

LENDING AN ALPINE HAND

A trip to the Alps sounds a daunting prospect for a first overland trip so we spoke to specialist Michael Stringer who assured us that his company, Alpine Rovers, could make it a memorable experience for all the right reasons.

Words and pictures – Michael Stringer

The Alps are always a firm favourite in our calendar and not without good reason. For some, a tour through the Alps is the first taste of travelling overland in their Land Rover. Others return year after year. Spectacular mountain scenery, fantastic views, seemingly endless tracks, spooky forts and bunkers, typical Italian, wine, pasta and hospitality.

The Alps Safari has all the character of a true overland expedition. There is no rigidly fixed itinerary so we adjust the route to the requirements of the group. With more than 20 years of experience exploring this region, we have built up a wealth of knowledge and good relations with the local authorities, so our travellers can enjoy the best the Alps have to offer.

The Alpine Adventure Safari has its roots in those great expeditions that now, regrettably, seem to be a thing of the past.

An Overland Holiday for all the family. Alpine can offer a family orientated holiday, catering for all age groups. Typically, this will be a small, relaxed groups, taking in some

gentle green laning, but offering spectacular views and plenty of opportunities to explore long-abandoned fortresses and secret bunkers from both World Wars. There's the possibility of swimming in one of the many turquoise coloured mountain lakes, or experiencing the snow at 10,000 feet above sea level. Most nights will be spent in secluded locations on the mountains with spectacular views, sunsets and crystal clear starlit nights, warmed by a bonfire.

Preparation

You do not have to go and spend a lot of money equipping your vehicle for an overland adventure. Our tours can be enjoyed in most standard 4x4 vehicles. Keep it simple. Most problems arise from vehicle modifications and overloading.

All levels of driver experience are welcome and further help and instruction can be provided if necessary. Less is more, so leave that kitchen sink at home. It is all in the right sort of preparation

Clothing:

- Be prepared for ALL weather conditions, as we can experience most, sometimes all, in the same day.
- Summer clothes
- Warm clothes
- Sturdy boots
- Wet weather coat
- Hat and gloves, specially for the evenings around the campfire
- Polycotton outdoor trousers - not jeans

Camping Equipment:

- Tent: remember we are moving on each day, so you want something you can put up with ease, and something that does not take too long, to erect - especially if it is raining.
- Heavy duty tent pegs are recommended.
- Cooking gas: Make sure you carry plenty, as some types are not easily found in Europe. Also remember boiling water at altitude uses lot of gas.
- Kelly kettles are great for boiling water, save gas and almost anything can be used as fuel:

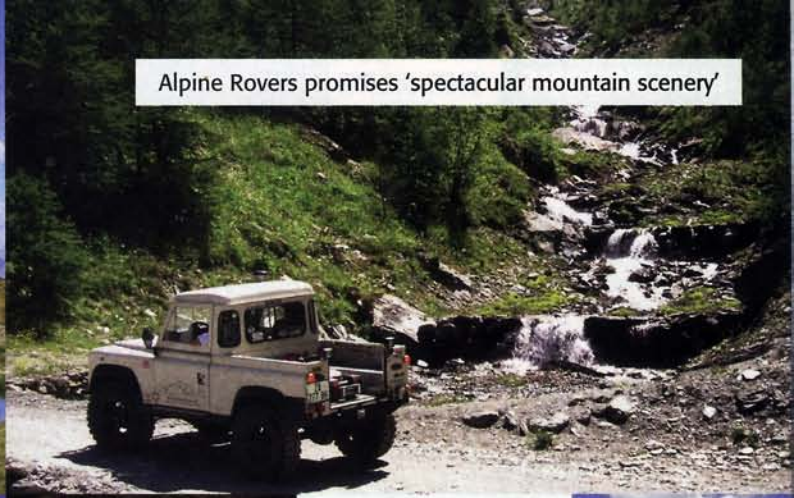
You probably couldn't get there any other way



Discover a whole new world...



Alpine Rovers promises 'spectacular mountain scenery'



LEFT: Apparently impregnable, but an inhospitable place in winter
RIGHT: 'I feel like an explorer!'



LEFT: These catacomb barracks were a common feature of the forts
RIGHT: Another 'I feel like an explorer' moment



twigs, grass, moss, paper and card, cotton wool.

- Sleeping bags: We recommend '4 Seasons', or the best you can afford, as the temperatures drop in the mountains. Double sleeping bags or duvets are not as warm as singles.
- We recommend self-inflating roll mats rather than the blow up mattress types, as mattresses can go down due to the altitude and feel cold due to the volume of air circulating inside them.

Food:

- Keep it simple. We suggest you bring some back up tins and packets of your favourite brands, as you may not be able to find them at the local supermarkets.
- However, there will be plenty of opportunities to shop for fresh produce, such as milk, bread, cheeses, fruit and veg, and meats.
- No need to spend your money on bottled water, there are plenty of opportunities to collect fresh mountain spring water along the way.

- We recommend you drink plenty, to keep your fluid levels up.

Personal Hygiene:

- We recommend micro fibre towels, they absorb moisture and dry quicker than standard house hold towels
- Baby wipes: the overlanders' best friend as they clean you up and cool you down
- Toileting: back to basics, bring a shovel or your own camping toilet & tent, but remember you will not be able to empty chemical toilets in the mountains, and do you really want to carry a full tank around for two days?
- Bio-degradable toilet paper

Medical Requirements:

- Comprehensive First Aid kit
- Any medications you require
- Sun screen lotion
- Insect repellent

Vehicle:

- Good running order and road legal. Check the

tyres have plenty of tread. Check the wheel bearings are well greased. Take a good look at the brakes as well as the hand brake, coolant system, suspension, lights etc.

- The vehicle must be taxed and have a valid MoT and be insured – check the insurance covers European travel.
- Don't forget the beam benders (headlamp converters) for right-side driving
- You will need a GB sticker or European style number plates.
- Breakdown recovery service covering Europe.
- NO fuel cans are to be carried on the exterior of the vehicle. Check also with your ferry operator if it is permissible for vehicles to carry spare fuel.
- Make sure all kit is safely tied down in the vehicle with ratchet straps. Load heavy items low down and as close to the centre of the vehicle as possible.

Equipment to carry:

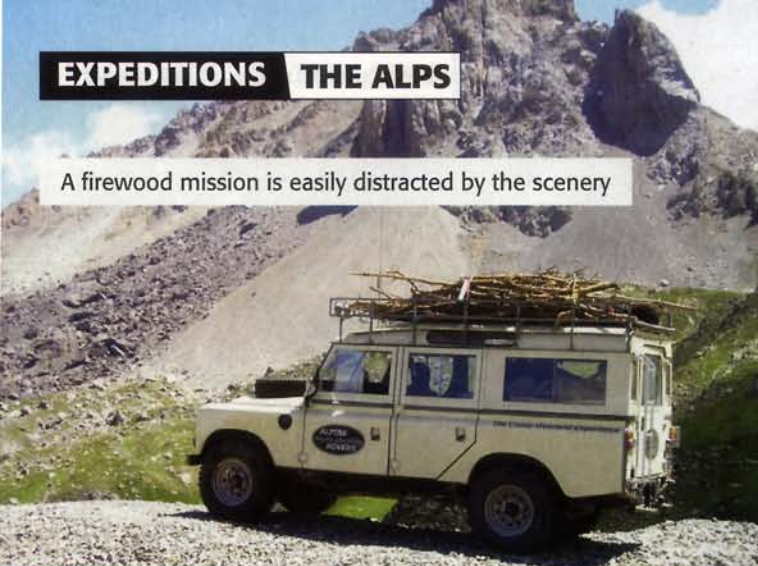
- Breakdown warning triangles (two)
- First aid kit



All levels of driver experience are welcome

EXPEDITIONS THE ALPS

A firewood mission is easily distracted by the scenery



Taking advantage of the shelter provided by another abandoned fortress



LEFT: One of many alpine lakes where snow is present all year round
RIGHT: Alpine water obtainable at the road side and incredibly pure



LEFT: Tours are tailored for most standard 4x4 vehicles
RIGHT: The scenery is an ever changing distraction



- High visibility jacket or vest (one per occupant)
- Fire extinguisher
- Spare bulbs set
- Tow rope/recovery equipment
- Jack & wheel brace (and locking wheel nut tool if necessary)
- Any special tools for your vehicle
- Spare wheel

Communications:

- Mobile telephone, switch to operate in Europe
- CB Radio (optional), check that it covers European channels

Documents:

- Driving licence
- Passport
- Travel insurance
- European health insurance card
- Vehicle documents – log book, MoT, tax, insurance papers
- Green Card (could be included within your

- insurance, however you need to check this with your insurance company) is compulsory!
- Credit card protection -together with the European telephone contact number
- Ferry tickets
- Copies of all relevant documents.

Additional Information

- Travelling time from the port of Calais to the Western Alps: 12 –15 hours.
- We recommend you allow two days with a stop over each way. How about one night stop over at the Camping Le Lac d'Orient: www.camping-lacdorient.com (Please mention Alpine Rovers).
- Motonway tolls vary, but allow £150 - £200 for the trip, if you intend to use the toll roads.
- Fuel: Will vary on what vehicle and engine you are using: However in the past a 200tdi averaged £350 - £400. A 2

.25-litre petrol 109 £550 - £600. V8 £600 - £700+ TD5 £450 - £500.

- Campsites: vary but an average charge is between €10 - €30 per night. Most will charge for: per person, tent & vehicle.
- Ferry can be booked through: www.ferrysavers.com or www.aferry.co.uk

For further information and to book a Tour with Alpine Rovers
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com



This Napoleonic fort has been preserved and updated