

Statement of impressions / feedback of our Infotour to Cameroun (September 2010)

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First of all I'd like to express my deepest thanks for the invitation to this fabulous country and for the possibility to get to know Cameroun and its treasure and wealth regarding touristic activities and possibilities. Also for the hearty welcome and engaged adaption by all the acting persons. Specially there is to mention the extraordinary and outstanding efforts of Mrs. Amougou, Mr. Mbe and Mr. Baba, of course not to forget the initially acting and unforgettable Mrs. Kah. All of them made us possible to have a really pleasant stay and successful time in Cameroun. The real highlight was the fact to enjoy the honour of the audience at His Excellence, the Minister of Tourism. Therefore I appreciated very much to have been part of this delegation of exploring and experiencing the richness of the great country of Cameroun.

Following I want to express my impressions of this tour in 7 steps:

- 1) The welcome and the whole time of our stay in Cameroun was accompanied by a real feeling of safety, good mood and real interest in our mission by the involved persons. This fact led me to the opinion that general tourism would have great chances in the future, because ambience and emotional surrounding is one of the most important aspects that decide the so called "first impression" of a country. We all felt well, safe and welcome at any time. Thank you all for this donation.
- 2) The choice of visited spots was perfectly done by the organizers of our tour. If we consider the short period of stay and the circumstances in general (raining season, no TO involved, different characters with different expectations within our group etc.) we could get an impression of the country that makes it possible to transfer our impressions even to regions we did not visit (e.g. the north) and to work out a programme in cooperation with the TOs we were lucky to meet by the strong efforts of Mr. Mbe. All the spots we visited had been of excellent choice, there was not a single thing I would like to miss on this trip. And this fact is not expectable everywhere, because by my experience I also had other infotours in other countries where this was not the case, so congratulations to this brilliant workout.
- 3) The meetings with TOs and tourguides were of great effect and success, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Mbe. On the one hand we have now a good choice of cooperation partners concerning our plans to take Cameroun-Trips into our own programme which we are presently contacting for offers. On the other hand we got a really good impression of the characters, styles, competences and mentalities of TOs and also tourguides that leads our company Travel & Personality to a strategy-plan mentioned further on concerning seminaries/trainings to improve the chances of TOs and

tourguides to present themselves even more successful and compatible with the needs of the tourism-branch of German-speaking countries.

- 4) The organization of our trip itself was generally well done. All staff-members were engaged at any time and did a fine job. Remarkable things that did not run very well were just few but nevertheless very important, e.g. time-management (concerning the calculation of distances, durations of driving-parts), announcements to the group of what's going on next, spontaneous decisions and plan-changes. Those were not dramatic for our group but they would be for tourist groups. I remarked some kind of lack of general experience in handling with group mentality and group-dynamic processes and realizing a planned programme under changing circumstances. In fact, this was not a greater problem for us and it was also not expected by the fact that there was no professional TO involved in the organization. Considered this it was an extraordinary good work done by the staff of the ministry. Anyway I recognized several always all over the world repeating aspects that could be optimized by the support of consciousness i.e. by seminars/trainings to achieve perfection within the dealing with foreign companies and clients that is necessary to pass the challenges of the world market of tourism, especially of German-speaking regions. I wish that Camerounian tourism avoids the many mistakes that other countries already had done and who also had a lot to do to get rid of them.
- 5) The acting local guides were all very good within their topics. We got really well chosen informations, they were all extraordinary friendly and were all perfectly accepted by the group. Nevertheless we had been a group that was not representative for tourist-groups but for professional TOs ourselves. That means WE knew how to handle THEM and how to get the infos we wanted, we knew what questions to ask and we knew what we can expect. But the situation would be different when it's a real tourist group. There were several typical system-lacks in their performance (e.g. talking only to some members of the group while the others were still on the way to the place, lacking structures of the speeches, technical information i.e. what's up next etc.). These techniques could be trained, but generally the "human resource" is definitely existent, it would be a pity if these competences and knowledge would not be offered in a perfect manner. It is not that far away from perfection but still "on the way". We had only contact with local guides, and I guess the need of training the staff / guides is bigger if they should guide a whole group over two or three weeks concerning psychological, didactical and structural competences, specially with german-speaking groups.
- 6) Concerning the hotels we got a very good insight in the diversity of styles and quality, starting from the high class hotel (Yaoundé) running to a "just a night"-hotel (Bamenda, Limbe) up to a smart individual and eco-styled lodge (Kribi). Fact is: there are all types of hotels. But: do we (Camerounians and Germans) share the same view on them? I was not sure. This is something we should find out, because this one of the most important aspects of the general understanding of foreign desires. I myself preferred the lodge in Kribi because of its ambience of "Africa of my child-dreams", but I know this was depending of the specific situation that day. Of course the "Mont Fébé" in Yaoundé is one of the best hotels in Cameroun, but do Camerounians and Europeans consider this in the same way as necessary? And if not, why? Nevertheless I would say, concerning the hotel situation there are perfect ways to establish a fitting type of tourism which might dominated by the theme of eco-tourism, adventure tourism and sustainable tourism at the first place. And we enjoyed it to find this out...

- 7) My colleague Mme. Béatrice Soupez (Madame Dakar Reisen) and myself (Travel & Personality), we decided immediately to take Cameroun into our portfolio of travel-programmes. We trust in the competence of our future cooperation partners (whoever this will be), but it's important to know that we consider this from the perspective of a small part of the German travel-community that had the chance to be invited by the Camerounian State to get this impressions directly in the country. We wish the country's TOs to be successful in their efforts to contact german tourism-organisations and TOs in the same positive way. There might be... further more: there IS a lack of trust by German TOs and also the clients themselves into the professionalism of camerounian tourism, its skills and knowledge, TOs and guides. Therefore we (Travel & Personality) propose a foregoing T&P-seminary/training for local TOs and also touguides to prepare the "attack" of the Tourism-Scene in the German-speaking countries in order to get an improved access to a market that is the world's largest tourism industry and personally to its outgoing TOs and clients. This scenario will be described in an extra proposition sheet.

Andreas Damson, 04.10.2010 in Stuttgart

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