

Additional to Mauretania :

Headlines: Officers in Mauretania stage coup for sackings

Military dismissals lead to overthrow of government. The coup took place after the President and Prime Minister sacked the country's top four military officers.

President Sidi Ould Sheikh Abdallahi was being held by renegade soldiers at the presidential palace in Nouakchott and soldiers also detained Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed Waqef.

Spokesman Romain Nadal said France's foreign Ministry was in contact with the French Embassy officials in Nouakchott. Measures have been taken to protect French citizens there. No violence was immediately reported.

That is how quickly things can change. Only a few days ago we were still in that country.

29.07.08-1.08.08

Camp Zebrabar; Senegal

The landscape towards our next destination, St.Louis, reflected its image in becoming greener and more fertile. The villages mirrored from cleanliness with its charming houses and huts.



In spite of customs clearance we arrived in St. Louis, at 19°, distance coverage 70km from the border. The campsite is managed by a Swiss couple, who are overseas at present. No wonder it was recommended to us because it's situated in a beautiful nature park surrounded by water.





Neither Heinz nor I felt like cooking. A tasty menu at the camp restaurant just sounded fantastic (beer and wine was again obtainable!)

My early stroll in the morning proved the wonderful landscape once more.

tWe decided on staying for a few days.



Isabelle, a French lady and her team looked after our well-being.

That's Isabelle doing her shopping in St. Louis



Visit to St. Louis

The ancient part of the town, which was founded by the French is on the Island in the river Senegal. The 500meter long bridge, which leads to the Island was built by a scholar von Eifel and was brought here in 1897. It is easier doing sightseeing by horse back and wagon, what we did anyhow. Unfortunately, the buildings weren't looked after very well and many interesting houses are falling to pieces. I believe, UNESCO placed money at their disposal to restore a part of the historic preciousness. Here an expedition through the town.



The bridge on the other side leads into the fisherman's village. One finds himself surrounded by fruits of the sea. Some impressions about the village one can see.

Most of the catch are loaded onto trucks and are transported all over the world.

Some fish processing is done right here on the spot. It does consist mostly of drying by air. The woman sprinkles salt on the fish and it's dried in the sun. I can assure you I didn't try any fish here!!!!



It is remarkable at all times, goats, also chickens are wandering the streets and look for food.

Although the hierarchy is the reverse from a human being, the male is tied up and the females walk around freely.



Visit in a small nearby village. Women are selling all kinds of fruit and vegetables which are presented in a very neat way.



Another woman is not only balancing wood on her head but also carries her baby on her back.

It looks like they haven't got any traffic rules at all! First come first drive, and one is better alert at all times of what could happen. The one who hoots first and has the most courage to go for the crossing has the precedence. Don't ask me for a description about the cars which are driving around! Here are some examples. (What would our inspector in Bützberg have to say? (Hello Toni Rouchi)



2.08.08 Drive to Dakar

We met two young backpackers at the camp. (Marie, a Belgian, and her friend from Spain). They were pleased to get a lift to Dakar where they had already booked their flight back to Europe the next Monday. Once for a change, I am in the picture but only because Marie's friend took it. The other picture shows her friend. On our way to Dakar Marie managed to take a few photos of the region. It is a little bit awkward for me handling the Minolta without support. We passed a couple of small villages and were amazed about the nature around us. The variety of plants made it even more attractive.



What was very impressive though were the “Baobab” (monkey- bread- trees) which are growing in the middle of nowhere with its thick stems and very few branches. I hope I still will be able to see more of its kind to shoot another picture.



Suddenly, a loud bang and Betsy reacted in a funny way on the right side (at the back) I knew straight away what the matter was, the third flat tyre.



A farmer in the field offered his help, I just had to bring out the needed tools and looked on how he changed Betsy's wheel.



After four police controls in town of Ngor and two hours sandwiched in a traffic jam just before our entry to Dakar, it took us in all 5 hours to get to the endeavoured camp, 15 km north of Dakar.



3.08.08 Visit Dakar and I'île de Gorée

On a Sunday Morning Dakar is very peaceful, empty streets etc. Like any other big towns, Dakar doesn't offer much. I visited the two attractions, the place of Independence and the palace.



The real gem and a must for visitors is the island of Gorée, which lays upfront of the town. The Island was used as a potter's wheel for servile deals flourishing in the 18th century.



The insularity served also others, partly in war. The shooting of "The canons of Navarone" by Anthony Quinn was done here. Whoever has seen the movie surely remembers the steep cliffs the allies had to climb.



The enormous canons are still visible.



The ammunition was so huge and heavy it had to be transported by these rolling stocks.



That friendly woman told me there was no need to have a guide exploring the Island, other useful tips were welcomed. To show my appreciation I bought a chain from her stall.



In that house slaves were shunted around. It was actually the basis for the organisation of slavery.



On the Island you'll find beautiful plants and trees.

On our return to the mainland, the captain of the ship let me into his cabin.



4.08.08 drive to Mbour



The traffic from Dakar, direction South wasn't very busy. We had little problem to do the 80km except the "Kamikaze" drivers which tried to manoeuvre in from all sides.



Another exclusive picture of a “Baobab” tree.



Shortly before arriving in Mbour a storm brew up in the sky. We experienced our very first rain in Africa. It came down in buckets, so bad that we nearly couldn't see the road anymore. Duration of 10minutes and everything was over.



At the entrance of Mbour we spotted a tyre shop! My tyre problems were solved as follows: The burst tyre was scrap and had to be replaced. The dealer kept two very good second- hand tyres in his shop, exactly the size I needed it. To valcunize the already repaired tyre again and to bear it as a spare wheel without its wheel- rim, I decided to buy both of them because the price was reasonable.



4.08.08 Camp Ferme de Saly

Having done a good buy we headed for the campsite Ferme de Saly, which offered a nice beach with a natural park where we found a nice place for our vehicles.



The toilettes looked clean (but very old fashioned) and the open- air showers were very well positioned with regard to the adequate temperature.



The “Weaver Birds”(out of SA) built its creative nests on the tree branches.



Editors Rectification:

In my dialogue about the Spanish town Tarifa I had mentioned a black and white cow with its roots in Simmenthal(Switzerland). Nelly of BKMV didn't agree with that at all. (That is how much I know about the origin of cows)

Nelly, here is an African cow which definitively doesn't originate from the Simmenthal at all!



9.08.08 – 11.08.08 Drive into nature reserve and camp Djidjack.

Our programme today was to accomplish 80km, which was easy to handle. In spite of that, we left the camp early at 9°clock. A quick stop at an ATM to draw some cash for the journey ahead. The currency here is dealt within various west- African countries, which we will be visiting, especially in the former French colonies. The CFA (Currency) is linked with the French Franc and later, after long negotiations, also with the Euro (one Euro = 656.-CFA)

Beautiful green districts with its Baobabs in its midst popped up while we were on route to our next destination.

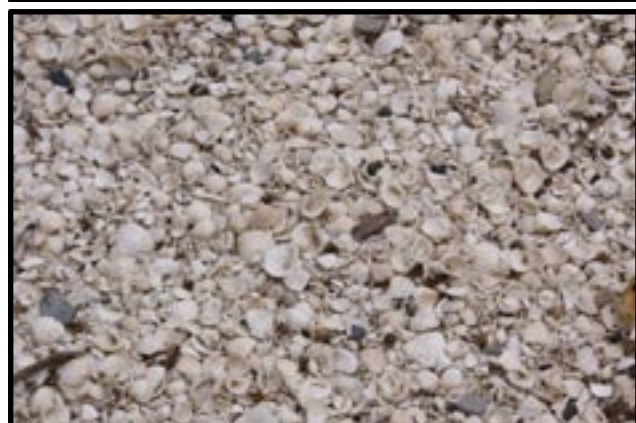


A stop on our way brought us to the Islands Fadiouth. We declined a guidance and walked over a wooden bridge towards the first Island.



The decayed footbridge reminded me a lot of the one in my home village Eschenz which leads to the Island Werd. According to the transmission (conveyance) of History, the Islands were brought forth by shells. Here, the proof should be visible.

There wasn't much to see on the Island though, so we marched back to our vehicles.



The religion in this area is mostly catholic and you'll find several churches sticking out. A few pictures of the Island (341,345,349,350)

As we continued our drive on a gravel road, we passed some magnificent, rural settlements before we landed in the middle of the reserve Palmarine, the camp.





Djidjack lies nearby the village of Djifer. There we found a shady place to set up our night camp.



A sunset, not as nice as we had experienced it at previous times but still worth seeing it finished the day off with dignity.



The evening we spent here was most comfortable in that big house and we weren't short of anything!



Craziella from Tessin(South of Switzerland) and Jean Paul from France did the utmost to keep the visitors happy.

A round trip through the camp and the surroundings next morning illustrated the beauty of this camp in many ways: lots of trees and bushes which the owner has planted over 7 years. Here are some impressions.



I also enjoyed the swim in the warm Atlantic (28C degrees) to the fullest.



Didn't I spy something? In fact, about 40 years ago, a ship stranded here and is just waiting to be destroyed completely by rust.

Conclusive to our stay at the camp, a mother pig gave birth to 8 piglets. Isn't that a good omen???



12.08.08 – 13.08.08 Back to Mbour and 2 nights at Jean Paul's "Ferme de Saly"

We were welcomed by the owner "Jean Paul and his team" with joy. There we spent two quiet days before we hit the road again, direction Mali (447,449)



14.08.08 – 16.08.08 Drive – direction Mali.

All fresh and relaxed we drove off at 8.30, eastwards direction Mali. The first 150km we had tarmac road in very good condition. Unfortunately after that stretch we tortured ourselves over another 125km, a road, which had been asphalted at one time. There were lots of potholes which could easily have swallowed a car's wheel. Here we had to concentrate very, very hard, because the potholes are all over dispersed and have to be eluded.





It took us nearly 7 hours and everybody understands the fact that we were very happy having reached the next camp. We put in a days rest after the horrendous drive. At the same time, we explored the campsite more closely.



Early the next morning we drove the Nissan which belongs to the camp to see the sights of the rather mysterious "Monoliths" Nobody actually knows exactly how these stones, in their round circles have originated (Eric von Däniken most likely would have an answer).



Thanks to the rainy season in this area (which is from July to October) the country turns green and the fields can be cultivated. Maize and Mil is their main diet. Mil is processed to the well known Couscous in this region.



What really fascinated us were the peanut plantations. In all these years we never really knew how peanuts are grown.

Peanuts grow like potatoes. Above the soil is the green plant and in the ground grows the nut. That is what it is all about.



The fields are still ploughed the way I remember it from my early childhood.



The jewel of that outing was our visit to a typical, Senegalan village, far away from the influence of the tourists. Everything appeared so clean and tidy. The people are friendly and showed great interest on our arrival. The inhabitants here are united with the nature and all its living creatures, which I try to transmit to you with these photos (487,544,545,551,552,553,562,563,564)





Also here, the camp team cared for us very well.
16.08.08 Departure to Mali



We had 400km ahead of us to the border of Mali. 8.30 was departure time. The first 125km was a lousy piste and we struggled along. Additional to that we encountered lots of tremendous dust. This particular stretch cost us 4 hours. The gratifying fact was that the remaining 255km resulted in having somehow a good tarmac road ahead of us. We clocked in at the border "Kidira" at 15° pm. The exit from Senegal went smoothly without any complications which confirmed my impressions I had had.

Concluding remark about Senegal:

I have been fascinated about this country from the word go. Shortly after crossing the border, the small villages were presenting themselves with lots of small huts, like one did expect it in a way. The inhabitants radiate a happy, friendly nature, and nobody is obstrusive in any way. I can't say that about the other countries I visited so far.

A highlight were the magnificent beaches which we really enjoyed a lot (I mentioned it in my earlier reports) Unfortunately, we leave the coast for a certain time, because we intend to visit Mali.

A few updates: Senegal

- * km 1080
- * stay 19 days
- * break downs 1 flat tyre

Bye, bye Senegal ----- Hello Mali

16.08.08 Customs at Diboli and Camp at Kayes

The nearer we got towards the customs, we were heading a traffic jam of LKW's, which were queued up all along the road. What are we in for? Actually we anticipated the worst and the reminiscence of what had happened at Rosso were omnipresent. Somehow we managed to drive past the LKW's.



The dispatch at the customs was efficient, quick and no bribes had to be paid. We were happy about it because we had experienced some bad Entries in the past. It didn't even cost us our nerves this time!!!

After approximately 50km, we set up our bush camp. As usual, these camps are united with nature, so we slept like a bomb, with chirping and other natural noises around us.

The next morning it was just a stone's throw to the next town where we found a place in a court yard of the hotel Bahnhof (station). Because of the Casino, a Bar, a Restaurant and a Night club directly next to it, the noises we heard were different. We couldn't complain, more or less we had a good nights rest.





A hooting, which reminded me of P.E, and was still in my ears, woke me up at 6 am. That must be a train! I quickly got up and marched over to the station. For sure, there it stood! It was a freight train with a Diesel Electric engine upfront, which had been built by General Motors in Port Elizabeth. What an excitement it was for me!

18.08.08- 25.08.08 Drive to Bamako and Camp Cactus

The country presented itself very green, because it was in the middle of the rainy season. We were the only ones who were travelling overland at the moment. All the other Overlanders start their journey the beginning of the year, when it is the dry season.

Everyone told us, that, the green meadows disappear and there is just barren plain (or brownish leftovers) in the dry season.

There were signs of a storm, but it didn't bother us from driving on.



The distance to the next stop over was too far to do it in one go. Therefore we stopped at a beautiful terrain, where we stayed over night. We love bush- camping!



Lots of small villages bordered the road towards our aim for the day. (696)

For the first time we had to cross the river Niger, which has its source here in Bamako. I won't add lots of pictures of Bamako, because, it is like any other big town, which don't offer much of sightseeing. A nice monument, which was built in the middle of a round- about is all what I can show you.



Although, to organise the various visa's at times, we have to enter the town if we want it or not. Don't worry, there are a few commentaries:

The camp Cactus, which is managed by a Canadian couple is situated directly at the Niger's shore. Also, their food is nothing to complain about.



These are sand people at the river who collect sand (dig) which eventually is loaded onto the LKW's. All manual work, well- understood! Their pay varies from 40 to 50 thousand CFA (Euro 60.- to 70.-) per load (LKW).



Necessary repairs or mending are done on the spot:

For example: A motor of a Mercedes, which cylinder head had to be repaired or the boats, which have to be sealed with tissues and tar.



Those people really touched my heart whenever I visited the area. They were so friendly and allowed my taking pictures of them without a hassle. The women, who had to mind the children and do their chores every day, were all the time in good spirits and happy.



The weaver birds who build their nests at the end of the branches with its opening at the bottom, to prevent any thieves from stealing the eggs (like snakes)

The arrangement of the Hierachy is as follow: The male builds the nest whilst the female watches him, to make sure that he does a proper job. The nest is investigated by her and if the result is below standard, the female bites the loop apart and the nest falls to the ground. The poor male has to start all over again.





A beautiful sun- set over the river Niger, where the sand people house.



26.08.08 rive to the camp Teriya Bugu

We left Bamako at 9⁰⁰ am. We had a relatively good tarmac road to keep a speed at 80km/h. The camp which we planned to stay laid about 325km away, so the good road was a blessing.

Heavy storms passed our way and occasionally there was a downpour, but even so, one could spot typical, African blue sky with its huge white clouds, which resembled cotton wool.h

There were three possible piste (roads) to drive on, but only one was passable (too much rain) That was somehow a hindrance for us and we only pitched up at the camp around 18⁰⁰pm.

In spite of the twilight, the long drive was rewarding at the end. Will tell you more about, later! We'll stay here for 2 nights to be able to explore the surroundings.



27.08.08 Camp Teriya Bugu

The camp lies directly at the river Bani, which has too much water presently.



By wandering around in the morning I thought I landed in a Zoo.

The mystery was solved in an instant. Hand- made, Hand- crafted animals, which just about resemble its lineage (stem) were eyeing you from all sides.

Although the lion would be best suited for the advertisement of “Simba Chips”



The catch of fish in the river is rendered useless because of the high water. The fishermen explained to me that at the moment, only mere trifles (pisces) land in the nets. That means, the fisher boats stay ashore.

Botany was never my strong point. I found a few nice examples in the camp which I would like to share with you.

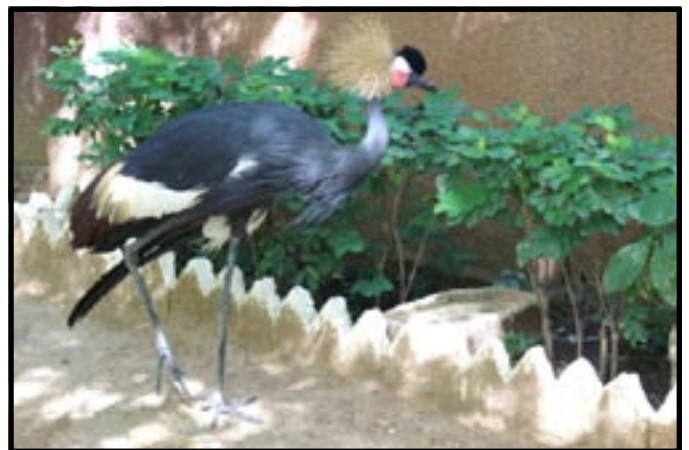
Bananas



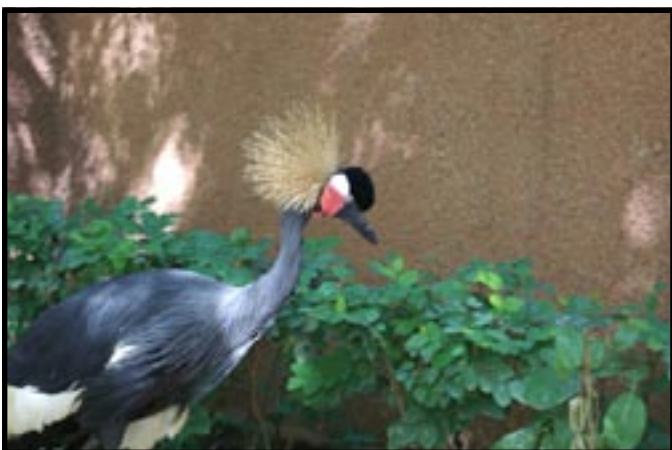
Bamboo



Bush with pretty flowers (Perhaps Sabine can put a name to it)



A bird, "Secretary", one of Anne's favourites
That's all for now! (If anyone would like more Botany, I am sure, Sabine wouldn't mind to pass on all the photos of various bushes and trees I mailed her)



28.08.08 . Our next destination lies 250km away, Djenné, in Mali

We started early in the morning passing several villages which were very special. What was really eye-catching, were the store- rooms (granaries) where the native people store the Maize, the Mil and other food , to be able to survive the dry season.



The rainy period lasts from June to September. During that time the farmers have to sow, weed and hopefully in the end, harvesting.

If there is a delay of the rain, or, if it ends earlier, or, the downpour is not sufficient, the plants will be destroyed. At the end, there is little to be harvested. For example, this lake disappears completely in the dry season. Then the environment resembles more or less a desert which we experienced in Mauretania



Although it is astonishing how the short time of its fertility is benefited(derived).
Rice is also planted in the more rainy plains. But the main thing is the cultivation of Maize, Mil and peanuts.



It is amazing what incredible work the termites put in daily to build castles like out of Disney films.
It was necessary to take the ferry to reach the town, which was our next destination.



We pitched up at the camp in a courtyard of a hotel in Djenné in the late afternoon. We still had enough time to view the town, Ali as our experienced guide.

At the entrance to the town, Ali hopped out of Betsy to move a cart out of the middle of the road. As soon he was on the road he came storming back again and jumped into Betsy. And now? I soon discovered what the problem was all about. A few of the most dangerous, African bees circled around his head. Lucky for me, he realised the danger, not only for himself but also on my behalf, so he quickly ran back onto the road again, the bees with him!!!! All of a sudden, everybody out in the street was running wild to escape the bees. What a spectacle for Heinz and me, from a safe distance. About a half hour later, Ali arrived at the hotel, very confused and with a swollen head from the bee stings. In spite of that, he carried out his task in guiding us through the town. What a hard guy!!

The highlight of the town is the Mosque, which was built from mud in 1907. It was built on top of a ruined Mosque from ancient time. For a fact, the building material is soil, water, wood and straw used as a connective tissue (binder). Because soil (mud) isn't weather proofed (resistant) , the building has to be restored each year after the rainy season. About 4000 voluntary helpers get stuck into the restoration. The wooden beams are reinforcing the structure of the building. When the yearly restoration takes place, ladders are used to fulfil the task.



It was "Muezzin" time as we passed by.



The town is very special, narrow alleys, in which the drainage (water- system) is flowing openly like in so many African countries. The smell isn't so bad. Secretion (Dekremente) is diverted separately.





Wood is transported for the well known market which always takes place on a Monday.

We had the privilege to view a home from inside. The kitchen with its stove and the washing- up bowl (sink) were most impressive.



29.08.08 Drive to Mopti

For a change we only had to do an 80km's drive. Around lunchtime we were able to set up our camp in a hotel back yard. We took the rest of the afternoon to explore the town on foot.

At this town, both of the big rivers, the Bani and the Niger join their waters. From that spot, the Niger flows inland and eventually finds its way to the sea in Nigeria.

Water means: Ships, Boats, Harbour and whatever else is entailed.





During the rainy season, the Niger is passable over long distances.

At this scene, a pirogue is being loaded, which destination will be Timbuktu.

Mostly, all the boats are built here.



A black-smith is very busy and forges nails of all kind and shapes, bare-footed as you can see! (169,170,171)



It's a fact that HIV is wildly spread in Africa and millions of people die from that disease every year. With such advertisement, people are warned about the out-come and also informed about how it can be prevented. The success is rather poor because the culture habits are outweighing predominately. Salt, which is won in the desert by Timbuktu is presented to its customers in slabs.



30.08.08 Visit of various villages along the Niger
“ Am I losing my second camera?”

A river outing and visiting various villages was on the Menu today. Somehow I made a wrong step as I went aboard the boat. A hard blow followed and because of it the one handle of my camera bag got torn. There, in front of my eyes, the whole bag with its contents immersed into the yellow water. Thanks to my quick reflection I managed to grip the bag and to pull it ashore. What now? There goes my second camera whistling down the drain! I removed the batteries and its chip. I actually was lucky, not much water got inside it. Heinz's remarks: Put it aside and let it dry! That is what I did. By this time I lost interest of boating around and visiting the villages but whether I liked it or not, I gave in and went along! After 2 days of drying, the camera was working as good as before. I was happy!

31.08.08 Drive to Douentza:

Even though we experienced quite a good tarmac road over the 215km drive, we found it interesting. The plain became barren and in spite of still lots of water on the surface, the green appeared like a carpet with short grass. The trees were scarce as well and only bushes decorated the scenery. The highlights of our visit to Mali will be the country of the Dogon and the town Timbuktu.

