

Vanlifezone

06.2023

English Version

N° 09



Inspiring Stories from the Roads of France to the Untamed
Terrains of Patagonia and the Heart of Turkiye

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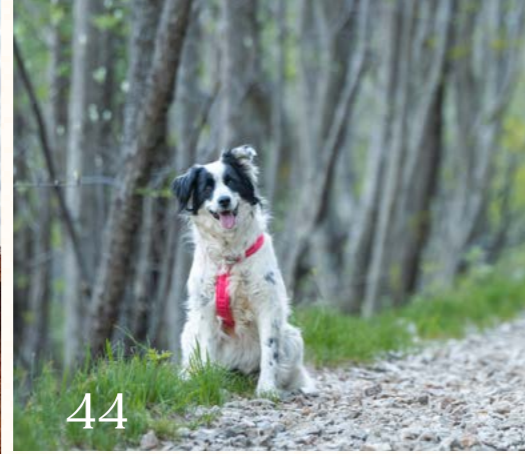
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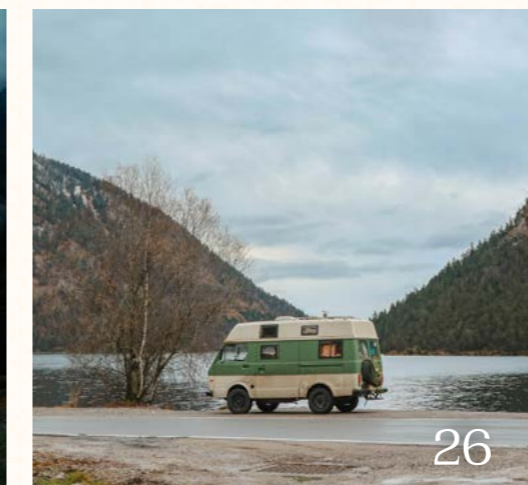
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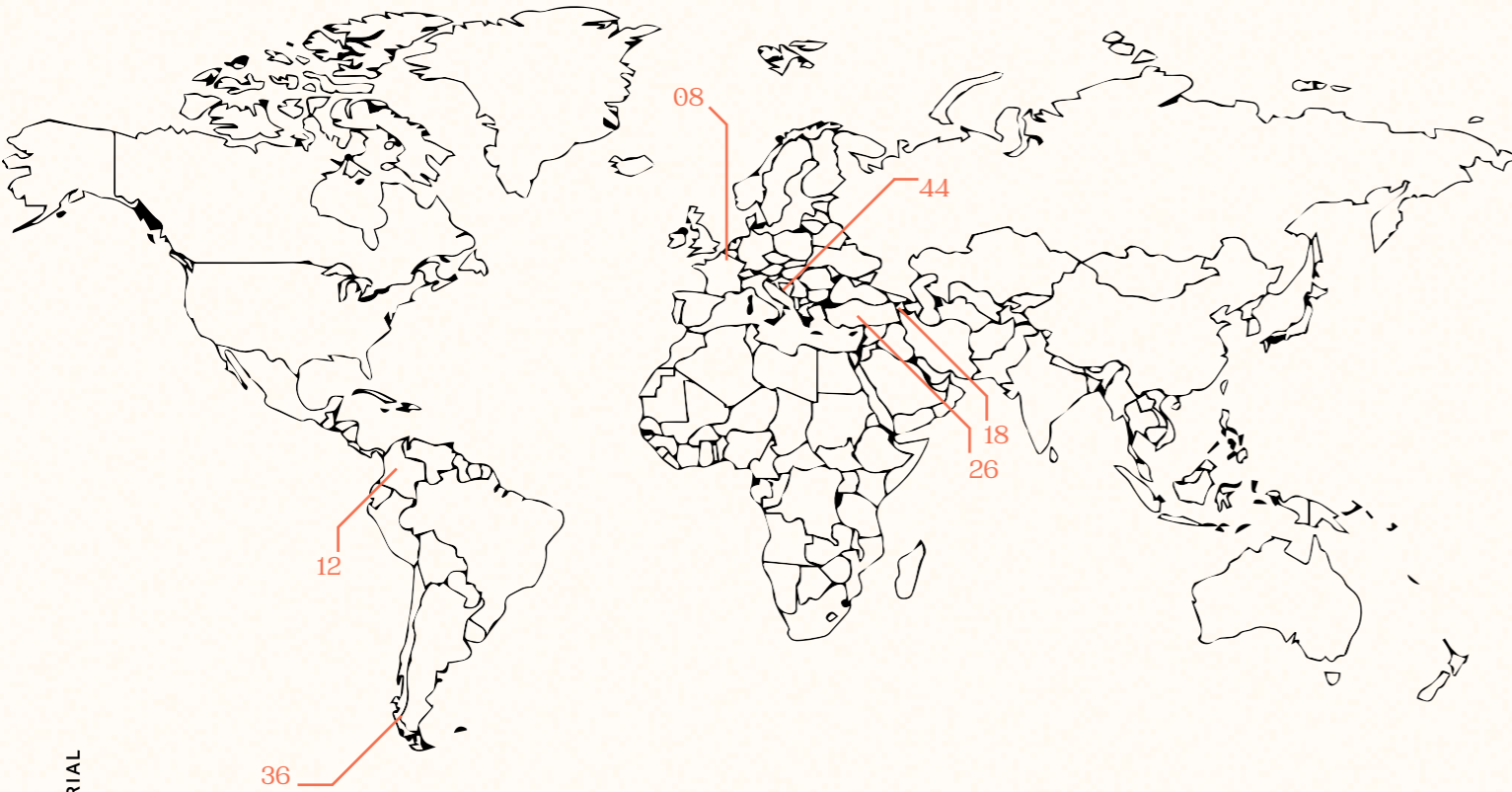
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Detours & More

Dear reader, within the pages of this magazine, you will discover captivating and motivational stories that will ignite your passion for adventure. Our contributors have ventured to different parts of the world, bringing you unique perspectives and experiences that you won't find anywhere else. Be a part of the journey and enjoy stories from all over the globe!

Vanlifezone is a project powered by passion dedicated to sharing and exchanging vanlife stories and adventures from every corner of the planet. Regardless of what type of van or camper you own, be it a vintage kombi, a modern transporter or a massive overlanding truck – every story bears the thrill and beauty of challenging experiences at new frontiers.

What to Expect

In this issue, we're exploring the globe, from the roads and cities of Northern France to the untamed terrains of Patagonia, uncovering inspiring stories from the road and discovering Turkish culture and cuisine.

We begin our journey with **@combi4us**, immersing ourselves in their experience of slow travel with their vintage Kombi. Then, join **@gary_and_sheila** as they traverse from the UK across Europe and onto the vibrant landscapes of the Americas, sharing their vanlife journey full of memorable moments and relevant numbers from their vanlife.

Embark on an adventure with Kerry & Craig from **@penelopethetruck** from the UK who embrace the unknown and seek a change of pace from their everyday lives. They crossed through Europe to Cyprus, Turkey, Georgia, and Armenia, and address polluted beaches and almost burning out in their article. **@anna.scheucher** provides you with more insights into both topics and how to contribute to solving the problems.

@alice.inwondervan tells a similar story of solo adventure with her dog Mavis. They too crossed through Europe from the

UK and discovered the beauty of Turkey. Her discoveries are accompanied by a delicious vanlife recipe from Mark and Sophie from **@vanlife_eats** who have taken the many wonders of Turkey as an inspiration for their vegetarian cheese and spinach Gözleme.

Witness the breathtaking story of **@natural_explorers_'**, who dared to leave everything behind for the rugged terrains of Patagonia and the awe-inspiring Torres del Paine National Park, where they come face to face with the raw beauty of nature and its wildlife. And finally, **@hrvoje_juric** shares his thoughts from the road traveling alone with his two loyal companions by bike through the frosty wilderness of Norway and by car with a rooftop tent through the Balkans.

Each story unveils a unique aspect of the nomadic lifestyle. Whether you're a seasoned traveler or contemplating your first adventure, these tales from our community are certain to ignite your wanderlust!

We welcome your feedback and suggestions, and we hope that you enjoy reading this edition of our magazine.

Your own Story

As always we're more than happy to receive and share your stories. The best time to send them in is **right now**, after the release of a new issue. This gives us the most time to work with the topics at hand and enables us to produce the magazine at the highest possible quality.

So go ahead and send us your story at www.vanlifezone.com/submit-article.php.

Until then, happy reading and happy travels and don't forget to get out there!



Florian Jaunegg
Editor in Chief & Project Manager

An Old Kombi in Our Lives



We are Combi4us: Marc, Laura, and our two children, and we want to tell you how a van changed our point of view on vanlife.



A Different Point of View

It all started with a „yes,“ and I'm sure you know what kind of „yes“ I mean. She said yes during the COVID period, and we never do the same thing as everyone else.

The idea was to bring the people closest to us together, make a rendezvous for drinks in a bar, and not say anything in advance. For this particular event,

we rented a Kombi, surprised all our guests, and enjoyed the day with our close family and friends.

After that crazy day, we thought, „why don't we buy a van for ourselves, for our holidays and for small adventures?“ We found Léon in Belgium. He was a German Kombi manufactured in 1978 for the English market and was spending

the rest of his days in the garage of an old lady in Belgium. The last owner gave it a new breath of life, and we bought it. The nickname of the smiling man who sold it to us was Léon, and we named our new family member after him.

Our first trip was a discovery of a part of France that we had never been to before, the eastern side.

I can't really say the exact route because we followed our instincts, and we were driving very carefully with our vintage bus. Our starting point was in the north of France, and we roughly fixed a destination on the map.

We tried to travel without the use of our GPS but kept it close just in case we got „really“ lost. It's much more interesting to be lost when you're looking at a real map made of paper. If you need help in a tiny village, you'll always find someone with a smile who wants to talk about our holidays with our vintage van. The locals will usually give you great directions and local tips on interesting spots to spend the night or on things to visit that aren't usually in your tourist guide.

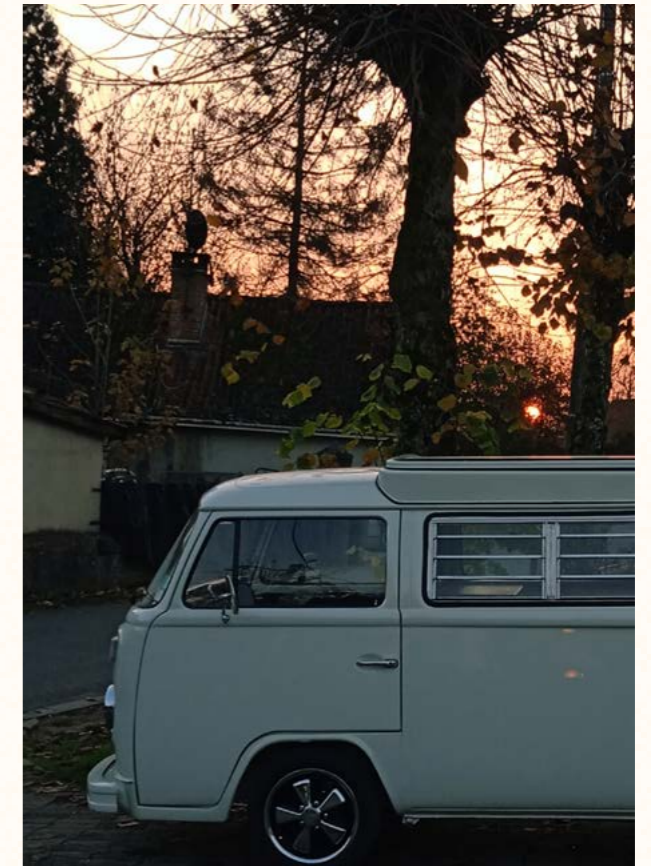
We tried to follow a straight line down towards Reims and then switched onto the road towards Nancy. All the villages reminded us of how diverse France is. When we visited Nancy, reality set in and showed us how difficult it is to drive through a busy town with an old, capricious van that's not good at starting and stopping repeatedly. It was also challenging to find a parking spot or underground car park that's big enough for Léon. Nonetheless, we enjoyed visiting this culturally and architecturally rich town.

We visited a popular zoo called Amnéville to entertain the children and headed towards the Belgian Ardennes because Alsace was too far for the old van. On the way back home, we took it slow and travelled peacefully through Belgium.



pointing at us with their fingers and their parents grinning from cheek to cheek. We'd always greet them with two honks and the shaka sign. It's really impressive how much easier it is to talk to someone when traveling in a vintage van. People are more careful and relaxed, and if we're too slow for the other cars, it's great to exchange communicative smiles when they drive past us.

For the last two years, we have been on the road with this classy vintage van. It's a little bit „à la roots“: no electricity, a really small kitchen, and a place for water; nothing more.



During this journey, Léon safely travelled 1500 km, which might seem like nothing for a modern car, but he made us very proud to make it back home with no trouble on our first trip. After all, he is a vintage van from 1978.

We have discovered a new way to spend our holidays: slowly driving on winding roads and a lot closer to nature, and more conscious of our impact on it. That's the kind of holiday you're set up for when you travel in such an old vehicle. Unfortunately, we can't spend every day living the vanlife, but on the days we do, when we turn the key, all the troubles of life disappear for the moment.

The sight of Léon makes everyone who meets him smile. What we remember the most are children



Last year, we were in Brittany and crossed all of the Normandy countryside, and for this summer holiday, we booked a ferry to Ireland.

I hope I found the right words to share the joy we have when we're all together with Léon. We hope to see you on the road!

Don't be shy,
we're always
happy to talk
and share a
beer, in case
there is one in
our fridge!

Undercover Van Travels

From Switzerland to South America

Hi, we are Gary (36 years) and Sheila (29 years) from Switzerland, and we'd like to share our story with you. When it comes to sharing our story, we would like to put an emphasis on the facts and numbers of our journey. Of course, we also like to share our adventurous experiences and interesting stories about the countries we are traveling to. But we have learned that numbers and simple facts are particularly helpful for other like minded travelers or for interested people, who dream of traveling with their self-converted van on their own. Certainly, only numbers and facts would be boring, so we try to do a little bit of both: interesting stories, and facts. In hope of reducing fears and insecurities and of inspiring some of you out there to go on your own adventures, here is our story:

It all began in 2018. When Gary, half Italian and Business economist, and I, half Brazilian and Psychologist, first met. It quickly became clear that we had a lot of common interests and dreams for the future, namely traveling and videography. We wanted to break out and explore the world, leaving behind the sedentariness and the familiar. So, we made plans to go on a big trip in a self-converted van together and film the whole project along the way. In July of 2019, we

bought our Fiat Ducato. It took us a lot of time to research and plan the build as well as to select and order the suitable materials. We built our van completely without external assistance and acquired all the necessary knowledge from books, the Internet, YouTube and through learning by doing. At the beginning of 2021, we quit our apartment lease and our jobs - another big step towards our goal. We finally finished our build in August of 2021 after a good 2 years of building.

For our big trip we saved up 150,000\$ from 2018 to 2021. Additionally, we invested 90,000\$ in crypto. While traveling, Gary occasionally does minor administrative work for his family business, which brings in a few hundred Dollars a month. Once a month I write an article for 200\$ for the local newspaper back home, the „Bieler Tagblatt“. This monthly income is too small to cover our daily living expenses, so we have been living off our savings since quitting our jobs.



Our Van Includes

- 680W solar panels
- 400 AH Lithium Batteries (2x Victron LiFePO4)
- Under-bench air conditioner (DometicFreshwell 3000, works with 230V)
- Heated bathroom with shower and dry separation toilet
- 4 infrared surveillance cameras
- Drainage with electric ball valve
- Diesel heater & 10L hot water boiler (JP Diesel Combi Air & Water Heater)
- Induction stove with 2 plates (3000W, works with 230V)
- Compressor Cool Box (Dometic CFX3 55L)
- Large sink with hot and cold water of approximately 32L
- External shower

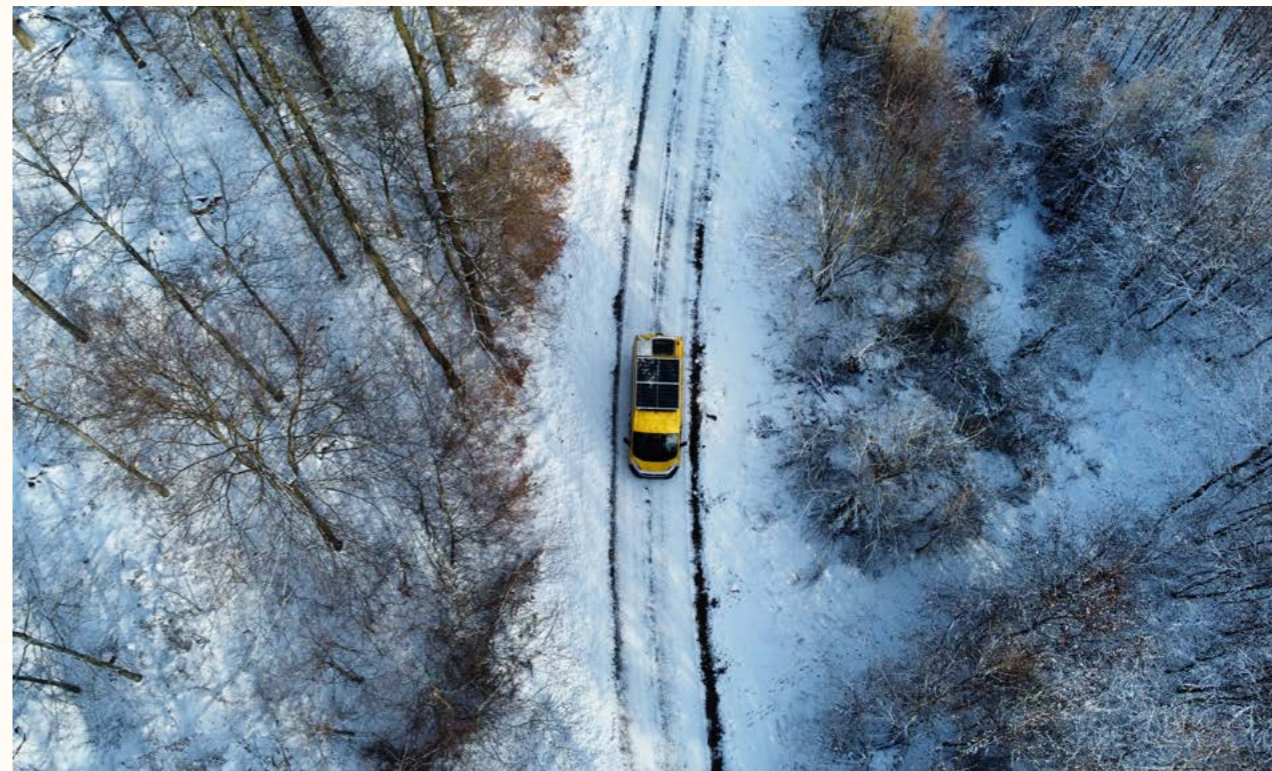


Our Home on Four Wheels

Our Fiat Ducato was a former security van from the Swiss Post. It is equipped with a Diesel Multijet 2.3-liter engine and has 130 HP. At the time of purchase, it already had a mileage of 208,000 km (129,245 miles), now it has 280,000 km (173,984 miles). The vehicle is from 2015, so it has the comfort of cruise control, a rearview camera and air conditioning. We opted for the standard size L2H2, which means the following dimensions: length 5.41m (17.74 feet), height:

2.54m (8.33 feet) and width: 2.05m (6.72 feet). The vehicle is a 4WD and has a maximum permitted weight of 3.3 tons as well as a trailer hitch.

Concerning our build, we like to think of our van as a little high-tech van with many amenities and a generous electric power set-up. In addition, the van looks very inconspicuous from the outside, but inside it is a small chalet in which we feel safe and comfortable.



Our Journey begins..



We started our trip in August of 2021 in Europe. After 4 months, we had traveled to 15 countries and had driven over 17,200 km (10,688 miles). From Germany, to Austria

through Luxembourg, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Czech Republic back to Switzerland. For both of us, the highlight of our first van trip is reaching the North Cape in Norway. Our self-made home on four wheels managed to get us to the northernmost drivable point of mainland Europe in November in snow, ice, and freezing temperatures. We arrived there at almost 3 a.m., all alone - we felt like we were on a polar expedition!

We, respectively Gary, were lucky in a hatchet accident in the Finnish Lapland. We were preparing our dinner - salmon on the fire. While I was preparing the salmon, Gary

was chopping wood for a nice fire. In a brief moment of carelessness, Gary's hatchet fell out of his grip under his arm. The hatchet caught the little toe and almost severed it completely, with the toe hanging from a small piece of flesh! After 3 hospitals visited, 350 kilometers (223 miles) of a long and nerve-wracking drive through the raging blizzard on snow- and ice-covered roads, and 5.5 hours later, Gary was finally treated - the foot was x-rayed, and a doctor sewed his toe back on. He had to spend the night in the hospital. The next morning, Gary was discharged, and each day his toe got better. Meanwhile, more than a year has passed since the accident, and Gary's toe is completely healed.

In May of 2022, we shipped our van from Hamburg, Germany, to Halifax in Canada. In the past 11 months, we have traveled through North and Central America. Now we are in Panama. After our cold European trip, we couldn't wait to drive our van to warm, tropical, and exotic places. Our highlights so far include the US National Parks. The variety and diversity of nature is breathtaking, from desert, mountain, alpine, and lake landscapes, the USA has them all. In Philadelphia in the USA, we were mugged by a group of hooded guys, but we had no cash with us, so they let us go....



In Central America, we were particularly amazed by Guatemala: from the imposing Mayan site of Tikal in the middle of the Guatemalan rainforest, the turquoise natural pools in Semuc Champey to Lake Atitlan with stunning sunsets and the hike up the active volcano Fuego!

Our journey continues: next we will ship our van in a container from Panama to Colombia. Meanwhile, we will make a sailing trip of 5 days through the Panamanian San Blas Islands to Cartagena. Then the adventure of South America awaits us! Time horizon? Until we run out of money, or when we don't feel like it anymore...

We always strive to continuously improve our skills in videography, to create content with emotions. We want to tell stories in pictures. We want to reach people, touch them, and inspire them. We appreciate the contact with other like-minded people and are happy to answer any questions about the van conversion or the trip.

So feel free to contact us on social media - we will write back!



Full Time Overland

We Sold Everything and Left

We are Kerry & Craig, both from the United Kingdom. Kerry is originally from the suburbs of Manchester, and Craig is from Bristol. We met several years ago atop a mountain in Wales (a story for another time). We both share a passion for nature, being outdoors, and enjoying adventures, and it turns out we were both living locally to each other in Essex at the time!

Fast forward almost 8 years, and we are currently traveling in our self-built (with a little help) 4x4 overland truck. We were both busy people, often working two jobs, three at times!

Craig worked at a brewery and ran his own business, while Kerry was a yoga teacher, project manager, and virtual assistant. Life was becoming more and more stressful and beginning to impact our mental and physical health. Craig developed a heart condition along with regular migraines, and Kerry was losing her hair. We needed to get off the train.

In 2019, we found the vanlife movement, and that was when we decided to build Penelope, converted from an ex-Army Leyland DAF T244 and into an expedition truck and home we have today.

With zero experience of mechanics, electrics, carpentry, gas, or plumbing, we set ourselves a budget and started to get to work, completing 70% of the work ourselves while continuing our two to three jobs.

It's actually crazy when we look back and see what we achieved in the space of two years.

To enable us to break free, we sold our house, all our possessions, settled our debts, and in 2022, we hit the road. This was an easy task for Kerry but not so much for me (Craig). I struggled with breaking free and not having the security of a house to fall back on if something were to go wrong. It was a big leap, but one that I am so glad we made the decision to make, as it has been life-changing.

A rough plan was made, and a vague time schedule. First was to get the truck out of the UK and into Europe. First stop: the Netherlands.

Our journey through most of Europe would be pretty swift, as due to Brexit, we are restricted to 90 days. So we hopped through Germany, Austria, and Italy and caught the ferry to Greece, where we spent a good month traveling the coastline all the way around to Turkey.

We had originally planned to get a 1-year temporary residency for Turkey (the Ikamet) as it's such a big country, and there is so much to do and see.



Change of Plans

Sadly, this fell through, and our application was rejected owing to where and when we applied, so our plans went back to the drawing board, and we headed to Cyprus for a few months to allow Turkey to warm. Cyprus has been a great place to come to and rest for a while, we've been here almost two months and traversed most of the island. We then travelled back up

through Turkey, spending a week in the incredible Cappadocia witnessing two glorious mornings of the famous hot air balloons over love valley before the snow set in, it's a truly magical place!

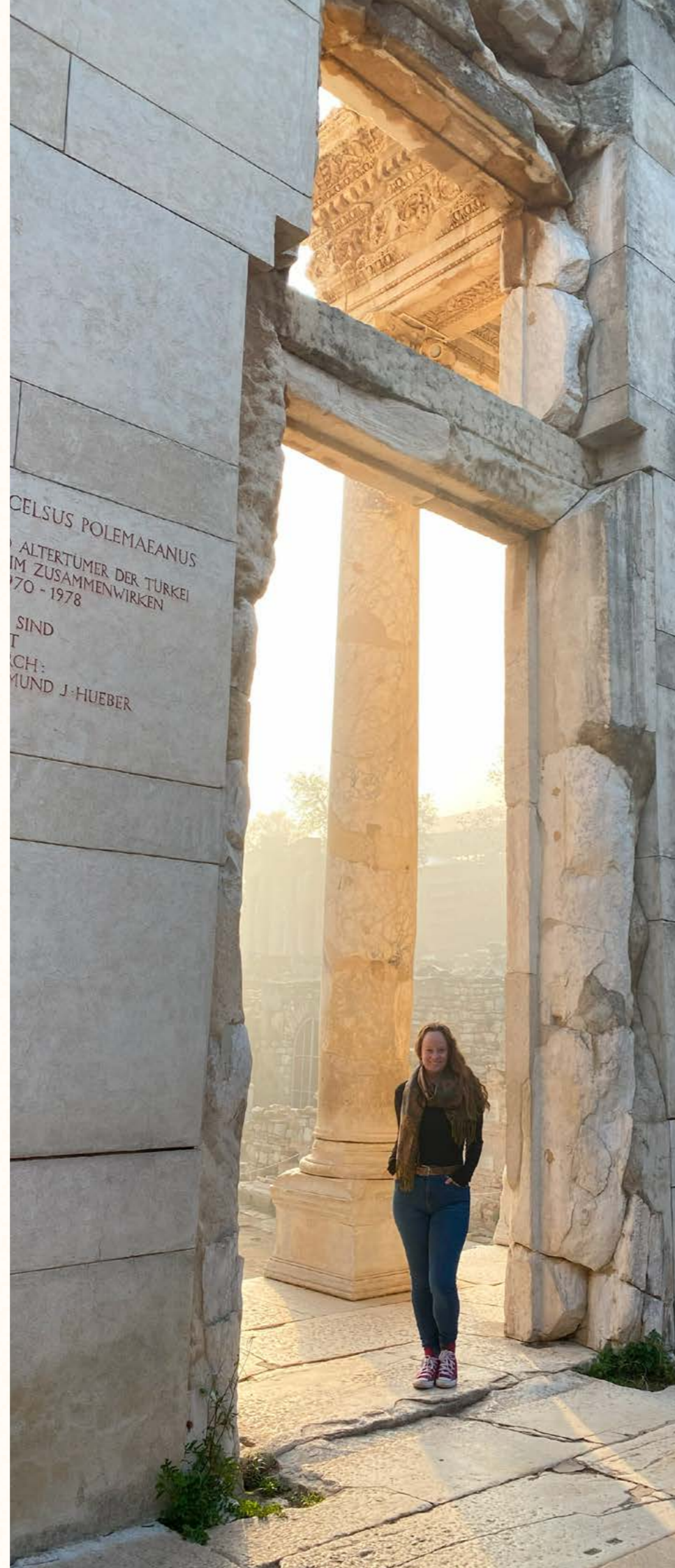
We traveled along the Black Sea coast before crossing into Georgia, which we almost immediately fell in love with. After spending a few

days in Batumi to reset we ventured out into the remote villages of rural Georgia which is just something else, with pigs, cows and chickens roaming free in the streets, warm smiles and friendly faces, it's just a whole different vibe and way of life and the landscape is simply stunning. Now in Armenia, which is everything we loved about Georgia, amplified!

Not only are the people some of the kindest, warm and welcoming people we've ever met, the landscapes are breathtaking with rolling hills, waterfalls and majestic snow capped mountain ranges and every evening so far we have been treated to the sounds of jackals howling after sunset. We highly recommend visiting Armenia!

This is the furthest East we will go in the truck. We intend to travel to Azerbaijan but by plane then we will head back East, but via the South of Turkey to Northern Iraq, a stop back in Cyprus and then head over to Tunisia before heading back to the U.K. next year to prep for our next adventure.

People always ask us how we are funding such a trip!? It's not easy as we are not rich, we don't have trust funds, etc. We had some money left over from the sale of our house, but we are, as yet, to touch this. Kerry is very resourceful and has found a way to make money as we travel, which means our emergency fund remains intact. She manages a few social media accounts for corporate clients and does some virtual assistant work for various clients in the UK, spending a few hours a day completing her work. Me (Craig) well, I plan all the routes, maintain the truck, keep our Polar Steps and Patreons updated, I also feed Kerry and make sure she has all the data, power, and entertainment she needs!



We are environmentally minded, always leaving the beautiful places we stop cleaner than when we arrived.

We have been doing a lot of beach cleans since Italy, and the further East we traveled the worse they got.

Some places we couldn't even scratch the surface and it breaks our hearts to see so much litter on the land, coast, and in the sea. Our mission going forwards is to try and highlight this problem and get onboard with some charities.

We have been fortunate to have teamed up with Waterhaul, which is great news and helps us reach more with our mission and message.

Trash Talk Why You Shouldn't Look the Other Way

Kerry and Craig mention how, on their way East through Europe in their van, they encountered lots and lots of trash. Unfortunately, that is not a new problem, and it's one that is becoming more and more apparent as the years go by. The big question is: what can you do about it?

Use Reusable Solutions

This one is important, especially when you are on the go for weeks at a time. Especially in a van, it can be tempting to resort to quick and easy solutions like single-use cups, plates, cutlery, etc. However, that is just a load of unnecessary trash and over time, it's even more expensive than the alternative! So, opt for reusable water bottles, coffee mugs, and food containers instead of disposable ones.

Zero Waste

Talking about reusable solutions, that doesn't quite stop with the usage of plates and cups - you can waste even less if you choose cloth bags, cloth napkins, reusable straws, glass jars, etc. That way, you can be sustainable even while shopping!

Opt for Eco-Friendly Products

When living out of a van, it is not uncommon to sometimes take a quick shower outside, bathe in a lake or river, or wash your dishes in the outdoors. In those cases, it is even more important that you focus on buying soaps and products that are eco-friendly and okay for the environment. Not only will the eco-friendly options likely have less packaging and be made

Apart from teaming up with companies such as Waterhaul or Pela Case, which are brands that care about the environment and try to use recycled materials for their products, there are other, more actionable steps you can take for the planet while being on the road:

of recycled materials, but it will also not harm the flora and fauna around you. You should also watch out for this when buying sunscreen, find the "reef-safe" logo!

Recycle

This is kind of a no-brainer, but whether you are on the road or not, you can do your part by recycling as much as you can. On that note, you can also pick up trash and do mini-cleanups whenever you encounter trash on your travels.

Support Local Businesses

Last but not least, you can take part in helping out the environment by choosing local businesses on your travels. And the best part? There is no better way to explore a country's culture than to talk to local business owners and see what locals are buying!

It might not be much, but these few steps are already enough to play a small role in saving the environment. If everyone pays attention to their own actions like this, big changes can be made!

What are your favorite ways of protecting the environment on your travels?



Living in a space 2.4 x 5.5m has its challenges, and this is a pretty rig compared to some, but mostly it has taught us that we really need very little in terms of ‚stuff‘ and what makes us truly happy is being together and exploring.

We're pleased to report that Craig's heart condition has gone, and Kerry is no longer losing her hair. There are no more migraines, and we sleep better than we ever have.

We've met some incredible people along the way; young and old, solo travelers and whole families, all of whom have enriched our journey, and it remains the best decision we've ever made in our lives together.

We aim to be back in the UK for spring 2024 to plan our next adventure, maybe in Penelope or maybe on two wheels instead of four!



Burnout

Measures to Prevent Burning Out

(if quitting your job and traveling the world is no option)

Burnout is no joke, and with life becoming increasingly stressful and demanding, burnout cases are on the rise. The good news? There are a few practical tips you can apply to everyday life in order to prevent this problem! When you follow these 8 steps, you are hopefully going to feel a lot more at ease:

Set Clear Boundaries

The first and most important step is to establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. Determine specific working hours and try to avoid working outside those hours whenever possible.

Take Regular Breaks

Incorporate regular breaks into your work schedule. Short breaks throughout the day can help refresh your mind and prevent mental fatigue. A little break can go a long way!

Set Realistic Goals

Whatever you do, establish realistic goals and expectations for yourself. Avoid over-committing or taking on more than you can handle, as it can lead to increased stress and burnout.

Prioritize Self-Care

You hear the term self-care everywhere nowadays, and for good reason. Make self-care a priority by engaging in activities that rejuvenate you, such as exercise, hobbies, spending time with loved ones, or practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques.

Seek Support

Don't hesitate to ask for help when needed. Reach out to colleagues, friends, or family members for support and assistance. Having a strong support system can alleviate stress and provide a fresh perspective. Feeling overwhelmed is more common than you think, and talking to someone can help a lot!

Engage in Stress-Reducing Activities

Find activities that help you relax and relieve stress, such as yoga, meditation, deep breathing exercises, or engaging in hobbies that bring you joy.

Practice Time Management

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by a pile of work? Develop effective time management skills to avoid becoming overwhelmed. You can do this by prioritizing tasks, delegating when possible, and breaking large projects into smaller, manageable tasks.

Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle

Of course, I had to mention this aspect: A healthy lifestyle can contribute to your overall resilience. Get enough sleep, eat a balanced diet, and engage in regular physical exercise. These habits can improve your energy levels and help you manage stress.

When you try to prioritize these 8 things, you are on your way to combating burnout and feeling more at ease with the stressors life throws at you.

Even if you currently don't have the time or resources to embark on a van-adventure, with these steps, you can feel more balanced again.

How do you unwind and prevent burning out?

Let's discuss it in our Vanlifezone Community Group on Facebook!



facebook.com/groups/vanlifezone

Life in a Wonder-Van

Alice & Mavis

My real journey started about 6 years ago, when I saw a shiny and pristine looking Volkswagen T25 sitting in a Glastonbury car park with a giant FOR SALE sign in the window. It was lime green and orange, covered in Zombie decal, a real modern apocalyptic treasure. I was out with my gran heading to her favorite local coffee house when this great thing caught my eye, since I can remember I've been in love with the iconic splitty, an old classic beauty of the motor world. I'm pretty different in what I like, I like to have things that aren't the norm and I've forever wanted a campervan and to eventually fulfill the vanlife dream. Long story short,



I contacted the owner, viewed and parted ways with my savings. My dad thought I was mad and my mum didn't even believe me. That was the beginning of my lifestyle, I knew as soon as I brought it home, even through all the anxiety, I'd made the best decision of my life.



I had Bob for around 2 years and in that time he took me on my first adventure: volunteering abroad in the Netherlands at a primate rescue.

A few months later, after making friends, bonding with the staff and doing an OK job of the role, they contacted me desperate for help due to an issue in staffing and asked if I'd be able to come and work temp contracts. Ofcourse I jumped at the oppurtunity, luckily for me my work is pretty flexible with me (the combination of having itchy feet and being a hard worker does well in your favour). This happened for the best part of 3 years, coming and going, only able to do this because I had the van.

Living in him throughout the wet winters I'd decided I could do with something a little bigger, the extra space is a godsend after you come in from the freezing cold or stuck inside due to the pouring rain. I was on my lunch break one day and thought I'd check ol' eBay for an LT, impulse buy after he agreed (within an hour of messaging) to hold it until I could reach the UK to swap them over, it was a done deal. The thing felt massive driving it an hour and half back to Frome, but no anxiety this time, I knew it was the right choice and the name came straight away, Roger. The T25 will forever be a part of me, I will never forget that van. And yes,

you can definitely get an emotional connection to a giant metal box, for without his presence I truly believe my life wouldn't be where it is today.

Almost 4 years deep into Rogers ownership, thousands of pounds spent on welding, respray and mechanics, 2 interior rebuilds, I think it's safe to say we're as near to finishing (these home's on wheels

are never complete) as we can get. Of course, there are always things to add, change and upgrade, but it's part of the lifestyle and I wouldn't change it. What I call the bane of dad's life, as I definitely wouldn't have made it this far without him and his very reluctant help with nearly everything, and most of what I've learnt along the way has been thanks to him.



The Great Trip

In December of 2022 I finally made it out on my long European trip I'd been planning for at least 3 years, covid really gave it a balls up, and the Brexit, but in fairness these issues worked in my favour. It gave me time to get the van really ready, put money into him before saving for the trip, and I'm so glad it did turn out like that. Dad rebuilt the engine after we discovered the head gasket had blown (pretty sure I'd bought it with this unnoticed), the body work, electrics, interior, all now at a stage I'm 90% happy with, making this journey a lot more relaxing than it probably would've been had I have left the country with an old vehicle

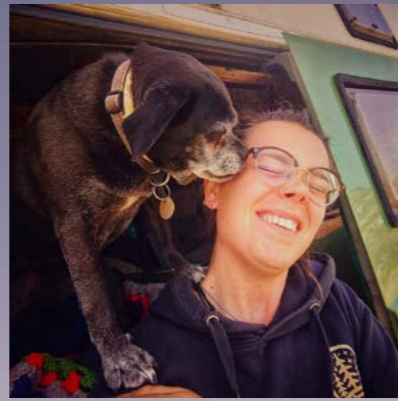
with no attention paid to it for so many years. Like many of us UK dwellers, it can be a real pain to travel with these new rules and restrictions. I was supposed to go with a friend, planning a few months travelling together, another big reason for getting a larger van, but covid hit putting the world in lockdown and pushing any hope of seeing another country into the distant future. Many of us struggled with covid, I was luckily working which kept me occupied and earning. Being a home carer for the best part of 9 year, along side other jobs of all kinds, rarely has a reason for stopping, no matter the circumstances.

Holidays, sickness or a world pandemic, you've still got to head out and cater to those unable. Nevertheless, I am now halfway through my trip, just me and my dog Mavis, loving life. So far I have 1 breakdown and 1 flat battery under my belt, these things are the less glamorous sides of vanlife, and not always discussed or documented, but I can say for certain it's not all rainbows and sunshine, it can be an extremely painful and expensive way of life at points. But the freedom, things I've seen and people I've met make this journey all worth every headache, money trauma and damp living quarters.

The other hard part is traveling alone. Realistically you are alone 100% of the time, dealing with every problem, every payment is directly yours, judging every decision a little wiser just in case, knowing that you are the sole provider of the dog as well as yourself, it can get hard.

Anyway, I'm almost two-thirds through my time in Turkey, meaning I'm over halfway through my trip! I really can't believe I've made it so far on my own in a 37-year-old vehicle. But I have, and I cannot wait to see what else happens on my travels, where else I'll visit, and who I may meet. I'm so grateful for the fact I am able to do this, as I know many others wish they could but can't. I do not take my life for granted, working in healthcare makes you appreciate everything and to grab and do what you can, when you can. Say yes, and do what you want in life, for we only walk this planet once.

I hope I make others who are currently, or thinking of, doing vanlife solo aware that it's not always glamorous, easy, or exciting and that you are not alone. For every boring car park or residential park up, awaits a night in the forest, a sleep by the sea, or coffee with a mountainous view. There are loads of us doing it by ourselves, we understand and know the struggles, and we support one another. Vanlife is a community, and that in itself is near the best thing about it.



With a heavy heart, we learned that shortly before the release of this issue Alice's beloved dog, Mavis, tragically passed away. Our thoughts and sympathies are with her during this difficult time.

the Vanlifezone Team



Turkiye

Did you know?

A country with everything you could ask for, from history and culture to wildlife and nature. In the morning, you could go for a traditional Hammam bath, then walk around an ancient site. You could be staring at snowy peaks through sunglasses in the middle of summer. Yes, it really is that diverse, and the combinations are endless.

Turkey has a phenomenal array of tourism aspects to spark anyone's interest. Given the size of the country, you'll want to spend quite some time here to appreciate what this place has to offer. Excursions are a great option to pack everything into a short visit. There are so many things to see wherever you are, but bear in mind, not all can be accessed by public transport. A popular option is to book a rental car, a highly recommended choice. This is common practice for holidaymakers as it allows the freedom and independence to visit places that may be a little harder to reach with fewer tourists. There's also the fact that not every traveler enjoys group coach trips and excursions. In fact, it would most likely work out

cheaper to sightsee in this manner. Group activities are exceptionally popular here too. Varying from town to town, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

In recent years, Turkey has become a favorite destination for vanlifters, becoming increasingly popular with Western tourists, mostly due to its freedom to roam and the hospitality the Turkish people offer. There's a real sense of welcoming from the locals, to whoever may be visiting. Their food is delicious and budget-friendly. With nearly every street having something on offer, you won't go hungry in this country. gözlemes, pancakes, and pita bread are the popular finds, along with kebabs, of course. The traditional dishes are best found in the smaller towns, on the side of the road where their makeshift shelters are accompanied by a 'GÖZLEME' sign hanging precariously from the corner. You won't get far without seeing these. Afterwards, you'll want to wash it down with some fresh juice, pomegranate being the top choice, freshly pressed while you wait.

The history here is vast, Greek and Roman influences being highly common, as well as Turkish, spanning back centuries and multiple periods in time. A great place to visit is the ancient city of Ephesus, situated on the outskirts of Selcuk, a town worth visiting in itself. At around a €12 entry fee, it's the biggest bang for your buck regarding paid grounds. With it being the largest in Turkey, you'll be gifted with multiple types of remains to study. When you get your ticket, you'll be asked if you'd like to pay extra for the terrace houses. You can buy them inside at the entry, but beware, they are a little pricier here. The terrace houses are a great extension and worth the extra payment. Since 1960, they have been excavated by grants from many big companies worldwide. The colors, textures, and detail being restored are incredible, considering how long they have been buried. So if you're a fan of art and skill, this should be right up your alley. You'll likely spend the majority of the day wandering this place. There is a cafe inside the top entrance and multiple ones outside the gate on the bottom entrance, but everything is pricey here, so bringing your own lunch may be a feasible option for most. Toilets are situated at each end of the site. Small dogs are welcome to walk the grounds with you, but beware of the strays who take residency here.

Dalyan, home to the Dekemar sea turtle rescue center, which you can visit and support with donations, and well-known for its magnificent scenery, is surely one not to be missed.



Impressive mountains surround Iztuzu beach, creating a landscape that is utterly breathtaking. If you're brave, you can drive up the rickety road to reach the viewpoint, but be prepared to be blown away. It's certainly a sight you don't see every day. Back down to earth, the town is small but still a great holiday destination with many boat

taxis and tours which run in any weather. Taxis and coaches frequently run to the beach where there is a cafe, toilets, and the Dekemar rescue center with lots of information regarding the turtles. The ancient Kaunos tombs can also be seen from the footpath in town across the water if a boat trip isn't within your budget.

The iconic scenes from the heart of Turkey featuring balloons floating above open landscapes belong to the district of Cappadocia, another gem riddled with history and nature. Every town and valley in Cappadocia is a special sight, incredibly different from anything we can find back home. The modern-day residents have taken advantage of its beauty

and openness, seizing the opportunity to create a floating rainbow in the sky each morning. These commercial flights only began three decades ago and have since become the icon of the valleys. Although the balloons are spectacular and are the scene most come to witness, Cappadocia has much more to offer. Its petite towns, large valleys, and intriguing history are far superior.

You can't get bored in this place. Each valley has its own name and story. Pigeon Valley, for example, got its name due to the fascinating techniques of using pigeon manure and eggs for production within the region, along with the pigeon lofts

which you can access, although with difficulty, to see folk art and incubation crates. Given the steepness and slippery terrain, when visiting here you should come equipped wearing sturdy walking shoes.

Wherever you're visiting, you'll be sad to leave it behind as this great country will make you feel at home after gifting you with such a variety of sights and knowledge.

Flavors of Turkiye

A Culinary Journey Amidst Inspiring Landscapes by Vanlife Eats

Turkiye is full of so many inspiring and beautiful places, it's an incredible place to travel with or without a van. Stunning beaches, waterfalls, valleys, canyons and forests, there really is something for everyone. We have seen many of our friends on social media recently with the background of hundreds of hot air balloons in Cappadocia. To say we are jealous is an understatement! The amazing thing with food is that you can visit these places with your taste buds even if you are not able to go there yet. So no matter where you are parked up we have a traditional Turkish recipe to transport you to the busy markets of Turkiye. Turkish food takes influence from many of the countries around

it, making it diverse and full of flavor. Some areas preferring fish and seafood dishes, others with more variety in vegetables, and others favoring traditional turkish kebabs. A lot of it is dependent on what is available locally. Traditionally breakfast and dinner would be the time the family would get together and enjoy a meal, conversation and laughter ringing out from homes everywhere. It seems as though this tradition is beginning to lessen in the modern world, but at weekends when time isn't as critical, families will come together and enjoy some delicious Turkish cuisine. The recipe we are sharing with you in this issue is a traditional street food meal called gözleme, a breakfast favorite,

it is also commonly eaten at lunch or just as a snack. As mentioned in the previous article about the amazing things to discover and see in Turkiye, gözleme is a traditional savory bread dish that can be found throughout Turkiye. It can be filled with a variety of fillings and is traditionally served with ayran, a creamy yogurty drink. Gözleme can be made with whatever fillings you want, the popular options being minced beef or lamb, a potato filling or cheese and spinach like this one! It is good for vanlife because it's so simple and versatile, you can break tradition and go with whatever needs using up in your van, or use what you can find locally on your travels.

Cheese and Spinach

Gözleme

A great vegetarian breakfast, lunch or snack.
A traditional turkish street food!

Difficulty



Time

Prep Time: 30min

Try it out yourself, and don't forget to post it and tag [@vanlife_eats](#) and [@vanlifezone](#) so we can see your results.

Ingredients

Dough

plain flour	2 cups
salt	½ tsp
olive oil	2 tbsp
warm water	¾ cup

Filling

spinach	100g
feta cheese	200g
shredded mozzarella	1 ¼ cup
spring onions (green onions)	4
chopped parsley	½ cup
mint leaves	3
dill	A pinch

Salt, pepper and red pepper flakes to taste
Oil or butter to cook

Instructions

Bread

1. Mix the flour, salt and oil in a bowl using a fork.
2. Add in the warm water until it comes together in a smooth ball.
3. Knead briefly (a minute) then cover and leave while you compile the filling.

Filling

1. Begin to blitz the spinach in the zyliss first. When this is finely chopped begin to add the other ingredients
2. Roughly break the feta cheese in. Add the mozzarella, spring onions, herbs and seasoning. Blend until fully mixed.

To Cook

1. Divide the dough into 4 equal parts and flatten out into circles (around 10 inches)
2. Put ¼ of the cheese mix into half of the circle, being careful not to let it go to the sides.
3. Fold the top half of the bread over and seal the edges by pressing firmly all the wayround.
4. Repeat for the remaining 3 pieces of dough.
5. It is important to use enough oil or butter in this recipe to get a nice crisp on the bread. Heat the oil or butter in the pan and cook for around 2 minutes per side or until golden brown, you may need to press down slightly to get good contact all over.
6. Repeat with the remaining gözleme. Cut into triangles and serve!





Moments of Great Courage

Leaving London for a Wild Patagonian Adventure with our Citroen Camper

About three years ago, in the middle of the pandemic, we found ourselves leaving London abruptly. There wasn't much preparation and no leaving parties. We had the chance to move to a house in the English countryside. With no children, it could be that easy to leave the city we lived in for over ten years. Although it was unexpected, it was one of those twenty-second moments of insane courage, when you know something good will come if you're just brave enough to say 'yes' to it. So we did: we left our familiar surroundings, our friends, everything.

When we arrived, we walked into the back garden. For miles, there was nothing. No signs of the city. Instead, there was a very distant glow of light, silence, grassland, and lavender fields. At first, it was almost scary. There was no local shop to walk to; pitch-black darkness at night. No family or friends to pop in and have a cup of tea with. Our old life was turned on its head.

But slowly, we adjusted. We had fresh air and the silence was peaceful. At breakfast, the tweeting birds and jumping deer would greet us. We grew vegetables, cooked more, and spent quality time with those who came to visit.

Up until that point, it felt like our big adventures were behind us in life. We had already traveled Latin America extensively and settled somewhat in our thirties. But, in those two precious years in the countryside, a dormant energy was shaken.



We left from a family visit in Brazil that year with a Pinterest board called 'Campervan Roadtrip.' Our destination we agreed easily: Patagonia, land of the wind, place of dreams, home of the Andes. Theo made a film there in 2015, and Maxine had planned a journey there, but never made it. Those twenty-second moments of insane courage came again when we booked the flights in May and bought our first campervan in September 2022 - with zero vanlife experience!

The period that followed, when we started getting ready, was

one of high pressure, doubt, and exhaustion. Maxine had a busy quarter in the education field and an overworked Theo was unsure whether to keep all his gear or bid farewell to his filmmaking career completely. We couldn't help but ask ourselves at points if we were doing the right thing.

In the end, just as abruptly as we had left London, we left that wonderful house in the countryside. We sold it on eBay, gave away our comforts, condensed life into our campervan, and counted to twenty as we drove away from it.



Crash Course in Vanlife

Our route was UK > Europe > Patagonia. We had our crash course in vanlife on the highway in France, heading south for a climbing trip with friends. It was the vanlife intro dream. France is a really well-equipped place to get started, and we coupled that with lots of climbing. By late October, we'd made it to Rotterdam, watching our van roll off into a warehouse, ready for shipping across the Atlantic.

We flew across to Buenos Aires and spent a quiet month in Uruguay at the beach, waiting. Pick-up day arrived, and we left the coast, collecting our campervan from Montevideo (the Uruguayan capital and main port) en route to take the Ruta 40. This is the famous road that drives through Argentina from the north, almost to the southern tip of the continent. Much of the journey is through an arid, golden grassland called 'estepa'.

The roads were empty; it was a hot, summery Christmas, and we quickly learned to navigate them. Not a person or vehicle in sight, except the occasional valiant cyclist. We soon encountered the dust, the howling wind, the YPF gas station, and empanadas de carne. We encountered guanacos (Patagonian llamas), abrojos (spiky plants that cling to your clothes), and choiques (Darwin's Rhea, which are like ostriches). Clouds of dust would trail behind us as we traveled along the ripio (dirt roads), and at times it felt like we were the only campervan on the planet.

Patagonia was a dream that we slowly got used to living. One day, we summited Volcano Achén Ñiyeu in 28°C, and it seemed like we'd landed on the Moon. The midday sun beat down relentlessly, offering no respite from the heat as we struggled to maintain our

footing. We ran down, socks full of debris, our bodies covered in ash, resembling skiers gliding through the slopes. Our adventurous spirits were dancing!

It became common to see wild animals daily: herds of guanacos, the odd choique or grey fox, and down the Beagle Channel, sea lions and penguins. When we crossed over to Chile, we had to mind the rabbits constantly leaping. We even got a special sighting of a puma in Torres del Paine. It's amazing how watching an endangered animal with your own eyes and hearing it cry across the valley can etch so deep in the memory.

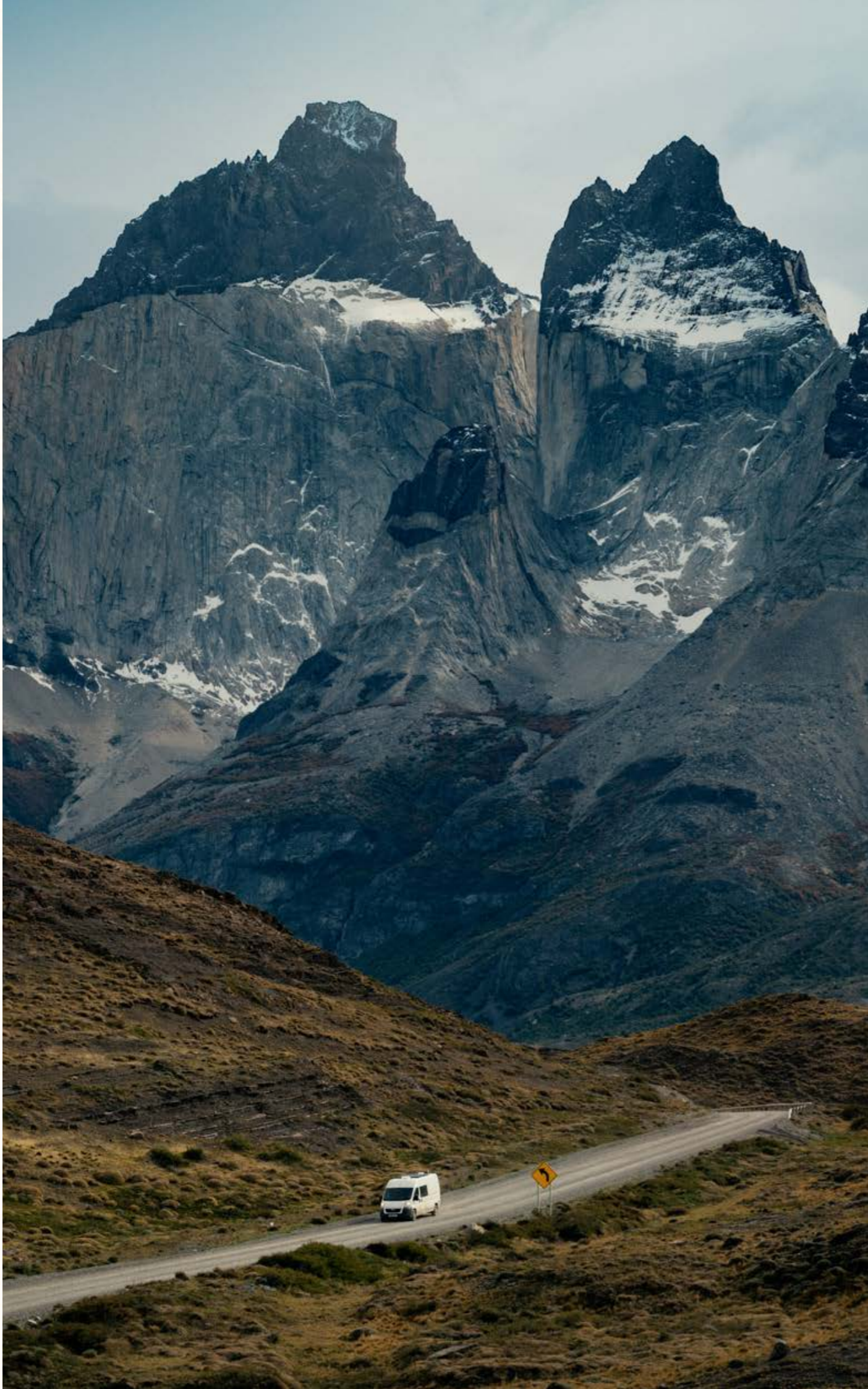
They say that nature has a positive impact on the mind and body and that prolonged exposure transforms our chemistry - this was an obvious moment we felt it.

We are seven months into our journey now. Instead of having nature as a backdrop to our days of work in England, we have instead brought nature and our sense of adventure to the foreground.



Our campervan is a wonderful home, and sometimes it's difficult to leave it. But some of the most chemically altering moments for us have been our treks, venturing past the parking space and into the wilderness.

It was a clear day and an epic drive, arriving in El Chaltén (home to the Fitzroy and Cerro Torre mountain ranges). On approach, it felt like the highway might swallow us into an oblivion of pale blue mountains. We lost ourselves in those three days of hiking, two little dots towered over by some of the continent's most prolific mountains.



Life's Rhythmic Journey

We've learned that vanlife has its magical peaks and also its cooler valleys. When we got to Ushuaia, for example (Argentina's southernmost tip), we were on such a high that we had made it. At the same time, Maxine fell ill, and we both got bad feet. This cut out hiking and climbing for weeks and was a real challenge, as we missed out on various treks. The road has taught us to pace ourselves and chill out when we need to. Life is still life, whether in a house or on wheels.

We're now at Parque Pumalín in Chile, a complete contrast to the arid estepa of Argentinean Patagonia. Yesterday, we followed

Darwin's Route through the ancient Valdivian Rainforest. This project has been designed to protect endangered ecosystems such as this. Spotting fungi and flora from the prehistoric age, feeling the rain on our skin, our heads so far back watching the towering Alerce trees - moments like this supercharge our energy.

We don't have a return date yet. From here, we'll head back to Argentina and then Brasil.

The other day, we opened a new Pinterest board, which still remains untitled. It's to imagine the life that will come after this great adventure.

We definitely see ourselves in nature. As we begin our forties, we're also thinking of kids. It's possible we'll leave our vanlife as abruptly as we left the others...

For now, adventure's calling, and we'll stay open to that energy. After all, we're only a twenty-second moment of insane courage away from whatever's coming next.

By the way - Find @vanlifezone on Pinterest for more inspiration!



Torres del Paine

ARTICLE
@fluadlwirt

A Confluence of Raw Beauty and Adventure

PICTURES
@natural_explorers_

Immersed in the wilderness of Chilean Patagonia is Torres del Paine National Park, a vibrant ecosystem filled with adventure and biodiversity. This breathtaking sanctuary boasts massive granite towers, seemingly infinite azure lakes, and imposing glaciers—Mother Nature's own masterpiece providing an unforgettable experience.



Among the iconic highlights of the park is the celebrated „W“ trail, offering a multi-day hike through ancient forests, across suspended bridges, and around serene lakes. It culminates with spectacular views of the Cuernos del Paine and the encroaching Grey Glacier, rewarding the hiker's endeavor with an unparalleled connection to nature.

Torres del Paine, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since 1978, is a hotspot for wildlife. It offers glimpses of the majestic Andean condor, elusive puma, and herds of guanacos, the elegant relatives of llamas. This wildlife

theater presents a paradise for nature lovers. The park invites you to partake in a diverse array of activities resonating with Patagonia's heartbeat.

Kayaking in the shadow of icebergs calving from the Grey Glacier, fly fishing in the trout-rich waters of the Paine River, or horseback riding across vast pampas offers a deep connection to the land and its primal essence.

But Torres del Paine is more than just a destination; it embodies nature's resilience and the vital role of conservation. Its commitment to sustainable tourism focuses on the health of its ecosystems and sheltered species. Leave No Trace principles, designated trails, and active recovery efforts for damaged ecosystems are essential strategies for maintaining the park's vitality and preserving threatened species such as the Andean deer or Huemul.

As you traverse this captivating land, engaging with local guides and rangers can enrich your understanding of the ecological balance and provide insights into the diverse species, ongoing conservation, and the importance of safeguarding this remarkable environment.

Torres del Paine offers both appreciation of its unrivaled beauty and active support for its conservation cause. It invites you to tread lightly, explore mindfully, and in return, gifts you with an

unforgettable journey into the heart of Patagonia. With every footstep in this sanctuary, you contribute to its story of preservation, respect, and unyielding wonder.

So, if you're still contemplating where your next vanlife adventure will take you, perhaps this is just the perfect destination calling for you. The wonders of Torres del Paine await your exploration, promising a journey of a lifetime.



Keen to read more vanlife stories from Torres del Paine?

Check out the article „North & South in Chile“ in Issue 6 of the Vanlifezone Magazine by @octaviaviajando

LOCATION
Torres del Paine



Roaming Earth

Living free

It has been almost a year since I sold my home and moved into my car. Living in a tent, at least for most of the year, was the best decision I ever made, or at least one of them. It gives me the possibility to wake up in the mountains, in places I had only seen in pictures. Now I'm the guy who takes those kinds of photos.

Two months ago, I returned from my bicycle trip through Norway, covering the entire country from Oslo to Nordkapp, approximately 2100 kilometers, in the wintertime. My dogs, Ena and Max, were

also part of this project. To be honest, we were equal members of this expedition. I had already experienced cycling in wintertime back in 2016, so I knew what kind of weather conditions we would encounter.

After completing this project, I needed to take a break and disconnect from social media, work, and content delivery. I needed to unplug myself from the life I had been living for the past 12 years. It was necessary for my physical and mental health. So, the three of us, the pack, hit the road.

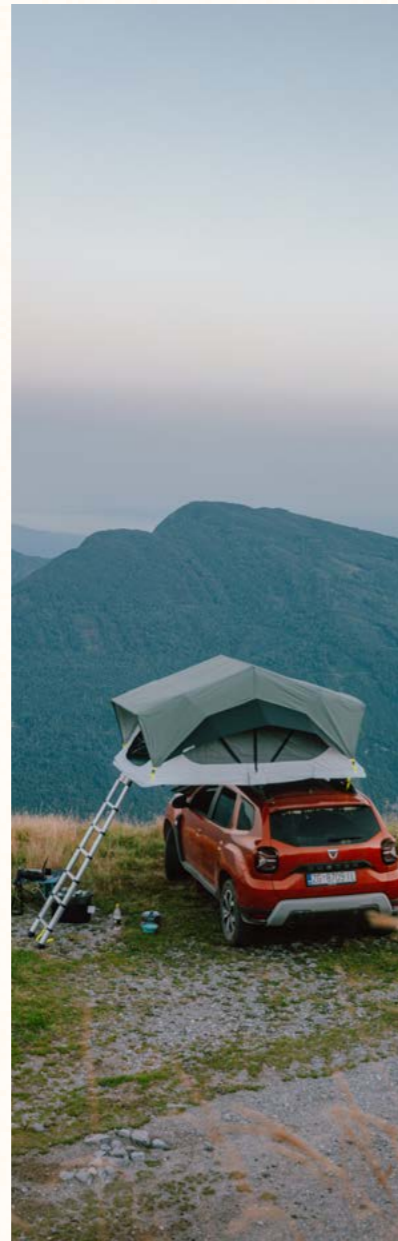


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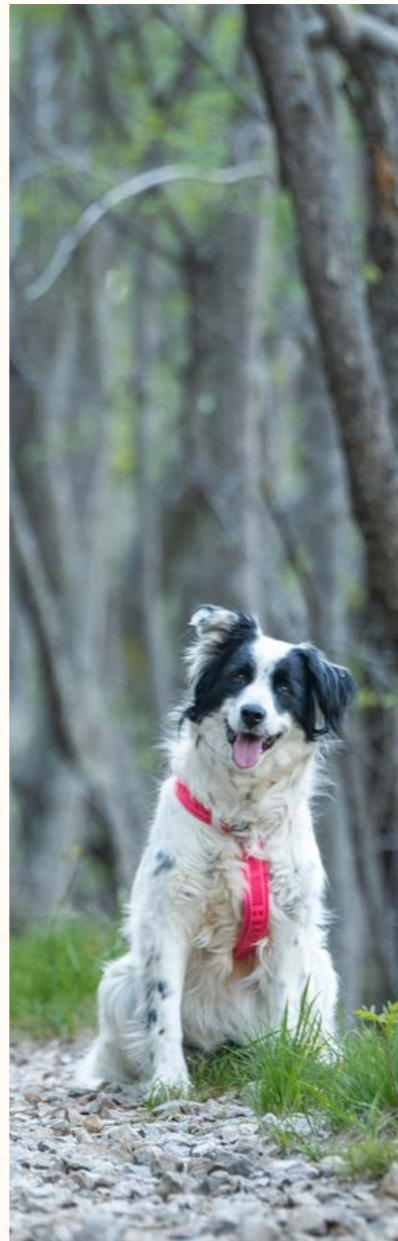
The only thing I knew was that I didn't want to spend hours and hours traveling, so we stayed „around.“

In such a small area like the Balkans, you can find everything you need. Lakes, national parks, mountains, hiking and climbing trails, beautiful seas, and wild and amazing animals are all there, pulling you toward them like a



magnet. Somehow, I found myself there, sitting in the early morning while the fog was still dancing above the meadow, watching my dogs explore new territory or just play with each other.

I consider myself a happy person because my dogs are okay with everything. Whether we go on a 12-hour hike or spend the entire day in accommodation watching



documentaries, they are fine with it as long as they are with me. Over the years, we have formed a strong bond, and now it's inconvenient when a „new person“ tries to step into my life. This may sound strange to you, but I embrace it wholeheartedly. I'm not alone, and I receive and give an unlimited power of love with those two furry companions.

»If I can give you a couple of pieces of advice to reconnect with yourself, it would be to turn off your mobile phone, pack your bags in a car, take your tent with you, and just go.«

It doesn't matter whether it's fifty or five hundred kilometers. We are living in a fast-paced time, bombarded with a lot of unnecessary information every day, and we have lost touch with nature. For the sake of your mental health, don't forget to be a vagabond sometimes.

Share Your Vanlife Story with Us!



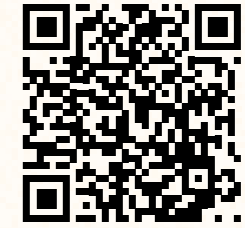
If you want to share your own vanlife experience and become a member of our community you are more than welcome to do so. Follow the steps on the right page and fill out the submission form on our website.

This project isn't possible without every single one of you. You can share any aspect or story about your experience of living in a van. For inspiration look through our other magazine issues as well.

Here are our the four steps on how to submit your article:

1. Complete Form

Go to www.vanlifezone.com/submit-article.php or follow the **qr-code** on the right. Fill out all of the required fields and double check all of your info! Be thoughtful with the title of your article; it should grab the reader's attention and tease what the article is about!



2. Article

Write your article and please make sure that it has roughly **1000 - 1200 words**. You have total creative freedom and can write about what ever is dear to your heart! The most important thing is that you are authentic and that you tell your story how it happened, even if there were some bad experiences. Paste your finished article into the corresponding field in the form.

3. Images

Equally as important as your text are your pictures. They make your article come to life and are a chance to add your personal visual style to your article. Go to wetransfer.com and add **15 - 20 high quality images** that fit your story. If you are unsure how to upload your images, click the „more info“ button next to the image field in the form.

4. Submission

The final step ist to **submit** the entire form with all of your info, the article and the link to your images. We are excited to read and share your wonderful stories. If there are any questions left, contact us on instagram or at office@vanlifezone.com and don't forget to **GET OUT THERE.**

If you are a brand and want to partner with us, please contact us on marketing@vanlifezone.com.

Imprint

Editor-in-Chief

Florian Jaunegg
@fluadlwirt

Text Editors

Anna Scheucher
@anna.scheucher
www.fullyholistic.com

Josh McClean
@joshjmclean
mccleanjj@gmail.com

Alice Vowles
@alice.inwondervan
aliceinwondervan@gmail.com

Publisher & Managing Director

Florian Jaunegg

Editorial Address
magazine@vanlifezone.com

@vanlifezone

Disclosure

Offenlegung gemäß §25
Mediengesetz:
Informationen zum
Medieninhaber sind ständig
und unmittelbar unter folgender
Webadresse auffindbar:
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can constantly be found directly
at the following web address:
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Media Owner & Publisher

Multimedia-Agentur Florian
Jaunegg, Schererstraße 25/7,
A-8052 Graz, ATU78193759



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