

Getting Started

Travelling in Turkey is a breeze thanks to the laid-back charm of the locals, bus transport that's second to none, and the sheer volume of accommodation options, from friendly cheap-as-chips backpackers to immaculately groomed boutique guesthouses. Only during the height of peak season or on public holidays would you be wise to book ahead; at most times you can just turn up and find your first accommodation choice awaiting.

WHEN TO GO

Spring (April to May) and autumn (September to October) are the best times to visit, since the climate will be perfect for sightseeing in İstanbul and on the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, and it will be cool in central Anatolia, but not unpleasantly so. Visiting before mid-June or after August may also help you avoid mosquitoes. If your primary drive is for beach-bumming, mid-May to September is perfect for the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, if a little steamy out of the water. The Black Sea coast is best visited between April and September – there will still be rain but not so much of it. Head to eastern Turkey from late June to September, but not before May or after mid-October unless you're prepared for snow, road closures and bone-chilling temperatures.

With the exception of İstanbul, Turkey doesn't really have a winter tourism season (see p20 for more details). Most accommodation along the Aegean, Mediterranean and Black Sea and in some parts of Cappadocia is closed from mid-October until late April. These dates are not set in stone and depend on how the season is going. High season is from July to mid-September, and prices are at their peak.

Anticipate crowds along all coastal areas from mid-June until early September. You will need to plan ahead when travelling during the four- or five-day Kurban Bayramı, as banks shut and ATMs may run out of cash (for more details see p660). Also, try not to visit the Gallipoli Peninsula around Anzac Day (25 April) unless it's particularly important for you to be there at that time.

COSTS & MONEY

Turkey is no longer Europe's bargain-basement destination, but it still offers good value for money. Costs are lowest in eastern Anatolia, and Cappadocia,

See Climate Charts (p653) for more information.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- 'Cover-up' clothing for mosque visits. Women might want to bring a scarf, although if you don't you've got a good excuse to go shopping.
- Slip-on shoes or sandals. Highly recommended as they are cool to wear and easy to remove before entering mosques or Turkish homes.
- Books in English. Those available in Turkey are hard to find and can be pricey. Second-hand book exchanges plug the gaps, but you'll need to have something to swap.
- Tampons. They can be hard to find as most Turkish women use pads.
- Universal sink plug.
- An appetite for kebabs.
- First-aid kit including sunscreen, which can be expensive in Turkey.
- Checking your government's travel warnings (see p655).

Selçuk, Pamukkale and Olympos still offer bargain prices. Prices are highest in Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and the touristy coastal cities and towns. In these places you can get by on €30 to €40 per person per day, provided you use public transport, stay in pensions, share bathrooms and eat out at a basic eatery once a day (add extra for entry to sights). Away from Istanbul, and the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, budget travellers can travel on as little as €25 to €35 per day. Throughout the country for €35 to €55 per day you can upgrade to midrange hotels with private bathrooms and eat most meals in restaurants. On more than €55 per day you can enjoy Turkey's boutique hotels, take occasional flights, and wine and dine out every day.

We quote all costs in this guidebook in euros. Although inflation has dropped from the stratospheric levels of the 1990s to around 9%, if we quoted Turkish new lira, prices would probably be out of date before the book even emerged from the printers.

HOW MUCH?

- Loaf of bread €0.20
- Glass of çay €0.20
- 100km by bus €3-3.50
- Short dolmuş trip €0.65
- Turkish Daily News €1

TRAVEL LITERATURE

Since time immemorial travellers have written about their rambles across Turkey. Herodotus (5th century BC), Xenophon (5th century BC) and Strabo (1st century BC) have all left us accounts of Anatolia in antiquity. The famous march to Persia by the Greek army, immortalised in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, has been retraced some 2400 years later by Shane Brennan in his fabulous tale, *In the Tracks of the Ten Thousand: A Journey on Foot Through Turkey, Syria and Iraq*. Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* details the author's travels to Istanbul with her husband, the British ambassador to Turkey, in 1716. It's a surprisingly nonjudgemental account of life at the heart of the Ottoman Empire.

Edmondo De Amicis' *Constantinople*, first published in 1877, has been recently translated into English. While its main focus is Istanbul, this classic beautifully details the exoticism of the city and the cosmopolitan nature of 19th-century Turkey. *Alexander's Path*, by the indomitable Freya Stark, will appeal to those who wish they too could have visited the classical sites of the coast in the early 20th century.

TOURING TURKEY IN WINTER

Unlike other Mediterranean hot spots, Turkey doesn't have a winter tourism season. However, for some travellers, winter is the best time to visit Istanbul: expect snow and chilly temperatures, but you get to enjoy the sights without the tourist press, and the touts are too busy savouring the low season to bother you in earnest.

All restaurants and hotels remain open in Istanbul year-round. You also won't have problems finding somewhere to stay in Ankara, Izmir or other big nontouristy cities where the hotels cater primarily to business travellers.

Even during a mild winter most hotels and restaurants along the Aegean and Mediterranean, and many in Cappadocia, close from mid-October to late April. Forget about choice – you may have to stay in the one place in town that's open.

Deep snow is a standard feature of the eastern Turkish winter with mountain passes regularly closed and buses delayed. Even some airports may close because they lack radar equipment. The central and western Anatolian winter is more fickle. One year you can be picnicking in the Ihlara Gorge in January, the following year subzero temperatures, deep snow and lethal ice make it impossible to venture further than the nearest shop.

If you're lucky enough to find a hotel open in winter, you'd be well advised to verify whether the heating is turned on before checking in. If the hot water comes from solar panels, beware – like pipes, the panels freeze up in winter.

TOP FIVE

Festivals

Turks really know how to have a good time, so it should come as no surprise to hear a festival or event is on nearly every other day. These are our top five; see p658 for others.

- Camel wrestling (p246) Bloodless bull-wrestling.
- Nevruz (p658) Kurds, Alevis and everyone else celebrate the ancient Middle Eastern spring knees-up on 21 March with joviality.
- Aspendos Opera & Ballet Festival (p395) Unbeatable Roman-era venue.
- Kafkasör Kültür ve Sanat Festivali (p575) More bloodless bull-wrestling.
- Kırkpınar Oil Wrestling Competition (p171) Yet more battling, but this time it's greasy buck-wrestling!

Must-Reads

Given Turkey's long history and vibrant culture it's hardly surprising that it has provided copious source material for authors old and new, local and foreign. For more information about Turkish authors and the literary tradition in Turkey, see p55.

- *Birds Without Wings*, by Louis de Bernières. If you only read one book about Turkey, make this it. Superbly written and researched historical fiction.
- *Memed, My Hawk*, by Yaşar Kemal. If this were a movie, it would rival the tear-jerking *Gone with the Wind*.
- *Snow*, by Orhan Pamuk. Pamuk's fictional insight unearths Turkey's contemporary challenges.
- *Atatürk*, by Andrew Mango. Get to know one of the 20th century's most intriguing political figures, virtually unknown outside his homeland.
- *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, by Irfan Orga. This page-turner is so intimate you'll feel like an honorary family member.

R&R

Ooo la la. You've come to the right place with your empty to-do list. In one word: *hamams*. These are our favourite, plus a couple of other options to indulge in some much-needed R&R.

- Çemberlitaş Hamamı, İstanbul (p133) Touristy sure, but sublime architecture and a head-to-toe service make a visit to this ancient institution a must.
- Cağaloğlu Hamamı, İstanbul (p133) Arm-wrestling with Çemberlitaş Hamamı for the title of most beautiful *hamam*. Heck, try both!
- Kurşunlu Banyo, Termal (p287) Soak your toes in steamy, mineral waters, then cool them off in the open-air pool – bliss!
- Kabak (p363) The word's starting to get out about this off-the-beaten-path beach community. Get there fast.
- Sultaniye Hot Springs and Mud Baths (p351) They'd pay a packet for this in Manhattan, a nose-to-tail mineral mud-pack.

In *From the Holy Mountain*, William Dalrymple retraces the journey of 6th-century monk John Moschos who wandered the reaches of eastern Byzantium from Mt Athos, Greece, through Istanbul, Anatolia and the Middle East to Egypt. This is a gripping meditation on the declining Christian communities, and amusing 'ta boot'. İstanbul-based poet John Ash provides a must-read for anyone interested in the Byzantine monuments scattered around İstanbul, Cappadocia and the rest of Turkey in *A Byzantine Journey*.

Balthasar's Odyssey, by Amin Maalouf, is a gripping tale of a Levantine merchant who travels through 17th-century Constantinople in search of the 'hundredth name' of God.

The lives of the disappearing Yörük, once one of Anatolia's largest nomadic tribes, have long captured the imagination of writers. Irfan Orga's superbly evocative *The Caravan Moves On: Three Weeks Among Turkish Nomads*, first published in 1958, details the author's journey and insights into the lives and lore of the nomads in the 1950s. An excellent follow-up read is *Bolkar: Travels with a Donkey in the Taurus Mountains*, by Dux Schneider, a bitter-sweet insight into the lives of the Yörük and Tatars today.

The 8.55 to Baghdad: From London to Iraq on the Trail of Agatha Christie, by Andrew Eames, retraces the crime queen's travels on the *Orient Express* with a chapter dedicated to the author's Turkey adventures.

INTERNET RESOURCES

ExpatinTurkey.com (www.expatinturkey.com) Expats' travel advice including jobs, working visas and eating, drinking and sleeping recommendations. The occasional cattiness makes for great reading.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Check out the Thorn Tree bulletin board to find out the latest travellers' tips for travelling the country, especially out east.

My Merhaba (www.merhaba.com) Aimed at expats with lots of general information of use to visitors too (such as what's on in İstanbul and restaurant reviews).

SkyLife magazine (www.thy.com/en-US/skylife) Click through to the archive of the excellent Turkish Airlines in-flight magazine, *SkyLife*, with articles on all sorts of aspects of life in Turkey.

Tourism Turkey (www.tourismturkey.org) Government website with grab-bag of articles and information.

Turkey Travel Planner (www.turkeytravelplanner.com) An ever-growing site with up-to-the-minute information on all aspects of travel in Turkey.

Turkish Daily News (www.turkishdailynews.com.tr) All the latest local news.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

FROM THE GOLDEN HORN TO THE SACRED WAY One Week / İstanbul to Ephesus

Hold tight for a whiz through the triumphs, glories and tragedies of empires. Begin in İstanbul, once the glittering heart of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. Start with the **Topkapı Palace** (p109), one-time home of Ottoman sultans, obelisk-hop the ancient **Hippodrome** (p106), and steam away any aches with a massage at **Çemberlitaş Hamamı** (p133). Late evening, do as the locals do and head to İstiklal Caddesi, heart of modern Turkey, and a helluva place for people-watching. The buzzing *meyhanes* (taverns) behind **Çiçek Pasajı** (p146) are a must. If you needed an excuse to dip into a glass or three of rakı (aniseed-flavoured grape brandy), you'll find plenty of peer pressure here. On day two start with the **Blue Mosque** (p106), then the magnificent **Aya Sofya** (p104). Afterwards head underground at the atmospheric **Basilica Cistern** (p108) and take a charged credit card and plenty of stamina to the labyrinthine **Grand Bazaar** (p115). Weather permitting, on day three you could take a cruise along the **Bosphorus** (p128), and peer over to the Black Sea after you've hiked off your delish fish lunch at **Anadolu Kavağı** (p131).

Come day four rise early and head down to Çanakkale, so you can be touring the **Gallipoli battlefields** (p183) by early afternoon. The devastation witnessed here during WWI needs no introduction. Next morning head to famous **Troy** (p203), worth a visit even without Brad Pitt. You'll need another early start to bus down to Selçuk, the base for visiting the ruins of **Ephesus** (p251), the best preserved classical city in the eastern Mediterranean.



Tick off İstanbul's A-list sights, the Gallipoli battlefields, and the ruins of Troy and Ephesus in one action-packed week, a journey of 1450km.

COAST & CAPPADOCIA**Three Weeks / Istanbul to Cappadocia**

For the first week, follow the first itinerary; see p23. Then, from your base at Selçuk, day-trip to the travertines and ruins of Hierapolis at **Pamukkale** (p324). The brilliant white terraces can be dizzying in the midday sun, but a dip in Hierapolis Termaal's swimming pool will restore your cool.

Heading back to the coast, ignore the overblown resorts of Bodrum and Marmaris and head straight for **Fethiye** (p353) and beautiful **Ölüdeniz** (p359). This is the spot to take to the air on a paraglide or lay low on a beach towel. You're now within kicking distance of the famous **Lycian Way** (p78); hike for a day through superb countryside to overnight in heavenly **Faralya** (p362), and further inroads into the Lycian Way will definitely head up your 'next time' list. Back on the coast, pit stop at laid-back **Kaş** (p371), its pretty harbourside square alive nightly with the hum of friendly folk enjoying the breeze, views, boutique browsing and a beer or two. You may want a few days more unwinding at the famous beach tree house complexes at **Olympos** (p379) close by.

Antalya's old **Kaleiçi quarter** (p384) is well worth a wander against the backdrop of that jaw-dropping mountain range. Then it's time to fold your bikini into a matchbox and head inland. Catch an overnight bus north to claim your cave in **Göreme** (p499). This low-key travellers' hang-out is the best place to base yourself in **Cappadocia** (p492), a surreal moonscape with phallic tuff cones, no less. For most the cones don't overshadow the more orthodox sights including the superb rock-cut frescoed churches of **Göreme Open-Air Museum** (p499) and the spooky underground cities at **Derinkuyu** (p528) and **Kaymaklı** (p528).

This is one trip you won't forget a hurry. Pack your towel, pumps, pedometer – you're seeing the sights of Old Istanbul, the highlights of the Aegean and the Mediterranean coasts and finishing off in kooky Cappadocia – a whopping 3100km of travel.

**ROADS LESS TRAVELLED****EASTERN DELIGHTS****Three to Four Weeks / Trabzon to Nemrut Dağı**

Buzzing **Trabzon** (p548) has a handful of sights worth a quick look-see, though most people head straight to nearby **Sumela monastery** (p554), peering down on a forested valley from its precarious-looking rockface. The route from here to Kars is spectacular. First travel from **Trabzon to Erzurum** (p555) and then continue via **Yusufeli** (p571). The route is best done by car or taxi as you'd miss the breathtaking views and ruined churches of medieval Georgia whizzing past in a bus. The onward drive between Yusufeli, Artvin and Kars is one of Turkey's most scenic (see p576), with roadways passing over dramatic mountain ranges, through gorges frothing with white water and past crumbling castles. **Kars** (p577) is beguiling, but its star attraction is **Ani** (p581), close by, once a thriving Armenian capital, but now a field strewn with magnificent ruins overlooked by the border guards of modern Armenia.

Head south to the raffish frontier town of **Doğubayazıt** (p586) and the outstanding **İshak Paşa Palace** (p586).

Further south is **Van** (p637), its proud drawcards the nearby spectacular **Hoşap Castle** (p643) and the 10th-century **Akdamar church** (p636), the sole inhabitant of a teeny island in Lake Van. The church's superbly preserved carvings just pip the wow factor on this church's magnificent setting.

Heading west, don't miss **Hasankeyf** (p632), with its soaring rock-cut castle by the ancient Tigris River, and **Mardin** (p626), a gorgeous, honey-coloured town overlooking the roasting plains of Mesopotamia. From Mardin head north to **Diyarbakır** (p621), the exotic heartland of Kurdish culture, its ancient sights ringed by even older city walls. Finally, see what all the fuss is about at **Nemrut Dağı** (p610), the gigantic stone heads the only image of eastern Turkey that does make it into brochures.



Escape the crowds and hightail it to the Turkey rarely seen in glossy tourist brochures, the other Turkey: the wild, magnificent east. After it casts its spell you'll find western Turkey downright tame. Some 2740km, and never a dull moment.

THE CARAVAN TRAIL

Two Weeks / Kuşadası to Diyarbakır

Caravanserais (see p57), dotting the routes of ancient trade routes, were once the ancient equivalent of the roadhouse. Today they're renovated as historical sights and hotels, or are sadly crumbling away. All evoke the nights of snorting animals tethered in the courtyard, with the rooms above abuzz with the snores of travellers and merchants.

Spending a night at overblown Kuşadası is worth it for **Club Caravanserai** (p261), the pleasant rooms playing second fiddle to the 'Turkish Nights' show in the courtyard. Plant your tongue in your cheek and enjoy. Head east to famous Pamukkale, but instead of the travertines admire the beautiful carved gateway of the **Ak Han** (p329) and the nearby Kaklık Cave, the underground 'Pamukkale' that tourists rarely see. Head north to **Otel Dülgeroğlu** (p311) in Uşak, now a mighty fine hotel. Continue north to Bursa's **Koza Han** (p296); visit in June or September to join the heaving throng engaging in the age-old haggle of the silk trade.

From Bursa, head east to the **Cinci Han** (p457), as good excuse as any to visit the World Heritage-listed Ottoman town of Safranbolu. From here head south to Cappadocia, a region with more caravanserais than fleas on a camel. Highlights include **Ağzikara Hanı** (p534), the superb **Sultanhanı** (p491), Turkey's largest caravanserai, and **Sultan Han** (p499), runner up to that title. **Sarıhan** (p515) and **Saruhan** (p527) both offer something slightly different. The first doubles as a set for whirling dervish *sema* and the latter is home to a fine eatery. From Cappadocia head east to pit stop at **Battalgazi** (p619) near Malatya. End your caravan journey in style at the atmospheric **Otel Büyük Kervansaray** (p625) in beguiling Diyarbakır, Kurdish heartland and a soulful city steeped in history.

No camels and very little grunt is required on this 1800km adventure into Turkey's lesser-known but magnificent hinterland. From tourist-trashed Kuşadası to sublimely exotic Diyarbakır, saddle up and hit the hans.



TAILORED TRIPS

NINE WONDERS OF TURKEY

Three Weeks to Tick Off Turkey's A-List

Unesco has applied World Heritage status to nine of Turkey's sights.

Start by soaking up the treasures of **Old İstanbul** (p104), then head to **Troy** (p203) with city layered upon city for the last 5000 years. **Pamukkale** (p324) boasts the famous dazzling white travertines and the ruins of Hierapolis, a city once known for the curative powers of its warm calcium-rich waters.

On the southern coast, **Xanthos** (p366) was once the glittering Lycian capital city, with **Letoön** (p365), close by, its religious sanctuary. Inland, hidden in the fairytale landscape of Cappadocia, **Göreme Open-Air Museum** (p499) is a cluster of rock-hewn Byzantine churches and monasteries. The going gets more rugged when you head to **Nemrut Dağı** (p610) and the proud 'thrones of the gods', which have been standing sentinel for over two millennia. From there head northward to the mosque-madrese complex of **Divriği** (p481), the least-visited of Turkey's World Heritage sites yet one of the most rewarding for its out-of-the-way location and the jaw-dropping ornamentation.

The ancient Hittites' magnificent capital was **Hattuşa** (p464) – the gorgeous rural location itself is as enthralling as the remains of the sprawling city. Head back towards İstanbul via the pristine Ottoman townscape of **Safranbolu** (p455), where you can soak up the atmosphere overnight in a meticulously maintained Ottomansion.



TURKEY FOR TASTEBUDS

Time Enough to Ease a Belt Hole or Three

Turks are deservedly proud of their scrumptious cuisine, and different parts of the country are known – and loved – for their specialities.

People may avoid you for days after, but **Tokat kebab** (see p476) – a lamb-basted eggplant kebab boasting a full fist of garlic – is worth every bite. Greasy, but worth it is **İskender kebab** – best sampled in eateries in **Bursa** (p299). The squid caught off the north Aegean coast is the finest in the nation; get it cooked fresh at **Sığacık** (p241) and you'll be boasting for years. If you overindulge, hope that the *mesir macunu* (power gum; p235) sold in nearby Manisa can cure you. Time your visit for the spring equinox to see the townsfolk concocting this tooth-binding elixir.

There ain't nought more experienced at making **lokum (Turkish delight)** than the folk at Ali Muhaddin Hacı Bekir (p153) in İstanbul, ancestors of the shop's namesake who invented the stuff. **Afyon** (p311) is famous for its immense crop of poppies and the rich clotted *kaymak* cream, reputedly so good because the cows graze on the poppies. Gaziantep boasts a trifecta: **fıstıks (pistachios)**, **baklava** and **künefe**. Blending the first two together for an addictive finger-licking treat is İmam Çağdaş (p597). **Kahramanmaraş** (p591) is the *dondurma* (ice cream) capital of Turkey. Served in fist-sized blocks, it's best tackled with a knife and fork.



WE DARE YOU

Travel in Turkey can be 100% pure adventure or soft and gooey like a piece of Turkish delight. You could leave your bathers on the coast and explore the regions and outdoor activities of Turkey unknown even to most Turks; maybe even criss-cross borders to pass a day or two with Turkey's exotic neighbours. We're not encouraging you to do silly things; do your own research and make sure you check out the latest situation (see p655) before you launch out on any adventure.

For those keen to explore places well off the beaten trail, western Anatolia's Phrygian Valley (p304) offers spectacular scenery and Phrygian ruins. And now that the troubles in the southeast are seemingly on the mend, former no-go zones in the east are opening up to visitors (see p644). The **upper valley of**

the Euphrates, between Elazığ and Erzincan (p620), is still uncharted territory; as is the stupendous scenery of the wild far southeast surrounding isolated **Bahçesaray (p643)**, **Hakkari (p644)**, and **Şırnak (p633)**. Get there before the tourists do.

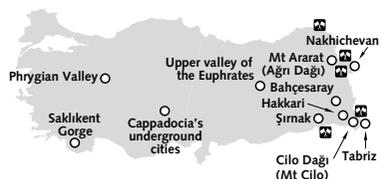
The claustrophobic but compelling underground cities (p528) of Cappadocia were once a haven from invading armies. Today you're lucky enough to be able to play at being a troglodyte. Hire a guide, take a good torch and delve deep into **Özlüce (p528)**, **Güzelyurt (p532)** and **Özkonak (p515)**, underground cities well off the tourist trail.

Most tourists just ice their toes in the **Saklıkent Gorge (p364)**, but there's a full 18km to be explored by white-water rafting, canyoning and hiking. Mountaineers might want to tackle Mt

Ararat (p589), which has captivated the imaginations of travellers for centuries, and check out developments at **Cilo Dağı (Cilo Mountains; p644)**. Word is out that trekking trips will be starting here any day. See p77 for other trekking possibilities and p648 for other outdoor opportunities.

One of the authors of this book confesses to being a border-crossing junkie. For others out there Turkey has several gnarly border crossings: Georgia-Turkey, Azerbaijan-Turkey, Iran-Turkey and Iraq-Turkey. Spend a night in **Georgia (p585)** with a full-bodied red *wink*. Peep into **Azerbaijan's (p586)** isolated back pocket, Nakhichevan and spend a day in this intriguing oil- and gas-rich nation. Follow the classic hippy overland trail by dropping out in Iran. Enter from Doğubayazıt (p588), or maybe from the more intrepid Esendere-Seró border crossing (p645) and spend a day or two in magical Tabriz. You can even follow Tony Wheeler's footsteps into **northern Iraq (p631)** to see for yourself what's happening in this Kurdish heartland.

As Long As You've Got



Snapshot

True to the topsy-turvy nature of Turkish politics, Turkey's ardour for Europe has cooled somewhat in the last couple of years. Locals are less than impressed with the West over recent policies in the Middle East and are also grumbling that meeting the stringent EU conditions for accession compromises Turkey's autonomy. Given its youthful population base (compared with the EU's ageing population) and key geostrategic location, they argue that Europe needs Turkey more than Turkey needs Europe. 'Let them come to us.' Nevertheless the government pushes doggedly ahead with legislative overhauls and official accession talks, which started at last in October 2005.

The Cyprus issue continues to be a stumbling block. Turkey's refusal to 'abandon' Turkish Cypriots continues to drive a wedge between it and EU member states Greek and Cyprus, whose support it will need if Turkey's bid is to succeed. And the negative press received when Turkey's best-known author Orhan Pamuk was tried for 'insulting Turkishness' (p51) has put the spotlight on the government's declared commitment to freedom of expression. With no guarantee of acceptance into the EU anyway, it seems that Turkey may remain teetering at the edge of Europe for some time.

EU or not, exciting developments are taking place in the country. The government is overhauling the rail network, greatly improving the country's transport infrastructure. Istanbul's mighty cross-Bosphorus tunnel project will relieve road congestion in a city that is in danger of grinding to a halt (p159).

In other respects, too, the government of Prime Minister Erdoğan has much to be proud of. It has trodden a remarkably skilful path through Turkey's minefield of vested interests. The country's economic nemesis, runaway inflation, has been held in check (p46). And despite a few hiccups, including the currency fall of early 2006, employment growth is robust. Relations with traditional rival Greece have been improving, so that a collision of Turkish and Greek military aircraft in May 2006 caused barely a diplomatic ripple. Life for the Kurds of southeast Anatolia is improving at last. EU-pushed government concessions have fostered a growing optimism, and the security forces have largely eased their stranglehold over the Kurdish provinces. While sporadic bombings by a breakaway group of Kurdish rebels act as reminders that the Kurds' problems are far from resolved, most people are confident that Turkey will not fall to the depths it reached during Abdullah Öcalan's reign of terror (p48). There are even signs of a thaw in relations with Armenia.

Erdoğan's greatest test, however, is likely to come as he confronts Turkey's secular institutions, including the all-powerful military clique. All eyes will be turned to the up-and-coming presidential elections, as the role of the president is seen as the arch-defender of secularism in Turkey. If openly religious Erdoğan becomes president this will be a first for the republic. Everyone has an opinion on a president whose wife wears a headscarf (see p52).

FAST FACTS

Population: 70.4 million

Surface area: 779,452 sq km

Highest mountain: Mt Ararat 5137m

Longest river: Kızılırmak 1355km

'Biggest flag flown at greatest height'. Held by Turks

Istanbul's ranking among world's most expensive cities: 18th

Average annual salary: €3500

Life expectancy: men 68, women 73

Percentage of population supporting Turkey's application to join EU: 73% 2004, 43% 2006

The Authors



VERITY CAMPBELL **Introductory chapters, İstanbul, Directory, Transport**
Straight after high school Verity visited Turkey and ended up staying for 18 months, learning the language, teaching English and hitchhiking throughout the country. She crisscrossed Australia and Turkey for the next 15 years until she finally persuaded both husband and toddler they'd enjoy a year in İstanbul. Verity has worked for six years as an author for Lonely Planet in various countries, but no prizes for guessing where her heart lies. As well as coordinating and authoring on this book, Verity has authored the *Istanbul Encounter* guide, several chapters in *Turkey 8*, and the Turkey chapter for *Mediterranean Europe* and *Europe on a shoestring*.

Coordinating Author's Favourite Trip

The southeast is my all-time favourite region of Turkey. Diyarbakır (p621), the Kurdish heartland, is a magical city steeped in ancient history, with its recent turbulent history etched on every face. A visit here is transforming. I then head southeast to Mardin (p626) to explore its dusty laneways, frenzied bazaars, and superb architecture. From Mardin I pay homage to the ancient Tigris and ill-fated Hasankeyf (p632). I then scoot through the seemingly all-male towns of Batman and Bitlis to Van (p637). To me this city is the barometer of Turkey's modernisation. When I first visited in the early 1990s I was virtually the only woman on the street. The optimistic chit-chat of both sexes in the streets, cafés and bars today fuels this liberal metropolis.



FRANCES LINZEE GORDON **North Aegean, South Aegean, Western Mediterranean**
Frances' fervour for travel was first sparked by a school scholarship when she was aged 17. More recently, she completed an MA in African & Asian (Middle Eastern) Studies in London, of which Ottoman history formed a major part. Keen to test out her studies, she champed at the bit to travel around Turkey. The combination of history and hedonism, sophistication and simplicity, but above all the absolute charm, wit and welcome of the people saw her soon smitten, and she dreams only of returning.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the internet or phone, and they don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more – and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is. For more, see the authors section on www.lonelyplanet.com.



JEAN-BERNARD CARILLET **Northeastern Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia**
Jean-Bernard's love for Turkey was first sparked by a train ride from Paris that ended in İstanbul during his teenage years. Since this initiation, the lure of Turkey has never been tamed. For this edition, he was all too happy to travel the breadth and length of the most remote corners of eastern Anatolia, full of (good) surprises. As an incorrigible Frenchman and foodie, he also ate more *fıstıklı* baklava (pistachio baklava) and kebabs than he cares to remember. A full-time writer and photographer based in Paris, he has contributed to numerous Lonely Planet titles, including the previous edition of *Turkey*.



TOM PARKINSON **Thrace & Marmara, Western Anatolia, Central Anatolia, Black Sea & Kaçkar Mountains**
Tom's first experience of Turkish culture was living on a street full of kebab shops in Berlin, Germany, and it was only a matter of time before he graduated to the real thing. Having covered the standard western circuit for Mediterranean Europe, he returned to seek out the varied delights of Turkey, from wrestlers in Thrace and cave dwellings in central Anatolia to mountain rakı (aniseed brandy) in the Kaçkars, with quick incursions into Georgia and Bulgaria for good measure. Thanks to diligent research, Tom remains an unrivalled authority on the relative merits of döners worldwide.



DAN ELDRIDGE **Antalya region, Eastern Mediterranean**
Dan first visited Turkey in 2001, when he ferried across the Aegean Sea from Greece in search of odd jobs. After briefly working as a tour guide on a *gület* (traditional yacht) that sailed between Marmaris and Fethiye, Dan relocated to İstanbul, where he taught English and worked as an editor for a monthly backpackers' magazine. For this edition, Dan explored Antalya and the length of Turkey's eastern Mediterranean, a region blessed with gorgeous ruined cities and sprawling beaches. A native of California, Dan works as a full-time freelance journalist. He lives in Philadelphia.



VIRGINIA MAXWELL **Cappadocia**
After working for many years as a publishing manager at Lonely Planet's Melbourne headquarters, Virginia decided that she'd be happier writing guidebooks rather than commissioning them. Since making this decision she's authored Lonely Planet's *Istanbul* city guide and covered Egypt, Spain, Lebanon, Syria and the United Arab Emirates for other titles. She has made multiple trips to Turkey with partner Peter and young son Max, and nominates İstanbul and Cappadocia as her favourite parts of the country.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Kate Clow Kate has lived in Turkey since 1989, working first in Istanbul and Ankara. After moving to Antalya, she researched Turkey's first long-distance walking route – the Lycian Way – and, with the help of Garanti Bank, opened the route in 1999. Since then she has implemented a second route – the St Paul Trail. Kate also leads trekking groups, flower and birding groups and cultural tours in the Turkish Lake District, Pontic Alps and Van regions. Kate, with her partner, Terry Richardson, has worked as a photographer and contributor to various magazines and books on Turkey, as well as international trekking guides. Kate wrote the Trekking chapter.

Will Gourlay A serial visitor to Turkey, Will first arrived in Istanbul over 15 years ago intending to sit on a Turkish beach. However, he couldn't resist the lure of Anatolia and ended up climbing Nemrut Dağı and traipsing from the Black Sea to the Syrian border. Will subsequently taught in Izmir for a year, learning of the delights of Iskender kebab and the perils of raki. When not obsessing on all things Turkish/Turkic/Ottoman-related he works as a commissioning editor in Lonely Planet's London office. Will wrote the History chapter and contributed some sidebars to the Culture chapter.

Dr Caroline Evans The Health chapter is adapted from text prepared by Dr Caroline Evans.