

June 30, 2008

What a long haul this spring was! Totally exhausting! After arriving back to our boat in Marmaris on March 10, we never dreamt that we would not leave Turkey until 16 weeks later.

One of the main jobs that we had to do this spring was to replace the fuel tank on our boat, a major undertaking. As our fuel tank was built into the boat, part of the boat had to be torn apart in order to get the fuel tank out, which included Phil’s taking out the stove and all the drawers in the galley. Phil started tearing the boat apart the week after we returned, and during this period we lived in an apartment in Beldibi, a neighborhood village within Marmaris city limits.



As this was our second aluminum fuel tank to leak, we decided to have the new tank made out of plastic. The major plastic fuel tank company in Turkey was located in Istanbul. By communicating with the company’s representative in Marmaris during our winter’s stay back in Florida, the entire undertaking was organized even before we returned in March. Once the fuel tank was removed, the representative from the plastics company came and took the measurements of the old fuel tank and sent the drawings up to Istanbul. Three weeks later we received our new tank. The only problem was that the tank had been fabricated backwards. It was the mirror image of our old tank. This was depressing news as a month had now passed since our return to Turkey. In a way, though, it was a “blessing in disguise” as we were never told beforehand that 35% of our fuel capacity would be lost changing from aluminum to plastic. For a cruising sailboat like ours, that’s a big difference, especially as we were planning an ocean crossing. So in the end, we returned to aluminum.



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Before the new aluminum tank could be made, we felt it necessary to wait until the company's representative returned to Marmaris the following week and acknowledge his error in order to receive our full refund. During this waiting period we went forward with our boat haulout period as planned. We spent 12 days in the boatyard. Our two major jobs were putting on new bottom paint and replacing the cutlass bearing. As the cutlass bearing supports the engine shaft as it goes through the hull, it's almost impossible to obtain the correct inside measurement of the bearing until the boat is actually out of the water. We brought one back from Florida, but it was not the correct size. Phil tried to find one in Turkey, but that failed. Finally, searching online, he obtained the correct size cutlass bearing from a company in the States. It arrived via DHL a couple of days later. During our haulout period, Phil hired a local worker to help him with the sanding and polishing, and as we had the new aluminum tank fabricated locally, we received it on April 29, the day we went back into the water.



During our short time back in Turkey, we had come to enjoy many of the cruisers "wintering over" at Netsel Marina. It was hard to believe that by the time we put our boat back into the water, most cruisers were leaving for the season, including our friends headed out of the Mediterranean.

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In all, we spent 8 weeks in the apartment in Beldibi before returning to our boat on May 14. Somehow, our wonderful apartment made these long and exhausting weeks off the boat much more bearable. Our unit was a two bedroom apartment on the bottom floor of a two story four-plex, complete with a washing machine, satellite TV, and small patio. The grass outside the unit was part of the common grounds of the larger condominium complex, so its upkeep was maintained regularly by the gardener. With the surrounding hills by our apartment covered with pine trees, the tree's fragrant scent and rustling sound reminded us much of the Northwest. And, it was easy to get back and forth to the boat from the apartment as the bus stop was located just outside our condominium complex. The dolmus (small bus) ride into Marmaris center took 10 minutes and then the walk to Netsel Marina another 10 minutes. Or, if we wished, we could walk to the boat in about an hour as it was only 3 miles away.



The village of Beldibi had its own Ataturk statue, village council, and weekly Sunday market. To shop at one of Turkey's weekly markets was a fun experience as Turkey's seasonal fruits and vegetables were bountiful and relatively inexpensive. Mary would come back to the apartment each Sunday with a full week's supply of fruits and vegetables. In the 8 weeks at the apartment, she became friendly with a few of the local market vendors, plus the girls at the nearby mini-mart. When walking pass the street next to our apartment building on her way to the mini-mart, she always enjoyed watching the neighborhood boys at play. Often, they reminded her of her own sons when young, as their creativity was boundless. For a few weeks they created this racing game using scrap lumber, and many of the neighborhood boys joined in the fun.



*Olive Vendor*



*Spice Vendor*

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On April 23, 1920, the first meeting of the Turkish Grand National Assembly was held following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. A few years later, Ataturk, the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, dedicated April 23rd to the children of Turkey, the country's future. Now, the day was called National Sovereignty and Children's Day, and on this national holiday Turkish flags decorated every town and village and children's festivities took place all over the country. Before heading to the boat that day, Mary watched some of the children's festivities at Beldibi's open-air theater. Noticeable were the Turkish flags and the picture of Ataturk draping the stage as Ataturk was still highly revered by all Turks.



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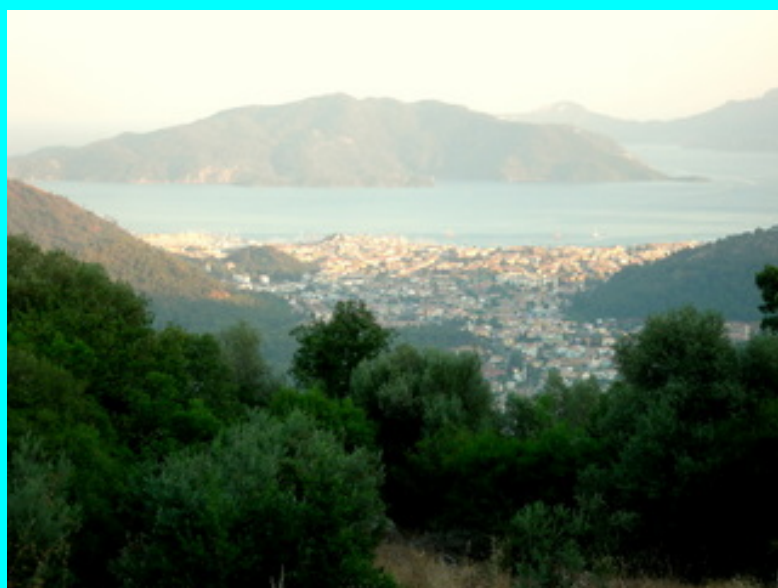


After our return to the boat on May 14, we still had more work to do as some projects had been set aside during the installation of the fuel tank. In addition, a few more days were even needed to finish cleaning the interior of the boat as the fine work dust had coated just about everything; every shelf and every drawer needed to be cleaned. During these busy times we enjoyed a lot of “take away” meals. One of our favorites was chicken wraps, made by our favorite “chicken wrap” chef.



Last September before the leak in our fuel tank occurred, we planned to visit Egypt before leaving Turkey. Realizing that we wouldn’t be able to depart Turkey by June 8 when our Turkish visa expired, we started thinking again about the possibility of visiting Egypt as we definitely needed some time off. We were both quite exhausted, especially Phil. Using the Internet, we were able to book at the last minute an Egyptian tour that occurred the first week in June, the only time period in which we could go. So, from the 5th to 13th of June, we took a much needed break from our boat projects and flew to Egypt. (See Egypt Log.)

During the last two weeks in June, we had fun rooting with Turkey as they made it first to the World Cup Quarter Finals and then to the Semi-Finals. As soccer is the major sport in Europe, this was quite an accomplishment for Turkey. Also during this time, we finished up our boat projects, celebrated our 39th wedding anniversary at a lovely restaurant overlooking Marmaris and Marmaris Bay, and rented a car for a day to see Ephesus and Pumukkale, our last two Turkish “must see” sights.



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During the Roman period, Ephesus (Efes) had been the Roman provincial capital of Asia Minor and the chief port on the Aegean Sea. The city flourished during this time, growing to around 250,000 at its peak. The majority of the present day archeological ruins at Ephesus dated from this period. Most majestic was the Library of Celsus (built around 115 AD and restored in the 1970's). Some niches could still be seen around its walls where scrolls had once been kept. The Gate of Augustus, next to the library, once led into the large agora (marketplace). Halfway up Curetes Way in the enclosed gray covered building stood the Terraced Houses, once homes of the wealthy. This archeological site was impressive; in general, these homes, decked out with elaborate wall paintings and mosaics, had been two stories. If we had any frustration with our visit to Ephesus, it was due to the throngs of tourists. We knew that Ephesus was a popular tourist destination, especially with cruise ships, but we were unprepared for the "sea of people" heading our way from the upper entrance at Ephesus when we started walking up Curetes Way from the library. At times it felt like we were swimming upstream, almost unable to catch our breath, and we actually had to find a quieter spot at Ephesus for awhile.



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Before leaving the area, we visited the Ephesus Museum in Selcuk. Even before Roman times, Ephesus was known as the center for the worship of Artemis (Cybele), the Anatolian Mother Goddess. On display was the marble statue of Artemis (Cybele), dating from the 2nd century AD.



To the Christian church, Ephesus was important. Apostle Paul lived in Ephesus for 3 years and while here wrote his letters to the Ephesians. The Third Ecumenical Council was held in Ephesus in 431 AD. And supposedly, Virgin Mary spent the last years of her life 5 miles from Ephesus. When Jesus was on the cross, he asked Apostle John to look after his mother, Mary. When John came to Ephesus around 37 AD, he brought Mary with him. Today there was a modest stone house and chapel built on the site where allegedly Mary had lived and ascended into heaven on August 15. We visited this reverend site; total serenity pervaded the area. Interestingly, this site was also revered by Muslims as Mary was the mother of the prophet Jesus. Below the chapel, bits of white cloth had been tied to the wall where Turks had come to make a wish.



In Pumukkale, the white travertine terraces and pools were dazzling in the late afternoon sun, all created when warm mineral water cooled and, over time, deposited layers of calcium carbonate over the surface. Above Pumukkale were the sparse ruins of the spa city of Hierapolis, dating from Roman times.



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On Monday, June 30, we checked out of Turkey and picked up last minute supplies. By this time, all of our cruising friends had left; only we remained. It had been such a long spring. For so long we had looked out at the entrance into Marmaris Bay, wondering when it would be our turn to sail out of this bay. Now, it finally was our turn. The next morning we sailed out of Marmaris Bay to begin the long journey home back across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.



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