

# Cappadocia



Between Kayseri and Nevşehir, Central Anatolia's mountain-fringed plains give way to a land of fairy chimneys and underground cities. The fairy chimneys – rock columns, pyramids, mushrooms and a few camels – and the valleys of cascading cliffs were formed when Erciyes Dağı erupted. The intervening millennia added to the remarkable Cappadocian canvas, with Byzantines carving cave churches and subterranean complexes to house thousands of people.

You could spend days touring the rock-cut churches and admiring their frescoes (technically seccos, actually). Alternatively, view the troglodyte architecture from far above on a dawn hot-air balloon ride or from a panoramic hotel terrace.

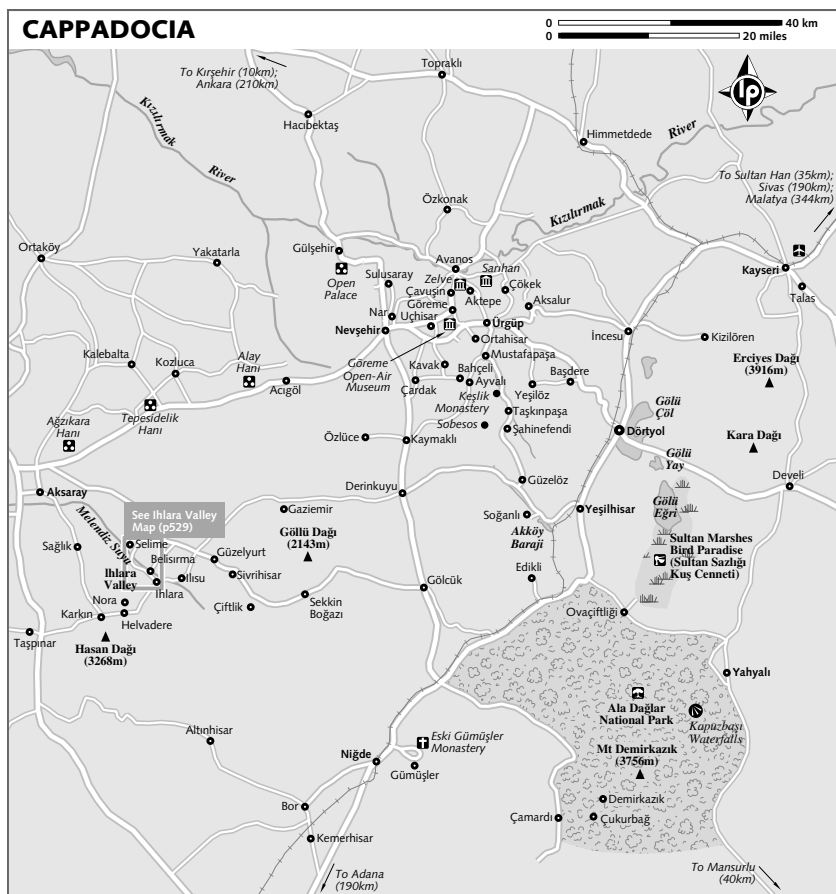
Whether it's a pension or a boutique hideaway with as few rooms as it has fairy chimneys, Cappadocia's accommodation rates as some of Turkey's best and allows guests to experience cave dwelling firsthand. The restaurants in dreamy spots such as Göreme and Ürgüp are equally alluring, with yet more terraces offering sweeping views of the knobby landscape. Staying in villages where eroding castles overlook small communities of very laid-back people, you might just become a world expert on the aesthetic qualities of rocky valleys at sunset. It will require evenings of study on the terrace, but you will get there with a good supply of çay (tea) or Efes.

However, between lingering looks at the rocky remains of Cappadocia's unique history, it is worth checking out some further-flung spots. Caravanserais dot the roads to the seemingly lost valleys of Ihlara and Soğanlı, and former Greek settlements such as Mustafapaşa.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore Byzantine tunnels at Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu **underground cities** (p524)
- Examine fresco-covered churches in the **Göreme Open-Air Museum** (p499)
- Gaze at the pigeon houses riddling cliffs and fairy chimneys in Göreme's labyrinthine **valleys** (p502)
- Gasp at the outcrops doubling as castles in **Uçhisar** (p507) and **Ortahisar** (p516)
- Take the trip of a lifetime in a **hot-air balloon** (p510)
- Drink in the views over multiple mezes in chic **Ürgüp** (p517)
- Part the vines and peer into a tumbledown Greek mansion in **Mustafapaşa** (p522)
- Trek through secluded monastic settlements in **Soğanlı** (p523), **Ihlara Valley** (p528) and **Güzelyurt** (p531)





## History

The Hittites settled Cappadocia (Kapadokya) from 1800 BC to 1200 BC, after which smaller kingdoms held power. Then came the Persians, followed by the Romans, who established the capital of Caesarea (today's Kayseri). During the Roman and Byzantine periods, Cappadocia became a refuge for early Christians and, from the 4th to the 11th century, Christianity flourished here; most churches, monasteries and underground cities date from this period. Later, under Seljuk and Ottoman rule, Christians were treated with tolerance.

Cappadocia progressively lost its importance in Anatolia. Its rich past was all but forgotten until a French priest rediscovered the rock-hewn churches in 1907. The tourist

boom in the 1980s kick-started a new era, and now Cappadocia is one of Turkey's most famous and popular destinations.

## Dangers & Annoyances

A warning is needed about bus services to Cappadocia from other parts of Turkey. Many readers have complained that although they purchased tickets to Göreme, they found themselves instead deposited at Nevşehir's otogar (bus station), or even outside it, and were left with no alternative except to catch an overpriced taxi to Göreme. We've even heard of some unscrupulous bus companies abandoning travellers on the highway outside Avanos. Problems most frequently occur on buses travelling between destina-