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THIS summer a most intriguing convoy will set off from Cambridge – and 10 days later the posse of 50-plus vehicles is set to arrive at a sumptuous banquet in Tangier, following a gruelling 5,000-mile odyssey to and around Morocco in a marathon fundraiser which will substantially benefit wildlife in east Africa and children in the Sahara, writes Mike Scialom.

One of the more interesting details that organiser Karl Scarr explained to me during a lengthy discussion about July's Sahara Rally is that "any old jalopy" is able to compete. "We've even got a Clio," the Cherry Hinton-based charity fundraiser explained when we met for coffee at Next Generation – where several members have already signed up for the epic adventure.

But, even though Karl is due to head up the rally in his own 1990 Mercedes 300 (220,000 miles on the clock), it would be a mistake to conclude that this is some sort of gung-ho jolly – every detail of the itinerary has been scheduled in, every stopover, every possible circumstance considered, from the provision of foreign-language SIM cards on arrival in Morocco to the not-inconsiderable paperwork that ferrying around five dozen cars with a hundred-strong team requires.

It all started last year when Karl was bitten by a mosquito on Midsummer Common. While undergoing treatment in Cambridge he caught another bug which laid him seriously low. "I thought 'I haven't done enough'," he explained. This was when he realised he could make a difference. Having been married to a Moroccan for some years, he had spent enough time in the north African state to realise that there was much to be done, particularly when it came to relieving the grinding poverty experienced by more than half the population. He was lucky in that his father-in-law was a former general in the Moroccan army and went on to become a familiar face across the country following his exploits as a showjumper.

Realising that he was in a unique position to be able to help, Karl – by then well on the road to recovery – first identified the two charities which are to benefit from the fundraising trip: La Crèche de Tanger and the East African Wild Life Society.

La Crèche de Tanger is a Tangier-based organisation which supports disenfranchised children – including orphans and the handicapped – and helps them make a decent life for themselves. The East African Wild Life Society publishes a quarterly magazine called Swara which outlines the work it does tackling all sorts of issues facing the natural habitats in Kenya and Tanzania. The charity champions the needs of the wildlife in the region, with particular emphasis on their ecosystems and the need for conservation and careful husbandry. Bear in mind that Africa is the "cradle of civilisation" and as such what happens to their land has resonance for all of us.

"I don't earn a penny out of this," Karl tells me, and goes on to explain that it is all possible because of the sponsorship he is receiving – and the £500 per car joining fee for the rally.

It turns out one of the key sponsors is Vindis, and when I called general manager Andy Sinclair at the Milton Road dealership he explained that he's completely behind the project.

"One of our technicians came to me and asked me to support him as an entrant in the charity," he said. "I said not to rule it out and it rolled on from there." The firm is proud to be

associated with the Cherry Hinton-based fundraiser and has proved invaluable as the project has got under way. But others have been equally as supportive with their time and energy, including the Wrestlers pub, World Video, G & A Autocars, Cambridge Discount Installations and Kevin Wells Cleaning. Channel 4 and the Discovery Channel are involved, a French film crew has tied up a deal with Sky, the RAC has put itself down for two vehicles . . . and you'll be able to follow the preparations for the event in Drive – in fact we hope to bring you a daily blog and photographs of each section of the course from the moment the teams have set off from the Next Generation site off Coldham's Lane to the moment they get back.

For anyone uncertain about their possible participation, the itinerary should banish all doubts. You'll be in Tangier within 48 hours of leaving east Anglia, and from there you'll take the coastal road to Rabat, turn left towards Fez (surely a must-visit site for Tommy Cooper fans!) and then head south towards the Atlas mountains. At Merzouga you'll see the beauty of the Sahara at its most awesome and, following an overnight stop, you'll turn west towards the High Atlas mountains and Marrakech, thence to Agadir, and from there north up the coast to Casablanca. It's one of the most sublime journeys you could imagine, as long as you – and your vehicle – are prepared for the heat.

As a bonus, Karl gives every impression that he knows how to throw – and enjoy – a party. The event organised for the final day in Tangier will probably be worth the entrance fee alone. By that stage, you'll be fully deserving of all the hospitality you will indubitably receive – the Moroccans are nothing if not indefatigable hosts with an astonishing interest in ensuring that a guest is fully taken care of at all times.

There are not many rallies like this. You've got Paris-Dakar, but that's just a straight-through race. This is something new – a rally which promotes camaraderie and co-operation rather than competition and assertiveness. If you can free yourself up for 10 days from July 23, there'll not be many better ways to spend them.