

Before that we were in Palmyra which is about 160km to the east of the main route north through Syria. More ruins but masses of them that you can just wander around. We dubbed Palmyra "rip-off the tourist" town as everything seemed to cost more for less. We had a fantastic view of the ruins from the hotel, parts of which were floodlit at night. Finding diesel was a bit of a problem as the garage said they had none on the two occasions we stopped. But on the way back we spotted a bowser in a small village and Jim persuaded them to sell some – at a high cost! We do have a couple of containers for emergencies but getting them out would have been a bit of a nuisance. On the way to Aleppo we stopped at Hama to see the norias – huge wooden waterwheels that pump the water from the river up to aqueducts then to irrigate the fields. They have been using the same design for many centuries.



Prior to that we stayed in Frances Hotel, a very nice apartment hotel, near to a wonderful castle called Krak des Chevaliers. The castle was described by TE Lawrence as "the finest castle in the world" and by Paul Theroux as the epitome of the dream castle of childhood fantasies. It was both. We have found that safety and keeping tourists within barriers does not apply here, so you can wander around all the wonderful bits that would be cordoned off in other countries! But you do need a torch!

We have had no TV for the last week and now that we have we are faced with the shootings in Virginia. No texting in Syria either as our server is not speaking to the one here!

Tomorrow we will be up and on the way early as we want to get out of Aleppo before it comes alive. The driving here is the worst we have encountered. There appear to be no rules. Crossing the road is like playing chicken! Then we hope to find the road north and to the Turkish border. More in a week or so.

3rd May

Here we are again! At the end of the last report we were about to leave Syria and travel on to Turkey. The transition was fairly painless except on the pocket! A new rule had just come out and if a diesel vehicle was leaving Syria there was a charge of 100\$. But no receipt could be given!!!! The Turkish lot were completely thrown because our type of car did not register on their computer. I think they finally just said GO! So we went! It was a very small border post because I had wanted to see the Euphrates alluvial plain, having heard so much about it in History or Geography lessons!

Turkey has been fantastic. To begin with we had a bit of fun because our Turkish was nil and their English was only marginally better, but with a phrase book and a lot of laughter you usually get what you want. As we travelled west more people speak English and German and French because those are the tourist areas. The food has become more varied and we have been able to relax more. But everyone has been so delightful. We found Syria rather grasping and everyone seemed to want to have our money. Not a good idea when it's Scots trying to hang onto it! Everything is also cleaner and I haven't seen a squat loo since coming into Turkey!

We have stayed in a variety of accommodation from a fantastic camping site right by the sea, but they were building a road just beside it and the noise continued all day, even Sunday! To a hotel that had not opened for the season, but gave us a room for a cash payment and no questions asked! We have met some lovely people including a group of teenagers in a forest who wanted to practice their English and one lad in particular who was very persistent – he'll go far!

We stopped in Fethiye to spend a couple of nights with Ian Ewart, whom some may remember, but it became five. We had a day out in Ian's boat and helped a friend move her gulet from her winter to summer mooring. Well Jim did things with anchor, sheets and lazy lines while I took photos! We recommend Ian's breakfasts, especially the pork haggis, and the hospitality in Fethiye. It's second to none.

We are now sitting in a camp site, again by the coast, in Alexandroupoli in Greece. We crossed the border this morning. If anyone is crossing at the Dardanelles keep going when you reach Eceabat – it's not worth the trouble of stopping. We had meant to look at some of the battlefields but there were so many buses and they were pouring in all the time, so we turned tail and headed west!

Jim says I've to mention that we are having a de-stressing glass of Caol Ila, that's a malt whiskey for