

2008 SPAIN, ALGERIA, TUNISIA AND MALTA

Thursday, April 3, 2008. We boarded the flight to Barcelona late and it became even later as we waited on the runway. I knew when we took off that I would miss my connection in Barcelona.

My seatmate was a doctor from Chicago on his way to a conference in Barcelona. His specialty was childhood epilepsy and he enthusiastically told me all about it¹. I had never thought this one disease would be a specialty in itself. Apparently there is an operation but it only is done in 5% of cases. Most are treated with drugs or diet. I ate very little dinner and curled up to sleep.

Friday, April 4. As predicted we arrived in Barcelona over an hour late. I had to wait for the wheelchair bus, which finally came for the five wheelchair passengers. Instead of taking me to in-transit I was taken to immigration and then the fun began. I had to get back into in-transit without a boarding pass. Speaking no Spanish I don't know how my pusher accomplished this but he did. He took me to Spanair² where I was told I had missed my flight to Malaga! What a surprise! He also pointed out that Delta should re-ticket me. Thus we made our way back out of in-transit to get to Delta's ticket counter. Delta could do nothing for me since they did not write my ticket. My Spanair flight was not in their computer. I also had nothing to show I even had a ticket with Spanair since all I showed was an e-ticket. We went back to the other terminal and found Spanair's ticket counter. Nothing was available until the 5:15 flight. It was now about 1:30. I bought a rather expensive ticket (330 Euros worth) but I had no choice since I had to catch up with the cruise. Back at check in I was told I could wait in the business class lounge but when we got there I was denied entrance since my very expensive ticket was only a coach ticket. Then I was plunked at gate 31 for a two or three hour wait. I believe if I had showed them my Delta Business class ticket they would have let me in but I did not think of it. I just don't think as clearly when I have jet lag. It was all very stressful. They even kept moving the gate around and I went up and down stairs and back and forth. I was so happy when we took off and even happier to find Zegrahm's³ representative waiting for me in Malaga!

He drove me about 45 minutes to Marbella and the Guadalmina Hotel⁴. It was a motorway and there were views of mountains and little whitewashed villages. Hundreds of condominiums have been built many in Pueblo style.

Lynn Greig, the Cruise Director and Mike Messick, the expedition Leader greeted me. The group was just finishing dinner but I ate some of the buffet that was left and went wearily off to bed. Our expedition is entitled North Africa's Roman Legacy⁵.

Saturday, April 5. I slept reasonably well but had to get up at 6 for our early departure. Unfortunately I forgot to remove my camera from my roll-on bag. When I caught up with the bag sometime later, the camera and its little bag were gone but the battery was left. So there will be no pictures to show my friends. I'll just have to be more graphic with my journal.

I met Patti and Mike Richter from Mount Vernon, WA. Her story is most inspiring. It seems some past traveler with Zegrahm established a fund to send someone on a trip that could ordinarily not afford it. Patti is a grade school teacher. She also is a cancer survivor who is coping with leukemia. Her husband teaches in high school. They did not know she had been entered in the contest. All her students wrote letters. She calls it the trip of a lifetime for she may never have a chance to travel again before she dies.

We left at 7:30 am for Granada. The road follows the coast back to Malaga and then we headed up into the mountains emerging on a fertile plain of olive groves. There were stands of poplars planted close together so they would grow no lower branches. There were fields being planted with asparagus. Our guide described everything (it seemed he was being paid by the word), but he was certainly knowledgeable as he filled our heads with statistics.

We got to Granada⁶ and the magnificent Moorish palace called the Alhambra⁷. Hambra means red and al means house in Arabic. Even though I had seen the palace last in 2003, we had such

¹ <http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/answerplace/Life/children/>

² <http://www.spanair.com/web/en-gb/>

³ <http://www.zeco.com/>

⁴ http://www.hotelclub.net/hotel.reservations/Golf_Guadalmina_Hotel_Costa_Del_Sol.htm

⁵ <http://www.zeco.com/destinations/Algeria-Granada-Tunisia-Malta-Cruise.asp?dateid=447>

⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Granada>

⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alhambra>

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a super guide named Federiko that I was able to appreciate it even more. He told us how the sultans made Granada a learning center teaching mathematics and medicine as well as many other disciplines. The greatest subject that was studied was poetry. The Qur'an or Koran⁸ is poetry and on the walls of the palace there are poems. He talked about the symbolism of numbers, seven being the most sacred. When we talk of being in seventh heaven it comes from the Arabic concept. There are geometric designs on all the walls for the Arabs did not allow animals or the human figures to be depicted. He called the Alhambra a palace of patios and we walked through a number of them. The Lions court was a disappointment as the lions are off being restored and a scaffold has been built to protect the fountain. However the reflecting pools are as lovely as ever.

We were shown the palace of Charles V⁹. I do not remember this circular building from previous visits. Two stories high with balconies inside, it made me think of a bullring.

Then we went into the old Medina¹⁰ where he gave us five minutes to shop! Once the Medina contained everything including a mint but today it is mostly tourist goods. One shop was selling the inlaid wood tables like the sewing box I bought here so many years ago. Beyond were the gardens. Fragrant hyacinths and boxwood perfumed the air.

Last of all we came to the summer palace, a wonderful airy place with water used to cool it. We climbed stairs, not my strong suit, and finally when we got up on top of it, I found a place to sit and catch my breath. And that was the last I saw of the group!

I didn't know what to do but I followed the "salida" signs. I climbed the famous water staircase where channels of water hug the banisters and then climbed down the other side. There were more and more gardens. I saw a lot more of the Alhambra than I had bargained for.¹¹ At last I reached the exit. There were buses but not mine. I checked out the car park and still no bus. I didn't know what to do! All I knew was that lunch was scheduled at the Alhambra Palace Hotel.¹²

Not knowing where that was I followed a group that looked like they were headed for lunch. We reached a street of hotels and restaurants but not the one I sought. I finally went into a shop and asked directions. A very nice man came out on the street to show me which way to go. And then I saw two members of the staff who had come to look for me. It seemed they had counted the bus wrong! Isn't it lucky that I remembered where the group was going to go for lunch!

They took me by taxi to the hotel where lunch was already underway. There was much too much of it of course but I enjoyed being in this hotel where Mother and I had come on my first trip to Spain. It's elaborate plaster designs are in the style of the Alhambra itself.

There was a wedding going on and many people around. However that seems to be true of all of Granada. 7000 people a day tour the palace, each carefully metered through. When Mother and I came there was hardly anyone but that was perhaps 30 years ago.

After lunch we boarded the buses again and drove down through the mountains to the small port of Motril¹³ where the Wind Spirit¹⁴ was waiting. My first thought was that she was enormous. She is 360 feet long. Her capacity is 148, but there are only 62 of us (thank goodness). She sports five sails (188 square feet of sail) from her four masts. She has many features of a cruise ship and even sports a spa, casino and shop! She can do 14 knots under engine and sail, which is faster than she can do under power (10 knots). Unlike Le Ponant, the sails are actually used. It is interesting on the bridge to see the large panel from which the sails are electronically controlled. No one has to tug on a line for anything!

We had lifeboat drill. I made an appointment for a leg massage and found they have two massage tables. Victoria took care of me but she rather spoiled it by trying to sell me all the expensive creams. My legs did feel better for a time. Then I went to orientation and met the large staff that will be lecturing. They all sound so interesting.

⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qur'an>

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace_of_Charles_V

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medina_quarter

¹¹ <http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/destinations/spain/alhambra.htm>

¹² <http://granadainfo.com/hotel/alhambrapalace.htm>

¹³ <http://www.indigoguide.com/spain/motril.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.windstar-cruises-luxury-lines.com/windspirit.htm>

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I sat with Christine Allen and we had dinner together joined by Derek and Tricia Till. They are all part of the Harvard group on board. I enjoyed the intellectual talk at dinner but when one of them told me how shocked they had been on a previous cruise to find 12 democrats on board, I realized I shall have to stay away from politics. This is a big difference to Travel Dynamics¹⁵ cruises where I found most of them agreed with me on this delicate subject.

Sunday, April 6. In the morning I enjoyed reminiscing with Emily Teeter¹⁶ on the trip I made to the Red Sea in 1982 with Society Expeditions. When Society went belly up, some of their people went on to found Zegrahm and she has been with them ever since. She gave a talk on the history of the Mediterranean.

I went down to my cabin and fell asleep. I slept so soundly that I missed the second lecture and then lunch. When I woke up they were announcing disembarkation in Oran, Algeria¹⁷.

On the dock two lovely ladies in native dress handed us dates. There was a native band welcoming us with their traditional Rai music¹⁸. The beat of the music is of Bedouin origin. They did a sort of dance and the leader greeted everyone playing his tambourine. A number of locals watched from a balcony nearby for we must be a curiosity to them.

We have three buses. I was on bus number one and our guide was a journalist of Berber descent. He works for the New York Times. Said Chitour's English was excellent and we were encouraged to ask any questions we wished. These same guides and buses will be with us throughout our visit to Algeria.

Moorish Andalusian traders from Spain founded Oran in the 10th century. It is now the second biggest city in the country after Algiers. Under the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, many of the Spanish Moslems and Jews took refuge in Oran. The French came and colonized it in 1830. Thus French is widely spoken in the country although the official language is Arabic. The French settlers took the best land and the poor Algerians lost theirs.

The French believed the Berbers¹⁹ were their allies against the Arabs and gave them preferential treatment. Many were naturalized. The Jews were never naturalized and the Arabs didn't want to be since it would interfere with their religion. So there was much dissension and this sowed the seeds for independence.

During World War 11, the Algerians were promised independence if they went to war with the French army. It was in Oran that the Allies landed and started their march across the desert to confront Rommel's men. However, independence didn't happen which led to civil war. Even today the Algerian soldiers do not receive the same pensions as the other French soldiers. The French were ousted in 1962 after an eight year long civil war. Even after independence the struggles continued as the Moslem fundamentalists took over the socialist government, which in itself was corrupt.

After independence most of the Europeans returned to Europe. Two million Algerians moved to France for the French needed workers. The second largest group in France is Algerian but they are not granted citizenship.

We left the dock with a large police escort. Said explained that it was to protect us from any danger since it would be an international incident if we were harmed. While the political situation in the country is stabilizing there are still Islamic extremists and Al Qaeda²⁰ in the country. Algeria is trying to establish good relations with the US. Their main exports are oil and gas that go by pipeline to Morocco and Europe. They are trying to promote tourism.

We drove through the old Spanish section of the city, which is in need of restoration and up to the high fortress above the city called Santa Cruz²¹. At the top we admired the view of the city, which has one and a half million inhabitants, Chinese laborers have been brought here to build more housing for the expanding population.

¹⁵ <http://www.traveldynamicsinternational.com/>

¹⁶ oi.uchicago.edu/pdf/02-03_Ind_Teeter.pdf

¹⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oran>

¹⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ra%C3%AF>

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berber_people

²⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Qaeda>

²¹ <http://www.britannica.com/eb/topic-522830/Santa-Cruz-citadel>

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We noticed that the women wore traditional clothing and had scarves over their heads. However Said tells us that women are now in almost every occupation and pointed out that one of our escorts was a policewoman. His own wife is a surgeon. However the women still do not have full rights.

Said is very proud of the fact that Yves St Laurent was from Oran. Also Edith Piaf came from Algeria. Cervantes was a political prisoner in Algeria and wrote Don Quixote while he was here. And of course, the French Foreign Legion was founded here.

At the summit there was a small shrine for women to come and pray. I took off my shoes and entered and was given a small piece of green cloth. I felt badly I did not have any money to give the lady. Said explained the cloth represented the peace of Marabout²² and was for good luck. Marabout was a Sufi saint²³.

On the opposite side of the summit we looked down on the military harbor. On our way down we passed the church of Santa Cruz, now abandoned, but it still stands with a huge statue of the Saint atop it.

We drove into the city and walked through the local vegetable market, not too busy at this time of day. Some 12 year-old boys proudly showed us their lesson books with Arabic writing and drawings. We also saw some beggar women outside a small mosque. Her mongoloid son accompanied one. Another woman proudly showed off her three year old twin sons. One old man told us he had been to Texas. Everyone seems pleased to see Americans.

Said told us about couscous²⁴ which is a national dish and comes in different colors depending on what it is made from. The black couscous has medicinal powers. Couscous is part of every Algerian meal.

Above the street every balcony sported a dish antennae so the locals know about America and are anxious for American goods. We saw Coca Cola for sale.

Said told us about some of the difficulties being a journalist in Algeria. He is not allowed to speak unkindly of the government. While he wouldn't be jailed he would be harassed. If he writes derogatory things about his president he would be jailed.

We were driven through the French section with elaborate balconies. It seemed in better shape than the other sections we saw.

We stopped to see the city library, which is housed in the old Sacre Coeur Cathedral building. It is a handsome building with stained glass windows built during the nineteen thirties. It was a strange sensation to see the pulpit and altar still in place and the altar holds an oil painting. The old chapels have been converted into stacks for the books. Each section holds a different subject. The old church does make a lovely library. Some of the other tourists could only see that it wasn't very clean. There is only one Christian Church left in Oran.

Our last stop was at the main square. At the end was an opera house built in the French manor and from playbills on the outside it is still active. A monument to the French War heroes is in the center of the square and a parliament building is along one side²⁵.

Some girls came up to me wanting to practice their English. Everyone is very friendly.

However Said tells me that he is not allowed to fraternize with Americans in his home.

That night I joined Patti and Mike and Ellen Smith for dinner. Ellen is an accountant by trade and has traveled extensively. Her hobby is to rescue guinea pigs. When she told me one had needed a \$1600 operation it was obvious she is dedicated to her hobby.

Monday, April 7, 2008. A day at sea. David Mitten²⁶, from Harvard, gave the first lecture of the day on the Architecture of Roman North Africa. He has yet to master PowerPoint and most of his glass slides could not be shown on the ships projector. He described a Roman city as being a grid, each square reminiscent of the square palisades Roman soldiers erected around their camp. The city had to have a forum. It also had to have a bath. Private citizens would donate baths and other buildings to perpetuate their names. For entertainment there was a theater, a coliseum for

²² <http://i-cias.com/e.o/marabout.htm>

²³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sufism>

²⁴ <http://www.gourmetspot.com/ask/couscous.htm>

²⁵ <http://lexicorient.com/algeria/oran.htm>

²⁶ <http://www.dce.harvard.edu/pubs/alum/2000/07.html>

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gladiator contests and a circus for the chariot races. Rome fell in part because the Goths were able to cut off the water system. There were temples to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva enshrined near the forum. There was a basilica to house the law courts. The Christian churches developed their shapes along the same lines of these ancient law basilicas. He described the different kinds of marble used in the architecture. Some huge stones were transported from far away. Yellow or "jemtu" marble came from near the Algerian border. Wild animals were used in the spectacles and as a result by the time the Arabs came there were no wild animals left in the Magreb²⁷. Even today we have amphitheatres and people enjoy watching the violence in such sports as ice hockey and football. Spain still has bullfighting in amphitheatres patterned after the ones in ancient Rome. People vied to build temples and stadiums just as today people pay to have structures named after them.

After an intermission Michel Behar talked on the French Colonial era. Some of the following I have incorporated into an earlier part of this journal. The Algerians helped the French fight in World War 11, because they had been promised independence. However, even as a Department of France they were not treated equally. There was a Civil War and the Algerians got their independence in 1966. This was followed by more turmoil as various people tried to take control of the socialist government²⁸. The country's military took control in 1991. Finally they have renounced socialism and are starting a free market community. However, as you may imagine, there are many problems in the conversion. It was determined that the free schooling and medicine should be continued but no taxation. To correct this discrepancy there were hidden taxes imposed on everything. The present government seems strong enough to prevent the Islamic fundamentalists from taking over but there is still a radical element in the country. France still does not comprehend why they lost Algeria even after the atrocities they committed. The French legislature only admitted ten years ago that a war had taken place!

After lunch there was actually time for a rest. I spent it trying to catch up on my journal and so forth.

Then Ron Wixman,²⁹ our cultural historian, gave his lecture on the Arabization of North Africa. In the program it was mislited as the Arabization of North America so he first corrected this misprint to some laughter. He told us there are 7 million Arabs in the United States and most of them are Christian. This is more than the number of Jews in our country.

Then he talked about what is an Arab. Islam is a religion but it is practiced differently by different sects and in different regions. For instance when Islam came to Indonesia, a pork eating country, they decided the pigs should convert as well and be called sheep! Thus the culture of eating pork in the country continued under the new religion. He talked about how language changes a country more than religion. For instance the Franks were a Germanic tribe. When Christianity came in, Latin influenced the local language until it became French. This is why French has some more guttural sounds than Spanish, which is also different from Latin because it was influenced by the Celts.

In the ancient world sheep, goats and cows were essential. Even their horns were used to help plant the ground. The cow could pull a plow. Only the cloven hoofed animals were allowed in the sacrifices.

When Christianity swept North Africa most of the Jews went to Palestine. Ron is fond of saying that the Jews didn't get the message. The Christians got the message but worshipped the messenger. Only the Arabs worship the message.

The people didn't speak Arabic until the Moslems came and then they learned Arabic through the church teachings. This exists even to this day with the Koranic schools whose sole function is to teach students to memorize the Koran written only in Arabic.

We were told how to tell what kind of Moslem women were by noticing their veils. The Berber woman doesn't wear a veil at all. Berber women can talk with men, Moslem women can't.

After the lecture I had time for a massage although I missed most of the recap.

The planned barbecue was moved indoors because of rain. Thank goodness for the temperature remains chillier than I would like. It was quite a barbecue with huge shrimp for appetizers and

²⁷ The Magreb is that area of North Africa which is today Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.

²⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algerian_Civil_War

²⁹ <http://geography.uoregon.edu/wixman/>

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lobster tails as well as other more tradition fare done on the grill. I sat with Said and Emily as well as another couple whose name I did not get and so got to ask him a number of questions. Said's wife, a surgeon, makes about \$500 a year. A teacher makes about \$200. Even put into the context that their life style is far below ours, this does not seem very much. He built his house for about \$100,000 some time ago. It is now worth about \$400,000. I figure this must be very grand by Algerian standards. It is certainly not bad by American standards. Said told me he saved for many years to get the money to build it.

After dinner we went to the lounge where there was a presentation of Rai music by a local band. Then they started to get the audience up to dance. Said got me up on the floor but I was winded after only a few minutes.

Tuesday, April 8, 2008. We got up early to depart at 7:30 with our police escort. Without them I don't know how we would have gotten through the rush hour traffic although I noted a lot of drivers ignored us. We headed east along the coast to get to Tipasa³⁰.

Said tells us that 17% of the population is under the age of 25 so there is a huge market for almost everything. The Algerians watch television and want to buy what they see.

The countryside was lovely. Small plots of land had bamboo palisades that are supposed to capture some of the salt from the air. There were daisies in bloom. We also saw plastic hothouses in which to grow tomatoes and other tender plants.

Tipasa is a Roman City that dates from the second century. There were probably about 40,000 people who lived there. I have seen far better preserved sites. Perhaps the 50% still to be excavated will be in better shape. I was also glad I knew what we were looking at for Said galloped off with very little explanation.

We started by a small amphitheater, which is the only one I have ever seen that is oval in shape instead of round. From there we walked down the corda maxima toward the sea. Some reconstructed columns made it easy to picture the shops that once lay behind as covered walkway.

We passed the baths without a second look to view the place where they processed the garum³¹ to make a salty fish-based sauce. I was not familiar with this but someone remarked they had heard of it at another ancient site.

At last we came to the Villa Fresca but were not shown any frescoes. There was a geometric design mosaic floor, which the group took care not to walk upon. And then we started the climb up to the fourth century Great Basilica where a huge Christian Church once sat. Its dimensions were 58 meters by 42 meters. What a view it had of the sea and town! Said showed us the remains of the Baptistery. Then we clambered down to see the necropolis. There were many damaged sarcophagi and it appeared they had been once contained in a round mausoleum. Some of the caskets were designed to hold two or even three people so a man could be buried with one or two wives.

We walked along the old city walls. In ancient times 2200 meters of wall protected the city.

We paused to see the 3rd century Roman theater and then the Nymphaeum where horses were brought to be watered and the people of the town got their drinking water.

At last we came to the two temples beside the amphitheater. Said told of the sacrifices that were made here.

This is a World Heritage site but it is in need of some money to try and restore it. I worry that the relics seen today will be lost because they are not protected from the weather or vandalism. Said remarked that the World Heritage people don't give money.

We drove from Tipasa to the Tomb of Mauritania. The kingdom of Mauritania³² used to border with the kingdom of Numidia³³ near here in ancient times. This wonderful tomb dates from the 3rd

³⁰ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/193>

³¹ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/losttemples/roman/garum.html>

³² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauretania>

³³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numidia>

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century BC is a circular pyramid on a high hill. Here was buried King Jubah 11³⁴ who had married Cleopatra Celene³⁵, one of Cleopatra's daughters. The tomb was surrounded by 120 Ionic columns and had four false doors. The real entrance was hidden below the earth and it led to a spiral hall that reached the tomb in the center. No one knows what treasures might have been here for the tomb was robbed in antiquity and there is nothing there at present. More recently terrorists hid in the area and there are marks on the building where shots were fired.

We had our huge boxed lunches sitting in the shade of the tomb. I tried to make friends with a feral cat by giving her pieces of ham and chicken but she would not come close enough to pat.

On the north side of the tomb we could see a lush agricultural valley stretching south to the Atlas Mountains³⁶. Only two ranges separate us from the desert.

We drove back to Algiers³⁷ and were taken to the Antiquities Museum³⁸. It was small but everything from Mosaics to small bronzes was beautifully displayed.

Nearby was a Museum of Islamic Art. I only toured one room of Islamic coins before a call of nature sent me to cope with the squat toilets available. I then sat in the shade and rested until the others joined me.

We drove to the top of the Casbah³⁹ and called on Mme Bahia. She is the niece of the owner of our tour company and she invited us into her lovely home. It is 500 years old. A central atrium rises three stories to the roof. We were invited to explore the entire house and on the third floor I found where the family lived. There was a living room, computer room and well-equipped kitchen.

On the roof we were offered delicious mint tea with pine nuts floating in it. The view from the roof was well worth the climb to get there.

We were told how the Casbah was badly damaged in the civil war and now is in a dilapidated state since there is no money to restore it. As we started our walk down to the buses we saw much evidence of this. Scaffolds shored up some archways. Some buildings were so badly damaged that nothing but the foundation remained. This is another World Heritage site but I fear there will be nothing left for future generations to see unless money is found to preserve it.

As we reached the bottom of the hill we found shops making furniture, selling shoes, making repairs and so forth. The most interesting one was where they sell the Karakou⁴⁰. These are the colorful native costumes from all over Algeria. A bride will have dresses in her trousseau from each section to show her national pride. She will wear them after her wedding to festivals.

We reboarded the buses and after viewing some of the other downtown buildings returned to the ship. It was a wonderful day but I was so happy to get out of my sweaty clothes and have a shower.

I had dinner with Christine Swanson and Sharon Miller, who are from Portland, OR, Gwen Williams, Ann Adams, and Sally Ehlers three ladies from Minnesota. They offered a showing of the Battle of Algiers after dinner but I was too tired to even contemplate it.

Wednesday, April 9. We docked at the small port of Béjaïa⁴¹ before sunrise and left in our buses at 7 am. The lighthouse in Béjaïa⁴² is the second highest in the world for it is up in the mountains. We drove for a time on the coastal road. Rome wanted to turn Algeria into a breadbasket. Legionaries were encouraged to settle here and given land grants if they married Berber women. Beside us the mountains rose straight up. We turned and headed up into these beautiful mountains, which I believe, are part of the Atlas range. The road in a narrow and spectacular

³⁴ <http://books.google.com/books?id=OkakVysphqgC&pg=RA1-PA55&lpg=RA1-PA55&dq=tomb+of+juba+11+mauretania&source=web&ots=3gfeoYmmMy&sig=hv7aFCD1w43dS4QmKYu-6vFLc8&hl=en>

³⁵ http://www.geocities.com/christopherjbennett/ptolemies/selene_ii.htm

³⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlas_Mountains

³⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algiers>

³⁸ http://www.arab.net/algeria/aa_museums.htm

³⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casbah>

⁴⁰ <http://images.google.com/images?q=karakou&ie=UTF-8&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1>

⁴¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saldae>

⁴² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saldae>

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gorge twisted its way up to over 2000 meters and we speculated on what the Roman's were thinking of to build in these inaccessible mountains. This is the Kabylia⁴³ part of Algeria and the driver played some Kabyle music for us as we drove. They are Berbers, as are the Tuareg, but don't live in the desert.

We stopped at the monument to the 450,000 men massacred at Herat by the French in 1945⁴⁴. Their bodies were loaded into trucks and dumped in the gorge. A painted monument vividly depicted the dump trucks casting bodies out and a pile of bodies below was washed in blood.

On a lighter note there were some macaque monkeys⁴⁵ living in the gorge and we enjoyed watching them scamper around. There are closely related to the Barbary apes that one sees at Gibraltar.

We stopped at the Hotel Amrouche after two hours, for refreshments and technical reasons, and it felt good to stretch our legs.

At last we reached the fertile high plateau called Selif. The Romans came here to grow grains for Rome, and we wondered if the numerous donkeys were descendants of the ones used to get the grain to the port. The high plain had herds of sheep, cows and goats. It was also plowing time and the farmers were turning the black earth to prepare for their crops.

After four hours we arrived at the city called Cocolita by the Romans that was renamed Djémila⁴⁶ by the Arabs. Djémila⁴⁷ means beautiful place and it spreads over many acres.

Outside the museum was a magnificent head of Septimus Severus⁴⁸, my old Roman emperor friend from Libya. The museum was small but had some wonderful mosaics. One showed the wildlife of the area. Lions and leopards lived in North Africa in Roman times. One mosaic showed dolphins. There was even a mosaic of a donkey. A hunting scene dominated the second room.

Then Said led us out on the site. He pointed out the theater cut into the side of the hill in the Greek manor. Then he led us to the fourth century Baptistery.

After viewing the basilica I was given the opportunity to join Mohamed's group which goes slower and only covers the highlights. We walked down through what had been a commercial area to the law basilica and the Temple of Septimus Severus. The French archaeologists had reconstructed the temple and also the nearby triumphal arch of Caracalla⁴⁹ his son.

Mohamed pointed out the difference in the highway stones. Outside the residential areas the stones were laid in a grid. In the residential areas the stones were laid at an angle. This was to slow the chariots down.

We went further down the hill; to the earliest part where there was a forum dating from the first century. We were shown the Temple to Venus. In the market I was able to identify the table of weights and measures. We were shown the prison. Everywhere there were ducts for carrying water and sewage. The Romans were much advanced in this.

Then we started the long way back up. Up hill is not my thing and I went slower and slower pausing often to catch my breath. I skipped the stop at the bath and slowly made my way back up to the top where I had time for a pit stop before boarding the bus for the four-hour trip back to the ship.

It was very hot and I was very tired but it had been a lovely day.

Tonight at the recap they talked of many things but the most interesting was the amazing security the Algerian Government has provided. Beyond our police escorts there are people working further afield to be sure no terrorist can get near us. We are probably using 20% of the security forces in the whole country.

Michel talked about Kabilya the area we are in. The Kabilyans were the indigenous people of Algeria and almost all Algerians can claim some Kabilyan blood today. The term is used simultaneously with Berber.

⁴³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabyle_people

⁴⁴ <http://www.turkishweekly.net/comments.php?id=2069>

⁴⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbary_Macaque

⁴⁶ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/191>

⁴⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dj%C3%A9mila>

⁴⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septimius_Severus

⁴⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caracalla>

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I finally connected with Sheila Gallagher. She was on the cruise to Libya two years ago. I kept feeling I had seen her before and sure enough I had. She is a lawyer from Anchorage and leaves a husband behind to travel on her own. We reminisced about Libya and then had dinner with Duncan and Diane Johnson. He is a lawyer and part of the Harvard group.

Thursday, April 10, 2008. We had not yet reached the port of Annaba⁵⁰ so I had a leisurely breakfast. Ron Wixman joined our table. He is such a dynamic person; I wish I could take a class with him at the university of Oregon. We got on to the subject of religion and the inaccuracies in the Bible. For him they were a set of parables used to illustrate the morality of the time. He then turned to genealogy and told me how DNA studies in England showed that 18% of the children were not by their acknowledged father and he is sure the same statistic would show up in America. The problem he says lies in the isolation in the suburbs where the housewife seldom sees her husband and seeks other men. He speaks in such a positive manner that it is impossible to disagree with him. It certainly gave me something to think about!

We had a lecture by Michel on post-independence in Algeria. After years under French rule, there was more civil war after the country became independent. The new independent country still had upheavals as the power struggle began. The new socialist country wanted to get rid of French as the native language and people were brought in from the Middle East to teach Arabic. Ahmed Ben Bella⁵¹, the first president of Algeria, made overtures to the communists but never advanced beyond socialism.

The Fundamentalists came to power and they gave the people ideology and faith but did not have economic solutions. The economy and agriculture were all in bad shape. It was pointed out that the people had limited choices, either support the corrupt government or support the terrorist group. Everything came to a head in the 1988 Black October riots⁵². One of the strongest military groups in the world lost credibility and is now implicated in Islamic terrorism.

The present president Abdelaziz Bouteflika⁵³ is a moderate with a more western style. He was elected in 1999 and has been president ever since. Elections are held every five years. Part of his popularity stems from the fact he offered amnesty to anyone who had not committed violence against the citizenry. He organized an economic recovery program and privatized many companies.

And then Ron made the astonishing statement that he has reduced terrorist attacks to only 1000 a year!

Most people are not extremists and they do not think that Islamic law should not be the law of the land. I hope the situation in Algeria will continue to improve so that they can once again be part of the world community.

We went out on tour and were taken to the lovely Church dedicated to St Augustine⁵⁴ (354-430 AD). He was born near here and studied all over the Magreb and the Middle East. He was a philosopher as well as a theologian and when he came back to Algeria he built a church.

The present church was built by the French starting in 1881. It took 19 years to complete. It is on a hill overlooking the city. The Maltese priest talked with us. There are only 400 Catholics in the entire diocese and only a handful in this part of Algeria. They only get 10-12 people for a mass. Most of the worshippers are the priest and the sisters who run the hospice for the elderly and infirm. They get no help from Rome. Their bishop raises money to support them.

The church is interesting in that it incorporates three styles. The overall shape is a cross in the Roman style but the arches along the nave are in Arab style. In the rounded apse you feel as if you are in a Byzantine church. French stained glass dating from 1899 decorates the high windows.

⁵⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caracalla>

⁵¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Ben_Bella

⁵² <http://www.onwar.com/aced/chrono/c1900s/yr85/falgeria1988.htm>

⁵³ http://i-cias.com/e.o/bouteflika_a.htm

⁵⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo

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There is a handsome marble pulpit and a lovely small altar fashioned from a Berber casket. The main altar is marble and behind it reposes an effigy of St Augustine with his leg bone prominently displayed. He was buried in Rome but the relic was returned to his church here in Algeria.

We drove back down the hill passing the Roman theater, which is not open to us and went to the site of Hippo Regius⁵⁵. Hippo was a Tyrian colony settled by the Phoenicians in the 12th century BC. It became the earliest Roman settlement in Algeria in 46 BC. We walked through the site, which was not easy as there were many thistles and thorns to avoid. Said, as usual, hurried on ahead and we had to struggle to keep up. He did show us the original church of St Augustine with its baptistery and we walked through the ancient market to the large forum. The town was destroyed so badly by the Vandals that when the Arabs came they started a new settlement nearby that is now Annaba.

We then got our lunch boxes out of the bus and walked up to the small museum overlooking the site. The lunch boxes must weigh five or more pounds so I was puffing and blowing all the way up. I did not even stop to visit with the friendly kitty that was near the path. They found a car to bring the more infirm people up the hill. There are some really crippled people on this trip who walk with canes and one lady who I suspect is in the beginning of Alzheimer's. One pair always claims the front seat on the bus because the older one tells us she has a broken foot, I do not include them in this group. She walks all over the various sites with little trouble.

In the small museum we first admired a bronze torso of Caesar and then the mosaics. There was a really nice mosaic of a hunting scene.

Then we had our picnic lunches in the shade of the museum. These lunches always have a couple of dry sandwiches, some fruit, a candy bar and cookies. None of us eat very much of them and it seems a terrible waste of food. Then we cued up to use the WCs before reboarding the buses.

Our next stop was the mosque of Sidi Bou Merouane⁵⁶. A Muslim saint, Sidi Bellit, who was born in 409 AD in Seville, founded it and his ancestry goes back to the prophet. He studied all over the Magreb and the Middle East before coming to Annaba. The mosque was renamed after a second saint, Sidi Bou Merouane, who came to Annaba in 1087.

It was a simple whitewashed structure. We took off our shoes and were ushered inside. There was the mihrab to show the direction of Mecca and the mimbar or pulpit from which the Imam gives his sermons on Friday. I was interested that the carpets were just ordinary carpets and not woven in such a way that the pattern had a point that could be faced in the direction of Mecca. Also the mosque had beautiful Corinthian capitals that had been quarried from nearby Hippo Regius. Some had been strengthened in 1839 to support a military hospital the French built on top of the then closed mosque. Our guide gave a demonstration of the prayer the Moslems use touching his forehead to the ground and ending with a sort of salute to both left and right angels.

We then were taken up to the roof and the Imam, clad all in white, told us he is totally against the radical Moslems and their violence. He showed us the tomb of Sidi Bou Merouane where people come to pray and he made a prayer for peace and us. We were not shown the Koranic school although we could hear the children in their recitations.

Downtown Annaba is French Colonial in flavor although the buildings are somewhat shabby. We had various building pointed out and then were taken to a craft shop. This is the first opportunity we have had to spend the dinars we had bought the first day. I bought two Berber pendants that were in the Kabylia style. They had some Tuareg pieces but I had bought some of those on the trip to Mali last year. Kabylia⁵⁷ means more to me on this trip.

At recap, Ron once more opened our mind by telling us that Allah Akbar (God is Great) the prayer of the Moslems is derived from the same Semitic root as Alleluia, which the Christians use.

⁵⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippo_Regius

⁵⁶ http://books.google.com/books?id=79et-oG13tcC&pg=PA39&lpg=PA39&dq=sidi+bellit+mosque&source=web&ots=_jdY9EVJfj&sig=tzmYAXX4lOnLXTFPqViZL5g6rrU&hl=en

⁵⁷ http://books.google.com/books?id=79et-oG13tcC&pg=PA39&lpg=PA39&dq=sidi+bellit+mosque&source=web&ots=_jdY9EVJfj&sig=tzmYAXX4lOnLXTFPqViZL5g6rrU&hl=en

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I had dinner with a large table of ladies, two of whom were the mother and daughter who own the front seat of the bus. The daughter held us all captive with her chatter. Apparently they do nothing but travel and have no real life.

Friday, April 11, 2008. In the morning Emily gave a talk on Carthage⁵⁸. The Phoenicians moved west across the Mediterranean from the Middle East. The term Punic refers to the Phoenicians. Legend says that Dido⁵⁹ (her name means fugitive) came with 80 virgins in 846 BC to start a new colony. The indigenous Numidians granted her the right to as much land as could be enclosed by a bursa or oxhide. She cut the hide into small slivers and was able to claim the area now called Bursa Hill for her city. The name Carthage means new city.

The city had two harbors. One was more or less rectangular and was the commercial port. Beyond was a circular harbor that could hold 220 military vessels. In the center of the circular harbor was an island that acted as a shipyard.

Carthage became very powerful and challenged the might of Rome. Three Punic wars were fought and finally Cato the Elder said Carthage must be destroyed. The Romans defeated Carthage and the city was razed and the fields were salted over in 146 BC.

Later a Roman city was built on the site, which endured until the Vandals came in the 3rd century. The Byzantines then came only to be conquered by the Arabs in 647.

She commented on the religion. Baal⁶⁰ and Tanit⁶¹ were the main gods. The Carthaginians made sacrifices of children to appease the gods. A Tophet⁶² cemetery has been found where these children were cremated and the remains buried in jars.

However Carthage in other ways was very modern. They had a written alphabet that was later modified by the Greeks. Women were educated. They were known for the quality of their pastry.

I skipped the second lecture on mosaics. They have kept us so busy I have had no time for myself. I worked on my journal and had time to reflect.

We docked at La Goulette⁶³, the port for Tunis⁶⁴, Tunisia. Our passports were returned to us and we had to have each stamped as we left the ship. This means we can come and go as we wish. No more protective police escorts will be a welcome change.

Our guide, Driss, speaks clearly but not as loud as Said so I missed much of his talk. However this is my third trip to Tunisia so I believe I know what is going on.

Our first stop was at the North African American Cemetery and Memorial⁶⁵. This is one of twenty-four cemeteries the United States operates overseas. The site covers twenty-seven acres and there are 2833 white headstones lined up in military precision on a pristine grass lawn.

After World War 11, a survey showed that most of the temporary military cemeteries in North Africa had disadvantages and so this cemetery was established in 1948 and all the remains were brought here for reinterment.

An arcade along one side has inscribed on its 364-foot wall the names of the missing. 3,095 were from the United States army and Air Force, 615 are from the United States Navy and 14 are from the United States Coastguard. They were from every state in the union. Their remains were either not identified or they were lost or buried at sea in the waters near the African continent.

The superintendent, Michael Koontz [spelling uncertain], was born in Tampa Florida and is a 24-year veteran. He escorted us down the Wall of the Missing telling tales about some of the individuals. Occasionally a rosette by a name showed that the individual has been identified and the remains have been sent home at the family's request.

Three marble statues decorate the wall to represent honor, memory and recollection. At each end of the columned walkway is a plaque reading, "HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF AMERICANS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY AND WHO

⁵⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthage>

⁵⁹ <http://homepage.mac.com/cparada/GML/Dido.html>

⁶⁰ <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/b/baal.html>

⁶¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanit>

⁶² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tophet>

⁶³ <http://www.lagoulette.net/>

⁶⁴ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15088a.htm>

⁶⁵ <http://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries/cemeteries/na.php>

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SLEEP IN UNKNOWN GRAVES 1941-1945 * INTO THY HANDS O LORD". Beyond there are maps made of ceramic tile that depict the details of the North African campaign⁶⁶. We stood while the national anthem was played followed by taps. This was followed by a few moments in the chapel. I am sure I was not the only one moved to tears by it all.

SOME THERE BE WHICH HAVE NO SEPULCHRE. THEIR NAMES LIVETH FOR EVERMORE.

We then proceeded to Bursa Hill viewing the remains of the old aqueduct and the fifteen huge cisterns the Romans installed to store the water.

St Louis Church now dominates Bursa Hill. Near its summit, on the site of the Roman Forum, is the Carthage Museum⁶⁷. A few fragments of columns and so forth mark the site where the temple stood. Over a wall we saw the meager remains of the Punic town. While Roman towns were laid out on a grid oriented north and south, the street plan of Carthage was different. We could see the remnants of some Punic villas.

We entered the small museum and were shown some of the tombstones and caskets from the Tophet graveyard. There were also mosaics and some of the glass and ceramic pieces that have been found. On the whole the museum was a disappointment compared to others we have seen on this trip.

Leaving the museum, among the shops, I found an ice-cream vendor and enjoyed a delicious pistachio and chocolate cone.

We continued to the huge 2nd century Antonine Baths⁶⁸. These were the third largest in the Roman Empire. We could make out the caldarium where the water was heated and behind it the frigidarium. What made this bath unique was that there were separate wings for men and women each with its own tepidarium.

In the shops outside I found a copy of the silver wire necklace I bought here in 2005 and have since lost. In the dicker I asked if it came in longer lengths for I like to be able to put it on over my head without having to fuss with a clasp. I was told they did not have a longer one but could put two together for me. I watched while Bahoo deftly combined the two and felt I got my \$20 worth.

We continued on to the Tophet cemetery. First we viewed the stones that had been found. Driss felt that the children sacrificed had either been badly deformed or even already dead, but this is not what Emily had told us. The children were all less than 4 years old. To get Tanit's help I feel it had to have been a healthy child. As I looked down into the 12-meter deep excavation I felt very sad that such a barbaric custom had existed.

Our last stop was to view the ancient harbors⁶⁹. They look so small by modern standards but of course ships were smaller then. The entrance could be sealed with an enormous chain.

During recap Emily talked about the problem archaeologists have in deciding what layer they want to save. Archaeology destroys the rest. When I view a site I realize that nature is destroying what has been found and I wonder what future generations will be able to see. Only a few times, and not at all on this trip, have I seen where archaeological remains are under a roof or otherwise protected. Hopefully in the future better techniques will be developed so that remains can be scrutinized with lasers or whatever and left in situ.

Paul Harris talked about the North Africa Campaign⁷⁰ and how important it was. It seasoned the troops for their subsequent invasion of Europe. Over one million Germans were killed and the Suez was protected.

I had dinner with Ellen. I told her how I admired her stylish wardrobe, which puts my raunchy travel clothes to shame.

Saturday, April 12. I am so tired and stiff and sore that I decided to take the morning off. The group is touring the Bardo Museum⁷¹ and Sidi Bou Said⁷², which I remember well from two and a half years ago. I wrote in this journal and even slept for a couple of hours!

⁶⁶ <http://www.topedge.com/panels/ww2/na/noframe.html>

⁶⁷ http://www.tourismtunisia.com/culture/carthage_m.html

⁶⁸ <http://lexicorient.com/tunisia/carthage03.htm>

⁶⁹ <http://www.gearthacks.com/downloads/map.php?file=14413>

⁷⁰ <http://www.topedge.com/panels/ww2/na/noframe.html>

⁷¹ <http://www.tourismtunisia.com/culture/bardo.html>

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My friends reported that the crowds in the Bardo were very bad. I was not surprised as there were four huge cruise ships tied up near us. I noted that one was only in port for three hours and wondered what they could have seen in the time allotted them. One hour of their time had to be spent going to and from Tunis.

With so much leisure I checked out the shop displays on the ship and decided to buy a silver and glass ring. It was made in Israel but the glass is authentic Roman period glass. I had to wait until we went back out to sea before I could buy it.

They took us up the top deck for a group photo with what must have been a fisheye lens for the 62 of us are supposed to show with our sails in the background. There was a sea rolling and I had to keep a hand on the rail. I understand I am to receive a picture book of the trip.

This was followed by Ron's lecture on the Geopolitics of the Middle East. I am no clearer now than before but Ron drew the conclusion that it was all about curtailing Russia's expansion. Russia had bases in Alaska and Hawaii. They were reaching into the Balkans. This is why the Middle East was carved up the way it was with no regard to ethnic divisions. France and England worked hand in hand to control the seaways. England had Gibraltar, France had Morocco. England had Malta, France had Tunisia. And so on until England had Aden and France had Djibouti. By having control of the sea they could contain Russia, which was so vast that you needed to go around the world by ship to get from east to west in the country.

The Crimean War was the beginning of the conflict to contain the Ottoman Empire and it continued through the First World War. The US backed the unpopular Shah of Iran as part of all this.

During recap Michel talked about the freedom of women in Tunisia. It may be because the President had a French wife. Among other things abortion is allowed which is unknown in the rest of the Arab world. Human rights however have a long way to go. Islamic fundamentalism is forbidden and hundreds have been jailed.

Tunisia has no oil or gas but pipelines run through Tunisia from Libya and Algeria on their way to Sicily and Europe.

David spoke about the blue and white color scheme of Sidi Bou Said. This same color scheme can be found in Mykonos, Greece and other places. The blue is suppose to avert the evil eye.

Mark Brazil⁷³, our resident naturalist, has had a difficult time on this trip. He was not allowed to take his binoculars ashore in Algeria. Tonight he mentioned that the mosaics in the Bardo show the flora and fauna of the Magreb. There were also introduced species like pheasants and tigers depicted.

I had dinner with Ellen and Patti. Mike is suffering from mal de mer.

Sunday, April 13, 2008. We came into Sousse⁷⁴. It was founded in the 8th century BC and destroyed by the Moslems in the 7th Century AD. In the 8th Century a military base was established here.

The Tunisian authorities wanted us to show our passports and somehow I had lost my blue card. Lynne Greig, the Cruise Director, even went through my purse to look for it. It was embarrassing but I had lost it. While the passengers disembarked they found another blue card for me but filled it out for Megan Stevens. The keen eyed customs officials caught the wrong name and so yet another card had to be filled out. As a result I was the last person off the ship.

We had a choice of trips. There were 24 of us who chose the excursion to Kairouan⁷⁵. I had taken the excursion to El Jem⁷⁶ two years ago when I was here.

Our guide told us how 13 different colors of marble are found in Tunisia. It is about a half hour drive through a flat landscape sprinkled with almond and olive trees and wheat fields. Our guide explained that Mosques are very plain inside since you should not have anything to distract you

⁷² <http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&hs=5kB&resnum=0&q=sidi+bou+said&um=1&ie=UTF-8>

⁷³ <http://www.zeco.com/library/mark-brazil.asp>

⁷⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sousse>

⁷⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kairouan>

⁷⁶ <http://lexicorient.com/e.o/jem.htm>

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from thinking of God. Mohamed had first suggested that you pray 50 times a day but it would not be practical. Our guide also said that most Tunisians do not pray even five times a day.

Kairouan⁷⁷ is the fourth holiest city in Islam after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. The city was founded in 617 as a garrison for the advancing Arabs. It became a staging point for further advances into Algeria and Spain.

We stopped at the Visitors center and were escorted to the roof to see the city. The city was the capitol of Tunisia for two hundred years. There are many mosques, each having only one minaret. Originally the minarets were used as signaling towers. Today they are only used for the calls to prayer. Even the call to prayer is automated and the muezzin never has to climb the minaret.

Then we were taken to the Mausoleum of Sidi Essahbi who was one of the original nine friends of the prophet. We entered a beautiful hallway with ceramic tile walls and with the cut plaster designs above. The crushed marble and gypsum plaster is all cut by hand. These were much more primitive than the designs of the Alhambra and dated from the 8th century. Our guide showed the various traditional designs such as the eight-pointed star and the yellow rose medallions that were from Andalusia designs. There were tree designs, which were for hope.

We entered another domed chamber that was even more beautiful. It dated from the 10th Century.

Then we entered the open courtyard. We were only allowed to look in where the saint was entombed. The doors were ornate and made of Lebanese Cedar. We were blessed with orange water poured in our hands.

We looked in the prayer hall and could see the Mihrab and Mimbar. On the wall were five clocks showing the times of prayer. The times vary from day to day because of the movement of the sun.

Next we went to the Great Mosque. The huge courtyard measures 84 meters by 80 meters. It was built this way in the 7th century so that there was room for the garrison to camp in it. Even today people can come to the mosque to sleep.

The Mosque was made of plain bricks but Moorish archways around the courtyard were decorated with beautiful Roman columns. They must have been transported from a long way off for the nearest Roman site is 70 kilometers away in Sousse. Sadly, the columns have been installed carelessly as the engineers must have more interested in them for support than aesthetics. One column is said to have a Christian cross carved on it.

There are several wells for washing. Our guide took the cover off one so that we could see the water. We looked into the prayer room that had some lovely carpets and a beautiful Mihrab and Mimbar made of teakwood. Around the Mihrab there are pieces of ceramics that have been brought from Iraq.

From there we went to see the Kairouan carpets⁷⁸. No trip to the Arab world is complete without a rug stop. I have been to many of these shows. They have the advantage of rest rooms and mint tea and it is fun to see the precision with which they unroll the rugs for us to enjoy. When one of our group bought a rug we were told to applaud. After that several others bought rugs to which we dutifully applauded. Even if I had wanted a rug, the applause would have deterred me!

Then we took a walk through the Suq⁷⁹ the Arab equivalent of a shopping mall. It was a pleasant open air Suq and it was obvious that Tunisians came here to shop. A barbershop and meat shops were tucked in among shops selling housewares and clothing. We looked in a pastry shop and I found it incongruous that four sheep heads were lying near the entrance.

I looked at some jewelry and then all of a sudden I realized I had lost the group! Shades of the Alhambra. I hastily retraced my steps and got to the street just as they were boarding the bus. It would have been so embarrassing to have been left twice!

We drove back to the ship and surrendered our passports. I had lunch with Ellen and got to admire some lovely silver pieces she had bought on her trip to El Jem.

⁷⁷ <http://images.google.com/images?q=kairouan&ie=UTF-8&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1>

⁷⁸ <http://www.travelblog.org/Photos/197233.html>

⁷⁹ <http://i-cias.com/e.o/suq.htm>

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I was lazy in the afternoon, skipping one lecture and only catching half of the second on the Siege of Malta⁸⁰ for I had a massage appointment. The siege of Malta took place in 1565 when the Ottoman Empire invaded the Island. It was one of the bloodiest and fiercely contested in history and established the Turks as a force to be reckoned with.

My massage was with a different girl and she started by wire brushing me to get my circulation going. It was a different sensation!

Much to my surprise I was invited to have dinner with Captain Andrew Walsh. We assembled in the lobby at 7:45 to walk in together. Others in the party were Monica and Paul Bancroft, Derek and Tricia Tils and Christine and Sharon. They had all had many trips with Zegrahm. I don't know why I was included since I am on my first trip.

Monday, April 14. The last day. No early wakeup call for a change! I went to the disembarkation talk with Lynne. Zegrahm makes it very easy since all the tipping is taken care of. I don't even have colored luggage tags since I am on independent arrangements.

I was on deck to watch us come into the Grand Harbor of Malta⁸¹. It was a sparkling day with a brisk breeze making white caps on the deep blue sea. On every side were fortresses and bastions left over from the days of the Knights of Malta⁸². There are 20 miles of fortresses on the island. There is now a renovation program for these buttresses that will cost millions of dollars. Since almost everything is built with limestone, a soft stone that disintegrates, they are injecting some sort of lime into the old stones to strengthen them.

We were taken on a bus and walking tour of the city. Our guide, Anna Giusti was very good.

Malta is the furthest south country in the European Union. They started using the Euro in the last year or two. There are three major islands. Malta is the biggest. Camino, the smallest only has 3 inhabitants but there is a hotel there for those that want to get away from it all. The third is the island of Gozo.

Malta's history goes back to 3200 BC when an unknown civilization built temples with great monolithic rocks. The Phoenicians came here, as did the Romans. Malta's location makes control of the island important in the control of the Mediterranean. The settlement most in evidence is when the Knights of St John came here. Returning from the crusades they first went and fortified the islands of Cyprus (1291) and Rhodes (1390). In 1490 Suleiman the Magnificent conquered Rhodes and the knights were homeless for three years until Spain offered them Malta or Tripoli and Malta was chosen as their new home. Their main purpose was to care for the sick and injured pilgrims and a hospital was built. To deter the pirates that were sweeping the Mediterranean they built massive fortresses and battlements to protect their island. The Arabs did conquer them and later the British defeated the Arabs. However on Malta you are still most conscious of the knights.

Anna took us to the main square. At one end was the ruin of the burned out Royal Opera House⁸³ destroyed by German bombs in 1942. The Maltese can't decide whether to rebuild it as it was or build a more modern building. Today it seems the plan is to build a parliament building on the site.

Anna named the countries that contributed knights: Spain, Portugal, France, Provence, Italy, Germany and England. They came from noble families. Each nationality needed an auberge, or inn, where they could stay inside the walls. We paused to admire the baroque Spanish Auberge⁸⁴. Built originally in Renaissance style, it was embellished to the present baroque style in 1744. The steps are not high for they had to be easy for the knights to use, burdened in their heavy armor.

⁸⁰ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Malta_\(1565\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Malta_(1565))

⁸¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malta>

⁸² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knights_Hospitaller

⁸³ <http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/1835/ophouse.htm>

⁸⁴ <http://www.sanandrea.edu.mt/Senior/CyberFair/knights/6c.html>
<http://www.sanandrea.edu.mt/Senior/CyberFair/knights/6c.html>

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Buildings are made of the local limestone. Wood is very expensive, as it must be imported. Then we walked into the Barracca Garden⁸⁵, a lovely spot with flowers and trees. A beguiling cat watched us from the limb of an olive tree.

Anna spoke of the olive trees. When you had an enemy you burned his olive tree. However, now the olives are back and Malta has a high quality of oil.

Beyond the garden we stood at the battlement for a fine view of the Grand Harbor. One area is devoted to ship yards for repairing ships is one of Malta's industries. Anna pointed out the home of one of the Grand Masters of the Knights with its two flags. It was from Malta that the allies launched the invasion of Italy during WW 2. Malta was badly damaged by the bombing during WW2.

We came to St John's Cathedral⁸⁶ built by the knights between 1573 and 1578. Outside there were two clocks: one told the correct time, the other an incorrect time. This is done to confuse the devil so he wouldn't know what time mass was to be held. I saw this clock charade on many churches during my stay. There was also a calendar to show the date. The structure of the church was a bastion of strength to give protection from the Turks.

The interior of the church is being refurbished and the colored marble tombstones that form the floor of the cathedral compliment the sight of so much gold on the walls and ceiling. The walls are elaborately carved and all of the carving was done in place. The knights planned that you walk on their tombs for they want you to pray for them. Now a carpeted walkway covers many of the tombs and it is planned to have a glass floor to protect them for posterity. Since the knights were from the nobility crests and coats of arms decorate the slabs.

Two marble figures behind the altar are of John the Baptist and Jesus. There are huge silver candlesticks that were given to the church to commemorate each new Grand Master.

The church is an art gallery with many paintings in the chapels. The ceiling has scenes from the life of John the Baptist. Anna pointed out they are not really frescoes since frescoes are painted directly on the surface. Here the ceiling had to be treated because the limestone was so porous before the painting could be done. Shadows were painted in the scenes to give a three dimensional effect.

Most famous is Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's masterpiece in the Oratory. Caravaggio⁸⁷ was not noble; in fact he was a convict. He was promised knighthood if he would paint for the church. When the painting were almost done Caravaggio got into a fight with the organist who refused to play for the installation ceremony. He was imprisoned but managed to escape. It is thought his patron, the Grand Master, arranged the escape. He went to Rome where he died two years later.

His masterpiece depicts the beheading of John the Baptist⁸⁸. It is a dramatic painting with only the action highlighted. The rest of the canvas is in shadows for that was the artist's style.

Another Caravaggio painting was stolen from the church and for months the thieves demanded a ransom sending small clippings from the painting to prove they really had it. At last word came that the painting was about to leave the island and all the airports and seaports were closed. The painting was found rolled up in a small private jet about to take off. Fortunately the clippings were from the edge of the painting and now a heavy frame conceals the mutilation.

We then walked to the archaeological museum⁸⁹. This small museum has some incredible things. In 3200 BC unknown people came to Malta and built temples. These are the oldest buildings in the world. Their age makes the pyramids and Stonehenge seem like they were built yesterday!

Once Malta was connected to the rest of Europe but the water rose and now Sicily is 20 miles away by water. Animals took refuge here to escape the ice age. The Maltese elephants were tiny, only 3 feet tall. Bear, fox and hippo bones have been found on Malta. The animals were

⁸⁵ http://www.carto.net/neumann/travelling/2006/malta_2006_03/02_valletta_2006_03_18/

⁸⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._John's_Co-Cathedral

⁸⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caravaggio>

⁸⁸ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beheading_of_Saint_John_the_Baptist_\(Caravaggio\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beheading_of_Saint_John_the_Baptist_(Caravaggio))

⁸⁹ <http://www.heritagemalta.org/archaeologymuseum.html>

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small probably due to a lack of food for Malta is such a rocky island that today the only way things can be grown is on terraces formed by backfilling a wall of stone with earth.

At Skorba⁹⁰ objects were found made of pumice stone that must have come from Etna or other volcanoes in Italy.

They seemed to have been worshipping a fertility goddess and one very large carving and many small ones were found of a fat lady. Most of the statuettes were found beheaded with the heads buried nearby. One tiny one was of the lady lying down and it reminded me of the small fetishes found in later civilizations.

Back in the bus Anna told us how everyone learns English and Maltese in the early grades. They then learn Italian and lastly German and French. She speaks seven languages and is presently trying to learn Japanese. There is 5% unemployment on Malta and the average wage is 400 Euros a week. Engagements can last 5 or 6 years while the couple saves to buy a house. Almost everyone owns his or her house. Divorce and abortion are against the law in this Catholic country. Anna herself has five children ranging in age from 7 to 17. Cremation is also forbidden. The Maltese language is more similar to Lebanese than any more probably reflecting the Phoenicians who came here. It is the only Semitic language with a Roman alphabet.

We went to the megalithic Tarxien Temple⁹¹. Near the entrance Anna pointed out the national plant, Widnetilbahar⁹², or Maltese Rock-Centuary plant, a sedum that grows on the cliffs, its leaves are shaped like the knight's helmets. A fragrant garden of stock led up to the temple. It was found accidentally when they were excavating for an apartment building. Carbon dating places its age at about 5000 years. The building is interesting. A short nave separates two chapels with curved apses. There is a place where they tied the animals before sacrificing them on what appears an altar. In one spot they have a reproduction of the large fat lady we had seen in the museum. Behind there was a third chapel. Nearby was another similar temple although here the apse was more like a niche and not as curved. This seems to be the pattern with these ancients. They built two complete temples and the reason can only be guessed.

We returned to the boat and finished our packing. At recap each of our experts summarized what he felt most impressive about our cruise. For our last dinner I ate with Kim Marshall and her roommate Louise Smith, Christine and Sharon and Ellen. Everyone headed for bed early to prepare for most have very early departures tomorrow.

Tuesday, April 15. I disembarked as quickly as I could (about 7:45) for Anna was waiting on the dock with a car and driver, Franz. We drove for about a half hour to the far end of the island and the ferry to Gozo⁹³. The countryside is laced with stone terraces and you could see the onion crop, which Malta is proud of. There were olive trees also growing in the rocky soil. Anna pointed out where Robin Williams was filmed in Popeye⁹⁴ at Anchor Bay, and also told me that the Count of Monte Cristo was filmed here. The island is shaped like a whale and just before we got to the tail there was a point where water could be seen on both sides of the narrow peninsula.

The ferry ride took 20 minutes. There were many tour groups who had to leave their buses on Malta and pick up new ones on Gozo. I don't believe I have mentioned that some of the buses on Malta are real antiques, a few 70 years old⁹⁵. They are mostly used for the tourists. There is now a program to replace them with modern buses.

Gozo has a different feel to Malta. The air seems fresher; the pace slower, there is less noise and everything is spic and span as though they sweep the streets. The name comes from an Arabic name "Gawdex". The island is 67 Kilometers square or 12 by 5 miles or about the size of Hong Kong Island. The people are mostly farmers and fishermen. The Gozotan women start to learn how to make lace at the age of seven and their cottage industry also produces sweaters and other knitted garments.

⁹⁰ <http://www.heritagemalta.org/skorbatemples.html>

⁹¹ <http://www.maltavoyager.com/moa/areas/tarxien.htm>

⁹² <http://www.maltavoyager.com/moa/areas/tarxien.htm>

⁹³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gozo>

⁹⁴ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popeye_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popeye_(film))

⁹⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bn0_6eqHGpo&NR=1

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There are eleven villages and one town on the island. Every town has a prominent church⁹⁶ that can be seen from far away. We stopped to view St Johns Church. It was built over another church and built using no scaffolding, using the older church to support the construction. After the church was built, the old chapel was dismantled, the stones were numbered and it was reassembled behind the new church. The church has the shape of an Eastern Church under a high dome. The old chapel was nice. In it two little ladies not five feet tall were selling hand made articles to support their church. I bought a guidebook to Gozo and hope I helped their cause along. Anna tells me that the people of Gozo are all tiny like these women. Many of the church festivals are celebrated with fireworks and Malta has competed well in worldwide fireworks contests.

We drove on and Anna pointed out one of the ancient windmills⁹⁷ built for grain. Only a few still have sails.

Anna pointed out that there is not a lot of water on the island. Water is collected in cisterns and there are desalination plants. Only 20% comes from underground water.

Gozo is an island with 3 women for every man. When Anna paused for our reaction she continued, most of them are nuns. There are many Catholic churches on Gozo, one for every 60 people, and the people support their churches rather than be taxed for their membership as we discovered happened in Germany.

The highlight of the day was the Ggantija Temple⁹⁸ (this footnote will direct you to some remarkable pictures of the site) in Xaghra. This is the oldest temple and it was built 3200 years ago. It was built on a hilltop 200 years before the pyramids! Just as at the Tarxien Temple huge boulders had been placed using round stones and tree trunks to move them. Unfortunately the temple was full of sightseers so it was hard to really enjoy its features. Like the Tarxien temple it was built with two semicircular apses off a central nave and there was a third chamber behind. Anna pointed out that some of the foundations are the original stones with carvings on them. There was an area where the bones of the animals were found and a stone was pointed out that was perhaps the altar where they were slaughtered. I'm glad I saw it now for the government plans to place a roof over it to protect it and it will not seem the same.

Gozo is supposed to be the legendary island where Calypso⁹⁹ detained Odysseus for seven years while he was on his way home to Penelope. We stopped and enjoyed the sight of a red sand beach near the blue sea. A Roman villa was found under the beach but it was recovered with sand to protect it. Now the water is rising and the beach may disappear. I would have climbed down to see Calypso's cave but Anna warned that it would be slippery and I might be hurt.

We drove through another town and I noted many people had bamboos shades that they could drop to protect their wooden doors. One porch boasted a kangaroo. Anna told me that some Gozitans had left the area only to come back years later. This family wanted to remember their stay down under. Franz found a bank and I was able to cash the travelers checks I have carried for four or five years. I bought them when the Euro was worth \$1.20 and now it is worth \$1.60 so my investment has paid off.

We passed Victoria, the capitol and noted it had an acropolis much as Athens had. Our next stop was the Azure Window at Dwejra Point¹⁰⁰, a natural arch through which the azure sea is framed. It was lovely on the Point with a good breeze kicking up whitecaps in the water. Unfortunately the arch may not survive much longer. There were signs warning of danger if you approached too close.

We returned to the citadel of Victoria¹⁰¹. Its ancient name was Rabat, which means "town" in Arabic, but it was renamed for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. There are two gates to enter the old citadel. The smaller one was original; the second was done so that the festival parades could be held. It was high enough so that the statues could be paraded out. There was a jail and the

⁹⁶ <http://www.maltagozo.com/churches.html>

⁹⁷ <http://windmillsofmalta.nl/>

⁹⁸ <http://www.maltavista.net/en/list/photo/1028.html>

⁹⁹ <http://www.showcaves.com/english/mt/caves/Calypso.html>

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.maltavista.net/en/list/photo/1153.html>

¹⁰¹ <http://www.gozo.gov.mt/pages.aspx?page=37>

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church was large enough so that 100 people could take refuge here in the event of an attack. When Napoleon came he scraped off the coats of arms.

We walked to the top and admired the view. We could see all three islands, Malta, Comino and Gozo. Then we stopped at the Ricardo Restaurant, which was in one of the original buildings. Anna ordered a sort of salad plate that we shared. It contained olives, capers, onions, tomatoes and two kinds of the local goat cheese. I liked the soft spreadable one; the other was dryer and seasoned with pepper and not to my taste. The local bread called Hobz¹⁰² is delicious and it takes all day to make it. We washed the meal down with the local wine. As we walked out of the gate there was an ice cream vendor and I enjoyed a huge pistachio cone. I think Anna found my enjoyment of it amusing. She did not join me.

She then took me to a lace shop where they demonstrated how to make the lovely lace. I bought a dresser runner with the Maltese cross¹⁰³ on it all in lace. I then tried to buy a gold Maltese cross on a chain. I totally misunderstood the price. I tried to put it on a credit card and it was refused. I have had trouble this whole trip with my cards. Finally I said I would pay cash but when I pulled my cash out the lady told me I did not have enough. That's when I found the price was 1069 Euros and not 169! I'm glad my credit was refused for I would have had a bad shock when I got the bill.

The Maltese Cross has eight points representing the eight beatitudes given in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-10).

We stopped at picturesque Xlendi Bay that was a pirate cove. Anna tells me that out of sight but near here is a beach where only nuns can bathe.

From the small village of Gala we had a view of all three islands. Then it was time to catch the ferry.

They took me to the Radisson Bay Point Hotel¹⁰⁴. It is on the water but it was too cold to enjoy the terrace. There was nothing else to do so I had a nap and then had a club sandwich in the hotel (with wine and a bottle of water it cost \$26) and went early to bed.

Wednesday, April 16. My wakeup call was memorable. The TV set came on at 4:15 and a clock was shown. The initial buzz was soft but it got more and more insistent as I tried to figure out how to turn the darned thing off.

My taxi took me through deserted streets to the airport. The ride cost 21 Euro. I checked in with Air Malta and then was given directions to their lounge. First class doesn't mean much in Europe for the planes use the same seats as in coach, they just don't sell the middle seat. However, the lounge was certainly a nice place to wait for my 7:15 flight to London Heathrow.

There a Delta Rep who called me by name met me. I was turned over to a wheelchair pusher who literally ran me through security and the duty free mall to one of the nicest lounges I have ever been in. They had free Internet, games and videos as well as the usual newspapers and magazines. I went out and found an electronics shop and bought a camera to replace the one I lost. Then I boarded the Delta flight to Atlanta.

¹⁰² http://www.magrohomes.com.mt/food_bread.asp

¹⁰³ <http://www.cityofmaryesther.com/FireDepartment/Lore/MalteseCross.html>

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.baypoint.malta.radissonsas.com/>

