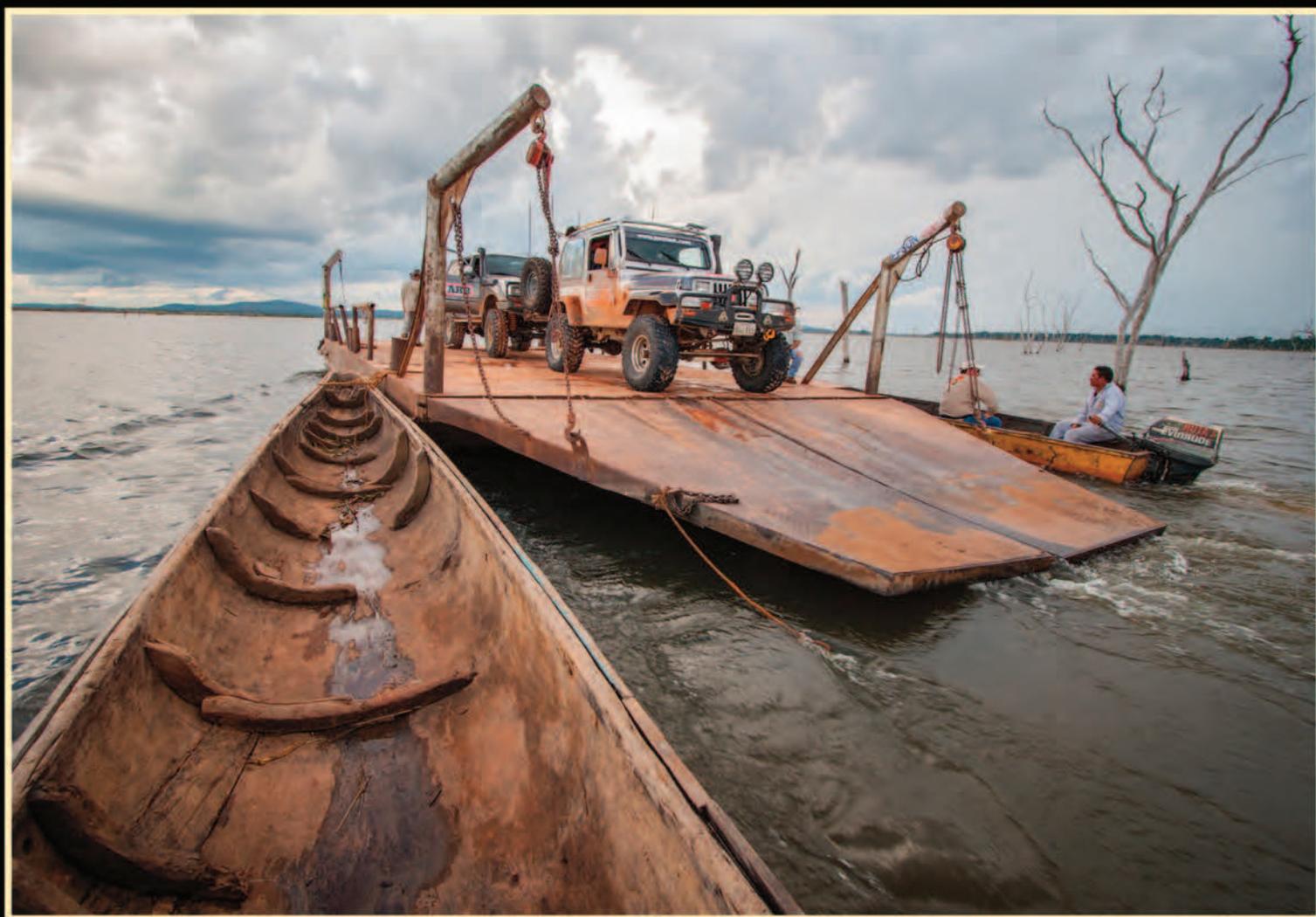


OVERLAND

JOURNAL



Venezuela | Sleep Systems | Siberia | Midwestern America



Fly in and Drive—or Ride

The resource guide to self-drive
adventures around the world.

In the 2014 Fall Issue we broached the topic of self-drive travel in foreign lands. While most of us dream of motoring across Africa's Kalahari or the Outback of Australia, the planning and logistics of such an adventure can be quite daunting. Shipping your personal vehicle makes sense if you are planning on a yearlong sabbatical, but for those of us with limited time, hiring a four-wheel drive or dual-sport motorcycle is a prudent option. Sourcing your steed in-country is more economical and eliminates the hassles and paperwork of importation, as well as the long shipping times that will bookend your trip. For this insertion of Fly in and Drive we are reviewing hire companies on seven continents that can put your tires to dirt (or ice) as quickly as you can check through customs and pick up the keys.

While there are hundreds of companies offering these services, as is the case with all industries, a flashy website does not always ensure a great product. For this reason, we are featuring companies that our staff, trusted contributors, or friends have personally used. We've reached out to adventure gurus Lois Pryce, Bill Drago, and Sam Watson, as well as our co-founder, Jonathan Hanson, and his wife, Roseanne, of Overland Expo fame. I also checked with the editors of international publications I work with in Australia, South Africa, and Europe, as their local knowledge can't be beat. Additionally, we've included some core subjects you will want to consider when planning the "Big Trip."

DURATION, ROUTE, AND **BOOKING**

An ailment we all seem to suffer when planning a trip is see-it-all syndrome, or SS. Glancing at a map of Australia, one might be inclined to pencil in a route from Sydney to Broken Hill, and then to Perth on the west coast. If your time window is less than a month I'd wager that you will spend the majority of your adventure behind the wheel and see very little. This is where a good hire company earns their keep. They can provide key points of interest, transit times, preferred routes, and some will even assist with booking accommodation or national park reservations in places like Botswana. Regardless of your chosen destination, if you are traveling in the high season I suggest reserving your vehicle or bike early, as fleets sell out quickly.

COMMUNICATION

Although I have carried a satellite phone and/or PLB on most of my international trips, I have yet to turn them on for a true emergency. Similar to having a winch on your vehicle, a reliable form of communication is worth its weight in gold

when you desperately need it. While there are dozens of sat phone outlets in the U.S., most hire companies can direct you to a local provider and you can arrange for the unit to be shipped directly to/from their facility.

DOCUMENTATION

You won't run into a border crossing issue in the EU or Australia, but if traveling through Africa or South and Central America, you will need an affidavit from the hire company authorizing the transportation of their vehicle into a given country. It is imperative to confirm these details in advance. It is also important to make sure the hire company's insurance is honored in the countries along your route.

MAPS, GUIDEBOOKS, AND **GPS**

I'm a longtime fan of Lonely Planet guides. They tend to stray off the beaten path more than other guidebooks, are updated regularly, and offer extensive coverage of the world. Garmin's world map works well in cities and established roads, but for off-piste travel we've used Tracks for Africa (*tracks4africa.co.za*) and Hema digital maps of Australia (*hemamaps.com*); both are excellent.

MEDICAL **EVACUATION PLAN**

While most adventures go off without a hitch, when things do go sideways it will be the small details that you will be glad you addressed in advance. Personal medical evacuation insurance is designed to get you back to your home country and proper medical care in the case of a life-threatening condition. For information on leading companies and their related services, see Senior Editor Christophe Noel's review on *expeditionportal.com* (key word "rescue").

If you are traveling with an operator, it is important to ask about their staff's medical certifications and evacuation plan in case of a major emergency.

CONSOLIDATORS OR **DIRECT CONNECTION**

There are dozens of consolidators that reserve vehicles through multiple vendors, but I'm always more comfortable with the personal nature of direct communication. Hands-on providers have much more at stake with regard to their reputation and your booking is less likely to get lost in the shuffle.

GUIDED **TRIPS**

I pooh-poohed guided trips for decades, maintaining that I didn't need a babysitter to lead me around and that self-reliance should be the essence of any adventure. Having followed both paths during the last few years, I must admit that I was wrong about tour operators. Some of the prime advantages of guided trips are that your vehicle/bike is ready when you arrive, you don't have to shop for food and missing items, re-

search routes and accommodation, buy maps and guidebooks, or worry about the mechanical worthiness of your steed (they usually have fairly new equipment and full support). Basically, the tour operator takes care of everything and concentrates the itinerary on key points of interest; you just need to show up with a good attitude and the desire to go.

GUIDED TOURS

PROS

- Everything is provided
- Limited research required
- Usually includes a translator
- Concentrated itinerary

CONS

- Cost
- Often limited to operator's schedule

SELF-GUIDED TRIPS

PROS

- Flexible schedule and route
- Practice your navigation skills
- Learn a new language
- Feeling of self-reliance
- Cost

CONS

- Considerable research required
- You *will* get lost occasionally
- Language barrier
- Must sort out problems on your own

Before we address regions that require a passport, we'll share several U.S.-based operators that hire overland-equipped vehicles right here in the States. This is a great option if you only have a week and dream of driving the Rockies or visiting the national parks of the West. We then move on to Oceania, Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and even Antarctica (yes, you can go there too). After digesting this wealth of information, I suggest you pencil in a date on the calendar, select a location, and pull the trigger on the adventure of a lifetime.

UNITED STATES

TONTO TRAILS

John and Julie Hartley launched Tonto Trails in 2013 and became the first to fill a long-needed niche in the U.S. Based in Durango, Colorado, they offer the highly coveted 4WD Sportsmobile Econoline and Sprinter, and the larger Chevrolet-based Tiger Adventure. Each platform will sleep four adults and is fully equipped for extended backcountry excursions: everything from bedding and galley kit to recovery gear, jumpers, a DeLorme InReach, and barbecue grill. The Hartleys can help plan your itinerary to include great photo, hiking, biking, and fishing locations. Reserve early, as their fleet books quickly in the high season.

TONTOTRAILS.COM | 970-403-5865

TETON BACKCOUNTRY RENTALS

Based in Jackson, Wyoming, Teton Backcountry Rentals is the ideal option for a quick getaway to Teton and Yellowstone National Park, or an extended tour of the land of Lewis and Clark. They offer four-wheel drive GM and Chevrolet trucks fitted with a variety of fully equipped pop-up campers, as well as mid-size and teardrop camp trailers. They also have a full line of equipment (sleeping bags to crampons) as well as Tepui roof top tents (fitted to *your* rack or load bars) for those that would like to avoid Yogi poking his nose into your tent.

TETONBCRENTALS.COM | 307-828-1885

PACIFIC OVERLANDER

Pacific Overland is the new kid on the U.S. overland vehicle hire scene. Although we've not taken one of their late-model vehicles out for a spin, we have spent time with owner Mason Schreck and feel his San Francisco-based operation is first-rate. The fleet consists of new 4Runners, Land Cruisers, and Tacomas, and for those that want a nostalgic overland experience, a Land Rover D90. All rentals are fitted with Autohome roof top tents, a galley kit and stove, and coolers (most have fridge/freezers). A third-generation Californian and backcountry enthusiast, Mason can provide itinerary suggestions for trips to the Lost Coast, Yosemite, and the Mojave Desert, among others.

PACIFICOVERLANDER.COM | 415-993-2101

COLORADO MOTORCYCLE ADVENTURES

For two-wheeled adventures in the American West, Bill Dragoo recommends Colorado Motorcycle Adventures (CMA). As a BMW Motorrad authorized touring company, they offer a full line of BMWs as well as Honda Africa Twins and Kawasaki KLR 650s. They are available for self-guided rides into the Rockies or you can join one of their fully supported trips. CMA is also one of the few companies that offer a female-only program, the Women's Adventure Tour. If you don't want to bring your gear, they have a full selection of Klim equipment available. A little rusty in the saddle? A 1-day class with their certified trainers can help you get back on the pegs.

COLORADOMOTORCYCLEADVENTURES.COM | 720-505-2030

EUROPE, ICELAND, AND THE U.K.

GREAT BRITAIN

EXPLORE CAMPERS

If you want to tool around Great Britain or Europe in style, try it in a turbo-diesel Land Rover Defender from Explore Campers. Available with one or two roof top tents, they feature everything from camp chairs and tables to bedding, awnings, and bike racks. Explore is one of Sam Watson's hire companies of choice.

EXPLORECAMPERS.COM | 44-0-7522-776-160

SCOTLAND OVERLAND

Although Scotland is not known as an off-piste overland destination, opportunities abound in the land of kilts and fine scotch. Scotland Overland offers Land Rover Defenders equipped with Hannibal roof top tents, Foxwing awnings, a full galley kit, three-season sleeping bags, camp chairs, and a portable toilet. They also have arrangements with some of the larger private estates which allows their clients

to camp deeper in the Highland backcountry. Vehicles can be delivered to the major airports, so all you need to do is show up, stock the National Luna fridge/freezer, and be on your way.

SCOTLANDOVERLAND.COM | 44-0-1721-729-848

ICELAND

ARCTIC TRUCKS

During the past 27 years, Arctic Trucks has set the standard for polar travel and exploration. What you may not know is that this Reykjavik-based company also hires vehicles for self-drive adventures. Their platforms of choice are the Toyota Hilux and Land Cruiser, which are highly modified for the island's many river crossings and volcanic glacial fields. Guided self-drive packages range from 3 to 6 days, and extended private programs can be crafted for up to a month. For an aurora experience, look into their winter programs (guided only).

ARCTICTRUCKS-EXPERIENCE.COM | 354-540-4900

PORTUGAL

DREAM OVERLAND

Wedged between the Atlantic Ocean and Spain, Portugal occupies the western flank of Europe's Iberian Peninsula. While you might not have considered it as an overland destination, the region has a wealth of backroads and byways threading through the artifacts of antiquity. Dream Overland, run by local expert José Almeida, leads tours to the country's most iconic destinations, including pre-Celts ruins, Roman aqueducts spanning 1,000-foot valleys, and castles of the Moors. They don't provide vehicles but can help you book a four-wheel drive truck or SUV as well as camping equipment (hacienda stays are more common).

DREAMOVERLAND.COM | 351-917-602-922

RUSSIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

COMPASS EXPEDITIONS

In addition to providing moto tours in Australia and South America, Compass also leads extended expeditions (13 to 100 days) in Russia and Central Asia. They were one of the first to guide a dual-sport tour across the Road of Bones, and have extensive experience in the Mongolian highlands and rugged mountains of Kyrgyzstan. Bike options range from the Suzuki DR-Z400 to Yamaha Ténéré, and tours include most meals, accommodation, support vehicles, transfers, and Compass apparel.

COMPASSEXPEDITIONS.COM | 61-3-9747-2379

KALPAK TRAVEL

Have you dreamed of experiencing the Silk Road or tiptoeing across the Roof of the World on the Pamir Highway, but are a bit unsure about striking off on your own? *Overland Journal* contributor Sophie Ibbotson, a Central Asia expert in her own right, suggests Swiss-run Kalpak Travel. Be forewarned though, the "driving" portion is merely a conduit to the greater cultural experiences to which the Stans are so highly acclaimed. Programs range from Nomad University (full-immersion living with Kyrgyz horsemen) to mountain biking Tajikistan for a more relaxed tour of five of the region's capital cities.

KALPAK-TRAVEL.COM | 41-78-657-27-01



Top, down: Tonto Trails, Teton Backcountry Rentals, Explore Campers, and Compass Expeditions.



Top, down: Elephant Moto, Safari Drive, Medloc-Maroc, and Bushlore Africa.

AFRICA

SAFARI DRIVE

Although one of the largest self-drive operators in Africa, U.K.-based Safari Drive's personal service and attention to detail are bar none—Sam Watson and Roseann Hanson give them a five-star rating. Founders Charles and Meregán Norwood launched the company in 1992 and have since added operations in exotic locales from Zambia and Namibia to Oman and Zimbabwe. Their well-maintained fleet of Defenders and Land Cruisers will provide the quintessential aesthetic of a proper bush trek and are equipped with nearly everything you need for an African safari.

SAFARIDRIVE.COM | 44-0-1488-71140

KENYA, RWANDA, AND UGANDA

ERIKSON ROVER SAFARIS

Sam Watson and I hired a Range Rover Classic for our recent work with the Born Free Foundation and Kenya Wildlife Service in Meru National Park. Their Defenders, Discoverys, and Classics are not late-model beauties, but our old Landy, Mama la Simba, kept running and felt right at home in the Kenyan hinterland. They offer roof top tents, fridge/freezers, cooking accessories, and camp tables and chairs—all at a reasonable cost.

ROVERSAFARI.COM | 254-72-46-47-982

SOUTH AFRICA, NAMIBIA, AND BOTSWANA

BUSHLORE AFRICA

Bushlore Africa is another good self-drive option for Southern Africa. Their selection of late-model Toyota Land Cruisers and Fortuners, along with Land Rover Defenders and Discoverys, are well maintained and feature everything from roof top tents to fridge/freezers. Vehicles are licensed for all Southern African countries, and they can help with route options and lodge bookings.

BUSHLORE.COM | 2711-312-8084

WILD WHEELS

With a fleet of 25 Toyota Troopies and Hilux four-wheel drives, Wild Wheels will get you into the wilds of the Okavango or the Kalahari Desert in style. Roof top tents will help keep you from becoming part of the food chain, and all vehicles are stocked with everything needed for a self-guided adventure. They also offer route itineraries and 24-hour mechanical support. Tina Payne at Front Runner Outfitters gives Wild Wheels two thumbs up.

WILDWHEELS4X4.COM | 267-684-0064

TANZANIA

SHAW SAFARIS

Based in the Twiga Lodge near the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Shaw Safaris checks all the boxes. Jonathan Hanson, and wife, Roseanne, joined the owners, Paul and Erika Sweet, on safari and can attest that Shaw is one of the finest operators in Tanzania. Their Land Rover Defenders are available for self-drive or guided trips, and are fitted with everything from spares, recovery kits, tools, fridge/freezers, satellite phones, and GPSs with waypoints for key attractions. They also offer 24-hour support as well as driving courses for those who are a little rusty.

SHAWSAFARIS.COM | 255-0-7689-45735

MOROCCO

MEDLOC-MAROC

Although options for sourcing expedition-ready vehicles in Morocco are limited, Medloc-Maroc offers late-model four-wheel drive Nissan Pathfinders, Mitsubishi Pajeros, and Toyota Prados. All are diesel and significant discounts are available for 30-day hires.

MEDLOC-MAROC.COM | 212-524-435-757

CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

ECUADOR

ECUADOR FREEDOM BIKE

Senior Editor Christophe Noel joined Ecuador Freedom Bike for a ride into the Andes and has not stopped praising this company since. Owners Court and Sylvain have created a one-stop shop for adventure travel in the region. This year-round operation (based in Quito) offers dual-sport bikes ranging from pint-sized Yamaha XT250s to the KTM 1050 Adventure ABS. For those that would rather drive, they also have Jeep Rubicons and Volkswagen Amarok TDI400s (equipped with a winch, roof rack, snorkel, and auxiliary lights). Strike out on your own with a pre-mapped itinerary or schedule a guided trip ranging from 3 to 12 days. All rentals include GPS tracking, an emergency repair kit, 24-hour breakdown coverage, helmets, gloves, a pre-paid local cell phone, and more.

FREEDOMBIKERENTAL.COM | 603-617-2499

COLOMBIA AND COSTA RICA

ELEPHANT MOTO

Publisher Scott Brady and Creative Director Sinuhe Xavier spent a week slogging through Colombia's remote backcountry with Elephant Moto. Owner Mauricio Escobar takes pride in the fact that Elephant is a BMW Motorrad partner with certified trainers and guides. They are experts on both Colombia and Costa Rica when it comes to two-wheeled adventures and knowing where to find hidden gems. Their fleet includes the BMW F800GS and R1200GS which can be hired for a casual weekend ride or month-long expedition. Guided trips include bike rental, accommodation, most meals, certified instructors, a support vehicle, and Elephant apparel. Some even feature moto VIPs such as *Overland Journal* contributor Bill Drago.

ELEPHANTMOTO.COM | 57-320-833-8773 (COLOMBIA) | 506-8811-0069 (COSTA RICA)

PERU

PERU SAFARI

With Peru Safaris, an affiliate of Explore Campers in the U.K., you can search out iconic destinations from Machu Picchu, high in the Andes to the wildlife-rich Galápagos Islands. Based in the capital city of Lima, they offer guided self-drive trips ranging from 7 to 14 days, led by their experienced staff. Add-ons can include hiking the Inca Trail, whitewater rafting on the Urubamba River, and flights over the mysterious Nazca Lines. You won't need to pitch a tent, as accommodation is a mix of 5-star hotels and haciendas.

PERUSAFARI.COM | 44-0-1744-889-819

BOLIVIA

EXPLORE BOLIVIA

Bill Drago traveled with Explore Bolivia for the cover story in our Summer 2013 issue. With 35 years of experience in South America's only landlocked country, they are considered experts in the region. They not only hire dual-sport motorcycles (Suzuki DR650s) for self-ride or guided adventures, they also maintain a fleet of Nissan Patrols (guided only). Guided trips include your vehicle or bike, most meals, accommodation, fuel, and tool/first aid/kitchen/recovery kits. Trips are custom tailored to a client's desires, the most popular being to the heights of the Altiplano and dense jungle lowlands of the Amazon.

EXPLOBOLIVIA.COM | 303-808-7713

OCEANIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

AUSTRALIA

The Land Down Under didn't invent the self-drive safari, but they are leading the charge when it comes to Outback-ready vehicle options. However, if you don't want to drive a psychedelic throwback from the '60s or look like a rolling billboard for one of the major brands, we've got a few suggestions.

WA EXPERTS

WA Experts, with offices in Perth and Darwin, offer fully kitted Toyota Troop Carriers and Land Cruisers for sojourns in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

WAEXPERTS.COM.AU | 61-437-498-740

AUSTRALIAN 4WD HIRE

This hire company has late-model Toyota FJ Cruisers, Land Cruisers, and Hiluxes available in 10 major cities. With nationwide coverage, they are an excellent option for long-distance, one-way treks across the country.

AUSTRALIAN4WDHIRE.COM.AU | 61-7-5527-6191

TRI-STATE SAFARIS

If you are looking for a guided trip through the continent's Red Centre, Tri-State Safaris, based in Broken Hill on the edge of the Outback and the Mundi Mundi Plains, offers catered tagalong trips ranging from 1 to 14 days, with destinations such as the Simpson Desert and Ayers Rock. I've worked with Tri-State several times and they are the real deal.

TRISTATE.COM.AU | 61-1300-688-225

COMPASS EXPEDITIONS

For moto adventures in the Land Down Under, Compass Expeditions is a go-to source. Based in Melbourne, they maintain an inventory of dual-sport motorcycles (BMWs and Suzuki DR650s) in seven of the country's major cities. They can be reserved for any period of time for a one-way or loop ride. Rental includes unlimited mileage, panniers, waterproof bags, tool kits, maps, route assistance, and 24-hour roadside assistance. They also offer satellite phones and GPS units, helmets and riding apparel, and a full selection of camping gear if needed. If you are into riding with celebrities, *Long Way Round's* Charley Boorman is a regular, as well as *Overland Journal* contributor Lois Pryce. Compass also offers guided 2-week trips in Cambodia.

COMPASSEXPEDITIONS.COM | 61-3-9747-2379



Top, down: Australian 4WD Hire, WA Experts, Trekker Adventures, and Arctic Trucks

SOUTHEAST ASIA

CAMBODIA MOTORBIKE TOURS

If the land of Angkor Wat is on your bucket list, Cambodia Motorbike Tours (CMT) has you covered. I've traveled with CMT owner, Jason Thatcher, and can confirm that his team knows every rice paddy single-track and remote temple in the country. They use the Yamaha TTR250 for its reduced weight, durability, and maneuverability in muddy conditions. Tours are between 7 and 9 days, and include accommodation, most meals, expert guides and translators, a field medic, and support truck. Note: CMT expeditions are for experienced riders only. If you are a true badass, try their Tough Guy Tour. Is Vietnam on your list? CMT also offers a dozen guided road bike tours (200cc Lifan street bikes).

CAMBODIAMOTORBIKETOURS.COM | VIETNAMMOTORBIKETOURS.COM | 61-42-9909-778

NEW ZEALAND

TREKKER ADVENTURES

If you love Land Rover Defenders and the thought of exploring the land of the Hobbits, Trekker Adventures can put you smack-dab in the center of Middle-earth. While the North Island is more arid and open, its southern counterpart features lonely beaches, glaciers of the Southern Alps, extensive fjord systems, and aqua-blue glacial lakes. Their corral of 110s and 90s are fitted with roof top tents, pots, pans, barbeques, and nearly anything else you will need. Although New Zealand is not known for extensive dirt two-tracks, having spent 3 weeks exploring the South Island I can assure you that once your boots are on the ground, this will be a moot concern.

TREKKERADVENTURES.COM | 64-021-796-039

ANTARCTICA

ARCTIC TRUCKS

Although this might sound a bit convoluted, Earth's coldest, driest, and windiest continent is high on the list of many adventurers. If you fit this profile, Arctic Trucks will be your go-to source for specialized logistics solutions in Antarctica. With a facility at the Novolazarevskaya air base, accessed via a flight from Cape Town, South Africa, they can arrange or support expeditions in Queen Maud Land all the way to the South Pole. They were the first to establish a GPS track up the glacial fields to the Antarctic Plateau, maintain a fleet of vehicles, and have the infrastructure in place to support any project. Our team relied on Arctic Trucks during the Expeditions 7 crossing of the continent and they are top-notch.

ARCTICTRUCKS-EXPERIENCE.COM | 354-540-4900 