

Presenter: Philippa, thank you for coming. Now, Philippa, what exactly is a blue zone?

Ph: well, according to Boulain's book, it is an area where you can find the greatest number of people who reach the age of 100.

Pr: I've heard for example of very old people in China and Korea but those countries aren't included in the Blue zones

PH: No, well, one of the problems we have in this field is that of evidence. They say they are 100 or 110 years old but it's very difficult to prove because there are no birth certificates, no supporting documentation. During the Cold war, the Russians claimed to have many people living over 100 in the area of Georgia but we have since discovered that to be false- it was just one more lie to make Russia look a good place to live in.

In the blue Zones we do have the proof so we are fairly confident about it.

Pr: And how many people are we talking about? There aren't a lot of them, are there?

PH: Well, these are small communities: Ikaria has only about 300 people and Loma Lona has

PR: How long do the people live to?

PH: On Icaria, they found one area where nearly 1 in 3 people reached their 90s, compared to an average of 1 in 20 in other parts of Europe.

Pr: But in what condition are they? I mean, they aren't fit and healthy at that age, are they?....

PH: In fact, surprisingly well. They have about 20 % lower rates of cancer and 50% lower levels of heart disease than other people in the same country or even in nearby towns.

Pr: What exercise do they do?

PH: Well, almost all of them walk every day for at least a couple of kilometres- even if it's just to go to a café. And interestingly, most of them also do a lot of gardening- they have little gardens where they grow fruit and vegetables (and that's healthy too of course)

Pr: and what's the reason behind it? It's genetic, isn't it? Because I suppose these people's parents lived a long time, they do too.

PH: Actually, no, it's not. Because they have seen that if these people move away from these areas, then they don't live as long. For example, Okinawans (the people from Okinawa) have moved to other places and they've found that for example, the ones who moved to Brazil lived on average 17 years less than

those who stayed on the island. So that just goes to show that most of their longevity is actually due to their lifestyle, not their genes.

Pr: So you're saying it's all due to their lifestyle then. I suppose they eat healthily, don't they?

PH: Oh yes, they're semi-vegetarian really. Obviously in Sardinia and Greece you have the Mediterranean diet with lots of pulses, vegetables, fruit and only a bit of fish, almost no animal protein and practically no sugar.. And in Okinawa and Loma Linda they all drink herbal tea, rather than coffee.

Pr: Another thing that's very important is the family, isn't it?

PH: Yes, that's right. All of these people have very close relations with family and friends. It seems to be important to maintain friendship and family links to help keep stress levels down, a feeling of being supported. In Loma Linda in California they are a religious community, not a real family, but they work together, they are very supportive of each other so in a way it is like a family.

Pr: Interesting stuff and food for thought. Philippa, thanks very much for coming in

PH: Thank you