**Mountainbiker Kenny Belaey pays tribute to epic Lebanon Mountain Trail**

**"Border to Border" video documents LMT mountainbike traverse

Mountainbike legend and outdoor enthusiast Kenny Belaey recently rode the Lebanon Mountain Trail and dedicated his latest video production to the endeavour. This 470 km long hiking trail traverses the length of Lebanon providing a thrilling journey of the Mediterranean country’s storied culture and stunning nature.**

While the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT), established in 2007, is described as bike-friendly in some sections, multiple trialbike world champion Kenny Belaey wanted to tackle as much as possible on two wheels. Kenny Belaey: “Lebanon is by far one of my favourite countries I ever visited so to ride LMT as cyclist has been a real honour. Some sections are super technical with slippery rocks, steep climbs and descents, river crossings and yes even I had to carry my bike in a few spots!”

**Adventure meets culture**

Rather than beginning in the north, what hikers normally do, Belaey set off in Marjaayou in the south and made his way north. LMT connects more than 75 towns and villages with altitudes ranging from 570 to 2,011 meters above sea level. While the entire footpath was designed to walk in 27 days Kenny and his brother Wesley, who went along to document the adventure, spent 10 days on their traverse.

*“We only stayed in locally-owned-and operated establishments and b&b’s which was an amazing way to learn more about the traditional way of life in the Lebanese countryside,*” explained Belaey. *“Some of these places are so remote that villagers wouldn’t meet people from Lebanon, let alone foreigners like me if it was not for LMT. We traversed fantastic natural landmarks like Shouf Biosphere Reserve, the Jezzine Waterfall, the Tannourine Forest reserve, different lakes and ruined fortresses.”*

**A different kind of Lebanon**Having performed numerous of times in Lebanon before the 37-year old Belgian was very familiar with the modern aspects of the country and the vibrant, cosmopolitan atmosphere of Beirut. *“Along the Lebanon Mountain Trail I learned more and more about the rich culture which fuelled my interest in the friendly people and what we would discover next,”* remembers Kenny.

One of the most remarkable encounters was with Abou Moustafa, an 85-year old villager who acted as one of Belaey’s trail guides. Abou grew up along the trail, as his ancestors has before him. *“It was inspiring to hear him speak with great reverence for these beautiful mountains surrounding him. For sure the LMT shows how diverse this small country is with different weather, sceneries, cultures and varying architecture.”*

**Appreciating the wonder**Riding and at the same time documenting his Lebanese adventure has been a tough challenge for Kenny. Yet the effort he put in made him appreciate the wonders along the way even more. *“Sights like the old silk factories, the wildlife, Ottoman bridges, the panoramic and the fresh smells of pine and herbs are simply unforgettable. I think there’s a good chance I will come back at some point to hike the LMT.”*For mountainbikers who want to experience the wonders of the Libanese mountains Belaey suggested that they do their homework. *“The riding offers a good variation between (faster) dirt roads, narrow paths and straight up technical stuff. You can select the sections that speak to you the most. In total about 70% of the trail is suited to mountainbikes the rest is so hard that you’d need a trialbike. And some sections would take a high-level rider one hour to cover 3 kilometers. But that hardly matters, there’s more than enough to enjoy on a mountainbike! ”*

**Local support**The Belaey brothers managed to capture the LMT mountainbike experience beautifully in their “Border to Border” video. But they couldn’t have pulled it off without the commitment of Red Bull Lebanon who were super passionate about this project from day one. Last but not least the production would never have reached its full potential if it wasn’t for the knowledgeable support of husband and wife duo **Stephanie Audi** (outdoor and eco-tourism expert) and **Guillaume Nallet** (creative director).

Stephanie, who’s also an accomplished  skier, currently works on a developmental project in the north with the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association. She commented: “We want to nurture the appreciation of the Lebanese mountains and pass this passion on to future generations. If an internationally established athlete like Kenny (Belaey) can get more people to learn about and value the precious natural beauty and cultural heritage of the Lebanon Mountain Trail, then we’ve all succeeded with this project!”