

Journal – Santorini, August 7

Finally arrived last night after 20 hours transit time through Philadelphia and London in Santorini, the black pearl of the Aegean. Staying in Oia, the most photographed village in the world and famous for its sunsets (see attached). We had dinner last night in a restaurant overlooking the caldera, the blown off part of the volcano that formed the island, which is now mostly submerged.

From this vantage point you'd never know that there is a financial and economic crisis in Greece. As our taxi driver from the airport said last night, Santorini exists in a parallel universe from the rest of Greece due to the two million tourists that visit here every year. Euros and credit cards are still flowing smoothly. The one thing the European Union hasn't been able to standardize is the faucets. After a couple cold showers we finally got instruction on to how to get hot water. Now we can't cool down after some steamy showers because the air conditioner can't keep up with the heat outside.

It seems a little strange to be in Europe without the Weismans, our traveling companions. We might even get some relaxation without every minute scheduled on a tour. The food is good; had breakfast served on our porch this morning overlooking the sea. Santorini is famous for their locally grown cherry tomatoes, which are delicious. However, I'm not sure how much more feta cheese I can eat.

Love to all,  
Lori and Stephen

Journal – Santorini, August 8

Enjoying our second full day on Santorini. We ended up getting a new room yesterday after spending one night with an air conditioner that couldn't compete with Lori's hot flashes. The new room is nice and cool, and the old room is now occupied by a European couple who probably never experienced good air conditioning in the first place.

Rented a car yesterday for easy access to the rest of the island. It isn't a Porsche, but it's easy to find parking and easy to push out of the rocks, which we had to do with some local help when we got stuck venturing a little too close to the black pebble beach. Who was driving will not be identified in this public forum.

Visited Fira today, the capital of Santorini (picture attached). Just as beautiful as Oia, where we're staying. Then stopped at the black beach and a vineyard for a wine tasting on the way back to Oia. Drinking and driving wasn't a problem since we shared the twelve glasses of wine.

Love to all,  
Lori and Stephen

Journal – Jerusalem, August 13

We spent Tuesday bicycling around Jerusalem on a tour of the different neighborhoods. It was a great way to see things that are too spread out to walk to and impractical to drive to. We also got a good workout since Jerusalem is built on hills, some of which can be tough on cyclists.

Wednesday was Josh's bar mitzvah. It was a memorable experience. Josh did a terrific job reading from the Torah, and we had the entire southern part of the Western Wall completely to ourselves. In the afternoon we met up with some cousins on my grandfather's brother's side. Of course we celebrated the whole day by eating, in typical Jewish fashion.

Yesterday we visited Petra in Jordan, one of the seven wonders of the world. We were picked up at our hotel at 4:15am, driven to Tel Aviv to catch a flight to Eilat, then driven to the Israeli/Jordanian border, where we crossed into Jordan. Then after another two and a half hour drive to Petra, we arrived at 1:30pm. We toured Petra for two and a half hours until 4pm, had a Jordanian buffet lunch, drove back to Eilat, flew to Tel Aviv, and drove back to Jerusalem to arrive back at our hotel at 1:00 am. It was like eating lobster claws: a lot of work for a little bit of meat. But it was amazing and I'm glad we did it. Lori is still bitching about it.

This morning our friend Ginat picked us up at our hotel to stay at her and Ayal's house. We stopped at a winery and wine-making school run by their sister and brother-in-law before having lunch at another winery in the area. The second winery is run by one of the students of the winery school. Today we started drinking earlier than usual.

We leave tomorrow night, so this will likely be the last journal you'll get from this trip unless something really unusual happens.

Love to all,  
Lori and Stephen