

I have been doing handstands for the last 58 years of my life as my signature greeting in every unique place I've been. This has included both Geographic Poles, 18 of the tallest buildings, rivers, canals, deserts, mountains, ancient ruins, atop of the great pyramid and many others. It also included all the countries of the world except SYRIA. Although I tried for the last 5 years, Syria remained the only sovereign state I was not able to enter. Until I found Spiekermann Travel in 2020. And then COVID-19 shut down



that planned trip in March, 2020. Finally! my quest was realized this week when Syria opened up to Americans again via Spiekermann Travel. At 75 years old, I did my handstands in Syria in spite of the arthritis, cancer three times, torn rotator cuff and dislocated shoulders, and worn out back. Just in time, I think. So, there were three of us and our superb Syrian/American guide, Ghiath. He got us into Syria by van from Lebanon and drove through some 58 check points over about 800 miles all over the Syrian part of the Fertile Crescent. We stopped to explore some 25 points of interest. Syria is part of the cradle of civilization, dating back as far as you like in recorded history and before. We saw the ancient Roman and even older ruins in Palmira, Apamea, Ebla, Aleppo, Damascus, and others along the way. We visited very old Christian and byzantine churches and convents, citadels, Roman baths, viaducts & water wheels, mosques, tombs, catacombs, and more. On one side of the relatively modern roadways would be totally destroyed building from the last decade of war; on the other side the main cities had been defended and were intact. The country was still struggling to recover from war and sanctions, but the people were extremely helpful and happy to see us. They were busy and productive, and some newly renovated restaurants and hotels were doing impressively well. The variety of foods were local and served with panache. Outstanding. The bazaars in Damascus and Aleppo were very busy with local folks and we tourists were welcomed in all the shops. Everything was inexpensive, but you had to use Syrian Lira, which we had to get in small

quantities from our guide. If I had more Syrian lira, I would have bought lots more of textiles, perfumes, artifacts, and foods to take home. I did buy a replica of the Damascus Sword that didn't fit in to my suitcase, but the hotel packed it so I checked it for free separately.

In summary, Spiekermann Travel enabled me to complete my life-long quest to do handstands in every country before I am physically unable to see the world upside down. In addition, the tour they arranged was so spectacular that now Syria is one of the most memorable countries I have ever seen. And now, I've seen them all.