

Season 12 – Part 4. Through Kyrgyzstan



Sa 17.9.2016, day 433. Into Kyrgyzstan (Kegen – Boz-Uchuk, 85 km)

I only had 6 more days and it is quite a hike to Bishkek, but I had already climbed the worst hill I was going to face and I was starting to feel confident that I would make it to Bishkek without problems. The ride was easy at first on good roads. I met a German couple coming the other way, the first touring cyclists I have met for ages! I slowly left civilization behind me as I headed up towards the Kyrgyz border. The nice paved road then turned into coarse gravel that slowed me down considerably. Luckily there was a far smoother dirt road running parallel to the road through the fields. The border crossing was fun. It was just two little huts in the middle of nowhere, one on the Kazakh and one on the Kyrgyz side. No hassle, no searches, no interrogation, only a friendly chit chat. In fact, the “bike search” on the Kyrgyz side involved me taking out the guitar and playing a song for them.

The scenery stayed absolutely beautiful and it was a thoroughly enjoyable ride, however the road stayed bad and I was making poor progress. Then I noticed a puncture in the trailer. Inspecting the tire, I found several thorns stuck in it. I must have ridden through a thorn bush without noticing. I also realized that I wasn't carrying a spare tube for the trailer. So I patched up all the holes and headed off. Soon I had another flat, so I stopped again, searched for the hole using my valuable drinking water as there was no stream around, patched it up and continued. I then came to a fork in the road, where I had to decide if I should take the main road, which was about 10 km longer, but more or less flat, or if I should take the short cut, a secondary road up over a 250 m high pass. I decided to take the short cut. At first the road climbed gently, then crossed a little stream, but then it turned into a terrible road with deep gullies and large loose rocks the size of melons that climbed steeply up the face of the hill. It was virtually impossible to ride the bike and completely impossible to push. And soon I noticed that I had a flat tire on the trailer again! I finally managed to fight my way up the hill, overtaking a truck that had broken down half way up. At the top I patched another hole, but the problem didn't go away. I had now patched a total of 10 holes and was starting to run seriously low on patches. I soon decided to call it a day and set up camp by some trees by a little stream and worry about the punctures in the morning.

Just as I was about to go to bed I heard the noise of a galloping horse approaching. Within seconds the horse and rider were upon me and flashed past my bike and the tent maybe 2 m away. They were

probably so used to riding this path that they knew the way blindfold. Had I not pitched the tent in amongst the trees they would have never seen it in time and it would have been a catastrophe.

















Su 18.9.2016, day 434. Saved by the Flea-market! (Boz-Uchuk – Chichkan, 101 km)

I slept very well and woke up full of optimism. First I thoroughly checked the tube of the trailer yet again and found that one patch was leaking. So I pulled the old patch off and re-patched it. Then I found a nice forked branch and carved myself a new stand for the bike while I cooked a big bowl of spaghetti for breakfast. I was still feeling optimistic when I headed off but after only a short ride, another flat on the trailer! That was it. I had enough. I pulled the tube out, sent over into the field, collected a large pile of straw and stuffed the straw into the tire. I now only hoped that I would find a new inner tube in Karakul, the last town I would see before Bishkek.

Amazingly the straw stuffed tire worked quite well and saw me all the way to Karakul where I got chatting to two backpackers who told me they had seen some bike spare parts at the bazar. After a very nice coffee I headed off to the bazar, pushing my bike through the very narrow little alleys. Gradually I was pointed in the right direction and finally I arrived at the bike spare part stall and they even had the right size tube. I was so relieved! Now I was definitively on my way. I stocked up on food and headed off.

I reached Lake Issyk Kul just before the sun set and found a wonderful little grassy spot (with quite a bit of horse manure on it) right next to a pebbly beach. I immediately stripped and braced myself for what I thought would be an icy dip in the lake. To my surprise it was a wonderful temperature and crystal clear. It was absolutely divine!

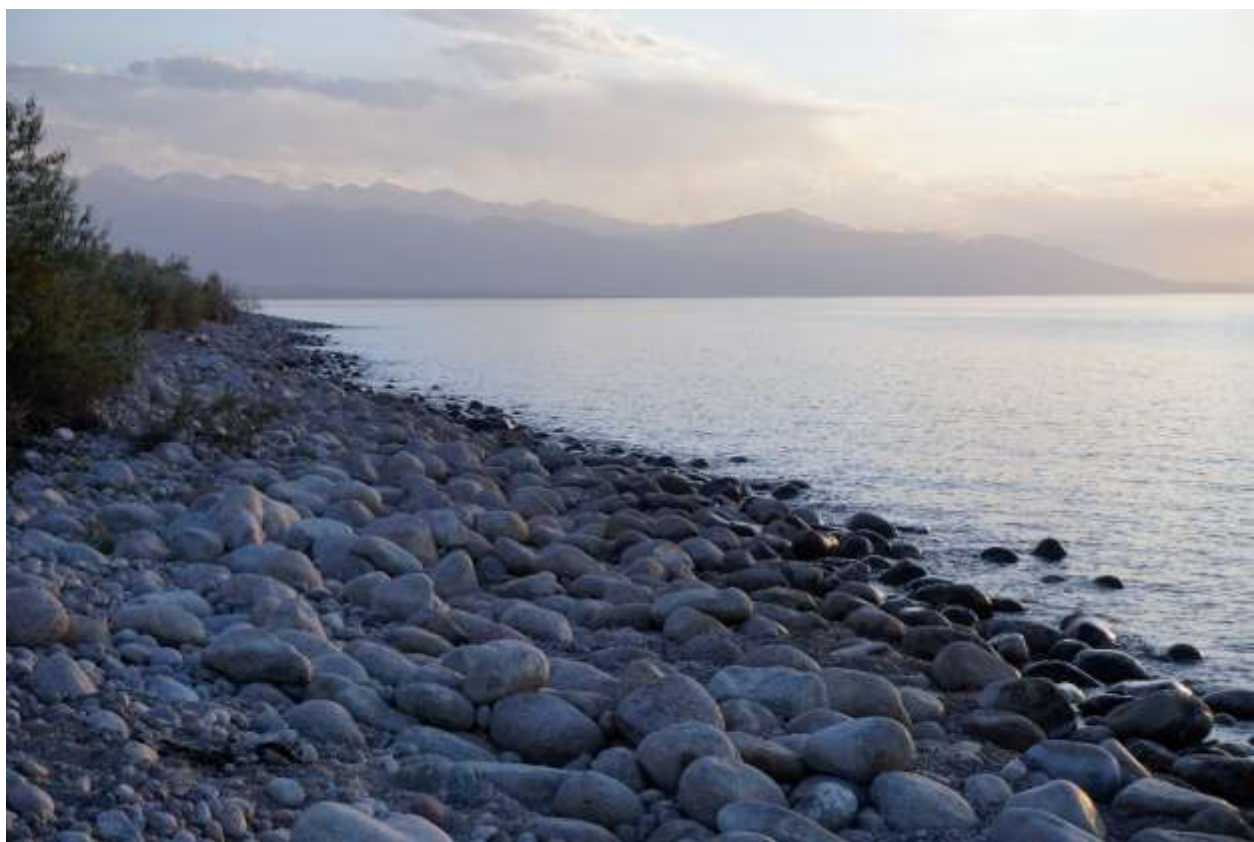


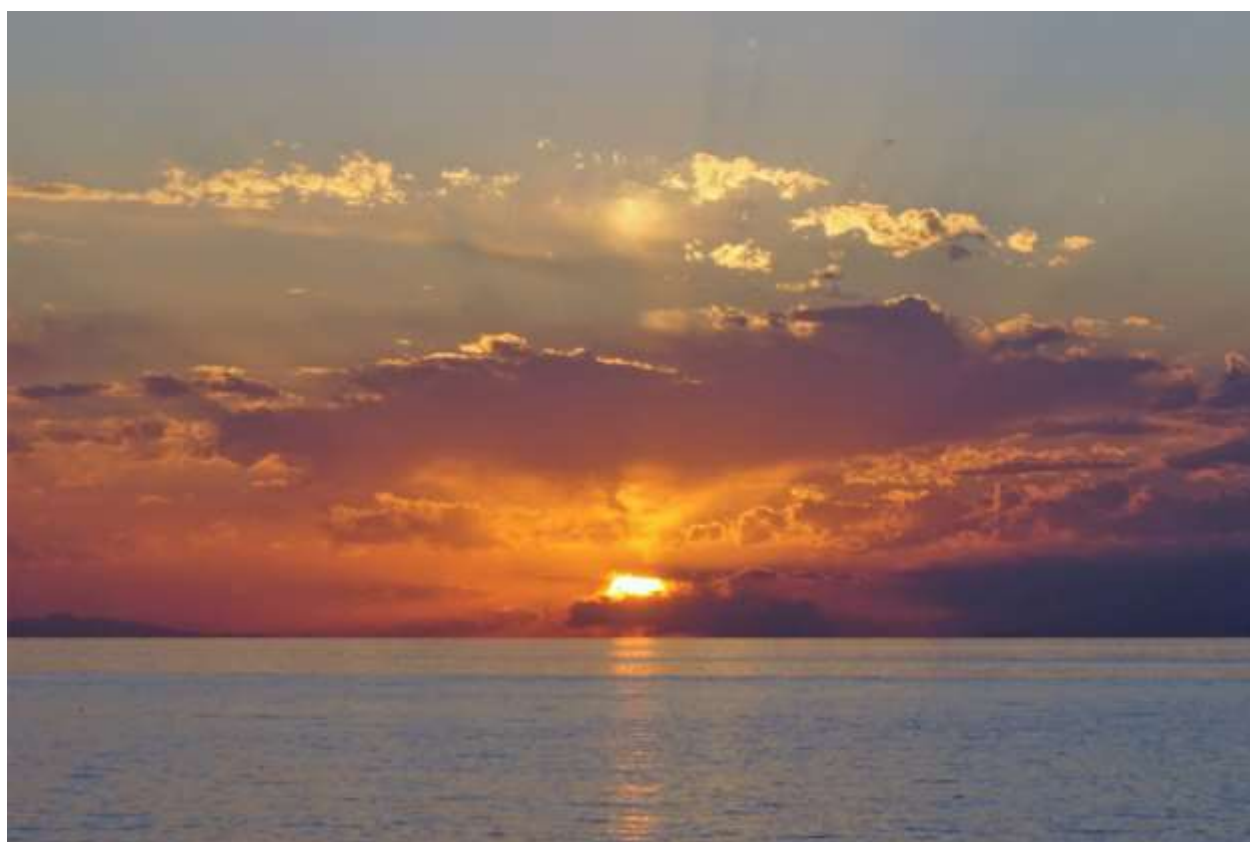












Mo 19.9.2016, day 435. Great biking along lake Isswyk Kul (Chichkan - Barbulak, 135 km)

Things were definitely looking up. My puncture problems were over, there was a scattering of tiny villages where I found the odd shop to stock up on water and whatever food they had for sale. The road was a bit bumpy but not bad. I was thoroughly enjoying myself. Around lunchtime I met two more touring cyclists coming towards me. This time a Swiss couple who had biked all the way from Switzerland. They had done 10'000 km so far, so that is about how much further we'd have to go, not really so much, considering we had now done close to 20'000 km.

The road then left the lake shore and wound its way up over a little pass. I arrived down the other side and back to the lake shore just in time to reach a lovely beach on a peninsula to set up camp, have another wonderfully refreshing swim in the lake and watch the sun set.

















Tu 20.9.2016, day 435. Wonderful ride past Orto Tokoy Lake (Barbulak – A365, 65 km)

I decided against taking the main road through the town of Balykchy and took a small secondary road past Lake Orto Tokay and up over a 2200 m high pass. It was the perfect choice. There was virtually no traffic whatsoever, the road was perfectly paved and the landscape was very beautiful. I was quite surprised to find a large herd of camels grazing by the shore of the lake.

I had lunch in the shade of some trees down by a river. It would have been a wonderful spot, but I was plagued by mosquitoes. So it ended up being quite a short lunch break and soon I was climbing up the hill and over the pass. I arrived at the top at around 4 pm and had to decide if I should enjoy a nice early evening up here in the quiet hills, leaving me with about 160 km to cover the next day to Bishkek or if I should press on and bike down into the main valley where there was a large main road and also a train line. It was so beautiful up in the mountains, that I decided to stop. I soon found a lovely little hidden flat spot in a Wadi and had a beautiful evening playing the guitar, taking a small hike up some little peaks, cleaning my bike a bit, cooking the last of my spaghetti with a can of peas before turning in for an early night's sleep.















We 21.9.2016, day 436. Long day against the wind (A365 – Bishkek, 164 km)

It was going to be a big day, so I was up at 6:30 and on the road just after 7 am. It was quite chilly biking down the steep road in the shadowy mountains. I was quite relieved that there were several cafés on the main road down in the valley. I first stopped for coffee and breakfast, then again for a second coffee and internet. Even though the road was downhill all the way, it was a tough ride, as there was a stiff wind blowing in my face. It was quite frustrating having to pedal hard going down-hill.

But I made good progress, overtook a touring bicyclist from Hong Kong who was heading for South Africa, had lunch in Tokmok and arrived in Bishkek just before 6 pm. So I made it with one day to spare! What a blast, Fukuoka in Japan to Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan in 3.5 weeks by bike, boat and train...





