

GREECE



LEE FROST/ROBERT HARDING

By Bella English
GLOBE STAFF

SANTORINI — For our daughter's college graduation gift in May, my husband and I promised her a trip to "someplace fabulous." There was a catch: She had to go with her mother. (It fell under the time-honored parental principle: You pay, they'll go.)

But where to go? For weeks, Megan and I e-mailed websites and "deals" back and forth. She wanted a 21-day road trip in Africa that involved words like "hostels," "tents," and "minibus." I countered with ideas that included "charming hotels," "sweeping views," and "unforgettable feasts."

In the end, we settled on a two-week trip to Greece and Turkey. We would make four stops: the Greek islands of Santorini and Mykonos, then Athens and Istanbul. The beaches for her, the cities for me.

In mid-May, we flew from Boston to London, then on to Athens, where we caught a 45-minute flight to Santorini. We were exhausted by our 22-hour door-to-door trip, but Santorini was like a hit of smelling salts. As our plane banked over the Aegean Sea, our heads swiveled from side to side, our eyes wide open.

EAT, PLAY, BOND

Mother and daughter traverse air and sea to a surprise destination: companionship

It was dusk when we arrived at our hotel in the village of Pyrgos, and the setting sun was a parfait of colors: peach, raspberry, and orange. The whitewashed cube homes set on terraces above the deep-blue sea, the riotous colors of flowers, the salty breeze, the stunning views — all made for sensory overload. Add a platter of fresh calamari and a shot of the bracing local ouzo and we couldn't have been happier. We opened the doors of our balcony for the night air and slept soundly.

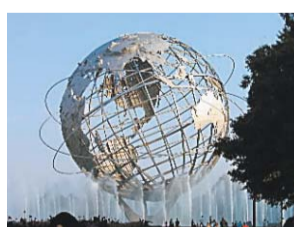
With daylight, there's not a bad view on the island, and every other step we took during our three days here evoked oohs and ahs from both of us. You can be on the beach, on the road, in a restaurant, or on a donkey and have a spectacular backdrop of the sea, the mountains, the archipelago of neighboring islands, or the charming towns clinging to the hillsides.

By far the best view is from the caldera, or the volcanic cliffs. Santorini — said to be the site of the mythical city of Atlantis — is the largest island in a chain created by a huge volcanic eruption about 3,600 years ago. You can feel the presence of the volcano every-

GREECE, Page M4



The author takes a backseat to her daughter, Megan, on board an ATV in Hora, the capital of Mykonos. They had come from Santorini, where Oia, top, perches hundreds of feet above the sea.



INSIDE

NEW YORK

The Unisphere's (above) park. M3

BALD HEAD, N.C.

Well preserved, birds and all. M6

EXPLORE NEW ENGLAND

BURLINGTON, VT.

An overnight on Lake Champlain. M7

SARGENTVILLE, MAINE

Local ingredients, Mexican taste. M7

JEFFERSONVILLE, VT.

Take a lazy ramble to a winery. M9



ESSDRAS M SUAREZ/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2007

On the Bosphorus at busy Ortaköy pier square in Istanbul stands the ornate, neo-Baroque-style Ortaköy Mosque, built for the Ottoman sultan in 1856.

TURKEY

A city filled with places to go lets her follow her heart

By Necce Regis
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

ISTANBUL — A sizzling June day reluctantly cools toward evening along the waterfront at Eminonu. I stop and write in my notebook.

Smells: salty, moist sea; grilled lamb; car exhaust; sweat; hamburgers; flowering trees; cigarettes; sweet cologne.

Here, where the shimmering Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus connect at the Golden Horn, massive ferries fill to capacity with pushy commuters. They include last-minute passengers not afraid to leap across the widening gap between solid ground and the decks as deafening horns signal imminent departure

TURKEY, Page M5

Putting her heart into a city with ancient soul

► **TURKEY**
Continued from Page M1

and the vessels chug to destinations with names like Kabatas, Uskudar, Buyukada, Harem, and Besiktas.

Between the ferry piers and a four-lane road clogged with rush-hour traffic, crowds stream in all directions across the wide Eminonu Meydani. I'm reminded of the concourse at Grand Central Station in New York except the twinkling overhead constellations are real, as is the crescent moon rising near the minaret of the 17th-century Yeni Cami.

The plaza is awash with activity. Vendors vie for attention, their carts piled high with cherries, bananas, apricots, peaches, pistachios, and mussels. A boy on a bicycle leans precariously close to pyramids of fresh grilled corn. Nearby, a musician with a long mustache strums his amplified oud and sings a mournful song.

Destination: nowhere in particular.

I watch my step as I meander. The plaza isn't always this bustling but it's Friday night and the ground is covered with a patchwork of plastic sheets and canvas tarps hosting an improvised flea market. Sneakers, shoes, backgammon sets, straw cowboy hats, beaded necklaces, carved wood horses and elephants, cheap plastic toys that light up, perfume, baseball caps, are all for sale. Two elderly men in turbans with scraggly gray-white beards offer winter parkas at bargain prices but no one stops.

I realized I could fall in love with a city many years ago, on my first visit to Rome, when I stepped from the train and felt, vividly and inexplicably, as if I were arriving home. Now I'm similarly drawn to Istanbul, though it feels less like a

home of my past than a place I could imagine living. In six years I've returned three times, for longer and longer visits. I'm especially besotted with this waterfront, which pulls me as if by magnetic force at all hours of the day and night.

Sounds: high-pitched seagull cries, cellphone tones, a ferry horn, shouts from vendors, the tap of a cane, amplified fasil music, the raspy call to prayer broadcast from flimsy microphones, a revving motorcycle, the clang-clang of an approaching light rail train, the snap of a flag in the wind.

Fishermen slouch and casually drape their rods across a low iron rail. Docked along the pier, a diminutive boat sporting a necklace of lights rocks in the wake of larger ships. Smoke wafts from its cabin where closer inspection reveals a man grilling fish. His partner slaps each portion into a crusty roll and passes it out the window to hungry diners who sit with their families on tiny plastic seats at tiny plastic tables for their evening meal.

Behind me, the Spice Market's entrance entices with its visual, olfactory, and tactile wonders, but I want to stay outside where the evening breeze tousles my hair.

In front of me, the Galata Bridge spans the Golden Horn. A stroll to the opposite shore, past more hopeful anglers, leads to a colorful fish market and small park on the left and the Karakoy ferries on the right.

It's a steep climb on stone steps to the Galata Tower, a cone-capped structure built by the Genoese in the 14th century. From the observation deck, at about 170 feet, I delight in a 360-degree bird's-eye view of this city that has captured my imagination.

I return to the waterfront in



PHOTOS BY NEECE REGIS/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

A ride on the Bosphorus is an essential Istanbul outing.

the early morning to avoid the blazing midday heat. The water sparkles like fish scales beneath the sapphire sky and I'm ready to hop on a ferry.

I consult the schedule and locate the ferry to Ortaköy. I'm told it doesn't leave for hours. But hurry! There's a ship departing now for Besiktas. My leap is not as dramatic as the late-night commuters, and the crowds are few, though in my haste I lose my cap.

The ship disengages from the shore. Curved domes and pointed minarets punctuate a tumble of interlocking shapes that shrink by the moment as we head to deeper waters, until the landscape looks like an intricate puzzle. The graceful lines of the Bosphorus Bridge, linking Europe to Asia, blur in lingering morning fog. To the north, sunlight blooms across rolling hills and spills down toward houses and apartments where I imagine people performing their morning rituals: dressing for work, drinking coffee, brushing their teeth. The wind intensifies as we swing north. I don't care where I'm going, really; I only want to be on my way.

At 10 a.m. I look for signs that say Adalar Iskelesi ("island ferries"), buy a \$2 token, and board a ship of impressive size. I follow a boisterous crowd to the upper deck and settle on a bench near the railing.

The nine-island archipelago known as the Princes' Islands sits in the sea southeast of Istanbul. This ferry stops at four of the islands including the largest, Buyukada, a 14-mile, two-hour voyage.

In Byzantine and Ottoman times, emperors and sultans used the islands as a place to banish powerful rivals. In the 19th century, wealthy Armenians, Jews, and Greeks built elaborate cottages as summer homes. Today, many but not all of the islands are inhabited, and the preserved Victorian-era structures, or yalis, are surrounded by meticulous gardens that bloom with fragrant acacia, jasmine, honeysuckle, bougainvillea, and oleander. The only things banished these days are combustion engines; the methods of transportation on the islands are bicycles, horse-drawn carriages, or phaetons, or two strong legs.

The party starts before we leave. In summertime, the island ferries are filled with day-trippers rather than commuters, and the atmosphere is festive. A gaggle of teenage girls from Lebanon sing and clap to pop tunes. Across the aisle, an equally exuberant group of men erupt in songs of their own. Others whoop as scraps of bread tossed to acrobatic seagulls are snatched in midair.

juice, pretzels, and tea served in tulip-shaped glasses.

People dash amid the groups to snap pictures. Chinese tourists pose with the guitar-playing Arab and his dancers. A woman covered in a black hijab raises a Sony Handycam to her exposed eyes and begins filming.

"Take our picture!"

A young woman wearing oversized pink sunglasses and matching hat pulls her boyfriend to her side. They don't hand me a camera; she wants me to use my own. I do.

"Where are you from?"

"America." I speak quietly, hoping to avoid attention.

"We're from Lebanon! We love America!" she shouts.

I return on the evening ferry, a subdued ride between groups of dozing revelers. Evening commuter boats steam in every direction, the interiors of their hulking sil-

houettes aglow in the purple-gray dusk. Colorful neon signage, from restaurants along the Galata Bridge's lower level, reflects bright shapes on the water's choppy surface. In the west, swaths of fading pink clouds are smeared across the horizon. Slender minarets of adjacent mosques, lighted from below, loom large as we approach the dock, reaching upward in the deepening indigo sky.

A man on the plaza grills fish in a cart. The crispy bread crackles as I bite. The flesh is sweet and smoky, wedged between a lettuce leaf and a dripping tomato slice. I have no plans for tomorrow except to return — dopey, curious, love-sick — to explore this peculiar object of my affection, the changing, chaotic, vibrant, breathing waterfront in Istanbul.

Neece Regis can be reached at neceeregis@gmail.com.

If you go . . .

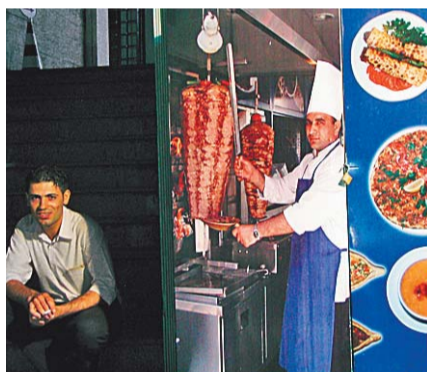
Where to stay
Orient Express Hotel
Hudavendigar St. No. 34
34210 Eminonu-Istanbul
011-90-212-520-7161
orientexpresshotel.com
Fifty-four rooms with old-world ambience; doubles \$118-\$170.

Adora
Erdogan Sok. No. 14-16
34410 Sirkeci-Istanbul
011-90-212-527-4950
adorahotel.com

Stylish 14-room hotel close to the waterfront as well as Hagia Sophia. First-floor restaurant and wine bar. Doubles \$70-\$170.

Where to eat
Hamdi Et Lokantasi
Tahmis Cad. Kalcin Sok. 17
Eminonu-Istanbul
011-90-212-528-0390
Kebabs, stews, and other southeastern Turkish specialties. Reserve a seat on the rooftop terrace, overlooking the harbor, ferries, and the Galata Tower. Entrees \$20-\$30.

Sirin Kofte Salonu
Vezircikmazi No. 7
Sirkeci-Istanbul
011-90-212-527-5294
Serving cop sis (skewered chunks of lamb), kofte (grilled lamb meatballs), doner (spit-roasted meat), and kebabs. Entrees \$5-\$7.



A waiter outside a waterfront restaurant near Eminonu.

What to do

The Princes' Islands

ido.com.tr/en/index.cfm
The least expensive and most fun way to get to the islands is to take the ferry. At least 10 trips a day run from the Adalar Iskelesi dock in front of the railway terminal in Eminonu. One token each way costs about \$1.60. The largest island is Buyukada, about a two-hour ferry ride from town. No cars are allowed on the islands, so be prepared to rent a bike, a horse-drawn carriage, or walk.

Galata Tower

Buyuk Hendek Cad
011-90-212-245-1160
Genoese tower from the 14th century with stunning views of the Golden Horn, Bosphorus, and Sea of Marmara. Elevator/admission \$6.

TEA GREEN

Darjeeling is the champagne of teas, growing high in the valleys where the world's smallest train makes its rounds. Assam is known for its full-bodied flavour, as robust as the horned rhino that roams its plains. In Munnar, you could even get a taste of a planter's life in sprawling bungalows, British era clubs with tennis, golf, bridge and of course, high tea.

Incredible India
ny@itony.com 1-800-953-9399
www.incredibleindia.org



Discover Ireland's Wonderful West

Ireland's Wonderful West, filled with unique, atmospheric towns and villages, long stretches of stunning coastline and soaring sea cliffs. Discover cultural festivals, scenic drives, national parks, championship golf and Ireland's literary greats. Experience the people, the place, the pleasures.



Irish Welcome
eight-day escorted
coach tour
from \$1261.



Ireland Resort Package
includes airfare, luxury
accommodation at
Adare Manor Villas and
car rental from \$1089.



Great value fares
to Shannon from Boston
with Aer Lingus.
Visit aerlingus.com

To discover more great value vacation offers, visit discoverireland.com/westcoast

Your very own Ireland



C.I.E TOURS International: Land only. Price is based on per person sharing double occupancy. This rate is valid for Oct. 16, 2008 departure, other dates are available. Visit your travel agent or cietours.com for airline prices and guaranteed departure dates. SCEPTRE TOURS: \$1089 rate is air and land per person, based on four people traveling. Valid for travel in October 2008. Includes air, six nights' three-bedroom villa and car rental. Prices for other dates are available.