BULGARIA

Black Sea

We headed out of our comfy camping site this morning to drive slowly east to the Black Sea coast. This is the summer playground of the locals and increasingly, other Europeans, including Russians.

Our journey was peaceful and easy. After our experience with the terrible secondary roads of a few days ago we stuck to one of the main thoroughfares. The consequence was we saw few towns and drove through very lush rolling country that was half and half cultivation and wooded hills.

During the second half of the journey we decided to by-pass the main urban area of Varna and went instead cross country via secondary roads. This brought us up close and personal with what can only be politely described as towns that generally needed "maintenance". The quantity of tumbledown residences is quite amazing.

Our one big excitement for the journey was being stopped by the local constabulary. We have seen massive

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PILLBOX We looked up at all the ghastly high-rise holiday flats that lined the Black Sea beach and then this pops into view. Interesting they have kept it like it was.

BUGS Heather took this photo of a huge pile of straw on the back of the horse and cart. Sadly the focus was on the splattered bugs on the windscreen

24HR DOCTOR There is obviously a problem here on the Black Sea beach when you come across a 24/7 doctor's hut.

numbers of them on Bulgarian roads, substantially more than in any other country. This particular policeman was mainly concerned to see that we had paid for our road tax. Because we had done it online we did not have a printed receipt or evidence on our screen. After some time they obviously searched online in their police vehicle and waved us on. I don't know where their fine money is going, but it does not appear to be going into road up-keep. Maybe they just have such a big backlog.

On nearing the coast we drove through a fierce thunderstorm. It poured rain and there was dark clouds and lightening all around. Luckily by that stage we were back on a good road surface.

On reaching the coast, we found a caravan park very close to the water. We jumped on our bikes (it has been some time since we had been on our bikes) and went for a ride along the foreshore that consisted of hotels and other accommodations hugging the beach. Everyone appears to be getting ready for the onslaught of visitors. It is very rag tag at the present but we can imagine the masses thronging the beaches. The hotels have ownership of the beach right to the waters edge. Each hotel sets up their lounges and umbrellas and each has its own little drink service hut. The beach is about 30 metres wide and currently has what looks like a new load of very deep sand. The colours of the aqua ocean against the light blue sky were really quite striking. The black sea was certainly not black today. Fishermen and a couple of artists lined the beach front.

Tonight we are sitting here and a brilliant pinky-red sunset is decorating the sky outside our van. Life could not be better, especially when you have someone next to you enjoying the peaceful ambience as the sun slowly sets.

Tomorrow the intention is to visit some of the very old ports that line the Black Sea coast. We want to steer clear of the hustle and bustle of the tourist strips with their cafes/restaurants/bars, loud music and tacky trinket stores- something that we are told dominates many parts of this "idilic" coastline.

PHOTOS

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