

Pushing the Limits- From Lagos to Europe and Back on Two Wheels.



Ogbonnaya Kanu, The Daring Bike Enthusiast Who Rode From Nigeria To Europe and Back.

July the 14th.

Day 1- Ikeja, Lagos to Sokode, Togo

Temps: low- 23° | high- 28°

Distance covered- 622 kilometres

So after some hitches with my phone, we finally left home around 07:30 hrs. “We” consists of myself and my EASY RIDERS brethren, who have come to ride with me to the border and wish me a safe trip!

We eventually get to the border, although some of us get separated. I clear all formalities in no time, and it’s time to go! “Bye guys”! And I am off!

Cross over to the Benin side of the border, and the adventure begins! I have already cleared all formalities, but am stopped as I am about to leave the border. I show my papers but the official there says my papers are wrong and that I have to pay to pass him. “No sir, I will not pay. Instead, we can go back to the Customs Post, and I will do the right thing!” So we go back, and he is told that I am ok and should be allowed through! My first ‘mini-adventure’... and so, so early on my trip!

Riding through Cotonou is uneventful, and I am soon bound for the Togo border! Border and everything goes as usual... have actually passed through this border several times, so I know the ropes! Stamp my passport, get *laissez passer*, and register with the police! Out of the border, and

my destination is set for *Sokode*. This town is familiar to me, as we (the GS boys and Baba Ibadan) passed this route about 2 years ago.

Miss my way slightly in the town of Lomé, but am soon back on track and on the highway! The road is nice, and the clouds overhead provide a much appreciated cover from the otherwise scorching sun! As I ride I pass the alma mater of all bikers, the *WAHALA School*... so I stop for a photo. I believe we all must have passed through this school or its twin-campus. Or else, why do we ride!



As I ride I notice that almost every town I pass along the way has a cemetery at its outskirts. Almost every town! Interesting, because I didn't notice this the last time I was on the same route!

It's generally a cool day, and I find that I hardly touch my hydration pack! I also decide that I will not stop for lunch. I had breakfast while we were sorting out the phone roaming settings in the morning, so I am not feeling particularly hungry. The kilometres roll by, and I observe the darkening skies on the horizon! I watch with keen interest as the horizon becomes darker and darker. And then the lightening starts! But it's all on the horizon and slightly to my left, so I'm hoping I will be able to pass the storm without going through it! But even if I *do* end up under it, I really am not bothered; my rain gear is ready to protect me, and the rain will cool me some, anyway!

Yes! The storm drifts further and further to my left, and I can see that I *will* escape! But not so fast! Drops on visor! And I am suddenly right in the thick of it! Very suddenly and without mercy, I get thoroughly beaten by this sneaky shower! And just as suddenly as it started, it's over and I am left feeling very cool and refreshed! Thank you Father! I really needed that!

As I approach Sokode, I begin to wonder if I shouldn't just push on to the next town. It's less than 40 km away, and there is still daylight. Can't seem to make up my mind, as I cruise into *Sokode*. I pass familiar sights, and as I approach the hotel we spent the night in during our Dakar trip, I flip a mental coin... heads I stay, tails I stay... so I stay!

Check-in is quick, and I am shown my room! A cool shower, and I am in the restaurant for dinner! I eat my food in silence, as I am the only guest for the night! I recall when I was here the last time, and remember the laughter and experiences that we all exchanged! None of that today! My meal is over, and I head to my room in silence! I begin to think of going back home tomorrow, and forgetting about the whole crazy trip idea! Don't know that I really like all this silence! At the same time, I pull out my map and look at my goal for the next day, *Bobo-Dioulasso*! Over 800 km, and a border to cross! We will see when I wake up how I feel! Say a prayer, switch off the lights, and search for the warm embrace of sleep! She is closer than I thought!

July the 15th.

Day 2- Sokode, Togo to Bobo Dialaso, Burkina Faso

Temps: low- 24° | high- 28°

Distance covered- 984 kilometres

The call to prayers from the nearby mosque wakes me up, and I know it's about 5:30-ish! I laze around, and eventually get up at 6! Outside, looking through my window, the sky is dense with clouds! The clouds settle over my heart, and I feel really slow and low in spirit! Take a warm water bath, get ready, and hit the road anyway, a couple of minutes before 7. I don't think I will have it as good today as I did yesterday, weather-wise as I see the amount of dark clouds over me! But I make up my mind to don my rain gear at the slightest hint of rain!

The road begins to wind up the range as I make my way to *Kara* in the north of Togo. I am immediately struck by the beautiful scenery! The beauty before my eyes lifts my spirits, and I am soon glowing inside again! I vow to take as many pictures as I can, and start at the first opportunity!



It's still very early, and the road is quite free of traffic. The occasional truck is all I see as I continue climbing! It's tough for the trucks and I see signs on the road of the ones that didn't quite make it! I can imagine in some places the plunge must be as far as 200 metres! And those ascending are doing it in first gear! I hear their engines straining loudly to hold the heavy payload back from the plunge, long before they come into view! But it's all so cool and nice, and breathtakingly beautiful.

Soon enough the climb is over for me, and the descent starts! Down, down, down I go, and come up to this 3 km long queue of trucks! I thank God I am on a bike, and breeze past them, soon arriving at the cause of the holdup- a truck had broken apart at a tight turn! It was in the process of having its cargo loaded unto another truck, while the wreckage had left just enough space for only one vehicle to pass at a time! That of course excluded me, and in no time, they were all

fading into the distance behind me, with *Kara* in front of me! *Kara!!!* Very nice town it seems. Perhaps even bigger than *Sokode*, and I observe a very beautiful looking hotel on my left! I decide, there and then, to make this town my target stop the next time I take this route!

The road keeps on heading north to *Mango*, and pretty soon the dark clouds begin to off-load *their* own cargo! I stop and put on my rain gear! It feels really nice to be insulated from the wetness, and I soldier on through the rain. The heavy part stops after about 30 minutes, and I observe that the temperature is at an all-day low. In my rain gear I am not only insulated from the rain, but also from the cold, so it's quite ok!

My first stop is *Mango*, and as I approach the town I start looking for the roadside canteen where we had stopped the last time! Spot it, and come to a stop in front of it! The cook is a lady this time, and I wolf down some bread, an omelette, and a cup of coffee! Memories again of the last time; we had stopped here and met with some guys on their way to South Africa. We had all eaten together, and taken pictures and shared laughter... and now, silence!!!

I could get used to this silence! I *have* to get used to this silence! Breakfast over and the border beckons! Shortly, I am there, and it's a breeze passing through! I wonder; why are the southern borders so stressful, and the northern ones so easy to pass through? The road leading up to the border has road-works going on, and with the rain, they have become a right muddy and gooey mess! I call on all my Guinea training to avoid an *intimate knowledge* of the mud, and wonder what the situation will be after the border!

Don't have to wonder for long... the road *does* improve, and I am riding along at a good pace pretty soon. As I pass through *Tindangou*, I spot the exact place I had sat while we waited for the issues with *Baba* to be resolved the last time. Nothing had changed. Except that there was a lot less traffic now! The weather remains cool, and pretty soon I am approaching *Ouagadougou*! I begin to feel some apprehension as I recall all the road-works from my last trip. Road-works and rain don't mix very well for a biker, especially for me! But it looks like I have nothing to worry about, as everything is now finished, and along with the many sign posts, I have no problem whatsoever in passing through the city and heading on to *Bobo*!

Ouagadougou has become a really beautiful and opulent looking town, with flyovers and all! I still have daylight enough to hit my goal for the night, so I am quite pleased. Traffic is light, and I am amazed to see a *Porsche Panamera* on this stretch of road! It strikes me that in spite of the generally bad economic situation, there will *always* be some that have a lot more than others! The kilometres count down, and I am in *Bobo-Dioulasso*! Locate a hotel on the main road into town,

reserve my room, and am off to look for a bike wash to have my trusty machine cleaned up! It gets a good wash-down as darkness falls over the town, and pretty soon I am back to my hotel!



At *Saby Hotel*, I get my dinner, some erratic wifi, and a drink! I attempt to take a shower, and discover there is no hot water! Reason- solar heater has not worked for some time, as it's been raining almost every day for the last several days! Ok, no problem, the kitchen will provide the hot water; *and* a bucket! Bath taken, I look into my maps and determine that my goal of *Bamako* is doable for the next day! I need to reach the city early enough to get my Mauritanian visa, and to do that, I have to start very early the next day! So it's off to bed for the night! Silence is becoming quite ok these days! Or *I* am changing! Thank you God, for another great day!

June the 16th.

Day 3- Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina-Faso to Bamako, Mali

Temps: low- 24° | high- 32°

Distance covered- 602 kilometres

I wake up to another cloudy day, and set off early after enjoying *Saby Hotel's* 'complimentary' breakfast. So much noise was made about this breakfast during check in... turns out it's just a couple of slices of regular old bread, some jam and butter, and a coffee. Ok. But since I need to make tracks, there is no time to supplement.

I find my way out of *Bobo*, and am on the road to the "*frontier*", as the border is called in the Francophone countries. I seem to be the only one on the road to the border this morning, and some discomfort begins to creep into my heart! Could the problems in Mali be much worse than I imagined or was made to believe? I don't know, but I really have no choice now; I continue riding on!

But I begin to also contemplate a *plan B*. supposing.....just supposing I can't get in? Actually I don't have any feasible plan B! I *need* this visa from Bamako. The words of the Immigration "Police" reassure me as I remember them. What did he say? Ah yes! "The Islamists have the north, and in the south there is no problem." Ok! I pass a sign and stop; make a U-turn and go back for a picture! What do I call this?? Is there a factory in the bush somewhere here?! Picture taken, and I'm on my way again.



Incredible! Some vehicles! At last! Looks like they must have set out quite early. And buses at that! Filled up with passengers! And with Malian number plates! Then it means they are border-bound... and hopefully know more than I do! Calm settles in my mind, and I continue making steady progress towards the border.

I pass the vehicles and come upon another bus soon after! But there seems to be a problem; why is he moving so slowly?! He has the whole road to himself, and he is moving so slowly! Alarm bells start going off in my head! I am now about 200 metres behind, and slowing down too. Looking past the bus, I can't seem to find anything further up the road that would be causing him to slow down. I slow down even further! I proceed to overtake cautiously, doing about 30 km/h, and when I am almost abreast the driver, I finally see what he had seen before me! A baby in the middle of the road!

I look around and see a compound about 50 metres from the road! Unbelievable! The baby can't be more than a year and a half. Oblivious of the dangers the road poses, he had probably walked/crawled his way to the road, and was now standing and waving his hands, and generally having himself a merry time! Some parents should be flogged! On a major highway!

His smile was so full! Like he had achieved a personal goal! I stop and lean on my horn till I see someone running towards us from the compound, then am off just as I see the driver getting out of the bus! I assume he has some choice words to give the baby's mum. Meanwhile, the happy toddler's smile remained wide as ever throughout! As I ride on, I contemplate the innocence of a child! Jesus had said this! A child is so trusting, so "brave"! But in this case, his mum was really careless! I wonder, and hope he is allowed to grow up!

The border comes up faster than I anticipated, and as always, I go through the formalities. Basically they run like this... First, Burkina-Faso "Police" stamp me out, and the "*Douane*" cancel my *laissez passer*. Next, I cross from Burkina-Faso into Mali, in this case, a distance of about 50 metres of well tarred road. In Mali, I show myself to the "*Gendarmerie*", who write my details in a book. The "Police" stamp my passport, and finally onto the "*Douane*" again, who issue me with a new *laissez passer*. In Mali, this costs 5,000 CFA. Also, apparently, I need to take my *laissez passer* back to the Police to have them endorse it. Then I am good to go!

But not so fast!! While waiting for the *Douane* to write the *laissez passer*, I casually leaf through my passport. Uh-oh!! This can't be right! They have put a "*SORTIE*" stamp on my passport! This *definitely* can't be right! It should read "*ENTREE*"! So as I take the *laissez passer* for endorsement, I also point this out to them. With apologies, the wrong stamp is cancelled, and the right one affixed. As I drive away from the border on my way to *Bamako*, I contemplate what that "*small*" mistake would have cost me!! I would probably only have found this out at the border out! Then I would have had to ride all the way *BACK*, across the whole country, to have it sorted out!! Not a pleasant thought at all! I say a silent "Thank You" to God, and find my way to *Sikasso*. Fill up with fuel, and am *Bamako*-bound.

At the outskirts of Bamako I find this beautiful sign, and stop for a picture!



Then it's off to locate the Mauritanian embassy. I have the co-ordinates on my GPS, thanks to Inyang, who passed this route in March, but it's still tough going through the city centre. There is traffic everywhere, and this certainly doesn't look like a country in "trouble", where my life might be in danger.

I fill out the form for the visa and make the payment. I am told I can have it in about an hour if I wait, so I go to the waiting room to pass the time. My phone locates a nearby free wifi, and pretty soon, I am catching up on my email. In the waiting room is another young man, Michele, a Camerounian who lives in Morocco. We chat, and I tell him my plan, to go to Morocco, but first through Senegal. He explains to me that this route I have chosen is longer and I should consider the alternative route (which would mean I will by-pass Senegal and go directly into Mauritania through Mali's northern border). With this new info, I begin to consider the alternative. Hmmm...

He is called and given his passport, and shortly after, I am called also. The officials are extremely apologetic as they tell me the particular official with the authenticating stamp has closed for the day, and I have to come back tomorrow. No problem. First thing, I will be back. So it's off to find a hotel.

I find Mande Hotel, which is relatively close to the embassy, and after settling in, order lunch. The Hotel is a four-star affair situated on an island in the middle of the river Niger.

Blanks with the Niger in the background... looking good!

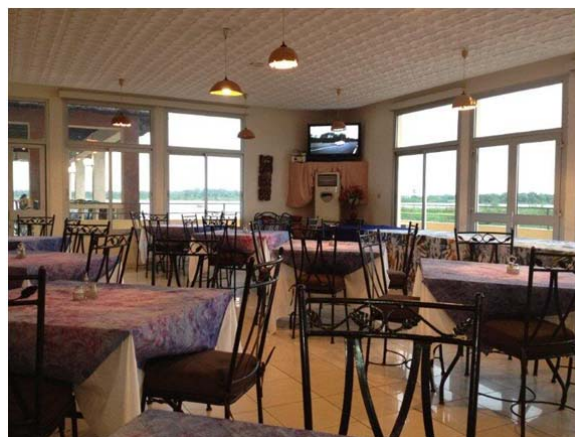


Lunch.....



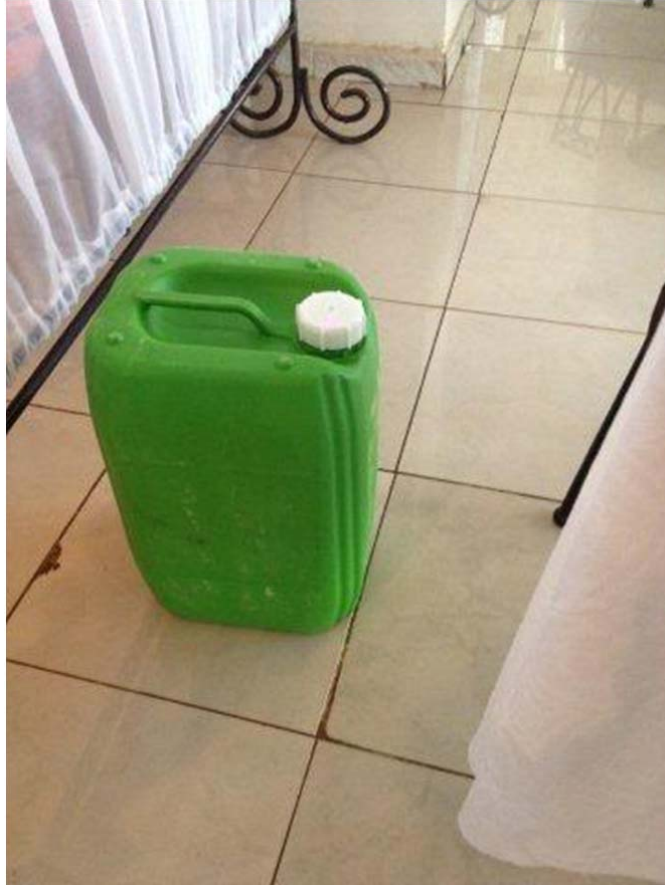
Aahhhh... lunch is great, and I sit in the restaurant chatting with the receptionist.

View from my table.....with the Niger River gently flowing by...



I run my plan by him, expressing my concern about passing into Mauritania from the northern border; concerns based mainly on the availability of petrol. Mauritania has extremely few *PETROL* stations. There is diesel everywhere you turn, but as for petrol, that's another matter.

After some consideration, we agree that I will need a jerry can for petrol. He calls a young man out, who tries, without success, to sell me some Malian art. I give him some money, and soon enough he is back with 2 cans for me to choose from. I choose my “*auxiliary tank*” carefully, then retire to my room to hatch the new plan.



I see my target for the next day as being *Ayoun el Atrous*, a town about 150 km into Mauritania. OK! I am good to go! Calm settles over me as I consider and reconsider my plan. All is well, and I like it. *Ayoun* it is then! Sleep comes quickly when things are going your way!!

July the 17th.

Day 4- Bamako, Mali to Ayoun el Atrous, Mauritania.

Temps: low-26° | high- 34°

Distance covered- 438 kilometres

There is no hurry in starting out today. I have a 9 am appointment to pick up my passport, and I can't leave Bamako before that. Strap on my new “auxiliary tank”, and am glad to discover that it's not a bad fit at all. Settle my bills at the reception and ride out to the embassy. I get there a few

minutes past 8 am, and spend the time waiting for the officials to arrive. Eventually get my passport at about 9:30 am, and am off. Stop at a filling station on my way out of *Bamako* and have my two “tanks” filled. Almost 40 litres of fuel!! That amounts to quite some endurance! I am ready for Mauritania!!

As I ride past *Kati*, I decide that I *MUST* not miss my breakfast this morning, so I make a stop at the next “mai shai”, or “tea-man”! The egg sandwich and coffee is just what I need to get started. Breakfast over, and I am back on track again! Next stop is for fuel.



As I ride, I observe the vegetation is beginning to thin out. No more the thick forests of the past couple of days. Now it's just bushes and trees. I also begin to see carcasses of cows! The first one is ok, but then I see another. I reason that this must be road kill or else, why would they be so close to the road?



The frequency is about a cow every 50 km, probably got hit by a speeding driver during the night. Here the animals share the roads with the cars and trucks, and there is a price to pay for that.

Some interesting road side art demands a mention.



I see patches of farmland too, with different cash crops planted. I stop at a plot where a horse and plough are being used.



The young boys run over to me, and we chat. They are in school, but as it's their holidays, they are helping out their parents with the farm work. Interesting. Groundnuts are being planted today! And they are all so happy to have their picture taken.



I arrive at *Diema* junction, and again a flood of memories comes over me. We had stopped here to enjoy some roasted meat during our Senegal trip! We had also refuelled before riding on to *Kayes* (Pronounced “*Ka*”) for the night. So I refuel too, but my destination today is Mauritania. So the first exit at the roundabout is for me, and I am on my way to *Nioro du Sahel*, the last town in Mali before the border. I have been lazing around all day with my frequent fuel stops and all, but I figure I still have time to get to *Ayoun* in Mauritania. I ride into *Nioro* and see a hotel in the distance. I figure I still have a lot of daylight and can easily get to my target, so I aim straight for the border. Border formalities on the Mali side are over briskly, and I am ready for Mauritania. But again, I refuel... and the bike takes about 4 litres more! Also, a quick change of money... \$100 gets me 26,000 *Ouguiyas*, and I am good to go!

Mauritania is surprisingly “modern”. I notice solar panels and battery banks on almost all the buildings at the border post. The Police take me into their office to stamp my passport and verify my visa. The official put on his computer (which, along with all the usual Immigration passport control equipment, looks like abandoned property), and I am surprised to see that it all actually works! My passport is scanned and I am processed quite quickly... all in less than 10 minutes. Then it’s off to have my bike sorted. I need insurance, and the local store offers that.



The *Gendarmerie* process and prepare the temporary vehicle license, and I am set to go.

Now Mauritania requires all foreigners to have a “*fiche*”, which they must have prepared and which contains all the bio-data and vehicle info on a sheet of paper. Inyang had sent me a template and I had prepared mine. Only thing was that this small piece of paper looked so insufficient to me that I could not believe it would pass the test. Soon enough, I was stopped, and produced the “*fiche*”. The police looked at it and waved me on! Really!! Wow!!! It works like a charm!!! However, in less than 10 kilometres, I have been stopped like 3 times! At this rate I begin to wonder if I have enough of the “*fiche*” to pass through! Oh well, I will have to produce more.

As I approach the next checkpoint the police wave me off the road. I pull over and switch off my engine as I get off the bike. After an exchange of gestures and a couple of words it begins to sink in what they are trying to convey to me... it's about 18 minutes to 7 pm, and foreigners aren't allowed to move from 7 pm to 7 am! So what's going to happen to me? *Ayou*n is about 1 hour away. I am going to have to spend the night with the police!

The senior officer at the post is on the phone, and soon enough the local Commissioner arrives the post. He explains to me, in fairly good English, that I will be escorted to the police station and I must remain there till 7 am. He also takes my passport from me in the rare case that I decide that I don't want to follow his “advice”. All this is done in a very courteous and polite manner. I'm surprised they would take so much care not to “offend” me. So it's off to the Station, where I am shown a spot to park my bike, and a mat for my use. Wow... such luxurious accommodation!

I ask for, and am escorted to the local “*fast food*” joint for chicken and chips.



My escort is a young police officer, but he is packing a pistol! I offer him food as I order and he politely refuses. Supper done, we walk to have a drink at a nearby store and he tells me he learnt English in school. He is from *Ayou*n and will be travelling there the next day too! Supper done, and it's back to the station and my mat.

Meanwhile, my mat is on the ground in front of the station, as are the single bunks of the 3 policemen who are at the station with me. I get out my rain gear to use as a pillow, and get “comfortable”. I lie on my back, and for the first time in a long time, I look up at the sky! It’s a clear night and I see the stars! It’s amazing that I have been so preoccupied with “life” that I have not even stopped to look around me and see all the wonders God has placed before us. I felt a happy peace settle over me, as the fear of not being in control melted away. Surprisingly, I find that sleep comes quickly! And I welcome it!

July the 18th.

Day 5- Moribougou to Nouakchott, Mauritania

Temps: low-24° | high-37°

Distance covered- 998 kilometres

Wake up with first light, after having ignored the call to prayer from the mosque close by. Arrange myself and start the wait till 7 am. The policemen also stand up and do their cleaning up... no bath for me today it seems!



In the picture, you can see my raingear, which is my makeshift pillow on the mat!

Around 6:30-ish they begin the age-old ritual of tea brewing, and soon enough a piping hot cup is in my hand, along with bread. What more could I ask for? At 7 am, the Commissioner, who had come around earlier, hands over my passport to me, bids me “Bonne Route”, and I am off.



As I ride, the frequency of the Police checks reduces to one every 30 or so kilometres. I get to *Ayoun*, and find out that I didn't really miss much by sleeping with the police... its quite a small town. I would have been surprised to find a decent hotel there. That being said, I do find fuel, at the service station. But it is sold by the bottle and all I get is 6 litres... which just about fills my tank. OK. So I am off to *Kiffa*, where I expect to get more fuel. The road to *Kiffa* deteriorates, and soon enough I am riding on a dirt track. I hate riding in dirt!



Apparently there are some road works going on, and I am soon having dust for breakfast, served up by the big construction trucks. I find this water pump amongst the desert sand and I wonder, did it ever produce water?



The roadkill frequency has increased, and now I am seeing a dead cow every kilometre or so, sometimes two or three at a time. And from time to time, I pass the living herd. The cows are painfully thin, and in the hot desert, I wonder what exactly they eat and drink! It is a sad, sad situation I see.

The road works and bad section last less than 50 km, and I am back on newly laid, good asphalt. I arrive *Kiffa* and sure enough, there is no fuel here in this town either. Hmmmm! Next target is *Aleg*! Hopefully there will be fuel there. Approaching *Aleg*, I need to call on my “auxiliary tank”, and make a refill.



I still have about 4 or 5 litres left to spare, and as I arrive *Aleg*, I find fuel here. I buy just enough to ensure I can hit *Nouakchott*, and start to head out. At the city outskirts I decide that I need to stop for food, but I haven't seen any restaurants and the like, so I make do with the corner store. Take some biscuits and some drinks, and wolf them all down even as *Blanks* draws all the children in the vicinity!!

Food break done, and I am on the road again. An interesting thing I notice is how some cars have their roofs painted white. As I ride I ponder this. Are they taxis or what? Later I find out that it's done to reduce the amount of heat absorbed by the car's body! Wow! It gets that hot!

The landscape gets more and more "empty" as the vegetation reduces more and more.



But the roadkills do not reduce. Eventually, Nouakchott is on the horizon, and with fuel to spare.



As I drive into the city, I look out for an opportunity to change some money. Find a shop that changes money, and change another \$100. The moneychanger speaks very good English, and points me to a budget "hostel" and somewhere I can get dinner. I wash my clothes, have a much deserved shower, and go off to eat at the "Syrian" restaurant I was pointed to. Dinner done, I head back to my bed, and after outlining my plan for the next day, I tuck in and am asleep in no time.

July the 19th.

Day 6- Nouakchott, Mauritania to Dakhla, Morocco.

Temps: low- 22° | high- 26°

Distance covered- 909 kilometres

Wake up around 7:30, and start getting ready. Stock up on water and juice, and I am out before 8:30! Work my way out of the city in the direction of *Nouadhibou*. The mile marker says 460 km to go, and I brace up.



The loneliness I felt in the beginning is now a thing of the past, and today I have Duane Sheriff keeping me company. With the lack of any visual stimulus, there is so much concentration available to learn new things. And new things I learn!

The kilometres are passing by and it's clear that things have changed! No people for one thing, and no towns anymore. No nothing! Not even dead cows by the road side!



Then, out of the blue, just like an oasis, a Total fuel station! "*Gare de Nord*" it's called, and I am delighted to see it.



And it's so conveniently located, just about half way to Nouadhibou! Fill up on petrol, and now I'm sure I'm good to go to reach *NDB*!

About 100 km to *NDB* I see what looks like an oasis of sorts... vegetation and power lines all around, yet this doesn't look like a town, and my GPS does not see anything there either. As I pass it I notice a rail-line now running beside the road. I ponder on this...a rail line from nowhere to *NDB*. Must be some sort of goods export route, I conclude. Later I find out that there *is* a mine nearby, and the rail-line serves to haul the ore to *NDB* for export.



30 km to *NDB*, I come upon my turn, which would take me to the border; but I can't take it just yet! I need some more cash AND more fuel, so I head on into the town!

First stop at the bank, and the ATM is out of service! Typical!! Next stop, and the ATM swallows my card!! Ok, cash is king, so I walk into the bank and change €50 to 18,000 *Dirham (DH)*. Fill up with petrol, and it's 30 km back to my exit, and on to the border! But en-route I happen to see the longest train ever... being drawn by two engines!!



All is good, and I exit Mauritania without much ado! The road ends about 5 metres past the border post gate, and there are several tracks that are options to follow. I pick the darkest coloured one... dark from the most tyre wear, so I figure it must be the right one. The tracks are on stone and sand. The landscape reminds me of no-man's land in the movies, with abandoned and cannibalized cars and all sorts of stuff. I even start to wonder if I haven't made a mistake! Then on the horizon, I see a communications tower, and I figure that must be my destination. A couple of minutes later, and I see a car heading towards me, and now I *know* I am on the right track!

Joy!! I see the border, and people just outside of it! I ride up to the barrier and the officer there motions me to park on the right! So I park the bike and walk to him. We exchange some words and it dawns on me that he is telling me that the border is closed! He says that they close at 6, and it's 6:15 pm! But I look at my watch (set to Mauritanian time) and I see that it's 5:15 pm. But smiling, he lets me know that Moroccan time and Mauritanian time are not the same! Crap! I begin to look around for a soft place amongst all the rocks surrounding the post as I consider it might be another wonderful night under the skies! Can't see anything comfortable! Try to talk to him to allow me, perhaps I can talk to his boss, but he points to the cameras and says there is nothing he can do!

Apparently, I am not the only one in this predicament! There is a Senegalese stuck out here too! So I am standing there, pondering my situation, when I see two men walking toward the barrier from inside. They come to the barrier, talk with the sentry and on the radio, and miraculously, we are allowed in! My opinion about these people is already beginning to change, and I am finding that they can be very compassionate to travellers! Well, I will find out in time! I am processed in about 30 minutes, and am out of the border post.