

COMMENTS ON TEACHER STUDY TOURS'09 – GROUP II

I am grateful for this opportunity to visit and learn about Turkey. I am not surprised though that Turks have more in common with us, citizens of the United States, than most people believe. I have come to have a better understanding of this through this travel opportunity. What I have seen, heard and felt is a world view of tolerance – tolerance for tense neighbor, tolerance for nosy Americans with comments, questions and curiosity. I see universal values of love of family and strength of character. I hear many languages and beautiful music. I taste many flavors of the provinces, sites and country side so we have travelled through Turkey. I shall always remember this trip and will recommend Turkey to my peers and students. I shall also remain a student of Turkey and will pass on knowledge of the history, culture and experience that is mine.

Deborah K. Bye, Anchorage, AK, USA

I have lived abroad and traveled around the world a fair amount – all on my own – so I was a bit nervous about going on my first group tour. However, I found it one of the most rewarding overseas journeys of my life. I learned more than I imagined I would about Turkey and met a bus load of great people, some of whom I hope to stay in contact with long after the tour.

John Fick, Anchorage, AK, USA

I've seen sites that I struggle to find words to describe. Each morning I feel as if I receive a beautifully wrapped gift to open during the day. Turkey is a visual delight, a place that tantalizes all senses. The music, the food, the textures, the landscapes, the people, the bright-eyed children- all tremendous.

Kathie B. Steele, Chugiak, AK, USA

This opportunity to come to Turkey and learn about all it has to offer has been amazing. I loved every moment of my time here from the first *Hoş geldiniz* to my last cup of Turkish coffee it was wonderful. I will have a lot of fun in my class this year weaving in the history, architecture, culture and cuisine. A BIG thank you to the Turkish Cultural Foundation for providing me with this unique opportunity.

Marilyn Doore, Anchorage, AK, USA

I would like to thank the Turkish Cultural Foundation for their support of teacher education. This has been a wonderful learning experience for me. It's one thing to study Turkish history and culture in a textbook, but to truly understand this diverse country we have had the ability to travel and discover it for ourselves. I am excited to start the new school year by sharing this experience with my students and colleagues in hopes that they can fully understand this unique country.

Stephanie Seward, Anchorage, AK, USA

This study tour has enriched my life and my global studies curriculum enormously. I cannot wait to share my new ideas and insights about this amazing nation. I am inspired to continue studying and learning about this great complex country.

Denise Dahl-Davis, Bozeman, MT, USA

The tour has been wonderful in every way. The sites are varied and incredible. The food and accommodations beyond expectation and the tour staff is remarkable. I will carry what I've seen into the classroom with me and it will be no small contribution to how I teach the history of the area.

Jim R. Stanicar, Missoula, MT, USA

Although I knew very little about Turkey when I started TCF's program, the preparatory class and readings gave me a good foundation in Turkish history, art, and culture. The tour built upon that foundation by providing sights, sounds, tastes--real life experiences which ranged from exploring 9,000-year-old ruins to listening to Turkish rap music. Each day's adventure was my favorite until it was outdone by the next day. The experience definitely inspired me to continue my studies of Turkey, and to share my understandings with my students and community. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity.

Kimberly A. Rott, Missoula, MT, USA

Each day it was like receiving a lovely wrapped gift. As the day went on we got to slowly unwrap the small treasures found inside – beautiful, spiritual and fascinating.

Kristyn L. Morin, Kalispell, MT, USA

The TCF study tour of Turkey provided an outstanding wealth of information and cultural experience to share with my students, family, and community in a multitude of ways. The experience has enlightened me to the many facts of Turkey as a country, culture, and international partner. This has been a well-planned and wonderful experience.

Patricia L. Rauch, Silver Bow, MT, USA

What an enriching and wonderful experience. The Turkish Cultural Foundation has given an opportunity of a lifetime for 30 American Middle High School Teachers. What we have seen from the Bosphorus cruise to Hagia Sophia to Çatalhöyük has enhanced my vogue knowledge into expertise. My students will benefit a thousand times over from what I have experienced. They in turn will have the resources to learn what I did not when I was their age. Thank you to all the people who made this possible.

Ryan J. Delany, Missoula, MT, USA

When my friends and colleagues learned of my pending trip to Turkey, I was often met with blank stares or questioning looks. Most have heard of Turkey, but have the faintest idea of what modern Turkey is all about. This trip has in twelve days, allowed me to get a taste of what Turkey is about. In these twelve days I have been introduced to Turkey's incredible history, its varied geography and its welcoming people and I thank the Turkish Cultural Foundation for sponsoring this enlightening trip. I will definitely be back.

Brian Fenderson, Salem, OR, USA

The Teacher Study Tour has built a bridge of understanding and enlightenment between our students and the Turkish people. I have been blessed to experience Turkish hospitality.

Daniel P. Adkisson, Portland, OR, USA

Prior to this tour I didn't realize the importance of teaching The Ottoman Empire. Now I realize it is an essential period of history.

Julie A. Schumann, Portland, OR, USA

Skillfully crafted to give us a broad overview of Turkish history, culture and modern life. I plan to take what I have learned into my classroom to educate my students and Turkey. I also hope to create a cultural student exchange between students in the United States (specifically Oregon) and Turkey

Mary Ann Campbell, Sherwood, OR, USA

I did not know very much about Turkey before I came; though I did teach about the Ottoman Empire in my AP European History class. However, two years ago, when I studied in Turkey, our guide was Turkish as she encouraged me to visit Turkey. Dreams to come true, and this wonderful opportunity has opened a world to your beautiful country. My experiences here will enable me to be an effective ambassador for greater understanding of Turkish culture and political issues. When I saw Mehmet's II fur lined robe, in Topkapı Palace, I was thrilled to see their tangible symbol of this powerful "conqueror", however, the Ottoman Empire was surprisingly tolerant. I was amazed to learn that the mosaic of the Hagia Sophia were not destroyed by the Ottoman architect Sinan but rather improved and preserved, albeit as a Muslim Mosque. In many ways I have learned how modern day Turkey is a caretaker of many beautiful scene belonging to other cultures. Many ignorant Americans cannot begin to understand the secular nature of Turkey's state.

Throughout my trip I saw modern Turkish women in Western dress commingling with more conservatively dressed women. I want to make sense that my students, and other people I encounter understand that, for the most part, the people's commitment to the vision of Atatürk has remained. (For this reason, I felt Turkey to be far more European, than Middle Eastern).

I also found the distance we covered to be such that the country has many diverse regions, not unlike those found in the United States. For example, the industry of the Anatolia plain was similar to say, Idaho, while the lovely resorts on the Aegean were not unlike those found in Florida. Like the American Southwest, Turkey also faces a depleted aqua in the Anatolian plateau. When I teach World Geography and use Turkey as a comparison case study, I will be sure to include the challenger of sustainable industry. Perhaps one of my favorite things on our itinerary were the school visits. (I was a bit jet lagged for the first two ☺)

I was pleased to see the "range" at educational opportunities. Even though the children were not in attendance, I enjoyed seeing the students who were there. Though the technical school was impressive (and the students highly articulate), the village school in Karacasu was a real treat. All the teachers we met were enthusiastic, committed to their students, and well, they seemed like US teachers. We have much in common in our commitment to help our students learn in the Global classroom.

Sigrid A. Olsen, Salem, OR, USA

Each day on this tour I think, "I've never learned so much history; I've never experienced so much in a single 24 hours" and then the next day even more happens than the previous day! This is a very exciting study tour. Be prepared to fall in love with Turkey. You will never want to return to your regular life; this is a magical country.

Cathy J. Goetsch, Bainbridge Island, WA, USA

This has been an incredible opportunity to learn about Turkish history and culture. The tour was well-planned with a great balance of ancient historical sites and cultural attractions. A wide-range of teachers could learn near content and take it back to their classrooms. The Turkish Cultural Foundation and Picasso Tours offered the best of Turkish hospitality. I appreciate their efforts to make the tour informative, relevant, and comfortable. Orhan, the guide was extremely prepared and led a great tour around the sites. Bonnie and Hulya from TCF made sure we were taken care of no details were missed. I am energized and inspired to create amazing lessons so my students can better understand the important role that Turkey has played in our world history.

Rebecca J. Wallace, Seattle, WA, USA

Turkey is a beautiful, complex country with great diversity in its landscape – cities, coastal, regions, farmlands and mountains, and its people whose ancestors come from all over the far reaching world of the Ottoman Empire. This diversity contributes to the rich culture in evidence throughout Turkey. This culture has been preserved in many areas and is being actively revived through conscious efforts to practice and teach many of the cultural traditions. The opportunity to travel with the Turkish Cultural Foundation has opened my eyes and heart to this amazing part of the world which has influenced Western Culture in all areas and often in unappreciated and unacknowledged ways. Learning the etymology of many common words during our bus travels is one way that connections have been made. I appreciate the thoughtful choices that have been made of which sights we will visit and in which order during this introductory tour of Turkey. The opportunity to visit both the paper marbling studio of Mr. Hikmet Barutçugil-Ebristan, in Istanbul and the tile making workshop allowed us to see first hand the ongoing practice of these art farms. The blending of art making with art training helps to ensure that these art farms will continue. We first visited the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, then traveled through the landscape where the raw materials come from to Iznik where the tiles were made.

This process strengthens a feeling of connection to the art and the land. I had a similar experience at the Temple of Artemis, because first we visited the cisterns in Istanbul where the pillars from this temple along with many others had been recycled. Both of these experiences have helped me understand the continuum and continuity of the history of this amazing place, Turkey. Each day of our busy trip I found myself saying, “This is my favorite day so far” and indeed it is clear that each day has been thoughtfully orchestrated to introduce us to the complexities of Turkish culture. What I have seen and experienced in this short time clearly would take an independent visitor so many times longer. Our TCF experience is the Sultan of cultural tours and I will enthusiastically bring these experiences into the classroom and share them with the greater Seattle community. Teşekkür ederim.

Eileen M. Hynes, Seattle, WA, USA

My trip to Turkey through TCF has been a tremendous experience for me both professionally and personally. As a world history teacher it has allowed me to literally stand in the historic places that I have so often taught about and put myself in the shoes of a person living in those historic times. Personally, it has helped me understand the historic and social forces that have shaped my culture and upbringing and to see HOW influenced the United States has been by this crossroads of the world. The tour visited many sites and ruins of civilizations that I teach in my AP World History class: from the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük to the ancient Roman city of Ephesus to the monumental and awe inspiring Hagia Sophia. Because of this trip I not only can teach my students that Çatalhöyük was one of the oldest continuously inhabited Neolithic sites but I can give students insight into the latest archaeological debates about the site because we spent time with the lead archaeologist at the site.

As a teacher, my goal is to deepen my personal understanding of history to better help my students understand it. I have taught about Roman cities, but walking through Ephesus and Aphrodisias allowed me to experience the urban geography of Roman cities as city-dweller of that time world. I understand much better how the baths work and what daily life was like then. What has been most eye-opening to me is the centrality of Turkey and Asia Minor in the shaping of world history, the diversity of cultures that are a part of Turkey. I have learned that to be Turkish does not mean being a specific color or ethnicity and that Turkishness is quite varied. My understanding of the world and world history has changed dramatically as a result of this trip. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. I will bring it back to my students and look forward to returning to Turkey again.

Robert V. Hallock, Seattle, WA, USA

Like our students, we teachers are more profoundly affected by what we see, hear, touch, taste and smell than we are by even the most enlightening readings. Yet, like most of our students, we cannot afford to venture far beyond our borders. We teach and learn what we cannot experience. TCF's Teachers Study Tour allowed me to see the Blue Mosque and the pottery of Iznik, hear the call the prayer and the music of the Mevlevi brothers, touch the silks of Bursa, taste Turkey's myriad of cuisines and smell the teas, coffee and herbs of the Spice Bazaar, bringing hundreds of years of history to life. If it has come alive for me, it will come alive for my students. Our visit to the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük was made even more special by the opportunity to meet one of the archaeologists on the project and see it through her eyes; she was able to explain and demonstrate the detective work that goes into excavations and share her passion for the team's discoveries. Our guide and other tour leaders organized our days so that we learned each layer of history in context.

We also got to know the Turkey of today. Our visits to three different schools and our discussions of funding, curricula, and student achievement, allowed us to better understand similarities and differences in our approaches; it was exciting to exchange ideas with Turkish educators and to meet some of their remarkable students. Representatives from a variety of NGOs offered us insights into how Turks are tackling challenges, many of which we share. We were given windows through which we could better see the problems with illiteracy, poverty and equality issues specific to Turkey and take a look at the models being developed that might very well cross over to other nation's NGOs and government programs in their efforts to address similar issues. It was also invaluable to meet other educators from around the country. We shared common experiences and yet came up with multiple approaches to imparting what we learned to our students. I anticipate that many of my fellow educators on this TCF tour will collaborate long after we have unpacked and gone back to our classrooms. Shared experiences can create powerful bonds. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity provided by TCF; I have grown both personally and professionally as a result of this trip and of the resources, both people and materials that I have discovered through TCF. Thank You.

Abigail B. Hundley, Seattle, WA, USA

There were so many extraordinary experiences on this trip that I was constantly caught off balance. The intellectual challenge of understanding thousands of years of history, the emotional challenge taking in so much cultural diversity and the sensory overload caused by the cacophony of sights and sounds all combined to create a constant staff of awe. Thankfully our guides and hosts welcomed us with a sense of hospitality that was unparalleled. I felt as if I was being welcomed into somebody's home, and this environment was so very conducive to my learning. Long after my photos are forgotten in the labyrinth of my hard drive I will remember the hospitality of my hosts and the warmth, richness and beauty of the Turkish culture.

Chris McQueen, Kenmore, WA, USA

Thank you so much TCF for this amazing experience. I have truly fallen in love with the country of Turkey. My dad has been here four times before and each time he came home he had fallen in love with Turkey more and more. I finally understand how he feels. As a world geography teacher, I have discovered some amazing things. I cannot wait to share them with my students. Personally, I think Ephesus was my favorite site. It was really neat to see everything so well preserved and to physically stand in a place so rich in history. There is so much to see in this one country which means a return trip for me to discover even more of what Turkey has to offer.

Adrienne L. Townsend, Ft. Worth, TX, USA

This fellowship has been amazing! I know I would be in for a real treat –definitely wasn't let down. I've enjoyed each cultural attraction, lecture, and Turkish cuisine immensely. First, the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia were two of the highlights that I enjoyed in Istanbul. I could only marvel at the details and intricate designs of these historic structures. Second, I especially enjoyed my visit to Ephesus. This historical attraction resonated with me. I am very thankful to have this opportunity to reflect on the life of Apostle Paul. In turn, I was able to meditate and reflect on early Christianity and on my own life as a Christian. Third, our visit yesterday to Çatalhöyük was informative and energizing! Being a World History teacher, I quickly embraced the opportunity to explore this Neolithic settlement. The presenter (guide), Shanina (expert from the U.K) was full of passion and enthusiasm which contributed to a dynamic visit to Çatalhöyük! She captured our attention right from the start. Personally, it might be the catalyst to accelerate my plans for starting my doctorate program in 2010! Fourth, our visit to the caravanserai and the churches (monasteries) built into rocks (Göreme) was inspiring. There was time for reflection as we toured each church. This place must have provided a special venue for tranquility and spiritual growth. These are just a few of the highlights during my stay in Turkey. I would like to formally thank the Turkish Cultural Foundation (TCF) for making this possible. This was a cultural exchange of a lifetime! I was thoroughly impressed with the care and planning that was exhibited by Julia and Bonnie. Thanks again for allowing me the opportunity to see, touch, and feel Turkey!

Karen M. Haley, Dallas, TX, USA

From Çatalhöyük to Konya to Istanbul, we covered 10,000 years of human civilization in 10 days. Time has made its deposits in Turkey; thank you for revealing these treasures in an intensive and enjoyable program.

Aditi G. Samarth, Irving, TX, USA

There were many things I enjoyed during this Turkish Tour including, but not limited to, the amazing hospitality provided by the TCF as well as our group leaders. Their enthusiasm and interest in making one adventures most meaningful definitely showed. Furthermore, the knowledge and openness of their history of Turkey was wonderful when questions were presented; they always had an answer! Though the schedule was packed every day, sometimes making for a long exhausting journey each night I was able to reflect on the many museums, mosques, restaurants and who can forget the shopping that I experienced and would not have wanted it any other way. A definite plus throughout the trip was the accessibility to water, coffee and tea, and bathrooms. In addition, one leader provided advanced notice of specific dress when needed which helped in selecting proper clothes; generally I always felt prepared. Traveling to different cities over the course of several days allowed for new geography as well as culture, ruins, and lifestyles differences that can visibly be seen throughout this country –what a sight! The hotels selected by the TCF also provided more than I could have ever asked for in accommodations and the food was exquisite! I have so much more to add and share with my family, students, and friends back home. This trip has truly been a once in a lifetime opportunity that I know I will cherish for some time to come. Thank you again for this opportunity and I do hope we keep in touch.

Megan L. Webster, Richardson, TX, USA