



Covered Bazaar with its corridors of spices, sweets and a range of typically Turkish or Istanbul shopping is an intangible heritage experience in itself. Its architecture is deep with layers of history and diversity. If you get to Coptic quarters of the bazaar then you realise the complexity of heritage values embedded in the bazaar



Süleymaniye popularly known as the Blue Mosque to outsiders is a masterpiece of Sinan architecture. Topkapı Saray and the Blue Mosque in the archaeological zone; the Sehzade and Süleymaniye mosques are two of the architect Koca Sinan's major works. These were constructed under Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566)



The World Heritage listed property of Istanbul includes unique monuments and masterpieces of universal architecture such as St. Sophia which was built by Anthemius of Tralles and Isidorus of Miletus in 532-537. Hagia Sophia became a model for an entire family of churches and later mosques and before the mosaics of palaces and churches of Constantinople influenced the Eastern and Western Christian art

WHY I LOVE ISTANBUL

I have worked on short-term and long-term projects on all the five continents over the past four decades. I am often asked about my favourite cities. It is easy as an international expert on heritage cities to answer the question as one can rattle off names of so many amazing cities. I learnt a very important lesson quite early on – that living is different from visiting. A Finnish immigrant living in Mackay, Queensland, Australia, said that when you go somewhere you see but when you migrate you live the difference. It was in 1990. I was working on the national guidelines for heritage diversity and cultural diversity capacity building for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in Canberra. Understanding the difference between living and visiting remains the global focus of the struggle between host communities and marauding visitation. Local heritage values are often drowned in the tsunamis of the marketplace. So which cities address this situation better and why do I like them.

Copenhagen, Vancouver and Melbourne win us over with a range of quality of life indicators. The former for its bicycle culture, winter swimming, creative energy, intellectual ferment and passion for democracy. The latter garlanded by its marine and mountainous hinterland offers a range of opportunities for young and all. It teaches you to respect the First Nations and the Salish values and the mosaic of Canadian immigrant heritage. Melbourne for me is not only one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse places on earth, it caters to the appetite and sensibilities of all foodies. The first time I went from London to Melbourne I realised that the Australian city provides more diverse cuisine at the most reasonable prices, compared to any other major city in the world.

Rio de Janeiro. How could you

not love Rio for its music, dance and carnival of samba. Despite losing their national house of treasures and the government scrapping culture as a portfolio, Rio celebrates life. It is about your sense of belief in yourself as a Brazilian. Rio is one of the most exciting cities on the World Heritage List. Samba is the spirit that lives on through the hearts of everyone as an egalitarian moment. The centrality of culture and creativity to struggle with poverty alleviation is best exemplified in Rio. I lost my heart in Rio. My appetite in Melbourne. But my spiritual self is in Istanbul.



Istanbul is layered with significant and aesthetically outstanding cultural landscapes and waterscapes. Archaeological remains and outstanding architecture include an exceptional clustering of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman monuments. It is surrounded by the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn and the Marmara Sea. It is the only World Heritage site that spans two continents – Asia and Europe

If Turkey is at the crossroads of civilisations from Asia and Europe then Istanbul is the epicentre of inspiration, innovation and pluralism. It is often patronisingly dubbed as the most moderate Muslim nation. We never say moderate Christian nations in Europe. So why this framing of Turkey from the European gaze? Istanbul defies all stereotypes of Europeans. In fact, it is one of the most loved cities by Europeans who love to visit, holiday and often invite its thinkers and writers to European literature festivals and conferences. Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk is most heard. Is

tanbul was the European City of Culture in 2010. I took advantage of the opportunity with Common Ground Publishing and convened our Inclusive Research Network meeting in Istanbul. (<https://on-museums.com/about>). Theme: Intercultural Dialogue and Bridging Continents.

International Institute for the Inclusive Museum considers the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO) as the framework for promoting cultural diversity and universal heritage through strategic partnerships. (<http://inclusivemuseums.org/>) It was established as part of the

list at the loss of the praxis.

It was for the greatest period of its history known as Constantinople. The conservation of the heritage of the city is one of the best examples in the world for understanding, assessing and conserving the layers of heritage significance over millennia. The research and evidence based heritage interpretation of its sites and places of significance would make even the most populist heritage expert in India think twice before uttering falsehoods like that Buddha had been to Amara-vathi and that a statue has been built on his footsteps and promot-



Istanbul is more integrated and evolved across the cultural borders. This photo wall installation makes the statement that Europe could aspire to be inclusive as it struggles to accept Muslims as Europeans

ed in the name of Buddhist tourism.

Istanbul with its 90% Muslim population and a range of ethno-specific cultural groups teaches one not just what is moderate Islam but most importantly cross cultural understanding and living together in neighbourhoods. In some ways Europeans with its predominantly Christian and India Hindu could learn a thing or two from Istanbul. People respect the other far more openly and include you in their family like friendship. The ability to be once own spiritual self and at the same time participate in the contempo-

Images: International Institute for the Inclusive Museum



Glazed bricks in the Archaeological Museum, which along with the Topkapı Palace and Hagia Sophia provide valuable contemporary approaches to museology in World Heritage discourse. Hagia Sophia is a museum that is both a mosque and a church at once, used for prayers and Christian symbols and frescos are preserved along with the later Islamic motifs and overlaid architecture and calligraphy

rary world of broadened recreational spectrum of neighbourhoods is quintessential urbanism of Istanbul. Women in jeans and T-shirts marched in defiance of the imposition of burqa and niqab, not all that long ago. No wonder, they lead the intellectual circles of the city as different from the stereotypes of coffee houses with men smoking. It is not as if women are into a segregated salon culture, but they are there occupying the public space as equal to any one as multicultural sophisticates.

The public culture of Istanbul somehow defies all pigeonholing – it is beyond the straightjackets of taxonomy. It is no wonder that while Europe struggles to see how it could add intangible heritage to its over listed World Heritage inscriptions, Istanbul lives the continuity of its heritage values in a more inclusive and holistic way. Whether it is the covered bazaar or the churches and mosques or politics, Istanbul has an organic character that projects for easy consumption and memory making diverse experiences that are cross cutting. It is an exemplar of the so called 'experiential tourism' a phrase much used and abused in India. Once you have been to Istanbul, you are seduced by it. But if you stay there long enough you cannot leave it. A touch of spice is imbued across Istanbul. What I respect most is that even though the President called fresh elections to see if he could capture the electorate, he lost in quick succession. It is this fierce self-respect, commitment to secularism and pride in one's own culture and heritage that makes Istanbul so special.



PROF. DR. AMARESWAR GALLA

a.galla@yahoo.com.au

(Professor Dr. Amareswar Galla, an unhyphenated Indo Danish Australian, has been frequently in Istanbul as a heritage expert)

NEXT WEEK

Heritage Matters will take you to the World Heritage site of Sanchi

Past Columns of Heritage Matters can now be downloaded at the new website: <http://inclusivemuseums.org/index.php/heritage-matters/>