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Sent: 10/18/2013 11:13:21 AM
To: Autumn Pray (Autumn_Pray@gap.com)
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Land of Flavor

Hello Peeps,

We needed some flavor after London's excessiveness and abnormalities. And so, we took a quick detour to Istanbul. Yes, our plan was London and Paris, but Istanbul said, "ladies, you are so close to me and you won't visit me? I have honey and cream with warm lavash. I also have, oh so delicious, kebabs. And, I have many nice people who like to talk with you and sell you figs and tea and baklava. Why not come and visit me?" We couldn't say no to that, and we have free miles. Some people have a hole in their pockets when it comes to money; we have a hole in our pockets when it comes to miles.

We are in Istanbul for two days and then en route to Paris and returning to our beloved San Francisco on Thursday at 1pm (inshalla). Istanbul is just as beautiful and just as hospitable and just as nice and delicious as the last time we were here. The weather is much better this time (last time it was deathly hot). We woke up today and took a cab to an Anthony Bourdain recommended café for kaymak and lamb sausage along the Bosphorus. After clogging our veins with heavy cream (kaymak) and ever so rapidly increasing our cholesterol (lamb sausage, fried cheese, regular cheese, and Turkish scrambled eggs) we decided to walk along the Bosphorus for the next 8 miles. Normally, water scares me, because it looks at you with power and sometimes anger, but on this day the Bosphorus looked at us with open arms and a peaceful look. Actually, I hate water and coming from London where the river is dirt water the clear Bosphorus water was a nice change of pace. We then walked another 5 or so miles to find my favorite baklava place closed for Byram (Turkish Christmas we were told, but it's really the Islamic celebration for Prophet Ibrahim's great sacrifice, I think ☺).

We have one more day in this most beautiful, friendly, welcoming and earthly city. Paris is waiting for us. We're looking forward to our cheese tour and our baguettes. Maybe a museum or two, if Autumn is really nice to me and the museums are for free or else there is the internet...

I miss my office and my team (in reverse order). I miss Russian Hill and my cat and potentially Brian and Gilda (partially because they are taking care of my cat), but I'm not entirely sure yet.

Hello,

We should have stuck to Shoreditch.

Yes, Istanbul is the perfect antidote to the excesses of London. What seemed at times to be more like Moscow or "The Capital" (of *Hunger Games*' Panem), is not in my top 10 list of cities. There were more extreme cars on the road with Kuwaiti and Saudi license plates than Minis. Think copper-encased Ferraris. Fluorescent blue with chrome-hooded Bentley's and Rolls Royces. And a Maybach in psychedelic colors. This made the matte black A8's and Ferraris of Moscow passé. And if you haven't been to Harrod's lately, it's really a trip to another dimension. Walking out of there we were enveloped in pungent perfume from our stroll through the first floor (cosmetics, luxury watches and food) for the

next hour or so. We went in seeking the culinary floors of Takashimaya but ended up being bombarded by a heightened experience of excess and extreme luxury capitalist one-upmanship. We ran into people so incredibly made up and fancy facial-hair'ed that I SWEAR it was like being in the Capital. We saw two men with the most overt and extreme affectations and facial hair that I'm certain they were twin brother lovers. It really took a while to shake that feeling.

So...what Marzia didn't mention is that I SURPRISED her with a trip to Istanbul. While seemingly en route to the train to Paris. And what she also didn't mention is that *she really doesn't like surprises*. Take note everyone....

I suppose in theory a surprise jaunt to the land of flavor would seem like a dream come true...in actuality if you are considering doing this please also consider that that jaunt also includes a trip to Heathrow (after a local train ride). And a horrid line to check in. During which your partner *might* be on the phone with United Airlines seeking a flight direct to San Francisco instead. And then security. And then waiting for the plane. And then getting seated far apart from each other. And then security/customs again. And then getting to your hotel room at 11:00 pm. And then maybe the next day you can enjoy the land of flavor. That is of course if you didn't plan this trip during one of the holiest of holy holidays during which 3 of your 4 favorite flavor palaces are closed.

And what Marzia also didn't mention is that this morning our trip was resurrected by magical dogs. They followed us, waited for us and walked with us along the Bosphorus for over a mile after our breakfast. See below for flavor picture of Durumzade, magical dogs and the requisite cat picture.