

# TRIP TO TURKEY 2001



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## 1 GENERAL

The trip this year was, as the title says, to Turkey. This is a country I have long wanted to visit and had only managed to get as far as Istanbul for a day or so many years ago. It is a country that Keith liked a lot and recommended, and he preferred it to Greece. Others I met on the trip agreed, saying that Greece is over-rated whereas Turkey is under-rated. The trip lasted for 3 weeks with additional time spent for flying. I travelled on a cheap ticket with Singapore Airlines and even though I could have got an even cheaper ticket, I was not too happy with the choice of airlines.



The map on the first page shows the places visited. Travel was on a ‘hop-on-hop-off’ bus with a company called Fez travel. When searching for information about Turkey on the Internet, the name Fez popped up on the first page. I was intrigued and looked it up and found a lot of useful information. As it says, people can hop on and hop off almost anywhere, though they do plan for just a



few hours of travel a day (usually), often with stops along the way and with fixed overnight stops. All the buses are comfortable, air-conditioned and non-smoking. Each bus has a guide (called an ‘offsider’ for reasons nobody seems to know) and as well as providing useful



**An actual Fez bus – this one about to leave from Istanbul with me on board at 7 a.m.**

information and tips, arrange accommodation at these stops. If you get off at other places, you are on your own, though it is not too difficult to find somewhere to stay. The bus may be a little more expensive than local buses (called a dolmus) but with all the suggestions one gets and the great reduction in hassle, it is worth it.

Accommodation is in hostels or pensions (small hotels) and though simple, are clean and adequate. Many times the rooms have an attached ‘bathroom’ (not much bigger than a normal shower cubicle) with a toilet and hand-held shower usually with both hot and cold water. You can stop just overnight at a stop or as long as you like, and pick up another bus as it passes through. In August, buses left Istanbul 5 times a week, while in September, they were leaving every 2 days. Thus in September, one has to choose between an overnight stay or 2 days, 4 days, etc. which is a little inconvenient but it worked out OK. The bus travels in an anti-

clockwise direction from Istanbul and takes about 8 days to complete a circuit. The last leg, from Goreme to Istanbul, is actually an overnight journey. This saves on one night's accommodation and makes it convenient for those who may have to fly out of Istanbul the next day.

**The pension at Koycegiz**



The Fez buses are for people of all ages though the majority, are of course, young people. About 60% of the clientele are Australians with many New Zealanders as well. There are very few people from North America at the moment. The reason for this is Gallipoli with many coming to visit the World War I battle sites. (More about this later; Fez travel also has special visits to Gallipoli for ANZAC day and includes these with tours of Turkey as well.). I was also surprised at the very large number of links with Australia and New Zealand. Flags of the two countries pop up in many places. Many of the pensions have names connected with the countries. For example, I stayed at an ANZ Pension, a Kookaburra Pension, and even came across an All Black Pension. Also, when people ask where you are from, they generally assume you are an Australian first.

I felt completely safe during the trip. Never was there any fear of being robbed or mugged. I had imagined that it would be bad, as in places like Spain or Italy, but this is not the case. I also felt safe on the roads. Before going, I had read about the terrible and reckless driving of the Turks with a 'never-give-way' mentality. This was one reason I decided against renting a car; the other was difficulty there would be in parking and finding one's way around narrow streets (in larger towns). But I never witnessed any dangerous driving. Also, the roads that we travelled on were excellent, with many multi-lane highways as well as super toll motorways. Having said this, apparently the death toll on Turkish roads is high. In order to control this, there are traffic police everywhere. All buses have a box connected to the wheels (I suppose) that gives a continuous recording of the vehicles. From time to time, at random, buses are stopped, and the driver must provide a printout of these speeds to the police. Perhaps that is why the standard of the driving on the Fez buses was excellent.

The weather! Most of the time it was hot and dry. I would guess it was in the 30s during the heat of the day. Most nights were warm. None of the rooms had air-conditioners though a few had fans which were helpful. However, right in the middle of the country the nights were cool and blankets were needed. The place on the map called Kas has the highest average temperature of any place in Turkey. However, while there, there was a period of heavy rain

which cooled the place so I don't know what it was really like. Also, this was the only rain during the whole trip. Most days, the skies were cloudless so a hat was needed all the time. I wore the Marines hat that Gavin had given me. In spite of the dry weather, the only water shortage was in the centre and East of the country. And even then, people still used a lot of water to clean their vehicles. Turks seem to be obsessed with keeping their vehicles clean! At almost every service station stop, there are people who clean vehicles, And the Fez drivers would get the buses washed and shampooed at nearly every such stop they made. All along the roads (apart from motorways), one would see roadside showers, in continuous operation, for people to wash their vehicles.

My health during the trip remained good. There was no sign at all of any asthma. As drinking water might not always be safe, bottled water was always used. Even many local people use bottled water though in many places, public taps and drinking fountains are provided. The only illness was a fever I got at about the 20-day stage. The fever only lasted about one day though it left me lethargic and not hungry for a couple of days. There were no other effects. There was talk about the parasite Giardia in water, which might get into the body, not through drinking, but while having a shower or cleaning teeth. However, I don't know the real reason for the fever.

At the moment, I am also writing brief notes to include with photographs to send to people in Turkey. A number of times, photographs of people would be taken and they would provide their addresses so that a copy could be sent to them.

Finally, for this general introduction, there was the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11<sup>th</sup> which occurred while I was in Turkey. I can remember exactly where I was when I heard about it. It was in the Goreme area of Cappadicia. People from the Fez bus were having a one-day tour of the area conducted by a local tour company. It was about 7 p.m. and we had nearly finished the tour. The driver was listening to the radio when the news came through. He mentioned it to the tour guide who attempted to translate it to us. He did not get it fully accurate. He told us that terrorists had hijacked aeroplanes and had dropped bombs on skyscrapers in New York. It was not until we got back to the pension later and saw the TV news that we found out exactly what had happened. Terrible!



**Attack on the World Trade Center**



## 2 AN INSTANT BILLIONAIRE!

The trip begins at 6:30 p.m. with a flight from Hong Kong to Singapore on Singapore Airlines (SIA) arriving there at about 10 p.m. Had about an hour to wait for the connecting SIA flight to Istanbul via Dubai. In the departure hall there were many people going to Dubai including a number of Moslem women dressed from head to toe in black. All one could see were pairs of eyes, and when these followed one around on passing it was rather eerie! Arrived at Dubai at about 3 a.m. (local time) then on to Istanbul arriving at about 6 30 a.m. on a Saturday morning



At the airport, the first thing I did was join the wrong queue. This turned out to be a queue for people who need visas and can get them at the airport. Australian passport holders need a visa, but New Zealand passport holders do not; I do not know the reason why. Then to the correct queue for immigration – one queue for the hundreds of foreigners but about 30 for locals!. After a while, somebody called out that foreigners could actually join the other queues which

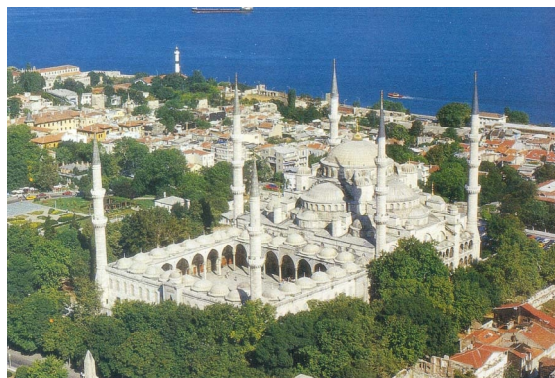
speeded things up a bit. Still slow though.

While waiting for the backpack to be unloaded, I changed some money. Changed £'s left over from last year. Talk about a surprise. For £1, I got TL (Turkish Lira) 2 million! So, with all the money I had taken, in Turkish Lira I was a billionaire! I must say all the zeros on the notes were rather confusing. The TL10 million note was not too bad as the '10' was larger than the remaining zeros. But not for the other notes. There was often a lot of counting of zeros when using the notes and checking change. The reason for all the zeros is because there has been a lot of inflation over the years. The Turkish economy is rather weak even now and so the exchange rate was good. Because of this, the cost of living was cheap. One of the most common things bought were bottles of water (as tap water, though treated, is not recommended for drinking) which were about 1/5 the price in Hong Kong.

Well, from the airport to town in the airport bus. Air-conditioned, and comfortable. I knew where the bus was going as I had seen the route on a map provided by the pension I would be staying at which was booked on the Internet. At the bus stop on the edge of the historical area of the city, there was a walk of about 400 m to the pension. The first thing I noticed was the general run-down nature of the buildings and the rather dirty and dusty condition of the roads. But when one gets used to this, it becomes less noticeable and Istanbul becomes a *very* interesting city. Found the pension OK, but the person on duty couldn't find the reservation. Anyway, got a room – very plain with a view to another building about 5 m away but all right.

At about 10 a.m. off to the Fez office to collect the Hop-on-hop-off bus pass and to talk about the trip around the country. The plan was to spend two days in Istanbul then leave on the Fez bus. Although many of the important sites to visit are in this area, I decided to first walk down to the nearby seaside (Sea of Marmara). Lots of hawkers selling things along the way. No carpet sellers at this stage, though they were to become the worst, and like persistent flies, were often difficult to get rid of. Got sucked into a shoeshine by a young boy! He had asked for a Hong Kong coin and I thought this would be the payment. But no, payment was still required in Turkish Lira. So, I got my *sandals* cleaned, the only time ever! (Many people like this, and though poor, are not starving. I saw very few beggars. Learnt that people are not supposed to beg and that there are many Moslem organisations that will provide for people in need.) Then on to a fish market and got offered some free coffee or tea from a guy

(manager?) in an adjacent restaurant. No obligations!! But the guy shows you the fish you can eat then sits you down at a table and eventually brings out the drink and allows a refill. He also shows the menu. Just for interest of course; no obligation!! Anyway, eventually felt a bit guilty over all the 'kindness' so had the cheapest dish on the menu. Still, it was much cheaper than eating in Hong Kong. After these two incidents, I was beginning to learn fast!



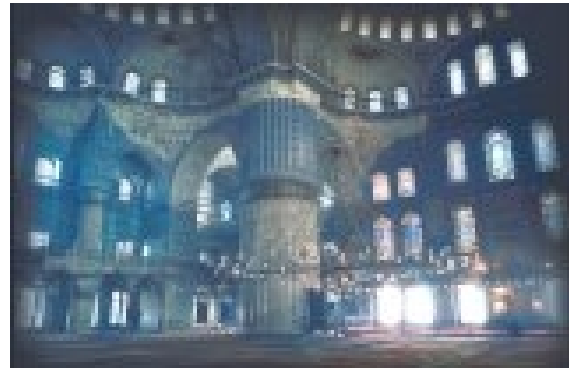
**Blue mosque (small bazaar on left – difficult to see)**



**The Sultan who had the Blue mosque built**

It was now the middle of the day and very hot. Slowly walked back towards the first of the main tourist sights – the Blue Mosque. Passed along many streets with roadside restaurants and 'friendly' owners. Passed by a small local mosque; I was interested in the old cemetery with writing on the headstones in Arabic (the Turkish language used to use the Arabic script; this was outlawed and switched to the Roman script when Turkey became a Republic in 1923). On arriving near the Blue Mosque, walked through a small bazaar and had my first encounter with a carpet seller. The opening line was to ask where I was from, then to come in for a look. Then he offers you something to

drink. I had a drink of *apple* tea. It is great, and drank it a lot during the trip. Then he talked about his carpets and gave a few prices. This guy was very friendly and didn't mind that I never but anything. There are other carpet shops in this bazaar, but didn't go into any of them this time. So, up to the Blue Mosque, named after the colour of the tiles used to line the inside. The mosque was built over a period of about 7 years at the beginning of the 1600's (the time of Shakespeare). The mosque was built with 6 minarets which caused consternation as only the mosque (?) in Mecca, where the prophet Mohammed was born, had 6 minarets. This was resolved when they added one more minaret to the building in Mecca. To enter a mosque, the legs and



**Inside the Blue mosque**

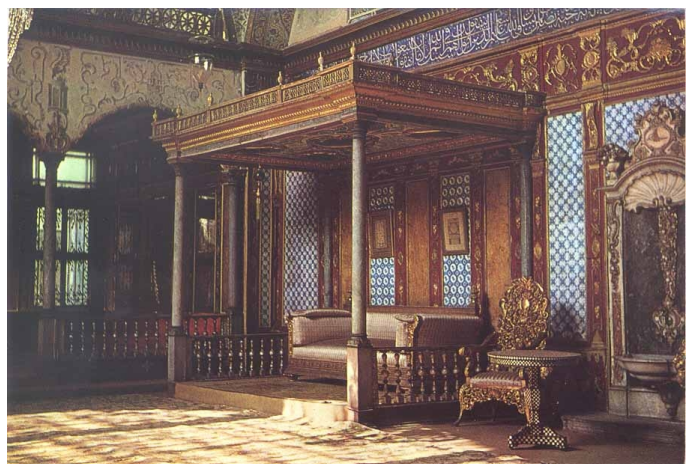
shoulders must be covered. As many foreigners visit this mosque, coverings are provided. So, as I was wearing shorts, I had a sheet wrapped around my legs. Lots of people there. Outside the mosque there are quite a number of hawkers selling books and photographs. Did my first bit of haggling and eventually bought a book on Istanbul together with three sets of photographs at a price much less than the opening bid! It must have been late in the afternoon at this stage, so back to the pension. The room was hot and there was no fan. Didn't have any dinner. Went outside briefly in the early evening and saw about five fire appliances attending to a fire near the pension (though I did not see any flames).

Sleep not too bad. Made easier by arriving in Istanbul in the morning after little sleep on the 'plane. I prefer arriving in the morning rather than in the evening when sleep is not always easy due to jet-lag. Also, it saves the expense of one night! Up at 8 a.m. for the buffet Turkish breakfast. At this pension, this consisted of bread, butter and jam, boiled eggs, olives, cornflakes and milk, sliced tomato and cucumber, and tea or coffee. Except for cornflakes and milk, this is a typical Turkish breakfast. Ate a lot! Set off at about 10 a.m. Most places closed, including the famous Grand Bazaar, as this was a Sunday. Although 98% of the population is Moslem, for whom Friday is the holy day, another change in 1923 was to make Turkey fit into the Western calendar, which meant Friday became an ordinary day while Sunday became a holiday. The first thing was to buy a bottle of water in the supermarket next to the pension. Then set off for the nearby Grand Bazaar but of course, it was closed. The streets were also empty at this time. After a while walking around old, narrow streets, came across a street market. A great variety on sale – you name it, it was probably there. A lot more people now. Ended up in a large square in front of the university. Stalls selling things such as drinks and sweetcorn (sometimes cooked in water, sometimes directly over a flame). Then walked past the university and down to another large and important mosque. This contains the mausoleums of Sultan Suleyman and his wives. Suleyman was one of the great Ottoman sultans (the Ottomans were the tribe from the middle of the country who ruled from 1299 to 1922). Went into the mausoleum of the wives but not the other buildings.



From there down the hill to the Golden Horn. On the way, took a photograph of a mother and her daughter, with their permission, shampooing a carpet in the street. A few minutes later, the daughter came running down the road with her name and address on a slip of paper. On returning to Hong Kong, I sent copies of the photograph to them. On to the ‘Horn’ (a river that empties into the Bosphorus, the strait that divides Istanbul into two parts – the Asian and European parts.) Noticed many policeman with little to do except lie under trees, eat at hawker stalls or just sit in police cars. Also, many *men* fishing from the two bridges over that end of the Horn. Then, for some time, watched ferries coming and going across the Bosphorus before heading along towards the Topkapi Palace. On the way, there was a rocky waterfront where many people – mainly men – were swimming in water where there were a lot of jellyfish. Nearby was a small children’s swing roundabout which was turned by hand! Hot and rather tired at this stage.

Over to the Topkapi Palace, where many of the Ottoman rulers lived. Quite expensive to get in and once in, there were places where further entrance fees were needed, so didn’t go into these. One was the Harem, which is where the Sultans lived with their wives and families. One room was given over to relics associated with the prophet Mohammed, the founder of Islam. This included hair, footprints and a letter to Coptic Christians in Egypt telling them to convert to Islam or else he would force them to do so! There was also a museum with plates, etc from China and Japan, reflecting trade between the countries in the past.



**Reception area in the Harem**



**Topkapi palace court dancers**



**Ancient military music being played inside the Topkapi Palace.**

*NB: These 3 photographs are not mine – copied from a set of pictures about the palace.*

*Next instalment: Gallipoli*



### 3 GALLIPOLI

From the Topkapi palace, I walked past the Sophia museum. This was originally a Christian church built about 350 AD when Istanbul, then called Constantinople or Byzantium, was part of the Eastern Roman Empire. After the Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453 AD, the church was converted into a mosque – hence the minarets. From 1923, after the Ottoman Empire was replaced by a Republic, it has been a museum. I was intrigued by a sign over some of the small shops around the museum that said “Sorry, we are open”!!! I didn’t go into the Sophia church/museum as it cost TL7 million! While outside, asking for directions, a guy came out of the museum area who also turned out to sell carpets. He took me down the road a bit to his carpet shop. Bit with hundreds of carpets and kilims. While drinking apple tea (again) he tried to impress me and sell me a carpet. I had no interest at all but kept listening. He ant tried to sell me carpets costing up to US\$20 000! Eventually told him I would think about it and left. At least the apple tea was nice. The strategy of this guy is typical of carpet sellers. There were carpet sellers everywhere, and eventually I just ignored them or told them I already had one!



**The Sophia museum (in red) is between the Blue mosque and the Topkapi palace (not visible).**

So, after two days in Istanbul, it was time to set of around Turkey on the Fez bus which left at 7 a.m. The early departure meant it was too early for the hostel breakfast. However, they prepared a large bread roll with all the Turkish breakfast fillings! Ate it while walking to get the bus. The bus seemed to take a long time to get out of Istanbul which is not surprising considering that its population is somewhere between 12 million and 18 million depending on whom you are talking to. Not very attractive but no squalor apparent. Also dry with few trees.

It took about 6 hours to get to the Gallipoli peninsula. Checked in at the hostel. While waiting for the Gallipoli tour to begin, played around on the outside billiard table. Haven’t played for years but after a while, was not too bad. You will notice a wooden cabin in the picture. The hostel had about 12 of these; each contained two beds, and are used at peak times such as around ANZAC day when the hostel is full.



**Playing on the billiard table. Wooden huts on the left.**

Left about 2 p.m. for the tour of the Gallipoli battlefields. It lasted about 6 hours and the guide we had was excellent. He is a retired University professor (training English-language teachers) but has been very interested

in the Gallipoli campaign and is a world authority. He has received the 'Order of Australia' (their highest civilian award) and has escorted many VIPs around. Fez were lucky to get him as a guide for a year.

The tour began with a talk and then a look through the museum. Quite interesting with letters, and the usual relics of war. Even a shoe with a foot still in it (though hard to recognise it as such now)! The bus then took us down to the ANZAC Cove area where the landings took place in the early hours of April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1915 in rowing boats. Many myths learnt that I and others had learnt were dispelled. For example, there was virtually no opposition to the landings. In fact, there were only about 20-30 Turks defending the area. The Australians

landed in the hilly area in the picture. The New Zealanders landed about a mile away on a relatively flat beach. Within a few hours they were up and on top of the hills and were not pinned down on the cliff faces as I had believed. But then, not knowing the number of defenders, they stopped for several hours! This gave the Turks enough time to get



**ANZAC Cove where the Australians landed and where they had a well-protected field hospital.**

about 3000 defenders into the area and then the battle really started. The guide gave us a good account of what happened. He also, of course, told us the story of 'Simpson and his donkey' which I knew about. Simpson was a medic who would take a donkey up the cliffs every day to rescue injured soldiers and bring them back to the field hospital on the beach. The field



**A cemetery close to the field hospital. Hills the NZs climbed are in the background.**

hospital was protected as shells from the Turkish guns would just go right over the top. The hills were a different story! Simpson was killed after just a few weeks of the 8-month campaign aged only 22 years! (I had imagined him as much older and lasting much longer.) His grave is on the ridge above the cove in the above photograph.

From the beaches, we went up onto the tops of the hills where brutal fighting took place. There was a lot of trench warfare with tunnels linking many of them. Each side in turn would make advances then have to retreat with terrible losses in the process. The next set of photographs show some of the sights.



- The memorial to the ‘Battle of Lone Pine’ where the only thing standing at the end of one battle was a solitary pine tree (not the one in the picture which is a replacement for the original tree). Mainly Australians fought and died here.



- One of the few trenches that remains. This is one that featured in the movie “Gallipoli” (though the movie was filmed in Australia and not here). From here, four waves of ANZACS went ‘over the top’ many of whom were mowed down. It is difficult for us to understand why they would do it, but their’s was a different generation. After the second wave, the Australian commander phoned back to his superior – a British officer – who kept ordering more waves! This sort of thing caused a lot of resentment against many of the British officers both here and in the Western Front in Europe.



- A picture showing some of the forbidding terrain. The ridge in this picture was one that a NZ regiment from Canterbury had taken, only to become lost and fail to meet up with another group, resulting in another loss.

In the whole campaign at Gallipoli, 31 VCs were awarded, only one of which went to NZ’ers, not through lack of bravery but because of the system for awarding them. Well, after 8 months, in one night the Allies retreated and were taken off the peninsula and onto ships. This was the most ‘successful’ part of the campaign, as not a shot was fired and not one soldier was lost. I didn’t quite hear whether the Turks knew about the retreat or not. But they had suffered enough having twice the number of casualties as the Allies. Incidentally, as well as Australians and New Zealanders, there were many more British troops though not in the same location. But Gallipoli is associated mainly with the ANZACS as this a defining moment in for them and the subsequent relationship of their nations with Britain the ‘home’ country.

The general in charge if the Turkish troops was a very good. His name was Mustapha and it was he who founded the modern Turkish Republic in 1923 and became its first president. In addition to changes mentioned earlier, one other was that everyone had to get a surname. Until that time, most people only had a single name. In the case of this guy, the legislature gave him the surname of ‘Ataturk’ which means ‘father of the Turks’. So, his full name was

Murtapha Kemal Atatürk (the ‘Kemal’ being a kind of nickname given to him earlier which means ‘the brave one’, I think!).

Well, we finally got back to the hostel at about 8 p.m. for a bbq dinner (served for us, not on an open fire) and a showing of the movie “Gallipoli”. A great day, and most definitely a highlight of the whole trip.



**The vehicular ferry across the Dardanelles.**

Had a good sleep that night in spite of lights outside and a dripping tap! Off on the bus the next morning at about 7:20 a.m. after a good breakfast to get the 8 a.m. vehicular ferry across the Dardanelles to the town of Canakkale (‘Kale’ in Turkish means ‘castle’). The ferry pier was only a 2- or 3-minute drive away and the crossing itself took about 25 minutes. On arriving, four of us were dropped off and the bus proceeded on its way. The reason for getting off was because we wanted to visit the

ancient city of Troy and the Fez bus does not stop there. So, went to a pension recommended in a ‘Lonely Planet’ guidebook, which was comfortable, very clean and not expensive. Then off to Troy. All of us walked to a local mini-bus stop and got a bus for the ½-hour ride to Troy. It was the first major set of ruins on the trip and I found it very interesting. (Had it been at the end of trip I might have thought it an uninteresting pile of stones, after having seen more impressive ruins.) But Troy has mystique, what with Helen, the wooden horse and all that. Troy, which used to be by the sea bit is now several miles from it, is actually nine cities built one on top of the other over the past 5000 years. It was discovered just over 100 years ago by a German adventurer who took literally stories by Homer in his books which others dismissed and eventually uncovered the ruins.



**The ‘wooden horse’ at Troy.**



**Ruins at Troy showing a ramp into one of the 9 cities up which a wooden horse could have been pushed.**

Next instalment: *In the footsteps of St Paul*



#### 4 IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST PAUL

Troy is actually the remains of 9 cities built at different times one on another. The original city was built as it is in a position where the winds of the Dardanelles blow. And before the days when sailing ships could sail *into* the wind, they had to stop at that point and wait for the winds to change. And so sea trade began, though eventually caravan routes took over. Troy is



**A amphitheatre at Troy of around 400 BC**

famous, of course, because of the wooden horse the Greeks are supposed to have sent as a peace gift to the Trojans; however, the horse was full of soldiers, so in the dead of night they came out, opened the gates and allowed the Greek army to invade and sack the city, and rescue the beautiful Helen! (If you want all the details, you must read Homer's books!) On arriving at the present site, the first thing one sees is this rather tacky wooden horse, probably nothing like the original. Worth a look though. Then you can followed numbered signs around the site which give an explanation of what the cities might have been like. This is not easy as later cities took stones from the earlier ones to build theirs,

Back to Canakkale from Troy at about 1 p.m. Bought some cold! chips for lunch and then slept for a few hours. After that, walked along a waterfront ending up at a nice park and naval museum (which had just closed as the time was 5 p.m.). In the park was a minelayer that laid mines which sunk or damaged British warships during the Gallipoli campaign in 1915. Then to a nearby supermarket – the first one of any size I had come across.



**The minelayer at Canakkale**

Interesting trolleys that I had not seen before which include a toy car that a child can sit in. Good idea! In the evening, had a meal at a nearby restaurant where there was a handsome waiter who reminded me of Gavin

Woke up early the next morning to catch the Fez bus. Too early for the hotel breakfast so just had a bread roll, jam and an orange from the bought from the supermarket. The bus, which was the next one doing the circuit, picked up 6 people by the ferry pier. And so off to Bergma



**A roadside stop for nuts, etc.**

which is the present name for the old city of Pergamon. (This city is famous in New Testament times. Although St. Paul did not visit it, there was a church there which was one of the 7 churches mentioned in the book of revelation to receive a letter written by St John.) On the way, had a “nuts” stop. The buses occasionally make stops at roadside stalls to buy nuts, fruit and drinks, etc. I bought some almond nuts, dried apricots and real Turkish delight candy (which I had last eaten when I was a boy, I

think). Although I didn't get too much, there was enough to last the rest of the trip. (And I didn't like the Turkish delight too much – too sweet!)

Arrived at Bergma at lunchtime. Had lunch in a restaurant laid out in Turkish style with carpets, though we sat at tables here rather than on the floor. Lunch included Turkish bread, sheep's milk, goat cheese, chicken salad and gozleme – Turkish pancakes with fillings which



**The steep amphitheatre at Pergamon**

are just great. This was the first genuine Turkish meal of the trip. After dinner, there was a guided tour of the old city of Pergamon. The important part is situated on the top of a hill and includes the ruins of a library and the steepest amphitheatre in the world. This is a Greek amphitheatre, characterised by a stage with no back wall and built with a beautiful background (Roman amphitheatres had walls). Note: By the way, references to 'Greek' always refer to the period of Alexander the Great a few hundred years BC. Only the nobility lived on

the hill; the masses lived down on the flats where Bergma is today. Once, when supplies of (Egyptian) papyrus were unavailable for making paper, there was a local competition for a replacement. Someone managed to do this using the dried skin from sheep and goats – a material called *parchment*, which is derived from the name *pergamon*. The tour lasted only about an hour. And it was hot – very hot!

From Bergma, the bus headed south to the town of Selcuk, arriving about 7 p.m. Chose to stay at the ANZ Pension (one recommended by the bus offsider), owned by a Turkish family that were born in and lived in Australia. They has a great roof lounge for meals and relaxing, laid out with lots of carpets and cushions. Included dinner, bed and breakfast for US \$10 per person. Great! Got a welcoming cup of apple tea; a brochure also mentioned that all guests would receive a Fez bus T-shirt, but that never eventuated!

The next morning, the Fez bus took everybody up to Ephesus, about 3 km away. Went in at



**Theatre and other ruins at Ephesus**

the top of the hill at the top of the city and walked downwards to meet the bus several hours later. The ruins of the city follow two main roads in an L-shape. The city was abandoned in about the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, not because of conquest, but because it's small harbour became silted over. At that time it was a trading city and depended on shipping. St. Paul spent about 2 years preaching here, though I could not feel anything extra special because of that.

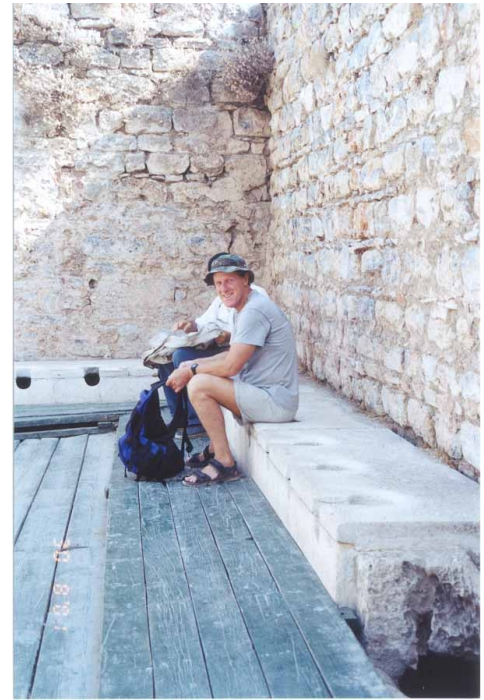




**Above:** The library at Ephesus at the junction of the two main streets.

**Right:** Yes, they had good public toilets in those days too—looks like it could have been a social outing!

**Below:** Main road down to the library



Back to the pension. Instead of having lunch there, the owner took a group of us in his mini-bus – free – to visit other sites in the afternoon and to have lunch (not free, but not expensive either!). The first of three places visited was the site where Mary, the mother of Jesus, is supposed to have been brought by (St) John to spend her last days. This is a few miles from Ephesus and on the site is her house, reconstructed last century according to a plan by someone who is supposed to

have had a vision. Next to the house is a site where services are held. From there back to the other side of the hill from Ephesus for lunch at a traditional tent restaurant with carpets, cushions and Turkish water smoking pipes. You sit on the cushions to eat. Good lunch,

including gozleme with fillings such as cheese, eggplant

and chocolate. A short walk then up to the ‘Cave of the seven sleepers.’ The story about this varies depending on who tells it or what book you read. But the basic idea is that 7 early Christian men (and their dog, depending on the version!)



**The Virgin Mary’s house; service in progress in the background**

**Cave of the seven sleepers**

went to hide in the caves to escape persecution. They fell asleep. On waking up, some 200

years later, they felt hungry (understandably!). So they went down to a village to buy some bread but tried to pay for it with coins that were 200 years out-of-date. Off next to a Greek village, noted for its wine growing. This was a village populated before 1923 (I think) by Greeks. There was an arrangement, whereby Turks and Greeks who were living in each other's country were able to return to their own countries and occupy villages lived in by the others. This was one of them. Didn't do much there except help some guys to push a car that wouldn't start. (Like New Zealand, there are a lot of old cars in Turkey.) On returning to the pension, a van load of us went down to the beach for a swim. The water was very sandy; not the lovely clear water that I was swimming in later in the trip. Did notice that the beach had armed security guards at the entrance!

The next day, the guy from the pension took a van load of us off for the day to visit two important sites – Pamukkale and Aphrodisias (see map) Had about 1½ hours in each place. We had to pay but it was a better alternative to paying almost the same for the public bus just to Pamukkale. Took over 2 hours to get to Pamukkale (which means 'cotton castle'). It is the site of natural white layers of calcium carbonate hot-spring pools. And next to it was the old



**A view of the 'cotton castle' hot water pools at Pamukkale**



**A Roman stadium at Aphrodisias**

Roman city of Hieropolis, built here so that they could have the natural hot baths. The water was certainly warm, and further down, people were allowed to go swimming in the pools. From there to the ruins of the old Roman town of Aphrodisias, about one-day's march from Hieropolis. Of note were the amphitheatre, temple and the stadium; the latter is still in very good condition. In the amphitheatre, some seats have names inscribed on them – an ancient kind of season ticket perhaps!

That evening, most people from the pension went for a Turkish bath – a real one! Males and females together, wearing swimsuits! This is the procedure: 1. It begin with a wash at a tap using a bucket. 2. Then you lie down on a large octagonal slab and sweat for a while. Occasionally, they throw cold water over you. 3. Then individually each person is given a scrub /massage while lying on the slab, followed by a shower. 4. Then they shampoo /massage each person individually, again on the slab. Shower and dry. 5. Free drink supplied – I had apple tea. Then an optional massage. I was not impressed, and can understand why few locals can be bothered anymore to have Turkish baths. Didn't help though having about 40-50 there from the pension all at the same time! Next instalment: *An impressive waiter!*



## 5 AN IMPRESSIVE WAITER!

After three nights in Selcuk, it was time to move on. As the bus left early afternoon, the morning was spent wandering around the town. The first stop was the Temple of Artemis, which is only about 100 metres from the pension. This was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Of the 7, only the pyramids of Giza in Egypt remain). This was a large and very beautiful temple in its day. All that remains today is one large marble pillar. So, it didn't take long to see. Then a short



**All the remains of the Temple of Artemis, Ephesus/Selcuk**

walk to the ruins of the St John Basilica where John, Jesus' disciple is supposed to be buried (I think). Then, while walking down the main street, a man sitting at a café table on the footpath offered me a piece of his water melon. That was nice of him. (I took a photo, got his name and address and on returning to HK, sent a copy of the photo and a thank you note to him. Got a postcard reply the other day – in English. As he did not speak English, he must have got someone to translate.) On further walking, came across the 'All Black Pension' (mentioned earlier). Went in and had a look. Run by a NZ lady living there. Has many photos of the All Black, but only up to 1999 which was about the last year they had much success!! Then through the town's Saturday street market and back to get the bus. While waiting, wrote and posted a postcard to Gavin.

The bus took travelled throughout the afternoon, but can remember almost nothing of the trip (that is why I would never do a bus *package* tour – it is very difficult to absorb anything given the speed of the tour. One needs time to 'stand and stare' [as the poet Walter de la Mare put it] in order to absorb things and places.) Anyway, we arrived at a very small place called Koycegiz (pronounced 'koy-chee-giz') on the edge of a large lake. Looked a bit of a dump but it turned out to be a nice stay there. The 'Tango' pension (see picture in first instalment) where everyone on the bus stayed, was also very nice. After checking in, had a walk along the water front (almost nothing to see) then had dinner at a simple restaurant. (Many people from the pension also ate there.) And it was here that I met their one waiter, and very impressive he was. Dressed just in old jeans and a dark T-shirt that seemed not to have been washed for a year, but he had a fabulous smile and was very helpful. He also knew how to serve. For example, he would place one hand behind his back when serving, and place the food, etc exactly where it was needed always from behind without ever pushing anything in front of the diner. He would be a credit to any first-class restaurant! In between serving people, he would be off on his moped making (home) delivery of dishes. Also met a guy wearing a rugby jersey identical to the Christ's College jersey. Spoke to him. Turns out he was from England, not Christchurch. He spoke fluent Turkish and was working as a translator for police and military in Turkey.

The next morning there was a 10-hour boat cruise across the lake to the sea and back. The operator is the brother of the pension owner. After some time, the boat stopped in the middle of the lake for people to have a swim. Great! Swam some ‘laps’ around the boat. Back on the boat, no need to dry off – the sun would do that. Some time later we passed cliffs with ancient tombs carved into the faces. (Were to see a number of these along the south coast of Turkey.) On arrival near the ocean, along with many other boats from a nearby resort town, the guys on the boat provided us with lunch and then there was about 3 hours to spend on the beach. At the edge of the beach, where the lake empties into the sea, there was bit sign saying ‘dangerous currents’, but it looked OK, and a few people actually swam across, including me. Had a swim in the sea. Many Russians there, presumable staying at the resorts. About halfway on the return trip, the boat stopped to let people go and have a frolic in mud pools. I skipped that, having a walk around a cotton farm and a ‘chat’ with a boat taxi driver who ferried people the 50 metres or so across the channel. Then another stop for swimming later on as well as being pulled behind the boat on tow lines – more difficult holding on that it looks! Back about 8 p.m. In the evening, again had a brief work around the village. While looking at a mineral spring outside a mosque, a young boy came up to offer a hand. Then back to the same restaurant and waiter as on the previous evening. (Took photos and addresses of the waiter and the young boy too and sent them photos!)



**Tombs in the cliff faces on Lake Koycegiz**



**Tow behind the boat on the lake. That’s me – third back on the right!**



**Gozleme lunch at ‘Esmas’.**

The next morning, I was thinking of staying another night at Koycegiz to do some hill hiking but decided against it and left on the bus. Off for a day of adventure of rafting and gorge hiking while on the way to the next stop. Just before reaching the gorge, stopped at a roadside open-air ‘restaurant’ for some gozleme (pancakes, remember?) lunch. Great. The pancakes are cooked on what looks like an inverted wok. I had a meat and honey gozleme.

And so to the Saklikent gorge (have a look at <http://www.saklikentgorge.com>). First up was a 5 km ride down a river (not unlike the Waimakariri river) on rubber tubes. Good fun. No need to change clothes. Just went in my travelling T-shirt and shorts – soon dried out later.



**Rafting on the Saklikent river. Not us; picture taken from their website**

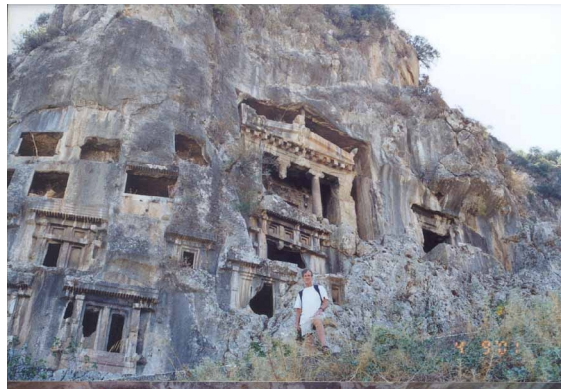
The only thing we did was to wear old shoes they provided instead of regular footwear. Then back in one mini-van – all 30 of us plus the tubes!! Then a hike up a very narrow gorge (only about 10 m or less wide). Eventually came to a high rock that the ‘guide’ would not let us climb even though there was a rope hanging from it. On the way back, near the exit of the gorge, floated down the icy-cold, fast-



**Walking up the gorge**

moving but not very deep, river. Along with another guy, went back and did this again! Then walked around to dry out.

Then on to the town of Fethiye, arriving at about 6 p.m. Checked in at a rather grotty pension which had a toilet that didn’t flush terribly well. After a while, went out, had something to eat and walked along the harbour front with boats of all sizes for a variety of purposes, such as eating, cruising, underwater swimming. Had a problem with a nearby rooster which seemed to have jet-lag! It kept crowing late at night instead of in the mornings – both nights spent the next day looking around the town. First, a visit to the ruins of a hill top. Eventually found my way up a mountain trail only to find at the top that I could have taken a good road most of the way! Then along the cliff faces. These



**Lycian tombs at Fethiye.**

peaceful tribe called the Lycians, who lived along the south coast here 2000+ years ago. The tombs themselves are about 2400 years old. Interesting. From the hill, could see what looked like the tents of a market, so off in that direction. On the way, bought a large ‘doner’ – Turkish bread roll with lamb and salad -- for less than HK\$3. Great value. Very hot now! Found the market and what a big one it was. Bought some packets of apple tea to bring back to Hong Kong, some bananas and a whole water melon! After leaving the market, sat on the waterfront and ate most of the water melon! In the evening, went back to the little shop and bought another ‘doner’ for dinner.

The next morning, the departure from Fethiye was earlier than expected. While having breakfast on the roof of the pension, noticed the bus arrive about 40 minutes earlier than it was supposed to. Turns out the Fez people had notified the pension but the message was not passed on properly! So, grabbed some food and off. A 2-hour drive over steep hills to the small seaside village of Kas (pronounced ‘cash’). On the way, went near the longest beach in



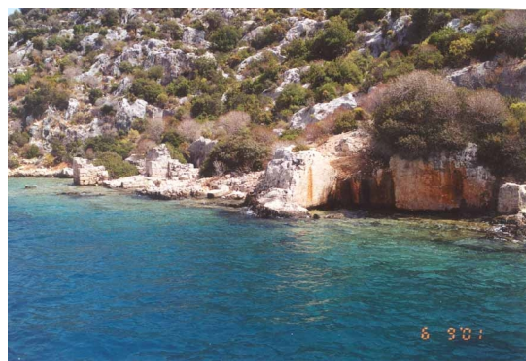
Turkey – about 17 km long, I think. This beach was used as a landing place in ancient times, and St. Paul was one of those who passed this way on one of his missionary journeys. At Kas, decided to spend two nights, but not sure if that was the thing to do or not as the place is so small. Turned out that it was! Kas is, *on average*, the hottest place in Turkey, but didn't seem to be when I was there. On arrival, the bus stops at a harbour front restaurant with an ancient Lycian wine cellar which was discovered during excavations. Then along to another nice little pension – room with a balcony and partial view over the bay. After a shower and rest, walked along to another small Greek amphitheatre and then to a very small beach for a swim. Most of the coast here is rocky, so that have had to bring in some sand and gravel to make a small beach. Water very clear.



**Weighing anchor after a stop for a swim on the way to Kekova**

The next day consisted of a full-day boat excursion primarily to an ancient partially submerged Lycian city called Kekova. Headed out to sea on a small boat with about seven other people. Then round to a small bay for a swim in the clear, blue Mediterranean. And just before Kekova, another swim.

Then, sailed past the ruins of



**Part of the Kekova submerged city**

Kekova, some above sea level and some below. Somewhat difficult to make out what was under the water, but interesting nevertheless. Over then to the mainland again to a 'tourist village' for a buffet lunch (included in the price of the outing). Good! Then a hike

up the hill to the ruins of another castle and a look at some (empty) Lycian sarcophaguses (stone coffins) nearby, trying hard to avoid the ladies and young girls trying to sell things to visitors. Then back to the pier before the return trip to Kas. One swimming stop on the way back. At that time it rained very hard for a while – the only rain in the whole trip. From there back the sea was very rough; a few people on the boat were nearly sick, but I was OK.



**Lycian sarcophaguses near Kekova**

Also, the skipper did some line fishing on the way back, probably for his dinner. Caught four. He also seemed to be having a competition with the skipper of another returning tour boat as to who could catch the most (our skipper did). After returning to the pension, went out onto the balcony and saw a large water spout heading across the bay – the first I have ever seen. Disappeared as it crossed the marina area. Probably not big enough to do any damage, however.

Next instalment: *The tree houses of Olympos*



## 6 THE TREE HOUSES OF OLYMPOS

As the Fez bus was not due in Kas until early afternoon, I was able to have a sleep in. This was followed by another good Turkish breakfast again with refills if wanted. The only thing in the breakfast that I seldom ate were the olives. Just not used to them. After that, went for a walk to the Kas open-air market. Much smaller, of course, than other visited. Didn't but anything.

The bus left for Olympos at 2 p.m. As the regular offsider couldn't continue because of sickness, another, who was a 'passenger' on the bus, took over. On the way, the bus stopped at a beach below a steep hillside. About four people went for a swim. I decided against it as I was not able to dry myself and there would have been no time to dry off in the sun. Looked good though with a swim to a cave on the other side of the bay. The next stop was at a BP

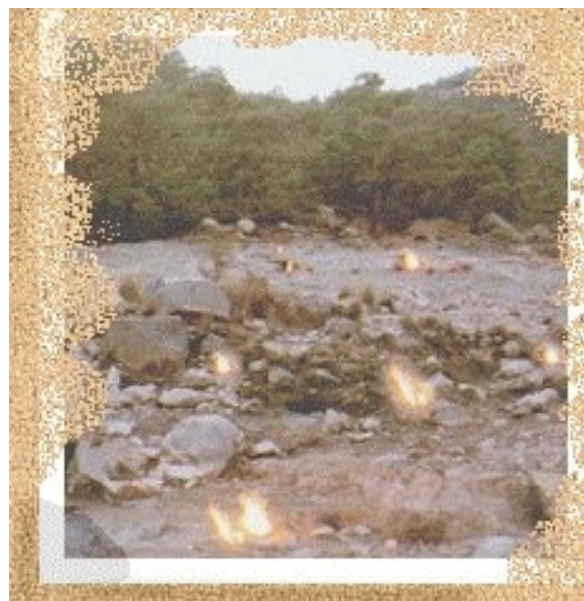


**Tree houses at Olympos; the 'Yellow submarine' top left.**

service station, voted 'best' (by whom, I don't know). Understandable, though. As well as the usual services, it has lovely clean toilets, a nice café, a children's playground as well as a vehicle-cleaning service (which the driver had to avail himself of, naturally!). Then on to Olympos, arriving about 6 p.m. This is actually a mountainous, forested area with a mountain that reminded ancient Greeks of their own Mt. Olympos in Greece. Not

far from the coast (which I didn't go to) is a camping ground with cabins and tree houses made from wood. Each room has a name as I was given the "Yellow submarine" which was a room and not an actual tree house. Communal toilets and showers, etc. Somewhat rougher than other places stayed at but still OK. Dinner and breakfast included in the price (which was the cheapest in the whole trip, being TL9 million, which is about US\$6.5, and this was 10% cheaper than the regular price as it is a member of the YHA and I had my membership card with me).

After dinner, at about 9 p.m., there was a bus ride of about 40 minutes to a neighbouring valley to see the flames of Chimerea. These are flames from natural gas which rise up through cracks in the ground. Some people were using them for a barbecue! A bit disappointing as they were not



**Flames at Chimera (picture from website – better than mine)**

very large or numerous; years ago they were much larger than now. And of course, the Greeks have a myth associated with the flames. They came from a beast that lived underground and which was killed by a 'hero' who had been sent to do battle with it after having been wrongly accused of a crime. Got back to the tree houses at about 11.30 p.m. Difficult to sleep as there was a lot of rowdy music being played until about 4 a.m. in the morning. I actually had to get up and stick ear plugs (from the airline kit) in my ear! Helped a bit.

Up at 7 a.m. for breakfast which was half an hour late. The bus left about 45 minutes late, mainly because of those people who couldn't wake up after being up most of the night. It would have been nice to have stayed and done some hiking but time didn't allow. (But if I came again, I would stay at a quieter campsite some distance along the road.) And so off, around Mt Olympos and along the coast to the city of Anatalya arriving at about 10 a.m.. Four of us had decided to stay so were dropped off in the middle of the town. Again, a chap was waiting near the bus stop. He noticed the small pension brochure I was holding and said that he worked there. Followed him and checked in. By this time I was starting to feel miserable. Think I picked up a bug which was making me feel feverish and tired. There had been stories along the way of people getting Giardia (a parasite in water). Probably not that, as I here that Giardia lasts a lifetime once a person is infected! Mine affliction lasted just the two days in Antalya.

Anyway, after checking in, walked down to the nearby harbour area where lots of people were trying to sell various boat trips. Stopped at a food stall and bought some Turkish rolls. Looked like Chinese spring rolls but turned out to be very sweet. Offered one to an elderly man who was standing on the footpath in the very hot sun selling Turkish craft bags but he wouldn't accept it. From there to see the remains of a city wall built by the Roman Emperor Hadrian (the same emperor who built the wall between England and Scotland which we visited in 1990). Feeling terrible at this stage so back to the pension to rest for the rest of the afternoon. Difficult, as a dog in a neighbouring pension was continually yelping at cats mainly. (Complained later to the pension owner, but it turns out they had unsuccessfully sued the other pension to get the dog removed.) In the early evening, walked the 10-15 minutes into the centre of town and sat by an ancient clock tower and watched life go by. Looked at food stalls but did not feel hungry and never bought anything. Then back to sweat out my fever and hopefully get some sleep. (At least during the night the dog was quieter.)

Up late the next morning. The fever had gone but felt somewhat weak. Had some breakfast from the pension's buffet on the roof. Off at 11 a.m. to look around the town but only lasted a couple of hours. Had to come back and rest. To town in the early evening and managed to eat a doner which made me feel better. But then back to the pension and bed.

The next day was a full day's travel to the central Turkish region of Cappadocia. While waiting for the Fez bus, saw a large group of school students dressed up in some kind of traditional costumes. They had got off their bus to drink water from a public fountain. The

bus (which had left Olympos earlier) was nearly full, mainly because buses now were only leaving every 2 days rather than 4 or 5 times a week. Flat land to start with, but soon up in the mountains between the coast and inland. But excellent, wide roads nearly all the way. Stopped for lunch at a restaurant in a very arid region. An elderly American man from Florida, an army veteran, began talking to a group of people from our bus, asking where people were from and saying “Been there” to most places. Of course, he had been to Christchurch too! Off again, out of the mountains and onto the vast Anatolian plateau. A very fertile area which is the “bread basket” of Turkey. Little rain though and most the water supplied to the fields by means of irrigation.

Passed through the city of Konya (ancient Iconium) which is the Islamic capital of Turkey and very conservative. The Fez bus seldom stops there as most of its people are not dressed appropriately! Even as we passed along the outskirts of the city, there were few people to be seen and the few seem were dressed conservatively – none of the men was wearing shorts, and even young children had their legs covered. Konya is also the place where a very tolerant Islamic cult was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The founder’s tomb is there. A particular characteristic of the cult is the way they meditate. Men – originally travelling/itinerant preachers called ‘dervishes’ -- dressed in long white robes would whirl around until they were in a trance-like state which was supposed to given them oneness with God/Allah. The men, known as the ‘whirling dervishes’ could continue this whirling dance for up to an hour. Originally I was hoping to see this dance performed at Konya. But I had to wait until back in Istanbul before seeing it. While stopping for fuel outside Konya, a number of jet fighters (F-16s, I think) screamed overhead; couldn’t tell if they were Turkish or US from a NATO air base.

The bus continued on to a Cappadocia, and we arrived in the small town of Goreme, where three nights and days were to be spent. Stayed at the “Kangaroo pension”, another pension run by an Australian. They are friendly with the people at the ANZ pension in Selcuk, who, by chance, were staying there. Goreme, and the area around it, is characterised by very unusual rock formations. Hundreds of thousands (?millions) of years ago, three large volcanoes (still



**Rock formations at Goreme**



there but no longer active) covered a large part of the land with lava. The resulting rock was a mixture of hard and soft rock. Over time, by the weathering action of water, the soft rock wore away leaving many cone-like rock towers standing. More about these later.

After checking in, off to what was billed as a Turkish folklore evening. Only partly true – it was mainly a dinner-disco in a smoke-filled atmosphere interspersed with a few Turkish folk dances! The few dances were interesting, but I just couldn't stand the rest. There was a tour group from Hong Kong there as well. After some time, they walked out in disgust. They too, had probably been fed information about the evening that was entirely accurate. Still the younger members of the Fez group, particularly those who also smoked, had a good time. The last Turkish dance was a "Belly dance" which I had heard of but never seen. That was very interesting, though I wouldn't travel thousands of miles just to see it. Got back to the pension at about 1 a.m.!!



**Belly dancer at the dinner-disco in Goreme**

The next day – September 11<sup>th</sup> – was taken up with a full-day tour of the region. The tour was included in the price of the Fez bus ticket. A very interesting day, seeing and learning things about the geology and history of the area. All loaded into two mini-buses. First stop was at the head of a valley above Goreme. From there we could look down and see lots of these unusual rock formations. Then a longish ride to an underground city, one of the many that have been discovered in the region. These were first cut out of the rock about 8000 years ago (I think) by the Hittites, primarily for use as hiding places during wars. Later, they were used and extended by other peoples as a haven during war and also from persecution. Many



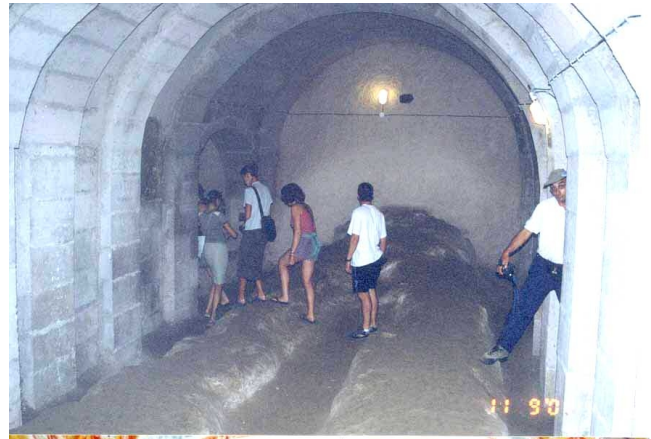
**Part of a tunnel in the underground city (Fez photo, not mine)**

early Christians spent time in these cities. Cool and pleasant down there. There were also many ventilation shafts going up to the surface where they were camouflaged. Tunnels were narrow which made it difficult for invading soldiers with their gear on to get through. The city we visited has 8 layers. The top layer was used as the stables – a bit difficult getting the horses through narrow holes and tunnels to lower layers.

Next: *The high point of Cappadocia*

## 7 THE HIGH POINT OF CAPPADOCIA

In the underground city, there were other reminders of time spent there by early Christian communities. In places identified as kitchens, there was black soot on the ceilings. There was also an underground church which served as a school (see photo). In the photo, the trench-like parts are where people sat. The guy on the right is coming out of a study room, and at the rear where the other people are there is a baptistery. And although we did not see them, there are many other underground cities throughout the region, many of which are connected by tunnels.



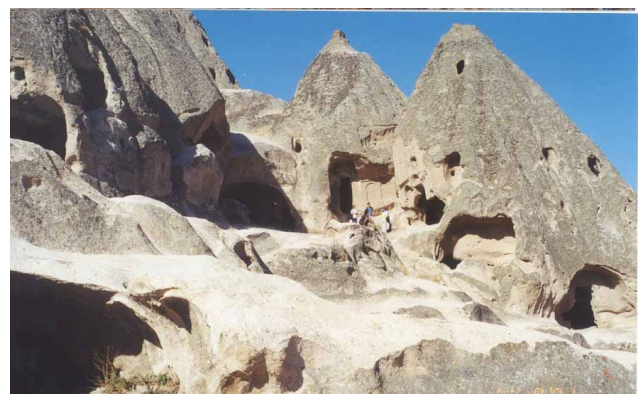
**An underground church**



**Frescoes on the ceiling of a cave church**

recalling stories about the life of Christ. At one point, a man and his wife appeared with a donkey which were for people to have a ride or to take a photograph – for a fee of course! At one end of the valley, there are many more of the strange cone-shaped rocks. One area, which has quite a lot of them, was used for a movie about space (?Star Wars). Nearby, there were more caves with quite a number of churches and living quarters in them. Interesting climbing up and walking around them. When originally built, most of these structures could not be seen. But erosion over the centuries has caused large chunks of the cones to fall off to expose many of the rooms, etc in the caves.

From the underground city, we travelled some distance to a large valley formed in ancient times by an earthquake. We descended into the valley and walked a few kilometres along it. Again, there are Christian churches carved into the cliffs. Also, many small caves where Christian hermits would come to live and meditate. Most of these had been sealed off which helped to protect them from vandals. But, in many of them, holes were left for pigeons to use the caves. In one of the churches, there were very beautiful frescoes on the ceiling



**Cones with churches and other rooms**



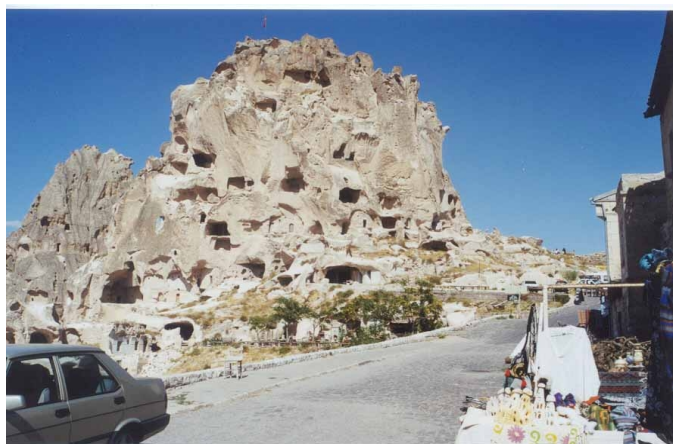
From there, it was a long journey back to have a look at a local pottery factory. But on the way, our mini-bus stopped at an extinct (I think) crater lake for a swim. I had still not recovered from whatever I got in Antalya, but decided to go in anyway. Felt much better after! Nice swim; the water was clean but not very clear. Also noticed fish jumping out of the water. At the pottery factory they gave us a demonstration of how local ceramics are made.



**Crater lake swim – with me in the water!**

It was dark by this time as we headed back to Goreme. It was then that we heard about the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. But, as I mentioned earlier, we did not get an accurate account until arriving back at the pension. That evening I walked around and found an Internet Café (without the café part!) so that I could e-mail Leonie. So that was the first full day in Goreme.

Got up a bit later the next day. Had breakfast at a local café, as it was too expensive at the pension. Then a toll-free call to the Fez Bus company in Istanbul to ensure that I was booked on the overnight bus to Istanbul the next evening. After that, got directions for a hike up a valley. At the start, there were more churches carved into the stone cones, some of which are still in good order. Continued up the valley past similar cones and through orchards. Saw a



**The ‘Castle’ – the highest point in Cappadocia**

few people picking fruit but I was not sure if the trees belonged to them or not. Picked two myself. Not sure what they were, but they looked a bit like small yellow apples. Ate one – tasted OK. Kept the other one – it is still here on the table waiting to be eaten!

Continued onwards and upwards. Eventually came out of the valley to a village with a high rock structure called ‘The Castle’. This is the highest point in Cappadocia (though still not very high) and the view from the top was quite good. As the photo shows, it too has quite a number of caves cut into its faces.

Quite hot at this time but was able to buy some nice cold water at a nearby shop. Also met three primary school boys returning from school. Had a look at their books. Took a photograph of them and one wrote out their names so that I could send a picture. Actually sent three so they could have one each! Then walked back to Goreme partly along a highway parallel to the valley I had come up. Arrived back at about 4:30 p.m. Bought something to eat and then had a quick look at the open-air market, buying some peaches to eat.



As there was still a third day to spend in Goreme, slept in and then checked out by 10 a.m. but left the backpack there. Walked along to an open-air museum which consisted of the cave dwellings and churches of a Christian community. Didn't go in as it was similar to places that I had already seen. Just as I was going to take a photograph, a tour group of Italians came and stood right in front of me! I had to wait about 10 minutes before they moved away and I could get the shot I wanted. Near the entrance was an interesting police station, which had either been carved out of the rocks or was built into one made a long time ago. Then walked slowly back to Goreme and had a shower at the pension. Then had an early dinner in town. There was a dead fly in the bread provided with the meal. I pointed this out to the boy waiter who just picked it out and threw it away!! Back to pick up the backpack from the pension and then to meet the bus which left for Istanbul at 8 p.m.



**A cave police station inside the open-air museum**

The bus was almost completely full – mainly because the buses were only coming at two-day intervals now. The lights were off for most of the journey but I didn't get much sleep. Nor could much be seen of what was outside. Passed through Ankara, the capital of Turkey, just after midnight. From what I could see, it seemed to be a very modern city. The highways was good, with parts of the journey on toll motorways. Our bus was stopped at random by traffic police. They asked for a computer printout of the bus' speeds and analysed it. This system means it is quite difficult for bus drivers to travel fast as a record of their speeds is kept on a computer which must be installed in all buses. A number of stops during the night at refreshment stops. At one stop there must have been about 30 buses at the same time! Night travel is very popular in Turkey.

Arrived back in Istanbul at about 7:30 a.m. in the cool of the morning. Crossed over one of the two Bosphorus suspension bridges linking the Asian side of Istanbul to the European side.



**One of the two Bosphorus bridges**

The bridge is about the same length as the suspension bridge in Hong Kong but is only a road bridge whereas the HK bridge is a combined road and rail. Checked in at a small hotel near the Fez office. Then spent the rest of the day looking around the city. A short distance away, next to the Blue Mosque is the site of an old Roman hippodrome (horse-racing track). Just about all that remains is an

obelisk brought in by the Romans from Egypt. Then across to the Roman cistern – an underground water reservoir that stored water from a forest lake (?) via an aqueduct (part of which is still in Istanbul but I didn't see it).

The cistern is about the size of a football field and has dozens of marble pillars to hold up the ceiling. Although we can walk inside it today, it would have been full of water in earlier times.

From there to the Grand Bazaar, which was open as it was a Friday and not a Sunday. Then down to the ferry piers

again and took a ride on a local cross-strait ferry. Spent about 30 minutes on the other side then came back on the ferry of a different company. Many boats providing cruises with meals. (Saw one couple just returning from a cruise running towards their illegally parked car that was just being towed away!).

In the evening, sat outside the Blue mosque and watch a 'Son at Lumiere' ('Sound and Light') show about the history of the mosque. Interesting. Then went to an open-air restaurant for something to eat, including gozleme, but primarily to watch a performance of the whirling dervishes dance that I mentioned in the last instalment performed for free by two men. (Have



**Blue mosque at night**

a photograph but can't put it here as it is still in the camera.) Could see the way they moved their feet and arms as they spun. They danced separately then together for about 20 minutes all together. I am glad I saw it. (It turned that I could have watched it for free without eating, but the food was good and it was the last night!)

Had a good sleep. Even though the hotel overlooks a tourist area, it becomes very quiet after about 11 p.m. The next morning, had a another buffet Turkish breakfast on the roof of the hotel overlooking the Sea of Marmara. Left for the airport in a private and somewhat rickety mini-bus at 11 a.m. Called at a number of little hotels to pick up people. Took about 40 minutes to reach the airport. Left on time for Dubai and Singapore and then got back to Hong Kong again arriving on time.



**Blue mosque from hippodrome – Egyptian obelisk in the foreground**

**THE END**