



The closest Russ Dykes got to cold water



£20 road-side fix gets the Defender home

the inland city of Guelmim, where we took a left just before the entrance to the city and headed back towards the coast and an official campsite at Sidi Ifni. What a shock this one was. It was ram-packed with hundreds of mobile homes all with satellite dishes, awnings and garden chairs outside. It felt like another planet and was almost embarrassing for our mud-covered Defender to spend a night parked next to a couple from Stevenage and their exquisitely clean white mobile home. In the evening a group of us walked into the town centre and found a pizzeria. We were back in tourist land. Overnight it rained hard, and we were thankful that the Defender was keeping us warm and dry.

DAY 10: Our final day with the group was a 450 km drive up through Tiznit and Agadir then back onto the motorway to Le Relais de Marrakech. As we moved further north the countryside became greener and greener. At one point we passed through a region of enormous cactus farms, which covered many of the hillsides.

In the evening we had a goodbye meal together in the Relais restaurant, and the next day the group headed north to Tangers Med to meet their ferry to Spain.

With the Ardventures part of our holiday finished, we spent two nights at our friend's beautiful riad (a traditional Moroccan house), deep in the heart of Marrakech Medina, then moved to an apartment next to the marathon start. Happy with what was now my 23rd marathon finisher medal, a couple of days later we headed north on small roads towards the Moroccan capital of Rabat.

While we were in Marrakech we had noticed a problem with the rear brakes. It seemed that with all the steering problems I had somehow forgotten to check the back end and the rear pads were shot so we phoned Land Rover Rabat to try and organise an appointment. After several phone calls we gave up as for some reason they could not register the VIN of our Defender into their computer so a dossier could not be created to work on it.

Thirty minutes into our drive to Rabat the engine light came on and we suddenly lost power. We pulled over and

plugged in our ODB Bluetooth box and fired up the app on my phone. It appeared to be an 'air mass' issue. I immediately thought of the air filter as I had not cleaned it since being in the desert, but after swapping it out for a new one the error code still came on, and five minutes later the light was on again and the engine lost power.

We limped our way to Rabat and decided to go the Land Rover dealer anyway to see if they would help us, but despite empty service bays and mechanics standing around doing not much, they still refused to look at it based on the aforementioned issue. The service manager said it didn't matter anyway as they had absolutely no spares for a Defender.

When I told him about the air mass error he was suddenly very helpful. We popped the bonnet and he poked around until he found a finger-sized hole in a little hose down the side of the engine. He said it would take him three weeks to have a replacement delivered, but off the record suggested we head into an area of Rabat where back street mechanics applied their trade.

So that's what we did and eventually we found an area with cars sprawled across the street and pavement being worked on. Judging by the vehicles being repaired – including BMWs and MINIs – there was some quality work going on. We popped the bonnet and showed the boss man the problem. Within two hours the hose was out, degreased, wrapped in black tape, covered in cables ties and back in the car. The bill was just over £20 and the hose lasted all the way home and has now been replaced by 5-ply silicon.

Admittedly five days in Rabat was a little excessive – ultimately it's an administration centre and not anything like as touristy or pretty as Marrakech. We headed back up to Tangier for a night before boarding the ferry at Tangier Med. Just before we boarded we followed a sign to the port's 'Panoramic View'. I managed to take one shot before a security guard came over and told us that photographs were not allowed. We must have looked confused as he pulled out his radio and, it seems, called for confirmation, as after a few minutes he told us that it was okay and to have a nice day. I love Morocco.

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ACCOMMODATION: A mix of wild camping and official campsites, the Gale's were particularly impressed with the Relais de Marrakech (relaisdemarrakech.com), Borj Biramane at Icht (borj-biramane.com/en/) and the small walled campsite, with indeterminate name, at Sidi Ifni (tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotel_Re-

view-g793713-d17541023-Reviews-Camping_Sidi>Ifni-Sidi>Ifni_Souss_Massa_Draa_Region.html).

After leaving the Ardventures tour the Gale's stayed at Abelia Riad (abeliarriad.com) and then moved to the Babylone Royal Host apartment block for the Marrakech marathon (booking.com/hotel/ma/babylone-royal-host.en-gb.html). In

Rabat they stayed in Balima Minaret apartments (booking.com/hotel/ma/senior-suite-balima-m61.en-gb.html), and at Tangier they spent a night at the Mnar Castle apartments (mnarcastle.com). CONTACT: Ardventures, ardventures.co.uk / 01757 638479, and see more on Galeforce TV, their YouTube channel.