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BUMFUZZLE

Travel in a Panel



After 52,000 miles in the Americas Ali and I were actually looking forward to more than three weeks out of the bus and onboard a cargo ship crossing the Atlantic and getting ready for our next stop, Europe. Our excitement was short lived however, when on day four, while stopped in Rio de Janeiro, our bus was broken into and robbed.



We felt completely inadequate parked with all the awesome buses at the Hessisch show.



An empty riverside campground in the Czech Republic.



Up on stage collecting our Swiss Francs.

The ship's captain had warned us repeatedly that during our stops in Africa we should take care to keep an eye on our vehicles while in port. Nobody mentioned the Brazilians. Our thief popped the back open with a screwdriver, crawled inside, stole all of our baseball caps, and then spotted our hubcaps. Yes, the hubcaps that we had never removed before in all the miles we had traveled and all the cities we had parked in. We took them off for their trip across the Atlantic and they were promptly stolen. Ahh, the irony. Something good did happen that day in Rio however. Ali and I stopped off in a pharmacy and picked up a home pregnancy test. Certain ladylike things had prompted this little purchase. Back on the ship the results were positive. Our '58 VW bus had done its job admirably and helped to conceive yet another hippie bus baby. We were ecstatic, and spent the next three long weeks talking about the future.

We were scheduled to arrive in Hamburg, Germany, but when the captain announced to the passengers that we could depart a day earlier in Bremerhaven all five vehicle owners quickly took him up on the offer. It had been twenty-four days at sea and we were all ready to be off.

Finally in Germany we had some bus work to do. First and foremost was replacing our tranny mounts. My campground bailing wire repair had hung on for four thousand tough miles, but it was clear the tranny wasn't going to take much more of our abuse. A VW friend who had been following our website invited us to his home where for the next three days, between rain storms, Ali and I dropped the engine and worked at shimmying our transmission back a few inches to slide the new mount in. Popping the engine back in and firing the bus up for the first time is always a moment to hold our breath, but once again she fired right back up and we were rolling smoothly.

Bus style relaxation.



About the only vehicles we would pass were buses, or more accurately, jacked-up four wheel drive vans. The faces inside would gawk at us as we drove past.



Two homes. A large one built of stone and a tiny one built of steel.

With the bus in tip top shape we headed off for Poland. We didn't make it out of Germany before being pulled over though. The Polizei seemed awfully grumpy here, unlike the always smiling Central and South American coppers, but it was hard to blame them as they stood out on the highway in the pouring rain.

After a couple of weeks in northern Europe it was clear to Ali and I that we had to make at least a few miles south in order to find sunshine. We eventually did come across the nice weather in Austria. Never has a place seemed more movie studio perfect. Smooth roads, zero litter, and flowers in every window box. The bus seemed to laugh at just how easy it was to drive here. When the Alps came into view we all breathed a sigh of relief as a bit of scenery and exciting driving roads beckoned. None of it disappointed either. The scenery was spectacular and the switchbacks provided a new view after every turn of the wheel.

A Swiss website friend of ours had contacted us with some interesting news. At the upcoming Frauenfeld, Switzerland, VW show the organizers had announced that they'd pay the gas costs of whoever drove the furthest to be there. Evidently they thought maybe somebody from as far away as France would turn up. Well, come on, we had to take advantage of that one didn't we? We did some quick calculations and concluded that \$7200 sounded about right. I e-mailed the organizers and told them, half jokingly, that they'd better get to the bank.

When we arrived at the show both our friends and the organizers were waiting for us. We had a great time hanging out with a big group of Swiss bus owners over the next couple of days and really enjoyed the show there. Throughout the show the organizers had been telling the story of the Americans who'd heard about the prize and had come to Frauenfeld to bankrupt them. All in good fun of course. So by the time of the awards ceremony a big crowd had >>

gathered around the stage to watch.

There was a lot of joking around about how they had forgotten to add some small print to the show's fliers. But all joking aside the head of the show did take me off and in hushed tones ask me if it would be alright if they paid our gas costs from Bremerhaven, Germany to the show. We of course agreed, even though it did only constitute about 2% of the miles we'd driven to be there. The award presentation was good fun and the crowd seemed to get a kick out of seeing a couple of Americans driving a bus all the way to Switzerland for their show.

Still another website friend of ours had invited us up to Belgium and told us that we had to join them for the BBT convoy to the Hessisch-Oldendorf show in Germany. While there we met a ton of people who'd been following our trip progress through our website and here on the pages of Camper and Commercial. After so long in foreign countries it was strange for Ali and I to be surrounded by Brits and having long conversations in English again. We hooked up with one of our most ardent website followers, John, who introduced us to his gang of W.A.N.C.'ers (Westfalians Are Nice Club). Hessisch was just amazing and; the buses here were the cream of the crop. I don't think anybody left disappointed at the end of the weekend.

After the miserable German weather we couldn't wait to get somewhere with actual sunshine and warmth. The south of France seemed to fit the bill so we jumped on the Autobahn and put the pedal to the metal. In Beaune we saw a doctor who checked out the baby and gave us a date of conception. Because of our website diary there was no doubt about it, this baby started life in the back of the bus camped out alongside a deserted lake in the mountains of Chile.



No country is complete in our trip without a police stop.



Getting ready to load ourselves onto the ship in Buenos Aires.

Look at that beauty, And Ali looks pretty cute too.



We found that the Brits tend to act strange whenever the sun is shining. Hessisch camping with the W.A.N.C.'ers



Two for now, but with a bus baby on the way it's soon to be three.

Laundry day in France.



First things first in Germany. Time to replace the tranny mounts.

In the long life of the VW bus there must be a million similar stories. From there we took the bus back into its element for a little while, cruising and camping the Italian and French Mediterranean coasts. Eventually though it was time to make a decision, and after many long talks we had made one. We were off for the UK to sell the bus. It was time to get on to our next adventure. Our two years in the bus had been absolutely amazing. We saw so much beauty, met so many incredible people, and had so many adventures that simply couldn't have been made in anything but a VW bus.

In the UK it only took a week to sell the bus. It was a little sad knowing that it wouldn't be having any real big adventures anymore, but I suppose it had earned a break after what we had put it through. It's a safe bet we won't see the Bumfuzzle bus again, but there is little doubt in our minds that sometime down the road we will find our family in a bus again. Absolutely nothing beats a road trip in a bus. ☺