

12 BLACK MAGIC AFRICAN Border Tips



Left: Uwe's Defender heads toward Maroto, the Uganda-Kenya border cuts the background mountains.
Right: Tempting fate with a dodgy traverse to find camp the night before entering Malawi.



Regular *Leisure Wheels* readers will be familiar with Shane and Tarryn Quinnell (Team Tane), their Suzuki Jimny 4x4 named Badger and their Suzuki Africa Sky High mission to drive to and climb the five highest peaks in Africa. Who better, then, to share some tips on making those infamous border crossings just a little less painful.

Words and photos: Shane Quinnell

NOW four and half months since they set off, Shane and Tarryn Quinnell have five mountain peaks, eight countries and over 12 500km potholed kilometres of African roads under the belt, as part of what Shane calls 'minimalist 4x4 overland travel'.

Crossing African land borders is an infamous

undertaking. Unfortunately, the truth is the reputation exists for good reason: it can be a huge challenge. It's time consuming, hot, intense and exceptionally confusing. There are people in your face pushing (semi-aggressively) to try and 'help' you, intimidating officials who occasionally want bribes and rules and prices, which seem to vary depending



"THE DAY BEFORE GOING TO ANY BORDER, WE QUICKLY RESEARCH AND WRITE DOWN KEY INFORMATION FOR THE COMING CROSSING"

on your perceived wealth.

Don't despair though, there is good news. First, in general, it's not as bad as the stories would suggest, and second, we can help. While solutions to the root causes of the issues remain utterly elusive, there are remedies, which like modern western medicine, can help alleviate the painful tooth-pulling symptoms experienced in attempting to toe the line. They won't magically get you from Botswana into Zambia but they may help you reduce frustration, limit how often you get swindled and lighten the awaiting agony. Like all things African, they are inexact and change depending on the situation. They require a touch of finesse and a bucket-load of patience to work, but like black magic, they work if only you believe.

Some African borders, where nothing but a tree marks the border (like between Tanzania's Serengeti and Kenya's Masai Mara National Parks) require only a decent 4x4. Luckily we had our Suzuki Jimny, Badger.

I have to thank my university engineering education for the first tip. While I recall almost nothing from the time I served there 10 years ago, the words

of my project management lecturer fortunately stuck: "The first rule of project management: proper planning prevents poor performance." As it turns out, the first rule of project management is also the first remedy. The day before going to any border we quickly research and write down key information for the coming crossing, it's the best thing we have done. Knowing what to expect before you reach the border will save you time, money and having to listen to the lies peddled by the sharks at the border.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO FIND OUT:

- **Visas:** Do you need a visa? If so, how much does it cost and how long does it last? Officials will often give you the amount of days that you ask for, up to the limit for that country, which usually ranges from one to three months. Ideally ask for more days than you need to give yourself flexibility. Make sure you have enough pages in your passport.
- **Carnet de Passage:** Does your car need a carnet de passage, effectively a car passport, to enter

Above, left to right:
 Welcome to Masai Mara NPI • Waiting for the hungover Zambian official to stamp our passports near lake Tanganyika.
 • A typically African roadblock en route to Kenya. **Right:** Not far as the crow flies but eight hours drive from any entry to Kenya.

the country? You can check if you need this on the table we have prepared for you. If required you will need to organise it before leaving South Africa. Carnets are not mandatory for most southern and eastern African countries, though they can be very helpful for reducing waiting times and other costs. We opted to get one and are thankful for it, our humble suggestion is you should get one for any extended overland trip in Africa.

- **Third-party insurance:** Is this mandatory in the country you're visiting and roughly how much should it cost? As a rule almost all countries will require this insurance. The cost varies depending on the country and



how well you bargain; be sure to do so as the vendors will almost definitely try to swindle you. In most places the smallest period you can buy is a quarter (three months) but if you are in the country for only a couple of weeks, you can negotiate the price on this basis. A very useful tip is that in COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) countries (<http://ycmis.comesa.int/>) you can buy one third-party policy to cover all visits for countries in the union. Doing this will save you a lot of money and effort of having to get a new policy in each country you visit.

• **Other documents:** What other documents or permits do you, or your car, need to get in to where you are

going? Common examples of things you might need include; carbon tax, road user tax and temporary importation permits for your car and yellow fever certificates for yourself.

• **Money matters:** What is the real exchange rate in the country you are visiting; how does it relate to your home currency and what currency are the various fees due in? Try to find this out before entering. A tip is to carry US dollars with you as you can convert them almost anywhere in Africa for the local currency. Banks will often give you better rates than guys on the street. Try to get some currency for the country you are entering before hitting the border. **AW**

Right: The world awakes on our early morning, unwarranted jaunt to Masai Mara. **Far right:** The locals waiting to enter Kenya's Masai Mara from Tanzania's Serengeti. **Below:** Waiting for friend Ulwe on our way to Uganda's Karamoja Province.



TEAM TANE OVERLAND BORDER INFORMATION

Country	Visa required	Carnet required	3rd party insurance	Other	COMESA member
Botswana	No	No	No	IDP rec.	No
Zambia	No	Rec	Yes	Vehicle Police Clearance (if travelling through Chirundu Post), reflective tape, 2 triangles, towing signs, fire extinguisher	Yes
Mozambique	No	No	Yes	TIP, 2 triangles, reflective jackets (2 if passengers), immigration fees, towing signs, IDP	No
Lesotho	No	No	No	Toll fees	No
Swaziland	No	No	No	Road tax: R50	Yes
Zimbabwe	No	No	Yes	TIP free at border, road tax, carbon tax, exit tax, 2 triangles, fire extinguisher, towing signs, reflective tape, CVG (if commercial vehicle)	Yes
Namibia	No	No, unless shipped	Yes	Toll fees, permit (if less than 3 months)	No
Malawi	No	Rec	Yes	Triangles	Yes
Tanzania	No	Rec	Yes	TIP (if no carnet), fuel levy, FVP levy, IDP rec.	Unsure
Burundi	Yes, medium	Highly rec	Yes	IDP rec.	Yes
Rwanda	Yes, easy	Highly rec	Yes	IDP rec.	Yes
Uganda	Yes, easy	Rec	Yes	Road tax, Toll payment, IDP rec	Yes
Kenya	No	Yes	Yes	Toll fees, IDP rec, towing signs incl 80km/h sticker	No
Angola	Yes, painful!	Yes	Yes	Foreign vehicle permit, license, toll fees, IDP rec, towing signs including 80kph sticker	No

TABLE KEY:
 Visas specific for ZA citizens, **Rec:** Recommended, **TIP:** Temporary Import Permit, **IDP:** International Driving Permit, **ZA:** sticker, registration papers and affidavit from owner if vehicle financed-assumed compulsory for all countries. **Source:** www.aa.co.za

"CARRY US DOLLARS WITH YOU AS YOU CAN CONVERT THEM ALMOST ANYWHERE IN AFRICA FOR THE LOCAL CURRENCY"

