



Turkish delight

Christine Jarvis and her husband Malcolm enjoy Turkey with all the trimmings on the Club's 40-day escorted tour of the country. **CHRISTINE** picks up the story



Malcolm's arm, I leant forward and felt a bubble of excitement rising up in my throat.



"It's absolutely amazing," I whispered in awe, as one after

another multi-coloured hot air balloons floated into sight, gently sailing along as if on a silky smooth sea.

Tearing my eyes away from the balloons for a moment, I gazed dreamily at the Cappadocia landscape.

Gently undulating hills gave way to craggy dips and crevices where shadows seemed endless in the strong, early morning sun.

Above: Hot air balloons fly over Love Valley, Cappadocia. Right: A view of the Bosphorus including the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul

We were almost halfway through our 40-day escorted tour of Turkey and having the time of our lives.

I'd fancied the trip as soon as I'd seen it in the Club's European brochure.

We'd already been on the Club's escorted tours of Morocco and Greece, each time returning home to Castleford, Yorkshire, tanned and happy,

with as many memories as we had photographs.

Showing the brochure to Malcolm, I knew he'd be as enthusiastic as me.

We loved exploring and now we were retired – me from my job as a civil servant and Malcolm, a miner – we indulged our passion for travel whenever we could.

"I like the look of this very

much," he said, leaning forward, peering closely at the tour page.

I knew he would. The trip featured visits to the British and Gallipoli battlefield sites, somewhere he'd always wanted to visit.

Booking it had been easy and the itinerary offered that magical mix of the old and the new – history mingled with discovery.

We loved the escorted tours because going away in a group was reassuring.

When travelling by motorhome, as we were, or by caravan as some of the others on the tour would be – it was reassuring to know that if something happened, from a flat tyre to a breakdown, there would always be people on hand to help out. And, of course, it was always nice to make new friends.





Clockwise from far left: The sun sets over the Blue Mosque in Istanbul; a pennon for the escorted tour; Kaymakli underground city



Our tour would begin in San Marino, Italy, where we would meet the other people who had signed up for the trip.

As Malcolm slipped our motorhome into first gear and we began rolling off the P&O ferry at Zeebrugge, I smiled, happy and relaxed - until we heard a massive bang.

"What was that?" I said as Malcolm met my worried gaze with a furrowed brow.

We soon found out. The water tank under our motorhome had caught on the ferry ramp and the brackets had snapped off.

Everyone at P&O was really helpful and it wasn't long before the water tank was stashed inside the van and we were whizzing to Bruges 12 miles away for new clips.

Fully restored we set off for San Marino where we met up with our fabulous Tour Escorts,

Pat and Alan Gadd, who were chatty and full of facts about where we would be going, the highlights and what we could expect.

We had to travel through Greece to get to Turkey and along the way stopped off at the 9th Century Meteora Monasteries perched precariously on the cliffs in Kalambaka.

Spending the night at campsites along the way, we quickly made friends with the other couples in our group, spending the evenings laughing over a glass or two of wine and beer.

After time spent relaxing on the beach in Alexandroupolis we were off to Turkey and the historic city of Edirne, the second capital of the former Ottoman Empire.

With the visas purchased, road toll card bought and a night's camping under our belts, we marvelled at Edirne's famous

Selimiye Mosque on a guided tour before discovering some gruesome facts at the fascinating Museum of Health and Medicine, which was in use from 1488 to 1909.

The days were flying by. An excursion to Istanbul included the majestic splendour of the Blue Mosque, the endless passages of the world-famous Grand Bazaar and the scurrilous tales still salaciously told of life inside Topkapi Palace centuries ago.

Along the way we'd also seen young soldiers practising manoeuvres in Ataturk's Mausoleum.

And for some, an outing to the Goreme Valley to visit the Kaymakli underground city would stay with them forever.

Now, sipping tea flicking

through the photos of our trip, I think back to the hot air balloons.

For me, they were the highlight of a tour that had also taken in Ankara, Antalya, Ephesus and the caravanserai, which dated back to 1229 and was used by the camel caravans travelling on the ancient silk routes, to name but a few stop-offs.

It had been a wonderful experience and after clocking up a total of 5,000 miles door to door, I can't help but smile.

For there on the coffee table is a copy of our trusty travel brochure, looking a little dog-eared, especially around about page 118, detailing the Club's tour of Italy - our next adventure.

**■ Interview by
Leda Reynolds.**



Malcolm and Christine travelled on the Club's 40-day escorted tour of Turkey, which ran from 10 May to 18 June.

The trip includes ferries, campsites, some meals, excursions, services of experienced tour escorts, two-night hotel stay in Istanbul, travel pack, maps, European drivers' handbook and Camping Card International.

Anyone who would like further details about the Club's May/June 2014 trip to Turkey can visit myccc.co.uk/escortedtours or call 0845 130 7701 or 024 7642 2024.