

OVERLAND TO AUSTRALIA – On the Way to Kathmandu (Part 2)

Leaving London on a cold, wet and foggy Sunday morning in February 1972 to catch the channel ferry for Ostend, I would be travelling on a bus with a load of strangers from all parts of the world heading for Kathmandu on the old Hippy Trail which would take just over three and a half months, and at that time on a very cold morning, the heat of India and Far East seemed many miles away. I would eventually go on to Australia to get work in the North West working on the Iron Ore mines which I had done the year before. We spent the first night in Brussels in a hostel mostly in the local bar getting to know each other. There were about thirty five of us in all under thirty –the girls outnumbering the lads - all with tales to tell which was very interesting and why we were travelling this way. There were Aussies going home, English heading for Aussie, Americans just travelling, along with Canadian, Irish, Swiss and Kiwis.

On leaving Brussels and entering Germany we spent the night in Heidelberg then next day going on down to Innsbruck. Each day for about a week or so we would change seats and partners, to get to know one another and then settling on our travelling companion. We then moved on to Venice and then on to Yugoslavia, as it was called in those days.

Travelling down the beautiful coast of Yugoslavia, we stopped off at Dubrovnik and Split. We also stayed one night in a small town which had been treated badly by the Nazis. The wall was left as a tribute to the locals who had been shot, with the bullet holes still in the wall. The locals treated us very well, arranging a dance with local food and drink. The school teacher gave us a short talk and tour of the place and its history.

Moving on we travelled through Yugoslavia visiting the town of Titograd and Skopje and whenever we stopped to buy food and drink we would be surrounded by inquisitive locals. Leaving Yugoslavia and crossing the border into Greece, passing by Mount Olympus, the ruins of Philippi and Thessalonika. We arrived in Delphi on a beautiful spring day and stayed overnight after visiting the ruins which are perched on the rocky slopes of Mount Parnassus. We then moved down to Athens stopping a few nights before travelling on along the coast to the Turkish border. We crossed the border and reached Istanbul where we spent a few days. Istanbul is a fascinating city where east meets west and where our journey really begins. There was a cafe in the city called the “Pudding Shop” where travellers coming from the East or West would stop by and chat and exchange stories and tell each other of what to expect ahead. There was a board where you could leave messages for someone and also pick up messages and information since from now on we would have no contact or news from home. (Remember there were no mobile phones or modern text then). When stopping in Istanbul we picked up another passenger, a girl who was travelling to Aussie.

