



THE ROUGH GUIDE to Turkey

EXPERT ADVICE • FULL COVERAGE • EASY TO USE



INSIDE THIS BOOK

INTRODUCTION What to see, what not to miss, itineraries and more – everything you need to get started

BASICS Pre-departure tips and practical information

THE GUIDE Comprehensive, in-depth guide to the entire country, with area highlights and full-colour maps throughout

CONTEXTS History, the peoples of Turkey, cinema and music, plus recommended books and a handy language section

We've flagged up our favourite places – a perfectly sited hotel, an atmospheric café, a special restaurant – throughout the guide with the ★ symbol



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This ninth edition published June 2016



THE ROUGH GUIDE TO

Turkey

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Introduction to **Turkey**

A mesmerizing mix of the exotic and the familiar, Turkey is much more than its clichéd image of a “bridge between East and West”. Invaded and settled from every direction since the start of recorded history, it combines influences from the Middle East and the Mediterranean, the Balkans and Central Asia. Mosques coexist with churches, Roman theatres and temples crumble near ancient Hittite cities, and dervish ceremonies and gypsy festivals are as much a part of the social landscape as classical music concerts or football matches.

The friendliness of the **Turkish people** makes visiting a pleasure; indeed, you risk causing offence by declining invitations, and find yourself making friends through the simplest of transactions. At the big resorts and tourist spots, of course, this can merely be an excuse to sell you something, but elsewhere, despite a history in which outsiders have so often brought trouble, the warmth and generosity are genuine.

Politically, modern Turkey was a grand experiment, largely the creation of one man – **Kemal Atatürk**. With superhuman energy, he salvaged the Turkish state from the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire and defined it as a modern, secular nation. Despite three military coups between 1960 and 1980, Turkey has maintained a reasonably successful multi-party democracy for over sixty years, and has managed to blend secularism and global capitalism with Islam. Challenges remain, however, with signs that the conservative, Islam-orientated **AKP** (Justice and Development Party) government are seeking to consolidate their rule through the introduction of a strongly presidential system led by one of their own, former prime minister **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**. The meltdown of two countries bordering Turkey’s southeast, Syria and Iraq, is also a major cause for concern.

When the Ottoman Empire imploded in the early twentieth century, refugees streamed into Anatolia, including Muslim Slavs, Greeks, Albanians, Crimean Tatars, Daghestanlis, Abkhazians and Circassians. There they joined an already mixed population that included

FACT FILE

- Turkey covers a vast 814,578 sq km (97 percent in Asia, 3 percent in Europe). Four seas lap its 8333-km **coastline**: the Mediterranean, the Aegean, the Marmara and the Black Sea. Numerous **peaks** exceed 3000m, the highest being Ararat (Ağrı Dağı; 5165m). Turkey's three longest **rivers** – the Kızılırmak, Yeşilirmak and Sakarya – flow into the Black Sea, while its largest lake is Lake Van (3713 sq km).
- The population of 77 million is 99 percent **Muslim** (Sunni or Alevi), with dwindling **minorities** of the Armenian Apostolic or Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and Jewish faiths. Besides standard Turkish, two dialects of Kurdish are widely spoken; other **languages** include Arabic, Laz, Circassian, Albanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Romany and Greek. Well over half the inhabitants live in cities; the four largest are İstanbul, Ankara (the capital), İzmir and Adana.
- Turkey's **economy**, rated seventeenth in the world in 2014, has undergone sustained growth in recent years. Inflation has fallen to single digits, inward investment has rocketed, major infrastructure projects have been realized at an astonishing rate, and the Turkish lira has generally held its own with the major currencies.
- Since 1922 Turkey has been a **republic**. The single-chamber Grand National Assembly (Büyük Meclis) in Ankara has 550 seats, and elects the president.

a very sizeable minority of Kurds. Thanks to recent arrivals from former Soviet or Eastern Bloc territories, that diversity endures. Another surprise may be Turkey's sheer **youthfulness**: more than half the population is under thirty, with legions of young people working in coastal resorts, and shoals of schoolkids surging through the city streets.

A huge part of Turkey's appeal lies in its **archeological sites**, a legacy of the bewildering succession of states – Hittite, Urartian, Phrygian, Greek, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Armeno-Georgian – that held sway here before the twelfth century. From grand Classical cities to hilltop fortresses and remote churches, some still produce exciting new finds today. In addition, Turkey holds a vast number of graceful **Islamic monuments**, as well as intriguing **city bazaars**, still hanging on amid the chain stores and shopping malls. Sadly, ugly modern architecture spoils most coastal resorts, where it's often hard to find a beach that matches the tourist-board hype. **Inland Turkey**, with its Asiatic expanses of mountains, steppes, lakes, and even cloud-forests, may leave a more vivid memory, especially when accented by crumbling *kervansaray* (desert inns), mosques and castles.

Where to go

Western Turkey is the most economically developed, and most visited, part of the country. It would take weeks even to scratch the surface of the old imperial capital, **İstanbul**, straddling the straits linking the Black and Marmara seas, and still Turkey's cultural and commercial hub. Flanking it on opposite sides of the Sea of Marmara, the two prior seats of the Ottoman Empire, **Bursa** and **Edirne**, abound in monumental attractions and regal atmosphere. Beyond the Dardanelles and its World War I battlefields lie Turkey's two **Aegean islands**, Gökçeada and Bozcaada, popular for their excellent beaches, lingering Greek-ethnic identity and (except in midsummer) tranquillity.



Further south, the olive-swathed landscapes around Bergama and Ayvalık epitomize the Classical character of the **North Aegean**. Ancient Sardis, and the old Ottoman princely training ground of Manisa, also make a fine pair, although İzmir serves merely as a functional introduction to the **central and southern Aegean**. Celebrated Ephesus tends to overshadow the equally deserving ancient Ionian sites of Priene and Didyma, or the intriguing ruins of Aphrodisias and Labranda – and don't overlook evocative hill towns such as the lovely Şirince. Also inland are tranquil, islet-dotted Bafa Gölü and the compelling geological oddity of Pamukkale, where travertine formations abut Roman Hierapolis. While the coast itself is heavily developed, its star resorts – *Daçça* is the quietest, Bodrum the most characterful – make comfortable bases.

Beyond the huge natural harbour at Marmaris, the Aegean gradually becomes the Mediterranean. Coastal cruises make popular pastimes in brazen Marmaris or more manageable Fethiye, the principal town of the **Turquoise Coast**, while fine beaches stretch at Dalyan and Patara, near eerie ancient Lycian tombs. Further east, Kaş and Kalkan are busy resorts, good for resting up between explorations of the mountainous hinterland. Beyond relatively untouched Çıralı beach, at ancient Olympos, fast-growing Antalya sprawls at the start of the **Mediterranean coast** proper. This is graced by extensive sands and archeological sites – most notably Termessos, Perge, Side and Aspendos – though its western parts get swamped in season. Beyond castle-topped Alanya, however, tourist numbers diminish; points of interest between Silifke and Adana include Roman Uzuncaburç and the romantic offshore fortress at Kızkalesi. Further east, Arab-influenced Antakya is the heart of the **Hatay**, culturally part of Syria.

Inland in **South Central Anatolia**, the rock-hewn churches, subterranean cities and tuff-pinnacle landscapes of **Cappadocia** await. The dry, salubrious climate, excellent wine, artistic and architectural treasures, plus horseriding or hot-air ballooning could occupy you for ten days, including a stop in Kayseri on the way north. You might also



TURKEY'S TOP FIVE BEACHES

With over 8000km of coastline, it's hardly surprising that Turkey has some excellent **beaches**. Below is a round up of some of the very best:

Patara Stretching for 15km along the beautiful Lycian coastline, Patara Beach is one of the longest and finest beaches in the entire Mediterranean. It's home to the atmospheric, dune-set ruins of ancient Patara, and a favoured nesting site of endangered turtles (see p.322).

İztuzu Best reached by a delightful thirty-minute boat ride downriver from the charming riverside resort of Dalyan, the soft golden sands of İztuzu Beach are as popular with visitors as they are with nesting loggerhead turtles (see p.310).

Çıralı This pebble-and-course-sand beach is book-ended by dramatic limestone spurs, backed by the snowcapped hulk of Mount Olympos and fronted by the Gulf of Antalya. A protected turtle nesting site, Çıralı is home to the overgrown ruins of ancient Olympos and the eternal flames of the Chimaera (see p.345).

Phaselis The ancient site of Phaselis sits grandly among pines right by the shore. The southern beach here shelves gently into the turquoise waters, while the small western beach fronts onto a shallow, lake-like lagoon (see p.348).

İskele Few foreign visitors make it out to low-key İskele, the beach-front offspring of nearby Anamur. Walk east along the beach to the fairy-tale medieval castle of Mamure, or west to the remote beachside ruins of ancient Anemurium (see p.380).



pause at the historic lakefront towns of Eğirdir or Beyşehir, or in Konya, renowned for its Selçuk architecture and associations with the Mevlevî dervishes.

Ankara, Turkey's capital, is a planned city whose contrived Western feel indicates the priorities of the Turkish Republic; it also features the outstanding Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. Highlights of surrounding **North Central Anatolia** include the bizarre temple of Aezani, near Kütahya; the Ottoman museum-town of Safranbolu; exquisitely decorated early Turkish monuments in Divriği; and remarkable Hittite sites at Hattuşaş and Alacahöyük. As you travel north, pause in the Yeşilirmak valley towns of Sivas, Tokat and Amasya. The lush shoreline of the Black Sea beyond holds little more than a chain of Byzantine-Genoese castles; the oldest, most interesting towns are Sinop, Anatolia's northernmost point, and Amasra. Fabled Trabzon, east of Sinop and once the seat of a Byzantine sub-empire, is now convenient for Aya Sofya and Sumela monasteries.

The Ankara–Sivas route positions you to head along the Euphrates River into the “back half” of Turkey. First stop in **northeastern Anatolia** is likely to be Erzurum, Turkey's highest and bleakest major city, a base for visits to the temperate,

WHO ARE THE TURKS?

Today's Turks are descended from nomadic pastoralist Turkic tribal groups that originated in Siberia, China and Central Asia, went on to conquer the Anatolian landmass, and have subsequently intermarried on a large scale with the region's already extremely heterogeneous population. Although historical records can trace them as a readily identifiable people as far back as the sixth century BC, only during the sixth century AD were they first recorded (by the Chinese) as "Tu-keh" or, to the west, **Turks**.

From around 1000 AD onwards, the Turks gradually migrated southwards and westwards. By the time they reached Anatolia, which would eventually become the heartland of the mighty Ottoman Turkish Empire, most had converted to **Islam**. Turks still maintain ethnic, linguistic and cultural links with Turkic peoples in Central Asia, the Caucasus, northwest Iran, northern Iraq, southern Russia, and Xinjiang in western China.

church-studded valleys of southern medieval Georgia, or treks in the Kaçkar Mountains. Kars is mainly visited for the sake of nearby Ani, the ruined medieval Armenian capital.

The **Euphrates and Tigris basin** have a real Middle Eastern flavour. Booming Gaziantep offers world-class Roman mosaics, an atmospheric old quarter and Turkey's spiciest cuisine. Further east, biblical Urfa is distinguished by its colourful bazaar and sacred pool, while cosmopolitan Mardin overlooks the vast Mesopotamian Plain. The major attraction, however, is a dawn or sunset trip to Nemrut Dağı's colossal ancient statues. Between Mardin and Nemrut Dağı, teeming, ethnically Kurdish Diyarbakır nestles inside medieval basalt walls. The terrain becomes increasingly mountainous towards the Iranian frontier, an area dominated by the unearthly blue, alkaline expanse of Lake Van. Urartian, Selçuk and Armenian monuments abound within sight of the water, in particular the exquisite, restored Armenian church on Akdamar islet. The east-shore city of Van is notable for its massive camel-shaped rock punctured with ancient tombs. Beyond Van looms the fairy-tale Kurdish castle of Hoşap, while just outside Doğubeyazıt, another isolated folly, the İshak Paşa Sarayı, stands in the shadow of Mount Ararat at the very end of Turkey.

A REAL TURKISH DELIGHT: YOGHURT

Only two genuinely Turkish words (as opposed to those loaned from Arabic or Farsi) have found their way into the English language. One is kiosk, from the Turkish *köşk*, which refers properly to an ornate wood-built mansion and informally to a raised seating area. The other is **yoghurt**, from the Turkish *yoğurt* (pronounced yo-urt). Given their origins as nomadic pastoralists in the steppes bounded by the Altai mountains, Lake Baikal and the Gobi desert, it's hardly surprising that yoghurt, relatively easily produced from the Turks' vast, mobile herds of sheep and goats, became a staple part of their diet.

Today yoghurt remains a prominent feature of Turkish meals, though it's as likely to be made from cow's milk as from that produced by sheep or goats. Although sweetened fruit concoctions have crept onto supermarket shelves in recent years, the vast majority of yoghurt is still purchased in its basic, pure, white and simple form. It forms the "sauce" for many of Turkey's most tempting *meze* (appetizers), is used in soups, slathered over kebabs and *manti* (Turkish ravioli) as well as, when mixed with water and salt, drunk as *ayran*.



When to go

Among coastal areas, Istanbul and the Sea of Marmara shores have a relatively damp, Balkan climate, with muggy summers and cool, rainy (though seldom snowy) winters. These areas get crowded between late June and early September. The popular Aegean and Mediterranean coasts can be uncomfortably hot during July and August, especially between İzmir and Antakya; in spring or autumn, the weather here is gentler and the crowds thinner, while late October and early November see the idyllic *pastırma yazı* or “Indian summer”. Even during winter, the Turquoise and Mediterranean coasts are – except for rainy periods in January and February – still fairly pleasant. The Black Sea is an anomaly, with exceptionally mild winters for so far north, and rain likely during the nine coolest months, lingering as mist and subtropical humidity during summer.

Cut off from the coast by mountains, Central Anatolia is mostly semi-arid steppe, with a bracing climate – warm but not unpleasant in summer, cool and fairly dry in winter, from late November to late March. Cappadocia makes a colourful, quiet treat during spring and autumn – or even December, when its rock formations are dusted with snow. As you travel east, into northeast Anatolia and around Lake Van, the altitude increases and conditions become deeply snowy between October and April, making late spring and summer by far the best time to visit. In the lower Euphrates and Tigris basin, a pronounced Middle Eastern influence exerts itself, with winters no worse than in Central Anatolia but torrid summers, without the compensation of a nearby beach.

CLIMATE

Average midday temperatures in °C & °F and monthly rainfall in mm

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ISTANBUL												
Temp (°C)/(°F)	6/43	6/43	7/45	12/54	17/63	21/70	24/75	24/75	20/68	16/61	12/54	8/47
Rainfall in mm	57.6	69.5	61.8	48.5	39.6	24.6	31	37	43.7	100.1	85.7	102
ANTALYA												
Temp (°C)/(°F)	11/52	12/54	13/56	17/63	21/70	23/77	29/84	29/84	25/77	21/70	16/61	12/54
Rainfall in mm	178	110.4	111.6	75.7	33	3	1	1	2	89.3	174.9	277.5
ANKARA												
Temp (°C)/(°F)	1/34	1/34	5/41	12/54	17/63	20/68	24/75	24/75	19/66	13/56	8/47	3/37
Rainfall in mm	14	15	20.5	25.1	24.9	16.5	22.3	7.1	25.2	19.1	26.1	30.9
TRABZON												
Temp (°C)/(°F)	8/47	8/47	9/48	12/54	16/61	20/68	23/73	24/75	20/68	17/63	14/57	10/50
Rainfall in mm	76	65.7	62.7	60.4	65	44.7	45.6	60.7	111.1	153.2	108.1	82.6
DIYARBAKIR												
Temp (°C)/(°F)	2/35	4/39	9/48	14/57	20/68	26/79	31/88	31/88	25/77	18/65	10/50	5/41
Rainfall in mm	57.3	72.5	62.4	52.4	42.6	20.2	1	5.4	2	48.5	55.4	67.4

Author picks

Our authors have traversed every corner of Turkey, from the bazaars of Istanbul to the resorts of the Turquoise Coast and the summit of Mount Nemrut. Here are some of their favourite experiences:

A big night out, Istanbul-style The Beyoğlu quarter (see p.104) of Turkey's leading city is a party animal's dream on a Friday and Saturday night. Warm up with a multi-course, raki-infused spread at a lively *meyhane* (see p.126) before heading off to a pulsating club (see p.128).

Birthplace of the Ottoman dynasty Bursa, recently declared a World Heritage Site and an easy target from Istanbul via fast ferry across the Sea of Marmara, is packed with intriguing early Ottoman monuments (see p.167).

Çiğ köfte Most forms of Turkish sustenance are familiar to Western travellers, but this little lunchtime pick-me-up may be new to you: a *dürüm* wrap filled with spicy paste and vegetables, all given a little lemon zing. It's also super-cheap at around ₺5 (see p.252).

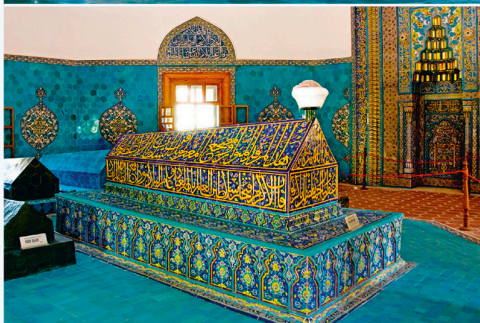
Get wet Make the most of Turkey's Aegean and Mediterranean coast by scuba diving off Kalkan or Kaş (see p.324 & p.328), windsurfing from hip Alaçatı (see p.235) or chilled Gümüşlük (see p.268), or kayaking around the Lycian shore (see p.324).

Turkey's Wild West Cappadocia's dusty plains, wildflower-covered slopes and weathered tuff chimneys provide an adventurous backdrop for a horseriding trek (see p.438).

Taking tea in Sivas Well off the tourist trail, this charming little city is home to a couple of enchanting thirteenth-century Selçuk buildings whose table-filled courtyards are perhaps Turkey's most atmospheric places to take tea (see p.502).

Ride a cable car Several new *teleferiks* have been built on strategic mountaintops, offering Black Sea panoramas at Ordu (see p.518) and Samsun (see p.510); taking up skiers and hikers at Uludağ (see p.179); and whisking sightseers up to Pergamon's acropolis at Bergama (see p.212).

Our author recommendations don't end here. We've flagged up our favourite places – a perfectly sited hotel, an atmospheric café, a special restaurant – throughout the guide, highlighted with the ★ symbol.



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things not to miss

It's not possible to see everything Turkey has to offer in one trip – and we don't suggest you try. What follows is a selective and subjective taste of the country's highlights: outstanding buildings and historic sites, natural wonders and exciting activities. All highlights are colour-coded by chapter and have a page reference to take you straight into the guide, where you can find out more.





1 HOT-AIR BALLOONING OVER CAPPADOCIA

Page 439

A lighter-than-air float gives an unrivalled perspective on the “fairy chimneys” and other features of the landscape.

2 İSHAK PAŞA SARAYI

Page 640

Strategically set astride the Silk Route, this architecturally eclectic seventeenth-century palace is one of eastern Turkey's most emblematic sites.

3 MONASTERY OF SUMELA

Page 528

Dramatically built into the side of the Pontic mountains, this Byzantine monastery is adorned with beautiful frescoes.

4 WHIRLING DERVISHES

Page 424

Members of a sect founded by the Konya-based Sufi mystic Celaleddin Rumi conduct “turning” ceremonies to effect union with God.



5 ANCIENT EPHEBUS

Page 239

This ancient city, addressed by Saint Paul in one of his epistles, is the best preserved of its kind in the eastern Mediterranean.

6 LAKE VAN

Page 620

The cobalt-blue expanse of Turkey's largest lake is at its most scenic in late spring or early summer.

7 LYCIAN WAY

Page 303

This well-marked path, suited to all abilities, follows some of the most scenic portions of the Turquoise Coast.

8 NEMRUT DAĞI

Page 594

Extraordinary mountaintop temple-tomb complex that's the outlandish legacy of an obscure, ancient kingdom.

9 BYZANTINE FRESCOS, CAPPADOCIA

Page 434

Cappadocia's many rock-hewn churches contain superb early Christian frescoes.

10 SHOPPING IN A BAZAAR

Page 89

You may not get a bargain, but you can't beat the banter, especially at Istanbul's Grand Bazaar.





7



8



9



10





11 MUSEUM OF ANATOLIAN CIVILIZATIONS, ANKARA

Page 471

Home to finds of native cultures from the Stone Age onwards, this superb museum is the capital's one must-see attraction.

12 ANI RUINS

Page 566

Medieval Armenian capital in a superb setting at the Turkish border, scattered with fine churches.

13 ROMAN THEATRE AT ASPENDOS

Page 368

Anatolia's largest and best-preserved Classical theatre hosts an opera and ballet festival in summer.

14 MARDİN

Page 607

Medieval houses, historic mosques and churches, and boutique hotels mix in this hilltop eyrie, high above the Mesopotamian plain.

15 HAGHIA SOPHIA, ISTANBUL

Page 72

The seemingly unsupported dome of Haghia Sophia is one of the architectural marvels of the world.

16 HITTITE CAPITAL OF HATTUŞA

Page 490

The ancient capital of the Hittites still impresses, with its extensive perimeter walls.





17 SELİMİYE CAMİİ, EDİRNE

Page 152

This sixteenth-century mosque is the masterpiece of the greatest Ottoman architect, Mimar Sinan.

18 KAÇKAR DAĞLARI

Page 554

Lying just inland from the Black Sea, this glacially sculpted granite mountain range, spangled with dozens of lakes, is Turkey's premier trekking venue.

19 ZEUGMA MOSAIC MUSEUM, GAZİANTEP

Page 578

A fabulous collection of mosaics from ancient Zeugma, a Hellenistic/Roman frontier city now under the waters of a reservoir on the nearby Euphrates.

20 VISITING A HAMAM

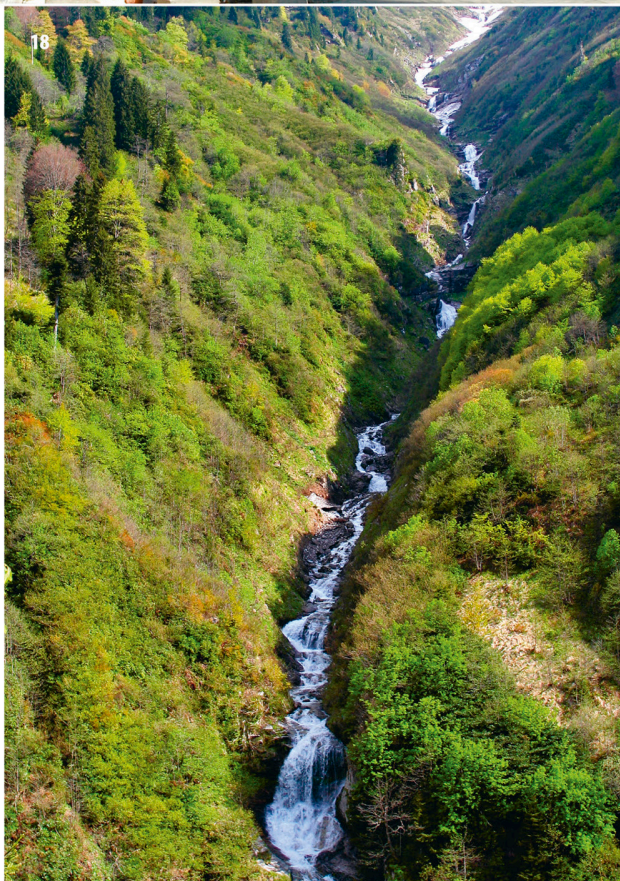
Page 46

One of the traditional sensual comforts of Turkey, hamams (Turkish baths) make a wonderfully relaxing (and cleansing) way to round off a day's sightseeing.

21 PATARA BEACH

Page 322

This unspoiled beach, one of the longest in the Mediterranean, is the perfect coda to a visit of the nearby, eponymous ancient city.





22



23



24



25



22 CHURCHES OF THE GEORGIAN VALLEYS

Page 544

The medieval churches northeast of Erzurum are among northeastern Anatolia's most striking monuments.

23 KARIYE MUSEUM, ISTANBUL

Page 99

The finest collection of Byzantine mosaics and frescoes in Turkey, adorning an attractive church near the city's land walls.

24 BAKLAVA

Page 40

The favourite dessert of the sweet-toothed Turks, rich, buttery *baklava*, in which thin layers of filo pastry are stuffed with pistachio or walnuts, is best enjoyed with a strong, black Turkish coffee.

25 GALLIPOLI CEMETERIES AND MEMORIALS

Page 195

Moving and unexpectedly beautiful legacy of one of the fiercest campaigns of World War I.

26 CRUISING THE SOUTHWEST COAST

Page 294

The deeply indented coastline between Bodrum and Finike is the venue for multi-day cruises on a *gulet*, or traditional wooden motor-schooner.

27 ACROPOLIS OF ANCIENT PERGAMON

Page 214

Pergamon was one of the chief Roman cities of Anatolia, and extensive ruins remain; shown here is the sanctuary of the restored Trajan temple.





Itineraries

By European standards, Turkey is a huge country, the size of the UK and France combined; it's impossible to see it all in a single trip. Lovers of the beach, mountains and Greco-Roman sites will be attracted to the beautiful southwest Mediterranean coast. With a little longer you can combine vibrant İstanbul with Cappadocia's fairy-tale landscape, while adventurers with more time to spare will be drawn to the spectacular "wild east".

THE TURQUOISE COAST

Allow a minimum of ten days to enjoy the best of Turkey's Mediterranean coast.

- 1 **Dalyan** This small resort, well served by Dalaman international airport, is unusually but beautifully situated on a reed-fringed river, opposite a superb ancient site and handy for the turtle-nesting beach at İztuzu. **See p.306**
- 2 **Patara** A superb coastal retreat, with low-key accommodation in the village of Gelemiş, a Roman site peeking from the dunes, and Turkey's longest beach. **See p.322**
- 3 **Kaş** Turkey's self-styled adventure capital, located at the feet of towering mountains, makes an excellent base to try scuba diving, sea kayaking, paragliding, canyoning or hiking the Lycian Way – or just chill. **See p.326**
- 4 **Çıralı** A relaxed resort hidden in citrus groves, backed by mountains and home to the romantic Roman ruins at adjoining Olympos, the eternal flames of the Chimaera, and a great sweep of shingle beach. **See p.345**
- 5 **Antalya** This bustling city is home to a superb archeological museum as well as the old walled quarter of Kaleiçi, which offers characterful accommodation, great nightlife and a tiny but pretty beach. **See p.354**

INTO ANATOLIA

With fifteen days at your disposal, you can get to know İstanbul; explore the wonders of Cappadocia; and visit the ancient treasures of the Mediterranean coast.

- 1 **İstanbul** Truly one of the world's great cities, straddling Europe and Asia, İstanbul is blessed with fascinating Byzantine churches, curvaceous Ottoman mosques and bustling bazaars. It also boasts a buzzing nightlife scene. **See p.66**
- 2 **Cappadocia** A unique landscape of weird rock pinnacles and deep valleys is enhanced by rock-cut, frescoed churches and entire underground cities. Two full days is an absolute minimum. **See p.428**
- 3 **Konya** Once home to the founder of the mystical "whirling dervish" order, the city captivates the spiritually inclined. **See p.420**
- 4 **Eğirdir** A welcome respite from a surfeit of sightseeing; most visitors to lakeside Eğirdir stay on the tiny island and simply admire the mountains, swim and eat. **See p.414**
- 5 **Pamukkale** Glistening white travertine basins and hot springs form a geological wonder to match Cappadocia. The Greeks and Romans would agree; their ruined spa-city, Hierapolis, remains integral to the experience. **See p.278**

6 **Bodrum** This former Greek fishing town is now an all-white architectural treat of a resort. Famed in ancient times for the Mausoleum of Halikarnassos, today it's better known for its club of (nearly) the same name, *Halikarnas*. See p.260

7 **Selçuk** Charming little town with welcoming places to stay, a good museum, the Basilica of St John and the remnants of the Temple of Artemis. It's also handy for both iconic Ephesus and İzmir International Airport. See p.237

WAY OUT EAST

To do justice to Turkey's stunning "wild east", you'll need at least three weeks.

1 **Gaziantep** The perfect gateway to Turkey's east. Explore Gaziantep's Arab-like bazaars, taste some of the country's finest cuisine, and admire the fantastic Roman mosaics at the state-of-the-art Zeugma Mosaic Museum. See p.577

2 **Nemrut Dağı** The colossal Hellenistic statues that dominate this remote mountaintop fully reward the effort it takes to reach them. See p.594

3 **Şanlıurfa** Famed for its pool of sacred carp, this traditional bazaar city makes the perfect base to visit the unique Neolithic temple sanctuary of Göbeklitepe, and the beehive houses at Harran. See p.584

4 **Mardin** Honey-coloured medieval houses cluster beneath an ancient citadel, looking out over the chequerboard fields of the impossibly flat Mesopotamian plain. See p.607

5 **Midyat** The old quarter of this venerable town makes a compelling place to kick back before or after exploring the Syrian Orthodox monasteries of the captivating Tör Abdin plateau. See p.613

6 **Hasankeyf** Going but not yet gone, this incredible medieval ruined city, perched above the Tigris, will soon disappear beneath the waters of a controversial dam. See p.615

7 **Van** Explore the vivid blue-soda Lake Van and its high-mountain hinterland, studded with unique Urartian sites and atmospheric Armenian churches – notably on Akdamar island. See p.620

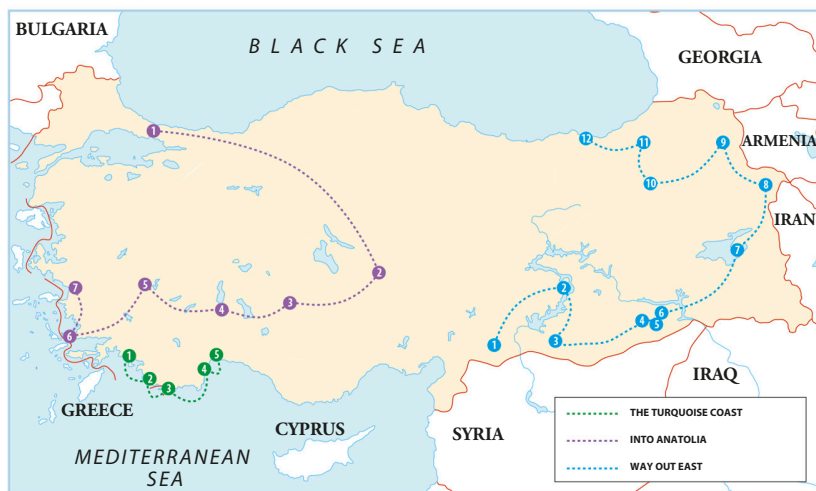
8 **Doğubeyazıt** This scruffy town, close to Iran, is the base for assaults on nearby Mt Ararat, and more sedate visits to the fairy-tale palace of a Kurdish chieftain, Ishak Paşa Sarayı. See p.640

9 **Kars** Set in vast, rolling tablelands, this city was brought to life in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*. Take a day-trip to the long-abandoned Armenian city of Ani. See p.562

10 **Erzurum** An upland city that holds fascinating Islamic monuments and is the gateway to Turkey's best ski resort, Palandöken. See p.543

11 **Kaçkar Mountains** This beautiful, green alpine range, dominated by Mt Kaçkar, spangled with *yaylas* (alpine pastures), glacier lakes and flowers, is perfect for trekking. See p.554

12 **Trabzon** Ancient Trebizond, a fiercely proud Black Sea port, has a superbly frescoed Byzantine church, the Aya Sofya, and is the base for day-trips to the spectacular cliff-hanging monastery of Sumela. See p.519





PIDE, ISTANBUL

Basics

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Getting there

The wide range of flights to Turkey from the UK (fewer from Ireland) take between 3hr 30min and 5hr, depending on your start and end point. Turkish Airlines (THY) flies direct from North America to Turkey, but North American airlines reach Turkey via a European gateway airport. Travellers from Australia and New Zealand usually go via the Middle East or Asia, or use a Round-the-World (RTW) ticket that includes Istanbul. There are direct flights from South Africa to Istanbul.

Airfares from Europe and North America are at their highest during Easter week and from June to early September. They're lower in April and May, and from late September into October, while you'll get the best prices of all between November and March (excluding Christmas and New Year, when seats are at a premium). While the price of flights from Europe and to some extent North America are affected by Turkey's high or summer season, for flights from the southern hemisphere, early booking rather than time of year is the most important criterion for bagging a cheap seat. Flight comparison sites like [skyscanner.net](#) and [expedia.com](#) are a good way to search for the cheapest option.

Flights from the UK and Ireland

You can **fly direct from the UK** to Istanbul (both airports), Izmir, Bodrum, Dalaman and Antalya. Reaching any other destination in Turkey involves a change in Istanbul.

Direct, scheduled flights are provided by Turkish Airlines (THY; [turkishairlines.com](#)) and British Airways ([britishairways.com](#)). THY links London (Gatwick or Heathrow) with Istanbul (Atatürk or Sabiha Gökçen) year-round, with less frequent flights from Edinburgh, Manchester and Birmingham. Return flight prices range from £150 in winter to £350 in summer, with London generally the cheapest departure airports. BA has three daily services from Heathrow (from around £350 return

in July & Aug). Information on onward domestic flights with either THY or their low-cost division Anadolujet, or competitors such as Atlasjet, Onur Air or Pegasus can be found on p.35.

Budget and charter flights

Among **budget airlines**, **easyJet** ([easyjet.com](#)) no longer flies to Istanbul but does offer summer flights from Gatwick to Izmir; from Gatwick, Luton and Manchester to Antalya; from Bristol, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Luton, Gatwick or Stansted to Bodrum; and from Bristol, Gatwick, Manchester, Edinburgh or Stansted to Dalaman. Advance low-season fares can be under £40 each way, though this can rise to £200 for late bookings.

Pegasus ([flypgs.com](#)) links Gatwick and Stansted to Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen all year, from where they have a far-reaching network of domestic flights (see p.35). **Jet2** ([jet2.com](#)) has summer-only flights to Antalya, Dalaman and Bodrum from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds-Bradford, Manchester, East Midlands and Newcastle. **Atlasjet** ([atlasjet.com](#)) fly year-round from Luton to Istanbul Atatürk.

The widest choice of **charter flights** to Turkish coastal resorts is offered by Thomas Cook ([thomascookairlines.com](#)) and Thomson ([thomsonfly.com](#)). With Thomas Cook, you can choose different departure and return airports and book one-way tickets. There are year-round charters to Antalya and Dalaman, while services to Izmir and Bodrum usually operate from late April/early May to late October. Peak-season prices can be as high as scheduled flights, but in winter they may drop as low as £100 return.

Flights from Ireland

From Belfast, British Airways offer year-round daily scheduled services, involving a stop in London or Manchester, but prices are high (in excess of £500 return in July and Aug). From Dublin, Turkish Airlines have a direct daily flight to Istanbul Atatürk, starting at €400 return. Usually the cheapest option is to use a budget carrier from either Dublin or Belfast to one of the UK cities, and connect with easyJet, Atlasjet or Pegasus to Turkey from there.

A BETTER KIND OF TRAVEL

At Rough Guides we are passionately committed to travel. We believe it helps us understand the world we live in and the people we share it with – and of course tourism is vital to many developing economies. But the scale of modern tourism has also damaged some places irreparably, and climate change is accelerated by most forms of transport, especially flying. All Rough Guides' flights are carbon-offset, and every year we donate money to a variety of environmental charities.

Flights from the US and Canada

The cheapest way to reach Turkey from North America is to buy a bargain transatlantic fare to Europe, and arrange your onward flight separately.

THY has expanded significantly in the US recently and now offers direct flights between Istanbul Atatürk and Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Chicago, New York (JFK), Los Angeles, and Washington DC. American Airlines (www.aa.com), United Airlines (www.united.com) and Delta (www.delta.com) partner up with European airlines: American Airlines stopping flights go via London; United via Frankfurt or London; and Delta via Amsterdam. European carriers route through their **hubs**: British Airways (www.ba.com) via London; Air France (www.airfrance.com) via Paris; KLM (www.klm.com) via Amsterdam; Lufthansa (www.lufthansa.com) via Frankfurt; and Swiss (www.swiss.com) via Zürich.

One-month return **fares** out of New York start from US\$680 in winter and US\$1200 in peak season. From LA, prices range \$800–1350.

There is only one direct flight **from Canada** to Turkey: THY and Air Canada (www.aircanada.com) partner daily flights between Toronto and Istanbul, with return fares from CAN\$880. Otherwise, several airlines fly to Istanbul via major European hubs.

Flights from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa

There are no direct flights **from Australia or New Zealand** to Turkey. However, several options will get you there after either a plane change or short stopover in the airline's hub city. The most straightforward routes are through the Middle East: Emirates via Dubai (www.emirates.com); Etihad Airways via Abu Dhabi (www.etihad.com); or Qatar Airways via Doha (www.qatarairways.com). Other options include Malaysia Airlines via Kuala Lumpur (www.malaysiaairlines.com); Singapore Airlines via Singapore (www.singaporeair.com); or South African Airways (www.flysaa.com) and Qantas (www.qantas.com) via Johannesburg in South Africa. THY (www.turkishairlines.com) also fly to Istanbul from Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Johannesburg. A marginally less expensive but far more time-consuming strategy would involve taking a flight to London and proceeding from there with one of the low-cost airlines. One-stop itineraries from **Sydney** start from around AU\$1500; **from Auckland**, fares start from NZ\$2300.

Round-the-World (RTW) tickets including Turkey use combinations of airlines, and could be

worth considering for a long trip taking in many destinations; generally, some free stopovers are allowed. Fares vary enormously, but start at AU\$2200 for options which include Istanbul.

From South Africa, THY has direct flights **from Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town** to Istanbul, with prices starting at around R9000. The other options from South Africa (with changes) are with Emirates, Etihad Airways or Qatar Airways. South African Airways (www.flysaa.com) flies daily to Frankfurt, Munich, London and Zürich, from where you can connect on to Istanbul.

Trains

Travelling to Turkey **by train** is slow and expensive. It only makes sense if you are a rail buff or wish to visit several other countries en route. The best route **from the UK** begins with the Eurostar (www.eurostar.com) from London to Paris, then a high-speed service to Munich, followed by a sleeper to Budapest, and finally two more nights aboard sleepers to Istanbul (including a change in Bucharest), making a total journey of five days and four nights. At the time of writing, the final leg, between the Bulgarian–Turkish border and Istanbul, was closed for line upgrading, with a replacement bus service in operation. Check the excellent www.seat61.com for more information. As each leg is booked separately, you can stop off in any of the cities where you change trains.

InterRail passes

The best train deal is provided by an **InterRail pass** (www.interrailnet.eu), which offers unlimited travel (except for express train supplements and reservation fees) on a zonal basis within thirty European rail networks. These passes are only available to European residents, and you must provide proof of residency to purchase one. To reach Turkey via the route described above, you need a Global Pass. For under-25s, a pass valid for one month's second-class travel covering thirty countries, including Turkey, costs €461 (£341); the price for over-25s is €983 (£728). A cheaper alternative is their five-days-travel-within-ten-days option – €192 (£142) for under-25s, or €403 (£299) for over-25s.

InterRail passes do not allow free travel between Britain and the Continent, although InterRail pass holders are eligible for discounts on rail travel in Britain and Northern Ireland, the cross-Channel ferries, and the London to Paris or Brussels Eurostar service.

By car from Europe

You can **drive from the UK** to Turkey in three to four days. However, this allows little time for stopping and sleeping, and most travellers prefer to do it more slowly, taking in a few places en route. Customs formalities and car insurance once in Turkey are covered in “Getting around” (see p.30).

The all-land itinerary goes via Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, though a more relaxing (if less direct) route is through France, Italy and Greece.

Ferries

Ferries no longer run **from Italy** direct to Turkey, but it's possible to take a ferry from either Ancona, Brindisi or Bari to Patras, in **Greece**, and make your way by road or rail to Athens (Piraeus). Regular ferries sail from there to several Greek islands which are linked by further ferries to Turkey (see below). Useful websites for information on Italy–Greece services include feribot.net and directferries.co.uk.

Ferries and catamarans from Greece

Many travellers take the short-hop ferries or catamarans over **from the Greek islands** to Turkish ports. These include Lésbos–Ayvalık, Chíos–Çeşme, Sámos–Kuşadası, Meis/Kastellerizo–Kaş, Kós–Bodrum and Rhodes–Marmaris and Fethiye. Services are daily in season (early May to early Oct), with much reduced sailings in winter. Fares are overpriced for the distances involved; full details of every service are given at the relevant points in this book. All the above have car-shuttle services (though Kuşadası has only one car ferry weekly), bar those serving Fethiye and Kaş.

AGENTS AND OPERATORS

Avro UK ☎ 0161 209 4259, avro.co.uk. Seat-only sales of charter flights to Antalya and Dalaman from various regional airports.

North South Travel UK ☎ 01245 608291, northsouthtravel.co.uk. Friendly, competitive flight agency, offering discounted fares – profits are used to support projects in the developing world.

Turkish Tursan Travel US ☎ 212 888 1180. Turkish specialist consolidator, based in New York.

Package tours and special-interest holidays

Scores of companies in the UK offer Turkish **package deals**. Most of these target Istanbul and the coast between Çeşme and Alanya, but most outfits also feature fly-drive plans. Coastal yachting (*gulet*) packages are available from May to October, while

winter breaks are increasing in popularity. Inland holidays concentrate on Cappadocia, while special-interest programmes include trekking, bird-spotting, yoga retreats, whitewater rafting and battlefield tours.

Three- or four-night Istanbul city breaks start at around £230 off season for three-star bed-and-breakfast accommodation (including flights and transfers), £1000-plus for boutique or five-star hotels.

Prices for a cheap-and-cheerful two-week **beach package** start at around £240 per person (double occupancy) in low season, including flights; staying in a four-star hotel will set you back £500–800. Quality self-catering villas tend to cost £1000 per person per week, flights included, increasing to £1400 per person at peak periods. A seven-day **yachting or cruising** holiday will cost £550–850 per person (double occupancy basis) depending on season, booked in the UK through an agent, less if arranged in Turkey directly with skippers. **Cycling/hiking/multi-activity** trips vary from £300–350 for seven to eight days along the Lycian coast if arranged locally, or around £750 for a higher-quality adventure booked in the UK.

Specialist holidays, relying on the services of expert natural history/archeological guides, are pricier of all, from £1700 (1 week) to over £3000 (2 weeks), including flights.

The best of the **US-based cultural or adventure tours** don't come cheap either – expect to pay at least US\$3600 for an eleven-day tour. The price will include all meals (excluding drinks), guides and ground transport, but not flights.

GENERAL TOUR OPERATORS

Anatolian Sky ☎ 0121 764 3553, anatoliansky.co.uk.

Mid-range to upmarket hotels and apartments on the southwest coast (particularly Kalkan, Dalyan, Akyaka, the Loryma peninsula, Antalya and Ölüdeniz), classic hotels in Istanbul, and a tailor-made programme.

Cachet Travel ☎ 0208 847 8700, cachet-travel.co.uk. Small selection of villas and hotels along the Turquoise Coast, plus guided, low-season special-interest tours, and select Istanbul/Cappadocia hotels.

Discerning Collection ☎ 0178 481 7720, discerningcollection.com. Limited but carefully selected portfolio of hotels and villas along the Turquoise Coast, as well as boutique hotels in Cappadocia and Istanbul.

Elixir Turkish Collection UK ☎ +44 20 7722 2288, elixirholidays.com. Boutique hotels and villas in Kaş, Kalkan, Patara, Faralya and Datça, aiming for the luxury market, plus *gulet* cruises along the Lycian coast.

Turkish Collection (Ilios Travel) ☎ 01444 225633, iliostravel.com. Top-quality (and thus pricey) villas-with-pool on the Bodrum and Datça peninsulas, plus rather more conventional accommodation at Akyaka, Kalkan and Kaş.

SAILING AND YACHTING

Cavurali ☎ 0090 242 419 2441, cavurali.com. Turkish-American guide Enver Lucas and his father-in-law Tosun Sezen, both with years of

local experience, offer bespoke sailing (and scuba) itineraries along the Turquoise Coast in a *gulet*-dive boat.

Day Dreams 📞 01884 849200, 🌐 turkishcruises.co.uk. Large fleet of *gulets* or schooners hosting "house parties" for singles and couples; also makes on-land arrangements in unusual areas like Kazdağı.

Nautilus Yachting 📞 01732 867445, 🌐 nautilusyachting.com. Bare-boat charters out of Marmaris, Bodrum, Fethiye and Göcek, plus set flotilla itineraries from Bodrum or Fethiye.

Scisailing 📞 0758 300 1766, 🌐 scisailing.eu. Bodrum-area-based small fleet of wooden *gulets* specially adapted so that you actually travel under sail power rather than (as normally on such craft) with merely decorative rigging.

Setsail 📞 01787 310445, 🌐 setsail.co.uk. Flotilla holidays from Göcek and Marmaris; also bare-boat charter.

Sunsail 📞 0203 553 8353, 🌐 sunsail.co.uk. Flotilla holidays from Göcek, Gulluk and Turgutreis, taking in the Turquoise Coast and the peninsulas between Bodrum and Marmaris.

TREKKING AND ADVENTURE OPERATORS

Exodus 📞 0845 287 7533, 🌐 exodus.co.uk. Offers an eight-day mountain-biking and hiking trip along the Lycian Way, plus kayaking on the Turquoise Coast and Cappadocia walking holidays staying in small hotels and village houses.

Explore 📞 01252 883 814, 🌐 explore.co.uk. Selection of eight- or fifteen-day active trips, mostly in Cappadocia, the east and Lycia (including a cruising section), plus standard historical and "best of" tours.

G Adventures 📞 0344 272 2060, 🌐 gadventures.com. Good choice of "comfort" and "budget" tours including sailing holidays, classic sightseeing itineraries, and active trips such as cycling and kayaking along the Lycian Way.

Imaginative Traveller 📞 01728 862230, 🌐 imaginative-traveller.com. Long-established and quality overland group-tour operator with a vast assortment of tours, many pitched at families, taking in all the Turkish highlights as well as a number of lesser-known spots, plus some Turkey-and-Georgia combos.

World Expeditions 📞 0208 875 5060, 🌐 worldexpeditions.com. Probably the most interesting Antipodean trekking operator for Turkey, with half a dozen itineraries, including a trip to Toros Mountains and Cappadocia region and a sightseeing "Best of Turkey" holiday, including hiking and cruising.

SPECIAL-INTEREST HOLIDAYS

Andante Travels UK 📞 01722 713 800, 🌐 andantetravels.co.uk.

Award-winning company with a very comprehensive selection of itineraries covering most of this archeologically fascinating country, covering all the major (and many minor) sites, led by experts in their fields.

Cultural Folk Tours US 📞 1800 935 8875, 🌐 culturalfolktours.com. US-based company offering up to nine annual tours (accompanied by company founder and Turkish musician Bora Ozkok) that give a real insight into seldom-visited regions of the country.

Fairy Chimneys Travel Australia 📞 1300 766 595, 🌐 fairychimneys.com.au. Small group and special interest tailor-made tours with an emphasis on luxury accommodation and good food, plus *gulet* and yacht arrangements.

Geographic Expeditions US 📞 1888 570 7108, 🌐 geosex.com.

Offers a thirteen-day "Tribute to Turkey" itinerary taking in the major historical sites, plus customized tailor-made trips to fit customers' interests.

Gölköy Centre UK 📞 0208 699 1900, 🌐 yogaturkey.co.uk. Yoga retreat on Bodrum peninsula offering week-long courses May to October, encompassing shiatsu and assorted personal growth themes. Accommodation is in a nearby village or small coastal hotels.

Greentours UK 📞 01298 83563, 🌐 greentours.co.uk. Several annual, one- or two-week natural-history holidays (emphasis on wildflowers), typically inland from the Turquoise or Mediterranean coasts. Enthusiastic English and Turkish guides know their subjects in incredible depth.

Huzur Vadisi 🌐 huzurvadisi.com. One-week yoga programmes from April to October at three secluded retreats; *Huzur Vadisi*, *Suleyman's Garden* and *The Pomegranate*, all a short distance inland from the Turquoise Coast.

Wilderness Travel US 📞 1800 368 2794, 🌐 wildernesstravel.com. A fourteen-day combination Greek Island and Turquoise Coast cruise itinerary, plus tailor-made historical tours and multi-country Black Sea cruises with a focus on archeological interests.

Getting around

Virtually the whole of Turkey is well covered by public transport, including long-distance buses, domestic flights, minibuses and ferries. The aged train network is being overhauled, with new high-speed lines linking the capital, Ankara, with Istanbul and Konya. Late booking is the norm for public transport users in Turkey, but reserve well in advance for major public holidays – especially for flights and trains. Car rental rates are reasonable if you shop around, and low-season rentals usually considerably cheaper than in high season.

By train

Turkey's train network is run by **Turkish State Railways** (TCDD; 🌐 tcdd.gov.tr). A high-speed route (Yüksek Hızlı Tren or YHT) links the Istanbul suburb of Pendik with Ankara, taking a little over three and a half hours. When transport infrastructure works are completed, the line will terminate closer to the city centre and link in with Istanbul's metro system, allowing passengers to cross the city to Halkalı, in Europe, and join the line running through European Turkey and on into the Balkans. A YHT line also connects Ankara with Konya. It's possible to reach İzmir by rail by taking the high-speed ferry (see p.35) from the Istanbul suburb of Yenikapı to Bandırma, then the 6 Eylül Ekspres on to İzmir.

More high-speed lines are under construction. In the meantime, the remainder of the rail network is fairly antiquated, but is a cheap and cheerful way to reach provincial centres such as Adana, Kayseri, Erzurum, Kars and Diyarbakir. These trains are slow – the mountainous terrain has resulted in circuitous routes. As a result, journeys can sometimes take double the time they would by road. The advantages are the chance to stretch your legs, unwind and watch the scenery unfold at leisure. To get accurate schedule **information**, especially with the delays and re-schedulings caused by the network overhaul, go to the station in person, read the placards and then confirm departures with staff. Several choices of **seats** are available on most routes, including first-class, reclining Pullman seats; first-class standard seats (usually in a six-seater compartment); and second-class seats (generally in an eight-seater compartment). For long distances, though, it's advisable to get a **sleeper**. Cheapest are *küşetli* (couchettes), with either four or six bunks in a compartment depending on the route, and two-bedded *yataklı* (sleeping cars) with a basin, soap, towel and air conditioning. All *yataklı* beds come with sheets, pillows and blankets provided, as do *örtülü küşetli* beds; for standard *küşetli* beds you'll need to bring your own bedding. For maximum privacy, and for women travelling without male companions, it's probably best to book a *yataklı* berth to avoid having to share. There are always (usually helpful but tip expected) porters on hand to make up beds. Note that all beds fold away in the day to convert the compartment into a seating area.

All long-distance services should have a licensed *büfe* wagon, offering simple meals at surprisingly reasonable prices, but it's a good idea to check in advance (note that most wayside stations offer some sort of snacks). On major train routes it's essential to **reserve ahead**, but unfortunately this cannot be done earlier than two weeks in advance – and it's almost impossible to arrange sleeper facilities from a station that's not your start point. It's possible to book online, and the rail site seat61.com has a step-by-step guide on this. One drawback is that tickets for some services can only be bought within thirty days of departure, fifteen days on others, and ten days for YHT trains. It is also possible to buy tickets from some travel agencies for a small supplement.

Fares and passes

To give some idea of **prices**, a Pullman seat for the lengthy 28-hour, 1076km journey from Ankara to Kars (close to the Armenian border) costs ₺43, while a bed in a two-berth *yataklı* compartment costs

₺98. An economy seat on the YHT (High-Speed Train) for the 450km journey between Istanbul and Ankara costs ₺70, and a Pullman seat on the Bandırma to İzmir (334km) train is ₺23. Buying a return ticket brings each single-journey fare down by twenty percent, while foreign **students** (with appropriate ID) and children also get twenty percent off. InterRail passes (see p.28) are valid, though a better bet for Turkey-only travel is the one-month **TrenTur** card, available at major stations, which costs ₺210 a month for unlimited second-class travel, or ₺550 for any class of sleeping car.

By long-distance bus

Long-distance buses are a key part of the Turkish travel experience and, despite keen competition from domestic flights and relatively high road accident rates, look set to remain so. Major *otogars* (bus stations) are veritable hives of activity, with dozens of separate companies vying for business and a plethora of places to eat, drink, souvenir shop or have your shoes shined.

The vehicles used by many companies are luxurious coaches, complete with air conditioning, though without on-board toilets. Journeys are sometimes accompanied by loud Turkish music or film soundtracks, though increasingly the better (and more expensive) companies use coaches with aeroplane-style screens set in the back of the seat in front, along with headsets. There's a choice of TV channels and films, though very seldom in English. Several companies also have free wi-fi on-board, which is of far more use to the non-Turkish-speaking traveller. Traditional services remain, however, with attendants dishing out free drinking water and cologne for freshening up. In addition, most companies serve free coffee/tea/soft drinks and cakes on board. Every couple of hours or so there will be a fifteen-minute **rest stop** (*mola*) for tea, as well as less frequent half-hour pauses for meals at purpose-built roadside cafeterias.

As bus companies are private, there's no comprehensive national bus **timetable**, although individual companies often provide their own. **Prices** vary considerably between top- and bottom-drawer companies, though convenience of departure and on-board service are equally important criteria. If in doubt, inspect the vehicle out in the loading bay (*peron* in Turkish) and ask at the ticket office how long the trip will take.

Bear in mind that **long-haul journeys** (over 10hr) generally take place at night, and that because of rest stops, buses never cover more than 60km per

hour on average. As a broad example of fares, Istanbul–Antalya (a 450km trip) costs around ₺65 with a standard bus company, ₺75 with a premium company. The 1240km journey from Istanbul to Hopa, on the Black Sea near the Georgian border, costs ₺110 with a premium company; the popular 753km run between Istanbul and Nevşehir (Cappadocia) is around ₺75.

Buying tickets

Most bus companies have **ticket booths** both at the *otogars* (bus terminals) and in the city centre. One of the big advantages of coach over plane travel is that, national holidays apart, you can usually just turn up at the bus station and find a seat. If you do this, it's worth checking out various companies to see which offers the best price and most convenient departure – touts that work for particular companies will not necessarily take you to the office of the company that has the cheapest or soonest departure.

Unacquainted women and men are not usually allowed to sit next to each other, and you may be asked to switch your assigned seat to accommodate this convention. If you buy your ticket at a sales office in the centre of town, ask about free *servis* (service) **transfer buses** to the *otogar*, especially if (as most now are) it's located a few kilometres out. These buses will often also take passengers from *otogars* into town centres, but that system is more erratic. Of the country's two **premium coach companies**, Ulusoy (📞ulusoy.com.tr) and Varan (📞varan.com.tr), Ulusoy offer by far the most comprehensive network. Their seats are more comfortable than most and they don't segregate single passengers by sex. Kamil Koç (📞kamilkoc.com.tr) also has a very good reputation. All three companies have online booking systems in English. Another very reliable operator, Pamukkale (📞pamukkaleturizm.com.tr), has yet to introduce an online system in English.

By dolmuş

A **dolmuş** (literally "stuffed") refers to a car or small van (*minibüs* in Turkish) that runs along set routes,

picking passengers up (give a normal taxi hand signal) and dropping them off along the way (just say *inecek var* or *müsait bir yerde* to be set down). Few cities have car-type *dolmuş* left – these include Bursa and Trabzon. On busy **urban routes** it's better to take the *dolmuş* from the start of its run, at a stand marked by a blue sign with a black-on-white-field "D", sometimes with the destination indicated – though usually you'll have to ask to learn the eventual destination, or look at the *dolmuş*'s windscreen placard. The **fare** is invariably a flat rate (usually ₺3), making it very good value for cross-city journeys, not so great for a one-stop hop. In some cities (eg Antalya), *dolmuş* have been banned because pulling in at random is dangerous and slows traffic. Locals, confusingly, still refer to the minibuses that replaced them (and stop only at fixed points) as *dolmuş*es.

Inter-town and village services are always provided by twelve- or fifteen-seater minibuses, and in these instances the term "*dolmuş*" is seldom used. For the remotest villages there will only be two services a day: to the nearest large town in the morning and back to the village in mid-afternoon. Generally, though, minibuses run constantly between 7am or 8am and 7pm in summer, stopping at sunset in winter or extending until 10pm or 11pm (or even later) near popular resorts.

By city bus and taxi

In larger towns, the main means of transport are **city buses**, which usually accept only pre-purchased tickets or smart travel cards, available from kiosks near the main terminals, newsagents, or from kerbside touts (at slightly inflated prices). This is certainly the case in Istanbul, where you have to use a pre-purchased token (*jeton*) or the *Istanbulkart* smart travel card (see p.113).

Yellow city **taxis** are everywhere, with ranks at appropriate places. Hailing one in the street is the best way to get a cab, but in suburban areas you can call them from useful street-corner telephones; sometimes you just press a buzzer and wait for a cab to turn up. City cabs all have working, digital-display

SEATING PLAN TIPS

When buying tickets, ask to see the **seating plan** so that you can choose window or aisle, a front seat (better views) or avoid certain less comfortable seats, such as those above the wheels and immediately behind the central door, which have less legroom. Even more important, if you're making a daytime trip in the heat of summer, work out the general direction of travel and try to get a seat on the shady side of the bus – a powerful sun beating down on the windows of even an air-conditioned bus makes quite a difference.

meters, and **fares** are reasonable. Each town sets its own rates, which includes the minimum charge and a unit charge for the distance covered. In Istanbul, for example, there's a ₺3.2 opening charge, plus a ₺2 per km fare rate. The main problem with using a cab is that few drivers – even in tourist areas – speak much English, so you may have to write down your destination on a piece of paper. Overcharging of foreigners in Istanbul and major resorts is, unfortunately, not uncommon – make sure that the driver turns his meter on and (trickier) that he doesn't take you all around the houses to reach your destination.

By car

While the excellent intercity bus network makes travel between major centres easy, having a **car** allows you to visit off-the-beaten-track sites. But be warned – the standard of driving in Turkey is often poor and attitudes aggressive, while the enforcement of traffic rules arbitrary. All these factors have contributed to the **high road-accident rate**, with over four thousand fatalities per year. Driving during public holidays, especially the religious Şeker and Kurban *bayrams*, and an hour or so prior to the *iftar* (fast-breaking meal) during Ramadan, is especially dangerous. In 2015, 74 people were killed and 446 injured in accidents in the notoriously risky few days preceding the Şeker Bayramı holiday, as families criss-crossed the country to visit relatives.

Rules of the road

You **drive on the right**, and yield to those approaching from the right. **Speed limits** are 50km/h within towns (40km/h if towing a trailer or caravan); open road limits are 90km/h for cars, 80km/h for vans (70km/h if towing); motorway (*otoyol* in Turkish) limits are 120km/h for cars, 100km/h for vans and small trucks. **Drink-driving laws** are in line with those of the EU: 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood – and drink-driving carries a fine of ₺800, reduced to ₺600 with early payment. Even so, drink-driving is a major problem; in 2010, almost 140,000 Turkish drivers had their licences seized for the offence. Front seat belts are mandatory and it's a fineable (₺88 or ₺66 with early payment) offence not to buckle up – though few drivers do.

Traffic control points at the approaches to major cities are common. You'll probably be waved through simply upon showing your foreign ID, especially if it's a rental car. Make sure the rental company provides the insurance certificate, the pollution compliance certificate (*eksoz muayene tasdiknamesi*) and the vehicle registration, or certified copies thereof.

Speeding fines, levied on a sliding scale according to how far above the limit you were, are heavy, with penalties of up to ₺392 (₺294 if the fine is paid within ten days). Usually you'll be given a ticket, which you take to a designated bank to pay. Jumping a red light carries a fine of ₺189.

If you have an **accident** serious enough to immobilize you and/or cause major damage to other people's property, the traffic police will appear and administer alcohol tests to all drivers, results of which must also be submitted along with an official accident report (*kaza raporu*) in order to claim insurance cover. It used to be an offence to move a vehicle involved in a car crash before the police showed up, but if there is only minor damage it is now OK to do so providing you have exchanged details with the other driver.

Heed the signposted **no-parking zones**, especially in resorts, as towing is common and, although the fines aren't too heavy, the hassle of finding the pound and negotiating language barriers is considerable. Generally, it's wisest to patronize the covered (*katli*) or open *otoparks*. In open car parks you may well be required to leave your keys so the attendant can move your car. If you leave your car in the street in some towns and cities, you may return to find a chit on your windscreen (typically ₺10), to be paid to the roving attendant.

Road conditions

Road conditions have improved enormously over the last few years, with **better surfaces** and more and more **dual carriageways**. On both single and dual carriageways there's usually a hard-shoulder area to the right of the driving lane, and often slower-moving vehicles pull into this to allow impatient drivers to overtake. Be very wary of doing this, especially at night, as you might find yourself ploughing into pedestrians or parked/broken-down vehicles. With continual road improvements being made country-wide, road works are often a (sometimes dangerous) nuisance – especially in the southeast. Sizeable archeological sites are usually marked by large white-on-brown-field signs, but side roads to minor sites or villages are often poorly signposted.

Typical **hazards** include drivers overtaking right, left and centre, failure to signal, and huge trucks. Small-town driving hazards include suicidal pedestrians, horse-carts, speeding scooters and motor-cycles (often with the entire family astride one vehicle) and tractors.

Toll highways, marked with white-on-green signs, are well worth the modest fees, but to use them you'll need to be enrolled in the **HGS** (Hızlı

ROAD SIGNS

<i>Dur</i>	Stop
<i>Tek yön</i>	One-way
<i>Çıkılmaz sokak</i>	Dead end/cul-de-sac
<i>Yol kapalı</i>	Road closed
<i>Yol boyunca</i>	Road narrows
<i>Tırmanma şeridi</i>	Overtaking lane
<i>Araç çıkabilir</i>	Vehicles exiting
<i>Yaya geçidi</i>	Pedestrian crossing
<i>Yol yapımı</i>	Roadworks
<i>Bozuk satış</i>	Rough surface
<i>Düşük banket</i>	Abrupt verge/ shoulder
<i>Şehir merkezi</i>	City centre
<i>Park yapılmaz/ edilmez</i>	No parking
<i>Araç giremez</i>	No entry
<i>Araçınız çekilir</i>	Your car will be towed
<i>Giremez</i>	No entry
<i>Askeri bölge</i>	Military zone
<i>Heyelan bölgesi, heyelanlı bölge</i>	Landslide zone

Geçiş Sistemi or Fast Transit System) first, as tollbooths accept neither cash nor credit cards. Many rental outlets offer cars with the requisite electronic chip sticker/registration card already fixed to the window – check before hiring a car if you intend using toll roads – and it's obligatory for rental agencies to provide one in and around Istanbul. With your own vehicle, it's possible to purchase the electronic chip sticker/registration card from a PTT (post office) for ₺10. Many Shell and OPET service stations also sell the HGS stickers. You must also "charge" it with a minimum of ₺30 and keep it topped up at "HGS dolun noktası" machines at many motorway service stations.

Main toll roads include Istanbul–Ankara, Istanbul–Edirne; Adana–Gaziantep; Adana–Pozanti, through the Cilician Gates; Izmir–Çeşme; and Izmir–Denizli.

Night driving is best not attempted by beginners – be prepared for unlit vehicles, glare from undipped lights, speeding intercity coaches and trucks and, in rural areas, flocks of sheep and goats and unlit tractors. Warning triangles are obligatory; make sure you put it on the road behind your vehicle following a flat tyre, breakdown or accident, and ensure your rental car has one.

Fuel and repairs

Filling stations are commonplace and open long hours, so it's difficult to run out of fuel. Fuel costs are high, and even diesel (*mazot* or *dizel*) is around ₺4

per litre. Petrol (*benzin*), available in four-star (*süper*) and lead-free (*kurşunsuz*) grades, goes for around ₺4.6 per litre. Rental cars generally use unleaded.

In western Turkey, roadside **rest-stop culture** conforming to Italian or French notions is the norm. You can eat, pray, patch a tyre, phone home, shop at mini-marts and, sometimes, even sleep at what amount to small hamlets (essentially the descendants of the medieval *kervansaray*s) in the middle of nowhere. In the east you'll find more basic amenities.

Credit and debit cards (Visa Electron, Visa and MasterCard but also American Express) are widely honoured for fuel purchases in much of Turkey (chip-and-PIN protocol is the norm), but carry cash in more remote rural areas and the east.

Car **repair workshops** are located in industrial zones called *sanayis* at town outskirts. To repair a punctured tyre (a common event in Turkey) head to a *lastıkçı* (tyre workshop); new tyres for small cars start from ₺120. Always check that the spare and toolkit are sound and complete before leaving the rental agency.

Car rental

To rent a car you need to be at least 21 with a **driving licence** held for at least one year. Your home country licence should be enough, but it is very helpful, especially at traffic-control points, to be able to show an **international driver's permit** (IDP). A compact car rented from a major chain on the Aegean and Mediterranean coast will cost around €55 per day or €320 per week in high season (April–Oct), less in low season. Rent a car from a local firm and you may be able to find something for around €180 a week, even in high season. Diesel-fuelled rental cars are becoming more widely available at a premium, but are well worth considering if you intend travelling large distances. If you pick up a car at one of Istanbul's two airports (and think carefully before you do so – the city traffic is horrendous, parking and route-finding difficult and accidents commonplace), you will pay extra for the HGS sticker/registration card (at least ₺30) affixed to the screen, as you must use a toll road immediately.

Some rental companies allow rental in one town and drop-off in another – at a premium. The international players like Europcar have outlets at many of Turkey's airports as well as downtown/resort offices; local outfits (some of which also offer advance, online booking services) may not have an office in the airport, but with advance booking will bring the car to the airport and have someone meet you outside arrivals. Be warned: tanks are sometimes near empty so you need to fill up right away.

When checking any car out, agency staff should make a thorough note of any **blemishes** on the vehicle – go around the vehicle with them when they do this as you may be liable for scratches and dents not noted at the time of rental. Basic **insurance** is usually included, but CDW (Collision Damage Waiver) is not, and given typical driving conditions taking this out is virtually mandatory. Along with KDV (Value Added Tax), all these extras can push up the final total considerably. Rental insurance never covers smashed windscreens or ripped tyres.

By bike and motorbike

Touring Turkey by **bike** is a great experience for experienced cyclists, though you should try to avoid the hottest months and the busiest roads, and don't expect any kind of deference from motorists. On the plus side, the scenery is magnificent, many roads delightfully quiet and the local people you'll meet incredibly hospitable. Be prepared to do your own repairs as local mechanics experienced in working on state-of-the-art bikes are thin on the ground and confined to big cities such as Ankara, Antalya, Istanbul and İzmir. There is a well-developed home-grown mountain-bike industry, and spares by such as Shimano are readily found in the big cities. Indeed, unless you're passing through Turkey or are a real bicycle freak, it's worth considering buying a home-grown model here, as that way the spares and repairs will be less problematic. Reasonable bikes start from ₺350, though imported models are likely to be far more expensive than you could buy at home. In cities, lock your bike; in rural areas theft is not likely to be a problem, even if the curious stares of incredulous locals could be. **Bike-rental facilities** are few and far between in Turkey; a notable exception is Cappadocia, particularly Göreme (see p.434), and there are outlets in bigger resorts such as Antalya (see p.354).

Given Turkey's road conditions, only confident, experienced **motorcyclists** should consider driving here. Plenty of visitors risk a day or two on a **scooter** in resort areas. In larger resorts and big cities there will be at least one motorbike **rental agency**, or a car-rental company that also rents out motor-scooters and mopeds (*mobilet*). You'll need an appropriate driving licence, and most companies insist that it has been held for at least a year. As with cars, always check the bike for scratches and dents before renting it. Helmets are mandatory, despite the countless helmet-less riders you'll see.

By ferry

Turkey's domestic **ferry network** is confined to Istanbul and the Sea of Marmara. Şehir Hatları (📞sehirhatlari.com.tr) operates ferries along the Bosphorus, between the European and Asian sides of the same strait, and to the Princess Islands. Longer runs across the Sea of Marmara to Yalova (for Termal & İzniç), Mudanya (for Bursa) and Bandırma (for the Aegean coast) are the preserve of Istanbul Deniz Ötobüsleri (📞ido.com.tr) sea buses. Any of the trans-Marmara car-ferry links save time compared to the dreary, circuitous road journey, but are relatively expensive with a vehicle.

Private companies offer services from the Mediterranean town of Taşucu to Girne in North Cyprus year-round, and catamarans run from the resort of Alanya in the summer months.

By plane

Travel by air is becoming the norm in what is a very big country, and makes sense for those on a tight schedule or who wish to visit far-flung places like Van or Erzurum. **Turkish Airways** (Türk Hava Yolları or THY; 📞0212 225 0566, 🌐thy.com), and its budget wing **Anadolujet** (📞444 2538, 🌐anadolujet.com.tr), offer the most comprehensive domestic flight network, though many flights from the west of the country are routed through either Istanbul or Ankara. This partnership faces stiff competition from private airlines such as Atlasjet, Onur Air, Pegasus and Sunexpress.

Atlasglobal (📞0850 222 0000, 🌐atlasgblb.com) offers flights to Antalya, Bodrum, Dalaman, Gaziantep, and İzmir. **Onur Air** (📞0212 663 2300, 🌐onurair.com.tr) has direct flights from Istanbul to the following destinations: Adana, Antalya, Bodrum, Dalaman, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Gaziantep, İzmir, Kayseri, Malatya, Samsun, Şanlıurfa and Trabzon.

Pegasus (📞444 0737, 🌐flypgs.com) covers Adana, Ankara, Antalya, Bodrum, Dalaman, Erzurum, Gaziantep, İzmir, Kayseri, Konya, Malatya, Mardin, Nevşehir (Cappadocia), Şanlıurfa, Trabzon and Van, while **Sunexpress** (📞444 0797, 🌐sunexpress.com), runs direct flights from the Mediterranean gateway resort of Antalya to Adana, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Hatay (Antakya), Istanbul, İzmir, Kayseri, Trabzon and Van.

Fares with THY are reasonable – for example, promotional one-way fares from Istanbul to Antalya (tax inclusive) are ₺94, though more usual prices are from ₺124. THY also offers variable student, youth and family discounts. Fares with Atlas, Onur,

Pegasus and Sunexpress also start from as low as **₺35** when there are special offers on.

The key to finding cheap economy fares is **early booking** – generally six weeks to a month prior to departure, except at peak holiday periods when even earlier booking is advised. These fares are often comparable to, if not cheaper than, intercity bus fares, though getting to and from some airports by cab adds to the cost considerably. If you have trouble booking online, try a travel agent, as most will book for you for a small fee.

You're told to appear at the airport 1hr 30min before your departure, but an hour is usually adequate leeway for completing security procedures. Baggage allowances vary between companies – usually it's either 15 or 20kg, but make sure you check to avoid unwanted extra charges.

Be sure to remember that Istanbul has two airports (see p.111), Sabiha Gökçen on the Asian side and Atatürk on the European. Some carriers use both airports, though Sunexpress only uses Sabiha Gökçen.

Accommodation

Simply turning up and finding a bed for the night is generally not a problem in Turkey, except in high season at the busier coastal resorts and in Istanbul. Most places have internet booking services, so you can reserve ahead. Prices are generally good value by most Western European standards, though Istanbul can be very expensive. In most of the larger coastal resorts, the big cities and touristy inland areas such as Cappadocia, a wide range of accommodation is available, from humble *pansiyons* (guest-houses) to five-star hotels. However, in towns of the interior, with fewer tourists, there's often little choice between fleapits or four-star luxury.

Rates are generally lower in winter (Nov–March) than high summer (June–Aug) but shoot up at Christmas/New Year and for religious festivals such as the Şeker and Kurban *bayrams* (see p.48), when many Turks take their holidays. Spring and autumn rates fall somewhere between the two, except in Istanbul, where prices are high during this period. Many establishments peg their rates to the euro as, after years of stability, the inflation rate has crept back to around ten percent. All but the most basic hotels **include breakfast**. Note that many pensions and hotels in coastal resorts close for the winter.

Rooms are generally on the small side by European standards, some have inadequate lighting and many have barely enough power points. To avoid **noise**, pick a room away from main thoroughfares and/or an adjacent mosque. You won't cause offence by asking to see another room, and never agree on a price for a room without seeing it first. Though break-ins aren't the norm in Turkey, **security** should be at least a consideration.

Plumbers quite frequently pipe the taps up the wrong way round, so check that the tap that should be hot is not the cold. Bathtubs and sinks seldom have plugs, so bring a universal plug from home. Especially on the south and southwest coast, **air conditioning** (a/c) is found in most accommodation, even *pansiyons*. **Double beds** for couples are becoming more popular; the magic words are *Fransız yatak* ("French" bed).

Touts can be a nuisance in places on the backpacker trail (for example Cappadocia, Selçuk and Eğirdir), greeting weary travellers off the long-distance bus with offers of accommodation. It's best to ignore them and use the recommendations in this guide. If you do decide to check out the accommodation offered by a tout, make sure it's up to standard before accepting – there will be plenty more choice available.

Lift/elevator buttons can be a source of potential confusion. "Ç" stands for "call", a lit-up "K" means the lift is already on your floor; an illuminated "M" means "in use"; "Z" stands for ground floor; and "A" means the mezzanine floor.

Hotels

Turkish hotels are graded on a scale of one to five stars by the Ministry of Tourism; there is also a lower tier of unstarred establishments rated by municipalities. At the **four- and five-star** establishments expect to pay from €110–200 at the lower end of the scale to €200–800 for restored palaces or very upmarket boutique hotels. **Two- or three-star** outfits (€50–90) are more basic; no tubs in bathrooms and more spartan breakfasts, though in resort areas they may have a small pool, terrace and bar. The walk-in price of three-star and up hotels is always much higher than if it is prebooked, but if the hotel is slack you may be able to negotiate a much better deal.

Boutique hotels are popping up all over the place, especially in restored old mansions in such places as Amasya, Cappadocia, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Mardin, Safranbolu and Urfa. However, the term is overused to market any accommodation that has been done up in a minimalist or modernist style, and prices vary widely accordingly.

The **unrated hotels** licensed by municipalities can be virtually as good as the lower end of the one-star class, and most have en-suite bathrooms, televisions and phones (€35–45). Others though, at the very bottom end of the market, will have a basin in the room but shared showers and (squat) toilet down the hall, with prices ranging between €20 and €30. Most solo female travellers will feel uncomfortable in unstarred and even many one- and two-star hotels, especially in less touristy parts of the country.

Pansiyons and apartments

Often the most pleasant places to stay are **pansiyons** (pensions), small guesthouses common in touristy areas, where charges generally start at around €25 and go up to €40, including breakfast. Many offer home-cooked evening meals at modest prices. These usually have en-suite facilities, and many feature common gardens or terraces where breakfast is served. Rooms tend to be spartan but clean, furnished in one-star hotel mode and always with two sheets (*çarşafs*) on the bed. Hot water is always available, though with solar-powered systems, not always when you want it. Many have air conditioning, often for a supplement.

Particularly when it comes to family-run pensions, you may well find that the proprietor has links with similar establishments in other towns; often he/she will offer to call ahead to arrange both a stay and a transfer from the *otogar* for you. This informal network is a good way of avoiding the hassle with touts and a late-night search for a comfy bed.

Self-catering apartments are widespread in coastal resorts, and are mostly pitched at vacationing Turks or foreigners arriving on pre-arranged packages. Some are available to walk-in trade – local tourist offices maintain lists. Apart from the weekly price, the major (negotiable) outlay will be for the large gas bottle feeding the stove. Ensure, too, that kitchens are equipped well enough to make them truly self-catering.

Hostels, lodges and treehouses

While there are only a handful of internationally affiliated, foreigner-pitched hostels in the country, this gap has been amply filled by **backpackers' hostels**, found most notably in Istanbul, Çanakkale, Selçuk, Köyceğiz and Fethiye. Often 1970s *pansiyons* that have been adapted to feature multi-bedded rooms, laundry and internet facilities, self-catering kitchen, tours and lively bars, they can be fair value

– costs vary €10–18 per head in a large dorm, but double rooms are often more expensive than *pansiyons* or cheap hotels.

In recent years, a large number of **trekkers' lodges** have sprung up in the foothills of the Kaçkar Mountains, especially on the south slope, and along the Lycian Way. These generally offer a choice between communal sleeping on mattresses arrayed on a wooden terrace, or more enclosed double to quadruple rooms without en-suite facilities – strangely, cooking facilities may often also be absent. Costs are generally comparable to the backpackers' hostels, though some are far more expensive.

So-called **"treehouses"**, usually just elevated shacks, are found principally on the southwest coast between Antalya and Fethiye. Some have dorm rooms while an increasing number are designed for two people and have doors, windows, electricity, air conditioning and, occasionally, en-suite facilities.

Campsites

In areas frequently visited by independent travellers, *pansiyons* and hostels with gardens will often allow **camping**. Charges run from a couple of euros to €7 per head in a well-appointed site at a major resort; you may also be charged to park your vehicle. The most appealing campsites are those run by the **Ministry of Forestry**, open April to October inclusive; look for brown wooden signs with yellow lettering. Twenty of them are sited in shady groves at strategic locations (mostly coastal) across the west of the country, and they make an ideal choice if you have your own transport, especially a combi-van or car and caravan.

Camping rough is not illegal, but hardly anybody does it except when trekking in the mountains, and, since you can expect a visit from curious police or even nosier villagers, it's not a good option for those who like privacy.

Food and drink

Turkish food is sometimes ranked alongside French and Chinese as one of the world's three great cuisines. Many venerable dishes are descended from Ottoman palace cuisine. The quality of produce is exceptional, with most ingredients available locally. Eating out is often very good value and many locals

do so frequently. The cheapest sit-down meals are to be found in establishments which do not serve alcohol (içkisiz), where it's possible to find a hearty three-course meal for ₺25 (€8). However, you'll often pay considerably more in resorts which aren't so frequented by Turkish tourists. It's easy to get stuck in a kebab rut, but show a little adventure and there are plenty of dishes available – more than enough to satisfy all but the strictest vegetarians.

Places to eat and specialities are summarized below, and at the back of this guide you'll find a **menu reader** (see p.704). Generic "Mediterranean" restaurants and burger/pizza/coffee chains, needing no translation, are almost everywhere.

Breakfast

The standard "Turkish" **breakfast** (*kahvaltı*) served at modest hotels and *pansiyons* usually comprises a basket of soft white bread, a pat of butter, a slice or two of feta-style cheese and salami, a dab of pre-packed jam, a scattering of black olives, a boiled egg and a few slices of tomato and cucumber. Only tea is likely to be available in quantity, and extras such as *omelette* will probably be charged for.

Things are far more exciting in the better hotels, where you can expect a range of breads and pastries, fresh fruit slices, a choice of olive and cheese types, delicious fresh yoghurt, dried fruits and nuts, and an array of cold and hot meats, plus eggs in various styles, though freshly squeezed orange or pomegranate juice will be extra. Turks are

BARGAIN BREAKFAST BITES

The classic budget breakfast is the national dish of **simit**, a bread ring coated in sesame seeds. These are usually sold by street vendors for ₺1.4, and can be enlivened by a processed cheese triangle – a surprisingly good combo. Another favourite is **börek**, a rich, flaky, layered pastry containing bits of mince or cheese, often available from specialist *büfes* (snack-cafés) for ₺4 and up. Bakers (*finnci*) are a great source of **poğça** (soft rolls usually filled with either cheese, olive spread or a spicy potato mixture) for ₺1 and up. A winter warmer favourite is a bowl of **çorba** (soup), invariably lentil and served with a lemon wedge, for around ₺5.

very fond of their breakfast, and often on a Sunday invite friends or family round for a big spread. Alternatively, they head out en masse to cafés that offer a full Turkish-style breakfast deal for around ₺18.

Street food

Unlike in Britain, **kebabs** (*kebab* in Turkish) are not generally considered takeaway food unless wrapped in *dürüm*, a tortilla wrap-like bread; more often you'll find *döner* or *köfte* in takeaway stalls, served on a baguette. A **sandwich** (*sandviç*) is a baguette chunk with various fillings (often *kokoreç* – stuffed lamb offal – or fish). In coastal cities, deep-fried **mussels** (*midye tava*) are often available, as are *midye dolması* (mussels stuffed with rice, pine nuts and allspice) – best avoided during summer because of the risk of food poisoning. In Istanbul and some other cities, look out for vendors (often street-carts) selling *nohutlu pilav* (pilau rice with chickpeas) and roast chestnuts.

A flat, pizza-like bread stuffed with various toppings, **pide** is served to diners in a *pideci* or *pide salonu* from 11am onwards. Its big advantage is that this dish is always made to order: typical styles are *kaşarlı* or *peynirli* (with cheese), *yumurtalı* (with egg), *kıymalı* (with mince) and *sucuklu* (with sausage).

Other specialities worth seeking out include **mantı** – the traditional Central Asian, meat-filled ravioli, served drenched in yoghurt and spice-reddened oil – and **gözleme**, a stuffed-*paratha*-like delicacy cooked on an upturned-wok-style dish.

Restaurants

A "**restoran**", denoting anything from a motorway-bus pit stop to a white-tablecloth affair, will provide *ızgara yemek* or meat dishes grilled to order. **Kebapçısı** traditionally specialize in kebabs, and at their most basic offer only limited side dishes – sometimes just salad, yoghurt and a few desserts. Many today, however, are veritable palaces, where you'll get a free flatbread to tear, share and mop up a few simple dips, then choose from a menu including soups, all kinds of kebabs, *köfte* (meatballs), *lahmacun* (a flatbread "pizza" topped with spicy mincemeat) and *pide*. A **lokanta** is a restaurant emphasizing *hazır yemek*, pre-cooked dishes kept warm in a steam-tray. Here also can be found *sulu yemek*, "watery food" – hearty meat or vegetable stews. Despite their often clinical appearance, the best *lokantas* may well provide your most memorable taste of Turkish cooking. Some *lokantas* are moderately upmarket, others, often referred to

as *esnaf lokantas* (tradesmen's restaurants) are more down to earth. **İskembe salonus** are aimed at revellers emerging from clubs or taverns in the early hours, and open until 5am or 6am. Their stock-in-trade is tripe soup laced liberally with garlic oil, vinegar and red pepper flakes, an effective hangover cure. A **çorbacı** is a soup kitchen.

Another kind of place that has become very popular over the last few years is **Ev Yemekleri** (home-cooked foods) cafés. Typically these are run by women who dish up good-value meals more typical of those you'd find in a Turkish home rather than a standard restaurant, with *hazır* and *sulu yemek*, *börek*, *dolma* (stuffed vegetables) and *mantı* all usually figuring. Many feature excellent-value three-course lunches for as little as **₺8**.

At an **ocakbaşı**, the grill and its hood occupy centre stage, as diners watch their meat being prepared. Even more interactive is the **kendin pişir kendin ye** (cook-it-and-eat-it-yourself) establishment, where a *mangal* (barbecue with coals), a specified quantity of raw meat, plus *kekik* (oregano) and *kimyon* (cumin) are brought to your outdoor/indoor table.

Meyhanes are taverns where eating is on a barely equal footing to tipling. Once almost solely the preserve of men, the fancier Istanbul ones, as well as some in the bigger cities and resort towns of western Turkey, are frequented by "respectable" Turkish (and foreign) women. They can be great fun, as well as dishing up excellent food. Plenty of *meyhanes* are not really suitable for foreign couples or female travellers, however, so examine the place before making your choice.

Balık Restoran (fish restaurants) are ubiquitous in western Turkey, made viable by the fish-farming industry, which produces an endless supply of sea bass and sea bream.

Prices vary widely according to the type of establishment. Expect to pay from **₺10** for a hearty *pide* in a *pideci*, **₺15** and up for a kebab or *köfte*. A simple grill or kebab in a licensed restaurant is likely to be twenty percent more expensive than in an unlicensed *kebabci*. A *meyhane* meal is likely to set you back **₺45–60** for the food, plus whatever you drink. Many have set deals, typically involving an array of cold and hot *meze*, a grilled-fish main and fruit dessert for around **₺100** – which includes as many local drinks as you desire. A main course in a *hazır yemek* joint usually costs around **₺7** for a vegetable dish, **₺10** and up for meat. A meal in a flashy fish restaurant serving wild-caught rather than farmed fish may set you back well over **₺130** without drinks.

WAITER TRICKS

Fancy, and not so fancy, restaurants sometimes levy both a *küver* (cover charge) and either a *garsoniye* ("waiter" charge) or *servis ücreti* (service charge, typically ten percent), though if it's not documented in writing on the menu, technically you don't have to pay this. At places without **menus** (which is common), you'll need to ascertain prices beforehand and review bills carefully when finished. Waiting staff are adept at bringing you items (pickles, garlic bread, *çiğ börek*, mini-*meze*, bottled water, etc) that you haven't specifically ordered – but which you will definitely pay for unless announced by the magic words *ikramızdır* (with our compliments).

Dishes and specialities

The most common **soups** (*çorbas*) are *mercimek* (lentil), *ezo gelin* (a thick rice and vegetable broth – an appetizing breakfast) and *işkembe* (tripe). *Çoban* (shepherd's) *salatası* means the ubiquitous, micro-chopped cucumber, tomato, onion, pepper and parsley **salad** (approach the peppers with caution); *yeşil* (green) salad, usually just some *marul* (lettuce), is less often available. The more European *mevsim salatası* ("seasonal" salad) – perhaps tomato slices, watercress, red cabbage and lettuce hearts sprinkled with cheese and drenched in dressing – makes a welcome change from "shepherd's" salad.

Meze and vegetable dishes

Turkey is justly famous for its **meze** (appetizers). Found in any *içkili restoran* (licensed restaurant) or *meyhane* – and some unlicensed places too – they are the best dishes for vegetarians, since many are meat-free.

Common platters include *patlıcan salatası* (aubergine mash), *piyaz* (white haricot vinaigrette), *semizotu* (purslane weed, usually in yoghurt), *mücvet* (courgette fritters), *sigara böreği* (tightly rolled cheese pastries), *imam bayıldı* (cold baked aubergine with onion and tomato) and *dolma* (any stuffed vegetable, but typically peppers or tomatoes).

In *hazır yemek* restaurants, *kuru fasulye* (haricot bean stew), *taze fasulye* (French beans), *sebze turlu* (vegetable stew) and *nohut* (chickpeas) are the principal **vegetable dishes**. Although no meat may be visible, they're almost always made with lamb or chicken broth; even bulgur and rice may be cooked

in meat stock. Vegetarians might ask *İçinde et suyu var mı?* (Does it contain meat stock?).

Bread and cheese

The standard Turkish loaf is delicious hot out of the oven, but soon becomes stale. Flat, unadorned *pide* is served with soup at *kebabçısı* year-round (and daily throughout Ramadan), as is delicious *lavaş*, a flatbread brought hot to the table puffed-up like a balloon. *Kepekli* (wholemeal) or *çavdar* (rye bread; only from a *fırın* or bakery) afford relief in larger towns. In villages, cooked *yufka* – the basis of *börek* pastry – makes a welcome respite, as does *bazlama* (similar to an Indian *paratha*).

Beyaz peynir (like Greek feta) is the commonest Turkish **cheese**, but there are many others. *Dil peynir* (“tongue” cheese), a hard, salty cheese comprised of mozzarella-like filaments, and the plaited *oğru peynir*, can both be grilled or fried like Cypriot halloumi. *Tulum peynir* is a strong goat’s cheese cured in a goatskin; it is used as *börek* stuffing, although together with walnuts, it makes a very popular *meze*. *Otlu peynir* from the Van area is cured with herbs; cow’s-milk *kaşar*, especially *eski* (aged) *kaşar* from the Kars region, is also highly esteemed.

Meat dishes

Grilled meat dishes – normally served simply with a few *pide* slices and raw vegetable garnish – include several variations on the kebab. *Adana kebab* is spicy, with sprinkled purple sumac herb betraying Arab influence; *İskender kebab*, best sampled in Bursa, is heavy on the flatbread, tomato sauce and yoghurt; *sarmı beyti* is a ground-beef kebab wrapped in *dürüm* bread and baked in the oven. Chicken kebab (*tavuk* or *piliç şiş*) is ubiquitous, and chicken is also served as *şiş*, *pırzola* (grilled breast) or *kanat* (grilled wings). Offal is popular, particularly *böbrek* (kidney), *yürek* (heart), *ciğer* (liver), and *koç yumurtası* (ram’s egg) or *billur* (crystal) – the last two euphemisms for testicle.

More elaborate **meat-and-veg combinations** include *mussaka* (inferior to the Greek rendition), *karniyarik* (a much better Turkish variation), *güveç* (clay-pot fricassee), *tas kebab* (stew), *hunkar beğendi* (lamb, puréed aubergine and cheese), *saray kebab* (beef stew topped with bechamel sauce and oven-browned), *macar kebab* (fine veal chunks in a spicy sauce with tomatoes and wine) and *saç kavurma*, an Anatolian speciality of meat, vegetables and spices fried up in a *saç* (the Turkish wok). *Şalgam*, a fiery drink made from fermented turnip and carrot, is an acquired taste that makes the best accompaniment to *Adana kebab*.

Fish and seafood

Fish and seafood is good. Usually sold by weight, per-portion prices of about ₺15–20 prevail for fish-farmed and less-valued species such as *istavrit* (whitebait). Prized wild-caught species can be very expensive. Choose with an eye to what’s in season (as opposed to farmed, frozen and imported), and don’t turn your nose up at humbler varieties, which will likely be fresher. Budget mainstays include *sardalya* (grilled sardines), *palamut* (autumn tuna), *akya* (*liche* in French; no English name) and *sangöz* (black bream). *Çipura* (gilt-head bream) and *levrek* (sea bass) are usually farmed. Fish is invariably served simply, with just a garnish of spring onion (*soğan*) and rocket (*roka*).

Desserts and sweets

Turkish chefs pander shamelessly to the sweet-toothed, who will find a huge range of sugary treats at a **pastane** (sweet shop).

Turkish delight and baklava

The best-known Turkish sweet, *lokum* or “**Turkish delight**”, is basically solidified sugar and pectin, flavoured (most commonly) with rosewater, often stuffed with pistachios or other nuts and finally sprinkled with powdered sugar. There are also numerous kinds of **helva**, including the tahini-paste chewy substance synonymous with the concoction in the West. *Yaz halvası* (summer *helva*) is made from semolina flour – the chocolate and nut-stuffed version is delicious.

Of the syrup-soaked **baklava**-type items – all permutations of a sugar, flour, nut and butter mix – the best is *antep fıstıklı sarması* (pistachio-filled *baklava*), though it’s pricey at ₺8–12 per serving. Other *baklava* tend to be *cevizli* (walnut-filled) and slightly cheaper. *Künefe* – the “shredded wheat” filaments of *kadayif* perched atop white cheese, baked and then soaked in syrup – has become a ubiquitous dessert in kebab and *lahmacun* places; both *baklava* and *künefe* are often served with large dollops of glutinous Maraş ice cream (see opposite).

Puddings, ice cream and fruit

Less sweet and healthier than Turkish delight and *baklava* are the **milk-based** dishes, popular everywhere. *Süpanyile* (“*süp*” for short, a corruption of *soupe d’Anglais*) is an incredibly dense, rich chocolate pudding with sponge or a biscuit embedded inside. More modest are *keşkül* (vanilla and nut-crumble custard) and *sütlaç* (rice pudding) – one dessert that’s consistently available in

ordinary restaurants. The most complicated dish is *tavukgöğsü*, a cinnamon-topped morsel made from hyper-boiled and strained chicken breast, semolina starch and milk. *Kazandibi* (literally “bottom of the pot”) is *tavukgöğsü* residue with a dark crust on the bottom – not to be confused with *finn sütlaç*, which is actually *sütlaç* pudding with a scorched top baked in a clay dish.

Aşure is a sort of rosewater jelly laced with pulses, wheat berries, raisins and nuts. It supposedly contains forty ingredients, after a legend claiming that after the Biblical Ark’s forty-day sail during the Flood, and the first sighting of dry land, Noah commanded that a stew be made of the forty remaining kinds of food on board.

Traditional Turkish ice cream (*dondurma*) is an excellent summer treat, provided it’s genuine *Maraşlı döşme* (whipped in the Kahraman Maraş tradition – a bit like Italian gelato). The outlandishly costumed *dondurma* street-sellers of yore have been overtaken by upmarket parlours selling every conceivable flavour; the best chain of these is Mado, with high prices but equally high quality.

Summer fruit (*meyve*) generally means *kavun* (Persian melon, honeydew) or *karpuz* (watermelon). Autumn choices include *kabak tatlısı* (candied squash with walnut chunks and *kaymak*, or clotted cream) or *ayva tatlısı* (stewed quince served with nuts or dried fruit, topped with *kaymak* and dusted with grated pistachio).

Slightly more healthy options include *cezeriye*, a sweetmeat made of carrot juice, honey and nuts; the east Anatolian snack of **peştil** (dried fruit), most commonly apricot and peach, pressed into sheets; and **tatlı sucuk**, a fruit, nut and molasses roll.

Coffee and tea

The Ottomans introduced **coffee** – and the notion of the coffee house – to the West during the seventeenth century. Intermittently banned as hotbeds of sedition and vice by the religious authorities, coffee houses had nonetheless become fixtures of Istanbul society by the mid-sixteenth century. The coffee was prepared, as it still is today, using finely ground coffee brewed up in a small pan and served, in tiny cups, *sade* (without sugar), *orta şekerli* (medium sweet) or *çok şekerli* (very sweet). Coffee fell out of favour during the early Republican period as, following the loss of the coffee-producing Arab territories, it had to be imported. But after decades of being both exorbitantly expensive and hard to find, coffee has made a major comeback. Traditional Turkish coffee is widely available today, and in the

big cities and resorts there are plenty of cafés serving filter, latte and other types of coffee, though in more remote areas the usual standby is (invariably over-strong) instant coffee.

Tea has, however, become the national drink, especially in rural areas and among the less well off, as it’s still much cheaper than coffee. Home-grown in the eastern Black Sea region since the 1920s, it’s an essential social lubricant. The drink is prepared in a *çaydanlık* or *demlik*, a double-boiler apparatus, with a larger water chamber underneath the smaller receptacle containing dry leaves, to which a small quantity of hot water is added. After a suitable (or unsuitably long) wait, the tea is decanted into tulip-shaped glasses, then diluted with more water to taste: *açık* is weak, *demli* or *koyu* steeped. Sugar comes as cubes on the side; milk is never added.

Herbal **teas** are also popular, particularly *ihlamur* (linden flower), *kuşburnu* (rose hip), *papatya* (camomile) and *ada çay* (“island” tea), an infusion of a sage common in coastal areas. The much-touted **apple tea** (*elma çay*) contains chemicals and not a trace of real apple essence.

Soft drinks

Fruit juices (*meyva suyu*) nowadays usually come in cardboard cartons or cans, and are refreshing but high in added sugar. Flavours include *kayısı* (apricot), *şeftali* (peach) and *vişne* (sour cherry). Fresh orange juice is widely available in tourist areas and big cities, as is *nar suyu* (pomegranate juice).

Bottled **spring water** (*memba suyu*) or fizzy **mineral water** (*maden suyu* or *soda*) are restaurant staples, but cheaper establishments usually offer free potable tap water in a glass bottle or a jug. *Meşrubat* is the generic term for all types of carbonated **soft drinks**.

Certain beverages accompany particular kinds of food or appear at set seasons. *Sıcak süt* (hot milk) is the traditional complement to *börek*, though in winter it’s fortified with *salep*, made from the ground tubers of a phenomenally expensive wild orchid (*Orchis mascula*) gathered in coastal hills near Izmir. **Salep** is a good safeguard against colds (and also reputedly an aphrodisiac), though most packages sold are heavily adulterated with powdered milk, starch and sugar. **Ayran** (watered-down yoghurt) is always on offer at *pidemis* and *kebabçısı*, and is an excellent accompaniment to spicy food. In autumn and winter, stalls sell **boza**, a delicious, mildly fermented millet drink.

Alcoholic drinks

Since the accession of the nominally Islamist AK Party in 2002, the price of **alcoholic drinks** has risen sharply – mainly because of the eighty percent tax levied. Alcoholic beverages are still widely available, however, especially in the big cities of western Turkey and all resort areas. It's much scarcer in provincial and conservative towns in central and eastern Anatolia, such as Afyon, Konya, Erzurum or Diyarbakır.

Wine

Wine (*şarap*) comes from vineyards scattered across western Anatolia between Cappadocia, the Euphrates Valley, Thrace and the Aegean. Fine wine now has a local audience, with expensive imported labels available in most upmarket town-centre or hotel restaurants and the bigger supermarkets. Local wines are also now better distributed, resulting in a huge variety in trendy resorts, though quality remains inconsistent. Red wine is *kırmızı*, white *beyaz*, rose *roze*. In shops, count on paying ₺18–35 per bottle of basic to mid-range wine. In restaurants, a standard table wine will set you back a minimum of ₺50, but more usually ₺70–80. Most places sell wine by the glass for ₺12–18.

The market is dominated by two large vintners:

Doluca (try their Antik premium labels, or Moskado Sek) and **Kavaklıdere** (whose Çankaya white, Angora red and Lâl rose are commendable). Kavaklıdere also produces a sparkling white, İnci Damalası, the closest thing to local champagne. Other smaller, regional brands to watch for include Turasan, Narbağ, and Peribacası (Cappadocia). Feyzi Kutman red in particular is superb, though rarely

found outside the largest centres. Another affordable Aegean producer worth sampling is Sevilen, which makes organic reds – Merlot and Cabernet – at premium prices, good whites and a palatable, MOR label, Tellibağ. Similarly confined to their areas of production are Majestik red, available only around İzmir, cheap-and-cheerful wines from Şirince, plus the vintners of Bozcaada (see box, p.200).

Rakı and other spirits

The Turkish national aperitif is **rakı**, not unlike Greek ouzo but stronger (45–48 percent alcohol), usually drunk over ice and topped up with bottled water. The *meyhane* routine of an evening is for a group to order a big bottle of rakı, a bucket of ice and a few bottles of water, and then slowly drink themselves under the table between bites of seafood *meze* or nibbles of *çerez* – the generic term for pumpkin seeds, roasted chickpeas, almonds etc, served on tiny plates. The best brand is reckoned to be Efe, particularly its green-label line. However, Burgaz is often better value and nearly as good (again in green-label variety). Tekirdağ, especially its “gold series”, is also recommendable. Yeni is the most widely available at most establishments, with a double rakı in a *meyhane* running ₺12–16. A 70cl bottle of Yeni Rakı in a Turkish shop costs around ₺70, and all brands are much cheaper bought duty-free.

Stronger **spirits** – *cin* (gin), *votka* (vodka) and *kanyak* (cognac) – exist as imported labels or cheaper but often nastier *yerli* (locally produced) variants. Avoid drinking spirits that are suspiciously cheap; several tourists have died in recent years from drinking bootleg liquor made from deadly methyl alcohol.

TURKISH BEER

Local brewery Efes Pilsen has a stranglehold on the Turkish beer (*bira*) market, sponsoring everything from a blues festival to one of the country's leading basketball teams. Luckily they produce a generally well-regarded pilsner-type brew, which comes in either 33cl or 50cl bottles or cans, plus in draught in many bars. From a supermarket or *bakkal* (small grocery store), expect to pay around ₺5 a bottle, slightly more for a can. **Efes Dark** is a sweeter, stronger stout-style beer, while **Efes-Xtra** is eight percent proof, though neither is widely available in bars or restaurants. Efes have added several more types of beer to their portfolio, the **Malt** being particularly good. Bottled **Efes Fıçı** (draught) also makes a nice change from the standard brew, as does **Bomonti**, a light wheat beer. **Tuborg**, of Danish origins, is the other major home-grown beer. It is less widely available than Efes, though some people swear by it. Their red-label beer is stronger than the standard green. **Carlsberg** is also brewed locally, while **Gusta** is a decent, dark, home-produced wheat beer.

Prices in bars and restaurants vary widely, with the cheaper places selling a 50cl beer for ₺9, trendier places for ₺15 and up. If the bar has draught (*fıçı*) beer, it's usually a little cheaper. If it's available, you'll pay at least a third more for the dubious privilege of drinking Corona, Fosters, Heineken or Becks.

Health

No special inoculations are required for Turkey, although jabs against tetanus, diphtheria, polio, measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and chickenpox are advisable. Cautious travellers might want typhoid and tetanus jabs, particularly for eastern Anatolia. Some visitors also get injections against hepatitis A and B, for which the risk is possibly greater in Istanbul than in rural areas. Malaria is theoretically a seasonal (April–July) problem between Adana and Mardin, especially in areas irrigated by the Southeastern Anatolia Project. However, for brief visits you shouldn't need prophylactic drugs. For up-to-date advice, consult a travel clinic.

Stomach upsets and drinking water

Many visitors experience bouts of **diarrhoea**, especially on longer stays. If you do get struck down, note that *Motilol* or *Imodium* (trade names for diphenoxylate) are easily available in Turkey. They allow you to travel without constantly running to the bathroom, but do not kill the bug that ails you, as they slow down the process of flushing it out. *Buscopan*, also sold locally, is particularly good for stomach cramps, while *Ge-Oral* powder dissolved in pure water is an effective rehydration remedy. **Turkish tap water** is usually drinkable, but it tastes strongly of chlorine, so travellers usually prefer to stick to bottled water, especially in Istanbul where the water is particularly chlorinated. **Rural springs** are labelled *içilir*, *içilbelir* or *içme suyu* (all meaning “potable”), or *içilmez* (not drinkable).

Particularly during the hot summer months, serious **food poisoning** is a possibility – even in the biggest cities and resorts, and especially in south-eastern Turkey. In restaurants, avoid dishes that look as if they have been standing around, and make sure meat and fish are well grilled. Don't, whatever you do, eat stuffed mussels in summer. If you're struck down, try to let the bug run its course and drink lots of fluids; eating plain white rice and yoghurt also helps. Stubborn cases will need a course of antibiotics or *Flagyl* (metronidazole), the latter effective against giardia and protozoans as well as certain bacteria; pharmacists are trained to recognize symptoms, and you don't need a prescription.

Bites and stings

Mosquitoes are sometimes a problem, and since no good topical repellents are available locally, you should bring your own. At night, mozzies are deterred with locally sold incense coils (*spiral tütsü*) or an *Esem Mat*, a small, electrified tray that slowly vaporizes an odourless disc. Hotels and *pansiyon*s in heavily infested areas often have mosquito screens on the windows.

Jellyfish are an occasional hazard along the Aegean shore, and they are ubiquitous in the Bosphorus and Sea of Marmara (though they aren't such a problem around the Princes Islands). **Sea urchins**, whose spines easily detach if trodden on, are more common; the splinters must be removed to prevent infection. **Snakes** and **scorpions** can lurk among the stones at archeological sites, and in nooks and crannies of ground-floor accommodation. There are two kinds of vipers (*engerek* in Turkish): the deadly, metre-long Ottoman viper, fortunately rare, and the smaller, more common and less dangerous asp viper. Neither is particularly aggressive unless disturbed; both are most commonly seen during mild spring days.

Certain **ticks** in Turkey carry the Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (**CCHF**) virus, with hundreds of cases (and fatalities in two figures) annually, though the danger seems confined to rural areas of several provinces between Ankara and the Black Sea.

Although rare (one to two cases per year), **rabies** is another potential danger. Be wary of any animal that bites, scratches or licks you, particularly if it's behaving erratically. If you do suspect you have been bitten by a rabid animal, wash the wound thoroughly (preferably with iodine) and seek medical attention immediately. Turkish cities are full of stray cats and dogs; dogs with a tag in their ear have been inoculated against rabies and other diseases and put back on the street with the blessing of the local authority.

Medical treatment

Minor complaints can be dealt with at a **pharmacy** (*eczane*); even the smallest town will have one. Turkish pharmacists may speak some English or German, and dispense medicines that would ordinarily require a prescription at home. Prices for locally produced medicines are low, but it may be difficult to find exact equivalents to your home prescription. Pharmacies are usually open Monday–Saturday 7am–7pm and closed on Sundays, but take turns to be a *Nöbetçi* (Duty) pharmacy. Each town

or city will have one or more chemists open at night and on a Sunday; a duty roster is posted in Turkish in every chemist's front window. Note that there are usually several pharmacies near major hospitals, one of which is often the *Nöbetçi* pharmacy.

For more serious conditions, go to one of the **public clinics** (*sağlık ocağı*), or a **hospital** (*hastane*), indicated by a blue street sign with a large white "H" on it. Hospitals are either public (*Devlet Hastane* or *SSK Hastanesi*) or private (*Özel Hastane*). In terms of cutting bureaucracy and speed of treatment, a private hospital is far better, especially as many of the major ones have an English- (and often other languages) speaking assistant whose job is to deal with foreigners. Fees are lower than in northern Europe and North America but still substantial enough to make insurance cover essential (there are no reciprocal healthcare arrangements between Turkey and the EU). Expect to pay €35 and up to see a general doctor in a hospital, €90 and up to see a specialist consultant. The medical faculties of major universities – eg Istanbul, Izmir, Edirne, Antalya and Bursa – also have teaching hospitals, which are infinitely better than the state hospitals, but usually less expensive than the private ones. Summoning a doctor to your hotel room will cost about €50, plus medication delivered from a local pharmacy. If you're on a package tour, the better companies will have arrangements with competent, English-speaking doctors and dentists in or near the resort. In a medical **emergency**, summon an ambulance by dialling 112.

Contraception and female hygiene

International brands of **birth control** pills (*doğum kontrol hapları*) are sold at pharmacies. **Condoms** (*preservatif*) are sold in most pharmacies and also supermarkets like Migros; don't buy off street-carts, where stock may be tampered with or expired. **Tampons** are available from pharmacies and supermarkets at UK prices; Orkid is the adequate domestic brand of sanitary towels.

Culture and etiquette

Many Turks, even in remote areas, have lived and worked abroad (mainly in Germany) or at tourist resorts in Turkey, and are used to foreign ways. But

traditional customs matter, and although you're unlikely to cause offence through a social gaffe, it's best to be aware of prevailing customs. Also, many Turks are devout (or at least conservative) Muslims, so you should adhere to local dress codes – particularly away from resorts and when visiting mosques.

Invitations and meals

Hospitality (*misafirperverlik*) is a pillar of rural Turkish culture, so you're unlikely to leave the country without at least one invitation to **drink tea**, either in a *çayhane* (teahouse) or someone's home. If you really can't spare the time, mime "thanks" by placing one hand on your chest and pointing with the other to your watch and then in the direction you're headed. If you do stop, remember that drinking only one glass may be interpreted as casting aspersions on their tea. If offered a full meal, decline the first offer – if it's sincere it will be repeated at least twice and custom demands that you accept the third offer.

Being **invited for a meal** at a Turkish home is both an honour and an obligation. Always remove your shoes at the door. In urban, middle-class homes you'll sit at a table and eat with cutlery. In village houses, however, the meal is usually served at a low table with cushions on the floor; hide your feet under the table or a dropcloth provided for the purpose. (Feet, shod or not, are considered unclean and should never be pointed at anyone.) When scooping food with bread sections from a communal bowl, **use your right hand** – the left is reserved for bodily hygiene. If you use toothpicks provided at restaurants, cover your mouth while doing so.

Dress and body language

What is acceptable dress-wise depends very much on which part of the country – or even which part of a city – you are visiting. Overall, though, Turkey is conservative regarding dress. **Beachwear** should be confined to the beach, while strolling shirtless around resort streets is offensive (though plenty of foreign men in resort areas do it). Revealing clothing such as miniskirts and skimpy shorts should be avoided away from heavily touristy areas. **Nude sunbathing** is not acceptable anywhere, though at any major Mediterranean/Aegean resort, discreet topless sunning takes place.

If you venture much off the tourist track, accept that being **stared at** is part of the experience and not considered rude. In some parts of the

southeast, you may be mobbed by small children wishing to guide you around the local ruins and/or begging for pens, sweets or money.

Turks employ a variety of **body language** which is often not immediately obvious. Clicking the tongue against the roof of the mouth and simultaneously raising the eyebrows and chin means “no” or “there isn’t any”; those economical of movement will rely on their eyebrows alone. By contrast, wagging the head rapidly from side to side means “Explain, I don’t understand”, while a single, obliquely inclined nod means “yes”.

Black and Asian travellers

In remoter areas, **black and Asian people** may find themselves something of a curiosity, and may receive unsolicited comments – ranging from *Zencil* (a Black!) to the notionally more appreciative *çok güzel* (very pretty!). Turkey is in fact one of the least racist countries around the Mediterranean. Many black footballers from Africa and South America play in Turkish teams, and you may also notice the

country’s black minority group, termed “Afro-Turks” (see box, p.230), particularly around İzmir.

Female travellers

While many **female travellers** encounter little more than some flirtatious banter while travelling in Turkey, a minority experience unwanted attention and more serious harassment in both resorts and rural areas. The key to avoiding trouble is to be aware of your surroundings, dress and behaviour and how it might be interpreted. If travelling alone, it’s best to stick to mid-range hotels (particularly in the interior) and schedule transport to arrive during daylight hours. That said, the backstreets of most Turkish towns are a lot safer at night than those of many Western cities. This is partly due to a heavy police presence; do not hesitate to ask them for help. Away from the main resorts, **unaccompanied women** are a rare sight at night; when heading out for an evening, try to go as part of a group, preferably mixed-sex (all-female groups may still get some unwelcome attention). In restaurants,

WOMEN IN TURKEY

Acceptable behaviour and roles for **women** vary widely by class and region. In Istanbul and along the heavily touristy coastline, social freedom approximates that of Western Europe; in more traditional areas females act conservatively, with headscarves in abundance.

Turkish women have long held **jobs** in the professions and civil service as well as in the tourist sector, in hotels and for airlines. There are female police, and an increasing number of women can be found working in restaurants and bars – though only in resorts and some of the more westernized cities such as Antalya, Ankara, Istanbul and İzmir. Despite this, Global Gender Gap’s 2015 figures revealed Turkey ranking a lowly 125th of 142 countries surveyed. In rural areas, women rarely have access to formal employment, and usually work the land.

Literacy rates for girls are also significantly lower in rural areas despite compulsory education up to the age of fifteen.

In villages, parents still choose wives for their sons; in cities, more Western attitudes prevail and couples even live together unmarried. Despite the current AKP government openly calling for a ban, abortion is still legal, though many state hospitals refuse to carry out terminations. Contraceptives are readily obtainable; and a baby can be registered to unmarried parents. The average number of children per family is two, though there’s a huge disparity between eastern and western Turkey, with families of up to twelve not uncommon in poorer southeastern (ethnically Kurdish) parts of the country. The law gives men considerable say over their children, though divorce law is fairly equitable.

Sadly, Turkey is also known for hundreds of annual “**honour**” killings, particularly in Kurdish areas. These occur for actual or suspected adultery, pregnancy out of wedlock or dating someone disapproved of by the family. While in the past this crime was carried out by a male relative, lately women have been forced to commit suicide instead. That said, the pro-Kurdish HDP (Peoples’ Democracy Party) has, in fact, proportionally far more female MPs than any other party in Turkey.

Rates of **domestic violence** and **sexual abuse** are extremely worrying countrywide, highlighted by the fact that between 2003 and 2013 there was a 1400 percent increase in the number of women murdered. Some commentators attribute the rise to the “value” of women declining in the decades of the Pro-Islamic AKP government; others put it down simply to more efficient recording and reporting of crimes against women.

unaccompanied women may be directed to the *aile salonu* (family parlour), usually upstairs, rather than be served with the male diners who tend to eat downstairs. While **public drunkenness** is unacceptable for both genders, this is especially true for women (see box, p.45).

Turkish women have, over the years, devised successful tactics to protect themselves from **harassment** – specifically, avoiding eye contact with men and looking as confident and purposeful as possible. When all else fails, the best way to neutralize harassment is to make a public scene. The words *Ayip* (“Shame!”) or *Beni rahatsız ediyorsun* (“You’re disturbing me”), spoken very loudly,

generally have the desired effect – passers-by or fellow passengers will deal with the situation for you. *Defol* (“Piss off!”) and *Bırak beni* (“Leave me alone”) are stronger retorts. In general, Turkish men back down when confronted, and cases of violent sexual harassment outside the home are rare.

Prostitution

Prostitution is thriving in Turkey, both in legal, state-controlled brothels and, illegally, on the streets and in certain bars and dubious hotels. Many prostitutes who work illegally come from Russia and former Soviet-bloc countries such as Moldova or Ukraine, and are known locally as “Natashas”. Female travellers

HAMAMS (TURKISH BATHS)

The **hamam** (Turkish bath) once played a pivotal role in hygiene, social discourse and religious life (they were often part of a mosque complex) in Turkey, but as the standard of living has increased, its importance has diminished. As an exercise in nostalgia, however, it’s well worth visiting one – Istanbul in particular boasts many historic hamams (see p.88, p.91, p.92 & p.93) worth experiencing for their architecture alone – and, of course, they make for a very relaxing end to a day of slogging around the sights.

Most Turkish towns have at least one hamam, usually signposted; otherwise look for the distinctive external profile of the roof domes. Ordinary hamams charge ₺10–15 basic **admission**, the price normally indicated by the front desk; those in coastal tourist resorts and Istanbul can be far more expensive (₺15–200 plus), with an optional scrub and/or massage adding to the cost. Most baths are either for men or women, or **sexually segregated** on a schedule, with women usually allotted more restricted hours, usually midweek during the day. Some larger hamams have both male and female sections.

HAMAM ETIQUETTE

On entering, leave your **valuables** in a small locking drawer, keeping the key (usually on a wrist thong) with you for the duration. Bring soap and shampoo, as it’s not always sold in the foyer. Men are supplied with a *peştamal*, a thin, wraparound sarong, women generally enter in knickers but not bra; both sexes get *takunya*, awkward wooden clogs, and later a *havlu* (towel). Leave your clothes in the changing cubicle (*camekan* in Turkish).

The **hararet** or **main bath chamber** ranges from plain to ornate, though any decent hamam will be marble-clad at least up to chest height. Two or more *halvets*, semi-private corner rooms with two or three *kurnas* (basins) each, lead off from the main chamber. The internal temperature varies from tryingly hot to barely lukewarm, depending on how well run the baths are. Unless with a friend, it’s one customer to a set of taps and basin; refrain from making a big soapy mess in the basin, which is meant for mixing pure water to ideal temperature. Use the scoop-dishes provided to sluice yourself. It’s considered good etiquette to clean your marble slab with a few scoopfuls of water before leaving.

At the heart of the hamam is the **göbek taşı** or “navel stone”, a raised platform positioned over the furnaces that heat the premises. The *göbek taşı* will be piping hot and covered with prostrate figures absorbing the heat. It’s also the venue for (very) vigorous massages from the *tellâk* or masseur/masseuse. A *kese* (abrasive mitt) session from the same person, in which dead skin and grime are scrubbed away, will probably suit more people. Terms for the *tellâks’* services should be displayed in the foyer. Few hamams have a masseuse, so female visitors will have to think very carefully before accepting a massage from a masseur – though this is far from unknown. Scrubs and massages are charged extra, so make sure you know what you’ll be paying. Upon return to your cubicle with its reclining couch(es) you’ll be offered tea, soft drinks or mineral water – charged extra as per a posted price placard. Except in heavily touristed establishments, extra **tips** are not required or expected.

MOSQUE MANNERS

As you stroll around the tourist-thronged sites of Istanbul's Sultanahmet or the promenade of an Aegean or Mediterranean resort, it can at times be hard to remember that you are in a predominantly Muslim country – though even here the call to prayer echoes out five times daily: sunrise, midday, late afternoon, sunset and after dark.

Many of Turkey's inhabitants are, however, both conservative and devout. Bear this in mind particularly when **visiting a mosque**. All those likely to be of interest to a foreign visitor (and many more besides) display some kind of "conduct" notice at the door outlining the **entry rules** – which are simple:

- Cover your head (women) and shoulders/upper arms (both sexes).
- No shorts or miniskirts.
- Take off your shoes before entering. (Many mosques now provide a plastic bag for this – before entering, slip your shoes into the bag and carry them around with you. Alternatively, place your footwear on the shelves provided.)

Especially if you are in a very conservative part of the country (which includes most of inland Anatolia as well as conservative districts within the big cities, like Istanbul's Fatih) try to avoid your visit coinciding with **noon prayers** – particularly those on a **Friday**, the most important prayer session of the week. Once inside the mosque, you're free to wander around, take photographs and admire the interior – but keep your voice down (there are often people praying or reciting the Koran outside of the five daily prayer times) and don't take pictures of worshippers unless they give their permission. Although the imam is a state-paid official, upkeep of the building is down to charity, so you may want to put a **donation** in the collection box.

may be mistaken for prostitutes by local men assuming that any foreign woman out unaccompanied at night must be on the game. If you wander through **seedy districts** such as Aksaray in Istanbul, or stumble across known pick-up points on major highways, expect to be followed by kerb-crawlers; it's usually enough to explain that you're not a *natasha*. This guide doesn't recommend hotels used for prostitution, but management and clientele can change, so keep your antennae primed.

Gay and lesbian travellers

Turkish society has always been deeply ambivalent about male **homosexuality**, since the days of a rampantly bisexual Ottoman culture, when transvestite dancers and entertainers were the norm. That said, public attitudes are generally intolerant or closeted. The only place with a recognized gay scene is Istanbul, though the more liberal towns of Antalya and Izmir and the resorts of Bodrum, Marmaris and Alanya are considered gay-friendly.

Homosexual acts between adults over 18 are legal, but existing **laws** against "spreading homosexual information" in print – ie advocating the lifestyle – are sporadically enforced. Gay Pride festivals have been forcibly cancelled, and cruising is an offence. Advocating a gay lifestyle remains an offence. On a more positive note, in 2011 a major Gay Pride march down İstiklal Caddesi in Istanbul attracted over ten

thousand participants and passed without incident, though marchers in 2015 came under water-canon fire after chanting anti-government slogans. Despite the ambiguous official attitude to gays, there is a strong scene in Istanbul (see p.129).

In terms of **accommodation**, turkey-gay-travel.com will help you find gay-friendly places to stay. The main pro-gay organisation, lambda, has a website, lambdalistanbul.org, though in Turkish only.

Smoking

With over forty percent of the adult population (around 25 million) indulging in the nicotine habit, the old saying "smokes like a Turk" is a fairly accurate assessment. Yet things have changed dramatically in recent years. Smoking was **banned** on public transport and in airports, bus terminals and train stations back in 1997, and then further prohibited in 2009 in all public buildings, and all enclosed public spaces including bars, cafés, restaurants and clubs – including nargile (hookah) cafés. There was of course a major outcry, largely from the owners of *kahvehanes* (the basic, invariably all-male, tea-and-coffee dens) and bars and restaurants. The ban is widely flouted despite the steep fines for proprietors, many of whom have muddied the waters by erecting tent-like awnings at the front or rear of their establishment, warmed in winter by outdoor heaters.

Toilets

Western-style toilets are usual in many hotels, restaurants, cafés and bars. The only difference you're likely to notice is a small pipe fitted at the rear rim of the basin – which serves the same purpose as a bidet. The tap to turn it on is usually located on the wall behind the loo. Used toilet paper should go in the bins provided rather than in the toilet – blockages are not uncommon.

In rural areas (and less touristy parts of major cities), however, traditional **squat toilets** are still the norm, especially those attached to service stations, basic eateries and mosques. Mosque loos are often the only "public" toilet you'll be able to find in remote parts of big cities or in smaller towns. There's always a tap and plastic jug next to the toilet, but few provide paper, so it's a good idea to carry some around with you. An attendant at the entrance will divest you of a lira or so on your way out and, in return, give you a tissue and splash of cologne on your hands.

Festivals

Celebrations in Turkey include religious festivals, observed throughout the Islamic world on dates determined by the Muslim Hijra calendar, as well as annual cultural or harvest extravaganzas held in various cities and resorts across the country.

Religious festivals

The most important religious festival is **Ramadan** (*Ramazan* in Turkish), the Muslim month of daylight abstinence from food, water, tobacco and sexual relations. Otherwise, life carries on as normal during Ramadan, despite the fact that half the population is fasting from sunrise to sunset. Some restaurants close for the duration or severely curtail their menus, others discreetly hide their salons behind curtains, but at most establishments you will be served with surprisingly good grace. The Koran allows pregnant and nursing mothers, the infirm and travellers to be excused from obligatory fasting; immediately after dark there's an orgy of eating (the *iftar yemeği*) by the famished in places public and private, and restaurants sell out of everything within an hour of sunset.

Kadir Gecesi (The Eve of Power), when Mohammed received the Koran from Allah, takes place between the 27th and 28th days of the month of Ramadan. Mosques – brilliantly illuminated for the whole month – are full all night, as it's believed

that prayers at this time have special efficacy. On **Arife**, the last day of Ramadan, it is customary to go to the cemeteries and pay respects to departed ancestors; many rural restaurants close that evening.

The three-day **Şeker Bayramı** (Sugar Holiday) immediately follows Ramadan, celebrated by family reunions and the giving of presents and sweets to children, and restrained general partying in restaurants; on Arife eve, the night after Kadir Gecesi, you will have to book well in advance for tables at better establishments.

The four-day **Kurban Bayramı** (Festival of the Sacrifice), in which the sacrificial offering of a sheep represents Abraham's son Ishmael (a Koranic version of the Old Testament story), is marked by the massive slaughter of sheep and goats. Only wealthy families can afford to buy a whole animal, so part of the meat is distributed to the poor of the neighbourhood.

During the Şeker and Kurban festivals **travel** becomes difficult – reserve well in advance for a seat on any long-distance coach, train or plane. If you travel by road in national holiday periods, note that the already high traffic accident rate soars. Many shops and all banks, museums and government offices close during these periods (although corner grocery stores and most resort shops stay open) and when the festivals occur close to a national secular holiday, the whole country effectively grinds to a halt for up to a week.

Religious festival dates

As the Islamic calendar is Lunar, the **dates** of the four important religious festivals drift backwards eleven days each year (twelve in a leap year) relative to the Gregorian calendar. Future dates of festivals given on Islamic websites are provisional.

2016 Şeker July 4–7; **Kurban** Sept 11–15

2017 Şeker June 24–27; **Kurban** Aug 31–Sept 4

2018 Şeker June 14–17; **Kurban** Aug 24–28

2019 Şeker June 4–7; **Kurban** Aug 10–14

Cultural festivals

Cultural festivals are most interesting in cities and resorts that have the resources to attract internationally renowned acts. Almost every town has some yearly bash, though many are of limited interest to outsiders. We've highlighted the best below, with fuller descriptions in the guide.

Folk-dance festivals provide an opportunity to see Turkey's best dance troupes perform a sample of the varied repertoire of Turkish dances in traditional costumes. In addition to the summary below there's

a full festival calendar for Istanbul in chapter 1 (see box, p.130).

January

Camel wrestling Selçuk. The festival itself takes place on the last two weekends, though bouts occur throughout Aydın province from December onwards.

April

Istanbul International Film Festival Istanbul 🌐 film.iksv.org/en. Full-length features and documentaries.

Tulip Festival Istanbul. Two-week festival honouring the national flower. Over fifteen million bulbs flower across the city, best seen in parks such as Emirgan and Güllhane early in the month.

May

Conquest Celebrations Istanbul 🌐 ibb.gov.tr. Week-long celebration of the Ottoman conquest of old Constantinople – concerts by the Ottoman Mehter military band, fancy-dress processions and fireworks.

Ephesus Festival Ephesus. The ancient theatre hosts folk dancing plus more conventional acts.

Hidirellez Gypsy festival Edirne. Celebration of the coming of spring, with gypsy bands performing, dancing in the street and jumping over bonfires. May 5–6.

International Theatre Festival Istanbul 🌐 tiyatro.iksv.org. Biennial event (next up in 2016), showcasing the best Turkish and foreign theatre companies.

Takava Gypsy Festival Kırklareli. The same celebrations as at the Hidirellez festival in Edirne. May 5–6.

June–July

Aspendos Opera and Ballet Festival Near Side, Antalya province 🌐 aspendosfestival.gov.tr. The Mediterranean coast's big highbrow event runs mid-June to mid-Sept.

International Izmir Festival Izmir 🌐 iksev.org. Month-long classical music, pop, ballet and jazz festival with many international names performing at Ephesus theatre and Çeşme castle.

Istanbul International Classical Music Festival Istanbul 🌐 iksv.org. Performances by top soloists and orchestras, often in historic venues.

Istanbul Jazz Festival Istanbul 🌐 iksv.org. Jazz as well as rock acts (see p.131). Early July.

Kafkasör Festival Artvin. Bullfighting between young beasts in a beautiful alpine setting, plus performances from folk-dance troupes and musical events – and lots of drinking. Late June.

Oil-wrestling Yağlı Güreş, near Edirne. Competitors from all over the country tangle with each other in the country's major, week-long oil-wrestling event, plus lots of music and dance events. Late June or early July.

One Love Istanbul 🌐 oneloveistanbul.com. Moderately alternative city-centre weekend-long festival generally held at trendy SantralIstanbul, with plenty of DJ-led dance sets and performances from international and local bands.

Pir Abdal Musa Tekke village near Elmali. Rites honouring the second most important Alevi saint after Hacı Bektaş Veli. Early June.

August

Chef's Contest Mengen, Bolu province. Cooking contest held in the region that purportedly produces the country's best cooks.

Hacı Bektaş Veli Commemoration Hacıbektaş village, Cappadocia. Bektaşis and their affiliates, the Alevi, meet for a weekend of ritual singing and dancing. Second half of Aug.

September–October

Akbank Jazz Festival Istanbul 🌐 akbanksanat.com. A more traditional programme than Istanbul's other jazz festival in July.

Altın Portakal ("Golden Orange") Film Festival Antalya 🌐 altinportakal.org.tr. A major fixture on the international film-festival circuit.

ArtInternational Istanbul 🌐 artinternational-istanbul.com. Annual large-scale prestigious contemporary art fair established in 2013, attracting big players from around the globe.

Bodrum Festival Bodrum. Centred on the castle, and emphasizing ballet and opera. Early Sept.

Grape Harvest/Wine Festival Ürgüp, Cappadocia. Featuring some of the better local winery products.

Istanbul Biennial Istanbul 🌐 iksv.org. Art exhibition, held odd-numbered years, with dozens of projects. Lasts into Nov.

Tourism and Handicrafts Festival Avanos. A celebration of the town's distinctive pottery.

Watermelon Festival Diyarbakir. A showcase for the region's most oversized fruit. Mid- to late Sept.

November

Istanbul Marathon Istanbul 🌐 istanbulmarathon.org. Runners from around the world compete in trans-continental marathon (see p.131).

December

Mevlâna Festival Konya. Whirling dervish performances at the home of the order. Dec 10–17.

The media

Newspapers and magazines were forbidden in Turkey until the mid-nineteenth century; now there are dozens of titles, representing the full gamut of public tastes. The airwaves were government-controlled until the late 1980s, but the advent of satellite dishes and cable has seen a huge growth in TV and radio stations of variable quality.

Turkish-language publications

Three titles – *Sabah*, *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* – dominate the newspaper market. Conservative *Sabah* is the pro-Islamic AKP's government's mouthpiece, while the latter two are secular. Politically left of the main three papers stands *Radikal*, although another title,

NEWS AND EVENTS IN ENGLISH

The best way to keep abreast of what's happening in Turkey and abroad is by perusing one of the two English-language **newspapers**, both available in major cities and resorts. Longest-established is the *Hürriyet Daily News* (📄 hurriyetdailynews.com; ₺2), which follows the secular/nationalist line. *Today's Zaman* (📄 todayszaman.com; ₺2) is liberal/Islamic, and new boy *Daily Sabah* (📄 dailysabah.com) is decidedly pro AKP government.

Time Out Istanbul, the local imprint of the London listings magazine, with an eighty-page English edition (₺6), is a reasonable what's-on listings magazine available in Istanbul only. More upmarket is *The Guide Istanbul*, published bi-monthly for ₺14 (📄 theguideistanbul.com). Bi-monthly *Cornucopia* (₺40) is a chic glossy, covering everything from history and travel to carpets and property renovation (📄 cornucopia.net).

Taraf, is far more radical than *Radikal* and frequently incurs establishment ire. *Cumhuriyet*, founded as the mouthpiece of the Turkish republic in 1924, mixes conservative nationalism with old-style socialism. Turkey's liberal-Islamist papers, *Yeni Şafak* and *Zaman*, give generally intelligent and thoughtful coverage.

Satirical weekly **comic strips** have a long history in Turkey. Look out for the distinctive artwork of L-Manyak, Le Man, Penguen and Uykusuz.

Television

Turkish channels include several **state-owned TRT** (Turkish Radio and Television) channels, with a mix of films, panel discussions, classical Turkish music shows and soaps. TRT-6, launched in 2009, broke a long-held Republican taboo by broadcasting in Kurdish. The most-watched **private channels** include Show, Star, ATV and Kanal D. For Turkish pop, the MTV-style Kral, Kral Pop and Power Turk lead the way.

The nation's leading digital company, Digiturk, has a number of English-language channels including CNBC-e and E2, both of which concentrate on re-runs of US TV shows and films. BBC Entertainment offers a mix of BBC comedies, dramas and soaps, while CNN, BBC World and Al Jazeera offer 24-hour news. Most high-end hotels subscribe to the Digiturk package screening these channels.

Digiturk also shows Turkish Premier League **football** on its Lig TV channel. English Premier League matches are shown on Premier League TV. Many bars and cafés subscribe to these and often have big screens showing Turkish matches. Bars in tourist areas usually have English and other European football games on.

Radio

Frequency-crowding means even popular channels are almost impossible to pick up without interfer-

ence. Of the four **public radio stations**, Radyo Üç (the Third Programme or TRT-3), most commonly found at 88.2 MHz, broadcasts the highest proportion of Western music. NTV Radyo (102.8) has the news in English at 6pm daily.

For Western music, try Açık Radyo (FM 94.9), Rock FM (94.5), Kiss FM (90.3) and Metro FM (97.2). Radyo Blue (94.5FM) specializes in dance, electronica and blues. Istanbul's coolest channel, Radyo Babylon (📄 radyobabylon.com; web only) is associated with its parent nightclub, Babylon (see p.128). For Turkish music, the best stations are Kral (92.0) and Best FM (98.4).

Cinema

With the exception of Istanbul's Beyoğlu district, where some period pieces date back to the 1920s, most cinemas are in shopping malls. **Films** are shown in the original language with Turkish subtitles, though kids' films are dubbed into Turkish. The volume is often excessively high, making the obligatory fifteen-minute interval a relief. There are often five screenings daily, generally at 11.30am or noon, then at around 3pm, 6pm and 9pm. **Tickets** in provincial cities cost ₺8–12, with reduced prices one or more days midweek; plusher cinemas charge ₺15 and up.

Shopping

Few visitors return from Turkey without some kind of souvenir; whether it's a pack of local herbs and spices or an expensive carpet depends on the budget of the traveller and the skill of the salesman. The best selection of good-quality wares is to be found in the major tourist centres: Istanbul, Cappadocia, Bursa and the coastal resorts. You won't

find a bargain at the production centres themselves; wholesalers and collectors have been there long before you.

How to bargain

Bargaining is a way of life in Turkey. In general it's acceptable to haggle over the price of souvenirs, which often lack price tags, so the vendor is able to adjust his asking price according to what he thinks you can or will pay. This applies to everything from expensive items such as carpets or kilims through to cheaper items like *lokum* (Turkish delight) and spices. As a guideline, begin at a figure lower than whatever you are prepared to pay, say half the shopkeeper's starting price. Once a price has been agreed, you are ethically committed to buy, so don't commence haggling unless you are reasonably sure you want the item.

"Assistance" from **touts**, whether in Istanbul, major resorts or even provincial towns, will automatically bump up the price thirty to fifty percent, as they will be getting a commission. Also, be prepared to hand over between three and seven percent extra if paying by credit card; your bargaining position is strongest with cash.

Don't bargain for bus, rail or air tickets, or for fruit or vegetables at street markets.

Bazaars, shops and markets

Several types of traditional bazaar continue to exist in Turkey. **Covered bazaars** are found in larger

towns like Istanbul (see p.89), Bursa (see p.170) and Şanlıurfa (see p.586). Essentially medieval Ottoman shopping malls, they comprised several *bedestens* at which particular types of goods were sold, linked by covered arcades also originally assigned to a particular trade – though strict segregation has long since broken down.

Surrounding these covered bazaars are large areas of **small shops**, open-air extensions of the covered areas and governed by the same rules: each shop is a separate unit with an owner and apprentices, and successful businesses are not allowed to expand or merge.

Street markets are held in most towns and all cities, similar to those in northern Europe and selling cheap clothes, household utensils and most importantly fruit, vegetables, cheese, yoghurt, olives, nuts and the like. More exotic are the semi-permanent **flea markets** (*bit pazarı*, literally "louse markets"), ranging in quality from street stalls where old clothes are sold and resold among the homeless, to lanes of shops where you can buy antiques and bric-a-brac.

However, in many cities, particularly in Istanbul, everyday shopping is increasingly done in Western-style department stores, shopping malls and supermarkets.

Carpets and kilims

Turkish carpets and **kilims** (flat-weave rugs) are renowned for their quality and have a very long history (the designs on many kilims have their origins in the Neolithic period). Rugs are no longer

CARPET AND KILIM BUYING TIPS

- **Do some research**, preferably before you leave home (check out some of the books reviewed in this guide; see p.699).
- Avoid buying in the first shop you visit, and **look around several**. You can always go back – preferably the next day, when you've had time to think about it.
- **Don't be embarrassed** at how many carpets the dealer is laying out for you – that's his (or usually his lowly assistant's) job.
- **Ask as many questions as you can** – this will test the dealer's worth, and could give you some interesting historical background should you make a purchase.
- **Check the pieces for flaws**, marks and the density of weave – hand-woven wool is preferable to machine as it is stronger, and the rug will last for longer.
- **Natural dyes** such as tobacco and saffron are the most highly prized and less likely to fade. You should be able to tell by opening up a section of the pile with your fingers. If the tint at the bottom of the pile is different to that at the top, it is a chemical dye.
- Even in the most reputable shop, **bargaining is essential**. Whatever you do, don't engage in the process if you've no intention of buying.
- You'll probably get a **better deal for cash** – this will also help overcome the temptation to credit-card splurge.
- Most important of all, **only buy the piece if you really like it** and are sure it'll look the part back home.

necessarily cheaper in Turkey than overseas, and many carpets have actually been made in places with cheap labour, such as Iran and China.

Most visitors will find themselves in a carpet shop at some point in their visit – willingly or unwillingly. It's very easy to be drawn into buying something you don't really want at a price you can barely afford once you've been smooth-talked and drip-fed with copious quantities of apple tea. However, it's still possible to get a good deal and enjoy the process (see box, p.51).

Carpets

Turkish carpets are single-sided, and knotted with a pile. They are either all-wool, wool pile on cotton warps and wefts, all-silk or – easily mistaken for silk – a glossy mercerized cotton pile on cotton warps and wefts. Needless to say, the higher the silk content, the more expensive the rug, with new, hand-woven wool carpets starting from around €150 per square metre, and pure silk ones starting at €550. Turkish carpets are made using the double-knot technique, making them more durable than their single-knot Persian counterparts. The most famous Turkish carpets are Hereke, named after their town of origin. Pure silk, they have an extremely high knot density. Larger Hereke take up to four years to weave and cost around €1010 per square metre, with prime examples going for tens of thousands of euros. Silk carpets woven in the central Anatolian province of Kayseri are usually a third cheaper. Other key carpet manufacturing areas are Bergama, Uşak and Milas – all near the Aegean coast. Be warned – any carpets that seem suspiciously cheap, especially silk ones, are almost certainly Chinese, not Turkish.

Kilims

A **kilim** is a pile-less, flat-woven wool rug. The better ones are double-sided (that is, the pattern should look much the same top or bottom). A *cicim* is a kilim with additional, raised designs stitched onto it. Traditionally woven by nomadic Anatolian tribal groupings such as the Turcomans and Kurds, kilims are generally much more affordable than carpets. Prices for newly woven examples (invariably woven by women and sold by men) start from around €30 per square metre, whereas a rare antique kilim can fetch thousands of euros. The vast majority of kilims are heavily patterned with geometric motifs – invariably stylized birds, animals, flowers or other images from the natural world that formed the backdrop to the nomads' lives. Originally they served as floor coverings, tent partitions and blankets or, stitched together, as storage/saddlebags and bolsters.

Clothes

Turkish designs are beginning to match the quality of local fabrics such as Bursa silk and Angora wool. You will pay near-Western prices for genuine locally designed items at reputable shops – local brands are aggressively protected from counterfeiting, if necessary by police raids.

However, many visitors find it hard to resist the allure of the cheap **fake designer clothing** available everywhere, with all the usual suspects (Armani, Diesel, Louis Vuitton et al) the victims. Genuine international designer wear is priced little differently to elsewhere.

Jewellery

Both in terms of design, quality and price, Turkey is a great country to buy **jewellery**, though gold prices in particular have rocketed in recent years. Gold and silver jewellery are sold by weight, with little regard for the disparate level of craftsmanship involved – at the time of writing, silver was a bargain at ₺1.3 per gram, gold ₺97 – and so too are semi-precious stones. One particularly intricate method is *telkâri* or wire filigree, most of which comes from eastern Turkey, particularly Mardin and nearby Midyat. Gold in particular can be very good value and is so pure (22 carat) that *telkâri* bangles bend easily. Also remember that sterling silver items should bear a hallmark.

Leather goods

Leather is still big business in Turkey. The industry was originally based in western Anatolia, where alum deposits and acorn-derived tannin aided the tanning process. Today, İzmir and Istanbul still have the largest workshops, though the retail business also booms on the Mediterranean coast, particularly in Antalya and Alanya. Jackets are the most obvious purchase, the prices of which vary from around €75 from a downmarket outlet to well over €350 from a branded "designer" shop such as Matraş, Desa or Derimod. Shoes are less good value and women's sizes rarely go over 40.

Miscellaneous souvenirs

A *tavla takımı* or **backgammon** set makes a good souvenir of Turkish popular culture. Mother-of-pearl inlaid sets are the most expensive, but fakes abound, so if in doubt go for one of the plain, wood-inlay sets. **Copperware** is still spun and hammered in the traditional way in some Turkish towns, notably Gaziantep in the southeast. The most popular items are lidded jugs, large serving trays and bowls. *Mavi boncuk* (blue bead) key rings,

ANTIQUES AND SMUGGLING: A WARNING

Under Turkish law, it is an offence to buy, sell, export or even possess genuine **antiquities** (which includes fossils). Exact age limits are not specified, suggesting that decisions by customs officials are subjective, though a principal measure of antiquity is rarity. At popular archeological sites such as Ephesus, you may be offered "antiques" by hawkers, which are invariably fake.

In the case of **carpets** handled by established dealers, you run a very slight risk of investing a lot of money in a supposed "collector's item" that turns out to be collectable only by the Turkish Republic. If you're apprehensive about a proposed purchase, ask the dealer to prepare both a *fatura* (invoice) recording the exact purchase price – also necessary to satisfy customs – and a declaration stating that the item is not an antique. Expect a heavy fine and possibly imprisonment if you transgress these laws.

intel ornaments and animal collars are sold all over the place to ward off *nazar* (the evil eye).

Meerscham **pipes**, carved from *lületaşı* stone quarried near Eskişehir, are available in all tourist areas. Less common are Karagöz puppets, representing the popular folk characters Karagöz and Hacivat, preferably made from camel skin in Bursa. Towelling and silk goods, the best of which come from Bursa, are also good buys, as are the pure cotton *peştamals* (the usually striped cotton wraps used in Turkish baths), bathrobes and tablecloths woven in Denizli. Kütahya **ceramics** may not be the finest ever produced in Turkey, but the vases, bowls, plates and, in particular, tiles, churned out in this western-Anatolian town, are attractive enough and reasonable value as decorative items. Revived İznik ware is a cut above (see box, p.165). For more contemporary ceramics try the nationwide store Paşabahçe.

Musical instruments

Traditional Turkish **musical instruments** are sold all over the country. The most easily portable are the *ney*, the Mevlevî flute made from a length of calamus reed; the *davul* or drum; and the *saz/bağlama*, the long-necked Turkish lute. Rock and jazz musicians might like to score, a bit cheaper than abroad, a set of cymbals from one of two world-

famous brands – Istanbul and Zildjian – both made by Istanbul-based or Armenian companies.

If you've any interest in local recordings it's worth listening to a cross section of Turkish styles and making a purchase or two (CDs go for ₺18 and up). We list a discography of recommended items at the end of this guide (see p.690).

Spices and foodstuffs

Acknowledging the slight risk of having certain goods confiscated on return to the European Union or North America, locally produced **spices, condiments and foodstuffs** make for a compact, light-weight souvenir purchase. Low-grade saffron (*zafran*), the stamen of a particular kind of crocus, is still gathered in northern Anatolia. Sumac (*sumak*) is a ground-up purple leaf for sprinkling on barbecued meats and salad onions. Pine nuts (*çam fıstığı*), gathered in the coastal mountains, are excellent and, especially if purchased in northwest Turkey, are considerably cheaper than in Europe. *Pekmez* (molasses of grape, mulberry or carob pods) is nutritious and makes a splendid ice cream, muesli or yoghurt topping. Olive oil is a worthwhile purchase, as are the olives it's made from. Olive-oil soaps are also popular, especially Defne Sabunu, a laurel-scented soap from Antakya. Both hot and sweet peppers are made into concentrated pastes (*salçalar*), while dried aubergine/eggplant and pepper shells are convenient for stuffing. *Nar ekşisi* is a sour-sweet pomegranate syrup widely used as a salad dressing or meat marinade. Turkish delight (*lokum*; see p.40) is a perennial favourite and comes in a bewildering variety of flavours.

Sports and outdoor activities

Whether you want to stand alongside some of the most passionate football fans in the world, hike a long-distance trail, climb up or ski down a mighty peak, raft the rapids of a mountain torrent, or paraglide over/dive beneath the warm waters of the Mediterranean, Turkey is the place to do it.

Football

Football is hugely popular in Turkey. Most Turks, no matter where they are from, profess allegiance to one of the "Big Three" Istanbul sides –

Galatasaray, Beşiktaş or Fenerbahçe (see p.107). The one exception is the Black Sea coastal town of Trabzon, whose citizens support their local team, Trabzonspor, which ranks up there with the Istanbul big boys.

Turkey has produced plenty of home-grown footballing talent (some now play in England, Germany and Spain), and many Turkish teams include international players, particularly from Africa and South America. The managers of the Istanbul “giants” are often recruited from abroad, though unusually in 2015 only one out of the “Big Three” managers was foreign (Fenerbahçe’s Vitor Pereira). Although the teams qualifying for the Champions League often fall at the first hurdle, Galatasaray became the first Turkish team to win the UEFA Cup (in 2000; beating Arsenal 4–1 on penalties).

Matches are played between September and May. TV schedules mean that matches are spread over the weekend, and there’s usually a match on Friday evening, then more on Saturday afternoons/evenings and Sunday afternoon. Obtaining **tickets** for provincial teams is usually both cheap and easy, with tickets available at the ground on match day for as little as ₺15, but prices can rise tenfold when one of the Istanbul “giants” is in town. Many bars show games on big screens, and can be very atmospheric, especially for derby games.

Football violence is common (in 2000, two English Leeds United fans were stabbed to death in Istanbul during street-fighting with Galatasaray fans), though the average foreigner is unlikely to get caught up in trouble. Turkish football was scarred by a big match-fixing scandal in 2012, which delayed the start of the new season and resulted in Fenerbahçe’s chairman being jailed.

After big games, especially those involving the “Big Three”, expect delirious celebrations, with flag-waving fans leaning on the horns of cruising cars embroiled in massive traffic jams.

Hiking and mountaineering

Turkey’s wild **mountain ranges** are a treat for experienced hikers prepared to carry their own tents and food, and cope with few facilities. The lack of decent maps makes mountain exploration a real adventure, but the unspoiled countryside, the hospitality of rural Turks, the fascination of the *yaylas* (summer pastures), and the friendliness of other mountaineers more than compensate.

Several companies organize expeditions to the alpine **Kaçkar Dağları**, paralleling the Black Sea, and the most rewarding mountains in Turkey for trekking. Next up in interest are the limestone **Toros (Taurus) ranges**, especially the lofty Aladağlar mountains south of Cappadocia.

Aside from this, high-altitude **mountaineering** in Turkey consists mostly of climbing the volcanoes of the central plateau. All offer superb views from their summits. Most famous is 5137m **Ağrı Dağ**, or Ararat (see p.642) on the eastern borders of Turkey, though this requires a special permit due to its sensitive location. By contrast, 3916m **Erciyes Dağı** (see p.460) offers exhilarating climbing without any of the expense or bureaucracy prevalent at Ararat. **Süphan Dağı** (see p.628) Turkey’s second-highest volcanic peak (4058m), stands in splendid isolation north of Lake Van. Unfortunately, the magnificent Cilo-Sat mountains south of Lake Van are sometimes a battleground between the Kurdish separatists and Turkish security forces, so are currently closed to outsiders.

WAYMARKED TRAILS

The exhilarating **Lycian Way** long-distance trail (see box, p.303) weaves its way through the westernmost reaches of the Toros, while the more challenging **St Paul Trail** (see box, p.418) crosses the range from south to north. Both trails are marked with red-and-white paint flashes and take in some stunning mountain and gorge scenery, remote ancient sites and timeless villages. Each has its own guidebook and map (see p.699); for more information check out trekkinginturkey.com. Opened more recently, and coiling its way through some of southwest Turkey’s most beautiful land and seascapes, is the 820km Carian Trail (cariantrail.com), with its own guidebook (available from their website), complete with maps and GPS coordinates.

Other trails include the **Evlia Çelebi Way** in northwest Turkey, suitable for horseriders and walkers, the **Phrygian Way** and the **Hittite Trail**.

You can find more information on all these routes, and several others, at cultureroutesinturkey.com, the website of the **Culture Routes Society**, a non-profit making organization which helps to set up, maintain and preserve walking routes in Turkey.

Hiking equipment and safety

Alpine huts are nonexistent, so you'll need to carry full **camping gear** to trek in the mountains. It's best to bring your own, as only Istanbul and Ankara have European-standard mountaineering shops. **Water** can be a problem in the limestone strata of the Toros, while on the volcanoes, detailed **maps** are very difficult to obtain and **trails** (when present) are seldom marked.

Rescue services are no match for those in more developed mountain areas in Europe and the US, but the local *jandarma* (see p.58) will turn out in an emergency. Voluntary NGO AKUT (Search and Rescue Association; akut.org.tr) has some 35 teams spread, patchily, across the country.

You'll find details on specific hiking routes through the Kaçkar Dağları, and a selection of walks on Bursa's Uludağ and along the Turquoise Coast, in the guide, but if you're daunted at the prospect of going alone, contact one of the adventure-travel companies listed in this chapter (see p.30). Except for the long-distance trails and the Kaçkar mountains (see p.554), it's virtually impossible to obtain large-scale **topographical maps** of specific areas for **trekking** (though usable-enough maps for the most popular trekking areas can be found in *Trekking in Turkey*, an unfortunately out-of-print guide that's still available secondhand).

Skiing

While few foreigners come to Turkey specifically to **ski**, the sport is growing in popularity, and if you're visiting between December and April it's well worth considering a day or more on the slopes. If you're willing to forego doorstep skiing, it's surprisingly easy and cheap to ski while based in towns like Erzurum or Bursa which are near to resorts. The Turkish State Meteorological Service gives information on snow heights at the various resorts (mgm.gov.tr).

Turkey's best-known ski resort is **Uludağ** (see p.180), above Bursa, with easy and intermediate runs, but the slopes are prone to mist and snow, and turn slushy after February. The **Saklık** complex in the Beydağları near Antalya would seem potentially ideal for an early spring sea-cum-ski holiday, but snow cover tends to be thin and the runs are limited. Close by is much better **Davraz**, near Isparta, where snow conditions are more reliable and there's plentiful accommodation in the nearby lakeside town of Eğirdir as well as at the resort (see box, p.416). Roughly midway between Istanbul and Ankara, near Bolu, **Kartalkaya** is better

than any of the aforementioned, despite a modest top altitude of 2223m; facilities now nearly match those of Uludağ, plus there are several red and black runs and, most importantly, in recent years there has been plentiful snow. The longest season and best snow conditions are usually at **Palandöken**, near Erzurum, where the top lift goes over 3000m and the Turkish Olympic team trains; there are three chair lifts, one T-bar and a 3km gondola car to service a mix of blue and red runs (see box, p.548). At **Tekir Yaylası**, on Erciyes Dağı near Kayseri, the season is nearly as long, the snow almost as powdery, with two chair lifts taking skiers to 2550m and 3000m respectively, plus six other lifts (see p.460). **Sarıkamış**, near Kars, has two chair lifts and one T-bar to service a handful of runs (mostly red and blue); the top lift is 2634m (see box, p.570). There are a number of hotels at each of the above resorts. For more information on Turkey's ski resorts, see skiingturkey.com.

Watersports

Most medium to large resorts offer **waterskiing** and its offspring, **parasailing**; the even more exciting thrill of **kitesurfing** is centred on Alaçatı, near Çeşme, while **windsurfers** head for the Bodrum peninsula. **Sea kayaking** makes a great way to explore the indented coastline, islets and shallow, clear waters in the environs of the southwest Mediterranean resort of Kaş.

For more thrills and spills but less skill (you just sit there unless you happen to be thrown – or pushed – into the torrent), there's also **whitewater rafting**. This is very popular on the Köprülü River near Antalya and the Dalaman River close to Fethiye, though for more serious outings the dam-threatened Çoruh in northeast Turkey is a world-class

BIRDWATCHING

Turkey stands astride several major bird migration routes and possesses some very bird-friendly habitat. Well-known **birdwatching sites** include the Göksu delta near Silifke (see box, p.384), the Belen Pass en route to Antakya (see p.398), and Lake Van (see p.620). On an active birdwatching holiday, you could expect to tick off nearly three hundred different species. For a database of bird species and distribution in Turkey, as reported by local and foreign birdwatchers, see kusbank.org.

rafting river. Another freshwater-based activity of a very different nature is **canyoning**, which involves abseiling down waterfalls, leaping into plunge pools and generally exploring precipitous gorges – trips are organized by outfits in Kaş (see p.330).

Scuba diving is one of the most popular water-based activities; outfits in Kaş, Kalkan and, further west, in Bodrum, Marmaris and Fethiye offer instruction and gear. There are underwater reefs and fish, wrecks and caves to explore, all in the (usually) clear, calm and warm waters of the Aegean/Mediterranean.

Other activities

With cheap flights, countless rock faces and ample winter sun, it's only a matter of time before Turkey begins to rival Spain on the itineraries of **climbers**. The best place to start is Geyikbayırı, conveniently located just 25km from the gateway Mediterranean resort of Antalya. Five hundred bolted routes track their way up a series of imposing limestone cliffs, and there are several camping/wooden chalet-style places to stay in the forest below. There's more climbing from beach level at the beautiful resort of nearby Olympos. For more information check out www.climb-europe.com.

Cappadocia's bizarrely sculpted rock pinnacles and plunging valleys rank among the world's most striking landscapes. The best way to see this geological wonderland is to drift over it in an expertly piloted **hot-air balloon**, though the over-proliferation of operators has contributed to a number of fatal accidents in recent years. For more of an adrenaline rush, try **paragliding** (in tandem with a qualified pilot) from the mountains behind the bustling resorts of Kaş or Ölüdeniz.

Travelling with children

Turks adore children, and Turkish families tend to take their children with them wherever they go, thinking nothing of letting them run around restaurants until the early hours. In this sense, the country is a great place to visit with kids. And, of course, the coastal resorts offer a generally calm, warm sea and have pools, beaches (and sometimes waterparks) aplenty. On the down side, the number of play areas and children's attractions lags far behind Western Europe.

Turks have an uninhibited Mediterranean attitude towards children. Don't be surprised to find your child receive an affectionate pinch on the cheek by a passer-by, often accompanied by the word *maşallah*, which serves both to praise your offspring and ward off the evil eye, while waiters will sometimes unselfconsciously pick a kid up and waltz them off into the kitchen to show their workmates, often accompanied by cries all around of "how sweet" ("*çok tatlı*").

With a few honourable exceptions (eg Miniaturk and the Rahmi M. Koç Industrial Museum in Istanbul, and Minicity Antalya), there are few **attractions** aimed specifically at younger children, and few museums have kid-friendly displays or activities. And for buggy-pushing parents, the uneven surfaces and metre-high kerbs of the average Turkish pavement (where there is one) are a nightmare. For older kids there are plenty of outdoor activities on offer – kayaking and windsurfing at some coastal resorts, for example, and whitewater rafting, mountain biking and canyoning in the hinterland.

Turkish **food** should appeal to most kids – what's *köfte* but a (very) tasty burger, *pide* a pizza without the tomato paste, and *gözleme* a stuffed pancake? Maraş ice cream is just as delicious as Italian gelato and comes in myriad flavours. In general, restaurants are very welcoming to families – just don't expect highchairs. Disposable nappies are widely available from supermarkets and the larger *bakkals*.

Travel essentials

Archeological sites

Most **archeological sites** open daily 8am–7pm between April and October, and 9am–7pm between November and March, though there are some variations; exact times are listed in the relevant sections of the guide.

Don't pay **entrance fees** unless the wardens can produce a ticket, and keep it with you for the duration of your visit. Sites like Patara and Olympos straddle the route to a good beach. If you are staying nearby and want to visit the beach on several occasions, **smart PlajKarts** are available, allowing multiple site/beach entries.

Beaches

Except near major cities, where seawater is sometimes polluted, Turkish **beaches** are safe to swim at, though be prepared for occasional

mountains of rubbish piled at the back of the beach. Tar can also be a problem on south-coast beaches that face Mediterranean shipping lanes; if you get tar on your feet, scrub it off with olive oil rather than chemical solvents. Virtually all beaches are free in theory, though luxury compounds that straddle routes to the sand will control access in various ways, and you'll pay for the use of beach-loungers and umbrellas.

Costs

Turkey is no longer the cheap destination it used to be; **prices** in the heavily touristed areas are comparable to many places in Europe. Exercise a little restraint, however, be prepared to live life at least occasionally at the local level (many Turks somehow survive on ₺700 a month) and you can still enjoy a great-value trip here.

Stay in a "treehouse" or backpackers' inn, eat in local workers' cafés or restaurants, travel around by train or bus, avoid alcohol and the most expensive sites, and you could get by on ₺90–120 (€30–40) a day. If that doesn't sound like much fun, double that and you could stay in a modest hotel, see the sights and have a beer or two with your evening meal. Equally, a night out on the town in Istanbul or one of the flashier coastal resorts could easily set you back over ₺150 (€50), and if you intend to see a lot of what is a very big country, transport costs could be a considerable drain on your budget – though taking night buses saves accommodation costs.

The more expensive tourist sites such as Ephesus, the Tokapı Palace and Hagia Sophia cost ₺30

(€10), but there are many more sites varying between ₺3 and ₺15. There are no student discounts, and the *Müze Kart* (Museum Card), which gives admission to all state-run museums for ₺30 per annum, is only for Turkish citizens and foreigners with a resident permit.

Crime and personal safety

Turkey's **crime rate** remains lower than most of Europe and North America, although pickpocketing and bag-snatching are becoming more common in Istanbul (see box, p.72) and other major cities. Violent street crime is fortunately rare. Keep your wits about you and an eye on your belongings, just as you would anywhere else, and make sure your passport is secure at all times, and you shouldn't have any problems. Except for well-known "red-light" districts, and some eastern towns, female travellers (see p.45) are probably safer on their own than in other European countries.

Street demonstrations, which sometimes turn violent, have become a feature of an increasingly polarized Turkey, seen most clearly in 2013 at Gezi Park in Istanbul, when protests against the felling of trees to make way for a new mall turned into an anti-government occupation of the park and Taksim Square. Heavy-handed police tactics, with much use of tear gas and water cannon, exacerbated the situation; several protestors died as a result. Visitors should avoid demonstrations for obvious reasons – flash points include upper İstiklal Caddesi and Taksim Square in Istanbul, and central squares in other large cities. In October 2015, Turkey suffered its worst-ever atrocity when twin suicide bombers (with suspected links to ISIS), blew themselves up amid an anti-war demonstration in Ankara, resulting in 102 deaths and hundreds more wounded. Protests in the ethnically Kurdish southeast of the country should also be avoided (see p.59).

As well as the usual warnings on **drugs**, note that exporting antiquities is illegal (see box, p.53). Note, too, that it's an offence to **insult Atatürk or Turkey**, which can result in a prison sentence. Never deface, degrade or tear up currency or the flag; drunkenness will likely be considered an aggravating, not a mitigating, factor. Also, do not take **photographs** near the numerous, well-marked military zones.

The police, army and gendarmerie

Turkey's police service is split into several groups. The blue-uniformed **Polis** are the everyday security force in cities and towns with populations over two thousand; the white-capped **Trafik Polis** (traffic

KDV: TURKISH VAT

The Turkish variety of VAT (*Katma Değer Vergisi* or **KDV**), ranging from eight to 23 percent depending on the commodity, is included in the price of virtually all goods and services (except car rental, where the 18 percent figure is usually quoted separately). Look for the notice *Fiyatlarımız KDV Dahildir* (VAT included in our prices) if you think someone's trying to do you for it twice. There's a VAT refund scheme for large souvenir purchases made by those living outside Turkey, but it's such a rigmarole to get that it's probably not worth pursuing; if you insist, ask the shop to provide a *KDV İade Özel Fatura* (Special VAT Refund Invoice), assuming that it participates – very few do, and they tend to be the most expensive shops.

police) are a branch of this service. Istanbul and several other large towns have a rapid-response squad of red-and-black-uniformed motorbike police known as the *yunus* (dolphin) *polis*; they are generally courteous and helpful to tourists and may speak some English. The dark-blue-uniformed **Çevik Kuvvet Polis** are a rapid response team most likely seen at demonstrations, football matches and other events where large crowds are expected. In towns, **Belediye Zabıtası**, the navy-clad market police, patrol the markets and bazaars to ensure that tradesmen aren't ripping off customers – approach them directly if you have reason for complaint. You're unlikely to come across plain-clothes police unless you wander off the beaten track in the ethnically Kurdish southeast.

In most rural areas, law enforcement is in the hands of the **jandarma** or gendarmerie, a division of the regular army charged with law enforcement duties. Gendarmes are usually kitted out in well-tailored green fatigues; most are conscripts who will be courteous and helpful if approached.

Note that it is obligatory to **carry ID** at all times – for locals and foreigners alike – so if you are concerned about having your passport stolen (or losing it) while out and about, at least carry a photocopy of the pages with your details and Turkish entry stamp.

Security and restricted areas

There is a noticeable security presence in the **Kurdish-dominated southeast** of the country, with firefights between Turkish security forces and the autonomy-minded **PKK** (Kurdish Workers Party) continuing at the time of writing. Security is tightest along the Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian borders, particularly south and east of Hakkari and around Şırnak in the mountains south of Lake Van. The civil war in Syria (with which Turkey shares a 900km border) that erupted in 2011 and had shown no sign of abating at the time of writing, is also problematic for Turkey, with foreign jihadist fighters en route to join **ISIS** (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in Syria and Iraq using the long, porous frontier between Turkey and Syria as a crossing point. Even worse, Turkey's biggest nightmare, a proto-Kurdish state run by Syria's Kurdish minority appeared to be developing across the frontier at the time of writing. Other areas which have seen sustained PKK activity include the rural hinterland of Diyarbakır and the mountainous region of Tunceli (the latter not covered in this guide). PKK attacks are mostly made in isolated rural areas, often targeting military vehicles with remotely detonated bombs. Occasional fully fledged assaults on military

outposts are made – inevitably followed by major reprisals by Turkish security forces. In 2015, a PKK affiliate took its struggle to the streets of some cities in the southeast, declaring certain areas autonomous zones and off-limits to the security forces. State reprisals led to week-long curfews in parts of Diyarbakır and other settlements in the region.

To add to the confusing picture, at the time of writing Turkey was launching cross-border **air-strikes** against PKK camps in the virtually autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, and had just opened up an air base near the Syrian border to allow the US (under NATO auspices) to bomb ISIS in both Syria and Iraq. Turkey itself has also become embroiled in the anti-ISIS struggle and was launching aerial attacks on ISIS. One tragic consequence of Turkey's newfound determination to combat ISIS was a suicide bomb attack in Istanbul's historic heartland of Sultanahmet in January 2016, which resulted in the deaths of ten foreign visitors. This was an attack by ISIS that appeared to deliberately target Turkey's tourism industry.

What does this mean to the average traveller hoping to visit this beautiful region? At the time of writing, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO; www.fco.gov.uk), for example, advised against all travel to within 10km of the Syrian border and against all but essential travel to the provinces of Diyarbakır, Şırnak, Mardin, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Kilis, Siirt, Tunceli, Hakkari and the Hatay. The official line, then, is to **avoid the mountains south of Lake Van** that border the de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq, and **stay well away from the Syrian border area** (where risk of kidnapping is a potential threat). However, note that places like Tunceli are a long, long way from the border.

The problem is compounded by the ever-fluctuating state of relations between the state and the PKK, with long ceasefires interrupted by violent flare-ups. At the time of writing, PKK attacks had resumed after a long, semi-official ceasefire, with over 120 security personnel killed between late July and early September 2015. However, in the Middle East things can change very quickly and it's quite possible the situation may have calmed down dramatically by the time you read this. In other words: read about what is happening in the press and on travellers' forums, and use your common sense and judgement before you travel.

Although there are fewer **checkpoints** on main roads than there used to be, you may be stopped if you attempt to travel to off-the-beaten-track sites and/or villages, and your presence may attract the attention of the *jandarma* (and quite possibly the

plain-clothes secret police, who generally stand out a mile from the locals). This may involve, at most, a rather tedious, though polite, interrogation. Lone males especially may find themselves suspected of being journalists and/or having Kurdish/Armenian sympathies. **Avoid talking politics** with anyone unless you are absolutely sure you can trust them, and, if you are questioned, keep calm, smile a lot, and emphasize wherever possible that you are a *tourist* (tourist). Of more concern to the average visitor are the violent **pro-Kurdish street demonstrations** that break out from time to time in south-eastern cities such as Diyarbakir and Van – though major cities in the west of the country are not immune, especially Istanbul, Adana and Mersin, which have large and sometimes volatile Kurdish communities. One traditional spark for demonstrations is the Kurdish New Year or Nevruz (Newroz), on or around March 21. More information on the Kurdish problem is provided in Contexts (see p.678).

Electricity

Turkey operates on **220 volts, 50 Hz**. Most European appliances should work as long as you have an adaptor for European-style two-pin plugs. American appliances will need a transformer as well as an adaptor.

Entry requirements

To enter Turkey, you'll need a passport with at least six months' validity, and tourist visas are required for citizens of several countries including the UK, USA, Ireland, Australia, Canada and South Africa; New Zealanders do not need advance visas. Prior to April 2014, visas were bought at the point of entry to Turkey. As of April 2014, visitors who require a visa should buy an electronic version in advance of their trip, available online from www.evisa.gov.tr. Filling in the online form is a simple process, and payment is by Mastercard or Visa debit/credit card (from the UK, USA and Ireland US\$20; Australia and Canada US\$60; South Africa free). Print out the e-visa and take it with you to the point of entry. **Visas** are multiple entry, and for most visitors, including citizens of the UK, US, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, are valid for 90 days in 180 days from the date requested on your e-visa application (or from entry for New Zealanders). South African visas are valid 30 days in 180. It is usually possible to obtain a visa at the point of entry, but fees are higher and queues sometimes long. Note that entry requirements can and do change, so check what's

required well before your intended departure date at mfa.gov.tr.

If you want to stay in the country longer than a tourist visa allows, the best option is to apply for a six-month **residence permit** from the Security Division (*Emniyet Müdürlüğü*), preferably in a provincial capital that's used to foreigners. Do this well before your time expires, as it takes at least two weeks to process. You will need to complete an "*ikamet izni beyanname formu*" application form and supply four passport-sized photographs, along with photocopies from your passport of the photo-page and the page showing your last entry into Turkey. The rub is that you also need to show that you have changed US\$500 for each of the six months – showing change receipts from a bank or *döviz* will suffice. Residence permit rates vary according to nationality – UK citizens, for example, pay US\$80 (payable in **₺**, according to the exchange rate on the day you apply), but the cost of the "blue book" containing the permit is a steep **₺172**. This is a one-off payment, however, as once you have the book you can keep renewing your permit for periods of between six months and ten years.

Turkish embassies and consulates abroad

Australia 60 Mugga Way, Red Hill, Canberra ACT 2603

☎ 02 6295 0227.

Canada 197 Wurtemberg St, Ottawa, ON K1N 8L9 ☎ 613 789 4044.

Ireland 11 Clyde Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4 ☎ 01 668 5240.

New Zealand 15–17 Murphy St, Level 8, Wellington ☎ 04 472 1290.

South Africa 1067 Church St, Hatfield 0181, Pretoria
☎ 012 342 5063.

UK 43 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PA ☎ 0207 393 0202.

US 2525 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008
☎ 202 612 6700.

Customs and border inspections

As Turkey is not yet an EU member, **duty-free limits** – and sales – for alcohol and tobacco are still prevalent. Limits are posted clearly at Istanbul's airports, and they apply for all frontiers.

Few people get stopped departing Turkey, but the guards may be on the lookout for **antiquities** and **fossils**. Penalties for trying to smuggle these out include long jail sentences, plus a large fine. What actually constitutes an antiquity is rather vague (see box, p.53), but it's best not to take any chances.

Insurance

It is essential to take out an **insurance policy** before you travel, to cover against illness or injury, as well as theft or loss. Some all-risks homeowners'

ROUGH GUIDES TRAVEL INSURANCE

Rough Guides has teamed up with WorldNomads.com to offer great **travel insurance** deals. Policies are available to residents of over 150 countries, with cover for a wide range of **adventure sports**, 24hr emergency assistance, high levels of medical and evacuation cover and a stream of **travel safety information**. Roughguides.com users can take advantage of their policies online 24/7, from anywhere in the world – even if you're already travelling. And since plans often change when you're on the road, you can extend your policy and even claim online. Roughguides.com users who buy travel insurance with WorldNomads.com can also leave a positive footprint and donate to a community development project. For more information go to [@roughguides.com/shop](https://www.roughguides.com/shop).

or renters' insurance policies may cover your possessions when overseas, and many private medical schemes (such as BUPA and WPA) offer coverage extensions for abroad.

Most policies exclude so-called **dangerous sports** unless an extra premium is paid: in Turkey this can mean scuba diving, whitewater rafting, paragliding, windsurfing and trekking, though probably not kayaking or jeep safaris. Travel agents and package operators may require travel insurance when you book a holiday – you're not obliged to take theirs, though you have to sign a declaration saying that you already have another policy. Similarly, many no-frills airlines make a tidy sum from selling unnecessary insurance at the time of booking – beware, and opt out.

Internet

Most hotels, pensions and hostels have **wi-fi access**, as do an ever-increasing number of cafés. Access is usually free except in the more expensive international chain hotels. Rates in internet cafés, in decline since the advent of wi-fi and 4G phones, tend to be **₺2** per hour. The Turkish-character keyboard you'll probably be faced with may cause some confusion. The "@" sign is made by simultaneously pressing the "ALT" and "q" keys. More frustrating is the dotless "ı" (confusingly enough found right where you'll be expecting the conventional "i") – the Western "i" is located second key from right, middle row.

Mail

Post offices are easily spotted by their bold black-on-yellow **PTT** (Posta, Telegraf, Telefon) signs. Stamps are only available from the PTT, whose website (www.ptt.gov.tr) has a (not necessarily up-to-date) English-language listing of services and prices. Post offices are generally open Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm and until noon on Saturday. Airmail (*uçakla*) rates to Europe are **₺2.5** for postcards, **₺2.5** for letters

up to 20g, **₺31.25** for 2kg, the maximum weight for letters. Delivery to Europe or North America can take seven to ten days. A pricier express (*acele*) service cuts delivery times to the EU to about three days. When sending airmail, it's best to give your stamped letter/card to the clerk behind the counter, who will ensure it gets put in the right place; otherwise, place it in the relevant slot if one is available (*yurt dışı* for abroad; *yurt içi* for elsewhere in Turkey).

Maps

Maps of Turkey are notoriously poor quality owing to the lack of survey-based cartography. Reasonable, easily obtainable choices include Insight's *Turkey West* and *Turkey* (both 1:800,000), both of which are easy to read and reasonably accurate, and the equally reliable *Turkey Geocentre Euro Map* (1:750,000) and Michelin's *National Turkey* (1:000,000). Reise Know How's *Turkey and the Mediterranean Coast* and *Cappadocia* (both 1:700,000) are also good.

The best easily available regional touring maps are Sabri Aydal's 1:250,000 products for Cappadocia, Lycia, Pamphylia and Pisidia, available from bookshops and museums within Turkey. Kartografischer Verlag Reinhard Ryborsch (1:500,000; Frankfurt, Germany) Turkey maps, which cover the entire country in seven maps, are out of print but sometimes turn up in local shops or online.

Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya, Bursa and İzmir (as well as overseas) tourist offices stock reasonable, free **city street plans**. Sketch plans from provincial tourist offices vary widely in quality.

Among **Turkish-produced city maps**, Net's *All of Istanbul* (1:9000) is more comprehensive than Keskin Colour's *Istanbul Street Plan* (1:8500), and includes useful maps of the Prince's islands. The most detailed A–Z-style atlas for the European side, ideal for out-of-the-way monuments, is Mepmedya's *Istanbul Avrupa Yakası* (1:7500), though it's pricey (£32) and heavy. All are available in Istanbul, the latter also abroad.

For **trekking maps** see p.55.

Money

Turkey's currency is the **Turkish Lira** (Türk Lirası) or **₺** for short, divided into smaller units known as kuruş. Coins come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25, 50 kuruş and **₺1**, with notes in denominations of **₺5**, **₺10**, **₺20**, **₺50**, **₺100** and **₺200**. The symbol **₺**, introduced in 2012, is phasing out the old system, where the price was suffixed by the letters TL, as in 10TL, but plenty of places still use the acronym.

At the time of writing the **exchange rate** was around **₺3.06** to the euro, **₺4.3** to the pound and **₺2.9** to the US dollar. As recently as 2004, hyperinflation meant that millions of lira were needed to purchase the smallest everyday item. Many Turks still talk in millions, which can be confusing when you are asked for "*bir milyon*" or one million lira for a **₺1** glass of tea.

Rates for foreign currency are always better inside Turkey, so try not to buy much lira at home. Conversely, don't leave Turkey with unspent lira, as you won't get a decent exchange rate for them outside the country. It's wise to bring a fair wad of **hard currency** with you (euros are best, though US dollars and sterling are often accepted), as you can often use it to pay directly for souvenirs or accommodation (prices for both are frequently quoted in euros). **Travellers' cheques** are, frankly, not worth the bother, as exchange offices (see below) and some banks refuse them.

Changing money

All banks will change money, but the best rate is usually given by the **state-owned bank** Ziraat Bankası, which has dedicated *döviz* (exchange) counters – but despite the automated ticket/queuing system, queues can be long. **Döviz**, or exchange houses, are common in Turkey's cities and resorts. They buy and sell foreign currency of most sorts instantly, and have the convenience of long opening hours (usually 9/10am–8/10pm) and short or nonexistent queues. Most do not charge commission, but give a lower rate than the banks.

Remember to keep all foreign-exchange slips with you until departure, if only to prove the value of purchases made in case of queries by customs.

Credit/debit cards and ATMs

Credit cards are widely used in hotels, shops, restaurants, travel agencies and entertainment venues and with no commission (though many hotels and shops offer discounts for cash rather than credit-card payments). Don't expect, however, to use your card in basic eating places or small

corner shops. Swipe readers plus **chip-and-PIN** protocol are now the norm in most of Turkey.

The simplest way to get hold of money in Turkey is to use the widespread **ATM** network. Most bank ATMs will accept any debit cards that are part of the Cirrus, Maestro or Visa/Plus systems. Screen prompts are given in English on request. You can also normally get cash advances at any bank displaying the appropriate sign, and in major cities and resorts some ATMs will give euros and dollars. It's safest to use ATMs attached to banks during normal working hours, so help can be summoned if your card is eaten (not uncommon). Turkish ATMs sometimes "time out" without disgorging cash, while your home bank may still debit your account – leaving you to argue the toss with them. ATM fraud is rife in Turkey – make sure you are not overlooked when keying in your PIN. You can also use Visa or MasterCard credit cards to get cash from ATMs, for a fee.

Opening hours and public holidays

Office workers keep conventional Monday–Friday 9am–6pm schedules, with a full lunch hour. Civil servants, including tourist offices and museum staff, in theory work 8.30am–5.30pm, but in practice hours can be much more erratic – don't expect to get official business attended to the same day after 2.30pm. Most state **banks** are open Monday–Friday 8.30am–noon and 1.30pm–5pm. Private banks such as Garanti Bankası and Koc operate throughout the day.

Ordinary **shops**, including large department stores and mall outlets, are open continuously from 8.30am or 9am until 7pm or 8pm (sometimes even later in many major cities and resorts). Craftsmen and bazaar stallholders often work Monday–Saturday 9am–8/9pm, with only short breaks for meals, tea or prayers. Even on Sunday the tradesmen's area may not be completely shut down – though don't count on this.

Museums hours vary quite considerably but are generally open from 8.30am or 9am until 4.30pm or 5pm in winter, later in the summer. Many museums in major tourist areas such as Istanbul have switched to being open 9am–7pm from April to October, and 9am–5pm November to March. Virtually all state, and some private, museums are closed on Monday, though in Istanbul closing days are staggered, so make sure you check the individual listings. All tourist sites and museums are closed on the mornings of public holidays (see p.61). Mosques are theoretically open all the time, but many of the less

visited ones are kept locked outside of prayer times, and many do not encourage visitors at prayer times.

Public holidays

Secular **public holidays** are generally marked by processions of schoolchildren or the military, or by some demonstration of national strength and dignity, such as a sports display. Banks and government offices will normally be closed on these days (exceptions given below). See p.48 for religious holidays.

Jan 1 *Yılbaşı* – New Year's Day.

April 23 *Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı* – Independence Day, celebrating the first meeting of the new Republican parliament in Ankara, and Children's Day.

May 19 *Gençlik ve Spor Günü* – Youth and Sports Day, also Atatürk's birthday.

May 29 *Istanbul'un Fethi* Istanbul's capture by Mehmet the Conqueror in 1453 (Istanbul only).

July 1 *Denizcilik Günü* – Navy Day (banks and offices open).

Aug 26 *Silahlı Kuvvetler Günü* – Armed Forces Day (banks and offices open).

Aug 30 *Zafer Bayramı* – Celebration of the Turkish victory over the Greek forces at Dumlupınar in 1922.

Sept 9 *Kurtuluş Günü* – Liberation Day, with parades and speeches marking the end of the Independence War (Izmir only).

Oct 29 *Cumhuriyet Bayramı* – commemorates the proclamation of the Republic by Atatürk in 1923.

Nov 10 **Anniversary of Atatürk's death in 1938.** Observed at 9.05am (the time of his demise), when the whole country stops whatever it's doing and maintains a respectful silence for one minute. It's worth being on a Bosphorus ferry then, when all the engines are turned off, and the boats drift and sound their foghorns mournfully.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance ☎ 112

Fire ☎ 110

Police ☎ 155

Tourist Police ☎ 0212 527 4503

ASSISTANCE

Directory assistance ☎ 118

International operator (reverse charges)

☎ 115

Intercity operator ☎ 131

INTERNATIONAL DIALLING CODES

Australia ☎ 61

Ireland ☎ 353

New Zealand ☎ 64

South Africa ☎ 27

UK ☎ 44

US & Canada ☎ 1

Phones

Most fixed-line **telecom services** are provided by TT (Türk Telekom); its website (☎turktelekom.com.tr) has an English-language page listing all services and tariffs. The best place to make phone calls is from either a PTT (post office) or a TT centre. Inside, or just adjacent, there is usually a row of card (*köntürlü* or *smartkart*) call boxes (TTs are blue and turquoise), and/or a *kontürlü* (metered, clerk-attended) phone, the latter sometimes in a closed booth. **Public phones** are to be found in squares and parks, outside many public buildings and at train stations and ferry terminals. The standard Turkish phone replies are the Frenchified *Allo* or the more local *Buyurun* (literally, "Avail yourself/at your service").

"Smart" **phonecards** are available from PTT or TT centres; when using these, wait for the number of units remaining to appear on the screen before you dial, and be aware that you will have little warning before being cut off. Cards are available for ₺5, ₺10 and ₺25. A number of phones have also been adapted to accept foreign **credit cards**.

Metered booths inside PTTs or TTs, or at street kiosks or shops (look for signs reading *kontürlü telefon bulunur*), work out more expensive than cards, but are certainly far cheaper than hotels, and also tend to be quieter (plus you won't be cut off). Their disadvantage is that you can't see the meter ticking over, and instances of overcharging are not unknown.

Overseas calls

Overseas call rates are ₺0.25 per minute to Europe or North America. Try not to make anything other than local calls from a hotel room – there's usually a minimum 100 percent surcharge on phonecard rates. For extended chat overseas, it's best to buy an international phonecard. Best is the Alocard, available from PTT branches and usable in public phones. Reveal the 12-digit PIN by scratching; then call the domestic access number, followed by the destination number. Rates are low – for example, a ₺10 card allows 104 minutes to the UK or US. The cards can also be used for domestic calls, giving 140 minutes of calling time.

Turkey uses a system of eleven-digit **phone numbers** nationwide, consisting of four-digit area or mobile-provider codes (all starting with "0") plus a seven-digit subscriber number.

To call a number in Turkey **from overseas**, dial your country's international access code, then 90 for Turkey, then the area or mobile code minus the

GETTING MOBILE

Given the Turkish penchant for chatting, **mobile phones** are essential accessories here.

Assuming that you have a roaming facility, your home mobile will connect with one of the local network providers – except those from the US, which don't work in Turkey. Charges, though, are high (up to £1.30/min to the UK), and you pay for incoming calls as well. Purchasing a **local SIM card** and pay-as-you-go package may be worth considering if you intend to make a lot of calls. The cheapest Turkcell SIM card package (which can take up to 24hr to activate) costs ₺51, which includes 100 minutes of domestic call time, 1000 domestic SMS messages and 2GB of internet use. Typically, calls cost ₺1 per min to Europe and North America, an SMS message to the UK the same. To purchase a SIM card, you'll need to sign an agreement form and present your passport for photocopying at a major Turkcell, Avea or Vodafone outlet where they'll fit the new card. All three companies have stands at arrivals in Istanbul's Atatürk and Sabiha Gökçen airports; Turkcell has the widest coverage. Note that the rules on bringing in mobiles from overseas and using them with a Turkish SIM card change regularly, mainly to avoid flooding the market with cheaply imported secondhand phones. At the time of writing, once-stringent rules had been relaxed, enabling a foreign mobile registered at a legitimate outlet to be used with a Turkish SIM for six months before it is blocked – though it needs to be topped up with a minimum of ₺15 credit at least once in that time. If you buy from one of the many smaller mobile phone stores and don't sign an agreement, you run the risk of your phone not being registered for use in Turkey, and it will be blocked within a matter of days.

initial zero, and finally the subscriber number. To call home **from Turkey**, dial 00 followed by the relevant international dialling code (see above), then the area code (without the initial zero if there is one), then the number.

Time

Turkey is two hours ahead of GMT in winter. As in Europe, daylight saving is observed between March and October – clocks change at 2am on the last Sunday in each of those months – so effectively Turkey remains two hours ahead of the UK year-round.

Tourist information

Most Turkish towns of any size will have a *Turizm Danışma Bürosu* or **tourist office** of some sort, often lodged inside the *Belediye* (city hall) in the smaller places. However, outside the larger cities and obvious tourist destinations there's often little hard information to be had, and world-weary staff may dismiss you with useless brochures. Lists of accommodation are sometimes kept at the busier offices; personnel, however, will generally not make bookings. On the other hand, staff in out-of-the-way places can be embarrassingly helpful. It's best to have a specific question – about bus schedules, festival ticket availability or museum opening hours – although in remote regions there is no guarantee that there will be anyone who can speak English.

Tourist offices generally adhere to a standard

opening schedule of Monday–Friday 8.30am–2.30pm and 1.30–5.30pm. Between May and September in big-name resorts and large cities, these hours extend well into the evening and through much of the weekend. In winter, by contrast, many tourist offices in out-of-the-way spots will be shut most of the time.

Useful tourist websites

- 📞 **biletix.com** A booking service for arts, cultural, music and sports events (mainly in Istanbul and Ankara), in both English and Turkish.
- 📞 **cultureroutesinturkey.com** Umbrella site for the country's hiking, cycling and horseriding trails.
- 📞 **goturkey.com** Turkey's official tourist information site.
- 📞 **istanbuleats.com** Fascinating blog-cum-guide to Istanbul's food scene – especially off-the-beaten-track, salt-of-the-earth places, as well as general info on Turkish food.
- 📞 **muze.gov.tr** Government website with information on the country's state-run museums, including the latest opening hours and admission fees.
- 📞 **mymerhaba.com** Intended for long-term residents, and strongest on Istanbul, but nonetheless an authoritative, wide-ranging site with news of upcoming events and ticket-booking functions.
- 📞 **turkeycentral.com** Useful information portal with links to a huge range of sites from scuba-diving operators to estate agents.
- 📞 **turkeytravelplanner.com** This very useful site has loads of practical tips for journey planning, plus many links to vetted service providers.
- 📞 **turkishculture.org** Not terribly innovative – but it does give a useful rundown on everything from architecture to ceramics, literature to music and lifestyles to cuisine – with plenty of photographs and illustrations.
- 📞 **yabangee.com** The site of choice for young, literate expats, with listings, features and blogs.



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1 Istanbul and around

Uniquely among the world's cities, Istanbul stands astride two continents, Europe and Asia. As if its spectacular geographical location were not enough, it can also boast of being the only city to have played capital to consecutive Christian and Islamic empires, a role that has shaped the region's history for more than 2500 years and bequeathed to Istanbul a staggering wealth of attractions; these range from the masterpiece Byzantine church of Haghia Sophia (Aya Sofya) to the formidable city walls, and the domes and minarets of the Ottoman mosques and palaces that dominate the city skyline. Although no longer its capital, the city remains the vibrant economic, cultural and intellectual heart of modern Turkey, a bustling, go-ahead city where east really does meet west.

In conservative districts such as Fatih, bearded men sporting skullcaps and baggy *shalwar*-style trousers devoutly heed the call to prayer, while women wouldn't dream of leaving the house with their heads uncovered. Yet across the water, the tidal wave of humanity sweeping down İstiklal Caddesi (Independence Street) includes young Turkish men and women in designer jeans and trainers who have rarely ever been to a mosque. In business districts such as Şişli, commuters arrive via the metro to work in high-rise office blocks, shop in state-of-the-art malls, and at weekends can be out clubbing until 6am.

Whether yours is the Istanbul of the Blue Mosque and the Topkapı Palace, or the Beyoğlu nightclubs and swish rooftop cocktail bars, the city takes time to get to know. Three to four days is enough to see the major historical sights in **Sultanahmet** and take a ferry trip on the **Bosphorus**. But plan on staying a week, or even two, if you want to fully explore the backstreets of the **old city** and the outlying suburbs and islands.

Brief history

In 2008, while digging the Yenikapı metro station, archeologists uncovered a Neolithic settlement dating back to circa 6500 BC. In popular tradition, however, the city was founded in the seventh century BC by **Byzas**, from Megara in Greece – hence the original name of **Byzantium**. Over the next thousand years, Byzantium became an important centre of trade and commerce, though not until the early fourth century AD did it reach the zenith of its wealth, power and prestige. For more than 350 years, it had been part of the Roman province of Asia. On Diocletian's retirement in 305, Licinius and **Constantine** fought for control of the empire. Constantine finally defeated his rival on the hills above Chrysopolis (Üsküdar) and chose Byzantium as the site for the new **capital of the Roman Empire** in 330 BC. The hilly promontory, commanding the Bosphorus and easily

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TOPKAPI PALACE

Highlights

- 1 Haghia Sophia** The monumental Church of the Divine Wisdom is the ultimate expression of Byzantine architecture. **See p.72**
- 2 Topkapı Palace** Contemplate the majesty of the Ottoman sultanate in the fine buildings, gilded pavilions and immaculate gardens of this beautiful palace complex. **See p.76**
- 3 Kariye Museum** Mosaics and frescoes portraying the life of Christ are among Istanbul's most evocative Byzantine treasures. **See p.99**
- 4 Galata Bridge** Spanning the bustling waters of the Golden Horn, this landmark bridge, packed with simple fish restaurants and bars, is wonderful at sunset. **See p.100**
- 5 İstiklal Caddesi** Lined with attractive nineteenth-century apartments, this lively street is the spine of the pulsating entertainment quarter of Beyoğlu. **See p.104**
- 6 Istanbul Modern** This bold contemporary art gallery enjoys stunning views over the Bosphorus from a converted warehouse. **See p.106**
- 7 Cruise the Bosphorus** Float past sumptuous villas, imposing fortresses, timeworn villages and two intercontinental bridges. **See p.115**
- 8 Princes' Islands** One of the world's cheapest cruises takes you from the city's heaving streets to these tranquil, historic islands, in the sparkling Sea of Marmara. **See p.140**

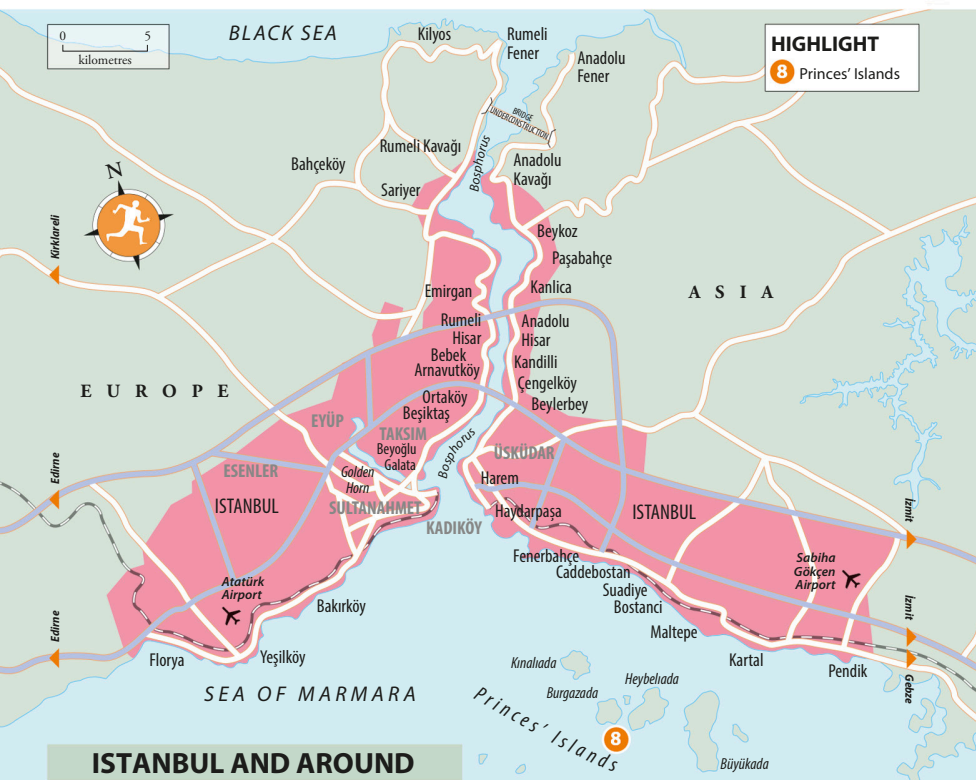
HIGHLIGHTS ARE MARKED ON THE MAPS ON P.68 & P.70

1 defensible on its landward side, was a superb choice. It was also well placed for access to the troublesome frontiers of both Europe and the Persian Empire.

In 395, the **division of the Roman Empire** between the two sons of Theodosius I left what was now named **Constantinople** as capital of the eastern part of the empire. It rapidly developed its own distinctive character, dissociating itself from Rome and adopting the Greek language and **Christianity**. Long and successful government was interrupted briefly, in Justinian's reign, by the Nika riots in 532. Half a century later, however, the dissolution of the Byzantine Empire had begun, as waves of Persians, Avars and Slavs attacked from the east and north. The empire was overrun by Arab invaders in the seventh and eighth centuries, and by Bulgars in the ninth and tenth. Only the city walls saved Constantinople, and even these could not keep out the **Crusaders**, who breached the sea walls in 1204 and sacked the city.

The Ottoman conquest

As the Byzantine Empire declined, the **Ottoman Empire** expanded. The Ottomans established first Bursa, then Edirne, as their capital, and Ottoman territory effectively surrounded the city long before it was taken. In 1453, **Mehmet II (the Conqueror)** – also known as Fatih Sultan Mehmet – besieged the city, which fell after seven weeks. Following the capture and subsequent pillage, Mehmet II began to rebuild the city, starting with a new palace and continuing with the Mosque of the Conqueror (Fatih Camii) and many smaller complexes. Tolerant of other religions, Mehmet actively encouraged Greek and Armenian Christians to take up residence in the city. His



ISTANBUL ORIENTATION

Istanbul is divided in two by the **Bosphorus**, the narrow 30km strait that separates Europe from Asia and links the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. Feeding into the southern end of the strait from the European side, the **Golden Horn** is a 7km-long inlet of water that empties into the mouth of the Bosphorus. The European side of the city effectively has two **centres**, separated by the Golden Horn. The old city, centred on the **Sultanahmet district**, is Istanbul's historical core and home to the main sights, while **Beyoğlu/Taksim**, north of the Horn, form the fulcrum of the modern city. The two can easily be made out from the water, distinguished respectively by the landmarks of the Topkapı Palace and the Genoese Galata Tower.

A little way west of Sultanahmet, the massive Grand Bazaar (**Kapalı Çarşı**) is the focal point of a disparate area stretching from the shores of the Sea of Marmara in the south up to the hill overlooking the Golden Horn to the north. Above is the commanding presence of the impressive **Süleymaniye Camii**. Some 6km west of the old city, stretching between the Sea of Marmara and the Golden Horn, are the remarkably intact Byzantine **land walls**.

From Sultanahmet and the waterfront district just north of it, Eminönü, you're most likely to cross the Golden Horn by the Galata Bridge, entering the hip port area of **Karaköy**, then heading up the steep hill through the ancient **Galata** district. Near the northern end of Galata Bridge, the **Tünel**, the French-built underground funicular railway, chugs up to **Beyoğlu**, the city's elegant nineteenth-century European quarter. From the upper Tünel station, an antique tram runs the length of Beyoğlu's pedestrianized boulevard, **İstiklal Caddesi**, to **Taksim Square**, the twin focal points of the modern city's best hotels, bars, clubs and restaurants.

North of Taksim, on the M2 metro line, the city's newest business districts of Harbiye, Etiler, Nişantaşı and Şişli hold many airline offices and embassies. Downhill from Taksim, on the Bosphorus shore, lie Tophane, **Beşiktaş** and **Ortaköy**, inner-city districts with scenic waterside locations and a number of historic palaces and parks. Across the straits, in Asia, the main centres of **Üsküdar**, **Haydarpaşa** and **Kadıköy** form part of Istanbul's commuter belt, but also have a few architectural attractions and decent shops, restaurants and clubs.

successor Beyazıt II continued this policy, settling Jewish refugees from Spain into the city in an attempt to improve the economy.

In the century following the Conquest, the victory was reinforced by the great military achievements of **Selim the Grim** and by the reign of **Süleyman the Magnificent** (1520–66), “the Lawgiver” and greatest of all Ottoman leaders. His attempted conquest of Europe was only thwarted at the gates of Vienna, and the wealth gained in his military conquests funded the work of **Mimar Sinan**, the finest Ottoman architect.

From Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic

A century after the death of Süleyman, the empire began to show signs of **decay**. Territorial losses abroad combined with corruption at home, which insinuated its way into the very heart of the empire, Topkapı Palace itself. Newly crowned sultans emerged, often insane, from the institution known as the Cage (see p.77), while others spent time in the harem rather than on the battlefield, consorting with women who increasingly became involved in grand-scale political intrigue.

As Ottoman territory was lost to the West, succeeding sultans became interested in Western institutional models. A short-lived parliament of 1876 was dissolved after a year by Abdülhamit II, but the **forces of reform** led to his deposition in 1909. The end of World War I saw Istanbul occupied by Allied troops as the victors procrastinated over how best to manage the rump of the once-great empire. After the War of Independence, Atatürk's declaration of the **Republic** in 1923 and the creation of a new capital in Ankara effectively solved the problem.

Istanbul today

The **population** of Greater Istanbul has increased twelvefold since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, and stands today at around 15 million. This rapid urban growth has





- HIGHLIGHTS**
- 1 Hagia Sophia
 - 2 Topkapı Palace
 - 3 Kariye Museum
 - 4 Galata Bridge
 - 5 İstiklal Caddesi
 - 6 Istanbul Modern
 - 7 Cruise the Bosphorus

ISTANBUL

SEA OF MARMARA