

Turkey:

The Ideal Tourism Destination for the Family

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During the last five years I have visited Turkey on twenty-five occasions, either on my own or with the family; some were for a journalistic work; others on route to Europe. This great country is rich with its seas, rivers, mountains, lakes, coast, and history, with the kindness of its people, their warm hospitality and their rich cuisine. Every time I visit this beautiful country, I become more and more attached to it and when I leave I carry with me fond memories and an eagerness to return.

Turkey enjoys a long and glorious history and the land is full of heritage that has been accumulated from different civilizations for the more than ten thousand years. Turkey is a meeting point between Asia and Europe. It has an area of 814,578sq km, most of it in Asia, called Anatolia. The European part of Turkey is about 24,378sq km. The Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus and Dardanelles divide the Asian and the European areas. Turkey has a total of

8,333km of coastline. The country is divided into seven regions: The Black Sea, Marmara Sea, Aegean Sea, Mediterranean Sea, East, South East and central Anatolia.

The population of Turkey is about 68 million people, 99% of them are Muslims. The cities are highly populated, as in: Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Bursa and the Black Sea region because they are commercial and industrial. The Turkish

language is the official language used by 90% of the population, but many people are competent in European languages, such as German and English.

It is a mainly green country with a diverse climate in differing parts. Summer temperature are around 20 to 30 degrees, autumn between 10 to 15 degrees, winter from zero to 15 degrees, and in spring around 13 to 20 degrees. ➔

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Turkey has been called with justification 'The Cradle of Civilization'. A visit to one of its Stone Age towns which goes back to 6500 BC, and other ancient sites, gives you the confidence that this country has a very rich heritage.

Turkish Cuisine

The Turkish kitchen is distinctive in the full meaning of the word. I remember that I was once in Turkey at the invitation of the Turkish Ministry of Tourism to travel the silk route in 1997, and I was accompanied by more than 100 journalists from all over the world. I heard them all praising the cuisine after each meal, they were more impressed than I was, as I was the only Arab journalist, and from the same region and accustomed to similar cuisine. I am convinced that many tourists select Turkey for their holiday because of its interesting food. There are all sorts of soups, mezze, meat dishes, pies and variety of stuffed vegetables, also as Turkey has access to three seas; there is a plentiful selection of fresh fish. In addition, you have a selection of deserts and sweets that suit all tastes, as well as the Turkish fruits. Finally do not forget the rich Turkish coffee.

Leisure and Entertainment

Turkey offers a variety of entertainment for all the family, such as zoos, restaurants, sport activities, theatre and large number of play areas and clubs that provided entertainment for children. You can find these facilities in all Turkish towns. The day is long in Turkey, and you can travel between public parks, water falls, boat trips, caves, discovering the heritage sites and end the day at the theatre.

Shopping

Shopping in Turkey is fun, there are hand made goods and clothes made from Turkish fabric which you can not resist buying. Hand made goods reflect the variety of cultural heritage of the country and its ethnic diversity. Most attractive for the tourist are the carpets, but also gold jewellery, copper, bronze, glass vessels and ornaments, pots, embroideries and precious stones.



Accommodation

Turkey offers a good range of accommodation, from the small village houses, small hotels, to the luxurious resorts, all licensed by the ministry of tourism, which means they have to be maintained and kept up to agreed standards. There are 315,000 licensed beds in more than 2000 hotels' in addition to 225,000 beds soon to be created. There are facilities in most places, which are exclusively for ladies, especially on the Mediterranean.

Waterfalls and Lakes

Turkey is almost an island and most of its plateaux are 1000-1500 m. above sea level, therefore the 16 main rivers contribute to so many waterfalls. The most spectacular waterfalls are: Kursunlu, twenty minutes from Antalya, on the Mediterranean sea, Manafigat the best known waterfall in Turkey, some 75 km. from Antalya, named because of its location near the town; you can enjoy a excursion on the river of Manafigat to see the waterfalls from the water. There are ➤

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other waterfalls in the area of Antalya, such as Kopru waterfall, on the river Goksu, which is one of the important waterfalls in the province of Konya. There are also so many lakes, such as Beysehir, which is the third largest lake in Turkey; there is a unique garden to the south of this lake. Also of note is the lake of Burdur. The topic of lakes needs a separate article on another occasion.

There are many beautiful valleys; of which the most famous are the ones in the Toros mountain range where many self-catering places are available. You can enjoy so many activities in the mountainous region, such as climbing, caving, riding in carriages pulled by bulls, walking on foot or riding horses, camping, canoeing, scuba diving, skiing on the water, fishing and golf. Among the distinguished sports in Turkey are air activities, such as flying with a single engine plane, parachuting and ballooning in Cappadocia. In wintertime, you could enjoy skiing in the mountains of Uludag near Bursa where they are covered with snow for six months or in the mountains of Bolu and Ilgaz or in

the skiing resorts of Paladoken and Erciyes in Kasyeri and other places. There are also many spas. Most famous one is near Pamukkale. Or enjoy the spa near Gyas Lake. It is rich with mineral water. There are also the warm springs near Izmir, Cankiri, Cesme and Yalova and in other parts of Turkey.

Turkey on the list of world heritage

Turkey is a member of UNESCO and many of its sites are included among the world heritage list. Pamukkale and Cappadocia were chosen as world cultural and natural heritage cities. Pamukkale means cotton because the soil is rich with calcium. The natural location is enchanting and it attracts so many people from all over the world; and people seek it for health and beauty from its water. It is considered nowadays as an important spa town and a centre for antiquities. As for Cappadocia, it is in the centre of Anatolia, near Aksaray, Nigde and Kayseri. It is considered one of the wonders of this world, in addition to its splendid historical sites and its houses



Bursa

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that were carved into stones, and its beautiful underground cities. As for Urgup and Corum, they are vital centres for tourism. They are located at the edge of a stone range of hills that is covered with old houses and it is considered an important place from which you can visit Cappadocia. You can see in Urgup how people lived there, in houses carved in stones. Undoubtedly, ballooning and visiting the underground cities in Cappadocia are truly unique and unforgettable experiences. ■