

EUROPE · HISTORY · CULTURE · FOOD · BEACHES · ARCHITECTURE · CITY BREAKS



# Turkey

Turkey spans Europe and Asia, with Byzantine and Ottoman Istanbul, the balloon-filled valleys of Cappadocia, the marble streets of Ephesus and Pamukkale's white travertine terraces. Add the turquoise Lycian coast and food that changes from region to region, and the real challenge is choosing which corner to explore rather than trying to see it all.



**The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Turkey.**

Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice. FCDO advice last updated 19 October 2026.

|                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  CAPITAL<br>Ankara                       |  CURRENCY<br>Turkish lira (TRY)<br>£1 ≈ TRY 66.30 |  LANGUAGE<br>Turkish, Kurdish                             |  BEST TIME<br>Apr–May, Sep–Oct       |
|  DAILY BUDGET<br>£40–£230<br>££ Moderate |  PLUGS<br>Type C, F<br>230V · adapter needed      |  FLIGHT FROM LONDON<br>3h 50m direct<br>~£150–£400 return |  TIME ZONE<br>UTC+3<br>standard time |

Turkey is vast, larger than any EU country, and its history runs from the 11,000-year-old megalithic enclosures of Göbekli Tepe through Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires. Most first trips combine Istanbul with one or two regions: Cappadocia by overnight bus or short flight, then the Aegean for Ephesus and Pamukkale, or the Mediterranean's Lycian coast between Fethiye and Antalya. Eastern Turkey, from the giant stone heads of Mount Nemrut to Sumela Monastery above the Black Sea, rewards a second trip, as distances there are long.

Turkey is good value for British visitors, though high inflation means lira prices change quickly and Istanbul now costs more than many expect. Long-distance coaches are comfortable and domestic flights cheap, which makes ambitious routes possible. July and August are hot and the coastal resorts busy, while spring and autumn suit sightseeing. Hospitality is genuine, with glasses of çay offered in carpet shops and on ferries, and the food, from breakfast spreads to meyhane meze, is a reason to visit in itself. It works equally well as a city break, road trip or beach holiday.

## Top 5 highlights

1

ARCHITECTURE

Hagia Sophia

Built as a cathedral in 537, converted to a mosque in 1453, a museum in the 1930s and a mosque again in 2020, its vast dome and Byzantine mosaics remain extraordinary. Dress modestly and avoid prayer times.

2

NATURE

Cappadocia

Fairy chimneys, cave churches with Byzantine frescoes and underground cities surround Göreme. See them from a hot-air balloon at sunrise or on foot through the Rose and Love valleys, and sleep in a cave hotel.

3

## HISTORY

**Ephesus**

One of the best-preserved Roman cities in the Mediterranean, with the façade of the Library of Celsus, a theatre for some 25,000 spectators and the mosaics of the Terrace Houses. Arrive at opening time to beat the cruise groups.

4

## NATURE

**Pamukkale and Hierapolis**

Brilliant white travertine terraces formed by mineral-rich hot springs spill down a hillside below the ruins of Roman Hierapolis. Walk the terraces barefoot, then swim among sunken columns in the Antique Pool.

5

## BEACH

**Kaş and the Lycian coast**

Between Fethiye and Antalya, pine-clad mountains drop to turquoise coves, Lycian rock tombs and the sunken ruins at Kekova. Base yourself in Kaş for kayaking, diving and sections of the long-distance Lycian Way.

**Biggest cities**

## LARGEST CITY

**Istanbul**

≈ 15.7 million people

A city spanning the Bosphorus: Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque and Topkapı Palace in Sultanahmet, the Grand Bazaar, and ferries between continents for the price of a bus fare.

## 2ND LARGEST CITY

**Ankara**

≈ 5.9 million people

The planned capital is more practical than pretty, but Anıtkabir, Atatürk's monumental mausoleum, and the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations justify a day between Istanbul and Cappadocia.

## 3RD LARGEST CITY

**İzmir**

≈ 4.5 million people

Turkey's relaxed, liberal third city on the Aegean has a long seafront Kordon, the Kemeraltı bazaar and good seafood; the base for Ephesus, Pergamon and the Çeşme peninsula.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

**Holiday regions in Turkey**

These areas have their own season and weather — see their guides for sea temperatures, resorts and flights.

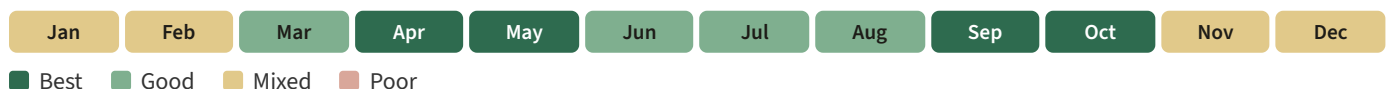

**Turkish Riviera (Antalya, Dalaman coast)**

Turkey Best: May–Jun, Sep–Oct 4h 20m from London

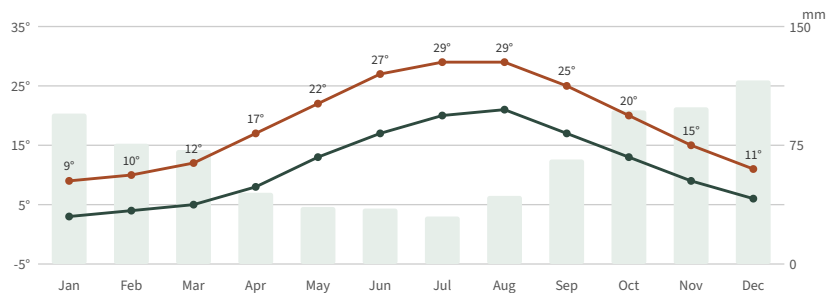
Sea up to 29°C ~£100/day

**When to go to Turkey**

Best time: **Apr–May, Sep–Oct.**

**Average climate in Istanbul**

High °C Low °C Rain (mm)



## Festivals & events

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Apr     | <b>Istanbul Tulip Festival</b><br>Each April millions of tulips bloom in Emirgan Park, Gülhane Park and across the city, a reminder that the tulip was an Ottoman obsession before it was a Dutch one.                  |
| Jun–Jul | <b>Kırkpınar oil wrestling</b><br>Held near Edirne for centuries, by tradition since 1346, this festival sees wrestlers in leather breeches, doused in olive oil, grapple over several days in late June or early July. |
| Dec     | <b>Şeb-i Arus</b><br>Konya marks the anniversary of Rumi's death on 17 December 1273 with nightly sema ceremonies of whirling dervishes during the first half of December.                                              |

## How much does Turkey cost?

|                                                                                                   |                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SHOESTRING</b><br><b>£40</b><br>per person / day<br>≈ TRY 2,652<br>hostels, street food, buses | <b>MID-RANGE</b><br><b>£100</b><br>per person / day<br>≈ TRY 6,630<br>3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis | <b>COMFORTABLE</b><br><b>£230</b><br>per person / day<br>≈ TRY 15,248<br>4-star+, guided trips, private transfers |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

## Food to try

### İskender kebab

Bursa's famous dish: thin slices of döner laid over cubes of pide bread, smothered in tomato sauce and sizzling butter, with yoghurt alongside.

### Kahvaltı

The great Turkish breakfast spread of cheeses, olives, tomatoes, cucumber, honey with clotted kaymak, eggs, simit and endless glasses of tea.

### Baklava

Layers of paper-thin filo, butter and pistachios soaked in syrup; Gaziantep's version, made with bright green local pistachios, is the most prized.

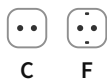
## Getting around

Turkish Airlines, Pegasus and AJet fly cheaply between dozens of cities, often quicker than long coach journeys. Intercity coaches are comfortable, frequent and bookable through apps such as Obilet. High-speed YHT trains link Istanbul, Ankara, Eskişehir and Konya. In Istanbul an İstanbulkart covers the metro, trams, buses and ferries, and BiTaksi or Uber summon taxis. Hire a car for the coast and the east.

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## Practical information

### PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

### DIALLING CODE

+90

### TAP WATER

Varies — bottled or filtered is safer

### TIPPING

Leave around 10% in restaurants, ideally in cash, as card tips may not reach staff. Round up taxi fares, and tip hamam attendants and guides.

### ETIQUETTE

Remove shoes and cover shoulders and knees in mosques, with women covering their hair. Avoid visiting during prayers, and remember that insulting Atatürk or the Turkish nation is a criminal offence.

### MAIN AIRPORTS

Istanbul Airport (IST), Istanbul; Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (SAW), Istanbul; Antalya Airport (AYT), Antalya

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **112** (ambulance, fire, police)

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

### TIME ZONE

UTC+3 (standard time)

### DRIVING

On the right

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## Visas & entry for Turkey

Shown for a British passport.

**No visa needed**

You can visit Turkey without a visa for up to 90 days in any 180-day period, for business or tourism.

If you hold a British citizen passport, you can visit Turkey without a visa for up to 90 days in any 180-day period, for business or tourism

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

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## Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

### RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

### SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Hepatitis B

Measles

Rabies

Typhoid

### YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

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MALARIA

Very low risk of malaria

- There is a very low risk of malaria in Turkey: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

## Public holidays in Turkey

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

|                 |                                                              |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thu 29 Oct 2026 | Republic Day                                                 |
| Fri 1 Jan 2027  | New Year's Day                                               |
| Tue 9 Mar 2027  | Eid al-Fitr                                                  |
| Wed 10 Mar 2027 | Eid al-Fitr                                                  |
| Thu 11 Mar 2027 | Eid al-Fitr                                                  |
| Fri 23 Apr 2027 | National Sovereignty and Children's Day                      |
| Sat 1 May 2027  | Labour and Solidarity Day                                    |
| Sun 16 May 2027 | Eid al-Adha                                                  |
| Mon 17 May 2027 | Eid al-Adha                                                  |
| Tue 18 May 2027 | Eid al-Adha                                                  |
| Wed 19 May 2027 | Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day · Eid al-Adha |
| Thu 15 Jul 2027 | Democracy and National Unity Day                             |
| Mon 30 Aug 2027 | Victory Day                                                  |

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

## Useful phrases in Turkish

| ENGLISH           | TURKISH         | SAY IT                   |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Hello             | Merhaba         | MEHR-ha-ba               |
| Thank you         | Teşekkür ederim | teh-shek-KEWR eh-deh-RIM |
| Please            | Lütfen          | LEWT-fen                 |
| Excuse me         | Affedersiniz    | af-feh-DEHR-see-neeZ     |
| How much is this? | Bu ne kadar?    | boo NEH ka-dar           |

## Know before you go

Book Cappadocia balloon flights with a licensed operator and schedule them for your first morning there; flights are often cancelled for wind, leaving spare days to try again.

When paying by card, choose to be charged in lira rather than pounds, and use bank-owned ATMs rather than standalone machines that charge heavy fees.

Buy an İstanbulkart on arrival: it works on the metro, trams, buses and ferries, can be shared by travellers in a group, and is far cheaper than single tickets.

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Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice ([gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](https://gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)) and TravelHealthPro ([travelhealthpro.org.uk](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk)). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.