



LUXURY AT EMPIRE'S EDGE

EasternTurkeyTours

Fully escorted group & private tours
across Central & Eastern Turkey and beyond...

“Be an open door, be a step among steps”

Experience the magic of a Turkey less travelled in the care of local guides who will transport you into an adventure you will never forget. Breath-taking natural beauty, magnificent historic sites, exciting fully guided tours which will enrich your understanding and appreciation of this inspirational country and its cultures both ancient and modern.

With an intimate knowledge of both the rich historical sites and the hidden places loved by the people of the region you are assured of a journey into the heart of Anatolia. We look forward to introducing you to the culture, traditions, folk lore and food of our unique region, which is known for its friendliness, history and pastoral beauty. Our tours will bring you closer to the people so that you will experience their hospitality first hand.

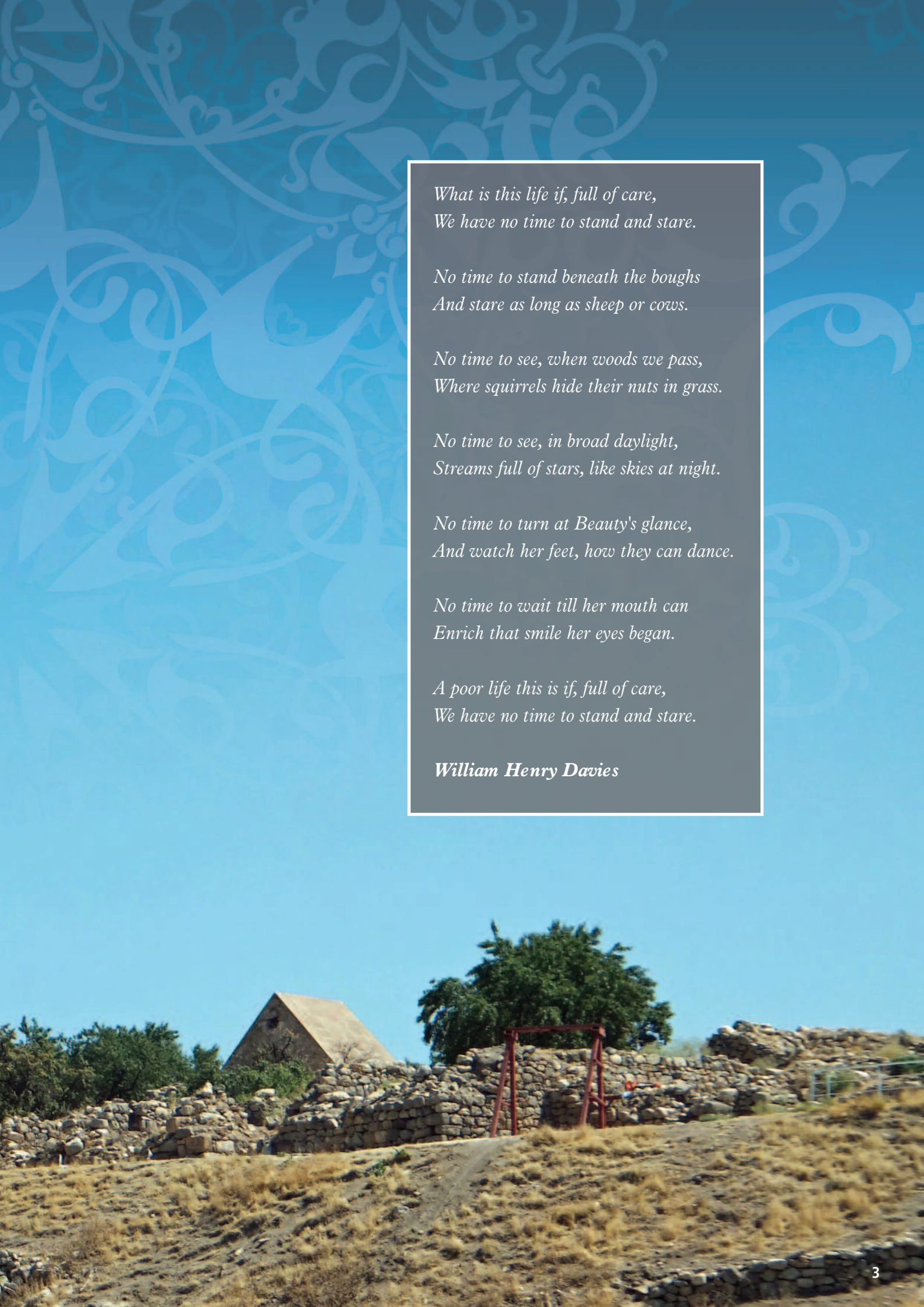
“All of our tours have been carefully planned to ensure that the pace and tempo of travel will allow us time to stop and visit the people we meet along the road and spend time at the extraordinary places we visit. After a tour across eastern Turkey with the Alkan family we want you to have a wealth of memories to treasure and above all, we would like to see you return.

Caring for our region is at the centre of our business and the foundation of our values. We not only know the regions better than anyone else but we care about the people and environment because we live there.”

Sabahattin Alkan, Director & founder of Alkans Tour Agency



Church of the Holy Cross (Sourp Khatch) on Akdamar Island (Aghtamar), Lake Van. 10th century



*What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.*

*No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.*

*No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.*

*No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.*

*No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.*

*No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.*

*A poor life this is if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.*

William Henry Davies

LUXURY AT EMPIRE'S EDGE

A photograph of a grand, ornate hotel lobby. The floor is made of large, light-colored marble tiles with a large, circular, decorative pattern in the center. In the foreground, there is a round, dark wood table with a white vase of flowers. To the right, a reception desk with a computer monitor is visible. A person in a dark uniform stands near the desk. In the background, there is a glass-enclosed area with the words "COFFEE COMPANY" on the wall. The ceiling is high and features large, ornate chandeliers. The walls are made of light-colored stone or marble.

*"Let me be surrounded by luxury, I
can do without the necessities!"*

Oscar Wilde



Elegant lighting at the Izala Hotel, Gaziantep



Unique rooms carved through solid rock at the Museum Hotel, Cappadocia

EXPERIENCE LUXURY AT EMPIRE'S EDGE

Eastern Anatolia is a region that has, for millenia been both the point of contact and a zone of conflict between Empires and great cultures. It has also been a highway for people travelling between east and west as well as a major highway for the movement of whole peoples westward. Anatolia was once described as being like a great mare stretching her head out into the Mediterranean and for the Turks with their nomadic history, arriving in the 10th century, this is probably the best analogy of all. Back in the earliest times of recorded history the eastern Anatolian region was home to the Urartians; the greatest of the region's indigenous cultures to make the journey into

empire building, the Urartians built an extensive empire between 850 BC and 600 BC, encompassing what is now eastern Turkey, Armenia and North Western Iran. Known as talented military and irrigation engineers they left their mark across the region and especially in Van, known to them as Tushpa, their Imperial capital. They come down to us in our history due to a biblical error in translation; Urartu became Ararat and known to us as the region where Noah's ark came to rest after the deluge.

The list of peoples to have left their mark here is a long and illustrious one. From the Assyrians, Persians, Hittites, Armenians,

Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and more latterly the many Turkish tribal groups such as the Seljuks who staked their claims at the battle of Manzikert in 1071 and established the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum identifying themselves, by their choice of name, as the heirs to Rome. After the Seljuks, the Ottomans delivered Anatolia into the modern era. All of their remains and their achievements are here, in central and eastern Turkey, waiting to be discovered.

As a place in the world where shifting frontiers have always made it feel remote, distant and far from the centre of things eastern Turkey still has the feel of a border region. But it's a border region that has embraced the modern world. The transport infrastructure has been modernised with new airports supported by excellent flight connections and extensive road development. Add to this a constantly evolving and growing stock of luxury hotels and we can truly say that eastern Turkey is on the map for the luxury traveller.



An exquisite room at the Erdoba Evleri Hotel

The hotel stock across eastern and south eastern Turkey encompasses all ranges and types from the artfully renovated town houses of Mardin, Şanlıurfa or Gaziantep to the elegant conversions of substantial old buildings right up to unashamedly modern and opulent brand new hotels. Here are just a few examples.

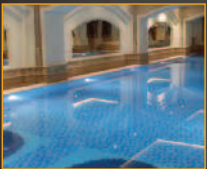


VAN

The Elite World Hotel

In our home base of Van our flagship hotel falls into the “modern and opulent” category. Recently built, the Elite World of Van is a luxurious hotel located in downtown Van and boasts all the five star amenities you would expect from hotels in major cities around the world.

www.eliteworldvan.com.tr

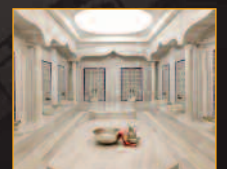
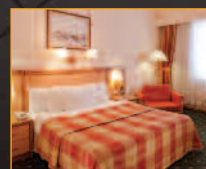


ERZURUM

The Polat Renaissance Hotel

The Polat Renaissance in Erzurum also a modern hotel, part of the Marriott group, that compares to its equivalents anywhere. Part of the Palandoken ski resort the Polat is just minutes from the centre of Erzurum. Amenities such as ski passes and fitness classes in the gym are all included for the hotel's guests.

www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/erzbr-renaissance-polat-erzurum-hotel

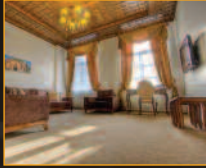


KARS

The Cheltikof Hotel

The Cheltikof Hotel in Kars is one of those places that can be called quirky and eclectic. The Cheltikof is a converted mansion from the Russian period of occupation. After the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877 the Kars region was incorporated into the Tsar's empire. It was regained by Turkey shortly after the First World War. Built as a merchant mansion just after the Russian occupation began the building was variously an opera house, a school, a military pharmacy and a maternity hospital before being transformed into a unique luxury boutique style hotel in 2011.

www.hotelcheltikov.com



MARDIN

The Erdoba Evleri Hotel

Mardin is particularly spoiled for choice in luxury hotels with a number of converted and adapted Mardin town houses but, forced to pick, we might choose the Erdoba Evleri. Erdoba Evleri, simply meaning "Erdoba Houses" is made up of five buildings along one side of a street in old Mardin and converted with exquisite taste to produce a hotel of one's dreams.

www.erdoba.com.tr

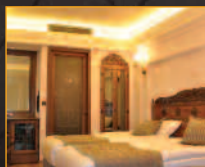
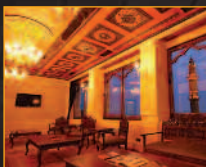


MARDIN

The Izala Hotel

Just opposite the Erdoba Evleri is the Izala Hotel, a group of modernised and adapted public buildings producing a hotel of elegance and mystery.

www.izalahotel.com





ŞANLIURFA

The El Ruha Hotel

Known in ancient times as Edessa, Şanlıurfa is a town with an venerable pedigree but with a modern forward looking face. The El Ruha embodies these two aspects of Şanlıurfa; a modern build with all the amenities of a modern luxury hotel but built in traditional style of Urfa stone and located adjacent to the historic centre of old Urfa with its citadel, the Pools of Abraham, its bustling Ottoman era bazaar and state of the art modern Archaeological Museum complex, the location could not be any better.

www.hotelelruha.com



GAZIANTEP

The Şirehan Hotel

Gaziantep has a superb choice of hotels that compliment its fiery kitchen. The fabulous Şirehan Hotel is a converted 16th century Caravanserai that was once an important stop on the Silk Road. Tastefully and elegantly appointed the Şirehan is a hotel that will stand out in the memory.

www.gaziantepsirehanhotel.com.tr

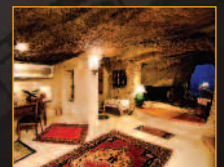
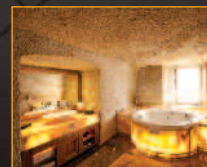


CAPPADOCIA

The Museum Hotel

Cappadocia is a remarkable region known for its other worldly geological formations and extraordinary landscapes. The region boasts many superb hotels but the unique nature of Cappadocia has an exclusive hotel to act as its luxury flagship. Built from the houses and caves that cascade down the castle rock of Uchisar, the Museum Hotel is that hotel. No room is the same and all rooms and suites have been furnished with antiques, designed to convey a magical atmosphere and enhance a mood that is unique for each and every visitor.

www.museum-hotel.com

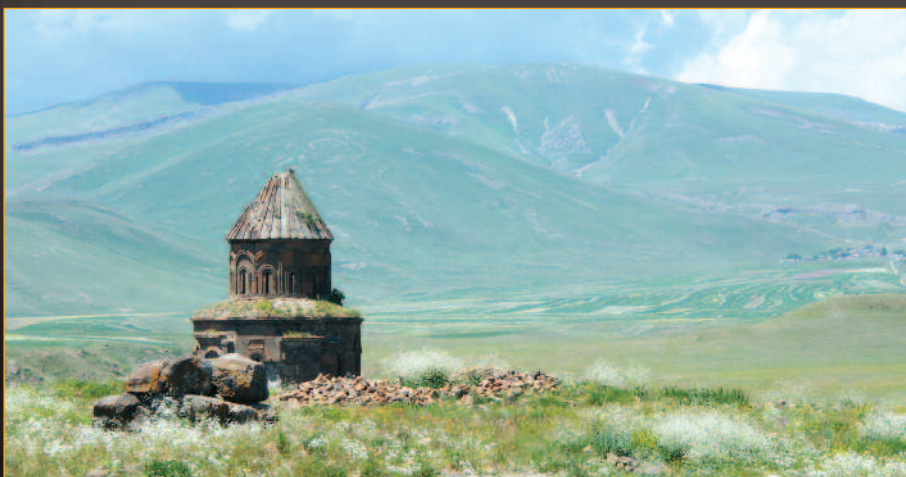
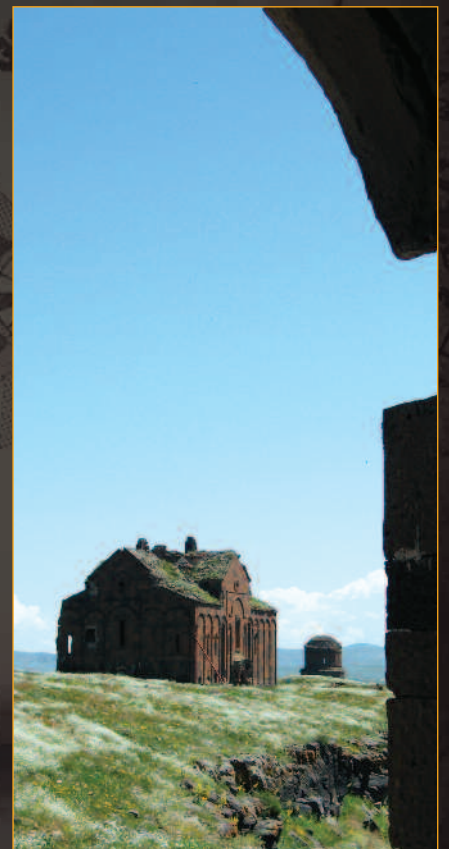




ANI: A CULTURAL TREASURE ON THE ANCIENT SILK ROAD

The City of Ani derives its name from the Ancient Persian Goddess Anahid. Closely identified with Aphrodite, Anahid was particularly revered by Armenians before their conversion to Christianity under the guidance of Gregory the Illuminator. The city grew up in a bend of the gorge created by the Arpacay River which provided a principal component in the defences of the city. Located on one of the major branches of the Ancient Silk Road, Ani reached its apogee in the 10th and 11th centuries under Bagratid Kings who enjoyed considerable autonomy from the alternating over-lordship of the Byzantines and Persians. The revenue

generated by its position astride important trade routes allowed the rulers of Ani to endow the city with great churches, monasteries and palaces and a major defensive city wall which survives to this day and at its height boasted a population of 200,000 competing in size and magnificence with Constantinople, Cairo and Baghdad. Ani finally succumbed to a combination of Mongol raids and a major earthquake in 1319 as trade routes shifted and the region declined into obscurity leaving us with the magnificent and remote remains of ancient Ani today.



Seen on:

*12 Day Tour of Eastern Turkey
Between Ararat & The Caucasus*





THE SILK ROAD; AN ANCIENT ARTERY ACROSS TURKEY

The Silk Road, İpek Yolu or as the Turks sometimes referred to it, Uzun Yol (Long Road), is an ancient trade route connecting the occident and the orient; running between China and Europe it has been an important conduit of commerce and knowledge since Classical times. The expansion of the Macedonian Empire under Alexander the Great probably provided the impetus that created the early Silk Road and it was further developed by the Roman and Byzantine Empires. The Byzantines in particular, treasured the luxuries that came from the east and improved the roads in the western reaches of the route.

Under the Mongols, who unified most of the lands of central Asia traversed by the road and who developed a sophisticated mail service the road improved yet again. But it was under the Seljuk Turks that the Ancient Silk Road really came into its own and most of the Hans and Caravanserais to be found across Turkey date from Seljuk times. Nearly one hundred Seljuk caravanserais along the Silk Road still exist in lands once controlled by the Seljuks in Turkey. Accommodation and provisions at the Seljuk caravanserais were provided free of charge to travellers for

up to three days at a time; this practice was an integral part of the caravanserais' charitable status as they were always connected to a religious establishment funded by the state or local rulers. In fact, the Turkish language and its many regional variations can be heard all along the route from Western China, across central Asia and Anatolia, right into the Balkans even today. In effect, the Silk Road is also a Turkish Road and it only began to decline with the opening up of maritime trade routes by western European powers and the discovery of the New World in the later Ottoman period. However, in many respects, the Silk Road was an idea that has a romance, mystery and resonance today even for those who know little about it; as much as a road, it has a conceptual meaning and importance that is gripping imaginations today as Turkey, the new nations of Central Asia, and China reach out to each other using the shared experience of the great Uzun Yol. The Silk Road had numerous spurs and branches and the routes we have designed fully explore all these varied possibilities- from Constantinople, present day Istanbul, to Ankara, along Turkey's Great Salt Lake to Cappadocia and then on to Kayseri,



Hosap Castle

Sanliurfa, Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Tatvan and Van before finishing at the great border fortress of Hosap near the Iranian frontier or at Hopa on Turkey's north eastern border with Georgia.

URARTU

FOR TWENTY EIGHT CENTURIES
THE CITADEL OF VAN HAS
STOOD GUARD...





OUR HOME BASE OF VAN, THE URARTIAN CAPITAL TUSHPA

For twenty eight centuries the citadel of Van has stood guard over the lands of eastern Anatolia and the crystal blue water of Lake Van; built in the 9th century BC the citadel of Van saw action for the last time just after the First World War. Used and continuously reused by many cultures and dynasties across the ages, Van citadel is one of the most remarkable places in the world.

The Kingdom of Biainili, better known as the Kingdom of Urartu, was the most powerful political and military culture to emerge in eastern Anatolia in pre-classical times. Known for their military engineering, Van citadel exemplifies their skills. It was from

here, their capital city of Tushpa, that they ruled an empire incorporating eastern Turkey, Armenia and north western Iran and from here that their kings rode out to campaign against their enemies each spring led by their Principal God, Haldi:

“The chariot of Haldi went forth.....With the awe inspiring splendour of Haldi; with the awe inspiring splendour of the chariot of Haldi; Menua, son of Ishpuini, went forth. Haldi went before him”

Inscription of Menua: 810-785 BC



**Carved chariot wheel moulds
Upper Anzaf Fortress, Van**

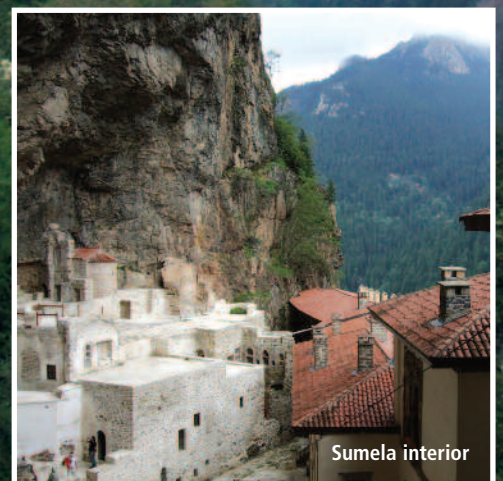


*On behalf of everyone...
I want to express our happiness and
appreciation for a great, great trip!*

*On our last evening together...
your patience, understanding,
accommodation and humor was
terrific.*

*The hotels and restaurants were perfect
and Cemil was a superb guide, giving
us history, culture and context that I
don't think we could have gotten
anywhere else."*

Joanne



Sumela interior



Ishak Pasha Saray

TWELVE DAY TOUR OF EASTERN TURKEY

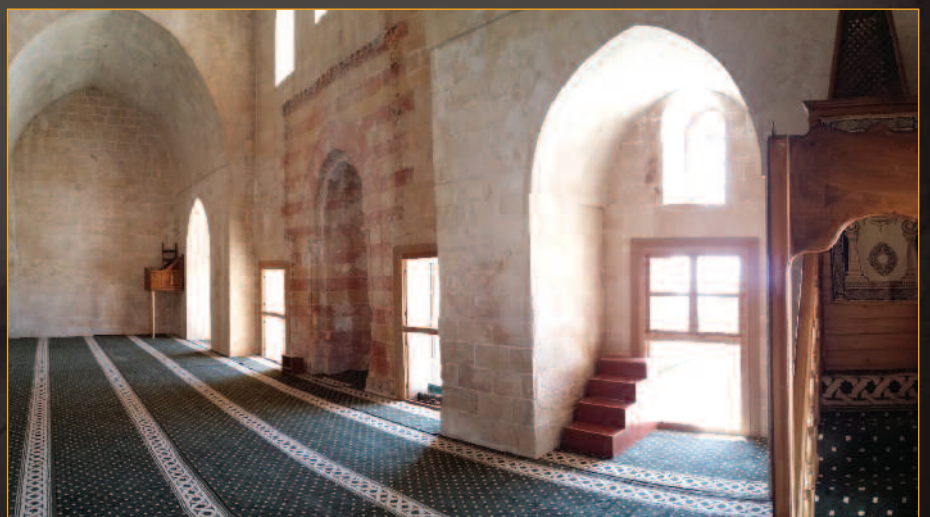
Beginning in Trabzon- ancient Trebizond- on the Black Sea coast this tour encompasses a broad sweep through eastern Turkey that takes in three millennia of history in a part of the Near East that saw the birth of western civilisation. From the stunning cliff hanging monastery of the Virgin Mary at Sumela the route takes us up the Black Sea coastline to Hopa and then through Turkey's precipitous tea growing region, down the Georgian Valleys and on to the eastern city of Erzurum. From here the road takes us to Kars and the Ancient Armenian city of Ani

and skirting the great mountain of Ararat, on to the ancient city of Van with its 3000 year old Urartian citadel. Van is the base for exploring the beautiful lake and the 10th century Armenian Church of the Holy Cross on the Island of Akdamar. From the high mountain valleys and passes of the east we descend to the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates taking in the Christian centres of Mardin, the ancient walled city of Diyarbakir, the funerary monument of Antiochus at the summit of Nemrut and Urfa, the City of Prophets, before arriving at the

extraordinary centre piece of this tour, the 12,000 year old site at Gobekli Tepe. The ancient site of Gobekli Tepe comprises a series of enclosures containing massive carved standing stones; built at a time when mankind was making the transition from a hunting and gathering society to settled agricultural communities Gobekli Tepe is the oldest ritual and religious structure yet discovered. The tour concludes in Gaziantep and the world famous Zeugma Mosaic Museum.



The Church of the Redeemer, Ani



Mosque at the Kasimiye Medrese in Mardin

The whole trip was perfect and like being with old friends they looked after me so well, I can't sing their praises highly enough.

I took over one thousand photos and will have great fun editing them all. There are several places that I would like to re visit so I am sure that I will be in contact with you again.

Hazel





Nemrut, Mountain of the Gods

ANCIENT CAPPADOCIA TO GOBEKLI TEPE

This is a unique opportunity to explore the ancient history of central Anatolia. Travelling from Ankara to the Hittite capital of Hattusha and onto the astounding geological mysteries of Cappadocia, known for its many rock carved churches and monasteries, and for many centuries an important centre for ecclesiastical and monastic life in Anatolia. The tour will take in the main rock churches as well as the

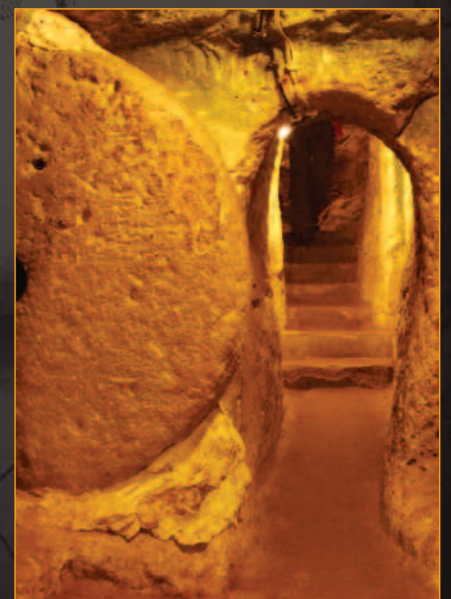
underground city of Derinkuyu. The highlight of the Cappadocia section is a balloon flight over the fairy chimneys.

From Cappadocia we proceed down a section of the Silk Road visiting Kayseri and the Karatay Han, an important Caravanserai on this section of the road, and on to Adiyaman with a visit to Mt Nemrut to view the spectacular mountain top funerary site

with its enigmatic carved heads. From Nemrut the tour goes on to Urfa, City of Prophets known in ancient times as Edessa, with a visit to the nearby archaeological dig at Gobekli Tepe which, at about 10,000 BC, is the oldest man made religious structure yet discovered. The tour concludes with a visit to Gaziantep and the world famous Zeugma Mosaic Museum.



Karatay Han on the Ancient Silk Road



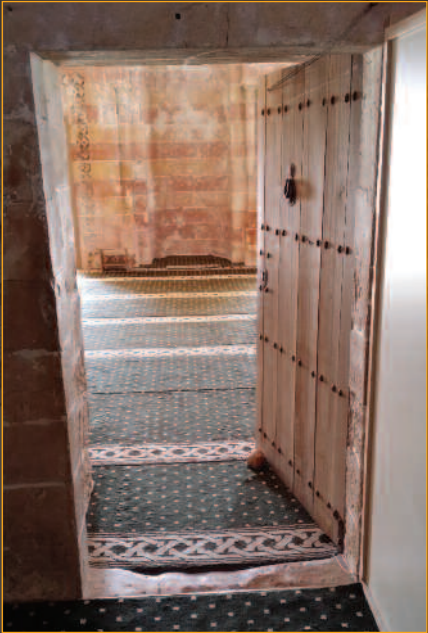
The entrance to Derinkuyu, the underground city



MARDIN

In the classical period the name of Mardin was Marida or Merida deriving from the old Syriac word for "fortress." It was an important Christian centre and was connected to Edessa as a suffragan see. It remains an important centre for Syriac Christians today and there are a number of important churches and monasteries in Mardin and the surrounding Tur Abdin area. The architecture of Mardin dates from the Seljuk and Ottoman periods and gives the town its distinctive air. The buildings of old

Mardin cascade down the slopes of the citadel southward towards the Mesopotamian plain and are considered to be an open air museum of late medieval architecture with caravanserais, churches, public buildings and many private merchant houses built from distinctive sand coloured stone. The narrow streets around the central part of the town make up a thriving bazaar and market area and there are shops selling local wine produced by the Syriac community.





Pools of Abraham

ŞANLIURFA

Situated on the northern edge of the Fertile Crescent, Urfa is a town that can trace its history of human habitation back earlier than 9000 or 10000BC. Numerous Neolithic sites can be found around the region most famous of which is Göbekli Tepe, the Neolithic cult sanctuary currently undergoing excavation. In Urfa itself monumental stone structures, like those at Göbekli Tepe and Nevalı Çori have been discovered as well as what is thought to be the oldest sculptured representation of a man yet to be discovered. In more "recent" classical times the city was known as Edessa and was the first independent kingdom to

accept Christianity in about 206 AD under Abgar IX. The Arab Muslims arrived in 638 AD and the city continued to be a multi ethnic, multi religious place until it became a central point of friction between Islam and Christianity after it was taken by the Crusader Baldwin of Boulogne who established it as the county of Edessa. It remained a crusader possession until taken by the Turkish military commander Zengui with great slaughter in 1144. From that point the city continued its history as a Muslim city but with a polyglot and multi ethnic population. Known as the City of Prophets, Muslim tradition places it as the



Ottoman era Bazaar

birth place of both Abraham and Job and for Christians it is the place where the Shroud of Turin first came to light.

Modern day Urfa is a dynamic, expanding city growing on the back of the massive irrigation project on the nearby Euphrates known as GAP. In spite of this considerable growth and wealth, produced by the project, the heart of Urfa retains its age old beauty in the Pools of Abraham and its dynamic Ottoman era Bazaar. The centre is now graced by a important state of the art museum which houses many important artifacts from Göbekli Tepe, Nevalı Çori and the magnificent Haleplibahçe Mosaics.





The Lions' gate

HATTUSHA, CAPITAL CITY OF THE HITTITE KINGDOM



The Hittites represented a mysterious gap in our knowledge of the region identified by only the lack of evidence of what should have been an important player in the politics of the ancient middle and near east. It was as if a major part of a jigsaw was missing or an important element was missing from the Periodic Table. Discovered only in the mid

1800's, Bogazkale was an extensive and unknown city covering some considerable area and defended by gigantic walls. Adding to the mystery was the existence of huge amounts of cuneiform tablets in an unknown language, scorched and baked by a catastrophic fire. It was not until the 1940's that the language was properly deciphered revealing a whole new area of hitherto unknown history. Of particular note was a copy of a peace treaty, replicated in stone carved hieroglyphs at the Temple of Karnak in Egypt; the Hittite copy was lodged in the Royal Palace at Bogazkoy - Hattusha. This treaty, signed between Ramses the Great and Hatusilli III in 1258 BC, is regarded to be the first recorded peace treaty in the world and is the treaty that formally concluded the war between the Egyptians and Hittites which ended at the Battle of Kadesh in 1274 BC. The treaty had all the components of a modern treaty including non-aggression and mutual assistance clauses as well as provision for the extradition of political exiles and criminals.

Hattusha was unique in that it was the only capital of an ancient Empire located away from main arteries of communication



Hittite Gods, Yazilikaya sanctuary

instead being located in a remote highland fastness. The city was finally abandoned after civil conflict and a break down in the governing system in around 1200 BC only a few years after the Hittites were recognised as important and equal partners by the Super Power of the age, Egypt. It is a salutary lesson that the great Hittite Empire, only a generation after its crowning glory simply vanished without trace.



Postern gate tunnel

Seen on Ancient Cappadocia to Gobekli Tepe tour



*A warm welcome at the Anadolu Evleri
Boutique Hotel in Gaziantep.*

For more detailed information and tour brochures and schedules for historical, cultural and adventure tours visit us on our web site:
www.easternturkeytour.org

For information on Trekking & Mountain adventures on Ararat and around Lake Van visit our dedicated Trekking website:
www.trekkingmountararat.com

*“Eastern Turkey Tours, also known as
Alkans Tours. This recommended Van
based outfit specialises in eastern
Anatolia, Georgia and Armenia.....”*

*Lonely Planet Turkey guide
13th ed. 2013*





RE-IMAGINING TIME

Here at Gobekli Tepe, in south eastern Turkey, lie the remains of the earliest religious structures built by man yet to be discovered. At about 11,000 - 13,000 years old this site pre-dates both pottery and writing and is far older than either Stonehenge in England or the great Egyptian Pyramids. In fact, less time

separates us from the builders of Stonehenge than separates the builders of Stonehenge from the last known users of Gobekli Tepe. Gobekli Tepe may have been in use as a point of gathering for religious and ritual events for over 2,000 years and it represents a major advance in our understanding of man's early history.



Seen on:

*12 Day Tour of Eastern Turkey
Ancient Cappadocia to Gobekli Tepe
Daily departures from Istanbul*

"It sounds silly to say that these tours can change your life, but they can. Now that I've been to these places, reading about the historical events that took place in them really comes to life."

Ed





EasternTurkeyTours

Alkans Tour Agency

Alkans Tour Agency

Ordu Caddesi, Yildiz Is Merkezi,
Zemin Kat, No: 20
65100 Merkez / VAN
TURKEY

Tel: +90 432 215 20 92

Tel: +90 (0)530 349 27 93

Fax: +90 432 215 54 86

Tel: (UK office) +44 (0)1792 293 464

Email: info@easternturkeytour.org

Email: info@trekkingmountarat.com

www.easternturkeytour.org



Tursab License No. 5904

www.trekkingmountarat.com

