

June 25

Istanbul

Quite a good night's sleep and another good breakfast buffet. They have at least half a dozen types of cheese, mainly mozzarella style, and lots of salads, buns, cakes and so on. Plenty of choice and lots of healthy stuff for me.



Narrow streets & lots of cars

We poured over a map and decided which way to go. First stop was the bank, followed by the Turkish Delight shop and the shoe shop. Valerie made purchases in all three. I just bought at the Turkish Delight shop.



The trams pass too close for comfort



A window full of Turkish Delight

Outside, the traffic was chaotic but we managed to avoid the cars and the trams and carried our booty back to the hotel. So far, Valerie's back was playing reasonably nicely so we set off on our voyage of exploration.



Lots of people stopped for tea ...



... Even the pussy cat

We stopped for a tea - I'm really getting into glasses of Turkish tea although Valerie isn't - and watched a pussy cat parading outside the café on the other side of the street.

We left there and soon got lost, a situation which was to last for most of the day. The Tourist Office got us completely confused, although we were able to photograph one of the exhibits at the neighbouring railway museum.

Valerie made the (possible) mistake of taking advice from a passing businessman who led us in a straight line to his mate's carpet shop. Once inside, we were given the hard sell for about 20 minutes. The silk rug did look beautiful. At about £1000 so it **** well should have done! Who knows if it was hand or machine made.



Istanbul Railway Museum

We finally escaped and wandered a bit further before Valerie asked for more directions from, would you believe it, another carpet shop owner.



A busy street corner

We managed not to get drawn into his shop and finally walked round the side of a huge mosque, past the taps which the worshippers use to wash their feet.

It should be said that it was cloudy but warm. My decision to leave my jacket at the hotel was a good one.



Cleanliness is next to Godliness



The Grand Bazaar

The Grand Bazaar is huge and full of stuff that I wouldn't want to buy in a million years. Bling of all sorts, gold, leather, ceramics and endless quantities of everything. I followed as Valerie searched for presents to take back to New Zealand. I worried about the cost and the volumes of suitcase space and weight that they would occupy.

The building was amazing, with spectacular ceilings and obvious signs of age and water damage, which I seem to have neglected to photograph.



Gold bling ...



Fresh fruit ...



... and ceramic tiles ...

After a couple of hours, we made our way outside into another crowded area and found lunch in a street side kabab stall.

It has to be said that every restaurant that we have seen, and there are more than in any city that I can recall, is a kebab house. We have seen nothing else. The food was OK and the rest was much needed.

Alongside the café was a shop selling both fruit and coffee. Pomegranates are obviously a major local crop. The coffee was freshly ground. I should have bought some.



... in an amazing building



... and coffee



The original Turkish Bath

Valerie had identified an historic Turkish Bath in which to ease her back but it turned out to be closed.



Shoes - lots of them

We found another shoe shop, without success, and more food shops and restaurants.

With time to kill before we returned to the carpet shop we visited yesterday, we found the Turkish equivalent of Starbucks, which sold lots of types of coffee and huge quantities of excellent looking chocolate. They even had a chocolate fountain, which I didn't patronise.



If only I could eat it!

With a little more geographical difficulty, we located the carpet shop and found that Valerie's coasters had been completed. Whilst they had cost an arm and several legs, the workmanship seemed to be of the highest quality. My own rug did look high quality.



The shop was well hidden

We got seriously lost and found ourselves in a huge street market. This seemed to be one frequented by locals and sold lots of useful stuff. Valerie found a wonderful haberdashers in which she found tassels for a fraction of what they would have cost in New Zealand.



The massed crowds in the street market



Spices I would love to have bought



Tassles of every shape and size

We finally found our way out and discovered that we were opposite the Spice Bazaar. Another spectacular building, it sold wonderful looking spices which certainly couldn't be taken into New Zealand and would probably have caused problems at UK Customs. We did buy some spice grinders which were on offer. Hope they work!



We emerged into the sunshine

Outside again, we arrived at the waterfront. It was crowded and the sun was bright. We made our way back to the hotel, past loads of restaurants and some fruit shops.



The Spice Bazaar



The local fruit shop

Valerie stayed at the hotel for a rest and I went round the corner for a beer, not very cold, and a diary writing and football watching session in a bar.



Another satisfied local

As I sat, the sky clouded over and it cooled down considerably. I was even joined by yet more of the local pussy cats. There are lots of them here & they all looked content.

After an hour and after I had completed my diary, I set off to examine all of the menus in the locality. They all seemed similar and there were no restaurants selling food from any other ethnicity.



Bags of bags

At the bottom of the hill I found a bag shop, which I earmarked for Valerie's attention, and I then returned to the hotel.

After a rest, we set off to the bag shop, where Valerie succeeded in finding a new purse. While she was in there, I was able to watch a man ignoring the trams rushing past and being hit on the shoulder by a wing mirror. A narrow escape. We visited a few more shops - the spice shop was excellent but not cheap - and then settled on a restaurant.

This turned out to be good. At one stage, we were assailed by a trio of what looked like North African musicians but the restaurant manager chased them away. The food was good and the meal was the cheapest we had in the city.



Lots of starters ...



... and another kebab

We sat next to an Australian who was here with his wife, a senior official with an NGO. She was inspecting Turkish charities providing services for refugees and he was having a holiday. While we sat, a few drops of rain fell but they had vanished by the time we walked the short distance back to the hotel.