

This Blog is a little out of date (we are now in Turkey), as we have not managed to grab time in front of a computer for a while, however we will publish and update soon with the latest.

So now we are in Greece on our last stop in western Europe before we head into Turkey. A little later than planned due to the late arrival of replacements for our stolen documentation, including Ruth's driving license, our international driving permits, registration documents for the car and the Carnet de Passage, a sort of car passport that is essential for anyone wanting to drive their vehicle through countries where import duties are ruinous. The liability is a multiple of the value of the vehicle and is sufficient to warrant picking up and carrying your car piece by piece over the border should it break down irreparably in some countries.

Speaking of the car: Mr Landyvan now has some bright new suspension courtesy of the generosity and contacts of Pantelis, Ntinos and the Landrover Club of Greece. For the petrol-heads we know: Koni shocks and heavy duty springs with an extra 1" lift; for our "normal" friends: they are bright orange and red and make Mr Landyvan look all perky! Although he is sitting up straight, this has only highlighted some other niggles that we have spent some time getting to the bottom of, so that confidence is once again middling to high.

Getting to Greece has been a series of long drives and border escapades as we make haste across the Southern Balkans. From Croatia we headed into Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia before finally getting to Greece. We have not spent long in each country, which we are sorry for, however...

...we were stunned by the coast of Montenegro, stopping off in Kotor, a beautiful walled town where Ruth narrowly escaped being sold a laxative when her rudimentary sign language and ignorance of local medicine caused her to miscommunicate a cough. Our campsite was at the back of a friendly restaurant local to the border, another occasion where turning up looking lost and helpless in the dark sneaks us a good deal.

...Albania was an excellent training ground for India. The roads, drivers and some of the signs of

development are not far from that country's standards. Until recently personal vehicles had been reserved for the old party elite and the infrastructure is struggling to catch up with the more flexible purchases of cars and petrol stations.

... Macedonia for us was Lake Orid and the town of Orid, where we spent a couple of days. The town is a friendly place with a stack of history to be proud of. We enjoyed the relatively low cost eating, the roman ruins and the many churches. We did not enjoy the campsite, which had a touch of prison camp chic about it.

...Greece has been an oasis of excellent roads and easy living. We have enjoyed its food, its beaches, an excellent haircut for me and a top notch set of mechanics for our Landy. We are currently staying at the bottom of one of the peninsulas of Halkidiki, Thessaloniki's holiday destination, enjoying the snorkeling looking across at Mt Athos and whiling away the time before our documents turn up.

Delays at border crossings have got steadily longer until passing into Greece took us around two hours, only to get to the front of the queue and get waved through. Only one crossing, into Macedonia, has asked to see the originals of our stolen documents, and then our letter from the Bosnian police and a phone call got us over that hurdle. Out of Macedonia the border guards were overjoyed to see us passing into Greece with their national flag stuck on our car, once in Greece this sticker become a liability when we realised that the Greeks have their own region of Macedonia and do not recognise the aforementioned country name. We will have to read ahead in our guide books!

Apart from having a country's flag flying as we cross borders, the other thing that inspires a friendly reception is our slightly aged and personalised Landy. It is an iconic vehicle for many and it also helps that most of the police forces we encounter have Landrovers in their fleet. In spite of the occasional liability, our Landy has helped us explore further and has given us more freedom than taking public transport, so we are still grateful for its company.