



Stichting 4WDCARE

Mensen zorgen voor mensen
People caring for people

Why a trip to Ukraine?

Most of us haven't seen war..

For 75 years now we have been living in peace.

Which is a long period if you look back in history.

That is why we think that we have a responsibility towards those who have to survive in a war situation.

Was it easy this time? No....

On the first day of our trip our trailer had a flat tyre. We were able to do an emergency repair after which we looked for a trailer workshop that could sell us a new tyre.

We were also under the impression that the trailer load had shifted.

Next day we found out it had shifted alright. When we opened up the trailer we saw that the beds had shifted. To solve that we had to take everything out that was on top of the beds. We used tension straps to secure the beds with mattresses as well as possible.

Unfortunately, it did not work out alright. At the Polish-Ukrainian border we had to find a building supplies store to buy more tension straps and secure everything all over again. The fact that we did strap things down better was a good decision because roads and weather conditions were only getting worse.

At the border we also met up with our guide, André Cieslak, who had offered to help us along.

The Polish-Ukrainian border was comparable to the way we had to deal with the Bosnian border concerning civil servants, checking and waiting, waiting and more waiting. Somewhere in the afternoon we got through but still had 6 hours to drive.



That was not easy, as it was getting dark. The roads were bad and the snow was getting worse.

The last 60 km were quite stressful. Our guide had relatively little trouble, he had only a small trailer.

Our combination however, with a trailer weighing 3000 kilograms, could hardly deal with the long inclines in the road. Every now and then we could feel the car starting to slide.

Because the electricity was gone a lot of the time it was hard to figure out the way. But fortunately we arrived safely at our first address at a friend of André's. His name was Pieter. He didn't have any electricity, no internet and no phone.

But still we were treated to a hot meal, bread and of course vodka. He had also made up three beds for us.

Pieter said that he and his son might be mobilised to fight in the war.

Next day we met Olga, the lady who coordinated transport of donated goods within the country with her organisation. She is not afraid to drive up to the front line and make sure that the men are supplied with food, clothing and other goods.

In the area where Olga and Pieter live there are weekly collections with which they prepare food for soldiers at the frontline. Olga pointed out that the amount of help from abroad has become less than it was at the start of the war.

They were so happy with the goods we had in our trailer and André's trailer. Olga found it hard to keep control of her emotions. In the afternoon we visited a hospital in Kolomyja. We had a good chat with the administrator and his partners and they showed us around. This hospital where they also treat war casualties can deliver a wide variety of care, however there is a great lack of everything. We were shocked by the way their bed linen was being washed.



There were a number of rusty household washing machines, an old spinner and a heater that blew warm air over the laundry in a room where normally one wouldn't want to work.

If only we would be able to change this situation for the better! That would be a great improvement.

Afterwards we drove south. Driving for 16 km on a bad, almost off the road, road is normally fun, but not when it is raining, dark and everybody is trying to pass you.

In the evening we arrived at Nicolai's and his wife's house. They live in poor conditions. Apart from the fact that there was no Electricity there either, the toilet was outside in an outhouse with a hole in the ground. He works in forestry but he is also a priest in the Orthodox Church community. This community is also active in collecting money and food for the army.

Next morning we were allowed to visit his pride and joy, a beautiful little wooden church. We were impressed by the traditions but also the colourful interior.

When we drove back we got stuck in a traffic jam kilometers long. Up front there was a funeral procession of a local soldier who was being taken to the graveyard. Family members were spreading flowers on the road.

We arrived late at Pieter's place. We hooked up the empty trailers and then we enjoyed a last hot meal. That was great because the road back took longer in the dark and it was around midnight by the time we got back to Poland.

Next day we had an evaluation with André and discussed the last few days.



The Ukrainian people are willing to fight and help each another. They are not used to being dependent on the government and they prefer to take action themselves. Their open attitude and their confidence that they will be able to keep Ukraine independent is impressive. However, they cannot do that alone.

We have been to the Ukraine, a country at war. Was it dangerous? No! Were there risks involved? Yes, certainly!! We passed a power plant that only a few days ago had been under attack by missiles between Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk.

But should that be a reason why we would not help these people and leave them to themselves?

This dilemma deals with the question if we can and want to take responsibility. After 75 years of living in peace you may answer this question.

