

# Eastern Mediterranean



Turkey's eastern Mediterranean has long lived in the shadow of its more fashionable neighbour to the west. But with the requisite sites, scenes, sounds and pristine beaches, this Arab-spiced peninsula is due its place in the year-round sun.

While Alanya and Side possess the razzle-dazzle trimmings of a package-tour playground, it's the region beyond the red pines of the Taurus that holds a more timeless Turkish life. Here you'll find an equally stunning coastline, dotted by hillside villages, unexplored ancient ruins and – as you round the Hatay peninsula – a certain Middle Eastern air.

Many Turks spend summer holidays here, in the low-key beach resorts of Anamur – a banana-rich town of clean beaches and remnants of the Roman Empire – and quirky Kizkalesi, famed for its floating Maiden Castle and the deep, dark chasms of 'Heaven and Hell'. The surrounding Olbion Plateau is an archaeological heaven where aimless wandering leads to genuine discovery.

Continuing east through the wide-open Çukurova Plain, the industrial cities of Mersin and Adana swell on the horizon, the heat rises and the tourists all but disappear. Yet these are youthful, modern and thoroughly secular parts where a stopover is rewarded with friendly, unaffected locals, and rarely seen sites including the Roman fortress city of Anazarbus, the Armenian retreat of Yilankale, and important Hittite and Christian sites.

The energy of the eastern Med turns south of İskenderun, due to the area's proximity to the Syrian border. Here is one of Turkey's most fascinating mixes of cultures, religions and languages. In the buzzing, prosperous city of Antakya – formerly fabled Antioch – you'll find a bazaar-ful of Sunnis, Alevis and Orthodox Christians, a world-class museum and Arabic spoken on the streets.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Swim to the **Maiden's Castle** (p423) at Kizkalesi, then hike to the lonesome reliefs at **Adamkaylar** (p424)
- Dance at the **Temple of Apollo** (opposite) in Side
- Visit Adana's extravagantly beautiful **Sabancı Merkez Cami** (p429), the country's second-largest mosque
- Descend the 452 steps into the massive **Chasm of Heaven** (p422), near Silifke, where the monster Typhon was said to have held Zeus captive
- Re-enact past glories in the Byzantine city of **Anamurium** (p416)
- View the finest mosaics in the world at the **Antakya Archaeology Museum** (p436), then climb to St Simeon's mountain-top **monastery** (p438)



## SIDE

☎ 0242 / pop 18,000

The seasonal village of Side (*see-duh*) is the Turkish version of a carnival by the sea. With its souvenir peddlers, quaint beaches, family-friendliness and peculiar slapstick charm, this once docile fishing town is now a firmly established high season playground.

Entering the town is like entering a film set; glorious Roman and Hellenistic ruins mark out the road, and an evening performance at the ancient amphitheatre is spectacularly showbiz. Adding to Side's appeal (and keeping its postcard industry firmly afloat) is the heart-warming Temple of Apollo – step from beach bar to bar until you gaze through this impossible arch to a horizon free from Ferris wheels.

Of course there is a very loud downside. The local operators have a natural appetite for foreign currency, and the do-anything-to-please customer service of endless back alley tack-shops and tourist restaurants can fall away soon after a sale. But visitors to Side often return despite themselves, happy to get fleeced now and then by the same 2000-year-old tricks, happy to swim in the sea and sip tonics on the rocks, happy to unwind in Side.

### History

Side, meaning 'pomegranate', is one of the oldest Anatolian settlements. The Aeolians lived here around 600 BC, but by the time Alexander the Great swept through the inhabitants had abandoned much of their Greek culture and language. Since then it moved through various hands and prospered as a major port in the Hittite era.

Piracy and slavery kept it buoyant, and many of Side's great buildings were financed by such pursuits under the Greeks, only to be stopped when the city came under Roman control. After that, Side managed to prosper from legitimate commerce; under the Byzantines it was still large enough to rate a bishop. The 7th-century Arab raids diminished the town, which was dead within two centuries. During the late 19th century it had a brief flowering under Ottoman rule when it was settled by Muslims from Crete.

### Orientation

Side juts out on a promontory, 3km south of the coastal highway. Vehicular access is tightly

controlled, so if you're driving, use the car park outside the village.

Liman Caddesi, leading through the village to the harbour, is considered the main street. The main beach is in the north of town.

The otogar (bus station) is east of the archaeological zone. To get to town, follow signs for the main road then turn left if you want to walk, or board the incongruous toy train that rolls in every 15 minutes in high season.

### Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 753 1265; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) is about 800m from the village centre, on the road in from Manavgat. Internet cafés abound around Nergis Caddesi – the best is **Side Internet C@fe** (per ½hr TL5) and there are ATMs on Liman Caddesi.

### Sights

Although the site is relatively small, the **Temples of Apollo and Athena** are among the most romantic and moving sites you're likely to encounter in Turkey. These ruins, which date from the 2nd century BC, are at the southwestern tip of Side harbour. A number of columns from the Temple of Apollo have been preserved and placed upright in their original locations, and after dark a spotlight outlines their form dramatically against the night sky.

The spectacular **theatre** (admission TL10; ☎ 8am-7pm), built in the 2nd century AD, rivals nearby Aspendos for sheer drama. In fact it's one of the largest Greco-Roman ruins in Asia Minor and can seat well over 15,000 spectators. If the opportunity allows, an evening performance here is a truly special occasion.

Next to the theatre and across the road from the museum are the remains of an **agora**. You'll find a good number of columns, although a chain-link fence restricts access. The delightful **museum** (admission TL10; ☎ 9am-7pm) is a ruin itself; its rather impressive, if small, collection of statues and sarcophagi resides inside the old Roman baths.

Take a left as you exit the museum for Side's spectacular field of ruins, among them a **library**, an **agora** and a **Byzantine basilica**.

### Festivals & Events

Tickets for the **Aspendos Opera & Ballet Festival** (☎ 753 4061) can be bought at the Side museum or at the **ticket office** (☎ 753 4061) outside the Roman theatre. For more information see p404.

## EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN



## Sleeping

As many of the pensions in Side are sublet for the summer, customer service can be compromised. Try to find a place where employees don't change with the seasons.

**Yıldırım Pansiyon** (☎ 753 2010; [www.yukser-pansiyon.com](http://www.yukser-pansiyon.com); Sümübül Sokak 8; s/d TL40/50; 🍷) Located just steps from the theatre, this exceptionally laid-back pension is conveniently located across the street from a car park. Expect shipshape rooms and a beautiful silence after dark.

**Yükser Pansiyon** (☎ 753 2010; [www.yukser-pansiyon.com](http://www.yukser-pansiyon.com); Sümübül Sokak 8; s/d TL40/50; 🍷) Tucked away from the noise of the main drag but still just steps from the beach, this traditional stone-and-timber house offers average but well-maintained rooms and a rather large back patio and garden.

**Onur Pansiyon** (☎ 753 2328; [www.onur-pansiyon.com](http://www.onur-pansiyon.com); Sümübül Sokak 3; s/d TL30/60; 🍷) This excellent family-run option has regular guests year-round who return for the bright, cosy rooms – and the cocktails by the fireplace. The young manager has a London accent. It's down the road from Uğur Lokantası

**Chillout Side** (☎ 753 2041; [www.chilloutside.com](http://www.chilloutside.com); Zambak Sokak 32; dm TL25, s/d TL40/60; 🍷) The backpacker scene is primed to return to Side with the opening of this keenly run new premises. Set around a pretty garden of mulberry trees, palms and roses, the up-scale hostel features a smart little bar and a genuine travel vibe. Rooms are new, though heavy on the wood panelling. Those upstairs have balconies.

**Beach House Hotel** (☎ 753 1607; [www.beachhouse-hotel.com](http://www.beachhouse-hotel.com); Barbaros Caddesi; s/d TL35/70; 🍷) Run by a long-term Australian expat, this is a justifiably popular choice. It has the prime beachside locale, yet still promotes restfulness, and the steady flow of tour groups and regulars merely add to the warmth of the place. Most rooms face the sea and all have spacious balconies. Sunbeds are free for guests.

**Hotel Lale Park** (☎ 753 1131; [www.hotellalepark.com](http://www.hotellalepark.com); Lale Caddesi 17; s/d TL60/90; 🍷) One of Side's largest gardens acts as a sort of commons area here. Roman columns and stone walkways are scattered about; there's also an abundance of conversation areas and an outdoor bar.

**Yalı Hotel** (☎ 753 1011; [www.yalihotel.com](http://www.yalihotel.com); Barbaros Caddesi 50; s/d TL70/90; 🍷) With redecorated rooms – all with TV and minibar – hanging over the ocean's edge, it's a mystery why this place isn't constantly packed. Management tends to take things pretty easy though, so perhaps the view to die for is killing business. The swimming pool is a welcome addition.

## Eating

While the number of restaurants may increase every season, the menus tend to repeat. Fresh fish (TL15 to TL25) is usually the way forward here – check what's included in the price.

**Uğur Lokantası** (☎ 753 3654; Orkide Sokak; meze TL5) The best local restaurant in town, the Uğur has been serving up the workers' trade for 13 years. Service is smooth and unhurried, and the selections – including delicious lentil *çorba* (soup) – turn over regularly.



**Ottoman Restaurant** (☎ 753 1434; Liman Caddesi; meals TL20) Rasim is half the reason to dine at this excellent, good-value restaurant. There's no harbour view, but this is compensated by a relatively diverse menu, including some fine Indian dishes. If you're staying out of town, a courtesy bus can be arranged.

**Soundwaves Restaurant** (☎ 753 1059; Barbaros Caddesi; meals about TL20) This ship-shaped institution is managed by the same crew from Beach House next door, so the vibe is expectedly friendly, relaxed and professional. The menu doesn't stray far from the traditional tourist Turkish, though the casseroles are most hearty.

**Paradise Restaurant** (☎ 753 2080; Barbaros Caddesi 56; meals about TL25) This family-first restaurant has a large play area for the little ones, a substantial kids menu, and very accommodating staff. The adults can enjoy a fine sea view and good seafood and international staples.

**Aphrodite Restaurant** (☎ 753 1171; İskele Caddesi; meals about TL25) This place wins the prize for 'closest table to the sea'. Not only is it an ideal spot to soak up the harbourside drama at eye level, it's also good for seafood, grills and *köfte* (meatballs).

**Paşaköy Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 753 3622; Liman Caddesi 98; meals TL25) More theme park than theme restaurant, the infamous Paşaköy is well worth an evening of absurdist dining. Giant plastic plants fight for space with stuffed buffalo and some nondescript mammals. But the stream is a lovely touch, and the bar decor grows weirdly familiar by each drink. Luckily the standard Turkish food is pretty reliable.

**Moonlight Restaurant** (☎ 753 1400; Barbaros Caddesi 49; meals around TL25) Probably the classiest joint in town, with an extensive Turkish wine list and unfussy service. The mostly seafood offerings are well presented and very fresh. The biggest drawcard, however, is the romantic back patio, which is regularly filled with happy couples feeding (on) each other.

## Drinking

For a town that more or less promotes binge drinking, the patrons in Side are remarkably well behaved. There are plenty of opportunities to do otherwise.

**Kiss Bar** (☎ 753 3482; Barbaros Caddesi 23) Like Romper Room for adults, it's fun watching people being forced to dance – until you get asked yourself, that is.

**Stones Dance Bar** (☎ 512 1498; Barbaros Caddesi 67) Watch pints of lager flow to the crooning sounds of 'new' England (of the mid-1990s). This excellent pre-club venue can easily become all you need to reach the tiles safely.

**Jungle Bar** (☎ 753 2235; Liman Caddesi 37) Hidden upstairs above busy Liman Caddesi, this hip new bar is understated by Side standards. The staff is formal and funky, and the music is set at a modest volume. It's good for a drink post-dinner while you plan your next move.

**Café Dreams** (☎ 753 1023; Barbaros Caddesi) Daggy acoustic covers somehow fit the bill in this shiny new, open-air lounge bar. If it wasn't for the seaside setting, you could be in a 1980s hotel foyer having a few 'in-betweeners'. If the night gets away, there's a pension upstairs.

**Royal Castle Pub** (☎ 753 4373; Reis Caddesi) This bizarre and busy place feels like Sherwood Forest on week-old shrimp. Staff dressed like Robin Hood in the navy bounce quality cocktails (TL15) to giggling tourists. Big screens show all manner of sports, and the faux-Britishness extends to a menu of greasy pub snacks. You've got to love it.

**Mehmet's Bar** (Barbaros Caddesi) This lovely booze shack is better suited to a tropical island than a Turkish promontory. Still, it's decidedly chilled, and ideal for sipping a quiet beer (TL4) while listening to the waves and reggae music.

## Entertainment

**Oxyd** (☎ 753 4040; Denizbuku Mevkii; cover charge €10-15) If your clubbing experience has lost its sheen lately, you'll find reinvention and decadence at Oxyd, a super-duper club 3km outside



The otogar is on the outskirts of town, on the bypass. Except at the height of summer, you'll have to come here from Side to connect with bus services to Antalya, Alanya, Konya and the lakes.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Frequent *servises* connect Side with Manavgat otogar (TL1), where there are onward buses to Antalya (TL7, 1¼ hours, 65km) and Alanya (TL6, one hour, 63km). 'Şehiriçi' dolmuşes from outside the otogar will run you into the town centre (TL1.50). A taxi from Side to Manavgat otogar costs TL15.

### Manavgat Waterfall

About 4km north of Manavgat on the Manavgat River is the appropriately named **Manavgat Waterfall** (Manavgat Şelalesi; admission TL2), a colossally popular tourist attraction filled with souvenir vendors and restaurants, some of which sit mere metres from the falls. Manavgat is well known for its trout, which is on the menu at some of the eateries here.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

A dolmuş from Manavgat costs TL1.60. In the town centre you'll find boats waiting to run you upriver to the waterfalls. An 80-minute round trip costs TL20 per person, providing there are at least four people.

### Lyrbe (Seleukeia in Pamphylia)

These interesting **ruins**, 23km northeast of Side, are particularly appealing due to their location atop three vertical cliffs. Situated among an expanse of pine trees, the site is shaded and somewhat forested, and can be cool even on hot summer days. Many of the buildings are difficult to identify, although you can clearly make out a bathhouse, an *agora* and a necropolis.

For years, archaeologists believed this site to be the Seleukeia in Pamphylia, founded by Seleucus I Nicator, a presumably egocentric officer of Alexander the Great who founded a total of nine cities in his own honour. However, a fairly recent discovery of an inscription found in the city, written in the language of ancient Side, has convinced researchers that this site is more likely the ruined city of Lyrbe.

Shortly after passing the Roman aqueduct, look for a sign on the left marked Lyrbe (Seleukeia; 7km). Continue on through the

village of Şihlar, and note the small bits of columns built into the walls of the village's stone houses. Take the road to the right opposite the minaret, which winds another 3km uphill to the ruins.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

If you don't have your own transport, taxi drivers wait across the bridge in Manavgat to run you to Seleukeia, with a stop at Manavgat waterfall thrown in (TL40 return).

### ALANYA

☎ 0242 / pop 110,100

In just a few short decades, Alanya has mushroomed from a sparsely populated highway town on a silky sand beach to a densely populated tourist haven for northern Europeans who prefer to pay upfront. Aside from the odd boat cruise or beach stroll, many visitors to Alanya move only from the airport shuttle to the hotel pool, and in the evening frequent restaurants and banging nightclubs.

But like little Side to the west, Alanya has something special up its ancient dusty sleeve. Looming high above the newly modern centre is a brilliant fortress district, with trappings of a fine Seljuk castle, a wonderful mess of ruins, active remnants of village life and a touch of revamped 'Ottomania'. Sipping a beer in one of the many hillside cafés affords a stunning view of the marina and, perhaps, a requisite break from the party below.

There's a growing concern in the local media about female tourists dressing inappropriately around town. Please remember to be considerate, especially during Ramazan.

### Orientation

Having gone from a small town to a 20km-long city almost overnight, Alanya has no real main square or civic centre. The centre lies inland (north) from the promontory on which the fortress walls sit. The closest thing to a main square is Hürriyet Meydanı, a nondescript traffic junction at the northern end of İskele Caddesi.

About 23km west of Alanya are **İncekum** and **Avsallar**, these days virtual extensions of Alanya.

### Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 513 1240; Kalearkası Caddesi; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) is opposite the Alanya Museum. There's also a small information





booth near the police station. **Café Pruva Internet** (☎ 519 2306; ☎ 8am-midnight) is off Müftüler Caddesi, just south of Atatürk Caddesi.

The Alanya Tourism and Cultural Festival runs every May.

## Sights

### FORTRESS

The only 'must-see' site in Alanya is its awesome Seljuk **kale**, which overlooks the city as well as the Pamphylian plain and the Cilician mountains.

Before reaching the entrance to the fort, the road passes through the old inner citadel; this was the Turkish quarter during Ottoman and Seljuk times, and a number of old wooden houses are still standing. At the top is the **Ehmedek Kapısı**, the gateway to the fort. Enter the **İç Kale** (Inner Fortress; admission TL10; ☎ 9am-7.15pm), where you'll find poorly preserved ruins including cisterns and an 11th-century Byzantine church. It's worth walking down to explore the village of **Ehmedek**, which includes a former Ottoman **bedesten** (vaulted market enclosure), some deluxe holiday houses, a fine mosque and a pretty wooded cemetery. Continue walking down the hill to reach the rows of requisite cafés.

The winding road to the fortress is 3km. If you don't want to walk, catch a city bus from Hürriyet Meydanı (TL1.25, hourly from 9am to 7pm) or opposite the tourist office (10 minutes past the hour). Taxis wait at the bottom of the hill (TL15).

### KIZILKULE & TERSANE

**Kızilkule** (Red Tower; admission TL2; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) is a five-storey octagonal structure measuring nearly 30m in diameter and more than 30m high. Constructed in 1226 by Seljuk Sultan Alaettin Keykubat I (who was also responsible for the fortress), it was very likely the first structure erected after the then-Armenian controlled town surrendered to the sultan. You can work the calves by climbing 85 steep steps to the top floor.

Kızilkule looms over the harbour at the far lower end of İskele Caddesi. Across the harbour from the tower are the remains of the only Seljuk-built **tersane** (shipyard) remaining in Turkey.

### ATATÜRK'S HOUSE

When Atatürk visited Alanya on 18 February 1935, he slept in a house on Azaklar Sokak,

off Fatih Sultan Mehmet Caddesi. The owner of the house left it to the Ministry of Culture, which has turned it into a small **museum** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun).

### MUSEUM

Alanya's small **museum** (☎ 513 1228; Bebek Sokak; admission TL3; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.30-7.30pm) is worth a visit. Artefacts from various regions of Anatolia include tools, jugs and jewellery. Also on display is a life-sized re-creation of a traditional 19th-century Alanya home.

### DRIPPING-STONE CAVE (DAMLATAŞ MAĞARASI)

About 100m towards the sea from the tourist office and near the souvenir booths of Cleopatra's Beach is the entrance to this **cave** (admission TL4; ☎ 10am-7pm). Filled with hanging stalactites and heavy with 95% humidity, it is said to cure asthma sufferers.

## Activities

### BEACHES & WATERPARKS

**Cleopatra's Beach** (Kleopatra Plajı) is the city's best. Sandy and quite secluded in low season, it has fine views of the fortress. At the start of July, a popular beach handball tournament takes place here. Alanya's main beaches are also decent, although east of the centre they're fronted by a busy main road.

Alanya also boasts an impressive waterslide park. **Damlataş Aqua Centre** (☎ 512 5944; İsmet Hilmi Balcı Caddesi 62; adult/child TL20/15; ☎ 9am-6pm) is packed with tube slides, pools and lots and lots of floaties.

### TOURS

Every day at around 10.30am **boats** (per person TL35, incl lunch) leave from near Gazipaşa Caddesi for a six-hour voyage around the promontory, visiting several caves and Cleopatra's Beach.

Many local operators organise tours to the ruins along the coast west of Alanya and to Anamur. A typical tour to Aspendos, Side and Manavgat will cost around TL55 per person, while a village-visiting 4WD safari into the Taurus Mountains will cost about TL40 per person.

## Sleeping

Alanya has hundreds of hotels and pensions, almost all of them designed for groups and those in search of *apart-hotels* (self-catering



## THE ASTHMA-CURING CAVES OF TURKEY

Sufferers of asthma have good reason to holiday in the eastern Mediterranean. Two caves in the area are said to produce a certain kind of air that, if inhaled and exhaled for long enough stretches of time, has the ability to relieve the afflicted of their ailment.

The more famous of the two is Alanya's Dripping-Stone Cave (Damlataş Mağarası; p413), where the 95% humidity is believed to have something to do with the cave's impressive powers. Many locals are confident the caves actually work, and in the area doctors have even been known to send patients there.

North of Narlıkuyu, at the Caves of Heaven and Hell, is the site known as Astım Mağarası (Asthma Cave; p422). This cave is much less touristy, although the jury remains out as to whether you get a better cure in heaven or in hell.

flats). The following individual options are close to the main drag.

**Baba Hotel** (☎ 513 1032; İskele Caddesi 6; s/d TL35/45) Baba still offers the cheapest sleep on İskele Caddesi, but you pay for what you get (which is not much). The front entrance is located on the left side of a cement stairway just off the street.

**Otel Temiz** (☎ 513 1016; fax 519 1560; İskele Caddesi 12; s/d TL50/100; 🏠) A great choice, Hotel 'Clean' is just that. Plus the rooms are spacious, and the balconies offer a bird's-eye view of the thumping club and bar action down below.

**Grand Kaptan Hotel** (☎ 513 4900; www.kaptanhotels.com; İskele Caddesi 70; s/d TL80/140; 🏠 🍷) This three-star hotel has a large and somewhat opulent lobby with a nautical theme and a bar. The perfectly clean and tidy rooms have all mod cons but are rather characterless.

**Seaport Hotel** (☎ 513 6487; fax 519 4320; www.hotelseaport.com; İskele Caddesi 12; s/d TL80/150; 🏠) This brand new business-type hotel on the İskele strip offers slick service and brilliant sea views. Rooms are not huge but are still very well drawn. It's particularly popular with upmarket tourists who prefer to do it their own way.

## Eating

Cheap restaurants are being eaten by rising rents, so if you're tired of the tourist traps, look for a *köfte* joint (TL10 a meal), or any *lokantası* (ready-food eateries) popular with workers.

**Köfte D' Köfte** (☎ 512 1270; Kale Caddesi; meals around TL12) A flashy yellow-and-red sign greets diners at this new 'boutique' fast-food joint. Clean lines, attentive service and generous meat, rice and salad combinations are all part of the deal.

**Gaziantep Sofrası Restaurant** (☎ 513 4570; İzzet Azakoğlu Caddesi; meals TL15) For something more adventurous than the standard grills and seafood,

this is one of central Alanya's best options. Traditional food from Gaziantep is on offer; try the *patlıcan kebab* (fried eggplants) or the *beyti sarma* (spicy meatballs and flat bread).

**Red Tower Brewery Restaurant** (☎ 513 6664; info@redtowerbrewery.com; İskele Caddesi 80; meals TL20-25) If EU membership were dependent on a good brewpub, then the Red Tower would be Turkey's sole delegate. Not only is this place rare, it also makes staggeringly good Pilsen. Still, perhaps mistakenly, it's a restaurant first and foremost, and upstairs on the 1st floor you can eat fairly standard international fare (with great potato wedges – presumably to accompany the beer!). There's also seating across the street that overlooks the harbour.

**Ottoman House Restaurant** (☎ 511 1421; Damlataş Caddesi 31; meals TL25-30) An internationally reputed eatery in the heart of Alanya might be hard to swallow, metaphorically, but after so many unimaginative menus, it's a dream. Set inside a 100-year-old former hotel made from stone and timber, the Ottoman House is a revelation. The *beğendili kebab*, a traditional Ottoman dish of lamb and aubergine puree, is testament to the creativity of the kitchen staff. Likewise the fresh tuna barbeque (TL30 per person) is a spectacle of swordsmanship as much as culinary skill. Quality live music (not muzak!) is performed most evenings in summer and a free shuttle can be arranged from your hotel.

**Mahperi Restaurant** (☎ 512 5491; www.mahperi.com; Rıhtım Caddesi; meals €15-25) A much-loved fish and steak restaurant that's been in operation since 1947 (a fairly astonishing feat in Alanya), this place is quite the class act, offering a good selection of international dishes. If you're feeling the need to escape the tourism glitz, this is certainly your best choice in the town centre.

## Entertainment

Alanya's postcards should undoubtedly feature its nightclubs, some of the most bawdy, bright and banging in the land. It's all good fun though, so long as you don't have to sleep within a kilometre or three of the blistering tech stompers.

**Cuba Bar** (☎ 511 8745; İskele Caddesi) The newest addition to the Alanya party junket, this stylish and relatively small club is a (slightly) less manic alternative. Girls dressed in white get a free mojito. It's near Otel Temiz.

**Harem Bar** (☎ 511 9225; İskele Caddesi) A great little live Turkish music venue, filled with young locals chain-smoking around small tables. Drinks are cheaper than elsewhere (beer TL5) and the vibe far more relaxed.

**Robin Hood** (☎ 535 7923; Rıhtım Caddesi 24; ☎ 9pm-3am) Supposedly the biggest club in Alanya, the first two floors of this monstrosity are decked out in (you guessed it) a Sherwood Forest theme. The Hawaiian Beach Club is on the 3rd floor and above that is the Latino Club. Beers are around TL10.

**Troy the Pub** (☎ 511 4718; Ziraat Bankası Karşısı 67; ☎ 24hr) A restaurant during the day and a bar at night, this pub changes its attitude drastically as the clock slowly turns. Breakfasts here are quiet and relaxing; show up in the afternoon or evening to hear reggae, jazz and hip-hop.

During the summer, free buses drive along İskele Caddesi about every half-hour. A taxi will cost about TL20.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

There are services to Girne (Kyrenia) in Northern Cyprus from Alanya harbour, operated by **Fergün Denizcilik** (☎ 511 5565, 511 5358; www.fergun.net; İskele Caddesi 84). Boats leave at noon on Mondays and Thursdays. In June they also leave on Tuesdays at noon and Mondays at 6am. Boats return to Alanya at 11am on Wednesdays and Sundays.

You must buy a ticket and present your passport a day before departure for immigration formalities. Not included in the TL68/118 one-way/return ticket prices is a TL12 Alanya harbour tax. Returning from Girne there is a TL18 departure tax.

### BUS

The otogar is on the coastal highway (Atatürk Caddesi), 3km west of the centre. It is served

by city buses (TL0.50, every half-hour). Most services are less frequent outside summer, but buses generally leave hourly for Antalya (TL10, two hours, 115km) and eight times daily to Adana (TL25, 10 hours, 440km), stopping at a number of towns along the way. Buses to Konya (TL20, 6½ hours, 320km) take the Akseki-Beyşehir route.

## Getting Around

Frequent dolmuşes shuttle along the coast, transporting passengers from the outlying hotel areas to the centre.

Dolmuşes to the otogar (TL1.30) can be picked up in the bazaar, north of Atatürk Caddesi. From the otogar, you walk out towards the coast road and the dolmuş stand is on the right.

## AROUND ALANYA

Some 23km to the west, the **İncekum Orman İçi Dinlenme Yeri** (Fine Sand Forest Rest Area; ☎ 345 1448) has a camping ground (no facilities) in a pine grove near the beach.

About 13km west of Alanya, notice the **Şarapsa Hanı**, a Seljuk *han* (caravanserai) built in the mid-12th century, which is occasionally reinvented as a function centre. Further west towards Side, there's another *han*, the **Alarahan**, accessible by a side road heading north for 9km.

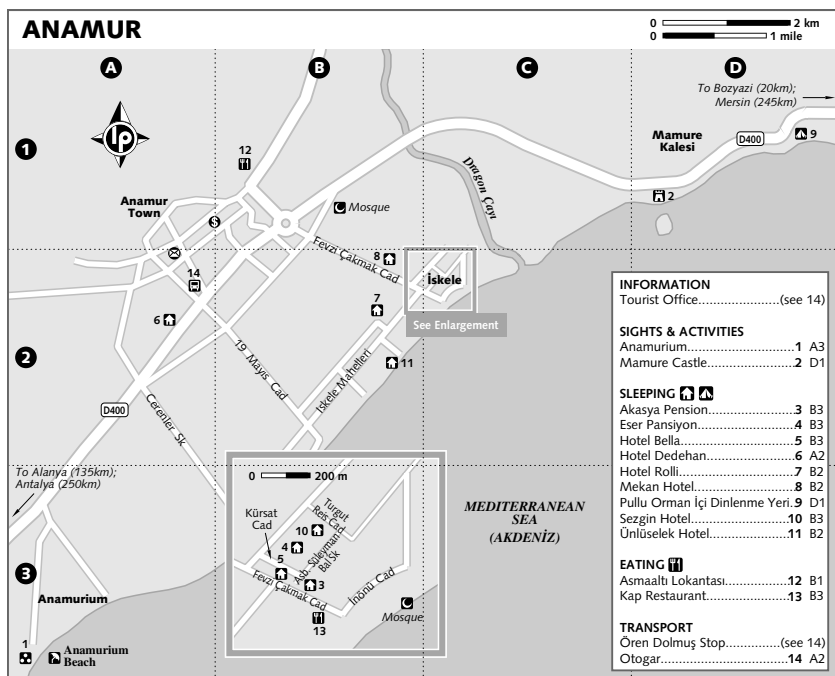
Heading east towards Silifke (275km), the twisting road is cut into the cliffs. Every now and then it passes through the fertile delta of a stream, planted with bananas (as at Demirtaş) or crowded with greenhouses. It's a long drive with few places to stop until you get to Anamur, but the sea views and the cool pine forests are extremely beautiful. On a clear day you can see the mountains of Cyprus across the sea.

This region was ancient Cilicia Tracheia ('Rough' Cilicia), a somewhat forbidding part of the world because of the mountains. Pirates preyed on ships from the hidden coves along this stretch of the coast. In the late 1960s the government completed the good road running east from Alanya and since then tourism has grown rapidly.

## ANAMUR

☎ 0324 / pop 50,000

Easygoing Anamur has a horticultural industry that far outweighs its tourism. As the closest town to the massive Byzantine city of



Anamurium (below) – and with a very pretty beach and waterfront – there’s good reason to hang around. Anamur is also close to the impressive Mamure Castle (opposite) that sits directly on the highway to the east.

### Orientation & Information

Anamur lies to the north of the highway, 1km from the main square. Mamure Kalesi is 7km east of the town centre, the ruins of Anamurium 8.5km west. The otogar is on the intersection of the highway and Anamur’s main street (see p418 for information about getting around). The **tourist office** (☎ 814 3529; ☞ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) is in the otogar complex behind the police station.

Around 2.5km from the otogar is İskele, a popular waterfront district.

### Sights

#### ANAMURIUM

On the isolated lovely stone beach is Anamurium, founded by the Phoenicians, toyed with by the Romans and sympathetic to the Byzantines. The site is both sprawling and inspiring, with ruins stretching from the beach

to the peak of the mountainside. It’s primarily the sheer size of the city that impresses.

Historians and archaeologists are still debating how Anamurium fell. The city suffered a number of devastating setbacks throughout its active existence, including an attack in AD 52 by a Cilician tribe known as the Cetae. However, it was long believed that corsairs from Arabia plundered and pillaged themselves silly in the mid-7th century. More recently, however, archaeologists working at Anamurium claim to have uncovered evidence suggesting that a massive earthquake destroyed the city sometime in the late 6th century.

The best-preserved structure here is the **public bath**; look for the coloured mosaic tiles that still decorate portions of the floor. Other ruins of interest include a 900-seat **theatre** dating from the 2nd century AD, a **stadium** and a rather large **necropolis**. There are also the remains of numerous private houses.

Approaching Anamur from the west or down from the Cilician mountains, a sign on the right points south towards the **ruins** (admission TL3; ☞ 8am-8pm). This road bumps 3km past fields and through the ruins to a dead end at

## BEHOLD THE ANAMUR BANANA

Nearly every city and town along Turkey's eastern Mediterranean coast seems to be known for growing a certain type of fruit, and Anamur is no different. Here, the banana reigns supreme.

Until the mid-1980s, Anamur bananas were the only sort of banana available in Turkey. That certainly wasn't a bad thing. It's true the bananas are small, but their smell and taste are outstanding. Anamur bananas are much sweeter and more tasty than those common in Europe and North America. Unfortunately for local growers though, Turkey began importing cheaper (but less tasty) bananas from other countries; large numbers of Anamur banana growers were driven out of business.

Happily, if you're in Anamur the local bananas can still be bought more cheaply than imported varieties. Keep your eyes peeled when driving through the mountainous regions surrounding town, where you're certain to spot dozens of farmers along the highway hawking great bunches of bananas from wooden fruit stands.

the beach. A good way of exploring the area is on bicycle, which can be arranged at Hotel Dedehan (below).

### MAMURE CASTLE (MAMURE KALESİ)

This tremendous roadside **castle** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-6pm) – with its original 36 towers still intact – is by far the biggest and best-preserved fortification on either Mediterranean coast. As if attempting to mimic Maiden's Castle to the east, the rear end of Mamure sits directly on the beach, while its front end almost reaches the highway.

Mamure dates from the 12th century – it was constructed by the Christian leaders of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia – although it could date as far back as the 3rd century BC. It's known that a Roman castle was built here in the 3rd century AD, although no remains of that structure exist. Mamure was briefly held by the Ottomans in the middle of the 14th century.

Climbing to the castle's peak is something of an adventure, although some stairs are a bit crumbled so use extreme caution. Your reward is an astounding view of the sea.

### Sleeping ANAMUR

**Pullu Orman İçi Dinlenme Yeri** (☎ 827 1151; camp sites or caravans TL10) This government-run camping ground in a cool forest is especially popular with Turkish families and school groups who arrive for picnics by the sea (where pious Muslim women swim fully clothed). It's just under 2km east of Mamure Castle.

**Hotel Dedehan** (☎ 814 7522; D400 Hwy; d TL30; 🏠) Conveniently located next to the otogar, this is a good choice if you're stuck in town overnight. Rooms are cheap, clean and quite large. It's also a good base for excursions to Anamurium or

Mamure Castle, as the friendly owner allows guests free use of a bicycle. Motorbikes can be rented for about TL25 a day.

### İSKELE

The popular İskele (harbour) district is where most visitors to Anamur end up. Numerous pensions and hotels run along İnönü Caddesi, the main waterfront street. The dolmuş drops you off at the main intersection.

### Pensions & Hotels

There are several hotels in the Yalievleri district, a treeless expanse of apartment blocks about 2km along the coast towards Anamurium from İskele. Catch the local bus that passes every 20 minutes through the main intersection.

**Eser Pansiyon** (☎ 814 2322, 814 9130; [www.eserpansiyon.com](http://www.eserpansiyon.com); İnönü Caddesi 6; s/d/tr TL25/40/50, 5-person flat TL70; 🏠 📺) By far the best value in town, this well-run pension includes satellite TV in every room, a self-catering kitchen and a barbeque pit in the shaded back garden. The owner, energetic and accommodating Tayfun, is a real character. The spacious flats and suites come complete with real bathtubs.

**Hotel Bella** (☎ 816 4751; [www.mybellahotel.com](http://www.mybellahotel.com); Kursat Caddesi 5; s/d/tr TL35/60/75; 🏠 📺) Operated by the same owner as Eser Pansiyon, this more upscale locale features perfectly tidy rooms – all with satellite TV – and a tastefully decorated dining area. It's particularly popular with young Turks, while the fine restaurant is the best meeting place in town.

**Akasya Pansiyon** (☎ 814 5272; Kursat Caddesi; s/d 35/60; 🏠 📺) In a bright orange building opposite Hotel Bella, the Akasya is a family-run pension with light-filled, comfy rooms and a young manager who is eager to please.

**Ünlüselek Hotel** (☎ 814 1973; www.unluselekotel.com; Fahri Görülü Caddesi; s/d TL40/70; 🚻 📺) This sprawling, family-oriented hotel is more like a low-budget resort. Along with live music at night, films are occasionally screened on a projector outside, where there's also a playground area for kids. Located just steps from the sea, a beach-volleyball court is usually set up in the summer. The owner loans his small boat to guests.

**Mekan Hotel** (☎ 816 4300; Fevzi Çakmak Caddesi; s/d TL50/100; 🚻 📺) The Mekan is a brand new hotel on the road back to town. It's very neat and business-like, but lacks the character and convenience of other hotels in İskele. The owner will give discounts.

**Hotel Rolli** (☎ 814 4978; www.hotel-rolli.de; Yahevleri Mahallesi; s or d TL90; 🚻 📺 🗺) A niche hotel specially designed for wheelchair-bound tourists, the Rolli does what it does well. The majority of guests here are German and the polite staff all speak the language. Airport transfers are available from as far away as Antalya (TL120).

**Sezgin Hotel** (☎ 814 9421; İskele Mahallesi 11; s/d/tr €35/60/75; 🚻 📺) Rooms at the Sezgin are simple but tidy; 10 out of the 24 have sea views and all have TV. The lobby walls feature an interesting collection of kilims (pileless woven rugs).

## Eating

In the warmer months the İskele waterfront is filled with large open-air cafés serving kebaps, *gözleme* (savoury pancake) and other snacks. Most guest houses prepare evening meals.

**Asmaaltı Lokantası** (☎ 814 8040; Solyu Caddesi; meals TL10) Situated in the city centre, this busy restaurant is a hit with the locals for its cheap stews. It makes an ideal lunch spot between buses, or if you're staying at the Hotel Dedehan.

**Kap Restaurant** (☎ 814 2374; İskele Meydanı; meals around TL15) On the prime corner in town, and with the best contacts down at the harbour, Kap is the fish restaurant of choice. The mezes are also delicious, but service can be sloppy.

## Getting There & Away

There are several buses daily to Alanya (YT15, three hours, 135km) and Silifke (TL18, 3½ hours, 160km).

## Getting Around

Anamur is quite spread out, but easy to get around on public transport. Buses and dolmuşes to İskele depart from a small stand behind the otogar (TL1, every 30 minutes). A taxi between İskele and the otogar costs about TL15.

Dolmuşes to Ören also leave from next to the mosque, over the road from the otogar, and can drop you off at the Anamurium turn-off on the main highway. Alternatively, you'll need to take a taxi from Anamur otogar or from İskele. Expect to pay about TL40 to go there and back, with an hour's waiting time – but this is barely enough time to see the highlights.

Frequent dolmuşes to Bozyazı (TL1) travel past Mamure Kalesi.

## AROUND ANAMUR

About 20km east of Anamur, you'll come to the town of **Bozyazı**, spread across a fertile plain. East across the plain, and clearly visible for miles around, is **Softa Castle** (Softa Kalesi), impossibly perched on the rocks above the hamlet of Çubukköyüğü. Like Mamure Castle (p417) to the west, Softa was built by the Armenian kings who ruled Cilicia for a short while during the Crusades. It is now pretty ruined, but the walls and location are mightily impressive. As you leave Bozyazı, a sign on the left points inland to the castle, but the road doesn't go all the way to the top.

If you'd like to climb into the mountains and see yet another medieval castle, turn left at Sipahili 3km southwest of Aydıncık and head up towards Gülnar (25km) for **Meydanlık Kalesi** (Meydanlık Kalesi), which has stood here in one form or another since Hittite times.

## TAŞUCU

☎ 0324

Taşucu is best known as the working port of Silifke, but this quaint, low-key tourist resort has a fine city beach filled with friendly locals. The town lives for the ferries to Girne (Kyrenia) in Northern Cyprus. Car ferries and hydrofoils take travellers across the sea.

## Orientation & Information

The main square by the ferry dock, one block south of the highway, has a PTT, banks, a customs house, assorted shipping offices and several restaurants. The beach is fronted by Sahil Yolu, which stretches out east of the docks and has several good pensions. There is an internet café in the plaza opposite the pier.

## Sleeping

**Meltem Pansiyon** (☎ 741 4391; Sahil Caddesi 75; s/d TL25/40; 🚻 📺) This fulfils the proper criteria of a pension – intimate, affordable and friendly. Sitting just a few steps from the small, sandy

beach, this family-run place has a few sea-facing rooms; breakfast is served on the back patio. Rooms are modest but squeaky clean.

**Holmi Pansiyon** (☎ 741 5378; holmi.pansiyon.kafeteria@hotmail.com; Sahil Caddesi 23; s/d €16/21; 🍴) The covered front porch here is particularly nice for relaxing on a hot day. The rooms have small desks and balconies, although not much of a sea view. It's a short walk to the beach.

**Dilara Pansiyon** (☎ 741 5378; dilarapansiyontasucu@hotmail.com; Sahil Caddesi 25; s/d TL30/50; 🍴 🚿) This delightful little two-storey pension, right next door to Holmi, has cheap but stylish rooms, all with spacious bathrooms. It's run by two keen young sisters who speak good English.

**Olba Otel** (☎ 741 4222; Sahil Caddesi; s/d TL50/80; 🍴) Next door to Meltem Pansiyon and directly on the sea, Olba is tidy and well run. The 2nd-floor balcony (where breakfast is served) offers wonderful sea views. The rooms are clad in cosy, kitsch wood-panelling. The couple who manages is very professional and discounts are negotiable.

**Lades Motel** (☎ 741 4008; www.ladesmotel.com; Atatürk Caddesi 89; s/d €37/51; 🍴 🚿) This hotel is a favourite of birdwatchers who come to visit nearby Gökü Delta (p421). The rooms, set around a big pool, are a touch disappointing. But there are wonderful harbour views from the balconies. The lobby and sitting areas are well designed for comparing 'twitching' notes.

**Taşucu Best Resort Hotel** (☎ 741 6300; www.best-resorthotel.com; Atatürk Caddesi 97; s/d €60/90, f€120; 🍴 🚿) A five-star hotel that suits a family vacation, this massive place has two restaurants, four bars, a hairdresser and hamam all on site, and a shell-shaped pool featuring a bridge and waterslide. Some of the technicolour rooms even come with portholes, while the family rooms have connecting (or separating) doors.

## Eating & Drinking

**Alo Dürüm** (☎ 741 2464, 741 2463; Atatürk Caddesi 17; meals about €3) In the middle of the main drag and close to the ferry terminal, this is an open-air döner (spit roast) and pide (Turkish pizza) place popular with locals and travellers. A 24-hour delivery service is available, should you get a hankering for *lahmacun* (Arabic pizza) at 3am.

**Denizkizi Restaurant** (☎ 741 4194; Atatürk Caddesi; meals TL10-20) Opposite the Atatürk statue and ferry terminal, this classy, quiet place is good for fish, meze and general wellbeing. The shaded outdoor seating is perfect on a hot afternoon.

**Baba Restaurant** (☎ 741 5991; Atatürk Caddesi 87; meals TL10-20) Next to the Lades Motel, locals regard Baba as Silifke's best eatery. The terrace is a beautiful place to sip a cold beer, but it's the food that brings in the punters. Portions are generous and artfully prepared, as is the meze cart, which will tempt you all evening long. Don't miss the updated selection of fresh fish on the chalkboard.

## Getting There & Away

**Akgünler Denizcilik** (☎ 741 4033; fax 741 4324; www.akgunler.com.tr; Taşucu Atatürk Caddesi) runs *feribotlar* (car ferries) and/or *ekspresler* (hydrofoils) between Taşucu and Girne (Kyrenia) in Northern Cyprus. It has a daily hydrofoil at 10am (one way TL72, return TL110) and a car ferry (one way TL55, return TL90; car one way/return TL150/300) leaving at midnight (although they don't actually sail until 2am), from Sunday to Thursday. The hydrofoil leaves Girne at 9.30am daily while the car ferry leaves at 11.30am Monday to Friday.

Hydrofoils are faster (two hours) but the ride can be stomach-churning on choppy seas. Passenger tickets cost less on the car ferry, but the trip is longer (anything from four to 10 hours depending on the weather). Provided your visa allows for multiple entries within its period of validity, you shouldn't have to pay for a new one when you come back into Turkey.

Dolmuşes drop you at the petrol station to the north of town – it's a five-minute walk to the beach. There are frequent dolmuşes between Taşucu and Silifke (TL1.50), where you can connect with long-distance services to major destinations.

## SILIFKE

☎ 0324 / pop 65,000

Silifke is a lush riverside country town of historic significance and contemporary charm. There's a striking castle above – and handsome park along – the gushing Gökü River. Plus in the vicinity lie some fascinating archaeological relics and serene mountain villages.

Seleucia, as it was known, was founded by Seleucus I Nicator in the 3rd century BC. Seleucus was one of Alexander the Great's most able generals and founder of the Seleucid dynasty that ruled Syria after Alexander's death.

The town's other claim to fame is that Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (r 1152–90) drowned in the river near here while leading his troops on the Third Crusade.





columns standing on the back porch and at the entrance.

The **Atatürk Evi** (admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4.30pm) is an old Silifke house with an interesting photo gallery of Mustafa Kemal. Be prepared to show your passport at the door.

The **stone bridge** over the Göksu dates back to AD 78 and has been restored many times.

## Sleeping

**Otel Ayatekla** (☎ 715 1081; fax 715 1085; Otogar Cıvırı; s/d TL30/50; 🍷) A quite nice two-star hotel next to the otogar with a large restaurant on the ground floor. Some rooms come with decent views of the city and mountains, and all have TV. A suite with balcony is available.

**Göksu Otel** (☎ 712 1021; fax 712 1024; Atatürk Caddesi 20; s/d TL35/60; 🍷) As pretty much the only midrange option in town, the Göksu has the market well in hand. Luckily it's also a very relaxing place to stay on the northern bank of its namesake. Business in style and decor, its provincial sensibility gives it more warmth than you might expect in the bigger cities. The ground-floor restaurant is excellent.

## Eating

**Göksu Pastanesi** (Cavit Erdem Caddesi; pastries from TL1) A large and shaded terrace perched atop the rumbling river below. Close to the stone bridge, this modest eatery sells çay (tea) and snacks.

**Gözde Restaurant** (☎ 714 2764; Menderes (Mut) Caddesi; meals TL8) This döner kebab and *lahmacun* joint also serves up delicious soups in a shaded outdoor dining area. The English-speaking wait staff make it a fine – if rather casual – evening outing.

**Babaoğlu Restaurant** (☎ 714 2041; meals TL10) It's an unlikely location near the otogar for Silifke's most upscale restaurant. The fish, lamb and chicken dishes are particularly well prepared. And if you've got a bus to catch it also makes a mean pide.

## Getting There & Away

Located at the junction of the coastal highway and the road into the mountains, Silifke is an important transit point with good bus services.

Buses depart for Adana along the highway east of Silifke (TL15, two hours, 155km, hourly) throughout the day and will stop to pick up ruin rambles.

Dolmuşes to Taşucu (TL1) depart every 20 minutes from opposite Babaoğlu Restaurant –

across the highway from the otogar – or from a stand on the south bank of the Göksu.

Other services from Silifke include to Antalya (TL35, nine hours, 390km, 10 per day) and to Mersin (TL6, two hours, 85km, three per hour).

## AROUND SİLIFKE Cave of St Thecla

This area is rich in Christian pilgrimage sites, such as the **Cave of St Thecla** (Ayatekla; admission TL2; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri), a small rock shelter hidden underneath the remains of a Byzantine church. St Thecla (Ayatekla in Turkish) was the first person to be converted by St Paul. A religious outcast, Thecla spent her last few years in the cave living a pious life. The church was built in her honour in AD 480.

To reach the cave when driving from Taşucu to Silifke, look for the Alpet petrol station on your left. Next to it is Ayatekla Sokak, which leads directly up a hill and to the site. The entrance to the cave is directly behind the basilica ruins.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

To get to the cave from Silifke take a Taşucu dolmuş (TL1) and ask to be dropped off at the Ayatekla junction, 1km from the site.

## Göksu Delta & Around

Some 334 species of bird nest in the lush salt marshes, lakes and sand dunes of the Göksu Delta, a renowned wetland area immediately south of Silifke.

East of Silifke, the slopes of the maquis-covered Olbian Plateau, one of Turkey's richest areas for archaeological sites, stretch along the coast for about 60km before the Cilician Plain opens into an ever-widening swathe of fertile land.

## Narlıkuyu

Tiny, beautiful Narlıkuyu village is more than just a cove on a bend in the highway. It's got justifiably famous fish restaurants and refreshing harbour currents, a singular mosaic and some hellish mountain caves nearby.

Inside the village's tiny **museum** (admission TL3), which is actually a 4th-century Roman bath, you'll find a wonderful mosaic of the goddesses of fertility, also known as the Three Graces – Aglaia, Thalia and Euphrosyne.

You won't go far wrong at any restaurant here, but **Kerim** (☎ 723 3295; meals about TL20), and

**Narlıkuyu Balık** (☎ 723 3286; meals about TL20) are both worth a shot.

Frequent dolmuşes run between Narlıkuyu, Ertur, Kızkalesi and Silifke (TL1).

## Caves of Heaven & Hell (Cennet ve Cehennem)

As you wind 2km up the road behind Narlıkuyu, the last thing you'd expect to find is a geological netherworld. An area of great mythological significance, these creepy, gargantuan **caves** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-5pm) are famed above Earth for their descent into a beautiful abyss.

For those expecting an easy ticket to here-after, the 250m-wide **Chasm of Heaven** (Cennet Cöküğü) is reached via 452 steps through a gorgeous leafy expanse. When you reach a landing, check out the 5th-century Byzantine **Chapel of Virgin Mary**, which for a short time in the 19th century was used as a mosque.

Continue following the path down and into the cave itself, where you'll find the **Cave-Gorge to Hell** (Cehennem Çukuru), a damp, jagged-edged, devilish theatre – indeed locals believe this cave to be a gateway to the eternal furnace. Should you hear a certain roaring sound, though, fear not: it's simply the sound of an underground stream (which can be seen in the winter but not summer). Legend had it that the roaring stream connects at some point with Styx, the river which in Greek mythology is the border between our world and the underworld.

You'll need a separate ticket to view the nearby **Pit of Hell** (Cehennem Çukuru; TL2), which can only be seen from a small viewing platform above. This deep charred hole is allegorically where Zeus imprisoned the 100-headed monster Typhon after defeating him in battle.

Near the car park is the **Astim Mağarası** (Asthma Cave), which is said to relieve the affliction.

## Uzuncaburç

The mountain village of **Uzuncaburç** (admission TL2; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) thoroughly rewards the short 30km trip north from Silifke. It sits within the ancient Roman city of Diocaesarea, originally a Hellenistic city known as Olbia. This area is thought to have been home to a zealous cult that worshipped Zeus Olbius.

The **Temple of Zeus Olbius** is just inside the site and on the left, but first visit the Roman **theatre** which can be found before the car park, also on the left. The theatre is easy to miss; it's half-sunken into the ground, and is covered with a

beautiful bed of wildflowers. Some of the sight's most important structures were Roman-built, including the **fountain** (2nd or 3rd century), the **Temple of Tyche** (1st century), and the **city gate**.

To view a Hellenistic structure built before the Romans sacked Olbia, leave the site and turn left through the village. On the right a road leads to a massive *burç* (tower), which seems to pop out of the roadside. Continue on and you'll discover a path to the left that winds down 500m to a **necropolis**.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibuses to Uzuncaburç (TL4) leave from a side street near the tourist office in Silifke at 9am, 11am, 1pm and 3pm, and return an hour later.

Hiring a taxi costs about TL50 return, waiting time included, which would allow you to inspect some tombs along the way.

## Göксу Valley

From Uzuncaburç the road continues via Kırabası to Mut and then to Karaman and Konya. Winding up into the forests you may pass huge stacks of logs cut by the Tahtacılar, the Alevi mountain woodcutters who live a secluded life in the forest.

About 40km before Mut the road skirts a fantastic limestone **canyon** that extends for several kilometres. High above in the limestone cliffs are **caves**, which were probably once inhabited. The land in the valleys is rich and well watered. About 20km north of Mut a turn-off on the right leads 5km to the ruins of another **medieval castle** at Alahan. Continuing further west the road runs through spectacular mountain scenery towards **Ermenek**, a pretty Anatolian village where a large dam is set to alter the landscape.

## KIZKALESİ

☎ 0324

Wonderful Kızkalesi, bang up against the D400, is not your typical highway town. It not only fronts one of the region's loveliest sand beaches, but is also the jumping off point for the Olbian Plateau, a virtual open-air museum of rocky hill ruins and unrecorded history.

Kızkalesi's whacky tack of tourism is sedated by the relaxed vibe of its locals. The foreshore is graced by a fine promenade filled with holidaying Turks, and within swimming distance is the mesmerising Maiden's Castle.

For a visitor, the scene here is more inclusive and relaxed than you'd expect of a typical

Turkish village of this size – perhaps thanks to the regularity of archaeology buffs from America and Europe kicking off their shoes here. And while the evening music may have deepened its bass lines of late, Kızkalesi still feels like old-school fun in the sun.

## Information

There is an ATM in the municipality building, and several internet cafés.

## Sights & Activities

A castle floating in the sea is the stuff of fairy tales and Turkish coastlines. **Kızkalesi** (Maiden's Castle; admission TL3), which lies 200m from the shore, is a suspended dream of impossible beauty. However, it is possible to swim to the castle; though most people choose to pay around TL5 for a lift on a boat.

To its left and on the shore is **Korykos Castle** (admission TL3), an antiquated fortress that was either built or rebuilt by the Byzantines, and was briefly occupied by the kings of Lesser Armenia. It's a bit of a rough-and-ready site, so be sure to wear proper footwear.

Across the highway from Korykos Castle is a **necropolis** that's well worth exploring. There are sarcophagi and rock carvings scattered about as well.

## Sleeping

**Hotel Hantur** (☎ 523 2367; hotelhantur@tnn.net.tr; s/d TL40/60; 🚰 🚽) The Hantur has long had the front row view of the sea (guests need do little else but watch the tides roll in). The sterile white rooms are cool, comfortable and all have balconies, but try to grab one facing the sea (hint: Room 201!) The breezy front garden is another bonus, as is the helpful manager.

**Baytan Hotel** (☎ 523 2095; www.baytanotel.com; s/d TL40/70; 🚰 🚽) Granted it's a touch tacky and faded, but it's right on the beach, rooms are spacious (though could do with a coat of paint) and the hilarious manager will ensure your stay is memorable. The rooftop terrace is great viewing at 'beer' o'clock.

**Hotel Korykos** (☎ 523 2212; www.korykoshotel.com; s/d TL40/70; 🚰 🚽) A complete makeover has done wonders for this smart hotel near the Yaka. Staff is attentive and professional, while the lobby space is particularly welcoming. Rooms have TV and firm, big beds. The bathrooms are newly fitted.

**Hotel Rain** (☎ 523 2782; www.rainhotel.com; s/d TL50/80; 🚰 🚽) With its youthful vibe suited

to meeting fellow travellers, Hotel Rain has blossomed on the grapevine. Run by the same crowd as Café Rain, it's got a similar anything-is-possible ethos, including scuba diving trips, thanks largely to its attached travel agency. The spotless, spacious rooms are sparingly decorated and conducive to long stays.

**Yaka Hotel** (☎ 523 2444; yakahotel@yakahotel.com; s/d TL60/90; 🚰 🚽) Yakup Kahveci, the Yaka Hotel's multilingual and quick-witted owner, runs the smartest hotel in Kızkalesi. Lodgers can dine in the attractive garden area, rooms are impeccably tidy and local knowledge abounds. The Yaka is also a great place to meet budding archaeologists in the midst of great discovery.

**Club Hotel Barbarossa** (☎ 523 2364; www.barbarossa-hotel.com; s/d with half-board TL105/140; 🚰 🚽 🚿) With the addition of your evening meals, the Barbarossa is a surprisingly good value choice. The finer touches are impressive too. The back garden – scattered with bits of Roman columns – provides welcome relief from the exposed beach, and the choice of two swimming pools means you can usually splash about in private. Even if you're not a guest, book yourself a massage (TL40).

## Eating & Drinking

Kızkalesi has yet to develop the restaurant scene to match its hungry crowd, due in part to the fine kitchens of the pensions. It's worth paying a TL1.25 bus fare for the 10-minute hop to Narlıkuyu (p421) to dine at the higher end.

**Honey Restaurant & Bar** (☎ 523 2430; İnci Plaj Yolu 1; meals around TL6) Unimpressive on the exterior, Honey is nonetheless a cosy and pleasantly palatable surprise. Try the *saç kavurma* (TL5), an Anatolian speciality of meat and veggies, or the *patlıcan kebab* (TL5), which is meat wrapped in eggplant. It's right on the highway, and features retro posters and a thirst-inducing mirrored bar.

**Café Rain** (☎ 523 2234; meals around TL10) The colourful decor compliments the cheery menu of tasty, good-value meals and, perhaps, the finest *börek* (pastry filled with cheese or meat) on the eastern Mediterranean. In the evenings, travellers transform it into a happening cocktail bar.

**Titanic** (☎ 523 2669; Cetin Ozvaran Caddesi; meals TL10) Near Café Rain, this new lounge bar has ample couches, pop posters, good indie music and a genuine gallivanting spirit. It's perhaps preferable to the nascent club scene.

**Paşa Restaurant** (☎ 523 1389; İnci Plaj Yolu; meals around TL10) A large open-air spot for grills, mezes and light Turkish snacks with agreeable prices.

At the time of writing, the Kızkalesi club scene was starting to make noise, albeit at a reasonable volume.

## Getting There & Away

There are frequent buses to Silifke (TL2, 30 minutes) and to Mersin.

## AROUND KIZKALESİ

The limestone-filled Olbian Plateau is a veritable adventure park of great ruins, many with little or no explanation. If short of time, head straight for ethereal **Adamkayalar** (Men's Rocks). These 17 reliefs from the Roman era immortalise warriors wielding axes, swords and lances, sometimes accompanied by their wives and children. There are more ruins and tombs scattered around at the top of the cliff.

It's about a 1.5km walk from the main road, but the once-rugged track has recently been cleared. Follow the painted arrows down a tricky incline – best not to go it alone.

About 25km further along the road are the ruins of **Çambazlı**, which feature a necropolis and a Byzantine-era church in remarkably good condition.

About 3km east of Kızkalesi are the extensive but badly ruined remains of ancient **Elaiussa-Sebaste**, a city with foundations dating back to at least the early Roman period and perhaps even to the Hittite era.

About 8.5km east of Kızkalesi at Kumkuyu is the road to **Kanlıdivane** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-7pm), the ancient city of Kanytelis. The site lies about 4km north of Kumkuyu. The first structure to come into view upon entering the car park is a **Hellenistic Tower**, which was built by the son of a priest-king in Olba (today known as Uzuncaburç; p422) to honour Zeus. It became the location of an ancient Zeus-worshipping cult.

The name Kanlıdivane means 'Bloodstained Place of Madness'. Take a stroll around the 90m-deep chasm where criminals were said to have been tossed to their deaths. Various ruins dramatically ring the pit – most from the Roman and Byzantine eras. Kanlıdivane's morbid past and isolated present probably give it the nod of Narlıkuyu (p421) as the creepiest depiction of the bowels of 'hell'.

Follow the footpath behind the Roman road to discover the splendidly preserved mausoleum perched atop the hill.

## MERSİN (İÇEL)

☎ 0324 / pop 1.06 million

Mersin's bustling port – one of Turkey's largest – recently underwent a fine facelift. Capital of the province of İçel, the site was earmarked 50 years earlier as a way to give Anatolia a port close to Adana and its rich agricultural hinterland. Until the 1991 Gulf War, the city was a major port for goods going to and from Iraq. Today the city is home to a number of underrated arts festivals and several good hotels.

Mersin has been renamed İçel, but everyone seems to be sticking with the former.

## Orientation

The town centre is Gümrük Meydanı, the plaza occupied by the Ulu Cami. On the western side is Atatürk Caddesi, a pedestrians-only shopping street, while two blocks north is İstiklal Caddesi, the main thoroughfare and a pedestrian mall.

To get to the centre from the otogar, leave by the main exit, turn right and walk up to the main road (Gazi Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı). Cross to the far side and catch a bus travelling west (TL1).

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Bilgi Internet** (Soğuksu Caddesi 30; TL2 per hr)

### MONEY

Exchange offices and ATMs are clustered around Gümrük Meydanı and the Ulu Cami. Many ATMs run out of money on weekends, so you may be forced to try several before securing your cash.

### POST

**PTT** (☎ 237 3237; İsmet İnönü Bulvarı)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (☎ 238 3271; fax 238 3272; İsmet İnönü Bulvarı; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm)

## Sights

A stroll along the harbour is one way to get an idea of what Mersin is all about. Another is to wander through the pedestrian streets between Uray Caddesi and İstiklal Caddesi. There is a small fish market and a covered bazaar with stores selling dried goods and piles of spices. At the eastern end of Atatürk Caddesi is the fine stone **Atatürk Evi** (admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4.30pm Mon-Sat), a museum in a house where Atatürk once stayed.

A little further west, beside the Kültür Merkezi (Cultural Centre; not open for tourists), is Mersin's small **museum** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm). This has a reasonably good archaeological collection with many Roman artefacts on the ground floor, including a small, headless statue of Eros, and the usual ethnographical bibs and bobs on the 1st floor.

Next to the museum, the modest **Orthodox church** has some fine icons. To gain entry, go to the left side of the church, on 4302 Sokak and look for the entry door. You may have to shout for the caretaker (who will expect a tip to show you around) if no-one is in sight.

For active souls there's a 12km-long **pathway** that runs parallel to the sea. The path starts behind the Mersin Hilton and continues west.

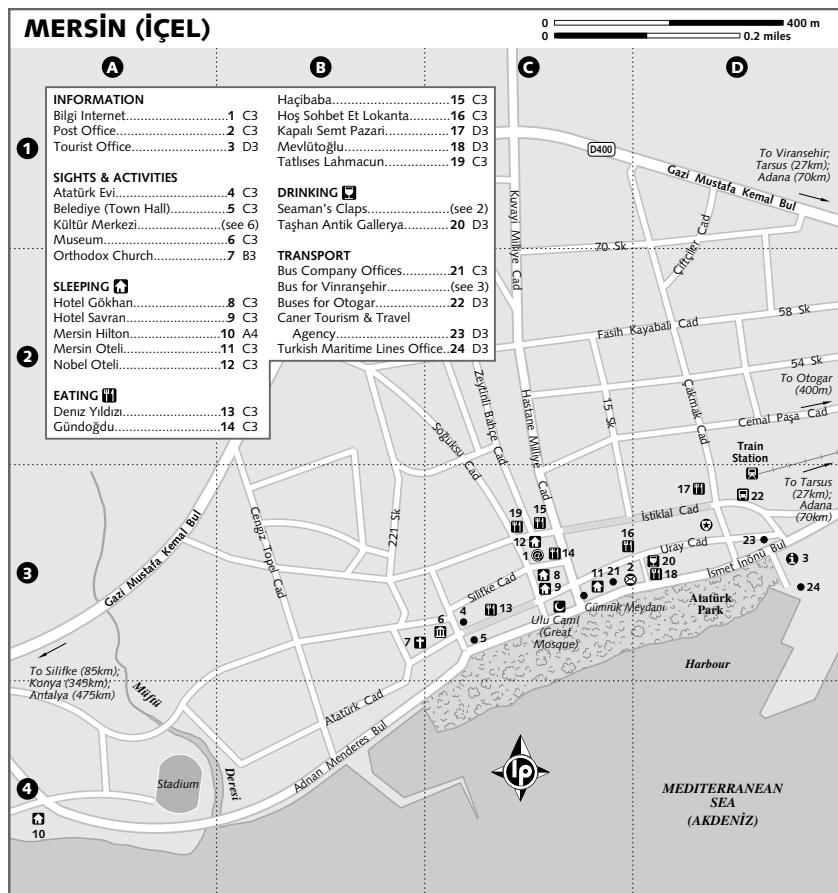
Or, to discover a working-class neighbourhood where döner kebabs can be had for TL1 and vendors sell strawberries and nuts from wooden carts, leave the guidebook at your hotel and stroll the length of **Çakmak Caddesi**.

Archaeology buffs might want to check out **Viranşehir** (TL4), the ancient Soles or Pompeiopolis. Buses depart from outside the tourist office.

## Sleeping

Mersin specialises in business hotels, most of them good value. If you're on the move early, there are some decent hotels facing the otogar.

**Hotel Savran** (☎ 232 4472; Soğuksu Caddesi 14; s/d TL25/45; ☹) The hotel might not be pretty,





but management at the Savran gives a lot more than one-star service. The rooms are unexpectedly large, though your sleep may be interrupted by dreams of a firm mattress. Still, it's a popular budget choice.

**Hotel Gökhan** (☎ 232 4665; fax 237 4462; Soğuksu Caddesi 22; s/d TL40/65; ♿) The interior decorator of this two-star hotel has been inspired by the Roaring Twenties – either that or a great aunt just passed away. The airy rooms include satellite TV and minibar – opt for a balcony at no extra cost. There's ample free parking.

**Nobel Oteli** (☎ 237 2210; www.nobelotel.com; İstiklal Caddesi; s/d TL65/90) A very smart choice in the heart of the city, the Nobel has big, bargain rooms with some deft design touches and satellite TV. The foyer is a hive of business activity and the adjoining restaurant is popular with the Mersin lunching set.

**Mersin Oteli** (☎ 238 1040; www.mersinoteli.com.tr; Gümrük Meydanı 112; s/d TL80/130; ♿) This relatively fancy if not entirely up-to-date four-star hotel in the centre offers bland but nice-enough rooms, some with sea-view balconies. Prices are a touch steep but discounts are possible.

**Mersin Hilton** (☎ 326 5000; www.mersin.hilton.com; Adnan Menderes Bulvarı; s/d €95/120; ♿) Even the hallways at this luxury hotel have amazing views, with the sea on one side and the city on the other. Enjoying two Asian-fusion restaurants, guests here are rather well taken care of. Tennis courts and a health club are both on-site. Booking online is cheaper.

## Eating & Drinking

**Hacıbaba** (☎ 238 0023; İstiklal Caddesi 82; meals TL8) Opposite the Nobel, this is a delightful little restaurant with a bright neon sign and rolled out reddish carpets. The *zeytinyagli dolma* (stuffed pepper) is up there with the best of a constantly rotating menu.

**Mevlütöğlü** (☎ 237 7024; Uray Caddesi 22; TL10) Next to Yoncas supermarket, this glass-walled place is relaxed and efficient. It serves a range of Turkish stews, with all the usual trimmings.

**Gündoğdu** (☎ 231 9677; Silifke Caddesi 22; meals €3) This especially toothsome fast-food joint seems to be permanently heaving. It has no menu, so simply order one of the house specialities: *İskender döner*, *börek* or *salata* (salad).

Soğuksu Caddesi boasts several small fish restaurants, such as **Deniz Yıdızı** (meals TL8).

If you're just passing through, there are lots of restaurants and beer halls mixed in with the hotels outside the otogar. Self-caterers can try

**Kapalı Semt Pazarı** (Çakmak Caddesi), a small fruit and vegetable market.

**Taşhan Antik Gallerya** is a collection of humming little working-class bars and cafés, popular with locals and Greek sailors – it's a great entry point into Turkish social life. The area around the Hilton has a few new clubs.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

The **Turkish Maritime Lines** (☎ 231 2536, 237 0726) ticket office is on the 2nd floor, right next to the dock entrance where the ferries depart. Ferries travel from Mersin to Gazimağusa (Famagusta) on the east coast of Northern Cyprus every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8pm. The ferry travels from Gazimağusa to Mersin every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday at 8pm. Tickets (one way/return TL60/115, per car one way/return TL140/280, 10 hours) must be bought a day in advance.

### BUS

From Mersin's otogar, on the city's eastern outskirts, buses depart for all points, including up to the Anatolian plateau through the Cilician Gates (p429). Distances, travel times and prices are similar to those from Adana (p430), 70km to the east on a fast, four-lane highway. From Mersin to Alanya costs TL22 (8½ hours, 375km, eight per day) and to Silifke TL8 (two hours, 85km, three per hour). Several of the main companies serving İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir have offices on İsmet İnönü Bulvarı.

Buses from town to the otogar (TL1) leave regularly from outside the train station, as well as from the stop opposite the Mersin Oteli.

### CAR

If you want to explore the coast by car, rentals can be arranged at **Caner Tourism & Travel Agency** (İsmet İnönü Bulvarı 88A), opposite the tourist office.

### TRAIN

There are frequent services to Tarsus (TL1.80), Adana (TL2.80) and İskenderun (TL5).

## TARSUS

☎ 0324 / pop 319,000

In the 2000th anniversary of Tarsus' most famous former citizen – St Paul – pilgrims travelling through a sprawl of concrete apartment blocks would concede its beauty as largely historic. However this is also one of those towns that

repays some perseverance, and a stroll through the Old City, or along Tarsus Nehri (Cydnus River), can be reason enough to linger.

## Information

The otogar is some way out of town. A taxi from there will cost you TL8 to the city centre; or you can walk out the front exit and hop on a bus (TL1) on the same side of the street. Detailed maps of Tarsus and its attractions are available at the tourist information booth in the town centre.

## Sights & Activities

Buses drop you off beside **Cleopatra's Gate**, a Roman city gate that has little to do with the famous lady, although she is thought to have met Mark Antony in Tarsus. In any case, restoration carried out in 1994 has robbed it of any sense of antiquity.

Walk straight ahead, and just before the *hükümet konağı* (government house) is a sign pointing left to **St Paul's Well** (Senpol Kuyusu; see boxed text right). The ruins of Paul's house can be viewed underneath plates of glass.

At the same road junction a second sign to the left points to the **Old City** (Antik Şehir). Follow it and you'll come to Cumhuriyet Alanı, where excavations have uncovered a wonderful stretch of **Roman road**, with heavy basalt paving slabs covering a lengthy drain.

Return to the *hükümet konağı* and continue northwards until you come to the 19th-century **Makam Camii** on the right. Directly across the street is **Eski Cami** (Old Mosque), a medieval structure which may originally have been a church dedicated to St Paul. Right beside it looms the barely recognisable brickwork of a huge old **Roman bath**.

Beside the Eski Cami you can catch a dolmuş (TL1) to Tarsus' other main sight, the **waterfall** (*şelale*) on the Tarsus Nehri (Cydnus River) which cascades over the rocks right inside the town, providing the perfect setting for tea gardens and restaurants.

To reach the 16th-century **Ulu Cami** (Great Mosque), which sports a curious 19th-century clock tower, turn right beside the Makam Camii and continue along the side street. Behind it and one street over on the right are the ruins of **St Paul's Church**.

The **Tarsus Museum** (Tarsus Müzesi; admission TL3; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) is located near the corner of Muvaffak Uygur and Cumhuriyet Caddesi, close to the stadium.

## BIRTHPLACE OF ST PAUL

Jewish by birth, Paul (born Saul) was one of Christianity's most zealous proselytisers; during his lifetime he converted scores of pagans and Jews to Christianity throughout much of the ancient world. After dying in Rome, sometime after AD 60, the location of his birthplace became sacred to his followers. Today pilgrims still flock to the site of his ruined house in Tarsus to take a small drink from the well (note that we can't vouch for its cleanliness!).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Cihan Palas Oteli** (☎ 624 1623; fax 624 7334; Mersin Caddesi 21; s/d TL20/35; ☹) Acceptable only in a pinch; best save up your pennies for Mersin.

**Tarsus Mersin Oteli** (☎ 614 0600; fax 614 0033; Şelale Mevkii; s/d TL60/100; ☹) This four-star hotel looms above the waterfall, and although the rooms are rather lovely and most conveniences are available, the decor and interior design could have used an update some 30 years ago.

## Getting There & Away

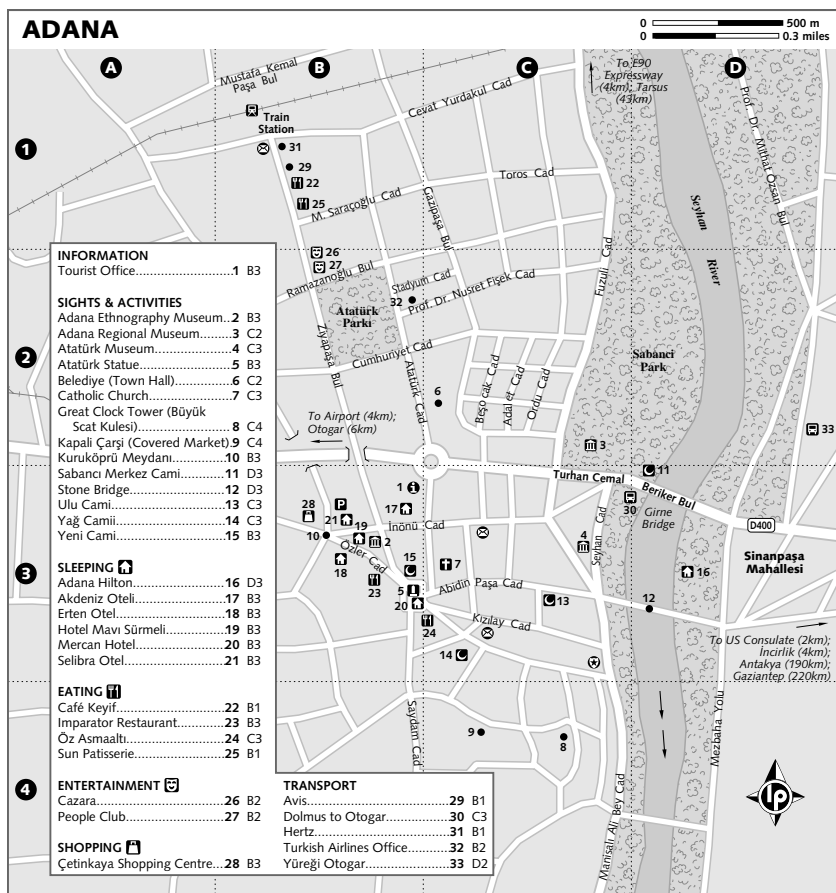
There are plenty of buses and dolmuşes connecting Tarsus with Mersin (TL2, 27km) and Adana (TL3, 43km), so you could take a break here while travelling between the two.

## ADANA

☎ 0322 / pop 1.2 million

The huge, steaming city of Adana – Turkey's fourth largest – has a habit of jolting those who approach with sand still between their toes. Split down the middle by the D400, it's a thoroughly modern and secular affair with some good nightlife and an old-fashioned working class grit.

North of the city's main road (Turan Cemal Beriker Bulvarı) is leafy and slick, a symptom of strong local industry led by the Sabancı Conglomerate – Turkey's second-largest – and the fertile Çukurova, the ancient Cilician plain deposited as silt by the Seyhan and Ceyhan rivers. But south of the trendy high-rise apartments, the mood deepens and the houses start to sprawl. Adana is in part a victim of Turkey's rising middle class, as the have-nots jostle for space on the fringes, and the *simit* (circular bread with sesame seeds) sellers are forced to re-bake their bread.



Adana is, expectedly, a major transport hub, with bus, train and plane connections. It's also home to a large American military base. While not blessed with the must-see tourist sites of the region, Adana's fast pace and thoroughly secular outlook is perhaps the most Turkish of all.

### Orientation

The Seyhan River skirts the city centre to the east. Adana's airport (Şakirpaşa Havaalanı) is 4km west of the centre on the D400. The otogar is 2km further west on the north side of the D400. The train station is at the northern end of Ziyaşpaşa Bulvarı, 1.5km north of İnönü Caddesi, the main commercial and hotel street.

The E90 expressway skirts the city to the north. If you approach by car from the north or west, take the Adana Kuzey (Adana North) exit to reach the city centre.

At the western end of İnönü Caddesi by the high-rise Çetinkaya shopping centre. There are several hotels on Özler Caddesi between Kuruköprü Meydanı and Küçüksaat Meydanı to the southeast.

### Information

There's a **tourist office** (☎ 359 1994; Atatürk Caddesi 13; 8am-noon & 1-5pm) one block north of İnönü Caddesi, in the town centre, and a smaller **office** (☎ 436 9214) at the airport. Internet cafés are on İnönü Caddesi north of the hotels.

## Sights

### MOSQUES

The attractive 16th-century **Ulu Cami** (Great Mosque; Abidin Paşa Caddesi) is reminiscent of the Mamluk mosques of Cairo, with black-and-white banded marble and elaborate window surrounds. The tiles in the *mihrab* (niche indicating the direction of Mecca) came from KütaHYa and İznik.

The 1724 **Yeni Cami** (New Mosque) follows the general square plan of the Ulu Cami, with 10 domes, while the **Yağ Camii** (1501), with its imposing portal, started life as the church of St James. Both are on Özler Caddesi.

More conspicuous than either of these is the six-minaret **Sabancı Merkez Cami**, right beside the Girne Bridge and the bank of the Ceyhan River. The biggest mosque between İstanbul and Saudi Arabia, it was built by the late industrial magnate Sakıp Sabancı, a wildly successful businessman, generous philanthropist and, when he passed away in 2004 at the age of 71, the richest man in all of Turkey. Take one look at the mosque he left behind and it's very obvious that Sabancı was also a devoutly religious man. Which isn't to say he was unapproachable: having grown up in the central Anatolian village of Akcakaya, it's said he purposely spoke in a country accent so as to assure his fellow Turks – and certainly his shareholders – that big business hadn't ruined him. Nonetheless, the Sabancı Merkez Cami is certainly a conspicuous monument. Roughly 20,000 worshippers can fit inside, and one of the minarets even conceals a small elevator. Fittingly, the marble and gold-leaf inlaid mosque has quite an influence in the surrounding areas: prayers originating here are broadcast to nearly 300 other mosques within a 60km radius.

### MUSEUMS

The excellent **Adana Ethnography Museum** (Adana Etnografya Müzesi; admission TL3; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-4.30pm Tue-Sun), on a side street off İnönü Caddesi, is housed in a nicely restored Crusader church. It now holds a display of carpets and kilims, weapons, manuscripts and funeral monuments.

Scheduled to re-open in mid-2009, the **Adana Regional Museum** (Adana Bölge Müze; admission TL5; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-4.30pm Tue-Sun) is rich in Roman statuary from the **Cilician Gates**, north of Tarsus. The 'Gates', the main passage through the Taurus Mountains, were an important transit point as far back as

Roman times. Note especially the 2nd-century Achilles sarcophagus, decorated with scenes from the *Iliad*. Hittite and Urartian artefacts are also on display.

The small **Atatürk Museum** (Atatürk Müze; Seyhan Caddesi; admission free; ☎ 8am-noon & 1.30-5pm), on a riverside street, is one of the city's few remaining traditional houses. It is a mansion that once belonged to the Ramazanogulları family. Atatürk stayed here for a few nights in 1923.

### OTHER SIGHTS

Have a look at the 16-arched Roman **stone bridge** (*taş köprü*) over the Seyhan, at the eastern end of Abidin Paşa Caddesi. Built by Hadrian (r 117–138), repaired by Justinian (r 527–565), and now sullied by modern traffic, it's still an impressive sight.

The **Great Clock Tower** (Büyük Saat Kulesi) dates back to 1881. Around it you'll find Adana's **kapalı çarşı** (covered market).

### Sleeping

Though Adana has lodgings in all price ranges, there are no hotels near the airport, otogar or train station. All but the cheapest places post high prices as required by the city council and slash them to far more manageable levels at the first sign of interest.

**Selibra Otel** (☎ 363 3676; fax 363 4283; İnönü Caddesi 50; s/d TL 35/60; ☎) This perennial two-star favourite has left its 1970s mojo in the decor, but it's certainly decent enough for the price. The reception is vintage Bond, and the rooms are quite, well, roomy. Should you need to call home during your morning constitutional, there's even a phone next to the toilet.

**Mercan Hotel** (☎ 351 2603; fax 459 7710; Ocak Meydanı; s/d TL35/70; ☎) Set amid cheap fabric and fashion dens, the Mercan is a bona fide budget winner. It's a boutique oasis in a desert of bland. Think we like it? It's got well-appointed, comfortable rooms, a quaint breakfast area and a stylish lounge with unusual art.

**Akdeniz Oteli** (☎ 363 1510; fax 363 0905; İnönü Caddesi 14/1; s/d TL60/100; ☎) This is a clean and smartly-decorated two-star place with glassed-in shower stalls. Don't miss the psychedelic mirrored staircase leading from the lobby to the 2nd-floor bar, which we don't recommend for a nightcap, as prostitutes generally outnumber actual guests by a ratio of two-to-one.

**Erten Otel** (☎ 359 5399; www.adanaertenotel.com.tr; Özler Caddesi 53; s/d TL90/120; ☎) A great addition to Adana's four-star hotel bracket, the

Erten is deep downtown and stars the city's friendliest reception. In each room, you can pen your memoirs at a sturdy desk, put your feet up in the small sitting area and pace the oval shower.

**Hotel Mavi Sürmeli** (☎ 363 3437; www.mavisurmeli.com.tr; İnönü Caddesi 109; s/d TL100/150; 🏠) The best value high-end hotel in Adana, the Mavi is centrally located and a truly luxurious four-star choice. Rooms are spacious enough for contact sports, while the bar is all orange-and-red armchair brilliance.

**Adana Hilton** (☎ 355 5000; www.adana.hilton.com; 1 Sokak; Sinanpaşa Mahallesi; s/d €110/185; 🏠 📺 📶) Imagine a riverside location with an unreal view of the Sabancı Mosque, out-of-this-world dining options, a fitness centre, and rock-star sized rooms. A little FYI: you'd be wise not to let inquiring locals on the opposite side of the river know that you're staying here.

## Eating & Drinking

Adana is famous Turkey-wide for its kebab: minced lamb mixed with hot pepper, squeezed on a flat skewer then charcoal-grilled. It's served with sliced purple onions dusted with fiery paprika, handfuls of parsley, a lemon wedge and flat bread.

**Sun Patisserie** (☎ 458 2134; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 15a; cake TL3-TL10; 🕒 9am-midnight) Cakes, puddings and a delightfully delicious assortment of chocolates and ice cream have been served up at this Adana standby for over three decades. Don't have a sweet tooth? Come anyway, and join the city's trendiest sidewalk seating scene.

**Café Keyif** (☎ 457 7820; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 17/A; meals €5) You might think Turkey had finally joined the EU after spending an hour or two at this wood-panelled, faux-British pub, where nine-to-fivers politely munch on the chef's salads and quietly sip glasses of Efes Pilsen. Sidewalk booths are available for prime people-watching.

**Imparator** (☎ 352 3062; Ozler Caddesi 43; meals TL10) There's a lot to like about this busy restaurant covered in posters of Turkish folk heroes. The chunky Adana kebaps come with all manner of sides and the English-speaking manager knows everyone's name.

**Öz Asmaaltı** (☎ 351 4028; Pazarlar Caddesi 9; meals TL15) Near the Mercan, this local favourite is also the finest restaurant in Adana. It's a fairly spartan place, but the mains and mezés are delightful – the hummus is pure creamy goodness.

## Entertainment

**Cazara** (☎ 459 3305; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 27/B; 🕒 11am-3am Mon-Sat) The late-eighties metal craze didn't fade away; it just moved to the Middle East. Guitar bands jam every Saturday night; Whitesnake burnouts pound Efes.

A new salsa club called People was scheduled to open next door.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Turkish Airlines** (☎ 457 0222; Prof Dr Nusret Fisek Caddesi 22) has daily nonstop flights between Adana and Ankara (one hour), İzmir (1½ hours) and İstanbul (1½ hours). **Onur Air** (☎ 456 0607; Atatürk Caddesi 11) flies between Adana and İstanbul.

### BUS

Adana's large otogar offers direct buses or dolmuşes to anywhere. Some useful daily services are listed in the table (opposite). Dolmuş to Kadirli (TL6, one hour, 75km) and Kozan (TL6, one hour, 72km) leave from the Yüreği otogar, on the east bank of the Seyhan River.

### CAR

**Avis** city (☎ 453 3045; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı); airport (☎ 453 0476)

**Hertz** (☎ 458 5062; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 9)

## TURNIP JUICE, ANYONE?

A once-tried, never-forgotten local drink made by boiling turnips and carrots and adding vinegar, is the crimson-coloured *şalgam*, sold at stalls around town. It's often drunk with a kebab meal or as an accompaniment to raki (aniseed-flavoured grape brandy). The juice carries an especially strong tang and tastes as if it were freshly squeezed. You'll probably do a good bit of puckering and funny-face making while you drink your first glass – as with coffee, cigarettes and beer, *şalgam* is an acquired taste. However, you may find yourself hankering for more after the initial shock has worn off. Locals drink the juice to relieve an upset stomach, so you might give it a shot the next time you experience a particularly painful dose of Traveller's D.

## SERVICES FROM ADANA'S OTOGAR

Destination	Fare (TL)	Duration (hr)	Distance (km)	Frequency (per day)
Adıyaman (for Nemrut Dağı)	35	6	370	7 buses
Alanya	35	10	440	8 buses (in summer)
Ankara	35	10	490	hourly
Antakya	18	3½	190	hourly
Antalya	45	10	555	2 or 3
Diyarbakır	25	10	550	several
Gaziantep	18	4	220	several
İstanbul	50	16	940	hourly
Kayseri	30	6½	335	several
Konya	35	6½	350	frequent
Şanlıurfa	25	6	365	several
Silifke	18	2	155	14 buses
Van	55	18	950	at least one

## TRAIN

The facade of the Adana **train station** (☎ 453 3172), at the northern end of Ziyapaşa Bulvarı, is decorated with lovely tiles. The *Toros Ekspres* and the *İçanadolu Mavi* train both travel to İstanbul's Haydarpaşa Station (TL32, 19 hours) via Konya (TL14.50, seven hours). Departures are at 2.10pm daily and at 9.10pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. The *Toros Ekspres* departs for Gaziantep (TL9, 5½ hours) at 5.05am every Wednesday, Friday and Monday. There are many trains to Mersin via Taurus, and to İskenderun.

## Getting Around

A taxi from the airport into town costs about TL10; it's about TL15 to the main otopark. Make sure the meter is switched on. A taxi from the city centre to the Yüreği otopark will cost TL8.

## AROUND ADANA

Tucked around the southeast corner of the coast are the plentiful Bay of İskenderun (İskenderun Körfezi) and the province of Hatay. Inland from the bay are ruins (p433) of an ancient Hittite city at Karatepe, and of a later Roman one, Anazarbus (Anavarza; right). Along the road stand assorted medieval fortresses. The cotton-growing Çukurova plain south of Adana is the landscape used by Turkey's famous author Yaşar Kemal (p56) in his powerful novels about working-class and rural people.

## Yılkale

Yılkale (Snake Castle) was built when this area was part of the Armenian kingdom of

Cilicia. It's said to have taken its name from a serpent that was once entwined in the coat of arms above the main entrance. It's 35km east of Adana and 2.5km south of the highway – then a 10-minute climb over the rocks to the fort's highest point.

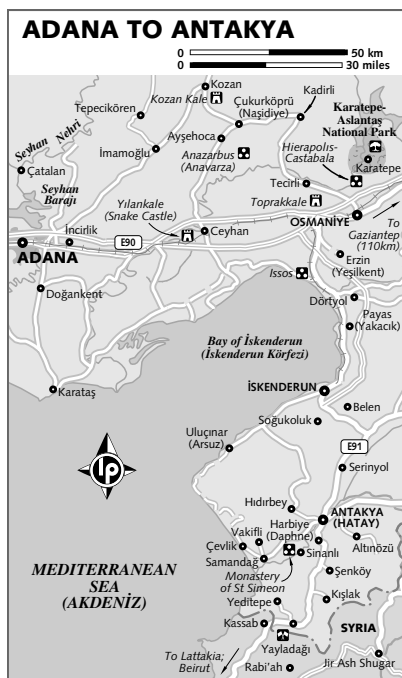
To continue on to Anazarbus (Anavarza) and Karatepe, head north and east just after the Yılkale turn-off. About 37km east of Adana an intersection is signed on the left (north) for Kozan and Kadirli, on the right (south) for Ceyhan. Take the Kozan–Kadirli road.

## Anazarbus (Anavarza)

When the Romans moved into this area in 19 BC they built this fortress city on top of a hill dominating the fertile plain and called it Caesarea-ad-Anazarbus. Later, when Cilicia was divided in two, Tarsus remained the capital of the west and Anazarbus became capital of the east. In the 3rd century AD, Persian invaders destroyed the city. The Byzantine emperors rebuilt it, as they were to do over and over again when later earthquakes destroyed it.

The Arab raids of the 8th century gave Anazarbus new rulers and a new Arabic name, Ain Zarba. The Byzantines reconquered and held it for a brief period, but Anazarbus was an important city at a strategic nexus, and other armies came and snatched it away, including those of the Hamdanid princes of Aleppo, the Crusaders, a local Armenian king, the Byzantines again, the Turks and the Mamluks. The last owners didn't care about it much and it fell into decline in the 15th century. Today it's called Anavarza.





After 5km you reach a road junction and a large gateway set in the city walls. Through this gate was the ancient city, now given over to crops and pasture but strewn with ancient stones. Turn left through a village where every other gatepost reuses a Roman column and, after walking 650m, you'll reach the remains of an **aqueduct** with several arches that are still standing.

The village of Anavarza has a couple of simple tea houses and a shop with cold drinks, but that's it.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

From the D400 highway follow the Kozan/Kadirli road north to the village of Ayşehoca, where a road on the right is marked for Anavarza/Anazarbus, 5km to the east. If you're in a dolmuş or bus you can get out here and hitch a ride pretty easily in the morning. Heading on towards Kadirli, hitch back the 5km to Ayşehoca and take the 817 road north to Naşidiye/Çukurköprü, where the road divides. The left fork is marked for Kozan and Feke, the right for Kadirli.

## Kozan

This transcendent little citrus and market town – within easy reach of Adana – was once the capital of the kingdom of Cilicia, and the lynchpin of a series of castles overlooking the Çukurova plain. Formerly Sis, the town features a stunning **fortress** built by Leo II (r 1187–1219) which stretches along a narrow ridge 300m above the town – it's a view nearing heaven.

Climbing up the road to the castle you pass a pair of towers and then the main gate itself. Inside is a mess of ruined buildings, but if you climb up a narrow ridge (not good if you don't like heights) you can see a many-towered keep on your right, and on your left a massive tower, which once held the royal apartments.

Between the first set of towers and the main gates are the ruins of a church, locally called the *manastir* (monastery). Up until 1921 this was the cathedral of the Catholics of Sis, one of the two senior patriarchs of the Armenian Church.

Kozan itself has some fine old houses and several cheap eateries and tea houses, and makes a good day trip. There are frequent buses between it and Adana (TL3.30, one hour).

## OSMANIYE

☎ 0322

Osmaniye is a dusty hot highway town that makes a useful base for getting to Hierapolis-Castabala and Karatepe-Aslantaş National Park. It lies on the E90, linking Adana and Gaziantep.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Şahin Otel** (☎ 812 4444; Dr Ahmet Alkan Caddesi 27; s/d TL40/60) Opposite the park on the main street, this is easily the best place to stay in town. The rooms are large and inviting with everything you would expect in a three-star hotel.

This is a town where people eat early. **Uğrak Lokantası** (☎ 813 4990; meals around TL5), a few doors down from the Şahin Otel, is a bustling joint serving up delicious *pilav* (rice) meals as well as hearty *şiş* (spit roast) for around TL2.

### Getting There & Away

Without your own transport your best bet for seeing Hierapolis-Castabala and Karatepe in one day is to organise a taxi. There's a handy taxi rank beside the otogar; to go to Hierapolis

## ARMENIAN CILICIA

During the early 11th century the Seljuk Turks swept westwards from Iran wresting control of much of Anatolia from a weakened Byzantium and pushing into the Armenian highlands. Thousands of Armenians fled south, taking refuge in the rugged Taurus Mountains and along the Mediterranean coast, where in 1080 they founded the kingdom of Cilicia (or Lesser Armenia) under the young Prince Reuben. The town of Sis (now Kozan; opposite) became their capital.

While Greater Armenia struggled against foreign invaders and the subsequent loss of their statehood, the Cilician Armenians lived in wealth and prosperity. Geographically, they were in the ideal place for trade and they quickly embraced Western European ideas, including its feudal class structure. Cilicia became a country of barons, knights and serfs, the court at Sis even adopting European clothes. Latin and French became the national languages. During the Crusades the Christian armies used the kingdom as a safe haven on their way to Jerusalem.

This period of Armenian history is regarded as the most exciting for science and culture, as schools and monasteries flourished, teaching theology, philosophy, medicine and mathematics. It was also the golden age of Armenian ecclesiastical manuscript painting, noted for its lavish decoration and Western influences.

The Cilician kingdom thrived for nearly 300 years before it fell to the Mamluks of Egypt. The last Armenian ruler, Leo IV, spent his final years wandering Europe trying to raise support to recapture his kingdom, before dying in Paris in 1393.

for an hour, then to Karatepe for two hours, and either on to Kadirli or back to Osmaniye, should cost about TL60.

From the centre of Osmaniye, road 01-08 is signposted northwest for Hierapolis-Castabala and the Karatepe-Aslantaş Museum. Follow the road until you come to a sign on the right for Hierapolis-Castabala which is 6km along a bumpy road. About 10km beyond Hierapolis-Castabala a road on the left is marked for Karatepe (9km).

Heading south, there are dolmuşes from Osmaniye to İskenderun (TL3, one hour). There are also frequent connections west to Adana (1½ hours) and east to Gaziantep.

## AROUND OSMANIYE

### Karatepe-Aslantaş National Park

The **Karatepe-Aslantaş National Park** (Karatepe-Aslantaş Milli Parkı; admission per person/car TL3/6) incorporates the open-air **Karatepe-Aslantaş Museum**, a site which has been inhabited for almost 4000 years. The ruins date from the 13th century BC, when this was a summer retreat for the neo-Hittite kings of Kizzuwatna (Cilicia), the greatest of whom was named Azitawatas.

From its beautiful, forested hilltop site, the park overlooks **Lake Ceyhan** (Ceyhan Gölü), an artificial lake used for hydroelectric power and recreation.

There is a charge for entrance to the **Hittite ruins** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm) in addition to the park admission fee. Be warned that on

top of the difficulty of getting to Karatepe without your own transport, the opening hours are rigorously adhered to, and the custodians will only take you around in a group, which can involve hanging about waiting for other people to arrive. Nor are you allowed to take any photographs.

The Hittite remains here are certainly significant, although you shouldn't come expecting something on the scale of Hattuşa (p465). The city was defended by 1km-long **walls**, traces of which are still evident. Its **southern entrance** is protected by four lions and two sphinxes, and lined with fine reliefs showing a coronation or feast complete with sacrificial bull, musicians and chariots.

### Hierapolis-Castabala

Set in the midst of cotton fields about 19km south of Karatepe and 15km north of Osmaniye are the ruins of **Hierapolis-Castabala** (admission TL3; ☎ 8am-7pm). A **kale** tops a rocky outcrop above the plain about 1km east of the road. The ticket seller will lend you a leaflet in English and you can see everything in about an hour.

From the ticket-seller's shed, walk along a **colonnaded street** that once boasted 78 paired columns; some still bear their fine Corinthian capitals. You pass a badly ruined **temple** and **baths** on the right. Keeping the castle on your left, walk past the rock outcrop to the theatre, also badly ruined. Beyond it to the

south in the fields is a ruined Byzantine **basilica**. Further along the same path is a *çeşme* (spring) and, in the ridge of rocks further on, some **rock-cut tombs**.

For information on getting to Hierapolis-Castabala, see p432.

## İSKENDERUN

☎ 0326 / pop 300,000

İskenderun – a translation of Alexandretta – is a modern industrial town with a working port and a naval sense of order.

Strategically located, the town has more than once changed ruling hands. Alexander the Great took charge in 333 BC, and it was occupied by the British in 1918, turned over to the French in 1919 and incorporated into the French Protectorate of Syria as the Sanjak of Alexandretta. In 1938 Atatürk reclaimed it for the Turkish Republic – and so it sits today.

İskenderun is a handy stopover between Adana and Antakya on the soon-to-be-extended coastal highway, but it's got little of Hatay's energy. Still, there are several places to stay and eat near the attractive waterfront.

### Orientation & Information

To find the sea you'll need to cross the highway and take a right turn headed south towards Şehit Pamir Caddesi. Once on this road, head north until you come to Atatürk Bulvarı. The main square at the top of Şehit Pamir Caddesi is marked by a huge monument on the waterfront. Most hotels are within a few blocks of this monument.

At the time of writing, the **tourist office** (☎ 614 1620; 49 Atatürk Bulvarı; ☎ 8am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri) was closed for renovations. In the meantime, try Hataylı Oteli (right) or Hasan Baba (right) for maps and good advice.

### Sleeping

**Hotel Altındişler** (☎ 617 1011; www.altindisler.com; Şehir Pamir Caddesi 11; s/d TL40/50; ☎) In the wake of welcome renovations, the Altındişler got its groove back. The kitsch element is still strong – abstract Polish prints, plastic plants and wild splashes of paint – but the rooms are now spotless and shiny to ensure a good night's rest. The mood in the huge 2nd-floor lobby is unashamedly voyeuristic.

**Hotel İmrenay** (☎ 613 2117; fax 613 5984; Şehir Pamir Caddesi 5; s/d TL40/60; ☎) A pinch rugged and run-down, although the lobby is rather classy and

complete with a flat-screen TV. The owner and his father enjoy having a chat with guests.

**Hataylı Oteli** (☎ 614 1590; Osman Grazi Caddesi 2; s/d TL85/125; ☎) Three-star travellers unite! İskenderun has a new first-rate midrange hotel, ideally located near the water. The excellent lobby bar has a mild equine theme, and the rooms are huge and handsome. The terrace restaurant offers a glorious breakfast vista.

**Grand Hotel Ontur** (☎ 616 2400; Dr Muammer Aksoy Caddesi 8; s/d €76/97; ☎) İskenderun's poshest hotel has spacious if somewhat dully decorated rooms. Bathrooms are spotless, but considering the outdated state of the place, discounts are definitely in order.

### Eating

The waterside area has some lovely tea gardens, plus a couple of long-standing fish restaurants and bars, especially popular on weekends.

**Hasan Kolcuoğlu** (☎ 614 7333; Ziya Gökalp Caddesi; meals TL7) By far the busiest restaurant in town, the double-storey 'HK' has been pumping out delicious, wholesome kebabs for decades. It's got an American diner feel but a truly Turkish clientele, and warm, casual service.

**Hasan Baba** (☎ 613 2725; Ulucami Caddesi 35; meals around TL10) This pide and *lahmacun* joint is sprawling and consistently packed with satisfied diners. Sit in the backyard and enjoy the fountain. City maps are generally available at the front counter.

### Getting There & Away

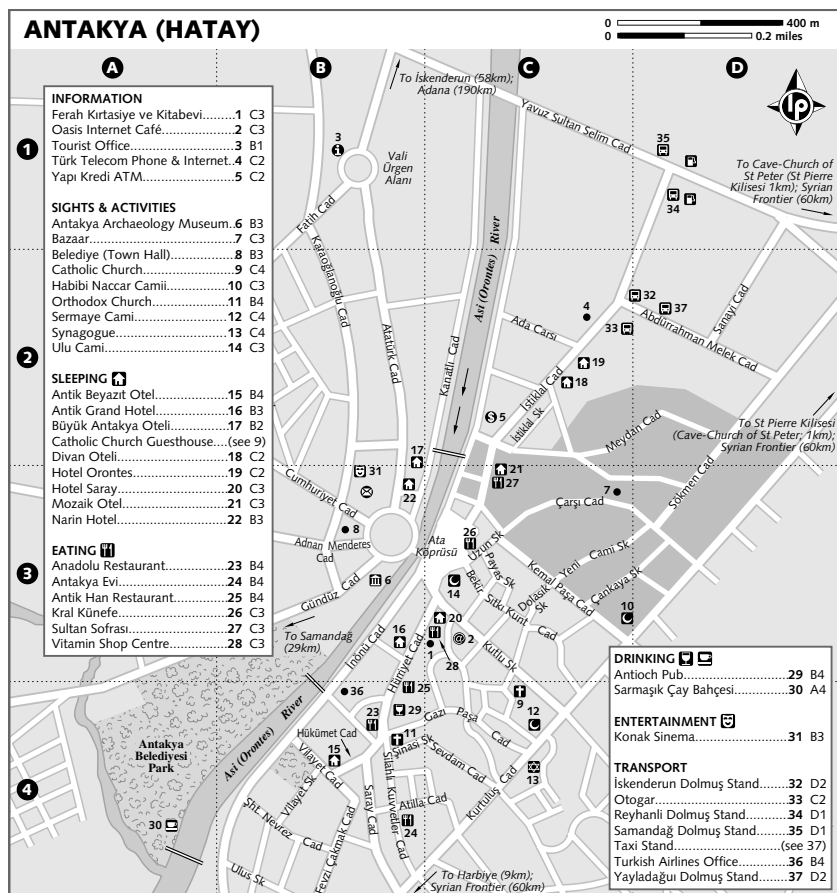
There are frequent minibus and dolmuş connections to Adana (TL5, 2½ hours, 135km), Antakya (TL2, one hour, 58km) and Osmaniye (TL2.30, one hour, 63km). Regular dolmuşes scoot down the coast to Uluçınar (Arsuz; TL2, 30 minutes, 33km).

## ANTAKYA (HATAY)

☎ 0326 / pop 681,700

Antakya (Hatay) is a prosperous and bustling near-Syrian-border city of modern convenience and ancient glory. Formerly Christianity's great Antioch, today it holds a mixture of Sunni, Alevi and Orthodox Christian faiths, 'the world's first cathedral' (the cave-church of St Peter), and a noticeably cultured air.

Antakya's wealth comes mostly from cotton farming and cross-border trade. Luxury car companies test the Turkish market here,



so expect to see some hot rides. The Asi Mountains form a fine backdrop and even siphon in cool evening breezes.

The Arab influence permeates local life, food and language, and indeed the city was only officially deemed part of Turkey in 1939. Most visitors to Antakya rush straight for the museum, and rightly so – the mosaics are unforgettable. And despite regular earthquakes – most shatteringly in AD 526 – the old city is still charming for a wander.

### History

Antakya is the ancient Antioch-ad-Orontes, which was founded by Seleucus I Nicator in 300 BC and soon became a city of half a million people. Under the Romans an important

Christian community developed out of the already large Jewish one. At one time this was headed by St Paul.

Persians, Byzantines, Arabs, Armenians and Seljuks all fought over Antioch, as did the Crusaders and Saracens. In 1268 the Mamluks of Egypt sacked the city. The Ottomans held onto it until Mohammed Ali of Egypt captured it in 1831, but with European help they eventually drove their rebellious vassal back.

Antakya was part of the French protectorate of Syria until 1938, after which it enjoyed a brief existence as the independent Republic of Hatay. But when Atatürk saw WWII approaching, he wanted the city rejoined to the republic as a defensive measure. Parliament voted for union with Turkey, and on 23 July

1939 Hatay became Turkish. The Syrian government never accepted this and some Syrian maps still show it as part of Syria.

The city is still the titular seat of five Christian patriarchs – three Catholic (Syrian Catholic, Maronite and Greco-Melchite), one Greek Orthodox and one Syrian-Tacobite – although none are based here any longer.

## Orientation

The Asi (Orontes) River divides the town. The modern district is on the west bank, with the PTT, government buildings and museum circling the Cumhuriyet Alanı roundabout.

The older Ottoman town on the east bank is the commercial centre, with most of the hotels, restaurants and services, especially along Hürriyet Caddesi. The otogar is a few blocks northeast of the centre. Continue northeast along İstiklal Caddesi for dolmuşes to Samandağ.

## Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 216 6098; 🕒 8am-noon & 1-5pm) is on a roundabout on Atatürk Caddesi, a good 10-minute walk from town.

There are several ATMs close to the otogar as well as on the west bank of the Asi River next to the Büyük Antakya Oteli. The **Ferah Kırtasiye ve Kitabevi** (Hürriyet Caddesi 17/D) stocks English-language newspapers and current affairs magazines.

The ultra-stylish **Oasis Internet Café** (☎ 216 5697; off Hürriyet Caddesi) is behind Ferah Kırtasiye ve Kitabevi.

## Sights

### ANTAKYA ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUM

At the Antakya **museum** (Antakya Arkeoloji Müzesi; ☎ 214 6168; Gündüz Caddesi; admission TL8; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun), you'll see as fine a collection of Roman/Byzantine mosaics as graces any museum in the world, covering a period from the 1st century AD to the 5th century. While some are inevitably fragmentary, others were recovered almost intact. Most labels are in English and Turkish.

Salons I to IV are tall, naturally lit rooms, perfect for displaying mosaics so fine that at first glance you may mistake some of them for paintings. Be sure to see the **Oceanus and Thetis mosaic** (2nd century) and the **Buffet Mosaic** (3rd century). As well as the standard scenes of hunting and fishing there are stories from mythology. Other mosaics have quirkier sub-

jects: don't miss the happy hunchback, the black fisherman or the mysterious portrayal of a raven, a scorpion and a pitchfork attacking the 'evil eye'. Many of the mosaics came from Roman seaside villas or from the suburban resort of Daphne (Harbiye), although some are from Tarsus.

### BAZAAR DISTRICT

A sprawling **bazaar** fills the back streets between the otogar, Kemal Paşa Caddesi and Kurtuluş Caddesi. Around Habibi Naccar Camii you'll find most of Antakya's remaining **old houses**, with carved stone lintels or wooden overhangs. It's one of the most interesting old neighbourhoods in Turkey to wander around; you might catch a glimpse of the courtyards within the compounds. The Italian priests at the Catholic Church believe St Peter would have lived in this area between 42 and 48 AD, as it was then the Jewish neighbourhood.

### CAVE-CHURCH OF ST PETER

Recently reopened and rejuvenated, this beloved Christian **cave-church** (St Pierre Kilisesi; admission TL8; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 1.30-4.30pm Tue-Sun) is cut into the slopes of Mt Staurin (Mountain of the Cross). It's said to be the earliest place where Christians met and prayed secretly. Tradition has it that this cave was the property of St Luke the Evangelist, who was from Antioch, and that he donated it to the burgeoning Christian congregation as a place of worship. Peter and Paul lived in Antioch for a few years and are thought to have preached here. When the Crusaders marched through in 1098, they constructed the wall at the front and a narthex.

To the right of the altar faint traces of fresco can still be seen, and some of the simple mosaic floor survives. The water dripping in the corner is said to cure sickness.

Three kilometres northeast of town, you can easily walk to the church in about half an hour, heading along Kurtuluş Caddesi.

### RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

Most of Antakya's 1200-odd Christians worship at the fine **Orthodox Church** (Hürriyet Caddesi; 🕒 prayers 8.15am & 6pm). Rebuilt in the 19th century with Russian assistance, the church contains some beautiful icons.

The **Catholic Church** (Kurtuluş Caddesi, Kutlu Sokak 6; 🕒 mass 8.30am daily & 6pm Sun) occupies two houses

in the city's old quarter, with the chapel in the former living room of one house. Next door is the **Sermaye Cami**, with a wonderfully ornate minaret (you'll see it on posters of Antakya), and nearby at Kurtuluş 56 is a **synagogue**.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Divan Otel** (☎ 215 1518; İstiklal Caddesi 62; s/d TL20/40; 🚽) Certainly the best of Antakya's budget options, some rooms here have balconies and small desks. There's also a quite comfortable lobby.

**Hotel Saray** (☎ 214 9001; fax 214 9002; Hürriyet Caddesi; s/d TL25/40; 🚽) Definitely a little rugged and musty, although the rooms (with TV included) are certainly large enough and some have decent mountain views.

The Catholic Church's **guesthouse** (domenico bertogli@hotmail.com; Kurtuluş Caddesi; Kutlu Sokak 6; per person TL20) has eight neat rooms around a suitably pensive courtyard. Tour groups often fill it up and guests are expected to attend daily mass.

### MIDRANGE

**Hotel Orontes** (☎ 214 5931; fax 214 5933; www.oronteshotel.com; İstiklal Caddesi 58; s/d TL50/80; 🚽) This two-star hotel near the otogar is somewhat plainly decorated, although rooms are quite large and satellite TV is included.

**Mozaik Otel** (☎ 215 5020; www.mosaikotel.com; İstiklal Caddesi 18; s/d TL50/80) This is an excellent mid-range choice near the Orontes. Rooms are decorated with multicoloured bedspreads and pretty mosaics, and some bathrooms are aqua blue. The restaurant is excellent.

**Antik Grand Hotel** (☎ 215 7575; www.antikgrand.com; Hürriyet Caddesi 18; s/d TL60/90; 🚽) This well-placed hotel offers large, tasteful rooms in a beautiful faux-antique style. All rooms have TV and minibar. Long-stay discounts are available. The excellent Antik Grand Restaurant next door has a five-course set menu special for TL12.

**Antik Beyazıt Otel** (☎ 216 2900; beyazit@antikbeyazitoteli.com; Hükümet Caddesi 4; s/d TL85/110; 🚽) One of the finest colonial dwellings in Hatay, this charming French period structure is filled with antique furniture and details. Expect Turkish carpets on the floors, European paintings and prints in the rooms, and an elegant lobby complete with drapery and an ornate chandelier. It's an excellent choice.

**Narin Hotel** (☎ 216 7500; www.narinhotel.com; Atatürk Caddesi 11; s/d TL80/120) Red-and-gold ornate

design – and a keen eye for detail – are the hallmarks of this refreshing business-minded hotel. The beds are soft and luxurious, and the bathrooms are decked in sleek white-and-grey tile. The restaurant upstairs looks the part, but the advertised menu is misleading.

**Büyük Antakya Otel** (☎ 213 5858; fax 213 5869; www.buyukantakyaoteli.com; Atatürk Caddesi 8; s/d TL90/130; 🚽) Stepping into the lobby of the 'Big Antakya' is like entering a department store. This aptly named four-star giant, with on-site hairdresser and travel agent, offers huge rooms, though prices are cheeky. Morning breakfast spreads are lavish, and some rooms have decent city and river views. It also has a deluxe sister 'spa' hotel on the road to the airport.

## Eating & Drinking

Syrian influences permeate Antakya's cuisine. Handfuls of mint and wedges of lemon accompany many kebabs. Hummus, rare elsewhere in Turkey, is readily available here. Many main courses and salads are dusted with fiery pepper; if this isn't to your taste, ask for yours *acısız* (without hot pepper).

For dessert, try the local speciality, *künefe*, a cake of fine shredded wheat laid over a dollop of fresh, mild cheese, on a layer of sugar syrup, topped with chopped walnuts and baked. **Kral Künefe** near the Ulu Cami makes a mean one.

Another good place to hang out is the riverside Antakya Belediyesi Park, a few blocks southwest of the museum. Here you'll find tea gardens, such as the **Sarmaşık Çay Bahçesi**, as well as shady promenades.

**Sultan Sofrası** (☎ 213 8759; İstiklal Caddesi 20; meals around TL12) Antakya's premier cheap eatery, this place is spotless and turns over the food at a rapid pace. The articulate manager loves to guide diners through the menu. Try the *İskender döner* or the vegetable soup. The *sütlaç* (rice pudding) is also quite good. It's next door to the Mosaik Otel.

**Antik Han Restaurant** (☎ 215 8538; Hürriyet Caddesi 17/1; meals TL12) The Han has been doing its thing for some time now and it's still one of the city's most enjoyable eateries. The breezy outdoor terrace is tucked up a narrow staircase, past the spinning chicken. The limited menu is satisfying enough – round it off with the wonderful *künefe*.

**Anadolu Restaurant** (☎ 215 3335; Hürriyet Caddesi 30; meals TL15) Antakya's newest culinary hotspot serves up a long list of fine meat dishes (Anadolu kebab TL12 on white tablecloths in



a splendid al fresco garden. The local glitterati (and a few humble loners) sip beer by the fountain and scoff first-class meze (TL5), including silken *acili ezme* (hot pepper paste with walnuts) and hummus. It's near Antik Beyazit.

**Antakya Evi** (☎ 214 1350; Silahlı Kuvvetler Caddesi 3; meals TL12-15) With a name like Antakya Evi (*evi* means home), it's little wonder that dining here feels much like eating at a friend's place. It's tastefully decorated with photos and antique furniture, and serves toothsome kebabs and standard grills.

**Vitamin Shop Center** (☎ 216 3858; Hüriyet Caddesi 7) The juice bar to the stars judging by the photo gallery, this is the place for your Atom shake (TL5), a regional speciality of banana, pistachio, honey, apricot, sultanas and milk.

**Antioch Pub** (Hurriyet Caddesi 25; beer TL3.50) Antakya's only strictly drinking hole is a friendly, though mostly male domain, where patrons lean on wooden barrels and strike Irish poses.

## Entertainment

**Konak Sinema** (Karaođlanođlu Caddesi; admission TL5) English-language blockbusters subtitled in Turkish are screened here.

## Getting There & Around

Antakya is a small enough place to negotiate on foot.

### BUS

#### To & From Syria

Everyone needs a visa to enter Syria (see the boxed text p681).

The Jet bus company at Antakya otogar has direct buses to Aleppo (TL6, four hours, 105km) at 9am and noon daily, and to Damascus (TL11, eight hours) at noon daily. These buses follow the route that all cross-border buses and trucks take, the Reyhanlı-Bab al-Hawa border, so you'll need to brace yourself for waits of two to four hours. To avoid hanging about at the border, ensure you are passing through before 8am or take a shared or private taxi, which can negotiate a path through the stationary buses and trucks. A taxi from Antakya (Turkey) to Aleppo (Syria) costs around TL60.

If you want to tackle the border in stages, local buses to Reyhanlı (TL2, 45 minutes) leave from in front of the petrol station on the corner of Yavuz Sultan Selim and İstiklal Caddesi. From Reyhanlı you can catch a dolmuş to the Turkish border. Then you

have to walk a couple of kilometres to the Syrian border.

Alternatively, catch a dolmuş south to Yayladađı (from behind the taxi rank across the road from the entrance to the otogar), from where you pick up a taxi or hitch a few kilometres further to the border. Once across (and crossing takes all of 15 minutes here), you're just 2km from the Syrian mountain village of Kassab, from where regular minibuses make the 45-minute run to Lattakia (S£25).

### Within Turkey

The otogar has direct buses to most western and northern points (Ankara, Antalya, İstanbul, İzmir, Kayseri and Konya), usually travelling via Adana (TL10, 3½ hours) and through the Cilician Gates (p429). There are frequent services to Gaziantep (TL18, four hours) and Şanlıurfa (TL24, seven hours, 345km), either direct or via Gaziantep. Minibuses and dolmuşes for İskenderun (TL3, one hour) leave from a stand just north of the otogar.

## AROUND ANTAKYA

### Harbiye (Daphne)

The hill suburb of Harbiye, 9km to the south of Antakya, is the ancient Daphne where, according to classical mythology, the virgin Daphne prayed to be rescued from the attentions of the god Apollo and was turned into a laurel tree. There are no laurels to be seen nowadays, although pine trees ring a large pool of water, very popular as a picnic place. The best approach is to get off the dolmuş opposite Hotel Çađlayan and walk down into the wooded valley on the left, which is usually full of Antakyalı holiday-makers drinking beer beneath rivulets of cooling water.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Antakya, frequent dolmuşes and city buses run along Kurtuluş Caddesi to Harbiye (TL1, 15 minutes), where they stop (briefly) to pick up passengers.

## Monastery of St Simeon

The remains of this 6th-century monastery sit on a mountain 7km from the village of Karaçay, about 18km from Antakya, on the way to Samandađ. There was no ticket office when we visited.

The cross-shaped monastery contains the ruins of three churches. The remains of mosaics can be seen in the first, but the central

church is the most beautiful, with rich carvings. The third church is more austere and was probably once used by the monks. The monastery and pillar were carved out of the mountain with an octagonal area around the pillar (the base of it remains) where pilgrims could listen to St Simeon preaching against the iniquities of Antioch. There are also the remains of a stepped structure next to the pillar, which pilgrims might have been able to climb to address the saint personally.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The turn-off to the monastery is just past the village of Karaçay, reachable by a Samandağ dolmuş (TL1, 20 minutes) from Antakya. The dolmuş stand is on İstiklal Caddesi at the junction with Yavuz Sultan Selim Caddesi.

You can take a taxi from the monastery for about €17 return, plus an hour at the site, or you could walk. A sign points up a road just past Karaçay. After 4km the road branches. The monastery lies about 2.5km down the track leading to the right.

#### Vakıflı

The last ethnic Armenian village in Turkey is beautifully set among orange orchards on the slopes of Mt Musa. There's little to hold the visitor, other than the local church (if it's open). Thirty-five households remain from the resettlement of five neighbouring Armenian villages in Lebanon in 1939 when Hatay returned to the Turks. Economics, it seems, is stronger than geo-politics, and Vakıflı survived thanks to its prosperous farming. Many Turkish Armenians from İstanbul visit in summer.

It's 35km west of Antakya.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Dolmuş from Antakya to Samandağ (TL1, 35 minutes, 29km) leave from an unmarked stand on Yavuz Sultan Selim Caddesi, near the corner with İstiklal Caddesi. From Samandağ

a few dolmuş journey to Vakıflı every day, but you might have better luck hitching.

#### Çevlik

Çevlik feels like a run-down city at the end of the sea, and is oddly bewitching for it. Locals meander about for afternoon picnics and overnight booze-ups. The coastal highway from İskenderun is due to be completed in 2009 and with it should follow a welcome revamp. The scant ruins of **Seleuceia-in-Pieria** are hardly impressive, but this was the port of Antioch in ancient times.

Nearby, however, is the mighty **Titus & Vespasian Tunnel** (Titüs ve Vespasiyanüs Tüneli; admission TL3), an astonishing feat of Roman engineering. During its heyday, Seleucia lived under the constant threat of inundation from a stream that descended from the mountains and flowed through the town. To counter this threat, the Roman emperors Titus and Vespasian ordered their engineers to dig a diversion channel leading the water around the town.

There are two ways to see the tunnel; naturally the harder way is more fun. The easy way is to ascend the steps form the car park. A guide is optional, but good footwear is essential.

The alternative is to follow the channel until you come to a metal arch on the right. Then take the path behind the arch (right fork) which follows an irrigation canal past some rock-cut shelters, finally arriving at a humpback Roman bridge across the gorge. Here, steps lead down to the tunnel. Bring a torch (flashlight) since the path is still pretty treacherous. At the far end of the channel an inscription provides a date for the work.

The slopes above the Roman bridge provide a perfect picnic spot.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Dolmuş run between Samandağ and Çevlik (TL1) every 30 minutes or so during daylight hours.

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