

Welcome to Turkey

A richly historical land with some of the best cuisine you will ever taste, a variety of scenery from beaches to mountains, and the great city of İstanbul.

An Epic History

When you set foot in Turkey, you are following in the wake of some remarkable historical figures. Turkey has hosted A-list history-book figures including Julius Caesar, who famously 'came, saw and conquered' near Amasya, and St Paul, who criss-crossed the country. Byzantine Christians cut cave churches into Cappadocia's fairy chimneys, and Ottoman sultans luxuriated in İstanbul's Topkapı Palace, ruling an empire that stretched from Budapest to Baghdad. At other points in history, Romans coursed down the Curetes Way at Ephesus (Efes), medieval Armenians built Ani's churches, whirling dervishes gyrated with Sufi mysticism, and the Lycians left ruins on Mediterranean beaches.

Cultural Depth

Of course, Turkey's current inhabitants are just as memorable. The gregarious Turks are understandably proud of their heritage, and full of information (of variable accuracy) about subjects from kilims (flat-weave rugs) to the Aya Sofya's floating dome. Turkey's long history, coupled with its unique position at the meeting of Europe and Asia, has given it a profound depth of culture. Immersing yourself in that culture is as simple as soaking in an ancient hamam, eating a kebab and tasting influences brought along the Silk Road, or visiting the ruins scattering the fields, bays and hills.

Culinary Exploration

The best thing about sampling Turkey's delicious specialities – from meze on a Mediterranean harbour to a pension breakfast featuring products from the kitchen garden – is they take you to the heart of Turkish culture. For the sociable and family-oriented Turks, getting together and eating well is a time-honoured ritual. So get stuck into olive oil-lathered Aegean vegetables, spicy Anatolian kebabs and dishes from Turkey's many other corners – and as you drink a tulip-shaped glass of çay and contemplate some baklava for dessert, remember that eating is deepening your understanding of Turkey.

Landscapes & Activities

The greatest surprise for first-time visitors to Turkey is the sheer diversity found between its Aegean beaches and eastern mountains. In İstanbul, you can cruise – on the Bosphorus as well as through markets and nightclubs – in a Westernised metropolis offering equal parts romance and overcrowded insanity. In Cappadocia and the southwestern coasts, mix trekking, horse riding and water sports with meze-savouring on a panoramic terrace. Then there are the less-frequented eastern quarters, where weather-beaten relics add lashings of lyricism to mountain ranges. It's hardly surprising Turkey has attracted so many folk over the centuries. Come and discover their legacy for yourself.



Why I Love Turkey

By James Bainbridge, Author

Turkey's charm lies somewhere between its stunning landscapes such as Cappadocia; the constant surprises provided by its storied history; and the hearty locals, who are always ready to chat over a çay or Efes beer. As the old Turkish saying goes: 'A cup of coffee commits one to 40 years of friendship.' This proverb nails the addictive qualities of the Turkish lifestyle, enjoyed by people who are blessed with a land of ancient bazaars and sandy beaches, magnificent ruins and soaring mountains – and who are keen to make sure visitors love it as much as they do.

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Above: Galata Bridge (p92) and Aya Sofya (p65), Istanbul