

to not sit close to the front, where you could see the road. It is customary to pass on curves, or down the middle of a two-lane road—at high speed. But everybody does it, and expects it, so we didn't die. It doesn't do much for the nerves, though.

Included in the day trips was Antakya (Antioch), where the oldest church in Christendom is situated. It is amazing to literally walk in the same places as many of the historical figures from the Bible.

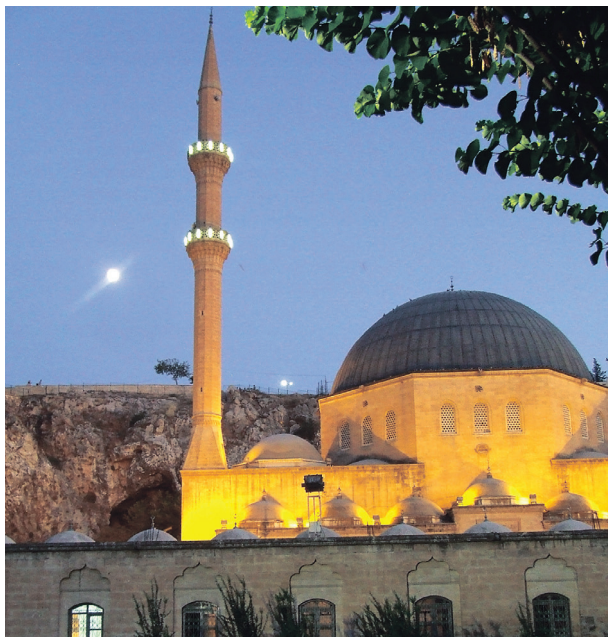
Another location, and truly the most remarkable one for me, was the city of Sanliurfa, with many wonders to see. When we arrived in the evening, we found a marvelous restaurant situated in caves located directly above the largest mosque in the region. As we descended after eating a delicious, primarily vegetarian meal laced with exotic flavours, we came across an ethereal scene—a small lake bathed in an eerie, green glow. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* had nothing on this! It was part of a waterway that held sacred carp, and was a major tourist attraction. Even late at night, the place was packed with locals and tourists alike.

Our main reason to visit Sanliurfa was the site called Gobekli tepe, which is the oldest temple in the world.

How old? Well, when we think of old temples, Stonehenge comes to mind. Gobekli tepe is actually 12,000 years old, twice the age of Stonehenge. The remarkable animal carvings were simply executed and delightful to look at. Several dozen of them were spread around the site.

Chapter 8: 'Merhaba'

"Merhaba" is the local greeting for "hello", and I was always warmly responded to when I used it, even with strangers. Some would give a slight bow, others would repeat it quickly two or three times and others would



Top left: Moonrise over the main mosque in Sanliurfa.



Top right : The fox, one of the magnificent stone carvings on the pillars at Gobekli tepe.



The pond connected to the location of the sacred carp.



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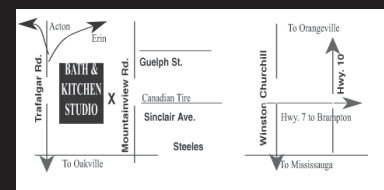
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