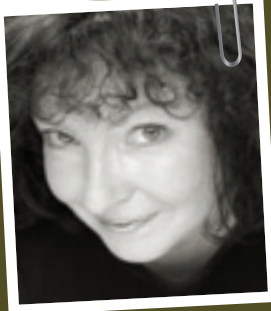


Dear Leapers:

**Thank you,
thank you,
thank you...**



Photographer: Peter Sibbald

Each time one of you makes a recommendation or rates a local guide or service you make a huge and positive difference in someone's life. I'm thinking of the local, but you actually help other travellers by sharing your knowledge. None of this could happen without you.

I have a thing for the smell of Jet A-1 exhaust. I suppose that's pretty politically or environmentally incorrect to admit. But that airport odor makes my heart race in anticipation of adventure. The people from around the world who have already entered guides and travel stories in this year's competition have given me that exact same feeling. It's like an around the world journey without the jetlag or amoebas.

While on the topic of travel-health, I've been checking out Leap Local's 2010 competition sponsor's website. My friends on Facebook know that the Shewee is already in my virtual basket for my upcoming bicycle trip in Kyrgyzstan. If you don't know what a Shewee is, take a look on www.nomadtravel.co.uk. Very, very, handy.

And while on the topic of pee...inside this edition of the Local travel news, you can read about our expert competition judges - one of them accidentally urinated on Idi Amin, though, there is a rumour that the last few drops were on purpose. You can also see some of the judges' travel DOs and DON'Ts and read one of their travel diaries (which we have to figure out how to return without her knowing).

Kirsten

Adventure Travel Writer

www.leaplocal.org

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Photo by: Sergey Ghuoverov

Competition Updates & New Sponsor!



Our competitions are now in full swing – entry closes 30th September 2010! Leap Local's TWO competitions celebrate the partnership of both local service providers and travellers – after all it takes two to tango!

International Competition for Local Guides and Services

Local guides and services are automatically entered when you recommend a new local, or review an existing local.

This competition builds on the success of last year's competition in 2009 which saw prizes being awarded directly to winning guides in Peru, Fiji, Easter Island, the Philippines and India. Mario, Saul, Tevita, Arnel, Santhosh and the Pakarati family were all delighted with the support for their businesses and resulting promotional opportunities.

International Competition for Travel Stories – 1st Prize \$500

If you have a travel story involving local people, or a tale of mishaps because you didn't use a local expert - whether the story be hilarious, exciting, gorgeous or terrifying - you are invited to enter this competition. Your submission will be judged by authors, travel writers, journalists, and other industry professionals. See entry guidelines on our website.

We are very pleased to be working with Nomad Travel & Outdoor who are sponsoring the competitions as a premier sponsor.

'Nomad Travel is very excited to be sponsoring the Leap Local 2010 Competition and forming a strong partnership between our two organizations that share so many core values' Alex @ Nomad

As a business that looks after travellers' health and equipment, Nomad is a valuable addition for most independent travellers. Founded in 1990, 'Nomad Travel Stores and Clinics' have been kitting out travellers with clothing, equipment, books and maps, medical supplies and vaccinations for more than 16 years. Of equal importance is Nomad's commitment to working with our local guides and services to make sure they have access to better information on the health concerns of tourists.

The competitions are now open for entry. We are inviting travellers to share stories of local travel adventures and help others find out about the local guides and services that make their ventures of the globe truly memorable. We are passionate about raising the profile of local guides, homestays and services in tourism which we do in collaboration with you, our engaged and growing travel community. After all, there is an enormous difference between destructive and creative tourism, and in developing economies it is critical to get this right. Making sure local communities are involved is a part of this process.

Travel DOS AND DON'TS...

Leap Local's Travel DOS and DON'Ts run every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday on Leap's Facebook fan page!

"When sneaking Cuban cigars past customs, the important thing is to not separate them. At the Miami airport, security agents are highly trained to spot individual cigars on an X-ray screen. If you are caught, they will waterboard you until you confess to having understated the total value of cocktail stirrers you brought back into the country, cavity search your wife for illicit rubber alligators, and confiscate your Big & Buxom Biker Chicks magazine. On the other hand, if you tie your Cuban cigars together, they will show up on the screen as a bundle of dynamite, and you'll zip through customs like a VIP."

Gary Buslik, American author

"I Make Present of You!"

By Kimmy Beach

Giorgos Votzakis and I go back. Way back. Twenty-seven years back. When I was eighteen in 1983, I spent two months in his village of Sfakia on the south coast of Crete. He and I became great friends and I'd missed him for nearly three decades. When I got the chance to return to Greece, I found him by accident and contacted him. The sound of his voice melted the years between us.

When I was eighteen, Giorgos was a really fun Greek friend. He seemed to do nothing but drink in the taverna with me and take me fun places.

November 12, 1983

Some guy in that Crete book somebody gave us in Freiburg: "It will be many years before a Cretan offers you his heart." BAAA HA HA HA HAAA! So far, Giorgos has given me his worry beads, a Cretan dancer doll, and today he gave me the tape of that song he really likes. Just popped it right out of Manousos' tape player and gave it to me. "You like? I make present of you!"

He tells me now, that the year after I returned home to Canada, he began running tavernas and has done it since. He's owned a string of nightclubs, eateries, and tavernas since he was nineteen. And he's good at it. Greeks are welcoming almost to a fault and are world famous for their hospitality (Xenia), but Giorgos is amazing. It's not an act, but it must be earned.

October 24, 2009

"This is the most precious and rare thing that's going to happen to us here," I whisper to my husband at Giorgos' family dining table. We're the only non-Greeks invited. We will do nothing wrong. We will behave as they behave and eat as much as they do. We will answer when asked something in English. We will not refuse a drink. We will appreciate this night for all we're worth. The table is full of food and drink and laughter and family and children and Marlboros smouldering in glass ashtrays and nephews and friends and Cretan folk singing and women serving more food and more wine. I would be nowhere else on earth tonight.

Today, the Mesohori Taverna is the hub of local life in Sfakia. Giorgos is the consummate host, plying his guests with raki, local wine, olive oil, honey, village salad, and slow-roasted goat, all of it homemade or home-grown. His affection is genuine, his slaps on the back hearty and welcoming. He accepts my husband and me into the village family, kissing our cheeks regularly, seldom letting us pay for anything. Our shared history as teenagers in this town bonds me to Giorgos in an almost surreal time warp that makes me feel as if I saw him yesterday, and not more than half a lifetime ago.

We talk late into the nights, learning about one another and reconnecting as the friends we once were and - by the strangest of chances - are again.

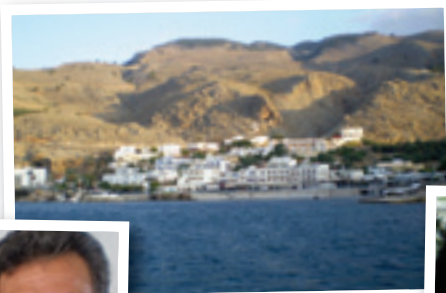
December 21, 1983

We leave tomorrow and tonight we cried so much our eyeballs fell out. Giorgos said he would "have big problem" when we left and wouldn't even go to the taverna because we wouldn't be there. I'm going to miss that Greek so much. He's so crazy and I love him.

To read more see <http://web.mac.com/kimmybeach/> - follow Hora Sfakion link



Kimmy and Giorgos 1983



Sfakia, October 2009



Giorgos and Kimmy's husband Stu, October 2009



Giorgos in his taverna, October 2009

Featured Guides...



Name: **Giorgos Votzakis**
 Location: Chora Sfakion
 Country: Greece
 Speaks: Greek, English,
 German, French
 Services: Accommodation, Food

Recommended by: Kim Beach



Name: **Sergey Gluhoverov**
 Location: Bishkek
 Country: Kyrgyzstan
 Speaks: Russian, English
 Services: Tours,
 Accommodation,
 Food, Sport, Craft

Needs Recommendation/Rating

The International Leap Local Travel Writing Competition Judges

Tahir Shah: is the author of more than a dozen travel books including "Caliph's House" (named a top ten book of 2009 by TIME). Tahir is also a documentary maker. His films have appeared on National Geographic TV, and the History Channel, and have landed him and his film crew in a Pakistani torture prison. www.TahirShah.com

Gary Buslik: this award winning author and English lit lecturer at University of Illinois is lucky not to be in prison - Gary accidentally urinated on Idi Amin and lived to tell the tale in his hilarious book, "A Rotten Person Travels the Caribbean" published by Travelers' Tales. www.arottenperson.com

Sean O'Reilly and Travelers' Tales publishing house: Sean O'Reilly reads over 2000 travel submissions each year as an editor at Travelers' Tales, for the Solas Awards, and as a judge for the Society of American Travel Writers' contest. He's a brilliant humourist and is the author of the controversial book, "How to Manage your DICK". www.travelerstaes.com

Kimmy Beach: is the author of four books of poetry. Her work has been published across Canada, in the UK, translated into Chinese, and has been broadcast on CBC, Bravo, Book TV, Access and more. She's recently finished her fifth book of poetry and a travel memoir about Crete, where she intends to go annually to help float the Greek economy with wine consumption. http://web.mac.com/kimmybeach/Kimmy_Beach/Home.html

Vicky Baker: is a freelance journalist based in Buenos Aires. She's a frequent contributor for the Guardian newspaper's travel section. Her work has also been published in the Observer (Escape), the Daily Telegraph, Sunday Times Travel Magazine, TNT, Overseas, Time Out plus she contributes to guide books. Vicky is also judging the Guides and Services competition. www.goinglocaltravel.com

The Local Guides and Services Competition Judges:

Richard Hammond: is the founder of www.greentraveller.co.uk - a website that features green places to stay and holidays that can be reached by train. He is the travel editor of National Geographic Green magazine supplement and writes a monthly column in Geographical - the magazine of the Royal Geographical Society. He co-wrote the Rough Guide to green holidays and has written over 130 articles on green travel in the Guardian.

Stephen Chapman: established www.maketravelfair.co.uk in 2006 and it won a Travelmole Web Award the following year for 'Best Online Education Site'. He was selected as 'One-to-Watch' in Travel & Leisure as part of The Courvoisier Future 500 and this year began working with whl.travel.

...plus Vicky Baker (see biography above)

Advisory Committee for Local Guides and Services competition: is made up of Sally Broom and www.tripbod.com plus last year's winners of the competition from Peru, Easter Island, India, Fiji and Philippines.



Nicola Dee (Leap Local co-founder, cantab, PhD): is the judging debate moderator for the Guides and Services competition. She is passionate about talented individuals having access to enterprise and opportunity. www.leaplocal.org

Kirsten Koza (Leap Local team member): is the judging debate moderator for the Travel Writing debate. She is a Canadian author, travel writer and speaker. www.kirstenkoza.com



Tahir Shah

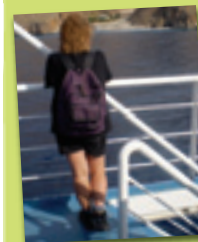


Gary Buslik

Photo: Nadia Diboun



Sean O'Reilly



Kimmy Beach



Vicky Baker



Stephen Chapman



Richard Hammond



Nicola Dee



Kirsten Koza

Travel DOS AND DON'TS...

"Always wear dark underwear while traveling. There is nothing more disturbing than viewing stains on tidy whites."

This tip comes from James O'Reilly, Publisher at Travelers' Tales, via his brother and fellow editor/author Sean O'Reilly.

But is it.....is KYRGYZSTAN a big DO or DON'T?

By Kirsten Koza

Photographs: Sergey Gluhoverov

When everybody says "don't go to Kyrgyzstan" and the only person who says "do" is an author who accidentally peed on Idi Amin and goes by the name "A Rotten Person" - one should probably listen to the "don'ts". But I'm not. I'm biking across Kyrgyzstan next month with a local guide.



A tough time for guides in Kyrgyzstan. These Kyrgyz heroes of tourism take a trip together to work on improving services and their country's reputation in the eyes of future travellers. As chaos erupted in the cities, they found the Nomads, far removed, were unaware of the strife that will now affect their livelihoods, as the numbers of tourists dwindle due to fear, travel advisories and recent media coverage.

To be honest, I'm more worried about insulting the nomadic people than I am with the political situation. My guide has provided me with two pages of cultural DOs and DON'Ts, regarding staying with nomads, including toilet etiquette. There's nothing about protocol when it comes to urinating on dictators in the two pages, but you must enter the toilet with the left foot first.

I'm bound to find out the consequences of using the right, when I stumble into the yurt-loo on a run, after washing down sheep eyes and tail fat with fermented mare's milk. Sergey, my guide, has said it is highly offensive to say "no thanks" when offered any of these Kyrgyz treats.

Before you too say, "Kirsten, don't go." This is cultural immersion to the power of a gazillion. I'm already in shock and these are the very reasons I am going. However, I couldn't imagine doing a trip through these superstitious mine fields without a local guide reminding me to never touch another person's hat or scrunch up my own. I've found the guide to the guides for this trip. Sergey (with the support of the Kyrgyz ministry of education and science) offers bi-monthly free seminars during the off season to guides, providing guest speakers including famous archaeologists, historians and scientists to educate guides and individuals in tourism.

Tourism is suffering in Kyrgyzstan because of the political turmoil that started in April. The Lonely Planet has toned back their high risk travel alert but many governments around the world take a much more conservative approach and recommend that their citizens not travel anywhere in Kyrgyzstan regardless of the violence being specific to certain areas. I'm Canadian, and my government says "Don't".

Even Tatyana Parfenyuk of Kazakhstan's Consular visa services in Toronto said I should get a transit visa for Kazakhstan, just in case my connecting flight to Kyrgyzstan is cancelled. By the way, when talking to someone from Kazakhstan, DON'T ever make reference to Borat.

Is Kyrgyzstan a big DO or DON'T? I don't know. But it's a GO, and I'll let you know if "Rotten" is right or wrong when I return.

To read all the DOs and DON'Ts of Kyrgyzstan and to see Kirsten's itinerary, visit the SCOOP & SCANDAL page of her website: www.kirstenkoza.com



Local Guide Pride



Sergey points out a spectacular bike route - but is this the uphill or downhill?



Sergey has provided Kirsten with two pages of cultural DOs and DON'Ts so she doesn't offend the nomadic people she will be staying with.

Travel DOS AND DON'TS...

"On the south coast of Crete, guns will be fired regularly into the night sky whether you like it or not. Right by your head. It's best to get used to it, and accept it for the celebratory and welcoming gesture it is."

Kimmy Beach, Canadian poet

