

namaste

September 2005

Vol 2, Issue 6



Africa...

**Breaking new ground in
Central Africa
HIV/AIDS Programme in
Sudan**

Plus...

**Bridget Jones in Kenya
Namaste Global Expedition
...and more**

Namaste!

Welcome to the September 2005 edition of Namaste News.

Setting out north from Nairobi, the Expedition was heading for Ethiopia, but broken shock absorbers left us stranded in the deserts of northern Kenya for 4 days. Having fixed the problem, we headed west into Uganda, the staging point for the next, and most challenging section of the expedition yet...

Fasten your seatbelts, for the second half of this month on expedition takes you on a

adventure through some of the remotest and toughest regions on the entire African continent. Ravaged by war, bandits, rebel militias, corruption, poverty and disease, we were the first visitors into this forgotten pocket of Central Africa in over 20 years...

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

1/9/05 Day 515
Nanyuki Mile 53996



3/9/05 Day 517
Marsabit Mile 54139



6/9/05 Day 520
Chalbi Desert Mile 54178



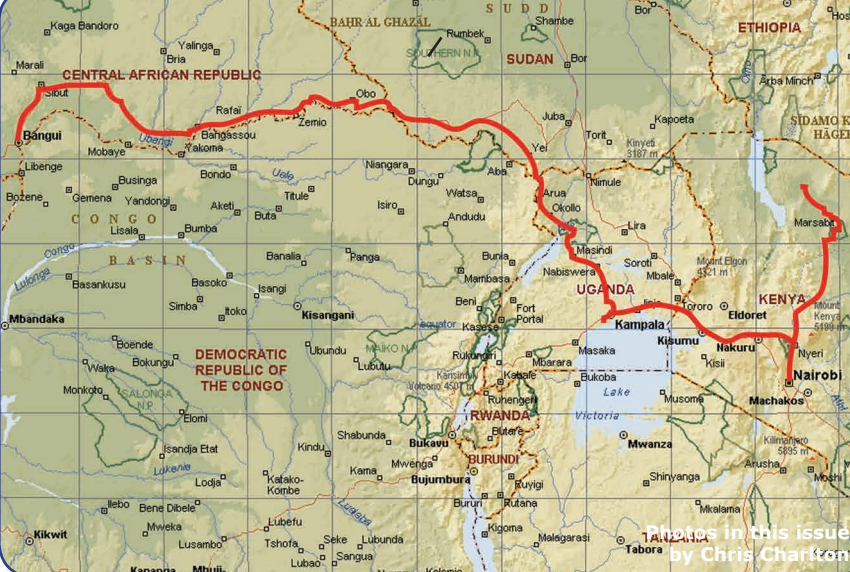
8/9/05 Day 522
Muyubue Mile 54711



14/9/05 Day 528
Kampala Mile 54918



30/9/05 Day 544
Bangui Mile 56616



18/9/05 Day 532
Murchison Falls Mile 55158



28/9/05 Day 542
Bambari Mile 56366



19/9/05 Day 533
Yei Mile 55378



27/9/05 Day 541
Bangassou Mile 56136



25/9/05 Day 539
Aguini Mile 55896



23/9/05 Day 537
Selim Mile 55750



22/9/05 Day 536
Izzo Mile 55694



21/9/05 Day 535
Yambio Mile 55608



Expedition Trivia...

# of Days (overall):	30 (544)
Miles in month (overall):	2831 (56616)
Avg miles/day (overall):	94 (104)
Longest day miles (overall):	348 (612)
# countries (overall):	4 (32)
# of police stops (overall):	84 (262)

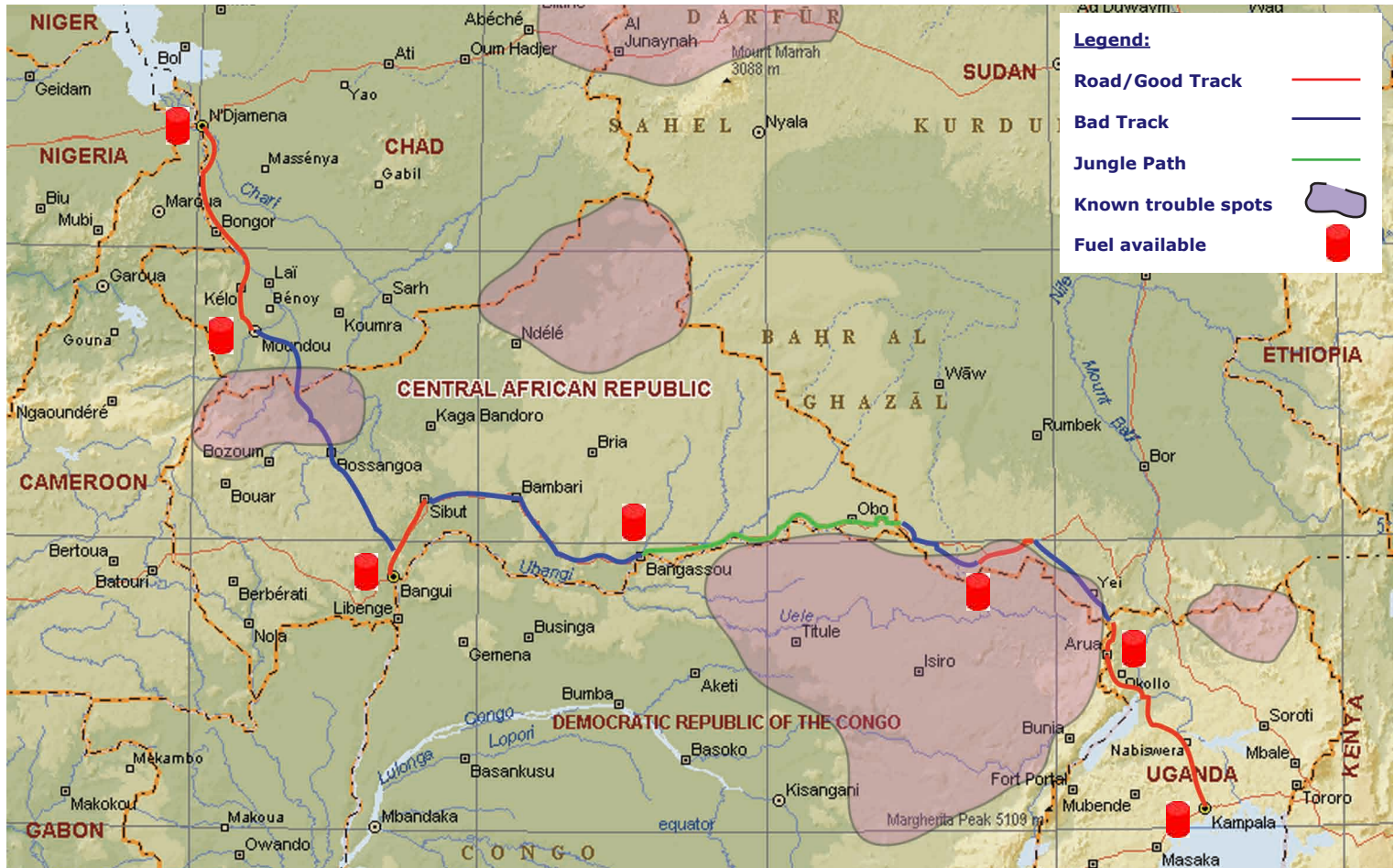
Top Tips this month...

Top Tip:	Southern Sudan
Favourite City:	Kampala, Uganda
Adventure Spot:	Eastern C.A.R.
Place to Stay:	Murchison Falls Lodge
Night Spot:	Angie Noir, Kampala
Wilderness:	Marsabit N.P., Kenya

Features...

Read about what it takes to make an epic and pioneering journey across Central Africa on page 2; Discover Kenya with Bridget Jones on page 3 and 4; and find out what it is like to work on an HIV/AIDS Programme in Southern Sudan on page 15. And read the Expedition Africa Plan on page 17. And find out what is coming next on page 18...

Ground-breaking in Central Africa...



For the first time, in September '05, the Namaste Global Expedition moved up a gear and into ground-breaking mode; researching, then pioneering a route through the heart of Central Africa that has not been attempted in over 20 years.

The route shown above was designed following intense research to combine the safest and most achievable possibility of reaching N'Djamena in Tchad from Kampala in Uganda in only two weeks. 2,390 miles (3,850 km) is a long way, even on good roads, so the challenge was definitely on.

Originally, I had hoped to forge part of the route through the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire), but non-existent roads and large tracts of land occupied by rebel militias, meant that I would need 2-3 months rather than 2 weeks. Whilst I met people with experience of northern Uganda, and southern Sudan, no-one knew what the route in the Central African Republic (CAR) would be like. The map showed a road, in part built by the French in colonial times, but this could easily have been swallowed up by the jungle in over 40 years. So there was only one way to find out...

Be warned - this region is far from ready for tourism or sightseeing, but is a challenge worthy of any hardened adventurer. Take time to prepare, be alert for signs of danger, either from the road (or lack of it), or from groups that would be happy to have you as a trophy. The future, though, is bright, particularly in southern Sudan...

Kit Preparations

Expect to be self-sufficient for the entire journey, including camping kit, food, water and fuel (our

capacity was 250 litres). Fuel is available at a number of places, indicated above on the map, but carry a 'baja' filter to sift out most of the crap. Food is also available at the larger towns marked on the map; but make sure you have the ability to purify all your drinking and cooking water on route. Other essential items include a machete - to cope with the jungle; a satellite phone; GPS, preferably with large-screen display such as Garmin GPS 18 which hooks into a laptop (Garmin nRoute & Garmap Africa are sufficient for software); survival and first aid kits.

Formalities

Uganda - easy as visas are issued on arrival, either by air or overland.

The New Sudan - Following 22 years of war, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and their political wing, the SPLM, have succeeded in achieving peace and rights to their own territory in southern Sudan. The Khartoum government cannot therefore issue visas through Sudan embassies. You need an SRRC pass, which can be issued in Kampala (I can supply further details on request).

C.A.R. - French embassies can issue visas in advance, though you can obtain permission from the local Commissaire on arrival overland.

Tchad - Visas can be issued at the Tchad embassy in Bangui, C.A.R., or other neighbouring countries.

The road

A solid 4wd is absolutely essential for this journey. It is your lifeline - break it and you must be able to repair it on route, as the chance of recovery is

highly unlikely, or very costly and time-consuming. Carry all spares, tools and off-road recovery kit (including winch, hi-lift jack, bottle jack, ropes, etc.)

The map above gives you an indication of the state of the road in each section. At its worst, expect continuous, difficult and technical off-road driving, not just for an afternoon, but all day, day after day. In many sections, but notably eastern CAR, the jungle has completely overgrown the track, which at best, is a hidden footpath.

Security

Do your research for the latest update. The notorious and vicious Lords Resistance Army (LRA), currently fleeing into DRC after combined efforts of the Ugandan Army and SPLA, are the chief concern in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. In CAR, rebel militias operate in the north-west and north-east of the country. In all countries, be very wary of corrupt and dangerous policemen, militia and military. At all times, have your travel documents in order and ready; be friendly, polite and firm and you should pass unscathed and you should not have to pay their requested bribes. Gain experience elsewhere in Africa before here, it will help you cope with the countless incursions and roadblocks you will encounter. Do not drive at night, and be sure of your campsites. Driving in convoy can offer better odds, depending upon your combined experience.

The rest is for you to explore and a good place to start is in this month's expedition update...

by Chris Charlton

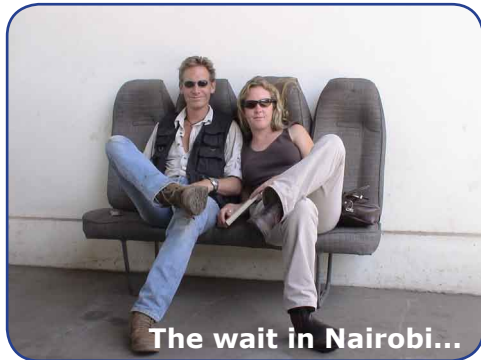
Bridget Jones in Kenya...

Jo's Diary (with apologies to Bridget Jones. And anyone who hasn't actually read Bridget Jones.)

Thursday 1 September

SOMEWHERE IN THE ULU, ISIOLO, NORTHERN KENYA

Alcohol = 1 bottle Chilean Merlot, 2 Jack Daniels & coke, Cigarettes = 7, Food = chicken stew, No. squares Lindt duty free chocolate = 6



The wait in Nairobi...

2pm Hurrah! After protracted battle retrieving satellite phone from airport customs finally leave Nairobi by scenic route taking in back street markets / rubbish tips. Road North winds through green hills and valleys past Mount Kenya, highest peak in the country, which am sure would look spectacular if not shrouded in cloud.

6pm As head North out of Isiolo towards Marsabit and the Ethiopian border, the tarmac stops and the stony corrugated Road From Hell begins... As the light fades we pull off road and bounce through Ulu to set up camp alongside local village. Watch the stars come out in the flickering firelight. It's so good to be back in the bush.

Friday 2 September MARSABIT NATIONAL PARK

Alcohol = 1 bottle Shiraz, 3 Jack Daniels & coke, Cigarettes = 11, Food = burgers cooked on fire, No. squares Lindt duty free chocolate = 5, No. new animals seen = 2 (gerenuk and dik,dik)

8am Gaaaah! Stick head out of rooftop to see motley crew of local elders come to look at the strange wazungus. Remember a story I wrote in primary school about aliens landing in my back garden and realise that sudden appearance of silver, floodlight Landie must be similar experience. Chris arranges a quick family photocall. Whilst flattered and delighted to join their family portrait am conscious of not looking best first thing in the morning before coffee with bleary eyes and unbrushed hair.

4pm Disaster. Total disaster. The Landie suddenly seemed to lose all stability and started swaying all over the road as if drunk. Both the back shock absorbers (the things we just spent 3 sodding days waiting in Nairobi to be fixed) have broken again. Chris is lying under the Landie with a spanner getting covered in oil and mending things.

11pm Managed to get back on the road and headed into nearby Marsabit National Park to find place to spend night and rethink trip. Map showed delightful looking campsite called Lake Paradise. Spent 2 hours driving around Park looking for paradisiacal lake. At one point we stopped and got out on foot to explore the route ahead as we climbed steadily upwards through the dense, shady forest we heard a distant scream of elephant alarm and then much breaking of branches as they crashed away. Pretty damn cool.

Saturday 3 September

MARSABIT NATIONAL PARK

Alcohol = 2 Tusker beers, 2 Jack Daniels & coke, Cigarettes = 4 (v.g.), Food = brie and grapes, potato salad, tomato salad, delicious tacos

What a marvellous day! Decided we had earned some time off given Landie-based restrictions on further travel so lay in our woodland glade reading books, eating nice food and generally pretending we are actually normal people and actually on holiday. Blissful.

Sunday 4 September CHALBI DESERT

Alcohol = 1 Jack Daniels & coke, 3 glasses red wine, Cigarettes = 11, Food = delicious vegetable curry, No. squares Lindt duty free chocolate = 0 (finished the bar)

4pm Dragged ourselves away from Lakeless Paradise and back onto Road from Hell. Have planned new route heading west across the Chalbi Desert to Lake Turkana then South to Uganda as 1500km trip into Ethiopia seems foolhardy given lack of suspension. Landie just started producing most godawful and decidedly worrying smell.

4.30pm Cannot believe what has happened. On closer inspection we found that both rear right shocks have now gone and the source of smell is coil spring rubbing against tyre. We can go no further and will have to wait here in the desert until we can arrange for someone to come and fix it... Make a few calls on satellite phone and mechanics should be with us by about 2pm tomorrow. Hurrah!

6.30pm Gorgeous sunset. Groups of young boys wearing intricately beaded costumes are herding camel home over the hills. This is actually a marvellous opportunity to enjoy an area of true wilderness and learn from interactions with local people.

Monday 5 September CHALBI DESERT

Alcohol = 3 glasses red wine, Cigarettes = 6 (rationing), Food = enormous plate cheese and

biscuits, 1 bowl frosties (non v. good), Positive thoughts re: Land Rover Kenya = 0

10am The beaded youth have returned bringing a plastic yellow container filled with absolutely rank-smelling liquid - presumably mixture of camel blood and milk. Appreciate that this is an amazing opportunity to sample the way of life of an ancient culture, however it smells truly vile and do not relish the idea of entertaining the youth further



Family life...

by vomiting in front everyone so decline their kind offer to try some. End up surrounded by about 20 young warriors (several of whom are carrying rifles) demanding tea, cigarettes, food, watches, money etc. Decide to drive a few kms back along the road to find a new camp surrounded by hills and hopefully out of sight of new friends.

6pm Finally get hold of mechanics - they have reached Marsabit and will be with us in the morning! Decide to just ignore reality and pretend are actually living normal life rather than stranded in the middle of godforsaken Desert, so slouch in camp chairs stuffing our faces with delicious brie and Gouda and drinking wine whilst we watch a Disney movie on the laptop.

continued on page 4...



On the road north...

Bridget Jones in Kenya (cont.)...

Tuesday 6 September
CHALBI DESERT

Alcohol = 6 glasses red wine (approx.), Cigarettes = 16, Food = more cheese and biscuits, shepherds pie, No. mechanics staying in camp = 4

7am Up nice and early to await our saviours!

1.30pm Mechanics finally arrive in surprisingly empty van. They got lost and had puncture. However, they have not actually brought required



Camels in camp...

welding kit so are sent back to Marsabit for equipment.

2-4 pm Lie feebly in shade.

5pm Paint toenails.

6pm Had just decided to make the best of a bad job and prepared cheese and wine to eat on Landie roof as though this were a planned sundowner break rather than 51st hour without progress, when, in an unprecedented hive of activity, a vehicle filled with people drove past and stopped to let out Simon, one of our mechanics. Apparently the rescue vehicle has also broken down, but they are slowly making their way across the plateau towards us and will start work first thing in the morning.

Wednesday 7 September
IBIS HOTEL, NANYUKI

Alcohol = 0 (surely something wrong?), Water = not enough, Cigarettes = 17, Food = 1 cabbage chapatti, 5 samosas, No. new animals seen = 1 (zorilla - it's a bit like a polecat)

6am Ugh. Excitement at the arrival of our saviours last night caused me to drink slightly more red wine than perhaps wise. Have vague memories of being very enthusiastic about Simon and Jackson teaching me Swahili, but cannot now remember a word. Attempts to weld the Landie have failed so having tied up the coil spring (and also tied up something underneath the mechanics vehicle) we begin a tortuously slow crawl back across the plateau to Marsabit in vehicles held together by bits of orange string.

2pm Scour every restaurant and shop in Marsabit trying to find something that will be deemed acceptable for lunch. Decide against plastic bag of rice and beans in goo. Discover that 3 weeks ago, 96 people were killed near Turbi about 150 kms NorthWest of here. i.e. the general vicinity of our last 3 days in the desert... Details are slightly unclear but it seems that raiders from a tribe over the Ethiopian border came to steal grazing land from the local Gerbra tribe resulting in what has become known as the 'Marsabit Massacre'. There are ongoing tribal feuds apparently exacerbated during times of drought - i.e. now. Perhaps should have been slightly more concerned about beaded youth with guns.

1.30am In bed in hotel. Completely exhausted. Drive back down 'Road From Hell' to Nanyuki took

eight long dusty bumpy white-knuckled hours.

Thursday 8 September
SOMEONE'S GARDEN, SOMEWHERE NEAR THE UGANDAN BORDER

Alcohol = 0 (this is getting serious!), Cigarettes = 9, Food = 1 bag ready salted crisps, 8 chocolate chip cookies

8am Uuurrgh. Oh God. Wake with tongue stuck to mouth feeling exhausted and so dehydrated there must be no water in body.

10pm Have passed back down Northern Kenya, through the Rift Valley and now making our way Westwards. Much of the 'road' seems to be more pothole than tarmac. And yet someone still felt the need to build mountainous speed bumps at regular intervals. Chris is very quiet and seems understandably rather distracted by the challenge of driving through Central Africa over the next couple of weeks. Which is entirely understandable. Am conflictly jealous, terrified and proud of what he is about to undertake.

1am. Oh God, I am so tired. Have decided we are close enough to the Ugandan border to finally stop for night. Should be able to reach airport in Entebbe by tomorrow afternoon if we start nice and early. Have turned down side road to look for campsite. Lots of neat rows of crops and deserted looking buildings so pull off onto nice flat patch of grass with few cows tied nearby and put up rooftop, crawl in, curl up and pass out.

Friday 9 September
KENYAN AIRWAYS FLIGHT KQ461, ENTEBBE - JOHANNESBURG

Alcohol = 1 well-earned Vodka and tonic on plane, Cigarettes = about a million, Food = 1 crisp sandwich

6am Oh dear. Wake to sound of voices and laughter. Buildings apparently not as deserted as they looked. Entire family (approx. 35 people) sitting and standing in rows awaiting our awakening. Everyone is incredibly friendly and delighted to

meet us. After obligatory bleary-eyed photo call get onto road in search of Ugandan border and, more importantly, cup of coffee. Can't help but think about how villagers in the UK would react if a group of Kenyans set up camp in their back garden in the middle of the night... Suspect the welcome would be slightly less effusive. The wonders of life on the road with Namaste.

1.10pm. Oh my God. My flight leaves in 2 hours



Overlooking the desert...

and we are still the wrong side of Kampala which appears to be completely gridlocked and the airport is still 40 kms further on the other side of town. The roads are a total heaving nightmare filled with cars and buses either entirely stationary or weaving madly in and out of tiny gaps.

Am now secretly crossing my fingers and hoping very hard that there will be a fire, flood or similar ahead, blocking the road and meaning that I do actually miss the flight and get to stay another day. Or even the whole weekend.

2.57pm Arrive at Entebbe airport.

3.06pm Collapse into seat on plane.

3.10pm Blink back tears as we take off over Lake Victoria. Start looking forward to next Namaste adventure...

by Jo Shaw



Meeting the local Turkana kids...

Global Expedition Update

So, we had finally left Nairobi after several days of Landie repairs, notably replacing two rear shock absorbers that had finally given up after 90,000km. Some other parts had not arrived in time, so these would have to wait until Kampala, the next opportunity for replacement.

I had been keen to ensure that the vehicle was in as good a shape as possible as the section across Central Africa was coming up soon; and the last thing I needed in potentially hostile territory was a broken vehicle! Consequently, I had been giving the Land Rover boys a hard time to make sure we got it right - well, it wasn't exactly the school run; and I hadn't chosen a new vehicle with a 3-year global warranty for nothing!

So north it was, our aim being to reach the mountains of southern Ethiopia, possibly even as far as Addis Ababa, before returning south and west to Kenya via Lake Turkana and onwards to Uganda, Jo's return point, and my staging point for the Central Africa section.

The road was good all the way to Isiola, passing to the west of Mt Kenya. The road north from there becomes a track, corrugated to hell, and dusty as can be, though the surrounding scenery is superb.

This area was also well known to me as a British military training area, both for mountain work, but also for desert work. It was interesting reading about places we were passing, as I was at the time chewing through a book about the Sierra Leone hostage rescue crisis a few years earlier. It had talked about one of the SAS squadrons, then on training in Kenya, called off for action in Sierra Leone. One of the vehicles they had been travelling in on this road had overturned, killing two of its occupants, not a good start to an SAS mission.

After several hours of bumping along the road, the Landie began to sway a lot more than usual. Shit, two shocks, the two new shocks, had collapsed after a mere 350 miles from Nairobi, a little less than the life expectancy I had been hoping for. As I lay under the Landie, trying to figure out a solution, my thoughts returned to the CMC garage and my discussion with the competent and ebullient head of after sales there.

"It's the brackets that need looking at as well...", he had said; and I had presumed this had been



The road to Ethiopia

Did you know?

"The Central African Republic is one of the last refuges in the world for a vast array of amazing, beautiful and unrecorded butterfly species. And a place to see wonderful and intricate displays, pictures and cards made from butterfly wings of all shapes, colours and textures..."

taken care of in the welding shop there. Clearly not, as I inspected the brackets. One of the shock absorber brackets had completely sheared, the other had a gaping hole that needed reducing to ensure the shock would not oscillate in a direction it wasn't supposed to. Hmmm, another lesson in not inspecting work done more carefully and I could just imagine my Dad wagging his finger at me for not doing so! Ok, so my mechanical abilities have improved tenfold on this trip, but sometimes, just sometimes, it is nice to rely on the expertise of others.

As we were now in the middle of nowhere, I made as good a patch job as I could (largely relying on the two remaining shocks and coil springs), and we decided to limp onto Marsabit to camp for the night in the Marsabit National Park. After exploring the park for a bit in search of supposed Paradise Lake, the difficult track, combined with 2 missing shocks and our need for rest, we instead ended up in a lovely piece of savannah forest not far from the

river, one of the few in this region with any water in it. The Jack & Coke went down very well after setting up camp!

With some time to contemplate our options, we decided that to try and continue on to Ethiopia would be foolhardy, given our limited time and now limited vehicle speed. So we looked at the map, and determined that the shortest and easiest route would be to cross the Chalbi Desert to Lake Turkana, then head south and cross into Uganda at Mt Elgon, in all about 50% less than we had planned.

Though I was hugely annoyed at the reason for this, sometimes you have to take the rough with the smooth on expedition. No point in letting it get you down, just deal with it.

After that first night in the park, we were too comfortable and tired to go anywhere, so with our new and relaxed timeline, we decided to stay another day, relatively undisturbed, with the distant sounds of elephants tramping through the forest. A good excuse to finish our books and soak up some relaxation in a wonderful setting!

On 4 September, we entered the small and

continued on page 6...



Sunset in Chalbi Desert

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

October 2005

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

November 2005

Through Togo to the Gold Coast of Ghana, before heading north through Ivory Coast to the mountains of Guinea and onwards to the Atlantic coast of the Gambia and Senegal, before turning north across the Adrar plateau of Mauritania along the western Sahara...



Getting the shocks fixed...

Global Expedition Update cont...

windswept desert town of Marsabit, before turning off the main track onto our route across the sand. A few kilometres out of town, we climbed over several hills, which on the other side, revealed an awesome view across the Chalbis Desert to the horizon, some 80km away.

Slowly making our way down the rocky track to the softer sand below, we were enjoying our new course, the GPS doing its thing and soaking up the

from Jo. There I sat them in a circle and we chatted about boy's stuff. Afterwards, I explained about our broken vehicle and that we had to wait for other people to come and help, and it would be great to get some rest. Perhaps they would like to come back in the morning.

A little surprised that the tactic worked, they set off in the direction of the setting sun and their village, leaving us to relax, for a while...

The concept of personal space, however, is a little unknown in Africa, and they duly returned an hour later, with more lads, and more guns. Without waiting, I decided it was prudent to move, in case they decided to take what they wanted by force. Swiftly we packed everything away, and despite the broken vehicle, we drove 5 km back along the track towards Marsabit, and out of harm's way.

It also made me reflect on one of Africa's dilemmas - the tensions that result from tribal differences, often transcending national borders that were drawn up by Europeans with no real thought for the diversity of culture and tribe. Tribal groupings are the foremost social grouping in Africa, with nationality a distant second. This is one of the reasons Africa still finds it difficult to manage itself at a national, let alone, international level; and the root cause behind many vicious and disturbing conflicts. Tribal dominance is an ancient motivator and acts as a hindrance to the concept of a state looking after all of its people. The genocide in Rwanda; Mugabe in Zimbabwe; protection of diamond income in Sierra Leone and Angola; all have roots in tribal conflict and the desire for one tribe to dominate the others.

But this same situation has applied in other parts of the world, such as the break-up of the former Yugoslavia into traditional ethnic groupings; or in Iraq today, where the 3 principal groups - the Sunnis, Shias and Kurds vie for power rather than work together for the common good of a national state.

Xenophobia and racism is still rife in Africa, and this stems from tribal characteristics

more than national ones. And corresponding government corruption stems largely from the lack of accountability amongst all of the people; and this desire for tribal dominance. Government policies reflect this, and play into the hands of the few that gain power, which is all too often abused for personal and tribal gain, rather than used for the benefit of all. This is one of Africa's greatest challenges - to move to the point of understanding



The source of the Nile

sights and sounds of this vast expanse of land. And then... crack... shudder... sway... oh shit, not again! Jumping out of the cab, I realised that one more of the shocks had collapsed, spewing its oil contents all over the place. Using the shock that I had removed due to the broken bracket, I replaced it. Given that regular Landies live with only 2 shocks at the back (I had upgraded mine to 4 to deal with the extra weight of expedition equipment) and 2 coil springs, I figured that we could still continue, albeit at snail pace.

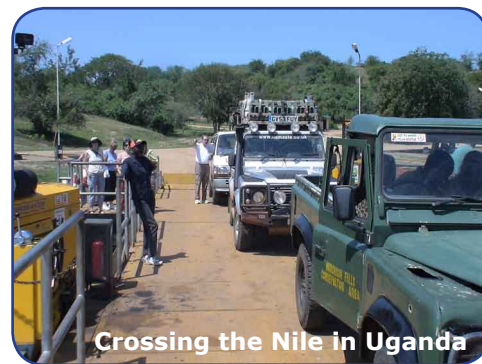
But after only 17 miles from Marsabit, I began to smell burning - one of the coil springs had jumped out of its housing and was rubbing against the inside of the tyre. Oh, how I hate not to be self-sufficient, but this was now time to stop. Any more progress was going to cause more lasting damage, and that was the last thing I need for crossing Central Africa.

Field repair, therefore, was the only option now, but who? Feeling just a little let down by the CMC Land Rover boys in Nairobi, and knowing that they had a branch in Nanyuki, the nearest town to us some 160 miles away, I called them on the sat phone. I gave them a precise location and description of route, plus a list of kit to bring, including welding kit and new shocks. Expecting them to arrive the next day, we set up camp in the desert, with camels for companions.

As we sat in the shade of the awning, it didn't take long for some local Turkana lads to appear out of nowhere. Looking awesome in their traditional outfits (see front cover picture), complete with beads, spears, machetes and some with AK47's (which seemed a little out of place for pastoralists to say the least), they were largely harmless, but relentless at their request for everything we had.

While I understood their curiosity, and perhaps their perspective on our apparent wealth (if only they knew the real story), I found it hard to comprehend their persistence after 3 hours. While these lads were young, no more than 18 years old, they were well armed and I knew there had been troubles in the region and recently, including the "Marsabit Massacre", involving the death of 100 people in clashes between rival pastoralists.

I could also see that Jo was becoming increasingly uncomfortable, so to relieve the situation, I shepherded the group of lads, by now about 15 or so of them, away from the Landie, and away



Crossing the Nile in Uganda

that a government is not for the benefit of those in government, but for all of a nation's people.

We all have something to learn from this, and Europeans have much to answer for in the legacy of colonisation in Africa. The Europeans hardly set a good example by taking what they wanted by force, at the expense of the African. That history is still relatively recent, and not far from the minds of many African governments. We must not flinch from the mistakes of the past; but use the lessons for the benefit of the future.

One of the interesting facets of modern Africa is the sight of failing infrastructure, be it roads, buildings, water supply or whatever. While the colonialists may have introduced a western concept of civilisation, such as towns and roads, they did

continued on page 7...



Murchison Falls, northern Uganda

Global Expedition Update cont...

little to pass the knowledge or skills onto the local population. For a society that was traditionally tribal, village-based, and often nomadic, this was an acceleration along the development timeline that far exceeded the European pace.

The majority of African people live from day to day, often hand-to-mouth, that leaves little room for worrying about tomorrow. The concept of planning is frequently non-existent, and combined with lack



Road conditions in Sudan...

of skills, or even desire, the result is there for us all to see. This is one of the greatest challenges for non-governmental organisations working in Africa, many of which have yet to grasp it, but I shall rant a little about that later!

Back in the desert, another 24 hours passed, then another, and still no CMC boys. Checking food & water supplies, I note we're still good for 5-6 days, but all the time knowing we were running out of time to get Jo to the airport in Uganda. I checked with the garage and they didn't know where the recovery vehicle was. Hmmm. Finally, they arrived around lunchtime on the third day, but without the welding machine I had requested, and only a very basic toolkit.

As it turned out, they had had a few 'issues' just getting to us - firstly they managed to crash on route, smashing their windscreen and breaking their own leafspring suspension. Here was a CMC Land Rover garage sending guys into the field on recovery in a second-rate Mazda pick-up! Oh, and getting lost of course, as they had failed to follow my instructions on location. These were great guys that had come to help us, but perhaps a bit more planning should have been on the training programme!

Anyway, they returned the 17 miles to Marsabit to find a welding machine, so we sat and waited again. Eventually they came back, but as it was by then 10pm, we had set up camp for the night. They had brought a couple of local guys too, so I pitched another tent for them and we sat and chatted late into the evening.

The following morning we set about fixing the Landie. Struggling to see in the dust blasting all about us by the relentless desert wind, we soon realised that we could not provide enough wattage from either my generator or alternator to power up the welding machine. So we did a rough bandage job on the coil spring to stop it bouncing out again and limped slowly back to Marsabit at 5mph along with their Mazda limping with equally bandaged leaf spring suspension. The comedy wasn't difficult to spot!

Reaching Marsabit, Jackson and his team completed an excellent welding job to repair and reinforce the shock brackets, replace the shocks, and saw us happily on our way by 5pm that day. Next up, it was time for them to fix the Mazda, so they could get back to Nanyuki themselves.

With 4 spare shocks loaded just in case (and 4 high grade Old Man Emu new ones on route from the UK for pick-up in Uganda), we headed south. Sadly, now so much time had been lost, we decided that the fastest route to Uganda was back down the awful track to Nanyuki, then continue south before heading west on hopefully good, tar roads.

I drove for 5 1/2 hours straight, teeth gritted, along that bastard track, finally handing over to Jo for the final section on tar to Nanyuki. There, we stayed overnight in a hotel that resembled a ship on the inside, and enjoyed a spot of a lie-in the next day.

Just before lunchtime, I popped into the CMC garage to haggle over the bill for recovery. In my view, I felt that CMC should cover the cost as it was their bad workmanship on the shocks in Nairobi that had caused the problem; and I could hardly be held responsible for the recovery vehicle breaking down or getting lost; but \$600 later, in no mood to waste any more time, we set out. I would deal with the issue at a later date.

Past Mt Kenya, again shrouded in clouds, we drove all day and evening. By midnight, we had made it within range of Kampala - 100 km to the Uganda border, and 200 km further to Entebbe. As I felt this was close enough to get there by mid-afternoon the next day, we pulled off the road, onto a village track. After 5km of continuous village buildings, interspersed by agricultural fields, we became tired of looking for a place to camp. So I did a little reconnaissance and found a flat spot to camp, surrounded by trees and a few huts.

We awoke to the sound of voices the following morning; and poking my head out of the tent, we realised we were in someone's garden; and the entire family, about 35 adults and kids, had come out to look. Dressing quickly, I climbed down the ladder and walked over to greet our unwitting hosts. Fortunately, it was one of those moments that restores your faith in people, as they were all extremely friendly and happy for us to visit. They didn't want anything from us, simply to chat and

discuss life. I was even asked if I was a preacher. I could think of a few friends who would have laughed a lot at that question, so I said: "Perhaps not the sort that you're used to".

Herding everyone into a big group, I took a photo of the entire family and enjoyed the looks of amazement as the printer whirled into action and spewed out the image. Easy for us with modern technology, but amazing for people that see very



Endless villages

few photos, let alone of themselves, so it was a great parting gift.

As we crossed swiftly and effortlessly into Uganda, Jo and I mused on the likelihood of an equivalent reaction arriving overnight in deepest, darkest Surrey in England. Perhaps not quite so friendly!

Racing around the shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda, we stopped briefly to take some photos of the source of the Nile River at Jinja, then hurried onto Kampala, the clock ticking.

Through horrendous traffic in the city - nothing like navigating through a new city with a deadline! With assistance from the GPS, we found our way through town and onto the road to Entebbe and

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Happy people after we pulled their truck out of a hole

Global Expedition Update cont...

the international airport perched on the shores of Lake Victoria. With only minutes to spare, Jo just made her flight. Whilst relieved to have made it, I was sad to see her go without time to really say goodbye or reflect on our adventure. Until next time Jo, and my thanks to you for all your hard work, perseverance and humour.

After watching Jo's plane take off, I popped over to the information desk to find a suitable hotel to be



my base for the preparations for Central Africa. The nearer Jo and I had gotten to Uganda, the more I had been thinking about this next section, and it was now time to get on with the research.

But first, a little R&R was needed, so after finding the hotel in the maze of downtown Kampala streets, I collapsed onto the hotel bed, beer in hand, to catch up on the news on CNN.

I ended up spending a week in Kampala in order to get everything ready for what was to be the most epic and pioneering section of the whole expedition to date. So, what did this involve?

Preparing the Land Rover...

Highly conscious of the recent issue in the deserts of northern Kenya, I was not about to make the same mistake again. I met the team at CMC Kampala, including Steve, the service head, and Jean-Pierre, the MD. We agreed what needed to be done and by when, and got on with the job, including fitting the newly arrived parts that had not made their way to Nairobi in time.

I also collected more new shocks, which had been sent by Ed in England. Ed runs the specialist outfit in the UK, Frogs Island 4*4, which had prepared my Landie for this expedition, and has been a constant source of mechanical advice throughout the trip. Cheers Ed. Funnily enough, as it turned out, Jackson's first class welding job in Marsabit was good enough to survive the entire Central Africa crossing and has survived even to this day - as I write this sitting in the middle of nowhere on the Niger/Mali border (we're currently on route to Timbuktoo!)

In one meeting with Jean-Pierre, he also mentioned MONUC, the UN's peacekeeping mission in the Congo, which he thought might be a useful avenue for my route research. He was right.

Planning the route to Tchad...

As the article on page 2 explains, my goal was to get from Kampala, Uganda, to N'Djamena in Chad by 3 October, as I had a friend arriving there to join for the crossing of West Africa. But to get there would have to mean crossing either the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire) and Central African Republic (CAR) to Chad; or northern Uganda, southern Sudan, and CAR to Chad.

Either route was fraught with potential difficulties - from exceptionally bad or non-existent roads; to open warfare, banditry and hostile rebel militias.

In essence, it makes Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" story look like a Sunday picnic.

First up, I made visits to the French, British, DRC & Sudan embassies, both to obtain the requisite visas; and to seek advice or help on the choice of route. I met with the French Consul, who was helpful, particularly with an update on the situation in CAR; but he suggested that I find an alternative route, whilst granting me a visa anyway.

The DRC consul told me that to cross DRC would be very difficult and take about 2-3 months. I had two weeks! He issued me with a visa just in case.

The British Consul was young, and not particularly helpful, choosing to sit behind bullet-proof glass rather than meet a British citizen face-to-face. He towed the party line, the official advice posted on the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) website, i.e. don't go there! Whilst I respected his official position, I was hoping to get some more intelligence than that. Even after explaining my background, including British military, he drew a blank, except to give me the contact details for British Consuls in neighbouring Cameroon and Sudan. I was rather hoping to meet a representative from the British Intelligence Service, rather than a bureaucrat, and it is a sad fact that a British citizen got more help from the French and the locals than the official British Consulate.

At the Sudan embassy, I was told that it could take weeks to issue a visa for Sudan. After 22 years of civil war, the Khartoum government and the SPLM (Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement), who represent the south of Sudan, had finally signed a peace accord, ending that terrible conflict. Whilst not saying it outright, it became clear that the embassy, which represented the Khartoum government, did not have the power to authorise travel in southern Sudan. I also met Amber there, who worked for an NGO in southern Sudan, and mentioned the need for an SRRC pass. She also made the kind offer of a place to stay in the ARC compound in Yei should I decide to go that route...

I then followed up Jean-Pierre's suggestion and

paid a visit to the UN's MONUC office (Kampala is the HQ and staging point for all the UN's operations in the Congo). After a brief meeting with the field admin officer, she clearly recognised that my needs were beyond her, but rather than politely decline any further assistance, she introduced me to one of the senior military commanders, Colonel Mostert (Mossie). I must admit, I did bite my lip for want of laughing because the way she pronounced his



name sounded like Colonel Mustard - and I thought, shit, he's going to do me with the lead piping in the library (for all you Cluedo fans out there!)

As I walked into his office, there were maps of DRC all over the walls. At last, I thought, I've come to a place that has some decent intel! Fortunately for me, Mossie was also keen to help, and I will always be grateful to him for that. It was definitely a turning point in my decision on routing, as after some discussion, DRC was effectively ruled out as an option. Too dangerous, and too slow. One of his patrols had taken 5 days to cover 80km, and that was on a stretch of known road. Beyond it, the route could well have been effectively impassable, especially with the imminent onset of the rainy season. It was also roughly 3,800km from Kampala

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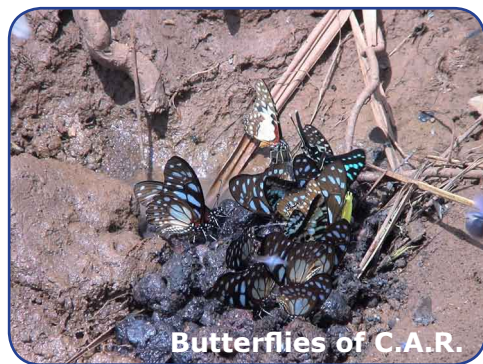


Global Expedition Update cont...

to N'Djamena and I was still planning on 2 weeks.

After a call to one of his ex-SADF (South African Defence Force) mates, Patrick, who he knew had connections with southern Sudan, I left Mossie's office with a telephone number for Patrick; and a firm idea that my route would take in northern Uganda, southern Sudan, and CAR on route to Chad.

Phoning Patrick the next day, he explained more



Butterflies of C.A.R.

about the situation in southern Sudan; and due to his work drilling for water in the hostile region of northern Uganda, he had made good connections with senior figures in the SPLM and SPLA (the military arm of the SPLM). As such, we agreed to meet at a restaurant the next day to discuss my routing further.

After a couple of coffees the next morning, Patrick took me to meet Gaily, a respected and senior investment adviser to the SPLM. After explaining what I wanted to do, Gaily was keen to help, and suggested that we go and meet the senior SPLM/SPLA commanders, then based in Kampala. Patrick explained that he had made the initial introduction, the rest was up to me. As Patrick pulled away in his 4*4, I jumped into Gaily's car and we headed into the centre of town.

I must admit, I felt a bit like a character from a Frederick Forsyth novel, moving silently from one agent contact to another. We pulled into a car park, just off the main high street in Kampala, and walked a few blocks to a nearby cafe. Looking like any other ordinary cafe, this one was a little different, not because of how it looked or appeared, but by the clientele.

We stopped at a table with half a dozen men sitting around, deep in conversation. As we approached, the conversation stopped, and Gaily duly introduced me to each person. He had previously explained that I should talk to Riak, one of the senior SPLM commanders, so after the introductions, I pulled up a seat next to Riak.

It was great to sit with these guys who had engineered and managed to achieve something that nobody had thought possible - the rights to control their own territory in southern Sudan; and now a lasting peace accord with the Khartoum government and just as importantly, international recognition. After 22 years of violent and devastating civil war, southern Sudan is now a region of hope and development; and I was to be the first official tourist! For sure, NGO's were already on the ground, but all with UN peacekeeping and SPLA escorts. I was going in unarmed, and without escort.

The main threat nowadays is from the vicious and repugnant LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) that operates in northern Uganda and southern Sudan; but as Riak explained, a joint effort by the SPLA and Ugandan Army was forcing the LRA to flee westwards into DRC. Though I was reassured by

Riak, I was still conscious that the fleeing LRA were crossing the route that I would have to take, so he gave me as much intel as he could. He also phoned his office in town to advise his staff that I would be arriving to collect an SRRC pass, the document you need to get into southern Sudan, which I did right after the meeting.

Excellent, I now had authorisation to enter and cross southern Sudan; and a visa for CAR. All I had to do now was evade the LRA, bandits and militias; and survive the route. Through my research and many meetings, I now knew the condition of the roads in northern Uganda and southern Sudan; but still I had not met anyone who had traversed the route across southern CAR. As it transpired later, this was not surprising, as no-one has attempted this route in over 20 years!! Only one way to find out...

Re-stocking provisions...

And a few extra essential items. This was my last chance to stock up on any provisions and equipment for making the crossing. In particular, I wanted to make sure I had all the safety, survival and communications equipment I would need in the event of an emergency. Given the jungle I was expecting ahead, I purchased a new machete, which I had sharpened with an axel-grinder in a local workshop.

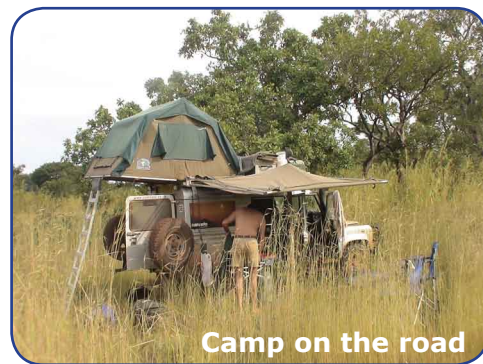
I also purchased a load of video film so that I could copy all the originals and send them home to the UK, just in case. I did the same with all computer back-ups. In my mind, I was preparing for the worst. What would happen if the vehicle was stolen, I was hijacked or forced to escape and evade. I certainly didn't want to lose anything that couldn't be replaced at a later date.

I also took some time to explore some Kampala nightlife while I was there, especially on the night of my birthday. It was good to get calls from my family, though I tried to shelter my Mum a bit from the details of what I was about to undertake. Well, you know how Mum's worry; and mine probably gets more than her fair share of worry, given my

history of expeditions...

It was also a good chance to consider the great gun debate... Should I, or should I not, have some form of weapon for self-defence. This is a tough call. After much debate, I finally decided that it would be better to go unarmed.

Ok, so the worst happens, you get ambushed by a bunch of hostile, and probably drunk, idiots. At best, and I've trained with many types of weapons



Camp on the road

with the military, and in a civilian context (so I know how to use them), you might get one or two, but six of them, even twenty, I think unlikely. It would only exacerbate the problem. And what would happen if you are caught with unauthorised weapons. I certainly didn't have the time to make it legal!

By far and away the best policy, in my opinion, if you're going through hostile terrain, is to do your research, prepare methodically, and use your wits and offer of friendship, no matter how dire the situation. After all, violence encourages violence. If you're smart, confident and can handle yourself in potentially confrontational situations, you are much more likely to walk away unharmed, than if you turn impatient and aggressive.

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The "road" in C.A.R. - spot Patric for scale

Global Expedition Update cont...

For this reason, I use a standard Special Forces (SF) approach to preparation. I carry all the immediate essentials directly on my person in a webbing vest, including sat phone & spare battery, passport, money, light, compass, pocket knife, etc. If this is all I can get away with, it's all I need to survive in the short-term and get my arse home. Next, I carry a survival knife and kit, first aid stuff, GPS, and rations (including a dab of whiskey of



Jungle rivers a plenty...

course) on a belt that I can grab at all times. Finally, I have a bunch of other useful survival items and luxuries in a small rucksack, colloquially known as a 'grab sack'. In the event of a 'get the fuck out of there' situation, you grab what you can, depending upon the circumstance.

You also rely on your own confidence to cover large distances unaided. Perhaps one of the reasons I completed specialist military selection, and trained and competed in ridiculous endurance events in the past, aside from the immediate reward of doing so, was to be mentally, as well as physically, capable, of covering several hundred miles of unknown terrain if needs be; be it jungle, desert, mountains, snow, whatever.

To the uninitiated, covering 250km on foot, carrying everything you need, navigating and evading potentially hostile terrain and people, in several days, is a little bewildering. To me, I've already got the tee-shirt, so I have the confidence it is possible; and this is a great asset for this kind of expedition. If it all goes tits up, I can 'bug-out', reach safe territory and get home to talk about it.

I also make sure the vehicle can be immediately locked and immobilised, so that it can possibly be recovered later. More than likely, any idiot attacking you would want to keep it rather than simply destroy it, so there is always a chance of recovery.

But this is all worst case planning. For general purposes, I always plan to stay with the vehicle. Not only is it a lifeline, it is the primary means to extricate yourself from a potentially hostile situation. You give it up as a last resort! This means you look ahead for potential ambushes, you avoid dodgy roadblocks, you go cross-country as necessary to reduce the chances of surprise attack, you keep your shit together at all times in preparation for rapid evacuation; and you keep it in good condition at all costs.

Prepare the emergency plan...

Whilst you can prepare for all eventualities; and have confidence in your ability to handle yourself in difficult and hostile situations; it's also a good idea to have at least some form of back-up in the event of an emergency.

Consequently, I created an emergency plan, including detailed maps, contacts in all countries, and requested the standby assistance of a group of friends who have experience of dealing with such

emergencies and environments. In essence, during the Central Africa section, I would make a daily satellite call to the emergency plan co-ordinator (also my old friend, Paul, who I trust implicitly, and has the personal capability to get shit done, whatever the odds) with details of precise GPS location, plans for forthcoming 2 days, status, etc.

In the event of an emergency; or no call on 2 consecutive mornings, Paul would instigate an emergency response, including a search and rescue mission if necessary. Whilst I had decided not to insure the vehicle in Africa (too expensive), I never shirk on travel insurance. And for my needs, my personal BMC (British Mountaineering Council) expedition insurance is as all-encompassing as it gets, including emergency repatriation. If a helicopter is needed, a helicopter is found...I hope! My thanks go to Paul and Cman in particular, but also Greg, Paul B, and my brother, Stu, and dad, Keith, for all being in on the plan and standing by if needs be. And to everyone else who offered their contacts in case of need, including Nick, Mossie, Patrick, embassy staff and numerous others.

At the time, I was also conscious of the fact I was planning to do this solo. I had made up my mind about this for some time. This was not a section of the expedition for the uninitiated, the inexperienced, or the unprepared. In some ways, my life has led me (or perhaps I have led my life) to be able to handle this kind of thing, and I didn't want the extra burden of someone else who was not similarly prepared. That is no offence in any way to all the wonderful people who have joined me so far on this trip, even those on previously difficult sections. But this was different - knowingly hostile and dangerous; and through largely unknown terrain.

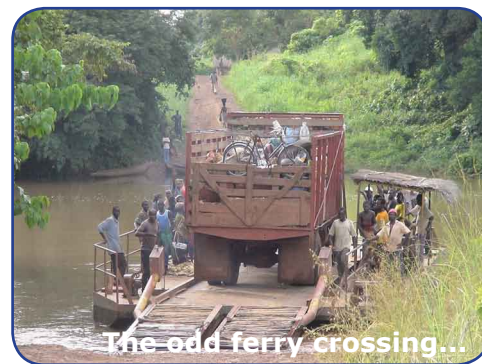
Time permitting, visit the gorillas...

Whilst in Kampala, I had hoped to pay a visit to the wild and mountainous jungle regions along the Uganda/Rwanda/Congo borders, mostly to visit the amazing gorillas and chimpanzees there. Unfortunately, time ran out (Heidi was still due in

N'Djamena on 4/10 and it was now 15/9), plus I was not keen to travel the 2,000km round-trip on difficult roads in order to keep the Land Rover fit for the Central Africa journey. I consoled myself with the knowledge that it would be a fantastic reason to return to this part of Africa...

And then a surprise, perhaps fate...

I had agreed to meet up with Patrick for a beer before leaving. Wandering into the local Kampala



The odd ferry crossing...

Irish pub, and one of the favourite local expat hangouts, I met Patrick, there with Mossie, his girlfriend, Lyn, and sister, Catherine, and a few other mates. After chatting for an hour or so, Patrick simply turned to me and said that he wanted to join me across Central Africa. Cool. I already knew some of his background - a former Captain in the SADF, pioneering numerous SF tactics, including riding the first ever motorbike-based forces into jungle combat; and lots of experience of dangerous missions in various parts of Africa. He also worked as and trained game ranging and anti-poaching units on several game reserves. And more recently, he had set up his own company with Lyn, drilling for water in northern Uganda. Unlike any other company operating in the region, they had been

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Patrick walking a river before crossing with the Landie...

Global Expedition Update cont...

working in and amongst the notorious LRA for several years, producing water for local villages in desperate need. Not that I knew at the time, but their company employs some 350 Ugandans in the north, and they also look after some 25 or so orphans up there. His experience made Patrick uniquely prepared for a journey of this sort. For Patrick, it was also a chance to explore terrain for potential further work for his company; as well as



Good road, infrequent

a chance to do something different. This was the primary motivator behind Lyn's initial suggestion that Patrick approach me.

I said OK, and we agreed to discuss it more over the weekend, and he invited me to come and stay with his family. I happily agreed as it would be a good chance to get to know each other more before setting out.

I had a great weekend with the self-styled and extremely hospitable "Adams Family", happy to delay for a day or two as I quickly appreciated how much of an asset Patrick would be to the success of the trip. I even learned of Patrick's previous experience in close protection (the official jargon for bodyguarding). He is 6'6, an imposing giant that would make many think twice in a dodgy scenario. He's also seen it, done it and survived it many times before. I couldn't have selected a more ideal companion for this journey if I had tried. What's more, we got along really well, quickly taking to each other's humour and experience.

After a final satcom test with Paul on the morning of 18 September; and breakfast with Patrick's family; Patrick and I set out on the road north. Our first stop and last point before potential dodgy terrain was Murchison Falls National Park, a beautiful reserve in north-western Uganda. We stayed in a lovely lodge there, sharing our extraordinary experiences and stories, views on life, even discussing quantum physics, though by then I suspect it was the beer talking!

We made good progress the next day, firstly taking a ferry across the Nile River, then on a good road to the Sudan border that tracks alongside the eastern border of DRC (this was the last tarmac for over 1,000km). As we approached the border, the tarmac turned to dirt track, and then positioned in a valley, the border post itself. A conglomeration of huts, trucks, and people milling about with various official duties. Signing out of Uganda was easy; and signing into the 'New Sudan', as it is now known, with our SRRC passes was also easy, albeit having to fill out numerous forms and visiting countless huts and officials. We also managed to get a stamp in our passports - a first for sure in the New Sudan!

We also met a couple of missionaries at the border, also on their way to Yei, and we met them several times again on the way to town. After the border, it didn't take long for the road to deteriorate

into a mess of ruts and muddy bogs, with giant trucks & buses unsurprisingly stuck and blocking the route. Eventually, each truck got pulled out and we seized the opportunity to get through before the next truck came along.

As we continued north, I noticed that fewer and fewer vehicles were on the road as darkness approached. Travelling at night on these roads was not wise, particularly given the last known sighting of the LRA was around Yei. However, we decided it would be better for us to reach the safety of Yei rather than camp out in the jungle.

About an hour from town, we passed another truck stuck in the mud, and offered a lift to an SPLA soldier heading into Yei. Once I had ascertained that the guy was kosher, he climbed up onto the roof of the Landie at my suggestion. Excellent, we now had armed roof cover (i.e. soldier on roof with automatic rifle) in case of problems.

We finally pulled into Yei, dropped off our new soldier-friend, who also accelerated our passing through the various roadblocks there; and ran into the missionaries again. To save time, they kindly offered to show us the location of the ARC International compound, where I had previously agreed to meet Amber. Hoping she was still there, as we had arrived 2 days later than expected, we pulled into the compound. *[ARC International is an NGO operating in many countries, including southern Sudan. For an insight into some of their work, read Rachel's article on page 13.]*

Fortunately, Amber was still there and showed us to our rooms, and to our pleasant surprise, a fridge full of beer! Supping on some beers, we enjoyed chatting to Amber and Rachel and some of the other staff there. Later on in the evening, there was sporadic gunfire reverberating off the jungle canopy. I was interested to see the looks on everyone's faces, from nervousness to outright fear. Talking to John, the head of security at the compound, Patrick and I enquired about the security arrangements. Pretty much non-existent aside from an evacuation plan and a hope that the nearby SPLA base would

suffice. But I had also worked out that it was from that direction that the gunfire was coming from. I explained that it was not sustained fire, typical of a live contact, but more likely to be soldiers letting off some steam after a few too many beers. Not something that would be tolerated in a highly disciplined outfit, but as long as nobody was getting hurt, no harm. There were also a number of UN peacekeepers (officers from several countries) in



Scenic road, infrequent

the compound, on a 'factfinding' mission, most of which I was unimpressed by.

The exception to this was a Lt Col, who had arrived the same day as us, but all the way from Pakistan. It was great to chat to him the following morning, as we shared a love of mountain-climbing. A remarkably intelligent man, he updated us on the Kashmir situation and the ongoing hunt for Al Qaeda in his country; as well as offering some insights into the thinking and issues facing Pakistan today.

We hung around for a bit, supposedly waiting to attend a UN security briefing that morning. Perhaps because of our questioning the night before, perhaps because we both had intelligent and experienced things to say on military and security

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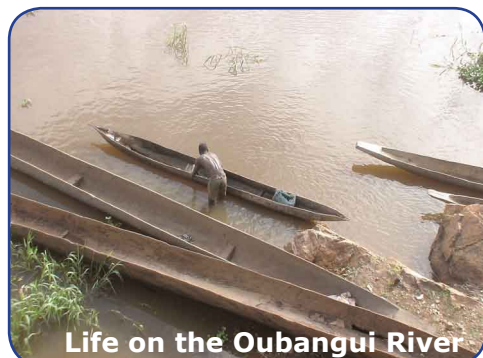


Normal road, lots and lots and lots and lots...

Global Expedition Update cont...

matters, who knows, but shortly before it, Amber told us the UN officer had said we were no longer invited to attend. The excuse, oh, only NGO's could attend.

Patrick and I were amused. A small man indeed was this UN officer. So what is the UN exactly? I believe it is an organisation that represents the people of the world, not selected invitees. What a joker! Nevertheless, we sat and waited for Amber to



Life on the Oubangui River

return to give us the latest. Oh, surprise, no news, except that the Level 3 security alert remained in place, i.e. no one was to leave their compounds. (Level 4 is complete evacuation)

I have always been perplexed by impotent and extraordinarily expensive UN peacekeeping missions. Throughout Africa, genocides have come and gone, atrocities and countless crimes against humanity have been continuously committed, with or without so-called UN peacekeepers on the ground. The only time these guys get a real mandate to defend (which, to any decent military strategist, means going on the offensive), is when individual countries hand out a mandate to their own forces, irrespective of the official UN position.

Surely it is time for the UN to reconsider its strategy and position on these matters. Kofi Annan, for example, is on the record as stating that missions in Africa would have been more effective if approached differently. Rwanda could, and should have been avoided. The same in Sierra Leone. He has even publicly recognised the existence and effectiveness of private military companies, though he knows that this topic is highly sensitive politically, in many ways as it is effectively privatising peacekeeping.

Let's take an example, Sierra Leone. Prior to the UN sending peacekeepers, the embattled and internationally recognised government of Sierra Leone at the time decided to hire a company called Executive Outcomes (EO). Comprising former special forces soldiers and officers from several countries, notably South Africa and the UK, these guys went in to Sierra Leone, and in a matter of 2 months, had put down the resistance, including the notorious and deadly West Side Boys, and facilitated peace and stability. And with a force of only 200 or so individuals. Peace was maintained for a year or so, then bowing to international pressure, the Sierra Leone government ended the EO contract, worth around \$2 million per month.

Even with a force of some 12-15,000 UN peacekeepers in-country with an annual budget of \$500 million, Sierra Leone once again returned to a land of violence, oppression and horrific abuses. Only after a British Army patrol got taken hostage (sadly, through their own bad decision-making and preparation), did the British government step-in and take matters into their own hands, sending in a hostage rescue force that not only rescued all the hostages alive, but effectively obliterated the

West Side Boys as a fighting force. One of the most ballsy SF operations in recent history.

It's a bit weird, but sometimes, good soldiers and officers become tied up in bureaucratic knots and bullshit when they swap their unit beret for a blue UN beret.

So anyway, Patrick and I decided to get on with our expedition, give or take the Level 3 alert. These UN guys hadn't even been out and about on the ground, so what did they know. We had direct intel from the local SPLA commanders, so we said: "fuck it, let's do it!"

We said farewell to our kind and hospitable hosts from ARC and drove out of the compound gate and onto the road west - probably the most dangerous piece of road given the latest SPLA intel on the current location of the LRA.

On constant alert for potential hazards, we took it in turns to drive along the jungle 'road' that was partially crap and partially great. In fact, there was a whole new section being built and it was the best piece of road for the next 1,000km!

At one point, we stopped to help an SPLA group on the side of the road. At first we were a bit wary about the risk, as we could not be sure if these guys were LRA or SPLA. Having stopped though, we realised there was no threat, so enquired about their situation. One guy was seriously sick, looking like he had advanced malaria, and these guys had spent many days bringing him to the road from somewhere deep in the jungle hoping to get him evacuated. Duly filling this role, we loaded him onto the roof as there was no room inside the car, plus one companion to make sure he didn't fall off. We also handed out the smokes. Patrick and I had both packed lots of extra cartons of smokes as cigarettes are an important currency in this part of the world; and an easy way to make friends with unfriendly cops or military.

A few hours later, we arrived in Maridi, found ourselves another NGO compound, this time an Italian-run organisation. With some cash, we sent James, the sick guy's companion, with his friend to

the local hospital.

For some idea as to what it's like driving into one of these towns, imagine being back in the Wild West... Dusty, dirt streets lined with dilapidated buildings, and lots of people milling about. Let's face it, the way of the gun has ruled this place for the last 20 years, and it showed. Silence falls when you enter, and all eyes are on you; then people approach to find out who you are and what you



Something not green...

want. When they realised we were tourists, their first tourists, they were overjoyed and greeted us with great enthusiasm.

The following morning, we met some local microfinance people also staying in the compound, and we chatted a little about the state of development in southern Sudan. There is so much work to be done, and the SPLM is crying out for more assistance. Imagine the devastation following 22 years of civil war. It was really interesting to feel the mood of the people - hope, optimism, and a new beginning, for sure. I look forward to tracking progress in the region through our new friends there.

A little later, James reappeared, looking for work. He asked if he could work for us during our

continued on page 13...



Our first village in C.A.R.

Global Expedition Update cont...

expedition. Patrick was keen on the idea, and after some thought, I said why not. Hell, this guy had been fighting for the SPLA since he was 11 years old, and he was only 22 now. It was the least we could do to help him down the road to a new life, free of fighting. He could also speak the local dialects, English and Arabic, and knew the terrain, so it was win-win. But I did explain that he could only come as far as the CAR border and no further.



Agriculture in the jungle

So, with James on the roof looking ahead for distant obstacles and problems; and Patrick and I sharing the driving, we continued on a particularly shitty track to the town of Yambio. On route, we put my recovery kit to full use, rescuing several trucks from serious potholes and muddy ditches, including one truck full of people who had been stuck for 2 days.

It was tough going on the senses. Continuous, difficult technical off-road driving, mile after mile. While one person focused on the road, the other would be scouring the dense jungle on either side of the track for threats, as well as co-piloting on the trickier, technical sections.

At last light we reached Yambio, and found a UNICEF compound, and the staff there offered us a room for \$30 a night each. We also met Edith, a Dutch woman who had been working here for a while and enabled me to send some emails from her computer. We also chatted to Bernardo, from the Philippines, who was running a new construction project on site.

The following morning we managed to find some more diesel, though I made sure we passed it through the baja filter as it looked like decidedly dirty fuel. We also found some fresh drinking water in town, and in so doing, I met a friendly Sudanese guy called Richard, who was attempting to create Radio Sudan. I wished him every success in his venture, and we promised to stay in touch on email.

Now clear of the major LRA threat, the next day we travelled across more of the same difficult road, through jungle, and countless villages, everyone waving as we passed. I love the way a stern-looking African man or woman is transformed into a beaming smile at nothing more than a smile and a wave. Given the reduced threat, I decided it was time to camp, rather than try and find some form of compound in a town, and have a chance to interact with a village community. We found a suitable clearing on the edge of a village, not far from a place called Izzo, and requested permission from the village elders. James was great here, allowing us to communicate, as only one or two people had a few words of English. One of the villagers told us that we were the first visitors for a long, long time, and most of the villagers were too young to remember the last time.

The villagers made a fire for us, and at the same

time we offered them some small items - from salt to cooking oil, whatever we could spare. And then there was the arrival of the comedy policeman. A classic idiot, perhaps with a case of traffic-warden disease, clearly pissed on local brew, he had learnt of our arrival and decided to come and check us out and throw his weight around. Patrick and I played tag team, taking it in turns to keep him sweet, at other times ignoring him completely. I was fairly relaxed about the potential danger from this individual - he was unarmed, pissed, and the village girls were all laughing at him. If he was a serious threat, the village would have been highly deferential. However, he did seriously upset James, who after all had been fighting for this guy's freedom and independence for the last 10 years, and he had no respect. A short while later, we sent him packing on his bicycle after James fixed his dynamo light so he wouldn't crash in the jungle on the way home.

This kind of abuse of power by so-called local officials, police or military, was to become a frequent daily experience for us, rarely in the new Sudan thanks to the work of the SPLM, but all too frequent in C.A.R.

Back to our evening with the villagers, I decided it was time for Namaste cinema... Now, you could argue that to show off modern toys would be unfair, but when would be the next chance for these guys and girls to watch a movie? TV & Radio had not reached this part of the world ever, let alone the concept of a cinema. I thought hard about what movie, as very few in the village spoke any English. Then, eureka, I had the perfect choice - Ice Age - a great animation that is easy to follow what's going on and is truly funny.

Sitting on the floor of the dirt clearing, or on logs that some had brought with them, about 20 or so villagers sat around in 2 or 3 tight semicircles to gaze at the screen of my laptop. It was a true wonder for Patrick and I to watch the faces of these great people, staring and laughing at the movie; plus of course enjoying a few chocolates I had brought for just such an occasion.

While most of the village retired to bed not long after midnight, Patrick and I stayed up until 4am, finishing off another carton of wine. I think we were both relieved to have reached this far; and soaking up our evening's experience around the campfire.

The following morning, I took and printed a photo of everyone in the village and gave it to the chief. Patrick made me laugh as he pondered what would happen when the next visitors came through,



Burial mounds in Sudan...

say in 5 or 10 years or so. They would pitch up in this village, thinking they were the first, and the villagers would come out with this dusty photo and stories of two white lads, a silver Land Rover from outer space, movies and chocolate!

We continued on the ever-deteriorating track, passing close to the confluence of the DRC, Sudan and CAR borders. Finally we reached the end of the road in Sudan in a small village. There, we had to say goodbye to James, who had been a great companion, and it was tough to resist his desire to continue, though I knew we could never swing his entry into CAR. We paid him a good wage, probably more than he had ever seen in his life, to make sure he could make his way back home. Patrick also offered him a job in northern Uganda working for

continued on page 14...



Contemplating the fish...

Global Expedition Update cont...

his drilling company. He made out a letter to give to the site chief there; and he described exactly how to get there. I also gave him a map so he couldn't make a mistake on location. We wished him every success, and I hope to hear from Patrick that he made it. Jobs are few and far between, so this was a golden opportunity for James, I hope he takes it.

Next, we had to find the supposed track leading into CAR. Imagine standing in a small village,



Refuelling on the road

surrounded by dense jungle, and looking at the smallest of footpaths winding its way straight into the jungle. No road, not even a track, just a footpath. We looked at each other and laughed. This had to be the most surreal experience - the time had come to venture completely into the unknown. As we inched our way down this path, trees and elephant grass entirely covering the Land Rover, we stopped to chat to a couple of villagers on the edge of town. We told them we were heading into CAR and they looked at us as if we were mad. No one had ever taken a vehicle down that way as long as they could remember, and they asked us why. Exploration, we answered! Sure, CAR was that way, but we had no way of knowing it was possible.

After ploughing straight through the jungle for about an hour at walking pace, keeping one eye fixed on the GPS and one eye on the tiny hint of footpath, we eventually came across a village. Some guys came up to us and started speaking French. Ah hah, I thought, we must have made it into CAR (ex-French colony) and I asked them about the route to Obo, the first town marked on my map.

It was somewhat funny, as we had been a bit worried about Patrick's lack of visa, but hell, who cared, no sign of any border, nor any official. This route was simply used by local villagers travelling between villages and to the small town on the Sudan side to do some trading. The concept of a national boundary was a bit alien to these guys. They told us the path continued all the way to Obo, which was a bit of a relief, but no vehicles ventured in this far!

We then met a guy on his bicycle, a health worker from a nearby village who spoke English. He told us that after 50km or so, "the road will get better!", which subsequently became our mantra in CAR and an everlasting joke! A few km's later, we found a clearing within a tiny village and decided to pitch camp for the night. The few locals that were there told us in broken French and a smattering of English, that many of the villagers had long since fled due to the war and militias in neighbouring Sudan and DRC, but that slowly, now, they were beginning to return to their homeland. Good news, I thought, for the road ahead, and certainly good news for everyone in this region.

The next day, we made slow and painful progress, continuing to plough our way through the jungle, sometimes having to stop to hack our way through

trees and vines with the machete. We even used the winch at one point to clear a tree that had fallen across the path.. We made 47 miles that day after some 10 hours of driving, and we were knackered.

We also reached Obo and visited the local Commissaire to get our passports officially stamped and Carnet stamped. It was time for me to really start practicing the old French!! It took me a while to get my head out of Spanish gear, which I had used a lot in South America some 6 months earlier, and my French was definitely rusty, but practice makes perfect!

After Obo, the track did indeed improve, in that it was no longer entirely covered in jungle; but the surface was utterly rutted, potholed, with hidden ditches and deep water-logged holes big enough to swallow the Landie completely. Oh, and elephant grass up to 3m high and trees still lined the track, sometimes overgrowing it, making it difficult to see the track and its obstacles ahead.

After several more days of tough driving like this at an average pace of 10 mph, we passed through numerous villages, crossed river after river, sometimes on dodgy bridges, sometimes ploughing straight through as the bridges had long since disappeared. We camped wild, trying to gain some peace and quiet, away from villages. We swapped driving every hour, made daily sat calls to Paul, and struggled on, taking it in turns to lose our sense of humour. The road WILL get better!!!

After Obo, the roadblocks also began, and the further we travelled west, the more frequent they became. A typical roadblock would consist of a hut containing anything up to 8 or so military guys, all armed with AK's, some with RPG's, some with handguns, R4's, whatever, and many were menacing. Then there were the gendarmes, with maybe 2 or 3 equally armed guys; and finally, the police representatives; all of whom wanted to see every bit of paper, and made demanding requests for money, cigarettes and anything else we could offer. One such roadblock a day, ok, but we soon found ourselves having to cross up to 20, even

more, every day. More time was spent at these roadblocks than actually travelling, at it was the toughest part of the journey for us to endure, each time keeping an eye on each other to make sure we didn't lose it. [I'll talk more about these roadblocks next month to give some examples, as for now I can't be arsed to write any more this month.]

Suffice to say, after 922 miles from the Sudan border (the last 100 or so even on tarmac, oh



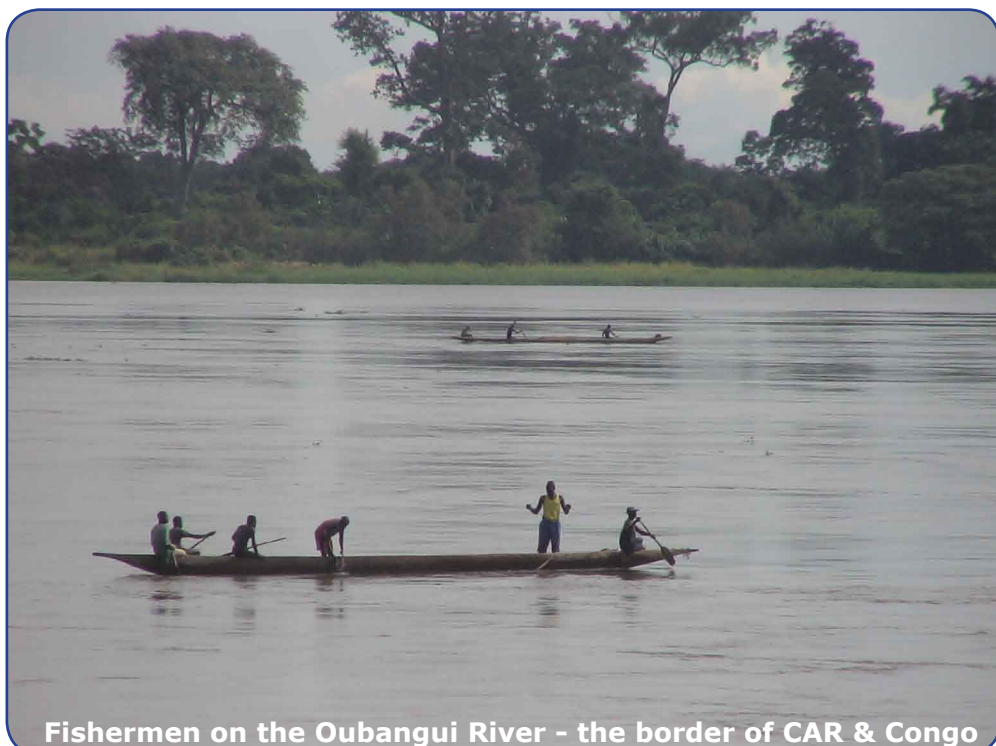
The only "sight" in C.A.R.

that felt good) tramping across some of the most continuously difficult terrain I have ever travelled, we finally pulled into the country's capital, Bangui, on 29 September. We had successfully completed two thirds of the total distance to N'Djamena in Chad. Some dicey moments, but we had made it this far, and we were happy chappies, so we enjoyed plenty of beers, even the hotel casino...But then we were now in a region known for everything from cannibals to pygmies, and the chance of a violent coup at anytime was still high.

Check out next month to find out what happened next...

by Chris Charlton

from somewhere in the desert on the Niger/Mali border



Fishermen on the Oubangui River - the border of CAR & Congo

HIV/Aids Programme in Southern Sudan...

Sudan is a country of such raw and primal beauty. Still untouched by development and most recently a victim of over 40 years of civil conflict, Sudan maintains some of the purity of original Africa. There are no tall buildings, electric lines, or smog to mar the scenery. There



The road out of Yei...

are mangoes and bananas in abundance, farms everywhere and goats in the middle of a very bumpy road refusing to budge. Amongst all this purity, there are mines along the roads, armed SPLA soldiers riding bicycles and trash lining the streets.

You might wonder how a young woman from East-coast America found her way to the busy and bustling town of Yei, in the middle of South Sudan. Hometown of John Garang, Salva Kiir and the SPLM, a non-political girl like myself is getting her fair-share of the most relevant political topics in East Africa, even meeting the big men and women involved, when most people get the long distance version. It happened with a bit of luck, and being in the right-time-right-place, and by following my instincts I now find myself in the midst of all the excitement and in a position to contribute to one of the most important development projects in this country, probably in Africa.

I am working on an HIV awareness project with the American Refugee Committee (ARC). ARC is one of the many NGOs that have entered into this region to address the major health issues affecting the area. With the signing of the peace agreement earlier this year, Yei and other regions of Sudan will soon experience an influx of NGO and governmental activity meant to contribute to the development and sustainability of Sudan as a country.

Despite the influx of foreigners here, I remain conspicuous as the young white

girl strolling down the dusty street. Everywhere I go I hear "Kawayja (white person), how are you?" from the little children, who are wondering what such a person could possibly be doing here. They all want to shake my hand and I greet them with one of the few Arabic phrases I know, "Salaam Aleykum".

Life is good in Yei, it's a simple life. I am learning the complexities of implementing HIV programs on the ground and how to deal with all the frustrations as well as reveling in the successes, however small. We have the rains, LRA, and mines that continually impede progress. But there is never a dull moment here. I am forever meeting new interesting people, gaining experiences, and watching history



All important classes

being made. At times it is good to just get away from all the "work" and be able to cherish the scenery, drinking in the greenery that goes on forever, the distant hills covered in palm trees and mango trees. But then you look down and find bullets in your path and you are



Village life...

told to not stray too far into the bush for fear of mines. You are quickly reminded of what people bring to a land.

In the end, I am grateful for my instincts that told me to come to this country. I have found such raw and vital energy here that makes my time and efforts seem so much more relevant...!

*by Rachel Gallagher
ARC International
Yei, Southern Sudan*



Chris & Rachel in Yei

People

Fellow Adventurers...



Jo Shaw, 30, from Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, joined the expedition for a 12-day journey through Kenya and Uganda.



Eva Vanessar, 21, hosted the expedition in Kampala, Uganda, helping out with logistical preparations for the crossing of Central Africa.



Patrick Devy, 43, from South Africa, joined the expedition for 17 days through Uganda, Sudan, CAR and Tchad; joining Chris for the epic pioneering route across Central Africa.



James, from southern Sudan, joined the expedition for 3 days after Chris & Patrick rescued his malaria-ridden friend from the jungle.

Along the way...

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



Villagers (Mt Kenya), Nanyuki Land Rover boys, Villagers nr Ug border, Staff at Holiday Express Hotel, James, Eva, Lynne, Catherine, Kayla, Veronica, Jean-Pierre, Steve, Mossie, Amber, Francois, Gaily, Riak... (Kampala), Rachel, Amber, Lt Col ??, John, ?? (Yei), Staff at NGO Compound (Maridi), Edith, Bernardo, UNICEF staff, Richard (Yambio), Villagers (Izzo & Selim), Alain, Fernand, Njoute (Bangassou), Djama, Jacques, Veronique (Bambari), Azo & Oubangui Hotel & Casino Staff (Bangui) and everyone else whose names I cannot remember!



In the News

In the News

See www.namaste.co.uk/news for details...

Previous Newsletters

Previous issues of Namaste News are also available at www.namaste.co.uk/news

Apr 2004	May 2004	Jun 2004
Jul 2004	Aug 2004	Sep 2004
Oct 2004	Nov 2004	Dec 2004
Jan 2005	Feb 2005	Mar 2005
Apr 2005	May 2005	Jun 2005
Jul 2005	Aug 2005	

Letters & Emails

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

"hi there, well juz got yr email...well u take care and i bet u sure enjoy yrself...so i will be waiting for yr emails...have fun...", Jazmin, Singapore

"hi, how are u? thanx for your mail. am well and also am continue wel with ma daily activities. wish u nice trip. take care", Emanuel, Tanzania

"Sounds good, def out on the edge! Good to hear SPLA giving those LRA bastards some stick, they are much more effective than Ugandan regulars - that bit of the world would be a lot happier if some really bad shit rolled their (LRA) way. Sounds like you have all the bases loaded so I would not expect trouble but quite happy to assist you or Paul if needed. Like you - looking forward to next installment report. Travel safe. Cheers", Paul, England

"Hi Chris. Are you mad - yes you are, but I love it. Still think your mad though. Your emails always sound amazing with your trip news etc, but this one takes the biscuit. I hope it all goes well and you have no problems - will be thinking of you. All is well though, great to hear from you and I look forward to news of your trip...", Gabrielle, Philippines

"Chris, hello i just got through checking out your status ,WOW!! have you had an adventure, pretty sweet, miss ya and still have our last trip still very much on my mind...thanks so much for the grand time, when you get time let me know whats up lately, stay safe but have a blast...", Tami, USA

"Holy, thats crazy! i dont think i could ever do that, i would be scared out of my wits, but i guess since you know what yoru doing it should be all good. That sounds so fun. Yeah i just got back form an 8 days canoeing trip down the yukon river to carmacks, 50km each day, and yeah our longest day was 9 hours straight of canoeing so it was pretty fun. I am leaving on next monday to go from Haines junction to Haines Alaska, and from there to Skagway and back to Whitehorse. I think its roughly 450km. That should be fun too. But i hope you have an amazing trip through Sudan. Be safe, and have fun...", Erica, Canada

"Chris, Way to go dude!!!! I do enjoy getting emails like this. Gets the adrenaline pumping just

reading it. It sounds bloody fantastic. I am there in spirit! All you have to remember are the words of a former squadron OC: Though I venture into the valley of death...I fear no evil....'cos I am the meanest mother f*****k there! Sleep with one eye open and don't forget those SOPs....", Gregor, UK

"Hi. Last two weeks i have done my best to speed through Peru, where i visited cloisters, canyons, a desert oasis, snift cultur and the air of 1000's of sealions near Paracas. I even saw some strange patterns and supposed proof of alien life in outer space. I hope you enjoy it and hope to hear from you.", Wim, Peru

"Chris, I'm going to be passing through Niger-Benin mid November. Is that anywhere near your route/timings? I'm running logistics for the Brussels-Benin rally, but am heavily on for a beer if paths cross!", Sam, UK

"Hi Chris, great to hear all is well. Good luck with the section ahead...rather you than me I think. Cover is actually leaving today with the courier, so will forward you all the details of the office in N'Djamena as soon as I have - keep a check on your emails. All the best", Jacques, South Africa

"Dear Chris, I hope you are travelling well and hope you have arrived in Bangui - C.A.R. I am the friend or Sudanese who showed in Yambio - South Sudan where to buy water and you gave me your business card, saying if I send email you send me your magazines monthly. And I have visisted you web site it is very exciting for business. I hope you will link me us in the western world more especially UK. I wish you safe journey and I hope to hear from you soon. Best wishes", Richard, New Sudan

"Hello Chris, I have been officially offered a spot on fieldtourings BP/K2 double header for this coming june. I have a shot at being the youngest american to ever summit K2, and the second oldest ever. I will also be attempting a second ascent on Broad Peak. So as of now i am trying to find different people and/or companies to help sponsor my expedition. It will be covered by K2climb.com, most climbing publications and possibly National Geographic... Hope all is well" Bobby, USA

"Hi Chrissie, Congrats on making it to the top mate!! Well done!!!!", Mascha, UK

"Ciao, Thanks for your call the other night ...its always my pleasure to hear your voice and laugh which makes me laugh always too..thanks!..."Lotta, Finland

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.

September 2005 Stats	August 2005 Stats
Hits: 36,173	Hits: 36,732
Countries: 56	Countries: 51
Downloads: 3,231 Mb	Downloads: 2,723 Mb



In the jungle...

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



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

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.

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

After a journey in the deserts of northern Kenya; a chance to meet the famous gorillas on the border of Uganda and the Congo. Discovering the equatorial jungle of northwest Uganda, southern Sudan before heading west to explore exotic butterflies and the pygmies of the Central African Republic (CAR).

October 2005

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

November 2005

Through Togo to the Gold Coast of Ghana, before heading north through Ivory Coast to the mountains of Guinea and onwards to the Atlantic coast of the Gambia and Senegal, before turning north across the Adrar plateau of Mauritania along the western Sahara...

December 2005

A tour of the length of the Atlas Mountains and ancient cities of Morocco. Then crossing into Spain and France for Christmas and returning to Tunisia in North Africa for New Year...

January 2006

Exploring Roman ruins of coastal Libya; and the pre-historic wonders of its Fezzan region. Then into Egypt to explore the the Gif Kebir plateau, the Nile river region, Cairo and the pyramids, before crossing into Jordan, Syria and the Lebanon on route to Turkey...

www.namaste.co.uk/africa.htm

namaste

What's next...

**October
2005**

**Into the
Sahara -
Chad & Niger**

**Mali - Mopti
& Timbuktoo**

**November
2005**

**Ancient
Mauritania**

**The Coast
of Gambia &
Senegal**

**December
2005**

**Western
Sahara**

**Atlas
Mountains of
Morocco**

Plus the usual Global Expedition Update...

www.namaste.co.uk/news