

# After hours

5/12/08

work rest play

## CRUISING *into* HISTORY

The Mediterranean is scattered with traces of medicine's past. Sailing to these shores can be a memorable holiday.

WORDS BY DR JIM LEAVESLEY

**T**HE big advantage of cruising is that you are always unpacked. The second plus is that you are effortlessly transported from one fascinating place to another, with no sense of pressure or trying to organise a tour for yourself in a foreign language. If you add to this the pleasure of travelling with a group of like-minded and intelligent people following a common interest — in our case, sites of medically historic significance — you are on a winner.

Thus it was that in September, 50 of us, including 10 Australians, joined the ship Braemar at the port of Rome to sail down the Mediterranean, through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea and back again, seeking out such delights.

An early highlight was a visit to Florence

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Archaeological wonder ... ruins of the ancient Greek temples at Delos.



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Nightingale's Hospital at Scutari, located in the Asian half of Istanbul. When Miss Nightingale arrived in 1854 she was given a military barracks to use and it reverted to that role after she left, remaining so to this day. As a consequence any visit is bogged down in paperwork, surrendering of passports and a military escort.

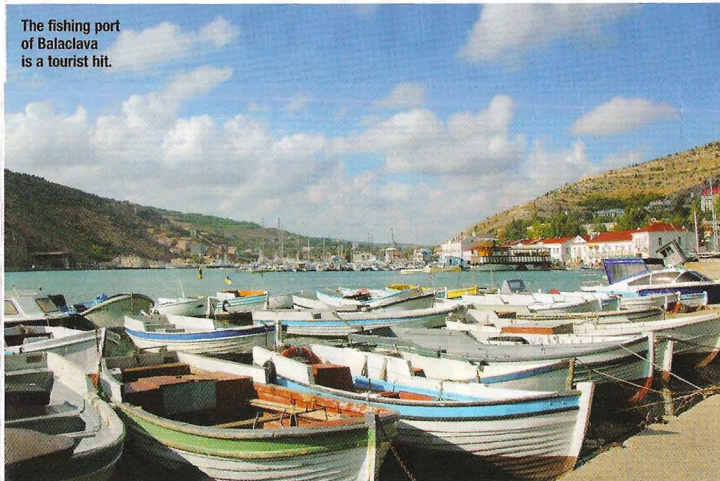
The 6km of corridors on four floors and along which the sick and wounded bedded down are still there. The lady's bedroom and office with a few artefacts remain, but, though evocative, there is little to excite the visitor.

Onto Sevastopol and Balaclava, site of Crimean War battlefields. These are very impressively displayed, especially Balaclava, where you can stand on the spot on the Sapoun Mountain where Lord Raglan had looked over the valley where Lord Cardigan and the Light Brigade stood ready for his orders. In the event, Raglan's handwritten order was so ambiguous that the Light Brigade dashed off in the wrong direction into the heavily defended Valley of Death with "cannon to the right of them, cannon to the left of them". But, "theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do or die", as Tennyson has it. The view you get and the excellent commentary by your Russian guide makes the whole disaster very clear.

The small fishing port of Balaclava itself is delightful, but the much bigger port of Sevastopol, home of the Russian fleet, has a more menacing air. Their experience during World War II, when the German aerial bombardment left only seven houses and one almost tree standing, has not been forgotten.

Back through the Dardanelles, deep in Australian memory, and on to the island of Delos, the

The fishing port of Balaclava is a tourist hit.



### FACTFILE

**Getting there:** The cruise was organised by Jon Baines Tours Ltd, who specialise in theme tours and have a special interest in medical history. The next medical history cruise is to the eastern Mediterranean between 18 October and 1 November 2009 on MV Prinsendam.

**More information:** For more details go to: [www.jonbainestours.co.uk](http://www.jonbainestours.co.uk) or e-mail [info@jonbainestours.co.uk](mailto:info@jonbainestours.co.uk)

smallest of Greece's Cyclades Islands and the alleged birthplace of Apollo, God of Medicine, highly significant to medical historians. The Braemar anchored at nearby Mykonos and we were ferried to Delos, now uninhabited apart from the inevitable coffee shop.

All that remains of the fabled site are the ruins of what had been a largish pre-Hellenic town site where Temples to Apollo, his twin sister, Artemis, and other

City of ruins ... shadows of the past make Delos special.



deities abound. The silent place is an archaeological wonder, the most famous sculptures being the row of five lions (originally nine) sitting in a menacing line along a processional way. In fact, they are replicas; the originals are safe in a museum.

On Delos one felt at the epicentre of the genesis of medicine. The mythology has it that in the 10th century BC the Titaness, Leto, daughter of Phoebé, herself born of a union of Heaven and Earth,

delivered the ineffable twins here after a nine-day labour. Later Apollo had a son whom he called Asclepius (Latinised into Aesculapius) and whom he entrusted to Chiron to be taught the art of medicine. As we all know, the boy went on to become 'the blameless physician' of Homer's *Iliad* and God of Healing. For all the doctors in the party this was a special place, the ambience and solitude of which was the highlight of the cruise. ●



BY DR JIM LEAVESLEY

### 5 December 1788

ON this day this doctor was summoned to Windsor Castle to treat the mentally ill monarch, George III. Born in 1718, he qualified in medicine at Oxford and then followed up by taking holy orders. As a result he was commonly known at the time as Dr Duplicate.

In 1769 he had successfully treated several mentally ill patients at the Lincoln asylum, and on the strength of that was called to the king, despite considerable opposition from the regular physicians. Our subject maintained the king would recover, which he did, but almost certainly spontaneously, in 1789. His reputation made, he returned to private practice and became wealthy.

He based his treatment on two measures: restraint and a mixture of purges, bleedings and application of leeches.

### 9 December 1979

ON this day the WHO announced that after a 21-year campaign it accepted a report that this highly contagious disease had been eradicated. The first vaccine had been found in England in 1796, but by 1948 it still ravished at least 90 countries and it was not until 1967, and nine years after the campaign started, that the incidence began to drop.

The last naturally occurring case was recorded in Somalia in 1977, but another case occurred two years later following the escape of the organism in a laboratory in Birmingham, England. The laboratory's director committed suicide.

After the 1979 announcement all vaccines were ordered to be destroyed, but both Russia and America retained some "just in case".

See below for answers