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Travel: Die Mond Campsite (Tankwa Karoo)

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By Grant Spolander

MANUAL MODE

Every year, people spend fortunes chasing a longer life — supplements, gadgets, miracle diets, and more. But what if there's a simpler, almost free way to slow down time?

Well, there is. The tricky part is that it requires we do the one thing that our brains are wired NOT to do — we have to stop recognising patterns.

We've thrived as a species because we spot trends, anticipate danger, and act efficiently. If a sabre-tooth tiger leaps from the same bush twice, we assume it'll happen a third time. This instinct shapes everything — from tracking seasons and migrations to mastering math, physics, and social dynamics.

But there's a cost.

The efficiency that helps us thrive also puts us on autopilot. Routine dulls attention. We zone out in traffic, scroll mindlessly, drift through daily rituals. Life becomes habitual, and the mind fills with noise — that restless inner dialogue replaying the past or rehearsing the future.

Travel quiets it. Step into the unfamiliar — a corrugated road, a sweeping mountain pass, a bustling border post — and your autopilot falters.

Every sight, smell, and sound demands attention. Your brain can't skim patterns anymore. Suddenly, you're present. No past. No future. Just now.

How often do we race through a week and wonder, where did the days go? Weeks blur into months, months into years. Contrast that with a holiday: an ordinary cup of coffee and an Ouma rusk feels super luxurious; dew on long grass and a mist-softened sunrise seem almost divine.

And once you see it, the bigger question follows: do we really need a holiday to feel this way? To be present? To slow down?

Of course not.

All it takes is breaking routine — stepping beyond familiar patterns and choosing something unfamiliar, even uncomfortable.

On that note, I recently asked you — our readers — whether this mag is on the right track. I was genuinely surprised by the response, and grateful for it. Even more interesting: the feedback was all very similar.

Quality over quantity. No need for print. Technical pieces matter most.

Music to my ears — because I agree.

Less comforting were the calls for a podcast, especially to unpack technical topics. Several industry folks have said the same – advice I've studiously ignored. The problem is that I'm mildly terrified of cameras and microphones.

Writing? Sure, no problem. But put a lens or mic in front of me, and my IQ drops well below room temperature.

"Errr… umm… errr…"

Still, doubts aside, the idea is simple: a podcast version of past — and future — technical features to help explain the trickier themes.

I'll probably procrastinate and delay the launch of this feature so feel free to hold me accountable. Rude notes might help.

But in the meantime, stay tuned, stay present.

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Authored by Moritz Wernli

SOUTH AMERICA UNSCRIPTED

When unplanned opportunities lead to big adventures

Ed's note: Following "*How to Stay Sane on the Road*" *in the* last issue, we continue with Moe and Valerie — who crossed Africa in *Balu*, their 1995 Puch 230GE — as Moe shares the pivotal prequel to their journey.

Some opportunities arrive loudly. Others slip into your life almost unnoticed — a single sentence, a line of text, something you stumble across without knowing that it will quietly rearrange everything that follows.

For me, it started with an advertisement.

“Environmental education trail in Bolivia – Bachelor thesis.”

I came across it almost by accident during my studies in landscape architecture. A Swiss-based NGO was looking for someone to conceptualise and build an environmental education trail in the Gran Chaco region of Bolivia.

The idea was simple and ambitious at the same time: to create a place where local schoolchildren could learn about the forest ecosystem surrounding their villages — not from books, but by walking through it.

I didn’t overthink it. I applied.

Below: *Roads to dream about in Bolivia.*

At the same time, I approached the university administration to ask whether such a project could qualify as a bachelor thesis. I didn't yet know how it would all work out — but I had learned that clarity often comes after commitment, not before.

Almost a year later, I found myself boarding a flight to Santa Cruz de la Sierra. My studies were finished. My bachelor thesis was no longer a concept on paper, but a real project waiting for implementation on the other side of the world.

During the preparation phase, a familiar thought began to surface again and again: If I'm already there, then maybe I should…

You see, there was no job waiting for me back home. No fixed structure pulling me back. And so I did what felt both natural and slightly reckless — I asked my partner Valerie if she would join me once the practical work was completed. The plan was simple: three months of project work, and then we would travel together through South America.

Below: *Taking in the view at Cascada Fin del Mundo, Colombia.*

Valerie managed to arrange a six-month sabbatical and agreed to meet me in Bolivia. We both felt that if we were going to do this, we should do it properly — with time, curiosity, and the freedom to go wherever the road would take us.

Freedom, however, required one essential ingredient: a vehicle.

By coincidence - or perhaps by the quiet logic that seems to govern these stories in hindsight - an opportunity presented itself.

A German tour operator was selling his backup vehicle in South America. After its latest trip, he didn't want to ship it back to Europe.

The reason: a well-developed patina of rust which made it less than appealing for future use in Europe.

For us, it was perfect.

A 1995 Nissan Patrol Y60, short wheelbase, equipped with a rooftop tent. Honest, capable, and a little rough around the edges. We bought it without hesitation.

Above and below: *We bought a short-wheelbase Y60 Patrol to explore South America. It came well equipped, having previously served as a backup vehicle for a German tour operator.*

Below: *Helping a fellow road user in need.*

There was only one small complication. The vehicle had to be picked up in Montevideo, Uruguay — one month before Valerie was due to arrive in South America. And neither we nor the previous owner had a clear idea of how to transfer German vehicle documents into our names on a different continent.

But experience would later teach us something important: most problems only look impossible until you start moving.

For the first problem, I boarded a bus. Thirty hours later, I stepped out in Buenos Aires. From there, ferries cross daily to Uruguay, and the final stretch from the port to Montevideo seemed manageable - at least in theory. As for the paperwork, it required a long night, a laptop with Adobe photoshop, a healthy disregard for sleep, and a visit to a local print shop the next morning. It was an elegant and easy solution and... it worked.

Below: *Crystal-clear waters and bright pink flamingos in Chile.*

By the time Valerie arrived, the car - which we named Mani, after the mammoth from Ice Age, grumpy on the outside with a soft core and almost indestructible - was waiting.

The following seven months carried us across a continent. Roughly 35 000 km took us from the salt flats of Uyuni to the Chilean coast, north through Peru and Ecuador, across Colombia's highlands, and down into the Atacama Desert.

From there, we followed the Amazon — via Iquitos and Leticia — all the way to Manaus, traveling the river on three different supply boats before returning to solid ground.

Eventually, we headed south. Patagonia awaited, along with the legendary Carretera Austral - a road that demands respect and offers little forgiveness.

It was there that our trip came to an abrupt, and almost tragic end.

A oncoming vehicle entered a bend too fast, crossed the centre line, and collided head-on with us. In a single instant, our journey was reduced to twisted metal and silence.

We were lucky. Incredibly lucky.

Above: *Catching a ferry to Leticia.*

Above: *Breathtaking views across beautiful Patagonia.*

Above: *Our trip came to an abrupt end on the Carretera Austral when an oncoming vehicle entered a bend too fast.*

The accident taught us how fragile everything is — not only material possessions, but health, plans, and even life itself. What remained with us just as strongly, however, was what followed.

In a small nearby village, strangers became family. We were taken in, cared for, and supported without hesitation. Within days, we were no longer guests but part of everyday life. Leaving that village was harder than we anticipated.

Weeks later, we headed back home to Switzerland with gratitude — and with more memories than we could properly process. In the plane, somewhere over the Atlantic, we looked at each other and knew: this wasn't the end. It was a pause.

The end of one journey leads to the beginning of another.

Back home, the first ideas began to take shape. What if we didn't just travel again — but went further?

Slower. Longer.

What if we drove from Switzerland to Africa, this time with no fixed endpoint other than the road itself?

The planning started quietly. Casually. Almost harmlessly.

We had no idea then that this decision would lead us back onto the road for over a year - or that it would eventually take us all the way to the southern tip of Africa.

But that is another story for another issue.

Below: *Stunning coastal landscapes in Peru.*

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Authored by Grant Spolander

Tool Talk

Basic tools and spares for your journey

Driving an old 4x4—even a famously reliable one—means accepting a simple truth: eventually, something is going to break. The only real question is where.

Ideally, it happens in your driveway. Less ideally, it happens somewhere remote, far from cell reception, workshops, or tow trucks.

I was reminded of this during a recent family trip through the Tankwa. After days of pounding along some of the worst corrugated roads I've ever driven, we finally rolled into camp. But something wasn't right.

The Pajero Sport suddenly had no power steering.

My first thought was expensive and probably a bit dramatic:
"*Great. The pump's gone. How the hell are we gonna get home*?"

But I decided not to worry. Not yet. Bad news could wait. Something more important needed to be done… Crack beer, open camping chair, enjoy the view.

Eventually – after more than one beer – I got up and popped the bonnet. 'First things first,' I thought, 'Check the fluid levels.'

'Wait, what fluid?'

To my surprise, the power steering reservoir was bone dry. Getting down on one knee, I looked under the Pajero and found the cause: Power steering fluid had been dripping from somewhere. Closer inspection revealed that one of the power steering pipes had come loose – four days of driving rough roads tends to reveal substandard connections.

Fortunately, I always travel with a set of spanners, and it didn't take long to retighten the fitting. Interestingly, the Sunday evening before we left for the trip, I had a nagging feeling to buy power steering fluid—not for the Pajero Sport, but for the Patrol. Finding ATF fluid on a Sunday evening was challenging, but I persevered and found two bottles at the back of a Spaza shop. And I'd popped them into the Pajero before we left.

I was grateful for the spare fluid and topped up the reservoir. Voila! The power steering was back in action!

This experience isn't limited to older 4x4s. Even if you drive a brand-new vehicle that has recently been serviced, there's always a chance that human error has left something "undone". Fluids are the lifeblood of your 4x4; without them, you're not going anywhere.

With that in mind, here's a basic list of some essential tools and spare parts to consider bringing along on your travels.

FLUIDS

As mentioned before, 4x4s need fluids, and because we expose our vehicles to extra harsh environments, including dust, extreme vibrations and higher than average ambient temperatures, carrying extra fluids is always a good idea, even for relatively new vehicles.

While carrying extra engine, differential, or transmission oil is wise, it's unlikely these components will suddenly leak unless you're aware of an existing issue. Typically, you'll notice signs of a seal or gasket failure before a complete breakdown. If you see any weeping or dampness, it's best to find the cause and replace any problematic seals before embarking on a tough trip.

Below: *Travelling with extra coolant is never a bad idea, especially in hot climates. Just make sure you buy concentrated liquid, not pre-mixed. It will go a lot further.*

On the other hand, brake lines and power steering pipes often have fittings that can loosen over time or be tightened too loosely. Keeping extra fluid for these components is advisable. If push comes to shove, you can use automatic gearbox oil (ATF) in your power steering system, addressing two needs at once.

Bringing along engine coolant is also worth considering if you have the space. While you can always top up with plain water in a pinch, good-quality coolant can raise the boiling point of water, which is crucial in extreme heat, when towing a heavy load, or when driving through soft sand.

Above: *This article covers the most commonly experienced faults when travelling off-road, not rock crawling on grade 5 trails. That means vibrations, dust, and moisture. Loose brake fittings are a common culprit.*

TOOLS

While tools can be heavy and bulky, and often tricky to pack in an already full vehicle, there are some essentials you should never leave behind.

Hammer and Dolly: A hammer with a claw at the back serves multiple purposes, and a short piece of aluminium or brass can act as a dolly to knock a bolt or bush into place without causing damage.

Spanners and Sockets: Both are necessary if you need to hold both sides of a bolt or nut to tighten or loosen something. Short sockets are generally more versatile and less likely to get in the way than long series sockets, and a spanner set with a ring on the other end can reach most areas.

You can also link two spanners together for extra leverage. Avoid cheap spanners, as they can break and be dangerous.

Pliers: It's not necessary to carry a full set—just ensure the pair you take is fairly large. Big pliers can hold both large and small objects and can cut through thick wires, rods, and electrical lugs. If you have space, vice grips are invaluable for providing a tight, hands-free grip.

Above: *Never hammer steel on steel. Use a soft dolly (aluminium or brass) to loosen or realign components.*

Above: *A ratchet set and spanners are non-negotiable. Avoid cheap tools — budget ratchets often stop working.*

Above: *Link two spanners together when you need more leverage on stubborn fasteners. NB: Don't attempt this with budget spanners!*

Above: *A multipurpose oil like Q20 is handy to have around, but I prefer silicone spray. It does most of what oil does (lubricates and displaces moisture), but it has the added benefit of being anti-static. Meaning, instead of attracting dust, it repels it. It's also safe on sensitive plastics and rubbers.*

SPARE PARTS

It's easy to get carried away with buying spare parts, but realistically, most people don't have the space to carry a spare of everything. Unless you plan to be on the road for an extended period and your vehicle has known issues with specific components, focus on packing only the parts you can replace yourself.

If you're concerned about your vehicle's belts, replace them before you leave. They are not expensive, and new belts typically don't fail without a good reason.

Below: *Bad connections and poor grounds are among the most common faults on rough roads. Pack spare lugs and terminals, plus pliers for crimping.*

The parts most likely to fail are small electrical components. Fuses, particularly those powering your fridge or 12V auxiliary sockets, are crucial.

Additionally, check electrical fittings and lugs. If they've been poorly crimped, there's a strong chance that the wires might disconnect due to vibrations. Be sure to know the sizes connected to your battery terminals and ground connections, and carry spares.

The same advice applies to tyre valves, not the caps, but the delicate valve inners. If these fail, you'll struggle to keep your tyres properly inflated.

It's also wise to have a variety o pipe-clamp sizes on hand. Stainless steel clamps are generally more durable than mild steel ones, and you can tighten them more securely without risking stripping the threads.

A spare fuel filter is a compact item that's worth carrying if you're travelling to remote areas with unreliable fuel options. If you drive a petrol engine, having an extra spark plug can prevent issues, as these can fail unexpectedly—even if they're new.

Above: *Carry a variety of fuse types and sizes, including a heavy-duty fuse for dual-battery systems.*

Above: *Valve cores are reliable but sensitive to dust and sand. Spares are cheap and tiny — pack a few.*

Left: *An extra fuel filter isn't usually necessary, but it may be needed in areas with notoriously poor fuel quality.*

MISCELLANEOUS

In addition to the three must-haves (Q20, cable ties, and duct tape), having an extra set of ratchet straps can be a lifesaver. I've seen ratchet straps used to align components, such as a rear differential that shifted after the control arm bushes came loose. They can also be used to secure an engine in place after the mountings sheared off, or to fasten a high-lift jack used as a makeshift leaf spring after the springs collapsed.

Right: *Vice grips are arguably the most underestimated tool. They act like an extra pair of REALLY strong hands. Again, choose a quality pair; cheaper brands tend to lose their grip strength.*

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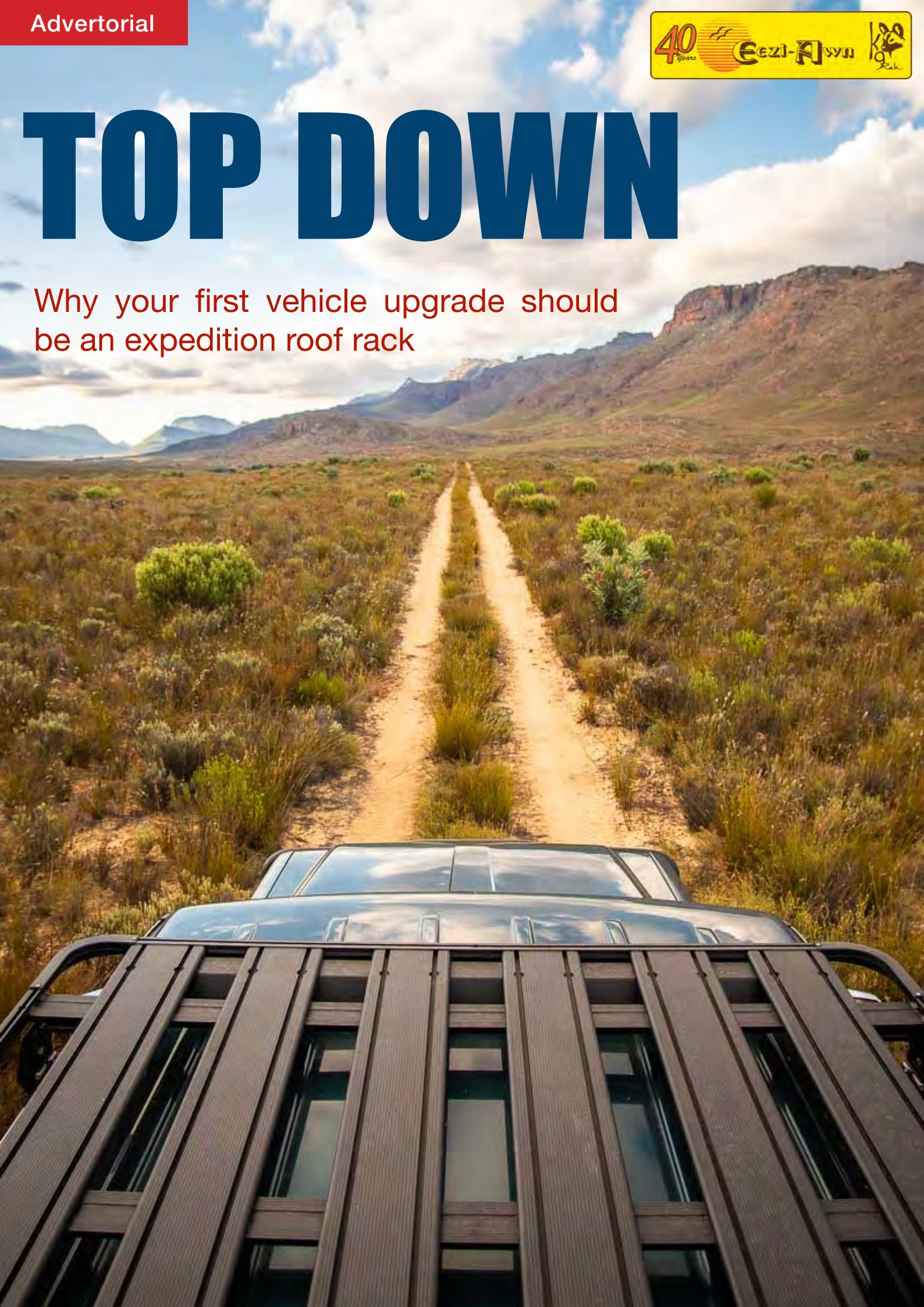
Advertorial

TOP DOWN

Why your first vehicle upgrade should be an expedition roof rack



Outfitting a new 4x4 is exciting — suspension, tyres, bumpers, drawer systems — the list is endless. But before any of that, there's one upgrade that quietly unlocks everything else…

A roof rack.

No matter how capable your vehicle is, packing space is often the limiting factor. Camping gear multiplies fast. Recovery equipment is bulky. And essentials — tables, chairs, firewood — occupy a lot of space.

Unlike a trailer, which includes the hassle of towing, licensing, storage and maintenance, a quality expedition roof rack transforms your packing equation. It moves bulky gear out of the cabin, frees interior storage, and improves packing flow — including quicker access to your fridge and other must-haves.

No cramming. No gear Tetris. No sacrificing comfort for cargo.

Below: *Roof racks are ideal for carrying bulky gear that takes up too much space inside your vehicle.*

A SOLID BASE

However, space is only half the story. A roof rack isn't just storage — it's a platform. The foundation for a properly equipped overland vehicle. It's where you mount the gear that's hardest to pack and most frustrating to access:

- A quick-access table slide so your camp table isn't buried under luggage.
- A high-lift jack bracket that keeps heavy recovery gear secure and outside.
- A shower cubicle for privacy wherever you stop.
- A rooftop tent mount that turns any campsite into a home.
- Awnings, jerry-can holders, utility mounts and more.

Get the rack right, and everything else follows. But with so many options on the market, choosing the right rack can be difficult. Here's what separates a basic roof rack from a true expedition unit…

Below: *A rack makes it easy to mount accessories like an awning, rooftop tent, or privacy/shower cubicle.*

DOUBLE-SLAT CONSTRUCTION

Not all roof racks are created equal. Many look similar, but the engineering underneath differs significantly. Single-slat racks suit flat-packing and shipping. Double-slat construction supports the rack both laterally and longitudinally. The result:

- Greater load capacity
- Less slat flex and fatigue on corrugations
- Smaller gaps so loose gear can't shift
- A rigid surface you can walk on
- More tie-down points and packing flexibility

Above: *A double-slat design — where longitudinal slats are supported by lateral crossbars — creates a significantly stronger platform, offers more tie-down points, and reduces flex.*

LOW-PROFILE FIT

Mounting a rack as low as possible makes it look less like an afterthought and more like a factory component. It also reduces wind noise and drag while improving clearance under low obstacles and in underground parking.

Cleaner look. Better aerodynamics. Fewer clearance issues.

Above: *A rack that resists bowing can sit closer to the roofline, reducing wind noise and improving clearance under low obstacles.*

MOUNTING MATTERS

A rack is only as strong as its mounting system. Look for hardware that's simple, durable and built around standard tool sizes. Intricate fasteners and speciality fittings are easier to strip and harder to work with when adjusting or removing the rack.

Practical design wins.

Above: *Ideally, choose a roof rack with a simple, robust mounting system that uses standard tools — not specialised hardware.*

ACCESSORISE WITH PURPOSE

The best expedition racks are designed as systems – not standalone products.

That means integrated accessories — from jerry-can holders and high-lift mounts to awnings and rooftop tents — allowing you to build a complete, modular expedition platform.

Above: *A roof rack should be engineered as a complete system, not a standalone product.*

THE FINAL TOUCH: FINISH THAT LASTS

A roof rack lives a hard life. Sun. Rain. Dust. Salt air. Corrugations. Branch strikes. Durable powder coating is critical.

A tough, high-quality finish resists chipping, fading and corrosion, keeping the rack looking good long after cheaper coatings have dulled or rusted. Because nothing dates a vehicle faster than a rack that hasn't aged well. Peeling, rust, and patchy fading make even premium 4x4s look tatty.

A quality rack should handle the elements — and still look the part years later.

A roof rack can more than double your vehicle's packing capacity — without the hassle of towing a trailer.

PROVEN WHERE IT MATTERS

That's where Eezi-Awn stands apart. We've spent decades in the overland industry, and we were the first commercial manufacturer to bring the rooftop tent concept to SA — a design that reshaped vehicle-based travel worldwide. That same expedition mindset runs through our full ecosystem of supporting products, engineered to work together as complete travel systems.

Sure, there are cheaper ways to build and ship a roof rack — less slats, bolted components, flat-pack designs. We've chosen not to go that route. Instead, we stick with construction methods proven in real expedition environments.

From the plains of the Serengeti to sub-zero Arctic adventures, our racks have endured relentless vibration, extreme weather, heavy loads and remote miles where failure isn't an option.

That experience shows in our materials, our engineering, and our refusal to cut corners where it counts. A roof rack isn't a short-term accessory. It's a long-term investment — a durable platform that grows with your vehicle and supports a lifetime of off-road adventure.

For more info on Eezi-Awn products visit www.eezi-awn.com, or contact (011) 794 6311 or info@eezi-awn.com.

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Travel

Authored by Grant Spolander

OASIS

Travel Suggestion: Die Mond Campsite (Tankwa Karoo)

Planning a family holiday often feels like running a political campaign. On one hand, I crave a route that resonates with me — remote, empty, untamed. On the other hand, I know a successful trip needs to win the popular vote with the family.

I'm a firm believer in "roughing it" —the absence of flushing toilets and hot showers can build character in a generation raised on PlayStation and Wifi. But if a camping trip feels like punishment, that's how it will be remembered. And before long, the family will outvote me to book a comfy beach house instead.

Hardship only works when it's balanced by reward. Dust must give way to shade. Dry riverbeds must lead to water. Long roads must end somewhere worth arriving. The art of travelling with children is all about contrast: a merciless dust bowl one day, a lush oasis the next.

And if there's ever a place that defines "oasis", it's Die Mond Campsite, just west of the Tankwa Karoo.

WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL

Die Mond sits on the broad, grassy banks of the Grootrivier — a rare, cool stretch of water in an otherwise arid landscape. The river is the heart of the campsite, offering swimming, paddling, and excellent freshwater fishing.

It's a working farm setting, with an open-plan riverside camping area rather than defined individual stands. The atmosphere is relaxed and social, and I've yet to see it overly busy. That said, I seldom visit during the peak holiday season, and I hear it's often fully booked over the Easter weekend.

Die Mond also serves as the perfect final chapter to a broader Tankwa Karoo journey. After days of dust, distance, and what feels like deliberate discomfort, it delivers an unexpected contrast — and that, in my opinion, is what turns a good trip into an unforgettable one.

The surrounding area is incredibly arid – adding to the contrast and oasis feel of Die Mond.

FACILITIES

Camping: The campsites — along with their distinctive, homemade wheelbarrow-style braais — are positioned on large grassy patches along the riverbank.

While there's plenty of natural shade, it pays to have an awning or gazebo, especially if your group includes more than two vehicles.

Chalets: If you'd prefer not to pitch a tent, four basic chalets share ablutions with the campsite. There are also two stone houses.

The smaller of the two sleeps five, while the larger sleeps seven — both have their own bathroom. Personally, the campsites win my vote for their prime position right on the water's edge.

Ablutions: Communal facilities include taps, refuse bins, a scullery area, flushing toilets, and warm showers. They're by no means modern — and a little dimly lit — but perfectly adequate. Chances are you'll spend most of the day in the river anyway.

Braai: Each site has a small portable braai, but you'll need to bring your own grid, spade, and firewood.

Above: *Most of the campsites are well shaded.*

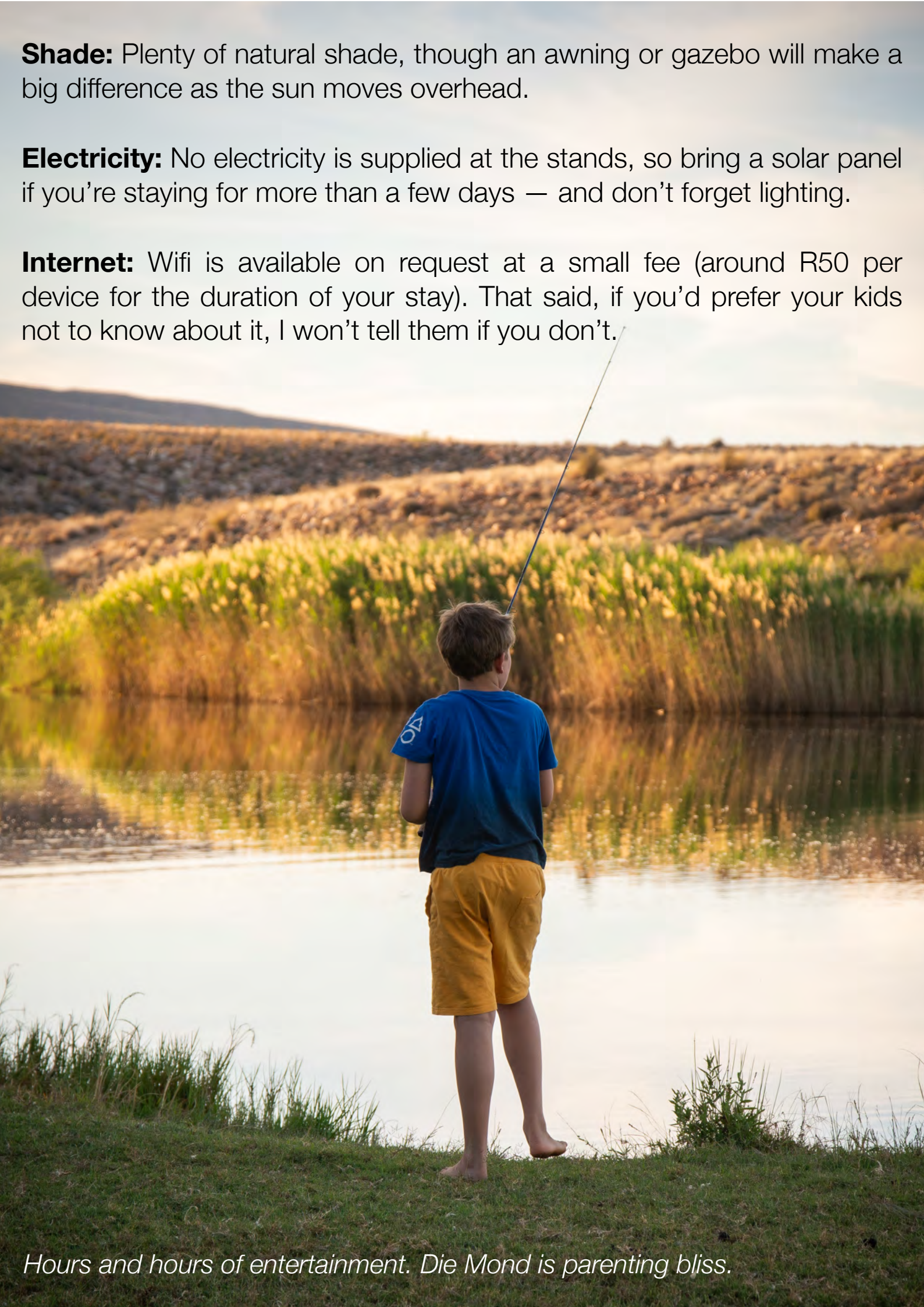
Above: *Don't let the entrance deceive you, the farm's super lush inside.*

The 7-sleeper stone house (above) and one of four chalets (below).

Shade: Plenty of natural shade, though an awning or gazebo will make a big difference as the sun moves overhead.

Electricity: No electricity is supplied at the stands, so bring a solar panel if you're staying for more than a few days — and don't forget lighting.

Internet: Wifi is available on request at a small fee (around R50 per device for the duration of your stay). That said, if you'd prefer your kids not to know about it, I won't tell them if you don't.



Hours and hours of entertainment. Die Mond is parenting bliss.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS

The roads in and around Die Mond can be heavily corrugated, with occasional washouts or ruts depending on recent weather. For the most part, vehicles with above-average ground clearance — including many softroaders and 4x2s — should manage without issue.

The greater risk lies in tyre damage. Corrugations can be punishing without lowering tyre pressures, but doing so on standard passenger tyres increases the risk of sidewall punctures. If your tyres begin to bulge at the sidewall, you've gone too far. Carry a tyre repair kit, and avoid over-deflating if your tyres aren't up to the task.

Below: *Fish, braai, swim, repeat – it really doesn't get any better than this. Generally speaking, bookings are handled on a first-come, first-served basis; however, if you're a regular at the campsite, you can put in a request for your favourite spot when booking.*

WHAT TO BRING

There are no shops on site. Firewood is usually available, but the ice supply can be inconsistent. Bring all your own food, drinks, and camping supplies, along with sun protection, insect repellent, river gear, hiking shoes, and plenty of fishing equipment.

PRICING & CONTACT

Camping: R180 pppn for adults and R120 pppn for children.

Chalets: From R600 per night for a unit sleeping up to six people.

Contact: WhatsApp Lindie on 073 812 6638

Get There: From Cape Town, the most scenic approach is via Katbakkies Pass, descending into the Tankwa basin before heading north (left) on the R355. Look out for the branded tyre – pictured below.

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Featured Vehicle

Brought to you by TUFFSTUFF

EL CHEAPO

This month's R5 000 winner!

Our latest winner of the TUFFSTUFF featured ride is Drew Murphy.

When my wife insisted we purchase a second car to keep me off Cape winter roads on my motorcycle and so that I could do my share of school runs, I agreed on two conditions. One, the vehicle had to be cheap. And two, it had to be fun. Which – of course – means it had to be an off-roader. Her only other condition was it had to have 4 doors. Fair enough.

My search led me to a 1998 RAV4 with 415 000 km under its belt, owned by a gentleman in his 80s. He and his wife both drove RAVs and he was selling his and keeping the younger one – that one had only covered 250 000 km.

For R55 000, I drove away with a capable off-roading vehicle that started and ran seamlessly and was in pretty decent shape, save for a few signs of a life well-lived.

Since then, I've been on a journey to learn as much as I can about the Toyota and do as much as I can myself. I've changed the oils – engine, diff and gearbox - and flushed the radiator, all fairly successfully. Sure, I've made some rookie errors like removing a wire I thought looked unnecessary only to have the battery run flat the next day, or removing a bolt from the transfer case which then couldn't be put back in and required a tow to the mechanic. But otherwise, it's all been pretty plain sailing.

After perusing the Temu menu, I've installed under-bonnet lights to allow me to admire the engine bay in the dark - not that any work is required, it's a Toyota after-all, as well as a CarPlay music and navigation system.

After living through a summer with no tint on the windows and an ailing air-con, I got the windows done and the air-con serviced. With cooling guaranteed I then promptly gathered my two best mates and took them on a 750 km round trip through the Cederberg and Tankwa Karoo. The RAV performed flawlessly, even crossing the Doring River without a hitch. Sure, we shredded a tyre sidewall in the Tankwa, but who hasn't?

The next major upgrade will be a 2" lift and roof-racks as my tent doesn’t quite fit in the boot. With these installed I have my GPS set on Baviaanskloof. At 425 000 km the Toyota is still going strong. If any Land Cruisers, Defenders, or Rangers need a tow, I'm sure she'll be up to that challenge too!

Competition

Brought to you by TUFFSTUFF

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Send pics of your pride and joy to info@4wdrevolution.com to enter.

By submitting an entry you acknowledge:

- That you are the legal owner of the vehicle, and all the images supplied.
- That you agree to have your name and possibly your image published by 4WD Revolution.
- If your vehicle has been exposed in other media, please provide details of such.
- Entries are limited to persons resident in South Africa.

Contact TUFFSTUFF* on 0861 44 44 00 for an obligation free quote.
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GO BIG

Big Capacity. Smart Control.

Meet the new 75-litre Travel Box.

There's a sweet spot in the world of camping fridges – a size that offers long-haul holiday capacity without moving into the realm of premium expedition territory. That's exactly where National Luna's newly launched 75-litre Travel Box fits in.

Designed as a practical, dual-control unit, the 75-litre Travel Box gives campers and overlanders the flexibility to run one side as a freezer and the other as a fridge – no compromises, no juggling space, and no settling for "either/or".

Positioned within our range of value-driven Travel Boxes, the 75-litre model stays true to the formula: lightweight construction, simple operation, and excellent affordability. It also runs on both 12VDC and 220VAC power, includes a free protective jacket worth R1 700, and is backed by a 3-year warranty.

Importantly, the 75-litre model rounds out a well-considered lineup. Alongside the compact 20-litre and the versatile 35-, 45-, and 60-litre units, it provides a higher-capacity option for families and longer journeys without stepping into a completely different price category.

The result is a fridge-freezer that offers ample space, true dual-zone control, and reliable performance – all at a budget-friendly price of just R8 999.

TB75
R8 999

TB20
R3 999

TB35
R5 999

TB45
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« Both the 45 and 60-litre models feature a removable divider that quickly transforms the fridge from a dual control to a single compartment.

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Authored by Henk Bogaards

STOPPING POWER

Why OEM brakes may not be enough for modified 4x4s

Two of the joys of 4x4 ownership are upgrades and modifications. It's very rare for a stock-standard 4x4 to deliver all the capability and performance we require. So we add a host of hefty accessories, then start looking for power upgrades to handle the extra load.

But the hard truth is that increased speed, heavier weight, and heavy towing loads often make your OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) brakes your vehicle's weakest link. If you're towing, very heavily laden, or tackling technical off-road descents, your standard braking system is likely being pushed beyond its original design parameters.

The Hidden Danger: Brake Fade and Vapour Lock

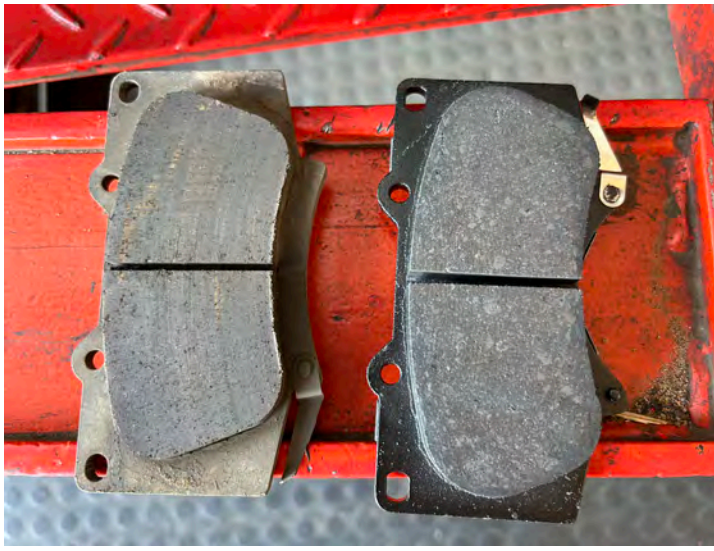
The need for a braking upgrade usually becomes apparent during prolonged, heavy braking, such as that experienced when descending a long, steep pass. This is where two critical failures are known to occur:

Above: *A large part of braking performance comes down to metallurgy and heat dissipation.*

Overheating Discs

Continuous braking generates immense heat. Standard discs have a limited capacity to dissipate these higher temperatures.

Most OEM discs have a maximum operating temp of approximately 450°C. Pushing past this threshold causes the pads to lose their bite, leading to brake fade.



Above: *Sometimes bigger is, in fact, better.*

Boiling Brake Fluid (Vapour Lock)

As discs and pads overheat, that heat transfers to the brake fluid. Standard DOT 4 fluid has a typical dry boiling point between 230°C and 240°C. Once this limit is exceeded, the fluid will boil and turn into gas.

Because gas is compressible (unlike liquid), your brake pedal will go soft, and you will lose all stopping power. This vapour lock only has to happen to you once for you never to forget it; it's terrifying!

The Solution: Not just pads

The ideal time to consider a strategic professional-grade upgrade is when your standard pads are due for replacement. Such an upgrade will address two primary components:

1. Performance Discs and Pads

To combat heat soak, you need materials engineered for high thermal loads. Upgraded kits, such as the Powerbrake D-Line, offer a bolt-on solution that works with your existing callipers and utilises superior metallurgy.

Feature	Standard OEM Brakes	Upgraded Performance Brakes
Material	Standard Grey Iron	High Carbon Alloys (for better heat management
Max Temp	Around 450°C	Up to 600°C
Pedal Feel	Softer, progressive	Firmer, more immediate response
User	Daily driving, moderate loads	Towing, overlanding, heavy 4x4 use
Brake Dust	Low	Moderate to high

Right: *A heavily kitted vehicle often requires heavier-duty brakes.*

2. High-Performance Brake Fluid

Upgrading your discs manages the heat, but you still need to protect the hydraulic system. Replacing standard DOT 4 with a high-performance alternative, such as Motul DOT 5.1, directly mitigates the risk of vapour lock.

Feature	Standard DOT 4 Fluid	Performance DOT 5.1 Fluid
Boiling Point	230 - 240°C	Around 272°C
Cold Viscosity	1 800 - 2 000 mm2/s	Around 900 mm2/s
Benefit	Standard performance	Reduced vapor lock; faster ABS/ESC response
Service Int.	24 months	18 - 24 months (due to moisture absorption)

Note: The lower viscosity of DOT 5.1 not only offers higher heat tolerance but also allows modern ABS and Electronic Stability Control (ESC) systems to react more quickly in emergency situations.

The Bedding-In Process: A Crucial First Step

Unlike standard brakes, performance systems like Powerbrake require a specific bedding-in (or running-in) procedure to ensure that the pads and discs mate perfectly, and to transfer a layer of friction material to the disc surface.

1. The Initial Phase: For the first 250 - 300 km, drive normally in urban conditions. Use firm pedal pressure, but avoid emergency stops from high speeds.

2. The Thermal Cycle: Once the initial distance has been covered, find a quiet road and perform 6 to 8 relatively hard stops from 100 km/h down to 20 km/h in quick succession (do not come to a complete stop).

3. The Cool Down: After step 2, drive for at least 10 km with minimal braking to allow airflow to cool the system, then park and let the brakes cool to ambient temperature. This process "cures" the materials, ensuring long-term performance and silence.

Trade-offs to Consider

It is important to remember that these are performance products. They require a strict bedding-in procedure in order to transfer a layer of friction material to the disc. While my experience has been quiet operation, you may notice a light “whoosh” sound under hard braking. But this minor mechanical trait is a small price to pay for a significantly safer, more capable workhorse.

Above: *Larger tyres also increase the need for stronger braking, not just because they're a lot heavier, but because the taller diameter increases the leverage acting against the brakes.*

Disclosure
These brake components were fitted to Henk's vehicle at no cost in exchange for an evaluation.

Check out more 4WD-related content from Henk by visiting his YouTube channel, 4WheelingSA: https://www.youtube.com/@4WheelingSA

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