



“WE’LL EITHER
FIND A WAY OR
MAKE ONE”

ROGER CRATHORNE, 1995

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



Left: Ranulph Fiennes and his team search for the lost city of Ubar in the greatest sand desert in the world, the Empty Quarter of Arabia

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

Land Rover Discovery across the Sahara 1989

01 London – Marrakech, via Western Sahara. 8,850 km



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 backlash caused by the publication of The Satanic Verses, by Salman Rushdie, and the subsequent death fatwa.

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, he didn't say.

Gavin Green, executive editor, Car magazine

“YOU TRY REALLY HARD TO KILL IT – BUT YOU CAN'T”

The Amphibious Discovery 1989

02 Around Amsterdam's canals



We built a three-door amphibious diesel Discovery which we took to Amsterdam, where the Queen of the Netherlands was opening a special hotel. There was a regatta of historical boats ... and us in our Land Rover.

Land Rovers continually amaze you with their resilience. Our vehicle would sit with water covering its wheels and the engine

pretty much submerged for days on end, and you could jump in, turn the key and start it. It had no reason to do that, it defies all logic. You try really hard to kill it – putting it in fresh or salt water – but you can't.

We would go down the little canals, passing some coffee shops, where people were having a good old smoke, and they would look out from the haze, see a car driving in the water, and do a double-take, which was very funny.

One thing that sticks in the mind is the vehicle's pneumatic telescopic mast, which had a little Land Rover flag on it. During the Amstel parade we forgot to lower it when going under one of the bridges, and it pulled a fireworks display down into the river and onto us. Fortunately it was dark so nobody knew.

David Saunders, General Manager, Land Rover Experience

“THE GERMAN TEAM WAS ALMOST UNDER WATER”

Camel Trophy, Russia 1990

03 Moscow – Siberia. 2,000km



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 demonstrators 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.

Moi Torrallardona, Land Rover Experience Instructor

“THEY THOUGHT WE WERE SPIES”

Discovering the lost city of Ubar 1991

04 Salalah to Shis'r. 180km



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.

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 Discoverys, which were excellent vehicles in sand.

The NASA site, in fact, turned out to be a different period of archaeology.

We spent two months digging around much of the Dhofar area [inland of Salalah, the capital of Dhofar], 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 discussing how our expedition had done much filming but very little excavating. They suspected we might be spies. This was deeply disturbing. I rushed off to Juris Zarins, the professor who was heading the team of young archaeology students, to tell them to start digging. “Where?” he asked. Just beyond our camp there was a meteorite site with a great deal of rubble around it.

Within three days, nine inches under the surface, we found 3,000-year-old Persian chess pieces. Within three months we started to trace a city wall. We'd found Ubar. It became the biggest excavation project in Arabia. But we didn't find it with NASA technology. We found it through luck.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes, explorer





“THIS MEANT A HUGE DEAL TO US”

La Ruta Maya, A Journey Of Discovery 1994

05 Belize City to Caracol, Belize. 176km

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).

Dr Diane Chase, anthropologist at the University of Central Florida

“WE WILL EITHER FIND A WAY OR MAKE ONE”

The Hannibal Trail 1995

06 Val d’Isère, France to Turin, Italy. 113km

Doing the recce for this remains one of my best memories. Our plan was to approximate the journey made by Hannibal the Carthaginian commander at the outbreak of the Second Punic War, when he marched his army, including elephants, across the Alps from France into Italy. Although he didn’t beat the Romans, he certainly surprised them. One of his mottos was: “We will either find a way or make one”, and that was my attitude too.

When we arrived in Val d’Isère on the first day of the recce, there was a circus, with an elephant grazing nearby. It was a sign.

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

“NO HUMAN HAS PROBABLY EVER SET FOOT IN THIS PLACE”

Calvert Expedition 1996

07 Geraldton to Broome, Western Australia, via the Great Sandy Desert. 2,000km

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 rack 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. This 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 joined us on a particularly difficult sandy section in their clean, fresh clothes. They were mortified, while sitting on their luggage, when we handed them shovels, instead of canapés and cocktails, to help us dig several of the vehicles out of a bog.

One night I walked about a kilometre from our camp and sat on top of a tall sand dune looking back at the dull glow from our campfire, then up at the star-filled night. I thought to myself, “No human being has probably ever set foot in this place”.

Phil Poulter, chief driving instructor

“IT FELT SPECIAL... KIND OF PIONEERING”

Camel Trophy Kalimantan 1996

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

Camel Trophy was always extreme, but this was perhaps one of the hardest Camel Trophy events ever to take place. It was about 1,500km but we only covered 500km in the first two

weeks of a three-week trip. At one stage the convoy of some 40 vehicles took more than 48 hours to pass a 200m-long mudhole. I called it the Mighty Mudhole. It involved hectic winching of every vehicle with trains of Land Rovers roped together. Really hard work!

On another section our vehicle was lead scout. We went ahead of the main convoy in case it was a dead end. 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.

Pontus Hellgren, Swedish competitor

“AN AMAZING HUMAN MOMENT”

Camel Trophy Mongolia 1997

09 Ulaanbaatar – Kharakorum, Mongolia. 1,600km

Heading across the grasslands of Mongolia for the day’s driving, we’d often not see another motorised vehicle all day. There would be people on horseback, maybe a Russian military vehicle, and that would be it. Living in their traditional gers (tents), we came across local Mongolians for whom seeing a load of Land Rovers was like the aliens had landed.

We’d be invited into their gers and they would serve up fermented mare’s milk, the local speciality, and we’d take pictures of them. We were shooting on film back then, but we wanted to share the pictures with our hosts, so we brought along a Polaroid camera. A lot of those people didn’t have mirrors, they didn’t look at themselves. To not only have a picture of themselves, but one that appeared before their very eyes – it blew their minds!

There was one particular old woman who I couldn’t speak a word to, but I handed the picture to her and she held the photo against her heart and put it on her mantelpiece with her most treasured possessions – including a black-and-white photograph of what I assume was her son in Russian military uniform. Quite an amazing human moment.

Nick Dimbleby, Land Rover photographer ►





Left: reindeer antlers picked up by John Pearson during his journey from Peterborough to Nordkapp in northern Norway

“WE’RE ALL GOING TO DIE”

Tempest Trek 1999
10 London – Pakistan – Paris. 33,000km

 My friend Bill Baker, once Land Rover’s director of communications programmes, gets fantastic ideas. When Land Rover introduced its entirely redesigned New Discovery in 1999, Bill dictated a memo: “Drive a pair of New Discoverys 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 in Black Rock Desert.”

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 India’s customs agents will confirm. The air conditioning is equal to the subcontinent’s worst climatic efforts. The Discovery has a body-on-frame construction like the proverbial brick thing of which there are hardly any in India. (And when you find one it has a bowl of water instead of a roll of toilet paper.)

The Discovery is doubtless crashworthy, something we amazingly did not test. Although we did experience a side-mirror fold-in from an express bus, got a Lambretta in the back of an lfor trailer, and had several sacred-cow brushbacks (“touched by the pot roast of God”). We did test the Discovery’s off-road qualifications, although not on purpose. We’d go off-road abruptly and at high speed because of the horrendous events in front of us or because of sudden pavement disappearance. This is not the preferred, Tread Lightly method of exploring the wilderness in a sport-ute. Nevertheless, the Discovery has

excellent rough terrain capabilities, including the all-important capability not to flip over. There was, as it happened, only one problem with driving the Discoverys around India. I couldn’t do it. I took a few turns negotiating India’s combination of figure-eight racing, dodgem cars, and “You Bet Your Life,” and then, like the seasoned world traveller and lifelong 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 1999
11 Dubai to the Gojal Valley, Pakistan. 1,982 km

 From our journey around the world, the leg that I most vividly remember is from Dubai to China. I particularly remember standing on the dockside in Ajman Port, Dubai, watching Rabia [their 1992 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 still had 19 days to reach the Khunjerab Pass where we had to cross into China on 1 June as pre-arranged. Near the end of May, travelling through the Gojal Valley on the Karakoram Highway we decided to take a closer look at the Ghulkin Glacier.


There we met a local lady who took me by the hand and walked us down to her home where she offered us tea. Soon, half the village had joined us, including Samina, a 10-year-old girl who was able to translate for us. We spent a pleasant afternoon with them and my husband Peter took out his camera to take photos of the scenery. Now it transpired that the local lady had been out looking for her escaped sheep. Using the telephoto lens on the camera, we

were able to spot the sheep on the far side of the valley. This caused great excitement – firstly, everyone was amazed by the ability to see so far into the distance, and secondly, because we have found the escaped sheep.

Eileen Crichton, adventurer

“I MIGHT HAVE TO SHOOT THE BUGGER”

Australia’s Nullarbor Plain 2001
12 Perth – Sydney, Australia. 4,100km

 There is a relatively easy way to get from Perth on the west coast of Australia to Sydney on the east coast. It’s called the Eyre Highway, a smooth blacktop that snakes along the Great Australian Bight.

Then there is the more difficult route, which takes you across the legend that is the Nullarbor Plain outback. It’s 200,000 square kilometres of virtually uninhabited vastness, which begins in earnest once you clear the gold mining town of Kalgoorlie some 600km east of Perth. And we’ve got another 3,500km to cover, much of it on the barely-there service road alongside the Indian-Pacific rail line, ploughing through deep, red bull-dust whilst gingerly avoiding razor-sharp limestone shards.

Then, rising like a mirage out of the scrubland, we see Chris Richards – I call him Dromedary Dundee. He’s on walkabout across the Plain, leading a quartet of spectacularly bad-tempered spitting camels. As a friendly gesture, Chris tilts a hat ringed with a bandoleer holding live .22 calibre rounds and unfolds an enormous smile. We talk of his adventures and the problems he’s having with one particularly nasty camel. “Difficult to get near him because he can kick in a six-foot radius,” says Chris. And then after a long pause for thought, “I might have to shoot the bugger.”

I’ll never know how that particular outback drama ended. But I reckon that camel survived to spit another day.

Gavin Conway, journalist





From left: driving Haul Road in Alaska with James May; fossils collected in Morocco by the Crichtons; Rikard Beckman (right) during the G4 Challenge Bolivia; the keys to a Land Rover Discovery 300Tdi

“TRUCKERS WON’T STOP FOR SURVIVORS”

Driving Dalton Highway 2003

13 Anchorage – Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, along Dalton Highway [Haul Road]. 1,287km



The promise of superb Arctic scenery and a chance to view the world’s most lucrative plumbing job [the Trans-Alaska pipeline] 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 Cookee, an Alaska veteran, a welder in the oil business and a man whose beard seemed to grow perpendicularly to his face at every point. “Hell,” he said as we outlined the route of our expedition. “If you guys ain’t prepared you’re gonna be in it like you’ve never seen before.” Another old sourdough joined our group. “Woah,” was all he could manage.

The two greatest threats would be the cold and the trucks; trucks 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.

[We’d picked up] the Discovery at Anchorage and had it fitted with electric heaters for the sump, gearbox and battery. We then set about filling it with contingency supplies: three five-gallon Jerry cans (“Excuse me?”) of extra fuel, a shovel, distress flares, a

portable stove, gas canisters, a towing chain, snow chains, two spare wheels and tyres, a candle lantern (sufficient to keep the interior of a stranded car above freezing, apparently), three spare candles, bottled water, storm-proof matches, two Arctic-spec sleeping bags of exponentially expressed tog ratings, Mars Bar, three cans of baked beans and a tin of that quintessential Alaskan resource almost as vital to the state’s well being as oil – Spam.

By the time we’d reach Fairbanks [577km away], just like on the school bus trip, we’d eaten nearly all our “emergency” rations and had to buy fresh supplies. It was later explained to us that many Alaskans and Canadians keep tins of dog food in the car. You only eat dog food when you’re desperate.

James May, Top Gear presenter

“MISTAKES DROPPED MORE POINTS THAN LACK OF FITNESS”

G4 Challenge: America 2003

14 Stage 4: Las Vegas – Moab, Utah. 1,145km



It was the last week and the stress was high. Making mistakes dropped points much more than lack of physical fitness. I was absolutely not the strongest – there were guys who did Iron Man runs – but my Air Force training gave me the skills to win.

First of all, navigation. Land Rover gave you the co-ordinates, a map and a GPS. You had to find your fastest way to the point. The terrain was difficult to navigate, winding through huge

canyons. One day, we navigated to the correct spot and looked up to see another team in almost exactly the same position, but they forgot to look at the map’s contours. They were on top of the canyon, 500m up.

Secondly, planning and preparation. Small things gain you time. For lunch, most people stopped their car, took out their Kelly Kettle and made food. Around 11am, we would stuff boil-in-the-bag meals in the front of the 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 take 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. I was not really willing to stop, so we left him in another vehicle. As I said, small things gain you precious time.

Rudi Thoelen, ex-Belgian fighter pilot and winner of the G4 Challenge 2003

“HE TOOK OFF IN A HELICOPTER WITH THE CAR KEYS”

Top Gear Challenge 2003

15 Ben Tongue, Scotland



The aim was to reach the top of Ben Tongue, at 302m one of Scotland’s most arduous off-road assaults, but we weren’t allowed to trial it beforehand. So we didn’t know exactly how the car would respond.

We planned to follow the cambers and avoid the marshes as much as possible, but Jeremy Clarkson chose to make it more exciting by getting it stuck in the mud, and at times the wheels were completely sunk, but the car got to the top which was brilliant.

At the top, Clarkson took off in the helicopter with the keys, and we realised that the car was stranded on the top of the mountain. We were just getting ready to have a key sent up from head office at Solihull when we saw the helicopter turn round and he dropped the car keys from the window.

Phil Jones, Land Rover Events Operations Manager

“THE SNOW WAS DRIFTING. IT WAS SERIOUS”

Land Rover Experience: Iceland Adventure 2005

16 Adventure Reykjavik – Landmannalaugar, Iceland. 189km



The Landmannalaugar camping hut in Iceland closes in October. That’s when we rented it out. It took all day to get there, and on the approach we drove through a river heated by geothermal springs. The water was 25°C, 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, -16°C. 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.

David Sneath, Senior Manager, Land Rover Drive Experience Events

“WE HAD TO FIND, TEST AND RATE THEM. IT WAS A BIG JOB”

G4 Challenge: Bolivia 2006

17 Stage three: Loop route from Santa Cruz via Sucre, Bolivia. 1,086km



We spent one-and-a-half years recceing in preparation for the 2006 G4 Challenger, and over that time we became locals.

We were based in Santa Cruz and we knew the best bars, the best routes and best contacts.

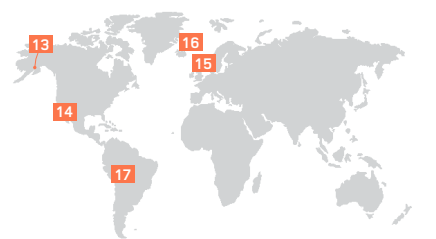
We were two Swedes, a South African, a couple of Brits and a Spaniard. Six guys looking for the best locations Bolivia had to offer. We had to find them, test them out and rate them. It was a big job.

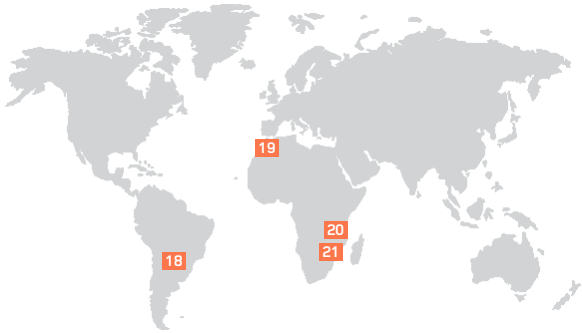
We found fantastic places where no one had been – not even the local guides.

One day, we were following what we thought was a track. As it started to go up a mountainside it didn’t do S-turns – it just went straight up. It was obvious that is 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 sections 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, this was the road. 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.

Rikard Beckman, G4 2006 lead instructor and recce leader





Clockwise from top left: in Tanzania on 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 trusty Leica M6

"AT 5,000M, IT IS THE WORLD'S HIGHEST ROADWAY"

Argentina's Road to the Clouds 2007

18 Cafayate – Salta, Argentina. 473km

The invitation was captivating: to drive Discoverys 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 pockets of the backcountry.

Finally, stepping out at the Abra del Acay summit we were whipped by fierce winds and caught off-guard by the incredibly thin air – overnight in a local hostel, medics provided oxygen to those in need. But when it comes to oxygen, I found mine in the adventure and backcountry driving out there.

Sue Mead, journalist

"IT'S THE UNSUNG HERO ... THERE'S NO FUSS"

Land Rover Experience: Morocco Adventure 2010

19 Marrakech – Essaouira – Taroudant – Marrakech, Morocco. 800km

This trip had everything from the coastal dunes near Essaouira and desert terrain of Taroudant to the highest pass in North Africa, Tizi n'Tachddirt, at 2,260m above sea level.

For me, most impressive was the sheer ability of the vehicle to carry all the support kit and food and drinks, as well as pulling the other cars out in the dunes. We at Land Rover Experience see the Discovery as 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

"WE COULDN'T COMPETE WITH FRESH BUFFALO"

Land Rover Experience: Serengeti Expedition 2012

20 Arusha – Serengeti Migration Camp, Tanzania. 250km

If you ever want to view game, the Serengeti has to be the place to do it. The amount of animals you see is overwhelming.

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 strolled 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"

Rift Valley expedition 2012/3

21 Djibouti – Mozambique, 5,000km

We've been adventuring for decades and our Discoverys 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 Gorongosa 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 gunmen for security, climbing to the rim of the lava-spewing active volcano of Erta Ale.

Back at the village, a warlord of the Afar Triangle pointed a revolver at my head, but we

talked our way out of it. Two 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 Bwindi Impenetrable Forest where we saw silverback gorillas. Staring into the soft brown eyes of a silverback before looking down submissively, knowing that he could break you in half, is incredible. Bwindi is a true jungle 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 silverback looked on possessively. Thank God she paid only a fleeting interest and moved on to eat some shoots.

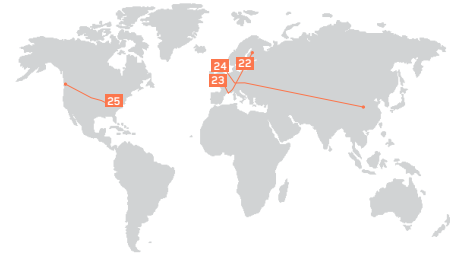
All our journeys are always underpinned by humanitarian campaigns. This trip, one of the key moments was on leaving the Omo River in Ethiopia. We came across a group of Dassanech tribes people carrying a naked young child on a homemade stretcher. The child had contracted malaria and was unconscious, sweating 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 draped 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. We made an arrangement for the mother and child to be transported to the village when they were ready and we returned the rest of the family home. The first thing we did here was make sure that every pregnant woman and child under the age of five received a long-lasting insecticide treated mosquito net.

We finally emptied our symbolic calabash into Gorongosa's Lake Urema. The calabash is an expedition talisman, we fill it at the beginning with water from our starting point, this time from 30 lakes in the Great African Rift valley and then empty it at the end of each journey. It's probably the most travelled Zulu artifact in the world.

Kingsley Holgate, humanitarian





“RACING IS ‘MY THING’”

**Land Rover Experience:
Nordic Adventure 2012**

22 Hämeenlinna – Helsinki, Finland. 100km



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 not needed to practise 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

23 Peterborough, UK – Nordkapp, Norway. 8,371km



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 Skarberget ferry 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 Russenes to Honningsvåg.

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 this the land of the midnight sun.

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

“AN AVALANCHE APPEARED...”

Birmingham to Beijing 2013

24 Birmingham, UK – Beijing, China. 18,000km



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 waiting to see what was going to happen, we just drove over whatever was there, and kept going.

Toby Blythe, D3 Events project manager

“COAST TO COAST WITHOUT PUTTING A TYRE ON TARMAC”

Trans–America Trail 2013

25 Jellico, Tennessee – Portland, Oregon, US. 6,722km



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 Discoverys ahead of us and Warren Blevins was spotting for him. I watched, holding my breath. Tom had to go to the edge of the switchback – with a 300m 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 ■



Clockwise from top left: a battered notepad from the Camel Trophy Kalimantan; along the Birmingham to Beijing journey; a small Roman vase picked up by the Crichtons in the Wadi Rum; on the 2013 Trans–America Trail; a Cobra walkie talkie; Discovery crossing the Empty Quarter; photographer Nick Dumbleby’s one-month visa for Mongolia in 1997; heading to the coast on the Trans–America Trail; (centre) fossilised coral collected by the Crichtons from the edge of the Rub al Khali