



PILGRIMAGE TO THE EAST

ALANA LOWES EXPLORES THE STREETS OF HISTORIC ISTANBUL AND TASTES THE FLAVOURS OF THE EXOTIC EAST.

AS A GOURMET food lover, travelling to other countries is all about the gastronomic experience – eating out at restaurants, jostling for a sample at the fresh food markets or practising lines from the phrase book with the local street vendors. For something different, a traditional cooking class will give you a fast-tracked taste of the culture.

Turkey's largest city and cultural hub, Istanbul, is my idea of a culinary wonderland. Feeling bleary-eyed from the long flight but full of beans, I hit the ground running, blindly following my nose as tempting scents waft out from side streets.

Losing myself in the maze that is Sultanamet (the old city) is on the agenda, and I soon find out it's Ramadam – the Islamic month of fasting. Participating Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, smoking and other indulgences from dawn until sunset.

As the sun goes down, the celebrations and feasting begin. The Hippodrome (city square) in Sultanamet brims with stalls filled with delicious delights and aromas. Street vendors sell salty pretzel-like bread, roasted chestnuts or the national dish, doner kebab (what we refer to as the kebab).

Smiley round-faced Turkish women flip traditional gözleme, a crepe-like dish with spinach and cheese filling or my favourite, the traditional lemon and sugar. The secret to the Turkish lemon and sugar gözleme is in the process of melting the sugar as the crepe cooks, resulting in delectable

sweet citrus syrup.

With so much to explore and so little time, it's advised to get in early for the major sites as the lines begin to bulge with tourist buses by mid-morning.

The Hippodrome is where the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sofia can be found. Built in 532AD, this was the largest cathedral in the world until 1520, later converted to a mosque and now a museum. The day is filled with fascinating history, exquisite mosaics and plenty of Turkish coffee or apple tea.

A highlight of a trip to Istanbul is a traditional cooking class. Cooking Alaturka Turkish Cooking Course with cordon bleu chef and owner Eveline and head-chef Feyzi provides an excellent opportunity to taste the aromatic flavours that makes up the heart of Turkish cuisine. As well as preparing dishes, you'll learn the wonderful art of Turkish coffee making.

The Egyptian Spice Bazaar on the banks of the Bosphorus River is essential for the food aficionado. More than just herbs and spices, there is also fresh seafood, cured meats, and cheese.

Istanbul awakens the senses and plunges you into a wonderful historic and fragrant culture. You will hunger to return again and again.



Getting there:

Singapore Airlines flies 21 times a week from Brisbane with daily connections to Istanbul. Prices from \$1814 including taxes/charges. www.singaporeair.com.au

Sleep:

Budget – Ayasofya Hotel from \$100 per night for a double room. www.ayasofyahotel.com

Luxury – Swissotel from \$200 per night for a double room. www.swissotel.com

Do:

Cooking Alaturka Turkish Cooking Course www.cookingalaturka.com
Walking tour from the Egyptian Spice Bazaar to the Grand Bazaar, a great way to take in the sights of Istanbul.

Wander outside the Grand Palace through the park to the headland where the Golden Horn, the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus river meet.

Eat:

Seven Hills Restaurant's rooftop terrace offers amazing views of the Hagia Sofia and the Blue Mosque and a great selection of simple, fresh seafood dishes and a delicious meze cart. www.sevenhillshotel.com

NEW QLD VIP THEME PARK PACKAGE

3 nights accommodation plus 2 QLD VIP Passes for UNLIMITED FUN until 30 June 2010* at Warner Bros. Movie World, Sea World and Wet'n'Wild Water World!

BOOK NOW. CALL 07 5519 1880 OR VISIT

myfun.com.au

*Valid until 30/06/10. Subject to availability. See myfun.com.au for QLD VIP Pass and package terms and conditions.
SEA WORLD © 2009 & TM Sea World Property Trust. WARNER BROS. MOVIE WORLD and logo and all related characters and elements are trademarks of and © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. © 1999