



VELOCIO X BADLANDS

Chapter 3

Organizer and Media Team — English Translation

Maya: Welcome back to another episode of Velocio by Badlands Podcast, where we will talk about some race stuff you've never heard before, the story behind it all, and you will find out why Badlands is called the wildest gravel challenge in Europe.

My name is Maya and I will be your host for today with a very special guest, the creator of this really special challenge, David Rodríguez, also Azahara and Peter.

Because this is a race from Spain, we will stick with the local language. But don't worry, you will have all the captions so you don't miss a bit.

Hello David, I'm very excited that you're here. I have been there since the second edition of Badlands but I also remember the first one, because it was spectacular, all the media team that followed, all the people, the show.... I knew Granada but seeing those images and all the people, I would love you to tell us a little bit about how the idea came about, why Granada, a little bit what you think people don't know.

David: Perfect. Well, hello, first of all, and thank you very much for the podcast. Yes, I think there is a beautiful story behind all this, and you just said one thing that is very important, and that is that you already knew Granada, you knew that area, but maybe you were a little surprised by the landscapes and that area that is already a little unknown, right? I think.

And it goes just like that, how the Badlands story begins. Well, I remember, five years ago, 2018, well, I was always connected to the world of long-distance cycling, we organized other events, and in 2018 we just saw a series of images of the Gorafe desert, there in Granada.

And it surprised us a lot, because we had never heard of that place, right? And when you see the photos, I think it has happened to all of us. Two questions arise, one of, is this real? Is it in Spain? And another, but how did I not know until now, right? Seeing these landscapes...

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And well, from there an idea arose, what if we make a route that unites the Gorafe desert, the Tabernas desert, Cabo de Gata, or something like that, a little linked to the concept of desert, right?

And especially within the gravel world, we are talking about five years ago, which already pointed to this explosion that we are experiencing now, maybe not so much, but well, then it arose a little from there, to make this route through the areas, especially the interior, a little unknown, of Granada and Almería.

Maya: Let's see, yes, the gravel was pointing, but how did you bet on gravel? Because it was something super new, I am very interested to know, how did you get so many people to get excited about the first edition?

Because, let's see, it's crazy, I mean, more than 700 kilometers, the unevenness, going up to Veleta, which many of us know because, well, the High Performance Center is there in Sierra Nevada, and we used to take the bike and go to discover it, but it is something spectacular, I don't know, tell us a little about that too.

David: Well, in the end, the whole team talked about it, right? We were betting, because it is true that we did road challenges and races, and that area on the road also has possibilities, right? You know it well, but we already saw how the sector was changing a bit towards gravel, and well, we also talked to stores, with sponsors, then manufacturers, and they told us that, what was the trend and how this was turning towards gravel.

So, well, we decided to bet a little on that modality, and I think it was a success. The truth is, and well, it's true, then others came up, well, I'm going very fast, I think I'm touching a lot of things, right?

There are many topics on the way that I am leaving behind, but once the idea arose, of course, this is an idea in the air, you have to land it, you have to create the route, with many surprises that we find, you have to create a concept, an identity, right?

What do we want to convey with this? Only deserts, no more, or, I don't know, what language does this test have to speak? I mean, how can we make it attractive?

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Where are we heading? Towards whom? Where do we want it to be in five years? All those kinds of things, right? Even the name. And I think, I insist, this was a team effort, Peter and Azahara, I think they are the key to making this work, because they are the ones who have made all this attractive, among other things, and well, it's a bit like how this came about.

We are also talking about the first year, 2020, this must also be considered. 2020, pandemic, what happened also at that time? There were a lot of travel restrictions, and it turns out that many international people, also professionals, were in the Girona area, as you well know.

So, they saw this race and said, fuck, something different here, in the south of Spain, this, wait, what is this?

And we received a lot of interest in that part, for example, Lachlan Morton, right? Lachlan Morton, I think he was looking forward to doing a challenge that year, and he saw that this came up, and he said, well, I like it.

So, well, as I say, it's a lot, a soup of many ingredients, and I say, in the end, this is the result.

Maya: For me, of the images that I was following in the race that year, and yes, of the videos that impressed me the most, was to see how Lachlan arrived at the end.

He couldn't even speak, he was in a trance, it was easy to see how difficult and demanding this race is, it was incredible.

A totally professional cyclist who is dedicated to this, and who arrives so empty, and to see, no, I think it was incredible. I don't know if you can tell us a bit, you were there, how did you experience it?

David: Well, look, Zahara and I, well, we were behind, because we have always tended to go a little behind the race, but Peter was the one who experienced it in the first person, so I think he can tell us a little more.

Maya: Let's see, Peter, I would love to see. You are always there, and now I'm going to ask you a lot of questions, because you do a lot of juggling to be able to cover a race like this, and it's impressive.

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I mean, to give the visibility that it has, and to follow, I don't know, when you follow a race like this, it's like you put yourself in the shoes of the person who is doing it, and I applaud the great work you do, because it's spectacular.

It's feeling that you are there, and living those emotions and those landscapes through all the beauty that you express.

Peter: Thank you very much, Maya. Well, first of all, thank you very much for inviting us, and you have asked me a very broad question now, but if you want we can start from the beginning, which is about Lachlan, which I was behind the camera, and I saw it.

For me it was a pleasure to record it, because I already followed him, what he has done, in other videos that I had seen on YouTube, and seeing him pedaling, and seeing the challenge that he wanted to achieve, and that he said from the beginning that he was going to do it in 48 hours more or less, and seeing him so empty, and in the end it was spectacular, the truth.

We were waiting for him for many hours, because it took a bit to descent Veleta and also with the tracking apps that we use, there is always a bit of delay, and we calculated it well, but there was a moment when we even went to sleep for a while, because it took a long time, and when it arrived, seeing a guy who is so physically and mentally strong, and seeing him so empty, but at the same time as if he was drunk about Badlands, the guy dreaming, and saying, wow, the statements that we have in the video on YouTube, it was spectacular.

David: That he had hallucinations, right?

Peter: Yes, he had hallucinations. Very crazy. I recommend watching the video, because he processes it perfectly, and it is amazing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3DIwWqtQSk>

Regarding how we cover all this, we try to cover it in the best way possible. We go in three cars, with different cameras, with a photographer, with Juanan, who is amazing, the photos he takes, and how he takes all the landscapes, which is relatively easy, because the landscapes are brutal, but you still have to be there, so with those three cars, we try to cover everything we can.

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We follow them a bit by intuition, saying, look, we are going to follow this guy, or this girl, who is at this point, there is a nice area. David and Zahara do a bit of scouting, and they tell us which areas are the most beautiful.

As they have done all the route before, they tell us which areas are more or less attractive, so then we choose a bit about the route, the distances to cover, because in the end, we get tired of driving for miles to go up and down, so we follow the route, it is cool, it is something that, when I go to Badlands, I know what is there, and it amuses me, because it is like playing cat and mouse, to look for the perfect shot.

Azahara: Well, in the end, we always plan all that, we also plan the areas, as Peter has said, the routes, where the cars can go, where they cannot go, the estimated hours of passage in certain areas, all that is planned, but in the end, it is planned, but then little can be done, because there are always things that arise without waiting, and you also have to know how to improvise before that.

But well, you have to have a plan, it is always good to have a plan.

David: Even if it doesn't work later.

Azahara: Even if it doesn't work later, you have to have it in mind.

Maya: You have to have a bit of an idea of everything. And from all these years that we have been with Badlands, what is a funny anecdote that has happened, that you remember, that you can tell us?

David: I'm sure we have everything, I'll start.

Maya: Let's see, one of each, I would like to know.

David: Look, I simply, let's see, I'm not going to give you anecdotes of the race, and there are a lot, but the after or the before, right?

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When I do the scouting, I go through the area, which is usually done in winter, well, I stop in towns or I see people, for example, there are a lot of people isolated in caves in the middle of the Gorafe desert, and this year, for example, I was there and of course, I stop with the bike, right?

And I said, how are you? Good, good. You see people there, calm, with their rhythm of life, super enviable. And well, you see a lot of bikes around here, and you say, hey, lately quite a lot, since two or three years ago. Even sometimes at night, they come here with some lights, people go hungry, they stay here lying down, we end up giving them water, my father-in-law puts them in the house.

And this is told to me in many places, that no, in the end, we see people sleeping there on a sidewalk. Well, we put them in the house, because on top of that, so that they take a shower, or we give them food or all that.

And I promise you that I love it, I love that part of how the towns are getting involved, this year there will also be surprises in that sense.

And well, it is something that the riders also tell us when they finish the race, they say, man, people are super hospitable in this place, it is incredible, that atmosphere. I think we also said before that it is one of the things that Badlands has, we are not only talking about the diversity of landscapes, but about the people, the people, it is incredible.

Azahara: Yes, and it is also reciprocal, because the neighbors also tell us, the people who come here are very kind, very polite, very nice, well, in the end it is a very reciprocal from neighbors to participants and vice versa.

Maya: And you, Peter, have you had any funny anecdotes while you were recording or during the tour?

Peter: Yes, I have once explained, but I love it because it is my top priority. One of the anecdotes is when Oscar Pujol was in the first edition sleeping in the Tabernas desert, near where the Dragon's Tail is, a super nice spot. He was sleeping there and we went to look for him at about five in the morning, because we wanted to record someone really doing V-Bag, there are a lot of people who take some hostels, go to a more comfortable place, but I wanted to look for something really adventure, real V-Bag.

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And we went, then we got to where we could with the car and then I got off and I was walking for about 20 minutes until I got to the place and he was sleeping, indeed, there, as the dot watcher indicated.

And then I got closer little by little and I thought, wow, there was a spectacular silence and I said, he's going to get scared, I mean, he's going to get scared when I get closer and he hears my footsteps, the guy, and indeed, when I got a little closer, he got up like Dracula from the desert and I said, Oscar, Oscar, I'm from the media team, I'm here recording.

And then we were talking, it started to dawn, it was super nice, there are also some very nice images and that would be one of the anecdotes that I remember most fondly from the first edition and all of them, there are many, but this would be my favorite.

Maya: He was worried that you were going to steal his bike, right?

Peter: Well, of course, in the middle of the desert, who would dare to get close to you, I mean, I don't know.

David: With what intentions? in this, there is a part of your body that says, man, if they steal my bike, it doesn't matter.

Peter: They can keep it.

Azahara: The bad thing is to return it, right?

Maya: In fact, there are times when you think about it, you say, please, steal my bike, I'm going to leave it here, here, here.

Yes, I remember last year that I was still quite close to the race, especially at the beginning, right? You go with, well, you don't have much, you don't know a little what's going to happen and they were all together.

And I remember that I got into the first canyon and I was walking there and there was already a sign that said, Coca-Cola a kilometer away, water, I don't know what.

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And I said, wow, a little town like that, that people have already taken out Coca-Cola and drinks so that people would know.

Because in the end, let's see, it's very hot and people, well, not everyone is used to being able to pedal there.

And no, no, it caused me a lot of curiosity. How incredible.

David: With this person I was, it's from Purullena, and I was with him just this winter and I went there and I said, hey, I wanted to thank you for that. And he says, damn, I'm delighted, we follow you every year. And nothing, he was already asking me dates again, that he is going to buy a pallet there of water and drinks.

I mean, and that's a lot, like the Villanueva bar that they had on the television of the Bar of the village, the application where you can see the points where they advance on the map.

Maya: I also remember before arriving in the desert, just before entering the first, I think it's Gorafe, yes. There are so many there who are already preparing, because you are not going to have a lot of food and a lot of water.

And the hotel-bar had already collapsed. And I remember that riders came in, no, no, don't worry, we'll help you cook. And they started making sandwiches like that to give to others.

And I said, wow, that's incredible.

David: Just Christian, from the Gorafe bar, told us. We asked him, I say, man, we feel if you have been stressed. And he says, no, on the contrary, but they are super kind people, super patient.

You know, as it is not a stress race for everyone there. It's a pleasure.

Maya: Yes, it's amazing. Let's see, you have told us that they use three cars, right?

But now that Badlands is growing, do you want to add more people or more average or more coverage to get to more?

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David: Of course. I mean, the question is interesting. On the one hand, you say, at what point are we in Badlands? Let's just go, for example, to the registrations. We have it limited to 350. We received 2,000, more than 2,000 applications. Why not more?

And why don't we grow this until we do it..well, I don't know. But there is another aspect that we would not like to sacrifice for that. And that, well, doing it, I don't know, that familiar touch that it has. We are also going to an environment, as we always say, that is fragile, that ecosystem.

And we don't want to bother too much. So, I think three cars is fine to cover this. We lose a lot of things, that's for sure. But we also record many others that are worth it.

So, it's complicated. It's complicated to do a follow-up on this. But we would not like to sacrifice that part. For the riders to feel comfortable, to have their moments of solitude. If that's how they want it. And it can be very aggressive. Most of them are very receptive. They are comfortable. But we don't want to break that moment. So, when we see a rider that we have recorded several times, we try not to bother him anymore. Because people come here with the idea of that. Of getting lost. And disconnect.

Azahara: I think everyone has a reason to come to Badlands. Not like, for example, the one in Lachlan. That we have mentioned before. Which was to do it in 48 hours.

But there are also riders that come with other goals. Which is to finish it. Have fun. Overcome. See where your limit is. And also many look for that adventure and that feeling of isolation. Which is also part of this event. Because riding through the deserts, at night, completely alone. Where you only listen to your bike, you see your light, and nothing else. It is also part of this experience.

So, we don't want to get too much into those moments, which are also to enjoy, and which are also part of this event.

Maya: We don't want Peter to give a heart attack to another rider.

Peter: No, no, no. You have to respect them. You have to be aware of that, that they are making an effort. And that there are people that don't need to be recorded.

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They are just there, enjoying themselves, doing the race on the days they want to.

There are even people that arrive later, and without any problem, it's not a race at all.

Azahara: Yes. In fact, there are people that, knowing that they didn't finish on time. They wanted to continue doing it, to finish it. So, there are always riders.

David: And we encourage that. That they don't get overwhelmed. I mean, there are many faces of Badlands. I mean, this can be as competitive as you want or there are people that come to enjoy it without a time limit.

They remind me of Paris-Brest-Paris, the third edition started yesterday. So, whenever I go, there are 90 hours left. So, I'm going to do 89 and a half. I mean, I want to enjoy it until the last minute. And there are people like that, with that idea.

Maya: The route is spectacular. I mean, it's incredible and you go through so many different places. I also recommend it.

– Music –

Maya: What is your goal when you communicate? I mean, what do you want as a race organizer to show to people?

David: Well, I think we can all agree on that. The three of us, for sure. I do want to say that part of that identity that has been given to Badlands with the whole team, here today we are three talking but, as Peter says; there is Juanan, Chris and Rafa.

All of us agree that we don't want to go with a communication of just this is an epic adventure, all of you are heroes. I don't think that is the language of Badlands that we like to use, we don't want to show people throwing up, suffering, of course you suffer and it's part of the race, but we want to do another type of communication.

For example, the video from last year, I recommend to everyone to watch a hundred thousand times. The touch that Peter gave it, especially with that vintage camera that has a story behind

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that camera itself that Peter can explain now, the music selected for it that he puts on the final edit and Azahara's communications. I think it's a totally different event.

Azahara: Well, yes I also think that we have this underground touch or, I like to think like we have it on how we communicate and we play with our branding. The music, the graphic identity, how we play with it is part of our core. I think Peter will also agree with me, for us it is like our playground at the end, we like to do what we do, we share ideas, we carry them out and they always end up working at the end.

David: They are creative, my brain is not creative at all, so, I hallucinate with them. The best thing I do, is to let them do what they do best, but just one example, now with all the Warm-Up communications pieces Azahara is doing right now, she said to us: Punky, and homage to Punk. so all the graphics, the music, it's based a bit on that to do an homage to Punk.

Azahara: Yes, at the end Badlands it's a playground. It has its own character that is easy to evolve throughout the communications and the graphic pieces of the videos. It is easy to evolve and we allowed the brand this evolution, always with our own context to play but with this change it is something I personally like a lot and I enjoy doing at Badlands. I think Peter will totally agree with me.

Peter: Yes, obviously. We've known each other since one year before Badlands project started and we've agreed a lot since then in terms of style to communicate and we just want to show to the people who are following reality itself, nothing more.

To show the real stories without what David said before of showing people dehydrated or beating blood, we go for beauty things, the environment, obviously, the scenery it is brutal but to show that, that deep Spain countryside, those small towns that if it wasn't for projects like Badlands will be really unnoticed at all.

Those rural areas that are beautiful and that speak for themselves, but try to get anecdotes and things that happen during the race without having to do anything behind the scenes. Basically,

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everything comes out quite with the flow because to be spontaneous is our style. On top of that, musically, we give it a little more punk, a little more underground, and that's it.

There is no more mystery, you know?

Maya: Well, keep it that way, because it's amazing. It excites us all.

I've already said that I don't want to race anymore, but it's a race that David tells me every year to do and obviously I would love to but I'm very realistic, I don't have much time to ride and train and I don't want to suffer, because I have the competitive vein and I would start ready to die, you know? It's something I want to do, but I know myself.

David: Well, you're going to do it at some point, that's for sure. We know that.

Maya: I agree, I agree. Something that would interest me a lot. How did the name come about? Why Badlands?

David: Good question. They have asked us once.

We were landing on this crazy idea and among them was, let's look for a name. In these projects what you want is to give it a strong identity. So, it was like what do we put on the table for names? Let's look for typical things from the area, from the territory, from food, from towns, from monuments, from culture, from prehistoric towns that were there, and in the end, once in Gorafe, when they saw us coming from the inside of the desert, they asked us... Do you come from the Badlands, right? and it was..how?!!

Yes, that area is called Badlands, which is part of Colorado and we thought, here we have something to work with. So, we did a test, and we sent it to an English colleague asking how Badlands sound to him? Because from here Badlands sounds cool, but maybe, for native English speakers, it doesn't sound good.

He told us. It sounds like the last Terminator movie and I said, that's it, we have a name. It is very identifiable from the landscape, and it's very good.

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Apart from that, another thing we do, as we said before about communication. We also do divulgative tasks of the territory we are riding on. For example, we recently did an article on the blog about what the Ramblas are, from where it comes from, to how it is ridden there, so the riders are not rolling there without any context about it. We like that everything has a double or triple meaning for the people who take part.

Maya: Any suggestions for those who are going to participate this year?

We know that now there is a program of activities out. I remember the first time I was there, we all went up to drink beer in a very cozy place and in a relaxed mood, so I know that this year there will be several activities and I really want to be there, to live with the people, because it is a very special atmosphere.

David: That's it.

Well, in the end, we have tried to shape those special moments. Because we have seen that there are people who come many days before, they go out a bit on their own, there is a WhatsApp group, they make appointments there. So, we have wanted, to create a meeting point, to bring the community together with some social rides, some giveaways, little things, to get to know each other a bit before race, Just to create a good atmosphere and then, of course, the beers up there, as you well know, in the viewpoint of San Nicolás.

Azahara: Yes, it is already a tradition. It started in a very improvised way, the first year and at the end, it has been repeated, edition after edition, and how could it not be inside our warm-up program that we are going to start this year. In the end it is what David said, to create a meeting point and activities in which the riders, and those who are not riders, but also the community of Granada cyclists, can share the moments with us, the social rides, the contests, the beers, all these.

Maya: That place is spectacular, it is incredible.

David: I am in love with Granada, but it was Azahara, in the end, she is from Jaén, but she has lived in Granada for several years, and when we were thinking about the route, hey, where do we start, how do we do it, she said, it has to be Granada.

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Azahara: Yes, yes, and it is also close to Málaga, which has the international airport, it also allows a comfortable arrival of international riders. Granada is a beautiful and stunning city in every way, and it has a great atmosphere, so it was the perfect place to start.

Maya: Yes, it is incredible to see people who come from all over the world, who are very impressed by this city, that in the end, maybe they hadn't even heard of it, and they go to this event and see how incredible the atmosphere is, because you see people singing, dancing in the streets. Then you go up there to have a beer, you can enjoy the incredible sunset, everyone knows each other, Badlands has this community that I think is very special, and I think it gives a lot of life to the city.

David: They don't expect it, they are very surprised when they discover it. I mean if they were to go to Seville, it's a beautiful city, but people have an idea of Seville, but in Granada nobody expects it. People come from Indonesia, people come from far away, we have people from 34, 35 different countries this year and it's very good.

Imagine the small towns, as they told us in Gor: Here is a guy from Los Angeles here in my supermarket! And I said, yes and wait, now there is one coming from Japan and another 300 more coming.

Maya: This year we are going to look for those unknown jewels a bit, because it caught my attention a lot, how they arrive at the supermarkets, really in small towns and the riders mix with the locals, it's incredible.

David: Yes, also when you are in that moment of survival when everything is worth it, you buy a can of anchovies or something like that, and you eat it there on the street, and this are becoming very iconic scenes of Badlands.

Azahara: Yes, also anecdotes from the other side, because on last edition, on a bar in Gorafe, Rosalia, who is a neighbor that we already know, because she has always been there from our initial days, and we have become close to her and the bar was closed while riders were arriving by night not having where to eat, so the poor woman started making sandwiches for everyone and she even open the awning for the riders to sleep under, so that they would not be bothered by streetlights.

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Maya: Yes, I love it, I really want to see everything also and see all of you.

But I remember an image from last year, we were at the finish line to see the first rider arrive, and well at the end the riders ride a bike, but then we are also the whole race up and down, trying to follow them, and no one realizes the wear and tear it is, and I don't take away the credit from those who ride, but also to follow them all and with all the stress of caring for everyone, I remember seeing your faces, you were exhausted.

Do they sleep at the end, at some point during the race? Because it's a long race and suddenly the first rider arrives after some days, but then you also have to be there until the last rider finish it.

David: Yes, you are always social, pending from the mobile. Even if you pause for three hours, the mobile is stuck to the ear, in case they call you for an emergency.

I remember, last year it was like six hours in three-four days, I don't remember, but something like that and of course, then you arrive to the weekend totally destroyed and on Monday back to work, we don't live from this, of course, and I imagine Peter the same, some sleep in the car and on top of that, with his two meters high...

Maya: Yes, how do you do it, Peter? Because in the end, recording, editing, publishing, because all this has to be done live in the moment and I think that's the most difficult part.

Peter: Yes, these past years, as I have two young children, I was already trained to not to sleep, the first three days, you sleep an average of two-three hours, but not continuatives, you slow down with a nap from one point to another, in the end your body tells you, to turn off and you sleep while your partner is driving.

You know what Badlands is about so the previous days you try to rest and be relaxed, but when the race starts, the whole environment fills you up so much and such that with two-three hours every day until the race ends.

Just like the riders do, we are there at the foot of the canyon and it's done, no problem.

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Maya: Well, congratulations, I can't wait to be there and see everything that they have prepared for us and the last one for today. I would love to know if the store at the finish line would also be open this year?

I love to see that image of all the riders destroyed, sitting in a chair, I love that image, I thought, where did they get these clothes from?

They're all dressed the same, they look like hippies.

David: The clothes, yes! I was in the store 15 days ago with her, her name is Mina and I said to her: Mina, do you remember me? And she said, yes, are you coming this year? And I said, yes!! get ready! and she said, ok, I'll buy clothes and flip-flops 😊

It's the typical store with hippie clothes, Moroccan style so the riders don't have clean clothes in the bike bags, so they buy something there and it's cool, it's part of Badlands now, it's fun.

Maya: Well, thank you very much for being here with us today, see you very soon.

Thank you all for listening. On the website of Velocio you will find all the episodes and we invite you to go through the social networks to discover all the people who have told us their stories, who gave us their tips for a better Badlands and to have fun.

The next episode we will do it directly from Granada, we are waiting for you all there, and we would love you to write us with questions that we want to ask the riders there, with things that you want to see and discover. We are very excited, see you in Badlands.