

COMMENTS ON TEACHER STUDY TOURS '11

I fell in love with Turkey when on arrival I stepped out on the terrace of the Arcadia to a most magnificent view of the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque framed by the Bosphorus! The weather was perfect, the food was wonderful, and the view stunning. Every day of our tour continued to offer something fantastic. My life has been enriched beyond belief and a whole new dimension has been added to my person. I will always be grateful for this experience and for the wonderful people I meet while touring Turkey.

Pat Cooksey, Houston, TX, USA

The Teachers' Study Tour of Turkey is an incredible learning experience that every dedicated American teacher deserves to experience. I have learned that Turkey is the largest, most vibrant democratic society in the Middle East, arriving at this position through a long historical process. Every moment of this trip was an enlightenment.

David Morse, Seattle, WA, USA

Thank you Turkish Cultural Foundation for a once in a lifetime opportunity. I would suggest this program to all teachers because of its great sites, great food, and great people. Türkiye'yi seviyorum!

Sotirios Pintzopoulos, Boston, MA, USA

Since I became a student of history many years ago, I have always wanted to visit Turkey. Never in my wildest dreams, however, could I have imagined seeing this beautiful country in the manner that the Turkish Cultural Foundation has provided. This study tour has been first class in *every* way. Thank you TCF for making my dream come true!

Jeri Espinoza, Rancho Cucamonga, CA, USA

What better way to enrich your—and by extension, your students'—understanding of a place and its rich culture than experiencing it? The Turkish Cultural Foundation has created a once in a lifetime opportunity to see and experience Turkey through a variety of lenses—from the bustling streets and bright lights of Istanbul to the narrow roads that wind through fields of sunflowers to reach Çatalhöyük. Being able to travel with other educators provided countless networking opportunities and generated numerous conversations about effective ways to bring this experience to students as well as our communities at large. TCF valued our time and made the most of it; I recommend this program without reservation. It is truly spectacular!

Kachina Martin, Lititz, PA, USA

I was honored to take part in the TCF Teachers' Study Tour. Thank you for showing such generosity in hosting this remarkable tour. You have presented a slice of Turkish life and culture that is impressively enchanting and complex. I look forward to a continued relationship with TCF and further study of everything Turkish. Now Turkey will always have a place in my classroom and my heart.

Stephanie Morris, Santa Fe, NM, USA

The Teachers' Study Tour was a phenomenal experience. The opportunity to see the sites of Turkey and the discussions they generated have truly transformed my understanding of Turkey's historical importance as well as its progressive nature being a 'friend to all'. I now have a better understanding of how Islam can and is flourishing in a democracy, and I cannot wait to go back and share my gained insights with my family, friends, and students. The Turkish Cultural Foundation has organized a top rate study tour. The sites are phenomenal and cover all periods. Additionally, the school visits and talks were amazing and have transformed my understanding of Turkey. The people and country are kind, open, compassionate, and resilient. I can't wait to come back, and I look forward to seeing what Turkey does next.

Elizabeth Ramos, Rancho Cucamonga, CA, USA

This was my first international travel experience to Europe/Asia. Turkey is the connection to linking both continents and the Teachers' Study Tour provided a comprehensive and first hand experience in a diverse country. From bustling cities to fertile agricultural fields and villages to beautiful coastal areas, one gains an experience of a lifetime. This experience transforms history before your eyes and brings history to life. The culture, riches of the regional cuisine, walks amidst ancient ruins, and experience of a secular state within an Islamic religion provides one with the knowledge to help change the outdated perceptions of Turkish people. Turkey is very similar to the United States in many ways. I hope to provide my students, colleagues, community and family with all of my experiences through pictures, stories, and personal narrations as I share my experience that the Turkish Cultural Foundation has so graciously provided to me. I will continue to contribute to "The Portraits of Turkey" through discussion, education, and sharing of my wonderful trip.

Rose Ann Lapp, Highfalls, NY, USA

In a country such as the U.S. where lately teachers are not appreciated and quite often made into villains, it was wonderful to be recognized with honor and respect by TCF. Thank you for an intellectually and culturally stimulating experience in Turkey. I have gained insight that I had not expected. TCF's mission and staff are invaluable to our world. Cheers to all that you do. This experience will live with me for years to come.

Tara Colen, Ridgefield, CT, USA

I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many friendly and inviting people while visiting a variety of historical and cultural places. I found Turkey to offer comfort, interest, and safety in all of my travels. It is indeed a place of diversity and contrasts. Witnessing ancient sites like Hagia Sophia, Ephesus and Aphrodisias were "jaw dropping" experiences. The continuous flow of delicious Turkish foods and cuisine added so much flavor to the trip. In addition, the geographic features like the terraces of Pamukkale and the surreal landscape of Cappadocia are so unique and fascinating. Finally, the arts, music, and architecture have made permanent impressions on me. In conclusion, I have totally enjoyed visiting this modern, progressive country which hosts a wealth of historical and modern opportunities. I am thankful to have had this experience and will happily share it back in the states. It was great!

Diane Henssler, Mohnton, PA, USA

Thanks to TCF for this amazing opportunity to get to know Turkey! Every day was full of surprises and amazing sights—from our first night watching the sunset over Istanbul to whirling Dervishes in Cappadocia to the shadow puppet show in Bursa—it was all wonderful! The most interesting part was seeing European history from a completely different perspective (that of the Ottomans). It was a whole different way to view historical events.

Esther Kovari, Santa Fe, NM, USA

We often look at multicultural countries through space rather than time. In the case of Turkey, one would profit greatly from doing both. It is a true crossroads for multiple empires, civilizations, linguistic groups, faiths, etc. Today, Turkey represents the best of Europe and Asia and is a highly worthwhile study in the political, constitutional, and sociological issues that confront the democracies of the world. Also, keep watching Turkey for its regional prowess and its good neighbor policy; Turkey acts as a vital intermediary between various nations in the region. As global power becomes more decentralized, Turkey will only become more vital. The beauty, history, and hospitality are apparent. If you have never considered a visit to Turkey, change your mind! From Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic sites to incomparable natural wonders and astonishingly beautiful architecture, you will be impressed.

Gary Handley, Las Vegas, NV, USA

The people of Turkey were gracious, courteous, and helpful. Turkey is the epitome of history. From the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük to the Lydians, Persians, and Romans in Turkey then from the Byzantine period to the Ottomans and finally to modern Turkey, history is abundant and mesmerizing in Turkey. This country has many wonders—the culture, the mosques, the archaeological sites, the music, the textiles, the carpets, the food, but most of all, the amazing people. I hope to return to Turkey someday to relive the amazing adventure I have just experienced.

Donna Patch, Houston, TX, USA

I enjoyed the Teachers' Study Tour because I now have additional evidence to support my curriculum beyond the textbook. When I teach Turkish history, I emphasize to students its function as a crossroads throughout history. Having lived this for two weeks, I can now make this concept become more "alive" for my students.

Kim Young, Boston, MA, USA

This was my first opportunity to travel overseas and I could not have been more impressed. It was filled with amazing hotels, food, and learning opportunities. I am so excited to get back in the classroom to share my trip with my students.

Laura Bennett, Seattle, WA, USA

Through the hard work and thoughtfulness of TCF, my dry academic understanding of Turkish history and culture has been given depth and soul. Thank you so much for this opportunity!

David Byron, Boston, MA, USA

An amazing experience! The Turkish Cultural Foundation made sure that, in addition to providing an invaluable lesson on the history of the country, we experienced Turkey in a way that allowed us to get a better understanding and appreciation for the country, its people, and contributions to the world as we know it today. The moment you arrive, Turkey embraces you and, then, you fall in love with it and you want to come back again and again! Thank you.

Anna Tihin, New City, NY, USA

Each event proved to be one mountaintop experience after the next: Hagia Sophia, the Bosphorus boat ride, the school visits, the hot air balloon ride, Çatalhöyük, and the list goes on. But nothing tops the graciousness and hospitality of the people. Teşekkür ederim, TCF, for allowing me to live the rich Turkish culture for two weeks. I'll be back!

Valerie Parsley, Watertown, SD USA

This has been the trip of a lifetime. I never dreamed of ever being in Turkey and visiting sites of Neolithic civilizations, ancient ruins, and modern cities. Every day has been a “wow” moment. Thank you Turkish Cultural Foundation for giving me this opportunity.

Pam Blake, Tyler, MN, USA

Thank you TCF from your newest ambassador! This experience has broadened my horizons so that I can help others gain a better understanding of our country and its culture. I appreciate all the work that is put into a tour and for the expertise of your many guides. Like Bonnie Kaslan said, “Turkey has embraced me.” Now I will go home and educate others about this beautiful country. Thank you for the variety of experiences—each was an “A-HA” moment—and I will be back!

Denise Ottenbacher, Watertown, SD, USA