

### **COMMENTS ON TEACHER STUDY TOURS'09 – GROUP III**

This was my first experience with a travel study tour, so I did not know what to expect. My initial reaction upon arrival was a feeling of comfort and security. I had confidence in the professionalism of everyone connected with the tour. The pace was perfect as well. My curiosity expanded each day of the trip. I especially appreciated the comprehensive nature of the tour. It matched my philosophy of teaching well. I loved the interconnected themes of geography, language, art, architecture, history, and religion. Best of all I enjoyed meeting so many Turkish people.

**Julie Peterson, Murphysboro, IL, USA**

I feel a bit of pressure writing this. I mean I am the language arts teacher after all, so I feel this should ooze multisyllabic vocabulary and mystic imagery. Maybe it will; maybe it won't. You see, when I began this journey I felt very concerned about pedagogy and unit plans, how my newfound knowledge would mesh into my schools curriculum and the U.S. government's no child left behind. I began this journey by fully embracing my identity as Mrs. Wilson, secondary education most ruction at Herrin High School, a Midwestern blue collar town that is comprised of a largely Caucasian student body. I teach speech there which consists of  $\frac{1}{4}$  public speaking and  $\frac{3}{4}$  interpersonal and intercultural communication. This trip will have helped me update my curriculum to include aspects of the Turkish culture. But I am still transforming about what I will do for my final/ongoing project. I want it to infuse logic, creativity, mysticism, and collaboration with the newfound friends I have met on this journey. Here, I need to mention that an overwhelmingly spiritual and personal experience this has been. The Peoria World Affairs Council and the Turkish Cultural Foundation prepared me what to expect academically and logistically, however, I don't think anyone could have prepared me for how deeply this trip would impact me. Spirit seeps the soil the air, the artifacts, and the people of this ancient land. I don't think it's hyperbolic to say that every cell in my body has heard, touched, smelled, tasted, and felt this culture. It has seeped through my hair, skin, organs, bone, marrow, and into my soul. I guess I learned that it is impossible to separate my profession and my spirit. None of this would be possible without Orhan, Hulya, Bonnie, Metin, and Ali, along with all of the staff and interns associated with TCF. When I think about how many people played a part in getting me right here, right now, I feel so small yet so interconnected, as if I am alone in Hagia Sophia staring upward and twirling like a dervish. Much like a Sufi tries to link logic, tradition, and mysticism, I will try to bridge Turkey and the United States through my student's education. I am humbled by and in awe of this country. Thanks again for this opportunity. I guess there is a whole lot of fame in Mrs. Wilson after all.

**Jamie L Walczak-Wilson, Carbondale, IL, USA**

Prior to the Turkish Cultural Foundation Study Tour in Turkey, my knowledge of the country was limited. I had never been to the country and my contact with native Turks was non-existent. As a result, my knowledge of the country was second-handed. The study tour has been a great benefit for my development. Being immersed in the culture has allowed me to interact with Turks from all walks of life. I have been able to exchange ideas with locals. I have been able to learn about them at the same time they can learn about Americans. Seeing family together showing people are similar everywhere can bring us closer together. This message will be a major learning tool for my students. In addition, to human interaction, the historical visits have been invaluable. We have visited sites studied in our textbooks, but being able to go into greater detail with first hand knowledge and showing personal photographs will spark a greater interest with my students. These visits will make me a better teacher. The Turkish Study tour has been an experience of enormous value. I have a better perspective about Turkish culture and Turkish history. My teaching has been greatly enhanced. The Turkish Cultural Foundation has performed a great service and with its continued support, the people of the United States and Turkey will continue to come closer together.

**David L. Hurley, Dupo, IL, USA**

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you TCF! This trip has enlightened me historically, culturally and personally. Travel to Turkey has reinforced the idea that we are all one people on this planet. We all laugh, cry, and want the best for our families. I am looking forward to sharing my wonderful experience with my little corner of the world. Turkey is a beautiful country with so much to offer.

**Michaelann Stanley, Johnston City, IL, USA**

To say that this journey through Turkey is a dream come true for me is so exaggeration. I had a simplistic sense of turkey that I brought with me some superficial awareness of its history, arts and people. What I am bringing back home is a sense of the immerse richness and depth of Turkish cultural history. I am grateful to our guide, Orhan, for his knowledge, humor and wisdom. I doubt that there is a better guide in Turkey. How he knows, what he knows and can full information out with great detail and clarity constantly amazed me. He was always patient with us, answering every question. If anything I would with for more time in Turkey, but for the time that we did have Orhan thought history alive. The other thing that I want to touch upon the food was superb as were the accommodation and I felt very safe the entire time. Metin was an amazing driver, Hulya, a fabulous organizer, Bonnie, our shopping diva and Ali always on hand. Because of all these people the trip went extremely well. I think that this experience has enriched my life in intellectual and spiritual ways. I hope to share my experiences with my students, my friends and family. We never know what life will bring but I know that Turkey is a turning point in my life. I cannot adequately verbalize at the moment but I know it to be so. This has been a special trip and I thank you for this incredible opportunity. Turkey and her people are wonderful! Morning reflections... This is a trip that no teacher could neither plan nor afford in ones lifetime, at least this one couldn't. I so appreciate this gift because I consider it to be one. A gift that I accept with an open heart, one that I will cherish for a lifetime. In time, I will give back in the only way I can by passing on the Turkish culture through its arts to the many children who pass through any classroom door. Thank you!

**Viktoria L. Ford, Champaign, IL, USA**

Traveling to Turkey with TCF is the most rewarding experience of my life. The planned trip covered so many different and incredible aspects of Turkey. I could never choose just one as my favorite. For years to come, I will remember hearing the call to prayer, experiencing a variety of mosques, ancient cities and geographical wonders. But for me, the really life changing part was discovering the beauty of the people. Turkish people have kind souls and strong country pride. I am honored to bring this experience back to America.

**Christine M. Kutchen, Oxford, MI, USA**

I am overwhelmed by the antiquities of this country. Ancient wonders have materialized. I've been provided with a wonderful cultural immersion beyond what I imagined. Above all, Turkey is a very friendly hospitable country where all we are welcomed.

**Donna A. Veara, Clarkston, MI, USA**

The depth of this experience in Turkey will unfold gradually for me for years to come. From the very origins of settled existence in Çatalhöyük, to the prosperous global power whose strength is yet to be fully realized, Turkey offers perhaps the most extensive portrait of history in a single nation. It is difficult to separate the spiritual expressions of Turkish culture such as the Mevlana Monastery or the other-worldly landscape of Cappadocia, or indeed, the breathing synthesis of natural beauty and historic weight found in the view of the Bosphorous, the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sophia from the rooftop of our hotel in Istanbul – from the dizzying amount of Sultans, viziers and emperors who ruled Asia Minor through the Millennia. I am looking forward to learning much, much more about Turkey and teaching its riveting stories to students, staff, friends, fellow librarians and anyone willing to listen, view and willing to fall under the enchanting spell of all that is Turkey.

**William S. Bowles, Ferndale, MI, USA**

My experience in Turkey has been so different from what I expected. There is so much diversity in Turkey. Each place we have experienced has opened a different door to the history and culture of this country. It is amazing to see first hand, amount of history that lies on and beneath the soil of this country. It makes me wish more people knew the colorful, exciting truth about Turkey. It was perfect to get to see modern day Turkish lifestyles juxtaposed with its ancient civilization and those who lived about 9,000 years ago. To be given this opportunity is such a gift and it truly will have changed the way we see Turkey as well as world cultures in general. In turn, all of these experiences can be passed on to our local communities in a positive way and quickly others will see Turkey in a similar light. Overall, the best part of the trip has been meeting the people of Turkey and experiencing their history for ourselves. This is what opens minds and hearts to understanding and appreciating the diversity of cultures and communities our world has to offer.

**Sheila S. Derrickson, Ferndale, MI, USA**

This trip fed me, and provided the tools and experiences for me to feed others. The exposure to the diversity of cultural layers per say allowed me to truly be engaged on a personal level, broadening my perspective and enabling me to feel even more connected to humanity. On this trip, I was not just engaged on an aesthetic level; this was more than a touristy adventure of entertainment and picture-shooting. I felt connected. I received warm smiles from everyone I encountered and sensed a humble disposition within them. I myself felt humbled in encountering the practices of the Sufi sect of Islam, the open-minded nature of Ataturk, and the nation of Turkey, and the non-confrontational demeanor of each person I came in contact with. I learned about the rich history of the Turks, and this knowledge was supported very well by a plethora of engagements that allowed us to see and feel the context of such a history. Because of this, I was able to internalize my thoughts allowing them to move from my head to my heart-creating empathy, appreciation, and sympathy within me. Having connected to this experience in such a profound way, I will go back home intentionally driven and motivated to spread my knowledge of and appreciation for this country to my family, peers, co-workers and students. I am excited to do this, and fell utterly blessed to have my soul fed in such a significant way. I truly appreciate it. A humble thank you!

**Danielle R. Filipiak, Claire Shores, MI, USA**

This has been a wonderfully rich experience. TCF has arranged a multitude of opportunities for me to be at a lost of words and in disbelief. Being able to visit sites we only read about in history books and the Bible was amazing! I ended each day, thinking it had been the best and that the next day could never be as full and rich, only to be enlightened once again ... I concluded after about five days, that there are so many wonderful things to experience in Turkey that I didn't have enough time to see them all. This tour is especially purposeful for those who learn in ways other than reading a text book. Our tour guide is so knowledgeable about every site we visit, drive past and can think of—facts were pouring out of him at nearly the speed of light. His personality and demeanor brought to life the ancient Turkish culture. He was quite doting to each of us and created an atmosphere that made us feel as one big happy family. Our accommodations, meals and opportunities to see ancient and modern Turkish culture were of the highest scale and utmost class. The schools we visited were each unique – offering different programs – providing authentic learning experiences for students and for those of us on the tour as well. I was able to obtain a knowledge base during this tour that is not offered in a textbook, documentary, photograph, or movie. I will take these experiences back to my students, school, family and community, raving about Turkey's role in history, the wonderful foods and people, and sharing my various experiences in this beautiful country.

**Makia Alexander, Redford, MI, USA**

It is easy as a teacher to say one “knows” about a place. After all, in our profession, we research, we learn, we learn some more and we teach. That is why, after teaching about the area we now call Turkey, I can say that there is a bit of embarrassment running through my veins. Visiting Turkey has opened my eyes to a kaleidoscope like variety of sights, a multitude of scents, too many touchable landscapes to list, auditory delights and a feeling of warmth that one may only find at home in their happiest moment. Turkey.

The sights seem unlimited. Its Istanbul has a bustling pulse of Turks winding their way through ancient streets while tourists jockey for position to see the most famous edifices –the local Turk and visitor seem as one. This would not seem too unusual until one ponders that locals and foreigners have been interacting with each other for centuries. Hittites and Phoenicians; Greeks and Persians; Christians, Muslims, and Jews. It is the people who survive on Turkey’s soil who define the place, and one cannot help but to gain astonishment in thinking about the lucky people in history who maintained residence there. There is a lesson from each group too – in 7400 B.C.E and beyond, we witness the early humans who give us no evidence of violence or competition. Yet, the collective at Çatalhöyük lasts for at least 1,500 years.

Visitors are allowed to touch Ephesus, the Hagia Sophia, the churches of a young Christian religion. Turkey has it all! A medley of spices will drive your nose wild. Visit a spice market, briefly close your eyes and try to guess which odors come your way. Better yet, imagine spices being traded more than a thousand years ago, possibly in the very spot on which you stand. By the way, did Justinian or Süleyman the Magnificent stand in that same spot? Only in Turkey. Further, one may never want to close an eyelid as the mountains, seas, lakes, plains, urban and rural areas simply can be missed.

Every day with the Turkish Cultural Foundation Study Tour provided the fulfilling opportunity for teachers to go beyond knowing this country, Turkey, that is settled by the Turks but can be claimed by the world. It is not rhetoric if you read in a guide book that the Turkish people want you to feel at home, wherever you may be. Yes indeed, the experience of Turkey is quite different from reading and teaching about the place. The Topkapı Palace is no longer a few sentences linked to the Ottomans in a textbook. The palace is alive in its grandiose nature with many, many riveting stories provided by the good people at the Turkish Cultural Foundation. The culture at Ephesus is certainly interesting enough, but swim in the Aegean Sea close by, and you perhaps have the same experience as our human ancestors centuries ago. That is the experience of Turkey. All of this must be conveyed to teachers and students, friends and associates – visit Turkey as soon as possible, and if you don’t have to dream about visiting, don’t allow the experiential flame flicker. Turkey is 100% pleasure. Thank you, Turkish Cultural Foundation, for the experience of a lifetime.

**Eric S. Hahn, St. Louis, MO, USA**

My experience on the Turkish Cultural Foundation Teachers Tour has been a remarkable journey surrounded by beautiful landscape, ancient links to the past, talented Turkish people, and a true glimpse into a country’s culture that is often unfairly portrayed in Western media. One of the most eye opening experiences was being able to explore the archeological dig site of Çatalhöyük. In the U.S., as a teacher without any archeological training, I would have most likely viewed the dig site from a far distance and would have listened to a generic tour guide explain the locations highlights. Professor Hodder welcomed us to the site himself, allowed us to view his team’s progress firsthand, and treated us as professionals with his eagerness to answer our questions. The entire Teacher’s Tour has been like this: we are able to experience Turkey’s highlights first hand and are given thorough explanations with the expectation that as interested professionals, we are intrigued and feel compelled to ask questions. This is not a tour, it is an enlightening experience based on interaction with Turkey’s rich history and culture.

**Jennifer M. Baysinger, Kansas City, MO, USA**

Turkey is incredible. This experience has been nothing short of enlightening. I now feel ashamed about how little I knew of Turkey's rich culture and history prior to this trip. It truly is the "cradle of civilization". This experience has transformed my knowledge of the world and my own personal being. With each new destination of this journey, I am consistently surprised by the continued richness, beauty, and history of this land. Whether in the city streets, mosques, historical sites, or out in the country, Turkey never ceases to inspire. I will definitely return home with a new perspective and new desire to share my wonderful experience here in Turkey with my family, students, friends and colleagues. Thank you for this amazing experience.

**Nathan D. Cushenbery-Andrews, Kansas City, MO, USA**

My head and my heart are full! During the day, I try to be like a sponge, soaking up the visible and sensory beauty of Turkey. This country rivals all of Western Europe that I have experienced. The quality of this experience, the layers of information, and nuance shared by the TCF guides and staff are invaluable and necessary to connect so many riches to my life's learning. When the days are done and I replay earlier hours, I am excited to think of taking this back to my students and colleagues in a few weeks. This is an unforgettable experience, and I am humbly grateful for the opportunity to fill my head and my heart with this wonderful place.

**Luanne K. Heggs, St. Charles, MO, USA**

Turkey – where to begin – Since I was a teenager Turkey has been a part of my life. As a teenager my father as a Colonel in the Air Force at the NATO base in Naples, Italy worked with Turkish officers. He had nothing but the highest respect and admiration for them. My father is an engineer and much like a judge in personality – he is not the hard core military type. His admiration of the Turks that he met and worked with was based on their dependability, intelligence, courage and pragmatism. He really preferred of all the countries to work with the Turks. Yet we also talked about how friendly, kind and funny the Turks were – Well things have not changed. I have found Turkey to be by far the best place I have ever visited. The people are quietly proud of their heritage. They carry this pride in their carriage and easy confident smile. Turks are generous and open. In all my transactions, I have found the people to be very honest and approachable. I love working with them. The scenery is beautiful (Cezanne should have come here for his grain fields and landscapes). The food is delicious and there is something for everyone—especially beans. The hotels and amenities are wonderful. The music is melodic, hypnotic and sublime. It is an auditory Rumi fits the rolling hills and fields of grain. Turkey is timeless. You look at the fields and you can imagine all of the heads of the past walking down. I love the sound of the call for prayer wafting with the breeze. I love looking at the people – all of them are intriguing. Old people with their experience marks (aka wrinkles) and their piercing eyes that see to go straight to my heart. I love Turkey – for me I can buy all the souvenirs people offer, but Turkey's spirit and soul will always be in my heart. Thank you for giving me this gift – I will treasure it always.

**Karen L. Johnson, St. Louis, MO, USA**

Eye-opening comes to mind first. I came into this trip with a general base of knowledge of the land and the history. Well at least I thought I did, but oh so many new doors have been opened. I have seen so many unbelievable sights; Istanbul was full of beauty with our Bosphorus cruise, the Blue Mosque, St. Sophia, to name a few. I was anxiously awaiting our trip to Çatalhöyük, but to actually walk among the grounds of this first city gave me goosebumps. Then the unexpected treasures: the Kervansaray (I was unaware of these resting places along the trade route), the beautiful artwork at Cappadocia (I thought it was just about the unusual dwellings). When I return home, I have so many stories to share. This trip has also created a need to learn more. Our tour guide was a wealth of information, but now I need more! The Turkish Cultural Foundation has given me an amazing look into this awesome land. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

**Lora B. Buatte, Lee's Summit, MO, USA**

My thoughts are not written on a parchment, I am out of pumice stone, but I am not out of praises, parchment or not, for the trip of Turkey organized by TCF. By reading carefully the words of the March of Independence: "It is my nation's star that ever forth will shine. It is my nation's star and it is mine.", I am very impressed by the determination of the people of Turkey to make their country a success and an example. I wanted to know more about the everyday life of the people and share their food, their conversations their desires. Thanks to TCF, we have been able to walk in the street of Istanbul and communicate with people, we have been able to go to villages and enter in their mosques, Kervansaray, houses and historical sites. I have been very impressed by the dedication and ambition of the Turkish educational system. The visit of the math and science school was a must.

I have been touched by the visit of a school in a remote village and the warm welcome we received. I am keeping a picture of an eight years old boy under the name of Alim who was shy but curious about us and opened up after a while. It seems to me that Turkish people make an outstanding effort to help people understand their country. They understand that you don't ripe before you saw. They also know that you don't ripe in the same season. They are patient. I discovered that the Turkish food is not over spiced. It is tasty but you can add a multitude of spices according to your preferences. Isn't it what Turkey is about? A great country with a lot to offer but with choices for people to enjoy it according to their family traditions, their religions, their hopes. Among the numerous sites we have visited, I have really enjoyed the visit of Aphrodisias with the history behind it and the commitment of one individual who gave his life to the renewal of Aphrodisias. The size of the circus was unbelievable. I was dreaming of visiting Cappadocia and I have not been disappointed.

My imagination started to rise at the first view of the volcanic formations. To finish and not be overwhelming, I would like to say that I have never been treated so well in my life. From the beginning to the end, I have received the utmost attention for any request I had. TCF has an outstanding staff and I thank all of them for being so kind, so informative and so organized. Tesekkür ederim. Sağolunuz. How can I help you?

**Philippe Vinaimont, Kansas City, MO, USA**

This is the second study tour I have participated in and I am pleased to say that all my expectations were surpassed. I have the variety of the experiences provided. Every teacher will probably return home with new ideas and materials they will be able to implement easily into the classroom. The portfolio was an excellent idea. I left mine on the bus for reading material during the driving time between destinations. Thanks for the time-line. Again this was a great teacher-friendly aide.

**Cynthia D. Green, St. Louis, MO, USA**

TCF has given me this incredible, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to live and experience the richness of Turkey. I have relished her culture and history, basked in the warmth of her hospitality and admired her natural beauty. I want to take back with me, so I can share with my students, colleagues and friends, the understanding of how Turkey holds the keys to solving the mystery of our past. Beyond that, she alone can bridge east to west, so it is vital that Americans learn to see the world through Turkish eyes. As I return to my classroom and my personal life back home, I will of course share my experiences, the sites, the "treasures" I purchased, and my photos and journaling of this adventure. But, I will go deeper than that. I will press to teach my World History students not only Ancient Greece and Rome, but also Ancient Turkey. I will challenge my high school students to take on the role of ambassadors from Turkey as they compete in Model United Nations simulations this year, and I will help my younger students explore Turkish fables, proverbs, literature and art. As my middle school students study world religions they will see how Turkey has had room for diverse peoples and faiths. In all, I am *so grateful* to TCF for opening my eyes to Turkey, a country and people I am reluctant to leave behind. You have given me a thirst to come back and experience more.

**Lisa A. Kucera, Kansas City, MO, USA**

I really enjoy the culture. The people all seem so friendly and helpful. The mixture of traditional Muslim and Western attitudes seem to work well here. Turkish pride is very high, a good thing. The long history puts it in perspective. Although I am not a history teacher, learning about it helps me to understand the culture better. My goal is to expand my knowledge of the culture in terms of economics, politics, business and trade, and education. One of the things I said I wanted to do after this trip is to coordinate a unit of study between US and Turkish teens.

At the department of Commerce I spoke to Basak Kizildemir about this. I learned that high schools in Turkey don't teach business. She said there are vocational schools but the students there probably wouldn't be the type of students I am looking for. However, I explained to her that I am the Department Head for Career and Technical Education, I have all types of kids in my classes that I'm sure we can find some type of match. She agreed and said to keep in touch with her and she will see what she can do.

I enjoyed reading the issue papers in our pocket. It gave me a great idea for a unit of study on Turkey. It can be coordinated with the social studies teacher. Students will research and debate whether or not Turkey should become part of the European Union.

One night I sat my balcony and watched the dancing at what I thought was a wedding; it was actually a circumcision celebration. I also saw 2 young men dance at our luncheon. This was good experience for me because last year at my school's annual multicultural festival, I did the choreography and coordinated the Turkish dance, a six minute performance by 24 students, many of them Turks. I will do this again this year.

I appreciate the knowledge, enthusiasm, friendliness, and helpfulness of the staff. I enjoyed and appreciate the speakers and hosts of our activities. All in all, this experience has been wonderful. I have many more ideas on how to integrate what I've learned about Turkey into the curriculum. I hope to keep an ongoing relationship with the Turkish Cultural Foundation. Thank you for this fabulous opportunity. Maybe in the future, you may want to tell teachers about sea urchins.

**Kimberly A. Kelly, Maryland Heights, MO, USA**

Before arriving on this trip I knew of the history of Turkey in many time periods and of its role as a crossroads of culture. Since arriving I have been amazed time and again by the beauty of the country how each stop and event seems more awe inspiring then the last. The diversity of culture and history is truly striking.

**Julie F. Kircher, Kansas City, MO, USA**

Turkey has so many yesterdays to attempt to understand and fathom. If you take too much time, or delve into the history too much it overcomes. I've found myself in almost a trance imagining the steps of Constantine , Mehmet, Suleyman where I've now walked. Then you have the people who surrounded these names we know. All those thoughts and actions that occurred where I've been. As you see, if you let yourself go in this, there's a question of when you will get back. But the history has led us here to this time, where a strong nationalism and civic pride pervades the land.

This is a land covered in red flags of crescent and star; they adorn it. The people love their land and it shows in their acceptance of each other and those outside the culture. They want you to understand their love of country. They want you to see and feel what they do. There is warmth here and it feels quite nice and I feel so fine.

**Earl David Colberg, Volga, SD, USA**

Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Thoughts on the tour:

- Extremely well organized and professional
- Excellent cross section of Turkey shown
- Orhan is masterful ==> the on the spot knowledge of a professor and the humor of a successful comedian
- Wonderful food ==> accommodation in general
- I've met many outstanding educators and made some lifelong friends. Life long because we shared a once in a lifetime experience
- Possibly the most informative and educational experience were those times spent discussing Turkish issues with Turks –Gular, Tuva, etc --> is strongly suggest more of that question-answer discussion in the future
- Suggestions for improvement
  - o More talking of Turks
  - o A home stay! – logistically difficult I'm sure, but it will be invaluable
  - o Let us stop and walk around the small village near Çatalhöyük
  - o More discussion of geographic topics –land use, spatial distribution and relations between separate cultural relation

Don't get me wrong, Orhan is exemplary. He does discuss geography, however I would personally prefer a bit less history and a bit more about modern Turkey.

- A geographical crossroads throughout history.
- No other place offers a better case study of cultural interaction, assimilation, cultural change.
- Turkey is a wonderful example of a people transitioning from traditional folk culture to modern popular culture, with all the common pains that transition entails.
- Country of contrasts- secular and devotedly Muslim?
  - o Horse cars on the same roads as a porches
  - o Women in Burkas talking on cell phones
  - o Men wearing Abercrombie & Fitch T-shirts while their wives covered
  - o One Turkish women walking down the street wearing a short skirt, high heels, etc, just like an American, she passes a woman who is covered from head to toe.
  - o An 800 yr old Mosque across the street from a modern highrise.
  - o A car full of Turkish youth drive by blasting Turkish techno pop as the call to prayer sounds.
  - o In a village near Konya a modern gas station, in the back an old woman works a small plot of sugar beets
  - o The modern affluent sprawl of Istanbul, the simple villages where donkeys and children scamper largely unchanged for the past hundred years.
- A people as beautifully complex and inviting as the landscape upon which they live
- Initially, I was intimidated and uncomfortable bartering. Now, I'm disappointed I won't buy anything from shops that have fixed prices.
- I scream, you scream, we all scream for Raki!
- Holy Patriotism Batman! Turkey's flag is everywhere. I wish my own countrymen had such strong positive, feeling of nationalism
- The mayors in this country are inexcusable! –according to our guide.

**Eric A. Toft, Brookings, SD, USA**

Prior to arriving in Turkey, I had an open mind, but still held some common misconceptions about Turkey and the Turkish people. Within hours in arriving in Istanbul, these were all shattered. The secular culture is truly evident as you walk out the door of your hotel and view the vast array of cultures. At each stop, I became more and more amazed at the access we were given to historical and cultural sites. Also, the information that Orhan provided for us to bring back to our classrooms is unheard of in any other travel tour. The entire tour has been geared toward teachers; I always feel like I am here to learn, as opposed to just see the sites and that is exactly what I was hoping to gain from this experience. Each tour has given us a once in a lifetime opportunity, although I cannot wait to bring back my daughter someday. Turkey will now be on the list of places we need to visit as a family. Thank you- Thank you- Thank you!

**Samantha M. Walder, Hayti, SD, USA**

The other day when I awoke, I looked over and saw the sandals I had been wearing the past two days. They were covered with dust. During the time I had worn them we had visited Ephesus and Çatalhöyük. I realized that I was looking at the dust of 9-10,000 years of human history. I was struck by the realization of what that meant. That I had actually walked upon the same ground frequented by those well known and those lesser known. No matter, I share a kinship with them all. Turkey - a land of diversity. A land traversed by so many yet it remains distinctive for its culture. Turkey - from the intricate beauty of the Blue Mosque to the simple labor of woman working in the sugar beet fields. Turkey - from the plains of Konya to the towering rock formations of Cappadocia. Turkey - modern highways to dirt roads in the villages. Turkey - modern shopping malls to roadside stands. Turkey - predominately Muslim but tolerant of active Armenian Christians and Jewish communities. Turkey - signs of a vibrant economy are everywhere yet there are those who make their living with their hands. Turkey - a democratic nation that pays the salaries of its imams and *muezzins*. Turkey - 16th in the world in GNP but not yet a member of the European Union. Turkey impressions abound, a land of beauty and culture, rich in history.

**Tom Holmes, Sioux Falls, SD, USA**

This study guide tour has given me a better understanding of the rich history of this remarkable country, and a better appreciation of its many arts. But mostly, it has given me an inner connection and special love for Turkey and its wonderful people. Thank you TCF and all the people who made this journey in my life possible and so memorable.

**Rosemarie Delvaux, Woonsocket, SD, USA**

It is hard to imagine a country with the richness of culture and history Turkey possesses. I've never stood in awe of so much in one country. From the archeological dig at Çatalhöyük to the modern day city of Istanbul, we've followed human history from prehistoric man to our modern age. Beautiful, fascinating sites with friendly and interesting people make Turkey a must see destination. Turkey's history is the history of humanity. Turkey's story is a large part of all of our stories. It would have been a shame to miss it.

**Adam L. Smith, Sioux Fall, SD, USA**

The study tour has been one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life - it is not an exaggeration to say that it has been life changing. Over the course of our journey I broadened my perspective immediately only because we have seen first hand the depth of history and culture, and learned intimately about the real Turkish people. For most of us, myself included, this is the first time we have spent a significant amount of time in a Muslim country. I wish all American could have this change - to see children running around barefoot in the sun, dappled Friday, mosque, to see the everyday devotion, openness, and kindness of people here. This exposure helps us feel closer to our Muslim friends, neighbors and students at home, as well as one global "neighbors" in other countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, for we are all connected now, though tragically thrown apart, through

commerce or worse, war. This town has given me a deeper appreciation for the connection between one culture and live, while introducing me to more unique differences too. It's a paradox, but it is more accurately a reflection of reality, in all its complexity, than just the image in the news. Experiences like this make my dream closer to the truth: to become not just a citizen of the USA, but a citizen of the world. And now the next part is almost as exciting as the first – sharing this growth with our students- not just the content but the prospective. Thank You!

**n/a**