

# Destination Turkey

Connecting Western Europe and the Balkans to Central Asia and the Middle East, Turkey has been a kingpin in Eurasian history. Silk Rd traders, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Mongolian horsemen were just a few of the folk who passed through the country, while the Ottoman sultans used İstanbul as the capital of an empire that sprawled from Budapest to Baghdad.

Given this historical prominence, it's unsurprising that Turkey conjures up strong images. There's Turkish cuisine (did someone mention kebabs?), Mediterranean and Aegean beaches, İstanbul's minaret-punctured skyline, and exotic bazaars and hamams. But the home of Troy and Ephesus also boasts more Greek and Roman ruins than Greece and Italy, and unique landscapes such as fairy chimney-dotted Cappadocia and Nemrut Dağı (Mt Nemrut), with its decapitated stone heads. This is the place to get stuck into activities ranging from kayaking over an underwater city to watching dervishes whirl.

It's also a country where modernisation is gathering momentum. The Marmaray subway line under the Bosphorus and a 1¼-hour rail link between Ankara and Konya are set to open in the coming years. Technology-loving Turks make the country the world's third-highest user of MSN Messenger, with a third of its 75 million inhabitants chatting.

None of the chat is buzzing with excitement about the EU; Turkey became a candidate for membership back in 1999 and many think 2020 will pass before it joins. Nonetheless, Prime Minister Erdoğan's AKP government is working doggedly towards accession, key issues being freedom of speech and resolution of the Cyprus dispute.

Against this broadly progressive background, 2008 was a tumultuous year. The AKP's opponents brought a dramatic closure case against the government, accusing it of 'nonsecular activities' for changing the law banning women's headscarves in schools and workplaces. Political meltdown was avoided when the Constitutional Court ruled against the closure, but many Turks remain uneasy about the government's pro-Islamic leanings.

Another event (that could have been a scene in a Turkish *Da Vinci Code*) was the indictment of conspirators in the Ergenekon plot, which aimed to oust the government by force. İstanbul was also rocked by an attack on the US consulate, in which six people died in a gun battle, and by two bombs that killed 17 and wounded 150.

Officials linked the bombs to the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), although the separatist group has denied responsibility. The Kurdish rebellion has simmered down in southeastern Anatolia and the mountainous area is open to travellers, but the Turkish army has been attacking PKK positions in Kurdish Iraq's Zap Valley. Some fear this will destabilise the most peaceful part of Iraq.

More positively, Turkey is improving its relationship with neighbouring Armenia. President Abdullah Gul became the first Turkish leader to visit Armenia, in a day trip that coincided with the countries' soccer World Cup qualifying match. It was an appropriate occasion for the historic jaunt; most Turks love soccer even more than technology, and the İstanbul clubs Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe have one of the world's great rivalries. Turkey won 2-0 – a better result than its disappointing semi-final defeat by Germany in Euro 2008 – and as good an excuse as any to engage in the traditional Turkish activity of blowing car horns.

**'There's Turkish cuisine, Mediterranean and Aegean beaches, İstanbul's minaret-punctured skyline, and exotic bazaars and hamams.'**

# Getting Started

Travelling in Turkey is a breeze thanks to the laid-back charm of the locals, bus transport that's second to none, and the sheer volume of accommodation options, from friendly cheap-as-chips backpackers to immaculately groomed boutique guest houses. During the height of peak season or on public holidays you should book ahead; at other times you can generally turn up and find your first accommodation choice awaiting.

## WHEN TO GO

Spring (April to May) and autumn (September to October) are the best times to visit, since the climate will be perfect for sightseeing in İstanbul and on the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts. It will be cool in central Anatolia, but not unpleasantly so. Visiting before mid-June or after August may also help you avoid mosquitoes. If your primary drive is for beach-bumming, mid-May to September is perfect for the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, if a little steamy out of the water. The Black Sea coast is best visited between April and September – there will still be rain but not as much of it. Head to eastern Turkey from late June to September, but not before May or after mid-October unless you're prepared for snow, road closures and bone-chilling temperatures.

With the exception of İstanbul, Turkey doesn't really have a winter tourism season (see p18 for more details). Most accommodation along the Aegean, Mediterranean and Black Sea and in some parts of Cappadocia is closed from mid-October until late April. These dates are not set in stone and depend on how the season is going. High season is from May to September, and prices are at their peak; many western Mediterranean businesses double their prices during the period.

Anticipate crowds along all coastal areas from mid-June until early September. You will need to plan ahead when travelling during the four- or five-day Kurban Bayramı festival (p664), as banks shut and ATMs may run out of cash. Also, try not to visit the Gallipoli Peninsula around Anzac Day (25 April) unless it's particularly important for you to be there at that time.

## COSTS & MONEY

Turkey is no longer Europe's bargain-basement destination, but it still offers good value for money. Costs are lowest in eastern Anatolia, and Cappadocia, Selçuk, Pamukkale and Olympos still offer bargain prices. Prices are highest in cities such as İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara, and in the touristy coastal cities and towns, particularly in Mediterranean regions such as between Dalaman and Antalya. In these places you can get by on as little as TL60 per day, provided you use public transport, stay in pensions, share bathrooms and eat out at a basic eatery once a day (add extra for entry to sights). Away from İstanbul and the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, budget travellers can survive on TL40. Throughout the country for just over TL100 per day you can upgrade to midrange hotels with private bathrooms and eat most meals in restaurants. In all cases, when you come to move on, it skews your spend upwards if you are using an intercity bus; the prices are almost as high as in some parts of Europe, eg TL30 to TL35 from İstanbul to Çanakkale. With cash at your fingertips you can live like a sultan from about TL300 per day, enjoying boutique hotels, taking occasional flights, and wining and dining every day.

See Climate Charts (p658) for more information.

### TOURING TURKEY IN WINTER

Unlike other Mediterranean hot spots, Turkey doesn't have a winter tourism season. However, for some travellers winter is the best time to visit Istanbul: expect snow and chilly temperatures, but you get to enjoy the sights without the tourist press, and the touts are too busy savouring the low season to bother you in earnest.

All restaurants and hotels remain open year-round in Istanbul, and in big, nontouristy cities such as Ankara and Izmir where hotels cater primarily to business travellers. It's worth booking ahead throughout the year in such cities, as accommodation can fill up with business people.

Even during a mild winter most hotels and restaurants along the Aegean and Mediterranean, and many in Cappadocia, close from mid-October to late April. Forget about choice – you may have to stay in the one place in town that's open.

Deep snow is a standard feature of the eastern Turkish winter, with mountain passes regularly closed and buses delayed. Even some airports may close because they lack radar equipment. The central and western Anatolian winter is more fickle. One year you can be picnicking in the Ihlara Valley in January, the following year subzero temperatures, deep snow and lethal ice make it impossible to venture further than the nearest shop.

If you're lucky enough to find a hotel open in winter, you'd be well advised to verify whether the heating is turned on before checking in. If the hot water comes from solar panels, beware – like pipes, the panels freeze up in winter.

We have quoted prices in Türk Lirası, or Turkish lira (TL; p666) and occasionally in euros or US dollars, depending on which currency operators quote their prices in.

### TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY

Since our inception in 1973, Lonely Planet has encouraged our readers to tread lightly, travel responsibly and enjoy the magic independent travel affords. International travel is growing at a jaw-dropping rate, and we still firmly believe in the benefits it can bring – but, as always, we encourage you to consider the impact your visit will have on both the global environment and the local economies, cultures and ecosystems.

#### Getting There & Away

There are a number of low-emission ways to get to Turkey from Europe. You can catch ferries and hydrofoils from Greek islands such as Rhodes to Aegean and Mediterranean Turkish ports including Bodrum and Kaş. Ferries also link Brindisi and Ancona in Italy with Çeşme, and Sochi in Russia with Trabzon. Buses cross the borders between Turkey and most of its neighbours, but the train is more romantic. Express services (in name only) connect İstanbul with Thessaloniki (Greece), Bucharest (Romania; connected to Budapest, Hungary) via Sofia (Bulgaria; convenient for Serbia), Aleppo (Syria) and even Tehran (Iran). See p677 for more information.

#### Slow Travel

Although they don't receive good press compared with Turkey's efficient bus network, the country's trains are gaining popularity with slow travellers such as the Man in Seat 61 (see boxed text p690). Try an 'express' train trip like the 1900km, two-day journey from İstanbul to Lake Van (Van Gölü). Another option, popular in areas like Cappadocia where there is a lot to see in a small area, is spending longer in one place and making forays by foot, bike or dolmuş (minibus). *Gület* (wooden yacht) cruises are popular in the western Mediterranean and there are ferries from İstanbul to locations including Bandırma, where you can catch the train to İzmir, and Bodrum.

#### HOW MUCH?

Short dolmuş trip TL1.50

*Hürriyet Daily News*

TL1.50

Old man's *şapka* (hat)

TL10

T-shirt TL10

100km by bus TL25

## Accommodation & Food

The many package holidays available on the Mediterranean coast do little to boost the local economy, as the participating resorts are often isolated and self-contained. Fortunately, independent travel is easy in the region, and the majority of pensions are family run and fantastic value. Ecofriendly hotels and camp sites are popping up along the coast in locations such as Çıralı, Phaselis and Kabak.

The old-fashioned *ev pansiyonu* (pension in private home) is dying out, but the tradition continues in isolated pockets including Gökçeada (where locals may approach you and offer their spare room) and Safranbolu.

Desertification is a long-term threat in central Anatolia, yet Cappadocia's hotel bathrooms are crammed with jacuzzis, massage showers, even minihamams. You could ask for a room without such facilities.

Dining on the coast, avoid large predatory fish, such as swordfish, which are depleted in most fishing areas. Fishing is supposedly banned on the Black Sea in Thrace between June and September, but local fish still finds its way to the table. Mediterranean bluefin tuna is on the verge of extinction.

## Responsible Travel Organisations

Turkey's environmental movement is still embryonic, but there are a few small organisations, such as the Alaçatı Preservation Society (see boxed text p235). Some of the Gallipoli tour agencies are committed to conserving the national park. **Greenpeace Mediterranean** ([www.greenpeace.org/mediterranean](http://www.greenpeace.org/mediterranean)) has an informative website covering coastal issues.

## READING UP

Since time immemorial travellers have written about their rambles across Turkey. Herodotus, Xenophon and Strabo have all left us accounts of Anatolia before Christ. The famous march to Persia by the Greek army, immortalised in Xenophon's *Anabasis* (c 400 BC), was retraced some 2400 years later by Shane Brennan in his fabulous tale *In the Tracks of the Ten Thousand: A Journey on Foot Through Turkey, Syria and Iraq* (2005). Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763) details the author's travels to İstanbul with her husband, the British ambassador to Turkey, in 1716. It's a surprisingly nonjudgmental account of life at the heart of the Ottoman Empire.

Edmondo De Amicis' classic *Constantinople* (1877) beautifully details İstanbul's bustle, atmosphere and cosmopolitan nature in the 19th century.

### DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- 'Cover-up' clothing for mosque visits. Women might want to bring a scarf, although if you don't you've got a good excuse to go shopping.
- Slip-on shoes or sandals. Highly recommended as they are cool to wear and easy to remove before entering mosques or Turkish homes.
- Books in English. Those available in Turkey are hard to find and can be pricey. Secondhand book exchanges plug the gaps, but you'll need to have something to swap.
- Tampons. They can be hard to find as most Turkish women use pads.
- Universal sink plug.
- An appetite for kebabs.
- First-aid kit including sunscreen, which can be expensive in Turkey.
- Checking your government's travel warnings (see p660).

# TOP PICKS



## MUST-READS

Turkey's long history and vibrant culture has provided copious source material for authors old and new, local and foreign. For more on Turkey's authors and literary tradition, see p56.

- *Snow* (Orhan Pamuk) – This Kars-set fictional insight unearths Turkey's contemporary challenges.
- *Portrait of a Turkish Family* (Irfan Orga) – This page-turner is so intimate you'll feel like an honorary family member.
- *Atatürk* (Andrew Mango) – Get to know one of the 20th century's most intriguing political figures.
- *Memed, My Hawk* (Yaşar Kemal) – If this were a movie, it would rival *Gone with the Wind*.
- *Birds Without Wings* (Louis de Bernières) – Superbly written and researched historical fiction.
- *Osman's Dream* (Caroline Finkel) – The historian charts the Ottoman Empire through seven centuries.
- *Tales from the Expat Harem* (edited by Anastasia Ashman) – Stories by women who made the move to Turkey.
- *Deadly Webb* (Barbara Nadel) – Nadel won the Silver Dagger award for this yarn about a hard-drinking Istanbul detective.

## FAVOURITE FESTIVALS

Turks really know how to have a good time, and a festival or event is on nearly every other day. These are a few favourites; see p662 for others.

- Camel wrestling (p242) – Bloodless bull-wrestling.
- Kırkpınar Oil Wrestling Festival (p172) – Yet more battling, but this time it's greasy buck-wrestling!
- Kiraz Festivali (p663) – Cherry-gobbling and judging, music and oil-wrestling.
- Nevruz (p662) – Ancient Middle Eastern spring knees-up.
- Aspendos Opera & Ballet Festival (p404) – Unbeatable Roman-era venue.
- Uluslararası Bursa Festival (p663) – Music from Roma bands to Portuguese *fado*.
- International İstanbul Biennial (p663) – Art, performances and contemporary culture.

## NATURAL WONDERS

Turkey's diverse landscapes tell of its position at the conjunction of continents – these are some of our favourites.

- Bafa Gölü (p263) – The lake is flanked by rugged mountains and dotted with islands.
- Cappadocian valleys (p502) – Soft white rock eroded into curvy cliff faces.
- Selge (p404) – Offers a spectacular view of the Taurus Mountains.
- Dilek National Park (p259) – A slice of wilderness, wildlife, glorious scenery and great beaches on the overdeveloped south Aegean coast.
- Phrygian Valley (p303) – A surreal rocky escarpment and dramatic forests.
- Gökçeada (p192) – Check out the views of Heavenly Island's southern coast from the mountain road running west to east.
- Amasra to Sinop (p543) – A spectacular drive, taking in the rugged Black Sea coast.

Tom Brosnahan worked for the Peace Corps in 1960s' İstanbul and İzmir, and the former Lonely Planet author recounts the experience in *Turkey: Bright Sun, Strong Tea* (2004).

In *From the Holy Mountain* (1997), William Dalrymple retraces the journey of a 6th-century monk through eastern Byzantium, from Mt Athos, Greece, with stops in İstanbul and Anatolia. It's a gripping meditation on the declining Christian communities. Rory MacLean follows idealistic folk of another kind through a harshly changed world in *Magic Bus: On the Hippie Trail from Istanbul to India* (2006). Andrew Eames' *The 8.55 to Baghdad* (2004) retraces the crime queen Agatha Christie's travels on the *Orient Express*, with a chapter dedicated to Turkey.

Nicolas Bouvier's wonderful *The Way of the World* (1963), which has a short section on Turkey, recounts an artist's journey from Geneva to the Khyber Pass in a Fiat Topolino. Also researched in the 1950s, Irfan Orga's evocative *The Caravan Moves On: Three Weeks Among Turkish Nomads* (1958) mixes travelogue with insights into the lives and lore of the nomads. The disappearing Yörük, once one of Anatolia's largest nomadic tribes, have long captivated writers; another excellent example is *Bolkar: Travels with a Donkey in the Taurus Mountains* (1982), Dux Schneider's bitter-sweet account of the Yörük and Tatars today.

If you want some beach reading, *Turkish Coast: Through Writers' Eyes* (2008; edited by Rupert Scott) examines the coastline from İzmir to Antalya with the help of scribes from Plutarch to Freya Stark.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**All About Turkey** ([www.allaboutturkey.com](http://www.allaboutturkey.com)) Multilingual introduction to history and the main sites.

**Hürriyet Daily News** ([www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/home/](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/home/)) All the latest national news.

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) Check out the Thorn Tree bulletin board to find the latest travellers' tips for travelling the country, especially out east.

**My Merhaba** ([www.mymerhaba.com](http://www.mymerhaba.com)) Aimed at expats with lots of general information of use to visitors too (such as what's on in İstanbul).

**Skylife magazine** ([www.thy.com/en-US/skylife](http://www.thy.com/en-US/skylife)) Click through to the archive of the excellent Turkish Airlines in-flight magazine, *Skylife*, with articles on all sorts of aspects of life in Turkey.

**Tourism Turkey** ([www.tourismturkey.org](http://www.tourismturkey.org)) Government website with grab-bag of articles and information.

**Turkey Travel Planner** ([www.turkeytravelplanner.com](http://www.turkeytravelplanner.com)) An ever-growing site with up-to-the-minute information on all aspects of travel in Turkey.

**Turkish Culture** ([www.turkishculture.org](http://www.turkishculture.org)) Arts encyclopedia with links to sites covering cuisine and music.

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

### FROM THE GOLDEN HORN TO THE SACRED WAY One Week/ İstanbul to Ephesus

Begin this trip through the triumphs and tragedies of empires in İstanbul's Ottoman **Topkapı Palace** (p103), then obelisk-hop the ancient **Hippodrome** (p100). Having steamed away any aches in the **Çemberlitaş Hamamı** (p126), spend the evening cruising **Istiklal Caddesi** (p115), the heart of modern Turkey. Start day two at the **Blue Mosque** (p100) and the **Aya Sofya** (p98), then head underground at the **Basilica Cistern** (p101). After lunch, explore the labyrinthine **Grand Bazaar** (p109) or, weather permitting, take an afternoon or evening cruise along the **Bosphorus** (p121).

Come day three, rise early and head down to Çanakkale, so you can start touring the **Gallipoli battlefields** (p178) by early afternoon. The devastation witnessed here during WWI needs no introduction. Next morning head to famous **Troy** (p197), worth a visit even without Brad Pitt. Cross the ruin-dotted **Biga Peninsula** (p204) to beachy **Assos** (p204) and nearby **Behramkale** (p204), with its hilltop Greek village and ancient temple. You'll need another early start to bus down to **Ephesus** (p246), the best-preserved classical city in the eastern Mediterranean.

Starting in İstanbul, once the glittering heart of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, tick off the city's A-list sights before moseying southwest. In a week you can take in the Gallipoli battlefields and the ruins of Troy, Behramkale and Ephesus – a 1450km journey.



## PALM TREES & FAIRY CHIMNEYS **Three Weeks/Istanbul to Cappadocia**

For the first week, follow the first itinerary. Then, from your base at Selçuk, take a day trip to the travertines and ruins of **Hierapolis** (p324) at Pamukkale. The brilliant white terraces can be dizzying in the midday sun, but swimming among submerged marble columns in the **Antique Pool** (p324) will restore your cool.

Heading back to the coast, ignore the overblown resorts of Bodrum and Marmaris and head straight for **Fethiye** (p351) and beautiful **Ölüdeniz** (p365). This is the spot to take to the air on a paraglide or lay way low on a beach towel. You're now within kicking distance of the famous **Lycian Way** (p359); hike for a day through superb countryside to overnight in heavenly **Faralya** (p368), and further inroads into the Lycian Way will definitely top your 'next time' list. Back on the coast, have a pit stop at laid-back **Kaş** (p379), its pretty harbourside square alive nightly with the hum of friendly folk enjoying the breeze, views, boutique browsing and a beer or two. You may want a few days more unwinding at the famous beach tree-house complexes at nearby **Olympos** (p388).

Antalya's old **Kaleiçi quarter** (p393) is well worth a wander against the backdrop of that jaw-dropping mountain range. Then it's time to fold your bikini into a matchbox and head inland. Catch an overnight bus north to claim your cave in **Göreme** (p497). This low-key travellers' hang-out is the best place to base yourself in Cappadocia, a surreal moonscape with phallic tuff cones, no less. For most the cones don't overshadow the more orthodox sights including the superb rock-cut frescoed churches of **Göreme Open-Air Museum** (p499) and the spooky underground cities at **Kaymaklı** (p524) and **Derinkuyu** (p524).



This is one trip you won't forget in a hurry. Pack your towel, pumps and pedometer: you're seeing the sights of Old Istanbul, the highlights of the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts and finishing off in kooky Cappadocia – a whopping 3100km of travel.



## ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

### EASTERN DELIGHTS

Three to Four Weeks/Trabzon to Harran

Buzzing **Trabzon** (p552) has a few sights worth a quick look, though most people head straight to nearby **Sumela Monastery** (p559), peering down on a forested valley from its precarious-looking rockface. The route from here to Kars is spectacular. First travel to **Erzurum** (p560 and p570), which is best tackled by car or taxi to appreciate the breathtaking views and ruined churches of medieval Georgia. The onward drive via **Yusufeli** (p578) is one of Turkey's most scenic, with roadways passing over dramatic mountains, through gorges frothing with white water and past crumbling castles. **Kars** (p582) is beguiling, but its star attraction is nearby **Ani** (p587). Once a thriving Armenian capital, it's now a field strewn with magnificent ruins overlooked by the border guards of modern Armenia. Head south to the raffish frontier town of **Doğubayazıt** (p592) and the outstanding **Ishak Paşa Palace** (p593).

Further south is **Van** (p645), its proud drawcards the spectacular **Hoşap Castle** (p651) and the 10th-century **Akdamar church** (p643), the sole inhabitant of a teeny island in Lake Van (Van Gölü). The church's superbly preserved carvings surpass its magnificent setting with their wow factor. Heading west, don't miss **Hasankeyf** (p639), with its soaring rock-cut castle by the ancient Tigris River, and **Mardin** (p633), a gorgeous, honey-coloured town overlooking the roasting plains of Mesopotamia. Then head to **Diyarbakır** (p627), the heartland of Kurdish culture, its ancient sights ringed by even older city walls. Next, see what all the fuss is about at **Nemrut Dağı** (Mt Nemrut, p616); its gigantic stone heads are about the only image of eastern Turkey that makes it into brochures. Finish with a trip south, almost to the Syrian border, to visit **Harran** (p613), which is mentioned in Genesis and is one of the oldest continuously inhabited spots on earth.

Escape the crowds and hightail it to the Turkey rarely seen in glossy tourist brochures, the other Turkey: the wild, magnificent east. After it casts its spell you'll find western Turkey downright tame. Some 2850km and never a dull moment.



## ARCHITECTURE ALLA TURCA

### Two Weeks/Edirne to Erzurum

Caravanserais or *hans* (see p59), dotting the ancient trade routes, were the ancient equivalent of the roadhouse. Restored or crumbling, they evoke the nights of snorting animals tethered in the courtyard, with the rooms above abuzz with the snores of travellers and merchants.

Begin your architectural amble past these Seljuk service stations, and other relics of long-gone empires, in grand style at Edirne's **Selimiye Mosque** (p169). Its 71m-high minarets are the finest work of the great Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan (p111).

On the other side of the Sea of Marmara, Bursa's 15th-century **Yeşil Camii** (Green Mosque, p292), accompanied by the **Yeşil Türbe** (Green Tomb; p292), is the earliest mosque displaying a purely Turkish style. Continue the green theme at İznik's **Yeşil Cami** (p287), which pre-dates its Bursa counterpart by 35 years and looks considerably more Iranian.

Now zip across the top of the country for an Ottoman double bill in **Safranbolu** (p455) and **Amasya** (p469), where half-timbered mansions, hamams and *hans* jostle for attention with stunning settings.

From Amasya head southwest to Cappadocia, a region with more caravanserais than fleas on a camel. Highlights include **Ağzıkara Hanı** (p534), the superb **Sultanhanı** (p493), Turkey's largest caravanserai, and **Sultan Han** (p538), runner-up to that title. **Sarıhan** (p513) doubles as a set for whirling dervish ceremonies, and **Saruhan** (p527) is home to a fine eatery.

From Cappadocia head east to **Battalgazi** (p626), with its Ottoman caravanserai and Roman walls, before pointing your camel north to Divriği's **Ulu Cami and Darüşşifa** (p483). Sporting three incredible carved stone doorways, the 780-year-old complex is on the World Heritage list. Finally, rest up in Erzurum, beneath the tile-covered twin minarets of the magnificent Seljuk **Çifte Minare Medrese** (p480).



No camels and very little grunt are required on this 2415km zigzag through Turkey's lesser-known but magnificent hinterland. From the Greek border to the mountainous northeast, saddle up and hit the hans.

## TAILORED TRIPS

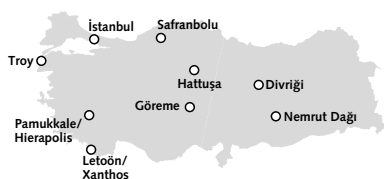
### NINE WONDERS OF TURKEY

Unesco has applied World Heritage status to nine of Turkey's sights.

Start by soaking up the treasures of **Old Istanbul** (p98), then point your compass towards the Mediterranean and **Troy** (p197), where city has layered upon city for 5000 years. **Pamukkale** (p322) boasts the famous dazzling-white travertines and the ruins of Hierapolis, a city once known for the curative powers of its warm calcium-rich waters.

**Xanthos** (p372) was once the glittering Lycian capital city, while nearby **Letoön** (p372) was its religious sanctuary. Inland, hidden in Cappadocia's fairy-tale landscape, **Göreme Open-Air Museum** (p499) is a cluster of rock-hewn Byzantine churches and monasteries. The going gets more rugged on southeastern Anatolia's 2150m-high **Nemrut Dağı** (p616), where the proud 'thrones of the gods' have been standing sentinel for more than two millennia. North is the mosque complex at **Divriği** (p482), Turkey's least-visited World Heritage site yet one of the country's most rewarding for its out-of-the-way location and jaw-dropping ornamentation.

West, the Hittites' magnificent capital was **Hattuşa** (p465), its remote location as enthralling as the sprawling city's remains. Head back to Istanbul via the pristine Ottoman townscape of **Safranbolu** (p455), where you can soak up the atmosphere in a meticulously maintained 'Ottomansion'.



### TURKEY FOR TASTEBUDS

Turks are deservedly proud of their scrumptious cuisine, and different parts of the country are known – and loved – for their specialities.

People may avoid you for days after, but **Tokat kebab** (p477), a lamb-basted eggplant kebab boasting a full fist of garlic, is worth it. Another greasy treat is **İskender kebab** (p68), best sampled in eateries in **Bursa** (p298). The squid caught off the north-Aegean coast is the finest in the nation; get it cooked fresh at **Siğacık** (p236) and you'll be boasting for years. If you overindulge, hope that the **mesir macunu** (power gum; p230) sold in nearby Manisa can cure you. Time your visit for the spring equinox to see the townsfolk concocting this tooth-binding elixir.

No one's more experienced at making **Turkish delight** than the folk at Istanbul's **Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir** (p157), the flagship store in a business established two centuries ago by the delicacy's inventor. **Afyon** (p310) is famous for its rich clotted *kaymak* cream, reputedly so good because the cows graze on the area's plentiful poppies. **Gaziantep** (p598) boasts a trifecta: **pistachios**, **baklava** and **künefe** (layers of dough with sweet cheese, syrup and pistachios). **İmam Çiğdem** (p603) combines the first two in an addictive, finger-licking treat. **Kahramanmaraş** (p598) is Turkey's *dövmé döndurma* (beaten ice cream) capital: served in fist-sized blocks, it's best tackled with a knife and fork.



## CLASSICAL TREASURES

If you love Greek and Roman ruins you will be thrilled to learn that Turkey has more of them than Greece or Italy.

Start at the famous ruins of **Troy** (p197), then head south to the crumbling **Acropolis** (p215) and **Asclepion** (p214) at Bergama (Pergamum) and the Byzantine remains at **Sardis** (p230). Towards the bottom of the Aegean coast, Selçuk is the best base for exploring the well-preserved classical city of **Ephesus** (p246), as well as the **Ephesus Museum** (p240). Ruin addicts will then want to detour inland to Pamukkale, to see the sprawling ruins of **Hierapolis** (p324) and **Afrodiasis** (p328), which some people rate above Ephesus.

From Selçuk (or Kuşadası) you can also visit the sites at **Priene** (p261), **Miletus** (p262) and **Didyma** (p262). Continuing along the southern coast, you'll find the Unesco World Heritage-listed remains of **Letoön** (p372) and **Xanthos** (p372) and, hidden behind a gorgeous beach, the ruins of **Patara** (p373). There are more evocative sites further east at **Olympos** (p387) and at **Phaselis** (p391).

Pause in Antalya and inspect the **Antalya Museum** (p394) before nipping northwest to romantic **Termessos** (p401). Next, head east to explore the extensive ruins at **Perge** (p402), **Aspendos** (p403) and **Side** (p407). End your trip among the forgotten ruins at **Anamurium** (p416), on the Mediterranean coast just west of Anamur.



## WE DARE YOU

On this trailblazing trip, explore some Turkish regions and activities unknown even to most Turks, and drop in on the country's exotic neighbours. Do your own research and make sure you check out the latest travel advice (p660) before striking out on any adventure.

Now that the troubled southeast is on the mend, former no-go zones are opening to visitors (see p652). The **upper valley of the Euphrates** (p624) is still uncharted territory, as is the wild scenery surrounding isolated **Bahçesaray** (p650), **Hakkari** (p651), and **Şırnak** (p640).

Cappadocia's claustrophobic but compelling underground cities (p524) were once havens from invading armies. Hire a guide and shine a torch on the lesser-known cities at **Özlüce** (p524), **Güzelyurt** (p531) and **Özkonak** (p514).

Head to **Saklıkent Gorge** (p371) for white-water rafting, canyoning and hiking. Walkers could also check out developments at **Cilo Dağı** (Cilo Mountains; p651), and **Mt Ararat** (p595) has long captivated the imaginations of mountaineers.

Eastern Anatolia has gnarly frontiers with **Georgia** (p582), where you can sample full-bodied red wine, and **Nakhichevan** (p678), an isolated pocket of **Azerbaijan**. Alternatively, follow the hippy trail to **Iran**, entered from Doğubayazıt (p595) or the more-intrepid Esendere-Sero crossing (p652). You can even follow the LP Turkey team's resident border-crossing junkie into **Iraq** (p635).



# The Authors



## **JAMES BAINBRIDGE** Coordinating Author, Environment, Experience Turkey, Central Anatolia, Cappadocia

James first visited Turkey as a student, at the end of an eastern European trip. He lived on bread and cheese triangles for a week in Istanbul and the Princes' Islands, before using the last of his funds to get home to Britain. His latest Turkish trip was more successful: wandering Anatolia and making up for student starvation by spending his entire fee on kebabs. When he's not investigating various countries' national dishes, James lives in London's 'Little Turkey'. He has contributed to half a dozen Lonely Planet guidebooks, and coauthored *A Year of Festivals*, featuring Turkey's camel- and oil-wrestling festivals.



## **BRETT ATKINSON** Western Anatolia, Black Sea Coast & the Kaçkars

Brett first travelled to Turkey in 1985, 70 years after his paternal grandfather fought at Gallipoli as an Anzac soldier. Since then he's returned several times to go ballooning above Cappadocia, explored the ancient city of Ani and honeymooned with wife Carol in Istanbul. For this trip he negotiated the coastal roads of the Black Sea, was surprised by the buzz of Bursa and Trabzon, and reinstated memories of 1985 at Afrodiasis and Pamukkale. When he's not on the road for Lonely Planet, Brett lives in Auckland, where a sizeable Turkish population means he's never far from a good kebab. His work on this book is dedicated to his late grandfather Albert Edward Atkinson.

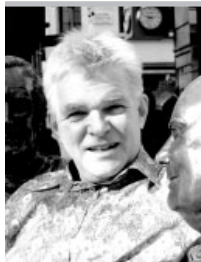


## **JEAN-BERNARD CARILLET** Turkey's Outdoors, Northeastern Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia

A Paris-based journalist and photographer, Jean-Bernard regularly needs his fix of adventures. Visiting remote Kurdish villages, seeking out churches and castles of yore lost in the steppe or perched on cliff tops, climbing majestic summits (including Mt Ararat), hiking in the Kaçkars, crossing the borders with Iraq and Georgia – for an adrenaline rush he can't think of a better playground than eastern Anatolia. But he also loves the region for its epicurean indulgences – after several sojourns in eastern Turkey, he is a now a certified baklava-holic.

### **LONELY PLANET AUTHORS**

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travellers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com).



### STEVE FALLON

#### Thrace & Marmara

Turkey came to Steve (or was it the other way round?) fairly late, beckoning for the first time just a decade ago. But never one to do things by halves, on a second visit five years later he bought with his partner what was purportedly a house in Kalkan. Slowly they started putting it together, brick by brick, learning words for things he doesn't even know in English. Steve spends a portion of every year in Turkey and although *Türkçe'yi hala mağara adamı gibi konuşuyor* (he still speaks Turkish like a caveman), no one has yet called him Tarzan.



### JOE FULLMAN

#### North Aegean, South Aegean

Turkey represented Joe's first trip outside Europe, some five years into his travel-writing career, although, as the destination was İstanbul, he only had the chance to dip his toe into Asia. Still, the waters seemed warm. His next time out was more of a submersion as he travelled up and down the Aegean coast. The third opportunity came with the update of this guidebook and, by this stage, he feels he's beginning to get the hang of things, although his Turkish could use some work. When he's not being sent to Turkey, Joe is a writer and editor based in London, or, more precisely, its southern enclave of Croydon.



### VIRGINIA MAXWELL

#### Food & Drink, İstanbul

After working for many years as a publishing manager at Lonely Planet's Melbourne headquarters, Virginia decided that she'd be happier writing guidebooks rather than commissioning them. Since making this decision she's authored Lonely Planet books to Turkey, Egypt, Spain, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. Virginia knows Turkey well, and loves it to bits. She is the author of Lonely Planet's *İstanbul* city guide and *İstanbul Encounter* guide and has covered Cappadocia for a previous edition of the Turkey guide. She usually travels with partner Peter and young son Max, who have grown to love the country as much as she does.



### TOM SPURLING

#### Western Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean

Tom's first experience of Turkey was to housesit for then Lonely Planet author, Pat Yale, in her cave house in Cappadocia. For a month he fought and fed 100 cats, and read all her Orhan Pamuk novels. His final experience on that trip was a 2am motorboat from a techno party on the Bosphorus. For this edition Tom moved from the Western to the Eastern Mediterranean smashing dolmuş-riding records in a midsummer blaze. Freakishly, all of Tom's highlights start with the letter 'K' – Kalkan, Kabak, Kaleiçi, Kızkalesi, Kaleköy and Kayaköy. But Antakya is also nice. When not travelling or writing, Tom teaches English (and various other things) in Melbourne.

---

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

**Will Gourlay**, a serial visitor to Turkey, first arrived in Istanbul in the early '90s intending to sit on a Mediterranean beach. However, Anatolia beckoned so he climbed Nemrut Dağı and wandered the southeast instead of working on his tan. He subsequently taught in Izmir for a year, learning the delights of Iskender kebab and the perils of raki. He still obsesses on all things Turkish/Turkic/Ottoman and recently took a second generation of Gourlays to Turkey. They loved the beach! Will updated the History and Culture chapters.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'