



A Shared Dream

How Our Journey Started

Olivier looks up from his computer screen and scans around the office. He has been working as a trainee in the Municipality of Rotterdam for six months now and is a youngster compared to his colleagues. He sees all his gray-haired coworkers typing diligently on their keyboards, occasionally sipping their coffee. He thinks about his colleague Ben. He was barely 63 years old and two years from retirement when he suddenly passed away. Ben was always talking about his plans once he finished working. In the end, he never got to fulfill a single one.

Olivier can't shake the thought. Why wait until my retirement to discover what I want? He jumps up, grabs his papers, and rushes to his bike. Olivier speeds through Rotterdam. He knows the way like the back of his hand. He usually switches up his route home, but today he takes the shortest. His brain is working overtime. He has made a choice, and he can't wait to tell Zoë. As fast as possible, he shoves his bike between all the overturned and abandoned bicycles outside their apartment, opens the door, and takes the stairs two at a time. His dream is now to travel the world; he has no plan for how, when, or even where, but he knows he must. Olivier and Zoë have traveled a small amount before but never anything on the scale that he has in mind.

Olivier's travel idea catches Zoë off guard. She feels conflicted and even jealous. She wants to be happy for him. More than that though, she wants to join him, but she has her own life and goals.

Zoë is completely focused on achieving her dream of becoming a rugby player for the Dutch National Rugby Team. She trains and competes six days a week. In the evenings, she tries to keep up with her studies in Industrial Product Design. She barely sees her friends, misses birthday parties, and has little time to spend with Olivier.

Zoë's dream becomes a reality when she makes the cut. But like all dreams, it's not without sacrifice. After two years of living together with Olivier in Rotterdam, she moves to Amsterdam to join the team while he continues to live and work in Rotterdam. But the seed of Olivier's idea continues to grow. In the meantime, Olivier supports Zoë's goal and sacrifices some of his own ambition. "You only get one chance to play for the Netherlands. That is our aim for now," Olivier tells Zoë. However, he continues saving as much money as possible with an eye on his long-term goal.

Then, Zoë's rugby team suffers a defeat that changes everything. It underperforms at the European Championships and loses its funding status. Salaries are cut, trainers are fired, and matches are from the schedule. It leaves Zoë with a choice: sacrifice even more to continue or follow another path. She is stubborn and has not yet fully achieved what she set out to do, but her heart is pulling her in a new direction. In the end, she knows her path is to follow her new dream of traveling around the world. Zoë makes up her mind on the day that Olivier hands in his resignation letter at work. She sees the opportunity for freedom, a life away from the stress of being a professional athlete. Almost instantly, doubt turns into motivation, uncertainty into enthusiasm, and jealousy into cooperation.

Even though we have the same passions, our personalities are very different. But our differences complement each other. Zoë likes Olivier's intellectual certainty. He thinks quickly, can remember everything, has a lot of general knowledge, works efficiently, is honest, and keeps his promises. It's exactly what Zoë needs. On the other hand, Olivier is reserved and thinks cuddling once a day is more than enough. Zoë is overflowing with emotions, while Olivier barely expresses his. Zoë is extroverted and social, and Olivier is introverted and reserved.

It is our similarities that shape our trip—our love for adventure, sport, competition, learning, and independence. We want to travel using human power, take local routes, be sustainable, learn languages, experience the unknown, stay fit, and travel without obligations. We want to feel, learn, discover, and understand the countries we explore.

We imagine our dream together and make space in our lives for our journey. Then, it is time to live it. The only thing that is lacking is a name.

What is WeLeaf?

WeLeaf is the name of our journey. It is a play on words between "we leave" and the "leaf" of a tree. The WeLeaf logo is a combination of a footstep and a leaf. The footstep represents slow travel by human power, and the leaf represents traveling with a low ecological footprint. Together, the dual images symbolize our commitment to sustainable, healthy, and conscious travel.

The WeLeaf identity helps us to reinforce our goals as we forge out on our long adventure to discover the world.