

Turkey - the fun continues

Soon after suffering another border crossing we were racing along in a 12 seater bus bound for Eserum with a 50T lire ticket each. We could see Mt Ararat, snow capped and huge, then began climbing a mountain range. After bouncing through several tiny Greek-like villages with rocky streets and goats, we came to the snow line and must have been several thousand feet above sea level. We stopped, it was very cold but the sun was shining. We followed our driver into a tiny shop where we ate stuffed capsicum and pieces of lamb, then coffee. There were lambs heads revolving on a rotisserie (*just like chicken shops cook chooks*).

By 8.30 we had arrived in Eserum where we headed straight for the station. There were many buses but we decided to take the train, first class. Another guy and I quickly bought bread and rations for the trip. It was so cold we expected it to snow any time.

We shared a compartment with an American a Malaysian/Chinese and an Englishman. After preparing our bunks we almost immediately dropped off to sleep to the rock and rhythmic clatter of the train.

We were all exhausted, the guys and I slept soundly but Heather was in trouble. The compartment door was both locked and chained however during the night Heather was disturbed and woke to see someone disappear out the door. She first shrugged it off thinking it was the English guy going to the toilet. But then found her pants had been unzipped. She relocked the door and returned to sleep however I was woken by her voice asking 'Who's that?' By the time I was conscious Heather was sitting up in bed, the others all asleep and the door latch broken! Someone had entered and

a torch had been shone on Heather, this had awakened her again. She had shouted in fright. Again her pants were unzipped! At this I jammed the door tight and rigged a way to chain the door shut, not relying on the crummy lock. Turks, what a welcome to their fair and happy land.

Next day we rumbled on through turkey. The landscape had changed to rolling green dotted with little villages. We rolled through villages and huge flat plains. Once we stopped at a station where the American guy hopped out and bought a huge jar of pickled cucumbers (which he evidently missed from home and called 'pickles'), plus a bottle of red wine and loaf of bread. It was Heather's birthday so we celebrated. At this same station we were intrigued by the sight of a pair of huge storks on a nest of sticks perched on a chimney top. Many other chimneys had similar nests. (I thought this was something found only in children's books)

At Ankara we left the train and our friends to head south to Marmaris on the western Turkish coast. Another strange city with strange people in a strange time, not the best place to look for a place to sleep the night. We followed our noses, but there were no friendly young westerners to ask questions of. We found a hotel at \$5A each, exorbitant after Asia. We were coming back to reality. The room had a shower. A SHOWER. So we hopped under and enjoyed our first real wash in memory. Then sleep.

First thing next day was to change money and find the bus station. I had some success and spent the rest of the day wandering the streets and eating in a restaurant. We bought dried fruit and nuts and goods from the marvellous outside market. Ankara was not too bad – clean and not crowded, impeccably clean after Asia.

At 6pm we were off, another night ride. This part of turkey is beautiful, very green. The driver was eastern in his approach and drove like a maniac, I sat at the front of the bus and could clearly see the speedometer. We slid around corners at 110km per hr. At 5am the bus stopped. All got out. We were not at Marmaris! At first I thought we had got on the wrong bus. Turned out we were at Mugla and a Turkish couple were also going to Marmaris. They and we were getting mad. We had all bought tickets to Marmaris and the driver had decided to let us find our own way there. Finally a taxi arrived, we were beckoned but I had no intention of paying a taxi fare. It was included in the price however, so we hopped in and after a beautiful ride through the country, we arrived at Marmaris where a ferry left for Greece.

It was early, the town which was totally composed of tourist shops, seemed deserted. We sat and ate breakfast with a couple of Turks, then began to browse around as the shopkeepers opened the stores. We seemed to be the only customers.

We searched around and found a Turkish wedding ring made of gold. She had lost her wedding ring way back in an Indonesian toilet.

Suddenly the streets were full, hundreds of them, mainly Germans with their bright patterned shirts and noisy language. The ferry from Rhodes had arrived.

As with all fascinating places the time went quickly. We made a dash for the onyx stone factory and replaced a broken vase sent home by Ian. \$5 and we were aboard the ferry for Rhodes. We thought this was expensive but we had no choice, and were dying to meet Ian and Marjatta.

The coastline is one of the most beautiful we had ever seen. The water was clear, very blue and coast comprised many rocky inlets, promontories and sandy bays.

With a kind of shock the weird feeling of being surrounded by Europeans struck us. From now we had to think 'Western' and I had to stop myself from simply pissing into the water if I felt the need. What is shocking to some cultures is quite normal to others. So I had to search for an onboard toilet!