

Central Anatolia



Visitors to central Turkey's hazy plains occasionally suffer an affliction known as 'Hittite hip hopping' or 'Roman rhyming'. The patient, overwhelmed by ancient sites such as the Hittite capital Hattuša, begins composing endless ditties to simplify the region's complex legacy of battling regimes.

The prognosis is grim. Luckily, the sense of history here is so pervasive that the average kebab chef can remind you that the Romans preceded the Seljuks. This is, after all, the region where the whirling dervishes first swirled, Atatürk began his revolution, Alexander the Great cut the Gordian knot and King Midas turned everything he touched to gold. Julius Caesar uttered his famous line, '*Veni, vidi, vici*' ('I came, I saw, I conquered'), near Tokat; the sentiment is shared by diners who devour a hefty Tokat kebab.

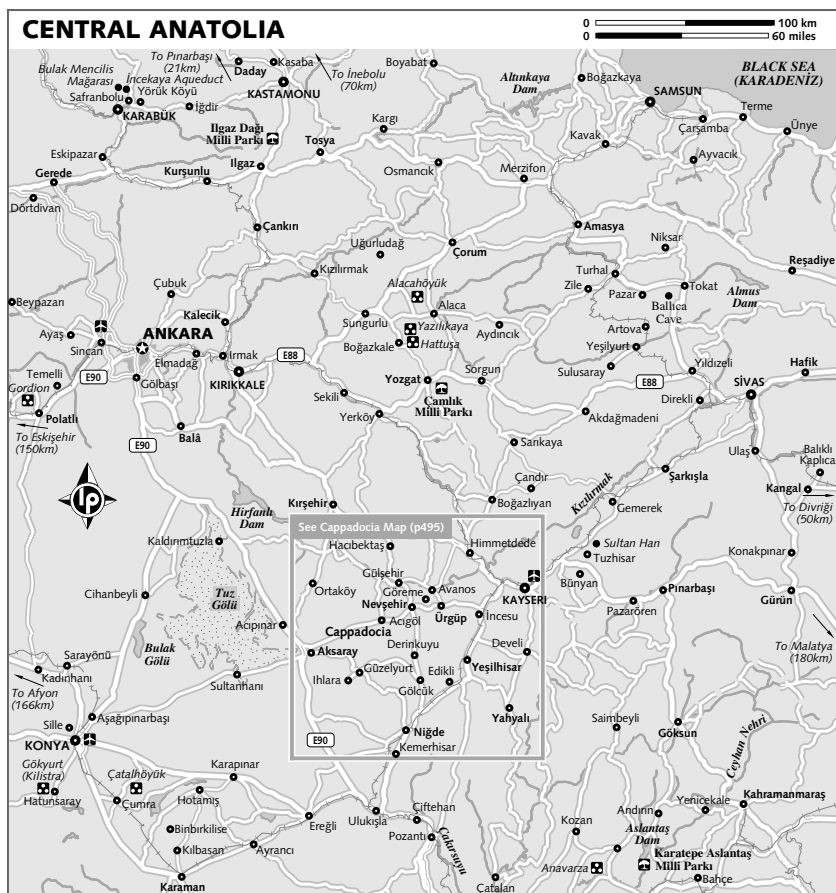
In Safranbolu and Amasya, drinking in the history involves nothing more than sipping a çay (tea) and gazing at the half-timbered Ottoman houses. These are two of Turkey's most beautiful towns, offering Ottoman digs with cupboard-bathrooms. Other spots are so seldom visited that foreigners may find themselves entered as just *turist* (tourist) in hotel guest books. This offers the opportunity to get to grips with everyday Anatolian life in a coach party-free environment – where the Hittites, the Phrygians, the Pontics, the Romans, the Seljuks, a mysterious neolithic society and Atatürk established major capitals.

If you can't stop rhyming about how the Hattis came before the Hittites as you examine Phrygian tumuli (burial mounds), Pontic tombs and Seljuk caravanserais, there may be an antidote. The incredible 'doctor fish' at Balıklı Kaplıca cure many ills...

HIGHLIGHTS

- Say hello to the Hittite storm god at Ankara's **Museum of Anatolian Civilisations** (p444), then beam back to the 21st century in **Kızılay** (p450)
- Feel like an intrepid archaeologist discovering a lost civilisation in atmospheric **Hattuša** (p465)
- Stay in an Ottoman mansion among rocky bluffs in **Safranbolu** (p455) and **Amasya** (p469)
- Step beneath the turquoise dome of Konya's **Mevlâna Museum** (p485) to learn about the whirling dervishes' inspiration
- Head east to the exfoliating fish at **Balıklı Kaplıca** (p482) and the divine doors in **Divriği** (p482)



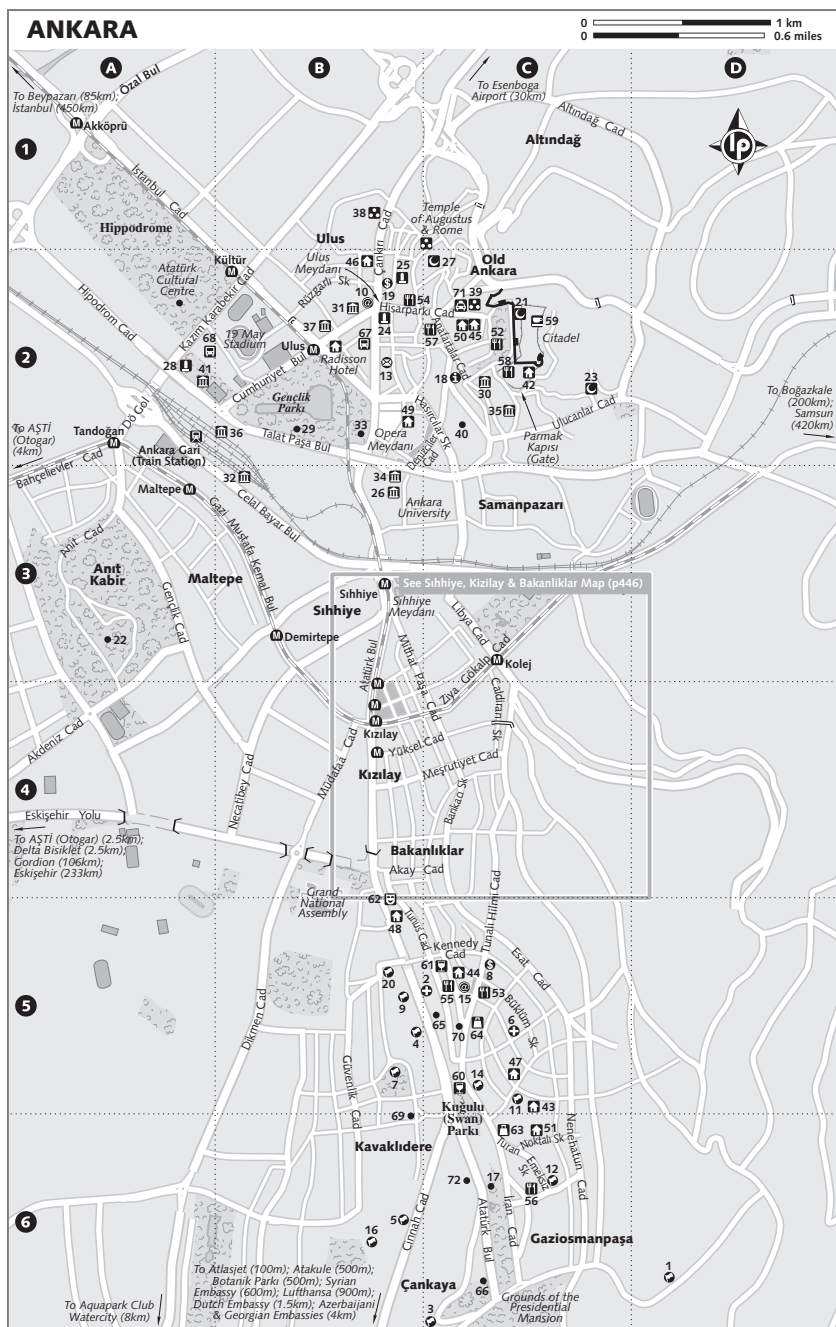


ANKARA

☎ 0312 / pop 4.5 million

İstanbul's may quip that the best view in Ankara is the train home, but the Turkish capital has more substance than its reputation as a staid administrative centre suggests. Catching the clean, efficient subway from the monolithic AŞTİ otogar (bus station) is the perfect introduction to a city that offers a mellower, more manageable vignette of urban Turkey than İstanbul. The capital established by Atatürk boasts two of the country's most important sights: the Anıt Kabir, the big man's mausoleum, and the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations, which will help you solve clues at ancient sites on the surrounding plains.

Having expanded from being an Anatolian nonentity to Turkey's second most-populous city in the 85 years since independence, Ankara can be a disjointed place. You don't have to walk far before you come to a few lanes of yellow taxis. However, a few areas have some charm: the historic streets in the citadel and, near the chic Kavaklıdere neighbourhood, vibrant Kızılay. One of Turkey's hippest urban quarters, Kızılay is enlivened by the student community, found strolling its boulevards and crowding its nightspots. Wandering the area, among crazy haircuts, revealing dresses and other fashion statements, looking at stalls selling everything from replica Ottoman daggers to flashing toy robots, is an excellent way to spend a warm Anatolian evening.



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History

Although Hittite remains dating back to before 1200 BC have been found in Ankara, the town really prospered as a Phrygian settlement on the north-south and east-west trade routes. Later it was taken by Alexander the Great, claimed by the Seleucids and finally occupied by the Galatians around 250 BC. Augustus Caesar annexed it to Rome as Ankyra.

The Byzantines held the town for centuries, with intermittent raids by the Persians and Arabs. When the Seljuk Turks came to Anatolia, they grabbed the city but held it with difficulty. Later, the Ottoman sultan Yıldırım Beyazıt was captured by Tamerlane near here, and subsequently died in captivity. Spurned as a jinxed endeavour, the city slowly slumped into a backwater, prized for nothing but its goats.

That all changed when Atatürk chose Angora, as the city was known until 1930, to be his base in the struggle for independence. When he set up his provisional government here in 1920, the city was just a small, dusty settlement of some 30,000 people. After his victory in the War of Independence, Atatürk declared it the new Turkish capital (October

1923), and set about developing it. European urban planners were consulted, resulting in long, wide boulevards, a forested park with an artificial lake, and numerous residential and diplomatic neighbourhoods. The city's position in the centre of Turkey made it more suitable than İstanbul as a capital for the new republic. From 1919 to 1927, Atatürk never set foot in İstanbul, preferring to work at making Ankara top dog.

Orientation

The main street is Atatürk Bulvarı, which runs 5.5km south from the old part of town, Ulus, through Kızılay and Kavaklıdere, to Çankaya.

Ulus centres on the large equestrian statue of Atatürk in Ulus Meydanı. Some of the area's museums and sights are nearby, although the most interesting attractions, the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations and the citadel, are at the top of Hisarparkı Caddesi. Likewise, there are many budget and mid-range hotels and restaurants around Ulus Meydanı, but the best options are mostly on the citadel hill.

The train station, near the terminus for the Havaş airport buses, is just over 1km southwest of Ulus Meydanı along Cumhuriyet Bulvarı.

Kızılay, the area around the intersection of Atatürk Bulvarı and Gazi Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı/Ziya Gökalp Caddesi, is the centre of buzzy 'new' Ankara, with midrange and top-end hotels, eateries and hang-outs of all descriptions.

Kavaklıdere, 2km south along Atatürk Bulvarı, is a fashionable district with embassies, airline and car-rental offices, trendy bars, smart shops, and the Hilton and Sheraton hotels.

In the hills south of Kavaklıdere is Çankaya, the residential neighbourhood that hosts the presidential mansion and many of the ambassadorial residences. Its most prominent landmark is the Atakule, a tower with a revolving restaurant, visible throughout the city.

The AŞTİ, Ankara's otogar, is 5.5km southwest of Ulus and 4.5km west of Kızılay.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Dost Kitabevi (Map p446; ☎ 418 8327; Konur Sokak 4, Kızılay) In a good area for bookshops; stocks some foreign-language novels and local-interest titles.

Turhan Kitabevi (Map p446; ☎ 418 8259; Yüksel Caddesi 8/32, Kızılay) Stocks coffee-table books, guidebooks, English novels, Turkish dictionaries and phrasebooks, and periodicals.

INTERNET ACCESS

There are many internet cafés in Ulus and Kızılay, particularly around Ulus Meydanı and Karanfil Sokak, but they are scarcer in Kavaklıdere. Wi-fi access is widely available in hotels, cafés and bars.

İntek Internet Club (Map p446; Karanfil Sokak 47a, Kızılay; per hr €1.75; ☎ 7am-midnight) Expensive but reliable.

Redline (Map p442; off Tunali Hilmi Caddesi, Kavaklıdere; per hr TL1.50; ☎ 10am-11pm) Near Kebap 49; has a variable connection.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Pharmacists take it in turns to open around the clock; look out for the *nobetçi* (24 hour) sign.

Bayındır Hospital (Map p442; ☎ 428 0808; Atatürk Bulvarı 201, Kavaklıdere) An up-to-date private hospital.

City Hospital (Map p442; ☎ 466 3838; Büklüm Sokak 72, Kavaklıdere) Near Tunali Hilmi Caddesi, with a Women's Health Centre (Kadın Sağlığı Merkezi).

Hospital Information Hotline (☎ 444 0911)

MONEY

There are lots of banks with ATMs in Ulus, Kızılay and Kavaklıdere. To change money, *döviz bürosu* (currency-exchange offices) generally offer the best rates, often without commission.

Genel Döviz (Map p442; ☎ 468 1332; Tunali Hilmi Caddesi 65, Kavaklıdere; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat)

POST & TELEPHONE

There are PTT branches in the train station, at the AŞTİ otogar and on Atatürk Bulvarı in Ulus. All have public phone booths nearby.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The Guide, available at the Rahmi M Koç Industrial Museum and Turhan Kitabevi bookshop, has listings for Ankara.

Tourist office (Map p442; ☎ 310 8789/231 5572; Anafartalar Caddesi 67, Ulus; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Reasonably helpful and has lots of brochures available. Plans to move to a new office at the train station.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Raytur (Map p446; ☎ 417 0021; www.raytur.com.tr; Karanfil Sokak 12/12, Kızılay) Operated by Turkish Railways. Sells train and air tickets, jeep safaris, domestic and outbound tours.

Saltur (Map p442; ☎ 425 1333; www.saltur.com.tr; Atatürk Bulvarı 175/4, Kavaklıdere) Airline and international tour agent.

Sights & Activities

MUSEUM OF ANATOLIAN CIVILISATIONS

The superb **Museum of Anatolian Civilisations** (Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi; Map p442; ☎ 324 3160; Gözcü Sokak 2; admission TL15; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) is the perfect introduction to the complex weave of Turkey's chequered ancient past, housing artefacts cherry-picked from just about every significant archaeological site in Anatolia.

The museum is housed in a beautifully restored 15th-century *bedesten* (market vault). The 10-domed central marketplace houses reliefs and statues, while the surrounding hall displays exhibits from the earlier Anatolian civilisations: Palaeolithic, neolithic, chalcolithic, Bronze Age, Assyrian, Hittite, Phrygian, Urartian and Lydian. The downstairs sections hold classical Greek and Roman artefacts and a display on Ankara's history.

Get there early to avoid the flood of tour groups and school parties. If it's not too hot, you can climb the hill from Ulus to the museum (1km); from Ulus head east up

Hisarparkı Caddesi and follow the road along the hillside, then turn left. A taxi from Ulus should cost about TL3.

Touring the Museum

The exhibits are chronologically arranged in a spiral: start at the Palaeolithic displays to the right of the entrance, then continue in an anticlockwise direction, visiting the central room last.

Most of the Palaeolithic finds were found in the Karain Cave (p402), near Antalya, and suggest a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle and the development of stone and, later, bone tools. Also here are finds from the neolithic era, when people started settling in villages, cultivating crops, raising livestock, and producing storage and cooking vessels. Çatalhöyük (p491), southeast of Konya, is one of the most important neolithic sites in the world. Here you can see a mock-up of the inside of a dwelling typical of those uncovered at the site; the clay bull-head icons were a feature of the cult of the time.

In the chalcolithic age copper and tin were used in addition to stone, leading to refinement of pottery and statues, as well as in painted decoration. The proficiency of metalwork took another leap forward with the introduction of bronze in the early Bronze Age. Many exhibits in this section of the museum come from the important archaeological site at Hacılar, southwest of Burdur, and many of the Bronze Age artefacts are from the ancient site of Alacahöyük (p468), east of Ankara. The gold jewellery, bronze standards and idols such as the mother goddess figurines would have been used for cult worship and were often buried with the dead.

Also on show are many finds from the Assyrian trading colony Kültepe, one of the world's oldest and wealthiest bazaars. These include baked-clay tablets found at the site, which dates to the beginning of the second millennium before Christ.

One of the striking Hittite figures of bulls and stags in the next room used to be the emblem of Ankara. The Hittites were known for their relief work, and some mighty slabs representing the best pieces found in the country, generally from around Hattuşa (p465), are on display in the museum's central room.

Most of the finds from the Phrygian capital Gordion (p454), including incredible inlaid wooden furniture, are on display

in the museum's last rooms. The exhibits also include limestone blocks with a still-undecipherable inscription, in text resembling the Greek alphabet, and lion- and ram-head ritual vessels, which show the high quality of Phrygian metalwork.

The best artefacts left by the Urartians, the Phrygians' east Anatolian contemporaries, are on display in the Van and Elazığ museums, but Ankara has a good collection of works from this lesser-known civilisation. Spurred by rich metal deposits, the Urartians were Anatolia's foremost metalworkers, as the knives, horse-bit, votive plates and shields demonstrate. There are also terracotta figures of gods in human form, some revealing their divine powers by growing scorpion tails, and neo-Hittite artefacts.

Downstairs, the classical-period finds and regional history displays give the local picture. Excavations have unearthed a Roman road near the Column of Julian, and Ankara has its own 'missing link', the 9.8-million-year-old *Ankarapithecus*.

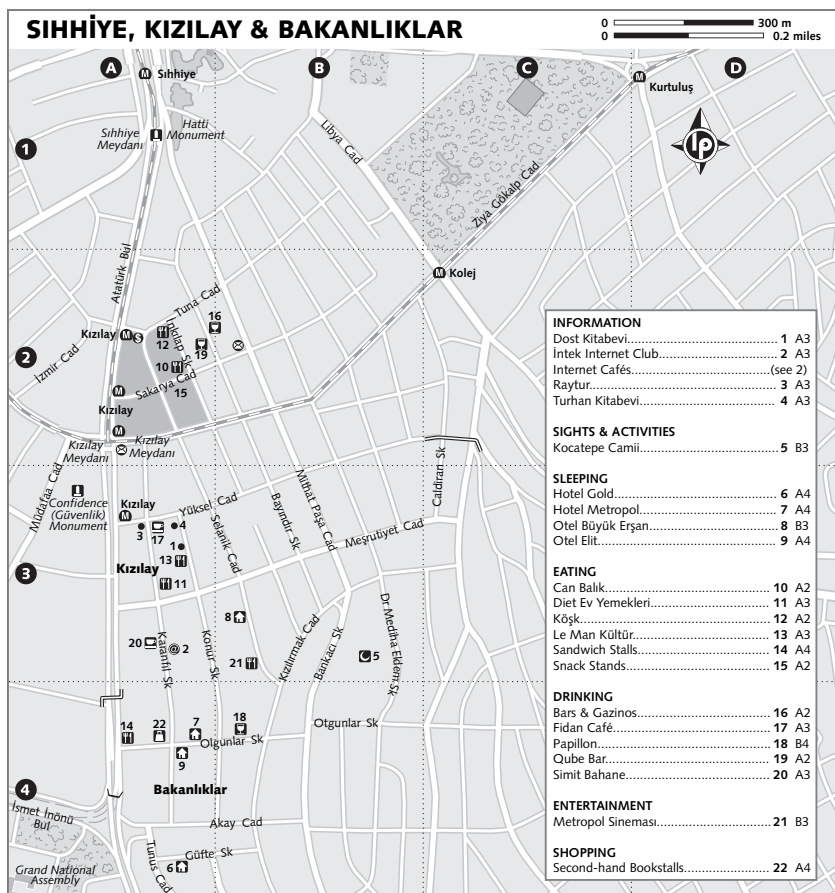
CITADEL

When you're done with the museum, make the most of its location by wandering to the imposing **hisar** (citadel or Ankara Kalesi; Map p442) just up the hill. The most interesting part of Ankara to poke about in, this well-preserved quarter of thick walls and intriguing winding streets took its present shape in the 9th century AD, when the Byzantine emperor Michael II constructed the outer ramparts. The inner walls, which the local authority is slowly rebuilding, date from the 7th century.

To find it, head around the back of the museum up Gözcü Sokak, past the octagonal tower, to the **Parmak Kapısı** (Finger Gate), also called the Saatli Kapı (Clock Gate).

Opposite the gate, in the beautifully restored Çengelhan, the **Rahmi M Koç Industrial Museum** (Rahmi M Koç Müzesi; ☎ 309 6800; Depo Sokak 1; www.rmk-museum.org.tr; adult/child €1.70/0.70; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) has three floors of rooms covering subjects as diverse as transport, science, music, computing, Atatürk and carpets, some with interactive features.

Walking straight ahead once you've entered Parmak Kapısı, through a gate on your left and past And Evi café, you'll see **Alaettin Camii** on the left. The citadel mosque dates from the 12th century but has been extensively rebuilt. To your right a steep road leads to a flight of stairs taking you up to the **Şark Kulesi**



(Eastern Tower), with panoramic city views. Although it's much harder to find, a tower to the north, **Ak Kale** (White Fort), also offers fine views. If you're coming up to the citadel along Hisarparkı Caddesi, look left about halfway up to see the remains of a **Roman theatre** from around 200 to 100 BC.

Inside the citadel local people still live as in a traditional Turkish village, and you'll see women beating and sorting skeins of wool. Broken column drums, bits of marble statuary and inscribed lintels are incorporated into the walls.

ANIT KABİR

The monumental mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), the founder of

modern Turkey, is worth a visit to see how much sway he still holds over the Turkish people. Located high above the city, with an abundance of marble and an air of veneration, the **Anıt Kabir** (Monumental Tomb; Map p442; admission free; ☞ 9am–5pm mid-May–Oct, to 4pm Nov–Jan, to 4.30pm Feb–mid-May) is one of Ankara's more relaxing areas.

As you approach the tomb, the **Hurriyet Kulesi** (Tower of Liberty) has interpretive panels and photos covering Atatürk's funeral, the construction of the tomb and the iconography of the site. Facing it, the **İstiklal Kulesi** (Tower of Independence) gives more detail, with models recreating scenes.

Continue along the **Lion Road**, a 262m walkway lined with 24 lion statues; Hittite symbols

of power used to represent the strength of the Turkish nation. The path leads to a massive courtyard, framed by colonnaded walkways, with steps leading up to the huge tomb on the left.

Entered to the right of the tomb, the extensive **museum** displays Atatürk memorabilia, personal effects, gifts from famous admirers, recreations of his childhood home and school, and his favourite dog, Fox (stuffed). Just as revealing as all the rich artefacts are his simple rowing machine and huge multilingual library, which includes tomes he wrote.

Downstairs, extensive exhibits about the War of Independence and the formation of the republic move from battlefield murals with sound effects to overdetailed explanations of post-1923 reforms. At the end, a gift shop sells Atatürk items of all shapes and sizes, including key rings, jigsaw puzzles, cufflinks, clocks, ties and even height charts.

As you approach the tomb itself, look left and right at the gilded inscriptions, which are quotations from Atatürk's speech celebrating the republic's 10th anniversary in 1932. Remove your hat as you enter, and bend your neck to view the ceiling of the lofty hall, lined in marble and sparingly decorated with 15th- and 16th-century Ottoman mosaics. At the northern end stands an immense marble **cenotaph**, cut from a single piece of stone weighing 40 tons. The actual tomb is in a chamber beneath it.

It should take around two hours to see the whole site. It is virtually a pilgrimage site, so arrive early to beat the crowds; school groups frequently drop by midweek, especially in May, June and September.

The memorial straddles a hill in a park about 2km west of Kızılay and 1.2km south of Tandoğan, the closest Ankaray station to the entrance. A free shuttle regularly zips up and down the hill; alternatively, it's a pleasant walk to the mausoleum (about 20 minutes) or you can take a taxi (TL3). Note that security checks, including a bag scan, are carried out on entry; taxi drivers should turn off the meter while the guards go through the formalities.

OTHER MUSEUMS

Ethnography Museum

The **Ethnography Museum** (Etnografya Müzesi; Map p442; Talat Paşa Bulvarı; admission TL3; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm) is housed inside a white marble post-Ottoman building (1927) that served as

Atatürk's mausoleum until 1953. To get there, go to Ulus metro station and follow Talat Paşa Bulvarı until you see the 'Etnografya Müzesi' sign (*not* the 'Resim ve Heykel Müzesi' sign).

Past the equestrian statue out front, the mausoleum is preserved in the entrance hall. Around the walls are photographs of Atatürk's funeral. The collection is superb, with displays covering henna ceremonies, Anatolian jewellery, rug-making, Seljuk ceramics, early-15th-century doors and (opposite the anxious-looking mannequins in the circumcision display) coffee. Also of interest are the calligraphy and manuscript collection of Besim Atalay, who translated the Quran into Kurdish.

Next door, the **Painting & Sculpture Museum** (Resim ve Heykel Müzesi; admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm) occupies an equally elaborate building. Ranging from angular war scenes to society portraits, the pieces demonstrate that 19th- and 20th-century artistic developments in Turkey paralleled those in Europe, with Atatürk appearing in increasingly abstract form.

Museum of the War of Independence & Republic Museum

Both these **museums** (Cumhuriyet Bulvarı) were closed for renovation at the time of research, but are worth a look if they have reopened when you visit. The former has a collection of military photographs and documents, housed in Turkey's first parliament (the republican grand national assembly held early sessions here). The latter was the assembly's second headquarters, and features exhibits on the republic's beginnings.

Transport Museums

While waiting for a train at Ankara station you may want to take a look at the **Railway Museum & Art Gallery** (Demiryolları Müzesi ve Sanat Galerisi; Map p442; admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm), a small building on platform 1 that served as Atatürk's residence for 1½ years during the War of Independence. Right beside it is Atatürk's private 1930s rail coach.

The **Open-Air Steam Locomotive Museum** (Açık Hava Buharlı Lokomotif Müzesi; Map p442; Celal Bayar Bulvarı; admission free) is a collection of slowly rusting vintage engines. To find it, descend the underpass as though you were going to the train platforms, but keep walking straight on. Just before entering the Tandoğan Kapalı Çarşı

shopping area, climb the steps to your left, then turn right and continue for around 800m. The museum may relocate when fast trains to Konya become operational in 2010.

The **Turkish Aeronautical Association Museum** (Türk Hava Kurumu Müzesi; Hipodrom Caddesi 2; Map p442; admission free) has a collection of old planes and some aviation displays in the shadow of its landmark parachute tower.

ATAKULE

Ankara's landmark tower, the **Atakule** (admission TL2.50; ☎ 11am-3am) has a revolving restaurant (mains TL16 to TL26) for 360-degree views; making a reservation exempts you from the admission fee. Shooting to the top in the glass lift is the hairiest part of the experience. There is a cinema in the mall at the bottom. Get here on Atakule- and Çankaya-bound buses down Atatürk Bulvarı.

MOSQUES

The huge outline of **Kocatepe Camii** (Map p446) in Kızılay is the symbol of Ankara. It is one of the world's largest mosques but is also very new (built between 1967 and 1987). However, there are one or two older mosques, and religious relics in the Ethnography Museum.

Ankara's most revered mosque is **Hacı Bayram Camii** (Map p442), near the Temple of Augustus and Rome. Hacı Bayram Veli was a Muslim 'saint' who founded the Bayramiye dervish order in about 1400. Ankara was the order's centre, and Hacı Bayram Veli is still revered by pious Muslims. The mosque was built in the 15th century, with tiling added in the 18th century. Surrounding shops sell religious paraphernalia (including wooden toothbrushes as used, supposedly, by the Prophet Mohammed).

If you turn left on leaving the *hisar* and walk downhill past the antique shops you will come to the 13th-century **Arslanhane Camii** (Map p442), with pieces of Roman masonry in its walls.

HAMAMS

There are several hamams east of Opera Meydanı, including **Şengül Merkez Hamamı** (Map p442; Acıçeşme Sokak 3; wash & massage TL10; ☎ 5am-11pm for men, 7am-7pm for women), which has separate sections for men and women.

PARKS

Walk south of Ulus Meydanı along Atatürk Bulvarı and you'll reach the entrance to **Gençlik**

Parkı (Youth Park; Map p442), where Atatürk had a swamp converted into an artificial lake. The park gets going during summer, but at other times the park appears to be returning to swampland. The Luna Park funfair overlooks the slow decay, and there are *çay bahçesi* (tea gardens) by the lake; single women should go for those with *aile* (family) in their name.

Other oases in the city are **Kuğulu Parkı** (Swan Park; Map p442), at the southern end of Tunali Hilmi Caddesi, and the **Botanik Parkı** (Botanical Park), spilling into a valley beneath the Atakule.

Further out of town in Gölbaşı, **Aquapark Club Watercity** (☎ 498 2100; www.clubwatercity.com, in Turkish; Haymana Yolu 6km, Gölbaşı; adult/under 4yr/4-12yr/TL20-30/free/15; ☎ 10am-7pm) has outdoor, indoor and children's pools, water slides, sports facilities and restaurants. Dolmuşes (shared taxis; can be a minibus or sedan) run here from Opera Meydanı.

OTHER SIGHTS

The sprawling ruins of the 3rd-century **Roman Baths** (Roma Hamaları; Map p442; admission TL3; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm) are 400m north of Ulus Meydanı. The layout of the baths is clearly visible; look for the standard Roman *apoditerium* (dressing room), *frigidarium* (cold room), *tepidarium* (warm room) and *caldarium* (hot room). A Byzantine tomb and Phrygian remains have also been found here.

The **Column of Julian** (Jülyanus Sütunu; Map p442; off Ulus Meydanı) was erected in honour of the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate's visit to Ankara. In a square ringed by government buildings, it is usually topped by a stork's nest.

Festivals & Events

Ankara offers festivals to satisfy music buffs of diverse leanings. The **Ankara Music Festival** (www.ankarafestival.com) provides three weeks of classical performances in April, and the three-day **Anki Rock Fest** (www.ankirockfest.com) takes place in late June.

The **Flying Broom** (www.ucanusupurge.org) women's film festival takes place in May.

Folk dances and classical music can be seen at venues including the Atatürk Cultural Centre and the Painting and Sculpture Museum; ask at the tourist office for more details.

Sleeping

Ankara hotels are numerous, but very rarely exciting. Book ahead, as rooms are snapped

up by businesspeople and bureaucrats. On a tight budget you will have to stick with Ulus, which is convenient for the main attractions but not the safest or most pleasant area. Most of the good midrange hotels are in Kızılay, while the top-end roosts are in Kavaklıdere.

ULUS

Ulus is handy for visiting the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations. There are cheap hotels around Ulus Meydanı, Opera Meydanı and on the streets below the citadel, south of Hisarparkı Caddesi. The latter area is smarter than central Ulus and ideally positioned for the museum.

Locals recommend that you do not wander Ulus' seedy streets after about 9pm. If you want to go out for the evening, given that most of the restaurants and nightlife are in Kızılay and you will probably catch public transport and/or a taxi back to Ulus, it may cost the same overall to upgrade to a room in Kızılay.

Otel Mithat (Map p442; ☎ 311 5410; www.otelmithat.com.tr; Tavus Sokak 2; s/d/tr TL23/33/43) Near Opera Meydanı, the Mithat's spartan rooms have tatty lino and small beds. On the plus side, there are TVs, phones, private bathrooms and wi-fi.

Kale Otel (Map p442; ☎ 311 3393; Şan Sokak 13; s/d TL30/50) One of the closest hotels to the museum, the Kale's yellow-and-red facade is rather off-putting but its pink-and-red interior is more palatable. One of Ulus' more pleasant budget options.

Otel Pınar (Map p442; ☎ 311 8951; Hisarparkı Caddesi 14; s/d TL32/62) Up towards the citadel, the Pınar supplies just the right kind of simple budget accommodation you need for a short stay. The breakfast, which costs extra, is terrible.

Hitit Oteli (Map p442; ☎ 310 8617; www.otelhitit.com; Hisarparkı Caddesi 12; s/d TL75/100) This is a small but noticeable step up from the nearby budget places. The rooms are not as smart as the reception, with its fish tank and budgie, but it is a reasonable option on the citadel ascent.

Şahinbey Hotel (Map p442; ☎ 310 4955; www.sahinbeyhotel.com; Alataş Sokak 5; s/d €35/55; 📶) The two-star Şahinbey is not as pleasant as the nearby Hitit and Kale hotels, but the rooms have mod cons such as fridges, digital TV and wi-fi.

ourpick Angora House Hotel (Map p442; ☎ 309 8380; angorahouse@gmail.com; Kalekapısı Sokak 16-18; s/d/tr €45/60/75; 📶 Mar-Oct; 🇺🇸) Run by a friendly Turkish couple, Ankara's original boutique hotel has a great location inside the

citadel and offers six beautiful, individually decorated rooms in a restored house, benefiting from some fine half-timbering and a walled courtyard.

Hotel Oğultürk (Map p442; ☎ 309 2900; www.ogulturk.com; Rüzgarlı Eşdost Sokak 6; s/d/tr/ste €55/75/100/130; 📶) Just off Rüzgarlı Sokak, the Oğultürk is one of central Ulus' smarter options, and on a par with many hotels in Kızılay. It's professionally managed and good for lone women.

KIZILAY & BAKANLIKLAR

The tree-shaded avenues of Kızılay and Bakanlıklar, close to some vibrant pedestrianised areas for shopping, dining and going out, are pleasanter than Ulus. Do ask for a discount from advertised rates if you are not offered one, as there are many hotels competing here.

Otel Elit (Map p446; ☎ 417 5001; elitotel@superonline.com; Olgunlar Sokak 10; s/d €40/55) Elit's decor may be stuck in a time warp, but the family hotel is conveniently located and the management runs a tight '70s ship.

Otel Büyüyük Erşan (Map p446; ☎ 417 6045; www.otelbuyukerşan.com; Selanik Caddesi 74; s/d/tr TL55/90/120) Past this 23-year-old hotel's brutal exterior, the lobby has a feeling of decayed grandeur. The cramped rooms have worn carpets, brown bedspreads and a smell of decay without the grandeur.

Hotel Metropol (Map p446; ☎ 417 3060; www.hotelmetropol.com.tr; Olgunlar Sokak 5; s/d TL70/100; 📶) A snip at these prices, the three-star Metropol provides comfort and quality across the board. The breakfast is excellent, but laundry rates are high.

Hotel Gold (Map p446; ☎ 419 4868; www.ankaragoldhotel.com; Güfte Sokak 4; s/d/tr TL80/120/140; 📶) Bling bling! Gold lives up to its name with its opulent reception and marbled lifts. The red-and-gold decor continues in the rooms, which have minibars and TVs.

Midas Hotel (Map p442; ☎ 424 0110; www.hotelmidas.com; Tunus Caddesi 20; s/d/tr from €80/100/130; 📶) The luxury four-star Midas lives up to its kingly moniker with beautiful interiors, a spa and fitness centre, refreshingly professional staff and a restaurant with panoramic views.

KAVAKLIDERE

Gordion Hotel (Map p442; ☎ 427 8080; www.gordionhotel.com; Büklüm Sokak 59; d from €120; 📶 🇺🇸) This place is the epitome of a refined town house hotel, revelling quietly in deep-rod fabrics,

silver teaset, a conservatory restaurant and full set of spa facilities.

Mega Residence (Map p442; ☎ 468 5400; www.megarresidence.com; Tahran Caddesi 5; s/d from €200/225, ste €280; 🍷) Targeting the German market, the pine facade of this smart establishment evokes the Austrian Alps. Apart from the schnitzel restaurant, there's not much Tyrolean flavour inside, but the rooms are good, especially the Jacuzzi doubles and kitchenette suite.

Also recommended are the **Ankara Hilton** (Map p442; ☎ 455 0000; www.hilton.com; Tahran Caddesi 12; s/d from €280/300, ste €445-820; 🍷 🍷 🍷) and, less welcoming but occupying a landmark cylindrical high-rise, the **Sheraton Hotel Ankara** (Map p442; ☎ 457 6000; www.sheraton.com/ankara; Noktali Sokak; d €157-432; 🍷 🍷 🍷).

Eating

ULUS

Most Ulus options are cheap and basic. If self-catering suddenly seems like a good option, Ulus Hali food market (Map p442) is the place to pick up provisions from oversized chilli peppers to jars of honey.

In and around the citadel, a dozen old wood-and-stone houses have been converted into inviting, atmospheric licensed restaurants. Summer opening hours are around noon to midnight; most places are better visited in the evening, when live music creates more atmosphere, although they reduce their hours in winter.

Kubaşık Piknik (Map p442; ☎ 309 7274; Hükümet Caddesi; kebaps TL2.50-4) This hole in the wall is actually part of a chain. *Köfte* (meatballs), döner kebaps and chicken alternatives are available to eat in or take away.

Zenger Paşa Konağı (Map p442; ☎ 311 7070; www.zengerpasa.com; Doyran Sokak 13; mains TL12-17; 🍷 noon-12.30am; 🍷) Crammed with Ottoman ephemera, the Zenger Paşa looks at first like a deserted ethnographic museum, but wealthy Ankaralıs love the pide, meze and grills, still cooked in the original Ottoman oven.

Kale Washington (Map p442; ☎ 311 4344; Doyran Sokak 5-7; mains TL15-20; 🍷 noon-midnight) Occupying a 17th-century mansion, the Washington is a favourite with visiting dignitaries (Hillary Clinton reportedly ate here). The service and the Turkish-international cuisine are not the best in town, and vegetarians who don't eat fish are not well catered for, but the views are impressive.

Boyacczâde Konağı (Map p442; ☎ 310 1515; Berrak Sokak 7/9; mains TL16-20; 🍷 from noon) Entered via a cluttered courtyard, this wonderfully converted mansion-restaurant offers great views and typical Ottoman-stalag decor, as well as good fish dishes. Turkish classical, or *fasıl*, music provides the entertainment.

Çengelhan (Map p442; ☎ 309 6800; Depo Sokak 1; mains TL16-25) The Rahmi M Koç Industrial Museum restaurant nestles between vintage cars and a reconstructed Ottoman house. Well-to-do families tuck into dishes including aubergine kebab, pan-roasted sea bass and marinated lamb.

KIZILAY

This is undoubtedly the best area for a casual meal, particularly in the pedestrian zone north of Ziya Gökalp Caddesi, where pavement eateries and stalls serve everything from döner to corn on the cob. Ogunlar Sokak is good for an alfresco sandwich.

Can Balık (Map p446; ☎ 431 7870; Sakarya Caddesi 13; sandwiches TL4; 🍷 10am-10pm) A popular alternative to pricey Piscean restaurants, Can Balık offers fried fish, served with salad or in a sandwich.

Diet Ev Yemekleri (Map p446; ☎ 418 5683; Karanfil Sokak; mains TL5) Chow down with the students on cheap, filling food. Grub includes burgers, *köfte*, pizza, döner and İskender kebaps and all the classics.

our pick Le Man Kültür (Map p446; ☎ 310 8617; Konur Sokak 8a-b; mains TL6-11; 🍷 10am-11pm) One of Kızılay's coolest hang-outs, this restaurant packs in the ripped denim and Amy Winehouse haircuts between walls decorated with subversive cartoons. The menu features crêpes, Chinese, Mexican and even Argentinean dishes.

Köşk (Map p446; ☎ 432 1300; İnkilap Sokak 2; mains TL15-30; 🍷 9am-midnight) Ankara's best fish restaurant offers a glass-fronted dining room and live music. Meze such as fresh calamari with peppers, and simple but effective grills and fish mains, are just as alluring.

KAVAKLIDERE

The scene here is more European and sophisticated, catering primarily to the embassy set.

Laterna (Map p442; ☎ 468 5851; Tunus Caddesi 50b; mains TL11; 🍷 noon-10pm) Choose between rakı (aniseed brandy) and ouzo at this popular Aegean restaurant. Mains include papalina fish and salmon on herbs, and the good

range of meze includes the recommended Ayvalık cold platter (TL9). There's live music most nights.

Café des Cafés (Map p442; ☎ 428 0176; Tunalı Hilmi Caddesi 83; mains TL14-21; ☎ 8.30am-11pm) Sit on red and white sofas between wood-lined walls to enjoy bistro flair from foreign Mediterranean shores. Dishes range across crêpes, Greek salad, sautéed steak with ginger sauce, and pasta.

Mezzaluna (Map p442; ☎ 467 5818; Turan Emeksiz Sokak 1; mains TL21-37; ☎ noon-11pm) The capital's classiest Italian restaurant is busy busy busy, with chefs slapping pizzas on the counter for apron-clad waiters. The choice includes antipasti, risotto, wood-fire pizzas and seafood (a better bet than the steaks).

Drinking

CAFÉS

Kızılay is Ankara's café central, with terraces lining virtually every inch of space south of Ziya Gökalp Caddesi.

And Evi (Map p442; ☎ 312 7978; İçkale Kapısı, Ulus) Sit on the citadel walls and enjoy fabulous views at this Ottoman-styled café, near Angora House Hotel.

Fidan Café (Map p446; ☎ 425 8326; Karanfil Sokak 15, Kızılay) This smoky first-floor café is run by an amicable couple, with paintings by their grandchildren on the wall.

Simit Bahane (Map p446; Karanfil Sokak 36a, Kızılay) An antidote to Kızılay's smoother establishments, with backgammon, newspapers and nargilehs (traditional water pipes) providing entertainment.

BARS

Qube Bar (Map p446; ☎ 432 3079; Bayındır Sokak 16b, Kızılay) Slightly more sophisticated than the neighbouring pubs, Qube has a removable glass roof. Food is available.

Papillon (Map p442; ☎ 419 7303; Olgunlar Sokak 9, Kızılay) This neighbourhood bar has rock on the stereo and brick walls decorated with number plates and Hollywood posters.

Locus Solus (Map p442; ☎ 468 6788; Bestekar Sokak 60, Kavaklıdere) Locus Solus draws a sophisticated crowd to its terrace and beer garden. Seating is on beanbags and curvy sofas at low tables.

Golden Pub (Map p442; ☎ 427 8095; Tunalı Hilmi Caddesi 112d, Kavaklıdere) This basement pub has dartboards and music TV playing high on the walls.

Entertainment

CINEMAS

Some of Ankara's cinemas occasionally show Western films in the original language; check the *Hürriyet Daily News* or www.askfest.org. Screens include **Metropol Sineması** (☎ 425 7478; Selanik Caddesi 76, Kızılay; adult/student TL10/9), which costs TL6 on Thursdays.

NIGHTCLUBS & LIVE MUSIC

Ankara has a spectrum of venues from student dives to recherché nightspots. Consult fellow drinkers, bar staff, flyers or local listings to get the latest tips.

For a night out with Ankara's student population, head to Kızılay – particularly Bayındır Sokak between Sakarya and Tuna Caddesi. The tall, thin buildings pack in up to five floors of bars, cafés and *gazinós* (nightclubs). Many of the clubs offer live Turkish pop music, and women travellers should feel OK in most.

IF Performance Hall (Map p442; ☎ 418 9506; Tunus Caddesi 14a, Kavaklıdere) The grandly named basement venue stages cover bands such as Effecto Placebo and Achtung Babies, as well as bigger acts.

Shopping

It's cheapest to shop in Ulus, but to see what fashionable Turkey spends its money on, head south. Tunalı Hilmi Caddesi has lots of local stores alongside more-familiar names such as the British department store **Marks & Spencer** (Map p442). Nearby, just below the Sheraton Hotel, is **Karum** (Map p442; İnan Caddesi), a glass-and-marble mall with branches of

RIGHTEOUS ANGORA

Can you tell the difference between a goat and a rabbit? It's not as easy as you think – or at least not if all you have to go on is the wool. One of the most popular misconceptions about Ankara's famous angora wool is that it comes from angora goats, a hardy breed believed to be descended from wild Himalayan ancestors. Not so: the soft, fluffy fabric produced from these goats is correctly known as mohair. Angora wool in the strictest sense comes from angora rabbits, also local but much cuter critters whose fur, weight for weight, could traditionally fetch as much as gold.

Swarovski, Body Shop, Swatch, Accessorize and Artemis.

Behind the Ulus Hali food market, on Konya Caddesi, is the **Vakıf Suluhân Çarşısı** (Map p442), a restored *han* (caravanserai) with clothes shops, a leafy café, toilets and a small free-standing mosque in its courtyard. With its stone balconies and low arches, the building itself is more inspiring than its shops.

The area around the Parmak Kapısı entrance to the citadel was traditionally a centre for trading in angora wool. Walking downhill towards Arslanhane Cami from the dried-fruit stalls in front of the gate, there are some carpet and antique shops. You'll come across copper-beaters and other assorted craftworkers carrying on their age-old trades.

On tree- and café-lined Olgunlar Sokak is a row of **secondhand bookstalls** (Map p446).

Getting There & Away

AIR

Ankara's Esenboğa airport, 33km north of the city centre, is the hub for Turkish Airlines' domestic-flight network. Although many domestic and international budget carriers serve Ankara, İstanbul's airports offer more choice. Even flying domestically, it may save you time and money to travel via İstanbul.

Turkish Airlines and Atlasjet offer direct flights between Ankara and destinations in-

cluding Adana, Antalya, Bodrum, Cyprus, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Gaziantep, İstanbul (IST and SAW), İzmir, Kars, Malatya, Trabzon and Van.

International airlines offer both direct services to/from Ankara and flights with connections in İstanbul.

Airline Offices

Atlasjet airport (☎ 398 0201); Kavaklıdere (Map p442; ☎ 440 6070; Cinnah Caddesi 43/1, Kızılay)

British Airways (Map p442; ☎ 467 5557; Atatürk Bulvarı 237/2, Kavaklıdere)

Japan Airlines & KLM (Map p442; ☎ 466 5640; Şili Meydanı, Kavaklıdere Sokak 23/5, Kavaklıdere)

Lufthansa (Map p442; ☎ 442 0580; Cinnah Caddesi 102/5, Çankaya)

Turkish Airlines airport (☎ 398 0100); Kavaklıdere (Map p442; ☎ 428 0200; Atatürk Bulvarı 154)

BUS

Every Turkish city or town of any size has direct buses to Ankara. The gigantic otogar or AŞTİ (Ankara Şehirlerarası Terminali İşletmesi) is at the western end of the Ankara underground train line, 4.5km west of Kızılay.

The terminal has departure gates on the upper level and arrivals on the lower. There are restaurants, internet cafés, ATMs, phones and newsstands. The *emanet* (left-luggage room) on the lower level charges

SERVICES FROM ANKARA'S OTOGAR

Destination	Fare (TL)	Duration (hr)	Distance (km)	Frequency (per day)	Counter
Adana	30	6	490	seven	52
Amasya	30	5	335	four	31, 37
Antalya	30	8	550	four	32
Bodrum	45	13	785	two (evening)	41
Bursa	28	6	400	hourly	71
Denizli (for Pamukkale)	34	7	480	frequent	58
Diyarbakır	50	14	945	three (evening)	34
Erzurum	50	13	925	four (evening)	36
Gaziantep	45	10	705	frequent	43
İstanbul	25-33	5-6½	450	every 30 min	27, 29, 41
İzmir	35	8	600	every two hours	43
Kayseri	17.50	5	330	six	46
Konya	23	3	260	hourly	42
Marmaris	45	10½	780	frequent	41
Neşehir (for Cappadocia)	25	5	285	seven	50
Samsun	30	7	420	five	52
Sivas	10	6	450	six	28
Sungurlu (for Boğazkale)	12	3	177	hourly	23
Trabzon	35	13	780	four (evening)	31, 32

EXPRESS SERVICES FROM ANKARA'S TRAIN STATION

Destination	Fare (TL)	Via	Duration (hr)	Frequency
Adana	20, sleeper 65	Niğde	12	daily
Diyarbakır	23, sleeper 61	Kayseri, Sivas, Malatya	35	4 weekly
İstanbul	23, sleeper 80	Eskişehir, İzmit	7-10	8 daily
İzmir	23-26.50	Kütahya, Balıkesir	14	3 daily
Kars	29-35	Kayseri, Sivas, Erzurum	28	2 daily
Tatvan	29	Kayseri, Sivas, Malatya	41	2 weekly
Zonguldak	12	Karabük	9½	3 weekly

TL4 per item stored; you'll need to show your passport.

As Ankara has many buses to all parts of the country, you can often turn up, buy a ticket and be on your way in less than an hour. Don't try this during public holidays, though.

AŞTİ has 80 *gişe* (ticket counters) and a central information booth where the surly staff will, in theory, point you in the right direction.

TRAIN

Train services between İstanbul and Ankara are the best in the country, and work is under way to develop an even faster rail link. **Ankara Garı** (Map p442; ☎ 311 0620) has a PTT, a restaurant, snack shops, kiosks, ATMs, telephones and a left-luggage room.

The table above summarises the main express routes out of Ankara; returning, most trains continue on to İstanbul. Slower standard trains serve many intermediate destinations.

Getting Around**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

Esenboğa airport is 33km north of the city. **Havaş** (Map p442; ☎ 444 0487; Kazım Karabekir Caddesi) buses depart from Gate B at 19 May Stadium every half-hour between 4.30am and midnight daily (TL10, 45 minutes). They may leave sooner if they fill up, so get there early to claim your seat.

The same buses link the airport and the AŞTİ otogar (TL10 to TL12.50, 60 minutes), leaving the station every half-hour between 4.30am and 11.30pm from in front of the passenger arrival lounge.

Buses from the airport are scheduled according to flight arrivals. Don't pay more than TL50 for a taxi between the airport and the city.

TO/FROM THE BUS STATION

The easiest way to get into town is on the Ankaray metro line, which has a station at the AŞTİ otogar. Go to Maltepe station for the train station (a 10-minute walk), or to Kızılay for midrange hotels. Change at Kızılay (to the Metro line) for Ulus and cheaper hotels.

A taxi costs about TL15 to the city centre.

TO/FROM THE TRAIN STATION

The train station (see above) is about 1km southwest of Ulus Meydanı and 2km northwest of Kızılay. Many dolmuşes head north-east along Cumhuriyet Bulvarı to Ulus, and east on Talat Paşa Bulvarı to Kızılay.

It's just over 1km from the station to Opera Meydanı; any bus heading east along Talat Paşa Bulvarı will drop you within a few hundred metres if you ask for Gazi Lisesi.

To go from the train station to Maltepe subway stop (on the Ankaray line to AŞTİ otogar), follow the underpass in the train station through a subterranean shopping area, mostly populated by military stores. Turn left at the top of the steps at the far end. In the other direction, follow the TCDD signs out of Maltepe, turn right at the top of the steps and, after about 100m, you will see the stairs to the underpass.

BUS

Ankara has a good bus, dolmuş and minibüs network. Signs on the front and side of the vehicles are better guides than route numbers. Buses marked 'Ulus' and 'Çankaya' run the length of Atatürk Bulvarı. Those marked 'Gar' go to the train station, those marked 'AŞTİ' to the otogar.

Standard TL3 tokens, available at subway stations and major bus stops or anywhere displaying an EGO Bilet sign, are valid for 45 minutes on multiple journeys. They work on most buses as well as the subway, and a 10-token pass costs TL12.

These tokens are not valid on express buses, which are the longer buses with ticket counters halfway down the vehicle.

CAR

Driving within Ankara is chaotic and signs are inadequate; it's easier to ditch your car and use public transport.

If you plan to hire a car to drive out of Ankara, there are many small local companies alongside the major international firms; most have offices in Kavaklıdere along Tunus Caddesi, and/or at Esenboğa airport. Some reliable operators:

Avis (Map p442; ☎ 467 2313; Tunus Caddesi 68/2)

Budget (Map p442; ☎ 468 0336; Tunus Caddesi 68/2)

National (Map p442; ☎ 426 4565; Tunus Caddesi 73/1)

METRO

Ankara's underground train network currently has two lines: the Ankaray line running between AŞTİ otogar in the west through Maltepe and Kızılay to Dikimevi in the east; and the Metro line running from Kızılay northwest via Sıhhiye and Ulus to Batıkent. The two lines interconnect at Kızılay. Trains run from 6.15am to 11.45pm daily.

Standard tokens cost TL3 and a 10-token pass is TL12 (see p453). Note that there are separate barriers for adult and child/student tokens at some subway stations, so if your token doesn't seem to work, check that you're using the right lane.

TAXI

Taxis are everywhere and they all have meters, with a TL1.70 base rate. It costs about TL6 to cross the centre; charges rise at night and the same trip will cost well over TL10. In Kızılay, beware the one-way roads, as the taxi may have to backtrack (without switching off the meter) to access a road going in the right direction.

AROUND ANKARA

You don't have to go far from Ankara to hit some major pieces of Anatolian history, but if it's a leisurely day trip you're after rather than an overnight, consider the Phrygian archaeological site at Gordion or the small Ottoman town of Beypazari.

Gordion

The capital of ancient Phrygia, with some 3000 years of settlement behind it, Gordion

lies 106km west of Ankara in the village of Yassihöyük.

Gordion was occupied by the Phrygians as early as the 9th century BC, and soon afterwards became their capital. Although destroyed during the Cimmerian invasion, it was rebuilt before being conquered by the Lydians and then the Persians. Alexander the Great came through and famously cut the Gordian knot in 333 BC, but by 278 BC the Galatian occupation had effectively destroyed the city.

The moonscape-like terrain around Yassihöyük is dotted with tumuli (burial mounds) marking the graves of the Phrygian kings. Of some 90 identified tumuli, 35 have been excavated; you can enter the largest tomb, and also view the site of the Gordion acropolis, where digs revealed five main levels of civilisation, from the Bronze Age to Galatian times.

MIDAS TUMULUS & GORDION MUSEUM

In 1957 the Austrian archaeologist Alfred Koerte discovered Gordion, and with it the intact **tomb** (admission incl museum TL3; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) of a Phrygian king, probably buried some time between 740 and 718 BC. The tomb is actually a gabled 'cottage' of cedar surrounded by juniper logs, buried inside a tumulus 53m high and 300m in diameter. It's the oldest wooden structure ever found in Anatolia, and perhaps even in the world. The tunnel leading into the depths of the tumulus is a modern addition, allowing you to glimpse some of the interior of the fenced-off tomb.

Inside the tomb archaeologists found the body of a man between 61 and 65 years of age, 1.59m tall, surrounded by burial objects, including tables, bronze *situlas* (containers) and bowls said to be part of the funerary burial feast. The occupant's name remains unknown (although Gordius and Midas were popular names for Phrygian kings).

In the **museum** opposite, Macedonian and Babylonian coins show Gordion's position at the centre of Anatolian trade, communications and military activities, as do the bronze figurines and glass-bead jewellery from the Syro-Levantine region of Mesopotamia. There is a good collection of Phrygian art, although the finest examples, including the intricate inlaid wooden tables found in the tomb, were removed to Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations.

In the grounds are displays on Phrygian architecture, terracotta work and mosaics from the acropolis (some of the oldest in Anatolia), and a reconstructed Galatian tomb.

ACROPOLIS

Excavations at the 8th-century-BC acropolis yielded a wealth of data on Gordion's many civilisations.

The lofty main gate on the city's western side was approached by a 6m-wide ramp. Within the fortified enclosure were four *megara* (square halls) from which the king and his priests and ministers ruled the empire. The mosaics found in one of these halls, the so-called Citadel of Midas, are on display outside the museum.

Today the site is a fenced-off collection of foundations with explanatory signs, which are of small appeal to the casual visitor. From the museum, continue along the main road through the village and it's the mound on your left just before the bridge.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Baysal Turizm buses connect Ankara's otogar (ticket counter 28) with Polatlı every half-hour (TL5, one hour). Once in Polatlı, you can travel the last 18km to Yassihöyük in a minibus (TL3), but this involves a 1.5km walk across town to the minibus stand, and services depart sporadically. A taxi will charge about TL40 to drive you to the main sites and back to Polatlı otogar.

Beyazari

☎ 0312 / pop 34,500

This picturesque Ottoman town is set high above the İnönü Vadisi. More than 3000 Ottoman houses line the narrow streets in the hilltop old quarter, where 500-plus buildings and some 30 streets have been restored. Coppersmiths and carpenters beaver away, shopkeepers flog model Ottoman houses in little bags to Ankaralı day trippers, and the 200-year-old market recalls Beyazari's position on the Silk Rd.

Occupying a sizeable Ottoman mansion, the **museum** (Beyazari Tarih ve Kültür Evi; admission TL1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is good for nosing around to a classical music soundtrack. Exhibits range from Roman and Byzantine pillars to an Ottoman depiction of an elephant, and the characteristic cupboard-bathrooms are still intact.

On the first weekend in June, the **Havuç Guvec** (Traditional Dish Festival) celebrates the humble carrot (the area grows more than half of the carrots consumed in Turkey). Additional attractions, if any are needed, include craftwork markets and Ottoman house tours.

While you're here try the local delicacies, which include *havuç lokum* (carrot-flavoured Turkish delight), clumpy *cevizli sucuğu* (walnuts coated in grape jelly) and Beyazari mineral water, bottled here and swigged throughout the country.

Me'vaların Konağı (☎ 762 3698; Köstüolu Sokak Müzeyanı 31; r with/without bathroom TL70/60), one of a few Ottoman house hotels on the square near the museum, has beautiful bedcovers and cupboard-bathrooms.

Occupying one of the town's most noted Ottoman piles, **Tarihi Taş Mektep** (☎ 762 7606; Alaaddin Sokak 4; mains TL6.50-9; ☎ 8am-10pm) is popular for dishes such as the surprisingly spicy salad, *yaprak sarma* (stuffed vine leaves) and grilled trout.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

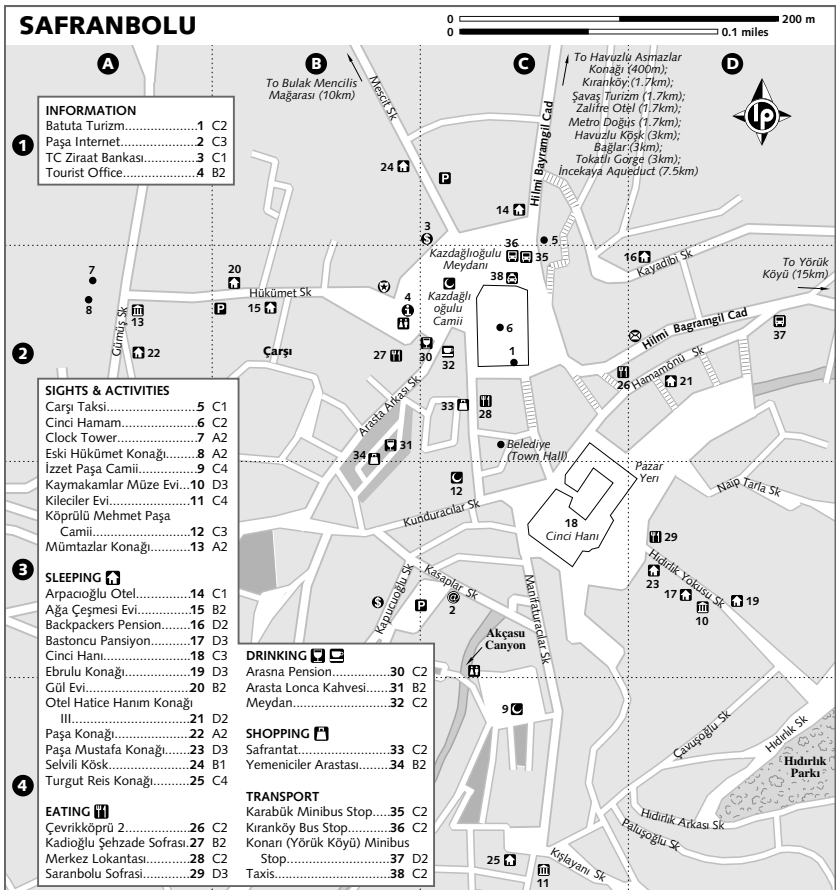
From Ankara, take a Metro train to Akkoprü and cross the motorway, heading away from the Ankamall. Walk to your left, away from the flyover, until you reach the area between the M Oil garage and the pedestrian bridge, where you can hail passing Beytaş Turizm minibuses to Beyazari (TL6, 1½ hours). In the Beytaş Turizm office across the road from the town centre bus stop (decorated with the Ottoman mural), you can check the time of the last bus back to Ankara.

SAFRANBOLU

☎ 0370 / pop 38,300

Every town in Turkey has its old Ottoman houses, but Safranbolu, the valley town at the heart of the new restoration movement, takes it to a different level: virtually the entire old Ottoman town has been preserved and now spruced up to such good effect that it made it onto the Unesco World Heritage list. This is as close as you'll ever come to historical Turkey, and the town's popularity with domestic tourists reinforces just what a rare treat this is.

The weather, too, can play a part in this unique experience. Summer thunderstorms periodically close over the sunken valley like a heavy black lid, and you can watch the lightning-pierced darkness drawing on



inch by inch until finally the light is gone and the rain bursts down onto the tiled roofs. Simply magic.

History

During the 17th century, the main Ottoman trade route between Gerede and the Black Sea coast passed through Safranbolu, bringing commerce, prominence and money to the town. During the 18th and 19th centuries Safranbolu's wealthy inhabitants built mansions of sun-dried mudbricks, wood and stucco, while the larger population of prosperous artisans built less impressive but similarly sturdy homes. Safranbolu owes its fame to the large numbers of these dwellings that have survived.

The most prosperous Safranbolulus maintained two households. In winter they occupied town houses in the Çarşı (Market) district, which is situated at the meeting point of three valleys and so protected from the winter winds. During the warm months they moved to summer houses in the garden suburb of Bağlar (Vineyards). When the iron and steelworks at Karabük were established in 1938, modern factory houses started to encroach on Bağlar, but Çarşı has remained virtually untouched.

During the 19th century about 20% of Safranbolu's inhabitants were Ottoman Greeks, but most of their descendants moved to Greece during the population exchange after WWI. Their principal church, dedicated

to St Stephen, was converted into Kıranköy's Ulu Cami (Great Mosque).

Orientation

Safranbolu falls into three distinct parts: Kıranköy, Bağlar and Çarşı. Approaching from the steel town of Karabük, you arrive first in Kıranköy, the former Greek quarter and now the most modern part of Safranbolu, with plenty of banks, shops and bus offices. Continuing uphill (northwest) along Sadı Artunç Caddesi, you'll reach Bağlar, with its centre at Köyiçi, which has many fine old houses.

However, most of what you've come to see lies downhill in Çarşı. To get there from Kıranköy, take Kaya Erdem Caddesi at the roundabout, and go 1.7km southeast, down the hill and over the next one. Buses ply this route roughly every half-hour.

Information

Paşa Internet (per hr TL1; ☎ 10am-11pm) Slow access near the İzzet Paşa Camii.

TC Ziraat Bankası (Kazdağlıoğlu Meydanı) Has an ATM; there is also one on Kapucuoğlu Sokak.

Tourist office (☎ 712 3863; www.safranbolu.gov.tr; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm) Off the main square; gives out a helpful *reheri* (map).

Sights

OTTOMAN HOUSES

Just walking through Çarşı is a feast for the eyes. Virtually every house in the district is an original, and what little modern development there is has been held in check. Many of the finest historic houses have been restored, and as time goes on, more and more are being saved from deterioration and turned into hotels, shops or museums.

Kaymakamlar Müze Evi, the most interesting of three old houses that have been turned into museums, has all the typical features of Ottoman homes (see boxed text, p458). It was owned by a lieutenant colonel and still feels like an address of note as you climb the stairs towards the wooden ceiling decoration. Tableaux recreate everyday scenes such as bathing in the cupboard, and the wedding feast, when the women served the men using the *dönme dolaplar* (revolving cupboard).

The tall, thin **Mümtazlar Konağı** (1893), former home of the head mufti at Safranbolu's *medrese* (seminary), is bare inside and unenlightening without a guide. The dusty exhib-

its are more evocative of the 1950s than the 19th century.

Kileciler Evi (1884) also has 1950s period pieces among the family heirlooms in its cupboards. However, the whitewashed interior has been attractively renovated, with exhibits including family photos, carpets and mannequins clad in traditional clothes. As the information sheet explains, the 99 cupboards symbolise the 99 names of God.

The exhibition rooms in the houses are generally open daily from 9am to 7pm and charge TL2 to TL2.50 for adult admission (TL1 for children). Tea is served in their gardens and the properties open more sporadically during winter.

Some of the largest houses had indoor pools, which, although big enough for swimming, were used instead to cool the rooms with running water, which also provided pleasing background noise. The best and most accessible example in Çarşı is the **Havuzlu Asmazlar Konağı** (Mansion with Pool; Çelik Gülersoy Caddesi 18, Çarşı), now run as a hotel (p459).

KENT TARİHİ MÜZESİ

Safranbolu's hilltop castle was demolished early in the last century to make way for the yellow Eski Hükümet Konağı (old government building), which was restored following a fire in 1976. English interpretive panels are scarce in the **museum** (☎ 712 1314; Çeşme Mahallesi Hükümet Sokak; admission TL3; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar) inside, but the exhibits are a decent introduction to local life. The reconstructions of old shops in the marble-floored basement include a chemist's store with the inevitable saffron tincture among the elixirs.

The ticket to the museum also covers the neighbouring **clock tower** (1797), built by grand vizier (prime minister) İzzet Mehmet Paşa. Climb the tower on the hour to see its clockwork hammer strike and hear the chimes ring around the surrounding hills.

OTHER HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Çarşı's most famous and imposing structure is the brooding **Cinci Hanı** (Eski Çarşı Çeşme Mahallesi; adult/student TL2/1), a 17th-century caravanserai, which is now an upmarket hotel (p460). On Saturday a market takes place in the square behind it.

Nearby, the contemporaneous **Cinci Hamam**, with separate baths for men and women, was closed for renovation at the time of research, set to reopen in autumn 2009.

OTTOMAN STYLE

Looking at the concrete cityscapes synonymous with Turkish modernity, it's hard to imagine being back in the 19th century, when fine wooden houses were the rule. Luckily, growing tourism has encouraged an Ottoman revival, and restoration has become a boom trade. Excellent examples can be found in Afyon, Amasya and Tokat, but Safranbolu is universally acknowledged to contain the country's single finest collection of pre-independence domestic architecture.

Ottoman wooden houses generally had two or three storeys, the upper storeys jutting out over the lower ones on carved corbels (brackets). Their timber frames were filled with adobe and then plastered with a mixture of mud and straw. Sometimes the houses were left unsealed, but in towns they were usually given a finish of plaster or whitewash, with decorative flourishes in plaster or wood. The wealthier the owner, the fancier the decoration.

Inside, the larger houses had 10 to 12 rooms, divided into *selamlık* (men's quarters) and *haremlık* (women's quarters). Rooms were often decorated with built-in niches and cupboards, and had fine plaster fireplaces with *yaşmaks* (conical hoods). Sometimes the ceilings were very elaborate; that of the Paşa Odası of Tokat's Latifoğlu Konağı, for example, is thought to emulate a chandelier in wood.

Details to look out for inside the Safranbolu houses include their *hayats* (courtyard areas where the animals lived and tools were stored); ingenious *dönme dolaplar* (revolving cupboards that made it possible to prepare food in one room and pass it to another without being seen); bathrooms hidden inside cupboards; and central heating systems that relied on huge fireplaces. *Sedirs* (bench seating that ran round the walls) doubled up as beds, with the bedding being stored in the bathrooms, which converted neatly into cupboards during the day. Space-efficient, certainly, but sometimes you wonder how anyone ever found anything!

The beefy, helmet-roofed **Köprülü Mehmet Paşa Camii**, beside the *arasta* (row of shops beside a mosque), dates to 1661. The metal sundial in the courtyard was added in the mid-19th century.

The **İzzet Paşa Camii** is one of the largest mosques built during the Ottoman Empire. It was built by the grand vizier in 1796 and restored in 1903, and shows European architectural influence.

Uphill past the Kaymakamlar Müze Evi, there are panoramic views from **Hıdırlık Parkı** (admission TL3). Peek through the windows of the locked mausoleum of 19th-century politician Hasan Paşa and you'll see a heap of coins left by visitors.

Tours

A couple of tours allow you to look around Safranbolu and the surrounding sights (p461) in a day. **Batuta Turizm** (☎ 725 4533; www.batuta.com.tr; Çeşme Mahallesi Hükümet Sokak) offers buggy tours, with circuits lasting from 40 minutes to three hours (TL8.50 to TL22.50). The short tour is a reasonable introduction to Safranbolu, but spending any longer in the company of the cheery voiceover (available in English and Japanese) may be detrimental to your mental health.

More recommended is the excellent half-day tour of Bağlar and the three sights listed under Around Safranbolu (p461). It leaves at 1.30pm and costs TL40 including entrance fees. **Çarşı Taksi** (☎ 725 2595; Hilmi Bayramgil Caddesi) offers a longer tour of these sights and two others for TL65.

Festivals & Events

September is a great time to visit Safranbolu, with two festivals, the **Golden Saffron Documentary Film Festival** and the **Safranbolu Architectural Treasures & Folklore Week**, taking place in the same month. Be sure to book accommodation in advance. At the **Geleneksel Sezzetler Şenliği**, a food festival organised in May by the Association of Anatolian Cuisine, you can try specialities from across the region.

Sleeping

Safranbolu is very popular with Turkish tourists at weekends and over holidays. Prices may rise at particularly busy times, and it can be worth booking ahead.

Splashing out a bit is virtually an obligation, as you may never get another chance to sleep anywhere so authentically restored. Look out for places that have been sympathetically

renovated, so you can appreciate some of the building's original character.

BUDGET

Backpackers Pension (☎ 725 2688; www.backpackerspension.com; Kayadibi Sokak; dm/s/d/tr TL15/25/45/55; 🗺) Run by the couple behind Bastoncu Pansiyon, this hostel is a solid budget choice, with eight rooms containing up to four beds each and a shared bathroom on each of the three floors. There are good views from the terrace and it offers the same services as its older sibling.

Bastoncu Pansiyon (☎ 712 3411; www.bastoncu.pension.com; Hıdırlık Yokuşu Sokak; dm/s/d/tr TL20/35/50/70; 🗺) In a 300-year-old building, Bastoncu is an institution for both backpackers and folks who choose it over more-expensive options for its unrivalled sense of history. The rooms and three-bed dorms have all their original wood, tiled bathrooms, jars of dried flowers, and some closet toilets. It's run by a friendly Turkish couple who speak English and Japanese and appreciate travellers' needs, offering a laundry service, lifts from the otogar, tours and traditional, two-course dinners (TL10).

Turgut Reis Konağı (☎ 725 1301; www.turgutreis.konak.com, in Turkish; Akpınar Sokak 27; s/d/tr TL30/70/100) Boasting a quiet position and some of Safranbolu's best views, this friendly hotel is one of the best deals around. The 200-year-old building has been sensitively restored, with stylish furnishings and touches such as steps leading to the beds in room 106.

Paşa Mustafa Konağı (☎ 725 1748; pasamustafa.konagi@hotmail.com; Massalla Mahallesi Hıdırlık Yokuşu Sokak 2; s/d/tr TL35/50/70) The three modern rooms in this intimate pension are not Safranbolu's most atmospheric, but the dapper, English-speaking owner is friendly to a fault. It's a pleasure to sit in the lounge at night, gazing between the kerosene lamps and an unbeatable view of the Cinci Hani.

If you'd rather stay in a family home than a hotel, the tourist office has a list of 25 basic pensions (the *Safranbolu'daki Ev Pansiyonları Listesi*). They are cheaper than hotels, though often of lower quality, and generally cost TL20 to TL25 per person. One example is the **Ağa Çeşmesi Evi** (☎ 725 1717; Hükümet Sokak; s/d TL25/50).

MIDRANGE

Otel Hatice Hanım Konağı III (☎ 712 7545; info@hotel.haticehanim.com; Baba Sultan Mahallesi Nauptarla Sokak 4; s/d

TL35/70) Part of a network of hotels in Ottoman buildings, this atmospheric establishment is excellent value for money. The terrace café and the windows between the wooden beams offer views of the *pazar yeri* (market square). Nearby Otel Hatice Hanım Konağı I, in the former governor's residence, has marble basins, original fittings and plenty of quirks.

Arpacıoğlu Otel (☎ 725 4340; www.arpacioglu.otel.com; Kazdağlıoğlu Meydanı 1; s/d TL45/80, half-board TL60/90) Set back from the main square, this hotel occupies a cluster of 200-year-old buildings. The sparse but spacious rooms have satellite TV, room service and a car park.

Selvili Köşk (☎ 712 8646; fax 725 2294; Mescit Sokak 23; s/d/tr TL70/100/130) The most charming hotel in yet another Ottoman network, the blue Selvili overlooks a pretty garden. One of our favourites for authentic 19th-century character, it has a high-ceilinged salon and big, cool rooms with steps leading to cupboard-bathrooms, one with a bathtub.

Ebrulu Konağı (☎ 712 0714; www.ebrulukonak.com; Hıdırlık Yokuşu Sokak 13; s/d/tr TL75/145/180) Modern fittings don't dispel the sense of history, created by low ceilings and broad stone window sills, in this hillside mansion. There are great views of Safranbolu and a pleasant courtyard restaurant.

Paşa Konağı (☎ 725 3572; www.safranbolupasa.com; Kalealtı Sokak 1-7; s/d TL80/120) Two hundred years after İzzet Mehmet Paşa (p457) occupied his mansion, the spacious rooms and secluded garden foster a romantic nostalgia. Certain bathrooms are inside cupboards with high steps, which might be tricky for some guests.

Zalifre Otel (☎ 725 4718; www.zalifreotel.com; Barış Mahallesi, Kiranköy; s/d/tr TL110/150/200) This faux Ottoman hotel opposite some bus company offices feels older than its tender years, thanks to its wood-panelled reception and marble courtyard with a fountain. Rooms are less impressive, with small bathrooms and grilles on the windows.

Havuzlu Asmazlar Konağı (☎ 725 2883; www.safranbolukonak.com; Çelik Gülersoy Caddesi 18, Çarşı; r/week-end from TL140/180) On the way to Kiranköy, the HAK is worth a stop just to glimpse the fine pool that gives the house its name. The rooms are beautifully furnished with brass beds, *sedirs* and kilims (pileless woven rugs), and the restaurant comes recommended. Bathrooms are minuscule and soundproofing minimal, but these are minor inconveniences. Two annexes provide less -atmospheric digs.

TOP END

our pick **Gül Evi** (☎ 725 4645; www.booking.com; Hükümet Sokak 46; s €60-83, d €80-110, ste €165-330) This recent arrival should give Cinci Hanı a run for its caravanserai gold. Set in two 150-year-old houses, the hotel perfectly balances stylish, minimalist decor with the Ottoman architecture. The 65-sq-metre suite, occupying the former *selamlık*, is the largest in Safranbolu and the restaurant will be serving Anatolian cuisine by the time you read this.

Cinci Hanı (☎ 712 0680; www.cincihan.com; Eski Çarşı Çeşme Mahalessi; s/d/tr from TL90/140/190) Safranbolu's stone caravanserai has a couple of centuries over most of the Ottoman houses, though rooms are comparatively limited on space and decor. The huge Han Ağası Odası suite is a gem, with kitchen, sitting room, and bathroom with old stone hamam basin.

Eating

As food is available at most hotels, Safranbolu is not overly endowed with great places to eat.

Just off the main square in Çarşı, the two branches of Çevrikköprü are neat old-style restaurants with plenty on the menu and views of the lower part of town. Gül Evi (see Sleeping) was opening a restaurant at the time of research.

our pick **Safranbolu Sofrası** (☎ 712 1451; Hıdırlık Yokuşu Sokak 28a; mains TL4; ☎ 9am-9pm) This friendly café offers an authentic local experience – in the sense that Turkish soap operas and music videos accompany dining. The delicious dishes include *dolma* with yoghurt and tomato sauce and *cevizli yayım* (macaroni topped with walnuts). If you like the saffron tea, buy a jar of the yellow powder.

Merkez Lokantası (☎ 725 1478; Yukarı Çarşı 1; mains TL4-5; ☎ 10am-10pm) This quaint, clean and friendly place still uses a real wood fire to cook its tasty basic staples.

Kadioğlu Şehzade Sofrası (☎ 712 5657; Arasta Sokak 8; mains TL6-9.50; ☎ 11.30am-10.30pm) Pide is the speciality here, served in as many different ways as the kitchen has ingredients; even the bread that accompanies the *çorba* (soup) is superb. Grills and *zerde* (saffron dessert) are also available.

Cinci Hanı (☎ 712 0680; Eski Çarşı Çeşme Mahalessi; mains TL10-15) If you can't afford to stay in the 17th-century caravanserai (above), you could eat in the courtyard (the dining room is not as pleasant). The menu features healthy selec-

tions of pide, grills and Western favourites. There is also a café-bar.

Havuzlu Köşk (☎ 725 2168; Dibekönü Caddesi 32, Bağlar; mains TL10-20; ☎ 1pm-1am) At this historic house in the hills you can dine at tables set around an upstairs pool or in a pleasant garden. The menu runs the gamut of Turkish standards: kebabs, grills, vegetarian meze and that time-honoured hangover cure, tripe soup.

Drinking

Meydan (Arasta Arkası Sokak; snacks TL2.50-6) This central hang-out is popular with young guys who sit outside playing backgammon. The menu features *gözleme* (savoury pancake), *çeşitli* (Turkish pancake) and *çorba*, with English translations.

Arasta Lonca Kahvesi (Boncuk Café; Yemenciler Arastası) This is one of the town's most congenial places for a coffee, but it's in the thick of the *arasta* action, so you pay for the atmosphere (çay TL2.50); head to the backstreets for a quieter, cheaper cuppa.

Arasna Pension (☎ 712 4170; Arasta Arkası Sokak 5, Çarşı) This pension below the main mosque and tourist office has a bar with regular live music. Its atmospheric stone walls are illuminated by electric candles.

Shopping

Safranbolu is a great place to pick up handicrafts – especially textiles, metalwork, shoes and wooden artefacts – whether locally made or shipped in from elsewhere to supply coach tourists. The restored Yemenciler Arastası (Peasant Shoe-Makers' Bazaar) is the best place to start looking, although the makers of the light, flat-heeled shoes have long since moved out. The further you go from the *arasta* the more likely you are to come across shops occupied by authentic saddle-makers, felt-makers and other artisans.

Safranbolu derived its name from saffron, the precious spice used to flavour the local *lokum* (Turkish delight), and the town is so packed with sweet shops that you half expect the houses to be made out of gingerbread. One regional speciality is *yaprak helvası*, delicious chewy layers of white *helva* (halva) spotted with ground walnuts. Pick it up at the sweet shops on the north side of Çarşı's main square and at Safrantat outlets. You can also visit the Safrantat factory behind the petrol station in Kıranköy to see how *lokum* is made.

Getting There & Away

The coach companies generally lay on *servis* buses to transport passengers between Karabük, on the main highway, and Kıranköy, Safranbolu's new town. If your ticket only takes you to Karabük, you can catch a minibus straight to Çarşı (TL1.40), Safranbolu's old town, 10km away.

From İstanbul, Ulusoy (p159) and the less reliable İzmir Turizm, which both have offices in Taksim, have a couple of daily services to Safranbolu. The journey takes about seven hours and costs TL30. There are also daily services from Ankara's AŞTİ otogar.

There are several bus company offices along Sadri Artunç Caddesi and just off Adnan Menderes Caddesi in Kıranköy, where you can buy tickets to destinations including Ankara (TL20, three hours), İstanbul (TL35, seven hours) and Kastamonu (TL11, two hours). You will probably be taken by *servis* bus to meet the coach at Karabük otogar.

Metro Doğuş (☎ 712 1966) and **Şavaş Turizm** (☎ 712 7480) each have five daily services to Bartın (TL10, 1½ hours), where you change for Amasra; start early in the day to make the onward connection. During summer, Şavaş Turizm has three direct daily services to Amasra (TL11, two hours).

Driving, exit the Ankara–İstanbul highway at Gerede and head north, following the signs for Karabük/Safranbolu.

There is a direct train from Karabük to Ankara, but the bus is a better option.

Getting Around

Every 30 minutes or so until 10pm, local buses (TL1) ply the route from Çarşı's main square over the hills past the main roundabout at Kıranköy and up to the Köyiçi stop in Bağlar. A taxi from Çarşı to Kıranköy will cost you TL7.

AROUND SAFRANBOLU

Yörük Köyü

Along the Kastamonu road, 15km east of Safranbolu, Yörük Köyü (Nomad Village) is a beautiful settlement of crumbling old houses once inhabited by the dervish Bektaşî sect (see p516). The government forced the nomads to settle here so it could tax them, and the villagers grew rich from their baking prowess.

Sipahioğlu Konağı Gezi Evi (admission TL4; ☎ 8.30am-sunset) is one of the village's enormous Ottoman houses. The builder's warring

sons divided the mansion in two, and you tour the *selamlık* and *haremlik* separately. Look out for the incredible early central heating system that used the fire to heat running water and behind-the-wall heating; painted clocks showing the time the painters finished their job; and the top-floor gazebo with its stand for the owner's fez.

Nearby in Cemil İpekçi Sokağı is the 300-year-old *çamaşırhane* (laundry), with arched hearths where the water was heated in cauldrons. Taller women scrubbed at one end of the tilted stone table, shorter ones at the other; the dirty water drained to the centre. The table's 12 sides are a clue to the village's Bektaşî origins (like modern Shi'a Muslims, the Bektaşî believed in 12 imams, the last of whom had been hidden by Allah). Older women would sit at the edges sizing up the grandchildren-producing potential of their younger counterparts, whose bodies would be revealed by their wet clothes. Ask at Sipahioğlu Konağı Gezi Evi for the key.

SLEEPING & EATING

Tarihi Yörük Pansiyon (☎ 737 2153; s/d without bathroom TL30/60) A lovely old wood-and-stone house with an inviting garden. Accommodation is simple but comfortable, although there is just one squat toilet between the four rooms. In one room you sleep on the *sedir*, Ottoman-style.

Yörük Sofrası serves traditional Anatolian dishes, *ayran* (yoghurt drink), baklava and *gözleme* at indoor and outdoor tables. There's also a **kahvehane** (coffeehouse) near the mosque.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There is no direct bus service from Safranbolu to Yörük Köyü, but there are a few dolmuşes a day to the nearby village of Konarı. If you ask the driver he may drop you at Yörük Köyü (TL1.50). Getting back, you'll have to walk the 1km to the main road and hitchhike (for information on hitchhiking, see p689).

It's much less hassle to go there from Safranbolu on a tour (see p458) or by taxi, which costs TL25 return.

Bulak Mencilis Mağarası

Deep in the Gürleyik hills 10km northwest of Safranbolu, this impressive cave network opened to the public a decade ago, although troglodytes may have lived here many millennia before that. You can walk through 400m of

the 6km-long network, enough to reveal a fine array of stalactites and stalagmites with inevitable anthropomorphic nicknames. There are steps up to the **cave** (adult/child TL4/2; ☎ 9am-7.30pm) and you should wear sturdy shoes as the metal walkway inside can be slippery and wet. A taxi from Safranbolu costs TL30 return.

Incekaya Aqueduct

Just over 7km north of Safranbolu you can visit this **aqueduct** (Su Kemer), which was originally built in Byzantine times but restored in the 1790s by İzzet Mehmet Paşa (see p457). Its name means 'thin rock' and the walk across it, high above the beautiful **Tokatlı Gorge**, would not suit vertigo sufferers. A taxi from Safranbolu costs TL20 return, but the walk there is recommended, following the steep gorge through lovely, unspoilt countryside.

KASTAMONU

☎ 0366 / pop 80,600

A town where the shops are full of chainsaws and milking machines doesn't seem immediately promising, but Kastamonu makes a reasonable stopover between central Anatolia and the Black Sea. Potential distractions include two museums, a castle, some old mosques, Ottoman houses and, further afield, Kasaba's wooden mosque and Pınarbaşı's 37,000-hectare national park.

History

Kastamonu's history has been as chequered as that of most central-Turkish towns. Archaeological evidence suggests there was a settlement here as far back as 2000 BC, but the Hittites, Persians, Macedonians and Pontic (Black Sea) kings all left their mark. In the 11th century the Seljuks descended, then the Danişmends. The 13th-century Byzantine emperor John Comnenus tried to hold out here, but the Mongols soon swept in, followed by the Ottomans.

Bizarrely, Kastamonu's modern history is inextricably linked to headgear: Atatürk launched his hat reforms here in 1925, banning the fez due to its religious connotations and insisting on the adoption of European-style tifters.

Orientation & Information

Kastamonu's otogar is 7km north of the city centre, reachable by dolmuş or taxi (TL10). If you're coming in from Ankara get the bus to

drop you in the centre near the old Nasrullah Köprüsü (Nasrullah Bridge).

The centre of town is Cumhuriyet Meydanı, with an imposing *valilik* (government building), a statue of Atatürk, the PTT and local bus stops. Another public square, Nasrullah Meydanı, lies to the north, on the other side of Cumhuriyet Caddesi.

Also to the north of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, most of the new hotels are clustered around Nasrullah Bridge. The bus companies' offices and, opposite, web café **Bil & Ken Net** (İzbeli Sokak; per hr TL; ☎ 9am-11pm) are in the same area. Despite the signs, there's no tourist office.

Sights

MUSEUMS

About 50m south of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, the **Archaeology Museum** (☎ 214 1070; Cumhuriyet Caddesi; admission TL3; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) has introductions to Atatürk's sartorial revolution and Anatolian archaeology, with predominantly Hellenic and Roman finds from the area.

Heading south of Nasrullah Meydanı on the main drag, turn right at the Akbank ATM to reach the excellent **Ethnography Museum** (☎ 214 0149; off Cumhuriyet Caddesi; admission TL3; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun). Occupying the restored 1870 Liva Paşa Konağı, it's fully furnished as it would have been in Ottoman times.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Kastamonu's **castle** (kale; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm), built on a tall rock behind the town, is a steep 1km climb through the streets of the old town. Parts of the building date from Byzantine times, but most belong to Seljuk and Ottoman reconstructions. Follow the walls round and admire the views before descending the spiral stairs to the portcullis (you have to jump the last metre).

Nasrullah Meydanı centres on the Ottoman **Nasrullah Camii** (1506) and the double fountain where men wash their feet. Poet Mehmet Akif Ersoy delivered speeches in the mosque during the War of Independence. The former **Munire Medresesi** at the rear houses some craft shops. The area immediately west of Nasrullah Meydanı is filled with old market buildings, including the **Aşirefendi Hanı** and the 15th-century **Ismail Bey Hanı**. Wander down any of the side streets in this area and you'll come across hamams, fountains and other historic structures. Look out in particular for the

gateway from the Seljuk mosque complex, **Yılanlı Külliye**.

Sleeping

Otel Kale (☎ 214 2416; Cumhuriyet Caddesi; s/d TL20/40) Kale's rooms are worn and bathrooms shared. Staff are friendly, but spend some extra lira elsewhere if you can afford it.

Otel İdrisoğlu (☎ 214 1757; Cumhuriyet Caddesi 21; s/w/d TL40/45/50) Right on the main road, the İdrisoğlu is geared towards businesspeople rather than tourists, but is adequate for an overnighter.

Otel Mütevellî (☎ 212 2018; www.mutevelli.com.tr; Cumhuriyet Caddesi 10; s/d TL50/75) Kastamonu's best business hotel, near Cumhuriyet Meydanı, has drab but well-serviced rooms beyond its gaudy reception.

Osmanlı Sarayı (Ottoman Palace; ☎ 214 8408; www.osmanlisarayi.tr.cx; Belediye Caddesi 81; s/d TL60/80) Atatürk once visited this former town hall, built between 1898 and 1915. The beautifully restored rooms have wooden ceilings and authentic but newly fitted cupboard-bathrooms. There is a basic restaurant in the basement.

Toprakçılar Konakları (☎ 212 1812; www.toprakcilar.com; Alemdar Sokak 2; s/d/ste TL70/120/220) More restored Ottoman splendour, this time in two town houses across the road from İsfendiyarbey Parkı. The rooms have been faithfully restored and the courtyard restaurant (mains TL6 to TL10) sometimes hosts live music, when you'd be better off in the second building.

Eating & Drinking

Eflanilî Konağı (☎ 214 1118; Gazipaşa İlköğr Yanı; mains TL5-8) This restaurant in a restored Ottoman house has beautiful upstairs dining rooms and tables among fountains in the courtyard. Staff will happily recommend local specialities.

Divan Pide (☎ 214 2424; Sımsar Sokak 28a; mains TL6-7) This clean and welcoming fast-food restaurant behind Otel Kale is recommended for its meal deals and dishes such as *ezo gelin* (bulgur and red lentil soup).

Canoğlu (☎ 213 9090; Cumhuriyet Caddesi; ☎ 6am-8pm) Near Nasrullah Bridge, this *pastane* (patisserie) with floor-to-ceiling windows on its second level is Kastamonu's premier catch-up spot. Goodies such as pizzas and burgers are available.

The winding streets to the west of Nasrullah Meydanı are great for a wander and a çay.

There used to be a café in a beautiful building in Kastamonu's first Seljuk hamam (1262) on Nasrullah Meydanı, but it was for sale when we visited.

Getting There & Away

Kastamonu's otogar offers regular departures for Ankara (TL25, 4½ hours), İstanbul (TL40, nine hours) and Samsun (TL25, six hours). There are direct services to Sinop (TL20, three hours), but it may be quicker to change in Boyabat (TL10, two hours). There are hourly departures for Karabük (TL10, two hours), with some buses continuing to Safranbolu.

Minibuses for İnebolu (TL10, two hours) also leave from the otogar.

AROUND KASTAMONU

Kasaba

The tiny village of Kasaba, 17km northwest of Kastamonu, is a pretty but unlikely place to find one of Turkey's finest surviving wooden mosques. The minaret of **Mahmud Bey Camii** (1366) stands out from miles away. The restored interior has four painted wooden columns, a wooden gallery and fine painted ceiling rafters. You can climb some rough ladders to the third storey of the gallery and look at the ornate beam-ends and interlocking motifs topping the pillars.

A return taxi from Kastamonu, with waiting time, costs TL35, and the driver should know where the imam lives if the mosque is locked. A cheaper option is to take the Pınarbaşı bus and jump off at the Kasaba turn-off, but it is a 4km walk to the village from there and you will have to ask around for the imam if Mahmud Bey Camii is shut.

Pınarbaşı

Pınarbaşı, a little hill town 97km northwest of Kastamonu, is the main access point for the 37,000-hectare **Küre Dağları National Park** (Küre Dağları Milli Parkı; www.ked.org.tr/empty.html; ☎ 0366-771 2465), which was gazetted in 2000. Despite some marketing efforts made by the local government, the Küre Mountains are still largely undiscovered and you will likely have the park to yourself. With gouged cliff faces towering above forests, this is a great place for outdoor types who can take the time to explore under their own steam. Spots worth seeking out include the Ilgarini 'Inn' and Ilıca 'Hamam' caves, Ilıca waterfall and Horma Canyon. There is a spectacular viewpoint overlooking

THE HITTITES

While the name may evoke images of skin-clad barbarians, the Hittites were a sophisticated people who commanded a vast Middle Eastern empire, conquered Babylon and challenged the Egyptian pharaohs more than 3000 years ago. Apart from a few written references in the Bible and Babylonian tablets, there were few clues to their existence until 1834 when a French traveller, Charles Texier, stumbled on the ruins of the Hittite capital of Hattuşa.

In 1905 excavations turned up notable works of art, most of them now in Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations. Also brought to light were the Hittite state archives, written in cuneiform on thousands of clay tablets. From these tablets, historians and archaeologists were able to construct a history of the Hittite empire.

The original Indo-European Hittites swept into Anatolia around 2000 BC, conquering the local Hatti, from whom they borrowed their culture and name. They established themselves at Hattuşa, the Hatti capital, and in the course of a millennium enlarged and beautified the city. From about 1375 to 1200 BC Hattuşa was the capital of a Hittite empire that, at its height, shared Syria with Egypt and extended as far as Europe.

The Hittites worshipped over a thousand different deities; the most important were Teshub, the storm or weather god, and Hepatu, the sun goddess. The cuneiform tablets revealed a well-ordered society with more than 200 laws. The death sentence was prescribed for bestiality, while thieves got off more lightly provided they paid their victims compensation.

Although it defeated Egypt in 1298 BC, the empire declined in the following centuries, undone by internal squabbles and new threats such as the Greek 'sea peoples'. Hattuşa was torched and its inhabitants dispersed. Only the city states of Syria survived until they, too, were swallowed by the Assyrians.

Valla Canyon, but you will need local help to find it and a head for heights to climb the ruddy steps to the platform.

On the way into Pınarbaşı is an uninformative **information centre** (☎ 0366-771 3375; www.pinarbasim.com, in Turkish).

You can stay at a basic ecolodge in the park, near the İlica waterfall. The dinky five-person cabins and smarter four-person cabin at **Park İlica Turizm Tesisi** (☎ 0366-771 2046; www.parkilica.com; per person 1145) have single beds on two floors. With nearby thermal springs, the cabins make a great base for looking around the park.

There are a couple of midibuses a day from Kastamonu to Pınarbaşı, but you really need your own transport to move around the park. A taxi will take you there and spend the afternoon touring the park before returning to Kastamonu for €80.

BOĞAZKALE, HATTUŞA & YAZILIKAYA

Out in the centre of the Anatolian plains, two Unesco World Heritage sites evoke a vital historical moment at the height of Hittite civilisation (above). Hattuşa was the Hittite capital, while Yazılıkaya was a religious sanctuary with fine rock carvings.

The best base for visiting the sites around here is Boğazkale, a farming village 200km

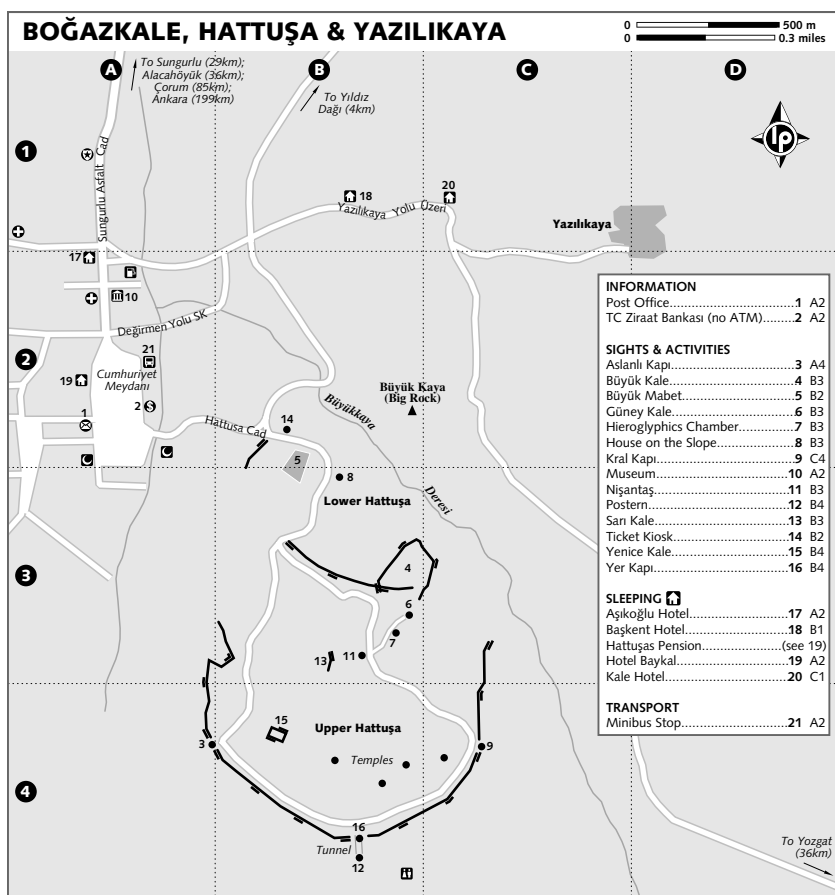
east of Ankara. Boğazkale has simple traveller services; if you want or need something fancier you'll need to stay in Çorum (p468) or, if you get going early enough in the morning, Ankara.

Boğazkale

☎ 0364 / pop 1600

The village of Boğazkale has ducks, cows and wheelbarrow-racing children wandering its cobbled streets, farmyards with Hittite and Byzantine gates, and a constant sense that a once-great city is just over the brow. Most visitors come solely to visit Hattuşa and Yazılıkaya, which can be accessed on foot if it's not too hot, but there is more to explore. Hattuşa is surrounded by **valleys** with Hittite caves, eagles' nests, butterflies and a neolithic fort. Head 4km east of Yazılıkaya and climb the **Yıldız Dağı** (Star Mountains), as they are known locally, to watch the sun set on the sites.

Late in the day, the silence is broken only by the occasional car kicking up dust on the main street, and the rural solitude may tempt you to stay an extra night. Apart from the accommodation options, the village's only facilities are some small shops, a post office and bank with an ATM.



BOĞAZKALE MUSEUM

Unsurprisingly, Hittite artefacts dominate the small **museum** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-5pm, closed Mon afternoon). Its disappointing collection includes examples of cuneiform tablets (including a state treaty between kings), signature seals, whimsically shaped vessels, arrow and axe heads, and a series of weathered black-and-white photographic displays. If you look closely at the Turkish/German labels you'll find that some items are copies, the originals having been taken to Ankara.

Hattuşa

Hattuşa (adult/student TL4.50/free; ☎ 9am-5pm) was the capital of an ancient kingdom that stretched from Syria to Europe, and squared up to the

Egyptian, Babylonian and Assyrian empires. The mountainous, isolated site was a busy and impressive city, with 50,000 inhabitants, a 100-step pyramid and seven ponds that each stored enough water for 10,000 people. Its defences included stone walls over 6km in length, some of the thickest in the ancient world, with watchtowers and secret tunnels.

The best way to tour the atmospheric ruins is to get up early and walk the 5km circuit; before the 21st century intrudes in the form of coaches and souvenir sellers (better quality serpentine statues are available at the Yazılıkaya stands). As you climb out of the village to the site, an evocative reconstruction of a section of city wall comes into view. Imagine the sense of purpose that drove the

Hittites to haul stone to this remote spot, far from oceans and trade routes, and build an engineering masterpiece that launched a mighty empire.

The admission ticket is also valid for Yazılıkaya.

BÜYÜK MABET

The first site you come to is the vast complex of the **Büyük Mabet** (Great Temple), dating from the 14th century BC and destroyed around 1200 BC. It is the best preserved of the Hittite temples, but you'll need plenty of imagination.

Enter uphill from the ticket kiosk, opposite the remains of a house on the slope. As you walk down the wide processional street, the administrative quarters of the temple are to your left. The well-worn cube of green rock, supposedly one of only two in the world, was a present from Ramses II after signing the Kadesh peace treaty.

The main temple, to your right, was surrounded by storerooms, thought to be several storeys high. In the early 20th century, huge clay storage jars and thousands of cuneiform tablets were found in these rooms. Look for the threshold stones at the base of some of the doorways to see the hole for the hinge-post and the arc worn by the door's movement. The temple is believed to have been a ritual altar for Teshub and Hepatu (see p464); the large stone base of one of their statues remains.

SARI KALE

About 250m south of the Büyük Mabet, the road forks; take the right fork and follow the winding road up the hillside. On your left in the midst of the old city you can see several ruined structures fenced off from the road, including the **Sarı Kale** (Yellow Castle), which may be a Phrygian fort on Hittite foundations.

CASTLE WALLS & GATES

From the fork in the road it's about 750m uphill to the **Aslanlı Kapı** (Lion Gate), where two stone lions (one badly defaced) protect the city from evil spirits. This is one of at least six gates in the city's defensive walls, though it may never have been completed. You can see the best-preserved parts of the fortifications from here, stretching up the ridge southeast to Yer Kapı and from there to Kral Kapı. These 4000-year-old walls illustrate the Hittites' engineering ingenuity, which enabled them to

either build in sympathy with the terrain or transform the landscape, depending on what was required. Natural outcrops were appropriated as part of the walls, and massive ramparts were built to create artificial fortresses.

A path leads over the brow from Aslanlı Kapı to the **Yenice Kale**, where you can see how the Hittite engineers transformed a 30m-high rocky peak into a smooth terraced fortress.

Back on the main track, head 600m downhill to the **Yer Kapı** or **Sfenksli Kapı** (Earth or Sphinx Gate), once defended by four great sphinxes, which are now in museums in İstanbul and Berlin. It is the most impressive gate, with an artificial mound pierced by a 70m-long **tunnel**. The Hittites built the tunnel using a corbelled arch (two flat faces of stones leaning towards one another) as the 'true' arch was not invented until later. Primitive or not, the arch has done its job for millennia, and you can still pass down the stony tunnel as Hittite soldiers did, emerging from the **postern**. Afterwards, re-enter the city via one of the **monumental stairways** up the wide stone glacis, and enjoy the wonderful views over the site and its surroundings.

Head northeast down the slope from the Yer Kapı, past some of the upper city's 28 **temples** on the left, and you'll reach the **Kral Kapı** (King's Gate), named after the regal-looking figure in the relief carving. The kingly character, a Hittite warrior god protecting the city, is a copy; the original was removed to Ankara for safekeeping.

NIŞANTAŞ & GÜNEY KALE

Heading downhill again you'll come to the **Nişantaş**, a rock with a Hittite inscription cut into it. The lengthy inscription dates to the time of Suppiluliuma II (1215–1200 BC), the final Hittite king, and narrates his deeds.

Immediately opposite, a path leads up to the excavated **Güney Kale** (Southern Fortress) and to what may have been a royal tomb, with a fine (fenced-off) **hieroglyphics chamber** with human figure reliefs.

BÜYÜK KALE

The ruins of the **Büyük Kale** (Great Fortress) are 200m downhill from the Nişantaş. Although most of the site has been excavated, many of the older layers of development have been recovered to protect them, so what you see today can be hard to decipher. This fortress held the royal palace and the Hittite state archives. The

archives, discovered in 1906, contained about 2500 pieces, including the Hittite-Egyptian Kadesh peace treaty, written in cuneiform on a clay tablet. Five such collections were unearthed at Hattuşa; one of the largest and oldest libraries ever discovered.

From the fortress it's about 1km back to the ticket kiosk.

Yazılıkaya

Yazılıkaya means 'Inscribed Rock', and that's exactly what you'll find in these outdoor **rock galleries**, just under 3km from Hattuşa. There are two galleries: the larger one, to the left, was the Hittite empire's holiest religious sanctuary; the narrower one, to the right, has the best-preserved carvings. Together they form the largest known Hittite rock sanctuary anywhere, sufficiently preserved to make you wish you could have seen the carvings when they were new.

In the larger gallery, Chamber A, the fast-fading reliefs show numerous goddesses and pointy-hatted gods marching in procession. Heads and feet are shown in profile but the torso is shown front on, a common feature of Hittite relief art. The lines of men and women lead to some large reliefs depicting a godly meeting. Teshub stands on two deified mountains (depicted as men) alongside his Hepatu, who is standing on the back of a panther. Behind her, their son and (possibly) two daughters are respectively carried by a smaller panther and a double-headed eagle. The largest relief, on the opposite wall, depicts the complex's bearded founder, King Tudhaliya IV, standing on two mountains. The rock ledges were probably used for offerings or sacrifices and the basins for libations.

On the way into Chamber B, you should supposedly ask permission of the winged, lion-headed guard depicted by the entrance before entering. The narrow gallery is thought to be a memorial chapel for Tudhaliya IV, dedicated by his son Suppiluliuma II. The large limestone block could have been the base of a statue of the king. Buried until a century ago and better protected from the elements, the carvings include a procession of 12 scimitar-wielding underworld gods. On the opposite wall, the detailed relief of Nergal depicts the underworld deity as a sword; the four lion heads on the handle (two pointing towards the blade, one to the left and the other to the right) double as the deity's knees

and shoulders. Nearby, Teshub's son Sarruma is shown with his arm protectively around Tudhaliya IV. The rock-cut ledges presumably held crematory urns.

Sleeping & Eating

The following generally offer camping for about TL5 to TL8 per site.

Hotel Baykal/Hattuşas Pension (☎ 452 2013; www.hattusha.com; Cumhuriyet Meydanı 22; pension s/d/tr TL15/25/35, hotel s/d/tr TL35/50/75). Behind its floor-to-ceiling downstairs windows, overlooking the square, this friendly establishment is dotted with artefacts, maps of Hattuşa, coffee-table books and a TV for Hittite documentaries. Entered via a tiled courtyard, the neat, compact hotel rooms have TVs and bar heaters. Ask to see a few as there is some difference between those on the ground floor and the second floor. The pension rooms are more basic affairs with a squat toilet. English and German are spoken. Main meals cost TL10.

Aşıkoglu Hotel (☎ 452 2004; www.hattusas.com; Sungurlu Asfalt Caddesi; s/d/tr €20/40/50) Just walking around the Aşıkoglu is educational: the modern rooms, which have bright bedspreads and all amenities, are named after Hittite figures, with potted biographies. There is a restaurant (mains TL10) with a terrace, patio and cinevision screen for documentaries, and an Ottoman-style café with a fireplace. In summer, the hotel often fills up with tour groups.

Başkent Hotel (☎ 452 2037; www.baskenthattusa.com; Yazılıkaya Yolu Üzeri 45; s/d/tr TL25/40/60; ☎ Apr-Oct) The rooms at Boğazkale's most basic option have narrow bathrooms but are decent enough. The long porch and upstairs balcony boast the best views of the four hotels, but the restaurant is unlikely to win any awards.

Kale Hotel (☎ 452 3126; www.bogazkoyhattusa.com; Yazılıkaya Yolu Üzeri; s/d/tr TL30/45/60; ☎ Apr-Oct) Kale's light, good-value rooms have cheery floral linen and bathrooms; the top ones at the front have good views and some have balconies. The restaurant, with its adjoining terrace, mostly caters to groups.

Getting There & Away

To get to Boğazkale by public transport, you'll need to go via Sungurlu. Many of the buses from Ankara to Sungurlu (TL12, three hours, hourly) are run by Mis Amasya (counter 23 at Ankara's otogar). Passengers are sometimes dropped off on the highway outside Sungurlu, but even if you are dropped at the otogar, the

rapacious taxi drivers will be quick to deny the existence of any dolmuşes to Boğazkale. Make your way to the Boğazkale dolmuş stand, 1km from the otogar near the soccer stadium; buses may drop you there if you ask. There are more dolmuşes (TL3) in the morning, but they run until about 5.30pm. Taking a taxi may be your only resort at the weekend; don't pay more than TL30.

Travellers coming from Cappadocia should note that dolmuşes between Boğazkale and Yozgat, 41km southeast, are thin on the ground. You're probably better off going via Kırıkkale and Sungurlu.

Getting Around

To get around Hattuşa and Yazılıkaya without your own transport you'll need to walk or hire a taxi. It's 1km from the Aşıkoglu Hotel to the Hattuşa ticket kiosk. From there the road looping around the site from the ticket kiosk (not including Yazılıkaya) is another 5km. The walk itself takes at least an hour, plus time spent exploring the ruins, so figure on spending a good three hours here. There is no shop on the site so take a bottle of water, and start early in the day before the sun is too hot, as there's little shade.

You could tour Hattuşa in a taxi or haggle for a day trip also taking in Yazılıkaya (just under 3km from both Hattuşa and Boğazkale) and Alacahöyük. As Alacahöyük is closer to the main highway, another option is to tour Hattuşa on foot and catch a taxi to the highway (where you can pick up dolmuşes in either direction) via Yazılıkaya and Alacahöyük; this can be accomplished in a day and costs about TL70. In all cases, negotiating a price should be cheaper than using the meter.

ALACAHÖYÜK

The tiny farming hamlet of Alacahöyük is 36km north of Boğazkale and 52km south of Çorum. It's a very old site, settled from about 4000 BC, but so little remains that it's really only worth the effort if you've got your own transport and have some time spare after Hattuşa. As at the other Hittite sites, movable monuments have been taken to the museum in Ankara, although there is a small museum and a few worn sphinxes at the entrance to the complex.

The **museum** (admission TL4; ☎ 8am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm) is right by the ruins, displaying artists' impressions of the site at various points in its

history and finds dating back to the Chalcolithic and Old Bronze ages. A glass case shows the 15 layers of Alacahöyük's buried history, from 5500 to 600 BC.

At the ruins, the **monumental gate** has two eyeless sphinxes guarding the door. The detailed reliefs (copies, of course) show musicians, a sword swallower, animals for sacrifice and the Hittite king and queen – all part of festivities and ceremonies dedicated to Teshub, shown here as a bull. The extensive site also includes the foundations of a granary, up the wooden planks on the right, and of a temple, where some rocks have holes for sacrificial offerings. On the far left is an underground tunnel. Walk through it and look down at the fields to see how the site was built up over the millennia.

The clay-and-stone Hittite **dam** 1km east of the village, discovered in 2002, is one of 10 built in Anatolia during a drought as an offering to the sun goddess Hepatu. The mound and rock overlooking Alacahöyük are the remains of a **Phrygian castle**.

There's a small **café** at the museum entrance, perfect for a post-ruins drink or snack.

Getting There & Away

There's no public transport between Alacahöyük and Boğazkale. If you're really keen, you could take a bus or dolmuş from Çorum to Alaca and another from Alaca to Alacahöyük (one or two services per day, none at weekends). Taxis can take you from Boğazkale to Alacahöyük, wait for an hour and then run you to Alaca or the busy Sungurlu-Çorum highway.

ÇORUM

☎ 0364 / pop 178,500

Set on an alluvial plain on a branch of the Çorum River, Çorum is an unremarkable provincial capital, resting on its modest fame as the chickpea capital of Turkey. The town is full of *leblebiciler* (chickpea roasters) and sacks upon sacks of the chalky little pulses, all sorted according to fine distinctions obvious only to a chickpea dealer.

If you're travelling north or east from Boğazkale you may have to change buses in Çorum. Its museum is excellent preparation for Hattuşa and the other Hittite sites to the southeast, and the town can be a handy base for visiting them. It is a friendly place and offers some glimpses of provincial Turkish life.

Orientation & Information

The clock tower (1894) marks the centre of Çorum, with the PTT and *belediye* (town hall) close by. The otogar is 1km southwest of the clock tower along the main drag, İnönü Caddesi, where there are a few internet cafés and banks with ATMs, mostly at the northeast end.

Sights

On the far side of Anitta Otel from the otogar, the excellent **Çorum Museum** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-7pm Tue-Sun) is well worth a visit before heading to Hattuşa et al. Major improvements were under way when we visited, but the exhibits on display traced Anatolian history from the Bronze Age to the Roman period. The centrepiece is a reconstruction of the royal tomb at Alacahöyük, with bull skulls and a crumpled skeleton clad in a crown, and there are some incredible artefacts such as a Hittite ceremonial jug with water-spouting bulls around its rim.

Sleeping & Eating

Atak Hotel (☎ 225 6500; hotelatak@hotmail.com; İnönü Caddesi 38; s/d/tr TL30/45/60) Between the otogar and the clock tower, Atak's rooms have bathrooms and are a reasonable choice for one night.

Hotel Sarıgül (☎ 224 2012; Azap Ahmet Sokak 18; s/d/tr TL45/60/70; 📺) On a side street near the clock tower, this is a hotel befitting a provincial capital, with kitschy decor throughout the bar, basement disco, first-floor restaurant (mains TL7 to TL12), backgammon room and dingy internet area.

Anitta Otel (☎ 213 8515; www.anittahotel.com, in Turkish; İnönü Caddesi 80; s/d/tr TL70/120/160; 📺 📺) Çorum might be the place to splurge on a good hotel, as the city's grandest digs are good value for money, with prices including access to the swimming pool and hamam. Rooms have glass-fronted minibars, plasma TVs and profuse mirrors.

Katipler Konağı (☎ 224 9651; Karakeçili Mahallesi, 2 Sokak 20; mains TL6-11; ☎ 11am-9pm) This restaurant is spread across two floors of a restored Ottoman house. Highlights include the mulberry juice and filling local starters (TL3 to TL7) such as *çatal asi* (lentil and wheat soup) and *keşkek* (roasted wheat, chicken, red pepper and butter). To find it from Hotel Sarıgül, turn left, cross the road and turn right; turn right on to the side street behind the mosque, turn left and it's on the right.

Getting There & Away

Being on the main Ankara-Samsun highway, Çorum has good bus connections. Regular buses go to Alaca (TL4, 45 minutes), Amasya (TL7, two hours), Ankara (TL15, four hours), Kayseri (TL20, 4¼ hours), Samsun (TL15, three hours) and Sungurlu (TL5, 1¼ hours).

AMASYA

☎ 0358 / pop 74,400

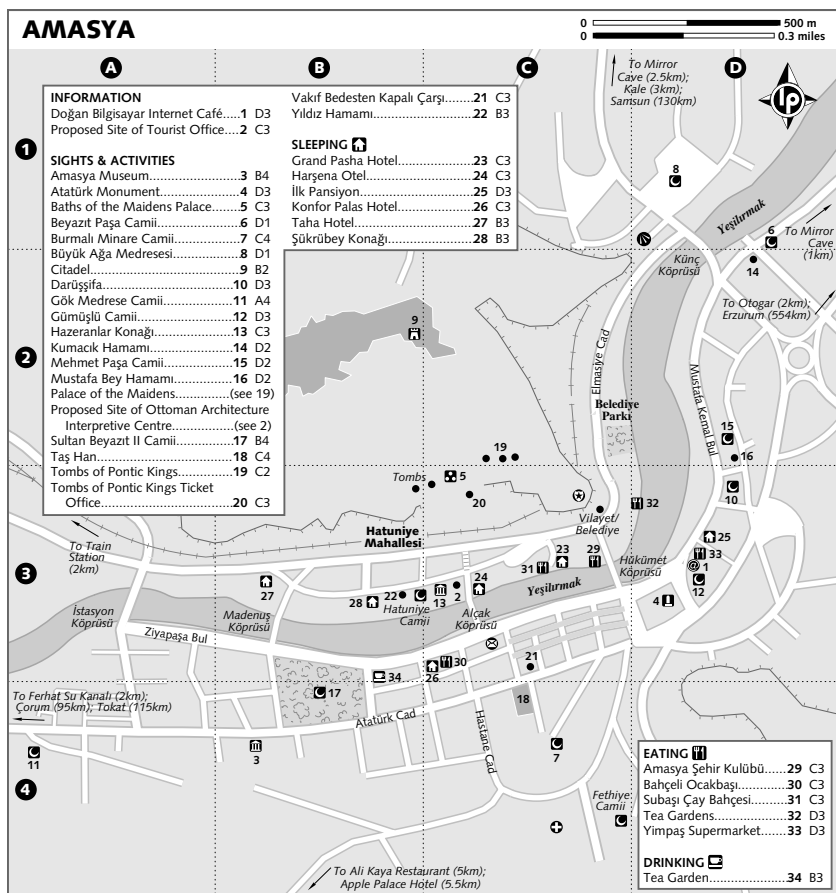
Amasya is certainly not the only Turkish town to have realised the value of its Ottoman houses, but not even Safranbolu can rival its eastern counterpart's location. The half-timbered mansions line the Yeşilirmak River, their balconies bulging over the brown water and gazing across at the whippersnappers in the new town. There is as much to gawp at above Amasya's minarets and *medreses*, with Pontic tombs carved into the wrinkly cliff faces below the citadel's lofty perch. A tunnel worms between two of the tombs, looking like a Pontic log flume, and the valley feels like a fairy-tale Ottoman kingdom. Wandering a narrow valley where a succession of empires left their marks, the historical fantasies that fill your head are interrupted only when a train chugs between the old town and the castle rock.

History

Called Hakmış by the Hittites, the Amasya area has been inhabited continuously since around 5500 BC. Alexander the Great conquered Amasya in the 4th century BC, then it became the capital of a successor kingdom ruled by a family of Persian satraps (provincial governors). By the time of King Mithridates II (281 BC), the Kingdom of Pontus entered a golden age and dominated a large part of Anatolia from its HQ in Amasya.

During the latter part of Pontus' flowering, Amasya was the birthplace of Strabo (c 63 BC to AD 25), the world's first geographer. Having travelled in Europe, west Asia and North Africa, Strabo wrote 47 history and 17 geography books. Though most of his history books have been lost, we know something of their content because many other classical writers quoted him. He left an account of Amasya under Roman rule, which began here in 70 BC.

Amasya's golden age continued under the Romans, who named it a 'first city' and used it as an administrative centre for rulers such



as Pompey. It was Julius Caesar's conquest of a local town that prompted his immortal words 'Veni, vidi, vici' – 'I came, I saw, I conquered'. After Rome came the Byzantines, the Danışmend Turks, the Seljuks, the Mongols and the national republic of Abazhistan. In Ottoman times, Amasya was an important military base and testing ground for the sultans' heirs; it also became a centre of Islamic study, with as many as 18 *medreses* and 2000 theological students by the 19th century.

After WWI, Atatürk met his supporters here and hammered out the basic principles of the Turkish struggle for independence, which were published in the Amasya Circular. The monument in the main square commemorates the meeting and depicts the unhappy state of

Anatolian Turks before the revolution. Each year, Amasyalılar mark the revolutionary rendezvous with a week-long art and culture festival.

Orientation & Information

The otogar is at the northeastern edge of town and the train station at the northwestern edge. It's 2km from either to the main square, marked by the statue of Atatürk and a bridge across the river. The majority of everyday amenities are on the south bank of the river, but the north bank is the prettiest part of town, with the tombs of the Pontic kings, most of the Ottoman half-timbered houses and the castle. You may want to take a dolmuş or taxi to and from the otogar and train station; otherwise everything is within walking distance.

Despite the signs, there's no tourist office, but there are plans to open one near Hazeranlar Konağı. **Doğan Bilgisayar Internet Café** (Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı 10; per hr TL1; ☎ 7.30am-2am) is just north of the main square.

Sights & Activities

PONTIC TOMBS

Looming above the northern bank of the river is a sheer rock face with the conspicuous rock-cut **Tombs of the Pontic Kings** (Kral Kaya Mezarları; admission TL3; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-6.30pm). The tombs, cut deep into the limestone as early as the 4th century BC, were used for cult worship of the deified rulers. There are more than 20 (empty) tombs in the valley (nicknamed Kings' Valley).

Climb the steps from the souvenir stalls to the ticket office. Just past the office the path divides: turn left to find the **Baths of the Maidens Palace**, built in the 14th century and used until the 19th century, and, through a rock-hewn tunnel, a couple of tombs. Turn right to find more tombs and the remnants of the **Palace of the Maidens** (Kızlar Sarayı). In the cliff behind the terrace are several more tombs. You'll have to tackle an assault course of disintegrating rock-cut stairs and ledges to get to them, but the views over the town make the effort worthwhile. You can walk around the tombs to see how they have been cut away from the rock face, but beware of couples in dark corners!

Another Pontic tomb, the **Mirror Cave** (Aynalı Mağara), sits apart from the others, northeast of Amasya. One of the finest tombs, its name derives from the glaring effect produced by the sun on its pale facade. Although built during Pontic times, it's likely the cave was later used as a chapel by the Byzantines, who painted the fast-fading frescoes. With a Greek inscription high on the facade, this is one of the few tombs with any type of adornment.

The cave is 4km from the main square (TL10 return in a taxi). Follow the Yeşilirmak north and cross it on Künc Köprüsü, then look for the signpost on your right after a few hundred metres; Mirror Cave is 3km before Ziyaret.

CITADEL

Above the tombs is the *kale* (citadel) or Harşena castle, perched precariously atop rocky Mt Harşena and offering magnificent

views down the valley. The remnants of the walls date from Pontic times, perhaps around King Mithridates' reign, but a fort stood here from the early Bronze Age. The castle was destroyed and repaired by several empires, including the Danişmend Turks. It had eight defensive layers, descending 300m to the Yeşilirmak, and a tunnel with 150 steps cut into the mountain. On a ledge just below the citadel is an old Russian cannon, fired during Ramazan to mark the end of the daily fast.

The castle is being renovated and is popular for a family day out, but travellers of either sex are advised not to go up unaccompanied later in the day. To reach the citadel, cross Künc Köprüsü and follow the Samsun road for about 1km to a street on the left marked 'Kale'. It's 1.7km up the mountainside to a small car park, then another steep 15-minute climb to the summit, marked by a flagpole.

AMASYA MUSEUM

Amasya's **museum** (☎ 218 4513; Atatürk Caddesi; admission TL3; ☎ 8.15am-noon & 1-4.45pm Tue-Sun) packs in Ottoman artefacts including vibrant banners, unwieldy manuscripts, and an armoury of flintlock guns, gunpowder flasks and inscribed daggers. Displays cover crafts such as rope-making, and wooden doors from Amasya's Gök Medrese Camii show the progression between Seljuk and Ottoman carving. The extensive collection also covers earlier periods; look out for the famous Statuette of Amasya, a bronze figure of the Hittite storm god Teshub, with conical hat and almond-shaped eyes.

Outside, a tiled Seljuk tomb in the garden contains a unique collection of mummies dating from the 14th-century İlkhan period. The bodies, mummified without removing the organs, were discovered beneath the Burmalı Minare Cami. None of it's for squeamish or young eyes, although, touchingly, one ruler is accompanied by his son, daughter and concubine.

HATUNİYE MAHALLESİ

Immediately north of the river, the Hatuniye Mahallesi is Amasya's wonderful neighbourhood of restored old Ottoman houses, interspersed with good modern reproductions to make a harmonious whole.

Just past the steps up to the Pontic Tombs is the **Hazanlar Konağı** (admission TL3; ☎ 8.15am-noon & 1-4.45pm Tue-Sun), constructed in 1865 and restored in 1979. Hasan Talat, the

THE LEGEND OF FERHAT & ŞİRİN

Amasya is the setting for one of Turkey's best-loved folk tales, the tragic love story of Ferhat and Şirin.

In its simplest form, it's the Eastern equivalent of Romeo and Juliet. The young *nakis* (wall painting) craftsman Ferhat falls in love with Şirin, the sister of sultan-queen Mehmene Banu, but the sultana disapproves of the match, so she demands that the young suitor carve a channel through the mountains to bring water to her drought-struck city. In the course of his Herculean labours, Ferhat hears that his beloved has died and kills himself in grief; Şirin, very much alive, finds his body and commits suicide in her turn. When they're buried together, tears flow from the graves and bring Amasya the water it so desperately needs.

Of course, as with all legends, there's no definitive telling of the story; all kinds of interpretations of the myth have been offered over the years, in print and on stage or screen. Celebrated playwright Nazım Hikmet offers a more complex reading, in which the lovers are undone by Ferhat's stubborn refusal to abandon his ill-fated project, turning it from a superhuman feat of love into an all-consuming act of pride and folly.

Elsewhere, you might come across the much-performed Karagöz puppet rendition, where the lovers achieve a happy ending by killing a wicked witch. Jale Karabekir's 2001 feminist stage version removes Ferhat entirely, defining him through absence in the fears and desires shaping the two sisters at the heart of the story.

Whichever reading you prefer, Amasya is the place to come to ponder the poignant lessons of the story amid the epic scenery that inspired it. A statue of the two lovers can be seen on the south bank of the river in town, and the Ferhat Su Kanalı, a late-Hellenic water channel, feeds the imagination perfectly. It runs through the Ferhatarası area alongside Atatürk Caddesi, beginning some 2km southwest of town.

accountant of governor-poet Ziya Paşa, built the mansion for his sister, Hazeran Hanım. The restored rooms are beautifully furnished in period style, with a refined feel to their chandeliers and carved wood, and have models to illustrate their use. The Directorate of Fine Arts gallery in the basement has changing exhibitions and there are plans to open an Ottoman architecture interpretive centre nearby.

HAMAMS

Amasya has several venerable hamams that are still in operation. Attached to Hatuniye Camii, the **Yıldız Hamamı** (Star Hamam; wash & massage TL13) was built by a Seljuk commander in the 13th century and restored in the 16th century. On the northern side of the Darüşşifa is the 1436 Ottoman **Mustafa Bey Hamamı** (wash & massage TL6), while not far away is the 1495 **Kumack Hamamı** (wash & massage TL13). All are open from about 6am to 10am and 4pm to 11pm for men; from 10am to 4pm for women.

OTHER SIGHTS

You could spend a very pleasant couple of hours exploring Amasya's minor sights on both banks of the river. The advantage of the

south bank is that you can see the scenic north bank from it, especially at night, when the castle and rock tombs are artily lit in neon. The bulk of Amasya's old religious buildings are also on this side of the river.

South of the River

At the northeastern end of the south bank, near Künc Köprüsü, is the **Beyazıt Paşa Camii** (1419). The early-Ottoman mosque follows a twin-domed plan that was a forebear in style to Bursa's famous Yeşil Cami.

Follow the river southwest and you'll come to the pretty **Mehmet Paşa Camii**, built in 1486 by Lala Mehmet Paşa, one of Sultan Beyazıt II's viziers (ministers). Don't miss the embroidered marble *mimber* (pulpit). The complex originally included the builder's tomb, an *imaret* (soup kitchen), *tabhane* (hospital), hamam and *handan* (inn).

Continue along the river and on the left you'll see the **Darüşşifa** (Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı; 1309) or Bimarhane. With its intricately carved portal, it was built as a mental hospital by İlduş Hatun, wife of the İlkhaniid Sultan Olcaytu, and may have been the first place to try to treat mental disorders with music. The İlkhans were the successors to Genghis Khan's

Mongols, who had defeated the Anatolian Seljuks. Their architecture reflects motifs borrowed from many conquered peoples, and the building is based on the plan of a Seljuk *medrese*. Today the building is often used for exhibitions, concerts and events.

A bit further along the river is Amasya's main square with its imposing memorial to the War of Independence. Perched on a rise to the east of the square, the boxy mosque with a wooden dome is the **Gümüüslü Camii** (Silvery Mosque; 1326). The town's earliest Ottoman mosque, it was rebuilt in 1491 after an earthquake, in 1612 after a fire, and again in 1688, then added to in 1903 and restored yet again in 1988.

If you keep walking west and head inland from the river you'll come to the 15th-century **Vakıf Bedesten Kapalı Çarşı** (Covered Market), still in use today. Keep heading west along Atatürk Caddesi and on the left you'll see the partly ruined **Taş Han** (1758), an Ottoman caravanserai. Behind it is the Seljuk **Burmali Minare Camii** (Spiral Minaret Mosque). It was rebuilt in 1590 after an earthquake, and following a fire in 1602, when its wooden minaret was superseded by the current stone structure with elegant spiral carving.

Keep walking west and you'll come to the graceful **Sultan Beyazıt II Camii** (1486), Amasya's largest *külliye* (mosque complex), with a *medrese*, fountain, *imaret* and *muvakkihan* (astronomer's house). The mosque's main door, mihrab (niche indicating the direction of Mecca and pulpit are made of white marble and its windows feature *kündekari* (interlocking wooden carving).

Finally, you'll reach the 13th-century **Gök Medrese Camii** (Mosque of the Sky-Blue Seminary), built for Seljuk governor Seyfettin Torumtay. The *eyvan* (vaulted hall) serving as its main portal is unique in Anatolia, while the *kümbet* (domed tomb) was once covered in *gök* (sky-blue) tiles.

North of the River

Across Künç Köprüsü is the impressive **Büyük Ağa Medresesi** (1488). With an octagonal layout, rarely seen in Ottoman *medrese* architecture, it was built by Sultan Beyazıt II's chief white eunuch Hüseyin Ağa, or Grandagha. It still serves as a seminary for boys who are training to be *hafız* (theologians who have memorised the entire Quran) and is not open to the public.

Sleeping BUDGET

Like Safranbolu, Amasya is one of those places where it's worth paying a bit more to stay in a real Ottoman house, but at least one budget option is far from terrible.

Taha Hotel (☎ 218 2675; Hazeranlar Sokak; s/d/tr TL25/50/75) This tidy hotel is friendly enough, though no English is spoken, and it offers a budget way to stay in the old town.

Konfor Palas Hotel (☎ 218 1260; www.konforpalas.com in Turkish; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 2c; s/d/tr TL40/65/85) This enthusiastically titled hotel's rooms are comfortable enough if you overlook the stained carpets and minor design flaws. It has a central location, right next to the cafés; choose a back or side room to avoid ambient noise.

İlk Pansiyon (☎ 218 1689; ilkpansiyon@hotmail.com; Hitit Sokak 1; s/d/tr TL40/65/85) An oasis of history in Amasya's new town, this restored Ottoman mansion has authentic-feeling, characterful rooms. The airy, spacious salons have low-lying beds and simple bathrooms. The rickety box room off the leafy courtyard is fine in summer but draughty in winter.

MIDRANGE

Grand Pasha Hotel (☎ 212 4158; www.grandpashahotel.com; Tevfik Hafız (Çıkmazı) 5; s/d TL50/100) This hotel in a 140-year-old riverside mansion is one of the best deals in town, with bright white beds on colourful rugs. There are plenty of Ottoman quirks beneath the high ceilings and a tempting bar-restaurant in the green courtyard.

Şükriübe Konakı (☎ 212 6285; www.sukrueykonagi.com.tr; Hazeranlar Sokak 55; s/d/tr TL55/100/150) Another good-value option, Şükriübe has pleasantly simple rooms with bathrooms and TVs perched on wooden stands or tables. The real highlight is the balconies with wooden stools and views of the tombs or the river below. The restaurant also has views across the Yeşilirmak and the friendly manager speaks good English.

Harşena Otel (☎ 218 3979; info@harsenaotel.com; PTT Karşısı; s/d/tr TL75/120/150; 🚶🏻) Some choices are harder than others. Will you go for the smart but unexceptional modern building, or a mellow, yellow room in the creakingly authentic old house overlooking the river? Well, duh. In case you're undecided, there's a courtyard and café-bar-restaurant in the old part, too.

TOP END

Apple Palace Hotel (☎ 219 0019; www.applegrup.com; Vermiş Sokak 7; s/d/tr TL110/210/280; 🚶🏻🚶🏻🚶🏻) On

the hillside south of the river, Amasya's four-star hotel overlooks the town and the Pontic tombs. The building is in need of a paintbrush in places, but the rooms are comfortable and there are spectacular views from the balconies. Facilities range from a billiards room to an outdoor pool, and buses shuttle up and down the hill.

Eating & Drinking

As well as the hotels listed above, there are a few reasonable cafés and restaurants in Hatuniye Mahallesi and a smattering of more basic options around town. Amasya is famed for its apples, which give autumn visitors one more thing to sink their teeth into.

Bahçeli Ocakbaşı (☎ 218 5692; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı; mains TL4-5) You can gaze up at the tombs from this café, one of half a dozen *lokantas* competing amiably for business in a lively, crowded courtyard.

Yimpaş Supermarket (☎ 212 7184; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 16; mains TL6) More than just a place to buy groceries, the big new Yimpaş has a rooftop café for light meals and ravine views.

Amasya Şehir Kulübü (☎ 218 1013; mains TL10; ☎ 11am-11pm) Downstairs from the smarter Amasya Şehir Derneği, this restaurant is popular for its food and balconies, which overlook the river next to the Hükümet Köprüsü. The menu includes meze, pizza, pide, Tokat kebab and the onion-laden *Izgara köfte*, which is recommended unless you are a Ferhat trying to woo his Şirin (or visa versa).

Ali Kaya Restaurant (☎ 218 1505; Çakallar Mevkii; mains TL12; ☎ 12-11pm) The best time to visit this simple licensed restaurant above Amasya is at sunset, when you can recharge after the steep climb with meze while taking in views of town and the tombs. Taxis will ferry you up for TL8.

The riverside **Subaşı Çay Bahçesi** (Tevfik Hafız Çıkmazı), opposite the Grand Pasha Hotel, is a popular tea garden. Several pleasant tea gardens also line the Yeşilirmak around Belediye Parkı and Sultan Beyazıt II Camii.

Getting There & Away

Amasya is not far south of the busy Ankara-Samsun highway, so buses are frequent. You should be able to jump off buses when they pass through – or just to the northeast of – the town centre en route to the otogar. Leaving, some bus companies have ticket offices on the main square and they provide *servis* buses from there to the otogar.

A number of companies have daily services to locations including Ankara (TL30, five hours), Çorum (TL10, two hours), İstanbul (TL40, 10 hours), Kayseri (TL35, eight hours), Malatya (TL35, eight hours), Nevşehir (TL50, nine hours), Samsun (TL10, two hours), Sivas (TL25, 3½ hours) and Tokat (TL10, two hours).

To get to Safranbolu, the cheapest option is to take an early-morning minibus to Gerede, alight at the Karabük junction and flag down a bus to Safranbolu, probably via Karabük. It's a long day; travelling via Ankara is easier.

Amasya **train station** (☎ 218 1239; ☎ 4am-10pm) is served by daily trains between Samsun (4.53am and 2.09pm, three hours, TL6) and Sivas (11.27am, 5½ hours, TL11).

TOKAT

☎ 0356 / pop 128,000

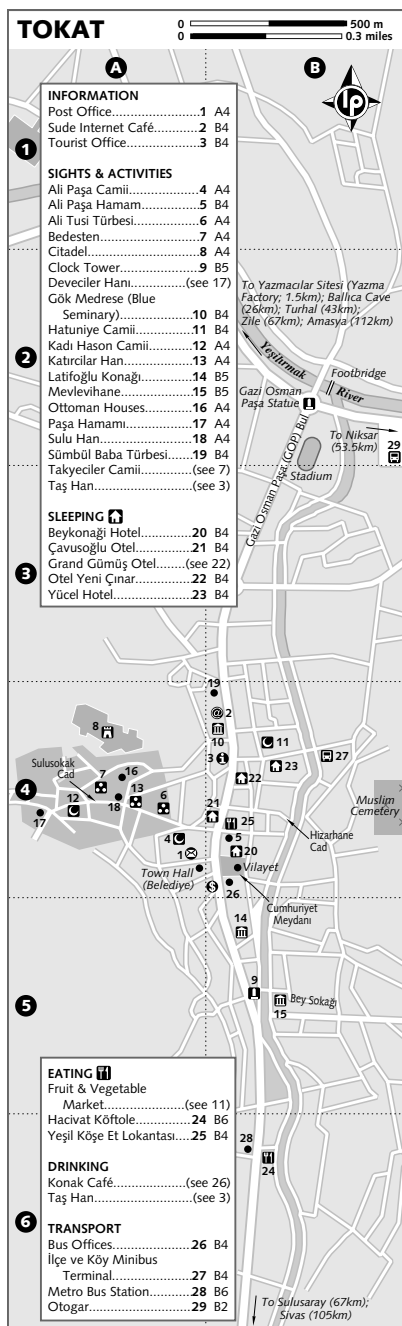
Like Amasya, Tokat has a riverside location and mosques, mansions, hamams and *hans* built under various rulers, all overlooked by rocky promontories and an ancient fort. Unfortunately, it lacks Amasya's charm, but you can console yourself by tucking into a Tokat kebab, the succulent feast of lamb, aubergine, tomato, peppers and garlic. This is the best place in the world to try the dish; if you are a carnivore, you should be very excited.

The whole town is thought to have risen by up to 5m between the 13th and 20th centuries, as rain and floods washed silt and debris into the valley, but architectural treats such as Gök Medrese and Alı Paşa Hamam are thankfully above ground. It is worth spending a night here, to see the citadel disappearing into the dark sky above the illuminated dome of Alı Paşa Camii.

History

Tokat's history features an inevitable roll-call of Anatolian conquerors. The Hittites and Phrygians, the Medes and the Persians, the empire of Alexander the Great, the Kingdom of Pontus, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Danişmend Turks, the Seljuks and the Mongol İlkhaniids all marched through here.

By the time of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, Tokat was Anatolia's sixth-largest city and on important trade routes; the approach roads are littered with Seljuk bridges and caravanserais. However, the Mongols and their subordinates the İlkhaniids reversed the trend



around the mid-13th century, leaving the city disinherited.

Only in 1402, under the Ottomans, did Tokat resume its role as an important trading entrepot, agricultural town and copper-mining centre. Gazi Osman Paşa even rose from a poor Tokat background to become one of the empire's greatest generals, and the main street here bears his name.

Significant non-Muslim populations (Armenian, Greek, Jewish) were in charge of Tokat's commerce until the cataclysm of WWI, and there's still a small but active Jewish community.

Orientation

The town centre is Cumhuriyet Meydanı, a large square where you'll find the *vilayet konağı* (provincial government headquarters), *belediye*, PTT and Ali Paşa Hamamı. There is a cluster of ATMs around Çavuşoğlu Otel nearby.

Looming above the town is a rocky outcrop crowned by the obligatory ancient fortress. Beneath it, many of the town's Seljuk and Ottoman relics dot the area around Sulusokak Caddesi, which used to be the main street.

The main street, Gazi Osman Paşa (universally abbreviated to GOP) Bulvarı, runs north from the main square past the Gök Medrese to a traffic roundabout. The otogar is 1.7km from Cumhuriyet Meydanı. Local minibuses leave from the İlçe ve Köy minibüs terminal a few blocks east of GOP Bulvarı; across the canal from Hatuniye Camii and the fruit and vegetable market.

Information

Sude Internet Café (Yazıcı Sokak 4; per hr TL1;

☎ 8am-11pm)

Tourist office (☎ 211 8252; Taş Han, GOP Bulvarı 138/1;

☎ 8am-5pm) An informative Tokat brochure is available and an English-speaking Fenerbahçe fan may be on hand to help out.

Sights & Activities

GÖK MEDRESE

Constructed by Pervane Muhinedin Süleyman, a local potentate, after the fall of the Seljuks and the coming of the Mongols, the 13th-century **Gök Medrese** (Blue Seminary; GOP Bulvarı; admission TL3; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) has also served as a hospital, a school and, today, Tokat's museum.

Very few of the building's *gök* (sky-blue) tiles are left on the facade, but there are

enough on the interior courtyard walls to give an idea of what it must have looked like in its glory days.

Although the courtyard is the highlight of the museum, the collection packs in Roman tombs, Seljuk carpets, Hellenic jewellery and local folkloric dresses, with informative signs in English. Look out for Bronze Age and Hittite artefacts, icons and relics from Tokat's churches (including a Greek Orthodox representation of John the Baptist with his head on a platter) and dervish ceremonial tools and weapons (fancy a 'mystic awl' or 'stones of submission?'). An ethnographic section on costume and textiles explains the local art of *yazma* (headscarf) making.

The seminary contains the **Tomb of 40 Maidens** (Kırkızlar Türbesi; 1275), actually an assembly of 20 tombs, possibly of the seminary's founders, though another theory has it that they are the tombs of 40 nurses who worked here.

The grounds also contain Ottoman and Seljuk tombstones and some statues, including one of an unnamed 19th-century chaplain of the East India Company, 'known as a man of god'.

TAŞ HAN & AROUND

Virtually next door to the Gök Medrese is the 17th-century **Taş Han** (GOP Bulvarı; ☎ 8am-8pm), an Ottoman caravanserai and workshop with a café in the courtyard. Two floors of shops sell a mixture of local garb and copperware, and paintings of sailboats and doe-eyed puppies.

Behind the Taş Han are streets lined with old half-timbered **Ottoman houses**. There are more shops in this area; some of the designs you see on *yazmas*, kilims and carpets were assimilated from Afghan refugees who settled here during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

In the fruit and vegetable market, across GOP Bulvarı from the Taş Han, stand the **Hatuniye Camii** and ruined *medrese*, dating from 1485 and the reign of Sultan Beyazıt II.

A few hundred metres north of the Taş Han, behind some plastic sandal stands on the same side of the street, look out for **Sümbül Baba Türbesi** (1291), an octagonal Seljuk tomb. Beside it a road leads up around 1km to the **citadel**, built in the 5th century and restored during the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. Little remains but the fine view, and women travellers should not go up alone.

ALİ PAŞA HAMAM

Ask around the steam rooms of Turkey's thousands of hamams, and you'll probably find that one of Tokat's biggest exports is its expert masseurs. Assuming there are actually any left in town, it seems like the perfect excuse to go for a scrub 'n' rub at the wonderful **Ali Paşa Hamam** (GOP Bulvarı; ☎ 5am-11pm for men, 9am-5pm for women). These baths, under domes studded with glass bulbs to admit natural light, were built in 1572 for Ali Paşa, one of the sons of Süleyman the Magnificent. They have separate bathing areas for men and women, and the full works should cost around TL15.

LATIFOĞLU KONAĞI

South of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, the splendid 19th-century house **Latifoğlu Konağı** (GOP Bulvarı) was being restored at the time of research. On previous visits we found it to be a fine example of Ottoman architecture (see the boxed text, p458), well worth a visit if it has reopened by the time you pass through Amasya.

SULUSOKAK CADDESİ

Many of Tokat's old buildings still survive, though in ruins, along Sulusokak Caddesi, which was the main thoroughfare before the perpendicular Samsun-Sivas road was improved in the 1960s.

Sulusokak Caddesi runs west from the north side of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, past **Ali Paşa Camii**, which was built at the same time as the nearby hamam and has classical Ottoman features on its grand central dome. Continue along the road and on the right you'll see the tiny **Ali Tusi Türbesi** (631-1233), a brick Seljuk work that incorporates some fine blue tiles. Next up, also on the right, is a crumbling wooden caravanserai, **Katırcılar Han**, with some vast pots lying in its courtyard.

Further on, on the same side of the road, the brick-and-wood **Sulu Han** is painted turquoise and white. The 17th-century Ottoman caravanserai provided accommodation for merchants visiting the *bedesten* (covered market), the remains of which are next door. Nearby, the 16th-century **Takyeciler Camii**, displaying the nine-domed style of great Ottoman mosques, is as at one end of a line of structures currently being restored.

On the other side of Sulusokak Caddesi, past the 14th-century **Kadı Hasan Camii**, is the Ottoman **Paşa Hamamı** (1434). Also on this side of the street is the 16th-century Ottoman

Deveciler Hanı, one of Tokat's finest caravanserai. The two-storey structure had a covered barn and a residential section with a porch and a courtyard.

OTHER SIGHTS

To the south of the centre don't miss the 19th-century **clock tower** with the numerals on its faces still in Arabic, and a watch-repair shop (what else?) at the bottom.

Just across the canal, among Ottoman houses and cobbled lanes, is the **Mevlevihane** (Bey Sokağı; ☎ 9am-6pm), a 19th-century building built as a dervish lodge and dancing hall, before serving as a women's prison in the 20th century. The exhibits include carpets and prayer rugs, Ottoman perfume bottles and candlesticks, and Qurans from down the centuries. However, the real action is upstairs, where the mechanical whirring dervishes are made slightly less laughable by the explanatory displays. With its reddish wood exterior, the house itself is stunning.

Sleeping

Yücel Hotel (☎ 212 5235; Çekenli Caddesi 20; s/d/tr TL35/70/105; 📺 📺) Still cheap, but with some major plusses – the fifth-floor restaurant and the hamam (included in the price). Rooms have minibars, TVs and cheap furniture, and there's a digital TV and internet area in the lobby. Prices can be haggled down.

Çavusoğlu Otel (☎ 213 0908; GOP Bulvarı 168; s/d/tr TL45/65/80) This smart, central bargain has pistachio bathrooms, TVs, hairdryers and a breakfast buffet.

Otel Yeni Çınar (☎ 214 0066; GOP Bulvarı 167; s/d/tr TL45/70/90) A good range of rooms with nice bathrooms and vistas over the hills from the back. The first-floor restaurant does a good line in grills, including one of the best Tokat kebabs in town (TL12.50).

Grand Gümüş Otel (☎ 214 1331; GOP Bulvarı; s/d/tr TL45/70/115; 📺 📺) Virtually opposite the Taş

Han, this good-value option offers comfortable rooms with stripy duvets and excellent facilities, including minibars and TVs. The bar-restaurant has violet tablecloths and a series of meal deals (TL5 to TL10).

Beykonağı Hotel (☎ 214 3399; www.otelbeykonağı.com; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; s/d TL55/85; 📺 📺) A relative newcomer, this 40-room three-star curries favour with compact but smart rooms in light shades and orchid art, plus bar and restaurant.

Eating & Drinking

Kebaps and *köfte* are the usual fare here, with eateries clustered around the fruit and vegetable market near the Hatuniye Camii. More upmarket restaurants and *pastanes* are found around Cumhuriyet Meydanı.

Hacıvat Köftöle (☎ 212 9418; GOP Bulvarı 275; set menus TL4-5; ☎ 9am-11pm) Opposite the Metro bus office, Hacıvat is popular with a young crowd. Magazine cuttings and photos decorate the stone walls, allowing you to swot up on modern Turkish culture as you wait for one of the top-value daily set menus.

Yeşil Köşe Et Lokantası (GOP Bulvarı 1; mains TL5-6; ☎ 6.30am-10pm) This takeaway joint and café, popular at lunchtime for kebaps, moussaka and *çorba*, is one of the best places in town to try a Tokat kebab (TL12). There is quieter seating upstairs.

Konak Café (☎ 214 4146; GOP Bulvarı; ☎ 9am-11pm) At the rear of a restored Ottoman building, this friendly café has multilevel outdoor seating.

Taş Han (GOP Bulvarı) The café in the caravanserai's courtyard is a popular spot for a nargileh, although we can't recommend the cappuccino.

Shopping

At one time Tokat had a monopoly on the right to make *yazmas*, the richly colourful

AUBERGINE DREAM

The Tokat kebab is made up of skewers of lamb and sliced eggplant (aubergine) hung vertically, then baked in a wood-fired oven. Tomatoes and peppers, which take less time to cook, are baked on separate skewers. As the lamb cooks, it releases juices that baste the aubergine. All these goodies are then served together with a huge fist of roasted garlic, adding an extra punch to the mix.

It's almost worth coming to Tokat just to sample the dish, and in fact you might have to; it's inexplicably failed to catch on in menus much further afield than Sivas or Amasya, and Tokat's chefs do it best anyway. Standard aubergine döners that crop up are a far cry from the glorious blow-out of the original.

block-printed headscarves traditionally worn by many Turkish women, and it's still a good place to buy souvenir scarves or printed tablecloths. For years the Gazioglu Han (block-printers' *han*) near the Gök Medrese was the centre of the trade. However, these days the materials are prepared in a modern **factory** (Yazmaçılar Sitesi; Rodi Halisahah), opposite the Küçük Sanayi Sitesi 4km northwest of the town centre; you can visit to see the cloths being made.

Getting There & Away

Tokat's small otogar is about 1.7km north-east of the main square. Bus companies should provide a *servis* to ferry you to/from town; otherwise, if you don't want to wait for a dolmuş, a taxi will cost about TL10. A ride across town in one of the dolmuşes that regularly trundle along GOP Bulvarı costs about TL0.70.

The otogar is not as busy as some, especially in the morning (there are, for example, fewer buses to Sivas than you might expect), so it's a good idea to book ongoing tickets well ahead, especially on Friday. Several bus companies have ticket offices around Cumhuriyet Meydanı.

There are regular buses to Amasya (TL10, two hours), Ankara (TL30, 6½ hours), Erzurum (TL40, 8½ hours), İstanbul (TL50, 12 hours), Samsun (TL20, four hours) and Sivas (TL12, 1¾ hours).

Local minibuses leave from the separate İlçe ve Köy terminal.

AROUND TOKAT

Ballica Cave

The **Ballica Cave** (Ballica Mağarası; ☎ 0356-261 4236; adult/child TL4/2; ☞ daylight hr), 26km west of Tokat, is one of Turkey's most famous caves. The limestone labyrinth, 3.4 million years old and 8km long (680m is open to the public), bristles with rock formations such as onion-shaped stalactites and mushroom-like stalagmites. Smugglers used to live here and the squeaks of the current residents, dwarf bats, add to the atmosphere created by dripping water.

Unfortunately, the ambience is quickly lost if you share the metal walkways with many others. With its copious lighting and signposts, the cave can feel like an underground theme park; exploring Safranbolu's less-visited Bulak Mencilis Mağarası (p461) is more rewarding.

There are a lot of steps both inside and outside the cave, although many schoolchildren manage it without snapping their pencils. The views from the café at the entrance are stunning, but its toilets are not the cleanest in Anatolia.

Returning, pause in Pazar to inspect the beautiful remains of a Seljuk *han* on the way out of town on the Tokat road. You can wait outside it for minibuses to Tokat.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

To get to Ballica, take a minibus from Tokat's İlçe ve Köy minibus terminal to Pazar (TL2.50, 40 minutes), where a taxi will be waiting to run you up the winding country road to the cave (8km). Drivers exploit their captive audience and you may have to pay as much as TL20 return (including an hour's waiting time). If you are driving from Amasya, Pazar is signposted 14km south of the main road to Tokat.

SIVAS

☎ 0346 / pop 294,000

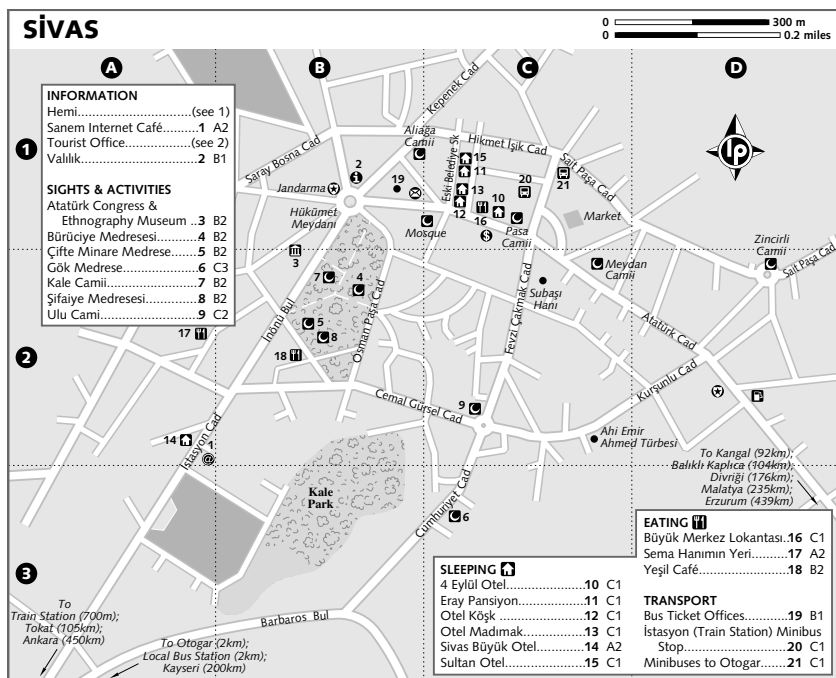
Sivas lies at the heart of Turkey politically as well as geographically, thanks to its role in the run-up to the War of Independence. The Congress building resounded with plans, strategies and principles as Atatürk and his adherents discussed their great goal of liberation. The Turkish hero commented: 'Here is where we laid the foundations of our republic'.

The city was a sometime capital under the Seljuks and the centre of the Ottomans' vast province of Rum. They were just two of the empires that left stately piles in and around the park near Hükümet Meydanı. At night, as the red flags on the *meydanı* compete for attention with the spilit minarets nearby, İnönü Bulvarı might be Central Anatolia's slickest thoroughfare outside Ankara. The occasional horse and cart gallops down the boulevard, past the plasma screens, clothes emporiums and neon, like a ghost of Anatolia past.

With a colourful, sometimes tragic history and some of the finest Seljuk buildings ever erected, Sivas is a good stopover en route to the wild east and the best base for visiting the diverse attractions to the southeast.

History

The tumulus at nearby Maltepe shows evidence of settlement as early as 2600 BC, but



Sivas itself was probably founded by the Hittite king Hattushilish I in around 1500 BC. It was ruled in turn by the Assyrians, Medes and Persians, before coming under the sway of the kings of Cappadocia and Pontus. Eventually the city fell to the Romans, who called it Megalopolis; this was later changed to Sebastea, then shortened to Sivas by the Turks.

Byzantine rule lasted from AD 395 to 1075, when the city was seized by the Danişmend emirs. The Seljuks and the Danişmends slogged it out for supremacy between 1152 and 1175 until the Seljuks finally prevailed, only to be dispossessed by the Mongol invasion of 1243. The İlhanids succeeded the Mongols, and the city was then grabbed by the Ottomans (1398), Tamerlane (1400) and the Ottomans again (1408).

More recently Sivas was the location for the famous Sivas Congress in September 1919. Seeking to consolidate Turkish resistance to the Allied occupation and partition of his country, Atatürk arrived here from Samsun and Amasya, and gathered delegates to confirm decisions made at the Erzurum

Congress. The two congresses heralded the War of Independence.

Orientation

The centre of town is Hükümet Meydanı (or Konak Meydanı), just in front of the attractive *valilik* (government building). The main sights, hotels and restaurants are all within walking distance.

The train station, Sivas Garı, is about 1.5km southwest of Hükümet Meydanı along İnönü Bulvarı/İstasyon Caddesi. The otogar and local bus station are 2km south of the centre. Bus offices and banks with ATMs are just east of Hükümet Meydanı, along Atatürk Caddesi.

Information

Hemi (☎ 0506-273 4662; Tekel Sokak) This local sports association, which has English-speaking members, can give advice on local skiing, scuba diving, rafting, canoeing, climbing and paragliding; the latter is popular on the hills above the city's university.

Sanem Internet Café (Tekel Sokak; per hr TL1; ☎ 8.30am-midnight)

Tourist office (☎ 222 2252; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) In the European Union office on the first floor of the *valilik*; the helpful representatives give out brochures.

Sights

KALE CAMII & BÜRÜCIYE MEDRESESI

Most of Sivas' Seljuk buildings are in the park just south of Hükümet Meydanı. Here you'll also find the **Kale Camii** (1580), a squat Ottoman work constructed by Sultan Murat III's grand vizier Mahmut Paşa.

Just east of the Kale Camii, reached through a monumental Seljuk gateway, is the **Bürüciye Medresesi**, built to teach 'positive sciences' in 1271 by the Iranian businessman Muzaffer Bürücerdi, whose tiled tomb is inside. The tea garden in the courtyard, where exhibitions are held, is good for a çay in the evening, when spotlights illuminate the building.

ŞİFAIYE MEDRESESI

Across the park from the Bürüciye Medresesi is one of the city's oldest buildings, the **Şifaiye Medresesi** (1218). It was one of the most important medical schools built by the Seljuks and was once Anatolia's foremost hospital.

Look to the right as you enter the courtyard to see the porch that was walled up as a tomb for Sultan İzzettin Keykavus I, who commissioned the building before he died of TB.

The decoration features stylised sun/lion and moon/bull motifs, beautiful blue Azeri tile work and a poem in Arabic, composed by the sultan. The main courtyard has four *eyvans*, with sun and moon symbols on either side of the eastern one.

ÇİFTE MİNARE MEDRESE

Commissioned by the Mongol-İlkhanid vizier Şemsettin Güveyni after defeating the Seljuks at the battle of Kosedag, the **Çifte Minare Medrese** (Seminary of the Twin Minarets; 1271) has a *çifte* (pair) of mighty minarets. In fact, that's about all that is left, along with the elaborate portal and facade. Stand on the path between the Çifte and Şifaiye *medreses* to see the difference made by half a century and a shift in power.

ULU CAMI

The town's other sights are southeast of Hükümet Meydanı along Cemal Gürsel and Cumhuriyet Caddesi; walk just past the southern end of the park and turn left onto Cemal Gürsel Caddesi.

The **Ulu Cami** (Great Mosque; 1197) is Sivas' oldest significant building, and one of Anatolia's oldest mosques. Built by the Danişmends, it's a large, low room with a

forest of 50 columns. The super-fat leaning brick minaret was added in 1213. Inside, 11 handmade stone bands surround the main praying area and the ornate *mihrab* was discovered during renovations in 1955. It has a certain old-Anatolian charm, slightly marred by modern additions.

GÖK MEDRESE

From the Ulu Cami, turn right (south) on Cumhuriyet Caddesi and you will soon see the twin minarets of the glorious **Gök Medrese** (Sky-Blue Seminary). This was built in 1271 at the behest of Sahib-i Ata, the grand vizier of Sultan Gıyasettin Keyhüsrev III, who funded Konya's Sahib-i Ata mosque complex. The facade is exuberantly decorated with tiles, brickwork designs and carving, covering not just the usual inlaid portal but the walls as well. The blue tile work on the minarets gave the school its name.

ATATÜRK CONGRESS & ETHNOGRAPHY MUSEUM

Opposite the Kale Camii is the imposing Ottoman school building that hosted the Sivas Congress in 1919. Today it's the **Atatürk Congress & Ethnography Museum** (Atatürk Kongre ve Etnografya Müzesi; İnonü Bulvarı; admission TL3; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun), entered around the back.

The extensive Ottoman ethnographical collection, displayed on the ground floor, features a fine selection of kilims and carpets, including some impressive examples showing local weaving style; a pillowcase-making demonstrator (another local craft), a 12th-century wooden *mimber* from Divriği's Ulu Cami (see p483); and dervish ceremonial beads, weapons and mystics' caps.

Upstairs, the Congress Hall is preserved as it was when the Sivas Congress met, with photos of the delegates displayed on old school desks. You can see Atatürk's bedroom and the cable room that played an important role in developments, with replicas of missives laying out the principles of the Turkish Republic. The hallway is lined with pictures of Atatürk and his cohorts and a photocopy of his passport.

Sleeping

Most hotels are within a few minutes' walk of the junction of Atatürk Caddesi and Eski Belediye Sokak.

Eray Pansiyon (☎ 223 1647; Eski Belediye Sokak 12; www.eraypansiyon.com; dmp per person TL20) German is spoken at this friendly pension, where smart

marble stairs and sturdy brown doors lead to clean six-bed dorms.

Otel Madımak (☎ 221 8027; Eski Belediye Sokak 2; s/d/tr TL60/90/115) This rebuilt 1st-floor hotel has comfortable digs with a burgundy theme, right down to the chairs and tiled bathrooms. Be aware, however, that the name has sad resonances (see boxed text, below).

4 Eylül Otel (☎ 222 3799; www.dorteylulotel.com; Atatürk Caddesi 15; s/d/tr TL70/120/150; 🚽) The discreet entrance next to the Akbank ATM sets the tone for this low-key hotel, where rooms have dark wood, minibars concealed in tables and paintings of Ottoman mansions. There is a rooftop restaurant and the popular hotel offers a similar experience to the Sultan for less money. Breakfast is TL17.50.

Sultan Otel (☎ 221 2986; www.sultanotel.com.tr; Eski Belediye Sokak 18; s/d/tr TL90/140/170) The perfect mix of quality and price, with ample extras including a roof bar-restaurant with live music, safes built into the TV cabinets, extensive breakfast buffets and free hot drinks. Oh, and the bathrooms are virtually as big as the rooms themselves. Popular with business travellers midweek.

Sivas Büyük Otel (☎ 225 4763; www.sivasbuyukotel.com; İstasyon Caddesi; s/d/tr TL120/190/225; 🚽) Plain corridors and stately rooms characterise the city's original luxury hotel, a chunky seven-storey block laced with marble and mosaics. Refreshingly, one thing it's not short on is space. Breakfast is TL15.

Otel Köşk (☎ 225 1724; www.koskotel.com; Atatürk Caddesi 7; s/d/tr TL130/180/220; 🚽) You can't get

much more modern than this towering glass block. From the fire-engine-red seats in reception to the laminate floors, glass washbasins and curvy showers in the rooms, slick design rules. Even the views of the dive bar across Atatürk Caddesi manage to be cool thanks to the neon Efes sign.

Eating

On summer evenings everyone promenades along İnönü Bulvarı and Atatürk Caddesi, where stalls sell everything from *gözleme* to corn on the cob. There is a fruit and vegetable market around Subaşı Hanı.

our pick Sema Hanımın Yeri (☎ 223 9496; İstasyon Caddesi Öncü Market; mains TL2.50-5; 🕒 8am-midnight) In this rustic, wood-panelled restaurant, the welcoming Madame Sema serves home-cooked food such as *içli köfte* (meatballs stuffed with spices and nuts). Watch *gözleme* being made while trying three dishes for TL3.

Yeşil Café (☎ 222 2638; Selçuklu Sokak; mains TL4-8; 🕒 7.30am-11pm) This friendly café-restaurant might not look like much, but the tiny balcony upstairs has amazing views of spotlit twin minarets. What's more, the menu's enough to distract you from them, with schnitzel, grills, spaghetti, macaroni and milkshakes.

Büyük Merkez Lokantası (☎ 223 6434; Atatürk Caddesi 13; mains TL7; 🕒 4am-midnight) This *lokanta* is popular at lunchtime, when you may find yourself sharing a table with an office clerk. The menu includes döners and the house speciality *sebze Sivas kebabı* (TL14.50), a local take on the Tokat kebab.

MADIMAK MEMORIAL

The original Madımak Hotel was the site of one of modern Turkey's worst hate crimes, on 2 July 1993, when 37 Alevi intellectuals and artists were burned alive in a mob arson attack. The victims, who had come for a cultural festival, included Aziz Nesin, the Turkish publisher of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. A crowd of 1000 extreme Islamist demonstrators gathered outside the hotel after Friday prayers to protest about the book's publication, and in the ensuing chaos the hotel was set alight and burned to the ground.

The Madımak has since reopened (with a kebab shop in the foyer!), although many human rights groups are calling for the site to be turned into a memorial and museum. The government has already rejected this plan once, sparking accusations that some ministers were directly involved or at least sympathetic to the arsonists.

As well as a memorial, many protesters want to see the trial of the Madımak suspects reopened, believing they were let off too lightly. Thirty-one death sentences, upheld in a 2001 appeal, were commuted to life in prison when Turkey abolished the death sentence the following year.

The scars from the tragedy show no signs of fading, and Sivas' name has become synonymous with the incident. Demonstrations and vigils take place in Sivas on the anniversary of the attack; in 2008, tens of thousands of people attended a service to mark the 15th anniversary.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Bus services from Sivas aren't all that frequent, so you may want to book ahead at one of the ticket offices in town. From the otogar, TL8 from the city centre by taxi, there are fairly regular services to Amasya (TL20, 3½ hours), Ankara (TL30, six hours), Diyarbakır (TL35, eight hours), Erzurum (TL30, seven hours), İstanbul (TL50, 13 hours), Kayseri (TL16, three hours), Malatya (TL20, four hours), Samsun (TL30, six hours) and Tokat (TL12, 1½ hours).

'Yenişehir-Terminal' dolmuşes (TL0.70) pass the otogar and end their run just uphill from the Paşa Camii, a five-minute walk from the hotels on Atatürk Caddesi and Eski Belediye Sokak.

TRAIN

Sivas **station** (☎ 221 7000) is a major rail junction for both east-west and north-south lines. The main daily east-west expresses, the *Doğu Ekspresi* and the *Erzurum Ekspresi*, go through Sivas to Erzurum and Kars (16 hours) or back to Ankara and İstanbul (22 hours); the *Güney Ekspresi* (from İstanbul to Kurtalan) runs four times a week in either direction and the *Vangölü Ekspresi* (between İstanbul and Tatvan) runs twice in either direction. There are also local services to Kangal, Divriği and Amasya (five hours).

'İstasyon' dolmuşes run from the station to Hükümet Meydanı and the Paşa Camii.

AROUND SİVAS

Balıkli Kaplica

Visiting the health spa at **Balıkli Kaplica** (Hot Spring with Fish; ☎ 469 1151; www.balikli.org, in Turkish; visitor/patient TL5/30; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-6pm) is a satisfyingly unusual experience from the moment you enter Kangal, 12km southwest of the resort. The tiny service town gave its name to the black-faced, pale-bodied Kangal dogs (see p74) seen throughout Turkey and a statue of a spiky-collared mutt guards the approach from Sivas.

A shepherd boy is said to have discovered the healing qualities of the local mineral water, which is high in the dermatologically curative element selenium. Amazingly, the warm water is inhabited by 'doctor fish', which not only live at a higher temperature than most fish can survive at, but nibble fingers, toes and any other body part you offer

them. The fish supposedly favour psoriasis-inflicted skin and the spa attracts patients from all over the world, but the swarming school happily gets stuck into any patch of flesh. It is wonderfully therapeutic to dangle your feet in the water and feel nature giving you a thorough pedicure, with the nippers tickling and then soothing like tiny vacuum cleaners.

The spa complex has six sex-segregated pools set amid trees, and a **hotel** (r&ste TL80-125; ☎) with a buffet restaurant, a café above the mineral water, a weighing machine and some massage chairs. Rates depend on whether you define yourself as 'normal' or 'ill'; the recommended course for genuine patients is eight hours a day in the pool for three weeks! If you are staying over, full board costs TL35 extra; half-board TL20.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibuses from the terminal beside Sivas' otogar run to Kangal (TL5, one hour), from where you can take a taxi to the resort (TL20). Balıklı Kaplica offers group transfers from Sivas.

Kangal train station is served by three daily services to/from Sivas (TL2.50, 4¼ hours) and the daily *Doğu Ekspresi* and *Erzurum Ekspresi* to/from Erzurum (TL10, 11 hours).

DİVRİĞİ

☎ 0346 / pop 14,500

Arriving in Divriği from the west, the village has an edgy feel, perhaps because it lies on the edge of Anatolia's distinct eastern region. It is also a dead end, in a valley between 2000m-plus mountains, and you must detour 100km to the northwest to continue into eastern Anatolia by car or bus. But there are three good reasons to come here: a trio of 780-year-old stone doorways, which are so intricately carved that some say their craftsmanship proves the existence of god. The doors belong to one of Turkey's finest old religious structures, Divriği's mosque-medrese complex, which is remarkably undervisited despite its inclusion on the Unesco World Heritage list.

Divriği village occupies a fertile valley and still has an agricultural economy. Its population is mostly made up of Alevis (see p55). The narrow streets conceal a busy market, PTT, internet café, some simple restaurants and a couple of banks with ATMs; there are petrol stations on the main road.

Sights

ULU CAMI & DARÜŞŞİFA

Uphill from the town centre stands the beautifully restored **Ulu Cami and Darüşşifa** (Grand Mosque & Mental Hospital; admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm), adjoining institutions founded in 1228 by the local emir Ahmet Şah and his wife, the lady Fatma Turan Melik.

It's the ornamental gateways overlooking the village that put Divriği on the map (and the World Heritage list). The entrances to both the Ulu Cami and the Darüşşifa are truly stupendous, their reliefs densely carved with a wealth of geometric patterns, stars, medallions, textured effects and intricate Arabic inscriptions, all rendered in such minute detail that it's hard to imagine the stone ever started out flat. It's the tasteful Ottoman equivalent of having a cinema in your house, the sort of thing only a provincial emir with more money than sense could have dreamt of building.

Inside the hospital, built on an asymmetrical floor plan, the stone walls and uneven columns are completely unadorned. The octagonal pool in the court has a spiral runoff, similar to the one in Konya's Karatay Medresesi (see p487), which allowed the tinkle of running water to break the silence of the room and soothe patients' nerves. A platform raised above the main floor may have been for musicians who likewise soothed the patients. The building was used as a *medrese* from the 18th century.

The mosque is also very simple inside, with 16 columns, carpets, some fresco fragments and a plain *mihrab*. The valley views from the terrace outside are equally impressive, as is the entrance facing the cliff-top castle, with more detailed stonework.

The complex is generally open during the listed hours, but if you find it locked, ask around and someone will probably find the key. Friday afternoon is a good time to come, as you should be able to visit following noon prayers. Wear trousers or similar rather than shorts and refrain from photographing Muslims during prayer.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

As this was once an important provincial capital you will notice several **kümbets** (Seljuk tombs) scattered about town, including Ahmet Şah's tomb, near the Ulu Cami.

Trailing down the sides of the hill above the Ulu Cami are the ruined walls of a 9th-

century **castle**, crowned by the crumbling *aslan burç* (lion bastion). The road heading behind the Ulu Cami and Darüşşifa leads up to the castle.

Getting There & Away

Minibuses from Sivas to Divriği (TL10, three hours), 176km southeast, depart from the minibus terminal. Services are infrequent and you may speed up your journey by changing in Kangal. It is possible to get there and back in a day from Sivas, but if you do not start early, you may have to stay the night at Balıklı Kaplıca (opposite).

A return taxi ride from Sivas, stopping in Balıklı Kaplıca and Divriği, costs about TL170. Take some ID as there is sometimes a police checkpoint between Kangal and Divriği.

The train station is about 1.5km north of the Ulu Cami, served by trains including the daily *Doğu Ekspresi* and *Erzurum Ekspresi* between Sivas (TL5, 4¼ hours) and Erzurum (TL10, 7½ hours).

Both trains and Nazar Turizm buses serve İstanbul and Ankara, though it's a long way to come for a day trip!

Drivers should note that there's no through road to Erzincan from Divriği, forcing you to head northwest to Zara and the highway before you can start driving east.

KONYA

☎ 0332 / pop 762,000

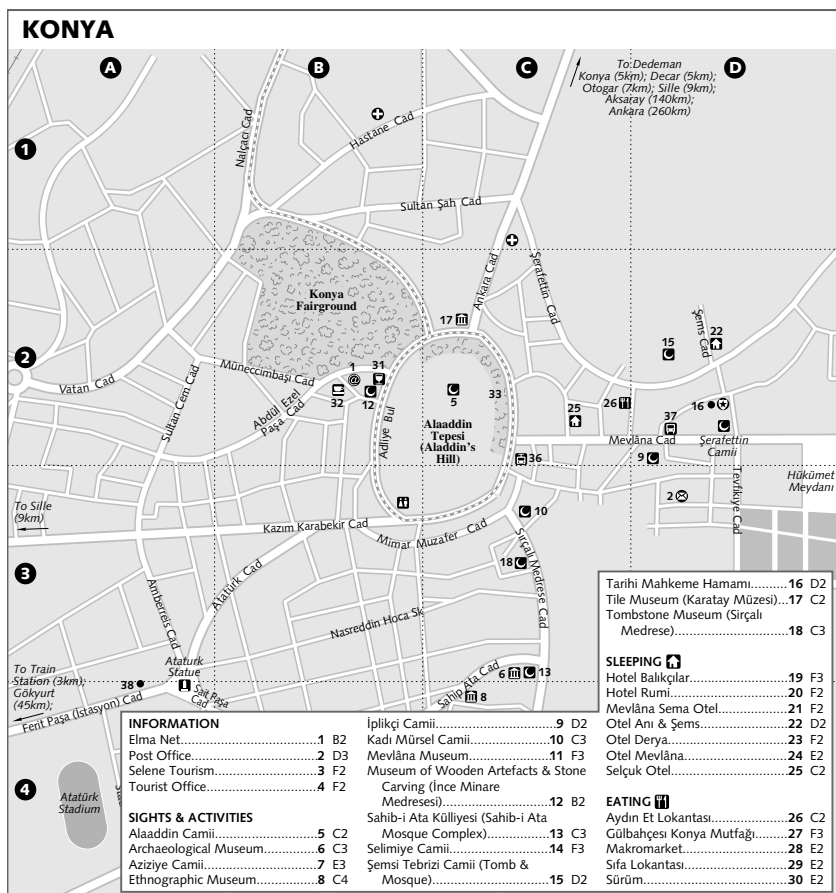
Turkey's equivalent of the 'Bible Belt', Konya treads a delicate path between its historical significance as the home town of the whirling dervish orders and a bastion of Seljuk culture on the one hand, and its modern importance as an economic boom town on the other.

The city derives considerable charm from this juxtaposition of old and new. Ancient mosques and the mazy market district rub up against contemporary Konya around Alaaddin Tepesi, where hip-looking university students talk religion and politics in the tea gardens.

If you are passing through this region, say from the coast to Cappadocia, bear in mind that the wonderful shrine of the Mevlâna is one of Turkey's finest and most characteristic sights.

History

Almost 4000 years ago the Hittites called this city 'Kuwanna'. It was Kowania to the



Phrygians, Iconium to the Romans and then Konya to the Turks. Iconium was an important provincial town visited several times by Sts Paul and Barnabas. There are few remains of its early Christian community, but Sille (p492) has several ruined churches.

From about 1150 to 1300 Konya was capital of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, which encompassed most of Anatolia. The Seljuk sultans endowed Konya with dozens of fine buildings in an architectural style that was decidedly Turkish, but had its roots in Persia and Byzantium.

Traditionally Konya lay at the heart of Turkey's rich farming 'bread basket', but these days light industry and pilgrimage tourism are at least as important.

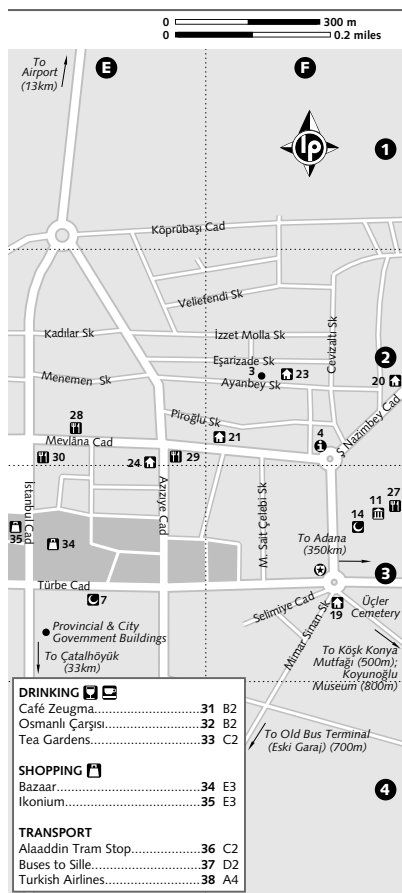
Orientation

The city centre is Alaaddin Tepesi (Aladdin's Hill), encircled by a ring road. From the hill, Mevlana Caddesi goes east 700m to Hükümet Meydanı (Government Plaza) – where you'll find the provincial and city government buildings, the main PTT, several banks with ATMs and a jewellery black market – then continues to the tourist office and the Mevlana Museum.

The otogar, connected by regular trams, is 7km due north of the centre; the local bus terminal (Eski Garaj) is 1km to the south.

Information

Elma Net (Çinli Sokak 14; per hr TL1; ☎ 10am-11pm) Internet café.



Selene Tourism (☎ 353 6745; www.selene.com.tr; Ayanbey Sokak 22b) Organises tours and, during summer, dervish performances for groups.

Tourist office (☎ 353 4020; Mevlâna Caddesi 21; ☎ 8.30am–5.30pm Mon–Sat) Gives out a city map and a leaflet covering the Mevlâna Museum; can also organise guides for the museum.

Dangers & Annoyances

Konya has a long-standing reputation for religious conservatism; you'll see more women in religious headscarves here than in many other towns, and you'll find Friday observed as a day of rest in a way it rarely is elsewhere. None of this should inconvenience you, but take special care not to upset the pious and make sure you're not an annoyance! If you

visit during Ramazan (see p664) don't eat or drink in public during the day, as a courtesy to those who are fasting.

Ironically, non-Muslim women seem to encounter more hassle in this bastion of propriety than in many other Turkish cities, and dressing conservatively will help you avoid problems. Men can wander around in shorts without encountering any tension, but you may prefer to wear something longer to fit in with local customs.

If you want a guide for the Mevlâna Museum, try to arrange it through the tourist office rather than hiring one of the carpet salesmen who loiter at the museum entrance.

Male travellers have reported being propositioned in the Tarihi Mahkeme Hamami.

Sights & Activities

MEVLÂNA MUSEUM

For Muslims and non-Muslims alike, the main reason to come to Konya is to visit the **Mevlâna Museum** (☎ 351 1215; admission TL2; ☎ 9am–6.30pm Tue–Sun, 10am–6pm Mon), the former lodge of the whirling dervishes. On religious holidays the museum (really a shrine) may keep longer hours.

In Celaleddin Rumi, the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum produced one of the world's great mystic philosophers. His poetry and religious writings, mostly in Persian, the literary language of the day, are among the most beloved and respected in the Islamic world. Rumi later became known as Mevlâna (Our Guide) to his followers.

Rumi was born in 1207 in Balkh (Afghanistan). His family fled the impending Mongol invasion by moving to Mecca and then to the Sultanate of Rum, reaching Konya by 1228. His father, Bahaeddin Veled, was a noted preacher, known as the Sultan of Scholars, and Rumi became a brilliant student of Islamic theology. After his father's death in 1231, he studied in Aleppo and Damascus, returning to live in Konya by 1240.

In 1244 he met Mehmet Şemseddin Tebrizi (Şemsi Tebrizi or Şems of Tabriz), one of his father's Sufi (Muslim mystic) disciples. Tebrizi had a profound influence on Rumi but, jealous of his overwhelming influence on their master, an angry crowd of Rumi's disciples put Tebrizi to death in 1247. Stunned by the loss, Rumi withdrew from the world to meditate, and wrote his greatest poetic work, the 25,000-verse *Mathnawi* (*Mesnevi* in Turkish).

He also wrote many aphorisms, *rubā'i* and *ghazal* poems, collected into his 'Great Opus', the *Divan-i Kebir*.

Tolerance is central to Mevlāna's teachings, as in this famous verse:

Come, whoever you may be,
Even if you may be
An infidel, a pagan, or a fire-worshipper,
come.
Ours is not a brotherhood of despair.
Even if you have broken
Your vows of repentance a hundred
times, come.

Rumi died on 17 December 1273, the date now known as his 'wedding night' with Allah. His son, Sultan Veled, organised his followers into the brotherhood called the Mevlevi, or whirling dervishes.

In the centuries following Mevlāna's death, over 100 dervish lodges were founded throughout the Ottoman domains. Dervish orders exerted considerable conservative influence on the country's political, social and economic life, and numerous Ottoman sultans were Mevlevi Sufis (mystics). Atatürk saw the dervishes as an obstacle to advancement for the Turkish people and banned them in 1925, but several orders survived on a technicality as religious fraternities. The Konya lodge was revived in 1957 as a 'cultural association' intended to preserve a historical tradition.

For Muslims, this is a very holy place, and more than 1.5 million people visit it a year, most of them Turkish. You will see many people praying for Rumi's help. When entering, women should cover their heads and shoulders, and no one should wear shorts.

A guide is not essential, but if you want to hire one, recruit a professional through the tourist office rather than engaging one of the carpet salesmen at the entrance. Guides are available in many languages; when we visited, English speakers were scarce, but it is worth checking at the tourist office to see if this has changed. You can avoid the worst of the crowds by visiting during the week and getting there first thing in the morning.

Visiting the Museum

The lodge is visible from some distance, its fluted dome of turquoise tiles one of Turkey's most distinctive sights. After walking through

a pretty courtyard with an ablutions fountain and pictures narrating the Mevlāna story, you remove your shoes and pass into the Tilavet (Quran reading) room, also known as the calligraphy room for its calligraphic displays.

At the entrance to the mausoleum, the Ottoman silver door bears the inscription, 'Those who enter here incomplete, will come out perfect'. Entering the mausoleum, look out for the big bronze *Nisan tası* (April bowl) on the left. April rainwater, vital to the farmers of this region, is still considered sacred and was collected in this 13th-century bowl. The tip of Mevlāna's turban was dipped in the water and offered to those in need of healing. Also on the left are six sarcophagi belonging to Bahaeddin Veled's supporters who followed him from Afghanistan.

Continue through to the part of the room directly under the fluted dome. Here you can see **Mevlāna's Tomb** (the largest), flanked by that of his son Sultan Veled and those of other eminent dervishes. They are all covered in velvet shrouds heavy with gold embroidery, but those of Mevlāna and Veled bear huge turbans, symbols of spiritual authority; the number of wraps denotes the level of spiritual importance. Bahaeddin Veled's wooden tomb stands on one end, leading devotees to say Mevlāna was so holy that even his father stands to show respect. There are some 65 sarcophagi on the platform, not all visible; 55 belong to Mevlāna's family (with green turbans) and 10 to lodge leaders (with white turbans).

Mevlāna's tomb dates from Seljuk times. The mosque and *semahane*, where whirling ceremonies were held, were added later by Ottoman sultans (Mehmet the Conqueror was a Mevlevi adherent and Süleyman the Magnificent made charitable donations to the order). Selim I, conqueror of Egypt, donated the Mamluk crystal lamps.

The small mosque and *semahane* to the left of the sepulchral chamber contain exhibits such as musical instruments, the original copy of the *Mathnawi*, Mevlāna's prayer rug, and a 9th-century gazelle-skin Christian manuscript. There is a casket containing strands of Mohammed's beard, with holes in the display case to smell the hair's scent of roses, and a copy of the Quran so tiny that its author went blind writing it. This was actually a mark of honour in the Ottoman Empire, which prized miniature art; grains of rice inscribed with

prayers are also on display. Look to the left of the *mihrab* for a *seccade* (prayer carpet) bearing a picture of the Kaaba at Mecca. Made in Iran of silk and wool, it's extremely fine, with some three million knots (144 per square centimetre).

The rooms surrounding the courtyard were once the dervishes' offices and quarters – one near the entrance is decorated as it would have been in Mevlâna's day, with mannequins dressed as dervishes. Look out for the wooden practice board, used by novice dervishes to learn to whirl.

Across from the museum entrance is the **Selimiye Camii**, built between 1566 and 1574 when Sultan Selim II was the governor of Konya.

OTHER MUSEUMS

Museum of Wooden Artefacts & Stone Carving

On the western side of Alaaddin Tepesi is the İnce Minare Medresesi (Seminary of the Slender Minaret), now the **Museum of Wooden Artefacts and Stone Carving** (Tas ve Ahşap Eserler Müzesi; ☎ 351 3204; Adliye Bulvarı; admission TL3; 🕒 9am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm). It was built in 1264 for Seljuk vizier Sahip Ata, who may have been trying to outdo the patron of the contemporary Karatay Medresesi (see below).

The extraordinarily elaborate doorway, with bands of Arabic inscription, is more impressive than the small building behind it. The octagonal minaret in turquoise relief is over 600 years old and gave the seminary its popular name. If it looks short, this is because the top was sliced off by lightning.

Inside, many of the carvings feature motifs similar to those used in tiles and ceramics. The Seljuks didn't heed Islam's traditional prohibition of human and animal images: there are images of birds (the Seljuk double-headed eagle, for example), humans, lions and leopards. The *eyvan* in particular contains two delightful carvings of Seljuk angels. The Ahşap Eserler Bölümü (Carved Wood Section) contains some intricately worked wooden doors.

Tile Museum (Karatay Müzesi)

Housed in a former Seljuk theological school, this **museum** (☎ 351 1914; Alaaddin Meydanı; admission TL3; 🕒 9am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm) was closed for restoration when we visited. The building was constructed in 1251–52 by Emir Celaeddin Karatay, a Seljuk general, vizier and statesman

who is buried in one of the corner rooms. The museum is well worth a look if it reopens before your visit; the outstanding collection of ceramics includes interesting octagonal Seljuk tiles.

Tombstone Museum (Sırçalı Medrese)

Several other Seljuk monuments lurk in the narrow warren of streets to the south of Alaaddin Tepesi. Look for the pint-sized Kadı Mürsel Camii, then turn down the side of it, opposite the brown school building with the blue sign. After a few minutes you'll come to another Seljuk seminary, the Sırçalı Medrese (Glass Seminary), named after its tiled exterior. Sponsored by the Seljuk vizier Bedreddin Muhlis, the 13th-century building houses a small **Tombstone Museum** (Mezar Anıtlar Müzesi; ☎ 353 4031; Sırçalı Caddesi; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm), with a collection of tombstones featuring finely carved inscriptions. The *eyvan* on the western side of the courtyard was used for classes; it is decorated with blue tiles and its arch has a band of particularly fine calligraphic tile work.

Archaeological & Ethnographic Museums

Beside the Sahib-i Ata Külliyesi, the **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 351 3207; Larende Caddesi; admission TL3; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun) is like a continuation of the museum at Çatalhöyük, with neolithic finds including the skeleton of a baby girl, clutching jewellery made of stone and bone. Artefacts range across the millennia, from chalcolithic terracotta jars to Hittite hieroglyphs, an Assyrian oil lamp shaped like a bunch of grapes, and bronze and stone Roman sarcophagi, one narrating the labours of Hercules in high-relief carvings.

Nearby, the dusty **Ethnographic Museum** (Larende Caddesi; admission TL3; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun) has a good collection of Ottoman craftwork, including some keys the size of 21st-century doors.

Koyunoğlu Museum

This little-visited **museum** (Kerimler Caddesi 25; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) contains the legacy of İzzet Koyunoğlu. The railway inspector built up his collection on his travels through Turkey.

Our heart goes out to the tired-looking stuffed pelican, but there is a wonderful variety of exhibits, encompassing prehistoric bones, rhino-horn rosaries, boxwood spoons

bearing words of wisdom about food, 19th-century carriage clocks, and old photos of Konya and whirling dervishes.

Ask the guards to unlock the recreated **Koyunoğlu Konya Evi**, which shows how a well-heeled Konyalı family lived a century ago. Izzet lived in the original building with US\$3 million of art around him.

The quickest way to the museum lies alongside the **Üçler Cemetery**. Carry straight on at the roundabout at the end of the cemetery, taking the road just to the left of the garage. If you decide to walk through the graveyard, only do so during the day when other people are about; women are advised not to walk through alone.

MOSQUES

Alaaddin Camii

Konya's most important religious building after the Mevlâna shrine, this Seljuk **mosque** (☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) bestrides Alaaddin Tepesi. You may be able to wander in outside the listed opening hours. Built for Alaaddin Keykubad I, Sultan of Rum from 1219 to 1231, the rambling 13th-century building was designed by a Damascene architect in Arab style. Over the centuries it was embellished, refurbished, ruined and restored.

Today, the mosque is entered from the east. The grand original entrance on the northern side incorporates decoration from earlier Byzantine and Roman buildings. The courtyard here features two huge Seljuk *türbes* (tombs), the left of which is the most impressive part of the complex, containing the blue-tiled tombs of 12th- and 13th-century notables.

The mosque's exterior is otherwise plain, but the interior has old marble columns surmounted with recycled Roman and Byzantine capitals. There's also a fine wooden *mimber* and an old marble *mihrab* framed by modern Seljuk-style blue-and-black calligraphy.

Other Mosques

A few blocks south of the Tombstone Museum, along Sırçalı Medrese Caddesi, is the **Sahib-i Ata Külliyesi** (Sahib-i Ata Mosque Complex; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm). Behind its requisite grand entrance with built-in minaret is the Sahib-i Ata Camii, originally constructed during the reign of Alaaddin Keykavus. Destroyed by fire in 1871, it was rebuilt in 13th-century style. The *mihrab* is a fine example of blue Seljuk tile

work. Alongside the mosque another grand gateway once led to a dervish lodge.

Dotted about town are other interesting mosques. The **Şemsi Tebrizi Camii**, containing the elegant 14th-century tomb of Rumi's spiritual mentor, is in a park just northwest of Hükümet Meydanı.

Originally built in the 1670s and destroyed in a fire, the **Aziziye Camii** was rebuilt in 1875 in late-Ottoman, baroque and rococo styles. Located in the bazaar, it has twin minarets with sheltered balconies, and a sign pointing out its interesting features.

On Mevlâna Caddesi, the **İplikçi Camii**, perhaps Konya's oldest mosque (1202), was built for the Seljuk vizier Şemseddin Altun-Aba. It is currently being restored and you can only see its plain brick exterior.

Festivals & Events

The annual **Mevlâna Festival** (☎ 353 4020) runs for a fortnight, culminating on 17 December, the anniversary of Mevlâna's 'wedding night' with Allah. Tickets (and accommodation) should be booked well in advance; contact the tourist office or Selene Tourism for assistance. If you can't get a ticket, other venues around town host dancers during the festival, although they are not of the same quality.

At other times of year, **semas** (☎ 352 8111; Aslanı Kışla; ☎ 8pm Sat) take place behind the Mevlâna Museum. Tickets to the one-hour performances are free and can be organised through travel agencies, hotels or the tourist office.

Sleeping

There's certainly no shortage of hotels in Konya, but the steady throughput of pilgrims can lead to high prices, and alcohol-stocked minibars are obviously not a common feature.

BUDGET

Otel Mevlâna (☎ 352 0029; Cengaver Sokak 2; s/d/tr from TL40/60/85) Across Mevlâna Caddesi from Otel Bera Mevlâna, this friendly central option is a good choice for backpackers of both sexes. Rooms have firm beds, fridges, bathrooms and kitschy paintings.

MIDRANGE

Mevlâna Sema Otel (☎ 350 4623; www.semaotel.com; Mevlâna Caddesi 67; s/d/tr TL50/75/100; 🍷) With a great position, some swanky decor and comfort-

DANCING WITH DERVISHES

The Mevlevi worship ceremony, or *sema*, is a ritual dance representing union with God; it's what gives the dervishes their famous whirl, and appears on Unesco's third Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Watching a *sema* can be an evocative, romantic, unforgettable experience. There are many dervish orders worldwide that perform similar rituals, but the original Turkish version is the smoothest and purest, more of an elegant, trancelike dance than the raw energy seen elsewhere.

The dervishes dress in long white robes with full skirts that represent their shrouds. Their voluminous black cloaks symbolise their worldly toms, their conical felt hats their tombstones.

The ceremony begins when the *hafız*, a scholar who has committed the entire Quran to memory, intones a prayer for Mevlâna and a verse from the Quran. A kettledrum booms out, followed by the plaintive sound of the *ney* (reed flute). Then the *şeyh* (master) bows and leads the dervishes in a circle around the hall. After three circuits, the dervishes drop their black cloaks to symbolise their deliverance from worldly attachments. Then one by one, arms folded on their breasts, they spin out onto the floor as they relinquish the earthly life to be reborn in mystical union with God.

By holding their right arms up, they receive the blessings of heaven, which are communicated to earth by holding their left arms turned down. As they whirl, they form a 'constellation' of revolving bodies, which itself slowly rotates. The *şeyh* walks among them to check that each dervish is performing the ritual properly.

The dance is repeated over and over again. Finally, the *hafız* again chants passages from the Quran, thus sealing the mystical union with God.

able, beige rooms, the Mevlâna Sema has a lot going for it. Ask for a room at the rear, away from noisy Mevlâna Caddesi.

Otel Derya (☎ 352 0154; Ayanbey Sokak 18; s/d/tr TL50/80/100; 🚽) Quiet and spotless, the Derya is a good choice for families and female travellers. Rooms are slightly bland, with pink bathrooms, TVs and minibars, but the management is friendly and efficient and overall it's recommended.

Otel Anı & Şems (☎ 353 8080; www.hotelani.com; Şems Caddesi 6; s/d/tr €30/45/60; 🚽) The mosque-side location may not look promising, but the interiors have a distinct charm. The rooms are worn but serviceable, with minibars and TVs, and there's an in-house travel agent.

Hotel Rumi (☎ 353 1121; www.rumihotel.com; Durakfakih Sokak 5; s/d/tr/ste €50/75/100/125; 🚽 📺) Boasting a killer position near the Mevlâna Museum, the stylish Rumi's rooms and suites have an abundance of curvy chairs, slender lamps and mirrors. The palatial breakfast room with views of the museum, the friendly staff and the hamam make this an oasis of calm in central Konya.

TOP END

Selçuk Otel (☎ 353 2525; www.otelselcuk.com.tr; Babalık Sokak 4; s/d/tr €60/100/125; 🚽) Both comfort and character are on offer at the Selçuk, where fish tanks part a sea of beige seats in the lobby.

Prices are high, but the facilities, decor and professional service are worth it.

Hotel Balıkçılar (☎ 350 9470; www.balikcilar.com; Mevlâna Karşısı 2; s/d/tr/ste €89/120/140/157; 🚽) The reception's Ottoman theme (it's styled as a cobbled street) doesn't continue in the rooms, but there are nice wooden touches. Facilities include a large lobby bar, restaurant, sauna, hamam and *sema* performances. Breakfast costs €12.

Dedeman Konya (☎ 221 6600; www.dedeman.com; Özalan Mahallesi, Selçuklu; s/d from €160/180; 🚽 📺 📺) Opposite the Kipa mall, the 18-floor Dedeman is impressive from the moment you step beneath the chandeliers in its reception. Attractions include a health club, live music in the top-deck bar-restaurant, and a patisserie and snack bar. The standard rooms are stronger on comfort than character, featuring plasma screens with pay TV, safes and minibars.

Eating

Konya's speciality is *fırın* kebab, slices of (hopefully) tender, fairly greasy oven-roasted mutton served on puffy bread. The city bakers also make excellent fresh pide topped with minced lamb, cheese or eggs, but in Konya pide is called *etli ekme* (bread with meat).

Be careful what you eat; if you ask a local to recommend a restaurant, they may mumble

darkly about food poisoning. Some restaurants around the Mevlâna Museum and tourist office have great views, but their food is not recommended.

The fast-food restaurants on Adilye Bulvarı, competing with the golden arches, are lively places for a snack, but check that the swift grub is thoroughly cooked.

RESTAURANTS

Gülbağçesi Konya Mutfağı (☎ 351 0768; Gülbağçesi Sokak 3; mains TL4-8; ☎ 8am-10pm) One of Konya's best restaurants, mostly because of its upstairs terrace with views of the Mevlâna Museum. Dishes include *yaprak sarma*, Adana kebab and *etli ekme*k. There are occasional *sema* performances.

Aydın Et Lokantası (☎ 351 9183; Şeyh Ziya Sokak 5e; mains TL4.50-7) This *lokanta*'s decor centres on a fake green oak tree with an ailing goldfish in the pool at its base, but the open kitchen is reassuring. You can try *etli ekme*k here and the menu has English translations.

Şifa Lokantası (☎ 352 0519; Mevlâna Caddesi 29; mains TL5-8) *Tandır kebab* tops Şifa's bill of standards. Service can be pretty rushed when it's busy, but at least there's a good view of the main drag.

Köşk Konya Mutfağı (☎ 352 8547; Mengüç Caddesi 66; mains TL8; ☎ 11am-10pm) Southeast of the centre, this excellent traditional restaurant is run by the well-known food writer Nevin Halıcı, who puts her personal twist on Turkish classics. The service is excellent and the outside tables rub shoulders with vine-draped pillars and a fragrant rose garden. The menu features some unusual dishes like the mouth-clogging dessert *höşmerim*.

For self-caterers, the **bazaar** (right) is the most exciting place to buy produce. Alternatively, there's a supermarket, **Makromarket** (Mevlâna Caddesi), and sugar addicts can satisfy their cravings at **Sürüm** (İstanbul Caddesi), a chocolate shop established in 1926.

Drinking

In summer few things could be more pleasurable than relaxing in one of the innumerable tea gardens dotting the slopes of Alaaddin Tepesi.

Osmanlı Çarşısı (☎ 353 3257; İnce Minare Sokak) Looking like an apple-smoke-spewing pirate ship, this early-20th-century house has terraces and seats on the street, where students talk politics or just inhale a lungful.

Café Zeugma (☎ 350 9474; Adilye Bulvarı 33; cover charge weekend TL3) With its backlit carvings and strobes, this cavernous cultural centre is popular with students for its live music.

Shopping

Konya's **bazaar** sprawls back from the modern PTT building virtually all the way to the Mevlâna Museum, cramming the narrow streets with stalls, roving vendors and the occasional horse-drawn cart. There's a concentration of shops selling religious paraphernalia and tacky souvenirs at the Mevlâna Museum end.

İkonium (☎ 350 2895; www.thefeltmaker.net; Bostan Çelebi Sokak 12a) Konya was traditionally a felt-making centre but the art is fast dying out in Turkey. Passionate *keçeki* (felt-maker) Mehmet and his Argentinean wife Silvia offer treats including op-art-style patterns and what might be the world's largest hand-decorated piece of felt.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are three flights every day to and from İstanbul with **Turkish Airlines** (☎ 321 2100; Ferit Paşa Caddesi; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1.30pm Sat).

The airport is about 13km northeast of the city centre; TL30 by taxi. Havaş was setting up a shuttle-bus service at the time of research; enquire at the tourist office.

BUS

Konya's otogar is about 7km north of Alaaddin Tepesi, accessible by tram from town (see opposite). Regular buses serve all major destinations, including Afyon (TL25, 3¼ hours), Ankara (TL20, four hours), İstanbul (TL45, 11½ hours), Kayseri (TL25, four hours) and Sivas (TL30, seven hours). There are lots of ticket offices on Mevlâna Caddesi and around Alaaddin Tepesi.

The *Eski Garaj* (Old Bus Terminal or Karatay Terminal), 1km southwest of the Mevlâna Museum, has services to local villages.

TRAIN

The **train station** (☎ 332 3670) is about 3km southwest of the centre. You can get to Konya by train from İstanbul Haydarpaşa (13½ hours) on the *Meram Ekspresi*, the *Toros Ekspresi* (İstanbul to Gaziantep) or the *İç Anadolu Mavi* (İstanbul to Adana), all via

Afyon. A new direct, high-speed train link between Konya and Ankara, scheduled to open in 2010, will trim the journey time from 10½ hours to 1¼ hours.

Getting Around

As most of the city centre sights are easily reached on foot, you need public transport only for the otogar or train station. To get to the city centre from the otogar take any tram from the east side of the station to Alaaddin Tepesi (30 minutes); tickets, which cover two people, cost TL2.20. Trams run 24 hours, with one per hour after midnight. A taxi costs around TL25.

There are half-hourly minibuses from the train station to the centre (TL1.25). A taxi from the station to Hükümet Meydanı costs about TL15.

Innumerable minibuses ply Mevlâna Caddesi if you're heading to the far end (TL1).

Cars can be rented from **Decar** (☎ 247 2343; Özalan Mahallesi, Selçuklu), based at the Dedeman Konya (see p489).

AROUND KONYA

Çatalhöyük

No, this isn't a hallucination brought on by the parched Konya plain. Rising 20m above the flatlands, the East Mound at **Çatalhöyük** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-5pm) is left over from one of the largest neolithic settlements on earth. Up to 8000 people lived here at Çatalhöyük's peak, about 9000 years ago, and the mound comprises 13 levels of buildings, each containing around 1000 structures.

Little remains of the ancient centre other than five excavation areas, which draw archaeologists from all over the world. If you visit between June and September, when the digs mostly take place, you might find an expert to chat to. At other times, the **museum** does a good job of explaining the site and the excavations, which began in 1961 under British archaeologist James Mellaart and have continued with the involvement of the local community. The museum's eight-minute video is worth watching before looking at the exhibits, which are mostly reproductions of finds now in Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations; including some of Anatolia's oldest pottery vessels, the world's oldest ceramic shaker and man-made mirror, and a representation of the mother

goddess. Mellaart's controversial theories about mother goddess worship here caused the Turkish government to close the site for 30 years.

Near the museum entrance stands the **experimental house**, a reconstructed mud-brick hut used to test various theories about neolithic culture. People at Çatalhöyük lived in tightly packed dwellings that were connected by ladders between the roofs instead of streets, and were filled in and built over when they started to wear out. Skeletons were found buried under the floors and most of the houses may have doubled as shrines. The settlement was highly organised, but there are no obvious signs of any central government system.

The guardian will happily show you the marquee-covered **south area**; a tip would probably be appreciated. With 21m of archaeological deposits, many of the site's most famous discoveries were made here. The lowest level of excavation, begun by Mellaart, is the deepest at Çatalhöyük and holds deposits left more than 9000 years ago. If you come during summer, you may be able to visit other excavation areas.

Çatalhöyük is one of the world's most famous archaeological sites, and one of the oldest town settlements ever discovered, but don't expect any towering monuments. However, you don't have to be an archaeologist to appreciate the romance and mystery of a site where, c 6000 BC, an egalitarian society lived, apparently without fighting a battle during its 1400-year lifespan.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

To get here by public transport from Konya, 33km northwest, get the Karkın minibus, which leaves the *Eski Garaj* at 9am, noon and 3pm. Get off at Kük Koy (TL2.50, 45 minutes) and walk 1km to the site, or you may be able to persuade the driver to take you the whole way. Going back, minibuses leave Kük Koy at noon, 3pm and 5pm.

Alternatively, take a minibus from *Eski Garaj* to Çumra (TL3, 45 minutes) and then hire a taxi from beside the otogar for the last 11km (TL35 return).

You should get going early on both routes to give yourself time to tour Çatalhöyük and catch the last minibus back to Konya. A taxi from Konya to the site and back will cost about TL70.

Gökyurt (Kilistra, Lystra)

A little piece of Cappadocia to the southwest of Konya, the landscape at Gökyurt is reminiscent of what you'll see in Güzeyurt or the Ihlara Valley: a gorge with dwellings and medieval churches cut into the rock face, but without the crowds.

St Paul is thought to have stayed here on his three Anatolian expeditions and the area has long been a Christian pilgrimage site; especially for 12 months from June 2008, declared by Pope Benedict XVI as 'the year of St Paul' to celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the saint's birth.

There's one particularly fine church cut completely out of the rock, but no frescoes. A trip out here makes a lovely half-day excursion, and the surrounding landscape is simply stunning.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The easiest way to get here from Konya, 45km away, is by car or taxi; the latter will charge TL100 return (including waiting time). There are several daily buses from Konya's *Eski Garaj* to Hatunsaray, 18km from Gökyurt, but taxis there are actually more expensive than from Konya as the drivers make the most of their captive audience. If enough Gökyurt villagers want to visit Konya, a minibus will travel to the city, and you can jump on the bus on its return journey.

Driving, you should take the Antalya road, then follow signs to Akören. After about 34km, and a few kilometres before Hatunsaray, look for a tiny brown-and-white sign on the right (marked 'Kilistra-Gökyurt, 16km'). Cyclists need to watch out for sheepdogs roaming about.

Sille

☎ 0332 / pop 2000

If you're looking for an excursion from Konya, head past the 'turtle crossing' road signs to the pretty village of Sille, a patch of green surrounded by sharp rocky hills. A rock face full of cave dwellings and chapels overlooks bendy-beamed village houses in several states of decay and a few bridges across the dry river.

The domed Byzantine **St Helen's Church** (Ayaelena Kilisesi), near the last bus stop, was reputedly founded by Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. It was completely restored in 1833; the vandalised and fast-fading frescoes date from 1880. Despite its later use as a WWI military depot and a clinic where

a German doctor attached artificial limbs, the church retains some of its old woodwork, including a broken pulpit and an iconostasis stripped of its icons. If you find it closed, ask at Sille Konak restaurant for the key.

On the hill to the north stands a small ruined chapel, the **Küçük Kilese**; it's worth the scramble up for the views over the village.

At **Sille Konak** (☎ 244 9260; mains TL5-9), a restored Greek house lovingly decorated by the family who run it, a team of headscarf-clad cooks rustles up home-cooked food. The owner will happily recommend dishes such as Konak kebab and *düğün* (soup with yoghurt, mint and rice, often served at weddings); order a selection, as portions are small. The restaurant is popular with coach parties, which can destroy the atmosphere.

There are a couple of cafés and a family restaurant at the entrance to the village, overlooking the glass-studded hamam.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus 64 from Mevlâna Caddesi (near the post office) leaves every half-hour or so (less often on Sunday) for Sille (TL1.10, 25 minutes).

KARAMAN

☎ 0338

After the fall of the Seljuk Empire, central Anatolia was split into several different provinces with different governments, and for some time Karaman served as a regional capital. Although little visited these days, it boasts a selection of fine 13th- and 14th-century buildings and makes a base for excursions to Binbirkilise (opposite).

The **Hacıbeyler Camii** (1358) has a magnificent squared-off entrance, with decoration that looks like a baroque variant on Seljuk art. The **Mader-i Mevlâna (Aktepe) Cami** (1370) is the burial place of the great Mevlâna's mother and has a dervish-style felt hat carved above its entrance. The adjacent **hamam** is still in use.

The tomb of the great Turkish poet Yunus Emre is beside the **Yunus Emre Camii** (1349). Extracts from his verses are carved into the walls of a poetry garden to the rear of the mosque.

Later buildings include the hilltop **castle**, which dates to 1471 in its present incarnation, and the **Imaret Cami** (1417), which is under restoration but remains a superb example of pre-Ottoman mosque architecture.

The slightly disorganised **Karaman Museum** (Turgut Özal Bulvarı; admission TL3; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm

Tue-Sun) contains cave finds from nearby Taşkale and Canhasan and has a fine ethnography section. Next door, the magnificent **Hatuniye Medresesi** (1382), whose ornate portal is one of the finest examples of Karaman art, now houses a restaurant.

If you get caught in Karaman overnight, the two-star **Nas Hotel** (☎ 214 4848; İsmetpaşa Caddesi 30; r TL50) is low on luxury but comfortable, welcoming to travellers of both sexes and close to the sights.

Getting There & Away

Regular buses link Karaman with Konya (TL20, two hours) and Ereğli (TL20, two hours). Getting to Karaman from Nevşehir (Cappadocia) is more time-consuming, as you must change in Niğde and Ereğli. The *Toros Ekspresi* and *İç Anadolu Mavi* trains (see p490) stop here between Konya and Adana.

BİNBİRKİLİSE

Just before WWI, the great British traveller Gertrude Bell travelled 42km northwest of Karaman and recorded the existence of a cluster of Byzantine churches set high on a lonely hillside and rather generously known as Binbirkilise (One Thousand and One Churches). Later İrfan Orga came here in search of the last remaining nomads, a journey recorded in his book *The Caravan Moves On*. You won't see any nomads around these days, or indeed much to mark the ruins out as churches, but half a dozen families live

HAN SWEET HAN

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

As well as the Sultanhanı, fine specimens include the Sarıhan (p513), 6km east of Avanos, and the Karatay Han, 48km east of Kayseri. Many other *hans* dot the Anatolian landscape, including the Ağzıkara Hanı (p534), 16km northeast of Aksaray on the Nevşehir highway, and the Sultan Han (p538), 45km northeast of Kayseri off the Sivas highway.

around the ruins (and in them, in the case of some of their animals) and the site is a rural alternative to busier attractions.

It's easiest to reach the churches with your own transport. Drive out of Karaman on the Karapınar road and follow the yellow signs. The first sizeable ruin pops up in the village of Madenşehir, 36km north, after which the road becomes increasingly rough. There are fantastic views all along the road, which is just as well, as you'll have to come back the same way.

A taxi from Karaman's otogar should cost around €45 for the return trip; the drivers know where the churches are.

SULTANHANI

☎ 0382

The highway between Konya and Aksaray crosses quintessential Anatolian steppe: flat grasslands as far as the eye can see, with only the occasional tumbleweed and a fist of mountains in the distance breaking the monotony. Along the way, 110km from Konya and 42km from Aksaray, is the dreary village of Sultanhanı, its only redeeming feature being one of several Seljuk *han* bearing that name. This stunning **Sultanhanı** (admission TL3; ☎ 7am-7pm), 200m from the highway, is the largest in Anatolia.

The site is a popular stop for tour groups, and you may field invitations to visit the nearby carpet-repair workshop. If you resist such offers, you could easily explore Sultanhanı in half an hour.

The building was constructed in 1229, during the reign of the Seljuk sultan Alaaddin Keykubad I and restored in 1278 after a fire (when it became Turkey's largest *han*). Through the wonderful carved entrance in the 50m-long east wall, there is a raised *mescit* (prayer room) in the middle of the open courtyard, which is ringed with rooms used for sleeping, dining and cooking. A small, simple doorway leads to the atmospheric *ahır* (stable), with arches, domes and pillars in the pigeon-soundtracked gloom.

Getting There & Away

Regular buses run from Aksaray's otogar Monday to Friday (TL5, 45 minutes); there are fewer services at weekends. Leaving Sultanhanı, flag down a bus or village minibus heading to Aksaray or Konya on the main highway. If you start out early you can hop off the bus, see the *han* and be on your way again an hour or so later.

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