



Cats, ferries and glorious food.

It's an exhilarating place with a variety of life which most other cities would find hard to match. But for me it was the effusive care for cats which left the most indelible memory. Like a furnace in summer and soggy freezer in the depths of winter, the diversity of the seasons indicates the multiplicity of this Euro-Asian metropolis.

I was in Istanbul to spend a week with my daughter; both contributing to climate change as we jetted in from different parts of the planet. The speedy highways and tunnels from the airport contrasted with the jam-packed lanes of Beyoglu, where we'd booked an Airbnb.



"Dad, dad!" I heard my daughter's familiar voice call, as my taxi negotiated yet another congested street, then halted, causing much consternation with tooting from all angles, due to my vehicle blocking the narrow way. Turks it seems are not unlike Italians in their indiscriminate approach to driving and parking, but beware if you obstruct their path!

We ascended the spiral-like staircase to find a fluffy white ball curled up outside our door. The climb was worth the reward; a well-appointed apartment with its jewel in the crown: a view over one of the busiest waterways in the world, *The Bosphorus*.



The author enjoys kahvalti

On our first morning's adventure down below, we discovered the typical Turkish breakfast, *kahvalti*, with its mind-boggling and delicious array of cheeses and jams, meats and vegetables, breads and sauces: a banquet in miniature, just for two.

But breakfast was merely the start. At lunchtime, the same could be said about *mezes*: a glorious mix of finger foods, set on a circular platter; the

food becoming chairperson for a meeting between hungry participants. This was a revelation in eating habits, which introduced us to a new environment; a different culture; another way of doing things.



Daughter Alice with mezes

Istanbul, like Sydney or Hong Kong, is a city of ferries. For me, this conjures up a feeling of ever-repeated motion and never-ending time. Every hour, every day, every year, the boat's hull bounces off the dock, ropes are tied and passengers move to and fro. For one week my daughter and I joined in that passage of time, on board ferries that traversed the Bosphorus: up, down and across; along its tributaries and underneath its iconic bridge, the umbilical cord between West and East.



But as we soon discovered, in addition to food and ferries this city abounds with cats; feline creatures of all descriptions: on our doorstep, under that arch, sun-baking in the

long grass; pampered by passers-by and fed by locals. One shopkeeper described Istanbul as the ‘*City of Cats!*’ I could understand why.

When it came time to leave, I said goodbye to our adopted fluff-ball, waved farewell to the elderly gent feeding five cats outside the entrance door, and passed by the six-cat, miniature apartment block on the corner of our street. The speedy under-and-over drive out of the centre went without a hitch, and the taximan even smiled as he handed me my bag, before I turned to be consumed by the cavernous halls of the gleaming new terminal.



Images: Duncan Gregory

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