

Hearts Taken by Türkiye

Written by Allison Coll

*“It is He who made the earth manageable for you, so travel its regions,
and eat of its provisions. To Him is the Resurrection.” Quran 67:15*

When CMF presented an alluring invitation to the convert community last autumn to take part in an end of year group expedition to taste the delectable cultural and culinary delights of Türkiye, and experience its rich expression of Islam and its history in no less than 3 awe-inspiring cities, it wasn't long before applications started streaming in.

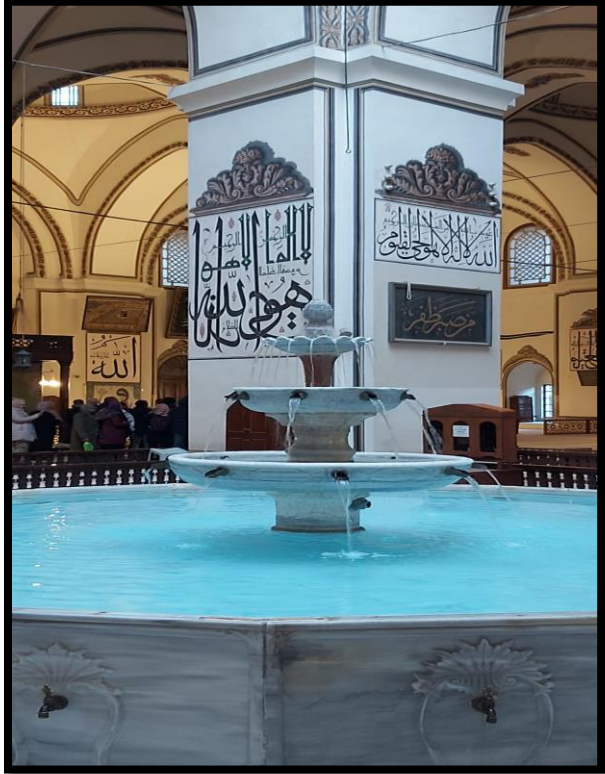
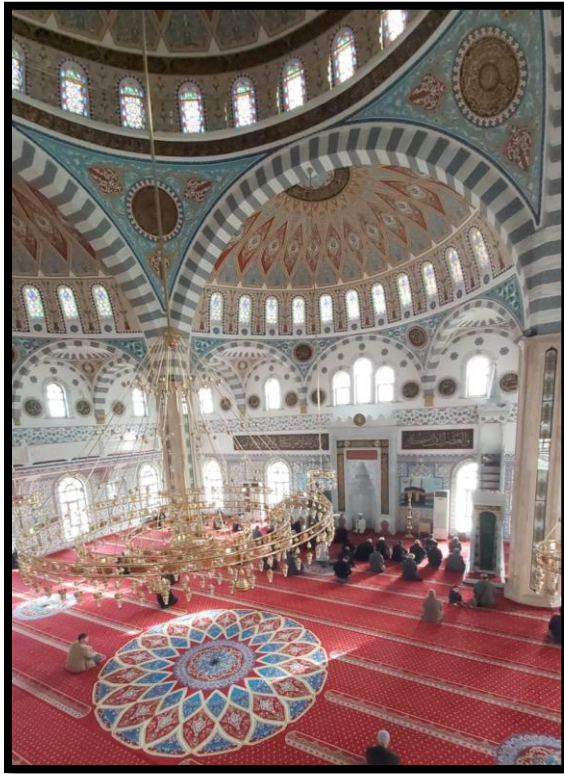
43 providentially destined souls formed a 'Caravan of Converts' under the good hands of the partnership between The Convert Muslim Foundation and the Turkish Diyanet Foundation in the UK, and armed with the short powerful Quranic dua of "*Rabbi zidni ilm*", "*My Lord, increase me in knowledge*", off they ventured with hearts buoyant from excited anticipation, walking shoes at the ready, and no sign of weakness in actual Achille's heels at least!

We were happy to hear that pulses went a leaping when eyes were first set on the wonderful Byzantine and Ottoman domes and tapering minarets silhouetted on the Istanbul skyline. Amongst the dynamic kaleidoscope of cultural amalgamation that the city manifests, the travellers encountered divine beauty and peace in its magnificent mosques. The melodic and rhythmic adhans simultaneously resounding from dozens of mosques calling worshippers to pray, awakened and attuned their hearts to their higher purposes.



Leaving Bosphorus behind, the Bursa experience also bejewelled the memories of the sojourning companions. The great green city steeped in history and heritage was felt through its architecture and art. The exquisite Turkish calligraphy that loves to compose elaborate knots was impressed upon everyone.

The last leg of the trip took the caravan deeper into Anatolia to Konya, once a capital in the great Seljuk Empire, and famous for being the resting place of the illustrious 13th century poet and mystic Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, whose influence has spread far across borders and religions and time. Geometrical motifs with continuous axial and diagonal symmetry adorn the city's buildings, expressing and embodying unity within diversity and the order and harmony that governs all things.



In the words of Rumi, “*The looking itself is a trace of what we are looking for.*” We hope that having returned from their journey, this caravan of converts will continue to tread softly and strongly, with firm faith, the path founded upon revelation, and experience countless more intimations of the sublime and sacred in whichever part of life’s road they are on.



Having allowed the participants time to rest, digest, and reflect on their venture, we caught up with them in due course to hear their thoughts and capture their sentiments about the project.

What shone through foremost was the gratitude directed toward CMF and the Diyanet Foundation for the opportunity they’d been given, and the indelible impressions they were now left with:

“I’d like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the brother Ensari and all the Diyanet team & Convert Care team. Jazzakhum Allahu kheiran for such a blessed and inspiring Islamic tour.”

Ruth Ruqaiyah

“To the organisers, I’m at a loss for words as to what this opportunity has given my soul. I will never be able to thank you enough.”

Jamila



Research shows that Islam in Turkey is found to shape even the way travelers' experiences in overwhelmingly positive ways, no matter your background. Islam is inextricably intertwined with Turkish culture. We were pleased how everyone in this cohort wanted to praise the welcoming and helpful nature of the natives and especially the tour guides:

“Thank you to the leaders of this group for an experience I will never forget.”

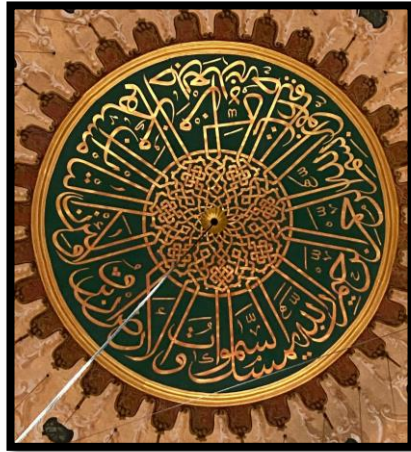
Claudio

“May Allah reward the organisers and their families for this kindness, patience and hospitality, treating us so well and safeguarding us.”

Bo

“I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in organising such an amazing religious and cultural tour. The memories I have come away with from the trip are priceless. Alhamdulillah. I am more than humbled by the fine example of hospitality from beginning to end. Your efforts have provided a deeply enriching experience. I am immensely thankful for the opportunity to explore the rich heritage of Türkiye.”

Yusuf



At CMF we held high hopes that our aim of cultural and spiritual immersion would have an enriching, empowering, educative, if not transformative, effect in the hearts of the guests. These aspirations were indeed actualised by all accounts! Be it the reverberation of the adhan in the cities' streets; the unparalleled design of the iconic architecture with its tessellations and illuminated calligraphy; the showcase of the rich history and heritage of the religion through the *'engaging, informative and beautifully delivered seminars'*; the camaraderie and sense of community from living and eating and being together amongst those who have a shared understanding of embracing this Deen; and of course the respect and decorum with which they were attended to by the hosts; indeed depths of the hearts were stirred and enlivened, fostering a deeper sense of connection to the Creator and commitment to the Deen of Islam:

"I have had such a beautiful and blessed trip, such a gift Allah subhana wa tala has gifted me, memories I will cherish, I will miss seeing every single person's beautiful face, I pray that Allah Almighty will keep our friendships strong on the siratal mustaqeem."

Marissa

"It was so uplifting to see my chosen faith in action. This trip has left a profound impact on me. I feel deeply emotional about how it unfolded— the people I met, the mosques where we prayed, and the places we visited. Greatly benefitted from being amongst inspiring Muslims and being spiritually guided by the leaders and shuyukh who

taught us so well. Seeing how the Turkish people lived Islam in their daily lives was also inspiring.”

Anon

“I felt very comfortable with my identity as a western convert to Islam.”

Anon

These are but a few testimonials and so all that remains to be said is alhamdulillah. Alhamdulillah. Alhamdulillah!

