



Merry Christmas and a great start into a happy and healthy New Year 2009 - best wishes from Tanja!!!

Gosh, it`s been a while since I have been able to drop a line to friends and family - sorry for that!!! My only excuse is that it has been a strange and hectic year (some might say every year in my life is like that, but 2008 has been exceptional)... So I want to take the chance and look back on it and fill you all in!

After a quiet Christmas 2007 with my parents in Amman /Jordan I have spent my last New Year in Baghdad. It was



more of a quiet get together than a roaring party, which was rather nice. Even the deadly fireworks in the Iraqi capital were not worth mentioning, a rather silent night.

Beginning of January we finally managed to get our guards little nephew Mohammed flown out to Germany for a heart operation. Everything went very well and he has turned from the worry of the family to their sunshine! We are all very happy about that. There are some pics on www.mohammed.eu.ki - sorry, all in German!

In February I went back to my old (and forever second) home CAPE TOWN! I took two couples, friends and colleagues from Jakarta and Amman, with me to South Africa. We started off at

Thakadu River Camp in Madikwe Game Resort, spent a night in Sun City and then took the Cape by storm!!! It was so great to see friends and family... My godson Max has grown so much and started school this year (PROUD!!!). It was very good to see and spend time with Bruces family and his son Alex.

At the good old Hout Bay Gallery (www.houtbaygallery.co.za) it was as if I had never left!!!

Some highlights in Cape Town were Celine Dion live in concert on a wine estate, Joe Cocker in the pouring rain at the Botanical Garden, our trip with Maritje and Tobie to the westcoast, taking part in the Gay Pride Parade... NO, it wasn` t my coming out Lindsay-Lohan-style, as I couldn` t help staring at the dancing, half naked guy on th e float ahead of us... But it was important for me to walk along as a sign of loyalty and tolerance.



The pic on the left shows me at the Gay Pride. The wings don` t belong to me, but to the handsome also halfnaked angel behind me. In the background the new Consulate General.

While I was in CT, I was even promoted in my job. Very unusual to have a small party with my old colleagues at the Consulate, while I didn` t even know most of the new German staff.

I also enjoyed my various sessions with different "voodoo girls " or "ghost women" (as non-tolerant friends call my new agy connections), which made me relax and find peace of mind and hopefully brought me forward on the karmic ladder ;-).

All in all, the 6 weeks in beautiful South Africa passed way too fast!!!

End of March I flew into Baghdad for the very last time. I had already been told that my next posting would be Amman - so I wouldn` t have to move house. I was pretty happy about that, but all of a sudden my landlord in Amman asked me to move out of the flat upon termination of the contract at the end of June, as he wanted to move in himself!!!!

I was pretty shocked, as my flight out of Baghdad was planned for 8th of June. It got even worse when the only reliable moving company in Amman confirmed that they could only pack my stuff on 10.-12.06. as they were busy after that!!! Great. One day at home and the movers rocking up the following day! With no place to go to.

Suddenly I started having my doubts about Amman and said to myself: if I have to pack up all my stuff anyway, I might as well get a posting in a new country. Half an hour after this thought crossed my mind, a new vacancy list was forwarded



from the head office. With COLOMBO on it. Sri Lanka, mmh, I had put this in 5th place on my initial list, so why shouldn't I apply for it...?

Beginning of June I went to Northern Iraq for a consular day. On 3.6. I called the head office and heard the happy news: COLOMBO! Sri Lanka, I'm coming!!!

I went back to Baghdad for a few days and had a some sad goodbye parties with colleagues that turned into friends over the last couple of years. It was really sad to of June for the last time, but I already we couldn't go to the airport on 9.6. either, I that the packers were already arrived there in the afternoon...



leave the compound on the morning of the 8th guessed: no flight today - SANDSTORM! As only got out of Baghdad on 10.6.. Which meant well on the way in my Amman flat, when I



When everything was packed up and loaded into containers, we moved into a temporary flat in town. Lucy, Macarena and Buster quite liked it there and were coping very well with their change of environment. Mind you, they are pretty used to it by now and know the procedure by heart.



In June I took my first trip to my new home, Colombo, to look for a house. Wow, everything was soooooo green!!! The tropical heat nearly pushed me over upon arrival. All colleagues are really nice and friendly, great fun at work.



My first impressions were extremely positive. The former British, Dutch and Portugese Colony is a wild mix of Asia and Europe. On my third day house hunting I finally found my dream home. Huge garden (PARK!!! Wonderful for the doggies, that had to be walked on a leash all the time in Amman), pool (especially for my dad), and a nice and cosy house for me. Well, not too small, actually. 5 rooms, 4 bathrooms, but a bit older and not as big as most other colonial mansions that were shown to me. The neighbours are my landlord and



landlady and really friendly.

I quickly bought my new Hyundai Tucson (golden or Chardonnay, as they call the colour) from a leaving colleague and off I went back to Amman. Unfortunately my plane was broken and I had to stop for a night in Dubai - Sri Lankan Airways will certainly not become my favourite airline with all the trouble I had to go through...

Before moving to "the pearl of the Indian ocean" for good, I was able to spend 10 days with my family in Germany.

Then I had to say goodbye to Amman and Jordan as well. Especially hard for me was leaving all my friends and animal friends at the Humane Center for Animal Welfare (www.hcaw-jordan.org). For me, this organisation around Margaret and them was the one most worthy of support in Jordan. I had spent a lot of time and loved helping out there. Waving goodbye cost me a few tears!

With my three babies I took a direct flight at the end of July to Colombo. The arrival and even getting the dogs out at the airport as well as the transportation to the house worked out fine. The landlady Ruvani had filled up the fridge and prepared a bed for me... Great!

A few days later I already had to go off to work and was happy that only a week later the pensioner-moving-squad (my parents!) arrived to give me a hand with the move.

They stayed for 2,5 months and it was so great to have them help me with the movers, handymen and getting to know my way around in the beginning. My lovely colleagues also welcomed them with open arms, so we were invited out a lot and spent a bit of time exploring the island as well. We went with them to a National park with lots and lots of wild elephants which was great! Also, we drove down south to some lovely beaches and enjoyed the relaxing lazy life by the Indian ocean... Our other favourite hobbies turned out to be eating out and SHOPPING!!! A lot of clothes in the Western shops like C&A, GAP, Tommy Hilfiger, Polo, Lands End and so on are being produced in Sri Lanka. Excess production ends up in the local shops CHEAP-CHEAP!!! We loved it...





My dad suffered quite a bit from the high humidity and is unsure if he should come around again. But in the months of Jan/Feb it's supposed to get better, we'll see! But one really has to get used to the frequent sweating and the swing of the ceiling fans at night...

The traffic I already find pretty manageable. Driving on the left hand side with Tuk-Tuks and cows is slightly stressful though.



Meanwhile we have trained the new good spirit of the household Shanti as well as gardener Nimal. The team at home has been completed with Shanti's husband Raj and old Henry as night guards. It is not that dangerous crimewise, but I feel better, if someone is in the house all the time.



One reason: there are so many wild animals in the garden, that could harm the dogs - especially little Buster! He could easily turn into a morning snack for the 2,5 m Monitor, that I chased out of the garden during the first days... I have put up a big fence at the end of the garden. Since then, I have only seen land monitors (only about 1,2 m). Well, sometimes two at a time though. There has been a long green snake (2m, harmless one, the gardener said) and Buster and Lucy chased a large monkey away. I also have striped squirrel thingmees, parrots and flying foxes in the garden. The flying foxes are soooooo cool, as they fly with their 1,2 m wingspan through the evening skies... Like little vampires. I love them!

After 4 months, the house is now ready to live in. The curtains are up (thanks, Mum!!!), paintings, too. Everything looks absolutely stunning with lots of colour and I feel really at home. Fortunately, we don't see much of the civil war, that is still rocking the north of the island. Colombo is rather quiet with the occasional bomb in the market area Pettah (where we don't go) and on public transport (which we don't use). There is a lot of military presence in town though. But coming from Baghdad, I hardly notice.

In October Colombo turned into a Bavarian dream. The Hilton hotel had flown in a real German Humpa-Band from Munich and spoiled us all with German food, Brezn, Weißwurst and so on for 12 days!!! Really cool! Unfortunately, I twisted my knee playing air guitar on the table.... Hey, real injury Tanja style :-))))!!!



At present I am already back on holiday in Germany. Brrrr. Icecold here. I miss Sri Lanka!

Highlight of the holiday was the christening of my third godchild Jorge Lennart on 30.11.08. I am very proud of him and send my congrats to the whole family!!!



Now we are busy renovating the hall way at my parents house. It's been 25 years, so it desperately needs a new look. This is my brother Toby and his girlfriend Anke's X-mas present for the folks.

Middle of December I am off to Berlin to get my vaccinations and participate in a couple of IT-courses. Although it's only for a few days, it'll be great to meet up with friends and colleagues. Anke is coming along and we are going to see Mamma Mia, the ABBA musical, in German as well.

After this trip I will be spending a harmonious family Christmas at home in Schönberg. Raclette, Toby and Anke, Mum and Dad - I know it will be fun! End of December I will return to Sri Lanka, where my doggies will already be awaiting me.

No idea, where I will be spending the New Year celebrations. Maybe I should go to bed early... On the other hand, after such a hectic but MARVELLOUS year 2008 I should really see it off in style!!! I really am so happy that it brought me a wonderful new posting, great colleagues and a beautiful house, where I will easily be able to spend the following 4 years with lots of fun and happiness!

I thoroughly hope, that the year 2009 will be a great one for us all and wish you and your family a peaceful Christmas, a spectacular New Year celebration and all the best for 2009, especially health and love!!!

Hugs, Tanja

