

# 2011 Safari Challenge

## SECOND RECCE REPORT



**The second recce for the 2011 Safari Challenge is now complete and we can now whet your appetite with a glimpse of how the rally will run day to day**

### Monday 15 August

A day to relax and enjoy the colour and vibrancy of Dar es Salaam. There are no official functions during the day, but officials will be on hand to give advice and assistance. The Kilimanjaro Kempinski is an international hotel with a world class reputation situated on the waterfront and is close to good amenities so that you can stock up on water etc for our journey through Africa. It has good restaurants, bars etc and a rooftop swimming pool which overlooks the Indian Ocean. A great place to sit with a cool cocktail watching the ships steaming in and out of port.

### Tuesday 16 August

The day will be busy with collecting the cars from the docks (transport arranged), clearing customs, scrutineering, documentation, competitors briefing and any last minute purchases for the journey ahead. The Rally desk will be available to deal with any queries.

In the evening there will be a welcome dinner at the Hotel which is a good opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones.

### Wednesday 17 August

After the frenetic pace of Dar es Salaam we set off on the open road to the famous Selous Wildlife Park with its vast, wild and remote landscape, for three nights. There are no accessible roads into the Park and most visitors fly in from Dar es Salaam, but we will be driving 194kms to where we have arranged to keep the cars in safety at a tobacco factory. We will then be taken in minibuses to a small airstrip where a specially arranged fleet of small aircrafts will fly us into our small exclusive camps. We arrive in time for lunch and after a leisurely afternoon we will repeat one of the highlights of the 2006 event - an early evening game drive and 'sun downer' watching the sun set over the hauntingly beautiful vistas of the Selous.



## Thursday 18 and Friday 19 August

We are split between three luxurious lodges for our 3-night stay. All three camps are close to the Rufiji River, and offer very personal attention. There are only 12 rooms in each camp. Morning and evening game drives are arranged for the following two days. You can pick and choose your drives or just luxuriate on the sundeck or in the swimming pool. The Selous is a Unesco World Heritage site and is the largest protected wildlife area in Africa being approximately the size of Switzerland.

It used to be home to over 3000 Black Rhinos but these have been reduced by poaching to a mere handful. However the game is legendary and we are visiting at the perfect time of the year, the dry season. At this time of the year the game gather in vast numbers at the ever

diminishing water holes and Rufiji River making exciting sightings a certainty.

## Saturday 20 August

After an early flight back to Morogoro, we collect the cars from the tobacco warehouse and continue our adventure on the all tarmac road through the Poroto Mountains and the Mikumi National Park, home to some of the worlds largest pythons (up to six metres have been recorded). After the town of Iringa we will drive through the unique and impressive Baobab forest, along the banks of the Rufiji River to Mbeya.

Tonight our accommodation will be at the Utengule Country Club on the edge of the East African Rift Valley in the foothills of the Mbeya Mountains. It is in the middle of a coffee plantation and has been a favourite 'watering



hole' of ex-pats and NGO's for many years. If you have any room in your car we fully recommend the light and fragrant coffee beans which they will pack up for you.

A local dance group/choir have been arranged for the al fresco buffet

## Sunday 21 August

Today, and the next few days, have given us a few headaches so when we heard that Todd Hasselbeck, the chief operating officer and director of the Gorongosa Park, was visiting London we arranged a meeting with him. The information he gave us, together with the intelligence received from Renee Boysen, our South African motor sport liaison officer, has led us to a re-scheduling of the event for the next few days.

The most important thing is that we are no longer visiting Tete. Not only are the hotels in Tete of a basic standard they are also all fully booked for two years by the mining and exploration companies currently working in the area. The bridge over the Zambezi is also under repair and delays of up to four hours have been reported.

The alternative route is longer as it goes over the only other road bridge between Tete and the Indian Ocean and is 400kms downstream.

In order to solve the problem we had a meeting with the Mozambique ambassador and he has promised full co-operation in applying to close the Dona Anna Railway Bridge at Villa De Senna. At 3.7kms long it is Africa's longest railway bridge. It used to be opened to cars but the public were stopped from using it several years ago. However Government vehicles still use the bridge hence our application. The bridge is concrete and in good condition and even more importantly it saves us many kilometres. A meeting with the Ministry of Transport is taking place as you read this and we are certain of positive outcome. The effect of all of this will be shorter days and consequently a change of schedule, as follows.

## New Schedule - Sunday 21 August

Today we will cross the border from Tanzania into Malawi and we are now planning to spend the night in Mzuzu and not Lilongwe. We stopped here in 2006 and the Malawi Government Minister of Tourism joined us for dinner with many television crews. She was a charismatic and entertaining lady and the rally was given good coverage in the press and on the television programmes the following day.

The road from Utengule ascends to 2300 metres with the hills frequently clad in early morning mist. The area



the political capital of Malawi. The road will take us through extensive juniper forests and the associated saw mills. The juniper is not a native species and it has spread and invaded local forests over a large part of Southern Africa. It is totally alien to local wildlife and has become a growing nuisance. In South Africa the Government has backed schemes to eradicate these trees.

We will finish the day in Blantyre, the commercial capital; where we will be staying at the Ryalls Hotel. The distance for the day is now 587kms.

### **Tuesday 23 August**

As previously outlined, today we will be travelling to the Gorongosa Park.

We will travel south from Blantyre to the Mozambique/Malawi border, across the Dona Anna Bridge and on to our first 70kms of gravel road to the new EN1 road at Caia. After lunch in Caia we will continue on the EN1 and then on a good gravel road into the Park. The distance for today will be 510kms.

has vast tea, sugar, banana and potatoes plantations as well as many other crops and every available inch of cultivatable soil is used. Once in Malawi it is a scenic run with much of the road following the shores of Lake Malawi. The lake is 23,000 square kilometres (nearly half Malawi's territory) and contains over 1000 indigenous fish species many of which are very good to eat.

The first test of the event will be a hill climb on the M1. The government has agreed to close the section of the road that climbs from the lake up the escarpment to the Malawi highlands. It is very smooth and be a good challenge to start our series of tests.

Entrant Richard Taylor has helped fund an educational academy for young people in Mzuzu. In 2006 many competitors visited the early stages of the project and by the time we arrive next year the academy should be fully operational and hopefully we will have the time to visit and see the progress.

### **Monday 22 August**

Today we will now travel from Mzuzu to Blantyre. We will continue along the good tarmac of the M1 stopping for lunch at the Capital Hotel in Lilongwe,





### Wednesday 24 August

#### Rest Day in Gorongosa Park.

When we met Todd Hasselbeck he was very enthusiastic about the Rally staying in the Park. "The selection of Gorongosa National Park for a stopover of their grand gathering of classic cars and visitors representing so many nations is an honour for the Park and the Republic of Mozambique. We think it particularly appropriate these travellers who have spent so much effort in restoring their cars recognise that the restoration of the Park has

progressed well, making it once again a spectacular safari location with a growing international reputation"

We will stay in two camps Chitengo and Explorers. Both are owner run and offer a very personal safari experience. At the centre of the Park is the sacred mountain from which it gets its name. During the civil war the wildlife was completely decimated by the various fighting factions. In the late nineties conditions started to improve when the Mozambique Government and then various donor agencies, such as WWF, became

involved. Now with the help of a number of organisations, including American philanthropist Gregg Carr and US Aid, Gorongosa is firmly back on the map with animal numbers well on the increase. Many animals have been relocated especially from the Kruger NP, South Africa. Modern anti poaching techniques are employed and particular attention is paid to programmes which involve the people from local villages.

The Park covers 3770 square kilometres and a wide variety of activities including a full day trip to Gorongosa

Mountain with a 1.5km hike at the end of the drive, morning and evening game drives, walking safaris and visits to the community education centre or to the old Portuguese cotton plantation. We should be the only people in the Park and a unique experience is guaranteed.

### Thursday 25 August

A main road drive to Vilankulos. The EN1 road to the Indian Ocean is good tarmac and to keep you amused there will be optional tests to enliven the day.



The airport at Mucoque is very secure and the short flight will take us to the Bazaruto Archipelago and the Spa island resort of Indigo Bay.

### **Friday 26 August**

A rest day at the Indigo Bay resort. The hotel is situated in the Parque Nacional de Bazaruto and on the coast is the Paradise Island Marine National Park.

The rich Indian Ocean sustains a large population of whales, dolphins, turtles and sharks. Of particular interest are the globally threatened dugongs, large unattractive marine mammals, apart from to other dugongs! This is one of the best places on the planet to observe this rare species.

It is certainly is a place to totally relax, either lazing by the pool, strolling along the white sandy beach or being pampered in the extensive spa. For the more active there are a wide range of activities including fishing, diving, sailing, horse riding and sea trips. For the golfers we have reserved some tee of times and clubs are available for hire. To satisfy the inner man

the seafood is outstanding. All in all a day to remember.

### **Saturday 27 August**

As mentioned in the last news letter we have made a change from the original programme for today and tomorrow. The length of the original day, together with increasing traffic in the Maputo area, a potentially chaotic border crossing into South Africa and the need to get into the Kruger Park by 18.00 has led to the decision to stop for only one night in Inhambane. The distance between Vilankulos and Inhambane is only 270kms so we should all arrive by lunch and take the afternoon to enjoy the facilities of Flamingo Bay. The lodges are all on stilts in a very secluded bay on the Indian Ocean. The beaches are beautiful and the food even better! If you need exercise there are water sports to enjoy. A relaxing day should be had by all.

### **Sunday 28 August**

Inhambane to Maputo and the Polana Hotel. We have 468kms to travel down the major road, with optional tests, before

reaching the luxury of the Polana Hotel. Built in 1922 in grand Portuguese colonial style it has welcomed Kings, Queens, Presidents, Ambassadors and a hosts of stars, while not forgetting our own 2006 Safari Rally. Since 2006 it has had a complete makeover at the cost of many millions of dollars. Its old grandeur has been renewed and many modern luxuries have been added without detracting from its original opulence. A Michelin 2 star chef, Edouard Louge, has joined from France so good eating is a certainty.

### **Monday 29 August**

Today is only 169kms to the Kruger Park. This gives a chance to have a leisurely start with the legendary Polana breakfast served pool side before heading to the busy Mozambique/South Africa border and a gentle drive into the Kruger Park and Shishangeni Lodge.

This is the point where the first recce report started so all we can say is we look forward to seeing you on the starting line next August.

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