

## Through hopeless villages towards marvellous beaches

**The first days at the Danube in Bulgaria have been the hottest days of the Tandem trip of the couple, Wolfgang wrote us. Adventurous ways to the Black Sea, an exciting train journey, biking over the longest bridge and a forbidden highway.**

The thermometer shows 37 to 39 degree in the shadow. In the full sun the temperatures climb much higher. The 10 litres of our daily drinking supply we take with us every morning is nearly finished in the evening. Every shadow spending tree makes us happy.

Not only the temperatures but also the condition of the Bulgarian streets give us a hard time. Constantly we have to swerve potholes. The distances between the villages are longer than in Serbia. We pass endless fields of sunflowers or corn and have to share the street with old cars, shaky motorbikes, donkeys and horsedrawn vehicles.

The villages look hopeless to us. Many uninhabited broken down buildings. Obituaries of people who lived here before are still hanging on the doors.

We share our first night in a motel together with some fleas. They and barking dogs give us a sleepless night. Brigitte is still scared of dogs since the attack in Serbia. The owner, she worked years ago in Germany, tries to calm her down. "Our dogs do only bite dark people" This comment shows the latent racism against gypsies we meet over and over again. It's picturesque to see them with their carts collecting scrap metal and trash. But it's really no funny life for the gypsies and their homes. In the outskirts are poor.

We cycle through deserted regions and can hardly see the Danube. Huge pieces of fallow land or monocultures we can see on our way and over and over burning fields and rubbish tips. It's no fun to drive through the smoke.

The third night we cannot find a hotel. A sixteen year old interested boy who has some knowledge of English wants to help us to find an accommodation but after some phonecalls he explains that all of the guestrooms are already taken because there is a festival in the town. But he shows us an area in a former school where we can camp. The police and the mayor will be informed by his mother. All his friends come to admire our tandem. We are so tired that neither loud music nor barking dogs can disturb our sleep.

The following day we decide to drive to the next station to take the train to the Black Sea. We manage the transport of our bike. The train doesn't have a luggage van so we have to pull our tandem and trailer into a narrow compartment at the end of the train. After the next stop we get a shock. The train rattles with open door through the Bulgarian desert. Wolfgang has to hold on both, tandem and trailer until the next stop. Here he can close the door again. Finally we arrive Varna.

At the railway station we find several Bulgarian people offering private accommodations and we take one of them. A man leads us through the pedestrian zone with neat shops and restaurants. Soon the buildings get worse. He lives with his mother in one room, so they can rent the two others. We fold up the sofa to have space for us and our tandem.

The second night we hear a loud noise. The next morning we see in the room of the mother that nearly the whole plaster of the ceiling fell down last night.

Different are the accommodations at the beach. Here are new luxury hotels, flickering advertisements and boutiques.

We drive on and decide to take some free days for holiday at the seaside in Obzor and Pomerie. The route to the black Sea isn't easy. We leave Varna in the busy traffic over the longest bridge of the Balkan States. New cars with Bulgarian number plates often pass by. In the cities of the beach regions we can see many new hotels built for rich tourists not only from Bulgaria. But we decide to look for smaller hotels.

Now we have to ride constantly up and down in the mountains. We have not only to struggle against the ascent but also with high temperatures. Hundreds of flies swarm around us and Brigitte has to wave with her handkerchief all the time to get them away.

On the side of the route there is a sign which indicates that this street isn't allowed for bicycles and carriages. But there isn't another way to take so we have to drive from Obzor to Pomerie on the forbidden highway. A highway with many cars and trucks is on the side of the street. Horsedroppings show us, we are not the only ones who ignore the prohibition.

In Pomerie there is a saltlake beside the Ocean. They bring out black healing earth here. The owner of our hotel manages that we get a big bottle of this mud. Instead of an expensive wellness treatment we can now heal ourselves rubbing the mud on our bodies. Later we go into the water of the sea to wash it away. The days at the sea are pure recovery. In the off peak season we have plenty of space at the beach. We enjoy the warm water, the sand and the delicious roasted food from the restaurants.

The weather changes quickly. Temperatures get cooler, not unpleasant for us. We decide to rent a small bus to cross the Turkish border. We will be in Istanbul on time to meet our friends.

Our departure day is on a stormy day. The sea is churned up and waves run until the sunshades. So the farewell isn't too bad. The way to the border reminds us once more of a different faces of Bulgaria. Newly built hotels and good streets disappear as soon as we leave the coastal region and so we rumble through potholes towards Turkey.