

Our Performance

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Frontier Europe and Asia, 7.2015



Fun in Ufa,
Russia,
7.2015
Teo gets
them all

The full presentation is 102 pages long, probably 2 h reading time. It is almost an e-book on „**Travel Quality**“.

It is the travel know-how that I accumulated over 24 years of traveling. The last 12 years together with my partner Teo, after he got his German passport.

It is the know-how that we wish we would have had at the beginning of our travel career. It would have saved us time, much more than the reading time.

But if you don't want to spend this reading time, go to the „**Summary**“, p. 94 only 7 pages.

The most important page is p. 96, the **criteria of travel management** to achieve top travel quality.

Teo and I are travel partners. He is the doctor, I am the organizer. We are very different but complement each other, a successful blend, a bit like Yin and Yang. We are one of the two couples among the extreme travelers.

Frank Wigand Grosse-Oetringhaus, born 1942, raised near Cologne and in Hamburg, studied in Berlin, PhD near Frankfurt, corporate consultant in Siemens from 1972 till 2001, trainer of the top management in strategy and corporate development, he wrote the Management System of SIEMENS in 1992, associate professor for 18 years at the University of St. Gallen, CH as a side job and other teaching assignments in strategy in Germany and the USA.

Frank cares about the planning and organization and optimizing. He is responsive to all comments you might have. But it can take time due to the traveling. Altogether he has traveled for 24 years. See his biography in „The best travelled.com“

2006 Frank became a registered partner of **Teodoro Murallon**, born 1949 in the Philippines, Doctor of Medicine in Cebu, Anaesthesiology training in Germany, private practise in the Philippines, nurse in New York and Germany, private nurse of Frank's mother till she died.

After retirement in 2001 they dedicated their life to traveling. They traveled almost non-stop from 2006-2016 and proved that it is possible to see almost 5.000 highlights in 10 years. For them quality comes first, quantity is second. In quality they want to belong to the top 10, but they want to excel in quality.

Now they slowed down, they live for 3-4 months in Berlin and 3-4 months in Phuket, Thailand and travel for 4-6 months.

Teo shares the travel experiences on Facebook. He cares about the social contacts, thus he is loved by everybody. Here only 5 out of so many comments:

„the best well loved world traveler, God bless you always“, Geronimo Bulos, N. Y.

„May your legs continue to carry you on great adventures across enchanting lands that most of us can only dream about“, Rolando Passignajen, Las Vegas

„A special person who's been an inspiration to many and who willingly shared God's given blessings to family and friends“, Rosalie Roa, Manila

„you and uncle Frank brought the whole world in front of us in the comfort of our homes“, Maria Charito, Calgary

„next time you will be not in the world anymore, but out there in the galaxies“, Jordon Laguna, Illinois



Our favourite spot in Phuket: Promthep Cape. Nearby we have a house, the center of our nomadic life, for Teo it is Berlin and Mindanao as well.

We present a travel concept that we call “Travel Quality” (TQ). Quality may mean something different for every person, but there are reasons which make more sense than others.

- In 2014 we criticized the travel clubs for showing members in top positions who are obviously only aiming for points without having experienced regions in a meaningful way. Our point: Travel performances are measured in the wrong way. Clubs measured the number of countries (either UN or TCC countries) or later the number of regions, that is subunits of countries with a more or less clear logic. The main point was, the clubs were aiming at quantity instead of quality.
- Harry Mitsidis told me: “Your criticism is well taken, but I don’t have an answer for it.” Now things have changed, he tries to address the aspect of quality with the TBT Series, listings of 18.359 sites in different categories.
- How do you measure and compare “quality”? Can you objectify it or is it only subjective? For some travelers backpacking or hitchhiking are low quality, for others it is the best form to immerse into a country. Some travelers go for nature, others for culture, others for people.



Just for a record?
North Pole, 9.2006



Or for commemoration?
Mission San Ignacio, Brazil, 12.2013:

Our travels aim since decades for quality. We are not only traveling extremely, we are striving **for the best concept**. It is not only to go from A to B it is about understanding **why** we do this.

Our presentation doesn’t want to be an egocentric view of our travels, which we can see often in the Internet following the motto “Kilroy was here”, every sentence starts with “I”, an orgy of egocentrism, “Look where I have been”, a show of graphics with many pictures.

But where is the “why”? Just points? Nobody really can be convinced by that.

There is something new at the horizon: The community of extreme travelers starts to change. **More and more are now dealing with quality issues. A new trend.**

Why this Presentation? – Our Aspiration

We want to **explain a travel concept** not to show our travels. If we show aspects of our travels they only illustrate, show examples for the guidelines of our concept. The examples will only prove the feasibility. We aim at explanation, discussion and possibly objection.

We want to **share** our concept and to stimulate criticism in order to learn and to improve. Our contribution is a profound systematic, a lot of research and a lot of travel experiences. One aspect is for us most important: We want fellow travelers to inspire to go for the extremes. This needs power. Its source is an attitude: Passion for the beauty of the planet. A positive attitude. This will lead to joy of traveling.

We are dealing with **records** as well - top performances in traveling and ways to achieve top performances. We don't say that we have the best concept. We only say that we are **striving for the best one**. We put **highest demands** on our concept. To discuss it among the top travelers we have launched a new website: worldsextremetravelers.com. This is more about the quantitative aspects. In quantity we only want to be among the top 10. But **in quality we want to excel**. If you want to discuss the best in quality you have to be in the top group of quantity otherwise nobody will listen.

So we have to explain, how we have determined our position, by what criteria. We will justify our leading position. This is no simple linear measurement but an evaluation of several positions and perspectives. An overview of all the perspectives you will find in the summary. But to illustrate all these different perspectives together with all the examples we think we need 102 pages.

In the core it seems to be simple: We measure the **number of visited highlights**. But the master list of 5.000 highlights is not yet published, thus it is not commonly acknowledged, we only can explain the concept, the **"system of travel quality"** with its 50 criteria. You will find it on p. 95, but we will develop that system step by step.



A landscape for movie sets, Tongariro, NZ, 11.2014

We will clarify that travel quality cannot be captured by one dimension. It has many dimensions. Thus we need 102 pages. You can condense it into two words: Intensity and Uniqueness. But very abstract. We do compress the concept in the summary but we want to illustrate the **diversity of travel** and to make the different dimensions vivid. **Diversity will lead to quality.**

Who travels better? Three models:

- 1) Queen Elizabeth II who traveled by jet or yacht in utmost luxury around the world and stayed in the best hotels? – or
- 2) Heinz Stücker, who cycled 52 years around the world, with no money, fighting daily for survival, saving every penny to pay the entrance fees, struggling for an overnight but getting a lot of support by locals, selling skillfully his story and - at the end - coming home with empty hands, but rich in memories? – or
- 3) Mr. Finn, who has the most miles and the most Concorde tickets from the first to the last, who is titled by the Guinness Book as the “most travelled”. Unbelievable: There is somebody who sits constantly in an aircraft and there are people indeed who call this traveling! For us a record in inefficiency if you measure miles traveled per travel objective.

There is no way to **reduce travel quality to simple formulas.**

It starts with the **selection of travel objectives.** How careful you select the travel objectives determines the travel quality. The TBT Series want to capture quality by adding one list to the other, museums, festivals, airlines... now 9, but more and longer. Not adding but selecting will lead to quality. We pursue only one list: 5.000 Highlights. Simple? No, because the term “highlight” is complex.

We will substantiate the **essentials of travel quality (TQ):**

1. TQ results from a **careful selection** of your travel objectives.
2. TQ needs a **holistic perspective** of life. It cannot be achieved in a single-sided way of life in which traveling is the only content.
3. TQ stems from a **diversity** of travel experiences, it is not achieved in one travel style, it is multi-stylistic.
4. TQ needs a **concept**, it cannot be achieved incidentally.
5. TQ is based on a **curiosity and a positive attitude** for experiencing the stupendous beauty of our planet, it cannot be achieved without **passion.**





Frank W. Grosse-Oetringhaus: Best traveled based on highlights

"...your travel quality is unique worldwide.",
Harry Mitsidis, Founder of "The Best travelled" (TBT), Athens

"...you are the best in quality travel...",
Valentin Sazhin, TBT and Owner of Lodestar, New York

"Frank & Teo have achieved the highest standards in quality travelling."
William S. Baekeland, London and Dublin

Quality scores

May 2017

- **No. 1 in Highlights: 90% of 5.000 places**
- **No. 1 in UNESCO World Heritage Sites: 940 out of 1.052 sites** (acc. to TBT)
- **Nr. 1 in the UNESCO Tentative List: 558 out of 1.707**
- **23 projects of helping organizations to get on the Tentative List of the UNESCO**

Quantity scores

- **No. 1 in the cross-comparison of all 9 lists:**
TBT Series accum, ISO, UNESCO Tentative, TBT, Globetrotters, World Heritage List, MTP, TCC, UN+ *)
- **No. 1 in the club „The Best Travelled“** (June 2015): Currently No. 4: **1.067 out of 1.281 regions**
- **All 193 UN-countries** (almost all thoroughly and North and South Pole)

The travel clubs: TBT: The Best Travelled,
MTP: Most Traveled People, TCC: Travelers' Century Club

*) for definition see „worldsextremetravellers.com“; for verification see „thebesttravelled.com“
and TBT series. Note differences in updating and the concept of regions vs. highlights



Teodoro Murallon: Top traveler based on highlights

“Frank and Teo have achieved the highest standards in quality travelling.” William S. Baekeland, Dublin

„the best well loved world traveler“, Rosemarie G. Bulos, New York

Quality scores:

- **No. 2 in Highlights: 4.046 of 5.000 places**
- **No. 2 in World Heritage Sites: 756 out of 1.052**

Quantity scores:

- **No. 16 in the cross-comparison of all 9 lists: TBTS, ISO, UTL, TBT, WGG, WHS, MTP, TCC, UN+ *)**
- **No. 22 in the club „The Best Travelled“: 888 out of 1.281 regions**
- **167 UN-countries** (and South Pole)

Teo cannot be a „second best traveler“ because his quantitative base is not sufficient for this position. Both our positions do not take our positions in our own list (5.000 highlights) into account since this is not published. For the time being Teo has not evaluated the „UNESCO Tentative List“ yet, for time reasons. But in this list he is a candidate for a No. 2. *) see worldsextremetravelers.com



Sharing Ideas with the Best

- We pursue the development of “travel quality based on highlights” for about 40 years.
- But the idea to take it to the extreme surfaced after we contacted an extreme traveler: **Babis Bizas**. We met for the first time during a trip to Wrangel Island in Aug. 2012. He has been observing our traveling almost weekly for 5 years.
- We contacted an illustrious group from the **Travel Clubs** to get a wider perspective.
- We – my partner Teodoro Murallon and I - report almost daily in **Facebook**. Search on Facebook for “Teodoro Murallon”. From here we get a wide range of suggestions.
- During our sometimes extreme travels we met many very interesting people - **people with the same passion** – an invaluable source of information.

For athletes it is normal to go for the No. 1. For traveling it is unusual. But if traveling becomes an essential part of your life it is understandable. It is fulfilling to measure your achievements. Especially if you go for a somewhat vague objective like "to see the whole world". I have developed a huge data base for only one purpose: To measure if I have achieved my goal seeing the whole world. This was the core idea of my 5000 highlights list. The idea of ranking came when I entered a travel club in 2014.

The problem starts if you state: "I am the best" - the danger of becoming a narcissist, an extremely egocentric person who lives in his own world. But if you try to be objective and ground your claim on widely acknowledged criteria you are not a narcissist, you like competition and you measure achievements. Nothing is wrong with that.



Galapagos, Espagnola, 1.2014

For a competitive claim the criteria must be clear and **widely acknowledged** and you must be objective and fair. If you measure your traveling in regions like MTP the criterion is clear: That one is "the most", who comes closest to 875. But this is not widely acknowledged. That was the reason Harry founded TBT. Some people go for even lesser acknowledged criteria: Special territories, remote, difficult to access like Ashmore & Cartier, Clipperton, Chagos, Paracel, Spratly, Balleny, Scott. So not only one but several people approach the Guinness Book to get the title "The Most traveled man in the world". The base for this claim "the most" or to have been "everywhere" is very small, only 875! And some of them cross only borders and shorelines. Is this objective or is it egocentric? We base our ranking on about 28000 sites, 9 lists, all we have got. And we get verified in TBT.

We are not saying "we are the best", we specify the criterion: "We are the best in quality - based on highlights". We want to differentiate from those who go for quantitative measures like countries, territories, regions, provinces. It is not enough for a "best traveler" only to cross shorelines and borders. You need a **concept for traveling** to answer the question why you travel. In Galapagos it is so clear: A mega highlight, the cradle of Darwin's Theory of Evolution. But for the majority of travel objectives it is not so clear. The travel concept specifies your criteria.

This presentation makes a travel concept transparent. Our **core criterion is the number of highlights** but it comes together with a **system of 50 sub criteria**. We specify our claim "the best based on highlights" on our highlight list of 5000 sites. But: This highlight list is only an add-on. We use the 9 most well-known lists as the base for our claim, the largest base in the world. We think that this is a very solid ground.

Ranking and Traveling as a Life Objective 12

In 2015 I had been the No. 1 in TBT, by now 3 travelers are ahead of me. All of them traveled all their life, I only have 24 years in total. My question: Are they better? Some more borders, double the time?

Travel Quality requires that traveling becomes an **essential part of your life**, it requires an intensity and broad spectrum that cannot be achieved by holiday traveling.

But if it is the only part of your life, you live one-sided.

A successful life should pursue **at least three objectives**: (1) love, (2) help and (3) knowledge (here acquiring knowledge by sight-seeing). This follows the Maslow pyramid of needs: Basic needs (loving), social needs (helping), ego-needs (sight-seeing).

Traveling should not be at the expense of the other two. It should come out of a full life, not a one-sided life model: Only traveling.



Therefore we go for a number of travel objectives – 5000 - which is feasible in 10 years, we go for a concept within a full life, after you have loved, helped others and now after you retired you go for a new challenge.

Quality traveling is embedded in a full life approach. But I admit, that is debatable. But if you only travel: Whom will you love? Sex on the way? Whom will you help? Spend some money here and there? No, we are talking about a life dedicated to love and help and not only dedicated to travel.

I ask: Those who only traveled throughout their lives, haven't they been very egocentric? Could it be that they traveled as a flight from themselves? That for us is not quality traveling.

The all-the-life travelers move around on a small budget if they have not inherited, always worrying about the transport. The transport possibility determines their schedule not the objective. If the bus doesn't stop, they miss it. When they talk it is about difficulties, accidents, border-crossing, fund raising, see p. 23. We leave a great deal of the logistics to agents. We concentrate on beauty. A very different focus. We see more in less time.

Harry Mitsidis, Founder, www.thebesttravelled.com

„You belong to the „crème de la crème“ in travelling. You are a true travel guru. It is an honour to compete with you on the quantity of regions; of course I cannot compete in quality, your travel quality is unique worldwide.“

Valentin Sazhin, founder and owner of „Lodestar, International Tours, Brooklyn, NY“, member of the committee of „The Best Travelled“

„Congratulations, your website is great, you explain clearly that you are the best in quality travel, your achievements are impressive.“

„I had the chance to organize 3 tours, 120 days in the most difficult areas of Africa. I have experienced how thoroughly and systematically you travel. Congratulations for completing an enormous task and traveling with such an extensive itinerary. You are making history, indeed.“

Thomas Büchler, Switzerland, official verifier of „The Best Travelled“ Club

„I checked your countries and your regions on a cruise to Bouvet that we undertook together. It was a pleasure to work with you. In four days of testing, I ascertained how thoroughly you travel and how well and systematic you document. Your „Access“ data base is stupendous, your diaries are characterized by amazing exactness in facts. You certainly belong to the very elite of world travellers!“



Harry
Tristan
da Cunha,
13.4.15



Valentin,
Ushuaia,
24.3.15



Thomas,
Gough,
12.4.15

Evaluations of Travel Entrepreneurs

14

1.2. Ranking:

William Baekeland, Ireland, Director of the forthcoming project "Circumnavigation in the Southern Ocean". 2017 leading the XL List of weird places in the TBT and the list of museums. The best traveled person at his age, 24. Not so far from now he will surpass me if he keeps his momentum and changes his focus, he is the rising mega star in traveling.

"Frank and Teo presently set the highest benchmark in quality travelling. Their website goes a long way to explaining, coherently, the concept of "Travel Quality". It is something to be striven for if one has the goal to see the world in its entirety - objectively and comprehensively - of this, there is no doubt. Frank and Teo have achieved the highest standards in travel."

Isaac Molina, Travel Researcher, Mar del Plata, Argentina,

"Sharing of travel ideas is part of your concept and you really do it. Our discussion on various topics of your website, your thorough response and the integration of fresh ideas with regard to evaluations, costs, Wake and Midway showed me that you really share and interact. This style indicates how thoroughly you travel. Therefore I believe that you are the best quality traveler in the world. I have done a lot of research, but I have never found a better concept on travel quality."

"People should know about your quality travels, because your systematic way of traveling is an example for everybody. In the travel clubs many people, unfortunately, are tickers, that is, they only travel to get one more point in those lists. But you are teaching us the correct way to travel. My admiration."

Lissy Xu, Director, China Highlights, Guilin, China

"We had the privilege to organize Frank's last 3 travels to China in 2007, 2012, and 2016. With us he reached his goals - to see all provinces and all the World Heritage Sites in China. No one has traveled to China so wide and thoroughly according to my experience. In quality travelling throughout China he sets the benchmark. His great passion for China and meticulousness to detail deeply moved and inspired our team. He is a lead customer for our company."

Robyn and Patrick Woodhead, Owner and Founder of White Desert, UK and RSA. **Patrick**: First East to West Traverse of Antarctica World Record Holder Youngest and Fastest Team to reach the South Pole, **Robyn**: First South African woman to reach both North and South Poles. **Both**: Fellows of the Royal Geographic Society

"It was an honour to have such well travelled people as Frank and Teo at White Desert Camp in Antarctica. From the preparation and documentation for the great adventure to Antarctica, we all clearly understood your travel ambitions. The clients and staff all enjoyed your company and the trip was a true once in a lifetime experience and really inspirational. Helping them reach their dream of reaching the South Pole was a wonderful achievement for everyone."





Charalampos (Babis) Bizas, travel expert, extreme traveler, operations manager of „Cosmorama“, Athens, Russian Geographic Society, Wikipedia, most probably the most traveled man on earth. He gave us 7 evaluations from 2014 to 2016, here 3 of them:

„Their travel quality is unique, they did what nobody else did, systematically, thoroughly and with passion – I admire them.“

„You are the No. 1 in quality. You travel like everyone should do... Don't stop this superb style of travel. ...shortly you will be the MOST and BEST travelled person in the world. My respects.“

„Congratulations to both of you. You are the Best. No one else in the world is travelling so thoroughly. You know exactly what you are doing and you experience every step of your travel consciously. Gold bless you! My greetings and best wishes from South Pole.“



Roman Brühwiler, Switzerland, No. 5 in „The Most Traveled“, website „80tage.ch“, 2 world records: Most countries in one year and in 80 days. We appreciate his evaluation of our „Travel Quality Concept“ although his travel concept so far has been very different. His concept now – to see all subdivisions – around 4000 (see TBT Series) – began in 2007 as a formalistic approach. He changed it to experiencing and enjoying.

„I have witnessed your concept of „Travel Quality“ from the first page on. I think that this concept is not only acceptable, it has all the potential to become a benchmark. And it qualifies you to be one of the leading travel authorities worldwide.“



Pinelopi Biza, Greece, wrote in January 2017 when we completed all UN-countries:

„You are the most thoroughly traveled man in the world. Unique!!“

Our Credo: This is what we believe in

In a Royal Thai home we found:

- **Life is a journey,
not a destination –**

we continue:

- but a journey has a destination,
not one - but many destinations,
- **how careful you choose them
determines the quality of the journey,**
- choosing borders will lead to no quality
choosing highlights can achieve the top,
- **to stay at the top, the journey has to become an
essential part of your life.**



With the
bushmen,
Kalahari,
5. 2006

One of the great travel routes:
In Search of the Cradles of Mankind, see p. 34

Our identity

- Exceling in travel quality
- Ensuring travel quality by highlights
- Developing a list of 5000 highlights
- Visiting 5000 in 10 years
- Sharing experiences almost daily
- Preserving UNESCO sites
- Traveling as a couple

Our slogan:

- Dream big, live full, travel extreme.

Our opinion:

- We do not see any alternative to travel for quality.
- Babis Bizas, arguably the most traveled, shares that point of view. But: He admits that he has not done it – always going for quality - and he thinks it is too late for him to change.
- Therefore his advice: „Everybody should travel that way“.
- Our advice for the young travelers: Go for quality, not quantity.
- Our opinion: Travel systematically.

We want to debate our point of view.



**Vanuatu, 9.2014
Tanna Island,
Yasur volcano,
800 years conti-
nuously erupting,
a mega-highlight**



**There is no place
on earth where
you can feel
mother nature
stronger than
here: Always**

- ❑ **Trade with natural resources, food and preferred goods:**
 - **Silkroad:** A network, the main “road” connected Xian with Venice
 - **British Indian Spice Trade:** Britain with India
 - **Trans-Saharan Trade:** Mediterranean with Niger Basin
 - **Incense Route:** Mediterranean with Southern Arabia
- ❑ **Exploration of regions, oceans, passages and science:**
 - **Vitus Bering:** Russia and the North Pacific
 - **Columbus:** America
 - **Cook, da Gama, and Magellan:** All Oceans
 - **Amundsen:** South Pole and the Northwest Passage
 - **Nordenskjöld:** Northeast Passage:
 - **Fitzroy and Charles Darwin** with HMS Beagle: The Theory of Evolution
- ❑ **Records in circumnavigations**
 - **Maritime:** The first was by Magellan and Elcano with the ship Nao Victoria, 1519-1522
 - Fastest today: Francis Joyon and crew, 12.2016 / 1.2017 sailing with the Maxi trimaran in almost 41 days, 48.915 km
 - **Aerial:** The first: Eckener in the airship Graf Zeppelin, 1929: 21 days
 - First non-stop aerial circumnavigation by US Air Force in a B-50, 1949: 94 h
 - By balloon: B. Piccard, 1999, solo by Steve Fossett, 2005, who set > 100 world records
 - By helicopter: Dick Smith 1983
 - **Time limits:** “In 80 days around the world”. Michael Palin followed the route of Jules Verne’s novel. Roman Brühwiler, Switzerland, asked: How many countries can you “do” in 80 days? 135; - in 1 year? 194; – in 1 day? 22 (none was acknowledged by the Guinness Book)
 - **Bicycle:** Heinz Stücker, Germany, cycled around the world, 1962-2014. See in this presentation: “Spotlight on H. Stücker”, p. 23
- ❑ **Records in specific performances - Two of the world’s most astonishing travelers:**
 - **Erden Eruc, Turkish-born American:** First person in history to complete an entirely solo and entirely human-powered circumnavigation of the earth, 2007-2012, on rowboat to cross the oceans, by foot, kayaks, canoes, bicycle, 66.299 km (Guinness Book), he will include all “Seven Summits”.
 - **Vladimir Lysenko, Russian:** A renowned scientist, the most spectacular rafter (down on rivers from all top peaks), circumnavigation on bicycle and car, along the Equator, from the deepest point (for him*) 3462 m to the Stratosphere, travelled along the Gold Rush Path, crossed on a yacht the Indian Ocean



Badrinath, on the way to the source of the Ganges, 10.2011

Footnote: *) I was 1992 in the same mine at least 202 m deeper because of the help of SIEMENS and the COO Mr. Koch: I went below the lowest pumps

Traveling is not Moving

Traveling is not defined by the miles you cover - it is defined by the dreams you fulfill.

Travelling is not about moving from A to B. Moving is a prerequisite for traveling. Traveling is about to **experience**. You should minimize the physical needs and maximize the experience. Our examples of extreme travelers showed that they aimed at formal records or at exploration, they achieved extraordinary performances. But: What have they seen? **How much beauty and uniqueness?**

None of the above mentioned traveled with the overall objective of experiencing sites, things worth seeing.

**Our philosophy:
Travel quality by experiencing highlights.**

**Our record in quality:
4650/4100 highlights in 10 years based on a concept which sets the benchmark in "Travel Quality".** We wanted to find the maximum for quality sight-seeing: 5000 in 10 years non-stop. If you want to do more, you have to travel more. You can do it, but we have not found anybody who did. So more is not realistic. Most probably there will be one exception, see p. 22. Our goal is not only to reach the most highlights but also to develop the best concept for traveling.



The concept is complex, thus 102 pages, because we have no single criterion like countries, regions, speed or time. Our concept is complex – 35 criteria (p. 95), but not difficult. We can condense it to two words, uniqueness and intensity, but then it will be abstract. To develop and enliven it we need 102 pages. The concept of "Travel quality", traveling for **experiencing** and not border-crossing, is for everybody, not only for supermen like Eruc and Lysenko. That's the good news. But timewise you have to be disciplined. That is the bad news. Really bad? We did it in 10 years or so – but everybody has to find his own pace.

Hyenas in Harrar, 1.2016



1.4. Comparison

Setting a Standard for „Travel Quality“

The consequence of our ranking

If we accept, that we are leading in travel quality, then we should define this term clearly, because there is no world-wide acknowledged standard. We want to make a first step toward **setting a standard**.

- We are posting the **concept of “Travel Quality”** on the Internet to see the reactions, to see the acceptability of the concept.
- We want to set the standard for the selection of the objectives, for the **definition of the 5000 highlights**.
- We will show that this is kind of an **“ultimate list”** because it claims to be systematic and objective. And we will show that this list is the **maximum**: You can't do more under realistic conditions. Lists of more than 5.000 sites are just lists, but no travel concepts. **The only reason for our ranking is to find this maximum. The ranks mean almost nothing to us, we only care for our list!**
- The concept of Travel Quality is the **base and the framework** for the highlight list. In other words: Our highlight list is not a stand-alone list, it is part of a travel concept. Sites are not on the list, that are not meeting criteria of a **meaningful overall travel concept**. This is the fundamental idea of our list.
- The list is the core of “Travel Quality” but not the full concept, which is **managing the process of traveling**. The process must be designed for the efficiency of logistics but also for an enjoyment of the experience of the travel sites.

Travel Clubs: Advantages and Problems

Travel Clubs enable the exchange of travel ideas and they set up lists that compare the performance of travelers.

There are three global Travel Clubs:

TCC: Travelers' Century Club,

325 countries. American-based.

MTP: Most Traveled People

875 regions. American-based.

TBT: The Best Travelled

1281 regions. European-based.

Their **advantages:**

- (1) Promoting travels to difficult regions,
- (2) doing the statistics.

TBT has a good global map, a quick overview. And they have a fairly meaningful and consistent structuring of countries into their subunits:

My map according to TBT. Here only as the start-up overview, it can be zoomed to any region and it comes with key data, which is excellent. What it does not show is to what extent you have covered the oceans. Here still we have to draw the lines. Blue: Missing regions as per 5.2016, Olive: Covered



3 problems: (a) When you don't control the entries to the lists you can't be sure if the comparison with your fellow traveler is correct. (b) More important are the rules for „a visit“. If you „get a point“ for having passed the entry gates of an airport and having left the airport immediately through the exit gates – nothing else - clubs undermine their credibility. (c) Clubs are misleading in the sense that they are seducing their members to go for „points“, to compete on points, neglecting quality.

William S. Baekeland is the youngest extreme traveler in the world: 24. The epitome of a British gentleman with impeccable manners. He has the means to travel to extreme places and excellent connections for the paper work. Sometimes we can travel together. We have one thing in common: The love for extremes. He travels with an extreme diversity in transport and objectives.

William has flown about 3,000 times including 16 Concorde trips. He has made 20 transatlantic crossings by sea and made 8 crossings of the USA by train. He has been 6 times to Syria and 4 times to Iraq and has visited the city of Herat in Afghanistan.

Presently he jets to various countries in Africa to reach the goal „all countries“ in summer this year: He will become the youngest traveler to have been to all 193 UN countries.

More so: William and his mother will be the first ever parent and child to have both visited every country on the planet.

He is the rising mega star in traveling. He will excel everybody: He goes for a list of 12.000 sites. I did almost 5.000 in 10 years. So 12.000 for him is doable. But this goal is the most ambitious goal ever. And I predict: He will extend his goals.

He has given several interviews: “It is not for the competition and I am not out for a record ... I don’t have the time to be chasing records and I think some of The Guinness World Record requirements make no sense, so I won’t be approaching them about this.”

He is connected with almost all social media and he documents his travels well. As far as I know: Only his systematics could be improved and his travel concept could be specified. About half a year ago he answered the question: What is your travel concept? „Islands, I guess“. No, his records show far more.

In the TBT Series he is two times no. 1: (a) In the XL list, a list about weird places: Difficult to reach, remote, unusual location, unusual inhabitation, abandoned. William organizes efficient transport to those places and remote islands; he charters planes, ships, helicopters. (b) But he is no. 1 in museums as well.

This shows how broad his spectrum is. And that is what I admire. In islands I am one position ahead of him (May 17). Not for long.



Heinz Stücker, born 1940, is an extreme traveler of its own kind. He apprenticed to a tool and die maker in Westfalia, Germany. He started his first big bicycle tour at 18, around the Mediterranean. At 20 he traveled to India and the Far East. He left home in 1962 at 22 with 300\$ in his pocket and returned to his home town only after 52 years when he was 74 in 2014. He cycled 52 years, 40 of them with the same bike. He cycled 648.000 km through 257 countries and territories and used 22 passports. He still has 17 of them, the rest were stolen. He was in the Guinness Book of Records between 1995 and 1999. In 2000 the structure of the book was changed.

What fascinated me? Heinz has seen the world before terrorism and before mass tourism. He slept on top of the temple of the Jaguar in Tikal, on the top of the pyramids in Gizeh and under the arms of Christ the Redeemer in Rio. He rode his bicycle for 2740 km through all of Somalia, hassle-free. How far away from the conditions of today! And he financed all his travels on the way.

He returned with 100.000 photos, thousands of diary pages and tons of memories. His hip was damaged due to jerking and heaving his heavy laden bicycle across gullies and landslides and over rocks. He had done more than anybody on a bike, but finally he had to pay a price. Now he sits in a small town in Westfalia and – as he hold me: "...lives his life backwards". He is sorting, framing and captioning his slides and tries to reconnect with encounters of his journey. He is supported by acquaintances. He sells photos and stage discussion evenings. He uses his collected travel paraphernalia for exhibitions. He is too proud to accept social aid. A matter of principle: Everyone should be responsible for himself. His relationship with TBT is remarkable. He has no idea how he got on the TBT list. At present he is no. 1. He doesn't know anything about the club. Some years ago a budget traveler had told him in Barcelona about such clubs, about people collecting countries and the way they structure the world. Did he ticked them off on the list? Heinz had never thought about collecting countries. He set himself the goals he had the money for.



In 2017 he still lived in an analogue world, no computer, he doesn't use Email. The only communication with him is to talk. When you talk with him there is only one way to do it: Listen. Yes, he encourages questions, but he answers them in his style wrapping them with his experiences. He talks about the bicycle and about how he got money selling brochures about his travelling, contacting agents, selling photos and features to weeklies. He says „My best idea was to sell my booklets.“ In Japan some days 200 or 300, each for the price of a cup of coffee. People are his priority, so he met many locals. People who saw their dreams in what he did, many supporting him. Only seldom he worked as a cleaner or painter. He is full of energy and enthusiasm. But he points out: „You have to be alone on your travels in order to be free.“ So most of his relations are short-lived „You always have to move on“.