

That's a Wrap on the Congo (A Summary)

I have been out of the Congo for almost three months. Thus, I have finally run out of photos. These are the few left that I am pleased to share with you. (And some that are worth repeating)



This is a photo looking across the Congo River towards Kindu, where I spent seven months of my nine month UN mission. That is the only ferry making a crossing. Mostly, the people use dug out canoes to cross.



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These Congolese commandos just made their own boat to float downriver.



While sometimes the place seemed daunting and many times was a real test of my patience, I would not trade for anything the experience of living way up the Congo River in Kindu.

This is a photo of Kindu taken from a helicopter making a landing.



And this is what the Congo River looks like a hundred kilometers or so downriver from Kindu. Between Kindu and Kisangani, some four hundred kilometers downriver, there is only one thing:

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jungle (and the odd tiny village).



I've dropped in a map here to give you a quick reference to the several places I visited in eastern Congo and that feature in the several Congo Stories.

Kindu is marked with the red indicator. And while the Congo River seems narrow on that map, it is 800 meters across at Kindu and much wider yet in Kisangani. You'll find Kisangani a few hundred kilometers north of Kindu.

Kalima is a short distance northeast of Kindu. And Kasongo is 240 kilometers southeast of Kindu.

The cities of Goma and Bukavu are on Lake Kivu, which is just west of Rwanda.



As part of the project to help the hospital on the other side of the Congo River from Kindu, I made numerous trips across using the dug out canoes you see in the photos. Perhaps the most memorable was a night crossing with a full moon.

The efforts we made to help the hospital are captured in the section of this website called Travels of Yellow Bird.

And now what we have here are the few photos of the Congo that I have left.

This first image is of the amazingly bizarre Okapi. They call it a forest giraffe and it is only found in the Congo. I never did see one live. In fact, I had never even heard about this animal before arriving in the Congo last year.

This is a photo I stole from the Internet. If you want to learn more about the Okapi see www.bonoboincongo.com which is a website about two new parks in the Congo.

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Sadly, you will learn there about a rebel raid last June on the ranger station in the park. The rebels murdered and sexually assaulted many people and also gratuitously killed the 15 okapi that were being kept at the station.

Such is the continuing savagery in the eastern Congo. For current updates about the shit going down in the Congo see: www.congosiasa.blogspot.com.



These women show the beauty, color and dignity that people still find in the Congo.

And this next photo shows the notorious and deadly motorcycle taxi riders (the "boda bodas") cleaning their weapons in the Congo River. My tip to anyone who wants to travel in eastern Africa is to look in all five directions before you cross any street. That is because the boda drivers never arrive from the north, east, south or the west. They always appear from nowhere. So that has to be the direction you check before you cross the street.

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Here is the top military prosecutor in Maniema province having some fun with the folks.



This is perhaps the most bizarre situation I saw while in the Congo. Certainly I saw a few strange things and most often I did not have a camera with me. What we see here is the military court holding proceedings in Kalima, but outside. Thus, the court is on the porch of a government building, but the accused and the defense lawyer are stuck under the sun. Finally someone bought them parasols. But dignity before the court was still missing.



The road from Kindu to Kasongo was rough and difficult, but it was also beautiful.

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This image shows the meager and antiquated infrastructure that is missing in most towns and barely existing in the Congo cities.



I was tempted to leave you with this as the last image of the Congo. This dead monkey was on his way to the bushmeat market to be sold and then eaten. He is a strong symbol of the continuing brutality in eastern Congo.

The French ambassador to the Congo recently said this about the situation: "It is a tragedy turning into another tragedy."



But instead I'll leave you with this image of the Congo. It shows a peaceful, island port on Lake Kivu. There is peace in the Congo, but only in some places. And in the east, not very many.

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