To celebrate 25 years of epic, muddy, steep, mad and glorious adventures in Land Rover Discoverys, we asked 25 storytellers to share their most memorable Discovery moment.

"WE’LL EITHER FIND A WAY OR MAKE ONE"

ROGER CRATHORNE, 1995
**Land Rover Discovery across the Sahara 1989**

Our goal was to cross the Sahara. In 1989, this would have been the first-ever crossing, of the world’s biggest desert by a Discovery. Ours was an early prototype plucked off the pilot production line. Everything was going swimmingly until we hit the Moroccan-Algerian border, at the town of Figuig. The Moroccans cheerfully bade us farewell. And then, minutes later, welcomed us back. The Algerians were not allowing Britons into their country. They wouldn’t tell us why. It turned out to be a blunder caused by the publication of The Satanic Verses, by Salman Rushdie, and the subsequent death threats. So we re-routed. Instead of southern Algeria, our goal was now the southern fringes of Western Sahara. There was only one problem: There was a war there.

We drove deep into that benighted country, on the watch for Polisario guerrillas. We kept going until the military forbade us to go any further. “The road is mined. Only the Red Cross is allowed through.” What sort of impunity the Red Cross had from land mines, we asked? The Red Cross is allowed through.” What sort of impunity the Red Cross had from land mines, we asked? We kept going until the military forbade us to go any further. “The road is mined. Only the Red Cross is allowed through.” What sort of impunity the Red Cross had from land mines, we asked? We kept going until the military forbade us to go any further. “The road is mined. Only the Red Cross is allowed through.” What sort of impunity the Red Cross had from land mines, we asked?

We spent two months digging around much of the Dhofar area [inland of Salalah, the capital of Oman], based in the small town of Shis’r, where we camped throughout the 26-year period.

One day in Shis’r I heard two Omanis asking. Just beyond our camp there was a meteorite site with a great deal of rubble around it. “Where?” he asked. Just beyond our camp there was a meteorite site with a great deal of rubble around it. “Where?” he asked. Just beyond our camp there was a meteorite site with a great deal of rubble around it. “Where?” he asked. Just beyond our camp there was a meteorite site with a great deal of rubble around it. “Where?” he asked. But nobody knew exactly where it was. Over 26 years I mounted eight desert expeditions into the Empty Quarter, the greatest sand desert in the world, stretching from the Omani coast into Saudi Arabia. After no luck, in 1991 NASA got involved. They took photos from the Space Shuttle of what they thought might be Ubar. So I got permission from the Sultan of Oman to look for it. We used three then-new Discoveries, which were excellent vehicles in sand.

The biggest excavation project, the Camel Trophy course in Russia took us through Moscow and on to Lake Baikal, the deepest and largest freshwater lake in the world, containing a fifth of the Earth’s freshwater. We set off from Red Square. It was the final year of the Soviet Union and there were Baltic demonstrations who were seeking independence. Heading into the countryside, the Discovery coped with steep hills, snow, heat, deep water and more. At one point the German team’s Discovery was almost submerged under water. Lake Baikal was like a sea, and I’d promised myself I’d go in. It was very cold, so I only dipped in, but I will remember that bath all my life. Camel Trophy opened my eyes. The event showed me a new way of life. It’s true that the best school is travel, sharing intense moments with different people. I knew I wanted to be part of it. Today I work with Land Rover Experience, which is an adventure every day.

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**“THE GERMAN TEAM WAS ALMOST UNDER WATER”**

Camel Trophy, Russia 1991

The Camel Trophy course in Russia took us through Moscow and on to Lake Baikal, the deepest and largest freshwater lake in the world, containing a fifth of the Earth’s freshwater.

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**“THEY THOUGHT WE WERE SPIES”**

Discovering the lost city of Ubar 1991

My obsession with finding the lost city of Ubar began when I fought in the Sultan of Oman’s army against Marxist rebels in the late 1960s. TE Lawrence called Ubar “the Atlantis of the Sands.” It was a key point on the old frankincense-trading route and was mentioned in the Koran. But nobody knew exactly where it was.

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**“WE KEPT GOING UNTIL THE MILITARY FORBADE US TO GO ANY FURTHER”**

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The mission of the expedition was to install two fibreglass replicas of Maya carved stone monuments that had been removed to preserve them from damage by pollution. The replicas were created by sculptor Gregory Glasson and depict a two-ton stela erected in 613AD to commemorate the rule of the great Caracol king, Kan II, and a 1.2m-diameter flat stone altar dated 820AD that depicts a Maya ruler receiving a prisoner.

Putting up the replicas was a huge deal for us and for the site of Caracol. It is difficult to appreciate what the site would have been like in the past without them in place. The replicas are exceedingly realistic — visitors are not aware that they are copies (unless they tap them and can hear that they are hollow).

I have travelled extensively throughout Australia, but the Calvert Expedition — which retraced the 1896 expedition led by Lawrence Wells — is the most memorable trip I have ever done. We camped at one location that was more than a 1,000km in any direction from civilisation, and walked past rock carvings that were tens of thousands of years old. Often there were no visible tracks to be seen. We travelled through country where the spinifex grass was taller than the vehicles, occasionally having to stand on the roof to locate the direction that the vehicle in front had gone. One day, late in the afternoon, the lowering sun lit up the spinifex so that it glowed like a sea of shimmering gold. The made it even more difficult to follow the tracks of the vehicle in front. We made an early camp that day.

One group of journalists flew in by helicopter to join us on a particularly difficult sandy section in their clean, fresh clothes. They were mortified, while sitting on top of a tall sand dune looking back at the dull glow from our camp and sat on top of a tall sand dune looking back at the dull glow from our camp and sat on top of a tall sand dune looking back at the dull glow from our camp and sat on top of a tall sand dune looking back at the dull glow from our camp.

It felt special... kind of pioneering. We came across a small team of gold diggers. They had a camp in the middle of nowhere, looking for gold in a stream. They were totally self-sufficient and had a pig at the camp. What do you think happened next? Well, I was invited to try panning myself and actually found some gold. It was a great experience.

I assume was her son in Russian military uniform. Quite an amazing human moment.

The journey covered forestry trails, goat tracks and Roman road — beautiful fine cobbles — but the first view of the Po Valley in Italy was the most memorable moment. You really could imagine Hannibal and his soldiers, standing there, surveying their prize.

Roger Crathorne, Land Rover evangelist

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"I FEEL SPECIAL: KIND OF PIONEERING" 

Camel Trophy Kalimantan 1997

Camel Trophy Kalimantan 1997

Camel Trophy Kalimantan 1997

Nick Dimbleby, Camel Trophy competitor’s bib; Camel Trophy Kalimantan; Dimbleby’s passport to adventure; Phil Poulter on the Calvert Expedition in 1996

Clockwise from top left: Nick Dimbleby’s Camel Trophy competitor’s bib; Camel Trophy Kalimantan; Dimbleby’s passport to adventure; Phil Poulter on the Calvert Expedition in 1996

"THIS MEANT A HUGE DEAL TO US" 

La Ruta Maya, A Journey Of Discovery 1996

"NO HUMAN HAS PROBABLY EVER SET FOOT IN THIS PLACE" 

Calvert Expedition 1996

"IT FELT SPECIAL... KIND OF PIONEERING" 

Camel Trophy Mongolia 1997

Camel Trophy Mongolia 1997

Camel Trophy Mongolia 1997

"THE HANNUAL TRAIL" 

The Hannibal Trail 1996

Phil Poulter, chief driving instructor

Phil Poulter, chief driving instructor

Camel Trophy Kharkov, Ukraine, via the Great Sandy Desert, 2,000km

Geraldton to Broome, Western Australia, via the Outback, 1,490km

Balikpapan to Pontianak, Borneo’s east to west coast. 1,490km

Pontus Hellgren, Swedish competitor

Pontus Hellgren, Swedish competitor

"WE WILL EITHER FIND A WAY OR MAKE ONE" 

The Hannibal Trail 1996

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Balikpapan to Pontianak, Borneo’s east to west coast. 1,490km

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Nick Dimbleby, Land Rover photographer
“WE’RE ALL GOING TO DIE”

Tempest Trek 1999

My friend Bill Baker, once Land Rover’s director of communications programmes, gets fantastic ideas. When Land Rover introduced its entire new Land Rover Discovery in 1999, Bill dictated a memo: “Drive a pair of New Discoveries around the world. This will prove they’re tough, durable and operable under thousands of feet of seawater. Scratch that last part. We’ll use a submarine. As I was saying, this will prove they’re tough and durable, and that automotive journalists are idiots who can be talked into almost anything, including travelling across the most crowded part of India during the hottest time of the year at the pace set by Craig Breedlove.”

I joined the New Discovery Trek in Islamabad, Pakistan – three weeks after it embarked on its four-month, round-the-world route – and I didn’t realise I was an idiot until the next afternoon. If this sounds like the kind of road trip you go on, let me recommend the Land Rover Discovery. Storage space is ample, which is the all-important capability not to flip over. Excellent rough terrain capabilities, including travelling across the most crowded part of India during the hottest time of the year at the pace set by Craig Breedlove. The Discovery is doubtless crashworthy, and automotive journalists are idiots who can be talked into almost anything, including travelling across the most crowded part of India during the hottest time of the year at the pace set by Craig Breedlove.

From our journey around the world, the leg that most vividly remember is from Dubai to China. It particularly remember standing on the deckside in Ajman Port, Dubai, watching Raba (their 1990 Discovery) being craned onto a wooden dhow. It didn’t look as though it would make it across the creek, never mind through the Straits of Hormuz and across the Indian Ocean to Karachi. I wondered if we would every see her again.

Despite delays caused by bad weather and the sheer bureaucracy of Karachi port, we finally got her across the world. We had 19 days to reach the Khunjerab Pass and then, like the seasoned world traveller and life-long guy that I am, I pulled over to the side of the road and cried. “I have a family!” I sobbed. “I’m 50! That goat didn’t have its turn signal on! My glasses are smudged! I hate the food! We’re all going to die!”

PJ O’Rourke, writer

“We Found the Sheep” Round the World 2001

Dubai to the Gojal Valley Pakistan 1,962km

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We then set about filling it with contingency heaters for the sump, gearbox and battery. Stretch, they simply can’t. The truth is that at 60mph on an icy downhill stop for survivors was quickly suppressed; rumour, heard at home, that truckers won’t up to 90 tons that “don’t give an inch”. A and the trucks; trucks with a gross weight of 80 tons. Nobody wants their in another vehicle. As I said, small things gain away, just like on the school bus trip, we’d swapped seats and engine. By 1pm, it was hot enough to eat, but we didn’t stop, we just swapped seats and kept going – one driving, the other eating. And finally, ruthlessness. We always had to keep press with us, and near the end I had a guy from Belgian television who was not used to that terrain. He was throwing up inside the car, which was not so good for concentration. And we were based in Santa Cruz and the keys to a Land Rover. It took all day to get there, and on the approach we drove through a river heated by geothermal springs. The water was 25ºC, despite being surrounded by snow. We were totally reliant on the vehicles. We carried our food, our water, everything. All was well. Then one night as we got to the hut a storm was brewing. It was windy, cold, -10ºC. When we woke in the morning, snow was drifting. It was serious. We had to get out. We set off in a tight convoy – in the middle of the storm. Driving snow was mixed with volcanic ash and you couldn’t see the car in front. After an hour and a half it was a complete whiteout. You could see nothing and we were effectively following a track log on the GPS. I ended up walking in front of the lead car with a broomstick. You couldn’t tell what was snowdrift or solid surface. I used the broom to plot a meandering route past hidden rocks to the left and right of the GPS track. It was a spectacular challenge – both for the vehicle, which came out of it admirably, and for the people involved – who all made it to safety. We found fantastic places where no one had been – not even the local guides. One day, we were following what we thought was a track. As it started to go up a mountainside it didn’t do 5 turns – it just went straight up. It was obvious that it was where they’d laid cable. It went really, really steep. In the end it was no problem for the Discovery, but it was scary how steep it went. Bolivia has extreme washboard roads. They’re all gravel and if you came across those sectors in Sweden or England, you’d drive at five kilometres per hour, because you know they would only be about 100m long. But in Bolivia, we had no way. Our mechanic said that what we did in one day in Bolivia meant more shock-absorbance than a car does in a whole lifetime in the UK.

The promise of superb Arctic scenery and a chance to view the world’s most lucrative plumbing job (the Trans-Alaska pipeline) driven made driving the infamous Haul Road seem like a good idea. At Seattle, where we scrutinised the map and waited for the flight connection to Anchorage and our rendezvous with the Discovery, we met Cooke, an Alaska veteran, a welder in the oil business and a man whose beard seemed to grow perpendicularly to his face at every point. Our expedition. “If you guys ain’t prepared you’re gonna be in it like you’ve never seen before.” Another old stooge joined our group. “Whoa,” was all he could manage. The two greatest threats would be the cold and the trucks, trucis with a gross weight of up to 90 tons that “don’t give an inch”. A rumour, heard at home, that truckers won’t stop for survivors was quickly suppressed; the truth is that at 60mph on an icy downhill stretch, they simply can’t. The truth is that at 60mph on an icy downhill stop for survivors was quickly suppressed; rumour, heard at home, that truckers won’t up to 90 tons that “don’t give an inch”. A
Morocco. 800km

Adventure
Land Rover Experience: Morocco
THERE’S NO FUSS”

“It’s the unsung hero… of the Land Rover fleet – it just does what is needed without fuss or complaint.”

Steve Purvis, Land Rover Experience Senior Instructor & Global Event Leader

“IT’S THE UNSUNG HERO … THERE’S NO FUSS”

LAND ROVER ONELIFE / 6136 / LAND ROVER ONELIFE

The invitation was captivating, to drive Discovery's along sections of the legendary Ruta 40 across the highest roadway on the South American continent, Argentina’s “Road to the Clouds”.

Meeting in Buenos Aires, we flew northwest across the Andes in a Lilliputian 18-seater on a three-hour white-knuckle ride to the Calchaqui Valley. From there we headed on road toward the 5,000m Abra del Acay pass, the world’s highest such roadway.

We travelled through twisting canyons, across waterways, and crawled up and down huge boulders and vertical cliff faces. We were soon deep in the backcountry driving out there. To oxygen, I found mine in the adventure and overnight in a local hostel, medics provided an IV drip.

Finally, stepping out at the Abra del Acay summit we were whipped by fierce winds – so high, we had to unty our camel’s back packs. One day we were having lunch in the Ngorongoro Crater, with white tablecloths and napkins. Over the other side of the swampy area there were eight lions, and a few buffalo foolishly wandered close to the pride. Realising their error, the buffaloes bolted, one headed into the swamp followed by six lions. They were headed for us – so we all leapt into the cars and waited. The animals charged through our picnic area and, after a little while, the lions stroked back past us. They showed absolutely no interest in our lovely steak. Obviously we couldn’t compete with fresh buffalo.

Andrew Brown, Land Rover Experience South Africa

“A WARLORD HELD A REVOLVER TO MY HEAD”

We’ve been adventuring for decades and our Discovery's are the most comfortable, capable Landies we have ever used. There is no doubt that “Discos can do it”. With them we’ve been across Africa to promote trans-frontier conservation and we’ve led a Land Rover humanitarian expedition to South Sudan to celebrate the world’s newest country.

Recently we followed Africa’s Great Rift Valley from Djibouti on the dangerous Horn of Africa to Gomongosa National Park in Mozambique. There were so many highlights along the way – reaching the Gulf of Tadjoura on the Red Sea and, with a camel to carry water and armed guards for security, climbing to the rim of the lake-spezing active volcano of Erta Alle.

Back at the village, the warlord of the Aller Triangle pointed a revolver at my head, but we talked our way out of it. Ten weeks later, a group of geologists weren’t as fortunate. 12 were killed by rebels and four kidnapped.

A far more beautiful highlight was in the Bandi Impenetrable Forest where we saw silvertip gorillas. Staring into the soft brown eyes of a silvertip before looking down submissively, knowing that he could break you in half, is incredible. Bandi is a true jumble of King Kong proportion. The young gorillas are extremely curious and any shiny objects you may be wearing will attract their attention.

I didn’t think my somewhat grey beard would count as a shiny object, but before I knew it a juvenile female had positioned herself behind me and began touching my beard and hair. All the while, the large dominant silvertip looked on possessively. Thank God she paid only a fleeting interest and moved on to eat some shoots.

All our journeys are always underpinned by humanitarian campaigns. This trip, one of the key moments was on leaving the Omo River in Ethiopia. We came across a group of Dassanech tribes people carrying a naked young child on a makeshift stretcher. The child had contracted malaria and was unconscious, wheezing profusely. We loaded the family – who had been walking for six hours – into the Discovery and drove to the closest clinic, nearly 100km away.

At the clinic a quinine IV drip was quickly administered, and the child was shaped in wet clothes to break her fever. That night we camped in a dry riverbed and shared a sombre meal with the family. The next day the child had improved dramatically – she was out of danger.

A far more beautiful highlight was in the Great Rift Valley expedition; a Camel Safari to the Kalahari; an expedition to the 2012 Serengeti Expedition; John Pearson’s Sami tapestry from his Nordkapp trip; Iceland during the Land Rover Experience adventure; a Camel Trophy competitor’s truly Leica M8.
"RACING IS MY THING"*

The Discovery was perfect for our winter driving adventure – it handled the snow and ice perfectly. You simply select a low gear, lift suspension and remember to act earlier than you usually would, so depress the brake or turn the steering wheel sooner than you would on tarmac.

Driving has always come naturally to me, I’ve never needed to practice much, so racing rallies was just me doing “my thing.”

Instructing has been far more challenging, because now you need to tell people what to do, when it’s just instinctive for me.

But it’s great seeing a scared first-timer go from “no, not me, I can’t drive” to smiling and confident after learning a new skill – it’s a huge reward.

Minna Sillankorva, former rally driver, now a Land Rover Experience instructor

"FROM HERE IT’S JUST SEA AND ICE UP TO THE NORTH POLE" Nordkapp adventure 2013

I wanted to prove that it’s possible for anyone to do a major adventure like this in a standard Land Rover Discovery, equipped only with a small pop-up tent. We were aiming for the most northerly point of Europe, Nordkapp in Norway, so from the UK we travelled through eight countries, over eight ferry crossings, through two tunnels (twice) and over one major bridge.

There was so much wonderful scenery on this adventure. The highlights were the Bognes to Skareberget fery crossing, which provides the most glorious backdrop, camping by the water’s edge on the picturesque Ramfjord campsite near Tromsø, and the drive along the coastline from Rasevær to Honningen.

I’ve driven through some beautiful places around the world, but this ranks with the best in terms of wild magnificence. The sea is gleaming turquoise and rocks at the roadside have been eroded into incredible patterns. And then there’s our arrival at Nordkapp, the North Cape. From here it’s just sea and ice all the way to the North Pole. My euphoria was heightened by the shining sun and cloudless sky – and of course it continued to shine all night, in the land of the midnight sun.

John Pearson, editor-in-chief Land Rover Owner International magazine

"AN AVALANCHE APPEARED..." "COAST TO COAST WITHOUT PUTTING A TYRE ON TARMAC" Trans-America Trail 2012

To celebrate the millionth Discovery, we headed across Europe to Beijing. And, at our last border crossing, from Kyrgyzstan into China, we took the Torugart Pass. It was a remote crossing up in the mountains, at just under 4,000m, and it was peak avalanche season. Avalanches were happening daily and we really didn’t know what we were going to find.

We didn’t see a soul. There weren’t any settlements up there. We saw a lorry on its side, abandoned. It had possibly been hit by an avalanche or sunk in snow. You could see they’d had some massive avalanches, the amount of earth that had travelled down the mountain.

Then an avalanche appeared, rolling across the road in front of us. With avalanches, you don’t know whether you’re seeing the beginning, the middle or the end. Has one just hit, or is it about to get worse?

This is where Discovery comes into its own. Suddenly the road goes from being a dirt gravel track to no road. You’ve got a freshly landed avalanche in front of you. We put the suspension up, got into low range and picked our route through. We could see small rocks and boulders, almost a constant flow of them, coming down. Not wanting to see what was going to happen, we just drove over whatever was there, and kept going.

Toby Blythe, D3 Events project manager

Clockwise from top left: a battered notepad from the Camel Trophy Kalimantan; a Land Rover Experience instructor, Minna Sillankorva, former rally driver, now confident after learning a new skill – it’s a huge reward. And, at our last border crossing, from Kyrgyzstan into China, we took the Torugart Pass. It was a remote crossing up in the mountains, at just under 4,000m, and it was peak avalanche season. Avalanches were happening daily and we really didn’t know what we were going to find.

Instructing has been far more challenging, because now you need to tell people what to do, when it’s just instinctive for me. Driving has always come naturally to me, I’ve never needed to practice much, so racing rallies was just me doing “my thing.”

But it’s great seeing a scared first-timer go from “no, not me, I can’t drive” to smiling and confident after learning a new skill – it’s a huge reward.

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Minna Sillankorva, former rally driver, now a Land Rover Experience instructor

The idea was to cross the US, without putting a tyre on tarmac. We managed this along dry riverbeds, mountain passes, railway lines, and over tracks of thick, milky dust – with a short nod to tarmac at the start. The bit that made me go “wow” was on Colorado’s Black Bear Pass. We headed up an almost sheer face of slippery rock, and then downhill, on insanely tight switchbacks. The Rock Crawl function on the Discovery really steadied us.

Tom Patterson was driving one of the Discoveries ahead of us and Warren Blaine was spotting for him. I watched, holding my breath. Tom had to go to the edge of the switchback – with a 30m drop – in order to reverse back to make the tight angles. I was amazed at how the Discovery gripped to the road. We were driving on stock tyres that you could use to go to the supermarket, but that day we were using them on one of the highest peaks in America.

Anthony Cullen, photographer