1.3 Tons of CO2 Saved: Rainer Zietlow Pulls Off Natural-Gas-Powered Drive to Asia

-Eco-Adventurers Rainer Zietlow and Franz Janusiewicz on the road in the “Natural Gas Caddy”-

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Press Release

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- EcoFuel Asia Tour took drivers more than 32,000 kilometres, from Berlin to Bangkok
- VW Caddy EcoFuel first European natural-gas car to enter China
- Drive through Tibet an endurance test for man and machine
- Tour was also acid test for a newly-developed range-increasing nano-material

Bangkok – The adventurer Rainer Zietlow has, after a ten-week marathon drive, successfully completed his EcoFuel Asia Tour. Zietlow’s car, a VW Caddy EcoFuel, arrived right on schedule at the ANGVA Natural Gas Vehicles Trade Fair in Bangkok. Rainer Zietlow and his accompanying photographer, Franz Janusiewicz, proved once and for all on their 32,000-kilometre tour the advantages of natural-gas drive systems for the environment: along the whole route, the car produced, with an average consumption of 7 kilograms of natural gas per 100 kilometres, roughly 1.3 tons less CO2 than a comparable 1.6-litre petrol-engine car. Apart from its somewhat higher chassis and nine supplementary gas tanks, the Caddy is a normal standard production model. “The success of our Natural Gas Tour will help further increase interest in environmentally-friendly fuels,“ said Rainer Zietlow on arrival in Bangkok.

The journey led first from Berlin through Eastern Europe to the Russian natural-gas metropolis Orenburg. The adventurers followed here the course of the Soyuz pipeline, which runs from Orenburg’s vast natural-gas fields into Germany. Then on via Turkey to Jordan, India, Nepal and Tibet. The adventurers made brief halts in two *SOS Kinderdorf* "Children’s Villages“ in Kathmandu (Nepal) and Lhasa (Tibet), in order to hand over donations – 15 cents, in total, for every kilometre driven on the Tour. Then on once again right across Han China to the trade fair “Challenge Bibendum“ in Shanghai. This event places particular emphasis on vehicles with environmentally-friendly propulsion using alternative fuel-types. Rainer Zietlow’s Caddy was the first European natural-gas car to enter China and also the only car to make the journey to the trade fair on its own four wheels. It was in this same VW Caddy that Zietlow had, last year, already made the journey right around the globe in the EcoFuel World Tour. In total, the car has now chalked up some 103,000 kilometres in all five continents of the earth, winning itself a place in the Guinness Book of Records.

The final leg of the EcoFuel Asia Tour was the drive from Shanghai to Bangkok. At the ANGVA international trade fair for Natural Gas Vehicles in Bangkok, the Caddy was the focus of much attention. "The Thai Energy Minister wanted to know what sort of a range the car has,” relates Rainer Zietlow. “I was able to tell him: one could cross his whole country, north to south, with it.” With the supplementary gas tanks, the car has a range of approximately 3000 kilometres.

“Our tour through Asia showed that natural gas is on the rise as a fuel, worldwide,” reports Zietlow. This environmentally-friendly fuel is especially suitable for taxis, as is the case in countries like India and China. In most countries, tanking up with natural gas proved unproblematic; the tanks were generally filled with gas at 200 bar pressure.

The Tour was a real test of endurance for Zietlow’s tough little vehicle. In many countries, road quality was very poor. The greatest challenge was the crossing of several 5000-meter-high mountain passes in Tibet. “That was the most strenuous part of the whole Tour“, says Rainer Zietlow. The Caddy had to

prove itself equal not only to ice and snow but also to the fording of several deep rivers – and all that without benefit of four-wheel drive. It had been planned in advance that the natural-gas adventurers should drive a 1000-kilometre stretch through Tibet rather on petrol fuel, since there exist no natural-gas refuelling facilities in the region. Here, the car's 13-litre petrol tank got its turn to do service. The whole mechanism of the car survived the extreme road and weather conditions without damage. Apart from four flat tyres and some stone-fall damage to the windscreen, Zietlow and Janusiewicz didn't experience a single breakdown during their entire marathon journey through Asia.

One of the VW Caddy EcoFuel's supplementary gas tanks had contained, throughout the entire Tour, a nano-material named "Basostor" developed by the chemical concern BASF and capable of adsorbing significantly more natural-gas molecules than would be possible in a normal gas tank. This increases the distance the vehicle can travel without refuelling by approx. 20%. Once the Caddy is back in Germany, the tank in question will be examined by BASF to establish how this new material has stood up to the constant shaking on poor road surfaces which it was subjected to during the Tour.

You can follow the whole course of Rainer Zietlow's Natural Gas Tour, with further images for the press, on the Internet site http://www.ecofuel-asia-tour.com .

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