

Hi- I'm sending you the reportage I did for Nick! Aug.2015
Love Jan xxx



Gambia is a tiny narrow country in the middle of Senegal and runs inland from the capital, Banjul, for more than 300km along the river Gambia. It's extremely poor, with a gdp (pil) of about € 350. Population is 1.8million and most of them are kids! They're swarming everywhere screaming 'tubab' at us- it's their name for us whiteys. The 'president' is Yahya Jammeh, who came to power in 1994 in a military coup. He's now been re-elected twice in very dubious democratic elections. The country has become even poorer during his 20 years whilst his personal wealth has prospered beyond all bounds. He carries his Koran with him at all times and has a reputation for frequenting call girls and hot sex parties. (Sounds familiar-apart from the koran ?!) Right now he's trying to



reintroduce the death penalty and plans to hold a referendum later this year. Elections are due next year and he's also planning to introduce a \$25000 fee for any presidential candidates wishing to run in the next election. That's 10000 times the current fee! Whew.

Some democracy. If you look him up, you'll find out some of his latest horrors. Unfortunately the people are undereducated and with him in power are likely to remain that way. Lots of people we meet are fed up with him, but in many small far away villages he can do no wrong. He gives the school some money for a party and they all love him. That was in Kuntaur, a village we visited.



Another village, Bintang, is very close to the President's own village and has a tarmac road...unheard of in Gambia. The main Street is dust and the road leading out of the village is tarmac. The windmill to pump the water up to the tower reservoir was an Italian project from the 90's and amazingly it's still working, the health centre organised by the Swedes, the Allotments for women growing vegetables donated and set up by the Spanish....

That's just an example in one village. Apparently the UK and The US are the biggest donators It's like that all over The Gambia, but unfortunately a lot of the projects have been abandoned once the organisers/ donators leave.

The biggest industry used to be agriculture, (especially peanuts) which 20 yrs ago accounted for more than 70% of the pil. Now it's 22% and dropping. Tourism had become the biggest income by 2013, at 65%. Now we see all the machinery for the peanuts and empty warehouses along the river rusting and rotting. Tourism slumped last year with the Ebola scare, even though there's no Ebola in Gambia.



We could well be one of the last sailboats to sail so far up the river as they are building a bridge which will be too low for us to go under. As it is, we made it as far as Janjanbureh where there's an electrical cable a bit too low. We probably could have made it by staying at the side, but didn't want to risk it!

The majority of the population are Muslim, with the main ethnic groups being mandinka, Fula and Wolof, who all

have their own languages. The official language is English so many people speak quite well. I haven't quite understood if they can understand each other's languages but I think not. They have

a set of mixed language greetings that they all understand. If you can manage to learn a few of these, you'll get a really warm reception, the problem being that they then they carry on talking....

We went birdwatching in Janjanbureh and again in Bintang. I think we've seen about 50 different species of multicoloured birds, quite amazing!
I have become quite a bird freak.



Spur winged plover



Abyssinian roller



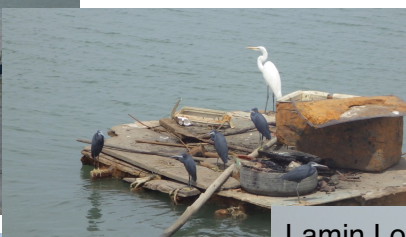
Ibis

Peanuts!

The market or 'Loma' in Wassu



Banjul



Lamin Lodge



Boraba village kora player



