

# Avanos to Trabzon

written by Marcus | 25 March, 2015



I have to admit I don't make a very good patient; Or more accurately a very patient patient. Injuries are just so inconvenient when there are so many things to do. Last year I broke my wrist and instead of being sensible and taking some time to recover I went out running in the woods in the dark and inevitably fell over. Add another 2 weeks to the recovery time and ramp up the frustration. On the plus side I got a fresh cast put on which pleased Kirsty as the old one was getting quite pungent..

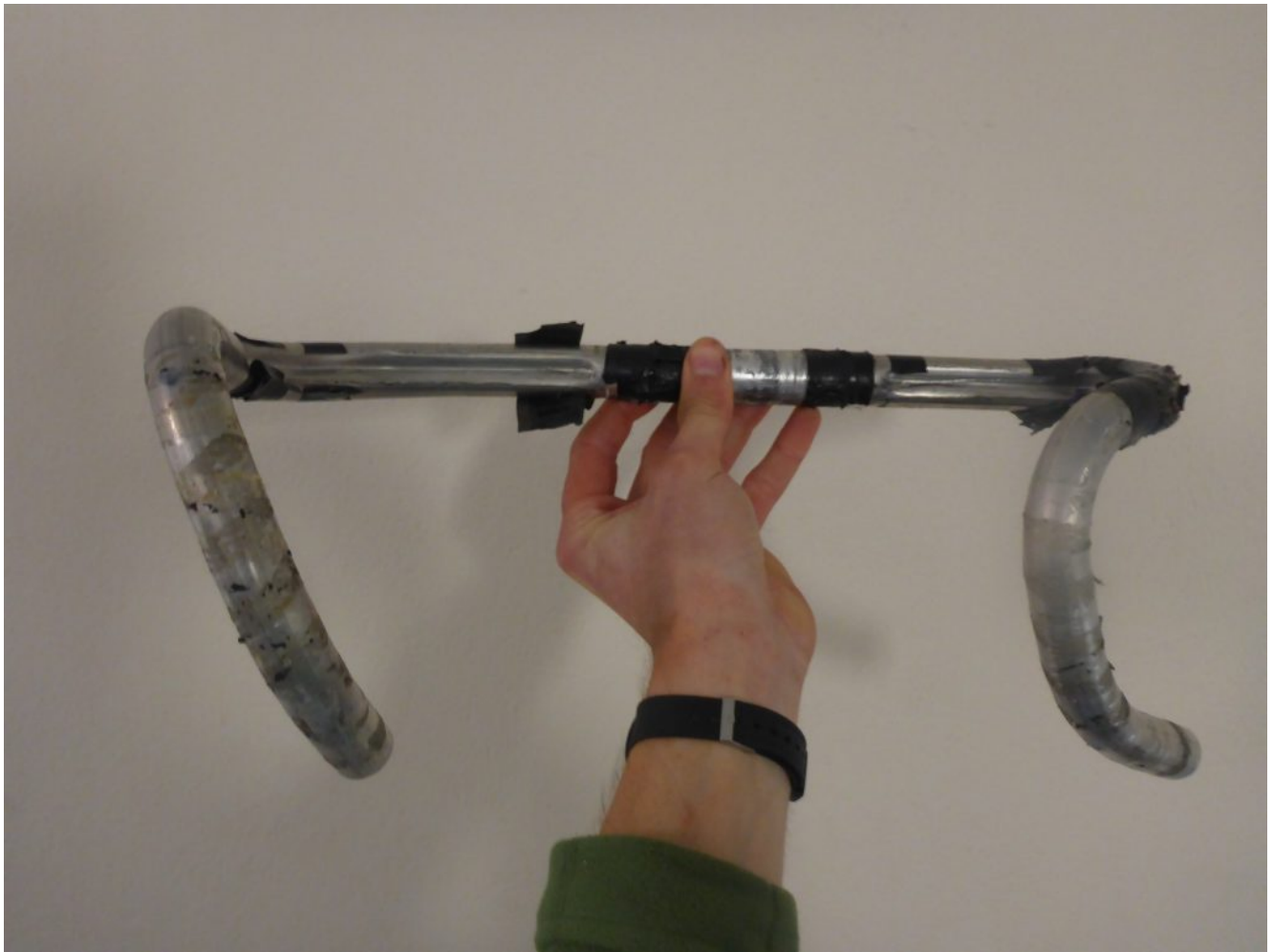
So spending 1-2 weeks on a sofa in Avanos was not an appealing prospect but without being able to bend my left knee there wasn't much else that could be done. Kirsty was also shaken up from the slam down so wasn't keen to go far for a while either.

Some post crash analysis revealed that the cause of the burst

tyre was from one of the brake blocks rubbing ever so slightly on one side. At high speed the friction was enough to melt a small groove in the side of the tyre, leaving a tell tale black residue on the brake block. After 1 too many 70kph descent the small groove became a small hole right through to the tube and that's when things went wrong. We think the brakes must have got knocked when we were clearing the clay off the bike after our visit to the quarry. Although avoidable with a bit more of a careful check of the bike each day we're very glad to know that it wasn't just a random puncture or unexplainable inner tube failure. A lesson learned for sure though.



Rim damage



## Bent Bars

In our feeble states the occasional hobble to the shop for fresh supplies or to the clinic for a fresh dressing was about as much as could be done during that first week and even that was probably over doing it. The weekend after the crash we were glad of a visit from Charlie and Ryan who brought with them a pack of Haribo, well know for its healing properties. We had met Charlie in Istanbul and he and Ryan are following the Silk Route to Beijing. We'd left Istanbul a few days before them and were hoping to stay ahead for a bit longer but now we'll be following their tyre tracks once we get back on the bike.





Charlie and Ryan

By the following Monday, 9 days after the crash I paid another visit to Nevşehir hospital as it was time for the staples to be removed. The procedure was quick, relatively painless and could have been done by Kirsty with the Leatherman pliers without the 84 TL bill.

Although Arif's flat had everything we needed (a kitchen, a sofa and the internet) we were now desperate for a change of scenery. We still had some money left on the Hotel Voucher that was so generously given to us by friends and family before we left so using this we booked a room in one of the famous cave hotels in Göreme.



## Our Cave Hotel

Göreme is like no other town we'd ever seen. It's often likened to the set of Star Wars or the Flintstones with its a



rock houses and surreal landscape but even George Lucas would have struggled to dream up such a unique place.



## Goreme

Our hotel room has been carved into a mound of rock high above the town and from the breakfast terrace we get some great views looking across the valley punctuated with dozens of rock towers, each one with windows and doorways revealing the fact they are not just geological features but are also luxury accommodation.



## Goreme

With the staples removed from my knee and Kirsty's grazing healing up well we decide to finally get out and see what Cappadocia has to offer. There are 17 valleys and each has its own collection of unusual cliffs, hoodoos and cave dwellings in a variety of unusual shapes, sizes and colours. The most famous of which is Love valley whose phallic rock towers are enough to make a nun blush.



Paşabağ Fairy Chimneys





Camel at Zelve





Zelve Fairy Chimney



Zelve Fairy Chimneys





Nice pose



Zelve Open Air Museum



Zelve Open Air Museum



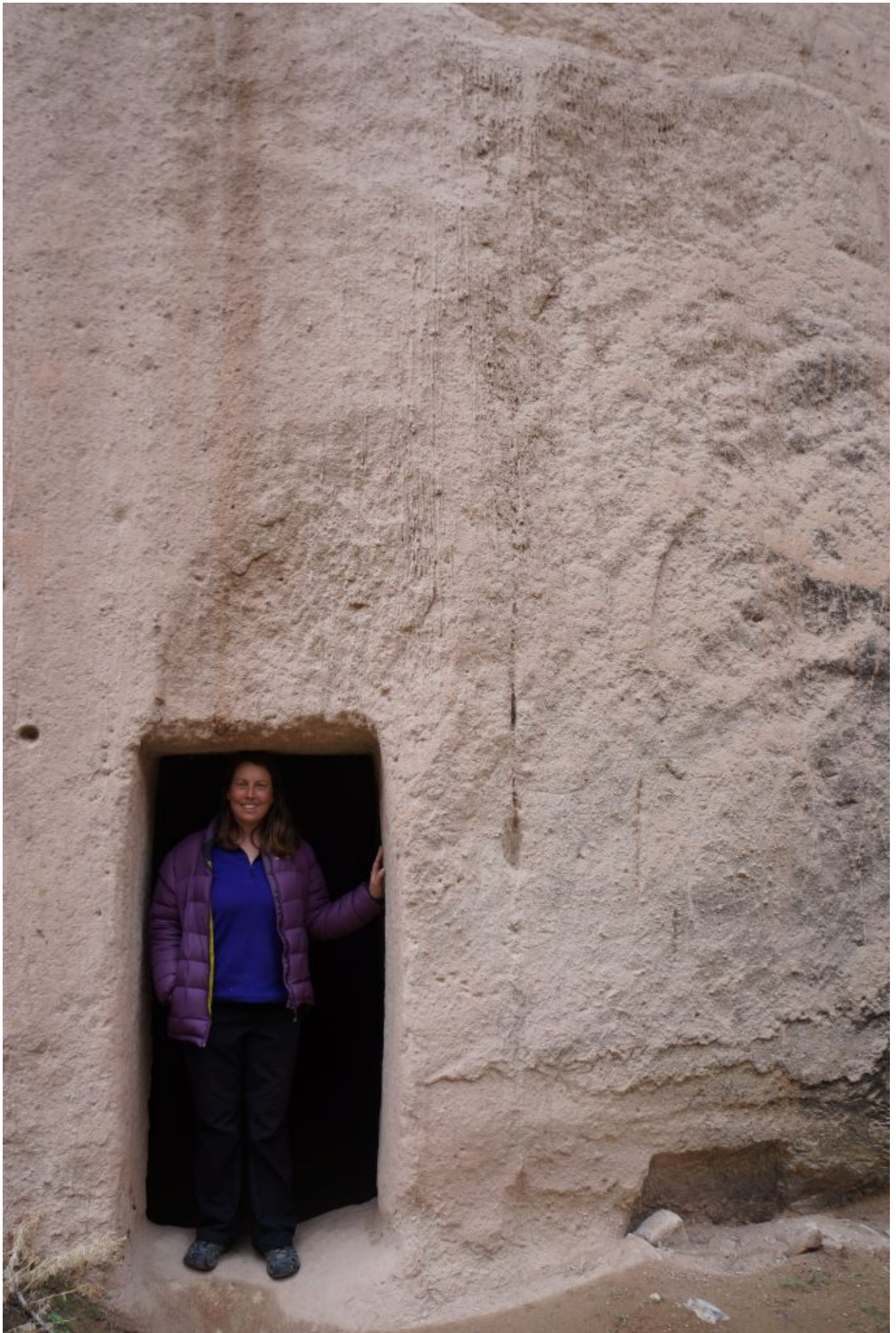


## Zelve Open Air Museum



Rock Church, Zelve Open Air Museum





Cave dweller



Rock church, Zelve Open Air Museum









Çavuşin



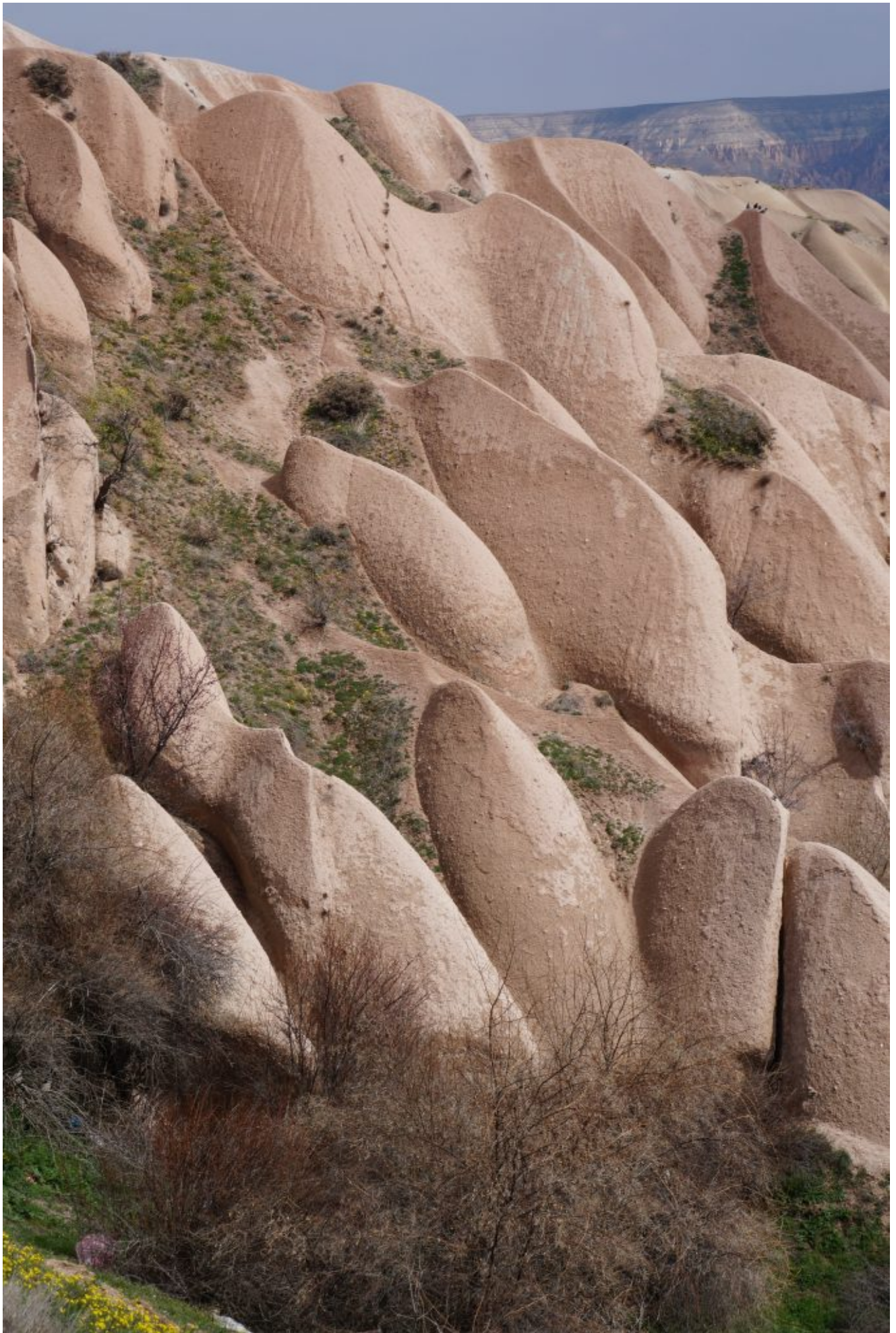
Pigeon Valley with some campers who we were very jealous of





Rock house in Pigeon Valley







Pigeon Valley



Honey Valley



Honey Valley





White Valley



Love Valley





Cappadocia is also famous for hot air ballooning and so most mornings a huge flock of them fly over, teeming with Japanese tourists keen to snap the sun rise. One morning they fly straight over Göreme so we watch them from a cliff above the hotel. On another of our walks they chase us down the valley like a scene from The Prisoner.



I am not a number!





























By the end of the 2nd week we're back in Avanos and ready to think about pedaling again, but we need a bike to ride. The now very familiar Turkish postal system tracking website is being watched eagerly while our parcel of bike parts gets closer and closer. While we wait we pay a visit to an underground ceramic museum which is not as impressive (or unusual) as the hair museum, housed in a cave. Here, thousands of locks of hair dangle from the ceiling, left by previous visitors and the explanation from the owner is that one girl started it and then lots of people did the same. Of course Kirsty is obliged to add to the collection but I'm not allowed to donate as it's for girls hair only. Not even beard hair is welcome.



Intricate ceramic plate





## Hair museum

Finally the parcel arrives, in a town 10km away due to an address error. But the next day we get to collect it from Avanos post office.

So the bike rebuilding gets underway. I've never built a wheel before but it seems like a good enough time to have a go so at least I know how to do it if something happens again. Or know to always get a bike shop to do it for me if it goes wrong. I get a handy tip on how to go about it using a cheats method after some enquiring online. By taping the new rim to the old one each spoke can be moved across one by one. It's then a case of tightening it all up methodically, making sure the wheel is round and tight and Bob's your Uncle we should be rolling again (Hi Uncle Bob).



Rebuilding the front wheel

After a few hours of spoke nipple tweaking it certainly looks like a wheel. It goes round and the spokes go ping of if I hit



them so the only thing left to do is ride it and see what happens.

Without The Big Crash we would be well on our way North East to Trabzon by now. But our uncertain physical capabilities and the size of the mountains en route that would test even 100% fit riders meant that another plan was needed. We also planned a rendezvous with someone in Tbilisi and with all the delays a speedier method of transport was needed to make sure we got there in time.

A thirteen hour coach journey provided the answer. 700km passed overnight and with it all those chance encounters, epic views, challenging climbs and snowy camp spots that would have made for a great bike ride (you can read about Charlie's experience of the ride [here](#)). Bus travel is certainly an effective way to get across a country quickly but in terms of experiencing the country fully we'd much rather do it by bike.



"You can't put that on the bus". " yes we can ". " OK yes you can "



Driver cam. A variant is being developed for the tandem so Kirsty can see where we're going.

In Trabzon our host is Yildirim who runs an English language school. He makes use of our command of English to test some of his students so we get asked how we are by four 8 year olds in turn. I hope we passed the test too.





Our Trabzon hosts



### Helping with the English lesson

While in Trabzon we decide to try and play the longest of long shots. So long in fact is this shot that it's well clear of the 18th hole and somewhere amongst the BMWs in the car park. We stroll into the Iranian embassy and ask if we can apply for a visa knowing full well that the rules for UK citizens changed last year. We're supposed to now need a code that's issued by the government once they have verified that we have a registered guide for the entire time we're in the country and a fully planned itinerary. This is hugely expensive and also makes the kind of spontaneous travel we like almost impossible. If we'd arrived 12 months previously this wouldn't have been necessary but the rules changed without warning. If we were from any other country other than UK, USA or Canada we wouldn't need the guide either. But there are rumours that it may change again which is why we thought we'd give it a go without a code to see what happens.



Our time in the embassy lasts less than a minute and the conversation goes something like: "where are you from?", "England ", " do you have a code? ", " no ", " go and get one and then come back ", " bye ".



Perhaps the closest we'll get to Iran for now

It's a great shame as Iran was somewhere we were looking forward to a great deal but it will have to wait until another time and another trip. This time a voyage across the Caspian Sea will be our next best option.

While in Trabzon we also take another bus trip to the famous Sümela monastery. As if one bus trip was not enough for one week.. Perched on the side of a cliff high up on a mountain it's not easy to get to at the best of times but there's been heavy snow so it's now even more difficult. Usually I'd prefer to travel across snowy mountains on a pair of skis but here we have to brave a ride in a mini bus with snow chains on for the

last stretch of road up to the top. The ride up is quite hairy but coming down is equal to the adrenalin rush from the most treacherous of black runs.



Minibus slalom ride

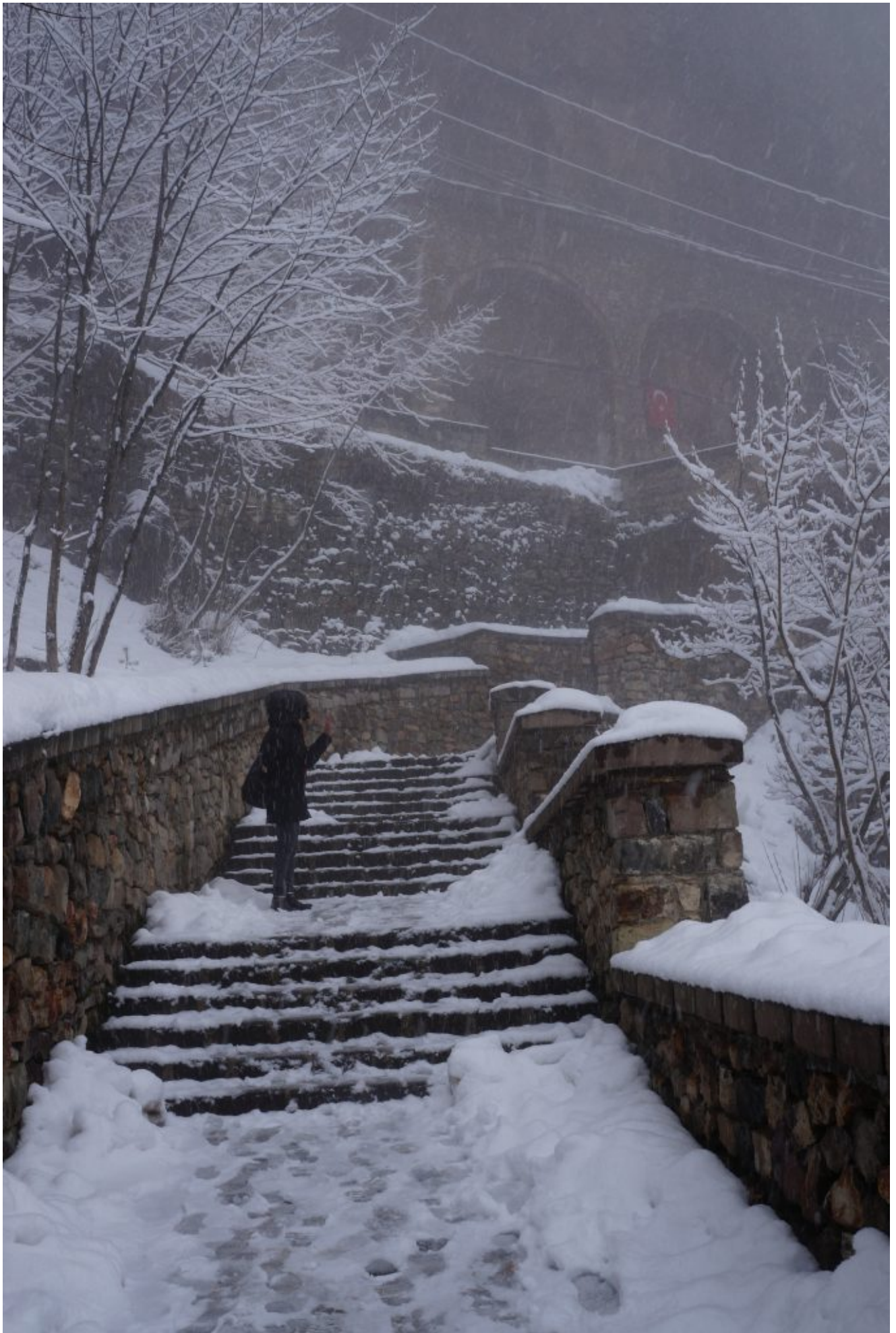








It's worth it though to see the incredible buildings built into the rock face. Just as incredible is the amount of damage from graffiti and from shepherds using the priceless frescos for target practice over several decades. It's all now very well guarded so hopefully it won't get any worse.





Sümela monastery



Sümela monastery





This wasn't us, honest guvnor.





Graffiti, Sümela monastery



Sümela monastery





Sümela monastery









Sümbela monastery

Our bus takes longer than expected as it includes a lengthy stop for lunch at a restaurant that feeds our driver well for bringing in his bus load of guests. So our plan to leave Trabzon that afternoon needs a rethink. It's actually a lucky escape as the customary Black Sea rain has been falling all day. Yildirim tells us he wouldn't have let us leave in that weather anyway so we stay another night.

Our long awaited return to the bike and continuing journey east has to wait until the next day and by now my patience is almost at an end. Hopefully cycling is as good as we remember.





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