

Traveling with Jonas and Joan

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A most enjoyable way to gain expertise as a forensic psychiatrist is to gain an appreciation of the marvelous diversity that is our common human heritage. Jonas and Joan Rappeport understood and insisted on celebrating this reality, and they practiced it to AAPL's great benefit. Chief among the ways they did this during the 1990s was to organize a series of seven 10-day excursions, each immediately following an annual meeting of AAPL. Plans were set for an eighth trip, this one to Turkey, but it had to be cancelled because of the 9/11 terror attacks. The other destinations were Italy, Ireland, France, Spain, Costa Rica, China, and central Europe. There was plenty to do and to see as tourists, as well as to exchange more formally with colleagues. On the bus trips between cities, the travelers took part in presenting and discussing their own professional and personal experiences and insights. Twenty years later, it is a pleasure to recall these experiences with Jonas and Joan and express gratefulness for these gifts.

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With the passing of Dr. Jonas Rappeport, AAPL members will surely miss the creative vitality of his leadership and the benefits of his global vision for the profound good we can offer as forensic psychiatrists. Fortunately for us his vision encompassed a keen awareness that we can achieve uniquely worthwhile advances through getting to know more about the people and the legal systems at work in countries outside our own. Jonas put this insight into especially powerful practice by organizing a series of several 10-day foreign trips, mostly during the 1990s. Each one began on the day following an AAPL meeting. Italy was the first destination; the others were Ireland, France, Spain, Costa Rica, China, and central Europe. Their order was set so that each trip destination was placed as closely as possible to the AAPL meeting preceding it.

The cost for each of the trips was economical, not much over \$1,000 (double occupancy). Food was consistently abundant and of high quality, and it seemed authentic. The less affluent places taught us the realities of coping with a basic menu of rice and beans, as does a majority of people on our planet. On several evenings, our dinners were handsomely enriched by the fly-fishing expertise

of two or three colleagues. In a few places, we felt that we were being rushed through a meal, but this was fairly rare. Far more often, the opposite happened. The fare was excellent, well presented, and accompanied by enough time to enjoy new tastes and fresh knowledge both culinary and professional. The abundance of leisure for schmoozing was more than enough to fulfill any traveler's dreams and any scholar's appetites.

We likewise enjoyed ample opportunities to mingle with everyday folk on the streets and in other public places. The most uplifting of possible examples must be the lowering of the flag at Tiananmen Square. It was late afternoon, and we were getting buffeted (gently) from all sides by a gradually surging crowd, much of it attempting to sell perhaps just one more shiny trinket to the nearest tourist. But this was something else. A crisp column of soldiers was marching toward us out through the ponderous high doors of the Forbidden City. With arms upraised they reached a flagpole I hadn't noticed before. As the crowd slowly hushed to a thin silence, the soldiers gently lowered the red and gold flag. They folded it rapidly yet respectfully without a wasted motion, then turned and marched directly back to the Forbidden City's stern red wall. As the great high doors closed behind them, the square was suddenly all but deserted. Although it had not been part of our travel plan, we were delighted when our local guide

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announced that she could rework our schedule to make room the following day for a second sunset visit to the square.

The local guide's ability to make or to break any journey experience is inescapable. As hurricane Mitch was drenching our visit to Costa Rica, we were presented with a choice. We could attempt our original itinerary, which was to stay at a luxury hotel that now we might not be able to reach, or to remain in place for some more time together in the jungle. We all agreed to stay and were rewarded by such sights as sea turtle hatchlings struggling to bullet themselves into the ocean. These were very likely that year's last few stragglers. Subsequent weather reports made it more than clear that our choice to remain in place had been well guided. And furthermore, our guides' promise of great fishing after the heavy rains were fulfilled amply, including several new anglers whose gear we borrowed from our hotel.

A similar experience happened during our trip to Spain. Most of us were rather disappointed to discover that we were scheduled to spend three nights in a town called Ronda. It was some distance from other more famous destinations such as the Alhambra, Granada, Seville, and Madrid itself which we did see and Toledo and others which we did not. Our local guides reassured us, gave out some routine suggestions and answers, and we were on our own. Not only were the lodgings most comfortable, but we found amazing places to visit as well as to dine. There was a restaurant perched to overlook sideways at a deep gorge, a rather small bullfighting stadium surrounded by impressive exhibits mounted under the seats and showing off the town's bases for its claim to be the very birthplace of bullfighting. When the time came to depart, we were all apologetic smiles as we boarded our bus.

It feels more than slightly like telling tales, but for the sake of clarity and fairness we did experience some disappointing behavior on the part of a few local guides. In China, for example, after a ride that seemed far longer than we were given to expect, we arrived at a ramshackle shop and studio with trinkets and statuary for sale. Clearly it was not the site of the ancient village of Ban Po that was to be most of our agenda for that day. When confronted, the guides

replied that they had shown us the village as depicted in a small museum diorama earlier that morning. Not much later we found out that our guides were also friends of the shop's owners. This came to light quickly as questions were asked in reaction to the dilapidated condition of the place; the kiln did not even appear functional.

A more serious matter unfolded as we were setting out to return home from the trip to central Europe. On our way to the Prague airport, our head tour guide announced that our flight to New York on the Czech national airline had been canceled, requiring everyone to rebook individually at the airport. This was not expected to take very long, but it did. The clerks at most of the half-dozen or so open windows had no real command of English, nor did anyone in our party know much about Czech. I heard one of my esteemed colleagues ask, very slowly and with great care, "What time does the airplane land?" Answer: "In New York." I looked around as quickly as I could, but our guides were gone. The longer the rebooking process took, the more convinced I became that the vanished guides knew exactly what they were doing, and if they did not, they ought to have known.

Jonas was always keen to enhance the travel experience with an academic or professional dimension. He regularly planned for presentations to be given during the longer bus rides by the travelers themselves. This proved a pleasant way to pass the time and a valued way to form new relationships, especially for some who came from other disciplines. On a few occasions, in Modena, for example, we visited with colleagues in their workplaces to learn directly about different ways to relate legal and clinical concepts.

At the time of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, we were just three weeks from beginning a planned trip to Turkey. Fortunately, we were able to cancel in time to recover our deposits in full. A great deal has happened since then, but at times it seems possible that the changes favoring trips such as these might just outweigh those that oppose them. Meanwhile we are free and welcome to raise a grateful glass in honor of Joan and Jonas and express in person to one another our gratitude for this great and wise gift.