

This amphitheatre adjoins the Acropolis in Athens and is still in use today. (Herald photo)

**Traveller moves into northern hemisphere**

# 'Retsina' in Athens, tea, Toby in Britain

It never seems to end, these long and interminable waits at airports. Because we had to be at Ben Gurion International Airport very early in the morning to catch a flight to Athens, Greece, John and I elected to spend the evening there sleeping, or some semblance thereof. Hopeless.

We spent the night in casual conversation with an American and a young Australian lady. All very pleasant, but by the time we checked through the rather arduous Israeli customs and subjected ourselves to a body search along with some other disreputable characters, we were feeling rather fatigued. The flight to Athens was pleasant enough and I believe I managed a quick nap before we landed.

As we disembarked, I heard John over my shoulder commenting, "Funny how in all the travel ads Greece is always portrayed as warm, sunny and inviting." Hardly the case in late October and the beginning of November.

We eventually found ourselves some lodging in a small house called 'John's Place' which was, of course, run by John, who happened to be a cantankerous old fellow. The room cost us four dollars (150 Dracmas) a night and as I noted in my journal, "It's very clean though, which is more than I can say for some of the dumps we've stayed in."

**ENJOYED ATHENS**  
Despite the inclement weather I must say I enjoyed Athens, especially the old city which is gathered around the base of the Acropolis.

In the evenings we would wander around the maze of streets which run every which way, but inevitably up. Many of the streets that run up the rock are stepped and are strictly for pedestrians, with the cross streets used for vehicular traffic.

All of these streets have cabarets and night clubs, ranging from the incredibly sleazy to the very posh. On these evening walks we rarely stopped in at any of them, quite content to walk and take in the sights, until we were back by some confusing route to John's Place.

In the little restaurant under our rooms, I had my first taste of that interesting Greek concoction, Retsina. It is certainly an acquired taste and John wouldn't have anything to do with it after the first

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glass. It remained up to me to finish the litre that we had bought. Naturally I steeled myself and drank the rest of the stuff and still didn't acquire a taste for it. John claimed that my stomach would be rotted out by the morning, but I had my doubts as I watched the little old men come in to fill up their jugs from the proprietor's big barrel. It certainly didn't seem to affect their longevity.

**SHEER BEAUTY**  
On my last day in Athens I wandered up to see the famous Acropolis. At the time, it was being repaired and much of it was surrounded by scaffolding. Years of pollution have taken their toll on the stone and in many places it was beginning to crumble. None of that could take away from the sheer beauty of it, however, especially when one considers that it was built so long ago. The fact that the Greeks had such a superb grasp of perspective and architectural design can't help but impress.

When we left Greece we flew directly to England. After a quick pint of British beer in the railway station, it was on to

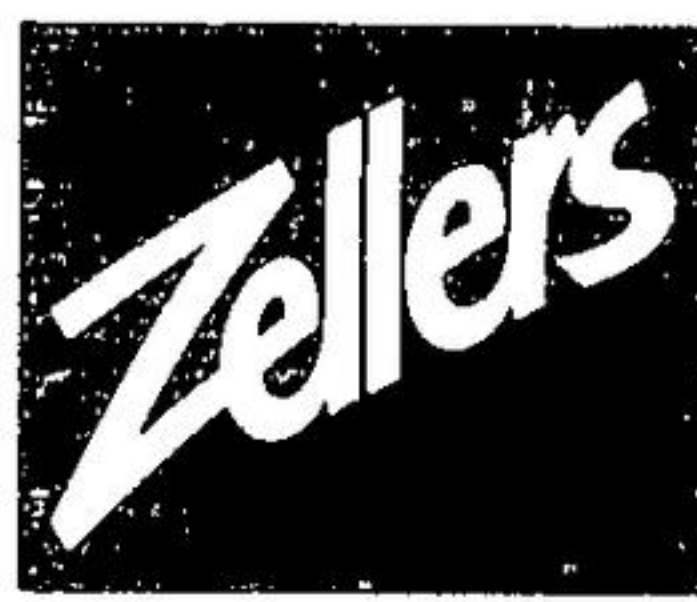
Cardiff, where John's parents live. Incidentally John hadn't seen his parents in two years.

From my journal - "Hot showers, delicious hot meals, British beer and beds with real sheets on them. Hospitality plus. Breakfasts of ham and eggs and toast and tea. All the things taken for granted a little over a year ago have become luxuries in the past five months either because of price or lack of availability."

**FATTENING**  
After fattening ourselves on John's mother's cooking we started a tour of his relatives. We stayed on his uncle's farm near Lancaster and visited numerous local pubs with his best friend, Philip, and his wife. The farm was around four hundred years old, yet all the buildings including the house were in good shape.

From the journal - "Two days ago J.P. and I spent the day touring the Cumbrian Lake District. I have never seen landscape as beautiful as this. No exaggeration. Long narrow lakes and small tarns set in hills and smallish mountains. Homes and farms

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