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BOTSWANA/NAMIBIA RULES, TIPS AND ADVICE

1. THE RULES

- a. 1st Rule for travelling in Africa. Before your trip, read up all you can about areas you will be visiting.
- b. A valid, English licence must be carried with you at all times, if your license is not issued in English you will have to obtain an international drivers licence.
- c. Carry your passport with at all times, as well as all your documents. Do not leave them in your tent or wherever you are staying. And just in case you do lose the originals, keep certified copies of these documents in your luggage or vehicle.
- d. Foreigners should carry a valid passport and or Visa at all times.
- e. A 3rd Party Comesa-approved Insurance is accepted, but you can buy local 3rd Party insurance at the border.
- f. A road permit as well as a National Road Fund must be bought at the border. Therefore, always carry cash with you as of most of the times card machines is out of order.
- g. Speed limits are always very clearly marked, we advise all visitors to adhere the speed limits as authorities are very strict on this. If caught speeding you would be required to pay an on-the-spot cash fine for which an official will issue a receipt.
- h. Drunken driving is illegal. The blood alcohol limit is 0.08%.
- i. Both the driver and passengers must wear safety belts at all time.
- j. Do not speak on a cell phone except if it is on hands-free mode, for it is illegal.

2. ADVICE

- a. Use common sense when you travel in Southern Africa, like you would when you travel anywhere else in the world.
- b. Domestic animals such as cattle, donkeys, goats and dogs are free to roam the roads. They therefor have the right of way and you should always be on the lookout for stray animals. If you come across them, stop and turn on your hazard lights until it is safe to continue.
- c. Never drive at night, it is almost impossible to see a black domestic animal at night and it is therefore dangerous and could cause possible accidents.
- d. It is always best to pack away loose camping equipment at night, you never know if a wind will come up or your site van be visited by curious wildlife.
- e. Before leaving for the day, please check that your tyre pressure is correct for the roads that you plan on travelling as well as the weight.
- f. Included in your standard equipment is a tyre repair kit ; make sure you know how to use it.
- g. Always keep your lights on, this allows you to be seen in dusty or low visibility conditions. Some local drivers are not familiar with this practice and will flash their lights to inform you about yours.
- h. If you see a road block, stop at the stop sign and wait for the officer to wave you forward. Do not drive past the stop sign to the official without stopping as you can be fined for not stopping at the stop sign. The sign is usually 50-100 m before the actual road block.
- i. Immediately slow down and prepare to stop when you see a red cone or oil drum in the road, this signals a police or veterinary fence checkpoint.
- j. We will provide you with our direct contact numbers. Always keep it with you.

3. DRIVE SAFELY

- a. As with any equipped 4x4 you must be aware of the extra weight on the roof of the vehicle which increases the centre of gravity and increases the chance of rollovers. Drive safely and build in extra safety margins, avoid sudden movement of the steering wheel and drive slower through corners and drive slower on any gravel roads.

4. AVOID DRIVING AT NIGHT.

- a. There are very few fences, so animals roam freely across the roads and they present a **major risk to any vehicles travelling at night.**

5. DRIVING ON GRAVEL ROADS

- a. If you deflate your tyres to 20% below normal pressure, it will soften the ride and ensure a better grip on gravel roads. It is advisable to drive at a low speed as gravel roads can be unpredictable and it is easy to lose control.
- b. Gravel roads can be extremely slippery so drivers with limited experience of this terrain should never exceed 80km/h. If you overtake someone on a gravel road, drive to the far right and stay there until you are well clear. Do not overtake through dust as your visibility will be impaired.
- c. Be extremely careful of the road edges, sometimes there is a very abrupt camber which can pull you off the road.

6. DRIVING IN THICK SAND

- a. Driving in thick sand is all about **keeping your momentum** and forward motion and this will allow you to pass the thick sandy depressions without bogging down. Keeping your momentum does not mean speeding as you must always drive slowly to avoid any chance of going off the road or creating excessive body roll.
- b. Keep the vehicle in high range and drive as fast as is required to safely maintain your momentum. If you cannot maintain your momentum, use first gear in low range and if you get stuck, use your difflock as well before you bog down.
- c. The wheels of the vehicle will follow the deep ruts in the sand so **be cautious if you need to 'change lanes'** as you need to turn the steering wheel more than normal to get any reaction. Do not try and do this at high speed, slow right down and then move lanes to avoid excessive body roll.
- d. When you want to drive on soft sand it requires lowering your tyre pressure to 40% below normal pressure. You must reinflate your tyres once you are back on a hard surface.
- e. If you need to stop in thick sand, do not use your brakes but rather roll on to a halt. Applying brakes will cause a wall of sand to be built up in front of the wheel, which will make pulling away very difficult.
- f. If possible, drive through thick sand as early in the day as possible. As the day gets hotter the sand will get softer and your speed will be slower and your fuel consumption higher.

7. DRIVING OVER ROUGH TERRAIN

- a. It is best to keep the tyre pressure to that recommended by the manufacturer.
- b. Select first gear, low range. It is always best to drive very slowly directly over sharp rocks instead of trying to avoid them, because damage happens when the sidewalls of your tyre, which are only a few millimetres thick, ride up against a knife-edged rock. The tyres tread is much thicker and is designed to deal with these rocks.

8. DRIVING IN MUD

- a. **Avoid mud** wherever possible and don't drive through mud holes if there is any possibility to drive around. In most cases there are tracks around the mud and these must be used to avoid unnecessary mud contamination.
- b. Mud usually has a firm base underneath and the trick is to let the tyres cut through the mud to get traction on the firm base below
- c. Select second gear, low range. In most cases driving through mud requires momentum and speed high enough to get you through the obstacle but not too high so as to be unsafe. Don't hold the steering wheel too tightly, feel the feedback from the tyres to the steering wheel and move with it rather than to fight it.

9. DRIVING THROUGH WATER

- a. The first rule is to stick to the main tracks and **never just drive through a water crossing** without assessing it completely.
- b. If you are not comfortable to cross the water rather turn around or wait for another vehicle.
- c. Insurance does not cover water
- d. You must walk through a water crossing before you drive a vehicle through the water. Walk through the crossing where your left wheel will drive and return on the path of the right wheel to ensure you pick up any holes or drop offs. Once you are confident that the water is shallow enough and the surface of the river is not too muddy you can drive slowly but steadily across the river. Engage 4x4 low and possibly your diff lock prior to entering the water and keep your momentum. Do not use very high revs or drive too fast as the engine fan can be broken by the water which is far more dense than air.

10. DRIVING THROUGH LONG, DRY GRASS

- a. When driving through long, dry grass, be aware of the danger of vehicle fires.
- b. When you drive through long, dry grass, it often collects underneath the vehicle around the exhaust pipe.
- c. In places where grass is long, stop every 20 km or so to check for any grass collecting near or on the exhaust. The exhaust will be extremely hot, so always be very careful if you need to remove any grass. Also when you stop, do not stop over long grass.

11. WILD ANIMALS

- a. Parks are unfenced, so the wildlife can wander through. Always keep your eyes open for wild animals.
- b. Remember the animals in these reserves are wild and that you are in their territory. You are always at risk of wildlife encounters when you leave the safety of your vehicle (even if it is allowed).
- c. It is a bad idea to swim or cool down in any rivers. It might have crocodiles.
- d. One should treat any abnormally tame behaviour by wild animals with suspicion.
- e. Children can easily fall prey when they see these nice little “doggies” approaching and want to play with them.
- f. Do not leave bones or other food out to attract animals to take photos
- g. Avoid feeding animals.
- h. Also do not leave any reuse bags around your camp as animals will tear them open.
- i. Pack away all food when you go to bed, otherwise this will attract wild animals, big and small. Rather pack away everything at night or when leaving your camp. Do not store food in the tents.
- j. In areas where there are elephants, you should not have fruit (especially citrus) with you as the elephants will do anything to get to it. Be vigilant of baboons and monkeys around your camp, for they will steal your food. Always ask the local camp warden if they have any problems with baboons or monkeys.
- k. Do not walk around at night and stay close to the campsite, vehicle or buildings when dark
- l. Never sleep with your tent open where wild animals roam free – no matter how hot it is. As long as your tent is zipped up, you will be safe. And you will keep mosquitoes, spiders, scorpions and snakes away.
- m. Always zip up your tents when the tents are left unattended.
- n. Hippos come out to graze at night. Do not pitch your tent near or on a well-worn path to the river.

12. FUEL

- a. Fuel is available in most towns and, generally speaking is reliably available and of good quality. A very good rule is to fill up at each and every fuel stations that you pass, regardless of how full your tank is. Distance between towns can be very far and sometimes towns run out of fuel or their pumps might be out of order.
- b. This is especially true when the demand for fuel is highest, like during high and holiday season.
- c. Low sulphur diesel (50 ppm) is available in most places. So long as you fill up with 50 ppm from a reputable service station whenever you have the opportunity, you should not have a problem with availability.
- d. The fuel price is regulated. However there might be marginal differences from town to town, where fuel is sold in containers prices will be a bit higher.

13. TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS

- a. It is common decency to respect people’s privacy. It’s always best to ask before taking photographs of locals.
- b. It is not uncommon to be expected to pay a fee for each photo you took of someone or his possessions.
- c. In Africa you should avoid taking photographs of official buildings like airports or official residences. Similarly, do not point your camera at roadblocks, guard posts and people in uniform, you do not want to have a problem with anybody who is in a position of power.

14. DRONES

- a. The private use of drones or remotely piloted aircraft is illegal unless registered with the relevant aeronautical authorities.
- b. Drones may **not** be flown in national parks or wildlife sanctuaries.

15. CAMPING ETIQUETTE

- a. There are well equipped campsites. But the real camping gems are the bush camps in many nature reserves and or conservancy areas. These may be very rustic with some having absolutely no facilities apart from a designated long drop. However these camps offer you the solitude that so many people come to seek and they are well worth exploring. If a campsite has a reception area, you will often find the rules displayed there. Adhere to these at all times and keep the following guidelines in mind:

16. BE QUIET

- a. Respect the fact that people who prefer bush camping do so partly because they enjoy the solitude and sounds of the bush.

17. DO NOT DISTURB

- a. Do not disturb fellow campers' rest
- b. Camp should be quiet by 22h00 and nobody should leave before sunrise.

18. HONOUR BOOKINGS

- a. Do not take just any campsite, unless you are told at reception that you may. Even remote camps often allocate campsites to specific bookings.

19. KEEP THE DONKEY GOING

- a. In campsites where a donkey boiler is used to heat up water for the ablutions, it is courteous to keep the fire going. You will benefit from other people's hot water as campers after you will benefit from yours.

20. CAMP IN DESIGNATED AREAS

- a. When you camp, you interfere with nature, so try to disturb the environment as little as possible by camping in the designated areas only.

21. CARRY YOUR OWN FIRE WOOD

- a. Do not collect firewood from the veld – dead wood provides an ecosystem for a variety of organisms. Buy sufficient firewood or charcoal before you enter sensitive nature areas.

22. DO NOT FEED WILD ANIMALS

- a. No matter how much fun it is to leave meat or bones out to attract wild animals for viewing around your camp, **DON'T DO IT!**
- b. Wild animals will learn to expect food from humans and so become a danger. You will not only risk your own life but also the lives of future campers.

23. FIRES

- a. If there is a designated fire pit or place where previous campers made fire, stick to it otherwise the camp will become littered with leftover coals all over. Before you go to bed at night or leave your camp in the morning you must ensure that fire is fully extinguished. Even a light breeze cause smouldering coals to reignite, blow away and set the surrounding bush ablaze.

24. WASTE MANAGEMENT

- a. Wilderness camps might only be visited by officials once a month. Under no circumstances should you leave your garbage even if bins are provided.
- b. Leave absolutely nothing behind. Do not bury this type of waste, other than the ash from your fire.

25. THE TOILET

- a. Use the toilet facilities provided, even if it is a long drop (pit toilet).
- b. If there are no facilities available, bury your excrement, do not ever leave it or toilet paper uncovered!