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Thoughts at the Border - Hungary to Croatia

Friday, October 23, 2015

At 5:30 am all passengers were called to the ship's lobby for a "face check." This was different from the procedure familiar to us when sailing south on previous trips. Officials used to come on board and check the passports held at the desk. If they found anything suspicious, they would only then ask to see the passenger.

We spent 3 days in the beautiful city of Budapest - a city we have visited many times in the past, most recently in July with family and in December for the Christmas Market.

This trip we looked "below the surface" - LITERALLY! Below Castle Hill there is a system of caves which have been used for many things since the middle ages. Yesterday we visited the "Hospital in the Rock" - 10 km of caves that were used as a hospital during WWII, the last stronghold of the 1956 revolution against the communists and a secret nuclear bunker during the communist era.

The 1 hour guided tour took us through only 1 km of the complex, complete with the sights and sounds of the 100 day siege of Budapest in 1944. There were hundreds of wax figures in realistic historical settings with original equipment.



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On previous trips we have visited caves used as a church and in July - the Labrynth - caves once used as a prison and haven for partizan fighters and now set up for tourists. Our teenage grandsons loved it.

I marvel at the resilience of the people. The destruction was horrific in 1944. 24,000 people tried to escape and only 700 made it. Over time the city was rebuilt mostly in its original style.

I saw many sculptures during my morning runs along the Danube. This was the most haunting.



These iron shoes remember the Jews murdered in 1944 by being thrown into the river.

People leave flowers, candles and stones to remember the victims.



As we are sailing south, there is a wave of humanity walking north. I wonder what I would do if war were exploding around me. I think I would run for the border and hope someone would take me in.

I remember my grandmother describing how she wrapped everything she had in a carpet and left for America and an uncertain future. I'm glad she did.

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MJZHERE

My grandmother came from Hungary at age 15. The entire family saved money and was only able to afford to send her. Our heritage is so important to all of us.
2054 days ago



SWEDE_SU

how fascinating - the events of the past echoing in the current flow of refugees. i have one grandfather from budapest; luckily he came over in the first decade of the 20th century, or he might have been among those thrown in the river. haunting memorial! thank you for sharing.
2056 days ago



MISCHAKEO

Your grandmother was a brave woman and I am glad she fled to the US. Those pictures are touching reminders of war and its losses.
2056 days ago



LIVEDAILY

It is one thing to read about it. Another thing entirely to see it, and experience it.



2057 days ago



MARYJEANSL

Wow - really interesting stuff. I only wish history had been taught by telling us things like this when I was in school rather than lists of names and dates. Santayana was right.
2057 days ago



MARINGAL

I am Jewish and get very emotional when I see memorials related to the Holocaust. I lost most of my family on my Mother's side, they were all in Poland. I have never seen "torn shoes," before but the affect it gives for me is mixed. I feel it is both beautiful and yet haunting. We shall never forget!
2057 days ago



DOVESEYES

Thank you
2057 days ago



ALEXSGIRL1

so sad
2057 days ago



ONEKIDSMOM

Haunting history, haunting present.... I'm sure the face check has something to do with the current checking of the flood of refugees from the middle East! Have we really become more civilized since 70 years ago?
2057 days ago



HOLLYM48

What a powerful picture of the shoes. Horrible things to think about happening. Thanks for sharing such a moving picture.
2057 days ago



WATERMELLEN

So evocative. I am grateful to have lived my whole life in a peaceful country.
2057 days ago



PHEBESS

Very haunting, and a timely reminder given world events currently happening.....
2057 days ago



NUMD97

My mother, Hungarian, often spoke of the Danube turning red with Jewish blood.

When I was living in Mexico, things radically changed, and we, too, started to make plans for escaping. My mother scoffed and asked how exactly did we think we would accomplish this, as borders are sealed immediately once the capital of a country is overtaken. We figured that once the capital was seized, we had hours to get out, and being three hours from the Texas border, we thought we had a shot at it. One woman, half seriously, made a "reservation" with me to take her in my car, as her car was not reliable.



At the time of the last gas crisis here in NY, I was totally taken by just how problematic escape could be. There is nothing (well, hardly anything) more sobering than a search for gas, reportedly available, per net searches, in the wee hours of the morning, and upon arrival, finding it wasn't there.

I have no answers as you query in this blog with your open-ended question, only many, many questions.

9-11 was a wake up call for many.
2057 days ago

Comment edited on: 10/23/2015 4:20:57 PM



PHOENIX1949

Awesome and sobering. Thank you.
2057 days ago



LYNDALOVES2HIKE

What an awesome and moving trip you are having - I haven't been to that specific area but have visited other areas that were impacted heavily during WWII - even all these years later, the damage is evident and it's a scar that will never go away on the world's history. Thanks for posting!
2057 days ago



GARDENCHRIS

how sad..... most people have no clue.....I went to the Dachau concentration camp as did 3 of my children... we saw the ovens and the pictures from the camp.... they will always remember that.
2057 days ago



MAMALOU1942

Haunting history. Thanks for sharing with us.

I took a history course... "THE HOLOCAUST" in college and what those poor people went through just sickened me and horrified me. We should never forget.

2057 days ago



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