

Massawa, without wishing to put too fine a point on it, has seen better days. Sadly there is no shipping activity to speak of anymore and the only visible evidence of a once thriving port was a sunken tanker peering gloomily out of the murky harbor water a few hundred yards from the shoreline. We stayed at the town's finest hotel, an interesting cross between Fawly Towers and the Eagles 'Hotel California'. Exploring a little of the area as planned, and by this time desperate to refuel for our return journey on the morrow we finally encountered a gas station. It looked empty but when I tried the kiosk door it opened. The attendant rose from his floor based slumber just long enough to mutter 'go away' or words to that effect. I took this to mean that there was no gas in town. Not good, never mind the gauge was still showing 'full'. Not wishing to waste anymore petrol we decided it was high time to forage for food. We returned to our hotel to see if Basil could rustle anything up. Long story.

run out of gas. Filling the vehicle back in Asmara we discovered it was 'stone empty'. The petrol we filled up with cost more per liter than in the UK.

During the remainder of our time in Eritrea we made plans for our next Christmas adventure. Possibly Somalia... or do I mean Mauritius? Dee is talking about going back to Eritrea to follow up on some Solar Power Scheme for schools issues but I said I was working late that night. On a serious note though, like so many adventures they are inevitably so much sweeter in their retrospective telling. I salute VSO Eritrea, their hard working and caring CD, the regular staff and especially the foreign volunteers who do a fantastic and worthwhile job in difficult circumstances for no material reward without complaint. Their gifts are for life not just for Christmas. As Arnie once said 'I'll be back' (next time with breathing apparatus).

DAY SEVEN and it was up and away at dawn. We left the sea behind and headed back up the mountain and straight into the dense fog once more. If it had not been for a truck traveling ahead of us whom we were able to follow closely, itself transporting a stranded car on its ancient flatbed spine, we would probably still be parked up in Hirghigo, a small linear village half way up the hill. We broke cloud cover a very long five hours later having at last reached the plateau and marveled that we had not



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