**Turkey**

**Overview**

For sheer diversity, Turkey is hard to beat. The country is best measured in multitudes – of people, natural landscapes and cultures. It is a land of vast open spaces and massive mountain ranges, fertile valleys and rugged coastline, fast-growing cities and sleepy villages, seaside resorts and remote beaches.

Countless waves of invasion, rebellion and immigration have forged a country whose cultural depth and breadth may surprise visitors as they venture not just through major cities, but across the country.

Turkey overflows with historic sites and archaeological wonders, all set in a varied and beautiful landscape. The Mediterranean coastline is punctuated with well-preserved Greco-Roman cities like Pergamom and Ephesus, while the otherworldly landscapes of the Cappadocia region harbour cave churches and underground cities.

Though capital status eludes it, Istanbul is very much the beating heart of the nation. The city is an archive of cultural influences throughout the centuries, playing host to Roman aqueducts, Byzantine churches and Ottoman mosques and palaces. Yet it’s no relic. Cafes, bustling bazaars, hammams (public baths), and nightclubs all buzz with activity.

Still, Istanbul is just one piece of the vast Turkish puzzle. Beach-lovers can while away lazy sunny days at the ever-popular Bodrum, Marmaris and Izmir resorts along Turkey’s Aegean and Mediterranean coasts.

The unlikely capital city, Ankara, may be less frequented, but its location in central Anatolia makes it worthy of a few days’ visit, if only to witness the contrast between the city’s modernity and the surviving citadel. Away from the more European sensibilities of Istanbul, Ankara also presents an opportunity to gain insight into other facets of Turkish culture.

However deep its roots are, Turkey is today a thrusting and dynamic society, navigating cultural, economic and political change while seeking to retain the best of its multicultural heritage and time-honoured traditions. And that's arguably what makes it so rewarding.

**Getting There**

**Air**

The number of airlines serving Turkey from Europe and the US has increased steadily over the years. The national airline is Turkish Airlines ([www.turkishairlines.com](http://www.turkishairlines.com)) but other airlines include Pegasus Airlines ([www.flypgs.com](http://www.flypgs.com)), Alitalia ([www.alitalia.com](http://www.alitalia.com)) and Easyjet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)). US Airways ([www.usairways.com](http://www.usairways.com)) also fly direct to Turkey.

**Air Notes**

XXX

**Flight Times**

From London to Istanbul is 3 hours 45 minutes and from New York is 9 hours 50 minutes.

**Air Passes**

The Europe Airpass from Star Alliance ([www.staralliance.com](http://www.staralliance.com)) allows travel to Turkey with member airlines, as well as 39 other countries within Europe.

**Departure Tax**

None.

**Road**

Driving overland to Turkey from Europe will take around 3 days straight driving, travelling through Germany, Austria, down through the Balkan countries of Croatia and Serbia and finally over the Greek or Bulgarian border. If travelling overland via Syria to Turkey please note that Turkey has closed most of its borders with Syria.

**Road Note**

The Eurasia tunnel for car travel between the Kazlicesme and Goztepe areas of Istanbul will be ready in 2014, cutting journey times from 100 mins to 15 mins.

**Rail**

Train journeys can be made to Istanbul via some of the major European cities. The journey from London takes three days. There are a variety of ways to do it; one route is to take the Eurostar to Paris, Orient Express to Vienna (overnight), Avala to Budapest, overnight Ister to Bucharest and finally the Bosfor to Istanbul. There is also a less comfortable couchette car from Budapest to Istanbul. Other international rail routes go to Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia, Germany and Serbia. For more information contact Turkish Railways (TCDD) in Istanbul (tel: (212) 527 0050; [www.tcdd.gov.tr](http://www.tcdd.gov.tr)). The weekly Trans-Asia Express also connects Istanbul and Ankara with Tehran in Iran.

**Rail Passes**

Rail Europe ([www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk)) offers the Interrail pass which gives travellers unlimited first- or second-class travel in up to 30 European countries for European residents of over six months with two pass options. The Global Pass allows for 22 days or one month continuous travel, five days in 10 days or 10 days in 22 days across all countries. The One-Country Pass offers travel for three, four, six or eight days in one month in any of the countries except Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. Travel is not allowed in the passenger's country of residence. Travellers under 26 years receive a reduction. Children's tickets are reduced by about 50%. Supplements are required for some high-speed services, seat reservations and couchettes. Discounts are offered on Eurostar and some ferry routes.

**Rail Note**

XXX

**Water**

It’s possible to travel to Turkey by water, depending where you are coming from. Hopping from the Greek islands over to Istanbul is a popular route. All ships, including private yachts, arriving in Turkish waters must go to one of the following ports of entry: Akçay, Alanya, Anamur, Antalya, Ayvalik, Bandirma, Bodrum, Botas (Adana), Çanakkale, Çesme, Datça, Derince, Didim, Dikili, Fethiye, Finike, Giresun, Güllük, Hopa (Artvin), Iskenderun, Istanbul, Izmir, Kas, Kemer, Kusadasi, Marmaris, Mersin, Ordu, Rize, Samsun, Sinop, Söke, Tasucu (Silifke), Tekirdas, Trabzon and Zonguldak.

**Water Note**

XXX

**Cruise Ships**

Cruise ships regularly stop in Istanbul, Kuşadası, Antalya and Bodrum, amongst others.

**Ferry Operators**

Direct ferries to Turkey are frequent, running from Greece, Lebanon, Cyprus and Ukraine, as well as others. There are a whole host of privately operated ferry lines. Book journeys through Aegean Tours ([www.ferries-turkey.com](http://www.ferries-turkey.com)). Ukrferry (tel: 380 4 8234 4059, in Ukraine; [www.ukrferry.com](http://www.ukrferry.com)) operates ferries between Ilyichevsk and Derince. There are currently no direct ferries between Italy and Turkey, with ferries instead travelling via Greece.

**River Routes**

XXX

**Getting Around**

**Air**

All of Turkey’s major regional towns and cities are connected by air to Ankara, Istanbul and other major transport hubs including Izmir and Antalya. Turkish Airlines (www.turkishairlines.com) provides the largest internal flight network. Independent airlines operating on key routes within Turkey and internationally include Atlasjet (www.atlasjet.com), Onur Air (www.onurair.com.tr), Pegasus Airlines (www.flypgs.com) and SunExpress (www.sunexpress.com.tr).

**Air Notes**

XXX

**Air Passes**

XXX

**Departure Tax**

XXX

**Road**

Turkey’s road network continues to improve, with four-lane motorways (*otoyol*) connecting major cities, and well-surfaced modern highways elsewhere, However, further east and in rural areas, roads may be less well surfaced. Standards of driving can be poor, and serious accidents are common. Main highways are well policed, and radar cameras are in use. Fines are levied on the spot for speeding offences; drivers of rental cars must pay the penalty when returning the vehicle to the rental company, which may add an additional administration charge. In rural areas, and especially in southeast Turkey, drivers may encounter road blocks manned by armed *jandarma* (militia) officers.

**Side Of Road**

Right

**Road Quality**

Road conditions and standards of driving in Turkey can be poor. There is a new road toll system in Turkey and the KGS-prepaid card has been abolished and replaced with electronically-read HGS cards.

**Road Classification**

XXX

**Car Hire**

Both chauffeur-driven and self-drive cars are available in all large towns and resorts. All international companies are represented.

**Taxi**

There are many types of taxi, share-taxi and minibus in operation. Taxis are numerous in all Turkish cities and towns and are recognisable by their chequered black and yellow bands. All taxis have a meter which must be switched on at the start of the journey. For longer journeys, the fare should be agreed beforehand. A *dolmuş* is a collective taxi or minibus which follows specific routes. Each passenger pays according to the distance travelled to specific stops. The fares are fixed by the municipality. The dolmuş provides services within large cities to suburbs, airports and often to neighbouring towns. This is a very practical means of transport and much cheaper than a taxi. Taxis may turn into a dolmuş and vice versa according to demand.

**Bike**

Cycling through Turkey is entirely possible but cyclists are recommended to make sure they are prepared for the heat, and ensure bikes are in good condition as the rough roads are frequent, especially in the countryside. Cycling in the major cities is relatively uncommon and should only be attempted by the brave. Watch out for heavy traffic as drivers may not be used to bicycles sharing the road.

**Coach**

There is an extensive bus network around Turkey linking the larger urban centres to smaller villages, and if you're willing to put up with long-distance overland travel, these can be much cheaper than taking domestic flights.

**Regulations**

The minimum driving age is 18 and front seat belts are compulsory. Children under 12 may not sit in the front. The speed limit is 120kph (75mph) on dual carriageway, 90kph (56mph) on highways and 50kph (31mph) in built-up areas.

**Breakdown Service**

XXX

**Documentation**

The Turkish Touring and Automobile Club (tel: (212) 282 8140; [www.turing.org.tr](http://www.turing.org.tr/)) provides insurance and advice for foreign drivers.  
  
An International Driving Permit or photo-ID licence is necessary. Green Card International Insurance, endorsed for all Turkish territory (or Turkish third-party insurance obtained at a frontier post) and car ownership documents are also required. A 'carnet de passage' is required for those continuing to the Middle East. Cars can be brought into Turkey for a maximum of six months in any year. For longer stays, it is necessary to apply to either the Ministry of Finance and Customs or the Turkish Touring and Automobile Club.

**Road Note**

XXX

**Towns And Cities**

Extensive conventional bus services operate in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. There are buses in all other large towns. These are generally reliable, modern and easy to use. Tickets are bought in advance from kiosks and validated on board. In Istanbul, you can pay as you go by buying *jetons* (tokens) at a cost of 3TL per journey. Alternatively, an *Istanbulkart* can save money on bus, tram, ferry and metro journeys. These have replaced the old Akbil cards, and you can buy them at vending machines and booths near stops and stations.

Ankara has a two-line metro system; Istanbul's is more extensive but covers mainly the more central areas of the city. Further expansion is planned in both. In late 2013 Istanbul opened the Marmaray tunnel, an underground railway under the Bosphorus river connecting the European side to the Asian side of the city in just 8 minutes.

**Rail**

Many trains of the Turkish Railways (TCDD) (tel: 444 2407; [www.tcdd.gov.tr](http://www.tcdd.gov.tr/)) have sleeping cars, couchettes and restaurant cars. Some are air-conditioned. Fares are comparatively low, but are more expensive for express trains. Discounts of 20% are available for students (though a Turkish student card may be required), groups, round-trips and passengers over 60. Children aged seven and under travel free. Tickets can be purchased at TCDD offices at railway stations and TCDD-appointed agents. The journey from Istanbul to Ankara takes between 6 hours 30 minutes and 10 hours, depending on the type of train. There is also a high speed rail link from Ankara to Konya, which takes one hour and fifteen minutes.

**Rail Passes**

Train Tour Card: Allows for 30 days' unlimited travel on most of the Turkish train network. Tour cards are available for high-speed trains, express trains and sleeping car trains. Validity begins on the first day that the card is used.  
  
The One-Country Pass available from Rail Europe ([www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk)) offers travel for three, four, six or eight days in one month within Turkey. Travel is not allowed in the passenger's country of residence. Travellers under 26 years receive a reduction. Children's tickets are reduced by about 50%. Supplements are required for some high-speed services, seat reservations and couchettes. Discounts are offered on Eurostar and some ferry routes.

Eurail offers unlimited second-class travel for non-EU nationals in 27 European countries. The Eurail Global Pass offers travel for 15 or 21 days, one, two or three months, as well as 10 days travel within two months or 15 days travel within two months; the Eurail Global Pass Youth ticket provides discounts for those under 26. The Eurail Select Pass is valid in three, four or five bordering countries and allows five to 15 travel days within a two-month period. The Eurail Regional Pass is not valid for Turkey.

**Rail Note**

XXX

**Water**

A frequent car ferry crosses the Dardenelles at Gallipoli, from Çanakkale to Eceabat and Gelibolu to Lapseki. Istanbul Fast Ferries (tel: (90) 444 4436; [www.ido.com.tr](http://www.ido.com.tr)) operates frequent seabus services from Bostanci, Kartal and Yalova to Yenikapi, Yalova and Bandirma.

**Water Note**

XXX

**Business**

**Business Etiquette**

As Turkey's capital, Ankara is an administrative hub where formal conventions prevail. For business meetings, a dark suit (with tie) is the norm for men. Women are advised to wear business suits with trousers or skirts below the knee. Visiting businesswomen will usually be treated with the same respect as male colleagues. However, women should be aware that after-dinner invitations to accompany the men to a revue bar or belly-dancing club might imply going to an upmarket brothel, and a woman's company will be resented. Women are advised to clarify the nature of the establishment before going.

English is widely spoken in business circles though to have even the most basic knowledge of Turkish wins considerable respect. Punctuality is expected, with lunch meetings commonplace. Business cards and formal greetings are widely used.

Most Turks prefer to do business with someone they know, trust and respect so establishing a personal relationship is an important part of deal-making. Once a relationship has been established, communication is direct. It is customary for business visitors to address new acquaintances by their first names followed using 'Bey' (sir) or 'Hanim' (lady).

Secretaries are rarely empowered to take important messages or even know the boss's schedule, so when phoning, it is usual for callers to be told to ring back 'one hour later' or fax your queries. Once the appropriate contacts have been made, however, business visitors are usually treated with personal warmth and courtesy.

As a Muslim nation, Turkey observes the festivals of the Islamic calendar so avoid scheduling meetings during Ramadan. Alcohol consumption is socially acceptable across most of Turkey, however many choose abstinence so it is important to check to be sure.

**Office Hours**

Mon-Fri 0830-1200 and 1330-1730.

**Economy**

The agricultural sector, previously of great economic importance, now accounts for only 9.1% of the GDP, although it a quarter of the labour force are still . It remains a major employer however, and Turkey is self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs like maize, sugar, wheat and barley.  
  
Manufacturing and services are the most important and fastest growing sectors, with banking and the construction industry enjoying major growth in recent years. The services sector makes the greatest overall contribution to the country's economy, accounting for around 60% of Turkey's GDP. The country's tourist industry is also of primary importance, with the number of tourists increasing year on year, going from around 27 million tourists in 2007 to over 31 million in 2012. The tourism industry brought in over US$$20 billion in revenue in 2012.  
  
Underlying structural problems coupled with years of mismanagement and world events brought the Turkish economy to its knees in 2001. In the face of this crisis, the government introduced an International Monetary Fund-backed austerity program that succeeded in cutting inflation from 70% to 6%. Unemployment in 2012 stood at 9.2%. Up until the financial crisis in 2008, Turkey’s GDP experienced strong growth and although impacted by the subsequent instability of Europe’s financial market, this has now stabilised at around 2-3%.

Istanbul and Antalya are the most popular venues, followed by Ankara, Marmaris and Bodrum. There are many 4- and 5-star hotels, which provide facilities and can host conferences and meetings to international standards.

**GDP**

US$794.5 billion (2012).

**Main Exports**

Clothing and textiles, food, manufactured goods, transport equipment.

**Main Imports**

Machinery, chemicals, appliances and parts, mineral fuels and oil, road vehicles.

**Main Trading Partners**

Germany, Iraq, Iran, Russia and China.

**Sightseeing**

**Turkish bath**

Relax in a steamy Turkish bath, known as a hammam, and have a scrub and massage. In Istanbul, the most popular historic baths are the Galatasaray Hammam in Beyoğlu and Cağaloğlu Hammam in Sultanahmet, though local baths are often just as good.

**Istanbul's Old City**

Discover Istanbul's Old City which was the capital of the Christian Byzantines and then the Islamic Ottoman empire. Highlights include the Blue Mosque, the Topkapi Palace, Aya Sofya Museum and the city's Archaeological Museum.

**Black Sea boat trip**

Explore the northern suburbs of Istanbul by ferry-boat, criss-crossing the Bosphorus to visit villages that stretch up to the mouth of the Black Sea.

**Gallipoli Peninsula**

Tour the WWI battlefields and the memorials commemorating the 250,000 British, Turkish and ANZAC troops that died on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Cross the Dardanelles, the straits dividing Europe and Asia, and visit the ruins of ancient Troy.

**Bodrum**

Visit Bodrum , site of one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Mausoleum of Mausolus, and now Turkey's finest Aegean resort. Dominated by the Castle of St John, the town is renowned for its shopping, dining and nightlife.

**Antalya**

Experience the charm of the Mediterranean city of Antalya, with its atmospheric old town and harbour, Kaleiçi. Visit the superb Archaeological Museum and tour the many historic sights surrounding the city.

**Ankara**

The Turkish capital is overlooked by many visitors but has some excellent museums. The superb Museum of Anatolian Civilisations ([www.anadolumedeniyetlerimuzesi.gov.tr](http://www.anadolumedeniyetlerimuzesi.gov.tr)) is currently undergoing renovations but some exhibits are still on display. The Ethnographic Museum in Ankara ([www.etnografyamuzesi.gov.tr](http://www.etnografyamuzesi.gov.tr)) gives visitors a great insight into Turkish culture.

**Cappadocia**

Do not miss Cappadocia. Marvel at the spectacular landscape of rock cones, pinnacles and ravines. There are cave houses, underground cities and subterranean churches to explore, plus visitors can stay in a cave hotel too.

**Sumela Monastery**

See the spectacular 14th-century Greek Orthodox Sumela Monastery ([www.sumela.com](http://www.sumela.com)), 54km (34 miles) from Trabzon. Set into a sheer cliff, 300m (1,000ft) above the valley floor, it contains some magnificent frescoes.

**Lake Van**

Use the far eastern city of Van as a base to travel along the south shore of Lake Van and catch a boat out to the 10th-century Armenian church on Akdamar island, famous for its intricate stone reliefs depicting biblical scenes.

**Prince's Islands**

Take a ferry from the Eminönü dock in Istanbul to the Princes' Islands, a tranquil summer getaway popular with Istanbulites where cars are banned and horse-drawn carriages and bicycles are the transport of choice.

**Istanbul's Galata Bridge**

Sip tea or smoke a *nargile* (also known as a shisha) as you watch the sunset at one of the traditional cafés beneath Istanbul's Galata Bridge.

**Trek the Lycian Way**

Trek the Lycian Way, which stretches for 500km (311 miles) between Fethiye and Antalya, providing a month's walking through some of Turkey's most spectacular scenery ([www.lycianway.com](http://www.lycianway.com/)).

**White-water rafting**

Experience white-water rafting on the Dalaman River, the Köprülü River, the Zamanti River or the Coruh River, which is rated by professionals as one of the top rafting descents in the world.

**Whirling Dervishes**

Catch a ceremony by the renowned Whirling Dervishes who are members of the Mevlevi Order and who perform the famous whirling dance known as Sema. Their amazing ceremony can be seen in Konya, where the Order originated, or in Istanbul.

**Explore the Kaçkar mountains**

Go trekking in the wild Kaçkar mountain range of Turkey's northeast, close to the Georgian frontier. Take a trail through dense pine forests and scenic pastures, before hitting heights of almost 4000m (13,123 ft). Routes across higher altitudes are only open during the summer months unless trekkers are equipped for snowy weather.

**Therapeutic waters**

The incredible pools at Pamukkale near Denizli attract tourists and locals alike who come to bathe in the warm therapeutic waters that fill the natural travertine terraces. The pools, together with the ancient ruins of the city of Hierapolis nearby have been declared a World Heritage site.

**Caves and bazaars**

Wander through the very Middle Eastern-feeling bazaar at Åanliurfa in the southeast, close to the Syrian border, and pay a visit to the cave where Abraham is said to have been born.

**Black Sea coast**

Escape the foreign tourist hordes and join holidaying Turks at one of the small Black Sea coast towns like Ünye or Giresun - less crowded, cooler and greener than the Mediterranean coast.

**Balloon flight**

Take an early morning hot-air balloon flight over the stunning, other-worldly moonscape of Cappadocia in central Anatolia. Choose from several private companies operating in the area including Kapadokya Balloons ([www.kapadokyaballoons.com](http://www.kapadokyaballoons.com/)).

**Mount Ararat**

Look for fragments of Noah's Ark, reputed to have washed up here, on the slopes of 5,165m (16,945ft) Mount Ararat in Turkey's far eastern region.

**Boat cruise**

Charter a *gulet*, atraditional wooden boat([www.boatingturkey.net](http://www.boatingturkey.net/)), for a leisurely cruise along the Aegean or Mediterranean coast. Itineraries of a week or more are possible, with a variety of destinations and ports of call.

**Attractions**

**Attraction**

XXX

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

XXX

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

XXX

**Telephone**

XXX

**Website**

XXX

**Opening Times**

XXX

**Admission Fees**

XXX

**Disabled Access**

XXX

**UNESCO**

XXX

**Shopping**

There’s more to shopping in Turkey than just colourful carpets. Traditionally a place of trade and commerce, shopping and haggling are part of the fabric of life here, and whether your preference is busy bazaars or more modern malls, rare is the visitor who doesn’t come away with some token of their time here.

Souvenir shoppers will find all sorts of items here. Locally made Turkish handicrafts include textiles, embroideries, copperwork, ceramics, and pottery, onyx, mother-of-pearl, inlaid woodwork, leather and suede products, jewellery, rugs and kilims. *Nargiles* (water pipes) and musical instruments make good, reasonably priced souvenirs.

Those who enjoy shopping will find Istanbul a delight, as the city is rammed with with plenty of cosmopolitan boutique stores and big label brands which will keep the most prolific shopper occupied (although you may have to do some digging to sniff out the gems).

Resorts such as Bodrum, Marmaris and Kusadasi have market areas peddling generally low quality souvenirs and handicrafts and copies of designer-brand shoes, footwear handbags, wristwatches and sunglasses. Bargaining is less essential than in the past, and many traders refuse to offer big discounts. When buying carpets and kilims, the seller must issue an invoice (*fatura*) stating the item's estimated age and purchase price in order to satisfy customs that it is not a restricted antiquity.

When buying big ticket items, get a receipt of the transaction. This can then be shown to customs agents at the airport to verify the purchase is above board and within allowances.

**Shopping Hours**

Daily 0930-1900 in tourist areas. Closing hours vary, with some shops staying open until midnight. Outside tourist areas shops may close at lunchtime and on Sundays. Istanbul covered market: Mon-Sat 0800-1900 (closed Sunday).

**Note**

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**Nightlife**

In a country where half the population is under 30, it’s no surprise that the nightlife scene is one of the best in Europe. It ranges from sophisticated to brash depending on where you are but the sheer variety of taverns, bars and clubs keeps things interesting.

In big cities such as Istanbul, Antalya, Izmir and Ankara, Turkey’s newly prosperous younger generation patronise stylish jazz bars and huge, gleaming dance clubs that rival similar venues in European cities. In Istanbul, enjoy a sunset along one of the many bars lining the banks of the Bosphorus, before heading out to trendy Beyoglu where you can grab great views across the city.

Meanwhile, in resorts such as Marmaris, Olu Deniz, Kusadasi and Bodrum, streets lined with happy-hour cocktail bars and sports TV pubs cater to British and other European holidaymakers. Bodrum’s huge Halicarnassus open-air dance club, with room for up to 5000, is a legend in its own right. Belly-dancing is a Turkish tradition, but in the 21st century attracts more tourists than locals, with ‘traditional’ belly dancing shows performed at most larger hotels or in venues that are purpose-built for tourist nightlife tours.

**Events**

**Wild Greens Foraging Festival**

Celebrate Turkey's bounteous nature at the Wild Greens Foraging Festival in Urla, on Turkey's Cesme peninsula. Organised by Slow Food Urla, this two-day festival aims to to revive the traditional celebration of spring and educate participants about Turkey's foodie credentials. Join in on family and friends fun day on the 23rd, where participants will go foraging with guides, learning more about what mother nature has to offer and how to forage sustainably. Finish the night to the sounds of live music in the Ozbek village bazaar.

**Theme**

Food & Drink

**Start Date**

22 Mar 2014

**End Date**

23 Mar 2014

**TBC**

No

**Date Description**

XXX

**Venue Name**

Urla

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Urla

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Turkey

**Website**

XXX

**Frequency Period**

XXX

**Frequency Number**

1

**Cost**

Free.

**Importance**

Low

**Efes Pilsen Blues Festival**

A touring programme of blues events in 14 Turkish cities that include Istanbul.

**Theme**

Music

**Start Date**

23 Sep 2015

**End Date**

29 Oct 2015

**TBC**

Yes

**Date Description**

XXX

**Venue Name**

XXX

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

XXX

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

XXX

**Website**

XXX

**Frequency Period**

yearly

**Frequency Number**

1

**Cost**

Varied.

**Importance**

Low

**Food and Drink**

**Introduction**

Turkish food combines culinary traditions from the people's nomadic past in Central Asia with influences of the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisine. Such mixed heritage when it comes to food can be the cause of fierce debate when brought up, in particular when it comes to discussing whether dishes are Greek or Turkish in origin. Debate aside, Turkish food is excellent, with wide variation, going far beyond the familiar kebab.

Meat is a large component of the Turkish diet, with lamb featuring heavily and dishes tend to be fragrantly spiced, although they are not as hot as those found in Indian cuisine. Vegetarians will find they are easily catered for, as meze – a selection of sauces, dips and vegetables – can be found on almost every menu and it’s not unusual to them as a main meal. Dolma (stuffed vegetables) are also veggie-friendly dishes.

Guests are usually able to go into a kitchen and choose from the pots if they cannot understand the names of the dishes. A wide range of international cuisine is also available in the major cities, and standard German and British dishes along the coasts.

**Specialities**

• Köfte (spicy sausage-shaped meatballs made of minced lamb).  
*• Shish kebab* (pieces of meat threaded on a skewer and grilled).  
*• Pide* (the Turkish equivalent of pizza topped with cheese and eggs).  
*• Dolma* (vine leaves or vegetables stuffed with pine nuts and currants).   
*• Lokum* (Turkish Delight - originally made from dates, honey, roses and jasmine bound by Arabic gum and designed to sweeten the breath after coffee).

**Things To Know**

Turkey is a secular state and alcohol is widely enjoyed, although during Ramadan it is considered polite for visitors to avoid drinking alcohol in public. Some local restaurants do not serve alcohol. Wine and spirits are heavily taxed and therefore expensive compared with local beers, which are less heavily taxed.

**Tipping**

A service charge is included in hotel and restaurant bills. It is customary to leave a small tip (10 to 15%) for barbers, hairdressers, Turkish Bath attendants and waiters in smarter establishments. In inexpensive cafes and restaurants a small gratuity is appreciated. When using taxis, passengers should just round up the fare.

**Regional Drinks**

*•* Raki (anisette, known as 'lion's milk', which clouds when water is added. Drinking *raki* is a ritual and is traditionally accompanied by a variety of meze).  
*• Ayran* (a refreshing yoghurt drink).   
*• Çay* (tea - usually drunk black and strong and served in small tulip-shaped glasses).   
*•* Strong black Turkish coffee (traditionally brewed over hot coals and served very sweet).  
*•* Turkish beer, red and white wines.

**Drinking Age**

18.

**History**

Turkey today is a stable, secular, pro-Western democracy, and in recent years it has sought to become part of European Union, although the recent financial crisis has dampened enthusiasm. But its recent past is turbulent. Disastrous defeats in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and WWI led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the subsequent declaration by President Kemal Ataturk, of a secular Turkish Republic, and the traumatic ‘exchange of populations’, when more than one million ethnic Greeks left Constantinople, Izmir and other towns and villages for Greece, while around half a million Turkish Muslims returned to Turkey from Greece.

Ataturk is the revered father of modern Turkey, and he and his successors were determined modernisers. Turkey remained neutral during WWII, but in the postwar years the army intervened several times to overthrow elected governments of which it disapproved. In 1974, Turkey and Greece came close to war over Cyprus, and the ‘Cyprus issue’ is the biggest obstacle to Turkey joining the EU, with the country divided along the Green Line – the north is Turk-Cypriot, whilst the south is Greek-Cypriot. Additionally, since the 1960s, Kurdish separatists seeking an independent state in southeast Turkey have clashed with security forces.

These events are just part of a history that stretches back more than 5000 years. Asia Minor cradled the Hittite kingdom which rose around 2200 BC, ancient Troy, and the Greek city-states which rose along the coasts during the first millennium BC. Their struggle with the Persian Empire ended with the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great. Alexander’s empire broke up after his death, and by 2BC the region had been conquered by Rome.

Relics such as the Temple of Diana at Ephesus and the Roman theatres at Aspendos and Side are among the great sights of present-day Turkey. In 330AD, Emperor Constantine I moved the Roman capital to Byzantium, strategically located on the Bosphorus, renamed it Constantinople (after himself), and imposed Christianity on the Empire. The Seljuk Turks trickled into Anatolia (eastern Turkey) in the 11AD and were followed by the Ottoman Turks. In 1453 Constantinople fell to Sultan Mehmet II. His successors expanded the Ottoman Empire further, and at its apogee, they held sway over an empire that stretched from the Balkans to the Red Sea and the Nile.

With recent uprisings in the Middle East, including the 2011 Arab Spring and Syria’s civil war, Turkey’s stability now finds itself under threat. Most recently, the heavy-handed quashing of demonstrations in Istanbul and Ankara against the authoritarian style of the police under Prime Minister Erdogan’s government have brought international condemnation. It remains to be seen what effect 2014’s presidential elections will have on the state of Turkish democracy.

**Data**

**Calling Code**

+90

**Area**

783562

**Population**

80694485

**Population Density**

103

**Population Year**

2013

**General**

**Area**

783,562 sq km (302,535 sq miles).

**Population**

80.7 million (2013).

**Population Density**

103 per sq km.

**Capital**

Ankara.

**Geography**

Turkey borders the Black Sea, Georgia and Armenia to the northeast, Iran to the east, Iraq to the southeast, Syria and the Mediterranean to the south, the Aegean Sea to the west and Greece and Bulgaria to the northwest. Asia Minor (or Anatolia) is the name given to the peninsula that forms a bridge between Europe and Asia. It accounts for 97% of the country's area and forms a long, wide peninsula 1,650km (1,025 miles) from east to west and 650km (400 miles) from north to south. The biggest city is Ankara, which is situated in the central plains of Anatolia.

The other 3% of the country is Thrace, the tiny land mass which is the European portion of Turkey bordering Bulgaria and Greece and separated from Anatolia by the Bosphorus, a strait linking the Black Sea and Aegean Sea. Despite its small size 10% of the population lives here, with most of these in Istanbul.

Two east-west mountain ranges, the Black Sea Mountains in the north and the Taurus in the south, enclose the central Anatolian plateau, but converge in a vast mountainous region in the far east of the country. It is here that the ancient Tigris and Euphrates rivers rise.

**Government**

Republic since 1923.

**Head Of State**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan since 2014.

**Head Of Government**

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu since 2014.

**Electricity**

220 volts AC, 50Hz. European-style plugs with two round pins are used.

**Note**

XXX

**Travel Advice**

Last updated: 10 June 2015

The travel advice summary below is provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. 'We' refers to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. For their full travel advice, visit [*www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice*](http://www.worldtravelguide.net/e/www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).Local travel - Syrian border

The FCO advise against all travel to within 10km of the border with Syria. The FCO advise against all but essential travel to the remaining areas of Sirnak, Mardin, Sanlurfa, Gaziantep, Kilis and Hatay provinces. On 11 May 2013, 2 car bombs killed 53 people and wounded more than 100 in the town of Reyhanli, Hatay province. In October 2012, 5 Turkish citizens were killed when a shell fell on the town of Akḉakale. Syrian forces continue to target areas close to the Turkish border and there remains a heightened risk of terrorism in the region.

Mortar rounds reportedly fired by ISIL militants in northern Syria landed on the E90 road near Nusaybin in Mardin province, Turkey, on 15 September 2014. There were no casualties. As a result of heavy fighting between ISIL and Kurdish forces in northern Syria, there has been a mass influx of refugees into Sanliurfa province (southern Turkey) since 19 September 2014.Demonstrations

Since Spring 2013, there have been sporadic demonstrations in cities across Turkey, some of which have become violent. In Istanbul previous demonstrations have centered on the area around Taksim Square, on Istiklal Street and in the Besiktas and Kadikoy districts and more recently in Okmeydani. In Ankara, the protests have mainly taken place in the central Kizilay district around the Prime Minister’s office. In Izmir the focus has been in the town centre, near the water front.

You should avoid all demonstrations and leave the area if one develops. Police have used tear gas and water cannon extensively to disperse protests. The effects of tear gas can be felt several hundred metres beyond the immediate site of demonstrations. Local transport routes may be disrupted.Crime

Generally crime levels are low, but street robbery and pick-pocketing are common in the major tourist areas of Istanbul. You should maintain at least the same level of personal security awareness as in the UK. Alcohol and drugs can make you less alert, less in control and less aware of your environment. If you are going to drink, know your limit. Drinks served in bars overseas are often stronger than those in the UK. Buy your own drinks and keep sight of them at all times so they are not spiked. Be wary of strangers approaching you offering food and drink (which may be drugged), to change money or to take you to a restaurant or nightclub.

Passports have been stolen from rented villas, even when they have been kept in the villa safe. This is a particular problem in Didim, Kas, Kalkan and the Fethiye/Hisaronu/Ovacik area.

In 2014, 14 cases of sexual assault, including rape, were reported to British consular staff in Turkey. Most of these cases occurred during the summer holiday period in coastal tourist areas. Most were committed late at night by someone the victim met during the evening. There have also been sexual attacks on minors visiting toilet facilities alone. You should be extra vigilant in these situations.

Never accept lifts from strangers. Find a registered yellow taxi and make a note of the registration number before getting in.

Very rarely counterfeit alcohol has been responsible for the death of some tourists. If you have any concerns, seek advice from your tour operator or the Turkish authorities.Road travel

Take care when travelling by road throughout Turkey, particularly at night. Roads between the major cities are generally in excellent condition, but can be poor in remote, rural areas. Accidents are common and mainly due to poor or reckless driving. According to the Turkish police, there were 1,207,354 road traffic accidents in 2013 which resulted in 3,685 deaths and 274,829 injuries.

If you drive in Turkey, you must have either an [International Driving Permit](http://www.theaa.com/getaway/idp/index.html) or a notarised copy (in Turkish) of your UK driving licence. Provisional driving licences are not recognised.

You will need an ‘A’ category standard motorcycle licence to hire a motorcycle over 50cc in Turkey. An ‘A1’ category ‘light motorcycle’ driving licence is only suitable for motorcycles below 50cc. By law you must wear a helmet. Failure to do so could result in a heavy fine.

Don’t drink and drive. The police will breathalyse drunk drivers, fine you on the spot and immediately confiscate your licence for 6 months.Extreme sports

If you participate in extreme sports (including paragliding, parasailing, white-water rafting, off-road driving and hot air ballooning), satisfy yourself that adequate safety precautions are in place. Only use reputable operators and insist on training before use. Make sure your travel insurance covers you for all the activities you want to undertake. British nationals have been injured and in some cases killed participating in extreme sports.Stray dogs

Most towns and cities have stray dogs. Local authorities take action to control and manage numbers but packs congregate in parks and wastelands and can be aggressive. Take care, remain calm, and avoid approaching stray dogs. If you’re bitten, seek medical advice as rabies and other animal borne diseases are present in Turkey.

**Passport Visa**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Passport Required** | **Return Ticket Required** | **Visa Required** |
| British | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| USA | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Canadian | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Australian | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Other EU | Yes | Yes | Yes/1/2 |

**Table Note**

XXX

**Passports**

Passports must be valid for at least 60 days beyond the expiry date of the traveller's visa or the end of the traveller's visa exemption period.

**Passport Note**

XXX

**Visas**

Visas are required by all nationals referred to in the chart above except:

**1.** Nationals of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden, who can enter Turkey without a visa for 90 days within a 180-day period.

**2.** Nationals of Lativa, who may visit visa-free for 30 days.

Turkey has introduced an e-Visa scheme allowing nationals of over 90 countries to apply for their visa in advance. Nationals in the chart who do require a visa must apply for an e-Visa in advance online at [www.evisa.gov.tr/en](http://www.evisa.gov.tr/en). Kiosks where you can buy visas on arrival are currently still available at Turkish airports if you forget to apply for your e-Visa in advance, but fees are higher, and this option is likely to be phased out soon.

**Visa Note**

If you wish to climb Mount Ararat, you will need to apply for a permit for your expedition, in addition to any other types of visa which may be necessary.

Nationals not referred to in the chart are advised to contact the embassy to check visa requirements for Turkey.

**Types And Cost**

e-Visa in advance: free (Maltese nationals); US$20 (other EU and US nationals); US$60 (Australian and Canadian nationals).

e-Visa on arrival at Turkish airports: free (Maltese nationals); US$30 (other EU and US nationals); US$70 (Australian and Canadian nationals).

**Validity**

e-Visa: 90 days within a 180-day period.

For longer stays or frequent visits, you can obtain single- or multiple-entry visas valid for six months, one year or five years from your nearest Turkish embassy.

**Transit**

XXX

**Application To**

Apply online at [www.evisa.gov.tr](http://www.evisa.gov.tr), at least 48 hours before departure. For long-term visas, apply to the nearest consulate/embassy.

**Schengen Visas**

XXX

**Temporary Residence**

XXX

**Working Days**

At the final stage of the application, you are given a link to the e-Visa.

**Sufficient Funds**

XXX

**Entry Documents**

XXX

**Extension Of Stay**

XXX

**Entry With Children**

XXX

**Entry Restrictions**

XXX

**Entry With Pets**

XXX

**Healthcare**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Special Precautions** |
| Hepatitis A | Yes |
| Diphtheria | Yes |
| Typhoid | Sometimes |
| Tetanus | Yes |
| Rabies | Sometimes |
| Malaria | Sometimes |
| Yellow Fever | No |

**Table Note**

XXX

**Healthcare**

Turkey’s healthcare system is in the midst of reform and has greatly improved over past decades, but the country has only basic public hospital medical facilities and has no state-funded general practitioner system. There is however an extensive private health care sector, including private emergency care hospitals, surgeons, dentists and other specialists. Inside the major urban centres such as Istanbul and Ankara, the quality of care in these clinics will match standards in Western Europe, but without private health insurance, getting treated in this environment can result in a hefty bill. Travel insurance which covers medical aid is essential. In the case of a medical emergency call 112.

**Food And Drink**

Mains water is chlorinated in towns and cities, but it is advisable to drink the widely available bottled mineral water. If a water source bears the words *içilmez*, it is not potable; sources labelled *içilir* or *içme suyu* are safe to drink. Milk is pasteurised. Eat only well-cooked meat and fish. When it comes to street food, common sense is advised; eat food that is freshly cooked and ideally, has been prepared in front of you. During the summer Turkey can experience temperatures up to 40°C (104°F) so carry a bottle of water to avoid dehydration.

**Other Risks**

Vaccinations against tuberculosis and hepatitis B are sometimes recommended. It is recommended that travellers visiting rural areas, get a rabies vaccination as this may be found in dogs, cats and other animals throughout the countryside. Turkey has very low risk of malaria, with the risk increasing towards the Syrian border in the south east of the country, but keen trekkers may want to stock up on supplies of insect-repellent.

**Money**

**Currency Info**

New Turkish Lira (TRY; symbol YTL) = 100 New Kurus (Ykr). Notes are in denominations of YTL200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of YTL1 and 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 New Kurus.

**Credit Cards**

Visa is the most popular, closely followed by MasterCard. American Express is accepted in top-flight hotels, restaurants and some gift shops. ATMs are widely found in most areas. In all smaller restaurants, bars, guesthouses and shops cash is preferred. Many establishments in resort areas will accept Euros.

**ATM**

ATMs are easily found in most urban areas. As with all transactions be careful with your card, taking care to keep it in sight, and be discreet with cash.

**Travellers Cheques**

Traveller's cheques can only be exchanged in banks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Pounds Sterling, Euros or US Dollars. Credit cards are far more convenient.

**Banking Hours**

Mon-Fri 0830-1200 and 1330-1700. Some banks in tourist areas and large cities are open daily. Cash can be exchanged in currency exchange offices (döviz bürosu) in all major cities and towns. Banks charge commission.

**Currency Restrictions**

There are no restrictions on the import or export of local. The import and export of foreign currency exceeding US$5,000 must be declared.

**Currency Exchange**

Cash can usually be exchanged commission free in currency exchange offices (*döviz bürosu*). Banks usually charge commission. Traveller's cheques can only be exchanged in banks with a passport. Travellers planning to exchange currency back from Turkish Lira to their own country before leaving Turkey, or those making a major purchase which may need to be declared to customs, must retain transaction receipts to prove that the currency was legally exchanged.

**Language**

**Language**

Turkish is the official language. Kurdish is also spoken by a minority in the southeast. French, German and English are widely spoken in major cities and tourist areas.

**Phrases**

XXX

**Duty Free**

**Overview**

The following goods may be imported into Turkey by travellers aged 18 and over without incurring customs duty:

• 400 cigarettes, 100 cigarillos, 50 cigars and 250g of tobacco.  
• 1L of alcohol over 22% volume or 2L of alcohol under 22% volume.   
• 600ml of perfume and eau de toilette.  
• 2kg of food products (eg tea, coffee or confectionery).  
• Souvenirs to the value of €430 (reduced to €150 for children under 15).

**Banned Imports**

Narcotics. Sharp implements (including camping knives) and weapons require a special permit.

**Banned Exports**

The export of souvenirs such as carpets is subject to customs regulations regarding age and value. The export of antiques is strictly forbidden, with harsh penalties for those caught doing so. Minerals may only be exported under licence from the General Directorate of Mining Exploration & Research. You can't export tea, coffee, grain products or spices.

**Important Addresses**

**Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in the USA**

**Thoroughfare**

2525 Massachusetts Avenue

**Neighborhood**

NW

**Locality**

Washington

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

DC

**Postcode**

20008

**Country**

United States of America

**Telephone**

(202) 612 6700 or 6740 (consular section).

**Website**

http://www.washington.emb.mfa.gov.tr

**Opening Times**

Mon-Fri 0900-1800.

**Turkish Consulate General in the UK**

**Thoroughfare**

Rutland Lodge

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Rutland Gardens

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

London

**Postcode**

SW7 1BW

**Country**

United Kingdom

**Telephone**

(020) 7591 6900 or 09068 347 348 (recorded visa information; calls cost 60p per minute).

**Website**

http://www.turkishconsulate.org.uk/en

**Opening Times**

Mon-Fri 0900-1230 (visas).

**Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in the UK**

**Thoroughfare**

43 Belgrave Square

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

London

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

SW1X 8PA

**Country**

United Kingdom

**Telephone**

(020) 7393 0202

**Website**

http://london.emb.mfa.gov.tr

**Opening Times**

Mon-Fri 0900-1730 (appointment only).

**Tourist Offices**

**Turkish Tourism Office in the USA**

**Thoroughfare**

821 United Nations Plaza

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

New York City

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

NY 10017

**Country**

United States of America

**Telephone**

(212) 687 2194.

**Website**

http://www.goturkeytourism.com

**Opening Times**

Mon-Fri 0900-1800.

**Turkish Culture and Tourism Office (TCTO) in the UK**

**Thoroughfare**

4th Floor, 29-30 St James's Street

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

London

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

SW1A 1HB

**Country**

United Kingdom

**Telephone**

(020) 7839 7778.

**Website**

http://www.gototurkey.co.uk

**Opening Times**

Mon-Fri 0900-1800.

**Communications**

**Telephone**

The cheapest way to make calls is from PTT telephone booths, which are found in all areas. These operate using phone cards, which can be bought from kiosks, or by using major credit cards.

**Mobile Phone**

Mobile phone coverage is generally good, but can be patchy in some rural areas in eastern Turkey. As Turkey is outside the EU, roaming charges are very much more expensive than for mobile phone use in the UK and the rest of the EU.

**Internet**

There are internet cafés throughout Turkey, even in small towns and rural villages. Almost all hotels (including even small guesthouses and budget hostels) offer free Wi-Fi internet access, as do many restaurants, bars and cafés.

**Post**

Turkish post offices are recognisable by their yellow PTT signs. It takes around 4-5 working days for mail from Turkey to reach Europe.

**Post Office Hours**

Major post offices are open Mon-Sat 0800-2400, Sun 0900-1900; smaller post offices have the same opening hours as government offices.

**Media**

The Turkish media tends to be self-censoring on controversial religious, cultural and political issues. Journalists, novelists, film-makers and broadcasters have been prosecuted under laws against ‘insulting' the country, the armed forces, and ‘Turkishness'.

English-language newspapers include *The Turkish Daily News*, whilst the main Turkish-language papers are *Hürriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Zamam Cumhuriyet* and *Yeni Asir*. An edition of the British *Sunday Times* is printed in Istanbul. The state broadcaster TRT operates several TV and radio channels. Private channels include ATV, Kanal D, Show TV and Star TV. CNN Türk is the Turkish channel of news network CNN. TRT radio stations include TRT 1 (cultural and educational), TRT 3 (classical, jazz and popular music) and TRT 4 (Turkish folk and classical music). Best FM, Show Radyo and Capital Radio are commercial stations whilst Radyo Foreks broadcasts news.

**Press**

XXX

**Television**

XXX

**Radio**

XXX

**Where to stay**

**Hotels**

Places to stay in Turkey range from purpose-built villa and apartment complexes and mid-range hotels in seaside resorts to luxury city hotels aimed at business travellers, budget hostels, simple *pansiyons* (guesthouses) and an ever-increasing number of stylish small boutique hotels in coastal and rural villages.  
  
**Grading:** Hotels registered with the Ministry of Tourism are graded from 1 star (1 *yildizli*) to 5 stars (5 *yildizli*). There are also unclassified hotels that have no stars, which can range from poor to acceptable. Classification is based on the standard of service and facilities. Motels and holiday villas are first class (1 *sinif*) or second class (2 *sinif*). There are other establishments registered with local authorities, and these too correspond to a certain standard in regard to facilities and services. There is also a national hotel association, TUROB ([http://english.turob.com](http://english.turob.com/)) which has comprehensive listings of accredited hotels.

**Bed And Breakfast**

Guest houses (*pansiyons*) can be found in some resorts and in most towns and villages. These usually offer clean but basic accommodation (not all have en-suite WC and shower or air conditioning). Most do not have a bar or restaurant, but some offer a simple breakfast.

**Camping**

There are numerous sites, but facilities can be quite limited. Some hotels have campsites within their grounds. Wild camping in public is fine, otherwise its best to obtain permission from the landowner before pitching your tent.

**Other**

**Hostels**: There are a number of youth hostels in Turkey, but standards and facilities vary widely. There are numerous private hostels aimed at budget travellers in Istanbul's Sultanahmet district, offering double, single and twin rooms in addition to dormitory accommodation. Budget hostel accommodation can also be found in and around favourite backpacker destinations such as Gelibolu, Kusadasi and Olympus. At the other end of the scale, Istanbul has some very upmarket hostels more suited to ‘flashpackers’ willing to spend a little more,  than those looking for rock bottom prices.

**Apartments**: Villas and apartments can be rented, especially on the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, and also in Cappadocia and the larger cities. Time share properties are also starting to take-off in Turkey, most usually in the resorts along the Aegean or Mediterranean coast and in Istanbul.

**Culture**

**Religion**

Muslim, with around 70% Sunni, 25% Alevis and a very small Christian minority. Turkey is a secular state which in theory guarantees complete freedom of worship to non-Muslims.

**Social Conventions**

Shaking hands is the normal form of greeting a stranger;  kissing on the cheek is reserved for meeting friends and family. Hospitality is very important and visitors should respect Islamic customs. Informal wear is acceptable, but beachwear should be confined to the beach or poolside. Smoking is widely acceptable but prohibited in cinemas, theatres, buses, coaches and *dolmuş* (collective taxis).

Until recently women working in civil service or government roles, or studying in university, were banned from wearing headscarves. This ban was lifted in 2013, but the subject remains a contentious issue. However, if visiting a mosque, women are advised to take scarves to cover their hair and to wear long-sleeved tops. Both men and women should have legs covered from the knees upwards.

**Weather**

**Best Time To Visit**

Turkey is a huge country, and its climate varies widely from region to region as well as seasonally. For sightseeing holidays to Istanbul and the most important ancient and medieval sights, and for active walking holidays, the best times to visit are spring (April-May) and autumn (October-early November) when days are generally warm and sunny but not uncomfortably hot. Rainy spells and cloudy days are possible, however, in spring and autumn, so the best months for a sun-and-sea holiday on the Aegean or Mediterranean coast are June to end September. Resort areas are most crowded from June until the end of August.

In developing ski areas such as Uludag near Bursa and Palandoken near Erzurum, the best time to visit is between December and April. Temperatures in and around Istanbul can vary from well below freezing in midwinter to above 40°C (104°F) in summer. The Aegean and Mediterranean coasts experience the hottest summers, with highs of 45°C (113°F), but midwinter temperatures can be as low as -5°C (23°F).

Mountainous Eastern Turkey has the most extreme climate of all, with winter temperatures as low as -43°C (-45F) and highs up to 38C (100F). The climate of the central Anatolia is also extreme with summer highs of 40°C (104°F) and winter lows of -25°C (-13°F). The Turkish State Meteorological Office ([www.mgm.gov.tr](http://www.mgm.gov.tr)) provides a day to day, region by region online weather forecast.

**Required Clothing**

Depending on where you are, appropriate clothing will vary widely. If visiting during the summer take light cotton layers and a hat, as temperatures can reach scorching, particularly in the cities. During the winter months pack heavier layers and waterproofs. Sturdy shoes and equipment are advisable for anyone who will be trekking in the mountainous areas.