

A Preliminary Overview

This document is a description of a road trip that its author is planning to make. In no way should it be construed as an invitation for anyone to participate in such trip. The author is not responsible for any loss or injury incurred by anyone who, at his/her own initiative, decides to partake in it, or tries to replicate it.

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December 2005

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1. Introduction

The *Trans-Sahara Overland II – From Europe to the Heart of Africa* (“TSO2”) is an overland expedition for all-terrain vehicles currently being planned to start in Lisbon, Portugal and finish in N’djamena, Chad, right in the middle of Sahelian Africa. From Lisbon, the route being considered crosses southern Europe to Genoa, Italy, from where it continues across the Mediterranean by ferry to Tunis, Tunisia. Back on land, the route continues to Tripoli, Libya, then crossing the country from top to bottom, into Niger. Once in Niger, the route crosses the Tenere to Agadez, continuing then south and west, around the northern side of Lake Chad to N’djamena, Chad. Per current plans, TSO2 will cover just over 9,000 km (approximately 5,700 miles) in 33 days sometime between mid January and the end of February of 2007. This time window is defined both by calendar and weather considerations, i.e., the desirability of leaving Lisbon after the Christmas holiday season and arriving in N’djamena before the peak of the Harmattan season in Sahel.

To describe in a few words the area to be crossed by TSO2 is an enormous challenge. Physically, this is the land of the sandy seas of the Sahara and of the Sahel. Culturally, this is the land of the Tuareg, the Tubu, the Hausas and many more other major peoples; the land of mystical and fascinating places from long gone empires, places such as Carthage, Leptis Magna, Djado and many others. Some of the highlights of TSO2 include:

- Crossing the Sahara through Libya to northern Niger and then across the Tenere to the Tuareg town of Agadez in central Niger;
- Visiting the culturally rich Mediterranean countries of Tunisia and Libya, with their Phoenician and Roman ruins and fairytale Berber troglodyte *ksour* (plural of *ksar*, i.e., a fortified granary);
- Visiting the fabulous ruins of mystical caravan towns, such as Ghadames in western Libya and Djado in northern Niger;
- Visiting Agadez, the “capital” of the Tuareg nomad people; and
- Exploring the traditional Hausa architecture in the old quarters of Zinder, Niger.



Ghadames, Libya

TSO2 is being planned as the continuation of a previous trans-Sahara overland crossing in the opposite direction (from Chad to Southern Europe) to be complete before Christmas of 2006 (“TSO1”), currently also in a preliminary planning stage.

2. Itinerary

The itinerary detailed in this document is merely indicative. The only things that are fixed by nature are the starting and finishing points – respectively Lisbon, Portugal and N’djamena, Chad – and the fact that the main of the Sahara crossing will be done via what is normally known as the “Marlboro *Piste*” – from Al Katrun in Libya to Madama and Bilma in Niger – and from there, across the Tenere to Agadez, also in Niger. Changes in everything else, as a result of political instability, unfavorable weather, deteriorating piste conditions and the like, should be considered fair game! In addition, some minor adjustments may be needed when assigning specific dates to the itinerary to account for the fact that some of the days in which formalities need to be done – e.g., border crossings – would otherwise fall on weekends or local holidays.

The itinerary through Libya was decided taking into consideration that this country, per current regulations, requires that a Libyan representative of a private tour company escort tourists traveling with their own vehicles. This tour guide can cost up to €100.00 per day (cost to be equally shared by all vehicles partaking in this part of TSO2.) The current plan of 10 days in-country (from the Ras Ajdir border to completing exit formalities in Al Katrun), should be considered as a “base case.” A final decision on the route through Libya will be made at a later time and will take into consideration the number of vehicles joining TSO2 through this part of the itinerary and any changes to the current regulations (there are rumors that these requirements could be relaxed soon.)

As stated before, TSO2, for the author, will be the “return home” to Chad after TSO1! But N’djamena does not necessarily have to be the “end of the road” for other drivers interested in joining TSO2. For those that will want to return to Europe, an interesting option is to do so via Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Morocco, retracing either in its entirety or partially the author’s TSO1. For those interested in continuing onwards, the obvious option is to cross the Logone River and continue through Cameroon (at the current time, i.e., late 2005, the traditional route to Eastern Africa via Sudan (i.e., Darfur) should not be considered lightly!) For those who reach N’djamena not willing (or not able) to consider any more (substantial) driving, two possible options are either to continue to Douala in neighboring Cameroon and ship the vehicle back to Europe on the next RoRo (frequent sailings and not prohibitively expensive), or alternatively, to sell the car locally (doing research for this trip, the author came to the realization that it is not that unusual for drivers to finance their trips to West Africa with the profit realized from selling their vehicles locally.)

A final note, this one on the name of Arabic towns: each source consulted for the planning of this trip seems to have its way to transcribe the names of towns from Arabic to western characters. As a result, Al Katrun can also be Al Qatrun, Al Quatrun, El Ghatrum, or a variety of other things (and some of them not as obvious!) The first step for anyone considering joining TSO2 ought to be buying Michelin Map 741, Africa North & West. For this reason, throughout this document, name of towns are spelled in whatever way Michelin spells them! For names of places that do not appear on Michelin (normally small towns or landmarks on *pistes*) Chris Scott’s spelling was used and for a similar reason – the second step for anyone considering joining TSO2 ought to be to buy his book *Sahara Overland*, 2nd Edition, Trailblazer Publications, October 2004.

2.1 Stage I – Across Southern Europe: From Lisbon, Portugal to Genoa, Italy

General Info

- 2090 km via borders at Badajoz, La Jonquera and Ventimiglia, all tarred.
- 3 days: 1st night in Madrid, Spain; 2nd night near Arles, France (place TBD); 3rd night in Genoa, Italy (place TBD.)
- Highlights: In Spain, the capital, Madrid, and the Catalonian city of Barcelona; crossing the region of *Provence*, in Southern France; the historic town of Genoa in Italy.



Details

- Day 1: Lisbon, Portugal to Madrid, Spain (630 km, all tarred.)
- Day 2: Madrid, Spain to Arles, France (1020 km, all tarred.)
- Day 3: Arles, France to Genoa, Italy (440 km, all tarred.)

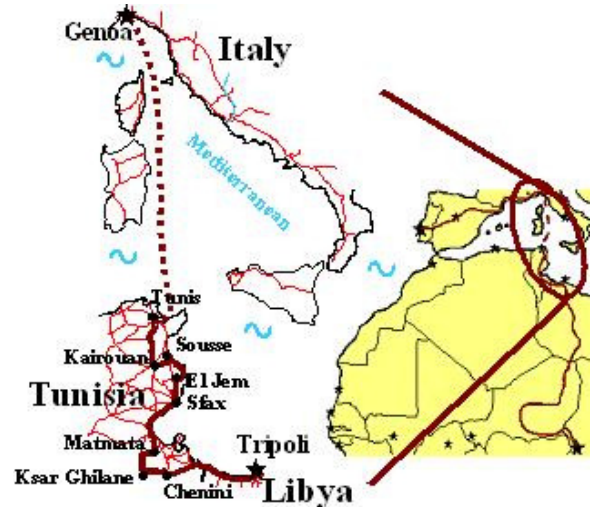
Observations

- All details for this stage to be completed.

2.2 Stage II – The Med Part: From Genoa, Italy to Tripoli, Libya

General Info

- 1060 km: 600 km from Tunis to Café Jelili, 30 km west of Matmata, tarred; 160 km from there to Chenini, piste; 300 km from Chenini, Tunisia to Tripoli, Libya, via border at Ras Ajdir, tarred.
- 9 days: 1st night in ferry; 2nd, 3rd and 4th nights in Tunis, Tunisia; 5th night in Sousse (place TBD); 6th night in Sfax (place TBD); 7th night in Ksar Ghilane (*Campement le Paradis* or *Relais Pansea*); 8th and 9th nights in Tripoli, Libya.



- Highlights: Tunis with its Medina (a Unesco World Heritage site), the Bardo Museum (the world's greatest collection of Roman mosaics) and the nearby ruins of Carthage (another Unesco World Heritage site) and the suburb of Sidi Bou Said; Kairouan with its mosque, Islam's fourth holiest site in the world (the whole city a Unesco World Heritage site); Sousse and its Medina (another Unesco World Heritage site); Mahdia and its old town; the Roman Colosseum in El Jem (another Unesco World Heritage site); the city of Sfax; and the troglodyte towns of Matmata and Chenini; In Libya, the roman ruins of Sabrata (yet another Unesco World Heritage site) and Tripoli, with its ancient Medina .

Details

- Day 1: Mostly in Genoa. Visit town during day. By late afternoon leave for ferry to Tunis, Tunisia (normally, ferry to Tunis leaves by late afternoon, early evening.)
- Day 2: In Tunis. Normally, ferry from Genoa arrives by late afternoon, early evening, so there will not be time to do much of anything in town.
- Days 3 and 4: In Tunis. Visit town (fascinating walled old city, or Medina, a Unesco World Heritage site, and the Bardo Museum, world famous for its collection of Roman mosaics.) Visit the nearby ruins of Carthage (another Unesco World Heritage site) and the suburb of Sidi Bou Said. Time permitting, visit the nearby ruins of Dougga, the most extensive and most dramatic Roman site in Tunisia, or of the Punic town of Kerkouane (both Unesco World Heritage sites.) Complete last preparations before departing south.
- Day 5: Tunis to Sousse (220 km, all tarred.) Leave early for El Fahs (60 km.) Visit the ruins of Thuburbo Majus, 3 km north of town (surrounded by rolling wheat fields, it is considered

the most idyllic of the major Roman sites in Tunisia, but the ruins are not as extensive as the ones in Dougga; if able to visit Dougga during stay in Tunis, may consider skipping Thuburbo Majus altogether, proceeding instead directly to Kairouan.) Done with Thuburbo Majus, leave for Kairouan (90 km.) Major settlements passed: Biar el Aouani (perfect turreted Byzantine fort and a little local museum.) In Kairouan, visit town (the first Arab capital of North Africa; its Great Mosque, with the oldest minaret surviving today, is Islam's fourth holiest site in the world and its Medina is also considered fascinating; the whole city is a Unesco World Heritage site.) Done with Kairouan, leave for Sousse (70 km.) Visit town (small city by the sea, famous for its Medina, a Unesco World Heritage site, with a beautiful fortified mosque and ribat, both from the 9th century.)

- Day 6: Sousse to Sfax (170 km, all tarred.) Leave along the shore to Mahdia (60 km.) Major settlements passed: Monastir (a former fishing port, location for various desert movie sets such as *Monty Python's Life of Brian* and *Jesus of Nazareth*, nowadays a bit overwhelmed by tourism development.) Once in Mahdia, visit town (generally considered Tunisia's most charming resort; the old city, on its own peninsula, is protect by a 16th century gateway.) Done with Mahdia, leave for El Jem (40 km.) Major settlements passed: Ksour Essaf (not much to see.) In El Jem, visit town famous for its extraordinary Roman Colosseum (a Unesco World Heritage site.) Done with El Jem, leave for Sfax (70 km.) Major settlements passed: El Hencha (not much to see.) In Sfax, visit town (one of the country's most lively old cities, known for its surrounding wall from 9th century, its great mosque from 10th century and its busy daily fish market.)
- Day 7: Sfax to Ksar Ghilane (290 km, 210 km tarred, 80 km *piste*.) Leave early for Matmata (180 km, all tarred.) Major settlements passed: Tyna (Roman ruins, famous for its mosaic), Mahres (beach resort with not much particularly interesting to see), Borj Younga (Byzantine fortress), Skhira (major oil facilities town with not much particularly interesting to see) and Gabes (small city by the sea, spoiled by development and pollution.) In Matmata, visit town (some of the best examples of troglodyte architecture – vertical caves dug in soft sandstone, usually formed as a circle, with doors and rooms dug in from the vertical walls; the region provided locations for the original *Star Wars* movie and its prequels, *The Phantom Menace* and *Attack of the Clones*.) Leave Matmata going west on road to Douz to the point near Café Jelili where this road intersects Chris Scott's T1 El Hamma to Tataouine piste (30 km, tarred.) Major settlements passed: Sidi Meta (Berber town) and Tamezret (Berber museum.) At Café Jelili, continue on piste to the oasis of Ksar Ghilane *campements* (80 km, piste.) (This piste is used at this point as a shakedown and practice run for desert driving.) In Ksar Ghilane and time allowing, visit the fort 2 km away.
- Day 8: Ksar Ghilane to Tripoli, Libya (380 km, 300 km tarred, 80 km piste.) Continue on Chris Scott's T1 piste to Tataouine (110 km, 90 km piste, last 20 km tarred.) Major settlements passed: Chenini (impressively-situated Berber village with more troglodyte dwellings.) In Tataouine, visit town (a palm oasis surrounded by drifting sand, with not much particularly interesting to see; the town's claim to fame is being the inspiration for the name of Luke Skywalker's home planet on the *Star War* movies.) From Tataouine, time allowing, visit the Ksar Mourabtine (abandoned and un-restored, but still largely intact, this is one of the most rewarding of the communal fortified granaries; it stands among troglodyte homes and

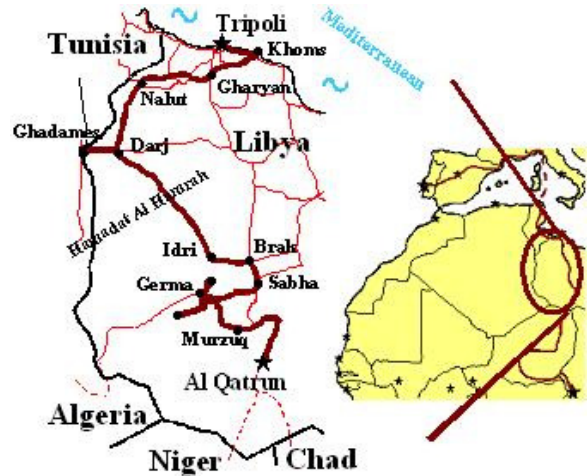
disused oil presses atop a hillside strewn with fossils of Jurassic shellfish.) Done with Tataouine, leave for the border at Ras Ajdir (110 km, all tarred.) Major settlements passed: Ben Guerdane (small village near the coast with not much particularly interesting to see.) Done with formalities at the border, continue to Tripoli along the coast (170 km, all tarred.) Major settlements passed: Zuara (Berber town with excellent white-sand beaches) and Surman (with the nearby Roman ruins of Sabrata, a Unesco World Heritage site.)

- Day 9: In Tripoli. Visit town (Medina, castle and the world-renowned Jamahiriya Museum) and the nearby Roman ruins of Leptis Magna, (another Unesco World Heritage site, one of the most magnificent and intact Roman cities anywhere in the Mediterranean.)

2.3 Stage III – Zigzagging South Across Libya: From Tripoli to Al Katrun

General Info

- 2570 km: 930 km from Tripoli to 10 km east of Darj, tarred; 450 km from there to Idri, piste; 370 km from Idri to near Germa, tarred; 420 km around Germa, piste; 400 km from Germa to Al Katrun, tarred.
- 9 days: 1st night in Gharyan (TBD); 2nd and 3rd nights in Ghadames (Winzrik Motel or Al-Waha Hotel & Camping); 4th night bush camping in the Hamadat Al Hamrah; 5th, 6th and 7th night near Germa (Camping Africa Tours); 8th and 9th nights in Al Katrun (Mohammed Tager's camping in the old Italian fort.)
- Highlights: The roman ruins of Leptis Magna, near Khoms, one of the most magnificent and intact Roman cities anywhere in the Mediterranean (and a Unesco World Heritage site); Berber troglodyte architecture in Gharyan, Qasr al-Haj and Nalut; the old city of Ghadames, one of the best-preserved caravan towns in the entire Sahara desert (and another Unesco World Heritage site); the first true and significant desert crossing experience on an off-road *piste*: the 450 km crossing of the Hamadat El Hamrah (Red Rocky Desert) from Darj to Idri, along Chris Scott's L1 *piste*; the oasis towns of Brak, Sabha and Murzuq; the ruins of ancient Garama, near Germa, one of Libya's most significant archaeological sites; the Awbari lake district and the pre-historic rock engravings of Wadi Mathendous, both of them also around Germa; the Muslim holy city of Zuwaylah.



Details

- Day 1: Tripoli to Gharyan (260 km, all tarred.) Leave very early for Khoms (120 km) to visit the ruins of Leptis Magna, generally considered the finest surviving monuments to Roman civilization in North Africa (and a Unesco World Heritage site.) Spend the morning visiting site. Time allowing, visit Villa Sileen (from the Byzantine era) on the opposite side of Khoms. Leave directly for Gharyan (140 km.) Major settlements passed: Tarhuna (not much to see.) Once in Gharyan, visit town (famous for its troglodyte architecture and its pottery.)
- Day 2: Gharyan to Ghadames (560 km, all tarred.) Leave early for Qasr al-Haj (140 km.) Major settlements passed: Abuzeyan (not much to see) and Yfren (sitting high on a series of rocky bluffs, it is one of the most appealing towns in this mountain region.) Once in Qasr al-Haj, visit the fortified granary, Libya's largest and arguably the most spectacular, example of Berber architecture (many of the storage rooms of this circular and completely enclosed

granary built in the second half of the 12th century are still in use today.) Once done with Qasr al-Haj, leave for Nalut (80 km.) Major settlements passed: Goush and Tiji (not much to see in either one.) In Nalut, visit town (home to yet another exceptional Berber *ksar*.) Done visiting town, continue to Ghadames (340 km.) Major settlements passed: Sinawan and Darj (not much to see in either one.)

- Day 3: In Ghadames. Visit the Unesco World Heritage-listed town, arguably, the best-preserved caravan town in the entire Sahara desert.
- Day 4 & 5: Ghadames to Germa (930 km, 480 km tarred, 450 km piste.) Leave early for Darj (100 km, all tarred.) At Darj's fuel station pick Chris Scott's L1 piste across the Hamadat Al Hamrah (Red Rocky Desert) and around the Idhan Awbari (the Awbari Sand Sea) to the little village of Idri on the Wadi Shati (470 km, 20 km tarred, 450 km piste.) Continue along the wadi to Brak (140 km, tarred.) Major settlements passed: Bargan and Qardan (not much to see.) In Brak, visit town (main oasis of Wadi Shati, with a small museum in the decaying 19th century Turkish fort and an exhibit of old firearms at the police station on the Italian fort.) Done with Brak, continue south to Sabha (80 km, tarred.) Visit town (main town in the area and an important staging/transit point for trans-Saharan travel, but not particularly attractive; the Italian-built fort doubles as a military base.) Continue to Africa Tours campsite in Tekerriba, 10 km before Germa (140 km.)
- Day 6: Around Germa (110 km, piste.) Visit across sand dunes to the Awbari lakes of Gabrun, Um el Ma and Mandara (Chris Scott's L4 The Dunes Lake Circuit.)
- Day 7: Around Germa (310 km, piste.) Visit the ruins of ancient Garama, the old capital of the Garamantes kingdom, 2 km south of Germa. Afterwards leave for Wadi Mathendous (Chris Scott's L5 Germa to Wadi Mathendous piste.) See the pre-historic rock engravings, dating 8000 to 6000 BC, near Wadi Mathendous.
- Day 8: Germa to Al Katrun (400 km, all tarred.) Leave for Murzuq (120 km.) Visit town (castle, once the home of the Sultan of Fezzan, and the old, vernacular-style, mosque.) Done with Murzuq, continue to Zuwaylah (130 km.) Visit town (one of the most important places in Islamic history – here seven of Mohammad's original followers are said to have died in a battle to defend the town in the 7th century.) Done with Zuwaylah, continue to the end of the tar road at Al Katrun (150 km.)
- Day 9: In Al Katrun. Do all Libyan exiting border formalities.

Observations

- Based on accommodation availability, may have to spend 1st night in Yfren, rather than in Gharyan.

2.4 Stage IV – The Marlboro *Piste* and the Tenere: From Al Katrun, Libya to Agadez, Niger

General Info

- 1700 km via border at Tumu, all piste.
- 7 days: 1st night in Madama (most likely bush camping); 2nd and 3rd nights in Seguedine (most likely bush camping); 4th night in Bilma (Le Camping Touristique de l'AKFO); 5th night bush camping somewhere in the Tenere; 6th and 7th nights in Agadez (Auberge d'Azal, Pension Tellit, or Hotel Tidene.)



- Highlights: The ruins of Djado, generally considered to be one of the highlights of the Sahara; driving along the Kaouar escarpment through the oasis of Dirkou and Bilma; driving across the Tenere, through the oasis of Fachi and the famed *Arbre du Tenere*, the place where the only tree in the whole of the Tenere once grew, the remains of which are now in a museum in Niamey (probably the only tree whose remains are exhibited in a Museum!); the dinosaur cemetery south of Tazole; the charming Tuareg town of Agadez.

Details

- Day 1: Al Katrun, Libya to Madama, Niger (390 km, all piste.) Leave for Tajarhi and the border post of Tumu (290 km.) Complete border formalities. Continue on to Madama, Niger (100 km.) Major settlements passed: none. Complete custom formalities for Niger.
- Day 2: Madama to Seguedine (260 km, all piste, mostly sandy.) Major settlements passed: Dao Timmi (military post.)
- Day 3: Seguedine to Djado and back to Seguedine (260 km, all piste.) A little detour to see what many consider to be one of the highlights of the whole of the Sahara – the ruined citadel of Djado (one of the medieval *ksour* built on outcrops of rock along the western edge of the Djado plateau back in the time when a trading route linked Lake Chad with the Fezzan.) Major settlements passed: Chirfa (oasis town.)
- Day 4: Seguedine to Bilma (170 km, all piste.) Proceed along the Kaouar escarpment to Dirkou (140 km.) Visit town (booming frontier town, with thriving markets run mostly by Nigerians who didn't quite make it to Libya.) Continue to Bilma (30 km.) Visit town (small fortified oasis town set against the Kaouar escarpment, famed for its salines.)

- Days 5 & 6: Bilma to Agadez (620 km, all piste, mostly very sandy.) The famed crossing of the Tenere! Leave for Fachi (170 km), the westernmost Kanure settlement in the Tenere. The first part on the *Grand Erg de Bilma* is rather challenging, especially for heavy vehicles on full fuel tanks. Once in Fachi, after visiting the village chief (house just east of big well at southern end of the main boulevard), visit town (old quarters, fort and the *salines*.) Done with Fachi, continue to the *Arbre du Tenere* (170 km), formerly the only tree growing in a region the size of France... .. until it was knocked over by a Libyan truck driver in 1973! A scrap-metal sculpture now marks the spot, while the remains of the original tree are exhibited in the *Musee National* in Niamey! Once done with the *Arbre*, continue to Agadez (280 km.) If possible, arrange to see the dinosaur cemetery 100 km before Agadez, south of Tazole (one of the world's most important ones.) Bush camp somewhere in route!
- Day 7: In Agadez. Visit town (charming Tuareg town, famed for its Sudanic-styled *Grande Mosquee*, the *Grand Marche* with its Tuareg jewellery and leather goods, the *Vieux Marche* and the camel market.)

2.5 Stage V – Through Central and Southeastern Niger: From Agadez to Diffa

General Info

- 920 km: first 80 km tarred; next 140 km not covered (but generally in reasonable condition); next 700 km tarred.
- 2 days: 1st night in Zinder (Hotel Amadou Kourandaga); 2nd night in Diffa (Hotel du Tal.)
- Highlights: Driving across the extremely scenic *Falaise de Tiguidit*; Zinder with its Hausa architecture (some of the world's best examples of this type of architecture).



Details

- Day 1: Agadez to Zinder (450 km, all but 140 km tarred.) Leave towards the *Falaise de Tiguidit* for Tanout (310 km, first 80 km tarred, next 140 km not covered, last 90 km tarred.) Major settlements passed: Aderbissinat (market known for its leather and sweets.) In Tanout, visit town (known for its dry Fulani cheese.) Continue to Zinder (140 km, all tarred.) Visit town (Birnin and Zengou Quarters, Mosque and the Sultan's Palace; may be possible to arrange a visit to the Sultan and even see his Rolls Royce – the only one in Niger!)
- Day 2: Zinder to Diffa (470 km, all tarred) Finish seeing Zinder and leave for Diffa. Major settlements passed: Goure (picturesque little village.) In Diffa, visit town (administrative town on the banks of the Komadougou river.)

2.6 Stage VI – Coming Home: From Diffa, Niger to N’djamena, Chad

General Info

- 700 km: 130 km from Diffa to Nguigmi to Diffa, tarred (but rough); 490 km from Nguigmi, Niger to Massaguet, Chad via border at Daboua, not covered (sandy and dusty *piste*); 80 km from Massaguet to N’djamena, tarred.
- 3 days: 1st night bush camping somewhere in Chad (place TBD); 2nd night bush camping somewhere in Chad, (place TBD); 3rd night at home in N’djamena.
- Highlights: In Niger, market of Nguigmi, big on camel trade. In Chad, not many! Drive around north side of Lake Chad, thru area with people generally unfriendly to drivers.



Details

- All details to be finalized.

2.7 Summary

Day	From	To	Km (Day)	Km (Acc)	Obs.
1	Lisbon, Portugal	Madrid, Spain	630		Embassy town
2	Madrid, Spain	Arles, France	1020		
3	Arles, France	Genoa, Italy	440	2090	
4	Genoa, Italy	At sea	-		Ferry
5	At sea	Tunis, Tunisia	-		Embassy town
6	In Tunis		-		Embassy town
7	In Tunis		-		Embassy town
8	Tunis	Sousse	220		
9	Sousse	Sfax	170		
10	Sfax	Ksar Ghilane	290		
11	Ksar Ghilane, Tunisia	Tripoli, Libya	380		Embassy town
12	In Tripoli		-	3150	Embassy town
13	Tripoli	Gharyan	260		
14	Gharyan	Ghadames	560		
15	In Ghadames		-		
16	Ghadames	In the Hamadat Al Hamrah	?		Bush camp
17	In the Hamadat Al Hamrah	Germa	930		
18	Germa	Germa	110		
19	Germa	Germa	310		
20	Germa	Al Katrun	400		
21	In Al Katrun		-	5720	
22	Al Katrun, Libya	Madama, Niger	390		
23	Madama	Seguedine	260		
24	Seguedine	Seguedine	260		
25	Seguedine	Bilma	170		
26	Bilma	In the Tenere	?		Bush camp
27	In the Tenere	Agadez	620		
28	In Agadez		-	7420	
29	Agadez	Zinder	450		
30	Zinder	Diffa	470	8340	
31	Diffa, Niger	N of the lake, Chad	?		Bush camp
32	N of the lake	NE of the lake	?		Bush camp
33	NE of the lake	N'djamena	700	9040	Home

3. General Considerations

3.1 Safety and Security

This is the “risk” thing. Trying to evaluate the risk of an activity is not necessarily very straightforward. First and foremost, because risk is probabilistic in nature. Secondly, because it is easy to be misled by pre-conceived perceptions about “risk” (mountain climbing in the Himalayas or in the Alps is generally perceived to be “more risky” than organized religion in America; however, probably more people have died recently as a consequence of the latter – bombing of family planning clinics, Waco, Guyana – than of the former.) And thirdly, because what is “too risky” for some may be mere routine for others (brings to mind the famous picture of the steelworkers having lunch seated on a beam during the construction of a skyscraper in NY in the 30’s.)



TSO2 goes through an area that, to put it mildly, has a risk profile quite different from most areas in the US or Western Europe! A detailed and comprehensive risk analysis of such an expedition is clearly out of the scope of this document. As a matter of fact, whole books could be – and have been – written on the subject. Rather, the intention here is to introduce the topic by listing the risks thought to be more prevalent and to look in a very general manner at what can be done to mitigate them. Health related issues are addressed in the following section.

In very general terms, a serious (as in life-threatening) crisis can arise from:

- Serious personal injuries;
- Getting lost;
- Vehicle problems;
- Banditry;
- Terrorism; and
- Landmines.

The mitigation of most of these risks starts at home, before any driving is actually done, with proper planning! In a trip like this, it is important to be adequately prepared and equipped; it is important to be prepared and equipped to handle the innumerable contingencies that are bound to happen once under way; it is important to plan the route carefully, taking into consideration supply needs (namely fuel and water) and danger areas. Concerning this last point, going anywhere near less secure areas should only be done if absolutely needed and never alone – either plan to join someone else’s convoy or plan one yourself. All this work is done before hitting the road.

Once on the road, it is important to drive defensively, not to drive at night and to avoid off-piste short cuts. Serious injuries are more of a problem in motorcycle expeditions than in vehicle ones. Normally, assuming seat belts are being used, a car accident to be serious enough to cause a life-threatening injury has to be a big one, one that involves a roll over or a major crash. Hence the

importance of driving defensively, of not going off-piste and of not driving at night, when local unlit vehicles on the road are not unusual. Not driving off-piste or at night are also important steps to mitigate the risk of getting lost. For this, it is also important to know where you are and where you are going at all times! If ever lost, do not carry on; stop before you go too far. If immobilized with vehicle problems, do not abandon the vehicle unless absolutely positive that you can reach help in a short walk along a clear track. One of today's most effective survival aids in an emergency is a Satellite phone (e.g., Iridium or Thuraya.) These devices are important not only to get you out of some problems, but also to help you avoid others, such as driving into political unrest!

In short, plan well, use common sense and know your limitations! Specifically to TSO2, all the guidelines mentioned above are being – and will always be – strictly followed.

A final consideration on yet another safety related issue – petty crime. In the area to be crossed by TSO2, pick pocketing, robberies, scams and the like, seldom ever escalate into a serious, life-threatening, situation. Bothersome, most likely; life-threatening, normally not! This is the reason why petty crime was not included on the list of concerns addressed above. Here, as in most places around the world (including Europe and the US), the best defenses against this problem are common sense and being street-wise.

3.2 Health Related Issues

This section follows the same format set forth in the previous one, i.e., it is an introduction to the topic rather than a comprehensive analysis of it. And to deal with health related issues, as dealing with the issues addressed in the previous section, the first preventive steps should be taken before leaving home – avoiding health problems starts with an adequate immunization plan, devised in conjunction with a doctor. Such plan should include vaccines against the following diseases:

- Hepatitis A and B (available in a combined form; three doses within a six month period);
- Meningitis (single dose);
- Polio (most likely only a booster may be needed; may clash with vaccine for yellow fever);
- Rabies (three doses within a 28 day period; rare but 100% fatal; vaccine only buys time until further medical attention is received);
- Diphtheria and tetanus (most likely only a booster may be needed; single dose);
- Typhoid (single dose, oral or injection); and
- Yellow fever (single dose.)

Once on the road, the most common health related problems likely to occur are diarrhea, sunburns, dehydration, bites and stings and malaria. Fortunately, there are well known preventive measures that one can take to minimize the probabilities of ever being affected by any one of these problems. Even more fortunately, all but the last type of problems on the list – namely diarrhea, sunburns, dehydration and bites and stings – if dealt with early enough, seldom ever become more than just an annoyance. With malaria, the situation is a bit more complicated – malaria (or the dehydration caused by its fever) is the most common cause of death in the world and while most health professionals consider the desert areas of North Africa to be malaria-free, the Sahel region

south of the Sahara is still a high-risk zone. As mentioned above, the first step to avoid life-threatening problems with malaria is prevention, namely malarial prophylactics and avoiding being exposed to mosquito bites, especially between dusk and dawn. The second step is being alert for malaria symptoms, to be able to detect it and to start taking care of it as early as possible. In a worst case scenario, for malaria as for any other serious medical situation, there is always the possibility of being evacuated. (Medical evacuation insurance is readily available at reasonable costs and is strongly recommended.)

3.3 Other Miscellaneous Considerations

TSO2 will encourage behavior respectful of the guidelines for responsible tourism set forth by the UK-based organization, Tourism Concern (www.tourismconcern.org.uk). The most relevant of these guidelines are:

- Save precious natural resources;
- Support local enterprise;
- Ask before taking close-up photographs of people;
- Do not give money to children, as it encourages begging as an alternative to working (for charity, make a donation to a recognized project such as health center or a school);
- Respect local etiquette;
- Educate yourself about the places you visit (it helps you understand its people and helps prevent misunderstandings and frustrations); and
- Be patient, friendly and sensitive (always keep in mind that you are a guest.)

4. Equipment and Consumables

4.1 Vehicle and Vehicle Related Equipment and Consumables

Over 9,000 kilometers in just over a month is tough on any vehicle anywhere in the world. Here, given the state of the roads (or lack thereof!), weather conditions (hot and dusty) and the generalized lack of support infrastructure (in some places lacking even your most basic road-side gas station), it is even more so. It is not the intention of this document to expand at great length on the specifications desired for a vehicle that is being brought to this environment. (For a very good write up on this subject, consult Chris Scott's *Sahara Overland*.) It is generally accepted that the ideal car for an expedition such as this one should be powerful but excellent on fuel economy, mechanically simple, easily repairable even in the most remote parts of the world, robust but comfortable and feather light, able to go to (and get out of) any place with all of our belongings and, most of course, extremely cheap in the first place. Unfortunately, such a vehicle does not exist! Obviously, some compromises are called for. Narrowing it down, the following list indicates some specific characteristics that, in the opinion of the author, are desirable:

- 4WD with rear differential lock;
- Good ground clearance, robustness and payload capacity but not excessively heavy;
- Diesel powered (less volatile, cheaper and more readily available); and
- Not overloaded with complicated gizmos

It is worthwhile to note that, for either technical, commercial, political, practical, or even fashion reasons, two brands, namely, Toyota and Land Rover, dominate the Sahara and Sahel road scene as none other. This is relevant because vehicles of these brands are more easily repairable in the remote areas that TSO2 will cross.

Preparing and equipping a vehicle for TSO2 should not be taken lightly. A list of what is considered absolutely essential should include:

- Ability to carry large amounts of diesel and water (long-range tanks and/or jerry-cans);
- Ability to repair a flat on the road (one extra spare tire, i.e., 2 instead of 1, is recommended);
- Ability to re-inflate tires after sandy passages (a 12V portable air compressor is ideal);
- Some recovery equipment (high-lift or air bag jack, a tow rope, sand plates and a good old shovel; a winch, while not essential, may come in handy); and
- An appropriate amount of consumables (filters, belts, air tubes, oils, et cetera.)

Again, for more on this topic it is highly recommended that a specialized book (such as Chris Scott's) or a web site (see section on Resources and Suppliers below) be consulted.

4.2 Navigation and Communications

As mentioned before, knowing where one is and where one is going is crucial towards avoiding potentially serious situations. TSO2 includes three "serious" desert passages: from Darj to Idri in

Libya, from Al Katrun in southern Libya to Madama in northeastern Niger, and from Bilma to Agadez in central Niger. To help with navigation on these passages, a handheld GPS unit, a back-up unit and appropriately scaled paper charts are deemed essential (for more on paper charts, see section on Resources and Suppliers below.)

On the communications side, it is deemed essential to have at the very least one Satellite phone. As explained in the Safety and Security section above, a Sat phone is important not only to get out of any eventual jam but also to be informed while on the road of events or facts that could potentially have a serious impact on the trip (e.g., political unrest, unusual weather, et cetera.)

Still on the subject of communications, some thought will be devoted to devising a short-range radio system to allow for inter-vehicle communications.

4.3 Camping Equipment, Food and Other Miscellaneous Items

As indicated in the Itinerary section above, bush camping next to the vehicle will be absolutely necessary in some places. In some other places, it may not be necessary but desirable! In any case, either out of need or just for pleasure, TSO2 will involve some camping and therefore some camping gear. But again, the list of what is considered needed is neither long nor complicated:

- Ability to separate oneself from mosquitoes and other flying bugs at night (i.e., either a tent or a good mosquito net);
- Ability to put some distance between oneself and any crawling bug (i.e., a cot!)
- Ability to prepare and eat your most basic meal (some sort of basic gas-fired camping stove, some very basic cooking utensils, some very basic food supplies and lots of drinking water!)

Rounding up this section, the last “piece of equipment” deemed necessary for the trip and worth mentioning here is a first aid kit. To prepare an adequate kit, here again, a specialized book such as Chris Scott’s should be consulted.

5. Documentation and Formalities

The list below indicates documentation and formalities required by each country for entry thru land borders for tourists (in addition to all the traditional documentation required – or desirable to have – for international travel by car, i.e., passport, international driver’s license, international health certificate, car ownership documentation and international paperwork for car and personal health insurance.) Information on Chad is included for completeness.

5.1 EU (Portugal, Spain, France and Italy)

Visa: Not needed for US nationals.
Carnet: Not needed.
Guides: Not required by law.

5.2 Tunisia

Visa: Not needed for EU or US nationals.
Carnet: Not needed.
Guides: Not required by law.

5.3 Libya

Visa: Needed by all US and EU nationals. Consulates in France, Italy, Spain, Tunisia, UK and USA. To obtain a visa, a “Letter of Invitation” from a Libyan entity or travel agency is needed. With a “Letter of Invitation”, visas may also be obtained at the Ras Ajdir border post.
Carnet: Buy local carnet at border post (estimated cost: €50 per car.)
Guides: Required by law (estimated cost: €50 to €100 per day without a vehicle, €100 to €150 per day on his own vehicle.)
Misc: Temporary vehicle license plate – Needed to be rented at border (estimated cost: 100 LD, with 50 LD supposedly refunded with return at exit border.)
Local vehicle insurance – Needed to be obtained at border (estimated cost: around €50 per car per 30 days.)
Local police registration – Needed to be done within 5 days of entering the country.

5.4 Niger

Visa: Needed by all US and EU nationals and not issued at border posts. Consulates in Paris, Brussels and Bonn.
Carnet: Buy laissez-passer (local carnet) at border post (good for all CFA zone.)
Guides: Only required by law in the Tenere region (estimated cost: €50 per day without a vehicle, €150 per day on his own vehicle.)
.Misc: Buy local insurance at border post (good for all CFA zone.)

5.5 Chad

- Visa: Needed by all US and EU nationals.
- Carnet: Buy laissez-passer (local carnet) at border posts (5000 CFA.)
- Guides: Per law, only required in northern provinces (BET.) Guides provided by the Sous-Perfect.
- Misc: Tourist registration – Tourists should register at the ‘Commissariat Centrale’ in N’djamena (30 minutes, 1 passport photo, no cost). Stamp in passport will be checked at road checkpoints.
- Autorisation de Circuler – to avoid problems, travelers should have an ‘Autorisation de Circuler’, available from the Service des Autorisations Diverses, Direction de l’Interieur, Ministere de l’Administration du Territoire, (ask for Monsieur Tatoula; 1 to 2 days, no cost.) Have your passport ready and know all places you will be visiting.
- Photo permit – required per law (but reportedly rarely enforced, especially out of the city.)

6. Resources and Suppliers: Directory and Links

6.1 Camping and Expedition Material

Brigade Quartermasters: www.actiongear.com

EMS: www.ems.com

Nomad Travel & Outdoor: www.nomadtravel.co.uk

REI: www.rei.com

West Marine: www.westmarine.com

Items already bought or in the process of buying:

- Tent (REI Item # 7125610019, Kelly Gunnison 4 Person)
- Cot (Brigade Quartermaster Item # Cot 11, Military Style Folding Cot, 77 x 25 x 17, 10 lbs)
- Mosquito Net (Brigade Quartermaster Item # CMN98 Combo 4 way mosquito net)
- Solar heated shower (West Marine item # 238758, H2O SunShower, 5 gallon solar heated shower)
- Foam sleeping pad
- Cooking stove & kitchen supplies (to be detailed)

6.2 Electronics (Navigation and Communication Equipment)

West Marine: www.westmarine.com

Items already bought or in the process of buying:

- GPS (West Marine Item # 2193944, Garmin GPS 76 & accessories)

6.3 Health Related Sites

Travel & vaccination Info:

US CDC: www.cdc.gov/travel/

Medical Advisory Service for Travelers Abroad: www.masta.org

World Health Organization: www.who.int

Travel Health Online: www.tripprep.com

Travel Doctor: www.traveldoctor.co.uk

Malaria:

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine: www.lshtm.ac.uk/malaria

Health Protection Agency: www.malaria-reference.co.uk

Medical Evacuation Services and Insurance:

International SOS: www.internationalsos.com/en/index.htm

First Assist: www.firstassist.co.uk

Travel Insurance Services: www.travelinsure.com/why/medicalevacuation.htm

6.4 Maps and Topographical Charts

Suppliers:

The Map Shop: www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords: www.stanfords.co.uk

Maps.com: www.maps.com

IGN Map Shop: www.ign.fr

Les Librairies de Voyageurs du Monde: www.vdm.com/vdm/cite/boutique/index.asp

Items already bought or in the process of buying:

Africa – North & West, Michelin 741, 1:4,000,000 (general planning)

Tunisia, Michelin 744, 1:800,000 (general country map)

Libya,

Niger, IGN, 1:2,000,000 (general country map)

Tchad, IGN, 1:1,500,000 (general country map)

NF-33 Djado (IGN topographical chart, 1:1,000,000, old surveys)

NE-33 Bilma (IGN topographical chart, 1:1,000,000, old surveys)

NE-32 Agadez (IGN topographical chart, 1:1,000,000, old surveys)

ND-33 Ndjamena (IGN topographical chart, 1:1,000,000, old surveys)

ONC H-3 (Central West Libya, 1:1,000,000)

ONC J-4 (SW Libya, NE Niger and Northern Chad, 1:1,000,000)

ONC K-3 (SE Niger and SW Chad, 1:1,000,000)

TPC H-3A (E Algeria & W Libya, 1:500,000)

TPC H-3B (NW Libya, 1:500,000)

TPC H-3C (SW Libya, 1:500,000)

TPC K-3B (SE Niger and Central West Chad, 1:500,000)

Note: other US DMA 1:1,000,000 Operational Navigational Charts (ONC's) and 1:500,000 Tactical Pilotage Charts (TPC's) may be used as replacement for 1:1,000,000 IGN topographical charts.

Maps on-line:

LexicOrient: <http://lexicorient.com/e.o/atlas/index.htm>

The University of Texas Libraries: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/

National Geographic: www.nationalgeographic.org/maps/

6.5 Tourism Related Resources

General and Route Information

Sahara Overland (route info & driver's forum): www.sahara-overland.com

Sahara Travel (travel agency): www.saharatravel.com

Transafrica (route info): www.transafrica.fr

Mosquitto (route info, in Portuguese): www.mosquitto.org

Unesco's website on its World Heritage sites: <http://whc.unesco.org/>

Els Slots's website on World Heritage sites: www.worldheritagesite.org

Hannibal Barca and the Punic Wars: www.barca.fsnet.co.uk

Ferry Companies

Grandi Navi Veloci: www.gnv.it

Compagnie Tunisienne de la Navigation: www.ctn.com.tn

Grimaldi Ferries: www.grimaldi-ferries.com.uk

Tunisia

Tunisian National Tourism Office: www.tourismtunisia.com

Tunisian National Tourism Office: www.tunisietourisme.com.tn

Tunisia Online: www.tunisiaonline.com

LexicOrient, Tunisia: www.lexicorient.com/e.o/tunisia.htm

Lonely Planet: www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/africa/tunisia

The Star Wars Traveler: www.toysrgus.com

Campement le Paradis, Ksar Ghilane: (+216) 75.470.255

Relais Pansea, Ksar Ghilane: <http://www.pansea.com/ksar.html>

Libya

LexicOrient, Libya: www.lexicorient.com/e.o/libya.htm

Lonely Planet: www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/africa/libya

Camping Africa Tours, Tekerriba: 071.625.594

Mohammed Tager's camping (Wadi Alhikma Agency), Al Katrun:

Niger

Lonely Planet: www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/africa/niger

World 66: www.world66.com/africa/niger

Le Camping Touristique de l'AKFO, Bilma:

Auberge d'Azal, Agadez:

Pension Tellit, Agadez:

Hotel Tidene, Agadez:

Hotel Amadou Kourandaga, Zinder: (+227) 51.0742

Hotel du Tal, Diffa: (+227) 54.0332

Chad

Lonely Planet: www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/africa/chad

World 66: www.world66.com/africa/chad

6.6 US Dept of State Resources

Embassies

Tunis, Tunisia (Monday to Friday, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm)

Les Berge du Lac

Tel: (+216) 71.107.000

Tel, after hours: (+216) 71.107.212

Web site: <http://tunis.usembassy.gov/index.html>

Niamey, Niger (Monday to Friday, 8:00 am - 4:30 pm)

Rue des Ambassades

Tel: (+227) 72.2661/2/3/4

Tel, after hours: (+227) 72.3141

Web site: <http://niamey.usembassy.gov/>

N'djamena, Chad (Monday to Thursday, 7:30 am - 5:00 pm; Friday, 7:30 am - 12:30 pm)

Avenue Felix Eboue

Tel: (+235) 51.7009 or 9052 or 9233

Tel, after hours: (+235) 51.7009

Web site: <http://ndjamena.usembassy.gov/>

Liaison Office

Tripoli, Libya

Post Reports

Tunisia: http://foia.state.gov/MMS/posrpt/pr_view_all.asp?CntryID=148

Libya:

Niger: http://foia.state.gov/MMS/posrpt/pr_view_all.asp?CntryID=110

Chad: http://foia.state.gov/MMS/posrpt/pr_view_all.asp?CntryID=32

Miscellaneous

Current travel warnings: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html

Consular information sheets: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Country background notes: www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/

6.7 Vehicle Related

Toyota (diplomatic and tax-free sales, Europe & Africa): www.toyota-gib.com

InterMotive (Land Rover & Toyota sales, parts and prep): <http://www.intermotive-car.nl/>

Matt Savage (parts and prep): www.mattsavage.com

David Lambeth (parts and prep, off road assistance): +44 (0) 1892 853913

Milner Off Road (parts and access for Jap 4x4) www.milneroffroad.com