

HOLY LAND  
& ANCIENT  
KINGDOMS



TRAVELOGUE  
BY MATT RAVIKUMAR

Inside Page

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Thank the Divine for making my dreams come true.

Thank my parents (MNS Mani & Lakshmi Mani) for this life-time opportunity.

Key words: Holy Land, Greece, Kingdoms

Disclaimer:

The book is about the travel experience of the author. All the photos are taken by the author, except where source references are given.

Other information is from city brochures, tour guide stories and public domain materials. And the endless tour guide(s) chatter, in a good way!

Cover Page Picture

Canva.com

Foreword

Ancient Kingdoms

Olympia, Golan Heights, Jerusalem.

Brings high-school memories about the texts read and exams written just to pass the class. Later in life, you want to know more details and relish history. There is nothing like visiting these places in person. The memories go into your body. It is not the same as watching a YouTube documentary!

If we do not know something, we say it is **like 'Greek' to me!** But we use more Greek words unaware of its source. The empires and kingdoms are totally different stories! Jerusalem is totally different. No one can cover the entire place in a book. It may take many more trips to understand the whole picture.

This book is about my experience with Greece, Italy, and Israel. The tour was a part of the Cruise and covered major places.

Any inaccuracy of data or textual errors will be corrected in future revisions of the book. All the photographs were taken by me. Any picture referred has its own photo courtesy source to avoid copyright issues. The cruise tour started and ended at Venice. But the book chapters start in Jerusalem and end at Venice.

As the Greek word say, Kalimera - have a good day!

Ashdod (Jerusalem)

ASHDOD (JERUSALEM) ISRAEL



DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Population 87000 in 2016

Founded in 3000 BC, City of David 1000 BCE

Largest port in Israel, gateway to 5000-year-old walled city of Jerusalem

Jerusalem is in central Israel, 53 km East from Tel Aviv, 2600 feet above sea level and highest city in Israel.

The city of David (Zion) is the most excavated site in 150 years. 3000-year-old wall in the city

Pool of Siloam, 2004 unearthed, two Olympic size swimming pool size

Antonia Fortress, is now public school but is a 19 BC  
Fortress

Temple Mount (eastern side of old city), 30 acres (35  
football field size) covers one sixth of the old city. Solomon  
built this place.

Mount Olive, which plays significant role in the Bible.

Chapel of ascension

Pater Noster Church, Jesus came to pray.

Garden of Gethsemane

Church of all nations (in 1924), rock of agony

Church of the Holy Sepulcher where Jesus was crucified.

Tomb of Jesus

Eastern Gate (known as Golden Gate. Ancient Solomonic  
Stones

Kidron valley, Hinnom valley

**Pilate's Palace**- Judgment of Jesus

Via Dolorosa

Western wall, wailing wall. Notes of prayers from people all  
over the world on the cracks on the stones

Southern Stairs, archaeological site

Crushed Herodian street, stone rock foundation of 30 feet  
long and f 6 feet wide

Damascus Gate, Cardo Road. Main road built by Romans  
132AD.

## Western Wall

The western wall has been the center of Jewish yearning and memory for than 2000 years. The only fragment of the Great Temple to survive the Roman destruction, the Divine Presence has never departed from the western wall. Long before the Temple stood on this mount, Abraham came here to sacrifice his son Isaac, and Jacob slept here, dreaming of a ladder to heaven. Then called, Mount Moriah, its summit was where Solomon built the temple on the land which his father King David purchased from Aravnah. The temple destroyed in 586 BCE was rebuilt 70 years later and restored to its original glory by Herod 2000 years ago. In 68 CE the temple was destroyed and burned to the ground. The western wall was untouched.

Today, people from all over the world converge here, to see, feel and pray- and to wedge notes, requests, and pleas between its timeless stones.

(source: The Western Wall brochure)



Western wall. Male and female pilgrims get separate sections. Head covering required for both.



Water fountain



רחבת הנגן  
Women  
Plaza - Men  
אזור מטרות  
Ammunition sites  
בית מדרש  
Rage Center  
משטרת הווא  
Wall Police  
המבר  
Information  
יבאה לשער  
Jaffa Gate  
יבאה לרובע  
Jewish Quarter  
יבאה לשער  
Jaffa Gate  
יבאה לשער  
Damascus Gate  
סיוע  
Aids

# ברוכים הבאים אל הכותל המערבי

## שריד בית המקדש

### Welcome to the Western Wall a remnant of the Temple

"שָׁאֲלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם  
יִשְׁלְחוּ אֲהֵבָהּ. יְהִי שְׁלוֹם בְּחֵילְךָ  
שְׁלוֹה בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ"  
(תהלים קכב, ו-ז)

"Request the welfare of Jerusalem;  
may those who love you enjoy tranquility.  
May there be peace in your wall,  
tranquility in your palaces"  
(Psalms 22, 6-7)

**כיום הבאים אל הכותל המערבי,  
ד בית מקדשונו.**

**הכותל, במסגרת הר המוריה, ניצבת אבן  
תייה שממנה על פי המסורת, הושחת  
לם עליה נעקד יצחק וסביבה הקים  
מה את בית המקדש הראשון, "בית  
ום ד' א-לקי ישראל" (מלכים א' פרק ח).**

**ות שנים עמד הבית במסגרתו, עד שחרב  
הבבלים, אחרי 70 שנות גלות שבו היהודים  
ועולים ובנו את בית המקדש השני, אשר  
ב בראש הר עד שחרב בידי הרומאים.  
ם היהודי יצא לגלות אבותיו אך נשבע  
ם אשכנח... תשכח ימינו". במשך כל  
ות הגלות לא חדלו היהודים סלתאבל על  
שלים ולהתפלל להגיע לירושלים הבנויה.**

**40 השנים כוסה הכותל, שאורכו המלא  
ת נותרו לפליטה, והיתה למקום תפילות  
מעתם של עולי גולי יהודים מכל קצוות תבל  
ממל הכיסומים לעיון.**

**זר הקמת מדינת ישראל נותר הכותל תחת  
לטון ירדן, ובמשך 19 שנים נאסרה גשת  
ודם אליו, בכחבאיר התשכ"ז 7 ביוני 1967,  
ודר נזר ישראל, לאחר קריבת קשים שבנם  
ודם נשם לוחמי גדל פון חטיבת החי"ר  
ודשלת, מלוגת הטנקים הירושלמית,  
טובת השריון הראל, חיל האוויר וחטיבת  
צנחנים "חוד התנו", שחוררו העיר העתיקה  
נר הבית, מאז ועד יתה נותרים רבבות עלי  
נל ומבקרים אל הכותל העתיבי בידי יום,  
ליבם - תפילה.**

**והיה באחרית הימים, נכון יתה הר  
ית ד' בראש ההרים, נשאו מנבעות,  
הרו אליו כל הגוים, והלכו עמים  
בים, ואמרו: לכו נעלה אל הר ד', אל  
ית א-לקי יעקב, וירנו מדרכיו, ונלכה  
ארותיו: כי מציון תצא תורה, ודבר  
" מירושלים" (ישעיהו, פרק ב' ססוקים ב-ז).**



Cemeteries on the side of the wall

## Gethsemane

Gethsemane, a garden in Jerusalem believed to be the place where Jesus and his disciples prayed the night before the crucifixion. It is at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. There are several small olive groves around the property and some of them are believed to be centuries old. A 2012 study showed the trees are dated AD 1092, 1166 and 1198.

There are four locations, claimed by different denominations to be the place where Jesus prayed on that night.

**The garden at the Catholic 'Church of All Nations,' built over the 'Rock of the Agony.'**

The location near the Tomb of the Virgin Mary to the North

The Greek orthodox location to the east

The Russian Orthodox orchard, next to the Church of Mary Magdalene.



Gethsemane Church (Church of All Nations)

PLEA

## Sanctuarium Gethsemani

**EN** *After the supper, Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron to a place named Gethsemane. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me." He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will."* (Jn 18:1, Mt 14:32, Mk 26:38-39)

**Gethsemane** from gat = shemanim, means "Olive Oil Press". It is the name of a natural grotto next to the Tomb of Mary and her Assumption. Jesus often visited the grotto and it was here that He was betrayed and arrested. In time, however, the entire area at the foot of the Mt. of Olives was called Gethsemane.

**The Garden of Olives** – Located above and to the right of the Grotto of Gethsemane (to the left of the Basilica, facing the façade) and enclosed by a fence. Here there are eight olive trees held by tradition to be the silent witnesses of Jesus' prayer and suffering the evening before His crucifixion.

**The Basilica of the Agony** was built to recall how Jesus agonized over us to the point of sweating blood (Lk 22:44). This is the third basilica built on this site:

- **The Byzantine Basilica.** Constructed in the time of Theodosius (A.D. 380), it had, at the center of the apse, the Rock of the Agony which is still conserved. It was smaller than the present basilica, had a beautiful mosaic floor, and was destroyed in A.D. 614.
- **The Crusader Basilica** was erected in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Remains are still visible to the south (left) of the present church. It was destroyed around A.D. 1200.
- **The new Basilica.** Began in 1919 after the design of the Byzantine Basilica and planned by architect Antonio Barluzzi, it was completed in 1924. Natural light filtered by alabaster windows creates a climate of prayer and invites one to prostrate oneself before the Rock of Agony which has been conserved directly in front of the altar. This basilica is also called The Church of All Nations because of the contributions offered by different nations for the mosaics of the apses and cupolas.

**ES** *Jesus fue con sus discípulos al otro lado del torrente Cedrón. Llegaron a una propiedad llamada Gethsemani. Entonces les dijo: "Mi alma viene una trágica de muerte. Quiéranse aquí, ve, andadme un poco, quedo con el rostro en tierra, cuando así: "Padre mío, si es posible, que pase lejos de mí este cáliz, pero no sea haga mi voluntad, sino la tuya".* (Jn 18:1, Mt 14:32, Mk 26:38-39)

**"Gethsemani"** de "Gath + shemanim", que significa "Prensa de aceite", es el nombre de una gruta natural situada junto a la Tumba de la Virgen María o el lugar de la Anunciación. El evangelio nos dice que a esta gruta solía venir Jesús con sus Apóstoles, y aquí vino después de la última Cena acompañado de sus discípulos. Este lugar da el nombre a toda la zona que se encuentra al pie del Monte de los Olivos.

**El Huerto** – Un poco retirado de la Gruta se encuentra el Huerto de los Olivos con sus árboles milenarios que se conservan como reliquias. Son ocho cuervos olivos que están en el área donde Jesús pasó la última noche de su vida en sufrida oración dirigida al Padre, después de la cual fue traicionado por Judas.

**La basilica de la Agonía** – Fue construida para conservar el lugar que nos recuerda la oración de Jesús y su sufrimiento hasta el sudor de sangre en la noche del Jueves Santo (Lc 22:44). Son tres las basílicas que se han construido a lo largo de la historia:

- **La basilica bizantina** – Construida en tiempo de Teodosio (380 d.C.) con tres naves y tres absides. En la nave central se sitúa la "Roca de la Agonía" y de la Oración de Jesús. La basilica bizantina era más pequeña que la actual y tenía un pavimento de fino mosaico. Fue destruida en el año 614 d.C.
- **La basilica cruzada** – Construida en el siglo XII. Los restos aun son visibles en el lado Sur de la basilica actual. La conquista de Jerusalén por Saladino trajo pronto la ruina de la basilica cruzada.
- **La nueva basilica** – Construida entre los años 1920-1924, siguiendo la orientación y planta de la basilica bizantina. La obra es del arquitecto italiano Antonio Barluzzi. La penumbra violácea produce





Inside the Church



The Garden



Russian Church

Bethlehem, Dolorosa, Tomb of Jesus. There are many more places to visit in Israel. Since mine was a part of cruise tour, I could be only on a one day-tour bus at a time. Pilgrims come as group tour and stay locally for weeks. They go to different parts of the country leisurely. Please research YouTube for some popular tour videos or documentaries.

Side note:

Jesus spent 18 years in India after age 13. (source Jesus in India the documentary 2008 Paul Davids) (King of **Travelers: Jesus' Lost years in India**- by Edward T Martin, 1999)

Haifa (Tel Aviv)

HAIFA (TEL AVIV) ISRAEL

DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Port city to travel to Nazareth, home of the young Jesus.

Entry point for Cruise for Galilee and Jordon river day tours

Population 280000

Third largest city after Jerusalem and Tel Aviv

City founded in 1st Century CE

On the north slope of Mount Carmel

Bahai Garden with gold-domed Shrine of the Bab

German colony with 19th century buildings (galleries and shops)

Just some historical notes:

Ottoman empire conquered Palestine in 1516

1742, Haifa was a village with Jewish community from Morocco and Algeria

1765, Zahir Al-Umar, Arab ruler of Acre and the Galilee moved the population for a fortified site

1799, Napoleon Bonaparte conquered Haifa

1909, Haifa became important to the Bahai Faith

**Baha'is consider Haifa shrine as the holiest place on Earth after Shrine of Baha'u'llah in Acre.**

Over half a million visitors visit the Yardenit Baptismal site every year. Most of them make a rededication or immersion. Some are baptized for the first time. It is the fulfillment of dreams to many.

The Biblical Pavilion (not shown in pictures here). Yardenit's promenade overlooks the untouched Jordan River landscape. A 170 seat Biblical pavilion, located at its isolated spot overlooking the river. It hosts groups for Holy Mass and Catholic Renewals of Baptism Vows, as well as Teachings and Musical worships.

A Kibbutz is a community living in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture. This started in 1910. It has joint ownership of property, equality, and cooperation of production.



Port city



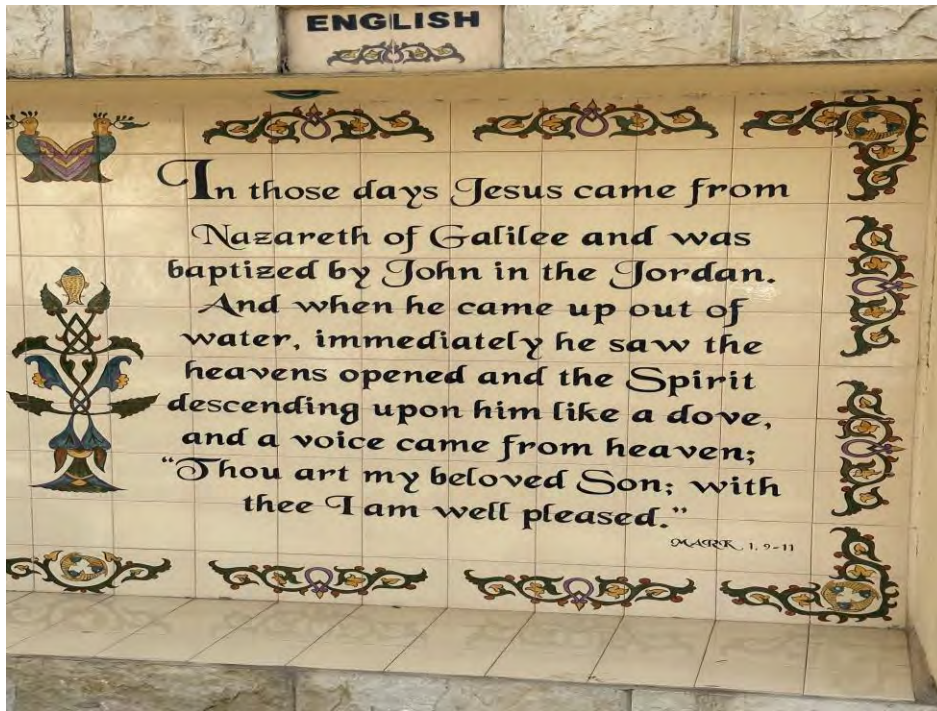
Bahai Shrine



The **Baha'i** faith is a religion founded in the 19th century that teaches the essential worth of all religions and the unity of all people.

Yardenit, the Galilee baptismal site on the Jordan River. The Hebrew name of the Jordan river is Yarden. The name Yardenit is derived from that.





Jordan River



Visitors dipping their legs on the river. The place has modern facilities for pleasant stay and blend with the pastoral natural scenic settings.

The Jordan River is the largest river in the Holy Land. It is mentioned nearly 200 times in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. It bears a very special spiritual significance. The Israelites crossed the River when entering the Promised Land. Near the Jordan banks it was where Prophet Elijah was taken to Heaven by a Chariot of fire and horses. Sick captain of the King of Syria, Naaman, dipped himself seven times in the Jordan river and his flesh was cured. 900 years later Jesus was anointed by the Spirit of God when he was baptized by John the Baptist in the waters of the Jordan River. (source: Yardenit brochure)

Zippori National Park

A place for history and showing the ruins from the Roman and Talmudic eras.



4500 seat capacity Roman theatre



Community baths with caves and water flows



Historic bath places



Ancient monument, declared as World Heritage Site



Modern Church over ancient place



Ancient Capernaum. At Capernaum Jesus lived with Peter and his brother Andrew in the home of Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus healed a paralytic at Capernaum.



Something about Jews

Something about Jews

Major terms:

Sephardic (Jewish diaspora population associated with the Iberian Peninsula) vs Ashkenazi (Jewish diaspora population who formed in the Holy Roman Empire). The lineage comes from male side of the family.

Shomer negiah: Observant of touch. Refraining from physically touching the opposite sex, excluding their immediate family and spouse.

Shabbat (or) Sabbath: Day of holiness and rest observed by Jews from sunset on Friday to nightfall of the following day. Turning on or off any electrical gadgets, driving/riding, shopping, using telephone, cooking, gardening, doing laundry are refrained.

Baal teshuva: Coming back to Judaism. Teshuvah includes recognizing what you did wrong, feeling genuine regret, undoing any damage done, resolving not to do it again and being forgiven by the person who was wronged.

Kosher: Means fit or proper food. Rules on which foods a person can and cannot eat, and how that should be produced. Example: Dairy products should not be mixed with meat.

Tikkun olam- Fixing the world (or) healing the world.

Tefillin, boxes with leather straps containing parchment scrolls (inscribed with verses from the Torah). Adult Jews wear it during weekday morning prayers.

**: 'chaim: means** life.

Yella: God is my strength.

Chavrusa: Traditional rabbinic approach to Talmudic study in which a small group study and debate a shared text, done twice a week.

Phish yarmulke. Orthodox Jewish men always cover their **heads by wearing a skullcap known in Hebrew as a 'Kippah' or in Yiddish as a 'Yarmulke.'**

Middos: Explicate the meaning of biblical words.

Frum - devoted religious

**Torah learning: Study of Judaism's religious texts**

Chuppah: Canopy under which a Jewish wedding ceremony takes place.

Mezusah: door post in Hebrew. A small decorate case which Jewish households attach to the right doorframe of the entrance to their home.

Bar mitzwah (13 years). A religious initiation ceremony of a Jewish boy who has reached the age of 13 and is regarded as ready to observe religious precepts and eligible to take part in public worship.

Shidduch: A system of matchmaking in which Jewish singles are introduced to one another in Orthodox Jewish communities for the purpose of marriage. The girl is expected to discuss her date with her parents before going to sleep.

Cholent- Stew taken on sabbath, simmered overnight for 10 hours+. Contains beef short ribs, beans, potatoes, onions, honey and smoked paprika.

Daven maariv. Observant Jews recite the Amidah at each of three daily prayer services in a typical weekday: morning (Shacharit); afternoon (Mincha) and evening (Maariv)

Katakolon (Olympia)

KATAKOLON (OLYMPIA) GREECE

DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Birthplace of the Olympic Games

2000 years of past history

Population 13000

Tourists: 2.43 million in 2022

Known for Syrtaki, a folkdance in circle formation with **hands on your neighbors'** shoulders.

Temple of Zeus, 40-foot statue of the God

The archaeological site has 760 significant buildings.

Tomb of quasi-mythical king, Pelopion



Ship docked in Olympia port. You need to drive to Olympia town.



Remains of Olympia. Bus tour tickets include entrance fees.



Monuments. This Palestra a center for wrestling game



Ongoing excavations. Why still going on? The guide said we did not complete everything. Let the future generation do their work too!



Temple of Zeus



Artifacts in the museum









Water fountain during historic Olympic games



Real historic Stadium. One event from Athen's recent Olympics conducted here without marketing or ticket fees.

## PIRAEUS (ATHENS) GREECE

### DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Athens, central Greece town

2004 Olympic Games

1896 summer Olympics, revival of modern Olympic games

1906 summer Olympics. Originally Greece to have its own Olympics every four years between main Olympics. The idea was discontinued.

Population 640000 (city of Athens)

Athens has a recorded history spanning over 3400 years.

Center for arts, learning and philosophy.

Home to **Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum**

Ancient myth: Athena the goddess of wisdom competed against Poseidon the God of the Seas for the city.

**Hadrian's Arch, Statue of Lord Byron, Temple of Olympian**

**Zeus**

Walk to the top of the Acropolis to glimpse the city of Athens.

The oldest human presence known, Cave of Schist 7th-11  
Millennia BC

1400 BC settlement become important center for  
Mycenaean civilization.

The Acropolis is the site of a major Mycenaean fortress.

The Acropolis of Athens is an ancient citadel located on a  
rocky place above the city of Athens. The area contains the  
remains of several ancient buildings of architectural and  
**historical significance. The famous one is 'Parthenon'. This  
was inhabited as early as 495 BC. Gone through Venetians'**  
siege and many wars. The Acropolis is 150m (490 feet)  
above sea level and covers about 4 acres. During the  
Byzantine period, the Parthenon was used as a church  
dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Obviously, a few pages are not  
enough to get into details of the Acropolis in this book.



Acropolis view



Water fountain. The bird is real.



Acropolis view



Acropolis view. Propylaea entrance



Acropolis view





Cruise port



Nice sunset view from the cruise

Story about Marathon

Story about Marathon



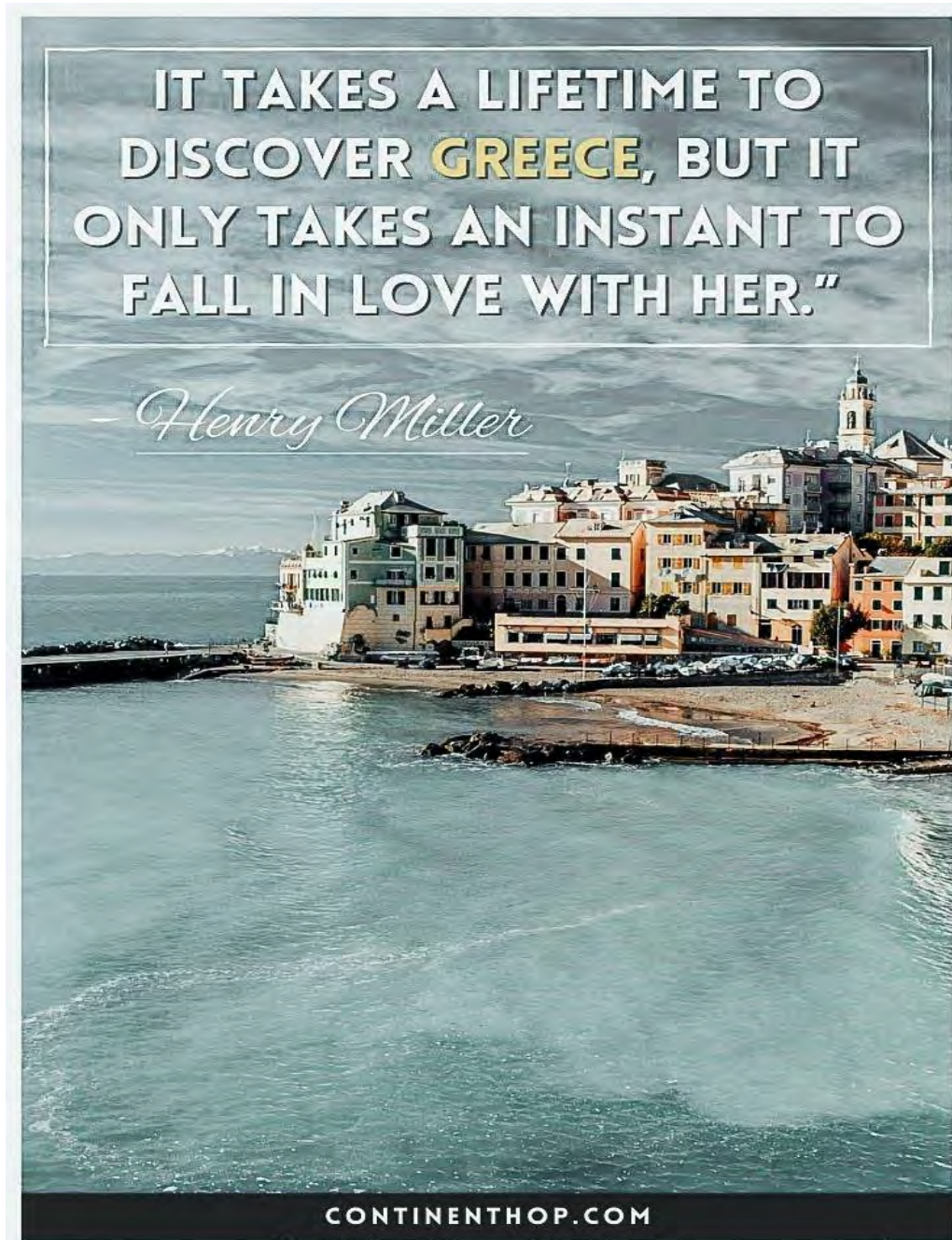
Chicago Marathon (photo courtesy Choose Chicago website)

We all know Marathon is a long-distance foot race with a distance of 42.19km or 26.2 miles. It is mostly running but with run/walk strategy in certain marathons.

The original event happened in 490 BC. The legend Athenian courier Pheidippides ran from Marathon place to Athens to communicate the victory of the battle. The message sign was Nike (the shoe company make it popular anyway). He collapsed and died at the end. The battle was the defeat of the Persian army by the Athenians.

The first modern marathon was run in honor of the event at 1896 Athens Olympics. Like every other word for Greek Gods, Pheidippides is considered God of Marathon (530 BC to 490 BC). The Athens Classic Marathon race has been held annually in Athens since 1972. It happens in early November.

Greece



(photo source: [continenthop.com](http://continenthop.com))

## RHODES, GREECE



## DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Greece is not one island. It has 1200+ islands and about 200 of them inhabited. The largest island is Crete, on the Aegean Sea. Second is Euboea on Euripus Strait. Lesbos & Rhodes are on the third and fourth list.

In Greek culture, the male child gets grand-**father's name** from father's side. The female child gets grand-mother's name from the mother's side. Hence the family will have lot of Maria, Georgios, Dimitrios and Sofias

## Ottoman Empire

The ottoman empire, historically and colloquially known as the Turkish Empire. The empire controlled Southeast Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa between 14 th and early 20th century.

What was left of the empire became the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Previously Bulgaria, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Romania, and Syria were part of the empire. (source: Wikipedia)

About Rhodes:

Popular Tourist destination in Greece

Area 540 square miles with 125000 island population, it has 43 towns and villages.

Rhodes city has 50000 population.

Tourists: 2 Million in a year

There are more cars and motorbikes than people on the island.

Greek orthodox dominant religion, followed by Turkish muslim minority and Jews.

The Medieval city just across the cruise port

A town by itself, medieval city has 6000 population, markets, and parks. A 4km long wall protects the city from invaders. (seen many in the past). UNESCO world heritage site since 1988. This was constructed around 1309 to 1523.

Mosaics town, beach town and Medieval town

Earthquake in 226BC destroyed the Colossus of Rhodes.

332 BC, The Alexander the Great defeated Persians and Rhodes became a major part of the empire.

Other history: 1306-1310 Knights Hospitaller; 1444 Attack by Sultan of Egypt, Siege by Ottomans; 1522 to **Suleiman's**



Cruises lined up at the island.



Aerial view



Beach, beach, and more beaches. Just drive and relax. No hotels or fancy restaurants nearby





Kastri beach



Kastri beach with warm sands



Time for Greek Coffee Ibrik coffee. Frappe is a cold coffee.

Frappe is made of instant coffee, water, sugar, and milk.



Entrance to Medieval city of Rhodes



Medieval city center market



Old synagogue



Traditional pottery making. Leg driven platform



Magical cup which disposes anything excess from the marked level.



Display of famous potteries



Famous Greek Gyros

## Story about Olives



Kalamata olives (photo: Greek city times)

We all love olives and olive oil.

The olive, with botanical name of *Olea Europaea*, is the traditional and popular product of the Mediterranean Basin. Olive oil means Mediterranean food! The species is cultivated in Australia, New Zealand, South America, and South Africa. But Mediterranean countries lead the production and usage. Major income generator from olives and olive oil for many Mediterranean countries. First may be Tourism but olives are close second in terms of economy. 20% of the production is used as table olives and 80% goes into oil production. Olive oil is considered sacred and holy. People in Greece talk about its medicinal benefits all the time. Greece produces 2.4 million tons of olives amidst

world production of 19 million tons (2016 data)

100 grams of cured olives provide 146 calories and 25% of daily value of Vitamin E. It contains large amounts of sodium.

What is extra virgin olive oil? The regular olive oil is heated to extract the oil and also refined. Extra virgin olive oil is cold-pressed and left unrefined. So, it is stronger in flavor and darker in color. It has free acid count of less than one percent.



## SOUDA (CHANIA) GREECE

### DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Town built around a beautiful Venetian Harbor.

15th century lighthouse

Part of Crete region

Population 8440

Area 8.5 square miles

NATO naval base



Souda bay



Suda bay view from war cemetery

This British Commonwealth war cemetery holds 1500 British war fatalities. They lost their lives during Battle of Crete, fought between Allied and German forces in May 1941



Monastery of Agia Triada. Largest monastery in Crete



Inside the Monastery



Outside structural view



A tree which gives lemons and oranges in winter season.





Another Greek Vegetarian dish

Quote

**'You open your mouth, and the world gets smaller.'**

\- famous Jewish quote

Argostoli, Cephalonia

ARGOSTOLI, CEPHALONIA, GREECE

Cephalonia is also known as Kefalonia island,

Ithaka island is another close by island.

Capital is Argostoli

DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Elevation Mount Ainos 1628 meters

Population 35000

Area 3003 square miles

Wine and raisins exports. Fish farming and calcium carbonate exports are rising.

Drogarati caves and Myrtos beach are popular destinations.

In the late Roman Empire, Cephalonia was a part of the Roman province. Turkish rules till 1500. Then the Venetian was successful in the second Ottoman war.

Beach town, period! Many beaches are accessible only on foot or by narrow twisting roads due to the type of terrain.



## Melissani- Cave of the nymphs

Located in Karavomylos, 2km away from Sami Town.

Discovered in **1951** by the 'speleologist' **Petrochilos**. The natural entrance of the cave is vertical and was created by the fall of the part of the roof. Beautiful waters with changing shades of blue as the sun enters through the roof. The lake is located 20 meters below the ground. Water depth varies from 10 to 30 meters. 1962 excavations found 3rd century Gods, female figures, lamps, and plates.

(Source: Melissani brochure)



De Bosset Bridge is the longest stone bridge over the sea in the world. Built in 1813 and goes for 690 meters.



Overview of the bridge. Used only for pedestrians now.



Cave lake. A must visit place on this island.



Short trip into the caves and enjoy the pristine water. The cave lake is a part of the bus tour but expect long queues on busy holidays.



Beach view from the mountain top



Lindos beach



Overview of Argostoli

## Story about Carob

### Carob



The Carob is a flowering evergreen tree in the legume family of Fabaceae. This is widely cultivated for its edible fruit pods and as an ornamental tree. This tree is native to the Mediterranean region and the middle east. Looks like Tamarind tree. **Portugal leads in the world's production with Italy and Morocco following the next positions.**

The dried carob is consumed as roasted powder, mostly. Merchants make carob syrup mixed with honey. The syrup is used in cakes, cookies and even in chocolates. Dried carob fruit is traditionally eaten on the Jewish holiday.

## LIMASSOL, CYPRUS



## DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

A place for sun-worship

Island country located in the eastern Mediterranean sea.

Third largest and third most populous island in the Mediterranean

Capital: Nicosia

Currency: Euro

Languages: Greek, Turkish

**Cyprus people as known as 'Cypriot.'**

Archaeological site of Kourion

A must-see place for the archeology and history



The area consists of these places from history.

310-30 BC Hellenistic Period

30 BC - 330 AD Roman Period

330- mid 7th century AD Early Christian period

The theatre

House of Eustolius

Earthquake house

Early Christian Basilica

The Agora

The Stoa

The northeastern hellenistic public structure

The Roman Nymphaeum

Early Christian house with a triclinium

House of the Gladiators

House of Achilles

The ancient city-kingdom of Kourion was founded by the Argives. Locals associate with founder Koureas, son of the mythical King Kinyras. The kingdom was abolished by Alexander the Great.



Overview



The theatre can hold 3000 people.

No audio systems needed if you speak from the center point. Bottom layers are original stones. This was built around the 2nd century BC. Originally in circular form but earthquakes damaged the area.



Archaeological remains.



Market place



Solar water heater on top of the houses. Sunshine most of

the year



Historic mosaics



Marble pieces assembled together.



Monuments

## The Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates

One of the three most important sanctuaries of Cyprus

History goes back to the late Bronze age 1650-1050 BC.

Initially worship at the sanctuary was associated with a male fertility God and later acquired the name Hylates.

During Hellenistic period, the deity was identified with God Apollo and later to Hylares.

In Cyprus, the male fertility deity often associated with **Apollo and female deity as 'Aphrodite.'**

People from nearby towns came to this place during the 1st Century AD during emperor Augustus period. They offered gifts and stayed at this place to take baths, socialize and be happy!



The Sanctuary

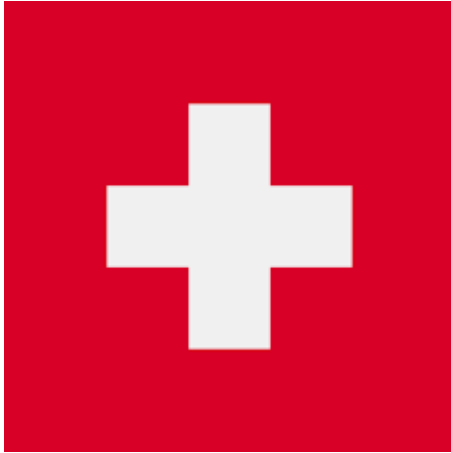


Archaeologists started to rebuild this monument but could not finish it.



Zurich

ZURICH (SWITZERLAND)



Switzerland Flag. (photo source: freepik site)

#### DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Zürich, a global center for banking and finance

Lies in north end of Lake Zürich, northern Switzerland.

Pre-medieval historical town on both side of Limmat River

17th Century Rathaus Town hall

City founded by Romans.

Population: 440000 in 2023

Zürich municipally: 92 sq km (366 sq miles)

Official language German, spoken language is Zürich

German

Zürich partner sister city is San Francisco.

32% of inhabitants do not hold Swiss Citizenship

(8% German citizens and 3.5% Italians)

Roman Catholic 30%

About 70000 people study at 20 colleges in Zürich

Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zürich) has association with 21 Nobel Laureates

Albert Einstein studied at the Federal Polytechnic school in Zürich during 1896-1900 obtaining a teaching diploma in mathematics and science. He was Professor at the University of Zürich 1912-1914.



People relaxing at Limmat river.



Public park at Limmat river



Rope walking enthusiasts on the river platform

## Story about Pizza

Pizza is a world popular food.



Pizza Margherita. The green basil is missing in the picture that day.



Bruschetta. Just for the visual color and appeal!

The book is also about Italy besides Greece. Italy and Pizza go together. We all know about pizza margherita. But never knew these subtle details.

Margherita pizza is known for its ingredients representing the colors of the Italian flag.

Red for tomato sauce, white mozzarella, and fresh green basil

The story is that in June 1889 one of **Italy's** Pizzeria chiefs (Pizzaiolo Raffaele Esposito) invented this dish. He named it to honor the Queen of Italy, Margherita of Savoy. Even today, there are Italian Culinary school that teach and provide certificates on how to bake the pizza.

Venice

VENICE (VENEZIA), ITALY



DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Venice, called Venezia, is the capital of Veneto Region

Built of 118 small islands connected by canals and some 400 bridges.

The city was founded by ancient Veneti people in the 10th century BC.

Population: 258000 in 2020, 85% Roman Catholic

**Venice known as 'City of Water' and 'City of Canals'**

The City gets 60000 tourists per day.

The main airport is Marco Polo International Airport

(Marco Polo 1254-1324 explorer and first westerners to travel to the Silk Road to China)

Venice is built on unstable mud-banks but has a rich and

diverse architectural style. Known for Rococo designs.

Venice Film Festival is the oldest film festival in the world, which started in 1932.

The annual Carnival of Venice lasts for two weeks where Venetian masks are worn.

Venice means canals, restaurants, and tourists!



The Canal was lined with restaurants.





Replace the car with a boat for your household shopping.



Main downtown center. Boats, buses, trains all in one destination



People drinking street tap water. Yes, this is a rare picture in 2023.

Trieste

TRIESTE (VENICE), ITALY

DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERESTING DATA

Port town for all the cruise ships in the northeastern Italy

Population: 204000

Altitude: 2 meters

The cruise liner MS Oosterdam was launched on 18 November 2002 by Holland America Line. It is 936 feet length and 106 feet width, with 1964 passenger capacity and 812 crew. It has 11 floors for the passengers.



Port of entry at Trieste Italy



Ship view at Athens

## Oosterdam 12-day Holy Lands and Ancient Kingdoms

### Tour schedule

06/11/23 Trieste Italy

06/13/23 Katakolon, Olympia Greece

06/14/23 Praeus, Athens Greece

06/16/23 Ashdod, Jerusalem Israel

06/17/23 Haifa, Tel Aviv Israel

06/18/23 Limassol, Cyprus

06/19/23 Rhodes, Greece

06/20/23 Souda, Chania, Greece

06/21/23 Argostolion, Greece

## Publications

<b>About the Author - List of Publications</b>		
	<b>General Subjects</b>	<b>Published</b>
1	Power of Mantras	April 26, 2022
2	Circa-2020 Inspirational Stories from Covid	September 19, 2020
3	Palghat Trails- Unique lifestyle from South India	September 17, 2020
4	Preaching of Saint Dattareya	July 31, 2020
5	Teachings of Thirumandiram	July 31, 2020
6	Inspirational Stories from covid 19	July 5, 2020
7	Be Happy Enjoy Life	December 11, 2019
8	Smile -100 cartoons	December 11, 2019
9	Life Lesson Stories from nature	December 10, 2019
10	Wisdom in proverbs from India's Tamil Language	December 10, 2019
11	South India's Ancient Wisdoms Demystified	December 3, 2019
12	Mediterranean Cruise Plus Vatican	November 17, 2019
13	Lyrics of Tamil Poet Bharathi	November 17, 2019
14	Marriages Made in Madras	November 16, 2019
15	Women Power	February 12, 2019
16	Lyrics of Poet Kannadasan	February 12, 2019
17	Yes, You can be self publisher	December 3, 2017
18	Guru Shopping made easy	December 3, 2017
19	Learn Quick Books	December 3, 2017
20	Kailash Calling	March 19, 2017
21	Lyrics of Poet Vaali	March 1, 2017
<b>Technical Books</b>		
22	Implementing Oracle JDE Manufacturing	July 20, 2017
23	Implementing Oracle JDE Manufacturing Tip & Tricks	May 28, 2018
<b>Udemy courses</b>		
24	Self-Publish in Seven Days	July 2, 2020
25	Time to be an Entrepreneur	July 31, 2020
<b>Audio Books</b>		
26	Life Lesson Stories from nature	July 6, 2020
27	Inspirational Stories from covid 19	July 31, 2020
28	Marriages Made in Madras	August 15, 2020
29	Kailash Calling	August 16, 2020

## About the Author:

Mathur (matt) Ravikumar, an author, consultant, and political/economic cartoonist

Matt started his own consulting company in 2012 and provides functional consulting in enterprise resource planning business software applications.

He has self-published 20+ books over many years. He also publishes weekly cartoon content on political and economic news and events on YouTube Channel. Two of his Udemy lessons have been released, one on entrepreneurship and another on self-publishing. Four self-published books have been released into audio format, available in audible and iTunes.

Regular meditator and trekked partially to Himalayas (Mount Kailash) towards a spiritual journey in 2016.

He is passionate about writing, especially on the subjects **that can teach life's lessons. He likes to mentor** others and find their talent sitting dormant inside.

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