

## TRAVEL

## World-class Istanbul ranks high for sights, people, food

BY JUDITH DONER BERNE  
SPECIAL WRITER

I wonder if we are the only Americans who ever went to Turkey who didn't buy a Turkish rug.

We didn't - only because we had no place for one - but it wasn't easy. It doesn't matter what kind of shop you enter - jewelry, leather, ceramics - there's a rug connection somewhere. Furthermore, you absolutely can't walk down the street in Istanbul without being verbally pummeled by rug salesmen.

It's a game, yes, but it's also their livelihood. And with inflation rising 65 percent per year, what Turkey produces and sells is both a bargain for you and a necessity for them. Turks are a naturally hospitable people, as well as born to sell. Expect to be offered a glass of apple tea at every turn.

Istanbul is an exotic city. Virtually hovering on the edge between West and East, it is at once cosmopolitan and Old World.

One of my fondest remembrances is three Muslim women, heads covered, and wearing baggy harem pants, jogging together along the Bosphorus. Another is hearing the Muslim call to prayer each morning and evening through the open windows of my hotel room.

## Sights and shops

You could spend weeks wandering the various neighborhoods, but in five days you can visit most of the major sights and get a real feel for the city.

We deliberately chose the Four Seasons Hotel, a former Turkish prison, for its reputation - it's often at the pinnacle of the world's top hotels - and its location - in the heart of Istanbul's Sultanahmet area, also known as the Old City.

But since it was just a month after the tragedies of Sept. 11, it was only a quarter full. Friends stayed nearby at the Sari Konak, a tiny, more reasonably priced alternative with its own charm and good father-and-son management. It too was rela-

**■ Turkey's Grand Bazaar, originated in the 1450s, made me wonder why it took us until the 1950s to build Northland, the United States' first covered shopping mall. The bazaar's winding streets host 4,000 storefronts, reportedly the most under a single roof in the world. But don't overlook the fine shops along Nuruosmaniye Caddesi, a major street leading to the Grand Bazaar.**

tively empty.

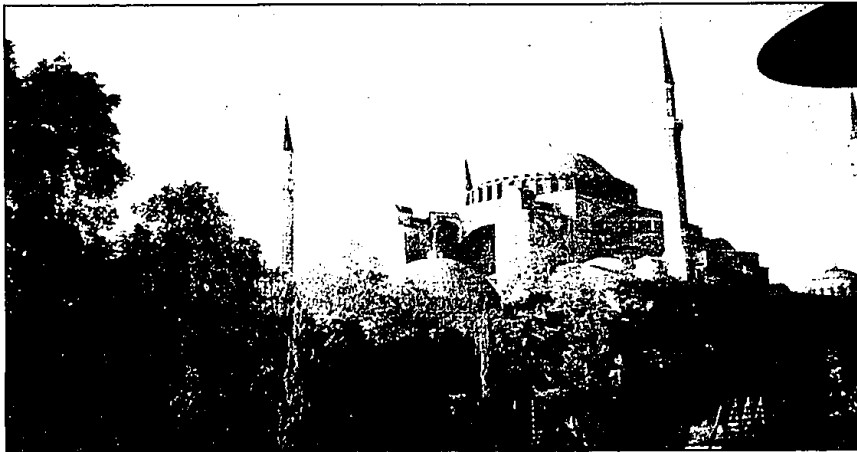
From both hotels, you have close-up views of two of Istanbul's most famous edifices: the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sophia, which face one another across a small park.

You are also within easy walking distance of Topkapı Palace and the very interesting Basilica Cistern, part of an underground waterway system from the 4th to 6th century that has been converted into artistic space.

Turkey's Grand Bazaar, originated in the 1450s, made me wonder why it took us until the 1950s to build Northland, the United States' first covered shopping mall. The bazaar's winding streets host 4,000 storefronts, reportedly the most under a single roof in the world.

But don't overlook the fine shops along Nuruosmaniye Caddesi, a major street leading to the Grand Bazaar. I got a buttersoft leather jacket at Rima Leder (Leather) at an amazing price from the sweetest Turkish shopkeeper I encountered.

You can't really window shop, because shopkeepers are on you immediately. He was the exception. He told me that they send a lot of their coats without labels to Italy, which the Italians sell



Beautiful view: A visit to Hagia Sophia is one of the highlights of a trip to Istanbul.

as theirs. But even he wanted to take me around the corner to a carpet shop!

The Spice Bazaar is smaller and even more exotic with its bins of spices and nuts, as well as other foods and merchandise. They have yards of the confection known as Turkish Delight, which in truth is not a delight, even to a sweet lover like myself. It's also where, unlike the Grand Bazaar, you'll see more Turks than visitors.

## Food

The food in Turkey is fantastic. The friends we traveled with, Bill and Ellen Sachs of West Bloomfield, agreed. So when we came home we gave a Turkish dinner party.

The Turks begin the meal with a group of appetizers called mezze. We served eggplant puree flavored with garlic and lemon; yogurt salad that combined plain yogurt with cucumbers; and shepherd's salad that

is chunks of seedless tomato, cucumber, onion, green pepper, radish and parsley in a vinaigrette dressing.

Turkish soups are fabulous. This one, a cream of vegetable soup, contained no cream at all. The soup was pureed to acquire its thick texture.

Kebabs (Turkish spelling) encompass much more than what we think of meat and/or vegetables on a skewer. In fact neither of the kebabs we served was on a skewer at all. Ellen made kefte kebabs - meatballs made of minced lamb mixed with rice or bread crumbs.

I was able to fashion a resemblance to my favorite Iskender kebab - that usually is sliced lamb (I used grilled chicken strips), awash in tomato sauce, yogurt and melted butter - all on a bed of pita bread. Fresh Turkish yogurt is incredible, but we made do.

We actually never had in Turkey the amazing glazed apri-

■ When to go: Spring and fall.

■ Hotels: Four Seasons Hotel, U.S. phone (212) 638-8200; Sari Konak, through its Web site or the Turkish Tourist Office in New York, (212) 687-2194.

cots filled with creme fraiche that Ellen made for dessert straight out of the Turkish cookbook she brought back.

For its place in the world, its sights, people and, yes, food, I'd have to rank Istanbul No. 3, just back of New York and Paris, among the cities to which I've been. Like all world-class cities, you see so much and there's so much left to see.

Judith Doner Berne, a West Bloomfield resident, is a former managing editor of The Eccentric Newspapers. Your questions and comments are welcome by calling (734) 953-2047 or e-mailing jberne@att.net.



Market: The Spice Bazaar features bins of spices and nuts, as well as other foods and merchandise.



## Ugliest Bathroom Contest

Sponsored By WJR AM 760 Radio, The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Building Industry Association and Mathison Supply of Livonia, Garden City and Canton.

**Win A \$10,000 Dream Bathroom!**



- Air Massour Massage Bathtub by Jason
- Bath Cabinetry by Bertsch
- Faucets by Hardin
- Ultra-Flush Toilet By Gerber
- The Tub Surround
- Installation by JAM Home Improvement
- And More!

Take a photo of your ugly bathroom and bring it into any Mathison Supply store or mail it to WJR, Ugliest Bathroom Contest, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Ste. 800, Detroit, MI 48202. The winner's bathroom will be upgraded with new fixtures, tile, medicine cabinet and accessories with a value of up to \$10,000. And, be sure to visit the WJR and Mathison Supply booths at:

**SPRING HOME & GARDEN SHOW  
NOVI EXPO CENTER  
APRIL 4-7, 2002**



All entries become the property of WJR and must be received by April 12, 2002. No cash equivalents. Judges' decision is final. No purchase necessary. Winner will be announced May 18, 2002.

Employees of WJR Radio, The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, BIA and Mathison Supply are not eligible to enter.

**Mornings, 5am - 10am**



**Chuck Gaidica & The Breakfast Club**

**WNIC 100.3 FM**

*Detroit's Nicest Rock*

**START YOUR DAY WITH US -  
THEN BRING US TO WORK WITH YOU  
FOR 20 SOFT ROCK FAVORITES  
IN A ROW, COMMERCIAL-FREE,  
STARTING AT 9am!**