

Easter 2011 Botswana Cut Lines

Our 8th father and son Easter trip was the cut lines in Botswana. Somewhere I had got the number of trips wrong but a recount proved this to be the 8th. The trip was born after some guys on the Overland Forum went to the rescue of a blown Powerstroke motor in Francistown and came home via various cut lines. Their stories lit a fire in my belly to go and ride them myself.

The participants for this trip were

Geoff Hill and son Andy in a Toyota Land Cruiser 100VX 4.2TDi aka Meneer
Dave Nixon traveling solo in a Toyota Land Cruiser 80 VX diesel.
Kobus Breet with his brother Rikus in a Prado 150VX.



My brother Steve was missing due to work pressures and Dave's son-in-law Craig had to pull out at the last minute.

I left White River on Wednesday 20 April 2011 at 11h00 en route to Andy's place in Sunninghill in Johannesburg. I stayed over and he took me to supper at his local Keg where I had the recommended curry. Later that evening we watched Arsenal nearly steal a win against Spurs. COYS.

We left Thursday morning at 05h10 in the drizzle to meet the rest of the traveling party at the Wimpy in Zeerust. We arrived at 08h10, had breakfast and filled up with diesel.

We were going to try Ramotswa border crossing as it had been recommended on the Overland forum and it was a breeze. We were through both sides in less than 30 minutes.

We headed for Molepolele for fuel and last minute provisions as Dave was meatless.



Our destination for the first night was east of Khutse entrance on the southern cut line at approximately this point S23.32120 E25.20760. At the Khutse gate where we turned onto the cut line a senior guy in Botswana's wildlife service did not want to let us use "his" cut line but in the end relented after lots of polite smiling. We found a suitable camp site at 17h30 and set up camp.

Supper that night was Spagetti bolognaise cooked by Dave which tasted great after a long day behind the wheel.



Next morning we left at 08h15 and stopped at the intersection of the North South and East West cut lines here S23.32113 E25.23929 and had our traditional Bacon sarmies.

As soon as we arrived Andy was out of the Cruiser and around the back to check on something and he informed me that he thought he had heard something fall off and lo and behold my rear trim was missing. Thanks Andy!



We then traveled north east until we got to a gate. After going through a gate the cut lines split and we carried on north west but here the middlemanneljie started getting quite high and the sand soft.

Kobus's Prado was relatively new and not modified in any way. He was taking strain as the Prado was regrading the cut lines with the front bash plate and we had to stop often to clear the sand out of the space between the plate and the sump.

We thought we would go a different route to our original plan and at S22.40676 E25.01197 we took the cut line heading north east. As we were having a Potjie that night and needed some extra cooking time we found a campsite at 15h30 and setup for the night.

There was loads of banter about front end loaders etc but it was a beautiful evening with loads of African TV.



After packing up we left just before 08h00 heading for the A14 from Serowa to Lethlakane. On reaching the A14 Kobus had more trouble as the traction control lights stayed on indicating a problem. He could still lock the centre diff and get low range if needed but the traction control was on leave. We headed north deciding to try Kubu as an alternative and some of our traveling party had never been there.

After topping up with diesel (what a pleasure it is paying R3 less) we set out for Kubu. In the village of Mmatshumo I took a wrong turn and was amazed by the number of locals who waved me down and pointed me in the right direction. I think that this is the friendliest trip I have ever had to Botswana as a number of occasions we were greeted with friendly smiles and offers of assistance.

The section through the Mopane after the village of Mmatshumo was full of mud and loads of standing water which I have never seen before. After the vet gate we decided to try the dry route as they said no one was getting through the wetter southern route. After a short time we came across 2 vehicles trying to extricate a Range Rover from deep in the mud. They seemed to have things under control but by the time Dave got there (he was at the back of our convoy) they then had 2 stuck vehicles and we could not leave them.

Dave got himself stuck then unstuck and then did a reverse kinetic strap recovery and the Rangie was free. All in all the whole operation took about 30 minutes and none of us took pictures except this one and one other.



After the recovery we wanted to find a camp site as soon as possible and found a wonderful one about 7 km further at a line of trees and made camp there. This was probably the best spot of the entire trip. It was my turn to cook and we had chicken flatties with mash potatoes for dinner.



The next morning we drove the 26 km to Kubu and it was like Sandton City on month end.

There must have been over 100 vehicles there and surprisingly loads of off road caravans as well.

Our plan was to have breakfast there, have a look around and then be off to Mea pan. As soon as we pulled up a representative from the trust was there and no we could not have breakfast and have a look around without payment of P60 per person.

So I am glad I have been to Kubu before when there was maybe one other party there because I won't be going again.

This was the only leg of the trip that we saw any other vehicles so if you value solitude go to Kubu in the off season.





We now headed for Mea Pan which meant going back the way we came to the A30 from Orapa to Francistown. Here we followed the tar road to Makobelo and turned off to Mea. Here we went through the village and they all turned out to see us drive through.

I could see Mea pan on my GPS but could not find a way to its edge so we found a very nice spot in the Mopane thickets where we set up for the night. We had an audience for a short while as we were about 4 kms from Mea village but they soon tired of us and left.

Supper tonight was T bone and we were hungry.



The next morning we went into the village of Mea and filled up our water tanks. This caused quite a stir and when we gave one youngster an empty 2 l juice container it was like Christmas had arrived early. We take some things so for granted it was quite humbling to see how important a water container can be.

We took the south west route out of Mea and picked up the Dukwe cut line and traveled down this cut line to the main road. After breakfast we hit mud and had some fun getting stuck and unstuck and falling over into the mud where a river had burst its banks and flooded the cut line. For a while it looked like we may have to find another route through but we got there in the end.



Down the cut line after the vet gate on the tar road and we were looking for our final bush camp site of the trip. We found a site where three cut lines meet and set up for the night.

Tonight it was burgers and chips and we were looking forward to it. Here is a picture of Kobus cooking chips.



The next morning we headed out for Martins Drift and we were going to stay at KwaNokeng Lodge. On reaching the A14 we pumped up the tyres and headed south.

We got there at 14h40 and headed for the pool for little R&R.

I did some general administration like saving track logs and pictures to my laptop and charging cell phones for our return to “civilisation”.

I made the final meal of the trip of mince curry and as we about to eat the heavens opened and it poured all night. Luckily it was the only rain we experienced the entire trip.



The next morning we went through the border with Kobus and Dave going via Lepalale and me heading down the N11 to Mokopane then back to White River. With all the talk before the trip of border strikes etc. thankfully nothing came of it and the borders were very quick and painless.

Another observation was that this is the only trip I have been on to Botswana where we were never searched or even stopped at any vet gate.

The only vehicle trouble was as mentioned the traction control of the Prado and my trim falling off.

Trip distance 2646 km
Consumption 13.5lt/100km

Once again great trip guys.
Thanks.

Geoff Hill