

JURGEN STROO  
**MERCEDES W123 300 TD**

**MANY PEOPLE THINK THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF A TRIP IS PLANNING THE ITINERARY, BUT OFF-ROADERS KNOW CHOOSING A VEHICLE IS PARAMOUNT. YOU CAN ALWAYS STOP IN A REMOTE TOWN AND FIND BASIC NECESSITIES OR SLEEP UNDER THE STARS, BUT YOU CAN'T ALWAYS FIND A GOOD MECHANIC, SO A RELIABLE ENGINE IS CRITICAL.**

The Mercedes-Benz W123 was such a hit when it was first introduced that the backlog for new orders ran as long as 12 months and those vehicles that did hit the road commanded a premium of 5,000 Deutschmarks over the original sale price on the black market. It's a testament to the popularity of the W123 that it can still be found in good working condition in countries around the world. Take this 1983 300TD model, which is all original, except for some minor modifications made by owner Jurgen Stroo. His reason for choosing the W123? The engine—it's one of the best ever made, he notes. What better vehicle to use on trips covering some of the most treacherous terrain anywhere in the world? The 88 horsepower, three-liter diesel engine has a total of 225,000 miles on it, including treks

to places as diverse as the mountainous terrain of the French Alps and the washed-out roads of Africa during the rainy season. To ensure that the W123 was up to the wide array of trips he had planned, Jurgen modified it by adding heavy-duty shock absorbers and heavy-duty springs as well as an oil-pan plate—for added protection on some of the bumpier rides he had in mind. To prepare the vehicle for trips to some of the world's less-traveled destinations, Jurgen added a Webasto water heater and a roof tent, in addition to making interior modifications. He also added an Elsbett converter, which uses vegetable oil as fuel. This would surely come in handy in some of the locales visited by Jurgen, where it was unlikely a gas station would be just around the next corner. The result was an incredible journey that's taken him to more than three dozen countries—and counting.



**MANUFACTURER:** Mercedes-Benz  
**MODEL:** W123 300TD  
**YEAR OF PRODUCTION/YEAR OF REBUILD:** 1983  
**SEATS/BEDS:** Four seats, two beds (roof tent)  
**CONDITION:** Original with minor modifications  
**DRIVETRAIN:** RWD  
**ENGINE:** 3 L diesel, 88 hp, 172 Nm at 2,400 rpm  
**AMOUNT OF MILES/KM:** 139,808/225,000

**COUNTRIES VISITED:** Netherlands, Belgium, England, Wales, Germany, Luxembourg, France, Spain, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Ukraine, Denmark, Serbia, Croatia, Albania, Romania, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, Russia, Moldova, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Mauritania, The Gambia, Senegal, Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo, Benin

**FAVORITE FEATURE:** The bulletproof engine  
**REBUILD—BODYWORK MODIFICATIONS:** Roof tent,  
**REBUILD—CHASSIS MODIFICATIONS:** Heavy-duty absorbers in the front, heavy-duty springs; oil-pan protector/skid plate; Webasto water heater  
**REBUILD—OTHER MODIFICATIONS:** Elsbett vegetable-oil conversion