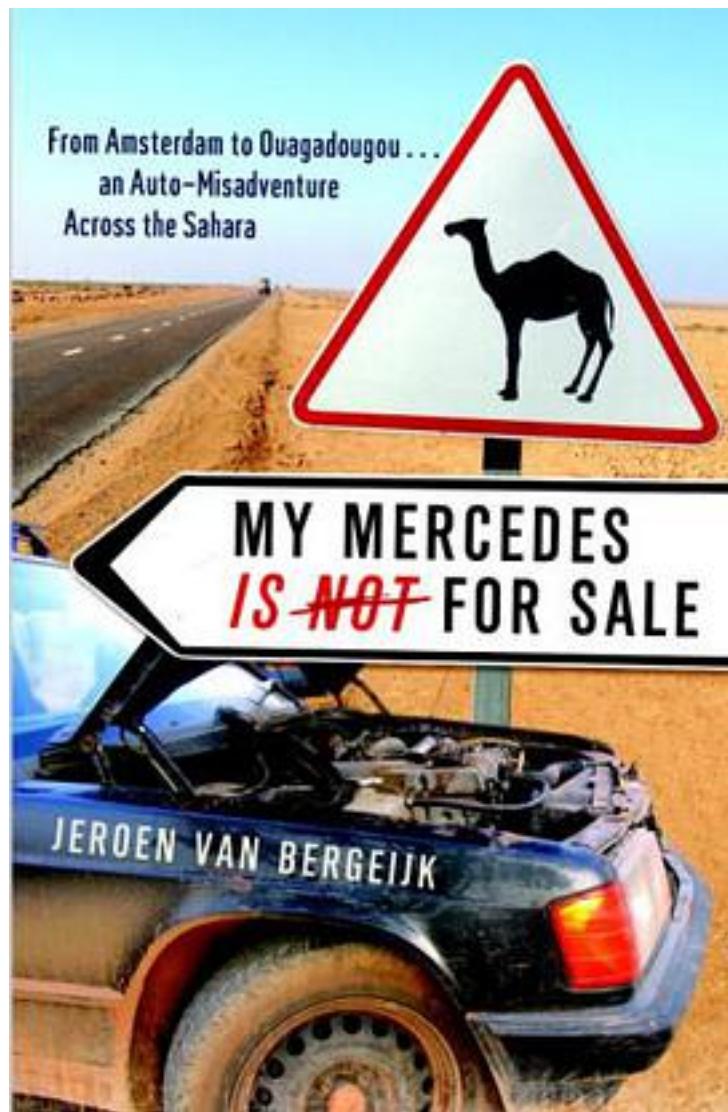


# My Mercedes is Not for Sale



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“Oh Lord, won’t you buy me a Mercedes Benz?”

—Janis Joplin

A journalist’s intrepid endeavor to sell his used car abroad results in a high-spirited and revealing look at West Africa.

“Look, there’s my car,” I say, pointing at my Mercedes in the parking lot.

“Where?” a fellow desert traveler asks.

“There, that Mercedes,” I say.

He looks at me, questioning. “You want to drive that through the Sahara?”

Jeroen van Bergeijk came up with what seemed like a great scheme for making a quick profit: buy a clunker of a car in his native Amsterdam and resell it in the Third World, where a market even for jalopies still thrives. His chariot of choice is a rusted-out 1988 Mercedes 190D with 220,000 kilometers on its odometer; his route will take him from Holland through Morocco, across the Sahara, and into some of the least trodden parts of Africa.

*My Mercedes Is Not for Sale* is a rollicking tale of an innocent abroad. The author finds himself facing a driving challenge akin to the Dakar Rally but encounters obstacles never dreamed of by race-car drivers: active minefields, occasional banditry—mostly by the border guards—and a teenage, chain-smoking desert guide with a fondness for Tupac lyrics. Food and water are scarce, sandstorms are frequent, and all he has to patch up his many car breakdowns thousands of miles from civilization is a bar of soap, some duct tape, and a pair of women’s nylons. Then there’s the coup he survived.

*My Mercedes Is Not for Sale* captures more than the adventure—it vividly portrays the impact of globalization on Africa through a surprise-filled journey into its thriving car culture, while asking the question: is the white man’s burden really a used car?

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