

Incredible India

Don and Jennifer are traveling overland from the Netherlands to Australia by Landrover Defender 110. On the road for over eight months, we caught up with them in Kuala Lumpur. The couple shares some of their experiences with the readers of 4x4 Magazine.

By Don Engelbracht & Jennifer Joedo



THE bordercrossing to Pakistan as a very smooth affair, especially if you take into account that we messed up all procedures. A young soldier who escorted us at the last part of our leg in Iran dropped us at the backdoor of the border, in search of cheap Iranian diesel. We didn't find any, too bad if you consider that diesel is dirt cheap in Iran. We could fill up our tank with 100 litres for USD1,50!

At the border we met two Turkish motorbikers on their way to Kathmandu. We decided to stick together because we didn't really know

what to expect and reputation of this region is not very good. Along the way we came across a Swiss couple who had a puncture. Their spare tyre didn't seem to fit. Fortunately we were able to assist them, so we could move on.

The police escort failed to show up at the prearranged location in Pakistan (according to plans we received a police escort from the Iranian border up to Quetta – Balochistan area). However, the next morning after we left the city the escort arrived and did not let us out of their sight during our stay in the coun-



About our travelplan:

We left our hometown Amersfoort, The Netherlands 1 September 2008. Traveled through: Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, North of India and up to Nepal to head back to India for charity and shipping. In Visakhapatnam, India we shipped our Land Rover 110 in an 20 feet sea container to Singapore and drove to up to Malaysia. After Malaysia we plan to travel to Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia before returning to Malaysia and shipping over to Australia. We planned to be away from home for 18 months, so we still got some time left...

Travel facts to date 11/05/09

Total distance traveled	24.227km
Total days traveling to date	258 days
Total fuel consumption to date	2873,32l
Total fuel expense to date	EUR1.796,62
Total vehicle repairs, service and parts expense	EUR567,99
Total nights camped free	65
Total nights camped paid	61
Total nights in free accomodation	112
Total nights in paid accomodation	19

VEHICLE EQUIPMENT

- Hannibal roof rack
- Hannibal roof tent
- TripNet Cargo System for organising and storing miscellaneous items
- Bullbar
- Superwinch
- Rockgliders
- Side protection backside
- High-jack
- Steering protection
- Diff protection
- 2x Extra lighting on Bullbar
- 2x Extra lighting mounted on roofrack
- Extra 40 liter fuel tank in fender
- 2x20 liter jerrycans for the roof rack
- 3 Zarges boxes on roofrack (storage)
- 350W 12V-220V Victron Energy Inverter
- 1 Optima Battery (yellow top)
- 1 Optima Battery (red top)
- 1 Charge divider
- 30 liter drinking water & waterfilter (TripNet)
- 10 liter drinking waterfilter
- Gashorn
- Coleman portable stove (fuel)
- Coleman lantern (fuel)
- Sandladders + Superwinch recovery set
- Axe & shovel on bonnet
- 6x BF Goodrich Mud Terrain tyres
- Koni Heavy Raids
- King Heavy duty springs
- Air compressor
- Webasto heater





try. This meant that we could not travel freely in Pakistan and we were unable to talk to the locals. When we went out to buy groceries, we were escorted by two officers armed with Kalashnikovs. Not our idea of fun traveling, so after ten days we crossed the border to India.

The road conditions in India are not very good, or as a local stated: "The roads are not bad, some parts are just better". It proved to be a wise decision that we mounted Koni's

Heavy Raids for this journey.

The traffic in India amazed us every day. Not only the number of road users (believe it or not but cows belong to the top 3 road users) but especially the way of driving. The basic traffic rules seem to be simple: smaller vehicles give way to bigger vehicles and everything what happens behind you is of no importance, so look ahead and never use your mirrors. As you might understand, occasionally we felt rather irritated and made inappropriate gestures. The Indians however were not offended and smiled at us. India is the country with the highest rate of traffic fatalities every year. The National Highway Authority tries to prevent hazardous driving by placing signs with slogans as: "If you're married to speed, divorce" and "Stop accidents before they

stop you".

After crossing the border to Rajasthan province we arrived in Chandigarh. This city is built as model town and serves as an example for future Indian cities. It is easy to find your way in this clean and well-organised city and the good road infrastructure is a real blessing. Searching for a place to spend the night we were stopped by a reporter of The Tribune, one of India's leading newspapers. This automotive reporter was a real 4x4 enthusiast and thirty minutes later we were sitting in his office giving an interview. We spent the whole evening talking about everything that has to do with overland travel and off-roading. It turned out that he is one of the organisers of Raid de Himalaya.

Leaving the next day and after several stop-overs along the



way we reached Jaisalmer. Lonely Planet describes this place as "a giant sandcastle with a town attached". It turned out to be a really nice desert town and we decided to spend Christmas Eve here. On the second day of Christmas we went offroading in the sand dunes just outside of Jaisalmer. It was an amazing experience.

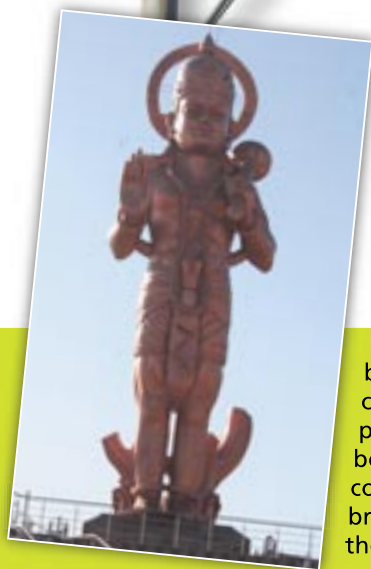
All the time we slept inside our Land Rover. The roof tent attracts too much attention, especially in India where people tend to be rather curious by nature. If it's not too warm it is a unique experience to sleep under a shimmering blanket of stars and another advantage is that you can camp at the most unusual places and drive off easily if you need to.

We celebrated New Years Eve in Udaipur at the Lake with the famous Lake Palace just a mile away. The reflections of the fireworks in the lake was an experience we won't forget.

The next challenge was reaching Agra. Not only because of the traffic, but our agenda included a visit to the Taj Mahal, too. In India, as in many other countries, foreigners are required to pay much higher entry fees than locals. At the Taj Mahal, foreigners pay a 37 times as much as locals. So we decided to split-up and Jenn pretended to be a local. This saved us a lot of Rupies which we spent on pizzas at Pizza Hut to celebrate our ingenuity.

After Agra we decided to travel towards Nepal. We arrived just in time at the Banbassa-Mahendranagar





border crossing point. This border consists of a bridge over the river and due to

its width (one vehicle at a time) is open at specific times, only. After the usual paperwork, we drove onto the Western Terai of Nepal. There is no comparison between India and Nepal. Nepal is not only much quieter place (read less people) but people seem to be a lot more friendly and reserved than in India. We spent our first night in a small village just beside the Highway. We were amazed by the hospitality of the locals as we were invited to spend this night at the farmhouse of a local family. Next morning we continued our journey to the Bardia National Park. We

didn't come across wild elephants, rhino's or tigers during our jungle tour, nevertheless the experience was very enjoyable.

We reached Pokhara via Tansen and Lumbini, which lies near to the birthplace of Lord Buddha. Pokhara is one the major tourist hubs of Nepal, but it has still retained its laid back atmosphere. Pokhara is quite popular among paragliders who enjoy the thermal winds and the stunning mountain views. We also got a good introduction in Buddhism. Don attended a 3-days meditation course and Jenn spent the time with a lovely Nepali family who insisted to show her around in the city.

Although we always tried to avoid major cities, we did not want to miss Kathmandu. We didn't regret it. It was also a good spot to buy some Land Rover spares

and get our rusty doors fixed. Our visas expired after two days, so we had to return to India. There was a general strike on our last day in Nepal but we were able to reach the border in time.

One again we were back in India. The custom officers tried to make us pay a stamp fee upon entry but we refused to comply. Nice way to welcome visitors! We headed towards our charity project near Visakhapatnam, a journey of roughly 1100 kilometer. A distance which we drive back at home in a day or two, took us six days because of the bad road conditions and accidents. We got stuck in a traffic jam on the longest bridge in India. This 7,5 kilometer long bridge crosses the Ganges river near Patna. The traffic jam was almost as long as the bridge and it took us four hours to get to the



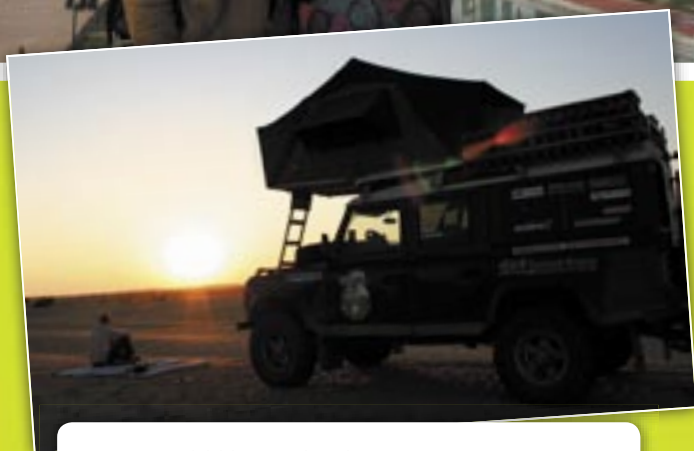
other side of Ganges.

After traveling for six months, we finally reached the location of our charity project, a campus for disabled orphans. In the Netherlands we managed to raise enough money to buy an ambulance car for the project team. We planned to work for the project for two months. Our aim was to create awareness among the local community and raise funds to buy equipment for the children's houses. Our Land Rover was a great help to get publicity.

Another issue that kept us busy was looking for a shipping agent to get our Land Rover across the Bengal Sea to Singapore. We finally found an agent who was willing to ship our Land Rover from Visakhapatnam, so there was no need to go to Chennai.

Luckily everything went well during transport and few days later we could pick up our precious cargo in Singapore. After relaxing at our friends place we moved on to Malaysia. After Malaysia we plan to travel further north to Thailand and from there to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam (depending on the hassle with paperwork) before returning to Malaysia to ship to Australia.

For more information about our overland trip, please check our website www.travelsick.nl. Surf to the Travelog section for blogs in English.



We would like to thank:

- **TripNet Cargo Systems** - <http://www.tripnet.eu>
- **4X4 Ermelo** - <http://www.4x4centrumermelo.nl>
- **Travelsafe** - <http://www.travelsafe.nl>
- **2Com** - <http://www.2com.nl>
- **ADT Diesel techniek** - <http://www.adtbv.nl>
- **Superwinch** - <http://www.hoekstra-utrecht.nl>
- **Koni** - <http://www.koni.com>
- **Victron Energy** - <http://www.victronenergy.nl>
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