



The Haasnoots on Safari

Prayer letter # 5

December 1996

'God be with you 'til we meet again!' These words of a song that we sang in our commissioning service became very real at the moment we had to say goodbye to friends and family. Africa, here we come! Our first destination was Nairobi, Kenya. Here started our 'Kenya Safari', an orientation course for Eastern Africa. In this prayer letter we look back on that course and tell you about our experiences.

Why...?

Our Safari (Swahili for 'journey') started on a camp site at Lake Naivasha. The first day already, the question was asked: why an orientation course for 11 weeks? And also: why camping? To be honest, these questions were also in our minds. The answer of the Safari director was clear: it takes us at least 11 weeks to teach you Westerners to slow down (this is Africa!) and to live more simple (that's why the tents)! And it's true, we have learned to be patient and to do more with fewer things.

Hippos

The Safari group this year was quite big. We counted almost 90 people! You can imagine it was quite an operation to move from one place to another with so many people. Although the group was big, we made good friends during Safari. Also our boys, Joel and Jesse, enjoyed themselves with the other kids. Especially Jesse had the time of his life with his new found girlfriend Jillian from the United States. Unfortunately Jillian is heading for Tanzania, so the only way to exchange stickers now is through the mail. During our Safari we saw a lot of animals. In Naivasha the hippos kept us awake at night and we saw a lot of zebras and giraffes along the road! Sometimes we felt like we were being part of a documentary about wild life!

Maasai

After ten days we left Naivasha and went to a remote place in Maasai land near a village called El'engata Enterite, which means: 'place of dust'. The Maasai are one of the people groups in Kenya. We camped along a small river and under fig trees. In those trees were a lot of baboons which dropped figs and other things on our tents and sometimes on our

heads! We cooked on an open fire and fetched water from the river. Each morning we had lectures about Eastern African cultures and we studied Swahili. It was very interesting to learn more about the Maasai and their culture. For a long time the Maasai resisted the Gospel, mainly because they did not like the 'Western wrapping' it came in. Now you can find Maasai Christians that try to shape Christianity within their own traditions. Mirjam attended a 'name giving ceremony' which was quite interesting. A Maasai baby gets its name one year after its birth. The baby girl

African hospitality, in our opinion, is beyond normal! Listen to this! On a Friday afternoon a tractor with two drivers broke down just before the house of our host family. The tractor was parked in the garden and one of the men went to get help. That man did not return before... Monday afternoon! All that time the other man had 'residence with full board' in the house of our hosts. So on Monday the help came but because the problem could not be resolved then, both of the men stayed with our host family. Eventually the tractor was fixed on Friday - a week later! To our hosts this event was not so special but we don't see this happen in Holland!

of this Christian family was called Hannah, after the mother of Samuel. Hannah's prayer was read and the baby was blessed. After that it was time for a big celebration with a meal, singing and dancing.

Doctor & Car Mechanic

Besides the lectures, we also had some practical training. One time a doctor came by to show us how to give an injection (we were allowed to practise on a banana!) and a car mechanic told

us a lot about cars. We found out that fixing the tube of a car tyre is much more difficult than fixing a simple bicycle tube! We also learned how to cook on an open fire and how to prepare some African vegetables.

African family

The last 3 weeks of the course we stayed with an African family in the highlands of Kenya. Our host was a pastor of eight churches in a huge area. This time with his family was the best of the whole Safari and it was a great learning experience. The pastor took us out to families and schools, and everywhere people expect you to speak. Can you imagine introducing yourself for the 25th time! Joel and Jesse enjoyed themselves a lot with the children of our host family and with the animals on their compound.

Joel, Jesse & Ernie

As we have said before, our boys did well on Safari. As we think about all the transitions they have gone through in the last period, that is something to be thankful for! For Jesse it was

often hard to understand what was going on (Where is our tent now? Where is our own

house? When do I see Grandma again?) but he did a good job! On travel days, his puppet Ernie (of Sesame street) was very important. He seemed to think: I don't know where you are taking me this time, but at least I have Ernie with me! Joel was home schooled during Safari - which was not always a success. But in which school do you have baboons above your head and Maasai people walking through the class? In Addis Ababa Joel will

go to a 'normal' school again, Bingham Academy.

Ethiopia

One day after Safari we received our entry visa for Ethiopia. This was really an answer to prayer! A week later we flew to Addis Ababa and that is where we are now. We are staying in a house of colleagues who are on furlough until we find a suitable house to rent. In January we will start our Amharic studies in language school.

Praise that:

- the Safari course was a good experience for us.
- we received our visa immediately after Safari.

Pray that:

- we soon would feel at home in Addis Ababa.
- Joel will enjoy his new school and will find new friends.

Warm greetings, Mirjam, Jaap, Joel & Jesse Haasnoot

A note about our heading. For Dutch readers this heading is quite clear (we hope) but for others it needs some explanation. The first part of our name Haasnoot (haas) means in Dutch: hare. So that's why you see four hares (rabbits are really different!) in the heading. The second part you can probably guess: 'noot' means - yes, that's it - a music note (or - for your interest - it can also be a nut, you have to know the context). So that's why these happy hares are singing!