

11.11.2016 Almost in Laayoune, Tarfaya

It was a very windy night and little sand dunes had built up which had to be removed again. Interesting, we never thought about it that sand is behaving like snow and has to be treated the same...



We continue driving South towards the Western Sahara, our goal is to reach the capital city Laayoune. Just as we reach the city boundary to turn South, a policeman is whistling and ordering us to stop. He is informing us, that both roads to Laayoune – the N1 as well as the coastal road – are closed as they have been severely damaged by strong rain. It would take 1-2 days until all repairs are finished. We are quickly weighing our options and decide to take the risk. Let's see how far we will get.

Not far behind Tarfaya lays the ship wreck of the car ferry Assalama, which in 2008 provided the first scheduled ferry service between the Canary Islands (Fuerteventura) and North Africa (Tarfaya). However, after only three months she was damaged by a mooring accident in the Tarfaya harbor and came to rest here. Since then the ferry is stuck in the shallow waters exactly in the same position...



Along the coast we notice again the pink colored military check points every 1 km, inhabited by usually 2 soldiers. There are different explanations to what purpose these check points serve: General safety and protection of the coastline against smugglers and illegal emigrants who want to get to the Canary Islands. Or the soldiers have been transferred here for disciplinary reasons or are serving their mandatory military service.



The wind got even worse and sand is blown all over the place, dust clouds are covering the sky. On the road the sand is drawing „psychedelic“ patterns and one gets really muddleheaded if focusing on the sand moving over the road. We even stop for a while to watch the sand being blown from the dunes...One can literally see the dunes wander.



About 15 km before Laayoune – we can already see the „Skyline“ of the city – we hit the road block. Construction is going on in the river bed and the police does not allow us to continue further even as we argue that the riverbed would not be an obstacle for our Unimog. We are informed that it will take another 2-3 days for the road to be repaired, but we do not want to wait so long, especially not in such a sand storm.



Our trip into the Western Sahara will therefore remain a flying visit, this is the Southern most point we will reach in Morocco. We turn around and drive back to Tarfaya, passing the same fishing huts and the familiar dromedaries again, staying another night at the beach promenade in the city.



12.11.2016 Akhfennir, Oued Ma Fatima

We drive back to the beach where our Moroccan fishermen friends are camping and Werner tries his luck fishing. But the wind is still too strong with the surf hitting the rocky coastline quite heavily.



Fishing is impossible, we therefore pack up and just want to leave as our neighbour brings us a fish dish with some bread. What a nice surprise lunch! The fish tastes finger-licking-good. As a Thank You we bring a kilo of sugar cubes when we return the plate, but again receive a huge pomegranate from them as a farewell present. On our way out we drop a bag of charcoal as our farewell present. Then drive off very quickly, otherwise we are going to run out of presents.



On this small charcoal fire pit in the sand our neighbours can create such yummy dishes! Dinner is already in the making.

In Akhfennir we fill up all our tanks as this is the last possibility to stock up on the tax free Sahara-diesel which only costs 0,68Euro/L.



We stop along the coastal cliff line, to watch the fishermen. From a father and son fishing team we learn that today the road to Laayoune had re-opened again. The son is working in a bank in Laayoune and was “forced” to go fishing for a few days as the road was closed. Also from the increased number of trucks passing by we can see that the road must be open again.

Late afternoon we reach the Oued Ma Fatima, where we are allowed to camp for the night. However, the place is not nice and also located in a sharp turn close by the road. We prefer to rather camp directly at the steep coast and hope that we will not be chased away again.



Just before 8:00 pm, it is dark already, we hear a knock on our door.... Oh no, do we have to pack up and leave this place? Luckily not, two friendly young soldiers just want to record our data, we are ok to stay here for the night. They are happy to receive the usual fiche from us with all our data and quickly leave.

13.11.2016 El Outia, Tan Tan

Finally, the weather has calmed down and we can see the sun. Werner is fishing like the locals close to the dangerous cliff line, with more than 100 m steep drop. Hopefully, he won't catch a too heavy fish who will pull him over the edge....



We have lunch in El Outia and order a Tajine for a change – we still can't get enough of this dish, even after having it eaten so often. The city is full of young men and boys, as a soccer tournament is taking place in town. They approach us and using sign language beg for cigarettes, money or drinks.

It is obvious, the boys just want to show off and impress each other how cool they are. They are all well groomed and dressed in branded sportswear, it is clear this begging is more kind of a sport for them than a mean of survival. A smaller boy greets us with a friendly „F**k you“ and we have a strong feeling, it is time to better leave this city.



The city of Tan Tan is on our way, but we drive through without stopping because we want to visit the Ksar de Tafnidilt, 25km North of Tan Tan.



The beautiful Hotel Ksar de Tafnidilt with campground is situated on the track to the Plage Blanche, the last offroad track we want to drive in Morocco. Ksar de Tafnidilt offers grand views of the Oued Draa, Tan Tan can be seen on the horizon.



We hope to meet here other off-roaders with whom we could team up to drive the long passage along the beach together. But also at this place it is very quiet. Some of the rooms are taken by quad drivers.



14.11.2016 Cap Draa

The track to Cap Draa is „only“ 25km long, but very sandy, rocky, curvy and sometimes quite steep. We are only able to make slow progress and need almost three hours for the distance.



After this quite rough track to the coast we are rewarded with a very nice camp site directly on the beach where it is not too windy.



Werner goes fishing immediately, while Dewi experiences her own kind of adventure: During a walk around our camp, she gets caught in the middle of a herd of Dromedaries. The beasts are very curious and are getting closer and closer instead of retreating into the bush. How to react? Little ones are part of the herd, and their mothers may react aggressive. Dewi is positioning herself near a small drop off, ready to jump down should it become necessary.

Fascinated by the close encounter she is relieved when the herd moves on and is heading back to camp still a bit shaky.



In the evening we have a small camp fire, but soon it is getting too cold and we have to move inside.



15.11.2016 Cap Draa

It is so nice here, that we decide to stay another night. The day is filled with fishing, reading, going for a walk.

Yesterday's herd of dromedaries can be briefly seen in the distance but they do not visit us today.



Werner makes new Moroccan fishermen friends, who give us quite a big fish as a present – dinner is secured. Their fishing hut behind the nearest sand dune is set up quite well and they even have plenty of ice to put their fish on.

We would have loved to know more about them and their lives, but unfortunately we cannot communicate. Where do they get the ice from and where do they sell the fishes to? It would be interesting to know how the whole logistic works, as the distances are huge and troublesome. Obviously, they do not fish only for their own needs.

Unfortunately, this remote beach is also covered in rubbish. No wonder given the (non-existing) rubbish disposal system in Morocco.





Despite the cold wind, we try to have another camp fire, but soon outside it is not very pleasant anymore and we prefer to move inside, into our more cozy Unimog.

16.11.2016 Fort Aoreora

We drive along the coastline, where on the left side huge cliffs are dropping into the sea but on the right side the landscape is as flat as a pancake. We pass by a few single fishing huts and once even a whole fishing village.



There are mountains of shellfish and sea snail housings which bear witness of geologically very active and interesting times in the past.



In the afternoon, we reach the former Fort Aoreora and catch up with the group of Italian Land Cruisers which had overtaken us on the way. They strongly recommend us to stay for dinner and order fresh fish which the fishermen will barbeque for us. We follow their suggestion, stay for the night and also order fresh fish for dinner. The fish is stored in deep freezers which are of course not connected to power, but filled with ice. Again, we wonder about the logistic, where does all the ice come from in such a remote place...



The long track along the beach of Plage Blanche should only be attempted during low tide and we anyways did not want to tackle the 30 km still today so late in the day. Therefore, a stopover at this place comes in handy. The Italian 4x4 group waited a little longer for low tide and we watch them as they speed off towards the beach. Of course, testing out their 4-wheel cars in the dunes. At least we now know, where to get down to the beach to get to the starting point of the track.





Our barbeque master, a fine young fisherman, speaks only little French about as good as ours, therefore our communication is very limited. He tries to teach us some Moroccan words and is explaining us the nick names he gave his fellow villagers. Werner is helping him to get the fire going and is immediately promoted to „Chef de Cuisine“.

The fresh fish, only seasoned with salt and olive oil tastes indeed wonderful. We made the right decision to stay overnight.

