

Dear friends,

already another year gone and time for our Report 2015.

At the begin of the year tomcat Minks decided to move back in with us. This led to some difficulties between him and the young tomcat Puki. At that time all other cats of the island, 2 females and 4 males and dog Lulu, were living with us, because all neighbours were on holiday. Minks chased all the cats, Lulu chased Minks, oh boy, sometimes the crazy race went right through the house.



On January, 14. another volcano erupted near Tongatapu, the ash clouds stopped the planes from flying between the islands, even a plane from New Zealand had to turn back.

Two weeks later on Thursday we had some excitement. Werner wanted to go into town with Canadian neighbour Barry from Hunga Lagoon in an open boat with an outboard engine. They went out on the west side of Hunga, but the engine was not running properly, quitting occasionally. If it stopped totally, wind and current would take the boat out to sea very fast, next stop Fiji, about 400 nm to the West. They just made it to the top of Hunga, and then decided to come back on the eastern side. They could communicate with me with a handheld VHF. Because no one else was around, I was thinking about my options to get them back, in case the engine dies. Either with the smaller boat La'a, which I had to launch first, or swimming out to ANTAIA, who had given us some trouble the last time we went to town... Fortunately, the engine had recovered and Barry dropped Werner on our beach sooner than expected. I told Werner what I had planned on doing, and he said, that there was only very little fuel left in La'a. For some hours the day went on rather uneventful, but at about five o'clock we were rocked by two short but strong shakers. We watched the reef through the trees from the house in case of a tsunami and listened to the radio. It was a 5.2 earthquake, about 50 km south and not very deep. Nothing happened, so we calmed down again. Shortly before six o'clock Werner decided to go for a swim and came running back from the water: "Our boat ANTAIA is gone!!!" I grabbed the handheld VHF, Werner the boat keys and we launched La'a in a hurry. Normally that outboard engine starts at first pull, but took at least 20 pulls this time until it fired and we started out into the lagoon. We hoped that the boat was just around the corner, but no boat as far as we could see. We raced towards the entrance to Blue Lagoon, I called Barry to come to help. Cursed myself for forgetting the binoculars. Then we could see a tiny white speck all the way over at the corner of Ovaka and headed towards it. Tide was still fairly high. Halfway over I remembered the nearly empty fuel tank, but Werner luckily had filled it up, after we had talked about it. By then we were pretty sure it was ANTAIA and we told Barry, who was just through the gap, to wait there. We could get on board while ANTAIA was still floating a small distance off the steep rocky coast of Ovaka. She had some damage on the starboard rail forward and the topsides, but the hull, our main concern, seemed to be ok. The mooring line was still attached, but the eye had lost its thimble and had parted, where the shackle had been secured inside the mooring ball. A space we could not see despite repeated controls. We could drive the boat back into the lagoon and put her on another mooring. Barry came to have a look too. We found another dent on the aft rail on the port side and some sharp coral chips still stuck to the wooden rim around the hull. One window on starboard also had a scratch and the rim below a big dent. We figured out, that she must have come loose at high water, when there was quite some swell, drifted over to the sharp rock that juts out at the end of our beach, where we found some new damage, bobbed around there, going up and down against that rock first with one side then the other, then floating out to sea. Werner checked the bottom, nothing to see there. After all, we were VERY happy, that we got her back with so little damage. Just think of all the IF's that could have made it much worse: If Werner didn't have a swim and only noticed her missing the next morning... If the weather had been bad... If the seas had been not so calm... If we had run out of fuel going out with La'a... If she had stranded on a reef...and so on. Werner fastened another mooring line to the ground tackle.



On February, 11. we saw black smoke on the horizon in the southwest, another volcano had erupted only 40 to 50 nautical miles away and emitted thick black clouds every 15 minutes for several days.





Begin of March we hauled ANTAIA on her trailer and pulled her up the boat ramp all by ourselves. We prepared everything for a long absence, packed our suitcases only with the bare essentials and on March 12. we took the Tongan plane to Tongatapu, seeing the new island, which was created in January from afar.



With Air NZ we continued to **AUCKLAND** in **NEW ZEALAND**. Because of different big events all hotel rooms were five times as expensive as normal or fully booked, so we picked up a campervan from Wendekreisen again. With that we could stand in the middle of town and participate in the festivities like the White Night with many cultural events. In addition, the Volvo Ocean Race yachts had a stopover in the town basin and raced their boats in front of the harbor.



Four days later we started with Korean Airlines to Zürich in Switzerland. This airline always makes a stopover in **INCHEON, SOUTH KOREA** and because they do not proceed on the same day, they transferred us to the Grand Hyatt Hotel, where we stayed for free in a luxurious room, including a grand buffet dinner and breakfast.

We had booked our tickets in late 2014 and planned a longer stay in Korea on our way back. At Christmas 2014, we received a mail from friends, who had visited us with their yacht in Tonga 2010. Helmut, a German who had emigrated to Australia and his Korean wife Hyeyoung were back in Korea, because Helmut was working as a specialist on the extension of the airport again. We planned to meet and Hyeyoung and Helmut picked us up from the airport, where they already show some traditional costumes and music. We had a nice talk after dinner and they gave us good advice for planning our three-week stay later in the year.



After flying over Russia, which was still in the grip of winter ice, we landed in **ZÜRICH** on March, 17. and my brother picked us up from the airport Kloten. After arriving in **GERMANY**, where the last snow melted slowly, we had some appointments for medical checkups. We celebrated my father's 90. birthday and the 88. of my mum, who lived since a few years with heavy dementia (Alzheimer's) in a nursing home, where my father lovingly had cared for her daily.



In May, we visited a gallery in **RIEHN** near Basel, who had a special picture exhibition of the painter GAUGUIN. On the way back we passed the Rheinfall in **SCHAFFHAUSEN**, which had a lot of water running. With my dad we also made several excursions .





From 2.6. until 5.7. we travelled through Germany with my dad's VW-van to visit old friends and discover new things. First, we went from **WURLINGEN** to **REGENSBURG** to visit Werner's brother. We listened to the choir of the REGENSBURGER DOMSPATZEN and participated in the holy procession through town at Fronleichnam, a special Catholic holiday. We had a look around the WALHALLA and went by boat to the monastery Kloster Weltenstein through the narrows on the DANUBE River, before visiting the round BEFREIUNGSHALLE (Hall of Liberty) near Kelheim.



Then on to **DRESDEN**, where we had seen the remnants of the FRAUENKIRCHE during our first visit in 1990. This time we experienced a Sunday ceremony with choir in the rebuilt church. We revisited the town and the many museums and galleries, meeting not once, but twice totally unaware some friends, we wanted to visit later in our travels. At sundown we sat in front of the Frauenkirche and listened to some young opera talents, who wanted to earn some money singing well-known arias.



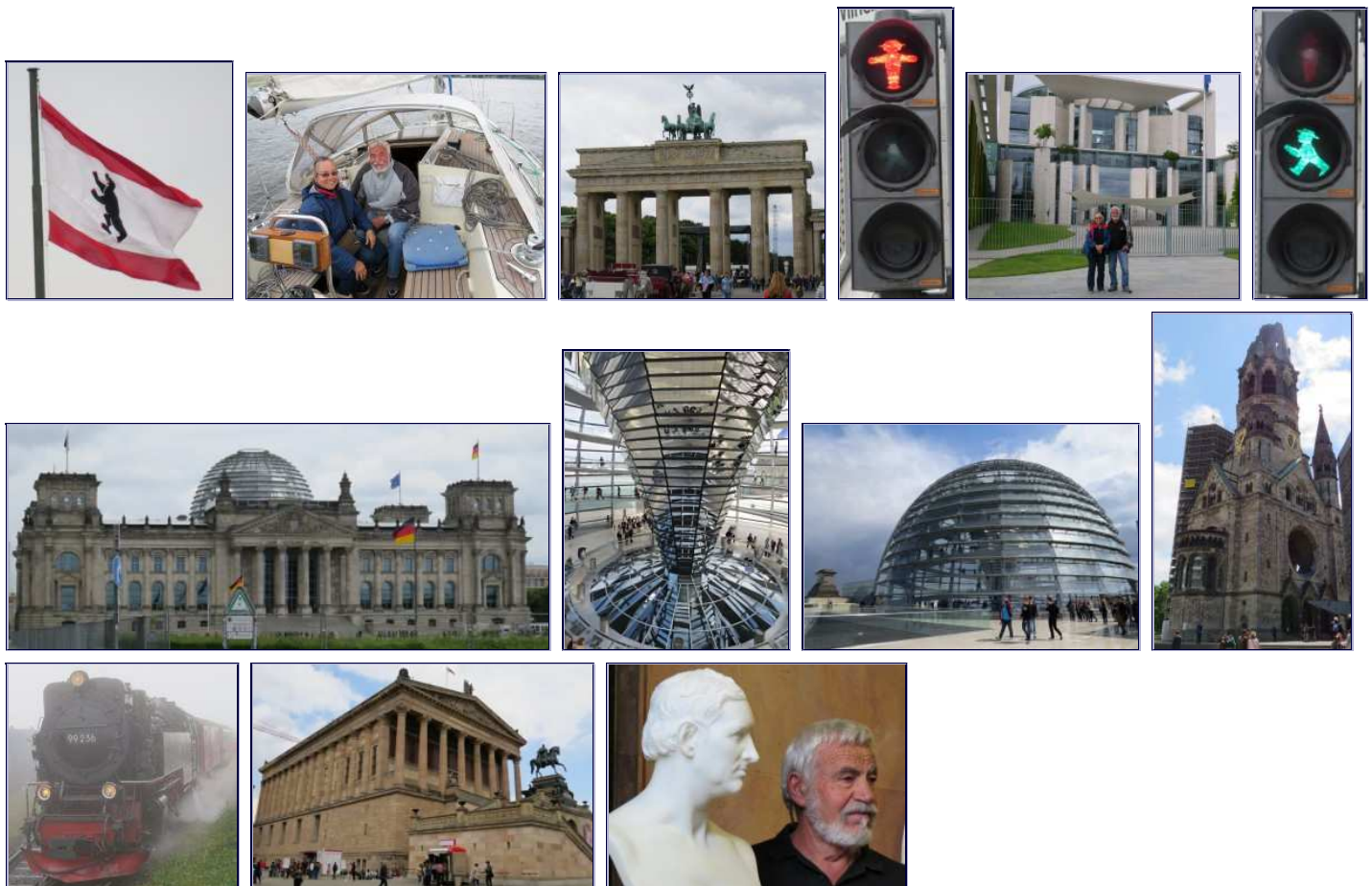
After visiting various friends in and around Jena we made a detour to **NAUMBURG**, where we had a look around the protestant Dom St. Peter and Paul with the famous figures of Hermann von Meißen and Reglindis as well as Ekkehard II. and Uta.



Our next destination was the **SPREEWALD**, where they still speak their own language, Sorbisch, even the street signs showed two languages and that in the middle of Germany. The towns in the Spreewald like **BURG**, **LÜBBEN** and **LÜBBENAU** are tourist attractions and very crowded. A commercial boat ride in the flat bottom boats driven by a stick trough the many waterways was not to our liking. Luckily, near Burg we found a nice spot for our camper at the hotel "Zur Wildbahn" which also rented out paddle boats. Therefore, we could make a nice tour by ourselves. We were happy, that our navigation app OsmAnd+ on the smartphone always showed where we were, otherwise it would have been very difficult to navigate in the maze of all the small and large waterways and channels, especially because there are strong currents running, when you go in the wrong direction. The occasional locks, which regulate the water flow, you have to operate yourself. Unfortunately the weather was rather cold and rainy, but with warm clothes, a hot soup for lunch and a quite some exercise we had a lot of fun. The next day we recovered in the hot pools of the Spa in Burg before moving on to Berlin.



In **BERLIN**, we stayed with sailors we had met first in Tonga about 20 years ago and who operate now the Trans-Ocean Stützpunkt Berlin. Together with another friend we had a cold but nice sail on the Havel. We visited the REICHSTAG and a lot of Berlin's attractions and great museums.



From Berlin our plans took us southwest again. We visited the 'sand man' in **HOLLE** (see [Report2012](#) and "[sand pictures](#)"). With some friends in **BAD HARZBURG** we walked over the interesting "BAUMWIPFELPFAD" and travelled with the 'BROCKENBAHN' up to the mountain Brocken, which was fully engulfed in thick fog, the wind was blowing with 50 km/h and the temperature was only 3 degrees Celsius.

In **GÜTERSLOH** we visited Werners sister and brother for a few days and on the way south some friends in **DOLGESHEIM AND FRANKFURT**.

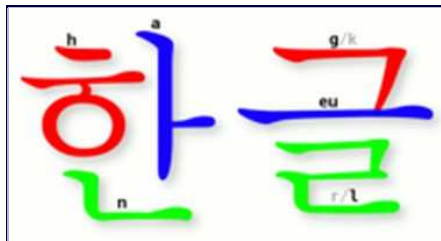


Because we had some more doctors' appointments, we arrived back in **WURLINGEN** in early July, but made some more excursions in the vicinity like to the 'PFAHLBAUTEN' in **UNTERUHLINGEN** on the Lake of Constance (Bodensee). We celebrated Werners and my birthday and Werner spent some more days with his siblings. Then we had to pack our suitcases again, leaving back some of our stuff due to the weight restrictions.



On August 11, our time in Germany was over and we looked forward to new adventures in South Korea. My brother and two of his kids brought us to the airport **ZÜRICH**/Kloten and after an eleven-hour flight, we landed on the airport island of **INCHEON** in **SOUTH KOREA**.

The Korean peninsula is about 1000 km long and is situated at the eastern border of the Asian continent between 33° and 43° North and 124° and 131° East. The narrowest part is 216 km wide and 70 % of the land is hilly or mountainous, which makes Korea one of the most mountainous regions of the world. The peninsula is divided into North Korea, which shares a border with China, and South Korea. In South Korea about 50.000 people live in an area of 100.000 square kilometers, half of them in and around the capital Seoul, which lies in the northwest of the country at 37° 34' N und 126° 59' E. The Korean language is related to Hungarian and Mongolian, the alphabet Hangul consists of 10 vocals and 14 consonants, which are written in groups of three letters. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hangul>) It is not so hard to learn the letters, but quite difficult to pronounce them properly. Many Koreans also speak and read Chinese. Despite high technical standards, the fastest internet in the world and smartphones everywhere (Samsung!) only a few Koreans speak English, less so German. The middle of the Korean flag symbolizes Yin and Yang and the symbols in the corners sky, earth, water and fire. (maps and Hangul from Wikipedia) The Korean Tourism Association has a good website and one can order maps and brochures in English (<http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/index.kto>). In the Google playstore are good apps with information and how to learn Hangul. In the larger towns we could pick up some regional English maps and infos.



Hyeyoung and Helmut live on the 28. floor of a high-rise building in the town **INCHEON**, which borders in the east at Seoul. They had invited us to stay with them for the first days and Helmut picked us up at the airport. They took very good care of us and showed us how to behave properly in Korea. For instance, we learned that here, like in Tonga, you have to take off your shoes before entering a room, house or especially a temple building. But then you should not be barefoot, and wearing socks in 30-degree heat was a bit hard for us. Out of their windows we had a good view all around and between the houses we saw a lot of green. The smart Koreans quickly convert empty building lots into lush vegetable gardens.



On the very first evening, we visited a restaurant with a barbeque and exhaust in every table. One could order different meat, fish and vegetables, which were served with many little bowls with more or less hot dishes and a large basket full of various salad leaves. For cutlery, we received a spoon, two thin metallic sticks, scissors and tongs. Here we learned our second lesson, Hyeyoung took the meat with the tongs, cut it with the scissors in small pieces, which she put on the grill. When the meat was grilled to our liking, we took a salad leaf, with our chop sticks put some of the hot vegetables from the little bowls onto it and the piece of meat, rolled the leaf together and ate it. The different vegetables are called Kimchi. Vegetables are placed with salt and spices into big jugs and fermented like our Sauerkraut, but much hotter. The pictures here show a variation of the grill process, where the meat is cooked with some vegetables in a pan on the grill. The usual drink is Soju, which has about 17% alcohol or Makoli, a rice wine. The waiter in the restaurants is being called with an electric bell in the table, seen to the right hand side of the Soju bottle.



On Thursday, we picked up our rental car, which we could rent for a good local rate through Hyeyoung. In Korea, they drive on the right hand side of the road, like in Germany, but the high traffic in Incheon and Seoul, different driving behaviours and unknown or unreadable traffic signs made driving quite adventurous. Therefore, we left the car in the underground garage for the first days and all of us took a bus and metro ride on Friday, which brought us in 90 minutes into **SEOUL**. Our first destination was the GYEONGBOKGUNG PALACE and because they celebrated on this August 15, their National Day (the end of the Japanese Occupation 1945), we had free admission and could watch a parade of the traditionally clad palace guards. The palace was built in 1394 when Seoul became the capital of Korea. Here we could see for the first time the wonderfully carved and painted roofs, ceilings and rooms, which are so typical for Korean palaces and temples. The extensive palace consisted of small and large buildings, which could be heated through underfloor heating and large gardens with lakes. They showed the traditional earthenware jugs, similar to the ones in which even nowadays the Kimchi is still made. We saw also, how the interior had looked in former times. The nearby National Museum had a great exhibition, which we explored before walking downtown through narrow alleyways between the skyscrapers to the canal which flows through town and where old and young comes together to relax.



The next day we visited a viewing point and temple, where even the usual temple bell was golden. In the natural fog we could barely see the high buildings of Incheon.



We had scheduled our departure from Incheon for Sunday, because then the traffic is much less and we could more easily adapt to Korean driving. Most of the traffic signs did show the towns also in English writing and with an English/Korean navigation system in the car and my navigation app OsmAnd+ on smartphone and tablet, it was relatively easy to navigate, only once we made a wrong turn. There are plenty of traffic cameras along Koreans streets, but the navigation system in the car and street signs every few hundred meters warn of the cameras. The speed limit is 60 to 80 km/h on normal roads and 100km/h on the few expensive freeways, rather on the slow side for us. The streets are maintained pretty well and most of the Koreans drive quite good. We were especially relieved, that there are by far not as many small motorbikes on the roads as in Indonesia. (See Report 2013).

Our first destination was the **DMZ**, the Korean Demilitarized Zone, a 250 km long and 4 km wide buffer zone between North and South Korea, running between the two countries and roughly following the 38th parallel. A bit like the former German wall, but both countries are formally still at war with each other. The Korean War started in 1950 and in 1953 they only made a truce. Every so often North Korea tries to infiltrate the South. All beaches on the East coast as well as some parts of the West coast are heavily secured with barbed wire and watch towers. There are also remnants of a tunnel, which was dug by the North Koreans and discovered 1978, when the end was only 44 kilometers away from Seoul. (3rd infiltration tunnel). They estimate that it would have only taken 1 hour to deliver 30.000 men with heavy artillery into the heart of South Korea. Just while we were in Korea, there were some border incidents and North Korea mobilized and massively started to threaten the South, 75 % of their submarines left their bases and lined up in front of the coast. Because Panmunjeom was closed for talks, we went to **IMJINGAK**, where we could see through many fences and barbed wire the shell damaged old train engine, the broken railway line and across the river North Korea. Signs and pictures show in Korean, Chinese and English the history, how Korea was divided after the Second World War and the Japanese occupation between 1910 and 1945 into a Russian and an American zone. If you want to know more about the places and history described here, please look it up in a search engine or Wikipedia.



In the afternoon we continued driving east into the mountains until we grew tired. In the small village of **HWASEO** we parked our car and walked around to look for a hotel. We found a motel, and because nobody spoke any English, we showed them with gestures, that we wanted a room. Before paying, we had a look at the room first, because in Korea there are two types of hotel rooms, one has no bed, alas, the beds were nearly as hard as the thin sheets on the floor. This method of finding a room for the night including a parking spot worked out well and most often we found our motel room like this. All of the motel rooms have behind the entrance door a separate little room, where you leave your shoes and an extra bathroom with toilet, washbasin and open shower. The room includes a TV, a small fridge, cold and hot drinking water, fan, mostly air condition, hairdryer, shower gel and hair washing liquid, lotion, hairbrush and similar, and per person one or two very small towels. When you check in, you get a toothbrush and maybe some other things. Sometimes the rooms were a bit too colorful for our liking, but all rooms, linen and equipment were very clean. Nearly everywhere, we had free very fast Wi-Fi internet. We paid between 25 to 60 Euros per night, the rates go up at the weekends. In Hwaseo we bought a cool box, two cups, coffee and some food, so we could prepare our breakfast in the room. Later that evening we found a nice restaurant with barbeques in the tables, where we could make good use of our training by Hyeyoung and Helmut. Again, nobody spoke English, but we looked around what other guest were eating and gestured, what we wanted. This was one of the widespread restaurants in Korea, where you sit on the floor and the table is only about 30 cm high. Good, we trained to sit and eat on the floor cross-legged Tonga, but with tight Jeans is was a bit more uncomfortable.



In the morning the nightly rain had cleared and we had a nice drive though the high **SEORAK MOUNTAINS**, passing lakes with very little water, before reaching **SOKCHO**, a town at the Japanese Sea, which is built around a large inner harbour. A pink and a baby blue bridge on the seaside, gardens and a high spiraling tower of a former Expo exhibition, which provided an excellent lookout, that was the colorful way how the Koreans like it.



After one night in Sokcho we turned south along the ocean, all the beaches were secured with barbed wire and high fences. Just south of Sokcho the temple **NAKSAN** stretches out on a peninsula (38° 7' 30" N, 128° 37' 43"E). Founded in 671 A.C., destroyed during the Mongolian invasion in the 13. century, by soldiers in the Korean War and 2005 by forest fire, it was repeatedly rebuilt. Since 1977, the 15 m high stone sculpture of goddess Haesugwaneumsang (Bodhisattva of Mercy) thrones above the temple. It is the largest Buddhist statue of its kind in the orient.



In search of an accessible beach we were driving further south along a narrow, winding road and coming around a corner we did not trust our eyes, a huge ship crossed our course, --"ooh, just a moment, we are driving in a car"—it was ... a hotel.

Close by we finally found a sandy beach, a nice motel and some small restaurants, where they served fish for a modest price. We had looked forward to eating a lot of seafood in Korea, but to our dismay most of the restaurants, which served seafood, were incredibly expensive. On the other hand, in every town we found one or more markets, where they sell a lot of different dishes. After arriving in a town, we mostly looked for the local



market and tasted here and there until we were not hungry anymore.

We loved these Korean markets. Huge halls with hundreds of vendors or little stalls on the street, they offer everything, often we had no idea what it was or what it was used for.



The next morning Werner returned from the beach disappointed, the waves and current were so strong, that he nearly couldn't stay on his feet and the locals warned him off to swim there. Maybe the high waves were produced already from the two strong taifuns (hurricanes) Atsani and Goni that were heading towards Korea and Japan. We felt like being between a rock and a hard place, the North Koreans playing war games in the north and two super storms threatening in the south, oh boy. With the storms still far out to sea we wanted to follow our original plan and drive to the southern coast, but first we made a detour inland, to visit **DOSAN SEOWON** close to Andong. This facility was founded in 1574 and was for 400 years a Confucian academy where also Togye was a scholar. The academy and Togye are pictured on the 1000 Won bill.





In the town of **ANDONG**, we visited the FOLK VILLAGE, where they display houses from different areas and centuries, it also has a very good museum. We explored the still inhabited historical village HAHOE situated in a river bend near Andong and in the Soju Museum, we learned how they distilled Soju in earlier times. Nowadays it is probably made in factories with huge steel tanks, but still the Soju from Andong is supposed to be one of the best.



In the beginning rain we headed for the coast again to **GYEONGJU** (35°50' N, 129° 13' E), which is full of tourist attractions. Here we met three young German women and two other men, in Sokcho we had met also a German family, that were about all non-Asian tourists, we met during our travels in Korea.

In earlier times different kingdoms ruled Korea and Gyeongju was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Silla (57 BC – 935 AD) which ruled about two-thirds of the Korean peninsula between the 7th and 9th centuries. In Gyeongju, there are many grassy hills up to 25 meter high and for a long time they were thought to be natural, until it was discovered in 1920, that they were burial mounds and by excavating them spectacular treasures were found. There are now 35 royal tombs and more than 500 tumuli in and around Gyeongju. In the DAEREUNGWON TOMB PARK in the middle of town we could visit the CHEONMACHONG TOMB, which was built between the 5. and 6. Century, inside is a large hall with the royal grave, the high round dome is inside made of stones. In the great national museum we could see the valuables they had found.



The artificial lake BOMUN on the outskirts of Gyeongju is very touristy, but lost a lot of its attraction with the falling water level. We went once around and quickly headed back to town with many more world heritage sites like the water palace DONGGUNG AND WOLJI (Anapi Pond), the BUNHWANGSA TEMPLE and the CHEOMSEONGDAE OBSERVATORY, one of the oldest surviving astronomic observatories in East Asia.



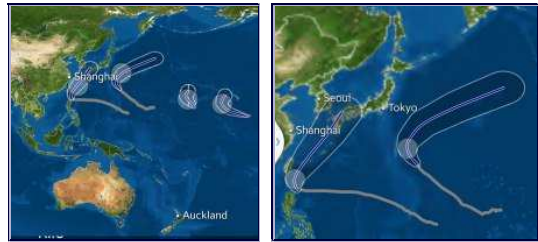
After a few days, we proceeded directly to the **BULGUKSA TEMPLE**, skipping the Seokguram grotto, accessible only by foot, because of heavy rainfall.

Fortunately, it rained less later and we could wander through the temple grounds and see the many Buddha's and the lucky pig.



On the way south we encountered huge industrial areas for miles and decided to leave the big busy city of Busan to our left and go straight to the islands in the south. Occasional very heavy downpours made driving pretty hazardous.

Across splendid bridges a la „Golden Gate“ and a long tunnel under the sea we came to the island of **GEOJE**, but to our dismay the industrial facilities continued here as well far into the south of the island, where at last we found green landscapes and some beaches. Because it was Sunday and pretty full everywhere, we were lucky to find a nice room with kitchen and terrace in **MANGCHIRI** right on the beach, which was full of big stones and unfortunately it was too rough to swim. In the evening, we ate some soup on the terrace, when our neighbours, two young Koreans, who had grilled fish and meat, looked over the little door dividing our terraces. We invited them over and immediately they came and started to hand feed us with fish and meat. They only spoke a few words of English, but we managed to communicate quite good with gestures and a translation app on the smartphone. They were both chefs in a nearby town, holidaying here for the weekend. After we emptied a few bottles of beer and Soju together, the language barrier melted and we had a lot of fun, only when they started to ask about their favourite German football stars and clubs, we had no answers, they knew more about it than we did.



In the meantime supertaifun Goni had caused more than 21 deaths in the Philippines and was heading directly for the southwestern corner of Korea, just were we were. Atsani and two more taifuns moved through the pacific further east. We did not like to be in the direct path of such a storm and went northwest, where we bunkered down in the middle of Seogeumdong in a solid looking hotel with covered parking lot for the car. During the night, the wind howled around the house and brought pouring rain, but it was never a real problem, we had encountered much worse before and Goni had stayed further out to sea than predicted. In Japan, they had measured wind gusts up to 255 km/h and 22.000 households were without electricity.

Also North and South Korea had reached an agreement and stopped the threats, the way to the north was safe again.



Before going north, we turned back south across more bridges to the island of **NAMHEA**. There on the eastern side is a famous tourist attraction, DOGIL MAEUL - THE GERMAN VILLAGE. We had seen a film about it and decided to have a look. On a hill above the water we passed German looking houses and stopped at the visitor center, where a Korean woman in a Dirndl (a traditional southern German dress) greeted us in perfect German. Her last name was Werner and she had spent 49 years in Germany, showing us in the museum some typical German things she had brought from Germany herself. She told us, that in the sixties Korea was still a very poor country and when booming Germany looked for workers, 11.000 nurses and a few thousand mine worker went there to work. Some of them returned to Korea with their German partners 40 years later and the mayor decided to build a German looking village. Since years it draws a lot of tourists, especially the Korean invade it by the hundreds, which makes the locals not so happy.



In the pouring rain we decided against a walking tour, we had seen German houses enough and proceeded to Mijori where finally in the morning Werner could have a swim at a sheltered beach.

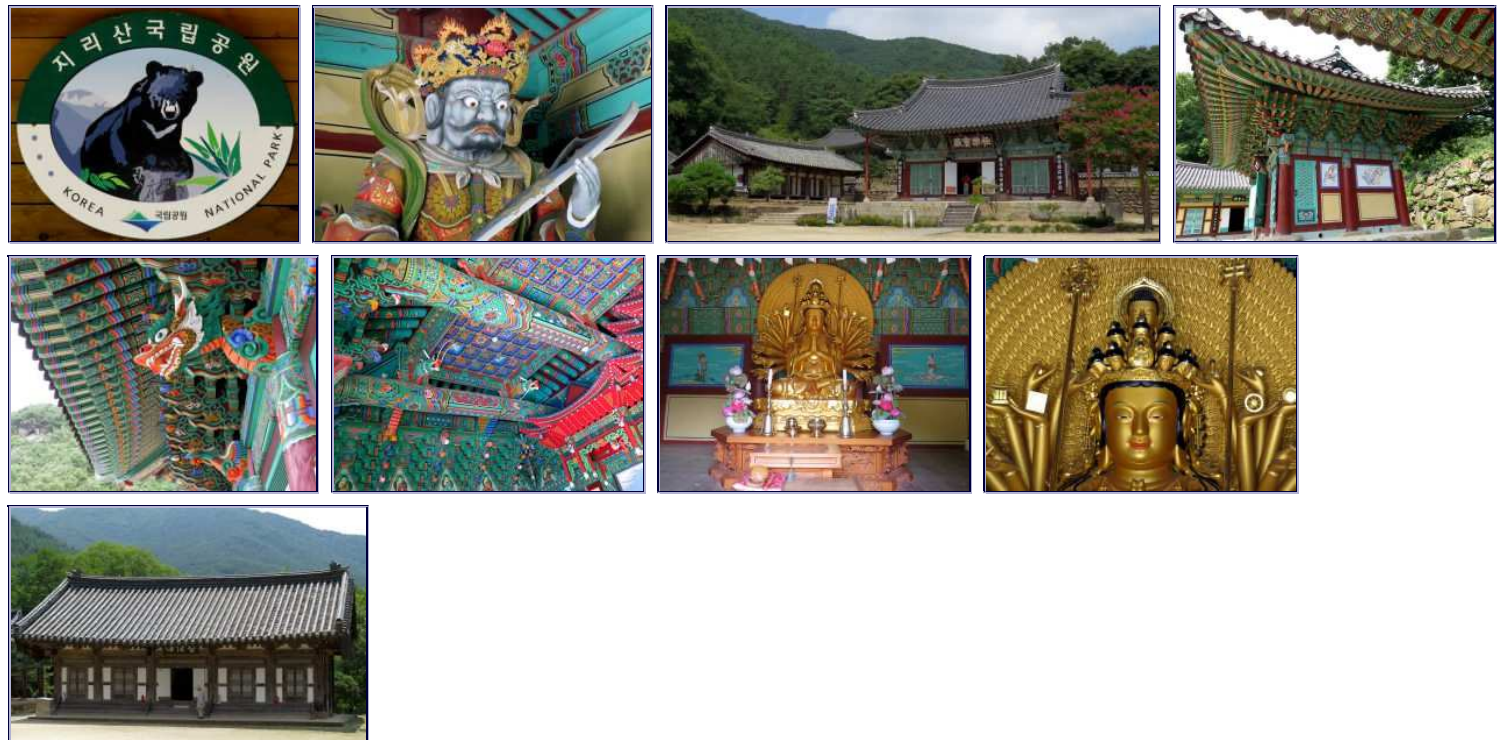
Shortly we stopped at Namhae town, before driving through the **YEOSU PENINSULA**, where we only found a few very expensive hotels. Therefore, we proceeded to **SUNCHEON**, where we visited the interesting huge INTERNATIONAL GARDENS and raced to the coast with a little magnetic train, where we walked across a long wooden walkway through high reeds, stopping to study the animals at the tidal stream and in the mud.



After a long day with lots of walking, we sat down for a nice meal in a restaurant, where we received as starters a little dish with small oval objects. They didn't taste bad, a little crunchy and nutty. Later we were told it was the larvae of the silkworms. When the silkworms have formed their silky cocoons, they destroy it to hatch. Before they can do that, they are thrown in boiling water, and then the silk thread, which can be up to 900 m in length, is carefully removed. The cooked larvae are then sold as a special food called BEONDEGI.



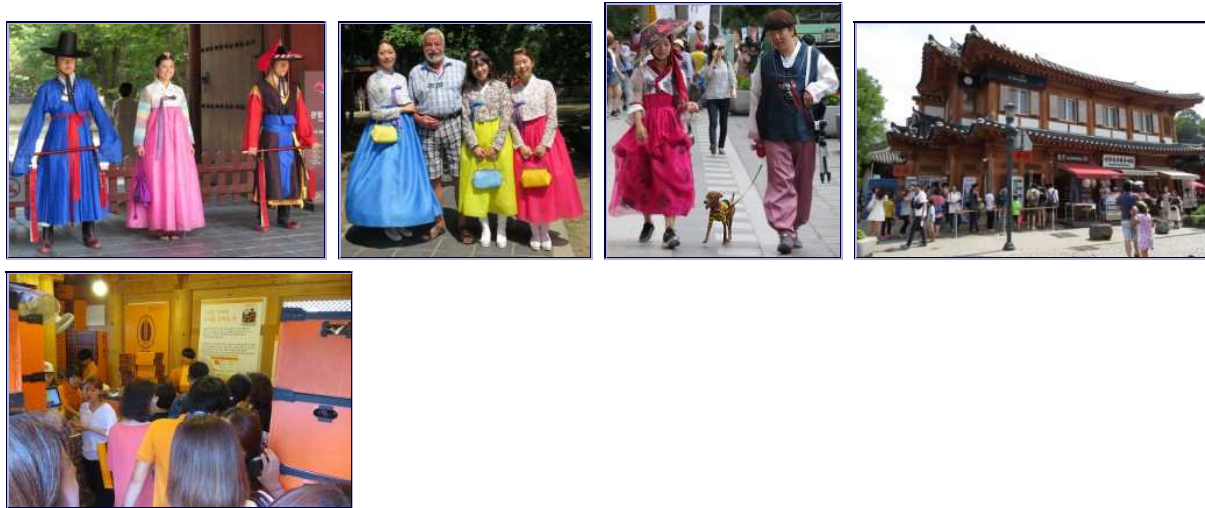
With only a week to go before our departure we started heading north. Along small winding streets, we steered upwards through JIRISAN NATIONAL PARK, where bears are still living. We walked through the very nice **CHEONEUNSA MONASTERY**, then the road took us high up above 1100m, with the 2000m high mountains looming under thick black clouds over us. We felt pretty cold with only 20 degrees Celsius and headed downhill into warmer areas and to Namwon.



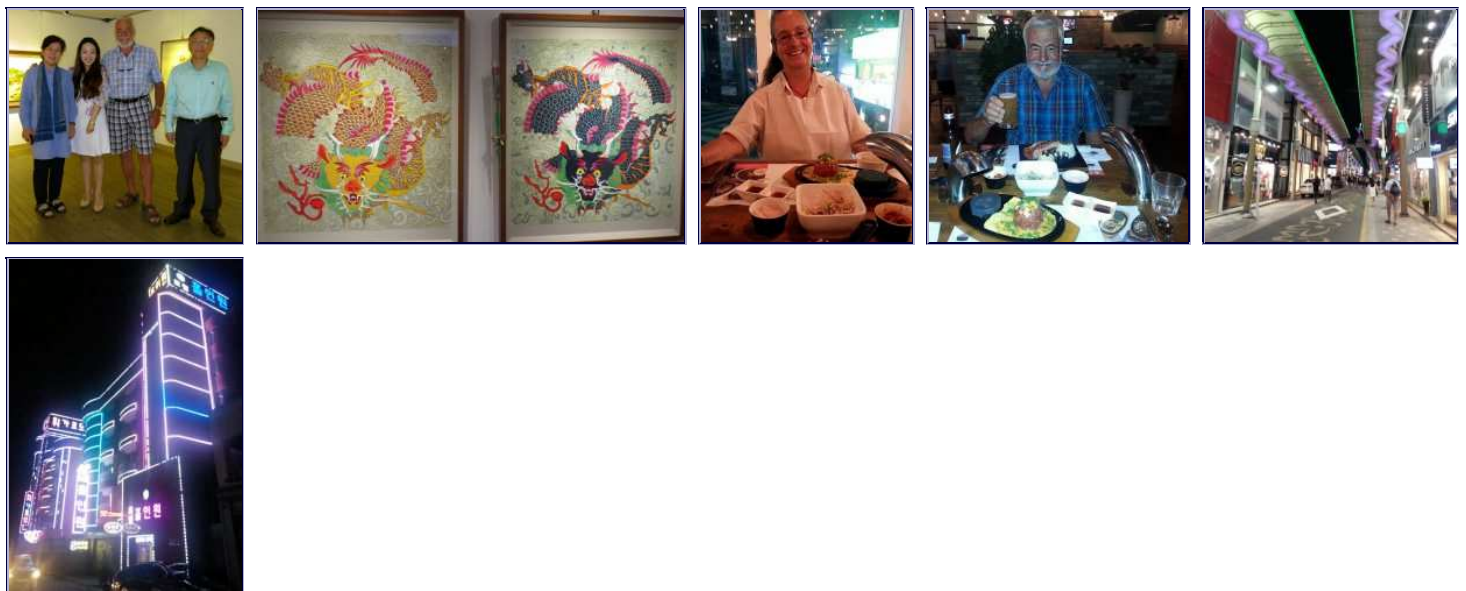
On Saturday we visited **MAISAN** (35° 45'40" N, 127° 24'44" E), the mountain Mai, which has two nearly 700 m high pinnacles, which look like horse ears from afar. Behind a small lake, high cliffs block the road and on their base sits the temple TAPSA, where the ermite Yi Gap-yong 1885 only 25 years old, decided to stay and meditate. Until he died in 1957, he placed thousands of stones on top of each other and thus erected about 120 stone pagodas without any help.



Our next destination was the town of **JEONJU**, which has one of the largest areas of traditional houses in Korea, the **HANOK VILLAGE** and a large **PALACE** of the Baekje dynasty. It was Sunday and the town full of people, mainly young ones, who showed off in traditional costumes. The palace guards wore costumes as well and even the dogs were dressed in clothes. Just in time Hyeyoung sent me a SMS to look for a shop called PNB, with a long line of people waiting outside, there we found really great tasting chocolate cake, despite the very small shop.



We visited the palace and walked through the Hanok village, had a look at the Calligraphy Museum and entered a picture gallery. Suddenly a young Korean woman approached us and addressed us in German, followed by her mother, the artist and owner of the gallery and her father. Both also spoke an excellent German. They told us, that they lived many years in Marbach in Germany. The father is professor for German language and now teaches in Korea. We talked together a little while about painting and Germany. In the evening, tired from lots of walking, we ate some minced meat in a restaurant, which we had to cook ourselves on a small cast-iron plate. The how to do this video was shown on a screen above our heads. On the way home, we strolled through colourfully lighted shopping streets back to our also futuristic looking motel. In Korea, we walked through towns even late at night without any fear. It is a quite save country, which has surveillance cameras everywhere, "Big Brother is watching you..."



From Jenoju we made a small detour southwestwards through the **BYEOSAN NATIONAL PARK**, a mountainous Peninsula, then went north again along the muddy west coast. The road several times went across long seawalls through the water until we found a nice motel directly on the beach in the little village **CHANJANGDAE**. There, at least at high water, was nice swimming and even I had a dip.

The fish restaurants along the seashore had a great display of all sorts of seafood, but when we saw, that they asked about 100 Euro for a dish, we prepared ourselves a bowl of soup in our motel room.

The next day we went through changing landscapes, over dams and bridges back to **INCHEON**, arriving at our friends place in the evening. The following day Hyeyoung went with us to the huge **FISH MARKET** of Incheon, where we saw an abundance of different seafood. They sold also hot sauces, Beondegi and even shark fins. We bought a lot of clams, seafood and fish for a fair price. The still living flounder was quickly killed right before our eyes and cleaned, filleted and nicely arrange on ice in no time.



At home, Hyeyoung prepared a truly outstanding dinner with many Korean specialties and then we made a walk through Incheon at night.

On 3.9. we returned our car, having driven around 2000 kilometer with it and on September 4. shortly before 5 pm, our plane started in Incheon to deliver us in 11 hours to **AUCKLAND** in **NEW ZEALAND**. We picked up our camper van at Wendekreisen and started the next day to buy the things we needed in Auckland and Whangarei and visiting some old friends there.



With one suitcase more, we boarded the Air NZ plane to **TONGA** on Monday, September 14. Our landlord picked us up at the airport in **TONGATAPU** and we could stay with him for one night in **NUKU'ALOFA**.

By now, we had much too much luggage (around 90 kg) for the small island plane. We had planned to go to Vava'u with the ferry Otuanga 'Ofa, which offers little cabins and needs about 18 hours to Vava'u. We had sailed on her before without problems. Unfortunately, this ferry was in Fiji for maintenance and our only choice was to go on the old dilapidated ferry PULUPAKI. Scheduled departure time was Tuesday night at 10 pm (22h), we had to be there by 8 pm (20h). It was a pretty cold night and we waited outside with 200 other passengers, all Tongans. 10 o'clock came and went, we sit sat shivering in the cold wind. Nobody told us anything, but there seemed to be a problem with one of the forklifts. They were still trying to load the rest of a lot of building materials for the Ha'apai Islands, which had been devastated by Cyclone IAN in January 2014. This strong cyclone had fortunately missed us by 30 nm, but went directly over the middle island group Ha'apai, especially the main island Lifuka. Finally, around 11 pm, we were allowed to board and quickly we went all the way up to the forward cabin, which had long benches, of which we occupied two. From here, it was a short way to get outside on deck, because we still remembered that in 2009 the ferry PRINCESS ASHIKA sank very fast halfway between Tongatapu and Vava'u. 74 of the 140 passengers died, mainly women and children that had slept in the lower cabins. Two Germans died too and because it was exactly the time we were supposed to come back from Germany, our friends had feared, it was us that had perished. Luckily, we had taken the plane that time.



At 1 am finally we departed from Nuku'alofa and arrived in the morning at 8 am at our first stop in **SOUTHERN HA'APAI**. The Pulupaki anchored near **NOMUKA** and the small island boats came alongside to pick up their cargo. Everything was loaded by hand, bags of cement, building stones, timber, fuel drums, food, and so on which took some time, but it was a nice sunny day and we enjoyed the warmth after the cold in New Zealand and Nuku'alofa, even the whales were playing around the ship. After a while all the boats were gone, but we still didn't depart. We wondered what was going on and went to the captain to ask him. He said, the regulator at the generator, which they needed to start the main engine, was broken, but no worries, they had a replacement on board. It took a long time, to replace the part, probably everything was rusted together solidly. Without engine or generator there was no electricity and no bilge pump could work. That was our main concern, because I had checked the boat at night with a flashlight and had seen a lot of water in the lower parts of the ship, that was pumped overboard. However, we didn't have to swim ashore, after eight long hours the engine slowly coughed back to life. At 4 pm they pulled the anchor and we proceeded to the next island **HA'AFEVA**, where we arrived just after sunset.



In the dark, they started unloading again, this time without shutting off the engine. The new island pastor with his extended family and complete household was transferred from the ferry to many small boats. Before leaving, his wife gave us two small water bottles. After unloading more building material we proceeded to the main island of Ha'apai, **LIFUKA** and the little sleepy "main" town **PANGAI**, which had suffered badly from cyclone IAN. Here the ship could dock at a pier, many Tongans left the boat and in the light of some streetlamps the forklifts started to empty the main cargo hold, which was full of containers and other stuff. Soon the first forklift had an engine problem and shortly after the second a flat tire. End of work. Everybody went to sleep until the next morning. Then the tire could be replaced and one forklift emptied the cargo hold.



However, on the upper deck were still 12 large pallets with long narrow breakable building materials that were loaded in Nuku'alofa by a separate large crane. Here they had no such crane and they tried unloading with the ship's crane. Werner immediately said, that cannot work and sure so, the whole crane was ripped out of the rusty steel deck by the weight. They put some iron parts along the deck and welded the crane back on, it failed again. After a lot of welding attempts, the crane stayed put, but could not pull up the load far enough. The captain in his red overall scratched his head and didn't know what to do. We had watched the whole procedure and suggested, to unload the materials by hand, until the crane could lift the rest. The captain and his little crew started to work, and because they were too few, Werner and I helped to unload for several hours in the hot Tongan sun, while the Tongan passengers, mostly young men, stood around grinning. Two of them finally started helping us as well.



After three more hours everything was unloaded, the empty containers were placed back in the hold and at 4 pm, the ferry could depart Pangai and start for the last 60 nautical miles to Vava'u.

With the normal speed of 10 knots, we should have arrived in **VAVA'U** around 10 pm, but it was already 2:30 am on Friday morning when we finally docked in **NEIAFU**. We were more than 52 hours on this ferry. The Tongans slept everywhere on the floor on mats and blankets, even the walkways were blocked. If you wanted to move around you had to literally climb over massive bodies, some about 150 kg. Loud music and talking, crying children, on the whole ship only six very nasty toilets, because there was no running water. No washing or brushing our teeth, no change of clothes for three days. To eat we only had a bit of bread, a few crackers, some water and coke. Fortunately, we could buy some more water, cracker and fatty corned beef in Pangai. Of course, there was no accommodation open in town at three in the morning. We went to a friend's restaurant at the waterfront, where we could put some chairs together on the terrace to sleep on. In the morning, we could do some shopping in Neiafu, before our neighbor came with his boat to take us out to the island **FOFOA**.

This was the longest trip we ever made on a ferry between Tongatapu and Vava'u. Even with our sailing yacht, which was only half as fast, we needed only between 26 and 40 hours for this distance.

Finally at home we could not relax, because after an absence of six months there was a lot to unpack and clean. The garden looked very poor, it hadn't rained for a long time and we could see only a few avocados and mangos on our trees. To our surprise, there were still a lot of mandarins hanging on the trees, that meant we had to pick them fast to make syrup, before they go to waste. End of November the first tropical depression went through and we had a lot of wind and some rain for a few days.

Begin of December we received the sad news that my mum had died in the nursing home.

Now we are on the island all by ourselves, all neighbours are on holiday. The cats, and dog Lulu are all here with us, only Minks we didn't see since we came back. Our island life is back to normal.

December 14. we already celebrate our 25. Wedding anniversary. We hope, that we are spared by strong cyclones this season, despite having a strong El Nino.

We wish you all a



*PEACEFUL AND MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A
HAPPY, HEALTHY NEW YEAR 2016!*



We thank our hosts for their generous hospitality and all of you for your friendship, emails, good wishes and all the goodwill we received. We hope to meet you again next year or at least hear from you once in a while.

With our best regards from the South Seas

Elke & Werner

All photographs, if not mentioned otherwise, made by Elke Stumpe (c)