



The Wandering Sloths

Ever thought about quitting your job to take a year out to see the world by campervan? That's what Andy and Shelly did...

WORDS Mike Trippitt PHOTOS Mike Trippitt and Andy & Shelly Farrant

When Shelly Farrant received a text message from her husband, Andy, asking, "Shall we go travelling for a year?" their world started to change...

But when they had bought a new Auto-Trail 635SE V-line campervan called Doris back in 2016, Shelly's dream of taking a year out to see the world seemed

to be over before it had begun when Andy had admitted that giving up his job didn't really appeal to him.

"I had put the idea to bed, thinking that it would never happen," says former zoo Manager, Shelly. "We bought Doris as a compromise. Both being very outdoor-type people, we could go away and explore at weekends and for holidays."

But at a dinner party one evening the question of travelling arose and Shelly's godmother's husband sowed a seed in Andy's mind. "You'll always be able to get another job when you come back, it just might not be a career job," he said. Andy concluded that he was right, "Life is too short, so I thought we should just do it: go and experience it."





Best trip

As part of our year's adventure, the initial journey from Denmark through the tunnel and bridge into Sweden, then travelling up through the coastal roads of Norway via the Atlantic Road to Nordkapp took some beating!

Goodbye Doris, hello Paddy

It was apparent that their current 'van, though great for weekends and short holidays, was not suitable for 12 months away. Andy says, "The layout didn't give us a great deal of storage space, and we had to pull two bench seats together each night to make the bed up. Even when the bed was permanently made, we still didn't have enough storage space to cater for 12 months abroad, covering all eventualities."

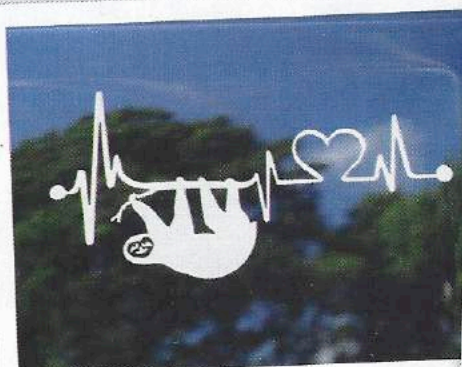
Shelly agrees, "We could have done it with Doris, but I was the one that was a bit more reluctant. When we bought it, we knew we'd only be doing a maximum of two-week holidays. But with thoughts of having to make a bed up every day for a year, and where we were going to put our summer and winter clothes, I knew we were going to struggle."

So Shelly and Andy went along to campervan shows once again to look

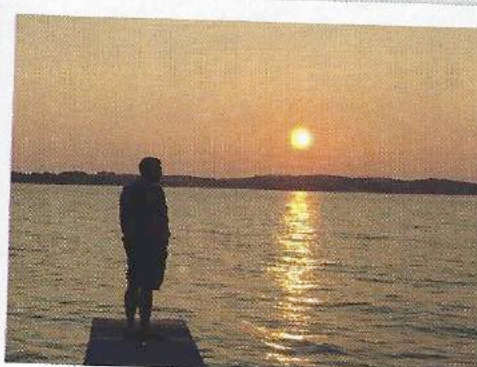
at several 'vans, both British and European, new and secondhand. "To cut a long story short," says Shelly, "we knew someone who had an Adria Twin and they highly recommended it, especially the layout. That's where the spark started, so it was really through recommendation that we looked more at the Adria campers."

The more they looked the more they liked. Build quality impressed them, as did the level of insulation. They also liked the exterior colours and the modern, light interiors. The Adria Twin Supreme 600 SP impressed the most. Andy says that the transverse bed with a huge garage underneath were the standout features. Shelly agrees: "Yes, that was the final tick, because if we didn't go for that there was no point selling Doris."

In March 2018 the couple said goodbye to Doris, and took delivery of a brand-new Adria Twin 600SP from Signature Motorhomes in Preston. They named it 'Paddy' after their favourite place, Padstow. They laugh when they say that their Adria Twin is a boy only because Doris was a girl!



We are the Wandering Sloths. Keep your eyes peeled for us on the road...



Andy, enjoying the sunset in Croatia while camped up near the beach...



Andy & Shelly

And we're off!

Andy and Shelly drew up a list of 14 countries they wanted to visit. They researched locations, studied the online and written literature and downloaded campsite finding apps. They even considered carefully what was the best departure date, but there was no pre-planned route.

"There wasn't really an itinerary," says Shelly. "Norway was high on our list, so originally we were going to go at New Year. But when we started doing our homework we realised that we would be away for two winters and only one summer. We thought that was harder to manage, and we had to be realistic about what the travelling was going to involve. Reluctantly, we said we were better off delaying it and leaving before the summer holidays."

Although they had written down a list of countries they wanted to visit, Shelly admits that later, as their tour progressed, the list went out of the window. She says, "Originally France, Spain and Eastern European countries were not on there. What was originally a list of 14 countries ended up being 21."

As the departure date approached, Shelly and Andy turned their attention to how they were going to keep in touch with family and friends. They set up a Facebook page on which they would write a travel blog. They pondered what the page should be called. They would be taking with them their mascot, Sid the Sloth – a cuddly toy they had bought originally to go in their first van. Andy says that, as they had no timescale and no definite schedule, there was going to be an element of aimless wandering, and so the 'Wandering Sloths' were born.

On 31 May 2018, The Wandering Sloths left Harwich onboard the ferry to The Hook of Holland. Andy had given up work, after 23 years in the automotive industry, just days earlier and had mixed emotions. "Anxious, nervous, apprehensive," he says. "I think I got to the point where I needed a new challenge, anyway. I needed something else to concentrate on; maybe a career change, so the year away was perfect. I saw things in a completely different light. I was sad to leave the company I worked for because the employees and customers were very good, but it didn't take me long to switch off."

Base vehicle 2018 Fiat Ducato SWB

Conversion type Adria Twin Supreme 600 SP

adria.co.uk updated to 3,500kg by SVTech svtech.co.uk purchased from Signature Motorhomes signaturemotorhomes.co.uk

Owned since March 2018

Drive Front-wheel drive

Engine 2.3-litre TDI Euro 6

Power 130bhp

Economy 31mpg

Gearbox 6-speed manual

Travel seats 4

Berths 3

Leisure battery 120Ah

Length x width x height 5.98m x 2.05m x 2.58m

Equipment Three-ring gas burner hob, oven/grill, 97-litre fridge, 100-litre fresh water tank, 90-litre waste water tank, water and space heater, 11kg gas cylinder, washroom with shower, loo and basin, Thule Omnistar 6200 awning, 120W solar panel, Cat 1 alarm, 16in alloy wheels, TV aerial, towbar. Cab air-con, sat-nav with reverse camera, DAB radio, Bluetooth, front fog lights, leather steering wheel and gear knob

Insurance £917 (with Comfort Insurance) when classed as full-time travellers. It's now £250 a year

COSTS SO FAR

The campervan.....	£52,415
Vehicle uprated by SVTech.....	£312
Supergain Nomade aerial.....	£50
Scotchguard interior & Supagard exterior.....	£350
120W solar panel.....	£350
Towbar.....	£250
First year habitation certificate.....	£249
First service.....	£407
Total costs to date.....	£54,383

It confirmed that I'd made the right decision! What we were doing was certainly for the best."

"We purposely picked a campsite in nearby Holland for the first couple of days. Leaving work a week before meant we had a lot to do in a short period of time, so we needed that couple of days to begin with just to take it all in and settle down," recalls Andy. Then it was plain sailing.

For 353 days, to be precise, Andy and Shelly travelled through Europe and Scandinavia, visiting 21 countries. They covered 21,420 miles and spent £4,042 on diesel. They paid for an overnight pitch on only 168 nights, either on campsites, aires or in car parks, and spent the remaining time wild camping.

The Sloths only planned two to three days in advance, but nothing was left to chance. They wild camped only where recommended, and chose sites carefully. They did everything with their eyes open, and had few surprises. Keeping an eye on expenditure was vital, too.

"We knew what we wanted to do and so had a daily budget," Andy says. "We knew that if we blew too much, we wouldn't be able to achieve our ultimate goal. There were days when we went over budget, but then we made sure we reined in expenditure for three or four days after to make up for it." But Shelly puts that into context, adding, "We weren't penny pinching, we were just mindful of what our allowances were."

In November, Andy and Shelly made an

unscheduled return to the UK for a funeral. Whilst here, they arranged for a new Elektroblock to be fitted to Paddy, too, as a power failure had been threatening the future of their travels. But they returned to France 10 days later, and after a journey through Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland and France, they spent Christmas and New Year in Spain, fulfilling Andy's ambition. "Andy had got in his mind that he wanted to be in shorts and a T-shirt cooking a barbecue on Christmas Day!" says Shelly. "We still did the traditional bit, but on Boxing Day, instead."

The end of the beginning

Back home, Andy and Shelly think they made a good choice in buying an Adria Twin. With hindsight Shelly would not bother with a TV aerial as they didn't really watch TV during their year away, but says their decision to have only one leisure battery knowing that they could charge it almost daily – between travelling and having



Sid the Sloth, all set to hit the road in the campervan!



The washroom in our Adria is really well designed for long-term travelling...

a solar panel – was a good one. Andy says the solar panel and the awning have turned out to be essential. Needless to say, the permanent bed and vast garage are big successes, too.

Since getting back, life is returning to normal. But it's a new normal, and a new life. Andy and Shelly have secured work as Site Assistants with the Camping and Caravanning Club and aim to spend six months each year working, and six months touring. The Wandering Sloths' travels are not over; in many ways, they have only just begun. And whilst both like the look of the latest Adria, they're more than happy with Paddy for the time being.



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