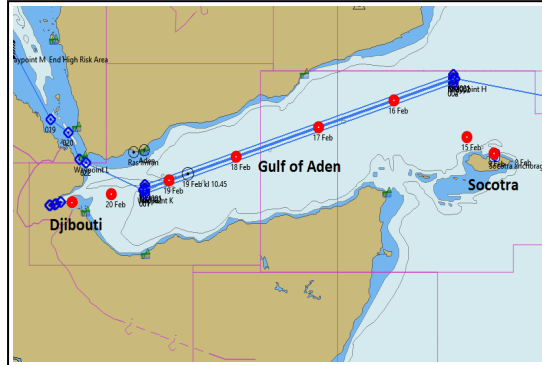




## 4. Djibouti 2020



by Johan Kjellander 2020



The advice from the military forces responsible for the security in the Gulf of Aden is that sailing yachts should follow the commercial shipping lane with lanterns and AIS turned on. This meant that when we left Socotra we first took a north westerly route to join the shipping corridor and then followed it, in the middle, where there was no commercial traffic. The red dots are our daily positions.

We sailed in the middle of the corridor for 3 days and then left it to continue to Djibouti where we arrived on the 21:st of February. 680 NM from Socotra.

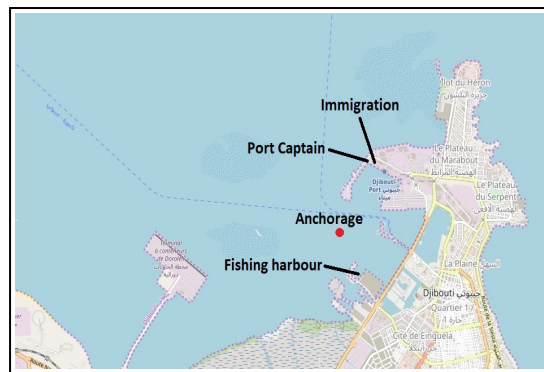


Foto: Andrei Aliakhnovich

And just like so many times before, we had visitors at night time. Not pirates, but Andrei caught a few visitors with his camera and I have tried to figure out what species it could be. Maybe Black Noddy?



There were many boats in the harbour when we arrived but only a few sailing yachts. This traditional wooden cargo ship was our closest neighbour. We saw the same type of boats on Socotra. Still going strong!

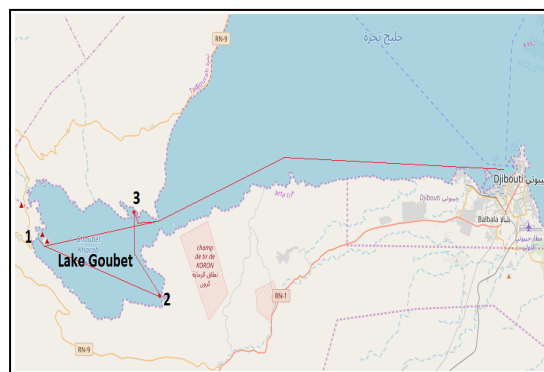


The anchorage in Djibouti has good holding and is well protected from wind and sea. The rest of the services offered by the harbour are not so good but the city has good shops and a western style mall close to the harbour. We were soon approached by an "Agent", Mohammed Ali, who offered his services. He would pick us up in his boat and take us to the nearby fishing harbour where he had his car and could then take us to any place in the city we wanted. This sounded good, compared to the alternative which is much more complicated. More on that later.

First he took us to the Immigration office where we got a 30 day visa for 30 USD each, plus had to pay 20 USD to the immigration officer and 20 USD to his friend. He called it a souvenir. Then he called for the "quarantine officer" who came aboard dressed in protective clothing, gloves and facemask. He charged us 50USD (after tough negotiation) for not having proof of Yellow fever vaccination for all crew members.



For three days Mohamed Ali was very helpful and we got SIM-cards, lots of shopping (including beer and wine) and a cruising permit to make it possible to see more of the country. We had read about "Lake Ghoubet" and wanted to cruise there for a few days. After our trip to Lake Ghoubet we would come back to Djibouti harbour and he would then help us with laundry, water and diesel. The price for his services was 350 USD. Much money but I have seen worse and it included everything for one week except for the diesel and the visa. Good so far, but now we wanted to see Lake Ghoubet.



Lake Ghoubet or Ghoubbet al-Kharab in arabic (Gulf of the Demons), has a narrow entrance with strong tidal currents but once you'r in, the sea is calmer. Surrounded by old volcanoes and 200 meters deep this "lake" has an unusual fauna that has attracted scientists for a long time. Jacques Costeaux, for example, was here in the 50:s to watch Whale Sharks but he found more....





In Lake Ghoubet, close to Devils Island, Cousteau discovered a terrible maritime creature and insisted it never be revealed to humanity. Since then, locals and visitors have been telling frightful stories about the Island of the Devil. Locals say that the bay is occupied by the “Sheytan”, the devil, and that it is a forbidden place to go, especially during sunsets or at night.

Unfortunately we could not find a comfortable anchorage anywhere near Devils Island. The easterly sea breeze blew with 20+ knots and the swell found it's way around everywhere. Maybe Sheytan didn't like us. So, we left the island and motored across the lake to Fare du Ghoubet, number 2 on the map image.



Here we found a calm and very beautiful place to stop for the night. High volcanic mountains around us, calm clear water and coral below.



The sea was full of fish that jumped high up into the air.



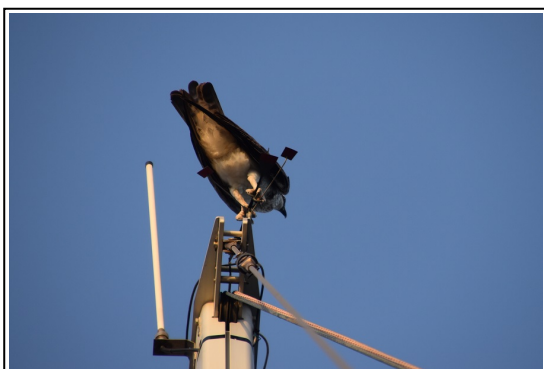
Foto: Andrei Aliakhnovich

And on one of the hills around us Andrei found this wreck of a small airplane that crashed more than 20 years ago, also mentioned on page 84-85

in the Red Sea Pilot, ISBN 0 85288 554 7.



Next day we moved to Baie de l'Etoile, number 3 on the map. Protected from swell but more windy than Fare du Ghoubet. Here I found a whole beach covered with the remains of dead old trees. Made a beautiful impression. Like a grave yard.



As I came back to the boat with the dinghy I saw an unusually big bird sitting in the top of our mast. Some kind of eagle. We saw many of them flying around but this one wanted a rest and had found a high place with a good view over his fishing grounds. Next day when we left Baie de l'Etoile we discovered that our wind instrument had stopped working. A detailed inspection showed that the wind vane was missing, probably broken off by the eagle while trying to sit on it.



Our last sundown in Lake Ghoubet was calm and beautiful. I have never seen the sun produce such "rays" before. Also on the picture you see our Moon and planet Venus side by side in the red circle.

After three days we returned to Djibouti city and called Mohamed Ali to make plans for diesel, water, laundry and check out. We wanted to leave as soon as possible because the winds would now be favourable to enter the Red Sea. He said he would pick us up at ten o'clock, next morning. And that was the last we heard from him. We never saw him again. Word said that he had a conflict with the fishing harbour and was not allowed to use it anymore. I now had to reorganize everything that needed to be done. This would take more time and money.

First thing I did was to take the dinghy into the harbour and look up Mr. Aden, the port captain. I explained the problem to him and he advised me to get water myself from Zam-Zam water company. I went there with a taxi and met the manager who promised to deliver water the next day. Back in the boat I managed to get hold of a new agent who delivered diesel the same day to a cost of 2 USD/liter!

The next day we would get water from Zam-Zam and then check out and be on our way to the Red Sea, we hoped, but no. Zam-Zam never showed up and did not answer the telephone. So, a new visit to the Port Captain and he then offered us 800 liters of water good for washing but not for drinking. We could buy mineral water in plastic bottles from the shop in the harbour.

Said and done, the next morning we took 800 liters of his bad water and bought 75 liters of expensive mineral water in the shop. Then we paid for our anchorage and checked out with Immigration. Finally free to leave Djibouti.

I think we were lucky to get help from the Port Captain. Our agent Muhamed Ali and Zam-Zam water company were not to trust and cost us a lot of extra time and money. And the laundry we had to do on board in bad quality water.



## End of Djibouti 2020

