

In the lack of a timely play-by-play for episodes three and four of The Amazing Race Australia 2 (the first episode for being boring as hell, the second because I just haven't had the time or energy, although I promise to do both in the future), I present this critical analysis of the task design from the season's first four episodes. Enjoy!

The Amazing Race Australia		AUSTRALIA	2
LEG 1: Philippines			
Car Escape	<p>Immediately upon starting the race, teams must pick up their bags and walk to the Sydney Opera House, then take a water taxi to Barangaroo Wharf. Once there, they must select one of twelve marked cars in a makeshift parking lot and unblock the exit directly in front of it by moving a series of decoy cars backwards and forwards. Both team members must be inside a car before it can move, and cars may not turn. Some of the marked paths intersect and require teams to work together. Once a team exits the parking lot, they will be given the next clue.</p> <p>An original challenge and one of the best "starting line" challenges the show's ever had, albeit not without a big design issue. With eleven teams and twelve cars, and all but two requiring working with another team to free, there's a distinct possibility the final team could be stuck in the parking lot in their chosen car if they pick one that's blocked in by whichever marked car isn't claimed. 7/10</p>		
Road Block #1	<p>Speculative list entry; if there was one, it is edited out. (Nobody is actually shown reading what to do upon landing in Manila, and there's no way in hell it took the twins almost seven hours to finish the next task.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Who knows? No score.</p>		
Balut	<p>Team members must work together to eat eight balut – partially-formed duckling fetuses. There is no minimum number of balut each team member must eat.</p> <p>Taken from The Amazing Race Asia 2. The producers have admitted their willingness to borrow challenges from the other two Amazing Race franchises they've run (The Amazing Race Asia and HaMeretz LaMillion), but perhaps they should have used challenges that actually, you know, worked. This was just as underwhelming the first time as it is here. 2/10</p>		
Detour #1: Jig or Pig	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two harvest festival traditions. Teams choosing PIG must cover their arms in grease and work in relay to catch four pigs in a muddy pen, transferring them to a waiting farmer. Each team member must catch two pigs. Teams choosing JIG must put on provided outfits, then learn a traditional lbalong dance routine and perform it to the satisfaction of a panel of four judges.</p> <p>Taken from The Amazing Race Asia 4. In theory, both options are adapted to make them twice as hard – catching four pigs instead of two or impressing four judges instead of two – but in actuality the dancing becomes significantly more demanding, and it's no surprise only one team was able to complete it. 5/10, and that's being generous since it was by a wide margin the best Detour of that entire season.</p>		
Raft	<p>Teams must assemble a raft using any or all supplies provided (including bamboo poles, rope, water containers, a sheet of fabric, and a knife), then paddle it around Misibis Bay to the next beach along, before running up a short path to this leg's Pit Stop on a dock. If the raft breaks apart in the water, they must return to the start and try again.</p> <p>Taken from The Amazing Race: A Corrida Milionária. This one's kind of odd. On the one hand, it's a brilliant test of everybody's ingenuity. On the other, it's really more of a Survivor challenge. But the "here's the basic goal, accomplish it however you can" genesis isn't used nearly enough any more, so it's still very welcome. 8/10</p>		
Salvage Pass	<p>The winners of this leg are given the Salvage Pass and can use it in one of two ways. They can either keep the leg as a scheduled elimination and take an extra one-hour head start at the beginning of the next leg, or they can keep their existing lead and change the episode to a non-elimination.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And there goes the shark. Wave bye-bye! 0/10</p>		

LEG 2: India	
Turban	<p>Teams must enter a staircase-like well with about fifty patrolling men wearing turbans, then unwrap the turbans one at a time until they find one of eleven with the word "CORRECT" printed on the fabric. Each time they unravel an incorrect turban, they must wind it back around its wearer's head before continuing.</p> <p>Taken from The Amazing Race Asia 3, where it was originally a Road Block. It's basically the same as the fan challenge we had at this point last season, albeit inferior in basically every way. Which is a real problem when it wasn't any good the first time. 2/10</p>
Detour #2: Pull or Poo	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two tasks based around cows, both requiring teams to first travel by tuktuk to Jabbar and Laallu's Dairy in Bhalswa, a town on the outskirts of Delhi. Teams choosing PULL must take turns milking a cow, with each team member collecting half a litre in a metal bowl. If the milk spills, they must start again. Teams choosing POO must work barehanded to create 50 "fuel bricks" from provided hay and cow manure, sticking each of them onto a wall to dry.</p> <p>Pull is taken from part of a Road Block from The Amazing Race 16; Poo was originally a Road Block in The Amazing Race Asia 1. As if the self-plagiarism wasn't enough, Poo also appeared as part of a Detour in The Amazing Race: Unfinished Business... which was the last complete US season to air in Australia before this season began filming. It doesn't help that it endorses the "India = Dirty!" stereotype. 3/10, mostly for the deceptively tough Pull option.</p>
Bollywood	<p>Teams must travel to the Old Fort and locate a "film set", then learn a Bollywood-esque dance and perform it with a group of backup dancers. They must then also perform a dialogue "audition" in Hindi, reading from provided cue cards. Once the "director" has approved both their dance and dialogue as satisfactory, they will be given the clue.</p> <p>Original task, although the dancing half coincidentally also appeared as a Road Block in The Amazing Race 20. Wow, the cultural stereotypes are out in force this week, aren't they? It doesn't appear to matter that Bollywood is strictly relevant to Mumbai rather than Delhi (thus the B for Bombay, the city's former title), we're in India! Well, okay then. 4/10, and I fear that's a bit generous.</p>
Road Block #2	<p>The task is edited out. (Nobody is actually shown reading the Pit Stop clue after the Bollywood challenge, with cuts to the clue and obvious splicing all over the place. It seems likely that clue directed them to a separate location for the Road Block itself – the clue was definitely a Route Info.)</p> <p>Who knows? No score.</p>
LEG 3: India	
Portable Pit Stop	<p>During the Pit Stop rest period, teams are transferred from Delhi to Jaipur. They depart from Shiv Vilas with their original time differences from the end of the last leg.</p> <p>Why? Doesn't taking the travel arrangement away from teams reduce fatigue in a race that – as far as viewers are aware – has been depressingly light on anything fatigeworthy, AND make it nigh on impossible for trailing teams to catch up? 1/10</p>
Hindu Blessing (Detour #3*)	<p>Teams must travel by tuktuk to the Red Elephant Temple and receive a traditional Hindu blessing. Once the blessing is complete, the priest will give them the next clue.</p> <p>The task was completed as part of a Detour (one team can be seen reading a Detour clue next to a cluebox outside the temple in the preseason commercials), but it's edited out and the two tasks are unknown. It's likely copied from The Amazing Race Norge 1, which had a hot coals/bed of nails Detour in this exact location. The fact that it was edited probably says it all, but in fairness I'm not going to give it a score here.</p>

Road Block #2: Driving Test	<p>In this Road Block, the chosen team member (who's a fast learner) must qualify for a local drivers' licence. After travelling to a nearby traffic school, they must sit through a lesson on local road signs, then drive their partner to the next destination, accompanied by a local driving teacher. Once they arrive, they'll be given the next clue.</p> <p>Taken from The Amazing Race 10. The design here really ruins it – because they drive directly to the next destination, there's no possibility teams could fail and have to redo the task. And since there's no penalty for failure (thanks mostly to the next task having a built-in penalty), it becomes less “pass a local driving test” and more “drive over there”, pretty much. 3/10</p>
Oxcart	<p>Teams must select an oxcart and load it with 75 large clay urns, then transport it across a busy market to a stacking area. If the team arrives with at least 61 pots intact, they will be given the next clue. If they arrive with 60 or fewer (thus, if they have broken fifteen or more pots), they will be given an immediate fifteen-minute penalty before receiving the next clue.</p> <p>Adapted from a Detour seen in The Amazing Race Asia 3. It wasn't an overwhelmingly interesting task that time, but given it was one of those Detours that seem to turn up every so often where it looks like it's clearly preferable and yet everybody chooses the other one, I don't have much of a problem seeing it again. 7/10.</p>
Two Road Blocks	<p>This leg contains two Road Blocks. Unlike in the American version's legs with two Road Blocks, there is no restriction on the second Road Block, and either team member can perform it. (Although the latter isn't shown, this is also the first time two Road Blocks have appeared in a leg with a Detour.)</p> <p>The tweak made here actually has two very good purposes. Firstly, it eliminates the need to tweak the Road Block splitting rule (although just being this early in the season accomplishes the same); secondly, it frees up the task designers in terms of designing the second task. Although ironically the second task generally IS better, as it is here, but... you know. 9/10</p>
Road Block #3: Stairs	<p>For this Road Block, teams must travel to the Panna Meena stairwell. Once there, the chosen team member (who is the stairmaster) must select one of three starting positions and walk to a guru waiting on a balcony in the stairwell, by descending exactly 41 steps and climbing exactly ten steps. If they arrive in the correct number of steps, the guru will give them the next clue.</p> <p>Original challenge. And a brilliant variation on the annoyingly repetitive counting challenge to boot. 10/10</p>
LEG 4: United Arab Emirates	
Must Vote U-Turn	<p>In this variation of the U-Turn (which forces the affected team to complete both Detour tasks), each team must vote in private to U-Turn a team of their choosing upon leaving the Pit Stop. The team who receives the most votes will find out they have been U-Turned in the usual manner (by forcing all teams to visit a road sign prop after the Detour). All teams who voted for this team will be shown on the larger “courtesy of” sign attached.</p> <p>Taken from The Amazing Race Israel. This tweak guarantees its usage (good), but is designed to force inter-team bickering (very, very bad). It's no coincidence that the best reality shows pit the contestants against the game itself rather than directly against each other. The U-Turn sucks in general for so many reasons, and this won't help. 0/10</p>
Detour #4: Dune Bash or Camel Dash	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two tasks based on methods of transport commonly used to cross deserts. Both tasks first require teams to first drive themselves to the Al Faqa desert, about 90 kilometres outside of Dubai. Teams choosing DUNE BASH must then drive along a ten-kilometre course in a dune buggy, passing through a series of flagged “gates”. Replacement buggies will be provided if a buggy breaks down or gets stuck to the point the team can't fix the situation. Teams choosing CAMEL BASH must board a camel and steer it to collect four coloured flags, before returning to the starting point. (As mentioned above, this Detour has a Must Vote U-Turn connected to it.)</p> <p>Dune Bash is taken from The Amazing Race 4 (in Australia, ironically enough), while Camel Dash is taken from The Amazing Race Asia 1. They're kind of generic tasks, yes, but sometimes it's nice to just have a simple task rather than spending longer to explain the task than it takes to complete. And it's even better that a team was forced to take the sucker bait camel option. 8/10</p>

Wave Machine	<p>Teams must drive themselves to Wild Wadi and change into provided wetsuits, then attempt to ride a wave machine to collect a dangling clue from the front. Only one player at a time is allowed to attempt the task. If they fail, they must return to the back of any line formed.</p> <p>Original idea. Short, simple, effective. Not much more to say really. 7/10</p>
Road Block #4	<p>The task is edited out, but clearly happens directly after the wave machine challenge (one of the players is seen holding the Road Block clue as they leave Wild Wadi).</p> <p>Who knows? No score.</p>
Horse Racing	<p>Teams must drive themselves to Meydan Racecourse and attempt to pick a winner in one of the day's five races. For each race, the team is allowed to select two horses. If either horse wins, they will be given the next clue. If neither pick wins, they must wait 45 minutes for the next race. If teams fail to pick a winner at all, or arrive after the last race, one team member must carry their partner along a 200-metre section of the track before receiving the next clue.</p> <p>Original challenge. And an awful, awful one. It's clearly only been included for two reasons, (1) having the U-Turned team catch up to the people who U-Turned them, and (2) for the sight gag of having a mass piggyback race for all the teams who fail to pick a winner. Unluckily for the producers, neither of these actually happened, and what we got was a complete and utter waste of air time. Why couldn't we have seen the Road Block instead?</p> <p>1/10</p>