

A Pennworld Poem London to Kathmandu

Hi,
Found this the other day amongst my stuff. I was on the Pennworld London to Kathmandu sk1069
Also completed africa overland in 1984 with Exodus
Lionel
Perth
Western Australia

The bus left Pennworld sharp at eight, bound east for
Katmandu

With 37 passengers and a basic crew of 2.

One guy came on at Dover and in Eindhoven, 2 more.

The last pair joined in Wurtzburg, now we numbered 44.

We sped on down to Saltzburg, the days and Ks flashed by.

We didn't see much sunshine for the rainclouds in the sky.

But in sunny Yugoslavia, the schedule fell to bits

As frequent stops were commonplace 'cause someone had the

-----!

Now at the border into Greece, we ran to change our dough,
But down the road the bank was closed and back we had to go.

To the border past where we compiled the longest queue in
Greece,

'til someone banged upon the desk and the teller yelled
"POLICE!"

One day spent on Batasi beach, then on to Istanbul,
Where we spent our time in a great hotel - Penn trips are
never dull.

But seeing sights all day some girls found out where danger
lurks

For bums were pinched and tits were squeezed by enthusiastic
Turks.

So most girls walked in 2s and 3s in order to avoid it,
While others toured the town alone - you see they quite
enjoyed it!

A. Wall and Barbara walked into a cafe owned by a Turk,
Sne slipped, and grabbed this Turk's delight and gave it
such a jerk

That his expression quickly changed - it wiped away his smirk.
He made an exploration to ensure it would still work.

In sun we left and headed south to Troy and Pergamon,
To Ephesus which has loos with views and a little odeon.
But on this trip the hairpin bends were tight and good roads

Amante.

As David wheeled the bus around, it sometimes scraped its
arse.

After Pamakkale's camp, we drove to Side where we stayed
In a shady wood by a sandy beach and a barbeque was made.
We all ate well and drank our fill and pretty soon were
high

'til some drunken bum fell on the fire and barbequed his
thigh!

At this time, Morris Flaherty determined to deprave
The minds and souls and bodies of all the folk who crave
The bright, congenial atmosphere you find inside a pub
As a substitute lets institute "Penn's Overland Wine Club"
The entrance fee was minimal and you don't buy many rounds
But its 3 to join and 2 to stay, "That's bottles, mate,
not pounds".

And everyone enjoyed it, including John the Raj,
But he only joined 'cause drinks were free and his
appetite was large.

) The crossing into Syria brought the first of our rough
camps

In a night so dark we pitched our tents by the light of
personal lamps.

Some people left the camp to wash in a stream they hoped
to find

But a Syrian they met suggested they use his bathroom -
wasn't he kind?

Next morning we rose early and drove to the castle
Des Chevalier,

which Crusaders from England captured in a battle they
fought one day,

But a steep approach and winding road combined made our
bus balk

So out we climbed, were shown the way and up we had to
walk.

Then after lunch we journeyed East across the tip of
Lebanon

Down a dusty road where years ago camel caravans had gone.
With the setting sun behind, we sped into a new locale
Where vibrant music blended with wild views to raise
morale.

The following day, some folk arose before the sky was grey
To climb a mount and observe the start of a sparkling
desert day.

It was worth the toil of the uphill fight to watch the
insurgent birth
Spread shimmering light with shattering night from the tip
of mother earth
An orb, distorted, raised its crown inexorably gaining
height.

Each inch upthrust stole tracts of land from fast re-
treating night.
That inferno'd ball ascended high, omnipotently to claim
The right to rule and forge the life of all in its domain.
With blistering heat to shrivel and kill its minions there
below
Or gently warm all forms of life, encouraging them to grow.

Some had pony rides or breakfast free from locals who would
ask us
To eat with them or ride their carts, before going to
Damsascus.

We spent a day going round the city, visiting every sight
Celebrating Garry's 21st with dinner and cake that night.

The next day found us at Jerash whose elliptical stone-paved
forum
Was such a treat we viewed the street with a modicum of
decorum.

The heavens opened, rain teamed down, it didn't help our
mood
To find our clothes locked in the boot and have vegetarian
food.

We paused while passing through Amman and just had time to
see

The major sights before dropping in for Philadelphia tea.
That evening, camped near Petra, passed quite socially in
a bar

Which was newly-built round ancient rock, an effect
spectacular.

We roamed next day through caves which had in cases many
 rooms
 And found at last that they had been old Nabathian tombs..
 Our path led down into a gorge whose rock walls, steep
 and high,
 Had such complicated sculpture that they oft obscured the
 sky.
 The shades of colour visible were predominantly blues
 with yellow, green, red, orange, brown in multitudes of
 hues.
 Each subtle change of lighting splashed the rock with
 living fire,
 which shone and glowed and smoothly flowed as sunlight
 angled higher.
 The long defile down which we walked could not avert the
 shock
 of the awful sight of Petra, which is carved from living
 rock.
 Each cubic inch of space they'd gained was carved by
 someone's hand
 In theatres, temples, houses, stairs so numerous in this
 land.
 The mind-engraved impression from this panoramic view
 was industrious business people and such security they
 knew.

Soon our road led South to Aqaba and the warmly, wondrous
 scene
 of organized, disciplined purpose shown by sailors of
 MY Queen.
 They tended us and entertained both on board and ashore
 with British hospitality - we couldn't ask for more.

Returning North, we found the sight, it's view as truly
 grand
 from which old Moses pointed out the Israelites'
 "Promised Land".
 Then down we went to Dead Sea level, its salty taste we
 loathed -
 Doreen was so damned keen to swim, she floated fully
 clothed!

Small rocks rained down so fast they left the vision blurred.
They struck the bus all down one side like field gun
detonation

But triplex windows took the shock, they proved to be
salvation.

We swept down to the Caspian Sea and night road to Gorgan
Where a tourist house was our abode, quite cheap, yet spick
and span.

Next day, we took a road where trees retained a tenuous hold
On rocky slopes, their autumn tints ranged from the palest
gold

To deepest red, but soon they thinned as our road climbed
ahead

And we ran on, to see by night the gold mosque in Meshed.

I'll tell to you a little tale - it's just to make a break -
How pennilessly we found a cafe and tried to grab a steak.
An Iranian did a meal deal and said give me a real rial,
Demanding with such real zeal that we would both a rial peel
If we had had a real rial reel, but as we could cold still
feel

To take to heel was our ideal and the veal meal lost all
appeal!

We crossed into Afghanistan and made our stop that night
Herat, where we met other Penn folk. Oh, Lord! What a sight!
They dressed so well and never camped, but went to bed on time.
It's better on the nympho's trip - SK ten sixty-nine.
Chris, Robyn, Max, Noreen and Rog joined up with in Herat,
A wedding in the tea gardens, on cushioned rugs they sat.
They did not see the bride and groom, but shared the wedding
feast

While outside, people danced and sang until the music ceased.

In the seventh week, the moans began - "These roads are always
bumpy".

It would appear some folk are only happy when they're grumpy.
"The music's bad", or "That's my seat", or "Why can't we have
money?"

Another of sparring thus would make the fighting funny
 But on point pure logic snags, it just can't correlate :
 Why people travel overland when obviously they hate
 Long hours riding in the bus; nor can good reason find
 Excuses why when sunshine comes they haul down yards of
 blind.

Or if I might, despite hindsight, the last rewrite, it
 might be spite
 When light quite trite, their eyes might smite,
 The slight white sight they fight.

And so next day to Kandahar, a lovely little town.
 Our hotel was the Asia, the Mayfair just fell down.
 Then on to Kabul, where we had a day to walk and shop
 Before we bused to Bamiyan, a minor six-hour hop.
 But Kabul food had its effect, I guess we knew it should
 With lots of paper-work, we formed "The Penn Trail-Marking
 Club":

Departing Kabul through the gorge, we saw our tortuous
 course
 Which wound and twisted slowly down, that picture hit with
 force

Upon the inner eye of mind, then by easier road, we ran
 To the border post where we crossed over into Pakistan.
 The money-lenders offered cash - perhaps they thought to
 joke

But we were deadly serious to sell our womenfolk.
 For Sue they bid £10,000, 2 camels and some hay -
 She wasn't keen, vowed she'd improve, and so we let her
 stay!

The Khyber Pass through which we drove was roughly hewn
 from rock
 And had been stormed from either side by men of sturdy
 stock,
 Until at last the guns lay quiet and peace then has ruled
 But is the peace a permanence - or are we being fooled?

With most sights seen and swimming done, we packed up and
 drove on
 To come at last to India - but lost Anjo and Ton
 With visa problems. They turned round and went back to
 Lahore.

We motored on, with one night stop to a one mile high lake-
shore

And so we came to Srinigar, the highlight of the tour,
where Tony planned the bedroom scene so everyone could
score.

He schemed with care for several weeks and most of us were
listed

In such a way we'd "have it off", on this point he insisted!
The best laid plans of mice and men are apt to go astray
But the reasons for his failure, Tony doesn't know today.
The pairs were made, the time was right, the scene was calm
and still,

If he doesn't yet know what went wrong, perhaps he never will:
But as the rule of 10 percent to us he'd squarely put,
We pressured merchants, who confessed some couriers took
their cut.

And though Pennworlders haggled hard for carpets rich in
pile,

For knives and precious stones, the merchants always wore a
smile.

We drove two days to Delhi, then had two more days to see
The sights for which a bus tour helped, it left us one day
free

But stomach troubles plagued some folks, a few were very ill
And Dee said she would bring the doc to Pete, she'd pay the
bill.

With careful medication, Pete was soon our good old pal
And we moved on to Agra, to view the Taj Mahal.

We saw it in the moonlight, at sunrise too.

Then dashed back in the noonday sun to just admire the view

And even as we gazed in awe, its qualities subtly changed
From beauty and simplicity to magnificence they ranged.

Pure symmetry, by no means boring, inlay cut so fine
With elegance and humility alive in every line.

And peace quite still, so absolute, just there inside the
tomb

And simple loveliness was in each arch, each door, each room

This edifice was planned and built by Shah Jahan to prove
For one dear wife his great respect and everlasting love.

But though it is a joyous sight, Jahan in his last years
Could only view through prison bars and sad eyes veiled in
tears.

We drove to Khajuraho, arriving there in daylight
And saw erotic temples, which were really not too bright
Next day, on to Benares - we arrived in time for tea
In a doctor's house which changed its name to the Hotel de
Paris.

WE saw the Pilgrims at their prayer by the Ganges just at
dawn.

Then a snake charmer and yogi man entertained us on the
lawn.

And just before the rain began, a cricket match was set
But Pennworld crickets first eleven has not lost one yet.
As the 28th was Jan's birthday, a party in fine style
Had been prepared by friends who saw surprise in her
bright smile.

Our fourteenth border crossing was the final one of all
It took some time but late at night we crossed into Nepal.
Next day, we rose quite early and to Chitwan we drove on
With several spare seats as we'd lost Robyn, Dudley, Bee
and John.

We ferried a bit by boat and bus to Royal Chitwan Park
Then pitched our camp and watched the rhinos drinking
after dark.

In the morning, we rode elephants to find the rhinos lair
And safely from holding ropes to sitting in a chair.
Canoe rides to the crocodiles were all part of the sight
They sat quite still and posed for us while basking in
sunlight.

And after all we journeyed back up on top of the bus
Which fitted on the ferry boat and saved us lots of fuss.
Then driving North to Pokhara, we found our last campsite
Where someone's tent was turned around mysteriously in
the night.

One quarter century ago, at three in the afternoon,
Wall and Barbara said "I do" and began their honeymoon.
And even after all these years, they live their lives with
zeal

So a crowd of us went out and calmed the spirit with a meal.
The last day dawned, the boot was packed up for the final
time

But tents came late, then folks pissed off to be the first
in line

At the restaurants while workers stayed behind to clean the
bus

After 70 days it seems it's really very much them and us.
Then on the dot, 10 minutes late, the last ones came on board
Dave started up, then down the road to Katmandu we roared.

The bus leaves Penworld in the spring, bound west for
London Town

And if you want to make the trip, you must not hang around
So don't come late, you'll miss the bus, don't even cut it
fine

For all the hold-ups ended with SK 1069

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by Stuart Whitcomb