

Welcome to Turkey

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

Epic History

From the ancient port city of Ephesus (Efes) to the soaring Byzantine dome of Aya Sofya, Turkey has more than its fair share of world-famous ruins and monuments. A succession of historical figures and empires – including the Romans, Byzantines and Ottomans – have all left their mark on this former stopover along the Silk Road. Experiencing their legacy takes you from the closeted quarters of the sultan and his harem in İstanbul's sprawling Topkapı Palace to the romantic and mysterious Lycian ruins on Mediterranean beaches.

Lyrical Landscapes

Turkey's diverse landscapes, from Aegean olive groves to eastern steppe, provide a lyrical setting for its many great ruins. The country's most magical scenery is to be found in Asian Anatolia, where beautiful vistas are provided by the vertiginous Mediterranean coastline, Cappadocia's otherworldly 'fairy chimney' rock formations and wavy valleys, the alpine pastures of the Kaçkar Mountains, and golden beaches such as 18km-long Patara. Whether you settle down with a çay to enjoy the view across mountain-ringed Lake Eğirdir or explore the hilly hinterland, Turkey's landscape will leave a lasting impression.

Activities Galore

Turkey offers activities to suit every temperament, from outdoors adventure to cultural enrichment. Watery fun includes diving, windsurfing, rafting and canyoning in mountain gorges, kayaking over Kekova's sunken ruins, and traditional *gület* cruises on the Mediterranean and Aegean. Or take to the air with Ölüdeniz' thrilling paragliding flights or a hot-air balloon ride over Cappadocia. For a fresh angle on stunning Turkish scenery, trek to highland pastures or walk part of the Lycian Way trail. In town, take a culinary course, soak in the hamam or hit İstanbul's Grand Bazaar to buy a carpet or flat-weave kilim rug.

Culinary Exploration

The best thing about sampling Turkey's delicious specialties – ranging from meze on a Mediterranean harbour to a pension breakfast featuring ingredients fresh from the kitchen garden – is that they take you to the heart of Turkish culture. For the sociable and family-orientated Turks, gathering together and eating well is a time-honoured ritual. So deepen your understanding of Turkey by getting stuck into olive-oil-lathered Aegean vegetables or spicy Anatolian kebabs, drinking a tulip-shaped glass of çay and contemplating some baklava for dessert.



Why I Love Turkey

By James Bainbridge, Writer

My first visit to Turkey was 20 years ago, when I finished a European rail odyssey in Istanbul, discovering the Blue Mosque and Sultanahmet's sights. I'll never forget drinking çay on my hostel's roof terrace, scribbling in my notebook and watching the ferries cross over to Asia. Wanting to visit somewhere between the continents, I jumped on a boat to the Princes' Islands, where an old man gave me a lift in his horse-drawn *fatyon* (carriage). It was my first taste of the Turkish friendliness and hospitality I've been experiencing ever since.

For more about our writers, see p640.