



# African Approaches

There are those who dare to dream, and then there are those who get out there and just do it. Jo Jordan is one of life's doers.

Jo Jordan is an intrepid adventurer. She is one of those people who embraces life, takes it by the arm, and constantly pushes it to deliver. Deliver it does. From travelling across the deserts of Africa, to renovating a barn, to writing a book, Jo has done it all, and done it in style.

Her recently published book, *African Approaches: Roads to a Far-Off Place* tells of just some of these adventures, the hot and dusty good and the bad of it. Inspired by a grainy black and white film of an overland journey across the Sahara to Nigeria and fortuitously stumbling across a small ad in the

*Observer* announcing an 18-week overland trip to South Africa, the young Jo jumped on the bandwagon and has never looked back.

"A story of epic proportions, *African Approaches: Roads to a Far-Off Place* tells of trials and triumphs, despair and elation, failure and success – every page laced with Jo Jordan's wry humour and slightly anarchic pragmatism," reads the blurb of the book. This is only the half of it. On that first African adventure, Jo met her future husband, Nick, changing

both of their fates in the process. Nick is a farm boy from Suffolk but there was insufficient work on the farm to keep him gainfully occupied year round, so he diversified into running long haul Trans Africa overland expeditions. By long haul, we mean long haul – trips could last upwards of five months. Jo joined that 1974 departure and the rest, as they say, is history.

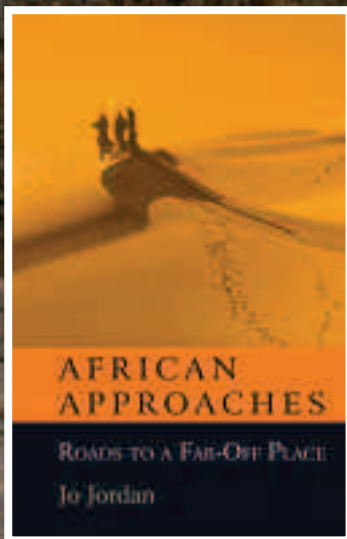
It is said that the first continent you travel to outside of your own country is the one you fall in love with. The duo fell in love with Africa, and it has remained with them ever since. Jo and Nick went on to form Hobo Trans Africa Expeditions, later called Truck Africa. They ran African trips in one form and another for the best part of thirty years, using Nick's family farm as a UK base and a useful place for storing equipment and building and customising the expedition vehicles.

Throughout *African Approaches* Jo portrays a cast of colourful characters encountered in Hobo's early days of trial and error; through to its transformation into a successful enterprise. Interwoven is the story of Jo and Nick's building project in Tanzania, the build of the house mirroring the build of the business, both ups and downs. Jo started *African Approaches*

almost by accident. She said: "I started it four or five years ago, scribbling away, but actually what first got me into it was that I started to write about my own family, riding on the wave of this interest in genealogy that's around and then I got to a bit and I thought 'When I met Nick we spent so much time overseas, the best part of thirty years in Africa. Hang about, I could write about that.' I started to and I really enjoyed the process." It is just as well she did, as the result is a fascinating account of the Africa of the time, a far different continent to what it has become now.

"I was recording a period of time when travelling overland was relatively easy," claims Jo. I wonder if easy means something different to her as the trials and tribulations of her African experience sound far from easy. Jo concurs, as she quickly follows up with: "Well, it wasn't ever easy, but you couldn't do that now. There was a window of about twenty to twenty-five years where group over-landing was very popular and we were there."

"I felt that it would be good to record that particular period of time that will never ever be revisited," Jo said, somewhat nostalgically, "...and of course Africa itself is developing all the





time as well so the experiences we had, the things we saw, the people we spoke to, that's all gone. It will never be the same again."

Jo is so driven that throughout writing the book she and Nick were working on a major facelift for the family farm, turning it into gorgeous self-catering accommodation, and managing a full time job as a solicitor. Jo did all of the writing but she is quick to share the limelight with Nick, crediting him with a superior memory. "He was invaluable," claims Jo. "I couldn't have done it without him. It's about us. It's a joint enterprise so he features prominently." It takes a certain kind of character to tackle overlanding and Nick also has that indomitable strength of spirit, although today he leaves the explanations to naturally ebullient Jo. "I think he enjoys the fact that people now understand what he is about too," hints Jo. "People think that of him as a farmer and a builder, well they are just sidelines. This is his real life." Jo and Nick's "real lives" are



fascinating, and nowhere is this better explored than in *African Approaches*. In the words on the cover of the book, "This is a chronicle of courage, of fulfilling the human urge to explore and push beyond boundaries. But most of all, it's about squeezing the pips from life." Jo Jordan and Nick Fisher squeeze those pips.



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