

Definitive take on city provided by guidebook

ISTANBUL
Anatolia News Agency

Seeking to move beyond a clichéd guide to Istanbul that starts and ends at the Hagia Sophia, the authors of a new book on the city hope to provide a comprehensive – and critical – look at the metropolis.

"The historical peninsula is very important but it is a very small part of Istanbul," Saffet Emre Tonguç, who has been working as a professional tour guide for 23 years, recently told Anatolia news agency. "We present the city in a frame from Büyükdere, Silivri and Çatalca [on the European side] to Gebze, Danca and Eskişehir [on the Anatolian side]."

Tonguç and British travel writer Pat Yale, who is best known for her contributions to the Turkey editions of the "Lonely Planet" franchise, are the authors of "Istanbul: the Ultimate Guide" ("Istanbul Hakkında Herşey" in its Turkish edition), a comprehensive tome that aims to reveal all of Istanbul's historical and cultural richness.

The guide lists over 2,000 places in the city, including restaurants, cafes, bars, shops, hotels, hostels, night clubs and Turkish baths, with 3,000 photos, illustrations, maps, gravures and miniatures.

"Istanbul: the Ultimate Guide," which received the Best Tourism Book of the Year 2010 award from Skai International Istanbul, was favorably reviewed by the International Herald Tribune and twice by the New York Times. The Turkish version was published in June, while the English version hit shelves in October. So far, 20,000 copies of the book have been printed.

Yale said tour guides brought tourists to certain places but not to Istanbul's central places like Bağdat Avenue, adding that she and Tonguç had thus used photos of places relatively unknown to tourists in the book.

The difference between "Istanbul: the Ultimate Guide" and other guide books is that the new release includes everything about the city, Yale said. "Generally, books do not talk about the secret places. We have prepared a guide book for everyone."

Uniquely, the book shows the different viewpoints of a Turk and a Brit, said Tonguç, who has served as a guide to Oprah Winfrey, Colin Powell and Calvin Klein. "The Turkish and English versions of the books are different. The Turkish one is more critical. We write what bothers us in the city and why we want things to be changed. Some of the critiques in the Turkish books may not concern foreigners. The English version presents the viewpoint of foreigners."

When he and Yale decided to write the book in 2007, they did not plan on producing such a thick work, he said. "We wanted people to imagine the places when they read the book. It is not possible for anyone to see every place in the city as there is not enough time. We present a book that is very rich in terms of visuals. Even though readers may not go to a place, they will have an idea about it."

Tonguç said they also aimed to reveal some of the hidden secrets of the city. "There is no other city in the world that served as the capital of three magnificent empires. Istanbul has many things from these empires and we want to show them to readers."

101 places, 3,000 photos

Tonguç said readers could find information about the Çoban Mustafa Paşa Külliye in Gebze as well as extraordinary hotels in Ağva, Mimar Sinan's bridge in Büyükdere, city walls in Silivri and Ovid Tower in Zekeriyaköy.

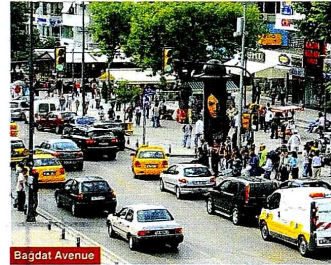
He said they took 26,000 photos for the book and gathered 6,000 more from 60 photographers. "We showcase 101 places with 3,000 photos. We used old postcards as well as special maps and three-dimensional drawings."

Tonguç said Istanbul had more than 20 structures repurposed from churches

A comprehensive guide book on Istanbul by British editor Pat Yale and professional Turkish tour guide Saffet Emre Tonguç looks to provide a different take on the city from other resource books by focusing on locations less well-known by visitors. 'Istanbul: The Ultimate Guide,' which has won international awards, is available in English and Turkish



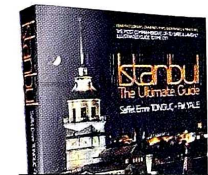
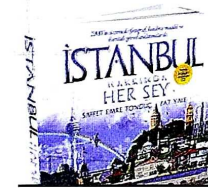
AUTHORS: Professional tourist guide Saffet Emre Tonguç (L) and travel editor Pat Yale released the comprehensive book on Istanbul, which reveals less-known places in the city unlike other usual guides.



Bagdat Avenue



Çoban Mustafa Paşa Külliye



to mosques – including Hagia Sophia, but many others as well.

He said they also wrote about the city's underground and open-air cisterns as well as interesting events in the city. "Istanbul was the scene of two James Bond films. People generally know 'James Bond: The World Is Not Enough' but not 'James Bond: From Russia with Love.' This film was shot in the Yerebatan Cistern."

Istanbul damaged by past decisions

Tonguç said they had benefited from the "Istanbul Encyclopedia" published by the History Foundation and "Strolling through Istanbul" by John Freely and Hilary Sumner-Boyd in writing the book and added that there was much misinformation on the Internet but that they had used trusted resources.

The guide said he was able to observe much about the modern-day changes being made to the city while researching the book.

"The historic peninsula and the Bosphorus are really damaged. Everywhere in the city is concrete. The number of wooden houses is diminishing too fast," he said.

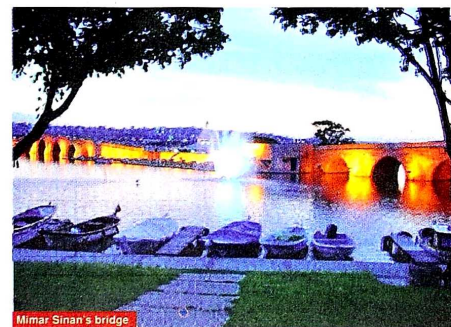
"One of the main streets, where the heart of the city beats, is Atatürk Boulevard between Aksaray and Üsküdar. The boulevard was designed by Frenchman Henri Prost, who planned the city during World War II. During its construction, Prost caused many Ottoman artifacts to be destroyed," he said. "At the time of Adnan Menderes [in the 1950s], the city's historic fabric was destroyed in order to construct roads. Vatan and Millet streets were constructed but they should have preserved [the area inside the city walls] and constructed the modern city outside."

As a result of all the changes, a homogenous air now pervades much of the city, Tonguç said. "Almost all the churches and synagogues are always closed. They are in a desperate situation," he said.

Yale first came to the city in 1974; she has been writing guide books for many years and has lived for the last 12 years in a fairy chimney in Cappadocia.

The author said she loved Istanbul very much and that it was one of the most interesting cities in the world to her. "In our opinion, the most successful restoration in Istanbul is the Egyptian Consulate General building."

Tonguç said he and Yale were presently starting work on a new book on Turkey's secret places.



Mimar Sinan's bridge