BITÁCORA OFF ROAD

JULY 2026

VANCREANDO

Lidia and Kriper: culture, art in motion
"We want to branch out, explore, and create. Perhaps explore artistic expression in other fields."

IN THIS ISSUE



PETRAPERA



AVENTURAS CON PEQUES



WELCOME TO

BITACORA OFF ROAD

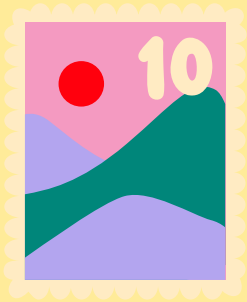
A Moving Shelter: Our Editorial Vision

From the outside, nomadic life is often mistaken for an endless vacation. People romanticize the image of a vehicle against the perfect sunset, overlooking what lies just beyond the frame: fatigue, hours of driving on uncertain roads, and, often, hands stained with oil after an emergency repair.

Deciding to hit the road is not running away from responsibility. It means trading predictable comfort for a life in which adaptation is the only routine. Along the way, we quickly learn that our home on wheels is an invaluable companion and our shelter, but it remains a tool; the real engine of the journey is our own resilience in the face of the unexpected. Sooner or later, a forced detour, harsh weather, or a mechanical failure in the middle of nowhere will make us scrap the original plan and reinvent ourselves.

And it is precisely there, when certainty falls apart, that the real magic of overlanding appears: the tribe. This way of life strips away the barriers of the city and brings us together around a shared campfire, where we realize that other travelers' stories of survival and genuine smiles are worth far more than any landscape. At the end of the day, the best thing to carry on the road is not the most expensive spare part, but the humility to ask for help and the willingness to keep moving forward together.

Macarena Orozco
Gabriel Jara



"The best thing to carry on the road is a simple life and the willingness to share it. Everything else, we find along the way."



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IF YOU TRAVEL AND WANT TO GET IN TOUCH

Want to introduce your project?
Send us a short biography and a photo so the community can get to know you.

Want to introduce your book?
There is room for you in the magazine.

Created an app that helps the travel community?
Send us the details so thousands can start using it.



Taken a photo you would like others to see?
Send it with your name and Instagram handle so people can follow you. You can also include the photo's technical details and a short description.

Just good vibes

& send to bitacoraoffroad@gmail.com

ICONIC PHOTO



Freedom on the road is no textbook phrase: it is pure logistics that lets you improvise. It means shutting off the engine in the middle of nowhere and knowing that this is your campsite. No schedules, no reservations: you depend entirely on your resources, the weather, and what your rig can withstand. Embracing the vastness of Laguna Lejía at 4,300 meters above sea level. Freedom has a name, and this journey is its finest setting.





THE POINT OF NO RETURN: WHEN THE ROAD SWALLOWS THE CALENDAR

One day, the trip stops being a trip. No alarm sounds, no sign at the border warns you, but it happens. It begins as a journey, a parenthesis in "normal" life, with a starting date and an ending plotted on the map. But kilometer by kilometer, that parenthesis devours the main text. The journey changes, settles into your blood, and suddenly you realize you are no longer traveling: you are living. The road has become your way of life. This is the point of no return. The exact moment when a traveler steps out of the monthly cycle, abandons the office clock, and begins operating by an entirely different measure, dictated by the weather, metal fatigue, and the rhythm of their own heart.



Macarena Orozco
/The Nomad Journalist





In the city, we are what we do from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. We accumulate titles, diplomas, master's degrees, and social standing. That is your calling card, your shield. But the mud, the jungle, and the Patagonian steppe do not give a damn about your résumé. When travel becomes life, your former profession fades through disuse. Your new profession demands that you become an emergency mechanic, a diplomat at customs, a navigator, a meteorologist, a survival economist, and your own psychologist. The ego that sustained the city professional fractures. Accepting that is not defeat; it is liberation. You stop introducing yourself by what you used to do for a living and start introducing yourself simply as what you are now: someone moving forward.

In the city, identity is often defined by what we do during working hours. We get used to introducing ourselves through our credentials or the career we studied to earn a living. Yet when the road becomes your home, a transition occurs that is far gentler and deeper than simply breaking with the past: your knowledge does not disappear; it blends together.

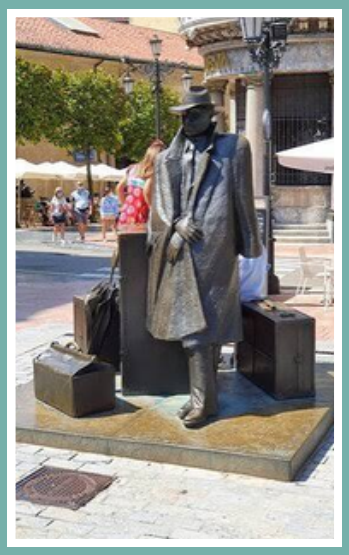
Your former trade moves into the passenger seat. It no longer defines you exclusively, nor do you need it as a shield of status before others. You simply begin to flow.

If anyone in history understood this funeral for the ego and the traveler's transformation, it was Alexander von Humboldt. In the late eighteenth century, Humboldt had everything he needed for a comfortable bureaucratic life in Europe: nobility, money, and position. Yet he spat on that comfort and turned the road into the greatest empirical laboratory in history.

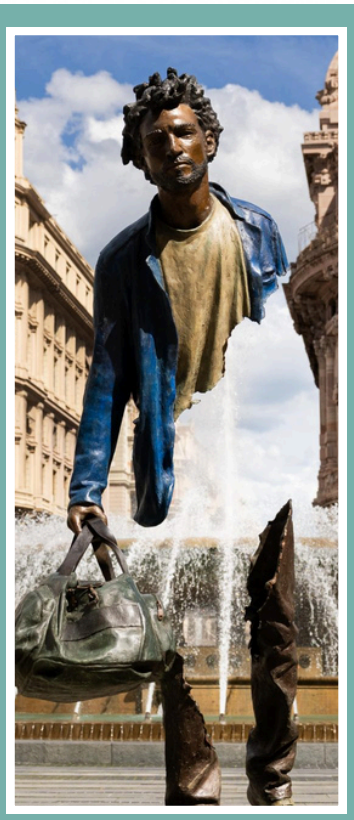
Humboldt did not travel through Latin America to sightsee or conquer; he traveled to decode. He understood that the truth of a territory, its biology, its climate, and its people cannot be legislated or understood from a desk ten thousand kilometers away. He plunged into the mud of the Orinoco, climbed Chimborazo with his nose bleeding from the altitude, and measured Pacific currents. His great legacy to the modern traveler is proof that someone who moves is no mere wanderer, but a translator of reality. Humboldt taught us that real knowledge demands putting your body out in the elements, and that respect for a territory comes from direct observation, not theory.

The weight of this nomadism runs so deep in the collective unconscious that settled society ends up admiring those stubborn enough to leave. Across the planet, travelers have been immortalized in bronze and stone sculptures celebrating kilometers rather than battles. These works mirror what the city envies and represses. In Oviedo, Spain, "El Regreso de Williams B. Arrensberg" depicts a man in a trench coat, surrounded by trunks, gazing toward the horizon: the embodiment of perpetual transit. At the far reaches of the Americas, in Ushuaia, and at Europe's western edge, at Portugal's Cabo da Roca, monuments mark the physical end of the land. In truth, they stand to validate the drive of those who drove, walked, or rode to the limits of possibility.









Artist Bruno Catalano's sculptures "The Travelers" (Les Voyageurs) depict bodies deliberately hollowed out and incomplete. They symbolize how the road tears away pieces of your former certainties and fills you with pieces of the world.

Across the vast roads of Asia and the trails of the Andes, apachetas (stone cairns left by walkers) serve as anonymous, collective sculptures that say: "I passed this way and survived."

Settled society erects these statues because, deep down, the system knows that the nomad represents the true human nature trapped beneath the asphalt.



By casting off the moorings of the traditional system, the traveler enters an unclassifiable social stratum: the “Middle Line.” From the outside, you are a walking contradiction. You are not a wealthy tourist in five-star hotels, but neither are you destitute. You have mechanical self-sufficiency, fuel, and, above all, time. You are the absolute owner of your hours.

This Middle Line makes you immensely rich in sunrises, time for deep reflection, hard-earned philosophy, and freedom of movement. Your wealth lies in the wear on your tires and the stories in your head. This position, equidistant from material abundance and absolute deprivation, is exactly what Buddhist monks and Shaolin warriors sought on their pilgrimages: a voluntary renunciation of excess, allowing them to experience life without the filters of comfort.

Humanity Without Filters

Standing on the Middle Line produces the road’s most intense side effect: it radically changes the kind of people who approach you, and why.

In the settled world, relationships are often colored by usefulness. “What do you do? What can you do for me?” But when you live in a vehicle, it is obvious that you have nothing material others might want. You are not a business contact.

So the people who approach your campsite are driven by the purest instinct: curiosity and friendship without an agenda. On the road, you may share a fire with other travelers or locals for only two or three days, yet the intensity of that connection is staggering. You say goodbye to people you met 48 hours ago with hugs that hurt, feeling you have known them forever. They are “fast-burning friends” who leave a permanent mark. These connections remind you that the hostility sold on screens is a fiction designed to keep people shut indoors.





When Shelter Becomes Routine:
The Battle to Keep Wonder Alive

The first months on the road are an overdose of adrenaline and anxiety. The newcomer's brain panics every day at five in the afternoon: "Where are we going to sleep? Is it safe?"
But as the countless kilometers pass, a fascinating biological phenomenon occurs: uncertainty becomes routine. Sleeping beside a secondary road in Chiapas or three thousand meters up in the Andes no longer causes stress. The vehicle becomes your central nervous system.
Yet this is where the veteran nomad's greatest danger emerges: apathy. After fifty majestic waterfalls, you risk becoming numb. The long-term traveler's daily battle is no longer finding a place to park, but fighting tooth and nail to preserve the capacity for wonder. Keeping a beginner's eyes after a hundred thousand kilometers is the overlander's true mastery.







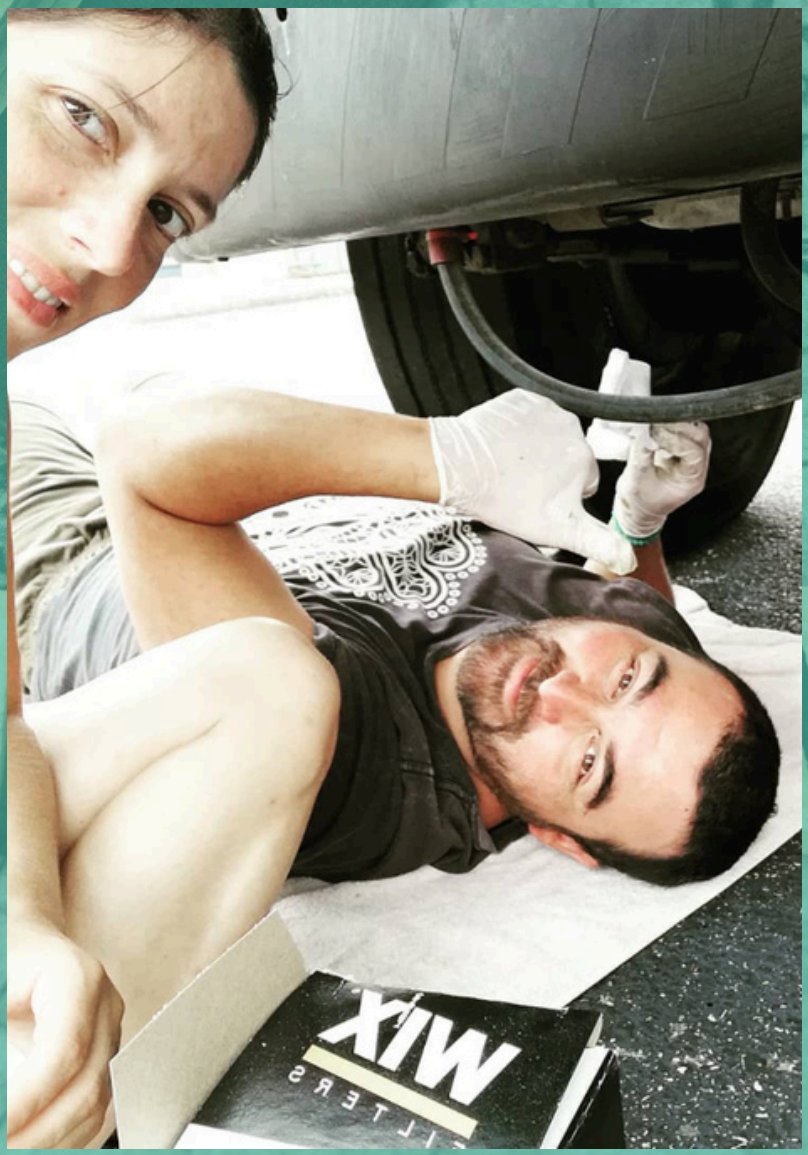
The Nomad's Legacy

In the end, when the journey swallows your old life, you realize you are not running from anything, but moving toward the heart of everything.

Making the road your way of life means understanding that things break, that plans are not worth the paper they are written on, and that your only real control is your attitude toward the unexpected. It means learning to be comfortable in the silence of your own mind.

We do not travel to collect flags on a window. We travel because it is the only way to unearth that raw, genuine humanity that routine buries every day at eight in the morning. Once you see the world from that perspective, no title, salary, or comfort is worth turning back for. The engine is already running.









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VANCREANDO

MEMBERS:
LIDIA AND KRIPER (WITH FRIDA AND MACARIA).

HOW THEY OPERATE:
THEY TRAVEL IN A 12-METER BUS, THEIR "BEBOTE" (BIG BABY), WHICH THEY CONVERTED THEMSELVES INTO A MOBILE ART STUDIO. THEIR APPROACH COMBINES NOMADIC LIFE WITH INDEPENDENT WORK IN VISUAL ARTS, TATTOOING, AND TEXTILE DESIGN. THEY MANAGE THE LOGISTICS OF LIVING AND CREATING ON THE ROAD, FUNDING THEIR KILOMETERS THROUGH INDEPENDENT CREATIVE PIECES, INCLUDING THEIR OWN COMIC BOOK. A TRAVELING ARTISTIC VISION NOURISHED DAY BY DAY, KILOMETER BY KILOMETER.

Photography courtesy of VANCREANDO

The starting point: How and when did you actually decide to leave the traditional structure behind and live on the road? What finally made you set off?

Kriper: It started because I have always loved art, and at one point I decided to become a tattoo artist. I brought tattooing to places where there were no tattoo artists, which led me to build a trailer that served as a mobile studio. Since I had nothing to tow it with, I looked at options. First I had a Ford Econoline XL van that used a huge amount of gas and was beyond my means, so I sold it and bought an '89 Nissan Ichivan. We converted it into a camper, cut off the roof, turned it into a home, and started taking occasional trips around Jalisco, to places like Tapalpa, San Juan de los Lagos, and Acatic. We loved the experience so much that one day, as a bus passed, we joked, "Imagine converting a bus." In the end, after a lot of effort, we sold the trailer and the Ichivan. That gave us the budget to buy the bus and start converting it, along with a little money I had saved teaching drawing independently. Lidia had also contributed to our expenses through her work as a fashion designer.

Lidia: That was when we decided to go. Once we bought the bus, we reconsidered everything and said, "We're going to convert it, but this time it's for real." By "for real," I mean we were going to live on the road full-time.

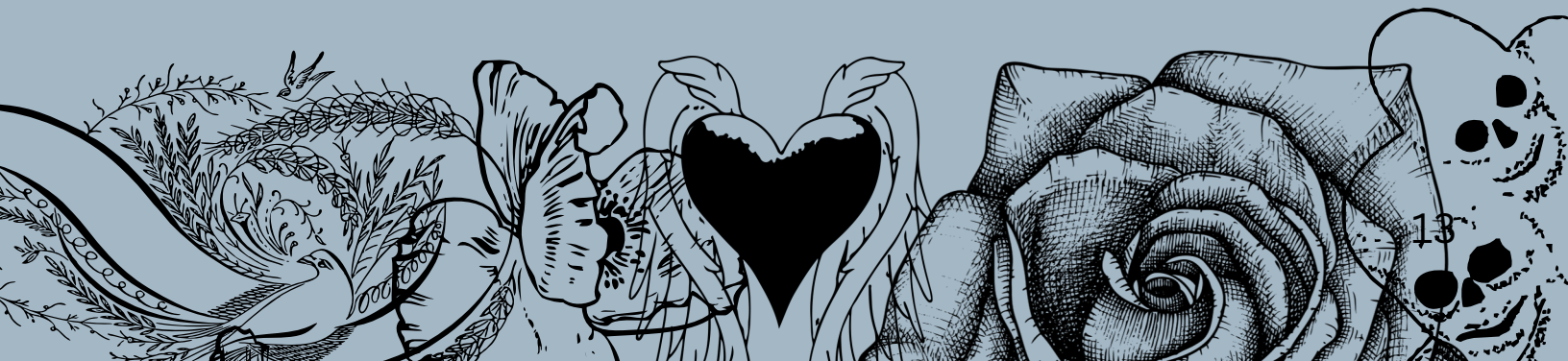
Kriper: Yes. Buying such a large vehicle meant deciding beforehand that we would not be able to store it; we would have to live in it. Lidia and I talked it through as a couple and took the plunge. While the trailer and the Ichivan had been more personal projects of mine, with the bus I told Lidia that, since this was a much bigger project, I needed her to get stuck in and do the hard work. She agreed and became much more involved in the process.



We put a lot of time into it every day, and buying the bus was what led us to leave the daily structure of settled life and begin a nomadic one. It was saying, "There's no turning back." Do you want to add anything to that question?

Lidia: From there I quit my job, and we devoted ourselves completely to the conversion and to spending all our savings.

Kriper: I kept teaching for four or five months, until I finally stopped and decided to put all my time into the bus, working as fast as possible while the rent on the house kept coming due. So we worked from sunrise to sunset converting the bus, and that was the decisive step toward living on the road.



Family: How do your families view your current lifestyle? Did they have any objections when you started traveling?

Lidia: We did not face an objection as such, because we were already living together and were independent of our families, but there were plenty of questions. They would say, "Are you going to do the same thing as with your old van? Will you go away for a month and come back?"
Kriper: Occasional trips. At first, I think they understood it differently, because five or six months in, the questions started: "When are you coming back? When will you visit?"
Lidia: "Where are you going, and until when?"
Kriper: "How long are you going to keep traveling like this?" At first they did not believe we were serious. Maybe they thought we would not manage, or that we would miss our families. Of course we do, but they thought that would break us. Or that we would struggle and suffer, which we have too, but we have been strong. We have endured the hardships of nomadic life, missing people, and being less comfortable. In the end, we were stronger than all that.
Lidia: Than what people told us or said.
Kriper: Yes. Another obstacle, though not from our families, was money. With no steady income, literally leaping into the unknown was an act of faith. We left with a thousand pesos in our pockets.
Lidia: That's right. To make the decision official, we held a farewell gathering and announced we were leaving. The funny thing is, three months after we set off, our families were still asking, "When are you coming back? Come home already!"

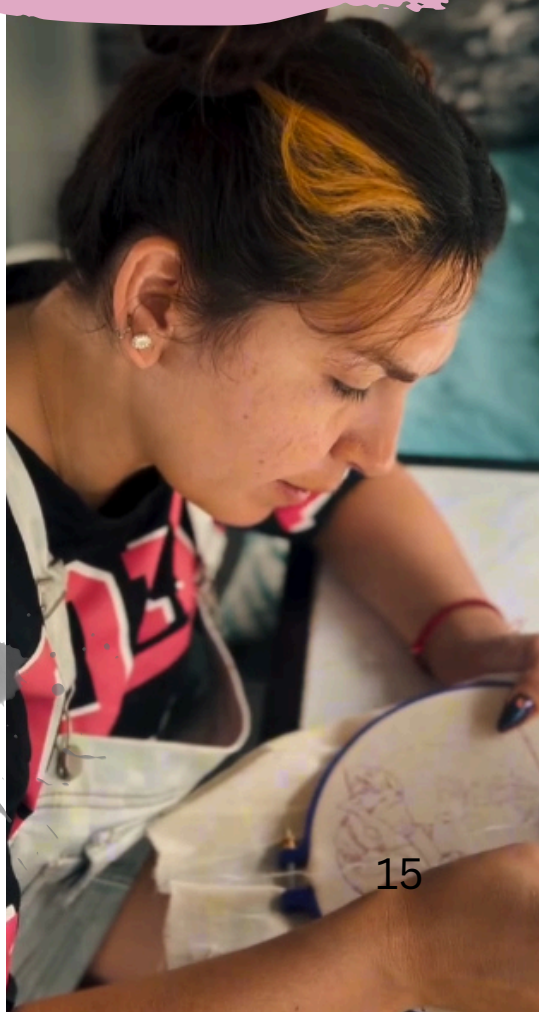


Kriper: Some relatives did not even come to that farewell.
Lidia: Because they thought we would be back soon.
Kriper: They did not see it as important; they thought it was temporary.
Lidia: We also had to miss family commitments like a wedding, a baptism, and a nephew's birth. That was when they finally realized we were very serious.









Vehicle evolution: You already know what changing homes on wheels is like. What pushed you to look for a different platform? Comparing your former vehicle with your current skoolie, what are the clear pros and cons of each?

Kriper: I think what led us to change platforms was that the converted Ichivan was extremely well equipped; for a small vehicle, it had everything. The problem was that it was quite heavy. On its own, that was not such a problem. The trouble came when it towed the trailer, which was like pulling another Ichivan. Alone, the Ichivan got around 6 or 7 kilometers per liter, but towing the trailer it managed between 3.5 and 4. I thought it over and said, "It's using as much fuel as a bus or a semi. I'd rather have something tougher, more durable, robust, and strong." That was how we decided to switch. Fuel consumption would be almost the same, but we would gain a lot of comfort and space.

Lidia: As for the bus's advantages, you can travel more slowly and carry more supplies. More water, more space...

Kriper: We have fully dedicated spaces. It is not a makeshift shower: we have a separate bathroom and shower, a dedicated cooking area, and a household refrigerator. The spaces are used very well.

Lidia: As for the drawbacks, you cannot get into very small towns. Sometimes you cannot drive along certain streets...

Kriper: Yes, that is a major drawback, though honestly, to this day we have never had trouble getting around, and we have crossed many cities, as long as we take the main avenues. Lidia means you cannot enter little streets or very steep ones, like in Mazamitla or San Juan de los Lagos, where streets are almost at a 45-degree angle. That becomes dangerous in such a heavy vehicle.



Another advantage is safety: it is very sturdy. Driving is incredibly stable because of its weight; the wind barely moves it. Another drawback is finding places to park, and you attract more attention. You lose a little privacy because people are more curious, and over time, if you want to be alone, that can work against you.

Lidia: You also cannot get into very narrow natural areas.

Kriper: We have been into forests and onto beaches, but we could not go somewhere a small van could get into, or along a very rough road with tight bends. It limits your size and movement, but I think it limits you less than people imagine.

Large-scale logistics: Driving a 12-meter vehicle through Mexico's Pueblos Mágicos is a major challenge. How do you handle narrow streets, and what is your strategy for avoiding getting trapped in areas designed for compact cars?

Lidia: Whenever we are heading somewhere unfamiliar, especially Pueblos Mágicos with narrow streets, we have a motorcycle with us. It is very useful for scouting before we bring in the bus. Our rule is not to drive straight onto the main streets; for that reason, we always try to stay on the outskirts. Before arriving, we also check the map on Google Maps.

Kriper: Yes, we usually use Street View and work our way through the area. It is also important to check how old the map images are, to get a realistic idea of things. Even so, there have been times when we did not scout beforehand and ventured in. The worst that can happen is having to back up and get off the road, or take another street. Usually, when we do that, we watch two things very closely: first, that no cars are parked on the corners where we need to turn, so we do not hit anything; and second, that we will not hit branches or cables. We pay close attention overhead. Fortunately, to this day we have never had an accident with cables or branches, and I think that is because we watch those details so carefully.

Lidia: Once we entered a Pueblo Mágico with a very narrow street because some police officers guided us in.

Kriper: In Álamos.

Lidia: In Álamos, and also in Nayarit, when we entered La Peñita. When we leave, the police sometimes help by telling us which streets are clearer.

Kriper: And not simply because we cannot get out, but because when they see the vehicle's size, they approach on their own and help. We do not ask; they offer, and that is something we value and appreciate.

Of course it is better when a local tells you the best streets for getting out in a vehicle that size. We have really adapted to its dimensions very well. The only place we could not enter was Mazamitla, because the street was too steep and there was no room to build up momentum for the climb. We also had a mechanical problem: the exhaust manifold was cracked, so the diesel engine's turbo was not working and it lacked its usual power. That time we could not get up and drove on. We had not planned to visit Mazamitla; we tried and could not manage because of that particular street's slope, although there must be less steep ones. In general, you can count on one hand the places we have not dared to drive through because they were too steep or narrow. If you think about it, wherever the Coca-Cola truck or the truck delivering water jugs to grocery stores can go, the bebote (our bus) can go too.



Art and surroundings: Living and working in the same space, what inspires your art today? How much do constant movement and changing landscapes influence your creativity at the canvas?

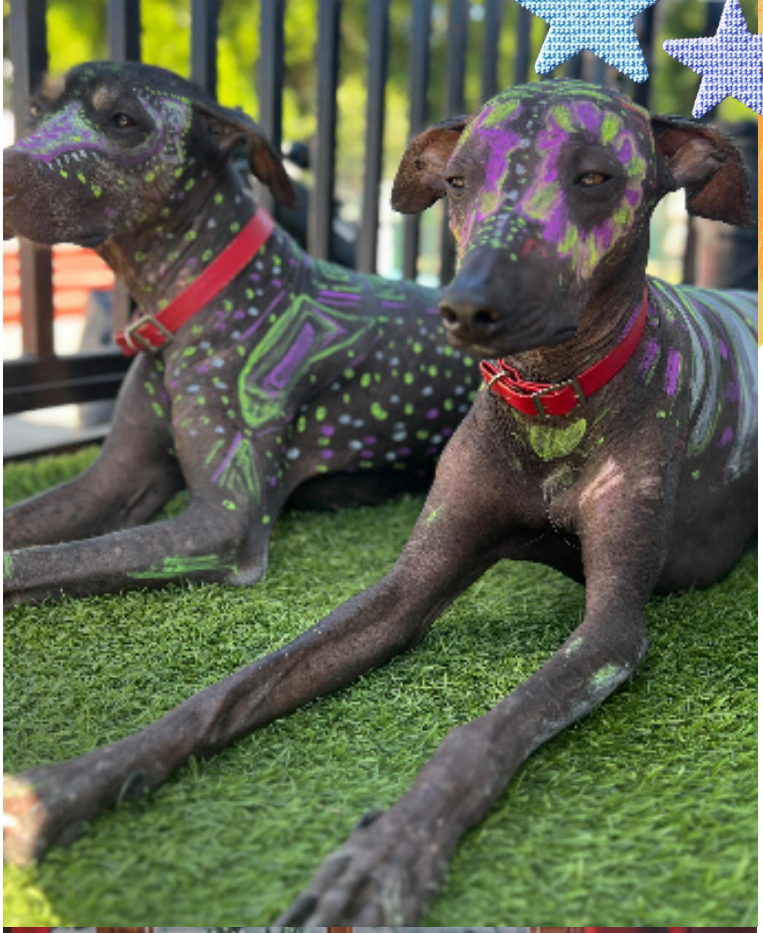
Kriper: These days, our artistic expression does relate to our surroundings. At first we made more personal work, but now I interview urban characters or people I meet on the road and in towns. Something inside tells me I should get to know them. I interview them, if they agree, of course, and afterward I make a portrait at home, usually in oils. I present the interview intercut with the process of painting the portrait. That is my way of bringing art to the viewer. I do not like the idea of being just a travel channel; there are so many, and I think it is important to express our essence and what sets us apart from a generic channel: art, and the way we make it. Lidia, meanwhile, is a fashion designer, and as she has evolved on the road, she has adapted design into textile art. Using thread, she builds images of animals, faces, plants, or whatever she sees on the adventure. We then sell them at our sales table.

Lidia: And it really is fundamental to our project, because we started out tattooing. Now we have evolved into textile art and digital art. It is not only art in physical form...

Kriper: But also video editing, which is a visual and digital art. It is another artistic branch.

Lidia: That's right. We do not just travel; we enjoy visiting cultural places and learning about the culture of the country we visit. I think that is fundamental to our inspiration.

Kriper: For now, states rather than countries, because we are only traveling through Mexico. But yes, we are mainly inspired by the states, their Indigenous peoples, cultures, customs, food, and history, among other things.







Kriper: Yes, that would be nice, and it is possible, but nothing is really organized yet. While we are on the subject, I think that is also part of our travel project. At least I am speaking for myself; I do not know if you feel the same way, Lidia. At the beginning of this journey, what I wanted was more time. Time to be in places I did not know, to create art. Initially, I never imagined becoming a content creator, although I now consider myself one and really enjoy it. At first, though, the project was more about seeking solitude in a vehicle in nature, or somewhere unfamiliar, so I could paint, draw, or even make music. That last part is something I have not shared much, but I love singing and musical instruments. Part of the journey was getting away so I could have time, above all: the wealth of having time for artistic expression. The journey has changed a little, and maybe that is why we do not picture going abroad so much. I think it is something I can find here, while traveling to another country currently requires a little more stress and planning, which would take time away from making art or being creative. Would you like to add anything?

Future routes: So far you have documented your country in depth, but are you considering trips across borders into other countries in the short or medium term?

Lidia: Right now we are focused entirely on Mexico, because we want to get to know it and gain a little experience traveling and living on the road. We do not like planning too far ahead because we enjoy living in the moment, you know? So it is not something we have in mind. Of course we would love to visit other countries, but we have not actually planned it yet, right?



Contrasts on the road: Traveling in such an eye-catching bus often gives people the impression that you are foreign tourists. As Mexicans, what happens at road checks or checkpoints, and does the treatment change when people see you are local?

Kriper: Well, when most people see us parked, they tend to think we are from somewhere else. They ask whether we are French, American, Spanish, or Argentine. I take it as a joke. If they ask whether I am French, I answer with a French accent; if they say I am Spanish, I imitate a Spanish accent. I tease them for a while, then explain we are Mexican. That happens when we are parked. At checkpoints, speaking respectfully has worked very well for me. They immediately realize I am Mexican from the way I speak. The interaction usually involves routine questions, normal for any checkpoint. With nothing to hide, there is nothing to fear, and everything goes well. So far, we have had no bad checkpoint experiences.

Lidia: Yes, some checkpoints have felt tougher, others more relaxed. At some, they have scanned us and searched very thoroughly. But we have not been mistreated or pressured for a bribe. Honestly, our experience with checkpoint authorities has been good.

Kriper: Maybe we have not noticed them thinking we are foreign because I usually approach and start talking to the officers first. I do not give them time to wonder about my nationality. Besides, I suppose the Jalisco plates make them assume we are local. With U.S. or Canadian plates, they might be confused, but with Mexican plates they automatically assume we are Mexican.

The pack adapts: Macaria and Frida are essential members of the team. Were they always traveling dogs, or did they need time to get used to the bus's noise and movement? How did you manage that adjustment?

Lidia: At first, only Frida traveled with us. From when she was little, we took her on the motorcycle and in the car, so she...

Kriper: In the Ichivan, right?

Lidia: In the Ichivan, yes. She adapted very well. She has always liked going into nature; she is a real hunter, very active and adventurous. We had Macaria, Frida's daughter, before converting the bus. After she was born, she did need a little adjustment because she was frightened when we first took her in the bus or the Ichivan. Traveling scared her; she vomited and got carsick, like a baby. I have not had babies, but that is how I feel she adapted. Watching her mother helped a lot too. That has made training, routines, and hygiene much easier, because she imitates everything Frida does. If Frida does not go to the bathroom indoors, she sees that and adapts quickly. She was just a little afraid of the engine when we got into the bus. I can tell you that on the first three trips, starting the engine terrified her because she was bewildered. But now they enjoy the road more than anyone. They sit in front of us in the bus, where the door is...

Kriper: Next to the engine.





"We do not want to be the channel that just reacts to the town square, the sea, or the forest. We want to branch out, explore, and create."

Lidia: And they like looking outside. Sometimes they go to the back, sit down, and love watching the scenery. I feel they have adapted very well to the road. As for climates, they have experienced cold and heat. They struggle a little more in hot weather because their body temperature is very high, so the heat does bother them. That is also why we try not to go anywhere the climate would be bad for them.

Kriper: In cold weather, we dress them. Lidia has made them sweaters, T-shirts, everything. We dress them for the weather and put on their little outfits. In short, Frida has always adapted perfectly to the bus and the Ichivan. Maca found it a little harder, but she adapted in the end. They have not been troublesome dogs; they are brave little fighters. If we go hiking, they come along and climb. If there is a hill to climb, they climb it. If we go to a waterfall, they go to the waterfall. Frida swims in the sea. They have adapted very well. Another really cool thing I love about them is that fireworks do not scare them. If we are in a town and fireworks are going off for a celebration, Frida is not afraid. I think that is wonderful because we do not have to deal with a frightened dog cowering in a corner.







"We do not just travel; We enjoy visiting cultural places and learning about the country's culture."

Lidia: That's right. Another thing we find lovely is that they see the bus as their safe place. We can leave them there when we run an errand and they adapt incredibly well. The bus is set up to keep them comfortable temperature-wise. That is a blessing, because there are places we cannot take them, and they see the bus as home.

Kriper: And they protect it as such. Nobody can come near when we are away because they go crazy.

Lidia: Yes, they are very protective. That is an advantage, because when you live on the road, they are also part of the bus's security.

Kriper: Between the cameras and the barking, the bus is always safe.

Lidia: Yes.

"Right now We are focused entirely on Mexico, because We want to explore and gain experience."

The impact of your work: How do the people you meet in towns respond to your art? Do you notice a difference between how your work is valued in person and on social media?

Lidia: Yes, there are definitely many contrasts. For example, Kriper has very personal work that is very dark, and in some places people find it unsettling. But he also has his newer art, which is more commercial.

Kriper: And mainly more closely tied to our travel experience. Perhaps that also makes it more commercial. I am not trying to make commercial art; for me, art is my expression. Whether it is more or less commercial depends very much on the eyes looking at it. But we have definitely been surprised when, somewhere, by chance and perhaps with some hesitation, I put out one of my dark pieces thinking, "Nobody will look at this," and it sells.

Lidia: Yes, we have been surprised by people who really value it, and by places where people do not even want to look at it or do not like it. But they prefer to support us by buying something specifically from the channel. For example, when he does interviews, people know whom he interviewed, and some have wanted to buy the portraits he made. Since they are also experiencing it through the channel, that is what we want: for people to share the Van Creando experience and, through sharing or buying the art, feel part of the project. That makes a piece like that appealing.

Kriper: Yes, especially things like the comic, which tells the story of the bus conversion, or the stickers, which are drawings or paintings of mine adapted to that format. There are also Lidia's textile-art keychains and embroidery. We have lots of little art-related things, and we also sell channel merchandise: T-shirts, mugs, keychains, and stickers.

Lidia: Plus other things, like bracelets and earrings. We keep adding to the sales table. People have also brought us materials or bracelets they make themselves to help us on our journey. That contribution helps a lot and is very much appreciated.

Kriper: But mainly, art is interpreted as such: according to the viewer, their culture, and where they are in life. As for the paintings of the people in our videos, it is rare for someone to ask for them. People see and recognize them, but I think they ultimately become a distinctive element of Van Creando at our sales table. People look and say, "Oh, that's the man you interviewed in Tecate," "Look, that's the man from La Rumorosa," or "That's the man from Caborca," and they remember. Ultimately, I do not make my art with sales in mind. I think more about creating an experience through video. I want to foster that connection and a renewed appreciation of human beings: to see people living on the street differently, as a work of art, with the same value every human being has and deserves.





Studio techniques: With half the bus devoted to creating, which specific visual-art techniques do you use in your daily work?

Kriper: The main techniques are digital content creation, textile art, embroidery, macramé, oil painting, graphite drawing, and sometimes watercolor or India ink. But my main favorites are graphite drawing and oil painting. The studio's number-one purpose is video editing. That is where Lidia and I end up spending many hours. Lidia has more flexibility because she handles social media and works on her phone, so she can move to the back of the house, onto the bed, the roof, or the balcony. I work on a laptop whose screen is not very bright, so I cannot work outside. I end up spending more time in one spot, at a table or workstation, though we have two or three so I can change positions.

I think our second most frequent activity is textile art. Lidia makes more textile art than the time I spend drawing or painting in oils. I end up putting a lot of time into editing so the videos come out on schedule, leaving little time for painting and drawing. When I can do it and have the time, space, subject, or inspiration, I do it with enormous pleasure and all my energy. I put on music; it is my personal space, and I really enjoy looking at the landscape through the window or watching everyday life unfold outside. So, in order, our activities are editing, textile art, and painting or drawing.

Lidia: It also used to be the tattoo studio, which was what we used it for most. It was entirely devoted to that.

Kriper: We are talking about six or seven months ago and earlier.

Lidia: Six months, yes, since we stopped. But that space was completely dedicated to tattooing.



"I want to create that connection and renewed appreciation of people; to see those living on the street differently, as a work of art, with the same value every human being has and deserves".

The future: How do you see Van Creando's future? What projects are still on the drawing board?

Kriper: We want to grow. We do not see ourselves as a channel that is only about travel. We do not want to be the channel that simply reacts to the town square, the sea, or the forest. We want to branch out, explore, and create. Perhaps explore artistic expression in other fields. Music really interests me; although I have not actually made anything yet, I already have a few things in the works. Maybe expand into sculpture, or make content that is not just about traveling. That is why our name is Van Creando. Otherwise, we would simply be "Van Viajando" (Traveling Along). We spent weeks going back and forth over many options before choosing Van Creando (Creating Along the Way), because we feel it gives us a broad niche that is truly ours.
Lidia: And because we do not want to limit ourselves to one option.
Kriper: Exactly. It comes from human curiosity itself. We are brave in allowing ourselves to step outside our own mold and explore new possibilities.
Lidia: In travel, art, and our personal lives. That is how we see Van Creando in the future: evolved. We do not see it staying as it began; we never would, because we want it to become something else. We cannot tell you exactly what that will look like, but we are very clear that we want the project to explore even further than what we have already started doing.
Kriper: We like to picture our project right now as a seed that has just germinated, sprouting a little branch with a leaf and a small root. It has soil, a leaf for... I have forgotten the word. What is it called?
Lidia: Fruit?
Kriper: For photosynthesis, and it already has a root to anchor it in the ground. In other words, it has everything it needs to start growing. If everything flows and goes well, that little seed will begin to branch out, evolve, bear fruit and flowers, and attract whatever it needs to attract.
Lidia: That is how we see the future of our...
Kriper: Of our project.




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THE WAY (2010)

Film Details:

- *Director: Emilio Estevez*
- *Runtime: 123 min*
- *Genre: Drama, Adventure*

Starring: Martin Sheen, Emilio Estevez.

An ophthalmologist travels to France to retrieve the ashes of his son, who died in the Pyrenees, and decides to complete the Camino de Santiago in his place, finding a community of travelers along the way.



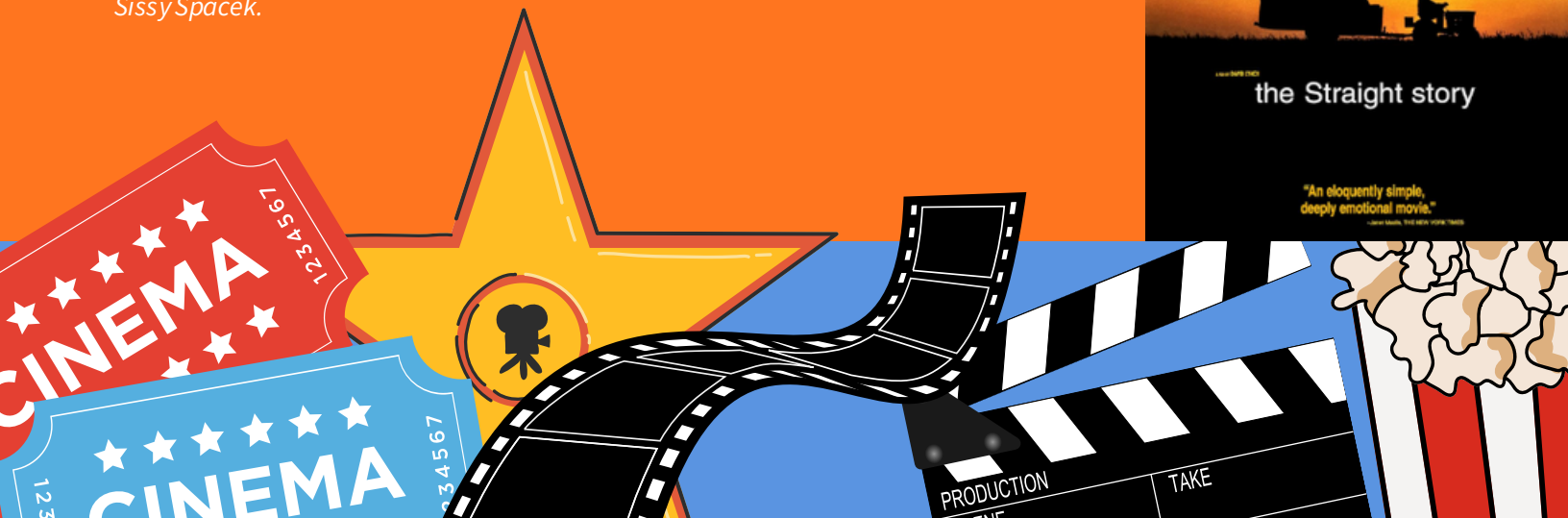
THE STRAIGHT STORY (1999)

Film Details:

- *Director: David Lynch*
- *Runtime: 112 min*
- *Genre: Biography, Drama*
- *Starring: Richard Farnsworth, Sissy Spacek.*

Based on a true story. An elderly man without a driver's license travels nearly 400 kilometers across two states on a riding lawn mower to visit his ailing brother.






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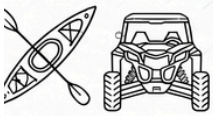
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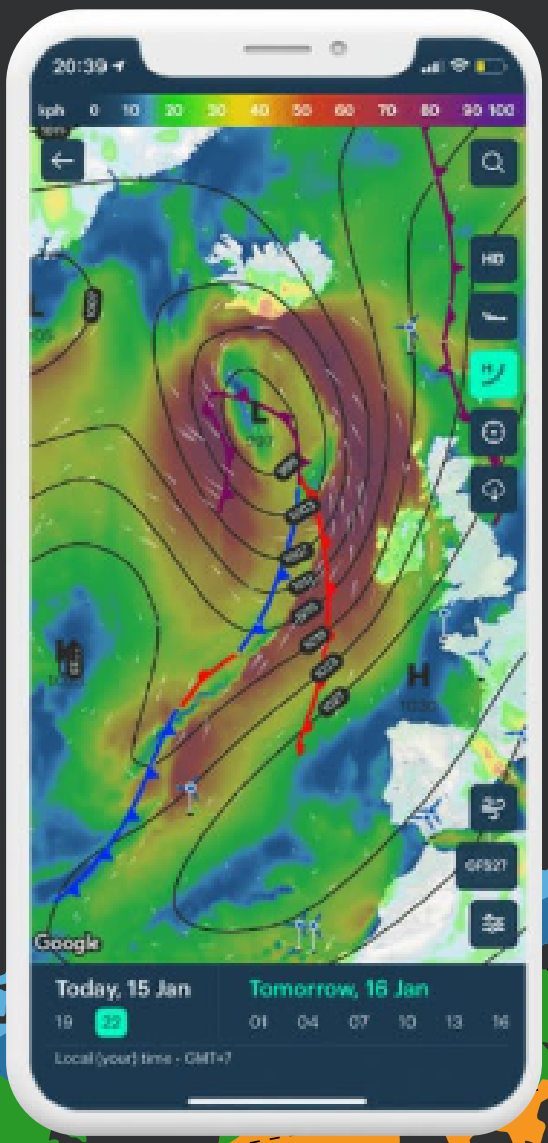
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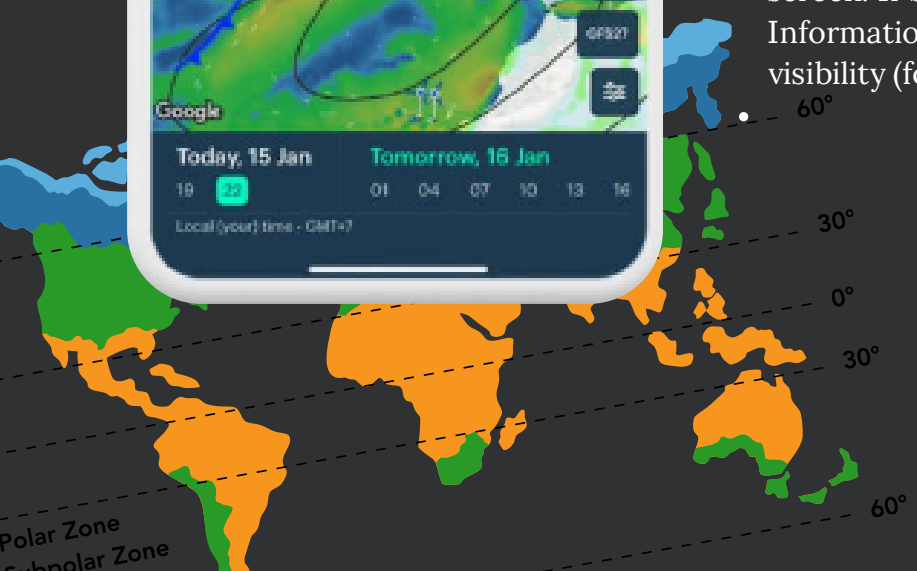






Windy is not your typical weather app telling you whether it will be sunny or rainy. It is a technical meteorological tool and, for independent travelers, an essential survival radar.
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- High-mountain decisions: Above 4,000 meters or when crossing mountain passes, weather changes quickly. Windy lets you see snow accumulation, thunderstorm risk, and sharp temperature drops hour by hour.
  Comparing models: It does not rely on a single forecast.
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  Information layers: You can overlay rain radar, humidity, visibility (fog), and extreme gust layers.



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PETRAPERA

Amparo and Sebastián left Chile with one goal in sight: reaching Alaska. The project began in 2020, and the journey continues. They are currently in Guatemala, pushing north to plant the Chilean flag in Alaska, accumulating kilometers, lived experiences, and knowledge in the field.

Photography courtesy of PETRAPERA

from Chile to Alaska

How and why did the idea of living on the road really begin? Beyond the logistics, what did you feel inside the cab during those first kilometers out of Chile, knowing you were leaving a settled life behind?

Sebastián: I think we have both always loved traveling. In fact, before we met, we each traveled separately. I took several solo trips, and Amparo also traveled with friends. We always had that in common. Later, when we were dating, we took a fairly long backpacking trip.
Amparo: Actually, we had barely been dating a month when we went traveling. We took a bus from Santiago to Asunción, Paraguay. Then we went to Brazil, Uruguay, and ended up in Argentina. When we returned to Chile, we had only been together two or three months.
Sebastián: It was quite a trip. Imagine the time we had. We always liked traveling, and I think once the travel bug bites, it never leaves you. As for what we felt in the cab, just imagine.
Amparo: We felt tremendous pride at having made the plan happen, because it took us a while to leave. We had several setbacks that we can talk about in other answers, but it was an enormous relief. We felt so much satisfaction, immense happiness, and, at the same time, uncertainty about what lay ahead.
Sebastián: Yes, a lot of uncertainty about what was coming.



When you brought up the idea of traveling through the Americas in a van, how did your close family react and view the plan? In those early planning days, how long did you expect the trip to last?



Sebastián: At first, we were going to make this same trip, but backpacking. We had actually bought tickets from Santiago to Santa Marta, Colombia. From there, we planned to travel through part of South America, cross into Central America, and continue north. We had some problems at work and had to cancel the trip. We were about a month from leaving, right, Amparito?

Amparo: Yes, a month. We had to cancel because of those problems, and the trip kept getting postponed. Around then, I remember watching YouTube videos of travelers doing it, and I told Seba, "Hey, going by car is a pretty good idea too." It also happened that Cristian Riquelme was a client of the pet hotel we owned. He arrived at the hotel in Dora, the vehicle they had driven from Alaska to Patagonia. We were blown away. We talked with him; he was incredibly friendly and told us about his experience. That gave us the final push to start looking for a vehicle and make the project happen.

Sebastián: Yes. We searched everywhere for vans, and eventually this one came up. We bought it quite cheaply at an auction. That was the moment it hit us: this was where the journey began.

Amparo: Right. When we bought it, we looked at each other and said, "That's it. We're going."

Sebastián: Exactly. As for our families' reactions, mine were good. My parents love traveling, so they thought it was a tremendous experience and always supported us. My mom was a little more nervous.

Amparo: Both our mothers were always a little more worried. Mine did not believe it until the end, because we were always saying we were leaving. I could tell she was very nervous right up until we set off. In fact, I felt she was still worried about the trip, and when I visited her in Chile, we had a talk. I told her we were happy, that there was another way to live, and that she could relax. I explained that perhaps this would not last forever, but we only have one life and have to enjoy it.

Sebastián: And the last part: how long did we expect the trip to last? At first we said one to two years at most. It has already been four, and we are now in Guatemala, so there is still more road ahead.



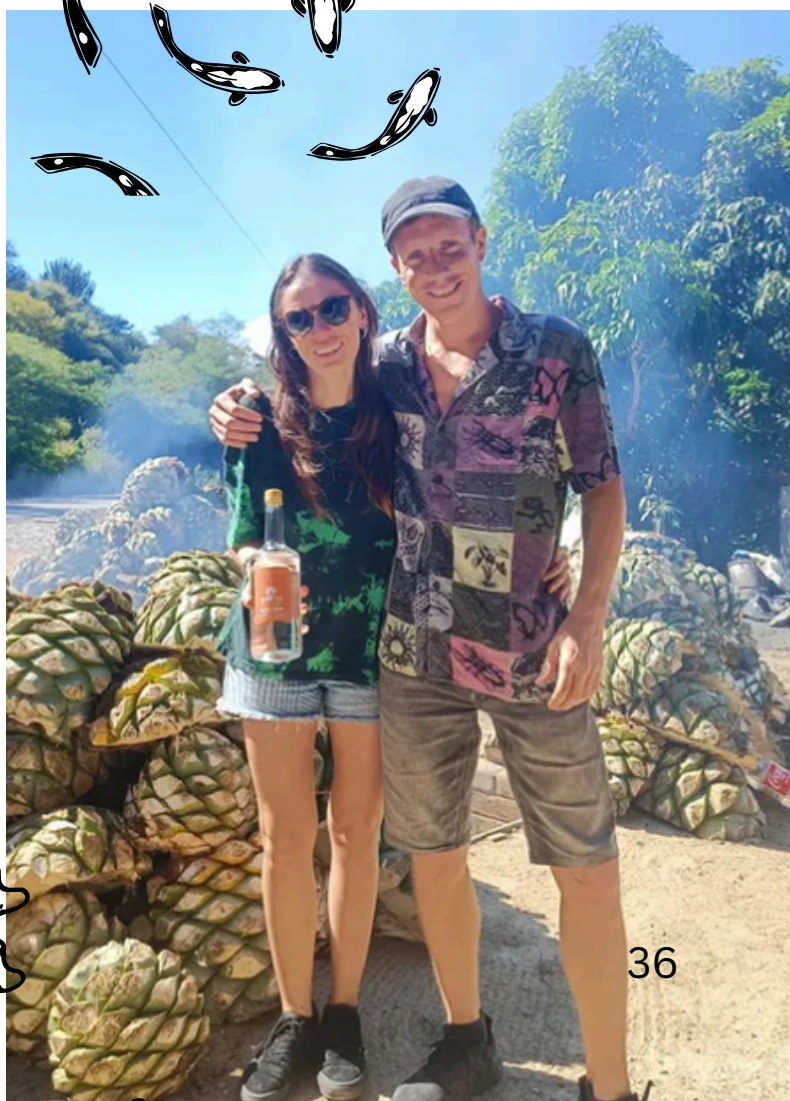
You have spent a long time crossing borders to reach Central America and Belize. Along the way, what has been the strongest, rawest, or most difficult cultural shock to absorb?

Amparo: That is difficult, because there have been several cultural shocks. When you leave Chile, you realize every country has different things that surprise you. More than a cultural shock, we had a reality check entering Venezuela. Before we went in, many people said, “How can you go there? There’s so much violence; the country is destroyed and has no supplies.” But we discovered a completely different reality. It is not quite how they...
Sebastián: How the media portray it, right.
Amparo: They exaggerate a lot. They fill you with fear, and I think that is why people live so frightened. When we entered, you could obviously see the effects of a major crisis, but there was no violence. The supermarkets were all stocked, and the people are beautiful. It was one of our favorite countries of the trip.

Sebastián: Yes. Besides, the borders had been closed for a long time, so when people saw a traveler, they went crazy; they were so friendly. That happened in plenty of other countries, like Honduras, where people scared us about the maras (gangs), or Colombia. In the end, we arrived and had tremendous experiences. You see cultural differences every day. First come the words: we all speak Spanish, but it is amazing how one word can mean one thing in one country and something entirely different in another.
Amparo: The thing that has blown both our minds is motorcycles. The number of motorcycles from Peru northward is incredible. Whoever gets through, gets through. There is no law.
Sebastián: The law of the jungle.
Amparo: In many countries, people ride without helmets, whole families with tiny babies on one motorcycle. That has really caught our attention too.

Amparo: The police too; sometimes we have even seen them without helmets.
Sebastián: What else? Food. We miss Chilean food so much. From Ecuador northward, there is a lot of rice, beans, tajadas (fried plantains), and protein, and not much variation beyond that.
Amparo: Obviously there is everything, but that is the staple, the most common meal.
Sebastián: Rice and beans. You miss those things from Chile a lot.
Amparo: Bribes are strange too. They exist in Chile, but you see them less often. In other countries, it is common for the police to ask for help buying a soft drink.
Sebastián: In Chile it is not so explicit. Of course there is corruption there, but here it is on a bigger scale.
Amparo: At borders or customs, they sometimes get difficult, and you already know where things are heading.
Sebastián: Where things are heading, exactly. Yes. Many things change, even people's physical appearance. There is a strong Afro-descendant culture in Ecuador, Colombia, and Central America. In Belize it is amazing. They were British colonies until the eighties, and the population is mostly dark-skinned and Indigenous. It was beautiful to see. So far, it was the only country where English is spoken.
Amparo: English and Creole, yes. Another thing was that there were no major supermarket chains; they were all Chinese-owned.
Sebastián: Chinese-owned or tiny shops, minimarkets. There was no Burger King, McDonald's, or any of those chains.
Amparo: We experienced that a little in Bolivia too. And something worth highlighting: respect for Indigenous people. In Chile we have lost some of that, but in countries like Guatemala, Mexico, Bolivia, and Peru, we found large Indigenous populations who are deeply respected. It is beautiful to realize that.
Sebastián: It makes us sad that this is being lost in Chile.
Amparo: Yes. So, that is it.





Overlanding exposes you to realities absent from tourist postcards. What has been the greatest lesson, or the most significant human insight, you have gained through direct contact with other cultures across the continent?

Sebastián: I think you learn new things every day. When we left, we were rookies, so to speak, and now we are much more seasoned after all these years on the road. As the question says, overlanding exposes you to realities you do not see in tourist postcards, which is completely true. Living out on the road makes you vulnerable and exposes you to many things. Ultimately, it is a continual learning process, dealing with situations that are not always comfortable, but that is the beauty of the adventure and the experience.

Amparo: This journey has also been very...

Sebastián: Humanitarian?

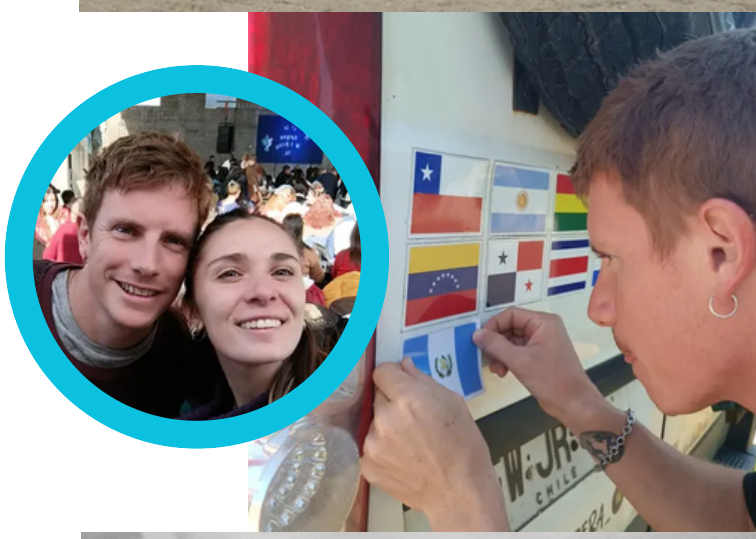
Amparo: Humanitarian, yes. You always have to stay humble and travel without prejudice. Something that has really struck us is people's willingness to help. Although it is harder nowadays because we know people carry too much, whether at work or at home, there is always someone willing to lend a hand. It is beautiful to realize that. And I mean across the whole continent, in every country and culture.

Sebastián: Completely agree. Selling crafts keeps us in constant contact with people. That has opened so many doors and has been very rewarding.

Amparo: It is positive for people to see you living a simpler life. I think it helps them appreciate things and realize you do not need so much to live peacefully.

Sebastián: Exactly. It is about learning not to judge, and not assuming you know everything.









Living in a tiny space with constant uncertainty is tiring. Has so much time on the road taken a physical or mental toll? How do you handle feeling overwhelmed so you do not throw in the towel?

Amparo: The wear and tear of traveling has caught up with us more than once.
Sebastián: It is not all sunshine and roses.
Amparo: Especially when we have vehicle problems and need spare parts. Traveling in a European vehicle has not made that easy.
Sebastián: Besides, parts are sometimes incredibly expensive. Finding them is a challenge, and sometimes they charge an arm and a leg.
Amparo: Right, and you also have to arrange shipping. There is a physical toll because you manage everything yourself, like hauling water and gas. In a normal house, you are used to turning on a faucet and getting water, but here you are always refilling containers, and that gets tiring.
Sebastián: That's right. Right now, for example, we are in Guatemala and had a leak. Water got into the floor, everything rotted, and the roof was leaking too. We are practically doing the camper conversion again. Obviously, it has been emotionally, physically, and financially exhausting, but these things test you and are part of learning on the road. Another difficult thing, of course, is living together. Living in such a small space is a huge challenge. If you have a little argument, you cannot just go to a bar with your girlfriends to clear your head, or to the room next door.
Sebastián: Here, all you can do is go cry in the passenger seat. But it has also taught us to solve problems faster and set our pride aside.
Amparo: And because we are a couple and a team, whenever one of us is down, the other becomes a pillar and lifts them up. We get nowhere if we are both miserable. Sometimes I see Seba upset or worried and always try to stay positive to cheer him up, and vice versa.
Sebastián: Exactly. You have to be a good team and complement each other.
Amparo: The journey itself has also taught us to react better. At first, things happened and perhaps we reacted badly. Now, when we have a vehicle problem or any other situation, we see it more positively because, in the end, everything has a solution.
Sebastián: Yes, we have matured a lot in that respect.








Keeping the tanks full means earning an income. What hidden talents, such as the crafts you show on social media, have you had to develop or discover along the way to keep the project financially afloat?

Sebastián: Well, you definitely have to do things to put food on the table. Lots of people ask, "How do you do it? Are you millionaires?" Many wonder about that, but in our case, at least, we still work. We had a pet hotel in Chile for about eight years. I had a partner there who handled the boarding side, while I continued doing smaller jobs managing the website and an online store. Amparo handled social media.

Amparo: At the same time, we made pizzas. In Bolivia we bought an oven and started selling pizzas on the street.

Sebastián: Yes, that was the first two years. I have since left that job back home.

Amparo: The pizza phase was really lovely because every time we cooked, we had to go to markets to buy ingredients. There we spent time with the cholitas (Indigenous Bolivian women) and had those cultural encounters too. Sometimes we could not find mozzarella and asked them, please, for a cheese that would at least melt.

Sebastián: Buying Chaco cheese.

Amparo: That was fun too. Then, in Colombia, we took the plunge into crafts.

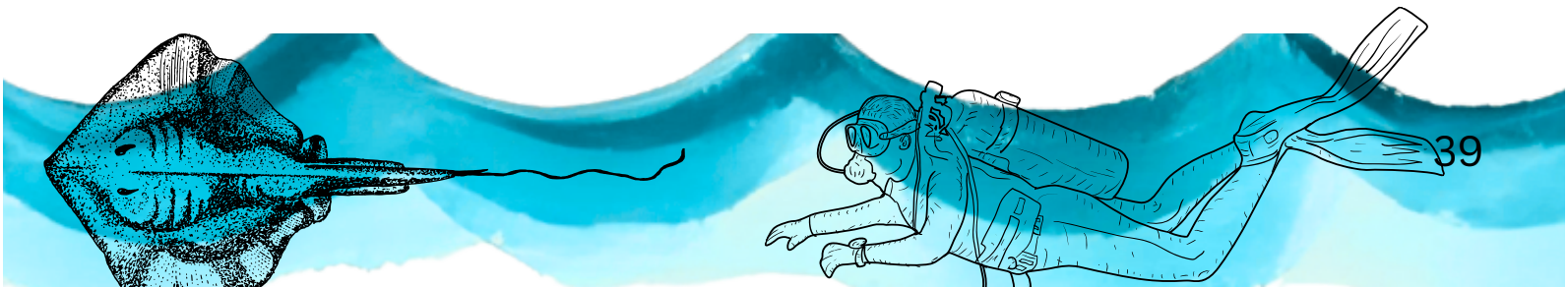
Sebastián: Yes, we stepped back from pizzas for several reasons. One was the heat. To let the dough rise, we had to cook with everything closed inside Petra (our vehicle), and the heat was hellish. Besides, when we crossed into Colombia, food was incredibly cheap.

Amparo: Yes, we could not compete with those stuffed potatoes.

Sebastián: Very cheap. That was when we started choosing crafts instead. Another thing with pizzas is that sometimes, if you do not sell them, you are screwed; you have to give them away or eat them. Crafts are different. If you do not sell something, you put it away and sell it the next day. But we started from zero with crafts; we could not even make a bracelet. The other day we were looking at pictures of our first display cloth and first table, and it was a joke; we made nothing. We began by reselling a few things, and today I would say we make 95% of the products ourselves. We only have a couple of items left from that first purchase.

Amparo: But it is good, and amazing how you find ways to earn money. If tomorrow I had to start something from scratch, I would not be nearly as scared as before.

Sebastián: Exactly. That is when you start realizing you have hidden talents you never knew about. We both always enjoyed making things, but now we have taken it to another level. We make our entire living from this now, and it is beautiful and gratifying.



The road forces you to solve everyday problems with whatever you have on hand. What technical skills or forms of resilience have you discovered in yourselves that you would never have noticed in a traditional routine?

Sebastián: Breaking the traditional mold. Let's see, problems on the road that we have had to solve ourselves?
Amparo: So many. Especially mechanical ones; when we left, we did not know much.
Sebastián: Next to nothing.
Amparo: My dad taught me basic checks, like checking oil and fluids, but not much beyond that. You learn as things happen, by taking an interest. Many people want their car fixed, leave it at the shop, and walk away. Whenever we have Petra repaired, we stay and ask about everything. Honestly, it is the only way to learn.
Sebastián: Yes. Every time we go to a mechanic, Amparito is right there...
Amparo: Well, I love it too.
Sebastián: She drives the mechanics crazy, standing there asking them everything! But it is great.
Amparo: Always respectfully, because some people do not like it much.
Sebastián: Yes, but Amparito takes after her father that way; the apple does not fall far from the tree. He is a real car enthusiast.
Sebastián: Sometimes the road demands it too. Often you are nowhere near mechanics or auto electricians. Suddenly you are on a beach in the middle of nowhere and have to solve things yourself. That has been a challenge too. Another good thing we did was build Petra ourselves. That helped enormously with knowing where every wire went and understanding the batteries. We had never installed a solar panel, controller, or fuses in our lives. All of that helped a lot. Building it was a huge learning experience; we learned to weld and so much more.
Amparo: And things happen every day, so life teaches you to become more of a jack-of-all-trades, as we would say.
Sebastián: Absolutely.



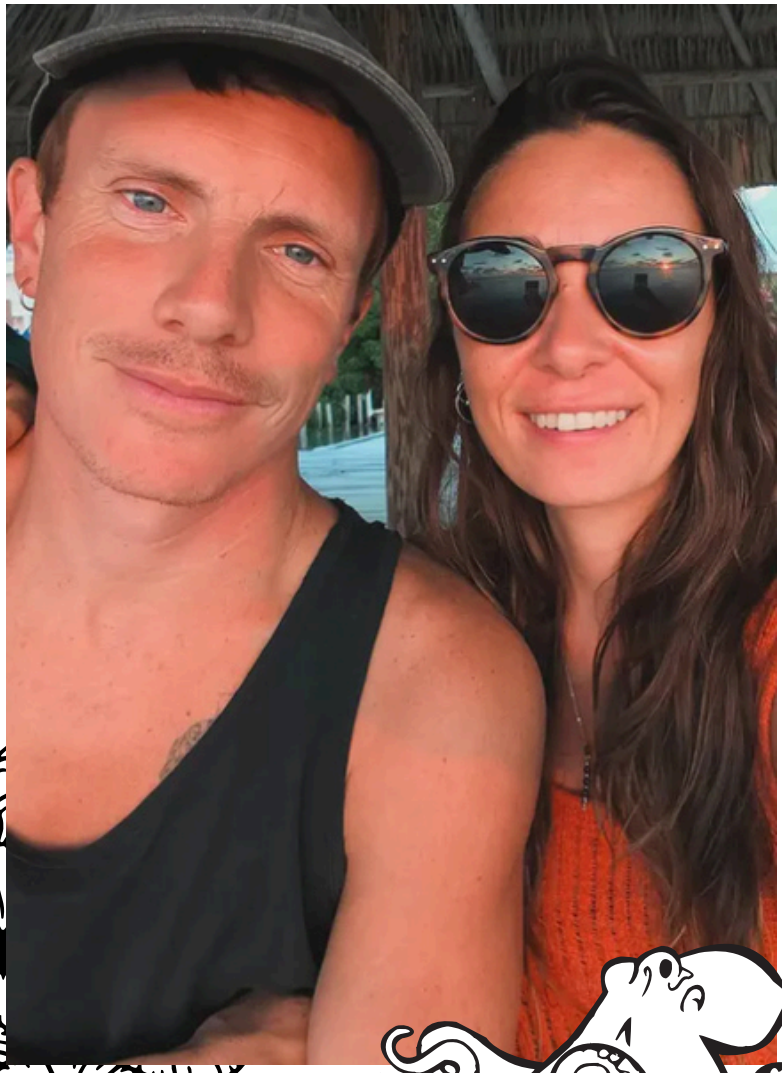


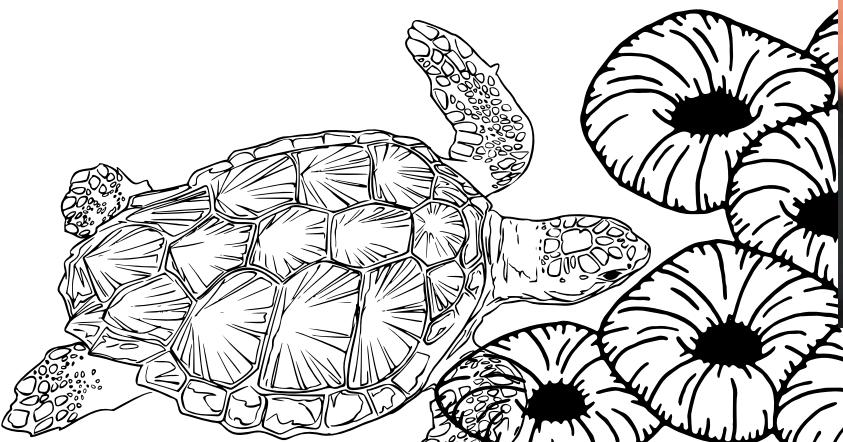




People say a diving course marks a before and after. How did that immersive experience enrich you, and exactly how did it change or broaden your view of nature during the rest of your journey?

Sebastián: I am glad you asked about diving, because it truly has been one of our most beautiful and enriching experiences. We left Chile with practically two dives under our belts; we knew very little about it. Then, in Ecuador, we began our first encounters with that world, and it blew our minds. It was love at first sight, just snorkeling.
Amparo: Absolutely.
Sebastián: We kept snorkeling...
Amparo: Throughout the journey.
Sebastián: Until we reached Utila, an island off Honduras. There we had the chance to take our first diving course, Open Water, and became certified divers.
Amparo: Yes, and then in Mexico.
Sebastián: In Mexico we met a Chilean who is now a friend. He is an instructor, lives in Mahahual in the Caribbean, and showed us the world's second-largest barrier reef, about 1,000 kilometers long, beginning in Mexico and ending in Honduras. Then we entered Belize, it happened to be my birthday, Amparito wanted to give me a gift, and we went to a dive center...
Amparo: We ended up talking to the owners. We arranged an exchange of crafts and social-media material, which let us take three diving courses. Today we are certified Divemasters, so we can work in diving.
Sebastián: It is great because it is the first professional course. If we want to work in diving on the road, it is useful as a second option.
Amparo: This is personal: a while ago we lost a pregnancy, and it was very hard, both being far from family and because of the situation itself. I do not want to go into details, but the sea was definitely a bandage for the heart, because if I had been pregnant, I could not have done it. What you feel down there is incredible: total disconnection and pure learning. The variety of animal species is astonishing. It teaches us to appreciate so much; the ocean is incredibly important to our lives. It produces more than half the oxygen we breathe and regulates the climate, so it is very precious.
Sebastián: Corals too. Without corals, the planet practically could not survive, so we have to respect and protect them.





Alaska is the ultimate goal for most people heading north through the continent. Once you reach that geographic milestone, what comes next for Petrapera? Do you see returning to a settled or traditional life as possible or desirable?

Sebastián: The day after the Holy Grail. Good question, Maca. I do not think even I can answer that. But first we need to finish this project, which has taken many years, and reach Alaska. Then we will see.
Amparo: Yes, one step at a time.
Sebastián: One step at a time, as Amparo says. There are lots of projects. We could change continents and keep traveling this way, or perhaps change how we travel in terms of the vehicle. Maybe leave the camper behind and go by motorcycle or bicycle; we have thought about it. You never know.
Amparo: Maybe return to Chile too. You never know.
Sebastián: Exactly. But I think the most likely option is that, after Alaska, we want to settle down a little. Move less, because it is exhausting and wears you down. Perhaps we will stay and live somewhere in Canada or the United States; that is very possible.
Amparo: Yes, although first our visas have to come through.
Sebastián: Right. The idea is to polish our English a little, then we will see. Really, anything could happen.
Amparo: And if someday we return to Chile...
Sebastián: ...which we would love to do, further down the line. I was born in Santiago. Amparo was born in Curicó but grew up in Santiago, and I do not think we would live there.
Amparo: Right. We would not go back to Santiago.
Sebastián: I do not think so. Maybe we would go to southern Chile; I do not know.
Amparo: As for returning to a settled or traditional life, it is hard. I think it is one of the hardest things for travelers. Imagine going back to an ordinary working life after four years of living like this. It would be very complicated. But we will see.
Sebastián: We will see as we go. We are not closed off either; we are open to every possibility, to whatever might happen.









Finally, what is the funniest story you remember? You can share more than one.

Amparo: Oh, this is a good one. The bonus track, an extra story. There are several, but one we remember is the time I left Seba locked inside the van's bathroom, accidentally, of course. We were in Ecuador, selling pizzas and empanadas. Seba always went out selling on the beach with the tray. That day he had complained, "Hey, you never go out." So I said, "You know what? While you take a shower, I'll go sell the empanadas, sell everything, and come back." I left very happily. Luckily, I sold everything, and when I came back I ran into the traveler friends we were staying with at the beach. They gave me this look, and I said, "Shit, what happened?" They said, "You locked Seba in. Who knows how long he's been there."

Sebastián: Right. I was showering, and Amparito has a bad habit of locking the door from outside. I did not notice, and when I tried to get out, she was gone. So I was screwed. I was naked in there, thinking, "How the hell do I get out?" There were customers outside because we were selling pizzas. I considered climbing naked out the window and almost did, but there were people on the beach; I could not go out like that. An aside: I remember hearing my Argentine friends outside. I heard them talking, but they could not hear me inside the bathroom. I started pounding on the door, and these guys heard it but thought I was messing with them. I knocked; they knocked back, and I thought, "These idiots." At one point I gave up, said, "I'm staying here," and sat down, resigned. I must have waited half an hour for someone to rescue me, until one friend realized and let me out.

Amparo: Then I came back, and all our friends had this "You're dead" look. It was funny because, imagine the look he gave me. He was about to tell me off when a family of about ten arrived asking for pizzas and empanadas. So I said, "Don't say a damn thing. Start making pizza, chop onions, and put together three empanadas."

Sebastián: And then I could not say anything. I had to swallow all my anger and get on with selling. But it was really funny. One day I will have to lock her in. Well, guys, I hope you enjoyed it, that we did not bore you too much or go on too long, and that is it.





Amparo: Another funny one was when we caught those Venezuelans having sex.

Sebastián: Well, yes, and I do not know whether you want to include this story; it is up to you. We were in Venezuela, around three in the morning, and suddenly Petra started rocking really hard. We had already had another incident where it started moving and someone was stealing a bicycle cover. So when Petra began to move, I said, “That’s it, we’re being robbed,” and we had no idea what was happening. Then I heard noise on the ladder and thought, “They’re on the roof already. They must be stealing the oven or something.” I got out in my pajamas and saw two people who were having sex. The guy was pulling up his pants and the woman was fixing her bra. They had been going at it, and that was why Petra was moving. So I had to apologize: “Sorry, you’re busy. Carry on. I’ll lend you the bed,” hahaha. I kept saying, “Sorry, sorry,” and they replied, “We’re leaving.” They did not know people were living inside. That story is one to remember too.



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Cookin' on the Road

S'MORES

Share the recipes you love most
on your travels.

INGREDIENTS

- Graham crackers (or any flat, firm, slightly sweet cracker or cookie).
- Large marshmallows.
- A thin chocolate bar (choose regular milk chocolate, which melts faster than chocolate with a high cocoa content).



Step by Step:

Method 1: Over a Campfire

1. Find a clean stick or use a metal skewer. Thread on the marshmallow.

2. Hold it near the embers, not directly in the flames. Turn it slowly. Aim for a golden, caramelized outside and a melted center.

3. Build the base in your hand or on a plate: one cracker with a piece of chocolate on top.
4. Place the hot marshmallow on the chocolate.
5. Top with another cracker, press down, and pull out the stick. The marshmallow's heat will melt the chocolate in seconds.

Method 2: In the Oven

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C (392°F), or use the broiler if available.
2. Arrange the crackers that will form the bases on a heatproof baking sheet.

3. Place a square of chocolate on each cracker, with a marshmallow on top.

4. Bake for 2 to 3 minutes. Stay close: sugar burns very quickly. Take them out when the marshmallows are puffed up and golden.

5. Remove the tray, add the top cracker to each one, and press gently.

Vanessa and Edison left conventional "stability" after events that changed their perspective. They hit the road to show their children the world and live full-time as a family, challenging the myth that the logistics of traveling with children make such expeditions impossible.



AVENTURAS pequeños

Photography courtesy of AVENTURASCONPEQUE

There is always an exact moment when fantasy collides with reality. What was the real trigger, the raw situation or conversation, that made you say, "Enough routine, we're leaving," and put "maybe someday" aside?

Edison: The first trigger was a friend from work. His wife died of brain cancer last year, leaving two girls, ages 3 and 6. When they were young, they had taken a trip similar to ours along the entire Pan-American Highway. At the funeral, people talked a lot about that experience, and her husband said how grateful he was for that journey and the memories he had with her.

That made us think, "What if we do this?" and we began considering the idea. My wife's mother also died about three years ago. Her philosophy was always to enjoy the present, make the most of being young, take risks, and not be afraid to do things.

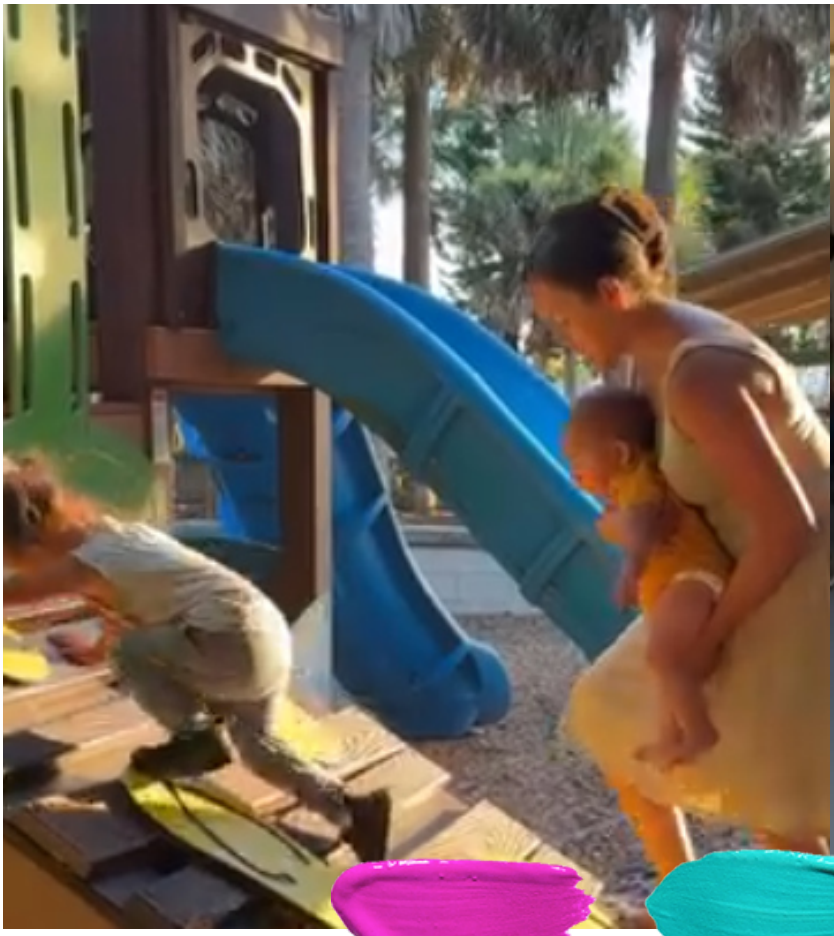
Add to that having children and wanting to spend more time with them. In the United States, we had a nanny raising them while my wife and I worked. So we realized it was a combination of factors: first, wanting at least one of us to raise our children, which in this case would be me; second, my friend's wife dying, reminding us that death can come at any time; and third, losing my mother-in-law. That was the turning point. Six months after the funeral, we bought the camper. Seven more months passed, we rented out our house, and we left. We have now been traveling for six months.







family







Do you see this trip as a journey with a beginning and an end, or as a way of life with no end date? How have you made it financially possible?

Edison: We started with the goal of traveling for only one year, but realized it was impossible to cover North and South America in that time. So we have extended it to two, or perhaps three years. It will not be more than three, because we want to settle in one place.
Financially, we had savings. Then we rented out our house and earned extra income from that. Finally, one of us had to keep working. Since my wife already had a remote job, we decided she would continue.

We knew we would face different challenges in South America, so it made more sense for me to handle logistics: driving, finding water, emptying the black-water tank, and talking with locals. Taking the kids out while she worked also seemed safer; I feel physically able to defend them if something happens, and she would not have felt comfortable going out alone with them while I worked.
In short, my wife's job is our main way of funding the trip. On top of that, social media has grown well over the last two months and has also become a primary source of support for this journey.





What positive and negative experiences have left a mark on you along the way?

Edison: The positive experience has been realizing the world is not as dangerous as people or the news make it seem. We have found that travel opens your mind: you see good and bad things, but the good outweighs the bad. With communication and a good heart, you can meet incredible people. That has been a major change in our lives.

Above all, seeing our children learn has amazed us. Socially, they interact very well with different people and are not afraid to talk to them. They learn so much because every day they see new animals, landscapes, and things.

On the negative side, perhaps a few run-ins with the police. That is the only negative experience we have had, though nothing has gone to extremes. Apart from that, nothing else. Maybe another drawback is that our RV is very large, so sometimes we enter small towns and that causes a lot of stress.

When have you looked into your children's eyes and recognized that moment of discovering and marveling at the world, as though the world were slipping in through a window?

Edison: It is something very simple. We spent six months in Mexico, and we speak only Spanish to our children because they will learn English from their mother no matter what. She has Mexican roots but does not know much about the culture or food; she is fourth-generation, and her family has been in the United States for over a hundred years.

While we were there, Héctor began saying things like "I want Jamaica" (hibiscus tea), "I want a popote" (a drinking straw), or "Look, a tope" (a speed bump). Seeing him absorb parts of the culture without our directly teaching them, or hearing him call the insects "chapulines" (grasshoppers), has been incredible.

Watching his reactions to every new landscape and animal is priceless. He is fascinated by the trucks we pass on the road; his favorites are howler monkeys and crocodiles. He also really enjoys hiking and meeting new children all the time. Watching all that development is when we realize this really is worth it.

In a traditional home, the power dynamic is clear. On the road, daily life requires constant cooperation. At exactly what point did you feel the relationship shift from "looking after the kids" to being a true pack, where they also support morale and the logistics of the journey?

Edison: I think they notice when we are on the move. If I ask them to pick up their toys, they do; when we are about to leave, they go straight to their car seats. We are potty-training Héctor now, and he is also understanding that it matters.

Little by little, we see that cooperation. They are very young, only three and one, so it is limited, but it is there. For example, the baby sometimes grabs things he should not; if we drop a knife, he picks it up. Héctor, as the older one, knows that is not allowed and takes it away. Or if our cameras are somewhere the baby can reach, Héctor has learned they belong to Dad and are not to be touched. He takes them away and tells me, "Dad, look, the baby had this." Seeing that level of awareness is great.

When you share every second of the day in a small space, words can sometimes be unnecessary. How have you developed the intuition to read each other and know what the other needs, whether space, support, or silence, without saying it?

Edison: There are stressful moments, especially because we do not have a separate place to relax or be quiet; we are practically in one room. Sometimes the children cry, and it depends on the situation. If I see my wife is overwhelmed, for example, now that she works from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., I do my best to leave the camper so she can be alone and have quiet. Then, when her shift ends, if I have had a hard day with the kids, she takes over to help me.

We have been married almost ten years, so we know how we react. In that respect, it has not been very different from living in a house. At first it was complicated because we lacked organization and everything was chaotic, but now we have more balance. We know where things are and know the babies' routines and schedules, making life together more manageable and preventing fights or tension between us.

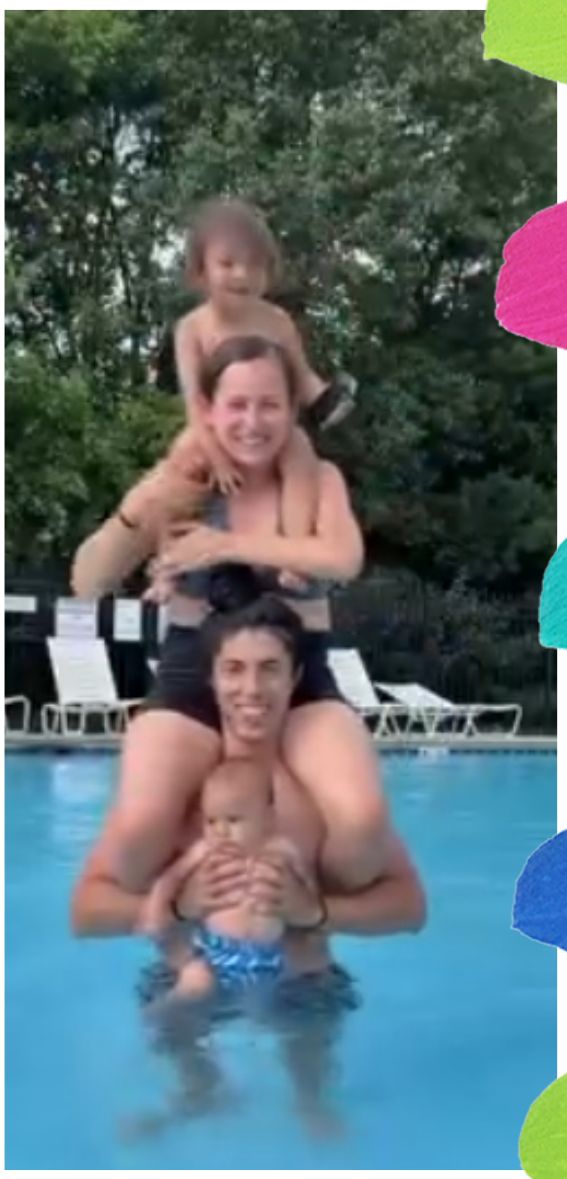






Being completely candid, what was your biggest fear before leaving, and how did the reality of the road dismantle it?

Edison: The biggest fear was the insecurity people associate with our Latin American countries, along with police corruption. But the reality is that there are far more good people than bad. There is always someone who will help one way or another, and that has overshadowed much of our fear. For example, we carry an electric-shock device (a Taser or stun gun), which we initially always kept within reach. Now we do not even keep it handy, because we do not feel so unsafe. We stay alert, but not to the degree we did before.



City life gives you only a limited number of hours with family. Living together 24/7 changes your perspective. What details have you noticed that you would never have seen in a traditional routine?

Edison: When we were in Ohio, we spent more time in the house and did not go out much. In this life, by contrast, it is exciting to leave the camper all the time because there are always new places and things to discover. It made us wonder why we shut ourselves indoors so much when we stayed in one place.
Second, being together 24/7 makes you notice details of the traditional routine. For example, taking a really long, hot shower without caring how much water you use. Normally, you neither appreciate that nor grasp its impact on the earth.
Finally, I think the most important thing is that you do not need so much to live. On the road, we have realized that we are happy with the few things we carry and need nothing more. This experience has given us a new perspective, so we will not accumulate so much when we live in a house again.



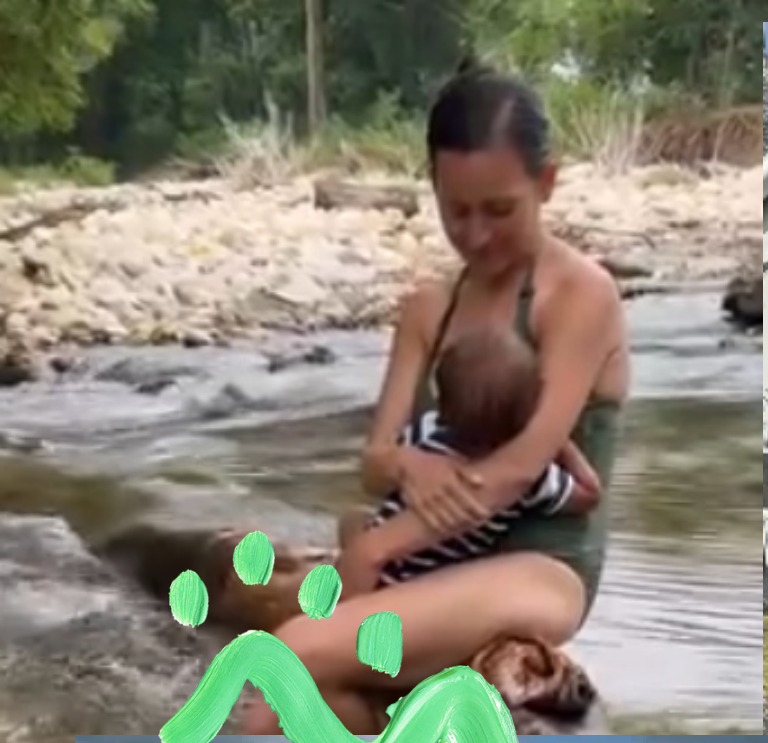
When everything around you changes daily, the weather, the landscape, the language, you are your children's only constant. How do you carry the weight of being their one absolute emotional refuge, and how has that total dependence reshaped your idea of family?

Edison: As immigrants in another country, we were already used to having no help; it has always been just my wife, our children, and me. We had already developed that independence, and our children already saw us as their emotional refuge.
Here on the road, we are still experiencing being new parents, and family is the most important thing to us. At first, changing surroundings and constantly moving was a little stressful, but now it has become completely normal.
The most beautiful thing is arriving somewhere new and seeing your children and your wife smile. Having a good time together makes you forget all the bad moments. That emotional refuge shows you that whether you are in a house, on a boat, on a plane, or in a camper does not matter. Home is family, that constant interaction between parents and children.



Edison: Well, I think the road has taught us that being uncomfortable is part of learning and growing in life. It has taught us to stay calm in changing, tense situations.
As for my children, I hope they learn to keep that same calm in difficult situations and see that there is always a way toward something good. I also want them to understand there are more good people than bad, although they should always stay alert.
Finally, I hope this shows them they should not be afraid to fight for their dreams. I want them to see that we made it possible for our family, to learn from all of us, and that they take a life lesson from it. I think that, even though they are little, this experience will be imprinted in their DNA, their minds, and their very being.







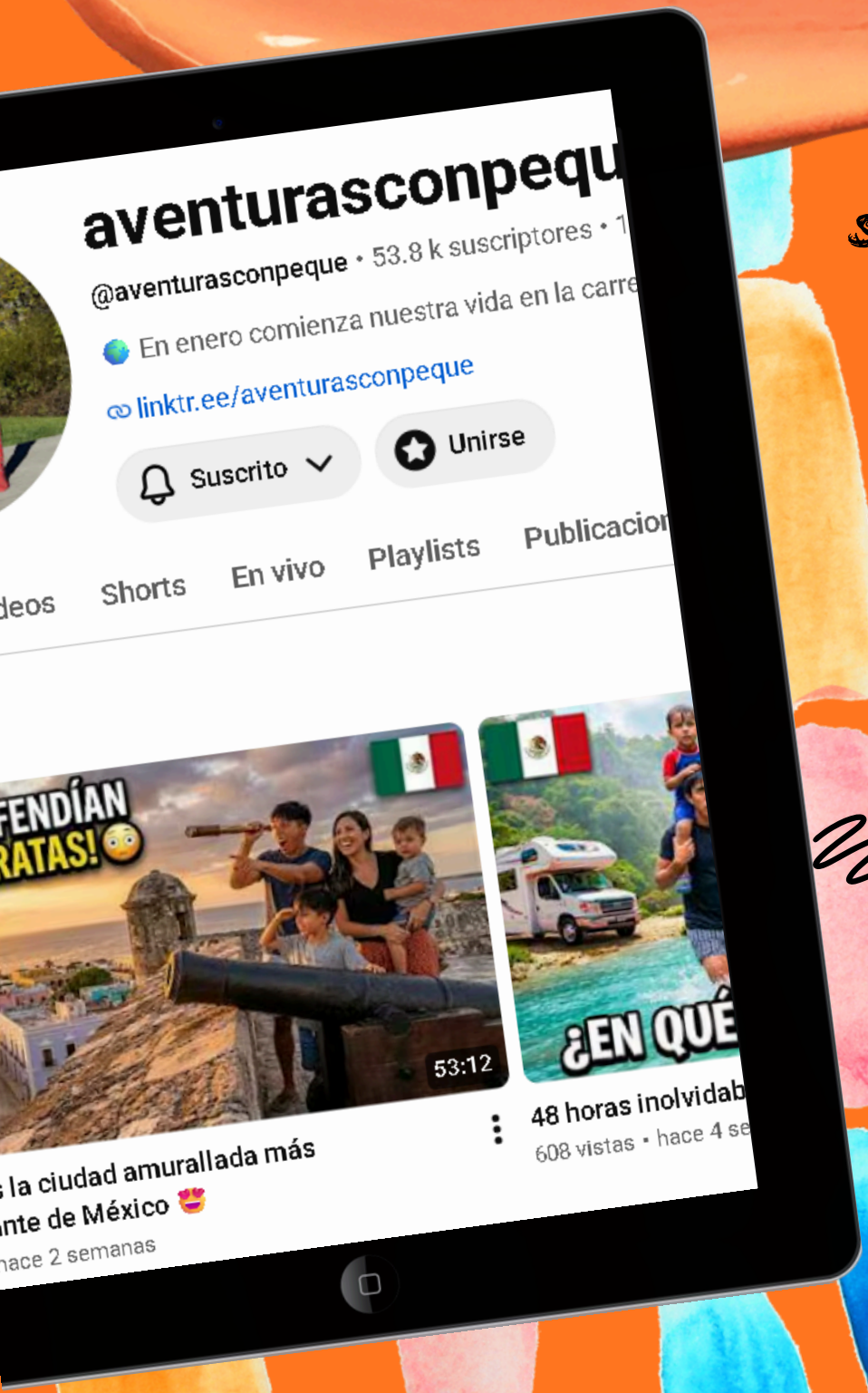


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Training the Microbiome

WHEN A STRICT DIET PUTS A TRAVELING DOG AT RISK



Dr. Gabriel Jara
Veterinarian / Traveler

The Fragile-Stomach Myth: The Single-Diet Trap on the Road

The most predictable veterinary consultations share a pattern: overprotected adult dogs on strict diets of a single ultra-processed food brand who, at the slightest formula change, collapse with acute diarrhea and digestive imbalance. In a static, urban life, this goes unnoticed; on the road, where supplies change from region to region, it is a critical vulnerability.

The belief that the canine digestive system is a delicate mechanism requiring an unchanging diet is a conceptual error encouraged by urban convenience and major manufacturers' marketing. Biologically, dogs descend from opportunistic carnivores capable of processing a broad variety of substrates. Their digestive tract is not designed for absolute rigidity.

Training the Microbiome

A traveling dog's resilience does not lie in finding one miraculous brand to carry in the vehicle for life, but in building a versatile digestive system from puppyhood. Evidence in veterinary gastroenterology shows that intestinal microbiome diversity depends directly on dietary variety during growth. Exposing puppies to different protein sources and commercial formulations trains bacterial populations and encourages tolerance in the intestinal immune system. If the gut knows only one type of kibble, bacterial strains specializing in other components atrophy. When food changes unexpectedly, the intestinal ecosystem collapses.

Adapting on the Move

Getting an animal used to alternating brands and food types from the first months of life creates the flexibility essential to nomadic living.

On the actual road, local store shelves vary from town to town; depending on a single commercial label thousands of kilometers from your starting point is unworkable.

A dog whose body has learned digestive flexibility tolerates ingredient changes without developing disease. Digestive health on the move is not protected by a glass bubble, but by exposing the body early to the real diversity of its environment.

The classic clinical rule of gradually mixing old and new food over one or two weeks is, in fact, a workaround for pampered stomachs. In a gut already trained for variability, this tedious transition is unnecessary. A dog biologically suited to travel can finish a bag of lamb-based food on Tuesday and start salmon or beef on Wednesday without a single episode of diarrhea. This metabolic efficiency makes the difference between traveling kilometers with peace of mind and spending days cleaning a mess inside the cab.

Border logistics also destroy any strict diet plan. Countries' plant- and animal-health barriers do not accommodate brand preferences or gastric sensitivities. Crossing customs with opened bags of food or formulations containing proteins restricted because of disease outbreaks often ends with the food confiscated into the inspector's trash bin. If the dog's digestive system collapses after losing its usual ration at a customs check, the entire itinerary becomes subject to a veterinary emergency.



It is not just about kibble. The water an animal drinks changes drastically in mineral composition, acidity, and bacterial load from one campsite to another. A robust intestinal microbiome, forged through constant diversity in solid foods, acts as the first defensive barrier against variations in local water. A fortified gut cushions environmental stress and changes in water, keeping a simple drink from a well or stream from ending in acute gastroenteritis.

Humanizing canine nutrition by projecting urban anxieties onto a dog's bowl is a limiting mistake on the road. Dogs are born survivors, but their resilience must be cultivated in practice, not numbed by the comfort of a controlled environment. Preparing an animal for nomadic life requires breaking the cycle of digestive overprotection. A truly free dog is not just one that travels everywhere, but one capable of taking in the world it explores without becoming ill in the process.



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Traveler's Horoscope

Aries (Mar 21 - Apr 19) The Chariot (Reversed) Slow down. This card says you are pushing too hard. You want to cover too many kilometers each day, and the physical and mechanical wear will catch up with you. This July, victory is not arriving first; it is arriving with your engine intact. Cut your driving day in half.

Taurus (Apr 20 - May 20) The Emperor Rules and bureaucracy take over. You will face temporary-import paperwork, insurance issues, or complicated border crossings. Do not try to bypass procedures or argue with local authorities. Structure rules: keep your files organized and pay what is due without complaint.

Gemini (May 21 - Jun 20) The Fool A route you planned down to the smallest detail will be blocked by unexpected weather or a landslide. The Fool asks you to leap into the unknown and take that dirt-road detour missing from the app. This month's real adventure begins where pavement and planning end.

Cancer (Jun 21 - Jul 22) The Hermit Too much campground socializing is wearing you out. You need solitude. Find a boondocking spot far from other RVs, turn off your phone, and spend a couple of days listening only to wind against the bodywork. Your mind and your vehicle need this silence to recalibrate.

Leo (Jul 23 - Aug 22) The Sun Watch the temperature. In the Northern Hemisphere, heat will punish your cooling system and push your solar panels to their limits; in the south, extreme cold will test your insulation. July's key is thermal management. Do not underestimate the weather.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sep 22) The Magician A technical failure is coming in the middle of nowhere, with no repair shops nearby. The Magician says you have all the tools and knowledge aboard to fix it. Poxipol, wire, adhesive tape, and sheer resourcefulness. Trust your mechanical instincts; the temporary fix will beat the original.

Libra (Sep 23 - Oct 22) Justice Your weight is unbalanced, and your suspension's leaf springs know it. Too much useless cargo has accumulated on one side of the vehicle. This month, empty the storage bays, redistribute the weight, and let go of what you have not used in the last thousand kilometers. Balance your rig.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21) The Tower foretells shattered plans. Something fundamental in your route falls apart: a closed bridge, a spare part that never arrives, a country shutting its border. Frustration is useless. Absorb the blow quickly, make a U-turn, and plot an entirely new route. Resisting change only creates stress.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21) The Wheel of Fortune July rolls the dice in your favor. The good-weather window you need to cross a mountain range or tackle a difficult gravel road will open just as you arrive. Use the momentum and do not postpone the stretch; a traveler's luck is fleeting and must be seized in the moment.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19) Temperance Strict fluid management. Temperance warns against waste. Carefully calculate distances between gas stations and monitor your drinking-water reserve. This month you will enter areas with no supplies. Measure every drop of fuel, oil, and water as though it were gold.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18) The Star Stop staring at the GPS screen. The Star asks you to return to analog navigation. Look up, ask a local truck driver or village shopkeeper, or study landmarks. Technology will send you the wrong way this month; the road's wisdom lies with local people.

Pisces (Feb 19 - Mar 20) The Hanged Man An obligatory pause. You will be stranded for a few days, waiting for a spare part, a visa, or a storm to pass. The Hanged Man teaches you not to despair when you cannot move. Use this downtime to get ahead on work, write, edit photos, or deep-clean your living space.



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