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From: t4a-bounces@overland.co.za] On Behalf Of Wouter Brand
Sent: Sunday, June 25, 2006 3:11 PM
To: t4a@overland.co.za
Subject: [T4A] Safety and 'Not to travel alone' and things.

Anton

You wrote (translated)

]Request to include 'Not to travel alone' in the 'NOT-KNOWING' Kaokoland
]document..

With permission I comment on this to Forum..

Please man.. don't let me preach the 'INFORMATION' thing.. it is a holy cow.. I
tend to exaggerate and to over simplify things... and I walk thin ice on this
matter..

All (repeat) the disasters and near disasters (and many more kept silent) over
the past 7 yrs and committed (yes like crime.. it does not happen.. it is
committed)by the Off-road travel community and reported/experienced/known to
this Forum are the direct result of *only* three things.

First.. Let's agree on a definition for 'disaster' = loss of life, personal
injury, loss of assets, damage to assets, theft and most importantly the
definition of 'disaster' *MUST* include 'Damage to Environment'... So maybe we
must speak of 'eco-travel disasters'

In plain English.. the STUPID things we do out there is the direct result of
only 3 evils.

1. The thing called group dynamics which is inevitable and unpredictable.
2. The thing called 4x4 macho syndrome.. '4x4 adrenalin'.. '4x4 challenge'..
'4x4 adventure'.. '4x4-ing' .. and (the one I hate most) 'eco-challenges'
3. The thing called 'Experience'

There is but *ONE* common denominator to all eco-travel disasters (also the
catastrophic ones) i.e. *LACK OF INFORMATION* .. or just plain *IGNORANCE*

And it is these 3 evils (above) that rules the mind not to obtain INFORMATION or
deemed NOT important.. because:

- a) we're in a *group* and it is always safe to travel in a group. == NOT
- b) If other 4x4'ers have done it.. I too can do this 4x4-ing thing.
- c) because I know the place and I've been here many times before... because I've
experience... because I'm over-confident.

FACT.. (from cold statistics)

In the past 7 years we have record of 36 GPS recordings through the Kaokoland..
Only 5 'single-vehicle-remote-operations'.. and only 2 have stopped at the
Okangwati Police Station to enquire about 'road conditions', 'safety issues',
'crime issues'... i.e. to obtain 'ground zero intelligence'.

Needless to say that the 2 that stopped at Okangwati Police Station were indeed 'single-vehicle-remote-operations'

From this statistics one must conclude that 95% of leisure trips to remote Africa are 'travel-by-ignorance' .. as in disasters looking for an inconvenient place to happen..

To ask that 'Not to travel alone' be included in the 'NOT-KNOWING' Kaokoland document.. I think NOT Sir... If we take this matter to vote 95% will agree with you.. but 95% will be dead wrong..

Group Travel is NO (repeat) guarantee for SAFETY.. to the contrary 'Group Travel' is the route course for eco-travel disasters.

If you want to test you ability to do stupid things on new and un-familiar terrain .. to do things you would NEVER dreamt of doing when you're alone.. then join a travel party..

And this goes for many of 'Professional Tour Guiding' as well.. This is what my one-and-only did (3 weeks ago).. after having moulded thoughts with her for 32yrs.

http://www.madmappers.com/pub/t4a/disaster_1.jpg (135kb)

Why I asked ?.. "I had no choice.. I was in a group.. I told Sparks it is not necessary to cross the Kwai river here S19.12479 E23.89119 because the T4A Map shows a dry road to travel" ..

Like so many others this 'experienced' Tour Guide too understands far more about playing with the cars and the '4x4 adrenalin' thing ..than the damage done to transmission oil when performing these stunts.

SAFETY == STATE OF MIND .. it has nothing to do with being alone or being in a group.. it has nothing to do with gender, it has nothing to do with age, it has nothing to do with being experienced.. it has nothing to do physical strength.. it has nothing to do with being on your chair in the sitting room of your home or somewhere nowhere in the wilderness..

SAFETY is the ability to be UN-STUPID.. to avoid having to admit to oneself the ultimate crime ='as result of my own stupidity'

To conclude.. by no means do I say NO-NO to group travel.. I will just never travel this way.

Travel by group.. if it is your choice.. but then do so for social or economic or convenient or pleasure reasons.. but NEVER do it for safety reasons.. because 'group travel' inherently is an un-safe and dangerous practice.

and if you firmly believe that you *must* travel in a group.. then do so with a reputable, responsible and qualified Tour Guide.

The very mission of Tracks4Africa.. To develop a GPS navigational toolkit (more than a GPSr on the dash).. and aimed at the needs for those who have no choice (or preference) otherwise BUT to travel alone... as in 'single vehicle remote operation' .. going places.. alone and for the first time.

The basis of this understanding is 'INFORMATION'.. not to expose oneself, travel companions, assets and ENVIRONMENT to un-necessary risk.. 'INFORMATION' needed to make informed decisions on the spot.. 'INFORMATION' needed to be 'un-stupid'

INFORMATION == The 4th dimension of Eco-travel

Because ultimately CONSERVATION == INFORMATION.. and there is no other way to accomplish this.. = end of story

wouter brand (and speaking too much again.. en dan nog tussenin ook)
tracks4africa

]-----Original Message-----

]From: Anton Keet

]Sent: Saturday, June 24, 2006 3:07 PM

]To: Wouter Brand

]Subject: Jan Joubert & NOT KNOWING