

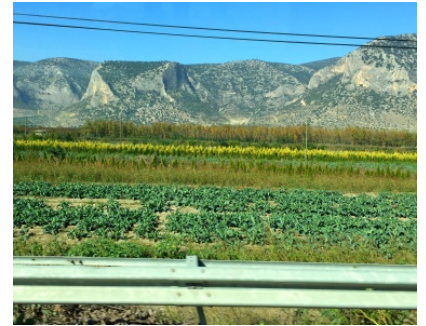
Wednesday November 4

Sadly it was time to say good bye to Cappadocia and head toward the western part of Turkey where we would visit Ephesus and Pamukkale, the next two stops on my bucket list.

The flight to Izmir was a short 60 minutes. The travel agency paid extra to put us in the bulkhead seats which were labeled as X-leg which supposedly had extra leg room. That also meant that we got a meal which everyone else just got nuts. To our surprise, the airport in Izmir was new and large and very modern. We were picked up by our guide for the next few days, Mutlu. Our itinerary had us with a free afternoon so I asked if we could drive around Izmir to see it a bit. The answer was there wasn't much to see. I was a bit surprised, but did not bring it up again.



We drove about 2 hours to the hill town of Sirince, our home for the next two nights. Just before arriving, we passed a local market and of course I asked if we could stop. We walked up and down the street where the fruit and vegetables, the Turkish delight, fresh pomegranates were all being sold, people were buying their local groceries. The best part of course was the people and the faces.



Watching people at a market always gives us such a feel for what being local might mean. Almost all the women, especially the older ones, wore headscarves, in the most vibrant and beautiful colors. And seeing the faces tells stories, most of which we need to imagine, but still, the stories are written in the faces. And when they pose and ask to have their picture taken, we connect, we smile at each other, I show them the picture I took, and a new friend is made. By the way, notice the shoeshine man's shoeshine kit – it is a large gorgeous brass design. Years ago a friend of ours, who travels a lot, saw it and asked to buy it. The shoeshine man agreed, but when she asked him to clean it up and get rid of all the shoeshine cream, he asked how will she be able to shine shoes back home without it.







The big item at this market seemed to be olives right off the tree. Mutlu told me that he and his wife of 3 months had just bought a few kilos. They crack each olive, cover them with water and salt and lemon, change the water every day, and in a few weeks they have edible olives. Everyone must make their own as there were plenty of “raw” olives being sold. We couldn't buy olives,

but we could and did buy a big block of halva which we noshed on the rest of the trip.



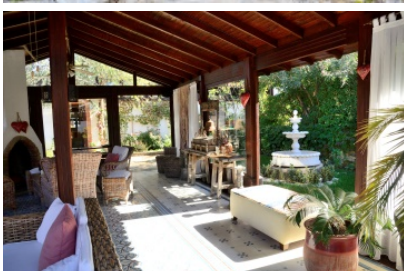
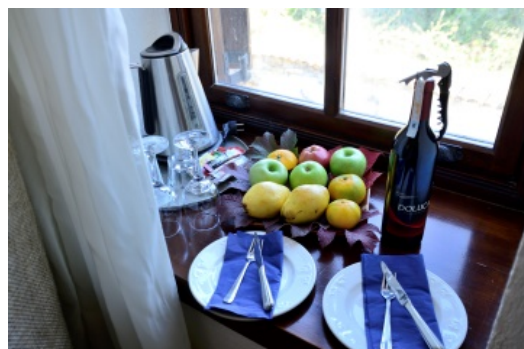
Sirince is a small town of 600 inhabitants, full of narrow cobblestone streets lined with one souvenir shop after another. Legend has it that the town was settled by Greek slaves who had been freed. They named the town Cirkince which means ugly in the hope that no one would follow them. The name was changed to Sirince, meaning pleasant, in 1926.



Our hotel, Gullu Konaklar, was hidden at the end of the main street, surrounded by rose gardens with views of the mountains. The entrance was surrounded by plants and really hid the hotel from the outside world. The hotel is a series of small houses, one with the office, another with the dining room, and then one two story with the rooms. Gullu Konaklar means Rose Mansion and the rooms are all named for different roses. As in



most hotels, we were welcomed in a large sitting patio with a glass of some sort of local fruit juice (I have no idea which fruit). We were then shown up to our room, first up many stone stairs leading to the building and then up a flight of stairs to our room. Turkish towns are not made for the handicapped. The room was small, but comfortable. There was fresh, local fruit in our room along with a bottle of local red wine, which they switched to white wine for us. Being





the big drinkers we are, that bottle came with us on the rest of the trip, and on our last day, we gave what was left (which was more than half) to Mutlu.

We walked around the town, up and down just about every street. We visited the church (there are two, one was closed and one was being reconstructed). We watched the old ladies knitting and trying to sell their wares. We ate some Turkish ice cream. We found one lovely shop where the owner, a woman, made silk and felt scarves, shawls, hats etc. She showed me the process and then showed me some of the beautiful things she made. This was different and worth seeing. As I was inside,

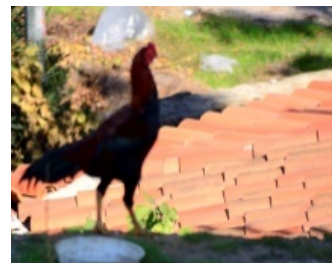


Andy sat outside and directed tourists into the shop.





But the rest of the town was a bust. We spent time in our room reading and writing (only later did we find out there was a sitting room), and then had dinner in the hotel dining room (which had one large dining room table set for two – we were the only ones eating there).



I was not particularly happy, and I knew we had free time the next afternoon as well. While some travelers like to have downtime, which is not our style. We travel to see as much as we can, to learn, to experience, not to rest. So I emailed Jane, my wonderful travel agent (and friend), and mentioned it to her so that for future clients she could avoid this. At 1000pm that night, the phone rang in our room. It was Karen, the president of Seasoning, the company Jane had used to organize our private tour. She was very apologetic and re-wrote our itinerary for the next remaining three days. We would visit Ephesus tomorrow as planned, but then drive to Izmir where they would put us up in a hotel and add a tour of Izmir, including some of the old synagogues. She added two additional historical cities to our itinerary and added a guided tour at one of them with one of the local archeologists. She called again the next day to confirm and to make sure everything was OK. This is why I don't do my own trips but rather have Jane do them. She finds us the best companies that specialize in the country we are visiting, she does it less expensively than we can (she can even beat prices for trips from Costco), we are constantly being upgraded in the hotels, and if anything goes wrong or unexpected happens, she is there to get it fixed. This is an ode to Jane!



Since tomorrow is going to be all about Ephesus, I am showing you breakfast in today's blog. This one was not a buffet since there are so few people at the hotel. And all those jams were fresh from fruit trees in their garden.