

Last word

Of fixed abode

It takes a traumatic trip abroad for *Rob Garratt* to realise home is where the heart is

It was when the taxi driver spat on me that I realised my summer holiday was not going entirely to plan. Some might say I deserved it: I did only cough up three-quarters of the agreed price. But then he did lie about knowing where I wanted to go, laugh at the suggestion he instead deliver me to a tourist information centre and then turn me out of his vehicle at an undefined location.

And so it was that I found a towering Slavic man pacing towards me, snarling the only word of German I know (I wasn't in Germany by the way), then slowly work up a goblet of phlegm and artfully placing it on my trousers.

And at that moment a thought flashed through my head: this wouldn't happen in Dubai.

It was the same every time disaster struck during my trip. Like so many others, I chose to escape Dubai's summer heat by fleeing to Europe and settled on a two-week jaunt around the Balkans. But it was far from a



inebriated burnouts, waiting for an internet fraudster to deliver an apartment key that would never arrive

every such quirk, quip or footstep of mine that displeased her in any way (a favour I was more than happy to return).

And I suppose I can't neglect mentioning my other taxi driver run-in. Let's just say at the end of a 15-minute

multilingual slanging match in the midst of an airport check-in queue the guy actually reached into my wallet and took off

with some (thankfully worthless) banknotes. (Does that mean I was mugged?)

Yet every time disaster arrived, I was struck with the same simple thought about Dubai.

As my plane touched down and I emerged from Dubai Terminal Two, the desert humidity enveloped me with a comforting sense of relief. It can't help but strike me as symbolic; after two years in the emirate, is my subconscious actually now calling this place home?

Rob Garratt is Time Out Dubai's Web Editor. He swears he doesn't have a problem with taxi drivers. In Dubai at least.

I spent 12 hours travelling to a park, only to be warned off 'because of the snakes'

stress-free experience.

There was the time I found myself combating a violent stomach upset on a six-hour bus ride between one bombed-out metropolis and another reconstructed capital.

Then the time I spent 12 hours travelling to a national park, only to be warned off entering by locals 'because of the snakes'.

Or the time I found myself on a Macedonian side street, surrounded by

(rendering me homeless for the night).

Then there's my travelling companion. I chose to invite my oldest friend along for the trip, thinking that there was no person better placed to tolerate a fortnight of my idiosyncrasies than someone who has been tolerating such quirks for years.

However, all this lengthy friendship actually meant in effect was that there was no one person more comfortable pointing out, with clinical sincerity,

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Audited by BPA Worldwide
Average Qualified Circulation 35,876 (Jan-June 2013)

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