

MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | TUES-WED 1-2 MAY 2013

Gallipoli

This was certainly a day to remember. We saw very few people this morning - some local contractors cleaning up after the ANZAC day service last week and an Australian and a Welshman who were riding motorbikes around the world. We really felt as if we had the area completely to ourselves. We slowly walked between the sites and had time to reflect and be thankful.

We visited all the well known Australian sites. We started at North Beach where a memorial wall has been constructed just above the water line. It is just a few metres away from ANZAC Cove where the first landings occurred on 25 April 1915. The little point that marks the beginning of ANZAC Cove is called Ari Burnu. This is where we saw the first cemetery. Others that we visited were on the ANZAC Cove beach front, Shell Green and Shrapnel Valley. We also visited the Lone Pine Memorial with its cemetery.

Each location was beautifully kept. Many flowers were in bloom and the lawns were immaculate. Mind you, outside of these areas, the country is probably pretty much as it was 98 years ago - scrubby and quite rugged.



Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives. You are now living in the soil of a friendly country, therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side. Here in this country of ours you, the mothers, who sent their sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears. Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.

Ataturk 1934

Words by the President of Turkey found on the large epitaph at Anzac Cove



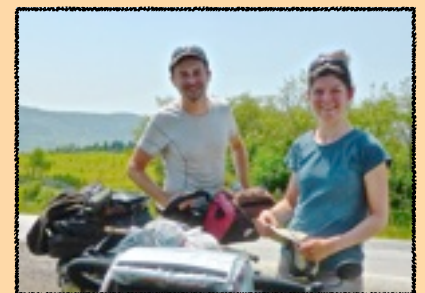
continued on next page



IRRELEVANT NOTICE Not sure why this sign is put up for tourists because the locals totally ignore what it says.



PUSH PUSH PUSH The mass of cars and trucks trying to squeeze in to one tiny space had Heather mortified and me in stitches. If a space opened up, no matter how small, it was quickly filled. Look how close the cars get.



WORLD CYCLISTS We met these two French bicyclists on the side of the road while having afternoon tea. David and Julia filled us with awe because they were cycling all the way from France to Thailand. Crikey!!

It's incredible that more than half of the Turkish army (300,000 casualties) was wiped out at Gallipoli.

The abundance of small cemeteries surprised us. We had expected a huge one with lines and lines of white headstones. The smaller ones were in many ways more telling. It was where the men lived and died.

We spent a lot of time separately walking through the head stones reading the stories thereon. The youngest I found was only 17. Apparently the very youngest (14 when he enlisted), died of his wounds and was buried at sea. The names of all those who do not have a grave (and it is more than half of the men) are on the memorial at Lone Pine. We even saw the grave of Simpson - the soldier famous for using a donkey to help the injured.

It was nice to see little remembrances on some of the head stones. I remember reading about a scheme where Australian school children can take up the cause of a soldier who died and have a poppy or a cross with a note put on the headstone. We saw a number of these. It also appears as if individual soldiers are picked out each year for special remembrance. In the front of such stones we saw a photo and a few facts about the person. It is poignant that many of the inscriptions

start with - "Believed to be buried in this cemetery".

Heather used up a lot of tissues. My mum said she would find it creepy to be in such a place. We did not feel like that. It was really a privilege to be here. Of course you really do have to wonder what all this achieved. Maybe one thing is that Heather and myself may not even have been born! It is ironic that this story is being written from our van which is parked on the water side in old Istanbul - so far from Australian shores.

After we felt we had experienced enough of this historic place, we headed on back to our caravan park. It was then that we noticed where all the buses were going - to the Turkish memorial - of course! They had 300,000ish casualties. I say "ish" because they do not know the actual number. There are no graves up where the Turkish memorials are. We don't know if they were not buried here or were taken somewhere else. The whole of this area is listed as a cemetery. Anyway, the Turks certainly remember their dead. We estimated about 30 buses were lined up beside the memorial. It did not even occur to us that so many people from other countries also died. How insular are we!

Visiting Gallipoli is one more tick on our bucket list.

Last night we met a Dutch couple who lent us a book outlining free camping places in Turkey. We took all night to go through it and it helped us decide on an itinerary for the rest of our Turkey trip. We decided it was best to back track a little and visit Istanbul now. This meant that we can return to Greece via ferry from the southern coast of Turkey.

Here we are now, parked in a camping place, right across from the famous Blue Mosque. The trip in was quite an experience. We have never ever been in such horrific traffic like that before. At one point the traffic virtually stopped and cars were squeezing in every which way! Heather was certainly biting her finger nails. I have to say that, even though every one was breaking the rules, they were doing it at an extremely slow speed and most vehicles seemed to go through unscathed. One truck and a car did come to fist-a-cuffs however. We breathed a sigh of relief when we sighted our motorhome haven.

Tomorrow we go exploring in this huge city of 13 million. One crowded place.



PHOTOS



Camping in Istanbul with the Blue Mosque in sight