

## Global Scholars 2002 Exploration

Global 2002-03 began with a long series of flights to Geneva Switzerland. Our objectives here are to gain some perspectives on the world, to begin to build a group, and to adjust to an intense study and travel schedule. We are indebted to Pastor's Rebecca and Steve Larson for helping with our initial arrangements, including places for group meals, a lecture room for the Economics class at Steve's Church, and the opportunity to visit and worship in an international congregation on our first Sunday.

Our next three days were packed with presentations from a number of UN and NGO – including the Red Cross, World Health Organization, World Council of Churches, World Trade Organization-- international organizations. We met a number of very competent and dedicated people who are working hard to make the world a more peaceful and healthy place for ALL people. (Details from individual organizations are in our notes and handouts.) The people from these organizations impressed us with their dedication and their competence. These are people with considerable experience who have served in both management roles in Geneva and in various field operations. They help people who have suffered from disasters, they help feed and relocate refugees, they work for improved human rights, they work to improve health conditions, and they work on spiritual and humanitarian issues. Their work requires considerable diplomacy since they work with the permission of local governments – some of whom are responsible in part for the problems. Doing good is very hard work and requires dedication and political skills. We are fortunate to have these people in our world.

Global is also about learning about people and cities. Our hotel was located out from the center of the city and so we purchased day passes for all students so that they could ride buses anywhere in the city. This encouraged exploration and the global students now know a great deal about Geneva and also they know how to begin learning about a city. We scheduled a guided tour the first day to orient everyone and then students quickly learned how to maneuver. Geneva is a very beautiful city with many historical and tourist sites worth visiting. Geneva is also expensive and global scholars had some basic lessons in Economics as they sought the best exchange rate and mentally calculated the cost of food and other purchases. Just as we became comfortable with Geneva it was time to leave a place that we had learned to love.

Our next series of flights brought us to Istanbul Turkey arriving very late at night. We were met at the Bogazici University "Super Dorm" by our good friend and coordinator Dr Zafer Toprak (who is Director of the Attaturk Institute for historical studies). He helped us get settled into wonderfully spacious dorm rooms. After a short night's sleep Zafer provided us with an orientation followed by an introductory tour of major historical sites by our local travel company. Our academic time has featured lectures by Dr Binnaz Toprak (wife), Zafer, and Dr Sevket Pamuk dealing with Islam and Turkey, the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey, Gender Roles in Turkey, and Economic issues in Turkey and the Middle East. In addition Dr Sevcek Pamuk provided an excellent set of economics lectures, initially dealing with globalization and then introducing us to the economic history of Turkey and some of the important present issues. In addition we spent a three hour session on the Global Semester Economics Course. The academic portion of the program at Bogazici was very strong in spite of the

limited number of class sessions. We have some understanding of the Ottoman Empire and the past and present role of Turkey in the world.

We are also quickly learning about Istanbul, a city with many European characteristics, but also with a strong Islamic influence. Turkey is a secular state and thus religious law does not apply. But as I write the Islamic “call to prayer” is heard from a nearby Mosque. The people in Turkey seem to have adjusted well to the combination of secular perspectives and strong Islamic beliefs. This may be a good model. We are learning about inflation. On the street one will pay 2 million Turkish Lira for a wonderful Donner (Gyro Sandwich) but then that is only about \$1.30US. Students have explored the Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia, Topkopi Palace (headquarters for the great Ottoman Empire). They have also wandered through the great Market Kapalı Carsi and many other interesting sites. Yes Char and I bought some great antique rugs from our favorite rug merchant. Students have learned a great deal about life in Turkey through their various ventures. They have also learned a great deal about themselves as they interact in many different supporting roles with each. These global scholars are maintaining the tradition of “hitting the bricks with their feet running” as we move into new areas. Their individual experiences will be amazing as they share with family and loved one’s.

September 11, 2002 began as a typical departure day, checking out of rooms, loading the bus and getting ready for a four day tour of important sites outside of Istanbul. But we all knew the meaning of this day both for American’s and for those we met in Turkey who share our sorrow about the tragedy that was imposed on the United States just one year ago. Our first stop was the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne. This mosque is the final masterpiece by the famous Ottoman architect Sinan, who designed hundreds of structures that still remain in active use. This mosque is the most beautiful mosque in the world and is very impressive. It is personally one of our favorite religious spaces in the world. The Imam who was on duty offered a “call to prayer” in honor of those killed one year ago. This was a very moving moment for our group – students from a Christian tradition in the United States sharing with a Muslim mosque our joint communication with the same God, but from different traditions. Through an interpreter I talked with the Imam about our appreciation for his recognition of our joint traditions. He expressed his deep sorrow for the tragedy one year ago and we both agreed that any attempt to associate the actions of those terrorists with our God was the ultimate in blasphemy. While we missed being with friends and loved one’s on this day we shared a very special moment between faiths that will live with us forever.

In the evening the student committee organized a candlelight service, attended by most of us, in one of the student rooms. Various members of our group shared their reflections on the event one year ago and our thoughts of our experiences today. This was a very deep and meaningful experience for all of us and cannot be adequately described in this format. Ask your son or daughter about their individual responses. The event concluded with many hugs and personal sharing. We learned first hand the importance of support and love between all of us in this group. Clearly this was a fitting end to a very emotional day that will live with us for a very long time.

On Thursday we continued our tours with an early start from the hotel. We first visited Troy and saw the many layers of this city and the history as developed by various archeologists. This was followed by some fun time in the wooden horse that was built on

the site. Our next visit to Perganum provided substantially more complete restoration of that famous city. The visible signs of this great city, including the acropolis and one of the great medical centers of its time, were very impressive. We have obtained a number of permanent images in our mind in addition to a substantial number of pictures in various forms.

Friday we visited Ephesus from our two day stay in Kusadas. This provided the outstanding restoration of an ancient Greek and Roman city that was very important from **300 BC to 1100 AD**. This city of over 200,000 ended ceased to exist when its harbor filled with silt and the seaport status was lost. This city featured many advances in technology at the time – the roman arch made possible construction of large multi-story buildings for the convenience of residents. The water and sewage system represented major improvements from most cities at the time, and contributed substantially to the health and quality of life. The library and government structures were models for future generations. The amphitheatre, which seated 25,000 people, provided opportunities for culture. This was a sophisticated city, but one that worshiped a variety of symbolic gods. Hence it is not surprising that Paul came here to bring the message of Christianity. Viewing Ephesus provides an understanding of a very sophisticated city and also helps one understand why Paul's ministry to this area was important.

Kusadas is a developing tourist city on the Aegean Sea, with a focus on beautiful seashore and the restored site of Ephesus. We also visited a training center for rug weaving. Here we learned the details of rug production. In addition we experienced a good demonstration of different rug types. We also experienced the rug selling process which is an important industry in Turkey that provides items of utility and beauty for homes around the world. And yes we did enjoy a shore swim in the Aegean Sea.

Tomorrow we drive to Bursa to visit a Mosque and a market. Our day will end as we board a late flight for Cairo. We spent 8 short days in Turkey but learned a great deal about this society and began our transition from Western society. In addition we learned a great deal about ourselves both individually and as the global scholars group.