

<http://himachal.us/2011/06/15/continent-travelers-paul-and-brigitta/28579/tourism/places/ravinder>



Continent Travelers – Paul and Brigitta

Posted by [Ravinder Makhaik Feature](#), [Globalisation](#), [Human Interest](#), [Latest News](#), [Lifestyle](#), [Nature](#), [Offbeat](#), [On The Road](#), [People](#), [Places](#), [Tourism](#), [Travel](#), [Wildlife](#)
Wednesday, June 15th, 2011

Shimla: It was a brush with history when Paul and Brigitta Bohlen Juni passed through Abbotabad just hours before the US navy SEALs swooped from choppers to shoot dead Osama bin Laden – the most dreaded terrorist in the world.



Brigitta

Certainly that was not on their itinerary when the audacious Swiss couple set out to circumnavigate the globe on 3rd September, 2006 in Mahangu – a specially equipped 6 cylinder diesel fuelled Toyota Land Cruiser that they've been calling home on the road.

Mahagu in Southern Africa is the name for a type of sweet corn and means – ‘food of the local people’. “And traveling is food for itchy feet”, says Paul, the 66 year old veteran sitting in a lounge of a luxury hotel here with his 48 year old road hardened wife at his side as they narrate tales about a globetrotting journey of a lifetime.



Cowboy Paul

The streak for the wild was intrinsic to the love for the couple that bloomed at the turn of the century and found ground in Antarctica, where they honeymooned after getting married in 2001.

Paul, hanging up his boots in the advertising world and his wife Brigitta threw up a career in finance before setting out from the Alps, driving through France, Spain and crossing from Gibraltar on a ferry into Morocco in Africa.

“Once we had tested the vehicle and our determination there has been no turning back since then,” says Brigitta, after having co driven and logged over 200,000 Kms of road journey in 45 countries across five continents.

To keep in touch with family and friends and sharing their on-road experience with others they keep specially created website www.circumnavigation.ch updated from wherever internet connectivity can be accessed.

For an address, their visiting card just has “From Here and There’ as residence.

From Africa, the journey headed north, crossed the Mediterranean, Spain and from Portugal the vehicle was shipped to Buenos Aires in South America. “When we left Europe, there were no signs of any economic crisis around,” she adds.



Beaches of Portugal

Much of 2007 was spent land cruising the east coast of the continent, passing through Argentina, Brazil, Panama, Nicaragua and other Central America nations.

It was painful to see large tracts of Brazilian forest cut down,” recalls Brigitta, who is also an ardent photographer.

Humbled by the engineering feats of the Incas and Mayans in building large pyramids by mere human and animal power, the journey passed crossed over into Texas USA from Mexico.



USA 45 Parallel

Driving up the continent along the east coast, the travelers recorded the after effects of hurricane Katrina that hit Florida 2005 and were witness to John McCain and Barack Obama's intense 2008 presidential election campaign.

Whichever city we drove past, there were many houses for sale," says Paul. Unmindful of the economic and mortgage crisis looming around, the couple headed north into Canada to reach the fish rich waters of Newfoundland.

Crossing the continent in the westward direction the journey headed north into Alaska. The journey back to Buenos Aires in South America was retraced along the west cost of the two America's, the highlight being the crisp air and the clear blue skies deep inside Atacama Desert in Chile.



Atacama Desert

From Buenos Aires the vehicle was shipped to a port in Namibia from where the travel first headed into South Africa before heading north with a brief excursion into Madagascar Island.



Namibia Death Valley

Driving through 17 African countries, piles of memories the couple recall are shattered farmlands of Zambia, rich wildlife of Africa, scars of genocide in Rwanda, clear waters of Nile sources, malnutrition in Ethiopia and civil strife ridden people of Sudan.

“In Africa there is so much wild life that at places our vehicle was surrounded by lions and at places we feared that a passing elephant herd would tramples us inside the car,” says Brigitta.



Kenya Masai Mara

From Djibouti the vehicle was shipped across the Red Sea into Saudi Arabia on 3rd December, 2010. “We were handed a 72 hour visa for Saudi Arabia, just enough to drive



through country,” mentions Paul.

Passing through UAE, Oman, Iran and Pakistan, the vehicle entered India through the Wagah border on 9th May.

It was after having traveled through flood ravaged Pakistan, when the two were headed to Gilgit that the US navy’s operation to get Osama bin Laden was conducted.

“On the morning of May 2nd while camping outside Ayubia, a town 50 Km east of Abbotabad, we found everyone glued to television sets. On making enquires, we learnt that Osama bin Laden had been killed in the town that we passed through the previous evening,” said Paul.



Golden Temple Amritsar

Having paid obeisance at the Golden Temple, the journey headed into Kashmir valley, went over Khardung La pass (5602 meter altitude) and it was back on the Srinagar-Jammu highway that the couple had the first accident of the world tour. “Mercifully neither of us was hit when the drunken truck driver hit our vehicle,” says Brigitta.

The couple entered Himachal from Pathankot, and after visiting Dalhousie and Dharamshala they reached Kullu.

Avoiding the crowded summer rush of Manali, the couple headed into Tirthan valley, where they caught up with Payson Stevens, the American who with his wife Kamla Kapur has made Ghyagi his second home and happily divides his year between US and Ghyagi in Kullu valley.

After meeting the remarkable couple Payson's records, "What I'd like to share is another level and impression of these modern explorers (Marko Paulo, I call him), which is more a remarkable feat for two successful Swiss professionals dropping out and setting sail in their land boat, Mahangu. The pressures of modern life, especially with the 24/7 demands of our digital, social networked life are both exciting and enslaving.

As they say: *even when you win the rat race, you're still a rat.* Not only did Paul (at 66) and Brigitta (at 48) chuck it all for a four-wheel drive magic carpet tour powered by diesel fuel, but they offer all of us another image of what is possible when you live life fulfilling your dreams.

Their circumnavigation of the globe is not only a physical trip over bumpy trails and paved super highways, forging streams or crossing gleaming steel bridges, it is an inner journey that lets us understand who we are in the timeless moments of our essential being. As the Italian poet, Cesare Pavese (1908-1950) said:

Traveling....forces you to trust strangers and to lose sight of all that familiar comfort of home and friends. You are constantly off balance. Nothing is yours except the essential things – air, sleep, dreams, the sea, the sky – all things tending towards the eternal or what we imagine of it.

"The forests here are much bigger than what we have in Switzerland," says Paul. His wife adds that in the Alps the tree line ends at a little over 1800 meters but here good forests survive at higher altitude.



Kullu Valley Himachal

Before the two hour interaction ended, the couple was already drawing up plans about the journey to Delhi for repairing the vehicle and obtaining visas for entering Tibet through Nepal.

Not having had enough, the two plan to drive south from Tibet passing through Southeast Asian countries, ship the vehicle into Australia, New Zealand, Japan and then to Vladivostok port in Russia before driving through the vast expanse of Siberia to reach back home in 2013.

Having been on the road for almost five years, witnessed the ravages of war, famine and genocide, Paul – the world traveler wonders, “Why do we spend so much to make deadly weapons?”



Mexico Desert Fire

Photos by *Brigitta / Paul*



Related posts:

1. [The long traffic jam from Manali to Rohtang pass](#)
2. [Scenic Spiti Valley in Himachal Under A Snow Cover](#)
3. [myHimachal Travel Forum: A Guide to Travelers](#)
4. [130 Thousand Migratory Birds Crowd Up Pong Dam Wetlands](#)
5. [Three dead in vehicle accident in Chirgaon](#)

Short URL: <http://himachal.us/?p=28579>



Posted by [Ravinder Makhaik](#) on Jun 15 2011. Filed under [Feature](#), [Globalisation](#), [Human Interest](#), [Latest News](#), [Lifestyle](#), [Nature](#), [Offbeat](#), [On The Road](#), [People](#), [Places](#), [Tourism](#), [Travel](#), [Wildlife](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#). You can leave a response or trackback to this entry

4 Comments for “Continent Travelers – Paul and Brigitta”

1. [Harbhajan Singh \(@Harbwit\)](#)

June 15, 2011 - 2:36 pm



Breathtaking journey, breathtaking article, breathtaking photos and last but not the least breathtaking presentation.

[Reply](#)

2. [Harbhajan Singh \(@Harbwit\)](#)

June 15, 2011 - 2:54 pm



Seems Paul and Brigitta were lucky in every way. May be if they were home in 2008 they too could be caught in 2008 market crash lol.

[Reply](#)

3. [Avnish Katoch](#)

June 15, 2011 - 6:32 pm



Dream!

Wish I can do so in my life!

And so well crafted story! Masterpiece!

[Reply](#)

4. [Rajneesh](#)

June 16, 2011 - 8:15 am



Wonders of travelling...Also wonder from where money comes from to meet all these expenses.... Worth investigating !

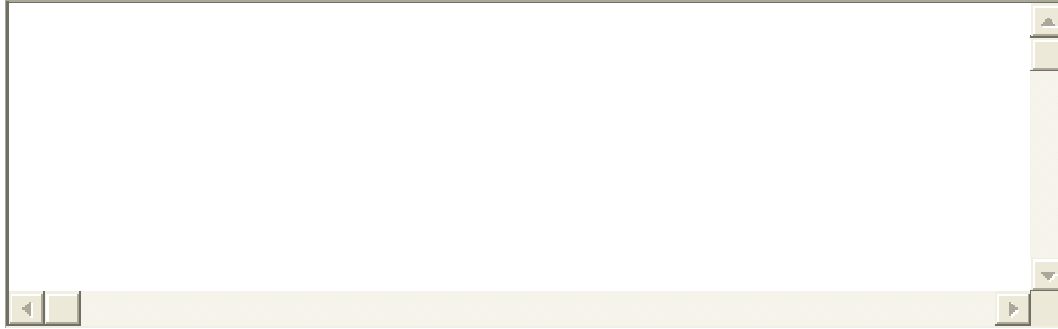
[Reply](#)

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website



Notify me of followup comments via e-mail