

## The Meeting of Two Worlds

Istanbul, Turkey is commonly referred to as the place where two worlds (Asia and Europe) meet. Indeed, the part of the city lying to the east of the Bosphorous is sometimes called the “Asian side”. Turkey itself is sometimes divided into two parts: the more European west with her Greek ruins and Mediterranean beaches and the eastern part of the country which feels more like the Middle East and is less likely to embrace western culture.

Istanbul is the obvious starting point for a trip to Turkey. It is the transportation hub of the country with two busy airports both having good connections to the center. Most of the attractions are on the European side, but the Asian side is worth a look. The views of the famous church/mosque Sophia and the Blue Mosque are quite impressive along the promenade on the Asian side. On the promenade, there are numerous street performers, musicians and young people who want to become Facebook friends after sharing a Coke and sunflower seeds.

Traveling along the Sea of Marmara one arrives at Canakkale, with a nearly as impressive promenade. Along the promenade are restaurants, an old sundial and a fake Trojan horse used in



the movie Troy. The person I stayed with, Ozgur, was a high school counselor and thus went out with a lot of his old students. Ozgur, his ex-students and I went to a festival near the fake Trojan horse which included dancers, jugglers and Arabic music with a variety of instruments. Other nights out included going to a variety of establishments and meeting a variety of friends. One person I did meet was an American from New York who

opened the only tattoo place in Canakkale.

The fake Trojan horse in Canakkale and the Trojan horse souvenirs is due to its proximity with Troy or Truva. At the Troy site is another fake Trojan horse from 1975 that tourists can climb into and take cheesy tourist pictures. Near the horse is the pithos garden with several old containers for olive oil and grain. Heading away from the horse is a twenty-ton slab of granite, illustrating the early development of that stone. Heading to the actual ruins, there are fortifications, a ramp to the citadel, the northeast bastion, the marble remains of a temple dedicated to Athena and the commoners' houses. More developed are the aristocrat residences

which are bigger and physically higher than the commoners' houses, the sanctuary, the amphitheater, the south gate and a drainage system. East of the main complex is a water cave as they had a god associated with water.

What makes the ruins at Troy notable is both their historical significance and also the trenches in which visitors can see the clearly labeled multiple layers of Troy. The multiple layers are due to the city being destroyed and rebuilt several times with the Troy of Trojan horse fame being the sixth reincarnation. The different eras can be seen in several ways such as different colored limestone and the Schliemann trench named after the famous German archeologist. In this trench, the layers are numbered one through nine with Roman numerals, reflecting the different Troys.

Another historic, albeit not ancient, day trip from Canakkale is to Gallipoli. Gallipoli is where the Western Allies attempted to break through the Central Powers and help supply their partner, the Russians, in World War I. The battle is hugely important for Australians and New Zealanders (whose combined forces were called ANZAC forces) as well as for Turks. For Aussies and Kiwis who helped fight with the allies, it's the first time their newly formed and developing countries proved their merit in a major war. For the Turks, it's when a young military leader Mustafa Kamel, who later became the head of modern Turkey under the name Ataturk, fought bravely versus the Allied forces and gained notoriety. Tourists from all three countries visit their respective cemeteries with the ANZAC one containing John Simpson. He was a soldier who continually saved wounded soldiers from a nearby hill, walking amongst the shrapnel and rifle fire, with the help of his donkey until he was killed.



The Gallipoli tour describes a variety of battles and strategies. Generally, the first stop is ANZAC Cove where the ANZAC forces landed and set up base although there are two possible sites for the cove. A nearby museum illustrates soldiers and skeletal remains as well as bullets

that had been borroughed into each other as the fighting in the trenches was so close. The actual trenches are part of the tour as well. One can see just how close the belligerents were, separated only by a small modern road. In addition to bullets getting stuck in each other at close range, soldiers would attempt to catch hand grenades and throw them back to the opposing trench only a few feet away.

Further down the Mediterranean coast is the city of Izmir. The city is dominated by Kadifekale, a fortress initiated by Alexander the Great whose complex includes cisterns and



other small buildings. Near the perimeter of the complex, we saw some Kurds who were baking bread in a stone oven with the bread dosed with egg to help it stick on the interior of the oven. Views of the historical marketplace (agora), hippodrome and the more recently constructed International Fair buildings can be seen from one side of the fortress while the other side has a view of a Mt. Rushmore – like statue of Ataturk.

Within the city is the main promenade with cute shops, bars and new restaurants and an out of place McDonald's. On the menus were Turkish pizza, strong Turkish coffee, Kunefe which is a type of desert and Aryan a mixture of milk, yogurt and salt. Included on the promenade is a house where Ataturk lived when he stayed in Izmir and a statue depicting where the Greeks attacked shortly after World War I.

Turkey has recently accelerated efforts to join the European Union. Western Turkey does feel a bit like Europe. There are several ancient Roman and Greek sites. The walks along the promenade are like any other strolls in any other Mediterranean city. The bars and restaurants have a similar Mediterranean feel as well. But the “other world”, the Asian or Middle Eastern world, can easily be seen as well, which makes for an interesting mix.