to the right-hand lane, onto the opposite pavement and to follow them to the border post.

The next twenty minutes take an eternity to pass, and feel like something out of a story book. All around us are vehicles, bicycles and people. We're driving in a non-existent lane, sometimes headlong into the traffic, and squeeze the Hilux into gaps it was never made to fit into. As we progress, the group of men in front of us keeps growing.

Our friend was right: everybody wants to be our agent. We realise that we won't get through here without help and choose the only man with a button-down shirt before getting out. “You will help us!” I try to sound confident. I offer the man 15 US dollar to lead us through Tunduma and so we agree – Nixon will be our agent.

Tunduma is not like other border posts with a definite building or counter for immigration, police, customs or insurance. No, here the respective officials all sit far removed from one another in hidden, unmarked offices. Here you don't have a hope of getting through without local help.

With Nixon on our side we get through the Zambian side in a jiffy, but just as we're starting to feel grateful that everything's going so smoothly, we hit a snag. A customs official on the Tanzanian side (who types SMSes and chews gum while you talk to him) refuses to stamp



Stay the day. The hot-water fountain at the Kapishya Hot Springs in northeastern Zambia. A palm forest around the crystal clear water attracts rare bird species. You could spend all day here.

SERENGETI TRIP: PART 3



Welcome in Tanzania. All the way from Tunduma on the border to the town of Morogoro north of Selous you see people in bright colours on the roadside.

our SARS form with all the camera gear and electronic equipment. Apparently we have to pay a kind of deposit to the value of all the gear in the vehicle at the border post – an amount we can only get back once we leave Tanzania in a month's time. Our friend was right. This place is crazy.

Finally, I relent and leave the situation to Nixon. After all, he is our agent and I am intending to pay him for his services. After a pleading session with the woman and a 20 US dollar bribe we finally get our stamp, but not before we show her every single piece of equipment on the list (16 in total). This time it's Nixon who shrugs: "TIA guys, TIA."

Minutes before the border post closes and almost R2000 later, we enter Tanzania. We arrive at the Karibuni Centre in Mbeya after dark – hungry, tense and knackered. Another day and another African challenge behind us.

Day 18 The first appetiser to the Serengeti

The aim of the previous shift was to cover a lot of ground and today we have another 660 km ahead. We head for Morogoro north of Selous, the next game park on our list of 12. We progress slowly on the main road through Tanzania.

We still encounter road blocks before and after every village and believe me, there are lots of villages. With a speed limit of 50 km/h (and in places even 30 km/h) in built-up areas and more speed bumps than you can count, we might have moved faster on foot.

The highlight of the day is the stretch of road through the Udzungwa Mountains National Park and after that the Mikumi National Park. We see 30 elephants, a herd of giraffes, a few families of warthogs and, of course, a troop of baboons on the roadside.

To save money we spend the night at the Masuka Village Hotel in Morogoro –

it has the cheapest double rooms in town. The rooms look clean, but tonight the kitchen only has chicken on the menu. We drive around the corner to Mama Pierina's Restaurant, where we enjoy steak and chips. J.I. lifts a Serengeti, one of Tanzania's local beers: "To the Serengeti Trip! The great trek is behind us and we survived. Tomorrow we set foot in Selous."

In the next issue: We visit Africa's biggest game park, Selous, eat samoosas on a snow-white beach south of Dar es Salaam, get a tummy bug in the shadow of Kilimanjaro and spend an unforgettable day with the Masai. >

Beware the road blocks

Africa is littered with road blocks and corrupt traffic officials. In Tanzania, you're usually stopped before and after every village.

In a typical conversation the official firstly wants to know where you're from and where you're headed.

Then he tries to find a transgression. You're asked for third-party insurance forms, vehicle registration papers, your driver's licence, the fire extinguisher...

If you're on the road legally, you're finally asked for a gift. If I'd received R100 for every time I'd heard the words, "What did you bring

me from..." , J.I. and I would have spent every night in a fancy lodge.

Don't allow them to intimidate you, but be polite and patient. We usually answered: "Oh, sorry. We didn't know that we'd find you here." That usually did the trick.

The officials are usually looking for money or something to eat or drink. If you want to save yourself time and efforts, keep a big bag of sweets nearby and give a few as a "gift" every time they ask for it.

It also helps to play dumb and pretend you don't really understand English.



This is where we stayed

Kapishya Hot Springs, Zambia

Where? 793 km northeast of Lusaka, ±32 km off the T2 highway.

Cost? ZK50 000 (R70) per person per night camping

Facilities: The campsite is on the bank of a river and has green lawns with braais at every stand. Wood is free. There are a few convenient gazebos with tables, benches and basins. The ablution block has flush toilets and donkey showers. The main camp has a restaurant, bar, TV and weak wi-fi internet signal, as well as a pool.

Contact: Mark Harvey on +260 (0)97 697 0444; kapishya@shiwafaris.com; www.shiwafaris.com/kaishya.html

Drive Out says: If you're driving to Tanzania on Zambia's Great North Road (the T2), spend at least two nights at Kapishya. You would want to spend a full day in the hot spring.

Karibuni Centre, Tanzania

Where? In Mbeya, in southwestern Tanzania

Cost? Ts3000 (R13) per person per night camping. A variety of rooms are also available.

Facilities: Very basic with simple rooms and a lawn for tents. The communal bathrooms have oriental squatting toilets and no hot water. There is a small restaurant.

Contact: +255 (0)25 250 3035;

www.twiga.ch/TZ/karibunicenter.htm

Drive Out says: The Karibuni Centre is a safe overnight place for travellers with a small budget.

Masuka Village Hotel, Tanzania

Where? In Morogoro, ±200 km west of Dar es Salaam.

Cost? Ts15 000 (R66) per night for a double room with mosquito nets, hot shower and standard flush toilet.

Facilities: A small bar with a pool table.

Contact: +255 (0)754 280223

Drive Out says: Although the rooms are very basic, it's good value for money.

Gear: All the necessary equipment

The greatest cause of stress before an African tour is probably the uncertainty over which documents you need and what it'll cost. Here is a summary of the vital documentation and cost as well as a list of other items you shouldn't forget.



Is there enough room in your passport? Ensure your passport is valid for at least six months after your tour ends, and that you have enough pages left for stamps (at least five for a tour similar to this one). If you don't have a passport, apply at least three months before your departure to ensure you receive it in time.

Use the AA. The best place to start is the AA. Ask for a print-out of their Crossborder Information form. It contains valuable information about visas, health risks and border documents for all Southern and East African countries. While you're there, apply for the following documents:

International driver's licence: It costs R284. Bring your passport, driver's licence and two passport photos.

Carnet de Passages en Douane (CPD): It costs R2800 for 10 pages,

and includes a deposit of R500. Bring copies of your ID and vehicle registration papers. We used it at the border posts in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi.

You can also buy ZA stickers and red-and-silver reflective tape from the AA. The latter is compulsory in Zambia and Zimbabwe (two silver rectangles on the front bumper and two red rectangles at the back).

Drive Out says: The CPD may be expensive, but it saves you a lot of trouble (and possibly also money) at the border posts.

International vaccination certificate. A doctor at a travel clinic will be able to tell you which vaccinations you need for which countries. Get this process going early on, because some vaccinations are only valid after the second inoculation. I got the following vaccinations: yellow fever (compulsory in Tanzania and Zambia),

hepatitis A and B, typhoid, pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus, polio and cholera.

The first round of vaccinations cost me R2030. Boosters, which extend the immunity periods of some vaccinations, are available for these vaccinations after your return.

Drive Out says: Visit the AA and the travel clinic on the same day – at least two months before your departure.

And what else?

Some countries require that you take extra equipment along. In Zambia and Malawi two emergency triangles are compulsory, and a fire extinguisher and one reflective vest per person are recommended.

Also remember to take the following documents along:

- Your vehicle's original registration documents.
- A police clearance for your vehicle.
- A list of all your electronic equipment and serial numbers for the SARS customs form.
- A laminated copy of your passport, licences and vaccination certificate.
- Proof of vehicle insurance cover during your journey.

Here's how you tackle a border post

If you tackle it at the right time, passing through an African border post can be a good experience. Here are a few tips:

The earlier the better. Spend the night before as close as possible to the next border post. If you leave early in the morning, you're calmer and less rushed.

Show me the money. You'll struggle to get Zambian and Malawian kwacha or Tanzanian shillings in South Africa. Ask the men on the roadside within 5 km from the border. They are less intimidating than the hordes at the border post itself. Change just enough to cover your border costs and next tank of fuel and draw the rest at the next ATM. Make sure they don't cheat you on the exchange rate or validity of the notes.

Be prepared. Ensure you have all the necessary paperwork and documents at hand when you get out of the vehicle. The better-organised you are, the quicker the process should go.

A little help, please. If you are very unsure of the border procedures, hire one of the many agents who want to force you to use their services. Choose the neatest-looking person and agree on a price in advance.

Smile. Always be friendly, patient and willing to open your vehicle or chests on top or inside when a customs official insists on it. The more you protest, the longer you'll spend on the border.

Border costs

This is how much we spent in border post costs for two people in a 2.7 litre Hilux bakkie.

Martin's Drift (RSA-Botswana):	R166 (multiple entry)
Pandamatenga (Botswana-Zimbabwe):	R385 (single entry)
Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe-Zambia):	R560 (multiple entry)
Tunduma (Zambia-Tanzania):	R1 575 + R315 for agent fees and bribes
Songwe (Tanzania-Malawi):	R335 (multiple entry)
Kariba (Malawi-Zimbabwe):	R385 (single entry)
TOTAL:	R3 386

Drive Out says: Get a strong bag with more than one compartment. Tie it to your belt with a brightly-coloured carabiner from Outdoor Warehouse, just to be 100% sure it doesn't fall off somewhere. Store your passport, international driver's licence and vaccination certificate in there, as well as a pen and enough cash for the next border post.



East African traffic signals

We spent more than two weeks in Zambia and Tanzania puzzling over why vehicles flashed their lights at us every so often. Are there traffic cops ahead or is there a problem with our bakkie? Finally, Mr Octopus, a tour operator from Zanzibar, explained to us how the Tanzanian traffic signals work.

- When someone flashes their lights at you, they're asking whether there are traffic cops nearby. If you haven't driven past a traffic cop in the past few kilometres, you flash back. The hand signal for this is an overturned hand with your fingers pointing downwards, like if you're scratching a dog's head.
- If you have recently passed a traffic cop, you move your hand up and down with your index finger pointing downwards. Then the other driver knows to slow down. If the official had a speed camera, you put your right hand on your neck and your left hand under your right arm, so your elbow points forwards.

If the traffic police weren't so corrupt and if the speed limit in cities weren't only 30 km/h, I would have felt guilty about this evasion. But at the moment it's very valuable.

Drive Out says: If a vehicle in front of you in Zambia or Tanzania switches on its right-hand indicator, it means you can't pass. A left-hand indicator means the road is safe, but the safest is to wait until you can see for yourself.