

A Place of Refuge

Wednesday, 24 June 2015

In search of the truth

The truth is sometimes hard to find especially as there can be so many versions of the same truth. It's within our instincts as people to adapt what we're told based on the value judgements we hold. Or to suit agendas either obvious or subtle. Or simply to be able to tell a great tale - embellishing the details not out of malice but rather excitement or spontaneity. Isn't that why some of the greatest tales start in bars?

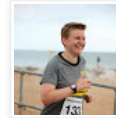
So in knowing that I was to spend two weeks on holiday in the island of Lesvos [Lesbos] an island with a dual weight on its shoulders due to the impending Grexit and the rise of migrants seeking refuge by travelling across the narrow waters from Turkey I wanted to find the truth. Not about the Euro and probable deal or no deal. But rather about the refugees. After all the media has begun to warn future tourists that Islands such as Kos and Lesvos are over run and cannot cope. That the streets around where we lay on our sun beds may be less pleasant and that an already struggling Greek economy simply cannot cope. Would this be true? What would I find on my short two week holiday? A holiday we have longed for over the preceding weeks and work hard to pay for - could this be blighted by sights that seem safely far away when we see them on our TVs or in newsprint?

Let's be clear I'm sympathetic to those fleeing war torn countries, the threat of Islamic extremists or even poverty for a better life. I could not travel here and simply pretend it wasn't happening. I spent some time before our flight out finding out what is the current situation and also what I may be able to do to help. The Internet makes this simple now and the fact I've been to Lesvos before and recognised the names of the locals who are offering help meant I could make direct contact. So I didn't fill my case with spare clothes as I knew these may not be needed. Instead a few hats and money is what I've come armed with. The Help for Refugees in Molyvos Facebook page is perhaps the most useful. Kept regularly up to date and a list of things you can bring if you want.

So here I am. Yes I'm in Lesvos - writing this from the comfort of my sunbed. Enjoying the first few relaxing days of our holiday. We landed in Mytilene and were transported to our resort by Thomas Cook. There was little sign of refugees during this - we saw a small group who we guessed to be walking near the harbour in Mytilene and as we passed through Kalloni the mid point from Mytilene to Molyvos our rep quietly pointed out to us the "new" refugee camp next to the police station. It's only been there a couple of weeks. Opened out of necessity. We knew before we came that refugees landing near Molyvos (the shortest distance from Turkey - at some points only 5 or 6 miles) were then walking to Mytilene - a walk of nearly 30 miles. The Kalloni camp provides a stopping point on that journey. But we didn't see anyone walking and arrived safely at our destination in Petra.

My next challenge is to enjoy my holiday but also to begin to see if I can find out some of the truth as to what is really happening. That and to find out what (if anything) I can do to help during my short stay here. So I will share what I find out and hope that you share it too so that we can find the truth together.

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Posted by Jo Frazer- Wise at 04:58



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