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Awkward Tales from the 'Bul #2: On Cleanliness

By **Kyndall McDorman** - April 2, 2017

A few years ago, on a freezing, snowy day, my roommate and I climbed our way up one of Istanbul's steep hills and hopped on a bus, griping about having to go to work with the weather as it was. Little did we know, this bus ride was to be a lesson on Turkish cleanliness.

The bus was practically empty, with just a *teyze* a few rows behind us and a couple at the back of the bus keeping us company. As my roommate and I chatted, I casually ran my fingers through my long blonde hair a few times.

In a matter of seconds, that *teyze*, with a sweet, floral headscarf framing her soft cheeks, came roaring up the aisle yelling something in Turkish. She was undeniably pissed, and neither of us had learned enough Turkish at that point to have a clue what she was saying.

We just sat there with our eyes as wide as plates and side-eyed each other. Once she realised I couldn't understand, she shook her finger and she said "What country from? You bad woman."

Both of us, still completely clueless, started to giggle nervously.

The *teyze* began searching the floor and picked up something close to invisible and held it right in front of my face – a couple of my long, blonde hairs. Evidently, a few hairs had fallen onto the floor of the bus as I obliviously ran my fingers through.

She glared at me while dropping the miniscule hairs onto my lap and then pointed to the floor. She proceeded to the front of the bus, livid, to tell the bus driver what a horrible foreigner had done in his vehicle, and then escaped the hell she was dealing with on the public bus. Poor thing.

The bus driver was, unfortunately for me, of the same mindset as the *teyze* and tried to make me get on the floor and find the hairs. Being the rebel that I was, I chose to ignore his request.

A mistake? Maybe.

We continued on our way and pushed the *DURACAK* button to get off as we neared our stop. We watched, regretfully, as our stop passed by without so much as a tap on the brakes. Pedal to the metal, instead. I was to suffer for my wrongdoing.

It wasn't until the couple at the back of the bus yelled at the driver because they also wanted to get off that the bus stopped.

Don't get me wrong. I love that Turks are probably the most hygienic people on Earth, in my experience at least.

I whole-heartedly miss the bidet feature of toilets once I'm out of Turkey. Turks most likely have some of the cleanest derrières in existence. Their cleanliness is especially nice when you're dating a Turk, in a car or home, or receiving homemade food.

I'm a little too lax for ALL of the Turkish rules on cleanliness, though. I'm not opposed to walking around the house without *terlik*, setting my *çanta* on the kitchen table even though it has been on the floor of the metro – or God forbid, letting a few of my hairs fall to the floor of an almost empty bus.

Featured images courtesy of [Talya Baker](#) and [Sveta Nekrasova](#).

Awkward Tales from the 'Bul is a series of the funny, strange and utterly confusing experiences we experience in Istanbul.

To contribute to this series, email your submission or query to: editor@yabangee.com.

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Kyndall, an Oklahoman, has been exploring Istanbul for the last four years. She completed an MBA here and is now a teacher. A great deal of her time is spent traveling and learning anything and everything unknown to her. Oftentimes, she can be found riding her bike along the sea, planning her next trip to a foreign destination or snapping shots around the city.

