

01.10.2016 Guefait

The oasis Guefait is recommended in our travel guide, there is a large river and several springs where one can sit in a restaurant with the feet in the water to cool down during a meal. In summer this is a very popular holiday spot for the Moroccans. We pass several large coal mine dumps on the way there.



First we are greeted by so much rubbish and are skeptical whether our guide book is correct. As there is an election going on in Morocco supporters have fun throwing election pamphlets in the air which are blown by the wind all over the landscape. Not a very eco-friendly way of campaigning.



We have to search around and ask the locals to find our way to the river. It is not a very clean river, but the contrast of the green river valley and the bare landscape is nice to watch.



And it is indeed true, during lunch we can put our feet in cool fast flowing water. Therefore, we order a Tajine and find out the hard way, that we have to wait for 1 hour AND 20 minutes instead of only 20 minutes. It's all about communication... Meanwhile we order peppermint tea and the size of the sugar cubes is again impressive!



We continue our journey and drive through arid landscape with just some occasional tussocks growing. It seems the Moroccans make an effort to reforest some of the landscape, but with limited success. The villages we pass through look deserted.



As we are looking for a camp site for tonight in this dry landscape, we are joking that we will most likely find the only mosquito infested spot around, and it turned out we were doing pretty well. We find a nice spot at a little lake just before Ain Benmartha. But at dusk more and more Mosquitos are humming around us and soon we have to retreat into our camper. During our evening stroll around our camp site we discovered some abandoned sites, but can't figure their meaning.



02.10.2016 Tandrara

At Ain Benimathar we turn onto the N17 and drive South until Tandrara. Just before Tandrara we pass our first police/military check point and we give them our first 'fiche'. A fiche is a form where all our personal data are filled in. Dropping a fiche at the check point has the advantage that we do not need to wait until the police man has copied down all our personal data from our passports.



After a last stop for a coffee, we turn onto our first off-road track to Iche, the most Easterly village of Morocco, directly bordering Algeria.

Just after Tandrara we pass an abandoned 'ghost' train station, which was built by the French and is remnant of better times in the past.



We enjoy the desert landscape of Chott Tigri until we are suddenly stunned – a Fata Morgana? Do we really see black and white cows standing in front of us? Who says they need good grass, lucern and supplementary feed? They seem to be able to survive eating sand! They are not even in a bad condition.





Just before sunset we stop in the sand dunes. It is quiet here, the temperature drops quickly for the night. We find out that we are at 1200 m elevation.



03.10.2016 Iche

As we will have more soft sand tracks ahead of us, Werner is installing our central tyre inflation control system. The sand dunes can come.



It is hard to believe how the nomads can survive in this harsh environment. Meanwhile some have trucks which makes it easier for them to relocate to new grazing grounds or bring their animals to the local market.



Although around us is only sand, we still discover a lot of interesting things. Our first dromedary for example or desert melons. We wonder why no-one has eaten or collected them, yet. Later we learn that these melons are poisonous, even the donkeys and goats know that...



We come close to the Algerian border and see the border wall which Morocco has built in the past years. A controversial project, as it does spoil the scenery and makes it much more difficult for the nomads to move around. Unfortunately, Morocco and Algeria have a border dispute. There are earth walls supposedly on both sides of the border with mines laid out in the no-man's land in-between.



After so many kilometers in the sand it truly feels like being at the end of the world, when suddenly after a last curb, the oasis Iche appears. It's quite a sight with its green palm trees.



Iche is small, quite interesting but many buildings are in ruins. Nevertheless, there are still quite a few people living here and the school looks rather new. The only hotel in town didn't manage to finalize construction... The local people are very friendly, every single one greets us with a hearty 'Bonjour'.



The children are watching us closely, which is understandable as this city is so remote nothing never happens. Guess, we are like a TV program for them. Luckily the children are not used to beg for bonbons or a pen here. So far we have not yet met any other camper during here. But as we are having dinner five 4x4 Range Rover from Portugal are speeding onto our parking. Now we have our own TV program to watch.



04.10.2016 Figuig

We are driving onto a 4x4 track from Iche to Figuig, again following the Algerian border closely. At the beginning of the track we have to pass three military posts who all ask us for the well-known ,fiche‘; later we pass a military patrol, they also want a fiche. Altogether we have to pass six military posts on this track They are all very friendly and always greet the driver with „Bonjour, ca va?“ and a hand shake.



We have lunch break at a small water reservoir. Today the weather is a bit misty and the view is not very good.



We come one last time very close to the Algerian border made of a huge earth and rock wall, pass a last military check point until we arrive late afternoon at the oasis city of Figuig.



While we are driving through the city we bump into an European looking man on a bicycle who asks us if we are looking for the camp site of Hotel Figuig. What a smart chap. He invites us to follow him and guides us safely there. Later we learn that he is Ewald from Austria and travels with his T3 VW bus.



The camp site is a small oasis within the oasis and we park in between Olive trees. There is even a swimming pool, but it's not well maintained and is rather a mosquito breeding ground. The water looks like it has never been changed since opening of the campground.

05.10.2016 Figuig

We take a day rest and stay for two nights at this camp site. The view from the terrace is superb. We start having breakfast there and stay for almost the whole day.





We have time to do the laundry, not only hand wash, but also foot wash items are due... In the hot sun and dry air the laundry is drying in next to no time.

For the evening stroll we explore the whole town. As always mainly men are out on the streets. There are some shops and cafes, but all is small. The locals are watching us as much as we are watching them...

