

161 Days (23 Weeks) Trans Africa - UK to Cape Town

Countries Visited: Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Angola, Namibia, South Africa

Embarking on this expedition will give you an insight into the varied cultures of West and Central Africa and all the challenges this vast continent can throw at you. There will be days when it will be pretty tough - bad roads, harsh terrains and extremes of climates, but you will also get to experience, see and discover a continent most travellers only dream of - whilst having the experience of a lifetime!

***Please note: This trip will become 21 Weeks from November 2012 onwards**

Please note that our itineraries are not set in stone and can be subject to change.

Days 1 to 14

We begin our journey from the UK to Cairo in Gibraltar or southern Spain where your Trans Africa Crew will meet you from your flight. Here, the weather is warmer and as it is a duty free port, we can stock up on supplies for Xmas and New Year. We will then cross the **Straits of Gibraltar** by ferry to **Ceuta**, a Spanish enclave on the **North African Coast**. In Morocco we visit **Chefchaouen** - set in a fertile valley of the surrounding **Rif Mountains** - where we will camp on a ridge overlooking this picturesque town with its white roofs, blue alleyways and narrow streets. You can wander around this relaxed town and even visit one of the old hammam bath houses. The **Roman City of Volubilis** is a remarkably well-kept reminder of the Roman presence in North Africa 2000 years ago. On this leg of the overland Africa trip, we spend some time wandering around the ancient streets and monuments before driving to the **fortress city of Fez**, known for its huge covered bazaar with narrow winding alleys, crammed with craft workshops, restaurants, food stalls, mosques, dye pits and tanneries.

Days 15 to 28

Our few days in the capital **Rabat** is spent organising visas before travelling onto **Todra Gorge** where its massive red and orange cliffs rise a thousand feet on each side of a sandy river. From Todra we cross the **Sarhro Mountains** and follow the **Draa Valley** past numerous scattered Kasbahs - Ait Benhaddou being one such example that has been the inspiration for many a Hollywood film set. The old capital of **Marrakech** is our base for the next few days of our Trans Africa overland adventure - allowing you the chance to wander around the **Jema el Fna**. This square is alive with activity through the day - from **storytellers, snake charmers, water sellers and musicians**. A nightly ritual sees hundreds of food stalls transform the square into one of Africa's largest local eating areas - the aromatic smells of fresh local food is fit for locals and tourists alike. The fishing port of **Essaouira** is our last major stop in Morocco before we head south following the rugged Atlantic coastline towards **Mauritania** and the **Sahara Desert**.

Days 29 to 42

On this leg of the overland Africa trip, after crossing into **Mauritania**, the remoteness and unrelenting heat and harshness of the desert becomes apparent. We have now left civilization behind and are in the desert proper. The security of knowing that our truck is totally self sufficient with food, water, fuel and a complete set of spares is a very comforting thought. We drive off-road for hundreds of miles, occasionally having to dig the truck out of very soft sand - where the use of sand ladders will be our only way forward. We pass through the **Parc d'Arguin**, renowned for its bird and sea life. In the small undeveloped capital of **Nouakchott**, we spend a couple of days reorganising the truck and life in general for our dusty desert travels. It is quite incredible to think that slavery was only abolished here in 1980 and it is rumoured that it still continues in some outlying areas. From here we continue on our Trans Africa overland trip by driving inland toward **Mali**.

As we get into the Sahel scrublands - we find the road conditions only slightly better than before. After a few days of dusty, stony, corrugated roads, smooth asphalt becomes our main desire! We pass slowly through many spread out villages harbouring free range goats, cattle and hardy chickens - some of which we may buy for a spit roast. Arriving in the capital **Bamako**, is a welcome relief for most - abounding with lively bars, cold beers, markets with fresh fruit and vegetables and people with different culture, language and dress to those in the Western Sahara. The town overlooks the Niger River and has some good live clubs - allowing the night owls in the group to enjoy some late night drinking and dancing to some world famous Malian music.



161 Days (23 Weeks) Trans Africa - UK to Cape Town

Days 43 to 63

Following the **Niger River**, we visit the old mud built towns of **Mopti and Djenne**. These towns were important trading centres over 500 years ago and not much seems to have changed as you wander through the narrow alleyways. It's hard not to get absorbed into the local hustle and bustle as we go about doing our ritualistic food shop just as the locals do daily. Djenne's huge mud built mosque, said to be the largest and oldest mud brick building in the world. On the remote **Bandiagara Escarpment** we hike out to visit one of most fascinating areas of West Africa - **Dogon Country**. Situated along a 200km long cliff face - the Dogon people were some of the few tribes who resisted the spread of Islam when its missionaries and forces swept across North and West Africa a thousand years ago. They still maintain most of their traditional religious beliefs. Using a local guide, we spend a few days hiking along the escarpment and staying in Dogon villages - either in adobe lodgings or atop open air roofs where the **nightly display of shooting stars** can be enjoyed. Our guide will be able to explain some of the history and culture of the area as well as take you to some of the old abandoned cliff dwellings - with tradition requiring a sacrifice of an animal before entry to the area is permitted. This will be one of your highlights on the Trans Africa overland adventure.

Passing through the friendly country of **Burkina Faso** we stop at the capital **Ougadougou** - pronounced Woga-Doogoo! This little heard of nation has a small, but thriving, film industry. Burkinabes are also renowned for their music and dance bands - as well as having an enthusiastically supported national soccer team.

In **Ghana** we notice another change in people and culture - especially the language! For the first time in two months of overland Africa travels, we are in a country where English is the main Language. We spend a night in **Mole National Park** in northern Ghana and get the opportunity to game walk with an armed ranger - hoping to view some of the numerous **elephants** and other wildlife that inhabit this park. Making our way to the coastline we stop off at Kakum National Park where you have the opportunity to embark on a canopy walk, or walk through the nature trails in the forest. Following the Coastline we pass the **castles of Cape Coast** and spend a couple of days **relaxing on the palm-fringed beaches** before making our way to the capital Accra.

Days 64 to 66

We will spend a few days on the beaches near Accra where you can indulge in great seafood, and cold drinks. We will need to obtain a couple of visas in Accra before beginning the next leg of our Trans Africa overland adventure.

Days 67 to 87

Travelling through **Togo and Benin** doesn't take long as they are only 50 miles wide. **Voodoo** is the main religion here, basing its beliefs in the power of the dead. You can visit an interesting **fetish market** as well as some good African restaurants in Togo. In Benin you can take local canoes out to **Ganvie village - built on bamboo stilts on Lake Nakoue**. Next we enter **Nigeria**, Africa's most populous country with well over 100 million people. The pace of life here tends to be more hectic than we have become used to on our UK to Cairo overland adventure, full of hustle and bustle. We stop for several days in **Abuja**, the capital before moving through mountainous and lush jungle toward **Cameroon**. Along this leg of the Trans Africa overland trip we may encounter some of the most challenging road conditions and situations on the whole of the route. Team work will definitely be needed if we are to tackle what may lay ahead - from clearing paths through water logged pot holes the size of the truck to only travelling a couple of miles in a day over wet and unkempt mud roads. These are some of the best memories you will take away with you.

Arriving at the foothills of Mount Cameroon, we spend a few days camping near Limbe and 6 Mile Beach - where you can choose to trek up **Mount Cameroon, visit a chimpanzee orphanage or relax on the beach**.



161 Days (23 Weeks) Trans Africa - UK to Cape Town

Days 88 to 108

After chilling out on the beach, or if you were brave enough to tackle the mountain, we head inland to the capital city of **Yaounde**, where we may apply for several visas for upcoming countries. You can sample fresh bread and amazing pastries from the countless bakeries, admire the roadside fresh flower stalls, or stock up on some supermarket treats! Bursting with art galleries, museums and various markets, this is an ideal place to restock your snack store and prepare for the demands of central Africa.

When we depart city life (and the tar seal!), to travel south on the more rugged roads! We drive through lush jungle scenery, passing the occasional waterfall, before eventually reaching the lively market town of **Ambam**. Here we can replenish our food supplies before crossing the **Ntem River** into **Gabon**, a country that consists mostly of tropical rain forest. Our next stop is the beautiful Lope National Park, home to a population of elephants, buffalo and the famous central Africa drill monkeys. After a safari through the savanna lands, we continue south along dirt and mud roads toward the **Republic of Congo**.

Days 109 to 124

One of the main highlights for most people who visit **Congo** is the friendliness of the people, particularly in the countryside. The open delight and welcome we receive while driving through these remote villages is really touching. While the first section of roads are rough dirt, once we reach the sealed roads it's a fast run to Brazzaville, the bustling city that lies on the North side of the magnificent Congo River, the largest river in Africa. Here we jostle amongst the locals and the cars/bikes and trucks to chug across the "Brown Snake" to Kinshasa, the much famed capital of the **Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly known as Zaire)**. It's only a short stop here, before we make our way to Matadi, the gateway to our next country, **Angola**.

Days 125 to 134

Angola is still recovering from over two decades of civil war. As we travel south through the many small villages and communities - local people - especially children may never have seen a foreigner before. The roads are at first extremely rough and slow going (especially if it has been raining). Military tanks litter the side of many roads in places. The country is slowly rebuilding its infrastructure and basic needs - with the capital of **Luanda** showing full sign of this slow progression. As Portuguese is the preferred language and hardly anyone we encounter will speak English - a lot of humorous improvisations with hands, face and voice are usually needed by all of us. After the southern town of **Lubango** we head to the Namibian border for the next instalment of our Trans Africa overland adventure.

Days 135 to 149

Crossing into **Namibia** and into the region of the Owambo people - we pass through the country's second largest town - Ondangwa. This town is one of the main suppliers of beer to Northern Namibia - hopefully there will be enough left for us! Heading west into what is known as the **Kaokoveld** - we enter one of Africa's lesser visited areas. By some it is classed as prime safari territory due to its inaccessibility and nearly non-existent infrastructure. We may be fortunate enough to see one of **30 remaining desert elephants** - who have adapted to the harsh arid conditions of this area in search of the underground water reserves of the ancient riverbeds. **Black Rhinos** also inhabit this area - but their secrecy makes viewing them in the wild that little bit more difficult. The **Kaokoveld** is also home to the Himba people, a tribe of nomadic pastoralists who to this day have shunned the advances of the modern world to keep with their tradition of leading nomadic lifestyles. They make a striking picture when we occasionally encounter them at the side of the road, as both men and women traditionally wear little clothing except for goats skin or modest cloth - opting to rub their bodies and hair with red ochre and fat which ultimately protects them from the sun. We then head towards the **Brandberg Mountain region** - home of Namibia's highest peaks.

Next we stay for a night or two in the capital **Windhoek** - the first taste of western civilisation we would have experienced in a few weeks. You have the chance to take a walking tour of the town - with its influence of old world German architecture and twentieth century modernity side by side. The hustle and bustle of the capital could not seem more far away from what we have experienced for the last few weeks. From Windhoek we head south and border the fringes of the **Kalahari Desert**, before crossing into the beautiful Northern Cape of South Africa.



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Days 150 to 161

Our first stop in the Northern Cape is the diamond town of **Kimberley** where we can visit the Mine Museum and the **Big Hole**, an excellent introduction into Kimberley's fascinating history. There is also the opportunity to take a trip almost 1km down an operating modern diamond mine. Further south we visit **Addo National Park, home to the big five** where we should spot Elephant, Hippo, Rhino, Buffalo, Lion and, if we are very lucky, Leopard. We continue heading towards the **Outeniqua Mountains** to the **Little Karoo** where we visit the **Cango Calcite Caves**, recognised as one of the world's finest network of Calcite caves. The bizarre formations of Stalagmites and Stalactites represent over a million years of slow formation. We also visit an **Ostrich farm** to learn more about the world's largest bird. The Ostrich has been around for 8 million years and a feather was actually discovered in King Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt. 97% of the world's population of Ostriches lives in the Karoo and here we will have the opportunity to feed and ride one!

We continue our overland Africa trip by spending a couple of days winding our way along South Africa's famous **Garden Route** where there is a wealth of things to see and do. We travel through the popular resort town of **Knysna**, located on a tranquil lagoon that is protected from the sea by two enormous cliffs known as 'the heads'. We visit the **Tsitsikamma Forest**, where you will be able to hike along the coast and view the crashing waves at the mouth of the scenic **Storms River**, and maybe spot **dolphins and whales** in the ocean. Optional excursions in this region include **mountain biking, black water tubing, and the mother of all bungee jumps** at Bloakrans Bridge - the highest jump in the world at 216 metres.

The most southern tip of Africa at **Cape Agulhas** is the dividing line between the warm Indian Ocean and the cooler Atlantic Ocean. From August to November **Southern Right and Humpback Whales** maybe spotted along the coast - as they feed in the nutrient rich waters off the southern coast. The final destination for some on this amazing expedition is the vibrant and cosmopolitan city of Cape Town. Our accommodation here will be in a backpackers lodge.

What's Included

- Flight from UK to Gibraltar
- Todra Gorge (Morocco)
- Parc d'Arguin (Mauritania)
- Mole National Park (Ghana)
- Cape Agulhas (S. Africa)
- Cango Caves (S. Africa)
- Addo Elephant Park (S. Africa)
- All road tolls and ferry crossings
- All transport on Expedition Truck
- All Camping fees, Camping and Cooking gear
- 3 Meals per day while travelling (2 in towns)
- Services of Crew
- 1st nights accom in Cape Town

What's Not Included

- Visas US\$600 - US\$1000 (depending on nationality most can be obtained en route)
- Meals taken while in hotels/hostels
- Optional Excursions as listed in the pre-departure information
- Airport Taxes & Transfers
- Travel Insurance
- Flights
- Drinks
- Tips

