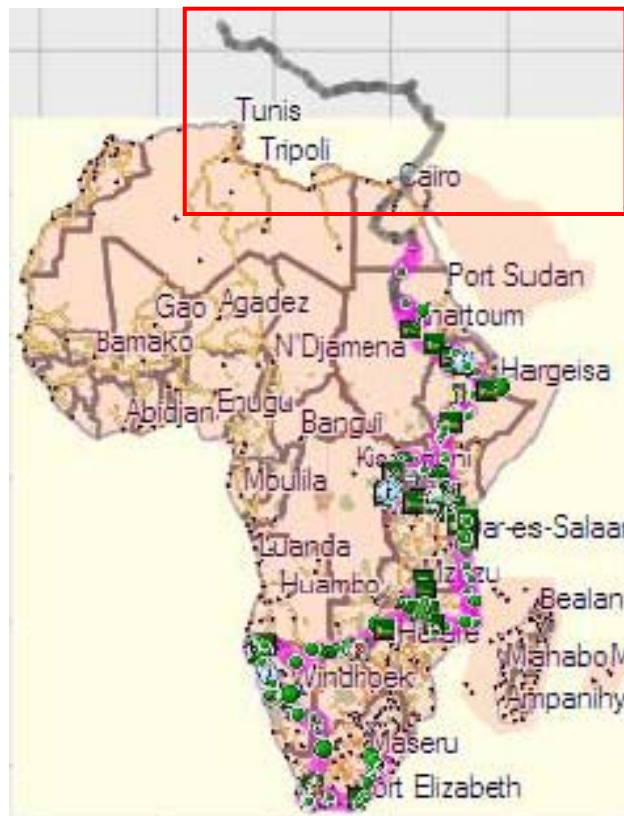


Cairo, 16th November 2012

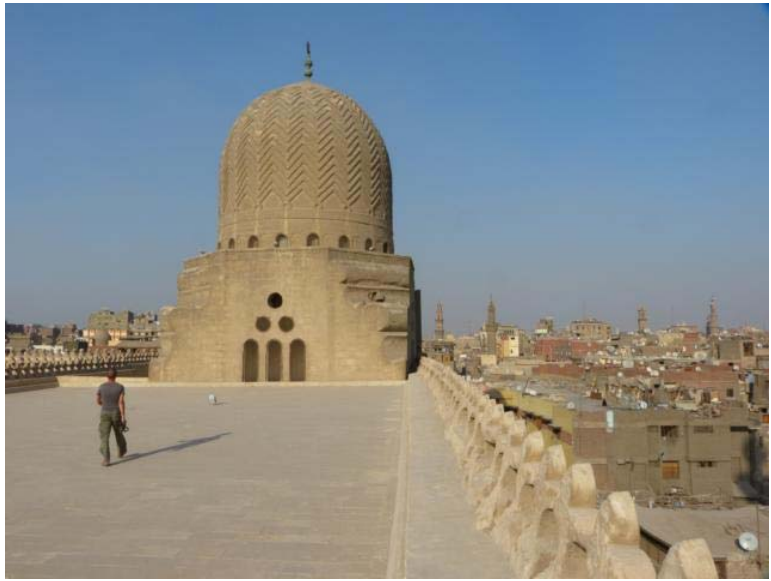
Dear All,

Now we're in Cairo. More than 13 million inhabitants, impossible to drink a cup of tea, or, even better, a beer with all of them. We had to make a selection on the sights to see. Clearly, the pyramids of Gizeh were on our itinerary. Not because they are interesting, but because everybody driving from Cape town to Cairo takes a picture of himself with the pyramids in the background and sends it to everybody who does not even want to see it.

Nevertheless, to get a little used to Cairo we started with a tour through the Islamic Quarter. As there are so many cars in the street, we took the metro to this area. This is a fast, easy and hassle free way to move in town. We visited all kind of mosques, climbed some minarets, went to the biggest market, took a lot of pictures and relaxed with some tea – and after all that we were ready for a sundowner (in Cairo of course in a completely closed bar in the underground) followed by an excellent Egyptian dinner in a very atmospheric restaurant.



Some indications concerning the strange map we show this time: As mentioned in its name Tracks4Africa does not provide any tracks outside Africa. Of course we never thought that we may need Tracks for Turkey or Tracks for Europe. This is the simple reason why the journey from Egypt onwards is no longer on the general map, it's just the track that was registered by the GPS. The small map is retrieved from Google and may help to find the different places to all those who think Europe is just a country with some political unrest due to imaginative financial management in Greece and an ongoing soap opera (La Berlusconi) in Italy.



The next half day we had to explore the possibilities to take a ferry to Turkey. We new approximately the dates we wanted to leave and the route. But still it was not easy, because nobody seems to be responsible for anything (the helpful lady in Turkey, indicated in all travel blogs, was on leave) and nobody may clarify you the correct way to make a booking. Finally we had some vague indications and a perspective to call the local shipping agent or somebody else for further clarifications by tomorrow.

As we did not know how long we might stay in Cairo until we had to move to the shipping port, we felt urged to visit the pyramids the same afternoon. Again metro; then a taxi. The nice driver took us to the wrong place; probably there he wanted to sell us something interesting. Finally we had to walk the last few km to reach the entrance gate. This was not an easy task as we had to cross several big roads filled with hundreds of cars and all of them driving with at least 100 km/h. Somehow we managed without having and creating major accidents and were near the entrance gate. But to finally reach it we had to pass thru a kind of torture alley filled with hundreds of people all of them concentrating on the few tourists left



after these revolutionary days during the introduction of real democracy. They tried to divert the poor tourist to anywhere they didn't want to go to, tried to sell everything nobody ever wants and offered all kind of services everybody tries to avoid constantly. After some minutes we had passed *Torture Alley*, paid a reasonable entrance fee and were ready to take this famous picture.

Inside the gate the next surprise. Somehow a strange scene: 3 pyramids, a few dozen tourists and hundreds of camels and their guides eager to be on a picture with the odd tourists or give them a ride.



We checked the tickets; they clearly mentioned pyramids, not camel market. So, don't discourage, we concentrated on the pyramids, ignoring completely the camels, the touts and the hawkers trying to sell these awesome papyrus prints with kitsch-factor XXL. We even entered one of these huge piles of stones - the biggest one - to learn a little more about the pharaoh's afterlife. As far as

we could observe, it's hot inside, of course quite dark, but no signs of virgins or other afterlife adventures for the poor guys. Maybe we misunderstood something. Finally we posed in front of 1 of the pyramids, took the picture – our only reason to be here, had a quick look at a great number of tourists and touts at the Sphinx and drove back to central Cairo.



The evening program was similar to the one the day before: sundowners and dinner. However with the dinner we were not as fortunate as before. We choose a longstanding French restaurant with a good reputation. Out of some strange reason Martin ordered pizza and Monika rabbit in mustard sauce. Well, the pizza was good, but the rabbit looked and tasted like cheap airline food and even was served in the alu plate.

Finally, in the evening we also could arrange for our ticket for the ferry leaving Damietta port on the 22nd November for Turkey. The fixer in Damietta told us to be there on 21st in the morning, which would leave us with another day in Cairo and him with enough time to arrange all the necessary paperwork.

The last day in Cairo we decided to have a look at the old Coptic quarter with its chapels and churches and then to move on to the famous Egyptian museum next to famous Tahir Place. Normally Martin does not like museums, but everybody simply has to go to this one, no pity. We spent some hours there to marvel at the loads of old treasures – and until we could not stand anymore.



Through downtown with its old houses, shops and busy streets we walked back to our hotel on Zege Island.



There we repeated the steps from *beer to dinner* and packed our goodies. Due to the Cairo traffic and the oncoming booking procedures for the ferry to Turkey an early morning start was planned for the following day.

Gümüyaka, 4th December

Don't think you have slept during your school time if you don't know this beautiful place. Nobody, expect the 38 habitants of this location have ever heard of it. Nevertheless, it's our 1st station in Europe. It's a village on the shores of Marmara Sea, some km from Istanbul. Outside temperature is 2 degrees. No problem, before we crossed from our rather limited trip to Asia on the bridge in Istanbul to Europe, we were even driving thru some snow today. So far the news from winter.

Back to Cairo: we left it a 6am to avoid at least some of the traffic jams. We quickly sneaked out of town towards the ring road. No problem, as the Egyptian would never go for work before 10am, the whole city seemed to be sleeping. The 1st km on the ring road – also pretty ok, but then it started. It was

7am, the most energetic Cairoans were already on the way to reach their destination in town by 10 or 11am. So traffic got a little denser.

But this was not a real problem, because there's a good highway with 3 lanes in each direction. But just considering the 3 lanes means ignoring the multiple orange sellers. As Cairo could not develop a proper system to market oranges grown in or outside the city the poor guys had to sell them on the street sides. Of course, the more traffic, the more oranges sold. In this logic they had to sell them along the ring road. So they occupied the inner lane of the highway, built up beautiful market stalls filled with even more beautiful oranges. Of course this attracts the attention of Cairoan drivers; if they are not busy on their cell phones or writing SMS while driving. Consequently all kind of cars make emergency stops to negotiate the prize of oranges and sometimes to buy a few of them. Logically and considering the importance of orange marketing everybody fully accepts that traffic on the ring road comes to an stop every 100 to 200 m.

Another important issue is of course the fact that not everybody owns a car. Therefore many Cairoans are simply forced to use public transport. In order to ensure quick transport the ring road of Cairo developed into one of the biggest bus stations in the world, loading and unloading some 10 million passengers every day on the highway. Of course all traffic also has to consider the stopping minibuses every 2 to 3 seconds when using the ring road. Finally after 2 h stop and go thru oranges, bus passengers and busses we left the Cairo ring road heading towards Port Said at the Mediterranean Sea.



On the way we saw some huge vessels driving thru the desert. Finally we discovered it was just the odd Suez Canal with some ships heading towards the Indian Ocean probably with their final destination somewhere at the Somali coast in the hands of some pirates.

In Port Said we met Eslam, our fixer for the ferry to Turkey. He took our passports and received police clearance within minutes; no known criminal charges against us. Then he left us for 30 minutes to do some other business. No problem, finally we had 2 h time to explore the town and its shoreline and to drink some tea.



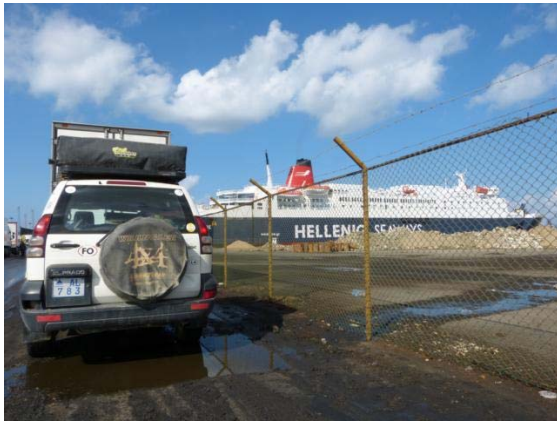
Later on we found him and moved towards Damietta. Maybe you remember, in the last newsletter we described Damietta the town resembling to Pizzia with Gorgonzola and Ruccola and Carouso singing some odd Italian songs. Definitely, reality is quite different. At that time we were happy that we should leave just a day later. We bought the ferry tickets – we had to fiercely



negotiate the prize, which suddenly was different from the one we were assured by the ship owner. Then our dear fixer brought us to the customs to deposit some of our papers; we were waiting for him outside. His 10 minutes extended to 1 hour; then he returned. He brought us to a hotel along a lively road and a noisy railway line. Nevertheless, the staff could organise some beer in a nearby supermarket.

Next day we should leave Egypt to sail to Turkey. Our fixer was not present; but he sent us 2 sub-fixers, Ahmed and Ibrahim. Optimistic as we were, we had our Egyptian number plates and an all important not understandable documents in Arabic given back to the police. Then we entered our car into the port, customs prepared its export. All business as usual as we had our 2 subbies Ahmed and Ibrahim by our side. They collected all kind of papers and stamps of outstanding importance to export the car: confirmation of the fire brigade that the confirmation of the fire brigade in Aswan still is valid, that we do not carry any explosives, confirmation of the chassis number examiner, that our chassis number still is the same, confirmation of the engine number examiner, that our engine number still is the same, confirmation of customs that we still have 2 bags and 5 plastic bags with all kind of stuff and 26 empty plastic bag and the confirmation of the mechanic that our tyre pressure is correct – you name it, somebody will confirm it. Some time later everything was confirmed and we went back to the local agent to get a stamp on the single piece of paper not yet stamped. There we learned that the ferry would be a little late. Somebody told us that towards 1am we may come back. So back to the hotel and sitting around in the nice chairs in the lobby; by 12 pm 1 of our subbies picked us up. At the office we learned that the delay would be more important, we may stay there – outside the office of course, as business time was over – or go back to the hotel. We preferred the hotel alternative with a nice bed and the possibility of a hot shower. Next day a

subbie picked us up again. We learned that the vessel has safely arrived; we were waiting until afternoon. Then the all important news: there was a slight problem between the Turkish ship owner and his Egyptian agent. As there was a discussion of a negligible amount of 850 000 US\$ the Egyptians seized the boat together with the whole crew. The Egyptians seemed to consider the 200 passengers as a kind of positive force to solve their problems as they just wanted to reach Turkey. Again, we went back to the hotel, spent another night and expected another few days in awesome Damietta. Next morning, what surprise, we were asked to go immediately to the port, to drive our car to the ferry, which seemed to be ready for boarding. Of course, we did as asked.



Just behind the open gate of the vessel we parked our car and observed a group of policemen busy by not allowing anybody to enter or to leave the boat. So we waited another day. By evening it became clear that we would not leave in the immediate future. We drove to a nearby parking within the port as we were no longer allowed to leave the area. No problem, we installed the tent, opened our last cans

of beer and enjoyed our last cans of food. Later on, Monika realized that there's no toilet in the whole harbour except the *traditional* one (we should have drunken less beer!). We spent a wonderful night on this parking, listening to the trucks crossing our tent the whole night and discovering in the middle of the night that our ferry suddenly was no longer at dock.



Next day; same game, we were waiting, drinking a lot of tea and coffee with the Turkish truck drivers, exchanging ideas about rumours and chasing the millions of flies around us. By the evening a guy flown in from Istanbul promised us that all problems are solved and that he paid all outstanding money – nevertheless there were rumours that he just arrived with 2 700 US\$ - quite a difference to the requested 850 000 US\$. So same story: Another night on the truck's runway. Another morning and we discovered that the ferry was back to the dock. We learned that we could board now – not cars, but passengers. We went to the ferry, even got a breakfast. Later on we moved there and even got a huge cabin free of cost; probably to compensate the small delay.



Now we were guests on the boat for the next 2 days, nothing was clear, all rumours were true, we were looking for alternatives and finally after 6 days of being taken a kind of hostage, suddenly

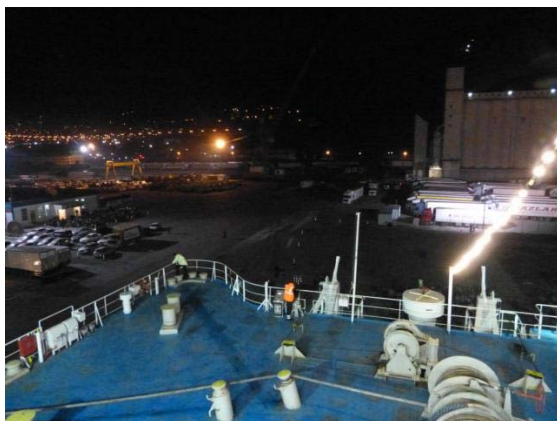


we had to get the car immediately onto the ferry, which was to leave in a short time. We still had to stamp our passports and the Carnet. No problem, the 1st was the job of the local agent, the 2nd the one of our subbies. Finally a few hours later the ferry left. Our passports were stamped, not so our Carnet, our subbies were just too lazy to get anything done. No problem, we will just have to get a confirmation of one of these charming Swiss custom officers that he has seen our car (wishful thinking – we hope we will not be sued to pay import taxes to Egypt).



Well, the ferry left Damietta (and we were happy, happy, happy...), bound for Iskenderun in Turkey. Once it was one of those beautiful Greece ferries plying between Greece and Italy, currently the Niossos Rodos is chartered by a Turkish company to transport Turkish drivers between Turkey and Egypt on their way to the Gulf. Initially, the vessel had several restaurants, a number of cosy bars, a disco and comfortable deck chairs to recover

from the everyday stress of a cruise. The self serving restaurant still remains functional; they serve 3 different menus – not as alternatives, but in rotation. All not bad but repeating itself after some time. Drinks are restricted to tea, water and occasionally coffee. But still not to be compared to our Wadi Halfa steamboat. Once we left Damietta, we had to celebrate that we're no



longer taken hostage. The prize was a bottle of Egyptian rotten grapes. Not perfect but adapted to the situation.

21 h later, at 7pm we arrived in Iskenderun port in Turkey. All Turkish truck drivers promised us *now problem finish this Türkiye not Misir* (Egypt). True or not, at midnight (after standing around for a

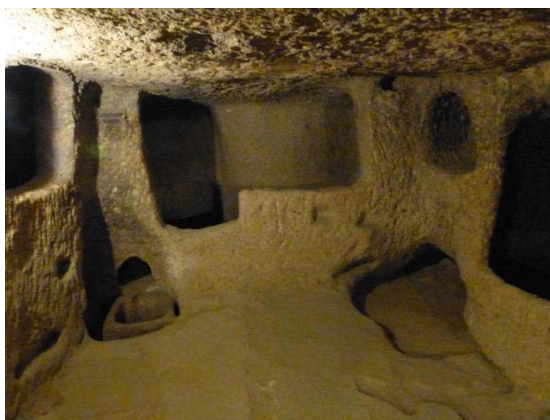
long time and not knowing what is going on) Martin could retrieve Monika's and a co-travellers' passport from the immigration officer. His own still being missed and found only an hour later – but still stamped after the immigration officers returned to their office, started their tired computers and discussed a long time, whether or not Martin may need a visa for Turkey. He did not, so we slept in a hotel in town, somehow resembling at a certain type of establishment that should not exist in this part of the world – it was 1.30 am by then.



Next day we experienced the easy way of Turkey again. No problem, 9h later we had temporarily imported our car into the country (just a few hours more than Egypt with the sole difference that was not bureaucracy, but failing computer systems and the absence of some important decision makers within the custom). We stayed in Iskenderun for another night, not like our Syrian friends who continued the same day as far as Istanbul. So we had an opportunity to buy the all important SIM-card and to enjoy a very expensive beer and a good evening meal.



The next day we started our journey towards the north. We decided to explore the sights of Kapadokia and stopped in Uchisar and Göreme. Göreme, with its fairy chimneys sculptured by erosion and its rock-hewn churches, is one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. As we arrived during a weekend everything was at least a little bit more animated, but we realized that we were completely out of season. In the hotel we were the only guests and we were happy to get a meal in the restaurant. But the next day we could experience the advantages in travelling in low season: the churches around Göreme were accessible even without queuing for hours and hours.



Other World Heritage Sites nearby are the multi-level underground cities built during the Median Empire. We went to visit the one of Kaymakli. It is incredible (and somehow frightening – little visibility, no space, lots of broken walls everywhere) to walk through this labyrinth of alleys, tunnels and rooms up to 7 storeys below surface – you should not eat too much before entering, otherwise you cannot fit through the

tunnels! The bims rock is very soft and it was probably easy to build this structure, but we really have to admire the architect of this city. How did the labourers know where to grab and where to stop – how to know where the “flat” of your neighbour is situated.

In the evenings we enjoyed the good, icecold Turkish beer and celebrated an early Santa Claus with lots of peanuts in an icecold environment.



We left Kapadokia and headed towards the northern part of Anatolia where we had to take a major decision – either to take a right turn and continue through Asia or to take a left



turn and drive onwards to Istanbul and to Europe. Due to the fact that there is cold, cold winter in Russia and we maybe need to earn some more money for our heirs before we continue our trip we opted for the leftern option. Definitely this is only a short term decision, but don't tell anybody. In Istanbul we finally crossed from Asia to Europe on the bridge over the Bosphorus, feeling that our

journey soon will come to an end.

Looking at the weather we were convinced that we took the wrong decision when turning left.

We stayed in a lonely hotel outside of Istanbul and, due to an early closure of the restaurant, had an evening meal in bed with our leftovers from the emergency box in the car.

It was time to move on to real Schengen Europe and the next day we crossed the border into Yunanistan; never heard about it - don't worry, it's Greece in Turkish language. What a short border crossing: no fixer, no delays - everybody just wanted to know where and what Lesotho is – probably the guys were sick during the Geography lessons on Southern Africa.



Today our destination was Thessaloniki, which we had visited on another trip some 31 years ago. As we did, the houses also got a little bit older in the meantime. Everything very animated, lots of people in the streets, Christmas business in full swing; no signs of the economic crises or the still outstanding revolution. Adapted to the current political climate and the outside temperature they even have an ice rink on one of the big places in the centre of town.



After one day in this highly volatile and political unstable republican kingdom of Greece we had the chance to move to the next country: Albania. The procedures at the border were a little bit longer, but mostly because it was the first time they ever saw a carnet de passage and a Lesotho registered car – a small request to everybody in Lesotho: kindly promote the country a little bit more actively in Greece and Albania. This would help the poor guys who may cross the border with a Lesotho registration within the next 20 years. Believe us; we did our level best to facilitate this important task.



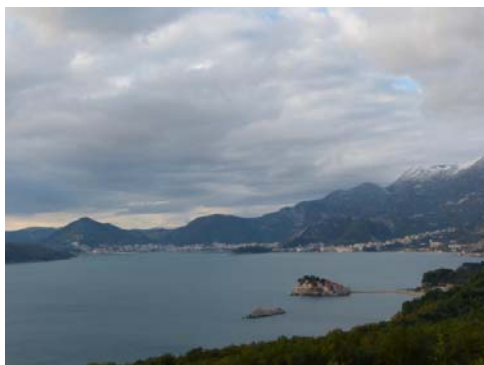
Albania was quite a change: Of course we did not feel very comfortable in Greece due to its political instability due to the severe austerity measures imposed by EU. We expected revolution, devolution, devaluation or even worse at any time during our one day visit to this country. Happily nothing happened. Now in Albania – really we're back to Africa. Not DRC, but

definitely Congo - Brazza. After the European feeling in Greece you immediately remark the difference. Maybe they decided on which side of the road to drive their old cars, but definitely they forgot to communicate this decision to their citizens. Conditions of roads – you clearly see which part of the funds was designated to the construction and which part was rather planned to help the survival of poor politicians. Nevertheless, fantastic landscape.



Lots of snow over the mountain passes and Tirana, the proud capital village of Albania, we experienced as a town which is so dark at night that it even competes with Niamey and Kinshasa when they have power - or with New York during a power cut.

Next day same procedure, another country – it simply was too cold to stay in Tirana, we have to come back in summer season. But before that, they still have to solve their parking space problem – absolutely no space throughout the whole city centre.



Next we moved on to Montenegro. We estimate it's the 2nd youngest country in the international community – after South Sudan and maybe a step ahead to beloved Somaliland. The border procedures, due to functioning computers, again were no problem. Nevertheless, after all the questions we had to answer we realized that maybe we have to develop a new barometer on border crossings: potential of all kind of

officials to develop professionalism when people with a car from Lesotho cross their border. Indicators would be - knowing any internationally spoken language (eg. *hi guys, how are u today, how was your trip, you don't need to answer, we wish you a safe trip onwards* instead of *Lumela Ntate, what did you buy in South Africa, Jambo what have 4 me, Asalam Aleikum, open pack on roof show it really is tent or dobro dosli no understand u car paper, go*). Another parameter might be of course the dollar index: the more dollars are asked per stamp from the poor victim the better and another might be the time factor – nothing tasking less than 1 day counts, everything taking more than 3 days counts double; finally not to forget the chocolate factor - did you get chocolates from the customs official during his interrogation? Well when crossing into Montenegro the chocolate factor was the big plus – they shared their beloved chocolate with us. All other parameters could not really

contribute to the scoring for the barometer. The greatest plus was of course the final go. Their officials receive 10.5 on a scale of 1 (hang yourself) to 10 (marry one of these guys – for females only; men remain with their beloved spouses). When crossing they definitely did not understand anything, especially they never heard about the Kingdom of Lesotho (again our appeal to everybody to do more promotion work).



We were inside Montenegro and went as far as Kotor, which is famous for its old town. Arriving at the hostel we learnt that there was a cyclone with strong winds and exceptional rain/ snow approaching. Quickly, we had a look at all important sights before scrutinizing all bars and restaurants.

In the evening it started raining and throughout the night we heard thunderstorms. The next morning the rain intensified even more and we had the feeling that the Amazon and the Senqu River have merged last night and diverted to pass straight through the beautiful town of Kotor. Consequently, when going out you immediately felt like standing in a bathtub filled with icewater and having an intense shower at the same time - with the same cold water. We were dreaming of this exquisite situation in the deserts of Sudan and Egypt at 44 degrees; however, it was difficult to fully appreciate that in Kotor at an outside temperature of 2 degrees.



Finally we decided to stay for another day. We used this opportunity to explore the town's shopping mall to develop interesting theories for the actual newsletter and to start planning our next trip, should we ever take the right road at this famous junction in northern Anatolia. More about that soon.



The next day the sun was back, it was even colder; we moved on. Now westwards to Dubrovnik. The landscape was covered by snow. Suddenly we were astonished to discover that the outside temperature dropped to -7 degrees (remember our former edition with indications concerning Sudan? Those -7 degrees increased the maximum temperature

difference during our trip to over 50 degrees!!!) No problem, the car's heating worked well. In Dubrovnik it was so cold we just had to accelerate our visiting program – never stop when outside, look every 5 minutes for a heated shop and limit all to a maximum of half an hour. So at least for Dubrovnik there are some more issues left for our next visit.



Ouagadougou, 19th December 2012

Currently Martin has left the cold and the snow of Europe. In the meantime we have reached our final destination Laufenburg after 9 months and 15 day and nearly 50 000 km on the road. We visited 14 African countries in 8 months and 29 days, 1 Asian country in 6 days and 8 European countries in 9 days. As usual in life at a certain moment salary slavery calls, the next position in one of the coal mines of our mother of all development cooperation is calling. By now it looks like back to West Africa, Burkina Faso to convince some more people that decentralisation is the key to paradise. Back to real life:

From Dubrovnik we still had some more kilometres to make and a couple of countries to explore – at least partially. So we continued westwards along the coast of the Adriatic Sea; crossing Bosnia within a few minutes to enter again Croatia. Finally, after short stops in Split and Rijeka, we crossed Slovenia – this time it took us half an hour – and finally reached Italy – the real place to have our pizza with Gorgonzola and Ruccola embedded in a misinterpretation of *O Sole Mio*.



Here we absolutely had to make a short visit to Venice in winter. We were hoping to see the gondolas in the snow. The temperature was perfect for that, only the clouds for snowfall were missing. So we admired the beautiful sunset, watched the gondolas carrying Japanese and Chinese tourists thru the icebergs in Canale Grande, the channel of Venice; we went for pizza and finally warmed up with a bottle of rotten Valpolicello grapes.



On the way near the city of Milan Monika discovered for the 1st time since we have passed Bloemfontein in South Africa a real restaurant. No choice, we had to get some of their tasty food and to enjoy some of their excellent drinks.

Our trip went on, to Lake Como to enjoy some more cold weather and lots of snow.



Finally, after crossing some mountains – luckily through tunnels –, we reached Switzerland and visited some of Martin's family.

They were a little surprised by the fact that we really and suddenly appeared there. Even if announced timely, they did not really believe that we would make the whole way. Nevertheless, they complained a lot that the newsletter was too long and in a kind of English difficult to understand. Maybe due to these complaints they still thought we were crawling somewhere on Mount Kilimanjaro, waiting for a rescue chopper.



Finally on 15th December, we reached Laufenburg. Our apartment was already waiting for us. It resembled to a house in Maseru during winter time: 9 degrees and hours to get it a little warmer. This situation we managed by simply crossing the border to Germany to go for an extended shopping trip – at least to have a basic survival kit for the next days – among that we found a

bottle of real *Allesverloren Tinta Barocca*. So we had the basics to celebrate the end of our trip; just imagine how long these rotten grapes have survived.



Cheers and seasons' greetings

Monika & Martin

