

TURKEY

Sunday, Sept. 25 1977 Turkey, 6 km after the border crossing, on a Mocamp campsite in Ipsala. Hard to believe. It's just like Holland here: A boggy meadow, lots of mosquitos. We put up the tents in an enormous downpour. It has been raining practically the whole way from Kavala to here. Maybe the same shower that pursued us in France? In Macedonia it hadn't rained for a long time.

No trouble at the border. Just Turkish officials taking great pleasure in using their rubber-stamps. Around the border office-buildings were at least a hundred car wrecks. It seems to cost a lot of money if you leave your car wreck in Turkey. That's why they haul it over the border and deregister it there.

We have our first "great meeting": two British motorcycle tourists, Tim Fryer and Olivier Matthews. "It looks like you are going the same way as we are". Indeed, we are all on our way to Australia. They have already purchased the boat trips from Madras to Penang and Singapore to Freemantle (for Dec. 17). Costs: 430 pounds sterling for one person and one bike. That doesn't seem too much. Jan and I don't have final plans yet.

Those Mocamp camp sites are quite good: clean toilets and showers, even a little building with a common room and a kitchen. In the evening the four of us have a long enthusiastic talk. Meeting fellow travellers is often especially stimulating for one's enthusiasm.

Monday, Sept. 26, 1977 7.00 Racing clouds, very cold: real Dutch autumn weather!

16.00 We camp on the BP-Mocamp, not far from Istanbul. The drive through Thracia: about 250 km with a fierce side-wind from the Balkan. Even wearing a sweater in my motorcycle suit I was still stone-cold.

We had a coffee in Tekirdag. The Turkish people at the tables around us were very friendly and offered us "chai" and (expensive) American cigarettes.

Tim and Olivier have much more loose stuff on their bikes than we have. I wonder how much of it will get lost. I forgot to mention their bikes: Olivier has a Honda 400 four; Tim rides a two-wheeled lorry: A Honda Goldwing. Later, in Australia, generally referred to as the "Leadbum".



The bikes of Frans, Olivier, Tim and Jan in Western-Turkey (from left to right)



Tim Fryer on the campsite near Istanbul

Jan's journal:

Monday Sept 26, BP Mocamp, not far from Istanbul

Last Friday night in Kavala (Greece): Raining. Left Kavala on Saturday. We camped 6 km over the Turkish border at a BP Mocamp. It had been raining the whole day. At the border we met 2 English guys who are also on their way to Australia by motorbike. Now we are not far from Istanbul.

Tuesday, Sept 27, Istanbul

Istanbul. What a city! What a difference to 4 or 5 years ago. This time I strolled around for half a day here today, relaxed and without trepidation, having a fabulous time. Here you can literally see anything. Yesterday for instance, in the traffic: Everyone seems to have equal rights, ie none! If you are ahead, you have right of way. So, on a bike, if you are not too frightened, quite an advantage. Everybody uses their horns incessantly, but, strangely enough, no-one gets excited and no-one gets angry. Fabulous people those Turks. Incredibly friendly and hospitable. Today has been a day of many impressions. Trying to buy things and trying to agree on a price, (or deciding not to) while enjoying a delightful cup of Turkish tea ("chai"). On my first visit to Istanbul (4 or 5 years ago), I didn't dare to accept any offers of tea, out of fear that it might be a plot and I might then "owe" them something. Totally wrong; no expectations, no commitments. Really very pleasant and fabulous. Tomorrow I'll try to take some photographs.

Today I walked around(?), near a mosque, while the (electronic) lamentations and calls to prayer sounded from the minarets. I was overcome with emotions. I now really have the feeling that this is the gateway to Asia



Shop in Istanbul



Street salesman in Istanbul



Frans' journal:

Wednesday Sept. 28, 1977 17.30hrs. Second day in Istanbul

Yesterday: What a mess! I went to the city to get a 4x18 tyre for the bike, because I feared the back tyre wouldn't make it to India. (They guarantee 20.000 km for the Nitto tyre that is fitted, but I fear that is for an empty bike!) Istanbul: Everywhere hooting cars. That was my

impression of yesterday. Endless streams of criss-crossing old American cars (“street-ships”), which don’t hesitate for a moment to cross the grassy centres between the main road lanes to proceed in the other direction, thereby creating absolute havoc on that road. I must say that Jan and I eventually followed their example when our original intentions took too much time. One learns quickly. After struggling for quite some time with the bike through Istanbul I find my first BMW-dealer. A great entrance hall; a number of well-dressed guys, but no parts! The second dealer was further to the north, in the district of Levant. An enormous garage full of cars; in one of the corners, a bit tucked away, three old BMW-motorcycles. The manager spoke fluent German and he referred me to the district of Taksim. I looked around in Taksim but found nothing. Next address: Sirkeci, on the southern bank of the Golden Horn. Sirkeci was an overpopulated neighbourhood, full of squabbling groups of men. They don’t actually have a quarrel, but their behaviour seems so hysterical. By the way, in the cafés I also only saw men; they often were engaged in a kind of domino game, consisting of white and green domino pieces. (By the way, looking around here at the Mocamp , I notice that those Turkish dogs look rather dreary. According to Ollie: “They look beaten”. Besides, I haven’t seen a dachshund yet in Turkey; a bad sign!)



Bazar in Istanbul

In Sirkeci there were a great amount of shops with motorcycle- and car parts, but no 4x18 tyres. They had lots of 3.5 x18 tyres.

At 2 in the afternoon, after spending 5 hours driving and walking in that bedlam, I returned to the campsite empty-handed. Then we decided to get the 3.5x18 tyres after all and went again to Istanbul. However, we first had to queue up for more than an hour for petrol, because at the moment there is a great lack of petrol in Turkey. Two weeks ago the price doubled(!) and everybody started hoarding. It appears that only a few oil companies supplied petrol to their service stations. Price was now 6 Lira a litre (high octane).

(In the spring of 1979 I read in the paper that the petrol price had again doubled in Turkey. That is quite something different from the 1-2 % price increase we see when the price of petrol goes up in Holland!)

During the wait for the petrol we “entertained” ourselves with a difficult and awkward conversation with some Turkish people who were in the queue as well. I must say this kind of simple but awkward conversation doesn’t suit me: “How fast does the bike go? How expensive is this in Holland” etc,etc. You have to have talent for small talk. But then again it is true that you come to a better understanding with people of another nation. You have to start somewhere and you just have to accept the frustrations. *(Much later, in another year, it was much more difficult during my trip in Indonesia with the two men to Gunung Semeru on Java. Our mutual vocabulary consisted of 3 to 4 words!)* After we returned to Istanbul I had to let Jan take care of our business, rode back to the campsite again and crept into my sleeping bag. I was simply sick with headache and nausea.

A lousy day altogether for me.

Today: A delightful day, totally different!

This time I went by bus to Istanbul. Never have I been in such an overcrowded bus! Packed like herring in a barrel! (Which is a Dutch saying...). The trip (about 15 km) costs only 2,5 Lira, so no complaints about that.

By the way, what pedestrians do in Amsterdam, is apparently considered normal behaviour for car drivers here in Istanbul. Yesterday I happened to wait for a red light, but that turned out to be a violation of the rules! Hooting and screaming by my fellow road users befell me and I had to ride on. At some intersections you see a policeman, often with a big moustache, whistling or waving a bit. I don’t know why exactly, maybe to increase the chaos a bit.

The Blue Mosque: On the square in front are a lot of yelling boys trying to sell you all kinds of stuff. “Marlboro, Marlboro, Marlboro you hear all the time. After a lot of bargaining I bought two sets of slides of the Blue Mosque for 85 Lira. Inside: Indeed, wonderfully blue; gigantic pillars that carry the enormous dome.





Later, entering the Aya Sofia I was immediately impressed by the unbelievable atmosphere of this building. It feels as if you enter a pool of darkness and age. True, the Aya Sofia is very old and it started as a church in the 6th century. The enormous round shields with the, for me, undecipherable Arabic signs contribute to the strange atmosphere.

I spent 3 hours drawing in the park in front of the Blue Mosque; first the obelisk, then the Blue Mosque. This was really quite an experience: All kinds of people came along to comment on my work or try to sell me something. One man started counting the windows of



Aya Sofia

the mosque and then those on my drawing! Of course a shoe-shiner came along, then someone with warm tea. That was a delight because I felt quite cold: I had forgotten my sweater. I received the ultimate expression of contempt for my drawing from a bird: it crapped exactly on my head.

Altogether I had a great time in the park. I like drawing more and more. At one stage I was visited by a shoe-shiner: He asked for a cigarette, but he reacted with disgust when I offered him a Turkish brand. Yes, I must agree, they don't taste nice. Then he sat beside me, grabbed my leg and wanted to shine my sandals. He asked for 5 Lira and I offered 4. When he was finished he suddenly wanted 20! (With the well-known story of a lot of children he had to look after). But I stood firm. He didn't become angry, just took the 5 Lira, shook hands and went away.

It is obvious you have to get used to this game; normally I am too suspicious and afraid to get into a quarrel with the sellers.

Later I walked a bit around the Pudding Shop and then the Grand Bazar. Simply a fantastic experience: Great massive displays of gold and jewels are exhibited. You see people stumble around with great loads on their back; traders that approach and harass you to sell you this or that. I must return later at some stage to buy something! There were people who tried to sell me something large, like a leather coat. But for them I always had a good answer: I am here on a motorbike, I have no room. "Oh, I see!" was their reaction.

There must be an enormous fortune exhibited in the Grand Bazar: In a jewellery shop I saw prices in the 5 figures!

21.30 Drinking wine with Jan, Tim and Olivier. We talk about Istanbul and the further route through Turkey. We must visit Goreme! Forgotten are the headache and the lousy mood of yesterday.



Blue Mosque in Istanbul

Other remarkable things in Istanbul: Everywhere boys with Marlboro cigarettes, stalls with rings of biscuit, fruit, chai (tea), etc

The Pudding Shop: the “gateway to Asia”. Indeed, here the other world really begins. After all, Asia really is another world to us. We saw on the windows of the many travel agencies the tempting names: Istanbul, Teheran, Kabul, Delhi, Kathmandu.

I like the old part of Istanbul most, that is the area Eminonu, south of the Galata Koprusu bridge. It’s a world apart from the chromium, glass and concrete of the district Taksim. It just bursts with energy! (*What an enormous difference with the Australian suburbs we encountered later, the domain of Edna Average.*)

Thursday, Sept. 29 - Third day in Istanbul

I tried very hard to get a student card. Apparently you could get those in the shady travel agencies close to the Pudding shop. Yes, you could, indeed, for 550 Turkish Lira. I decided against it. The next one said that it was illegal and yet another one wanted to sell it only combined with a trip to Delhi. Too bad!

After a good meal in the Pudding Shop we went to the Topkapi Museum where we looked in astonishment at the unbelievable amount of valuables that the sultans had scraped together in 300 years. I didn’t know that emeralds of that size even existed. One weighed 3 kgs! And those ornamented weapons! The time that this work must have taken, the great love for their work, their skills! Being from an era where everything has to be done fast and efficiently, I find it almost incomprehensible that people were willing and able to create the things I have seen there.



Istanbul





Street in Istanbul

Friday, Sept. 30, 1977 The four of us leave Istanbul, direction Ankara.

Goodbye to Istanbul; we drive over the magnificent Bosphorus bridge with a phenomenal view of the city. In the distance I see the districts of Eminonu and Sirkeci, that gave us such good memories.

The road E-5: This is the road between Istanbul and Ankara; incredibly busy; wrecks of lorries next to the road; drivers that overtake like idiots.



At 14.45 Jan and I stopped at a café along the road to write a letter to Frans Jacobs in Holland, as we had arranged to do at this specific time and date, prior to our departure. Tim and Ollie ride on; we'll catch up with them later.

Letter to Frans Jacobs:

"Dear Frans "

We are in a café along the road from Istanbul to Ankara; a number of little rascals are annoying us; fortunately, they can't read Dutch, because one of them has his snout right on my paper. I feel shit (I can't see the paper I am writing on, because someone next to me holds a pin-up picture in front of my nose; other feelings come to the surface that I have to suppress); I have a bad cold (the first one on the trip), traffic is frighteningly busy; cars, tarmac, the smell of petrol, oil, smoke; it seems that the whole world is full of it! In this condition I long for a Beerenburg, sitting in a chair at the fire in a cosy Dutch living room, far from suddenly appearing oncoming traffic and deep abysses next to the road, violent wind and heavy rain. There is nothing nice around here, only grim clouds and hurrying cars. And every time the indication of that tiny little distance on the map of Asia that we managed to cover. This is the negative part, but I know that on this journey that we chose to do, there will be great experiences as well! (And have been: for instance, the old part of Istanbul with its kaleidoscopic experience, brimming with life, or the incredible convoluted rock layers in Macedonia.)

I don't know where you are writing now Frans, probably in your nice home in quiet North-Limburg. You and the others in Holland now seem so far away, in space and time. We have already accumulated an enormous amount of travel memories: A merry-go-round of faces, landscapes and cities, and you are even farther away when I realize that we are now on the brink of the unknown Asia.

The English motorcyclists with whom we have been riding together since the Turkish border, are now further ahead. We will meet them again in Bolu, or in Goreme, or maybe in India. There is a growing companionship with them that has been growing since the first time we met them.

The boys leave us alone now. Jan is sitting and writing opposite me at the table. The bond we have is at the same time loose and strong and this makes the journey easier. No emotional troubles, we are companions in fate, in an adventure that is totally different from what you can possibly imagine at home in a lazy chair in front of the colour TV. We are continuously surprised; I feel all conventions slip away in this enormous world that seemed so small during the flying trip to Vancouver, and while roaming the starry sky with my telescope. Politeness, status, maintaining a close personal relationship, I don't really know how to anymore. For Christ's sake; the things I would I have to learn again in Holland, if and when I ever return? I believe that, if I would be travelling on my own, I would become totally rootless.

I sit here, sniffing like an idiot; I am looking forward to get away from this awful, busy shit of a road, to get over my cold and to sit somewhere in a quiet place drawing, for instance in the fantastic tuff-stone landscape of Goreme, or at the foot of the mighty Ararat.

I consider drawing a delightful activity, like that time when I was busy in the park near the Blue Mosque, where I had so many interactions; boys who offered chai or I don't know what, or people who start comparing the number of windows in my drawing with the original, and finally that sublime expression of disgust from a bird that crapped on my head when my drawing was finished.

Frans, I am putting an end to this letter because I feel the urge to go forward into the unknown. Adieu"

21.30 We found a campsite near Bolu, about halfway between Istanbul and Ankara. Tim and Ollie are here too and we have created a real feast in the kitchen (we are the only ones here anyway!): pasta, many kinds of vegetables, scrambled egg, bread, tea, grapes. All five gas burners are in use. As we were engaged in discussions about the future and the consequences of long time travelling on the chances for a job and marriage, suddenly there appeared on the grassy field in front of the kitchen an enormous contraption: A bus with an enormous trailer. In the bus there were 39 Germans; the trailer functioned as a sleeping and eating place. The thing was called: "Das Rollende Hotel" (the rolling hotel). I have seen those things in other places during the trip. We talked to a few bus travellers: Hard to believe, but they travel in 30 days to Bombay (from Germany). They get up at 5.30, leave at 7 and drive on till 9 pm. Istanbul was done in half a day; the people were herded from one mosque to the other. Precisely the kind of travel I hate!

21.50 We are in the lounge of the hotel next to the campsite: Armchairs, an open fire, an enormous fire place lined with brass. We write letters or write in our diary. I hadn't expected these kinds of things during our quite uncomfortable trip.



Frans, Olivier, Tim and Jan

Jan's journal, Friday, September 30, 1977

Letter to Frans Jacobs:

(Café along the road from Istanbul to Ankara, 30 September 1977, 2pm "Dutch" time.)

Dear Frans,

I start writing surrounded by curious Turkish boys, far different from the peaceful surroundings that I would have preferred. But look now, as if they sense it, they are starting to focus on their own activities again and I think that, if I just continue to write, I might be able to find the inner peace that is necessary for those feelings to surface that somehow might be connected to, or inspired by, someone who is some 3000 kms. from here. I am trying to visualise you, while you are putting pen on paper at this very moment. I have the feeling that you are trying to contact me.

I am going to stop writing now for a moment to see if we can really achieve some kind of contact...

I have some feeling that there is some kind of contact; that there is much less distance than those 3000 kms.

I saw you sitting in your typical tailor sit. I am now writing in past tense, because a friendly German speaking Turk asked me for some technical details of the bike. After answering a couple of questions I explained to him that I am writing a letter now, because at this very moment, in the Netherlands, a friend of mine is writing a letter to me. He asked a few more question, then explained things to the bystanders and left me again in peace.

Trying to re-establish contact...Not easy.

Turkish tea is really delightful.

Next time I will look for absolute peace and quiet. I am going to set aside a whole day for this. Strange enough it seems easier to get in contact again while writing. Things are going very well for us and we are enjoying the trip very much. I've got the feeling that I can see you again, smoking a roll-up. Crazy idea really. I quite like writing a letter like this. I have felt some contact; I am sure it can be better still.

Suddenly I am thinking about Gerda. Is she somewhere around you by any chance? Writing a letter? I had intentions of writing her a letter tonight. You both are a couple of great people. I think I am going to leave it at this for now. Many heartfelt greetings.

Jan

22.00 hrs.

We left Istanbul today. The traffic on the road exceeded all expectations. I have never witnessed so many dangerous manoeuvres in the one day. If you were to sit along the road in Holland for an entire day, you would feel that you really experienced something if you only saw once what you see here hundreds of times. There are no rules that anyone seems to adhere to; and before long you behave in a similar fashion.

Istanbul was fantastic; It was wonderful to stroll through the rain soaked, wet city. I finally mustered the courage to photograph people: Copper-working craftsmen, probably underexposed, too dark.

A few pushy Turkish types have just pushed their way onto our table. They offer us whiskey and I accept a cup of tea. They are probably known, because they don't get served.

This was really the first less than pleasant encounter with Turkish people.

Sunday, Oct 2, 1977

Jan's journal:

October 2. Yesterday we arrived in Ankara. Four big motorbikes. Surrounded by an incredible crowd of people we parked our bikes. This continuous interest in us is getting very tiring. The people have been so far very friendly, but nevertheless one is pleased to pay the hefty price for a camping, in order to escape from this relentless attention. At some stage even a policeman helped us to get some peace and quiet from the massive crowds of curious, staring people. To make things worse, Olivier started to get problems with his electrics, which stopped us in our tracks for half a day. When we finally could escape, his last main fuse blew after 200 m. Frans and I decided to go on to the campsite. After a few hours Olivier arrived without Tim. He had lost him.

We left Ankara today. It's now evening. Raining. I am in the tent at the moment.

Ever since we have been in Turkey the weather has been dismal; cold, rainy, terrible. I wonder if we have left our departure from Holland too late.

This morning Frans and I continued on and rode from Ankara to Goreme to a campsite in Urgup. Olivier stayed behind to work on his bike. Tim was still lost.

What a beautiful ride! How unbelievably beautiful are these Anatolian highlands!!

Immensely so. I hope to take some photographs tomorrow. From where we are camped now, we can see the snow-capped top of Ercyas Dagi, the extinct volcano responsible for that strange tuff-stone landscape in the valley of Goreme.

Earlier a Dutch speaking Turk told us that East of Sivas many Kurds live. Dangerous.

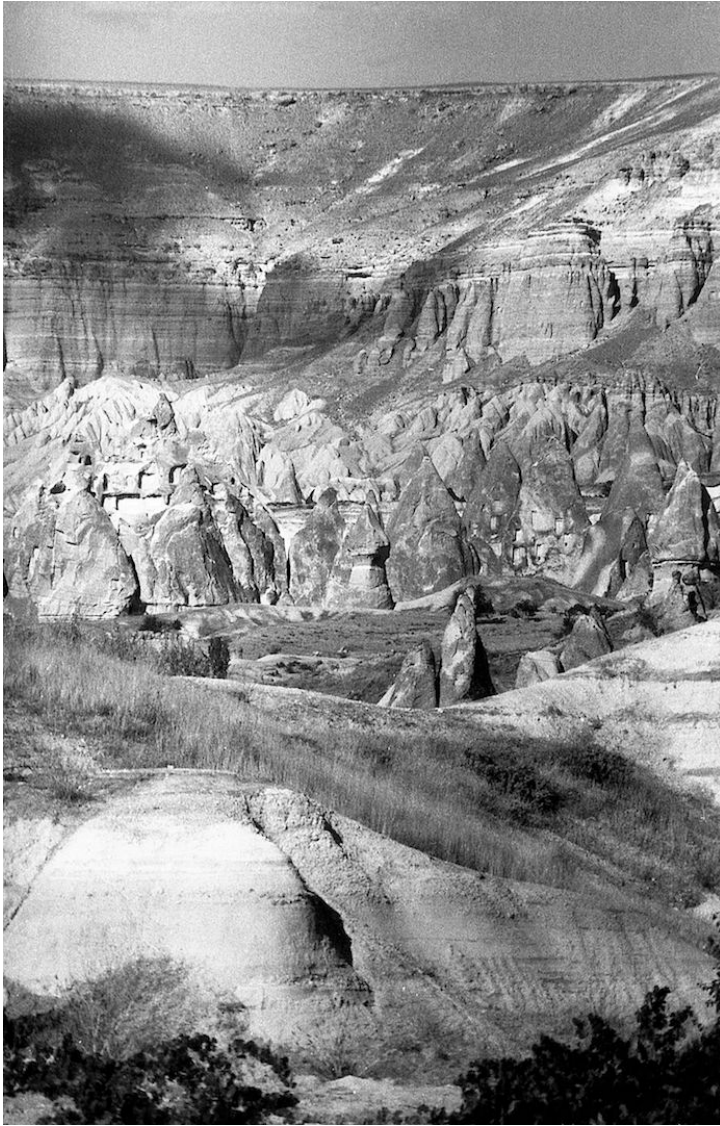
Turkish truck drivers only go there in groups of 2 or 3, and armed. We are expecting to meet up again with Tim and Olivier and have decided to see if we can stay together with the four bikes while travelling through East Turkey.

Frans' journal:

Luckily the drive over the Anatolian plateau was a real highlight: a seemingly endless rolling mountain landscape coloured in yellow, purple, sometimes green, probably as a result of copper ore. You see almost no trees and this contributes to the strange appearance of the landscape.

After Nevsehir we see the first strange formations of the tuff-stone landscape. In the hazy distance looms the 3900 m high peak of the extinct volcano Erciyes Dagi. When we are at the campsite we can see its white snow-cap against the blue sky.

In the evening we talk with some travellers in a Bedford truck that drives from London to Kathmandu. One girl really envies us because of our freedom. In the back of that truck one is packed in with 25 other people. Really an exercise in togetherness. Clearly nothing for me.



Anatolia

is really alien. The cause lies in the volcanic eruptions. A few million years ago Erciyes Dagi and another volcano spat out enormous amounts of ash which over time consolidated in this tuff-stone. In the ages thereafter erosion by wind and rain sculpted these strange cones. In the afternoon I visited a church that 10th century Christians have carved from such a tuff-stone cone. Apparently there is an underground village in this area. By the way, in Urgup people still live in caves in the big tuff-stone wall next to the village. In the evening the sky cleared up. The big volcano is very, very impressive in the East. And challenging! Yes, and then Olivier came up with the idea to climb that mountain. (He had come to Urgup via Kayseri and thus “circled” the mountain. It forms an impressive sight, and if you are a bit inclined towards adventure, well..., then you quickly feel the challenge!)

And why wait for the Himalayas when there are such brilliant opportunities just here?! Somehow volcanoes really fascinate me. They are symbols of latent power.

Today is a brilliant day! No cloud in the sky. Jan and I will ride to Develi (a little village southwest of the mountain) to look for a hotel and find out if we can climb that mountain.

Tim is lost somewhere. Ollie is still on the Mocamp in Ankara to work on his bike. Well, tomorrow we might see each other again in this neighbourhood.

Today I felt quite bad: heavy cold, throat and headache.

Monday, October 3, 1977

07.30

Late yesterday we were all together again on the Cimenli campsite in the Goreme valley (Urgup). Tim had spent all night (Saturday) at the railway station of Ankara. It seems Olivier and Tim had had an arrangement about what to do when they lost each other: they would go to the central railway station of the nearest city. Well, Olivier hadn't done that and I don't know if that might have caused some trouble between them. (*Looking ahead, that came later in East-Turkey when they split up.*)

Yesterday I spent most of the day in the Goreme valley. I just walked between the big tuff-stone boulders. Nobody there, only the whistling of birds and the crowing of a rooster in the far distance. This world, in the centre of Cappadocia,



Jan's journal:

Develi, Oct 3, 1977 We decided to climb the volcano. Olivier came up with the idea yesterday. First seemed bonkers! But later: Why not?

Frans and I rode to Develi, made some enquiries and asked questions. An English speaking Turk that we talked to insisted to pay for our meals! We rented a hotel room, left our gear and made a trip to the foot of the Ercyas Dagi to explore the possibilities. Unpleasant meeting: we encountered a snake as thick as an arm. We were lucky.

Back to the hotel. Bikes parked in the hallway of the hotel, due to the overwhelming attention from enormous crowds of curious, staring people. Crazy Hotel manager (“Tsjai koot koot koot, tsjai koot”, not once, but incessantly. I think he thought that Turkish chai was pretty good).

Tomorrow, when the others get here, we will see if we can get to the top of that volcano.



Village in Cappadocia



Jan in front of the Erciyes Dagi, the extinct volcano of 3900 m height. It's eruptions, long ago, caused the tuff-stone landscape.



The tuff-stone landscape with the Erciyes Dagi (photograph Olivier Matthews)



Frans' journal (4 days later):

Friday, Oct. 7, 1977 11.45

We climbed the volcano! At this moment, as we are recovering in hotel "Turan" in Kayseri, I can hardly imagine what we have gone through on the Erciyes Dagi. One forgets so easily. In one way the hike has been a very valuable experience: you learn to appreciate simple things: Every drop of water was a gift of God; a cup of weak warm tea in the evening, in the cold darkness at 2000 metres altitude, tasted much more wonderful than the most expensive drink in calm, normal life.

All the brooding over past or future disappears; only the direct confrontation with nature remains; you only think about the next step up; the future is only a few hours away, namely the top of the mountain where the thirst-quenching snow lies.

But first I will give an account of the events since Monday.

Monday, Oct 3, 1977

Develi: No tourist place, that is obvious. When we pulled up in the village centre there formed immediately an enormous mob around us. We were approached by English-speaking Turks. Our first question: Is there a route up Erciyes Dagi? We got acquainted with a teacher of English who inquired for us. We talked extensively with him in a restaurant; he paid the meal for us, a kind of pizza with pieces of meat and vegetables. All the same the restaurant owner tried to let us pay as well for the meal!

Next to us a couple of men were eating a gigantic bunch of grapes. We looked at the windows: a mass of staring faces from the outside.

The teacher told us a bit about the fascistic tendency in Turkey. He belonged to a revolutionary group and he felt he could talk to us freely. He mentioned the clashes on May 1 in Taksim, Istanbul. The police shot with automatic guns from the flat roofs at the crowd with 40 deaths as a result.

A few of the pupils of the teacher showed us the only hotel. This was my first encounter with a Turkish hotel. Oh boy, what an experience! First the unpacking of the bike: among overwhelming interest we had to struggle our way through the crowd to the hotel's door. The manager appeared to be nuts: He knew the German word "gut" (good) and he let each sentence be accompanied by "koot koot koot"! When we finally had let ourselves into the room, he dropped by every 2 minutes to have a chat. Twice we had to move the bikes, the second time even to the hotel's hall! The high sidewalk was taken with the help of a few wooden logs, which we borrowed from a large pile in a side street; of course that also caused a lot of excitement!

- That hotel manager I will not forget so easily. He and his brother came bursting into our room all the time and when on Thursday we left Develi, the "koot koot koot" would still be sounding in our ears for a long time! In fact they were not very happy about us taking the room's key (because we were suspicious!) with us to the mountain.

In the afternoon: the exploring of the Erciyes Dagi. Earlier in the day, on our way from Grene to Develi, we already had had a magnificent view of this volcano. (We rode towards the south of the mountain over the great plain to Develi. The high plain itself is at a height of about 1000 m. Rising up like a gigantic cone, its slopes scattered with side craters, the volcano was very impressive. The foot must have a diameter of at least 40 km!.)

We followed a 10 km wobbly road to the foot of one of the near mountains (from now on mentioned as green mountain). With our bikes we tried to go upward a little on a kind of goat path, but got stuck soon. An experimental climbing of a small mountain (that proved to be yet a few hundred meters) gave a first indication of the efforts that were awaiting us!

We descended the small mountain again and walked through the bushes past some rocks. Suddenly a fierce snort! A few meters from us a snake crouched among the bushes, about as

thick as an arm, with a grey white body with a zigzag pattern on it. Stupid as we were, we should have realized that this terrain was an ideal place for snakes! But we thought too lightly of it, just like of the volcano climb itself.

Tuesday 4 October: The big day.

Some friends of Ollie, Sue and Graham (whom Tim had met by pure coincidence earlier in Urgup) had decided to join us and take a later train to Teheran. They eventually managed, with some effort, to get via Kayseri to Develi. by bus. They travel by public transport and in these regions that is not always so easy.

At 12.30, amidst the overwhelming curiosity of a large crowd of people, we mounted our motorbikes, the six of us, with our backpacks and took the wobbly, dusty road to the foot of the volcano. Here I saw for the first time the so called “dust devils”, small tornados that slowly “travel” across the landscape and that changed colour when I saw them crossing from the grey road to the brown field.

It is hot, the straw hat I bought is now (and on the mountain where there are no trees) extremely useful!



We leave for the foot of the Erciyes Dagi.

The following notes are from the note book that I took to the mountain. They are not extensive; how could they be: I was too exhausted to write or my fingers were stiff with cold. Oct 4, 1977.

13.00 Start of the climb. We parked our bikes somewhere at the end of a dirt road.

14.45 Extremely exhausting. We are now three quarters up the green mountain. We are advancing step by step. Very slow.

16.00 hrs Through a deep trench in the lava field full of boulders, we are going in the direction of the red mountain.

16.50 hrs We stop for the night. After passing the side of the green mountain we have a view of an enormous lava field with deep gullies. We walked along the bottom of the first gully and then have gone upwards again. Our bivouac lies not far from the point where the base of

the red mountain touches the green mountain. Most of the times the going is very tough: loose pebbles, thistles, thorn bushes. This hike is much worse than the trip to Mt. Robson (base camp) in Canada: no water, except in some little dirty pools in the first gully. (Each of us brought 1 litre along, much too little for 3 days). And no shade!

18.45 We have eaten and drank a delightful warm cup of tea! We had to go down again to a pool that was a hundred meters lower to get some water from a dirty pool. The water was filtered through a woollen sweater and boiled for a long time. To get the firewood (we didn't bring a petrol stove) we had to roam around the area. Wood was very sparse. Only a few dry brushes. It is very cold; a great cloudbank arrives from the west.

We are going to "bed" and hope for the best. If only we had a bottle of booze!

Olivier, Sue and Graham sleep in a tent, Tim, Jan and I just have sleeping bags, a mat and a piece of plastic over the bag.

In the night the snow comes. Not unexpected. It is cold and we are 2000 metres high.

Terribly cold, the wind turns and blows the snow directly into my sleeping bag. Shit! The sleeping bag gets wet, the plastic cover (a rescue blanket made of very thin aluminium coated mylar) is too small; I am wrestling with it for hours, my curses roll over the mountainside. I am fully clothed, still I am very cold and continuously roll from my mat into the gravel.



Tim, Ollie, Graham and Sue



Tim with a friendly face on the slope of the Erciyes



Jan on the Erciyes

Wednesday, Oct.5, 1977 Day 2

5.00 Wonderful starry night. I lie in my sleeping bag, my hands clutching the upper part. The moon (last quarter), Jupiter, Mars and Saturn shine above my head. I stare into the depths of the Universe for a long time.

5.30 Venus rises brilliant over the rim of the green mountain.

Especially the sight of Venus in the early morning makes a deep impression on me: A bright diamond in the cool blue.

6.00 Got up. The others still sleep. I went down to the bottom of the first gully to fetch some firewood. Arrived back again, dead tired, with a lot of wood.

7.00. The others get up.

7.30 The thermometer we brought with us shows minus 3 degrees Centigrade. I thought it was much colder! The sun is still hidden behind the green mountain, but the higher parts of the Erciyes are already coloured red by the sun.

We make tea; the cooled off tea freezes in the cups. The jam is frozen; the chocolate paste is stiff. The fire gives lifesaving warmth.

The sun tries to fight off a newly arriving cloud deck.

8.00 The sun finally rises above the green mountain.

8.30 The temperature is now minus 1°; we decide to climb the red mountain. The main peak which is a little higher (3916 m) seems too far away. A rucksack with food will be brought along, carried in turn.



Frans gathers wood for the fire in the first evening on the mountain.



The Early morning of the second day of our climb



Tim and Graham in the morning fog



Jan in his sleeping bag. It was bitterly cold.



Getting up



After breakfast. The mood is getting better. From left to right: Olivier, Jan, Sue, Tim and Graham.

9.10 Departure.

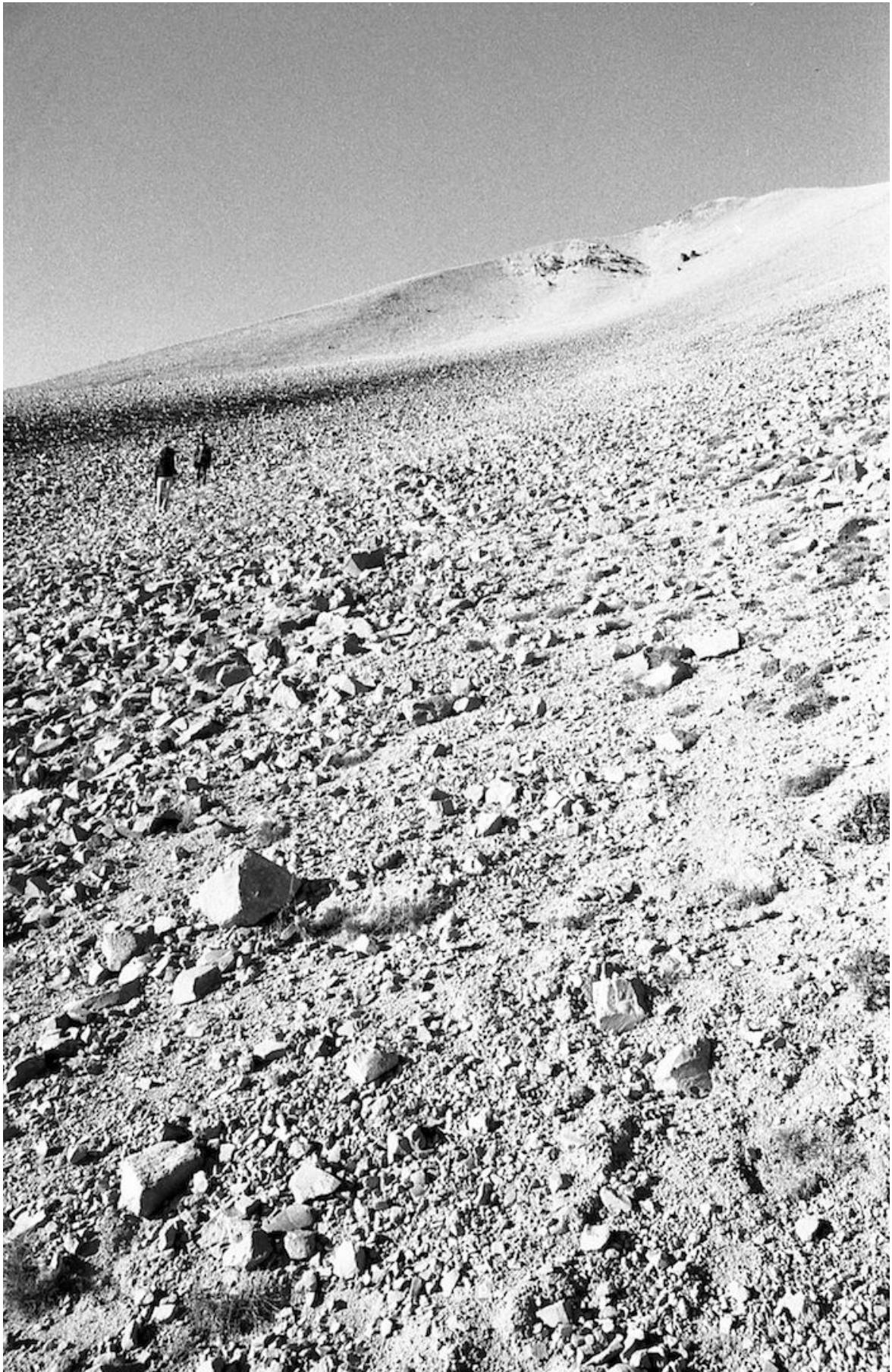
11.20 We are at about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the distance between the tent and the red mountain's peak. It is 10° in the shadow and there is a cool wind. We are looking down on a giant cloud that has already reached our tent (a red spot in the distance). A fantastic view. Lovely, the loneliness and silence high up in the mountains. Usually we walk separate from each other; everyone picks his own path across the slope.

The slope of the red mountain is a big stone avalanche, varying from loose gravel to big boulders. Walking is terrible, with nearly every step you sink. I see white birds with black wing tips (as big as a starling). The snow on the north of the stones is melting. I ate from it to quench the thirst.

12.40 Now just a few hundred more metres. Tim and Ollie are somewhere deep down. Jan, Sue and Graham at the other side of a big gully in the side of the mountain. Tired, tired and tired again! The clouds are slowly withdrawing. I drop the rucksack and continue with the water jar to the top. A little later I cannot see the others anymore, but I hear them calling.

14.00 On the top! At last. Here is snow on the north side. To the west the main peak rises up 1 or 200 metres higher. On the north side the red mountain is very steep, with huge rock pinnacles on the slope. I want to fill the jerry can with snow, take some pictures and then return. My hands freeze while digging in the snow, but this inconvenience pales into insignificance compared to the majestic view. In the distance I believe I can see the strange landscape of Goreme. I gather some pieces of volcanic glass, which sticks on some stones like a green glaze. I devour snow because my mouth feels like grinding paper. Painful for the teeth. Spent 40 minutes on the top. The jerry can between my legs to melt the snow inside. Does not work.







We get snow to quench our thirst from the sub-top of the Erciyas.

14.40 The way back. Dangerous! Going down I cause small stone avalanches.

17.30 Back at the tent.

Along the way, on the long stony field stretching between 2000 and 3800 metre altitude, we saw several piles of stones. Beneath one of them we saw a bone. Probably graves of people who died on the mountain.

I must say we really had a hard time on the volcano. Now you become aware of the value of simple pleasures, like a bit of rest, water and something to eat.

18.00 Jan, Olivier and I are going down to the bottom of the first gully to fetch water and wood. We filter the water through a woollen cap of Ollie and add a number of chlorine tablets to the filled jerry can. You have to, if you are thirsty and don't want to become ill.

19.30 Arrived dead tired at the bivouac. We had to rest several times during the ascent, although that was only 100 m!

20.00 Campfire; 4 cups of tea; old bread; cold!

I hardly slept during the night. The Milky Way looked fantastic, especially Sagittarius was impressive. We brought the 9x63 binoculars, but I used it only sporadically because of the cold. I would have been more enthusiastic if I could have sheltered and warmed up now and then.



The great retreat to our bivouac



Sue and Graham



Thursday, October 6, 1977

6.00 We rise. Cold!

7.10 We leave and descend the green mountain and arrive at 9.15 near the bikes.

There must have been visitors because my luggage elastic strap is pinched.

11.30 In Develi we went for it: 1 beer, 1 cola, 2 orange-juice, 3 tea and food. Tired. Still thirsty, and that feeling stays with us for days!

Sue and Graham leave for Kayseri to take the train to Teheran in Persia. It costs only 3 pounds. Incredibly cheap, for that distance. And it's even first class!



Lava peaks on the slopes of Ercyes Dagi



Frans the photographer

Friday, October 7, 1977 15.00 The whole day we have been in hotel Turan in Kayseri. We washed all our dirty clothes in the bathtub. The room is an enormous mess. I am still unwell, and have been for quite a while. I think I am going to write letters. I feel like a bored old man again. Is that caused by the cold and the headache? To be honest, I long for the mountain again; there our goals were clear. I must not forget that wonderful experience.

Jan's journal:

A few days ago: Ercyes Dagi, the mountain challenge: After waiting for some acquaintances of Ollie, whom he had met in Urgup, we left at around midday to start our climb with 6 people. A fantastic experience! Bitterly cold at night, no tent, slept on the mountain for two nights (snow storm on the first night). Only Frans made it to the top. After 2 days back in Develi. Left for Kayseri the same day (sick to death from the crazy hotel manager who didn't leave us alone with his visits every 2 minutes, saying nothing else but "Chai koot koot koot,chai koot").

Here, in Kayseri, we have spent 2 nights in a rather luxurious hotel, had a Turkish bath and washed our clothes. In short: we recuperated.

Frans' journal:

Saturday, October 8, 1977 21.30 What a day! Today Kayseri-Erzincan 450 km. The ride over the Anatolian plateau was superb! Endlessly undulating mountains with an unbelievable variety in colour: white, brown, yellow, red, green (copper ore?!). 120 km before Erzincan the road became very bad. Here I had a fall on the bike. One moment I rounded a hilltop and suddenly the low sun exploded in my face: I simply lost control; luckily only the horn got damaged.

In this deserted landscape I saw an enormous bird of prey gliding in the air.

(At the time I thought it was a golden eagle, but later the photograph showed that it had been a steppe buzzard. I saw that much later, back in Holland.)

The others drove very fast, not to my liking. I had forgotten to change my broken front lightbulb and it got darker and darker.

Tonight we met a few other motorcyclists near a petrol station; they were on their way to Australia as well: Alastair Pearce from London on a Kawasaki 900, complete with cassette player and radio, and Bruce Hawkesford from Tasmania and Tiina McKenzie from New Zealand together on a Suzuki 750 .

Bruce thought there were job possibilities for us in Australia: Mt. Tom Price, a mine 300 miles north of Freemantle. The campsite in Erzincan was rather poor; it was just a stubble-field.

Jan's journal:

Today I lost my cigarette lighter, (bought in Istanbul for 70 Turkish lira, instead of the 150 TL originally asked for), to some shady looking Turks on a tractor. I was stupid enough to light a cigarette for one of them with this (rather fancy) cigarette lighter. They offered to buy it, later to swap it for one of theirs. When I refused, they decided to take it anyway, after they showed me they were carrying a pistol! I wasn't impressed and expressed my disagreement, but they just walked away. When Ollie came to my aid and went after them, I had to call him back and explained. (He hadn't seen the pistol). After 50 metres one of them came back and handed me their (cheap) lighter as compensation.



Eastern Turkey



Eastern Turkey

Frans' journal:

Sunday October 9, 1977 Erzincan-Erzurum; good road. Here I had to finally give up. The headache, (as a result of a head-cold caught on the Erciyes), became unbearable. At that moment I spoiled it for Jan; the other bikers continued. I laid down for some time at the side of the road. After some time, Jan and I rode to Erzurum. First we set up the tent, then we went to look for a doctor. We arrived finally in a building where a few men in white coats walked around; also there was a whole crowd of people waiting for their turn. I asked a policeman who was present in the building, where I could find a doctor. Immediately I got a preferential treatment; of course this annoyed the waiting Turkish people. I had to lie on a couch, a very bad tempered nurse measured my blood pressure (luckily I couldn't understand her), the doctor fumbled with a stethoscope and after a difficult conversation he came up with the diagnosis: head-cold. With a prescription for 8 pills per day I left.

At the camping in the evening playing cards with Piet and Truke, who had turned up in the meantime.

Jan's journal:

The cold on the mountain proved too much for Frans who already had a cold to start with. He rode along for one-and-a-half days after leaving Kayseri, but today he had to give up. Tim and Ollie moved on, together with two other English bikes whom we had met earlier in Erzincan (Alastair on a Kawasaki 900 and Bruce and Tiina on a Suzuki 750), Probably we will see them again in Tehran or Mashhad. We stayed behind in Erzurum.

We found the hospital, in search for a doctor for Frans. (He "jumped the queue" and for some reason was given preferential treatment over all the other people waiting to be treated). He was seen to by a doctor. The hospital was a mess: cats everywhere, nurses and doctors in smudgy "white" uniforms, wheelchair with three instead of four wheels AND a flat tyre, man on a stretcher on a drip with many civilians assisting chaotically, holding up the bottle, pushing the stretcher, chattering incessantly.



Frans overcome by severe headaches

Frans' journal:

Tuesday October 11, Erzurum (1950 m altitude). We have to stay here until my headache disappears. All day long I lay in the tent, pondering about the headache. A tea towel is wound round my head (Piet: "You look like a real Dutch farmer!"). It is very cold here. After 6 in the evening and before 9 in the morning you cannot do much. From time to time we worry about the snow. Things can get very risky on a two-wheeler then!

Now I have to take 9 bloody pills a day! 2 Tetracycline (an anti-biotic), 3 vitamin E, 3 headache pills and 1 malaria.

Wednesday October 12 Two big birds of prey are hovering over the campsite. Immediately I awake from my lethargy. They look like stone eagles. I take some pictures with the 300 mm tele lens + 2x converter. (*Postscript: they turned out to be steppe buzzards.*)

Jan's journal:

Yesterday I lent a Turkish man, in a fruit stall, my Parker ballpoint (present from my sister, leaving Holland) to jot down some prices and then forgot about it. After 30 minutes I realised my mistake, went back, but the man was gone. With difficulty I tried to explain to the other people in the stall what I wanted. I was not sure if they understood that I had left my Parker ballpoint and that I would like to get it back. I understood that I was asked to come back the next day.

Today I went back, and a little girl that was there yesterday as well, hands me back my ballpoint pen. That was not something that I expected! She refused the 5 Turkish lira that I offered as a reward.

My impressions so far: Turkey, a land of opposites; fascinating and disgusting, friendly and hostile, stimulant and depressive. Splendid nature in Anatolia. Friendly, hospitable people, but sometimes you thank the heavens when you have the opportunity to withdraw to a campsite, to escape from the exhausting curiosity and attention. Hot during the day, cold at night, etc,etc.

I no longer feel like writing letters or postcards. I am growing tired of that, but I still try to do it. Intense living, much of it day-to-day. Every day is an adventure. Every next day brings new experiences. Peaks and troughs. I can imagine that a regular life after this will be very boring and that I won't be doing that anymore. I now enjoy every day.

Plenty of challenges; I still don't feel "free" (uninhibited?) enough. I still hold back and don't have the courage to fully let myself go, but I have learned that it is almost always OK to do so. My experience is that people generally appreciate it if you can be yourself, here too. Olivier is a lot less inhibited than me and moves a lot freer and easier. Very instructive.

Frans' journal:

Thursday October 13 23.00 In my tent on the Turkish-Iranian border. We did leave eventually. The road was good from Erzurum until close before Horasan, after that the asphalt changed into sand and gravel. Trying to negotiate the difficult surface, both of us went down several times, much to the delight of the Turkish road workers. But they kept on encouraging us from their sometimes really huge vehicles. After Dogubayazit at the foot of Mount Ararat the road became much better.

Yes, Mt Ararat, the final resting place of Noah's Ark: how I have been looking forward to this mountain? And it did not disappoint me. The pain that I felt of not being able to climb it. Through the binoculars I see the enormous size of its ice covered top and then I shudder. I have no experience at all with climbing mountains in ice and snow; that must be the reason of my shiver. Alas, we go on. On its eastern slope there is a wonderful cone of about 4000 m high.



Bad roads in Eastern Turkey

Slowly we enter the village of Agri. Countless people in the streets and on the terraces in front of the tea houses; however, they are all men! We getting further and further into the Islamic world; a world where women are hidden away. On leaving the village we saw women working in the fields, here and there carrying heavy burdens on their backs.

The border: we needed to get our "Carnet de Passage" stamped; 10 civil servants are chattering happily away and let us wait. Is this Asia we are in now? We really came to dislike these guys. Also those policemen with their annoying expressions on their face and their ridiculous peaked caps and revolvers. We kept a low profile as much as possible, you never know with those guys.

They discovered that in Jan's Carnet the expiry date says 7 July 1977 instead of 7 July 1978. A disaster! After 2 hours we are finally done. They left the motorbike with all its luggage alone. If you're driving a truck you are likely to have much more trouble; the queue before the border has gigantic dimensions! And in those 2 hours waiting I have not seen much progress.

Ararat's white cap is clearly visible from the border



Jan and Mt Ararat