

## **COMMENTS ON TEACHER STUDY TOURS '10 – Group II**

How can I ever thank you for allowing me to come on this trip. It was wonderful. I have been abroad nine times and I do think this has been the best of all nine trips. The people were wonderful to us. The places we saw were spectacular! The food was good, the hotels excellent, and our guide, Bonnie, the bus driver and his helper were all anyone could ever ask for. Bonnie Joy was like a mother to all of us—no matter what age we were. Don't ever let her go—she is too great! I could write all day and you might not ever know how much this trip meant to me. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

**Bobby Hill, AL, USA**

This was my first trip abroad and was unforgettable. The people here are warm and friendly. Even though language is a barrier, communication was still achieved. The country is beautiful in its diversity, from the hustle and bustle of the big city life in Istanbul, to the calm and slow life of the rural villages. Even though our history may be very different, we all share the same goals for our future: a better life for our coming generations. Even though we are thousands of miles apart, we can be close with the push of a few buttons. The insights this trip has given me will be passed on to my classes and I am honored to be given the opportunity to do so. Thank you TCF!

**Julia McCombs, Birmingham, AL, USA**

This has truly been one of the most educational and enriching educational experiences in 31 years of teaching. The unique geographical features and events will enhance many geography and science lessons- such as the erosion resulting in unique Cappadocian rock structures. The wonderful fine arts, history, and literature knowledge acquired are too extensive to name. These journeys will help many teachers reintroduce essential historical concepts- such as the impact of the Ottoman Empire- to all areas of the curriculum. Turkey's role is crucial worldwide so we teachers are fortunate to have this enlightening opportunity. We can begin to clarify so many misconceptions about Turkey. Every detail was planned and handled impeccably. The guides, drivers, and assistants were always professional and cheerful. The pace was well planned including handling unexpected emergencies in a calm manner. I cannot imagine how the experience could have been more reinvigorating as well as comprehensive. The personal encounters (meeting people in schools and at TCF) and hands-on experiences (paper marbling, hiking in sites, archaeological digs, pottery, and rug making-particularly silk thread) truly brought the culture to life. The opportunity to see a true Whirling Dervish ceremony, then be entertained by a shopkeeper (Orhan brought to the bus), playing and singing could not be replicated via video or internet. Bonnie Joy made this an amazing experience that will enrich the curriculum for many years to come.

**Georgia Miller, Mountain Brook, AL, USA**

So many things are running through my mind as I think of my experiences while on this trip—where do I begin? This trip has been a revelation of knowledge of the diversity of a country and a people who have imprinted the history of our planet. Turks are a courageous, loving people who have embraced their history and have survived turmoil, and used their individual resources to move into the future. As I leave this beautiful country and people, I will savor their kindness, generosity, joy of life in my heart and mind as a special gift from Bonnie Joy as our fearless leader and from the TCF as the benevolent benefactor. What a treasure and what a fabulous opportunity as an educator. I remain in awe and in love with Turkey.

**Nicki Linton, Pell City, AL, USA**

This study tour has truly been a once in a lifetime opportunity to begin to understand the complexity, richness, and diversity that can be found in Turkey. This tour was so many tours in one—a history tour in which the significance of the country in world religions and politics from pre-Biblical times on was explained and experienced. An art tour in which we got a chance to see beautiful works from more than a millennium ago and see current artisans working to keep those arts alive and creating beautiful work today. An eating tour with the most amazing food—delicious, abundant, fresh, and authentic to each

region. I feel grateful that I was chosen for this trip. I cannot wait to share all that I have learned with other teachers in my district, and with friends and relatives. Everyone needs to come to Turkey at least once—and if they can, over and over again!

**Shari Bernstein, Silver Spring, MD, USA**

Turkey sings to my soul (thank you Bonnie) on so many different levels. Historically, who knew it had more Roman sites than Italy and more Greek sites than Greece? I didn't, now I do and I saw for myself the wonder of Ephesus and the magic of Aphrodisias. Culture! What an exciting mix of diversity! Here all roads meet it seems. Ancient civilizations still live among the towns and cities, it's a part of life, not regulated to history books or museums. It's in the eyes of the people, it's in the fashion on the streets. Food! What great food! The infinite variety of fresh fruits and vegetables from far and near, the combinations of spices and flavors leave me looking forward to the next meal. Geographically there is nothing that comes close. What a geographical wonder Turkey is. Pamukkale was such a remarkable sight! The sense of joy that place evoked was evident in the smiles on people's faces. The lunar type landscape of Cappadocia leaves you breathless. The Aegean Sea is a marvel as well, a balm to your soul and body to watch the sun set; it takes away all cares and worries. Education! The school visits made me think of how much the American Educational System could benefit from the Turkish example. Imagine taking some of the most vulnerable youth who don't have the privilege of money or connection and giving them a first rate education? A potential drain on the government turned into a valuable commodity – but not only that, it speaks volumes about what Turkey values. So what does Turkey mean to me now? After such an amazing 13 days? How do I share these incredible experiences with my students, dismiss the misconceptions? That has yet to gel, but I know I will because I can't keep this to myself. Turkey is way too wonderful for that!

**Fay Montelione, South Berwick, MN, USA**

By participating in this study tour, I have become a more empowered teacher. Through me, students will be able to experience the rich history and present greatness of Turkey. No longer, will I skip Turkish history because of my lack of knowledge. I am excited to start a new school year to share this great experience with my students, school, and district. Thank you TCF for this great opportunity.

**Andrena Curtis, Charlotte, NC, USA**

“Turkish Delight”—this phrase entranced me thirty years ago when I read The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe. Anything so tempting as to make a boy betray family and friends.... well, since then it stood in my mind as the height of sublime. While I truly don't enjoy sticky sweets, Turkey has proved a true delight. It amazes me that for so many of my friends and family, it remains this wondrous treasure hidden in plain sight. So many things “gelled” for me this trip—college ancient East classes, “Sunday School”, the endless books of Marco Polo, and novels about the Sultan's women—it coalesced into something that made sense—rather like putting the last few pieces into a puzzle. Turkey really is comprised of so many “pieces”. The eras of migration, conquest, and assimilation has produced such a diverse, rich, layered place. This impression came to me so strongly as we examined the Catalhoyuk site. I realized that as we journey from city to city, we are shifting and sifting through so many myriad layers. Turkey, thank you for: the muezzin's call, sunlight glinting off a mosque's dome, the smell of spices, the tons of creamy cheese, the sheer of silks, the welcoming embrace of the Aegean, tulips, and your mosques, churches and ruins. I am only just beginning to understand what I have experienced. My wish is that my students will realize that Turkey is a delight.

**Catherine Allen, Greenville, NC, USA**

The Study Tour to Turkey has been a valuable opportunity for me as both an educator and an individual. From the mesmerizing dervishes to the surreal formations of Cappadocia, Turkey is a place of great beauty and continuous transformation. I am filled with ideas for lessons to share with my students. I have learned so much during my visit and hope to return someday.

**Holly Loranger, Mebane, NC, USA**

From the Blue Mosque of Istanbul to the fairy towers of Cappadocia, the Turkish Cultural Foundation provides a tour of breadth, insight, and education. This combined with the wit of Orhan and a backdrop of ever changing scenery will allow me to take the culture of Turkey home with me to my classroom, civic organizations, community, and especially, many wonderful memories.

**Linda Seymour, Snowhill, NC, USA**

This is a trip that all teachers should have the opportunity to take. There is something here for all content areas- geography, history, science, music, art. Your perspective of Turkey will change and your lesson plans will never be the same. This trip is intense, but the education is wonderful. Things you only read about come alive and you can say to your students: "Yes, Cappadocia does look like that, I was there." While we are now headed for home, the trip will forever be remembered fondly.

**Judy Perry, Center Ossipee, NH, USA**

T= touched by the willingness of the Turkish people to open their land to American teachers

U=understanding of the importance of cross cultural communication and commitment

R=reevaluating our preconceived notions about the Turkish country

K=keeping new friendships and alliances alive

E=everyone has broadened their horizons

Y=yet another reason why I teach!

**Nancy Gagnon, North Franchestown, NH, USA**

Like a teacher gives their students knowledge, the Turkish Cultural Foundation has given me a love for Turkey. The vision of the Turkey Study Tour far outweighs its intended agenda. This is a trip that will not only impact my teaching in the classroom but will leave an everlasting imprint on my life. The massive itinerary of this study tour combines Turkish culture, history, society, and geography. The Turkish culture embraces immense diversity. Muslim, Christian, nightlife, ancient ruins and shopping bazaar style has left me like a whirling dervish. I am so grateful to have experienced it all. Turkish history abounds throughout the centuries. Paleolithic, Hellenistic, Roman and Ottoman have allowed Turkey to embrace all the people, religions and races that have occupied Thrace and Anatolia. This tour has taken us through Catalhoyuk, city of ancient rooftop neighborhoods to the bustling streets of modern Istanbul. What surprised me the most about Turkey was the impact of Ataturk in modern day life. In every school and in most shops hang his photograph. Although Ataturk died in 1938 his passion and vision live on with gusto in this great nation. The dream of his secular nation that will include all people continues to strive and prosper in modern Middle East today. The people of Turkey, no matter which region they come from, truly share a common Turkish culture and moral standard. They are a people with love and pride for their history and country. As geography teacher the topography of Turkey is phenomenal. From the Mediterranean coastline, to the interior harvest land, Turkey exudes that it is a place for all interests. A standout for me personally was Pamukkale. I love natural sights and this site has just moved to #1 on my list. The white contrast exploded into mountainside cliffs. Popular trees, Taurus Mountain Range and Cappadocia has so much to explore- so much to digest. I am blessed with this experience to travel to Turkey. It has been a gift beyond its expectations. I linger for more. Bonnie and Orhan are forever sealed into my sasha. What a memory, what an experience, I have been given. My gift in return will be to share all that I have learned to my friends, students, and family.

**Shannon Fernald, Portsmouth, NH, USA**

It is hard to know where to begin to find the words to describe this incredible adventure that began nearly two weeks ago. Turkey is an amazing country. It is as varied in its landscape as it is in its people and culture. Istanbul has emerged as a cosmopolitan and stylish city with all the vibrancy of any big city in the world. However, its unique and distinct cultural history is extremely evident. One can't visit the Grand Bazaar or the smaller Spice Bazaar and not feel like they have been transported back in time. The call to prayer that resounds across the city five times a day is yet another one of the many elements that brought my attention back to the traditions and heart of this colorful nation. I loved constantly experiencing the blend of old and new. The location of our hotel with its spectacular views of the city

and Bosphorus, between the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque provided for continual opportunity for that experience. It was also quite evident when we took the boat ride on the Bosphorus. There is the construction of luxury hotels and yet the traditional markets and cafes are there to be enjoyed and appreciated. Life in the countryside was perhaps even more interesting to experience. Although it continues to be traditional and mostly agricultural, it is evident that Turkey is progressing to adopted new ways to better provide for the people. There was great evidence of progress and improvement in the areas of road construction, housing, and education. I was particularly impressed with the ways they have developed their national historic sites. This in the future will increase the tourist industry tremendously. Turkey is obviously an up and coming nation. The people I met were thoughtful and friendly. It was very evident that they have committed to making tremendous progress and they will continue to strive to reach new levels of success. To the Turkish Cultural Foundation, Bonnie, Orhan and assistants, know how grateful I am for having been given this unbelievable experience. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. I now consider myself an official ambassador of Turkey. I will share my experience every chance I get!

**Nancy Larkin, Cornwall, NY, USA**

I thought this study tour was an outstanding experience and I appreciate all the effort that went into its organization and execution. It was top notch and ranks the best among study tours I have participated in. You have a good sense of timing and that was key. I thought we focused on the big ideas that teachers need to cover in a world history curriculum and that has given me quite a few ideas for curriculum development. I know that teachers can be tough and especially critical. The information we were given was more than adequate and although some of us may not have able to do as much reading as we should have, Orhan's commentary about authors, artists, and everyday issues piqued our curiosity. The tours and demonstrations provided us with many opportunities to integrate Turkish history and culture into our curriculum. I don't want to sound unappreciative but I'll just make this point that on other study tours we were given a small stipend and time to look for materials that we might use for our projects. I certainly appreciate the generosity of the Turkish Cultural Foundation and I don't expect we should be given this—but I'm offering it as a possible consideration. I know how we have struggled at the state level to get questions on Ataturk and Suleiman and the Ottomans on to the test. Because, these topics are not evenly covered around the states, it's not easy. I've gotten some ideas as a result of this study tour and I'm going to share them at State Ed. I hope you'll see some good questions on these topics in the near future and I'll send them along! Thank you again for a wonderful opportunity and I hope to send you some fine teachers in the future!

**Nancy Maguire, Cornwall, NY, USA**

To begin, I am so honored to be a part of this study tour and I would like to thank the Turkish Cultural Foundation for their endowment. I have learned so much about this country so far. The people are friendly and the landscape is tremendously breath taking. I was exposed to culture and history and I truly have a strong sense of how the Turkish people endured progressed throughout generations. I feel lucky and I am prepared to spread my knowledge about Turkey and promote this country to anyone who is willing to take the opportunity to listen. I feel very at home here, especially, Istanbul.

**Mary Lee-Mehl, Hurley, NY, USA**

Overall, my first trip outside the USA has been a breathtaking and unbelievable experience. It has been an educational whirlwind tour through the history, culture, and modernity of Turkish life. I would never trade my experience for anything in the world. I wish I could stay longer and live in Turkey. The people involved with the tour were so knowledgeable and helpful, plus the people of Turkey were so nice and genuine. My conceptions of Turkey were disproved as I learned Turkey is full of extraordinarily talented people who truly value their culture, art, and history. From Istanbul to Ankara, I can honestly say there was nothing bad about this study tour. I am leaving this experience a different person and thanks to the Turkish Cultural Foundation, I am able to transfer much of this experience to my students. Thanks!

**Clinton Desouza, Poughkeepsie, NY, USA**

Turkey has changed me. Walking in the streets of Ephesus, Istanbul, and Iznik made Turkey enter into my soul. I will miss the smells of the Spice Bazaar, the sounds of the crashing Aegean waves, the tantalizing tastes of olives, hummus, and warm pitas and the textures of silk carpet underfoot. The sights of Turkey are burned into my memory—the detailed tiles of Topkapı Palace, the 86-carat diamond in the treasury, the multi-colored lanterns in the bazaar, the beautiful children, and the stunning sunsets! These are pictures that no KODAK film could ever reproduce. My heart is filled with the spirit of the Turkish people. Their kindness and generosity are paramount. Even though there is a language barrier, Turkish men, women and children seemed to go above and beyond normal hospitality. As our trip continued, I realized that their actions were very normal—I was just unaccustomed to such incredible hosts! The feelings of friendship and respect surface in every encounter with the Turks. This has created a comfort for me. While in this comfort zone, I was able to ask questions about family, religious ideas, and politics – all while I showed respect to my hosts – a connection was developing that I did not want to jeopardize. These rather informal discussions open not only my heart to Turkey, but also my counterpart’s eyes to the United States. It was beautiful. My mind has wrapped around the economic challenge that Turkey has faced and will face in its future. Turkey has survived – it will struggle, but it will “ride the storm” and succeed. The country is also going through political changes and this fascinates me. Instead of conforming to expectations of other nations, Turkey has stood full form in its beliefs and policy. That is to be admired. Volumes of books are beckoning me to read them—so many pieces of literature and history. Until this trip I was uninterested in gaining a depth of knowledge of this region. Now, I can’t wait to get to the bookstore and delve into the recommended reading—and more! This trip has illuminated Turkey and I cannot wait to share the experience with others. I want all to see Turkey as the jewel it is! Thank you again for the opportunity of a lifetime!

**Robin Tyke, Export, PA, USA**

As I thought what to write, I really began to think about what I would say when I return home. Turkey is magical, evolving, historical, struggling, and whimsical. To only see Istanbul is not a full picture of the country. While a magical and beautiful city, it seems to never slow down, something is always going on and moving and happening. The people seem younger, perhaps because they are always moving. It was in the interior that I saw the other parts of Turkey. The old women who sell their handmade lace on the side of the road to scratch out a living, while at the same time taking care of three dogs. Everywhere you go in the interior you see the struggle between the historical and the modern age. This trip highlighted all of the pieces of Turkey: the layers of flavor and spice in the food, the mix of architecture in the cities, the blue of the Aegean and the Plains of the interior, and the street dogs tagged in the car and the old woman on the side of the road sharing her food with her three much loved dogs.

**Laura Brodie, Latrobe, PA, USA**

Wow! An overall impression of the TCF Study Tour...Fantastic and life changing. It has truly been an experience that has altered not only how I think about Turkey, but also how I will teach about it. The trip has filled in so many experiential and knowledge-based gaps in my understanding of Turkey. The entire experience gets a “10”.... it was superb! From the sites to lodging to our guide, driver and assistant...all we fabulous. I am excited about teaching ancient and modern Turkey in the fall. This trip, in addition to teaching me so much, it has refreshed my desire to teach. I am also very excited about the friends made, resources provided, and the priceless gift of an experience in Turkey. I intend to become much more involved with the Turkish foundation branch in Pittsburgh as well as with the W.A.C. This experience will be put to use in many educational and personal ways. Thank you!

**Tim Kunes, North Versailles, PA, USA**

Overtime things fade or disappear altogether. In rare cases, memories of the past survive through literature or song. Fragments of the physical world remain intact, survived as a fossil. It is these preservations which were the focus of the Study Tour to Turkey. They instituted an amazing window through which I could look at the past, both ancient and more modern. The remains at Ephesus, Catalhoyuk, and Aphrodisias established the parameters in some ways, of the entire trip. We were meant to learn of ancient life, but also and more importantly, the interplay of culture over time. This is

the story of Turkey—an ancient and emerging civilization, integrating, absorbing each others customs and creating a synthesis more lasting than most of what life offers. In another way this trip, while allowing me to review the past, allowed me to view the present. All relationships and customs are based on the integration of cultures. There is no where that this is more evident than Turkey! Starting from the fragments of the past, a huge reality comes to the surface. What an amazing chance to study this process!

**Karen Gallimore, Alexandria, VA, USA**

Turkey is the DAIOPHGA of our history and civilization—whether the development of trade or the evolution of the concept of nation-states. Being in Turkey has brought alive the ideas of how cultures and history are all products of the interactions of peoples throughout time. So much of what went into the making of Western Civilization is alive still today in Turkey.

**Jim Wagner, Springfield, VA, USA**

When I was a little girl, I used to go to the market with my old maid great aunt. I was allowed to go places in the market place that my mother had forbade because I was accompanying my aunt. She loved to buy all kinds of textiles and clothes, but it was necessary for her to buy extra because she was a tall woman and needed more than most people. We used to get up at 4 AM, leave the house at 4:30 and arrive at the market before 5 AM. We would eat something first and then go to the “bargain” section where the “Turks” were. I loved to hear them speaking Spanish and watch them selling all kinds of textiles from far away. They said that they came from Turkey and when my aunt finished the shopping, the merchants said something that sounded like “Allah”. I felt like Turkey must be the most exotic country—mysterious and far away. I dreamed I was on a flying carpet and travelling to Turkey, the land of my dreams (especially when natural disasters made life tough in my native country). Now, I am awake and my dream has come true, but Turkey is more beautiful than I imagined. The Turkish people are so gracious and hospitable. I thought that “my people” were the friendliest on the planet (especially as my father was friendly to everyone and my mother always so polite), but I have come to realize that I have Turkish “brothers and sisters” who are as friendly as the people with whom I grew up. In describing Turkey, the word beauty comes to mind, but beauty that surpasses all levels. Turkey is a continuous discovery for an avid learner like me. This trip has changed me as a person and as a teacher. I hope that the wonders and mysteries of this land of my dreams continue to fill my imagination and may the rest of the world come to share these dreams.

**Ruth Wagner, Springfield, VA, USA**