



## Around the world with 52 cards

*Travels and adventures of a bridge pro*

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### Rhodes

The 2004 Bridge Olympiad, held in Istanbul, is in full swing by the time you read this article, but what you might not remember is that eight years ago the 1996 edition of the event took place only a few miles away from the southern coast of Turkey in the beautiful island of Rhodes.

Rhodes is the third largest Greek island and rightly or wrongly it bears the proud title of the sunniest place in Europe. The city itself is situated at the island's most northerly point and is separated into new Rhodes, which covers most of the peninsula, and Old Rhodes, a walled fortress close to the docks, originally erected by the Crusader Knights of St. John of Jerusalem after they took over the island in 1309 AD. This combination of the ancient and the modern, so common in Europe, takes a new dimension here: the 14-meter thick walls look much more imposing than any structure built over the last few centu-

ries. Here the ancient world wins hands down, also thanks to strict local laws that keep the motor traffic to a minimum and help to preserve, especially in the evening, the magic aura of the picturesque medieval town.

A few miles south of Rhodes town one can discover an entirely different world. It looks more like the type of Greek landscape you'd come to expect: tiny hamlets dotted along a coast covered with olive trees, while inland the rugged hills are wearing a green mantle of refreshing pine forests.

On the rest day we head out to the ancient town of Lindos, a port where 3,000 years ago Menelaus and Helen stopped on their voyage home from the Trojan War. The town is small, and on the other side of it there is a steady climb to the fortress, which was also built by the Knights of St. John, a tougher walk than it looks. Inside is



the acropolis, containing the ruins of the temple of Athena Lindia, one of the most famous of the antique world.

As I round the top of the massive open-air staircase, the world unveils before me. I'm facing east, the sun just overhead at its zenith. The Aegean spreads out in the distance to the pale coast of Turkey, the water glittering with the sun's rays on its rippling surface. I walk to the end of the ruins, past the temple of Athena Lindia, and look down the cliff to the Aegean far below, where waves rhythmically break on rocks leaving swirls of foam. The world seems ancient this morning, like it aged 3,000 years during the night. That boat I see slowly drifting ashore could well belong

to Helen and Menelaus returning from Troy, and I feel like I could stay here forever to treasure this magic moment.

Alas, duty calls and we must make our way back to resume our daily struggle with the 52 cards!

Both of our teams, the Open and the Ladies, seemed to thrive in the ancient island and surged forward in the early stages to lead both competitions only to fade a little towards the end. We eventually lost in the knock-out stages to a fast rising Chinese team.

In the round robin match, the following board came up:

West dealer	North	
None vul	♠ J 2	
	♥ K Q 9 8 5 2	
	♦ —	
	♣ A Q 9 3 2	
West		East
♠ 10 7		♠ 9 6 5 3
♥ A J 7 6 4		♥ 10 3
♦ 9 2		♦ Q 8 7 6 4
♣ K 7 5 4		♣ 8 6
	South	
	♠ A K Q 8 4	
	♥ —	
	♦ A K J 10 5 3	
	♣ J 10	

West led the ♣5 (third and fifth) which I let ride to my jack. The contract seems safe as long as spades are no worse than 5-1 and diamonds no worse than 4-3, with a few cases where, with certain cards conveniently placed, it is possible for declarer to succeed even with a bad split in one of those suits.

There was no point in delaying drawing trumps and I did so in four rounds, West discarding two hearts, and afterwards I cashed the two top diamonds and continued with the ♦J, getting ready to claim if both opponents followed. Unfortunately West showed out, discarding a third heart and uncovering the dreadful 5-2 split. East won her ♦Q and played the ♥10 back.

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West	North	East	South
Pass	1 ♥	pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♣	pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♣	pass	4 ♦
Pass	4 ♠	pass	4 NT
Pass	5 ♦	pass	6 ♠

(all pass)

It was clear that West held the ♥A (otherwise East, who knows my shape — or should! — would have exited with the ♦8). Therefore, I could ruff the heart return and play the ♦10, squeezing West in clubs and hearts. This was the position after I ruffed the heart: