



10 Years of Vanlife: How roadsurfer Transformed the Camper Travel Market

From 25 camper vans to nearly 10,000 vehicles: roadsurfer celebrates its 10th anniversary.



Munich, June 23, 2026 – Ten years ago, roadsurfer launched with just 25 Volkswagen camper vans in Munich, Frankfurt, and Hamburg. Today, with nearly 100 locations across 16 countries, the company has become the world's leading provider of camper van and RV travel experiences. Through its iconic colorful vans and strong brand identity, roadsurfer has helped redefine the camper travel industry. What was once a niche market when the company was founded in 2016 has evolved into a global movement, with “roadsurfing” becoming synonymous with the freedom of life on the road. As roadsurfer marks its 10th anniversary, the company's founders - Dr. Susanne Dickhardt, Markus Dickhardt, Jean-Marie Klein, and Stephie and Christoph Niemann - look back on a decade during which travel preferences have fundamentally shifted. Today, flexibility, independence, and personalized experiences are more important to travelers than ever before.

From Munich Startup to Global Vanlife Leader

By 2022, roadsurfer had doubled the size of its rental fleet every year, reaching approximately 5,000 vehicles. Today, the company operates a fleet of nearly 10,000 camper vans and RVs - a growth trajectory that has continued even after the pandemic-fueled travel boom. roadsurfer operates in an industry that has enjoyed steady annual growth of 8% to 10% for several years. Key milestones include expanding the fleet from camper vans into larger RVs, entering its first international market in France in 2019, and launching operations in North America. Today, roadsurfer employs approximately 1,000 people worldwide and has enabled more than 420,000 travelers to experience vanlife since 2016.

How Vanlife Has Evolved Over the Past Decade

Vanlife has matured, and booking trends clearly reflect that shift. Travelers are planning further ahead than ever before. In 2026, the average booking lead time has increased to approximately 110 days. By comparison, travelers booked about 80 days in advance in 2025 and roughly 70 days ahead when roadsurfer first launched. The trend indicates that camping has become a regular and increasingly important part of annual vacation planning.

The customer base has remained relatively consistent, according to a 2025 customer analysis:

- 19% of customers travel with children.
- Approximately 9% bring a dog along.
- Travelers ages 34 to 44 account for 26% of all bookings..

Vehicle preferences vary by travel group. Families tend to choose camper vans and RVs with more space, while couples and groups of friends are equally likely to opt for either camper vans or larger RVs.

While airfare and hotel prices continue to rise in 2026, roadsurfer's summer rates remain stable compared to last year. As a result, camper travel continues to be viewed as a dependable and cost-effective vacation option. Summer rates start at \$150 per night during peak season, with pricing varying by vehicle type, season, and location. Current summer promotions, including roadsurfer's Fourth of July Deal, provide travelers with additional savings.

Top Travel Destinations in 2026 - and a Standout Growth Market

The United States, Germany, and France continue to rank among the most popular destinations for American roadsurfers, while Los Angeles, Edinburgh, and Milan were the company's most-booked pick-up locations over the past year.

The biggest growth story of the year is unfolding in North America. "North America remains our fastest-growing market in 2026, following approximately 120% growth in 2025 and continued strong booking growth among U.S. residents who are embracing the European vanlife concept," said Markus Dickhardt, Co-Founder and CEO of roadsurfer. "From day one, we have believed in growing profitably. In the years ahead, our focus will not be on expansion for expansion's sake, but on continuously improving the customer experience and increasing operational efficiency."

Dr. Susanne Dickhardt, Co-Founder and Chief Experience Officer, added: "Even in 2016, our vision extended beyond simply renting vehicles. Through a brand built around freedom and adventure, we wanted to introduce a new generation of urban travelers to camping by combining comfort, convenience, and style. Our goal was to make #roadsurfing the preferred way to travel independently, and I believe we have successfully achieved that across both Europe and North America."

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About roadsurfer

Founded in Munich in 2016, roadsurfer has grown into the world's leading provider of camper travel experiences. With nearly 10,000 vehicles and approximately 100 locations across 16 countries, the company enables flexible travel centered on freedom, adventure, and exploration.

In addition to camper van and RV rentals, roadsurfer offers vehicle sales and subscription programs designed for extended or seasonal travel. Through its camping platform, roadsurfer spots, travelers can book unique camping locations throughout Germany, Italy, Spain, and France, often on short notice.

Featuring the latest vehicle models, premium amenities, and unlimited mileage, roadsurfer allows travelers to hit the road without fixed itineraries or pre-booked accommodations.

For more information, visit roadsurfer.com.