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December 2003, **One Year Further and 6 Continents To Go.**

The TOPtoTOP the Global Climate Expedition team celebrates the success of its first year while in the Canary Islands, just before crossing the Atlantic to North America, the 2<sup>nd</sup> continent on their global trip. Along the journey from Croatia to Italy, Tunisia, Spain and the Canary Islands there have been many highlights and a few lowlights. The team can look back over the 3000 km and 100'000m in height by foot, 1500km biked and 3000 nautical miles sailed and rejoice.

Since the Swiss TOPtoTOP party in Lausanne-Vidy in May 2003, the expedition headed off by bike with the Alps behind them to Croatia and met the sailboat 'Pachamama' which will take them around the world's 7 continents to the 7 summits. From the starting event in Punat, throughout Croatia's many national parks and to Zadar, the expedition encountered many people and projects trying to tackle the impacts of an unpredictable climate and humans on their environment. The highlight of the TOPtoTOP's contribution to Croatia was certainly the provision of fire fighting equipment to Telascica Natural park to enable them to deal with the severe effects of the dry summer on their forests. After beach cleaning actions in Dubrovnik and inspiring encounters with ecohouse builders and other NGOs such as cleanuptheworld the expedition headed onwards to Brindisi and Milazzo in Italy, despite ongoing setbacks in technology and equipment.

In Brindisi one of the main highlights was at the Cantatori Lucio Dalla music concert when Dalla announced TOPtoTOP's message on stage of the importance of respecting the environment and the sea. Litter on the local beaches has been a problem there, so together with the CANYON twins the expedition biked to Torre Guaceto national park and did some more beach cleaning activities.

The expedition's first approach to the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest continent-Africa will be well remembered because the team encountered a fierce storm, which rocked the Pachamama but proved her to be seaworthy for the expected storms ahead. The port of Bizerte in Tunesia gave the team rest and shelter, and more beach cleaning, before they headed across the null meridium to Malaga in Spain. The expedition will visit Africa again in 2008, when they will climb Kilimanjaro, the 2<sup>nd</sup> last TOP in their global journey.

After testing their sea legs in the Meditteranean the team were happy to spend some time on land and visited schools in Alora. One of the main aims of the expedition is to motivate children to get active about environmental issues, particularly climate change. Their approach has been very well received in primary schools throughout the journey. The thought provoking images created by children during school visits are printed on postcards and are used to fund TOPtoTOP initiatives and provide

sponsorship for chosen environmental projects such as Solarspar. Further expedition activities such as climbing, and pot-holing were enjoyed at El Chorro before the team headed back to the Pachamama for their first experience of Atlantic waves on the Straits of Gibraltar.

The Canary Islands has long since been the last port of call between Europe and the Caribbean as well as a hugely popular sun holiday destination for Northern Europeans. The biggest problem for these volcanic islands is the lack of water and the tourists! In the past few years the Islands are dryer and approximately 5°C warmer. The islands are ideal for wind power however due to the authorities concern about their potential negative visual impact and effect on Tourism, their development in Tenerife has been stopped.

The preparation for the thirty day journey across the Atlantic unleashed some mechanical problems which set the expedition back by a few weeks. Nevertheless, the time was spent in Tenerife and Gomera doing extensive environmental work in schools and with projects and making invaluable connections for the onward journey. One highlight of the experience in Gomera was meeting the competitors of the Woodvale International Rowing Competition, who were each heading solo for Barbados with a rowing boat armed with solar panels. Amazing challenges can be done in harmony with nature!

Hundreds of motivated people have met and joined Dario and Sabine along their unique journey. The expedition is growing from strength to strength from TOP to TOP and is always looking for volunteers to help out at home, join the expedition, or provide invaluable connections about projects, people and climate solutions. Check out the website [www.toptotop.org](http://www.toptotop.org) for details or email [Fiona@toptotop.org](mailto:Fiona@toptotop.org). Next, the expedition is going to Grenada, Martinique, the US Virgin Islands, Antigua, Guadeloup, San Blas Islands, Panama, Hawaii, Anchorage Alaska, Climbing TOP of North America - Mt. McKinley/Denali, Vancouver, South-America - Aconcagua, Antarctica - Mt. Vinson, Australia - Mt. Cosciusko, Asia - Mt. Everest, Africa - Kilimanjaro, Europe - Mt. Elbrus in Russia. Come and join us!

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