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OVERLAND THE FAROES

Toyota Hilux explores the archipelago and finds some of the most impressive views

KING OF THE HAMMERS

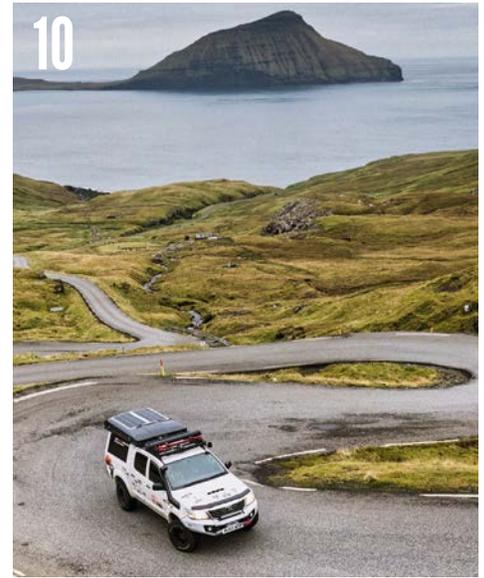
A tale of first time racing out of Hammertown in the Baby Trophy Truck

MONGOLIA + LAND CRUISER

Bad Roads won't stop the Troopy from exploring this ancient land

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Are you interested in more Electric & Hybrid vehicle adventure coverage? See our current and future EV Adventure articles on *Live to Explore!*

<https://LiveToExplore.co/evadventure>

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Toyota Hilux exploring the Faroe Islands

PHOTO BY

Jason Spafford
@fourwheelednomad

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[FRAMED]

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

TOYOTA ADVENTURE IS ALIVE AND WELL

IT HAS BEEN AN INTERESTING START TO 2023, TO SAY THE LEAST.

When Jan 1, 2023 hit—the 3rd Gen Tundra Sequoias with their hybrid drivetrains were top of mind for all of us in the vehicle supported adventure (Overland) industry, now just a short six months later, we have an entire new set of late model vehicles to pine over.

The 2024 Tacoma (Page 4) was released and it finally sports many of the features we've been asking about forever: 4 wheel disc brakes, a PreRunner trim, and of course a manual gearbox. It also looks amazing and will no doubt be an amazing adventure vehicle for this fourth generation.

Not to be outdone, Lexus also revealed the GX 550 (Page 48) with a much more aggressive (some say boxy) design. This new truck is clearly meant for the adventure-minded enthusiast, especially since it now comes in an Overtrail and Overtrail+ trim that make it perfect to get dirty right off of the dealer lot.

But wait, there's more!

Not long after the GX launch, Toyota began teasing the Land Cruisers return to the United States (See Fall/Winter 2022 Last Word). The new LC will be very similar in size and capability to the GX 550, and we really hope they go a little more retro and offer something that also competes with Ford Bronco and the various Jeep models.

While none of the new releases offer a hybrid option at launch, we're told to expect electrified versions relatively soon.

We're still very excited for what the future holds with these modern, capable, and well designed vehicles!

Until next time, Stay Safe, Stay the Trail, and Tread Lightly!

Shane

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2024 Tacoma: More Revolution than Evolution?



As expected, the all new 2024 Toyota Tacoma is bringing the TNGA-F architecture to the mid-size market. Toyota revealed the brand new design during a special event in Hawaii. This all new fourth generation truck will be available in both a 2.4l turbo and i-FORCE MAX Hybrid that produce more HP and torque than the outgoing model.

The new design updates the truck to rear disc brakes, a coil-sprung rear suspension, and an all new look that will set the standard for mid-size pickups. It really is a revolution in the Toyota Tacoma world.



Additional Details from the reveal:

- Standard 4cyl 2.4l Turbo - produces up to 278 horsepower, 317 lb.-ft. of torque.
- i-FORCE MAX turbo 2.4l hybrid - produces 326 horsepower, 465 lb.-ft. of torque.
- First Trailhunter grade is a factory-developed overlanding rig with the latest off-road equipment from ARB, Old Man Emu, and RIGID.
- TRD Pro Tacoma debuts IsoDynamic Performance Seat for enhanced off-road driving control and comfort.
- 2024 Tacoma adds new XtraCab long bed configuration for enhanced interior functionality and cargo capacity

The 2024 Toyota Tacoma is a redesigned mid-size pickup truck that is built on the TNGA-F global truck platform. It has a new high-strength boxed, steel-ladder frame, numerous off-road features, an available fully redesigned multi-link coil rear suspension, and

two powerful and efficient turbocharged four-cylinder powertrains, including a top-of-the-line i-FORCE MAX hybrid. The Tacoma also introduces the world to Toyota's all-new Trailhunter grade, a purpose-built overlanding rig available right off the dealer lot. The all-new 2024 Tacoma will go on sale later this year with i-FORCE MAX models arriving in early 2024. Manufacturer's suggested retail pricing will be announced closer to the on-sale dates.

Here are some of the key features of the 2024 Toyota Tacoma:

- New high-strength boxed, steel-ladder frame
- Numerous off-road features
- Available fully redesigned multi-link coil rear suspension
- Two powerful and efficient turbocharged four-cylinder powertrains, including a top-of-the-line i-FORCE MAX hybrid
- All-new Trailhunter grade, a purpose-built overlanding rig

TACOMA



In terms of grades, Tacoma is available in SR, SR5, TRD PreRunner, TRD Sport, TRD Off Road, Limited, TRD Pro, and Trailhunter.

Returning for 2024, TRD PreRunner is available in the XtraCab configuration with two-wheel drive only. It has a lifted front suspension, larger diameter BFGoodrich all-terrain tires, and an electronically locking rear differential.

For a sportier look and feel, TRD Sport gets black 18-in. TRD wheels, color-keyed door handles and overfenders, hood scoop, black exterior badging, and aluminum pedals.

The TRD Off-Road grade is more capable than ever thanks to new Bilstein remote reservoir monotube shocks for better heat dissipation and the available front stabilizer bar disconnect system.

Limited grades offer more sophistication than ever with a luxurious interior and standard tech including power retractable sidesteps, head-up display, 14-inch touchscreen, JBL® audio, digital rearview mirror, and a power moonroof along with the new smooth-riding adaptive variable suspension and full-time four-wheel

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TACOMA

drive on i-FORCE MAX-equipped models.

Trailhunter is also all-new for 2024 and offers a well-equipped overlanding rig that's adventure-ready right from the dealer.

Tacoma will offer a robust color palette that includes Supersonic Red, Blue Crush Metallic, Underground, Wind Chill Pearl, Solar Octane, Celestial Silver Metallic, Black, Ice Cap, and Bronze Oxide. A new TRD Pro-exclusive

color was also just announced: Terra is a new take on a red/orange color that is reminiscent of the Red Mountains of Ouray, CO.

The 2024 Toyota Tacoma will be a top choice for mid-size truck buyers and overland enthusiasts. It offers a combination of off-road capability, power, efficiency, and features that make it a great choice for both work and play. *TR*



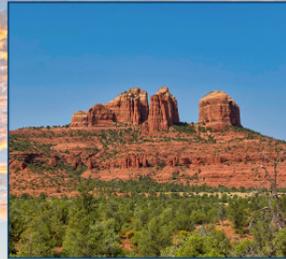
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HOW TO OVERLAND IN THE FAROE ISLANDS

Words Lisa Morris | Images Jason Spafford

BEFORE REACHING THE FAROES, it's easy to underestimate this tiny mountainous land where glittering waters sweep into clean fjord shores, raging their full power against mighty shards of rock. It's adorned with some of Europe's most impressive cliffs to the west and big swathes of greenbelt to the east. Velvety mountains and spongy heathland run rampant through every wind-tousled valley. Unpeopled for the large part, no litter, just picturesque spots and rustic villages—full of texture and color. It's a startling way to encounter the Faroes.

Upon mooring or touching down on the archipelago situated between Iceland, Norway, and Scotland, the islands are connected by bridges and causeways. Here's how to experience this faraway place.

TOPOGRAPHY

Basalt layers began forming the Faroes 60 million years ago. Today, at 70 miles long and 47 miles wide, it's home to 18 craggy, volcanic islands of barely trodden trails. Nowhere will you find yourself more than three miles from the shoreline. Until social media gives this gemstone the same coverage as Iceland, it remains a relatively under-the-radar Nordic jewel.

CLIMATE AND WHEN TO VISIT

Encircled by the Gulf Stream 62 degrees North, and isolated from the Nordic and Scottish mainlands, means that the weather is deemed as "maritime subarctic". Interchangeable, definitely. You can get drizzle, a double rainbow in glorious sunshine, and it can blow a fresh "hooley" in a four-season day, so layer up.



Faroese settlement houses on grassy heathland hillside

Temperatures dip to a mild 37 degrees in winter, where daylight plummets to five hours a day, and climb to a cool 55 degrees during summertime with up to nigh 20 hours of sunlight!

Some 300 wet days annually call for Gore-Tex, but if the menacing Norse Gods allow, the Northern Lights can glorify the night skies from September to April. Check the weather forecast in this northern latitude location and carry a map app. When skies do a 180, it's handy to keep one's bearings and wend your way towards better weather.

VISAS

As a self-governed land of Denmark, Danish immigration regulations apply. A Faroes tourist visa is required for anyone outside the EU. Look up your nearest Danish embassy/consulate.

OVERLANDING

The Faroes' infrastructure is established more than you may envisage for such a closed-off location. There are routes granting access to all the remote villages, carving through the harsh terrain or choppy waters by road or ferry. Often, snakelike roads undulate over the hills and distill to singletrack through intimidating tunnels. You can travel bottom-up in under two hours in your vehicle, on public transport, or a motorcycle.

Sub-sea toll tunnels, roads, and bridges connect

Vágur with the nearby island of Streymoy, and Bordoy to Eysturoy, making it a doddle to get anywhere. Signposted roads are concrete and well-maintained for the most part. Expect the streets veering off to the smaller settlements to steepen and narrow, turning to gravel. Negotiate those with care. That said, a four-by-four is not requisite. Note that off-roading is forbidden over this protected, sensitive landscape.

By law, driving on the right up to 50 mph on main roads and within 30 mph through villages is stipulated. As is keeping your headlights on at all times. Convenient passing places ensure the main roads stay clear for oncoming vehicles to pass without fuss, but don't be enticed to pull over in these and take a cheeky snap. Keep your eyes peeled for shaggy sheep around every corner, the source of most congestion. Studded tires will prove helpful from mid-October through April when there can be a dusting of snow and black ice.

Car rentals at Torshavn or Vágur Airport offer options for every budget. Gas stations are available on Bordoy, Eysturoy, Sandoy, Streymoy, Suðuroy, and Vágur.

SIX STUNNING ROADS

Sørvágur to Gasadalur, Route 45

From the village of Sørvágur on Vágur, where the Nix horse legend resides, lap up the magic of Molafossur waterfall. En route to the charming cluster of houses in

Gasadalur on the 45, you'll get a dark tunnel experience before terrific vistas of Tindhólmur and the iconic Drangarnir archway unfurl. This is an unmissable drive during the golden hour at sunset, setting the tips of Tindhólmur and the island of Mykines on fire under a neon pink and burnt orange sky.

Buttercup Route to Norðradalur off the 10 to Torshavn

Towards Torshavn along Route 10, a small road on the right leads to a tiny tucked-away village called Norðradalur on the western coast of Streymoy. Expect woolly sheep in droves and a wide gorge spectacularly carving its way down to the water's edge.

Tjørnuvík via Fossá waterfall on Route 594

As you approach Tjørnuvík (pronounced 'Chu-nu-vik') – the biggest Faroese waterfall at Streymoy, the road tapers and ascends sharply giving your backside a complimentary workout.

Norðdepil to Viðareiði, Route 70

Once you've traced the winding road to the edge of Viðoy, you'll reach the northernmost



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settlement, Viðareiði. Stellar views go out toward the craggy northeastern cliffs of Borðoy, also known as 'Headland Island'.

The only way to Kalsoy

In the northeast, between Eysturoy and Kunoy, take the solitary road to reach Kalsoy. Once you disembark the ferry, swing a right and enjoy the madness of the tuck-in-your-wing-mirrors, one-way tunnel system! Passing the third tunnel, you'll meander towards Trollanes, the start of the Kallur Lighthouse trailhead.

Streymnes to Saksun, Route 53

Over on Streymoy's northwest side, the road from Streymnes to Saksun is a worthwhile one. The slim strip of asphalt gently veers you away from the coastline and cuts through the high-sided mountainous green valley to the village of Saksun.

LOCALE

It began with a Viking "thing" taking after the hammer-wielding Thor, the Nordic God of Thunder, followed by a marketplace and later a thriving town. Today, Torshavn, meaning "Thor's harbor," is one of the world's smallest capital cities. Traffic-choked roads and hordes of tourists haven't reached this cosmopolitan municipality or even the Faroes; life here unfolds at its own untroubled pace.

Brilliantly, town buses are free, the Prime Minister's contact details are listed in the phone book, and the national language has appeared on milk cartons to preserve it. Mercifully, English is widely spoken. Three is both the number of hostels and the volume of traffic light units.

A Viking history harmonizes with the contemporary eliciting Torshavn's unique allure. A lovely sprinkling of old grass-roofed, black-tarred houses with white painted



Waterfall and settlement near sea above steep cliff

windows sit alongside buildings of modernity, all nestled in an enclave bound by nature's endless supply of ruggedness.

POPULATION

The populace is a shade below 50,000. Sheep, utilized as willing lawnmowers and seen on the Islands' coat and arms, outweigh the residents by almost 2:1. Unsurprising, "Faeroe" is alleged to mean "sheep islands". Despite the small people population, 80 nationalities reside in the Faroes. Such ethnic diversity derives from when the Vikings settled 1,000 years ago but were not accompanied by Norwegian female counterparts; they snatched up Irish and Scottish lassies instead.

CULTURAL PROVISIONS

To be Faroese is chatting about the weather (and doubtless the tourists) in a close-knit community, slow cooking, comfort food, and togetherness. They're a nation that hunts seabirds and, to this day, still participates in mass whaling for their blubber and meat. Meanwhile, there's an empowering LGBT movement and the government is proactively working towards solely renewable energy by 2030.

DO'S

- This isn't a low-cost destination, so stock the coffers beyond your intended budget.
- Pack your drone.
- Engage with the friendly locals. Learn some words/stock phrases:
- Excuse me = Orsaka (Orsh-akha)
- Hi = Hey
- Do you speak English? = Tosar Tú Enskt? (Toah-sar Too Enskt?) One beer = Eina Øl (Eye-nah Uhl)

- Stick to the designated trails, paths, and roads.

DON'TS

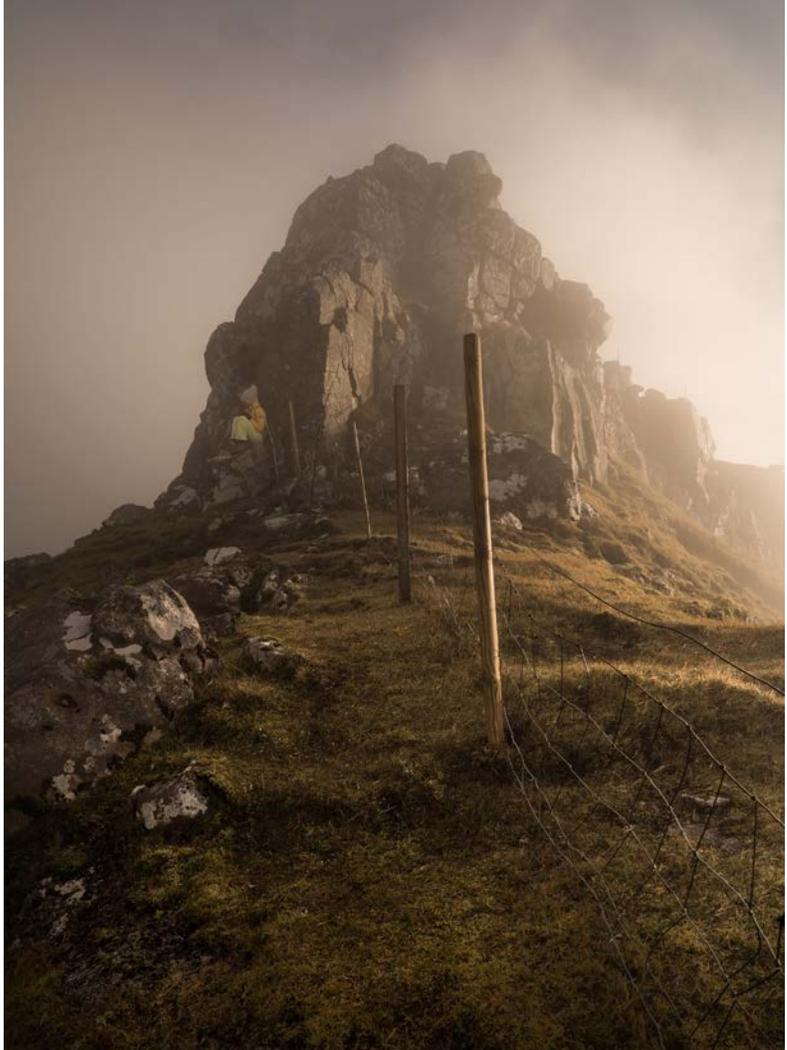
- Interfere with any bird's nest.
- Approach cliff edges, some with 1,300 ft. drop-offs; deceptively strong winds prevail.
- Intrude on cultivated farmland or any other privately owned land.
- Discuss Grindadráp, the Faroese whale hunt, with the locals. It may cause provocation.

ACCOMMODATION

Whether you choose a hostel (e.g., Giljanas is good), hotel, self-catering Airbnb, or to camp, there's something for all. Conveniently, 21 campsites are spread over six islands. Including a football field. It's banned to wild camp/overnight in a vehicle. Alas.

MONEY

Bring a combination of MasterCard/Visa credit cards (American Express is not widely accepted), Apple Pay, and krone (Faroese and Danish are comparable)—hard currency on the remote islands where only cash is accepted. ATMs are widely available.



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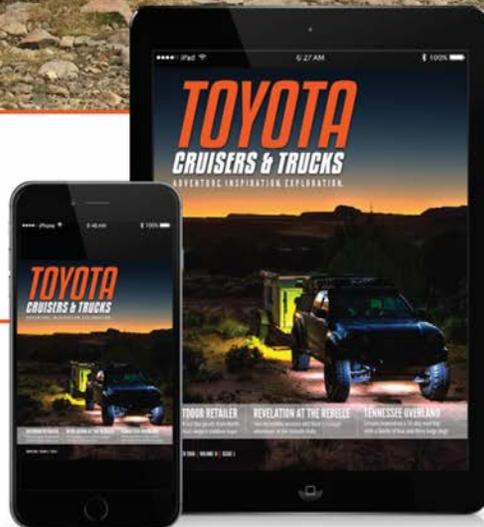
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ADVENTURE ON THE ARCHIPELAGO

Tours and excursions can be booked in the Tourist Information Centers or online. Thrill-seeking activities range from world-class winter surfing in Tjørnuvík, diving the crystal clear waters year-round, rappelling a 656 ft. bluff on Sandoy into the water, and swimming back to shore to kayaking. Or, horse riding over the emerald-green landscape may be more your bag of fun.

PREMIER HIKING DESTINATION

A trekker's idyll, 687 miles of coastline fringe a lunar landscape of inlets and fjords, hills and mountains, and ancient landmarks on old settlement land – all imbued with a mystical Faroese legend that can be better appreciated on foot. The highest peak, Slættaratindur, bestows a panoramic vantage point of the archipelago at 2,887 feet. Feel free to wander the time-worn trails marked by age-old cairns toward rocky formations such as Trøllkonufingur (the Witch's Finger on Vágar). Take in the scenic village walks, too.

TWO RECOMMENDED TREKS:

- **Sunrise hike:** Lake Sørvágsvatn and Múlafossur waterfall, Vágar
- **Dusk hike:** Kallur Lighthouse, Kalsoy

Because Faroese land comprises mostly private ownership, there's no right to roam. Information centers will furnish you with any entry restrictions. Follow the signposts at a trailhead, occasionally needing to flash your contactless credit card to enter the turnstile. (Unguided treks are from \$10 to \$35.)

BOATING

Being smack dab in the North Atlantic launches special ways of further experiencing the Faroes. Be that gawping at the guillemots, puffins, and razorbills at Mykines, Søltuvík, and Vestmanna, deep-sea fishing, cruising down the straits, or island hopping. Sightseeing cruises are from \$50 to \$175. You could even attend a cave-bound "grotto concert" to listen to jazz on the water.

CITY ENTERTAINMENT

When you're all adventured out, the streets in Torshavn are a snugger of relaxed haunts. There's a warm vibe at Vágsbotnur, the marina, where small independents sell their designer woolens and handmade wares. Weave around the network of narrow lanes at Tinganes, the tip of Reyni's small peninsula. Explore the well-preserved Old Town, whose quintessential red buildings date back to the Middle Ages.



Faroese settlement houses on grassy heathland hillside

Carry onto Vaglid Square, where you'll encounter Lagtinget (parliament)—one of the world's oldest government meeting points—beyond which the pedestrian area emerges. Inspired by Faroese folklore, the Nordic House was constructed to symbolize an enchanting Elvish hill. Museums are equally crammed with Scandinavian spirit and culture, and an old cinema showcases 3D movies. Festivals attract music lovers with the G! and the Summer Festival, for instance.

FOOD AND DRINK

If you're after something traditional, lunch with Faroese farmers Anna and Óli in their home for \$135 per person. The capital offers international and European-style cafes, bars, and restaurants: Chinese, fish and chips, Mediterranean, pizzerias, rustic dining, and sushi.

When you fancy a pint, there's an array of intimate to lively pubs in Torshavn. Craft beer lovers will want to sample the prize-winning Føroya Bjóror Okkara beers from Scandinavia's longest standing breweries. Their 125-year old blends incorporate rhubarb and angelica. Skál!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Once you immerse fully into the Faroese wilderness, you'll succumb to a delicious faraway feeling. The small island geographies give rise to a captivating, otherworldly place where land and a pulsing sea pursue an endless war. With the landscape of a tiny mountain utopia for companionship, it makes it an overlander's must-meet destination. What a place to live! *TCT*

@fourwheelednomad

Resources

A first-timer's guide to the Faroe Islands
Guide to the Faroe Islands
Visit Faroe Islands
Visit Torshavn
The Faroes' Google Translate equivalent



Camping on a footy field



Drone shot of Sørvágsvatn, a lake above the ocean



Driving in the Faroes

[FRAMED]

f/6.3 1/400s 78mm

The 2024 Lexus GX 550 on
the trail









[FRAMED]

f/6.3 1/400s 78mm

The Baby Trophy Truck tearing through some tracks at the 2023 King of the Hammers in Johnson Valley.

PHOTO BY LONA SCOTT

[FRAMED]

f/8 1/25s 32mm

The 2024 Toyota Tacomas on
Hurrah Pass





DREAMING OF THE NORTH

Exploring and Adventuring in Canada

BY MICHAEL HOLLAND

I TRANSFIXED MY ATTENTION ON THE MANY LOVELY, WHITE SNOWFLAKES CASCADING FROM THE CLOUDS ABOVE.

It was winter and inches of “white gold” accumulated outside my kitchen window. Snow engulfed my house, which sits at an elevation of 7,000 feet in the mountains of Utah. Winter was here, but my mind dreamed of a summer adventure.

For many of us, winter in the northern hemisphere means that we limit our outdoor activities. Most of us confine adventure travel to lower altitudes to escape the white stuff. Winter overland travel and adventures become cumbersome, too. However, Winter is also a time to dream! Dream of longer days and warmer temperatures. Dream of Spring and Summer adventures. Dream of the long road north.

My friend Brian and I slowly approached the border crossing outside Eureka, Montana. A herd of bighorn sheep grazed on the Canadian side and welcomed us with a quick glance before munching on more green grass. We were a little cautious. I am not really sure why.



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"Hello, welcome to Canada. What brings you here?"
The border guard inquired.

"We are heading up north toward Jasper. Just want to hike and explore," I explained.

"How long do you plan on being in Canada?"

"Roughly 8-9 days," I replied.

"Well, have fun and be safe. Enjoy your stay. Oh, by the way, nice Cruiser."

I smiled and pressed my foot gently onto the gas pedal. Away we went. Yeah, I am not sure why we felt nervous, but we both crossed the border and proceeded north. The two-lane road twisted and turned through the countryside. The streams and rivers swelled with early Summer runoff. Traffic was nonexistent, which made travel fairly simple and easy. Brian and I were on the lookout for hot springs. After a full day, which originally started in Glacier National Park, Montana, we were exhausted. As I made a right hand turn off of Highway 93, the road's surface immediately turned to dirt. Stunning, snowcapped mountains towered above us. The many different colors of the landscape (rocks, valleys, plateaus) created a surreal scene. This was the Canada of my dreams.

Canada is an enormous country, geographically larger than the United States. It comprises 10 provinces



THE ROAD WAS FAIRLY SMOOTH GRAVEL, AND WE DESCENDED TO A NATURAL HOT SPRING ALONG THE BANK OF THE LUSSIER RIVER.

and three territories. Our plans included adventuring in the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. It had been a number of years since I had traveled this far north, so I was excited; and for Brian, this was his first visit.

We motored east and entered Whiteswan Lake Provincial Park. The road was fairly smooth gravel, and we descended to a natural hot spring along the bank of the Lussier River. After a long day, the warm waters of these natural springs soothed our bodies. Brian and I soaked in the springs and conversed with other soakers (locals) as well. Afterward, we needed to find a campsite so we continued east. By nightfall, we had discovered a nice, small campground along a mountain creek to serve as our "home" for the night.

The following morning, we awoke to see cobalt blue skies, towering evergreens, moss covered rocks, and snowcapped mountains. It was gorgeous! After a quick breakfast, we packed, and traveled north. The dirt road paralleled the Kootenay River; towering peaks of the Canadian Rockies loomed overhead. I spotted three black bears wandering along the road, but they darted into the deep woods for cover. We felt like we had the place all to



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THE FOLLOWING DAY, WE HIKE UP AND AROUND LAKE LOUISE, A STUNNING, GLACIAL BLUE ALPINE LAKE.

ourselves. Wait, we did! After 60 miles of backcountry travel, we finally reconnected with paved Highway 93. We aired up and pointed the vehicles east toward Banff in order to meet our friend and colleague, Janice.

Banff, Alberta, is a stunningly beautiful town, a true mountain town. Enormous peaks surround the town itself, and there isn't a bad view to be had. We met Janice in the town plaza and enjoyed dinner together. We ordered Poutine, a traditional Quebec Province dish/appetizer, consisting of fries topped with gravy and cheese curds. Later, we enjoyed a not-so-typical Canadian dish—pizza. With our appetites satisfied, we motored north to our campsite at the Lake Louise Campground.

With a quick release of a few latches, I deployed my CVT rooftop tent was deployed, while prepped his truck bed for sleeping, and Janice opened her Ikamper rooftop tent. We cut some wood and started a fire. Each of us enjoyed the long daylight hours this far north and the warmth of a campfire. After a few hours of snap, crackle, pop, and conversation we doused the fire and called it a night.

The following day, we hiked up and around Lake Louise, a stunning, glacial blue alpine lake. We hiked from the lake up to Lake Agnes Backcountry Tea House. Yes, after a few miles of hiking and gaining elevation, we were ready for a break. On shore of Lake Agnes sits



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a remote, log cabin that serves as a tea house for hikers and adventurers. We ordered coffee and a few treats, and we admired the view of the high peaks. Melting snow and waterfalls flowed from the high peaks as we witnessed the landscape changing over to summer.

During the night, a light sprinkle of rain, lulled me into a deep sleep. After a quick breakfast, we packed and proceeded north on the Icefield Parkway. This 140-mile paved road is known as one of the prettiest roads in the world. No, I wouldn't need the Land Cruiser's 4-wheel drive but rather its brakes to slow down and admire the stunningly vistas and mountains along the way.

We turned north from Highway 1 onto Highway 93. The two-lane highway cut through a large evergreen forest. Within minutes, we stopped at over at the Bow Lake Overview. This beautiful lake sits at the base of Crowfoot Mountain and Glacier. Since it was early June, large ice chunks floated in the lake. Our curiosities spiked, we proceeded north.

"Look at the view!" Brian called over the radio from his vehicle.

"Should we pull over?" I questioned.

Throughout much of the drive, conversations such as that occurred. There are so many wonderful spots to pull over and explore. We cruised further north, and we enjoyed each and every view. We pulled into the Sunwapta Falls trailhead and proceeded to hike along the Sunwapta

COLD AIR BLEW OFF THE GLACIER AND COOLED US AS WE CLIMBED AND GAINED ELEVATION. WITHOUT A DOUBT, IT WAS AN OUTSTANDING WAY TO SPEND A FEW HOURS IN THE FAR NORTH.

River. The hiking trail was well-marked. After three miles, we returned to our vehicles for lunch. With our bellies full, we continued driving the Icefields Parkway.

"Brian and Janice, there's a bear up here on the right." I called over the radio.

"Right behind your vehicle," Janice replied.

"I see it," Brian called over the radio.

Wildlife encounters can happen anywhere along the Icefields Parkway. Luckily for us, a large brown bear wandered along the highway; we snapped countless photos. Eventually, we selected a campsite just outside of Jasper, Alberta. A large elk herd grazed through the campground as the park ranger welcomed us.

The next day, Brian decided to throw his fly in the water to see if anything would bite; Janice and I hiked into the high peaks outside Jasper. Brian landed some lovely Canadian Northern Pike. The clouds rolled over the mountain top but not before Janice and I took a few photos and headed down. After hiking the Sulphur Skyline Trail, we stopped and soaked in Miette Hot Springs, located at the trailhead. Not a bad way to end

the day!

"Watch your step!" Our guide said as I stepped over a large crevasse.

"Thanks," I responded while mesmerized by the color of blue ice below.

The following day, we hiked and climbed the Athabasca Icefield. Corin Lohmann, owner of Ice Walks, outlined the expectations of hiking on the glacier. The Athabasca Icefield is an enormous glacier just off of Highway 93. It's somewhat of a tourist attraction, but definitely worth the stop. Visitors are not allowed to hike on the glacier without the use of a guide.

Unfortunately, you better visit soon. The ice is melting. During part of our hike, the guide pointed out where the glacier used to be and how far it has receded. Saddened and astonished, we placed crampons onto our feet and hiked up. Stunningly gorgeous, fresh water flowed down the glacier. It was fantastic being in and exploring such a foreign environment. My footsteps crunched the snow and ice. I felt captivated by my surroundings. Cold air blew off the glacier and cooled us as we climbed and gained elevation. Without a doubt, it was an outstanding way to spend a few hours in the far north.

Back on land, I shifted the Land Cruiser into drive and headed south. The joys of the Icefields Parkway presented themselves through my windshield around each and every bend. We had a few days left to explore and adventure, but pointing the Cruiser south signified our return to the United States. Journeys and adventures are big and small. A journey to our neighbor to the north, Canada, is not a small undertaking. However, it's definitely worthwhile. So this winter, grab a cup of coffee, a map of Canada, and dream of your adventure this summer—north. Better yet, make it happen! **TCT**

Trip Tips

- July and August are extremely busy. Consider a trip in June.
- Passports are required for crossing the border.
- I exchanged a small amount of cash but used my credit card without an issue.
- Fuel is noticeably less expensive in Alberta than British Columbia

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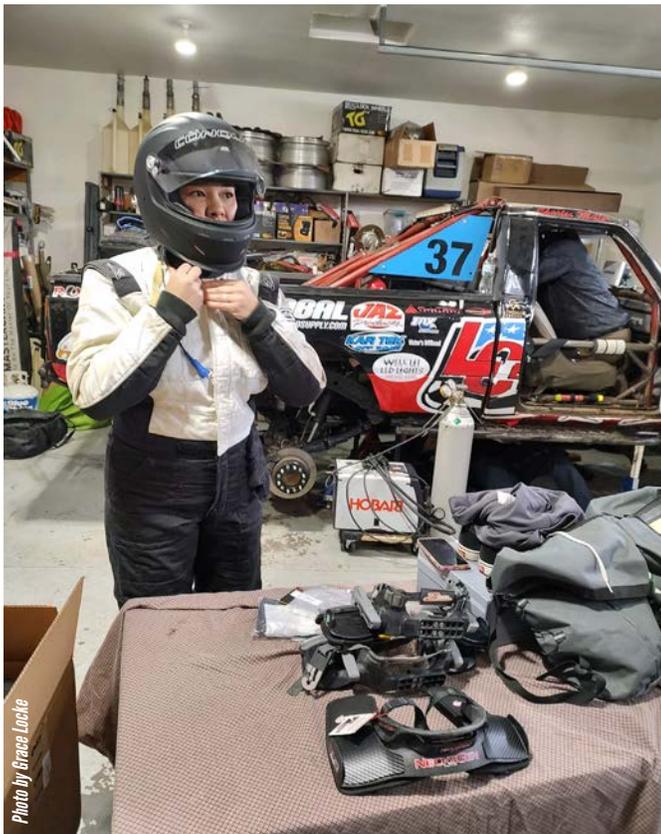
OFF-ROAD The Ride of My Life



Photo by Lona Scott

I think my heart is beating faster than normal but I can't tell because I'm also distracted by the butterflies in my stomach. Or is it slight nausea I'm feeling? Josh is telling me he can hear me NOT breathing and that I need to breathe. My breathing is definitely erratic, or even non-existent at times, but I can't seem to get a deep breath in either.

All my senses are heightened. I should be chattering and babbling away to release the energy, but I can't seem to get any words out. I'm usually a talker but informal chit chat just doesn't make sense right now and I'm too focused on the trucks in front of us and the commotion and buzzing all around. Plus,



I've never been in this situation before—do we discuss the weather? The crazy amount of dust flying around? Did I put my chapstick in my pocket? I double check, and yes, my chapstick is in my pocket, although the pockets are super deep.

Josh turns to me and asks how I'm doing. I tell him I'm feeling all the emotions right now but I can't pinpoint just one. Josh smiles. We fist bump and I tell him, "I got this". I'm not sure if I'm reassuring him or myself. A bit of silence falls as we watch the other trucks, two by two, leave every 30 seconds as we slowly inch forward. A few seconds later, I manage to tell him I feel like we're waiting in line for the craziest roller coaster ride in the universe. "More than you know," he says. I can hear the cranking of imaginary chains on the roller coaster rails as we move closer to the top of the steep downward slope. There's no turning back now.

We're in the start line for the 4-Wheel Parts Every Man Challenge race at the 2023 King of the Hammers (KOH), the hardest and most grueling one-day off-road race

event in the world and my day is about to drastically change.

Practice kind of makes perfect. Josh and I start discussing what the plan for KOH looks like and by Thanksgiving weekend, I'm testing out helmet and race suit fitment. Josh is the owner of Rock Tech Racing and the 1981 Toyota Pickup I wrote about in the Fall 2021 issue of *Toyota Cruisers & Trucks*, the Baby Trophy Truck. Josh starts sending over a list of various racing items I'll need—a good pair of leather boots, race gloves, race socks, and a head sock. I ask what I need to wear underneath the race suit, and he tells me, "Nothing." He sees my look of shock, confusion, and then probably disgust. He laughs and clarifies. "I mean, there are some racers who don't wear anything under their suits. Charlie and I wear shorts. You can wear shorts and a T-shirt, or whatever. It just needs to be 100% cotton."

BIG sigh of relief. BIG. I add 100% cotton shorts, t-shirt and undergarments to the list of items to buy.

For the next few weekends, I practice climbing in and out of the

Baby Trophy Truck and buckling the five-point harness with all my gear on while some of Josh and Niki's friends stop by to help with the truck. A laundry list of items that need to be done on the truck is scribbled on a large white board hanging in the shop. Their friends randomly stop by to help check items off the list to help Josh get ready for the race.

As Josh and his crew work on the truck, I'm focused on figuring out how to get in and out of the truck without having to disassemble my body, or worse, get stuck. This is important because I need to be able to get out quickly when Charlie jumps into the co-driver seat at Remote Pit 1 for his section at KOH and time is crucial. But most of all, it's a safety issue.

I struggle to grab the harness straps and connect the five-point latch with the gloves on. Josh suggests I try without the gloves, but I'm determined to figure out how to do everything with my gloves on—I don't want to risk having them fall to the floor and having to redo the harness all over again. After numerous trial and errors over a few

EVENTS



weekends, I figure out the process that works best for me. I feel confident in my ability to climb into the truck, buckle, and get back out, safely. My biggest worry, among other things, is holding up Josh during the co-driver change between me and Charlie and it weighs heavy on my mind.

KOH OR BUST

Josh heads out early to KOH as he is planning to compete in the Desert Challenge Terra Crew 1400 Class the Sunday before we all start to arrive. Charlie and I decide to leave Monday afternoon and drive straight through from Denver to Johnson Valley, California.

We land in Yucca Valley, California late afternoon on Tuesday after a couple of quick naps during our drive. We make a stop at a local grocer for last-minute items before we make the final trek to Rock Tech Racing camp at King of the Hammers. From Yucca Valley, we're just over 30 minutes to what will be my first introduction to a world described as "Mad Max meets Burning Man" and I will tell you, it did not disappoint.

Hammertown, as it is affectionately known, is a small "town" that arises from the dry lakebed of Means Dry Lake for two weeks during KOH. Creating this temporary settlement is no small feat—crews start bulldozing "roads" weaving through various presentation stages, vendors, and food stalls, to support a massive number of spectators and ungodly amounts of vehicles—from your standard 4x4 vehicle variations all the way to the large and incredibly impressive unlimited trophy trucks.

The numbers for Hammertown are staggering—in 2022, they had over 80,000 spectators with over 530 teams along with two million online viewers. Needless to say, KOH has grown from the 12 teams racing for a case of beer in 2008.

As we arrive in Hammertown, my senses are quickly overloaded—cars and trucks are driving in all directions as we slowly creep into town behind a throng of others. I'm mesmerized as I watch some vehicles fly by on both sides of us through the whoops and think how fun those look. Engines are rumbling and roaring as they fly by and the smell of exhaust and fuel prevalent throughout my time at KOH along with the fine dust that permeates my sinuses, eyes, and hair for the next five days.

I feel as though I have just encountered a



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small town that has survived the apocalypse.

THIS IS REALLY HAPPENING

Race day is only a few days away. I feel pretty ready but at the same time like I have completely no idea what I'm doing or why I'm here in the first place. I vary between having fun and enjoying time with the crew to fully realizing the race is just around the corner and I'm actually here for a reason. Reality kicks back in.

The day before race day, Charlie gives me a quick run through on the GPS unit that is mounted in the truck and the only buttons I should worry about. Josh has one mounted on his side of the truck as well. For some reason, having a GPS unit feels foreign, or like I'm cheating, even though I've used some form of it when I traveled with friends on off-highway adventures. The only competition I've ever been in, the Rebelle Rally, is map and compass based only—no cell phones, no GPS.

Friday morning arrives and our camp has already been buzzing since the early hours with everyone finishing any final prep and inspection on the race truck. I'm nauseously getting all my various race gear and equipment on and telling myself, "I can do this. I got this." I just keep trying to calm myself down and breathe. Time is quickly winding

down to get the race truck to the start line which we must drive to from camp, less than five minutes away. Before I know it, Josh and I are on our way. It's cool and brisk in the desert mornings and not having a windshield doesn't make it any easier but somehow manages to distract me for a bit during the ride.

Josh and I arrive at the end of the start line, which is fairly long, as vehicles two-by-two at the start line are sent 30 seconds apart from the next group. Josh is familiar with this and jumps out of the race truck, taking off his helmet and gloves, and seems incredibly relaxed and is all smiles and energy along with other racers. Everyone is aware this is their last moment to stretch and chat with neighboring racers or make a bathroom pit stop. Me on the other hand, I'm terrified to undo my harness, because of how hard it might be for me to connect it again and decide to sit firmly planted in the co-driver seat with all my gear on. Josh asks if I'm ok, and I tell him, "I am, but I'm just not sure what to do yet." He laughs gently and smiles because he understands what I'm probably going through.

Josh's wife, Niki, meets up with us and offers some coffee. She checks in with me as well, as she's noticed I'm hanging tight in the co-driver seat, with all my racing



Photo by Niki French



Photo by Greg Woods

gear still on, desperately holding my race harness. I'm sure I look somewhat frozen. She asks how I'm doing, and I tell her, "Ok. Nervous, but ok." She then asks if I want to run to the restroom as this is probably the last chance before we start moving down the line and until Remote Pit 1. I tell her, "No, I think I'm good" but she looks at me with raised eyebrows, along with pure empathy, and suggests one more time. I realize that she is looking out for me, and they both know this routine well, so I take her up on the pitstop suggestion. I undue my harness, which has almost become my safety net in the figurative sense and climb out of the race truck. I take off my gloves and helmet and take a few minutes to breathe outside and take in the energy around me. I then realize what a nightmare it will be to use the porta potty and NOT get anything on my race suit or have my race suit touch the floor. With some clever maneuvering in the small space and

my germaphobe ninja skills, I make it out somewhat unscathed.

I head back over to Niki and Josh before a tall elderly gentleman stops by to chat. To say Josh is excited is an understatement. He's telling this gentleman about the race truck and how it was on the cover of *Toyota Cruisers & Trucks* (TCT) magazine, which Josh has in hand, and that I was the writer of that story. Josh introduces me to Marlin Czajkowski, the owner and founder of Marlin Crawlers, and explains what I'm doing here. I now understand Josh's excitement. Marlin is extremely curious and asks numerous questions about the truck and the magazine. He shares in Josh's energy, emotes happiness, and smiles during the entire conversation. Marlin signs Josh's TCT magazine and even leaves his personal cell phone number, smiles, and tells us "Good luck" and is on his way.

Little did I know that this was my one- and only-time meeting Marlin. He passed away less than three

weeks later due to a heart condition. He was a well-respected industry legend but to me, he was just a kind and friendly by passer who chatted with us and was genuinely interested in our experience and shared in our excitement.

IT'S GO TIME

The race trucks finally start moving and I put my helmet and gloves on, climb in, and manage to get my harness buckled, although loosely for the time being. Nerves are on high alert again and this time, it's real. As we meander through Hammertown, I struggle to get the window netting up. The netting is super tight and I'm sitting at an awkward angle, and I don't have the physical strength to pull it up and lock it into place. Josh yells to the race staff to help get the netting connected and with some power they manage to squeeze it into place.

The next thing I know, we're two rows away from taking off with what will be the craziest ride of



Photo by Lora Scott

my life. As the time counts down and the vehicles in front of us take off in a whirl of dust and roaring engines, there's hardly time to get a grip of what's happening before the green flag waves and Josh tears out weaving through a couple of tight hairpin turns and large embankments that have grown from all the previous trucks from the past few weeks of racing. I hang onto my harness for dear life and plant my feet firmly into the floor of the truck for stability. I'm giggling and smiling from ear to ear. I'm being bounced around and my eyeballs have yet to sync back up with my brain to figure out exactly where I'm at and what's going on. After what feels like a few minutes but in all actuality probably only 20 seconds, I manage to get myself re-balanced and stabilized and I start assessing the GPS and the surrounding geography.

After getting through the tight turns, we reach a massive hill climb. Some race teams struggle to climb and others climb like they're on an escalator. I finally feel everything come together—I actually feel calm. I am able to finally take a deep breath, start focusing on the GPS unit and the hill, and help Josh out as we struggle to climb it. We try multiple times to climb the hill. I know the truck can make it but it seems to just automatically lose power and just sink in the sand and silt. I don't know it at the time, but the truck is having fuel pump issues, essentially draining any momentum we could muster.

After a couple of attempts, Josh finds a good line with enough gravel to grab and keeps on the throttle, and we make it up the hill. We crest the top of the hill, and all the spectators and media clap and cheer us on.

The fuel pump becomes an issue a few more times during our section to Remote Pit 1 (RP1) and Josh has to jump out and make adjustments. The rest of the racecourse consists of numerous deep ridges, whoops', rocks of all shapes and sizes, and a few sharp turns as well as some straightaways. I finally feel comfortable and find my groove informing Josh as each of these hazards pops up on the GPS. Although I'm not perfect at being a co-driver, I'm not sucking at it either and am getting into the groove of the co-driver role. I am having a good time and I am proud of how I'm handling this new role. I begin feeling like I can now be the calm for Josh as he focuses on driving the truck through the crazy terrain. I feel comfortable enough to gently remind him, "Just keep her in one piece," as I want to not only finish my

section, but for Josh to finish the race. As we get closer to RP1, Josh asks me to radio into the team and let them know how close we are and that we'll need a spare fuel pump. They'll pick up the pump at Main Pit.

As we get closer to RP1, I can see our friend Clark's Tacoma flying the "King of the Hammers" flag high above his truck and Josh instructs me to start unbuckling and get ready to jump out.

Even after practicing multiple times and feeling pretty confident in my ability to get out of the truck, I still manage to get myself somewhat tangled trying to squeeze out of the door. Charlie jumps in and with a few minor entanglements with the air hose, Josh and Charlie take off into the vast and dry mountain desert.

ONE HECKUVA RIDE

My section of the race was exhilarating and crazy. Nerve wracking but wild. Equally surreal and unreal. I honestly didn't know what to expect, I just knew deep in my soul that one thing I would not do was freak out on Josh during the race, whether by the speed, the terrain, or even rolling in the vehicle or crashing. I was actually more terrified of letting Josh and the team down and it weighed heavy on me. I knew though that once I was committed, I wasn't backing out. I was fortunate to experience KOH and even more so as a co-driver. My experience is one that I will never forget. It was everything I hoped it would be and more. *TGT*

THE STATS

King of the Hammers is known as the toughest offroad race in the U.S. and I now know why. Out of 157 teams that started in the 2023 4-Wheel Parts Every Man Challenge, only 37 actually finished. Seven teams made it to Lap 2 but did not finish and 74 teams did Lap 1 and did not finish. 34 teams did not finish at all and seven teams did not even start. In the 4600 Stock Class, the class we competed in, there were 43 teams total and our team, Rock Tech Racing, placed 26th. Out of the 43 teams in this class, only four teams finished the race.



MONGOLIA IN A NUTSHELL: *BAD ROADS & RELIGION*

BY KARIN-MARIJKE VIS
PHOTOS BY COEN WUBBELS

AFTER COMMUNIST RULE IN MONGOLIA ENDED, BUDDHISM AND SHAMANISM FOUND THEIR WAY BACK INTO PEOPLE'S LIVES. UPON ENTERING THE COUNTRY, WE IMMEDIATELY CAUGHT A GLIMPSE.

Our guidebooks spoke about a sacred tree situated right after the border, and so, after a lengthy bureaucratic rigmarole to enter Mongolia, we set out to find it. Asphalt turned into sandy trails that meandered through grassland into the hinterland for a couple of miles. To our surprise it was busy with cars parked all over the place amidst shady trees, and people strolling about. It was Saturday and many had come from the capital of Ulaanbaatar to pray to the spirits that dwell in trees, which is a shamanic tradition that predates Buddhism.

A piece of land was fenced off with blue silk cloths tied around posts, on some of which stood cups of milk. In the middle lay a big fallen tree. Was this the Mother Tree? Adults and children sprinkled cornmeal and candies over the trunk. Next to it stood a table for other offerings: sweetbread, milk, biscuits, paper money and copper coins (most of them Russian because Mongolian money has no coins). The atmosphere was relaxed, no noise and no cameras. The latter was striking in a world where 'everyone' is photographing 'everything' these days. Only Coen was clicking away.





LAND CRUISER



Suddenly we heard shouting and singing. About ten men and boys with horses started circling the trunk, some in the saddle, others leading the horse with a rope. Some were dressed in colorful, knee-length traditional robes, others wore T-shirts. The group gathered and three men took turns making offerings by throwing milk from a carton into the air and sprinkling it over the horses. After having burned incense sticks in a container they led the horses on a few more rounds while singing songs, after which they disappeared into the forest.

A little farther stood a large, dead tree. Was this the 'real' Mother Tree, or was it the successor to the fallen tree? Lacking a shared language with the other visitors we never found out. In front of the tree people offered sweets and grain, which was eaten by pigeons the moment humans were out of sight. More visitors arrived. More milk was thrown into the air, as was more grain, after which the devotees

circled the tree and stopped for a prayer in front of a statue.

While fascinated by all we saw, we had to move on as a festival was taking place at a monastery this weekend. The border crossing had wasted a lot of our time this morning and we needed to drive some 95 miles to get to the Amarbayasgalant Monastery. It was time to go.

Back on the main road we followed asphalt that cut through the rolling countryside of soft green grass. The landscape exuded a serenity and in a way it felt ancient, as if it had existed like this for eons. Possibly it had, except for the asphalt, the cars and electric wires, of course. Herds of sheep, goats and cows were grazing the hills that are home to yurts, called 'gers' in Mongolia. The white, round, felt homes of the nomads stood out in the green scenery.

It was half past six when we took a turn off the highway and hit an unpaved road. Some twenty miles of brutal road surface lay waiting for us, but thankfully summer evenings are long in Mongolia. Coen aired down the tires and we were in for a continuous guess of which trail would be easiest to navigate. As they twisted



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around the hills we couldn't see them in the distance and had to base our calculations on what was right in front of us. Thanks to its ground clearance, the Land Cruiser managed well on the deeply eroded tracks, but the main challenge were the trails on a slant. Our home on wheels is 8,8 foot high and the one thing we fear when off-roading is the Land Cruiser toppling. Whether that's just our imagination or a real possibility, we thankfully don't know (yet), but our hands get sweaty when we drive on a slant. I held on tight to the dashboard while sitting on the edge of my seat and when the slant got worse I climbed on my seat and hung out of the window as counterbalance. Whether that was of any use with my



fifty kilos remains to be seen, but it felt better than doing nothing.

Back on flat terrain crossing the valley, it was easy to doze off and sink into some meditative state as we quietly dealt with bumps and slowly drove through long potholes while chugging along in second gear. We effortlessly traversed dozens of ankle-deep streams and in the soft evening light it felt as if we were driving in a timeless landscape. About two hours later we spotted the red-brown monastery in the distance. After crossing two more shallow rivers Coen turned off the engine in a field not far from the entrance.

The 'Monastery of Tranquil Happiness' was built in the



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18th century, a complex of forty temples surrounded by a large wall and at one time home to more than 2000 monks. It was among the few places of worship that survived the destruction of religious buildings under Stalin's reign of terror (although Mongolia was not part of the Soviet Union and had its own communist system, the Soviet Union did have a lot of influence). Today, 28 temples remain and only 30 monks live here.

Across the field we stepped into a courtyard with two towers and peeked into a temple. The place was deserted, possibly because it was dinner time. A paper on the wall said there would be another ceremony at ten pm. We returned to the Land Cruiser with the intention to return to the monastery later, but the moment we were inside the black sky burst open and a rainstorm howled through the valley. Our bodies were wrecked and we went to bed. Tomorrow would be another day. *167*







2024 Lexus GX 550 Reveal

Overtrail... soon to replace Overland as the hottest fad in outdoor exploration.

That's the new grade Lexus coined for the all new, completely redesigned, 2024 Lexus GX 550, which they recently revealed. It includes 18" wheels and 33" tires from the factory, along with all the bells & whistles to make your time in the dirt a little easier.

The new GX has been completely redesigned as the flagship mid-size luxury SUV from Lexus, and offers a

combination of rugged off-road capability and luxurious interior appointments. It's based on the on the (TN)GA-F platform, which also underpins the Lexus LX 600. This platform provides a stiffer and more rigid chassis, which results in improved handling and ride quality.

Interestingly, the GX is powered by a twin-turbocharged 3.4-liter V6 engine that produces 349 horsepower and 479 lb-ft of torque. This engine is paired with a 10-speed automatic transmission. A hybrid version



will 'be available later', probably when they figure out how to add the battery without taking up cargo space (See: 2023 Toyota Sequoia).

The GX is available in two off-road-oriented trim levels: Overtrail and Overtrail+. These trims feature a number of upgrades, including a raised suspension, all-terrain tires, and for the first time from the factory, a locking rear differential.

The interior of the new GX is luxurious and spacious. It features a standard 14-inch touchscreen infotainment system, a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, and a 10-speaker premium sound system.

****The 2024 Lexus GX is available now. Prices start at \$56,475.****





Here are some of the key features of the new GX:

- Rugged off-road capability
- Luxurious interior appointments
- Powerful twin-turbocharged V6 engine
- Available in two off-road-oriented trim levels
- Spacious and comfortable interior
- Advanced safety features

The new GX is a great choice for anyone who is looking for a luxurious and capable SUV. It offers the best of both worlds, with off-road capability and on-road refinement. *TCT*



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Introducing all new “Audio Adventures”!

Toyota Cruisers and Trucks is excited to announce the launch of our new Audio Adventure listening feature! This feature is part podcast, part adventure storytelling, and 100% inspiring. We have over 15 years of adventure stories in our catalog, and we’re excited to share them with you in a new and engaging way. You can listen to both archive and future adventure articles while you read along, or close the app and enjoy the audio just like a podcast.

To gain access to these Audio Adventures, simply download the TCT App from iOS App Store () or Google Play Store (), subscribe, and look for the “articles” section. Click play in the “Listen to this Adventure” section of the article.

We’ll be publishing new audio articles from back issues each month as well as all new adventure inspirations in the future. So whether you’re a seasoned adventurer or just starting out, we hope you’ll enjoy our Audio Adventures!

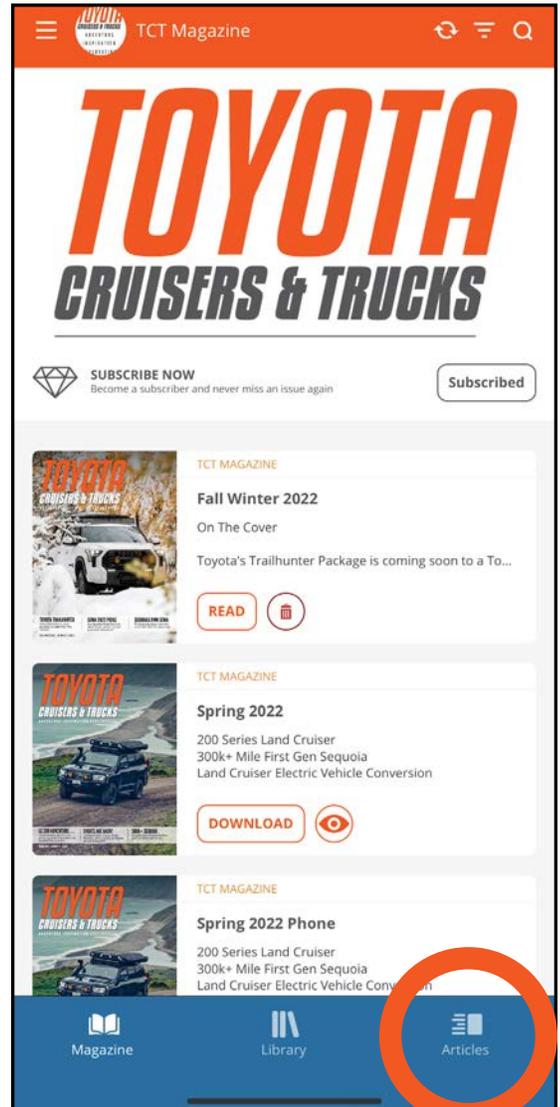
HERE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL DETAILS ABOUT THE AUDIO ADVENTURE LISTENING SERIES:

- Each episode can range from four to about 20 minutes long.
- The episodes are narrated by custom AI voices, and written by experienced adventurers who will share their stories of exploration, discovery, and overcoming challenges.
- The episodes will feature stunning photography and videography to transport you to the far-flung corners of the world.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEXT WAY TO BECOME INSPIRED FOR ADVENTURE?



Download the TCT App today and start listening to our Audio Adventures!



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