Meet the DAN Europe Ambassadors touring to save our oceans

The health of our oceans, and of many other bodies of water, is one of the biggest concerns of our times. Plastic, overfishing, pollutants and climate emergency are changing dramatically the environment we divers do love more. Oceans, rivers, and lakes are changing under our eyes. As Dr. Sylvia Earle stated, we are eyewitnesses of the change. We are the best ambassadors of our oceans.

Two DAN Europe Ambassadors are ready to travel across Europe from South to North and back, with the **DAN Europe Sustainable tour**. They will cover some 11.500 km using, of course, an electric vehicle. These two Ambassadors have precise objectives to achieve, some of them quite ambitious, but we are confident they will succeed: they are very special guys indeed. We asked them to tell us more about themselves and their mission. Here are Alana Alvarez and Manuel (Manu) Bustelo.

Alana and Manu, how would you describe your personalities, skills and background in few words?

ALANA – I'm a cheerful person with a lot of passion for the environment, people and life itself. I have an academic background in pharmacy and ongoing studies in Sustainable Development, which gives me the right set of skills to manage positive changes in society, aimed at promoting the health of both human beings and our planet.

MANU – I'm a committed and passionate individual. Committed to the environment and society we live in, passionate about adventure, our world and the people I love. With an MBA and 22 years of experience on the outdoor industry, I'm devoted to grow sustainable practices in the business sector.



DAN Europe members and many other divers will be happy about DAN's strong commitment to environmental issues. What's the purpose of the Sustainable tour?

ALANA – The next 10 years are going to be crucial for Ocean Conservation. Within the **UN Ocean Decade** framework, we found the right opportunity to work with the private sector, public institutions, and European citizens, all united in the pursue of creating a more sustainable way of living. Anything we do on land, ultimately has an impact on the Ocean. The big issue, is that due to our 21st Century way of living, being friendly with the environment it's not so easily done. A clear example is doing your groceries in a supermarket. We are all aware of the amount of plastic that we will end up taking home along with our food. Since only 9% of worldwide discarded plastic is recycled, there's a remaining 91% that has a big chance to end up in our Oceans; first as a discarded bottle or packaging bag, and many years after that as microplastic particles.

MANU – I'll provide another example by asking a question: how do you move around your city, country or even abroad? Whatever you use, does it emit CO2? It is very likely that you end up using a vehicle – besides your bike – that has a carbon footprint. More likely, that 'something' is called a car. Most of us use a car to commute to work, leisure, travelling, family gatherings, etc. All this contributes to Ocean acidification, climate change, oil spills, noise pollution, and so much more. The raise of electric vehicles is already here, and there's a good reason why. We are going to be covering most aspects related to EVs, from battery recycling facilities to the renewable energy that we need to produce to make them truly

environmentally friendly. So, how can you as a private company, individual or government can get involved in solving these issues? We are going to join the dots with these and plenty of other daily aspects we all face by just… living it!

How are you going to achieve your objectives? Are classes or public talks scheduled? What do you expect from talks with corporates? How crucial is the involvement of big players, and how much individual engagement is accountable?

MANU – Yes, we are going to have meetings with private companies involved in sustainable businesses, NGO working in Ocean Conservation, the EU Commission. We will also engage with regular citizens, in particular the youth, to educate and promote a sustainable lifestyle. What we expect from talks with corporates is to better understand their offer of sustainable products/services, and how we can all benefit from their businesses.

ALANA – Our planet is currently suffering a terrible headache, caused by us humans. In order to stop it, all efforts – no matter how big or small – are accountable. Clearly, science and technology are important elements in the toolbox of remedies, so we can act and cure the underlying disease. We will explore all of them, from Citizen Science to big corporations' sustainable products breakthroughs.



How many countries are you going to visit? It’s going to take a long time!

ALANA – Our intention is to travel across 15 countries on an electric vehicle. We estimate we’ll complete the tour in 4 to 5 months. However, there’s an adventure component to this trip, which we’ve considered, if ever our plans are altered. After all, this is what adventure is about, isn’t it?

MANU – It remains to be seen how easy and accessible it will be to recharge our electric vehicle in all 15 countries. According to the current EV charging network, this is possible, but we just don’t know exactly how things will roll out!

Should we expect live streamings and broadcasts from your road trip?

ALANA – Absolutely! We planned live streamings from every single relevant stop in the tour. We will go live with meetings, findings, experiences, talks and all important information about the matter at hand. You will be able to experience this just as if you were in the backseat of our car. Check out www.sustainabletour.eu

MANU – You can also follow us from our personal Instagram accounts: Manu & Alana

In a certain moment of life people feel they have to do more to protect the environment. When did you feel the call, and what did you do?

ALANA – My answer is quite direct – the first time jumped in the water during my Open Water course. There I realised that the underwater world was very special. In one of my first dives I spent a good couple of minutes with an octopus hidden underneath a rock. He extended one of his tentacles and grabbed my finger for what seemed to me an eternity. I felt connected. We owe life and our own existence on Earth to our Oceans.

MANU – It hit me when speaking about corporate social responsibility (CSR) in different lectures during my MBA at Solvay Business School. By then, I have climbed many mountains, ridden my mountain bikes through many forests, and explored many oceans. It was while discussing CSR (and lately CSV, creating shared values) that I found the right business tools to connect the dots with environment conservation.



Do you have a message for all DAN Europe members? What is your dream?

MANU – If diving your passion, now it’s time to stop just being an observer, and to start taking action to protect this fragile environment.

ALANA – Our dream is to live in a world where all creatures live in harmony with nature. Our message to DAN Europe members is: will you join us?