

# MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | SATURDAY, 4 MAY 2013

## Tourists in Istanbul

After yesterday's experience, we thought we would avoid the crush and push of trying to get into Hagia Sophia early, and opted instead to spend the first part of the day in to the retail heart of Istanbul - the Grand Bazaar. The brochures tell you that no visit to Istanbul is complete without visiting this retail icon.

The bazaar is a mass of narrow lane-ways crammed with all sorts of shops selling an incredible array of wares. Istanbul has an abundance of bazaars including ones that specialize in spices, book, and even tools. The Grand Bazaar is by far the largest.

The walk to get to the bazaar was through very bustling pedestrian and vehicular traffic. There is no one entrance to the bazaar and unless you are careful you can easily become disorientated. We took our GPS along just in case.

One we entered we quickly realised that this "shopping centre" was like nothing we have ever seen before. Most of it is covered. It was extremely busy with shoppers and lots of goods on offer to choose from. Heather was keen for me to buy a new short sleeved shirt so we were ready to bargain. Back and forth the bidding went but eventually the seller won and I had not one but 2 copies of



## Buying Stamps

Heather has always been keen to send Blayze postcards. He sent us an email saying how much he looked forward to receiving them. So now we have lots of postcards but it's difficult to find stamps. We were determined therefore to buy a number of stamps today so we could send our Istanbul card as well as any more cards from Turkey.

Finding a post office proved to be a nightmare. We walked and walked.

Finally in desperation Heather asked a fellow who appeared to be Turkish and able to speak English. He was wonderful. As a local shopkeeper he took us in hand and showed us exactly where the post office was - it happened to be just around the corner.

We thanked him and walked over to the Post Office entrance but it was closed - as are all Turkish Post Offices on Saturdays. Duuuuh!!



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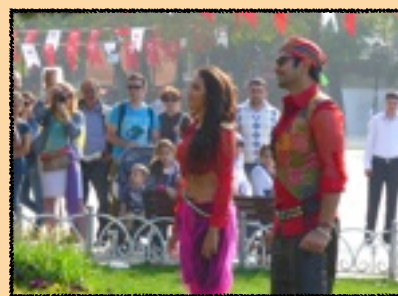
**LOLLY MAN** Watch as your lolly on a stick is created. Not sure what is in the coloured stuff other than sugar and dye. No thanks. The red would set any child off.



**WATER BOY?** Would you drink the water carried in the back pack of this traditional mobile water carrier?

Cups at the ready and only 1 Lire a cup of cold water.

Mmmmmm.



**TURKEYWOOD IN TOWN** The Hippodrome was the backdrop for a Turkeywood film. We watched as these gorgeous actors did their dancing. After each take their hair was combed back to its beautiful self ready for the next take.

## SNAPS



BLUE MOSQUE FROM HAGIA SOPHIA



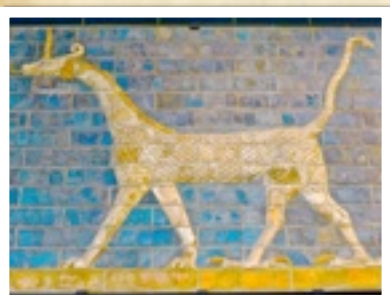
INSIDE HAGIA SOPHIA



SARCOPHAGUS



DETAIL ON SARCOPHAGUS



ANCIENT EGYPTIAN

# The wailing from the mosques was incredibly loud and confronting.

Lacoste brand shirts. They did look great on me though so price ultimately was not the issue.

We then tried to buy a replacement hat for the one that I left in the bus in Meteora but we decided we could not stomach any more haggling.

After spending some time walking and admiring the shops and displays it was time to leave. There are over 64 lanes in this place and we only got to see a few. I must say we both never felt unsafe or intimidated at all by the experience although there were times when we felt a little lost (but not so lost as to turn on the GPS).

**IT IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST MANIC SHOPPING PRECINCTS YOU COULD EVER HOPE TO EXPERIENCE.**

We did however turn on the GSP to find our next site. The physical schematic maps we had of Saltanamet (old town) were again less than useful.

The Basilica Cistern would count as one of our best highlights in Istanbul. The cistern is a large underground water holding chamber. It holds an incredible 80,000 cubic meters of water. Built by Justinian in 532AD (and visited by James Bond in "From Russia with Love") the cavernous depths are held up by 130 pillars. It was wonderfully cool inside.

Time then to visit the Archeological Museum to see one of the biggest collections of classical statues and other monuments in the world. We particularly liked the Tiled Kiosk and the sarcophagi from the Royal Necropolis in Lebanon. After viewing many ancient artifacts we started to weary. Lunch and a nap in our nearby van did the trick.

Refreshed, we decided to tackle the Hagia Sophia. It was a great time to see the highest and largest domed church in the world. We were totally awe struck by its sheer vastness. Most of the crowds had now dissipated so we were able to walk around and admire it at our own pace. The walk home was punctuated by the incredibly loud wailing from the three mosques.





# PHOTOS

