

History

Fate has put Turkey at the junction of two continents. As a land bridge, a meeting point and a battleground, it has seen peoples moving in both directions between Europe and Asia throughout recorded history. That human traffic has left monuments and debris, dynasties and lasting cultural legacies, all of which have contributed to the character of modern Turkey. Turkish history is such a hugely rich patchwork of overlapping eras and empires that it boasts figures, events and phenomena familiar even to the layperson.

Anatolia is so named for the Greek word *anatólē* meaning 'rising of the sun'. The Turkish 'anadolu' translates, very roughly, as 'motherlode'.

Archaeologist Ian Hodder's *Catalhöyük: The Leopard's Tale* is an account of the excavation of the site, which vividly portrays life as it was during the city's heyday.

Until the rediscovery of the ruins at Boğazkale in the 19th century, the Hittites were known only through an obscure reference in the Old Testament.

EARLY CULTURES, CITIES & CLASHES

Archaeological finds indicate that the earliest Anatolian hunter-gatherers lived in caves during the Palaeolithic era. By around the 7th millennium BC some folk had abandoned their nomadic existence and formed settlements. Çatalhöyük (p489), which arose around 6500 BC, may well be the first ever city. It was certainly a centre of innovation – here locals developed crop irrigation and were the first to domesticate pigs and sheep, as well as create distinctive pottery and what is thought to have been the first-ever landscape picture. Relics from this settlement can be seen at Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations (p443).

The Chalcolithic age saw the rise of Hacılar, near current-day Burdur in Central Anatolia, as well as communities in the southeast, which absorbed Mesopotamian influences, including the use of metal tools. Across Anatolia more and larger communities sprung up and interacted – not always happily: settlements tended to be fortified.

By 3000 BC advances in metallurgy allowed power to be concentrated in certain hands, leading to the creation of various Anatolian kingdoms. One such kingdom was at Alacahöyük (p467). Alacahöyük was in the heart of Anatolia, yet even this place showed Caucasian influence, evidence of trade far beyond the Anatolian plateau.

Trade, too, was increasing on the southern and western coasts, with Troy trading with the Aegean islands and mainland Greece. Around 2000 BC the Hatti people created a capital at Kanesh (Kültepe, near Kayseri), ruling over an extensive web of trading communities. Here for the first time Anatolian history emerges from the realm of archaeological conjecture and becomes 'real': clay tablets left at Kanesh provide written records of dates, events and names.

No singular, significant Anatolian civilisation had yet emerged, but the tone was set for the millennia to come: cultural interaction, trade and war were to become the recurring themes of Anatolian history.

AGES OF BRONZE: THE HITTITES

The Hatti were only a temporary presence. As they declined, a new people, the Hittites, assumed their territory. From Alacahöyük, the Hittites shifted their capital to Hattuša (near present-day Boğazkale; p464) some time around 1800 BC.

The Hittites' legacy consisted of their great capital, as well as their state archives (cuneiform clay tablets) and distinctive artistic styles. By 1450 BC

the kingdom, having endured internal ructions, was reborn as an empire. In creating the first great Anatolian empire, the Hittites were necessarily warlike, but also displayed other imperial trappings – they ruled over myriad vassal states and princelings while also being noted for their sense of ethics and an occasional penchant for diplomacy. This didn't prevent them from overrunning Ramses II of Egypt in 1298 BC, but did allow them to patch things up with the crestfallen Ramses by dividing up Syria with him and marrying him to a Hittite princess.

The Hittite empire was harassed in its later stages by subject principalities, including Troy (p203) on the Aegean coast. The final straw was the invasion of the iron-smelting Greeks, generally known as the 'sea peoples'. The Hittites found themselves landlocked – hence disadvantaged during an era of burgeoning sea trade – and lacking in the use of the latest technology: iron.

Meanwhile a new dynasty at Troy was establishing itself as a regional power. The Trojans in turn were harried by the Greeks, which inevitably led to the Trojan War (1250 BC). This allowed the Hittites some breathing space. However, later arrivals, from both east and west, sped the demise of the Hittites. Some pockets of Hittite culture persisted in the Taurus Mountains, but the great empire was dead. Later city states created a Neo-Hittite culture, which attracted Greek merchants of the Iron Age and became the conduit through which Mesopotamian religion and art forms were transmitted to the Greeks.

CLASSICAL EMPIRES: GREECE & PERSIA

Post-Hittite Anatolia consisted of a patchwork of peoples, both indigenous Anatolians and recent interlopers. In the east the Urartians, descendants of earlier Anatolian Hurrians, forged a kingdom near Lake Van (Van Gölü). By the 8th century BC the Phrygians arrived in western Anatolia from Thrace. Under King Gordius, he of the Gordian knot, the Phrygians created a capital at Gordion (Yassihöyük, p454), their power peaking later under King Midas. In 725 BC Gordion was put to the sword by horse-borne Cimmerians, a fate that even King Midas' golden touch couldn't avert, and the Phrygians were no more.

On the southwest coast the Lycians established a confederation of independent city states extending from modern-day Fethiye (p353) to Antalya (p382). Inland the similarly named Lydians dominated Western Anatolia from their capital at Sardis (p235) and are credited with creating the first-ever coinage.

Meanwhile, Greek colonies were steadily spreading along the Mediterranean coast, and Greek cultural influence was spreading through Anatolia. Most of the peoples of the Anatolian patchwork were clearly influenced by the Greeks: Phrygia's King Midas had a Greek wife; the Lycians borrowed the legend of the Chimera and cult of Leto (centred on Letoön, p365); and Lydian art acted as a conduit between Greek and Persian art forms. It seems that at times admiration was mutual: the Lycians were the only Anatolian people whom the Greeks didn't deride as 'barbarians', and the Greeks were so impressed by the wealth of the Lydian king Croesus that they coined the expression 'as rich as Croesus'.

These increasing manifestations of Hellenic influence didn't go unnoticed. Cyrus, the emperor of Persia, would not countenance such temerity in his

Homer, the Greek author of *The Iliad*, which told the story of the Trojan War, is believed to have been born in Smyrna (present-day Izmir), before 700 BC.

The most enduring reminder of the Phrygians is the Phrygian cap, a conical cloth cap with the top jauntily pulled forward. It was recorded on Greek vase paintings and tomb carvings, and was adopted as a symbol of liberty during the French Revolution and in various anticolonial revolutions in Latin America.

For further discussion of the highs and lows of life in ancient Lycia and detailed information on the sites of Turkey's Lycian coast, visit www.lycianturkey.com.

TIMELINE c 7500 BC

Founding of settlement at Çatalhöyük

c 1180 BC

Fall of Homer's Troy

c 1100 BC

Fall of Hittite Empire. Greek colonists start to land on coast of Asia Minor.

547 BC

Cyrus of Persia overruns Anatolia and the Greek colonies

backyard. He invaded in 547 BC, initially putting paid to the Lydians, then barrelled on to extend control to the Aegean. Over a period of years under emperors Darius I and Xerxes the Persians checked the expansion of coastal Greek trading colonies. They also subdued the interior, bringing to an end the era of home-grown Anatolian kingdoms.

Ruling Anatolia through compliant local satrapies, the Persians didn't have it all their own way. They had to contend with periodic resistance from feisty Anatolians, such as the revolt of the Ionian city of Miletus (p268) in 494 BC. Allegedly fomented from Athens, the revolt was abruptly put down and the locals massacred. The Persians used the connivance of Athens as a pretext to invade mainland Greece, only to be routed at Marathon (whence the endurance event arose).

ALEXANDER & AFTER

Persian control of Anatolia continued until 334 BC when a new force stormed across Anatolia. Alexander and his Macedonian adventurers crossed the Dardanelles at Çanakkale, initially intent on relieving Anatolia of the Persian yoke. Sweeping down the coast they rolled the Persians at Granicus, near Troy, then pushed down to Sardis, which willingly surrendered. After later successfully besieging Halicarnassus (modern-day Bodrum; p272) Alexander ricocheted ever-eastwards disposing of another Persian force on the Cilician plain.

In the former Phrygian capital of Gordion, Alexander encountered the Gordian knot. Tradition stated that whoever untied the knot would come to rule Asia. Frustrated in his attempts to untie it, Alexander dispatched it with a blow of his sword. Asia lay before him; he and his men thundered all the way across Persia to the Indus until all the known world was his dominion.

Alexander was seemingly more disposed to conquest than to nation-building, and when he died in Babylon in 323 BC he left no successor. The enormous empire he had created was to be short-lived – perhaps he should have been more patient with that knot – and was divided between his generals in a flurry of civil wars.

However, if Alexander's intention had been to cleanse Anatolia of Persian influence and bring it within the Hellenic sphere, he had been monumentally successful. In the wake of Alexander's armies, a steady process of Hellenisation occurred, a culmination of the process begun centuries earlier that had so provoked Cyrus, the Persian king. A formidable network of municipal communities – the lifeblood of which, as ever in the Hellenic tradition, was trade – spread across Anatolia. The most notable of these was Pergamum (now Bergama; p217). The Pergamene kings were great warriors and governors and enthusiastic patrons of the arts. Greatest of the Pergamene kings was Eumenes (r 197–159BC) who ruled an empire extending from the Dardanelles to the Taurus Mountains and was responsible for much of what can still be seen of Pergamum's acropolis. As notable as the building of Hellenic temples and aqueducts was the gradual spread of the Greek language, which came to extinguish the native Anatolian languages over a period of centuries.

All the while the cauldron of Anatolian cultures continued to bubble, throwing up various typically short-lived flavour-of-the-month kingdoms.

In 279 BC the Celts romped in from southeastern Europe, establishing a kingdom of Galatia centred on Ancyra (Ankara). To the northeast a certain Mithridates had earlier established the kingdom of Pontus, centred on Amasya, and the Armenians, long established in the Lake Van region, and thought by some to be descendants of the earlier Urartians, re-established themselves having been granted autonomy under Alexander.

Meanwhile, across the Aegean Sea, the increasingly powerful Romans were casting covetous eyes on the rich resources and trade networks of Anatolia.

ROMAN RULE & THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

Ironically, Pergamum, the greatest of the post-Alexandrian cities, became the mechanism by which the Romans came to control Anatolia. The Roman legions had defeated the armies of a Seleucid king at Magnesia (Manisa) in 190 BC, but Pergamum became the beachhead from which the Roman embrace of Anatolia began in earnest when King Attalus III died in 133 BC, bequeathing the city to Rome. In 129 BC Ephesus (p251) was nominated capital of the Roman province of Asia and within 60 years the Romans had overcome spirited resistance from Mithridates of Pontus and extended their reach to Armenia, on the Persian border.

The reign of Emperor Augustus was a period of relative peace and prosperity for Anatolia. It was in this milieu that the fledgling religion of Christianity was able to spread, albeit clandestinely and subject to intermittently rigorous persecution. Tradition has it that St John retired to Ephesus to write the fourth Gospel, bringing Mary with him. John was buried on top of a hill in what is now Selçuk; the great Basilica of St John (p246) marks the site. And Mary is said to be buried at Meryemana (p255) nearby. The indefatigable St Paul capitalised on the Roman road system, his sprightly step taking him across Anatolia from AD 45 to AD 58 spreading the word.

As Christianity quietly spread, the Roman Empire grew cumbersome. In the late 3rd century Diocletian tried to steady the empire by splitting it into eastern and western administrative units, simultaneously attempting to wipe out Christianity. Both endeavours failed. Diocletian's reforms resulted in a civil war out of which Constantine emerged victorious. An earlier convert to Christianity, Constantine was said to have been guided by angels in choosing to build a 'New Rome' on the ancient Greek town of Byzantium. The city came to be known as Constantinople (now İstanbul; p88). On his death bed, seven years later in 337, Constantine was baptised and by the end of the century Christianity had become the official religion of the empire.

ROME ASUNDER, BYZANTIUM ARISES

Even with a new capital at Constantinople, the Roman Empire proved no less unwieldy. Once the steady hand of Theodosius (r 379–95) was gone the impact of the reforms that Diocletian had instituted earlier became apparent: the empire split. The western – Roman – half of the empire eventually succumbed to decadence, sloth and sundry 'barbarians'; the eastern half – Byzantium – prospered, gradually adopting the Greek language and allowing Christianity to become its defining feature.

By the time of Justinian (527–65), Byzantium had taken up the mantle of imperialism that had once been Rome's. History books note Justinian as

According to legend, both of Alexander's parents foresaw his birth. His mother dreamed that a lightning strike had struck her womb, while his father dreamed that his wife's womb had been sealed by a lion. In great consternation they consulted a seer, who told them their child would have the character of a lion.

In 333 BC Persian Emperor Darius, facing defeat by Alexander, abandoned his wife, children and mother on the battlefield. His mother was so disgusted she disowned him and adopted Alexander as her son.

To get the background on the search for, discovery of and ensuing controversy of Mary's final resting place, read Donald Carroll's *Mary's House*.

Julius Caesar made his famous 'Veni, vidi, vici' ('I came, I saw, I conquered') speech at Zile, near Tokat.

John Julius Norwich's concise *A Short History of Byzantium* – a distillation of three volumes on the Byzantines – does a fantastic job of cramming 1123 eventful years of history into less than 500 pages.

334-323 BC

Alexander the Great conquers most of Anatolia. On his death his empire splinters into smaller independent states.

261-133 BC

Glory days of kingdom of Pergamum. On his death, Attalus III leaves his state to Rome.

AD 330

Constantine makes New Rome (later Constantinople) the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium)

527-65

Reign of Justinian. Byzantines extend control within Mediterranean

Sailing from Byzantium: How a Lost Empire Shaped the World, by Colin Wells, brilliantly illustrates the profound effect the Byzantines had on all of the cultures they came into contact with: Turkish, Slavic, Western European and Arabic.

In 1054 the line along which the empire had split in 395 became the separating line between Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, a fault line that persists to this day.

responsible for the Aya Sofya (p104) and codifying Roman law, but he also pushed the boundaries of the empire to envelope southern Spain, North Africa and Italy. It was at this stage that Byzantium came to be an entity distinct from Rome, although sentimental attachment to the idea of Rome remained: the Greek-speaking Byzantines still referred to themselves as Romans, and in subsequent centuries the Turks would refer to them as 'Rum'. However, Justinian's exuberance and ambition overstretched the empire. Plague and the untimely encroachment of Avars and Slavic tribes north of the Danube curtailed any further expansion.

Later a drawn-out struggle with their age-old rivals the Persians further weakened the Byzantines, leaving the eastern provinces of Anatolia easy prey for the Arab armies exploding out of Arabia. The Arabs took Ankara in 654 and by 669 had besieged Constantinople. Here were a new people, bringing a new language, civilisation and, most crucially, new religion: Islam.

On the western front, Goths and Lombards impinged as well, ensuring that by the 8th century Byzantium was pushed back into the Balkans and Anatolia. The empire remained hunkered down until the emergence of the Macedonian emperors. Basil assumed the throne in 867 and the empire's fortunes started heading on the up once more, as Basil chalked up victories against Muslim Egypt, the Slavic Bulgars and Russia. Basil II (976–1025) earned the moniker the 'Bulgar Slayer' after putting out the eyes of 14,000 Bulgarian prisoners of war. When Basil died the empire lacked anyone of his leadership skills – or ferocity, perhaps – and the era of Byzantine expansion was comprehensively over.

THE BYZANTINES & ARABS... & THE RENAISSANCE

Fully 680 years before Constantinople fell to the Ottomans, a Muslim army laid siege to the Byzantine capital. Newly converted, the armies of Islam marched out of Arabia, swept through southeast Anatolia by 654 and by 669 arrived at Constantinople's city walls. The early Arab incursions into Byzantine territory so worried Emperor Constantine III that he withdrew to Sicily in 660. When he then requested that his wife and son come and join him, the citizens of Constantinople refused, believing that if they left the city would lose its imperial status. His son, Constantine IV, succeeded him in 668 and endured five Arabic assaults on Constantinople in 10 years.

The meeting of the Byzantines and Arabs wasn't all acrimonious, however: there was considerable cultural cross-pollination. The Islamic ban on portraying human beings in pictures was adopted by Emperor Leo in 726, thus ushering in the Iconoclastic period that was to last almost a century. More happily, domes were an innovation unknown to Arabs until they saw Byzantine churches. Thereafter the dome entered the repertoire of Muslim architects, and with the passing of time the fabulous voluptuous skylines of Islamic cities – Istanbul not least among them – were born. And in meeting the Byzantines the Arabs also encountered the scientific and philosophical works of the classical Greeks. The Arabic translations of these works eventually made their way to Western Europe, via Muslim Spain, thus providing the spark for the Renaissance.

To Ottoman believers, a relic of the Arab sieges of Constantinople became the fourth most holy site in Islam: the place where the Prophet Mohammed's friend and standard bearer, Ayub Ansari, was buried. The site of his grave was lost during the continuing reign of the Byzantines, but once Mehmet's soldiers took the city in 1453 it was 'miraculously' rediscovered (see p124). Thereafter it became a pilgrimage site for Ottoman sultans on ascending the throne.

THE FIRST TURKIC EMPIRE: THE SELJUKS

During the centuries of Byzantine waxing and waning, a nomadic people, the Turks, had been moving ever westward out of Central Asia. En route the Turks encountered the Arabs and in so doing converted to Islam. Vigorous and martial by nature, the Turks assumed control of parts of the moribund Abbasid empire, and built an empire of their own centred on Persia. Tuğrul, of the Turkish Seljuk clan, took the title of sultan in Baghdad, and from there the Seljuks began raiding Byzantine territory. In 1071 Tuğrul's son Alp Arslan faced down the might of the Byzantine army at Manzikert (modern Malazgirt, north of Lake Van). Although vastly outnumbered, the nimble Turkish cavalry won the day, laying all of Anatolia open to wandering Turcoman bands and beginning the drawn-out, final demise of the Byzantine Empire.

Not everything went the Seljuks' way, however. The 12th and 13th centuries saw incursions by Crusaders, who established short-lived statelets at Antioch (Antakya; p433) and Edessa (modern Şanlıurfa; p600). In a sideshow to the ongoing Seljuk saga, an unruly army of Crusaders, in 1204, sacked Constantinople, the capital of the Christian Byzantines, ostensibly the allies of the Crusaders. Meanwhile the Seljuks were riven by internal power struggles of their own and their vast empire fragmented.

The Seljuk legacy lived on in Anatolia in the Sultanate of Rum, centred on the capital at Konya (p481). Although ethnically Turkish, the Seljuks were purveyors of Persian culture, art and literature. It was the Seljuks who introduced knotted woollen rugs to Anatolia, and they endowed the countryside with remarkable architecture – still visible at Erzurum (p564), Divriği (p481), Amasya (p468) and Sivas (p477). These Seljuk creations were the first truly Islamic art forms in Anatolia, and they were to become the prototypes on which Ottoman art forms would later be modelled. Celaleddin Rumi (p483), the Sufi mystic who founded the Mevlevi, or Whirling Dervish, order, was an exemplar of the cultural and artistic heights reached in Konya.

In the meantime, the Mongol descendants of Genghis Khan rumbled through Anatolia. They took Erzurum in 1242, then defeated a Seljuk army at Köse Dağ in 1243. At the Mongol onslaught, Anatolia fractured into a mosaic of Turkish *beyliks* (principalities) and Mongol fiefdoms; the shell-shocked Byzantines did not regain Constantinople until 1261. But by 1300 a single Turkish *bey*, Osman, established the Ottoman dynasty that would end the Byzantine line once and for all.

THE FLEDGLING OTTOMAN STATE

The Ottoman Turks were in fact new to Islam, flitting with impunity around the borderlands between Byzantine and formerly Seljuk territory, but once galvanised they moved with the zeal of the new convert. In an era marked by destruction and dissolution they provided an ideal that attracted legions of followers and they quickly established an administrative and military model that allowed them to expand with alacrity. From the outset they embraced all the cultures of Anatolia – as many Anatolian civilisations before them had done – and their culture became an amalgam of Greek and Turkish, Muslim and Christian elements, particularly in the janissary corps, which were drawn from the Christian populations of their territories.

Vigorous, ambitious and seemingly invincible, they forged westward, establishing a first capital at Bursa (p292), then crossing into Europe and

An overview of the various Turkic communities from southeastern Turkey to the deserts of China's Xinjiang region, from 600 BC to the modern day, *The Turks in World History*, by Carter Vaughn Findley, is informed and insightful.

European observers referred to Anatolia as 'Turchia' as early as the 12th century. The Turks themselves didn't do this until the 1920s.

663

Muslim Arab armies invade Anatolia, bringing the message of Islam

1071

The Seljuks defeat the Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert. Start of Seljuk domination of central Anatolia.

1204

The Fourth Crusade seizes and ransacks Constantinople

1243

Mongols defeat Seljuks at Köse Dağ, effectively ending the Seljuk empire

taking Adrianople (Edirne; p166) in 1362. By 1371 they had reached the Adriatic, and in 1389 they met and vanquished the Serbs at Kosovo Polje, effectively taking control of the Balkans.

In the Balkans the Ottomans encountered a resolute Christian community, yet they absorbed them neatly into the state in the creation of the *millet* system, by which minority communities were officially recognised and allowed to govern their own affairs. That said, neither Christian insolence nor military bravado were countenanced within Ottoman territory, and Sultan Beyazıt resoundingly trounced the armies of the last Crusade at Nicopolis in Bulgaria in 1396. Beyazıt perhaps took military victories for granted from then on. Several years later it was he who was insolent, when he taunted – to his detriment – the Tatar warlord Tamerlane at Ankara. Beyazıt was captured, his army defeated and the burgeoning Ottoman Empire abruptly halted as Tamerlane lurched through Anatolia and out again.

THE OTTOMANS ASCENDANT: CONSTANTINOPLE & BEYOND

It took a decade for the dust to settle after Tamerlane departed, dragging a no-doubt chastened Beyazıt with him. Beyazıt's sons wrestled for control until finally a new sultan worthy of his predecessors emerged. With Mehmet I at the helm the Ottomans regrouped and got back to the job at hand: expansion. With a momentum born of reprieve they scooped up the remaining parts of Anatolia, rolled through Greece, made a first attempt at Constantinople and beat the Serbs, this time with Albanian sidekicks, for a second time in 1448.

The Ottomans had fully regained their momentum by the time Mehmet II became sultan in 1451. Constantinople, the last redoubt of the beleaguered Byzantines, stuck out like a sore thumb in the expanse of Ottoman territory. Mehmet, as an untested sultan, had no choice but to claim it. He built a fortress just along the Bosphorus, imposed a naval blockade on the city and amassed his enormous army. The Byzantines appealed forlornly and in vain to Europe for help. After seven weeks of siege the city fell on 29 May 1453. Christendom shuddered at the seemingly unstoppable Ottomans and fawning diplomats likened Mehmet to Alexander the Great and declared him to have assumed the mantle of the great Roman and Byzantine emperors.

Thereafter the Ottoman war machine rolled on, alternating campaigns each summer between eastern and western borders of the empire. By this point Ottoman society was fully geared for war. The janissary system, by which subject Christian youths were converted and trained for the military, meant that the Ottomans had the only standing army in Europe. They were agile, highly organised and motivated. Successive sultans expanded the realm, Selim the Grim capturing the Hejaz in 1517, and with it Mecca and Medina, thus claiming for the Ottomans status as the guardians of Islam's holiest places. It wasn't all militarism and mindless expansion, however: Sultan Beyazıt II demonstrated the essentially multicultural nature of the empire when he invited the Jews expelled from Iberia by the Spanish Inquisition to Istanbul in 1492.

The Ottoman golden age came during the reign of Sultan Süleyman (1520–66). A remarkable figure, Süleyman was noted as much for codifying Ottoman law (he is known in Turkish as Süleyman Kanunı – law bringer) as for his military prowess. Under Süleyman, the Ottomans enjoyed victories

Murat (r 1421–51) was the most contemplative of the early Ottoman sultans – he abdicated twice to retire to his palace, but both times had to reclaim the throne in order to see off insurgencies in the Balkans.

Bubbling with enthusiasm and *bons mots*, Jason Goodwin's *Lords of the Horizons* is an energetic tilt through Ottoman history.

Mehmet's siege of Constantinople coincided with a lunar eclipse (22 May 1453). The defending Byzantines interpreted this as an extremely bad omen, presaging the fall of the city and the impending defeat of all Christendom. Things didn't get quite that bad, but the city did fall within a week.

1300

Under Osman, the Ottomans begin expanding out of Western Anatolia

1402

Tamerlane defeats Beyazıt I at the Battle of Ankara but quickly departs to cause havoc elsewhere

THE SULTANATE OF WOMEN

The Ottoman Empire may have been the mightiest Islamic empire, but for a time women commanded great influence in the machinations of the empire. More than ever before or after, from the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent until the mid-17th century, some women of the Ottoman court assumed and wielded considerable political clout.

This period, sometimes referred to as the sultanate of women, began with Lady Hürrem, known to the West as Roxelana. A concubine in the harem of Süleyman, Roxelana is believed to have been of Russian or Ukrainian origin. She quickly became Süleyman's favourite consort, and when his mother died, Roxelana became the most powerful woman in the harem. She then proceeded to shore up her own position, persuading Süleyman to marry her – something that no concubine had done before.

A master of the art of palace intrigue, she manoeuvred the sultan into doing away with Mustafa, his son from an earlier coupling, and Ibrahim, his grand vizier. This left the way open for Roxelana's son, Selim, to succeed Süleyman as sultan.

Such conniving had a lasting legacy on the fortunes of the empire. Selim proved to be an inept and inebriated leader, and some historians claim that the precedent of behind-the-scenes manipulation, set by Roxelana, contributed to the increasing incompetence and eventual downfall of the Ottoman aristocracy.

over the Hungarians and absorbed the Mediterranean coast of Algeria and Tunisia; Süleyman's legal code was a visionary amalgam of secular and Islamic law, and his patronage of the arts saw the Ottomans reach their cultural zenith.

Süleyman was also notable as the first Ottoman sultan to marry. Whereas previously sultans had enjoyed the multifarious comforts of concubines, Süleyman fell in love and married Roxelana (see the boxed text, above). More remarkably still, he remained faithful to her. Sadly, monogamy did not make for domestic bliss: palace intrigues brought about the death of his first two sons. A wearied Süleyman died campaigning on the Danube in 1566, and his body was spirited back to İstanbul.

THE OTTOMAN JUGGERNAUT FALTERS

Putting a finger on exactly when or why the Ottoman rot set in is tricky, not to say contentious, but some historians pinpoint the death of Süleyman as a critical juncture. Süleyman's failure to take Malta (1565) was a harbinger of what was to come, and the earlier unsuccessful naval tilts in the Indian Ocean aimed at circumventing Portuguese influence in East Africa were evidence of growing European military might.

Indulging in hindsight it is easy to say that the remarkable ancestral line of Ottoman sovereigns – from Osman to Süleyman, inspirational leaders and mighty generals all – could not go on indefinitely. The Ottoman family tree was bound to throw up some duds eventually. And so it did.

Plainly the sultans immediately following Süleyman were not up to the task. Süleyman's son by Roxelana, Selim, known disparagingly as 'the Sot', lasted only briefly as sultan, overseeing the naval catastrophe at Lepanto, which spelled the definitive end of Ottoman supremacy in the Mediterranean. The intrigues and powerbroking that occurred during the 'sultanate of women' (above) contributed to the general befuddlement of later sultans,

Miguel Cervantes was wounded fighting against the Ottomans at the battle of Lepanto. It is said that his experiences served as inspiration for some scenes in *Don Quixote*.

1453

Mehmet the Conqueror defeats the last Byzantine emperor and captures Constantinople. Ottoman supremacy in Turkey.

1520-66

The reign of Süleyman the Magnificent, the high point of the Ottoman Empire

but male vested interests, putting personal advancement ahead of the best interests of the empire, also played a role in this. Assassinations, mutinies and fratricide were the order of the day, and little good came of it.

Further, Süleyman was the last sultan to lead his army into the field. Those who came after him were generally coddled and sequestered in the fineries of the palace, having minimal experience of everyday life and little inclination to administer or expand the empire.

These factors, coupled with the inertia that was inevitable after 250 years of virtually unfettered expansion, meant that the Ottoman military might, once famously referred to by Martin Luther as irresistible, was on the wain. There were occasional military victories, largely choreographed by capable viziers, but these were relatively few and far between.

THE SICK MAN OF EUROPE

The siege of Vienna in 1683 was effectively the Ottomans' last tilt at expanding further into Europe. It failed, as had an earlier attempt in 1529. Thereafter it was a downward spiral, the more bumpy for occasional minor rushes of victory. At the treaty of Karlovitz in 1699 the Ottomans sued for peace for the first time, and were forced to give up the Peloponnese, Transylvania and Hungary. The empire was still vast and powerful, but it had lost its momentum and was rapidly falling behind the West on many levels: social, military and scientific. Napoleon's swashbuckling campaign through Egypt in 1799 was an indication that an emboldened Europe was now willing to take the battle right up to the Ottomans, and was the first example of industrialised Europe meddling in the affairs of the Middle East.

It wasn't just Napoleon who was breathing down the neck of the empire. The Hapsburgs in Central Europe and the Russians were increasingly assertive, while Western Europe had grown rich after several centuries of colonising and exploiting the 'New World' – something the Ottomans had missed out on. In some regards, the Ottomans themselves had to endure a quasi-colonisation by European powers, which dumped their cheaply produced industrial goods in the empire while also building and running much infrastructure: innovations such as electricity, postal services and railways. Indeed, the Ottomans remained moribund, inward looking and generally unaware of the advances that were happening in Europe. An earlier clear indication of this was the fact that the Ottoman clergy did not allow the use of the printing press until the 18th century – a century and a half after it had been introduced into Europe.

But it was another idea imported from the West that was to greatly speed the dissolution of the empire: nationalism. For centuries manifold ethnic groups had coexisted harmoniously in the Ottoman Empire, but the creation of nation-states in Western Europe sparked a desire in the empire's subject peoples to throw off the Ottoman 'yoke' and determine their own destinies. So it was that pieces of the Ottoman jigsaw wriggled free: Greece attained its freedom in 1830. In 1878 Romania, Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia went their own ways, while at the same time Russia was encroaching on Kars (p577) and boldly proclaiming itself protector of all of the empire's Orthodox subjects.

As the empire shrunk there were various attempts at reform, but it was all too little, too late. In 1829 Mahmut II had abolished the janissaries, and in so doing had slaughtered them, but he did succeed in modernising the

armed forces. In 1876 Abdülhamid had allowed the creation of an Ottoman constitution and the first ever Ottoman parliament. But he used the events of 1878 as an excuse for doing away with the constitution. His reign henceforth grew increasingly authoritarian.

But it wasn't just subject peoples who were determined to modernise: educated Turks, too, looked for ways to improve their lot. In Macedonia the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) was created. Reform minded and Western looking, the CUP, who came to be known as the 'Young Turks', forced Abdülhamid in 1908 to abdicate and reinstate the constitution. Any rejoicing proved short-lived. The First Balkans War saw Bulgaria and Macedonia removed from the Ottoman map, with Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian troops advancing rapidly on İstanbul.

The Ottoman regime, once feared and respected, was now condescendingly known as the 'sick man of Europe'. European diplomats and politicians bombastically pondered the 'eastern question', ie how to dismember the empire and cherry-pick its choicest parts.

WWI & ITS AFTERMATH

The military crisis saw a triumvirate of ambitious, nationalistic and brutish CUP paşas – Enver, Talat and Cemal – stage a coup and take de facto control of the ever-shrinking empire. They managed to push back the unlikely alliance of Balkan armies and save İstanbul and Edirne, but there the good they did ended. Their next move was to choose the wrong side in the looming world war. Enver Paşa had been educated in Germany, and because of that the Ottomans had to fend off the Western powers on multiple fronts during WWI: Greece in Thrace, Russia in northeast Anatolia, Britain in Arabia (where Lawrence rose to the fore and led the Arabs to victory) and a multinational force at Gallipoli. It was during this time of confusion and turmoil that the Armenian scenario unfolded (see p40).

It was only at Gallipoli (p183) that the Ottomans held their own. This was due partially to the ineptitude of the British high command but also to the brilliance of Turkish commander Mustafa Kemal. Inspiring and iron-willed, he inspired his men to hold their lines, while also inflicting shocking casualties on the invading British and Anzac forces. Unbeknown to anyone at the time, two enduring legends of nationhood were born on the blood-spattered sands of Gallipoli: Australians see that brutal nine-month campaign as the birth of their sense of nationhood, while the Turks regard the defence of their homeland as the birth of their national consciousness.

The end of WWI saw the Turks largely in disarray. The French occupied southeast Anatolia; the Italians controlled the western Mediterranean; the Greeks occupied İzmir; and Armenians, with Russian support, controlled parts of northeast Anatolia. The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 ensured the dismembering of the empire, with only a sliver of dun steppe to be left to the Turks. European haughtiness did not figure on a Turkish backlash. But backlash there was. A slowly building Turkish nationalist movement was created, motivated by the humiliation of the Treaty of Sèvres. At the head of this movement was Mustafa Kemal, the victorious leader at Gallipoli. He secured the support of the Bektâşi dervishes, began organising Turkish resistance and established a national assembly in Ankara, in the heart of Anatolia, far from opposing armies and meddling diplomats.

Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers, by Bozidar Jezernik, is a fascinating record of travellers' observations of the Balkans under Ottoman rule.

A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914–1922, by David Fromkin, is an intriguing account of how the map of the modern Middle East was drawn arbitrarily by European colonial governments in the wake of the demise of the Ottoman Empire.

1699

The Treaty of Karlovitz – the Ottomans lose the Peloponnese, Transylvania and Hungary

1876

Abdül Hamit II takes the throne. The National Assembly meets for the first time.

1908

Revolution of the Young Turks

1914–15

Turkey enters WWI on the German side; the Gallipoli campaign begins

In the meantime, a Greek expeditionary force pushed out from İzmir. The Greeks, who, since attaining independence in 1830, had dreamed of recreating the Byzantine Empire, controlling both sides of the Aegean, saw this opportunity to realise their *megali idea* (great idea). Capitalising on Turkish disorder, the Greeks took Bursa and Edirne and pushed towards Ankara. This was just the provocation that Mustafa Kemal needed to galvanise Turkish support. After an initial skirmish at İnönü, the Greeks pressed on for Ankara seeking to crush the Turks. But stubborn Turkish resistance stalled them at the battle of Sakarya. The two armies faced off again at Dumlupınar. Here the Turks savaged the Greeks, sending them in panicked retreat towards İzmir, where they were expelled from Anatolia amid stricken refugees, pillage and looting.

Mustafa Kemal emerged as the hero of the Turkish people. Macedonian-born himself, he had realised the dream of the 'Young Turks' of years past: to create a modern, Turkish nation state. The treaty of Lausanne in 1923 undid the humiliations of Sèvres and saw foreign powers leave Turkey. The borders of the modern Turkish state were set and the Ottoman Empire was no more, although its legacy lives on in manifold nation states, from Albania to Yemen.

THE FATE OF ANATOLIA'S ARMENIANS?

The final years of the Ottoman Empire saw human misery on an epic scale, but nothing has proved as enduringly melancholy and controversial as the fate of Anatolia's Armenians. The tale begins with eyewitness accounts, in autumn 1915, of Ottoman army units rounding up Armenian populations and marching them towards the Syrian desert. It ends with an Anatolian hinterland virtually devoid of Armenians. What happened in between remains a muddled melange of conjecture, recrimination, obfuscation and outright propaganda.

Armenians maintain that they were subject to the 20th century's first orchestrated 'genocide'. They claim that over a million Armenians were summarily executed or killed on death marches and that Ottoman authorities issued a deportation order with the intention of removing the Armenian presence from Anatolia. They allege that Ottoman archives relating to this event were deliberately destroyed. To this day, Armenians demand an acknowledgement of this 'genocide'.

Turkey, though, refutes that any such 'genocide' occurred. It does admit that thousands of Armenians died but claim the Ottoman order had been to 'relocate' Armenians with no intention to eradicate them. The deaths, according to Turkish officials, were the result of disease and starvation, direct consequences of the tumultuous state of affairs during a time of war. A few even go so far as to say that it was the Turks who were subjected to 'genocide' at the hand of the Armenians.

Almost a century after the events the issue remains contentious. In 2005 President Erdoğan encouraged the creation of a joint Turkish–Armenian commission to investigate the events; Orhan Pamuk, Turkey's most famous novelist and 2006 Nobel Prize Laureate, speaking in Germany, claimed that a million Armenians had been killed and that Turkey should be prepared to discuss it; and academics convened in Istanbul to discuss the issue. All three initiatives failed: Armenia flatly refused Erdoğan's offer, Pamuk was pursued by the courts for impugning the Turkish national identity (see p51) and the conference attracted vehement protests from Turkish nationalists.

It seems that even a dialogue between the Turks and Armenians is not possible...and so the tragedy lives on.

ATATÜRK: REFORM & THE REPUBLIC

Left to manage their own affairs, the Turks consolidated Ankara as their capital and abolished the sultanate. Mustafa Kemal assumed the newly created presidency of the secular republic at the head of the CHP (Republican People's Party). Later he would take on the name Atatürk (literally 'Father Turk'). Thereupon the Turks set to work. Given Turkey's many problems, they had a job ahead of them. But Mustafa Kemal's energy was apparently limitless; his vision was to see Turkey take its place among the modern, developed countries of Europe.

At the time, the country was impoverished and devastated after years of war, so a firm hand was needed. The Atatürk era was one of enlightened despotism. Atatürk set up the institutions of democracy while never allowing any opposition sufficient oxygen to impede him. He brooked little dissent and indulged an occasional authoritarian streak, yet his ultimate motivation was the betterment of his people. One aspect of his vision, however, was to have ongoing and sorry consequences for the country: his insistence that the state be solely Turkish. To encourage national unity made sense considering the nationalist separatist movements that had bedevilled the Ottoman Empire, but in doing so he denied a cultural existence to the Kurds, many of whom had fought valiantly during the struggle for independence. Sure enough, within a few short years a Kurdish revolt erupted in southeast Anatolia, the first of several such ructions to recur throughout the 20th century (see p47).

The desire to create unified nation-states on both sides of the Aegean also brought about population exchanges after the armistice between Greece and Turkey, whereby whole communities were uprooted as Greek-speaking peoples of Anatolia were shipped to Greece, while Muslim residents of Greece were transferred to Turkey. These exchanges brought great disruption and the creation of 'ghost villages' that were vacated but never reoccupied, such as Kayaköy (see p361). Again, this was a pragmatic move aimed at forestalling outbreaks of ethnic violence, but it became one of the more melancholy episodes of the early years of the republic and, importantly, hobbled the development of the new state. Turkey found itself without much of its Ottoman-educated classes, many of whom had not been Turkish-speakers, and in their stead Turkey accepted impoverished Muslim peasants from the Balkans.

Mustafa Kemal's zeal for modernisation was unwavering, giving the Turkish state a makeover on micro and macro levels. Everything from headgear to spoken language was scrutinised and where necessary reformed. Throughout the 1920s and '30s Turkey adopted the Gregorian calendar (bringing it in line with the West, rather than the Middle East), reformed its alphabet (adopting the Roman alphabet and abandoning Arabic script) and standardised the Turkish language, outlawed the fez (seen as a reminder of the Ottoman era, hence backward), instituted universal suffrage, and decreed that Turks should take surnames, something that they had previously got by without. By the time of his death in November 1938, Atatürk had, to a greater or lesser degree, lived up to that name, having been the pre-eminent figure in the creation of the nation state and having dragged it into the modern era by a combination of inspiration, ruthlessness and sheer weight of personality.

Before WWI Mustafa Kemal had served the army in Sofia, Bulgaria; a legacy of his disagreements with the CUP revolutionaries, whom he had helped seize power in 1908.

Bruce Clark's *Twice a Stranger* is an investigation of the Greek-Turkish population exchanges of the 1920s. Analysing background events and interviewing Greeks and Turks who were transported, Clark recreates the trauma of the exchanges and shines new light on the fraught relationship of the two countries.

1920

Turkish War of Independence; ends with the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) and the founding of the Turkish Republic

1938

Death of Atatürk

1960-80

Three military coups attempt to bring order to Turkey

1974

Turkey invades northern Cyprus, creating the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

FATHER OF THE MOTHERLAND

To Westerners unused to venerating figures of authority, the Turks' devotion to Atatürk may seem unusual. In response the Turks simply remark that the Turkish state is a result of his energy and vision; that without him there would be no Turkey. From an era that threw up Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, Atatürk stands as a beacon of statesmanship and proves that radical reform, deftly handled, can be hugely successful.

The Turks' gratitude to Atatürk manifests itself throughout the country. He appears on stamps, banknotes, statues – often in martial pose astride a horse – in town squares across the country. His name is affixed to landmarks and infrastructure projects too many to mention, from bridges to airports to four-lane highways. And seemingly every house where he spent a night from the southern Aegean to the Black Sea is now a museum.

Turkish schoolchildren are well versed in Atatürk's life and achievements – they learn them by rote and can dutifully recite them. But it may be that the history-book image of Atatürk is more simplistic than the reality. An avowed champion of Turkish culture, he preferred opera to Turkish music. Though calling himself 'Father Turk', he had no offspring and a single short and troubled marriage. A recently published biography (in Turkish only) of his wife, Latife Uşşaki, sheds light on aspects of his life previously glossed over, and has raised the ire of duly reverent Turks.

Atatürk died relatively young (aged 57) in 1938. No doubt years as a military man, reformer and public figure took their toll. His friend and successor as president, İsmet İnönü, ensured that he was to be lauded by his countrymen. The praise continues to this day. Indeed, any perceived insult to Atatürk is considered not only highly offensive but is also illegal. Cynicism about politicians may be well and good at home, but it is a no-no in Turkey as regards Atatürk.

There are two outstanding biographies of the great man. Patrick Kinross' *Atatürk: Rebirth of a Nation* is engagingly written and views closely to the official Turkish view, while Andrew Mango's *Atatürk* is a detached, objective and highly detailed look at a remarkable life.

DEMOCRATISATION & THE COUPS

Though reform had proceeded apace in Turkey, the country remained economically and militarily weak and Atatürk's successor, İsmet İnönü, stepped carefully to avoid involvement in WWII. The war over, Turkey found itself allied to the USA. A bulwark against the Soviets (the Armenian border then marked the edge of the Soviet bloc), Turkey was of great strategic importance and found itself on the receiving end of US aid. The new friendship was cemented when Turkish troops fought in Korea, and Turkey was made a member of NATO soon afterwards.

Meanwhile, the democratic process, previously stifled, gained momentum. In 1950 the Democratic Party swept to power. Ruling for a decade, the Democrats had raised the hackles of the Kemalists from the outset by reinstating the call to prayer in Arabic (something Atatürk had outlawed), but when, as their tenure proceeded, they failed to live up to their name and became increasingly autocratic, the army stepped in during 1960 and removed them. Army rule lasted only briefly, and resulted in the liberalisation of the constitution, but it set the tone for years to come. The military considered themselves the guardians of Atatürk's vision – pro-Western and secular – and felt obliged and empowered to step in when necessary to ensure the republic maintained the right trajectory.

The 1960s and '70s saw the creation of political parties of all stripes, from left-leaning to fascist-nationalist to pro-Islamic, but a profusion of new par-

ties did not necessarily make for a more vibrant democracy. The late 1960s were characterised by left-wing activism and political violence that prompted the creation of unlikely coalitions and a move to the right by centrist parties. The army stepped in again in 1971 to restore order, before swiftly handing power back in late 1973. Several months later the military was again in the thick of things when President Bülent Ecevit ordered them into Cyprus to protect the Turkish minority, in response to a Cypriot Greek extremist organisation who had seized power and was espousing union with Greece. The invasion effectively divided the island into two political entities – one of which is only recognised by Turkey – a situation that persists to this day.

Political and economic chaos reigned for the rest of the '70s so the military took it upon themselves to seize power again and re-establish order in 1980. This they did through the creation of the highly feared National Security Council, but allowed elections in 1983. Here, for the first time in decades, was a happy result for Turkey. Turgut Özal, leader of the Motherland Party (ANAP), won a majority and, unhindered by unruly coalition partners, was able to set Turkey back on course. An astute economist, and pro-Islamic, Özal made vital economic and legal reforms that brought Turkey in line with the international community and sowed the seeds of its current vitality.

The late 1980s, however, were notable for two aspects – corruption and Kurdish separatism (see p47) – that were to have an impact long beyond Özal's tenure.

THE 1990S: MODERNISATION & SEPARATISM

The first Gulf War kick-started the 1990s with a bang. Turkey played a prominent role in the allied invasion of Iraq, with Özal supporting sanctions and allowing air strikes from bases in southern Anatolia. In so doing, Turkey, after decades in the wilderness, affirmed its place in the international community, while also becoming a more important US ally. At the end of the Gulf War millions of Iraqi Kurds, fearing reprisals from Saddam, fled north into south-eastern Anatolia. The exodus caught the attention of the international media, bringing the Kurdish issue into the international spotlight, and resulted in the establishment of the Kurdish safe haven in northern Iraq. This in turn emboldened the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), who stepped up their campaign, thus provoking more drastic and iron-fisted responses from the Turkish military, such that the southeast was effectively enduring a civil war. The Kurdish conflagration continued escalating, with most of the southeast under martial law, until the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999.

Meanwhile, Turgut Özal died suddenly in 1993 thus creating a power vacuum. Various weak coalition governments followed throughout the 1990s, with a cast of political figures flitting across the political stage. Tansu Çiller served briefly as Turkey's first female prime minister, but her much-vaunted feminine touch and economic expertise did nothing to find a solution to the Kurdish issue or to cure the ailing economy. In fact, her husband's name was aired in various fraud investigations at a time when sinister links between organised crime, big business and politicians were becoming increasingly apparent.

In December 1995, to everyone's surprise, the religious Refah (Welfare) Party managed to form a government led by veteran politician Necmettin Erbakan. Heady with power, Refah politicians made Islamist statements that

Voices from the Front: Turkish Soldiers on the War with the Kurds, by Nadire Mater, offers sometimes harrowing first-hand accounts of the Kurdish insurgency during the 1990s.

1983

Turgut Özal wins elections; starts to open Turkey to the wider world

1985-99

Kurdish uprising in southeast, effectively ended by capture of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan

1999

Two earthquakes wreak devastation on northwestern Turkey

2001

Economy collapses and Turkish lira loses half its value

raised the ire of the military. In 1997 the National Security Council declared that Refah had flouted the constitutional ban on religion in politics. Faced with what some dubbed a 'postmodern coup', the government resigned and Refah was disbanded.

TOWARDS EUROPE

The capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in early 1999 may have seemed like a good omen after the torrid '90s. His capture offered an opportunity – as yet largely unrealised – to settle the Kurdish question. Later that year the disastrous earthquakes centred on İzmit put paid to any premillennial false hopes. The government's handling of the crisis was woefully inadequate; however, the global outpouring of aid and sympathy – not least from traditional foes, the Greeks – did much to reassure Turks they were valued members of the world community.

An economic collapse in early 2001 seemed to compound the country's woes (see p46), but despite the government securing IMF loans the long-suffering Turks were understandably jaded with their lot.

Things changed dramatically in late 2002 when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) swept to power in such convincing fashion that most old political parties were confined to oblivion, and with them several political perennials long past their use-by date. The electorate held its collective breath to see if the military would intervene to prevent the manifestly pro-Islamic AKP from assuming government but the generals consented to respect the will of the electorate. The AKP's leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was initially banned from sitting in parliament due to an earlier conviction for 'inciting religious violence' (reading out a poem that compared the minarets of a mosque to the swords of Islam), but some deft sidestepping ensued, and he was allowed into parliament and into the prime ministership.

Pundits were concerned as to which direction Erdoğan would take the country. Any initial misgivings were swiftly cast aside. Clearly intent on gaining EU entry for Turkey, Erdoğan proved a deft and inspiring leader, amending the constitution to scrap the death penalty, granting greater cultural rights to the Kurds and cracking down on human rights violations. By the end of 2002 the EU was making approving noises and the economy was largely back on track. Turkey was as self-confident and assertive as it had been in many a long year, steadfastly refusing American demands that the country be used as a base for attacking northern Iraq in 2003, then later the same year enduring the horror of terrorist bombings in İstanbul with resilience and solidarity. By January 2005 the economy was considered robust enough to introduce the new Turkish lira (Yeni Türk Lirası) and do away with six zeroes on each and every banknote.

The icing on the cake came when the flirtatious EU finally started accession talks with Turkey in October 2005 after many years of come-ons had come to nothing. However, there are still a number of obstacles to overcome before Turkey achieves EU accession. For more details, see p29.

Former BBC Turkey correspondent Chris Morris ponders the rhythms and cadences of modern Turkish life in *The New Turkey: The Quiet Revolution on the Edge of Europe*

2002

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Islamic Justice & Development Party (AKP) wins landslide election victory

2005

Yeni Türk Lirası introduced (January); EU accession talks start (October)

The Culture

THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

Just as the person who asks ‘How are you?’ in the street expects you to reply with ‘Fine’ rather than give a blow-by-blow account of your health and relationship problems, so the Turk who asks ‘How is Turkey?’ expects the answer ‘*Çok güzel!*’ (Wonderful!) rather than a detailed critique. Turks may grumble and criticise aspects of the country themselves, but they certainly don’t want outsiders to do the same thing.

Turkish chauvinism is the ugly side of the national psyche. When Atatürk salvaged a nation from the wreck of the Ottoman Empire, the price for national unity was an ideology in which minorities and outsiders were regarded with suspicion, even hostility. An official veil was drawn over Turkey’s cosmopolitan past, and the saying went about: ‘A Turk’s only friend is another Turk.’ Outsiders are frequently dismayed to find that their fluent English-speaking and apparently intelligent new Turkish friend turns out to harbour all sorts of conspiracy theories about how the world plans to do Turkey in.

Happily, there are signs this situation is giving way to a new openness and pluralism. In the streets, hip-hop artists are giving the global phenomenon a very Turkish twist. In the universities, it is common to meet students of Ottoman language and Byzantine history. Crumbling churches dotted throughout the countryside are being restored. And from Ankara to Van, an increasing number of people feel there is no contradiction in being both Turkish and Kurdish.

Eight hundred years of Ottoman empire-building, followed by a century of fighting for survival, forged a people who respect authority and toughness. But it also endowed them with the ability to laugh in the face of adversity, to enjoy the here-and-now, and to show generosity to strangers and the less well off. It’s that unique combination of traits that make the Turks, for all their insularity, some of the most warm-hearted and hospitable people in the world.

LIFESTYLE

Increasingly, two completely different lifestyles coexist in Turkey. In İstanbul, İzmir, Bursa, Ankara and along the west coast, people live their lives much like people in the West. Both men and women march off to jobs in city offices and shops, men and women socialise together, and in their homes people sit down to dinner at tables and use ‘modern’ (ie pedestal) toilets. But move away from the cities (and in particular out east) and you will find a very different, far more traditional lifestyle still alive and kicking. In these areas, men and women rarely sit (let alone socialise) together, women stay at home to look after the children, everyone sits on the floor to eat and toilets are firmly of the squat variety.

The picture has been complicated by massed emigration from the villages of the east to the big cities of the west, which means that alongside the Westernised neighbourhoods there are also pockets of traditionalism. Women in headscarves may be a rarity along İstanbul’s İstiklal Caddesi, but they’re the norm in the backstreets of Sultanahmet.

Children receive nine years of compulsory education. Doing well on the controversial three-hour University Entrance Exam (ÖSS) is a must to get into university, but only a quarter of high school graduates find a place at university anyway. A World Bank report on Turkish education says the standard of education across the country is in dire need of an overhaul. One of the major reforms needed is to increase high school graduation from just

Turks claim to be able to detect someone’s political affiliations from the shape of their moustache. Civil servants are given instructions on how much hair can adorn their upper lip. University students are forbidden to grow beards.

A survey carried out in east and southeast Turkey discovered that one in 10 women was living in polygamous marriages, even though these became illegal in 1926.

ONE BIG, HAPPY FAMILY Verity Campbell

One of the cultural habits Turks have in common with their Arabic neighbours is the use of familial titles to embrace strangers into the extended family. This endearing habit is worth keeping an ear out for as it really does charm you. One of my fondest recent memories was when a friend was having a picnic in a park beside the Haliç (Golden Horn) in İstanbul, and I asked an old woman directions (in Turkish). 'Just south of the Fener *iskelesi* (jetty), my daughter' she said. I was so delighted I could have placed a big kiss on her grizzled face right then, though my reaction was also probably mixed with relief that she'd called me 'daughter' (*kızım*) and not 'sister'.

Listen out for slightly older men being called *abi* (big brother) and slightly older women *abla* (big sister). Considerably older men are *amca* (uncle) or *baba* (father); considerably older woman *teyze* (auntie) or *anne* (mother). You'll hear these titles in use when tensions are riding high in order to help to ease the situation.

35% in eastern provinces to 80% (the rate in the EU) and to implement a pre-schooling program. Despite the need for reform, literacy rates are good. According to the Turkish Statistics Institute some 80% of women and 95% of men are literate.

Although people are generally getting wealthier, with a declining number of people living under the poverty line (currently a quarter of the population), the gap between those at the top and bottom of the income pile is wide and growing wider. The average civil servant earns around €450 per month, while the owners of successful private companies throw away equivalent amounts on fripperies every day.

Tourism has had a huge impact on life in Turkey. While bringing in much-needed cash, it has also fostered rapid and all-pervasive social change. Until the 1970s not even a husband and wife could kiss or hold hands in public. Today, with many tourists wandering around in as few clothes as they can get away with, the taboos are breaking down and young Turks in the cities behave in much the same way as young people anywhere. This can cause confusion for tourists who, assuming anything goes these days, are shocked when a fight breaks out over 'possession' of a woman or someone takes offence on seeing a couple kiss in public. If in doubt, the watchword must always be to err on the side of caution, especially in rural areas.

ECONOMY

Turkey is infamous for a galloping inflation rate that tipped 77.5% in the 1990s, with so many zeros regularly added to the currency that having a tea for 1,000,000 Turkish lira no longer seemed a joke.

An economic collapse in early 2001 compounded the country's woes. Inflation skyrocketed and the value of the Turkish lira plummeted. Kemal Derviş, a newly appointed Minister of the Economy, succeeded in sweet-talking the IMF for loans and made much-needed economic reforms, thus avoiding a potentially disastrous downward spiral.

By January 2005, under the direction of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the economy was considered robust enough to introduce the new Turkish lira (Yeni Türk Lirası) and finally do away with six zeroes on each and every banknote. For a year or so the yeni lira looked fairly stable, but in early 2006 a global downturn saw an exodus of international money and the currency lost some 18% of its value. Investors were left feeling shaky, sadly reminded of Turkey's vulnerability due to its high debt and current-account deficit. While the AKP had been boasting about bettering their IMF repayments, they were left red-faced. With the aid of the Central Bank the currency is back on track – for now.

POPULATION

Turkey has a population of approximately 70 million, the great majority of whom are Turks. The Kurds form the largest minority, and there are also small groups of Laz and Hemşin people along the Black Sea coast, and Yörüks and Tahtacı along the eastern Mediterranean coast.

Since the 1950s there has been a steady movement of people away from the countryside and into the towns, so that today some 66% of Turks live in cities. This process was speeded up by the years of fighting in the southeast when villagers were either forcibly relocated or decided for themselves that the grass was greener elsewhere (predominantly in Turkey's largest cities of İstanbul, Ankara, Bursa and Adana, but also in eastern towns such as Gaziantep and Malatya). The result is that cities such as İstanbul have turned into sprawling monsters, their historic hearts padded out with ring after ring of largely unplanned new neighbourhoods inhabited by the poor from all around the country.

Turks

That the Turks speak Turkish is a given, but what is not perhaps quite so widely known is that Turkic languages are spoken by a much larger group of people of similar ancestry who can be found all the way from Turkey through Azerbaijan and Iran to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan and even Uighur, China. This is because the Turks are the descendants of assorted Central Asian tribal groupings, including the Seljuks, Huns and the nomadic Oğuz. Although academics believe the Turkic languages may have been spoken as early as 600 BC, the Turks definitively first appeared in medieval Chinese sources as the Tujue (or Turks) in 6th-century Mongolia and Siberia. As they moved westwards they encountered the Arabs and converted to Islam.

The Seljuks became Anatolia's first Turkic empire (see p35). It's believed that as news of Seljuk conquests and expansions spread, other nomadic Turkic people moved into Anatolia.

Kurds

Turkey has a significant Kurdish minority estimated at 14 million. The sparsely populated eastern and southeastern regions are home to perhaps seven million Kurds, while seven million more Kurds live elsewhere in the country, more or less integrated into mainstream Turkish society. Virtually all Turkish Kurds are Muslims. Kurds look physically similar to the Turks, but have a separate language, culture and family traditions.

Troubles between Kurds and Turks have been well documented. The Ottoman Empire's inclusivity ensured Kurds and Turks fought together during the struggle for independence, but relations soured after the formation of the Republic. Atatürk's reforms fuelled nationalism that left little room for anything other than Turkishness. It was only a matter of time before the Kurds began their separatist struggle.

Unlike the Christians, Jews and Armenians, the Kurds were not guaranteed rights as a minority group under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, which effectively created modern Turkey. Indeed, until relatively recently the Turkish government refused to even recognise the existence of the Kurds, insisting they be called 'Mountain Turks'. Even today the census form doesn't allow anyone to identify themselves as Kurdish, nor can they be identified as Kurdish on their identity cards. This is in spite of the fact that many people in the east, particularly women, speak the Kurmançî dialect of Kurdish as their first language (see the boxed text, p621) and may have only a shaky grasp of formal Turkish.

Various (not exactly academically rigorous) theories state that the Turks are descendants of Japheth, the grandson of Noah. The Ottomans themselves claimed that Osman could trace his genealogy back through 52 generations to Noah.

According to the UN, Turkish is one of the world's most widely used languages, spoken in one form or another by around 150 million people from the old Yugoslavia to northwestern China.

In 1984 Abdullah Öcalan formed the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which proved to be the most enduring – and bloodthirsty – Kurdish organisation that Turkey had seen. Many Kurds, while not necessarily supporting the early demands of the PKK for a separate state, wanted to be able to read newspapers in their own language, have their children taught in their own language and watch Kurdish TV.

From the mid-1980s the separatist strife escalated until the southeast was in a permanent state of emergency. After 15 years of fighting during the 1980s and '90s, and the deaths of some 30,000 people, Abdullah Öcalan was caught in Kenya in 1999. The 21st century started on a more promising note for relations between the Turks and Kurds when Öcalan urged his followers to lay down their weapons and a ceasefire was called.

The best hope for speedy change lies in Turkey's eagerness to join the EU, which champions the rights of cultural and ethnic minorities. In 2002 the Turkish government approved broadcasts in Kurdish and the go-ahead was given for Kurdish to be taught in language schools. Emergency rule was lifted in the southeast. The government started compensating villagers displaced in the troubles and a conference entitled 'The Kurdish Question in Turkey: Ways for a Democratic Settlement' was held in İstanbul in 2006. Life for Kurds in the southeast has become considerably easier: the press of harsh military rule and censorship has largely been lifted, and optimism has been fuelled by the outlook of accession with the EU. Many Kurds have been delighted with the development of the quasi-independent Kurdish state over the border in northern Iraq, but prefer to see their future with a country tied to the EU.

However, despite the positive accomplishments, this road will not be easy. Some Kurdish activists maintain reforms are inadequate and want an amnesty for PKK militants. The ceasefire was broken in June 2004 and since then low-level fighting has resumed in the southeast. A group believed to be a front for the PKK, the TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Falcons), claims responsibility for the unrest and the sporadic bombings throughout the country. But few feel that these events spell a return to the terror of the 1980s and '90s.

Laz

The 250,000-odd Laz people mainly inhabit the valleys between Trabzon and Rize. East of Trabzon you can hardly miss the women in their vivid red- and maroon-striped shawls. Laz men are less conspicuous, although they were once among the most feared of Turkish warriors: for years black-clad Laz warriors were Atatürk's personal bodyguards.

Once Christian but now Muslim, the Laz are a Caucasian people who speak a language related to Georgian. Just as speaking Kurdish was forbidden until 1991, so was speaking Lazuri, a language that until recently had not been written down. However, the German Wolfgang Feuerstein and the Kaçkar Working Group drew up a Lazuri alphabet (combining Latin and Georgian characters) and dictionary, and there are small signs of a growing sense of Laz nationalism.

The Laz are renowned for their business acumen and many are involved in shipping and construction.

Hemşin

The Hemşin people mainly come from the far-eastern end of the Black Sea coast, although perhaps no more than 15,000 of them still live there; most have long since migrated to the cities where they earn a tasty living as bread and pastry cooks.

The Hemşin may have arrived in Turkey from parts of what is now Armenia. Like the Laz, they were originally Christian – their relatively recent conversion could explain why they seem to wear their Islam so lightly. You won't see any women in veils or chadors in Ayder, although the local women wear leopard-print scarves (even more eye-catching than those worn by Laz women) twisted into elaborate headdresses.

Other

About 70,000 Armenians still live in Turkey, mainly in İstanbul, around Lake Van and in and around Antakya. The controversy surrounding the Armenians and the Ottomans in the final years of the Ottoman Empire ensures that relations between Turks and Armenians in Turkey and abroad remain predominantly sour (see p40).

Although Turkey once had a large ethnic Greek population, after the population exchanges of the early Republic era (p41) most of the ethnic Greeks still living in Turkey settled in İstanbul. A few Pontic Greeks still live in the remote valleys of the eastern Black Sea.

There are also small communities of Circassians, Assyrians, Tatars, Yörük, Arabs, Roma and Jews, as well as a large – and growing – expat community.

SPORT

Football

Turks are simply mad about football (soccer). Every city has a football stadium that heaves with fans on match days. Pre- and post-match, the streets are aflutter with team flags, and the bars and tea gardens buzz with talk of nothing else.

The Turks' love affair with football began in the mid-19th century, after they were introduced to the game by English tobacco merchants. First matches saw English and Greek teams face off, but soon Turkish students from the Galata high school ran on field as the Galatasaray club. Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş and Galatasaray are the top three teams, all of which are based in İstanbul, and all of which have fanatical national followings. Choose a team at your peril.

Since the 1990s Turkish teams and players have been enjoying greater success and increasingly higher profiles. In 2003, the national team made it to the semi-finals of the World Cup; Turks even outdid themselves when it came to partying hard.

If you are interested in seeing a game, the best place to see one is in İstanbul (p151).

Oil Wrestling

Turkey's most famous *yağlı güreş* (oil wrestling) matches have been taking place near Edirne since 1361 (see the boxed text, p171). Every June, hundreds of amateur wrestlers from all over Turkey gather there to show off their strength.

The wrestlers are organised into classes, from *teşvik* (encouragement) to *baş güreşler* (head wrestlers), with the winner in each class being designated a *başpehlivan*, or master wrestler. Clad only in leather shorts, they coat themselves with olive oil, utter a traditional chant and start going through a warm-up routine consisting of exaggerated arm-swinging steps and gestures. Then they get down to the nitty-gritty of battling each other to the ground, a business that involves some interesting hand techniques to say the least.

On the last day of the festival, the *başpehlivans* wrestle for the top prize. Finally only two are left to compete for the coveted gold belt.

Diminutive weightlifter Naim Süleymanoğlu won a hat-trick of Olympic gold medals in 1988, 1992 and 1996.

Turkey has the youngest population in Europe; some 22 million (32% of the population) are under 15.

Camel Wrestling

Another purely Turkish spectacle is the camel-wrestling matches held in the South Aegean town of Selçuk, late January. Huge male camels are brought together to grapple with each other, which sounds like a frightfully unfair infringement of animal rights. Actually, it all seems rather harmless, with teams of men on hand with ropes like tug-of-war teams to pull the beasts apart at the first sign of anything seriously threatening. It's an amazingly colourful sport, and the picnicking spectators love it. For more information see the boxed text, p250.

MULTICULTURALISM

Under the Ottomans Turkey was well known for its multiculturalism, with many towns all over the country boasting populations of Greeks, Jews and Armenians as large as their Muslim ones. The Ottoman policy was to allow people to go on with their lives in peace provided they paid the requisite taxes. However, the events of WWI and then of the Turkish War of Independence meant that most Turks came to see non-Turkish nationalism within Turkey as a threat (p41), a heritage they have been slow to shake off.

Modern Turks will assure you that theirs is a very cosmopolitan country, an impression that can just about be sustained if you stick to the main tourist areas. However, when it comes to permanent inhabitants the picture looks very different. Take a stroll down İstanbul's İstiklal Caddesi and you'll see a population almost uniformly Caucasian and Muslim. The shortage of restaurants selling anything other than local and daringly 'European' food speaks volumes for this lack of diversity.

In such circumstances Turkey has barely reached first base when it comes to dealing with the realities of multiculturalism. Foreigners wanting to move to Turkey often have trouble persuading officials to let them keep their own names on their ID cards, let alone being allowed to register themselves as Christians or Jews. If anything, despite the government's rhetoric to the contrary, suspicion of 'alien' religions seems to be growing and polls confirm that support for nationalistic parties is on the rise. Even the St Paul Trail came under scrutiny for fear that those beefy trekkers were really missionaries in disguise, while the killing of a Catholic priest amid the Prophet Mohammed caricatures controversy in 2006 was further proof that tensions are rising. It will be a long time yet before Turkey is ready to have its children celebrate alternative religious festivals in school.

Even in its heyday the Ottoman Empire didn't extend beyond Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The result is that Turkey has not come under the same pressures to take in settlers from ex-colonies and accommodate refugees from far-flung places that have so changed the complexion of most Western countries. But all that is changing. In the last few years the numbers of asylum-seekers reaching Turkey have grown, and Turkey's position on

LOVE US OR LEAVE US *Verity Campbell*

While talking to two modern young Turkish girls about their aspirations, we were inevitably drawn to a discussion about travel. They wanted to study English overseas and were discussing which country they'd like to go to. A young man in the group was asked if he'd like to travel: 'No, I love Turkey. Why would I want to leave?' The ridiculous idea seems to be growing in the community, closely tied to increasing nationalism, that if you leave Turkey you don't love it – you're a traitor. Turkish legislation seems to have fostered this trend. Turks were legally allowed to travel overseas for the first time in 1961, and Turkey has the most expensive passports in the world (some €400 for five years), seemingly designed to penalise those who leave.

FREEDOM TO SPEAK

Although Turkey has been implementing a wide range of reforms for its EU membership bid, the country's new penal code still retains the infamous Article 301, which prohibits people from 'insulting Turkishness'. This Article has been the basis for a series of recent high-profile prosecutions of journalists, writers and artists, exposing Turkey's freedom of expression credentials (or lack thereof) to the world.

The most famous case to hit the headlines was Turkey's internationally acclaimed novelist, Orhan Pamuk, who was tried after he mentioned the killing of Armenians by Ottoman Turks at the beginning of the 20th century (see the boxed text, p40). Charges were dropped early 2006, but Pamuk had become a reluctant political symbol and a target for nationalists, and the damage to Turkey's reputation had been done.

Lesser-known but just as important cases have followed. Journalist and author Perihan Mağden was tried for 'turning people against military service' after she wrote an article in the *Yeni Akteul* titled 'Conscientious objection is a human right'. Her case, heard in the Sultanahmet law courts in mid-2006, was a debacle because ultranationalists were allowed to demonstrate loudly outside the courtroom throughout the hearing. Critics claim the fact that security forces did little to quell the protestors makes them complicit. At the time of writing, Turkey's feted literary queen, Elif Şafak, was also due to stand trial for comments made by the Armenian characters in her *The Bastard of İstanbul*.

Even Prime Minister Erdoğan has taken artists to court – and won – for caricatures representing him as an animal. With this level of hypocrisy, it remains to be seen whether continuing pressure and international exposure from the increasing number of cases will eventually force the government into acting on its declared commitment to freedom of expression.

the doorstep of Europe has made it one of the major centres for human trafficking in the world (see p107).

Turkey has a large diaspora, with the largest community (some 2.6 million first- and second-generation Turks) living in Germany. Turks arrived in Germany in the 1960s as 'guest workers' at the invitation of the German government. However, the Kohl government's 1983 *Voluntary Repatriation Encouragement Act*, offering Turks financial incentives to return home, goes a long way to show that relations have never been easy. There are also significant populations in Bulgaria, France, Netherlands, UK, USA, Austria and Australia.

MEDIA

Although from the way the Turks slag their governments off in print it may look as if there's little censorship, certain subjects (the 'Armenian genocide', the 'Kurdish problem', negative portrayal of Atatürk, the army etc) still cause problems. Since editors and journalists know the likely penalties of stepping out of line, self-censorship is the order of the day. Still, some 200 journalists, artists and writers have been tried over the last two decades. In response, a freedom-of-speech movement has gained momentum over the last few years (see the boxed text, above).

Although controls over TV have loosened, the public broadcaster, Turkish Radio and Television (TRT), still receives a certain amount of censorship from the government of the day.

RELIGION

The Turkish population is 98% Muslim, mostly of the Sunni creed, with about 20% Alevi and a small group of Shiites (around Kars and Iğdır). İstanbul, İzmir and the coastal resorts have small Christian populations. There's also a small but rapidly declining community of Assyrian Orthodox Christians in

and around Diyarbakır, Mardin and the Tūr Abdin plateau. Turkey has had a Jewish community since at least 1492 when Sultan Beyazıt II invited Jews expelled by the Spanish Inquisition. Today there are some 24,000 Jews in İstanbul, with smaller numbers in cities such as Ankara, Bursa and İzmir.

Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country with a secular constitution. Some 75% of Turks support the separation of state and religion, but nevertheless tensions between state and religion remain high. The urban-elite secularists, who see themselves as defenders of Turkey's republican foundations, fear the country will become an Islamic state (like its neighbour, Iran) if the fiercely guarded principles of the constitution are chipped away. Others say the doggedly secular laws repress basic human rights, including religious expression and duty. The headscarf has become a symbol of ongoing state versus religion tensions – see the boxed text, below.

Islam

Many Turks take a fairly relaxed approach in terms of Muslim religious duties and practices. Fasting during Ramadan (Ramadan in many Islamic countries) is usual and Islam's holy days and festivals are treated with due respect, but for many the holy day, Friday, and Islamic holidays are the only times they'll visit a mosque. You can also tell by the many bars and *meyhanes* throughout the country that Turks like a drink or three, another strict no-no for Muslims in other countries. If you've travelled in other Muslim countries where the five-times-a-day prayers are strictly followed, you'll find the practice of Islam in Turkey quite different.

Like Christians, Muslims believe that Allah (God) created the world and everything in it, pretty much according to the biblical account. They also believe that Adam (Adem), Noah (Nuh), Abraham (İbrahim), Moses

Biblical Sites in Turkey, by Everett C Blake & Anna G Edmonds, provides detailed coverage of the country's many Christian and Jewish holy places as well as the Muslim ones.

ISLAMISTS VS THE STATE: THE HEADSCARF CONTROVERSY

Who would have thought a square of cloth could cause such controversy? But for secular Turks the headscarf (*türban* or *eşarp*) worn by religious women is a symbol of everything they despise, of a backward-looking mentality that has rejected everything Atatürk stood for.

The result of this contempt is that people of otherwise impeccable left-wing credentials will behave towards women with headscarves in a way that would be out of the question in the politically correct West. But they have the law on their side. Women are forbidden to wear headscarves while working in public offices (which means schools as well as government buildings), and the start of every academic year sees huge demonstrations on university campuses since, in theory at least, women may not study for their degree while wearing a headscarf.

All this came to a head in 1998 when the elected MP Merve Kavakçı tried to take the oath of office while wearing a scarf, only to be jeered at and slow hand-clapped by her fellow MPs. And it's still not uncommon for government ministers to be denied invitations to presidential receptions if their wives wear headscarves.

Despite all this, in an almost inexplicable decision, the European courts ruled in 2004 that universities were within their rights to refuse to admit adult women who were wearing scarves. The current government has passionately argued for the lifting of the ban, but so far, to no avail.

So do all headscarves indicate fervent fundamentalist faith? Of course they don't, although they may indicate a generally traditional and more conservative approach to life in which a woman's modesty is of utmost importance. Regardless, it does seem ridiculous that a woman should be denied the right to study because she wears a headscarf. That the wife of the current prime minister wears a headscarf was controversial at election time, yet he was voted into office. For the upcoming presidential elections all eyes are on the candidates, and their wives, as the president is seen as the keeper of secularism in Turkey. If the chosen candidate's wife wears a headscarf it's likely that attitudes will be forced to change in the country.

(Musa) and Jesus (İsa) were prophets, although they don't believe that Jesus was divine or that he was a saviour. Jews and Christians are called 'People of the Book', meaning those with a revealed religion (in the Torah and Bible) that preceded Islam.

Where Islam diverges from Christianity and Judaism is in the belief that Islam is the 'perfection' of these earlier traditions. Although Moses and Jesus were great prophets, Mohammed was the greatest and last: *the Prophet* (Peygamber) to whom Allah communicated his final revelation, trusting him to communicate it to the world.

Accordingly, Muslims do not worship Mohammed, only Allah. In fact, Muslim in Arabic means 'one who has submitted to Allah's will'. The *ezan* called from the minaret five times a day and said at the beginning of Muslim prayers says: 'Allah is great! There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet.' Allah's revelations to Mohammed are contained in the Kur'an-i Kerim, the Quran (Koran in Turkish).

Muslims are expected to observe the following five 'pillars' of Islam:

- Say, understand and believe: 'There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet.'
- Pray five times daily: at dawn, noon, midafternoon, dusk and after dark.
- Give alms to the poor.
- Keep the fast of Ramazan, if capable of doing so.
- Make a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Muslim prayers are set rituals. Before praying, Muslims must wash their hands and arms, feet and ankles, and head and neck in running water. Then they must cover their head, face Mecca and perform a precise series of gestures and genuflections. If they deviate from the pattern, they must begin again.

A Muslim must not touch or eat pork, nor drink wine (interpreted as any alcoholic beverage), and must refrain from fraud, usury, slander and gambling. No sort of image of any being with an immortal soul (ie human or animal) can be revered or worshipped.

Islam has been split into many factions and sects since the time of Mohammed, and Islamic theology has become very elaborate and complex. However, these tenets are the basic ones shared by the entire Muslim community (or *umma*).

WOMEN IN TURKEY

Women in Turkey live in polar opposite worlds. Many women in İstanbul and other big coastal cities live a life not unlike their sisters in the West, free to come and go pretty much as they choose, to go out to work and to dress as they wish. But for the majority of Turkish women, especially those in villages out east, no such freedom exists and their lives continue to be ruled by the need to maintain their modesty and the honour of their family for fear of retribution.

Honour killings are an ongoing headache for the country. Over 2000 women were allegedly murdered for 'honour' in the country during three six years since 2000, and police believe these figures are just the tip of the iceberg. In most honour killings the 'dishonoured' family chooses a male family member to murder the woman accused of dishonouring the family, usually by having a child outside marriage or an extra-marital affair. Traditionally the murderers have received reduced sentences due to pleas of provocation, but the government's recent law amendments have increased penalties. However, social ideals also have to change – especially out

While the Ottoman Empire was a Muslim entity, its rulers weren't a particularly pious lot. No Ottoman sultan performed the Haj except Selim I – when he conquered Mecca.

Turkey's answer to England's King Henry VIII, Sultan İbrahim (r 1640–48) had his entire harem of 280 women tied in sacks and thrown into the Bosphorus when he tired of them.

THE ALEVIS

An estimated 20% of the Turkish population are Alevi – Muslims whose traditions differ markedly from those of the majority Sunnis; they have more in common with Shiites. The origins of these differences lie in the quarrels that broke out in 656 between the followers and relatives of the Prophet Mohammed following his death.

The religious practices of Sunnis and Alevi differ significantly. Many Alevi beliefs correspond with those of Hacı Bektaş Veli, the 13th-century Muslim mystic whose tomb is in Hacıbektaş (see the boxed text, p517) in Cappadocia. While Sunnis gather for prayer in a *cami* (mosque) with men and women separated, the Alevi assemble in a *cemevi* (assembly hall) with men and women together. During an Alevi *cem* (ceremony) a sermon is delivered by a *dede* (grandfather; a moral authority in the community) and then men and women begin a *sema*, the whirling ritual dance.

Antipathy between the Sunnis and the Alevi has continued into modern times, with some Turks denying that Alevi are true Muslims. Alevi want their religion included in textbooks (currently only the Sunni faith is covered), their rights recognised and their *cemevi* recognised as places of worship. In 2006 they took their complaints to the European Courts of Human Rights, a move designed, no doubt, to get the Turkish government to sit up and listen.

One of the nastiest manifestations of this antipathy is known as the Madımak tragedy. After lunchtime prayers, one July Friday in 1993, a mob attacked the Madımak hotel in Sivas, killing 37 people. Most of the dead were Alevi and were in Sivas for a local cultural festival; among them was the Turkish publisher of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (allegedly the catalyst for the event). Although some of the culprits were captured, their prison sentences were pretty derisory – authorities claimed that those killed had contributed to their own fate by 'provoking' the crowd.

east – before this tradition is stamped out. A recent parliamentary commission into honour killings found some 37% of respondents thought women who commit adultery should be killed. Ongoing 'suicide epidemics' of young women out east, as described in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*, is an ongoing interrelated issue. Activists think the clampdown on honour killings may be partly responsible for encouraging families to push 'dishonourable' women in the family to dispose of themselves.

So it goes without saying that equality for women is a long way off in Turkey. Despite the country granting key rights such as the right to vote and be elected in the 1930s, long before some Western countries did, women still get a raw deal. Studies show women earn an average 40% less than their male equivalents, that women make up only 4.4% of parliamentary representatives, and that 45% of men think they have a right to beat their wives.

Good news is that around one-third of all lawyers and academics in the country are female, and there's a growing pool of talented women taking executive roles in the marketing, banking and retail sectors. Other good news is that the government has recently overhauled its laws with a view to joining the EU. As of January 2003 Turkish women are technically the equal of their menfolk. The new Turkish Civil Code abolished the clause decreeing that men were the heads of every household and ruled that henceforth women will be entitled to half their household's wealth in the event of a divorce. Rape in marriage and sexual harassment are now recognised as crimes. These tougher laws are a good start, but addressing the culture of patriarchy in Turkey, which views women squarely as commodities, is a long way off.

ARTS

Turkey's artistic traditions are rich and diverse, but we only have room to offer a brief introduction to some of them.

The Alevi in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition, by David Shankland, based on anthropological studies in central Anatolia, sheds light on the relatively unknown traditions of the Alevi.

For more information about women's issues in Turkey, see KA-MER (www.kamer.org.tr) and Flying Broom (<http://en.ucansupurge.org/>).

Literature NOVELS

The notion of writer as social commentator took off in Turkey in the early 20th century, in the fertile grounds of WWI, the Russian revolution, the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the blossoming Turkish Republic era. Yaşar Kemal is the internationally best known author of the time, his *Memed, My Hawk* a gut-wrenching, thrilling saga and utterly unputdownable insight into the desperate lives of villagers battling land-grabbling feudal lords. Kurdish Yaşar Kemal has been nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature on several occasions, and jailed a number of times for supposed pro-separatist sympathies. Certainly *Memed, My Hawk* is an insight into the socialist era.

Following in the footsteps of this *agent provocateur* is Turkey's other internationally acclaimed author and 2006 Nobel Prize Laureate, Orhan Pamuk. While the foundation of Yaşar Kemal's work was in the early decades of the Republic, contemporary Turkey has given Pamuk much food for thought. He shot to international headlines in 2005 for mentioning the dreaded Armenian tragedy (see the boxed text, p51). Although he is increasingly widely read, his works seem impenetrable to many. The most accessible, and simply his best read to date, is the award-winning *Snow*, set in the remote eastern town of Kars. It explores a society grappling with female 'suicide epidemics'. *Istanbul, Memoirs and the City* is also well worth reading for those interested in the author and his complex relationship with his beguiling city.

Elif Şafak is being touted as the next Orhan Pamuk. Her novel, *The Flea Palace*, certainly has mental chewing-gum prose akin to Pamuk, so it's probably not the best choice for a beach read. However, this story of an elegant Istanbul apartment building fallen on hard times is a living painting of contemporary Turkish society and beautifully evokes Istanbul. Buket Uzuner is also worth seeking out. Her novels have been blockbusters in Turkey and have been well translated, though you probably won't find them in your local bookshop yet. *Mediterranean Waltz* is an unrequited love story set with the backdrop of civil war. Better yet is her *Long White Cloud, Gallipoli*, describing the fallout after a New Zealand woman claims a soldier revered as a war hero in Turkey is actually her great-grandfather. And in true Buket Uzuner style, the protagonist falls into a tangled love affair.

Irfan Orga's autobiographical *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, set during the late Ottoman/early Republican era, describes the collapse of his well-to-do Istanbul family and its struggled rebuilding (beautifully mirroring the times). It offers an insider's peep into the culture of the *hamam*, the life of leisure in the Bosphorus *yalı* (summer houses) and much more. This one will have you up until 3am.

Some of the recent novels by expatriates living in Turkey or Turkophiles are worth seeking out, too. *Tales of an Expat Harem* is a compilation of stories dealing with life in Turkey for expatriate women. It's an excellent holiday read, if a little unanimously positive about its host country. Barbara Nadel writes gripping whodunits, usually set in Istanbul around the chain-smoking, stubbled hero, Inspector Çetin İkmen. *Belshazzar's Daughter*, her first, is still one of the best, but the award-winning *Dance with Death* is an easy and enjoyable holiday read, too.

See p20 for more reading recommendations.

POETRY

Turkey's two most famous poets lived roughly seven centuries apart from each other: the mystic poet Yunus Emre lived in the 13th century and Nazım Hikmet in the 20th century.

For more background reading on Turkish arts see the US-based Turkish Culture Foundation's website: www.turkishculture.org.

Louis de Bernières, of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* fame, wrote *Birds Without Wings*, another block-busting page-turner inspired by Kayaköy (p361) near Fethiye. It exposes the human side of the intermingling of religions and culture in the Ottoman era, war and the population exchange. A must-read.

Nazım Hikmet is not only Turkey's greatest poet but also one of the world's best. Although his work was firmly embedded in Turkey and strongly patriotic, he was also a Communist exiled for his beliefs. His poems written while incarcerated are some of his best. He died and is buried in Russia, and sadly his works are still not allowed to be taught in Turkish schools. Probably the best introduction to his work is *Poems of Nazım Hikmet*.

Carpets

The oldest-known carpet woven in the Turkish double-knotted Gördes style dates from between the 4th and 1st centuries BC, but it is thought that hand-woven carpet techniques were introduced to Anatolia by the Seljuks in the 12th century. Thus it's not surprising that Konya, the Seljuk capital, was mentioned by Marco Polo as a centre of carpet production in the 13th century.

Traditionally, village women wove carpets for their own family's use, or for their dowry. The general pattern and colour schemes were influenced by local traditions and the availability of certain types of wool and dyes. Patterns were memorised, and women usually worked with no more than 45cm of the carpet visible. Each artist imbued her work with her own personality, choosing a motif or a colour based on her own artistic preferences, and even events and emotions in her daily life. Knowing they would be judged on their efforts, the women took great care over their handiwork, hand-spinning and dyeing the wool.

In the 19th century, the European rage for Turkish carpets spurred the development of carpet companies. The companies, run by men, would deal with the customers, take orders, purchase and dye the wool according to the customers' preferences, and contract local women to produce the finished product. The designs might be left to the women, but were more often provided by the company based on their customers' tastes. Although well made, these carpets lost some of the spirit and originality of the older work.

These days, many carpets are made to the dictates of the market. Weavers in eastern Turkey might make carpets in popular styles native to western Turkey, or long-settled villagers might duplicate the wilder, hairier and more naive *yörük* (nomad) carpets. Many carpets still incorporate traditional patterns and symbols, such as the commonly used 'eye' and 'tree' patterns. At a glance two carpets might look identical, but closer examination will reveal the subtle differences that give each Turkish carpet its individuality and charm.

Village women still weave carpets but usually work to fixed contracts for specific shops. Generally they work to a pattern and are paid for their final effort rather than for each hour of work. A carpet made to a fixed contract may still be of great value to its purchaser. However, the selling price should be lower than for a one-off piece.

Other carpets are the product of a division of labour, with different individuals responsible for dyeing and weaving. What such pieces lose in individuality and rarity is often more than made up for in quality control. Most silk Hereke carpets are mass-produced but to standards that make them some of the most sought-after of all Turkish carpets.

Fearing the loss of the old carpet-making methods, the Ministry of Culture has sponsored several projects to revive traditional weaving and dyeing methods in western Turkey. One such scheme is the Natural Dye Research and Development Project (Doğal Boya Arştırma ve Geliştirme Projesi; Dobag); see p212 for more details. Some shops keep stocks of these 'project carpets', which are usually of high quality.

For advice about buying carpets, see p663.

Jon Thompson's beautifully illustrated and very readable *Carpets: From the Tents, Cottages and Workshops of Asia* is an excellent introduction that may well tempt you into parting with your money.

THE ORIGINAL ROADHOUSE

The Seljuks built a string of caravanserais (caravan palaces) along the route of the 13th-century Silk Road through Anatolia. These camel caravan staging posts were built roughly a day's travel (about 15km to 30km) apart to provide food and lodging and to facilitate trade. Expenses for construction and maintenance of the caravanserais were borne by the sultan, and paid for by the taxes levied on the rich trade in goods.

The Ottomans were not keen builders of caravanserais like the Seljuks. Instead they built thousands of *hans*, urban equivalents of caravanserais, where goods could be loaded and unloaded near the point of sale. Ottoman *hans* were simpler in design than the caravanserais – just two-storey buildings, usually square, surrounding an open court with a fountain or raised *mescit* at its centre. On the upper level, behind an arcaded gallery, were offices and rooms for lodging and dining.

The most beautiful *hans* are the early Ottoman ones in Bursa – the Koza Han and Emir Han – but in fact every Anatolian town has at least a few *hans* in its market district. Istanbul's vast Grand Bazaar is surrounded by *hans* that are still used by traders and artisans.

For the sake of ease, this book does not really differentiate between caravanserais and *hans*. See p26 for a *han/caravanserais-hopping* guide to the country.

Architecture

The history of architecture in Turkey encompasses everything from Hittite stonework and grand Graeco-Roman temples to the most modern tower-blocks in Istanbul, but perhaps the most distinctively Turkish styles were those developed by the Seljuks and Ottomans.

SELJUK ARCHITECTURE

The Seljuks endowed Turkey with a legacy of magnificent mosques and *medreses* (seminaries), distinguished by their elaborate entrances; you can see the best of them in Konya (p481) and Sivas (p477). They also built a string of caravanserais along the route of the 13th-century Silk Road through Anatolia (see above).

OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURE

The Ottomans also left many magnificent mosques and *medreses*, as well as many more fine wood-and-stone houses.

Before Ottoman times, the most common form of mosque was a large square or rectangular space sheltered by a series of small domes resting on pillars, as in Edirne's Eski Cami (p169). But when the Ottomans took Bursa and İznik in the early 14th century they were exposed to Byzantine architecture, particularly ecclesiastical architecture. Ottoman architects absorbed these influences and blended them with the styles of Sassanian Persia to develop a completely new style: the T-shape plan. The Üçşerefeli Cami in Edirne (p167) became the model for other mosques not only because it was one of the first forays into this T-plan, but also because it was the first Ottoman mosque to have a wide dome and a forecourt with an ablutions fountain.

Each imperial mosque had a *küllüye*, or collection of charitable institutions, clustered around it. These might include a hospital, asylum for the insane, orphanage, *imaret* (soup kitchen), hospice for travellers, *medrese*, library, baths and a cemetery in which the mosque's imperial patron, his or her family and other notables could be buried. Over time, many of these buildings were demolished or altered, but Istanbul's Süleymaniye mosque complex (p116) still has much of its *küllüye* intact.

The design, perfected by Ottoman's most revered architect Mimar Sinan (see the boxed text, p117) during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent,

For magnificent mosques and minarets seen from an angle you may not be able to manage yourself, Yann Arthur-Bertrand's gorgeous *Turkey from the Air* provides a bird's-eye view of Turkey's stunning scenery.

proved so durable that it is still being used, with variations, for modern mosques all over Turkey.

For information about Ottoman houses, see the boxed text (p457).

TURKISH BAROQUE

From the mid-18th century, rococo and baroque influences hit Turkey, resulting in a pastiche of hammed-up curves, frills, scrolls, murals and fruity excesses, sometimes described as ‘Turkish baroque’. The period’s best – or some say worst – archetype is the extravagant Dolmabahçe Palace (p121). Although building mosques was passé, the Ottomans still adored kiosks where they could enjoy the outdoors; the Küçüksu Kasrı (p129) in İstanbul is a good example.

NEOCLASSICISM

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, foreign or foreign-trained architects began to unfold a neoclassical blend: European architecture mixed in with Turkish baroque and some concessions to classic Ottoman style. Many lavish embassies were built in Pera (Beyoğlu) as vehicles for the colonial powers to cajole the Sublime Porte into trade and territorial concessions. The in-vogue Swiss Fossati brothers were responsible for the Netherlands and Russian consulates-general along İstiklal Caddesi in İstanbul.

Also in the capital, Vedat Tek, a Turkish architect who had studied in Paris, built the central post office (p103), a melange of Ottoman elements such as arches and tilework, and European symmetry. Sirkeci train station (p157), by the German architect Jachmund, is another example of this eclectic neoclassicism.

MODERN ARCHITECTURE

There’s little worth mentioning as far as modern architecture goes. The most interesting movement in the last few decades is that Turks have begun to reclaim their architectural heritage, especially those parts of it that can be turned into dollars via the tourism industry. These days, restorations and new buildings being built in Sultanahmet and other parts of İstanbul – and even Göreme, in Cappadocia – are most likely to be in classic Ottoman style.

Music

POP, ROCK, ELECTRONIC, HIP HOP & RAP

Turkey’s home-grown pop industry is one of its big success stories. The seal was put on worldwide recognition of Turkish pop in 2003 when Sertab

The Turkish bathing tradition is in fact Roman. When the Turks ventured into Anatolia they encountered the bath houses of the Byzantines, who in turn had inherited the bathing tradition from the Romans. The Turks so took to the steamy ablutions that they became part of the Turkish way of life.

Lovers of Art Nouveau architecture will be able to feast their eyes on several beautiful examples of the style in Eminönü and along İstiklal Caddesi. It was introduced to İstanbul by the Italian architect Raimondo D’Aronco.

ALL THE EMPTY HOUSES

You won’t have been in Turkey five minutes before you notice the extraordinary number of half-built apartment blocks, houses and multistorey car parks littering the landscape. The reason behind this ugliness is usually housing cooperatives, whereby a group of people get together to pay for an apartment in a new development. Since they cannot pay all the money upfront (bank loans are prohibitively expensive), they can take several years to be finished – so at least some of the houses will one day be completed.

Unfortunately a lot can happen between the first breaking of the earth and the completion of the complex. The members of the cooperative may run out of money or the builder may go bankrupt. Worse still, builders have been known to disappear with the money, leaving the work to stand incomplete in perpetuity.

But even that cannot completely account for the sheer quantity of half-built blocks. Of course, some of them are entirely speculative projects, begun in the hope of tax breaks or some such reason, and abandoned just as soon as it suits the builder to pull out.

STOLEN TREASURES

‘Every flower is beautiful in its own garden. Every antique is beautiful in its own country.’ So reads the sign in the lobby of the Ephesus Museum. They surely have a point. And yet everywhere you go in Turkey you will come across archaeological sites that have been stripped of their finest artefacts, even of their most important structures, by Western countries that now display them proudly in their own museums.

The Sphinx column from Xanthos, the altar from Pergamum, the statue from Hadrian’s Library at Ephesus, Schliemann’s treasure from Troy: these are just some of the more prominent monuments that you must look for in museums in Britain, Germany, Italy and Russia rather than in Turkey.

Most Western countries justify retention of such treasures by arguing that they acquired them ‘legitimately’. Or they claim that we all gain by being able to see a wide range of artefacts in museums worldwide. Finally, they claim that they are better equipped to care for the artefacts than the Turks. And while these arguments had started to wear thin, and several important collections had been returned to Turkey, recent scandals of theft from archaeological museums in the country have ensured that Western governments will keep holding on to their Turkish treasures for a while yet.

In 1993 the 2500-year-old Karun Treasure was repatriated to the Uşak museum (p311) after New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art lost a costly legal battle with the Turkish government. Some 13 years later, in the midst of a scandal about a number of thefts in Turkish museums, news broke that the famed golden winged seahorse brooch, one of the most valuable pieces in the collection, had been replicated and stolen. Investigations fingered the museum’s director and nine others with embezzlement and artefact smuggling. The government promptly ordered investigations into 32 other museums, and the minister admitted he wouldn’t be surprised if there were thefts from every one of them. With the museums chronically understaffed, underfunded and mismanaged – and the Karun scandal attracting international headlines – it will be a long time before Turkey’s archaeological museums have any chance of winning back any more of their treasures.

Erener won the Eurovision Song Contest with her hit song ‘Every Way that I Can’.

Sezen Aksu is widely regarded as the queen of Turkish pop music, but it is Tarkan, the pretty-boy pop star, who has achieved most international recognition. His ’94 album, *A-acayipsin*, sold over two million copies in Turkey and almost a million in Europe, catapulting him to Turkey’s biggest-selling pop sensation. After several more albums, and tours all over Europe, he recently released the long-awaited *Come Closer*, sung entirely in English. It flopped, leaving fans distraught, but Tarkan’s hip-swivelling bisexual brand will take a few more hits before it runs out of steam.

Burhan Öçal (www.burhanocal.com) is one of the country’s finest percussionists. His latest work, *New Dream*, is a funky take on classical Turkish music, but we aren’t box him by this production: his wide-ranging experimentation with all types of Turkish and foreign music genres has earned him due respect. His recent work with the ‘Trakya All-Stars’ is well worth looking up.

Turkish rock has long aped the West, but it’s finally offering something distinctly Turkish. Look out for Duman, Replikas, 110 (electronica) and most definitely Yakup, a blend of East-meets-West oriental rock. Try to catch them live if you’re passing through İstanbul.

On a more electronic jazzy theme is Orient Expressions, mixing Alevi and folk with jazzed-up Turkish melodies. Also well worth looking up is Baba Zula, a fusion of traditional Turkish instruments, reggae, electronic, pop and belly-dancing music – and it works! They’ve started the international touring circuit, so keep an eye out.

Turkey has a thriving rap slash hip-hop scene alive in the streets of İstanbul. Ceza (www.cezafan.com) is the king – he’s literally mobbed by fans. Try to catch him live if you’re in the city for a once-in-a-lifetime treat you won’t forget. On a side note, all albums in Turkey need pre-release approval by the government, which means swearing is a no-no for Turkish rappers – unless they go underground or swear in English, that is. This ends up being a bonus for travellers, as it means most artists perform in English.

ARABESK

The equally popular style of music known as *arabesk* (that, as its name implies, puts an Arabic spin on home-grown Turkish traditions) started in the 1980s. Playing to *arabesk*’s traditional audience is the hugely successful Kurdish singer İbrahim Tatlıses, a burly, moustachioed, former construction worker from Şanlıurfa who pops up on TV as often as he does on radio. Orhan Gencebay is, however, the king of *arabesk*, a prolific artist and also an actor. Start with his *Akma Gözlerimden*.

CLASSICAL & RELIGIOUS

Traditional Ottoman classical and religious (particularly Mevlevi) music may sound ponderous and lugubrious to the uninitiated. These musical forms use a system of *makams*, an exotic-sounding series of tones similar in function to Western scales. In addition to the familiar Western whole- and half-tone intervals, Turkish music often uses quarter-tones, unfamiliar to foreign ears and perceived as ‘flat’ until the ear becomes accustomed to them.

After the banning of the Mevlevi at the beginning of the Republic, it wasn’t until the early ’90s that a group called Mevlana Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı Sanatçıları was set up to promote the Sufi musical tradition. Mercan Dede (www.mercandede.com) has taken this music to another level altogether, fusing it with electronic, techno, classic beats.

FOLK, TÜRKÜ, FASIL & GYPSY

Turkish folk music is more immediately appealing to Western ears. Instruments and lyrics reflect the life of the musicians and village so they will be slightly different from village to village. Kurdish big names worth looking out for include Ferhat Tunç, who has produced an album annually since 1987, and Aynur Doğan (www.aynurdogan.net). Aynur, as she is simply known, has started touring internationally and is set for stardom. Both produce enjoyable Kurdish folk.

Türkü, a sort of halfway house between folk and pop, directly reflects experiences common to Turks. It became very popular in the 1990s.

Fasil has been likened to a nightclub or lightweight version of Ottoman classical. This is the music you hear at *meyhanes* (taverns), usually played by gypsies. The music is played with clarinet, *kanun* (zither), *darbuka* (a drum shaped like an hourglass) and often an *ud* (a six-stringed Arabic lute), *keman* (violin) and a *cumbus* (similar to a banjo). It’s usually hard to distinguish between *fasil* and gypsy music.

Until the 1960s and ’70s it was still possible to hear Turkish *aşıklar* (troubadours) in action. Although radio, TV, video and CDs have effectively killed off their art, the songs of the great troubadours – Yunus Emre (13th century), Pir Sultan Abdal (16th century) and Aşık Veysel (1894–1973) – remain popular.

If you’re lucky you may spot wandering minstrels playing the *zurna* (pipe) and *davul* (drum). They perform at wedding and circumcision parties, and also congregate in bus stations on call-up day to see off the latest band of conscripts in style.

The Turkish government’s Virtual Music Museum (www.kultur.gov.tr) is a newly inaugurated work-in-progress, and currently only in Turkish, but it looks like it’ll be well worth checking out.

The documentary *Crossing The Bridge: The Story of Music in Istanbul*, by Fatih Akin, follows the trail of musos, giving you a superb peep into the vibrant and extraordinarily diverse contemporary music scene in İstanbul.

A BEGINNERS’ GUIDE TO TURKISH MUSIC

These are our top picks to start your collection growing:

- *Turkish Groove* (compilation) A must-have two-disc introduction to Turkish music with everyone from Sezen Aksu to Burhan Öçal and from pop and Sufi to drum’n’bass
- *Su* by Mercan Dede (Sufi–electronic–techno fusion) Mercan Dede is a growing name in hip circles in İstanbul and abroad. *Su*, his latest offering, is arguably also his best to date.
- *Keçe Kurdan* by Aynur (Kurdish Folk) Aynur’s impassioned *Kurdish Girl* album, sung entirely in Kurdish, was her excellent debut on the international scene. One to watch.
- *Rapstar Ceza* by Ceza (rap) You won’t understand a word (unless you speak Turkish), but you don’t need to. The energy and passion is palpable.
- *Duble Oryantal* by Baba Zulu (fusion) Baba Zulu’s latest, ‘Belly Double’, was mixed by the British dub master Mad Professor.
- *Divan* by Oriental Expressions (fusion) Along the same vein as Baba Zulu, yet a little more folksy.
- *Gipsy Rum* by Burhan Öçal and İstanbul Oriental Ensemble (gypsy) This 1998 production is an excellent, thigh-slapping introduction to Turkey’s gypsy music, played by instrumental masters.
- *Buluşma* by Başar Dikici and Bülent Altınbaş (Ottoman classic) Mostly traditional, but with a modern twist, this recent big-seller should appeal to those not quite ready to face the classic Ottoman.
- *Yitik Sesen Peşinde* by Bezmârâ (Ottoman classical) An oldie, but a goodie. But you’ll probably have to wait until you get to Turkey to pick this one up.

Cinema

The first screening of a foreign film in Turkey took place at the Yıldız Palace in İstanbul in 1896. In 1914 Turkey showed its first home-made documentary and by the end of WWI several Turkish feature films had appeared. The War of Independence inspired actor Muhsin Ertuğrul to establish a film company to make patriotic films. Comedies and documentaries followed, and within a decade Turkish films were winning international competitions. During the 1960s and ’70s films with a political edge were being made alongside innumerable lightweight Bollywood-style movies usually lumped together and labelled *Yeşilçam* movies. A string of cinemas opened along İstanbul’s İstiklal Caddesi, only to close again in the 1980s (or turn into porn-movie houses) as TV siphoned off their audiences. The 1990s were an exciting decade for the national cinema, with films being critically acclaimed both in Turkey and abroad.

Several Turkish directors have won worldwide recognition, most notably the late Yılmaz Güney. Joint winner of the best film award at Cannes in 1982, *Yol* explored the dilemmas of a group of men on weekend-release from prison, a tale that manages to be gripping and tragic at the same time, and which Turks were forbidden to watch until 2000. His last film, *Duvar (The Wall)*, made before his untimely death at only 46, was a wrist-slashing prison drama.

Following in Güney’s footsteps, many Turkish directors continue to make political films. *Güneşe Yolculuk (Journey to the Sun)*, by Yeşim Ustaoglu, is about a Turk who migrates to İstanbul and is so dark-skinned he’s mistaken for a Kurd and treated appallingly. Nuri Bilge Ceylan’s excellent *Uzak (Distant)* is also a bleak meditation on the lives of migrants in Turkey – it won the Jury Prize at Cannes. His latest work, *İklimler (Climates)*, which he also

For hard-to-find Turkish music you can’t go past US-based online Turkish shopping emporium, Tulumba.com (www.tulumba.com), shipping right to your door – plus you can hear music samples.

stars in, looks at relationships between men and women in Turkey (plenty of scope there!), though some find it a little self-indulgent.

It's not all politics, though. Ferzan Özpetek received international acclaim for *Hamam (Turkish Bath)*, which skilfully explores cultural nuances after a Turk living in Italy reluctantly travels to Istanbul after he inherits a *hamam*. It's also noteworthy for addressing the hitherto hidden issue of homosexuality in Turkish society. His *Harem Suare (Evening Performance in the Harem)* was set in the Ottoman harem, while his most recent offering, *Karşı Pencere (The Window Opposite)*, ponders issues of homosexuality and marriage.

A relatively new name to watch, Fatih Akin, produced the widely acclaimed *Duvvara Karsi (Head On)*, a gripping and often violent spotlight on the Turkish immigrant's life in Germany (Fatih is himself a Turkish-German). His documentary, *Crossing the Bridge: The Story of Music in İstanbul*, is also well worth seeking out.

Visual Arts

Until 1923 and the founding of the Turkish Republic, all mainstream artistic expression conformed to the laws of Islam, which forbid representation of any being with an immortal soul (ie animal or human). Sculpture and painting as known in the West did not exist, with the notable exception of Turkish miniature painting, which was for the upper classes only.

By the late 19th century, educated Ottomans were influenced by European-style painting. Atatürk encouraged this artistic expression, and the government opened official painting and sculpture academies, encouraging this 'modern' secular art in place of the religious art of the past.

By the 1930s many Turkish artists were studying abroad, with some becoming expatriates. Fikret Mualla is one of Turkey's most famous contemporary artists; he lived most of his life in Paris. Once again, the best place to see what modern artists are up to is İstanbul. İstanbul Modern (p120) is the country's best modern art gallery, but the small private art galleries along İstiklal Caddesi are well worth checking out as well.

Dance

Although it is dying out in the towns, folk dance is still a vibrant tradition in Turkish villages, as you will realise if you attend a traditional wedding.

Folk dance can be divided into several broad categories, including the *bar* from the Erzurum/Bayburt area, the *horon* from the Black Sea and the *zeybek* from the west. Although originally a dance of central, south and southeastern Anatolia, the *halay*, led by a dancer waving a handkerchief (or paper tissue), can be seen all over the country, especially at weddings and in *meyhanes* (taverns) in İstanbul when everyone has downed one rakı (aniseed-flavoured grape brandy) too many. But it may well be the *horon* that you most remember, since it involves the men getting down and indulging in all manner of dramatic kicking, Cossack-style. For a quick taste of these and other dances, pop along to the folk dance shows in İstanbul (see p151); they may be touristy but they're also fun.

The *sema* (dervish ceremony) of the whirling dervishes is not unique to Turkey, but it's here that you are most likely to see it performed; see the boxed texts, p119 and p119.

Belly dancing may not have originated in Turkey, but Turks have mastered the art. Although belly dancers are frequently seen at weddings and, incredibly, at many end-of-year company parties, your best chance of seeing a decent belly dancer is at one of the folk shows in İstanbul (p151). If you're interested in teaching your belly to dance see (p654).

Osman Hamdi (1842–1910), whose orientalist paintings are very much in vogue, was also the man responsible for establishing the İstanbul Archaeological Museum (p114).

Iznik: The Artistry of Ottoman Ceramics, by Walter Denny, is a coffee-table book (and similarly priced), guaranteed to have regular pick-ups. It gives a superbly photographed run-down on this renowned Islamic art form.

Environment

THE LAND

Turkey has one foot in Europe and another in Asia, its two parts separated by the famous Dardanelles, the placid Sea of Marmara and the hectic Bosphorus. Eastern Thrace (European Turkey) makes up a mere 3% of Turkey's 779,452 sq km land area. The remaining 97% is Anatolia (Asian Turkey).

Boasting 8300km of coastline, snow-capped mountains, rolling steppes, vast lakes and broad rivers, Turkey is stupendously geographically diverse. The Aegean coast is lined with coves and beaches, with the Aegean islands (most of them belonging to Greece) dotted never more than a few kilometres offshore. Inland, western Anatolia has two vast lake districts and the soaring Uludağ (Great Mountain), at 2543m one of Turkey's highest mountains and increasingly popular with ski buffs.

The Mediterranean coast is backed by the jagged Taurus Mountains. East of Antalya, however, it opens up into a fertile plain as far as Alanya, before the mountains close in again. Central Anatolia consists of a vast high plateau of rolling steppe broken by mountain ranges, and Cappadocia, a region of fantastical landscapes created by the action of wind and water on tuff thrown for miles around by volcanic eruptions in prehistory.

Like the Mediterranean, the Black Sea is often hemmed in by mountains, and at the eastern end they drop right down into the sea. At 3937m, Mt Kaçkar (Kaçkar Dağı) is the highest point of the popular Kaçkar trekking and mountaineering area at the far eastern end of the Black Sea. There, *yaylas* (high plateau pastures) come ringed with peaks and glaciers.

Mountainous and somewhat forbidding, northeastern Anatolia is also wildly beautiful, especially around Yusufeli, and around Doğubayazıt, where snow-capped Mt Ararat (Ağrı Dağı; 5137m) dominates the landscape for miles around. Southeastern Anatolia offers windswept rolling steppe, jagged outcrops of rock, and Lake Van (Van Gölü), an extraordinary alkaline lake.

The bad news? Turkey lies on at least three active earthquake fault lines: the North Anatolian, the East Anatolian and the Aegean. Most of Turkey lies south of the North Anatolian fault line, which runs roughly parallel with the Black Sea coast. As the Arabian and African plates to the south push northward, the Anatolian plate is shoved into the Eurasian plate and squeezed west towards Greece. Thirteen major quakes in Turkey have been recorded since 1939; the latest in August 1999 hit İzmit (Kocaeli) and Adapazarı (Sakarya) in northwestern Anatolia killing more than 18,000. Some scientists predict that much of İstanbul would be devastated by any earthquake over 7 magnitude, due to unlicensed, jerry-built construction. Locals remain half-panicked, half fatalistic – but no-one doubts it's coming.

WILDLIFE

Animals

In theory, you could see bears, deer, jackals, caracal, wild boars and wolves in Turkey. In practice you're unlikely to see any wild animals at all unless you're trekking.

Instead you can look out for Kangal dogs, which are named after a dreary small town near Sivas. Kangals were originally bred to protect sheep flocks from wolves and bears on mountain pastures. People wandering off the beaten track, especially in eastern Turkey, are often alarmed at the sight of these huge, yellow-coated, black-headed animals, especially as they often wear

Turkey is one of only seven countries in the world that is wholly self-sufficient in agriculture.

Bogazici University and the Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute run a website mapping the country's seismic activity (www.koeri.boun.edu.tr/sismo/map/en/index). Don't let it spook you!

For more information on Turkey's wildlife, contact Doğal Hayatı Koruma Derneği (Foundation for the Protection of Nature; ☎ 0212-513 2173; www.dhkd.org.in Turkish) or WWF-Turkey (☎ 0212-528 2030; www.wwf.org.tr).

TAKE ONLY PHOTOS, LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS

Tourism is not the only thing that has had a damaging impact on the Turkish environment, but it is certainly one of them. So what can you do to help?

- Never drop litter anywhere (although, to be fair, tourists are not the worst offenders when it comes to abandoned rubbish).
- Don't buy coral or seashells, no matter how lovely they look in a necklace.
- It goes without saying that you should try to do without plastic bags, even though some bags in Turkey are made from recycled material.
- Complain to the captain if you think your excursion boat is discharging sewage into the sea or if it's dropping its anchor in an environmentally sensitive area. Even better, complain to **Greenpeace Mediterranean** (☎ 0212-248 2661; www.greenpeace.org/mediterranean).
- Consider staying in pensions and hotels that have been designed with some thought for their surroundings.
- Refrain from purchasing water in plastic bottles wherever possible. Water in glass bottles is served in many Turkish restaurants, and you can buy water filtration systems from home before your departure. The very least you can do is to buy the 5L plastic water bottles, which you can keep in your hotel room and use to fill up a re-usable smaller bottle to carry with you during the day.

ferocious spiked collars to protect them against the wolves. Their mongrel descendants live on the streets in Turkey's towns, villages and cities.

Some 400 species of bird are found in Turkey, with about 250 of these passing through on migration from Africa to Europe. It's particularly easy to see eagles, storks, (beige) hoopoes, (blue) rollers and (green) bee-eaters. Enthusiastic bird-watchers should head east to Birecik (p599), one of the last known nesting places in the world of the eastern bald ibis (*Geronticus eremita*). Also well off the beaten trail is Çıldır Gölü (Çıldır Lake; p585), north of Kars in northeastern Anatolia. It's an important breeding ground for various species of birds. More readily accessible is the Göksu Delta (p420), near Silifke, where some 332 species have been recorded – including the rare purple gallinule – and Pamucak (see p256), home to flamingos from February to March.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Rare loggerhead turtles still nest on various beaches in Turkey, including İztuzu Beach at Dalyan, the Göksu Delta and Patara Beach (see the boxed text, p352). A few Mediterranean monk seals are just about hanging on in Turkey around Foça (p224), but you would be very lucky to see them.

The beautiful, pure-white Van cat, with one blue and one green eye, has also become endangered in its native Turkey.

PLANTS

Turkey's location at the junction between Asia and Europe and its varied geology have made it one of the most biodiverse temperate-zone countries in the world, blessed with an exceptionally rich flora of over 9000 species, a third of them endemic. Some sources report that a new species of flora in Turkey is discovered every five days.

Turkey is the last remaining source of frankincense trees (*Liquidambar orientalis*), which grow in stands along the southwest coast of the Mediterranean, especially around Köyceğiz (p346). The Egyptians used the trees' resin during the embalming process. Today, it is exported for use in perfume and

Walking and Birdwatching in Southwest Turkey, by Paul Hope, is an introduction to some of Turkey's best bird-watching spots.

Van cats are said to be able to swim the waters of Lake Van – not that their owners would let these valuable pets out of their sight to do so.

incense. Also on this coast is the endemic Datça palm (*Phoenix theophrastii*), found on the Datça Peninsula and near Kumluca. Like frankincense, these are also the last remaining populations of these trees in the world.

NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES

In the last few years, thanks to EU aspirations, Turkey has stepped up its environmental protection practices. It's now a signatory to various international conventions including Ramsar and Cites (International Trade of Endangered Species). The growing number of protected areas includes 33 *milli parkı* (national parks), 16 nature parks and 35 nature reserves. It also includes 58 curiously named 'nature monuments', which are mostly protected trees, some as old as 1500 years. (For more information see www.turizm.gov.tr.) In the parks and reserves the environment is supposedly protected and hunting controlled. Sometimes the regulations are carefully enforced, but at other times a blind eye is turned to such problems as litter-dropping picnickers.

Tourism to national parks is not well developed in Turkey, and they are rarely set up with facilities for visitors. It is not even the norm for footpaths to be clearly marked, and camping spots are rarely available. Most of the well-frequented national parks are as popular for their historic monuments as they are for the surrounding natural environment.

The following national parks are among the most popular with foreign visitors to Turkey:

Gallipoli Historic National Park (p183) Historic battlefield sites on a gloriously unspoilt peninsula surrounded by coves.

Göreme National Park (p499) An extraordinary landscape of gorges and cones ('fairy chimneys') spread over a wide area.

Kaçkar Dağları National Park (Kaçkar Mountain National Park; p558) Stunning high mountain ranges popular with trekkers.

Köprülü Kanyon National Park (p396) Dramatic canyon with spectacular scenery and facilities for white-water rafting.

Nemrut Dağı National Park (Mt Nemrut National Park; p610) Huge historic heads surmounting a man-made mound with wonderful views.

Saklıkent National Park (p364) Famous for its 18km-long gorge.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Turkey faces the unenviable challenge of balancing environmental management with rapid economic growth and urbanisation, and to date it's done a pretty sloppy job. Hopeless enforcement of environmental laws, lack of finances and poor education have placed the environment so far down

The Byerley Turk: The True Story of the First Thoroughbred, by Jeremy James, is a fictionalised biography of the Ottoman horse, whose ancestors are the world's finest racing horses today.

The Most Beautiful Wild Flowers of Turkey, by Erdoğan Tekin, is the best field guide on the market with some 700 photos and detailed charts on each flower. It's pricey though.

TOWARDS THE EU

Turkey's intended accession to the EU is thankfully forcing it to lift its environmental standards. The country has started to overhaul environmental practices and laws, and even given indications that it might ratify international conventions such as the Kyoto Protocol (don't hold your breath).

The government aims to harmonise all environmental legislation with the EU by 2010. Initial cost estimates put this ambitious project at some €70.5 billion; €150 million has already been received from the World Bank to kickstart 'green' energy developments in 2004.

Although the Environment and Forestry Minister, Osman Pepe, must be having sleepless nights trying to work out where to start with this most challenging quest for accession, most analysts say improving food safety is a major priority. Currently Turkey isn't authorised to export animal products and most nuts to the EU. The other major priorities are wastewater disposal and water treatment facilities.

The Isparta area is one of the world's leading producers of attar of roses, a valuable oil extracted from rose petals and used in perfumes and cosmetics. See p315 to find out how you can see the harvest in late spring.

See Sifir Yok Oluş (www.sifiryokolus.org) for information on Turkey's 266 Key Biodiversity Areas outlined by Turkey's wing of the international coalition, Alliance for Zero Extinction.

the list of priorities that it would pack up and leave if it could. But things are looking up, and it's largely due to the country's desire to join the EU – see boxed text, p65.

One of the biggest environmental challenges facing Turkey is the threat from maritime traffic along the Bosphorus. The 1936 Montreux Convention decreed that, although Turkey has sovereignty over the Bosphorus strait, it must permit the free passage of shipping through it. At that time, perhaps a few hundred ships a year passed along the strait, but this has risen to over 45,000 vessels annually (around 10% are tankers), with some estimates suggesting traffic will grow by a further 40% in the near future.

Many of these ships are tankers or are carrying other dangerous loads. There have already been serious accidents, such as the 1979 *Independenta* collision with another vessel, which killed 43 people and spilt and burnt some 95,000 tonnes of oil (2½ times the amount spilt by the famous *Exxon Valdez*). A new oil pipeline running between Azerbaijan and the Turkish eastern Mediterranean port of Ceyhan has been built to relieve some of the burden. Other pipelines are on the drawing board, but in the meantime toxic substances and most oil continues to be carried along the Bosphorus.

Building development is taking a terrible toll on the environment, especially along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts. Once pleasant fishing villages, Kuşadası and Marmaris have been near swamped by tacky urban spread and are in danger of losing all appeal. Local environmentalists battling development around Bodrum say the number of secluded valleys the famed Blue Voyage (p356) cruises visit has decreased from 45 to 11 in the last few years. Worse still, much of the development is only used for several months of the year, placing unrealistic strains on the infrastructure.

Short of water and electricity, Turkey is one of the world's main builders of dams. Wherever you go you see signs to a new *baraj* (dam) construction, and it doesn't take long to hear about the problems they are causing. Furthermore, recent studies have shown Turkey's soil erosion problems are shortening the dams' life spans considerably anyway. The gigantic Southeast Anatolia Project, known as GAP, is one of Turkey's major construction efforts. Harnessing the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, it's creating a potential political time bomb with the countries downstream that also depend on this water. For more information, see the boxed text, p608.

NUCLEAR TURKEY

One of the biggest environmental challenges facing Turkey's environmentalists is the current government's plan to build three nuclear power plants by 2015. These plants propose to provide 5% to 10% of Turkey's projected energy needs for the next two decades. The first nuclear reactor is planned for Sinop, on the Black Sea coast. One of its most vocal opponents is **Sinop is Ours** (www.sinopbizim.org), a community-run initiative.

Turkey's government says the country's rising dependence on energy from other countries is the main catalyst for its push for nuclear energy. Turkey currently imports some 75% of its oil and natural gas, and when it was hit, like Ukraine was in 2005, by gas cuts by Russia, internal energy security went firmly on the agenda. Experts also claim that Iran's nuclear program, and its alleged push to develop nuclear weapons, makes it an untenable potential threat on Turkey's doorstep, pushing Turkey to have some nuclear capacity. Environmentalists say reports have shown that Turkey's existing energy infrastructure is outdated, poorly maintained and should be improved, and policies should be enforced to better harvest the current energy demands before looking to implement nuclear energy. They also state that the country's seismic vulnerabilities make any nuclear reactors an unacceptable risk.

Disposal and treatment of industrial waste is a major headache for the government; reports suggest up to 75% of industrial waste is discharged without any treatment whatsoever and only 12% of the population is connected to sewage treatment facilities. Turkey is adopting the EU's 'polluters pay' policy by increasing fines and improving legislation and policing. In early 2006 fines for dumping toxic waste increased from a maximum of €4500 to €1.5 million. However, locals feel this is akin to shutting the gate after the horse has bolted, as these legislative changes were announced only after barrels of toxic waste were discovered in empty lots throughout İstanbul. One of the worst hit suburbs was Dilovası, with deaths from cancer in the area nearly three times the world average and a report saying Dilovası should be evacuated and labelled a medical disaster area (neither happened).

To end on a happy note, Turkey is doing well when it comes to beach cleanliness, with 192 of its beaches qualifying for European Blue Flag awards in 2006; go to www.blueflag.org for the complete list.

A surprising 26.7% of Turkey is covered in forest, 28% is pasture and 2% is wetlands.

Food & Drink

Think Turkish food and you may conjure up a vertically roasting döner kebab, spitting-revolving-spitting-revolving while meat is deftly sliced off and stuffed into a hunk of pide (Turkish-style bread), soaked in a garlicky yogurt, and topped with salad sprinkled with *sumak* (ground purple-red berries). Salivating already? You haven't tasted anything yet. Food from the Turkish homeland is so much tastier and so much more diverse than its most famous exports.

It's down to the crunchy-fresh ingredients, the regional specialities, and the tender loving care taken to plan the flavours of every meal. But most importantly, food in Turkey is not merely fuel but a celebration of community. Meals unfurl with great ceremony – they are joyful, boisterous and always communal. Turks eat because they're celebrating a circumcison, crunching on a handful of green plums heralding the start of spring, or savouring a shared leisurely breakfast with the family before the day begins. Turks drink for community too: endless cups of tea to foster new or old friendships; nights spent drinking rakı (grape spirit infused with aniseed) while debating the merits of Gaziantep's *fıstıks* (pistachios) over Giresun's hazelnuts.

The basics of Turkish cooking may have evolved on the steppes of Central Asia, but as the Ottoman Empire grew it swallowed up the ingredients of Greece, Persia, Arabia and the Balkans, creating a deliciously diverse cuisine you can enjoy every meal. *Afiyet olsun!* (Good appetite!)

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Turkey is one of the few countries that can feed itself from its own produce and have leftovers. This is not hard to believe as there's food being grown, sold and eaten wherever you look. Famous favourites are the ubiquitous döner kebab, but regional specialities abound – check out Turkey for Tastebuds, p27.

Turkish *kahvaltı* (breakfast) consists of fresh-from-the-oven white *ekmek* (bread), jam or honey, black olives, slices of cucumber and juicy tomatoes, a hard-boiled egg, a block of white cheese, and innumerable dainty glasses of sweetened black *çay* (tea). Locals eat like this daily, with sometimes a second helping late morning if they've had an early start. Expect this feast at every hotel.

There's not always a lot to choose between what's on offer for lunch and dinner, but both meals frequently start with *çorba* (soup). The most common soups are *ezo gelin* (red lentil and rice) and *domates* (tomato), but you may also meet *balık çorbası* (fish soup), *sebze çorbası* (vegetable soup) and *yayla çorbası* (yogurt soup with mint). Workers who don't have time for a leisurely breakfast at home will often pop into a cheap restaurant for a *mercimek çorbası* (lentil soup) on the way to work.

A night fuelled by rakı and Turkish mezes in a *meyhane* (tavern) often ends up being a visitor's most cherished memory of Turkey. Locals usually savour a procession of mezes throughout the night. The waiter brings out a tray of cold mezes for you to point and choose – select your hot mezes from the menu.

In most restaurants, mezes are usually followed by meat. Beef is the most commonly used meat, though lamb and mutton follow closely behind. Meat is prepared in three main ways: as *köfte* (meat balls); *yahni* (stewed or casserole meat); and, most commonly, as kebabs. You'll find *şiş* kebabs (marinated

TURKEY'S TOP TASTE SENSATIONS

Obviously we're sticking our necks out here, but out of Turkey's myriad culinary offerings we feel these are the must-tries:

- *Yaprak sarma* (stuffed grape leaves) – Fresh grape leaves from the markets stuffed with spiced rice and rolled into tasty fingers.
- *Kalamar* (calamari) – Fleshy calamari from the northern Aegean is so tender you'll be boasting for years.
- *İmam bayıldı* (the imam fainted) – And so did we when we first tasted it. Aubergines stuffed with a garlicky, oniony mixture.
- Tokat kebab – The greasy Tokat might knock 10 years off your life but it tastes so good you won't care (see p476).
- *Fırın sütlaç* (baked rice pudding) – What Granny did best Turks have elevated to a fine art.
- *Tavuk göğsü kazandibi* (burnt chicken-breast pudding) – This chewy chicken dessert is somewhat kooky but surprisingly tasty.
- Baklava – The dental bills are worth it (see p597).

cubes of meat on skewers) everywhere. The different meals are distinguished by the spices, accompanying vegetables and occasionally the sauce (usually tomato, but sometimes yogurt-based). Meat dishes are often named after their places of origin. Guess where Tokat kebab comes from?

Turks love vegetables, eating them fresh in summer and pickling them for winter. *Patlıcan* (eggplant/aubergine) is the darling, cooked in every conceivable manner – Turkish cookbooks list up to 200 recipes for it! Turks also love *dolma* (stuffed vegetables): they stuff rice, currants, all-spice, cinnamon and pine nuts into peppers, tomatoes, cabbage and grape leaves (the tastiest). With the addition of lamb mince, *dolma* is served piping hot. Dishes based on cabbage or cheese are staples of the Black Sea region's unique cuisine (see p556).

If you consider mains to be merely an obligation before the most important course, dessert, you'll be delighted to hear that sweets are an indispensable part of the Turkish meal and culture. Turkish sweets are a mix of super-sweet pastries, syrupy cakes, *helva* (a sweet made from sesame seeds), and milk-based, dried-fruit and pulse puddings. Consider yourself warned.

DRINKS

In the coastal touristy towns, virtually every restaurant serves alcohol, as do more expensive restaurants in the big cities. In smaller towns, there's usually at least one restaurant where alcohol is served, although in religiously conservative cities such as Konya you may have to hunt hard to find it. Although Turks have a fairly relaxed attitude towards alcohol, public drunkenness is a definite no-no.

Turkey's beloved tippie is rakı, a grape spirit infused with aniseed, similar to Greek ouzo; do as the locals do and cut it at least by half with water if you want to surface the next day. Beer is becoming a serious contender to rakı's fame, with national consumption doubling since 2000. The main local brew, Efes, is a popular choice on a summer's afternoon.

Turkey has a small but blossoming viticulture, carrying on the Ottoman-Greek wine-making tradition. Head to Ürgüp (p519) in Cappadocia or the idyllic Aegean island of Bozcaada (p206) to taste-test. Elsewhere *şarap* (wine) is fairly average for the price, but you can't go wrong if you stick with the main wine producers, Doluca and Kavaklıdere. For whites try Kavaklıdere's Kavak

The Complete Book of Turkish Cooking, by Ayla Esen Algar, is widely regarded as the best Turkish cookery book (in English) available.

The Turkish diet has meant that Turks now appear near the top of the world obesity stakes.

Deceptively simple, yet absolutely delicious when done to perfection, the humble *simit*, an O-shaped bread ring sprinkled with sesame seeds, is the number-1 snack for Turks. The magic ingredient in something seemingly so simple – flour, water and salt – is *pekmez*, a grape syrup.

Grumbly tummy? Ask for an *ihlamur çay* (linden tea). Turks always have it on hand for upset stomachs.

THE BELOVED COFFEE BEAN *Will Gourlay*

The Ottomans, inadvertently, gifted coffee to Europe. When Mehmet IV besieged Vienna in 1683 he was so confident of victory he brought coffee beans in preparation for his victory feast. When the Turkish armies eventually retreated they left behind the coffee, which was discovered by the Viennese who then introduced the coffeehouse to Europe.

or Çankaya, or Doluca Nevsah and, for reds, Kavaklıdere Ancyra. Angora is a passable cheapie that becomes more drinkable as the night wears on.

Somewhat surprisingly, *Türk kahvesi* (Turkish coffee) is much less popular than tea. It's ordered according to sweetness since the sugar is mixed in during the brewing. The national hot drink is *çay* (tea), served in dainty tulip-shaped glasses – expect to share many a glass with locals on your travels. No-one puts milk in their tea, but everyone adds sugar. The wholly chemical *elma çay* (apple tea) is caffeine-free and only for tourists – locals wouldn't be seen dead drinking the stuff.

Sahlep, a hot milky drink, takes off the winter chill. It's made from wild orchid bulbs and is reputedly an aphrodisiac. *Ayran*, popular year-round, is a mix of yogurt, water and salt, and a must-have with every meal. You might also want to try *şalgam* (see p427) – the first gulp is a revolting salty shock, but persevere and you may find this turnip-carrot concoction becomes an essential accompaniment to rakı binges.

CELEBRATIONS

Every special occasion in Turkey has concomitant foods, and mostly these are sweets. Some say Turks' adoration of sweets may be attributed to the Koranic verse 'To enjoy sweets is a sign of faith'; a local proverb says 'sweets

CHEESE, GLORIOUS CHEESE

Be the envy of every mouse with a taste-test tour of Turkey's cheeses. Do as the locals do and try cheeses before you buy. Serve them at room temperature and buy from reputable-looking market stores (brucellosis can be a problem with unpasteurised cheeses so it pays to be a little careful). One of the best places to buy cheese is in the Spice Bazaar in Istanbul (p118).

There are three main storage methods for cheese: *teneke*, cheese squares in metal drums; *tulum*, pressed cheese in bags or, less commonly these days, in hairy goat skins; and cheese pressed into wheels. *Keçi* (goat's) cheese is popular in the west of the country and *koyun* (ewe's) cheese out east (the animals are suited to the climatic conditions of each region). *İnek* (cow's) cheese is becoming increasingly popular too. You'll find a combination of these depending on the season, but early spring cheeses are at their milky-rich best.

The most common Turkish cheeses are *beyaz peynir*, a salty white feta you'll find on every breakfast table, and *kaşar peynir*, a yellowy cheese like a Cheddar. *The Treasury of Turkish Cheeses*, written by a true cheeseaholic, Suzanne Swan, is the best resource in English for like-minded cheese devotees.

Our favourites of the many other cheeses worth seeking out are listed below.

- *Van otlu peynir* – chewy ewe's cheese laced with freshly picked mountain herbs.
- *Erzincan peynir* – for novelty value try this dry, crumbly ewe's cheese cured in a *tulum* (goatskin bag). Some say it tastes like a goat's backside!
- *Niğde peynir* – hard to find but well worth the search, this is one of Turkey's finest. Can be found as a blue cheese, too.
- *Muhlama* – a large dish overflowing with molten cheese, best sampled in the tiny villages of the Kaçkar Mountains – see p556.

are equated with a kind heart and a sugary tongue'. Despite sweets being such a focus during celebrations and festivities you can enjoy many puddings year-round in a *muhallebici* (milk pudding shop) and all restaurants.

Baklava is a sticky, ultra-sweet, syrupy pastry baked in trays and cut into bite-sized rectangles. It was traditionally reserved for festive occasions such as Şeker Bayramı (Sweets Holiday; p660), the three-day holiday at the end of Ramazan (p659). Baklava is also popular for engagements and weddings, proving sugary stamina for the rollicking hours of party-making ahead and the couple's wedding night (wink, wink). The best two *baklavacı*s in the country are Karaköy Güllüoğlu in İstanbul (p145) and İmam Çağdaş in Gaziantep (p597).

Other sweets such as *helva* and *lokum* (Turkish delight) are commonly part of more reflective occasions such as deaths and *kandil* days (the five holy evenings in the Muslim calendar). A bereaved family will make *irmik helvası* (semolina *helva*) for visiting friends and relatives, and *helva* is shared with guests at circumcision feasts.

Aşure (Noah's Ark pudding) is a sacred pudding traditionally made with 40 different dried fruits, nuts and pulses, supposedly first baked from the leftovers on Noah's Ark when food provisions ran low. These days *aşure* is traditionally made after the tenth day of Muharram (the first month of the Islamic calendar), and distributed to neighbours and friends.

Savoury dishes are integral to celebrations in Turkey too, albeit not nearly as many. *Kavurma* is a simple lamb dish cooked with the sacrificial lamb or mutton of the Kurban Bayramı (Feast of Sacrifice; see p660). The meat is cubed, fried with onions and baked slowly in its juices. During Ramazan a special round flat pide is baked in the afternoon and collected in time for the break of fast feast, *iftar*.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Turkey's eateries open from eightish in the morning until late at night. Often there isn't much difference between a €6 meal in an informal *lokanta* (restaurant) and a €15 meal in a more upmarket *restoran* except in terms of the ambience and service. Only at very hip restaurants in cities such as İstanbul do you need to make a reservation.

Hazır yemek (ready-made food) restaurants serve stews, casseroles and vegetable dishes prepared in advance and kept warm in steam trays. These are best at lunchtime when the food will be at its freshest.

If you're after meat, look instead for a specialist *kebabçı*. The *ocakbaşı* (fireside) versions are the most fun, with patrons sitting around the sides of a grill and watching the *kebabçı* preparing their dinner. Often diners take pot luck with what they're served and there's no menu or price list.

Meyhanes are Turkish taverns where you can expect a succession of mezes to be paraded in front of you, then a choice of meat and fish dishes, all to be

Legend has it that in society Ottoman-era houses chefs made baklava with over 100 pastry-sheet layers per tray. The master of the house would test the thickness with a gold coin: if it fell to the bottom of the tray the chef kept the coin.

In the 17th century 1300 people slaved away in the kitchens of Topkapı Palace, which could cook up a big enough feast for around 15,000 people.

CHARGE YOUR CARD & YOUR GLASS

Some of our favourite eating establishments:

360 (p144) Superb mod-Türk cuisine, uberstylish and the best views in İstanbul.

Beyaz Yunus Lokantası (p361) Prepare your stomach at the delightful sunset bar for some of Turkey's finest fish and seafood mezes.

Cercis Murat Konağı (p629) Old-fashioned fare prepared by an all-woman team in a traditional Syrian Christian home in Mardin.

Kocadon Restaurant (p278) Old-world charm and traditional Ottoman cuisine.

Ottoman House Restaurant (p413) Time your visit for a fresh tuna-carving session and you'll see what all the fuss is about.

washed down with copious quantities of raki. Don't miss a night carousing at the *meyhanes* clustered in the Beyoğlu area of İstanbul (p146).

Turkish *pastanes* (patisseries) have supplies of *börek* and sweet and salty biscuits (*kuru pasta*, dry pastry), but a *muhallebici* (milk pudding shop) is a better bet for puddings, baklavas and other sweet goodies. Don't confuse *pasta* (pastry) with *makarna* (noodles).

For vegetarians, Turkey has few purpose-designed restaurants, but there's no reason why you won't be able to eat well. We have included vegetarian options throughout the book where possible; see the boxed text, below, for more information.

Prices

Most places will have a printed menu with fixed prices. The one exception is fish: you ask the waiter to show you what's available and then get the fish weighed to find out the price. See the boxed text, opposite, for some tips on fish.

Restaurant prices usually include taxes but not service, but in some tourist areas a service charge may be added to the bill automatically. It's worth checking the bill and questioning anything unexpected, like hitherto unmentioned *kuver* (cover) charges, which then have *servis* charges added on to them. For advice on tipping, see p662.

Quick Eats

The best cheap snack is pide, the Turkish version of pizza, a canoe-shaped dough topped with cheese (*peynirli*), egg (*yumurtalı*) or mince (*kiymalı*) – the tastiest. A *karaşık* pide will have a mixture of toppings. Döner kebab – the one you'll see being cooked on an upright revolving skewer – is Turkey's national dish, served everywhere from street corners to upmarket restaurants. You should also try *su böreği*, a melt-in-the-mouth lasagne-like layered pastry laced with white cheese and parsley, and *gözleme*, savoury crepes rolled thin and cooked with cheese, spinach and potato – delish!

VEG-A-WHAT? TRAVAILS OF A VEGETARIAN TRAVELLER IN TURKEY *Miriam Raphael*

As someone whose favourite part of the day is deciding what to eat, I was salivating at the thought of several months in Turkey. All that glorious bread! All that wonderful cheese! But on arrival in İstanbul I began to think, 'All that meat...'. I recalled my friends warning me that as a vegetarian I would die in Turkey. After a week I had to agree; if something didn't change I was going to die. Not of starvation but of a surfeit of welsh rarebit!

But if you are up for a challenge, being a vegetarian in Turkey can be done.

Firstly, learn the words 'Etli mi?' (Does it have meat?) and 'Sebzeye yemekleri var mı?' (Are there any vegetable dishes?). And get used to walking into the kitchen to check things out for yourself (because Turkish 'vegetarians' sometimes eat no animal but chicken. Then get acquainted with all the vegetarian salads and mezes on offer. A couple of these and some piping hot bread is often more than enough for lunch.

Cheap *lokantas* (restaurants) are great for vegetarians. Not only can you see what you are ordering, but also they offer lots of hearty dishes – stuffed aubergines, plates of green beans, okra and peppers – with an obligatory pile of rice on the side. Better restaurants often have vegetable *güveç* (stew in a clay pot) on the menu. Covered in cheese and baked in the oven, it's nothing short of scrumptious. *Menemen*, a stir-fried omelette with tomatoes and hot peppers, is also popular. Unfortunately, most soups, even *ezo gelin* (lentil and rice), are made with meat stock.

Every town has a *börekci* that serves flaky pastry stuffed with white cheese and parsley. And don't miss *gözleme*, a Turkish pancake filled with spinach, cheese or potato.

If all else fails, there's always dessert!

Vegetarian Turkish

Cookery: Over 100 of Turkey's Classic Recipes for the Vegetarian Cook, by Carol & David Robertson, will help those who love Turkish cooking but don't care for its normally meaty emphasis.

FISH FORM ON THE COAST

With four seas surrounding the country – the Aegean, the Mediterranean, the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea – Turkey's hardly short of sources of fresh fish. Visitors to the coasts should take advantage: fresh fish cooked *à la Turquie* – sometimes to old Ottoman recipes – is one of the highlights of visiting this region.

Winter is considered the best season for fish, and each month is known for a different species. At this time many species migrate from the Black Sea in search of warmer waters and also reach maturity.

In Turkish cuisine, certain herbs as well as vegetables are thought to complement particular types of fish. Mackerel is often stuffed with onions, bonito is cooked with celery root, and sea bass or sea bream is poached with tomatoes and green peppers. Bay leaves are popped into almost all fish dishes.

A certain etiquette is usually observed when visiting a fish restaurant. After being seated, it's customary to go and inspect the day's catch displayed either on a counter or – in the smaller restaurants – in the kitchen. After seeing what's on offer and taking your pick, you can discuss the way you want the fish prepared. It's then weighed and you're given a price.

Next stop is the mezes cabinet where you choose your first course. In between these and sips of raki at your table on the seafloor, your fish is freshly prepared.

Frances Linzee Gordon, with thanks to Mustafa Yılmaz, head chef, Foça

EATING WITH KIDS

Turkish children rarely eat out so children in restaurants are a welcome novelty – babies especially are made a fuss of. Waiting staff will usually be happy to heat food or drinks and generally help out, but it's rare to find high chairs. You won't find kids' menus either, but this shouldn't be a problem as most Turkish food is child-friendly, and less challenging meals are widely available such as *kuru fasulye* (beans), similar to baked beans, and *domates çorbası* (tomato soup). Ask for *acısız* (no spices) meals if you need to.

Great snacks for kids include the delicious *simit* (O-shaped bread ring sprinkled with sesame seeds), sold by street vendors, and *peynirli tost* (toasted cheese) available in snack booths everywhere. Pide is always a hit too.

Ensure that eggs and meat are well cooked.

HABITS & CUSTOMS

In rural Turkey locals usually eat two meals a day, the first at around 11am and the second in the early evening. In the cities three meals a day is the norm. In urban areas people sit down to meals in the same way as people in the West. However, in villages it is still usual to sit on the floor around a *tepsi* (low round table) with a cloth spread over one's knees to catch the crumbs.

TRAVEL YOUR TASTEBUDS

Like most countries, Turkey has its favoured dishes that only a local could love. Top of the yuck stakes for most visitors must come *kokoreç*, seasoned lamb intestines wrapped around a skewer and grilled over charcoal.

İşkembe (tripe) soup reputedly wards off a hangover, so do as the locals do and head to an *işkembeci* (tripe soup restaurant) in the wee hours – maybe not? You might need to seek out *koç yumurtası* (ram's 'eggs') instead. Served spicy with oregano, they reputedly increase sexual stamina.

You may also want to learn the term for *kelle paça* (sheep's foot) soup, so you don't accidentally order it in a restaurant.

Lonely Planet's *World Food Turkey* gives the low-down on all aspects of Turkish cookery, eating etiquette and regional specialities.

Joan Peterson's *Eat Smart in Turkey: How to Decipher the Menu, Know the Market Foods & Embark on a Tasting Adventure* combines cookbook, language and tasting tips, and regional knowledge.

These days people mostly eat from individual plates, although sometimes there will be communal dishes. Most Turks eat with spoons and forks (rarely with knives).

COOKERY COURSES

Turkey has a handful of operators offering foreign-language cookery courses, but the market is growing, so by the time you read this there could be more. Most courses are based in İstanbul, such as İstanbul Food Workshop and the Sarnıç Hotel. See p653 for details of these and other courses.

EAT YOUR WORDS

Want to know a *köfte* from a kebab? Get behind the cuisine scene by getting to know the language. For pronunciation guidelines, see p692.

Useful Phrases

EATING OUT

I'd like (a/the) ..., please.

... *istiyorum lütfen.* ... ees-tee-yo-room *lewt-fen*

menu

Menü me-new-yew

menu in English

İngilizce menü een-gee-leez-je me-new

I'd like the local speciality

Bu yöreye özgü bir yemek istiyorum. boo yer-re-ye erz-gew beer ye-mek ees-tee-yo-room

Enjoy your meal/Bon appetit!

Afiyet olsun! a-fee-yet ol-soon

This is ...

Bu ... boo ...

(too) cold

(çok) soğuk (chok) so-ook

(too) spicy

(çok) acı (chok) a-juh

superb

efes en-fes

The bill please.

Hesap lütfen. he-sap *lewt-fen*

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR VISITORS TO A TRADITIONAL TURKISH HOME

Do:

- Take a small gift, such as a box of baklava or *lokum*
- Eat only the food nearest to you from a communal dish
- Eat everything on your plate, but don't overeat. Note the Turkish proverb: 'Eat a little be an angel; eat much and perish!'
- Say '*Afiyet olsun!*' (May it be good for your health). After the meal say '*Elinize sağlık!*' (Health to your hands) to compliment your hostess on her cooking (it will always be a hostess who cooks!)

Don't:

- Eat anything directly from a bowl with your left hand
- Sit down beside someone of the opposite sex unless your host(ess) suggests it

VEGETARIAN & SPECIAL MEALS

Do you have any dishes without meat?

Etsiz yemek var mı? et-seez ye-mek-var muh

I'm allergic to ...

... *alerjim var.* ... a-ler-zheem var

dairy produce

Süt ürünlerine sewt ew-rewn-le-ree-ne

eggs

Yumurta yoo-moor-ta-ya

nuts

Çerezlere che-rez-le-re

DRINKS

(cup/glass of) tea ...

... *(bir fincan/bardak) çay* ... (beer feen-jan/bar-dak) chai

(cup of) coffee ...

... *(bir fincan) kahve* ... (beer feen-jan) kah-ve

with milk

Sütlü sewt-lew

with a little sugar

Az şekerli az she-ker-lee

without sugar

Şekersiz she-ker-seez

Cheers!

Şerefe! she-re-fe

Food Glossary

STAPLES

<i>bal</i>	bal	honey
<i>çiğir</i>	jee-er	liver
<i>çorba</i>	chor-ba	soup
<i>ekmek</i>	ek-mek	bread
<i>hamsi</i>	ham-see	anchovy
<i>kalamares</i>	ka-la-ma-res	calamari
<i>midye</i>	meed-ye	mussels
<i>peynir</i>	pay-neer	cheese
<i>piliç/tavuk</i>	pee-leech/ta-vook	chicken
<i>pirinç/pilav</i>	pee-reench/pee-lav	rice
<i>yoğurt</i>	yo-oort	yogurt
<i>yumurta</i>	yoo-moor-ta	egg

CONDIMENTS

<i>kara biber</i>	ka-ra bee-ber	black pepper
<i>şeker</i>	she-ker	sugar
<i>tuz</i>	tooz	salt

COOKING TERMS

<i>ızgara</i>	uhz-ga-ra	grilled
<i>tava</i>	ta-va	fried

MEZES

<i>caçık</i>	ja-juhk	yogurt with grated cucumber and mint
<i>fava salatası</i>	fa-va sa-la-ta-suh	mashed broad bean salad
<i>patlıcan salatası</i>	pat-luh-jan sa-la-ta-suh	aubergine (eggplant) salad

<i>yaprak dolması</i>	yap-rak dol-ma-suh	stuffed vine leaves
<i>çoban salatası</i>	cho-ban sa-la-ta-suh	tomato, onion, cucumber and green pepper salad

MAIN COURSES

<i>börek</i>	boo-rek	flaky pastry parcels
<i>Bursa (İskender)</i>	kebab boor-sa ees-ken-der ke-bab	döner kebab on pide with yogurt, melted butter and tomato sauce
<i>döner kebab</i>	der-ner ke-bab	meat packed onto a vertical skewer, then roasted and sliced off
<i>gözleme</i>	gerz-le-me	savoury crepe laced with spinach, cheese or potato
<i>güveç</i>	gew-vech	meat-and-vegetable stew in a clay pot
<i>imam bayıldı</i>	ee-mam-ba-yuhl-duh	literally, 'the imam fainted'; aubergine stuffed with ground lamb, tomatoes, onions and garlic
<i>karışık ızgara</i>	ka-ruh-shuhk uhz-ga-ra	mixed grill (lamb)
<i>köfte</i>	kerf-te	meatballs
<i>mantı</i>	man-tuh	ravioli (Turkish style)
<i>şiş kebab</i>	sheesh ke-bab	cubes of meat grilled on a skewer

FRUIT (MEYVE) & VEGETABLES (SEBZE)

<i>biber</i>	bee-ber	capsicum/bell pepper
<i>domates</i>	do-ma-tes	tomato
<i>elma</i>	el-ma	apple
<i>havuç</i>	ha-vooch	carrot
<i>ispanak</i>	uhs-pa-nak	spinach
<i>karpuz</i>	kar-pooz	watermelon
<i>kavun</i>	ka-voon	cantaloupe melon
<i>kayısı</i>	ka-yuh-suh	apricot
<i>kuru fasulye</i>	koo-roo fa-sool-ye	white beans
<i>muz</i>	mooz	banana
<i>patates</i>	pa-ta-tes	potato
<i>portakal</i>	por-ta-kal	orange
<i>salatalık</i>	sa-la-ta-luhk	cucumber
<i>şeftali</i>	shef-ta-lee	peach
<i>soğan</i>	so-an	onion
<i>taze fasulye</i>	ta-ze fa-sool-ye	green beans
<i>üzüm</i>	ew-zewm	grape
<i>zeytin</i>	zay-teen	olive

DESSERT (TATLI)

<i>aşure</i>	a-shoo-re	'Noah's Ark' pudding made from 40 different fruits, nuts and pulses
<i>baklava</i>	bak-la-va	layered filo pastry with honey and nuts
<i>dondurma</i>	don-door-ma	ice cream
<i>lokum</i>	lo-koom	Turkish delight

DRINKS

<i>çay</i>	chai	tea
<i>bira</i>	bee-ra	beer
<i>buz</i>	booz	ice
<i>maden suyu</i>	ma-den soo-yoo	mineral water
<i>meyve suyu</i>	may-ve soo-yoo	fruit juice
<i>rakı</i>	ra-ku	grape spirit infused with aniseed
<i>şarap</i>	sha-rap	wine
<i>su</i>	soo	water
<i>süt</i>	sewt	milk

Trekking in Turkey

Turkey's huge, bare central plateau, punctuated by isolated volcanic cones and shimmering, shallow lakes, is hemmed by many mountain ranges. The Taurus ranges, in the central south, are limestone – raising white, weathered ridges above ancient cedar or juniper forests. On the coastal sides of these ranges, below pine-clad foothills, are steep-sided coves, busy harbours and resort towns. On the north are the Pontic Alps with, to the east, the Kaçkars – a sharp, granite range, largely unforested, which separates the misty tea-growing Black Sea slopes from the knife-edge gorges of the Çoruh, and the plateau. To the east, the plateau rises towards Asia, divided by the great Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, and closely hemmed by jumbles of ranges rising towards the volcanoes of Suphan and Mt Ararat (Ağrı Dağı). The west of the country slopes down in soft, dry valleys to the Mediterranean.

The best trekking areas are south and north of the plateau. Although the east has much to offer, maps are a problem and, except for Mt Ararat, guides and organised treks scarce.

Ingrained in the unforgiving landscape of Anatolia are the scars of old roads – some dating from Hittite times – linking towns, mines and markets of the interior with coastal harbours. They wind over passes over the ranges and, of course, some are now modern highways. Subsidiary tracks, trodden twice a year by the migrating flocks of sheep and goats, link summer and winter pastures. The whole forms an elusive but timeless net stretching over the country.

The Walks

The five treks highlighted in this chapter weave the old roads into the fabric of modern Turkey, seamlessly allowing the hiker to traverse from old to new, country to town, mountain to plain. On the way, they pass canyons, mountain pastures brimming with flowers, tiny stone villages and ruins of ancient cities. They also offer much more – during these treks, you can walk in the steps of a saint, raft a white-water river, swim in canyons, lakes and your own private coves and stay with shepherds in their black wool tents.

RESPONSIBLE HIKING

Before embarking on a hiking trip, consider the following points to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience:

- No permits are required for walking or camping, but obey forestry 'no fire' or 'no entry' signs.
- Acclimatise to the temperature; learn the symptoms of heatstroke and dehydration (see p689).
- Know your next water point and carry more than sufficient water to reach it.
- Be aware that weather conditions and terrain vary considerably with altitude and region. In winter – carry full waterproof equipment and a GPS, if you have one, for finding routes in the snow.
- Shepherds or villagers may offer food and/or accommodation. Treat them respectfully and pay for what you use. If you become hurt or lost, they are your lifeline.
- Bury your toilet waste away from water sources and don't litter.
- Take your insurance details and the phone numbers of your consulate and Turkey's rescue organisation – **AKUT** (☎ 0212-217 0410). It's a good idea to buy a local SIM card for your mobile phone (though there's pretty well no reception on the Kaçkars).

Trekking tourism in Turkey should also be seen as an excellent way of providing income for isolated, marginal mountain villages.

The selected treks average three days and are suitable for a reasonably fit person. Three days is long enough for a taste of trekking but short enough to fit into a hectic holiday programme. Most of these treks can be accomplished with little experience and only basic equipment – a daypack, water bottles and comfortable boots. Two require camping equipment. Four of them follow parts of Turkey's newly waymarked long-distance trails. They are spread from the south to the northeast, and you will find a trail for every season.

See p87 for finding everything from hiking maps and books, camping equipment and guides to trekking companies.

Completing the chapter are cross-references to other walks mentioned in other parts of this book (see p87).

ALINCA TO OVACIK – LYCIAN WAY

Alınca, a tiny village spectacularly perched high above seven headlands, is on the west of the Tekke or Lycian peninsula, which extends between Fethiye and Antalya. From Alınca, mule paths run along the wild Lycian coast to Ovacık, between Fethiye and Ölüdeniz. Most of the walk is through cliff-top pines, high above the deep indigo sea, though it does descend to pretty beaches. There is pension or village-house accommodation each night. Fit/fast trekkers could take two days, missing the night at Kabak.

The *Sunday Times* chose the Lycian Way as one of the world's 10 best walks, and *Country Walking* magazine chose it as 15th in the world's 50 greatest walks.

Getting to the Start

The Fethiye–Kaş bus passes through Eşen; get off here and find a taxi to take you to Alınca, about 20km away down a side road, past Boğaziçi. Dolmuşes from Fethiye only go as far as Kabak.

In the upper part of Alınca is a Lycian Way signpost marked to Kabak; follow the marked path up to a level area with picnic tables in front of a house belonging to the headman, Bayram.

Accommodation in Alınca is either in **Bayram's house** (☎ 0252-679 1169; cabin per per-

son half board €13.50) – recommended, or in Selcuk's pension, further up the hill.

Day 1

The Lycian Way footpath continues past Bayram's house, running level with pines on the right, to a pass with views towards the jigsaw of dark islands beyond the pale gold crescent of Ölüdeniz (10 min). Follow the old mule path downhill, up to a second low pass (cumulative time 50 min) and then to an area of terraces planted with olives (1¼ hr). From rocks on your left is a spectacular view of a small golden strip of sand, bordered in turquoise, which merges into the velvety indigo of the sea. There is a well 30m off the path to the right and a tiny shepherd's hut hidden in the rocks.

The path descends right into a narrow, forested valley, first straight, then down newly repaired stone hairpins, to a junction known as Delikkaya (Rock with a Hole) below a cliff face (2 hr). Turn left on narrower path down more hairpins, then left again to a level clearing (2¼-2½ hr). From here the path is wider, and leads towards the beach (2¾-3 hr). Turn right onto a short, steep descent to the valley floor where you turn left along a stream bed to the beach of Kabak (see p363; 3¼-3½ hr).

Behind the beach are three places to stay including Turan's Camping and the Olive Garden.

Day 2

From the north end of the beach, climb a narrow path, which immediately widens, then turn left and up again onto hairpins leading up to farmland. Keep right on a path that leads to the village road and Mama's Restaurant (see p363; 1 hr). Opposite Mama's is a spring. Next to it, turn upwards onto a footpath that runs level to a junction; keep left and continue climbing through woodland to a dirt road (1¼ hr). Turn right, and at a junction turn left and walk around terraces with spectacular views, then downhill to a spring and trough (2½-2¾ hr). About 200m further on, turn right onto a footpath, which follows the edge of woodland to a pass (2¾-3 hr). Descend hairpins through woods to meet the dirt road, and turn right to reach Faralya (see p362; 3½-3¾ hr).

There are three pensions in Faralya; we recommend George House (p362).

Day 3

By a spring on the village road, turn upwards to the Old Mill, now a luxurious hotel. The old cobbled mule path passes in front of the millhouse – you may be able to see the restored mill at work. Follow the stream up the valley, looking back from

WALK FACTS

Duration 2-3 days

Difficulty easy

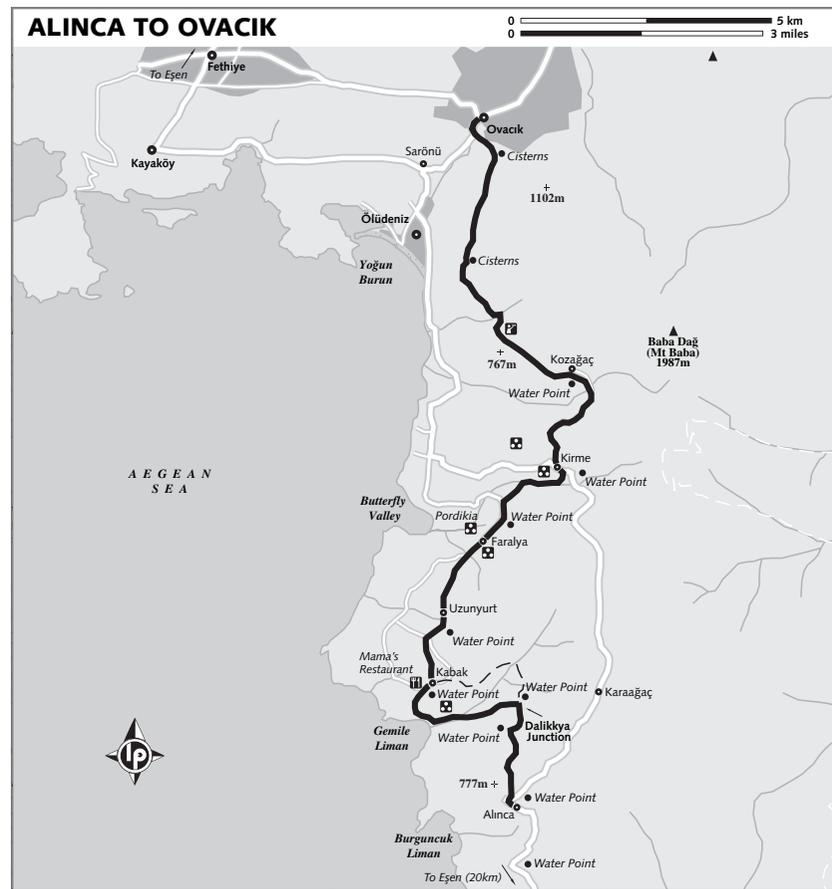
Waymarking easy

Best time February–May, October–November

Special equipment: swimming gear; picnic food

time to time to catch the views down into Butterfly Valley (see p362) below.

At the head of the valley turn left into the village of Kirme, and right to the village spring and sitting platform (2 hr). On the road, turn left to a junction by the old school, and continue right up the hill (2¼ hr). At the pass, take a footpath that drops left into woodland and follow the old road around the head of a deep valley. Rejoin the road and continue past a spring and between loose boulders and stones. Here, in the 1950s, an earthquake demolished part of the mountain and buried several village houses. Turn left to circle the village on footpaths, soon rejoining the road (3-3¼ hr). Turn left and continue upwards towards



the cliff-tops, following a detour to the cliff edge on the left. Rejoin the road near a new house; just past here are superb views down to the pale crescent of Ölüdeniz (3¼-3½ hr). The cobbled mule path descends a few hairpins, circles a gully and passes two cisterns (4½-4¾ hr). The path, cobbles now gone, continues to another viewpoint, then turns inland, descending gradually through shady pines towards the buildings at the head of the valley. It bears left to a cistern and dirt road (5¾-6 hr). A few minutes later, you reach tarmac and turn left, down to the main Ovacık-Ölüdeniz road (6-6½ hr).

Take a right to reach Ovacık, or take the bus going left down the hill to Ölüdeniz (p359).

MYRA TO FINIKE – LYCIAN WAY

Between Myra and Finike is a massive, rounded headland, which the Romans used to bypass by ferry boat, and visitors today bypass by tortuous coastal road.

This section of the Lycian Way climbs inland on an old pilgrim road to the Church of the Angel Gabriel, then climbs again to the last remaining Mediterranean cedar forest. With wide views over the sea and islands, it follows the curving ridge to an ancient city silhouetted against the sky, before descending to Finike. It's a tough route, with no accommodation save, in summer, the black tents of the shepherds.

Getting to the Start

The coastal dolmuşes from Antalya to Fethiye stop at the bus station in Demre, which is a five-minute walk from the Myra ruins (see p378 for more on this site) and 10 minutes from the start of the walk, at a children's park north of the ruins.

Day 1

From the children's park, walk on the road north over a bridge on the river and turn left. Walk 3km along the road in the bed of the Demre Gorge; from here turn right just past a mosque.

Our route rises on stone walls that hairpin up the side of the gorge; this old road is known as the Gavur yolu (Unbelievers' road), and once carried Christian pilgrims to the churches above. The clear stepped path leads you across a road (1½ hr) and continues up more badly eroded hairpins

on the lower valley wall. Scramble up to meet the road, turn right to tumbledown Belören village (cumulative time 4-4¼ hr), with the remains to two vast churches, once lavishly decorated with carving.

At the fork in the road by a cistern, bear right towards a valley; turn right on a clear path that winds up to a level field; on the road beyond, pass through a cutting to the next valley, Zeytin, bisected by a tiny limestone gorge. Turn left on a dirt road, then go downhill on a path and cross the gorge to regain the dirt road (4¼-5 hr). Over a pass, turn right down a footpath to the ruins of the Church of the Angel Gabriel. The once-frescoed walls of the church are remembered in the local name: Alakilise – many coloured church. One wall stands upright, surrounded by a jumble of beautiful carved capitals and friezes (5½-5¾ hr).

From the end of May to October, shepherds camp near the church and may offer you hospitality.

Day 2

Walk up the valley on a rising footpath; cross the dirt road near a cistern (20 min) and climb up in zigzags towards the huge rock face on the horizon: Papaz Kaya – the priest's rock. Nearing the cliff, bear right towards two huge boulders; above the upper one the path turns right into cedar forest (2¾-3 hr). Scramble along the almost level path, dodging the roots of windblown fallen cedars, to a clearing with goat pens and a well (3½-3¾ hr).

Continue upwards through clearings, which turn purple with autumn crocus flowers in October, then descend to a well topped by cedar logs. Climb and cross a fence to a ridge-top area devastated by a long-passed forest fire; around are views of rolling blue ranges, the sea and islands beyond (5¼-5½ hr).

The route follows the rolling ridge-top, passing back into forest, then swings south, with glimpses of the orange orchards of Turunçova far below on your left (6½-7 hr).

A clearing and well is a possible camp site, but soon, below on your right, you see a few shepherd huts huddled along a dirt road. Descend to meet the road just before a junction (8-8½ hr), turn left and camp near the huts (water from wells).

Day 3

Keep right at the junction, then turn right onto a footpath that runs along a steep hillside, which overlooks the lagoon at Beymelek, far below. At the end of the ridge, turn left and contour around two valleys, climb another ridge, descend to a well and then meet a newly bulldozed forest road (1½ hr). Continue south and, just before a fenced field, turn right, glimpsing the sea from a low pass. Turn south again down a valley, then up to a ridge crowned with the ruins of Belos (2½-2¾ hr).

All around are remains of huge sarcophagi, some still capped with lids. Rooms are carved out of the rock, ancient walls are

topped by later Roman remains and, at the end of the ridge, lie huge cisterns.

After exploring, follow the ridge-top path inland, turning right to contour around a valley, past a fenced graveyard and some shepherds' huts to a new dirt road. Turn right and then left, and follow the road downhill to a pass marked by a length of Roman column (4-4¼ hr).

Keep straight on past the column and, 200m on, turn right down a footpath, which descends into a river bed, running down water-worn steps under arched trees. Turn left on a mule track (5-5¼ hr) that contours around the ridge, with views of Gök Liman beach ahead. At a dirt road, turn left, bear right at a junction and descend past a few houses on the ridge down dirt roads and a narrow track to Finike town, emerging just above the harbour (6½-7 hr).

AKBAŞ TO ÇALTEPE – ST PAUL TRAIL

High above the Köprü River is a migration route (for goats mostly), which follows the Köprülu Kanyon, crossing a Roman bridge, then climbing to Dedegöl mountain, far to

WALK FACTS

Duration 3 days

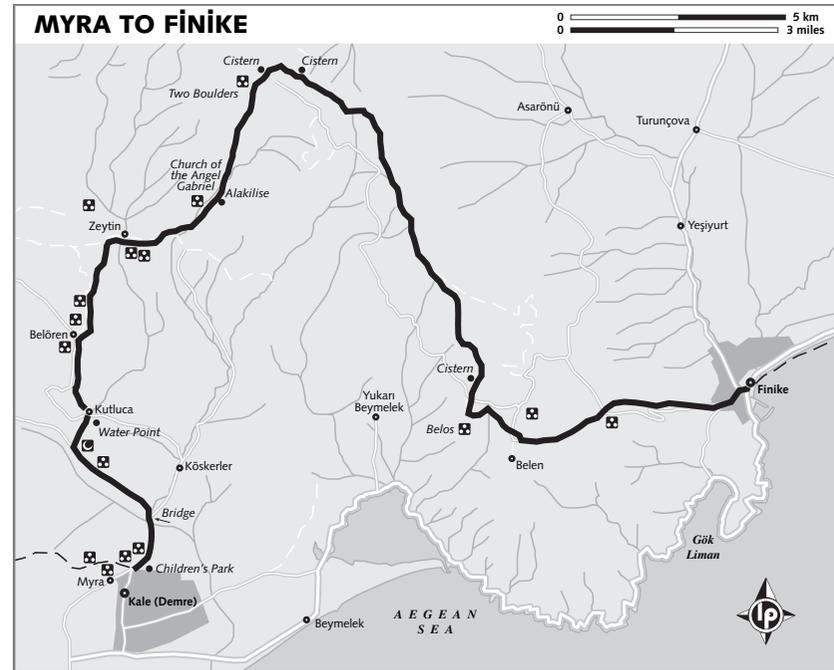
Difficulty medium

Waymarking yes

Best time April–June, September–November

Special equipment camping gear; string and bucket for wells, food

MYRA TO FİNİKE



Sütçüler – see p321; stay the night there and return to the same spot next day.)

Cross the road and continue down on tracks to the riverside below. Turn right and follow the river until it emerges from a small canyon (3½-3¾ hr). Here your walk becomes a scramble – it's possible (but dif-

ficult) to scramble the whole length of the canyon without getting wet, but in summer it's much more fun to paddle and swim in the pools. The canyon ends at a bridge (7-7¼ hr) – turn up the left bank to a spring, then turn right, pass a graveyard, and walk high above the river into the village of Siphahiler (8¼-8¾ hr).

Walk down to the main road, shop and *çay bahçesi*; accommodation for walkers is in a room attached to the mosque.

Day 2

Walk back up the steep road in the centre of the village, bear left onto a path and head for the pass among trees on the skyline to the west (35 min). Cross the next valley, aiming

WALK FACTS

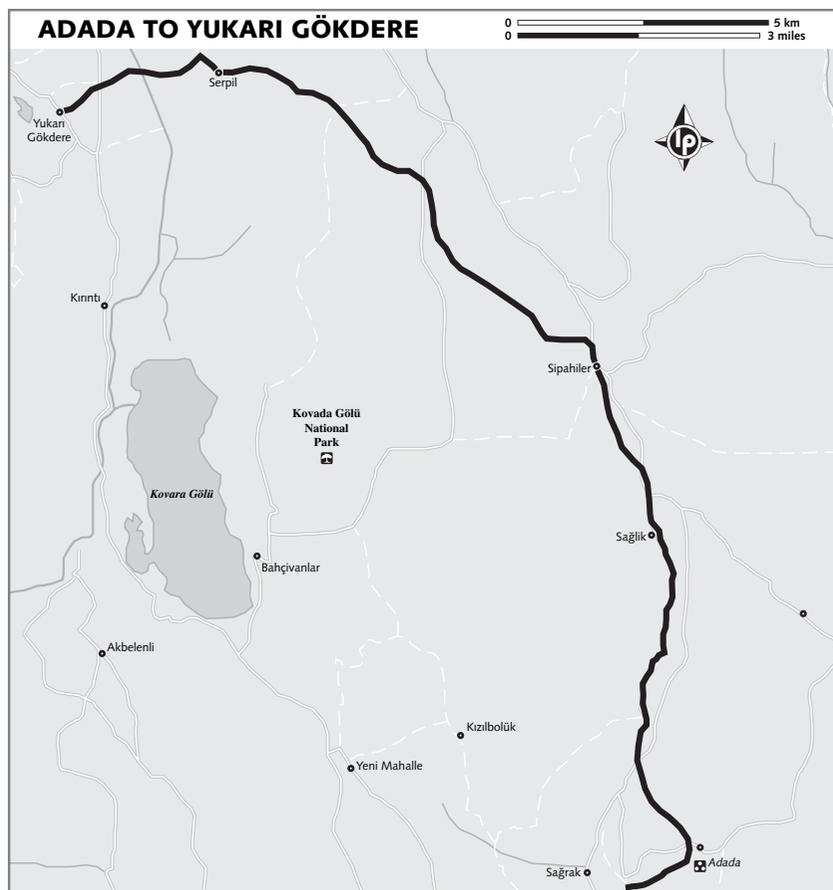
Duration 2-3 days

Difficulty easy

Waymarking yes

Best time April–June, September–November

Special equipment old shoes; swimming gear



at a spring on the far side and continue on the path, veering slightly right and climbing the next hill (1½ hr). Descend into a shallow valley, turn left and walk to a tractor track; turn right, continue past a huge well to a pine plantation (2¼ hr). Walk through the pines to a valley, through a wire fence, through more pines to a huge open plain (2¾ hr). Walk down the left side of the plain, cross a low pass, and turn right, passing through forest down to another plain. Cross the plain diagonally right, then over another pass to a tractor track. Turn right for a third plain (3¾-4 hr). Follow the track to a line of telegraph posts, turn left along them and over a final pass (4½-4¾ hr). Follow the paved path down towards the village of Serpil below. Turn left at the path end, and follow tracks around the hillside and down onto the apple orchards below. Cross the orchards to a bridge over the canal and the main road beyond (5¼-5½ hr). Just opposite are the petrol pumps at Yukarı Gökdere, from where you can get a bus to Eğirdir (p317).

YUKARI KAVRON TO YAYLALAR – TRANS-KAÇKAR TREK

Most trekking in the Kaçkars is above the treeline; routes are well used and quite easy to find. The mountains are notorious for storms and afternoon mists, particularly on the northern slopes; if you experience zero visibility, you should bivouac until the weather clears. Water is never a problem; as long as there are no cattle above you, stream water is safe to drink.

Yukarı Kavron is a summer village on the north slopes of the Kaçkar Mountains (Kaçkar Dağları); from here steep paths lead over the range at Naletleme pass. Often the passes are not open until the third week in July; check at Yukarı Kavron that the Naletleme pass has been used and the snow trodden down. After the pass, you could head straight downriver for Yaylalar, the trailhead on the southern side, but a diversion takes you to the spectacular base camp for Mt Kaçkar. The summit climb isn't covered in this description, as early in the season you need crampons and an ice axe to attempt the climb safely.

To Reach the Start

Take a dolmuş from Pazar or Çamlıhemşin to Ayder and then another to Yukarı Kavron

(there are several per day in season, including one at 9am), where there is accommodation, a café and limited supplies. Accommodation in Ayder is better (see p561).

Day 1

Leave the village heading east, on a footpath that first zigzags, then runs on the right bank of the side-stream bouncing down the steep Çaymakcur valley. The path can be muddy and slippery in the frequent mists. The route crosses the stream, rises left over a lip (2½ hr) and levels as it approaches a small lake, Büyük Deniz (*deniz* literally translates as 'sea'); veer right off the path to the level camp site by the lake (3 hr) set in a grassy basin scooped out of flaking rock and fed by glaciers. Not visible, but a 10-minute walk uphill to the south, is tiny Metenek Gölü (Metenek Lake), swimmable and with a camp site, should the first be full. Take time to explore this area of lush pastures and miniature rhododendrons below the snow-clad peaks.

Day 2

Continue north with Büyük Deniz on the left, and follow the path to the pass east of the lake (20 min). Follow the steep hairpins downhill to the stream that leads to turquoise Kara Deniz lake; cross the stream on a difficult path over boulders and turn upwards (south) to the ridge beyond the stream (1¾ hr). The pass is now ahead, above a rock outcrop. Climb left on a well-used path, which winds in zigzags upwards over scree. Over the outcrop, the gradient eases, although the path remains stony until it reaches the cairn on shady Naletleme pass (3203m), topped much of the year by snow (4-4¼ hr). The view from the top is of wide, green valleys with rounded ranges beyond, and Mt Kaçkar, often capped by cloud, on the right. The descent is first on steep zigzags, then over a snow pocket and scree, then on the left bank of a stream, down a steep, wide valley. As the path veers left to Yaylalar, descend and cross the Düpeduzu stream to a large flat camp site with a spring at 2750m, in the beautiful valley of the same name (6-6½ hr).

Day 3

Head up the valley, first onto a low shelf then southwest into a wide valley penetrating the ridge of Pişovit. The path is a goat

track, which gets steeper as you progress, leading in hairpins diagonally over the ridge at about 3100m (2¼ hr). Once over the top, a view opens out over the Hevek valley, with the tiny stone houses of Nastel (or Hastal) Yaylası far below. The narrow path turns right and contours above the spurs of

the ridge. In places it's indistinct, but you should keep as high as possible, until the base camp of Dilberduzu comes into sight, south-southwest and far below (3¾-4 hr).

In front is a high-point on the ridge. The path starts to descend left down a spur, first with the side-ridge on the right, then on the left. As it descends, the path runs over patches of scree, then through vegetation so lush that in places it is shoulder high.

Cross the Büyük Çay stream (5-5½ hr) and climb the final 1km to the camp site at the base of the rocks of Şeytan Kaya (Devil's Rocks; 5½-6 hr). The camp site is large enough for 100 or more tents, and is the most popular one in the Kaçkars, as it's the base for climbs to Mt Kaçkar (3937m).

WALK FACTS

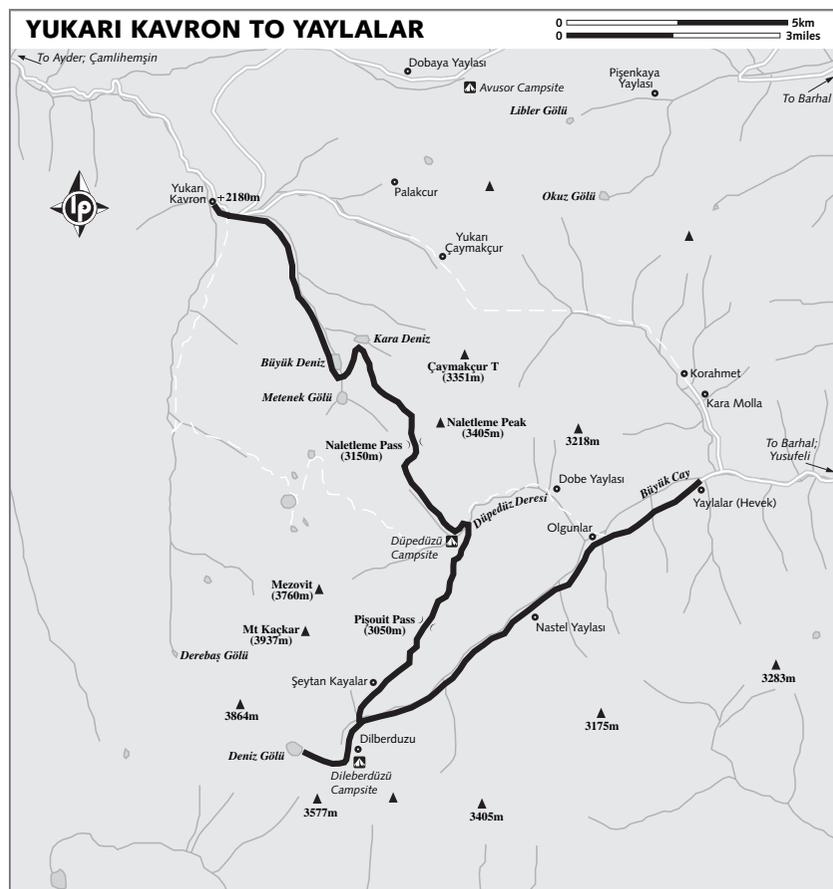
Duration 4 days

Difficulty medium

Waymarking no

Best time mid-July–September

Special equipment wet weather and camping gear, food, compass



TREKKING RESOURCES

Books & Maps

Aladağlar, by Ömer B Tüzel, Homer Kitabevi (publisher, in Turkish)

Kaçkar Dağları, by Tunç Fındık, Homer Kitabevi (in Turkish)

Lycian Way, by Kate Clow, Upcountry

St Paul Trail, by Kate Clow & Terry Richardson, Upcountry

The Mountains of Turkey, by Karl Smith, Cicerone

Walking and Birdwatching in Southwest Turkey, by Paul Hope, Land of Lights

Trekking Companies

Dragoman Turkey (www.dragoman-turkey.com) Trekking holidays mainly in Lycia but also St Paul Trail and Kaçkars.

Middle Earth Travel (www.mountainsofturkey.com, www.middleearthtravel.com) Trekking holidays in Lycia, St Paul Trail, Mt Ararat, Ala Dağlar and Kaçkars. Special itineraries for private groups.

TML travel (www.tmltravel.com) Adventure-holiday base on the St Paul Trail, where they specialise.

Tempo Tur (www.tempoour.com.tr) Tours/adventure holidays, especially Kaçkars and Lycia.

Terra-Anatolia (www.terra-anatolia.com) Self-guided treks in Lycia, also Kaçkars and Cappadocia.

Türküt Turizm (www.turkoutour.com) Accommodation and holidays in the north side of the Kaçkars.

Equipment

The following two firms take phone or web orders and deliver promptly.

Adrenalin (www.adrenalin.com.tr, in Turkish) Camping-equipment store that offers mail orders.

Offshop/Adventure Republic (www.offshop.net, in Turkish) Two camping-equipment stores, also offering mail orders.

Trekking Guides & Mules

Middle Earth Travel, Terra-Anatolia and Dragoman can suggest itineraries and provide guides for private groups. In the Kaçkars, mules and their drivers (who double as guides), are organized by Çamyuva Pension in Yaylayar or in Olgunlar (see p574). Mule treks start from Barhal, Yaylalar or Yukari Kavron.)

Day 4

In the morning, Şeytan Kayalar turn gold as the morning sun strikes them, and alpine choughs shriek from the sheer cliffs. The final day is a short trek down the valley to Yaylalar village. You could first explore the route west to Deniz Gölü (1 hr), where, even in July, icebergs often float on the lake. Retrace your steps and follow the path on the south bank of the stream first towards the *yayla* (here, some buildings in a highland pasture) of Nastel, then Olgunlar (4½-4¾ hr), a permanent village that has two or three inhabitants year-around. In summer it has pensions, a café and occasional minibuses to Yaylalar.

Half an hour's walk beyond is Yaylalar (5-5½ hr), which has a good pension (the Çamyuva; see p574) and a dolmuş to Yusufeli (p571), with onward connections.

OTHER TREKS

The walks described earlier in this chapter are only a small sample of the walks

that can be done along the Lycian Way, St Paul's Trail and the Kaçkar Mountains. See the books, above, for more details on these walks. Some further information on organising treks in the Kaçkar Mountains is provided in this guidebook, see p558 (from Ayder) and p572 (from Yusufeli). Keep in mind that the snow-free season in the Kaçkars is very short.

You can also trek in the rugged Ala Dağlar National Park (p526), near Niğde, famous for the superb Yedigöller (Seven Lakes).

The spectacular valleys of Cappadocia make another excellent area for hiking, with a range of possibilities lasting from just a few hours to eight days or more. See the boxed text, p502, for short walks and tour operators such as Mephisto Voyage (p511) and ones listed in the boxed text, above, for longer hikes.

Upcountry (Turkey) Ltd (www.trekkinginturkey.com) provides trekking information and offers an online service for buying books.

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