BITÁCORA OFF ROAD

septiembre 2026



LOS MUNDO

Eight years, three children, and thousands of kilometres later, Los Mundo are closing the Run Run chapter and getting ready for a new way to keep travelling as a family.

IN THIS SPECIAL TRUCK EDITION





WELCOME TO

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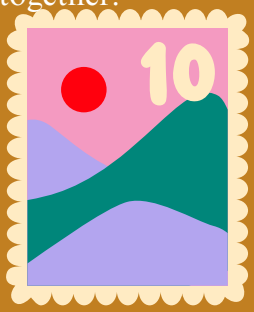


The Moving Refuge — Our Editorial Line

From the outside, nomadic life is often mistaken for one endless vacation. The image gets romanticized: a vehicle parked in front of the perfect sunset, while everything just outside the frame is ignored — the exhaustion, the long hours driving uncertain roads, and, more often than not, hands covered in oil after an emergency repair.

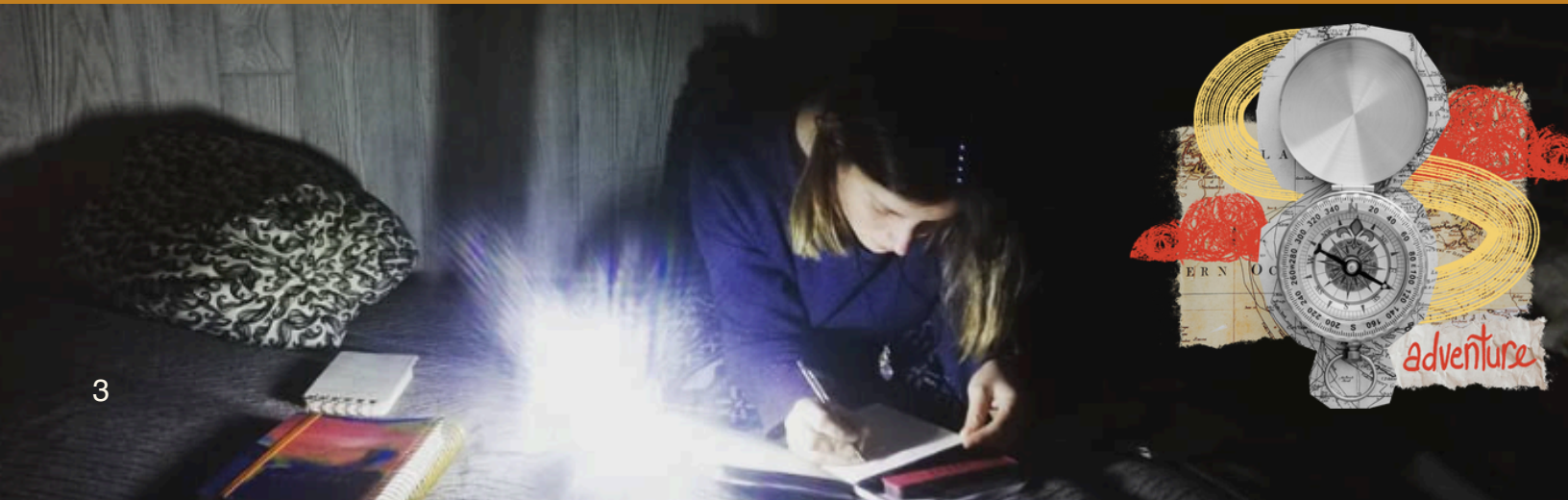
Choosing life on the road is not about running away from responsibility. It is about trading predictable comfort for a life where adaptation becomes the only constant. Along the way, we quickly learn that our home on wheels is an invaluable companion and our shelter, but it is still only a tool; the true 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 throw out the original plan and reinvent ourselves.

And it is precisely there, when certainty begins to fall apart, that the true magic of overlanding appears: the tribe. This way of life breaks down the barriers of the city and brings us together around a shared campfire, where we come to understand that stories of survival and the genuine smiles of fellow travellers are worth far more than any landscape. At the end of the day, the best thing we can 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

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IF YOU'RE A TRAVELLER AND WOULD LIKE TO GET IN TOUCH

DO YOU WANT TO SHARE YOUR PROJECT?

Send us a short bio and a photo so the community can get to know you.

DO YOU WANT TO SHARE YOUR BOOK?

There's a space for you in the magazine.

DID YOU CREATE A USEFUL APP FOR THE TRAVEL COMMUNITY?

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DID YOU TAKE A PHOTO YOU'D LIKE OTHERS TO SEE?

Send it to us with your name, your Instagram so people can follow you, and, if you'd like, the technical details of the photo along with a short description.



& SEND IT TO CONTACT@BITACORAOFFROAD.COM

ICONIC PHOTO



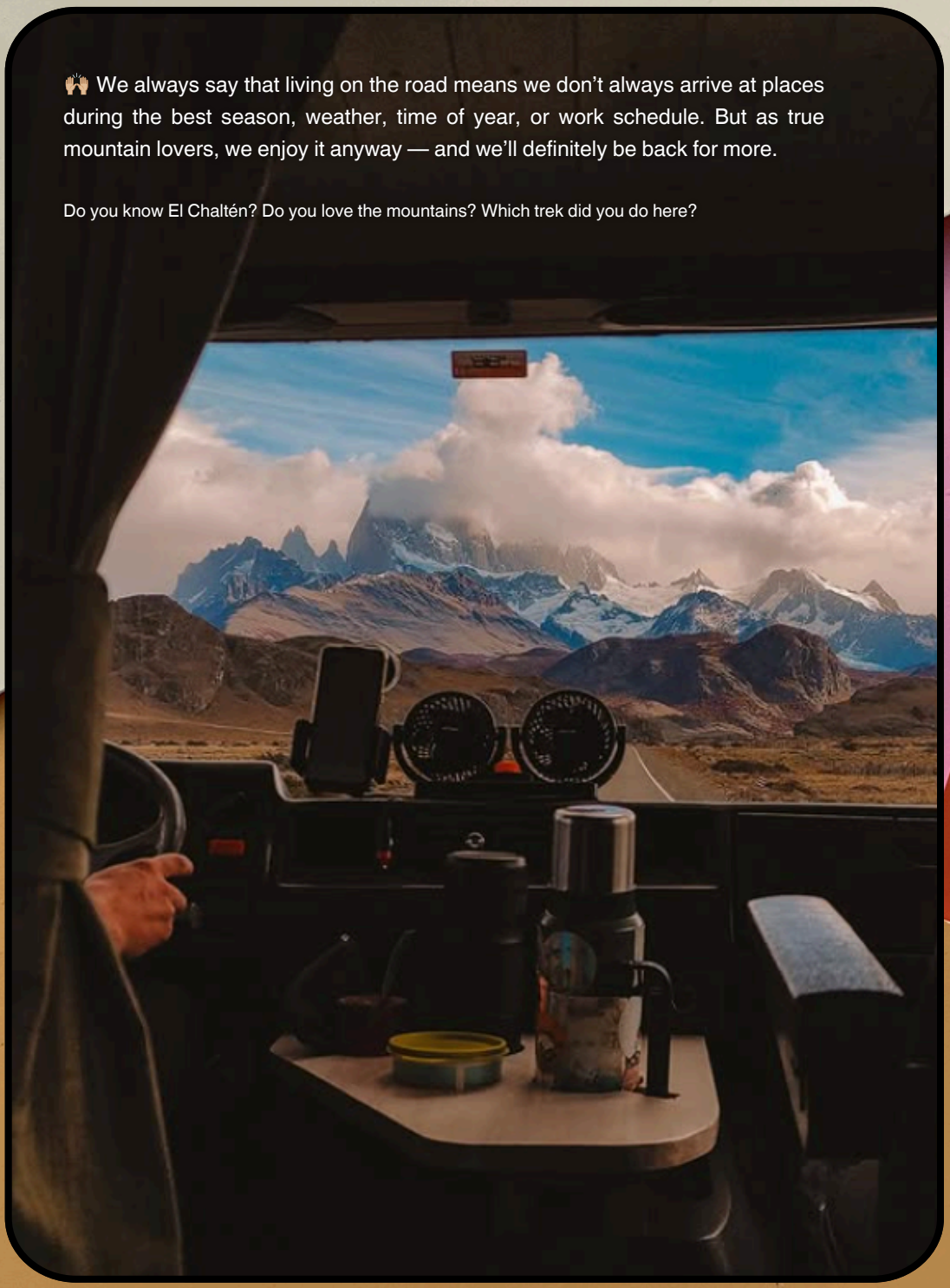


Photo courtesy of La Ruta Madre

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Back to the Origin

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GO FEST BACK TO ITS ROOTS





Macarena Orozco
The Nomad Journalist

GoFest was born at a time when overlanding was still a largely unknown concept in Chile. In 2014, during a trip through the north of the country, Margarita Calderón met other entrepreneurs connected to the outdoor world and asked herself a simple question: why not create a place where this entire community could come together?

The first edition brought more than 500 people to Curacaví and eventually gave rise to one of Chile's most iconic outdoor and overlanding gatherings.

Twelve years later, GoFest is returning to its roots with a more mature vision, but with the same idea that started it all: bringing together people who see adventure as a way of life.

Margarita Calderón, its founder, tells us how the project began, how the industry has evolved, and what lies ahead for this new chapter of GoFest.

Organizing an event of this scale requires a clear vision from the very beginning. How did the idea of creating Go Fest Chile first take shape, and what specific moment made you realize the country needed a gathering place for the travelling community?

Today GoFest looks like a huge festival, but the truth is that it did not begin with a clear vision of becoming what it is today. It grew from a desire to bring a community together, to connect people who enjoyed the same way of life and see what might happen. At the time, I was beginning to become more involved in this world, and I found it difficult to meet people who shared that way of living, except when I was travelling, camping, or spending time in hard-to-reach places. One day I thought: why not bring together those of us who live life in a similar way, share a space, and see what happens? That, basically, is how GoFest was born.

At that time, together with my ex-husband, we were selling Italian Autohome rooftop tents in Chile. They remain one of the world's leading references in this type of equipment. Bringing them from Italy connected us with travellers, campers, and people who shared the same mindset. It was never only a business; there was a lifestyle behind it. Why did the idea occur to me and not someone else? I do not know. What I do know is that I have always enjoyed bringing people together, creating connections, and gathering those who share a similar way of life.

Because I believe that when you find your community, you also find shelter, a sense of home, and often a destination. From something quite spontaneous, a concept gradually began to take shape and, more than a decade later, became one of Chile's most important outdoor festivals, with a reach that now extends across Latin America.



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Overlanding has moved beyond being an extreme niche and is now attracting a much broader audience. How do you see today's overlanding scene in Chile in terms of travel culture, equipment, and awareness of the environment?





We were one of the first large gatherings in Chile to start talking about overlanding. Back in 2014, it was still fairly new here, while internationally it was already deeply rooted in certain cultures, especially in Australia, which for me is still a bit like the birthplace of this world. In Chile, there was already a strong culture of travelling in groups, camping, exploring, and equipping vehicles. And there is a phrase that has always made me laugh and that I really agree with: the only difference between a child and an adult is the price of the toys.

When you bring together people who love travelling, camping, or spending time in nature, they inevitably start looking at what others carry, how they solved a problem, or which equipment works best. It is not necessarily about showing off, but about sharing information and learning from each other. That has helped the market grow enormously and has also changed our travel culture.

COVID also had a huge impact. During that period, many people discovered that travelling in their own vehicle, in a motorhome or camper, or simply camping, allowed them to maintain independence and a sense of safety. Growth was very strong. But alongside the equipment, something more important has gradually appeared: greater awareness of the environment. Years ago, I think that awareness barely existed, while today more people understand that travelling is not simply about reaching a place, but about learning to coexist with it in the most sustainable way possible. I also do not believe that human beings should never touch or interact with nature.

I strongly believe we should be able to enjoy it, travel with our families and pets, explore it, and live in it, while understanding the conditions and rules that allow certain ecosystems to survive human impact. The entire planet has already been influenced by us. That is why the areas we still preserve require enormous respect and education. I want that conversation to exist within GoFest as well: not simply telling people what they must not do, but learning how we can coexist with nature and leave future generations something they can still discover, enjoy, and protect.

COVID showed us something remarkable: when people stayed inside, nature moved forward. For me, there is a clear lesson in that. The better we learn to become part of nature in a balanced way, the better we will be able to coexist.

Many international travellers agree that Chile has unique geography, but uneven infrastructure. From the organization's perspective, is Chile really prepared —in roads, services, safety, and regulations— to receive large numbers of long-distance travellers in recreational vehicles?



Chile has one of the most extraordinary geographies in the world, and for good reason it has been internationally recognized and awarded as an adventure tourism destination.

Are we really prepared as a country to receive large numbers of long-distance travellers? I don't think so yet. We still fall short in roads, specialized services, safety, infrastructure for recreational vehicles, and clearer regulations.

But I think we are making huge progress. There is more awareness, we are receiving more travellers, and there are new ideas about how to develop this kind of tourism. I also feel tourism is playing an increasingly important role in the way Chile presents itself to the world. It is no longer only about our wines or landscapes, but also about the experience people have when they travel through and encounter our country.

I personally receive foreign travellers at my property in Curacaví: Polish, German, Belgian, and French visitors. That has allowed me to see that Chile offers something that goes well beyond infrastructure, roads, or services.

There is something in the land, and also in the heart of Chileans, that often makes up for our shortcomings. In the end, travellers are deeply impressed by the landscapes, the diversity, and the human experience they find here, and many of those other shortcomings end up, so to speak, taking a back seat.

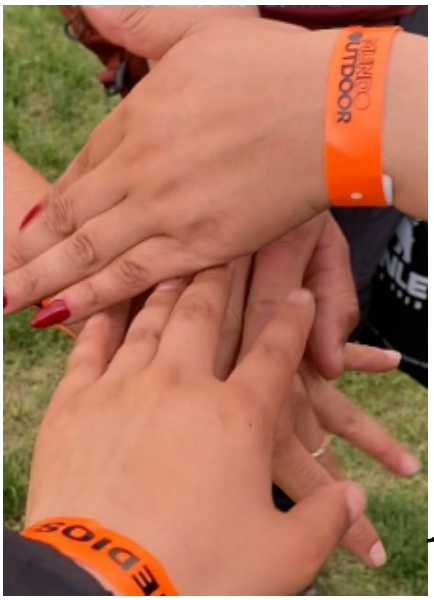
That does not mean we should not solve them. Quite the opposite.

If we can combine that extraordinary geography and our ability to welcome travellers with better roads, services, safety, infrastructure, and regulations, Chile can truly become an unforgettable destination on the world stage.

THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE LAND AND ALSO IN THE HEART OF CHILEANS THAT OFTEN MAKES UP FOR OUR SHORTCOMINGS

Each edition of Go Fest brings together the sector's leading figures and builders. How do you see the level of overlanding in Chile today, both in the quality of travel projects and in the development of locally made technical and mechanical solutions?





Chile's level has grown exponentially, and today we have a much higher standard than we did ten years ago.

When we started, between 2014 and 2016, there was a lot of experimenting, trial and error. Today we have manufacturers, importers, workshops, and entrepreneurs developing campers, trailers, electrical systems, suspension setups, furniture, storage, and complete vehicle builds at an increasingly professional level. We also have access to a much broader international range than before. But I still believe there is plenty of room to grow.

One of the wonderful things about this world is that, in very small spaces, you can develop extraordinarily creative solutions without always doing the same thing. That is where we still have a lot to learn by looking at markets that are years ahead, such as Germany, France, Spain, and, once again, Australia.

It is not simply about copying, but about looking at experiences that already work and adapting them to our territory, our geography, and the way we travel.

I also believe automotive brands will become increasingly connected to this market. There is a clear movement of people wanting to return to a more natural way of life, live closer to the countryside, travel, or spend time away from large cities, without necessarily giving up connectivity or comfort.

That is where overlanding is beginning to play an increasingly important role. The same is happening with glamping which, although it is a different concept, shares something interesting: it shows that connecting with nature does not necessarily mean giving up comfort. You can be somewhere remote and still have an extraordinarily comfortable experience.

Something that has always interested me about GoFest is precisely bringing those worlds together: the people who manufacture, import, develop, and ultimately use these products. Many of the best solutions are born after thousands of kilometres on the road, when you discover what actually works when you are far from everything.

Photos courtesy of Go Fest

Looking ahead, what would you like to see changed or introduced in Chile's overlanding sector over the medium term, either at an institutional or community level?

I would like Chile to begin formally recognizing the enormous potential of tourism linked to overlanding, campers, and recreational vehicles. And not only in terms of infrastructure, but also financing.

It would be very interesting for financial institutions and companies connected to this market to develop products similar to leasing or specific financing options for camper conversions, motorhomes, or vehicle transformation projects.

Because overlanding does not necessarily mean going away for two or three days. For many people, it can literally become a way of life on the road.

Because of its geography, Chile has extraordinary conditions for this. I would also like to see many more services designed specifically for this kind of traveller: grey and black water disposal points, fresh water supply, and designated places developed around a Leave No Trace approach.

Today, these services exist mainly at some campgrounds, but they could easily be extended to service stations, hotels, restaurants, and other strategic locations along travel routes. This would allow travellers to stop, resupply, dispose of waste responsibly, and continue their journey. It would also create new business opportunities for many local communities.

At an institutional level, I would like this type of tourism to be recognized as a category with its own potential, one that could be promoted and developed through government initiatives.

At the community level, however, I think we are much further ahead. There are already so many people who are enthusiastic and genuinely happy with this way of travelling.

The community is already there. The more opportunities we create to bring it together, the stronger this entire ecosystem will become.





The growing flow of vehicles into remote areas creates tensions with local communities and national parks. What role should traveller organizations or travel groups play to ensure that the growth of overlanding makes a positive contribution to the places it seeks to explore?

I'm not sure I would describe it today as a major source of tension in Chile.

We still do not have enough travellers for this to become a widespread issue and I think that, in many remote places, their arrival is welcomed more than rejected because it generates trade, spending, and economic activity in communities often far from major urban centres.

And I think that is important because this kind of tourism can also become a practical tool for decentralization.



Travellers buy fuel and food, eat in restaurants, use local services, stay overnight, repair their vehicles, and often reach places that traditional tourism does not necessarily reach.

Of course, that only works when travellers respect the environment and understand the responsibility of being in the place they are visiting. That is where organizations and traveller groups can play an important role by connecting communities with travellers and providing information, routes, recommendations, and basic codes of conduct.

Today, we also have digital tools that give us access to an enormous amount of information that we once found, for example, in the road guides that everyone who travelled used to keep in the car.

I believe that the better the information available, and the better connected travellers are with the territories they visit, the more positive that relationship can become.

And if tourism growth also encourages small communities to develop better services and infrastructure, we can create a virtuous cycle: more visitors, greater economic activity, better services and, at the same time, greater awareness of the value of protecting these places.

For an event of this scale to become firmly established, support from private industry is essential. How has the response from automotive, technology, and outdoor equipment brands evolved as this community has continued to grow in Chile?

It has grown enormously.

I believe GoFest broke new ground, making it easier for other projects and events connected to the sector to follow a somewhat smoother path.

It is a bit like opening a trail: the first person has a hard time marking the route, but once that track exists, those who come later already have a path to follow.

I think GoFest did a great deal of that in Chile.





But I also do not want to suggest that everything is easy today. From the outside, it may seem that you take a festival of this size to the market and brands line up to participate. It does not work that way.

Even after more than a decade, we often have to present GoFest again almost as if it were a new project, explain what we are doing, where we are going, and why we believe a particular brand should be with us.

What has changed is that today we have something fundamental: a track record and credibility.

We can show that we have created different experiences, that every year we have tried to evolve, and that there is a real community behind the festival.

That allows us to offer companies a concrete way to connect with an audience that shares certain interests and a particular way of life.

This year, we are also taking what is probably one of the biggest steps in our history byl

returning to Curacaví and developing our first boutique GoFest, with Toyota Chile as the official host.

It is a major investment and a strong commitment to raising the standard, the experience, the aesthetics, and the overall quality of the festival.

And I think that connects perfectly with how this market has evolved. Because overlanding and glamping do not necessarily mean giving up comfort. Quite often, they mean exactly the opposite: learning how to take certain comforts with you.

It might be an excellent coffee in the middle of the mountains, a good meal, a comfortable bed, heating, power, or simply a warm shelter after a day of rain, cold, or wind.

Nature is wonderful, but we all appreciate having a good refuge when conditions become difficult.

That idea of experiencing extraordinary places without necessarily giving up comfort is also part of what this market is beginning to understand, and I believe brands are understanding it better and better.



Behind the exhibition is a complex operation involving coordination, safety, and regulations. What has been the most difficult technical or regulatory challenge to overcome in order to keep the festival running safely year after year?

I think one of the most complex things to coordinate at GoFest has to do with safety and all those services that ultimately allow the festival to run like clockwork.

For us, it is very important that, no matter how relaxed and informal the atmosphere may feel, everything behind the scenes is working properly: for the

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exhibitors, the public, and every one of the experiences.

This year, with this more boutique concept, we are taking a huge step forward. One of the things I value most is having spent years building a team capable of turning into reality everything that, for months, exists only on computers, in meetings, plans, and conversations.

My leadership style is based on empathy. I have always tried to understand, and have personally done, practically every task that I later ask someone else to carry out. I find it difficult to give an instruction without knowing how much effort it takes.

Since we started, I have done a bit of everything and, although today we have professional teams in every area, I still stay closely involved in the details.

Making sure the layout is followed down to the centimetre, the parking works, the public arrives smoothly and in an orderly way, and that from the moment someone walks in, they feel a welcoming, collaborative, cheerful atmosphere. That energy is a fundamental part of GoFest, and you can feel it in the air.

If we talk specifically about regulatory challenges, probably the biggest one involves safety standards.

We have climbing walls, paragliding, navigation, a 4x4 track, horseback riding, and many other activities. Let's say GoFest is, ironically, the perfect event for a risk-prevention professional.

But there is something we are deeply proud of: in twelve years, we have never had an accident associated with our activities.

And that does not happen by chance. It happens because we do not simply try to do things well; we work with serious companies and professionals who allow us to feel confident about what we are delivering.

We want people to experience the outdoors in the best possible way, but also with the best safeguards and the highest standard we can achieve. It is a constant challenge, but fortunately in Chile we have extraordinary professionals who allow us to deliver a first-class experience.

WE WANT PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE THE OUTDOORS IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY



Through direct contact with the festival audience, what do you think is the main technical or planning gap that the average Chilean overlander still needs to learn or improve before heading out on the road?





I would say they need to learn everything and nothing. Of course there are basic planning issues: knowing your vehicle, knowing where you are going, understanding range, water, energy, safety, weather, and carrying essential tools for the unexpected. But I have also learned, without considering myself an overlander like many who attend GoFest, that some things can only be learned once you are on the road. You cannot have everything figured out before leaving. I also think Chilean travellers have grown enormously. Social media has democratized a huge amount of information, and today it is much easier to know the basics needed to begin a journey. But for me, something matters more than being perfectly equipped: having the spirit to set out and the humility to understand that you probably know far less than you think.

This year we had a wonderful example with Fabio Belnome, known online as Volata di Peluca, who travelled from Alaska to Patagonia in a 1998 Fiat Marea. We are hardly talking about the prototype of a great camper vehicle. And yet, he completed an extraordinary journey.

He later ranked Chile first among the best countries he had driven through, highlighting the Carretera Austral in particular. How prepared was he before leaving? I do not know. How much did he learn along the way? Probably a great deal. How much could he learn again on the next trip? Everything. That is why I am not sure the real gap is how much you need to learn before setting out.

I believe the road is still the best school. You can prepare, and you should do so responsibly, but overlanding is also about being able to move, solve problems, adapt, and stay humble enough to understand that no matter how much you have travelled, there is still a great deal to learn.

And there is something very special about Fabio's story: Chile ended up taking the number one spot in his ranking of the countries he visited and travelled through, simply for being Chile. Not because we have the best infrastructure, roads, or services in the world, but because the territory, the landscapes, and the experience of travelling through them were powerful enough to speak for themselves. I agree completely with Fabio.

Beyond being a meeting point for the community and a commercial and exhibition space, what do you hope will be Go Fest Chile's lasting impact or legacy on the way Chileans understand and experience overland travel?

For me, GoFest is much more than a festival. It has a deeply personal dimension. In 2016, I became pregnant with my first and only son, Vittorio, who passed away in July of that same year. By November, we were once again building GoFest.

In the midst of one of the greatest pains of my life, I understood something that, in a way, also has a great deal to do with travelling: the road can hit you, place obstacles in your path, and bring challenges you never imagined, but you can keep moving forward and reach another place, understanding that often the true meaning was in the journey and not only in the final destination.

So, when I think about GoFest's legacy, I think of very simple words: community, collaboration, creativity, and freedom. I would like GoFest to teach us to live surrounded by what is beautiful: landscapes, nature, people, travel, and the freedom to choose roads that may not be the ones everyone else chooses.

To step outside our comfort zone and understand that we do not necessarily have to follow the life formula we were told for years was the right one. I think GoFest will stay in the memories of many people who arrived for the first time and thought: "these are my people." People who may have spent years looking for those other crazy ones who, one day, did not overthink it, got into a vehicle, and simply went out to live.

People who decided to make travel not just a vacation, but a way of life. And deep down, there is something very ancestral in all of this. Humanity was born from a nomadic condition. Moving, discovering, searching for other territories, finding shelter, and setting off again are part of our history. Perhaps what we are doing with overlanding is not inventing something new.

Perhaps we are simply going back to our roots. And that has an especially beautiful meaning for GoFest this year, because we are also returning to ours.





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THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY

Film Details:

- 🎬 *Director: Ben Stiller*
- 🎭 *Main Cast: Ben Stiller, Kristen Wiig, Sean Penn, Adam Scott*
- ⏱️ *Runtime: 1 h 54 min*
- 🎨 *Genre: Adventure, comedy, drama*

Walter Mitty lives a quiet, routine life while, in his imagination, he experiences incredible adventures around the world. But when his job at Life magazine is threatened and an essential photograph disappears, Walter must leave his fantasies behind and set out on a real journey that takes him through extraordinary landscapes and situations he never thought possible. A story about daring to break free from routine, travel, and begin living the life we have always imagined.



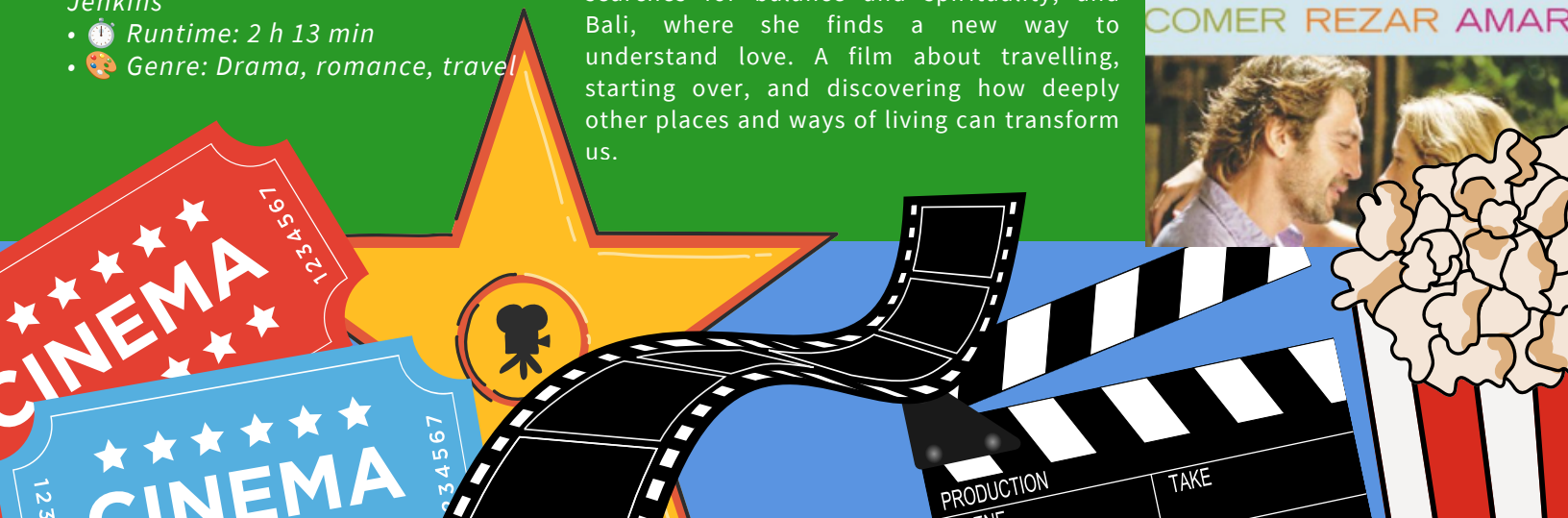
EAT, PRAY, LOVE

Film Details:

- 🎬 *Director: Ryan Murphy*
- 🎭 *Main Cast: Julia Roberts, Javier Bardem, James Franco, Richard Jenkins*
- ⏱️ *Runtime: 2 h 13 min*
- 🎨 *Genre: Drama, romance, travel*

After realizing that the life she built no longer makes her happy, Elizabeth Gilbert decides to leave her routine behind and set out on a long journey to find herself again. Her travels take her through Italy, where she rediscovers the pleasure of enjoying life; India, where she searches for balance and spirituality; and Bali, where she finds a new way to understand love. A film about travelling, starting over, and discovering how deeply other places and ways of living can transform us.





LOS MUNDO



VTRAVELLER TYPE:
READY FOR ANYTHING

NUMBER OF MEMBERS:
FIVE, 3 CHILDREN 2 ADULTS

YEARS TRAVELLING: 8 YEARS

CONTINENTS TRAVELLED: 3

Since 2018, Los Mundo have shown that a family of five can also turn the road into a home. Marta Bruyel and Dani Gimeno left their life in Madrid behind with their children Tao, Dhara and Erik to begin a journey around the world in Run Run, a 4x4 truck with barely eight square metres of space that became their home, school, audiovisual studio and starting point for crossing the Americas and Africa. For nearly eight years, they have documented not only the landscapes, but also the breakdowns, borders, parenting and everything that usually stays outside the perfect postcard. Now, as they prepare to sell Run Run and close one of the most important chapters of their lives, Los Mundo tell us what made them leave, what kept them travelling and why evolving can also mean knowing when it is time to change direction.

Fotográfia gentileza de LOS MUNDO



Looking back at how it all began, what was the exact turning point that made you leave routine behind and move into a truck?



The good thing is that Dani and I had already done plenty of backpacking. In fact, six months after we met, we left for a year and a half travelling through Asia, New Zealand and Australia.

Our lives before meeting were already shaped by travel, and then as a couple too. So that travel bug was always there. But when the children were born, we did what people usually do: settle down and assume children need routine. That was when we suddenly put the brakes on a little and started doing what you are supposedly meant to do when you have children: have a normal job, send them to school and keep a routine. We gradually realised that it was not what we wanted. The children came quite close together, and it was good to stay still during that stage, to have our little cave, our own space, our home. But then we began to see their childhood flying by: school, picking them up, going home, bath time, dinner and bed. Then the same thing the next day, and again after that.

I was the one who started thinking about it more and more. I did not want to watch the children's lives pass that quickly. I wanted us to spend more time together as a family, and I wanted to show them the world. I brought it up with Dani whenever we travelled around Spain in the van, because he worked one week on and one week off. We tried to spend one week in Madrid and the next travelling. Every time we came home, I thought: "This can't be it. I want to keep doing this."

At that time Dani had a company and was building the business. He had always been a nomad and had gone from that life to running his own venture, creating something of his own, and he felt good in that position. We were always caught in the same thought: we are good here, but we are better when we are travelling.

Then we spent a month in Morocco with the van, followed by three months in Southeast Asia with Tao and Dara, and Erick still in my belly. That was when we realised travelling really suited us: we were happy together as a family, the children thrived, got along well, loved the journey and felt free.

I remember seeing Tao's eyes full of happiness while he was playing with some children in a little village in Vietnam. He was only four years old, and there was this glow of genuine freedom in his eyes. That was the moment we thought: "We have to do this. We have to go for it."

Then Erick was born, but we already had this idea in our heads, and from that point we began thinking about how we could make travelling with the children work.

Travelling as a family 24/7 in just a few square metres is not how Instagram makes it look. How do you manage the space and mental strain on difficult days?

The truth is that we have gone through many stages. When we started, it was complete chaos, because we had three children aged six, four and one, and we went from living in an eighty-square-metre apartment to eight square metres, which is the size of the truck's living space. Everything is in there: five people, the bathroom, the kitchen, everything.

It was chaotic because every morning at breakfast the milk ended up on the floor, there were things everywhere, and we kept bumping into the furniture and into each other. The first thing you need is a period of adjustment to get used to the space. Then, once you understand how the space works, it sounds strange, but it becomes like a dance: when one person passes, the other moves, you stop bumping into each other, and everything gradually falls into place.

It also helped enormously when we started finding our own travel rhythm. At first, we travelled with other friends and moved a little too quickly for what worked for our family. So we began slowing down, really respecting the children's sleeping and eating schedules, because we were travelling with a baby. We started taking shorter routes and staying longer in each place.

Once we began respecting those schedules and leaving enough time to stay in one place, we found our rhythm and things started to flow naturally. Dani and I gradually divided the work between



us and built our routines inside the truck. During the first three to six months there was more conflict, and it was harder to find that rhythm, understand what each person did and what their role was.

We also had to work and educate the children. Managing time was the hardest part. When you live on the road, you are not on holiday. You have to move, change places, find water and food, take care of the truck, educate the children, do schoolwork and work. It is complicated. Getting to that point was not easy, but we gradually learned to manage it.

What also helped was spending a lot of time outdoors, respecting the children's pace and not trying to see everything. Our journey became less about ticking places off a list and seeing, seeing, seeing, and more about feeling the experience and simply being present.

It was more about going to parks so the children could play, or spending time with other families, than sightseeing.

I think that made things much easier, because if the children were fine, we were all fine. As for medical emergencies, we never had anything major. We travelled with health insurance and, when something small came up, we simply went to a local hospital or doctor and they were treated.

What mechanical or logistical problem came closest to making you give up the journey?

Honestly, if I started listing all the mechanical problems we have had, I could be here for an hour. We have had everything.

One of the worst periods was in the United States, when we had injector problems and nobody could figure out what was wrong. Our visa expired and we were stuck there, unable to leave. It was very tense because of the visa and because nobody knew what the problem was. Mechanics in the United States were also incredibly expensive, so we kept spending money without getting answers.

At that point we did not think about giving up. It was stressful and hard, but we never really considered stopping. In Africa, though, in Namibia, there was a moment when we reconsidered the whole journey. We had been in Spain and fixed everything on the truck. Then we reached South Africa and it started having problems again: first the brakes, then other things, and we had to stop to repair everything.

We continued to Namibia, where the transmission broke. The real problem there was not the mechanic, because he could repair it, but the parts. The parts we needed were only available in Europe. Shipping them was incredibly expensive, and they were difficult to find.



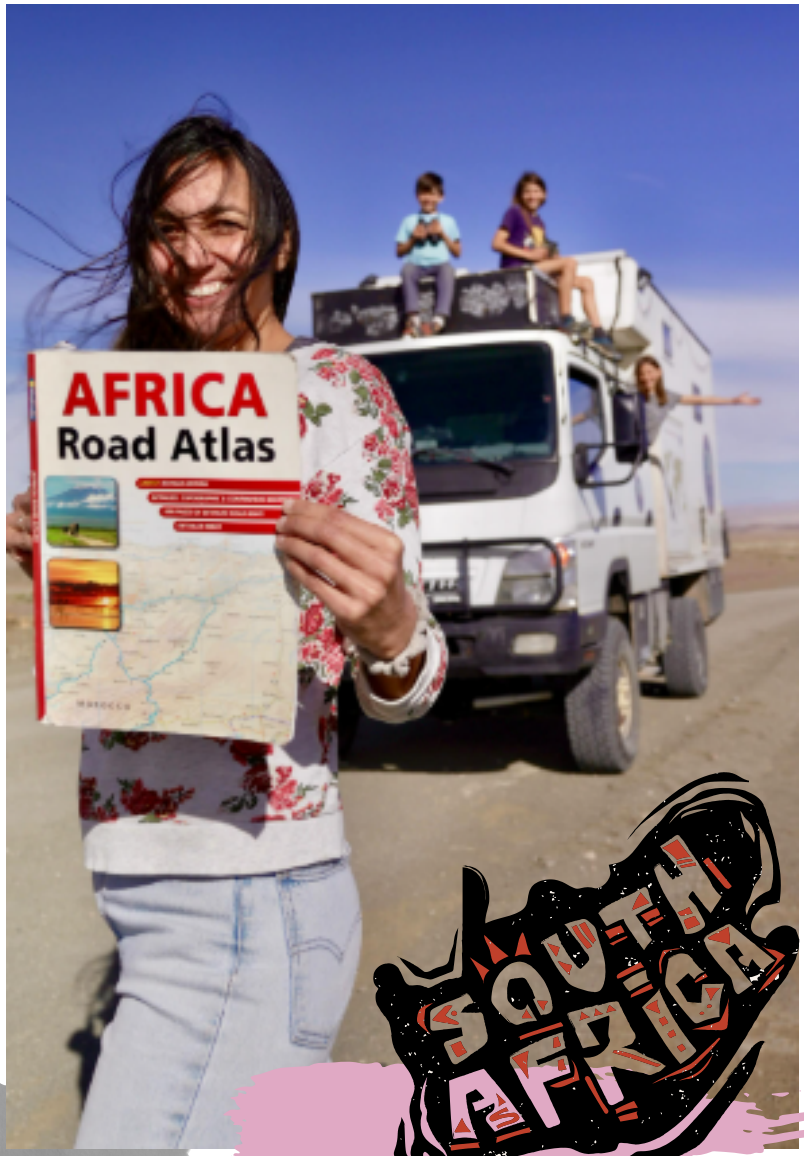
That was when we said: “Shit, we’re stranded here. What do we do? Sell the truck and leave?” We had already spent so much on repairs that it was completely outside our budget.

And with all that stress, Dani accidentally caused another battery problem and the truck would not start. That was the only time we said: “That’s it. We can’t do this anymore.”



In the end, some friends’ parents were travelling to Namibia at that time and brought us the parts. We said: “Let’s keep going.” Thankfully we did, because afterwards we had an incredible journey through the rest of Africa.

But that moment made us consider other options: selling the truck there, taking it back to Spain to sell it, ending the journey and doing something else.



Of all the borders and routes you've travelled, when did you truly fear for your safety?

Honestly, I cannot remember a place where we feared for our safety. Travelling with children, we try not to go anywhere where we would have reason to feel unsafe.

We are cautious. People might say, "But you travelled through Latin America," or "What about Africa?", but the truth is that we have never really felt unsafe anywhere.

One moment when we did feel quite helpless was when we entered Zambia. It was a tough border day, one of those rough crossings with many hours, lots of arguing and a very tense atmosphere.

We looked for somewhere to rest. It was the rainy season, we took a track we should not have and got completely stuck, with the truck almost tipping over.

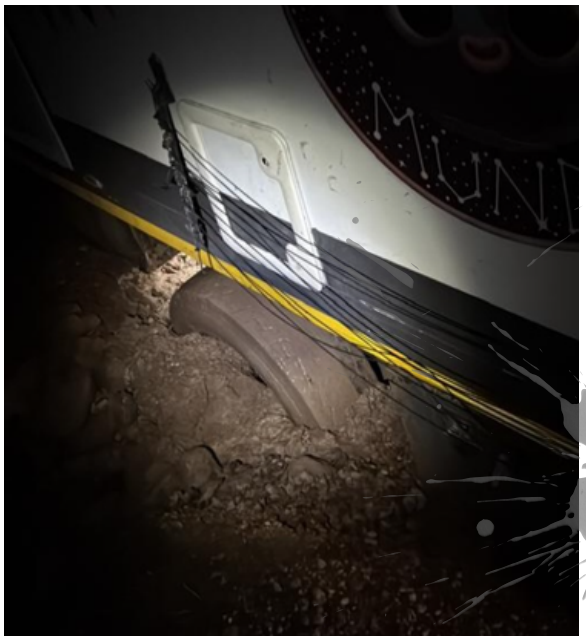
It was nighttime and we were in an area with leopards, lions and elephants, in the middle of the bush, stuck there with the truck close to rolling over.

That was when we thought: "Shit, what have we gotten ourselves into?" We decided to sleep there. Thanks to Starlink, I sent messages to people in the area and to a hotel, and the message reached a local group. People came to help us.

That night, the children and I were taken to sleep at a house while Dani stayed with the truck. Because it was the rainy season, it started pouring. A river formed underneath the truck, and that was when we feared it might roll over and stay there. If that happened, there were no tow trucks or anything capable of getting it out. In the morning, our rescuers called a tractor. It came and pulled the truck out.

The truth is that whenever bad things have happened to us, there has always been someone there to help. That has been the pattern throughout the journey. A lot of things have happened, but they always seem to end with someone helping us.

I think that is one of the greatest lessons of the journey: every challenge and difficult moment has been resolved thanks to the help of other people.



Once the novelty of nomadic life fades after years on the road, even crossing another continent, what is it that you are looking for now?

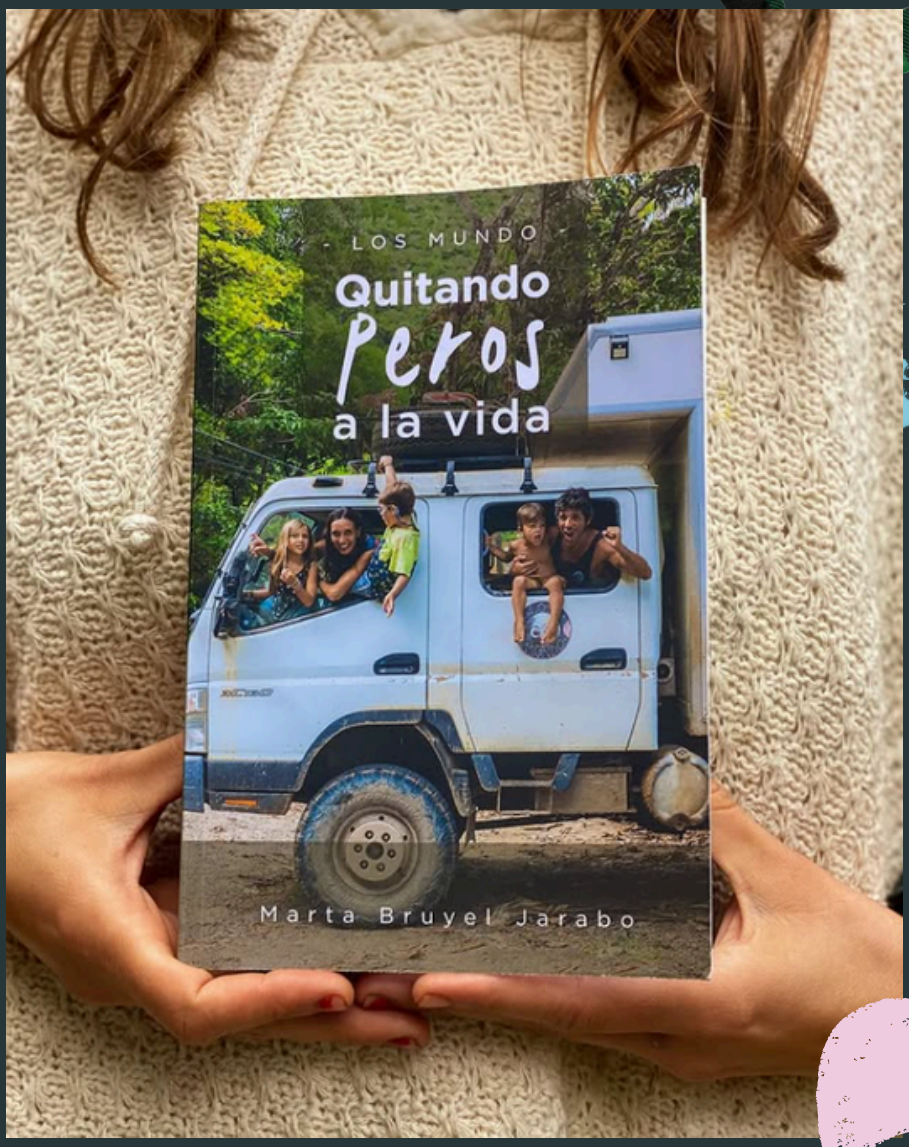
What really happened is that we loved that way of life. Once we got through the beginning, the hardest part because we had to balance travel, adventure, work and education, we realised we had adapted very well to that life and genuinely enjoyed it.

We had our own rhythms and our own time, and that was how we wanted to live that freedom. In the end, the nomadic lifestyle gives you freedom. It does not mean you do not work; you do, but when you choose.

We are not completely free. We still depend on society and work, but we have that feeling of freedom to say: I travel when I want, I stop when I want, I work when I want, and I organize myself in my own way, as a family and as individuals.

That feeling of freedom is what keeps us moving and makes us happy.

And it is not only about us. It is also seeing our children enjoying nature, meeting other kids, climbing trees, surfing, playing on the beach, living and experiencing the world. For me, that gave us a deep sense of fulfilment. That is what kept us going until now. And what are we looking for now? The children are growing, the truck has become too small, and we were getting a little tired of so many breakdowns.



But above all, the children are growing. We now have two preteens and can see they need other things. We want them to discover new interests and explore them more deeply. Travelling has shown them they enjoy climbing, diving and art; Dara is very artistic.

The problem is that always moving makes it hard to go deeper into those things. Now we want to give them time to focus on the activities they enjoy and see what adolescence is like while staying a little more settled.

Our idea is to live in each place longer. We are now going to South Africa so they can spend a school year there. Afterwards, we want to move somewhere else and stay longer, perhaps six months or full school years.







We want them to go deeper into activities and friendships. We have always said the journey would stop or change the moment we saw the children were no longer doing well, or if someone in the family wanted to stop. Nobody wants to stop today, but as parents we have realised they have other needs and we want to give them that. We will keep being guided by the well-being of the children and the family.

If you could face yourselves just after preparing the truck, what raw, realistic advice would you give yourselves?

We would tell ourselves to maintain the truck better from the start, keep up with it daily, and know more mechanics from the beginning.

Dani knows a lot now and has learned enormously, but when we left he knew almost nothing, and we did not maintain the truck properly.

For example, all the greasing should have been kept much more up to date. Over time, that was what started causing us problems.

We have learned as we went. So the advice would be to be better prepared from the beginning in mechanics and understand how to care for and maintain a truck, because it is not the same as a car or a motorhome.

That is the part we should have improved from the beginning.



How do you see the real, long-term impact of this nomadic life on children's development compared with a more traditional upbringing?

First of all, I do not like comparing, because I do not know how they would have turned out with a different upbringing, since we have never lived that. I would rather not make comparisons, but talk about what I see in my children now and the positive things this nomadic life has given them.

I see children who are extremely open and flexible. They have no problem talking to anyone: people from other cultures, people of different ages, whether it is a two-year-old child or an eighty-year-old man.

They are also very sensitive. They can see differences and understand that there is nothing wrong with them. They are able to understand and help others. They have a strong ability not to generalize and to see people from a much broader perspective.

They understand there are different ways to live and different ways to exist in the world, and that all of them can be valid. I think that makes them more sensitive, more open, and also very flexible.

People ask me: "What do the children think?" And honestly, almost everything sounds fine to them. Now we say, "We're going to school," and they say, "Okay, school." If we're going to South Africa, then okay, let's go.





It is as if they trust the process, go forward and dare to try. They know things may not be easy at first, but they will know how to handle them.

They are very communicative, talk things through and express their emotions. They are also very confident in themselves and their abilities, both socially and physically, because they have spent so much time in nature and move through it comfortably.

I think those are the things travel has given them.

I do not know how they would be with a different education, but I do believe travelling has given them this: openness, confidence, flexibility and adaptability. They adapt to everything.



¿What comes next for Los Mundo in the near future? What was it like deciding to sell Run Run?

First, we decided to spend a school year in South Africa so the children could learn English. We chose South Africa because we still wanted to stay on the African continent and, from the places we knew, it seemed the easiest option logistically and for finding a school we liked.

The original plan was to reach Kenya, leave the truck there, fly to Spain for the summer because we wanted to see our family, return to Kenya and then drive the truck down to South Africa along another route.

That sounded good, but we arrived exhausted. Africa gave us plenty of mechanical problems. Later the truck was running really well, in good condition and working beautifully, but Africa is a more demanding continent: everything is a little more complicated, border crossings get tiring, visas have to be paid for, and because the culture is so different, it is also more mentally exhausting because you are more alert.

We were exhausted and suddenly said: “What if we ship the truck, sell it, and just go to South Africa without it?”

We made the decision very quickly. There were maybe three weeks left before leaving, and we had already found somewhere to store the truck. But at the Kenyan border, leaving it there was not easy. Other complications came up and everything started feeling difficult again.

All the bureaucracy in Africa had become exhausting and we did not want to deal with any more of it.

So we thought: “What if we take this weight off our shoulders and travel lighter?” Just thinking about it brought a sense of relief. We felt that perhaps that chapter had already ended. If we were going to begin a new stage, we needed to close the previous one.



It was a very quick decision and we went ahead. Leaving the truck was hard, but now we believe it was best. One chapter ended and another began.

The truck gave us enormous freedom, but now it would limit it. If we want to move elsewhere or go to another continent, we would always have to take it with us. And we are in a different stage now. The truck chapter is over.

We feel freer with just ourselves to move and that sense of lightness. We are going to South Africa. We already have the school arranged and are working on the visas. That is our immediate future.



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For a trip like the one you're planning, I think this is one of the most useful apps because it automatically records your GPS route, even without an internet connection, and visually builds your journey on a map.

Later, you can add photos, videos, text and places you visited, and share the entire route with other people.

In 2026, they also expanded the planning features considerably: you can now prepare your trip from a computer, organize destinations, save activities and reservations, and even create suggested itineraries.

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EL FUCHA



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EL FUCHA



El Fucha did not begin as a camper: it started as an old Unimog 426 that had spent years out of service. In 2019, Jhon Gajardo found a 1974 workshop truck at a Chilean Army auction and saw something that, to others, might have been simply an old machine: the possibility of building a home capable of reaching almost anywhere. Then came the transformation, the kilometres, the secondary roads, and a life increasingly connected to nature. Since 2021, El Fucha has travelled across Chile, becoming much more than a vehicle: a home, a tool for exploration, and an inseparable part of the journey.

Today, accompanied by Toly and with new projects in mind, Jhon tells us what it really means to live when your home is also capable of making its own way forward.





Getting a truck ready takes time, money and effort. What was it that finally set the journey in motion and pushed you to leave your comfort zone behind completely?

There was a period of my life that simply flew by. Between thirty and forty, I basically did nothing but work. I went home mostly to sleep and, living in a city as large as Santiago, I felt life was slipping through my hands.

I felt another kind of life was possible, and that being trapped inside the machinery of productivity was not how I wanted to live. That is when the idea of building a vehicle began to take shape. On some trips, I met people who lived or travelled in motorhomes and thought I could live in a vehicle, carry only what I really needed, step away from consumerism and work differently. After the pandemic, remote work also became possible and that helped enormously because suddenly there was another way to make it work. Deep down, what I was looking for was a different way of life.





It was a leap into the unknown. You never know whether it will turn out the way you imagine. There is a lot of romanticism around living in a motorhome, and then you discover it is not always like that. But I took the chance and started living differently.

At first, the way I travelled was very different from today. Now it is more mature, less concerned with proving that everything has to be epic.

The vehicle also came from my connection with nature. I had always done trekking, mountaineering, diving and outdoor activities. If I was going to change my life, I wanted a vehicle that could take me to those places.

That is why it had to be 4x4. I looked at large Jeeps, F-250, F-350 and RAM pickups, until I saw some French travellers in a camper-converted Unimog. I fell in love at first sight. Once I understood its capabilities–flexible chassis, portal axles, ground clearance, wading ability and relatively compact size–I knew it was the vehicle for the life I wanted.

Why a truck instead of a motorhome, and why a Unimog?

The vehicle choice comes from the fact that I have always felt deeply connected to nature. And if I was going to change my lifestyle from a completely urban setting, I wanted to change it for a life right in the middle of nature. I wanted to be able to reach wherever I wanted to go.

I saw some French travellers in a Unimog and I was amazed by that truck. I had seen those vehicles before in military parades and things like that, and they had always seemed imposing and impressive to me. When I finally saw one converted into a camper, I fell in love at first sight.

After that, I started researching the features and capabilities of the vehicle, and that only made me more interested. I immediately knew that a Unimog had to be the vehicle that would let me reach all the places I wanted to reach.

It is not a particularly heavy vehicle, but it has remarkable capabilities on uneven terrain. For example, its chassis can flex almost completely, helping keep all four wheels in contact with the ground.

It has portal axles at both the front and rear, increasing ground clearance and allowing it to get over obstacles. It also has excellent river-fording ability. Among 4x4 trucks, it is a monster; they call it the climbing truck. And although it is small for a truck, its size is ideal for getting into cities, small towns, narrow roads and places like that.

If you could redesign El Fucha's interior or mechanical setup from scratch, knowing what you know today, what would you remove immediately?

I'm not sure "remove" is the right word. If I built El Fucha again, the first thing I would do is keep the camper lower.

I wanted to be able to walk comfortably inside, so I raised it quite a lot. These trucks have a low centre of gravity, which helps them handle uneven terrain and significant side slopes. Raising the camper also raised the centre of gravity.

Also, when I take secondary roads or "get creative" and start looking for or making my own track, the height has limited me several times. I have even had to climb onto the truck roof and cut branches just to get through.









That would be the main thing I would do differently.

The other thing is that I would have designed a space for a wood stove from the beginning. Gas heating works perfectly, even in Chilean and Argentine Patagonia during winter, but it is not the same as having a wood stove.

Wood gives off more heat, lets you dry clothes and warms the camper in a very different way from gas or diesel heating.

I have a wood stove now, but I had to adapt the space, as well as the flue outlet and draft. It works well, but if I built it again, I would include it in the original design.

On off-road routes or at border crossings, what was the critical moment when you thought the journey might end right there?

Two moments come to mind.

The first was on the way to Patagonia Park, near Cochrane. We were climbing when I saw some guanacos and stopped to take photos from the cab. I had my foot on the brake pedal so we would not roll backwards. Suddenly, the pedal went straight to the floor and the truck started rolling backwards downhill. El Fucha weighs around six tonnes and had completely lost its brakes. I pressed the pedal and nothing happened; even the handbrake could not stop it.

The truck began picking up speed in reverse and there was a bend ahead. When I turned, it rocked heavily to one side, and at that moment I thought we were going to roll over.



The only thing I could think of was using one feature of the gearbox: the Unimog can reverse in several gears. I put it in reverse and fourth, slowed down, then shifted through third, second and first until I stopped.

I had no brakes. I drove back to Cochrane using low gears to keep the truck under control.

The other moment was on the Andean Route, near the Bolivian border.

I had been warned about a “red zone” where vehicle smugglers steal cars and take them into Bolivia.

In the distance I saw dust and four mining-style pickups appeared. When they saw me, they stopped.

I kept moving, ready for anything. The vehicles had no plates. They passed slowly, staring defiantly.

I waved; they did not.

I thought they might force me out. I was even prepared to ram them if necessary.

Eventually they carried on and I kept driving, shaken. That was another moment when I thought the journey might end.

What local custom or reaction during your travels left you completely thrown off and unsure of how to respond?

The religious festivals of northern Chile come to mind.

There is a mixture of Catholic tradition and Indigenous cultures, with a very strong connection to Pachamama and to the land. I had heard stories about it, but experiencing it is very different.

I was struck by the depth of their feelings toward Pachamama, the land and natural cycles.

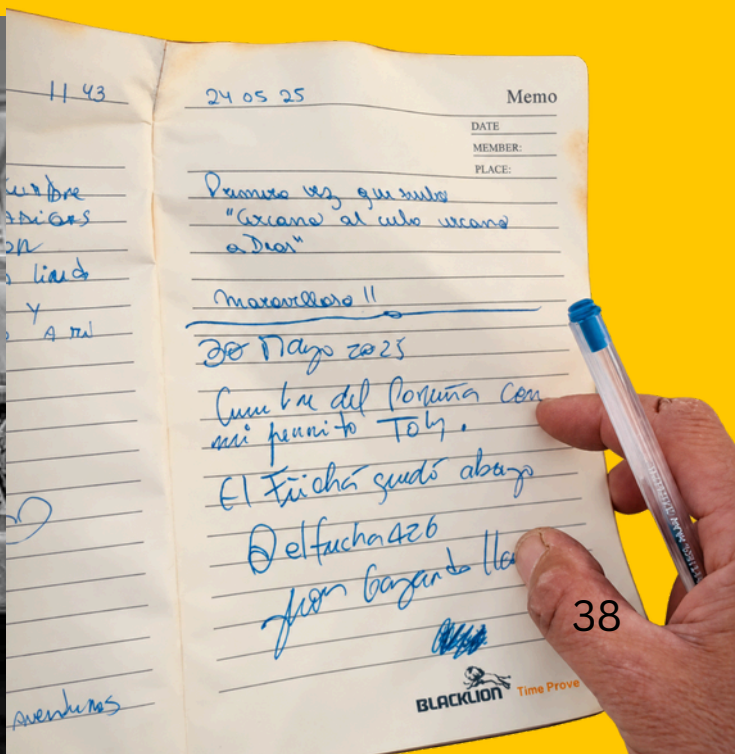
It is something you do not see everywhere. Those of us who live in cities are often deeply disconnected from our surroundings, from natural cycles, from respect for the land and even from the simple act of giving thanks to it.

That cultural blend and that way of relating to the land really caught my attention.

What is it like sharing the adventure with Toly, and is there any story that captures that special bond with a four-legged travel companion?

Toli. I have to say that Toli is the best thing that could have happened to me. Travelling with a dog like him is incredible. And Toli actually grew up living in the truck..







Since he was little, the only home Toli has ever known is El Fucha, while his backyard keeps changing everywhere we go. Now, at three and a half years old, we understand each other in an incredible way.

Sometimes we do not even need words to know what is coming, what needs to happen, what we have to do. Toli has taught me a lot. He is, I always say, a teacher.

He is a teacher of the present, because dogs like Toli truly enjoy wherever they are. If he feels like running into the sea, he runs into the sea. If he feels like taking a nap, he does it without guilt. He has taught me a lot about enjoying the place where I am, the moment I am living, and understanding that sometimes the best time to do something is simply now. And if you feel like doing it, why not? That is something I value deeply about Toli.

He is incredibly loyal. He is always ready to explore and absolutely loves going on adventures. He is a great dog, honestly. He was also raised to be very affectionate and friendly with people, while still being protective of his surroundings, especially El Fucha and me.

So Toli plays several roles in my life. One story that comes to mind–the biggest one–was the time I lost him. We were at a religious festival in the Chilean Altiplano, in a place called Estación San Pedro, at the foot of the San Pedro and San Pablo volcanoes. It is a tiny village. The locals invited us to join the celebration, so we went, and during the afternoon and evening I let Toli off to play with the other dogs in the village.

Every so often he would come back to where I was, look at me, and we would greet each other as if he were saying, “I’m here,” and I would answer, “Okay, keep playing.” That was our routine the whole time. He was having an amazing time with his dog friends while I spent time with the local people.

Then, at around midnight, they started setting off fireworks during the festival. I know fireworks scare Toli, and suddenly he disappeared. He was gone and I could not find him. When the fireworks ended, I started whistling for him–we have a particular whistle that normally brings him back–but he did not come.

playing, and Toli wasn't with him. Sometimes when Toli wanders off and we don't find each other right away–for example, when we go out hiking–he goes back to the truck by himself and waits there until I return. So I knew there was a chance he might be there. I went back to the truck hoping to find him waiting for me, but he wasn't there.

He wasn't there. The hours kept passing while I walked through the village, whistling and shouting his name. I must have looked completely crazy, but he just wouldn't appear. I kept doing that until three in the morning, until finally I thought my last chance, my very last option, was to go out searching in the truck so he might hear its very distinctive sound, recognize it, and come toward the vehicle.

I went back to the truck, got everything ready and started driving slowly around the village. He didn't appear. Nothing. By then I was incredibly anxious.

Then I began driving beyond the edge of the village, out toward the countryside where there were no houses anymore. I was doing that when, suddenly, I looked in the rear-view mirrors and saw Toli running behind the truck, completely frightened and trying to catch up with me.

I stopped. We hugged. I honestly think both Toli and I were crying. We had finally found each other. He climbed into the truck, and that was the end of the anguish, after around three or four hours of looking for him.

A smaller story is that sometimes, in villages or little towns where Toli and I are walking around, shopping, running errands or whatever, there are people who recognize him. They follow us on Instagram and they recognize Toli before they recognize me.

They say, "Oh, look, there's Toli!" And sometimes they tell me they had already seen the truck parked somewhere and then, later, they see Toli and recognize him straight away. I find it absolutely hilarious because they recognize him. Me? They barely even notice me.





Many people travel to escape, while others travel in search of something. What truly motivates you to keep turning the ignition key every morning?

This is a slightly more philosophical question, because in the almost five years I have spent travelling and living in El Fucha, the way I experience this lifestyle has evolved.

At first, everything was new. I had to adapt and, somehow, everything had to be epic. Maybe there was also a foolish need to justify or prove that the decision I had made was right, because many people questioned it at the beginning.

Over time, that changed into a much calmer way of life, where living the experience itself became more important than showing it on social media. And that has been deeply fulfilling.

There are many experiences and moments that we no longer post. We keep them to ourselves because the journey has become more personal. It no longer has to be epic. I gradually realised that El Fucha is much more than a camper truck: it is my home.

It is like being able to take your house everywhere with you: to the beach, the mountains, the river, the lake or the forest.

What motivates me every day is that I am living where I want to live, doing what I want to do and living the life I want.

I do things that, if I lived in the city or had a normal job, I simply could not do. That is the greatest motivation: I am living the life I want to live.

Looking back at your first months on the road, what beginner's mistake did you make that now seems almost unthinkable?

The biggest beginner's mistake was how I drove the vehicle. I went from driving small vehicles, Jeeps and cars, to driving a Unimog truck. My truck has five levers just to operate it.

It is a whole learning process and almost an art. Anyone who drives a Unimog knows you have to learn how to truly use the vehicle's capabilities: what obstacles it can clear, how far you can enter a river, how to drive in snow, what depth is reasonable, what speed to use and how to work with the different gears.





At first, I made many mistakes because I thought the truck was basically just a “big Jeep.”

I still see it a little that way today, but the way I drive it has changed completely. Now I feel I know how to handle it in a way that lets me reach the places where I want to stay for as long as I choose.

I have spent a week on the slopes of volcanoes with no roads, reached more than five thousand metres above sea level carrying my home with me, entered forests and crossed rivers.

There are many driving mistakes I made in the beginning that I simply would not make today.

Behind the videos and photos, there are days when nothing works. What is your worst travel story that ended up becoming an invaluable lesson?

For this question, I am going back to the Altiplano and to the area where I had already been on high alert because of the vehicle smugglers. That day was difficult from the very beginning.

The terrain was terrible and also dangerous. There was the option of crossing illegally into Bolivia through an unofficial route–the same one used by the smugglers–driving a few kilometres and then re-entering Chile to avoid a climb above four thousand metres on a road in extremely poor condition.

Because I was already tense after the encounter with the smugglers, I did not want to cross illegally. I chose the climb. Almost nobody uses that route. Although it is a public road, it was in terrible condition, with enormous cracks. Driving was awful: I think it took me a couple of hours to cover barely ten kilometres.

I was tense because of the smugglers, the road and the steep terrain.

When I started descending near the Salar de Surire, I had been told to spend the night at the Polloquere hot springs. Then hail, sleet and snow began to fall.

Everything became extremely cold and the tension kept rising. I finally reached the hot springs and the wind was incredibly strong. The smell of sulphur was intense, and the place was nothing like what I had imagined.





I quickly chopped some wood to warm us up, set up Starlink, and Toli did not behave the way I expected. That was the last straw. I felt completely overwhelmed and started scolding Toli. At that moment I realized the problem was not him.

The problem was my own expectations, the tension of the road, the danger of the route, the cold, the hunger, and everything that had built up during the day.

I calmed down, hugged Toli, packed everything away again, and we moved to another place that ended up being fantastic. The lesson was understanding that it is okay to feel overwhelmed, and that it is something quite common in this lifestyle. What matters is what you do when you reach that point and how you react.

Routes end, repeat themselves, or evolve. What real future projects do you have, both as travellers and for El Fucha as a vehicle?

In the short term, El Fucha is going through a maintenance period. We are servicing the camper, making a few changes to make it more comfortable for the kind of travel and lifestyle we want, and doing preventive mechanical maintenance.

Because we like travelling through remote places, we need El Fucha to be one hundred percent reliable to avoid problems on the road. In the medium term, we want to keep developing projects with the truck and visit places in Chile we still have not reached. We also want to explore more creative off-road routes.

We would like not only to visit, but to live for a while in places that really caught our attention: the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctica Region, especially Tierra del Fuego; Bahía Inglesa, which we love; and Arica, where we made great friends.

Further ahead, the idea is to begin travelling around South America. We are not especially rigid with our plans.

We adapt them as we go and new interests appear. We are also working on a project that we want to turn into a Heritage Expedition across Chile.

During these four years travelling across Chile from end to end–from Puerto Williams to Visviri–we discovered places, people, and traditions that we reached mainly thanks to the vehicle.

The idea is to capture that cultural, natural, and human heritage in a professional documentary. We are seeking funding and already have a promotional video and an information dossier for people or companies interested in joining the project.

The project is called “Heritage Expedition Across Chile,” and the idea is to take El Fucha to little-known places that are worth showing in a professional way.

So El Fucha stays on the road: first maintenance, then new routes across Chile, longer stays in places that left a mark on us, the documentary project and, further ahead, South America.











ATTENTION





HERITAGE EXPEDITION

The project is taking shape, and over the coming months we will meet with the first partners joining this route through Chile's identity and extreme exploration.

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1937

THE UNDERGROUND JOURNEY OF SALT



WHY IS THERE A SALT FLAT IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS FOREST?

IN MANITOBA, A SALINE CLEARING BREAKS THE BOREAL LANDSCAPE AND OPENS A WINDOW INTO THE SUBSURFACE. MCARDLE SALT FLAT FOLLOWS CLUES TO A STORY CONNECTING ANCIENT SEAS, GLACIERS AND A SMALL INDUSTRY THAT ONCE TRIED TO HARNESS WATER RISING FROM THE GROUND.



West of Lake Winnipegosis, the forest meets an unexpected boundary. The vegetation suddenly breaks, exposing reddish, damp ground covered by little more than scattered plants. Between the trees and the open soil lies a border not created by fire or logging. It was drawn by water rising from below.

The place is called McArdle Salt Flat. It lies near the Red Deer River in Manitoba, far from the coast and from the arid landscapes we usually associate with salt flats. A Manitoba Geological Survey guide describes a clearing roughly one hundred by three hundred metres: a small opening within the forests and wetlands of Manitoba's boreal interior.

Its size could easily make it go unnoticed. Yet here, a story unfolds on a continental scale.

At several points across the site, brine rises to the surface: water loaded with dissolved salts. Its presence alters the soil and restricts much of the vegetation normally found in the forest. What looks like an absence—the space where trees are missing—is actually evidence of an active process.

The surface reveals its consequences. To find the origin, we have to follow the water's path down into the rocks below.

McArdle pertenece a una franja de manantiales salinos situada al oeste de Lake Winnipegosis. Los estudios regionales han identificado más de sesenta y cinco sitios con surgencias activas o señales de actividad reciente.

Algunos se reconocen por el terreno desnudo; otros, por cambios de color o por pequeños puntos de descarga.

La sal no siempre forma una cubierta blanca. En este ambiente húmedo puede permanecer disuelta, mezclarse con otras aguas e impregnar el suelo. El paisaje ofrece indicios menos evidentes que los de un salar desértico, pero igualmente reveladores.



The most immediate explanation would be to imagine water from an ancient ocean preserved beneath Manitoba.

Regional analyses, however, indicate that water in these springs is meteoric in origin: it comes from precipitation or snowmelt that entered the subsurface.

The salt has a different story. It comes from minerals accumulated in ancient geological formations and dissolved during underground circulation.

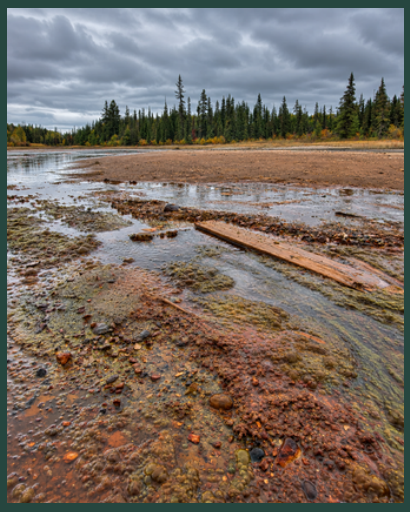
The spring therefore brings together two journeys: that of water moving through the rocks and that of the salts those rocks preserved. Their meeting reaches the surface in a clearing where chemistry changes the rules of the forest.

Beneath this region lies the northeastern edge of the Williston Basin, a vast sedimentary basin covering parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and several northern states of the United States.

Over hundreds of millions of years, different environments left layers of sediment there. There were inland seas, accumulations of carbonates and periods when evaporation concentrated salts until they were deposited as minerals.

Those deposits formed evaporites. Among their components is halite, the sodium chloride we know as common salt. When relatively fresh water comes into contact with it, it can dissolve the mineral and carry those dissolved elements through the subsurface.

THE SEAS THAT LEFT THEIR MINERALS



Studies of the springs west of Lake Winnipegosis describe waters dominated by sodium and chloride, with a chemical composition fully consistent with that process.

The rocks also provide pathways. Some carbonate formations can store and transmit water through their pores and fractures. The old McArdle well encountered brine in Devonian carbonates, one important part of the underground system through which this mineralized water continues to circulate.

The subsurface therefore works as a network of reservoirs and flow paths. But the way that entire system functioned changed dramatically when an enormous load of ice covered the region.

THE PRESSURE OF A FROZEN CONTINENT

During the Pleistocene, Manitoba was repeatedly covered by vast ice sheets. Their advance reshaped the surface and created enough pressure to alter the movement of groundwater deep below the surface.

Using geochemical and isotopic data, Stephen Grasby and other researchers proposed that this load may have temporarily reversed the regional flow within the Williston Basin.

Meltwater, driven by the immense pressure of the ice, may have entered permeable formations and moved farther into the interior of the basin itself.

The models indicate that this movement may have extended for hundreds of kilometres. Along the way, the water encountered evaporites, dissolved minerals and increased its salt content.

As the glaciers retreated, the load that had altered the system disappeared. Pressures changed again and groundwater circulation began to reorganize. Part of the mineralized water became incorporated into a flow directed toward discharge zones along the edge of the basin.

This regional model helps explain the springs we see today. Research has also identified a strong signal of Pleistocene meltwater in many of these brines.

At McArdle, the small scale of a single seep offers a glimpse into the consequences of that vast underground readjustment.



THIRST IN WET SOIL

For a plant, having water around its roots does not necessarily mean it can absorb it. When salts become concentrated in the soil, they alter the conditions that allow this exchange to take place.

Salinity makes it harder for water to enter the roots. At the same time, high concentrations of sodium and chloride can affect tissues and physiological processes. In ground that appears wet, a plant can still experience severe water stress.

This difficulty helps explain the opening at McArdle. Many forest species are excluded from the most saline areas. Salt-tolerant plants find a space there that other species cannot occupy.







THE COLOURS AND VISITORS OF THE SALT FLAT

McArdle's reddish hue adds another clue. In springs north of Lake Winnipegosis, iron staining and microbial mats have been documented around discharge points.

The oxidation of minerals and the activity of microorganisms can help colour these environments, although assigning every tone in the landscape to a specific cause would require analysis.

Animals also respond to the chemistry of the place. Sodium and chloride are essential to the body, and some herbivores seek out mineral sources to supplement their diet.

A report of traditional knowledge compiled for Manitoba Hydro records associations between the regional salt flats, moose and deer. It includes references to their historical use as hunting areas because of the animals visiting them.

The same salt that limits many plants can provide a resource for certain mammals. This relationship helps explain the clearing as a selectively rich environment, with different opportunities and challenges for each organism.

The water, meanwhile, continues on its journey. Geological mapping describes drainage from McArdle toward the Red Deer River system. The spring connects the subsurface with a surface landscape: it reaches the ground, transforms the terrain and becomes part of the region's water circulation.

THE PROMISE OF AN INDUSTRY

In 1937, a group of investors from Swan River saw commercial potential in the brine. Led by L. J. McArdle, they organized the Northern Salt Syndicate to make use of the resource in the Red Deer River area.

The initiative led to the drilling of a 71.8-metre well. According to records compiled in the provincial geological guide, brine appeared in Devonian carbonates at a depth of 24.3 metres, and the flow increased toward the bottom. The reported discharge was about 217 litres per minute.

The concentration was also remarkable: historical measurements from the well indicated salinity between 24 and 26 percent. These figures belong to that operation and differ from the salinity that surface springs may show today, where the water can mix with rainfall and runoff.

A small evaporation plant was installed north of the salt flat. During late July and August 1941, it produced approximately 22.6 tonnes of salt for the local market.

The project had shown that the resource could be extracted and processed. The challenge was sustaining the business in a region where distance and transportation weighed as heavily as the abundance of salt water.



WHAT REMAINS





The Manitoba Historical Society attributes the operation's lack of profitability to the great distance from markets, transportation costs and internal problems. The salt was there, but turning it into a competitive commercial product required overcoming conditions that the spring itself simply could not change.

The institution's photographic records, updated in November 2025, document the spring and the remains of the former industrial installation. That industrial footprint adds a human scale to a story that stretches much further back in time.

McArdle preserves all those different scales in one place. The minerals recall ancient marine and evaporitic environments. The water carries signs of groundwater circulation altered by glaciation. The soil and vegetation show what happens when brine finally reaches the open air. The remains of the operation speak of an economic expectation that never managed to prosper.

Each layer offers another way to read and understand the forest clearing.

In a territory of vast lakes and extensive forests, McArdle occupies only a small opening. Yet here the landscape reveals something that normally remains hidden: the continuous movement of water through the rocks beneath our feet.

Salt reaches the surface and the forest responds. Beneath both, an ancient story remains in motion.

Fuentes: Manitoba Geological Survey, guía de campo de McArdle Salt Flat; Grasby y colaboradores (2000), geoquímica de manantiales salinos y flujo regional de la cuenca de Williston; Grasby y Chen (2005), recarga subglacial; Manitoba Historical Society, McArdle Salt Works; Burchill y Kenkel (1991), vegetación de salares boreales; Manitoba Hydro (2011), conocimiento tradicional regional.

CASANETA



Before La Casaneta existed, there was already a desire to discover the world. Melisa began travelling alone and, when Aarón joined the adventure, they explored different countries together by plane, bus, ferry, shared vehicles and even hitchhiking along the way. With the arrival of Almendra and later Nahual, travelling stopped being only a couple's adventure and became a family project. Their answer was to build their own home on wheels: La Casaneta, a project that took nearly two and a half years and today allows them to travel across Chile while educating their children on the road. With no final destination, and the United States, Africa and Asia among their next dreams, Melisa and Aarón tell us how a family learns to build not only a vehicle, but a completely different way of life.

Photo courtesy of CASANETA



Every overlanding project begins with an idea that can sometimes seem irrational. What was the raw transition like from having it on paper to holding the keys and setting off on that first day?

The first thing was love, although it all began with me (Melisa), travelling alone to Ireland with the simple desire to discover the world.

Aarón came later, and when we started moving around Europe together–by plane, bus, ferry, BlaBlaCar and even hitchhiking–everything flowed naturally. We travelled through each country's most iconic places and, without really noticing, the world became our true home. I think that desire to discover is what really drives us. The transition was not difficult: we are professionals with good careers, and because we are not very consumerist, we can save quickly and keep travelling.



Sharing the cab and living space every day requires some survival rules. Do you have any unwritten code for handling family or couple life when everything goes wrong?

I think our success as a couple is that we genuinely get along. There is love and respect and, after more than ten years together–almost eight living 24/7–we still do not get bored.

Each of us does what we want, when we want. Honestly, after so much time together, I do not know how we have not ended up killing each other–laughs. I know many couples would not handle it.



The children help too: they are funny, but a lot of work, so at home we never stop. Even so, it feels different and rewarding because we do it at our own pace.

I think Aarón has been more patient than me. Becoming a mother changed me completely, 180 degrees, and becoming parents was a huge shock.

But despite everything, we listen to each other, we love each other, and always try to do what is best for one another.

Travelling in this kind of vehicle attracts attention, but its size also creates problems. What is the worst place you entered by mistake, and how did you get out?

That was Aarón's idea. He wanted a truck, and at first I said no because it made me feel unsafe. I thought everyone would want to rob us.

But Aarón contacted a Spanish couple who were in Arica, and we went to meet them. They were older, around 65, and had travelled extensively in a truck, even through Africa.

They told us it was very safe because, being so high, it is extremely difficult to open the door from outside. And it is true, because I cannot even reach the door of our own home; Aarón always has to open it –laughs–.







The road is not always kind. Tell us about the moment of greatest physical or mechanical vulnerability you faced in the middle of nowhere.

Yes, we have had a few moments.

For example, in the Altiplano we were heading to some hot springs when rain washed away part of the dirt road. It was a one-way track, so we could not even reverse easily. The good thing is that the truck has power, and in moments like that you have to stay calm and breathe.

I, Melisa, get out, guide Aarón and, with plenty of patience, we manage to turn around. Things like that happen, and sometimes there is nothing else to do: turn around and find another route. It is part of the adventure, honestly, and we take it quite well. I will not deny it can be frustrating, but nobody says much, because what is the point? In the end, this is what we chose, and we enjoy it anyway.

And people always help, which is great. Everywhere we go, we find people willing to lend a hand, offer advice or simply share a smile that brightens the road.

That is one of the beautiful parts of travelling.



In what country or region did you feel your Western assumptions completely fall apart when faced with a very different culture?

Every place has shown us very different realities.

For example, in Greece people would gather in cafés to drink coffee and smoke cigarettes, and although the language is very difficult, people are very warm.

In Russia, the metro really surprised us: some stations are incredibly deep, almost like real bunkers, and the people... well, let's just say they had their own vibe –laughs–



One of the strongest experiences was visiting a concentration camp. For me, it was horrible; I could truly feel the horror experienced by the people who were there. It is one of those things that stays with you forever.

In Africa, on the other hand, what struck us most was seeing people eat with their hands in restaurants, something very different from what we were used to.

And in India, the number of people living on the streets was very striking, but at the same time the country is beautiful.

Anyway, I don't know, we like everything because everything is different from what you know. And travelling through Europe and experiencing part of the war up close is also pretty crazy.

Every place has its own world, and that is exactly what makes travelling worthwhile.

There is a lot of romanticism around overlanding. What part of your early days became a real logistical problem that nobody saw on social media?

Without a doubt, the hardest part of this entire process was building La Casaneta.

It took us almost two and a half years and it was exhausting, mainly because we had almost no help from anyone. And we were in the city where Aarón's entire family lives.







To make things even harder, I had only recently had Nahual, so between raising the children, the construction and the lack of support, those were some very intense months.

The truth is, it was pretty tough. Many times we wanted to give up on the whole thing, quit and say: “This is as far as we go.”

But the desire to have our own space, to build something that was ours, was stronger than the exhaustion. And although it was difficult, we managed to keep going. Looking back now, I know every bit of effort was worth it.

Looking back, what was the most useless expense or modification you made to the project before understanding what life on the road was really like?

I’m not sure any expense was completely useless, but there are definitely several things we would change.

Where do we even start? –laughs–

The house ended up being very heavy and very tall; that is something we would definitely improve. The bathroom was also quite expensive and, honestly, I don’t think it is the most practical setup for a family of four.

The overall design could be improved too. But despite everything, we love it. It is ours, it is reliable and the mechanics are simple.

Even with all its “flaws” –because it is far from being a perfect home– we have our own space, and we have been able to calmly find solutions to each problem as it comes along.

In the end, that is what really matters.















Long-term travel toughens and changes you. What part of your former life have you lost for good since living on the road?

I think we have lost the traditional way of living.

Having a fixed schedule, working from 8 to 6, living in a permanent home... today it would be very difficult to return to that life. I am not saying we could not do it if necessary, because people adapt, but the truth is we are always thinking about travelling again.

And when we are travelling, we never think about going back to the city.

We also lost the traditional way of studying. Going to school, following rigid schedules and sitting inside classrooms is no longer for us. Now we homeschool, and I think it is amazing.

I love being able to learn at our own pace, anywhere, and seeing the children grow with that freedom.

It is a different rhythm of life, and honestly I would not trade it for anything.

How do you handle the children's schooling, and what system works best for you and gives the best results?

For now, we educate them at home, and most of the time I, Melisa, teach them. I follow the textbooks for each grade, and honestly I do not find it difficult.

Almendra is in Grade 4 this year, and I find it incredible because I give her the material and she moves through it at her own pace.





She learns very easily and, whenever I can, I reinforce what she is learning.

At this point, she can follow the textbook alone and move ahead on her own. She is also a very good reader: she reads a lot for her age.

We also have online English and chess lessons, but I have not enrolled her in an online school because I am anti-screen. I would rather wait until she is older.

With Nahual, who is younger, I do not push him, although he has his preschool and kindergarten books. He also likes doing schoolwork like his sister. Sometimes I teach him, other times Almendra does, and somehow he picks things up by osmosis too –laughs–.

A life project on wheels is always evolving. Where do you see La Casaneta heading in the coming years, and what modifications are planned for the vehicle?

The truth is that our project is here for the long run. We plan to keep travelling for a long time, God willing. Our plans include going to the United States for a holiday –laughs–, seeing the Atlantic coast we have not visited yet, going to Disneyland and taking a cruise. The idea is to buy an RV there and travel for about six months, which is how long the visa lasts.



Then, return to Chile, keep exploring our country, and later cross into Africa to reach Asia. I am dying to discover Asia; it is one of my biggest dreams.

Modify La Casaneta? That is difficult, honestly. Maybe what comes next is a 2.0 version someday –laughs–. But for now, we are taking things step by step, enjoying each stage. Plans are always changing.

The first time we travelled, we were younger and had no children, backpacking through Europe, Africa and Asia. We were in India when my mother became ill and had to return. We would have kept going, but came back.

Back in Chile, we found work and decided to have a child. We went through insemination and Almendra was born. She was a wonderful baby who won us over, so we decided to have another. We tried again, but this time it did not work.

I was feeling depressed and said to Aarón, “Let’s go travelling.” He agreed, but we could no longer travel as before: now we had a baby. So we decided the best way was with an RV, giving our daughter emotional stability.

We travelled to the United States, to “the best of the best,” looking for an RV. The plan was to reach Chile, but in Guatemala we had to return because of the pandemic and because I became pregnant again.

Together, those two things were not workable. We returned to Chile, I was pregnant, and Aarón went back to work to save money and build our own RV. We chose to travel through Chile because my mum was getting older and we wanted to stay close in case anything happened. That is how our story changes and how we adapt. That is the beautiful part: life is not a fixed plan, but a road that takes shape as you travel it.








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COOKING ON THE ROAD

"SKILLET PIZZA IN UNDER 15 MINUTES"

(PLEASE SHARE THE RECIPES YOU ENJOY MOST ON EVERY TRIP)

- INGREDIENTS
- • Pizza dough (or a large tortilla for a quick version), tomato sauce, cheese, and toppings of your choice (such as ham, peppers, or mushrooms)..



STEP BY STEP:

1. Heat the skillet over low/medium heat for 2 minutes. Ideally, use a non-stick pan with a lid. Add a very thin layer of oil.

2. Place the rolled-out dough in the skillet. Cook for 3–4 minutes, until the bottom is lightly golden and the surface begins to firm up.

3. Flip the dough. The golden side should now face up. Reduce the heat to low.

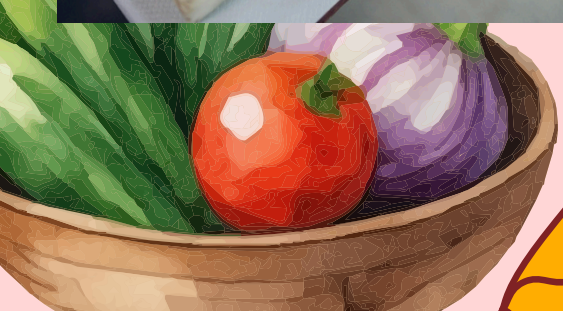
4. Quickly add the ingredients: tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese, and your preferred toppings. Avoid too much sauce or too many moist ingredients, as the pizza may become soggy.

5. Cover the skillet and cook over very low heat for 5–8 minutes. The lid is important because it traps the heat, allowing the cheese to melt while the dough finishes cooking.

6. Check the base. When it is golden and crisp and the cheese has completely melted, it is ready. If the cheese needs more time but the base is already golden, turn off the heat and leave it covered for another 2 minutes.

7. Finish off the heat with oregano, basil, a little olive oil, or some chilli if you like.

Important tip: keep the heat low after adding the toppings. If the heat is too high, the base will burn before the cheese has time to melt.







WHEN THE CAMPER BECOMES HOME TOO

DOGS ON WHEELS



Dr. Gabriel Jara
Veterinarian /
Traveller

For us, the landscape changes. For them, the backyard changes.

For us, the landscape changes. For them, the backyard changes.

Travelling with a dog in a camper has little to do with the perfect photo. There is hair on the bed, mud on the floor, spilled water and, if the dog is big, it will probably lie down exactly where everyone needs to walk.

But after a while, the vehicle stops being “the car” and becomes home.

In this same issue, Jhon tells us that Toli practically grew up in El Fucha. The house is always the same; what changes are the backyards.

As a veterinarian, that phrase describes a travelling dog quite well: it needs to recognize its sleeping place, its water, its people, and what stays normal when everything outside around it changes.

A BIG DOG DOESN’T COME IN CAMPER SIZE

When we build a camper, we think about beds, tanks, batteries, heating and storage space inside.

The dog usually enters the plan later.

And with a dog weighing 30, 40 or 50 kilos, you notice it quickly.

You need a place where it can lie down without blocking every movement inside the home, and a reasonably safe way to travel.

In small vehicles, there is often no room for a crate large enough for the dog. The solution has to fit the actual vehicle: a strong harness secured to a solid anchor point, a physical barrier from the cab, or an adapted space that prevents the dog from being thrown forward during hard braking.

There is no single solution because no two campers are alike.

The floor matters more than it seems.

A dog standing on a smooth surface constantly adjusts its posture with every turn, brake and movement of the vehicle. A rubber mat or non-slip surface can make a huge difference, especially for large or older dogs.

Height matters too.

Climbing in and out ten times a day from a tall truck is not the same for a young twenty-kilo dog as for a forty-kilo dog that is eight years old.

Then comes real life: the wet dog that walks in just after we finished cleaning, the one that shakes itself inside the camper, or the one that sleeps right in front of the drawer we need to open.

There is no technical solution for everything.

Part of travelling with them is accepting that they take up space, make a mess and change the way we live on the road.



THE ROUTINE BECOMES PORTABLE

Dogs usually adapt well to life on the move when things remain predictable: their blanket, water, sleeping place and walking routine.

When we arrive somewhere new, I prefer to explore it first with the dog on a leash. While he sniffs around, we notice what we could not see from the cab: livestock, other dogs, a nearby road or wildlife. Then we decide how much freedom he can have.

Letting him loose because “he always comes back” works until the day it stops working.

In this issue, Jhon tells exactly that story about Toli. During a festival in the Altiplano, he was playing and coming back every so often. Then the fireworks started. Toli got scared and disappeared for hours.

An intense fear response can completely change a dog’s usual behaviour.

A dog that always comes back may suddenly run to escape the noise.



That is why a visible ID tag, an up-to-date microchip and, for those travelling through remote places, a GPS tracker can be worth far more than relying only on obedience.

A ROAD DOG CANNOT LIVE IN A BUBBLE

One common mistake is raising a dog as if it will spend its whole life eating exactly the same food, drinking the same water and living in a perfectly controlled environment.

That may work at home. On the road, it does not.

Today you buy one brand of food and a hundred kilometres later it is gone. You cross a border and an open bag may be taken away. You change province, country, climate and even the water.

The problem is not that the dog is “delicate.” Often, we make it dependent on such a rigid routine that any change ends in diarrhoea.

A travelling dog needs some ability to adapt, and that adaptability can also be built.

THE MICROBIOME CAN BE TRAINED TOO

The intestinal microbiome —the community of microorganisms living in the gut— changes depending on what the dog eats and the environment it is exposed to.

If, from puppyhood, it is introduced to different proteins, formulations and foods, its digestive system deals with variety as something normal. That is very different from keeping it on a single kibble for years and then expecting any change to cause no problems.

Of course, changing food suddenly can cause diarrhoea. That is exactly why it makes little sense to discover that fragility thousands of kilometres from home.

For a healthy dog that is truly going to live on the road, I prefer it to experience variety from a young age and for food changes to be part of its life, rather than turning one particular brand into something impossible to replace.





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