

40 years of walking together, how do they do that?



The Oranginas, from left to right: Hans Plas, Sietse Abma, Jan Schipper, Cor Kramp, Cees Werkhoven and in front with map: Aart van Wijngaarden

***"It shouldn't become a tradition,"* six gentlemen said to each other forty years ago. In 1979 they decided for the first time as a group to go hiking for a week in the Teutoburg Forest. Around Easter, because that period has a number of days off. And that made a difference in taking vacation days. But mainly because after a winter "inside" they wanted to go "outside" again. We have now almost reached the 40th anniversary of hiking group Oranginas.**

Why did you keep walking together?

Jan, who already regularly walked with Aart, came up with the idea. He asked Cor if he wanted to join him, Cor asked Cees, who in turn brought Sietse in, after which Hans joined at Jan's request. And then you have six. Men who knew each other separately, but not as a group. With quite different backgrounds, views, characters, activities and places of residence. Why did you keep walking together?

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wanted to join him, Cor asked Cees, who in turn brought in Sietse, after which Hans joined at Jan's request. And then you have six. Men who knew each other separately, but not as a group. With very different backgrounds, views, characters, activities and places of residence.



The Oranginas is on the descent through the Sfakiana gorge in Crete, 2013.

It was an experiment, an experiment by a group of people with a common passion: walking for several days. Actually two passions: walking and a week really away, abroad. The Frisian Forest Path, although beautiful, never became it with this group!

After a week of walking without any significant problems in the Teutoburg Forest, it soon became clear: experiment succeeded. "We'll do that again". Provided it doesn't become a tradition, of course. And that repeated itself annually, for 39 years. In recent months, twenty articles about these multi-day walking tours in Europe have appeared on Wandelmagazine.nu.

Why the name Oranginas?

In 1987 we walked in the Vosges, from Moosch to Sewen. It was a sweltering day and not even halfway through the route the water was up. We had brought way too little, just stupid! After another hour of thirsty walking, we saw something in the distance that looked like a "hut", which turned out to be a café. Where the café owner ran out of his

supply of Oranginas in no time. "*Shake first!*". That convex bottle. Sinas, so to speak. Rarely drunk before. After that, almost no more.

In the years that followed, the word Oranginas became a concept, a statement, an atmosphere, a quote..... and finally the name of this group. Now included in the name of our famous website: www.oranginas.nl, where you can currently find reports of sixty multi-day hikes through Europe.

How do you prepare for a long journey?

In the first 20 – 25 years of our existence as a walking group, the preparations were minimal. To determine the destination we met once and there was some written consultation about what should be in the backpack. Something for all weather conditions: from *gamaschen* to shorts, a compass, a piece of cheese, crackers, Quick Jelles, a can of noodles just in case, a can opener, a whistle. You soon had fifteen kilos on your back.



Descent through Stara Planina in Bulgaria, 2006.

We drove to a jointly defined global goal, a region in a certain country. On the spot, a suitable starting point was chosen where we bought the hiking maps and mapped out a route for 4 to 5 days. A circular walk if possible, otherwise the presence of a train connection back was useful, and that was it. The less you arrange or figure out in advance, the less can go wrong! Everything you arrange creates expectations. And they can be disappointing or not at all. The idea of "pictures" is often wrong. You then check whether what you have already heard, seen, read or discovered at home is correct. The reality is often disappointing compared to – for example – the often photoshopped and misshapen pictures in leaflets, magazines, on the internet or Instagram.

Why do you walk?

The choice of what we call "the adventure" appeals greatly to the flexibility and the underlying and mutual solidarity of the group members. For example, it may happen that there is no expected place to sleep, but one six kilometers away. While you are already almost at the end of your abilities. Or there is only one sleeping accommodation in the place of arrival: a hotel, also quite expensive. Or the sleeping place is "rather austere", to put it mildly... In that case it is: "inside!", after all, this is part of the choice for adventure.

And that choice delivers fantastic experiences. Along the way there are friendly people everywhere. For example, we slept in the attic of the postman from Videm (Slovenia), which had not been used for years. Another time, due to sudden snowfall, instead of a day, we stayed for a week in a guesthouse in Liptovske Osada (Slovakia), where the owner and daughter of the hut gave us unforgettable experiences.



Start hiking tour Broumovsko, Czech Republic, 2001.

Another occasion that stays with us was a, say, B&B in Brloh, Czech Republic. Here an elderly couple presented us with the most beautiful painted eggs ever seen at breakfast on Easter Sunday. In the show room of a hundreds of years old farm, where [all the turbulent events of recent years](#) seemed to have in no way influenced their way of life and dealing with each other and with the other inhabitants of the village. This experience is from our first Czech Republic trip in 1992. In retrospect, one of the most beautiful tours we have ever walked as a hiking team. These kinds of experiences can't be booked from behind your PC. The most beautiful emotion during a walking tour is and remains the wonder! The astonishment! The surprise!

As the group members get older, the preparations do increase. The risks of bad weather, of a lot of snow in the mountains, combined with a somewhat decreasing condition increase the need for preparation, for reservations, for luggage transport, for flying and with it the restrictions associated with the almost unprecedented travel options. The stage places are fixed, so you can know where you will arrive at the end of the afternoon. This is reassuring, but at the same time reduces the adventure.



The Oranginas hike through bad weather in Poland, 1991.

What tip(s) would you give to beginning hiking groups?

For us, the name "walking group" covers exactly the load, because the group consists of hikers, of people who love walking and find each other in it. Our advice to starting or yet to start hiking groups is: keep it there too! For example, the Oranginas rarely, if ever, come as a group on each other's birthdays. A walking group is – in our case – a group of enthusiasts, not so much of friends.

Personal love and suffering can be discussed while walking, but limited. That's not a deal, that's how it's grown. The humour, the lazy, the joke, the football and the predominate, wonderful! Solving the world's problems is done elsewhere, not while walking.

Money matters are invested with one person: the treasurer: the manager of the joint pot, the 'issuer'. There are quite a few hiking groups that, due to the management of such a pot, get into trouble and lift themselves. If you catch yourself paying attention to whether the other person is not consuming too much from the pot, our advice is: stop it! Give up your spot to someone else. The highlight in this context is the group that printed an Excel sheet every day to map out the individual expenses from the pot. Really happened!

Also don't: use your mobile *"to keep up to date with the latest social news"*. Do it: take in the latest news from nature that you walk through, let it penetrate you and store it. For ever.



The Oranginas at the evening program of Porto city Camino Portuguese.

Will you make it to 50 years?

We're going for it! Who knows, it might end with the Friese Woudenpad. Near where we live.

