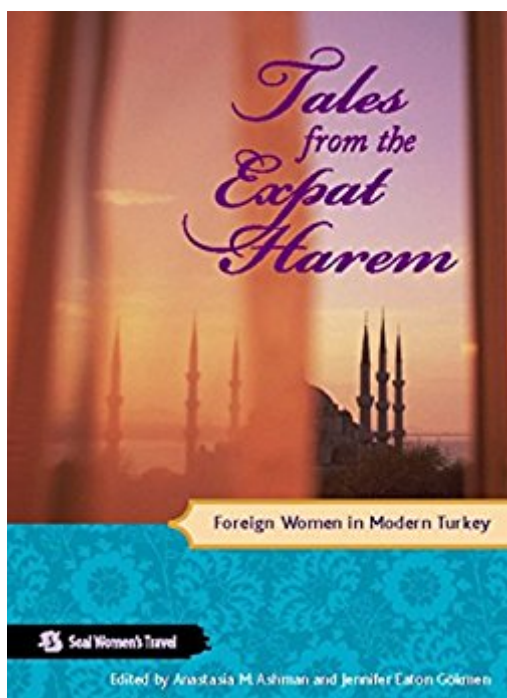


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# Tales From The Expat Harem: Foreign Women In Modern Turkey



## Synopsis

As the Western world struggles to comprehend the paradoxes of modern Turkey, *Tales from the Expat Harem* reveals its most personal nuances. This illuminating anthology provides a window into the country from the perspective of thirty-two expatriates from seven different nations—artists, entrepreneurs, Peace Corps volunteers, archaeologists, missionaries, and others—who established lives in Turkey for work, love, or adventure. Through narrative essays covering the last four decades, these diverse women unveil the mystique of the “Orient,” describe religious conflict, embrace cultural discovery, and maneuver familial traditions, customs, and responsibilities. Poignant, humorous, and transcendent, the essays take readers to weddings and workplaces, down cobbled Byzantine streets, into boisterous bazaars along the Silk Road, and deep into the feminine stronghold of steamy Ottoman bathhouses. The outcome is a stunning collection of voices from women suspended between two homes as they redefine their identities and reshape their worldviews.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The selection of women writers was varied enough to get glimpses of both urban and village life, and in both the East and West of Turkey, which I learned from this book are very different areas. I didn't care for all of the stories - which is fine with me; I don't expect to identify with every female on the planet. The writing quality varies. While I presume the editor(s) did a bunch of cleaning up, they did not take away the different voices, which is a good thing. If you are curious about what a modern, Muslim-dominated society looks like, especially from a female (and usually feminist), non-Turkish point of view, this is a great place to start. I suspect readers will be pleasantly surprised. I certainly was.

A very interesting and enlightening story told from the standpoint of very independent women. If this is a problem for the reader then stop now. These stories tell of the excitement of being an independent person, of taking chances, of not being afraid of what lies ahead, of looking at challenges as well as opportunities as a way toward growth and fulfillment. This is a story about the women of today who are not afraid to accept challenges.

I ordered five books about Turkey to read in preparation for my trip there this coming May, and this was by far my favorite. In fact, I think it's my favorite travel book ever. The book is composed of short essays by various women, mostly American, who have lived in Turkey and you can get a real inside personalized look into the country from their writing. These women don't just give you the history and geography, although there is some of that. They get you into the kitchen, into the bedroom, into the workplace, and into the baths in various locations throughout the country. Their stories are about people and relationships and from reading this book, I feel like I have a much better understanding of the Turkish culture. The tone of the book is conversational, and after reading a couple of books on Turkish history, *Tales From the Expat Harem*, seemed like talking with friends who happened to all be accomplished storytellers. I would have enjoyed this book even if I didn't have a trip to Turkey on my calendar.

I was in Turkey when I started reading this and I continued to read and enjoy it when I got home. Each story rings true and so many of the anecdotes reflected aspects of life that I came across while there. Definitely gave me an insight into Turkish life for women. The only limitation is that - I think - most of the women were from a white, middle-class, English-speaking, American or Anglo background. That's just my impression, maybe I'm wrong. It would have been very interesting to find a more diverse group but I still really enjoyed it and would recommend reading it whether you go to

Turkey or not.

Not one of the women essayists published in this anthology is a tourist or a casual observer of Turkish culture. Among them are professional businesswomen, teachers, artists, writers, a nurse, a reporter and a Christian missionary. All have lived in Turkey long enough, and behind the patina of tourist romanticism, to have entered into the culture as an active participant. Some have learned Turkish, some have married Turkish men, some have worked independently, and all are excellent writers. They come from an assortment of countries, yet share a basic attitude of receptiveness and willingness to explore life beyond the cultural milieu in which they've been raised. This is a book for seekers and students and those who would like to revisit their own experiences with all things Turkish. It will not help persons who want to plan a vacation to Turkey, but it will engage all the senses-- and especially the heart-- of anyone who reads it.

This collection of brief memoirs was perfect for me while I travelled in Turkey. Gave me lots of bits & pieces of real life for American women there, cited places & customs I was seeing, great for those points where I needed to pull back from the real experiences and sink into a book. Because they were short stories, I never worried about getting too immersed in the written form. Some were much better written than others, but perfect for my trip. I kept citing things I'd read to my traveling companion. Glad I chose it.

Turkey... a few short years ago it wasn't even on my radar screen of places to visit; but after befriending a number of Turks online and experiencing how incredibly warm, open and loving these people are, I suddenly found myself deeply interested in learning more about this exotic country and yes, eager to visit someday. Heartwarming, infuriating, passionate, free-spirited, stubborn, embracing, zest for life are some of the words and adjectives that come to mind when I think of the stories in Tales from the Expat Harem. In some ways Turkish culture is much more conservative than Western culture, yet in other ways, more open, uninhibited! From caring neighbors to overbearing in-laws, relentless male pursuers to protective bus drivers, each story is like an intimate little window into Turkish life and is much more personal than what you'd find in a typical travel book. Aggravating, touching, dramatic, never boring; Turkey beckons me even stronger now than before! ;)

We don't seem to be too knowledgeable about countries in the Middle East area and this book will

explode any and all stereotypes holding you back from learning from the Turkish experience of several diverse western women who either live there or have spent much time there. Each story is written by a different woman, usually about a different angle or aspect of the culture, and it is rich with warmth and human kindness and real people. It has certainly inspired me not to be afraid to travel to the region and I will the first chance I get! Captivating writing, delightful, mind-opening stories. Don't miss this book. I passed it along to my daughter. Halfway through, she called and said she was heading to the local Istanbul Cafe (here in the southwest) for lunch and was dying to travel to Turkey! It's contagious, the enthusiasm and love of the writers for the country and its people. Don't miss it!

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