

# VANLIFEZONE

Get out there!

Issue 7  
12/2022

## WHEN THE HUM OF THE ROAD CALLS

a family on the road in  
australia

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## CHASING THE LIGHT

two dogs and their dad on  
the road into the north

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## LEBANESE VANLIFE DREAMS

the power of staying  
true to your dreams





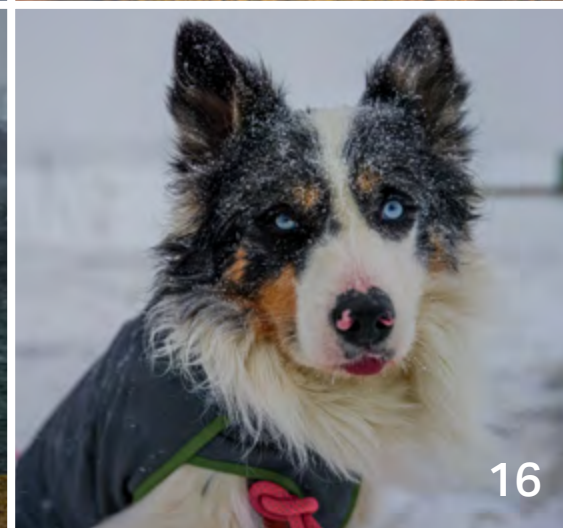


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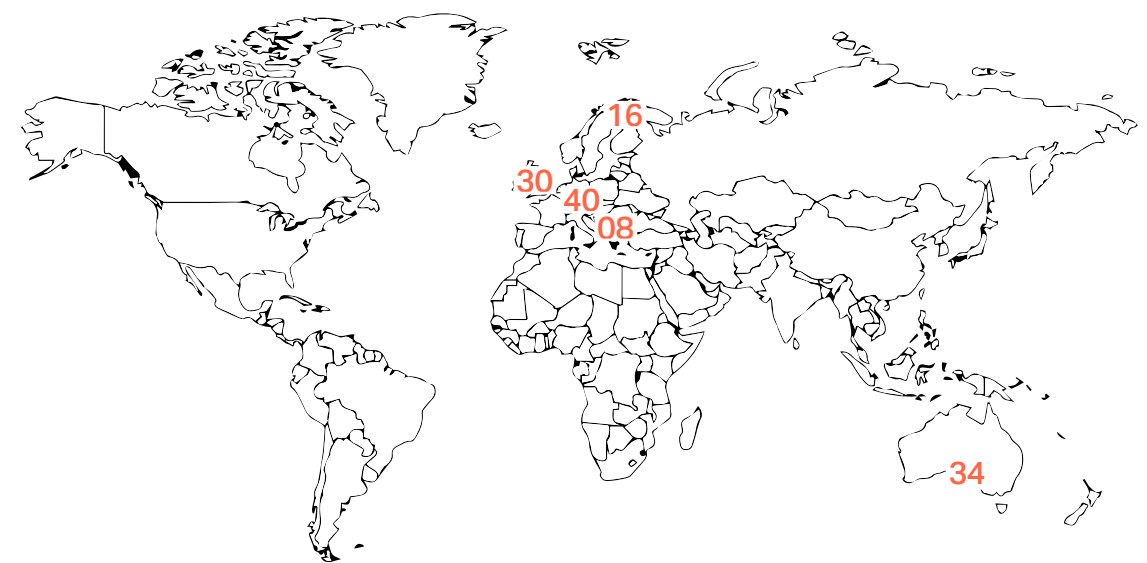
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# SLOWLY FINDING TRACTION

## Editorial

Another 3 months have passed and after taking the leap we're slowly finding traction. Just as much as an old van needs some time to get fired up - we need it too. Not only when it comes to the creation of the magazine but also to the process optimization and the communication within the team and with outside partners.

In order for our journey to be a long and pleasant one, we're completely content with taking things slowly. Step by step. And we keep on improving and learning with every step we take. You gave us so much loving and positive feedback on our last issue which gave us a huge amount of motivation and drive!

## Keep an Eye out for Our Giveaway

Speaking of outside partners...

To celebrate this adventurous year, the many amazing stories we've all experienced and the vanlifezone community we are organizing an "End of 2022" giveaway. We have teamed up with several awesome brands that provide sustainable and practical products for your outdoor adventures and your vanlife experience!

Be sure to stay tuned on our social media accounts because we'll be announcing the giveaway shortly to celebrate the end of 2022 and to start the New Year with a bang!



## You're in for a Treat

This beautiful issue bears another set of amazing stories from all around the world. Starting off with an article from Lebanon we get to experience the dream of vanlife that was pursued even though everybody else doubted it. We get the chance to discover Beirut and its troubled and colorful history.

In chasing the light you can discover the reports of Hrvoje, a Croatian who traveled north with his two dogs and a roof tent to find the northern lights. Want to know what the northern lights are and how to stay fit during the cold days? We got you covered!

As a cool alternative to freezing off your limbs in winter in northern Europe you could try discovering surfing in Cornwall during winter – if the shores of California or Australia are too farfetched.

Speaking of the coast of Australia, join a family of 5 and follow the call of the hum of the road in a warmer story that bears beauty and adventure even in the face of setbacks.

And finally to top it all off, join Chanti and Luki from Switzerland and the Netherlands and their venturesome cat Ollie, who has been to more than 18 countries and loves being on the road more than you would ever expect! Even with certain challenges, traveling with a cat can be just as rewarding and illuminating as any other adventure!

## Don't be Shy – Contribute Your Story!

As you can probably tell, this issue is a few articles shorter than the previous one. That's not because we didn't want to include more but because we received less submissions. That's totally fine – sometimes there are more and sometimes there less.

Our theory is that because the last issue included so many big accounts with more than 100.000 followers the average vanlifer was intimidated to send in their story. Don't be shy! Sometimes the articles and images by smaller accounts can be just as good, if not even better, than bigger ones.

So if you have a vanlife story to tell be sure to send your article to **[office@vanlifezone.com](mailto:office@vanlifezone.com)**!



**Florian Jaunegg**  
Editor in Chief & Project Manager



# LEBANESE VANLIFE DREAMS

@GER000000

COMMUNITY MEMBER

ARTICLE & PICTURES BY  
GREGORY

Life is either a very daring adventure or a very boring one. No gray areas here. Now I would have loved to tell you that “VanLife” was my dream since I can remember, that “Living more with less” was a concept I always cherished and that connecting with nature was my way of feeding my heart and soul... but nah, it is not how it all started.

My name is Gregory Kamel, I am a proud camper owner from Lebanon and my journey with Van life began 8 years ago.

They say we have two lives to live and that the second one begins when we realize we have only one. This reality hit me hard in the face, pun intended, when I was 14 years and I was involved in a disastrous car crash. I had severe face and jaw injuries and spent quite some time healing and I am not only referring to the physical pain.







During that period, my perspective of joy and fulfillment was slowly but surely taking a turn. I was always a very social and outgoing person but I came to realize that I do enjoy my alone time. So I took some time off of everyone and everything to reconnect with myself, unfold the deep layers, and most importantly find out what makes me happy.

And this is how it all started: I discovered an innate love for nature, vintage cars, handcraftsmanship, outdoor activities, camping, extreme adventures and while enjoying all of the above, I always had this inner voice in the back of my head whispering "get yourself a camper". I remember sharing the thought with my family and a few of my friends:

**keep dreaming was a common reply! That, dear readers, is exactly what I did.**

Nothing is impossible. Right? So I pursued my dream and fast forward a few years, I bought my first camper, or to be more accurate I bought "a piece of distressed junk that used to be a camper" and I am quoting my dad here. He did not see any potential in it, no one did to be fair but I was pretty convinced that under all the rust and inside all the wreck that ugly duckling had what it takes to be turned into a beautiful swan.

Now, before hopping on the restoration journey, I have to warn you: it is a very bumpy ride: buying a vintage camper is not for everyone, notably in Lebanon where there is not such a big van life movement. Hence, the limited possibilities of getting tips and advice on the repairing process. It got ugly sometimes and it was extremely draining and time consuming. Finding the parts was a mission, a nearly impossible one, getting someone to do the repairs was so complicated and very expensive that I decided to take charge of it myself and this meant a lot of DIY and I had zero experience in that.

I will not pretend it was all sugar and spice, I had to be very patient, I had to stay focused and I tried my best to trust the process specially that it was a ton of work with full overhaul restoration including many steps: from electrical work, painting, flooring, adding appliances, refurbishing the interior and adding my personal touches. After all, I was going to be spending most of my time in it so it had to reflect my personality.

5 years... 5 long years of trial and error, of pitching for small details and recruiting my father, brother and sometimes close friends to save on costs.

Major DIY work had to be done and many delays in shipments occurred but it was all for a greater cause. From an early bird to a night owl and everything in between: I lost track of my days, months, seasons and years... but I did it! Amidst the pandemic, while everyone was tucked away in the comfort of their homes, I was working hard to finalize my work of art. Yes indeed, my camper turned out to be a piece of art and I could not be prouder to watch it hit the roads in 2020.

Sitting behind the wheel, exploring new cities, discovering hidden gems in my beautiful country gave me great satisfaction and made me appreciate all the labor of love I invested in my camper.

When it comes to the van life movement in Lebanon and as I mentioned earlier, it is still quite shy. Therefore, you have to be fully



equipped for every adventure from fuel, food, water, solar panels to tents and warm sleeping bags. There are no parks nor stations to offer help if needed. I have to be well prepared before cruising and ready to get my hands dirty if any urgent repairs occur. The bright side is that I have been through a lot these past few years and I can overcome every hiccup along the road.

There is nothing more thrilling than being out there, in the wild, recharging the body, nurturing the soul and clearing up the mind. It is the ultimate form of unwinding.

People may find pleasure in having a good cup of coffee, chasing sunrises and sunsets, stargazing, enjoying the stillness, or simply wandering...

I consider myself lucky enough to be able to do all of the above, no strings attached. I learned how to live the moment and it brings me so much joy.

In a very agitated country, the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. I dreamt and what felt like an unattainable dream came to life!

**So keep dreaming.**



# BEIRUT HAS SEEN IT ALL

## A Closer Look at Lebanon's Capital

It is complete chaos that undoubtedly seems overwhelming at first. The loud honking of the countless cars and mopeds that clog the streets at all times. Crowds of people pushing along against a constantly changing backdrop of luxury and poverty. Smells that seem familiar and completely foreign at the same time. This is Beirut, the capital of Lebanon.

Once called the „Paris of the East,“ the city is a melting pot of denominations and cultures. A friendly cab driver explained that there is no such thing as a typical Beiruti, or even a typical Lebanese. The background of those who call Lebanon and its capital their home is simply too diverse. No one can control Lebanon, he said, and that is a good thing.

Stark contrasts do indeed exist in Beirut. People from all countries of the Arab region meet here. The wealthy and the poor live right next door to each other. Adherents of almost twenty recognized denominations live in the city. Various political movements fight

for power and sympathize with local or foreign actors who often pursue their very own interests and goals. That great differences also harbor great potential for conflict has been demonstrated more than once in Beirut's past.

During the civil war that broke out in 1975, the city was divided into a Christian east and a Muslim west. At that time, it was cut from north to south by the front line. Known as the „Green Line,“ this posed an insurmountable obstacle to the inhabitants of the two halves of the city. Anyone who wanted to cross it was exposed to fire from snipers on both sides and put his or her life in danger.

Nowadays there is little left to see of the war. The former „Green Line“ has long since become a busy artery in the capital again, and most of the war damage in the city center has been repaired. Repaired is an understatement even, the city center has been rebuilt from scratch. At the end of the war in 1990, hardly anything was left of this once magnificent social center. In its place was a wasteland littered with rubble. It was hardly possible to imagine that this had been a commercial stronghold, which was called the „Switzerland of the Middle East“ before the war because of its prosperity.







The reconstruction of the city center, including its state institutions, began in 1994, when a master plan for the revitalization of the destroyed surroundings was adopted. On one hand this included the reconstruction of historic buildings, on the other it also focused strongly on integrating prestigious architecture into the cityscape, for which international architectural competitions were held. To the north of the new city center, directly at the Beirut harbor, a huge area of the sea was filled with new land mass to reclaim the area, on which a modern city district with high-rise buildings and offices was to be built.

In contrast to the city center, which by now has been completed and is filled with life, this district, called the „Waterfront District,“ is still far from seeing its completion. At present, it is more like a dusty desert crisscrossed by wide streets whose traffic lights flash only for seagulls and occasional pedestrians. There is practically no car traffic, and why should there be? Apart from a few warehouses and a military base, the roads all lead to nowhere. However, they are very much appreciated by athletes for this very reason. Especially in the morning, before the midday heat really turns the area into a desert, many runners enjoy the empty asphalt tracks. This is a rare privilege, because in the rest of Beirut, sports along the crowded streets are hardly possible.

Zaituna Bay, an impressive marina surrounded by modern skyscrapers, including Lebanon's tallest tower, is a haven for the rich and all those who would like to be. Restaurants and coffee shops spread along a spacious pedestrian mall whose green lawns stand in strong contrast to the bleakness of the adjacent Waterfront District. In the shadow of the gleaming skyscrapers and with a view of the countless yachts, one quickly forgets what hard decades Beirut had to go through.

But when you take a closer look at the rows of high rise buildings, one structure stands out in particular. Behind a huge national flag waving in the wind, the completely shattered concrete skeleton of the former Holiday Inn Hotel stretches 24 stories into the sky. The former luxury hotel was in operation for only two years before it was hit by hundreds of bullets and missiles in the course of the civil war. Unlike most other destroyed buildings, it has not been demolished or renovated to this day. It towers over Beirut as a memorial to darker times and is a reminder of a past that is slowly becoming invisible with the new buildings erected throughout the rest of the city.

When over 2700 tons of ammonium nitrate, which were improperly stored at the port, exploded in August 2020, the image of the „new“ Beirut was deeply shaken. The huge blast wave of this

explosion caused severe damage throughout the city and claimed 207 lives. Down Town was once again hit by destruction, the removal of which is still being worked on today. The consequences of this catastrophe are omnipresent and have resulted in a further worsening of the economic crisis and political unrest.

Although Beirut generally gives off a very safe feeling, the high military presence, regular checkpoints and hundreds of meters of barbed wire fencing off areas in the city highlight the nation's tense situation. The massive drop in the value of the Lebanese currency has further exacerbated this, with more than three-quarters of Lebanese now living below the poverty line.

One glimmer of hope is tourism. It has been increasing slowly but steadily for years. More and more people are discovering the exciting Beirut for themselves or visiting the picturesque landscapes that Lebanon has to offer. Along the Mediterranean Sea there are numerous beaches and hotels, which allow a beach vacation away from the established vacation destinations on the Mediterranean. Lebanon is also worth a trip in winter. The mountains are home to well-visited ski resorts with breathtaking views.

Hard times are always followed by good times, as the past has shown. Beirut has seen it all. An impressive city full of contrasts that after every setback rises from the ashes again.







# CHASING THE LIGHT

It is early winter morning at -14 degrees celsius, the sun is rising stealthily, barely showing its true face, and the white wilderness surrounds us. I'm in my new home, the tent on the roof of the car, that I replaced my bicycle with. We're a pack of three - two hairy dogs and one with a little less hair.

Going to Nordkapp in winter is not new to me, I already traveled by bike from Oslo to Nordkapp in 2016, a total of 36 days in all possible conditions. I went to explore my limits and luckily I didn't cross them. However, this time the „mission“ was completely different.



The idea was to capture the aurora borealis and it was a mission that did not necessarily contain success.

We could have come to the north and had clouds all the days of our stay, but through 11 years of traveling around the world, I have learned that it is crucial to believe in what you are doing and the results will come sooner or later.



My loyal companions, Ena and Max, are always up for action. Whether we go to Lake Borovik, which is half an hour's drive from my former home, or to the mountain wilderness of Durmitor, a national park in Montenegro - they are always up for an adventure. This time I prepared them with coats and protection for their paws since at some points, we were going to be down to -41 degrees celsius while shooting the aurora, on a frozen lake and I didn't want to endanger their health.

The Aurora Borealis is a beautiful natural phenomenon that can best be seen in the northern hemisphere. So I got into my Duster, which I converted into a camper, prepared enough warm clothes and food, and set off on a 15,000-kilometer adventure.







In 40 days, we traveled through most of Europe, from Austria and Germany to Denmark and Sweden, to finally reach Finland and Rovaniemi, where we stayed for a while. We already had great weather in Sweden, so we saw the aurora borealis there for the first time. It was a very comical moment when I ran out into the snow completely barefoot, without socks, and put the camera on a tripod to set it up for long exposure. On long drives, I like to go barefoot, which a real hardcore crew of campers will understand.





I caught the most beautiful aurora north of Rovaniemi, when we traveled almost 300 kilometers that evening to have as few clouds and light pollution as possible. Driving in winter conditions and covering that much distance, at night, is not very easy.

At some points, I also had problems sleeping because I almost switched day and night. However, it all made sense and was worth it because I got the best possible confirmation in the world - National Geographic published photos of aurora borealis on their channels, and they also took some photos from Norway. Through that project, I continued to collaborate with them and we are currently negotiating new projects.

Being a freelancer for over 12 years and living on the road is not at all easy. I sold my house a few months ago and literally decided to live in nature, with my dogs, and wherever the road takes us.

**I feel like I've taken a huge burden off my back.**

Life is simpler, I no longer have so many obligations that I wasn't even fond of, and the most important thing in all of this is that I can devote myself to photography and video as much as possible while Ena and Max accompany me in all of this. Can a man ask for more?





# AURORA BOREALIS

## What are the Northern Lights?

In the previous story, we read about a pack of three traveling to chase the Aurora Borealis, but what is this phenomenon, exactly?

We think we speak for almost everyone, when we say we have a picture in our minds when thinking of the Northern Lights - green and blue streaks of light dancing across the sky - but how does that even happen?

Let's take a look at the science behind Aurora Borealis:

### How do the Northern Lights form?

The first and most important question you are probably asking yourself is how the Northern Lights even come into existence. Looking at photos and videos of this natural phenomenon looks a lot more like magic than any scientific process!

However, while looking magical, the Northern Lights are actually quite an intense, violent phenomenon! You see, energized particles from the sun, which are also known as solar wind, travel toward Earth and hit our upper atmosphere at incredible speeds - up to 45 million miles per hour, which is around 72 million km/h!

The good news? Earth's magnetic field protects us from them, redirecting these particles to the two poles - North and South. The result is this amazing phenomenon that can look quite magical!

Simply put, as the sun's solar winds interact with our Earth's magnetic field, the energy gets distributed, which causes the atmosphere to light up!

The colors green and blue (or sometimes others, too) come from the chemical composition of Earth's atmosphere.

## Are there Southern Lights, too?

We just talked about the fact that Earth's magnetic field redirects the particles to the two poles. This means there's not just the Northern Lights, but the Southern Lights, too.

When you see this phenomenon on the South Pole, it is known as Aurora Australis instead of Aurora Borealis - but the effect is the same!

The name Aurora Borealis and Northern Lights simply seems to be more widely spread and more common!





Who came up with the name Aurora Borealis?

You might be wondering who discovered these Polar Lights and came up with that name.

Well, just like a lot of things concerning space, the Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei is to thank for this discovery. He coined the name "Aurora Borealis" in the year 1619. Why Aurora Borealis, you may ask? Well, Aurora is the Roman Goddess of dawn and Boreas is the Greek God of the North Wind.

However, Galileo is not the first person to have spotted this phenomenon, the earliest documentations go back to a 30000-year-old cave painting that was found in today's France!

While Galileo had some ideas about where this phenomenon was coming from, the actual scientific proof and explanation behind the Northern Lights weren't discovered until the beginning of the 20th century, so around 100 years ago!

The person who came up with the theory of the sun's emissions was Norwegian scientist Kristian Birkeland. His theory unfortunately wasn't proven correct until long after his death in 1917, but he was correct in his assumptions.

How often can you see the Northern lights?

The solar wind never stops, but the sun's emissions go through a cycle of 11 years in their activity. Sometimes, there will be fewer emissions, while other times, there will be intense storms hitting Earth's atmosphere with incredible amounts of energy.

Of course, that is when the Polar Lights are at their brightest and can be seen a lot more frequently. The last "peak activity" was in 2014, so we can expect another solar wind maximum to occur approximately in 2025 (time to plan your trips up North in a few years!)

Technically speaking, the Aurora Borealis happens 24/7, all day every day. However, that doesn't mean that they are easy to catch and spot.

According to Tour companies, the best places to see the Aurora Borealis are in the so-called "Auroral Zone", which is in a 2500-kilometer radius of the North Pole.

Being far away from city lights and light pollution will further aid you in your quest to chase Aurora Borealis. However, be careful of the northern wilderness, many people underestimate its harshness. It might be better to stick to places with more infrastructure like Fairbanks in Alaska; Abisko National Park in Sweden; Yellowknife in Canada; Svalbard in Norway; Rovaniemi in Finland, or any place in Iceland.

Weather plays a big role too and the best times to go see the Aurora Borealis are between September and April because that's when the sky is the darkest.

According to Geophysicists, 9pm to 3am seems to be the time they are most active, but now we're really getting into the nitty-gritty details.

As long as you are there when the weather is somewhat good and it's dark, you should be able to catch a glimpse of this phenomenon!

Meet the team!

Listen to Anna's Podcast on Spotify

ANNA'S CONTEMPLATIONS  
By Anna Scheucher



ride  
yourart

Balance Boards  
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Get your  
VAN LIFE  
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your HOME



Freedom on a cork roll

I'm Timmy, a total outdoor and board lover. Whenever I came home from a van trip i wanted to bring the feeling and inspiration of being free and in the nature into my apartment. That's why I founded RideYourArt. With our handmade Balance Board and the magnetic Wall Mount it's easier than ever to find the ultimate flow at home. Just hang it up on your wall and be as creative as you want to be. Do tricks on the board, elevate your home work-out or just move your body. And if you aren't boarding, it makes a great interior piece on your wall.

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# HOW TO SURVIVE WINTER

## 10 Tips to Stay Healthy and Happy

Winter is around the corner, days are getting colder and the hours of sunlight are getting fewer and fewer.

While we deal with this change of season every single year, it still begs the question: how do you stay healthy and in good spirits during these dark and cold months?

Whether you are on the road or taking a seasonal break, these 10 tips will help you to stay happy and healthy no matter the temperatures outside!

### 1. Watch what you eat

No, with this point we are not insinuating that you need to pay special attention to how many Christmas cookies you're eating - by all means, have as many as you wish! This is more about something else - which is getting enough vitamins, fiber, and protein in your diet! We often overlook what a huge impact our diet has on our health, and incorporating lots of greens, vitamin C, lentils, fish, fresh fruits and veggies, etc. can give your immune system a boost and help you to feel your best even through the colder months. Speaking of diet:

### 2. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate

We know, when it's cold outside, and we're not sweating a lot, water can often slip to the very back of our minds during the day. But even though summer is an important time to hydrate, you really shouldn't neglect your water in winter, either! Adequate water helps your body to get rid of toxins, bring nutrients to your cells and balance everything.

### 3. Hygiene

It sounds self-explanatory, but there are lots of easy little ways in which you can prevent getting sick, like washing your hands more often. Proper hygiene helps you to stay healthy and feel good.

### 4. Get some fresh air

We know, when it's freezing out, it can be tempting to spend all your time inside, cuddled up with a blanket and your latest Netflix binge series. However, getting some fresh air each day is crucial in order to at least catch a few sun rays. Plus, the fresh air will feel great on your body!

### 5. Keep yourself warm

The last thing you want to do is get ice-cold in the wintertime, that's a recipe for colds and other illnesses. Instead, make sure that when you go outside, you are protecting yourself adequately from getting too cold or even worse, getting frostbite!

### 6. Vitamin D

Winter can be a pretty dark time, both literally and emotionally. Many people suffer from seasonal depression or mood swings. A lot of the time, these things can be prevented, or at least made less severe, by taking a vitamin D supplement.

You see, the sun usually gives us plenty of vitamin D, which keeps us happy and healthy. When we are deficient in that vitamin, like in the winter months, it's harder for our bodies to fight off viruses, and we also get sad!

It's crazy what a difference in mood and energy a few drops of vitamin D a day can make!

### 7. Proper sleep

Sleep is crucial for proper body functioning. We need sleep for our immune system, concentration, happiness, recovery - basically everything! This is why it's super important to get enough high-quality sleep, especially if you are trying to ward off infections or colds!

### 8. Get moving

When it's cold and dark out, the last thing you probably want to be doing is exercise. We get it, so we understand if your amount of exercise goes down during the colder months. However, you should still try to make an effort to incorporate at least a little bit of exercise into your weeks, as the benefits are incredible! Not only are you fighting stress (which we just talked about), but your immune system gets a boost and you are more likely to fight off illnesses!

### 9. Drink in moderation

Yeah, I get it, it's the Christmas season and all these seasonal drinks can be oh-so-tempting. I'm not saying you should quit drinking altogether, but being more mindful of your alcohol consumption and drinking in moderation can actually help your body's immune system a lot! But don't feel guilty about the occasional mulled wine or eggnog - 'tis the season, after all!

### 10. Reduce stress

That's a nice one - if you want to keep yourself from getting sick this winter, one of the best things you can do for yourself is to reduce stress.

Stress releases a bunch of stress hormones in your body, like Cortisol, which actually suppresses your immune system! So, when you are incredibly stressed, your immune system can't function as well as it should, and you are more prone to catching viruses, colds, etc.

Simple habits such as breathwork, meditation, or daily walks can help you to keep your stress levels at bay and fight those infections as effectively as possible!





# CORNWALL

UK's Mini California - a Surfing Hotspot in Winter

Cornwall is a proud county, one that is readily compared to the Mediterranean because of its warmer weather and crystal blue water. Nicknamed Kernowfornia, this county is arguably the best in all of the UK for van dwellers and adventurers. With its interesting history, dramatic coastlines, and a chilled out way of life it is every traveler's dream.

Cornwall is known for its tin & copper mining history, and if you keep an eye out while hitting the road you will soon spot one of many stacks that dot the area. The mines were worked with a variety of tools including steam engines, and the chimneys acted as ventilation shafts, allowing miners to work. There are several great mines you can visit in Cornwall to dive a little deeper into the history, including Greevor tin mine or Botallack Mine, and some which were built too close to the sea and are slowly being reclaimed.





The nickname Kernowfornia ties Cornwall not to its mining history but to its surf culture and beautiful beaches. Cornwall is probably the UK's best known, and most loved surfing location, and it has a great variety of beaches and breaks perfect for beginners and seasoned pros alike.

Most Cornish bays have a resident surf shop, where a friendly local can kit you out with a board and wetsuit if you want to give it a go. Or you can join a larger group for a lesson where

you can get a bit more instruction and help with learning. For the pros, you can find waves all along the north and south coasts, with some of the most well-known spots being Fistral near Newquay and Porthleven.

The only downside is that the best waves tend to come in winter, when the water is cold and the weather can be stormy and wet. However, with a bit of luck you can catch a mellow swell even during summer months.

In addition to its laid back surfer atmosphere, its Kernowfornia nickname comes from the beautiful beaches and marine life you can see in this part of the UK. Some of the best parts are Kynance cove, Gwithian Beach, and St. Ives. With white sand and beautifully clear water it's understandably a popular spot for holidaying, with summer crowds getting large on the popular beaches. That being said, its coastline comprises lots of small bays with plenty of nooks and crannies to be explored.



With a bit of time on your hands and an appetite for exploring, it's easy enough to find beautiful beaches away from the crowds. Places where you can share the sandy shoreline of a hidden cove with only a handful of other beach goers and maybe a few resident seals. So don't let Cornwall's popularity put you off, there is something for everyone.

It's no surprise with its natural beauty and chilled out way of life that people from Cornwall see themselves as a bit different from the rest of the UK. In fact, there are people that want Cornwall to be its own country. In Roman days long past Cornwall was indeed its own territory, refusing to submit to the rule of others.

Whether or not Cornwall should be independent depends on who you ask, but what is irrefutable is the fact that it is a friendly, beautiful part of a rather rainy country. With lots of summer sun and natural beauty to enjoy, you simply have to add it to your van life bucket list.





# WHEN THE HUM OF THE ROAD CALLS





The call of the road has always been strong, after a childhood spent traversing the Australian landscape in a 4x4 and tent. So when the time came for me to travel with my own family, I knew it had to be in a less conventional way. I wanted to replicate those feelings of nostalgia, and of minimalistic travel, of doing it tough, and roughing it. Perhaps it was the roadside bush mechanics I recall fondly, as I watched my dad belly up in the gravel, with grease up to his elbows. Things I didn't appreciate as a child myself, but somehow became etched in my fibers.

It was a lifelong dream to own a humble old Volkswagen kombi, so on a whim one weekend six years ago, my husband Keenan and I decided to step out of the grind that we'd found ourselves with our big mortgage and young family, and tip conventionalism on its head.



## We bought a 1975 Kombi in the perfect shade of mellow yellow, and set about to take our family on an adventure.

Since then, we have covered some 100,000 kms of dusty roads as we've rattled our way around Australia with our daughters and dog in tow. Our tiny yellow tin can sleeps all five of us, it's cozy, especially on those cold rainy nights, but there hasn't been a single night where we've opted for more luxurious comforts.

We revel in the challenges it brings, of the day to day uncertainty that comes with taking a 47 year old vehicle into the harsh landscapes we find ourselves. The journey has become our spirituality of sorts, the lessons, the growth, the hardship, and the joy, it has shaped us, and is laying good foundations for our daughters to grow.







The journey hasn't always been easy, just like there is never a right time when the stars align and everything fits into place to take a leap of faith. We just knew we wanted something different, we knew we needed to change our lives, and we knew nothing different would come from doing the same thing.

**Despite the setbacks and obstacles, the breakdowns, and the empty bank accounts, we wouldn't have it any other way.**



As a photographer, I have found incredible joy in capturing the moments, the details, and the places we explore. Each day I am in awe, not only of the opportunity we have, or for this remarkable vehicle that carries us, but mostly for the land upon which we wander. I've been deeply compelled to share this in a way that takes others on a journey too, placing them in the scene, to evoke nostalgia, and to tell a story.

It's a story of breaking free of societal norms, of challenging fears, of triumphs and defeats. It's a story of determination, of struggle, of resilience, and adaptability. Mostly it's a story of love, a deep love, so much that at times it aches. It's love of family, and of adventure, love of community and connection, love of an old kombi van and all that it brings. It's love of freedom, and the soothing hum of the road.

Find out more about our story and follow our travels at [@summerofseventyfive](https://www.instagram.com/summerofseventyfive).



# OLLIE THE VANCAT

Our traveling circus consists of a Swiss guy called Lukas, a Dutch girl called Chantal and our ginger cat Ollie. After 2,5 years traveling back and forth between the Netherlands and Switzerland in the name of love, we still didn't have a clue where to settle down. To convert our Opel Movano van was the only way to delay this decision.

Our goal was to travel to Iran or Japan, but by now our route planning looks like a drawing of a 2-year old. However we have already traveled 1,5 years around Europe, including doing some seasonal work in the snowy Alps. And who knows, maybe the answer to our question 'where-to-settle' will be a lifelong search?







Lukas (aka Luki) is an outdoorsman who is always seeking action. In his happy zone he is kiting, mountaineering, skihiking, climbing, snowboarding, ice climbing or wannabe-fishing (can someone give some tips?). He worked as a landscape architect before and his eye for detail, you will for sure find back in the van build and design. Oh and without him, Ollie and Chanti would be forever hungry or eating pasta-pesto.

Chantal (aka Chanti) studies to be a cognitive psychologist, so she is an advocate for not showing only 'happy-de-peppie-life' on social media, but showing life in its fullest.

Though she has the attention span of a "OH LOOK SQUIRREL", so maybe full therapy sessions are not her thing. She worked as a project manager, which is still her daily job or rather state-of-being.. travelplanner, secretary, finance chief, digital manager, van hostess, managing the alcohol stock, Ollie's agent and party planner. Her hobby: ``fröbelen'', if you know what that is? The chance of meeting her in her panter print, neon pink of Feyenoord Football Club related outfit is 99.9%. According to Luki she apparently also 'Cares more about animals than about Luki'.

Our cat Ollie who you will most likely spot on our dashboard, is the star of the show.

**His biography would be called 'From little farm kitty to world explorer!'**

Ollie loves cheese so much, he can open any fridge. He can do a lot of tricks for food. He loves to hunt, because.. food. He can be cuddly, if you give him food. He naps a lot to process the food, but Ollie has the gift some people might be jealous of.







He doesn't get fat. And besides food, he hates everything else. As much as Ollie seems now the purrrfect instagramable travelcat, he was totally NOT! And he will never be the cat who will be fine with putting on a shark-shaped-lifeguard and getting wet on a SUP-board. You can look it up on youtube, this stuff really exists!

So we really made small steps to get him adjusted to vanlife, which sometimes lasted weeks and they all included the element of; FOOD! With food and loads of patience we got him used to the van. We visited the van for a few minutes, we spent dinners or even nights in the van while standing still, slowly started introducing car sounds (slamming doors, water pump), driving two rounds on the parking lot, making a little day trip and the first month we drove a maximum of one hour a day.

**Sometimes we thought 'He loves it' and then a day later we thought 'Oh, this will never work.'**

Now 18 countries further and counting, we would say he is more relaxed and happier than ever. We can give him endless attention and he spends loads of time in nature, chasing grasshoppers and lizards. In every new environment, he takes his position on the dashboards and studies the new world around him.

Even if we turn the motor of the van on, he jumps to the front to put himself into driving position. We get the question a lot if we leave Ollie alone behind in the van. Yes, we do for a few hours and with a lot of van adjustments and safety measures. During our vanbuild we made sure that we could control the temperature at its best; good isolation, air circulation, a diesel-heater and a backup 12V airco. We also builded in his cat toilet and an automatic feeding machine. An explanation of this last item is upon request as it puts us immediately in the box of 'crazy-cat-couple'. We also made sure Ollie has many safe spaces where he can sleep in peace. If we leave the van, Ollie wears a GPS tracker. So if the window gets smashed and he escapes, we can find him back. We of course don't leave our van behind in shady places. And last but not least, we have a little note on the front window which quotes 'Hey, I'm Ollie and I live in this temperature-controlled van, call this number if you have any questions..'. We can't blame all the animal lovers out there for keeping an eye on overheated animals in a car, but don't want to risk having a smashed window.

As you might notice we could write a whole book about our travel buddy. While writing this piece though, his leash got tangled up around a tree again for the 1000st time. We take this as a sign to finish up writing and start enjoying our Greek clear-blue-water-beach park up again. We love to hear more cat-travel-tips or share our experience via our Instagram.





## We want to share YOUR vanlife story!

Send an article about your vanlife adventure to  
**office@vanlifezone.com.**

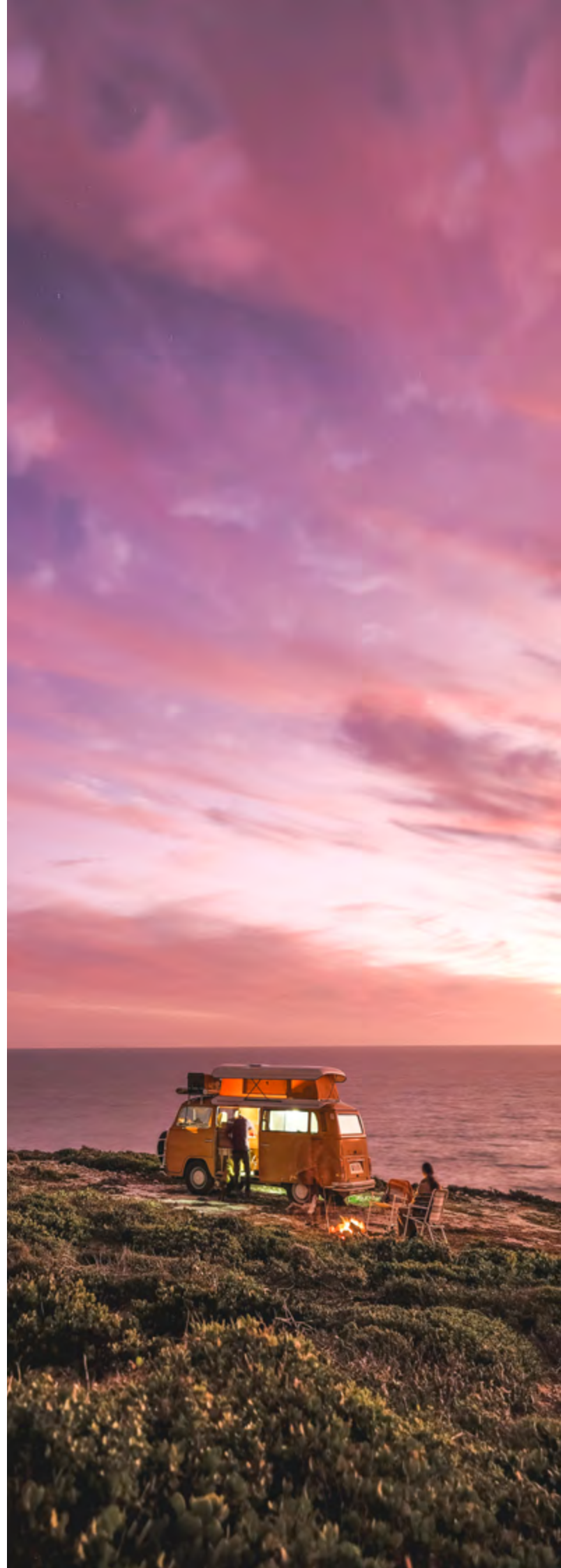
You have total creative freedom and can share any aspect or story about your experience of living in a van.

Please make sure that you have roughly 1000 words and that you include 10 - 15 high resolution images.

## Promote your brand or product in our magazine!

Not only can you reach travelers, campers and adventurers from all around the world with the Vanlifezone magazine but it also helps us grow and fund the production of it!

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