

Around Africa on a bike

• TANJA BAUSE

JOLANDIE Rust (27) left Cape Town on April 27 in an effort to become the first woman to circumnavigate the African continent solo.

This epic journey will take her about two and a half years to complete. She will cycle through 34 coastal African countries and cover a distance of close to 40 000 km. She has to transport with her on her bicycle 40 kg of gear which includes camping equipment, food, water, clothing and tools.

For Rust the journey, which took her more than three years to prepare for, is personal. "I believe that we only have this life here and now and we need to take it and live our dreams and through this journey I hope that I can inspire other people to also grab their lives and live their dreams," she says.

She also wants to show the world a different Africa: an Africa from the grassroots perspective. She will be either staying in her tent or with people she meets along the way in their houses, homes and shacks.



Photo: Tanja Bause

Jolandie Rust on a sight-seeing trip through Windhoek on her bicycle.

"We as Africans are very warm and welcoming and people I have already met along the way have offered me their houses and referred me to people living in other countries I will be traveling through."

But she is by no means a romantic fool and very aware of the possible dangers of her journey.

"I will never put myself

deliberately into danger and I am fully aware of the risks I will face," she says.

This is not the first time that Rust has taken her bicycle and gone on a wild adventure. In 2004 she cycled through Israel. She was working on a kibbutz when she decided to cycle through Israel in a time when the Gaza war was at its height.

This was when the adventure bug bit her and in 2008 she cycled from Johannesburg to Cape Town and in 2010 she became the first person to cycle around the edge of South Africa.

Rust collects money for the American-based organization IDUKA, which gives scholarships to African children so they can further their education at a university.

She also carries a little drum with her. "I am also cycling under my personal theme which is 'Connecting through Music' as music is a universal language and might come in very handy, especially in countries where I do not speak the language, I can use music to connect to the people."

Her bicycle is called 'Luna' because her father always claimed she was bothered by the moon. "I entered Namibia on full moon and it was wonderful," says Rust.

Once Rust has finished her journey she wants to write a book about her adventure. People wanting to follow Rust's progress can read her blog at jolandie-rust.blogspot.com.