



Cappadocia Turkey's Unspoiled Treasure.

Cappadocia was on my list of "must do" but we were unable to find a way to incorporate Tuck into the trip as Goreme lay 700 km. away from Fethiye. So I travelled alone by overnight bus (12 hrs.) across inland Turkey to Goreme- an experience in itself. Turkish buses run highly competitive services – modern Mercedes buses with air conditioning, individual TV sets, free refreshments, refreshing lemon cologne and service personnel on board.

Some places are magical and Goreme is one of them. The whole area is one of the most unique geological areas on earth. A moonscape of fantasy rock formations shaped only by wind and water through the ages. This small village is set among towering fairy chimneys of stone, honeycomb cliffs and stunning valleys of rippling rock- Rose, Honey and Pigeon Valleys- several World Heritage sites It is utterly weird. Pictures cannot do it justice- neither the scale nor atmosphere. It was settled by Hittites from 1800 – 1200 BC. During the Roman & Byzantine periods, it became a refuge for early Christians who settled here from 4th-11th century, building churches, whole underground cities, and monasteries, all within caves. (The locals try to tell you Star Wars was filmed here but it was actually made in Tunisia).

Today, it is one of Turkey's most popular destinations though it is far, far away from everything else. Most of the small hotels are built right into the caves. Mine was "Sunset Cave Hotel". I got the room at the top with stunning views (couldn't wake the owner as I arrived at 04:30 a.m.). Together with a charming guide, over the next two days I walked several km. of the valley, did two whole day tours, climbing into an underground city, up into the cave monastery, into fairy chimneys, saw cave church frescoes 1000 yrs. old and still vibrant, hiked 4 km. of the Rose Gorge (40C), enjoyed a Turkish night (an ugly venue and mediocre food but with the most enthusiastic troupe of dancers that you just had to love!) We also visited a deserted Greek town whose inhabitants had been forcibly repatriated to Greece in the 1920's along with hundreds of thousands of others and a wonderful 200 yr. old family pottery business. And finally, a real "highlight", saw the whole amazing place again from the air with a 05:30 a.m. hot-air balloon ride. An unforgettable 3 days.



