

“Wildlife in Other Lands” Part One

I am writing this article while flying from Istanbul, Turkey to Atlanta via Paris, France. I want to keep fresh on my mind the experiences I had while visiting this beautiful area of the world; with the hopes of sharing with others! I want to share not only the experience of the friendliness of the Turkish and Kurdish residents of Turkey but also some thoughts that came to mind while I was in Turkey, thoughts that I have also experienced on other journeys.

Last year while visiting the Costa del Sol in Southern Spain, cats of all colors, shapes, and sizes were living quite comfortably in the beautiful Mediterranean cities. I, of course, wanted to know more so I asked several of the residents of these areas why the cats were so abundant, and so well cared for but, yet, living outdoors with no obvious owner. The explanations were all the same. The cats were treated as royalty by shop owners, restaurant owners, and home owners mainly to control the rodent populations that are so abundant in more populated areas.

I found the same to be true in Istanbul. Cats were everywhere but none seemed to have an owner. I saw cat house towers and perches all over town, food dishes on every corner and in every alley, and cats lying undisturbed on merchandise piled outside the little shops. Many of the cats were feral and did not take kindly to strangers but finally, in Istanbul, I learned the reason why so many of them would not approach me. When in foreign countries, cats do not respond to “here kitty, kitty” as they do in the United States because they aren’t familiar with English. So, you must learn how they respond in their native language, like I did, accidentally I might add, in Turkey. Of course I had tried the English way of calling them, with little to no result but while walking down the street I over heard a Turkish gentleman making the sound “tch, tch, tch” and watched in amazement as the cats came to him. I couldn’t wait to try this new sound, so the first cat I saw, which was a beautiful orange tabby, I went “tch, tch, tch.” Low and behold, the kitty came running to me, as if we were old friends.

I thought maybe this was a fluke; that maybe this was just a friendly “come to anyone” cat, so I tried “hear kitty, kitty.” The cat seemed afraid of me. So, while walking through the beautiful city of Istanbul I learned if I wanted to pet a cat, I had to speak their language.

Some of the most beautiful objects that I saw while in Turkey were at the Archeological Museum where Roman and Turkish history abound. Some objects dated as far back as 2700 B.C. That’s almost 5000 years old. I even saw the skull and right hand (bones of course) of John the Baptist. But now I’m sidetracking you. Back to the cats. Standing in front of a sarcophagus near the entrance to the museum was a multi-colored tiger cat. After taking a photo of her, I decided to speak her language and much to my delight she came to me without concern. It was at this time I felt compelled to share this story and the photo of her standing in front of a structure with a history dating back to 350 B.C.

If you would like to see my photo slideshow of the visit to this beautiful Romanesque land, please feel free to visit my website, so you can experience the magnificence of one of the most important histories of our world.



Cat standing in front of 2400 year old sarcophagus



One of many cat perches with an ancient wall in the background.