

## Vehicles passing through turns heads

By Emily Adams

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DOVER-FOXCROFT

Local residents got a glimpse of European “overlanders” and their rugged expedition vehicles recently on their way to the Moosehead region in search of the remote North Woods.

Germans Nobbi and Alex Römer and Markus and Sabine Meyer are on a two-year tour of North and South America. They are traveling at their own pace and decide from one day to the next where they will go.

Starting in Maryland, they zig-zagged north. They are on their way to Nova Scotia and stopped at Acadia National Park along the way. While on Mount Desert Island, reports of the beauty and seclusion of Greenville piqued their interest. They like to be in sparsely populated places where they can cook by campfire, go on hikes and see wildlife, so they made a detour.

On July 2, their vehicles were parked in the shopping plaza at Dover-Foxcroft to take advantage of the free, wireless Internet access at McDonald’s and restock food supplies at Shaw’s.

“Somebody told us there must be a really nice place somewhere in the woods where there are only logging trucks and there are checkpoints and you have to tell them how long you are staying and there are waterfalls and everything,” explained 48-year-old Alex Römer during their brief layover in Dover-Foxcroft July 2. “So it must be beautiful



Photo courtesy of Emily Adams

**HEAVY TRAFFIC** — Sabine Meyer, a retired German nurse, waves from her motor home, a former Austrian troop transport vehicle.

and quiet. There is nobody. So that’s where we are going now.” She and her husband, Nobbi, who is retired, started traveling together about two years ago.

Markus Meyer, a retired engineer, and Sabine, a retired nurse, also began their travels about two years ago. They had reared two daughters, now grown, and had full careers, but decided there was more to life. What they are “looking for is to meet people, to talk to people, to get new ideas, to make your mind opened, to see other cultures,” explained Markus. “That’s what we think we’d love to see for the

next 10, 20, 30 years.”

The two couples met by chance in Norway. They discovered their mutual plans to tour the Americas and decided to travel together. After Nova Scotia, they will go west through Canada to Alaska and head south for the winter.

The Meyers plan to stop for an extended time in one of the poorest countries in South America, Bolivia. In Quillacollo, a city of 75,000 southeast of La Paz, they plan to assist Tres Soles (three suns [www.tres-soles.de](http://www.tres-soles.de)), a project that houses and educates 50 indigent children and teenagers.

Neither couple is independently wealthy. The Meyers might be able to live this way indefinitely, but the Roemers will have to return to Kaiserslautern, Germany. Alex might resume work typing medical reports.

To stretch their funds, both couples live as frugally as possible, avoiding the expense of campgrounds most of the time, cooking their own food, and resisting the temptation to buy localized maps and guidebooks. They rely on GPS and the Internet.

Their vehicles were shipped from Hamburg to Baltimore where they were retrieved in early June. The Römers’ motor home was originally an air-pollution-testing truck for the fire



Photo courtesy of Emily Adams

**EXPLORING MAINE** —

German overlander Nobbi Römer points to the Maine sticker on his expedition vehicle. The door bears the coat of arms for Krickenbach, a municipality in the district of Kaiserslautern.

department in Wuppertal, Germany. The Meyers’ was a troop transport vehicle for the Austrian military.

These overlanders prefer excess government vehicles to traditional RVs because they withstand weather and terrain better. A huge exhibition devoted to selling, renovating and equipping such vehicles draws thousands of overlanders each spring to the Bavarian city of Bad Kissingen (the Abenteuer Allrad [www.abenteuer-allrad.de](http://www.abenteuer-allrad.de)).

These motor homes have solar panels, gel batteries, potable water storage, low-energy refrigeration and LED lighting. The Römers’ vehicle is 7.5 tons, the Meyers’ 12. His vehicle burns diesel and averages nine to 10 miles per gallon. “The bad thing is it’s permanently four wheels, so it needs extra diesel,” he notes. “I would love to switch it off, but it’s not possible. This thing is made to go to war.”

They can go virtually anywhere except through water and the walls are thick and strong, which provides security. The Roemers were in Morocco for three months and went through the desert wherever they wanted to go. The Meyers took theirs across the Western Sahara for three weeks seeing nobody except camels.

“I would like to add one thing in your report,” said Markus at the conclusion of the interview. “If anybody is seeing an overlander, those guys need two things: A place to sleep and fresh water. That’s what they need. And they are friendly and they are nice.”

They might return to Maine this autumn to see the fall foliage.

The couples keep family and friends informed of their travels through their websites, both in German. The Römers’ is [traewwelschees.de](http://traewwelschees.de) and the Meyers’ is [looking4adventure.de](http://looking4adventure.de).