



Turkey

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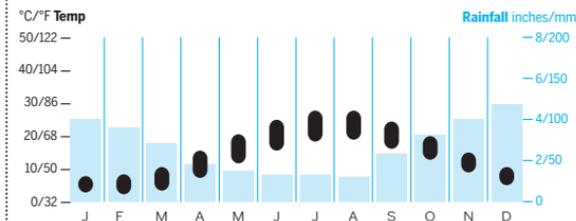
Why Go?

Hoş geldiniz (welcome) to the perfect introduction to the Middle East. Although most Turks see their country as European, the nation packs in as many wailing minarets and spice-trading bazaars as its southeastern neighbours, Iran, Iraq and Syria. This bridge between continents has absorbed Europe's modernism and sophistication, and Asia's culture and tradition. Travellers can enjoy historical hot spots, mountain outposts, expansive steppe and one of the world's finest cuisines, without having to forgo comfy beds and punctual buses.

Such potent mixtures of natural splendour and ancient remains result from millennia of eventful history, during which the greatest Middle Eastern empires established capitals in Anatolia (Asian Turkey). Travelling Turkey's beaches and plains is like turning the pages of a historical thriller, with mosques and *medreses*, hamams and *hans* (caravanserais) never far from view.

When to Go

Istanbul



Apr Beat the summer crowds and avoid the summer sun, a perfect time for hiking.

Jul-Sep Time for sun-worshippers to hit the beaches of the Med.

Dec-Jan It's ski season in the icy mountains of eastern Anatolia.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Turkish lira (TL). One Turkish lira is worth 100 kuruş.
- » **Mobile Phones** Buying a local phone and chip is less complicated than registering your phone with a Turkish provider.
- » **Money** ATMs widespread; credit cards accepted.
- » **Visas** Apply to most nationalities; pay in cash at the border.

Fast Facts

- » **Capital** Ankara
- » **Country code** 90
- » **Language** Turkish
- » **Official name** Türkiye Cumhuriyeti (Turkish Republic)
- » **Population** 79 million

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	TL1.81
Euro	€1	TL2.32
Zone		
Iran	IRR\	TL0.14
	£10,0000	
Iraq	IQD\$100	TL0.15
Syria	SYP£10	TL0.30
UK	UK£1	TL2.85
USA	US\$1	TL1.75

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Resources

- » **Turkey Tourism** (www.turkeytourism.com) Jam-packed with information.
- » **Go Turkey** (www.go.turkey.com) Official portal.
- » **Hello Turkey** (www.hello.turkey.net) Jumbled but useful.

Connections

Straddling Europe and Asia, Turkey occupies the same important position on the travellers trail today that it once occupied on the trade routes. Land borders with Bulgaria and Greece funnel visitors through to Asia via the country's exciting capital of İstanbul, while ferry services link the vibrant coastal resorts with nearby Greek islands and further afield to Italy and Cyprus. Though you could spend a lifetime just getting to know this fascinating country, the pull of the exotic Arabic nations to the south is hard to resist. There are major border crossing points with Syria (especially Reyhanlı, Yayladağı and Akçakale), and road (Gurbulak) and rail (Kapikoi) routes to Iran. Increasingly Iraq (Silopi) is being seen as a viable option by adventurous tourists. The land border with Armenia has been closed for many years.

ITINERARIES

Two Weeks

Party at night, sightsee by day in atmospheric **İstanbul**, before heading to the sobering **Gallipoli battlefields**. Sail through **Troy** en route to classical **Ephesus**. Don't miss a quick inland trip to the unique travertines of **Pamukkale**, then hit the coast again staying in an **Olympos** tree house. From here meander along the Med coast, stopping at the walled city of **Antalya** and biblical **Antakya** before moving on to Syria.

Three Weeks

Follow the three-week itinerary as far as Antalya, then whirl northeast to **Konya** with your fellow dervishes. From there, it's just a few hours to **Cappadocia**, other-worldly home of fairy chimneys. Next, drag yourself east towards **Malatya**, from where you can visit ethereally beautiful **Mt Nemrut** strewn with stone heads. Before crossing to Iraq, leave Turkey with fond memories by strolling along the gorgeous Cumhuriyet Caddesi in picture-postcard **Mardin**.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Ayran** An oddly salty yoghurt drink that Turks swear is the perfect companion for a tasty kebab.
- » **Baklava** Syrupy pistachio pastries sent to tempt the weak.
- » **Durum** Portable, filling meaty treats wrapped in pide.
- » **Elma Çay** The ubiquitous apple tea, served in curvy glasses.
- » **İskender** Döner meat doused in tomato sauce with a dollop of yoghurt.
- » **Rakı** This aniseed-flavoured, clear spirit that turns white when mixed is not for the faint of heart.
- » **Simit** Delicious rings of sesame bread, wholesome street food.