

Central Anatolia



Central Anatolia is the heartland of Turkey, both geographically and culturally. Tribes, races and empires have been fighting over these dusty steppes and hills for centuries, dragging cities from obscurity to prominence, or from prosperity to destruction, sometimes spending decades battling over the same patch of ground. Civilisations were made or broken in the crucible of the Anatolian summer, leaving tantalising glimpses of themselves behind.

Today the evidence of history's ebbs and flows is laid out all across the region like a giant crime scene, just waiting for the keen-eyed traveller to play detective. Follow the right traces and you'll find Neolithic settlements rubbing shoulders with Hittite cities, and Seljuk pomp vying with Ottoman glamour, all founded on the forgotten ashes of a hundred more failed invaders.

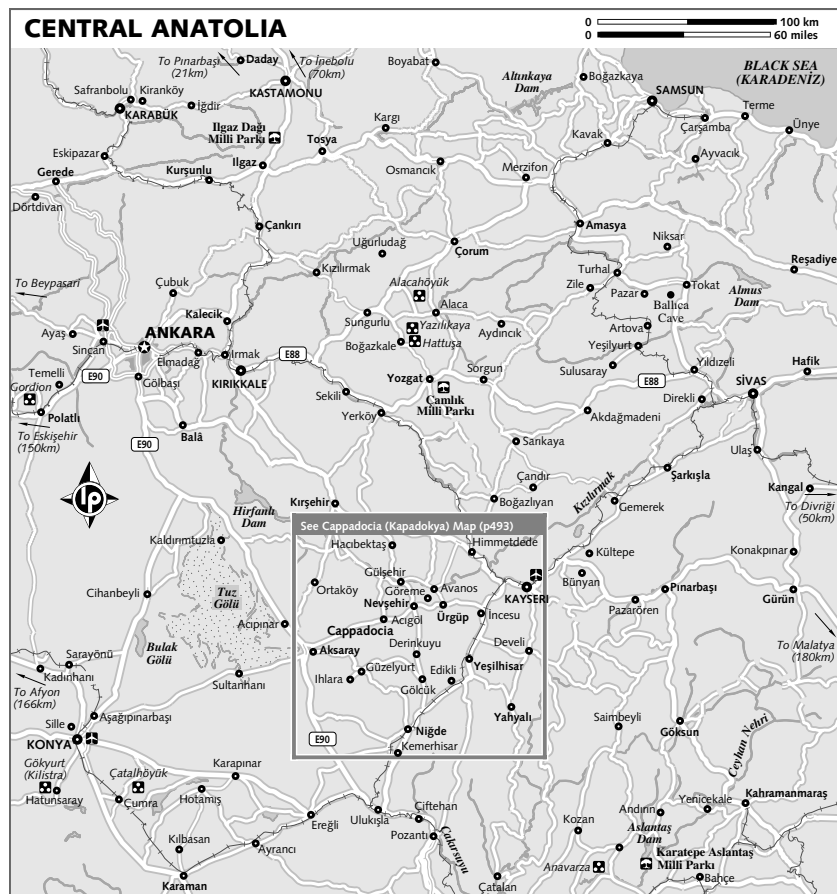
Ultimately, the result of this constant fuss and flux is the characteristic Turkish culture we see today, exemplified above all by the modern cities of Ankara and Konya, which embrace their past but move beyond it, fixing their sights firmly on a prosperous tomorrow. Trends may be set in Istanbul, but it's here that they become fashion, and without its heartland Turkey could never follow its true beat.

One thing's for sure: this is one region where you'll have to work for your experience, and you'll never discover the real heart of Anatolia through a bus window. So whether it's schnitzel in Sivas, chickpeas in Çorum or tea in Tokat, get out, eat the kebaps, sample the sweets, drink the beer, have the massages, visit the mosques, talk to the students, browse the shops and get involved!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore millennia of antiquity in Ankara's **citadel** (p445) and **Museum of Anatolian Civilisations** (p443)
- Kip down on a *şedir* (divan) in an Ottoman mansion at **Safranbolu** (p455)
- Decode cuneiform and appreciate hilly Hittite culture amid the ruins of **Hattuşa** (p463)
- Marvel at the surreal beauty of riverside **Amasya** (p468)
- Sample the best kebab in the land in between massages in **Tokat** (p476)
- Inspire own your creative carving at the mighty Ulu Cami portals of **Divriği** (p481)
- Bow down with pilgrims to the memory of a dervish at Konya's **Mevlâna Museum** (p483)





ANKARA

☎ 0312 / pop 4.3 million

These days just about everyone could name the capital of Turkey correctly in a pub quiz, which goes to show how far Ankara has come in the public consciousness since the days when 'İstanbul' seemed like the only possible answer. In the 80 years since independence the once anonymous provincial capital has really grown into its role as an international city, assuming a very modern air of sophistication. Café culture in particular has transformed the city, breathing full-on life into its wide, open streets.

As the city expands, everything that's new and now tends to pop up at random points across the lattice of suburbs, making it tricky for short-term visitors to track down the latest

hotspots. If you really want to keep up with the thriving city scene, get used to asking locals for tips and taking taxis to find them.

History

Although Hittite remains dating back to before 1200 BC have been found in Ankara, the town really began as a Phrygian settlement that prospered at the intersection of the north-south and east-west trade routes. Later it was taken by Alexander the Great, claimed by the Seleucids and finally occupied by the Galatians, who invaded Anatolia around 250 BC. Augustus Caesar annexed it to Rome in 25 BC as Ankyra.

The Byzantines held the town for centuries, with intermittent raids by the Persians and

Arabs. When the Seljuk Turks came to Anatolia after 1071, they grabbed the city but held it only with difficulty. The Ottomans, too, had problems: Sultan Yıldırım Beyazıt was captured by Tamerlane near here, and subsequently died in captivity. Spurned as a jinxed endeavour, the city slowly slumped into a backwater, prized for nothing but its goats.

That all changed, of course, when Atatürk picked Angora as his base of operations in the struggle for independence. When he set up his provisional government here in 1920, the city was just a small, dusty settlement of some 30,000 people – but after his victory in the War of Independence, Atatürk declared it the new Turkish capital (October 1923), and set about developing it. European urban planners were consulted, and the result is a city boasting long, wide boulevards, a forested park with an artificial lake, and numerous residential and diplomatic neighbourhoods. The city's position in the centre of Turkey made it more suitable than İstanbul, both physically and symbolically, as a capital for the new republic. From 1919 to 1927, Atatürk never set foot in İstanbul, preferring to work at making Ankara top dog in fact as well as on paper.

Orientation

The main street is Atatürk Bulvarı, which runs 5.5km from the old part of town, Ulus, in the north, through Kızılay and Kavaklıdere, to Çankaya in the south.

Ulus is marked by a large equestrian statue of Atatürk in Ulus Meydanı. The most important museums and sights are nearby, as are dozens of budget and midrange hotels and restaurants. The train station, near the terminus for the Havaş airport buses, is 1400m southwest of Ulus Meydanı along Cumhuriyet Bulvarı.

Kızılay, the area around the intersection of Atatürk Bulvarı and Gazi Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı/Ziya Gökalp Caddesi, is the centre of buzzy 'new' Ankara, with midrange and top-end hotels, bars, café-restaurants and bus ticket offices.

Kavaklıdere, 2km south along Atatürk Bulvarı, is a fashionable district with embassies, airline and car rental offices, trendy bars, smart shops, and the Hilton and Sheraton hotels.

Up in the hills south of Kavaklıdere is Çankaya, the residential neighbourhood that

hosts the presidential mansion and many of the ambassadorial residences. Its most prominent landmark is the Atakule, a tall tower with a revolving restaurant, visible throughout the city.

The AŞTİ, Ankara's otogar (bus station), is 5.5km southwest of Ulus and 4.5km west of Kızılay.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Dost Kitabevi (Map p444; ☎ 418 8327; Konur Sokak 4, Kızılay) Some foreign-language novels and local-interest titles.

Turhan Kitabevi (Map p444; ☎ 418 8259; Yüksek Caddesi 8/32, Kızılay) Coffee table books, guidebooks, maps, fiction and a lot of newspapers and magazines.

INTERNET ACCESS

The densest concentration of internet cafés can be found in Kızılay, around Konur Sokak. Wi-fi access is available in many hotels, cafés and bars.

Internet Club (Map p444; Karanfil Sokak 47/A; per hr €1; ☎ 9-1am) Fast access and some outdoor (!) terminals.

Makronet (Map p444; Selanik Caddesi 52; per hr €0.70; ☎ 9-1am) Internet and gamers' café with 100 terminals.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Bayındır Hospital (Map p442; ☎ 428 0808; Atatürk Bulvarı 201, Kavaklıdere) The city's most up-to-date private hospital.

City Hospital (Map p442; ☎ 466 3346; Büklüm Sokak 53) Near Tunalı Hilmi Caddesi, with a modern Women's Health Centre (Kadın Sağlığı Merkezi).

MONEY

There are lots of banks with ATMs in Ulus, Kızılay and Kavaklıdere.

Sakarya Döviz (Map p444; Sakarya Caddesi 6-A, Kızılay) Changes cash quickly and easily.

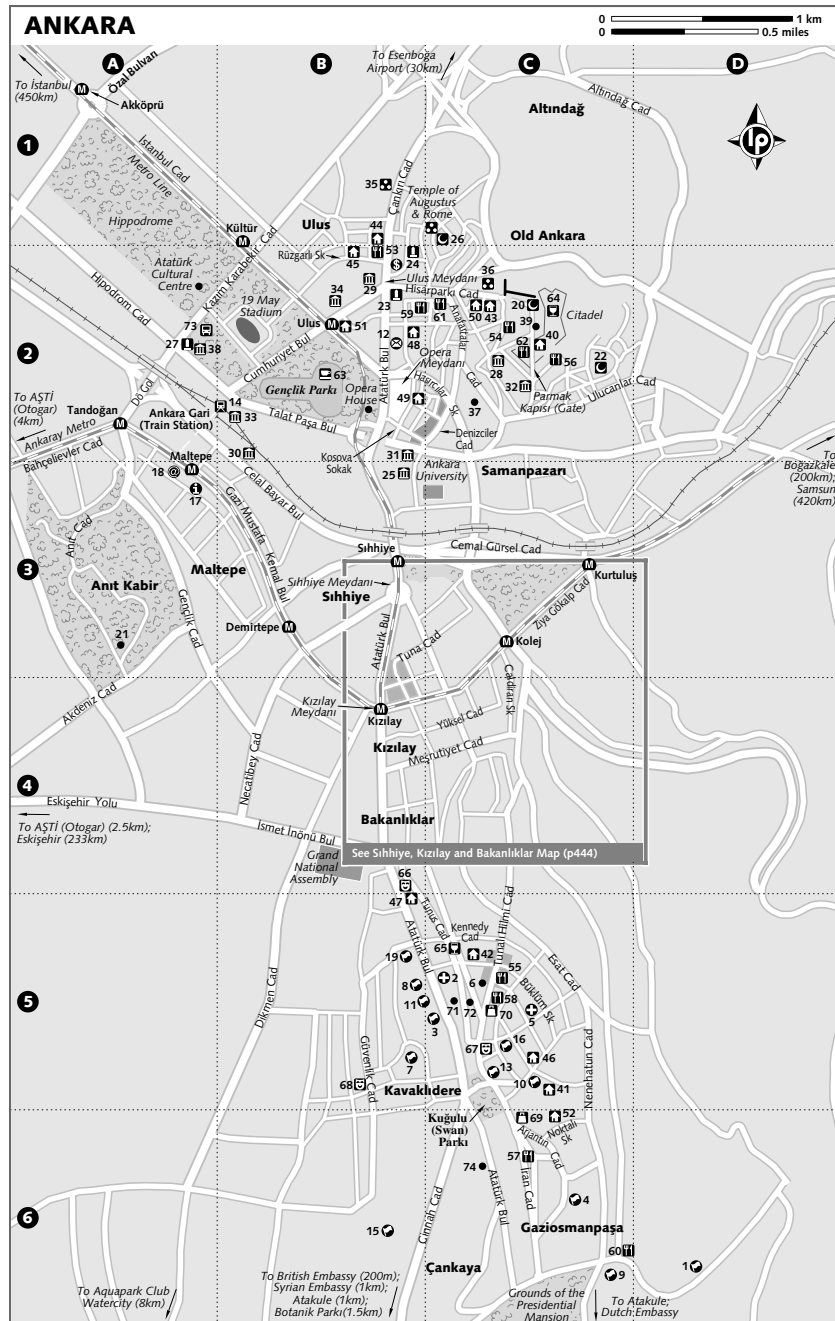
POST & COMMUNICATIONS

There are PTT branches in the train station, at the AŞTİ otogar and on Atatürk Bulvarı in Ulus. All have public phone booths nearby.

Türk Telekom (Map p442; Gazi Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı, Maltepe; ☎) Near the tourist office.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (Map p442; ☎ 231 5572; Gazi Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı 121, Maltepe; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Opposite Maltepe Ankaray station. Offers the usual glossy handouts and free maps; English and some French spoken.



INFORMATION	
Australian Embassy.....	1 D6
Bayındır Hospital.....	2 C5
Bulgarian Embassy.....	3 C5
Canadian Embassy.....	4 C6
City Hospital.....	5 C5
Dünya Kitabevi.....	6 C5
French Embassy.....	7 B5
German Embassy.....	8 B5
Greek Embassy.....	9 C6
Iranian Embassy.....	10 C5
Irish Embassy.....	(see 1)
Italian Embassy.....	11 B5
Main Post Office.....	12 B2
New Zealand Embassy.....	13 C5
Raytur.....	14 B2
Russian Embassy.....	15 B6
Saltur.....	(see 66)
Spanish Embassy.....	16 C5
Tourist Office.....	17 A3
Türk Telekom Office.....	18 A3
US Embassy.....	19 B5
Independence.....	29 B2
Open-Air Steam Locomotive Museum.....	30 B2
Painting & Sculpture Museum.....	31 B2
Rahmi M Koç Industrial Museum.....	32 C2
Railway Museum & Art Gallery.....	33 B2
Republic Museum.....	34 B2
Roman Baths.....	35 B1
Roman Theatre.....	36 C2
Şengül Merkez Hamamı.....	37 C2
Turkish Aeronautical Association Museum.....	38 A2
Şark Kulesi.....	39 C2
Café des Cafés.....	55 C5
Hatipoğlu Konağı.....	56 C2
Kale Washington.....	(see 62)
Mezzaluna.....	57 C6
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Wok.....	60 C6
Yeni Haller Market.....	61 C2
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DRINKING ☺☺	
Ada Aile Çay Bahçesi.....	63 B2
And Ev'i.....	64 C2
Locus Solus.....	65 C5
SLEEPING 🏠	
Angora House Hotel.....	40 C2
Ankara Hilton.....	41 C5
Gordion Hotel.....	42 C5
Hitit Oteli.....	43 C2
Hotel Ögültürk.....	44 B1
Hotel Spor.....	45 B2
Mega Residence.....	46 C5
Midas Hotel.....	47 B5
Otel Buhara.....	48 B2
Otel Mithat.....	49 B2
Otel Pınar.....	50 C2
Radisson Hotel.....	51 B2
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EATING 🍴	
Bosna İşkembe Lokanta ve Kebap Salonu.....	53 B2
Boyacızade Konağı.....	54 C2
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IF Performance Hall.....	66 B4
Jazz Time.....	67 C5
OverAll.....	68 B5
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Karum Mall.....	69 C6
Market Stalls & Antique Shops.....	(see 32)
Marks & Spencer.....	70 C5
Vakıf Sulhan Çarşısı.....	(see 61)
TRANSPORT 🚗	
Avis.....	71 C5
Budget.....	72 C5
Dolmuş to Etlik Bus Terminal.....	(see 24)
Havaş Bus Terminal.....	73 A2
National.....	(see 72)
Turkish Airlines.....	74 C6

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Raytur (Map p442; ☎ 311 4200; www.raytur.com.tr; TCDD Gar Binası İçi, Ulus) Operated by Turkish Railways, in Ankara station. Sells rail and air tickets, jeep safaris, domestic and outbound tours.
Saltur (Map p442; ☎ 425 1333; www.saltur.com.tr; Tunus Caddesi 14/3, Kavaklıdere) Airline and international tour agent.

Sights & Activities

MUSEUM OF ANATOLIAN CIVILISATIONS
 Still proudly displaying its 1997 Best European Museum award, Ankara's superb **Museum of Anatolian Civilisations** (Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi; Map p442; ☎ 324 3160; admission €5.60; 🕒 8.30am-5.15pm) is the perfect introduction to the complex weave of Turkey's chequered ancient past, housing artefacts cherry-picked from just about every significant archaeological site in Anatolia.

The museum is housed in a beautifully restored 15th-century *bedesten* (market vault). The 10-domed central marketplace houses reliefs and statuary, while the surrounding hall displays exhibits from the earlier Anatolian civilisations: Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, Assyrian, Hittite, Phrygian,

Urartian and Lydian. The downstairs sections hold classical Greek and Roman artefacts and a display on Ankara's history.

You may be approached by would-be guides outside the museum; if you want to use their services, agree a price in advance and be sure that it's for your entire group, not per person. You can buy drinks in the museum.

If it's not too hot, you can climb the hill from Ulus to the museum (1km); from Ulus head east up Hisarparkı Caddesi and turn right into Anafartalar Caddesi, then bear left along Çıkrıkçılar Sokak to reach the museum. A taxi from Ulus should cost about €2.

Touring the Museum

The exhibits here are arranged in a basic spiral: start at the Palaeolithic displays to the right of the entrance, then continue in an anticlockwise direction, visiting the central room last.

Most of the Palaeolithic finds (three million years ago through to 8000 BC) were found in the Karain Cave (p394), near Antalya, and suggest a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle and the development of stone and,

later, bone tools. Also here are finds from the Neolithic era (8000-5500 BC), when people started to settle in villages, cultivating crops, raising livestock, and producing storage and cooking vessels. Çatalhöyük (p489), 50km southeast of Konya, is one of the most important Neolithic sites in the world. Here you can see a mock-up of the inside of a dwelling typical of those uncovered at the site; the clay bull-head icons were a feature of the cult of the time.

The Chalcolithic age saw the introduction of copper work, and the refinement of pottery, statuary and painted decoration. The finds on display here are mainly from Turkey's most important Chalcolithic site at Hacilar, near Burdur.

Many of the Bronze Age artefacts on display came from the ancient site of Alacahöyük (p467) and show the proficiency that had been achieved with metalwork. The gold jewellery, idols and various bronze standards would have been used for cult worship and were often buried with the dead.

Also on show are many finds from Kültepe, an Assyrian trading colony near Kayseri, and one of the oldest and wealthiest bazaars in the world. Many of the baked-clay tablets found at the site are on display here.

One of the striking Hittite figures of bulls and stags in the next room used to be the emblem of Ankara. The Hittites were known for their relief work, and some mighty slabs representing the best pieces found in the country,

usually from around Hattuşa (p463), are on display in the museum's central room.

Most of the finds from the Phrygian capital Gordion (p454), including incredible inlaid wooden furniture, are on display in the museum's last rooms.

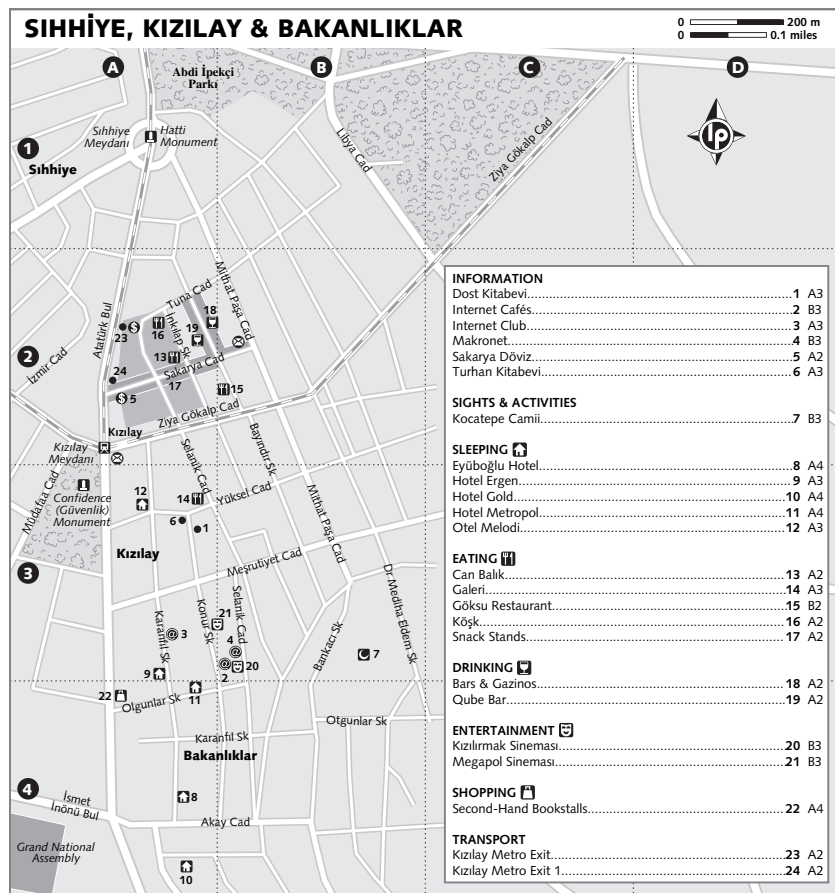
The best artefacts from the Urartian empire are on display in the Van and Elazığ museums, but Ankara still has a representative collection of works from this lesser known civilisation, including bronze armour indented with figurative decorations, and ivory statues and seals.

Downstairs, the classical-period finds and regional history displays aren't as epoch-defining as the main attractions, but it's good to get the local picture. After all, who knew that Ankara has its own 'missing link', the *Ankarapithecus*, a mere 9.8 million years old?

at the north, **Ak Kale** (White Fort), also offers fine views. If you're coming up to the citadel along Hisarparkı Caddesi, look left about half-way up to see the remains of a **Roman theatre** from around 200 to 100 BC.

Inside the citadel local people still live as in a traditional Turkish village, and you'll see women beating and sorting skeins of wool in the gaps between the inevitable carpet shops. As you wander about, you'll notice broken column drums, bits of marble statuary and inscribed lintels all incorporated into the mighty walls.

There are no fewer than 14 restaurants inside the citadel, most done out in traditional Ottoman style; see p449 for more details. The streets just outside the Parmak Kapısı are also great places to browse for antiques – see p451.



CITADEL

When you're done with the museum, it would be smart to make the most of its location by wandering to the imposing **hisar** (citadel or Ankara Kalesi; Map p442) just up the hill. By far the most interesting part of Ankara to poke about in, this well-preserved quarter of thick walls and intriguing winding streets took its present shape in the 9th century AD, when the Byzantine emperor Michael II constructed the outer ramparts. The inner walls, which the local authority is slowly rebuilding, date from the 7th century.

To find it, head around the back of the museum up Gözcü Sokak, past the octagonal tower, then turn left to enter through the **Parmak Kapısı** (Finger Gate), also called the Saatli Kapı (Clock Gate).

Just opposite this gate, in the old Çengelhan, the new **Rahmi M Koç Industrial Museum** (Rahmi M Koç Müzesi; www.rmkmuseum.org.tr; adult/child €1.70/0.70; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) is perfect for kids (and adults) who prefer a hands-on approach to staring at a bunch of pots behind glass, and has slightly less emphasis on transport than its original branch in İstanbul (p123).

Walk straight ahead once you've entered the gate and you'll see, on your left, the citadel mosque, the **Alaettin Camii**, which dates from the 12th century but has been extensively rebuilt. To your right a steep road leads to a flight of stairs taking you up to the **Şark Kulesi** (Eastern Tower), with panoramic city views. Although it's much harder to find, the tower

ANIT KABİR

Even if you've never taken much interest in the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)'s monumental mausoleum, the **Anıt Kabir** (Monumental Tomb; Map p442; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Mar), is well worth a look to try to grasp just how much sway the man held over his adoring republic.

As you approach the tomb there are two small towers. The **Hürriyet Kulesi** (Independence Tower) contains information about the building of the tomb and photos of Atatürk's funeral, while the **İstiklal Kulesi** (Freedom Tower) explains the iconography of the site.

From the towers a paved walkway is guarded by bored soldiers and paired stone lions – Hittite symbols of power and strength. Sitting on the lions is strictly prohibited (and we wouldn't recommend sitting on the guards either). This path leads to a massive courtyard, framed by colonnaded walkways, with the huge tomb at its southern end.

Within the colonnade, the **museum** rooms display Atatürk memorabilia, personal effects, official automobiles and catafalque (funereal platform), though all the rich artefacts reveal far less about the man than his simple rowing machine and huge multilingual library. On the downstairs level are extensive exhibits about the War of Independence and the formation of the republic, moving from battlefield murals with sound effects to rather over-detailed explanations of the various post-1923 reforms. At the end, a gift shop sells items such as Atatürk posters, plates, ties and height charts,

perfect for those 'just what I always wanted' moments.

As you approach the tomb itself, look left and right at the gilded inscriptions, which are quotations from Atatürk's speech celebrating the republic's 10th anniversary in 1932. Remove your hat as you enter, and crick your neck up at the lofty hall, lined in marble and sparingly decorated with mosaics. At the northern end stands an immense marble **cenotaph**, cut from a single piece of stone weighing 40 tons. The actual tomb is in a chamber beneath it.

It should take around 1½ hours to see the whole site, assuming it's not too busy; school groups frequently drop by in midweek, especially in May, June and September.

The memorial stands on top of a small hill in a park about 2km west of Kızılay. The nearest Ankara station to the entrance is Tandoğan, 1.2km north. It's a pleasant uphill walk to the mausoleum (about 20 minutes), or you can take a taxi (€1.10); if you drive up you will need to leave your licence at the gate. Note that security checks are carried out on entry, including a bag scan, and guns, pets and balloons are not permitted.

OTHER MUSEUMS

Ethnography Museum

South of Ulus, the **Ethnography Museum** (Etnografya Müzesi; Map p442; Talat Paşa Bulvarı; admission €1.25; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm) is a real treasure. It's housed inside a white marble post-Ottoman building (1925) that once served as Atatürk's offices (hence the equestrian statue out the front). Around the walls are photographs of Atatürk's funeral, which illustrate a level of genuine national mourning seldom seen in Western cultures.

The museum contains wonderful collections of embroidery, porcelain (the İznik tiles are especially fine) and woodwork, including a stunning 13th-century *mihrab* (niche indicating the direction of Mecca) from Damsa, near Ürgüp. You'll be driven mad by the automatic lighting system and the lack of labelling, but the tableaux of a wedding party and circumcision celebration are pretty self-explanatory.

Just next door, the **Painting & Sculpture Museum** (Resim ve Heykel Müzesi; admission €1.10; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm) occupies an equally elaborate building and showcases mainly modern and contemporary Turkish works.

Museum of the War of Independence

This **museum** (Kurtuluş Savaşı Müzesi; Map p442; Cumhuriyet Bulvarı; admission €1.10; ☎ 8.45am-12.15pm & 1.30-5.15pm Tue-Sun) is where the republican grand national assembly held its early sessions up until 1925. Before it was Turkey's first parliament, the building was the Ankara headquarters of the Committee of Union & Progress, the party of 'Young Turks' that overthrew Sultan Abdül Hamit II in 1909 and attempted to bring democracy to the Ottoman Empire. Today you'll see numerous photographs, documents and a throng of soldiers, here to learn about the campaigns. You can also see the chambers where delegates met.

Republic Museum

Just down the hill from Ulus Meydanı, the **Republic Museum** (Cumhuriyet Müzesi; p442; Cumhuriyet Bulvarı; admission €1.10; ☎ 8.45am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun) was the second headquarters of the grand national assembly, and its early history appears in photographs and documents. The captions are in Turkish but you don't need to read anything to get a sense of the republic's modest beginnings. The assembly itself is now housed in a rather more imposing building in Bakanlıklar.

Transport Museums

While waiting for a train at Ankara station you may want to take a look at the **Railway Museum & Art Gallery** (Demiryolları Müzesi ve Sanat Galerisi; Map p442; admission free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Sep-Jun), a small building on platform 1 that served as Atatürk's residence during the War of Independence. Right beside it is Atatürk's private rail coach, a gift from one Adolf Hitler.

Slightly further away, the **Open-Air Steam Locomotive Museum** (Açık Hava Buharlı Lokomotif Müzesi; Celal Bayar Bulvarı; admission free) is a collection of slowly rusting vintage engines on the southwestern side of the station. To find it, descend the underpass as though you were going to the train platforms, but keep walking straight on. Just before entering the Tandoğan Kapalı Çarşı shopping area, climb the steps to your left, then turn right and continue for around 800m.

Back opposite the station, the **Turkish Aeronautical Association Museum** (Talat Paşa Bulvarı; Map p442; admission free) has a collection of old planes and some aviation displays in the shadow of its landmark parachute tower.

ATAKULE

Down south in Çankaya is the **Atakule** (admission €0.85; ☎ 9am-3am), Ankara's landmark tower, with a revolving restaurant on top for 360-degree views of the city; making a reservation exempts you from the admission fee. A glass lift – not for the faint-hearted – whisks you to the top. There is also a cinema here. Get here from Ulus or Kızılay on any Çankaya-bound bus.

MOSQUES

The outline of the huge **Kocatepe Camii** (Map p444) in Kızılay is now the symbol of Ankara. It may be one of the largest mosques in the world but it is also very new. However, Ankara does still have one or two older mosques, and the relics in the Ethnography Museums are poignant reminders of others that have long since disappeared.

Ankara's most revered mosque is **Hacı Bayram Camii** (Map p442), near the Temple of Augustus & Rome. Hacı Bayram Veli was a Muslim 'saint' who founded the Bayramiye dervish order around 1400. Ankara was the order's centre, and Hacı Bayram Veli is still revered by pious Muslims. The mosque precincts are ringed with shops selling religious paraphernalia (including wooden toothbrushes as used, supposedly, by the Prophet Mohammed). You can buy food to feed the pigeons in the nearby pigeon feeding area (Güvercin Yemleme Alanı).

If you turn left on leaving the *hisar* and walk downhill past the antique shops you will come to the **Arslanhane Camii** (Map p442), which dates back to 1290 and incorporates pieces of old Roman masonry in its walls.

HAMAMS

If you're staying in Opera Meydanı and your bathroom isn't up to much, never fear because there are several *hamams* (bathhouses) in the streets immediately east of the square. The best is **Şengül Merkez Hamamı** (Map p442; wash & massage €8.50; ☎ 5am-11pm for men, 7am-7pm for women).

PARKS

Walk south from Ulus Meydanı along Atatürk Bulvarı and you'll soon reach the entrance to **Gençlik Parkı** (Youth Park; Map p442), where Atatürk had a swamp converted into an artificial lake. The Luna Park funfair provides amusement for children and several pleasant *çay bahçesi* (tea gardens); single women should go for

those with the word *aile* (family) in their name.

Other oases in an often wearing city are **Kuğulu Parkı** (Swan Park; Map p442), at the southern end of Tunalı Hilmi Caddesi, and the **Botanik Parkı** (Botanical Park), spilling into a valley beneath the Atakule in Çankaya.

Further out of town in Gölbaşı, **Aquapark Club Watercity** (☎ 498 2100; www.clubwatercity.com in Turkish; Haymana Yolu 6, Gölbaşı; adult/child €14/7; ☎ 10am-7pm) has a range of outdoor, indoor and children's pools, sports facilities, water slides and restaurants. Dolmuşes run here from Opera Meydanı.

OTHER SIGHTS

Right on Cankırı Caddesi you'll discover the sprawling ruins of the 3rd-century **Roman Baths** (Roma Hamaları; Map p442; admission €1.10; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun), about 500m north of Ulus Meydanı. The layout of the baths and the system for heating them are clearly visible; look for the standard Roman facilities: an *apoditerium* (dressing room), *frigidarium* (cold room), *tepidarium* (warm room) and *caldarium* (hot room). Remains dating back to Phrygian times (8th to 6th centuries BC) have been found beneath the baths.

To find the **Column of Julian** (Jülyanus Sütunu; Map p442) head north along Cankırı Caddesi from Ulus Meydanı and turn right beside the beautiful old Türkiye İş Bankası. The column stands in a square that is ringed by government buildings – there's usually a stork's nest on top of the column. The Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate (r AD 361-63) visited Ankara in the middle of his short reign and the column was erected in his honour.

Festivals & Events

It's usually İstanbul that gets the wildest events, but the new **AnkiRockFest** (www.ankirockfest.com) has done a lot to build the capital's cred, supplying a full weekend of bands around the end of May. Tickets for the whole event cost around €35.

Sleeping

Ankara hotels are numerous and functional, but very rarely exciting. On a tight budget you will have to stick with Ulus, which is convenient for the main attractions but not the nicest area to stay in. Most of the good midrange hotels are in Kızılay, while the top end roosts in Kavaklıdere.

ULUS

Despite its general seediness, Ulus is undoubtedly handy if you want to visit the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations and then move speedily on again. Several cheap hotels face onto Opera Meydanı; after dark this area is creepily quiet and dimly lit, and even in daytime it's pretty seamy. There are lots of two- and three-star hotels north of Ulus, but most are hopelessly noisy. Lone women and those after quieter digs would be better off staying around Rüzgarlı Sokak, on the northern side of Ulus Meydanı.

Otel Pınar (Map p442; ☎ 311 8951; Hisarparkı Caddesi 14; s/d €15/20) Up towards the citadel, this is the best corner of Ulus for lone, female or nervous travellers, and the Pınar supplies just the right kind of simple budget accommodation you need for a short stay. Breakfast costs €2.80.

Otel Mithat (Map p442; ☎ 311 5410; www.otelmithat.com.tr; Tavus Sokak 2; s/d/tr €14/23/25) Overlooking the busy mobile phone market on Opera Meydanı, this seven-storey block looks good from its Ottoman-styled lobby, though it's back to tatty lino upstairs. Some slightly cheaper rooms with shower and shared toilet are available; breakfast costs €2. Has wi-fi access.

Otel Buhara (Map p442; ☎ 310 7999; Sanayi Caddesi 13; s/d/tr €17/25/34) A block back from Atatürk Bulvarı, the Buhara dodges some of the worst street noise and provides reasonable standards for the price, with the benefit of a smart kebab shop next door. Breakfast costs €2.80.

Hotel Spor (Map p442; ☎ 324 2165; www.hotelspor.com; Rüzgarlı Plevne Sokak 6; s/d/tr €31/39/50; ☎) Despite the rowdy betting shop two doors down, the 'Hotel Sport' bills itself as a family hotel,

and sure enough the slightly ageing wood mellows the compact rooms.

Hitit Otel (Map p442; ☎ 310 8617; Hisarparkı Caddesi 12; s/d/tr €27.50/39/59) On the citadel ascent, this is a small but noticeable step up from the budget places in quality, though sadly not in style or taste (even the 'guests' on the brochure look like mourners at a 1970s Mafia funeral). You may get snatches of view through the trees in front.

Hotel Oğultürk (Map p442; ☎ 309 2900; www.ogulturk.com; Rüzgarlı Eşdost Sokak 6; s/d/tr €31/42/56; ☎) Just off Rüzgarlı Sokak; standards here are not far off the lower-end Kızılay options, though there's more mosque noise. It's professionally managed and good for lone women.

Radisson Hotel (Map p442; ☎ 310 4848; info.ankara@radissonas.com; İstiklal Caddesi 20; s/d from €72/82; ☎ ☎ ☎) Sixteen floors of international-standard luxury across from Gençlik Parkı.

KIZILAY & BAKANLIKLAR

The tree-shaded streets of Kızılay and Bakanlıklar to the south make much nicer places to stay than those of Ulus, and you'll be close to lots of amenities. Most of the hotels offer air-con, minibars, IDD phones and digital TV; advertised prices can be twice what we quote here, but you'll rarely have to pay them.

Hotel Metropol (Map p444; ☎ 417 3060; www.hotelmetropol.com.tr; Olgunlar Sokak 5; s/d from €31/45; ☎) Quite a snip at these rates: the Metropol lives up to its cosmopolitan name with some fair attempts at Art Deco touches, providing quality and character across the board.

Eyüboğulu Hotel (Map p444; ☎ 417 6400; Karanfil Sokak 73; s/d €34/45) One suspects design wasn't a priority here, given the unprepossessing brown facade, rucked carpets and plain white sheets, but you can't argue with the restaurant, barber salon and American-style café-pool hall. It's popular with Turkish groups.

Otel Melodi (Map p444; ☎ 417 6414; www.melodihotel.com; Karanfil Sokak 10; s/d €36/48; ☎) A well-run hotel with a great corner location at the heart of Kızılay's pedestrian café zone, the Melodi strikes a chord thanks to spacious, comfy rooms in varied brown tones. It also seems to inspire local cartoonists, whose works adorn the lobby.

Midas Hotel (Map p442; ☎ 424 0110; www.hotelmidas.com; Tunus Caddesi 20; s/d €50/62; ☎ ☎) The rates quoted for this brand-new luxury four-star are promotional prices for quiet periods and

will doubtless double as soon as a proper client base is established, but for now it's an irresistible bargain. All facilities, from the spa and fitness centre to the in-room wi-fi, are free for guests.

Hotel Gold (Map p444; ☎ 419 4868; www.ankara.goldhotel.com; Güfte Sokak 4; s/d/tr €75/92/100; ☎) Whatever the 'Gold' refers to, it isn't the fiery orange shades in the rooms, the red carpets on the floors or the marble of the terrace café. Still, the class pervades, and you can't fault a place that gives you free samples of an anti-hangover drink.

KAVAKLIDERE

Gordion Hotel (Map p442; ☎ 427 8080; www.gordionhotel.com; Büklüm Sokak 59; s/d €94/113; ☎ ☎ ☎) If you could smell class, this place would reek to high heaven, and quite possibly overpower a lot of European competition to boot. It's the epitome of a refined townhouse hotel, revelling quietly in deep red fabrics, silver tea sets, a conservatory restaurant and full set of spa facilities; even the soap is handmade, doubtless at great expense. Breathe it all in and enjoy.

mega residence (Map p442; ☎ 468 5400; www.megaridence.com; s/d from €147/167, ste €200; ☎) Targeting the German market, the pine facade of this smart establishment evokes the Austrian Alps, and the Schnitzel restaurant is even more of a giveaway. There's not much Tirolean flavour on the inside, but the rooms are very good indeed, especially the Jacuzzi doubles and kitchenette suite.

Also recommended:

Ankara Hilton (Map p442; ☎ 455 0000; www.hilton.com; Tahran Caddesi 12; s/d €297/315; ☎) Plush rooms and suites on 16 floors; weekend discounts available.

Sheraton Ankara Hotel & Towers (Map p442; ☎ 468 5454; www.sheraton.com/ankara; Noktali Sokak; s/d €254/297; ☎ ☎) Landmark cylindrical luxury high-rise; weekend discounts available.

Eating

ULUS

Like accommodation, most Ulus options are cheap and basic, often serving beer to a purely male clientele. If self-catering suddenly seems like a good option, the colourful Yeni Haller vegetable market (Map p442) is ideal.

Inside the citadel, over a dozen old wood-and-stone houses have been converted into inviting, atmospheric licensed restaurants. Summer opening hours are around 11am to

midnight; most places have live music in the evening, but close or cut back their hours in winter. Just outside the walls, on Can Sokak, you'll also find several cafés lurking amid the antique shops.

Zenger Paşa Konağı (Map p442; ☎ 311 7070; www.zengerpasa.com; Doyran Sokak 13; mains €2.80-9.50; ☎) Built in 1721 for governor Mehmet Fuat Paşa, the Zenger Paşa was the first restaurant of its kind in Ankara, restored and masterminded by a TV executive with a keen eye for the tourist market. Meals are still cooked in the original oven, and the whole place is crammed with Ottoman ephemera. There's live music every evening to complement the perfect citadel views.

Boyacızade Konağı (Map p442; ☎ 310 2525; Berrak Sokak 7/9; mains €3.50-16) Not far from the museum, the Boyacızade is another wonderfully converted mansion-restaurant with great views, typical Ottoman-stalag décor and a good line in fish dishes. Turkish classical, or *fasıl*, music provides the entertainment.

Kale Washington (Map p442; ☎ 311 4344; Doyran Sokak 5/7; mains €10-20; ☎ from 9.30am) Spliced together from two 17th-century houses, the Washington is a favourite with visiting dignitaries (Hillary Clinton reportedly ate here once) and other aspirational types, who come to chow down on Turkish-international food. Staff sometimes give as much attitude as they get, but as long as you're not a complete scruffbag it's not over-snobby.

Hatipoğlu Konağı (Map p442; ☎ 311 3696; Sevinç Sokak 3; set menus €15-20; ☎ 7pm-1am) The touristy set menus here are good value, but watch those steps if you go for the unlimited-alcohol option! Acoustic groups play here every day except Sunday. To find it, come out of the citadel through the Parmak Kapısı and turn left.

The next two are closer to Atatürk Bulvarı.

Bosna İşkembe Lokanta ve Kebap Salonu (Map p442; ☎ 310 8701; Çankırı Caddesi 11; mains €2-3.70; ☎ 24hr) This all-hours place is scarily popular and, thankfully, not as grim as some of its rivals.

Urfalı Hacı Mehmet (Map p442; ☎ 311 2008; Kızılay Sokak 3/A; mains €2.50-3.70; ☎ 9am-10pm) A welcome haven for family and female diners, kept clean and bright for maximum enjoyment of an extensive fast-food menu.

KIZILAY

This is undoubtedly the best area for a casual meal, particularly in the pedestrian zone north

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Angora House Hotel (Map p442; ☎ 309 8380; Kalekapsı Sokak 16; s/d €36/56; ☎ Mar-Oct) Sometimes a good thing can be slow to catch on – this is still Ankara's only boutique hotel, run by a friendly Turkish couple who used to sell carpets to the same tourists they now feed and water. It's in a great location inside the citadel and offers beautiful, individually decorated rooms in a restored house, benefiting from some fine half-timbering and a walled courtyard. With only six rooms, advance reservation is recommended.

of Ziya Gökalp Caddesi, where pavement eateries and stalls serve everything from *döner* to *kumpir* (baked potatoes).

Kızılay is also Ankara's café central, with terraces lining virtually every inch of space south of Ziya Gökalp Caddesi and the sound of students playing backgammon echoing for miles.

Can Balık (Map p444; ☎ 432 4862; Sakarya Caddesi 8/4; mains €1.70-4.50; ☎ 10am-10pm) A popular alternative to pricey fish restaurants, the classiest thing here are the Coke ads, but the Piscean menu works perfectly.

Galeri (Map p444; ☎ 418 9950; Selanik Caddesi 40/2; mains €1.70-5.50; ☎ 9am-11pm) The breezy booths above street level here are popular with couples, while the mixed brasserie-style menu has treats from breakfasts and salads to cheese-cake, all ambitiously presented.

Göksu Restaurant (Map p444; ☎ 431 2219; Bayındır Sokak 22/A; meals €3.10-7.50; ☎ 11am-11pm) Fine dining with uniformed staff and a terrace discreetly shielded from the street by glass and vines. It's popular with besuited blokes guzzling mezes and raki (aniseed-flavoured grape brandy).

Köşk (Map p444; ☎ 432 1300; İnkılap Sokak 2, K; mains €4-11; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat) Specialising in fish, the Köşk cultivates a slightly staid air to please the decorum-minded older diners who form its core demographic, though at €1.40 the beer's cheap enough to enthuse the younger crowd as well.

KAVAKLIDERE

The scene here is more European and sophisticated, catering primarily to the embassy set, and offers some opportunities to dabble in cuisine beyond the usual Turkish staples.

Tapa Tapa Tapas (Map p442; ☎ 428 3562; Tunali Hilmi Caddesi 87; dishes €1.40-8.50; ☎ 8.30am-midnight) The chef plays it a bit safe with the chilli and with the booze level of the sangria (€3.50), but the sheer novelty of finding *albondigas* and *patatas bravas* in Turkey doesn't wear off fast. Pasta, crêpes and grills round out the menu.

Café des Cafés (Map p442; ☎ 428 0176; Tunali Hilmi Caddesi 83; mains €3.60-11; ☎ 8.30am-midnight) Another dash of culinary flair from foreign parts of the Med, the CdC offers ambitious bistro dishes from *quesadilla* to salmon and *arugula*.

Mezzaluna (Map p442; ☎ 467 5818; Turan Emeksis Sokak 1; meals €20-30; ☎ noon-midnight) The capital's classiest Italian restaurant impresses as soon as you walk in the door, with interior design

by Roberto Magris and a real Italian chef at the pass. There's a second branch in the suburb of Bilkent.

Wok (Map p442; ☎ 446 1992; Borusan Bldg, Uğur Mumcu Caddesi 8/2; meals from €20; ☎ noon-midnight, to 2am Sat & Sun) Achingly fashionable, this mixed Oriental bar-restaurant above a BMW showroom supplements its pan-Asian menu with sophisticated European dishes and electronic music. For added entertainment, certain tables have a view of the kitchen action.

Drinking

The best place for a tea is Genclik Parkı, across the road from Opera Meydanı. Head straight for the **Ada Aile Çay Bahçesi** (Map p442), which juts out into the lake, to watch the world go by over a samovar (€1.10).

For a night out with Ankara's student population, head for Bayındır Sokak, between Sakarya and Tuna Caddesi in Kızılay, where Turkish *gazinós* (nightclubs) are packed sometimes three deep per building! Many of these offer live Turkish pop music, and women travellers should feel OK in most.

And Evi (Map p442; ☎ 312 7978; İçkale Kapısı, Ulus) Right on top of the walls inside the citadel, even Hobson would have trouble choosing the panoramic terrace or the sumptuous indoor lounge at this Ottoman-styled café.

Qube Bar (Map p444; ☎ 432 3079; Bayındır Sokak 16/B) Slightly more sophisticated than its neighbours, Qube has an unusually wide range of draught beer, including the slightly appley Pera Pilsener from Tekirdağ.

Locus Solus (Map p442; ☎ 468 6788; Bestekar Sokak 60) A funky orange terrace-lounge sucking in a young, unpretentious crowd for beers, cocktails, smoothies or snacks. The MP3 jukebox covers all kinds of electrica (French ska, sir?), and high-cred DJs play regularly, including occasional international names. Even the bar-men reckon it's 'something special'.

Entertainment

CINEMAS

Some of Ankara's cinemas may occasionally show Western films in the original language; the *Turkish Daily News* gives programme details.

Screens include the following:

Kavaklıdere Sineması (Map p444; ☎ 468 7193; Tunali Hilmi Caddesi 105; tickets €3.50-5)

Kızılırmak Sineması (Map p444; ☎ 425 5393; Kızılırmak Caddesi 21/B; tickets €3.50-5)

Megapol Sineması (Map p444; ☎ 419 4492; Konur Sokak 33; tickets €3.50-4.50)

NIGHTCLUBS & LIVE MUSIC

Most visitors don't hang around Ankara long enough to get to grips with the nightlife, but believe us, it's there – with a whole spectrum of venues from student dives to recherché nightspots. Consult fellow drinkers, bar staff, flyers or local listings to get the latest tips.

IF Performance Hall (Map p442; ☎ 418 9506; Tunus Caddesi 14/A, Kavaklıdere) It's a pretty grand name for what's essentially a basement bar venue, but there's something going on here most nights, and plenty of biggish bands come through. As Kipling might have said, IF you can keep your head when all about are getting off theirs...

OverAll (Map p442; ☎ 468 5785; www.overall.web.tr; Güvenlik Caddesi 97; ☎ Tue-Sat) Another popular dancefloor venue with a mixed bag of nights, from bands to hip-hop, dance and, um, karaoke.

Jazz Time (Map p442; ☎ 463 4348; Bilir Sokak 4/1, Kavaklıdere) A low-key jazz club, with tables, usually hosting live Turkish pop or folk artists. The attached Gitanes Bar has a garden terrace.

Shopping

It's cheapest to shop in Ulus, but to see what fashionable Turkey likes to spend its money on, you'll need to head south to Kızılay and Kavaklıdere. Tunali Hilmi Caddesi is a great place to watch wealthier Ankaralis shopping, with lots of local stores alongside more familiar names such as the British department store **Marks & Spencer** (Map p442). Nearby, just below the Sheraton Hotel, is **Karum** (Map p442; İnan Caddesi), a flashy shopping mall that could outdo its London cousins.

Behind the Ulus vegetable market, on Konya Caddesi, is the **Vakıf Suluhan Çarşısı** (Map p442), a restored *han* (caravanserai) with clothes shops, a café, toilets and a small free-standing mosque in its courtyard.

The area around the Parmak Kapısı entrance to the citadel was traditionally a centre for trading in Angora wool. In front of the gate is a row of dried-fruit stalls. Walk downhill along Gözcü Sokak to inspect the carpet and antique shops. You're unlikely to find many bargains but you'll come across copper-beaters and other assorted craftsmen still carrying on their age-old trades.

RIGHTEOUS ANGORA

Can you tell the difference between a goat and a rabbit? It's not as easy as you think – or at least not if all you have to go on is the wool. One of the most popular misconceptions about Ankara's famous angora wool is that it comes from Angora goats, a hardy breed believed to be descended from wild Himalayan ancestors. Not so: the soft, fluffy fabric produced from these goats is correctly known as mohair, and angora wool in the strictest sense comes from Angora rabbits, also local but much cuter critters whose fur, weight for weight, could traditionally fetch as much as gold.

Cutting across Karanfil Sokak is tree- and café-lined Olgunlar Sokak, with its row of **second-hand bookstalls** (Map p444).

The tourist office (p441) sells good-quality Turkish arts and crafts items.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Ankara's Esenboğa airport, 33km north of the city centre, is the hub for Turkish Airlines' domestic flight network. Of the budget carriers, only Atlasjet and Pegasus Airlines serve Ankara, so you may have more options going via İstanbul.

The table below shows *direct* flights from Ankara only. All schedules are subject to change.

Other international airlines sometimes have flights to Ankara, or connections with Turkish Airlines' flights from İstanbul.

FLIGHTS FROM ANKARA'S AIRPORT

Destination	Frequency (per day)
Adana	2
Antalya	2
Bodrum	4 weekly
Cyprus	up to 2
Diyarbakır	3
Erzurum	1
İstanbul (IST)	at least 14
İstanbul (SAW)	4 or 5
İzmir	3
Kars	1
Malatya	1
Şanlıurfa	1
Trabzon	2 or 3
Van	2

Airline Offices

Air France (Map p442; ☎ 467 4404; Atatürk Bulvarı 231/7, Kavaklıdere)

Atlasjet (Map p444; ☎ 425 4832; Atatürk Bulvarı 109/6, Kızılay)

British Airways (Map p442; ☎ 467 5557; Atatürk Bulvarı 237/2, Kavaklıdere)

KLM (Map p442; ☎ 417 5616; Atatürk Bulvarı 199, Kavaklıdere)

Lufthansa (☎ 442 0580; Cinnah Caddesi 102/5, Çankaya)

Turkish Airlines Kavaklıdere (THY; Map p442; ☎ 428 0200; Atatürk Bulvarı 154) airport (☎ 398 0100)

BUS

Every Turkish city or town of any size has direct buses to Ankara. The gigantic otogar or AŞTİ (Ankara Şehirlerarası Terminali İşletmesi) is at the western end of the Ankaray underground train line, 4.5km west of Kızılay.

The terminal has departure gates on the upper level and arrivals on the lower. There are restaurants, a first-aid post, ATMs, phones and newsstands. The *emanet* (left-luggage room) on the lower level charges €1.10 per item stored; you'll need to show your passport.

As Ankara has many buses to all parts of the country, you can often turn up, buy a ticket and be on your way within the hour. Don't try this during public holidays, though.

AŞTİ has 80 *gişe* (ticket counters) and a central information booth to point you in the right direction. Major companies include:

Bus Company	Counter
Kamil Koç	17, 18
Metro	16, 41
Nilüfer	25
Pamukkale	58, 59
Uludağ/Çanakkale Truva	71
Ulusoy	13
Varan	12

Many bus companies also maintain city-centre ticket offices near Kızılay on Ziya Gökalp Caddesi, Gazi Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı, İzmir Caddesi and Menekşe Sokak. Several premium bus companies, including Varan and Ulusoy, have their own terminal facilities near the otogar. The table below lists details of some useful daily routes from Ankara.

TRAIN

Train services between İstanbul and Ankara are the best in the country, and work is under-way to develop an even faster rail link, though concerns were raised by some accidents in 2004. **Ankara Gari** (Map p442; ☎ 311 0620) has a

SERVICES FROM ANKARA'S OTOGAR

Destination	Fare	Duration	Distance	Frequency (per day)	Counter
Adana	€14	10hr	490km	frequent	57
Amasya	€8.50	5hr	335km	frequent	31
Antalya	€14	8hr	550km	frequent	32
Bodrum	€19.50	13hr	785km	12	41
Bursa	€11.50	6hr	400km	hourly	71
Denizli	€14	7hr	480km	frequent	58, 78
(for Pamukkale)					
Diyarbakır	€28	13hr	945km	several	34
Erzurum	€22.50	13hr	925km	several	36
Gaziantep	€19.50	10hr	705km	frequent	36, 42
İstanbul	€14	5-6hr	450km	every 15 min	29
İzmir	€8.50	8hr	600km	hourly	25, 35
Kayseri	€7.50	4½hr	330km	frequent	45, 54
Konya	€5.60	3hr	260km	frequent	50, 75
Marmaris	€19.50	10hr	780km	12	17, 41
Nevşehir (for Cappadocia)	€8.50	5hr	285km	frequent	50
Samsun	€11.50	7hr	420km	frequent	52
Sivas	€14	6hr	450km	frequent	27, 32
Sungurlu (for Boğazkale)	€5.60	3hr	177km	hourly	30
Trabzon	€19.50	13hr	780km	several	31, 52

EXPRESS SERVICES FROM ANKARA'S TRAIN STATION

Destination	Fare	Via	Frequency	Duration
Adana	€9, sleeper €30	Niğde	daily	12hr
Diyarbakır	€12.50, sleeper €31-39	Kayseri, Sivas, Malatya	4 weekly	35hr
İstanbul	from €7, sleeper from €15	Eskişehir, İzmit	up to 10 daily	6½-9½hr
İzmir	€12.50, sleeper €27-36	Kütahya, Balıkesir	3 daily	13hr
Kars	€19.50, sleeper €32-40	Kayseri, Sivas, Erzurum	2 daily	28hr
Tatvan	€18.50, sleeper €31-39	Kayseri, Sivas, Malatya	2 weekly	41hr
Zonguldak	€6.70	Karabük	3 weekly	9½hr

PTT, a restaurant, snack shops, kiosks, ATMs, telephones and a left-luggage room.

The table above summarises the main express routes out of Ankara; returning, most trains continue on to İstanbul. Slower standard trains serve many intermediate destinations.

Getting Around**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

Esenboğa airport is 33km north of the city. **Havaş** (Map p442; ☎ 444 0487; Kazım Karabekir Caddesi) buses depart from the Havaş Terminal every half-hour between 3.30am and 9.30pm daily, with further night services timed according to flight schedules, and travel directly to the airport (€5.30, 40 minutes). They may leave sooner if they fill up, so claim your seat at least two hours before flight time. Buses stop at the AŞTİ otogar in both directions.

Taxis between the airport and the city cost about €20.

TO/FROM THE AŞTİ OTOGAR

The easiest way to get into town is on the Ankaray metro line, which has a station right next to the AŞTİ otogar. Go to Maltepe station for the tourist office or the train station (a 10-minute walk), or to Kızılay for the midrange hotels in Kızılay and Bakanlıklar. Change at Kızılay (to the Metro line) for Ulus and the cheap hotels.

For a dolmuş to Ulus (€0.85), cross the main road in front of the otogar and catch an 'Ulus-Balgat' or 'Gölbaşı-Opera Meydanı' dolmuş.

A taxi costs about €4 to the train station and €5 to Ulus or Kızılay.

TO/FROM ANKARA GARI (TRAIN STATION)

The train station (see opposite) is about 1.4km southwest of Ulus Meydanı and 2.5km north-

west of Kızılay. Any bus or dolmuş heading northeast along Cumhuriyet Bulvarı will take you to Ulus. Many buses heading east along Talat Paşa Bulvarı go to Kızılay and/or Kavaklıdere.

It's a bit over 1km from the station to Opera Meydanı; any bus heading east along Talat Paşa Bulvarı will drop you within a few hundred metres if you ask for Gazi Lisesi.

To go from the train station to the AŞTİ otogar, follow the underpass in the train station through a dingy shopping area and eventually you'll end up at the Maltepe Ankaray station, where you can take the metro to the otogar.

BUS

Ankara has a good bus, dolmuş and minibus network. Signs on the front and side of the vehicles are better guides than route numbers. Buses marked 'Ulus' and 'Çankaya' run the length of Atatürk Bulvarı. Those marked 'Gar' go to the train station, those marked 'AŞTİ' to the otogar.

City buses (€0.70) run on the same pre-pay system as the metro: tickets can be bought from kiosks at major bus stops or from shops and vendors displaying an EGO Bilet sign. Cards for five/10/20 journeys cost €3.50/7/11.

CAR

Driving within Ankara is chaotic and signs are woefully inadequate, so even if you have a car it's better to ditch it and use public transport instead.

If you plan to hire a car to drive out of Ankara, there are many small local companies alongside the major international firms; most have offices in Kavaklıdere along Tunus Caddesi, and/or at Esenboğa airport. Reliable operators include:

Avıs (Map p442; ☎ 467 2313; Tunus Caddesi 68/2)
Budget (Map p442; ☎ 468 5888; Tunus Caddesi 79/1)
National (Map p442; ☎ 426 4565; Tunus Caddesi 73/1)

METRO

Ankara's underground train network currently has two lines: the Ankaray line running between AŞTİ otogar in the west through Kızılay to Dikimevi in the east (see p453); and the Metro line running from Kızılay north-west via Sıhhiye and Ulus to Batıkent. The two lines interconnect at Kızılay. Trains run from 6.15am to 11.45pm daily.

Single-journey tickets for the whole transport system cost €0.70. Note that there are separate barriers for adult and child/student tickets at some stations, so if your ticket doesn't seem to work, check that you're using the right lane.

TAXI

Every second vehicle on the road seems to be a taxi and they all have meters. The drop rate is €0.50; an average trip costs around €3 during daylight hours, 50% more at night.

AROUND ANKARA

You don't have to go too far from Ankara to hit some major pieces of Anatolian history, but if it's a leisurely day trip you're after rather than an overnight, your options are more limited. The Phrygian archaeological site at Gordion and the small Ottoman town of Beypazarı are the strongest candidates for your time.

Gordion

The capital of ancient Phrygia, with some 3000 years of settlement behind it, Gordion lies 106km west of Ankara in the village of Yassıhöyük.

Gordion was occupied by the Phrygians as early as the 9th century BC, and soon afterwards became their capital. Although destroyed during the Cimmerian invasion, it was later rebuilt, only to be conquered first by the Lydians and then by the Persians. Alexander the Great came through and famously cut the Gordian Knot in 333 BC, but by 278 BC the Galatian occupation had effectively destroyed the city.

The landscape around Yassıhöyük is dotted with tumuli (burial mounds) marking the graves of the Phrygian kings. Of 100 identified tumuli, less than half have been excavated;

you can enter the largest tomb, and also view the site of the Gordion acropolis, where digs revealed 18 different levels of civilisation from the Bronze Age to Roman times.

MIDAS TŪMŪLŪS & GORDION MUSEUM

In 1957 the Austrian archaeologist Alfred Koerte discovered Gordion, and with it the intact **tomb** (admission to tomb & museum €2.80; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) of a Phrygian king, probably buried some time between 740 and 718 BC. The tomb is actually a gabled 'cottage' of cedar surrounded by juniper logs, buried beneath a tumulus 53m high and 300m in diameter. It's the oldest wooden structure ever found in Anatolia, and perhaps even in the world. The tunnel and tomb entrance are modern additions to ease access for visitors; the tomb itself is fenced off, but diagrams and photos give you an idea of what it was like.

Inside the tomb archaeologists found the body of a man between 61 and 65 years of age, 1.59m tall, surrounded by burial objects, including tables, bronze *situlas* (containers) and bowls said to be part of the funerary burial feast. The occupant's name remains unknown, although both 'Gordius' and 'Midas' are good bets – most Phrygian kings seem to have been called one or the other.

Across the road, the **museum** houses finds from the Bronze Age to Phrygian and Hellenistic times. Note the Hellenistic terracotta roof tiles and the many Phrygian bronze fibulae (brooches). The finest examples of Phrygian art, including the intricate inlaid wooden tables found in the tomb, were removed to Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations.

In the grounds are several simple 8th-century BC mosaics from the Acropolis and a reconstructed Galatian tomb.

ACROPOLIS

Excavations at the 8th-century BC acropolis yielded a wealth of data on Gordion's many civilisations.

The lofty main gate on the city's western side was approached by a 6m-wide ramp. Within the fortified enclosure were four *megara* (square halls) from which the king and his priests and ministers ruled the empire. The mosaics found in one of these halls, the so-called Citadel of Midas, are on display outside the museum.

Today the site is a fenced-off collection of foundations with explanatory signs, which are

of small appeal to the casual visitor. It's some 3km from the museum on the far side of the village (follow the main road through).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Baysal Turizm buses connect Ankara's otogar (ticket counter 28) with Polatlı every half-hour (€2.80, one hour). Once in Polatlı, you'll have to take a taxi the 18km to Gordion and back; negotiate a price in advance, as it could run as high as €50 on the meter if you include the acropolis.

Beypazarı

☎ 0312 / pop 34,500

If you prefer traditional life to ancient remains, Beypazarı, set high above the picturesque İnözü Vadisi, makes a great place for a day trip. Explore the winding back streets and the fascinating old market, and you'll soon come across row upon row of tastefully restored old Ottoman houses. Several of these have been turned into cafés or pensions with inviting courtyards, and one is also open to the public as a **museum** (admission €0.55; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) – note in particular the original bathrooms inside cupboards and the magnificent 1894 map of the eastern Mediterranean in the hall.

In June the **Beypazarı Festival** swells the ranks of market traders and introduces a carnival atmosphere, while a quirkier **harvest festival** in October celebrates that crucial crop, the carrot.

While you're here it'd be rude not to try the local delicacies, which include *havuç lokum* (carrot-flavoured Turkish delight), *cevizli sucuğu* (walnuts coated in grape jelly) and Beypazarı's own local mineral water, bottled here and marketed throughout the country.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

To get to Beypazarı you need to take a bus from Ankara's Etlik bus station rather than AŞTİ; to get there take a dolmuş (€0.45, 15 minutes) from beside Hacı Bayram Camii. Sporadic dolmuşes and more comfortable buses travel back and forth to Beypazarı every day (€1.75, 1½ hours). Check the time of the last bus back to Ankara as soon as you arrive.

SAFRANBOLU

☎ 0370 / pop 32,200

Every town in Turkey has its old Ottoman houses, but Safranbolu, the valley town at the

heart of the new restoration movement, takes it to a different level: virtually the entire old Ottoman town has been preserved and now spruced up to such good effect that it made it onto the Unesco World Heritage list. This is as close as you'll ever come to historical Turkey, and the town's popularity with domestic tourists reinforces just what a rare treat this is.

The weather, too, can play a part in this unique experience: summer thunderstorms periodically close over the sunken valley like a heavy black lid, and you can watch the lightning-pierced darkness drawing on inch by inch until finally the light is gone and the rain bursts down onto the tiled roofs. Simply magic.

History

During the 17th century, the main Ottoman trade route between Gerece and the Black Sea coast passed through Safranbolu, bringing commerce, prominence and money to the town. During the 18th and 19th centuries Safranbolu's wealthy inhabitants built mansions of sun-dried mud bricks, wood and stucco, while the larger population of prosperous artisans built less impressive but similarly sturdy homes. Safranbolu owes its fame to the large numbers of these dwellings that have survived.

The most prosperous Safranbolulus maintained two households. In winter they occupied town houses in the Çarşı (Market) district, which is situated at the meeting point of three valleys and so protected from the winter winds. During the warm months they moved to summer houses at the garden suburb of Bağlar (Vineyards). When the iron and steel works at Karabük were established in 1938, modern factory houses started to encroach on Bağlar, although Çarşı has remained virtually untouched.

During the 19th century about 20% of Safranbolu's inhabitants were Ottoman Greeks, but most of their descendants moved to Greece during the population exchange after WWI. Their principal church, dedicated to St Stephen, was converted into Kıranköy's Ulu Cami (Great Mosque).

Orientation

Safranbolu falls into three distinct parts: Kıranköy, Bağlar and Çarşı. Approaching from the steel town of Karabük, you arrive first in Kıranköy, the former Greek quarter

and now the most modern part of Safranbolu, with plenty of banks, shops and bus offices. Continuing uphill (northeast) along Sadrı Artuç Caddesi, you'll reach Bağlar, with its centre at Köyiçi, which has many fine old houses.

However, most of what you've come to see lies downhill in Çarşı (Market). To get there from Kıranköy, take Kaya Erdem Caddesi at the roundabout, and go 1.7km southeast, down the hill and over the next one. Buses ply this route roughly every half hour.

Information

Batuta Turizm (☎ 725 4533; www.batuta.com.tr; Hilmi Bayarngil Caddesi 3) Local trekking, cultural and nature tours.

Paşa Internet (per hr €0.55; ☎ 10am-midnight) Slow access near the İzzet Paşa Camii.

Tourist office (☎ 712 3863; www.safranbolu.gov.tr; ☎ 9am-12.30pm, 1.30-6pm) Off the main square.

Türkiye İş Bankası (Kapuçioğlu Sokak 12A) Çarşı's only bank; no ATM.

Sights

OTTOMAN HOUSES

Just walking the streets of Çarşı is a feast for the eyes – virtually every house in the district is an original, whether freshly whitewashed or gently neglected, and what little modern development there is has been held carefully in check. Many of the finest historic houses have been restored, and as time goes on, more and more are being saved from

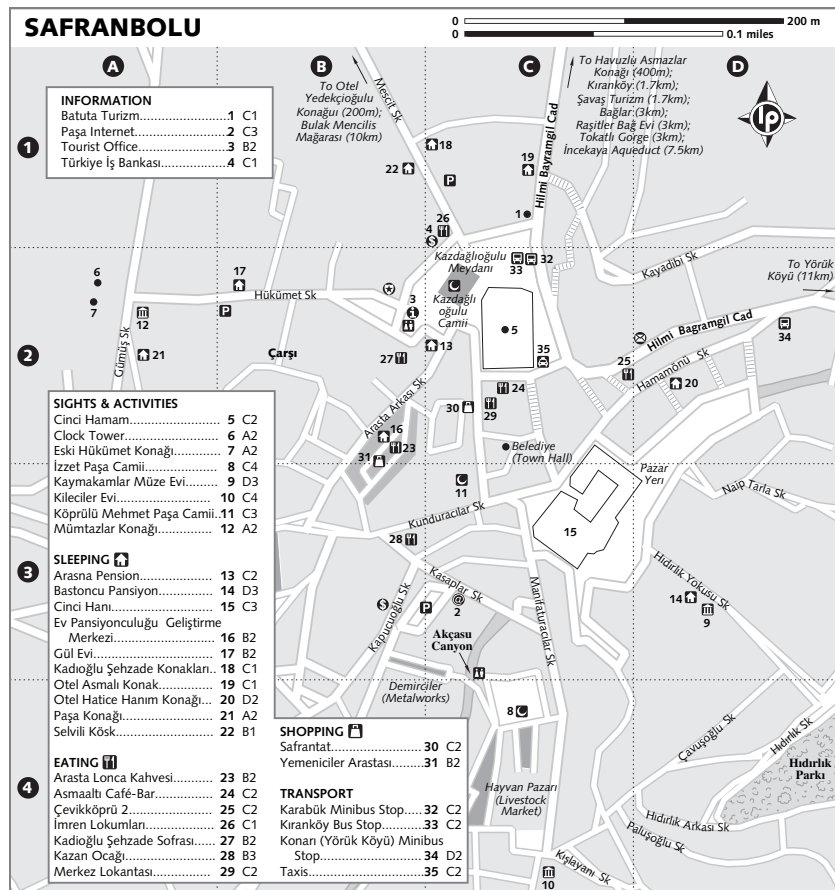
OTTOMAN STYLE

Looking at the concrete cityscapes synonymous with Turkish modernity, it's hard to imagine being back in the 19th century, when fine wooden houses were the rule. Luckily growing tourism has encouraged a virtual Ottoman revival, and restoration has become a boom trade. Excellent examples can be found in Afyon, Amasya and Tokat, but Safranbolu is universally acknowledged to contain the country's single finest collection of pre-independence domestic architecture.

Ottoman wooden houses generally had two or three storeys, the upper storeys jutting out over the lower ones on carved corbels (brackets). Their timber frames were filled with adobe and then plastered with a mixture of mud and straw. Sometimes the houses were left unsealed, but in towns they were usually given a finish of plaster or whitewash, with decorative flourishes in plaster or wood. The wealthier the owner, the fancier the decoration.

Inside, the larger houses had 10 to 12 rooms, divided into *selamlık* (men's quarters) and *haremlik* (women's quarters). Rooms were often decorated with built-in niches and cupboards, and had fine plaster fireplaces with *yaşmaks* (conical hoods). Sometimes the ceilings were very elaborate; that of the Paşa Odası of Tokat's Latifoğlu Konağı, for example, is thought to emulate a chandelier in wood.

Details to look out for inside the Safranbolu houses include their *hayats* (courtyard areas where the animals lived and tools were stored); ingenious *dönme dolaplar* (revolving cupboards that made it possible to prepare food in one room and pass it to another without being seen); bathrooms hidden inside cupboards; and central heating systems that relied on huge fireplaces. *Sedirs* (bench seating that ran round the walls) doubled up as beds, with the bedding being stored in the toilets, which converted neatly into cupboards during the day. Space-efficient, certainly, but sometimes you wonder how anyone ever found anything!



deterioration and turned into hotels, shops or museums.

At time of research the following old houses were open to the public: the **Kaymakamlar Müze Evi**, arguably the most interesting, with recreated tableaux of everyday life; the **Mümtazlar Konağı** (1888), former home of the head mufti at Safranbolu's *medrese*; and the **Kileçiler Evi**, built in 1884. The exhibition rooms in each house are open daily from 9am to sunset, charging €1.10 for admission, and tea is served in their gardens. Houses may close in winter.

Some of the largest houses had indoor pools, which, although big enough for swimming, were used instead to cool the room with running water, which also provided pleasing background noise. The best and most accessible example in Çarşı is the **Havuzlu Asmazlar Konağı** (Mansion with Pool), now run as a hotel (p458).

OTHER HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Çarşı's most famous and imposing structure is the brooding **Cinci Hanı** caravanserai (admission €0.55) dating back to 1645, which is now an upmarket hotel (p459). On Satur-

day a busy market takes place in the square behind it.

Beside Çarşı's main square, Kazdağlıoğlu Meydanı, is the **Cinci Hamam** (☎ 712 2103; ☎ 6am-midnight for men, 9am-10pm for women), built at the same time as the Cinci Hanı and still a great place to clean up your act; a wash and massage should cost you around €6. There are separate baths for men and women.

The beefy **Köprülü Mehmet Paşa Camii**, beside the *arasta* (row of shops beside a mosque), was built in 1661; the solar clock in the courtyard used to have its own custodian, whose house is now a research and tourist information centre. The **İzzet Paşa Camii**, on the main square, was built in 1796.

Uphill past the Kaymakamlar Müze Evi you reach **Hıdırlık Parkı**, which offers panoramic views. Peek through the windows of the locked Tomb of Ahmet Lütfi and you'll see a heap of coins left by the faithful.

On the other side of town, Safranbolu's castle was demolished early in the last century to make way for the attractive **Eski Hükümet Konağı** (old government building) on the hilltop near an old clock tower. You can wander round, but don't loiter too long near the police post!

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

September is a great time to visit Safranbolu, with two festivals, the **Altın Safran Documentary Film Festival** and the **Safranbolu Architectural Treasures & Folklore Week**, falling in the same month. Be sure to book accommodation ahead of time, though.

Sleeping

Safranbolu is very popular with Turkish tourists at weekends and over holidays. Prices may rise at particularly busy times, and it can be worth booking ahead outside midweek.

Whatever your budget, splashing out a bit in Safranbolu is virtually an obligation, as you may never get another chance to sleep anywhere so authentically restored. Facilities vary across the spectrum; look out for places that have been renovated rather than sanitised, so you can appreciate some of the building's original character.

If you'd rather stay in a family home than a hotel, the **Ev Pansiyonculuğu Geliştirme Merkezi** (Home Pension Development Centre; ☎ 712 7236; Yemenciler Arastasi 6), inside the *arasta* bazaar, makes reservations for overnight stays in restored houses that are not regular hotels. Use their scrapbook of photos to help you choose.

BUDGET

Bastoncu Pansiyon (☎ 712 3411; a_bastoncu@yahoo.com; Hıdırlık Yokusu Sokak, Bağlar; dm €11, s/d/tr 17/25/34; 📄) Easily the best cheap choice in town, the Bastoncu still has all its original wood and some closet toilets. It's run by a friendly Turkish couple who speak English and Japanese and clearly appreciate backpacker needs. Aldous Huxley might not like it, but room 101 is the place to be. A second house with mainly three-bed rooms should be open by the time you read this.

Arasna Pension (☎ 712 4170; Arasta Arkası Sokak 5, Bağlar; s/d €23/36) This less personable pension opposite the main mosque and tourist office has a restaurant with regular live music, not good for light sleepers. Most of the rooms are invitingly decorated with old artefacts, but rooms 5 and 7 are best.

Kadioğlu Şehzade Konakları (☎ 712 5657; www.kadiogluşehzade.com; Mesçit Sokak 24, Bağlar; s/d €20/34/45) This central branch administers six converted houses of the same name, scattered about various corners of Safranbolu. For that extra agony of choice you can see pictures before making your mind up.

Selvili Köşk (☎ 712 8646; www.hotelselvilikosk.com; Mesçit Sokak 23, Bağlar; s/d/tr €20/39/56) One of our favourites for authentic original character, the Selvili has a particularly beautiful salon and lovely large rooms with bathtubs. There's a pretty garden too. The same owners run two more properties with the same name, but for our money the original has the most charm, and just edges into the budget category.

MIDRANGE

Otel Asmalı Konak (☎ 712 7474; Bayramgöl Caddesi 13, Çarşı; s/d €23/42) It's nowhere near Cappadocia, but someone obviously thinks naming their hotel after Anatolia's most popular soap opera will bring in the punters. The newly renovated rooms are slightly too modern in feel, but the ceiling in 22 is fantastic and there's little lacking in the overall vibe.

Otel Hatice Hanım Konağı (☎ 712 7545; www.hotelhaticehanim.com; Hamamönü Sokak 4, Çarşı; s/d/tr €23/45/67) Another top choice for atmosphere; rooms at this former governor's residence come with marble basins, original fittings and plenty of quirks. The public rooms are also nicely decorated. Four further branches ply their trade around town, including the multistorey Hatice Hanım III right opposite.

Otel Yedekçiöğlü Konağı (☎ 712 6597; www.yedekcioglu.com; Mesçit Sokak, Çarşı; s/d €28/42) Proclaiming itself one of the most beautiful mansions in Safranbolu may seem like faint self-praise amid so much worthy competition, but flagstone floors and a big garden do lend instant appeal. The house itself wears its 200 years well, even if the mod cons (TVs, hot water, patio furniture) are distinctly this century.

Havuzlu Asmazlar Konağı (☎ 725 2883; www.tur-ing.org.tr; Çelik Gülersoy Caddesi 18, Çarşı; s/d €42/56, ste 667; 📄 Apr-Oct) Halfway towards Kiranköy, the HAK is worth a detour just to glimpse the fine pool that gives the house its name. The 11 guest rooms are beautifully furnished with brass beds, *sedirs* and kilims, and the restaurant comes recommended. Bathrooms are minuscule and soundproofing minimal, but these are minor inconveniences. Two annexes provide cheaper but less atmospheric digs.

Paşa Konağı (☎ 712 8153; www.safranboluturizm.com.tr; Çarşı Kalealtı; s/d €47/57) İzzet Mehmet Paşa, prime minister to the Ottoman sultan Selim III, probably would have preferred it here to the mosque that's also named after him – the spacious rooms and secluded garden foster a romantic nostalgia. Certain bathrooms are

inside cupboards with high steps, which might be tricky for some guests.

Raşıtlar Bağ Evi (☎ 725 1345; Değirmenbaşı 65, Bağlar; s €28, d €50-56) This former summer dwelling offers five attractive rooms, an inviting sitting area and a family atmosphere in a good location right behind the remains of an old watermill.

Gökçuoğlu Konağı (☎ 712 6372; www.safranbolu-turizm.com.tr; Bağlar; d €62) The Gökçuoğlu is another fine old house with an inviting garden and even more design quirks than most (ask about the 'cat corridor'). Rooms vary in style: in some you sleep Ottoman-style on a *sedir*, but others just have standard beds. The Güneş Odası, with its spectacular wooden ceiling and stone fireplace, would be the den of choice. Book ahead, as reception isn't always staffed.

Gül Evi (gulevi@canbulat.com.tr; Hükümet Sokak 46, Çarşı) Look out for this next new arrival on the scene, due to open soon.

TOP END

Cinci Hanı (☎ 712 0680; www.cincihan.com; Bağlar; s/d/tr €50/78/106, ste from €89) And now for something completely different. Safranbolu's ancient stone caravanserai has a couple of centuries over most of the famed Ottoman houses, though rooms are limited on space and décor compared to their wooden equivalents. If you can handle the price tag, the huge Han Ağası Odası suite is a gem, with kitchen, sitting room, and bathroom with old stone *hamam* basin.

Eating

As food is available at most hotels, Safranbolu is not overly endowed with great places to eat, and some require a bit of a journey to reach them.

RESTAURANTS

Kadioğlu Şehzade Sofrası (☎ 712 5091; Arasta Sokak 8; mains €2.50-4.50; 📄 11am-midnight) Near the *arasta* and just behind the Arasna, a jovial plastic chef ushers you into his courtyard domain, complete with adjoining dining room in case of inclement weather. Pide is the speciality here, served in as many different ways as the kitchen has ingredients, with grills as back-up.

Çevrikköprü 2 (☎ 725 2586; Hamamönü Sokak 1; mains €2.50-5; 📄 11am-10pm) Just off the main square, overlooking the lower part of town, this is a

neat old-style restaurant with plenty on the menu. There's another branch next door, and the original is on the way to Yörük Köyü (p460).

Havuzlu Köşk Et Lokantası (☎ 725 2168; Dibekönü Caddesi 32, Bağlar; mains from €2.80; 📄 noon-11pm) For an enchanted evening, direct your designated driver straight to this attractive licensed restaurant, where you can dine at tables set around an upstairs pool or in a pleasant garden. The menu runs the gamut of Turkish standards: kebabs, *köfte* (meatballs), salads etc.

CAFÉS

Arasta Lonca Kahvesi (Boncuk Café; Yemenciler Arastasi) This is one of the town's most congenial places for a coffee, but it's right in the thick of the *arasta* action, so you pay more for the atmosphere – head to the backstreets for a quieter, cheaper cuppa.

İmren Lokumları (☎ 712 8281; Kazdağlı Meydanı 2) Overlooking the main square in Çarşı, this flagship sweet shop has a sprawling first-floor café complete with fountain and mannequins showing off Ottoman-style costumes. Try the *safranlı zerde*, a gelatinous dessert flavoured with saffron.

QUICK EATS

Kazan Ocağı (Kasaplar Sokak 19; mains €1.10-2.80; 📄 10am-10pm) The Kazan is a friendly little family place which serves real home-cooked meals at dainty tables with cute little Ottoman-house serviette dispensers.

Merkez Lokantası (☎ 725 1478; Yukarı Çarşı 1; mains €1.10-3; 📄 10am-10pm) This quaint, clean and friendly place opposite the Köprülü Mehmet Paşa mosque still uses a real wood fire to cook its tasty basic staples.

Asmaaltı Café-Bar (☎ 712 3405; mains €2.50-3.50) Displaying enough dark wood to recreate a rainforest, live music helps the food go down here – or vice versa.

Shopping

Safranbolu is a great place to pick up all sorts of handicrafts – especially textiles, metalwork, shoes and wooden artefacts – whether locally made or shipped in from elsewhere to supply browsing coach tourists. The restored Yemenciler Arastasi (Peasant Shoe-Makers' Bazaar) is the best place to start looking, although the makers of the light, flat-heeled shoes who used to work here have long since moved out. The further you go from the *arasta* the more likely

you are to come across shops occupied by authentic working saddle-makers, felt-makers and other artisans.

Safranbolu originally derived its name from saffron, the precious spice used to flavour the local *lokum* (Turkish delight), and the town is still so packed with sweets shops that you half expect the houses to be made out of gingerbread, or at least *lokum*. One regional speciality is *yaprak helvası*, delicious chewy layers of white *helva* (halva) spotted with ground walnuts. Buy it at any branch of İmren or Safranlat. You can also visit the Safranlat factory behind the petrol station in Kıranköy to see how *lokum* is made.

Getting There & Away

There are a few direct buses to Safranbolu, although you will usually be dropped off at nearby Karabük, from where minibuses (€0.40) run the last 8km to Kıranköy. Note that direct buses to Safranbolu from Ankara leave from *peron* (gate) 35 at AŞTİ

There are several bus ticket offices along Sadri Artuc Caddesi in Kıranköy from where you can catch regular daily services to Ankara (€6.70, four hours) and İstanbul (€11, 6½ hours). **Şavaş Turizm** (☎ 712 7480; Kaya Çarşısı), just off Sadri Artuc Caddesi, has five daily services to Bartın (€5, 1½ hours), where you change for Amasra; start early in the day to make the onward connection.

There are many other services from Karabük, including buses to Kastamonu (€4.50, two hours) and a direct train to Ankara.

Driving, exit the Ankara–İstanbul highway at Gerede and head north, following the signs for Karabük/Safranbolu.

Getting Around

Every 30 minutes or so until 10pm, local buses (€0.15) ply the route from Çarşı's main square over the hills past the main roundabout at Kıranköy and up to the Köyiçi stop in Bağlar.

A taxi to Kıranköy will cost you €2.50, to the otogar €4. Taxis can also offer tours of all the local attractions (see below) for around €34, including waiting time.

AROUND SAFRANBOLU

Yörük Köyü

Along the Kastamonu road, 11km east of Safranbolu, Yörük Köyü (Nomad Village) is a beautiful settlement of crumbling old houses

once inhabited by the dervish Bektaşî sect (see p517). As if to prove that man *can* live by bread alone, the villagers here grew rich from their baking prowess, and some of the houses are truly enormous.

In fact, the **Sipahioğlu Konağı Gezi Evi** (admission €1.10; ☞ daylight) is so vast that the guided tour comes in two separate parts. Unfortunately it's only in Turkish but look out for: the incredible early central heating system that used the fire to heat running water and behind-the-wall heating; wall paintings in which groups of 12 carnations are symbolic of the Bektaşîs; and the delightful gazebo at the top of the house with its stand for the owner's fez.

Nearby in Cemil İpekçi Sokağı is the old village *çamaşırhane* (laundry), with arched hearths where the water was heated in cauldrons, and a huge stone table that was used for the actual scrubbing; taller women worked at one end, shorter ones at the other. The table's 12 sides are another clue to the village's Bektaşî origins (like modern Shi'a Muslims, the Bektaşîs believed in 12 imams, the last of whom had been hidden by Allah). You may need to ask around for the key.

SLEEPING & EATING

Tarihi Yörük Pansiyon (☎ 737 2153; s/d with shared bathroom €17/34) A lovely old wood-and-stone house with an inviting garden. Accommodation is simple but comfortable, although there is just one squat toilet between the four rooms. In one room you sleep on the *sedir*, Ottoman-style.

Yörük Sofrası serves *ayran* (yogurt drink), baklava and *gözleme* at indoor and outdoor tables. There's also a **Kahvehanesi** (coffee-house), beside the mosque.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There is no direct bus service from Safranbolu to Yörük Köyü, but dolmuşes depart for the nearby village of Konarı three times daily (times vary). If you ask the driver he may drop you at Yörük Köyü (€0.55). Getting back, you'll have to walk the 1km to the main road and hitchhike.

It's much less hassle to get a taxi in Safranbolu for the whole return trip – expect to pay around €15.

Bulak Mencilis Mağarası

Ten kilometres northwest of Safranbolu, this impressive cave network has only opened to

the public in the last few years. So far you can walk through only 400m of it, but that's enough to reveal a fine array of stalactites and stalagmites. There are steps up to the **cave** (admission €1.10; ☞ 8am–dusk) and you should wear sturdy shoes as the metal walkway inside can be slippery and wet.

İnekaya Aqueduct

Just over 7km north of Safranbolu you can visit this **aqueduct** (Su Kemerî), which was originally built in Byzantine times but restored in the 1790s by İzzet Mehmet Paşa, the man responsible for one of Safranbolu's finest mosques. The aqueduct spans the beautiful **Tokatlı Gorge**, and the drive out to it is through lovely, unspoilt countryside. Taxi drivers in Safranbolu will take you there.

KASTAMONU

☎ 0366 / pop 64,700

Any town where the shops are full of chainsaws and milking machines doesn't seem immediately promising, but the cheery murals all over town hint at the conservative yet positive atmosphere here, and Kastamonu has plenty to offer as a stopover between Anatolia and the Black Sea. Potential distractions include several museums, a castle, several old mosques and many fine old Ottoman houses, while if you stay over you could visit an ancient wooden mosque at Kasaba or explore the outdoors around Pınarbaşı.

History

Kastamonu's history has been as chequered as that of most central Turkish towns. Archaeological evidence suggests there was a settlement here as far back as 2000 BC, but the Hittites, Persians, Macedonians and Pontic (Black Sea) kings all left their mark. In the 11th century the Seljuks descended, followed by the Danişmends. In the late 13th century the Byzantine emperor John Comnenus tried to hold out here, but the Mongols and the Ottomans soon swept in, and by 1459 Kastamonu was secured as an Ottoman town.

Bizarrely, Kastamonu's modern history is inextricably linked to headgear: Atatürk launched his hat reforms here in 1925, banning the fez due to its religious connotations and insisting on the adoption of European-style *tifters*. You have to wonder how the great leader would have reacted to the rise of the baseball cap...

Orientation & Information

Kastamonu's otogar is 7km north of the city centre, reachable by dolmuş or taxi (€6). If you're coming in from Ankara get the bus to drop you in the centre near the old Nasrullah Köprüsü (Nasrullah Bridge).

The centre of town is Cumhuriyet Meydanı, with an imposing *valilik* (government building), a statue of Atatürk, the PTT and local bus stops. Despite the signs, there's no longer a tourist office here – ask around to see if a new one has opened yet.

Just to the north of Cumhuriyet Meydanı a stream passes under the Nasrullah Köprüsü. Most of the hotels are clustered around this bridge.

Sights

MUSEUMS

About 50m south of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, just off Cumhuriyet Caddesi, the **Ethnography Museum** (Liva Paşa Konağı Etnografya Müzesi; admission €1.10; ☞ 8.30am–5pm Tue–Sun) occupies the restored 1870 Liva Paşa Konağı. It's fully furnished as it would have been in Ottoman times and well worth a visit.

Nearby is the **Archaeology Museum** (☎ 214 1070; Cumhuriyet Caddesi; admission €1.10; ☞ 8.30am–4.30pm Tue–Sun), with predominantly Hellenistic and Roman finds from the area.

OTHER HISTORIC BUILDINGS

It may take a little while to notice Kastamonu's **castle** (kale; admission free; ☞ daylight hr), built on a tall rock behind the town, but once you do you'll want to take a look. Parts of it date from Byzantine times, but most of what you see belongs to the later Seljuk and Ottoman reconstructions. It's a steep 1km climb up through the streets of the old town.

Nasrullah Meydanı centres on the Ottoman **Nasrullah Camii** (1506) and the fine double fountain in front of it; the former **Munire Medresesi** at the rear now houses a cluster of craft shops. The area immediately west of Nasrullah Meydanı is filled with old market buildings, including the **Aşirefendi Hanı** and the **İsmail Bey Hanı**, built in 1466 and restored in 1972. Wander down any of the side streets in this area and you'll come across old *hamams*, fountains and other historic buildings. Look out in particular for the one gateway from the Seljuk **Yılanlı Külliye** (1272), a mosque complex that survived a fire in 1837.

Sleeping

Otel Selvi (☎ 214 1763; www.selviotel.com; Banka Sokak 10; s/d €14/25) Just north of Nasrullah Meydanı, the Selvi has a range of basic but serviceable rooms, some with castle views, and a tatty roof terrace. Breakfast is €1.10; you can save €5.60 per person by settling for a shared bathroom.

Otel İdrisioğlu (☎ 214 1757; Cumhuriyet Caddesi 21; s/d from €20/34) Right on the main road, the brown-toned reception here is the gateway to a selection of minutely differentiated rooms, all of which are quite adequate for an overnighter.

Otel Mütevellî (☎ 212 2018; www.mutevelli.com.tr; Cumhuriyet Caddesi 10; s/d €25/45) Across the road from Cumhuriyet Meydanı, this hotel is Kastamonu's best (or, um, only) decent central business hotel, with well-serviced rooms and a licensed rooftop restaurant.

Osmanlı Sarayı (Ottoman Palace; ☎ 214 8408; www.ottomanpalace.4t.com; Belediye Caddesi 81; s/d/tr €28/50/67) This former town hall (1898) is a historical attraction in itself, so it's great to see it so beautifully restored, and even better to get the chance to stay here. The 18 bedrooms have soaring wooden ceilings and bathrooms in authentic but newly fitted wooden closets. There's a basement restaurant and a rear tea garden.

Toprakçılar Konakları (☎ 212 1812; www.toprakcilar.com; Alemdar Sokak 2; s/d €45/67, ste €111) More restored Ottoman splendour, this time in a pair of old townhouses across the road from İsfendiyorbey Parkı. The owners are so protective of the original flooring that you're required to put plastic galoshes over your shoes. The courtyard restaurant has live music at weekends, when you'd probably be better off in the quieter second building.

Eating

Frenkşah Sultan Sofrası (☎ 212 1905; Nasrullah Meydanı; mains €1.10-2.80; ☎ 9am-10pm) Housed in Kastamonu's first Seljuk *hamam* (1262), this place quite literally sank over the years, until it was recovered and restored in 1965. You can dine on homemade *gözleme* in an alcove surrounded by handicrafts or sit outside on the square.

Ulugöl Kebap ve Pide Salonu (☎ 214 1196; Cumhuriyet Caddesi 19; mains €1.10-2.80; ☎ 9am-10pm) Local women and families seem besotted with this brown wood-clad corner eatery, which serves up pide, kebaps and *kiremit* (baked in earthenware) dishes.

Canoğlu (☎ 213 5583; Cumhuriyet Caddesi 18/F; mains €1.10-3.50; ☎ 9am-10pm) Towards the eastern end of the main street, Canoğlu is a *pastane* (patisserie), restaurant and fast-food joint in one, or in other words a pig-out waiting to happen.

Drinking

Kastamonu has two great **çay bahçesi** (tea gardens): one in the courtyard of the Munire Medresesi, surrounded by craft shops, and a second on the hillside just beneath the old clock tower, looking down over Cumhuriyet Meydanı and the old town. A taxi up the hill will cost you about €1.10; you can easily walk back down again.

Sevgi Çayevi (cnr İnebolu Caddesi & İzbeli Sokak) On the other side of the park from the Toprakçılar houses, this is a cosy teahouse in a perfectly restored building.

Getting There & Away

Kastamonu's otogar offers regular departures for Ankara (€11, four hours), İstanbul (€19.50, nine hours) and Samsun (€11, six hours). To get to Sinop (€8.50) you may have to change buses at Boyabat (€5.60, 1½ hours). There are hourly departures for Karabük (€5.60, 2½ hours), with some buses continuing to Safranbolu.

Minibuses for İnebolu (€4.50, two hours) also leave from the otogar.

AROUND KASTAMONU

Kasaba

The tiny village of Kasaba, 17km northwest of Kastamonu, is a pretty but unlikely place to find one of Turkey's finest surviving wooden mosques. The **Mahmud Bey Camii** was built in 1366; externally, only the lovely wooden doors stand out, but get the *imam* to unlock it and you'll find a stunning, recently restored interior with four painted wooden columns, a wooden gallery and fine painted ceiling rafters.

To get to Kasaba, take a minibus from Kastamonu otogar to Daday and ask to be let off at the road to Kasaba, just past Subaşı (€0.55). From there it's a 5km walk to Kasaba, where you'll have to ask around the village for the *imam*. A return taxi from Kastamonu, with waiting time, should cost €8.50, and the driver should know exactly where the *imam* lives.

Pınarbaşı

Pınarbaşı, a little hill town 73km from Kastamonu, is the main access town for the new

THE HITTITES

While the name may evoke images of skin-clad barbarians, the Hittites, like the Phrygians, were actually a sophisticated people who commanded a vast Middle Eastern empire, conquered Babylon and challenged the Egyptian pharaohs over 3000 years ago. Apart from a few written references in the Bible and Egyptian chronicles, there were few clues to their existence until 1834 when a French traveller, Charles Texier, stumbled on the ruins of the Hittite capital of Hattuşa, next to Boğazkale.

In 1905 excavations turned up notable works of art, most of them now in Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations. Also brought to light were the Hittite state archives, written in cuneiform on thousands of clay tablets. From these tablets, historians and archaeologists were able to construct a history of the Hittite empire.

The original Indo-European Hittites swept into Anatolia around 2000 BC, conquering the local Hatti, from whom they borrowed their culture and name. They established themselves at Hattuşa, the Hatti capital, and in the course of a millennium enlarged and beautified the city. From about 1375 to 1200 BC Hattuşa was the capital of a Hittite Empire that, at its height, even incorporated parts of Syria.

Never ones to skimp on religion, the Hittites worshipped over a thousand different deities; the most important were Teshub, the storm or weather god, and Hepatu, the sun goddess. The cuneiform tablets revealed a well-ordered society with more than 200 laws. The death sentence was prescribed for bestiality, while thieves got off more lightly provided they paid their victims compensation.

From about 1250 BC the Hittite empire seems to have gone into a decline, its demise hastened by the arrival of the Phrygians. Only the city-states of Syria survived until they, too, were swallowed by the Assyrians.

Küre Dağları National Park (Küre Dağları Milli Parkı; ☎ 0366-214 8663), a 37,000-hectare plateau that was gazetted in 2000. The local government is currently putting a lot of effort into marketing the 'Kure Mountains' as a tourist destination, and there are plenty of attractions for outdoors types who can take the time to explore under their own steam. Spots worth seeking out include the Ilica waterfall, Horma Canyon, and the Ilgarini 'Inn' and Ilica 'Hamam' caves. The spectacular 20km Valla Canyon, reached by walking through the forest 26km north of Pınarbaşı, is a great spot for rafting and trekking, but shouldn't be attempted without local assistance.

BOĞAZKALE, HATTUŞA & YAZILIKAYA

Out in the centre of the Anatolian plains, these intriguing sites were crucial to the whole development of the region, and now encapsulate a vital historical moment at the height of Hittite civilisation (see above). Hattuşa was the Hittite capital, while Yazılıkaya was a religious sanctuary with fine rock carvings. Both are now designated Unesco World Heritage sites.

The best base for visiting Hattuşa and Yazılıkaya is Boğazkale, a farming village

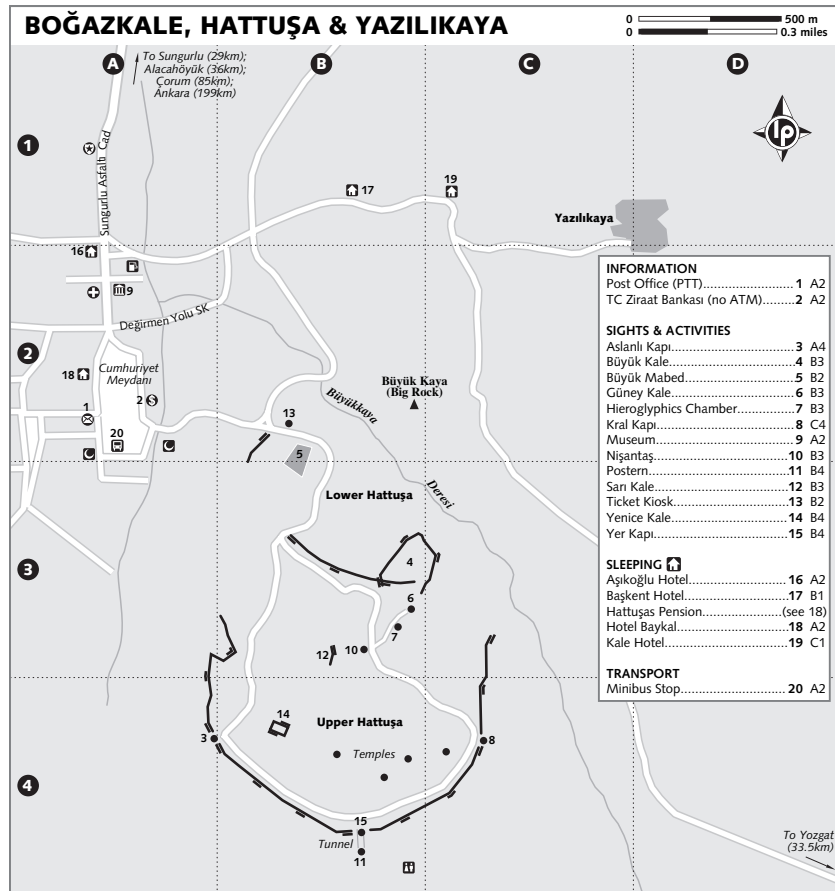
200km east of Ankara. Boğazkale has simple travellers' services; if you want something fancier you'll need to stay in Çorum, the uninspiring provincial capital. Alternatively if you start early enough in the morning you could visit the sites on a day trip out of Ankara.

Boğazkale

☎ 0364 / pop 2000

Base camp for the sites, Boğazkale trades on a spot of rural village charm, though it can get dusty in summer. If it's not too hot, you could happily visit the Hattuşa ruins on foot from here. Apart from the accommodation options, the only facilities are a couple of small shops, post office and bank (no ATM).

Boğazkale's small **museum** (admission €1.10; ☎ 8am-5pm) is on the left as you come into the village. Despite the listed hours it's sometimes closed on Monday. Unsurprisingly, Hittite artefacts dominate the collection, with examples of cuneiform tablets (including a state treaty between kings), signature seals, arrow and axe heads, and whimsically shaped vessels, though if you look closely at the Turkish/German labels you'll find that many items are actually copies, the originals having been spirited away to Ankara.



Hattuşa

It may be a bare hill now, but **Hattuşa** (admission €2; ☎ 8am–noon & 1–5pm) was once a busy and impressive city, defended by stone walls over 6km in length. Today the ruins consist mostly of reconstructed foundations, walls and a few rock carvings, but there are several interesting features preserved in situ, including a tunnel and some fine hieroglyphic inscriptions. Coach tours do pass through here, and weathered souvenir sellers pop up seemingly from nowhere, but often enough you'll be on your own. The rugged isolation somehow makes the site more atmospheric.

The site is theoretically closed for lunch, but in practice you can enter when you like

and let the ticket-seller catch up with you. The admission ticket is also valid for Yazılıkaya.

BÜYÜK MABED

The first site you come to, just past the ticket kiosk, is the vast complex of the **Büyük Mabed** (Great Temple), dating from the 14th century BC and destroyed around 1200 BC. It is the best preserved of the Hittite temples, but you'll need plenty of imagination.

Enter via the wide processional street; to your left (southwest) are the administrative quarters of the temple and a well-worn green cubic rock, supposedly one of only two in the world and a present from Ramses II after the signing of the Kadash peace treaty (see opposite).

The main temple, to your right, was surrounded by storerooms, thought to be several storeys high. In the early 20th century, huge clay storage jars and thousands of cuneiform tablets were found in these rooms. Look for the threshold stones at the base of some of the doorways to see the hole for the hinge-post and the arc worn by the door's movement. The temple is believed to have served as a ritual altar for Teshub, the storm god, and Hepatu, the sun goddess; the large stone base of one of their statues remains.

SARI KALE

About 250m south, past the **Büyük Mabed**, the road forks; take the right (west) fork and follow the winding road up the hillside. On your left in the midst of the old city you can see several ruined structures fenced off from the road, including the **Sarı Kale** (Yellow Castle), which may be a Phrygian fort on Hittite foundations.

CASTLE WALLS & GATES

From the fork in the road it's about 750m uphill to the **Aslanlı Kapı** (Lion Gate), where two stone lions (one badly defaced) protect the city from evil spirits. This is one of at least six gates in the city's defensive walls, though it may never have been completed. You can see the best preserved parts of the fortifications from here, stretching up the ridge south to Yer Kapı and east to Kral Kapı. These walls, built almost 4000 years ago, illustrate the Hittites' engineering ingenuity: their ability to build in sympathy with the terrain coupled with their ability to transform the landscape. Natural outcrops were appropriated as part of the walls, and massive ramparts were built to create artificial fortresses.

Just east of Aslanlı Kapı is **Yenice Kale**, where you can see how the Hittite engineers transformed a 30m-high rocky peak into a smooth terraced fortress.

From Aslanlı Kapı continue another 600m to the **Yer Kapı** or **Sfenksli Kapı** (Earth or Sphinx Gate), once defended by four great sphinxes, who are now watched over themselves in the museums of İstanbul and Berlin. The hill here is artificial, and a 70m-long **tunnel** runs through the walls to a **postern** on the southern side. As the 'true' arch was not invented until much later, the Hittites used a corbelled arch, two flat faces of stones leaning towards one another. Primitive or not, the arch has done

its job for millennia, and you can still pass down the stony tunnel as Hittite soldiers did, emerging from the postern. Afterwards you can climb back up via one of the **monumental stairways** on either side of the wide stone glacis, and enjoy the wonderful views over the site and its surroundings.

Head northeast down the slope from the Yer Kapı, past some of the upper city's 28 **temples** on the left, and you'll reach the **Kral Kapı** (King's Gate), named after the regal-looking figure in the relief carving. The one here is an obvious copy; the original was removed for safekeeping to the Ankara museum. For the record, the figure is not a king at all, but a Hittite warrior god protecting the city.

NIŞANTAŞ & GÜNEY KALE

Heading downhill again you'll come to the **Nişantaş**, a rock with a long Hittite inscription cut into it, which dates it to the time of Suppiluliuma II (1215–1200 BC), the last Hittite king.

Immediately opposite, a path leads up to the excavated **Güney Kale** (Southern Fortress) and to what may have been a royal tomb, with a fine (fenced off) **hieroglyphics chamber** with human figure reliefs.

BÜYÜK KALE

The ruins of the **Büyük Kale** (Great Fortress) are 200m downhill from the Nişantaş. Although most of the site has been excavated, many of the older layers of development have been re-covered to protect them, so what you see today can be hard to decipher. This elaborate fortress held the royal palace and the Hittite state archives. The archives, discovered in 1906, contained about 2500 pieces, including the Kadash peace treaty between the Hittite monarch Hattusili III and the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, written in cuneiform on a clay tablet.

From the fortress it's about 1km back to the ticket kiosk.

Yazılıkaya

Yazılıkaya means 'Inscribed Rock', and that's exactly what you'll find in these outdoor art galleries, just under 3km from Hattuşa. Yazılıkaya was a Hittite religious sanctuary for years; in later Hittite times (13th century BC) a monumental gateway and temple structure were built out the front, and it's these

foundations that you see as you approach from the car park.

There are two natural **rock galleries**: the larger one to the left, which was the empire's holiest religious sanctuary; and a narrower one, with the best preserved carvings, to the right. This latter gallery is thought to be the burial place of King Tudhaliya IV (r 1250–1220 BC), possibly the founder of this gallery, and his family. Together they form the largest known Hittite rock sanctuary anywhere, well enough preserved to make you wish you could have seen the carvings when they were new.

In the large gallery, Chamber A, there are fast-fading reliefs of numerous goddesses and pointy-hatted gods marching in procession. Heads and feet are shown in profile but the torso is shown front on, a common feature of Hittite relief art. In this gallery you'll see the superb large relief of Tudhaliya IV, with a cap and long cape, standing on two mountains. On the far wall look out for another large, worn relief, that of Teshub, the storm god, standing on two deified mountains (depicted as men). Beside him is his (better preserved) wife Hepatu, the sun goddess, standing on the back of a panther; their son, Sharruma, and possibly her two daughters, follow behind her. The rock ledges were probably used for offerings or sacrifices and the basins for libations.

Leave the large gallery and head to the narrow gallery of Chamber B, where the carvings are better protected from the elements; supposedly you should ask permission of the winged lion-headed guard depicted by the entrance before penetrating his lair. Here you'll see another procession of scimitar-wielding gods and a detailed relief of the sword god, the sword's handle consisting of four lion's heads (two pointing towards the blade, one to the left and the other to the right); the central figure at the top of the handle depicts the god himself. Nearby is another relief of Sharruma with his arm protectively around Tudhaliya IV. The rock-cut ledges presumably held crematory urns.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Baykal/Hattuşaş Pension (☎ 452 2013; www.hattusha.com; Cumhuriyet Meydanı 22; pension s/d/tr from €7/12/18, hotel d/tr €30/45). This friendly dual-identity establishment is right in the heart of the village, overlooking the square. The hotel rooms don't offer much in the way of extras

but are neat and comfortable. The pension is scrappier, with shared bathrooms and rural artefacts all over the place, but has that much more character. Breakfast costs €2. Ahmet, the proprietor, speaks good English and knows all there is to know about the area.

Başkent Hotel (☎ 452 2037; www.baskenthattusha.com; Yazılıkaya Yolu Üzeri 45; camping per tent €8.50, s/d €10/20; ☎ Apr-Oct) Up the hill on the road to Yazılıkaya, the Başkent goes for a modern motel style, complete with long porch to take in the views. Bathrooms are variable but the rooms are decent enough. The terraced camp site can sleep up to 60 and accommodate 50 campervans.

Kale Hotel (☎ 452 3126; www.bogazkoyhattusha.com; Yazılıkaya Yolu Üzeri; d/tr €17/28; ☎ Apr-Oct) The Kale, occupying a perfect spot 400m further along the Yazılıkaya road, has big, light rooms with cheerful floral linen; the top ones at the front have good views and some have small balconies. The leafy **camp site** (per site €5.60) has OK views, and the restaurant mainly caters for groups.

Aşıkoğlu Hotel (☎ 452 2004; www.hattusas.com; r from €20, ste €50; ☎) Just outside the village, the Aşıkoğlu offers a great variety of accommodation: plump for a three-star room with spotless bathroom and TV; a two-star room in the yellow pension section, without TV; or the big 'Marilyn Monroe' suite. Three basic **camping areas** (per site €5.60) are also available. English and German are spoken. In summer, the hotel may fill up with tour groups.

Getting There & Away

To get to Boğazkale by public transport, you'll need to go via Sungurlu. Buses from Ankara to Sungurlu (€5.60, three hours, hourly) sometimes drop their passengers on the highway rather than at Sungurlu otogar; lurking taxi drivers will then deny the existence of any dolmuşes to Boğazkale. To be sure of making a connection, travel from Ankara with Hattusus buses (ticket counter 37 at the otogar); they run a beat-up *servis* into Sungurlu that drops you right by the Boğazkale dolmuş stand.

During the week minibuses run from Sungurlu to Boğazkale whenever they fill up (€1.10, 30 minutes); at weekends you may have to hitch or take a taxi for around €8 to €10.

Travellers coming from Cappadocia should note that direct minibuses from Yozgat to Boğazkale are thin on the ground; you're

probably better off going to Kırıkkale (east of Ankara) and changing.

Getting Around

To get around Hattuşaş and Yazılıkaya without your own transport you'll need to walk or hire a taxi. It's 1km from the Aşıkoğlu Hotel to the Hattuşaş ticket kiosk. From there the road looping around the site from the ticket kiosk (not including Yazılıkaya) is another 5km. The walk itself takes at least an hour, plus time spent exploring the ruins, so figure on spending a good three hours here. Take drinking water and start early in the day before the sun is too hot, as there's little shade.

Local taxis from Hattuşaş will take you all the way around for about €12. You may want to haggle for an all-day tour including Hattuşaş, Yazılıkaya and Alacahöyük.

Yazılıkaya is just under 3km from Hattuşaş and about the same distance back to Boğazkale.

ALACAHÖYÜK

The tiny farming hamlet of Alacahöyük is 36km north of Boğazkale and 52km south of Çorum. It's a very old site, settled from about 4000 BC, but so little remains that it's really only worth the effort if you've got your own transport and have some time spare after Hattuşaş. As at the other Hittite sites, movable monuments have been taken to the museum in Ankara, although there is a small site museum and a few worn sphinxes have been left in place.

The **museum** (admission €1.10; ☎ 8am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm) is right by the ruins, displaying artists' impressions of the site at various points in its history and finds from the Chalcolithic and Old Bronze ages. A glass case shows the 15 layers of Alacahöyük's buried history, from 5500 to 600 BC.

At the ruins, the **monumental gate** has two eyeless sphinxes guarding the door. The detailed reliefs (copies, of course) show musicians, acrobats, animals for sacrifice and the Hittite king and queen – all part of festivities and ceremonies dedicated to Teshub, shown here as a bull. The rest of the site is pretty extensive but there's not much to see apart from foundations, and all the detailed signage is in Turkish only.

There's a small **café** with hay-bale seats at the site entrance, perfect for a post-ruins drink or snack.

Getting There & Away

There's no public transport between Alacahöyük and Boğazkale. If you're really keen, you could take a bus or dolmuş from Çorum to Alaca and another from Alaca to Alacahöyük (one or two services per day, none at weekends). Taxis can take you from Boğazkale to Alacahöyük, wait for an hour and then run you to Alaca or the busy Sungurlu-Çorum highway for around €20.

ÇORUM

☎ 0364 / pop 161,400

Set on an alluvial plain on a branch of the Çorum River, Çorum is an unremarkable provincial capital, resting on its modest fame as the chickpea capital of Turkey – proof, perhaps, that pride comes before a felafel. The town's market is crammed with *leblebiciler* (chickpea roasters) and sacks upon sacks of the chalky little pulses, all sorted according to fine distinctions obvious only to a chickpea dealer.

If you're travelling north or east from Boğazkale you may have to change buses in Çorum, and the town can also be a handy base for seeing the Hittite sites.

Orientation & Information

The clock tower (1894) marks the centre of Çorum, with the PTT and *belediye* close by. The otogar is 1.5km southwest of the clock tower along the main drag, İnönü Caddesi, where there are a few banks with ATMs.

Çorum Museum

Close to the otogar is the **Çorum Museum** (admission €1.10; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Tue-Sun), which has a typical collection of Hittite, Byzantine-Roman and Ottoman exhibits and ethnography. To find it, leave the otogar's main entrance, turn left, then left again at the traffic roundabout and walk a few hundred metres; it's just south of the Ticaret Meslek Lisesi.

Sleeping & Eating

Most hotels are along İnönü Caddesi, either near the otogar or the clock tower.

Otel Konfor Palas (☎ 224 2744; Kubbeli Camii Karşısı; s/d/tr/q with shared bathroom €9/16/23/30, s/d/tr €12.50/19/28) Calling your budget hotel the 'Comfort Palace' may be stretching it a little, but for a bright, cheap bed off the central pedestrian zone we're quite prepared to let it go.

Hotel Sarıgül (☎ 224 2012; Azap Ahmet Sokak 18; s/d/tr €22/34/45) Despite some frankly inhumane deployment of greens, limes and mauves, this smart hotel behind the post office is good for a night or two, with bar, disco and live music in the restaurant.

Anitta Otel (☎ 213 8515; www.anittahotel.com; İnönü Caddesi 30; s/d €35/55; 🍷) A terracotta three-star block standing on its own opposite the otogar, the Anitta has an inflated sense of its own worth (you may have to haggle), but at least this means its standards stay high.

Katipler Konağı (☎ 224 9651; Karakeçili Mahallesi, 2 Sokak 20; mains €2-6; 🍷 11am-10pm) The best eating experience for miles, spread across two floors of a restored Ottoman house. The highlight is the selection of local dishes such as *çatal asi* (lentil and barley) soup and *keşkek* (mutton and coarse-grained wheat), washed down with delicious black mulberry juice. To find it from the Sarıgül, turn left, cross the road and turn right; take the side street behind the mosque straight ahead, turn left at the end and it's on the right.

Getting There & Away

Being on the main Ankara-Samsun highway, Çorum has good bus connections. Regular buses go to Alaca (€2.50, 45 minutes), Amasya (€4, two hours), Ankara (€6.70, four hours), Kayseri (€9.50, 4¼ hours), Samsun (€6.70, three hours) and Sungurlu (€2.50, 1¼ hours).

AMASYA

☎ 0358 / pop 74,400

Set in a ravine hemmed between two great ridges of rock, bisected by the Yeşilirmak River, lined with fairytale Ottoman houses, Amasya has a certain fantasy air about it, an ethereal quality to the organic loveliness of the location that makes it feel almost as if it shouldn't exist at all. Luckily, though, it does.

Locals show great pride in their town, which they are anxious to share with any visitors fortunate enough to come this way.

Capital of the modern province of the same name, Amasya was once the capital of a great Pontic kingdom. Its dramatic setting complements its numerous historic buildings, especially the rock-hewn tombs of the kings of Pontus and some fine old mosques and *medreses*. Against this rugged backdrop, the sensitively restored half-timbered houses

seem even more attractive, whether lit by sunlight or shrouded in snow.

Amasya is also famed for its apples, which give autumn visitors just one more thing to sink their teeth into. A walk along the river can be all you need to fall in love with the place.

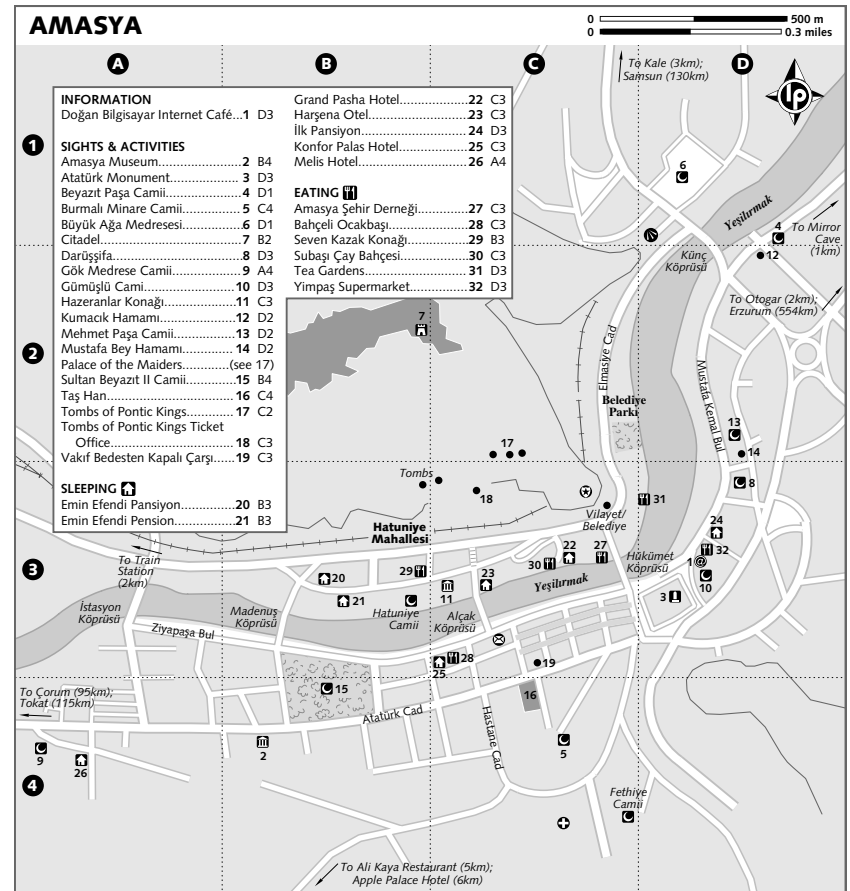
History

Originally known as Hakmiş under the Hittites, the Amasya area has been inhabited continuously since around 5500 BC. The city was conquered by Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC, then became the capital of a successor kingdom ruled by a family of Persian satraps (provincial governors). By the time of King Mithridates II (281 BC), the Kingdom of Pontus was entering its golden age and dominated a large part of Anatolia.

During the latter part of Pontus' flowering, Amasya was the birthplace of Strabo (c 63 BC to AD 25), the world's first geographer. Perhaps feeling restricted by the surrounding mountains, Strabo left home to travel in Europe, west Asia and north Africa, writing 47 history and 17 geography books as a result of his journeys. Though most of his history books have been lost, we know something of their content because many other classical writers chose to quote him.

Amasya's golden age ended when the Romans decided to take control of Anatolia (47 BC); it was supposedly the conquest of Amasya that prompted Julius Caesar's immortal words *Veni, vidi, vici* - 'I came, I saw, I conquered'. After Rome came the Byzantines, the Seljuks (1075), the Mongols (mid-13th century) and the notional republic of Abazhistan. In Ottoman times, Amasya was an important military base and testing ground for the sultans' heirs; it also became a centre of Islamic study, with as many as 18 *medreses* and 2000 theological students by the 19th century.

After WWI, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) escaped occupied İstanbul and came to Amasya, where he secretly met with friends on 12 June 1919 and hammered out the basic principles of the Turkish struggle for independence. The monument in the main square commemorates the meeting and depicts the unhappy state of Anatolian Turks before the revolution. Each year, Amasyalıs commemorate the meeting with a week-long art and culture festival.



Orientation & Information

The otogar is at the northeastern edge of town and the train station at the northwestern edge. It's 2km from either to the main square, marked by the statue of Atatürk and a bridge across the river. The majority of everyday amenities are on the south bank of the river, but the north bank is the prettiest part of town, with the tombs of the Pontic kings, most of the Ottoman half-timbered houses and the castle. You may want to take a minibus or taxi to and from the otogar and train station; otherwise everything is within walking distance.

Despite all the signs, there's currently no tourist office, though it's hoped one will open soon. The serviceable **Doğan Bilgisayar İnternet**

Café (Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı 10) is just north of the main square.

Sights & Activities

PONTIC TOMBS

Looming above the northern bank of the river is a sheer rock face with the conspicuous rock-cut **Tombs of the Pontic Kings** (Kral Kaya Mezarları; admission €1.10; 🕒 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-5.30pm Nov-Mar). The tombs, cut deep into the rock as early as the 4th century BC, were used for cult worship of the deified rulers. There are 18 tombs in these valleys, all of them empty.

Climb the well-marked steps to the ticket office. Just past the office the path divides: turn left to find a couple of tombs reached via a

THE LEGEND OF FERHAT & ŞİRİN

Amasya is the setting for one of Turkey's best-loved folk tales, the tragic love story of Ferhat and Şirin.

In its simplest form, it's the Eastern equivalent of Romeo and Juliet: the young *nakis* (wall painting) craftsman Ferhat falls in love with Şirin, the sister of sultan-queen Mehmeşe Banu, but the sultana disapproves of the match, so she demands that the young suitor carve a channel through the mountains to bring water to her drought-struck city. In the course of his Herculean labours, Ferhat hears that his beloved has died and kills himself in grief; Şirin, very much alive, finds his body and commits suicide in her turn. When they're buried together, tears flow from the graves and bring Amasya the water it so desperately needs.

Of course, like all true legends there's no definitive telling of the story, and all kinds of interpretations of the myth have been offered over the years, in print and on stage or screen. Celebrated playwright Nazım Hikmet offers a more complex reading in which the lovers are undone by Ferhat's stubborn refusal to abandon his ill-fated project, turning it from a superhuman feat of love into an all-consuming act of pride and folly.

Elsewhere you might have across the much-performed Karagöz puppet rendition, where the lovers achieve a happy ending by killing a wicked witch, or Jale Karabekir's 2001 feminist stage version, which removes Ferhat entirely, defining him through absence in the fears and desires shaping the two sisters at the heart of the story.

Whichever you prefer, Amasya is the place to come to ponder the poignant lessons of the story amid the epic scenery that inspired it. A statue of the two lovers can be seen on the south bank of the river in town, and you can also visit the Ferhat Su Kanalı, an actual 6km-long water channel that feeds the imagination perfectly.

rock-hewn tunnel, or right to find more tombs and the remnants of the **Palace of the Maidens** (Kızlar Sarayı). Though there were indeed harems full of maidens here, the palace that stood on this rock terrace was that of the kings of Pontus, and later of the Ottoman governors. In the cliff behind the terrace are several more tombs. You'll have to pass through the hole in the wall and scramble up the rock-cut stairs to get to them, but the views over the town make the effort worthwhile. You can walk around the tombs to see how they have been cut away from the rock face, but beware of couples in dark corners!

Another Pontic tomb, the **Mirror Cave** (Aynalı Mağara), is apart from the others on the road in from Samsun. It's worth visiting if you have time and is a pleasant 4km walk from the main square; follow the river north until you cross the Yeşilirmak Bridge, then look for the signpost on your right.

Although built during Pontic times, it's likely that this tomb was later used as a chapel by the Byzantines who painted the fast-fading frescoes inside. With a Greek inscription high on the façade, this is one of the few tombs to have any type of adornment. If you're feeling lazy, a taxi will run you there and back from the centre for about €5.

CITADEL

Above the tombs is the *kale* (citadel) or Harşena castle, perched precariously atop the cliffs and offering magnificent views. The remnants of the walls date from Pontic times, perhaps around the time of King Mithridates. The fortress was repaired by the Ottomans and again in the late 1980s. On a ledge just below the citadel is an old Russian cannon that is fired during Ramazan to mark the end of the daily fast.

To reach the citadel, cross the Künç Köprüsü and follow the Samsun road for about 1km to a street on the left marked 'Kale'. It's 1.7km up the mountainside to a small car park, then another steep 15-minute climb to the summit, marked by a flagpole. Travelers of either sex are advised not to go up unaccompanied.

AMASYA MUSEUM

Amasya's **museum** (☎ 218 4513; Atatürk Caddesi; admission €1.10; ☎ 8-11.45am & 1-4.45pm Tue-Sun) is well worth a visit. Notable exhibits include the famous Statuette of Amasya, a bronze figure of the Hittite god Teshub, with pointed cap and huge almond-shaped eyes; wooden doors taken from the Gök Medrese Camii, showing the progression between Seljuk and

Ottoman carving; and displays on Ottoman crafts such as rope-making. English signage is good throughout.

The highlight, though, is the tiled Seljuk tomb in the garden, which contains a unique collection of gruesome mummies dating from the İlkhan period. The bodies, mummified without removing the organs, were discovered beneath the Burmalı Minare Cami. None of it's for squeamish or young eyes, but the remains of a baby girl, disintegrated into three pieces, are particularly hard to look at.

HATUNİYE MAHALLESİ

Immediately north of the river, the Hatuniye Mahallesi is Amasya's wonderful neighbourhood of restored old Ottoman houses, interspersed with good modern reproductions to make a harmonious whole.

Just past the steps up to the Pontic Tombs is the **Hazeranlar Konağı** (☎ 218 4018; admission €1.10; ☎ 8.30-11.45am & 1.15-4.45pm Tue-Sun), constructed in 1865 and restored in 1979. The restored rooms are fully furnished in period style and have models to illustrate their use. Whether you'll enjoy the Directorate of Fine Arts gallery in the basement probably depends on what's showing (historical photos at time of research).

HAMAMS

Amasya has several venerable *hamams* that are still in operation. On the northern side of the Darüşşifa is the 1436 Ottoman **Mustafa Bey Hamamı** (☎ 6-10am & 4-11pm for men, 10am-4pm for women; full wash €6), while not far away is the 1495 **Kumack Hamamı** (☎ 6-10am & 4-11pm for men, 10am-4pm for women; full wash €6).

OTHER SIGHTS

You could spend a very pleasant couple of hours exploring the minor sights of Amasya, which are spread out along both banks of the river. The advantage of the south bank is that you can see the north bank from it, essential for the best views during the day and especially at night, when the castle and rock tombs are artily lit in neon. The bulk of Amasya's old religious buildings are also on this side of the river.

South of the River

At the eastern end of the south bank, near the Künç Köprüsü, is the **Bayezıt Paşa Camii**,

an early Ottoman mosque (1419), following a twin-domed plan that was a forebear in style to the famous Yeşil Cami in Bursa. It's closed except at prayer times, but its most interesting features are external anyway.

Follow the riverbank west along and you'll come to the pretty **Mehmet Paşa Camii**, built in 1486 by Lala Mehmet Paşa, tutor to Şehzade Ahmet, the son of Sultan Beyazıt II. Don't miss the beautiful marble *mimber* (pulpit). The complex originally included the builder's tomb, an *imaret* (soup kitchen), *tabhane* (hospital), *hamam* and *handan* (inn).

Continue west and on the left you'll see the **Darüşşifa** (Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı) or Bimarhane, which was built as a mental hospital by İlduş Hatun, wife of the İlkhanid Sultan Olcaytu, in 1309 and may have been the first place to try to treat mental disorders with music. The İlkhanes were the successors to Ghengis Khan's Mongols, who had defeated the Anatolian Seljuks. Their architecture reflects motifs borrowed from many conquered peoples, and the building is based on the plan of a Seljuk *medrese*. Today the building is often used for exhibitions, concerts and events.

A bit further along the river is Amasya's main square with its imposing memorial to the War of Independence. Perched on a rise to the eastern side of the main square is the **Gümüşlü Cami** (Silvery Mosque; 1326), the earliest Ottoman mosque in the town. It was rebuilt in 1491 after an earthquake, in 1612 after a fire, and again in 1688, then added to in 1903 and restored yet again in 1988.

If you keep walking west and head inland from the river you'll come to the **Vakıf Bedesten Kapalı Çarşı** (Covered Market), built in 1483 and still in use today. Keep heading west along Atatürk Caddesi and on the left you'll see the partly ruined **Taş Han** (1758), an Ottoman caravanserai. Behind it is the **Burmalı Minare Camii** (Spiral Minaret Mosque), built by the Seljuks between 1237 and 1247, with elegant spiral carving on the minaret.

Keep walking west and you'll come to the graceful **Sultan Beyazıt II Camii** (1486), Amasya's largest *külliyeye* (mosque complex), with a *medrese*, fountain, *imaret* and *kütüphane* (library). Finally, you'll reach the **Gök Medrese Camii** (Mosque of the Sky-Blue Seminary), which was built from 1266 to 1267 for Seyfettin Torumtay, the Seljuk governor of Amasya. The *eyvan* (vaulted recess) serving as its main portal is unique in Anatolia, while the *kümbet*

(domed tomb) was once covered in *gök* (sky-blue) tiles, hence the name.

North of the River

Across the Künc Köprüsü on the north bank of the river is the impressive octagonal **Büyük Ağa Medresesi**, built in 1488 by Sultan Beyazıt II's chief white eunuch Hüseyin Ağa. It still serves as a seminary for boys who are training to be *hafız* (theologians who have memorised the entire Koran) and is not open to the public.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Like Safranbolu, Amasya is one of those places where it's worth paying a bit more to be able to stay in a real Ottoman house, but at least one budget option is far from terrible.

Konfor Palas Hotel (☎ 218 1260; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 2/B; s/d/tr €11/20/25) If you can overlook stained carpets and minor design flaws, these small rooms are comfortable enough, and the caretaker may somehow remind you of your dad... Back and side rooms avoid the noise from the cafés outside. Breakfast is not included.

İlk Pansiyon (☎ 218 1689; Hiit Sokak 1; r €17-50) Who says you have to pay imperial measures to stay in an Ottoman house? This restored mansion is one of the best in Turkey, eschewing false luxury in favour of authentic-feeling, characterful rooms. The five airy, spacious salons have low-lying beds and simple bathrooms (one hidden Tardis-style in a closet), while the solitary box room off the leafy courtyard is perfect for couples.

MIDRANGE

Emin Efendi Konakları (☎ 212 0852; www.eminefendi.com.tr; Hazeranlar Sokak 73; pension s/d €20/31, hotel s/d €34/50; ☎) Whatever your taste, the two Emin Efendi properties seem determined to cater for it – the new hotel building (Emin Efendi Pension) offers an intelligent interpretation of traditional style with modern comforts, while the original pension down the road (Emin Efendi Pansiyon) has exactly the right amount of clutter and Ottoman features, plus a perfect courtyard.

Grand Pasha Hotel (☎ 212 4158; www.grandpasha.hotel.com; Tefvîk Hafız Çıkmazi 5; r €20-67) With 120 years of history behind it, this high-ceilinged house on the river has more than enough Ottoman quirks to keep a stay interesting. If the novelty

wears off, there's always the live music in the courtyard restaurant.

Melis Hotel (☎ 212 3650; www.melishotel.net; Toruntay Sokak 135; s/d €28/42; ☎) Away from the river but near the museum, this tall, narrow hotel-guesthouse is crammed from top to bottom with rustic artefacts. The individually decorated rooms are colourful and clean, there are wood floors and furniture throughout, and the rooftop terrace makes the perfect spot for an evening wind-down.

Harşena Otel (☎ 218 3979; www.harsena.com; PTT Karşısı; s/d €30/55; ☎) Some choices are harder than others. Will you go for the smart but unexceptional modern building, or the creakingly authentic old Amasya house overhanging the river? Well, duh. In case you're undecided, there's a courtyard and café-bar-restaurant on the old side, too.

TOP END

Apple Palace Hotel (☎ 219 0019; www.theapplepalece.com.tr; Vermiş Sokak 7; s/d €50/80; ☎) Amasya's solitary four-star hotel lives in splendid isolation on the hillside south of the river, overlooking the town and the Pontic tombs. Rooms are swish and comfortable, while the facilities are constantly improving and the disco is one of Amasya's only major night-spots. Shuttle buses ferry guests to and from town.

Eating & Drinking

Apart from the hotel restaurants listed above, there are several good cafés and restaurants in Hatuniye Mahallesi and a smattering of more basic options around town.

Bahçeli Ocakbaşı (☎ 218 5692; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı; mains €1.40-3.50; ☎ 8am-10pm) This is one of half a dozen cafés competing amiably for business on the lively, crowded courtyard outside the Konfor Palas. It also has the biggest sign, which must mean something.

Yimpaş Supermarket (☎ 212 7184; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 16; meals €3; ☎ 9am-8pm) More than just a place to get your groceries, the big new Yimpaş has its own rooftop café for light meals and ravine views. Oh, and of course you can get your groceries there.

Seven-Kazak Konağı (Figani Sokak 1; drinks from €0.30; ☎ 11am-10pm; ☎) It's not on the river and the basement can get almost rowdy without the calming influence of daylight, but one look at the walled courtyard and you won't want to sip tea anywhere else.

Ali Kaya Restaurant (☎ 218 1505; Çakallar Mevkii; mains €1.70-4; ☎ 11am-10pm) This simple licensed restaurant, up near the Apple Palace, offers breathtaking views of Amasya. Come during the day or just before sunset to do them justice. If there's a group of you, ring ahead for a free pick-up; otherwise a taxi will set you back €3 each way.

Amasya Şehir Derneği (☎ 218 1013; mains €2.50-6; ☎ 11am-11pm) Overlooking the river next to the chunky clock tower by the Hükümet Köprüsü, this three-tiered clubhouse has the best balconies in town, mostly reserved for Amasya's movers and shakers (ie men in suits). Foreign tourists also get a free pass to enjoy the grill menu, live music and frog chorus.

The **Subaşı Çay Bahçesi** (☎ 212 0852; Tefvîk Hafız Çıkmazi), opposite the Grand Pasha Hotel, is the north bank's most popular café garden. Several more tea gardens line the river north of Belediye Parkı.

Getting There & Away

Amasya is not far off the busy route between Ankara and Samsun, so buses are frequent. Some bus companies maintain ticket offices on the main square; a *dolmuş* to the otogar costs €0.40.

To get to Safranbolu (€17, nine hours), take an early morning minibus to Gerede, alight at the Karabük junction and flag down a bus to Karabük. From Karabük take another minibus to Safranbolu – a long day!

Otherwise there are daily buses to Adıyaman (for Nemrut Dağı; €25, 10 hours), Ankara (€14, five hours), Çorum (€5.60, two hours), İstanbul (€20, 10 hours), Kayseri (€17, eight hours), Malatya (€17, eight hours), Nevşehir (€20, nine hours), Samsun (€5.60, two hours), Sivas (€11, 3½ hours) and Tokat (€5.60, two hours).

Amasya **train station** (☎ 218 1239) is served by two daily trains between Samsun (€2.80, 5½ hours) and Sivas (three hours).

TOKAT

☎ 0356 / pop 114,000

Like Amasya, Tokat is essentially laid out in a straight line, backed by some rugged grey rocks, though the busy main street is never going to live up to Amasya's riverside charm. On the plus side, Tokat is still liberally sprinkled with crumbling ruins, many of them below ground level – the whole town is thought to have risen by up to 5m between

the 13th and 20th centuries, as local silt and earthquake debris were carried down into the valley by rain and floods.

As well as these architectural treats, which include the Gök Medrese and the wonderful Latifioğlu Konağı, kebab fetishists should stop here to sample the amazing local rendition of the Turkish classic.

History

Tokat's history, as you'd expect, is a rollcall of Anatolian conquerors: the Hittites and Phrygians, the Medes and the Persians, the empire of Alexander the Great, the Kingdom of Pontus, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Danişmend Turks, the Seljuks and the Mongol İlkhans all marched through here at some point.

By the time of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, Tokat was Anatolia's sixth-largest city and an important trade routes; the approach roads are littered with Seljuk bridges and caravanserais testifying to its importance. However, the Mongols and İlhanid sultans reversed the trend around the mid-13th century, leaving the city disinherited.

Only in 1402, when the Ottomans took the area, did Tokat resume its role as an important trading entrepot, agricultural town and copper-mining centre. In the 19th century a local boy, Gazi Osman Paşa, even rose from a poor background to become one of the Empire's greatest generals, and Tokat's main street still bears his name.

Significant non-Muslim populations (Armenian, Greek, Jewish) were in charge of Tokat's commerce until the cataclysm of WWI, and there's still a small but active Jewish community.

Orientation

The town centre is Cumhuriyet Meydanı, a large square where you'll find the *vilayet* (provincial government headquarters), *belediye*, PTT and Tarihi Ali Paşa Hamam. There's a shopping centre underneath.

Looming above the town is a rocky promontory crowned by the obligatory ancient fortress. Beneath it cluster the bazaar and many of the town's old Ottoman houses.

The main street, Gazi Osman Paşa (universally abbreviated to GOP) Bulvarı, runs north from the main square past the Gök Medrese to a traffic roundabout. The otogar is 1.7km from Cumhuriyet Meydanı. Local minibuses

TOKAT

0 500 m
0 0.3 miles

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To Sulussaray (67km)
Sivas (105km)

Information

Sentez Bilisim Internet (GOP Bulvarı 148/B; per hr €0.45; ☎ 9am-midnight) Above Safi Döviz.

Tourist office (☎ 211 8252; Taş Han, GOP Bulvarı 138/I; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri May-Nov) No maps, no brochures, no English spoken!

Sights & Activities

GÖK MEDRESE

Constructed in 1277 by Pervane Muhinedin Süleyman, a local potentate, after the fall of the Seljuks and the coming of the Mongols, the **Gök Medrese** (Blue Seminary; GOP Bulvarı; admission €1.10; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) was used as a hospital until 1811; it's now the town's small museum. A number of informative signs are translated into respectably intelligible English.

Gök is an old Turkic word for sky-blue, and the building's blue tiles occasioned its name. Very few of these are left on the façade, now well below street level, but there are enough on the interior courtyard walls to give an idea of what it must have looked like in its glory days. Museum exhibits include Stone and Bronze Age artefacts from excavations at Maşat Höyük, icons and relics from Tokat's churches (look out for John the Baptist carrying his own head on a platter), dervish ceremonial tools and weapons (fancy a 'mystic awl' or 'stones of submission?'), Korans and Islamic calligraphy. An ethnographic section on costume and textiles explains the local art of *yazma* (headscarf) making.

The seminary contains the **Tomb of 40 Maidens** (Kırkkızlar Türbesi), actually an assembly of 20 tombs, probably of the seminary's founders, though popular belief would have it that they are the tombs of 40 girls.

TAŞ HAN & AROUND

Virtually next door to the Gök Medrese is the **Taş Han** (1614-30; GOP Bulvarı; ☎ 8am-7pm), an Ottoman caravanserai and workshop. The street-facing shops are all fully occupied, but the courtyard units are empty, which seems a waste of such prime real estate.

Behind the Taş Han are streets lined with old half-timbered **Ottoman houses**. Shops offer copperware, *yazmalar* (headscarves), and local kilims and carpets, some with Afghani designs assimilated from the many refugees

who settled here during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

who settled here during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

In the fruit and vegetable market, across GOP Bulvarı from the Taş Han, stands the **Hatuniye Camii** and *medrese*, dating from 1485 and the reign of Sultan Beyazıt II.

A few hundred metres north of the Taş Han, on the same side of the street, look out for the octagonal **Sümbül Baba Türbesi**, a Seljuk-style tomb dating from 1251. Beside it a road leads up around 1km to the **citadel**, of which little remains but the fine view. Solo women travellers should not go up there alone.

ALI PAŞA HAMAM

Ask around the steam rooms of Turkey's thousands of *hamams*, and you'll probably find that one of Tokat's biggest exports is its expert masseurs, who seem to get just about everywhere. Assuming there are actually any left in town, it seems like the perfect excuse to go for a scrub'n'rub at the wonderful **Ali Paşa Hamam** (☎ 214 4453; GOP Bulvarı; ☎ 5am-11pm for men, 9am-5pm for women). These baths, under domes studded with glass bulbs to admit natural light, were built in 1572 for Ali Paşa, one of the sons of Süleyman the Magnificent. They have separate bathing areas for men and women, and the full works should cost around €8.

LATIFOĞLU KONAĞI

South of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, don't miss the **Latifoğlu Konağı** (☎ 214 3684; GOP Bulvarı; admission €0.55; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun), one of the most splendid 19th-century houses on show in Turkey. Its large, gracious rooms are surrounded with low *sedirs* (bench seating that doubles as beds); in the bedrooms, bedding was taken up and stored in cabinets during the day, Ottoman-style. The most spectacular rooms are upstairs: the Paşa Odası (Pasha's Room), for the men of the house, and the Havuzbaşı for the women. The light, airy upstairs hall would have been used in summer only.

SULUSOKAK CADDESİ

Modern Tokat has spun round on its axis and now runs north-south where once it used to run east-west. A happy consequence of this is that many of its old buildings still survive, though abandoned and in ruins, along Sulusokak Caddesi, which was the main thoroughfare before the Samsun-Sivas road was improved in the 1960s.

Sulusokak Caddesi runs west from the north side of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, past the grand **Ali Paşa Camii**, which dates back to 1566. Continue along the road and on the right you'll see the tiny **Ali Tusi Türbesi**, a Seljuk work dating back to 1233 and incorporating some fine blue tiles. Next up, also on the right, is the crumbling wooden **Katircilar Han**, with some vast pots lying in its courtyard.

On the left you'll then see the locked remains of the **Yağbasın Medresesi**, a Danişmend work dating back to 1145-47; the workshops behind it are full of antique dealers. Directly across the road are the extensive remains of the old *bedesten* (covered market) with, beside it, the 16th-century **Takyeciler Camii**.

A little further west and you'll see the 14th-century **Kadı Hasan Camii** and, nearby, the **Paşa Hamamı**.

OTHER SIGHTS

To the south of the centre don't miss the 19th-century **clock tower** with the numerals on its faces still in Arabic, and a watch-repair shop (what else?) at the bottom.

Just across the road from here is the **Mevlevihane** (Bey Sokak; ☎ Tue-Sun), a rather splendid 19th-century building built as a dervish lodge and dancing hall. After painstaking renovations it was opened as a tourist attraction in 2006; the displays consist only of a few old photos and some slightly laughable model dervish figures that rotate mechanically to music, but the house itself is stunning, particularly in the evening, when the reddish wood of the exterior practically glows in the dimming light.

Sleeping

Hotel Çamlica (☎ 214 1269; GOP Bulvarı 179; s/d €17/23) About the nearest Tokat has to a low-end budget option, though it's hardly worth the slide in quality just to save €3. It's well scrubbed but dim and a bit blokey.

Yücel Hotel (☎ 212 5235; Çekenli Caddesi 20; s/d €20/25; ☎ ☎) Still cheap, but with two major advantages – the quiet location and the *hamam* facilities in the basement, both of which are included in the price. Rooms are small but neat, and there's a bar with digital TV in the marble lobby.

Otel Yeni Çınar (☎ 214 0066; GOP Bulvarı İş Bankası Yanı 2; s/d/tr/q €20/31/39/45) A good range of rooms with nice bathrooms and vistas over the hills from the back; triples even come with their

own balcony patio. The first-floor restaurant (mains €2.50 to €5) does a good line in grills, including the famous Tokat kebab (see below).

Çavuşoğlu Plevne Otel (☎ 214 2207; GOP Bulvarı 83; s/d €23/31) You can't fault the renovation job they've done on this place, which has transformed a mediocre budget joint into a smart, central bargain. Pistachio bathrooms, TV, hairdryer and breakfast buffet just reinforce the point.

Beykonağı Hotel (☎ 214 3399; www.otelbeykonagi.com; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; s/d €42/56; 🍷) Fresh on the scene, this 40-room three-star curries favour with compact but smart rooms in light shades and orchid art, plus bar and restaurant. While it's new you can get away with paying half these prices, or a minute €50 for a suite.

Eating

Kebabs and *köfte* are the usual fare here, with shops clustered around the fruit and vegetable market near the Hatuniye Camii.

Hacivat Köftecisi (☎ 212 9418; GOP Bulvarı; mains €0.55-2; 🍷 9am-11pm) South of the centre, Hacivat is an appealing café-restaurant with top-value daily set menus (€1.40). You can even tank up on traditional culture at the same time, as there are Karagöz shadow-puppet performances every Saturday at 7pm; see p297 for more on the Karagöz tradition.

Yeşil Köşe Et Lokantası (GOP Bulvarı 1; mains €1-4; 🍷 9am-10pm) Along with the Yeni Çınar, this cafeteria restaurant does arguably the best

Tokat kebab in town (€4), as well as decent ready-made meals.

Honça Tokat Evi (☎ 213 3818; Ali Paşa Hamam Sokak 5; mains €2.50-6; 🍷 noon-10pm) A magic slice of authentic Ottoman dining. If your Turkish is up to it, the menu's a mini-guidebook on Tokat, and includes lots of non-mainstream traditional dishes; if it's not, just go into the kitchen and let the jovial chef show you what's on offer.

Shopping

At one time Tokat had a monopoly on the right to make *yazmas*, the printed headscarves traditionally worn by many Turkish women. The monopoly may be long gone, but Tokat is still a good place to buy souvenir scarves or printed tablecloths. For decades the scarves were made in a vast building near the Gök Medrese. However, these days the materials are prepared in a modern **factory** (Yazmaçılar Sitesi; ☎ 232 0500; Rodi Halisaha; 🍷 9am-5pm Mon-Sat), which you can visit to see the cloths being made. The site is about 4km northwest of the town centre; a taxi will charge around €6 for the return trip, including waiting time.

Getting There & Away

Tokat's small otogar is about 1.7km from the main square. The better bus companies provide a *servis* to ferry you to and from town. Otherwise, if you don't want to wait for the infrequent city buses, a taxi will cost about €2.50.

The otogar is not as busy as some, especially in the morning (there are, for example, fewer buses to Sivas than you might expect), so it's a good idea to book ongoing tickets well ahead, especially on Friday. Several bus companies have ticket offices on GOP Bulvarı.

There are regular buses to Amasya (€5.60, two hours), Ankara (€23, 6½ hours), Erzurum (€20, 8½ hours), İstanbul (€25, 12 hours), Samsun (€11, four hours) and Sivas (€5.60, 1¼ hours).

Local minibuses leave from the separate İlçe ve Köy Terminali.

AROUND TOKAT

Balıca Cave

If you're interested in the underground, the **Balıca Cave** (Balıca Mağarası; ☎ 356-261 4236; admission €0.55; 🍷 daylight), 26km southwest of Tokat, is probably the best one open to the public in Turkey. It's a vast limestone labyrinth, 680m long and 95m high at its tallest point, filled

with stalagmites and dripping stalactites and with patterns like marbling on the walls. You'll certainly hear and smell the colony of dwarf bats that live inside, even if you don't get to see them.

There are a lot of steps both inside and outside the cave, although many elderly Turkish matrons in *salwar* and slippers manage perfectly well. The views from the Balıca Café at the entrance are stunning.

Returning, pause in Pazar to inspect the beautiful but graffitied remains of a Seljuk *han* just before you leave town on the Tokat road.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

To get to Balıca take a minibüs to Pazar from Tokat's İlçe ve Köy minibüs terminal (€0.85, 40 minutes). In Pazar there will probably be a taxi waiting to run you up the winding country road to the cave (8km); the driver will want at least €7 to run you there and back, with one hour's waiting time.

SIVAS

☎ 0346 / pop 252,000

Here is where we laid the foundations of our republic.

Atatürk

Grand words, but then, like Amasya, Sivas is assured a place in Turkish hearts thanks to the role it played in the run-up to the War of Independence, when the halls of the Congress building resounded with plans, strategies and principles as Atatürk and his adherents discussed their great goal of liberation.

Now that the days of struggle are over, though, you get the impression Sivas isn't quite sure what to do with itself. Modernity has been embraced wholesale in the bustling centre, giving the town a slightly unfocused energy. Sivas has a colourful, sometimes tragic history and some of the finest Seljuk buildings ever erected, but otherwise there's not a huge amount left to engage tourists for more than a day. It's best seen as an enjoyable but non-essential stopover on the way to the real wild east.

Sivas also makes the best base for visiting the marvellous World Heritage mosque-madrese complex at Divriği (p481).

History

The tumulus at nearby Maltepe shows evidence of settlement as early as 2600 BC, but

Sivas itself was probably founded by the Hittite king Hattushilish I in around 1500 BC. It was ruled in turn by the Assyrians, Medes and Persians, before coming under the sway of the kings of Cappadocia and Pontus. Eventually the city fell to the Romans, who called it Megalopolis; this was later changed to Sebastea (presumably when someone realised how ridiculous Megalopolis was) and then shortened to Sivas by the Turks.

Byzantine rule lasted from AD 395 to 1075, when the city was seized by the Danişmend emirs. The Seljuks and the Danişmends logged it out for supremacy between 1152 and 1175 until the Seljuks finally prevailed, only to be dispossessed by the Mongol invasion of 1243. The İlkhaniids succeeded the Mongols, but in 1400 lost the city to Tamerlane, who in turn lost it to the Ottomans in 1408.

More recently Sivas was the location for the famous Sivas Congress, which opened on 4 September 1919. Seeking to consolidate Turkish resistance to the Allied occupation and partition of his country, Atatürk arrived here from Samsun and Amasya. He gathered delegates from as many parts of the country as possible to confirm decisions made at the earlier Erzurum Congress. These two congresses heralded the War of Independence.

Orientation

The centre of town is Hükümet Meydanı (or Konak Meydanı), just in front of the attractive *valılık*. The main sights, hotels and restaurants are all within walking distance.

The train station, Sivas Garı, is about 1.5km southwest of Hükümet Meydanı along İnönü Bulvarı/İstasyon Caddesi. The otogar and local bus station are 2km south of the centre. Bus offices and banks with ATMs are just east of Hükümet Meydanı, along Atatürk Caddesi.

Information

Sivas Turizm (☎ 224 4624; www.sivasturizm.com.tr; İstasyon Caddesi 50, Sivas) Car rental, tours and airline tickets.

Tolaman Internet Café (İstasyon Caddesi 52; per hr €0.35; 🍷 9am-midnight)

Tourist office (☎ 221 3135; 🍷 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) On the ground floor of the *valılık*.

Sights

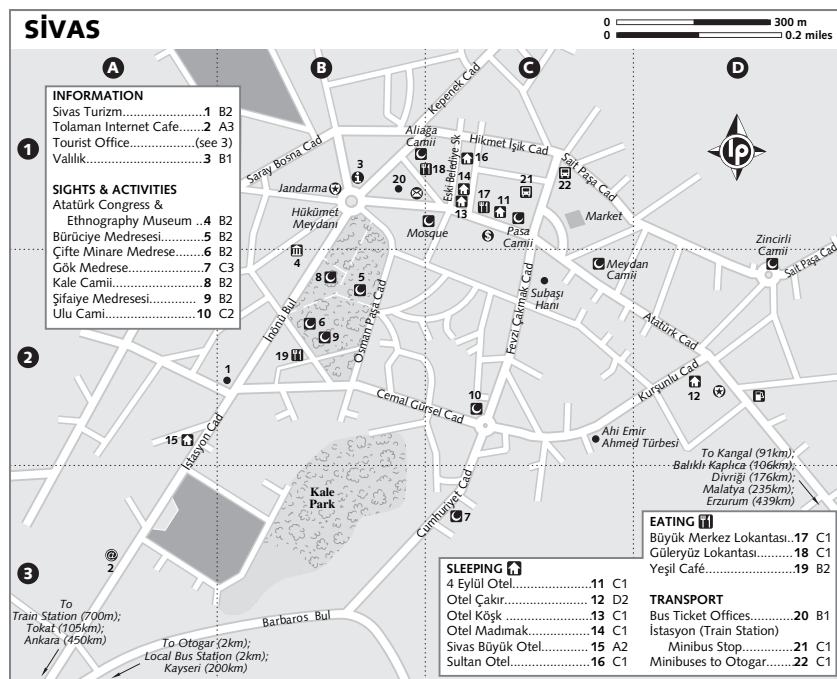
KALE CAMII & BÜRÜCIYE MEDRESESİ

Most of Sivas' Seljuk buildings are, conveniently, in the parkland just south of Hükümet

AUBERGINE DREAM

The Tokat kebab is made up of skewers of lamb and sliced eggplant (aubergine) hung vertically, then baked in a wood-fired oven. Tomatoes and peppers, which take less time to cook, are baked on separate skewers. As the lamb cooks, it releases juices that baste the aubergine. All these goodies are then served together with a huge fist of roasted garlic, adding an extra punch to the mix.

It's almost worth coming to Tokat just to sample the dish, and in fact you might have to – it's inexplicably failed to catch on in menus much further afield than Sivas or Amasya, and the standard aubergine *döners* that do crop up are a far cry from the glorious blow-out of the original.



Meydan. Here you'll also find the **Kale Camii** (1580), a squat Ottoman work constructed by Sultan Murat III's grand vizier Mahmut Paşa.

Just east of the Kale Camii, reached through a monumental Seljuk gateway, is the **Bürüciye Medresesi**, built to teach 'positive sciences' in 1271 by the Iranian businessman Muzaffer Bürücerdi, whose tiled tomb is inside. A tea garden currently occupies the courtyard, where regular exhibitions are held.

ŞİFAİYE MEDRESESI

Across the park from the Bürüciye Medresesi is the **Şifaiye Medresesi**, a medieval medical school and healing centre that ranks as one of the city's oldest buildings. It dates from 1217, when it was built for the Seljuk sultan İzzettin Keykavus I, whose architect used stylised sun/lion and moon/bull motifs in the decoration.

Look to the right as you enter the courtyard to see the porch that was walled up as a tomb for İzzettin when he died of TB in 1220. Note the beautiful blue Azeri tilework and the poignant poem in Arabic, composed by the sultan himself.

The main courtyard has four *eyvans*, with sun and moon symbols on either side of the eastern one. It now boasts a lovely rose garden and is surrounded by cafés and craft shops of variable quality.

ÇİFTE MİNARE MEDRESE

Commissioned by the Mongol-İlkhani vizier Şemsettin Güveyni after defeating the Seljuks at the battle of Kosedag, the **Çifte Minare Medrese** (Seminary of the Twin Minarets; 1271) has, as you might guess, a *çifte* (pair) of mighty minarets. In fact, that's about all it has, as the *medrese* behind the elaborate portal was destroyed when the Seljuks retook the city, and the façade has outlived subsequent incarnations. Stand on the path between the Çifte and Şifaiye *medreses* to see the difference half a century made to the extravagance of Seljuk architecture.

ULU CAMI

The town's other sights are southeast of Hükümet Meydanı along Cemal Gürsel and Cumhuriyet Caddesi. To find them, walk to the southern end of the park and turn left (east) onto Cemal Gürsel Caddesi.

The **Ulu Cami** (Great Mosque; 1197) is Sivas' oldest significant building. Built during the reign of the Danişmend leader Kubbettin Melik Şah, it's a large, low room with a forest of 50 columns. The super-fat leaning brick minaret was added in 1213. It's not as grand as the more imposing Seljuk buildings but has a certain old-Anatolian charm, slightly marred by modern additions.

GÖK MEDRESE

From the Ulu Cami, turn right (south) on Cumhuriyet Caddesi to make your way to the glorious **Gök Medrese** (Sky-Blue Seminary). This was built in 1271 at the behest of Sahip Ata, the grand vizier of Sultan Gıyasettin II Keyhüsrev, who funded the grand Sahip Ata mosque complex in Konya. The façade was decorated with exuberant tiles, brickwork designs and carving, covering not just the usual inlaid portal but the walls as well. The blue tilework still visible on the twin minarets gave the school its name.

The whole area was fenced off for restoration work at the time of research, but if you can get in the interior is equally worth a look.

ATATÜRK CONGRESS & ETHNOGRAPHY MUSEUM

Opposite the Kale Camii is the imposing Ottoman school building that hosted the Sivas Congress on 4 September 1919. Today it's the **Atatürk Congress & Ethnography Museum** (Atatürk Kongre ve Etnografya Müzesi; İnönü Bulvarı; admission €1.10; 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun). The entrance is around the back, opposite an army barracks, whose occupants are regularly marched in to pay their respects to history.

MADIMAK MEMORIAL

You won't see it mentioned in the brochure, but the original Madimak Hotel was the site of one of modern Turkey's worst hate crimes, on 2 July 1993, when 37 Alevi intellectuals and artists were burned alive in a mob arson attack. The victims, who had come for a cultural festival, included Aziz Nesin, the Turkish publisher of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. A crowd of 1000 extreme Islamist demonstrators gathered outside the hotel after prayer time to protest about the book's publication, and in the ensuing chaos the hotel was set alight and burned to the ground.

The Madimak has since reopened (with a kebab shop in the foyer!), although many human rights groups are calling for the site to be declared a memorial. The government has already rejected this plan once, sparking accusations that some ministers were directly involved or at least sympathetic to the arsonists.

As well as a memorial, many protesters want to see the trial of the Madimak suspects reopened, believing they were let off too lightly. Whatever the outcome, the scars from the whole tragedy show no signs of fading fast.

The Ottoman ethnographical collection, displayed on the ground floor, includes a fine selection of kilims and carpets, some magnificent embroidery, a 12th-century wooden *mimber* from the Kale Camii in Divriği, two huge carved ceiling roses, and relics collected from dervish *tekkes* (monasteries) closed in 1925.

Upstairs, the Congress Hall is preserved as it was when the Sivas Congress met, with photos of the delegates displayed on old school desks as if awaiting a reunion. You can also see Atatürk's bedroom and the cable room that played an important role in developments. The other displays (mainly photographs and documents) are captioned in Turkish and a bit of French.

Sleeping

Otel Çakır (☎ 222 4526; Kurşunlu Caddesi 20; s/d €14/23) The best option in the cheap hotel district around Kurşunlu Caddesi, offering respectable rooms and random poster art. There's no catering, but breakfast is provided in the little café a couple of doors down.

Otel Madimak (☎ 221 8027; Eski Belediye Sokak 2; s/d/tr €25/39/50) This rebuilt 1st-floor hotel has comfortable digs with a burgundy theme. Be aware, however, that the name has very sad resonances (see boxed text, below).

Sultan Otel (☎ 221 2986; www.sultanotel.com.tr; Eski Belediye Sokak 18; s/d/tr €36/56/67) The perfect mix of quality and price, with ample extras including a roof bar with live music, safes built into the TV cabinets, extensive breakfast buffets and free hot drinks. Oh, and the bathrooms are virtually as big as the rooms themselves. Popular with business travellers midweek.

Otel Köşk (☎ 225 1724; www.koskotel.com; Atatürk Caddesi 7; s/d/tr €45/67/73; 🍷) You can't get much more modern than this towering glass block, with its orange highlights and minimalist lobby. Laminate floors and slick design rule, and pillow fans are inundated with the things.

4 Eylül Otel (☎ 222 3799; www.dorteylulotel.com; Atatürk Caddesi 15; s/d/tr €48/78/89, ste €111; 🍷) Oh wait, it turns out you *can* get more modern than the Köşk – Sivas's newest hotel is an even sleeker glass tower... but then changes its mind inside and goes for dark wood, satiny sheets and an understated interpretation of traditional style. Suffice to say it's really rather good.

Sivas Büyüyük Otel (☎ 225 4767; www.sivasbuyukotel.com; İstasyon Caddesi; s/d/tr €67/106/125; 🍷) Plain corridors and stately rooms characterise the city's original luxury hotel, a chunky seven-storey block laced with marble and mosaics. Refreshingly, one thing it's not short on is space.

Eating

Apart from the hotel restaurants, the Sivas eating scene doesn't show much sense of adventure. On summer evenings everyone promenades along İnönü Bulvarı, where stalls sell everything from *gözleme* to corn cobs.

Güleyüz Lokantası (☎ 224 2061; mains €1.10-4) The tiniest but most characterful of the row of cheap eateries down the street next to the PTT, with pictures for anyone having menu difficulties.

Yeşil Café (☎ 222 2638; Belçuklu Sokak; mains €1.70-4; ☎ 9am-10pm) This friendly apple-green café-restaurant might not look like much until you get out onto the tiny balcony and realise you have the best views of the neon-lit twin minarets, like, ever. What's more, the menu's even enough to distract you from them, with pasta, schnitzel, grills and an actual choice of milkshakes.

Büyüyük Merkez Lokantası (☎ 223 6434; Atatürk Caddesi 13; mains €1.70-6) Three busy floors of fast food, ready-made meals and kebaps. Its speciality, the *sebze Sivas kebapı*, is actually the delicious Tokat kebap (see p476).

Getting There & Away

BUS

Bus services from Sivas aren't all that frequent, so you may want to book ahead at one of the ticket offices in town. There are fairly regular services to Amasya (€11, 3½ hours), Ankara

(€17, six hours), Diyarbakır (€17, eight hours), Erzurum (€17, seven hours), İstanbul (€28, 13 hours), Kayseri (€8.50, three hours), Malatya (€11, four hours), Samsun (€14, six hours) and Tokat (€5.60, 1½ hours).

'Yenişehir-Terminal' dolmuşes (€0.30) pass the otogar and end their run just uphill from the Paşa Camii, a five-minute walk from Hükümet Meydanı and the budget hotels on Kurşunlu Caddesi.

TRAIN

Sivas **station** (☎ 221 7000) is a major rail junction for both east-west and north-south lines. The main east-west express, the *Doğu Ekspresi*, goes through Sivas to Erzurum and Kars (16 hours) or back to Ankara and İstanbul (22 hours) daily; the *Güney Ekspresi* (from İstanbul to Diyarbakır) and the *Vangölü Ekspresi* (from İstanbul to Tatvan) run five times a week. There are also local services to Kangal, Divriği and Amasya.

'İstasyon' dolmuşes run from the station to Hükümet Meydanı and the Paşa Camii.

AROUND SİVAS

Balıkli Kaplıca

The tiny service town of Kangal, known for its famous white sheepdogs (see p63), has one more strange claim to fame: the unique health spa at **Balıkli Kaplıca** (Hot Spring with Fish; ☎ 469 1151; www.balikli.org; admission visitor/patient €2.80/17, car €0.55; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-6pm), a haven for sufferers of psoriasis 14km northeast of town. A shepherd boy is said to have discovered the healing qualities of the local warm mineral water, especially when combined with the action of the 'doctor fish' that nibble at sufferers' scaly skin. These fish are supposed to be able to favour psoriasis over any other type of defect, but they generally seem happy to suck on anything you stick in the water!

The spa complex has several sex-segregated pools set amid trees, together with an efficient **hotel** (r €39-70; 🍷), a restaurant, games room, tea garden, barber and small shop. Room rates can depend on whether you define yourself as 'normal' or 'ill' – the recommended course for genuine patients is eight hours a day in the pool for three weeks! Budget €17 per person for full board if you are planning to stay over.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibuses from the terminal beside Sivas otogar run to Kangal (€3.50, one hour) from

where you can take a taxi to the resort (€12 return). From June to the end of September the minibuses come all the way here. The spa also offers its own group transfers from regional towns (Sivas €98, Ankara €470).

DİVRİĞİ

☎ 0346 / pop 14,500

For a building that's been around nearly 800 years, the stunning mosque-*medrese* complex at Divriği is remarkably undervisited, especially given its prestigious inclusion on the Unesco World Heritage list. Still, tourism's loss is the independent traveller's gain, and it's well worth penetrating the 1970m mountain curtain to view one of Turkey's finest old religious structures.

Divriği village occupies a fertile valley and still has an agricultural economy. Its population is mostly made up of Alevis, Muslims whose traditions are very different from those of the majority Sunni Muslims (see p54). The narrow streets conceal a busy market, PTT, Internet café, some simple restaurants and a couple of banks with ATMs.

ULU CAMİ & DARÜŞŞİFA

Uphill from the town centre stands the beautifully restored **Ulu Cami & Darüşşifa** (Grand Mosque & Mental Hospital; admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm Tue-Sat), adjoining institutions founded in 1228 by the local emir Ahmet Şah and his wife, the lady Fatma Turan Melik.

It's almost a shame you can't see the interiors first, as they're totally anticlimactic – it's the ornamental gateways on the building's northern façade that put Divriği on the map (and the Heritage list). The entrances to both the Ulu Cami and the Darüşşifa are truly stupendous, their reliefs densely carved with a wealth of geometric patterns, stars, medallions, textured effects and intricate Arabic inscriptions, all rendered in such minute detail that it's hard to imagine the stone ever started out flat. It's the tasteful Ottoman equivalent of having a cinema in your house, the sort of thing only a provincial emir with more money than sense could have dreamt of building.

The western entrance has some fine work as well, but nothing to compare with the front. If you manage to tear your eyes away from the facade, there are some pretty good valley views in the other direction as well.

Inside, the mosque is very simple, with 16 columns, carpets, some fresco fragments and

a plain *mihrab*. The hospital next door, built on an asymmetrical floor plan, is even more basic, its stone walls and uneven columns left entirely unadorned. The octagonal pool in the court has a spiral run-off, similar to the one in Konya's Karatay Medresesi (see p485), which allowed the tinkle of running water to break the silence of the room and soothe patients' nerves. A platform raised above the main floor may have been for musicians who likewise soothed the patients with their music.

As long as local coach parties keep coming through the Darüşşifa is open during the listed hours, but at quieter times you may find it locked. If so, ask around and someone will probably find the key. Friday lunchtime is a good time to come, as you should be able to visit the mosque and *medrese* when prayers are over.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

As this was once an important provincial capital you will notice several **kümbets** (Seljuk tombs) scattered about town. Ahmet Şah's tomb is near the Ulu Cami, so you might want to go and thank him for his profligacy.

Trailing down the sides of the hill dominating Divriği are the ruined walls of a vast medieval **castle**, with the Kale Camii a solid but equally ruinous structure on the summit. The road heading behind the Ulu Cami and Darüşşifa leads up to the castle.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibuses from Sivas to Divriği (€5.60, three hours) depart from the minibuses terminal seven times a day. If you catch the first service you'll have more than enough time to look round and catch the last bus back.

The train station is about 1.5km north of the Ulu Cami, served by the *Doğu Ekspresi* and *Erzurum Ekspresi* between Sivas (€2.80, four hours) and Erzurum (€5.50, 7½ hours).

Both buses and trains serve İstanbul and Ankara, though it's a long way to come for a day trip!

Drivers should note that there's no through road to Erzincan from Divriği, forcing you to backtrack to Kangal before you can start heading east.

KONYA

☎ 0332 / pop 762,000

Turkey's equivalent of the 'Bible Belt', conservative Konya treads a delicate path between

its historical significance as the home town of the whirling dervish orders and a bastion of Seljuk culture on the one hand, and its modern importance as an economic boom town on the other.

Luckily the city derives considerable charm from this juxtaposition of old and new. Ancient mosques and the mazy market district, awash with Eastern smells, eager shopkeepers and Muslim pilgrims, rub up against contemporary Konya around Alaaddin Tepesi, where hip-looking university students talk religion and politics freely in the tea gardens.

Many travellers don't even consider stopping in Konya, but if you are passing through this region, say from the coast to Cappadocia, bear in mind that the wonderful shrine of the

Mevlâna here is one of Turkey's finest and most characteristic sights. The city's collection of imposing Seljuk buildings should also keep building buffs happy, and at the very least you can get a good dinner here.

History

Almost 4000 years ago the Hittites called this city 'Kuwanna'. It was Kowania to the Phrygians, Iconium to the Romans and then Konya to the Turks. Iconium was an important provincial town visited several times by Saints Paul and Barnabas. There are few remains of its early Christian community, but Sille (p490) has several ruined churches.

From about 1150 to 1300 Konya was capital of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, one of the

successor states to the Great Seljuk Turkish empire of the 11th century. The Sultanate of Rum encompassed most of Anatolia, and the Seljuk sultans endowed its capital with dozens of fine buildings in an architectural style that was decidedly Turkish, but had its roots in Persia and Byzantium.

Traditionally Konya lay at the heart of Turkey's very rich 'bread basket', but these days light industry is at least as important as farming, and pilgrimage tourism is also a big earner.

Orientation

The city centre is Alaaddin Tepesi (Aladdin's Hill), encircled by a ring road. From the hill, Mevlâna Caddesi goes east 700m to Hükümet

Meydanı (Government Plaza), where you'll find the provincial and city government buildings, the main PTT, several banks with ATMs and a vast underground jewellery market. From here the boulevard continues east to the tourist office and the Mevlâna Museum.

The otogar, connected by regular trams, is 14km due north of the centre; the local bus terminal (*Eski Garaj*; Karatay Terminal) is 1km to the south.

Information

- Klistra Tours** (☎ 238 1421; www.klistratours.com; Gürağaç Sokak 8) City and local tours.
- Selene Tourism & Travel Agency** (☎ 353 6745; www.selene.com.tr; Ayanbey Sokak 22B) Organises dervish performances, tours and hunting trips.
- Tourist office** (☎ 351 1074; Mevlâna Caddesi 12; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat).
- Truva Internet** (Adliye Bulvarı; per hr €0.55; ☎ 9am-midnight)

Dangers & Annoyances

Konya has a long-standing reputation for religious conservatism; you'll see more women in religious headscarves here than in many other towns, and you'll find Friday observed as a day of rest in a way it rarely is elsewhere. None of this should inconvenience you, but take special care not to upset the pious and make sure *you're* not an annoyance! If you visit during Ramazan (see p659) don't eat or drink in public during the day, as a courtesy to those who are fasting.

Ironically, non-Muslim women seem to encounter more hassle in this bastion of propriety than in many other Turkish cities. You can also quickly tire of the touts hanging about Mevlâna Caddesi and the Mevlâna Museum.

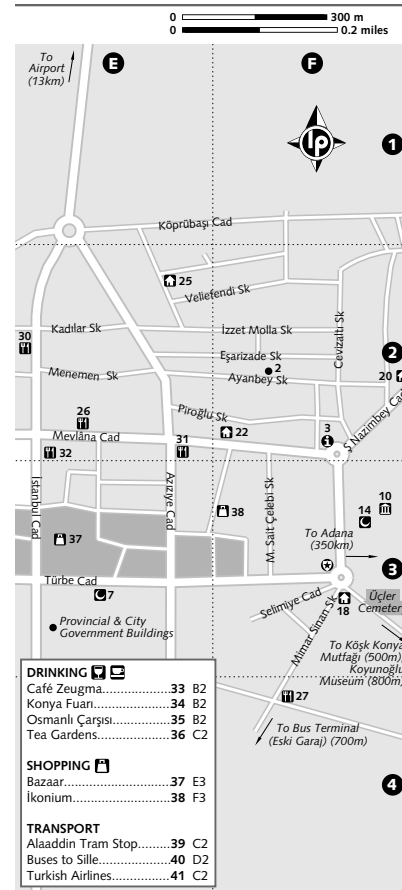
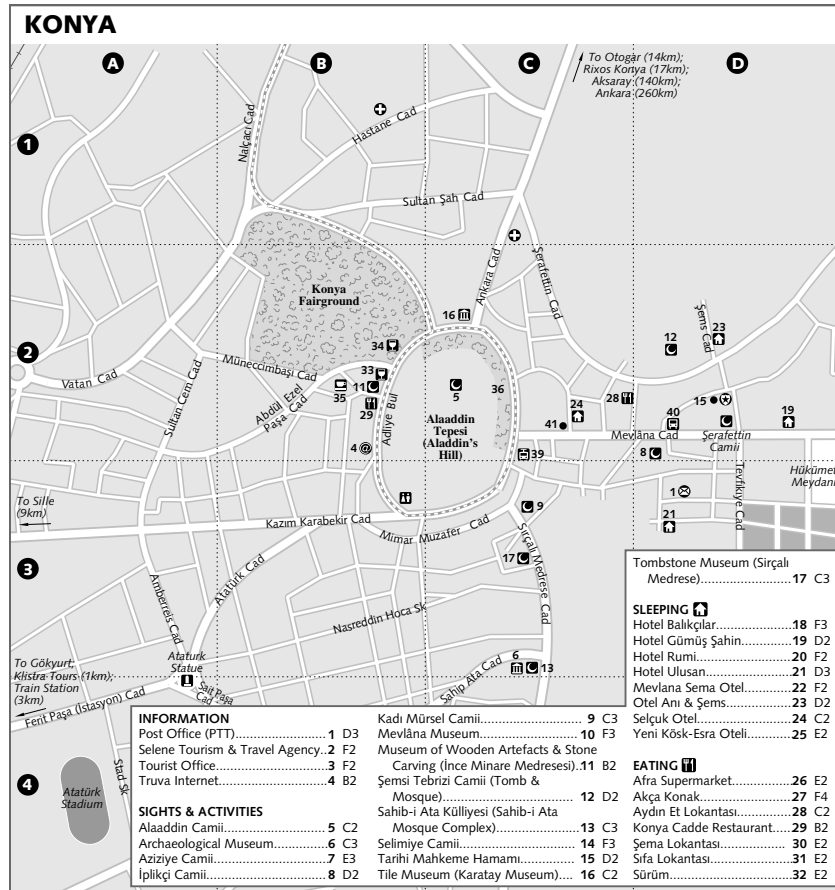
Sights & Activities

MEVLÂNA MUSEUM

For Muslims and non-Muslims alike, the main reason to come to Konya is to visit the **Mevlâna Museum** (☎ 351 1215; admission €2.80; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun, 10am-6pm Mon), the former lodge of the whirling dervishes. On religious holidays the museum (really a shrine) may keep longer hours.

In Celaledin Rumi, the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum produced one of the world's great mystic philosophers. His poetry and religious writings, mostly in Persian, the literary language of the day, are among the most beloved and

CENTRAL ANATOLIA



CENTRAL ANATOLIA

respected in the Islamic world. Rumi later became known as *Mevlâna* (Our Guide) to his followers.

Rumi was born in 1207 in Balkh (Afghanistan). His family fled the impending Mongol invasion by moving to Mecca and then to the Sultanate of Rum, reaching Konya by 1228. His father was a noted preacher, and Rumi became a brilliant student of Islamic theology. After his father's death in 1231, he studied in Aleppo and Damascus, returning to live in Konya by 1240.

In 1244 he met Mehmet Şemseddin Tebrizi (Şemsi Tebrizi or Şems of Tabriz), one of his father's Sufi (Muslim mystic) disciples. Tebrizi had a profound influence on Rumi but, jealous of his overwhelming influence on their master, an angry crowd of Rumi's disciples put Tebrizi to death in 1247. Stunned by the loss, Rumi withdrew from the world to meditate, and wrote his greatest poetic work, the *Mathnawi* (*Mesnevi* in Turkish). He also wrote many aphorisms, *rubâ'i* and *ghazal* poems, collected into his 'Great Opus', the *Divan-i Kebir*.

His teachings are summed up in this beautiful verse:

Come, whoever you may be,
Even if you may be
An infidel, a pagan, or a fire-
worshipper, come.
Ours is not a brotherhood of despair.
Even if you have broken
Your vows of repentance a hundred
times, come.

Rumi died on 17 December 1273, the date now known as his 'wedding night' with Allah. His son, Sultan Veled, organised his followers into the brotherhood called the *Mevlevî*, or whirling dervishes.

In the centuries following *Mevlâna*'s death, over 100 dervish lodges were founded throughout the Ottoman domains. Dervish orders exerted considerable conservative influence on the country's political, social and economic life, and numerous Ottoman sultans were *Mevlevî* Sufis (mystics). Atatürk saw the dervishes as an obstacle to advancement for the Turkish people and banned them in 1925, but several orders survived on a technicality as religious fraternities. The Konya lodge was revived in 1957 as a 'cultural association' intended to preserve a historical tradition.

For Muslims, this is a very holy place, and more than 1.5 million people visit it a year, most of them Turkish. You will see many people praying for Rumi's help. When entering, women should cover their heads and shoulders, and no one should wear shorts.

Visiting the Museum

The lodge is visible from some distance, its fluted dome of turquoise tiles one of Turkey's most distinctive sights. After walking through a pretty courtyard with an ablutions fountain and several tombs, you remove your shoes and pass into the **Mevlâna Tomb**. Look out for the big bronze *Nisan tası* (April bowl) on the left as you enter. April rainwater, vital to the farmers of this region, was considered sacred and collected in this bowl. The tip of *Mevlâna*'s turban was dipped in the water and offered to those in need of healing.

Continue through to the part of the room directly under the fluted dome. Here you can see *Mevlâna*'s sarcophagus (the largest), flanked by that of his son Sultan Veled and those of other eminent dervishes. They are all covered in velvet shrouds heavy with gold embroidery, but those of *Mevlâna* and Veled bear huge turbans, symbols of spiritual authority.

Mevlâna's tomb dates from Seljuk times. The mosque and *semahane*, where whirling ceremonies were held, were added later by Ottoman sultans (Mehmet the Conqueror was a *Mevlevî* adherent and Süleyman the Magnificent made charitable donations to the order). Selim I, conqueror of Egypt, donated the Mamluk crystal lamps.

The small mosque and *semahane* to the left of the sepulchral chamber display clothing worn by *Mevlâna*, as well as dervish paraphernalia including musical instruments, prayer mats, illuminated manuscripts and a casket containing hair from Mohammed's beard. Look beside the *mihrab* for a *seccade* (prayer carpet) bearing a picture of the Kaaba at Mecca. Made in Iran of silk and wool, it's extremely fine, with an estimated three million knots.

The rooms surrounding the courtyard were once the dervishes' offices and quarters – one near the entrance is decorated as it would have been in *Mevlâna*'s day, with mannequins dressed as dervishes.

Across from the museum entrance is the **Selimiye Camii**, endowed by Sultan Selim II in 1567 when he was the governor of Konya.

OTHER MUSEUMS

Title Museum (Karatay Müzesi)

Housed in what was once a Seljuk theological school near Alaaddin Tepesi, this **museum** (☎ 351 1914; Alaaddin Meydanı; admission €1.10; ☞ 9am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm) was constructed in 1251–52 by Emir Celaleddin Karatay, a Seljuk general, vizier and statesman who is buried in one of the corner rooms.

The museum houses an outstanding collection of ceramics, including interesting octagonal tiles from the ruined 13th-century Seljuk palace of Kubadabad by Beyşehir Gölü. At time of research, though, it was closed for major restoration work.

Museum of Wooden Artefacts & Stone Carving

On the western side of the Alaaddin Tepesi ring road is the İnce Minare Medresesi (Seminary of the Slender Minaret), now the **Museum of Wooden Artefacts & Stone Carving** (Tas ve Ahsap Eserler Müzesi; ☎ 351 3204; Adliye Bulvarı; admission €1.10; ☞ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm). This religious school was built in 1264 for Sahip Ata, a powerful Seljuk vizier, who may have been trying to outdo the patron of the Karatay Medresesi, built only seven years earlier.

The extraordinarily elaborate doorway, with bands of Arabic inscription running all round it, is far more impressive than the small building behind it. The octagonal minaret in turquoise relief is over 600 years old and gave the seminary its popular name. If it looks a bit short, this is because the top was sliced off by lightning in 1901.

Inside, many of the carvings in wood and stone feature motifs similar to those used in tiles and ceramics. You'll quickly see that the Seljuks didn't heed Islam's traditional prohibition of human and animal images: there are plenty of images of birds (the Seljuk double-headed eagle, for example), men and women, lions and leopards. The *evyan* in particular contains two delightful carvings of Seljuk angels with distinctly Mongol features. The Aşşap Eserler Bölümü (Carved Wood Section) contains some intricately worked wooden doors.

Tombstone Museum (Sırçalı Medrese)

Several other Seljuk monuments lurk in the narrow warren of streets to the south of Alaaddin Tepesi. Look for the Kadı Mürsel Camii, then walk south along Sırçalı Medrese Caddesi. After a few minutes you'll come to

another Seljuk seminary, the Sırçalı Medrese (Glass Seminary), named after its tiled exterior. Sponsored by the Seljuk vizier Bedreddin Muhlis, construction was completed in 1242. It's now a small **Tombstone Museum** (Mezar Anıtlar Müzesi; ☎ 352 8022; Sırçalı Caddesi; admission €1.10; ☞ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm), housing a collection of tombstones with finely carved inscriptions. The main entrance is grand but restrained compared with Konya's other great *medreses*. The *evyan* on the western side of the courtyard was used for classes; it is decorated with gorgeous blue tiles and its arch has a band of particularly fine calligraphic tile work.

Archaeological Museum

The small but interesting **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 351 3207; Larende Caddesi; admission €1.10; ☞ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun), beside the Sahib-i Ata Külliyesi, houses local Iron Age artefacts, Byzantine mosaics from Silile and Çorum, some bizarre lumpy Assyrian lamps, and several impressive, intact sarcophagi decorated with high-relief carvings. However, the unusually informative displays on Neolithic Çatalhöyük, 50km southeast of Konya (see p489) are the top draw, combining a good explanation of the site with finds including necklaces, rings and a fragment of wall painting.

Koyunoğlu Museum

This **museum** (Kerimler Caddesi 25; admission free; ☞ 8am-5pm Tue-Sun), sharing the KonTV building 800m from *Mevlâna* Meydanı, is also well worth visiting.

Founded by a private (and clearly quite compulsive) collector, the displays take a scattergun approach, encompassing everything from fossils, minerals, weapons, stuffed birds, paintings of the sultans and photos of old Konya to kilims, bank notes and bath clogs. The few labels are in Turkish only. Outside, the recreated **Koyunoğlu Konya Evi** is a real highlight, showing how comfortably a well-heeled Konyalı family lived a century ago.

The quickest way to the museum lies through the **Üçler Cemetery**. Use this route only in daylight when other people are about – women are advised not to walk through alone.

MOSQUES

Alaaddin Camii

The *Mevlâna* shrine aside, Konya's most important **mosque** (☞ 9.30am-5pm) bestrides

Alaaddin Tepesi at the opposite end of Mevlâna Caddesi. The mosque of Alaeddin Keykubad I, Seljuk Sultan of Rum from 1219 to 1231, it is a great rambling building designed by a Damascene architect in Arab style and finished in 1221. Over the centuries it was embellished, refurbished, ruined and restored.

The grand entrance on the northern side incorporates decoration from earlier Byzantine and Roman buildings. It used to lead through the courtyard and between two huge Seljuk *türbes* (tombs) into the mosque; today a less imposing eastern doorway serves as the main entrance.

While the mosque's exterior is generally plain, the interior is a forest of old marble columns surmounted with recycled Roman and Byzantine capitals. There's also a fine wooden *mimber* and an old marble *mihrab* framed by modern Seljuk-style blue-and-black calligraphy.

Other Mosques

A few blocks south of the Sırçalı Medrese, along Sırçalı Medrese Caddesi, is the **Sahib-i Ata Külliyesi** (Sahib-i Ata Mosque Complex), founded in 1285. Behind its requisite grand entrance with built-in minaret is the Sahib-i Ata Camii, originally constructed during the reign of Alaaddin Keykavus by the Seljuk soldier and statesman Hacı Ebubekirzade

Hüseyinoğlu Sahib-i Ata Fahreddin Ali. Destroyed by fire in 1871, it was rebuilt in the same style. The *mihrab* is a fine example of Seljuk light-and-dark blue tile work. Alongside the mosque another grand gateway once led to a dervish lodge.

Dotted about town are other interesting mosques. The **Şemsi Tebrizi Camii**, containing the elegant 14th-century tomb of Rumi's spiritual mentor, is just northwest of Hükümet Meydanı, not far from Alaaddin Bulvarı. The **Aziziye Camii** (1875) in the bazaar was rebuilt in late-Ottoman style after a fire; it's the one with twin minarets bearing little sheltered balconies, and has a sign outside helpfully pointing out its interesting features.

On Mevlâna Caddesi, the **İplikçi Camii**, perhaps Konya's oldest mosque (1202), was built for the Seljuk vizier Şemseddin Altun-Aba in unadorned style: a forest of columns, arches and vaults.

HAMAM

The **Tarihi Mahkeme Hamamı** (Historic Court Hamam; ☎ 353 0093; wash, massage & sauna €12; 🕒 6am-midnight for men, 9am-6pm for women), behind the Şerafettin Camii, is the city's most interesting *hamam*.

Festivals & Events

The **Mevlâna Festival** (☎ 353 6745) runs for a week in early December. The last night com-

memorates Mevlâna's 'wedding night' with Allah. Tickets (and accommodation) should be booked well in advance; contact Selene Tourism for assistance. A new building specifically to host the *semas* (Mevlevi worship ceremonies) was built in 2003. Don't worry if you can't get a ticket, as other venues around town also host dancers during the festival.

At other times of year visitors can watch whirling dervish ceremonies at the **Cultural Centre** (☎ 351 1215; tickets €15; 🕒 Apr-Nov) behind the Mevlâna Museum. The one-hour evening performances usually take place about three times weekly in the season; you can book tickets through travel agencies or your hotel.

Sleeping

Given Konya's character, it's hardly surprising that many hotels boast their own *mescit* (small mosque) rather than minibar. There's no shortage of options but the steady throughput of pilgrims means that even the worst places can get away with prices that would be impossible elsewhere.

BUDGET

Hotel Ulusan (☎ 351 5004; ulusanhotel@mynet.com; Çarşı PTT Arkası; s/d €11/17; 🕒) Tucked away behind the PTT, this impeccably renovated gem is as good as many twice the price, with an enthusiastic proprietor and that all-important dash of character (teddy bears!). Some rooms have shared but pristine bathrooms. There's a cosy TV room, with a real fire in winter, and internet access is free.

Yeni Köşk-Esra Oteli (☎ 352 0671; yenikoskotelit@turk.net; Yeni Aziziye Caddesi, Kadılar Sokak 28; s/d from €20/30; 🕒) A bizarre subterranean tunnel links two separate buildings here, each with small but well-equipped rooms. It's fairly quiet and a good choice for women travellers. Look for signs pointing the way off Mevlâna Caddesi.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Gümüş Şahin (☎ 352 0422; www.gumussahin.com; Mevlâna Caddesi 39; s/d/tr €25/47/67; 🕒) A stylised ceramic hallway provides a dramatic entrance to this decent central choice. The bathrooms are very pink and the balconies overlook the main road, but the 'tree-lined' restaurant should distract you.

Mevlana Sema Oteli (☎ 350 4623; Mevlâna Caddesi 59; s/d/tr €35/56/80; 🕒) Also on the main road, resplendent in browns, maroons and new laminate floors. Unusually, pets are accepted,

though bringing a dog into a hotel full of Muslims would be like eating bacon in a synagogue.

Otel Anı & Şems (☎ 353 8080; www.hotelani.com; Şems Caddesi 8; s/d/tr €40/60/80; 🕒) The location, behind the Şerafettin Cami, may not look promising but the interiors have a distinct charm, particularly the top-floor rooms. There's an in-house travel agent for all your tour and transport requirements.

Hotel Rumi (☎ 353 1121; www.rumihotel.com; Durak-fakih Sokak 5; s/d €40/70; 🕒) It's too plain to be really special, but the newly opened Rumi offers immaculate three-star Western standards, with fitness centre, starchy lift, alcohol-free minibars and a smart modern lobby.

Selçuk Oteli (☎ 353 2525; www.otelselcuk.com.tr; Alaaddin Bulvarı 4; s/d €50/75; 🕒) A recent makeover has saturated this refined block hotel in cream tones, giving it an air of the cat who got the beige. The effect works well, especially in the long lounge, and good facilities (including great showers) back up the décor.

Hotel Balıkçılar (☎ 350 9470; www.balikcilar.com; Mevlâna Karşısı 1; s/d €70/90; 🕒) Easily the best reception area in town, styled as a cobbled Ottoman street, complete with streetlights. The theme doesn't quite carry through to the rooms, but there are a few nice wooden touches. Facilities include a lobby bar, restaurant, sauna, *hamam* and occasional *sema* performances.

TOP END

Rixos Konya (☎ 221 5000; www.rixos.com; İstanbul Yolu, Selçuklu; d & tw from €120; 🕒) One of several luxury hotels on the outskirts of the city, about 13km from the airport and 15km from central Konya. Amenities are suitably copious and extravagant, from the bowling alley to the horse-riding centre. Discounts are often available but, if not, rack rates can be double those quoted here.

Eating

Konya's speciality is *fırın* kebab, slices of (hopefully) tender, fairly greasy oven-roasted mutton served on puffy bread. The city bakers also make excellent fresh pide topped with minced lamb, cheese or eggs, but in Konya pide is called *etli ekme* (bread with meat).

RESTAURANTS

Köşk Konya Mutfağı (☎ 352 8547; Mengüç Caddesi 66; mains €2.80-4.50; 🕒 11am-10pm) Run by the

DANCING WITH DERVISHES

The Mevlevi worship ceremony, or *sema*, is a ritual dance representing union with God; it's what gives the dervishes their famous whirl, and appears on Unesco's third Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Watching a *sema* can be an evocative, romantic, unforgettable experience. There are many dervish orders worldwide who perform similar rituals, but the original Turkish version is the smoothest and purest, more of an elegant trance-like dance than the raw energy seen elsewhere.

The dervishes dress in long white robes with full skirts that represent their shrouds. Their voluminous black cloaks symbolise their worldly tombs, their conical felt hats their tombstones.

The ceremony begins when the *hafiz*, a scholar who has committed the entire Quran to memory, intones a prayer for Mevlâna and a verse from the Quran. A kettledrum booms out, followed by the plaintive sound of the *ney* (reed flute). Then the *şeyh* (master) bows and leads the dervishes in a circle around the hall. After three circuits, the dervishes drop their black cloaks to symbolise their deliverance from worldly attachments. Then one by one, arms folded on their breasts, they spin out onto the floor as they relinquish the earthly life to be reborn in mystical union with God.

By holding their right arms up, they receive the blessings of heaven, which are communicated to earth by holding their left arms turned down. As they whirl, they form a 'constellation' of revolving bodies, which itself slowly rotates. The *şeyh* walks among them to check that each dervish is performing the ritual properly.

The dance is repeated over and over again. Finally, the *hafiz* again chants passages from the Quran, thus sealing the mystical union with God.

well-known food writer Nevin Halıcı, this excellent traditional restaurant puts her personal twist on classics like kebabs and *ayran*. In summer headscarved women prepare your food in a hut on the lawn. The menu features some unusual dishes like *höşmerim*, a rich, mouth-clogging dessert made from sesame oil, flour and syrup (€1.10). It's southeast of town, towards the Koyunoğlu Museum.

Akça Konak (☎ 350 8108; Mengüç Caddesi 18; mains €2.80-6; ☎ 11am-10pm) This is a neat restored house near the Hotel Balıkçılar with tables inside and outside, live music and post-prandial nargilehs (water pipes). The menu is pretty standard but does feature a few regional specialities.

Konya Caddesi Restaurant (☎ 351 3060; Adliye Bulvarı; mains €2.80-11; ☎ from noon Mon-Sat) Beside the İnce Minare, this restaurant is a low-lit, 1st-floor place that will do for a night out as well as a meal. On a good night the place is packed with an unconservative slice of the populace seeking beer and live music.

QUICK EATS

Şifa Lokantası (☎ 352 0519; Mevlana Caddesi 56; mains €1.10-4.50) *Tandır kebab* tops the bill of standards at Şifa. Service can be pretty rushed when it's busy, but at least the chandeliers give you something to look at.

Sema Lokantası (☎ 352 3565; İstanbul Caddesi 107; mains €1.10-4.50) In the backstreets north of the centre, the Sema is a cheery place that serves the usual kebabs and stews as well as a good range of desserts – try the *aşure* (Noah's ark pudding).

Aydın Et Lokantası (☎ 351 9183; Şeyh Ziya Sokak 5/E; mains €3-6) Enquiring minds may want to know why there's a giant fake tree in the middle of this grill joint, but really it's easier just to stare at the clay-sculpted walls and concentrate on the comprehensive menu of pide and kebabs.

SELF-CATERING

As ever, the **bazaar** (right) is the most exciting place to shop for fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese etc. Alternatively, there's the **Afra supermarket** (Mevlana Caddesi), and sugar addicts can spoil their sweet teeth at **Sürüm** (İstanbul Caddesi), a chocolate shop established in 1926.

Drinking

In summer few things could be more pleasurable than maxing and relaxing in one of the

innumerable **tea gardens** dotting the slopes of Alaaddin Tepesi. In the evening it's also fun to duck into the grounds of the **Konya Fuarı** (Konya Fairground), where you can sip tea while watching the locals navigate pedaloos round an artificial lake.

Osmanlı Çarşısı (☎ 353 3257; İnce Minare Sokak) An early-20th-century house serving *çay*, coffee and nargilehs. It's popular with Turkish students, there's a rustic toast wagon outside and the whole place has more character than a whirlpool full of dervishes.

Café Zeugma (☎ 350 9474; Adliye Bulvarı 33) This self-styled cultural and art centre targets a similar student crowd with live music and 'crazy parties'. Admission costs €3.50 at weekends.

Shopping

Konya's **bazaar** sprawls back from the modern PTT building virtually all the way to the Mevlana Museum, cramming the narrow streets with stalls, roving vendors and the occasional horse-drawn cart. The streets are divided up in very medieval fashion: here a section for coils of rope, there one for gold jewellery, nearby one for mobile-phone accessories. There's a concentration of shops selling religious paraphernalia and tacky souvenirs at the Mevlana Museum end.

Ikonium (☎ 350 2895; www.thefeltmaker.com; Bostan Çelebi Sokak 10) The art of felt-making is fast dying out in Turkey, so you might want to pop in here to see a modern take on an old craft.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are three daily flights to and from İstanbul with **Turkish Airlines** (☎ 351 2000; Mevlana Caddesi 9) and one with **Onur Air** (☎ 350 6151).

The airport is about 13km northeast of the city centre. An airport service bus (€2) leaves from near the THY office, but you should check the times carefully.

BUS

Konya's otogar is about 14km north of Alaaddin Tepesi, accessible by tram from town (see opposite). Regular buses serve all major destinations, including Afyon (€8.50, 3¼ hours), Ankara (€5.60, three hours), İstanbul (€17, 10 hours), Kayseri (€8.50, four hours) and Sivas (€14, seven hours).

The Eski Garaj (Old Bus Terminal or Karatay Terminal), 1km southwest of the Mevlana Museum, has services to local villages.

TRAIN

The **train station** (☎ 332 3670) is about 3km southwest. You can get to Konya by train from İstanbul Haydarpaşa (13½ hours) on the *Meram Ekspresi*, the *Toros Ekspresi* (İstanbul to Gaziantep/Damascus, three weekly) or the *İç Anadolu Mavi* (İstanbul to Adana), all via Afyon. Planned new high-speed rail links will add a direct line to Ankara and should knock 9¼ hours off the journey time!

Getting Around

As most of the city centre sights are easily reached on foot, you need public transport only for the otogar or train station. To get to the city centre from the otogar take a tram marked 'Alaadin' from the east side of the otogar to Alaaddin Tepesi (€0.40, 30 minutes). Innumerable minibuses ply Mevlana Caddesi if you're heading to the far end. A taxi costs around €8 from the otogar.

There are half-hourly minibuses from the train station to the centre (€0.40). A taxi from the station to Hükümet Meydanı costs about €4.

AROUND KONYA

Çatalhöyük

You won't find any towering monuments or reconstructed classical splendour at **Çatalhöyük** (admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm), but the bare, hilly expanse remains one of the world's most famous archaeological sites and one of the oldest town settlements ever discovered. Teams of international archaeologists continue to work away at unearthing its secrets in the summer months (June to August).

The guardian will happily show you the marquee that houses the excavations and the preserved remains of the first intact house discovered, Building 5; a tip would probably be appreciated. The site of James Mellaart's 1961-65 excavations, a short way away, shows how the mound turned out to cover the remains of 13 layers of buildings, dating from 6800 to 5700 BC. Another section, the so-called 4040 area, is due to be excavated for public display by the end of 2007.

There may once have been 150 mud-brick dwellings on the site, which was originally a wetland environment. Most seem to have been houses that were accessible via ladders from their roofs, and which were filled in and built over when they started to wear out. Skeletons were found buried under the floors

and most of the houses may have doubled up as shrines. Finds from the site included many layers of murals, bulls' head plaster reliefs, mother-goddess figurines, tools and the earliest known pottery; most are now housed in Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations (see p443). The settlement was highly organised, with up to 8000 people living here at its peak, but there are no obvious signs of any central government system.

Near the site entrance stands the Experimental House, a reconstructed mud-brick hut used to test various theories about Neolithic culture, along with a small **museum**. The handful of artefacts are accompanied by informative English displays on the site, its houses and the many questions raised by the excavations – such as why many of the human remains found here were missing their heads!

If you're not much interested in archaeology, there would be little point in coming out here. However, the comments in the visitors' book make it clear that many people love the romance of the site, with its echoes of the cult of the mother goddess and reminders of our origins. There's lots of local involvement from schools and individuals, and many of the archaeologists are European volunteers, so if you show up in summer you may find few people to chat to about the site.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

To get here by public transport take one of the hourly minibuses from Konya's Eski Garaj to Çumra (€1.70, 45 minutes) and then hire a taxi from beside the otogar for the last 17km (€14 return). A taxi from Konya to the site and back will cost about €25.

Gökyurt (Kilistra, Lystra)

Konya may be well south of central Cappadocia, but the landscape at Gökyurt (50km to the southwest) is reminiscent of what you'll see in Güzelyurt or İhlara: a gorge with dwellings and medieval churches cut into the rock face, but without the crowds. There's one particularly fine church cut completely out of the rock, but no frescoes. A trip out here makes a lovely half-day excursion, and the surrounding landscape is simply stunning.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are several daily buses from Konya's Eski Garaj to Hatunsaray, from where you could catch a taxi the last 18km (€15 return).

A taxi from/to Konya will charge around €25, including one hour's waiting time.

Driving, you should take the Antalya road, then follow signs to Akören. Look for a tiny brown and white sign on the right (marked 'Kilistra-Gökyurt, 16km'), a few kilometres before Hatunsaray. Cyclists need to watch out for sheepdogs roaming about.

SILLE

☎ 0332 / pop 2000

If you're looking for an excursion from Konya, the pretty village of Sille, a narrow patch of green on a dry river bed surrounded by sharp rocky hills, is a perfect escape. The traditional village houses, many neglected and crumbling, are mirrored by a rock-face full of cave dwellings and chapels.

The domed Byzantine **St Helen's Church** (Ayaelena Kilisesi; ☎ 9am-5pm), near the last bus stop, was reputedly founded by Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. It was completely restored in 1833; the vandalised and fast-fading frescoes date from the 1880s. Despite its use as a mosque from the 1920s until the late 1990s, the church retains some of its old woodwork, including a broken pulpit and an iconostasis stripped of its icons.

On the hill to the north stands a small ruined chapel, the **Küçük Kilese**; it's worth the scramble up for the views over the village alone.

Time your visit to Sille for a mealtime since it has one unexpected gem: the terraced **Sille Konak** (☎ 244 9260; www.sillekonak.com; mains €2-4.50), a restored Greek house lovingly decorated by the family who run it and provide the excellent home cooking.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus 64 from Mevlâna Caddesi (opposite the post office) leaves every half-hour or so (less often on Sunday) for Sille (€0.40, 25 minutes).

KARAMAN

☎ 0338

After the fall of the Seljuk Empire, central Anatolia was split into several different provinces with different governments, and for some time Karaman served as a regional capital. Although little-visited these days, it boasts a selection of fine 13th- and 14th-century buildings and makes a base for excursions to Binbirkilise (right) and Sultanhanı (opposite).

The **Hacıbeyler Camii**, dating from 1358, has a magnificent squared-off entrance, with decoration that looks like a baroque variant on Seljuk art. The **Mader-i Mevlâna (Aktepe) Cami**, dating from 1370, is the burial place of the great Mevlâna's mother and has a dervish-style felt hat carved above its entrance. The adjacent **hamam** is still in use.

The tomb of the great Turkish poet Yunus Emre (1320) is beside the **Yunus Emre Camii**. Extracts from his verses are carved into the walls of a poetry garden to the rear of the mosque.

The slightly disorganised **Karaman Museum** (Turgut Özal Bulvarı; admission €1.10; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) contains cave finds from nearby Taşkale and Canhasan and has a fine ethnography section. Next door is the magnificent **Hatuniye Medresesi**, built in 1382, whose ornate portal is one of the finest examples of Karaman art. It's now a rather smart restaurant.

Getting There & Away

Frequent buses link Karaman with Konya (€2.80, two hours) and Ereğli (€2.80, two hours). Onward buses from Ereğli to Niğde are few and far between.

BİNİRKİLİSE

Just before WWI the great British traveller Gertrude Bell travelled 42km northwest of Karaman and recorded the existence of a cluster of Byzantine churches set high up on a lonely hillside and rather generously known as Binbirkilise (One Thousand and One Churches). Later İrfan Orga came here in search of the last remaining nomads, a journey recorded in his book *The Caravan Moves On*. You won't see any nomads around these days, or indeed much to mark the ruins out as churches, but plenty of goats and tortoises graze peacefully and a few curious villagers amble among the low piles of loose stone foundations.

It's easiest to reach the churches with your own transport. Drive out of Karaman on the Karapınar road and follow the yellow signs. The first sizable ruin pops up in the village of Madenşehir, after which the road becomes increasingly rough. There are fantastic views all along the road, which is just as well, as you'll have to come back the same way.

A taxi from Karaman otogar should cost around €40 for the return trip; the drivers know where the churches are.

SULTANHANI

☎ 0382

The highway between Konya and Aksaray crosses quintessential Anatolian steppe: flat grasslands as far as the eye can see, with only the occasional tumbleweed and a fist of mountains in the distance breaking the monotony. Along the way, 110km from Konya and 42km from Aksaray, is the dreary village of Sultanhanı, its only redeeming feature being one of several Seljuk *han* bearing that name. This stunning **Sultanhanı** (admission €1.10; ☎ 7am-7pm), 200m from the highway, is apparently the largest in Anatolia, and can be explored in about half an hour.

It was constructed in 1229, during the reign of the Seljuk sultan Alaaddin Keykubad I and restored in 1278 after a fire (when it became Turkey's largest *han*). Note the wonderful carved entrance, the raised central *mescit* and the huge *ahır* (stable) at the back. Other rooms once served as baths, bedrooms and an accounting house.

Getting There & Away

Around 10 buses run to/from Aksaray otogar Monday to Friday (€1.10, 45 minutes); there

HAN SWEET HAN

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

As well as the Sultanhanı, fine specimens include the Sarıhan, 6km east of Avanos, and the Karatay Han, 48km east of Kayseri. Many other *hans* dot the Anatolian landscape, including the Ağzıkara Hanı, 16km northeast of Aksaray on the Nevşehir highway, and another Sultan Han, 45km northeast of Kayseri off the Sivas highway.

are only two services at weekends. Alternatively you can flag down a bus heading for Konya or Aksaray from the main highway. If you start out early you can hop off the bus, see the *han* and be on your way again an hour or so later.

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