

## 26.10.2016 Imilchil, Lac Tislit

The water has receded, now we can see the full damage caused by the flood. Not only the bridge, also the road behind the bridge is totally destroyed, and still submerged in murky waters. Considering the remoteness of the location and the Moroccan speed, it may take days or even weeks until all is repaired and the road is passable again... Some people with obviously urgent business are starting to even walk out of the valley.



While we inspect the road situation thoroughly and are still considering our options, we receive the hoped for message from Martin stating that he was yesterday also stuck in the Todra gorge, but this morning he managed to drive out via Imilchil on the Northern route. Our decision is made instantly, we will also try to get out via Imilchil.

The police had in fact instructed us to not leave our parking spot, but they also said that they will return at 9:00 am this morning... At 11:00am there is still no police in sight so we take the liberty to leave and start our way back out. Unfortunately, we have to backtrack 72 km on the same path we came, crossing again the Tizi-n-Ouano Pass with 3000m altitude, hoping that the track has not taken too much damage from the flooding. Unfortunately, we also have to drive again through Agoudal, the village with the aggressive children.



Fortunately, the track is still in a drivable condition (at least for us) and the mountain passes have dried up a bit. We can drive relatively swift considering the conditions of the track. It helps as well that we are familiar with the route.

And it's true, we have to warn all fellow travelers of the children in Agoudal. They are aggressive, throwing stones at passing cars while adults (their parents?) are standing next to the children, not interfering at all. With one hand they are begging and in the other hand they hide a stone, if one does not stop and give gifts, they throw the stone at your car. If one could end up with a damaged car or a broken windscreen, this is seriously not funny anymore. We are totally not amused.



During our forced "flood break", it seems as suddenly autumn has arrived. However, it does not matter which time of the year it is, the children are still begging aggressively....They seem to be able to recognize a tourist vehicle already from a few kilometers away and line the roads long before we arrive.





At 16:30 we already reach Imilchil and are relieved to be out of the narrow Atlas mountain roads. We would have never thought that we could make it out so quickly. We stop for a coffee and wind down from our 'escape' drive, as suddenly the Magirus Deutz from von Mo and Maura is turning around the corner. We have met the two previously at the camp site in Fom-Zguid. What a pleasant surprise after this very wet adventure we have behind us...

We decide to look for a campsite together and drive from Imilchil to Lac Tislit (2300m) a lake which is not far away from town.



## 27.10.2016 El Ksiba

Before we leave the High Atlas mountain, we visit the sister lake of Lac Tislit. The legend says that the two lakes were created by the tears of two unhappy lovers who were not allowed to marry as their two tribes were enemies.



Blue skies and sunshine – the masses of water of the past days seem like a bad dream. We enjoy the stunning landscape of the Atlas mountains.



Today we are covering some distance over badly maintained mountain passes, through villages and through kilometer long stretches of road work as the old road is being repaired and newly surfaced with tar. To drive through villages and observe village life is always most interesting. Amazing to see what the Moroccans can pile up and transport on top of their vehicles.



Late afternoon we reach El Ksiba and find ourselves back to civilization. El Ksiba is a relaxed little town. Or maybe we are more relaxed after all the excitement of the past days in the mountains?

We notice that many women are on the street and are dressed quite fashionably in T-shirts and tight pants. This is a sharp contrast to the very conservative villages which we have passed through during the last few days where one can only see men in the public.

We are strolling along the streets and try the minced meat which is barbecued everywhere. The meat is cut off and put in the mincer in front of our eyes, it can hardly be any fresher... But we do hope that the spray can of Raid standing next to the barbecue is not the reason why there are no flies on our meat.



## 28.10.2016 Beni-Mellal, Afourer

Our next destination is Marrakech, which means we have to cover some distance today. The Route Nationale leads via Beni Mellal along the Western boundary of the Middle Atlas range. Our camp site for tonight will be Afourer, which is a 6 km detour, because along the main road it is too densely populated or farmland. This Tadla plain is very fertile and also referred to as the California of Morocco.

A friendly local recommends us to camp next to the post office saying it will be save there. Afourer is a pleasant village, nobody is bothering us, no sales man or beggar approaches us and we can stroll quietly through the city.



We find it interesting that in Morocco, one can just park in the middle of the city even overnight. The best spot to park is the market place which is usually only occupied on the market day and lies idle for the rest of the week. Staying a night right in front of the local police station is also usually well accepted – everything which is safe for tourists seems to be ok. After travelling for a while in the country, we developed a sense of where it is good to stay for the night or where it might not be such a good idea – often depending proportionally on the number of male youth on the road.

## 29.10.2016 El-Kelaa-des-Sraghna, Marrakesch

Just after passing Beni Mellal we are very lucky to be able to witness a „Fantasia“. Fantasia are horse riding competitions with a historic military background. The riders simulate a cavalry attack on their enemies. In the past and during peace times Fantasias were meant for training and preparation purposes.

The riders gallop from one side of the yard to the other, stop abruptly at the end in front of the judges and fire their guns. All that should happen ideally very synchronized and the judges give points for the best performances. This is a truly remarkable spectacle – the nicely decorated horses and riders in traditional costumes, the loud shots of the many muskets, loaded with real gun powder.



We watch the festivities until noon, when everybody starts to hide from the scorching sun and has their lunch break. We do have our own lunch break as well and thereafter drive directly to the camp site Le Relais in Marrakech, about 12 km out of town. The reception on the camp site is French style and comes across a little cool... We get the impression, that the French lady is not so happy anymore running her camp site. The washing machine can only be used until 16:00 pm – because it is not allowed to make overtime and has to go off duty after 16:00?!

On the bright side, we are pleased to meet Ewald again, who had guided us to the camping place in Figuig with his bicycle. We have dinner together and catch up on our adventures of the last weeks.

## 30.10.2016 Marrakech



Most visits to Marrakech start on the square 'Djamaa el-Fna', which means literally the "Place of the Hanged" most likely referring to the public executions which took place here in former times, when the heads of the hanged were publicly displayed.

In the morning, the square is relatively calm and quiet, there are just a few snake whisperers and fruit stalls selling fresh juice... However, in the evening the square looks entirely different and is hardly recognizable.



The square Djamaa el-Fna is located between the Northern and the Southern Souk, these markets are gigantic. One can stroll along the thousands of small alleys only to realize after a while that we one has been in the same alley already. We are prepared for the worst in terms of aggressive sales behavior, but it is actually much better than we expected, in other places the sales people have been much more aggressive.



As the sun sets the square is filling up with people, soon it's shoulder to shoulder with other visitors and we have to squeeze ourselves through the square. The story tellers, dancers, singers and other artists perform their shows, the food stalls are starting their business and try with an unimaginable noise to attract customers... A true feast for all senses.





All in all we expected Marrakech to have a more 'oriental' flair. However, the beautiful mosaics and squiggly windows are only to be found in selected locations, such as museums or in Riads, traditional Moroccan houses with courtyards, which were converted into hotels. The medina (old town) is basically a huge market and a lot of things sold here are „made in China“...



On our way home, we witness a demonstration and naturally do not understand the reason for it. We wonder, that demonstrations are allowed at all. The next day, we learn that a local fish trader was crushed to his death in a rubbish compactor truck. He was jumping into the rubbish truck in order to retrieve his merchandise which was confiscated by the police to be destroyed. It seems that the police wasn't totally uninvolved when the compactor started while the fish monger was inside the truck.

During the following days demonstrations were held in many major Moroccan cities targeting the almighty power and despotism of the police and government. However,

after a week it all quiets down, the demonstrations are becoming fewer and soon we do not hear about this anymore.

### **31.10.2016 Marrakech**

Today is break time and we relax at the nice but very cold swimming pool of the camp site.



Next week the UN climate conference COP22 will take place in Marrakech. Luckily, we have visited Marrakech now, as during the conference where many heads of state will be attending half of the city will be cordoned off.

We hope that during the conference they will find time to discuss the tremendous rubbish problem which Morocco is plagued with. Here we see the need for immediate action, as we have never seen such an amount of rubbish and construction waste just being dumped anywhere in the landscape...