

Cappadocia



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

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

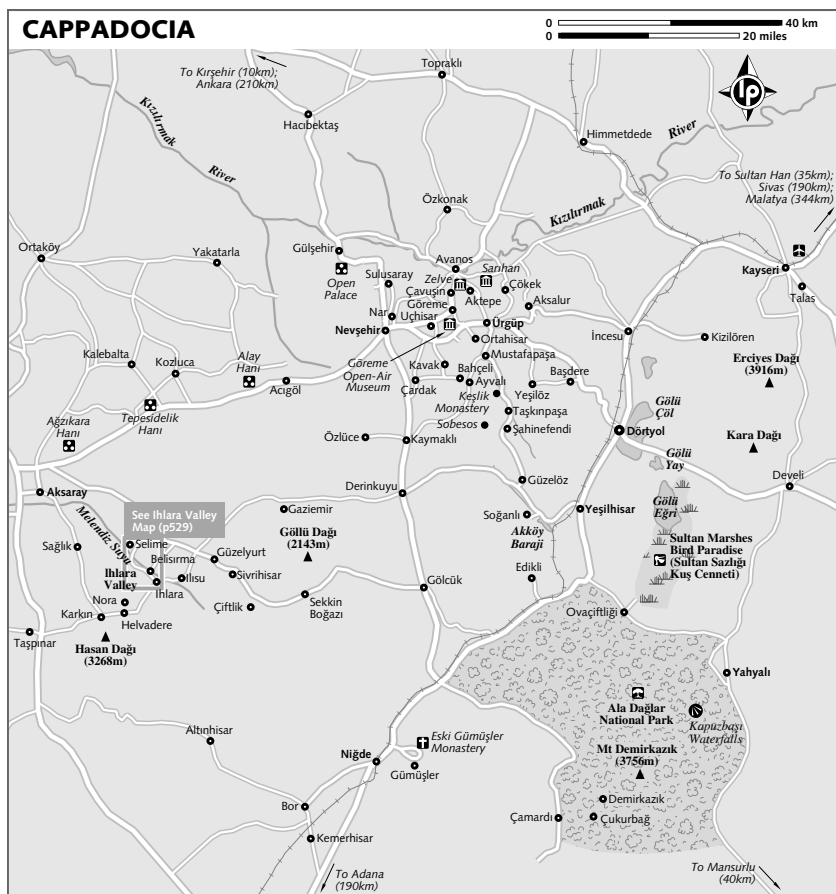
Whether it's a pension or a boutique hideaway with as few rooms as it has fairy chimneys, Cappadocia's accommodation rates as some of Turkey's best and allows guests to experience cave dwelling firsthand. The restaurants in dreamy spots such as Göreme and Ürgüp are equally alluring, with yet more terraces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

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

HIGHLIGHTS

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





History

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

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

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

Dangers & Annoyances

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

tions to the east and west of Cappadocia. In reality, many long-haul buses do terminate in Nevşehir, but the legitimate companies (including Göreme, Metro, Nevşehir, Öncü and Kapadokya) then transfer their passengers from Nevşehir to the surrounding villages on free *servis* (shuttle minibuses).

When you purchase your bus ticket, make absolutely sure that it clearly states that it is for Göreme; having it state 'Cappadocia' is not enough. With this proof, you will be able to insist on a free shuttle transfer (even if it means refusing to get off the bus!). It's also a good idea to confirm your final destination with your driver before you get on the bus at the start of the trip. If you find yourself on the Avanos bypass, phone your hotel to arrange onward transport or walk to the garage and call a taxi.

For more information about transport from Nevşehir's otogar, see p514 and p515.

Walking in central Cappadocia's valleys is a wonderful experience and should not be missed, but lone travellers, particularly women, should take care there. Women have been attacked in the often-remote valleys; the last incident happened in 2008. Solo travellers who do not want to hire a guide are advised to avoid the areas away from Göreme et al in the evening and, if possible, to walk with (or near to) a worker or fellow guest from your pension.

Tours

Cappadocia is overrun with travel agents, the majority of which agree on a standard price at the beginning of each season. However, it is worth shopping around as tours vary in terms of value for money – the quality of the guide or the number of sights covered.

Most tour companies offer the following:

Full-day tours Similarly priced, these packages often take in one of the underground cities, a stretch of the Ihlara Valley and one of the caravanserais, but others go to Soğanlı and Mustafapaşa.

Guided day hikes Usually in the Rose, Sun, Red or Pigeon Valleys. Costs vary according to the destination, degree of difficulty and length, but should not exceed the above prices as less motor transport and pricey petrol are involved.

Ihlara Valley trip A full day, including a guided hike and lunch; most operators charge TL50 to TL60, but prices go up to TL80.

Most itineraries finish at a carpet shop, onyx factory or pottery workshop, but it is still

worth taking a tour. It is interesting to see a traditional Cappadocian craftsman at work, but if you really object to hearing a sales pitch, you can sit out that section of the tour in the minibus, or make it clear before the trip begins that you are not interested.

At the start and end of the season, when customers are thin on the ground, local tour companies tend to join forces rather than have a fleet of half-empty minibuses trundling back and forth. Most of the pensions either operate their own tours or work with one of the travel agencies.

We strongly advise you to avoid booking an expensive tour package upon arrival in İstanbul. If your time is limited and you want to take a tour in Cappadocia, you're better off booking a tour directly from an agent in Cappadocia itself.

For listings of tour agencies, see p500 (for Göreme), p509 (Çavuşin), p512 (Avanos) and p518 (Ürgüp).

Getting There & Away

Two airports serve central Cappadocia: Kayseri and Nevşehir. For details of flights to or from İstanbul and İzmir see p537 and p515.

Transfer buses operate between Kayseri airport and accommodation in central Cappadocia for passengers leaving or arriving on flights between the mid-morning and evening. The buses pick up from and drop off to hotels and pensions in Ürgüp, Göreme, Uçhisar, Avanos and Nevşehir, and cost TL15 (for Ürgüp) to TL17 (for the other destinations). If you want to use the service you *must* pre-book by phone or email with **Argeus Tours** (p518) in Ürgüp if you fly Turkish Airlines; or through **Peerless Travel Services** (p518), also in Ürgüp, if you fly Onur Air or Sun Express. Alternatively, you can easily request your hotel or pension in Cappadocia to book a seat for you. If you don't pre-book, you may be able to jump on a bus at the airport if it is picking up other passengers on your flight. However, you will more likely have to make your way to Kayseri's otogar to catch a bus to your final destination (note that this is not an option in the evening) or catch a taxi there – an expensive proposition.

It's easy to get to Cappadocia by bus from İstanbul or Ankara. Buses from İstanbul to Cappadocia travel overnight (in high summer there may also be day buses) and bring you

to Nevşehir, where there should be a *servis* to take you to Uçhisar, Göreme, Avanos or Ürgüp (see p515). From Ankara you can travel more comfortably during the day. It's easy enough to travel back from Cappadocia to İstanbul by day bus via Ankara because there are so many buses between these two cities.

The nearest train stations are at Niğde and Kayseri. See p528 and p538 for information about services.

Getting Around

The most-convenient bases for exploring central Cappadocia are Göreme, Ürgüp and Avanos. In summer, travelling between these places by bus and dolmuş (minibus) is relatively easy, although on Sunday the transport slows right down. In winter, public transport is less frequent.

Belediye Bus Corp dolmuşes (TL1.75 to TL2 depending on where you get on and off) travel between Ürgüp and Avanos via Ortahisar, the Göreme Open-Air Museum, Göreme village, Çavuşin and (on request) Paşabağı and Zelve. The services leave Ürgüp every two hours between 8am and 4pm (6pm in summer) and Avanos between 9am and 5pm (7pm in summer). You can hop on and off anywhere around the loop.

There's also an hourly *belediye* (municipal council) bus running from Avanos to Nevşehir (TL3) via Çavuşin (10 minutes), Göreme (15 minutes) and Uçhisar (30 minutes). It leaves Avanos from 7am to 6pm.

The Ihlara Valley in southwest Cappadocia can be visited on a tour from Göreme; it is difficult to visit in a day by bus, as you must change in Nevşehir and Aksaray.

GÖREME

☎ 0384 / pop 2250

Göreme is the archetypal travellers' utopia: a beatific village where the surreal surroundings spread a fat smile on everyone's face. Beneath the honeycomb cliffs, the locals live in fairy chimneys – or increasingly, run hotels in them. The wavy white valleys in the distance, with their hiking trails, panoramic viewpoints and rock-cut churches, look like giant tubs of vanilla ice cream. Rose Valley, meanwhile, lives up to its name; watching its pink rock slowly change colour at sunset is best accompanied by meze in one of the excellent eateries. Tourism is having an impact on a place where you can start the day

in a hot-air balloon, before touring a valley of rockcut Byzantine churches at the Göreme Open-Air Museum. Young locals are less interested in agriculture in the face of relatively rich tourist pickings. The pigeon houses peppering cliffs and fairy chimneys, traditionally used to collect the birds' droppings for use as fertiliser, increasingly lie empty. The village's permanent population has slipped below 2500, meaning it might lose its *belediye*. Nonetheless, you can still see rural life continuing in a place where, once upon a time, if a man didn't own a pigeon house, he would struggle to woo a wife.

Orientation & Information

Most of Göreme's shops and restaurants are in the streets surrounding the otogar. The Open-Air Museum is an easy walk 1km to the east of town.

BOOKSHOPS

1001 Books (☎ 271 2767; Müze Caddesi 35; ☎ 8am–8pm) One of Turkey's best bookshops for English reads, with guidebooks and a pile of free magazines. English-speaking staff work in the afternoon and some of the profits are donated to local causes.

INTERNET ACCESS

Flintstones Internet Centre (Belediye Caddesi; per hr TL2; ☎ 10am–midnight) Get an hour free for donating a tome to the book swap.

Mor-tel Telekom Call Shop/Internet Café (Roma Kalesi Arkası; per hr TL2; ☎ 9am–midnight) Also offers cheap international calls.

MONEY

There are four ATMs in booths at the otogar (Vakıf Bank, Türkiye Bankası, HSBC and Garanti Bankası). The one at Deniz Bank on Müze Caddesi dispenses lira, euros and US dollars. Some of the town's travel agencies will exchange money, although you're probably better off going to the PTT.

POST

Post office (off Bilal Eroğlu Caddesi) Phone, fax and money-changing services.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Despite being the centre of the Cappadocian tourist industry, Göreme has no real tourist office. There's an information booth at the otogar that is open when most long-distance buses arrive, but it's run by the **Göreme**

GÖREME

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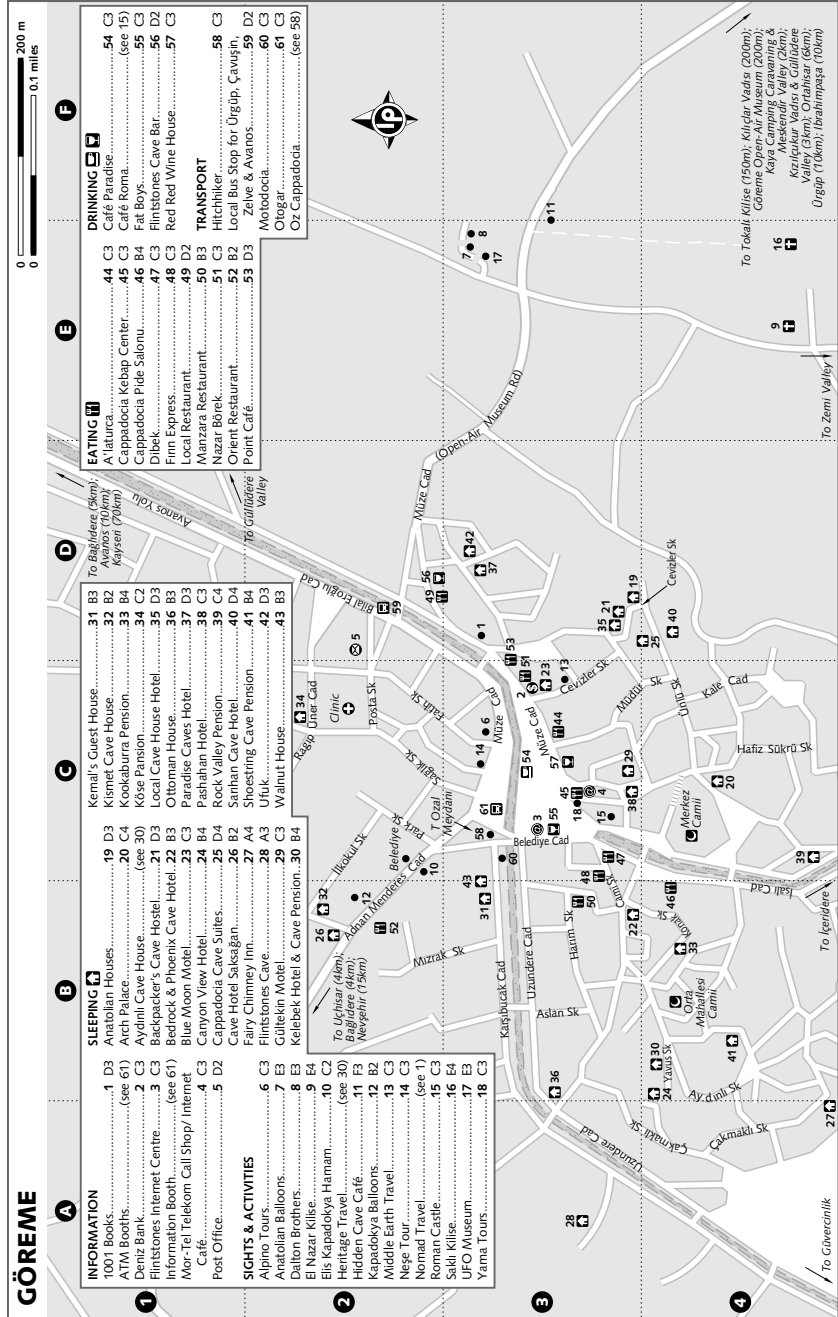
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Turizmçiler Derneği (Göreme Tourism Society; ☎ 271 2558; www.goreme.org). This coalition of hotel and restaurant owners is solely aimed at directing travellers to accommodation in the village and staff can't supply any meaningful information. They give out free maps and sell one for TL5.

Sights & Activities

GÖREME OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

One of Turkey's World Heritage sites, the **Göreme Open-Air Museum** (Göreme Açık Hava Müzesi; admission TL15; ☎ 8am-5pm) is an essential stop on any Cappadocian itinerary and deserves a two-hour visit. First an important Byzantine monastic settlement that housed some 20 monks, then a pilgrimage site from the 17th century, the cluster of rock-cut churches, chapels and monasteries is 1km uphill from the centre of the village.

Try to arrive early in the morning in summer and space yourself between tour groups – when lots of people crowd into one of the little churches they block the doorway, which is often the only source of light. Alternatively, go at midday, when the tour parties stop for lunch. If possible, avoid weekends, when domestic tourists descend.

Follow the cobbled path until you reach **Aziz Basil Şapeli**, the chapel dedicated to Kayseri-born St Basil, one of Cappadocia's most important saints. The grate-covered holes in the floor were the graves of the chapel's architects and financiers; the small boxes contained less-affluent folks' bones. In the main room, St Basil is pictured on the left; a Maltese cross is on the right, along with St George and St Theodore slaying a (faded) dragon, symbolising paganism. On the right of the apse, Mary holds baby Jesus, with a cross in his halo.

Above Aziz Basil Şapeli, bow down to enter the 12th-century **Elmalı Kilise** (Apple Church), overlooking a valley of poplars. Relatively well preserved, it contains both simple, red-ochre daubs and professionally painted frescoes of biblical scenes. The Ascension is pictured above the door. The church's name is thought to derive from an apple tree that grew nearby or from a misinterpretation of the globe held by the Archangel Gabriel, in the third dome.

Byzantine soldiers carved the **Azize Barbara Şapeli** (Chapel of St Barbara), dedicated to their patron saint, who is depicted on the left as you enter. They also painted the mysterious scenes on the roof – the middle one could represent the Ascension; above the St

George representation on the far wall, the strange creature could be a dragon, and the two crosses, the beast's usual slayers. The decoration is typical of the iconoclastic period, when images were outlawed – red ochre painted on the stone without any images of people or animals.

Uphill, in the **Yılanlı Kilise** (Snake Church or Church of St Onuphrius), the dragon is still having a bad day. To add insult to its fatal injuries, it was mistaken for a snake when the church was named. The hermetic hermaphrodite St Onuphrius is pictured on the right, holding a genitalia-covering palm leaf. Straight ahead, the small figure next to Jesus is one of the church's financiers.

A few steps away, hundreds of students chowed down in the **refectory**, with its long dining table with rock-cut benches and holes for candles. The trough in the floor was probably used for pressing grapes. In the attached larder, you can see storage shelves carved into the walls, and a kitchen. Another smaller, nameless church here retains a rock-cut iconostasis.

The museum's most famous church, the stunning, fresco-filled **Karanlık Kilise** (Dark Church; admission TL8), is definitely worth the extra outlay. The supplementary fee is due to its costly renovation, and an attempt to keep numbers down and preserve the frescoes. One of Turkey's finest surviving churches, it took its name from the fact that it originally had very few windows. The lack of light preserved the frescoes' vivid colour, particularly the upper examples, which were also spared by the iconoclastic Muslim vandals. On the right of the entrance, you can see two of the church's founders wearing curved ceremonial hats; in the main room, five more are visible, one reduced to a disembodied head. The copious biblical scenes include the birth of Jesus, on the left, with an ox and ass poking their noses into the manger.

Just past the Karanlık Kilise, the small **Azize Katarina Şapeli** (Chapel of St Catherine) has frescoes of St George, St Catherine and the Deesis.

The relatively recent, 13th-century **Çankılı Kilise** (Sandal Church) is named for the footprints marked in the floor, representing the last imprints left by Jesus before he ascended to heaven. The four gospel writers are depicted below the central dome; in the arch over the door to the left is the Betrayal by Judas.

Downhill, the cordoned-off **Rahibeler Manastırı** (Nun's Convent) was originally several storeys high; all that remains are a large plain dining hall and, up some steps, a small chapel with unremarkable frescoes.

When you exit the museum, don't forget to cross the road and visit the **Tokalı Kilise** (Buckle Church), 50m down the hill towards Göreme. Covered by the same ticket, it is one of Göreme's biggest and finest churches, with an underground chapel and fabulous frescoes painted in a narrative (rather than liturgical) cycle. Entry is via the 10th-century 'old' Tokalı Kilise, through the barrel-vaulted chamber with frescoes portraying the life of Christ. Upstairs, the 'new' church, built less than a hundred years later, is also alive with frescoes on a similar theme. The holes in the floor once contained tombs, taken by departing Christians during the population exchange (p40).

CHURCHES

On the road between Göreme and the Open-Air Museum, a sign points to the 10th-century **El Nazar Kilise** (Church of the Evil Eye; admission TL8; ☎ 8am-5pm). Carved out of a fairy chimney, the church has been restored and is considerably quieter than the Open-Air Museum, although its frescoes are in worse condition. It's a pretty 10-minute walk from the main road.

Back towards the Open-Air Museum, a yellow sign points to the **Saklı Kilise** (Hidden Church), up the path to the right of the Hidden Cave Café. When you reach the top of the hill, follow the track to the left and look out for steps leading downhill to the right.

GÖREME VILLAGE

Göreme village, set amid cones and pinnacles of volcanic tuff, is its own biggest attraction. Just wandering its windy streets, glimpsing Cappadocia's undulating valleys between stone houses, is an experience that will stay with you for as long as it takes a fairy chimney to erode. Calls to prayer, apricots drying on flat roofs and vine cuttings protecting the tops of walls are reminders that, despite the fantastical setting, everyday rural life takes place here.

At Göreme's centre is the so-called **Roman Castle** (Roma Kalesi), a fairy chimney with a rock-cut Roman tomb; you can see the re-

mains of column tops on its facade. Göreme may have been a burial ground for the Romans of Venasa (now Avanos).

UFO MUSEUM

ET says *hoş geldiniz* (welcome) at the world's fifth **UFO Museum** (admission TL3; ☎ 9am-7pm). Mostly consisting of magazine cuttings displayed haphazardly on cave walls, the exhibition ends with video footage of a possible seven-UFO sighting in Göreme.

ELİS KAPADOKYA HAMAM

Unwind after the chimney-spotting and treat yourself to a thorough massage at the beautiful **Elis Kapadokya Hamam** (☎ 271 2974; Adnan Menderes Caddesi; admission TL35, massage TL10; ☎ 10am-midnight), which has women-only and mixed areas.

Tours

See p496 for details of the types of tours offered by all of these agencies.

The following businesses have been recommended by readers or can be vouched for by us. However, the list is by no means exhaustive.

Alpino Tours (☎ 271 2727; www.alpino.com.tr; Müze Caddesi 5)

Heritage Travel (☎ 271 2687; www.turkishheritage-travel.com; Yavuz Sokak 31) Local tours with the knowledgeable Mustafa are highly recommended (TL60 for four people minimum and €100 for a private tour). Based at the Kelebek Hotel & Cave Pension (p504), the company also offers traditional Turkish weddings and longer packages such as two-week cuisine tours (€2800).

Middle Earth Travel (☎ 271 2559; www.middle-earthtravel.com; Cevizler Sokak 20) The adventure-travel specialist offers climbing and treks ranging from local, one-day expeditions (€30 to €40) to one-week missions along the Lycian Way or St Paul's Trail, through the Kaçkar Mountains or up Mt Ararat.

Neşe Tour (☎ 271 2525; www.nesetour.com; Avanos Yolu 54) Also offers trips to Nemrut Dağı (Mt Dağı) lasting between two and four days.

Nomad Travel (☎ 271 2767; www.nomadtravel.com.tr; Müze Caddesi 35) Offers an excellent Soğanlı tour.

Yama Tours (☎ 271 2508; www.yamatours.com; Müze Caddesi 2) Also offers three-day trips to Nemrut Dağı (€150), leaving on Monday and Thursday.

Sleeping

With about 100 hostels, pensions and hotels in Göreme, competition keeps prices low.

If you're visiting between October and May, pack warm clothes as it gets very cold at night

EKREM ILHAN

When Persia ruled Turkey (see p29), Katpatuka (Cappadocia) was famous throughout the empire for its beautiful horses. In Iran's Persepolis palace, among the reliefs depicting delegates from Persia's subject states, visitors from Katpatuka are pictured with equine offerings.

It seems appropriate, then, that present-day Göreme has a horse whisperer. Ekrem Ilhan brings wild horses to Göreme from Erciyes Dağı (Mt Erciyes), where a tribe of 400 has grown as local farmers have replaced them with machinery.

'They are in shock when they arrive here, but when their eyes open they see me, talking and giving them sweet things,' he says. 'People teach animals to bite and kick, because they are angry with them. But when you're friends, and you talk to them and give them some carrot and cucumber, you don't have any problems.'

Looking like a Cappadocian Clint Eastwood in a hat brought from America by a carpet-dealing friend, Ilhan tells a story about two pregnant mares he returned to Mt Erciyes to give birth. 'One year later, I went into the mountains, among the 400 horses, and called their names and they came directly to me.'

Ilhan treats the 11 horses in his cave stable using homemade remedies, such as grape water to extract parasites, and olive oil, mint and egg for indigestion. He is starting a trekking company, called **Dalton Brothers** (☎ 0532-275 6869; 2hr TL50) at the suggestion of a Canadian traveller and *Lucky Luke* fan. 'People like wild horses because it's difficult riding in the mountains, it's rocky, and the horses are used to it,' he says.

Göreme-born Ekrem Ilhan and Dalton Brothers are based at the stables behind the Anatolian Balloons office in Göreme.

and pension owners may delay putting the heating on. Ring ahead, too, to check that your choice is open. Those that do open in winter sometimes offer a low-season discount, but the prohibitive cost of heating means that this is relatively unusual.

BUDGET

Camping

Kaya Camping Caravaning (☎ 343 3100; kayacamping@www.com; camp sites per adult/child TL13/8.50; 📶 🚰) This impressive camping ground is 2.5km from the centre of Göreme town, uphill from the Göreme Open-Air Museum. Set among fields of vines and a good sprinkling of trees, it has magnificent views and top-notch facilities such as clean bathrooms, plentiful hot water, a restaurant, supermarket, communal kitchen and washing machines. It's an excellent place for a family holiday, particularly as it has a large swimming pool complete with kiddie pool and sun lounges.

Pensions

Backpacker's Cave Hostel (☎ 271 2258; info@cappadocia-backpackers.com; Cevizler Sokak 13; dm TL12, s TL20-35, d TL30-45, tr TL45-60; 📶 🚰) The hostel also known as 'Yasin's place' is a mixed bag. You're better off with an arch room, as their musty cave counterparts have low ceilings and narrow

beds. Room 5 is a triple-arch room with a small balcony, and the dorm has 13 beds.

Shoestring Cave Pension (☎ 271 2450; www.shoestringcave.com; Aydınlı Mahallesi; dm €6, r per person with/without bathroom €9/8; 📶 🚰) One of Göreme's longest-running pensions, the Shoestring Cave has a swimming pool on the roof terrace and some attractive double rooms with marble bathrooms. The rock-cut rooms and dorm are not as appealing, but are set in a wonderfully organic chunk of rock with mushrooming walls. Tasty breakfasts and snacks are served in the courtyard restaurant.

Ufuk (☎ 271 2157; www.ufukpension.com.tr; off Müze Caddesi; dm/s/d/tr TL10/25/40/55, breakfast TL5; 📶 🚰) Popular with Japanese and Korean travellers, Ufuk has a five-bed cave dorm and rooms with cramped bathrooms and satellite TV, all ranged around a scruffy courtyard with fruit trees. Visitors rate the owner Hasan, who ensures there's some conversation on the terrace among guests gazing at the *ufuk* (horizon).

Flintstones Cave (☎ 271 2555; www.theflintstonescavehotel.com; dm incl/excl breakfast TL15/10, s/d TL20/40, with jacuzzi TL40/60; 📶 🚰) Among fields on the edge of the village, Flintstones is a lively hostel where the pool has hosted a barbecue party for every fairy chimney in Cappadocia. Manager Fatih, who claims to be Fred Flintstone's nephew, advertises heaps of activities in the

WALKS AROUND GÖREME

Göreme village is surrounded by the magnificent Göreme National Park. Valleys with gorgeous scenery and a mixture of ancient pigeon houses and even older rock-cut churches fan out from all around the village.

A handful of valleys are easily explored on foot; each needs about one to three hours. Most are interconnected, so you could easily combine several in a day, especially with the help of the area's many dolmuşes.

For example, you can walk to the Göreme Open-Air Museum and have a look around, then catch a Belediye Bus Corp otobus to Ürgüp, which stops outside the museum at 10 minutes past every even hour, to Zelve (TL2). Ask the driver to stop there or he may head straight to Avanos on the main road. It may be possible to get off further on at Aktepe (for Devrent Valley). Walk back to Göreme from Zelve via Paşabağı, Çavuşin and Meskendir Valley, Rose Valley and Red Valley. Don't forget a bottle of water!

These are some of the most interesting and accessible valleys:

Bağlıdere (White Valley) From Uçhisar to Çavuşin.

Güllüdere (Rose Valley) Connecting Çavuşin and Kızılçukur viewpoint.

Güvercinlik (Pigeon Valley) Connecting Göreme and Uçhisar; colourful doves.

İçeridere (Long Valley) Running south from Rock Valley Pension.

Kılıçlar Vadisi (Swords Valley) Running off the Göreme Open-Air Museum road.

Kızılçukur Vadisi (Red Valley) Superb doves, churches with frescoes.

Meskendir Valley Trail head next to Kaya Camping; tunnels and doves.

Zemi Valley (Love Valley) West of the Göreme Open-Air Museum, with some particularly spectacular rock formations.

A word of warning: most of the valleys have signposts directing you to them, but nothing to keep you on the straight and narrow once you get there. Nor are they all particularly easy to walk, and there's no detailed map available – you'll have to rely on basic printouts. If you are exploring the Meskendir Valley area, it is easier to get lost if you climb out of the valleys.

Mehmet Güngör (☎ 0532-382 2069) is one local guide with an encyclopedic knowledge of Göreme's highways and byways. Most pension owners will also happily guide you for a minimal fee (it may even be complimentary).

bar-restaurant, a cavernous hang-out with a pool table. Ask to see a few rooms because there is a range of choices in the 20 cave, 'semi-cave' and modern rooms. If you're dorm-bound, shoot for the five-bedder with two adjoining rooms and a private bathroom.

Kookaburra Pension (☎ 271 2549; kookagoreme@hotmail.com; Konak Sokak 10; dm exd breakfast TL10, s/d TL20/40; 📍) This small pension, with agricultural tools and pot plants decorating its stone passages, has tidy, spacious rooms with private bathrooms. The roof terrace is a knockout. If you can tear yourself away from the view, there's internet access in the bar-restaurant.

Walnut House (☎ 271 2235; www.cevizliev.com; Karsıbucağ Caddesi; s/d/tr TL20/40/60; 📍) This Ottoman mansion by the otogar offers one of the best deals in this price range. It's plain and low on atmosphere but popular with older and solo travellers. The main building has upstairs rooms with arched stone ceilings,

hard beds and small but clean bathrooms, and there's a new extension. In the attractive, kilim (pileless woven rug)-filled lobby-lounge, the views of the rose garden are some compensation for the odour of cigarette smoke.

Rock Valley Pension (☎ 271 2153; www.rockvalleycappadocia.com; İceri Dere Sokak; dm/s/d TL10/40/50, tr & q per person TL15-20; 📍 📍) At the mouth of a valley on the edge of the village, Rock Valley's backpacker credentials are obvious from the Ireland T-shirt decorating its pavilion restaurant, which is the perfect place to get acquainted with a Cappadocian cushion. The five- and six-bed dorms are pleasant, with blue sheets and vines painted on the walls. Unfortunately, guests have complained about the hot-water supply and standards of cleanliness. Camping is also available.

Paradise Caves Hotel (☎ 271 2248; www.paradisecaveshotel.com; off Müze Caddesi; dm exd breakfast TL10, s/d incl breakfast TL30/50; 📍) It's smarter than

neighbouring Ufuk, but its name is a generous description of the rooms with old carpets and purple bedclothes. Positive features include fairy-chimney rooms, a functioning fireplace in the three-bed dorm, and a pirate-ship-like, multitiered terrace that winds around the cliff.

Bedrock & Phoenix Cave Hotel (☎ 271 2604; www.bedrockcavehotel.com; Cami Sokak; dm/s/d/tr TL10/30/50/75; 🏠) This central option has a leafy upstairs terrace and clean, spacious rooms, including an eight-bed dorm. Rooms have private bathrooms and beds tucked under arches, but are unlikely to inspire much purple prose in emails home.

Sarhan Cave Hotel (☎ 271 2216; www.sarhancavehotel.com; Ünlü Sokak; s TL40-50, d TL50-70, tr TL60-80, ste TL100-150; 🏠) Fifteen of the 20 rooms in this decades-old hotel occupy caves and offer stunning views across the village. All are a little characterless but clean and comfortable, with access to the obligatory terrace.

Kemal's Guest House (☎ 271 2234; www.kemalsguesthouse.com; Karşibucak Caddesi; dm incl/excl breakfast €9/6, s/d/tr/q €24/30/42/52) Entered via a flowery garden and a laid-back reception with big bookshelves and comfy chairs, popular Kemal's is run by a genial Turkish-Dutch couple. Barbara offers guided hikes (€7 including a picnic) and her beau Kemal rustles up four-course Turkish feasts (€10). There are cave, Ottoman and modern rooms, with cheaper double and triple options with shared bathrooms available, and two six-bed, single-sex cave dorms with private bathrooms.

Köse Pension (☎ 271 2294; www.kosepension.com; Ragıp Üner Caddesi; dm TL12, s without bathroom TL20, tw hut TL40, d & tw with bathroom TL60, tr with/without bathroom TL75/60; 🏠 🏠) Like all youth hostels, Köse Pension has some rough edges, but unlike most, it has a swimming pool in the garden and a terrace where communal meals are served. Breakfast costs TL3.50; for dinner, choose between Western meals (TL10) and the three-course Turkish extravaganza (TL15), washed down with a drink from the self-service fridge. Run by Edinburgh-born Dawn and family, the backpacker institution is cheerily painted with grinning spiders and winding creepers. Many rooms have balconies and, on the roof, there are wooden huts and a 20-bed dorm with mattresses on the floor (sheet sleeping bags can be rented).

Gültekin Motel (☎ 271 2584; www.gultekin-motel.com; Roma Kalesi Arkası; s/d/tr TL35/60/85, without bath-

room TL25/50/75; 🏠) Up the hill from the Roman Castle, the Gültekin is popular for the excellent views from its roof terrace, the hearty breakfasts and its friendly owner. The cave and arch rooms, on a couple of levels, are not very atmospheric, but are clean with cheery bedspreads.

Cave Hotel Saksagan (☎ 271 2165; www.cavehotel.saksagan.com; Adnan Menderes Caddesi; s/d/tr TL45/65/100) This pyramidal fairy chimney boasts a walled garden, a terrace, and proximity to one of the balloon companies for that early-morning start. In the tastefully restored rooms, rugs hang between photos of yet more fairy chimneys and there are few modern additions beyond the private bathrooms and satellite TVs. The newer arch rooms (they are only 200 years old) are in a former stable and farmer's cottage.

Canyon View Hotel (☎ 271 2333; www.canyonviewhotel.com; Yavuz Sokak; s/d/tr TL50/65/75, with jacuzzi TL60/85/100; 🏠 🏠) As well one of Göreme's best roof terraces, with views of Çavuşin, Canyon View offers rooms in a converted 9th-century church and Byzantine house. Decorated with local pottery, the rooms, which include a former winery, pigeon house and stable, retain features from their original incarnations. The family offers free tours to new arrivals, but readers have advised against accepting the offer.

MIDRANGE

There is a cluster of rock-cut retreats on Aydınlı Hill (around Orta Mahallesi Camii), gazing across the fairy-chimney-punctured village.

Arch Palace (☎ 271 2575; www.archpalace.com; Ünlü Sokak 14; s/d TL30/70; 🏠 🏠) The Arch Palace inspires fierce loyalty, largely because owner Mustafa Yelkalan is a helpful and knowledgeable host, everything is squeaky clean and the rooftop terrace restaurant has sensational views. The simple, peaceful rooms are decorated with local pottery and carpets.

Blue Moon Motel (☎ 271 2433; www.bluemoonmotel.net; Müze Caddesi; s/d/tr/q from TL40/70/90/110; 🏠 🏠) A 150-year-old village house is the setting for this central hotel's sunny rooms with flowery bedspreads. The rooftop 'architectural' rooms have arched ceilings and little windows opening on to the terrace, which has a front-row view of the main drag. Breakfast takes place here or, during the winter, in a cave room downstairs.

Ottoman House (☎ 271 2616; www.ottomanhouse.com.tr; Orta Mahalle 25; s/d TL45/70; 🏠) With its indoor swimming pool, this restored building is certainly no fairy chimney, but the professional management has attempted to create a local ambience. Candelabras stand in reception and rugs adorn the white walls. The rooftop restaurant is pleasant and it's a reasonable option if there's no room at more-traditional inns.

our pick Kelebek Hotel & Cave Pension (☎ 271 2531; www.kelebekhotel.com; Yavuz Sokak 31; s/d €28/35, deluxe €36/45, ste €65-220; 🏠 🏠) In 1993, pioneering Ali Yavuz became Göreme's first hotelier to step above the backpacker sector. Not just because he had to climb Aydınlı Hill to reach his family home, which now boasts the village's best terrace for surveying the Cappadocian dreamscape, but because he converted it into Göreme's first boutique hotel. Divided into the modestly named Kelebek Pension and the newer Kelebek Suites, the 32-room complex ranges across stone houses and two fairy chimneys, once used as chapels by hermits. The sympathetically restored rooms and suites mix Anatolian decoration and handmade furniture with modern luxuries. The 10 newer suites have their own dining terrace, and traditional Cappadocian wedding ceremonies are available. As much as the hamam, garden and small swimming pool, it's the helpful staff and Yavuz' passion for village life that make this a magical spot.

Pashahan Hotel (☎ 271 2283; www.pashahan.com; Roma Kalesi Arkası 7; s/d/tr TL45/85/100; 🏠 🏠) The Pashahan promises to makes guests 'feel like a Pasha' and the double beds in its cave rooms are certainly kingly. Although they are slightly gloomy at the bottom of the hotel, the eight rooms have TVs, minibars, polished floorboards and excellent bathrooms. The Roman Castle virtually explodes through the roof terrace, with its indoor and outside sections, and carpets and textiles are piled throughout the building.

Local Cave House Hotel (☎ 271 2171; www.localcavehouse.com; Cevizler Sokak 11; s/d €30/50; 🏠 🏠 🏠) The Local's attractive cave rooms have features such as big beds, local artwork, antique furniture and wooden ceilings, although the bathrooms are not a highlight. There are two terraces with wonderful views and a glass-fronted lounge-restaurant overlooking the swimming pool among the fairy chimneys.

Fairy Chimney Inn (☎ 271 2655; www.fairychimney.com; Güvercinlik Sokak 5-7; s/d/tr from €44/55/66, students €22; 🏠 🏠) This fairy chimney high on Aydınlı Hill has been wonderfully converted by its owner, a German anthropologist who has ensured the conversion is as respectful of the original fabric as possible. With his Turkish wife, he has created a tranquil retreat at the village's highest point, with some of the best views around. Rooms are beautifully decorated, with simple furniture, cushions and carpets everywhere and a refreshing lack of TVs and jacuzzis. The palatial Byzantine family suite is one of the most alluring in town, spread across four floors with peephole windows. Other treats include the cave hamam, communal lounge, home-cooked meals and glorious garden terrace.

Aydınlı Cave House (☎ 271 2263; www.thecavehotel.com; Aydınlı Sokak 12; standard s/d/tr €45/60/75, deluxe €55/85/100) This recent addition to the hilltop posse of midrange cave abodes has six immaculately presented rooms. With features such as hamam taps and stone fireplaces, the decor never sacrifices tradition and taste in the pursuit of comfort. The deluxe rooms have jacuzzis and show-stealing touches such as an old illuminated winery, while the standard rooms are more minimal.

Kismet Cave House (☎ 271 2416; www.kismetcavehouse.com; Kağrı Yolu 9; d €60-80) Opened in 2007, this eight-room guest house has quickly built a strong reputation; one reader told us it was the best-value accommodation they found in Turkey. The arched rooms up top have the edge on the chimney chambers, but Afghani bedspreads, jacuzzis and views of Rose Valley are common features. If you check into the deluxe Tulip Room, you will be loath to drag yourself away from its open fire, with logs at the ready. Knowledgeable owner Faruk encourages communal Anatolian living at the long dining tables.

TOP END

Cappadocia Cave Suites (☎ 271 2800; www.cappadociacavesuites.com; Ünlü Sokak 19; s/d/ste from €103.50/115/300; 🏠) Göreme's long-established top-end favourite consistently bags awards for its boutique appeal, although it's not in the same league as Anatolian Houses. As well as satellite TV, minibar and a promised fitness centre, rooms have decor such as the Turkmenistan-meets-Cappadocia bedspread in suite 2. The suites are not the best in town but fairy chim-

ney rooms such as 109, with its low archway leading to the bedroom and lounge in a former stable, are sure winners.

Anatolian Houses (☎ 271 2463; www.anatolianhouses.com.tr; Gaferli Mahallesi, Ünlü Sokak; r €195-290, ste €420-610; 📍 🚗) It took six years to build this swish boutique hotel occupying a group of fairy chimneys, and no wonder. If you're not bowled over by features such as the spa, with its indoor/outdoor swimming pool, hamam, sauna and wellness centre, you certainly will be by the hotel's sleek restaurant (mains TL20) and extensive wine cellar. With rooms exquisitely decorated with objets d'art and handmade textiles, this is as luxurious as Cappadocia gets.

Eating

There is a strip of good eateries on the quiet side of the dry canal, away from the busy Bilal Eroğlu Caddesi.

Cappadocia Kebap Center (☎ 271 2682; Müze Caddesi; mains TL3.50) This tiny, friendly joint is a great place for a fast feed. You can enjoy a chicken döner kebab sandwich for a mere TL3 or a spicy *acı* kebab sandwich for TL4, accompanied by chips (TL3.50) and a beer (TL3.50) or fresh orange juice (TL3).

Fırın Express (☎ 271 2266; Eski Belediye Yanı Sokak; pide & pizza TL4-8, mains TL8-13; 🕒 11am-11pm) Set slightly back from the main strip, this wood-cabinlike eatery is praised by carnivores and vegetarians alike for the pide (Turkish pizza) and pizza produced in its large wood oven. More-substantial claypot dishes such as *tavuk güvec* (chicken stew, TL6) are also available.

Nazar Börek (☎ 271 2441; Müze Caddesi; mains TL5) If you're after a cheap and filling meal, sample this simple place's *börek* (filled pastries), *gözleme* (savoury pancakes) and *sosyete böreği* (stuffed spiral pastries served with yoghurt and tomato sauce). Friendly staff and a pleasant outdoor eating area on the canal make it perennially popular. There's often a tasty daily special, and the baklava and generous glasses of orange juice (TL4.50) are also recommended.

Cappadocia Pide Salonu (☎ 271 2858; Hakkı Paşa Meydanı; pide TL5-9) Göreme's pide hot spot has a more local feel than most of the village's eateries, created by the uncontrived decor of rugs and Coke posters. Sitting under the canal-side umbrellas, you can tuck into 12 types of pide, as well as spaghetti, grills, pottery kebabs, beer and rakı (aniseed brandy).

Point Café (Müze Caddesi; mains TL10) Missing your favourite comfort foods? Cenap and Anniesa, a Turkish-South African couple, dish up curries, burgers, fruit smoothies, filter coffee and home-baked cakes. Sit on the balcony above the canal or in the cabinlike restaurant.

Dibek (☎ 271 2209; Hakkı Paşa Meydanı 1; mains TL10; 🕒 9am-11pm) Dibek is one of Göreme's best and most original restaurants. You pass a winery on the way into the 475-year-old building, before reclining at low circular tables in alcoves decorated with hoes and scythes. Although many local eateries offer *testi kebab* (pottery kebab, with meat or mushrooms and vegetables cooked in a sealed terracotta pot, which is broken at the table; TL15), this is the only place where you must give three hours' notice before eating, so the dish can be slow cooked in an oven in the stone floor. Other offerings include homemade wine, *saç tava* (cubed lamb with tomatoes, peppers and garlic, TL13) and the less-exciting *kurufasulye* (white beans with tomato sauce and optional sundried lamb, TL6).

our pick A'laturca (☎ 271 2882; Müze Caddesi; mains TL10-25) Style meets substance at this elegant eatery. Offering Anatolian cuisine as well as the odd T-bone, the menu has been thoughtfully and creatively designed and the food is exceptionally well prepared. Pick one of the many seating areas, such as the upstairs terrace or the garden with its bright beanbag seating, and tuck into some of the best mezes we tasted in Turkey. Recommended mains include the succulent Erciyes kebab, served on a bed of thinly sliced fried potatoes and garlic yoghurt; and Ali Nazik, a *şiş kebab* with an aubergine, garlic and yoghurt puree.

Local Restaurant (☎ 271 2629; Müze Caddesi 38; mains TL11) At the start of the road to the Open-Air Museum, the Local is one of Göreme's best eateries. There's an outdoor terrace and an elegant, stone-walled dining room with an open fire and candles flickering in alcoves. The service is attentive, ingredients are fresh, and prices are reasonable for scrumptious dishes such as lamb shanks and *tavuklu mantarlı krep* (chicken and mushroom pancake).

Manzara Restaurant (☎ 271 2712; Harım Sokak 14; mains TL12) With its bird's-eye view of Göreme's flat roofs and less-flat rock formations, Manzara is a prime spot to spend a meze-and-rakı evening. Choose between two terraces and an indoor dining room with a fireplace. Classics such as aubergine kebab are on offer

and staff are considerate enough to consult diners about the background music.

Orient Restaurant (☎ 271 2346; Adnan Menderes Caddesi; mezes TL8, mains TL12-40, 4-course set menus TL20) Göreme's smartest restaurant is light on views but heavy on ambience in its stylish ground-floor dining room. This is the place to spend a leisurely evening savouring good food. Dishes include chicken cordon bleu, pasta and grills, and the restaurant has a good reputation for meat dishes such as the tender marble steak, served on a sizzling marble slab. Vegetarians, less well catered for, can opt for the assorted meze plate.

Drinking

Most of the village's watering holes open from noon till late.

Fat Boys (☎ 0535-386 4484; Belediye Caddesi; mains TL7; ☎ 24hr) Head to this happening, rock-soundtracked hang-out, run by an Australian-Turkish couple, to shoot some pool, dig into burgers, pies and vegemite, and lounge outside with a nargileh (traditional water pipe).

Red Red Wine House (☎ 271 2183; Müze Caddesi) The two tiny tables outside Göreme's most atmospheric bar are hot property for people-watching. The candle-lit cave inside is an intimate setting for a nargileh and a beer or a glass of Cappadocian wine, available hot.

Café Roma (Müze Caddesi; mains TL9) With a prime spot overlooking four floors of rugs hanging from a carpet shop, this lantern-lit garden is a good place to chill out to Pink Floyd records or the long-haired troubadour, who strums the *saz* (long-necked lute) most nights.

Café Paradise (☎ 271 2545; El Sanatları Çarşısı 13) Hiding in the centre of town, this secluded

tea garden is entered by a dinky bridge over a moat. The shaded sofas are the ideal accompaniment to a nargileh.

Flintstones Cave Bar (Müze Caddesi) This long-time backpacker favourite, cut right into the rock face, mixes a roaring fire and rugs on the walls with a dance floor and satellite TV.

Getting There & Away

For details of shuttle-bus services between Kayseri airport and Göreme see p496. See p495 for extra information about bus services to Göreme.

There are daily long-distance buses to all sorts of places from Göreme's otogar, although normally you're ferried to Nevşehir's otogar to pick up the main service (which can add nearly an hour to your travelling time). See p497 for the bus services that connect Göreme with nearby villages.

Details of some useful long-distance daily services from Göreme are listed in the table (above). Note that the morning bus to İstanbul goes via Ankara, so takes one hour longer than the evening bus. For Aksaray, change in Nevşehir.

Getting Around

There are several places to hire mountain bikes, scooters, cars and the objectionable quads, including **Hitchhiker** (☎ 271 2169; www.cappadociahitchhiker.com; T Ozal Meydanı), **Oz Cappadocia** (☎ 271 2159; www.ozcappadocia.com; T Ozal Meydanı) and **Motodocia** (☎ 271 2517; Uzundere Caddesi), all located near the otogar. It pays to shop around, as prices vary dramatically.

As a rule, mountain bikes cost between TL10 and TL15 for a day; TL3 to TL5 for an

SERVICES FROM GÖREME'S OTOGAR

| Destination | Fare (TL) | Duration (hr) | Frequency (per day) |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Adana | 30 | 5 | 3 |
| Ankara | 25 | 4½ | 6 |
| Antalya | 35 | 9 | 2 evening |
| Çanakkale | 60 | 16 | 1 evening |
| Denizli (for Pamukkale) | 35 | 11 | 2 evening |
| Fethiye | 55 | 14 | 1 evening |
| İstanbul | 40 | 11-12 | 1 morning & 2 evening |
| İzmir | 40 | 11½ | 1 evening |
| Kayseri | 10 | 1½ | hourly morning, afternoon & evening |
| Konya | 20 | 3 | 2 morning |
| Marmaris/Bodrum | 55 | 13 | 2 evening |
| Selçuk | 50 | 11½ | 1 evening |

hour. Mopeds and scooters go for TL25 to TL40 for a day; TL20 to TL25 for half a day. A small Renault or Fiat car costs TL35 to TL90 for a day, with features such as air-con, automatic gears and a diesel engine available.

You'll need to leave some ID as a security deposit. Since there are no petrol stations in Göreme and the rental companies will hike petrol prices, refill your tank in Nevşehir, Avanos or Ürgüp, or at one of the garages on the main road near Ortahisar and İbrahimpaşa. The companies may let you off if you have been on a small journey to, say, Çavuşin and used a minimal amount of fuel.

UÇHISAR

☎ 0384 / pop 6350

Welcome to *Cappadocia*, as the French call Cappadocia. At times, pretty Uçhisar is like a 'Petite France', having been the local 'kilometre zero' for Gallic gallivanterers since Club Med revived the village's fortunes in the 1960s.

Spotted from Göreme, Uçhisar Castle is a distinctive blip on the horizon, adding yet another dollop of character to the landscape. It is equally impressive up close, its jumble of rock faces gazing across the valleys at **Erciyes Dağı** (Mt Erciyes; 3916m). The mountain's snow-capped summit provides a fantastic backdrop for old Uçhisar, which is quieter than Göreme and worth considering as a base for exploring Cappadocia.

There are Vakıf Bank and Garanti Bankası ATMs on the main square, and an **internet café** (per hr TL1; ☎ 9am-midnight) and a PTT nearby.

Watching the sun set over the Rose and Pigeon Valleys from the wonderful vantage point of **Uçhisar Castle** (Uçhisar Kalesi; admission TL3; ☎ 8am-8.15pm) is a popular activity. A tall volcanic-rock outcrop riddled with tunnels and windows, the castle is visible for miles around. Now a tourist attraction complete with terrace cafés at its entrance, it provides panoramic views of the Cappadocian countryside. Unfortunately, many of the bus groups that visit leave rubbish, which diminishes the experience. The lack of barriers means you should be very careful – one photographer died when he fell over the edge after stepping back to get a good shot.

There are some excellent **hiking** possibilities around Uçhisar; see the boxed text, p502, for more information.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Uçhisar Pension (☎ 219 2662; www.uchisarpension.com; Kale Yanı 5; s/d TL30/60) The blue-and-white bedspreads give the eight clean, simple rooms, including three cave rooms, the feel of a breezy country escape. Rooms have private bathrooms and the terraces may be small but there's nothing modest about their views.

Anatolia Pension (☎ 219 2339; www.anatoliapension.com; Hacılibey Caddesi; d €25-30; ☎ ☑) Occupying a sturdy stone house on the main street, this pension has 15 vaulted, light-filled rooms with comfortable beds, clean linen and sparkling bathrooms. Traditional Turkish meals are available.

La Maison du Rêve (☎ 219 2199; www.lamaison dureve.com; Tekelli Mahallesi 32; s/d/tr €20/30/40; ☑) Teetering on the edge of a cliff and enjoying spectacular views from the large terrace, 'Dream House' is an ant colony of a hotel. Rambling over three floors, the 30 compact rooms include 20 with attached balconies. There's a ramshackle restaurant (five-course menu TL15) and the owners rent out scooters (TL40 per day).

Kilim Pension (☎ 219 2774; www.sisik.com; Tekelli Mahallesi; s/d/tr €25/35/52) Roomy Kilim's spectacular views are the closest you'll get to the view from a hot-air balloon basket without leaving the ground. The nine beautifully decorated rooms, including one cave room, overlook a vine-shaded courtyard. Ask for one upstairs, as they have more light. There's also a relaxing rooftop terrace and an atmospheric restaurant.

MIDRANGE

Les Terrasses d'Uçhisar (☎ 219 2792; www.terrassespension.com; Eski Göreme Yolu; s/d/tr/ste €38/38/46/80; ☑) The splendid location of this relaxed French-owned place is its best asset. Rooms are arched or in caves and all feature simple but stylish decoration; those upstairs have absolutely fabulous views. There's a great terrace for soaking up the views, and a well-regarded restaurant.

Lale Saray (☎ 219 2333; www.lalesaray.com; Göreme Caddesi; s €45-80, d €50-85, tr €60-95; ☎ ☑ ☑) Inspiring love hearts in its guest book for its service, Lale Saray has a large restaurant and a terrace splashed with cushions. The sweet-smelling cave and arch rooms have features such as massage showers, heated towel rails, minibars, and terraces with wicker furniture.

TOP END

Villa Cappadocia (☎ 219 3133; www.villacappadocia.com; Kayabaşı Sokak 18; r TL150; ☒) This small and immensely comfortable hotel takes good advantage of its spectacular views of Rose Valley. With just 12 rooms, it has a tranquil atmosphere and is designed to give guests as relaxed a holiday as possible. The pick of the rooms is the Honeymoon Room, which has a jacuzzi and a private terrace. Steps lead through a rose garden to the small cave restaurant (mains TL7 to TL10), and the two terraces are perfect spots for a sunset drink.

Karlık Evi (☎ 219 2995; www.karlikevi.com; Karlık Mahallesi; s/d from €120/140; ☒) A former hospital, this retreat offers 20 spacious rooms, some with private balcony or terrace. The atmosphere is one of discreet elegance, and the overall style is best described as 'rustic chic'. The excellent facilities include a restaurant, a hamam, a garden, a roof terrace and a massage service.

Les Maisons de Cappadoce (☎ 219 2813; www.cappadoce.com; Belediye Meydanı 28; studios €130-180, villas €240-980) French architect Jacques Avizou's 15-year-old empire now numbers 16 rental properties. Located above Pigeon Valley in Uçhisar's old quarter, the properties offer stylish and supremely comfortable accommodation, which allows maximum independence and privacy alongside services such as daily cleaning. A breakfast basket is left hanging at your door every morning. Six of the properties are studios perfect for a romantic getaway, the others are well-equipped houses that can accommodate up to seven people. Reception is in a first-floor office in the main square.

Museum Hotel (☎ 219 2220; www.museum-hotel.com; Tekeli Mahallesi 1; d from €130-195, ste €250-1650; ☒) This exquisitely decorated boutique hotel is one of Cappadocia's best, featuring magnificent common areas and luxe rooms and suites. Standard rooms come complete with brass beds, rich rugs and attractive textiles, and the opulent suites (some in caves) have to be seen to be believed. The mosaic-adorned infinity pool, stylish Lil'a restaurant (mains TL20) and panoramic rooftop terrace are equally impressive.

Eating

Kandil House (☎ 219 3191; Göreme Caddesi; snacks TL4) With its spot-on views of Rose Valley, randomly painted furniture and backgam-

mon board, the café under the arches makes a pleasant hideout on a hot day.

Le Mouton Rouge (☎ 219 3000; Belediye Meydanı; mains TL10) The Red Sheep has a bistro ambience, created by orange tablecloths, French TV, jolly *mouton* motifs and a large courtyard. The menu, however, is not particularly Gallic, featuring salads and meat dishes such as *saç tava*. Better for a *bière* and a bite than a meal.

House of Memories (☎ 219 2947; Göreme Caddesi 41; mains TL10-12) Despite the name, the food here isn't particularly memorable. Seating is in the kilim-strewn downstairs dining room or on the ramshackle but undeniably welcoming upstairs terrace, which enjoys a good view. The menu features mezes and other Turkish staples, a beer costs TL5.50 and the service is friendly.

Center Café & Restaurant (☎ 219 3117; Belediye Meydanı; mains TL10-15) This outdoor eatery on the main square has tables dotted around a shady but slightly scruffy garden. Locals enjoy the kebabs and swear by the *patlican salatası* (eggplant salad, TL7.50). A good pit stop for *gözleme* (TL5) and a beer (TL5).

Les Terrasses d'Uçhisar (☎ 219 2792; www.terrasses-pension.com; Eski Göreme Yolu; dinner €5-8) With its yellow tablecloths, candelabras and small French menu, the cosy bar-restaurant in the pension of the same name has the air of a Provençal bistro. The home-cooked food includes Turkish classics such as *saç tava* (€5), French alternatives such as *filet de boeuf avec sauce poivre* (beef fillet with pepper sauce, €8) and a nine-course menu (from €5). Nonguests are welcome, but should book ahead.

Elai (☎ 219 3181; www.elairestaurant.com; Eski Göreme Yolu; mains TL24-45; ☒) 10.30am-2.30pm & 6.30-11pm) This stylish place is in a converted café, where the gossiping old men have been replaced by a sharp dining room with velvety curtains and exposed beams. Guests can kick off with a drink on the terrace, with its magnificent view, before moving inside to sample dishes ranging from duck confit to grilled jumbo. Dishes travel around the world but really shine when they are Turkish in inspiration.

Getting There & Away

Dolmuş and midibuses leave from outside the *belediye* for Göreme, Çavuşin and Avanos (TL1.50 to TL2.50, every half-hour from 7am to 7.30pm, to 6pm in winter). Similarly priced and timed buses to Ortahisar and Ürgüp

RUDE BOYS

The *peribacalar* (fairy chimneys) that have made Cappadocia so famous were formed when erosion wiped out the lava covering the tuff (consolidated volcanic ash), leaving behind isolated pinnacles. They can reach a height of up to 40m, have conical shapes and are topped by caps of harder rock resting on pillars of softer rock. Depending on your perspective, they look like giant phaluses or outsized mushrooms. The villagers call them simply *kalelar* (castles).

depart from near Chez Kemal on the main square. Both services stop at Nevşehir after Uçhisar on their return journeys.

A taxi to Göreme costs TL10 and to Ürgüp TL25.

You can book longer bus journeys at Chez Kemal. You'll probably be taken to Göreme in a *servis* to pick up onward connections to destinations throughout Turkey; see p506 for details.

For details of shuttle buses between Kayseri airport and Uçhisar see p496.

ÇAVUŞIN

☎ 0384

Midway between Göreme and Avanos is sleepy little Çavuşin, where the main activity is at the souvenir stands beneath the cliff houses. It has some sterling accommodation options and offers an authentic village experience.

On the highway you'll find the **Çavuşin Church** (Big Pigeon House Church; admission TL8; ☎ 8am-5pm, last admission 4.30pm), accessed from the pottery shop via a steep and rickety iron staircase. Cappadocia's first post-iconoclastic church, it served as a pigeon house for many years and is home to some fine frescoes.

Walk up the hill through the new part of the village and continue past the main square to find the old part of Çavuşin. Here you can explore a steep and labyrinthine complex of abandoned houses cut into a rock face, as well as one of the oldest churches in Cappadocia, the **Church of John the Baptist**, which is located towards the top of the cliff.

Çavuşin is the starting point for scenic **hikes** to the southeast, through Güllüdere (Rose Valley), Kızılcukur Vadisi (Red Valley) and Meskendir Valley. You can even go as far as the Zindanönü viewpoint (6.5km), then walk

out to the Ürgüp-Ortahisar road and catch a dolmuş back to your base.

There is no bank or ATM in the village, but there are three internet cafés, including **MustiNet** (per hr TL1, ☎ 4pm-midnight) near İn Pension.

Tours

Mephisto Voyage (☎ 532 7070; www.mephistovoyage.com) is based at the İn Pension and has a very good reputation. It's been operating for over a decade and offers trekking and camping packages ranging from a two-day local wander to a 14-day trip around Cappadocia and the Taurus Mountains (€500). It also rents out bicycles and offers tours by bike, horse cart and, for mobility-impaired people, the Joelette system.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping Cappadocia (☎ 532 7070; 2 people incl tent & breakfast €10, sleeping bag €2) Being set up by Mephisto Voyage at the time of writing, this network of camping grounds in scenic spots such as Red Valley will allow trekkers to camp out without having to lug their own equipment.

Green Motel (☎ 532 7050; www.motelgreen.com; camp sites TL7, r TL30-50; ☎) Our favourite Çavuşin accommodation option, this friendly place is set in a lush garden where owner Mehmet's father kept horses. The simple, spacious rooms in the 80-year-old family house and newer extension have rugs on the walls and bathrooms of varying sophistication. At the top end, you can step out on to a balcony with views of Red Valley. The Ottoman-style restaurant churns out pide and the atmosphere could not be more relaxing.

İN Pension (☎ 532 7070; www.pensionincappadocia.com; s/d/tr TL35/70/80, s/d without bathroom TL15/30; ☎) Right on the main square, this converted village house is nothing flash but it's worth considering due to its knowledgeable owners, Ahmet and son Ali, who run Mephisto Voyage. With their whitewashed walls, blue doors and red curtains, the rooms are being restored and a rooftop café and children's swimming pool added.

Turbel Motel (☎ 532 7084; www.turbelhotel.com; s/d TL40/80, cave TL125/150) A good choice, Turbel has commanding views from its restaurant and rooms, which have basic private bathrooms and rugs, folkloric dolls and kitschy paintings for decor. Owner Mustafa, who spent 15 years

CAPPADOCIA FROM ABOVE

If you've never taken a flight in a hot-air balloon, Cappadocia is one of the best places in the world to try it. Flight conditions are especially favourable here, with balloons operating most mornings from the beginning of April to the end of November. It's a truly magical experience and many travellers judge it to be the highlight of their trip; see the boxed text, p656, for a first-hand account of a flight.

Flights take place at dawn. The reputable companies have an unwritten agreement that they will only offer one early flight per day due to the fact that the winds can become unreliable and potentially dangerous later in the morning. Transport between your hotel and the balloon launch site is included in the hefty price, as is a champagne toast.

Despite the fact that there is an ever-increasing number of ballooning companies in Cappadocia, increased competition hasn't led to price discounting. This is because the balloon companies offer large commissions to the hotels and tour agencies who sell their flights, and don't want to further erode their profits by discounting flights sold direct to customers. Some companies will give a discount for cash payments or direct online bookings, but that's about as far as the reputable outfits will go.

You'll quickly realise that there's a fair amount of hot air between the operators about who is and isn't inexperienced, ill-equipped, underinsured and unlicensed. Be aware that hot-air ballooning is potentially dangerous. It's your responsibility to check the credentials of your chosen tour operator carefully and make sure that your pilot is experienced and savvy – even if it means asking to see their licences and logbooks. And don't pick the cheapest operator if it means they might be taking short cuts with safety (eg operating two flights per day).

It's important to note that the balloons travel with the wind, and that the companies can't ensure a particular flight path on a particular day. All companies try to fly over the fairy chimneys, but sometimes – albeit rarely – the wind doesn't allow this. Occasionally, unfavourable weather conditions mean that the pilot will cancel the flight for the day for safety reasons; if this happens you'll be offered a flight on the next day or will have your payment refunded. All passengers should take a warm jumper or jacket and women should wear flat shoes and pants. Children under seven and adults over 70 will not be taken up by most companies.

The following agencies have good credentials:

Ez-Air Balloons (☎ 0384-341 7096; www.ezairballoons.com; Kavaklionu Mahallesi 8a, Ürgüp) Running since 1991, and offering the services of veteran pilot Hasan Ezel, Ez-Air charges €160 for a one-hour-minimum flight. Its two balloons have capacities of eight and 20 passengers.

Kapadokya Balloons (Map p498; ☎ 0384-271 2442; www.kapadokyaballoons.com; Adnan Menderes Caddesi, Göreme) The premium balloon airline, partly because it is the only operator to change its launch site based on wind direction, ensuring the most scenic flight path. Run by Kaili and Lars, who kicked off Göreme's ballooning industry 20 years ago, and their team of four multilingual pilots, the company offers an exclusive deluxe flight (€250, children aged 6 to 12 €125, at least 1½ hours, 10 passengers) and a sponsored flight (€175, one hour, up to 20 passengers).

Sultan Balloons (☎ 0384-353 5249; www.sultanballoons.com; Kaktus Sokak 21, Mustafapaşa Kasabası, Ürgüp) Established in 2005 by long-time chief pilot İsmail Keremoglu, the company offers a standard flight (€155, one hour) in its 12- and 20-passenger balloons. It is the only operator to offer VIP flights for two passengers in a small balloon (€600 for two, 1¼ hours).

in Strasbourg and resembles the French actor Roger Hanin, attracts many French travellers. A new underground cave section has five rooms with jacuzzis and a disco-bar.

Ayşe & Mustafa's Place (☎ 0535-947 8649; snacks TL3-4; ☎ 9am-5pm) Sitting under the plum trees, sample Ayşe's home cooked *gözleme*, *menemen* (Turkish omelette) and bigger meals on reservation. Fresh fruit juice, beer and nargilehs are also available.

Getting There & Away

See p497 for info about the bus services that connect Çavuşin with nearby villages.

ZELVE

The road between Çavuşin and Avanos passes a turn-off to the **Zelve Open-Air Museum** (admission incl Paşabağı TL8, parking TL2; ☎ 8am-5pm, last admission 4.15pm), where three valleys of abandoned homes and churches converge.

Zelve was a monastic retreat from the 9th to the 13th century. It doesn't have as many impressive painted churches as the Göreme Open-Air Museum, but its sinewy valley walls with rock antennae could have been made for poking around.

The valleys were inhabited until 1952, when they were deemed too dangerous to live in and the villagers were resettled a few kilometres away in Aktepe, also known as Yeni Zelve (New Zelve). Remnants of village life include the small, unadorned, rock-cut **mosque** in Valley Three and the old *değirmen* (mill), with a grindstone and graffitied wooden beam, in Valley One.

Beyond the mill, the **Balıkli Kilise** (Fish Church) has fish figuring in one of the primitive paintings. Adjoining it is the more impressive **Üzümlü Kilise** (Grape Church), with obvious bunches of grapes.

Unfortunately, erosion continues to eat into the valley structures and parts may be closed because of the danger of collapse, while others require scrambling and ladders. If Valley Two is open, what's left of the **Geyikli Kilise** (Church with Deer) is worth seeing.

There are cafés and *çay bahçesis* (tea gardens) in the car park outside.

Paşabağı, a valley halfway along the turn-off road to Zelve near a fairy-chimney *jandarma* (police station), has a three-headed formation and some of Cappadocia's best examples of mushroom-shaped fairy chimneys. Monks inhabited the valley and you can climb up inside one chimney to a monk's quarters, decorated with Hellenic crosses. Wooden steps lead to a chapel where three iconoclastic paintings escaped the Islamic vandals; the central one depicts the Virgin holding baby Jesus.

Getting There & Away

The hourly buses running between Ürgüp, Göreme, Çavuşin and Avanos (see p497) will stop at Paşabağı and Zelve on request. If you're coming from Ürgüp, Göreme or Çavuşin and tell the driver that you want to go to Paşabağı or Zelve, the bus will turn off the highway past Çavuşin, let you off and then go up to Aktepe and on to Avanos. If no one wants Paşabağı or Zelve, the bus will not make this detour. Getting a bus from Zelve is more difficult; you may have to walk the 3.5km from the site to the main highway, from where you can flag down a bus going towards either Göreme or Avanos.

DEVRENT VALLEY

Look, it's a camel! Stunning Devrent Valley's volcanic cones are some of the best-formed and most thickly clustered in Cappadocia, and looking at their fantastic shapes is like gazing at the clouds as a child. See if you can spot the dolphin, seals, Napoleon's hat, kissing birds, Virgin Mary and various reptilian forms.

Most of the rosy rock cones are topped by flattish, darker stones of harder rock that sheltered the cones from the rain until all the surrounding rock was eaten away, a process known as differential erosion.

To get to Devrent Valley (also known as Imagination Valley) from Zelve, go about 200m back down the access road to where the road forks and take the right road, marked for Ürgüp. After about 2km you'll come to the village of Aktepe (Yeni Zelve). Bear right and follow the Ürgüp road uphill for less than 2km.

AVANOS

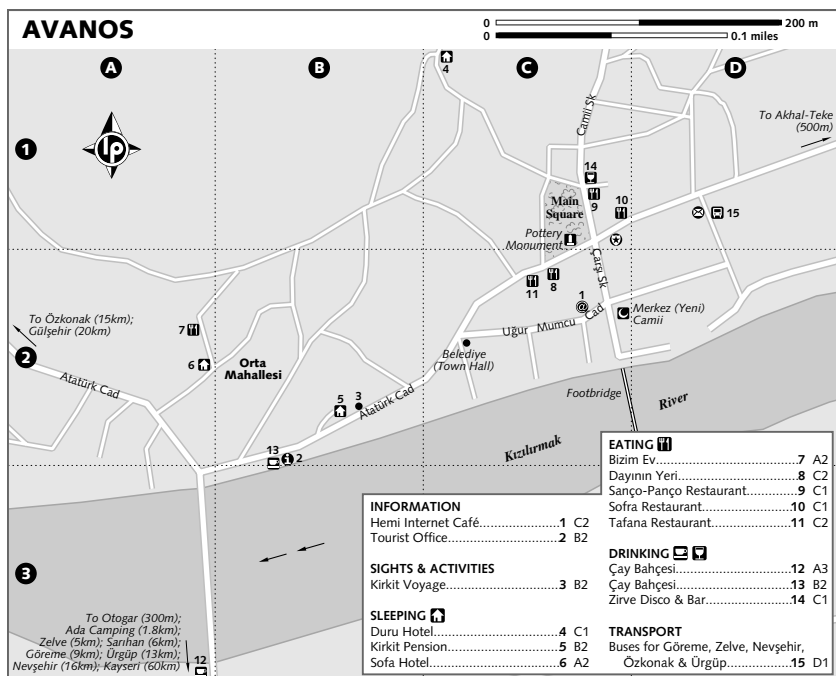
☎ 0384 / pop 11,800 / elevation 910m

In Avanos' main square, the usual Atatürk monument is joined by a statue of a potter. The town is famous for pottery – made with red clay from the Kızılırmak (Red River), which runs through its centre, and white clay from the mountains. Typically painted in turquoise or the earthy browns and yellows favoured by the Hittites, the beautiful pieces are traditionally thrown by men and painted by women. As for Avanos itself, its old town is run-down and its riverside setting does not match the other Cappadocian centres. However, it boasts some superb views of Zelve and, when the tour groups have moved on, it's an appealingly mellow country town.

Orientation & Information

Most of the town is on the northern bank of the river, with Atatürk Caddesi providing the main thoroughfare. Although there is an otogar south of the river, all dolmuşes for the local area stop outside the PTT, on Atatürk Caddesi near the main square. The **tourist office** (☎ 511 4360; Atatürk Caddesi; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), which doesn't always stick to its opening hours, is on the main street. You'll find several banks with ATMs on or around the main square.

To check your email or surf the net, head to the **Hemi Internet Café** (Uğur Mumcu Caddesi; per hr TL1; ☎ 9am-midnight).



Sights & Activities

Tour groups tend to find themselves shopping for pots in vast warehouses on the outskirts of town. It's much more enjoyable (and infinitely cheaper) to patronise one of the smaller **pottery workshops** right in town, most of which will happily show you how to throw a pot or two. These are located in the small streets around the main square and in the group of shops opposite the PTT.

If you fancy horse riding, **Akhal-Teke** (☎ 511 5171; www.akhal-tekehorsecenter.com; Camikebir Mahallesi, Kadi Sokak 1) and **Kirkit Voyage** (☎ 511 3148; www.kirkit.com; Atatürk Caddesi 50) organise guided treks in the area. Prices range from TL60 for two hours to TL150 for a full day; it's worth shopping around.

Tours

Kirkit Voyage (above) has an excellent reputation. As well as the usual guided tours, it can arrange walking, biking, canoeing, horse-riding and snowshoe trips. It's an agency for Onur Air, Pegasus Airlines, Turkish Airlines and Atlasjet, and runs a shuttle between Avanos and Kayseri airport (€15, reservation essential).

Sleeping

Ada Camping (☎ 511 2429; www.adacampingavanos.com; Jan Zakari Caddesi 20; camp sites per person TL10 incl electricity; 🚻) Take the Nevşehir road and bear right to reach this large, family-run camping ground, in a superb setting near the river. The toilet block could be cleaner but there's lots of shade and grass, a restaurant and a cold but inviting swimming pool.

Kirkit Pension (☎ 511 3148; www.kirkit.com; Atatürk Caddesi; s/d/tr €30/40/55; 🚻) Set in converted old stone houses, this long-running pension is known throughout Cappadocia for its congenial, laid-back atmosphere. The simple rooms are decorated with kilims, historical photographs of the region and *suzani* (Uzbek bedspreads) – some are a bit cramped, so ask to see a few before checking in. Guests can enjoy a home-cooked local meal (TL13 for dinner) in the vaulted restaurant or pleasant courtyard. Recommended.

Duru Hotel (☎ 511 2404; www.hotelduru.com; Yukarı Mahallesi; s €20-25, d €30-35, tr €45-50; 🚻) Perched high above the town (it's one hell of a walk), this slightly run-down place offers two types of rooms. It's worth spending €5 more to stay

in the newer rooms, with arches and origami towels. The dingy older rooms have brown doors that look like they would shatter if you leant against them. The real drawcards here are the grassy terrace and the exceptional views over Avanos.

Sofa Hotel (☎ 511 5186; www.sofa-hotel.com; Orta Mahallesi, Baklacı Sokak 13; s/d TL60/100; ☒) Lots of Cappadocian cave establishments have their idiosyncrasies, but this hotel is downright bonkers. With sofas and dining tables in the central courtyard, indoor and outdoor spaces organically merge in the 15-house complex. Staircases, bridges and terraces lead you up the hill, past eyes suddenly staring out from a mosaic fragment or a pottery face, to 33 rooms crammed with knick-knacks. No prizes for guessing the owner's an artist.

Eating

Saңo-Paңo Restaurant (☎ 511 4184; Çarşı Sokak; mains TL6) This basic but welcoming eatery on the main square is a great spot to have a beer (TL4) and people-watch. Given Avanos' pottery trade, it's hardly surprising that the speciality is *güveç* (beef stew with potatoes, tomatoes, garlic, paprika and cumin, baked in a clay pot; TL7).

Sofra Restaurant (☎ 511 4324; Hükümet Konağı Karşısı; mains TL7-8) In a line of restaurants catering to the tour groups visiting the nearby pottery shops, Sofra has a wide-ranging meze menu, pottery dishes and a small terrace.

Tafana Restaurant (☎ 511 4862; Atatürk Caddesi 31; mains TL8) Decorated with plates in earthy Hittite style, this reasonably attractive eatery is not as popular as nearby Dayının Yeri, but is a decent fall-back option if one is needed. It specialises in *pide* (TL6), cooked in a wood-fired oven, and the beer is cheap (TL2).

Dayının Yeri (☎ 511 6840; Atatürk Caddesi 23; mains TL10) This shiny, modern *ocakbaşısı* (grill restaurant) is one of Cappadocia's best, and is an essential stop on any visit to Avanos. The kebabs are sensational and the *pide* is just as good. Don't even *think* of leaving without sampling the freshly prepared *künefe* (strands of cooked batter over a creamy sweet cheese base baked in syrup; TL4), cooked on little hobs near the tables. No alcohol is served.

Bizim Ev (Our House; ☎ 511 5525; Orta Mahallesi, Baklacı Sokak 1; mezés TL6, mains TL11) This welcoming family-run restaurant is about as swish as dining gets in Avanos, with an air-conditioned, stone-walled dining room and a rooftop terrace. Try

local specialities such as trout cooked in a clay pot and optionally topped with melted cheese (TL11), catfish skewers (TL12) and *mantı* (Turkish ravioli, TL9).

Drinking

If you're keen to linger over a tea and nargileh, try the *çay bahçesi* adjoining the tourist office, which is as welcoming to women as it is to men, or the large riverside *çay bahçesi* on the southwestern side of the bridge.

There are a few bars on Atatürk Caddesi and around the main square, but most are local hang-outs where visitors (particularly females) may not feel welcome. The only one we'd recommend is **Zirve Disco & Bar** (Yukarı Mahallesi), which hosts live music.

Getting There & Around

For details of shuttle-bus services between Kayseri airport and Avanos see opposite.

There are two bus routes from Avanos to Nevşehir: one leaves every 30 minutes and goes direct and the other leaves every hour and travels via Çavuşın and Göreme. Both services operate from 7am to 7pm and charge TL2.50 per ticket. There's also an hourly *bediye* bus running from Avanos to Nevşehir via Çavuşın (10 minutes), Göreme (15 minutes) and Uçhisar (30 minutes). It departs from Avanos from 7am to 6pm and costs between TL1.50 and TL3 depending on where you get on and off.

Dolmuşes to Ürgüp (TL2) pass through town at 9am, 11am, 1pm, 3pm and 5pm.

Kirkit Voyage (opposite) hires out mountain bikes for TL20 per day or TL10 for half a day.

AROUND AVANOS Sarıhan

Built in 1249, the **Sarıhan** (Yellow Caravanserai; admission TL3; ☒ 9am-midnight) has an elaborate gateway with a small mosque above it. Having been restored in the late 1980s, it's one of the best remaining Seljuk caravanserais. Gunning down the highway towards it makes you feel like a 13th-century trader, ready to rest his camels and catch up with his fellow dealers.

Inside, you also have to use your imagination in the bare stone courtyard. Visitors are allowed on the roof, but the main reason to come here is the 45-minute **whirling dervish ceremony** (☎ 511 3795; admission €25; ☒ 9.30pm Apr-Oct, 9pm Nov-Mar). You must book ahead – most

pensions in Göreme, Ürgüp, Avanos and Uçhisar will arrange it for you. The price may vary according to how much commission your tour agent or pension is skimming off the top.

Though the setting is extremely atmospheric, the *sema* (ceremony) is nowhere near as impressive as those staged at the Mevlevi Monastery in İstanbul's Beyoğlu (see p116). If you've seen one of those you should probably give this a miss.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Getting to the Sarıhan, 6km east of Avanos, without your own transport is difficult, as there are no dolmuşes and few vehicles with which to hitch a ride. An Avanos taxi driver will probably want around TL25 to take you there and back, including waiting time.

Özkonak Underground City

About 15km north of Avanos, the village of Özkonak hosts a smaller version of the underground cities of Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu (see boxed text, p524), with the same wine reservoirs, rolling stone doors etc. **Özkonak underground city** (admission TL8; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) is neither as dramatic nor as impressive as the larger ones, but is much less crowded.

The easiest way to get there is by dolmuş from Avanos (TL1.50, 30 minutes), but there are few services on weekends. Ask to be let off for the *yeraltı şehri* (underground city); the bus stops at the petrol station, a 500m stroll from the entrance.

NEVŞEHİR

☎ 0384 / pop 81,700 / elevation 1260m

According to local lore, if you set eyes on the beautiful view from Nevşehir's hilltop castle, you will be compelled to stay here for seven years. The legend must be very old, because the provincial capital is an ugly modern town that offers travellers little incentive to linger.

Orientation & Information

The main otogar is behind the Total garage, across thoroughfare Atatürk Bulvarı from the museum. Dolmuşes to Göreme, Uçhisar, Avanos and Ürgüp also stop on the main road outside the museum (on the same side of the road, but a bit further towards Göreme).

Nevşehir's **tourist office** (☎ 214 4062; Atatürk Bulvarı; ☎ 8am-5pm) is in a large government

building on the town's main road. Staff here can supply a basic map of Nevşehir, but not much else. There are also a number of banks with ATMs along here.

Dangers & Annoyances

The tour companies and taxi drivers based at Nevşehir's otogar have a formidable reputation for pouncing on travellers who arrive from long-distance destinations as soon as they get off the bus. If you are seeking a *servis* to your final Cappadocian destination, you may be led to a travel agent's office on the pretence that it is the place to arrange your transfer. Once cornered, unsuspecting and tired victims are often conned into signing up for overpriced tours or agreeing to ridiculously overinflated prices for a taxi trip (be it to Göreme, Ürgüp, Uçhisar or any of the nearby villages).

We suggest that you avoid any dealings with the tour agents here and follow the advice outlined on p495 to ensure that your bus ticket includes a shuttle-bus transfer to your final destination from Nevşehir. Unfortunately, malpractice is so institutionalised at the otogar that even people at the bus companies' counters may take you to the travel agents. If you do find yourself in need of a *servis* or a taxi and you have booked a hotel, it is worth phoning it for assistance; Nevşehir's otogar has long been problematic for travellers and the tourist industry in the rest of Cappadocia is well aware of it.

Sights

Nevşehir Museum (☎ 213 1447; Türbe Sokak 1; admission TL3; ☎ 8am-5pm Tue-Sun) is housed in an ugly building 1km from the centre and 400m east of the tourist office. The collection includes an archaeological room with Phrygian, Hittite and Bronze Age pots and implements, as well as Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman articles. Upstairs, the dusty ethnographic section is less interesting.

The statue in the small park in front of the cultural centre is of Nevşehir'li Damat İbrahim Paşa (1662-1730), the Ottoman grand vizier after whom the town is named. The local luminary endowed the town's grand mosque complex, which is clearly visible on the hill to the south of Atatürk Caddesi and still has a functioning mosque, a *medrese* (seminary - now a library), a hamam and a teahouse.

Sleeping & Eating

Nevşehir's accommodation falls into two categories: bland four- and five-star resorts on the city fringe that are geared mainly towards package groups, and dingy places in the city centre where Russian prostitutes ply their trade. Even if you arrive here in the middle of the night, we recommend that you make your way to nearby Göreme, where the accommodation is cheaper and infinitely superior.

Nevşehir Konağı (☎ 213 6183; Aksaray Caddesi 46; ☹ 9am-9.30pm; mezes TL2.50, mains TL7) There is one good reason to visit Nevşehir. This municipal restaurant, set up to serve local cuisine, serves Cappadocian specialties such as *bamya çorba* (ochre soup) and *dolma mantı* (ravioli). The location – an Ottoman-style building with Greek-style pillars in the park at the Kültür Merkezi (City Cultural Centre), 1.5km south-west of the centre – is the perfect place to tuck into scrumptious dishes such as *yoğurtlu beyti* (Adana kebab with yoghurt).

Getting There & Away

Turkish Airlines (www.thy.com) has a returning flight from İstanbul to Nevşehir on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday (TL69 to TL199 one way).

Nevşehir is the main regional transport hub. There are services to surrounding towns and villages from the otogar and other stops (see opposite). These go to Göreme (TL1.75, every 30 minutes from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, every hour on weekends); Uçhisar (TL1, every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday, every hour on weekends); Niğde (TL7, every two hours from 7.30am to 6pm) via Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu; and Ürgüp (TL3.50, every 15 minutes from 7.30am to 10pm). Some Ürgüp buses go via Ortahisar and all can drop you at the turn-off on the main highway, a 1km walk from the town centre. There are two services to Avanos: one leaves every hour and goes direct and the other leaves every 30 minutes and travels via Göreme and Çavuşin. Both operate from 7am to 7pm and charge TL2 per ticket. The otogar is set to move by the end of 2010 to a new position on the Gülşehir road.

A taxi to Göreme should cost around TL35.

AROUND NEVŞEHİR

If you're heading for Ankara, consider stopping off to see Gülşehir and Hacıbektaş along

the way. While this is easily done if you have your own vehicle, it's not too hard by public transport either.

Gülşehir

☎ 0384 / pop 9800

This small town 19km north of Nevşehir has two rocky attractions on its outskirts that are worth visiting if you're passing through.

Four kilometres before Gülşehir's town centre you'll find the **Open Palace** (Açık Saray; admission free; ☹ 8am-5pm), a fine rock-cut monastery dating from the 6th and 7th centuries. It includes churches, refectories, dormitories and a kitchen, all of which are cut into fairy chimneys.

Two kilometres closer to town, just before the turning to the centre, is the rock-cut **Church of St John** (admission TL8; ☹ 8am-5pm). A five-minute walk down a signed road on the left of the highway, it's signposted 'Church of St Jean/Karşı Kilise'. The 13th-century church on two levels has marvellous frescoes, including scenes depicting the Annunciation, the Descent from the Cross, the Last Supper, the Betrayal by Judas, and the Last Judgment (rarely depicted in Cappadocian churches). The frescoes are particularly well preserved due to the fact that until restoration in 1995 they were covered in a layer of black soot.

Buses and dolmuşes to Gülşehir (TL1.50, 15 minutes) depart from the dolmuş and bus stop in the centre of Nevşehir (see left). Ask to be let off at the Açık Saray or Karşı Kilise to save a walk back from town. Returning, just flag the bus down from the side of the highway. Onward buses to Hacıbektaş leave from Gülşehir's small otogar opposite the Kurşunlu Camii (TL2, 30 minutes).

Hacıbektaş

☎ 0384 / pop 4900

Other than the municipal announcements ringing across town, the main activity in tiny Hacıbektaş, 46km from Nevşehir, takes place at the museum. Inside, pilgrims queue to pay their respects at the tomb of Hacı Bektaş Veli, the founder and spiritual leader of the Bektaşî dervishes. The visitors' numbers swell to 10,000 during the festival dedicated to the Muslim saint – held from 16 to 18 August.

You'll find a Vakıf Bank ATM in a booth in front of the PTT on the main street, and TC Ziraat Bankası and Türkiye Bankası ATMs near the Ethnographic Museum.

HACI BEKTAŞ VELİ & THE BEKTAŞI SECT

Born in Nishapur in Iran in the 13th century, Hacı Bektaş Veli inspired a religious and political following that blended aspects of Islam (both Sunni and Shi'ite) with Orthodox Christianity. During his life he is known to have travelled around Anatolia and to have lived in Kayseri, Sivas and Kırşehir, but eventually he settled in the hamlet that is now the small town of Hacıbektaş.

Although not much is known about Hacı Bektaş himself, the book he wrote, the *Makalât*, describes a mystical philosophy less austere than mainstream Islam. In it he laid out a four-stage path to enlightenment (the Four Doors). Though often scorned by mainstream Islamic clerics, Bektaşî dervishes attained considerable political and religious influence in Ottoman times. Along with all the other dervishes, they were outlawed by Atatürk in 1925.

The annual pilgrimage of Bektaşî dervishes is an extremely important event for the modern Alevi community. Politicians tend to hijack the first day's proceedings, but days two and three are given over to music and dance.

Not to be confused with the town's normally closed Ethnographic Museum, the **Hacıbektaş Museum** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) contains the tombs of Hacı Bektaş Veli (see box, above) and his followers. Pilgrims carry out superstitious activities such as hugging a pillar, kissing door frames and tying ribbons around a mulberry bush known as *dilek ağacı* (wish tree). Several rooms are arranged as they might have been when the Bektaşî order lived here, with exhibits such as photos of the dervishes and earrings worn by celibate members of the sect.

Hacıbektaş has limited hotel options. The unremarkable **Hünkâr Otel** (☎ 441 3344; s/d TL25/50), on the *meydanı* (town square) between the shrine and the otogar, offers basic rooms with blue and yellow furniture and reasonable bathrooms. Prices should be negotiable except in August, when it's booked solid. Eating options are limited to the basic *lokantas* (eateries serving ready-made food), *pastanes* (patisseries) and *kebabçıs* (kebab eateries) on the main street.

Buses from the centre of Nevşehir to Hacıbektaş (TL3, 45 minutes, 11 daily between 7.30am and 6.15pm on weekdays, fewer services on weekends) depart from the 'Has Hacıbektaş' bus office, just down from the Alibey Camii on the road to Gülşehir. The last bus from Hacıbektaş' otogar to Nevşehir leaves at 5pm (4.45pm on weekends).

ORTAHİSAR

☎ 0384 / pop 4800

Apart from the groups visiting the Culture Folk Museum, mainstream tourism has bypassed this farming village, leaving it to survive on its traditional trade of storing citrus fruit in underground caves. Ortahisar may

lack its neighbours' buzz, but this is the place to slow to the pace of old men whose lined faces resemble the surrounding canyons. Its castle is a crazy crag even by local standards. In the gorge, cobbled streets wind past houses that look ready to lie down for a snooze.

Staff at the small **tourist office** (☎ 343 3071; Tepebaşı Meydanı; ☎ 8am-5pm) near the castle are friendly, but don't speak English. They will probably take you to 'Crazy Ali', who runs the neighbouring antique shop and speaks some English, French and German. The loquacious poet, who says he was given his nickname when he drove an ox cart to the moon, offers guided walks to spots such as Pancarlık Valley.

You can check emails at **Antiknet** (Huseyin Galif Efendi Caddesi; per hr TL1; ☎ 8am-midnight), downhill from the PTT.

Sights

There are no monuments in the village other than the **castle**, an 18m-high rock used as a fortress in Byzantine times and now undergoing a seemingly interminable restoration.

On the main square near the castle, the **Culture Folk Museum** (Kültür Müzesi; Cumhuriyet Meydanı 15; admission TL5; ☎ 9am-7pm) gets bombarded with tour groups but is a good place to get to grips with the basics of local culture. In the dioramas, with their multilingual interpretive panels, mannequins in headscarves and old men's *şapkas* (hats) make *yufka* (thinly rolled, unleavened bread), *pekmez* (syrup made from grape juice) and kilims.

On the road to the AlkaBris hotel, the municipal park **Manzara ve Kültür Parkı**, is slightly dishevelled but its grassed areas are good picnic spots. Near some holes in the cliff big

enough to accommodate Volvo-driving pigeons, the café has views down the gorge to the castle.

From Ortahisar you can hike to little-known churches in the nearby countryside, especially in the Pancarlık Valley.

Sleeping & Eating

Kapadokya Otel (☎ 343 2221; Ulus Meydanı; s/d/tr TL25/50/75) Up a psychedelically carpeted staircase with a colourful painting of the castle on the wall, the reasonably clean rooms have blankets on the beds. Although the beds look like they would collapse if you snored too loudly, they are comfortable enough and benefit from a terrace with views across the countryside.

Burcu Kaya Hotel (☎ 343 3200; www.burcukayaotel.com.tr; s/d/tr/ste €60/90/105/120; 🚿) Uphill from the centre, this quiet hotel's swimming pool has a view of rock formations and pigeon houses. The rooms have arched ceilings and, upstairs, small balconies overlooking the leafy central courtyard. Rooms are comfortable but a little bare and hardly offer Cappadocian cave character.

AlkaBris (☎ 343 3433; www.alkabris.com; Cedit Mahallesi, Ali Reis Sokak 23; r €100-125, ste €140; 🚿) An oasis of calm and luxury, this lovingly restored Cappadocian house offers five tastefully furnished rooms and suites. Four are in caves and the fifth, Gilgamiş, beguiled us with its double-whammy view of the castle and Erciyes Dağı. Jacuzzis in the suites, homemade bread and jam for breakfast, two magnificent terraces, a rock-hewn restaurant (dinner €25) and mosaic decorations by hostess Sait all justify the 1.5km climb from the centre of town.

Park Restaurant (☎ 343 3361; Tepebaşı Meydanı; pide TL6-9, mains TL9-15) Overlooking the main square, with the castle as a backdrop, this attractive garden is a perfect spot to recharge with a meat pide and green salad, accompanied by a beer (TL5) or glass of 'energy drink' (fresh orange juice, TL3).

Cultural Museum Restaurant (☎ 343 3344; set menus TL20; 🍷 lunch & dinner) The museum's attractive upstairs restaurant mainly caters to groups, but it is possible for individuals to dine here, particularly if you phone ahead. Dishes on offer include meatballs and *testi kebab* (pottery kebab). The English-speaking manager Cenk, a good source of local information, has proudly served Fenerbahçe players, Hungarian politicians and the Queen of Spain.

Getting There & Away

For details of shuttle-bus services between Kayseri airport and Ortahisar see p496.

Dolmuşes make the 5km run between Ortahisar and Ürgüp every 30 minutes from 8am to 5pm Monday to Saturday (TL1.50). See p497 for details of the Belediye Bus Corp dolmuşes between Ortahisar and Avanos via Göreme and Çavuşin. All services stop next to the museum. There are buses to Nevşehir, but it may be quicker to walk 1km to the Ortahisar turn-off on the main highway, as passing buses pick up passengers there.

Bus companies including Metro, Kent and Nevşehir have offices in the village.

ÜRGÜP

☎ 0384 / pop 15,500

If you have a soft spot for upmarket hotels and fine dining, you need look no further – Ürgüp is the place you're looking for. The ever-growing battalion of boutique hotels in the town's honey-coloured stone buildings (left over from the pre-1923 days when the town had a large Greek population) are proving very popular with travellers. With a spectacular natural setting and a wonderful location at the very heart of central Cappadocia, this is one of the most seductive holiday spots in the whole of Turkey.

Orientation & Information

Ürgüp is set within a steep valley about 18km east of Nevşehir and 9km east of Göreme. Most of the action occurs on or around Cumhuriyet Meydanı, the main square, 150m west of the otogar.

There are several **banks** with ATMs on or around the main square. The **post office** is northeast of Cumhuriyet Meydanı.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0384-341 4059; Kayseri Caddesi 37; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr, 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri May-Sep) gives out a colour walking map and has a list of Ürgüp's hotels.

You can check your emails among pot plants and nargilehs at **Teras Internet Café** (3rd fl, Suat Hayri Caddesi 40; per hr TL1.25; 🕒 8am-1am), in the arcade next to Kardeşler Restaurant and Vodafone, and at **Eftelya** (Refik Basaran Heykeli; per hr TL1.50; 🕒 9.30am-11pm).

Sights & Activities

Northwest of the main square is the oldest part of town, with many fine **old houses**, reached through a stone arch. It's well worth a stroll, after which you can head up Ahmet Refik

ÜRGÜP

0 200 m
0 0.1 miles

| | A | B | C | D |
|--------------------------------|----------|----|---|---|
| INFORMATION | | | | |
| Akbank..... | 1 | B4 | | |
| Eftelya..... | 2 | C4 | | |
| Post Office..... | 3 | C3 | | |
| Teras Internet Café..... | (see 30) | | | |
| Tourist Office..... | 4 | C3 | | |
| SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES | | | | |
| Arch to Old Village..... | 5 | A3 | | |
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| Museum..... | 7 | C3 | | |
| Old Village..... | 8 | A3 | | |
| Peerless Travel Services..... | 9 | A4 | | |
| Tarihi Şehir Hamamı..... | 10 | B4 | | |
| Temenni Wishing Hill..... | 11 | B3 | | |
| Turasan Winery..... | 12 | A3 | | |
| SLEEPING | | | | |
| 4ODA Cave House..... | 13 | A2 | | |
| Cappadocia Palace..... | 14 | C4 | | |
| Elkep Evi Pansiyon..... | 15 | A2 | | |
| Esbelli Evi..... | 16 | A3 | | |
| Hotel Akuzun..... | 17 | A4 | | |
| Hotel Assiana..... | 18 | A3 | | |
| Hotel Elvan..... | 19 | B4 | | |
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| Melekler Evi..... | 21 | A3 | | |
| Melis Hotel..... | 22 | A4 | | |
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| Sükrüoğlu..... | 38 | B3 | | |
| TRANSPORT | | | | |
| Alpin..... | 39 | B4 | | |
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| Avis..... | 41 | B4 | | |
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| National..... | (see 38) | | | |
| Otogar..... | 44 | C4 | | |
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| Taxi..... | (see 31) | | | |

Caddesi and turn right to **Temenni Wishing Hill** (☎ 9am-11pm), home to a saint's tomb, a café and 360-degree views over the town. It doesn't always stick to its opening hours.

Right by the main square is the **Tarihi Şehir Hamamı** (admission TL15; ☎ 7am-11pm), the hamam. Partly housed in what was once a small church, it offers mixed but respectable bathing.

The **museum** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) features some 10-million-year-old teeth from a forerunner of the elephant, unearthed at Mustafapaşa, but the overall collection is uninspiring.

WINERIES

The abundant sunshine and fertile volcanic soil of Cappadocia produce delicious

sweet grapes, and several wineries carry on the Ottoman Greek winemaking tradition. You can sample some of the local produce at the big **Turasan Winery** (☎ 341 4961; Çimenli Mevkii; ☎ 7.30am-8pm).

Tours

Several Ürgüp-based travel agents run tours around Cappadocia. Two recommended agents:

Argeus Tours (☎ 341 4688; www.argeus.com.tr, www.cappadociaexclusive.com; İstiklal Caddesi 7) Offers three-to-nine-day packages, including an eight-day mountain-biking option, as well as day tours and flights. Ürgüp's Turkish Airlines representative.

Peerless Travel Services (☎ 341 6970; www.peerlessexcursions.com; İstiklal Caddesi 59a) Also Ürgüp's

representative for Onur Air, Sun Express, Atlasjet and Pegasus Airlines.

Sleeping

Ürgüp has a glut of boutique hotels, mostly on Esbelli hill, and a couple more-central budget and midrange options worth considering. Many close down between November and March, when Ürgüp's weather keeps locals indoors and travellers elsewhere.

BUDGET

Hotel Elvan (☎ 341 4191; www.hotelelvan.com; Barbaros Hayrettin Sokak 11; s/d/tr TL35/60/80; 🏠) A friendly welcome and homely atmosphere await you at this unpretentious but immaculate guest house. The rooms are arranged around a small courtyard and have midrange amenities such as satellite TVs and hairdryers. There's also a small roof terrace and comfortable dining room. Excellent value.

Yıldız Hotel (☎ 341 4610; www.yildizhotel.com; Kayseri Caddesi; s TL30-60, d TL60-100) Nowhere near as impressive as the other budget options mentioned here, the Yıldız offers old-fashioned rooms that are clean but in need of a paint job and new carpet. The renovated bungalows in the flowery garden are much nicer, but carry a slightly ambitious price tag.

MIDRANGE

Cappadocia Palace (☎ 341 2510; www.hotel-cappadocia.com; Duayeri Mahallesi Mektep Sokak 2; s/d/tr TL35/70/85, cave TL60/120/140; 🏠) This large and comfortable hotel is housed in a converted Greek house that's conveniently located a stone's throw from Cumhuriyet Meydanı. It has 13 motel-style rooms with satellite TV and small bathrooms, as well as four impressive cave suites. There's a lovely arched restaurant-lounge and an attractive foyer area. Book ahead.

Razziya Evi (☎ 341 5089; www.razziyaevi.com; Cingilli Sokak 24; s/d/tr TL70/80/120) This lovingly restored *evi* (house) is one of Ürgüp's few decent midrange options. Its seven cheerful rooms (some in slightly musty caves) are comfortable and clean; they're not at all posh, but in a town where posh boutique hotels are a dime a dozen this almost comes as a welcome relief. There's a hamam, a salon with satellite TV, a pretty courtyard and a kitchen that guests can use.

Hotel Akuzun (☎ 341 3869; www.hotelakuzun.com; Yeni Cami Mahallesi 49; s/d/tr €40/55/65) This centrally located fall-back option has a boxy exterior and professional staff who make the most of

the uninspiring interior. The water feature tries to compensate for the lack of cave character here, but a recent restoration has added little charm to the 20-year-old building. The staff and the bushy garden are Akuzun's main selling points.

Melis Hotel (☎ 341 2495; www.melishotel.com; İstiklal Caddesi 34; s/d/tr from €35/50/65; 🏠 🏠) On a main road right next to a mosque (pack those earplugs!), the Melis offers Ottoman- and Greek-style stone rooms and cave rooms with jacuzzis. The main building, a 300-year-old Greek house, stands at one end of a long swimming pool – the site is a picture when the floodlights come on. There's also a cave bar-restaurant.

TOP END

Ürgüp Evi (☎ 341 3173; www.urgupevi.com.tr; Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak 54; d €65-80, ste €110-140; 🏠) A chic makeover of this long-running favourite left its gorgeous stonework untouched, but installed extremely comfortable beds with luxe linen in the cave rooms. The hotel's strongest point is its location right at the top of the hill (the views are quite amazing), its attractive cave restaurant and its terrace garden, which is home to a scattering of brightly coloured beanbag seats.

Elkep Evi Pansiyon (☎ 341 6000; www.elkepevi.com; Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak; s/d €50/70, with jacuzzi from €80/100, with Turkish bath from €100/120; 🏠 🏠) The largest of the boutique hotels in Esbelli Mahallesi has 21 rooms in four former cave houses, sprawling across the cliff at Ürgüp's highest point. All rooms have their own terrace or alcove to take in the view and two even have hamams. There's plenty of space in the rooms and in public areas such as the rooftop terrace and the pillar-dotted garden, where fresh *gözleme* is one of the treats served for breakfast.

Kemerli Evi (☎ 341 5445; www.kemerliev.com; Dutlu Camii Mahallesi Çıkmaz Sokak 12; s/d €60/80; 🏠 🏠 🏠) Lost up backstreets inhabited by friendly locals, this converted 13th-century house straddles the divide between midrange and top end. In the eight rooms, antique chairs and carpets, nooks and crannies are everywhere and an air of calm hangs between the thick stone walls. The elevated terrace has a beautiful swimming pool and views of the main square and the hills beyond.

Villa Bacchus (☎ 341 6623; www.villacacchus.com; Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak 6; standard s/d €65/75, deluxe s/d €75/95, ste from €110, villas €255; 🏠 🏠) Standards on

Esbelli hill are high and Villa Bacchus, like the affiliated Kayadam Cave House, is falling behind the rest of the boutique pack. It could be cleaner and the garden gnomes don't exactly lend a touch of class. We mention it mainly as a possible option for groups. The open-plan Argeus suite has a kitchen and you can hire out all three rooms, which overlook a walled garden. Children under 10 can stay for free.

Hotel Assiana (☎ 341 4960; www.assianahouse.com; Esbelli Mahallesi Dolay Sokak 1; s/d/ste €65/85/100; 📍) The youngest member of the boutique family on Esbelli hill has three cave rooms and two arched stone rooms. The interiors are simple but tasteful, with maroon bedding, rugs on the varnished wooden floors, the occasional pot on a clutter-free shelf and a tree carving in one wall. The stone rooms upstairs are our favourites – the suite has a living room with a small fireplace and a vintage radio.

40DA Cave House (☎ 341 6080; www.40da.com; Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak 46; s/d €70/90; 📍) It may only have five rooms, but this peaceful pension has more than its fair share of atmosphere and comfort. The infectious cheerful and friendly owner goes out of her way to make guests feel at home, rustling up homemade pastries and jams for breakfast and sharing her personal library and lounge room. The sense of pride continues in the rooms, where everything is arranged around the original cave features. Highly recommended.

our pick Esbelli Evi (☎ 341 3395; www.esbelli.com; Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak 8; s/d/ste €80/90/200; 📍 📺 📺) Süha Ersöz opened Cappadocia's first boutique hotel in 1990 and the consummate host is still at the head of the pack. Having bought surrounding properties to preserve Esbelli's atmosphere of hilltop serenity, his complex now has 15 rooms and suites in nine houses. However, it feels small and intimate, thanks to the welcoming atmosphere and the communal areas where guests are encouraged to congregate. The lounge is scattered with lap-tops, coffee-table books, CDs and DVDs, and a sense of culture pervades the hotel. We were impressed by the deep understanding of what appeals to guests; from Flintstones-like windows to amuse children in the family suite to a bottle of single malt next to the freestanding bath in the amazing honeymoon cave suite.

Melekler Evi (☎ 341 7131; www.meleklerevi.com.tr; Dereler Mahallesi Dere Sokak 59; d €90-145) This seven-room boutique hotel's name, House of Angels, could refer to its lofty position at the top of the

old town, eye to eye with the pigeon houses and castle carved into the cliff. Restored by an architect and an interior designer from İstanbul, the cave and arch rooms are tastefully decorated in subtle shades. The modern sauna and massage systems are counterbalanced by wooden beams, flowery carvings above fireplaces and hi-fis in the place of TVs. A music-listening and wine-tasting area is on the way, in case guests tire of the beds under the fruit trees, the dining room in a former stable, and the nightly fires on the terraces.

Yunak Evleri (☎ 341 6920; www.yunak.com; Yunak Mahallesi; d €100-115, ste €145; 📍 📺) This swish hotel regularly appears in the 'best hotels in the world, ever' lists that travel magazines love to compile. Its 30 well-appointed rooms occupy six cave houses, their cliffside location giving them the feel of a secret kingdom. Housed in an attractive 19th-century Greek mansion, the main building boasts a state-of-the-art DVD room and music lounge, and the terrace restaurant has prime sunset-watching potential.

Sacred House (☎ 341 7102; www.sacred-house.com; Dutlu Cami Mahallesi, Barbaros Hayrettin Sokak 25; d €115-190; 📍 📺) This 12-room, uber-boutique hotel is set in a 250-year-old Greek mansion crammed with antiques. When we say 'crammed', we mean it – you'll either love the sumptuously decorated rooms or find them overcooked and pretentious. Objets d'art, antiquarian books and Ottoman swords are scattered throughout the building, but your eye may be drawn by sleek red and black walls or the hi-fi with more decks than an ocean liner. Sacred House wasn't our glass of Cristal, but it has certainly made more bold design decisions than any other Cappadocian hotel.

Eating

The range of restaurants in Ürgüp is more limited than in Göreme, but the overall standard is much higher. If you're passing through the otogar, there are plenty of *pastanes* and *cafés* right outside.

Micro Café & Restaurant (☎ 5341 5110; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; mains TL11) It's not the plaza's most popular restaurant, but Micro's diverse menu, ranging across Ottoman chicken, spinach crêpes and peppered T-bone steak, attracts some tourists and locals. Its outside seating has unlimited people-watching potential. The semolina with chocolate sauce and ice cream is recommended, but the spoon salad is not.

Şömine Cafe & Restaurant (☎ 341 8442; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; mezes TL5, salads TL5-7, mains TL9-15) This popular restaurant on the plaza has a roof terrace and an attractive indoor dining room. Start with a salad or a meze choice such as *soyete mantısı* (one large ravioli, covered in yoghurt, tomatoes and mint), then attack a *kiremit* (meat or vegetable dish baked on a clay tile). There's a large menu of quality dishes, although they don't quite live up to the promise of the pristine napery and quality tableware.

Dimrit (☎ 341 8585; Yunak Mahallesi, Teyfik Fikret Caddesi 40; mains TL10-21) With mezes served in curvy dishes and three types of raki, Dimrit's hillside terraces are top spots to spend a sunset. The extensive menu features salads, fish, classic grills such as *beyti kebab* (beef or lamb with tomato and yoghurt) and house specials such as *beğendili kebab* (beef or lamb with eggplant purée).

Ocakbaşı (☎ 341 3277; Güllüce Caddesi 44; mains TL13) This long-established place has a cavernous dining room and a terrace with an unbeatable view of the otogar. It's low on atmosphere but has a long list of meze and a good reputation for its grilled meats.

Ehlikeyf (☎ 341 6110; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; mains TL12-25) Competing with nearby Şömine in the sophistication stakes, and suffering from the same flaws, Ehlikeyf occupies a sleek dining room with a wavy ceiling. Dishes such as the fabulous Ehlikeyf kebab (steak served on slivered fried potatoes, garlic yoghurt and a demi-glace sauce; TL19) arrive on glass plates; a gloved waiter wielding a carving knife accompanies the *testi kebab*. The large, well-spaced tables with leather chairs are comfortable places to spend an evening, but the bill at the end of it will be as ambitious as the presentation.

our pick Ziggy's (☎ 341 7107; Yunak Mahallesi, Teyfik Fikret Caddesi 24; set menus TL30, mains TL13-16) Cool Ziggy's, named after the David Bowie song, has multilevel terraces where its logo, Snowy the dog from the *Tintin* books, decorates the lampshades. Whether you opt for a cocktail or the 12-course set menu, which features 10 meze plates such as the distinctive smoked aubergine, hosts Selim and Nuray add a sprinkling of Istanbul sophistication to the Cappadocian views. If you find it tough to tear yourself away from the stylish decor and jazz soundtrack, console yourself with a visit to the on-site shop where Nuray sells the jewellery she makes.

Drinking

The main square is the best place to grab an alcoholic or caffeinated beverage at an outside table and watch Cappadocia cruise by. *Pastanes* and cafés such as **Şükürüoğlu** and **Café Naturel** vie for attention with sweet eats and shiny window displays.

Bookended by carpet shops, the pedestrian walkway running northeast from Ehlikeyf restaurant is full of cafés, bars and old men playing backgammon.

Angel Café Bistro (☎ 341 6894; Cumhuriyet Meydanı) Readers rate this pointedly untraditional place, which provides a soundtrack of synth hits for the south side of the square. You may prefer to sit outside than in the red-and-black interior, and you can take a break from the Efes with Gusta, a Turkish wheat beer.

Han Çırağan Restaurant (☎ 341 2566; Cumhuriyet Meydanı) This local institution has a good terrace for a beer, but we wouldn't recommend eating here as the service is lacklustre and the food is bog-standard Turkish fare.

Getting There & Away

For details of shuttle-bus services between Kayseri airport and Ürgüp see p496.

Most buses leave from the main otogar. Dolmuşes travel to Nevşehir every 15 minutes from 6.55am to 11.30pm (TL2.50). A service runs between Ürgüp and Avanos (TL2) via Ortahisar, the Göreme Open-Air Museum, Göreme village and Çavuşin every two hours between 8am and 6pm.

Seven buses per day (fewer on Sunday) travel between Ürgüp and Mustafapaşa between 8.15am and 5.30pm (TL1). They leave from the Mustafapaşa otogar, next to the main otogar.

Details of some useful long-distance daily services from Göreme are listed in the table (p522).

Getting Around

The steep walk from the centre of town up to Esbelli Mahallesi is an absolute killer – many people instead opt to catch a taxi (TL5) from the rank next to Micro Café & Restaurant on the main square.

Ürgüp is a good base for hiring a car, with most agencies located on the main square or İstiklal Caddesi. Rates hover around TL70 to TL75 per day for a small manual sedan such as a Fiat Palio and climb to TL90 to TL120 for a larger automatic. **Decar** (☎ 341 6760) is more

SERVICES FROM ÜRGÜP'S OTOGAR

| Destination | Fare (TL) | Duration (hr) | Frequency (per day) |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------------|--|
| Adana (via Nevşehir) | 25 | 5 | 3 morning & afternoon |
| Aksaray | 7 | 1½ | hourly |
| Ankara | 25 | 4½ | 7 |
| Antalya | 40 | 10 | 1 night (& 1 morning in summer) |
| Çanakkale | 60 | 16 | 1 afternoon |
| İstanbul | 40 | 11 | 1 morning, 2 evening |
| İzmir & Selçuk | 40/50 | 11½ | 1 evening |
| Kayseri | 6 | 1¼ | hourly 7am to 7.30pm (to 5.30pm in winter) |
| Konya | 20 | 4 | 5 |
| Marmaris/Bodrum/Pamukkale | 55 | 11-15 | 1 evening |

expensive but provides the best service; you can also try **Astral** (☎ 341 3344), **National** (☎ 341 6541) and **Avis** (☎ 341 2177). If you plan to drop the car off in another part of Turkey, your best bet is Decar. If you book ahead, it does not charge the prohibitively large relocation fees (eg TL200 to drop off in Ankara) that other companies levy.

Several outlets in town rent mopeds and motorcycles from TL50 per day, and bicycles from TL25. Try **Astral**, **Safari** (☎ 341 6480) or **Alpin** (☎ 341 7522).

AYVALI

☎ 0384 / pop 500

Heading south from Ürgüp to Mustafapaşa look out for a turn-off to Ayvalı, a tiny unspoilt village where healthy bunches of onions and bags of footballs are sold on the main street. In this rural setting is a gorgeous 25-room boutique hotel, the **Gamirasu Hotel** (☎ 341 5825; www.gamirasu.com; d €90-140, ste €200-400). Occupying a 1000-year-old Byzantine monastery, it offers top-end comfort and style in a secluded gorge where the only noise at night is the frogs. It has an on-site restaurant reached by a bridge, a church with frescoes, and an ancient winery on the premises. A walking trail leads down the valley and horse riding and cycling can be organised.

MUSTAFAPAŞA

☎ 0384 / pop 1600

Until WWI, Mustafapaşa was called Sinasos and was a predominantly Ottoman Greek settlement. These days it greatly benefits from this Greek legacy, as its exquisitely decorated stone-carved houses and minor rock-cut churches attract the attention of a small but respectable number of foreign and domestic tourists. It's a wonderful spot to spend a day or two.

You enter Mustafapaşa at an enlarged intersection, the Sinasos Meydanı, where a signboard indicating the whereabouts of the local rock-cut churches is located. Follow the road downhill and you'll come to Cumhuriyet Meydanı, the centre of the village, which sports the ubiquitous bust of Atatürk and several teahouses.

There's no tourist office in town, and no ATMs; internet access is available on the main square and at **Monastery Hotel** (opposite; per hr TL1.50; ☎ 8.30am-midnight).

Sights

A sign pointing off Sinasos Meydanı leads 1km to the 12th-century **Ayios Vasilios Kilise** (St Basil Church; admission TL5; ☎ 9am-6pm), perched near the top of a ravine. Its interior features unimpressive 20th-century frescoes. There should be someone there with a key; if not, enquire at the *belediye*.

Between Sinasos Meydanı and Cumhuriyet Meydanı is a 19th-century **medrese** with a fine carved portal. The stone columns on either side of the doorway are supposed to swivel when there's movement in the foundations, thus warning of earthquake damage.

Cumhuriyet Meydanı is home to the imposing **Ayios Kostantinos-Eleni Kilise** (Church of SS Constantine & Helena; admission TL5; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-5.30pm), erected in 1729 and restored in 1850. A fine stone grapevine runs around the door but the ruined interior with faded 19th-century frescoes is not worth the admission charge. If you are keen to see it, a uniformed council worker should be posted outside; if not, ask for the key at the nearby *belediye*.

There are also churches in **Monastery Valley**, but they're disappointing compared with others in Cappadocia. Nonetheless, it's a lovely

walk. Also to the west of Mustafapaşa, there are 4km to 8km walks in **Gomeda Valley**, where there is a ruined 11th-century Greek town. Local guide Niyazi, who charges €25 for individuals and groups, can be contacted through Old Greek House.

Sleeping & Eating

Many of Mustafapaşa's accommodation options are closed from November to March.

Monastery Hotel (☎ 353 5005; www.monasteryhotel.com; Mehmet Şakirpaşa Caddesi; dm/s/d/tr TL20/30/60/70; 🏠) This rough hotel has been running since 1968 – and looks like it. The rooms could use a spring clean but have TVs, private bathrooms and all amenities. The four- to six-bed dorms have TVs and the bizarre cave disco-bar opens for groups. Take care of your valuables, as the courtyard is an insalubrious local hang-out.

Hotel Pacha (☎ 353 5331; www.pachahotel.com; Sinasos Meydanı; s/d €20/30) Hotel Pacha is the real thing: a family-run business that offers a warm welcome and home cooking by the lady of the house, Demra. The restored Ottoman Greek pile has a great feel about it from the moment you enter its pretty vine-trellised courtyard. Entered under painted archways, the rooms have a bright, modern appearance and are very clean. Guests spend most of their time relaxing in the simply wonderful upstairs restaurant-lounge, which overlooks the courtyard.

Hotel Natura (☎ 353 5030; www.clubnatura.com; Sümer Sokak 16; r incl dinner TL70) There is decayed elegance to this 19th-century Greek mansion, where a rusty banister climbs the stone staircase from the central courtyard. Carpets are everywhere in the 'antique' rooms, alongside lamps, pictures, hatstands and the occasional broken window. Smaller modern rooms lack the eclectic mishmash of decor.

Old Greek House (☎ 353 5306; www.oldgreekhouse.com; Şahin Caddesi; s TL60, d TL80-120) This hotel restaurant (mains TL6 to TL20, set menu TL22 to TL30) is about the best place to try Ottoman cuisine in Cappadocia. Prepared by half a dozen village women, the dishes include unusual choices such as *barbunya* (lima beans in tomato sauce), carrot salad and some of the best *baklava* we tasted. The hotel, occupying an Ottoman Greek house inhabited by the same family since 1938, is an excellent place to stay thanks to its historic

aura. The large rooms have polished floorboards covered in rugs and comfortable beds with embroidered bedspreads.

Ukabeyn Pansiyon (☎ 353 5533; www.ukabeyn.com; d/tr €55/75; 🏠) This boutique hotel high on the hill overlooking the town has six arched and cave rooms furnished in an attractive modern style. There's a swimming pool, a series of terraces and a fully equipped apartment (€75 to €95) that would make a fabulous base for an extended visit. From Cumhuriyet Meydanı, it's a stiff 1km up the hill.

Sinasos Gül Konakları (Rose Mansions; ☎ 353 5486; www.rosemansions.com; Sümer Sokak; s/d incl dinner €100/150; 🏠) Occupying two heavily restored Greek mansions, this hotel is part of the Dinler chain. Rooms are luxurious but a little impersonal, with blue and yellow cushions scattered on the beds, which sit on raised platforms. There's a posh restaurant, a hamam and a strange 'Ottoman-meets-Holiday-Inn' lounge in a wooden pavilion in the rose garden.

Most of the hotels and pensions offer meals and this is fortunate, as the town's other eateries are dreadful. For lunch or dinner, we recommend Old Greek House and Hotel Pacha; set menu €8).

Getting There & Away

Nine buses a day (three on Sunday) travel the 5km between Ürgüp and Mustafapaşa (TL1, 10 minutes). The first leaves Mustafapaşa at 7.45am and the last leaves Ürgüp at 7pm. A taxi costs TL20.

SOĞANLI

☎ 0352 / pop 400

The twin valleys of Soğanlı, about 36km south of Mustafapaşa, look so magical that mischievous guides have falsely claimed they featured in *Star Wars*. Yoda is not snoozing in any of the rock-cut churches, but they are much less visited than those at Göreme or Zelve. Soğanlı is a magnificent place to explore, and unless your visit coincides with a day tour from Göreme, you may well have the valleys to yourself.

To reach Soğanlı turn off the main road from Mustafapaşa to Yeşilhisar and proceed 4km to the village. Buy your ticket for the **churches** (adult/child TL2/free; 🕒 8am-8.30pm, to 5pm in winter) near the Kapadokya Restaurant (p525). In the village square, local women sell the dolls for which Soğanlı is supposedly famous.

GOING UNDERGROUND

During the 6th and 7th centuries, when Persian and Arabic armies set off to vanquish the Christians, beacons were lit and the warning could travel from Jerusalem to Constantinople in hours. When the message reached Cappadocia, the Byzantine Christians would escape into secret tunnels leading to vast underground cities.

Some 37 cities have been opened, and there at least 100 more. Excavations have not proceeded further because they have uncovered little more than graves and pottery pieces, as the cities' inhabitants took their possessions with them when they returned to the surface.

Some 10,000 people lived at **Derinkuyu** and 3000 at **Kaymaklı**, spending months at a time down there. They cunningly disguised the air shafts as wells. The Persian horsemen might throw some poison into the 'wells', thinking they were contaminating the water supply. They would not notice any smoke from the fires burning beneath their feet, as the soft tuff rock absorbed most of it and the remaining fumes dispersed in the shafts.

The shafts, which descend almost 100m in some of the cities, also served a construction purpose. As rooms were made, debris would be excavated into the shaft, which would then be cleared and deepened so work could begin on the next floor.

Touring the underground cities, mentioned by the ancient Greek historian Xenophon in his *Anabasis*, is like tackling an assault course for history buffs. Narrow walkways lead you into the depths of the earth, through stables with handles used to tether animals, churches with altars and baptism pools, walls with air circulation holes, granaries with grindstones, and blackened kitchens with ovens.

As on an ocean liner, the poshest families lived closest to the surface, where the air supply was better. In the dwellings, you can see holes used for wooden doors, for holding candles and for hanging hammocks. Huge rolling stone doors would have served as last lines of defence if the Muslim soldiers had discovered the hideout.

Some archaeologists date the earliest portions of the underground cities back 4000 years to Hittite times, and they were certainly used to make and store wine before they were inhabited. All year round, the underground chambers remain at the optimum temperature for making and ageing wine.

Visiting the cities is fascinating, but be prepared for unpleasantly crowded and sometimes claustrophobic passages. Avoid visiting on weekends, when busloads of domestic tourists descend. Even if you don't normally like having a guide, it's worth having one when you tour an underground city, since they can conjure up the details of life below ground better than you can on your own.

Kaymaklı underground city (yeraltı şehri; admission TL15; ☎ 8am-5pm, last admission 4.30pm) features a maze of tunnels and rooms carved eight levels deep into the earth (only four are open). As this is the most convenient and popular of the underground cities, you should get here early in July and August to beat the tour groups, or from about 12.30pm to 1.30pm when they break for lunch.

To reach **Özlüce underground city** (admission free), turn right as you enter Kaymaklı from the north and you'll be heading for the small village of Özlüce, 7km further away. More modest than Kaymaklı or Derinkuyu, this underground city is also less developed and less crowded.

Derinkuyu underground city (Deep Well; admission TL15; ☎ 8am-5pm, last admission 4.30pm), 10km south of Kaymaklı, has larger rooms arrayed on seven levels. When you get all the way down, look up the ventilation shaft to see just how far down you are – claustrophobics beware!

There are also underground cities at Güzelyurt (p531) and Özkonak (p514), near Avanos.

Getting There & Away

Although you can visit one of the cities on a day tour from Göreme, Avanos or Ürgüp, it's also easy to see them on your own. The half-hourly Nevşehir-Niğde bus stops in both Kaymaklı (TL2, 30 minutes) and Derinkuyu (TL3, 40 minutes). You could easily visit Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu and then continue onto Niğde the same day using the local buses.

You'll need a taxi to take you to Özlüce from Kaymaklı.

Sights

The valleys of **Aşağı Soğanlı** and **Yukarı Soğanlı** were first used by the Romans as necropolises and later by the Byzantines for monastic purposes (similar to Göreme and Zelve), with ancient **rock-cut churches**.

Most of the interesting churches are in the right-hand valley (to the north), easily circuited on foot in about two hours. All are signposted, but be careful as many are in a state of disrepair.

Coming from the main road, about 800m before the ticket office, signs point to the **Tokali Kilise** (Buckle Church), on the right, reached by a steep flight of worn steps; and the **Gök Kilise** (Sky Church), to the left across the valley floor. The Gök has twin naves separated by columns and ending in apses. The double frieze of saints is badly worn.

The first church on the right after the ticket booth, the **Karabaş** (Black Hat), is one of the most interesting. It is covered in paintings showing the life of Christ, with Gabriel and various saints. A pigeon in the fresco reflects the importance of pigeons to the monks, who wooed them with dovescotes cut into the rock.

Furthest up the right-hand valley is the **Yılanlı Kilise** (Church of St George or Snake Church), its frescoes deliberately painted over with black paint, probably to protect them. See p499 for an explanation of its name. The hole in the roof of one chamber, surrounded by blackened rock, shows fires were lit there.

Turn left at the Yılanlı Kilise, cross the valley floor and climb the far hillside to find the **Kubbeli** and **Saklı Kilisesi** (Domed and Hidden Churches). The Kubbeli is unusual because of its Eastern-style cupola cut clean out of the rock. Nestling in the hillside, the Hidden Church is indeed hidden from view – until you get close.

In the left-hand valley, accessed from the village, you'll first come across the **Geyikli Kilise**, where the monks' refectory is still clearly visible. The **Tahtalı Kilise** (Church of Santa Barbara), 200m further on, has well-preserved Byzantine and Seljuk decorative patterns.

Sleeping & Eating

Kapadokya Restaurant (☎ 0352-653 1045; set menus TL6; ☺ lunch) boasts tables set under shady trees and serves stodgy but acceptable omelettes, casseroles and *çorba*. **Modest Soğanlı Restaurant** (☎ 653 1016; ☺ lunch only) has a good,

shady garden for sipping çay. Nearby, the village's only pension, the family-run **Emek** (☎ /fax 653 1029; dm with half board €16), is a picture of rural simplicity, with clean cave dorms. Meals are cooked by the owner's wife and served on a pleasant upstairs terrace overlooking the square.

Getting There & Away

It's basically impossible to get to Soğanlı by public transport. Your best bet is to make your way to Yeşilhisar from Kayseri (TL2.50, every 30 minutes from 7am to 9pm) and then negotiate for a taxi to take you the rest of the way. Alternatively you can rent a car (see boxed text, p526) or sign up for a day tour in Ürgüp or Göreme.

ALA DAĞLAR NATIONAL PARK

The Ala Dağlar National Park (Ala Dağlar Milli Parkı) protects the rugged middle range of the Taurus Mountains between Kayseri, Niğde and Adana. It's famous throughout the country for its extraordinary trekking routes, which make their way through craggy limestone ranges dotted with waterfalls. It's best to trek here between mid-June and late September; at other times weather conditions can be particularly hazardous, especially since there are few villages and little support other than some mountaineers' huts. Bring warm gear and be prepared for extreme conditions.

The most popular walks start at the small villages of **Çukurbağ** and **Demirkazık**, which lie beneath Demirkazık Dağı (Mt Demirkazık, 3756m), some 40km east of Niğde.

You can also reach the mountains via Yahyalı, 70km due south of Kayseri, a short drive away from the impressive **Kapuzbaşı Waterfalls** on the Zamantı River.

Although there are a variety of walks in the mountains, many people opt for the two-day minimum walk to the beautiful **Yedigöller** (Seven Lakes, 3500m), which starts and finishes at Demirkazık. An easier three- to four-day walk begins at Çukurbağ and leads through the forested Emli Valley, before finishing at Demirkazık.

Although solo trekkers do sometimes venture into the mountains, unless you're experienced and well prepared you should consider paying for a guide or joining a tour. A guide should cost around €50 per day; a horse, which can carry up to four people's luggage, about €30. If you want to do a full trek in the

SOĞANLI ROADTRIP

If you only rent a car once on your trip, the day you visit Soğanlı could be the time to do it. Not only are the valleys tricky to reach by public transport, but the drive there is beautiful. The open countryside makes a change from central Cappadocia's canyons and you can stop in sleepy country villages that give an idea of what Göreme was like 30 years ago.

Signposted from the main road, some 10km south of Mustafapaşa, the rock-cut Byzantine complex at **Keşlik Monastery** includes vandalised frescoes and 16 houses where hundreds of monks lived. Inside the dwellings, you can see chimneys, fireplaces, bookshelves and grey nicks left on the rock by metal chisels. The kitchen features a hatch for passing meals to the refectory, which has seats at the far end for the teachers.

Some 7km further south, tractors bounce along hilly, cobbled streets in **Taşkınpaşa**, which is named after its 600-year-old Seljuk **mosque**. Photos near the entrance to the mosque show its original, 14th-century pulpit, now in Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations (p444). Outside, Taşkın Paşa himself is buried in one of the two Seljuk tombs; traders stayed under the arches during the caravanserai days. On the way back to the main road you will see a *medrese* with an ornate door frame.

At the ancient city of **Sobesos** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm), signposted from Şahinefendi, the various sections of the Roman baths can easily be distinguished. There are also some fine Roman mosaics, a mummy and a Byzantine church, built during renovations of the Roman city in the late 4th century.

Some day tours also stop at these sights.

range (about €200 for a week, all inclusive), Middle Earth Travel (p500) is a good first port of call in Göreme. The agency offers a five-day program for €280, for a minimum of six people. **Osman Üçer** (☎ 0536-813 6032) and **Ahmet Üçer** (☎ 0536-712 0728) are two guides based in the park, and there are agencies in Niğde:

Demavend Travel (Map p527; ☎ 0388-232 7363; www.demavendtravel.com; 5th fl, Esenbey Mahallesi Bahadır Is Merkezi 15, Niğde)

Sobek Travel (☎ 0388-232 1507; www.trekkingin turkeys.com; Avanoğlu Apt 70/17, Bor Caddesi, Niğde)

Sleeping & Eating

Şafak Pension & Camping (☎ 0388-724 7039; www.safaktravel.com; Çukurbağ; camp sites per person €10, d per person with half-board €25; ☎ ☎) This is run by the friendly, English-speaking walking and climbing guide Hassan. Rooms are simple but clean, with plentiful hot water, heating and comfortable beds. Camp sites have electricity and their own bathroom facilities. The terrace and garden command magnificent views of Mt Demirkazık.

On the other side of the road, the same family has recently opened another, similar pension, **Öz Şafak**, which charges the same rates. You'll find both pensions near the main road, about 1.5km from the bridge and the signpost marked 'Demirkazık 4, Pınarbaşı 8'.

Çukurbağ has basic shops for supplies.

Getting There & Away

From Niğde, take a Çamardı-bound minibüs (TL5, 90 minutes, every hour between 7am and 5.30pm) and ask to be let off at the Şafak Pension (it's 5km before Çamardı).

NİĞDE

☎ 0388 / pop 331,677

Backed by the snowcapped Ala Dağlar range, Niğde, 85km south of Nevşehir, was founded by the Seljuks. It's an agricultural centre with a clutch of historic buildings. You won't want to stay, but may have to if you want to visit the fabulous Eski Gümüşler Monastery, 10km to the northeast. You may also pass through en route to the base-camp villages for trekking in the Ala Dağlar National Park (p525).

French is spoken in the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 232 3393; Belediye Sarayı 38/39; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri), located on the 1st floor of the ugly Kültür Merkezi (City Cultural Centre) on Bor Caddesi. There are plenty of internet cafés on the main street, including **Cafe In** (Bor Caddesi; per hr TL1; ☎ 9am-midnight), opposite the tourist office. ATMs are dotted along Bankalar/İstiklal/Bor Caddesi.

Sights

Niğde Museum (Niğde Müzesi; admission TL3; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) houses a well-presented

selection of finds from the Assyrian city of Acmehöyük near Aksaray, through the Hittite and Phrygian ages to sculptures from Tyana (now Kemerhisar), the former Roman centre and Hittite capital 19km southwest of Niğde. Several mummies are exhibited too, including the 11th-century mummy of a blonde nun discovered in the 1960s in the Ihlara Valley.

The Seljuk **Alaeddin Camii** (1223), on the hill crowned with the fortress, is the town's grandest mosque but the **Süngür Bey Camii**, on a terrace at the end of the marketplace, is more interesting. Built by the Seljuks and restored by the Mongols in 1335, it is a curious blend of architectural styles.

The attractive **Ak Medrese** (1409) houses a cultural centre that may – or may not – be open.

Also in the centre are the **Hüdavend Hatun Türbesi** (1312), a fine Seljuk tomb, and the Ottoman **Dış Cami**.

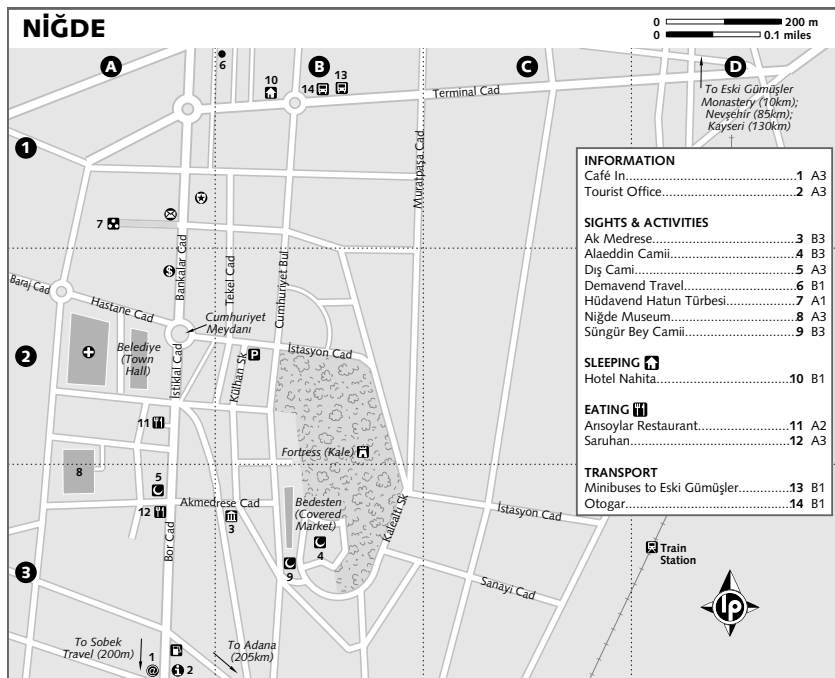
Sleeping & Eating

Niğde has several drab concrete hotels and numerous cheap and cheerful *lokantas* and *pastanes* on its thoroughfares.

Hotel Nahita (☎ 232 3536; fax 232 1526; Emin Erişingil Caddesi 19; s/d/tr TL45/60/70) On the main road into town and close to the otogar, this three-star block lacks character but is clean and comfortable and has a large green-and-orange restaurant.

Saruhan (☎ 232 2172; Bor Caddesi 13; mains TL6-10) Occupying a restored *han* (caravanserai) dating from 1357, Saruhan is heavy on atmosphere and no lightweight when it comes to its food. It serves delicious kebabs as well as rustic dishes such as *işkembe çorba* (tripe soup). We enjoyed the Adana kebab and were blown away by how cheap everything was. No alcohol is served and beware the toilet: it was out of order when we visited, and previous patrons advise that you give it a wide berth.

Ansöyler Restaurant (☎ 232 5035; Bor Caddesi 8; mains TL7-9) This sleek modern eatery offers classics such as İskender kebab, *çiğ köfte* (patties of raw spiced lamb) and *beyti sarma* (wrapped lamb with garlic, TL9). Its air-conditioned dining room with pink and white tablecloths is a perfect place to escape the heat and noise of Niğde.



Getting There & Away

Minibuses to and from the otogar trundle along Bankalar/İstiklal/Bor and Terminal Caddesi; it costs TL1 from the otogar to the tourist office. There are buses to Adana (TL15, 3½ hours, five daily), Aksaray (TL10, 1½ hours, hourly between 7am and 9pm), Ankara (TL25, five hours, five daily), İstanbul (TL50, 11 hours, five daily), Kayseri (TL10, 1½ hours, hourly between 7am and 9pm), Konya (TL20, 3½ hours, 10 daily) and Nevşehir (TL10, one hour, hourly from 7am to 6pm).

Niğde is on the Ankara–Adana train line. A daily service leaves for Adana at 6am (TL15, four hours) and for Ankara at 11.30pm (TL25, 9¼ hours).

AROUND NIĞDE

Eski Gümüşler Monastery

The ancient rock-hewn **Eski Gümüşler Monastery** (admission TL3; ☎ 8.30am–noon & 1–5pm), sprawling along the base of a cliff about 10km north-east of Niğde, has some of Cappadocia's best-preserved frescoes.

The monastery was only rediscovered in 1963. You enter via a rock-cut passage, which opens onto a large courtyard with reservoirs for wine and oil, and rock-cut dwellings, crypts, a kitchen and a refectory.

A small hole in the ground acts as a vent for a 9m-deep shaft leading to two levels of subterranean rooms. You can descend through the chambers or climb to an upstairs bedroom.

Even the pillars in the lofty main church are decorated with colourful Byzantine frescoes, painted between the 7th and 11th centuries. The charming Nativity looks as if it is set in a rock-caved structure like this one, and the striking Virgin and Child to the left of the apse has the elongated Mary giving a *Mona Lisa* smile – it's said to be the only smiling Mary in existence.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Gümüşler Belediyesi minibuses (TL1, 15 minutes) depart every hour from the minibuses terminal beside Niğde's otogar. As you enter Gümüşler, don't worry when the bus passes a couple of signs pointing to the monastery – it eventually passes right by it. To catch a bus back to Niğde, walk to the roundabout 500m from the monastery entrance and flag down a minibuses heading to the left.

IHLARA VALLEY (IHLARA VADİSİ)

☎ 0382

Southeast of Aksaray, Ihlara Valley scythes through the stubbly fields. Once called Peristrema, the valley was a favourite retreat of Byzantine monks, who cut churches into the base of its towering cliffs. Following the river (Melendiz Suyu), which snakes between painted churches, piles of boulders and a sea of greenery ringing with birdsong, is an unforgettable experience. In the words of one Slovakian traveller, Radovan: 'The deep canyon with lots of churches and trees opens up as you approach Selime. After that you're in a sleepy valley with the river flowing, big mountains typical of Cappadocia in the distance, and a gorgeous monastery in Selime.'

Like Soğanlı, Ihlara Valley looks worthy of *Star Wars* but did not actually feature in the films. Nonetheless, walking the 13km between Ihlara village and Selime is likely to be a highlight of your trip. Given the tricky public-transport situation, many people visit on day tours from Göreme, although these allow only a few hours to explore the central part of the gorge. Good times to visit are midweek in May or September when fewer people are about. Midway along the valley, at Belisırma, a swath of riverside restaurants means you needn't come weighed down with provisions.

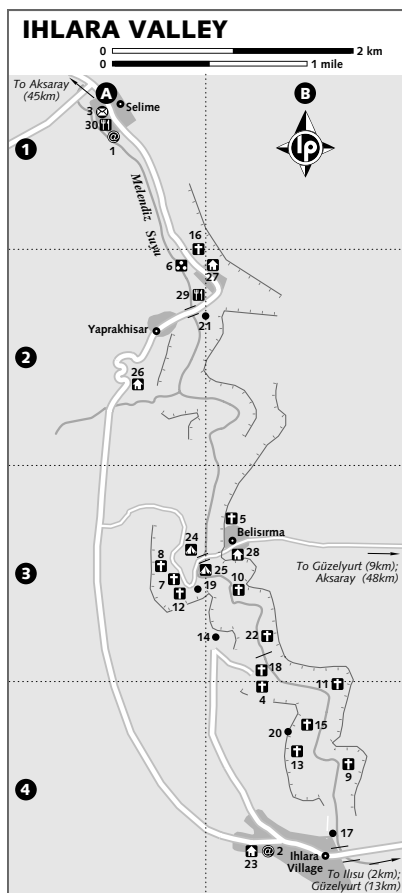
There are no ATMs in Ihlara village, Selime or Belisırma. Internet access is available at **Kappadokya Café** (per hr TL1; ☎ 9am–midnight), near Akar Pansion in Ihlara village, and at **Derren Net** (per hr TL1.50; ☎ 8am–10pm), next to the supermarket and the PTT in Selime.

Sights & Activities

WALKING IHLARA VALLEY

There are four entrances along the **Ihlara Valley** (admission TL5, parking TL2; ☎ 8am–6.30pm). If, like most people, you only want to walk the short stretch with most of the churches, then enter via the 360 knee-jarring steps leading down from the Ihlara Vadisi Turistik Tesisleri (Ihlara Valley Tourist Facility), perched on the rim of the gorge 2km from Ihlara village. Alternatively there are entrances near the derelict Star Otel in Ihlara village (follow the path uphill to the left), at Belisırma and at Selime.

It takes about 2½ to three hours to walk from the Ihlara Vadisi Turistik Tesisleri to Belisırma, and about three hours to walk from Belisırma to Selime. You'll need seven to eight hours if you want to walk all the way from



Ihlara village to Selime, stopping in Belisırma for lunch along the way.

If you're planning to walk all the way, it's best to start early in the day, particularly in summer, when you'll need to take shelter from the fierce sun.

The ticket for the valley should also cover Selime Monastery (p530) and Güzelyurt's Monastery Valley & Antique City (p531).

CHURCHES

Along the valley floor, signs mark the different churches. Although they're all worth visiting if you have the time, the following list includes the real must-sees:

Kokar (Fragrant) Kilise This church has some fabulous frescoes – the Nativity and the Crucifixion for starters – and tombs buried in the floors.

INFORMATION

| | | |
|----------------------|---|----|
| Derren Net..... | 1 | A1 |
| Kappadokya Café..... | 2 | B4 |
| Post Office..... | 3 | A1 |

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

| | | |
|--|----|----|
| Ağaç Altı (Beneath-a-Tree) Kilise..... | 4 | B4 |
| Ala Kilise..... | 5 | B3 |
| Ali Paşa Tomb..... | 6 | A2 |
| Bahattin'in Samanlığı (Bahattin's Granary) Kilise..... | 7 | A3 |
| Direkli (Columned) Kilise..... | 8 | A3 |
| Eğuritas (Crooked Stone) Kilise..... | 9 | B4 |
| Karagedik (Black Collar) Kilise..... | 10 | B3 |
| Karanlık Kale (Dark Castle) Kilise..... | 11 | B4 |
| Kırk Dam Altı (St George) Kilise..... | 12 | A3 |
| Kokar (Fragrant) Kilise..... | 13 | B4 |
| Ihlara Vadisi Turistik Tesisleri..... | 14 | B3 |
| Pürenli Seki (Platform) Kilise..... | 15 | B4 |
| Selime Monastery..... | 16 | A1 |
| Star Otel..... | 17 | B4 |
| Sümbüllü (Hyacinth) Kilise..... | 18 | B3 |
| Ticket Office..... | 19 | A3 |
| Ticket Office..... | 20 | B4 |
| Ticket Office..... | 21 | A2 |
| Yılanlı (Serpent) Kilise..... | 22 | B3 |

SLEEPING

| | | |
|---|----------|----|
| Akar Pansiyon & Restaurant..... | 23 | B4 |
| Anatolia Valley Restaurant & Camping..... | (see 24) | |
| Aslan Restaurant & Camping..... | 24 | A3 |
| Belisırma Restaurant..... | 25 | A3 |
| Kayabaşı Motel..... | 26 | A2 |
| Piri Pension..... | 27 | B2 |
| Tandırıcı Restaurant & Camping..... | (see 24) | |
| Vadi Pansiyon..... | 28 | B3 |

EATING

| | | |
|------------------------|----------|----|
| Çatlak Restaurant..... | 29 | A2 |
| Shop..... | (see 23) | |
| Supermarket..... | 30 | A1 |

Sümbüllü (Hyacinth) Kilise Some frescoes remain, but the church is mostly noteworthy for its well-preserved, simple but elegant facade.

Yılanlı (Serpent) Kilise Many of the frescoes are badly damaged, but it's still possible to make out the one outlining the punishments doled out to sinners; especially the three-headed snake with a sinner in each mouth and the nipple-clamped women (ouch!) who didn't breastfeed their young.

Kırk Dam Altı (St George) Kilise It's a scramble to get to, but the views of the valley make all the puffing worthwhile. The frescoes are badly graffitied, but above the entrance you can see St George on a white horse, slaying a three-headed snake.

Bahattin'in Samanlığı (Bahattin's Granary) Kilise

With some of the valley's best-preserved frescoes, the church is named after a local who used to store grain here. Frescoes show scenes from the life of Christ, including the Crucifixion, Massacre of the Innocents and Baptism scenes.

Direkli (Columned) Kilise This cross-shaped church has six columns, hence the name. The large adjoining chamber originally had two storeys, as you can see from what's left

of the steps and the holes in the walls from the supporting beams. There are burial chambers in the floor.

SELİME MONASTERY

The **monastery** (☞ dawn-dusk) at Selime is an astonishing rock-cut structure incorporating a vast kitchen with soaring chimney, a church with a gallery around it, stables with rock-carved feed troughs and other evidence of the troglodyte lifestyle. The admission price is included in the Ihlara Valley ticket. The entrance is just opposite the Ali Paşa Tomb (1317).

Tours

Travel agencies in Göreme (p500), Avanos (p512) and Ürgüp (p518) offer full-day tours to Ihlara for TL50 to TL60 per day, including lunch.

Sleeping & Eating

If you want to walk all the way along the gorge there are modest pensions handily placed at both ends (in Ihlara village and Selime). You can also break your journey into two parts with an overnight stay in Belisırma's camping grounds or pension. Note that all accommodation is closed out of season (December to March).

IHLARA VILLAGE

Akar Pansion & Restaurant (☎ 453 7018; fax 453 7511; s/d/tr TL20/40/55) One of the only places in town, Akar's 18 motel-style rooms are simple but clean with private bathrooms. The restaurant (mains TL6 to TL7) serves *saç tava*, grilled local trout, fried chicken and omelettes, and a small shop sells picnic ingredients. Owner Cengiz shuttles people to Selime (TL20), Belisırma (TL15) and the Ihlara Vadisi Turistik Tesisleri (free).

BIG HASAN

If a stroll through Ihlara Valley gets you salivating for more walking, the area around Cappadocia's second-highest mountain, Hasan Dağı (Mt Hasan), is good for trekking. The closest village to the 3268m inactive volcano is **Helvadere**, about 10km southwest of Ihlara village and 20km east of Taşpınar. Helvadere is the site of the ancient city of Nora, the architecturally unique remains of which can be seen 1km east of the village. From the mountain hut, 8km southwest of Helvadere, it takes eight hours to hike to and from the summit, where the basement of what was once Turkey's highest church remains. There are views of the Ala Dağlar and Bolkar ranges and Tuz Gölü, the country's second-largest salt lake. The challenging trek requires some mountaineering experience during the winter. You can get more information in Göreme at Middle Earth Travel (p500), which offers a two-day trip incorporating Kaymaklı and Ihlara Valley from €150.

BELİSİRMA

Midway along the gorge, below Belisırma village, four low-key licensed restaurants feed the hungry hikers. They are not worth a special trip, but benefit from their position right by the river. Two have wonderful tables on platforms above the water – the hottest property on the strip. All serve basic meals of grilled trout, *saç tava*, kebabs, salads and soups, and charge about the same: TL10 for a main and TL5 per site in their camp sites, which have basic ablution blocks.

Anatolia Valley Restaurant & Camping (☎ 457

3040) This good site has a couple of vine-covered pergolas for shade, although the toilet block isn't too clean. Wooden 'tree houses' are planned and the owner will drive hikers back to Ihlara car park if they are tired (TL15).

Aslan Restaurant & Camping (☎ 457 3033) The camp site is set at the base of a cliff with lots of trees. The waiters in the busy restaurant are brusque and objectionable, and the river platforms are generally held for groups.

Belisırma Restaurant (☎ 457 3057) On the opposite bank of the river, Belisırma's balconies are popular with groups. The camp site at the rear makes up for its lack of shade with respectable toilets and some hammocks.

Tandırca Restaurant & Camping (☎ 457 3110) Camp sites are dotted among vegetable gardens and a small orchard. Groups often bypass the restaurant, leaving a mellow, shady spot and a sporting chance of scoring a river platform.

There's a pension in the scruffy village on the hill, across the bridge from the restaurants. The spartan **Vadi Pansiyon** (☎ 457 3067; d TL50) has four green rooms with small private bathrooms, and a terrace café with views across the fields.

SELİME

The cheapest and most pleasant accommodation option at the northern end of the gorge is the worn but clean **Piri Pension** (☎ 454 5114;

carpet_Mustafa@gmail.com; s/d TL20/40), a tranquil, friendly place overlooking some fairy chimneys. Owner Mustafa guides around the valley and the nearby monastery (TL15).

In an olive-green block 2km outside the village on the road to Belisırma, the bare, clean rooms at **Kayabaşı Motel** (☎ 454 5565; s/d TL25/50) are chiefly notable for their views of the yawning mouth of the gorge.

There is a ramshackle eatery, **Çatlak Restaurant**, on a muddy riverbank a few steps from the start of the walk.

Getting There & Away

Ten dolmuşes a day travel down the valley from Aksaray, stopping in Selime, Belisırma, Ihlara village and Ilisu en route to Güzelyurt (p533). In Belisırma, dolmuşes stop in the new part of the village, up on the plateau, and you have to hike a few hundred metres down into the valley. To travel in the opposite direction, you have to catch a taxi. A taxi between Ihlara village and Selime should cost about TL25; from Selime to Aksaray, about TL45. See p532 for taxi fares from Güzelyurt.

GÜZELYURT

☎ 0382 / pop 3735 / elevation 1485m

According to signposts on the deserted roads east of Ihlara Valley, 'a trip without Güzelyurt is not a Cappadocia trip'. It may seem an optimistic slogan, but Güzelyurt both ticks all the important Cappadocian sightseeing boxes and receives a refreshing lack of visitors. A scree slope with Hollywood-style letters spelling out the town's old name, Gelveri, overlooks underground cities, rock-cut churches, stone houses and a lakeside monastery.

In Ottoman times Karballa (Gelveri) was inhabited by 1000 Ottoman Greek families and 50 Turkish Muslim families. In the population exchanges between Turkey and Greece in 1924, the Greeks of Gelveri went to Nea Karvali in Greece, while Turkish families from Kozan and Kastoria in Greece moved here. The relationship between the two countries is now celebrated in an annual **Turks & Greeks Friendship Festival** held in July.

Güzelyurt has a PTT, a branch of the TC Ziraat Bankası (but no ATM) and several shops. English-speaking staff at the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 451 2498; ☎ 8.30am-7pm) in the main street can supply information about both the town and the Ihlara Valley. The poorly signed **Arikan Internet Café** (per hr TL;

☎ 8am-11pm) is on the 1st floor of a *pastane* in a small square behind the bank.

Sights

MONASTERY VALLEY & ANTIQUE CITY

Walk downhill from the main square following the signs to the Monastery Valley and Antique City. About 300m from the square, a sign points left to a small, uninteresting satellite of the **underground city** (yeraltı şehri; admission TL5; ☎ 8am-6.30pm). Next stop is the ticket booth; admission should be free with an Ihlara Valley ticket. The restored complex ranges across several levels and includes one hair-raising section where you descend through a hole in the floor.

The valley is also home to several churches, most impressive of which is the **Aşağı or Büyük Kilise Camii** (Lower or Big Mosque). Built as the Church of St Gregory of Nazianzus in AD 385, it was restored in 1835 and turned into a mosque following the population exchange in 1924. St Gregory (330-90) grew up locally and went on to become a theologian, patriarch and one of the four Fathers of the Greek Church. The building was being restored at the time of research, but if you can get into its wrecked interior, you can see the wooden sermon desk that was reputedly a gift from a Russian tsar. There are plans to uncover the whitewashed frescoes.

Signposted up some steps on the left after the Büyük Kilise Camii, the **Sivişi Kilise** (Anargyros Church) is a much later rock-hewn church with square pillars and an impressive cupola sporting some weathered frescoes. Climb the steps behind it for fabulous valley views.

Further on are the **Koç** (Ram) church and the neighbouring **Cafarlar** (Rivulets), with its interesting frescoes.

Afterwards you can continue through the 4.5km **Monastery Valley**, a sort of Ihlara in miniature. Panoramic viewpoints abound and just walking through it is pleasant, but there are more rock-cut churches and dwellings to explore. Some 2km after the previous group, the **Kalburlu Kilisesi** (Church with a Screen) has a superb entrance. The almost adjoining **Kömürlü Kilisesi** (Coal Church) has carvings including an elaborate lintel above the entrance and some Maltese crosses.

YÜKSEK KİLİSE & MANASTIR

Perched high on a rock overlooking Güzelyurt lake is the **Yüksek Kilise and Manastır** (High

Church and Monastery), some 2km south of a signposted turn-off on the Ihlara road 1km west of Güzelyurt. The road there creeps between huge boulders balancing on other rocks like outsized sculptures in a gallery. The walled compound containing the plain church and monastery is graffitied inside and looks more impressive from afar, but has sweeping views of the lake and mountains.

KIZIL KİLİSE

Set in farmland surrounded by rugged mountains, the **Kızıl Kilise** (Red Church) is about 6km southeast of Güzelyurt, off the road to Çiflik and Niğde, just past the village of Sivrihisar. Named for the rusty colour of its stone, the dilapidated building is not worth a visit unless you have your own transport or a penchant for windy taxi journeys. The road wiggles uphill and through some boulder fields. A taxi from Güzelyurt costs about TL15, including waiting time.

GAZİEMİR

Some 18km east of Güzelyurt, just off the road to Derinkuyu, Gaziemir's **underground city** (yeraltı şehri; admission TL3; ☎ 8am-6pm) opened in 2007. Churches, a winery with wine barrels, food depots, hamams and tandoor fireplaces can be seen. Camel bones and loopholes in the rock for tethering animals suggest that it also served as a subterranean caravanserai.

Sleeping & Eating

Asrav Konak (☎ 451 2501; asravpansiyon@asrav.com.tr; s/d €17/32) Housed in an imposing building, Asrav's simple rooms and bare wooden floors are not as grand as its exterior. However, it is comfortable and stylish enough, and the balcony is a perfect place to start the day.

Kadir's Houses (☎ 451 2166; www.kadirshouses.com; s/d/tr/q TL50/80/100/120) A budget version of Hotel Karballa, Kadir's occupies a 120-year-old Ottoman house entered through an antique carved wooden door. The three rooms have modern bathrooms, subtle lighting, mezzanines and beds with natural, woollen duvets. Homemade wine is served in the small outdoor bar and village tucker is available for dinner (TL15).

Halil Pension (☎ 451 2707; www.halilpension.com; Yukarı Mahallesi Amaç Sokak; s/d/tr with half-board TL80/120/150; ☎) This family home would make a great base for those intending to explore the area for a few days. The meals, packed

with goodies from the garden and served at a table fashioned from an antique door, could be the culinary highlight of your trip. In a modern extension to the original 140-year-old Greek house, the rooms have loads of natural light, small but spotlessly clean bathrooms and cheerful modern decor. The roof terrace has magnificent views of Yüksel Kilise and one room has a private balcony. As you enter town from the west, it's signposted off to the right, a short walk downhill from the centre.

Hotel Karballa (☎ 451 2103; www.karballahotel.com; standard s/d/tr/q €40/55/75/100, deluxe €50/65/85/110; ☎ ☎) We bet the monks enjoyed living in this 19th-century Greek monastery above the town centre. The hotel has retained a contemplative atmosphere and you feel like a father breaking his fast in the arched former refectory, now the restaurant (dinner €10). The rooms, named after the holy one-time inhabitants, have cross-shaped windows, bright Uzbeki bedspreads and mezzanines. Some of the standard rooms, reached by spiral staircases, snuggle into their vaulted ceilings. There is even a pensive atmosphere in the pool, which overlooks the town's Gelveri sign.

There are three similar *lokantas* on and around the main square, serving cheap beer and raki and dishes such as pide, *köfte* (meatballs) and kebabs for TL4 to TL7.

Getting There & Away

Returning buses travel from Güzelyurt to Aksaray (TL5, one hour) every two hours between 6.30am and 5.30pm. On Sundays there are fewer buses.

You'll have to catch a taxi to get to Selime (TL25), Ihlara village (TL35) and Hasan Dağı (Mt Hasan; TL60). A taxi to Aksaray costs TL60.

AKSARAY

☎ 0382 / pop 152,000

Like Nevşehir, Aksaray is an ugly modern town with a sprinkling of old buildings and very little to attract the traveller. You may need to transit through here on your way to the Ihlara Valley, but otherwise you're best off avoiding it.

Orientation & Information

Aksaray's main otogar is about 3km west of town. A free *servis* shuttles between it and the

small *eski otogar* (old otogar), from where it's a 200m walk to the *vilayet* (provincial government building) in the centre of town. You'll find banks with ATMs along Bankalar Caddesi, a main thoroughfare running past the *vilayet*, which overlooks the pedestrianised main square. Continue straight along Bankalar Caddesi to find the Ulu Cami.

French is spoken in the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 213 2474; Taşpazar Mahallesi; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri). To find it, walk along Ankara Caddesi (which runs west off Bankalar Caddesi near the *vilayet*), walk past the Zafer Okulu (school) and take the first left. You can check your emails near Harman (right) at **VIP Net** (Hükümet Sokak 10; per hr TL1; 🕒 9am-10pm), where fish tanks glow alongside six flat screens.

Sights

The **Ulu Cami** (Bankalar Caddesi) has decoration characteristic of the post-Seljuk Beylik period and a little of the original yellow stone remains in the grand doorway.

The **Aksaray Museum** (Aksaray Müzesi; admission TL3; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 1-5pm), in a new building en route from the otogar to the centre, covers both ethnography and archaeology. Exhibits include neolithic beads, a Hellenic child's sarcophagus, Roman perfume bottles, carpets from the Ulu Cami and, in the hall of mummies, a mummified cat.

The older part of town, along Nevşehir Caddesi, has the curious **Eğri Minare** (Crooked Minaret), built in 1236 and leaning at an angle of 27 degrees. Inevitably, the locals know it as the 'Turkish Tower of Pisa'.

Sleeping & Eating

All of the following are on, or within walking distance of, the main square.

Otel Yuvam (☎ 212 0024; fax 213 2875; Eski Sanayi Caddesi Kavşağı; s/d/tr TL25/40/60) This budget option is located on the main square next to the Kurşunlu Cami. The overwhelming feel is old-fashioned, with rooms sporting lino floor coverings and solid wooden furniture. Bathrooms are spotless and beds are hard but have crisp, clean linen. The small lounge with satellite TV is a good retreat from central Aksaray – until the call to prayer intrudes.

Otel Vadim (☎ 212 8200; fax 212 8232; 818 Vadi Sokak 13; s/d/tr TL30/50/60; 📺) It is certainly worth paying a few extra lira to upgrade from Otel Yuvam to this excellent midrange choice. Located in a quiet side street off Büyük Kergi

Caddesi, the southern extension of Bankalar Caddesi, it has a green-tiled facade and large, comfortable rooms with wi-fi.

Grand Saatçioğlu Otel (☎ 214 2020; www.saatciogluotel.com; Turizm Caddesi 3; s/d/tr/ste TL80/110/140/225; 📺 📺) This striped grey building with smoked windows has comfortable rooms with minibar, TV and attractive green bedspreads. It's about the smartest accommodation you'll find in Aksaray and has a hamam.

Yeni Merkez Lokantası (☎ 213 1076; Bankalar Caddesi Valilik Karşısı 8d; mains TL4-7) A local favourite, this friendly place facing the *vilayet* has an array of daily specials on display in the bains marie, or you can order specialities such as the İskender kebabs. Takeaway döner sandwiches are available here and at the street vendors nearby.

Harman (☎ 212 3311; Bankalar Caddesi 16a; mains TL7) Aksaray's best restaurant, a few doors from Yeni Merkez Lokantası, is adorned with photos of visiting celebrities posing with the star-struck waiters. It offers a great selection of *ızgara* (grills, TL6.50), döner kebabs (TL7), pide and soups (TL2). Those who enjoy a sweet at the end of the meal will be impressed by the excellent homemade baklava and *künefe* (TL4).

Melisa Pastanesi (☎ 212 3134; Eski Sanayi Caddesi 11) This patisserie near Otel Yuvam serves the usual range of sweet treats and the friendly staff speak some English; particularly Tariq, who worked in a kebab shop in Stoke-on-Trent, England.

Getting There & Away

From Aksaray, direct buses go to Ankara (TL18, 3½ hours, 230km), Konya (TL14, two hours, 140km) via Sultanhanı (TL5, 45 minutes, 50km), Nevşehir (TL10, one hour, 65km) and Niğde (TL10, 1½ hours, 115km).

Dolmuş run between the old otogar and Güzelyurt (TL5, one hour, 45km, six daily) every two hours between 7.30am and 6pm, stopping in Selime, Belisırma, İhlara village and İlsu. Between 9am and 2pm, there are also four dolmuş for İhlara Valley alone. Sultanhanı (TL5, 45 minutes, 50km, 10 daily) is also served; there are few Sunday services.

AROUND AKSARAY

The road between Aksaray and Nevşehir follows one of the oldest trade routes in the world, the Uzun Yol (Long Rd). The route linked Konya, the Seljuk capital, with its other

great cities (Kayseri, Sivas and Erzurum) and ultimately with Persia (Iran).

The Long Rd was formerly dotted with *hans* where the traders would stop for accommodation and business. The remains of three caravanserais can be visited from Aksaray, the best preserved being the impressive **Ağzıkara Hanı** (admission TL3; ☎ 7.30am-8pm), 16km northeast of Aksaray, which was built between 1231 and 1239. From Aksaray a taxi will charge about TL50 for the run there and back. If you'd prefer to go by bus, catch one heading to Nevşehir and jump off at the Ağzıkara Hanı. Day tours from Göreme and Ürgüp also call in on the caravanserai.

Further towards Nevşehir you'll pass the scant remains of the 13th-century **Tepesidelik Hanı**, 23km northeast of Aksaray, and the 12th-century **Alay Hanı**, another 10km on.

KAYSERİ

☎ 0352 / pop 1.2 million / elevation 1067m

Mixing Seljuk tombs, mosques and modern developments, Kayseri is both Turkey's most Islamic city after Konya and one of the economic powerhouses nicknamed the 'Anatolian tigers'. Colourful silk headscarfs are piled in the bazaar, one of the country's biggest, and businesses shut down at noon on Friday, but Kayseri's religious leanings are less prominent than its manufacturing prowess. The city is overlooked by Erciyes Dağı and the Hilton may not boast central Cappadocia's charms, but its residents are both confident of their city's future and proud of its past. With no need to rely on the tourism game for their income, Kayseri's people are often less approachable than folk in Göreme et al, and this can be frustrating and jarring if you arrive fresh from the fairy chimneys. However, if you are passing through this transport hub, it's worth taking a look at a Turkish boom town with a strong sense of its own history.

History

Under the Roman emperor Tiberius (r AD 14-37), Eusebia (as the settlement at Kayseri was known) was renamed Caesarea. The Arabs renamed it Kaisariyah and the Seljuks gave it its current name.

Kayseri became famous as the birthplace of St Basil the Great, who was responsible for organising the monastic life of Cappadocia. Its early Christian history was interrupted by Arab invasions from the 7th century. The

Seljuks took over in 1084 and held the city until the Mongols' arrival in 1243, except for a brief period when the Crusaders captured it on their way to the Holy Land.

When Kayseri had been part of the Mongol empire for almost 100 years, its governor set up his own emirate (1335). This lasted just 45 years and was succeeded by another emirate, before being conquered by the Ottomans, captured by the Mamluks, and finally retaken by the Ottomans in 1515 – all in just over a century.

Orientation & Information

The basalt-walled citadel at the centre of the old town, just south of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, the huge main square, is a good landmark. Another convenient point of reference is Düvenönü Meydanı, 350m west of the citadel along Park Caddesi.

The train station is at the northern end of Atatürk Bulvarı, over 500m north of Düvenönü Meydanı. Kayseri's otogar is about 3km northwest of Düvenönü Meydanı, along Osman Kavuncu Caddesi and Çevre Yol.

English and German are spoken at the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 222 3903; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri), which gives out maps and brochures.

You'll find numerous banks with ATMs in the centre. To collect your email, head to **Soner Internet Café** (Düvenönü Meydanı; per hr TL1.50; ☎ 8am-midnight).

Sights

Now acting as an overflow valve for the nearby bazaar, the monumental, black volcanic-stone walls of the **citadel** (*hisar* or *kale*) were constructed in the early 13th century, during the Seljuk sultan Alaattin Keykubad's reign. Kayseri saw its first castle in the 3rd century, under the Roman emperor Gordian III, and the Byzantine emperor Justinian made alterations 300 years later. The present building has been restored over the years – twice in the 15th century.

Among Kayseri's distinctive features are several important building complexes that were founded by Seljuk queens and princesses, including the austere-looking **Mahperi Hunat Hatun Complex** (Seyyid Burhaneddin (Talas) Caddesi), east of the citadel. It comprises the Mahperi Hunat Hatun Camii (1238), built by the wife of Alaattin Keykubad; the Hunat Hatun Medresesi (1237); and a hamam, which is still in use.

KAYSERİ

1 To Otogar (2km);
Asırlık Saray (6km);
Ankara (330km);
Adana (335km)

2 To Oğlular (20km);
Sivas (200km);
Malatya (95-4km);
Sivas (200km);

3 To Airport (4km);
Sivas (200km);
Malatya (95-4km)

4 To Erzyes Dağı (26km)

5 To Military Zone

6 To Airport (4km);
Sivas (200km);
Malatya (95-4km)

7 To Oğlular (20km);
Sivas (200km);
Malatya (95-4km);
Sivas (200km);

8 To Erzyes Dağı (26km)

9 To Oğlular (20km);
Sivas (200km);
Malatya (95-4km);
Sivas (200km);

10 To Oğlular (20km);
Sivas (200km);
Malatya (95-4km);
Sivas (200km);

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Sivas (200km);

30 To Oğlular (20km);
Sivas (200km);
Malatya (95-4km);
Sivas (200km);

31 To Oğlular (20km);
Sivas (200km);
Malatya (95-4km);
Sivas (200km);

32 To Oğlular (20km);
Sivas (200km);
Malatya (95-4km);
Sivas (200km);

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Another striking monument is the **Çifte Medrese** (Twin Seminaries). These adjoining religious schools, set in Mimar Sinan Parkı north of Park Caddesi, were founded at the bequest of the Seljuk sultan Gıyasettin I Keyhüsrev and his sister Gevher Nesibe Sultan (1165–1204). The Museum of Medical History inside was closed for renovations at the time of research.

Back towards the citadel is the Ottoman-style **Kurşunlu Cami** (Lead-Domed Mosque; Atatürk Parkı). Also called the Ahmet Paşa Camii after its founder, it was built in the late 16th century, possibly following plans drawn up by the great Sinan (who was born in a nearby village). North of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, be sure to have a look at the **Sahabiye Medresesi** (from 1267; Ahmetpaşa Caddesi), an Islamic theological school that now functions as a book bazaar.

Another notable mosque is Kayseri's **Ulu Cami** (Great Mosque), begun in the mid-12th century by the Danişmend Turkish emirs and finished by the Seljuks in 1205. It features some good examples of early Seljuk style, such as the brick minaret, one of the first built in Anatolia.

Kayseri is dotted with conical **Seljuk tombs**, most famous of which is the so-called **Döner Kümbet** (Revolving Tomb; Talas Caddesi) at Kartal Junction. On the way to the archaeological museum, you'll pass a cluster of Seljuk monuments, including the **Alaca Kümbet** (Alaca Tomb; Seyyid Burhaneddin (Talas) Caddesi), with a typical quadratic design and pyramidal roof.

The 19th-century **Surup Krikor Lusavoriç Kilise** (Church of St Gregory the Illuminator; off Nazım Bey Bulvarı) is one of Anatolia's few remaining Armenian churches. *Asiatic Review* described it as 'tawdry' back in 1937, and the seldom-used building is certainly dilapidated. However, the domed interior is worth a look, mostly for the three gilded altars, containing paintings that replaced the originals last century. The painting on the left, with four fiery columns topped by flaming crosses, depicts the vision of St Gregory, who grew up in Kayseri. Located in a bad part of town, the church is tricky to find, so take a taxi (TL15 return from the tourist office, including waiting time). Ring the bell on the west side of the building to gain entry and leave a tip for the caretaker at the end of your visit.

MUSEUMS

Just southeast of the citadel is the 18th-century **Güppüpoğlu Konağı** (off Tennuri Sokak),

a stone Ottoman mansion with beautiful wooden balconies and doorways. Inside, the **Ethnography Museum** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am–5pm Tue–Sun) is split between an exhibition of Ottoman craft and a mannequin-inhabited section, evoking how life was lived under the multicoloured beams.

Nearby is the stylish **Atatürk Evi** (Tennuri Sokak; admission free; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri), a small, originally furnished Ottoman-era house where Atatürk stayed when he visited Kayseri.

If you have half an hour to spare, wander through the park to the small **Archaeological Museum** (Kışla Caddesi 2; admission TL3; ☎ 8am–5pm Tue–Sun), a minor magpie's nest featuring finds from nearby Kültepe (ancient Kaniş, the chief city of the Hatti people and the first Hittite capital). The largest city mound discovered in Anatolia, Kültepe yielded the area's oldest written documents. Many relate to commerce, such as the Assyrian clay tablets and envelopes from 1920 BC to 1840 BC. Other exhibits include a stunning sarcophagus illustrating Hercules' chores, a Bronze Age mother goddess idol, child mummies, Roman and Hellenistic jewellery, hieroglyphic inscriptions relating to King Tuthalia IV and a decapitated but imposing statue of the Hittite monarch.

Sleeping

Due to Kayseri's cult status among chain-smoking Turkish businessmen, you should book accommodation in advance. Once installed in a room, ensure you reserve it for the duration of your stay or the management may give it to the next claimant.

Hotel Sur (☎ 222 4367; Talas Caddesi 12; s/d/tr TL40/60/75) Beyond the dark reception and institutional corridors, the Sur's rooms are bright and comfortable. The management is friendly and the hotel's withered international flags can almost lean on the ancient city walls for support.

Elif Hotel (☎ 336 1826; elifotelkayseri@elifotelkayseri.com; Osman Kavuncu Caddesi 2; s/d/tr TL40/70/90) The Elif's welcoming but conservative Islamic management frowns on alcohol on the premises and other forms of hanky-panky. Despite their slightly worn bathrooms, rooms are a bargain, with satellite TV and minibars. Ask for a spot at the rear of the building, which is quieter.

Hotel Çaparı (☎ 222 5278; www.hotelcapari.com; Gevher Nesibe Mahallesi Donanma Caddesi 12; s/d/tr/ste TL60/90/110/120; ☎) With thick red carpets and friendly staff, this three-star hotel on a quiet street off Atatürk Bulvarı is one of the best

deals in town. The well-equipped rooms have satellite TV, wi-fi and massive minibars.

Bent Hotel (☎ 221 2400; www.benthotel.com; Atatürk Bulvarı 40; s/d/tr TL75/100/120) Its name may not inspire confidence, but the Bent is a good midrange choice overlooking the pedal boats in Mimar Sinan Parkı. The small but comfortable rooms have TVs, Efes-stocked minibars and 24-hour room service.

Hotel Almer (☎ 320 7970; www.almer.com.tr; Osman Kavuncu Caddesi 15; s/d/tr TL75/120/150; 🚰 📺) Kayseri's top sub-Hilton establishment is smoothly professional from the moment you reel through the revolving door. The relaxing reception has a backlit bar and little alcoves for working your way through the magazine rack. Mirrored pillars glint between pink tablecloths in the restaurant, and the wi-fi-enabled rooms are surprisingly quiet despite the busy road.

Hilton (☎ 207 5000; www.hilton.com; İstasyon Caddesi 1; s €120-135, d €140-155; 🚰 📺) Slap bang in the town centre, this is Kayseri's only five-star hotel. Its futuristic design is a striking contrast to the surrounding mosques and historical buildings. Inside it's swanky, with an atrium as vast as a station, luxurious rooms and all the requisite amenities, including a fitness centre. The views from the upper floors are great.

Eating

Kayseri boasts a few special dishes, among them *pastırma* (salted, sun-dried veal coated with *çemen*, a spicy concoction of garlic, red peppers, parsley and water), the original pastrami.

Few restaurants serve alcohol – if you want a tittle with your tucker, try Hotel Almer (above, mains TL12, open 7pm to 11.30pm) or the Hilton (above).

The western end of Sivas Caddesi has a strip of fast-food joints that still seem to be pumping when everything else in town is quiet.

Divan Pastanesi (☎ 222 3974; Millet Caddesi) Across Millet Caddesi from the Elmacıoğlu İskender et Lokantası, this modern pastry shop is a favourite among Kayseri's sweet tooths.

İstanbul Balık Pazarı (☎ 231 8973; Sivas Caddesi; mains TL3; 🕒 8am-11pm) Choose between the fish frying at the door, then head past the glistening catches in the fishmongers to the small dining room, with its mishmash of nautical and historical paintings.

Tuana (☎ 222 0565; 2nd fl, Sivas Caddesi; mains TL7) Entered from the lane leading from the PTT

to Sivas Caddesi, the smart Tuana offers a rollcall of classics such as kebaps and Kayseri *mantı*. When it's quiet, the ocean of red tables and chairs adorned with golden ribbons have the air of an out-of-season seaside resort, but it's easy to distract yourself with the views of the citadel and Erciyes Dağı.

Öz Urfa Sofrası (☎ 232 7777; 1st fl, Millet Caddesi 11; mains TL8; 🕒 10am-10pm) This busy place overlooking the billboard-flanked LC Waikiki store is a little expensive, but its Urfa specialities are popular nonetheless. In addition to the usual pide and meat on sticks, the *künefe* is a winner and the *ayran* (a yoghurt drink) presentation is certainly novel.

Elmacıoğlu İskender et Lokantası (☎ 222 6965; 1st & 2nd fl, Millet Caddesi 5; mains TL8-10; 🕒 9am-10.30pm) Ascend in a lift to Kayseri's best restaurant, with waiters sporting bow ties and big windows overlooking the citadel. İskender kebaps are the house speciality, available with *köfte* or in 'double' form (TL13), and other dishes include *pastırma* pide (TL8.5). Recommended.

Shopping

Set at the intersection of age-old trade routes, Kayseri has been an important commercial centre for millennia and its *kapalı çarşı* (vaulted bazaar) was one of the largest built by the Ottomans. Restored in the 1870s and again in the 1980s, it remains the heart of the city and is well worth a wander. The adjoining *bedesten* (covered market), built in 1497, was first dedicated to the sale of textiles and is still a good place to pick up carpets and kilims. An antique carpet auction takes place here on Monday and Thursday.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Turkish Airlines (☎ 222 3858; Tekin Sokak Hukuk Plaza 6c) has three daily flights to and from İstanbul (TL69 to TL169 one way, 1½ hours) and one Sun Express flight to and from İzmir (TL74 one way, 1½ hours) on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.

Onur Air (☎ 231 5551; Ahmetpaşa Caddesi 7) has a daily flight to and from İstanbul (TL54 to TL174 one way).

A taxi between the city centre and the *havaalanı* (airport) costs TL15 and a dolmuş is TL1.25. There are shuttle buses between the airport and hotels in central Cappadocia (see p496).

SERVICES FROM KAYSERİ'S OTOGAR

| Destination | Fare (TL) | Duration (hr) | Frequency (per day) |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|---------------------|
| Adana | 22 | 5 | frequent |
| Ankara | 25 | 5 | hourly |
| Erzurum | 40 | 10 | frequent |
| Gaziantep | 25 | 6 | six a day |
| Göreme | 10 | 1½ | hourly |
| Kahramanmaraş | 20 | 4 | hourly |
| Malatya | 25 | 5 | frequent |
| Neveşehir via Ürgüp | 12/6 | 1½/1¼ | hourly |
| Sivas | 18 | 3 | frequent |
| Van | 50 | 13 | frequent |

BUS

On an important north-south and east-west crossroads, Kayseri has lots of bus services – see the table (above).

The otogar has an internet café, luggage storage (TL6 for 24 hours), a barber, car rental and a café with an *ayran* fountain. If there's no *servis* from there to the *merkez* (centre), grab a taxi (TL15) or catch a local bus (TL1.25).

Dolmuşes run to Ürgüp (TL5, 1¾ hours) from the west garage.

TRAIN

Kayseri is served by the *Vangölü Ekspresi* (between İstanbul and Tatvan), the *Güney Ekspresi* (between İstanbul and Kurtalan), the *Doğu Ekspresi* (between İstanbul and Kars), the *Erzurum Ekspresi* (between Ankara and Kars), the *Çukurova Mavi* (between Ankara and Adana) and the *4 Eylül Mavi Train* (between Ankara and Malatya). The RAJA Passenger Trains İstanbul–Tehran service (see p682) stops in Kayseri en route to Iran.

To reach the centre from the train station, walk out of the station, cross the big

avenue (Çevre Yol) and board any bus heading down Atatürk Bulvarı to Düvenönü Meydanı. Alternatively you could walk along Altan Caddesi, which isn't as busy as Atatürk Bulvarı.

AROUND KAYSERİ
Sultan Han

Built in the 1230s, the **Sultan Han** (admission TL3; ☉ daylight) is a striking old Seljuk caravanserai on the old Kayseri–Sivas highway, 45km northeast of Kayseri. It is a fine, restored example of a Seljuk royal caravan lodging – the largest in Anatolia after the Sultanhanı, near Aksaray.

Locals should unlock the door and issue tickets, but visitors have reported frustrated attempts to gain access. If you are coming from Kayseri, enquire at the Kayseri's Archaeological Museum (p536).

Sultan Han is southeast of the Kayseri–Sivas road, near Tuzhisar. To get there from Kayseri, take a Sivas-bound bus (TL5), or a dolmuş (TL2.50) heading to Sarioğlan or Akkişla from the *doğu* (east) garage.

TRAINS FROM KAYSERİ

Trains depart daily unless otherwise stated.

| Destination | Fare (TL) | Duration (hr) | Departures |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|---|
| Adana | 14 | 6 | 2.15am & 7.40am |
| Ankara | 13 | 8 | midnight, 12.55am, 2.51am (not Sun), 4am & 4.19am |
| İstanbul | 22 | 18 | 2.51am (not Sun) & 4am |
| Kars | 26 | 20½ | 1.30am & 10.17pm |
| Kurtalan | 21 | 20 | 11.50am (Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat) |
| Malatya | 15 | 9 | 2.52am & 11.50am (not Thu) |
| Tatvan | 22 | 24 | 11.50am (Tue & Sun) |

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