

The Journal



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Chapter 3: Senegal & The Gambia

Day 23: St Louis to Sukuta, The Gambia

Up at eight for breakfast and do the daily vehicle checks so as to be ready when the border guard arrived at 10. Luckily he was bang on African time and arrived at Midday – about as late as it would have been possible for us to leave and make the border. The next 300km were pretty uneventful (thankfully) and were marked by the rising temperature (it's getting really quite hot in the Land Rovers now) and the worsening state of the road. The border crossing into The Gambia was amazingly easy although for the first (not last) time we were surrounded by hordes of money changers on our arrival. It's amazing what a difference speaking the language makes and the fact that everybody speaks English seemed to make life a whole lot easier.

A short journey down to the river and across on the (last) ferry at ten o'clock meant we didn't make the campsite (Sukuta Campsite) here until almost midnight again. The plan was to refresh both ourselves and the Land Rovers (particularly Ernie's clutch) and collect our Carnet before the push on East. All that could wait until tomorrow.

Day 24to 26: Sukuta

Naturally the camp site owner 'knew a man' who could help us out (there's no official Land Rover dealership in The Gambia) but he obviously wasn't available until the next day – the same day the Carnet was due. The clutch seems to be sticking somewhere but we're not exactly sure why and so have opted to replace it with the spare we were carrying and see what happens. The garage are changing the tyre with the dodgy valve and we can replace that ourselves. Both vehicles are going to be serviced at the same time and we're also hopeful that a solution to our bent jacking point can be found as we're not happy to jack the vehicle from that point as it is.

The campsite has proved a real find; friendly and helpful German owners and a site far enough away from the slightly grotty resorts to be peaceful

and relaxing. Highly recommended to all.



Day 27: Sukuta

The end of four days in Sukuta saw ourselves and the vehicles in a far better state.

Bert and Ernie have now had a good service as well as the jacking point on Ernie being mended courtesy of the local ingenious welder. An unfortunate discovery was made when we put both the vehicles up on ramps to inspect the underside and grease the various universal joints, this being that Bert seems to be losing oil from near the transfer gearbox. We topped up the levels and arranged for a new seal to be fitted and kept our fingers crossed.

As for the drivers we have managed to spend some time eating a controversial three meals a day, sleeping for more than five hours a night and not sitting in the landrovers for 12 hours of the day.

Tomorrow we attempt to push through Senegal and head for Mali.

Day 28: The Gambia to Tambakounda, Senegal

We bid a fond farewell to Joe, Wolfgang and the Sukuta Campsite and headed with Joe's advice on the route to set us on our way making for the border. The contrast to the first crossing into Senegal was remarkable with the Carnet de Passage making life considerably easier. This had been DHL'd out to us in Banjul after finally being cleared and was gratefully received.

Thanks to the easy crossing, with not a dollar changing hands, we got within striking distance of the border into Mali by that night and collapsed gratefully into a hotel bed in Tambakounda.

The temperature is definitely rising now as at night it barely dips below the mid twenties. Time to start sitting in the fridge.