

# MindStormPhoto Turkey 2016 pt 1



Burt and Evelyn Johnson



# MindStormPhoto Turkey 2016

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# Turkey 01 – Istanbul First Impressions



# Turkey 01 – Istanbul First Impressions

We have just completed our first week in Istanbul, Turkey with 4 nights on the Asian side, and 2 nights. We will next go on a photo tour of Western Turkey, before returning here to Istanbul to stay a couple months. This post is therefore just our first impressions of the city. We are doing an 11 week home exchange with a couple that lives here on the Asian side, and who is now staying in our home in Cuenca, Ecuador. If you would like to meet the Turkish couple in Cuenca, send me an email and I will forward their contact information to you.

Our very first impressions? Extremely friendly people, fresh seafood, clean, and lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. There seems to be a fruit, vegetable and/or fish market every couple of blocks. The strawberries looked so good, I had to buy some -- and they tasted every bit as good as they look, for only 5 TL (under \$2 US) for a Kilo. One note though -- other than Gulistan, there was almost no English spoken in this neighborhood. When on our own, we did a lot of pointing and pantomiming.



# Turkey 01 – Istanbul First Impressions





# Turkey 01 – Istanbul First Impressions

Gulistan (seen above with Evelyn) is a friend of our Istanbul hosts, and took it upon herself to show us the neighborhood. After several evenings of her showing us where to shop, helping us get a Turkish phone number, pick up some extra Advil at the local pharmacy (we have been doing a LOT of walking...), we took her out to dinner. As seen above, the feast was over-the-top in volume and variety. Fortunately, the tastes were every bit as good as it looked.





# Turkey 01 – Istanbul First Impressions

The second impression? Cats! And more cats! Dogs are rare in Istanbul, but cats are everywhere. I expect many (most?) of them are feral, but they don't look underfed. Gulistan tells us of "her" cat that visits Starbucks, going from table to table, knowing who will give her milk. Seems the cats are universally loved and cared for as a community. We saw several bowls of food and water put out on a sidewalk, clearly helping any cat that passes by.



# Turkey 01 – Istanbul First Impressions

What do you bring back from Turkey? Rugs, ceramics... and spices. A trip to the Spice Market was mandatory, and almost overwhelming. Covering less than a city block, it is crammed with vendors all selling pretty much the same thing. Spices and candy are everywhere you turn. Some have it in bins, some in large piles, and a few in pre-packaged collections obviously aimed at the tourists. The vendors will talk to you in German, Cantonese, Japanese, English, whichever language to get you into their store.

English is the universal language here, and we often saw Middle Easterners talking in English to the vendors. We were told they were probably from Iran or Syria, or other neighboring country, and that English was the common language for them all. This seemed true everywhere we went within the European commercial side of Istanbul.

We have several spices on our shopping list, but were warned to buy them at our local neighborhood seller instead (for better prices), so we left empty handed other than cameras full of images.



# Turkey 01 – Istanbul First Impressions



Just outside the spice market, sharing the same public square, is a garden center on one side, as well as a fish market, plus fruits, vegetable, and other items.



# Turkey 01 – Istanbul First Impressions





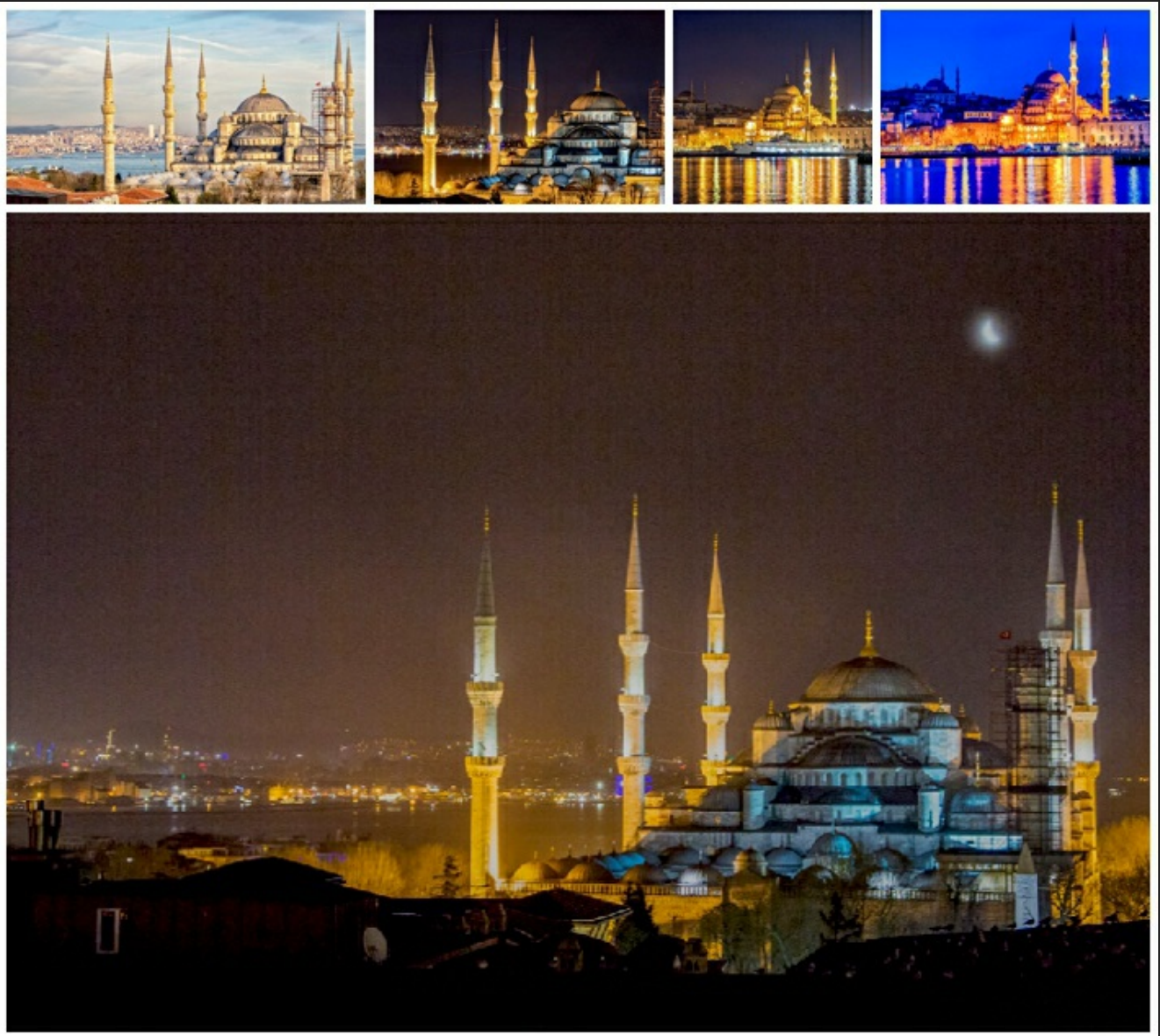
# Turkey 01 – Istanbul First Impressions

Yesterday, we joined up with Mehmet Ozbalci ([Fantastic Photo Tours](#)) and 4 other tourist-photographers to start a 10 day photographic tour of Turkey. We started in Istanbul, on the European side, and opened with a tour of some mosques in the area. Above are images from the outside of some we visited. Since there are [2,944 active mosques in Istanbul](#) (in a city of 15 million), we obviously only sampled a few of the most ostentatious ones...



# Turkey 02 – Where Babies Come From

We then visited the underground [Basilica Cistern](#), created in the 6th century by the Romans. We then moved on to the interior of the [New Mosque](#). The bottom image above is looking directly up, next to a column (that anchors the bottom of the photo). Gotta admit, I didn't even see a photo there, until Mehmet went to the column, shot looking up, and came to show the rest of us what it looked like. We then all clamored to that location to get it too!





# Turkey 02 – Where Babies Come From

We had to start before dawn to get the best photos, so off we went at 5:30 -- the true cost of being on a tour with other photographers...! The [Blue Mosque](#) was the most picturesque of the mosques from the outside. The lower image above was from our hotel room balcony, just before we left to explore the landscape and shoot the sunrise.





# Turkey 02 – Where Babies Come From

After leaving the New Mosque, we walked across the Golden Horn on the [Galata Bridge](#). This is a popular spot for local fishermen to toss their hooks, and made for a pleasant photographic crossing.

## Turkey 02 – Where Babies Come From





# Turkey 02 – Where Babies Come From

If you are following this blog in real time, you know that I am cheating with the publish dates. We started a photo tour of Turkey in Istanbul on April 1, which ended for us on April 11, when the group returned to Istanbul. During that time, we were kept going from before dawn most mornings (to get a sunrise shot somehow requires we get up before sunrise to get there??!), usually until 10PM or so. With 5,122 images to edit from those 10 days, and hours like that, I had no realistic chance of catching up until we were back "home" in Istanbul, where we will spend much of the next two months in a friend's apartment. I will be giving an official post date on these blogs that represents the day we took the included images, to keep it all from bunching up. With no further ado...

"Today" we we flew from Istanbul to Izmir, then drove to Selçuk, where one of the highlights is the nesting storks on top of an ancient aqueduct. I finally had a chance to see where my mother told me I came from!



# Turkey 02 – Where Babies Come From



Next to our lunch restaurant was a town square where men were playing cards. We took a quick break to photograph them, as they were entranced in their games. Immediately, it became clear that they did not mind being photographed, and they would often look up at the camera and smile before returning to study their hand of cards.



# Turkey 02 – Where Babies Come From



While most of the men played their cards, a few sat on the sidelines and looked on. No women participated in the games, but they were seen strolling with their children or sitting on a park bench -- or doing some shopping at the local food markets.



# Turkey 02 – Where Babies Come From



After lunch (and card game photographing), we drove to the picturesque Greek village of Sirince. The center of town is clearly devoted to tourists, but the huge majority of them were Turkish families enjoying a Sunday afternoon strolling the streets. The top two vendors above were making Turkish ice cream, and were more than happy to pose for photographs (as were most people). We had a cone from the second ice cream maker (upper right), who turned the entire sale into a comical slight-of-hand maneuver where the cone would appear, then disappear, then appear in the other hand. Oh yeah, the ice cream was good too. We ended up eating homemade ice cream at several other stops during the week after this.



# Turkey 03 – Ephesus - MindStormPhoto Blog and Gallery





# Turkey 03 – Ephesus - MindStormPhoto Blog and Gallery

As we walked the back streets, we came across many of the town population, all willing to take a moments break from their work for us. One set of children (lower left -- a girl is not shown here, but was playing with them) was having a grand time with a simple stick they had taken from a tree, and were slapping in a stream of water, trying to outdo each other in the biggest splash.

## Turkey 03 – Ephesus





# Turkey 03 – Ephesus - MindStormPhoto Blog and Gallery

We next drove to Kusadasi for our next night's hotel. We stayed at the Hotel Marina Suites, which had a luxurious spa that none of us in our photo tour used. We had noticed that German was a common language on many signs in the ruins, and we had often been spoken to first in German by vendors. Here was our first real understanding why. Germans showed up in large bus loads, 60 at a time, and overwhelmed the hotel. We six American photographer tourists were surrounded and swallowed up in the sea of Germans arriving just behind us.

The road to this town were like many we experienced in our tour around Western Turkey -- paved, but very rough. Some of the roughness appeared to be intentional, as grooving to reduce slipping in snowy or wet weather, much like we have near Lake Tahoe, in California. Some appeared to just be poor design, or poor workmanship, or wear & tear? In any case, it made reading or working on computer (for photo editing) difficult on the longer bus legs.

We visited the ancient ruins of [Ephesus](#) twice -- once for sundown and the next morning for sunrise. Ephesus is an ancient [Greek city built in the 10th century BC](#), and is considered the [best preserved ancient ruin in Asia Minor](#). Above are some of the columns and statues that can be seen today.

# Turkey 03 – Ephesus - MindStormPhoto Blog and Gallery





Here we see the ancient library and the great amphitheater, as well as Mehmet (our tour guide) flanked by two fellow photographer tourists looking down at the scene (center-top). In modern times, many famous musicians have performed in this amphitheater, including Joan Baez, Elton John, Sting, Ray Charles, and Julio Iglesias.



Some of the ancient city is still being uncovered and restored. One new area is the Terrace Houses, which comprise a section of homes covered by an awning, with archaeologists actively working as we wandered through the rooms. Each section of this restoration is being financed by a different group in various countries.

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, April 4, 2016

## Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale

Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale



# Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale

Photography, Tour, Travel, Turkey



This morning we got up early for a long bus ride to our next hotel. On the road, Mehmet suddenly told the bus driver to stop, then back up a couple hundred yards. He had spotted a woman herding goats on the side of the road. In what became a common occurrence, he approached the woman, greeted her with “merhaba” (“hello” in Turkish), asked permission to photograph her, then invited us to crowd around with our cameras. Fortunately, there were only six of us (Mehmet keeps his photo tours small), so there wasn't too much jockeying for position as the shutters started clicking.



# Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale





# Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale

After a lunch in Karacasu, which we will come back to later, we proceeded to Pamukkale. Walking towards the calcium terraces of Pamukkale, the small ancient castle of **Hiropolis** built in the 3rd century AD can be seen off to the side. Just as we arrived at the terraces, we came across a pre-wedding photography session. A young newly married couple were having a professional photo session created for their memory books. We immediately thought just how common a scene like this is back in the US for new brides these days. These scenes repeatedly reminded us just how much we have in common with the Turks, even if the language makes no sense to our ears.





# Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale

As we passed the pre-wedding photo shoot, we came across the famous Pamukkale calcium terraces. Pamukkale means "cotton castle" and the area consists of hot springs laden with calcium deposits that evaporate and leave the white terraces behind. This area has been a hot-spot of [tourism for thousands of years](#), and brought us here today.

The underground springs that feed the terraces are now controlled by 20th century sluice gates. Unfortunately, most of the terraces had no water today, as the local government chooses to let them dry periodically to maintain the clean white appearance. Mehmet went off in search of water, and discovered one far-flung set of pools that still had water, even though the park guards insisted there was none. He then ran (literally) back to the entrance gate, hired two golf carts, picked us up and drove us there in time for the sunset. Though I was impressed with Mehmet's dedication in finding photo opportunities for us, I later realized it was just his standard approach and what makes him special -- he did this kind of quick-change, find-the-best-spot repeatedly for us during the entire tour.

# Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale



*Children, often with their mothers carrying them, in the Karacasu market.*



# Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale

Remember I said we would come back to the village of Karacasu? Well, here we are in a special place where no tour buses would generally stop. We had a rather nice lunch at an outdoor cafe, then had an hour to photograph the locals going along on their daily business in the market. This was thoroughly enjoyable, and surprising in some ways.

This was our fourth day on tour with Mehmet. We have begun to realize that Turkish people are friendly, and not camera shy. They only rarely indicate they do not want a photo taken. More often, they will turn and smile, before returning to their daily life. This market took this to a new level though. People in this market did not just cooperate -- they profusely thanked us (usually in Turkish, that we could only understand via body language), and then often gave us little gifts for taking their photos. When we loaded the bus after the hour, we came back laden with apples, bell peppers, twigs of spices, or whatever the person was selling and offered as a token of friendship.

In some ways, this was the hardest section to edit photos for the blog. I normally limit myself to seven photos per "story," so that one photo montage has enough images to see, in a large enough size (after lots of reader feedback that the earlier crowded sets were too small -- thanks for letting me know!), and the story is told enough to support the text. Here, there were just too many photos of market people that I fell in love with! I edited some 500 of them down to 60, and then those down to 28. It hurt too much to cut further, and so here you get a sampling of the glorious people of the Karacasu market, that welcomed all six of us into their lives for an hour this afternoon.

To keep the text from getting overly long, I will let the next blocks speak for themselves. Hope you enjoy them as much as we did while interacting with these people!

# Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale



*Men in the Karacasu market*



# Turkey 04 – Karacasu and Pamukkale



*Karacasu market women*

# Turkey 05 – Opium and Konya



*More Karacasu market women*

## Turkey 05 – Opium and Konya



# Turkey 05 – Opium and Konya



# Turkey 05 – Opium and Konya

Enroute to Cappadocia today, we saw some women working in the fields. Mehmet signaled the driver to pull over, and after a minute of discussion with the workers, Mehmet signaled for us to join him. He had gotten permission for us to take their photographs. They were hand weeding what appeared to be barren soil, but we were told it was actually a poppy field, grown under government license for producing opium.

A few minutes later an older gentleman walked over, and after a short hesitation, wanted to also pose for our cameras (center top). He then insisted we walk with him over to a neighboring field, where we could see some leaves sprouting up (upper right image). He introduced us to his wife (lower right), then pulled up one plant, and gave each of us some leaves to chew. A little bitter, but nobody started wearing lampshades. Turns out the leaf has no narcotic effect, and we got a short lecture on how opium is harvested (as translated by Mehmet).

The older gentleman was not accustomed to displaying public affection, so he laughed when he put his arms around his wife.



# Turkey 05 – Opium and Konya



When we got back on the bus, we continued to Konya, where we visited the [Mausoleum of Mevlana](#). This was the birthplace of the famous Whirling Dervish sect, outlawed in 1923 by the first Turkish president (he outlawed any Muslims sects that were "man made," and felt that only the Sunni and Shiah were valid religions). The dervish statue outside the mausoleum shows a dancer, one hand uplifted to Allah, and the other down towards the power of the earth.



## Turkey 06 – Cappadocia Balloons and Fairy Castles



After leaving the mausoleum, we wandered the grounds. Again, the people were welcoming to us. One 83 year-old man had a flowing white beard, sitting in the shade with his daughter (right upper image). Mehmet approached him, and the man agreed to move to better lighting, in the shade against the temple wall (lower right image).



# Turkey 06 – Cappadocia Balloons and Fairy Castles

, April 6, 2016



# Turkey 06 – Cappadocia Balloons and Fairy Castles

We spent last night in an exotic "cave hotel," where the rooms are carved out of the hillside, and lived much like the ancients did. Of course, those early inhabitants did not have lights, indoor plumbing nor internet, but we were only willing to go so far in "roughing it."

Yesterday, we pored over the map to see where we were going today. We finally concluded that it was not a very good map, since Cappadocia was not even shown on it! Mehmet then informed us that Cappadocia is an informal and mostly tourist name, not the name of any city nor even an official name of the region.

We got up well before dawn, to head to the area where hot air balloons are launched each morning when the air is sufficiently calm. We have photographed balloon ascensions in Albuquerque, NM in the past, and even rode in hot air balloons in Napa, California. We still find it fascinating to walk the grounds as the pilots fire up the propane burners to provide the hot air to lift the balloons into the air.



# Turkey 06 – Cappadocia Balloons and Fairy Castles



Most photos of Cappadocia show a scene of hot air balloons flying over the valley. Watching 30+ balloons all lift within minutes of each other, and then drift over the "sand dunes" (more on those later) and into the valley makes it clear why this is such a popular photography location.



# Turkey 06 – Cappadocia Balloons and Fairy Castles



Our next stop was Pigeon Valley, so named because of the thousands of pigeons that call this place home. They were first brought here in the 4th century AD, and raised both for food and fertilizer, harvesting the bird droppings for crops. You can see Uchisar castle in the background, as well as a few hot air balloons still in the air.

Breakfast was yet another feast with more than 50 courses-- nobody ever goes hungry on Mehmet's photo tours! Then, on to the Göreme open air museum of cave dwellings. Unfortunately, photography was forbidden here, so I have no images to share of the frescoes.



# Turkey 06 – Cappadocia Balloons and Fairy Castles



After lunch, we visited the "fairy castles." These are limestone hills, that were occupied starting in the 6th century BC. Ortahisar castle is again seen in the background here, and Mehmet bribed one local vendor to pose for us.



# Turkey 06 – Cappadocia Balloons and Fairy Castles



In the late afternoon, we drove to the "sand dunes" of the region. Actually, these are limestone formations that have eroded over the millennia until they looked very much like sand dunes. The low afternoon sun was optimal for creating deep shadows. The upper-left image shows the area from a wider view, letting you see the overall topography of the area, while the others zoom in for more abstract images.



# Turkey 07 – Cappadocia Enroute to Antalya



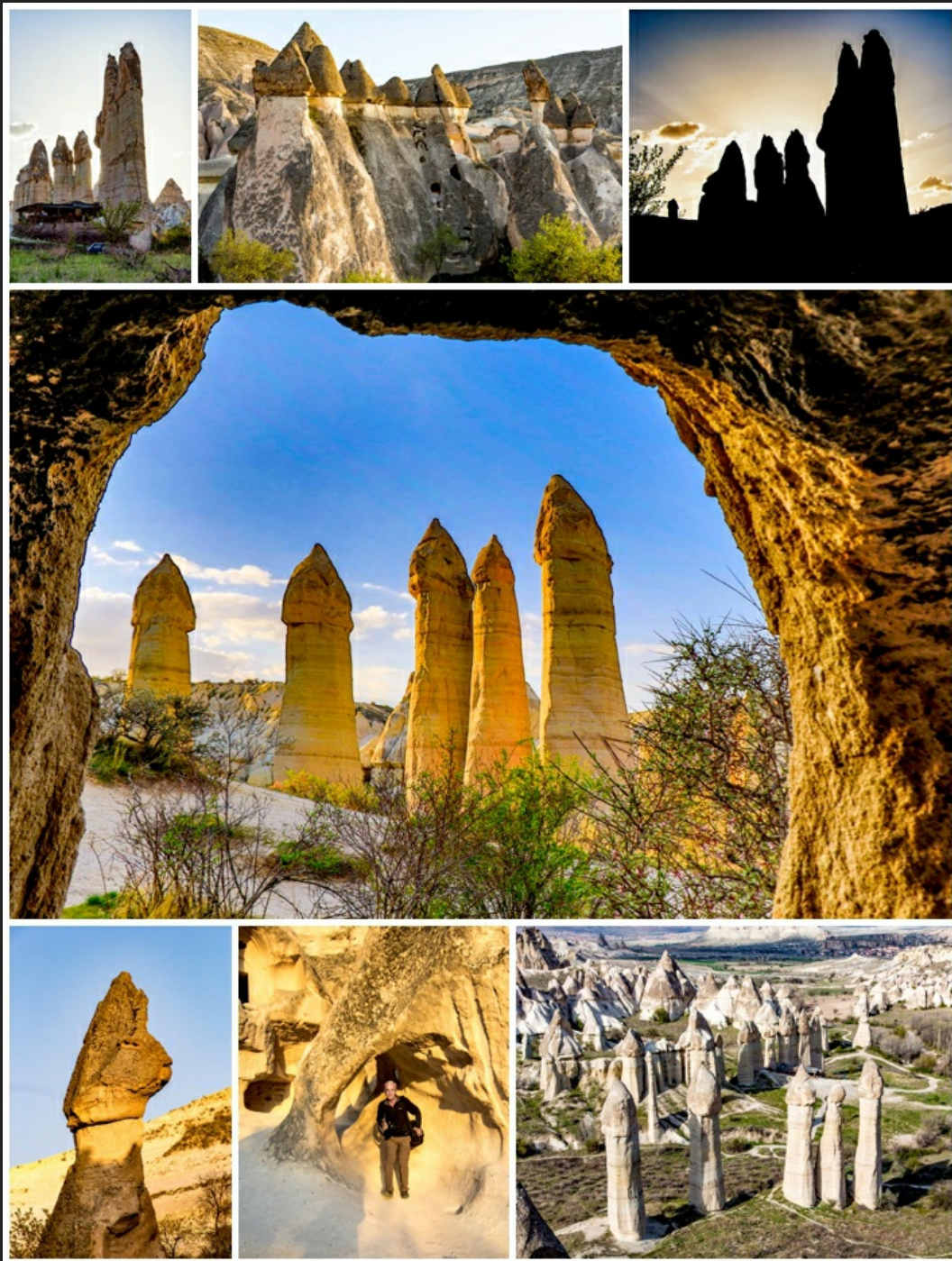
We waited for sunset in a small park overlooking the Uchisat Castle, followed by another scrumptious dinner at a restaurant where Mehmet knew the owner.

## Turkey 07 – Cappadocia Enroute to Antalya

The chimney fairies were our last photo stop in Cappadocia. But first, a word from our sponsor...

It seems that some people are a bit confused about this blog, and believe that Burt (aka "me") is the source of all photographs and writing. Actually, at least 1/3 of all photographs shown were taken by Evelyn, and all posts go through a final edit from her before being distributed. I do almost all the photo editing, but otherwise this really is a shared effort, though it is usually written in "my voice." And now, back to our regularly scheduled program...

# Turkey 07 – Cappadocia Enroute to Antalya



This photo spot is Baglidere Valley, dubbed the Love Valley due to the phallic symbols carved by erosion. Looking around the valley, it is easy to see a layer of sediment decidedly different on both sides, that corresponds to a volcanic eruption some 10's of thousands of years ago. The demarcation resulted in the rock above and below eroding differently, creating the shapes you see above.



# Turkey 07 – Cappadocia Enroute to Antalya

There were also numerous rock formations where it was easy to imagine an animal had been carved, and reminded us of the Alabama Hills in Eastern California. The "rabbit" in the lower left image is one of many such examples. (The lower middle image shows Mehmet coming out of an alcove where he had been shooting an image framed through a natural hole.)



# Turkey 07 – Cappadocia Enroute to Antalya

Enroute to Antayla, we stopped at the [Caravanserai at Sultanhani](#), the best preserved Roman stadium in Turkey, where a local actor hired himself as a gladiator to pose for tourists. Mehmet convinced him to model for us, in exchange for buying a photograph of him with our entire group afterwards.

We then drove to an old Roman Bridge on the Koprupazari River, where we encountered yet another pre-wedding photo session in progress.



# Turkey 07 – Cappadocia Enroute to Antalya





# Turkey 07 – Cappadocia Enroute to Antalya

Next stop was the Roman aqueduct around which the village Belkis has grown. After photographing the aqueduct itself, and a lone poppy found in the field (middle left is Rich from our group, photographing the poppy), we explored the village. As has become the norm in Turkey for us, the people were friendly, open, and willing to let us photograph them. At one point, a matronly woman (bottom left) insisted we come into her home. She then offered us Turkish coffee (for Evelyn) and orange juice (for me) and introduced us to her entire family (lower right), including mother, sister, and multiple sons, daughters, nieces and nephews.





# Turkey 08 – St. Nicholas and Kale

Along the road to our hotel, Mehmet spotted a farmer plowing his field. Again, he stopped the bus, got permission to photograph, then had us join him. Payment to the farmer for his time and helpfulness was a candy bar. At lunch, we saw how "puffy lava bread" is made (middle image). Walking around Antalya that afternoon, we came across still another wedding photography session. This is clearly a popular time for young Turks to get married. We had dinner on the Mediterranean, watching the sun set.

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, April 9, 2016

[Photography](#), [Tour](#), [Travel](#), [Turkey](#) · [Antalya](#), [Cappadocia](#)

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## Turkey 08 – St. Nicholas and Kale





# Turkey 08 – St. Nicholas and Kale

Unfortunately, the threat of terrorism did have an impact on our trip. Due to the threats of ISIS kidnappings, we diverted from our original plans of going to Adiyaman and Sanliurfa. Always ready to react to changing circumstances and opportunities, Mehmet took us to Demre and his favorite fishing village, Kale instead. This blog post is the last from our tour with Mehmet (from [Fantastic Photo Tours](#)). His tour has been one of the best run we have experienced -- in fact, we have tentatively planned on joining him in 2017 to tour three of the "-stan" countries (Kazakhstan, etc). The details for that tour has not yet been finalized.

Yesterday, we drove to Demre, where we photographed the [Church of St Nicholas](#). This is the burial place of St Nicholas, a 4th century bishop, who is considered the original Santa Claus. The upper images, plus lower-right show some of the still-vibrant frescoes depicting the life of the saint. A young Turkish family arrived while we were there, also exploring the church. Mehmet talked to the girl and her mother and convinced her to pose for us. The result added a touch of color and size perspective to the center photograph of the nave.

# Turkey 08 – St. Nicholas and Kale





# Turkey 08 – St. Nicholas and Kale

We then took a boat to the tiny village of Kale, population approximately 45, and protected by the Turkish government as a historically significant site. Overlooking the village is the oldest (and smallest) castle in Turkey, initially built in the 4th century BC. Cannon emplacements attest to the fact that this castle was still in use more than a millennium later, when it was being used to protect against pirates entering the bay. Next to the castle is a Lycian graveyard and sarcophagus.

## Turkey 09 – Camera Mania!



Climbing the steep steps to the castle, we met a few village members. We asked the precocious girl in the upper-right how old she was. She was obviously tired of hearing the same question repeatedly, and scowled at us (in Turkish), "I'm 6 already!"



# Turkey 09 – Camera Mania!

The man (middle left) was steadily stripping oregano from the branches, to be sold in small bags to visitors of the fishing village. Throughout Turkey, we saw many variations of the [Nascar talisman](#), intended to protect the wearer from the harm of an Evil Eye curse. The lower-left was the handicraft version sold here. Also, the owner of the restaurant had purchased an octopus from a fisherman in the morning, and offered to share his family's dinner with us.



On our final morning of the photo tour, we woke up to the sounds of the garbage man on a boat beneath us. Then a small squall started, turning into hail stones pounding on our rooftop, and the strong wind blowing the rain across the bay so the landscape was nearly obliterated. We finished with a tour of the underwater ruins.

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, April 11, 2016

[Tour, Travel, Turkey](#) • [Demre, Kale, St Nicholas](#)

# Turkey 09 – Camera Mania!



Today was an adventure in exploring transportation around Istanbul, shopping, dining, getting lost, and spending way too much money on stuff we can't get in Ecuador. Let's see how it unfolded...



# Turkey 09 – Camera Mania!

Evelyn decided she wanted a new camera bag. She is in love with luggage, and still searching for the ideal bag that will weigh zero pounds, allow her to stuff with everything she owns, and still weigh zero. [Hermione Granger](#) had it in Harry Potter, so why shouldn't Evelyn? I needed a new tripod plate for my tripod, since I learned that a separate plate was really needed on my monster [Canon 70-200 f2.8](#) lens to keep things balanced and stable. Off we went in search of the "camera district" that we had passed two weeks ago when on tour with Melmet.

Deciding to go on public transportation, we started walking to the metro (aka subway) station. It looked pretty far on the map, but 10 minutes later were descending on the first of two very long escalators. First thing I noticed was that everyone was rushing to catch the next train, even though they came every 3 minutes -- far more often than any California or Ecuadorean light rail. We missed the first train, but that just let us photograph the approaching cars a couple minutes later (center in above set). The other thing we noticed was the number of musicians playing for spare change. We have seen this in almost every subway we have taken around the world, but these musicians were almost all blind -- a twist that surprised us.

# Turkey 09 – Camera Mania!



After watching the electronic map show our progress, and arriving at the last stop (at the ferry peer), we got off. During the trip, we saw two people separately give up their seat for older women. Evelyn commented that nobody gave her a seat, and I noted that just meant we did not look old enough to be seniors. Always a bright spot in every situation.



# Turkey 09 – Camera Mania!

From the subway, we walked about 500 feet until we saw a ferry with a sign giving the destination we wanted. A security guard blocked our entrance, and when we said the name of where we wanted to go, he pointed us to another entrance. Hey, he understood me! Of course, there were about 4 words (the 4 destinations in that building) that he probably heard a bazillion times, so his filter saw through my terrible pronunciation. Got on the ferry, and waited maybe 15 minutes for it leave. The trip was uneventful, taking about 20 minutes. The combination of metro and ferry cost a total of 5 TL, which is less than \$2 US. Martin (the owner of the apartment we are staying in) had left us with two [Istanbulkart](#) cards with about \$10 each on each, so we breezed through.



# Turkey 09 – Camera Mania!

We got off the ferry... only to realize we had forgotten the note Mehmet (our photo tour guide) had given us with the name of the store and neighborhood. Well, it was around here somewhere, so we started walking. After a few blocks, we asked a security guard, whose English was not yet as good as our Spanish (in other words, pretty basic). Pointing at the camera Evelyn was carrying, pointing around at random, and shrugging got him to understand we were looking for a camera store. He pointed back the way we came and said "is in underground." Huh? What we saw the prior week was certainly not underground? Decided it was only polite to go in the direction he pointed, and check it out.

Back to the ferry building, and then a bit further. Just as we were to give up, we saw a stairway leading underground some ways ahead. Tried it, and found that was a pedestrian underpass, chock full of trinket vendors, and leading across the busy main road we had been wondering how to cross. Bingo! The guard was right!

Coming out, I recognized a mosque we had visited a week earlier, and knew we were near the Spice Market. Comforting to be in almost known surroundings, but still no idea of where the camera stores were. Stopped and asked someone (more gesticulating) and made some progress. Asked again, and were again pointed in the same general direction. Just as I was about to ask the fourth time, we saw a FujiFilm store, and entered. We had reached our destination.

At each store, Evelyn would look at camera bags, and I would ask about the tripod plate (mostly by holding it up and saying "var mı?" which is Turkish for "do you have?"). Evelyn never hit it off with any of the bags, and each vendor pointed us to the next likely candidate to have my plate. After several stores, we ended up in the Canon store. Nirvana!



# Turkey 09 – Camera Mania!

Everyone on the photo tour had been envious of my [tripod](#) that is so super-light, collapses to almost nothing for a backpack, yet is surprisingly stable. Evelyn saw a version of it in the Canon store, and started to get serious about that too. Then she asked about a [Tamron 16-300mm lens](#) for her Canon 7D that she had read about. We didn't expect them to have it, but they did... and at a competitive price too. Hmmm... Since we are talking about lenses, I have read about the new version of the [Tamron 28-300](#) for my Canon 5D too. Now we find ourselves negotiating for two lenses.

We decide to check next door at the other Canon dealer first, but he doesn't have those lenses. They do have some bags that Evelyn starts to lust over though. I know this is going to be a long wait, so I walked a couple blocks to the next place that was suggested for my tripod plate. Eureka! They had it, so I bought two... and noticed an impressive array of tripods.

Returning to Evelyn, she had decided to buy the bag, so we did. Next door for both lenses, which we also bought (along with protective UV filters). Since Evelyn had been looking at tripods, and not impressed, we went back to the place where I bought the plate. Half an hour later, we walked out with a new tripod for her too. Looks even smaller and sleeker than mine, but costs 3 times as much. When we got home, we found hers was 1 inch longer and weighs exactly the same (just over 1 pound) as mine, so my envy was quieted some...

Loaded down with bags, we retraced our steps to the ferry building, and got on the ferry that took us back to the Asia side (so called because it is, literally in Asia, while the cameras stores in Istanbul are in Europe -- the Bosphorus Strait splits the city, and also separates Europe from Asia). On the ferry, the man next to me started talking to me, in excellent English.

# Turkey 09 – Camera Mania!

Zihad is a contract advisor for Saudi Aramco, an oil company in Saudi Arabia. He was there to get a hair transplant, which he proudly pointed to. When I asked why he came here, he replied "*the best hair transplants in the world are in Istanbul. All my friends came here!*" We chatted the entire way across, talking about his family (married 6 years with one 3 year-old daughter, both of whom were sleeping below) and job. When I told him we now live in Ecuador, he was fascinated, saying he had never met anyone that lived there before. As we arrived at the far shore and were parting, he said that maybe we could do a home exchange with his Saudi home. hmmm... Our Istanbul exchange was started by a conversation not all that different, so maybe...?

We then took the metro back to our stop. At the street, we stopped to look at our iPhone screen to decide which route to walk home (the way we knew, or some new streets?). A man stopped and asked if he could help, in perfect English (very rare on the Asian side). We first said we knew where we were, but then asked him for a restaurant recommendation. We showed the direction we were planning to go, and he insisted those are all fast food places that will deliver to your home. If you want good restaurants, he pointed to our iPhone map and showed where to go. We thanked him and headed in that direction. It was clearly the long way home, but... another adventure.

We walked... and walked... and walked... and realized it was hard to judge distances on that tiny iPhone map... We had pretty much given up and were ready to call it a failure. Evelyn noted a pharmacy a few doors down (they are *everywhere* in Istanbul!). We had discovered a drug here that seems to work as well as Pseudofed does in the US (but cannot be obtained in Ecuador), and wanted to get another box. Went in and got that. Evelyn then asked for a restaurant recommendation, and the owner pointed across the street with an enthusiastic smile.



## Turkey 10 – Pera Museum and Sunset

We went across to a little seafood restaurant, named **Kücükalyalı Balıkçısı** and sat down. Nobody spoke a word of English (which is common in this part of town), so the waiter took us to the seafood market next door (actually part of the restaurant, as seems common here) and pointed to various fish, giving an approximation of the English name -- probably the only English he knew. We pointed. He picked one out and gave it to the chef. A bit later we had one of the best sea bass meals on our plates that we have ever tasted. We also had some excellent calamari rings (after some confusion, managed to learn that "tavir" means deep fried), and two Efes beers (the most common Turkish brand).

After dinner, we figured we were in for a long walk home. PointX (the iPhone app we use to return to key places, such as our apartment or hotels when in unknown cities) showed the basic direction to head. About a block later, we suddenly recognized the neighborhood. Though we had walked a *long* way to get the restaurant, it had actually been just a round-about way to get there, and we were only about 5 blocks from our apartment.

All in all, a very successful, long, exhausting, and wallet-busting day.

# Turkey 10 – Pera Museum and Sunset



Today was another day of exploring the European side of Istanbul, and testing our new lenses. We planned to start off with a visit to the [Pera Museum](#), which meant once again using the metro subway and ferry to get there. The subway comes every 5 minutes on Saturdays ("1 DK" and "6 DK" indicate the next train is 1 and then 6 minutes from now). We often people-watch on the ferry. This time there was a conservative Muslim man in a long robe, even though it was a hot day. When he first came on board the ferry, he had a very harsh look and a loose fitting robe. It was hard not to let all the news photos flood through our minds...

We also did some people-watching of each other. Right-center shows me with my 2-week-old white beard -- still haven't decided how long to grow it, or how long to keep it. Evelyn is giving me the Evil Eye in the lower right, below that...



# Turkey 10 – Pera Museum and Sunset





# Turkey 10 – Pera Museum and Sunset

We arrived at the museum, and found there was a 50% discount on entry. Always a nice surprise. The art shown was generally very good, including Evelyn's new favorite, the *Tortoise Trainer* image bottom right in the block above. She acquired a bowl and a refrigerator magnet with that image. The descriptions of the art was in both Turkish and English, so we were able to learn the rather interesting history of the piece. (There was also the inevitable "modern art" section, where some curator got conned into displaying a painting that consisted of nothing but a black dot on white paper...) There were also several groups of children getting a museum tour and learning history on a Saturday afternoon.





# Turkey 10 – Pera Museum and Sunset

We took the long way back from the museum (a polite way of saying we got lost...), which gave us plenty more people-watching time and discovering a new neighborhood. At one point, we came across a movie being made (upper and lower center images in above block). We also walked across the Galata Bridge again -- men (plus a lone woman) fishing, but under harsh early afternoon lighting conditions this time.



# Turkey 10 – Pera Museum and Sunset

While we were photographing the occasional mosque, skyline, or construction images (the latter will compose a later blog entry), I snapped a couple photographs, only to find a car quickly stopping in the middle of the street, with a policeman running over to tell me it was forbidden to photograph any military installations. Yikes! He said it was NATO's new offices, that I could go to prison for photographing it, and that I had to delete the photos immediately. The one image on upper right managed to miss the purge... We had thought a mosque was being refurbished with a dozen workers on a Saturday afternoon, which demonstrated the Turkish work ethic.

Istanbul has a fair amount of pollution, though not on a level of Beijing or other famously polluted cities. Walking across the Galata Bridge and looking towards the mosque on the hill (lower image in block above) gives a rather condensed quick view of the situation. Ornate ancient mosques, surrounded by spewing smokestacks, power lines, automotive traffic, cafes and throngs of people.





# Turkey 10 – Pera Museum and Sunset

When we arrived at the ferry dock, we realized that it was approaching sunset. We tried to photograph the sunset from this location two weeks ago, but that had been an overcast dreary evening. Today there wasn't a cloud in the sky, and the weather was warm, so we decided to head over to the seawall and check out the sunset.

Unfortunately, we had not traveled with tripods today, not expecting to shoot a sunset. However, the images do give a sense of what it was like as the sun settled below the horizon, and the colors came to the evening sky. We were joined by hundreds of couples, most of whom sat on the seaside rocks, drank beer, smoked (almost universally...) and enjoyed a romantic sunset together.