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Voyaging Couple Makes Their Way to Namibia

• Jonathan Solomons

Travelling around your country is an enormous task on its own, not to mention continents, or the entire globe.

But this – travelling the world – is a project that European-couple Manu and Ivana Torres have been ticking off their bucket list – one country at a time. Manu from Spain and Ivana from Macedonia first made the decision that they want to experience all the good, bad and ugly Mother Earth has to offer in April 2013.

The couple have christened their expedition 'Around Gaia'. In Greek mythology, Gaia is the personification of earth and is also known as the Mother Earth goddess.

Ivana explained that the idea came to them about half a decade ago when they explored India on a motorcycle. "Six years ago, we were in India and we travelled around on a bike. We really liked the bike because we find interesting stories. We came back to Europe, and we took the bike we have now and in 2013 we started this project of travelling around the world. We want to see all the continents, meet all the people, different traditions, different cultures."

"The motivation is to learn, we turn our life into our travel. We created this project to keep us travelling, it's what we love to do," Manu added.

The couple started off their journey in Seville,

Spain, then proceeded east all the way to India and south east Asia. From there, they made their way to Chile. "We made our way to most southern point in Argentina and then to the most northern point in Alaska," he said.

"From the Arctic sea, we went to New York, and from there we flew to Johannesburg. We are starting our last continent now, which is Africa. The goal now is to travel the continent from end to end, on our same motorcycle continuously without stop. Every obstacle on the road, we have to face it."

For Manu and Ivana, the voyage is about learning about and discovering the world and the people in it. "We encourage people to follow their dreams and work for what they want. We are working class in Europe, and money was a big handicap in the beginning.

When we decided to travel around the world, we didn't have any money saved. Before the trip, we were making bracelets and necklaces and other handicrafts and we sold them in the Greek island of Mykonos. In the summer time, we were selling these and the rest of the time we travel like backpackers," Manu said.

During their journey, the adventurers have come face-to-face with themselves, and this helped them grow personally. "We discovered our possibilities and our skills that developed on this trip, such as photography and writing for maga-

zines. These are things we never did before. We were learning, and we were doing what we love with passion," Manu said. He also mentioned that their newly-developed skills pave the way for them to pay of their trip.

"The travel is paid by the travel itself."

The couple landed in Johannesburg in August, and first travelled around South Africa before making the way to Namibia, across the Orange river.

Namibia is the 44th country the couple have visited since 2013.

"We feel more comfortable here (in Namibia) with regard to safety. We didn't encounter any problems in SA, but we were warned by the locals. We experienced this tension. We stopped ourself from camping," Manu said.

For the past three and half years, the couple couch-surfed, often staying with locals in the area or camping under the stars, something they didn't feel safe enough to do in SA.

"Travelling is more interesting to us when we share with the locals, we experience and learn more," Manu said.

The south of Namibia has really gone down well with the travellers. "South Africa is nice, but Namibia is much nicer. We travelled the south. We went to the dunes at Sossusvlei. We went to Luderitz, it was really beautiful. Every place in Namibia has been really nice so far. One of our favourite ambiances in our travels



is the desert," Ivana said. The desert was also a special location as Ivana celebrated her birthday on 25 September watching the sun rise and set from the Namib Desert.

Manu and Ivana are taking a break in the capital before making their way north, a journey they are looking forward to. "We have a break in Windhoek, then we make our way to the North. We are excited to see the difference, the contrast. It's like two different countries," Manu said.

One might think security would be the biggest challenge on such a trip, however it was Gaia that posed the harshest obstacles.

"The experiment we make with our bodies is very crucial, we expose our bodies to all different environments," Manu said. From ice cold conditions on the top of mountains to hot and humid jungles, Around Gaia is no walk in the park. "This is one of the biggest challenges, more than the people we encounter. We don't have any problems

with regard to security. The biggest problem we have is the environment, the food and water we eat," Manu added.

He also mentioned that bumpy roads and different climates catch up to eventually, and for a few days they can feel a bit unwell.

For Ivana, not seeing her family for almost four

years sometimes gets to her emotionally, especially when they are not on the road and she has time to think about it. "They miss us and we miss them so much. Yesterday I was very sad, I was missing them very much. I speak with them only via the internet, but it is not the same. But soon we will see them," she said.

If you want to keep up with Manu and Ivana, like their Facebook page Around Gaia and follow them on Instagram @aroundgaiaofficial.

– @jonathan_sasha on Twitter; @jonathan.sasha on Instagram; jonathansasha.tumblr.com

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