

From: Zafar, Marzia

Sent: 6/25/2012 1:22:45 PM

To: Redacted

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Marzia & Redacted in Istanbul

Hello,

We are making our way through Istanbul. It is our 3rd day here so far. This is my first of two journal emails from our 7 night stay here.

It's really hot here. For someone who enjoys the cloudy and cold days of San Francisco this level of humidity and hotness is sometimes difficult to bear. We still managed to walk about 12-15 miles yesterday and probably 7 so far today.

Okay, the Turks make the most delicious breakfast. They have this one order called supreme or something like that and basically your whole table is packed with small plates of heavenly goodness. The best one is this plate of clotted cream of some sort and you dip it with honey and some freshly made lavash bread. I will dream of this dish forever. It is seriously mouthwateringly delicious. It is so good that the taste buds that were either retired or never born become alive. I think it could also clog my arteries, but the experience in your mouth out weighs the future heart operation.

So far our favorite area is Cihangir - almost like Mission/Dolores or Valencia but with way more hills (the city is full of steep streets). I think Istanbul is much like the other countries in Europe, but with better food. I am gonna stop eating kebabs for the rest of our trip. They have so much more to offer.

Today we tried yet again to visit a museum or some historic place. We went to Topkapi palace. You are supposed to stay there half a day. We managed 30 minutes and most of it was spent taking pictures of the Bosphorus. Like most of our other trips we keep trying to go to these historic places just to integrate with other visitors, but it is difficult since there is no food to taste, the lines are always long, you cannot touch anything because it is ancient and fragile, and it is too crowded near very ancient and fragile things, so we quickly pass by it.

So, thus far my observations are that the food is very delicious, the people are overwhelmingly nice, the weather at times is way too hot/humid. And there are a lot of men everywhere - a whole lot compared to anything or anyone else - there are a lot of stray cats every where, too. And wherever there is water there are guys fishing for tiny fish. You must see it to really get what I am saying. I don't know if it is a sport or they actually eat the fish? One must catch like 100 of them in order to make a meal...

Oh, we marched in their gay pride parade. It was on Sunday - same day as the one in San Francisco, but a lot smaller. I would say about 100 or so people protected by riot police. No one seemed to care, though. A lot of pictures and videos were taken, but no one cared which was a wonderful surprise to us. It is also neat that you see some women in tank-tops with short skirts and lot's of make-up showing lot's of PDA with their boyfriends and then there is also just as many women in full black hijabs covering everything even black gloves - that seamless co-existence is very nice and new to me.

San Francisco is still best! But always good to see other places and then know you live in the best place on earth.

Marzia & Redacted