

# History

Fate has put Turkey at the junction of two continents. A land bridge, meeting point and battleground, it has seen peoples moving between Europe and Asia throughout history. That human traffic has left monuments and debris, dynasties and cultural legacies, which have contributed to the character of modern Turkey.

## EARLY CULTURES, CITIES & CLASHES

Archaeological finds indicate that Anatolia (the land mass of Turkey within Asia) was first inhabited by hunter-gatherers during the Palaeolithic era. By around the 7th millennium BC some folk formed settlements. Çatalhöyük, which arose around 6500 BC, may be the first ever city. It was certainly a centre of innovation, locals developing crop irrigation, domesticating pigs and sheep, and creating distinctive pottery. Relics from this settlement can be seen at Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations (p444).

The chalcolithic age saw the rise of Hacılar, in Central Anatolia, and communities in the southeast that absorbed Mesopotamian influences, including the use of metal tools. Across Anatolia more and larger communities sprung up and interacted – not always happily: settlements were often fortified.

By 3000 BC advances in metallurgy allowed power to be concentrated, leading to the creation of various Anatolian kingdoms. One such was at Alacahöyük, in the heart of Anatolia, yet even this place showed Caucasian influence, evidence of trade beyond the Anatolian plateau.

Trade, too, was increasing on the western coast, with Troy trading with the Aegean islands and mainland Greece. Around 2000 BC the Hatti people established a capital at Kanesh (Kültepe, near Kayseri), ruling over a web of trading communities. Here for the first time Anatolian history materialises from the realm of archaeological conjecture and becomes 'real': clay tablets provide written records of dates, events and names.

No singular Anatolian civilisation had yet emerged, but the tone was set for millennia to come: cultural interaction, trade and war would become the recurring themes of Anatolian history.

## AGES OF BRONZE: THE HITTITES

The Hatti were a temporary presence. As they declined, the Hittites assumed their territory. From Alacahöyük, the Hittites shifted their capital to Hattuša (near present-day Boğazkale) some time around 1800 BC.

The Hittites' legacy consisted of their great capital, as well as their state archives (cuneiform clay tablets) and distinctive artistic styles. By 1450 BC the kingdom, having endured internal ructions, was reborn as an empire. In

Archaeologist Ian Hodder's *Catalhöyük: The Leopard's Tale* is an account of the excavation of the site, which vividly portrays life as it was during the city's heyday.

Until the rediscovery of the ruins at Boğazkale in the 19th century, the Hittites were known only through several obscure references in the Old Testament.

## TIMELINE

c 6500 BC

Founding of Çatalhöyük, the world's first city. Over time 13 layers of houses were built, beehive style, interconnected and linked with ladders. It is estimated that at its peak the city housed around 8000.

c 4000–3000 BC

Hattian culture develops at Alacahöyük during the early Bronze Age, although settlement has been continuous since the chalcolithic age, when stone tools were still in use. The Hatti develop distinctive jewellery and metalwork and weapons.

c 2000 BC

The Hittites, an Indo-European people, arrive in Anatolia and conquer the Hatti, claiming their capital at Hattuša. The Hittites go on to carve out an immense kingdom extending to Babylon and Egypt.

creating the first Anatolian empire, the Hittites were warlike, but displayed other imperial trappings – they ruled over myriad vassal states and princelings while also displaying a sense of ethics and an occasional penchant for diplomacy. This didn't prevent them from overrunning Ramses II of Egypt in 1298 BC, but did allow them to patch things up with the crestfallen Ramses by marrying him to a Hittite princess.

The Hittite empire was harassed in later years by subject principalities, including Troy. The final straw was the invasion of the iron-smelting Greeks, generally known as the 'sea peoples'. The Hittites were landlocked – hence disadvantaged during an era of burgeoning sea trade – and lacked the latest technology: iron.

Meanwhile a new dynasty at Troy was establishing itself as a regional power. The Trojans in turn were harried by the Greeks, which led to the Trojan War in 1250 BC. This allowed the Hittites breathing space but later arrivals sped their demise. Some pockets of Hittite culture persisted in the Taurus Mountains, but the great empire was dead. Later city states created a neo-Hittite culture, which attracted Greek merchants and became the conduit for Mesopotamian religion and art forms to reach Greece.

## CLASSICAL EMPIRES: GREECE & PERSIA

Post-Hittite Anatolia was a patchwork of peoples, indigenous Anatolians and recent interlopers. In the east the Urartians, descendants of Anatolian Hurrians, forged a kingdom near Lake Van (Van Gölü). By the 8th century BC the Phrygians arrived in western Anatolia. Under King Gordius, of Gordian knot (p30) fame, the Phrygians created a capital at Gordion, their power peaking later under King Midas. In 725 BC Gordion was put to the sword by horse-borne Cimmerians, a fate that even King Midas' golden touch couldn't avert.

On the southwest coast the Lycians established a confederation of independent city states extending from modern-day Fethiye to Antalya. Inland the Lydians dominated western Anatolia from their capital at Sardis and are credited with creating the first-ever coinage.

Meanwhile, Greek colonies were spreading along the Mediterranean coast, and Greek cultural influence was infiltrating Anatolia. Most of the peoples of the Anatolian patchwork were clearly influenced by the Greeks: Phrygia's King Midas had a Greek wife; the Lycians borrowed the legend of the Chimera; and Lydian art was an amalgam of Greek and Persian art forms. It seems that at times admiration was mutual: the Lycians were the only Anatolian people the Greeks didn't deride as 'barbarians', and the Greeks were so impressed by the wealth of the Lydian king Croesus they coined the expression 'as rich as Croesus'.

Increasing manifestations of Hellenic influence didn't go unnoticed. Cyrus, the emperor of Persia, would not countenance such temerity in his

Homer, the Greek author of the *Iliad*, which told the story of the Trojan War, is believed to have been born in Smyrna (present-day Izmir), before 700 BC.

For further discussion of the highs and lows of life in ancient Lycia and detailed information on the sites of Turkey's Lycian coast, visit [www.lycianturkey.com](http://www.lycianturkey.com).

### c 1200 BC

The destruction of Troy. For 10 years the Mycenaeans had besieged the city, which was strategically placed above the Dardanelles and was the key to Black Sea trade. The war was later immortalised in Homer's *Iliad*.

### c 1100 BC

After the fall of the Hittites several neo-Hittite kingdoms arose, while the Assyrians and various Georgian groups encroached on southern Anatolia. It is thought that the Phoenicians brought the alphabet to Anatolia around this time.

### 547 BC

Cyrus of Persia overruns Anatolia, setting the scene for a long Greco-Persian rivalry. He established a series of satrapies. Later Darius I and Xerxes further Persian influence in Anatolia and forestall the expansion of Greek colonies.

backyard. He invaded in 547 BC, initially putting paid to the Lydians, then barrelled on to extend control to the Aegean. Over a period of years under emperors Darius I and Xerxes the Persians checked the expansion of coastal Greek trading colonies. They also subdued the interior, ending the era of home-grown Anatolian kingdoms.

Ruling Anatolia through compliant local satrapies, the Persians didn't have it all their own way. They contended with periodic resistance from feisty Anatolians, such as the revolt of the Ionian city of Miletus in 494 BC. Allegedly fomented from Athens, the revolt was abruptly put down. The Persians used the connivance of Athens as a pretext to invade mainland Greece, only to be routed at Marathon.

## ALEXANDER & AFTER

Persian control of Anatolia continued until 334 BC when a new force stormed across Anatolia. Alexander and his Macedonian adventurers crossed the Dardanelles initially intent on relieving Anatolia of the Persian yoke. Sweeping down the coast they rolled the Persians near Troy, then pushed down to Sardis, which willingly surrendered. After later successfully besieging Halicarnassus (modern-day Bodrum) Alexander ricocheted ever-eastwards, disposing of another Persian force on the Cilician plain.

In the former Phrygian capital of Gordion, Alexander encountered the Gordian knot. Tradition stated that whoever untied the knot would come to rule Asia. Frustrated in his attempts to untie it, Alexander dispatched it with a blow of his sword. Asia lay before him; he and his men thundered all the way across Persia to the Indus until all the known world was his dominion.

Alexander was more disposed to conquest than to nation-building. When he died in Babylon in 323 BC, leaving no successor, the enormous empire he had created was to be short-lived – perhaps he should have been more patient with that knot – and was divided in a flurry of civil wars.

However, if Alexander's intention was to cleanse Anatolia of Persian influence and bring it within the Hellenic sphere, he was monumentally successful. In the wake of Alexander's armies, steady Hellenisation occurred, a culmination of the process begun centuries earlier that had annoyed Cyrus, the Persian king. A formidable network of municipal communities – the lifeblood of which, as ever in the Hellenic tradition, was trade – spread across Anatolia. The most notable of these was Pergamum (now Bergama). The Pergamene kings were great warriors and enthusiastic patrons of the arts. Greatest of the Pergamene kings was Eumenes, who ruled from the Dardanelles to the Taurus Mountains and was responsible for much of what remains of Pergamum's acropolis. As notable as the building of Hellenic temples and aqueducts was the gradual spread of the Greek language, which extinguished the native Anatolian languages over several centuries.

According to legend, both of Alexander's parents foresaw his birth. His mother dreamed that a lightning strike had struck her womb, while his father dreamed that his wife's womb had been sealed by a lion. In great consternation they consulted a seer, who told them their child would have the character of a lion.

### 333 BC

Alexander the Great rolls the Persians and conquers most of Anatolia. Persian Emperor Darius, facing defeat, flees and abandons his wife, children and mother, who is so appalled she disowns him and 'adopts' Alexander.

### 133 BC

On his deathbed Pergamene king Attalus III leaves his state to Rome. The Romans swiftly establish a capital at Ephesus, an already buzzing port, and capitalise on vigorous sea trade. The population grows to 250,000.

### AD 45–60

St Paul, originally from Antioch (modern Antakya), undertakes his long proselytising treks across Anatolia. St John and the Virgin Mary are thought to have ended up in Ephesus, which develops a sizeable Christian community.

All the while the cauldron of Anatolian cultures bubbled, throwing up various short-lived flavour-of-the-month kingdoms. In 279 BC the Celts romped in from southeastern Europe, establishing the kingdom of Galatia centred on Ancyra (Ankara). To the northeast Mithridates had earlier established the kingdom of Pontus, centred on Amasya, and the Armenians (long established in the Lake Van region, and often thought to be descendants of the earlier Urartians) re-established themselves, having been granted autonomy under Alexander.

Meanwhile, across the Aegean Sea, the increasingly powerful Romans were casting covetous eyes on the rich trade networks of Anatolia.

## ROMAN RULE & THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

Ironically, Pergamum, the greatest of the post-Alexandrian cities, became the mechanism that allowed the Romans to control Anatolia. The Roman legions had defeated the armies of a Seleucid king at Magnesia (Manisa) in 190 BC, but Pergamum became the beachhead for the Roman embrace of Anatolia when King Attalus III died in 133 BC, bequeathing the city to Rome. In 129 BC Ephesus was nominated capital of the Roman province of Asia and within 60 years the Romans had overcome spirited resistance from Mithridates of Pontus and extended their reach to Armenia, on the Persian border.

The reign of Emperor Augustus was a period of relative peace and prosperity for Anatolia. In this milieu the fledgling religion of Christianity was able to spread, albeit clandestinely and subject to intermittently rigorous persecution. Tradition has it that St John retired to Ephesus to write the fourth Gospel, bringing Mary with him. John was buried on top of a hill in what is now Selçuk; the great Basilica of St John (p240) marks the site. Mary is said to be buried at Meryemana (p250) nearby. The indefatigable St Paul capitalised on the Roman road system, his sprightly step taking him across Anatolia spreading the word.

As Christianity quietly spread, the Roman Empire grew cumbersome. In the late 3rd century Diocletian tried to steady the Empire by splitting it into eastern and western administrative units, simultaneously attempting to wipe out Christianity. Both endeavours failed. Diocletian's reforms resulted in a civil war out of which Constantine emerged victorious. An earlier convert to Christianity, Constantine was said to have been guided by angels in choosing to build a 'New Rome' on the ancient Greek town of Byzantium. The city came to be known as Constantinople (now İstanbul). On his deathbed Constantine was baptised and by the end of the century Christianity had become the official religion of the Empire.

## ROME FALLS, BYZANTIUM ARISES

Even with a new capital at Constantinople, the Roman Empire proved no less unwieldy. Once the steady hand of Theodosius (379–95) was gone, the

Julius Caesar made his famous '*Veni, vidi, vici*' ('I came, I saw, I conquered') speech about a military victory at Zile, near Tokat, in 47 BC.

To get the background on the search for, discovery of and ensuing controversy of Mary's final resting place, read Donald Carroll's *Mary's House*.

330

Constantine declares his 'New Rome', later Constantinople, as the capital of the eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium). He had earlier (in 313) converted to Christianity and in 325 hosted the Council of Nicaea, a pivotal event in Christian history.

395

Under Theodosius the Roman Empire becomes Christian, with paganism being forbidden and Greek influence becoming more pervasive. Upon his death the Empire is formally split along the line Diocletian had set a century earlier.

412

Theodosius II builds the land walls of Constantinople to protect the riches of his capital. They prove extremely effective, withstanding sieges from Avars, Arabs and Bulgars, and are only to be breached once: by Mehmet in 1453.

impact of Diocletian's reforms became unstoppable: the Empire split. The western – Roman – half of the Empire eventually succumbed to decadence and sundry 'barbarians'; the eastern half – Byzantium – prospered, gradually adopting the Greek language and with Christianity its defining feature.

Under Justinian (527–65), Byzantium took up the mantle of imperialism that had once been Rome's. Historians note Justinian as responsible for the Aya Sofya (p98) and codifying Roman law, but he also pushed the boundaries of the Empire to envelop southern Spain, North Africa and Italy. It was at this stage that Byzantium came to be an entity distinct from Rome, although sentimental attachment to the idea of Rome remained: the Greek-speaking Byzantines still referred to themselves as Romans, and in subsequent centuries the Turks would refer to them as 'Rum'. However, Justinian's exuberance and ambition overstretched the Empire. Plague and the encroachment of Avars and Slavic tribes north of the Danube curtailed further expansion.

Later a drawn-out struggle with their age-old rivals the Persians further weakened the Byzantines, leaving the eastern provinces of Anatolia easy prey for the Arab armies exploding out of Arabia. The Arabs took Ankara in 654 and by 669 had besieged Constantinople. Here were a new people, bringing a new language, a new civilisation and, most crucially, a new religion: Islam.

In 1054 the line along which the Empire had split in 395 became the separating line between Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, a fault line that persists to this day.

### THE BYZANTINES, THE ARABS... & THE RENAISSANCE

Fully 780 years before Constantinople fell to the Ottomans, a Muslim army laid siege to the Byzantine capital. Newly converted, the armies of Islam marched out of Arabia, swept through Anatolia and by 669 arrived at Constantinople's walls. The early Arab incursions into Byzantine territory so worried Emperor Constantine III that he withdrew to Sicily in 660. His son, Constantine IV, succeeded him in 668 and endured five Arabic assaults on Constantinople in 10 years.

The meeting of the Byzantines and Arabs wasn't all acrimonious, however: there was considerable cultural cross-pollination. The Islamic ban on portraying human beings in pictures was adopted by Emperor Leo in 726, thus ushering in the Iconoclastic period. More happily, domes were an innovation unknown to Arabs until they saw Byzantine churches. Thereafter the dome entered the repertoire of Muslim architects, and gradually the voluptuous skylines of Islamic cities – Istanbul not least among them – were born. And in meeting the Byzantines the Arabs also encountered the scientific and philosophical works of the classical Greeks. The Arabic translations of these works eventually made their way to Western Europe, via Islamic Spain, thus sparking off the Renaissance.

To Ottoman believers, a relic of the Arab sieges of Constantinople became the fourth most holy site in Islam: the place where the Prophet Mohammed's friend and standard bearer, Ayoub al-Ansari (Eyüp Ensari in Turkish), was buried. The site of his grave was lost during the reign of the Byzantines, but once Mehmet's soldiers took the city in 1453 it was 'miraculously' rediscovered (see p125). Thereafter it became a pilgrimage site for Ottoman sultans on ascending the throne.

#### 527–65

During the reign of Justinian, Byzantium enjoys a golden age. Justinian's military conquests include much of North Africa and Spain. He also pursues reform within the core of the Empire, while also embarking on building programs.

#### 600s

The Sassanid Persians, age-old rivals of the Greeks, invade, sweeping across Anatolia and then pushing into Byzantine territory in Egypt. This brings about an economic collapse in the realm and weakens the Byzantine Empire.

#### 654–76

Muslim Arab armies invade Anatolia, capturing Ankara and besieging Constantinople. Arab incursions in the west are temporary but the eastern and southern fringes (Syria and Egypt) of the Byzantine domain are lost to the Arabs.

On the western front, Goths and Lombards impinged as well, so that by the 8th century Byzantium was pushed back into the Balkans and Anatolia. The Empire hunkered down until the emergence of the Macedonian emperors. Basil assumed the throne in 867 and the Empire's fortunes were on the up, as Basil chalked up victories against Islamic Egypt, the Bulgars and Russia. Basil II (976–1025) earned the moniker the 'Bulgar Slayer' after putting out the eyes of 14,000 Bulgarian prisoners of war. When Basil died the Empire lacked anyone of his leadership skills – or ferocity, perhaps – and the era of Byzantine expansion was comprehensively over.

## THE FIRST TURKIC EMPIRE: THE SELJUKS

During centuries of Byzantine waxing and waning, a nomadic people, the Turks, had moved ever-westward out of Central Asia. En route the Turks encountered the Arabs and converted to Islam. Vigorous and martial by nature, the Turks assumed control of parts of the moribund Abbasid empire, and built an empire of their own centred on Persia. Tuğrul, of the Turkish Seljuk clan, took the title of sultan in Baghdad, and from there the Seljuks began raiding Byzantine territory. In 1071 Tuğrul's son Alp Arslan faced down the might of the Byzantine army at Manzikert north of Lake Van. Although vastly outnumbered, the nimble Turkish cavalry won the day, laying all Anatolia open to wandering Turkic bands and beginning the final demise of the Byzantine Empire.

Not everything went the Seljuks' way, however. The 12th and 13th centuries saw incursions by Crusaders, who established short-lived statelets at Antioch (modern-day Antakya) and Edessa (now Şanlıurfa). In a sideshow to the Seljuk saga, an unruly army of Crusaders sacked Constantinople, the capital of the Christian Byzantines, ostensibly the allies of the Crusaders. Meanwhile the Seljuks were riven by power struggles and their vast empire fragmented.

The Seljuk legacy persisted in Anatolia in the Sultanate of Rum, centred on Konya. Although ethnically Turkish, the Seljuks were purveyors of Persian culture and art. It was the Seljuks who introduced knotted woollen rugs to Anatolia, and they endowed the countryside with remarkable architecture – still visible at Erzurum, Divriği, Amasya and Sivas. These buildings were the first truly Islamic art forms in Anatolia, and were to become the prototypes on which Ottoman art would later be modelled. Celaleddin Rumi (p485), the Sufi mystic who founded the Mevlevi, or whirling dervish, order, was an exemplar of the cultural and artistic heights reached in Konya.

In the meantime, the Mongol descendants of Genghis Khan rumbled through Anatolia defeating a Seljuk army at Köse Dağ in 1243. At the Mongol onslaught, Anatolia fractured into a mosaic of Turkish *beyliks* (principalities) and Mongol fiefdoms. But by 1300 a single Turkish *bey* (tribal leader), Osman, established the Ottoman dynasty that would eventually end the Byzantine line.

For insight into the battle and aftershocks of the Seljuk's first military triumph over the Byzantines grab the scholarly *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert* by Carole Hillenbrand. It sheds light on this little-known but pivotal historical event.

John Julius Norwich's concise *A Short History of Byzantium* – a distillation of three volumes on the Byzantines – does a fantastic job of cramming 1123 eventful years of history into fewer than 500 pages.

### 976–1014

Under Basil II (the Bulgar Slayer), Byzantium reaches its high-tide mark. Basil overcomes internal crises, pushes the frontiers of the Empire to Armenia in the east, retakes Italy and inflicts major defeats on the Bulgarians.

### 1071

New arrivals, the Seljuk Turks take on and defeat a much larger Byzantine force at Manzikert. The Seljuks don't immediately follow on their success but it is a body blow for the Byzantines, who retreat to Constantinople.

### 1204

The rabble of the Fourth Crusade sack Constantinople, an indication of the contempt with which the Western Christian powers of the time regard the Eastern Orthodox church. The Byzantines don't regain control of their city until 1261.

*Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* by Judith Herrin takes a thematic approach to life in the Byzantine realm and in so doing reveals the secrets of the little-understood empire.

Exuberantly told and bubbling with *bon mots*, Jason Goodwin's *Lords of the Horizons* is an energetic tilt through Ottoman history.

Concise, yet covering the vast sweep of Ottoman history, *Osman's Dream* by Caroline Finkel is rich in telling detail and investigates the goings on of the sultans over six centuries.

## THE FLEDGLING OTTOMAN STATE

Osman's bands flitted with impunity around the borderlands between Byzantine and formerly Seljuk territory, but once galvanised they moved with zeal. In an era marked by destruction and dissolution they provided an ideal that attracted legions of followers and they quickly established an administrative and military model that allowed them to expand with alacrity. From the outset they embraced all the cultures of Anatolia – as many Anatolian civilisations before them had done – and their traditions became an amalgam of Greek and Turkish, Islamic and Christian elements, particularly in the janissary corps, which were drawn from the Christian populations of their territories.

Vigorous and seemingly invincible, the Ottomans forged westward, establishing a first capital at Bursa, then crossing into Europe and taking Adrianople (now Edirne) in 1362. By 1371 they had reached the Adriatic and in 1389 they met and vanquished the Serbs at Kosovo Polje, effectively taking control of the Balkans.

In the Balkans the Ottomans encountered a resolute Christian community, yet they absorbed them neatly into the state in the creation of the *millet* system, by which minority communities were officially recognised and allowed to govern their own affairs. However, neither Christian insolence nor military bravado were countenanced: Sultan Beyazıt trounced the armies of the last Crusade at Nicopolis in Bulgaria in 1396. Beyazıt perhaps took military victories for granted thereafter. Later it was he who was insolent, when he taunted the Tatar warlord Tamerlane. Beyazıt was captured, his army defeated and the burgeoning Ottoman Empire abruptly halted as Tamerlane lurched through Anatolia and out again.

## THE OTTOMANS ASCENDANT: CONSTANTINOPLE & BEYOND

It took a decade for the dust to settle after Tamerlane departed, dragging a no-doubt chastened Beyazıt with him. Beyazıt's sons wrestled for control until finally a worthy sultan emerged. With Mehmet I at the helm the Ottomans got back to the job at hand: expansion. With a momentum born of reprieve they scooped up the rest of Anatolia, rolled through Greece, made a first attempt at Constantinople and beat the Serbs for a second time in 1448.

The Ottomans had regained their momentum when Mehmet II became sultan in 1451. Constantinople, the last redoubt of the beleaguered Byzantines, was encircled by Ottoman territory. Mehmet, as an untested sultan, had no choice but to claim it. He built a fortress on the Bosphorus, imposed a naval blockade and amassed his army. The Byzantines appealed forlornly and in vain to Europe for help. After seven weeks of siege the city fell on 29 May 1453. Christendom shuddered at the seemingly unstoppable Ottomans and fawning diplomats likened Mehmet to Alexander the Great, declaring him to be a worthy successor to great Roman and Byzantine emperors.

### 1243

The Mongols rumble out of Central Asia taking Erzurum and defeating the Seljuks at Köse Dağ. The Seljuk empire limps on and the Mongols depart leaving only some minor states. There is no dominant power remaining in Anatolia.

### 1300

Near Eskişehir on the marches between the moribund Byzantines and the shell-shocked Seljuks, Osman comes to prominence. He takes on the Byzantine army and wins minor skirmishes, slowly attracting followers and gaining momentum.

### 1349

As allies of the Byzantines, the Ottomans, under Osman's son, Orhan, make their first foray into Europe. Orhan had earlier consolidated Islam as the religion of the Ottomans; soon they are making conquests in their own right.

The Ottoman war machine rolled on, alternating campaigns between eastern and western borders of the Empire. Ottoman society was fully geared for war. The janissary system, by which subject Christian youths were converted and trained for the military, meant that the Ottomans had the only standing army in Europe. They were agile, highly organised and motivated. Successive sultans expanded the realm, Selim the Grim capturing the Hejaz in 1517, and with it Mecca and Medina, thus claiming for the Ottomans' status as the guardians of Islam's holiest places. It wasn't all mindless militarism, however: Sultan Beyazıt II demonstrated the multicultural nature of the Empire when he invited the Jews expelled by the Spanish Inquisition to İstanbul in 1492.

The Ottoman golden age came during the reign of Sultan Süleyman (1520–66). A remarkable figure, Süleyman was noted as much for codifying Ottoman law as for his military prowess. Under Süleyman, the Ottomans enjoyed victories over the Hungarians and absorbed the Mediterranean coast of Algeria and Tunisia; Süleyman's legal code was a visionary amalgam of secular and Islamic law, and his patronage of the arts saw the Ottomans reach their cultural zenith.

Süleyman was also notable as the first Ottoman sultan to marry. Where previously sultans had enjoyed the comforts of concubines, Süleyman fell in love and married Roxelana (see the boxed text, below). Sadly, monogamy did not make for domestic bliss: palace intrigues brought about the death of his first two sons. A wearied Süleyman died campaigning on the Danube in 1566, and his body was spirited back to İstanbul.

*Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers* by Bozidar Jezernik is a fascinating record of travellers' observations of the Balkans under Ottoman rule.

### THE SULTANATE OF WOMEN

The Ottoman Empire may have been the mightiest Islamic Empire, but for a time women commanded great influence in the machinations of the empire. More than ever before or after, from the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent until the mid-17th century, some women of the Ottoman court assumed and wielded considerable political clout.

This period, sometimes referred to as the 'sultanate of women', began with Lady Hürrem, known to the West as Roxelana. A concubine in the harem of Süleyman, she quickly became his favourite consort, and when his mother died Roxelana became the most powerful woman in the harem. She then proceeded to shore up her own position, persuading Süleyman to marry her – something no concubine had done before.

A master of palace intrigue, she manoeuvred the sultan into doing away with Mustafa, his son from an earlier coupling, and İbrahim, his grand vizier. This left the way open for Roxelana's son, Selim, to succeed Süleyman as sultan.

Such conniving had a lasting legacy on the fortunes of the Empire. Selim proved to be an inept and inebriated leader, and some claim that the precedent of behind-the-scenes manipulation, set by Roxelana, contributed to the increasing incompetence and eventual downfall of the Ottoman aristocracy.

### 1396

The Crusade of Nicopolis, a hastily cobbled together conglomeration of Eastern and Western European forces, aim to forestall the Turks who are marching into Europe with impunity. Ottoman forces abruptly defeat them, and Europe is left unguarded.

### 1402

Beyazıt, victor over the knights of the Crusade of Nicopolis, turns his focus to the ultimate prize, Constantinople. Ever cocky, Beyazıt takes on the forces of Tatar warlord Tamerlane. Beyazıt's army is crushed and he is enslaved.

### 1421–51

Murat II restores Ottoman fortunes after the Tamerlane setback. He takes Greece and retires to his palace in Manisa twice, but both times is forced to reassume the throne in order to see off insurgencies in Bulgaria.

## THE OTTOMAN JUGGERNAUT FALTERS

Determining exactly when or why the Ottoman rot set in is tricky, but some historians pinpoint the death of Süleyman as critical. Süleyman's failure to take Malta in 1565 was a harbinger of what was to come, and the earlier unsuccessful tilts in the Indian Ocean aimed at circumventing Portuguese influence were evidence of growing European military might.

With hindsight it is easy to say that the remarkable line of Ottoman sovereigns – from Osman to Süleyman, inspirational leaders and mighty generals all – could not continue indefinitely. The Ottoman family tree was bound to throw up some duds eventually. And so it did.

The sultans following Süleyman were not up to the task. Süleyman's son by Roxelana, Selim, known disparagingly as 'the Sot', lasted only briefly as sultan, overseeing the naval catastrophe at Lepanto, which spelled the definitive end of Ottoman supremacy in the Mediterranean. The intrigues and power broking that occurred during the 'sultanate of women' (p35) contributed to the general befuddlement of later sultans, but other vested interests, putting personal advancement ahead of that of the Empire, also played a role.

Furthermore, Süleyman was the last sultan to lead his army into the field. Those who came after him were coddled and sequestered in the fineries of the palace, having minimal experience of everyday life and little inclination to administer the Empire. This, coupled with the inertia that was inevitable after 250 years of unfettered expansion, meant that the Ottoman military might, once famously referred to by Martin Luther as irresistible, was on the wane.

## THE SICK MAN OF EUROPE

The siege of Vienna in 1683 was effectively the Ottomans' last tilt at expanding further into Europe. It failed. Thereafter it was a downward spiral. The Empire was still vast and powerful, but it had lost its momentum and was rapidly falling behind the West on many levels: social, military and scientific. Napoleon's swashbuckling campaign through Egypt in 1799 indicated that an emboldened Europe was willing to take the battle right up to the Ottomans, and was the first example of industrialised Europe meddling in the affairs of the Middle East.

It wasn't just Napoleon who was hovering. The Habsburgs in central Europe and the Russians were increasingly assertive, while Western Europe had grown rich after centuries of colonising and exploiting the 'New World' – something the Ottomans had missed out on. Meanwhile, the Ottomans remained moribund, inward looking and unaware of the advances happening in Europe. An earlier clear indication of this was the Ottoman clergy's refusal to allow the use of the printing press until the 18th century – a century and a half after it had been introduced into Europe.

But it was another idea imported from the West that was to speed the dissolution of the Empire: nationalism. For centuries manifold ethnic groups had coexisted relatively harmoniously in the Ottoman Empire, but the creation

Miguel Cervantes was wounded fighting against the Ottomans at the battle of Lepanto. It is said that his experiences served as inspiration for some scenes in *Don Quixote*.

Anatolia is so named for the Greek word *anatolē* meaning 'rising of the sun'. The Turkish *anadolu* translates, very roughly, as 'mother lode'.

### 1453

Mehmet lays siege to Constantinople, coinciding with a lunar eclipse. The defending Byzantines interpret this as a fatal omen, presaging the doom of Christendom. Sure enough, the Turks are victorious within a week of the eclipse.

### 1512–16

Selim the Grim defeats the Persians at Çaldıran and massacres Shiites in Anatolia. He proceeds to take Syria and Egypt, assuming the mantle of Caliph, then captures the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

### 1520–66

The reign of Süleyman the Magnificent, the zenith of the Ottoman Empire. Süleyman leads his forces to take Budapest, Belgrade and Rhodes, doubling the size of the Empire; he is also a patron of the arts.

of nation states in Western Europe sparked a desire in the Empire's subject peoples to throw off the Ottoman 'yoke' and determine their own destinies. So it was that pieces of the Ottoman jigsaw wriggled free: Greece attained its freedom in 1830. In 1878 Romania, Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia went their own ways, while at the same time Russia was encroaching on Kars.

As the Empire shrunk there were various attempts at reform, but it was too little, too late. In 1829 Mahmut II abolished the janissaries, and in doing so slaughtered them, but he did succeed in modernising the armed forces. In 1876 Abdülhamid allowed the creation of an Ottoman constitution and the first ever Ottoman parliament. But he used the events of 1878 as an excuse for doing away with the constitution. His reign henceforth grew increasingly authoritarian.

But it wasn't just subject peoples who were restless: educated Turks, too, looked for ways to improve their lot. In Macedonia the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) was created. Reform minded and Western looking, the CUP, who came to be known as the 'Young Turks', forced Abdülhamid in 1908 to abdicate and reinstate the constitution. Any rejoicing proved short-lived. The First Balkan War saw Bulgaria and Macedonia removed from the Ottoman map, with Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian troops advancing rapidly on İstanbul.

The Ottoman regime, once feared and respected, was now condescendingly known as the 'sick man of Europe'. European diplomats and politicians bombastically pondered the 'eastern question' and plotted how to cherry-pick the Empire's choicest parts.

## WWI & ITS AFTERMATH

The military crisis saw a triumvirate of ambitious, nationalistic and brutish CUP *paşas* (generals) stage a coup and take de facto control of the ever-shrinking empire. They managed to push back the unlikely alliance of Balkan armies and save İstanbul and Edirne, but there the good they did ended. Their next move was to choose the wrong side in the looming world war. As a consequence the Ottomans had to fend off the Western powers on multiple fronts during WWI: Greece in Thrace, Russia in northeast Anatolia, Britain in Arabia (where Lawrence led the Arabs to victory) and a multinational force at Gallipoli. It was during this time of turmoil that the Armenian scenario unfolded (see p38).

It was only at Gallipoli that the Ottomans held their own. This was due partially to the inept British high command but also to the brilliance of Turkish commander Mustafa Kemal. Iron-willed, he inspired his men to hold their lines, while also inflicting shocking casualties on the invading British and Anzac (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) forces. Unbeknown to anyone at the time, two enduring legends of nationhood were born on the blood-spattered sands of Gallipoli: Australians see that brutal campaign as

Before WWI Mustafa Kemal had served in the army in Sofia, Bulgaria, a legacy of his disagreements with the CUP revolutionaries, whom he had helped seize power in 1908.

### 1571

The Ottoman navy is destroyed at Lepanto by resurgent European powers who are now in control of the lucrative Atlantic and Indian Ocean trades and who are experiencing the intellectual and scientific advances of the Renaissance.

### 1595–1603

Stay-at-home sultan Mehmet has his 19 brothers strangled to protect his throne. His successor Ahmet I institutes the Cage, in order to keep potential claimants to the throne distracted with concubines and confections.

### 1683

Sultan Mehmet IV besieges Vienna, ending in the rout of the Ottoman army. By century's end, the Ottomans have sued for peace for the first time at Karlowitz and have lost the Peloponnese, Hungary and Transylvania.

### THE FATE OF ANATOLIA'S ARMENIANS?

The final years of the Ottoman Empire saw human misery on an epic scale, but nothing has proved as enduringly melancholy and controversial as the fate of Anatolia's Armenians. The tale begins with eyewitness accounts, in spring 1915, of Ottoman army units marching Armenian populations towards the Syrian desert. It ends with an Anatolian hinterland virtually devoid of Armenians. What happened in between remains mired in conjecture, obfuscation and outright propaganda.

Armenians maintain that they were subject to the 20th century's first orchestrated 'genocide', that over a million Armenians were summarily executed or killed on death marches and that Ottoman authorities issued a deportation order intending to remove the Armenian presence from Anatolia. They allege that Ottoman archives relating to this event were deliberately destroyed. To this day, Armenians demand an acknowledgment of this 'genocide'.

Turkey, though, refutes that any such 'genocide' occurred. It admits that thousands of Armenians died but claim the Ottoman order had been to 'relocate' Armenians without intending to eradicate them. The deaths, according to Turkish officials, were the result of disease and starvation, direct consequences of the chaos during a time of war. A few even claim that it was the Turks who were subjected to 'genocide', at the hand of Armenian guerrillas.

Almost a century after the events the issue is unresolved. In 2005 Prime Minister Erdoğan encouraged the creation of a joint Turkish-Armenian commission to investigate the events; Orhan Pamuk, Turkey's most famous novelist and 2006 Nobel Prize Laureate, speaking in Germany, claimed that a million Armenians had been killed and that Turkey should be prepared to discuss it; and academics convened in İstanbul to discuss the issue. All three initiatives failed: Armenia flatly refused Erdoğan's offer, Pamuk was pursued by the courts for impugning the Turkish national identity (see p52) and the conference attracted vehement protests from Turkish nationalists.

The murder of outspoken Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in early 2007 at the hand of Turkish ultranationalists appeared to confirm that rapprochement is impossible. But what happened? Thousands of Turks marched in protest and in solidarity with the slain journalist bearing placards saying 'We are all Armenians'. Is the problem solvable? We hope so.

the birth of their independence, while the Turks regard the defence of their homeland as the birth of their national consciousness.

The end of WWI saw the Turks largely in disarray. The French occupied southeast Anatolia; the Italians controlled the western Mediterranean; the Greeks occupied İzmir; and Armenians, with Russian support, controlled parts of northeast Anatolia. The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 ensured the dismembering of the Empire, with only a sliver of dun steppe to be left to the Turks. European haughtiness did not count on a Turkish backlash. But backlash there was. A slowly building Turkish nationalist movement was created, motivated by the humiliation of Sèvres. At the head of this movement was Mustafa Kemal, the victorious leader at Gallipoli. He secured the support of the Bektaşî dervishes, began organising Turkish resistance and

#### 1720

Ahmet III is an extravagant sultan, spending vast amounts on follies on the Bosphorus. His rule is marked by nepotism and corruption. The Austrian Habsburgs and Russia emerge as major rivals to the Ottomans.

#### 1760–90s

Despite attempts at modernisation and military training from France, Ottomans lose territory in the Black Sea and Caucasus to the Russians under Catherine the Great, who grandiosely anoints herself as protector of the Ottomans Orthodox subjects.

#### 1826

Major attempts at reform under Mahmut II. He reforms and centralises the Empire's administration and modernises the army, resulting in the 'Auspicious Event' where the unruly janissaries are bloodily put to the sword.

established a national assembly in Ankara, far from opposing armies and meddling diplomats.

In the meantime, a Greek expeditionary force pushed out from İzmir. The Greeks (who, since attaining independence in 1830, had dreamed of recreating the Byzantine Empire) saw this opportunity to realise their *megali idea* (great idea). Capitalising on Turkish disorder, the Greeks took Bursa and Edirne and pushed towards Ankara. This was just the provocation that Mustafa Kemal needed to galvanise Turkish support. After an initial skirmish at İnönü, the Greeks pressed on for Ankara seeking to crush the Turks. But stubborn Turkish resistance stalled them at the Battle of Sakarya. The two armies faced off again at Dumlupınar. Here the Turks savaged the Greeks, sending them in panicked retreat towards İzmir, where they were expelled from Anatolia amid stricken Greek refugees, pillage and looting.

Mustafa Kemal emerged as the hero of the Turkish people. Macedonian-born himself, he had realised the dream of the 'Young Turks' of years past: to create a modern, Turkish nation state. The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 undid the humiliations of Sèvres and saw foreign powers leave Turkey. The borders of the modern Turkish state were set and the Ottoman Empire was no more, although its legacy lives on in manifold nation states, from Albania to Yemen.

## ATATÜRK: REFORM & THE REPUBLIC

The Turks consolidated Ankara as their capital and abolished the sultanate. Mustafa Kemal assumed the newly created presidency of the secular republic at the head of the CHP (Republican People's Party). Later he would take on the name Atatürk (literally 'Father Turk'). Thereupon the Turks set to work: they had a job ahead of them. But Mustafa Kemal's energy was apparently limitless; his vision was to see Turkey take its place among the modern, developed countries of Europe.

At the time, the country was impoverished and devastated after years of war, so a firm hand was needed. The Atatürk era was one of enlightened despotism. Atatürk set up the institutions of democracy while never allowing any opposition sufficient oxygen to impede him. He brooked little dissent and indulged an occasional authoritarian streak, yet his ultimate motivation was the betterment of his people. One aspect of his vision, however, was to have ongoing consequences for the country: his insistence that the state be solely Turkish. Encouraging national unity made sense considering the nationalist separatist movements that had bedevilled the Ottoman Empire, but in doing so a cultural existence was denied the Kurds, many of whom had fought valiantly during the independence struggle. Sure enough, within a few years a Kurdish revolt erupted in southeast Anatolia, the first of several such ructions to recur throughout the 20th century (see p47).

*A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922* by David Fromkin is an intriguing account of how the map of the modern Middle East was drawn arbitrarily by European colonial governments in the wake of the demise of the Ottoman Empire.

1839

Reform continues with the Tanzimat, a charter of legal and political rights, the underlying principle of which was the equality of the Empire's Muslim and non-Muslim subjects. The first newspapers, banks and secular schools are established.

1876

Abdül Hamit II takes the throne. The National Assembly meets for the first time and a constitution is created but Serbia and Montenegro, urged by Russia and emboldened by the pan-Slavic movement, fight for independence.

1908

The Young Turks of the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), based in Salonika, demand the reintroduction of the constitution. In the ensuing elections the CUP wins a convincing majority, espousing fraternity within the Empire.

### FATHER OF THE MOTHERLAND

To Westerners unused to venerating figures of authority, the Turks' devotion to Atatürk may seem unusual. In response the Turks simply remark that the Turkish state is a result of his energy and vision; that without him there would be no Turkey. From an era that threw up Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, Atatürk stands as a beacon of statesmanship and proves that radical reform, deftly handled, can be hugely successful.

The Turks' gratitude to Atatürk manifests itself throughout the country. He appears on stamps, banknotes, statues – often in martial pose astride a horse – in town squares across the country. His name is affixed to bridges, airports and highways too many to mention. And seemingly every house where he spent a night from the southern Aegean to the Black Sea is now a museum.

Turkish schoolchildren are well versed in Atatürk's life and achievements – they learn them by rote and can dutifully recite them. But it may be that the history-book image of Atatürk is more simplistic than the reality. An avowed champion of Turkish culture, he preferred opera to Turkish music. Though calling himself 'Father Turk', he had no offspring and a single short and troubled marriage.

Atatürk died relatively young (aged 57) in 1938. No doubt years as a military man, reformer and public figure took their toll. His friend and successor as president, İsmet İnönü, ensured that he was to be lauded by his countrymen. The praise continues to this day. Indeed, any perceived insult to Atatürk is considered not only highly offensive but is also illegal. Cynicism about politicians may be well and good at home, but it is a no-no in Turkey as regards Atatürk.

There are two outstanding biographies of the great man. Patrick Kinross' *Ataturk: Rebirth of a Nation* is engagingly written and sticks closely to the official Turkish view, while Andrew Mango's *Ataturk* is a detached, objective and highly detailed look at a remarkable life.

The desire to create unified nation states on the Aegean also prompted population exchanges between Greece and Turkey, whereby whole communities were uprooted: Greek-speaking peoples of Anatolia were shipped to Greece, while Muslim residents of Greece were transferred to Turkey. These exchanges brought great disruption and the creation of ghost villages, vacated but never reoccupied, such as Kayaköy. It was a pragmatic move aimed at forestalling ethnic violence, but it became one of the more melancholy episodes of the early years of the republic and, importantly, hobbled the development of the new state. Turkey found itself without much of its Ottoman-educated classes, many of whom had not been Turkish-speakers, and in their stead Turkey accepted impoverished Muslim peasants from the Balkans.

Atatürk's zeal for modernisation was unwavering, giving the Turkish state a makeover on micro and macro levels. Everything from headgear to spoken language was scrutinised and where necessary reformed. Throughout the 1920s and '30s Turkey adopted the Gregorian calendar (bringing it in line with the West, rather than the Middle East), reformed its alphabet (adopting the Roman alphabet and abandoning Arabic script) and standardised the Turkish language, outlawed the fez (seen as a reminder of the Ottoman era,

Bruce Clark's *Twice a Stranger* is an investigation of the Greek–Turkish population exchanges of the 1920s. Analysing background events and interviewing Greeks and Turks who were transported, Clark recreates the trauma of the exchanges and shines new light on the fraught relationship of the two countries.

### 1912–13

The First and Second Balkan Wars. An alliance of Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian forces take Salonika, previously the second city of the Ottoman Empire, and Edirne. Edirne is reclaimed by the Turks when the alliance turns on itself.

### 1915–18

Turkish involvement in WWI sees them fighting on the side of the Central Powers. Encroached on on four fronts, the Turks repel invaders only at Gallipoli. At war's end a British fleet is positioned off the coast of Istanbul.

### 1919–22

The Turkish War of Independence. The humiliating terms of Treaty of Sèvres (1920) reduced Turkey to a strip of Anatolian territory but the Turks, led by Mustafa Kemal, fight off the Greeks and eject the Great Powers.

hence backward), instituted universal suffrage, and decreed that Turks should take surnames, something they had previously got by without. By the time of his death in November 1938, Atatürk had, to a greater or lesser degree, lived up to his name, having been the pre-eminent figure in the creation of the nation state and dragging it into the modern era through inspiration and sheer weight of personality.

## DEMOCRATISATION & THE COUPS

Though reform had proceeded apace in Turkey, the country remained economically and militarily weak and Atatürk's successor, İsmet İnönü, stepped carefully to avoid involvement in WWII. The war over, Turkey found itself allied to the USA. A bulwark against the Soviets (the Armenian border then marked the edge of the Soviet bloc), Turkey was of great strategic importance and received significant US aid. The new friendship was cemented when Turkish troops fought in Korea, and Turkey was made a member of NATO.

Meanwhile, the democratic process gained momentum. In 1950 the Democratic Party swept to power. Ruling for a decade, the Democrats had raised the hackles of the Kemalists by reinstating the call to prayer in Arabic (something Atatürk had outlawed), but when, as their tenure proceeded, they failed to live up to their name and became increasingly autocratic, the army stepped in during 1960 and removed them. Army rule lasted only briefly, and resulted in the liberalisation of the constitution, but it set the tone for years to come. The military considered themselves the guardians of Atatürk's vision – pro-Western and secular – and felt obliged and empowered to step in when necessary to ensure the republic maintained the right trajectory.

The 1960s and '70s saw the creation of political parties of all stripes, from left-leaning to fascist-nationalist to pro-Islamic, but the profusion did not necessarily make for a more vibrant democracy. The late 1960s were characterised by left-wing activism and political violence that prompted a move to the right by centrist parties. The army stepped in again in 1971 to restore order, before swiftly handing power back in late 1973. Several months later the military was ordered into Cyprus by President Bulent Ecevit to protect the Turkish minority, in response to a Cypriot Greek extremist organisation that had seized power and was espousing union with Greece. The invasion divided the island into two political entities – one of which is only recognised by Turkey – a situation that persists.

Political and economic chaos reigned for the rest of the '70s so the military seized power again to re-establish order in 1980. This they did through the creation of the highly feared National Security Council, but they allowed elections in 1983. Here, for the first time in decades, was a happy result for Turkey. Turgut Özal, leader of the Motherland Party (ANAP), won a majority and, unhindered by unruly coalition partners, was able to set Turkey back on course. An astute economist and pro-Islamic, Özal made vital economic and

European observers referred to Anatolia as 'Turchia' as early as the 12th century. The Turks themselves didn't do this until the 1920s.

### 1923

The Treaty of Lausanne, signed by the steadfast İsmet İnönü, undoes the wrongs of Sèvres. The Republic of Turkey is unanimously supported by the members of the national assembly and the process of modernisation begins.

### 1945

After WWII, which the Turks have avoided, the Truman Doctrine brings aid to Turkey on the condition of increased democratisation. By 1950 the Democratic Party is in power. Turkey becomes a key Cold War ally of the US.

### 1960

A military coup deposes Democrat leader Adnan Menderes, who is later hanged. A new, more liberal constitution is drafted. The next 20 years are politically turbulent, with the military stepping in twice more to oust the government.

legal reforms that brought Turkey in line with the international community and sowed the seeds of its current vitality.

The late 1980s, however, were notable for two aspects – corruption and Kurdish separatism (see p47) – that were to have an impact long beyond Özal's tenure.

## THE 1990S: MODERNISATION & SEPARATISM

The first Gulf War kick-started the 1990s with a bang. Turkey played a prominent role in the allied invasion of Iraq, with Özal supporting sanctions and allowing air strikes from bases in southern Anatolia. In so doing, Turkey, after decades in the wilderness, affirmed its place in the international community, while also becoming a more important US ally. At the end of the Gulf War millions of Iraqi Kurds, fearing reprisals from Saddam, fled north into southeastern Anatolia. The exodus caught the attention of the international media, bringing the Kurdish issue into the spotlight, and resulted in the establishment of a Kurdish safe haven in northern Iraq. This in turn emboldened the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), who stepped up their campaign, thus provoking more drastic and iron-fisted responses from the Turkish military, such that the southeast was effectively enduring a civil war.

Meanwhile, Turgut Özal died suddenly in 1993, creating a power vacuum. Various weak coalition governments followed throughout the 1990s, with a cast of figures flitting across the political stage. Tansu Çiller served briefly as Turkey's first female prime minister, but her much-vaunted feminine touch and economic expertise did not find a solution to the Kurdish issue nor cure the ailing economy. In fact, her husband's name was aired in various fraud investigations at a time when links between organised crime, big business and politicians were becoming increasingly apparent.

In December 1995 the religious Refah (Welfare) Party managed to form a government led by veteran politician Necmettin Erbakan. Heady with power, Refah politicians made Islamist statements that raised the ire of the military. In 1997 the National Security Council declared that Refah had flouted the constitutional ban on religion in politics. Faced with what some dubbed a 'postmodern coup', the government resigned and Refah was disbanded.

## TOWARDS EUROPE

The capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in early 1999 may have seemed like a good omen after the torrid '90s. His capture offered an opportunity – still largely unrealised – to settle the Kurdish question. Later that year the disastrous earthquakes centred on İzmit put paid to any premillennial false hopes. The government's handling of the crisis was inadequate; however, the global outpouring of aid and sympathy – not least from traditional foes, the Greeks – did much to reassure Turks they were valued members of the world community.

*Voices from the Front: Turkish Soldiers on the War with the Kurds* by Nadire Mater offers sometimes harrowing first-hand accounts of the Kurdish insurgency during the 1990s.

### 1983

In elections after the coup of 1980, the Özal era begins. A populist and pragmatic leader, Özal embarks on economic reform, encouraging foreign investment. Turkey opens to the West and the tourism industry takes off.

### 1985–99

Abdullah Öcalan establishes the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a Marxist-inspired terror group calling for a Kurdish state. Escalation of PKK violence leads to a long, bloody, low-intensity war in southeast Anatolia, until Öcalan's capture in 1999.

### 2001

The economy collapses, and the Turkish lira plummets. With an unwieldy coalition in political deadlock, massive foreign debt and after Kurdish problems and human rights violations of the 1990s, Turkey is at a low ebb.

An economic collapse in early 2001 (see p45) seemed to compound the country's woes, but despite the government securing IMF loans the long-suffering Turks were understandably jaded with their lot.

Things changed dramatically in late 2002 when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) swept to power in such convincing fashion that most old parties and several political perennials were confined to oblivion. The electorate held its collective breath to see if the military would intervene to prevent the pro-Islamic AKP from assuming government but the generals respected the will of the electorate. The AKP's leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was initially banned from sitting in parliament due to an earlier conviction for 'inciting religious violence', but some deft sidestepping ensued, and he was allowed into parliament and into the prime ministership.

Pundits were concerned as to which direction Erdoğan would lead. Initial misgivings were swiftly cast aside. Clearly intent on gaining EU entry for Turkey, Erdoğan proved a skilful and inspiring leader, amending the constitution to scrap the death penalty, granting greater rights to the Kurds and cracking down on human rights violations. By the end of 2002 the EU was making approving noises and the economy was largely back on track. Turkey was as self-confident as it had been for years, steadfastly refusing American demands that the country be used as a base for attacking northern Iraq in 2003, then later the same year enduring terrorist bombings in İstanbul with resilience and solidarity. By January 2005 the economy was considered robust enough to introduce the new Turkish lira (Yeni Türk Lirası) and do away with six zeroes on each and every banknote. In 2009 the Yeni Türk Lirası was renamed the Türk Lirası (TL).

The flirtatious EU finally started accession talks with Turkey in October 2005 after many years of come-ons had come to nothing, but the road ahead still proved bumpy. Resistance from some EU member states towards Turkish membership, and the reforms that EU candidacy has imposed on Turkey, mean that the initial ardour for membership has cooled somewhat. Nonetheless Turkey continues to exhibit more self-confidence on the world stage, playing a pivotal role in ongoing peace negotiations between Syria and Israel, while also hosting Pope Benedict, Queen Elizabeth and Greek PM Costas Karamanlis between late 2006 and 2008.

Meanwhile, the political scene has been characteristically volatile. Following the AKP's triumphant re-election in mid-2007, the tussle between 'secularists' and 'Islamists' grew more heated. A legal case to close the AKP on the grounds that it was pursuing an antisecular agenda brought tensions to boiling point. This was exacerbated in mid-2008 when the police arrested scores of people associated with the ultranationalist Ergenekon movement, alleging they were fomenting a coup against the AKP government, and a series of terrorist bombs exploded in İstanbul. Everyone drew a sigh of relief when the Constitutional Court voted not to close the AKP, but the ongoing political scene is sure to be captivating viewing.

Former BBC Turkey correspondent Chris Morris ponders the rhythms and cadences of modern Turkish life in *The New Turkey: The Quiet Revolution on the Edge of Europe*.

*The Turkic Speaking Peoples* edited by Ergün Çağatay and Doğan Kuban is a monumental doorstop of a volume investigating, in full colour, the traditions and cultures of Turkic-speaking groups from the Balkans to the western deserts of China.

## 2002

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) wins a landslide election victory, a reflection of the Turkish public's disgruntlement with the established parties. Erdoğan is an astute economic manager and the economy recovers.

## 2005

The EU finally begins accession talks with Turkey. Reforms to the economy and legal systems, as demanded by the EU, begin to be implemented. Resistance to Turkish membership by some EU states leads to a decrease in approval by some Turks.

## 2008

After a resounding election victory in mid-2007 the AKP is threatened with closure on the grounds that it is undermining the secular nature of the Turkish nation. The court votes against closure. Political tension is alleviated.

# The Culture

## THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

Legion are the travellers who return from a holiday in Turkey remarking on the friendliness of the Turks. Tales abound of travellers being offered cups of çay (tea), having meals paid for, of hitchhikers being ferried vast distances out of the driver's way, of expats constantly being invited to peoples' homes for meals or picnics. The Turks are an innately gregarious people and their tradition of hospitality – perhaps linked to their Islamic faith – runs deep. Cheerful and sociable, the Turks' fascination with visitors and pride in their country mean they are keen to act as ambassadors to everyone who comes to Turkey.

It's not uncommon for picnicking Turks to welcome passers-by with cries of '*buyrun*', an untranslatable term that means something like 'come and join us', and while carpet-shop touts or restaurant spruikers in resorts may be ultimately interested in your Western currency, they generally engage with you with a degree of light-heartedness and a lack of rancour.

The Turks also display an admirable *joie de vivre* and ability to live for the moment. The pace of modern life may be picking up but there is still always time to chat with friends and neighbours, to stop for a cup of çay or just to watch the comings and goings of the passing world. The Victorian travel writer AW Kinglake described the Turks as having an 'Asiatic contentment', perhaps not the most politically correct term but still an accurate portrayal of the Turkish ability to shoot the breeze and remain untroubled by workaday events.

Turks are also fiercely proud of Turkey. At times this may manifest itself as defensiveness or chauvinism. They may grumble about aspects of the country but they don't welcome outsiders doing the same thing. And it's surprising how many well-educated Turks subscribe to conspiracy theories about ill-defined outside forces planning to dismember Turkey.

However, with rising affluence and a degree of liberalism entering the political process, the Turks are increasingly self-confident and, despite innate conservatism, open to new ideas. The default position for most Turks is to be warm-hearted and generous, something that most visitors realise very quickly.

## LIFESTYLE

Inevitably among a population of over 70 million there is no single way of life, but one common thread through all of Turkey is the importance of family. The chosen path for the majority of Turks is to marry and raise a family. Children are adored and indulged. Family gatherings occur regularly – they are long, joyous and involve a lot of food – and are perhaps the most common manifestation of the Turks' sense of community.

In fact, Turkish life tends to be lived communally. Rare is the Turkish couch potato: far preferable is convening in teahouses, parks or playgrounds, discussing the issues of the day and chewing on sunflower seeds. And on hot nights, families will sit on their balconies calling through the darkness to their neighbours and sharing jokes with passers-by.

Due to economic conditions, however, there are stark differences in lifestyles that exist side by side in Turkey. In İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara and other major cities, people live their lives much as is done in the West. Both men and women march off to jobs in offices and shops, men and women socialise together, and in their homes people sit down to dinner at tables

Turks claim to be able to detect someone's political affiliations from the shape of their moustache. Civil servants are given instructions on how much hair can adorn their upper lip. University students are forbidden to grow beards.

Turkey has the youngest population in Europe; some 22 million (32% of the population) are under 15 years old.

and use 'modern' (ie pedestal) toilets. But move even a short distance from the cities, or into the poorer neighbourhoods of those cities themselves, and you will find a far more traditional lifestyle. Here, men and women rarely sit (let alone socialise) together, women stay at home to look after children (or work the fields), everyone sits on the floor to eat, and toilets are of the knees-by-your-ears squat variety.

This picture has been complicated by mass emigration of villagers seeking economic opportunities in the cities in the west of the country, which means that alongside the Westernised neighbourhoods there are also pockets of traditionalism. Women in headscarves may be a rarity along İstanbul's İstiklal Caddesi, but they're the norm in the backstreets of Sultanahmet. Although people are generally becoming wealthier, with a declining number of people living under the poverty line (currently a quarter of the population), the gap between those at the top and bottom of the income pile is wide and growing wider.

Meanwhile, Turkish society appears to be adopting more liberal social mores. Part of this may be due to the influence of tourism: the first Western tourists who wore bikinis in the 1970s caused scandals in some seaside villages, but today such taboos are breaking down and young Turks in the cities behave in much the same way as young people anywhere. No doubt a more liberal approach is also a consequence of increased exposure to the West, and the forces of globalisation, in general. But here again, there can be a stark difference between what is acceptable behaviour and dress in a beach resort and what is acceptable in a rural village or conservative neighbourhood. This can cause confusion for tourists who, assuming anything goes these days, are shocked when offence is taken or reception frosty. If in doubt about how to behave, always err on the side of caution, especially in rural areas.

## ECONOMY

Turkey is infamous for a galloping inflation rate that tipped 77.5% in the 1990s, with so many zeros regularly added to the currency that having a 1,000,000 lira cup of tea was a bad joke come true. An economic collapse in 2001 compounded the country's woes. Inflation skyrocketed and the value of the Turkish lira further plummeted. Kemal Derviş, a newly appointed Minister of the Economy, succeeded in sweet-talking the IMF for loans and made much-needed economic reforms, thus avoiding a potentially disastrous downward spiral.

By January 2005, under the direction of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the economy was robust enough to introduce the new Turkish lira (Yeni Türk Lirası) and finally do away with all those zeroes – something that had been promised for years. For a year or so the yeni lira looked fairly stable, but in early 2006 a global downturn saw an exodus of international money and the currency lost some 18% of its value. Investors were left feeling shaky, sadly reminded of Turkey's vulnerability due to its high debt and current-account deficit. During the final crises of 2008 the Turkish economy was affected but it did not appear to suffer as much devastation as some European economies, and Turkish investors tended to maintain an optimistic outlook. In January 2009, the Yeni Türk Lirası was renamed the Türk Lirası (Turkish lira; TL).

## POPULATION

Turkey has a population of approximately 70 million, the great majority of whom are Turks. Kurds form the largest minority, and there are also small groups of Laz and Hemşin people along the Black Sea coast, and Yörüks and Tahtacı along the eastern Mediterranean coast.

A survey carried out in eastern and southeastern Turkey discovered that one in 10 women was living in a polygamous marriage, even though these became illegal in 1926.

According to a Durex Global Sex Survey in 2007, Turkey is the world's 'most virile nation'. Turkish respondents to the survey reported an average of 14 sexual partners in a lifetime, higher, even, than the Italians...

## THE PLEASURES OF THE TURKISH BATH

The hamam (steam bath) was an institution that passed from the Romans to the Byzantines, and thence to the Turks. It was a much-anticipated weekly outing, for women especially, an opportunity to gossip, groom and pamper, and for mothers to size up potential matches for their sons. Although modern bathrooms have reduced the need for public bathing, the tradition of the leisurely soak is still alive, albeit on a much reduced scale. Unfortunately some of the finest old baths have raised prices for tourists, putting them out of reach for most locals, while also reducing the quality of their service on the assumption that tourists don't know what to expect and won't be coming back anyway.

Many people feel anxious the first time they go to a hamam. So what should you expect when you cross the threshold? First up, you usually need to choose and pay at the door for the service you'd like. Then you enter the *camekan*, where you'll be shown to a cubicle where you can undress, store your clothes, lock up your valuables and wrap around yourself the *peştimal* (cloth) that's provided. You'll be given a pair of *nalin* (wooden clogs), which you'll need to attempt to wear to prevent slipping on the marble floors. Then an attendant will lead you through the *soğukluk* (cold room, though it's usually warm) to the *hararet* (steam room) where you sit and sweat for a while.

It's cheapest to wash yourself (bring soap, shampoo and towel). The steam room will be ringed with individual *kurna* (basins) that you fill from the taps above. When sluicing the water over yourself try not to get soap into the water in the basin. Also, avoid splashing your neighbours, especially on a Friday when someone who has completed their ritual wash would have to start over again if soaked by a non-Muslim. But washing yourself is missing the fun. It's far more enjoyable to let an attendant do it, dousing you with warm water and then scrubbing you with a *kese* (a coarse cloth mitten), loosening dirt you never suspected you had. Afterwards you'll be lathered with a sudsy swab, rinsed off and shampooed.

When all this is complete you can have a massage, an experience certainly worth indulging in once during your trip. Some massages are carried out on the floor or a table, but usually you'll be spread out on the marble slab called the *göbektaşı* (belly stone) beneath the central dome. Take note that the *göbektaşı* can be hot. In touristy areas the massage is likely to be pretty cursory, unless you're prepared to pay the extra for an 'oil massage'. Elsewhere, however, a Turkish massage can be an unforgettable and invigorating experience.

Bath etiquette dictates that men should keep the *peştimal* on at all times. In the women's section, the amount of modesty expected varies considerably: in some baths total nudity is fine, in others it would be a blunder to remove your knickers; play safe by keeping your underwear on under your *peştimal* until inside the hot room where you can decide what is appropriate. It's worth bringing a dry change of underwear to put on after your hamam. If you want to shave your legs or armpits, do this in the *camekan* rather than in the bath.

Traditional hamams have separate sections for men and women or admit men and women at separate times. Opening hours for women are almost invariably more restricted than for men. In tourist areas some hamams are more than happy for foreign men and women to bathe together, and charge a premium price for the privilege. In traditional hamams, women are washed and massaged by other women – no Turkish woman would let a male masseur anywhere near her. Women who accept a massage from a male masseur should have their massage within view of companions and protest loudly at the first sign of impropriety.

Since the 1950s there has been a steady movement of people away from the countryside and into the towns, so that today some 66% of Turks live in cities. This process was accelerated by the years of fighting in the south-east when villagers were either forcibly relocated or decided for themselves that the grass was greener elsewhere (predominantly in Turkey's largest cities of İstanbul, Ankara, Bursa and Adana, but also in eastern towns such as Gaziantep and Malatya). The result is that cities such as İstanbul have turned into pervasive sprawls, their historic hearts encircled by rings of

largely unplanned new neighbourhoods inhabited by economic emigrants from across the country.

## Turks

That the Turks speak Turkish is a given, but what is not perhaps so widely known is that Turkic languages are spoken by a much larger group of people of similar ancestry who can be found spread in pockets throughout much of Eurasia: west of Turkey in Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria; north in Ukraine and parts of Russia; and east through Azerbaijan and Iran to the nations of Central Asia and the western corner of China, Xinjiang. This is because the modern Turks are the descendants of a string of Central Asian tribal groupings, the most recognisable of which are the Huns, the Seljuks and the Ottomans. Although academics believe the Turkic languages may have been spoken as early as 600 BC, the Turks definitively first appeared in medieval Chinese sources as the Tujue (or Turks) in 6th-century Mongolia and Siberia.

As they moved westward the predecessors of the modern Turks encountered the Arabs and converted to Islam. The Seljuks established the Middle East's first Turkic empire (see p33). The Seljuks' defeat of the Byzantines in battle in 1071 opened up all of Anatolia to wandering Turkish groups, thus speeding up the westward drift the Turks had been pursuing for hundreds of years. Over the following centuries, Anatolia became the heartland of the Ottoman Empire and the core of the modern Turkish Republic.

In recent years the Turks have been more willing to acknowledge the links with their Turkic brethren and have played champion for the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, while also attempting to establish business and cultural links with the Turkic-speaking Central Asian states.

## Kurds

Turkey has a significant Kurdish minority estimated at 14 million. The sparsely populated eastern and southeastern regions are home to perhaps seven million Kurds, while seven million more Kurds live elsewhere in the country, more or less integrated into mainstream Turkish society. Virtually all Turkish Kurds are Sunni Muslims. Kurds look physically similar to the Turks, but have a distinct culture, family traditions and language (an Indo-European tongue related to Persian) and live spread across the border regions of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

The ongoing struggle between Kurds and Turks has been well documented. The Ottoman Empire's inclusivity meant that Kurds and Turks fought together during the struggle for independence in the 1920s, but the situation changed after the formation of the republic. Unlike the Greeks, Jews and Armenians, the Kurds were not guaranteed rights as a minority group under the terms of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne (see p39). The Turkish state was decreed to be unitary, ie inhabited solely by Turks, hence the Kurds were denied a cultural existence. After the fragmentation along ethnic lines of the former domains of the Ottoman Empire, such an approach for the modern state was understandable and may have seemed prudent, but as the Kurds were so numerous it was perhaps inevitable that problems would arise.

As early as 1925 the Kurds rebelled against restrictions placed on their identity. Indeed, until relatively recently the Turkish government refused to even recognise the existence of the Kurds, insisting they were 'Mountain Turks'. Even today the census form does not allow anyone to identify themselves as Kurdish, nor can they be identified as Kurdish on their identity cards. This is in spite of the fact that many people in the east, particularly

Various (not exactly academically rigorous) theories state that the Turks are descendants of Japheth, the grandson of Noah. The Ottomans themselves claimed that Osman could trace his genealogy back through 52 generations to Noah.

*The Kurds: A People in Search of Their Homeland* by Kevin McKiernan recounts travels among the Kurds of Turkey, Iran and Iraq and discusses their current plight in light of their history and the geopolitics of the region.

*Istanbul: Poetry of Place*, edited by Ateş Orga, is a collection of star-struck poets, from Sultan Süleyman to WB Yeats, painting portraits of the great city.

### IN THE FAMILY WAY

Perhaps exhibiting a vestige of their nomadic, tribal origins, the Turks seem to retain a strong sense of family within their community. Indeed, one of the more endearing Turkish habits is to use familial titles to embrace friends, acquaintances and even strangers into the extended family. A teacher may refer to his student as '*çocuğum*' (my child); a passer-by will address an old man on a street corner as '*dede*' (literally, 'grandfather'); and the old woman on the bus would not bat an eyelid if a stranger called her '*teyze*' (auntie).

It is also common for children to refer to family friends as '*amca*' (uncle) and for males of all ages to address slightly older men as '*ağabey*' (pronounced 'abi', and roughly analogous to English men saying 'guv'nor'). You will also hear small children referring to their teenage sisters as '*abla*', equivalent to 'big sister', which may sound obvious but which is rather charming in its simplicity.

These terms are a sign of deference and respect but also of affection and inclusiveness. And perhaps this intimacy explains how some of the sense of community found in rural villages persists amid the tower blocks of sprawling cities where the majority of Turks now live.

women, speak the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish as their first language (see boxed text, p645) and may have a limited grasp of Turkish.

In 1984 Abdullah Öcalan formed the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which proved to be the most enduring – and bloodthirsty – Kurdish organisation that Turkey had seen. The PKK was and remains an outlawed organisation. Many Kurds, while not necessarily supporting the early demands of the PKK for a separate state, wanted to be able to read newspapers in their own language, have their children taught in their own language and watch Kurdish TV. The Turkish government reacted to the PKK's violent tactics and territorial demands by branding any call for Kurdish rights as 'separatism'. Strife escalated until much of southeastern Anatolia was in a permanent state of emergency. After 15 years of fighting, forced relocations, suffering and the deaths of over 30,000 people, Abdullah Öcalan was captured in Kenya in 1999. The 21st century started on a more promising note when Öcalan urged his followers to lay down their weapons and a ceasefire was called.

The best hope for change in Turkish–Kurdish relations may lie in Turkey's eagerness to join the EU, which demands the rights of cultural and ethnic minorities be protected. And an increasingly pragmatic and reasoned approach on the part of both the military and government has borne some fruit. In 2002 the Turkish government approved broadcasts in Kurdish and the go-ahead was given for Kurdish to be taught in language schools. Emergency rule was lifted in the southeast. The government started compensating villagers displaced in the troubles. Life for Kurds in the southeast has become considerably easier: harsh military rule and censorship have largely been lifted, and optimism has been fuelled by the possibility of joining the EU, and the guarantee of democratic rights that will come with it. In the general election of 2007, 20 Kurdish independents (including seven women) were elected in the national assembly. Many Kurds have been delighted with the development of the quasi-independent Kurdish state over the border in northern Iraq, but prefer to see their future with a country tied to the EU.

However, despite progress, some Kurdish activists maintain that reforms are inadequate, and bureaucratic hurdles are placed in the path of Kurds seeking to teach, publish or broadcast in their own language. Pundits also suggest that an amnesty for PKK militants would go a long way to ending ongoing military flare-ups. The ceasefire that followed the arrest of Öcalan has long since been broken and sporadic fighting continues in the southeast, with the Turkish army regularly entering Kurdish territory in northern Iraq in pursuit

According to the UN, Turkic languages are among the world's most widely used, spoken in one form or another by around 150 million people from the former Yugoslavia to northwestern China.

of the PKK. A group believed to be a front for the PKK, the TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Falcons), claims responsibility for the unrest and sporadic bombings throughout the country. When several bombs were exploded in İstanbul in summer 2008 many observers immediately blamed the PKK.

## Laz

The 250,000-odd Laz people mainly inhabit the valleys between Trabzon and Rize. East of Trabzon you can hardly miss the women in their vivid red- and maroon-striped shawls. Laz men are less conspicuous, although they were once among the most feared of Turkish warriors: for years black-clad Laz warriors were Atatürk's personal bodyguards.

Once Christian but now Muslim, the Laz are a Caucasian people who speak a language related to Georgian. Just as speaking Kurdish was forbidden until 1991, so was speaking Lazuri, a language that until recently had not been written down. However, the German Wolfgang Feuerstein and the Kaçkar Working Group drew up a Lazuri alphabet (combining Latin and Georgian characters) and dictionary, and there are small signs of a growing sense of Laz nationalism.

The Laz are renowned for their sense of humour and business acumen, with many involved in the Turkish shipping industry and construction.

## Hemşin

The Hemşin people mainly come from the far eastern end of the Black Sea coast, although perhaps no more than 15,000 of them still live there; most have long since migrated to the cities where they earn a tasty living as bread and pastry cooks.

The Hemşin may have arrived in Turkey from parts of what is now Armenia. Like the Laz, they were originally Christian – their relatively recent conversion could explain why they seem to wear their Islam so lightly. For example, you won't see women in veils or chadors in Ayder, although the local women wear leopard-print scarves (even more eye-catching than those worn by Laz women) twisted into elaborate headdresses.

## Other

Some Turks like to say that their nation is made up of 40 tribes. Indeed, there is a multitude of minority communities throughout Turkey.

About 70,000 Armenians still live in Turkey, mainly in İstanbul, and in isolated pockets in Anatolia. The controversy surrounding the Armenians in the final years of the Ottoman Empire ensures that relations between Turks and Armenians in Turkey and abroad remain predominantly sour (see boxed text, p38). Happily, there are signs of rapprochement. In early 2007 the Armenian church on Akdamar Island (see p643) was refurbished by the Turkish Culture Ministry and reopened amid hopes that relations would improve. Turkish voters, later the same year, gave the Armenian entry in the Eurovision song contest the maximum number of votes, a move interpreted by some as a gesture of reconciliation. Throughout 2008 Ankara made several requests to the Armenian government to be able to meet face to face – something that has never happened – to start a dialogue on the issues that bedevil relations. Meanwhile, brisk Turkish–Armenian trade is ongoing, despite their mutual border being closed. Turkish manufacturers send Turkish goods to Armenia on a circuitous route through neighbouring Georgia, surely proof positive that Turks and Armenians have much in common and much to gain if they can bury their mutual distrust.

Turkey's other significant minority is the Greeks. Large Greek populations once lived throughout the Ottoman realm, but after the population exchanges

A magnificent collection of images collected over decades, *Nomads in Anatolia* by Harald Böhmer and Josephine Powell looks at the lost traditions and handicrafts of Anatolia. Difficult to find but a hugely rewarding book.

*The Turkish Coast Through Writers' Eyes*, edited by Rupert Scott, collects a diverse range of musings on the landscape, archaeology and way of life of this beguiling stretch where the land plunges into the blue sea.

The hard-to-find *Farewell Anatolia* by Greek author Dido Sotiriou recounts the experiences of Greek villagers during the 1920s. Beloved by both Greek and Turkish readers.

of the early republic era (p40) and acrimonious events in the 1950s, these were reduced to a small pocket still living in İstanbul and a few Pontic Greeks in the remote valleys of the eastern Black Sea. Recent years, however, have seen a warming of relations between Greece and Turkey and the return of some Greek young professionals and students to İstanbul.

There are also small communities of Circassians, Assyrians, Tatars, Bosniaks, Albanians, Arabs, Roma and Jews, as well as large – and growing – expat communities.

## SPORT

Far and away the most important sport in Turkey is football (see below), but in recent years basketball has taken off. The Turkish Basketball League is now 40 years old, boasts 16 teams and attracts players from the US and elsewhere, while some Turkish players have achieved great successes in the American NBA. Turkish women's volleyball teams have been very successful in Europe, too.

Turkey is also a small but significant presence in the sport of weightlifting. The diminutive Naim Süleymanoğlu won gold at the Seoul and Barcelona Olympics, aside from setting various world records and winning world titles, while his protégé Halil Mutlu won gold medals at the Atlanta, Sydney and Athens Olympics.

In 2005 Turkey hosted its first Formula One Grand Prix. A more traditional sport is *cirit* (pronounced 'jirit'), which involves horse-borne riders hurling wooden javelins at opposing teams. Requiring a great deal of skill and horsemanship, it is thought to have evolved as a training routine for Ottoman cavalries and has recently undergone a revival in various Anatolian towns.

## Football

Turks are simply mad about football (soccer). Every city has a football stadium that heaves with fans on match days. Pre- and post-match, the streets are aflutter with team flags, and the bars and tea gardens buzz with talk of nothing else.

The Turks' love affair with football began in the mid-19th century, after they were introduced to the game by English tobacco merchants. First matches saw English and Greek teams face off, but soon Turkish students from the Galata high school ran onto the field as the Galatasaray club. Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş and Galatasaray are the top three teams, all of which are based in İstanbul and have fanatical national followings. Choose a team at your peril.

Since the 1990s Turkish teams and players have been enjoying greater success and increasingly higher profiles. In 2003, the national team made it to the semi-finals of the World Cup; Turks even outdid themselves when it came to partying hard. Summer 2008 saw the country in a high state of excitement as the national team, against expectations, made it to the semi-finals of the European Cup, only to lose to Germany.

The best place to see a game is in İstanbul (p154).

## Oil Wrestling

Turkey's national sport is *yağlı güreş* (oil wrestling). The most important wrestling tournament has been taking place near Edirne since 1361 (see boxed text, p172). Every June, hundreds of amateur wrestlers from all over Turkey gather there to show off their strength.

The wrestlers are organised into classes, from *teşvik* (encouragement) to *baş güreş* (head wrestlers), with the winner in each class being designated

a *başpehlivan*, or master wrestler. Clad only in leather shorts, they coat themselves with olive oil, utter a traditional chant and start going through a warm-up routine consisting of exaggerated arm-swinging steps and gestures. Then they get down to the nitty-gritty of battling each other to the ground, a business that involves some interesting hand techniques to say the least.

On the last day of the festival, the *başpehlivans* wrestle for the top prize. Finally only two are left to compete for the coveted gold belt.

## Camel Wrestling

Another purely Turkish spectacle is the camel-wrestling matches held in the south Aegean town of Selçuk in late January. Huge male camels are brought together to grapple with each other, which sounds like a frightfully unfair infringement of animal rights. Actually, it all seems rather harmless, with teams of men on hand with ropes like tug-of-war teams to pull the beasts apart at the first sign of anything seriously threatening. It's an amazingly colourful sport, and the picnicking spectators love it. For more information see boxed text, p245.

## MULTICULTURALISM

The Ottoman Empire was the quintessential multicultural state, a sprawling geographic realm encompassing countless ethnic communities living side by side. Ottoman policy was to allow people to live their lives in peace provided they paid the requisite taxes and obeyed the law. However, the fragmentation of the Empire into ethnically based nation states in the late 19th century, followed by the events of WWI and the Turkish War of Independence, meant that republican Turkey strived to achieve a unitary state and looked upon non-Turkish nationalism within Turkey as a threat (p39). Turkey has been slow to shake off this mindset.

Multiculturalism as it is understood in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and countries that have absorbed migrants in search of economic opportunities, is not a concept that has a lot of currency in Turkey. Because Turkey itself was reforming and establishing its economic and democratic institutions during the post-WWII era it did not attract economic migrants or refugees from elsewhere. As such, it has not needed to set up the mechanisms of modern multiculturalism. Foreigners wanting to move to Turkey often have trouble persuading officials to let them keep their own names on their ID cards, or to be allowed to register themselves as Christians or Jews.

Modern Turks will assure you that theirs is a very cosmopolitan country, but notwithstanding its various minorities (see p45), the population is almost uniformly Caucasian and Muslim. And while Turkey is a resolutely secular country, there remain lingering doubts about non-Muslim interest groups within. Indeed, avowedly secular ultranationalists are thought responsible for the gruesome murders of three Christian convert 'missionaries' in Malatya in 2007. Even the St Paul Trail (see p359) came under scrutiny for fear that volunteers waymarking the trek were really missionaries in disguise.

While Turkey didn't receive post-WWII migrants and refugees, it is now acting as a conduit and having to absorb waves of people afoot as a repercussion of globalisation. In recent years the number of asylum-seekers reaching Turkey has grown, and Turkey's position on the doorstep of Europe has made it one of the major centres for human trafficking in the world. It is estimated that more than 100,000 people annually risk their lives hidden in ships or cross the long, rugged mountain passes on Turkey's southeastern borders in the hope of continuing their journey by boat to Italy or Greece,

Louis de Bernières, of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* fame, wrote *Birds Without Wings*, another blockbusting page-turner inspired by Kayaköy near Fethiye. It exposes the human side of the intermingling of religions and culture during the Ottoman era, war and the population exchange.

### FREEDOM TO SPEAK

Although Turkey has been implementing a wide range of reforms for its EU membership bid, the country's penal code still retains the infamous Article 301, which originally prohibited people from 'insulting Turkishness', but after a lengthy political debate was amended in 2008 to prohibit 'insulting the Turkish nation'. This Article has been the basis for ongoing high-profile prosecutions of journalists, writers and artists, all of which are indicative of Turkey's tight limits on freedom of speech.

The most famous case to hit the headlines was Turkey's internationally acclaimed novelist, Orhan Pamuk, who was tried after he mentioned the killing of Armenians by Ottoman Turks at the beginning of the 20th century (see boxed text, p38). Charges were dropped in early 2006, but Pamuk had become a reluctant political symbol and a target for nationalists, and international attention was drawn to the state of affairs in Turkey.

Lesser-known but just as important cases have followed. Journalist and author Perihan Mağden was tried for 'turning people against military service' after she wrote an article in the *Yeni Akeul* newspaper entitled 'Conscientious objection is a human right'. During her case, heard in the Sultanahmet law courts in mid-2006, she was heckled by ultranationalists, whom, critics claim, security forces did little to quell. Subsequently, internationally recognised author Elif Şafak was also set to stand trial for comments made by the Armenian characters in her *The Bastard of Istanbul* before the prosecution stumbled.

Even internet phenomenon YouTube.com has been banned in Turkey several times, most recently when a video allegedly insulting Atatürk was discovered in its videologs. Some allege that the video was posted by Greek nationalists. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Erdoğan has been wont to take artists to court – and win – when he has felt he hasn't been portrayed in a flattering light.

It remains to be seen whether continuing pressure and international exposure from the increasing number of cases will eventually force the government into acting on its declared commitment to freedom of expression.

or by land into Greece. Many get stuck in İstanbul and stay as long as it takes for asylum visa applications to be processed or to earn enough money to fund the next leg of their trip.

Turkey has a large diaspora, with the largest community (some 2.6 million first- and second-generation Turks) living in Germany. Turks arrived in Germany in the 1960s as 'guest workers' at the invitation of the German government. However, the Kohl government's 1983 *Voluntary Repatriation Encouragement Act*, offering Turks financial incentives to return home, indicates that while guest workers were welcome as an economic stimulus it was not anticipated that they would stay for such long periods. There are also significant remnant Turkish populations in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece, and large expat communities in France, the Netherlands, UK, USA, Austria and Australia.

### MEDIA

Although from the way the Turks slag their governments off in print it may look as if there's little censorship, certain subjects (the 'Armenian genocide', the 'Kurdish problem', negative portrayal of Atatürk, the army etc) still cause problems. Since editors and journalists know the likely penalties of stepping out of line, self-censorship is the order of the day. Still, some 200 journalists, artists and writers have been tried over the last two decades under Article 301, and in response, a freedom-of-speech movement has gained momentum over the last few years (see boxed text, above).

Although controls over TV have loosened, the public broadcaster, Turkish Radio and TV (TRT), still receives a certain amount of censorship from the government of the day.

## RELIGION

The Turkish population is 98% Muslim, mostly of the Sunni creed, with about 20% Alevi and a small group of Shiites (around Kars and Iğdır). İstanbul, İzmir and the coastal resorts have small Christian populations. There are also small communities of Nestorian and Assyrian Orthodox Christians in and around Diyarbakır, Mardin and the Tür Abdin plateau. Turkey has had a Jewish community since the Roman era. It significantly increased in 1492 when Sultan Beyazıt II welcomed the Jews expelled by the Spanish Inquisition. Today there are some 24,000 Jews in İstanbul, with smaller numbers in cities such as Ankara, Bursa and İzmir.

Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country with a secular constitution. Some 75% of Turks support the separation of state and religion, but nevertheless tensions between state and religion remain high. The urban-elite secularists, who see themselves as defenders of Turkey's republican foundations, fear the country will become an Islamic state (like its neighbour, Iran) if the fiercely guarded secular principles of the constitution are chipped away. Others say the doggedly secular laws repress basic human rights, including religious expression and duty. The headscarf has become a symbol of ongoing state-versus-religion tensions – see boxed text, below.

## Islam

Many Turks take a fairly relaxed approach to their Muslim religious duties and practices. Fasting during Ramazan (Ramadan in many Islamic countries) is widespread and Islam's holy days and festivals are treated with due respect, but for many the holy day, Friday, and Islamic holidays are the only times they'll visit a mosque. You can also tell by the many bars and *meyhanes* (taverns) throughout the country that Turks like a drink or two. If you've travelled in other Muslim countries where the five-times-a-day prayers are strictly followed, you'll find the practice of Islam in Turkey quite different.

Like Christians, Muslims believe that Allah (God) created the world and everything in it, pretty much according to the biblical account. They

*Biblical Sites in Turkey* by Everett C Blake and Anna G Edmonds provides detailed coverage of the country's many Christian and Jewish holy places as well as the Muslim ones.

### 'ISLAMISTS' VS THE STATE: THE HEADSCARF CONTROVERSY

Who would have thought a square of cloth could cause such controversy? The issue flared up in 1998 when elected MP Merve Kavakçı tried to take the oath of office while wearing a scarf, only to be jeered at and slow hand-clapped by her fellow MPs.

Since then the headscarf (*türban* or *eşarp*) has been the issue over which secular and religiously minded Turks have tussled. Secularists argue that the headscarf is a banner for 'Islamists' and that to allow headscarf-wearing women into schools or to work in government offices would be to undermine the secular nature of the Turkish Republic. The law supports this argument. Religiously minded Turks argue that to ban women wearing headscarfs from educational facilities and government work opportunities is to unfairly deprive them of the right to an education and employment. They argue that to wear a headscarf is to be observant of religion and is indicative of a more conservative approach to life in which a woman's modesty is of heightened importance but is not an indication of 'Islamism'.

As the law stands, it's not uncommon for government ministers to be denied invitations to presidential receptions if their wives wear headscarves.

After its decisive election victory in mid-2007, the AKP amended the law. Women wearing headscarves duly turned up at universities in early 2008, but many were prevented from entering. The AKP's move was a prime catalyst for a closure case brought against the party in mid-2008 on the grounds that it was seeking to undermine the secular nature of the state. The case was overturned, but tensions remain and a solution seems elusive.

While the Ottoman Empire was a Muslim entity, its rulers weren't a particularly pious lot. No Ottoman sultan performed the Haj except Selim I – when he conquered Mecca.

*The Alevi in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition* by David Shankland, based on anthropological studies in central Anatolia, sheds light on the relatively unknown traditions of the Alevi.

also believe that Adam (Adem), Noah (Nuh), Abraham (İbrahim), Moses (Musa) and Jesus (İsa) were prophets, although they don't believe that Jesus was divine. Muslims call Jews and Christians 'People of the Book', meaning those with a revealed religion (in the Torah and Bible) that preceded Islam.

Where Islam diverges from Christianity and Judaism is in the belief that Islam is the 'perfection' of these earlier traditions. Although Moses and Jesus were prophets, Mohammed was the greatest and last: *the* Prophet (Peygamber) to whom Allah communicated his final revelation, entrusting him to communicate it to the world.

Accordingly, Muslims do not worship Mohammed, only Allah. In fact, Muslim in Arabic means 'one who has submitted'. The *ezan* called from the minaret five times a day and said at the beginning of Muslim prayers says: 'Allah is great! There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet.' Allah's revelations to Mohammed are contained in the Kur'an-i Kerim, the Quran (Kuran in Turkish).

Muslims are expected to observe the following five 'pillars' of Islam:

- Say, understand and believe: 'There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet.'
- Pray five times daily: at dawn, noon, midafternoon, dusk and after dark.
- Give alms to the poor.
- Keep the fast of Ramazan.
- Make a pilgrimage to Mecca, if capable of doing so.

Muslim prayers are set rituals. Before praying, Muslims must wash their hands and arms, feet and ankles, and head and neck in running water. Then they must cover their head, face Mecca and perform a precise series of gestures and genuflections. If they deviate from the pattern, they must begin again.

A Muslim must not touch or eat pork, nor drink wine (interpreted as any alcoholic beverage), and must refrain from fraud, usury, slander and gambling. No sort of image of any being with an immortal soul (ie human or animal) can be revered or worshipped.

## MOSQUE ETIQUETTE

Many Turkish mosques are breathtaking architectural and artistic creations, and, while visitors are welcome, it's important to remember that mosques are places of worship, first and foremost.

- It's best to avoid visiting while prayers are under way (ie at the call to prayer – dawn, noon, midafternoon, dusk and evening). This is particularly the case for noon prayers on Fridays, which is the Muslim holy day.
- Before entering, remove your shoes (if there is an attendant you may want to tip him when you retrieve your shoes).
- Both men and women should dress modestly and conservatively; shorts or sleeveless tops are inappropriate.
- Women should wear a scarf or head covering and a skirt or trousers that covers their knees; many of the regularly visited mosques will be able to provide a strip of material for a head covering should you not have one.
- Loud and extroverted behaviour is not appropriate, nor are displays of affection.
- Try not to disturb anyone who is praying; don't take flash photos and certainly don't walk directly in front of them.
- It will be appreciated if you drop some money into the donations box as you leave.

### THE ALEVIS

An estimated 20% of the Turkish population are Alevis – Muslims whose traditions differ markedly from those of the majority Sunnis; they have more in common with Shiites. The origins of these differences lie in the quarrels that broke out in 656 between the followers and relatives of the Prophet Mohammed following his death.

The religious practices of Sunnis and Alevis differ significantly. Many Alevi beliefs correspond with those of Hacı Bektaş Veli, the 13th-century Muslim mystic whose tomb is in Hacıbektaş (see boxed text, p516) in Cappadocia. Alevism contains many aspects of Anatolian folk culture; it is a lot less rigid in its traditions – for instance men and women assemble together in a *cemevi* (assembly hall), unlike strictly segregated Sunnis – and it includes aspects of universalism and humanism.

Antipathy between the Sunnis and the Alevis has continued into modern times, with some Turks denying that Alevis are true Muslims. The left-leaning and liberal ways of the Alevis are regarded suspiciously by more-conservative Sunnis. Alevis want their religion included in textbooks (currently only the Sunni faith is covered), their rights recognised and their *cemevis* recognised as places of worship.

One of the nastiest manifestations of this antipathy is known as the Madimak tragedy (p481), where, in July 1993, a mob attacked an Alevi cultural festival, resulting in 37 deaths.

Islam has been split into many factions and sects since the time of Mohammed, and Islamic theology has become very elaborate and complex. However, these tenets are the basic ones shared by the entire Muslim community (or *umma*).

### WOMEN IN TURKEY

Many women in Istanbul and other big coastal cities live a life not unlike women in the West, free to come and go pretty much as they choose, to go out to work and to dress as they wish. But for many Turkish women, especially those in villages, no such freedom exists and their lives are ruled by the need to maintain their modesty and the honour of their family for fear of retribution.

Honour killings are an ongoing headache for the country. A European Parliament investigation into women's rights in Turkey found that since 2003 the number of women allegedly murdered for 'honour' has increased. In most honour killings the 'dishonoured' family chooses a male family member to murder the woman accused of dishonouring the family, usually by having a child outside marriage or an extramarital affair. Traditionally the murderers have received reduced sentences due to pleas of provocation, but the government's recent law amendments have increased penalties. Indeed, a Turkish parliamentary commission into honour killings found some 37% of respondents thought women who commit adultery should be killed. Ongoing 'suicide epidemics' of young women out east, as described in Orhan Pamuk's novel *Snow*, is an ongoing interrelated issue. Activists think the clampdown on honour killings may be partly responsible for encouraging families to push 'dishonourable' women in the family to dispose of themselves.

Despite the country granting key rights such as the right to vote and be elected to parliament in the 1930s, long before some Western countries did so, women still don't enjoy gender equality. Studies show women earn an average 40% less than their male equivalents, that women make up only 4.4% of parliamentary representatives, and that 45% of men think they have a right to beat their wives. In 2007 the women's support group KA-DER highlighted this issue with a highly successful 'moustache protest' media campaign, whereby women sported false moustaches while asking whether it was necessary to be a man to enter parliament.

Turkey's answer to England's King Henry VIII, Sultan Ibrahim (r 1640–48) had his entire harem of 280 women tied in sacks and thrown into the Bosphorus when he tired of them.

However, around one-third of all lawyers and academics in the country are female, and there's a growing pool of talented women taking executive roles in the marketing, banking and retail sectors. The AKP government has begun overhauling laws with a view to joining the EU. As of January 2003 Turkish women are technically the equal of their menfolk. The new Turkish Civil Code abolished the clause decreeing that men were the heads of every household and ruled that henceforth women will be entitled to half their household's wealth in the event of a divorce. Rape in marriage and sexual harassment are now recognised as crimes.

## ARTS

Turkey's artistic traditions are rich and diverse, and here we offer an introduction to some of them.

### Literature

Historically, the Turkish literary tradition consisted of epic poetry passed down orally. During the Ottoman era, highly ritualised and formal divan poetry grew popular. It is only in the last century that Turkey has developed a tradition of novel writing.

### NOVELS

The notion of writer as social commentator took off in Turkey in the early 20th century, in the fertile grounds of WWI, the Russian Revolution, the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the blossoming Turkish Republic era. Yaşar Kemal was the first major internationally recognisable Turkish novelist. His *Memed, My Hawk* is a gut-wrenching insight into the desperate lives of villagers battling land-grabbing feudal lords. Of Kurdish extraction and leftist bent, Kemal has been nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature on several occasions, and jailed a number of times for supposed pro-separatist sympathies.

Following in the footsteps of the grand old man of Turkish literature is internationally acclaimed author and 2006 Nobel Prize Laureate, Orhan Pamuk. While Kemal's work focuses on the early decades of the republic and village life in Anatolia, Pamuk tends to wrestle with the weighty issues confronting contemporary Turkey. In the course of several novels he attracted a growing audience, but he shot to international prominence in 2005 for mentioning the dreaded Armenian tragedy (see boxed text, p38). Pamuk is an inventive prose stylist, sometimes compared to Calvino and Borges. His *Black Book* is an existential whodunit set in Istanbul and told through a series of florid newspaper columns; while *My Name is Red*, set in the Ottoman era, is a murder mystery which also delves into eastern and Western concepts of art. In *Istanbul, Memoirs and the City* Pamuk ruminates on his complex relationship with the beguiling city.

For some time, the Turkish-French writer Elif Şafak has been attracting an international audience. Her novel, *The Flea Palace*, is a dense and wordy story of an elegant Istanbul apartment building fallen on hard times. The follow-up, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, is a coming-of-age saga bristling with eccentric family members and fell foul of Article 301 (see boxed text, p52). Buket Uzuner is another well-regarded female author. Her prize-winning novel *Mediterranean Waltz* is an unrequited love story set against the backdrop of civil war. Better yet is her *Long White Cloud, Gallipoli*, describing the fallout after a New Zealand woman claims a soldier revered as a war hero in Turkey is actually her great-grandfather. Meanwhile, *Dear Shameless Death* by Latife Tekin is a heady whirl of Anatolian folklore and magic realism.

İrfan Orga's autobiographical *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, set during the late Ottoman/early republican era, describes the collapse of his well-to-

*Tales from the Expat Harem* is a compilation of stories, sometimes funny, sometimes insightful, dealing with life in Turkey by expatriate women.

For more background reading on Turkish arts see the US-based Turkish Culture Foundation's website: [www.turkishculture.org](http://www.turkishculture.org).

Orhan Pamuk's latest book, *Other Colours*, is a collection of nonfiction pieces he has written over the years. It's a lively and enquiring collection of meditations, criticism, observation and snatches from his notebooks.

do İstanbullu family and its struggle to rebuild (beautifully mirroring the times). It offers a peep into the culture of the hamam, the life of leisure in the Bosphorus *yalis* (summer houses) and much more. Another autobiographical novel is *Young Turk*, an elegant tale related in 13 linked stories, by Jewish-Turkish writer Moris Farhi.

There is a growing trend for foreign writers – expat or otherwise – to set their tales in Turkey. Barbara Nadel writes gripping whodunits, usually set in İstanbul, featuring the chain-smoking, stubbled Inspector Çetin İkmén. *Belshazzar's Daughter*, her first, is one of the best, but the award-winning *Dance with Death* is an easy and enjoyable read, too. Alan Drew's first novel, *Gardens of Water*, looks at contemporary Turkey in the aftermath of the earthquakes of 1999. And long-term Turkophile Jason Goodwin's mysteries, *The Janissary Tree*, *The Snake Stone* and *The Bellini Card*, feature one of modern literatures more unlikely heroes, an Ottoman eunuch named Yashim.

See p19 for more reading recommendations.

## POETRY

Turkey's two most famous poets lived roughly seven centuries apart: the mystic poet Yunus Emre lived in the 13th century and Nazım Hikmet in the 20th century.

Nazım Hikmet is not only Turkey's greatest poet but also one of the world's best. Although his work is firmly embedded in Turkey and strongly patriotic, he was also a Communist exiled for his beliefs. His poems written while incarcerated are some of his best. He died and is buried in Russia, and sadly his works are still not allowed to be taught in Turkish schools. The best introduction to his work is *Poems of Nazım Hikmet*.

## Carpets

The oldest-known carpet woven in the Turkish double-knotted Gördes style dates from between the 4th and 1st centuries BC, but it is thought that hand-woven carpet techniques were introduced to Anatolia by the Seljuks in the 12th century. Thus it's not surprising that Konya, the Seljuk capital, was mentioned by Marco Polo as a centre of carpet production in the 13th century.

Traditionally, village women wove carpets for their own family's use, or for their dowry. The general pattern and colour schemes were influenced by local traditions and the availability of certain types of wool and dyes. Patterns were memorised, and women usually worked with no more than 45cm of the carpet visible. Each artist imbued her work with her own personality, choosing a motif or a colour based on her own artistic preferences, and even events and emotions in her daily life. Knowing they would be judged on their efforts, the women took great care over their handiwork, hand-spinning and dyeing the wool.

In the 19th century, the European rage for Turkish carpets spurred the development of carpet companies. The companies, run by men, would deal with the customers, take orders, purchase and dye the wool according to the customers' preferences, and contract local women to produce the finished product. The designs might be left to the women, but were more often provided by the company based on their customers' tastes. Although well made, these carpets lacked some of the spirit and originality of the older work.

These days, many carpets are made to the dictates of the market. Weavers in eastern Turkey might make carpets in popular styles native to western Turkey, or long-settled villagers might duplicate the wilder, hairier and more naive *yörük* (nomad) carpets. Many carpets still incorporate traditional patterns and symbols, such as the commonly used 'eye' and 'tree' patterns. At a glance two carpets might look identical, but closer examination will

The literary online magazine, *Turkish Book Review* ([www.planb.com.tr/tbr/02](http://www.planb.com.tr/tbr/02)), published twice a year, includes reviews and articles on movements in Turkish literature and stories by upcoming writers.

Jon Thompson's beautifully illustrated and very readable *Carpets: From the Tents, Cottages and Workshops of Asia* is an excellent introduction that may well tempt you into parting with your money.

reveal the subtle differences that give each Turkish carpet its individuality and charm.

Village women still weave carpets but usually work to fixed contracts for specific shops. Generally they work to a pattern and are paid for their final effort rather than for each hour of work. A carpet made to a fixed contract may still be of great value to its purchaser. However, the selling price should be lower than for a one-off piece.

Other carpets are the product of a division of labour, with different individuals responsible for dyeing and weaving. What such pieces lose in individuality and rarity is often more than made up for in quality control. Most silk Hereke carpets are mass-produced but to standards that make them some of the most sought-after of all Turkish carpets.

Fearing the loss of the old carpet-making methods, the Ministry of Culture has sponsored several projects to revive traditional weaving and dyeing methods in western Turkey. One such scheme is the Natural Dye Research and Development Project (Doğal Boya Arştırma ve Geliştirme Projesi; Dobag); see p207 for more details. Some shops keep stocks of these 'project carpets', which are usually of high quality.

For advice about buying carpets, see p668.

## Architecture

The history of architecture in Turkey encompasses everything from Hittite stonework and grand Graeco-Roman temples to the most modern tower-blocks in İstanbul, but perhaps the most distinctively Turkish styles were those developed by the Seljuks and Ottomans.

### SELJUK ARCHITECTURE

The Seljuks endowed Turkey with a legacy of magnificent mosques and *medreses* (seminaries), distinguished by their elaborate entrances; you can see the best of them in Konya and Sivas. They also built a string of caravanserais along the route of the 13th-century Silk Road through Anatolia (see boxed text, opposite).

### OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURE

The Ottomans also left many magnificent mosques and *medreses*, as well as many fine wood-and-stone houses.

Before Ottoman times, the most common form of mosque was a large square or rectangular space sheltered by a series of small domes resting on pillars, as in Edirne's Eski Cami (p171). But when the Ottomans took Bursa and İznik in the early 14th century they were exposed to Byzantine architecture, particularly ecclesiastical architecture. Ottoman architects absorbed these influences and blended them with the styles of Sassanid Persia to develop a completely new style: the T-shape plan. The Üç Şerefeli Cami in Edirne (p169) became the model for other mosques not only because it was one of the first forays into this T-plan, but also because it was the first Ottoman mosque to have a wide dome and a forecourt with an ablutions fountain.

Each imperial mosque had a *küllüye*, or collection of charitable institutions, clustered around it. These might include a hospital, asylum for the insane, orphanage, *imaret* (soup kitchen), hospice for travellers, *medrese*, library, baths and a cemetery in which the mosque's imperial patron, his or her family and other notables could be buried. Over time, many of these buildings were demolished or altered, but İstanbul's Süleymaniye mosque complex (p110) still has much of its *küllüye* intact.

The design, perfected by the Ottoman's most revered architect Mimar Sinan (see boxed text, p111) during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent,

### THE ORIGINAL ROADHOUSE

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

The Ottomans were not keen builders of caravanserais like the Seljuks. Instead they built thousands of *hans*, urban equivalents of caravanserais, where goods could be loaded and unloaded near the point of sale. Ottoman *hans* were simpler in design than the caravanserais – just two-storey buildings, usually square, surrounding an open court with a fountain or raised *mescit* at its centre. On the upper level, behind an arcaded gallery, were offices and rooms for lodging and dining.

The most beautiful *hans* are the early Ottoman ones in Bursa – the Koza Han and Emir Han – but in fact every Anatolian town has at least a few *hans* in its market district. Istanbul's vast Grand Bazaar is surrounded by *hans* that are still used by traders and artisans.

For the sake of ease, this book does not really differentiate between caravanserais and *hans*. See p25 for a *han*-/caravanserai-hopping guide to the country.

proved so durable that it is still being used, with variations, for modern mosques all over Turkey.

For information about Ottoman houses, see boxed text, p458.

### TURKISH BAROQUE

From the mid-18th century, rococo and baroque influences hit Turkey, resulting in a pastiche of hammed-up curves, frills, scrolls, murals and fruity excesses, sometimes described as 'Turkish baroque'. The period's best – or some say worst – archetype is the extravagant Dolmabahçe Palace (p117). Although building mosques was passé, the Ottomans still adored kiosks where they could enjoy the outdoors; the Küçüksu Kasrı (p122) in İstanbul is a good example.

### NEOCLASSICISM

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, foreign or foreign-trained architects began to unfold a neoclassical blend: European architecture mixed in with Turkish baroque and some concessions to classic Ottoman style. Many lavish embassies were built in Pera (Beyoğlu) as vehicles for the colonial powers to cajole the Sublime Porte into trade and territorial concessions. The in-vogue Swiss Fossati brothers were responsible for the Netherlands and Russian consulates-general along İstiklal Caddesi in İstanbul.

Also in the capital, Vedat Tek, a Turkish architect who had studied in Paris, built the central post office (p84), a melange of Ottoman elements such as arches and tile work, and European symmetry. Sirkeci Train Station (p160), by the German architect Jachmund, is another example of this eclectic neoclassicism.

### MODERN ARCHITECTURE

There's little worth mentioning as far as modern architecture goes. The most interesting movement in the last few decades is that Turks have begun to reclaim their architectural heritage, especially those parts of it that can be turned into dollars via the tourism industry. These days, restorations and new buildings being built in Sultanahmet and other parts of İstanbul – and even Göreme, in Cappadocia – are most likely to be in classic Ottoman style.

For magnificent mosques and minarets seen from an angle you're unlikely to be able to manage yourself, Yann Arthur-Bertrand's gorgeous *Turkey from the Air* provides a bird's-eye view of Turkey's stunning cityscapes and countryside.

## STOLEN TREASURES

'Every flower is beautiful in its own garden. Every antique is beautiful in its own country.' So reads the sign in the lobby of the Ephesus Museum. It surely has a point. And yet everywhere you go in Turkey you will come across archaeological sites that have been stripped of their finest artefacts, even of their most important structures, by Western countries that now display them proudly in their own museums.

The Sphinx column from Xanthos, the altar from Pergamum, the statue from Hadrian's Library at Ephesus, Schliemann's treasure from Troy: these are just some of the more prominent monuments that you must look for in museums in Britain, Germany, Italy and Russia rather than in Turkey.

Most Western countries justify retention of such treasures by arguing that they acquired them 'legitimately'. Or they claim that we all gain by being able to see a wide range of artefacts in museums worldwide. Finally, they claim that they are better equipped to care for the artefacts than the Turks. And while these arguments had started to wear thin, and several important collections had been returned to Turkey, recent scandals of theft from archaeological museums in the country have ensured that Western governments will keep holding onto their Turkish treasures for a while yet.

In 1993 the 2500-year-old Karun Treasure was repatriated to the Uşak museum (p309) after New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art lost a costly legal battle with the Turkish government. Some 13 years later, in the midst of a scandal about a number of thefts in Turkish museums, news broke that the famed golden-winged seahorse brooch, one of the most valuable pieces in the collection, had been replicated and stolen. Investigations fingered the museum's director and nine others with embezzlement and artefact smuggling. The government promptly ordered investigations into 32 other museums, and the minister admitted he wouldn't be surprised if there were thefts from every one of them. With the museums chronically understaffed, underfunded and mismanaged – and the Karun scandal attracting international headlines – it will be a long time before Turkey's archaeological museums have any chance of winning back any more of their treasures.

## Music

### POP, ROCK, ELECTRONIC, HIP HOP & RAP

Turkey's home-grown pop industry is one of its big success stories. Turkish pop finally won worldwide recognition in 2003 when Sertab Erener won the Eurovision Song Contest with her hit song 'Every Way that I Can'.

Sezen Aksu is widely regarded as the queen of Turkish pop music, but it is Tarkan, the pretty-boy pop star, who has achieved most international recognition. His '94 album, *A-acayipsin*, sold over two million copies in Turkey and almost a million in Europe, establishing him as Turkey's biggest-selling pop sensation. 'Şımarık', released in 1999, and since covered by Holly Valance (as 'Kiss Kiss'), became his first European number one. After several Europe-wide tours, he released the long-awaited *Come Closer*, sung entirely in English. It flopped, leaving fans distraught, but Tarkan's metrosexual hip-swivelling will guarantee him more hits to come.

Burhan Öçal ([www.burhanocal.com](http://www.burhanocal.com)) is one of the country's finest percussionists. His seminal work, *New Dream*, is a funky take on classical Turkish music, but we aren't define him by this production: he has garnered critical acclaim experimenting with diverse types of Turkish and foreign music. His recent work with the Trakya All-Stars is a Roma-Balkan investigation of the music of his native Thrace.

Turkish rock has long aped that of the West, but it's finally offering something distinctly Turkish. Look out for Duman, Replikas, 110 (electronica) and most definitely Yakup, a blend of East-meets-West oriental-indie-grunge rock. Try to catch them live if you're passing through İstanbul.

On a more electronic jazzy theme is Orient Expressions, mixing Alevi and folk with jazzed-up Turkish melodies. In a similar vein, albeit more

The Turkish bathing tradition is in fact Roman. When the Turks ventured into Anatolia they encountered the bath-houses of the Byzantines, who in turn had inherited the tradition from the Romans. The Turks so took to the steamy ablutions that they became part of the Turkish way of life.

### ALL THE EMPTY HOUSES

You won't have been in Turkey five minutes before you notice the extraordinary number of half-built apartment blocks, houses and multistorey car parks littering the landscape. The reason behind this ugliness is usually housing cooperatives, whereby a group of people get together to pay for an apartment in a new development. Since they cannot pay all the money upfront (bank loans are prohibitively expensive), they can take several years to be finished – so at least some of the houses will one day be completed.

Unfortunately a lot can happen between the first breaking of the earth and the completion of the complex. The members of the cooperative may run out of money or the builder may go bankrupt. Worse still, builders have been known to disappear with the money, leaving the work to stand incomplete in perpetuity.

Even that cannot completely account for the sheer quantity of half-built blocks. Of course, some are probably entirely speculative projects, begun in the hope of tax breaks or some such reason, and abandoned just as soon as it suits the builder to pull out.

given to performance 'events', Baba Zula create a fusion of traditional Turkish instruments, reggae, electronic, pop and belly-dancing music – and it works!

There is a thriving rap/hip-hop scene alive in the streets of İstanbul. Ceza ([www.cezafan.com](http://www.cezafan.com)) is the king – he's literally mobbed by fans. All albums in Turkey need pre-release approval by the government, which means swearing is a no-no for Turkish rappers – unless they go underground or swear in English, that is. This ends up being a bonus for travellers, as it means most artists perform in English.

### ARABESK

The equally popular style of music known as *arabesk* (which, as its name implies, puts an Arabic spin on home-grown Turkish traditions) started in the 1980s. Playing to *arabesk's* traditional audience is the hugely successful Kurdish singer İbrahim Tatlıses, a burly, moustachioed, former construction worker from Şanlıurfa who pops up on TV as often as he does on radio. Orhan Gencebay is, however, the king of *arabesk*, a prolific artist and also an actor. Start with his *Akma Gözlerimden*.

### CLASSICAL & RELIGIOUS

Traditional Ottoman classical and religious (particularly Mevlevi) music may sound ponderous and lugubrious to the uninitiated. These musical forms use a system of *makams*, an exotic-sounding series of tones similar in function to Western scales. In addition to the familiar Western whole- and half-tone intervals, Turkish music often uses quarter-tones, unfamiliar to foreign ears and perceived as 'flat' until the ear becomes accustomed to them.

After the banning of the Mevlevi at the beginning of the republic, it wasn't until the early '90s that a group called Mevlana Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı Sanatçıları was set up to promote the Sufi musical tradition. Mercan Dede ([www.mercandede.com](http://www.mercandede.com)) has taken this music to another level altogether, fusing it with electronic, techno and classic beats.

### FOLK, TÜRKÜ, FASIL & GYPSY

Turkish folk music is more immediately appealing to Western ears. Instruments and lyrics reflect the life of the musicians and village, so they will be slightly different from village to village. Kurdish big names worth looking out for include Ferhat Tunç, who has produced an album

Lovers of art nouveau architecture will be able to feast their eyes on several beautiful examples of the style in Eminönü and along İstiklal Caddesi. It was introduced to İstanbul by the Italian architect Raimondo D'Aronco.

The documentary *Crossing The Bridge: The Story of Music in İstanbul* by Fatih Akin follows the trail of musos, giving you a superb peek into the vibrant and diverse contemporary music scene in İstanbul.

## A BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO TURKISH MUSIC

These are our top picks to start your collection:

- *Turkish Groove* (compilation). A must-have two-disc introduction to Turkish music with everyone from Sezen Aksu to Burhan Öçal and from pop and Sufi to drum 'n' bass.
- *Işık Doğdan Yükselir* by Sezen Aksu (contemporary folk). A stunning and diverse collection drawing on the traditions of regional Turkish folk music.
- *Su* by Mercan Dede (Sufi-electronic-techno fusion). Mercan Dede is a growing name in world music circles in Istanbul and abroad.
- *Keçe Kurdan* by Aynur (Kurdish folk). Aynur's impassioned *Kurdish Girl* album, sung entirely in Kurdish, was her excellent debut on the international scene.
- *Rapstar Ceza* by Ceza (rap). You won't understand a word (unless you speak Turkish), but you don't need to. The energy and passion are palpable.
- *Duble Oryantal* by Baba Zulu (fusion). Baba Zulu's classic, 'Belly Double', was mixed by the British dub master Mad Professor.
- *Şunu Bunu* by Yakup (rock). A Turkish version of various UK indie pop styles, with chiming guitars and shuffling drums.
- *Gipsy Rum* by Burhan Öçal and Istanbul Oriental Ensemble (gypsy). This 1998 production is an excellent, thigh-slapping introduction to Turkey's gypsy music, played by instrumental masters.
- *Avaz* by Replikas (Turkish rock). Guitar-based rock with touches of Sonic Youth, occasional jazzy touches and the ring of the *saz* (long-necked lute).
- *Konser* by Duman (Turkish rock). A live album featuring all the big hits of Turkey's answer to Fugazi.

annually since 1987, and Aynur Doğan ([www.aynurdogan.net](http://www.aynurdogan.net)). Aynur, as she is simply known, has started touring internationally and is set for stardom. Both produce enjoyable Kurdish folk.

*Türkü*, a sort of halfway house between folk and pop, directly reflects experiences common to Turks. It became very popular in the 1990s.

*Fasil* has been likened to a nightclub or lightweight version of Ottoman classical. This is the music you hear at *meyhanes*, usually played by gypsies. The music is played with clarinet, *kanun* (zither), *darbuka* (a drum shaped like an hourglass) and often an *ud* (a six-stringed Arabic lute), *keman* (violin) and a *cumbus* (similar to a banjo). It's usually hard to distinguish between *fasil* and gypsy music.

Until the 1960s and '70s it was still possible to hear Turkish *aşıklar* (troubadours) in action. Although radio, TV, video and CDs have effectively killed off their art, the songs of the great troubadours – Yunus Emre (13th century), Pir Sultan Abdal (16th century) and Aşık Veysel (1894–1973) – remain popular.

If you're lucky you may spot wandering minstrels playing the *zurna* (pipe) and *davul* (drum). They perform at wedding and circumcision parties, and also congregate in bus stations on call-up day to see off the latest band of conscripts in style.

## Cinema

The first screening of a foreign film in Turkey took place at the Yıldız Palace in Istanbul in 1896. In 1914 Turkey showed its first homemade documentary and by the end of WWI several Turkish feature films had appeared. The War of Independence inspired actor Muhsin Ertuğrul to establish a film company to make patriotic films. Comedies and documentaries followed, and within

A thorough investigation of the Turkish film industry, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* by Gönül Dönmez-Colin, sheds lights on the themes and identities for an English-speaking audience.

a decade Turkish films were winning international competitions. During the 1960s and '70s films with a political edge were being made alongside innumerable lightweight Bollywood-style movies usually lumped together and labelled *Yeşilçam* movies. A string of cinemas opened along İstanbul's İstiklal Caddesi, only to close again in the 1980s (or turn into porn-movie houses) as TV siphoned off their audiences. The 1990s was an exciting decade for national cinema, with films being critically acclaimed both in Turkey and abroad.

Several Turkish directors have won worldwide recognition, most notably the late Yılmaz Güney. Joint winner of the best film award at Cannes in 1982, *Yol* explored the dilemmas of a group of men on weekend-release from prison, a tale that manages to be gripping and tragic at the same time, and which Turks were forbidden to watch until 2000. His last film, *Duvar* (The Wall), made before his untimely death at only 46, was a wrist-slashing prison drama.

Following in Güney's footsteps, many Turkish directors continue to make political films. *Güneşe Yolculuk* (Journey to the Sun), by Yeşim Ustaoglu, is about a Turk who migrates to İstanbul and is so dark-skinned he's mistaken for a Kurd and treated appallingly. Nuri Bilge Ceylan's excellent *Uzak* (Distant) is also a bleak meditation on the lives of migrants in Turkey – it won the Jury Prize at Cannes. His next, *İklimler* (Climates), which he also starred in, looks at relationships between men and women in Turkey. His latest *Üç Maymun* (Three Monkeys) won him the gong for Best Director at Cannes in 2008.

It's not all politics, though. Ferzan Özpetek received international acclaim for *Hamam* (Turkish Bath), which skilfully explores cultural nuances after a Turk living in Italy reluctantly travels to İstanbul after he inherits a hamam. It's also noteworthy for addressing the hitherto hidden issue of homosexuality in Turkish society. His *Harem Suare* (Evening Performance in the Harem) was set in the Ottoman harem, while his most recent offering, *Karşı Pencere* (The Window Opposite), ponders issues of homosexuality and marriage.

The new name to watch, Fatih Akin, produced the widely acclaimed *Duvara Karsi* (Head On), a gripping and often violent spotlight on the Turkish immigrant's life in Germany (Fatih is himself a Turkish-German). His documentary, *Crossing the Bridge: The Story of Music in İstanbul*, is also worth seeking out and his latest, *Edge of Heaven*, again ponders the Turkish experience in Germany.

## Visual Arts

Until 1923 and the founding of the Turkish Republic, all mainstream artistic expression conformed to the laws of Islam, which forbid representation of any being with an immortal soul (ie animal or human). Sculpture and painting as known in the West did not exist, with the notable exception of Turkish miniature painting, which was for the upper classes only.

By the late 19th century, educated Ottomans were influenced by European-style painting. Atatürk encouraged this artistic expression, and the government opened official painting and sculpture academies, encouraging this 'modern' secular art in place of the religious art of the past.

By the 1930s many Turkish artists were studying abroad, with some becoming expatriates. Fikret Mualla is one of Turkey's most famous contemporary artists; he lived most of his life in Paris. Once again, the best place to see what modern artists are up to is İstanbul. İstanbul Modern (p115) and Santralİstanbul (p125) are the country's best modern art galleries, but

*37 Uses for a Dead Sheep* (dir Ben Hopkins) is a colourful documentary focusing on a group of Kirghiz exiles who sought refuge in Turkey, fleeing the Communist regime in their home in Central Asia. Insightful and entertaining, with moments of true comedy.

Osman Hamdi (1842–1910), whose Orientalist paintings are very much in vogue, was also the man responsible for establishing the İstanbul Archaeological Museums (p108).

the small private art galleries along İstiklal Caddesi are well worth checking out as well.

## Dance

Although it is dying out in the towns, folk dance is still a vibrant tradition in Turkish villages, as you will realise if you attend a traditional wedding.

Folk dance can be divided into several broad categories, including the *bar* from the Erzurum/Bayburt area, the *horon* from the Black Sea and the *zeybek* from the west. Although originally a dance of central, southern and southeastern Anatolia, the *halay*, led by a dancer waving a handkerchief (or paper tissue), can be seen all over the country, especially at weddings and in *meyhanes* in İstanbul when everyone has downed one rakı (aniseed-flavoured grape brandy) too many. But it may well be the *horon* that you most remember, since it involves the men getting down and indulging in all manner of dramatic kicking, Cossack-style.

The *sema* (dervish ceremony) of the whirling dervishes is not unique to Turkey, but it's here that you are most likely to see it performed; see boxed text, p116.

Belly dancing may not have originated in Turkey, but Turks have mastered the art. Although belly dancers are frequently seen at weddings and, incredibly, at many end-of-year company parties, your best chance of seeing a decent belly dancer is at a folk show in İstanbul. If you're interested in teaching your belly to dance, see p659.

For hard-to-find Turkish music, books and paraphernalia you can't go past US-based online Turkish shopping emporium, Tulumba.com ([www.tulumba.com](http://www.tulumba.com)), shipping right to your door; and you can hear music samples.

# Food & Drink

Mention Turkish cuisine and many people conjure up images of greasy, pre-hangover döner kebabs and an array of supermarket-purchased dips. Somewhat oily and bland stuffed vine leaves can leap to mind, along with memories of chewy shish kebabs incinerated on backyard barbecues. Fortunately, the reality on the ground couldn't be more different.

Here, kebabs are swooningly succulent, *yaprak dolması* (stuffed vine leaves) are filled with subtly spiced rice and meze dishes such as dips are made daily with the best seasonal ingredients. Freshly caught fish is expertly cooked over coals and served unadorned, accompanied by field-fresh salads and Turkey's famous aniseed-flavoured drink, raki. Strong çay (tea) served in delicate glasses accompanies honey-drenched baklava studded with plump pistachios from Gaziantep.

Food here is not merely belly fuel – it's a celebration of community and life. Meals are joyful, boisterous and almost always communal. Food is used to celebrate milestones, cement friendships and add cohesion to family life. When you get here you'll quickly realise that for Turks, the idea of eating in front of a TV or from a freezer is absolute anathema – this is a cuisine proud of being social, slow and seasonal.

The basics of Turkish cooking may have evolved on the steppes of Central Asia, but as the Ottoman Empire grew it swallowed up the ingredients of Greece, Persia, Arabia and the Balkans, creating a deliciously diverse cuisine. Each region has specialities and signature ingredients, meaning that travel through the country truly tantalises the taste buds. As the Turks say, *Afiyet olsun!* (Good appetite!).

## STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Turkey is one of the few countries that can feed itself from its own produce and have leftovers. This means that produce makes its way from ground to table quickly, ensuring freshness and flavour. Here, being a 'locavore' is taken for granted.

The common Turkish *kahvaltı* (breakfast) consists of fresh-from-the-oven white *ekmek* (bread), jam or honey, black olives, slices of cucumber and juicy tomatoes, a hard-boiled egg, a block of *beyaz peynir* (salty white cheese made from ewe's or goat's milk), and innumerable glasses of sweetened black çay. Expect this feast at every hotel. Other breakfast dishes to look out for are *menemen* (eggs scrambled with tomatoes, onions, peppers and white cheese), and bread served with flowery honey and rich *kaymak* (clotted cream).

There's not always a lot to choose between what's on offer for lunch and dinner, but both meals frequently start with *çorba* (soup). The most common soups are *ezo gelin* (red lentil and rice) and *domates* (tomato), but you may also meet *balık çorbası* (fish soup), *sebze çorbası* (vegetable soup) and *yayla çorbası* (yoghurt soup with mint). Workers who don't have time for a leisurely breakfast at home will often pop into a cheap restaurant for a *mercimek çorbası* (lentil soup) on the way to work.

Many locals eat their lunch in a *lokanta*. These cheap and cheerful spots serve *hazır yemek* (ready food) kept warm in bain-maries. The etiquette is to check out what's in the bain-marie and tell the waiter or cook behind the counter what you would like to eat. You can order a full *porsiyon* (portion), a *yarım* (half) *porsiyon* or a plate with a few different choices – you'll be charged by the *porsiyon*. After taking a seat, you'll then be served your chosen plate of food by a waiter.

In the 17th century 1300 people slaved away in the kitchens of Topkapı Palace, where feasts for up to 15,000 people could be cooked.

*The Complete Book of Turkish Cooking* by Ayla Esen Algar is widely regarded as the best Turkish cookery book (in English) available.

The Ottomans were masters of the evocative culinary description, inventing such delights as 'Ladies' Thighs', 'The Sultan's Delight', 'Harem Navel' and 'Nightingale Nests'.

A night fuelled by rakı and meze (see boxed text, below) often ends up being a cherished holiday memory. In İstanbul's famous Beyoğlu *meyhanes* (taverns; see boxed text, p139), waiters heave around enormous trays full of cold meze dishes that customers can choose from – hot meze dishes are chosen from the menu.

In a *meyhane*, the meze course is usually followed by fish; a *kebabçı* (kebab restaurant) is where you should go if you're keen on sampling kebabs and a *köfteci* is the equivalent for *köfte* (meatballs; see boxed text, p68). The *ocakbaşı* (fireside) versions of the *kebabçı* are the most fun, with patrons sitting around the sides of a grill and watching their meat being prepared and cooked. *Restorans* (restaurants) often serve a mixture of kebab and *köfte* dishes, as well as fish.

Overall, the Turks are huge meat eaters, which can be a bit of a problem if you are a vegetarian (see p70). Beef, lamb, mutton and chicken are prepared in a number of ways. The most famous of these is the kebab – *şiş* and *döner* – but *köfte*, *saç kavurma* (stir-fried cubed meat dishes) and *güveç* (meat and vegetable stews cooked in a terracotta pot) are just as common. In Cappadocia, many restaurants serve *testi kebabı*, kebab in a mushroom and onion sauce that is slow cooked (ideally over coals) in a sealed terracotta pot that is then theatrically broken open at the table. The most popular sausage in Turkey is the spicy beef *sucuk*, and garlicky *pastırma* (pressed beef preserved in spices) is regularly used as an accompaniment to egg

## MARVELLOUS MEZE

Meze isn't just a type of dish, it's a whole eating experience. If you eat in a local household, your host may put out a few lovingly prepared dishes for guests to nibble on before the main course is served. If you choose to spend a few hours in a city *meyhane* (tavern), beckoning the waiter over so that you can choose 'just a few more' inevitably means that the meze dishes will comprise most of your meal.

Turks credit Süleyman the Magnificent with introducing meze into the country. During one of his Persian campaigns, Süleyman learned from the cunning Persian rulers that food tasters were a particularly good idea for every sultan who wanted to ensure his safety. Once he was back home, Süleyman decreed that *çesnicî* (taste) slaves be given small portions of his meals before he sat down to the table. These portions became known as meze, the Persian word for pleasant, enjoyable taste.

Mezes are usually vegetable-based, though seafood dishes can also feature. You will probably encounter the following dishes while eating your way around the country:

**Ançüz** Pickled anchovy.

**Barbunya pilaki** Red-bean salad.

**Beyaz peynir** White ewe's- or goat's-milk cheese.

**Cacik** Yoghurt with cucumber and mint.

**Çerkez tavuğu** Circassian chicken, made with chicken, bread, walnuts, salt and garlic.

**Enginar** Cooked artichoke.

**Ezme salatası** Spicy tomato dip.

**Fava salatası** Mashed broad-bean paste.

**Haydari** Yoghurt with roasted eggplant (aubergine) and garlic.

**Kalamares** Fried calamari, usually served with a garlic sauce.

**Lakerda** Sliced and salted tuna fish.

**Patlıcan kızartması** Salad of fried eggplant with tomato.

**Patlıcan salatası** Fried eggplant with tomatoes.

**Semizotu** Green purslane with yoghurt and garlic.

**Sigara böreği** Deep-fried cigar-shaped pastries, often stuffed with *peynir* (cheese).

**Yaprak sarma or dolması** Vine leaves stuffed with rice, herbs and pine nuts.

### TRAVEL YOUR TASTE BUDS

Like most countries, Turkey has some dishes that only a local could love. Top of the confrontational stakes for most visitors is *kokoreç*, seasoned lamb intestines wrapped around a skewer and grilled over charcoal.

*İşkembe* (tripe) soup reputedly wards off a hangover; it's even more popular than *kelle paça* (sheep's trotter) soup.

Locals in need of extra reserves of sexual stamina swear by spicy *koç yumurtası* (ram's 'eggs'). When these don't do the trick they often resort to *boza*, a mucous-coloured beverage made from water, sugar and fermented grain.

dishes; it's occasionally served with warm hummus (chickpea, tahini and lemon dip) as a meze.

Fish is wonderful here, but can be pricey. In a *balık restoran* (fish restaurant) you should always try to do as the locals do and choose your own fish from the display. This is important, as the occasional dodgy restaurant may try to serve you old fish. The eyes should be clear and the flesh under the gill slits near the eyes should be bright red, not burgundy. After your fish has been given the all clear, ask the approximate price. The fish will be weighed, and the price computed at the day's per-kilogram rate. *Kalkan* (turbot) and *uskumru* (mackerel) are best consumed between March and June. Mid-July to August is the best time to feast on *levrek* (sea bass), *lüfer* (bluefish), *barbunya* (red mullet) and *istravrit* (horse mackerel), while winter means tasty and slightly oily *hamsı* (fresh anchovy).

Turks love vegetables, eating them fresh in summer and pickling them for winter (pickled vegetables are called *turşu*). There are two particularly Turkish ways of preparing vegetables: the first is known as *zeytinyağlı* (sautéed in olive oil) and the second *dolma* (stuffed with rice or meat). *Patlıcan* (eggplant/aubergine) is the sultan of all vegetables, cooked in every conceivable manner and loved by Turks with a passion.

Simplicity is the key to Turkish *salata* (salads), with crunchy fresh ingredients being caressed by a shake of oil and vinegar at the table and eaten with gusto as a meze or as an accompaniment to a meat or fish main course. The most popular summer salad is *çoban salatası* (shepherd's salad), a colourful mix of chopped tomatoes, cucumber, onion and pepper.

When travelling through central Anatolia, you will often encounter *mantı* (Turkish ravioli stuffed with beef mince and topped with yoghurt, garlic tomato and butter). It's perfect in winter but can be overly rich and heavy in hot weather.

### Quick Eats

The nation's favourite fast food is undoubtedly döner kebab – lamb slow-cooked on an upright revolving skewer and then shaved off before being stuffed into bread or pide. Soggy cold French fries and green chillies are sometimes included, at other times garlicky yoghurt, salad and a sprinkling of slightly sour sumac are the accompaniments.

Coming a close second is in the popularity stakes is pide, the Turkish version of pizza. It has a canoe-shaped base topped with *peynir* (cheese), *yumurtalı* (egg) or *kıymalı* (minced meat). A *karışık* pide has a mixture of toppings. You can sit down to eat these in a *pideci* (Turkish pizza parlour) or ask for your pide *paket* (wrapped to go).

*Börek* (filled pastries) are distinguished by their filling, cooking method and shape. They come in square, cigar or snail shapes and are filled with *peynirli*, *ıspanaklı* (spinach), *patates* (potatoes) or *kıymalı*. Bun-shaped

At Istanbul's famous Çiya Sofrası (p121), owner/chef Musa Dağdeviren serves over one thousand different dishes every year, rarely repeating the same dish twice.

## KEBAPS & KÖFTE

Kebaps are undoubtedly the national dish, closely followed by *köfte* (meatballs). These meat dishes come in many forms, and are often named after their place of origin. The most popular are:

**Adana kebab** Spicy *köfte* wrapped around a flat skewer and barbecued, then served with onions, paprika, parsley and pide (bread).

**Çiğ köfte** Raw ground lamb mixed with pounded bulgur, onion, clove, cinnamon, salt and hot black pepper.

**Döner kebab** Compressed meat (usually lamb) cooked on a revolving upright skewer over coals, then thinly sliced.

**Fıstıklı kebab** Minced suckling lamb studded with pistachios.

**İçli köfte** Ground lamb and onion with a bulgur coating, often served as a hot meze.

**İskender (Bursa) kebab** Döner lamb served on a bed of crumbled pide and yoghurt, then topped with tomato and burnt butter sauces.

**Karışık ızgara** Mixed grilled lamb.

**Patlıcan kebab** Cubed or minced meat grilled with eggplant (aubergine).

**Şiş kebab** Small pieces of lamb grilled on a skewer and usually served with a side of bulgur and char-grilled peppers. *Çöp şiş* is served rolled in a thin pide with onions and parsley.

**Şiş köfte** Wrapped around a flat skewer and barbecued.

**Tavuk şiş** Chicken pieces grilled on a skewer.

**Tekirdağ köftesi** Served with rice and peppers.

**Tokat kebab** Lamb cubes grilled with potato, tomato, eggplant and garlic.

**Urfa kebab** A mild version of the Adana kebab served with lots of onion and black pepper.

*poğaca* are glazed with sugar or stuffed with cheese and olives. *Su böreği*, a melt-in-the-mouth lasagne-like layered pastry laced with white cheese and parsley, is the most popular of all *börek* styles – you're sure to be instantly infatuated.

*Gözleme* (thin savoury crepes cooked with cheese, spinach or potato) are also great quick snacks.

## Prices

Most places will have a printed menu with fixed prices. The exception to this rule is the *balık restoran* (p67), where fish is priced according to the kilo.

Restaurant prices usually include taxes but not service, although a service charge may be added to the bill automatically in some tourist areas. It's worth checking the bill and questioning unexpected additions such as hitherto unmentioned *kuver* (cover) charges. For advice on tipping, see p667.

## DRINKS

### Alcoholic Drinks

In tourist-heavy destinations along the coast virtually every restaurant serves alcohol. The same applies to more-expensive restaurants in the big cities. In smaller towns, there's usually at least one restaurant where alcohol is served, although in religiously conservative places such as Konya you may have to hunt hard to find one. Although Turks have a fairly relaxed attitude towards alcohol, public drunkenness is a definite no-no.

Turkey's most beloved tippie is *rakı*, a grape spirit infused with aniseed. Similar to Greek ouzo, it's served in long thin glasses and is drunk neat or with water, which turns the clear liquid chalky white; if you want to add ice, do so after adding water, as dropping ice straight into *rakı* kills its flavour.

*Bira* (beer) is also popular. The local drop, Efes, is a perky pilsener that comes in bottles, cans and on tap.

Turkey grows and bottles its own *şarap* (wine), which has greatly improved in quality over the past decade. Head to Ürgüp (p518) in Cappadocia or to the

Forget the Golden Arches – Turkey's favourite fast-food chain is Simit Sarayı, which sells the country's much-loved *simit* (sesame-encrusted bread ring) to thousands of happy customers every day.

idyllic Aegean island of Bozcaada (p203) to taste-test. If you want red wine ask for *kırmızı şarap*; for white ask for *beyaz şarap*. Decent tipples include Sarafin chardonnay, fumé blanc, sauvignon blanc, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet merlot; Karma cabernet sauvignon; Duluca Özel Kav (Special Reserve) red, white and *lal* (rosé); Antik red and white; and Çankaya white.

## Nonalcoholic Drinks

Drinking çay is the national pastime, and the country's cup of choice is made with leaves from the Black Sea region. Sugar cubes are the only accompaniment and you'll find these are needed to counter the effects of long brewing, although you can always try asking for it *açık* (weaker). The wholly chemical *elma çay* (apple tea) is caffeine-free and only for tourists – locals wouldn't be seen dead drinking the stuff.

Surprisingly, *Türk kahve* (Turkish coffee) isn't widely consumed. A thick and powerful brew, it's drunk in a couple of short sips. If you order a cup, you will be asked how sweet you like it – *çok şekerli* means 'very sweet', *orta şekerli* 'middling', *az şekerli* 'slightly sweet' and *sade* 'not at all'. Your coffee will be accompanied by a glass of water, which is to clear the palate before you sample the delights of the coffee.

Freshly squeezed juice is popular and cheap. *Taze portakal suyu* (fresh orange juice) is everywhere, and delicious *nar suyu* (pomegranate juice) can be ordered in season.

*Ayran* is a refreshing drink made by whipping yoghurt with water and salt; it's the traditional accompaniment to kebabs.

*Sahlep* is a hot milky drink that takes off the winter chill. Made from wild orchid bulbs, it's reputed to be an aphrodisiac. You might also want to try *şalgam* (see boxed text, p430) – the first gulp is a revolting salty shock, but persevere and you may find this turnip-and-carrot concoction becomes an essential accompaniment to rakı binges.

## CELEBRATIONS

In Turkey, every celebration has an associated sweet. Some say this can be attributed to the Quranic verse 'To enjoy sweets is a sign of faith'. The good news is that even though these sweets are a focus during celebrations and festivities, many of them can also be enjoyed year-round in a *muhallebeci* (milk pudding shop), *pastane* (cake shop) or *baklavacı* (baklava shop).

Baklava (pastry sheets soaked in sugar syrup or honey and sometimes stuffed with nuts) is traditionally reserved for festive occasions such as Şeker Bayramı (Sweets Holiday; p664), the three-day holiday at the end of Ramazan (p664), but is also popular for engagements and weddings, proving sugary stamina for the rollicking hours of party-making ahead and the couple's wedding night (wink, wink). Other sweets such as *helva* (sweet prepared with sesame oil, cereals and honey or syrup) and *lokum* (Turkish delight; see boxed text, p157) are commonly part of more-reflective occasions such as deaths and *kandil* days (the five holy evenings in the Muslim calendar). A bereaved family will make *irmik helvası* (semolina *helva*) for visiting friends and relatives, and *helva* is shared with guests at circumcision feasts.

*Aşure* (Noah's Ark pudding) is a sacred pudding traditionally made with 40 different dried fruits, nuts and pulses, supposedly first baked from the leftovers on Noah's Ark when food provisions ran low. These days *aşure* is traditionally made after the 10th day of Muharram (the first month of the Islamic calendar), and distributed to neighbours and friends.

Savoury dishes are integral to celebrations in Turkey, too. *Kavurma* is a simple lamb dish cooked with the sacrificial lamb or mutton of the Kurban

Grumbly tummy? Ask for an *ihlamur çay* (linden tea). Turks always have it on hand for upset stomachs.

Don't drink the grounds when you try *Türk kahve* (Turkish coffee). Instead, go to the 'Turkish Coffee'/'Fortune Telling' section of [www.mehmetefendi.com/eng](http://www.mehmetefendi.com/eng), Turkey's most famous coffee purveyor, for a guide to reading your fortune in them.

Look out for the wonderfully symbolic *perde pilavi*, often served at weddings and sometimes appearing on restaurant and *lokanta* menus. It's made from chicken and rooster meat (symbolising the bride and groom) cooked with rice (for blessing) and almonds (for children) and encased in pastry sheets (symbolising the home).

Bayramı (Feast of Sacrifice; see p664). The meat is cubed, fried with onions and baked slowly in its juices. During Ramazan a special round flat pide is baked in the afternoon and collected in time for *iftar* (the break-of-fast feast).

## VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Though it's normal for Turks to eat a vegetarian meal, the concept of vegetarianism is quite foreign. Say you're a vegan and Turks will either look mystified or assume that you're 'fessing up to some strain of socially aberrant behaviour.

The meze spread is usually dominated by vegetable dishes, and meat-free salads, soups, pastas, omelettes, pides and *börek*s, as well as hearty vegetable dishes, are all readily available. Ask '*etsiz yemek var mı?*' ('is there something to eat that has no meat?') to see what's on offer.

The main source of inadvertent meat eating is *et suyu* (meat stock), which is often used to make otherwise vegetarian *pilav* (a rice dish), soup and vegetable dishes. Your hosts may not even consider *et suyu* to be meat, so they will reassure you that the dish is vegetarian; ask '*et suyu var mı?*' ('is there meat stock in it?') to check.

## HABITS & CUSTOMS

In rural Turkey locals usually eat two meals a day, the first at around 11am and the second in the early evening. In the cities three meals a day is the norm. In urban areas people sit down to meals at tables and chairs, but in villages it is still usual to sit on the floor around a *tepsi* (low round table) with a cloth spread over one's knees to catch the crumbs. These days people mostly eat from individual plates, although sometimes there will be communal dishes. Most Turks eat with spoons and forks (rarely with knives).

In restaurants, it's not considered very important that everyone eats the same courses at the same pace, so the kitchen will deliver dishes as they are ready: it's quite normal for all the chicken dishes to arrive and then, five minutes later, all the lamb. You don't have to wait for everyone's food to arrive to begin eating.

Turkish waiters have a habit of snatching plates away before the diner has finished. Saying '*kalsın*' ('let it stay') may slow them down. When you have finished, put your knife and fork together to indicate that the waiter

Legend has it that in so-called Ottoman-era houses chefs made baklava with over one hundred pastry-sheet layers per tray. The master of the house would test the thickness with a gold coin: if it fell to the bottom of the tray the chef kept the coin.

### DOS AND DON'TS FOR VISITORS TO A TRADITIONAL TURKISH HOME

#### Do

- Take a small gift, such as a box of baklava or *lokum* (Turkish delight)
- Eat only the food nearest to you from a communal dish
- Eat everything on your plate, but don't overeat. Note the Turkish proverb: 'Eat a little be an angel; eat much and perish!'
- Say '*Afiyet olsun*' ('May it be good for your health') before starting to eat. After the meal say '*Elinize sağlık*' ('Health to your hands') to compliment your hostess on her cooking (it will always be a hostess who cooks!)

#### Don't

- Eat anything directly from a bowl with your left hand
- Sit down beside someone of the opposite sex unless your host(ess) suggests it

can take the plate. If this has no effect (or you don't have a knife), say '*biti, alabilirsin*' ('finished, you can take it') to the waiter.

Toothpicking should be done behind your hands, but you don't need to be particularly discreet. Try to avoid blowing your nose in public; sniff or excuse yourself if you need to do this.

## COOKING COURSES

Turkey has a handful of operators offering foreign-language cookery courses (p658). There are two highly regarded courses run by foreigners in İstanbul (see p128), as well as a four-day residential course at Ula, 135km from Bodrum, run by well-known Turkish cooking writer and broadcaster **Engin Akin** (☎ 0532-241 7163; www.enginakin.com).

## EAT YOUR WORDS

Want to know a *köfte* from a kebab? Get behind the cuisine scene by getting to know the language. For pronunciation guidelines, see p698.

### Useful Phrases

#### EATING OUT

##### I'd like (a/the) ..., please.

... *istiyorum lütfen.* ... ees-tee-yo-room lewt-fen

##### menu

*Menüü*

me-new-yew

##### menu in English

*İngilizce menü*

een-gee-leez-je me-new

##### I'd like the local speciality

*Bu yöreye özgü bir yemek istiyorum.* boo yer-re-ye erz-gew beer ye-mek ees-tee-yo-room

##### Enjoy your meal/Bon appétit!

*Afiyet olsun!* a-fee-yet ol-soon

##### This is ...

*Bu ...* boo ...

##### (too) cold

*(çok) soğuk*

(chok) so-ook

##### (too) spicy

*(çok) acı*

(chok) a-juh

##### superb

*enfes*

en-fes

##### The bill please.

*Hesap lütfen.* he-sap lewt-fen

## VEGETARIAN & SPECIAL MEALS

### Do you have any dishes without meat?

*Etsiz yemek var mı?* et-seez ye-mek-var muh

### I'm allergic to ...

... *alerjim var.* ... a-ler-zheem var

#### dairy produce

*Süt ürünlerine*

sewt ew-rewn-le-ree-ne

#### eggs

*Yumurta*

yoo-moor-ta-ya

#### nuts

*Çerezlere*

che-rez-le-re

The most famous of all *patlıcan* (eggplant) dishes is *imam bayıldı* (the imam fainted), a simple dish of eggplant slow-cooked in olive oil with tomatoes, onion and garlic. Legend has it that an imam fainted with pleasure on first sampling it – after tasting a well-prepared version you'll understand why.

**DRINKS****(cup/glass of) tea ...**

... (*bir fincan/bardak*) çay ... (beer feen-*jan*/bar-*dak*) chai

**(cup of) coffee ...**

... (*bir fincan*) kahve ... (beer feen-*jan*) kah-*ve*

**with milk**

sütlü sewt-*lew*

**with a little sugar**

az şekerli az she-ker-*lee*

**without sugar**

şekersiz she-ker-*seez*

**Cheers!**

Şerefe! she-re-*fe*

**Food Glossary****STAPLES**

<i>bal</i>	<i>bal</i>	honey
<i>çiğەر</i>	<i>jee-er</i>	liver
<i>çorba</i>	<i>chor-ba</i>	soup
<i>ekmek</i>	<i>ek-mek</i>	bread
<i>hamsi</i>	<i>ham-see</i>	anchovy
<i>kalamares</i>	<i>ka-la-ma-res</i>	calamari
<i>kaşar</i>	<i>ka-shar</i>	cheddarlike yellow cheese
<i>lahmacun</i>	<i>la-ma-joon</i>	pizza with a thin, crispy base topped with chopped lamb, onion and tomato
<i>lavaş</i>	<i>la-vash</i>	thin crispy bread
<i>midye</i>	<i>meed-ye</i>	mussels
<i>peynir</i>	<i>pay-neer</i>	cheese
<i>piliç/tavuk</i>	<i>pee-leech/ta-vook</i>	chicken
<i>pirinç/pilav</i>	<i>pee-reench/pee-lav</i>	rice
<i>tulum peyniri</i>	<i>too-loom pay-nee-ree</i>	dry, crumbly goats cheese cured in a <i>tulum</i> (goatskin bag)
<i>yoğurt</i>	<i>yo-oort</i>	yoghurt
<i>yumurta</i>	<i>yoo-moor-ta</i>	egg

**CONDIMENTS**

<i>kara biber</i>	<i>ka-ra bee-ber</i>	black pepper
<i>şeker</i>	<i>she-ker</i>	sugar
<i>tuz</i>	<i>tooz</i>	salt

**COOKING TERMS**

<i>ızgara</i>	<i>uhz-ga-ra</i>	grilled
<i>tava</i>	<i>ta-va</i>	fried

**FRUIT (MEYVE) & VEGETABLES (SEBZE)**

<i>biber</i>	<i>bee-ber</i>	capsicum/bell pepper
<i>domates</i>	<i>do-ma-tes</i>	tomato
<i>elma</i>	<i>el-ma</i>	apple
<i>havuç</i>	<i>ha-vooch</i>	carrot
<i>ispanak</i>	<i>uhs-pa-nak</i>	spinach
<i>karpuz</i>	<i>kar-pooz</i>	watermelon
<i>kavun</i>	<i>ka-voon</i>	cantaloupe melon
<i>kayısı</i>	<i>ka-yuh-suh</i>	apricot
<i>kuru fasulye</i>	<i>koo-rao fa-sool-ye</i>	white beans
<i>muz</i>	<i>mooz</i>	banana

<i>patates</i>	pa-ta-tes	potato
<i>portakal</i>	por-ta-kal	orange
<i>salatalık</i>	sa-la-ta-luhk	cucumber
<i>şeftali</i>	shef-ta-lee	peach
<i>soğan</i>	so-an	onion
<i>taze fasulye</i>	ta-ze fa-sool-ye	green beans
<i>üzüm</i>	ew-zewm	grape
<i>zeytin</i>	zay-teen	olive

**DESSERT (TATLI)**

<i>aşure</i>	a-shoo-re	'Noah's Ark' pudding made from 40 different fruits, nuts and pulses
<i>baklava</i>	bak-la-va	layered filo pastry with honey or sugar syrup, sometimes stuffed with nuts
<i>dondurma</i>	don-door-ma	ice cream
<i>fırın sütlac</i>	fuh-ruhn sewt-lach	rice pudding
<i>kadayıf</i>	ka-da-yuhf	dough soaked in syrup; often topped with a layer of <i>kaymak</i> (clotted cream)
<i>künefe</i>	kew-ne-fe	layers of <i>kadayıf</i> cemented together with sweet cheese, doused in syrup and served with a sprinkling of pistachio
<i>lokum</i>	lo-koom	Turkish delight
<i>tavuk göğsü</i>	ta-vook ger-sew	a decidedly strange burnt chicken-breast
<i>kazandibi</i>	ka-zan-dee-bee	pudding

**DRINKS**

<i>çay</i>	chai	tea
<i>bira</i>	bee-ra	beer
<i>buz</i>	booz	ice
<i>maden suyu</i>	ma-den soo-yoo	mineral water
<i>meyve suyu</i>	may-ve soo-yoo	fruit juice
<i>rakı</i>	ra-ku	grape spirit infused with aniseed
<i>şarap</i>	sha-rap	wine
<i>su</i>	soo	water
<i>süt</i>	sewt	milk

# Environment

## THE LAND

Turkey has one foot in Europe and another in Asia, its two parts separated by the famous Dardanelles, the placid Sea of Marmara and the hectic Bosphorus. Eastern Thrace (European Turkey) makes up a mere 3% of Turkey's 779,452 sq km land area. The remaining 97% is Anatolia (Asian Turkey).

Boasting 8300km of coastline, snowcapped mountains, rolling steppes, vast lakes and broad rivers, Turkey is stupendously geographically diverse. The Aegean coast is lined with coves and beaches, with the Aegean islands (most of them belonging to Greece) dotted never more than a few kilometres offshore. Inland, western Anatolia has two vast lake districts and the soaring Uludağ (Great Mountain), at 2543m one of Turkey's highest mountains and increasingly popular with ski buffs.

The Mediterranean coast is backed by the jagged Taurus Mountains. East of Antalya, however, it opens up into a fertile plain as far as Alanya, before the mountains close in again. Central Anatolia consists of a vast high plateau of rolling steppe broken by mountain ranges, and Cappadocia, a region of fantastical landscapes created by the action of wind and water on tuff thrown for miles around by volcanic eruptions in prehistory.

Like the Mediterranean, the Black Sea is often hemmed in by mountains, and at the eastern end they drop right down into the sea. At 3937m, Mt Kaçkar (Kaçkar Dağı) is the highest point of the popular Kaçkar trekking and mountaineering area at the far eastern end of the Black Sea. There, *yaylas* (high plateau pastures) come ringed with peaks and glaciers.

Mountainous and somewhat forbidding, northeastern Anatolia is also wildly beautiful, especially around Yusufeli and in the Doğubayazıt area, where snowcapped Mt Ararat (Ağrı Dağı; 5137m) dominates the landscape for miles around. Southeastern Anatolia offers windswept rolling steppe, jagged outcrops of rock, and Lake Van (Van Gölü), an extraordinary alkaline lake.

The bad news? Turkey lies on at least three active earthquake fault lines: the North Anatolian, the East Anatolian and the Aegean. Most of Turkey lies south of the North Anatolian fault line, which runs roughly parallel with the Black Sea coast. As the Arabian and African plates to the south push northward, the Anatolian plate is shoved into the Eurasian plate and squeezed west towards Greece. Thirteen major quakes in Turkey have been recorded since 1939; the latest in August 1999 hit İzmit (Kocaeli) and Adapazarı (Sakarya) in northwestern Anatolia, killing more than 18,000. Some scientists predict that much of İstanbul would be devastated by any earthquake over 7 magnitude, due to unlicensed, jerry-built construction. Locals remain half panicked, half fatalistic – but no one doubts it's coming.

## WILDLIFE

### Animals

In theory, you could see bears, deer, jackals, caracal, wild boars and wolves in Turkey. In practice you're unlikely to see any wild animals at all unless you're trekking.

Instead you can look out for Kangal dogs, which are named after a small town near Sivas. Kangals were originally bred to protect sheep flocks from wolves and bears on mountain pastures. People wandering off the beaten track, especially in eastern Turkey, are often alarmed at the sight of these huge, yellow-coated, black-headed animals, especially as they often wear

Turkey is one of only seven countries in the world that is wholly self-sufficient in agriculture.

The pigeon houses dotting Cappadocia's fairy chimneys and valleys, which once served to harvest the bird's droppings for use as fertiliser, are increasingly disused as traditional agricultural practices die out.

For more information on Turkey's wildlife, contact Doğal Hayatı Koruma Derneği (Foundation for the Protection of Nature; ☎ 0212-231 5514; www.dhkd.org, in Turkish) or WWF-Turkey (☎ 0212-528 2030; www.wwf.org.tr, in Turkish).

ferocious spiked collars to protect them against wolves. Their mongrel descendants live on the streets in Turkey's towns, villages and cities.

Some 400 species of bird are found in Turkey, with about 250 of these passing through on migration from Africa to Europe. It's particularly easy to see eagles, storks, (beige) hoopoes, (blue) rollers and (green) bee-eaters. Enthusiastic birdwatchers should head east to Birecik (p606), one of the last known nesting places in the world of the eastern bald ibis (*Geronticus eremita*). Also well off the beaten trail is Çıldır Gölü (Çıldır Lake; p590), north of Kars in northeastern Anatolia. It's an important breeding ground for various species of birds. More readily accessible is the Göksu Delta (p421), near Silifke, where some 332 species have been recorded – including the rare purple gallinule – and Pamucak (see p251), home to flamingos from February to March.

*Walking and Birdwatching in Southwest Turkey*, by Paul Hope, is an introduction to some of Turkey's best birdwatching spots. Also recommended is Jeremy James' *The Byerley Turk: The True Story of the First Thoroughbred*, a fictionalised biography of the Ottoman horse, whose descendants are the world's finest racing horses today.

## ENDANGERED SPECIES

Anatolia's lions, beavers and Caspian tigers are now extinct, and its lynx, striped hyena and Anatolian leopard have all but disappeared. The last officially recorded sighting of the distinctive leopard was in 1974, when one was shot for attacking a village woman outside Beypazarı.

Rare loggerhead turtles still nest on various beaches in Turkey, including İztuzu Beach at Dalyan, the Göksu Delta and Patara Beach (see boxed text, p348). A few Mediterranean monk seals are just about hanging on around Foça (p220), but you would be very lucky to see them.

Mediterranean bluefin tuna, used in sushi, is facing extinction and there have been clashes between Turkish tuna fishermen and Greenpeace protestors.

The beautiful, pure-white Van cat, with one blue and one green eye, has also become endangered in its native Turkey. Happily, the Anatolian wild sheep, unique to the Konya region, is making a comeback.

## Plants

Turkey's location at the junction between Asia and Europe and its varied geology have made it one of the most biodiverse temperate-zone countries in the world. Not only do its fertile soils produce an incredible range of fruit and vegetables, they are blessed with an exceptionally rich flora of over 9000 species, 1200 of them endemic. Some sources report that a new species of flora in Turkey is discovered every five days. The most common trees and plants you will see as you travel the country are pine, cypress, myrtle, laurel, rosemary, lavender and thyme.

Turkey is one of the last remaining sources of frankincense trees (*Liquidambar orientalis*), which grow in stands along the southwest coast of the Mediterranean, especially around Köyceğiz (p344). The Egyptians used the trees' resin during the embalming process. Today, it is exported for use in perfume and incense. Also on this coast is the endemic Datça palm (*Phoenix theophrastii*), found on the Datça Peninsula and near Kumluca. These are the last remaining populations of these trees in the world.

Other notable plants include purple bougainvillea on the coast, introduced from South America. Olive trees, synonymous with the Mediterranean, originated in the Turkish part of the region and spread

Regarded as harbingers of spring, storks migrate to Turkey around March. Their lofty nests can be seen along the west coast and in cities such as İstanbul, Konya and Ankara (often atop the Column of Julian). Some communities repair the nests to encourage the birds to return.

Van cats are said to be able to swim the waters of Lake Van – not that their owners would let these valuable pets out of their sight to do so.

Tulips are commonly associated with the Netherlands, but the flower originated in Turkey and grew popular during the Ottoman Empire, when it was exported to Europe. Sultan Ahmed III's peaceful 18th-century reign is known as the 'Tulip Era'.

**TAKE ONLY PHOTOS, LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS**

Tourism is not the only thing that has had a damaging impact on the Turkish environment, but it is certainly one of them. So what can you do to help?

- Never drop litter anywhere (although, to be fair, tourists are not the worst offenders when it comes to abandoned rubbish).
- Don't buy coral or seashells, no matter how lovely they look in a necklace.
- It goes without saying that you should try to do without plastic bags, even though some bags in Turkey are made from recycled material.
- Complain to the captain if you think your excursion boat is discharging sewage into the sea or if it's dropping its anchor in an environmentally sensitive area. Even better, complain to **Greenpeace Mediterranean** (☎ 0212-292 7619; [www.greenpeace.org/mediterranean](http://www.greenpeace.org/mediterranean)).
- Consider staying in pensions and hotels that have been designed with some thought for their surroundings.
- Refrain from purchasing water in plastic bottles wherever possible. Water in glass bottles is served in many Turkish restaurants, and you can buy water filtration systems from home before your departure. The very least you can do is to buy the 5L plastic water bottles, which you can keep in your hotel room and use to fill up a reusable smaller bottle to carry with you during the day.

west during the Roman era. Turkey also introduced cherries to Italy, thence the world, via Giresun on the Black Sea coast.

*The Most Beautiful Wild Flowers of Turkey* by Erdoğan Tekin is the best field guide on the market, with some 700 photos and detailed charts on each flower.

**NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES**

In the last few years, thanks to EU aspirations, Turkey has stepped up its environmental protection practices. It's now a signatory to various international conventions including Ramsar and Cites (International Trade of Endangered Species). The growing number of protected areas includes 33 *milli parkı* (national parks), 16 nature parks and 35 nature reserves. It also includes 58 curiously named 'nature monuments', which are mostly protected trees, some as old as 1500 years. (For more information see [www.turizm.gov.tr](http://www.turizm.gov.tr).) In the parks and reserves the environment is supposedly protected and hunting controlled. Sometimes the regulations are carefully enforced, but at other times a blind eye is turned to such problems as litter-dropping picnickers.

Tourism to national parks is not well developed in Turkey, and they are rarely set up with facilities for visitors. It is not even the norm for footpaths to be clearly marked, and camping spots are rarely available. Most of the well-frequented national parks are as popular for their historic monuments as they are for the surrounding natural environment.

The following national parks are among the most popular with foreign visitors to Turkey:

**Gallipoli National Historic Park** (p178) Historic battlefield sites on a gloriously unspoilt peninsula surrounded by coves.

**Göreme National Park** (p502) An extraordinary landscape of gorges and cones ('fairy chimneys') spread over a wide area.

**Kaçkar Dağları National Park** (Kaçkar Mountain National Park; p563) Stunning high mountain ranges popular with trekkers.

**Köprülü Kanyon National Park** (p404) Dramatic canyon with spectacular scenery and facilities for white-water rafting.

A surprising 26.7% of Turkey is covered in forest, 28% is pasture and 2% is wetlands.

**Nemrut Dağı National Park** (Mt Nemrut National Park; p616) Huge historic heads surmounting a man-made mound with wonderful views.

**Saklıkent National Park** (p371) Famous for its 18km-long gorge.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Turkey faces the unenviable challenge of balancing environmental management with rapid economic growth and urbanisation, and to date it's done a pretty sloppy job. Hopeless enforcement of environmental laws, lack of finances and poor education have placed the environment so far down the list of priorities that it would pack up and leave if it could. But there are some glimmers of improvement, largely due to the country's desire to join the EU – see boxed text, p78.

One of the biggest environmental challenges facing Turkey is the threat from maritime traffic along the Bosphorus. The 1936 Montreux Convention decreed that, although Turkey has sovereignty over the Bosphorus strait, it must permit the free passage of shipping through it. At that time, perhaps a few hundred ships a year passed along the strait, but this has risen to over 45,000 vessels annually (around 10% are tankers), with some estimates suggesting traffic will grow by a further 40% in the near future.

Many of these ships are tankers or are carrying other dangerous loads. There have already been serious accidents, such as the 1979 *Independenta* collision with another vessel, which killed 43 people and spilt and burnt some 95,000 tonnes of oil (2½ times the amount spilt by the famous *Exxon Valdez*). An oil pipeline running between Azerbaijan and the Turkish eastern Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, opened in 2005, relieves some of the burden. Other pipelines are on the drawing board, but in the meantime toxic substances and most oil continues to be carried along the Bosphorus.

Building development is taking a terrible toll on the environment, especially along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts. Once pleasant fishing villages, Kuşadası and Marmaris have been near swamped by tacky urban spread and are in danger of losing all appeal. Local environmentalists battling development around Bodrum say the number of secluded valleys the famed Blue Voyage (p354) cruises visit has decreased from 45 to 11 in the last few years. Worse still, much of the development is only used during the warmer months, placing intensive strains on the infrastructure.

The Isparta area is one of the world's leading producers of attar of roses, a valuable oil extracted from rose petals and used in perfumes and cosmetics. See p313 to find out how you can see the harvest in late spring.

The oil pipeline running from Baku, Azerbaijan to Ceyhan, Turkey via Tbilisi, Georgia is the world's second longest; it takes oil a month to travel from one end to the other.

### NUCLEAR TURKEY

One of the biggest challenges facing Turkey's environmentalists is the current government's plan to build three nuclear power plants by 2015. These plants propose to provide up to 20% of Turkey's projected energy needs for the next two decades. The first nuclear reactors are planned for Mersin, on the Mediterranean coast, and the Black Sea town of Sinop (see p545). One of the Black Sea scheme's most vocal opponents is **Sinop is Ours** ([www.sinopbizim.org](http://www.sinopbizim.org)), a community-run initiative.

Turkey's government says the country's rising dependence on energy from other countries is the main catalyst for its push for nuclear energy. Turkey currently imports some 75% of its oil and natural gas, and when it was hit, like Ukraine was in 2005, by gas cuts by Russia, internal energy security went firmly on the agenda. Experts also claim that Iran's nuclear program, and its alleged push to develop nuclear weapons, makes it an untenable potential threat on Turkey's doorstep, pushing Turkey to have some nuclear capacity. Environmentalists say reports have shown that Turkey's existing energy infrastructure is outdated, poorly maintained and should be improved, and policies should be enforced to better harvest the current energy demands before looking to implement nuclear energy. They also state that the country's seismic vulnerabilities make any nuclear reactors an unacceptable risk.

## TOWARDS THE EU

Turkey's intended accession to the EU (p43) is thankfully forcing it to lift its environmental standards. The country has started to overhaul environmental practices and laws, and even given indications that it might ratify international conventions such as the Kyoto Protocol (don't hold your breath; one government quango estimated it would lower the country's Gross Domestic Product by 37%).

The government aims to harmonise all environmental legislation with the EU by 2010. Initial cost estimates put this ambitious project at some €70.5 billion; €150 million was received from the World Bank to kick-start 'green' energy developments in 2004.

While Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has displayed an ambivalent attitude to environmentalists, his Environment and Forestry Minister, Veysel Eroğlu, must be having sleepless nights trying to work out which challenge to start with. Analysts say improving food safety is a major priority, and some fear it will be hard for Turkey to meet EU-set targets in this area. Currently Turkey isn't authorised to export animal products and most nuts to the EU. The other major priorities are wastewater disposal and water treatment facilities.

Short of water and electricity, Turkey is one of the world's main builders of dams. Wherever you go you see signs to a new *baraj* (dam) construction, and it doesn't take long to hear about the problems they are causing. Furthermore, recent studies have shown Turkey's soil erosion problems are shortening the dams' life spans considerably anyway. The gigantic Southeast Anatolia Project (p607), known as GAP, is one of Turkey's major construction efforts. Harnessing the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, it's creating a potential political time bomb with the countries downstream that also depend on this water.

In 2008, Hasankeyf (p640) was on the World Monuments Watch list of the planet's 100 most endangered sites (alongside four other Turkish sites including İstanbul's historic walls and Güzelyurt's Red Church), thanks to the Ilisu Dam Project's plans to drown the historic southeastern town. The Ilisu consortium plans to move the architectural remains of the town, which was historically a Silk Rd commercial centre on the border of Anatolia and Mesopotamia, but the ruins' atmospheric setting on the Tigris River among cliffs and caves would be lost. The project, which could displace 50,000-plus people and affect almost 200 settlements, is set to be completed by 2013. On the other side of Turkey, the Yortanlı Dam poses a similar threat. Already built, the dam will bring water to an arid region but flood the ruins of a 1st-century Roman spa at Allianoi (p218), near Bergama.

Disposal and treatment of industrial waste is a major headache for the government; reports suggest that up to 75% of industrial waste is discharged without any treatment whatsoever and only 12% of the population is connected to sewage treatment facilities. Turkey is adopting the EU's 'polluters pay' policy by increasing fines and improving legislation and policing. In early 2006 fines for dumping toxic waste increased from a maximum of €4500 to €1.5 million. However, locals feel this is akin to shutting the gate after the horse has bolted, as these legislative changes were announced only after barrels of toxic waste were discovered in empty lots throughout İstanbul. One of the worst-hit suburbs was Dilovası, with deaths from cancer in the area nearly three times the world average and a report saying Dilovası should be evacuated and labelled a medical disaster area (neither happened).

To end on a happy note, Turkey is doing well when it comes to beach cleanliness, with 258 beaches and 13 marinas qualifying for Blue Flag status; go to [www.blueflag.org](http://www.blueflag.org) for the complete list.

Dolphins live in İstanbul's Bosphorus strait – marine biologists have likened them to street children for the hardy lives they lead.

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