

# GUIDEBOOK OF TURKEY



## I - GENERAL DATES

1. Official Name: Republic of Turkey
2. National Anthem: İstiklal Marsi (Independence March)
3. Founder: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk
4. System of Government: Republican parliamentary democracy
5. Area: 783.562 square kilometres
6. Coastal Length: 7.200 km
7. Coastal Borders: Mediterranean Sea at south, Aegean Sea at west, Black Sea at north
8. Population: 74.724.000 (31 December 2011)
9. Capital City: Ankara
10. Language: Turkish
11. Religion: Muslim 99%
12. Neighboring Countries: Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia, Iraq, Armenia, Iran, Syria
13. Currency: Turkish Lira (TL) 1TL = 100 kr
14. Number of Cities: 81
15. Victory Day: 30 August
16. Republic Day: 29 October
17. Largest Cities: Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Antalya, Konya, Bursa, Kayseri, Samsun, Trabzon, Erzurum, Eskisehir, Kocaeli, Diyarbakir, Sakarya, Mersin, Gaziantep
18. Lifestyle: Turkish lifestyle is a vivid mosaic; juxtaposing the Occident and the Orient, the ancient and the modern.
19. Hospitality: Hospitality is a cornerstone of Turkish culture, and Turks believe that visitors should be treated as Guests sent by God.



20. Cuisine: Turkish cuisine is renowned as one of the world's best.

21. Weather: It is said that all of the four seasons exist in Turkey.

22. Tourism: Turkey has so much to offer her visitors, therefore this country has recently become one of the world's most popular tourism destinations.

## II - HISTORY

The history of the Turks covers a time frame of more than 4000 years. Turks first lived in Central Asia around 2000 BC. Later, some of them left Central Asia and spread around, establishing many states and empires independent from each other within a vast area of Asia and Europe. These empires included The Great Hun Empire (established during the 3rd Century B.C.), the Göktürk Empire (552-740), the Uygur Empire (741- 840), the Avar Empire (6-9 Century A.D.), the Hazar Empire (5-10 Century A.D), the Great Seljuk Empire (1040- 1157), and many others.

**2.1. Turks in Anatolia:** The Turks started to settle in Anatolia in the early 11th century by way of continual migrations and incursions. The Malazgirt victory in 1071 against the Byzantines literally opened up the gates of Anatolia to the Turks. It is following this date that the Turks fully conquered the whole of Anatolia and established the Anatolian Seljuk State there (1080-1308). This was the first Turkish State in Anatolia and was sometimes called, after its capital city of many years, the Konya Sultanate.

**2.2 OTTOMAN AGE 1299–1923:** The Seljuk State rapidly declined with the Mongol invasion of Anatolia which started in 1243. During the period of the decline of the Anatolian Seljuk state and after its disappearance, many Turcoman principalities were established in Anatolia towards the end of the thirteenth century. One of these was the Ottoman (in Turkish Osmanli) Beylik (similar to a Principality) named after its founder, a Turkish ruler named Osman in 1299 in the environs of Söğüt in Eskişehir in the northwestern corner of the peninsula. The Ottoman Beylik rapidly expanded throughout the fourteenth century and thus arose the Ottoman Empire, which ruled over a vast territory on three continents and lasted for 623 years until the end of the First World War.

The Ottomans captured Constantinople in 1453, during the reign of Sultan Mehmet II (1451-1481), and the Byzantine Empire fell, which also marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the New Age. During the reign of Sultan Mehmet II, who assumed the title of "The Conqueror," the Ottoman state entered into an era of rapid development which would last until the end of the sixteenth century. At its height, the Ottomans ruled over what is today Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania in the Balkans, over all the islands in the Eastern Mediterranean, and over what is today the Middle East. The borders of the Empire extended from the Crimea in the North to Yemen and Sudan in the South and from Iran and the Caspian Sea in the East to Vienna in the Northwest and Spain in the Southwest.

Starting in the 16th century, however, the Ottoman Empire incrementally lost its economic and military superiority in comparison to Europe, which had developed rapidly with the Renaissance, with



its conquest of new territories and its access to raw materials, and with the Industrial Revolution. The Ottoman Empire failed to adapt to these new developments. Thus, the balance of power shifted in favor of the European States. The nationalist movements that started in the nineteenth century and the self-determination movements and rebellions of the Balkan nations, supported by the European powers and Russia, slowly brought the Ottoman Empire to a decline.

**2.3. WORLD WAR I 1914 –1918:** The weakening of the Empire continued until World War I. The Ottoman Empire entered the First World War in 1914 on the side of the allied powers and emerged defeated from the war in 1918, compelled to sign the Mondros Armistice on October 30, 1918. Under the terms of this Armistice, the territories of the Ottoman Empire were occupied by Britain, France, Russia, and Greece. This was the actual end of the Ottoman Empire.

A national resistance and liberation movement emerged as a reaction to this occupation under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, an Ottoman military commander who mobilized Anatolia in a quest for Turkish self-determination and national independence. He united sporadic and disorganized resistance groups in Anatolia and organized them into a structured army. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal—later given the last name Ataturk or "Father of Turks"—the resistance became cohesive, and the Turks were capable of fighting the war for national liberation.

The Turkish National Liberation War was an effort to create a new state from the ruins of an Empire, which had completed its life. It lasted four years (1919-1922) wherein a small army of volunteers fought and won a war against the leading powers of this time. Ataturk's victory was not only military, but it was also diplomatic. The Turkish military victory was sealed with a diplomatic success with the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty on July 24, 1923. Signed with Great Britain, France, Greece, Italy and others, the Treaty recognized the creation and international borders of a Turkish State and guaranteed its complete independence.

**2.4. REPUBLIC OF TURKEY:** The Republic was proclaimed on October 29, 1923. For the first time in centuries, the Turkish people enjoyed self-rule. Mustafa Kemal was elected as the first president of the Republic of Turkey.

As president for 15 years, until his death in 1938, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk introduced a broad range of reforms in the political, social, legal, economic, and cultural spheres that were virtually unparalleled in any other country.

The first Grand National Assembly under the leadership of Ataturk created a new political and legal system based on the principles of parliamentary democracy, human rights, national sovereignty and division of powers, private ownership and secularism, and the separation of religion and state affairs. A new, secular education system was established, the Arabic alphabet was changed into the Latin alphabet, and new civil and criminal codes were adapted from European models. Turkish women received equal rights under the law such as the right to vote and be elected to public office, which put Turkey ahead of many Western nations in terms of women's rights. It was a revolution, unparalleled at its time and even today, to bring a predominantly Muslim nation in line with Western civilization and universal values.

### III - GEOGRAPHIC AREAS



### 3.1. Geographical Regions of Turkey

Turkey is generally divided into seven regions:

- Black Sea region,
- Marmara region,
- Aegean region,
- Mediterranean region,
- Central Anatolia region,
- East Anatolia region
- Southeast Anatolia region

### 3.2. Turkey's flora

Anatolia is one of the foremost world sources of plants which have been cultivated for food, and the wild ancestors of many plants which now provide staples for mankind still grow here. Turkey is also the home of many other cultivated plants, such as chickpeas, lentils, apricots, almonds, figs, hazelnuts, cherries and sour cherries

### 3.3. Turkey's Fauna

The diversity of fauna in Turkey is even greater than that of wild plants. While the number of species throughout Europe as a whole is around 60,000, in Turkey they number over 80,000. If subspecies are also counted, then this number rises to over a hundred thousand.

## IV-TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN TURKEY

Turkey offers a wealth of different kinds of destinations to travelers. From the dome and minaret filled skyline of Istanbul to the Roman ruins along the western and southern coasts, from the beaches of Antalya and the Mediterranean seaside resorts to the misty mountains of Eastern Black Sea.

### 4.1. Hagia Sophia

Located in Istanbul, the Hagia Sophia was originally a basilica constructed for the Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian I in the sixth century. A masterwork of Roman engineering, the massive dome (31 meters or 102 feet in diameter) covers what was for over 1000 years the largest enclosed space in the world. The church was looted by the fourth Crusaders in 1204, and became a mosque in the 15th century when The Ottomans conquered the city. The Hagia Sophia was converted into a museum in 1935 and is now one of the top attractions in Turkey.



#### **4.2. Goreme Fairy Chimneys**

Cappadocia is famous for its weird and wonderful natural rock formations and unique historical heritage. One of the best places to see these strange formations is the town of Göreme, which is located among a large number of tuff cones, termed fairy chimneys. The fairy chimneys have been formed as the result of wind and water erosion of two different volcanic layers: A thick layer of tuff (consolidated volcanic ash) covered by a thin layer of basalt that is more resistant to erosion. Due to the ease of carving into the tuff, many of the fairy chimneys at Cappadocia have been hollowed out over the centuries to create houses, churches and storage facilities.

#### **4.3. Library of Celsus**

The ruins of Ephesus are a popular tourist attraction on the west coast. The city of Ephesus was once famed for the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, which was destroyed by a mob led by the archbishop of Constantinople in 401 AD. Some of the structures can still be seen however including the Great Theater and the Library of Celsus. The library was built around 125 AD to store 12,000 scrolls and to serve as a monumental tomb for Celsus, the governor of Asia. The façade was carefully reconstructed in the 1970s to its present splendid state from the original pieces.

#### **4.4. Blue Mosque**

With its six minarets and sweeping architecture the Sultan Ahmed or Blue Mosque in Istanbul impresses from the outside. While still used as a mosque, the Blue Mosque has also become one of the most popular tourist attractions in Istanbul. It was built between 1609 and 1616 and like many other mosques contains the tomb of the founder. Inside the mosque, the high ceiling is lined with the 20,000 blue tiles with different patterns that give the mosque its popular name.

#### **4.5. Mount Nemrut**

Nemrut is a 2,134 meter (7,001 ft) high mountain in southeastern Turkey, near the city of Adiyaman. In 62 BC, King Antiochus I Theos of Commagene built a tomb-sanctuary flanked by huge statues of himself, two lions, two eagles and various Greek, and Persian gods on the mountain top. Since their construction, the heads have toppled from the bodies and lay scattered throughout the site. The summit of Mount Nemrut provides a great view of the surrounding mountains. The main attraction is to watch the sunrise from the eastern terrace which give the bodyless heads a beautiful orange hue and adds to the sense of mystery of the place.

### **V-CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS**

#### **5.1. DAILY GREETINGS AND COMMON EXPRESSIONS**

Turks love to celebrate or empathise and common expressions apply to many daily or special events and occasions. Should a friend fall ill, the response should be “Gecmis Olsun” meaning get well soon.



Enter into a shop and you may hear the saying of “Hos Geldiniz” which means welcome. The list goes on and on but the good news for foreigners is that Turks are quite relaxed if you are visiting the country. Learning a few sayings earns you great respect, but do not sweat the small stuff, because to the Turks, you are a welcome guest in their country.

## **5.2. BLUE BEAD WORN AGAINST THE EVIL EYE**

In direct disbelief of Islamic traditions, the Nazar Boncugu, also known as the evil eye is in offices, homes, in transport and businesses. Turks believe this talisman wards off evil and these days, as well as featuring heavily in Turkish culture, it is one of the top recommended souvenirs to buy.

## **5.3. PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND CHILDREN: WHEN A BABY IS BORN**

Likewise, when a baby is born, friends and family will often give it an evil eye for protection. Turks adore children, so do not be surprised if your kid receives their undivided attention. The children also increase family size, so represent a symbol of increased strength. Pregnancy is the next natural thing to do after marriage and anybody shunning parenthood, or unable to conceive can become the target of gossip, or socially questioned in some regions.

Since pregnancy is an assumed must, many traditions revolve around it such as cravings or determining the sex, although, in modernized areas, couples are turning to the medical profession to find out the sex of their child. In smaller villages, some mother stay indoors for 40 days to regain health and help their new-borns with a good start in life.

## **5.4. CIRCUMCISION**

Circumcision is still a religious requirement in many parts of the country but thankfully, practises have improved during the last century. In history, it was not unheard of for a local elder to perform the ritual on the kitchen table but especially in the western parts of the country, more people are opting for hospital procedures. To mark the occasion, traditionally seen as the transition to a fully blooded male, a present like a memorable watch is given to the boy.

## **5.5. THE TURKISH HAMAM**

This tradition stemming from the Roman public bathhouses and modified by the Ottomans, has split into two. Certain Turkish baths are touristic orientated because westerners prefer to wear swimming costumes while others cater for the local community in the tradition way and this is seen in the weekly practise of women only day.

People enter naked or wear a swimming costume, to sit in the sauna while dosing down with cold water. A scrub down with a lofar and plenty of soapsuds is good exfoliation of dead skin and the optional choice of a body massage is usually offered in the touristic bathhouses.



## 5.6. HOSPITALITY: SHOES, DINING AND GIFTS

Turks are hospitable and often invite newfound friends around to their house for a dinner party. Visitors are given slippers, so they can leave their shoes at the door and copious amounts of food will be offered of which it is rude to refuse. During this time, a gift is not expected but if you intend to adhere to the popular western culture of bringing a bottle of wine, be sure to check whether the hosts drink. A lot are teetotal or only drink outside of the house. Contrary to popular belief, Turks only drink their version of coffee on a few days during the week. Instead, the national drink is tea, served black in tulip-shaped glasses and sweetened with sugar according to the drinker's preference. A common feature in most villages, towns, and cities are the men only teahouses where they gather to drink tea and play games such as OK. Otherwise, tea gardens are popular for families and females, especially on the weekends.

## VI - TURKISH FOOD CULTURE & CUISINE

Turkish cuisine is one of the most appetizing and rich cuisines of the world, and Turkish people are known to be quite passionate about food. Diversity and the full flavor makes the Turkish cuisine worldwide famous which draws influences from its rich history and each region in the country today praises its own specialities. The richness of Turkish cuisine is based on several factors: Variety of products cultivated on the lands of Asia and Anatolia, numerous cultural interactions in history, the palace kitchens of Seljuk and Ottoman empires and geographical conditions that shaped the character of Turkish culinary culture.

The Turkish art of cooking has a long and deep-rooted past and its cuisine varies across the country. The culinary culture of Istanbul, Bursa, Izmir region inherits many elements of vast Ottoman cuisine. The Marmara, Aegean and Mediterranean cuisines are rich in vegetables, fresh herbs and fish. Olive oil is most widely used. Black Sea region's cuisine uses fish extensively, especially the Black Sea anchovy (hamsi). It's influenced by Balkan and Slavic cuisine and includes maize dishes.

To get an overview of the Turkish food varieties;

Çorbalar: Soups, generally served before the main dish, especially in winter season.

Mezeler: Mezes, Mostly cold served, olive oil based appetizers.

Dolma & Sarma: Stuffed vegetables or rolled leaves with rice or meat stuffings.

Salatalar: Salads of various kinds from different regions.

Zeytinyağlılar: Olive oil vegetable dishes which are usually served cold.

Pilavlar: Rice or bulgur pilaf variations.

Etililer: Meat dishes mostly cooked with vegetables.

Börekler: Stuffed or rolled pastries with meat, cheese or vegetable fillings.

Pideler: Kind of flat bread with cheese, vegetables or meat.

Kebaplar: Kebabs range from kebabs cooked in a pot to skewered kebabs.



Balık ve Deniz Ürünleri: Fish and other seafood such as shrimps and squids.

Tatlılar: Desserts that range from milk-based tastes to baklava like pastries.

## VII - TURKISH CHILDREN GAMES

**7.1. SAKLAMBAÇ (HIDE AND SEEK):** This game is played at least four persons. One is chosen as "ebe" means the person who is on duty. Ebe turns to the wall and starts to count up to fifty. Others try to hide himself or herself as soon as possible. After counting, ebe says "okay!". And starts to see the other persons. If ebe sees someone and says his or her name and adds "sobe" aloud and put his or her hand on the wall. Others try to say "sobe" and put his or her hand on the wall without being seen by ebe. The person to be seen and be said his or her name aloud becomes new ebe. Then new ebe is on duty. The game starts again. This goes on and on and on.

**7.2. KÖŞE KAPMACA (PUSS IN THE CORNER):** This game is played with a few people. Four or five at least. This is an outdoor game. You can find enough corners of buildings or streets or entrances of buildings. "Ebe" stands in the centre. Others stand at the corners. Persons at the corners try to change their places without being caught by the "ebe". If one of them get caught, he or she becomes new "ebe". Play starts again.

**7.3. YAĞ SATARIM ( I SELL OIL):** This game can be played with 10 to 15 people. All the players turn to each other and sit on the floor. The "ebe" is determined by drawing a lots. "Ebe" holds a handkerchief and makes a knot on one end. "ebe" starts to go round behind the people and sings a song. During the song he or she puts the handkerchief behind one of the players. If the player realizes it, he or she stands and starts to chase "ebe" to catch him or her. If he cannot catch ebe, ebe can sit his place, then he becomes new ebe.

**7.4.MANGALA:** The game is generally played in brazier-like holes, either twelve or fourteen of them. In most cases it is played by two players in the following manner. Each player digs seven small holes in the ground in lines opposite each other and places five stones in each hole.

Each player in turns picks up all the stones out of any one hole on his side, and distributes them one by one counter-clockwise in the other holes beginning at the first hole on the right of the one from which he has taken the stones. The game is finished when all fourteen holes are empty. The stones are then replaced five in each hole and the player whose stones exceed the number needed to fill the holes in his line wins.

## VIII - NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS IN TURKEY

### 1 January

New Year's Day(*Yılbaşı*) – National Holiday – First day of the new year.

### 23 April

National Sovereignty and Children's Day (*Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı*) – National Holiday – Commemoration of the first opening of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara (1920). Dedicated to the children.





### 1 May

Labor and Solidarity Day (*Emek ve Dayanışma Günü*) – National Holiday.

### 19 May

Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth & Sports Day (*Atatürk'ü Anma Gençlik ve Spor Bayramı*) – National Holiday – The arrival of Atatürk in Samsun in 1919, the beginning of the War of Independence. Dedicated to the youth.

**Sugar Feast's Eve (*Ramazan Bayramı Arifesi*)** – Religious Holiday – ½ day.

**Sugar Feast (*Ramazan Bayramı*)** – Religious Holidays – Three-day festival to celebrate the end of fasting (Ramadan) where plenty of sweets are eaten.

**Feast of the Sacrifice's Eve (*Kurban Bayramı Arifesi*)** – Religious Holiday – ½ day.

**Feast of the Sacrifice (*Kurban Bayramı*)** – Religious Holidays – Four-day festival where sheep are sacrificed/slaughtered and their meat is distributed to the poor.

### 30 August

**Victory Day (*Zafer Bayramı*)** – National Holiday – Victory over the allied forces during the final battle in Dumlupınar in 1922, ending the War of Independence. Dedicated to the armed forces.

### 29 October

**Republic Day (*Cumhuriyet Bayramı*)** – National Holiday – Anniversary of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923.