

The passion of popularising astronomy: StarTruck Odyssey – From expedition vehicle to mobile observatory

Gernot Meiser^{1,2,3} and Pascale Demy^{1,2,3}

¹Atelier für audiovisuelle Medien PartG,
Gross Str. 37, D-66740 Saarlouis, Germany

²Astronomers without Borders (AWB)

³The World at Night (TWAN) – Europe

email: gernot.meiser@av-atelier.de pascale.demy@av-atelier.de

Abstract. A live-spoken multimedia presentation on large screen describing the project “Mobile Observatory”: making astronomy available to other communities and astronomy outreach at any location.

Keywords. outreach, Africa

As a strange vehicle navigates southward under the starry blackness of a Nubian Desert sky, a new idea is conceived. As the adventurers traverse the African continent from North to South –from windswept Sahara sands to savannahs teeming with wildlife– the idea takes shape. The German-French couple is travelling from Europe to southern Africa to witness one of nature’s most awesome spectacle, a total eclipse of the Sun. Along the way, while sharing their astronomical equipment by sky observing with local people, they are encouraged to also follow their new dream –to convert their 6-wheel Unimog expedition vehicle to a fully-equipped portable observatory.

On “star safaris” for small groups of enthusiasts, at special astronomy events at Earth’s increasingly rare dark sites, and at sidewalk astronomy gatherings in urban locations, parks and schools, they imagine all that could be accomplished. By the end of their year-long African odyssey, the dream has become an obsession. Now, years later, that dream has become a reality. In their multimedia presentation Gernot Meiser and Pascale Demy present the story of their African eclipse odyssey as well as the their mobile observatory’s journey from concept to completion. Stunning images of their route through South Eastern Europe, Near East and East Africa, enthralling photos of a total solar eclipse, the expanse of the universe, examples of sidewalk astronomy events, training courses, workshops, lectures are all a part of the journey.

The multimedia show can be watched at <http://canalc2.u-strasbg.fr/video.asp?idVideo=8351>