

A Bendy Bus to cross the Sahara

Budapest, Tuesday, October 23, 2007: An adventurous team of international travelers will attempt to set a new record this coming January. The team, known as Bus Number 7, are piloting an old, soviet-style articulated bus right across Europe before making a daring crossing of the Sahara Desert into the heart of Africa. The team will start their epic journey from Budapest, Hungary and travel to the southern-tip of Spain, crossing into Morocco and ending up in Mali, covering well over 7000 km in the process, all the while living completely self-contained onboard the specially converted bus.

Bus Number 7's, the team's journey to Africa will join up with the Budapest-Bamako (B2) Rally, which brings hundreds of amateur adventure enthusiasts from around the world for a daring two week race to Bamako, the capital of Mali. Open to anyone with a working vehicle, the rally is billed as a low-cost and rougher version of the Paris-Dakkar Rally that has taken off in recent years. Along the way the teams have to tackle every obstacle from sand storms, mine-fields, impenetrable Saharan sand-dunes to the daunting African border control, all with only their wits and a good slice of luck to rely on.

Bus Number 7 is taking this challenge to a whole other level, by driving this 16.5 metre long, 12 ton monster of a machine to Africa and back in what will surely be the first time such a vehicle has crossed the Sahara. The organisers of the project are hoping to push their endurance to the limit while at the same time promoting cultural awareness and the image of Africa back home in their native countries. *"All of us involved in the project have a passion for exploration, about getting out of our daily routines and challenging the limits of what we can achieve"* remarked Aravind, an Indian entrepreneur who is helping to organise the project. *"Bus Number 7 is all about the going for the extraordinary and we hope that this will be just the first of our adventures onboard the bus, as we try to show people that the world is closer to their doorstep than they think."*

Not just about adventure however, the team are also hoping their journey will be able to make a difference to the lives of some of the children they meet along the way. Veterans of the two previous Budapest-Bamako rallies, the organisers have seen first hand how even seemingly insignificant improvements can make a difference to children's lives. *"For us, it's incomprehensible how much even a football can mean to a child in Mali. Last year some local kids came up to us in Bamako and explained that they were collecting donations for their football team. We gave them some money and promised them if they came over to our hotel next morning, we would give them a ball. The next morning at 8 o'clock about 20 kids were waiting for us and when we gave them our ball, I've never seen so happy faces."* recollected Attila, a Hungarian on the team. In preparation for this year, Bus Number 7 have already established links with a school in Bamako that they visited the year before, and for which they aim to raise funds to buy sports equipment and teaching supplies.

To prepare for the arduous journey across the Sahara and back, the organisers are well underway with fitting out their 1986 Hungarian Ikarus 280 articulated bus. The team plan to carry seven crew members along with two drivers, and are fitting four bunk-beds, a kitchenette with lounge and a small shower on board to make the journey a little bit more comfortable. There is also going to be a fully feature sound-system with loudspeakers built into an open-air rooftop balcony, to ensure that Bus Number 7 becomes the unofficial party bus along the way, bringing fellow teams on the rally together with any curious locals looking for a free open-air disco!

Bus Number 7 still have two places left on the crew for suitable candidates looking for the journey of a lifetime. The team are also interested to hear from sponsors wanting to learn more about the project.

Find out more at our website at <http://www.busnumber7.com>.

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