

Nomination 3 Fly in the Eye Award 2024

'Africa Classic' | AMREF Flying Doctors

The genre of adventurous travel has made a return after a hiatus of several years. Following a two-year absence, when the global COVID-19 pandemic made travel nearly impossible, various organizations resumed organizing and promoting adventurous trips for donors over the past year. This is unfortunate, as we believe this genre is fraught with so many pitfalls that it would be better if organizations abandoned this ill-conceived form of audience engagement entirely (thankfully, some organizations have indicated they will no longer organize such trips).

A prominent special mention in this genre this year goes to the '[Xperience Trip: Unknown](#)' (Georgia) by Kom over en help, featuring episodes like [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#), where a pleasant trip for Dutch youth is painfully combined with 'development work' ('worstenbroodjes, sausages, anyone?'). Compassion Nederland also earns another special mention for their [Muskathlon](#), which combines 'an extreme challenge in a unique location' with 'making a meaningful contribution' to 'the projects you will visit.' Compassion already has six of these adventurous trips planned for the coming years, where participants will run or mountainbike through Indonesia, Uganda, the Philippines, Rwanda, Kenya, or Tanzania.

However, the clear frontrunner for this year's nomination is the [Africa Classic](#) by AMREF Flying Doctors, billed as 'the unforgettable cycling adventure in Africa,' where participants support 'a healthy and strong Africa' (yes, they're still using the slogan). The entire campaign is riddled with the pitfalls of the adventurous travel genre, from the centralization and glorification of Dutch (and German) participants to the oversimplification and exoticization of Tanzanian people and landscapes.

Take, for example, this particularly painful [finish video](#) of the Africa Classic 2023, where all the Tanzanian 'children on the side [of the street]' are described as 'cheerful,' 'happy,' and 'endearing' (though one participant prefers to call them 'authentically African'). As with many other adventurous trips, the focus is ultimately on the 'thrills' during the bike rides and the 'very nice feeling' with which participants board the plane back home.

The most cringeworthy moment in the video is probably when one participant, after crossing the finish line, expresses gratitude for living 'in a country where healthcare is a little bit better,' and another remarks that the living conditions in Tanzania 'hit deeper than you'd think,' but he's eager to 'return to the luxury lifestyle' in the Netherlands. It's baffling that these statements made it past the final edit. But honestly, nearly every moment in the video is toe-curling, such as when a participant describes the trip as 'unreal, unique, [and] super cool,' raising their privileged champagne glass on a dirt road.

As is typical in such campaigns, AMREF's projects barely get any attention; less than half a minute of the 4.5-minute-long video. We sincerely hope that AMREF and other organizations stop organizing and promoting these kinds of trips in this manner.

What we've also observed this year is that some organizations collaborate with travel agencies or tour operators – or even function as such themselves – when setting up and promoting these problematic trips. Examples include the [Actieproject Koers-Vakanties 2024](#) by Bijzondere Noden in collaboration with the travel agency Koers-Vakanties and the donation platform [Heroes for Charity](#), which also operates as a tour operator. These organizations also receive a special mention this year for the adventurous trips 'for a good cause' they offer – and how they promote them.