Spreading DAN's Mission Across the Mediterranean

When my fellow colleagues at DAN Europe suggested the idea of a **Road Trip** I imagined dusty roads, crossing a desolate wilderness or through small rocky coves, contemplating imposing cliffs plunging into the deep blue sea, falling in trance watching spectacular sunrises, sinking my feet on sandy beaches, diving surrounded by all kinds of marine life, or discovering sunken ships… The first verses of the song Mediterráneo by J.M.Serrat came to my mind, as I started to hum the lyrics…



I must confess that the thought of a few days aboard a spectacular, branded pick-up truck, driving along the coast, mixing four of the famous five Spanish "S" (Sun, Sea, Sand & Sangria), diving in friendship and meeting like-minded people, sounded just great!

In fact, not only did the Road Trip meet my expectations, but went far beyond them. It was a really engaging experience, as we had to provide answers to a large number of requests from dive enthusiasts and professionals. This allowed us to get a more realistic view of what divers are really asking for and what their requests are.



We got the chance to draw closer to dive industry, local businesses and even authorities and public administrations, such as Coast Guard bodies.

The tour was also inspired by projects like Green Bubbles and Horizon 2020. DAN Europe thus supported the idea that the recreational diving industry should be able to manage its economic system in a smarter, more sustainable and inclusive way.

Activities included visits to diving centres, both DAN members and non-members. Some of them expressed the will to participate in the **Diving Safety Partner programme,** an international initiative aimed at improving the safety standards of dive centres.



Through the program, centres can get free expert advice on dive operations, assess the state of their facilities and the check (or create) their safety protocols and emergency plans. The program thus identifies those centres that offer better safety standards which, in turn, can result in attracting more customers and increase the value of the dive centre.

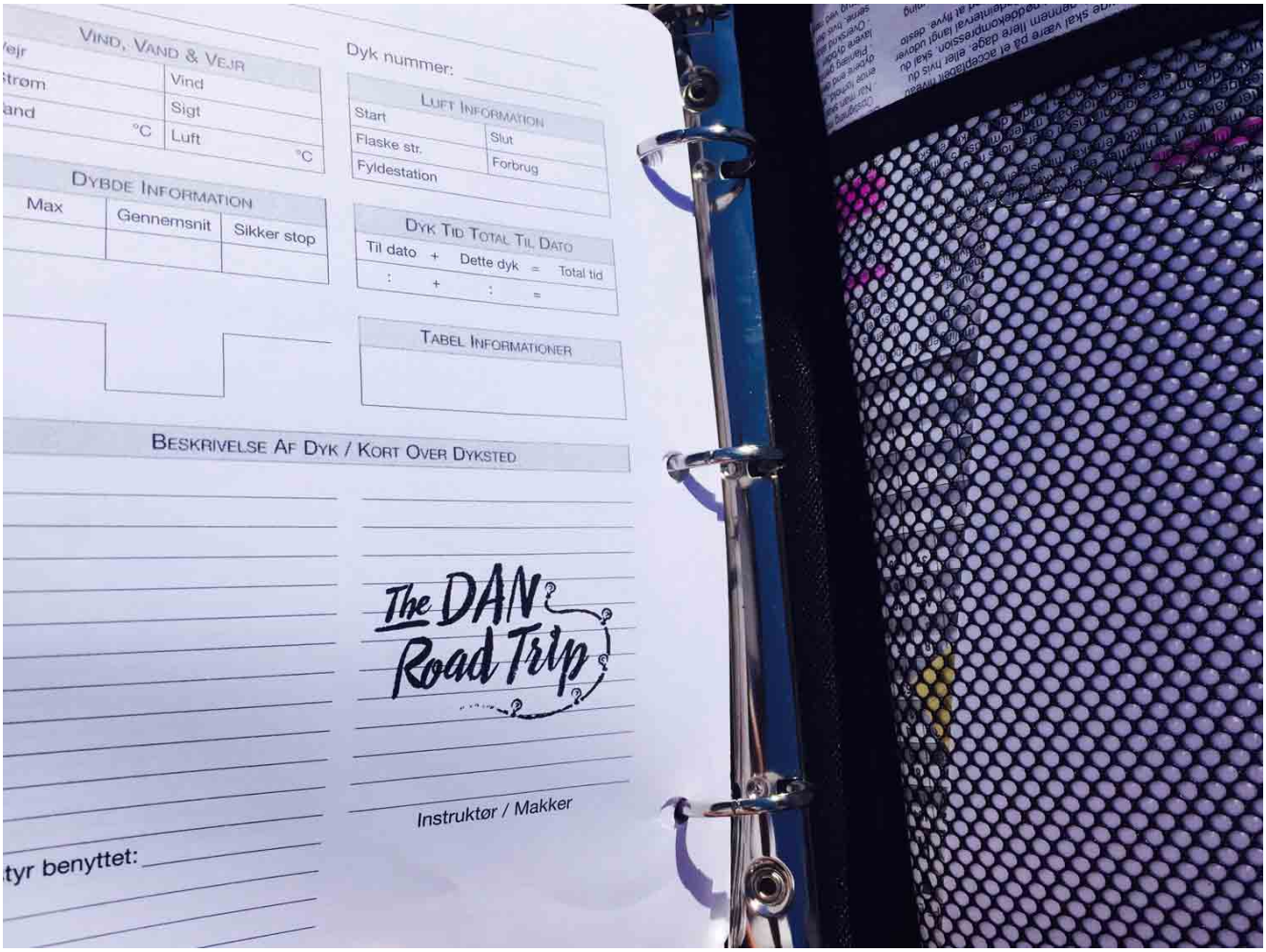
Our staff also discussed training opportunities addressed to staff members wanting to get qualified in First Aid and management of diving emergencies, took the opportunity to inform them about new services offered by DAN, regarding new insurance covers for both centres and their customers and students. In addition, in collaboration with local dive centres and associations, we organized some events to promote public safety campaigns: avoiding ear barotrauma, how not to get lost at sea, risks related to ageing and diving, to name a few.



All in all, the Road Trip was an epic tour. Some numbers: our team – a total of **30 staff members** – drove **29.322,2 Km** through more than **100 cities** in **5 countries**, outlining the coasts of Sardinia, Sicily and the rest of **Italy**, **Malta**, **France**, **Spain** and **Portugal**. It took **163 days** (5 months) to visit more than **200 diving centres**, holding over **40 events**.



We distributed thousands of water bottles, highlighting the importance of **good hydration** for divers, greeted hundreds of friends and promoted at the same time the **Diver Safety Guardian**, an interactive logbook developed by DAN researchers, aimed at helping divers to evaluate the decompression risk of their dives.



The idea seemed to me extraordinary. More than three thousand years of evolution have passed, still the sea is our main link uniting people and communities. Among them, the diving community is a particularly dynamic one. In a few years, many things have changed: dive training systems, learning methods, design of diving equipment, knowledge of human physiology... This changed safety rules and protocols, and our behaviour as divers too, expanding our horizons. Our needs as divers push us to define new requirements, in order to continue feeling safe when we travel the world, chasing our dream dive destinations.



From all the work done, a clearer view of what remains to do emerged. To stay always on the diver's side and deliver the right message, it was necessary to come, to see and to talk with people, institutions and all other actors involved in this dive industry, to deliver the right message. *Veni, vidi, vixi*.

The 2016 Road Trip wrapped up, but our journey continues. The great geographer Yvette Barbaza once said: "*Wherever life takes you, all who have been privileged to be born and grow up next to the Mediterranean, you will remain always attached to him in a profound and, often, passionate way.*"



If any of our efforts finally resulted in helping you improve your dive operations, or promote diving safety, then we attained our goal. We stay true to our motto: **divers helping divers!**

About the author:

Ramon is passionate about travel and the sea. He has a degree in chemical engineering and a diploma in Hyperbaric and Underwater Medicine. He is Diving Course Director & Medical Emergency Instructor Trainer as well as DAN Area Representative, Research Area Supervisor, Training Coordinator for Spain.