

# Sahara Journey 1989

Adventures in Algeria



Ueli Leardi

# Foreword

The journey documented below was my first trip to the Sahara. I had accumulated quite a lot of vacation days at the time and so it was a tempting project to travel to Algeria, together with two friends from the Swiss Safari Rally Team. It was not to be my last trip into the desert. Since then, I have been to North Africa at least once almost every year, be it as a participant in a rally by motorcycle or in the car or on a holiday trip with friends.

Billy supported Rolf and me on the motorcycles with his car. He carried all the luggage, equipment, fuel for man and machine. It had previously accompanied two motorcyclists in this way, but at that time across the continent to Cape Town. We motorbike riders could fully enjoy the off-road riding, because we didn't have to carry any luggage, not even a large tank.

At that time, a trip to the depths of the Sahara was still a real adventure with many unknowns and an infrastructure that repeatedly limited us and forced us to compromise. The security situation in Algeria was completely unproblematic at that time and adventurous trips were quite popular with Central Europeans. A major challenge was the navigation on the tracks of the south, as these were often barely visible traces spread out to several kilometres. Markers and signposts were an exception and often the route was moved further and further away from the official route due to the forming corrugation on the road.

Food and water supplies also had to be carefully planned for the long, lonely routes. In order to satisfy a menu plan that met our expectations, the offer of non-perishable food from Switzerland had to be accessed. The supply of fresh food in the villages on the way was usually limited and sometimes simply not available. Since we did not have a refrigeration facility on board at that time, we had to do without fresh meat almost completely, but the way the meat was offered for sale on the market did often not correspond to our expectation of quality and hygiene anyway.

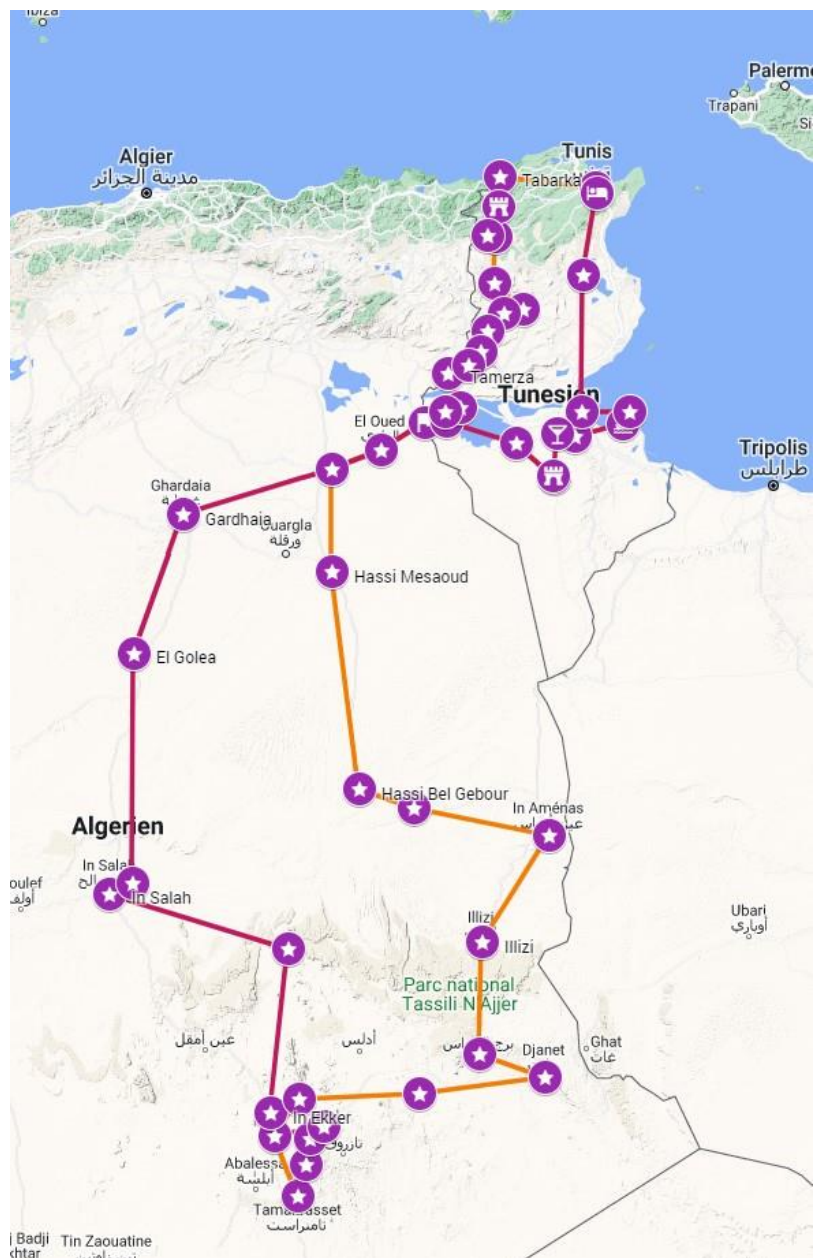
Also, the supply of fuel often did not work. Again and again there were delivery delays when a tanker broke down and the gas stations had no fuel anymore. Then it was time to wait...

I wrote the following travel diary in a book by hand during the trip and now, more than thirty years later, transferred it into the digital world. I hope the story gives an idea of how travel to remote regions of the Sahara was experienced back then.

Have fun reading and browsing through the past

Ueli

# Overview Map



# Travel Log

## Saturday 11 November 1989

### Aarau – Genoa ferry port, 450 km

Billy picked me up by car at 7 o'clock sharp. Already the day before, we had loaded the vehicle to the roof. We removed the two wheels so that the two motorcycles could be accommodated on the tray of the Hilux. A large part of the remaining equipment could be accommodated on the roof rack. As a result, Rolf and I were able to save the 450 km motorway ride to Genoa on the bikes and the ferry passage was therefore cheaper too. After we had picked up Rolf in Staffelbach, we went south. For me it was a little cramped on the improvised space between the seats, but still better than riding the motorbike in the cool weather.

After a short stay in *Biasca* with my relatives we went on to the last motorway service station in Switzerland where we enjoyed a last "local" coffee and *croissants* . At the Italian border, the customs officer looked somewhat amazed at our cargo, but then waved us through with an incredulous smile.

Shortly after Milan our journey was severely hampered by thick fog. The constant pedal to the metal, fog and the cold weather led to the carburetor icing up during the ascent into the mountains. Much too fat mixture and thus loss of performance were the symptoms. After a short rest in a parking lot, the problem solved itself, the engine heat quickly thawed the formed ice. Shortly before 2 o'clock we arrived at the port of Genoa. Although it was still more than three hours until the scheduled departure, the parking lot was almost full. Fully equipped desert drivers, car pushers with their fine Mercedes, but also rusty Peugeots and above all North Africans on the way home, waited tightly packed for loading. Until the springs crashed, the cars stood loaded in the rows. Up to complete

upholstery groups and refrigerators, everything could be seen adventurously lashed to the car roofs. We with our baggage on the roof fitted in quite well.

Already here in Genoa, the first forms for entry into Tunisia had to be filled out and stamped by the Tunisian border officials. Time flew by. Here in the harbour we already met the first acquaintances. Peter Hinterreiter with a tour group was also ready for loading together with his truck "*Colossos*", we know him from the Swiss Safari Rallye Team.

With a two-hour delay, the "Habib"<sup>1</sup> finally departed. After we had moved into the cabin, we met for an aperitif in the bar. Dinner, like all meals, is included in the 1st class price. The service, as well as the food itself, were very good and we enjoyed the little luxury one last time for a few weeks. Tired of the journey and the whole bustle in the harbour, we went to bed after a few good night sips.

## Sunday 12 November 1989

**Ferry -> Tunis – Beja, approx. 100 km**

We slept until around 9am and went to breakfast right after getting up. In the hours that followed, we always had visual contact with *Sardinia* in bright sunshine. The afternoon was marked by queuing for the completion of the second portion of formalities for entry. In principle, they wanted to know again what we had already written down in Genoa. Instead of making a copy with carbon paper<sup>2</sup>, we just had to fill out a second form. Peter had offered us to accompany him with his group. Since we didn't have any exact plans after arriving in Tunisia anyway, we gladly accepted the offer.

We arrived in Tunis three hours late. First of all, we had to go through the passport check. After an hour of queuing, we got rid of one of the

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<sup>1</sup> At that time, the "Habib" was still a modern ferry and known for its comfort and good service. Within a few years, however, the ship became obsolete and rotten, so that one was happy afterwards if one was booked on one of the newer ferries.

<sup>2</sup> Carbon paper used to be placed between two sides of paper to emboss a copy on the bottom sheet.

previously completed forms. Afterwards we stood in another cue for a long time until we realized that a customs officer had to be politely lured to the vehicle so that he would please carry out his check. After we had created a loading list of our vehicle, in duplicate of course, we finally found a willing official. The actual control was then done in a few minutes. Of the two loaded motorbikes, only the headlights could be seen, which the customs officer found incredibly funny. Inspecting the load on the roof was probably too cumbersome, because he left it to ask us what was stowed there. Once again we had to stand in line to hand in the targeted forms at the exit of the port area. The official did not realize that we still had two motorcycles with us and accidentally gave us the corresponding notes back. Thus, the motorcycles had never been officially imported into the country.

Peter had been handled faster with his tour group than we and had already driven ahead. As agreed, he had left us a message at a gas station, in which he described the way to his camp. We still had almost two hours to drive to this meeting point. By the time we set up camp and had eaten something, it was two o'clock and we were happy to be able to crawl into the sleeping bag.

## Monday 13. November 1989

**Beja – Tabarka – Jendoba – Lekef, approx. 250 km**

Before we could start in the morning, we first had to unload and reassemble our motorcycles and then reload the luggage. The others were already gone for about an hour by the time we were ready to start. Again we had arranged different meeting points with Peter, where we could meet again. Until *Tabarka*, on the north coast, we drove on well-developed roads through varied landscape. The first impression of Tunisia by day was very positive. Whenever we drove through villages, people waved at us friendly. From *Tabarka* the road climbs up to the passes of the Tell Atlas. A bumpy, but still paved road leads up to almost 1000 m above sea level. It had therefore become very cold and only when we arrived at the Roman ruins of *Bulla Regia* it got warmer.



The quite interesting ruins are the remains of a settlement which was inhabited by about 25'000 Romans and about 45'000 slaves. The residential buildings were all two-storied, one floor above ground for the cool winter and an exact copy of it during the day for the hot summer underground. The typical bathrooms with cold and natural hot water are quite well preserved, as well as various beautiful mosaic floors. The most important buildings were explained to us by an expert guide.

After a short snack we drove on towards *Le Kef*. We filled water canisters and fuel tanks and drove the last kilometres to the camp at *Hamman Mellegue*. A 12 km long, beautiful track leads down to a river where a nice place invited us to spend the night. We pitched our tent and started preparing dinner. Afterwards we spent the evening together with Peter's travel group. As it turned out, this was a very good gang that had come together. Wine and beer were provided from the huge belly of the "*Colossus*". But it didn't get late today, because it was quite cool and everyone had an eventful day behind them.

## Tuesday 14 November 1989

**Le Kef - Thala - Sbeitla - Tamerza, ca. 350 km**

Already at 7 o'clock there was breakfast because a relatively long stage was announced. In cool weather we went back to the main road. A few kilometres south of *Thala* the first meeting point was identified. From here, a beautiful road branches off to SO, which meets the main road a few kilometres outside of *Sbeitla*. Varied landscape and the beautiful track guaranteed the good riding mood. The thick fog together with dust spoiled the first kilometres but afterwards the conditions were good. Billy with the Toyota made the broom truck. He had received Doris as co-pilot who otherwise travelled in the truck. On the last few kilometres Peter had predicted sandy passages and he had also expected some falls. Rolf and I with our light enduros had no problems. Katja with the DR Big paid her first apprenticeship in the form of a fall. Not much was broken, but the shock was in her bones.



At the ruins of *Sbeitla* we met again. Via *Kasserine* we drove to *Férian* where we had lunch and refueled. Further south we turned off to reach a road to *Sidi Boubaker*. Edi and Mattias, the two Styrrs, were overdue and when I drove back I found them on the side of the road. The DR Big had electrical problems. I reported this to Peter and drove ahead with Rolf towards *Moulares*. A few km on sand and then stony the road led southwards. This was the first time we came into contact with *Fesch-Fesch*. This deceptive, quite fine dust I knew as Bull-Dust from Australia. On the main road to *Tamerza* we waited half an hour until gradually the whole club arrived. Peter and the two from Austria were also there again.

I accompanied Billy on the way to the mountain oasis *Tamerza*. Shortly afterwards we set up our camp. The others had to wait almost an hour for the "*Colossus*". After dinner, we were invited, and with one of the locals I picked up a drum in the village. After we got back, he and some others played Tunisian songs. But Hubert, the cook of the tour group, shot the bird with his "strip-tease" number. The tears ran down from the laughter at his performance. The evening was still quite long and funny until we finally went to bed.

## Wednesday 15 November 1989

### **Tamerza – Tozeur, ca. 60 km**

Today was not so early day watch, because the planned stage of the day was only short. In addition, we had only arrived yesterday at dusk and had therefore not noticed much of the surroundings. Everyone still visited what interested him. I first drove down to the waterfall where some tourists had already arrived. I got the first impression of soft sand which was easy to drive with my TT. I also wanted to take a picture of the old, now abandoned, *Tamerza* and therefore drove back to the viewpoint. Before 11 o'clock we gathered in the camp for the departure towards *Tozeur*. In the mountains, the road was still paved and reminded me of a roller coaster. In the plain below, it turned into a fast, hard packed gravel

road. I became cocky and therefore almost fell on my nose when I over-looked a deep, sandy ditch and drove into it at almost 80 km/h.

After we arrived in *Tozeur* we had lunch in a restaurant one last time together with the travel group, because here we parted ways. They drove on to *Douz* while we drove to the campsite at the *Belvedere*. The simple camp ground is beautifully situated in a small gorge, in the middle of the date palms. We spent a leisurely afternoon and went to bed at nine o'clock.

## Thursday 16 November 1989

### **Tozeur – Nefta – Tozeur, 50 km**

Towards morning I woke up and thought I was crazy. I heard raindrops pattering on the tent roof. I quickly threw the tent-fly on top of it and moved back into the dry. But there were only a few drops that fell and in the course of the morning the weather cleared up again. After breakfast we drove to *Nefta* to the market. We left the motorcycles in the campsite and squeezed into the Hilux. We rummaged around the market and stocked up on vegetables. We visited the old town and then climbed up to a viewpoint from where you have a beautiful view of the "Corbeille" and the whole city. The "Corbeille" is a funnel-like incision in which countless springs spring to supply the whole oasis with its 400,000 date palms with water.

The rest of the afternoon was reserved for the vehicles. The air filters were washed out and everything was checked. In the evening, two motorbikes, a Swiss and his German colleague, drove into the camp. Billy knew the Swiss from his 1st trip to Africa. He had been unlucky this time and had fallen twice. He had injured his legs so badly that he had to give up his plan to continue. Now the two were on their way home. At Before it got dark, we took a bath. From a 20 cm pipe 30 ° warm water shoots into a basin which serves as a bathtub. We invited the two motorcyclists to dinner. We cooked vegetable stew and tomato salad. Over tea we chatted together until late.

## Friday 17 November 1989

Tozeur – Tougourt, ca. 230 km

The dogs around the campsite can drive you crazy. You can't hear them all day, but when you want to sleep it starts. There is howling and barking without interruption and when it gets quieter in the morning, the *muezzin* calls down from the tower for the morning prayer. Even though the city is a few hundred meters away, the plaintive prayer can be heard from thousands of voices.

At 9 o'clock we were ready to leave. At a brisk pace we went to the Tunisian-Algerian border. On departure we were handled by very friendly officials. It took about half an hour until all the formalities had been completed and some cigars had changed hands. With best wishes and a warm "*au revoir*" the barrier was opened. A few kilometres further on, the Algerian border post came into view. We were actually expecting several hours of thorough check, but everything turned out quite differently. After an warm and friendly welcome, the officials helped us fill out the X forms. We didn't really lose a minute waiting, but were passed from one official to another. The customs control was limited to a cursory glance into the rearmost box and the barrier opened here as well. Now there was still the obligatory change of 1000 dinars (rate about 5 dinars = 1 SFr.) and the equally mandatory vehicle insurance. (100 dinars / motorcycle, 1 mt. (car 200) and we were on the road again. Total duration of exercise, a ridiculous 1 1/2 hours.

Through flat, monotonous landscape we drove towards *El Oued* . About 30 km behind the border we immediately found *Seesi's* raincoats at the place he had described to us before leaving. On his Trans-Africa trip on a motorcycle, he had buried his rain clothes here on the roadside, because he was of the opinion that they were only unnecessary ballast in the further course of the journey. We had agreed to dig up the clothes again and bring them back to him in Switzerland.

In a place before *El Oued* we stopped at a restaurant for lunch. For just under 6 SFr. We were served a menu including water and tea. Between *El Oued* and *Touggourt* the road passes through the northern foothills of the "*Grand Erg Oriental*". The dunes to the left and right of the road were only interrupted by some oases with their date plantations. There was a strong wind from all directions and the sand swept horizontally across the road. Behind *Touggourt* there is a hotel with thermal baths which also offers camping. The place is nothing special, but we preferred it to a camp in the dunes and you don't have much choice in this area anyway. In the evening the wind died down and it became quite comfortable. Dinner was quite simple, a mushroom dish from the can with rice.

## Saturday 18 November 1989

**Touggourt - Hassi Messaoud - +105 km, ca. 275 km**

On departure it was already pleasantly warm and the morning was clear and windless. Through flat terrain we continued towards *Ouargla*. But even before the town, we turned south towards *Hassi Messaoud*. The boring road tempted Rolf and me to drive parallel to the asphalt road in the terrain. Usually, the sandy ground was clear and level, so we could keep up well with Billy. *Hassi Messaoud* and the whole surrounding area is a huge gas and oil deposit. Black plumes of smoke from the flaring sites spoiled the air over long distances. Arriving in the city we filled our gas supplies and while Billy waited at the roadside, Rolf and I got motor oil and bread. When I saw a man with *baguettes* under his arm, I asked him for directions to the bakery. When I arrived at the store, I was told that the bread was sold out, but that a fresh load from the oven could be expected in a few minutes. So I waited together with about 20 others until the bread was ready. With great shouting and clamour, the bread was then distributed.

After our machines had received a sip of oil, we made our way further south to *Hassi Bengebbour*. In the middle of the desert we stopped at a wooden shack with the boastful sign "*Café et Restaurant*". We drank a soft drink that tasted like chemicals. When we wanted to pay, the owner

asked if we would like to pay with clothes. Since we had two bags of old clothes with us, Billy got one. After some action, we gave him jeans and a sweater. For the owner this was certainly a good deal and it cost us nothing. In any case, he gave us another can of jam when we said goodbye. As we drove on, I spotted two wild camels off the road. Two gears down and out into the sand it went. Only when I had approached about twenty meters, the animal galloped away. Of course, it was fun to hunt camels in the sand. As the wind strengthened further south, we began to look for a campsite. We found something, a few hundred meters off the road, in the lee of dunes. With the motorcycle I chose the best place. When Billy followed with the Hilux, he got into a soft sand field where he promptly bogged. Twice we had to underlay the sand ladders until he found firmer ground again.

When the camp was set up, we waited patiently for the annoying wind to subside. Rolf practiced some dune driving. This has its pitfalls, but can be easily mastered with our light motorbikes. Today Rolf took over the kitchen service. As it slowly got dark, the wind became much stronger. We even had to move the tent into the immediate slipstream of the car. The folded table provided additional wind protection. It was a restless night, but the wind died down in the morning.

## Sunday 19 November

### Camp – Hassi Belgebbour, ca. 260 km

The wind had also brought a change in the weather. The temperature had dropped a few degrees and a bright blue sky awaited us. Before we went further south on the paved road, we had to lay sand plates under the Toyota again, but then it went fast and easy. The landscape still did not offer much of a change. At a greater or lesser distance, however, huge sand dunes accompanied us on both sides of the road.

An experimental farm in the middle of the desert and oil drilling rigs were the only signs of civilization. About 40 km before *Hassi Bengebbour* the dunes come up to 1 km to the road, which prompted Rolf and me to

make a detour. At first I just wanted to drive up to the dunes, but when I stood there, it grabbed me. I was amazed that I made it right away to just the 150 m before the summit. Rolf, who had followed me, had to get some momentum again until he parked next to me. The view was magnificent and the view back to the car made us feel like dwarfs. The descent was then much more difficult, because the front wheel always wants to dive into the soft sand. But we both arrived back down without a fall. When crossing the plain I drove much too fast into an area with 1/2 m waves. Only with a lot of luck I could avoid a fall. You can't be unfocused for a moment when driving cross-country.

When we arrived in *Hassi Belgebbour* we refuelled before we enjoyed a *cous-cous* in the restaurant. Only 2 km south Billy knew a hot spring from his first trip and there we wanted to set up our camp. The source is also known to the truck drivers and so someone always came by to wash himself after the exhausting and long drive on the dusty roads.

Towards the evening there was a rumbling in my stomach, apparently the effects of lunch. It turned out that I had a proper diarrhoea. It plagued me all night and I didn't even want to think about dinner.

## Monday 20. November 1989

### Hassi Belgebbour

I felt quite bad and Rolf also showed slight signs of diarrhoea. That made us stay another day. I was just hanging around limply all day while Billy and Rolf fitted an additional leaf spring on the Toyota. In the evening I felt better and decided to take a bath in the spring. I felt much better afterwards, but I didn't feel like eating yet.

Rolf had driven back to the gas station to buy oil for the motorcycle and rusks for me. So I choked down some rusks. For me, it was soon time to retire and I slept through until early in the morning.

## Tuesday 21 November 1989

**Hassi Belgebbour – Ohanet + 10 km, ca. 270 km**

The diarrhoea was not completely done yet, but I felt good enough to continue. The landscape was very monotonous. The only change was a kilometre-long construction site in which the urgently needed pavement repairs were carried out. In *Tin Fouye* we replenished our water supplies and rinsed our dirty laundry which we had washed in our "washing machine", a plastic barrel on the roof, and had been washed by the constant shaking. About 70 km before *Ohanet*, the road came very close to the escarpment of the *Tinrhert* Plateau. The view of the *Djoua* depression and the *Erg Issauane* brings a change to the flat landscape. For the 260 km from *Hassi Belgebbour* to *Ohanet*, the TT had not even consumed 10 litres of gasoline. At first I thought Billy had secretly filled my tank, but that was not the case.<sup>3</sup>

Behind *Ohanet* we found a suitable camp not far from the road. For a change we had some bushes around us. First, we hung up the freshly washed laundry to dry and made ourselves comfortable. Rolf and Billy lit the first campfire from the sparse branches, which did not last long, so that they were also in bed before 8 o'clock. In the meantime, it had become common practice that we went to bed quite early. The two had decided to spend the night "open-air", while I preferred the tent.

## Wednesday 22 November 1989

**Ohanet – In Amenas + 90 km, about 200 km**

Right after getting up, we packed up our freshly washed clothes and made breakfast. When the camp was cleared, we continued towards *In Amenas*. When driving down into the *Djoua* valley, we had once again a beautiful view. On the hole-strewn asphalt road we went into the modern town of *In Amenas*. First we took care of the formalities at the

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<sup>3</sup> On the Hilux we had a 200 l petrol tank with us. From this you could refuel both the car tank and the motorcycles by means of a hand pump.



"*Daira*".<sup>4</sup> Although the road is now almost continuously paved, you still need a pass permit to *Illizi*. Afterwards we were recorded in the big book at the police and they said friendly goodbye.

In a cafe in the small city park we drank something. When we visited the bakery it was already closed, but a friendly Algerian gave us two of his breads, but he did not want to take any payment for it. The grocery store was still open and so we could stock up on fruit juice and eggs. After we had filled all the "barrels" again, we drove out of the town with the destination *Illizi*. On the first 25 km it was better to drive cross-country than on the potholed road, but afterwards the road was "like new". Soon the mighty dunes of the *Erg Tiguentourine* appeared on the left. These dunes with almost 300 m height, are among the highest in Algeria. During a photo stop, Billy noticed that a wire had wrapped around the front axle of the car. The problem was soon solved and we could go on. We started looking for a camp and after passing the erg found a nice place right next to the dunes. This gave us the opportunity to climb the dunes and enjoy the sunset. For dinner we had a bottle of Tunisian red wine. The evening was generally not as cold as the last two days and remained above 10°C until late in the evening.

## Thursday 23 November 1989

### In Amenas – Illizi + 55km, about 200 km

We went further and further south. After another 150 km of paved road, the real adventure began.

Already after a few kilometres we passed the oil drilling rig *El Aded Larache*, but we continued for a good hour on the great asphalt road until we reached *Illizi*. As the day before, we took care of the formalities. First, we were sent to the *Tassili* National Park Office to buy the passage permit through the park. (90 dinars per person for 4 days). Afterwards we got the driving permit to *Djanet* on the "*Daria*" just in time before the

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<sup>4</sup> The "*Daira*" is the city administration where you had to log off or back in remote areas to make sure you didn't get lost in the desert.

lunch break. Filling gasoline and water, drinking another tea and we were on the road again. The change from the paved road to the gravel came abruptly. Immediately after the last house, the paved road turned into a corrugated and sandy road. The route for the paved road further south already exists for a good 20 km, but for understandable reasons it was not yet allowed to be driven on. Quite wavy it went over the plain. When the track became more winding, a German Suzuki rider came towards us. He had torn off the rear shock absorber at the fixation on the track in front of us and without rear suspension he could only drive very slowly. His friend followed shortly after we left. Soon the stony, narrow road led through a lunar landscape. Black, crumbly stone shaped the surface as far as the eye can see. We with the motorbike could usually drive 40-60 km/h, while Billy could hardly get out of first gear in the car. Therefore, we had two quite long breaks while waiting until Billy had caught up with us again. We also always had to watch out for sharp-edged, rock bands on the road. After about 50 km we found a camp off the track. Very close was the *Oued Techet Tamelets* where we found enough wood for a campfire. Billy cooked us a *chili con carne* with rice today. I had set myself up with my sunbed just above the camp in a wind-protected rock niche. The shell-shaped overhang gave a clear view of the starry sky. So I could go "satellite hunting" from my bed.

## Friday 24 November 1989

**Illizi +50 km to Illizi +133 km, ca. 83 km**

We left at half past nine, because nobody really wanted to eat breakfast. As yesterday, the track remained narrow, winding and rocky. All three drove on his own, the car only advanced at about 15 km/h anyway. I stopped for the first time after half an hour and waited for Billy. He appeared behind an Algerian Land Rover after half an hour of waiting. The Algerian stopped only briefly for a chat. After Billy had arrived, I set off again. The lunar landscape remained, but the ride was quite varied. On a large plain I stopped at a lonely tree next to the track. In the shade I laid down a bit. Soon I got a visit from a small, trusting bird. We had

seen the species before. It has a white cap and a white tail<sup>5</sup>. The rest is black. He looked at me curiously, changing the location again and again. Later Rolf came and shortly afterwards Billy. We stopped for lunch and opened a portion of salami. Shortly after continuing our journey we climbed a pass. Over a pebble-covered plain with partly evil corrugation we drove quite fast. At the point where the *El Fadnoun* plateau drops, you have a beautiful view of the area in front of you. A single Italian on a Yamaha met us shortly afterwards. But he was under a lot of stress and talked about an "*etappa lunga e dura*" that he still had ahead of him. Rolf and I waited for Billy on a viewing platform on the descent into the plain. We must both have fallen asleep in the shade of the motorbike, because Billy woke us up with the horn. We decided to look for a suitable camp after reaching the plain. Two or three bends further on, some Arabs stopped us. One of the two trucks had probably overheated the brakes on the descent and had to drive into the ditch to avoid the worst. The suspension of the front, left spring package had sheared off. They had been there for two days and almost finished repairing, but they hadn't been able to get one of the rivets out. We helped them repair the damage and were invited to tea to thank us. An old Tuareg practiced the lengthy ceremonial of tea preparation. Again and again he emptied the brew from one pot to the other. Again and again he tasted it with more sugar until everything was right. Then the tea was served in small glasses. Sweet and strong, you get like from an espresso the heart palpitations, that's how the tea should be. We were bid farewell with effusive thanks. Only two kilometres further, where the plain begins, we found a nice camp in the *Oued*<sup>6</sup>. Some trees provided firewood, so we could grill sausages today.

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<sup>5</sup> This bird can be observed throughout the Sahara. Since it appears regularly when you rest somewhere, I named it "host bird". It is the Saharan wheatear (*Oenanthe leucopyga*)

<sup>6</sup> Oued, a dry riverbed

## Saturday 25 November 1989

Illizi +133 km to Illizi +230 km, ca. 97 km

A few kilometres after leaving I stopped for the first time to take a picture. I saw a fleeing gazelle. These animals are quite common in the desert, but are very shy. The track was initially very rocky and not yet warmed up, a bit tedious to drive. Soon Rolf and I had caught up with two trucks, we had already met them yesterday. I was soon able to overtake one, but the second obviously looked forward spellbound, but he didn't care what was going on behind him. After about two kilometres I was able to bypass him on an alternative route.

At the crossing of the *Djanet-Amguid* road we waited for Billy. Again we had an hour break. When he arrived, we arranged to meet at a "*Guelta*",<sup>7</sup> about 20 km further along the route. Until there, the road became a little faster, but it had partly horrible corrugation. Some wild camels stared at me from a short distance, but didn't look disturbed. At the "*Guelta*" we met a German couple with a Land Rover. After a short conversation they drove on towards *Illizi*. After lunch, Rolf and I descended to the waterhole to take pictures. At first we also wanted to swim, but the water was too cold for us.

The track was now partly quite fast, but you always had to be on your guard for cross ditches and stone fields. In a beautiful valley we waited again for Billy and decided to look for a camp on his arrival, as the area was much nicer than it seemed to be further ahead. As soon as Rolf arrived at the camp, a group of *mouflons* was discovered less than 100 metres away<sup>8</sup>. Billy and Rolf started looking for wood while I made a bread dough. At first we had some trouble to create enough embers for a good heat for baking, but then the bottom of the bread was even a bit burnt. But otherwise it wasn't so bad for the first time.

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<sup>7</sup> Guelta is a natural waterhole.

<sup>8</sup> Moufflon are very rare animals similar to the ibex of the Alps

Immediately afterwards we also cooked a wonderful potato-leek gratin on the fire and finally there was homemade pop-corn for dessert.

## Sunday 26 November 1989

### 37 km to Fort Gardel - Djanet, 175 km

First the road led through the beautiful valley where we had stayed to the *Tin-Tarajeli*. After the steep, washed-out descent we went through a sandy plain to Fort Gardel. Rolf and I arrived together and completed the control formalities. Until everything was finished, Billy also reached the place. In a cafe we got orange jus from a can for the first time. Until we were sure to be on the right track, we rode together, then we moved away with the motorcycles. A lot of corrugation and soft sand shaped the character of the first kilometres towards *Djanet*. Under a tree we waited surprisingly long for Billy. When he appeared, dusty from head to toe, the delay was explained. He had landed in a soft sand field while dodging a hole and bogged himself up to the axles. We therefore decided to stay within sight. Even before the lunch break we saw a group of wild camels. It grabbed me and I tried to keep them together with the motorbike by circling them. It was a lot of fun, but I didn't want to rush the animals too much and weaken them.

The corrugation remained and it was not always possible to dodge next to the road. A tanker had tried this and was promptly sunk into the soft sand. We helped the driver as much as we could, but he was already too deep in the sand. He had no choice but to wait until a colleague could drag him back onto the main track. I was just surprised that he didn't even have a shovel and only a few meters of steel cable with him.

The last 50 km to *Djanet* were quite passable and allowed a brisk pace. Before reaching the town of *Djanet*, we found an immaculate asphalt road. A strange driving experience after more than 400 km of rumble road. As usual, the formalities had to be completed first. Police and then "*Daira*" was the procedure, our personal as well as the vehicle data we knew by heart now. Then we called at the Hotel Zeriba, where there is

also a camping possibility. Apart from us, there were only two Frenchmen with motorbikes and a German loner on the pitch. We had dinner and tea with the French in a nearby restaurant. We had a soup, salad and a lean chicken leg. Back at the campsite there was a "real tea" (a very light coffee with some prune schnapps and a lot of sugar). In return, one of the two Michel showed us some of the known stars and Jupiter with its moons. In the news on shortwave we already learned today that we will have to continue military service in Switzerland, because the army abolition initiative had been rejected by the people.<sup>9</sup>

## Monday 27. November 1989

### Djanet

Today we wanted to have a real rest day. Billy and Rolf fetched fresh bread for breakfast at the nearby bakery, which we then enjoyed in peace. Michel, one of the French, had promised to give us a demonstration of his sextant skills. He had all the equipment for determining his position with him: sextant, pocket computer, map and transporter, as well as a very accurate watch. Despite the language difficulties, he was able to explain the process to us exactly. Despite the fact that he only owns a cheap plastic model, he managed to determine his position with an accuracy of better than one kilometre.

In the afternoon Thierry and Maja arrived with some friends. We know both of them from the Swiss Safari Rallye Team. We had known that our paths could cross somewhere. Of course, there was a lot to tell and so the afternoon was soon over.

For dinner we went out, like yesterday, with the two Michel. The offering on the menu was, as usual, not very rich, but we were fed for 40 dinars. If you calculate with the official rate, this is 8 SFr., so not exactly cheap. But we had already changed money in Switzerland at a com-

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<sup>9</sup> At that time, a shortwave radio was one of the few ways to get news from all over the world. So we also had access to up-to-date information from home

pletely different, more advantageous rate. Calculated with this the dinner cost 2 SFr. A salad, rice with some meat, three small meat skewers and coffee.

When we were at the campsite, drinking "*Coffee with...*", we heard some drops falling on the roof. It was nothing serious, but as a precaution I covered the tent.

## Tuesday 28 November 1989

### Djanet

Again, we were not in a hurry to get up. Today I got fresh bread for breakfast. In the course of the morning, all three of us began to work on the vehicles. Billy discovered another broken leaf spring, which he was able to repair with his spares. I had planned to change tyres at the rear. The tyre was still good, but I wanted a new tyre now for the coming tracks rather than later when we would be driving on paved roads again. Checking spokes, washing out air filters and oil check were the other standard tasks that were required on the motorbikes. For lunch, I went to the nearby market and bought fruits and vegetables. We had a tomato, radish and carrot salad. Soon the two Michel said goodbye. They wanted to drive a bit out of *Djanet* towards *Tamanrasset*.

I finished writing the postcards I started earlier in the morning and brought them to the post office. On the way back I looked at the shop of a silversmith. He had various interesting works for sale, but I immediately noticed a chain with a pendant, a so-called "Southern Cross"<sup>10</sup>. The seller was not so much interested in cash, but rather in exchange. I had taken a whole sack full of clothes with me and brought it to the store. First he wanted all the clothes plus 400 dinars. In the end he got about four pairs of pants and some T-shirts from me and I got the cross. For me it was free and he had made a good deal, so both had reason to smile.

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<sup>10</sup> Each Tuareg tribe has its own cross, in total there are at least 21 forms of these Tuareg crosses.



For dinner we went with Thierry's team to a restaurant at the market. It proved to be the best choice so far and as a big attraction there was even Coca-Cola and Fanta to drink. Afterwards there was coffee and "Aschi" entertained the whole campsite with guitar and country music.

## Wednesday 29 November 1989

### Djanet

After breakfast doing laundry was on the program. Here in the city we had enough water available and therefore it was not a problem. For lunch we picked up vegetables at the market again, we wanted to take advantage of the offer as long as we had the opportunity. In the afternoon it became noisy at the campsite as an organized group of 23 people had arrived. As usual for these people, their truck is their world and they cared little about the environment.

Today we also had to take care of the permission for the onward journey. First to the national park office to fill out a "*fiche*"<sup>11</sup>, then to the "*Daira*" for the driving permit to *Tamanrasset*. Since it was just before closing time, it was only a few minutes until everything was done. We were asked to look for a French Peugeot reported missing on our way to *Tamanrasset*. We then went again to the national park office to see the small "*Tassili*" museum. Although it is not very large, it gives an insight into the history of the region and the typical equipment of the Tuareg culture. In the café right next door we enjoyed a fruit juice. Four different flavours were offered, an offer never before seen in Algeria.

The evening before, we had ordered three *cous-cous* in a restaurant. When we arrived it was already quite full, but everybody slid a bit closer together. Whether the many people came because of the excellent food or the colour TV, I do not know. We were definitely very happy with the menu again.

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<sup>11</sup> The "*fiche*", the form to be filled out again and again in the African bureaucracy.

The "*Daltus*" people from the truck not only entertained themselves, but we also had to grin at their childish games they played. We didn't stay up too long, because the temperature had dropped sharply within hours.

## Thursday 30 November 1989

### Djanet

At five o'clock in the morning hell broke loose. Part of the neighbouring tour group had signed up for a day trip and had to be ready by 6 o'clock. They were awake, so why take care of the rest of the campsite...

Rolf and I wanted to take a little trip south of *Djanet* today. In the travel guidebook were some points described that we wanted to visit. Only about 7 km along the road it should have rock engravings. Even after a long search, however, we did not find them. An airplane which crashed during the landing approach, however, we found as described only 1 km off the road. Not much is left of it, because everything that was somehow usable has been taken. Further into the desert we were supposed to find an old keyhole grave, but that was again a mistake. But the landscape compensated us for the lost history lesson. Back in *Djanet* we drove up to the highest point for a bird's eye view of the oasis.

After lunch, a German KTM rider arrived. He was not very happy with his motorbike and complained about vibrations and a lot of breakdowns. In the evening, Billy discovered a broken leaf spring on the front right. At first he wanted to wait until *Tamanrasset*, but I persuaded him to change it here. In just over an hour, the leaf was changed and the package was reinforced by an additional leaf.

For dinner we went like yesterday to the restaurant at the market. Georg, the KTM rider, came with us. As usual, it was quite crowded. We had a table reserved for us and when we came back after a short walk, a table was set for us. Today we, unfortunately, had no choice, a tomato salad as a starter and then a lentil dish, which tasted very good, was the only menu.

Back at the campsite we had a coffee. The "*Daltus*" people weren't up long either, because they had a strenuous day trip behind them, so it quickly became quiet in the camp.

## Friday 1 December 1989

**Djanet – Fort Gardel + 40 km, 175 km**

The camp was packed and then we went to the gas station. Gasoline is only available for tourists on the day of departure. It was a huge operation and we had to queue for almost an hour until everyone had filled their tank and some jerry cans. Super was not available at the moment, but in the large tank of the Toyota only 1/3 was consumed, so that an acceptable mixture was created.

Since *Djanet* was a dead end for us, we went back the same way to *Fort Gardel*. After about an hour I had caught up with the "*Daltus*" truck. The stressed people had needed almost 2 1/2 times as long for the 60 km. After a chat, everyone went on. Later, two German motorbike drivers came towards me, which in turn was a reason to stop. Here Rolf and then Billy caught up with me. The two Germans had driven the grave track and raved about it. Before the lunch break we also caught up with the group of Germans, who had started in the morning from *Djanet*. They had had an extensive "breakfast" on the roadside.

In *Fort Gardel* we had an orange juice from the fridge before we registered with the police. Like the first time we were treated very friendly. When looking for the track to *Tam* we had a bit of a hard time. First we drove west out of the village, but we soon noticed the error and turned south. After a few kilometres we met road markings. You could drive wherever you wanted, because the route initially led over a flat surface. Only for a sandy passage the traces came together again. After the track changed direction, we knew we had to stop at Mount *Tarat*. We were already wondering if we would have to camp in this flat area when an area peppered with rocks appeared. At a huge boulder we found a nice place.

For dinner there was *spaghetti al tonno* with tomato salad. Later in the evening a strong wind came up, which soon chased us into the sleeping bags. Hidden deep in the sleeping bags, it could not harm us much.

## Saturday 2 December 1989

**Fort Gardel + 45 km to + 220 km, 175 km**

We had stayed just 5m from the main track. Here, however, you did not have to be afraid of traffic noise. Since *Fort Gardel* we had only just encountered a truck.

We made good progress and always stayed in visual contact, as the track sometimes spread out a few kilometre and thus we could have lost each other easily. Shortly before the turnoff to *Tamanrasset* I saw a truck at the edge of the track. We stopped and learned that the driver had been waiting for nine days with clutch damage for the ordered parts. How long he was still calculating, I asked the driver. Today, tomorrow or in a month, he replied laughing. I asked if he needed anything, water or food. Only the cigarettes had run out of him, otherwise he lacked nothing, which would give the answer...

As expected, only 3 km later the turnoff with signpost appeared. Although the direction did not exactly match the map, we decided to take the variant marked with poles. But after only a few kilometres the track turned west and we knew that we had chosen the wrong one. We drove east, assuming that we would cross the right one like that. Twice more we caught the wrong one, until I then stubbornly drove 4 km cross-country until I found a way that kept exactly SSW. That was the right one. After a few kilometres came the confirmation we knew from the route description. The landscape became more interesting as the track led through hilly terrain. For lunch we parked at one of the few trees. The next short stop was at *Fort Sereounout*. The abandoned buildings give an impression of the circumstances under which one must have lived here, in the middle of nowhere. It is also astonishing that the groundwater level is only 2 m below the surface. The water in the well is slightly salty,

but still clear and drinkable. About 10 km behind *Sereounout* Rolf and I stopped on a hill to wait for Billy. I was amazed when Billy did not turn south like we did, but continued straight ahead to the west. We waited a moment, but when he didn't show up, we chased after him. The solution to the riddle was that we had followed the stone cairns and thus the main route, while Billy had stayed on the right edge of the many tracks and automatically came on to the truck route veering off. It took us almost 15 km to catch up with Billy again. We decided to stick with the truck variant. We drove a little more than an hour until we found a resting place by a tree off the road.

We wanted to bake bread again and so Rolf and Billy started to chop the wood we had brought with us and started the fire while I took care of the dough. After a good hour of baking, it turned out that the bread had worked out perfectly this time. Rolf had kitchen duty today, the menu: boiled potatoes with juicy ham and tomato salad.

Today there was no wind, but it was already a bit colder in the evening, so that we were already in our sleeping bags at nine.

## Saturday 3 December 1989

**Fort Gardel + 220 km to near Metoutek, 190 km**

When I first woke up, the day was about to break. A beautiful sunrise seen from the sleeping bag and then the first, warming rays of sunshine were a good start to the day.

Soon after the departure, the track turned into a never-ending "*Ham-mada*". These plains, which are strewn with fine to coarse gravel, can be driven very well cross-country. You only have to watch out for the sometimes deep washouts caused by occasional rainfall. Billy was also able to set a brisk pace. Shortly after, the track followed an ever-narrowing valley, where we had a lunch break.

Somewhere in this area we must have taken a wrong turn. The general direction was right, but the due merger with the highway did not take

place. We stayed on track, as it seemed to be used quite regularly. Through a wide, scenic valley we went further and further west. Like an oiled lightning, a gazelle fled when we appeared. After leaving the valley, we followed a wide plain southwards. We were now impatiently and somewhat unsettled waiting for the main gravel road. We had no idea where exactly we were, but the direction was right and we still followed a clearly recognizable track. After a very sandy passage we suddenly met an unmarked lane which led from east to west. We decided to follow the track to the west. Slowly the "Oued" became narrower and narrower until we finally drove in a beautiful canyon. The "Oued" was full of deep soft sand, but we got through well. Suddenly we were faced with a woman who was herding a herd of goats. When we approached her to ask for directions, she hurriedly drove her flock away and disappeared. We continued to follow the valley and met a nomadic settlement. There were no people to be seen, but their belongings were hung in the trees. The valley widened and the track reached a small pass. The view from there was magnificent. Over a wide valley, the view was clear on a rugged mountain massif. After one kilometre, a track joined in from the right. We followed ours further south. At a very sandy place with deep tracks I looked around for the others and already I was on my nose. Nothing had happened because in the soft sand driver and machine usually fall soft.

A little later we met an old man in the middle of the pampas. He spoke broken French and so he was able to explain to us that the road that joins at this point comes from *Mertoutek* and if we drove further south, sooner or later we would come across the main road from *Ideles* to *Hirafok*. Although we had known that sooner or later we would have to come across this road, we were still happy to know where we were again.

Only a few kilometres later we found a nice camp not far from the track. We still had enough wood and since the bread was used up anyway, we baked again. This time there was nothing wrong with the bread. It succeeded "as if from the baker".

Billy was on kitchen duty today. His menu: rice with wild rice, and meatballs with white sauce and a radish carrot salad. As always when the cast iron pan was used anyway, there was a load of popcorn on the menu.

## Monday 4 December 1989

**Near Metoutek – Tamanrasset, approx. 220 km**

When I woke up briefly at 4 o'clock in the morning, the sky was still without clouds. When we got up, however, it was covered and only in the west could you see that it was clear.

We set off, assuming that we would meet the main road *Hirafok-Ideles* after 20 km at the latest . At a fork after 10 to 20 km we had chosen, mistakenly still holding the SW or W, the left option. As a result, we must have reached a rarely used track *Mertoutek-In Ecker*. As we turned more and more westwards instead of southwards, we seized the next opportunity to turn south. We knew we had enough reserves to "navigate" by gut feeling. It was equally clear that as long as we moved between south and west, we had to meet the paved road *Tamanrasset-In Salah* after 100-150 km at the latest. We still had fuel for 400 km.

From a hilly area with a stony road we reached another "Oued". The very sandy track was a bit tedious to drive and left little time to enjoy the beautiful landscape. We came across a small group of wild camels that eyed us curiously and then moved leisurely. The many dry trees caused us to bunker some firewood. In a few minutes we had loaded a nice supply. Over a small pass, the track changed into a wide valley in which we made good progress. At a dome-like mountain, the road forked. We chose the left lane and after about 3 km suddenly came across a small settlement above an "Oued". The only people we saw was a woman with two small children, the other huts were deserted. The woman stared at us uncomprehending and then completely ignored us. A truck and a tractor, as well as the two running water pumps down in the riverbed were sure signs for us that men could also not be far. We



decided to take a lunch break nearby, hoping that someone else would show up. Rolf wanted to make a little exploration round through the surroundings. He came back after more than a quarter of an hour. He had met a man who spoke some French at a greenhouse in the "*Oued*". He had explained to him that we were about 10 km northeast of *In Amguel*, on the paved road. When Rolf gave him some cigarettes, the Arab gave him a whole bag full of crisp fresh bell pepper and tomatoes.

After lunch we continued. Instead of stopping full west, we again chose a possibility to drive south and after about 20 km we met the road from *Hirafok* to the paved road exactly at the kilometre marker "*Hirafok 71 km – In Amguel 10 km*".

After 4 km we met the main road a little below *In Amguel*. Since there were only 120 km of paved road left to *Tamanrasset*, we decided to drive through. On the black ribbon, completely without holes, corrugation and *Fesch-Fesch* we almost fell asleep. But we made rapid progress. Only a few kilometres of the notorious, totally destroyed paved road remained, the rest is in quite good condition.

As we arrived at the campsite in *Tam*, we met different people we knew from *Djanet*. The two Michels with their motorcycles were there, the German with the small Land Rover had also arrived after a differential failure and also the French couple in their ancient Renault was there. They had travelled with Roberto and Francesca and had taken almost the exact same route as us. We set up our camp and enjoyed the quiet "evening". Today I cooked a "*Risotto ai Funghi*" with tomatoes and pepperoni salad. Since I needed a sip of white wine for the risotto, our last bottle had to be sacrificed. Of course, we didn't throw away the rest.

At half past nine Roberto came back from his *Assekrem* excursion and came briefly over to greet us. We went to bed early.

## Tuesday 5 December 1989

### Tamanrasset

I'm probably not used hearing noises around me anymore, because I didn't sleep very well. The "guard dogs" with their barking also contributed little to a deep sleep. When I woke up, I noticed that we had the usual weather again: bright blue sky.

We had planned to take a shower this morning. But it was still quite cold and all three of us had little desire to take an ice-cold shower. I filled our solar shower as a precaution to be able to take at least a lukewarm shower until the afternoon. I spent the morning, chatting a bit, reading something, studying maps. Time flew by in no time.

In the afternoon I went to the city to register us coming from *Djanet* , so that we were not considered lost. I took the opportunity to make a small city tour to get a first impression. *Tam* seemed to be quite a lively city, but with 50,000 inhabitants, no wonder. The centre is somehow quite inviting with its brown mud buildings. The many trees certainly contribute positively to the cityscape. After returning, I got into conversation with our neighbours, a couple from New Zealand. They will embark tomorrow on an 8-day camel ride to *Assekrem* and back. For 3100 dinars per person this is a cheap and certainly very interesting way to get to know the desert.

Anne-Marie asked around if we wanted to cook dinner together. The group, who already knew each other from *Djanet* , was in favor of it. Twelve people from four countries soon began preparations. First of all, Billy and I baked two loaves of bread, which, by the way, was followed with great interest. Then the big vegetable preparation started. Four of us sat at the table and peeled, sliced and chopped pepperoni, tomatoes, onions and garlic. On the menu were spaghetti and egg omelette with vegetables.

It was a cheerful group sitting together at a big table. After the meal I made a "green tea special", seasoned with plum schnapps, which caused

after some mistrust, radiant faces. Later we sat around the campfire and had fun with the many stories that were presented. It was almost eleven o'clock until we went to bed.

## Wednesday 6 December 1989

### Tamanrasset

Slowly but surely it is getting colder in the Sahara. Until the sun appeared above the horizon, the morning was very cool. But daytime temperatures were still above 20°C.

When Roberto and Francesca came out of the hotel to the campsite, they put a can of Nutella and rusks on the table so that everyone could pitch in. We had already scoffed in *Djanet* about his fondness for Nutella.

Before noon we set off to the city on foot. We hadn't even looked at the clock and reached the centre at a time when many shops closed until 2 pm. The cafes and restaurants remain open for the most part and so we could enjoy our lunch in a garden restaurant. As a big change there was here in *Tam* bbq chicken from the grill. A whole chicken cost 80 dinars. While we were still eating, one Michel appeared first, shortly afterwards the second. When Roberto and Francesca sat down with us, we were a fun company together again. On the main road there was a lot of activity and it was interesting to watch the hustle and bustle.

In a small travel agency we organized a camel ride for the next day for the three of us. The owner told us that he first had to find a guide and three camels, but would let us know in the evening how the excursion would go.

Arriving at the campsite, we got into conversation with two young Swiss people who wanted to go even further south with their Suzuki DR Big. Since this was their first time in the desert, they were a bit reluctant to find their way. Since the two Michels and Roberto wanted to go in the same direction the day after tomorrow, we organized that they could ride with this group.

With eight people planned to eat together in one of the few restaurants where there serve also wine. In the bar of the *Tahat* Hotel we enjoyed an aperitif. Pastis and lemonade were the whole choice at this 4 star hotel, the best in town.

When we arrived at the restaurant *Tahirine*, it was immediately noticeable that it was mostly locals who ate there. The food itself was hardly the reason why they had chosen this restaurant, because almost all the guests had a whole bottle of wine in front of them. One was so drunk that he just poked around clumsily in his plate. The only menu was salad and a tiny piece of meat with french fries. The waiter brought only three bottles of wine instead of the ordered four. "C'est fini le vin," he announced. The wine was definitely better than the menu.

Back at the campsite we made some tea, but soon went to bed, because the cold wind was a bit uncomfortable.

## Thursday 7 December 1989

### Tamanrasset

This time Rolf had been caught. In the middle of the night he had to vomit and also a bad diarrhoea plagued him. Camel riding was not for him at the moment. I drove to the Hotel *Tahat* to ask Robert and Francesca if they would like to come along. But it was too short-term for both of them. Michel II then stepped in for Rolf.

Punctually at eight o'clock the guide with his four camels awaited us directly in front of the campsite. Our bags and shoes were attached to the saddle. One by one, they climbed into the saddle of the kneeling camel. One jerk forward, one backward and you are already sitting about 2 m above the ground. At a leisurely pace we went along a *oued*. You have to get used to the eternal swing, but you have enough time to enjoy the surroundings. The Tuareg at the head of the small caravan hummed softly Arabic songs to himself.

Soon we left the last houses behind us. The landscape became increasingly hilly, interrupted again and again by green *oueds*. Michel's camel had already bitten mine twice in the butt. Each time, understandably, it made a move forward, which shook me vigorously every time. The *Targi* stopped and changed the order of the camels, so that Michel was now directly behind the leader. After that there was silence.

Above a *oued*, the guide let us sit down. He let the animals kneel down one after the other, so that one could dismount comfortably. The descent into the *Oued* was quite steep and since the knees of the camels bend backwards, going downhill is not only uncomfortable for the rider, but also for the camel. At some huge boulders the saddles were taken off the camels and the animals were led to a *guelta* to drink. While the *Targi* led the camels to the plateau to let them "graze", the three of us climbed further into the small valley. Considering the many trees and bushes, there must be quite a lot of groundwater in this cut. Some beautiful places for camping were unfortunately already spoiled by rubbish. We rested and I took a nap. Subsequently, a fire was lit by the *Targi* to make tea. A handful of twigs was enough for him. He put on a teapot and when the water boiled, he added a white wine glass full of tea leaves. The first water is only for washing the leaves and is poured away. Then a glass of sugar was added and heated again. Instead of stirring, the tea is emptied again and again into the glass and back into the pot. Three times was water refilled and the tea was still strong and sweet. For lunch, the guide had brought his standard menu, sardines, while we contributed cheese and oranges.

After lunch, *Targi* set out to retrieve the camels while we laid around lazily. The animals were saddled and led up to the plateau and we followed on foot. Only now were the animals mounted. On the same way we went back to *Tam*. Slowly but surely, certain parts of the body began to hurt. The hard saddle and the unusual movements of the camels were probably the cause. I was definitely glad when the camping showed up. We paid our guide and gave him a generous tip. We thanked him and said goodbye to him. (100 dinars per camel per day)

At seven we had arranged in the restaurant *Ténéré*. Michel had reserved and ordered *cous-cous*. Pascal and Anne-Marie were a bit late and so I drove ahead to report it to Roberto. He was already waiting in front of the restaurant. The three of us went inside and ordered a bottle of white wine for an aperitif. When the rest arrived, the waiter began to serve. First there was *chorba*, a typical soup of North Africa. Like the *cous-cous* that followed, both are a kind of national dishes. The portions were huge and we struggled to devour everything. The beer was a bit weak, but the rosé we drank with dinner was, like the white wine, quite good.

At the campsite we soon retired to the sleeping bag.

## Friday 8 December 1989

### Tamanrasset

Today was the day of farewell. Roberto and Francesca, the two Michel, Pascal and Anne-Marie, they all wanted to go further south. They were joined by the two Swiss Josef and Peter Ackermann, as well as the three Swedes who had, without a car escort, not received the travel permit. At ten o'clock everyone was ready. After their departure it had become quiet, we will certainly miss the gang.

Billy and I weren't in good shape because of the aftermath of our camel ride yesterday. All our bones hurt and so it was a quiet day for us. Rolf made a small trip to *Amsel* in the south of the city. Shortly after noon, Pascal and Anne-Marie reappeared. They had once again gotten into an argument and had therefore broken off the journey to the south.

In the evening, Rolf and I rinsed the soaked laundry and then hung it up to dry. After a simple soup we soon went to bed.

## Saturday 9 December 1989

### Tamanrasset

After we got up quite late, I went into town to get bread. The breakfast dragged on, so soon it was lunch.

I had prepared a solar shower in the morning which had become pleasantly warm until the early afternoon. The showers at the campsite only run for a few minutes in the morning and then again in the evening and the water was freezing. Brrrrr!

Since the departure was planned for tomorrow, we had to shop again. At home you go to the *Migros*, but here in Algeria you systematically rattle off the individual shops. One has the sought-after sardines, but no fruit juice. Once you have found the fruit juice, you are amazed that there is also pear juice. But it has nowhere the usual apricot juice, etc.

For vegetables and fruits we went to the centrally located market. The offer was quite good. If you had to buy at the official rate, the vegetables would cost around 4 SFr. per kilo. With the black price, prices fall to 1 SFr. When we wanted to fill up with gasoline, one gas station had no gasoline at all and the other only regular gasoline. We should have refuelled as soon as we arrived.

We wanted to have a barbecue in the evening and therefore went to a butcher's shop, where we bought beef and sausages. When Pascal and Uwe learned about it on our return, they drove to the butcher to stock up on grilled meat. The common dinner was again a convivial feast. For dessert, Anne-Marie surprised us with crêpes, which we filled with jam. By the time the dishes were done, it was already ten o'clock, time to crawl into the feathers.

## Sunday 10 December 1989

**Tamanrasset – Assekrem, ca. 98 km**

Today we had to vacate our camp again. We made good progress with packing and after breakfast we said goodbye to Uwe, Anne-Marie and Pascal.

In the city, Billy and I bought tuna in the "supermarket", but there was no cheese. By the way, milk powder and sugar were not available in the city of 50,000 inhabitants at the moment.

Meanwhile, Rolf got fresh bread. When everything was done, we headed towards *the Hoggar* Mountains. Rolf missed the turnoff to the *Chapuis* spring, as the beautiful track tempted you to drive a little faster. So we returned back and followed the right track. After a few kilometres we came to a building in which the carbonated spring originates. The water has the same taste as *non-carbonated Henniez*<sup>12</sup>. We drank a tea, enjoyed the rest of the morning and filled our drinking water canister before returning to the main road. Soon the track led into the mountains and Billy with the car stayed a little behind. The landscape was almost without vegetation, but the many forms of freestanding mountains are impressive. After waiting for Billy again, we decided to drive through to *Assekrem*.

We had written off the *Gueltras Afilal* because, according to local information, they were occupied by a military camp. When we arrived at the turnoff, however, there was a sign of the national park and the reference to a café. Rolf was waiting for Billy and I drove ahead. The man who ran the café did it in his first year. Because there was too little water for an entire military unit, they were withdrawn again, he explained. For us a stroke of luck because the *Gueltras* are very beautiful. In the middle of this stone desert you will find oleander and wild mint. The largest water basins are a few meters deep. You can follow the chain of *Gueltras* for several hundred meters. After returning to the café, I wanted to buy a nicely made bag made of gazelle fur. However, the demanded price was a little too high for me and the courtesy of the seller too small, so that the deal did not come about.

The landscape became more and more imposing. The rock towers moved together and the track led through the middle of them. Due to the steepness, the track becomes more and more difficult to drive on and it is dotted with rocks. From the turnoff from the *Hirafok* piste it goes up again really steeply until you finally reach the *Assekrem*. Through a gate you drive to the small plateau. In addition to the buildings of the monks

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<sup>12</sup> Henniez is one of the best-known mineral water brands in Switzerland



on the summit, there is also a hostel with two buildings with bedrooms on the plateau.

To experience the sunset, the big sight here at 3000 m, I climbed up to the hermitage. When I arrived, there were only five other guests up there. But after Rolf and Billy finally made it up too, we enjoyed the sunset in the company of thirty people. Unfortunately it was cloudy in the west and therefore not much was to be expected.

For dinner we only cooked a soup, because we had eaten a snack earlier. We went for tea in the hostel before we went back to our room.

## Monday 11 December

**Assekrem – Hirafok + 35 km, 108 km**

At half past seven I woke up. High time, if we also wanted to see the sunrise. Billy preferred to stay in his sleeping bag. Rolf also came up to the hermitage with a little delay. The sky was nicely red, but the sunrise was again delayed by clouds. The mountains in the morning light were ghostly. I was affected by the light and colour changes. It was quite cold, but soon the first rays of sunshine warmed the air.

Back to the turnoff to *Hirafok* we went the same way. In front of us was an "Overlander" truck that was now crawling downhill at walking pace. The road to *Hirafok* had been rebuilt a few years ago, but especially in steep sections or when crossing *Oueds*, it was partly impassable again and had to be bypassed. The landscape became flatter and flatter. At a *Guelta* we waited for Billy and then had lunch break together. At the end of a narrow canyon rises a spring which then feeds various water basins.

The track now also allowed higher speeds, so we never had to wait long for Billy. About 30 km before *Hirafok* we visited another *Guelta*, located right next to the road. That would be a very nice campsite, but for us it was still a bit too early. We had learned that a new café had recently opened in *Hirafok*. The two Michels had raved about the friendly service. For Rolf and me a good reason to wait there for Billy. Although the café

was not open when we arrived, but shortly after we had sat down in the garden restaurant, the first children came and then the landlord who chased them to hell. We didn't stay alone for long. Soon there were six or eight men around us who kept us company. The landlord offered us handicrafts for sale. We wanted to exchange some of it for clothes. However, he was not interested in the clothes, but everyone else. I fetched the clothes and soon an entertaining action was underway. It wasn't really the purpose to sell the clothes, but we thought that we could buy some of the souvenirs with the proceeds. In the middle of it there was an alarm: "La Gendarmerie"!! Within two minutes our clothes, handicrafts and jewellery were hidden and all Algerians sat hypocritically in the café and played dominoes and the patrol came in and greeted us friendly. They drank tea and soon left. Immediately, the action continued. At last we had about 300-400 dinars from the clothes sale. If we added the rest of the cash in our wallets, we got 582 dinars. But the landlord did not want to sell under 600. So I sold him blue jeans for 20 dinars. Honestly as he was, he gave me 2 dinars back because the 582 plus the blue jeans worth 20 made 602 dinars. In my exuberance about the deal, I threw the 2 dinars, worth about 10 centimes, into the air. But that was a huge mistake, because the people around were very upset about it. "You don't throw money away," someone called out to me excitedly. When tempers calmed down and I apologized, we said goodbye and drove out to the village to look for a place to stay.

Not far from the route we found a nice place in a *oued*. In view of the black, overcast sky, however, we were not sure if the choice was good, because if it rained heavily, we would be at risk of flooding here.

We found enough wood in the *oued* to maintain a campfire. After dinner there was tea time and we sat together to chat. Already since dusk, the clouds had dissipated again, so that again and again the almost full moon became visible and thus the flood danger was averted.

## Tuesday 12 December 1989

Hirafok + 35km - In Ecker - Amguid Pist +80km, 185 km

We only drank a coffee for breakfast, as we planned to eat one of the well-known "*Omlette Frites*" in *In Ecker*. On the mostly pretty good gravel road we drove towards *In Amguel*. Rolf and I were travelling at a good speed and could therefore drink a cup of tea in the café until Billy arrived too. We bought bread and eggs and drove together the 40 km to *In Ecker*. This gas station also had only regular gasoline at the moment, even the diesel had run out. After all our barrels were full, we crossed the street to eat our already mentioned, late breakfast. When the water supplies were replenished to the full 90 l, it went on. After exactly 14 km, as it is written in the guidebook, there was the entrance to the *Amguid* track. The old stone signpost lies destroyed on the ground, but the traces were clearly visible. In the area of the main route, there was a lot of corrugation from the beginning. Only later, when the mountains bordered the wide valley on both sides, the many tracks spread out for miles. In terms of landscape, the route offered little change, but we made good progress, as the track usually had a hard, but not stony ground. After a drive of about 60 km, a plaque reminds of the nuclear tests that France had carried out in the area in the 1950s. Only a short time later, the meagre remains of a Paris-Dakar Range Rover came into view.

We searched in vain for a nice place to stay, and finally settled down at a single tree, a little off the road. We had already stopped before three o'clock and had enough time to read something or just laze around a little. Apart from ourselves, we saw only three convoys of trucks driving south on the horizon in the course of the afternoon. The dust plumes could still be seen more than 20 km away.

Billy was on kitchen duty today. His menu, even though he himself was not a friend of it: rice with tongue with Madeira sauce and a bell pepper salad.

## Wednesday 13 December 1989

**Amguid piste + 80 km to + 210 km, approx. 130 km**

It had been quite cold during the night, so we didn't get out of the warm sleeping bag until the sun had warmed the air a bit. It was already half past ten when we were on the road again.

Soon we passed the *Tidikmet* on its east side. At the northeast corner of the mountains we would have found a nicer campsite yesterday, but who could know that? The track now followed a *oued* that was overgrown with many trees. For us the ideal place to supplement firewood, because today we would run out of bread and for baking we needed sufficient firewood. The *oued* also seems to attract other people, because soon we passed a small settlement. A sign indicated that there should even be a café. But when half the village, especially the children, ran together, we preferred to continue. The incoming gendarmerie patrol confirmed this decision, because we had not registered with the authorities in *Tamanrasset* for the *Amguid* route.

At a mile post we stopped to determine our position. We noticed that a change of course to the northeast was due soon. In fact, the track turned slightly to the right to follow another *oued*.

To get to the western of the two routes, we had to pass the left of the *Edjeleh*. We stayed at the left edge of the track and arbitrarily followed a good track that turned. In fact, more and more traces came together to bypass the free-standing mountains on the west side. There we met a tanker on its way south. 20 km north of the *Edjeleh* we stopped in a sparsely overgrown *oued* for today.

We prepared everything to bake. We baked two loaves of bread, so we had enough for two days. For dinner there was mashed potato and meatloaf. Shortly after the sun set, the moon appeared as a large, yellow disk on the horizon, an impressive image. Since the wind hardly blew tonight, the temperatures were bearable until after eight o'clock.

## Thursday 14 December 1989

**Amguid route + 210 km to In Salah piste before Erg Kanguet, 140 km**

We continued northwards on the westernmost traces of the *Amguid* route. About 50 km south of the *Erg Amguid*, you could already see it clearly, we changed course and headed directly towards the southern tip of the *Moungas et Tir*. Over the expanses of the *Hammada* areas we could also drive cross-country with 80-100 km / h. As planned we met the track *Amguid-In Salah*. On this well-marked route we went towards a gap in the *Erauene* mountains. For a short time it became rocky, but as the valley, lined with table mountains, widened, it became flat and sandy. The red-yellow dunes that snuggled high up on the mountains formed an interesting contrast to the otherwise black rock. Before we got all the way up to the pass, we took a lunch break. Billy told us that he had used the shovel again in the valley below because he had sanded in.

From the pass we had a wide view into a true lunar landscape. Even with the motorcycle we could not drive too fast in this area, because the narrow track was very rocky. At *Oued el Tiris* I noticed the small, reddish dunes, some of which shone silvery. The reason was that gray, light stone flakes were lying on top. Not far from the track, a watering hole was marked on the map. While Rolf waited for Billy, I continued along the table mountain looking for a resting place. I found no water, but lush vegetation and the reed was a clear sign that at least groundwater was present. The area was extremely sandy, so I could often only drive in first gear. In addition, the approach from the track was covered with large stones, for the car an ordeal. We decided to drive out of the mountains, because there were several more *oueds* marked on the map.

Suddenly Rolf and I were standing in front of nine camels. Since the terrain was very rocky, they had preferred the road for their hike, just as we did. But now they were afraid of us and trotted in front of us in the direction from which they had come. Only after several hundred meters they fled off the road and we were able to pass them.

We soon found a nice place where we waited for Billy. We rested a bit from the rumbling. I tried with moderate success to be a tailor, in repairing the sleeping bag cover. Well, it should only stay together and not win a beauty contest. After dinner we had a "coffee with..", although the temperature moved around maybe 10-12°C.

## Friday 15 December 1989

### Before Erg Khanguet to Ain Tidjoubat, approx. 135 km

Due to the small breakfast, we only made coffee and three-minute eggs, we were on the road before nine o'clock. The uneven, narrow road led us north around the last foothills of *the Erg Khanguet*. The reddish dunes glowed in the morning sunshine. I couldn't resist driving up one of the "piles of sand" again. This gave me the opportunity to take some photos and take another bag of sand for my collection.

The landscape constantly changed its image. Just a moment ago sand dunes, black scree hills soon dominated the picture. The most beautiful section of the trip took us through a magnificent *oued*. The canyon-like dry riverbed would be an ideal place to stay. Countless, sometimes quite large, trees invited to rest. First a couple and a little later a herd of eight gazelles took off in front of me and fled into a side valley. I got a good scare from a large, grey camel, because I only noticed it when it trotted away, only 20 m away. We left the beautiful valley and crossed a large *Reg*<sup>13</sup> plain. While crossing a *oued*, we came across the wreck of a motorcycle. Rolf and I tried to figure out what it could be. The engine was a Honda four-cylinder V-engine, but the frame seemed very special to us. Maybe a rally car? Or maybe a sidecar? The wreck was burned out and the entire front part had been sawn off and removed! If we only knew the stories of the many ruins...

Under a lonely tree we stopped for lunch. Rolfs Honda lost quite a bit of oil via a simmer ring. The reason was probably the filter he had attached to the crankcase ventilation. After this had been blocked by dust, the

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<sup>13</sup> As Reg the Tuaregs refer to the large gravel plains that are quite common in the Sahara

pressure in the motor housing rose so much that the seal began to leak. Well, the filter was removed and the oil leak decreased abruptly.

After continuing our journey we came to a junction. We drove straight ahead over a wavy plain towards a small pass that was quite tricky. The track was steep and extremely rocky. With the bike that wasn't a problem, but for Billy it meant off-road reduction and walking pace. The last stretch to the top of the pass had even been much steeper a few years ago. But it had been eased by further hairpin bends. Rolf and I waited for Billy. Today was probably the warmest day since our departure. The stones covered in black heated the air even more. With binoculars the further course of the track could be followed from the pass for kilometres.

From the pass it was another 28 km to our stage destination, a well. Before that, however, we had to cross the alluvial clay plain ahead of us. Deep ruts next to the main road testified that if it rains here, the area becomes impassable for some time. Once on the other side of the valley, the track followed a silted chain of hills to *Ain Tidjoubat*. First we came to the old well, a little further on was the new well. At the new water point, equipped with a wind turbine pump, we stopped for today. The pump did not work due to lack of wind, but with a rope and bucket we brought the cool water from about 2.5 m depth to wash ourselves first. When Billy arrived, for him it had been a very difficult stage, we installed the shower first. After a week without proper washing facilities, a real treat.

Only when you have travelled in the desert, you learn to appreciate the value of water. We definitely enjoyed being able to be generous with the water again. We had eaten the last bread for lunch and so I took care of supplies.

The evening remained so warm today that we sat outside in a T-shirt until after nine o'clock.

## Saturday 16 December 1989

### Ain Tidjoubat to In Salah, 165 km

The whole night it had remained quite warm, it would certainly be a warm day again.

From the well *Ain Tidjoubat* the route turned at right angle from NW to SW to follow the wide *Oued et Botha* at its edge. The landscape became increasingly flatter and offered little variety. After 25 km Rolf and I waited on a hill for Billy as usual. Only as a dot he appeared about 10 km away. It is always amazing how far you can see in the desert. Up to 150 km and more, mountains can be seen in flat areas. If you drive towards a mountain range, it is very difficult to estimate the distance due to a lack of size comparison. The mountain always seems to look the same and suddenly you stand in front of it.

Shortly before we reached the old *Hoggar* route there were again two ruins of rally cars lying around. This time the cause was obvious. Shortly before, there was a meter-high drop on the track where the two had probably driven over at too high speed.

At the junction with the old *Hoggar* route, the old signposts still stand. Although they are very faded, they are still legible. We only had to follow this track until it meets the new paved road. A lot of corrugation characterized the last section. In the past, that is, until a few years ago, you had to drive on this road from northern Algeria to *Tamanrasset*, without any alternative! There were probably only a few who managed the return trip *Tunis-Tam* in three weeks of vacation. But even if, the route had hardly been used by foreigners.

The *Hassi el Khenig* well is a 5 m deep pit dug with bulldozers in which the magnesium-containing groundwater converges. For us humans, the water is only drinkable in an emergency, but for the animals it is invaluable. From *Hassi el Khenig* we could already see the paved road. However, the route runs parallel to it for long. Without further ado, we cut



off cross-country and thus saved ourselves the last kilometres of corrugation.

The landscape was now almost flat and without charm. So we were glad that at least good progress was made. Outside *In Salahs* we stopped again to drink an orange juice in a roadside café, cold, because they even had a fridge.

When we arrived in *Salah* we first visited the campsite. We found a pitch below large, shady trees. I wanted to change the oil of the TT while the engine was still warm and so I went straight to work. After a new filter and fresh oil was in the engine, I cleaned the air filter and re-oiled it. After the spokes were checked and tightened, the motorcycle was ready to travel again.

In the evening, Georg, we had met him in *Djanet*, arrived on his KTM. There was a hello and of course a lot to tell. Georg had an eventful day behind him. It had thrown him off the bike for the first time and as a result, one of the panniers touched unluckily the exhaust and it caught fire as he drove on. He was able to extinguish the fire with sand, but some equipment, including stoves and dishes, had been destroyed.

We quickly went to the market and bought vegetables for salad. For the first time we saw beans on offer, whereupon we immediately bought a portion as a side dish. Georg was of course invited, which he appreciated with a healthy appetite.

There were two Bavarian motorbike drivers and we talked together until almost eleven o'clock before we retired to the sleeping bag.

## Saturday 17 December 1989

### In Salah

Yesterday, after arriving in *Salah* Billy had only come out with the fact that he had discovered a chassis break on the Toyota two days ago. He didn't want to worry us unnecessarily, he said. Well, today we wanted to have it welded, together with the roof rack that was already broken

in Ecker. Only 50 m from the campsite it had a "*Mecanicien Precision*". First, we agreed with him on the price. Without looking too much, he told us: "400 FF in foreign currency". I cut the price in half, which he accepted immediately. He left everything and Billy drove over the concrete pit. The mechanic understood his trade and in just half an hour the damage was repaired. However, he didn't have the right electrodes for welding, but Billy was able to provide him with some from his own stock. The fact that he had them with him without the right welding equipment was one of many travel experiences. Often workshops have quite talented mechanics, but the money for good tools and material is often missing.

Before noon I went to the market to buy tomatoes and eggs. Even after some searching, I found neither one, nor the other. The supply in Algeria is sometimes a mystery to me. So far, we had found tomatoes in every village, no matter how small.

Rolf brought his bike back into shape, which means he checked everything and adjusted the valves.

We wanted to have dinner in the restaurant today. We walked to the restaurant "*Carrefour*" where we ordered a tea. It was nearly undrinkable, which is quite normal in *In Salah*, because the drinking water is slightly salty. It was still early for the food, the waiter explained to us. We therefore took a walk, which led us past the "*Relais Saharien*". The restaurant made a sympathetic impression, so we sat down there. We ordered salad, soup and chicken with rice. The fact, that the ordered "orange juice" was made with syrup and tap water was not difficult to find out due to the salty taste.

We made the coffee ourselves in the camp, because we had still better drinking water in our cannisters. I brought the two Germans the book I had just finished reading and stayed with them for a while.

## Monday 18 December 1989

### In Salah – Foggaret et Zoua – In Salah, 150 km

In the travel guide I had read about a petrified forest about 70 km east of *In Salah* and we wanted to visit it today. Rolf got into Billy's car and I drove ahead with the TT. Above the airfield, the road to *Foggaret et Zoua* branches off to the east. It was paved, at least up to the turnoff to *Foggaret el Arab*, but peppered with holes all over. We drove past various small oases, which all had artificial dunes on the east side as a vestibule and protection from sand. But if they become too big, they threaten the oasis even more.

The road to *Foggaret et Zoua* is very bumpy and interspersed with many soft sand fields. The bypasses are a bit better to drive, but you will find even more sand passages. We had a description of the place where the petrified trees are located, but a sign at the entrance to the village prohibits the visit without permission. These can be obtained in a small travel agency in the village. For a day visit you pay 50 dinars per person. *Mohamed Bouchikhi*, the owner of the travel agency, is also the representative of the national park and collects the money. For this he wanted to lead us to the petrified forest. He also climbed into the driver's cab of the Hilux and directed Billy cross-country in an easterly direction out of the village. After about 20 km we reached the first petrified trees and parked the vehicles. The trunks lay all over the place. Some of them looked as if they were still made of wood. *Mohamed* explained that from the Grand Erg Oriental to *Alouef*, petrified wood had been found in various places, which can be seen as evidence that this vast area must have been forested at the time of the dinosaurs. We rummaged around in this largest site and then drove on the same way back to the oasis where we were served a tea. We said goodbye and made our way back to *In Salah*.

Actually, we should have extended the insurance, but their cash register was already closed when we arrived. The insurance employee calcu-

lated what it would cost us if we extended the insurance. A ten-day extension costs almost as much as the 30-day border insurance, 113 dinars per moto and 193 for the Toyota. So we have to go again tomorrow.

When we got back to the campsite, Billy and Rolf went to the market and cooked dinner after their return. I read the book I had exchanged yesterday. Because of the many mosquitoes that bothered us at dusk, I moved back into the tent.

## Tuesday 19 December 1989

### In Salah – Fort Miribel

First we went to the insurance company to take care of the formalities for the extension. In front of us were two German car pushers. They were on the road with a total of five cars, all Mercedes and BMW's. On a construction site bypass north of *In Salah*, all five were injured. The first car had driven into a *Fesch-Fesch* hole and got stuck. The other four drove into the dust cloud and then it had banged four times. Conclusion: 2 total losses, 2 still drivable, but only usable as spare parts suppliers and one only slightly damaged. In the case of the insurance, they now learned that this only pays for personal injury but not for damage to property. This deal had been badly messed up for the Germans. On top they also had the audacity to complain about Algeria's bad roads.

When we had extended our insurance, we drove north on the N 1. The landscape was not interesting from the beginning. The last kilometres before the climb to the *Plateau de Takmait* we had to bypass some sections of the road due to construction work. Since there was a strong crosswind, the dust on the bypass was whirled up in such a way that the visibility partly dropped to less than 20 m. I avoided the problem by driving cross-country about 500 m to the right of the bypass. During the ascent to the plateau, several wrecks of trucks lay on the roadside. They had probably underestimated the steep descent after the long plain and lost control over the vehicle or the brakes had failed. While waiting for Billy, we watched a huge truck crawl down the decent at walking pace

to avoid becoming part of the debacle. Soon Billy appeared and we kept going.

On the plateau a sandstorm raged which darkened the sky. For about 30 km the road was totally broken up and we had to switch to a bypasses. Rolf and I drove into sight, but sometimes he just disappeared into a dust wall. When the road was in order again, there wasn't too much dust in the air anymore. But the wind accompanied us over the whole *plateau de Takmait*. In the middle of it all is the only café on the roadside, for us the ideal place to wait for Billy. When he had also had a tea, we drove on together. After some time I had to switch to reserve, time for a refuelling stop. We also took it as an opportunity to eat something quickly. We were a bit late due to the construction sites and the bad road and wanted to get to *Fort Miribel*, because we didn't feel like spending the night on the flat plateau, exposed to the wind.

From the junction we went about 30 km on the old *Hoggar* road back to the old fort. *Fort Miribel* is also a remnant of the Foreign Legion. It is located above the *Oued Chebaba* in which is a rich well. The location of the Foreign Legion outpost was no coincidence. Firstly, the crew themselves had enough water from the well and they were also able to keep the surrounding inhabitants and tourist traffic under control, because they all had to pass the well. The fort itself is well preserved and was the largest complex we have seen so far.

In a wind protected corner we set up for the night. It was just a pity that empty cans were lying around everywhere and apparently every visitor had the feeling that he had to immortalize himself on the walls with his name. When the sun had set as a yellow disc, it quickly became cool, so I retired to the sleeping bag soon after dinner, even if it was only half past eight o'clock.

## Wednesday 20 December 1989

Fort Miribel - El Golea - Hassi Touiel, 340 km

It had been significantly colder last night than in the previous days. After the sun had risen as a pale yellow disc, as yesterday at sunset, I read 8°C on the thermometer inside the car. Also on the road you could feel the penetrating, unfamiliar cold. When we reached the paved road again, we waited for Billy to continue together. On the paved road, Billy's Toyota is just as fast as Rolf and I on the bikes. Our cruising speed on such good roads is around 90 km/h.

A group of Swiss who had stopped on the way south also caused us to take a break. We had a chat and passed on the last information to the guys before we set off again. Some sand dunes broke up the monotonous landscape a bit. At the beginning of *El Golea* I noticed in the corner of my eye a shop with bread. We stopped and did some of the shopping. We had been warned about *El Golea*, especially because of the children. These are supposed to throw stones and steal what was not nailed down. All the negative experiences we had heard about so far were about *El Golea*. We were correspondingly cautious on the market as well as when refuelling. The children actually turned out to be quite pushy and cheeky.

Rolf still had the problem with the oil loss at the Simmer ring of the kick-starter shaft. It was a mess, but the oil loss was minimal. Nevertheless, we wanted to keep some oil in reserve just in case. But this became more and more of a problem. Since *Tamanrasset* we had asked for oil at all gas stations, but to no avail. There are always supply bottlenecks in Algeria. If we had not received any premium petrol at all in *Djanet* and *Tam*, there was now only super in *El Golea*.

Shortly after we left the city, we were stopped by a customs check. We had to show our papers. The officials were particularly interested in the foreign exchange declaration form. We had to show all the foreign currency we had declared upon entry. Everything was fine so far. No one asked us if we had actually been able to live for six weeks just of the

three thousand dinars of the mandatory change. We were also lucky, because Billy had not put our illegally changed dinar back in the hiding place, but kept it in the cabin. If the vehicle had searched more thoroughly, we would probably have gotten into trouble.

Apart from the sand dunes, the drive to *Hassi Touiel* was monotonous. Only a group of camels driven south by an Arab along the road offered some change. Billy knew *Hassi Touiel's* campsite from his first trip through Algeria. An artesian well provides 31°C warm water in abundance. The existing swimming pool had already cooled down too much for bathing due to the cold nights, but the showers were still pleasantly warm after the consistently cold washing facilities of the south.

For dinner there was mushroom risotto with salad. Then we tried the peppermint tea we had bought in *El Golea*. For half a kilo of dried mint we had paid 2.50 SFr. and it was really good.

## Thursday 21 December 1989

### Hassi Touiel

The last night it had been very cold again, thus we crawled out of the warm sleeping bags around nine o'clock. After breakfast we started to do the laundry. It was of course pleasant to wash with the warm water. After almost two hours, everything was on a line.

After lunch, Rolf set about repairing or at least reducing his oil leak. The simmer ring was in poor condition, but he tried to straighten the sealing lip as well as possible. Whether it has achieved anything, will show tomorrow.

After the sandstorm between *In Salah* and *El Golea*, we had to clean the air filters again. Otherwise, no further service work was necessary.

In the evening we received company from a Swiss couple who were traveling with a Range Rover. They had also been to *Niger* and *Mali*. Travelling always gives enough material to chat, so that despite the cool temperature it was half past ten until we retired.

## Friday 22 December 1989

### Hassi Touiel – Ghardaia, 85 km

Since we only had a short stage on the day's program today, we were able to keep in the sleeping bag until nine. The packing was also more leisurely than usual.

The onward journey to *Ghardaia* offered some variety, as the road builders had to build long curves again and again due to the hills. After driving straight ahead for a long time, such little things suddenly catch your eye.

Shortly before *Ghardaia* we stopped at a beautiful viewpoint from where we took some photos. The houses of the city are nested on the slopes of various hills, while on the valley floor some palm groves mix with the residential buildings. After some searching we found the very beautiful and praised campsite "*Oued M'Zab*". Around a swimming pool, in the shade of date palms, the individual pitches are grouped, and are divided by smaller trees and bushes. We cooked ourselves a minestrone for lunch, because the shops had already closed and we had to do without bread. The young people who run the campsite are very friendly. One had even been in Switzerland for a few weeks.

Rolf's makeshift repair from yesterday seemed to pay off, because the seal had remained almost dry today. He was therefore also able to treat himself to a quiet afternoon.

## Saturday 23 December 1989

### Ghardaia

After a hearty breakfast, with scrambled eggs and yogurt, we made our way to the city centre. From the campsite it takes about a quarter of an hour to reach the market and the centre. But before that, we looked for the wine shop with the description of the camping manager. Since we didn't find it right away, we decided to try again on the way back.



The narrow, lively streets of the old town with its many small shops almost reminded us of Italy. In any case, the cityscape is much more interesting compared to the cities visited so far. Many more people crowded the streets and the buildings are often multi-storeyed. On a large, open square, in the middle of the old town, is the goods and vegetable market. The adjacent buildings house a wide variety of shops. The carpet vendors hang their colourful wares in front of the shop, which together with the fruits and vegetables of the market create a colourful mood. We did our errands which offered no difficulties, because *Ghardaia* is excellently supplied. The range of food and especially clothes and other consumer goods is terrific compared to the south. We bought three half, fried chickens in one of the small restaurants and slowly made our way back. We finally found the wine merchant where we bought a bottle of red wine (49 dinars) to taste.

After we had eaten our purchased lunch, we gave the two Swiss motorcyclists, who had arrived yesterday, a crash course in tyre change. One of the two Thomas wanted to try to mount my used Desert tire on his Ténere. But it turned out that the tire was too wide for his rim and so he had to leave his Pirelli on it.

For dinner we had sauerkraut with bacon and sausages. As it was written in the instructions for use, we placed the can in hot water for heating. When we opened the cans, there was a fountain all over the table due to the overpressure. The little bit of meat was not of convincing quality nor quantity yet the 1.5 kg sauerkraut was almost a little too much for the three of us. Only the salad compensated the disappointment and we had learned something.

When we went to bed, for once we saw no stars in the sky. Hopefully the weather won't change!

## Sunday 24 December 1989

### Ghardaia

The sky was overcast when we got up to brew our morning coffee. It remained quite cold because the sun could not warm us.

We didn't have any concrete plans for today. We sat together and chatted. After a cash crash we found out that we were allowed to "squander" about 1500 dinars. Actually, we wanted to go to the city in the afternoon to look for suitable souvenirs. The camp manager offered himself as a companion if he would not have too much work to do.

After a warm soup we helped the second Thomas adjust some Yamaha spokes for his 500cc Morini. Billy had discovered three broken spokes on his the rear wheel. Thomas had not found any spare parts in Switzerland and now had to shorten Yamaha spokes and cut new threads. It had taken him all morning to find an M4 thread cutter.

In between I went to take a shower. The first HOT Shower after six weeks! A blessing especially in view of the prevailing, cold weather. By the time the two had reinstalled their rear wheels, the afternoon was almost over again.

For the dinner of this Christmas Eve we had saved a fondue. With the Phoebus cooker and our small cast iron pan as Caquelon, heating the fondue was as good and easy as at home. Unfortunately Algerian white wine we had not found, so we had to stick to the red wine. It was fondue weather regarding the temperature, only that we enjoyed it outside and under date palms. The 800 g were quickly cleaned away and we moved on to dessert. We had chocolate cream with pears on the menu. The dessert was accompanied by a coffee with plum brandy. The food may have been Christmassy, but felt no Christmas spirit.

Later, the camping manager joined us and we had an interesting conversation about the Islamic religion. He explained to us that the faithful

pray five times a day, and is reminded each time by the sing-song of the *muezzin*. He also explained *Ramadan*, the Islamic month of fasting, to us.

Despite the fact that it was Christmas Eve, I went to bed at half past ten. Rolf and Billy talked for a while with one of the doctors German Democratic Republic who were also in the camp. Ten doctors run a rural hospital in northern Algeria as guest workers. They are paid directly by Algeria, but the GDR also obtains some foreign currency. He had explained that more than a hundred Russian doctors work in Algeria in this way. By the way, we heard from him for the first time about the fall of the Berlin Wall. What significance this meant for themselves or the future of the GDR was of course still open.

## Monday 25 December 1989

### Ghardaia

Today was the last opportunity to convert the remaining dinars into souvenirs. We made our way to the centre. Around the market and in the side streets we rattled off various shops. The offer, especially woven carpets, is great. Rolf and I each bought a small carpet for only 10 SFr. each. The price differences were relatively large, so it was worthwhile to check different offers. We were only able to negotiate the price down by about 10% and only with great tenacity, which is actually unusual in the Arab world. In another shop we wanted to invest the remaining 1000 dinars in three of the typical leather stools. In the end, however, Billy had to do without, because we did not get three for the money.

After lunch we made ourselves comfortable again. Later we went to fill up so that we could avoid the typical, morning queue.

After dinner, Martin, the doctor from the GDR, came by with his wife. While he spoke openly about the problems in the GDR, his wife was rather reserved. He told us that until liberalization, they were required to account for conversations with foreigners at their embassy. Since al-

cohol is difficult to obtain in Algeria, they had produced wine themselves. Matthias had brought us a bottle of date wine to try. It tasted a bit sour, but it was quite drinkable.

## Tuesday 26 December 1989

### Ghardaia - Guerrara - Touggourt, 320 km

It was still cloudy and it remained cold even after sunrise. After packing up, we said goodbye to the people we had met here and set off. The cold penetrated me to the bone after just a few kilometres. The road was in good condition and we made good progress. Although it was only eleven o'clock when we arrived in *Guerrara*, we ordered an "Omlette Frites" for lunch. While we were eating, we watched a mentally ill man jumping around on the floor like a monkey, begging from people food and cigarettes. It was a bit embarrassing when he stopped at our table and shouted in Arabic that was incomprehensible to us. Suddenly, he made a jump and ran away crying.

We had planned to stay at *El Alia*, but it was only 1am when we got there. We decided to drive on to *Touggourt*. *El Alia* and the next oasis are strongly threatened by the sand. We could see many already abandoned buildings which were slowly covered by the sand. Also the landscape was now more and more dominated by sand dunes. We approached again the northern foothills of the "*Grand Erg Oriental*".

As with the outward journey, we camped at the thermal bath outside *Touggourt*. The dim indoor pool with its damp and dingy changerooms made us not to take a bath despite the cold. Thermal baths are a delicate matter when it comes to hygiene.

For dinner today there was something typically Swiss: *Rösti* with fried eggs. Billy struggled with the sticky *Rösti*, and could not prevent a burnt bottom. It was still edible, but he couldn't serve it as the usual, golden-brown cake.

When it was already dark, a group of Italians came to the campsite, and they soon began cooking loudly. Only when dinner was on the table it became a little quieter for a short time. But like us, they fortunately went to bed soon.

## Wednesday 27 December 1989

### Touggurt - El Oued - Tozeur, 250 km

In the middle of the night I woke up because raindrops fell on the tent roof. Billy had decided to sleep outside and now had to "move" his bed under a tree. As quick as it had started, the spook was already over and I soon fell asleep again.

It was not as cold as yesterday, but still cloudy. But I still dressed a bit warmer today, because it was still uncomfortably cold on the bike. After *Touggurt*, the road leads to *El Oued* through the foothills of the dune field "*Grand Erg Oriental*". Apart from a few oases along the road, only two power lines accompanied the asphalt through the sea of sand.

The area here in the north of the Sahara is known for its "sand roses". These rose-like crystals are gypsum efflorescences and can be found in the dunes, when they become exposed by the wind. In size, they vary from a few centimetres to structures of 20 kg and more. At one of the many stalls we stopped and picked out some small pieces. For 10 dinars a truly cheap souvenir. At other stands, however, very tasteless souvenirs were also offered. *Feneks*, the little desert foxes, were held up by the neck. For my taste, these little guys belong in the vastness of the desert and are hardly suitable as pets for tourists.

In *El Oued*, we wanted to convert the remaining dinars into cheap gasoline. At 150 l, however, all tanks were full and we were left with a few dinars. The changed money had worked out pretty well for us.

At the border at *Taleb Larbi*, the vehicles were fortunately only jammed towards Algeria. We were the only tourists who drove north. We submitted our foreign exchange declaration and tourist card without any

checks. At the policy we had to fill out two "*Fiche*" again, a quick look at the back of the Toyota and the barrier opened. Everything had taken just under an hour. Only a few kilometres further on, the procedure was repeated in Tunisian, fill in "*Fiche*", stamp in the passport, look into the car and we were back in Tunisia. Only our citrus fruits were confiscated. We had known beforehand that the import of date products was prohibited, but that the rule applies to everything not grown in the ground was nowhere written down.

In *Nefta* we went to the bank to exchange Tunisian dinars again. Afterwards we had a late lunch before we left for *Tozeur* to spend the night again at the *Belvédère Camping*. On our first stop we had been almost alone, but now the small camping was quite well occupied. Among other things, a group of Swiss was there. Five motorcycles and a Land Rover who were on the road like us, but only in Tunisia. One has had an accident and had to fly home with a broken collarbone.

The dinner was not very sumptuous, as we had eaten lunch at four o'clock. It got cold again today but we stayed up until nine o'clock.

## Thursday 28 December 1989

### **Tozeur**

After we had breakfast in peace, the three of us drove to the city centre in the Toyota. There was a lot of activity and we noticed the many tourists, especially Italians. We took a little stroll through the city and bought teapots and tea. After a short walk through the market, we soon made our way back. It had been almost a little too hectic for me in this city, apparently I had already got used to the sparsely populated regions of the Sahara. The Swiss had described to us a shop where beer is sold. On the way back we stocked up on beer and returned to the *Belvédère*.

In the early afternoon I enjoyed a warm bath in the basin of the spring tapping. The temperature of the water is about 30°C where it shoots out of the thick pipe.

Two Swiss with a German appeared later, all three of whom were on motorcycles. As usual at such meetings, there is enough to talk about to sit together for a few hours.

## Friday 29 December 1989

### Tozeur - Nefta - Chott el Jerid, 120 km

Actually, we had wanted to drive on the normal route over the paved road to *Douz*. However, when we drove into *Tozeur* after our departure, the motorbike drivers of Hans-Ruedi Möri's travel group met us. Of course, there was a huge hello, because in addition to "Liebu" and "Brachsme" there were some more familiar faces. On the spur of the moment, we joined the tour group. First we visited the desert zoo in *Tozeur* together. It is beautifully laid out in a park, but the way animal are kept was a bit disgusting to me. First you were shown some scorpions and snakes. Of course, the creepy feeling of a python around the neck could not be missed. Two young lions were released without further ado but they crawled into the bushes in panic, pursued by the tourists with clicking cameras. A highlight was a Coke-drinking camel. The guide put a Coke bottle between the animal's lips, whereupon the bottle was elegantly held up and emptied in a few sips. After a short snack we went on to *Nefta*. Rolf and I hung on to the motorcycles while Billy drove along with the support vehicles. A few kilometres after *Nefta* we stopped at a big sand rose market. Hans-Ruedi suggested to romp around in the sand dunes on the other side of the road. They weren't huge dunes, but we could let off steam like children in the sandbox. Crisscross, up and down, the 20 motorcycles thundered. Again and again we saw a rider pushing his motorcycle out of the soft sand under the ejection of huge sand fountains. After the cars had arrived at the souvenir stands, we set off to cross the westernmost tip of the large salt lake "*Chott el Jerid*" to the south. With a good 100 clicks we roared over the pot-flat salt desert. Initially, a long plume of dust was pulled behind us. Later, the soil became somewhat damp and softer. In fourth gear full throttle, the TT ran just 100-110 km/h. After about 30 km the track became sandy again.

Also small bushes and small dunes showed up again. Over the humps, the Yamaha often came on the rear wheel or even both wheels went into the air. When we stopped, we never had to wait long for the escort vehicles, because they also made good progress. The track now followed the southern edge of the *Chott* towards the oasis of *Douz*. A good distance outside the oasis we set up the camp. Of course, there was a lot to tell again. A few days ago, "Liebu" hit his shoulder while driving in the sand, in a fall. But I think the way he rode today, he's on the mend, I mean the shoulder.

We ate quite early, we had spaghetti Bolognese, the Möri's gang had ravioli. Afterwards we sat together around the campfire and laughed at the jokes told. The ever-stronger wind spoiled the mood little, but at half past ten the last ones went into the feathers.

## Saturday 30 December 1989

**Chott el Jerid - Douz - 30 km direction of Ksar Ghilane, 140 km**

We reached the road to the oasis *Faouar* after a few kilometres. The wide gravel road tempted us to drive at a good 100 km/h. But caution was called for, because often deceptive soft sand fields were hidden behind hilltops. At a military camp, not far from the oasis, we waited for the cars. Some got bored soon and so they began to pass the time with small jumps and elegant drifts. The road ran at this point on a dam, which was used by some as a ramp to jump. Erich even wanted to try to jump the whole road. They prepared a beautiful ramp. Erich got started and jumped the road at a height of 2.5 m. The landing succeeded well, but afterwards he lost control of the motorcycle and actually crashed only slightly. Unfortunately, he hit the handlebars with his upper body and it took his breath away for a moment. After he recovered, he only complained of shoulder pain. One had walked the jump with 17 m, which was enough with a lot of reserve for the only 6 m wide road.



At *El Faouar* we reached the paved road on which we stayed until *Douz*. All the oases in the area are intensively irrigated. Here, too, date production plays a major role. But also fruits and vegetables are planted. Tourism is also becoming increasingly important. At the gas station in *Douz* we had a lunch break. Rolf arrived late because he had caught a flat tire through a spike. While we waited, I refreshed our food supplies in the city. In addition to fruits and vegetables, I also bought sheep meat for a dinner.

Hans-Ruedi had decided to avoid the big dune sea on the way to *Ksar Ghilane* because we wanted to get all four cars through. After leaving the protective alleys of *Douz*, we experienced a mediocre sandstorm. Nevertheless, we ventured south into the desert. The easily recognizable track was peppered with fresh, up to 1.5 m high dunes. No problem for the motorcycles, but the cars were quite challenged. When the tracks disappeared in a dune field, we even had to play scouts for the off-road vehicles. They meandered laboriously through the now much higher dunes. Violent storms must have raged in the last days and weeks, and had transported the sand by the ton. At a dried up well we built the camp, because it would soon get dark. Fortunately, the wind had subsided in the course of the afternoon. Today's entry into this route was a small foretaste of what the next day would bring us.

## Sunday 31 December 1989

**Approx. 70 km direction Ksar Ghilane**

Measured by the last kilometres, it went quite well. The larger dunes were bypassed by the cars, while we had fun crossing the piles of sand directly. On a very good track with little sand we progressed well, and we had the lunch break before the first serious dune field. It already looked impressive, first the small dunes, still with bushes in between and behind them a belt of naked up to 20 m high piles of sand. It would be tough with the motorcycle, but for the cars that would mean shovelling and recovering for several hours if everything went well.

At the begin to the large dunes I had teamed up with "Liebu". Since it is easy to get lost or bogged, it is a first commandment to drive in pairs and to pay attention to each other. This is the only way to help each other if something goes wrong. So I drove ahead and Heinz followed my traces. At a only 30 cm high dune edge it happened. I had hit her a bit diagonally, while "Liebu" was about to drive straight over it. The edge was unexpectedly hard and he lost the handlebars, causing him to fall. It looked like a harmless fall, as it is almost unavoidable in such terrain. At the next stop, Heinz complained of severe pain in his shoulder, which we looked up more closely. The diagnosis was quickly made: collarbone fracture. Driving on was out of the question for him. The collarbone was fixed with a special bandage. As a passenger, he would have to ride in the car and we planned to fetch his motorcycle later. In this terrain, however, he was better off on foot because the shaking and bumping would cause him very severe pain. The motorcyclists should cross the dunes in two groups and wait on the other side of the high dunes. I was one of the first and laid a trail which some followed. Urs, "Liebus" brother, was always behind me. In the beginning, we made good progress. The dunes were only a few meters high and in between you always found "valleys" that were easy to navigate. When I turned around once, I was alone. I didn't think much about it and drove on alone for a few minutes. Only when the dunes got even higher and I fell for the first time, I got an uncomfortable feeling in my stomach. I heard the engines of some colleagues, but they could pass me within 20 m without discovering me. I fought my way forward, but the dunes were getting higher and higher. Sometimes I advanced only 10-20 m only to bog the motorbike up to the axle. It was sweaty work to dig out the rear wheel by hand to keep going again. In addition, the hot engine started poorly. At some point I was bogged again. The kick starter was on the slope side of the dune and totally covered by sand. The wheels were soon freed again, but whenever I tried to dig out the kick starter, the powdery sand trickled down and ruined my efforts. I was in despair, because I could not remove the whole dune and I lacked the strength to push it out. At least now I regretted not having turned back when I had found myself alone. I was

resting and was about to try again to snatch the thing out of the sand when I heard engines nearby. About 100 m away, the rest of one group gradually appeared. Fortunately, they became aware of me. But before I could walk over to them, Viktor came in my traces from behind. He had also lost his partner and had followed him when he met my trail. With his help, we were able to get mine and his motorbike afloat again. I had already spotted the track outside the dunes with the binoculars, so we tried to get out in this direction. We were both pretty exhausted when the dunes got smaller and there was even hard ground in between. Now it was a matter of a few minutes and we were out of the dunes. We drove to the track and on it back to the dunes to the exit. There we hoped to meet the cars that we thought had tried further north. Instead, we met a Swiss I knew from *Tozeur*. His five colleagues had chosen the same route as us, while he was driving around the dunes on a gravel road. The five motorcycles had been overdue for two days and he was now looking for them. Soon, however, he had to turn back to *reach Ksar Ghilane* before dusk. Viktor and I decided to look for the other people from an exposed hill about 5 km after the dunes. As soon as we reached the top, another seven motorcyclists reached the mountain and joined us. When I discovered the cars and another group of motorcycles in the middle of the dunes with binoculars, it was clear to us that if they made it at all, it would be very late and dark. We prepared a signal fire and gave light signals with the headlight of Tonis Africa Twin. The cars answered us soon after. Shortly before dusk, it began to rain accompanied by strong winds. I only was only wearing the protectors and was soon shivering from the cold. Luckily I had the rescue blanket with me which served as rain cover for three men. The others, what a paradoxical picture, stood in the desert in rain suits and helmets and waited until it was over. Fortunately, the rain lasted only a short time. As soon as it was a little darker, we lit our fire to warm us and to show the rest of the group that we would stay in this place. They responded with a green and a red signal rocket. After dark, we noticed that the cars were no longer moving. We decided to drive back into the dunes, as far as possible in the dark. Nicely lined up in a single file we managed about 4 km until it seemed

too risky to continue. We also didn't want to overstrain Erich, who had fallen on his shoulder again. So we left the bikes on dune ridges and set off on foot. The orientation was not a problem, because a headlight of a car had been set up in our direction. If we couldn't see it, the compass helped to keep the direction. After 3/4 hour we arrived at the already set up camp. There was a happy welcome and everyone was happy that the whole group was reunited. Under the circumstances, there was a simplified dinner, but it tasted twice as good after the hard day. Since we had run out of bread, I prepared a bread dough and, to the astonishment of the team, made four loaves of bread in the course of the evening. The New Year's Eve party was a bit improvised but no less funny. Hans-Ruedi provided fireworks and at midnight the sparkling wine was popping. For me and probably for most others as well, this was probably one of the most unforgettable New Year's Eve we ever had experienced. After toasting and New Year's wishes, we didn't stay up late, because everyone was pretty exhausted from the long day.

## Monday 1 January 1990

**Approx. 40 km to Ksar Ghilane**

Before breakfast, I helped Billy replace the two broken leaf spring on the front left of the Toyota. After almost an hour, the maltreated vehicle was ready for the attack on the remaining dunes. While I marched back to our motorcycles with the group of "pedestrians", the others tried to follow the trail of an Italian, whom we had met yesterday after leaving the dunes.

The way back to the motorbikes seemed much shorter to me in daylight. Urs drove "Liebus" TT out in our footsteps. In stages, this motorbike was brought to the road. Yesterday's rain made it much easier to drive over the dunes. By the way, we saw traces that came from our group. I was amazed how far into the dunes we had driven yesterday in total darkness. In daylight, of course, the route was half as wild. Arriving at the track, I drove towards the cars. They were still on the last few meters dunes when I arrived at them. They said that it had gone surprisingly

well. Only the last two or three hundred meters of bare dunes had been hard. It was also noticeable that it was getting worse and worse to drive due to the drying of the dunes.

The last stretch to the fort, only 4 km from the oasis *Ksar Ghilane*, was quickly completed. From the old Foreign Legionnaire fortress you have a wonderful view of the dune landscape and the oasis behind it. After lunch, everyone was drawn to the warm spring of *Ksar Ghilane*. But you had to earn the bath first, because once again we had to cross a few kilometres of dunes. Viktor and I drove again as a couple. We followed the car tracks. I tried to drive beside the tracks, because on the "virgin" sand it was much easier than in the deep, ransacked tracks. Without having to stop once, we went through to the oasis. Since our swimming trunks were still in the cars, we were soon sitting in our underpants in the 30°C warm, natural pool. A blessing and when our colleagues also supplied us with beer, the world was more than in order.

An hour after us, the cars had also made it. The camp was soon set up. After dinner, we had rice with mushrooms on a cream sauce and for dessert vanilla cream with fruit salad, we sat around the campfire. The last two days provided enough to talk about, so it was relatively late.

## Tuesday 2 January 1990

### Ksar Ghilane

This morning "Liebu" and Erich were driven by Mani and Rosemarie to Tunis, from where they would fly home. Mani drove "Liebus" TT so that a motorbike was already in Tunis. Of course, he had fun riding a motorcycle again without any worries instead of tormenting the heavy Land Cruiser through the dunes.

Ruth and I started baking bread soon after breakfast. As always so far, we achieved quite acceptable results and everyone was happy to be served "oven-fresh" bread for lunch. I spent a good part of the afternoon in warm pool. Exuberantly we romped in the pool. Some had their butts kneaded on the back of a camel. The most tireless were riding back to

the fort once again on the camel trail. A group of Italians tried to follow them. As they crawled past us paddling like ducks, it was clear to us that this could not go well. Only two finally made it, the others returned to "safe" ground after a short time with bright red heads.

For dinner we were invited to the Möri's. It's also nice when you can just sit at the table and eat like at home. After ample drinks were organized, we enjoyed the evening at the campfire. By the way, Rolf and I baked more bread for breakfast. Today it was midnight until the last ones went to bed.

## Wednesday 3 January 1990

**Ksar Ghilane**

The freshly baked bread sold like wildfire. But also nothing remained of the muesli. After breakfast I went together with "Brachsme" and "Küsu" on an extended morning walk through the oasis. Urs poked again and again in the mouse holes in the hope of finding a scorpion, because he has a collection of reptiles and other critters at home. Interestingly, the newer irrigation channels were mostly broken and the water flowed through the old clay canals. Mainly fodder for donkeys and camels was cultivated. In addition, the cultivation of date palms is also very widespread. Occasionally we saw young pomegranate trees. We often met working people who greeted us very friendly.

It was well past noon when we returned to the camp. After a beer in the bar we went for a swim. Since some of us were already in the water, two teams were formed to play water polo. Until we had let off steam, we had stayed in the warm water for almost an hour and a half.

Ruth also cooked a fine dinner for the three of us. After a hearty soup there was tortellini and later, when the main course was cleaned up, also a dessert. Today the company was less exuberant, although we had it quite nice.

## Thursday 4 January 1990

### Ksar Ghilane

I had agreed to drive back to the point in front of the dunes where we had lunch three days ago with Hans-Ruedi in the Terrano. Shortly before eight o'clock he woke me up.

We drove on the normal route to the fort, but when we got on a wrong track we promptly sanded in. Until we were finally back on the right traces, we had to shovel almost an hour and put sand mats under the wheels. Again and again we got stuck in the soft sand. As soon as we could drive on the main lane, we were rid of the problems. We wrote a road book of the whole route to the entrance at the big dunes and drove into the dune belt after a short stop. Without getting stuck, we drove through the most difficult part. In the middle of the now harmless dunes, a convoy of six cars came towards us. We let them pass and drove without significant difficulties to the stone cairn where our rest area had been three days ago.

After we had rested and eaten a bit, we discussed the way back. We wanted to confirm our theory, namely that it would be easiest to reach the narrowest point through the dunes along the northern hills. Without even sanding once, we managed to find a good trail and sketched the area a bit.

After about an hour we were back at the fort. On the trip three days ago, this had taken a whole day. The group of French people were about to leave when we arrived. They wanted to reach the oasis on the camel trail. We told them that this was quite difficult with cars, but they wanted to try anyway. The first and third vehicles got stuck in the first dune. After a short assessment, Hans-Ruedi passed the two, let me get in and we drove away from them. It required quite a bit of momentum in the narrow dune valleys and curves not to get stuck, but Hans-Ruedi knew his job. Only once we had to put the sand mats under to restart, but after five minutes we went on. As we shot around a dune, two Italians were standing next to the traces with their motorbikes. One had

broken down with engine damage. After a short consultation, we decided to attach the bike to the Nissan and tow it back to the oasis. The rider was great, because he never fell off the bike despite the soft sand and the up and down. When we arrived at the camp, the Italians opened a bottle of bubbly to empty it together with us. Most likely, the engine had swallowed sand, because the compression was very weak.

We had heard our boys racing around on a solid sandy surface and therefore drove over there as well. They had staked out a nice motocross track. We mingled in with the car and did not look so bad. Hans-Ruedi was also not afraid to take the jumping hill. There were some spectacular photos of the Terrano taken with all four wheels in the air. I put on my gear and also did some laps. We exchanged our motorcycles with each other to get to know the differences a little. Even with Werni's Africa Twin it went quite well, but in the soft sand you could feel the high weight. Billy and Mani had organized two goats in the morning and were boning them. The rest of us put on our swimming trunks and were soon back in the pool enjoying the warm water. After more than an hour I left the water reluctantly, because it was quite cold outside and also a strong wind blew.

Two French motorcyclists, accompanied by the six cars we had already seen in the dunes, came in by the evening to fix their defective motorcycles. One had burned the clutch of his Africa Twin while his colleague had worn out the chain and sprocket wheel to the point of uselessness. Both could be helped to the point that they could at least drive as far as Tunis.

The dinner dragged on a bit, because the meat on the grill took over an hour to cook. But afterwards it tasted twice as good. However, it started raining at the exact moment when everyone was eating. We are all not too well equipped for rain, so people soon retreated to the dry tent. It continued to rain until morning, sometimes even heavily.



## Friday 5 January 1990

### Ksar Ghilane - Bir Soltane - Matmata, ca. 130 km

Due to the persistent bad weather, the three of us had decided to drive along the pipeline track to *Bir Soltane* and from there directly to *Matmata*. The tent and everything that was left outside was damp or wet. We packed our belongings and said goodbye to the others. They wanted to drive through the mountains towards *Djerba*. When Billy wanted to start the Hilux, the engine didn't start. The damp weather had given the ignition system the rest. We tinkered with it for about an hour until we got the car running. But when Rolf wanted to kick off his Honda, it didn't start either. After a quarter of an hour of intense kicking, he also got his vehicle running. Meanwhile, the others had already left. They also had some problems getting the motorcycles running.

The gravel road was easy to drive on, but Billy drove careful, because our supply of leaf springs was slowly running out. After about 30 km we surprisingly met Möri's troop again. They had decided at short notice to go to *Matmata* as well. One of the Suzukis had given up. Since we now had the same way again, the Suzuki driver got into the Hilux with Billy and his bike was attached to the towing bracket behind the Toyota. The next meeting point was north of *Bir Soltane* at the turnoff to *Matmata*. About 15 km before we came to a *oued*, which, due to the heavy rains, had swelled to a raging river of about 20 m width. A group of Italians were already on the other side, so it was feasible to cross the murky river. Rolf was the first to try. He got to the middle of the river until his Honda stalled and he had to push the rest. Wet feet were the price. Jarno tried it 100 m upstream at a shallower place and got to the other side without getting wet. I also chose a spot upstream. At the beginning I was able to drive slowly without encountering big stones. Suddenly, however, the water became deeper and only a well-dosed burst of gas saved me from dismounting. Now the water splashed up over my head, but I made it to the other shore without issues. One by one crossed the river, more or less wet. Rüedu's bike suffered from a cracked side cover on the engine with corresponding oil loss. Werni had towed him

up to the Oued and on arrival drove into the river with Rüedu in tow without long hesitation. He didn't get far and he had to put his Africa Twin in the water. The two pushed their motorbikes to the other bank. The cars got through without any problems and after a short break we went on.

A lovely woman served us tea at the café at the junction to *Matmata*. Despite the fire, the small "garden restaurant" was not very comfortable in this weather, but still preferable to a stop on the open road. When everyone was together, we continued towards *Matmata*. If the weather had been nice, the landscape and the track would have been a treat, but now it was just a matter of arriving in *Matmata* as quickly as possible. On the way to *Tamezret* the track was easy to drive. Some rocky passages required some caution, especially because of the wetness. For the remaining kilometres to *Matmata* the road was paved. At the Hotel *Matmata* there were rooms for everyone. Although we were soaking wet and quite dirty, we were warmly welcomed. We had barely occupied the rooms when the cars arrived. After a hot shower we were all better again and the good appetite soon led us to a nearby restaurant where we enjoyed a good and rich dinner. It was just under 10°C in the restaurant, but the spicy main course warmed us up from the inside.

As we were on our way to the hotel, a completely soaked, clay-covered Australian on a CX Honda asked us for a hotel. He had come from *Medenine* and had needed over four hours for the 60 km. He didn't even have to tell us that he had fallen to the ground several times. Dirty as he was, he was also assigned a room. After a few drinks at the hotel bar we went to bed.

## Saturday 6 January 1990

### Matmata

When we went to breakfast at nine o'clock, the weather had not improved a bit. In the night I had woken up a few times from the noise of the heavy rain. It was clear to the three of us that we wanted to stay

another day, while Hans-Ruedi would have liked to continue. Rüedu had repaired the housing and side cover with liquid aluminum and only needed to refill oil and find out whether the work had been worthwhile. The weather did not clear up and according to the latest information the road to *Medenine* was interrupted due to the heavy rains. The paved road to *Gabes* was also flooded in various places. So finally we all prepared to wait another day in *Matmata* to see how the weather developed.

With the manager of the hotel we made a favourable group rate for another night and put together a Tunisian menu with him, which we wanted to have together in the hotel restaurant in the evening.

The afternoon was quite entertaining and especially since it rarely went longer than half an hour without rain, nobody was remorseful to have stayed in the hotel. I talked to the Aussie or was reading a book.

The dinner wasn't extraordinary, but for 4 dinars you can probably not ask too much. We ended the evening in the hotel bar.

## Sunday 7 January 1990

### Matmata – Gabes – Maseth – Houmt Souk, 200 km

I could hardly believe it, but when I opened the window there was not a cloud in the sky. It was still a bit cool, but the day promised to be nice and warmer. Shortly after nine we had packed our things and were ready to travel. For the group of Möri's it took a little bit longer. In order to easy on our Toyota, we drove on the paved road to *Gabes*. Even on the day after the heavy rains, it was clear where the otherwise dry *Oueds* had water. Only a few rivulets had to be crossed today. In *Gabes* we went towards *Medenine* to turn off at *Maseth* to the ferry to the island of *Djerba*. In shuttle traffic, passengers and vehicles are transferred to the touristy island. The strait is only a few hundred meters wide and so we were back on solid ground after a few minutes. Since the only campsites are on the east side of the island, we first had to cross all of *Djerba*. On still soaked roads we went along the south coast to *El Kantara*. Here a dam forms the connection to the mainland. When we arrived at the

campsites, we saw that there was only the hotel complexes and there was no village to be found far and wide. We therefore decided to take a hotel in the main town *Houmt Souk*, so that we could visit the city on foot tomorrow. After some searching we found an apartment hotel where we stayed for 20 dinars. In addition to two bedrooms, the apartment also had a kitchen and bathroom. Rolf and I serviced the bikes while Billy relaxed.

In the evening we strolled through the old town looking for a nice restaurant. The few winter tourists had returned to their hotels on the east coast and the city was only animated by a few locals. We were the only guests in the small restaurant. The food was excellent yet the touristy place correspondingly expensive.

## Monday 8 January 1990

### **Houmt Souk**

Right after breakfast we went to the bank opposite to change money again. As I had planned yesterday, I was looking for a hairdresser to have my beard and haircut. The deaf-mute boss of the business took care of me. With sign language I informed him of my wishes. Very carefully he cut my hair first dry, then wet. Then he devoted himself to the beard. Cheeks and neck were shaved clean and even the muzzle he trimmed expertly. Unfortunately, I only noticed too late that he also smeared cream in my hair, but I was able to wash it out again. For 3 dinars, about 5 francs, I had enjoyed a very good service.

Together with Rolf I visited the Turkish fortress on the beach in the north of the city. Afterwards we browsed in the many souvenir shops. We just laughed about the prices on the tags. A ceramic candlestick should cost 24 dinars. In the end, he changed hands for 4 dinars without the seller losing money. As we sat with coffee and excellent pastry, we noticed a beautiful carpet on the opposite side. We both guessed the price and walked over to ask for the price. Both of our guesses were too high. We were invited to a tea without obligation. We were shown some carpets,

and I liked the silk prayer rugs best. It was only out of interest that I began to haggle. 2700 SFr. was his first prize. My counter-offer was 1000 SFr. Only up to 2300 SFr. he wanted to reduce the price finally. The eager salesman spoke of bankruptcy and losing money. After some back and forth, we got up and wanted to leave. The seller held me back by the arm and came down with price surprisingly fast. When I stubbornly insisted on the 1000 SFr., he even agreed. I talked myself out of it by stating that I had to get the money first and put him off until tomorrow. We went to the ONAT<sup>14</sup> to inform ourselves about the guide prices. It was about 200 SFr. higher than I would have had to pay. I now had an idea of the magnitude in which I had to act. Unfortunately, we did not find what I was looking for at another dealer. I will try again in *Kairouan*.

We had dinner very close to our hotel, just outside the centre. This was clearly reflected in the price. For almost half price, compared with day before, we had to do without wine, but the food was fine. Since it wasn't too late yet, we walked into the city centre for coffee. They were already putting things together, but it was still enough time for an espresso.

## Tuesday 9 January 1990

### Houmt Souk – Gabes – Kairouan, 325 km

Shortly after nine we were ready to go. On the direct route we drove back to *Aijin* to take the ferry to the mainland. We were the last vehicles that found space on the next ferry. The way back to *Gabes* was the same. But even after that, the landscape changed little. About 100 km before *Kairouan*, the sky turned black and blacker. Rolf and I put on our rain pants as a precaution. Shortly before it actually started to rain, we stopped for lunch. Although we got some rain afterwards, it seemed to me that the worst was already over. Along the road you could see big puddles in the fields and in the mountains west of the road it looked like

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<sup>14</sup> ONAT is a state institution that certifies authentic and high-quality artisan products and guarantees the origin and quality.

it was heavy raining. Soon, however, the sky cleared up again, thus we were dry again until the stage finish.

At first we wanted to camp at the youth hostel, but Billy and I didn't really want to settle into this "parking lot". For two dinars a person we moved into a bunkbed in one of the rooms for 10. Since Billy didn't feel very well, Rolf and I went into town alone again. We rummaged around in the old town, the so-called medina, looking for a silk carpet for me. A young Tunisian offered to show us around. We stopped by various dealers. The prices were exaggerated same as in *Djerba*, only that I could not haggle so easily here. We had already come to terms with the fact that it was too expensive here when the boy came running after us and talked about a shop where we could buy a carpet at the expected price. So we tried again. Although the selection was not very large, I found a nice piece. It was a slightly smaller carpet, but otherwise exactly what I was looking for. I soon realized that they wanted to sell something and stubbornly insisted on my offer of 500 SFr. Originally, it was supposed to cost 450 dinars, almost 850 SFr.

After the carpet was packed, we looked for a restaurant for dinner. The fact that the restaurant was located outside the "touristy" centre was already evident in the predominantly Tunisian guests and the prices. For 10 SFr. we ate "*Brik a l'Oeuf*", a mixed salad and chicken or meat skewers with fries. A bottle of mineral water was included as well as two Cokes.

When we got back to the hostel, Billy was still or already in bed, but he was feeling better. He didn't really like food yet, but he thought it would settle down again.

## Wednesday 10 January 1990

**Kairouan - Hammam Lif - Ez Zahra**

It was cool and the sky was overcast, but at least it wasn't raining. Before we left *Kairouan*, we had breakfast in the same restaurant where we had dinner yesterday. Billy chose an omelette with bellpepps for all of us.

The peppers were strengthened by chilis, but you had to look for the eggs. All in all, a spicy thing on an empty stomach.

The journey to *Ez Zahra*, just before *Tunis*, led through flat, boring area. Only that it was getting greener and greener and the trees were bigger and stronger, we noticed. After a good two hours we drove up in front of the modern '*Hotel Ez Zahra* and moved into a triple room. Before we changed, we unloaded all our belongings in the parking lot to make room for the partially dismantled motorcycles. A large part of the boxes went to the roof, while the rest found space next to the two motorbikes inside. As soon as we were finished, it started to rain heavily. A good, late lunch made us forget the bad weather. The time until dinner we killed with reading and a nap. After a coffee in the hotel bar I went to the room to read something, because I didn't feel like hanging around in the boring bar.

## Thursday 11 January 1990

### Ez Zahra – Tunis – Ez Zahra

Actually, Rolf and I had already wanted to go to Tunis in the morning, but it rained so heavily until noon that we lost the desire for it. The vanguard of Möri's group, Markus and Gerhard arrived in their Land Rover shortly after noon.

After they had moved into their room, we took two taxis to the centre of Tunis. The small taxis are only allowed to take three passengers, but for 4 dinars the journey is still cheap. The *medina*, i.e. the old town, is a huge market, which is largely covered. To the left and right, the shops are lined up in the narrow streets. In many cases, a particular trade occupies its own street. For hours we wandered all over this fascinating world of trade. Every now and then we let ourselves be dragged into one of the shops. If you showed interest in an object, the haggling started. Little, maybe 12-year-old tots turned out to be tough and competent traders. By the time everyone had their souvenirs and gifts together, it had already gotten dark. In the dense rush hour traffic we had some trouble to

find two taxis that brought us back to the hotel. We stowed the purchased things in an empty box on the roof rack and finally covered the roof load with a tarpaulin.

## Friday 12 January 1990

### Ez Zahra - La Goulette - Ferry

At six o'clock we had the wake-up call. There was not much left to pack, because all three of us had only a small travel bag with the essentials for the ship passage. Also the breakfast took little time, so we were the first on the way to the harbour. It was a morning that made it easy to say goodbye to Tunisia. The foggy, cloudy weather and the darkness of the early morning hour were not suitable to create a good mood.

From the village of *Redief* on a peninsula we took a small ferry over the fairway of the big ships and we were already at the ferry port. For the last time they tried to sell something to the departing tourists. Most of them no longer had a Tunisian currency due to the export ban on dinars. After checking the tickets, we entered the duty-free zone of the port to complete the exit formalities. One of the Tunisian vehicles was completely dismantled and finally sniffed by a drug search dog. We ourselves came through customs without much search and were able to load directly onto the "Habib". Meanwhile, Möri's troops had also arrived and were busy with the customs formalities. Some managed to get on the ship with us, the rest had to wait to plug with their motorcycles the last remaining "holes" in the hold.

With only three-quarters of an hour delay, the "*Habib*" finally departed. As soon as we left the harbour, it started to rain heavily. We moved inside and went to the bar. It was soon time to take an aperitif, because lunch was scheduled for half past one. As on the inward journey, food and service was very good. After more than an hour we left the restaurant with a full belly.

During the afternoon I switched between the two bars in first class. Time passed rapidly and soon it was time for dinner. The long nap had not



improved Billy's malaise, so he refrained from eating. Rolf and I, on the other hand, had a good appetite. We had been assigned a table neighbour, a Tunisian living in Italy, with whom we had a lively conversation about North Africa and the Islamic religion.

After a short nap I met with some people again at the bar. There is not much else to do on board than to sit together and chat. It was not too late when one after the other set off towards the bunk.

## Saturday 13 January 1990

**Ferry – Genoa – Chiasso – Aarau, 450 km**

Only shortly before the service was discontinued we went to the restaurant to have breakfast. Billy felt better today, and he came to have breakfast, albeit still with a moderate appetite. Afterwards we had just time to clear our cabin, because the ship already arrived in the port of Genoa. The small delay in Tunis had even been overcome.

Hans-Ruedi Möri had, as usual, collected all passports, including ours, to complete the entry formalities at the Italian customs. Soon he came back but without having received the stamps. The official had arbitrarily decided that everyone had to appear in person. Now a big queue started to form. There was only one officer each for first and second class on board. For this purpose, the North African travellers were checked very carefully. Finally it was half past one until we had all our forms stamped. After that, however, it was quickly possible to get off the ship. Roberto and Francesca had suggested in *Tamanrasset* to pick us up in Genoa to eat together in a nice restaurant. But we couldn't find them anywhere.

I had agreed with Viktor that I could ride back to Switzerland with him and Urs, as it was quite cramped for three people in the Toyota. Their motorcycles were quickly loaded onto the trailer. We said goodbye to the others and set off. Behind the coastal mountains we stopped at a motorway service station to quickly eat something small. We made good progress, the weather was good and soon we were in the cue at the Swiss

customs. I hoped that Billy didn't have to unload with the Toyota, because we would have lost quite a bit of time to check all the equipment and especially to load it again. However, both vehicles got through without delay or check.

In Mosleerau we had a coffee together and then drove to Urs' home to deliver him and his TT. But before Viktor could turn to Winterthur, he also had to deliver me at home. Of course, there was a lot to talk about, so although I was quite tired, it was quite late.

END

## Epilogue

In the nine weeks we drove a distance of 7000 km. Of these, about 2500 km were unpaved tracks and roads. For this route at least 5-6 weeks should be planned.

The ferry first class costs almost 600 SFr. return per person and about 1100 SFr. for a Toyota Hilux (with over 220 cm height)

We had bought food in Switzerland for about 750 SFr., which was enough for about 2/3 of all the travel days. In addition to canned menus, pasta, rice, corn, dried tortellini, etc. were packed. For lunch we carried mainly canned meat and boxed cheese, but also salami and bacon in one piece, as well as other dry meat and sausages, which we had vacuum-packed. Vacuum-packed smoked meat can be kept unrefrigerated for more than two months. We also had 12 kg of flour and dry yeast for 15 kg of flour. In the cast pot we baked our own bread on longer sections of the routes without supply.

The total cost of the trip was about 2500 SFr. per person and they are roughly divided as follows:

Ferry	1000	SFr.
Food	250	SFr
5000 Alg. Dinar	300	SFr.
1000 Dinar Forced exchange	200	SFr.
Tunisian dinars	800	SFr
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Total /Person	2550	SFr.

## Thoughts and facts about Algeria

### Money:

Compulsory change of 1000 dinars per person at the border. Exchange rate December 1989: 200 SFr. for 1000 dinars = 5 dinars/SFr. Exchange rate in Switzerland 54 SFr. for 1000 dinars = approx. 20 dinars/SFr.

At the "official" exchange rate, Algeria was quite expensive, but cheap at the "Swiss" rate. The three of us used about 16,000 dinars in the 6 weeks, mainly for gasoline, camping, restaurant, vegetables and fruits.

### **Insurance:**

1 month of insurance, bought at the border, cost 100 D. per motorbike and 200 D. per car. 1 month was the longest you can solve. The extension of 10 days cost almost the same for a 600cc machine and a Toyota Hilux.

### **Petrol:**

Super 3.45 D./l,  
Normal 2.85 D./l  
Diesel 0.85 D./l.

We didn't get Super in Djanet, Tam and In Ecker. The supply in the south is still not guaranteed.

### **Motor oil:**

20/40 is difficult to obtain throughout Algeria, it costs 20-30 D./l. If it is not available at petrol stations, try oil change companies (*Vidange*). In most cases, however, you have to bring a container, as the oil is usually stored in barrels.

### **Camels:**

In Tam, a camel costs 100 dinars per day. The camel of the guide is to be paid on top. For multi-day excursions, pack animals and food for the guide are added. Example: 2 persons, 1 guide. 1 cargo camel 3200 dinars for 8 days plus about 400 dinars food for all. →

### **Gifts and exchange objects:**

Old clothes, especially children or men's clothes, are ideal. Jeans, coats, shirts are quite popular. But they shouldn't be too old-fashioned. Selling is less worthwhile, but bartering, especially for crafts and jewellery is

good. Car tubes and tires are very good exchange and sale objects, but the locals cannot afford the equivalent of the Swiss prices.