

Date: 17/06/2011 Place: Selcuk

Kms walked: 3122

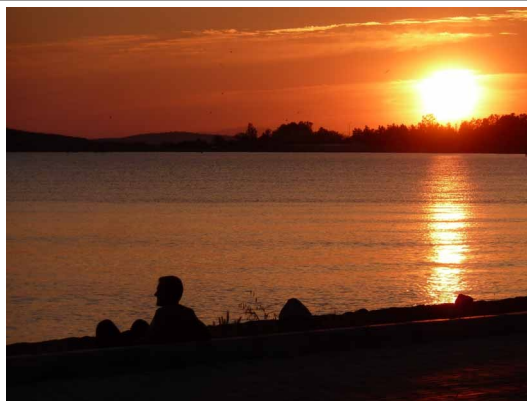
No, this Postcard is not about Jerusalem – that will be the subject of my next missive! It covers the journey from Bergama to Meryemana where I called a halt to the walking part of my pilgrimage.

Leaving Bergama it was a lovely sunny day as I headed out just after 13:00. About an hour later I came to a garage and stopped for a coffee. The waiter was somewhat bemused by my appearance but in a kind way. He had a rose in his hair which fell out as he helped me with my rucksack & he gave it to me – putting in my hair behind my ear! It promptly fell out as my hair is a bit too short so I pinned it to my rucksack. It lasted for several days before it withered to the point of disintegration.

The route again headed to the coast and one evening I was able to camp right beside the beach and was treated to a stunning sunset.



No particular reason to include this – I just thought it was a beautiful picture!



Yet another beautiful view from my 'bedroom window'

The journey continued fairly uneventfully, route was flat and weather reasonable for a few days. Then I had a rotten day where I was rained on yet again. I reached my target town but annoyingly the main road bypassed it so I didn't see any accommodation. I was too tired to go into the centre and wander around looking for somewhere to stay. It had dried up and I thought I would just find somewhere to camp. What I did not know was that I was now in the Izmir suburban sprawl. On and on and no sign of anywhere to stop.

Eventually I came to a hotel but they wanted 120TL for a room. I laughed and walked out. It was obviously way past my budget. By now I was on a metro line into Izmir so I took that on the basis that at least I knew of an affordable place there (where I had stayed previously). I had started walking at 7:30 that morning and it was now gone 20:00. To my delight the metro stopped at Alsancak, the area in which I had stayed at Easter. Not only that but the line also went right out to Izmir airport. How was that for convenience. In the end I booked into the same pansyion and even had the same room.

Next day I returned by metro and walked into Izmir and a couple of days later was at the airport to meet my 2 friends. At this point I became a bit of a tourist as I had been in Split. We did some wandering around which included taking the lift at Asansor Tower. The lift was built in 1907 and financed by a Jewish philanthropist to help the elderly and infirm go up the steep slope to the synagogue. After doing a bit of tourist stuff we three comrades set off to walk to Ephesus. We walked just 1 day from Izmir out through more suburban sprawl.



Motorway sign on the way in to Izmir indicating how rural Turkey is



View of Izmir from the top of the lift

We had decided to base ourselves in Selcuk which is basically Ephesus and walk, catching a bus to the day's start point and another at the end of the day. Our first full day there was spent again being tourists (we visited the beach) but on the second day we were all set to go when the hostel owner mentioned that it was a Holiday and there were parades and displays of dance, music etc. I'm afraid my desire to see some Turkish folk dance quite overcame my desire to walk! So I told the others I would prefer to postpone walking and we went to the display. In fact I think I was being guided again because it had been a brilliant day, warm and sunny, then at about 14:00 the skies suddenly darkened & we had a downpour and hailstones. The storm lasted for a couple of hours. We would have been soaked as none of us would have packed rain gear. Later on we visited St John's Basilica.



The tomb of St John

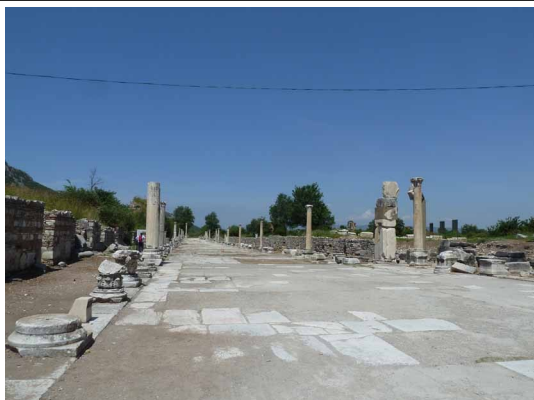


Turkish Folk dancers

By the next day it became clear to me that actually we would not really have time to do the walking and visit the archaeological site at Ephesus, and I had plenty of time and could do the walk after my friends had returned to the UK so I proposed that we abandon plans to walk and concentrate instead on being tourists. And so we did. We had a great time. We visited Ephesus. What an amazing place. Again I was in the footsteps of St Paul. There are houses being restored and although it costs extra to visit, they are well worth it. I was intrigued by the roped off areas in which people were working, piecing together fragments of what must be the world's biggest and most difficult jigsaw puzzle.



I took many many photos, a small selection is below.



In the footsteps of St Paul again – the road leading up from the port



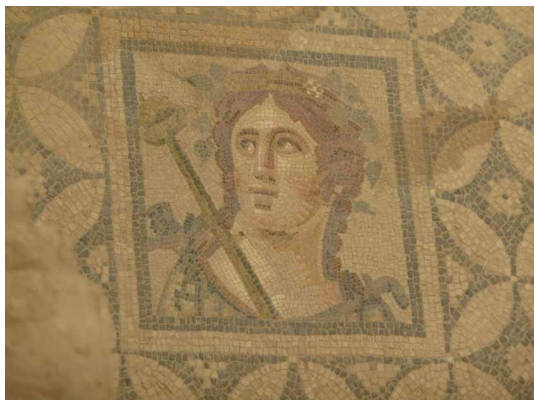
The Celsus Library, constructed in 117AD



Putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle



Interior wall painting



Floor mosaic



Pamukale

We also visited the remarkable geological site of Pamukale. It has thermal springs with water temperatures of 36 deg C, containing a very high concentration of a calcium compound which when it comes into contact with oxygen in the air, precipitates out as white calcium carbonate giving the rocks the appearance of being covered with snow. In addition there are formations that look rather like icicles. Formerly Pamukale was known as Hierapolis and there is a large, spread out archaeological site. Like Ephesus it is the location of one of the Churches mentioned in the Revelations of St John. A hill near the ruins is the site known as St Philip's Martyrdom. Although it is not proven, some believe that that St Philip was the apostle but it could also have been St Philip the Evangelist, a later disciple. Unfortunately we did not have time to visit the archaeological site but it is a place to which I would very much like to return.

All too soon the 'holiday' was over, my friends went back and I started to walk again. As I said in my previous Postcard I felt safe sticking to main roads and my last three days of walking passed quickly. But I was tired, worn out even. The rest and being a tourist had been very relaxing but perhaps I had used up most of my reserves and I really didn't feel I could continue walking. So as I said in my last Postcard I decided to stop at Meryemana and then take planes & bus to Jerusalem. I felt that I did not want to walk in Israel, somehow I had a strong feeling that I should reach Jerusalem without delay and so I booked my initial leg, from Izmir to Ercon, the airport near Nicosia on the Turkish side.



Pause for prayer at a Mosque en route



Stunning views on the way up to Meryemana



Meryemana - end of the walking phase

Setting off from Selcuk to Izmir airport I fervently hoped I would be able to spend the night there as the flight was at 7:00 which meant check in at 5:00. But there was no problem. The airport had flights coming and going throughout the night and a café was open as well. So I settled down wondering what next lay in store. Would I have problems crossing into the Greek side of Nicosia? A friend of mine had had some last year and was initially refused entry. Would I still be able to still get a cheap flight from Larnaca? Was it easy to get from Tel Aviv airport to Jerusalem. Where would I stay in Jerusalem? I had not booked any accommodation as I did not know yet my arrival date. Of course you now know the answers to some of those questions but I have to say that the next day saw jigsaw pieces falling neatly into place, one by one. But more of that later.

Take care and God Bless,

Ann