

NEWSLETTER 1 : RFH ON TOUR

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Departure from NL

On Tuesday morning, November 29th 2022 we (Cassidy and I, Narda) departed at 8:00am from the Dutch town of Scherpenzeel, heading south with the UAZ: my buddy, the bus carrying Roof for Humanity on a world-wide tour. The decision was made, due to social-political tensions in parts of Europe, to reverse the planned route and begin in Southern Africa. From there, I'll drive northwards through Africa, then on to Europe, ending the trip back in the Netherlands.

Timeline and Route

I spent the majority of the first month of the trip, December, in Morocco where I made many wonderful new contacts. These connections give us the opportunity to return later to potentially build a temporary community dome there as well. With local support, I loaded the tour bus onto a container ship at the end of December 2022, to be disembarked in Namibia and continue the Tour in early 2023.

January, the second travel month, required significant patience. Navigating a different country, without my own vehicle, with no public transport network. Luckily the middle of February saw the return of my buddy, the Tour bus!



29-11-2022 Narda and Cassidy, all ready to go!

Finding Your Way

Are you driving all the way down to Namibia? Or will you rent a car there to begin the Tour? Why on earth are you heading off on a trip to southern Africa without a concrete plan?

These are a few of the many questions posed to us at the beginning of the Roof for Humanity Tour. In our newsletter I, Narda Beunders, will introduce you to our organization's vision and mission, hopefully answering these types of questions along the way.

We believe in personal contact and are convinced that when we meet and come together as people, mutual goodwill grows. Contact via email or phone is the most standard form of connection these days, fine for day-to-day business. But when you want to achieve something outside-the-box, this (to our mind) impersonal communication isn't the best approach.

This conviction gave rise to my desire to personally contact a shipper in Morocco, someone who would arrange the preparations, and someone on the other end in Namibia to receive the container carrying the bus.

The shipping method was decided quickly: the bus would travel in a container, instead of via the 'row row' option. That involves loading your vehicle on a sort of ferry and leaving the keys inside, with the risk that not everything arrives in the bus as it should. Shipping in a sealed container is decidedly safer on a route with necessary stops along the way.



Mechanic Mattheus at my campsite

Bumps in the Road

My buddy and I have already logged a size able number of kilometers since departing for Roof for Humanity on Tour. To our surprise, the UAZ Bukhanka (the brand of the bus) has done really well! That said, it hasn't been completely smooth sailing the whole way...

- In Morocco in turned out that the brake system wasn't reacting entirely well anymore. Together with experienced mechanic Hassan, we cleaned all the disks, the oil and other components and replaced three rubber rings in the break pump.
- A bit of off-road adventuring shook the fuse on the lights so much that the tail lights were constantly turned on. A few wires reconnected and the problem was solved, thankfully.
- About the gas tanks... that was a whole other story involving multiple trips to Falkenberg garage in Kamanjab and the gas station. But luck was on our side again because the owner was a wonderful person and she warmly welcomed me into her home for good stories, tasty cookies and what we Dutch call 'gezelligheid.' With a bit of trial and error, the tanks were up and running again.



coffee with garage owner, Juanita

So it's a Container-ship Then...

How did that process go, you ask? First, we tried for months in the Netherlands to personally approach a suitable shipping partner for a decent price who would gladly bring the bus, my buddy, to southern Africa. No such luck. Other options? We looked into sailing from Germany or England, but that would ultimately require much more time and paperwork. The decision was made to just get on the road, heading south. The right choice, it would seem.

Arriving in Morocco it was quickly apparent that the large port cities there, Tanger-Med, Tanger and Casablanca weren't much different than Rotterdam. Big, hierarchical and impersonal. Further southwards, then. A journey full of beautiful places and meetings with remarkable people brought me to the southern port city of Agadir. Driving into town, a positive feeling washed over me. Agadir is an open and friendly city with a small-scale harbor area. "This is the place, buddy!" was my first thought.

A little bluff and a good story about our mission and the Roof for Humanity Tour got me passed the strict access control into the harbor, where I found my way to the main office of CMA-CGM. There I met an extremely kind woman, Nadia, who really took the time to listen to why on earth I was standing in front of her without an appointment...

Nadia completely understood my explanation about the kind of partnership where you place a lot of trust in another, in this case CMA-CGM, and the importance of having a face to go with the name on the website and all the logistical emails.

This, in combination with what she deemed to be the 'wonderful work of RfH,' was enough of a reason for her to agree to help in arranging the shipment from Agadir.

Nadia immediately put me in contact with Youssef of South Marine Maroc shipping and things took off from there. They were also very interested in the story and person behind the commission. What a fantastic team of professionals with a high regard for personal connection. Not to mention the wonderful guidance in the harbor during all the police and customs checkpoints. After a suspenseful day, the bus was loaded into a 20 foot container, ready for departure to Walvis Bay, Namibia.



Excellent help in Agadir harbor

- A day after the gas tanks, my buddy and I were about to take off when I discovered that the cable for the gas pedal was broken. We weren't leaving after all and just had to repeat the mantra of "patience is a virtue!" Because when someone assures you they'll arrive at 10:00am, finally shows up at 7:00pm, and departs again within five minutes, saying; "oh our mechanic Matheus will get to that tomorrow, 15 minutes and it's good as new! Not to worry, eh," you really scratch your head in surprise at how differently things turn out than how you'd planned.

All -in-all no major roadblocks really.

The Road Ahead

Namibia is an enormous, beautiful country, full of contrasts. The area is in no way shape, or form comparable to the Netherlands. There, you can be on the road for days without encountering a single soul. Amazing!

So much pristine nature, silence, vastness and vistas make you realize how small we are as humans, but also how much we are part of this greater, fascinating Circle of life.

During the drive, I've met extraordinarily wonderful people, made connections and good contacts to build upon throughout the project. Perhaps we'll return to this point in a later newsletter, where we'll also dive more into the goal and the vision behind the RfH Tour.

We definitely see possibilities for Roof for Humanity in both Morocco and Namibia to be explored further and we'll remain in contact with different parties and people in both countries going forward.

Because of a building project in Malawi that's planned to start soon in March/April, 2023, the Tour will first be heading in that direction.

Via Botswana and Zambia, my buddy and I are driving towards Chikwawa, Malawi.

RfH on Tour!

From Agadir to Walvis Bay

And then it had really happened... my buddy was in a container. Doors closed, seal tag in place and no way back. That moment felt very double-sided, because I *was* incredibly happy that it had worked. At the same time, I felt somewhat at a loss that my home on wheels wouldn't be with me for the 41 days at sea, in addition to the processing time before and after the voyage. Suddenly, I was confronted with the daily question of where to sleep and how to get myself from one place to the next.

Three weeks ahead of the container ship's scheduled arrival date, I set foot in the Namibian capital, Windhoek. The time was certainly necessary to get everything in order so I could retrieve my buddy when the ship docked. It required time, some convincing, and perseverance to get that process arranged properly, for a reasonable price.

It all came together in Walvis Bay, occasionally requiring hours of waiting and even more patience. Thanks to personal contact with all the parties involved in the arrival of sea cargo and the good guidance of the team at WFS, I could retrieve my buddy from the harbor, without bribes - later than planned, but by African standards still quite quickly. Even with compliments for Roof for Humanity's work from the customs agent!

Stamps, papers, toll payments, all arranged and ready to go!



Building together and space for connection in Tatamutsi, Namibia

The First Dome is Built!

The RfH Tour continued from Walvis Bay, heading north through central Namibia, around the Brandberg mountain range. In the small settlement Tatamutsi - meaning "Let me not see you" in the local language - near Uis, we built our first temporary community space with Thyren, his aunt, Entenesia, and other villagers. A social event was organized for the kids and we all had a lot of fun.

Read more about it in the next newsletter.