

Grand Voyage Mathilde et Antoine

22/7/14, Newsletter 3

IN A NUTSHELL :

Date: July 22nd 2014 (86th day)

Location: Khiva, Uzbekistan

Driven km up to date: 12 700.



PICTURES



NEWS



In **Iran**, we have discovered a welcoming and open population; a rich civilization building a bridge between East and West, incredible and numerous architectural sites (mosques, fortified old towns, caravanserais, etc.), great past empires, and a regionally influent country, centre of shiism. The country is a desert in its large majority, but Iran has deployed the necessary means to adapt to this environment. Ramadan has not been so difficult to stand (we were hiding in the van to eat and drink). However, we do not recommend to visit this area in summer (suffocating! Often over 40 degrees Celsius).

Wrong ideas that the Western medias try to make us believe: Iran is not dangerous, people are not introverted fundamentalists and most of Iranian women do not wear the burka (they have to wear a veil « hijab » and a loose tunic).

Remember this: Iranian people are delicate and sophisticated, have a great sense of hospitality, like poetry (cf. Hafez) and are very open to foreigners. We thank all our Iranian friends, who have welcomed us with open arms!

Turkmenistan has been a nice surprise. Despite suffering a dictatorship (nearly as closed as North Korea), the population is nice, lively and open. The contrast between the blinking capital with its marble buildings and the extremely poor state of the Northern roads was striking to us. The Darvaza inflamed gas crater and the old city of Konye-Urguench were really worth a look.

FUNNY PICTURE



Grand Voyage Mathilde et Antoine



INTENSIVE MOMENTS :

- The friendship built with our host family in Rasht and the birthday party of a friends' daughter.
- The interview we had to pass with « *mullahs* » (religious leaders) when entering the sacred site of Qom, Mathilde all wrapped in a chador. In theory, non Muslims were not allowed to get in.
- The countless heat waves, sweat drops we felt, and hot wind drying our eyes.
- Sharing meals on carpets (big tables!) or sleeping on mattresses on the floor with air conditioning.



CURRENT MOOD : Happy to enjoy life (note: so much more enjoyable without mosquito bites), curious to discover Central Asia. Mathilde feels relieved not to have to wear the *hijab* and Antoine feels like driving for hours... We are excited to meet Kat and Manu in Samarkand for a week.



COUNTRIES VISITED : Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

COMING : Tajikistan, Kirghizstan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, Japan, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania.



MAP - ITINERARY :
since the last newsletter



- 1- Alamut valley
- 2- Kashan bazaar
- 3- Isfahan place
- 4- Persepolis
- 5- Yazd ville
- 6- Garmeh oasis
- 7- Zein-O-Dein
- 8- Darvaza craters
- 9- Koye-Urguench

