

Senegal

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Date: 14-nov-2007
Restday: St.Louis

It was again one of those easy days of which we seem to get the hang of it. Interesting to see that at the beginning of our trip we sometimes were a bit under stress; cleaning the bikes, cleaning the clothes, preparing the Newsletter, selecting the photo's, etc.

In Africa you can find much more easily someone to do part of the work for you, we often gave our clothes to be washed by someone from the hotel, and the most important part of the bicycles that we cleaned were the chains, the rest we dusted off and will wait till we are back home to do an intense cleaning.

We stayed in a nice hotel in St. Louis, it looked a bit like pictures of hotels we have seen from the Antilles.

St. Louis is the old colonial capital of the former French Western Africa colony. You can still see that easily by the way the city is build. In one of the hotels



of the town, La Residence, we took our lunch.

Before that we had a not so nice experience that fortunately could have been worse. When leaving the Internet café were we send our 14th Newsletter to Lucien, our web master, we were kind of blocked by two men, one tried to get me interested in a MP3 player and when I said that we were not interested the other man stepped on my foot, pretending that he had to clean his shoe or so.



I turned around and felt that the other person was trying to get to my wallet. But fortunately I had put it in a pocket with a zipper and he was not able to reach it, also because I immediately realized that it was a Scam. Would have been nice to lose my wallet with credit cards again (see Tour d'Afrique report from Nairobi last year)!

The rest of the day was kind of easy going as mentioned above, take a swim in the ocean, take a nap at the beach and a dinner in the restaurant of the hotel.

The only last thing to say about this place is that Arnoud found a very special place to put his tent, under a tent!

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Date: 15-nov-2007

Stage: St.Louis to Desert camp

Distance: 107 km

Ascent: 175 m

Temp (L/M/H): 23/32/47

KCal: 496

Time: 7 h 44 m

Country: Senegal

The start of the last stretch to Dakar, only 3 easy days and we will find ourselves at the end of this tour.

We left St. Louis over the bridge that once was designed by Gustav Eiffel and originally was built to cross the Danube. As mentioned in the last report, the bridge needs a lot of maintenance, and has an iron pavement with plenty of holes in it. On top of it the bridge was wet in the morning, and was very busy. We took good care not to fall down, especially Jenny who was still struggling with the injury she got in Nouakchott. She decided to walk the last 50 meters, which naturally was not appreciated by the cars that were queuing behind us.

We saw more and more Baobabs, one was rather bulky, we have seen bigger Baobabs but felt that this one was worth a picture, as well a the boy that came to see what we were doing.

We took a very long lunch today. The reason was that Marius wanted to wait to see how Arnoud was doing, as he had cramps again. It's remarkable that he is still able to cycle all the stages up to now.

At this lunch stop kids came to see us. Contrary to what we experienced in Morocco and Mauritania, the children here are not a nuisance, they wait until you invite them to come closer. One of them was riding a donkey, and although the way they treat animals here in Africa is not always appreciated by some of us, the had a good relation with the donkey. We gave the kids the postcards from Paris Dakar by Bike and he showed the donkey the

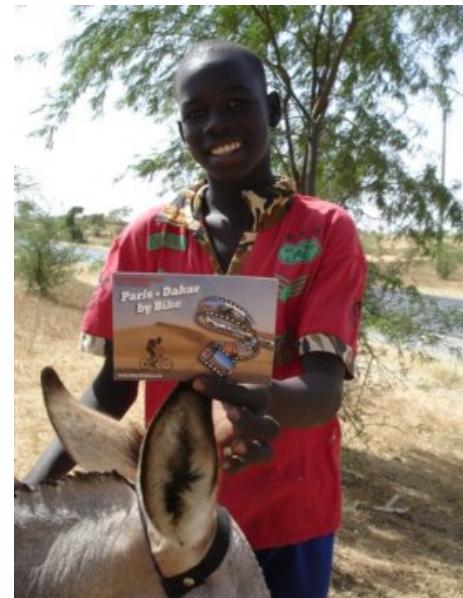


picture and put two of them on the site of his head as a kind of protection for his eyes.

A bit further on the road Marius saw that the canvas that is attached (was actually!) to the green truck, was hanging in a tree. We called Wilbert to make him aware of it and fortunately the crew was able to get it back! It could have been worse, first of all the canvas could have hit another car or pedestrian/cyclist, but secondly it was by pure chance that their were not too many houses around, otherwise it could have disappeared and be used by one of the locals.

One more “interesting” experience to end the day. When we wanted to put our tent up, we found that “something” had happened with our 2nd tent. Most likely because of a burning cigarette, our tent became unusable. Had this happened in the truck, Adam was sure it had not, but bottom line was that we now had one tent with a broken pole and one with holes in it. Rudy lent us a spare tent and as we only had 2 more nights to go, we left it at that. Next time we take 3 tents with us, just to be sure...

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Date: 16-nov-2007

Stage: Desert camp to M'Boro sur Mer

Distance: 96 km

Ascent: 140 m

Temp (L/M/H): 20/31/40

KCal: 943

Time: 5 h 48 m

Country: Senegal

Perhaps some of you remember that during the Tour d'Afrique some of us participated in the so called naked mile. Often this event was mentioned and the intention of some of boys to do something similar was in the air and finally, here they were, Arnoud and Kevin drove by the lunch stop without anything else than their Adam's costume!



The 100km “miles stone” was reached shortly after lunch. It would have easily be possible to get to Dakar in one day, but why not take another stopover in M'Boro sur Mer the organization decided.

Rudy promised us a very nice last meal he was going to prepare for us there, so the motivation was there.

The barbecue that Rudy and Marianne promised us was wonderful, sitting on a porch with a view over the beach and the sea, seeing the sun going down, we had a wonderful meal and Jenny was ever able to score 2 bottles of wine. Let me say here and now that our cooks have done a wonderful job during this trip, they knew how to make sure that the stomach of the cyclists were always full and paid special attention to hygiene, to make sure that the food was not going to upset our stomachs. A wonderful couple!

M'Boro sur Mer is a small fisher town, much friendlier than the town where only men lived back in Mauritania. Kids were playing at the beach, some trying to catch a fish with their bare hands. The sea here is so full of fish, that that is possible.

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Date: 17-nov-2007

Stage: M'Boro sur Mer to Dakar (Lac Rose)

Distance: 76 km

Ascent: 150 m

Temp (L/M/H): 24/33/41

KCal: 320

Time: 5 h 57 m

Country: Senegal

Just before the sun appeared, I went to take a swim in sea and as there was nobody on the beach, decided not to use my swimming trouser and leave that with my slippers and towel on the beach. When I got out of the sea, I saw one of the dogs that were lying on the beach running away with my trouser! So I ended up running naked of the beach to get my belonging back! So no naked mile for me, but at least a naked run of a couple of hundred meters. I got it back, the dog finally decided to let go.

The last part of our tour was easy as easy could be. Only about 80km, so our departure was scheduled for 9:00am with a long lunch and a nap before we went for the last 20km to the finish in Dakar at Lac Rose. The place where the car rally also stops.

The convoy was nice, a maximum speed of 15km/h, a lot of chatting, shaking hands



and making compliments to each other. It is nice to hear that young people feel we have inspired them as “oldies” to be able to do the 7200km.

Arriving all together at the hotel at Lac Rose was a big surprise. Djembe music, and Priscilla en Lucien standing their with a banner saying “Jenny and Kees have finished the Race” . Priscilla surprised us with two bottles of champagne, that we opened a gladly shared between all of us!

For Hannie and Marius there was a big surprise as their daughter had unexpectedly decided to welcome them in Dakar!



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Written by Kees Vonk



For the record, here is the total group that reached Dakar, from left to right:



First row, sitting: Madeleine, Hetty, Rudy, Jan, John, Liset, Bob, Wim, Mieke.

Second row, standing: Piet, Rik, Wilbert, Elleke, Jenny, Marius, Hannie, Janette, Geerten, Jeff, Joan, Matthew, Joan.

Third row, standing: Rob, Kees, Marianne, Jordan (only her hair), Arnoud (behind Marius), Kevin, Wout, Tim, Adam.

Missing: Anne, Adam's wife.

And the winners are! John from New Zealand and Mieke from Holland! See www.bike-dreams.com for more details about the results if you are interested in it. Just for the record, I were able to do the tour in 334 hours and 24 minutes. Because Jenny was in the truck for 4 days (4 times 12 hours penalty) and

the fact that she did not participated in the time trial, her time is higher, 360 hours and 45 minutes.

Personally we think that we are all winners, winners of daring to start this trip in Paris, not knowing exactly what to expect, and winner to be able to get all the way to Dakar by just pedaling through wind, rain, heat, dust and some boring stretches in the desert.

Our price was that we were able to finish this trip and we got our personal price from our children, two nice bicycles made in Africa!

In the evening we had a very special meal, sitting in tents and having fun with the music and the dancing. Not easy to believe that after 10 weeks together we will each go our way. We have made some very good friends and will continue to try to keep in touch with each other, but know from experience that most of us will never see each other again.

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Date: 18-nov-2007/20-nov-2007

Stage: Dakar (Lac Rose) to Collines d Niassam

Country: Senegal

The trip is over, but we are not going back home yet. Together with Priscilla and Lucien we spend a couple of nights in a superbe location, a Lodge called Les Collines d'Niassam (www.niassam.com), wonderful located near the sea and the two rivers Sine and Saloum. The huts are either build into the Baobab trees or are standing with their feet in the water. Plenty of birds are flying around, in the early morning we were often woken up by pelicans who were taking their bath.

On the 20th we celebrated Priscilla's birthday and we made a trip in an ULM (light weight airplane) over the lagune, visited the nearby village and had a wonderful meal in the evening, where Priscilla was surprise by the crew there, they came with a special cake for her



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while singing and dancing. On top of that white butterfly's were the whole day in the air, Priscilla loves butterfly's.

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[Date: 21-nov-2007/22-nov-2007](#)
[Stage: Collines d Niassam via Dakar to Home](#)
[Country: Senegal](#)

Finally it was time to leave Africa, our flights were late at night, so we decided to visit the famous island of Gorée, who has a rich history related to the slave trade.

We visited the famous Maison d'Esclave



(House of the Slaves), a house that was used as a holding for the slaves. A local guide told that between 200 and 300 slaves were in this house at any time.

Unbelievable given the size of it.

Through this door, thousands of slaves left for America, never to return to Africa again. We were glad to have seen it, although it also gave us a guilty feeling, the Dutch have been heavily involved in this undignified way of making money. Is this the reason that some of us are still handing our presents to children when we were meeting them on the road?



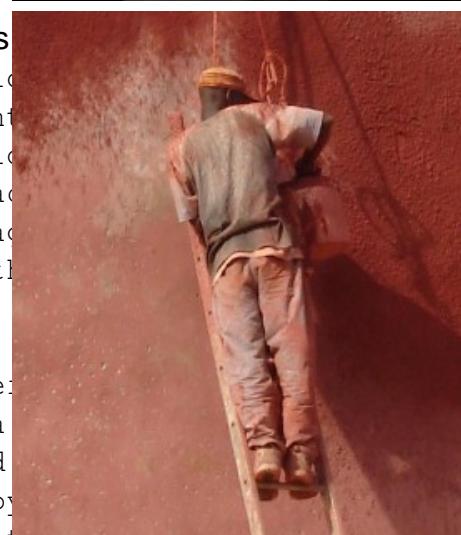
The island is a little bit in shambles, many historic building are in a very bad state, for instance the old palace of the governor, which at the moment is used by squatters that are using it to find a home and are not thinking about doing any maintenance on it. But lets be patient, the Historical Museum is getting a face lift, the painter that is redoing the facade is almost as red as the building itself.

Flying back in about 4,5 hours from Dakar to Paris, is difficult to understand if you just have done 10 weeks on your bicycle to get to Dakar. And although the

distance we flew is not the s

+4200km instead of the +7200 we did is something of a totally different dimension, almost a different world of haste, getting to the place we want to go as quick as possible, and the world of traveling, enjoying the trip itself, not the arrival itself.

Our caretakers Kees and Monique were waiting for us in Nice and after a long trip we came back to our house and Floor was out of her mind and happy to see everybody back. We were happy that our 4 caretakers (Ans, Jel, Kees and



Monique) took so good care of her and the house. It did not come as a surprise, and we like to thank the 4 of them openly that they were willing to help us doing this trip. Without them it would not have been possible to leave for this 10 week trip.

We also were happy to have the comfort of our house again. Reality quickly kicked in going though the large pile of envelopes that we received over the almost 3 months we were away, so by the time I am writing these final words, I almost forget that we had such a wonderful time on our bike!

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Epilogue

Similar thoughts as last year, how simple is living on a bicycle, with all you belonging in Locker 6! Coming home it feels like we have to learn how to coop with a 250 m² house, being able to take a hot shower every day, no having to dig a hole to go to the toilet. The difference with last year is that we experienced this already once before, so we knew roughly what to expect.

On the trip itself, we both felt that physically this trip was as difficult as last years Tour d'Afrique, or may be even a bit more difficult; the first 7 weeks we were climbing the same altitude meters (>60.000 meters) as last year during the 4 months. The trip was a bit less adventurous, starting in Europe, you kind



of know what to expect and we went from a luxurious environment, where getting a cup of coffee in the morning is not at all difficult to get, to the more harsh environment of Africa.

The organization was more than perfect. It was clear that both Wilbert and Rob, being seasoned cyclist themselves, know what it takes to do this kind of trip. The descriptions of the stages we got each day, the muesli in the morning, the nice lunches and dinners Rudy prepared, the assistance given by Adam and Anne when it was hot on the road and we needed more water; the technical assistance we got from Rik, who was always available to assist; the 3 doctors Nynke, Didier and Wout, who did help us when we had medical problems; and finally Andrew, who followed us on his motorbike and was a great help in getting drinks and arranging papers for our passports (including the visas for Mauritania for those that did not have that done before). All in all, a great tour that we could wholeheartedly recommend to everybody that likes this challenge.

Despite the fact that cyclists are individuals, our group was rather homogeneous. Perhaps the fact that more than 50% of us were Dutch gave us this impression, but we made a lot of new friends and became much more closer to those we already knew before.

Unfortunately Jenny had many small problems with her health this time. First the neck and the wrist, for which she was treated before the trip and that continued to give her difficulties, despite the massage that we did every day; but more so the unfortunate accident in France when we had an aggressive dog attacking us, as well as the fall in the shower in Nouakchott, where she cracked

at least one rib and had pain in her muscles. I was more lucky this time around, only one very difficult day out of Fes, but otherwise a good ride being able to do all the kilometers from Paris to Dakar.

“And what is next?” is the question that we get since a couple of days. We do not have firm plans. On the bicycle we think to cycle next year from our house to Copenhagen. But this time on our own, taking our luggage with us and being able to stop when we feel doing so. We also would love to get to Nepal to do some mountain walking and perhaps go to an Asian country for cycling, like Vietnam or Thailand. Future will tell and we will let you know when we have planned another trip.

Finally we like to thank Lucien, our son-in-law and skilled web master, who did an excellent job in compiling all the report and photos in the weekly reports and published them on this website. Without his help we would not have been able to share our stories with you. Bedankt Maatje!

And finally, finally, thanks Jenny that you dared to do another trip with me. You are my Super Jenny!

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