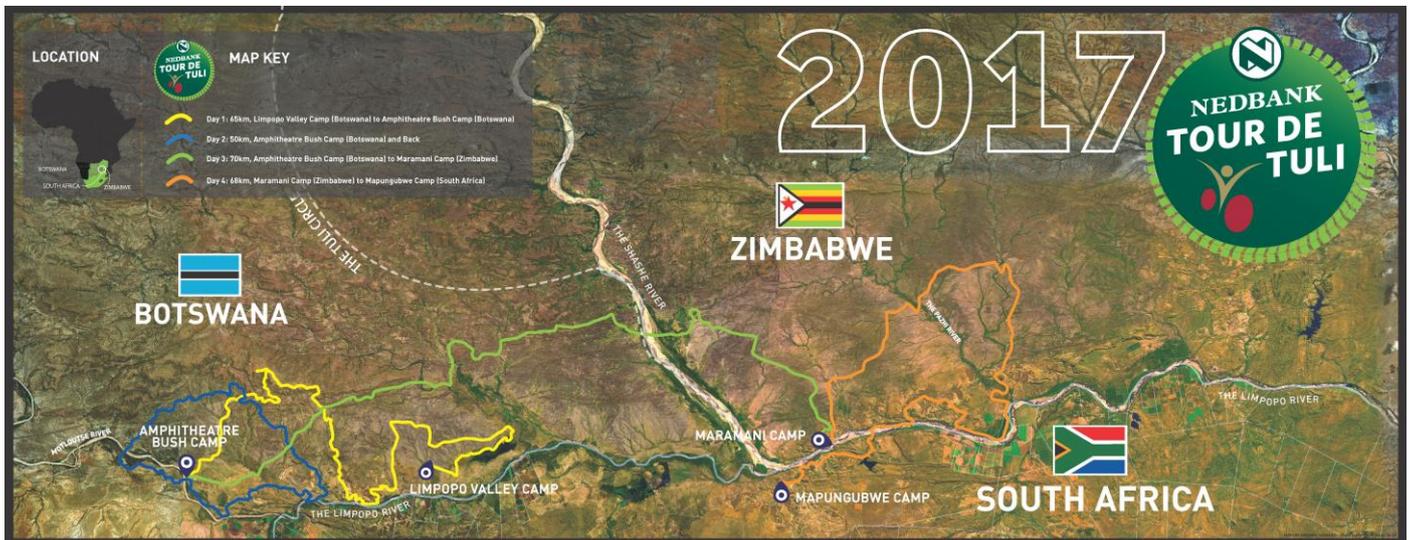
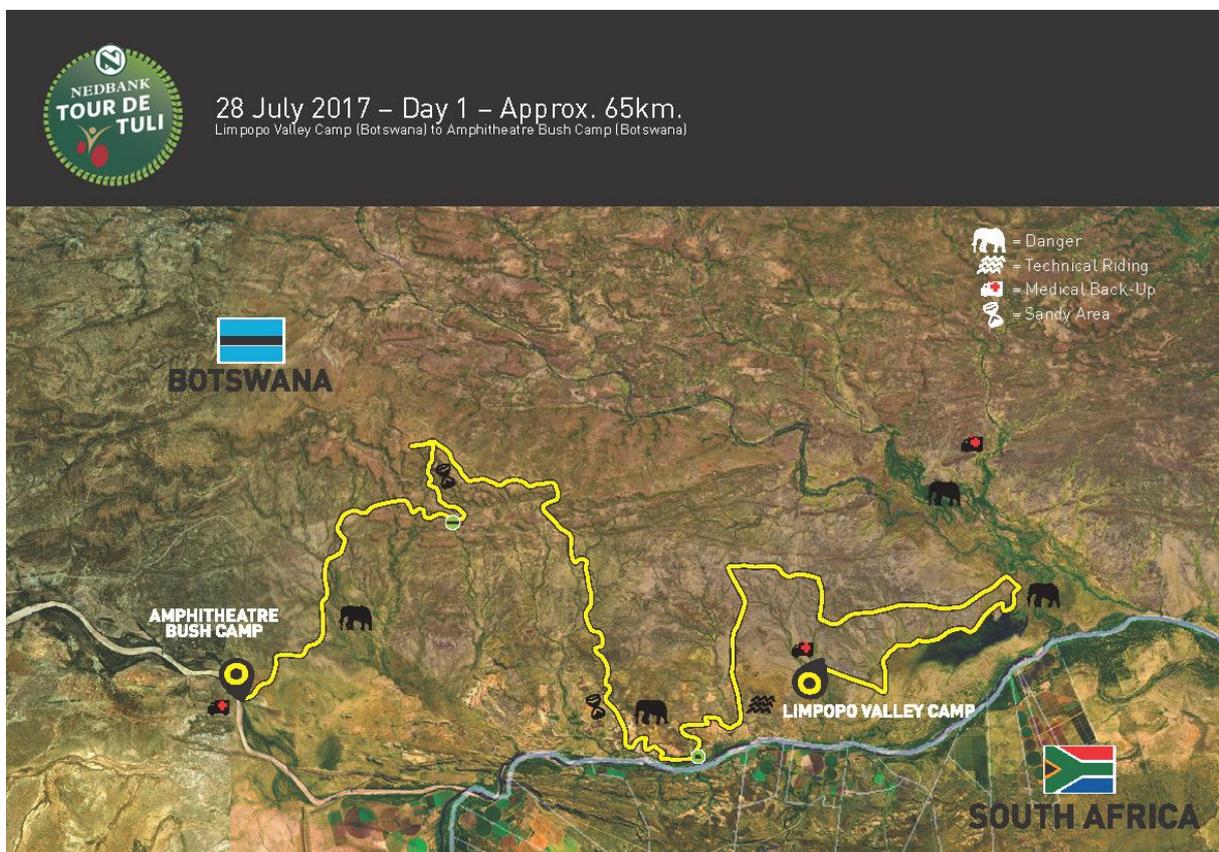




2017 ROUTE DESCRIPTIONS



RIDING DAY 1 – 28TH JULY – LIMPOPO VALLEY AIRFIELD (BOTSWANA) TO AMPHITHEATRE BUSH CAMP (BOTSWANA) – APPROXIMATELY 65 KM



Head out of the Limpopo Valley Airfield in an easterly direction into the sunrise which is always spectacular. Some warm kit is recommended for the mornings which you can either carry with you or hand over to one of the trusty volunteers to collect later at the Support Desk.

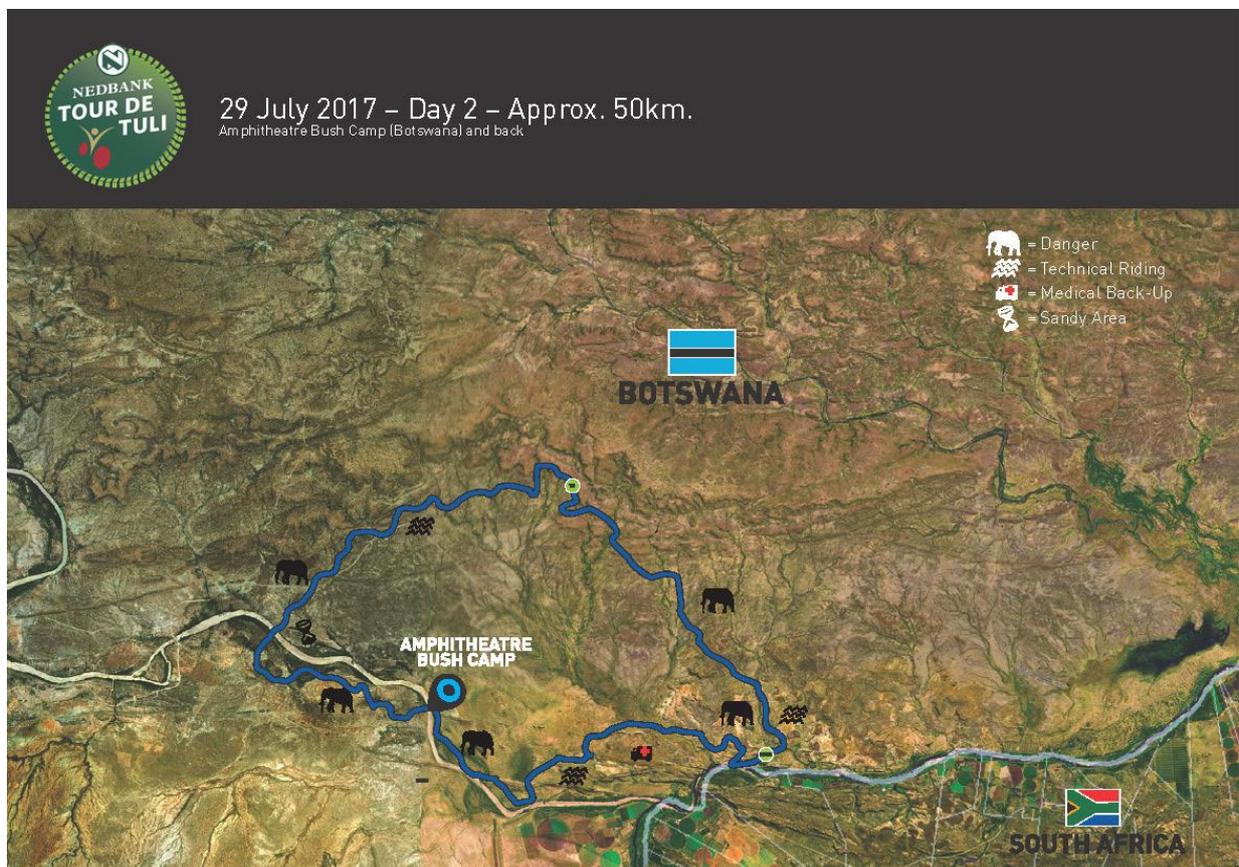
From Nel's Vlei we head north-west on single track into open plains scattered with shepherd bush trees. From here we will start heading south into the famous sandstone ridges to test your mountain bike skills. Brace yourselves for a bit of sand once you get into the sandstone hills. The tea stop (which is approximately 20 km from camp) will be situated at Pride Rock – the lovely Janet and her team will be ready to welcome you with a variety of delicious treats. Please ensure that you reapply sunblock at this stop.

On to brunch; this section includes a short but magic section of sandstone where after we will head north into shrub mopane. Keep a good gap between yourself and the rider in front of you as the mopane branches have a nasty sting. This section has the most climbing of the whole Tour with some rocky little climbs which are, however, 100% rideable. That said, don't be shy to walk should you feel uncomfortable riding it. *Remember, this is a tour; not a race.* On top of the plateau there is a lone baobab with the second-best view on Tour. This is a great spot for a panoramic shot on your way to the brunch stop. Brunch will be *asemrowend* guaranteed. Please fill up with water as the last stretch of the day can be warm. Remember to reapply your sunblock at the brunch stop too. The distance between the tea and the brunch stop is about 19 km with about 150 m of climbing.

Homeward bound to Amphitheatre Bush Camp on single track through mopane bushveld. This section is fast and flowing but care needs to be taken as there are a lot of elephants in the area. Please ensure you keep a watchful eye on your Cycle Leader so you don't miss any communication signals they may be making.

The last stretch into camp is sandy so brace yourselves for this last push. The ice cold beers waiting for you at the camp should motivate you to push through this sandy patch. Brunch to Amphitheatre Bush Camp is roughly 17 km, with a 40 m climb.

RIDING DAY 2 – 29TH JULY – AMPHITHEATRE BUSH CAMP LOOP (BOTSWANA) – APPROXIMATELY 50 KM



We head west out of camp where we will start off with a river crossing to warm up the legs. After crossing the Motloutse River we move into open plains on well-used ellie tracks. Be warned, this area is rather chilly in the morning so a warm top is highly recommended – you can drop it at tea if you are extra nice to Janet. The first 10 km will take us through true wilderness areas where we will explore the Tuli Wilderness Reserve. We will then cross back over the Motloutse River again, heading east to tea which will be situated under large apple-leaf trees. Tea is located approximately 19 km from camp.

From the tea stop we cross over the vet fence into some loose rocky terrain to test your technical riding skills. This stretch is very diverse as the bush changes all the time from mopane to open plains to leadwood thickets, with tricky drainage lines to cross. Brunch is under a majestic mashatu tree, approximately 18 km from the tea stop.

So who's up for a challenge?

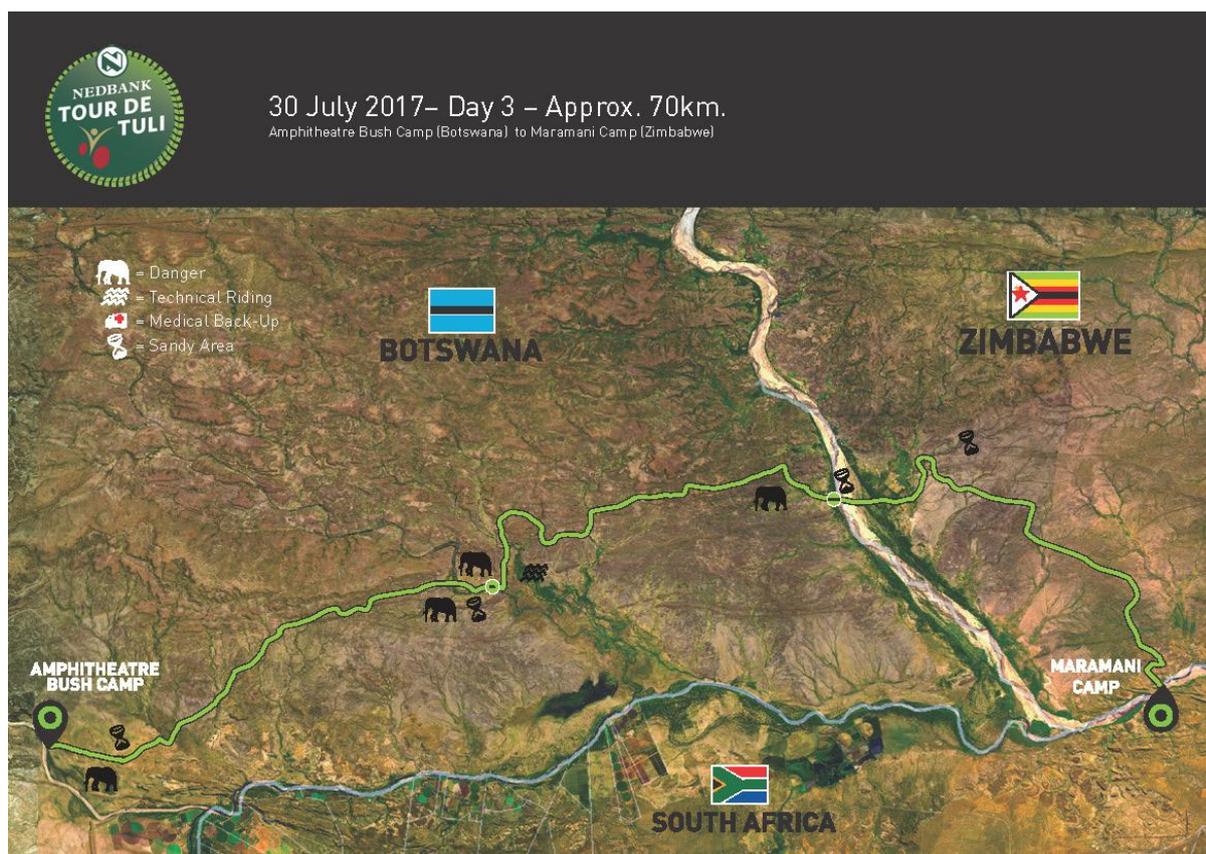
For some of the front teams we dare you to ride a Qhubeka Buffalo bike for approximately 5km from brunch via the Lentswe wall to the village of Lentswe-le-Moriti to put a smile on some kid's dial. This is the average distance that most rural children walk to get to school each day. A humbling thought as you struggle to manoeuvre your Buffalo bike through this section of the route.

From brunch we drop into the Limpopo River under the Lentswe Wall, a natural marvel. There are two portages in this section but nothing too serious. This entails a quick visit to the school and back into the wilderness, popping out under Mmagwa Ruins. Demand that your Cycle Leaders take you to the top. This is the best view of the Tuli area you will ever experience and there's a great photo opportunity under the Cecil John Rhodes Baobab. The ride continues west to Solomon's Wall, yet another spectacular natural marvel. Ice cold beers aren't too far away and will be well-deserved after a long day in the saddle. From the brunch stop back to camp it is approximately 16 km.

Ladies and gents, the temptation to have a *moerse opskop* once you arrive in camp is very inviting but PLEASE remember, Day 3 is going to hurt.

We will once again overnight at the Amphitheatre Bush Camp.

RIDING DAY 3 – 30TH JULY – AMPHITHEATRE BUSH CAMP (BOTSWANA) TO MARAMANI COMMUNITY CAMP (ZIMBABWE) – APPROXIMATELY 70 KM



Today we will leave as early as it is safe to do so as the first section of the route is renowned for interactive ellie encounters. So when your Leader makes a bee-line for the main road please don't hesitate to follow as they are more than likely avoiding a large herd of ellies. I think we should reiterate the importance of listening to your Leaders and ensure you do not overtake the front Leader. The first section to the tea stop is 95% single track with a lot of mopane. It is best to keep your following distances in mind, as the whipping effect of the lower mopane branches does hurt somewhat. The pace may tend to be erratic as the bush is rather thick in areas.

We cross the Majale River twice and the banks are very steep so walking them may be the better option. At the tea stop Janet will once again be her most accommodating and hospitable self. Distance from camp to tea is approximately 23 km.

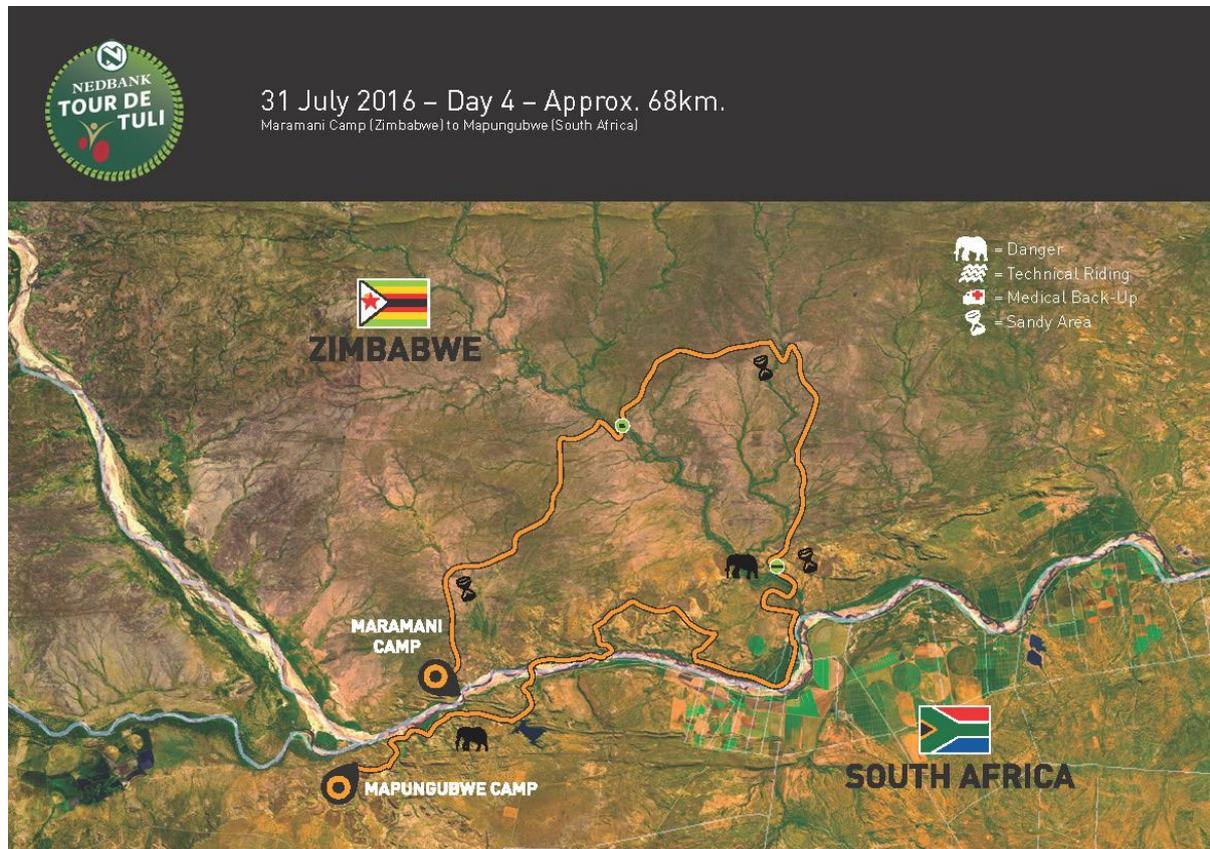
There will be a few sandy patches today that you will need to get through. This is a great opportunity to practice your sand riding. The next couple of kilometers after tea will be quite warm so please ensure you top up your water/32Gi supplement at the Tea Stop.

Heading into the heart of Mashatu the game encounters here can be amazing and the area is truly magnificent so take a moment to absorb the beauty. As we get closer to the Shashe River crossing there is a dramatic change in landscape and vegetation, and riding will become a bit more challenging with thick bush, rocky descents and the odd drainage line to throw a spanner in the works. Brunch is served on the banks of the Shashe River on the Botswana side. Here we bid farewell to Botswana, where you will clear customs and after a short walk across the Shashe River, and enter Zimbabwe.

Get your passport stamped after you trudge across the sandy Shashe River. The Zimbabwean section of the route is approximately 24 km. Take a shady single track through the riverine forest, filled with lala palms, massive ironwood, fig, mashatu and fever trees and head north through Shashe Village. Feel free to stop and sample an ice-cold beer from a local store before heading up to the Shashe Primary School. Swing south and speed across flat hard single track – just remember to duck for the lower branches of the trees waiting to smack you on the helmet. You will

reach the sandstone kopjes that guard the Limpopo from the interior, swing around a sandstone spur and you will be at your next home for the night – the delightful Maramani Community Camp on the banks of the Limpopo. Relax and enjoy.

RIDING DAY 4 – 31ST JULY – MARAMANI COMMUNITY CAMP (ZIMBABWE) TO MAPUNGUBWE (SOUTH AFRICA) – APPROXIMATELY 68 KM



Head out of the Maramani Community Camp to the north; there is easy fast riding on Jeep track all the way through community lands to tea set in cool shade on the banks of the Pazhi River. Cross the river and head north and then east across game-filled acacia and mopane bushveld. Look out for giraffe, wildebeest, zebra, eland and impala. Pause to enjoy the Saltpan and two remarkable riverbank cuttings with hardy trees growing out of the walls. These spots will be perfect for group photos.

You will swing south along a fast jeep track all the way past the Sentinel Rock Camp back to the Pazhi River. You will need all of your muscle power to force your way down the black sandy riverbed for a few hundred meters until you climb out into a glade of massive ironwood, fig and mashatu trees for a delicious brunch.

Cross the main Shashe road, a short sprint down a turnoff and you will swing around to enter the riverine forest that flanks the Limpopo River. Weave your way through massive trees that have been there just forever (keep a look out for elephants), and pass the Bristow's house, where you will be shown a display of 200 million year old fossils collected on Sentinel. Follow the river bank, swing inland and take a short sharp rocky climb to the fossil site – there you will meet the oldest and biggest lizard you have ever seen.

Power through a short sandy patch, traverse a plateau while you soak up the atmosphere created by the ancient baobabs that surround you and emerge right at the Sizi Spring. This is an age-old meeting point for all animals, and is the likely source of permanent water for the Iron Age era Mapungubwe Kingdom. From here – a short, slightly sandy, ride awaits you to the border crossing and over the Limpopo. You will soon be in South Africa on graded roads all the way to the Mapungubwe Camp – keep a look out for elephants.