

11.06.08-14.06.08

On 12.06.08 DHL tried to deliver my apparatus but couldn't find the camping site. The delivery guy took it right back to the branch again. Although Anna and Franziska, the ladies at the office at the camp site tried to convince DHL via telephone of its emergency, it was of no avail. In other words we would have to wait until Monday, because on a Sunday, no delivery!!!!

But by now I really had enough!!! I borrowed my neighbour's car and headed north (150km) to fetch it myself. On my return, I also went to book my ferry to cross the channel- Alcesia to Ceuta. In spite of the two weeks waiting impatiently for my breathing "thing", the stay here turned out very pleasant.

The campsite offered everything one needed and lots of special events were happening while at the camping site:

6 Irish men returned from a visit to Marocco on their motor bikes and only praised the country.
2 South Africans from Cape Town also travelling on their bikes stayed in the camp for one night.
So, there was enough time to get all the News first hand. I am ashamed to say it, but the two of them made the trip in only 51 days!!!! I am indeed going to look very old with my intension in completing it in 8- 10 months!!!

The camping site here is mostly occupied by pensioners and their dogs during off season. Sometimes I felt like being in an old people's home or a kennel for a fact. But in between I had some hope coming up that our population doesn't exist just of pensioners.

A cow strangely sauntered around on the beach.

The transport industry showed difficult consequences towards the end of the week. One can hardly get fresh products in the shops.

I didn't only have a drink at this pub, I also worked on reports, sent off e- mails and watched football games, Euro08.



Now, it's high time to say "Bye, Bye Europe and Hello Africa"

On Sunday morning at 8:00 am, I will board the ferry which will take me to Africa!

15.06.08 Crossing the channel to Chefchaouen

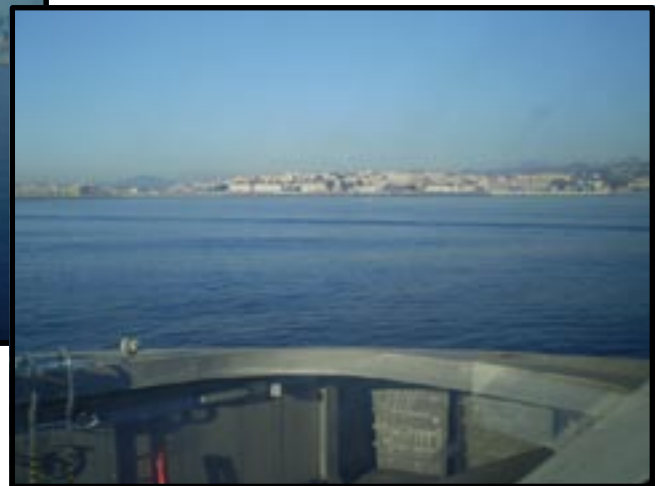
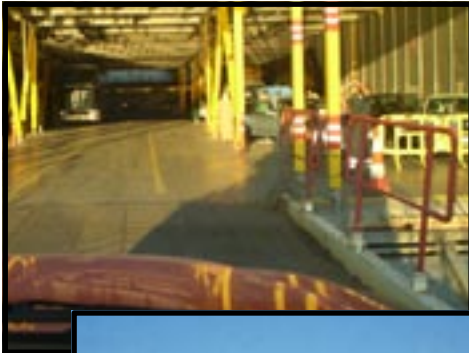
What solution do I have if there is nobody who wakes me up. My simple Cell hasn't got an alarm and I have to be up by 6.30. I remembered all of a sudden that I also packed in an electric alarm clock (I still can hear the teasing of my son Steve in doing so). I installed it quickly before I went to the restaurant where I watched the Euro08 match Spain- Sweden. That was the high light of the Euro08, when, after a great disappointment so far, Spain still shot a 2:1 in the last minute (025).



Everything went accordingly quickly in the morning. 7.30 on the dot I boarded the ferry to get across the channel to Ceuta, a Spanish Enclave on the Marocco side.

A last look back to Europe, before we (Betsy and I) touched solid ground again.

I took the opportunity in filling up Petrol, duty free. Altogether 133L Diesel for Betsy and 55L unleaded petrol for the dynamo in case of an emergency. At the customs, a friendly gentleman greeted me in German (he even managed to say Chuchichaeschtli)

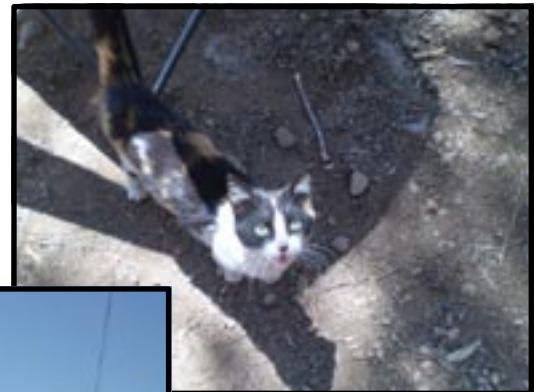




Let me call him Ali. The luck was indeed on my side! He helped me with filling in all the necessary papers and manoeuvred me in just an half an hour through the customs. That procedure can take up a half a day of your time! I rewarded him with 30 Euro and both of us were happy.

To drive to Chefchaouen turned out well without any bigger occurrences except a flock of sheep which comfortably took their time in the middle of the road. Actually the very first mosque appeared on the scene.

Shortly afterwards a sign directed me to turn left. I did that with the utmost caution because of oncoming traffic. Not far from the turn off, a police man stopped me and tried to convince me of having cut off an oncoming car. In the mean time there wasn't a car in sight! I had to present my Identity documents and some how he also asked me for a green card (Insurance policy) which I didn't have. My situation therefore was more than risky. I didn't have another possibility than paying the fine of 400 Dirhams(approx. Fr. 60.-) without getting a receipt. Not long after this incident I arrived at a camping site. The stray cats were already waiting!!!



An old land rover (Defender) eventually rolled up. A Swedish couple, Mia + Chris climbed out of it. They were on their way back from several weeks' tour through Marocco. That evening Mia cooked Spaghetti, I grilled some lamb chops and created a tomato salad. It was to everyone's taste, also the wine of good quality. (I won't mention bedtime, but it was very late) They shared their experiences made during their trip, which will help me a lot to adventure the beauty of this land.

16.06.08 Visit in Chefchaouen

Mia + Chris were ready to leave the camp, but still decided to view the small town. To have some company once in a while I joined them. I had the pleasure to have a ride in a “Defender) which confirmed that having bought a Mitsubischi was the right decision I made. (The Defender’s noise, the sitting position, no power steering, no air condition, many mechanic noises, etc(only to mention a few).

You have heard the word “Medina” from a previous visit to Tanger. It means the old part of a town with its narrow alleys and its fully packed shops. We tasted the traditional peppermint tea (freshly picked)



17.06.08 Second Day in Chefchaouen

The day started with good News. The green card which I had to have was sent to me twice, via Internet, directly from the Insurance Company in Winterthur. Thanks to my son Steve for the quick organisation. It was printed out in the office at the camp. I should have all the papers I need in Marokko by now.

A German who just arrived was also fined at the same left turn(that means an additional income for that policeman? I am sure of it!)

I realised yesterday that there is nowhere in town where alcohol is being sold. The boy at the camp explained, the nearby hotel is selling it, a five star hotel with swimming pool and a magnificent view onto the town below. I eventually had a beer at the bar which cost me Fr. 6.-.



18.06.08 – 20.06.08

Drive from Chefchaouen to Fes

Like usual. breakfast in the early morning. What is remarkable here is, the bread is flat. It tastes very nice and keeps fresh longer too than the one you get in South of Europe (baguette).

I was just finished with my breakfast when a French guy approached me who saw my equipment. He wanted to clean the element of the air filter of his car with my compressor. That means my very first try in putting it into action. It went very smoothly, when you think of all the dust we got out of the element, his car should be in good condition again, at least where the filter is concerned.



On my departure, direction Fes, I threw a last glance back at the small, but neat village.



Oh, what's that? I can't read Arabic but normally it is positioned where one expects a stop!
(Hansruedi, you would be able to know what it says).

Once more I met another policeman. The last time I caught up with one still sat deep in my mind! He showed me a radar-guided pistol, his newest acquisition. It had 58km/h on the clock. Obviously I didn't realise the 40km sign, that's what he wanted to know. I denied it and put on an innocent face. He must have felt sorry for me and after a while he said "allez monsieur". Happy I drove off. Although I was disappointed in a way, because, having received the green card so quickly per Internet, he didn't even make any gesture to see the papers.



The market in the village looks about as follows, dead animals which are leaving a terrible picture behind (only for good nerves).



The garage also looked desolated and I hope I never have to intrust Betsy to such a crash invaded garage.

From time to time water tanks emerged where everyone can fill up the very badly needed element. One can view the carriers, but at the moment they are just taking a Siesta.

In the more southern part, the district changed from green meadows to yellow corn fields, which accompany me over a 100km.

Shall I overtake that LKW?



Here a nut to be cracked for Röbi (a school friend I met while I was in the trade school) Do these storks still fly to Switzerland?



Should anyone think my Betsy is overloaded than that Mitsubishi L200 would have to be weighed in first.

In spite of the co- ordination Emmi(GPS) couldn't find the camping site in Fes. On the contrary, she caused some disturbance with her "recalculating". (Don't we know that, Erika?) I eventually switched it off and carried on, on my own. A young biker appeared next to me and asked "camping"? Yes, I said and followed him for at least 15km where the sign turned up "International Camping", exactly the place I was looking for. He didn't want a reward but a souvenir of Switzerland, so I gave him a red T-Shirt with the Swiss cross, which lightened up his face.

It was already 16:00 and Betsy showed 34 degrees on the clock. The swimming pool was just the thing to cool off. The camping facilities also supplied hot water! Gladly I took a shower (about 3 days overdue) and had a swim after that. The catering team were organised for the well- being of its visitors. Here the team, chef Mohamed, who put together a typical, maroccan supper. The temperature dropped at night and I slept like a baby.



19.06.08 Visit of the Medina in Fes

At 9:00 am I had a date with a guide and a taxi driver. The taxi took us to Fes and the guide lead me through the labyrinth of the Medina (could easy result in getting lost without it. One would also miss out on the highlights, and there are lots of them, just to name a few:

The entire impression of “1001 night”, of which I have read about, is really true:



Mosque



Only donkeys manage to get through the narrow alleys



Spices – and all kind of dealers: I bought 19 gram of Saffron. I believe it is very rare to get it, also very expensive. The flower has only 3 (calyx) in its bloom (sepals) of which Saffron is stripped off.



That tannery is still functioning in the same way as it was done in the year 1400.



They say the carpets of Morocco are one of the best! Didn't we hear that once on Tunis and southern Turkey?? The only thing what was special here was, I was allowed to give them a hand in helping with the weaving the carpets (nice staff)



The "chicken place" had its fascination and its smell!!!



The dashboard for once more was decorated in a distinctive manner (Taxi).

SORRY, have to make a brake, because the MUEZZIN is giving a signal to pray.

From my camp, I can hear 4 different ones, the result, very confusing (Quatro- sorry- Kaka- Phonie)

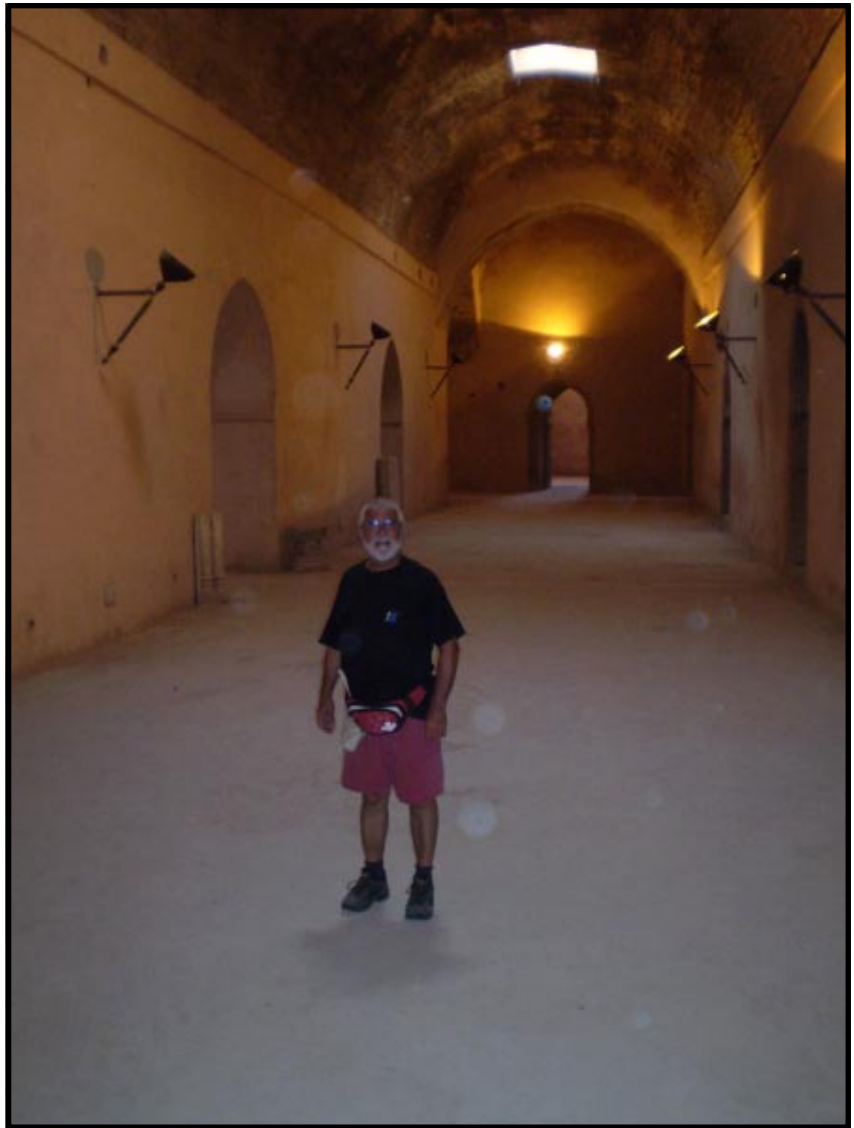
Although I get the impression the average population has to be immune, they are not paying any attention as if they're praying.

26.06.08 Drive to Mekkèn, visit of the Medina on a horse back

The 60km drive turned out well without any specific occurrences, not even a policeman stopped me. By now, I found out, that these uniformed gentlemen are pioneers to get information about the where-abouts! (The signs are useless anyhow) And Emmi, more often than not is in a stress anyhow, she repeats herself with her telling me "recalculating". Eventually, one of these guardians of the Law led me to the camping spot.



The time when Mekkèn started to flourish began in the 17th Century. The Sultan, Ismael nominated it at that time, the capital of his empire. As a fact there are still a few buildings of the ancient time to be seen. I noticed the old part of this town is boarded on the camp while I was making inquiries. One could view the horse-stables of the Sultan which still were in a very good condition. One can't believe it though, 1200 horses were dwelled in here and its farm-labourers also found their living and places to sleep in.



It looked as if one horse was left behind! Exactly in front of the stables, there stood a horse with its coach (carriage). After bargaining I had a round trip. At least “Sun”(horse’s name) and its coachman had something to do! I was the only guest and so I was allowed to sit next to the guide in front. Hassan, the coachman had worked for 5 years in a spa Hotel in Wiesbaden. Therefore his German was quite good. So no language problem there! Although there was a traffic jam in spite of the chosen means of transport (or sightseeing from a horse’s point of view).

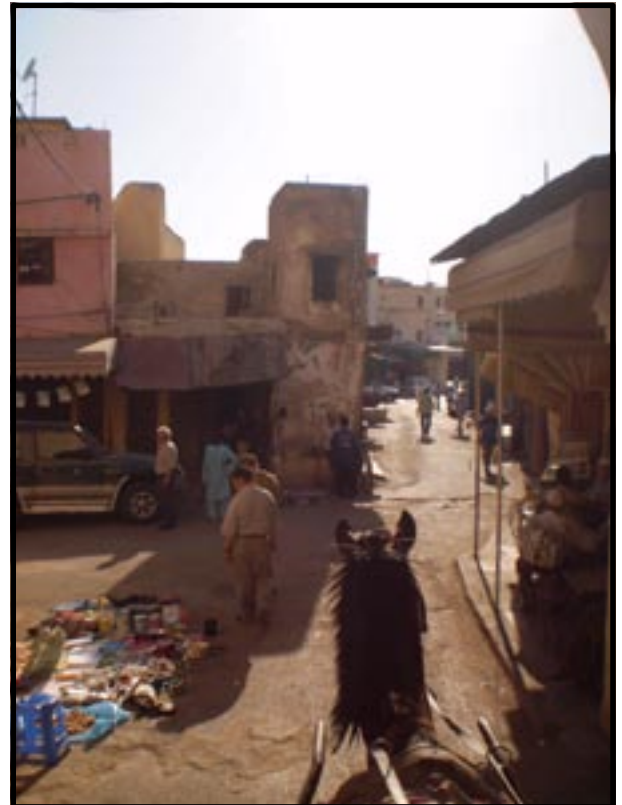




Only by kindling the horse on and off, it was more or less possible to get around the circles (roundabouts).



The alleys here aren't as narrow as at other places, as one can see on the picture. For one thing I was able to take good photos and secondly, it was easy for Hassan to lead his horse and its coach through it.



On route, Hassan quenched his thirst at a water hole. I didn't trust the water's quality and went without it. (I rather had a cool beer on my return to the camp).

Before I left Hassan, there had to be a photo- session, my humble self at the "steering wheel" and of course its coachman.



26.06.08 Departure Blue Source to Merzouga

As if I had ordered a huge camper drove up in the park. A "ZH" glanced at me. With a roof height of 3,8 meter it was somehow difficult to enter the park but possible. That was some luck for me! In conversation Heinz + Tsiyon had the same idea in visiting Marocco first and then driving South towards South Africa. Heinz has a lot of experiences in off- road driving and straight away we agreed to travel together for a while during our adventure of Africa.

That was really at the last minute, exactly at the door to the desert, when the camper appeared! Is that destiny (fate)(Erika would say, yes) but sometimes it does sound negative. It can also be by accident or luck?! It doesn't matter, but it was the right thing at the right time.



Early the next morning we left the camp to go into the desert. A short drive on a tarred road we turned left in Erfoud and were on the “piste”, that’s the French expression if one drives on a nature territory (tract of the country). “Piste”, because the word, “road”, would be an exaggeration. The road can be anything from sand, rubble, hard rock, salt etc. One is able to follow the previous tyre marks of cars which one still can make out on the surface. As a rule in general the surface shows gutters all over from all the passing cars, so driving next to it is a much better solution. Each one looks for the best track.



Enough Theory! We drove along the Sahara desert and on the left, the famous sand dune "Erg Chebbi" emerged (cropped up). The temperature climbed by now to 47 degrees.





Heinz at first was quite nervous at the Entrance at Merzouga. Does his camper make it through the gate? In the end he managed it.

In Petit Prince we lodged for the night. Towards the evening hungry camels trotted in to be fed (directly at the back of the camp site).

Nearby there was also a cemetery and all the tombstones were facing towards Mecca.





27.06.08- 28.06.08 Drive Merzouga to Zagora, “Desert Drive”

According to Heinz yesterday's drive was like eating honey! Today one can really taste “desert”, he said and off we went. The surface offered everything what one was expecting and which at first was missing, still followed later after a few hours in excessive volume (the sand!) Being a newcomer in that field I didn't leave enough distance between Heinz's car and my car. As a result I was driving in a cloud of dust, produced by Heinz's car of course. Stopping was out of the question in this situation! I would have run the danger of being stuck in the sand. Only about a hundred meters later we had to cross over a deep bed and than it happened! Heinz got stuck while he tried to get out of the steep exit. He had to reverse and I tried my luck with Betsy. No outcome, I also got stuck. Now we were facing some hard work! Shovelling and putting sand sheets under the tyres and by that time, temperature had risen to 52 degrees! What a nightmare! With lots of strain (effort) and sweat we managed to conquer the hindrance. After a few meters we had solid ground again. (Unfortunately we were so busy in getting out of that misery, I forgot to take a photo. But to comfort you, here are still some pictures to give you an idea about the region.





For the 180km distance it took us 7 hours! We stopped somewhere what we thought is sheltered to make preparations for a desert- camp, far away from the civilisation.



I was curious if my generator would stand its test with its delivery of 220 Volt for the refrigerator and my breathing apparatus.



A big change, food wise! We didn't grill this time. Heinz installed his cast ironed pot (K-pot) and cooked a fantastic hotchpotch,(potjie) (one- course- dish). My first night in the desert wasn't like I had imagined it (with lots of stars shining in the sky). It was over cast and a very hot wind was blowing. I didn't sleep well at all, but at least my generator did its work!



On our way, many children approached us and cried out for "Bonbons"and"Pens".





Arabic women also were curious of who came here to visit. Pretty, aren't they?

At least one can have its imagination!!!(They are covered up)

The rest of approx. 80km turned out to be difficult, because, practically we had very bad foundation and the speed always was under 20km/h, or even less: But we survived and we arrived in Zagora safe and sound. To be on a tarred road again was worth a loud cheering.

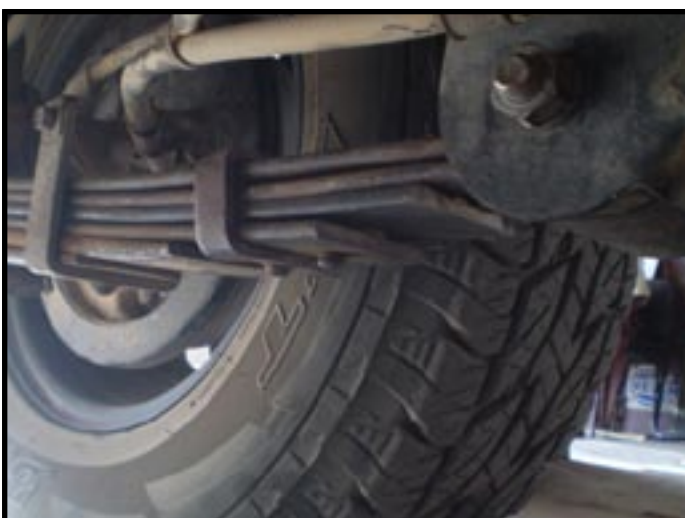


We found the camping site in one go, early noon we set up everything and relaxed after that from our exertion through the desert.

Ali, the rubbish remover in the camp was just busy doing his rounds and was pleased to see the arrival of new guests.

29.06.08 Sorrows with Betsy

As we just settled in the camp, a young chap came passed and explained to me, that his brother had a garage and would be happy to grease my Betsy for 20 Dirham(2 Euro)(that shows how clever these guys are to get some work, or money?) I followed him to the garage where we had a closer look at Betsy. While greasing, all Betsy's wounds appeared which the drive through the desert caused her. A broken spring feather at the back and all shockupsorbers were defect.



That guy's brother revealed himself as an off- road-specialist. He also takes part in Ralleys as a mechanic. Therefore he has the necessary experiences and keeps all the spare parts in stock. Saturday afternoon as well as Sunday (without a Siesta) Betsy still wasn't fit for a Ralley, but with Oldman EMU Shockupsorbers, a new spring feather, plus an extra one (spring feather) Betsy will master such hindrances (Strapazen) much better in future. (Still at home, I intended actually to do that, but decided otherwise, to see how it progresses). I was really lucky to come across a specialist like him. (In Switzerland, I just would have been able to get the parts only, for the money I had to pay him)

So Betsy's "bum" is now 100mm higher at the back, and 4cm at the front.



29.06.08 Zagora

Apart from Betsy's problems, Zagora showed itself as a small but distinguished town, which is orientated on tourists like most towns in Marocco. In summertime, although one won't realise it so much, because of the high temperatures. The tourists flock in , in winter, then the temperature only reaches 15- 20 degrees during day time and 10- 12 degrees at night.

On Sunday I spotted a pick- up loaded with live chickens on its back, right near the Internet café. The poor creatures actually were beheaded right there before they land on the grill (Fresher you can't get it).



30.06.08 Drive Zagora to „Gorges du Dadès” (better said “Vagary Drive” “Horror trip”

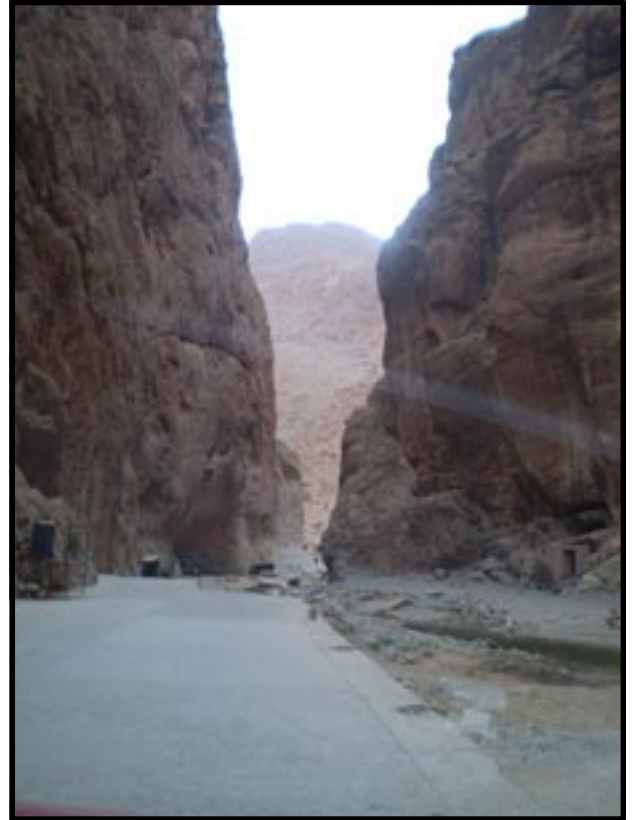
Today we went our separate ways and will meet up again tomorrow night. The reason is, I would like to drive through a crossing of two abysses. As the guide- book reads it is very difficult and Heinz wouldn't have a chance to make it with his 10tons vehicle.

I started the trip at 9° clock and the first 300km went smoothly on the tarred road until Tinerhir. Betsy approved to be fit after her face- lifting in Zagora.





Gorges du Todra presented itself friendly and the road here was still tarred.



At 2⁰⁰pm the very difficult and more or less passable road took its bad turn.

(To call it a road it's rather exaggerated). At the utmost, one can name it a mule track, which can be walked on or perhaps a cart still would manage to go along on) I missed the other crossing into the Gorges du Dadès further back. I had to follow that dangerous path for the next 130km. To reverse, no chance!! That path led on hard rocks and is uneven and one can't dodge the above rocks.





Eventually only flocks of sheep and its shepherd, or a lonely donkey were part of the scenery.



Without warning there was a detonation under the bonnet of Betsy, which caused a power decrease. The Turbo charger pipe burst and the pipe lay openly in the bonnet. With a cable-binder I could fix it and the drive could continue. But I didn't get far though and the next thing happened! Betsy made funny movements, left then right. Oh no, a flat tyre!! The changing of the wheel was no problem. Now I still had to get down this steep road. The clock's handle already pointed to 20⁰⁰ pm and still no sight to be at the end of my infernal trip.



Whether I liked it or not I had to carry on! I arrived at the camp about 23⁰⁰ pm, which I had booked in advance. That path has cost me 9 hours of my precious life, no wonder the speed, I was able to do, was approx. 14km/h.



After a good night sleep I saw everything from a different point of view. In retrospect I was able to book it off as a good experience. In future I will pay more respect if I decide in visiting a “no- mans- land”