

Parking on the Sidewalk... Walking in the Street

Monday, September 9, 2019

Summer Laughs

This summer some Australian friends rented a house on the Aegean Sea in Greece, and invited us to join them for a few days. Vacations in this part of Greece are very common for people living in Bulgaria, both foreigners and Bulgarians, so we were excited to join the trek. (Think going up north or going to the lake...)

Due to new EU regulations, we could use our Bulgarian phone in other EU countries for Google Maps etc. to find our way around. This was extremely helpful! However, I struggled with what exactly was available to me for data, etc. in a new country as the messages are always in Bulgarian. I decided to use my Google translate, which told me how much data I had available and other important facts. It also encouraged us to "drive carelessly". This provided a good laugh as we traversed the crowded and busy Greek highway to our destination!

Whether we are in Bulgaria or another country nearby, there are always interesting cultural experiences that we don't have in the US. Upon our return to Sofia, Paul went to fill the car with gas and must have passed a certain threshold because, as he was paying, the clerk reached under the counter and pulled out a liter bottle of beer which was a free gift to him because of his gas purchase. We also got a good laugh about this.

A similar experience came when we were looking at refrigerators at a local electronics store. We've had a lot of problems with ice buildup and then water all over our floor due to a long crack in the back of the refrigerator. This has also lead to some other ugly things in the refrigerator which I will not describe... So, in looking at several brands of refrigerators we noted that there were free gifts involved, mainly a dozen liter bottles of a certain brand of beer. The deal did not provide the required incentive to buy a refrigerator but it did give us another laugh.

We find that it's not just in our daily experiences but also in the church that our cultural differences come out. They may relate to the importance of being "on time", how we pray, what and how long we sing, what is expected in the sermon and how long we meet. For the most part we have enjoyed these challenges and the diversity, although sometimes it does leave us shaking our heads or chuckling to ourselves. God is Good and we appreciate the opportunities to share life and faith in this amazing country!

Blessings, Kathy

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