

THE GAMBIA

MAY 2010

By Karen Hauptfleisch

30 May: Our first taxi got us to Temba, then another followed to Velingore where Alan, bless his soul, refused to pay the asked price for our luggage. Once in Velingore, we were asked an exorbitant price to charter a taxi to Basse, only 20 km away. It was Sunday afternoon and only 3 other lonely taxis were waiting, no other passengers in sight. I had PMS and some horrible flashbacks of waiting for hours for a taxi to fill up. Sitting in the middle of nowhere with no toilet or water in sight, was not meant for me today. Alan finally got the price reduced to a third and 20 minutes later, we were in The Gambia. Our first guest house was being renovated and we were instructed to go to the Department of Education. The first thing I noticed were the birds, the second the fan that didn't work, then the cockroaches in the dirty toilets. But it was cheap, it was getting late and at least there was some running water.

31 May: We got a minibus to Fetote and upon arrival; we tackled the first hill we could see, since our fellow passenger told us that was the highest hill. According to my GPS, it was 44m.



What hill? Everything was flat!

Heading South, following Chris's coordinates, we passed a village where we filled up with water. A spot next to the road measured 54m. Following the coordinates, we arrived at the spot 90 minutes later. There was no sign of any hill or any sand dump, as described in a previous report. The only bumps were made by termites. I felt a bit disappointed, but time was an issue and we raced back, hoping to catch a ride back. Apparently, we had just missed the last taxi going back. We had 3 options. Spend the evening under the tree,

walk the 45km or charter a private vehicle. Alan felt sorry for me and we paid the R300 to the very kind gentleman, who played some lovely music all the way back. Arriving in Basse an hour later, I realized I wouldn't have made the 45km hike.

1 June: We got a 7 seater Peugeot and the worst seat in the back with another Mr. Codliver. 15 Police checks, 260km, 2 ferry crossings and 9 hours later we stepped off the ferry in Banjul, having gotten rid of Mr. Codliver. The



Kids playing in the street

first hotel we tried turned out to be a brothel but we managed to get a discount at the Apollo hotel.



Looking for the highest peak

2 June: After receiving our Guinea Bissau visa, I spent a considerable time trying to get rid of the dust in my clothes.

3 June: We received our Sierra Leone visas before we applied for our Guinea Conakry ones. The official looked flabbergasted when we requested a visa. Our visit to the internet café was not very successful but I did manage to find two English Novels – after reading Katy Fjords novel three times, it would make a great change. That evening we marched down to the shebeen, where the boss lady eventually smiled and I played with the local friendly girls in the street.

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks – The Gambia

4 June: Our taxi driver could not speak English and we got a bit lost but we did end up in Serakunda and two more taxi rides followed before arriving back in Senegal at 9h30. The ride to Ziguinchor was not uneventful. We had one taxi breakdown and did a fair amount of walking. I also found an internet café where I could sort out the pictures taken so far. That evening, we spend talking to a Gambian in exile who reported atrocities.



A Silk Cotton Tree