

**BURKINO FASO
MAY 2010
By Karen Hauptfleisch**

6 May: We took motorbikes across the border and were just in time for the bus leaving for the capital of Burkina. Initially, we had 5 seats to ourselves, but the bus filled up along the way. The change in scenery was dramatic and, in my opinion, overgrazing has taken its toll. We saw loads of bicycles, donkeys and even a camel. The people were friendly, offered us their food and even offered us their seats. We took a taxi to another hotel since we arrived at 20h00 and were then told that the hotel we intended to stay in had been demolished (they are rebuilding the capital city). I had lost my sense of humour in the dust covering me but felt so bad when the taxi driver gave me change.



A petrol station along the way

7 May: I've never seen so many bicycles in my life. People put their bicycles on the bus, taxi or motorbikes. Alan decided it was time to splurge on a steak. The motorbike salesmen are big and there's music everywhere.

8 May: We hit the jackpot and got the seats next to the bus driver. It was pure heaven and I could put my feet on the dashboard without any complaints. Unfortunately, the bus broke down and we waited patiently while mechanics fixed it. Although I got bit worried when they removed some plugs to solve the problem of the red light that said stop! The drivers face said it all and we were on our way. Unfortunately, his face changed again an hour later when the warning sign would change from Caution to stop, but we made it to Bobo Doulasso, determined not to be harassed by any potential guide. After checking into the hotel, we went to the market to buy tomatoes etc before going to the supermarket where we bought laughing cow cheese and gherkins, and then to the bakery for some bread. It was time for my treat.



My first decent meal

9 May: We arrived in Banfora at 10h00, just in time to get a guide who 'sold' us a 4X4 and driver for R1300. There was no other transport except motorbikes, and considering Alan's dislike for them, we paid the exorbitant price.



The chief's family

A dusty 90 km followed before we reached the village where we paid the chief dash and were given one of his wives to hike with us.

All along the way she gave us wild fruit she picked. The Cairn was the biggest I've seen. The guides wanted to take us to the waterfalls but we declined, and the dusty 90 km back followed,

with a flat tire to make sure life didn't get boring.

We only had to wait 20 minutes for a bus back but tickets had been sold as day tickets so the stampeding for seats was hectic. Back in Bobo Dioulasso, the second longest shower in my life followed trying to get rid of the red dust. Hand washing was taking its toll and my trustworthy

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks – Burkino Faso

shirt had torn from all the washing. I feasted once again on the gherkins and cheese we bought the day before. All is well in Africa.

10 May: Waiting at the bus station at 07h00, we were informed that the bus only left at 16h00. Then we were informed that the bus left at 12h00. Luckily, we only went for a short walk because by 11h00, when the bus left for the 4 hour journey to Kouri, we were on it.

Once in Kouri, we were told to wait. Since patience was now one of my virtues, we waited. Suddenly, we were asked for money, and I refused, saying we've already paid for our luggage. We were then ushered off to the centre of the market and a group of Moslem boys followed. At the bus, we were informed that we would only leave at 19h00.



On top

I wanted to cry. It was hot. There was no sign of water, food or a toilet.



The famous red dust

Children had gathered around us, holding their hands out for cash and shouting. I was scared and didn't understand one word of what they were saying.

The next moment I felt a small hand guiding me to a door. The little boy took money out of my pocket and brought me water and my change, before disappearing. I was flabbergasted.

17h00: I asked around for a toilet. I was dehydrated and too scared to drink water. I was shown to a residential ablution facility, a piece of earth with a wall surrounding it.

19h00: Everyone was sitting outside the bus while the mechanics fiddled with the engine. Al helped with the loading of the luggage on the roof which turned out to be quite dangerous since they haul motorcycles and other heavy stuff on the roof using ropes. They also thought he knew something about engines so he just nodded when the driver said Allah will get us there.

21h00: We finally left and I caught Alan using my plastic fan, something that turned out invaluable. In Nigeria, I had a guy sitting behind me chewing bubblegum for 12 hours. Today, I had a guy sitting behind me who coughed for 8 hours straight.

I did not see that little boy again that day, but 12 months later, whilst I was busy with a Journey course, he appeared again, and he has been keeping me safe ever since.