

## Running a Food Kitty

How a kitty is managed on the road can often be an area where discussions take place. How should it be organised? What should it pay for? We have written this quick guide with a few hints so if you are ever asked to run the kitty you will know how to approach it.

On many overland trips the food kitty is organised by one of the passengers. On a **First48 overland expedition** the accommodation is part of the overall expedition cost and therefore the kitty is only used for food and eating out and the occasional birthday present.

### General Management

The group is split into equal food groups as far as is possible depending on numbers. Experience has shown that groups of three are usually best. During the day the group should purchase all the food that they require for that day's evening meal and breakfast and lunch the next day (although bread is often better bought fresh the next morning for lunch).

It is much better if individuals wash and dry their own dishes after a meal and the cook group does the pots and pans. This means that the cook groups aren't stuck washing and clearing up for hours while people are drinking or when there is an evening group discussion.

The food group responsible for the evening meal chooses the music for the truck music system for the evening (therefore ensuring that everyone gets a chance to play their own music if they wish)

**If you are "in town" for a few days and people are not getting lunches supplied from the kitty then there are no refunds from the food kitty.**

20 people eat approximately 4 kg of pasta and 4-5 kg of vegetables per meal.

The kitty manager should give the daily food group a set amount for buying the days food. This figure should be known within a few days of shopping in a country. Your driver will be able to give you some help to begin with.

### Coffee and other Western food

Not everyone drinks coffee for example. This can make it an expensive luxury while travelling in less developed countries. Tinned tuna can cause similar discussions. Where possible food groups should purchase food that the locals are buying. This helps both your budget and the local economy.

Where expensive foods such as coffee are purchased the daily budget given to the food group should be increased. It is often worthwhile buying these items in large quantities as this works out cheaper and you never know when they will next be available.

### Restaurants & eating out:

If managed badly, eating out a lot can be a disaster for your budget management. However, group meals out are a great way of spending time together in a local environment and give people a break from 'home cooked' food every day. There are 6 factors that need to be considered:

- Not everyone eats the same amount of food
- Not everyone will want to go out for a meal
- Restaurants in some countries cater very poorly for the vegetarian

- The bill at the end of the night never adds up to what you expect it to
- Restaurant meals may cost more than the kitty budget for the day
- People drink different amounts of alcohol

**Our solution is as follows:**

- The kitty manager - who is at the meal, should set a level that you can buy a minimal meal at. So for example if you can get a decent main course and milkshake for 70 rupees in India set the level at 60. We call this the "standard meal rate"
- At the beginning of the meal (when everyone still has a menu in front of them) everyone tells the kitty manager how much he or she has spent. If they have spent 100 rupees then they have to give 40 rupees to the kitty (as this is 40 rupees more than the standard meal rate). It is therefore personal choice if an individual wants to have a more expensive meal.
- Those that don't go for the meal out are credited the "standard meal rate" of 60 rupees on their personal kitty account.
- At the end of the meal the kitty pays for the bill - and the tip. The kitty manager knows exactly how much the bill should be (as everyone has told him / her what they have spent). The final bill sometimes works out more than the individual totals and the kitty pays this discrepancy. This avoids that "end of meal" discussion, trying to get people to put in a few more rupees to bring the cash on the table up to the total bill.
- Restaurants, when they see the kitty manager writing down how much each individual has spent, find it harder to confuse you with a complicated and scribbled bill.
- This solutions works! - Try it!

**Acting as a money lender / bureau de change:**

If you are running with the restaurant system as above then you are already maintaining individual kitty "bank accounts" for each individual on the trip.

You can therefore decide whether to "lend" money from the kitty if you have changed too much. You could also "buy" currency from the group when the kitty is short. You can also buy and sell currency from the "company". This can help both you and the rest of the passengers out, especially when you arrive in a new country or are just leaving one.

When entering the country for the first time record an exchange level and keep it the same for all kitty conversions.

Buying currency from the group the day before you leave a country is often a good thing to do and keeps the group happy. Many people will have changed small amounts of money on entering a country and probably won't have spent it all. If you buy this currency you should be able to find a food shop and spend all the remaining currency on food. Bear in mind however what you know about the next country you are entering. If food is going to be much cheaper in the next country it is worth saving your money, changing it on the border, and then shopping in the first town.

**Other things we have learnt:**

The Company pays the kitty for any company staff on the expedition. This ensures that the group don't think that the driver is eating his / her way through their money.

Never buy beer with a food kitty. Have a separate beer kitty (and get someone else to handle it. You've already done your bit). In fact have a separate beer kitty each time you buy beer!