

Every month a new trip will be uploaded to this site: enjoy!

This weekend trip, my family and I take our 1994 FZJ-80 Land Cruiser, affectionately nicknamed “Elsie”, to the Omani northern coast, where we camp on the beach, and then battle tidal conditions through a salt-water estuary to resurface by the Sohar Fort Hotel and the adjacent public park.



Old is gold, as they say, and this certainly applies to our Elsie, who actually turned her 300,000th kilometre on this trip: Elsie runs the venerable 4.5L in-line six cylinder engine that powered generations of Land Cruisers. But what made the 80 Series special was that it was the first to turn the vehicle into a comfortable driving machine, which meant its popularity exploded.

Consider that, for an 18-year-old car, Elsie came fitted with dual-zone A/C, a fridge and an ice-maker, front and rear differential lockers, dual petrol tanks, electric winch, sunroof, CD player with sub-woofer, seating for five and four more on benches in the cavernous back. Not bad, eh? No wonder I get stopped regularly by people ready to make an offer for her (not for sale).



February, March and early April are our favourite beach months, as the daytime sun is not too severe and the waters of both the Gulf and, in this case, the Indian Ocean have shaken off the “icy” grip of winter and not yet reached the soup-like temperatures of summer.

The beach is wide open, and it is possible to drive along it with a 4×4 vehicle.



Download the KML file for your GPS by clicking [here](#). Once downloaded, you can import the file into your GPS device and take it on the road, or double-click that file and it will open automatically in Google Earth if you have that installed (all adventurers should! [Google Earth](#)).

And here is an interactive map of the route.

View [Sohar](#) in a larger map

The beach runs for hundreds of kilometres, practically from Sohar all the way down to Muscat, and it is open to the public and used by generations of fishermen.

You never know what you'll come across, as this youtube video shows:

We chanced upon a hand-made boat, constructed of sturdy palm fronds and rope, probably quite similar in design to boats built in that fashion centuries ago. This one was equipped with a modern outboard motor, combining tradition and technology.



As you make your way along the coastline, be aware of the tide, especially just before waypoint 14. At that point, there is a creek that fills at high tide, rendering passage impossible. That is not quite a problem, since you can simply go inland and around; the issue is after high tide, when the water recedes enough to tease you with the possibility of safe passage, only to entrap your eager 4x4 in the very wet sand. Without differential lockers, which I doubt your modern vehicle is equipped with, it will be very difficult to extract yourself. Elsie copyright Paolo Rossetti, ask first for reproduction of contents (text, photos, etc.) - prosett@weekenduae.com

managed just fine, though.

Even worse, and now a serious threat, is just before high tide. Be careful of approaching the creek estuary at this time as the tide is creeping up to its high point. Water will have seeped up and under the sand, turning it into a hidden quicksand trap and, if you get caught out and stuck, the inexorable rise of the sea will swamp your vehicle, and there is no escape from that force of nature without a winch.

Seriously, I've seen it only twice before, but it is heart-wrenching to watch in powerless despair as your car gets pounded by the sea. And when the tide retreats, don't think you can just drive out - it will be buried - no, sucked down into compacted sand, so you'll have 12 hours to battle to extract it before the next tide comes back for a second hit.

If in doubt, take the high road, and swing around inland, which requires you to backtrack a few kilometres and pass by the corniche and public park.





View a pdf file of [the original article](#), as published in February 2012, or read the archived newspaper article on The National website [here](#).

My disclaimer is [here](#).