

What an honor and a privilege it was to travel with Niagara Foundation to Turkey in May, 2005. The trip was an opportunity to be introduced to some of the rich variety that makes up that fabulous country.

Although we were only gone ten days, we were able to experience Turkey from many different angles. We spent time in cities, at historical sites, along the seacoasts and waterways, and within the rural areas. We visited houses of worship, markets, ancient ruins, beaches, holy places, architectural wonders, underground waterways and cities, geological formations, businesses, museums, waterfalls, historic buildings, artisans' shops, and scenic areas. All of these added a vivid texture to our impressions of this lovely, lively country.

An especially delightful aspect of the trip was the opportunity to meet Turkish educational and business leaders as well as to interact with schoolchildren who were some of the most eager and joyous students we have ever encountered. We were pleased to be personally introduced to the extraordinary work that is ongoing in the educational institutions funded by private foundations in Turkey. We observed these schools seeking to provide excellent personalized education for the talented young people who will be the future leaders of Turkey. Their commitment to training students for both high moral standards and global leadership was remarkable. Likewise, we met business people who generously took time out of their busy schedules to warmly welcome us and spend time in dialogue with us.

As we remember the phenomenal ten days we spent in Turkey, we continue to be overwhelmed by the lavish generosity and warm conviviality of the hospitality extended toward us. We were truly treated like royalty. We could not have been more pleased with the lovely hotel accommodations, which were all extremely luxurious. Each evening we felt pampered and very comfortable. Meals were truly sumptuous. We were treated to an astonishing array of delicious foods provided in amazing abundance and with such warm welcome and hospitality that we could not help but thoroughly relish our dining experiences.

We feel particularly blessed by the families who hosted our group in their homes. How kind it was of Yusef and his family to entertain us in their home after our visit to the Yamanlar College. It was wonderful to sit together for a while, enjoying tea and fruit and dessert, while sharing informal conversation, laughter, and Turkish folk music. It was also a

pleasure and a privilege to attend the gorgeous dinner party at the home of Mr. Fettah Tamince and his family. Being treated to terrific weather, good music, a beautiful table, great food, and stimulating conversation partners, we truly feasted there and were royally entertained. We also feel deep gratitude for our evening with Dr. Hussein and his family and the personal attention they gave us. Sharing stories and conversation in the intimacy of their living room, enjoying a cozy meal together on their porch, and later being treated at the school to a performance by the whirling dervishes was a wonderful experience. We appreciate these families welcoming us so personally by inviting us into their homes.

Kemal's planning and leadership and knowledge and hard work were evident in every part of our journey together. We appreciated the leadership he showed in putting into place travel arrangements for the group, the hundreds of cell phone calls he made on our behalf, all the effort he expended translating for us, all the time he spent answering our questions about Turkish life and culture, all the guidance and care he gave us.

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