

11/14/2003

It's the rhythm I miss the most.

When you travel by motorcycle, your day has a rhythm.

You wake up early and put on your riding gear.

You walk outside, take off the cover and locks and then load your gear on the bike.

You eat some breakfast while reviewing the maps and route information for the day.

You strap on your helmet, pull on your gloves and ride off into the day's adventures and discoveries, every turn a joy, every hill revealing a new possibility just over the crest. Your nostrils fill with the smells of flowers, fresh crops, wild herbs, rich soil and sea air. You feel the temperature change as you descend into valleys and cross deserts. The wind, the weather, the road, the motorcycle and you are all together, all one.

You discover small towns and little cafes. You meet friendly people who are interested in you, your machine and your journey. It is easy to meet them, as there is no barrier, no boundary, no isolating vehicle between you and them. You are open to their world, to their children and to their curiosity.

At the end of the day you pull into your next destination. You fill the bike up with gas and check it over. You unload, lock and cover the bike, patting it a quick thanks for another day's journey. You shower, have dinner and share your discoveries and adventures with your fellow travelers over drinks around the bar, the beach or the campfire. You wander back to your bed and sleep soundly, your dreams filled not with stressful chases and escapes, but with long ago friends, adventures, laughter and joy.

Before the sun rises and the alarm goes off your eyes are already open, eager for another day.

And the rhythm begins anew.

It makes for a beautiful song of life, the steady beat pacing your soul. You never want it to end.

But earlier this week, ours did.

That morning, I rode the bike to the docks in Cape Town and loaded it into a 40' shipping container along with 16 others. As we struggled to close the door on the container I realized that this trip didn't want to end. Three of us, using all of our strength, couldn't close the door. The dock hands finally used a fork lift to force it closed and still the door shrieked in protest as the levers were pulled down on the locks. A shipping seal was snapped in place and the 2003 Southern Africa Tour was officially over.

As I watched it happen, a strange quiet filled me. The rhythm had stopped.

For days Steph and I knew it was coming. We did our best to prolong the contentment we had rekindled in our souls by discussing what we'd learned on this journey. We lingered long over sweet memories. We savored new discoveries. We marveled again at wonders we had stumbled upon along the way. We clung to each place, each experience, and each new friend.

Had we not been committed to transport the bike home by ship and be home for some family events we would have air freighted it somewhere else in the world, shipped home the 250 lbs. of excess baggage we didn't need, and kept going.

We loved the discoveries, adventures and rewards of this trip. We loved the rhythm. We wanted it go on and on and on.

Unfortunately, it wasn't an option this time.

But next time...

Be well,
Doug

PS – Before our journey ended we visited some fascinating places in Namibia and the West coast of South Africa. Some photos of this portion of our journey follow.



A beautiful walkway along the strand in Swakopmund, Namibia.



Just another day in the Namib desert, in the Western end of the Kalahari desert. This is the thermometer we have mounted on the bike, which was in the shade at the time.



We visited Sossusvlei, a unique valley that protrudes some 40 miles into the great dune sea of Namibia. The dunes stretch for hundreds of miles in an unbroken undulating ocean of sand, except for this finger of flat land piercing into it. Some dunes rise to more than 900 feet in height. To give you an idea of their immensity, the tree in the foreground of this photo is about 45 feet tall.





The bike in front of dune 45. Note the two people standing on top of the dune. As you can see here, we carried our two LowePro camera backpacks inside the two pannier boxes on the bike. The panniers provided lockable physical security and weather proof protection for our camera gear. The two round black tubes mounted to the pannier lid are two LowePro lens cases that I strapped to the pannier lid. We used them to hold the video camera, video camera batteries and a water bottle. They worked out great, as Steph was able to easily pull the video camera out, shoot and put it away while we were riding.



On the road to nowhere. Abandoned Chevrolet pickup, near Ai-Ais, Namibia.



Age, weather, rust and man combine to create art in the desert.



A Quiver Tree, which is actually a type of Aloe plant. It is called a quiver tree because the San people once used hollowed out limbs as arrow quivers.



Quiver tree bark.



Steph at Fish River Canyon, Namibia, Africa's "Grand Canyon."



Two Swedish tourists ignore the sign and head down into the canyon.



Sunset at fish river canyon.



A portion of the Cape Gannet colony at Lambert's Bay, South Africa.



A Cape Gannet comes in for a landing.





Cape Gannet in flight



A fishing boat taken over by Cormorants at Lambert's Bay.



The remains of the fishing fleet at Lambert's Bay. Fishing species have crashed in this area, leading to shrinkage of the fishing fleet from over 50 vessels to a handful.



On the beach at Muisbosskerm, which roughly translated means “tumbleweed shelter,” a unique beach restaurant & dining experience at Lambert’s Bay, South Africa. Our trip brought us many smiles, much adventure and more new friends than we could count.



Watching the sun set on our journey, Lambert’s Bay, South Africa.