

3 – PERGAMUM, EPHESUS, AND KUŞADASI

Saturday, 12 October

Having slept very well during the night, I woke at nine and, after a good breakfast, checked out of the hotel. When ready, we set off in the coach for today's journey to Pergamum. This morning Frank and I sat directly behind the driver, and so had a good view of the passing scenery, most of which was not very inspiring. At first Meltem had a lot to say, but she gradually eased off when she noticed that some of the people at the back of the coach had fallen asleep. As it was very warm today and, as the distance that we had to cover was very long, the journey soon became rather tedious. We stopped briefly at a petrol station to stretch our legs and buy drinks, then drove on to the Yüksel Carpet Cooperative near Bergama – a place that I suspected would be a tourist trap. To get to this place, we had to leave the main road and negotiate some narrow country roads surrounded by fields. We eventually stopped in a small but picturesque yard, got out of the coach and were greeted in perfect English by a Turkish man who looked as though he was the boss. The first thing that caught my eye in the square was a plucked musical instrument placed on a table outdoors; the body was like that of a lute, but the long neck had frets tied on at unusual-looking intervals. While my companions followed the boss inside, I quietly plucked one of the strings, stopping it at the various points where the frets were. I was not too surprised to discover that the scale sounded very exotic and unfamiliar.



The Yüksel Carpet Cooperative near Bergama

Inside the building we were shown different types of carpets – some of them exquisite – and the various levels of quality were explained to us in detail. As the designs were so wonderful and the skill needed to create them was so amazing, I was quite dazzled by them. We were then introduced to a young man who demonstrated how the very thin, though strong, lengths of silk were unwound from cocoons that he

now soaked in a special solution. The amount of silk that came off just one cocoon and was transferred to a roller seemed to be endless. When the demonstration was finished, ladies wearing beautiful clothing and headscarves appeared, and offered us glasses of tea, which they carried on trays. The tea proved to be very refreshing.



The Yüksel Carpet Cooperative near Bergama

We were then brought into a long corridor, where we saw a couple of women weaving carpets – some of the ladies in our group were offered the opportunity to have a go at this – and then, unsurprisingly, we were shown roomfuls of carpets that could be purchased. In a large room, carpets and rugs were selected and put on the floor for us to admire, and soon it became like an Aladdin’s cave. As a couple of small blue rugs caught my attention (I had noticed a few of them in the corridor where the women were weaving the carpets), a young man fetched a selection of them and put them on the floor in another room for me to examine. Frank and a few of our friends looked on while I examined them carefully. I was fascinated to discover that, when they were turned around so that I was looking at them from opposite sides, the colours seemed to change. This, I was told, was due to the way that they had been made. With a little encouragement from Frank and the others, I eventually settled on the one that pleased me the best, and I asked about the price. After a little bit of haggling, this was reduced to 2,400 *lira* (about €80), which I thought was quite reasonable. Noticing some euro notes in my wallet, the man who was dealing with me asked for them, so I gave him €70 and paid the balance in *lira* with my debit card. The rug was rolled up, wrapped in paper, then placed in a cylindrical plastic container and zipped up. Delighted with my purchase, I was now glad that we had visited the carpet factory! When we left, several of the people in our group congratulated me.

We then climbed aboard our coach and headed off towards today’s main attraction: the ancient (and now ruined) city of Pergamum, perched on a mountain close to the modern town of Bergama. As this was a relatively short distance away from the carpet factory, we arrived at about 12.30 p.m. We parked in a very touristy part of the town and went up in a lift to a cable car that would take us to the mountain top. When a few of us had sat down in one of the little cars, we were off. As it was rather hazy today, the view was not particularly spectacular. Soon we were all up at the top, tramping around the various ruined buildings of the once-powerful city of Pergamum. Its ruins, I had read, are so extraordinary that they were inscribed in Unesco’s Heritage List in June 2014: the 999th site in the world (and the 14th in Turkey) to be so honoured.

Pergamum owed its prosperity to Lysimachus, one of Alexander the Great's generals, who took control of much of the Aegean region when the empire fell apart after Alexander's death in 323 BCE. Lysimachus went on to capture a great treasure, worth more than 9,000 gold talents, which he entrusted to his commander in Pergamum, a eunuch named Philetaerus, before setting off to fight Seleucus for control of Asia Minor. However, Lysimachus lost the battle and was killed in 281 BCE. Following this, Philetaerus set himself up as governor.

Philetaerus was succeeded by his nephew and heir Eumenes I, who was in turn followed by his adopted son, Attalus I. Attalus declared himself king, expanded his power and forged an alliance with Rome. During the reign of Attalus's son, Eumenes II (who reigned from 197 to 159 BCE), Pergamum reached its golden age. Eumenes founded a library that would in time rival the one in Alexandria, then the world's greatest repository of knowledge. This was partly due to the large-scale production of *pergamena* (parchment), which was more durable than papyrus.

Eumenes added an Altar of Zeus to the fine buildings of Pergamum that were already crowning the Acropolis, built the 'middle city' on terraces halfway down the hill, and expanded and beautified the nearby Asklepion. Much of what he and subsequent kings built did not survive the ravages of the centuries or the acquisitive enthusiasm of Western museums, notably the Pergamum Museum in Berlin, but what remains, I had read, was impressive and dramatically sited.

Over the following years the kingdom began to fall apart. As he had no heir, Attalus III bequeathed his kingdom to Rome, and Pergamum became the Roman province of Asia in 129 BCE.



Pergamum: Temple of Athena, Roman stonework, the Traianeum, and the Theatre

At the top of the hill we followed Meltem and stopped to admire the remains of the fine buildings: the Temple of Athena, the Temple of Trajan (or Traianeum), and the impressive 10,000-seat Hellenistic theatre, which we saw from a distance above. We eventually made our way down to the theatre, where we sat on reconstructed stone seats and listened to what Meltem had to say about the place, then returned to the cable car station. As Frank, David and I wanted to take a quick look at the nearby Asklepion, in which there had been a medical institution that was regarded as one of the most important healing centres in the Roman world, Meltem spoke to a taxi driver and the four of us jumped into one of the cable cars and went down to where the fellow was waiting for us in his taxi. Meltem told him the name of the restaurant where we would be having lunch, and we got into the car. Having offered us some savoury pretzels to chew, he drove us through the narrow streets of Bergama, where he picked up another bag of pretzels and stopped in a square to deliver them to some of his friends, with whom he chatted for a few minutes. We then headed out into the countryside and eventually stopped at the entrance to the Asklepion. Parking the car in the shade under some trees, the driver told us that he would wait for us.

We now approached the deserted ticket office and were greeted by a young lady who had seen us coming. As it was Frank's idea to come here, he very kindly bought three tickets at €13 each, despite the fact that we would only be able to give the place a flying visit. Inside, we walked up to the main archaeological site, where there were only a few people, and stopped here and there to take photographs. Frank asked me to take several shots of him standing or sitting beside some of the ruins. After I had done this, we had quick look around and headed back to the entrance. David and I were glad to have seen this important site, especially as it had not been included in our itinerary.



The Asklepion, near Pergamum

When we reached the car park, I approached the taxi, woke the driver who was dozing in his front seat, and off we set for the Bergama Restaurant, which we had passed on our way to Pergamum. As it took much longer for him to drive to it than I had imagined, I thought that he did not know where it was or else had passed it. I rang Meltem, who assured me that he knew where it was. At last we reached it; I had

forgotten how far out of the town centre it was located. As I had no cash, David paid the driver and I promised to pay him as soon as I could get some more money.

In the restaurant we helped ourselves to food, and I washed down my lunch with a glass of red wine. We ate quickly as we did not want to delay the others, but there seemed to be no hurry.

Eventually we returned to the coach and set off for our next hotel, which was in the coastal town of Kuşadası. The journey through some rather uninteresting scenery turned out to be particularly long. As Meltem had done previously, she pointed out certain areas and mountains that had recently been ravaged by fire due to the high temperatures and dry conditions across the country. I fell asleep a couple of times. We eventually stopped at a petrol station to stretch our legs, buy drinks and chat. We then drove on and later stopped in the town of Selçuk to visit the Basilica of Saint John, who is believed to have lived here, but we were not allowed in as the site was about to close in twenty minutes or so. Meltem was furious about this as she had telephoned in advance and had been given permission to visit the basilica; she argued with a couple of men at the gate who were letting people out, but to no avail.

Defeated, we drove on and finally arrived at the huge and quite luxurious Korumar Hotel in Kuşadası. My room overlooked the bay and the modern town beyond, and from the balcony I could look down at the swimming pools and the outdoor eating area. In the sea was a huge cruise liner and, in the distance, the large Greek island of Samos. As I felt so stiff after sitting in the coach for so long, I went out for a walk towards the town centre, passing more big hotels. When I had gone far enough, I turned around and headed back, then had a welcome shower. Later I was able to watch a dramatic sunset over the bay from my balcony; although it was quite spectacular, darkness fell quickly.

Later I joined my fellow travellers in the huge restaurant, most of which was outdoors, overlooking the bay. Long tables indoors contained a huge selection of starters, soups, main courses, cheeses, desserts, and ice cream; outdoors there were chefs cooking and frying various types of food that one could order. I helped myself to some starter dishes and joined my friends at a reserved table outside, sitting beside Frank and opposite the American couple. As one of the men was celebrating his birthday today, a large slice of cake with a lit candle on it was brought to the table by a waiter, and we sang him the Happy Birthday song.

After an excellent meal I left early and went up to my room to write my diary. As it was late by the time I had finished doing this, I went to bed.

Sunday, 13 October

Today I woke and got up at seven o'clock. After a good breakfast with some of the others in the group, I returned to my room, where I washed my teeth and got my bag ready. I then joined the others in the lobby, got into the coach, and off we set for the nearby Graeco-Roman hill town of Ephesus. The weather was perfect: a pleasantly hot and sunny morning. After a short time we reached the famous ancient city, got out of the coach and entered the complex, which was already full of people.

Meltem had by now told us a little about the founding of this large city, only twenty per cent of which had been excavated. At one time, over 250,000 people had lived in it. According to the Greek historian and geographer Herodotus, Ephesus was founded by colonists coming from the West during the 10th century BCE. According to a legend, Kodros, the king of Athens, consulted the oracle before declaring war on his neighbouring cities. The oracle told him that the armies of the king who would die first would be the winners. Kodros was killed by his enemies, and his troops won.

Androklos, one of Kodros's sons, who dreamt of founding a new city, consulted the oracle about its future location. The oracle predicted that a boar and a fish would indicate the exact place to him. Androklos and his men went out to sea and came across an unknown land. While they were grilling fish that they had caught, the fire spread to the bushes, from where an enormous boar appeared. Androklos chased and killed it. Remembering the prediction of the oracle, he founded the city on that spot. However, excavations have proved that humans had begun inhabiting the surrounding area during the Neolithic Age (6000 BCE), and settlements dating from the early Bronze Age have also been discovered.

In about 650 BCE, the city was attacked and razed by the Cimmerians (Eastern Iranic nomadic people). After they had been driven away, it was ruled by a series of tyrants; however, the people revolted, and the city was subsequently ruled by a council. Later, it was conquered by the Lydians (from Anatolia); although King Croesus was a harsh ruler, he treated the inhabitants with respect and rebuilt the temple of Artemis, which had been in ruins. However, the temple was burned down in 356 BCE, during the Classical period.

In 334 BCE, during the Hellenistic period, Alexander the Great defeated the Persian forces that had ruled Asia Minor since the Archaic period, resulting in the Greek cities of Asia Minor being liberated. The pro-Persian tyrant Syrpax and his family were stoned to death, and Alexander was greeted warmly when he entered Ephesus in triumph. When he noticed that the new temple of Artemis was not finished, he proposed to finance the rebuilding and have his name inscribed on the front. However, the people of Ephesus demurred, claiming that it was not fitting for one god to build a temple to another. Later, after more turbulence, Ephesus became part of the Seleucid Empire. However, when the Seleucid king Antiochus III the Great tried to regain the Greek cities of Asia Minor and recaptured Ephesus in 196 BCE, he came into conflict with Rome. After a series of battles he was defeated by Scipio Asiaticus at the Battle of Magnesia in 190 BCE. As a result of the Treaty of Apamea, Ephesus came under the rule of Eumenes II, the Attalid king of Pergamon who ruled from 197 to 159 BCE. When his grandson Attalus III died in 133 BCE without sons to succeed him, he left his kingdom to the Roman Republic, on condition that the city of Pergamon be kept free and autonomous.

The city felt Roman influence at once, for taxes rose and the treasures of the city were systematically plundered. Hence, in 88 BCE Ephesus welcomed Archelaus, a general of Mithridates, the king of Pontus in northern Anatolia. When Mithridates conquered western Anatolia, he ordered every Roman citizen in the province to be killed, which led to the slaughter of 80,000 Roman citizens in the area, and any person who spoke with a Latin accent. Statues and monuments of Roman citizens in Ephesus were also destroyed. After the subsequent turmoil, Greek cities in the region were given freedom and several substantial rights; Ephesus became, for a short time, self-governing, although it was back under Roman rule by 86 BCE. Marc Antony was welcomed by Ephesus during the periods when he was proconsul, and he was in the city in 33 BCE with Cleopatra (Queen of Egypt) when he gathered his fleet of 800 ships before the battle of Actium. When Augustus became emperor in 27 BCE, he made Ephesus the capital of proconsular Asia (western Anatolia) instead of Pergamum. Ephesus then entered an era of prosperity, becoming both the seat of the governor and a major centre of commerce. According to Strabo, it was second in importance and size only to Rome.

Although only such a small part of the city has been excavated, the vast size of this archaeological site was obvious when we entered it and gazed at the ruins.



Ephesus: the Varius Bath, the Basilica, the Odeon, and the Monument of Memmius

Heading gradually uphill and following a long, straight road, we passed the State Agora, the Varius Bath, the Basilica, the Odeon or small theatre, the Prytaneion State Agora, and the Monument of Memmius, then stopped at a modern building. Some of us used the facilities here, and then we waited outside for a while until it was time for us to go inside and watch a virtual presentation of the site and its history. While we waited, we were given receivers and earphones so that we could hear the commentary in English. We queued at a gate for a short while, watching a group of actors walking over to a small open-air stage to re-enact a little of the ancient city's history, and were eventually let into the first of several large rooms, where discreet equipment projected moving images on the four walls, the floor and ceiling. The presentation was made even more dramatic by the addition of atmospheric music and loud rumbling noises. By the time the commentary started in our earpieces, the noise was uncomfortably loud. Several times my sense of balance was upset by the movement all around me; this and the noise spoilt the presentation for me. In the first room we were told about the Greeks settling here; in the second, the Romans, and so on. As I could hear little of the commentary in my earpiece because of the volume of the music and special effects, I was glad to escape from the building about twenty minutes later.

We then left and joined a large crowd of people who were making their way down the long straight Curetes street from the Hercules Gate towards the well-known Library of Celsus, which could be seen in the distance. We now passed the Temple of Domitian, the Nike relief, the remains of some houses, the Fountain of Trajan, some fine examples of mosaic, and what was left of the elegant Temple of Hadrian. When we finally reached the Library of Celsus, part of which was now enveloped in scaffolding, we stopped to rest in the shade of some trees. As the Library was the largest and best façade of a building in the complex, many people were taking photographs of it, or of groups of people standing in front of it. Meltem asked us to form ourselves into a group and she got a young man to photograph us.



Ephesus: the Nike relief, Curetes Street, the Fountain of Trajan, the Temple of Hadrian, the Library of Celsus, and the Great Theatre

We then turned right and made our way to the Great Theatre, built originally by the Greeks, then reconstructed by the Romans, which was a short distance away. Despite the presence of a large crane and some other modern intrusions, it was suitably impressive. We sat on the stone seats while Meltem told us about the theatre, and I clambered about, taking some photographs. Meltem then called upon me to perform something on the stage in order to test the acoustics. I tried to avoid this, but in vain; she dragged me on to it, made a formal announcement, and stepped back in order for me to do something. Fortunately I had managed to come up with a plan and so, projecting my voice to the best of my ability and speaking clearly, I recited a nonsense poem written by the prolific author Anon:

An accident happened to my brother Jim
When somebody threw a tomato at him –
Tomatoes are juicy and don't hurt the skin,
But this one was specially packed in a tin.

However, despite my careful diction, not everyone had heard what I was saying as so many other people were talking and laughing at the same time. The ‘performance’ ended with a verse or two of a song.

We then set off again and made our way to the exit. When we reached the gate, I went into a gift shop and tried to buy one of the official printed guides of the archaeological site. As I did not have enough cash, I produced my debit card, but it could not be used for some strange reason. I therefore handed back the book, found Frank outside and sat down beside him. He showed me a much cheaper book, which he had bought and, because I did not have enough money, he bought a copy for me. At 200 *lira* it was not too expensive. I thanked him and promised to return the money whenever I found a cash machine.

When at last we had all the members of our group together, we walked to the coach and set off for the nearby town, passing what is believed to be the house of Mary, mother of Jesus, in the distance. Although we could see little detail, it resembled a ruined Roman dwelling made of stone. We then drove to the nearby town of Selçuk, where we stopped at an open-air restaurant for lunch. This turned out to be very pleasant, and the food was good. Because of my lack of money, I brought a bottle of water from the bus and drank it with my meal.

Afterwards we drove to the nearby Basilica of Saint John, the disciple whom Jesus appointed as Mary’s son shortly before he died on the cross. According to Saint John’s Gospel, ‘When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.’ It is believed, therefore, that John and Mary had made their way to Ephesus together after the apostles had been chased out of Jerusalem.



The Basilica of Saint John, Selçuk

We soon arrived at the archaeological site and entered it through the Pursuit Gate, which had been closed to us during the previous day. We now found ourselves in a large elevated and walled area containing the ruins of various different Roman buildings. Included were the remains of the former basilica, which had been built in the sixth century AD, and where Saint John is believed to have been buried. We soon found the spot; on a marble slab were carved the words, ‘St. Jean in Mezari / The Tomb of St. John’. We then ambled around some of the other buildings, which had once formed part of a religious institution, admired the view from the hill, then eventually left.



The House of the Virgin Mary, Mount Koressos

We now drove up into the nearby mountains to visit another popular place: the House of the Virgin Mary, or *Meryemana Evi* (Mother Mary's House) in Turkish. En route we stopped briefly at a large statue of Mary that had been placed by the side of the road, and took photos of it. It was a modern and not particularly elegant statue. On we went, and eventually approached the very busy and commercialized religious centre dedicated to Mary on Mount Koressos. Somehow the driver managed to find parking space and, after we had left the coach, we followed the crowds towards the restored house, which had now been converted into a tiny chapel. Although it was ostensibly a Catholic shrine, it seemed to attract Christians and Muslims alike, for we saw plenty of local people and women dressed in typical Muslim clothing and with their hair covered. I was aware that both Jesus and Mary are mentioned in the Koran.

Unsurprisingly, there was very little to see in the tiny church; a notice inside warned us that photography was prohibited. It was dark and cool inside; at the end of the main area was an altar with a picture of Mary over it. A door to the right of the altar led to a smaller room, where there was another picture of Mary and a glass case containing paraphernalia associated with her and a gift from the present Pope. Very soon we were outdoors once again. I took a photo of the exterior of the building and other parts of the grounds, such as an area beside the little church where people could light votive candles, and a wall where people had written messages on pieces of paper and had pushed them into crevices.

After a little while we all assembled at a given location in the grounds, returned to our coach, and drove back to Kuşadası. When we arrived, we stopped at the seafront, near the town centre, and started an impromptu tour of the area. We looked inside an old building, which at one time had been a caravanserai, and from here looked across to the ferry port for the island of Samos. Meltem then brought us along the main street, which was full of shops and very commercialized. Seeing a money-changing machine nearby, I broke away from the group (with Meltem's permission), walked over to it, and watched a young man using it. Although he spoke fluent English, I discovered that he was Russian! He helped me get some cash and very shortly afterwards I had 400 *lira* in my wallet. I thanked the young man in Russian, said goodbye to him, and rejoined my companions. Having looked at some more shops, we headed back towards the seafront, where we waited for our coach to pick us up. Soon we were back in our hotel.

In my room I rested for a while, had a shower, wrote some of my diary, and then went down for dinner. As usual, I joined some of my companions and chatted to them during the meal. Very few of the others appeared, and there was no sign of Frank. On

discovering that we would be paying for our drinks on leaving, I asked for a glass of beer with my meal.

When I left after eating, I wandered around the lobby and stopped when I heard a piano being played. The sound led me to a plush bar, where I found a smiling young lady playing a Yamaha baby grand piano. As she was quite a confident performer, I stood beside her, listening to a medley of popular (and some vaguely familiar) music. When she eventually stopped, I complimented her. I then spoke to her in slow, simple English, and told her about my interest in music and the musical instruments that I had at home. I ended up by playing, as best as I could, an arrangement of a piece by the blind Irish harpist Carolan, which was applauded by two members of our group who were in the bar.

I then went out for a walk to the main seafront and back, then returned to my room. I wrote a little more of my diary but, as I was tired by now, I went to bed by about 11 o'clock. I would be able to relax on the following day as the optional excursion to Pamukkale and Hierapolis, which I had hoped to join, had been cancelled as not enough people had decided to avail of it.

Monday, 14 October

I slept very well during the night and woke at 7 a.m. I took my time about getting up and finally made my way down to the restaurant for breakfast at about 8 o'clock. I met one of the ladies in our group and we sat down together. We chatted while we ate and then, when the lady had left, I quickly made myself a ham and cheese sandwich, wrapped it up in a paper napkin, then returned to my room. After I had washed my teeth, I took my diary down to the outdoor area where we had eaten during the previous evening, and finished the entry that I had started.

This done, I returned to my room, where I prepared a few things, left the hotel, and set off for the town centre. As I climbed the steps up to the road, I met some of my companions and waited for a minibus that would take us part of the way to the city centre. One of them duly appeared but, as it was so full of people, it did not stop. Rather than hang around waiting for another one, we all set off on foot. However, as the others were moving too slowly for my liking, I strode on, leaving them behind.



Caravanserai, Kuşadası

When I came to the waterfront, which was lined with hotels, I looked out for some place where I could change money, and soon found one. When I asked the man in charge if I could buy some euro, he said no; when I said that I wished to buy some

Turkish money, he pointed to an ATM machine nearby. I thanked him and, when I had worked out how much I would need for giving tips to Meltem and the driver on the following day, I bought 500 *lira* and put the money safely in my bag, away from my wallet. I then trudged on, approaching the area that we had visited during the previous day. I found the caravanserai that we had been in; as it was now much quieter, I took a photograph of it, then sat down to rest in its pleasantly cool interior.

From here I made my way up the main street, with its many shops and stalls. I stopped at a large stall selling ice cream, which looked good and, as no prices were marked on the choices available, I spoke to a young man and explained that I had very little money left, which was true. He spoke to an older man, who approached me with a cardboard tub and asked me what I wanted. At my request, he put in one scoop of kiwi-flavoured ice cream, a scoop of vanilla, and a little of another flavour, which I had not requested. When he informed me that these small helpings would cost me 300 *lira* (about €10), I reminded him that I had very little money, and showed him the contents of my wallet. He pulled out the notes, counted them and, with a shrug of resignation, accepted what I had offered him, which amounted to about €1.70. No doubt a local person would not have been charged so much money. I then sat down on a seat nearby to eat the ice cream which, although very refreshing, seemed to have been thickened with gelatin, for it was slightly sticky.



A mosque in Kuşadası

When I had finished eating it, I set off on foot, passing by some shops, and noticed a domed roof and a minaret behind them. Finding a narrow alleyway between two of the shops, I made my way into a small square where the mosque was situated. When I approached the entrance, I said hello to a handsome young man with a beard who was standing beside a display case containing free copies of the Koran that had been translated into various languages. He invited me to visit the small mosque and reminded me to take off my sandals before going inside. Although the interior was quite plain, it was very elegant. To one side, facing Mecca, a man was praying at a spot that was illuminated by coloured sunlight that was streaming through a high, stained-glass window. As it was blissfully quiet here, I spent some time relaxing, then turned off the sound in my phone and began taking some photos of the interior. I finally emerged from this haven of peace and chatted to the man outside. He asked me where I had been in Turkey, and spoke reverently about the nearby House of the

Virgin Mary, which surprised me. As his American English was so perfect, I asked him where he had learned it; he told me that he had been born in America to a Turkish father and a Ukrainian mother. I finally shook hands with him, helped myself to a copy of the Koran in Russian, and said goodbye.

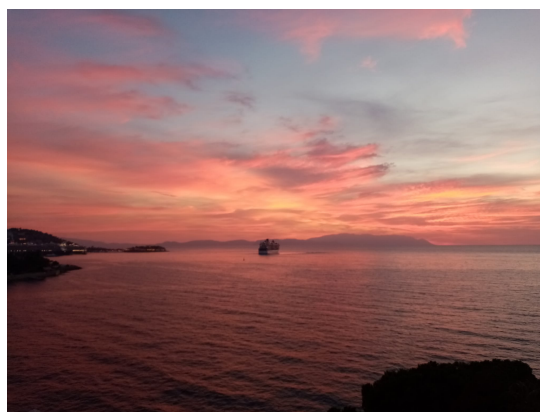
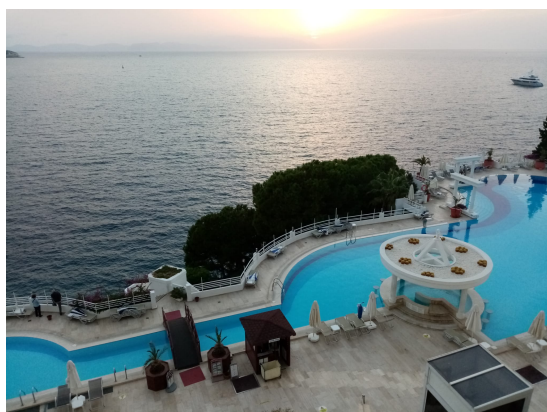


Alleyways and the seafront, Kuşadası

I then went wandering around some of the charming alleyways nearby, nearly all of them containing shops, restaurants and bars, then made my way out to the seafront, where I joined tourists (many of them German) and locals. I stopped to look at and photograph the huge cruise liners, the seafront, some of the people, and the high-rise buildings. As I was hot and tired by now, I began to make my way back to the hotel, stopping now and then to take in the view. I eventually made it back to my room, where I rested for a while before eating my packed lunch outside on the balcony.

Afterwards I sent some of my photos to a few friends, then had a short nap. Feeling much better afterwards, I sat down to write today's diary to this point, then had a shower. Afterwards I read a little more of Homer's *Iliad*, watched the sun setting over the sea, which was very dramatic, then went down for dinner at seven o'clock. Once again I sat with Frank, David and a lady whom we three had befriended, named Breda. As Frank was suffering a little from a cold that he had caught, Breda very kindly fetched him food from the large room nearby.

Following the meal, I went out for a quick walk in the opposite direction from the one that I had taken this morning. When I returned to the hotel, I found a group of my fellow travellers at the reception desk, settling their bills for drinks with their meals, and so I joined them and did the same. I then went up to my room, where I finished writing my diary and prepared for bed, setting my alarm for 5 a.m.



The swimming pool of the Hotel Korumar, Kuşadası, and a sunset seen from the hotel

Tuesday, 15 October

Having slept well during the night, I woke at about 4.45 a.m., some fifteen minutes before my alarm was due to go off. I therefore had plenty of time to wash, dress, organize my things, then do my morning exercises. I was down in the lobby by 6 o'clock, where I handed back the key to my room and received a packed breakfast consisting of a filled roll, an apple, and a small carton of juice. I then went out to our waiting coach, where my small bag was put in the back. I then sat inside with Frank, who by now had developed a nasty cough.

When everybody was aboard, we set off along the dark roads at 6.30 a.m. towards the airport, which was near İzmir. During the journey it slowly began to get bright. On approaching İzmir, I began to eat some of the roll and drank all of the juice.

We finally reached the large modern airport at about 8.30, and said goodbye to the driver and our guide, Meltem; I gave them both 400 *lira*, about €14. Inside the building, we went through a preparatory baggage check, then joined queues for the passport checks. I wondered why all the checkers were young women dressed in black and the explanation soon was apparent. As cameras were being used to check everyone's face, married women were required to pull back their scarves to reveal their hair, and those wearing yashmaks were obliged to remove them temporarily. Women and husbands were allowed to witness this, but not other men. After this came another and slightly more thorough baggage check.

We then made our way to the departure gate. Although we arrived with some time to spare, we had to wait a long time before we were allowed to board the plane. At last we were let through the gate and on to the plane, which took off shortly after 9 o'clock. During the uneventful flight we were given another filled roll and a cup of tea.

Soon we were approaching İstanbul; although the descent was rather steep and wobbly, we touched down fairly smoothly. Back in the huge airport we walked a long distance to the departure area, where we sat down to relax. Leaving my bags with some of the others, I went off to find a loo, then sat down at a table near some food shops, where I wrote a little of my diary. I then returned to the main hall, where I bought a bottle of wine for friends who would be collecting me from Dublin Airport. When I left the duty free shop, I got into difficulty trying to find where my fellow travellers were sitting, as the general area was so huge and there were several duty free shops, but I eventually found them.

When at last our gate number was announced, we left together and made our way to it. Now we had another long wait, for the time of departure turned out to be 13.15 instead of the 12.15 printed on our tickets.

Eventually we joined a long queue and made our way to the plane. Once again I found myself sitting at the very back. Opposite me was a Turkish family of mother and father, three daughters (all of whom had their hair covered), and a young, lively son who was availing of the many types of entertainment available on the screen in front of him.

As soon as we were airborne, lunch was served; once again, the main dish was chicken. I dozed for a while afterwards, then had a look at some videos about places to visit in Turkey, which I found on my screen. Afterwards I watched a couple of classical music concerts: Brahms's first piano concerto performed by Sir András Schiff, then Bach's B minor Mass, sung by The Sixteen and conducted by Sir Harry Christophers in a beautiful church. Thanks to this excellent entertainment, the journey went very quickly.

Soon we began to drop down through a bank of heavy clouds and approach Dublin Airport. Although it was good to be returning home, the dullness of the sky and the land beneath us came as a shock. The bump, when the plane finally landed on the tarmac, signalled the end of a remarkably interesting and memorable holiday.