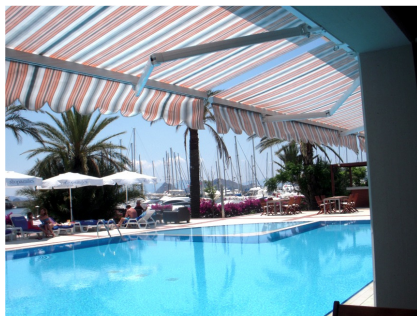




East to the **Ottoman Empire** - Turkey ... Impressions

In the past two months, from Turgutreis to Fethiye, we have experienced many contrasts. From the wild luxury of the 5 star yacht marinas of Turgutreis, Bodrum and Marmaris to the homemade jetty restaurants of the bay areas, the Yacht Classic boutique hotel/marina of Fethiye to isolated coves with only the goats and gulets (traditional Turkish wooden ships) for company. We have enjoyed extraordinary hospitality and generosity, undoubtedly been ripped off on occasion, feasted on the best food ever, and marvelled at the creativity, craftsmanship, colour, humour and sheer cheek of the Turks who are good businessmen but above all warm-hearted people. We have seen the best of Turkey-the liberal, wealthy, westernised coastal region of the Mediterranean /Aegean. Wild areas of natural beauty and areas of wild commercialisation. No longer cheap, Turkey is perhaps in danger of pricing itself out of the normal cruisers' market but it is a terrific experience. (Er...a herd of goats at the water's edge are watching me as I write this, sitting in the cockpit 10 metres offshore. Tuck is clearly puzzled...)



As a non-EU country, formalities for entering are strict but not as complicated as feared- only 5 different offices: marina,harbour authorities, passport control, customs, health office (twice) (But, strangely, not the vet). Turgutreis 5 star marina was heavenly in the 38C heat. The all day Saturday market was fascinating for it's fruit, spices, Turkish Delight (a sweet) and fake everything else. Also the bazaar- shopping area. We found the sellers funny, enthusiastic and less aggressive than in Kusadasi last year. In tiny Cokertme, the village women still weave traditional wool carpets by hand methods using vegetable dyes. (Had my eye on a nice little one- just 13.000dkr! They take modern credit cards...) Also some vibrantly glazed, intricately- patterned pottery.





Turkish Cuisine at it's best really tops anything we've experienced anywhere so far... Each meal begins with turkish mezes, a variety of vegetarian dishes- featuring aubergines, tomatoes in garlic and olive oil, cucumber, onions, yoghurt with watercress, green beans, and much, much more. The best food was often at the simple jetty restaurants (often accessible only by water) where yachts tie up for the night for free provided you eat at the restaurant- often run by local fishermen/farmers with fresh local produce, lamb, beef, chicken, sea bream, sea bass. A regular feature is casseroles (meat/chicken baked in clay pots in the oven for hours). Turks make superb meat.(Even the basic doner kebabs are mouth-watering and addictive!). The bread baked in wood ovens is irresistible. Efes beer is good, they have Raki (like ouzo) but wine is heavily taxed (being a muslim country- often 40 dkr a glass and sprits are extremely expensive.

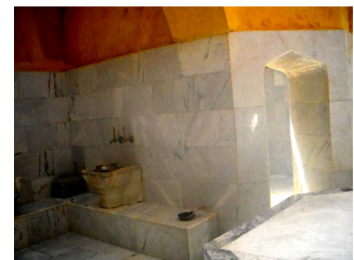


Here we would like to mention especially the **superb food and hospitality** we enjoyed at **Mesudiye** at the **Port Hayitbuku Restaurant** with the owner Ali Yalcinkaya, a former Gulet captain and his charming Thai wife. They have recently taken over the restaurant which will provide a good meeting place to eat and relax for visiting sailors. This is a lovely spot, small beach and jetty, dolmus service to Datca. His chef is simply the best. Many thanks again. **Sailors- do not miss this spot!**





We also enjoyed the gracious hospitality of **Mehmet Keles** at the **Liman Restaurant** in Bozburun, a sleepy protected harbour close to Marmaris. Mehmet graciously provided us with much information on Turkish customs and food and offers a superb 3 course meal for only 17TL (around 80 dkr.) We were sceptical, having been warned about tourist menus but not only was it a wonderful meal, we also got a free shower and watched the World Cup Final Holland/Spain to boot. (well, OK I fell asleep...but anyway don't miss this place...).



The Turks work very hard- many have two or three jobs just to make ends meet. 18/19 hr. days, 7 days a week. While waiting for our meal in this Marmaris restaurant, our waiter who was quite the character, not only filled us in on his upcoming wedding (1000 guests for 3 whole days- his wife has 600 relatives coming...much rolling of eyes), but gave us all a face, neck and arm massage. We'd have probably got a haircut ,too, if the food hadn't arrived as he was also a hairdresser as well as masseur/waiter/artist. We loved him.

The other very special experience was a visit to **The Old Turkish Bath/ Hamam** in Fethiye. Built by the Sultan Selim in the 16th century, this has been a little oasis of peace and relaxation for 400 years. I was a little worried but it was spotless and such a lovely experience. Starting in a small steam room with domed ceiling of painted stars and warm marble slabs you relax for 20 mins. Then have the most relaxing peeling rubdown followed by a foam massage while stretched out on a warm marble table. It was Sunday morning and I was alone in there with a lovely Turkish lady masseuse. Shampoo and rinse with lovely cool water followed by a rose oil massage. "Bliss and relaxation guaranteed" they say... and it is.

Our tour from Bodrum to Fethiye with Lene & Jan follows.

