

people may feel very envious of our ostentatious wealth and become angry at the insensitive way we may behave. Young people may want to adopt western ways or even migrate to western countries because what they see when we visit appears so much better than what they have. Often that difference is illusory, but it still creates discontent that can set up tensions within families and communities.

Perhaps we need to think carefully about why we travel and what we want from a visit. We may just want a break, a chance to recharge our batteries, lie in the sun, enjoy warm seas and different food. There is nothing wrong with that, but we might want to look carefully at travel companies, and select those that are ethical. There are plenty out there, which make sure that the money you pay goes back into the community you are staying in and which set high environmental standards for the accommodation they use.



If we are travelling to experience different cultures, histories and landscapes then again it is worth looking at companies that ensure it is local people who benefit and who ensure our impact on the destination is minimised. The old advice still holds good: 'Take nothing but pictures; leave nothing but footprints.'

Dates for your Diary:

1. 18th Nov. Visit to Lebanon—Bradfield St George Village Hall, IP30 0AS. 10.00—2.00 with a light lunch. Contact Richard on 01284 388175 or by email below.

Prayers:

1. Give thanks for the safe return of Judy and Dorothee after their fund-raising climb of Kilimanjaro.
2. Pray for the Rohingya refugees and those helping them.

If you would like one of us to speak about issues in developing countries then please contact Richard Stainer at richard.stainer14@gmail.com or Carol Mansell at carol.mansell@btinternet.com .



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich



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World Development Newsletter

A very late newsletter this time as we have been away in Lebanon (see inside double page spread.) We are fortunate that we can travel so widely but it does raise real ethical questions for us as Christians. When we fly long distances we contribute greatly to the CO2 in the atmosphere and therefore to global warming. We can mitigate this by offsetting and there are various organisations which will help us to do that. George Monbiot says that this practice is really rather like the Church selling indulgences. Just as indulgences allowed the rich to feel better about sinful behaviour without actually changing their ways, carbon offsets allow us to "buy complacency, political apathy and self-satisfaction". Is he right or are there arguments in favour of our urge to travel?

Certainly travel can stimulate economic growth and development in countries. Lebanon is very keen to re-generate its tourism industry and there is clearly tremendous potential here. There are staggering archaeological sites to be discovered and beautiful mountains and valleys to be explored, yet there are very few people visiting. Rwanda, 'an African Tuscany' also has enormous potential for tourism which could do a great deal to stimulate further economic growth. On the other hand we can all think of places where mass tourism has become a curse with cities and beaches overrun with visitors to the annoyance of local people.



Travel can also allow us to meet and get to know people and to understand different cultures. It should make us more tolerant and open-minded. 'Travel broadens the mind' may be a cliché but it can be true as long as we allow ourselves to move outside the tourist bubble. Tourism can also have an adverse effect on local cultures and people, creating a feeling of discontent and even anger. Local

Visiting Lebanon

Carol and I travelled to Lebanon with Christians Aware — <http://www.christiansaware.co.uk/> - an ecumenical group which works for justice and peace. We were there to learn about the Eastern Church in its many guises, but also to learn something about Muslim/Christian relations in the region.

There is not space here to even begin to discuss the incredibly complex religious and political situation now and in the recent past. All I can offer are short vignettes from our visit. A memorable one was our brief visit to Tripoli in the north of the country. Until a few months earlier this had been under ISIL control and was not safe to visit. However



we entered a bustling city, driving down a street lined with garages and parts and repair shops to the beautiful Taynal Mosque dating back to 1336. It occupies the site of a former Carmelite church and is architecturally stunning to look at. But what impressed me was the welcome we were given by the sheikh who, seeing Andrew in his dog collar, wrapped him in his arms and hugged him. He was clearly delighted to be visited by a group of western Christians and bought the group cups of coffee at the stand outside the mosque. This was a Sunni Moslem leader welcoming Christians to his place of prayer.

Another highlight was a Sunday morning service at Beirut's Anglican church. Again we were made very welcome and were struck by the ethnic diversity of the congregation. We even met a student from Rwanda studying chemical engineering at the University who was thrilled to meet people who had visited his country. The beautiful church was dwarfed by massive sky-scrapers in Beirut's commercial area, but it could have been any Anglican church in terms of the



worship. The only slightly odd addition were the army patrol sitting in their truck in the street outside. The army are everywhere, outside all religious buildings and at road blocks as you travel. However they never feel oppressive. They are there to keep you safe and are often friendly and cheerful.

Driving through the Bekaa Valley, between the two great mountain ranges which dominate Lebanon, we were struck by the large number of tents in the fields. We asked our guide if they were refugees. "Some my be", he replied, with obvious disgust. It seems that some Lebanese people are rather cynical about the influx of Syrian refugees.



About 1.6 million have come into the country, but there are clearly doubts that they are all legitimate. Apparently, in the Bekaa, Syrians have always come to pick fruit and vegetables in the summer and then returned home with their wages. Now, according to our guide, many are staying and claiming to be refugees because they get \$150 a week from the U.N.. "Do refugees have satellite T.V., smart cars, computers?" asked our guide. Was this 'Daily Mail' talk or a real concern—we will never know, but Lebanon has been remarkably generous in giving so many people a refuge from war.

The conflict with Israel must also be mentioned. In July 2006 war broke out when Lebanese Sh'ite's crossed the border killing 3 Israeli soldiers to pressurise Israel into releasing Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners. Israel's response was immediate and fierce with air and sea strikes. Much of the Israeli attack was centred on the Litani Valley which the Lebanese and Hezbollah claim the Israeli's wanted for the water supply it could bring to the dry north of their country.



Casualties were heavy on both sides, including many civilians. Both sides claimed victory, but Israel was clearly surprised by the resistance from Hezbollah. Both sides have continued to rebuild their arsenals and there exists a state of uneasy peace with UN peace keepers deployed in the south of Lebanon. As we discovered,

army checks are much more prolonged and detailed near the Israeli border. Understandably there is real hatred for Israel by those whose houses were fired on or bombed and who had to flee the region. It will be interesting to hear the Israeli side of the argument.

Although Lebanon has a troubled and complex history, or perhaps, because of it, it is a fascinating country to visit, with some staggering archaeological sites, some superb food, and friendly people. *(see over for an opportunity to hear more about the trip)*