

# namaste



July 2005

Vol 2, Issue 4

## **Africa...**

**Lake Nyasa**

**Jo's Roadtrip**

**Scuba-diving in Mozambique**

**Teaching with VSO in Namibia**

## **Plus...**

**Kruger National Park**

**Namaste Global Expedition**

**...and more**

## Namaste!

July has been a world of contrasts on expedition from the magnificent elephants and baobab trees in Botswana's Chobe, across the vast and dusty Makgadikgadi salt pans, down through the Bushveld wilderness of South Africa's Kruger National Park then back up the palm-fringed white beaches of Mozambique's Indian Ocean coast.

Then a journey from south to north through beautiful Malawi, southern Africa's "warm heart", an ascent of Mulanje Mountain, lakeside

vistas, plus a short trip into Zambia to explore the fabulous game reserves of South Luangwa and Luambe National Parks, finishing with some relaxation on the shores of Lake Nyasa before crossing into Tanzania and the start of the East Africa leg...

Packed full of features as well as the regular updates, feel free to send me an email with your suggestions and ideas for future issues (chris.charlton@namaste.co.uk)

*Cheers, Chris*

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## Global Expedition Highlights

**1/7/05 Day 453**  
Makgadikgadi Pan Mile 48464



**3/7/05 Day 455**  
Tuli N.P. Mile 48835



**5/7/05 Day 457**  
Kruger N.P. Mile 49189



**7/7/05 Day 459**  
Maputo Mile 49396



**9/7/05 Day 461**  
Barra Mile 49747



**31/5/05 Day 483**  
Udzubwa Mtns Mile 52214



**12/7/05 Day 464**  
Vilancula Mile 49966



**28/7/05 Day 480**  
Nkhata Bay Mile 51711



**14/7/05 Day 466**  
Savane Camp Mile 50366



**26/7/05 Day 478**  
S Luangwa N.P. Mile 51396



**23/7/05 Day 475**  
Lilongwe Mile 51181



**21/7/05 Day 473**  
Cape McLeer Mile 51012



**18/7/05 Day 470**  
Mulanje Mtn Mile 50770



**16/7/05 Day 468**  
Nasanje Mile 50650



## Expedition Trivia...

# of Days (overall):	31 (483)
Miles in month (overall):	3833 (52214)
Avg miles/day (overall):	124 (108)
Longest day miles (overall):	349 (612)
# of countries (overall):	6 (25)
# of police stops (overall):	22 (159)

## Top Tips this month...

Top Tip:	Baobab Beach, Vilancula, Moz
Favourite City:	Maputo, Mozambique
Adventure Spot:	Mulanje Mountain, Malawi
Place to Stay:	Flat Dogs, S Luangwa, Zambia
Night Spot:	Nkhata Bay, Lake Malawi
Wilderness:	Makgadikadi Pan, Botswana

## Features...

Read about Jo's amazing roadtrip on page 2; Discover Kruger National Park and scuba-diving in Mozambique on page 6; and find out what it is like to teach with VSO in Namibia on page 7. Explore Lake Malawi on page 8 and read the Expedition Africa Plan on page 9. And find out what is coming next on page 10...



## Jo's Roadtrip...

I love roadtrips - the thrill of constant action tempered by the soothing rhythm of life in motion and the ultimate sense of purpose towards a final goal. So when Chris asked me to join him for part of the Southern African leg of his global expedition I didn't need much persuasion. The route was perfect; combining places I was itching to return to - the gorgeous Mozambiquan coast and Victoria Falls - with places I'd long wanted to discover



**Camp in the "Ulu" before crossing the vast Botswana salt pans...**

- Chobe National Park and the vast Makgadikgadi salt pans in Botswana as well as the beautiful wilderness of northern Kruger Park.

I knew Africa wasn't going to fail us when the passport official at Victoria Falls International Airport sent me through to the arrivals hall to check with Chris whether I was going to need a single or double entry visa before he stamped me in. After that I had to help one of the baggage handlers wrestle my pack from the bottom of his trolley as I couldn't bear to wait another second for the adventure to begin. And what an adventure it was...

There were so many highlights it seems impossible to list them all. But, being me, I'll try...

*Being woken at 3am to hear and strain to see a herd of elephants eating mere metres away from our rooftop idyll next to the Chobe River. Ghostly grey shapes moving so silently through the trees.*

*The first sighting of the unworldly Makgadikgadi*



**Driving across the Makgadikgadi salt pans of central-east Botswana...**

*Pans. A glaring silent white expanse stretching to the horizon on all sides. And then a convoy of vehicles and their mirages gliding towards us.*

*Spotting a beautiful big male leopard curled on the branch of a tree a few kilometres before leaving Kruger Park. Not only did this complete our safari Big Five - elephant, lion, rhino, buffalo*

*and leopard - but was something of an omen as Chris and I share a deep admiration of this sensual, independent, resourceful cat.*

*Enjoying a perfect steak on our candlelit balcony overlooking the Olifants River as the hyenas whooped and the lions roared before cranking up the music and boogying under the stars.*

*Lots of laughter. Our shared sense of humour took me from fits of hopeless giggles over nothing to outraged guffaws at the latest Charlton shocker.*

*An evening chorus of barking geckos reaching crescendo as the sun set over the edge of Sua Pan in Botswana - the horizon so vast and distant across the salt flats it felt like camping on the edge of a great lake.*

*The people we met along the way...*

*Particularly the incredible hospitality and friendship we enjoyed with Faruk and his lovely family on their amazing farm outside Maputo. It felt like a day out of time as we sat next to the fire eating divine food and swapping life stories as the rain poured down around us.*

*Listening to waves crashing in from the Indian Ocean onto the white sand of Barra beach in Mozambique as the wind buffeted the palm trees and the rooftop swayed like a treehouse.*

*The satisfaction of successfully manoeuvring the 3 tonne Landie (which seemed about 10x bigger and 50x heavier than my little jeep) between endless cavernous potholes on the road from Inhambane in torrential rain.*

*Racing over the ocean in a speedboat, marvelling at the incredible clarity and unbelievable colours of the green, turquoise and azure water before diving in and floating above the most incredible variety of beautiful fish.*

*Hours spent chatting and relaxing with pina colodas in the beautiful bar on the beach in Vilankulos.*

2,600 miles. 4 countries. Less than 3 weeks. That's a serious roadtrip.

I felt like a cross between the nomadic San bushmen who once roamed through much of the area we covered (though admittedly our experience was rather more high tech in the state of the art Landie) and desperado fugitives on the run. Every dawn brought a new adventure and every night Chris seemed to manage to find a more spectacular campsite than the last - even if we sometimes arrived in the dark only to understand the true glory of our location in the morning light.

Myriad delights would appear from the neatly packed Landie to provide a perfect bush home - fridge, gas stove and a fully equipped kitchen, a table complete with rhino patterned tablecloth, filtered drinking water, a piping hot shower and upstairs the queen-sized rooftop. After our latest excitement on the road we spent wonderful evenings sprawled on the remarkably comfortable camp chairs and relaxing in the flickering firelight. And talking and laughing and reviewing images of the day. Enjoying a goblet of red wine. Or two. Or three. And the inevitable Jack Daniels and coke. The food was fantastic. No lukewarm baked beans or boiled bacon on this trip. Chris conjured up incredibly impressive meals in the most outlandish places and perhaps this combination of the great outdoors and Five Star living best sums up the man himself and his trip as a whole.

Our flights of fancy about life on the run were fuelled by a rare night in civilisation - which we spent holed up eating junk food and watching endless movies in a seedy motel in Francistown. And of course by the inevitable encounters with

genuine speed cops and other less official officials, such as the gentleman who attempted to demand one million meticals for some imagined traffic violation shortly after our arrival in Mozambique. He was swiftly despatched in a flurry of Spanish with a dose of Charlton charm.

I love Africa. It has been my home for nearly 5 years and our whirlwind tour - from the magnificent elephants and baobab trees in Chobe, across the



**Looking a bit dusty after 4 days in the "Ulu" - ready for a spot of civilisation?**

almost alien Makgadikgadi pans, down through the Bushveld wilderness of Kruger National Park then back up the palm-fringed white beaches of gloriously dilapidated Mozambique - along with the wonderful people we met on the way only served to reinforce my feelings.

Our eventual arrival at the port of Beira after a long hard day in the Landie was tinged with sadness that for me, for now, this was the end of the road. I'd already extended my trip by 2 days and had to go back to living my own dream. Only by focusing on the sushi feast and long hot bath awaiting me in Johannesburg before I headed back to the Kalahari was I able to get on my flight and blot out my desperate desire to just continue into Malawi. Oh and Zambia. And then maybe Tanzania. And Kenya. And quickly onto Ethiopia. And...

To join the Namaste global expedition is to step into a world of exploration, excitement and wonderful shared experiences, you may know where you're heading, but you never quite know



**Camp next to the beach near Vilankulos, Mozambique...**

how you'll get there or what joys you'll discover along the way.

Go well, Chris, as they say down here. Namaste...

by Jo Shaw



## Global Expedition Update

Leaving Chobe, we headed south to the start of Botswana's great salt pans, Sua and Ntwetwe, collectively comprising the 80,000 sq-km Makgadikgadi Pan. It took several days of tough driving and interesting navigation to cross this vast and magnificent ocean of salt and sand. And the dust, the endless dust, well, that just gets everywhere, much to the dislike of anything electronic!

Nearing the southwestern corner of Sua Pan we came across the original desert island. Except for one tenuous finger of grass, the alien-looking outcrop of 20m-high Kubu Island with its ghostly baobabs lay surrounded by a sea of salt. At its southern edge sits an Iron Age stone enclosure that was the inspiration for the myth of the Lost City of the Kalahari.

Rather than camp at the 'island', we carried on a bit further to find a fantastic site to stop for the night - all to ourselves, middle of nowhere, incredible view across the salt pan, decent wood supply and a sunset to die for! But the relaxed vibe was about to change...

Crack...crack...bang...thud...what the hell was going on? Small tufts of sand exploded around us and the glass from the wing-mirror shattered...

"Shit, shit, that's incoming fire! Time to go Jo, and now!", I shouted as I threw bags into the back of the Landie. Time in the military gives you an instinct to recognise enemy fire, and this was no mistake, no warning shots, this was long-range and on target.

With most stuff already packed for the night, we jumped into the cab and took off, tent still up and flapping furiously in the wind. We raced straight through the bushes in front of us, then around a small hill some 600m away. I was looking for cover, and we found it. Once hidden, I stopped to pack the tent away and check the vehicle for damage, while Jo looked back through the binos to see what was going on.

"3 vehicles crossing the pan straight at us - Zimbabwe wildlife traders!", she yelled.

"How the hell do you know that? And what do they want with us?", I responded in disbelief.

It was only now that I learned of Jo's secret life



Crocs in the river...



Ploughing through the dust of the vast Botswana salt pans

### Did you know?

"Tobacco is Malawi's most important cash crop, accounting for more than 60% of export earnings. It is grown in large plantations or by individual famers. The leaves are harvested and dried, and then brought to auction for sale, where moisture content determines the value. The sold tobacco is then taken to processing plants for making cigarettes, but most is exported to overseas processors..."

as we blasted southwards across the pan to escape the chasing vehicles. Her rhino research was real, but it was also a cover, a front, to enable her to infiltrate government circles to find out what was really going on. Espionage...MI6...wildlife, arms and drugs trade investigator...no way! But she was known to the authorities, and as we had crossed over the border, the alarm had been raised. It had taken them 3 days to track us in secret (as they were off home-turf and highly illegal) and had waited for the opportunity to strike in the middle of nowhere.

Hearts racing, we weighed up the options - get away, obviously, but to where? How far would they go? Would they attack in public? They had crossed one border, would they cross more in a relentless pursuit? We concluded that they would probably

only try in Botswana, so we decided to get to South Africa, and fast.

First, though, we needed to reach public space so we decided on Francistown, Botswana's second city and a place we could hide. On route, Jo phoned ahead on my sat phone to make arrangements. Another agent was based there and would help...

After several hours bumping around violently in the dark across the remaining miles of salt pan, we finally turned onto the tarmac and the last 200km into town. Fortunately for us, the Landie was in good shape and all 200bhp were put to good use.

We met up with Jo's agent friend, who took us to a suitably seedy-looking motel, and checked us in. After more calls, Jo was happy we were secure for the night and could relax. So there we stayed, eating junk food, watching movies and planning our next move for the following day. Around 5am, the agent returned to inform us he had arranged for a counter-strike so we could get away and across the border.

Rather than take the obvious route into South Africa we headed southeast to a remote corner of Botswana, home to Africa's largest private wildlife

*continued on page 4...*

## Coming Up...to find out how to join, click below

### August 2005

Across the great plains of Tanzania to the Indian Ocean coast for some relaxation and diving on Zanzibar before climbing Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain at 5,895m (19,340 ft). Then a journey across the Serengeti on route to Kenya's incredible game parks, including Tsavo & the Masai Mara. And in both countries, a chance to see much of the Great Rift Valley, one of Africa's most spectacular sights...

### September 2005

Through the Kabalega and Ruwenzori national parks of Uganda; and unforgettable river journeys on Africa's second biggest river in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Discovering the equatorial jungle, exotic butterflies and the pygmies of the Central African Republic before crossing to the Waza National Park of northern Cameroon and onto Lake Chad...



"Ulu" Camp near Limpopo River



## Global Expedition Update cont...

reserve, the Tuli Game Reserve. It is an excellent place to view big cats, antelopes and large herds of elephants, as well as the stately mashatu tree and impressive landscapes: savanna, rock kopjes, river bluffs, riverine forests and tidy villages. It was also difficult terrain to be followed if the strike failed.

Sitting at camp hidden carefully away on the side of a hill surrounded by huge boulders, we waited for news. Just before midnight the sat phone



Fishing boats in Mozambique

buzzed and we listened intently to the agent's 'sitrep' (situation report). The illegal traders had been discovered and taken into custody on the road out of Francistown. What a relief! So we celebrated with some beers from the fridge and climbed onto one of the rocks to watch the stars and share some secret stories...

Finding it somewhat difficult to return to normal expedition life, we crossed the border to South Africa at Botswana's easternmost village, Pont Drift, which requires a crossing of the Limpopo River. At this time of year though, it was dry and we could simply drive across the riverbed.

After waving bye to the incredibly friendly customs official, we stopped in Messina on the way to the Pafuri Gate, the northernmost entrance to the Kruger. We camped nearby in the woods, out of sight, just in case... It would take a few more days to relax fully again.

Next morning, we toured north to south through the immense Kruger National Park, one of the biggest, oldest and best wildlife parks in the world. We stayed a night at the Olifants Camp, which had fortunately had a cancellation and one cabin was free overlooking the river. As the sun was setting, we could watch the animals below, including 5 lions sunbathing on a rock which was fantastic [See page 6 for more on the Kruger].

Crossing the border into Mozambique was straightforward, though soon after, I had to persuade a police officer that we didn't want to give him one million meticals for an apparent traffic violation. As Portuguese is the principal European language spoken in Mozambique, I found a firm word in my reasonable Spanish seemed to do the trick, and he backed down from his cash demand.

We were heading for Maputo, formerly Lourenço Marques, the capital and largest community of the country, located on Delagoa Bay. It serves as Mozambique's main port and as an important outlet for the landlocked countries of Zambia and Zimbabwe. Exports include cotton, coal, sugar, sisal, and processed food. The city's manufactured goods include refined petroleum, building materials, clothing, footwear, and food products.

Rather than stay in the centre, we had been invited to stay with friends - Faruk & his family - on their wonderful farm on the outskirts of town. It was great to unwind in their idyllic gardens and share views on everything from religion to politics

before beginning our journey north along half of Mozambique's 2,800-km (1,740-mi) Indian Ocean coastline.

Stopping overnight at Xia Xia beach, we followed the coast to Inhambane, turning off to find Barra beach and a spot to camp. After having no luck finding the official campsite in the darkness, we decided to just camp on the beach. This was one of those great times when you wake up to find yourself in a perfect spot.

We continued on to Vilankula, situated on the coast adjacent to the Bazaruto Archipelago, and my chosen dive location. It was also an opportunity for me to have a long-awaited 3-night stay in one place - I had been on the go continuously for about 6 weeks and needed a rest. Baobab beach was a great choice with perfect beaches, good food, great diving and lively local life. [See more about scuba-diving in Mozambique on page 6.]

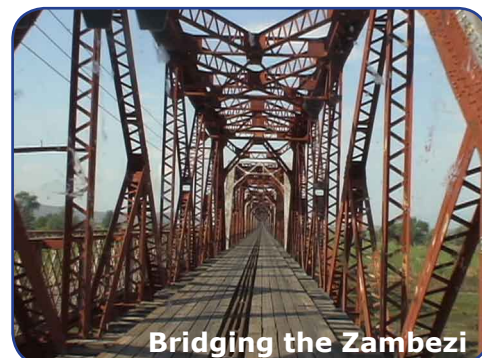
Further north, we couldn't help but reflect on the vibe in Mozambique, clearly beginning to make progress since the devastation of the civil war. Thirteen years had passed since then, the mood was upbeat, but most buildings were still dilapidated and run-down, and we learned something of the history...

The Portuguese colonists had done very little to develop the economic or the human potential of Mozambique. At independence in 1975, the country inherited an economy reliant on exports of cheap raw materials, and an untrained, illiterate labour force. The Frelimo government, led by Samora Machel, began to establish a Marxist-type state, nationalising industry, and creating agricultural collectives. The exodus of most whites, who had formed the skilled manual, technical, and professional class, also weakened the nation's economy.

In the late 1970s the government supported the liberation movement in neighbouring Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), allowing it to use bases inside Mozambique. In retaliation, Rhodesia armed and trained the Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana

(Renamo), which carried out guerrilla raids against Mozambique. When the Rhodesian struggle ended, South Africa - in line with its then policy of destabilising its black neighbours - took on the role of supporting Renamo.

The 1980s saw an escalation of the conflict into an exceptionally brutal 'civil' war. Health and education systems collapsed and, in many areas, agricultural production ceased. Severe drought



Bridging the Zambezi

in the mid-1980s led to a major famine. By 1990 nearly a million people had died, 1.3 million had fled the country, and 4 or 5 million were displaced within Mozambique.

In 1990 - with South Africa's politics changing radically and the Soviet bloc, Frelimo's main backer, in disarray - Frelimo and Renamo began tentative peace talks. A treaty formally ending the civil war was signed in 1992, with a timetable for demobilisation of troops and plans for multi-party elections under UN supervision. A UN peacekeeping force was deployed and, with UN and international aid, a massive repatriation and resettlement programme for external and internal refugees began.

Mozambique today is peaceful and tourism

*continued on page 5...*



All in a day's work near Maputo, Mozambique

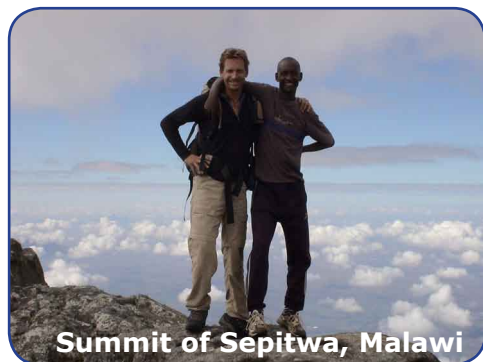


## Global Expedition Update cont...

is beginning to flourish, the people friendly and purposeful, and its coastline is both beautiful and inspiring.

Our coastal journey ended at Beira, a large and noticeably dilapidated city. At the hotel, we dropped off Claire & Sean who we had met at Baobab and given a lift to, and walked into town for some food and wine.

After some fun trying to convince the staff that it



Summit of Sepitwa, Malawi

was ok to use my computer at their internet cafe, we drove to the airport as Jo had to get back to her research in South Africa. It had been an amazing couple of weeks on the road together and it was sad to see her plane disappear westwards. Until next time...

Sean had continued along the coast and as Claire and I were both heading north to Malawi, I offered a lift. After a night next to the river at the beautiful Savane Camp, our route wound its way over dirt tracks as far as the Zambezi, which we crossed using an old, 2-km long railway bridge. We found the border into southern Malawi, and we soon discovered why it is known as Africa's "warm heart". Malawians are wonderfully friendly and hospitable people and the country is stunning.

It is also one of the world's poorest and least developed countries. With about US\$170 per capita income, Malawi is primarily an agricultural country that has traditionally been self-sufficient with regard to food, but severe drought and resultant malnutrition have persisted through the '90s to the current day so that the economy has had to depend on economic assistance from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and from other countries. Indeed, the recently elected president came to power on the promise of sorting out the food shortage.

But this doesn't dampen the hospitality and openness of the people. Our camps in the "Ulu", near villages, created great interest even when we thought we on our own. One morning, we awoke to an eager audience sitting in the field next to the Landie, which is a little strange at first, but something I have now become accustomed to.

At Claire's suggestion, we turned east to Mulanje Mountain, a 3,000m massif in southern Malawi known as the "island in the sky". As we approached the massif, it rises steeply off the plains with dramatic granite cliffs and towering ridgelines. A perfect location for a spot of Kilimanjaro training.

It takes 2 days to climb Sepitwa, Mulanje's highest peak, so we hired a guide, who had been recommended to Claire. Comestar was a great guide, steering us along the steep and narrow trails that wind their way through the forest and out onto the open and rocky hillsides.

Early the next day, Claire was not feeling too well, and on top of the exertions of the previous day, decided to head back to the hut. A wise move,

and given that it was her first ever mountain and we had climbed over 1,500m already, it was a huge achievement in its own right. After reaching the top of Sepitwa, Comestar and I returned to the hut, and Claire vowed to return to make the ascent.

Returning to the valley, we all ended up in the village bar to enjoy some local beer. Slightly hungover the next morning, one of our new friends, Unex, invited us to his village and his school. It was a fascinating insight into Malawian culture, and Chewa culture in particular. The Chewa constitute the largest ethnic group in Malawi, whose ancestors actually originated in the Congo. Thanks to Claire's knowledge of Zambia's predominant local language, we were able to communicate quite well with Unex's family. They were also thrilled when I gave them a photo of the entire family which I printed in the Landie.

After farewells, we continued north to Cape McClear on the southern shore of Lake Malawi. With a perfect camp and another perfect sunset, I finally learned how to play the African game of bau on the beach. And my teacher was also a little perturbed when I won a game!

Malawi is also home to a plethora of art and artists, including woodcarvings, stone carvings, batiks and paintings, and it is a living for many around the lake. Possibly the best-known artist is Cuthy Mede, who is actively involved in the development and promotion of Malawian art within the country and around the world.

After dropping Claire at the boat jetty as she was heading to Likomo Island to do a diving course, I headed west into Lilongwe for a few days to catch up on work. Rather than continue north through Malawi, I opted to make a detour into Zambia to visit some amazing game reserves.

The wildly meandering Luangwa river is the extraordinary lifeline of South Luangwa National Park. Uninterrupted by man for 700 km, it is a major tributary of the Zambezi and has given its name to a valley that has become synonymous with wildlife and wildlife-viewing in Zambia. One

of Africa's largest concentrations of hippos finds a home between the river's white sandbanks, and elephants cross from one side to the other as they follow migration routes worn smooth by their feet and ingrained in their collective memory.

Back to Lake Malawi, I stopped in Nkhata Bay, and I enjoyed listening to the distant sound of drums. Drum and dance pieces are taken from a healing ritual from northern Malawi in which



Nkhata Bay, Lake Malawi

the healer is possessed by a spirit who has been "heated up" by the sound of drumming, singing, and clapping. As in many African cultures, drums are often used to summon spirits and gods during a variety of religious and other significant community ceremonies. Their connection to the spirit world is both powerful and crucial to any healing or religious process.

Crossing into Tanzania, the transition from southern Africa into East Africa, I pondered the route ahead. Africa has already lived up to its reputation of adventure, wildlife and rich cultural diversity and there is so much more to come...

This month, fact or fiction, you decide..!

by Chris Charlton



Village life near Mulanje Mountain, Malawi



## Kruger National Park...

South Africa's Kruger National Park offers a wildlife experience that ranks with the best in Africa, if not the world. The park was established in 1898 at the instigation of then-president Paul Kruger who persuaded the Transvaal parliament to establish a protected area for the wildlife in the region following their rapid destruction by hunters. Only as



Olifants Camp

recently as 1961 was the extended Kruger Park fenced in.

The park now stretches 352km (220 miles) along the Mozambique border from the international boundary along the Limpopo River in the north to the Crocodile River in the south. Averaging 65km (40 miles) in width and covering nearly 20,000 square kilometres the park is larger in area than

Israel. Truly the flagship of the South African national parks, Kruger provides a refuge for 147 mammal species, 507 species of birds, 116 reptiles, 34 amphibians, 49 fishes, 457 types of trees and shrubs, 1 500 smaller plants, and countless insects. The park is characterised by combinations of savannah, thornveld and woodland eco-zones. The far north of the park is the wildest and most difficult area to access and because of this, it has alluring qualities for the real adventurer.

South Africa's largest wildlife reserve and one of its most unspoilt wildernesses is at the same time one of the most developed and accessible ecotourism destinations in the country. A web of roads of 1863 kilometres cover the National Park, 697 km of them being tarred. Kruger has 12 main rest camps, 5 bushveld camps, 2 bush lodges and 4 satellite camps. In 1999, tourism in Kruger generated R200 million (approx. 20 million GBP) in turnover, with a net profit of approximately R10 million. This income is used to sustain many of South Africa's less profitable (but biologically important) national parks.

A remarkable new initiative is the creation of a fence-free park that allows animals to migrate freely across national borders. In May 2002, Kruger, Limpopo National Park (in Mozambique) and Gonarezhou National Park (in Zimbabwe) formally merged into the

35,000 square kilometer Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park – this unique political innovation is creating a colossal wilderness area.

The climate is subtropical with hot (often very hot) summers and warm dry winters. Summer rains fall between October and March. The best time for visiting is the dry



Rhino spotting...

winter season. Then the grass is low and bushes and trees don't have leaves, so one can have an unobstructed view. Because there is very low rainfall during the winter months, the animals come to the waterholes to drink in the mornings and evenings and can be easily observed.

by Jo Shaw

## Scuba-diving in Mozambique...

Before the civil war, Mozambique was a popular holiday destination for South Africans wanting a break from the restrictions of apartheid. Since peace in 1992, it has been re-establishing its tourist industry and diving is one of the main areas opening up.

A few resorts are now in operation and the coastline near Maputo, just a few miles inside



Bazaruto Archipelago...

Mozambique from South Africa, is a favoured diving spot with a number of attractions, including sharks and friendly potato cod. In fact, in many areas, shark sightings are virtually guaranteed, with bulls, silver-tips and ragged tooth sand tigers all putting in an appearance.

Other highlights include frequent whale shark sightings at Tofo, near Inhambane,

though if you prefer a more relaxed scene, try Barra beach slightly further north.

Further north is Vilankulo, the gateway for visiting the nearby Bazaruto Archipelago, designated as a national park. Whilst it's possible to stay on the islands themselves, a recommended spot is at Baobab beach. Find Ben & Vicky there who run the local PADI dive centre and you can be sure of a rewarding dive around the islands.

As with its northerly neighbour Tanzania, the coast is made up of broken barrier reef which protects mile upon mile of sandy beach. The reef isn't too far offshore, making the bumpy boat journey a lot less taxing than at other destinations.

The area is often hit by rather hefty swells thrown up by the mighty Indian Ocean, and launching a RIB can be a tricky affair, but that is half the fun of diving here. The other half is actually seeing the pristine coral formations and the abundant fish life.

Aside from the locations mentioned above, the other favoured dive spots along Mozambique's Indian Ocean coast are Nampula and Pemba. The latter has a beautiful setting on a peninsular jutting into the enormous and stunning Pemba Bay.

The good diving around Pemba starts about 300m offshore from Wimbi Beach, where the coastal shelf drops off steeply. It's

also worthwhile visiting Ibo and the other islands of the Quirimbas Archipelago. Ibo is a fascinating, almost surreal place with wide streets lined with dilapidated villas, and crumbling, moss-covered buildings. Keep an eye on tide times as access and exit to these islands is tide dependent!

For back-to-basics adventure with some



Pristine coral formations...

superb diving thrown in, this could be the place for you. And if you have time, try a short visit to Lake Nyasa, which forms the border between Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania. The quality of the fresh-water diving here is first class and the beaches are as good as any tropical island...

by Chris Charlton



## Teaching with VSO in Namibia...

There are some moments that I have to pinch myself to remind me that I am actually living in Africa. No it's not a dream, this is reality! And there are other times (too long to list but just to give you a little idea!) like: there is no running water for days, no electricity,



no way to contact the outside world and extremely venomous snakes found outside your classroom when I think WHY am I living here!

It is an amazing experience and one I would recommend to anyone with a sense of adventure and of course a sense of humour! I must admit that when I first arrived that I felt like a bit of a wimp as I wasn't living in a mud hut and I did have electricity and running water! Now I give thanks of praise for the miracles of both and must have acclimatised as I now refuse to take a cold shower!

I was a teacher at home in England before I came to Namibia and it's



certainly been enlightening having to teach with up to 3 students sharing a chair and a desk, not having enough exercise books to go round and certainly no textbooks. Sometimes a piece of chalk and my board are my only resources! Some of the students in my final Grade

class are in their late twenties because prior to Independence they were excluded from education, so I can't call them kids! But they listen in total and utter silence to everything I say and do everything I say immediately! It's a very strange experience for a teacher from Inner City schools! It is amazingly rewarding, especially seeing a classfull of twentysomethings doing their times tables aerobics to start off the day!

I have such admiration for my students who still come to school willing to learn against such odds. Unfortunately education isn't free here and the majority of my students are orphans or have elderly parents who are unable to support them. Every day students are off sick and it isn't just a little cold like back at home, it's malaria



and TB and so many of them have to go home to attend funerals of a family member on a regular basis. Funerals are so common here that they are the social events that everyone attends at the weekends. Death is a daily part of life here and yet they are all so happy and willing to learn.

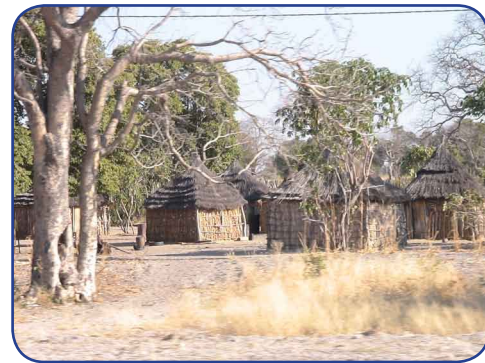
The meaning of a class interruption here is a goat or cow wandering into your classroom unannounced! Or all the students being late to class because they were building a chicken run to stop the chickens from running all over the school, including the Principal's office! I also never have to carry any of my books or bags anywhere as there is always an army of eager students to do that for me. I have become totally spoilt and am not sure if I will ever be ready to go back into teaching in England!

Evenings are spent quietly sitting on my veranda watching the sun go down and listening to the symphony of insects and staring at the Milky Way. No light pollution, no noise pollution, just the sounds of the bush quietly falling asleep. My school is surrounded by



mud huts and often the local children will come and stare at the funny white people, that's the local entertainment! At the weekends we can take a little stroll down to the river where we can often see Hippo but now I'm feeling much more cautious after a woman and her baby were eaten by a Hippo last week. You also have to look out for the crocs, a little riverside stroll has never been so stressful!

They call Namibia the 'Land of Contrasts' and it certainly lives up to it's name. It is full of beautiful sights, beautiful people, terrible poverty, huge private ranches, real Christian beliefs, a total obsession with witchcraft, deserts



and waterfalls. If you want a varied and exciting adventure, then this is the place for you. Where else would a student's excuse for not coming to class the previous day was that there was a lion on the road?

*by Jo Langham*



## People

### Fellow Adventurers...



Jo Shaw, 30, from Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, completed her 18-day tour on expedition through Zim, Botswana, South Africa and Mozambique on 14 July.



Faruk Ismael, 28, from Maputo, Mozambique, hosted the expedition at the family farm outside Maputo for several days.



Claire Thomas, 22, from London, joined the expedition for 10 days in Mozambique and Malawi.



Comestar Supuni, 27, from Likabula, Malawi, worked as a guide for the expedition on Mulanje Mountain.



Lusingu, 18, and friends hosted the expedition for 2 days in Nkhata Bay, Malawi.

### Along the way...

A big thank you to all those people who we've met along the way in July, including:



Owen (Francistown); Faruk & family & friends (Maputo); Claire, Sean, Ben & Vicky (Baobab Beach); Comestar, Rasmus & Alberte, Unex & family, John, Patrick, Cody (Mulanje Mountain); Mark, Moses, David, Donna & Ollie, Claire & Sophie, Chico (Cape Mclear); Megan, Andrew, Grese, and Larry (Lilongwe), Dutch group, Cob, Jeff and co (S Luangwa), Italian overlanders (Luambe), Brown, James, Gina, Nina, Lusingu (Nkhata Bay)...



## In the News

### In the News

See [www.namaste.co.uk/news](http://www.namaste.co.uk/news) for details...

### Previous Newsletters

Previous issues of Namaste News are also available at [www.namaste.co.uk/news](http://www.namaste.co.uk/news)

## Letters & Emails

Thank you for all your letters, emails, text messages, and faxes. Each month, a few excerpts will be printed here...

"Hey Chris, its E-J and Michael here...Just thought we'd drop you a line to say hi from the road...We have been driving for just over 3 weeks now and are now in Guadalajara, Mexico...Your help on the questions we had when we emailed you a few months ago now was much appreciated - all in all road trips are great!! Hope Africa is still fantastic and we keep reading your newsletters. [www.bigenchilada.net](http://www.bigenchilada.net)", Emily & Michael, Mexico

"Um, wow. This is incredible. How do you do it??? I'm really glad we got to meet you in Livingstone. Where exactly are you now?", Liz, USA

"Dear Chris, I hope this isn't too late but I was laid low by a lovely African virus and then one of my friends was hit by a car on a gravel road (well he was walking down the middle of the road at dusk and is quite deaf) and has just had to be airlifted to a hospital in Jo'burg, which isn't as easy to organise as we thought it would be! I now realise that I have more medical training than all the nurses at our local hospital so may become a volunteer there! Take care, safe travels", Jo, Namibia

"So my friend....everything's cool so far???? See the pics that I took from our small time together... I really enjoyed it....I really enjoyed the pics that you gave me. They are really cool man...I will ask you for more pics that you took before in the Americas...and I will follow you on the net...Hope that u keep your self ok...take care...", Faruk, Mozambique

"Hey Chris! Long time no talk, yeah, finals are over, and hmmm, you know, they could have gone better, but can't complain... And my license is awesome!!!! Got into this cool program next year, all outdoor ed and that kind of stuff, it will be great. Get to go white water rafting, and skiing, and rock climbing... Hope your having a great time, hope to hear from you soon.", Erica, Canada

"Hi Chris!! It is so great to hear from you!, I am so pleased to hear that everything is going well for you and I bet you are seeing some pretty amazing things... I am soooooo jealous. All is well here in London, apart from the bombings going on...I am finding it hard to get used to this London weather, it is weird waking up to grey skies almost everyday! and I thought it was summer here...", Jen, UK

## Website Update

### Stage 1 Development

Stage 1 development is now complete.

### Stage 2 Development

The first Namaste Management Guides (Project Management Series; Leadership & Management Series) and Namaste Adventure Films (Climbing Denali; A Taste of North America) are now in production; and should become available from December 2005.

#### July 2005 Stats

Hits: 28,772  
Countries: 45  
Downloads: 2,634 Mb

#### June 2005 Stats

Hits: 34,346  
Countries: 52  
Downloads: 2,689 Mb

## Lake Nyasa...

Lake Nyasa, otherwise known as Lake Malawi, lies between Malawi on the west and Tanzania and Mozambique on the east within the Great Rift Valley. About 580 kilometres (360 miles) long and an average of 40 kilometres (25 miles) wide, the lake dominates the landscape and lures visitors with promise of pristine water, sandy beaches and stunning marine life.

Sighted by the Portuguese in the 17th



century, the lake was forgotten by Europeans until its rediscovery by the British missionary and explorer David Livingstone.

The area of the lake has been estimated to be 29,785 sq km (11,500 sq mi); and its surface is about 472 m (1,550 ft) above sea level. The lakeshore environment changes starkly from dramatic escarpments pressing against the water's edge to flat sandy bays in the south.

Favoured travel spots around the lake include Cape Maclear in the south, Likoma Island and Nkhata Bay in the centre, and the least developed section in north.

Much of the lake is navigable and it is possible to get around by boat; and fishing is heavy along its banks. Lake Malawi's population of colourful fish also make it one of the best freshwater diving areas in the world - and one of the cheapest places to learn to dive...

In all, there are around 500 species of fish in the lake, many of which are from the Cichlidae family, the largest family of fish in Africa. Most famous are the brightly coloured *mbuna*, not



just for divers, but also for scientists as they provide a fascinating insight into the process of evolution, through their numerous and co-existing environmental adaptations.



# namaste

GLOBAL EXPEDITION

## Join the expedition in Africa

for an adventure of a lifetime...

### Namaste!

Welcome to the Africa Plan of the Namaste Global Expedition, an amazing around the world adventure. Join me on the expedition for a weekend, a week, a month or longer, and it is up to us to decide what we want to do.

Click here to download the full Africa Plan PDF (to be updated monthly), which should give you some idea of the expedition plan for Africa, though this is subject to variation depending upon conditions, politics and what you would like to do. You will also

find other info documents for more detail, including how to join the expedition.

If you need anything more, please don't hesitate to contact me, by email, fax or phone. I look forward to your suggestions and ideas; and travelling with you soon...

*Cheers, Chris*



### Highlights...

Perhaps nowhere in the world will you find such a variety of cultures, vistas, contrasts and contradictions, cities ancient and modern as in Africa. From the snow-capped peaks of Kilimanjaro and Mt Kenya, to the scorching heat of the desert; from the impenetrable jungles of the Congo, to the silver-sanded beaches bordering the Indian Ocean.

A key theme of the Namaste Africa Expedition will be to explore many of the continent's game reserves, whilst touring through this continent full of culture and design, of music and dancing, with a wealth of wildlife, flora and fauna. Some of the planned highlights include:

#### May 2005

Time to explore gorgeous Cape Town, built on the peninsula of the Cape of Good Hope with Table Mountain as a backdrop before heading north through the western Cape to the Tswalu Kalahari Reserve & rhino sanctuary...

#### June 2005

Exploring Namibia's incredible landscapes from the Fish River Canyon in the south to the Skeleton Coast in the north; from the Namib Desert in the west to the Caprivi Strip in the northeast. Touring the Okavango Delta, Makgadikgadi pan & diamond mines of Botswana on route to Victoria Falls...

#### July 2005

Touring south through eastern Botswana and southern Zimbabwe, through South Africa's legendary Kruger National Park, before exploring Mozambique's Indian Ocean coastline. Then north through Malawi, often known as 'little Switzerland' owing to its beauty...

#### August 2005

Across the great plains of Tanzania before climbing Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest at 5,895m (19,340 ft). Then to the coast for some relaxation and diving on Zanzibar before a journey inland through Kenya's incredible game parks, including Tsavo & the Masai Mara. And in both countries, a chance to see much of the Great Rift Valley, one of Africa's most spectacular sights...

#### September 2005

Through the Kabalega and Ruwenzori national parks of Uganda; and unforgettable river journeys on Africa's second biggest river in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Discovering the equatorial jungle, exotic butterflies and the pygmies of the Central African Republic before crossing to the Waza National Park of northern Cameroon...

#### October 2005

A visit to the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, once the centre of one of the ancient Mossi kingdoms; and the famous red, white and black Volta rivers. Onto historic Mopti, the 'Venice of Mali' founded in the 13th century and the legendary Timbuktoo before experiencing the unique lifestyle of the nomads of Niger...

#### November 2005

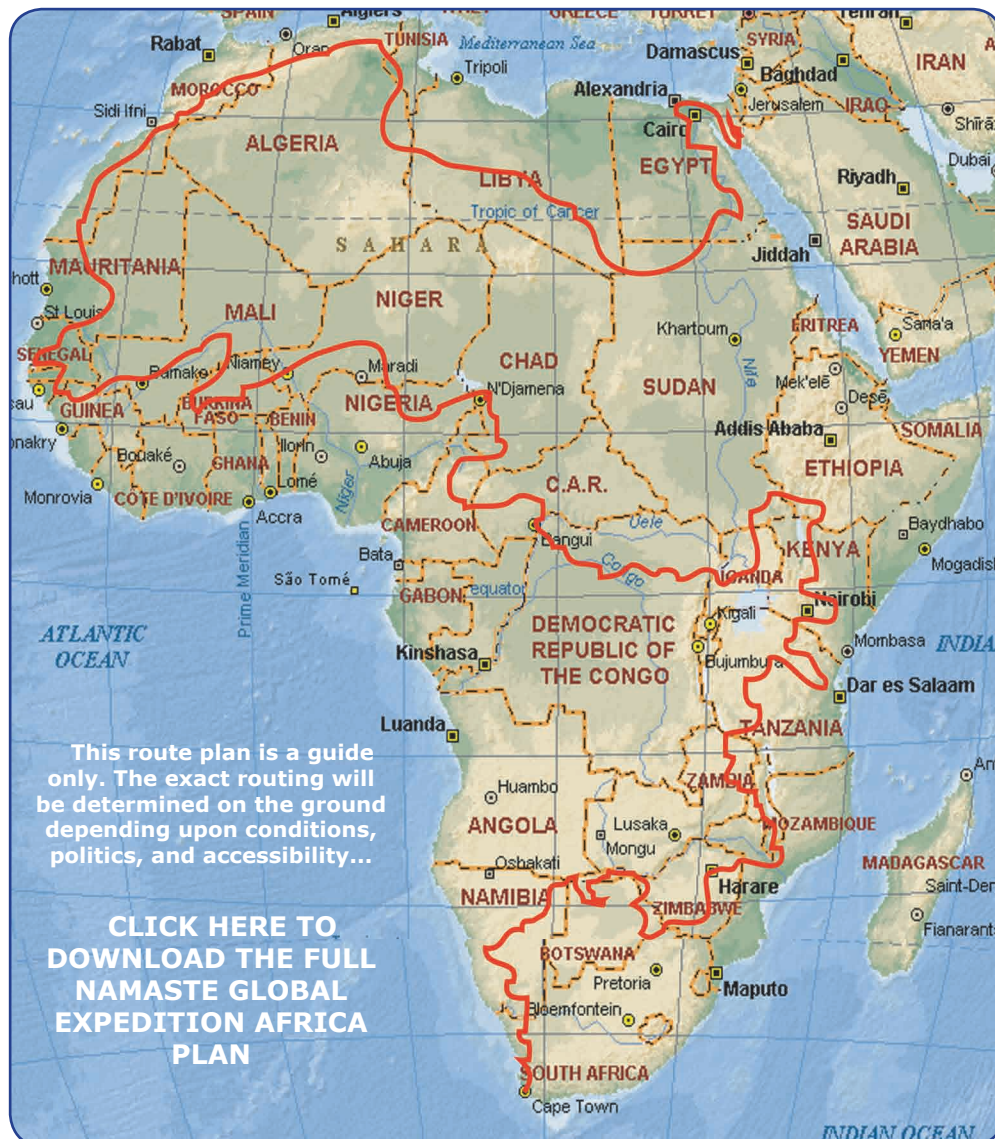
From the mountains of Guinea to the Adrar plateau of Mauritania; the Atlantic coast of the Gambia and Senegal, before turning north through Mauritania along the western Sahara before a tour of the length of the Atlas Mountains and ancient cities of Morocco...

#### December 2005

Exploring Roman ruins of coastal Libya; and the scenic and pre-historic wonders of its Fezzan region. Then into Egypt to explore the the Gifl Kebir plateau, the Nile river region, Cairo and the pyramids, the Great Desert Road and of course some Red Sea diving off the coast of the Sinai Peninsular...

### Africa Route Plan

Africa. This vast and diverse continent of 53 countries stretches from the Cape of Good Hope to the shores of the Mediterranean. Encompassing the world's largest desert and one of its most extensive rainforests, it is the adventurer's last frontier. Whether it's the stunning wastes of the Sahara Desert with its barren mountains, the inspiring beauty of snow-capped Kilimanjaro rising sheer from the East African plateau, the lush, mist-covered volcanoes and lakes of Kenya's Rift Valley, colourful tribal peoples, or the lure of ancient Egypt, this continent has them all. And of course, the large numbers of big game that still roam the plains of this fascinating land make Africa the king of safari...



This route plan is a guide only. The exact routing will be determined on the ground depending upon conditions, politics, and accessibility...

CLICK HERE TO  
DOWNLOAD THE FULL  
NAMASTE GLOBAL  
EXPEDITION AFRICA  
PLAN

[www.namaste.co.uk/africa.htm](http://www.namaste.co.uk/africa.htm)



# **namaste**

**What's next...**

**August  
2005**

**Zanzibar**

**Serengeti of  
Tanzania**

**Climbing  
Kilimanjaro**

**September  
2005**

**Kenya Masai**

**Ethiopia &  
Uganda**

**Gorillas of the  
Congo**

**October  
2005**

**Into the  
Sahara -  
Chad & Niger**

**Mali - Mopti  
& Timbuktoo**

**Plus the usual Global Expedition Update...**

**[www.namaste.co.uk/news](http://www.namaste.co.uk/news)**