

# Vehicle & Caravan Conclusions





Since returning from our trip, we initially found it a bit difficult to weigh up lessons learned with regards to experiences with both Land Rover and caravan.

The length of our shakedown really helped us to understand the realities of a long-haul overland trip such as vehicle issues and breakdowns (and costs!! of which we went approx 60%!! over-budget). Plus, we were able to gain an understanding of how the children and us felt about each other 24-7, the prospect of further travel over a period of a year and about being in it altogether for the longer haul.

Given the vehicle issues experienced we can't deny there were times when we felt really deflated to the point of wanting to kick the Land Rover and send it home.

And, if we were to offer advice to anyone considering a long-haul overland trip we'd have to say towing anything a real 'no-no'. If you could choose a 'single' solitary vehicle to live, eat, sleep - this would definitely be the way to go for all the reasons we've mentioned in both our issues pages. With one vehicle you can just pull up and sleep anywhere (for free in many countries) without concerns of parking or regarding whatever you might be towing behind you. Much less hassle factors all round.

We considered alternative options seriously since returning - options that would provide primarily maybe more guaranteed / longer vehicle reliability, more freedom and less financially draining considerations. But ones that would still provide comfort, security and practicality whilst 'on the road'.

Long before our trip and since returning, we've looked at other options such as Land Cruiser, converted truck/ambulance, campervan, roof tent options (we really like the Maggiolina products). Out of these truck/ambulance conversion would be our chosen option. However, with only a short time before our big trip, the ones we've seen are either well out of our price range else the front cab is only designed for two rather than our existing safe and comfortable 4-5 person set-up.

With children, the roof tent option doesn't appeal to us over a period of a year. We think the ability to be able to sleep inside a vehicle, comfortably and securely is the best way to go. We definitely tossed and turned regarding our chosen configuration and moreso since the shakedown. Thoughts such as, when we had just the Land Rover solo, during parts of

our trip, we were able to pull in - cover the windows and sleep anywhere. Unfortunately, the vehicle is not big enough for 4 of us to do this as part of a daily habit. We also had much more speed and freedom to get 'off track'.

The caravan brought with it a lot of considerations but it also has many upsides:

**Handling** - Apart from minor issues and known weight, it didn't really present any serious issues and handled really well behind vehicle. Stayed behind us comfortably on flat sealed roads comfortably at speeds of up to 65 - 70mph.

**Comfort** - nice thick mattresses, slept 4 of us flat without hassle. Daytime, could chill, read, relax, have somewhere decent to escape - especially if raining. Electrics hooked up (to Land Rover as well as campsite pitch services) also meant we could have electric kettle, lights and DVD's plugged into portable player.

**Storage** - can keep all bedding in caravan

**Insulation** - noticed when we slept in Land Rover - much more noisy whereas caravan provides buffer of silence both inside (children playing, shouting, singing) and out (from busy port side harbours, people and streets).

**Security** - Felt better for us and the kids while sleeping - could lock door, sleep well etc. Relying on Land Rover only would have been too cramped and restrictive and worried about noise and who could see us (Andrew slept solo in Land Rover and Anne with children when/if security was an issue).

**Off ground** - for sleeping/weather - much better than maybe muddy, hard, cold, wet ground or windy, noisy, wet roof in our view. Much more comfortable and felt like proper living on the road - comfortable sleep is everything when you are spending a long time on the road.

**Compactness** - sits neatly behind caravan - no additional driving mirrors required.

**Robustness** - excellent

**Reliability** - excellent

Cooking, shower, gas, hot water, cold water - all on board (though we didn't use any of these as had alternative as equipment / additions on Land Rover which we'll list at some point).

Set-up - we could just open the door and climb in.

Jerry can storage - caravan carries 2 x 20L jerry cans plus spare wheel securely on the back. This meant spare can of petrol which we used for Colemans dual fuel stove and another of can diesel for vehicle if needed kept away from Land Rover load.

With regards to the Land Rover, we got unfortunately very unlucky but the issues have now been resolved and it didn't mis-behave at any point during our drive homeward. When on the road and OK - as Andrew says 'it was well - the nuts!'

We thought long and hard but can't seem to find an alternative configuration that suits us better. Both the Land Rover and the caravan have become part of our skin so we're sticking with them and are going to make them work. Our eyes are wide open to the what this entails for us. And who needs speed!

In terms of immediate changes we are going to make to try to make our bigger trip better - the caravan for instance, we are going to strip and leave as a carcass with just beds on board. We don't need the heavy load on board - i.e. 80L fridge, 2 x 20L water tanks, 2 x large gas cannisters - can all come out. A new roof surround has been successfully ordered from South Africa and is currently en-route to the UK. We'll further seal the roof and seek support from the South African community to help further improve our lot with regards to this - maybe look at shocks etc.

Foley's will address issues that are theirs regarding the Land Rover though nothing apart from silly bits appears to be wrong now (they have already provided us credit and support throughout without hesitation) and are reputable, committed and professional in getting things right. We'll get used to the vehicles speed capability uphill's and even learn how to make tea without leaving the wheel!

Despite everything that happened, we had great fun and the issues became a large part of the adventure as well as presenting several challenging tests for us. In a funny way, that made the trip and logistics

quite interesting to say the least. That just leaves our sanity and the prospect of the children getting used to possibly several flatbed lorries throughout (and being stuck with their parents). We loved our time together and decided we are up for the challenge (or maybe just plain stupid!) to lose our shirts completely in financial terms but one of our highlights could be that maybe we'll be among the first (we can think of several good reasons why others wouldn't do it) to traverse from UK to Oz with an off road / bush caravan in tow? and then tell everyone else 'never' to do it! In any case, it will certainly determine the caravan's capability if anything along with our nerves! In all, we are not prepared to trade our choice just yet! (well.....an affordable truck solution could be considered???? and the Azalai [www.azalai.co.uk](http://www.azalai.co.uk) is an interesting concept - see also <http://www.lro.com/print.php?sid=232>). Last note on caravan side - if it can be dragged around South Africa in bush conditions - ours somehow made it to the UK - there has got to be something said about it's capability.