

# Information of Turkey

Turkey has so much to offer its visitors - breathtaking natural beauties, unique historical and archaeological places, steadily improving hotel and touristic infrastructure and a tradition of hospitality and competitive prices. Therefore, it is not surprising that this country has recently become one of the most popular tourism destination of the world. Due to Turkey's diverse geography, one can experience four different climates in any one day. The rectangular shaped country which is surrounded on three sides by the three different seas. Its shores are laced with beaches, bays, coves, ports, islands and peninsulas.

The summers are long, lasting as long as the eight months in some areas. Turkey is also blessed with majestic mountains and valleys, lakes, rivers, waterfalls and grottoes perfect for winter, summer tourism and the sports of all kinds. Skiing fans, mountain climbers, trekkers, hikers and hunters are able to enjoy take a new and unforgettable experiences in Turkey. Turkey is, above anything else, a huge open-air museum, a repository of all the civilizations nurtured by the soils of Anatolia. The huge amount of the historical and archaeological wealth in Turkey seems more appropriate for an entire continent than a single country

Recently, a new field of tourism has opened up in Turkey. It is a health tourism. The country is in fact rich with hot springs, healing waters and healing muds, which come highly recommended by the medical authorities as a remedy for many diseases. For centuries, Turkey has also been a crossroads of religions, not only of Islam and Christianity, but also of many others now forgotten by history. Many religious devotees can find a site, a shrine, a monument, a tomb or a ruin connected with their faith or belief.

## **Facts:**

### **Official Name**

Republic of Turkey

### **Date of Foundation**

29 October 1923

### **Capital**

Ankara

### **Largest Cities**

Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Antalya

### **Area**

814.578 km<sup>2</sup>

### **Geographical Coordinates**

Eastern Meridians 26° and 45° and Northern Parallels 36° and 42°

### **Coastal Borders**

Mediterranean Sea in the south, Aegean Sea in the west and Black Sea in the north

### **Language**

The official language is Turkish. English is widely spoken in major cities.

**Currency**

TL (Turkish Lira) 1 Euro approximately equals to 2,30 Turkish Liras.

**Time Zone**

GMT+2; CET +1; and EST (US -East) +7

**Business Hours**

The workweek in Turkey runs from Monday to Friday. Banks, government offices and majority of corporate offices open at 9 AM and close at 5 PM.

**Public Holidays**

There are two types of public holidays in Turkey: Those that fall on the same day each year; and the religious festivals, which change according to the lunar calendar and, therefore, fall on different dates each year.

1 January, 23 April, 1 May, 19 May, 30 August, 28 & 29 October

Eid (Ramadan): 30 August – 1st September 2011

Greater Eid: 7-9 November 2011

**Visas**

Visas are easily obtained upon arrival at the airport and are required for citizens of most countries.

**Electricity**

220V. European standard round two-pin sockets.

**Health Services**

Cities and major touristic towns have a selection of private international and public hospitals with good standards.

**Food**

As with many Mediterranean nations Turkish food is very healthy, fresh and enjoyable.

**Water**

Tap water is chlorinated and, therefore, safe to drink. However, it is recommended that you consume bottled water, which is readily and cheaply available.

**Communications**

Turkey has three GSM operators, all of them offering 3G services and almost 95% coverage over the country. Internet service is available all around the country.

**International Dial Code**

+90

**Language**

The official language of the country is Turkish. It is spoken by 220 million people and is the fifth most widely spoken language in the world. Today's Turkish has evolved from dialects known since the 11th century and is one of the group of languages known as Ural-Altaic, which includes Finnish and Hungarian. Turkish is written with the Latin alphabet with the addition of six different characters. It's completely phonetic, i.e. each letter of the alphabet has only one sound, so each

word sounds exactly how it is written. During Ottoman times Turkish was written in Arabic script, that made a limit for a number of people who were able to write. In order to improve literacy and therefore to overcome the difficulties of learning and reading Turkish using Arabic script, Turkey switched to the Latin alphabet following Atatürk's initiative started in 1928. English language has replaced by French and German as the chief secondary language taught in schools and is becoming more widespread. It is widely spoken and understood by the most of the people all over the Turkish territory. German, Russian and French are also spoken especially in the popular holiday destinations.

### **Culture and Art**

Turkish Culture is unique in the world in that it has influenced and has been influenced in return by cultures and civilizations from China to Vienna and from Russian steps to North Africa for over a millennia. Turkish culture reflects this unparalleled cultural richness and diversity, and remains mostly shaped by its deep roots in Middle East, Anatolia and Balkans, the cradle of many civilizations for at least twelve thousand years.

### **Dance**

Turkey has a very ancient folk dance tradition, which varies from region to region, each dance being colourful, rhythmic, elegant and stylish. The following are among the most popular: "Çayda Çıra" from the Sivas region in Central Anatolia is performed by young girls dressed in silver and gold embroidered kaftans who dance in the dark with lighted candles in their hands. In the "Silifke Yoğurdu" from the Mersin region in the South Mediterranean, dancers click wooden spoons together above their heads. "Şeyh Şamil" from the Kars region in the East, is a beautifully dramatised legend of a Caucasian hero. "Kılıç Kalkan" is an epic dance performed with swords and shields from the region of Bursa, and "Zeybek" from Izmir is another epic and vigorous folk dance performed, by male dancers who bang their knees on the floor in between steps. Folklore has also had a considerable influence on ballet. First imported from Europe and Russia, ballet became institutionalised in the Republican era along with other performing arts. The Turkish State Ballet owes its momentum and development to the great British choreographer Dame Ninette de Valois. The State Ballet in both Ankara and İstanbul has, for decades, performed many world classics. Several new foreign and Turkish productions have been introduced into the repertoire over the years and a number of modern dance groups like the infamous "Fire of Anatolia" (Anadolu Atesi) have recently begun to give performances all over the world.

### **Music**

Turkish music evolved from the original folk form into classical through the emergence of a Palace culture. It attained its highest point in the 16th century through the composer "İtri". Great names in Turkish classical music include "Dede Efendi", "Hacı Arif Bey" and "Tamburi Cemil Bey". It is a form that continues to be professionally performed and one that attracts large audiences. Turkish music, locally called Turkish Classical Music, is a variation of the national musical tradition, played with instruments such as the tambur, kanun, ney and ud.

Folk music has developed gradually over the centuries in the rural areas of Turkey. It is highly diversified with many different rhythms and themes. Musical archives contain almost 10,000 such folk songs. Turkish religious music, mostly in the form of songs, is centuries old and rich in tradition, embodied most perfectly by Sufi

(Mevlevi) music. The Turks were introduced to western classical music through orchestras, which were invited to the Sultan's Palace to celebrate occasions such as weddings. The great Italian composer, Donizetti, conducted the Palace Orchestra for many years. The first military band was founded in the 19th century. During the Republican era, the Presidential Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1924, and the Orchestra of the Istanbul Municipality Conservatory played a leading role in introducing and popularising classical music in Turkey. Turkish composers drew their inspiration from Turkish folk songs and Turkish classical music. Today, conductors such as Hikmet Şimşek and Gürer Aykal, pianists like İdil Biret and the Güher and Süher Pekinel sisters, and violinists like Suna Kan are internationally recognised virtuosos. Leyla Gencer was one of the leading sopranos of La Scala Opera, wildly acclaimed whenever she performed in her native Istanbul.

### **Opera and Ballet**

In the period prior to the proclamation of the Republic in Turkey, opera, ballet and the theatre were mostly centred around Istanbul and Izmir. The first showing of opera at the imperial court was by artists trained by Giuseppe Donizetti (1788-1856) from the Italian opera. During the Republic, Ahmet Adnan Saygun, Necil Kazım Akses and Cemal Reşit Rey were the first composers of opera, operettas and musicals. A. Adnan Saygun's first two operas, Özsoy and Taşbebek, Necil Kazım Akses's Bay Önder staged in Ankara, a Mozart musical Bastien and Bastienne staged at the Ankara State Conservatory with pupils playing libretto in Turkish (1936), and the staging of western operas such as Madame Butterfly and Tosca (1940-1941). The orchestrations, chorus and solo recitals of 1950-1952 all contributed to form a foundation for the establishment of today's State Opera and Ballet. Meanwhile in 1947, the famous ballerina and teacher Ninette de Valois was invited to Istanbul and through her efforts, the National Ballet School at Yeşilköy was set up. In 1956-57, the first dancers graduated from Ankara State Conservatory and in 1959-60, the State Opera formed a corps de ballet. "Çesmebaşı" which is one of the most important works in Turkish ballet history was first performed in 1965. Notwithstanding the short history of opera in Turkey which only spans 56 years, the General Directorate of State Opera and Ballet counts amongst its members many artists of international fame, and aside from Ankara and Istanbul, many other branches have been set up in cities around the country and the results everywhere have been very successful.

### **History and Civilisation**

Turkey is considered to be one of the richest countries in terms of archaeology and is by far the biggest "open air museum" of the world. It has always been a bridge between the East and West and has been noted by scholars as the "melting pot" of various cultures where classical culture was shaped. From the first known urban city settlement of "Çatalhöyük" to the historically famous Troy and from the Ionians (the Anatolian Greeks) to the greatest empires of the world, the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman, many cultures were established and indeed flourished in and around this huge "melting pot". Today, a traveler to Turkey can observe the features of all of these cultures. Not only are they visible in their marvelous remains, but in their impacts on the daily lives of Turks today, which differs greatly from one area to another.

**Early Ages-** The history of Turkey tells of a 10,000 year-old civilisation. Anatolia is a melting pot where cultures from Sumer, Babylon and Assyria interacted for centuries with peoples such as the Hattis, Hittites and Hourrites. The result was a unique Anatolian civilisation which has long inspired the thoughts and legends of the West. The ancient Bronze Age witnessed the establishment of the first independent city states. At that time, the centre and southeast of Anatolia were inhabited by the indigenous Hattis. The most spectacular findings from this time

are those of Alaca Hoyuk in the Kızılırmak region and of Horoztepe near Tokat, in the Black Sea region. They are contemporary with the royal tombs of Mycenae in Greece.

**Legendary Troy-** Troy was founded around 3000 BC, and played a major role in the importation of tin, vital for the production of bronze.

### **Top Reasons to Visit Turkey**

A Turkey vacation maybe the perfect choice for you because it is a travel heaven and a tourist hotspot. Turkey is one of the top ten destinations in the world, according to number of visitors and revenues. Are you still wondering "why go to Turkey?" Here are some Turkey information and the top 10 reasons why a Turkey vacation is the ideal getaway.

1. **Sun and Sea Lovers' Paradise:** The unique Mediterranean climate and beautiful nature of Turkey allows almost 6 months of summertime in southern parts, especially in Antalya and Bodrum which are the most popular "sun and sea" tourist destinations. The sandy beaches are splendid and the sea, especially the Aegean coastline, is the most amazing. It is a mildly cold sea that allows for a refreshing experience. Blue Voyage or Blue Cruising is the most favorite way to visit all the beaches with a yacht while enjoying the "turquoise" sea. This may surely be the highlight of your Turkey vacation.
2. **History:** Turkey is extraordinary rich in history. Did you know that Turkey hosts the most archaeological sites in the world? Anatolia is the birthplace of many civilizations, empires, historic figures and legends. One of the oldest known human inhabited areas is in Çatalhöyük, Konya dating back to 6500 BC. Ephesus (Temple of Artemis), City of Troy, Cappadocia and the cave church of St. Peter are among some of the countless important sites to visit in your Turkey vacation.
3. **Accommodation:** Turkey has the most amazing luxury and boutique hotels in the world, especially in Antalya region. The lavishness and the extravaganza in these hotels are probably unmatched since most of them cater to Russian oligarchs and tourists as well. On the other side, you may find the most beautiful hotels at very affordable rates due to intense competition among travel agencies.
4. **Shopping:** Authentic gifts, carpets, rugs, kilims are among the tourist favorites and shopping is breeze if you know where to go. There are more artistic features and special creativity in Turkish carpets than any other carpet in the world.
5. **Culture:** Turkey's population is a diverse mixture of many different ethnic origins and that shows when you visit different regions of the country. Each region has different traditions, their own arts, music and folklore, and even their eating habits are totally unique to the region. Even though they all pride themselves in being Turks, this multicultural environment adds great richness to the country.
6. **Eating:** Turkish cuisine is among the best in the world. It is a fusion of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dishes. There are so many culinary delights like the Turkish tea, Turkish coffee and the famous Turkish delight. You can find these almost anywhere in Turkey, while the most delicious kebabs are in southeastern part. The foods that are brought in small portions before the main course are called "Meze" in Turkish and they are fabulous. They are usually consumed with the most famous Turkish alcoholic drink

called "Raki" (anise flavoured national drink). It is also referred to as the "lion's milk". Fish also holds a very important place in Turkish cuisine and Fish restaurants and taverns can be found near the bay areas.

7. Turkish Bath – Hamam – Spa Experience: This is definitely a must if you are intending to visit Turkey. Turkish Bath or hamam as it is called here, will help you relax and unwind and get rid of all your nervous energies. A Turkish Spa is also a favorite among tourists nowadays since it combines traditional hamam experience with more Far Eastern touches like using aromatic smells and certain massages.
8. Nature Sports: If you are into nature sports you are in the right place. Hiking, trekking, mountain biking, river rafting, scuba diving, windsurfing, wave surfing, kite surfing, paragliding, parasailing, skiing, jet-skiing are among the many nature sports that you can truly enjoy in Turkey. One more Turkey information: The golfing industry has grown very fast over the last few years and Turkey established itself as one of the leading golf destinations in Europe. The golf courses especially in Belek, Antalya are spectacular.
9. Business Opportunities: Turkey is one of the largest economies in the world yet it is still considered a developing nation. This provides enormous business and investing opportunities, especially in the real estate sector. Your Turkey vacation may turn into a great investing decision as well.
10. Relatively Cheap: Turkey's national currency is Turkish Lira. Compared to Euro or Dollar, in terms of buying power, it is weaker. This presents an advantage to travellers who convert their Euros or Dollars to TL and buy stuff in TL. An important tip: Immediately convert your foreign currencies to TL upon arrival to Turkey and pay everything in TL.

## **Important Cities**

### **Istanbul-**

The capital of empires... The city that dominated continents... The cradle of civilisation... The meeting point of cultures and civilisations... These are some of the thousands of phrases that describe İstanbul. Yet neither words nor any amount of reading or listening are sufficient to truly describe and become familiar with the city. Only when you walk along its historic streets, when you see with your own eyes the architectural masterpieces of Byzantine and Ottoman Empires in their original setting, when you enjoy the panoramic vistas of its unique location, and when you start to explore its mystical beauties – only then will you begin to discover, and to fall in love with İstanbul.<br /> <br /> İstanbul is the most developed and largest city of Turkey, and the latest discoveries indicate that the history of human habitation goes back 400,000 years ago. The Megarians settled and founded the city of Byzantium that later lent its name to the Byzantine Empire. However, the first settlers in the region established their city Chalcedon (Kadıköy), on 'the land of blind people' which was strategically less important. And the Megarians, led by an Oracle, became aware of the beauty of Seraglio Point (Sarayburnu), and they established their city there on the opposite side of the Chalcedon.<br /><br /> Today the historical peninsula is the most beautiful part of İstanbul, and is strategically well placed. The city is surrounded by a seascape peppered with distant islands, and this, together with the Golden Horn (Haliç), the estuary that thrusts into the land along the peninsula, make İstanbul a unique place – and, throughout its long history, a city that many desired to conquer. But the desire to possess the city cannot be explained only by its strategic position or

unsurpassed beauty; it has a different attraction, a mystical magnetism that drew states, empires and great conquerors towards it. This attraction led to a long history of conflict, conquest and occupation between those determined to maintain their hold on the city and those who strove to capture it. For more than 1,500 years İstanbul was the capital of two empires, first the Byzantine and later the Ottoman. It was beautified accordingly with magnificent monuments and became a metropolis where diverse cultures, nations and religions mingle. Those cultures, nations and religions are the small pieces that form the mosaic of İstanbul. Perhaps some of those little pieces do not mean much to you, but as an ensemble they make up the unique majesty of İstanbul.

### **Ankara**

Ankara is the capital city of Turkey and the second largest city in the country after İstanbul. It is located at the heart of both Turkey and Central Anatolia. The city is an important commercial and industrial city, and it also houses the Turkish government, and all foreign embassies. The population is around 4.5 million. The locals are generally helpful to tourists, and many young people can communicate in English. Although most people will try to speak English with you, it's a good idea to bring a Turkish phrasebook or dictionary. Ankara is the administrative center of Turkey and a huge university town such that most of its inhabitants consist of civil servants, students and academics.

### **Antalya**

The turquoise shores of Antalya combine ancient cities whispering tales of history, myth and legend, met on either side by tranquil, emerald-green forests and the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean. This is the perfect choice for a vacation surrounded by sea, sun, sand and more. Along with a cultural heritage deeply rooted in history, Antalya's coves and highlands of unique beauty, pristine beaches, comfortable hotels and marinas, colourful entertainment venues, and art-filled festivals all make it a tourist destination that offers endless possibilities to its guests. These include the pleasure of sunbathing from sunrise to sunset; the natural thrill of outdoor sports in the grip of mother nature; the excitement of discovering national parks with their rich flora and fauna, ancient cities, museums and Kaleiçi; the mystery of the mountains and the peaceful Mediterranean coves drawing you away; the romance of watching an opera outdoors under the stars at night; sampling the unique delicacies of Turkish cuisine and enjoying the party scene. Meeting the hospitable people of Antalya is just another part of the pleasant holiday experience.

### **Canakkale**

The city of Çanakkale lies at the narrow, 1200 meter entrance to the Çanakkale Strait (the Dardanelles) that connects the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean. Passenger and car ferries run daily between Canakkale on the Asian side and Eceabat and Kilitbahir on the European side. Yachts navigating the straits stop at the well-equipped Çanakkale Marina to allow tourists more time in the area. Hotels, restaurants and cafes along the promenade, offer a place to enjoy the traffic in the harbor, as well as a view of the Kilitbahir Fortress and the Çanakkale Archaeological Museum. In 1451, Sultan Mehmet II, later the conqueror of İstanbul, built one fortress on the European side of the Çanakkale Strait at Kilitbahir and one on the opposite shore at Çimenlik to control the passage of ships through the strait. Today the Çimenlik Fortress serves as a military museum dedicated to the World War I Battle of Çanakkale.

Historic National Park of Gelibolu Peninsula was established to honor the 500,000 soldiers who lost their lives on Gelibolu, also known as Gallipoli. In 1915, Mustafa Kemal, commander of the Turkish army, led a successful campaign to drive out allied powers from the area. The park includes memorials, monuments, cemeteries, the natural beauty of the Ariburnu Cliffs and Tuz Golu (Salt Lake) The beauty of the green hills, sandy beaches and blue waters provides an honorable resting place for the soldiers who bravely fought and died in this historic battle. You cannot help but sense the heart of the Turkish nation in the patriotic spirit of the place. Homer immortalized Troia (Troy) in his stories of King Priam, Hector, Paris and the beautiful Helen. Archaeological excavations have revealed nine separate periods of settlement including ruins of city walls, house foundations, a temple and a theatre. A symbolic wooden Trojan horse commemorates the legendary war. The ancient harbor of Alexandria-Troas was built in the 3rd century BC. St. Paul passed through twice, and then on his third missionary journey, he continued on to Assos. As you approach Bozcaada island, the Venetian castle commands your attention. Then your eyes are drawn to the glistening white houses and the restaurants and cafes which line the promenade.

Wine seems as plentiful as water on this island; a tour reveals many vineyards and wine cellars. There are good, sandy beaches at Ayazma, Poyraz and İğdelik.

The largest of the Turkish islands, Gökçeada is ringed with pristine bays. Its hills, covered with the greens of pine and olive trees, are dotted with sacred springs and monasteries. Regularly scheduled ferry boats make the trip from Çanakkale and Kabatepe. In August, islanders and tourists gather for colorful local fairs.

### **Bursa**

Bursa is a city in the Asian part of Marmara Region, Turkey. Bursa lies in the northwestern part of Turkey near the Sea of Marmara, about 20 km inland. Bursa was the first major city the Ottomans, who started as a small emirate in the countryside just east of Bursa, had taken control of. As such, it served as the first capital city of the Ottoman Empire, from 1326, when it was captured from the Byzantines, to 1365, when the capital was moved to Edirne in European Turkey, as sultans started to turn their attention to Europe. Most of the historic sights of the city date back to this early period of the Ottomans.

Today, with a population of more than 2,500,000, Bursa is the fourth largest city in Turkey after Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. It is famous for its peach, chestnut, and silk, although lately, heavy industry located in the outskirts of the city has surpassed these traditional industries. Furthermore, Uludağ—one of the highest mountains in Turkey—lies very close to Bursa and is the main winter sports center of Turkey.

### **Trabzon**

Trabzon is a hub of the Eastern Black Sea Region, with a long history, rich culture and great natural beauty. While Trabzon bears the marks of past civilisations, its earliest history remains mysterious. Archaeological excavations have revealed traces of human habitation during the Chalcolithic and Bronze Ages.

In light of these finds, we can say that the earliest known settlement was a trading colony of Miletus that came into existence around 670 BC. The name of the city is first mentioned as “Trapezus” in the book of Xenophon entitled Anabasis.

An important Silk Road connection between Europe and Asia, Trabzon has hosted many civilisations throughout its history. The Cimmerians, Medes, Persians and Macedonians were among the earlier rulers of the port city. After the death of Macedonian King Alexander the Great, Mithridates I Ctistes, a descendant of the Persian nobility, founded the Kingdom of Pontus, in 312 BC. The city was part of the Eastern Empire after the split of Rome, controlled by the Byzantine Empire and later the Komnenos Dynasty. The Komnenoi began to rule Trabzon at the dawn of



the 13th century, and lasted more than 250 years until 1461, when the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II, the Conqueror, conquered the city.

Trabzon has been an inspiration for world-renowned travellers such as Xenophon, Evliya Çelebi, Fallmerayer and Frunze, who visited the city and immortalized it in travel books and manuscripts. Today, the city is also an important centre of commerce and culture, replete with its museums, monasteries, mosques, tombs, caravanserais, bathhouses, covered bazaar, city walls and magnificent examples of civic architecture, markets, a fantastic landscape, and mystical nature. The people of Trabzon preserve the traditional handcrafts, such as stone-carving and wood-carving, weaving, jewellery making, the art of the coppersmith, knife making, and quilting. Trabzon's gold and silver jewellery, its typical horon line dance and the local musical instrument kemençe (Byzantine Lyra) have found a worldwide audience.