

Turkish Bath

by Penny

We were in Istanbul, recently, and my friend Judy said we should sign up for a Turkish Bath & Massage. I didn't really know how that differed from a regular massage, but I was game.

We were spending the day touring, so we made the appointment for 5:00pm, figuring that we would be exhausted by then. We got hung up in the Grand Bazaar, letting a rug vendor chew our brains, trying to sell us carpets. The whole process is very interesting. But that is another story. We finally got ourselves out of there, and perused the bazaar a bit more, until we could no longer stand the pressure coming at us from the vendors. The carpet people would have been happy to set us in the right direction back to our hotel, but we thought we could just grab a cab outside. Turned out that the traffic was so bad, because it was Ramadan, and a Saturday, and the cab was going to be \$40. We figured that they were just trying to "take" us. We decided to walk back to the hotel. But we didn't really know where the hotel was. Thus the adventure began. We started out asking a guy selling jeans, and he headed us in the right direction. We walked up past one mosque, then all across the University, and then on to another Mosque. Once there, we asked someone else. He pointed us down the hill and off we went towards our hotel.....never really knowing if we were headed in the right direction or not. We had a card from the hotel, and people kept advising us. Just 600 meters down the hill. At one point Judy said "I think I'm going to cry". We just kept trudging on, and the last person we talked to told us the hotel was just another 200 meters, around the corner. We were so happy to finally find the hotel. All the while we had been going in the right direction. Whew!

On to the massage.....Judy was already in the steam room, and I didn't want to take a steam first, so I was told to go and "just lay down" on this huge big area of hot marble. Called a goebektas - a very large octagonal marble slab, about 2 feet off of the ground. It seemed too hot to me. When the Turkish masseur came in, he put my towel down, and took the little plaid thingie (which I had on my head, at this point), made me lay down, and covered my privates with the plaid cloth - barely! But then the pleasure began. He poured warm water all over me, and began scrubbing me with a luffa sponge, all over my body. Exfoliating months of dead skin off of me. Sometimes it kind of hurt, but mostly it felt pretty good. What followed after was the amazing part. Warm perfumed water was poured all over, rinsing me off, and a tingling began. Like hundreds of teeny tiny hands massaging me all over. I didn't even know what was happening. I just knew it felt amazing. I finally opened one eye a bit, and saw Judy covered with suds! Thus the tingling. Millions of bubbles popping all over me. It felt so good. Then warm oil was poured over, and the massaging began. The two Turkish masseurs were talking back and forth some. I didn't like that too much. Then he asked me "how does it feel?" I guess I wasn't moaning enough, and showing enough pleasure. I said it felt wonderful, and thought -

please shut up!! What woman doesn't want some man running his hands all over her body with hot perfumed oil. And strange man at that. Let's not have to talk about it. Afterwards there was a lot of rinsing with warm water, and then I was asked to get up and go over to a basin, where he proceeded to wash my hair! Oh! When has that ever happened? It felt so great.

Then I was done. The 6:00 rush was on, and I walked out into a crowd of men, clad in teeny bikini suits, asking me "how was it?" There was me, looking like a complete wreck, wet hair, small towel around my ample body. "Great, just great" I said, and hurried off to the dressing room.

Later I found out why Judy thought she would cry, on the way back to the hotel. It wasn't because we might be lost.....she thought we might miss our massage!!