



To Hel & Back in association with



raising money for  Alzheimer's Research Trust and  Link Ethiopia

40 countries, 30,000 miles, 2 continents, 1 trip!



**Main**  
The 110 is really earning its keep as it continues to propel us around Africa.  
**Above**  
Taking some time out to catch our breath on the shore of Lake Malawi.

**HAVING SAT** around in Nairobi fixing the cracked chassis for over a month, we were more than happy to get back on the road again. Having set deadlines to meet friends in South Africa, while still having 4,000 miles to cover, we needed to catch up with our original schedule.

Unfortunately, we were still waiting for new camera parts to arrive from home. After hours of hassling over a few days, we left on first name terms with the DHL manager in Nairobi. We eventually secured assurances that we could collect the package first thing the following morning from the airport on a national holiday, as they had cleared it through customs before it had even landed.

We had had a lovely time in Nairobi, eating far too much

while enjoying the hospitality and friendliness of all the Kenyans we met. Throughout our stay, everyone went out of their way to make us feel at home at Starehe Boys Centre and the guys at City Panel Beaters left us in disbelief and very humbled, after fixing the car for free.

We said our goodbyes and left en-route to Uganda driving to Lake Baringo in the heart of the Rift Valley and camped on the shore, crocs and hippos in the distance. Mossies were everywhere, congregating in menacing malarial masses around the nightlights.

From Baringo, we were back on the potholed road, interrupted only by large tarmac speed bumps, spoiling the first section of perfect road since Ethiopia. Thankfully we didn't hit any bumps hard, but the old EBC brake pads are a bit smaller, as the bumps are unmarked.

We climbed the scenic valley sides towards Uganda, with the truck beginning to overheat due to the altitude and we were thankful for the Kenlowe fan. Up at 2,300 metres, we crested the hills and headed back down towards Uganda.

**touting for business**

The usual touts descended upon us at the border, wanting to 'help' with paperwork and 'chang-er money'. As usual, Tom had to complete the extensive paperwork, as the Landy is in his name. Thankfully we were →

# THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF REASON

The boys journey from Kenya to Uganda and Rwanda, however the trip takes a sombre turn as the scale of the Rwandan genocide leaves its mark Tom and Carl

Words and Photos by: Carl James and Tom Picton



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through in under an hour, possibly our fastest time for border crossing, and pressed on, with unmarked speed bumps a continuing theme in Uganda.

Our first impressions of Kampala were good, some parts were very modern with American style shopping malls. We booked into Backpackers Lodge and set off to explore town.

We toured Kampala on 'boda bodas' – a motorbike taxi which can carry anywhere up to four people. These Chinese-made 100cc motorbikes are everywhere in Uganda. While far from safe, they are the only realistic way of getting about in the city without sitting in traffic for literally hours on end.

After a few lively days in Kampala, we decided we needed to press on for Rwanda. A few wrong turns on the way out of town took us though a hectic market, with boda-boda's charging around in every direction and people careering through the traffic left, right and centre.

However, as has been noticeable in the rest of Uganda, no one paid us the slightest bit of attention. No one stopped to stare, no one asked

**Above**  
The equator sign displays the words 'Hakuna Matata', which is a Swahili phrase meaning, 'There are no worries'.

us for money, no one tried to flog us miscellaneous tat such as large-scale maps of Africa or random fruit. Brilliant.

We hit the road south, curving round Lake Victoria. Before we knew it, we had crossed the Equator for the third time on the trip and left the tarmac to call by the Kiyumbakimu Children's Village en-route to Rwanda.

We had yet to see true village life in Uganda so we were very keen to visit the children, but also because we wanted to visit and support such an interesting project.

#### helping in the community

The orphanage currently cares for 21 children of varying ages. They welcomed us with piping hot tea and a round-robin sing-along, which was brilliant. We were then treated to a traditional dinner of boiled matoke (a non-sweet banana) and sauce. Quite plain, but good.

With two adult mothers, a continuous stream of volunteer teachers, a few cows, chickens, on-site teaching facilities, a lot of surrounding space and a bed each, the project is a shining example

of how children who have been born into misfortune can still have a structured and fulfilling upbringing.

As we cruised through Uganda the following morning, with its raw red soil and lush emerald hillsides broiling with banana trees and teeming with tea plantations, we decided that this is a brilliant example of an African country having come through hardship and yet prospering. The country seems so efficient and well run compared to some other countries we have been through.

#### a different outlook

Additionally, both here and in Kenya, there is some sense of road safety. People look before crossing the road, tie up animals which graze near roads and don't walk along the tarmac unless absolutely necessary. Simple stuff, but it's saving lives here as well as saving us from an early heart-attack related death.

We made the Rwandan border by 4pm and for the second time in less than a week we were through in under an hour. Being such a small country, the capital, Kigali, was only 65km away. We poured over the Bradt guide as we went, reminding

ourselves why this country is famous for all of the wrong reasons.

Past events aside, this is a pretty, picturesque and pleasant country, very small and very hilly. The road from the border was reminiscent of the Alpine road we took to visit our friend Paul at Riders Retreat way back in Europe, five months ago. Up and down we drove, accelerating and braking through constant twists and turns.

Rwanda feels more developed than other African countries, with a solid urban infrastructure and high prices. While the infamous events of 1994 and the resulting 100 days of incomprehensible bloodletting are no doubt still very raw for many, we felt that we needed to visit the museums and displays about the genocide.

#### understanding the genocide

For those not aware, the Rwandan genocide in 1994 resulted in the deaths of over 1,000,000 people, carried out over 100 days. It was the result of a well planned and brutally executed plan by the dominant Hutu population to entirely exterminate the numerically lesser Tutsi peoples.

## The pews were draped with victims' clothes, still ripped and bloodstained as they were the day they were killed

Following years of persecution by Hutus, the Tutsis and anyone associating with them were rounded up and hunted down by groups of soldiers and specifically created death squads.

After visiting the main Kigali memorial we both agreed, this was the most horrifically moving and hard hitting remembrance we had seen. Little did we know, more was to come in Rwanda.

Leaving Kigali, we decided to take the direct road to Tanzania, along which are situated two further memorials. The first memorial was also visited on *The Long Way Down* series. The site preserves a church where local Tutsi people had congregated as the genocide swept Rwanda, hoping for salvation and protection from the death squads.

Sadly, this only made the killers' tasks easier, as they locked the doors and threw grenades through the windows, before entering the

**Above**  
The 110 makes slow progress through Uganda but, surprisingly, the locals totally disregarded the Landy.

church to finish the killing by hand. Similar buildings in the same church compound had been crammed full of people and set alight, burning and suffocating all inside. In this small compound alone an estimated 10,000 people were murdered, many of which were women and children.

In the church itself, row upon row of bones and skulls were arranged on racks. Most of the skulls were cracked or smashed, or still bore the deep scars from the killers' machetes. One skull still had a spear sticking through it. Either side, the pews were draped with the victims' clothes, still ripped and bloodstained as they were on the day they were killed. Coupled with the horrendous stories of women and children being routinely tortured, raped, mutilated and killed, we left slightly dazed and extremely moved.

Some stories were worse than we imagined possible. At times we struggled to take in quite what could



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fuel such hatred for people to do these things, not only to complete strangers but also to friends, neighbours and family members, all due to their ethnicity.

We moved on to another church further down the road, which had also been preserved as a genocide memorial site. In a church barely bigger than in an average English village, over 45,000 people were thought to have been killed.

Again, the pews were draped with the clothes of the dead and guides walked round with visitors, adding a detailed and a personal perspective. As we walked, we were shown the holes peppering the roof and dark spots on the ceiling, the result of grenade shrapnel and blood respectively.

We toured the underground mass graves outside the church, struggling to take in the scale of the killing with coffins all around, stacked at least four high. Then we were told that each coffin contained anything up to ten people.

**Above**  
The Landy makes light work of the Ugandan sand.

The church also contained even higher racks of skulls and bones, the chilling hollow stare of thousands upon thousands of skulls becoming too much to view.

This was killing on an epic scale: approximately one million Tutsis were killed in 100 days across the country with bones still routinely found in fields and buildings across the country. Once the killing stopped (when the mainly Tutsi RDF army took control of the country) the streets were so full of corpses that cars couldn't get through. Dogs also had to be shot en-masse as they had developed a taste for human flesh.

#### living with the scars

We met people who had lost friends or parents. One of the most frustrating things for us was that many of those who killed are still walking free today, such was the scale of the bloodletting and the overwhelming numbers of people involved.

There were so many aspects

of this event that left unanswered questions and warrant further investigation and justice. In the end, we got on the road again much quieter and a little unsure about how to take in the huge amount we had seen and heard in the last few days in Rwanda.

It was however refreshing to see the attitude of the people around the various sites, everyone was respectful and no money was required at any of the sights – for us this was unique in Africa as every sort of 'sight' normally has a huge entrance fee slapped on it to make as much profit as possible.

We often struggled to appreciate the scale of the violence and killing; to try to imagine it, we couldn't help but think back to the very gruesome *Hotel Rwanda* film as it seemed to accurately catch many of the aspects of the genocide.

Throughout the memorials we visited, the failure of the UN to act was regularly highlighted. While the West may well have ignored Rwanda during its time of need, they've certainly helped since with a lot of aid (as we understand it) and now it stands as a very clean and well organised country – in stark contrast to many of the countries we have travelled through thus far. The roads are perfect, there are lots of traffic police checking paperwork and road-worthiness of vehicles. Drivers were all reasonably safe and motorbike taxis were only allowed to carry one passenger – who must wear a helmet.

We left the churches behind and pressed on through the seemingly endless rolling hills, climbing and descending through evergreen valleys and crossing rice-paddy strewn valley floors.

#### entering Tanzania

We made it to the picturesque border crossing with Tanzania by 6pm and managed to get a few sly video clips (a big no-no at borders) as the car rolled across the bridge, over the Rusumo waterfall below.

By the time we had got through the Rwandan side it was 6.30pm and all the Tanzanian customs chaps had gone home so we were forced to camp behind the gate.

We hit the road to Arusha after a local breakfast, where the language barrier resulted in us being given chipati alongside a meat soup consisting of goat stomach, intestines and lung. Filling, but most definitely not that tasty and very, very chewy.

Thirty minutes later the tarmac stopped, leaving us on a dusty, bumpy, dusty, corrugated, dusty, bumpy and dusty road that lasted for the next five hours or so. Did we mention it was dusty and bumpy?

After a few days touring Arusha and dealing with the hundred and one touts/guides and agents we were sullen faced and having to accept a stark reality. While our primary intention for reaching here was to climb Kilimanjaro, we had to accept bitter defeat on this key part of our trip. Having shopped around, we are not only faced with a much increased £700 bill each for the hike up the hill, but also significant storage fees for the car.

#### serious budget matters

After our hold-up in Nairobi, as well as running over budget with diesel and running costs, we sat down and went through our options. We have always maintained that this trip was only possible on a very tight budget and, while we can sanction the occasional extravagance, we were left with a choice: either we could stick to our original plan and attempt to summit Kili, and thus leaving insufficient monies to complete the West Coast or we could bite the bullet and accept that we would have to put this particular challenge on hold for a few years.

So, it boiled down to either not climbing Kili or not driving up the West coast. A tough choice, but a simple decision in the end; we drove here and we'll be damned if we aren't going to drive back home. Sorry Kili, you'll have to wait.

We drove past the nearest large town to Kili, Moshi, hoping to get some nice photos of the mountain but were met with a blanket layer of cloud. Just as we were about to call off the search and begin the long drive to Dar Es Salaam, the clouds parted and we caught a fleeting glimpse of the snow-capped summit through the swirl. At least we can say we saw a fraction of her, even if we didn't get on top of her and plant a flag. A fairly damp ending to a disappointing few days in and around Kili, one of our primary aims had not been achieved and we felt irritated, frustrated and most definitely that there was unfinished business here.

An overnight bushcamp overlooking the Tanzanian interior later, we arrived in Dar Es Salaam and marvelled at the beauty of the beach and Indian Ocean. A topaz



blue sea stretched out before us, the waves washing up gently onto a white beach curling away down the bay. Palm trees to one side, the bar to the other. In short, paradise. And all for \$10 a night.

We squeezed the Landy between the vast overlanding trucks already ensconced within the compound. While they are commonly sneered at by independent overlanders for having many more luxuries and comforts, being so much more affordable than independent travel they clearly have their place with tourists.

#### Ramadan in Zanzibar

After an afternoon of lapping up the sun on the beach we got ourselves organised and got over to Zanzibar. We wandered the narrow streets, looking for a hotel with space for a couple of nights during Ramadan, fitting right in with the hoards of backpackers.

We spent a very hot couple of days in Zanzibar eating fresh fish, touring a spice farm, visiting the museum (school is cool, kids)

**Above**  
Meeting the locals, countless border crossings and proper bush driving: this is what overlanding is all about.

and checking out the significant historical landmarks, notably David Livingstone's house, Freddy Mercury's bar and the last remnant ruins of the East African slave market.

Before leaving we decided to deal with a persistently leaking rear hub which had been blowing off hub caps. We came to the conclusion that the oil seal responsible was tucked in behind the stub axle and took all the bolts off to remove this but the bugger was fixed solid: 13 years of UK weather had caused a Spice Girls moment, where two become one.

We crossed the Malawian border and after shuffling through numerous police checkpoints (who simply ask "Where are you going?" before letting you through) found a campsite by the shore of Lake Malawi. First glimpses of Malawi reminded us of Ethiopia, with kids demanding pens and sweets, obvious poverty and densely populated.

So here we stand, on the shores of the lake plotting our route further southwards. With any luck next time you hear from us it'll be from South Africa. See you in Hel!

LRM