

Germany - South Korea (from 21.07.1998 to 31.10.1999)
...And all this based on funny joking idea

A "short" abstract

In fact our first bicycle-world-tour trip based, only on a crazy idea. Well this isn't really a run of the mill starting basis but perhaps not even the worst. The chosen route was a little bit out of the common way, however with hindsight it wasn't so bad. Well we had to cross sometimes the sea and over fly impassable countries but the good site was, that we got mostly a favourable summer climate on our way. So winter climate wasn't a problem and thick winter equipment hasn't be packed.



[Following the river Elbe](#)

We started in Hamburg without any training and we couldn't try out our bicycles before. So the first meters out of the city on our bicycles was a little bit shaky and takes some time to getting used to. We follow the river Elbe eastwards so gladly the way was plane and easy to drive. Also after two weeks our buttocks had been accustomed and got a thick horny skin.

After some weeks on the road, we passed Germany, Czech Republic and Austria; we mastered our first bigger handicap, the Alps and run in to Italy.



[The Alps had to be crossed](#)

There we visited Venice, following the Adriatic Sea and passed inland to Florence.



Venice

Between Florence and Sienna then something unexpected happened, that I would like to express short: It was a nice sunny day and the country road to Sienna followed a hilly valley and passed every hill on the route. So for use it was a sweaty fagging job this day. Also there was the straight expressway that the country road underneath and crossed every time. So after a long curve uphill it happened that Mun Suk, she drove every time a little bit behind me, didn't follow straight the country and drove against on the expressway. Well it wasn't a little bit confusing because it was in the middle of the curve, the country road underneath the expressway, and there was a sign to Sienna but perhaps not fore the country road. I was waiting a little bit straight ahead but I couldn't saw anything because the sideway was abundantly covered with vegetation. Mun Suk for the same reason couldn't saw me that I'm was waiting for her and so it happened that she took the wrong way up to the expressway. She didn't notice that now she got a road with to lanes and a guardrail in the middle. Also that some car drivers blowing their horn irritated her only after 5 km she noticed that something was going wrong because their was a, for bicycle drivers, impassable tunnel that she made stopping. She now that I was waiting on an important location like this for her, so she known that she couldn't be right.

I, after a short time of waiting, was thinking that Mun Suk got a problem on the way, maybe a flat tyre or something else. So I drove back downhill to see what happened. But as I arrived on our last resting place and she wasn't there I noticed that she had have took the wrong way on the expressway to Sienna. Fast as I could I drove uphill again but on my way I was thinking, that she must have already noticed her mistake and came back to the country road and now she was looking for me more uphill on the road. For this reason I passed again the slip road and looked for her on the way uphill. Well the road was very twisting and as I said before, abundantly covered with vegetation, so it was impossible to see what was there after 100 Meters. Unfortunately after 20 Minutes of a hard ridding uphill normally I must have reached here but sadly there was none Mun Suk to see. I've got a little bit nervous about this situation so I stopped on the road and I stopped the passing cars to asked the drivers if they sawn a small Asian woman on a bicycle on the road. After six passed cars without a result my nerves were all on edge. Then a car came uphill and blowing the horn it stopped beside me but the driver could speak only in Italian. But I recognized that there was something downhill with Mun Suk so I thanked the driver and sprinted with my bicycle downhill. And there she was a picture of misery on the other side of the slip road to the expressway. She was crying like a waterfall and totally beat. As I aforementioned she was stopping in front of the tunnel and short she was thinking, maybe I was making teat of courage with here. But wisely she knows that I never would make something like this so she rejected the idea to cross the tunnel with her bicycle. So she crossed over to the other side of the expressway and cycled back. But when she reached the slip road where she passed on there was a guardrail that not allowed her to pass to the

other side. So she had had to ride more forward to get a slip road down to the country road. It was a long ride for her and she had to drive again uphill to curve with the junction but when she arrived there and I wasn't there she broke down. This adventure fortunately was turned on well and our further tour proceeds normally. We passed Roma and Naples and from Bari we crossed the Adriatic Sea to the Peloponnesus Island on Greece. As the weather turned very unfriendly the last time in Italy, we've got very heavy storms and rainfalls now in Greece the sun came out again. But with the sun also the temperature rose up very straight so that we gonna roasted very strong. We were hopping a little bit from Island to Island and made an extra trip to the Island Santorini. Then we said good-bye to Europe and passed with a ferry to Israel. Unfortunately we wanna gone to Israel in matters of later passport problems with Islamic countries but nowadays, at this time, there was no ferry directly from Europe to Egypt where we originally want to go. Well it looks like that we was ill prepared for this trip but it wasn't like this. Really we've got a lot of information before that a ferry from Piraeus to Alexandria still was running. Also inner side Greece we've met a Greece photographer woman and she made a call to the harbour officials in Piraeus and they said, yes there is a ferry to Alexandria, so when we arrived at the harbour we wasn't very happy to her that no ferry anymore was running this way. Still we found a faded sign 'Piraeus-Alexandria' outside the ticket counter but no luck, it was only a relict of a historic passed time.

So we stranded in Haifa and it wasn't so bad this solution. But first we had to passed the immigration formalities, which indeed was, for this time (1998), a little bit sophisticated. After these formalities first we passed up to the North to Akko because this site was a tip from an Israeli who we met in Athens before. Then back again southwards to Tel Aviv. Here it happens that a young Israeli was asking us if we would stay overnight or for some days in his apartment. First we was a little bit suspected and we was thinking about kidnapping ore something more dangerous but in this short discussion with him we decided first to take a look. Actually it wasn't only his apartment because he joined it with two other friends but for them also it wasn't a problem so we could stay there for a while. But the funniest thing was that after some minutes they decided to make a short holiday trip and then we stand in the door and said goodbye to them. There wasn't a problem with this for us but certainly the first night wasn't so funny because Mun Suk got a heavy allergic reaction after joining a Thai restaurant and for three days she couldn't do so much.

After Tel Aviv we followed the road inland to Jerusalem a so crazy and overloaded place with historic facts and figures. The old town, where we staid was very interesting. You could feel this vibration of religiousness and fanaticism on every corner. Happily at these days Jerusalem and the rest of the land was very quiet. Only a few months later it changed again dramatically. We followed the eastwards and it was going downward the hole day and at the end we was about 400 m under the costal sea level on the banks of the Dead See.



On the way to the Dead See

Here a miracle happened that Mun Suk in her wildest dreams never believed before. For the first time in her life she could swim! We rested a while on this incredible place of the Dead Sea before we passed to Eilat the frontier town to Egypt. The procedure to pass this border was very interesting because they really want to x-rays our total stuff including our bicycles. As you could imagine their x-ray scanners weren't big enough so they couldn't get a bicycle into. So the officials were a little bit lost and after 5 minutes of intensive thinking we could pass the bicycles without scanning.

We followed the Red Sea and passed the Sinai, outside the thermometer stands up over the 50°C. degrees. There we saw the first time some children from whom we were warned before by reports from other travellers. Maybe for them some tourist on a bicycle is such a strange thing, or only for them it looks maniac so for this reason they throw stones to tourist bicycle drivers. We were prepared and we got an arsenal of some stones on our handlebar bag so we could demonstrate that it was necessary we could throw back some stones. Never before we were thinking to hit a child or to throw a stone to them, but as we read in the guidebook this kids could be a serious and dangerous problem. And it worked well because as we saw them on the street and only shown them that we are also got 'weapons' they decided not to throw a stone to us. After this experience we landed in the big and chaotic city of 1000 and 1 night, Cairo. Well, here none throw stones to us but we thought that every one would like to make a business with us. Mostly they want to sell something but other ones came with a heart-rending story that his child or his wife had to be operated soon, they had no money for this or some different story even worse. It was a nightmare to walk around in the center of the city.



On the way in Egypt



A modern bicycle-shop in Egypt

To visited Luxor and the Valley of the Kings and Queens we took the train from Cairo and backwards to Cairo we've taken a Felucca down the river Nil. As we arrived we saddled our bicycles and were riding to Alexandria. From there we visited inland to the Siwa Oasis, the biggest and most beautiful oasis not only for Egypt. Before the idea was to take a boat from Sudan the Eritrea in fact that the Sudan was closed but also there was no boat or ferry anymore from Egypt to Eritrea and between Eritrea and Ethiopia a short time before we started our world-bicycle-tour a new boundary dispute started a new war between this two countries. The only possible or safe way to follow our route was that we have to pass these countries so that we had had to fly. We was a little bit worry with all our language and so the overweight but we arranged everything before with the travel agency in Cairo so that we paid only 100 \$ for the overweight.

The jump from Egypt to Kenya was enormous. No sand and dessert anymore and flat land, everything was green and hilly. Now the people wasn't light-skinned they was black.



With the Maasai

Also the people there want to make some business with us or come with a ugly story to get some cash, in Kenya only they opened their hands and said "give me money". The plan was to go from Mombassa by boat to India but first we've made a loop to north of the country. There was the Rift Valley and some great mountain massifs; also we've visited some wild parks. One of them the called the Hell Gateway and this park we could visit also with our bicycles. On another one, the Nakuru Park, we could camp inside but only some few meters after the entrance because this one was a real "wild" park. We were the only visitors who camped inside the Park so for the monkeys we were the right victims. Later in the afternoon a big group of baboons came to join with us the camping place. The trees around the camping place was there sleeping domicile and when it was time to go to bed the moved up on the trees. Some minutes later I was thinking why without clouds now we've got rain. Well it wasn't rain; it was only the night toilet from the baboons. Then, it was around midnight; I woke up from the noise that the baboons had made. Semi somnolent I saw a shadow of a big cat passing our tent. At the next morning the park ranger told me, yeah it would be possible that this was a jaguar. So good that I didn't decide to go out the tent at night to figure it directly out. On our trip and mostly in the parks we saw a lot of animals like warthog, monkeys, baboons, zebras, giraffes, buffalos, rhinoceros and hippopotamus.



Inside a park



Giraffes on the roadside

After this amazing roundtrip we've gone to Mombassa to find a boat to India. But we've got no luck. We visited some different shipping agencies and they got a lot of shipping routes to India. But on no one it was possible to catch a ride. The fact was, so they telling us, that they have to get an insurance for every passenger that they transport on their ships. And the ship owners who sit far far away from Mombassa, mostly in Europe, USA or Japan, never get in touch with the idea, to spend a minute of their busy time to get these insurances. So it was waste less time and we have to think about an alternative to cross to India. Well, the only real alternative was to fly, so we bought to tickets for a flight from Nairobi to Mumbai. The days that we have to wait for our departure we spend on the coastline of Kenya, a little bit up on the north from Mombassa. Then, to reach our flight, we took a train to get to Nairobi.

To get our stuff safe in the train and to be sure to catch a seat near by our bicycles, we ask forehand the general manager from the station if he is kind to help us a little bit. He was a nice guy and glad to help us, so we wasn't in trouble and when the train leaves the station, everything was inside the train and we, well of course a little bit sweaty, got an seat for us. BUT!!! Our happiness wasted only in a short time because after only one hour the train stopped on a tiny platform in the middle of nowhere. No forward or backward. Nobody could tell us what's happened and after one hour some passengers went out to get some fresh air. Maybe two hours later we've could here some presumptions that the train, how is coming strait from Nairobi to Mombassa was jumping out of the rails. Our fear approved two

additional hours later as a repairing train was on his way from Mombassa to the broken train. By the way to inform you, there was only, or still is, one track from (or vice versa) Mombassa to Nairobi, so our train couldn't drive past. No we were sweating more and more, not only due to the high temperature, because our time, to catch our flight in Nairobi, melts away. I decided, that when the train wouldn't move forward until 06:00AM we have to go out, back to the main street to catch a bus or truck to Nairobi. Well 06:00AM passed, we checked out and moved back to the main road but no bus and no truck was willing to take us with them, because every car or bus or truck was already fully packed when they leaved Mombassa. No chance on this site. Well a good advice was really necessary at this moment. I decided again, the only chance what we got or what we could take is, go back with on our bicycle as fast as we can to Mombassa, hint strait to the airport and hopefully we could get an flight, in time, to Nairobi. It was a nightmare, the street was bumping and dusty the whole way backwards but after a little more than an hour, we arrived on the airport in Mombassa. Very quick I cleaned my face and fingers because at this moment I was more locking like an African as a European and went strait to the ticket counter. When I came back to Mun Suk, she was taking care of our luggage, I was very happy to inform here that I could get a flight, for a reasonable price and right in time to Nairobi. Both we took a load of our mind and we've gone to the bathroom to clean up the dust from the road. Also we packed all our stuff close together and the heavy stuff we put in our hand luggage. Then after some short minutes of relaxing we went to the check-in counter and then there it was that someone pull the rug out from under. First they told us that we have to weight all our stuff, including the hand luggage and for the overweight minus 10 KG for the hand luggage we should have to pay and also they informed us that our destination airport is the national airport of Nairobi and the international airport is around 10 km away from that. This was too much for Mun Suk her nerves laid brightly. She started to screaming and blamed me that I hadn't arranged our flights very well. Also she started crying and sobbing, and many tears were running down her eyes. This indeed was too much for the Kenyans from the check in counter and they tried to calm down Mun Suk but the effects was backward and Mun Suk still were crying and blaming more and more. Now the Kenyans got worried because they couldn't manage a situation like this and after some short minutes between them the manager of the company came to us and offered us that the don't have to pay for the over luggage and after a short discussion with him we've got also a free transport from the national to the international airport. As a statement of my defence I had to say that I asked forehand that we've to arrive to the international airport in Nairobi.

On our flight to Nairobi was enough time so that Mun Suks tears could dry and than we've got a free quick ride on a pick-up to the international airport. The check-in there was without any trouble and on the next morning we landed in Asia, Mumbai, India. We decided to enter the city on a safe way with a taxi. It wasn't not really a big car, the taxi what we took, more like an old DDR car a la "Trabbi", but with the bicycles on top and the rest inside the car, well not really comfortable, we arrived on our Hotel near the Bombay-Gate. Once more, this step from Africa to Asia was huge. Everything was different and a totally new world opened it for us. It was at the beginning of December 1998. Very interesting and not so interesting new odors reached our nose. Three months we cycled in this so different country and everywhere where we arrived, even just for a short stop, there was every time a bunch of persons who gathered in a circle around us and stared on us and our bicycles.



Everytime an attraction

But no one of them got the courage to speak to us. There was a lot of whispering every time in these groups and the only word that we could understand was gear bike. O.K. that's easy to understand because in India where many people ride a bicycle there is no cycle with gears. So this was the most common interest in the group. Also every time there was one person who thought that he must explain to the rest how a gear system of a bicycle works.



A normal road situation

We spend Christmas and the end of the year without celebration because in India these customs does not exist. We passed Udaipur, known from the James Bond film Pussycat (this film runs mostly every night in every restaurant), Agra, worldwide known for his marvellous Taj Mahal and Jaipur, known for his palace of the wind (a superb historic building who is only a façade with covered windows. It was build for the wife's of the maharajah to join the processions without seen by other mans). After three months we arrived in Calcutta and this was enough time in this interesting country with his different smells and squalors on every corner.



Public garbage place

So again there was a flight that we had to catch but this time everything proceeded without any complication. What a surprise.

This time the jump wasn't for such a long distance but the difference was quite big enough. On the airport in Bangkok everything was spotless and recent cleaned. Also the people were very friendly, helpful and every time with a smile in the face. This was the reason that Mun Suk started to cry and tears running down her face when we were on the way to the city on our bicycles. For god sake that we were riding our bikes otherwise I thought that she would have kissed the bottom like the old pope. What a nice ride on well-made roads without potholes and with well-educated drivers. In Bangkok we had had to wait for a package from Germany with some spare parts so with a lot of waiting time we decided to make a short trip with low packed bicycles to the north of Thailand to Chang Rai and Chiang Mai. Afterwards, the spare parts arrived well in Bangkok and perhaps with some smelted chocolate from my beloved mother; we started heading down to the south.



A Thai Tempel

We made an island hopping to Koh Tau, Koh Phangna and Koh Samui and later back on the continent we crossed to the west side to Kao Lak.



On Koh Tau

To fast the time flows away in Thailand, a country so pleasant and fascinating. Malaysia, our next destination we touched very short only on the island Penang. From there we shipped to Medan on Sumatra, Indonesia.

The boat was looking like a banana and the ride was very rough. Well shaken we left the boat in the harbour of Medan. Now more than 13000 islands were waiting for us, because Indonesia has this number of islands. Well, not all of them we want to visit and not all of them are inhabited.



On the coast side of Sumatra



North and South



Lunch time with the main dish, salted crackers

But on Sumatra, the biggest of these islands we spend around two months. We visited e.g. an Orang-Outang rehabilitation station and Tuk-Tuk, an island in an island because it is situated in a big volcano crater sees. Then we had to leave the country for renovate our visas. Very adventurously we shipped with a cargo and passenger ship a long river downstream and thereafter we crossed the open sea. On a small island nearby Singapore we got from board. There we left our bicycles in the hotel where we staid for the night and shipped again now to the modern world of Singapore. This small city country for mostly of the travellers a shopping paradise was for us only hustle and bustle. The distance to Indonesia was to big, in culture and also in the way of living. So two days was more than enough for us and we went bag to our small Indonesian island and from there with a big ferry boat down two Jakarta on the island Java.

After a short while in the big and busy city of Jakarta we flee away, looking for a quieter place. Our next city stop was in Bogor, the summer place of the President (our better dictator) Suharto. But now after 30 years it was the first time that free and controlled elections took place in this country. Well it was a long way with a lot of demonstrations and blood, of course but now every one was in fire for the coming elections. There was red, green, yellow, blue and maybe some colours more and every colour stood for a political party. They'd made a lot of rumour, driving around with totally people filled trucks waving big flags with their party colour. We escaped from this not unsafe situations and also we changed our new T-shirts very fast because they were in the colour red, indeed a party

colour and the other party groups looked a little bit strange than the saw us. Normally we were riding the principal main road but there was a lot of traffic so I looked at my map and there was a small road painted down in the south on the coast side. We tried to figure out in what kind of situation this road is and the information was not so bad. There should be a tarred road, a little bit hilly but in good conditions. So optimistically we changed our route and went down to the south. After arriving to the coastline we asked again and the information was quite the same. But then... it was like a small nightmare. Immediate from a good-tarred road the situation changed to a humpy, bumpy sharp stone covered trail with a lot of mire, only good enough for a mule trail. I asked Mun Suk if she is willing to ride this way or that we head back but what a surprise for me because Mun Suk was willing to following this way. The only tricky part of these situation was, after the very hard riding part and that our water provision was running down that the next knowing town was around 50 km far away and it was already afternoon. Well, on the left and on the right side there were huge coconut plantations kilometres of kilometres. So why not get some coconuts and take their fresh and tasty water. First I tried it with a tightrope and a spanner but without fate, than Mun Suk tried it to climb a coconut palm like the kids that we saw afterwards but after one and a half meter over ground she got some acrophobia and started to crying. But then, right in the moment of disillusion there came a farm worker right his way and we asked him if he could get some coconuts down for us. Well it wasn't a communication with words because this man couldn't understand English and we in fact couldn't speak Indonesian so we had to explained more with hands and feet but the result was, that this old man climbed up the palm in a second without any problem and throw down some coconuts for us. Carefully we smashed the coconut on a stone to get the desired water. You do not imagine how delicious a coconut can be.



Coconut milk service station



Hardcore cycling on Java

Anyway we like very much the water of a coconut but this time it was like fountain of youth. We filled all of our bottles with the coconut water and then we rode or perhaps pushed our bicycles forward. Right after the dawn we reached a small town. We asked for the house of the mayor because we had heard that is tradition that in a small town, without a hotel or another places of accommodations, the mayor will assign a place. But before we reached the mayor house a man asked us in English what we looking for. So explained our situation and that we was looking for a place where we can stay for the night and where we can eat something. He explained us that his house is like a hotel where we can rest and have some food. It wasn't really a hotel more a normally family house because when we came in the young daughter of the man was leaving his room, so this was the place for us. But we where happy as we got a place for this night. Our dinner was a chicken, fresh slaughtered outside the house from his wife. The next day we said goodbye, but before we leaved we gave the housewife some money in their hand. It was like the same amount that we had normally to pay in an ordinary hotel and restaurant. Then we got same 20 km more to ride on the trail but we needed the whole days for this short distance. Finally we arrived in Sindanbirang and small town directly situated at the waterfront of the ocean. There we've got nearly the whole long black sanded beach for us alone and the other good information was that from there a tarred street headed back to the civilization.



Nearly alone on a wide black sanded beach

Later on Java we visited Yogyakarta, a very important cultural site and then we made a trip up to the volcano Mt. Bromo. Then we took a small ferryboat to the island Bali. We crossed this island in the north; far away the hyper-touristy places in the south.



On Bali

Then again some crossovers in a ferryboat to smaller islands. From Sumbawa there was a bigger passage in a big ferryboat to Sulawesi. We bought a first class ticket to be sure to have some comfort on the boat but also for safety reasons, because in the second class you have to share the room or worst on third class, the whole deck there is sharing the space. Well this can be funny and a good place to get in contact with the locals but later at night, when you fall asleep also a good place to lose your stuff. After 20 hours on this boat we arrived on Sulawesi. The first few days we spent in the city and we saddled the bikes to heading up to the north. Now straight up to Korea. But first we visited the place Suaya, which is a very special place. In fact nearly all people in Indonesia are Muslims but here in a small area a small ethnic group of Christians survived. Toraja they called the people there.



The houses of the Toraja

But they are not 100% pure Christians because they still practice their old ancient culture too. So one of them is their burial culture. If someone died they cannot easily bury him. In their culture they have to make a ceremony and bring down some sacrificial offerings. This is needed so that the soul from the dead can move from this world into the world of the dead. But the sacrificial offerings will be decided by a shaman and the quantity and what kind of animal had to be sacrificed depends mostly on the mundane personal status. So it can be e.g. when a mayor of a town or other high ranking person died, that a lot of buffalos, pigs and chickens had to be sacrificed. This sacrifice is not the mayor attraction that a lot of tourists come here to see this, because it is a very bloody orgy as they cut one's own throat of every animal on the public square and the whole blood is running down this place. We weren't really so wild to see this blood festival as there was in fact right at the moment when we were there such a ceremony outstanding, but we decided not to go there. So later after the ceremony you can notice the importance of the passed away person because at the front of their house the family will place all the horns of the killed buffalos. So on some houses you can count around 20, 30 or more buffalo horns and this gives you a good impression how many litres of blood had to be run down the main square. But in fact there was much more blood running because of each buffalo there was a bigger size of pigs and even more chicken that got to be killed, but these animals wouldn't be placed as a trophy at the house front.

Our visas were running out of time and still there was a large distance to ride. So we decided to take the bus up to Mindanao. If we had known what kind of bus ride we picked up, I'm sure rather we'd decided to ride our bikes. We were sitting in a small bus with nearly no space to move in any direction. Beside a full bus with humans there was a lot of boxes and chickens bounded together in this bus. Nearly all of our stuff was stuffed at the roof with thousands of other boxes too from the other passengers. Also there were some really huge bats bounded together on the roof, well for the Indonesians these animals are like delicatessen. So we arrived in Mindanao mistreated and in bad condition at night at 08:00 pm. Very quickly we looked for a hotel and after the check-in we were looking for some information for a transport to the Philippines. We heard that at the next days early in the

morning a cargo boat who takes passengers as well will leave Sulawesi up to the Philippines and there was no timetable for another boat in a sooner future. So it was a very short night because we had had to be in the harbour around at 6 or 7 a clock in the morning and the harbour was around 30 km outside of Mindanao. In a disagreeable temper only after 3 or 4 hours of sleeping we organized a taxi that brought us to the port. There we bought the passage, arranged the passport formalities and checked in. The boat should leave around 09:00 am but as they count the hours in a different kind of manner at least at 03:00 pm we shipped away. Any way. Again 30 hours lasted this trip on this rusty old soul vender. We stayed directly on board and slept our inflatable mattresses. Fortunately the cruise was with half board so two times a day they cooked directly on board something for the passengers.

A little knocked up and with wavering course we left the boat on Davao, Philippines. First we've got all our stuff together, packed the bicycles and then we looked for a restaurant. There wasn't a big selection of restaurants but a small pizzeria invites us to come in. At the time waiting for our pizza I felt some moving, so I thought this is a feeling afterwards from our shipping trip but the woman who was working at the cash box said by the way: "Oh maybe this was an earthquake". In fact it was a very small earthquake and so a nice warmly welcome to us on the Philippines. Afterwards we heard that at this day the volcano Mayon was getting active again, after a long inactive time. Later after some weeks we also passed this volcano very nearby but first we'd took a ride in the southern part of the Philippines islands. So after crossing Davao from the south to the north we shipped to the islands Bohol, Cebu, Christmas islands, Samar, Mindoro (where we passed the Mayon volcano, but only a few clouds of smoke where seen) and then to Luzon.



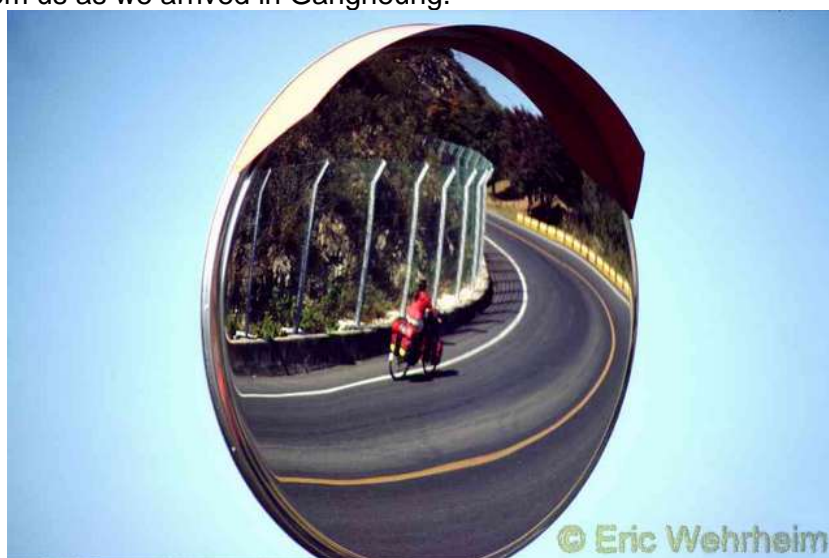
The Philippine Bamboo-Boats



Stormy see

After a week cycling on Luzon we arrived at Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Here we went to Taiwanese embassy to get our visas for Taiwan. But they don't let us in because I was wearing only shorts. Great. The next day we tried it again, now I'm with long trousers and as I knew also sandals was forbidden, so I changed at the entrance my sandals with my climbing boots that I got with me in a plastic bag. Now inside we had to fill out a declaration and then an official want to know for how many days we want to visit Taiwan. But they don't want to give us the 90 days tourist visas only 30 days. We told them that 30 days is not enough and that we ride with bicycles but there was no way to catch these 90 days. Only with an invitation from a person from Taiwan we could get these 90 days. So with all the trouble and fussiness before we said, o.k. Taiwan maybe is nice but when they wont have some visitors like us so even not. And after 14 months on the road in many different countries we said that this was enough of experience and adventure so we decided to go directly to South Korea and make a bigger cycle trip there, around the peninsula.

So we arrived in September 1999 at the Seoul airport in South Korea. The check-in before in Manila was without problems but when our bicycles arrived in Seoul my gear system was nice twisted. After a short debate with the airline company they agreed the payment for the part that was broken of the gear system. Then finally we could leave the airport and get in touch with my family in law outside in the waiting hall. What a surprise. The whole family was there but as it is in Korea they don't spend so much time for the welcoming and shortly we was sitting in a car driving downtown to the apartment from one sister of Mun Suk. The parents had have to wait a short time more, because they living in Gangneung, on the other side of the peninsula and one motto auf our bicycle-world-tour was: visiting my parents in law with bicycle. But we had had to wait around 3 weeks for this roundtrip in Korea because the weather wasn't very nice, as it was still the end of the rainy season. And now, as we started in South Korea the feeling was totally different as on our trip before. It was more just like holidays as a world trip because we was still right there, on our destination country. We took the coastline and for me it was very interesting to learn more about the mother country from my wife as before I visited only some cities and northern parts of the country. Well South Korea really isn't a tourist attraction and also it isn't a cheap country for travellers. But here you can feel and get in contact with an unadulterated culture, in fact that there is nearly no tourism with foreigners there. The only knocking out point is that mostly nobody can our like to speak English. The last meters of this roundtrip was getting again a little bit rough as there was on the east coast side a lot of small steeply hills that we had had to climb. Another funny part of this roundtrip was, that the Korean press and TV were interested to make a report from our tour and now our trip in Korea. So as we leaved Seoul there was one TV Team that followed us a little bit in Seoul, another TV Team made a report from us in Mokpo, that is down in the south on the west coast side and at least a TV Team had made a very nice report from us as we arrived in Gangneung.



In South Korea

Then in Gangneung a lot of newspaper and magazine reporters made an interview with us, because it was a sensation that a Korean woman had made a bicycle trip like this. In fact she was the first woman who reached Korea by bicycle from Europe. We staid in Korea up to March next year. In this time I made a short visit to Germany to visit my family for Christmas and also to get all my slide films together. This was the first time that I could see the result of my pictures because from our tour I sent all the slide films for the developing to Germany. Then a lot of work, a really hard job was waiting for me, as I had had to cut each slide and put it in a frame. But this wasn't all, so I had to sign every slide frame with an association number and then, the hardest job of all; I digitize nearly 2000 slides with a slow scanner. This indeed was a slave job as I was sitting down a whole week from 06:00 am to 02:00 our 03:00 am of the following day. But this job was needed because as I flew back to Korea we still organized before two photo exhibitions accompanied with a multimedia slide show, so the digitized photos where necessary. I think our trip around the half world by bicycle was a great success and as we made our exhibitions the people thanked us for this with their stunning interest.