

VANLIFEZONE

Issue 5
06/2022



**MEMOIRS
OF A VAN**

BREAKDOWN

**TAKE IT
EASY**

**MEET
HEINRICH**

**VANLIFEZONE
FESTIVAL**

23.-25.09.2022
in Austria

A PASSION PROJECT
DEDICATED TO SHARING
VANLIFE STORIES AND
ADVENTURES

4-5	Get Out There!
6-9	23 Wild and Free
10-13	Memoirs of a Van
14-17	Breakdown
18-21	Meet Heinrich
22-27	Traces of Luxury
28-29	Vanlifezone Festival
30-33	Vanlife wasn't our Plan
34-37	Healthy Habits
38-39	Vanlife Eats!
40-45	Take it Easy!
46 -49	Albania
50-55	The Isle of Skye

GET OUT THERE.

If there's one thing we've learned in the last few years, it's to be flexible, to adapt, to change plans when necessary and to keep our eyes open for new paths, new perspectives and new adventures.

After these two years of uncertainty, this year everything feels a bit more normal again. We are in the middle of spring, summer is getting closer with each passing day and we all feel it down to our toes: we are finally getting out! Yes, we want to get away, we want to go out into freedom, we want to feel ourselves and enjoy our lives. We want to Experience new things, see new places and meet new people. We want less distance from other people, while at the same time seeking greater distance from everyday life and routine.

What does this mean for the vanlife community? It's finally time again to get our buses out of their garages, spruce them up and pack our bags to finally hit the road.

WE'RE SETTING OFF FOR NEW HORIZONS

In keeping with this spirit of departure, there is also big news for Vanlifezone that we would like to share with you!

For us as Vanlifezone, this year is also one of change. Those who have been following us for some time and have perhaps already read one or two issues of the magazine or even submitted a story might have noticed that both our content on Instagram and this magazine are developing step by step and expanding in new directions. Vanlifezone was created in 2020 as a passion project and will certainly continue as such - but a few things will change!

Probably the most obvious change: we are getting bigger. Bigger as a team, bigger as a magazine and bigger in our thinking, in our goals. What does that mean exactly? You as a community were always at the heart of Vanlifezone and that's exactly where you will remain - because it's your stories that make this so special and give our platform its uniqueness.

What will change is the scope and regularity, as well as the quality of the magazine. Around your stories, we will create different categories that will allow us to bring the magazine to a higher level of quality. With the help of our team, well-researched articles will be published at regular intervals to better support your content. We will provide you with general impressions of different destinations, we will inform you about different camping possibilities and we will go in search of unknown places you have never been to. Furthermore, you will get insights into topics that are especially important to us as passionate campers - from minimalism to sustainable living in the van to tips and tricks on nutrition and health while traveling.

One of the new features is that this issue of the magazine has a special theme. You've probably already guessed the theme of this June issue? That's right! This issue of the magazine is all about setting off: getting started, getting ready, going on a journey, discovering new things and just getting moving. Why did we choose this theme? First and foremost, because we ourselves are on the move. By the way, „Aufbrechen“ has several meanings in German. On the one hand, to set out means to be about to leave a place, to set off somewhere, but on the other hand, it can also mean breaking up old patterns - in the sense of change: rethinking the old, traditional and adapting to changing situations in the best possible way.

THE JOURNEY IS NOT THE ONLY GOAL

This is exactly what we want to achieve with the changes in the Vanlifezone magazine. We want to give your stories the best possible platform to be shared, to touch other people, to impress and to make them laugh. We want to add value with more topics, entertain you, inform you and create awareness for a responsible approach to our nature. We want to create an incentive to think more about your own way of life and to connect more with other people. As a result, we also want to offer a new total package in the vanlife community - because so much can be said: not only in the magazine itself will old patterns be broken, but you will hear more about this on our channels when the time comes!

Are you interested in joining us on our journey? Or would you like to be part of the next issue? We are already looking forward to hearing from you and we'll just ask you directly:

What is it that drives you so much? Is it the love of driving? The love of discovering new things, getting to know new cultures? The love of freedom? What experiences have you had on your travels? What impressions have shaped you? We want to unite all these feelings, this mood that we ourselves feel when we can finally buckle into our driver's seat again and set off on our journey, in this magazine for you. Because what drives us are your stories! It is you who inspire us and encourage us to try out new things and embark on new adventures!

Written by Verena, Vanlifezone Team
[@verenagroebi](#)

23 WILD AND FREE

It was 2020 and, at 21, I'd just graduated from University in the height of a pandemic and found myself thrown into a world of countless unknowns and innumerable restrictions. What was I to do next? My intention was always to travel as extensively as I could after completing my education, but with COVID regulations and limited funds, I soon realised I'd have to make another plan.

Determined not to be beaten, I made the somewhat spontaneous decision to use the savings I had managed to acquire during my time at University to buy and convert a 2011 Ford Transit van. I had absolutely no experience of any form of DIY or mechanics, but did have endless enthusiasm and a keen interest in watching other van lifers convert and upgrade their vans online. Perhaps irrationally, I decided that if they can do it, why can't I? It took me almost a year to convert my van on weekends outside of my full-time job. Most of the build took place in the depths of winter in freezing temperatures and thick blankets of snow. It was certainly a challenge learning how to navigate power tools, electrics, carpentry and itchy glass-based insulation with only the odd YouTube video for instruction. But slowly the van progressed and with every small accomplishment I gained more motivation to complete the van conversion of my dreams.

Eventually, as the Spring of 2021 lazily turned into Summer, I put the last finishing touches to my tiny home on wheels. I was more than ready to get out there and start experiencing van life adventures for myself. Quitting my job as a teaching assistant, I immediately began searching for remote job opportunities which would give me more of a

chance to earn an income whilst on the go. To my surprise, I managed to land a great job in marketing which is a perfect fit to van life and eventually turn into a freelance career as a digital nomad. It was at this point that the clouds of uncertainty that had fogged my mind since the pandemic started finally began to disperse. I'd created a chance to travel from the comfort of my own tiny home, with a remote income that wouldn't keep me tied to one monotonous routine, and was starting to see a positive clear future ahead of me rather than the blank void I had been so desperate to fill before.

Flash forward a year and my van has already given me so many of the experiences I yearned to have during years of schooling and, more recently, lockdowns.

One of my favourite van life trips to date was during December 2021 when my brother and I went on a Christmas road tour of Germany, Belgium, France, and Luxembourg. We headed directly to Cologne first to experience the numerous Christmas markets that light up the 2000 year old German city during the festive season. Parked up with a view over the Rhine as our backyard, I experienced an overwhelming sense of freedom and elation, and knew that I was on the right path.

The markets were unforgettably magical. Thousands of fairy lights blanketed the skies above alpine huts selling roasted chestnuts, glühwein, and intricately carved ornaments, whilst the gothic spires of Cologne's famous cathedral loomed majestically overhead.





From here, we headed south to the Black Forest, where we drove along mountaintop passes which wended their way through miles of snow topped evergreen woodland. I parked up on the side of the road and jumped out of the van in childlike excitement to run through the winter wonderland, soaking up the Narnia-like views and not quite believing I'd driven us all the way here to this dreamlike place.

For the next few nights, we stayed in a free wild-camping location just outside the tiny rural village of Saint Peter in the alpine valleys of the Black Forest region. The best part about van life in my opinion is staying in such beautiful 5-star destinations without having to spend a penny on accommodation or expensive flights. Although it has its challenges, such as finding places to fill up with freshwater, disposing of waste, and finding overnight parking at the last minute, it's a life filled with endless possibilities and access to the world's most enchanting locations. For me, it's well worth its unique struggles. And besides, I'm a firm believer that having to navigate challenging situations sometimes and stepping out of your comfort zone really helps to fast-track personal growth. Van life certainly does this!

More recently, and closer to home, I took my van on a weekend trip to the Yorkshire Dales in search of adventure. The temperature was still very nippy as I drove past frost-tipped hedgerows and icy fields. But as I drove up onto Buttertubs pass, a remote high road in the heart of the Dales, I was treated to the most intense golden hour sunlight I've ever experienced. I parked the van up on the side of the road looking out onto miles of rolling hills and idyllic stone walls with no-one else in sight, bathing in the resplendent glow. There's definitely a reason they call it magic hour. Though totally alone in this remote location, I didn't feel at all lonely.

One of the things I'm most grateful for that van life has given me is a new sense of independence and the ability to create my own path and happiness. I love being around friends and family, but it's nice to know that you can always make your own way, irrespective of the position of those around you.

That evening, I parked for the night on the shore of Semerwater lake with the sliding door of my van opened onto the gentle lapping of water just a couple of metres away from my doorstep as I watched the sun slip down below the horizon. Before leaving the next morning, despite near freezing temperatures, I couldn't miss the opportunity to pull on my wetsuit and go for a wild dip in the lake. Although I could only stay submerged for a couple of minutes in the icy water, it was wonderfully invigorating.

So, now it's 2022... I'm 23 and just at the start of my van life journey. I plan to travel to the South of France over summer, and perhaps further, to seek more adventures, this time with the heat of the September sun to accompany my exploits. Though I have infinite van life travels ahead of me, I feel I've already found so much of what I was searching for from converting and exploring in my van, and have gained so many unforgettable, unique memories. Bring on the future!

Sent in by Tamzin, Community Member
@tamzinvw

MEMORIES OF A VAN

My name is Maki, and I am a Renault master born in France in 2005. You should know that my name was not always Maki, in fact, I never had a name until April 2, 2021.



When my first owner bought me, I served as a work and storage van. It was hard work for me. My owner was a tough man who saw me as an object for his work. Until one day I was no longer used. At first, I thought I wasn't good enough for my owner anymore, I didn't see him for days until one rainy day I looked in through the window and my owner was lying on his sickbed. Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months, and months turned into years.

For 2 years I have waited faithfully to serve my owner, until one day my owner walked up to me, his face looked defeated. The moment I was finally allowed to ride again, I made extra tours for him, but I still felt that he was no longer the same tough, strong man as before. That same day I was sold and never saw him again, he didn't even look back as he left the garage. I was defeated and thought I would never find my happiness on the road Again...

It was early spring and the birds were singing the most beautiful songs, but it didn't do me anything. I heard and saw people pass by who were interested in me, but when they heard the price and saw my rusty spots, they quickly

dropped out. I have to be honest that I didn't feel the need to show my best side, if I wait quietly I will be taken to the scrapyard, how can a bus service if it has no happiness on the road? One day a young couple walked up to me, I was surprised they looked younger than the others who came to see me, they were not wearing workers' clothes or were covered in dirt, the girl was wearing a flowered dress and had braids in her hair, the guy had long wild curly hair and was wearing a blouse that was way too big for him. They checked and looked at me completely inside and out, they got more and more excited by the minute.

Especially the girl, she kept giving out little screams. I will never forget the moment when I heard they wanted to use me as their home. Did I hear this right? Me? An old imperfect work bus as a home? I saw the boy making a deal with the man from the garage and the girl came up and down to take another look at me. If I could blush my white-colored metal would be completely red. They shook hands with the man from the garage and made sure I knew they were coming back for me.



That didn't take long, within 2 weeks they were back in front of me, even happier than the day of our meeting. For a good 5/6 months, I slowly became a home from inside and out, my rust spots are brushed away and I have a full-size kitchen, bed, lounge, and toilet inside. They even gave me the name Maki! No idea what it means but, it must have something to do with food as they love food a lot. My new owners even organized a party when I was all done, never in my life have I been admired and loved by so many people.

It was time to hit the road with my new owners Iris and Maxime, a Dutch and French couple that have been traveling around with their suitcases around the world. It was time for them to settle down in their own way, by making me their dream home on wheels. Iris and Max were talking about making a tour through Europe, I didn't know if Europe was an area or a country and how far I would have to drive for it, but if it were on the other side of the world I would take them there. You have to understand that I didn't know much about the world, I only saw France and a bit of the Netherlands. It didn't take me long before I figured out that Europa was a group of varied countries, with mountains, white beaches, green forests, and beautiful towns to discover.

9 months 11 countries and more than 20,000 km later I am still the boss on the road, I go everywhere where my owners go. I have found my happiness on the road again. My favorite country? I should say France because I was born there, but to me, it's Greece. Here I was allowed to drive through mud, off-road mountain trails, and beaches. I also enjoy the highways, they are boring at first glance but as soon as we entered the highway the music gets louder and I have a real concert performance by Iris. Her favorite band is ABBA, she screams when a song is played on the radio.

Max is the driver during our trip, he knows exactly how I like to cross the road. He also makes sure that my tank is always full and that I get a bath every now and then.

I am no longer an object used for work and storage, I am loved every day, admired when I drive off-road without breaking all the glasses or furniture. Van life is not only for people but also for old work vans like me. So what are you waiting for, do we see you soon on the road?

Would you like to follow my journey and that of my owners?

Sent in by Iris and Max, Community Members
[@irisandmax](#)



BREAK DOWN





The engine dies. Nothing works anymore. The steps in the track are too big, too much debris, too steep. Once again, I overestimated what our 35-year-old rear-wheel drive firetruck is able to perform. Once again, I didn't think twice before I drove down here the other day. Once again I didn't listen to Franzi, my girlfriend, who asked at least five times if we could really get back up there. So now we are blocked here, in a rather stupid situation, the car inclined, on a slope in the middle of nowhere on Crete's south coast. Ok then, first we get out and check the situation. Sweaty hands. The next seconds go by in slow motion. I didn't see the fist-sized stone on which my left foot landed when I got out of the car. It moves under my weight, rolls away, my foot slips, my ankle bends. I fall. First a pain in the joint itself, then something tears somewhere further up. And then I'm lying there in the dust. And a stupid situation has turned into a real shit situation within a second.

The next day, the x-ray shows that the ankle joint is broken. In a first operation two screws are put in. Six weeks later they have to be removed. We stay in Crete and still want to continue. But from now on some things will be different in our life on the road.

The first week after the operation we spend at my parents' house, who live in Crete. Then we are drawn back to our traveling home, we finally want to explore the island. And there we go. I am dependent on crutches and am not allowed to put any weight on my leg. Driving a car isn't possible. So Franzi has to do it. We arrive at the first spot and the dogs have to go out. I can't walk a dog so Franzi has to take care of it.

The next weeks will be a test for us. I can only do half of my actual tasks. I try as hard as I can. I cook, I wash the dishes, I chop wood while kneeling and I take care of the stove. I navigate and research camp spots, shopping facilities and water sources. Franzi however is the one who has to go out at night because our puppy is not yet sleeping through. Franzi maneuvers a vehicle over six meters long through narrow Greek villages and over bumpy tracks, even though

she had only driven it a few times before the accident. Franzi walks the dogs several times a day, practices with the little one, fills our water cans, goes shopping, drives, practices, drives, walks ... I'm the one in pain, but Franzi is the one suffering.

Even if everything goes smoothly and you're in top shape, the idealized fulltime-vacation-world aka „vanlife“ advertised on Instagram and Co is a castle in the air. Life in a car is exhausting. Beautiful and diverse, but also very exhausting. It doesn't feel like a vacation. It feels like life. It brings with it difficulties and tasks that you don't encounter in normal everyday life. You are exposed to the weather much more directly. You don't have a bathroom or a washing machine. You often have to rely on the help of other people, people who are not all friendly and not all cool. You have to try out a lot, improvise and also leave a lot of things undone. And living in a car with a broken leg doesn't make it any easier. It doesn't make a 24/7 relationship and living with two dogs on six square meters any easier either. It's just a component we both could have done without.

Others might have canceled. We only discussed that for about two days. And of course I didn't want to end this unique experience because of a situation that was recklessly my fault. The weeks after the accident were nerve-racking but also very beautiful. And they showed us that you can do a lot together if you are a good team.

Today, exactly four months after the accident (we are now in eastern Turkey) we can say that it was the right decision to continue. I can walk again and am mostly pain free. I can do all my tasks again. I can maneuver us into stupid situations again — although not quite as mindlessly as before — only now we handle them better, calmer and more easygoing. And only because we both decided to.

Sent in by Max, Community Member
@hummel_die_feuerwehr





MEET HEINRICH



At the end of 2019 we bought the bus. A VW Bus t2b, year of construction 1979, with Westfalia Berlin equipment. The previous owner had already named it „Heinrich“, so we didn't change the name. It was in such a good condition that we didn't have to do much to it and could concentrate on planning travel for 2020. We wanted to travel through Germany, and had picked out the northernmost, westernmost, southernmost and easternmost points of Germany as our cornerstones. We also wanted to go to France, Spain and Portugal.

Then everything changed and with the Corona Pandemic we had to deal with lockdowns, exit, entry, and travel restrictions. So we had to change our plans. Our first trips were limited to Hamburg and were mainly just day trips. Again, we picked the most northern, the most western, the most southern and the most eastern point. This time, however, only from our hometown and then only as a day trip. With the relaxation of the Corona measures we could extend our trips into the countryside surrounding Hamburg or sometimes drive to the German Baltic Sea coast.

Now this year everything should be different and we want to realize our original plans. First we want to go to the south of Germany, to Bavaria. There are many great lakes to go stand-up-paddling and landscapes where we can relax. After that, France and Spain are on the plan. Or Italy? We are not quite sure yet and have to plan it out again.

But there is one thing we have already learned: No matter if we have looked for a place in Hamburg or if we drove to a lake around the corner or to the Baltic Sea, the journey starts as soon as we get into the bus and start the engine. The lack of comfort in the form of power steering, brake booster or fast acceleration, decelerates us from the first moment.

Sent in by Anna and Christoph with Nuca,
Community Members

@meetheinrich



TRACES OF LUXURY



HOTEL HALUDOVO

Abandoned places have always held a special fascination for travellers and adventurers. It is the tranquillity of these places, the standstill of time and the memory of what once was that captivates people. One of the most impressive lost places is located on the Croatian island of Krk not far from the town of Malinska. A former five-star resort, is perched on a hill overlooking the waters of the northern Adriatic. Many years ago this was a place where celebrities from all over the world gathered to enjoy their vacations in exuberant luxury. Not much is left of the former splendour. The hotel as well as the buildings surrounding it have long been left to their own devices, devastated and marked by weather and decay. This is the story of Hotel Haludovo.

RISE AND FALL OF A PROMISING IDEA

At the end of the 1960s when Yugoslavia, a then communist country, wanted to further expand tourism as a lucrative economic pillar, officials envisioned an enormous hotel complex on the island of Krk. A company owned by the state of Yugoslavia was chosen to be the builder and owner of the project. After four years of construction the hotel town of Haludovo was completed in 1971. It consisted not only of the actual luxury Haludovo Palace Hotel but also featured numerous flats, bungalows, sports facilities and a newly built coastal village next to an artificially raised beach.

One year after the official opening, Bob Guccione, an American businessman and founder of the men's magazine *Penthouse*, invested several million US-dollars in a stake of the Haludovo hotel complex. He extensively changed the hotel both visually and in terms of its objective making it the best-known luxury hotel on the Adriatic coast. In the formerly planted atrium of the Palace Hotel the pompous *Penthouse Adriatic Club Casino* was erected which was to attract rich and prominent guests from all over the world. His plans succeeded and by the summer of 1972 hundreds of wealthy visitors were landing at Rijeka International Airport every week, which is located just a few kilometres away.



While staying at the Haludovo Hotel, guests lived in exuberant luxury. Huge amounts of champagne and caviar were consumed and the visitors were entertained with gambling, female employees called "Penthouse Pets" and attractions within the complex. In addition to well-known Western politicians and businessmen, the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussain also resided at the Palace Hotel for a few days. Rumour has it that an entire swimming pool was once filled with champagne. Despite its international success the resort, brimming with decadence, ran into financial difficulties just one year after the opening of *Penthouse Adriatic Club Casino*. The casino had to close and the American investor Guccione withdrew from the project.

Nevertheless, the hotel complex itself continued to operate regularly and attracted numerous prominent guests in the course of the following years. The man-made beach enjoyed particular popularity and the luxuriousness of the Palace Hotel remained unchanged, only the days of the former lavish lifestyle were over. Although the hotel no longer had the same international notoriety that Guccione had helped it achieve it was still a prestigious destination for the jet-set-lifestyle.

More than a decade later Yugoslavia slid into a serious political crisis. This culminated in the Balkan Wars from which the Yugoslav part republic of Croatia was not spared. From 1991 onwards Croatia was at war for its

independence. Destruction and suffering covered the country resulting in tourists, who were important for the economy, not coming to Croatia anymore. Although the island of Krk itself was not affected by the armed conflict, tourism also suffered here. For Hotel Haludovo, this meant the end of its shining days. The complex stood empty and no longer accommodated guests. Instead, the hotel and surrounding apartments were soon converted into temporary shelters for people fleeing the war. In the following years this was its only use but after the war refugee camps in Croatia were dissolved and the people staying at Haludovo were asked to clear the premises. Not all of them were happy to leave what had by now become their home and therefore stole furniture, electrical appliances, valuables and parts of the building's infrastructure when they moved out.

After repairs and with new furniture the Hotel Haludovo was reopened as such. However, it never again became the luxury hotel it once was. The fall of communism had made it possible to privatise the complex, and it was subsequently sold in parts to various buyers. In the end only the Palace Hotel itself was still in operation, but it accommodated far too little visitors for it to be economically viable. At the beginning of 2002 guests were welcomed for the last time, then the hotel closed its doors for good.



ALL THAT REMAINS

Since then, the area and all the buildings have been left to themselves and are slowly being reclaimed by nature. It is not only plants and animals that have caused damage, but also vandals and graffiti artists, who redesigned the hotel complex according to their ideas. Nowadays almost every window is broken, the furniture was torn out and destroyed and the walls are full of graffiti. In the Palace hotel most of the broad stone steps that make up the staircase leading from the entrance area to the rooms on the upper floor are broken off and lie smashed on the floor of the atrium below. Trees and bushes grow on the roofs of the apartments and bungalows and birds nest inside them.

Haludovo shows impressively what happens to buildings when they are not occupied and maintained for a long time. The extensive corridors and halls of the Palace Hotel are particularly exciting. There is an eerie silence in the largest building of the complex, interrupted only by the whistling of the wind and the crunching of broken glass with every step.

Remains of a bowling alley, the kitchen and the hotel's laundry room can be seen in the basement while the countless guestrooms on the upper floors still contain scattered beds and wardrobes that give an idea of how guests once lived there. The high atrium on the ground floor impressively combines columns, arches and huge windows. About fifty years ago the Palace Adriatic Club Casino was located there but nowadays nothing is left of it. From the former casino, it is only a few metres to the empty swimming pool that has its light blue tiles covered in debris. The pool and the overhanging roof structure used to be a popular motif on postcards and holiday photos. Today it is one of the few places where no tall vegetation is blocking the view of the Palace hotel.

THINGS TO KNOW

Like in any abandoned building there are dangers. In some places open elevator doors fail to hide metre-deep shafts leading to the basement. On the upper floors the balconies no longer have railings and access to the roof is not without risk either.

To get to the roof the only way is an adventurous climb up a ladder on the outer wall of the top floor. Once this obstacle is overcome visitors are rewarded with an incredible view over the entire Haludovo complex and the nearby town of Malinska. As far as the eye can see bungalows and flats stand out among the trees and bushes of the overgrown complex. The viewer is presented with a unique landscape of plants and concrete.

On warm summer evenings the hotel is an ideal place to watch the sunset. While it is already getting dark and cool inside the buildings the roof of Palace Hotel provides pleasant warmth and the last rays of sun bathe the glittering sea in a deep orange.

For travellers on the island of Krk Hotel Haludovo is definitely worth a visit. A road accessible by car leads from Malinska directly to the empty car park in front of the main building. Due to the overgrown terrain, the omnipresent broken glass and the lack of lightning inside the building, good shoes and a flashlight are recommendable when visiting this fascinating place.

Written by Paul, Vanlifezone Team
@paul.jaunegg

**GET OUT THERE
TRAVELING. COMMUNITY.
VANLIFEZONE FESTIVAL.**

Welcome to the first edition of the Vanlifezone Festival 2022. This event is an open place for world travelers, colourful campervans and inspiring life stories. One weekend in early autumn is all about sharing memories of your last camping trip, sustainability, DIY projects and slow travel.

The countless possibilities during these three days, such as workshops, yoga sessions, experimental cooking classes, presentations of minimalistic concepts, survival training, and many more, invite all visitors to get out of their comfort zone and jump into their next adventure.

Let us help you remember your summer travel memories forever by listening to the best Indie sounds, while enjoying the international cuisine of the StrandGut Großsteinbach and finding new travel buddies at the Vanlifezone Festival. So, say hi to a new adventure and let yourself soak into the exciting world of slow traveling. Welcome to the Vanlifezone Festival!

In order to not miss the ticket sale for this unique event, follow @vanlifezone on Instagram. And don't forget, life begins outside your comfort zone! We can't wait to see you there!

Written by Laura, Vanlifezone Team

@laura_haubi

festival@vanlifezone.com

VANLIFEZONE FESTIVAL

IN AUSTRIA
45 min from
GRAZ



**Community Activities
Vanlife Stories
Talks
Exhibitions
Films
Live Music
& More**

23. -25. Sep. 2022

StrandGut Grosssteinbach - Großsteinbach 190, 8265

VANLIFE WASN'T OUR PLAN



THIS IS HOW WE DID IT ANYWAY

We would like to say that we are Vanlifers from the very beginning. We are not. But we are also not like everyone else. We are Jo and Georg with our dogs Momo and Nelly and we live in our T4 called Quest.

Like so many others, we came to vanlife during the corona pandemic. We've had the urge to travel for a long time. Even though we had imagined it differently.

Our plan was to backpack through Asia and maybe the rest of the world. Flights were booked, work paused, all arrangements made. Then everything came different and circumstances forced us to decide: Do we postpone our plans indefinitely or find another way? We knew there is no perfect time, only the moment when you realize you can't wait anymore.

So we went through our options. One of them was discovering Europe with a camper. Georg already knew traveling like this, vacation in his childhood meant to go by the self-built LT28. While for Jo, this subject was new. So we did well to take a „test drive“ first. How does it feel to be on the road like this? We rented a T4 and drove across Germany for three weeks - one of the best vacations we've had so far. The decision to change the plan and get our own Bulli was not difficult.

In May 2020 we finally started, initially for 7 months. We didn't add much stuff or sophisticated furniture to our T4 - quite deliberately. We visited Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria and Slovenia. From reindeers in Lapland, getting stuck in Sweden, huge floods in Germany and hiking on the Zugspitze, everything was there and we enjoyed every moment. While we sometimes looked with a bit of envy at the fancy white rolling tinyhomes on Instagram, we knew it had to be this way. After all, if we had expanded before, we wouldn't have known two important things: What we absolutely needed when living in the bus and secondly, what equipment sounds useful but isn't for us at all.

We slept on the old folding bench in the back, Momo in front. For this we had installed a rotating seat to be able to push the seats together. This and a small shelf to store our luggage, that's it. Shower? Sink? Toilet? A canister and folding spade. Refrigerator? The styrofoam box from the last order at the chinese restaurant. Everything was a bit of a makeshift. Still this was the only way we could learn what really mattered.

After about three months, it was time to speak out and realize what in retrospect was probably already clear beforehand: For us, there is no going back to our old life in Hamburg. Our 7 month trip was not only supposed to be a „break“.



After that was established, our temporary home suddenly didn't feel like enough. If we really wanted to call our Quest a home for an indefinite period of time, it should feel like it. In addition, we now knew much better what was needed in mobile life. Two things were most important to us: A box should be included for Momo. This is simply safer on the road. In addition, she has a permanent place of retreat for herself without us having to disturb her. The other important point: More space, less clearing. Previously, we had to move a lot from the back to the front at night in order to unfold our bed and vice versa in the morning. We didn't want that anymore. All our things should get a fixed place.

One of the things we still don't miss is the refrigerator. It works great without even if you only buy groceries once a week. And if you want a cool drink after all, there are enough stores everywhere where you can just go and get one.

So we drove from Slovenia once again to Germany, in order to be able to make the expansion with relatives on a farm. Momo's box is, not surprisingly for a german shepherd, quite big. So we fiddled with a plan for a long time. Every square inch was used. Still we found a system where we can even take out much of our interior when needed like when you get stuck or just want to clean properly. In the end, everything really has now been put in a permanent place, just as we imagined. Overall, we are very pleased. Our expansion is simple and efficient and we did not have to invest too much time and money which we rather use for traveling.

In the meantime, we have been on the road for 1 year. How long we will keep moving, we do not know yet. Our way so far led us further over France, Spain and Portugal to the Canary Islands, where we were allowed to spend the warmest winter of our lives. There we went surfing, had a real car breakdown and did volunteer work at the animal shelter. During this work, the youngest member came aboard: Nelly, a little black mixed breed dog. Where else to go? Further.

The next big step will take us across the Atlantic. By the end of the summer we will travel to the USA. We want to see more, be further away and explore America. We know that we will not live in our van until we are old and gray. Still, it is also clear to us that we will spend a certain part of our lives in the van.

By the way, the name „Quest“ for our van has a certain reason: We don't feel at home anywhere yet. We are looking for the place we want to call home. We don't have any concrete ideas yet and maybe we will find out one day that the place we are looking for is the place where we came from.

Who knows?

Sent in by Jo and Georg, Community Members
@meilentrio



HEALTHY HABITS

Are you ready to embark on your next van adventure?

As summer rolls around, people are getting ready for their next trips. But being on the road for days, weeks, or even months at a time can really take a toll on your health. Exercise is put on the back burner, sleep could definitely be better and the food? Let's just say it's easy to get a little lazy with cooking when living out of a van.

If this sounds like you, don't worry. There are actually some pretty easy habits that you can implement into your van life that will keep you healthy and energized on the road. But why is it so important to stay healthy during your trip, can't you just do that afterward? Well, I mean you could, but when you lead an active and healthy lifestyle, the advantages far outweigh the inconveniences.

- 1) You'll be in a better mood - and honestly - who doesn't want to be in a good state mentally while discovering new places and going on adventures?
- 2) You'll have more energy - I probably don't have to tell you, but being on the road can be exhausting at times! So I'm sure you'll love any energy boost you can get to be ready to face all the adventures awaiting you!
- 3) You'll improve your physical health - all those slightly daunting hikes that have an amazing view at the end? You can do them without problems!
- 4) You'll be less likely to get sick - I mean, who wants to get sick during their van life adventure?

But enough with the advantages, let's look at how you can implement some easy habits to live a healthier van life!



1. FIND SIMPLE, HEALTHY RECIPES FOR THE ROAD

Food is one of the biggest pillars of health. And for good reason, after all, it provides us with the necessary fuel to go about our days. So, in order to live a healthier van life, you'll need to take food into account. But you see, it's one thing to go all out and make a super fancy healthy dinner in your van once in a while, but doing that every day? That can get really tiring really quickly.

That's exactly why it's so important to find a few healthy recipes that you can easily do in your van. The thing is, when you have a few staple recipes, you can always go back to those when you run out of ideas. The keyword here is simple: you don't need a lot to make a healthy meal, maybe a quick oatmeal with fresh berries could be one staple or a lentil soup that doesn't require a lot of ingredients. Turns out the simpler and easier the recipes, the more you will be likely to make them, even on the days when you feel tired and unmotivated. When it comes to health, consistency is key. It doesn't help to do one super healthy meal a month when you feel motivated if it's so complicated that you never do it again.

Our friends from VanlifeEats tell you a bit about cooking outside on page [...] and share with you a delicious recipe from their community: a garlic damper bread! We hope to give you some inspiration for easy recipes to try on the road but don't be shy to do some research online, there is so much out there!

2. DON'T FORGET TO HYDRATE

The next habit that will keep you healthy on the road is staying hydrated. You've most likely heard it before and I'm here to tell you again: staying hydrated is crucial for your health! Think about it: when you don't drink enough water, not only are you jeopardizing your health but you'll also:

- Feel more tired
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded
- Get headaches

These are all things that will dampen the experience of your van life adventure, so why not avoid it, if possible? Drinking enough water doesn't have to be a hard habit to stick with, and most of the time it's really just about convenience. You see, when you have all the water you need right there and in sight, you will be much more likely to drink it! So, instead of drinking your water from a cup here or a few sips there, invest in a big water bottle that you can keep right next to you while driving or with you when you embark on adventures.

When you have a visual of needing to drink this bottle once, twice, or three times a day (depending on the size), it's much easier to estimate whether or not you're drinking enough!



3. DON'T SKIP YOUR EXERCISE - USE NATURE AS YOUR GYM

I know, being on the road can be exhausting and the last thing you want to do after a long day of driving is a workout, but trust me, especially on those days, the movement will give you so much extra energy!

Now: you don't have to go ahead and work out 6 days a week by finding a gym on the road or following some Youtube videos (although if that floats your boat, go ahead!). An even better way to make movement more sustainable and fun is using the things you have and getting creative! Believe me when I say that nature is the best gym, there is so much you can do and it will never get boring, especially when you are at a different spot every few days.

When you incorporate movement into every day and make it a priority to spend, let's say, 20 minutes on that, you will feel a difference almost instantly. A few ideas to spark your inspiration:

- sunrise/sunset yoga in nature
- Going on a run
- Hiking through the mountains
- Climbing a tree
- Doing box jumps on a tree stump
- Pull-up drills on a tree
- Playing "the floor is lava" in the forest and jumping over rocks
- Swimming in a lake

You see, it doesn't always have to be high-intensity workouts, but moving your body is very important.

And the best part? Your options are endless!



4. SLEEP ENOUGH

Yeah, we all know that sleep is important, but especially when you're on the road, this pillar of health deserves more recognition. You see, in order to have enough energy to drive, explore, and have fun, you need to be well-rested.

Did you know that driving without having slept enough can be just as dangerous as drunk driving? I'm serious, you shouldn't take this lightly! When you live out of a van, your sleep schedule might take a bit of a toll, but it's important to make good sleep a priority while on the road.

Make it a habit to go to bed at a certain time, especially when you know the sun will probably wake you up early. Once you prioritize your sleep, you will notice higher energy levels and better concentration right away!



5. GET ENOUGH SUNSHINE!

Hopefully, this habit won't be a big problem now that summer is around the corner. Getting plenty of sunlight on a regular basis will not only improve your mood, but it is also really good for your health!

You see, when you're in the sun, your body produces Vitamin D, which is a crucial vitamin for maintaining a healthy immune system. Simply put, the sun can help you prevent getting sick! So, plan in a few minutes on sunshine every day and you're good to go.

Don't forget your sunscreen, though!

KEEP IT SIMPLE!

These are only a few ideas of habits that will keep you healthy on the road, but you can get really creative with this process. The most important part is: don't overcomplicate it. Especially when it comes to health, there are so many conflicting opinions out there concerning the nitty-gritty details.

While you're on the road, keep it simple and follow the most basic guidelines:

- Eat nutritious food
- Drink water
- Move your body
- Sleep enough
- Get some sunshine

That's really all there is to a healthy lifestyle. How you choose to go about these things is up to you, that's where the fun comes in! Let us know what your favorite ways are to stay healthy on the road and maybe try something out of your comfort zone every once in a while!

We'd love to hear about your experiences! :)

Written by Anna, Vanlifezone Team
@anna.scheucher



HOW TO COOK IN YOUR VAN?

Here at Vanlife Eats, we love having a nosey in other people's vans. We think most vanlifers do to be fair! We love seeing all the different set-ups that people have in their van kitchen, and what was a priority for them to include in their roaming kitchen. We spent a lot of time thinking about our perfect kitchen design, we even got a bigger van to be able to stand up when cooking! We recently got a wood burning stove and now we can't get enough of cooking outdoors.

We see so many of you who love to fully embrace the nomadic lifestyle and set up your kitchen in the great outdoors. Obviously this comes with its limitations, in the parking lot of a supermarket may not be the best place to set up your table and chairs and start a fire! Also there are numerous park-ups which won't allow fires for various reasons.

As summer is rapidly approaching in the UK we are seeing more and more vanlifers taking advantage when the sun comes out and cooking outside, and we're here for it.

SO WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO COOKING OUTSIDE?

- 1) Firstly, you get to fully enjoy and immerse yourself in the beauty of nature around you.
- 2) No cooking smells in your campervan.
- 3) Socialising - if you are at a campsite or meet-up you can strike up a conversation while cooking outside
- 4) Being adventurous! Us vanlifers like to live a little and it's much more exciting to cook outside on a fire than inside on a hob.
- 5) S'mores..... do we need to say any more?

It takes a while to get used to cooking over a fire, especially when used to cooking on a hob or in an oven when you can easily adjust the temperature. Cook safely on an open fire by using the correct wood. Many sources advise not to cook on a naked flame so ensure you have the right equipment. Be patient, a fire usually needs to burn for around half an hour for it to reach the right temperature for cooking.

Remember... A fundamental principle of vanlife is to leave no trace, so do please be responsible with any campfires, firepits etc

- Make sure your fire is small and manageable
- Be responsible if collecting firewood
- Be respectful of other campers and surrounding nature
- Never leave a fire unattended and make sure to put it out fully when done

At vanlifeeats.com we welcome recipes from vanlifers all over the globe. This enables us to have a collection of recipes from a range of people with a variety of set ups. The recipe we are going to share with you in this issue was kindly submitted from one of our Instagram followers @jens_travelling_kitchen. The perfect recipe for an open fire, and who can resist fresh bread? Not us!

GARLIC DAMPER BREAD

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 30 minutes
Equipment required: Dutch oven
Dietary: Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS

2 cup Self Raising Flour
40 g Butter
1 tsp Garlic Powder
1 Salt
Water

- 1) Rub the butter into the flour until it resembles breadcrumbs, add the garlic powder and salt
- 2) Add the water gradually, incorporating with the blade of a knife until a dough can be formed, lightly knead on a floured board for a only a minute or two and form into a ball, the top can be scored with the knife
- 3) Line the Camp Oven with baking paper and spray with oil or flour, place the damper in and place lid on top, set into coals, and also place a few coals on top on Oven, the damper will normally be ready in 30 mins
- 4) The damper can also be placed on a paper lined tray in a pre-heated conventional oven for 30 min on 200 c

INSTRUCTIONS

Prep in advance before your trip..... Before you go camping, process the flour, butter, garlic powder and salt in a food processor until all combined. Place all in the zip-lock bag or container and refrigerate. When the damper is required, as water and follow instructions as above

Sent in by Mark & Sophie, Vanlifezone Recipe Experts
[@vanlife_eats](#)





TAKE IT EASY

HOW A
34-YEAR-OLD
VW-BUS
TAUGHT US
AN IMPORTANT
LESSON



It was an unusually cold day in March 2020 when we sat in our newly restored van and cried. Those weren't tears of joy, but tears of frustration. The last years were extremely demanding, both physically and mentally. Now it looked as if it had all been for nothing.

Let's start at the beginning. We are Thomas and Regina, two mid-30-year-olds living in a van. When we matched on Tinder five years ago, we lived completely different lives: hectic, scheduled, career-focused. Regina worked as a manager in one of the leading accounting firms, with working days hardly ever shorter than 12 hours. Thomas was working two jobs. Besides his full-time job as a journalist and radio host for the Austrian national public broadcast, he freelanced as a professional filmmaker.

Burned out from having hardly any free time for years, we knew this couldn't go on like this. We both had a strong desire to change our lives and break free. So we came up with the crazy idea to leave everything behind, move into Thomas' old Volkswagen Vanagon „Edelweiss“ and drive as far east as possible (at least as far as India) without a fixed return date. Before that, we had to rebuild and prepare our rusty van for this long journey. Little did we know what we had gotten ourselves into.

After quitting our jobs, we planned four months for the whole restoration. Already exhausted, we wanted to hit the road as soon as possible. But everything turned out to be much more elaborate and complex than we thought. The rust removal took forever, and we had problems with the

new paint. Additionally, almost every single engine part broke and had to be replaced. We had to learn everything from scratch, like car mechanics, how to build a proper onboard electrical system, carpentry, sewing, and a thousand other things. Every time we thought there was an end in sight, a new issue arose.

The four months became six, then 12, then 18. Even though we worked day and night. Without the help of our dads and invaluable input from fellow vanlifer, we would still be standing in the garage. Both being perfectionists, our daily hustle and pressure had not changed compared to our previous jobs.

And then, once we were finally ready to leave after almost two years of van-related work, there was a global shutdown. It was that freezing day in March when we realized that our long-awaited journey could be over before it even began.

Looking back, the van taught us two essential lessons. Firstly, good things take time; you have to accept that they can't be forced and rushed. Secondly, we realized that in our lives, we have always worked relentlessly toward certain goals that we thought would make us happy while forgetting to enjoy the actual journey. We decided to let go of our fixed ideas and expectations and instead take things



as they come. This van has slowed us down significantly, both figuratively and technically, since its maximum speed is 80 km/h.

Thus, instead of going to India, we first explored our home country Austria for several months. Finally, in September 2021, when the borders opened again, we said goodbye to our loved ones and embarked on a journey into the unknown. Seven months later, we call ourselves full-time travelers. True to our new resolution, we travel very mindfully. If we like a spot, we may stay several weeks just to enjoy the moment.

We are generally more attracted to places off the beaten path, and we enjoy diving deep into foreign cultures. That's why we spent three months in the non-touristy country Albania. Initially, we just wanted to drive through towards warmer regions. We ended up staying the whole winter, impressed by the beauty of Albania's landscape and its people's hospitality.

Thomas, now a full-time filmmaker, is producing short documentaries on our trip. Thus, we always keep our eyes open for interesting people and events along the way. You can find us helping farmers harvest olives, becoming best friends with the elders of a Greek mountain village over some „Tsipouro“, or following other travelers for several days with a camera. On Instagram, we try not only to post beautiful pictures, but to tell meaningful stories and give a glimpse into the lives of the people we meet on the trip.

We don't know how long and how far we will go, but we notice how good mindful traveling feels right now. Slowly but surely, we manage to leave the hustle and bustle behind and live a more conscious life. Even though it didn't seem like it initially, this journey was the best thing that could have happened to us.

Sent in by Regina & Thomas, Community Members
@edelweiss.on.the.raod





ALBANIA



Lonely beaches, impressive mountain sceneries, authentic towns, quiet villages and hundreds of bunkers. This is Albania. A country that has not yet been taken over by mass tourism.

Albania is a small state on the Balkan Peninsula, characterised by high mountain ranges and picturesque landscapes on the Adriatic coast. It borders Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Greece.

In contrast to other Balkan states, Albania is still little developed for tourism. However, the country is in no way inferior to its neighbours in terms of beauty and vacation flair. Especially for budget travellers or those who enjoy calm and quiet conditions a trip to Albania is worthwhile. The prices for accommodation and food are comparatively low, large crowds and overcrowded tourist attractions are non-existent.

A stretch of coast known as the Albanian Riviera is located in the very south of the country. Beach vacationers will find similar conditions as in nearby Greece. Steep cliffs, picturesque bays and turquoise waters characterise the landscape. On secluded sandy and pebble beaches nature can be enjoyed to the fullest.

There are two ways to get to the rather remote Albanian Riviera. One is an hour-long drive along winding mountain roads through the barely inhabited countryside. The second and faster variant is arrival by ship from nearby Greece. The Greek island of Corfu is within sight of the Albanian coast, crossing by ferry takes little more than 30 minutes.

Hikers and mountaineers also get their money's worth in Albania. The Prokletije, often referred to as the Albanian Alps, is a mountain range along the Montenegro and Kosovo border and is considered a largely unknown insider tip. Small villages, green valleys, mountain lakes and snow-capped peaks make up the charm of Prokletije. Visitors appreciate the remoteness of the mountain landscape and the breath-taking views. There are numerous well-marked hiking trails and even local guides offering organised mountain tours. Moreover, the highest mountain peak in the Balkans, Jezercë, is located in Albania.

In other countries on the Balkan peninsula, large areas are contaminated with landmines from the Yugoslav wars. Relaxed walks in the countryside are therefore only possible to a limited extent in many places. In Albania the situation

is different, the minefields in the border regions have been cleared and the country has been officially mine-free since 2009. Thus, nothing stands in the way of excursions into the diverse nature of the small Balkan state.

Albania is rich in cultural treasures and looks back on a long history of settlement. For example, about 70 kilometres south of the capital Tirana is the city of Berat. The 2000-year-old city is nicknamed as „The City of a Thousand Windows“ and has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008. It takes its name from the old town buildings, whose countless windows look out over the Osum river valley. The architecture of the city has a strong Ottoman influence, with centuries-old mosques and ornate buildings bearing witness to the versatile history of Berat.

Between 1944 and 1990, Albania was a communist country. During this time, hundreds of thousands of bunkers were built all over the country in fear of foreign invasion. Most of these concrete structures are still standing and are a fixed part of the landscape. They can be found in towns and villages as well as in the mountains and by the sea. Since the bunkers no longer have any significance on a military level, many of them have been put to other uses. Today, some of them serve as stores, stables for livestock, storage buildings or even chapels. For tourists, the bunkers are a popular photo motif.

One reason why tourism is still rather undeveloped in Albania are the negative speculations and prejudice concerning the country's security situation. However, these are not true nowadays. In fact, Albania is no more dangerous than any other country in the Balkans.

A trip to multifaceted Albania is an ideal alternative to the well-known vacation regions on the Mediterranean. It is an extraordinary country, both calm and exciting, leaving a lasting impression with travellers. Albania sure knows how to enchant its visitors.

Written by Paul, Vanlifezone Team
@paul.jaunegg

Pictures by Regina & Thomas, Community Members
@edelweiss.on.the.raod





THE ISLE OF SKYE



When I first heard the name Isle of Skye it conjured up images in my head of a mystical place, with enchanting scenery and ethereal beauty. Having now visited Skye and spent a month exploring its every nook and cranny, this mental image is now reinforced in my mind. I began my journey in the most charming Scottish way possible, by boarding a ferry on a dreary and wet day. The short hop from Mallaig to Armadale should have afford great views of beautiful scottish mountains, but the clag clug to the hills and the mountains remind hidden.

From Armadale I struck out north, heading on a short loop past Achnacloich and along the coast of Skye. This quaint area of the island sees fewers tourists than some of its more iconic locations, and is well worth a jaunt. There is some great wild camping along the way with quiet pullovers aplenty. From there the road leads north towards an area, and a pub, that is infamous among the Scottish mountaineering and hill walking communities, Sligachan Bridge. From here the view towards the Cuillin Mountains is spectacular. It is a popular area to start an adventure into those very same mountains, but I decided to attack these peaks later in the trip starting slightly closer at their base. Trust me the Cuillin mountains are no joke, and I would need every advantage I could get.

Portree is a gorgeous little town, full of quaint charm with all the amenities you could need to provision yourself for a great adventure. I stocked up on food for myself and petrol for the thirsty VW T25. The anticipation was high as I left Portree because the next few days would take me into the heart of some of Skyes most breathtaking scenery. The Old Man of Stor was the first stop. Winding over small roads makes it feel like you are venturing into the heart of a land from Lord of the Rings. Birds of prey circle high above riding drafts of wind spilling in from the sea. The rain was softly falling in true Scottish fashion as I parked the van to hike to the Old Man.

While the weather was not stunning it served to keep some of the tourists at home. The approach to Storr winds up a gravel track switch backing along the hillside. It somewhat creeps up on you, especially when its hiding in the low cloud. The spires of rock stand proudly away from the hill side, like sentinels standing watch for intruders from the sea. Unfortunately on the day I went, and the following morning when I went back, the sentinel's gaze was covered in cloud.

Nonetheless they are still impressive geographic features, and the hike is not particularly challenging so well worth a visit. From Storr once again I trudged north in the van, with a quick stop to see the cascading Lealt Falls. I wildcamped in a quiet place with a spectacular view over the coast towards the mainland. As is the way in Scotland the weather cleared rather suddenly in the afternoon, and I was rewarded with a view of a gorgeous rainbow, a small consolation for the rather disappointing view from the Old Man of Storr.

Just north of Lealt Falls is the rugged and pretty peninsula called Brothers Point. The sea in this area was remarkable, crystal clear and sparkling a brilliant turquoise in the short lived Scottish sun. The hike down to the coast is well marked and I spent a day exploring this area. Winding my way up the east coast of Skye, my next destination was another world renowned area of natural beauty, the Quirang. The van chugged up the small road that snakes up to this pass, all the while revealing more and more of the beautiful landscape I was about to witness.





From the top the view stretches out far to the east. The grand mountains in Torridon sit on the horizon cloaked in a hazy blue. Immediately in front of me sits a ridge with a complex and intriguing topography. The land falls away in places leaving a strange mixture of sharp ridges, isolated hulks of rock, and steep cliffs that drop steeply away. You need to spend time exploring the Quiraing, as it is one of the places on Skye where Scotland's enchanting and mystical air is most absorbing. If you feel adventurous you can hike into clefts between ridges and cliffs, where the sound of your voice will reverberate off the damp rock.

A solitary crow calls out, breaking the silence of the mountains. The Quiraing is an otherworldly place and it feels like something out of a medieval novel. The Quiraing is definitely one of the highlights from this trip, a place steeped in the magic of Scotland. However as is always the case with traveling you must always leave a place for something new. I struck out for the little town of Uig for a night in a charming little campsite near the ocean to recharge batteries and have a hot shower.

From Uig I cut across the Island, heading for Dunvegan and Kinloch Campsite. This area is beautiful and home to the Neist Point Lighthouse. From a vantage point along the towering cliffs at Neist Point I was actually able to spot a pod of dolphins frolicking in the water, a foreshadowing of what was to come. From Neist Point I turned the van South, heading for the most popular spot on the island, the Fairy Pools and Glen Brittle. The weather had taken a fortunate turn, in fact Scotland was experiencing uncharacteristically good weather, with 20+ degrees and blue skies.

Arriving at the Fairy Pools on a scorching day made them even more special. While they were incredibly busy you could really make the most of the sparkling blue water. People were splashing and frolicking in the pools for the length of the river and I spent the day splashing around having a bit of fun.

The Cuillin mountains are a spectacular range of lofty peaks. They comprise of knife edge ridges and steep buttresses, making them some of the most exciting and adrenaline spiking mountaineering terrain in the country. They are a serious set of mountains, that could be equally at home nestled in the Alps as they are on the Isle of Skye. I spent a few days testing my mettle on some of the easier routes, but I do feel the need to say here please only

venture into these mountains if you have the right level of skill. Luckily, if while peering up at the staggering peaks in wonder, you feel a little bit scared, there are lots of local guides who can escort you up the mountains. These guides will keep you safe while giving you a chance to set foot into the most majestic mountains in Scotland.

Before departing for home, there was one final thing I wanted to do. Being a wildlife lover and keen photographer, I wanted to try and spot some of Scotland's wildlife. I decided a boat based wildlife tour in the lochs and sea around Skye would be just the ticket. Myself and a few other wildlife spotters loaded into the R.I.B of a local tour company and pushed away from the dock into Loch Harport. Within minutes the local guide had spotted a stunning eagle, and I knew this was going to be a memorable boat ride.

Over the course of a few hours we spotted numerous sea, golden and white tailed eagles. Our captain expertly guided us into small sea caves to peer at curious sea birds, and regaled us with tales of Skye and all its wondrous wildlife. However the end of the trip proved to be the most amazing part. The weather had been stunning all day and because the wind was so gentle the captain said he would head out further to sea. Something he told us he only gets to do a handful of times per year when the weather allows. After 10 or 15 minutes of motoring the captain slowed the engines and shouted, look in front of the boat. As if on cue a pod of bottle nose dolphins leaped gracefully out of the water. As we motored forward they began playing at the bow, twisting and turning just centimeters below the surface.

For half an hour we got to witness one of the most spectacular events I have ever seen. The dolphins danced and played with each other and the boat, jumping high out of the water and twisting to smash back down. Peering down from the bow of the boat you could see the scars and marks on their bodies from a wild life in the sea, but you could also see their eyes peering back up, full of intelligence and curiosity.

The Isle of Skye is Scotland at its very best. A place so wild and free it will stay with you forever, a place that I would encourage anyone to go and see for themselves.

Written by Josh, Vanlifezone Team
@joshjmcclean

VANLIFEZONE MAGAZINE TEAM

Anna Scheucher

Writer & Text Editor
@anna.scheucher
www.fullyholistic.com/

Florian Jaunegg

Executive Editor
@fluadlwirt
office@fluadlwirt.com

Josh McClean

Writer & Text Editor
@joshjmclean
mccleanjj@gmail.com

Paul Jaunegg

Executive Writer & Text Editor
@paul.jaunegg
paul@jaunegg.eu

Philipp Maurer

Design & Layout Editor
@philipp.maurer
office@maurerphilipp.at
www.maurerphilipp.at

Verena Gröbl

Writer & Text Editor
@verenagroeb1
office@verenagroeb1.at
www.verenagroeb1.at

SHARE YOUR VANLIFE STORY WITH US!

Send an article about
your vanlife adventure to

OFFICE@VANLIFEZONE.COM

You have total creative freedom
and can share any aspect or story about
your experience of living in a van.

Please make sure that you have
roughly 1000 WORDS.

and that you include
5 - 15 high resolution **images.**

