

TransAnatolie TA0602: 15 Day Turkey Cultural Historical Heritage Tour: Cappadocia, Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia -Turkey Exploration Tour: Cultural, Historical and Archaeological Heritage Tour to East Anatolia Turkey: TransAnatolie East Turkey

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Day 1: Europe-Ankara

Arrival in Ankara. Transfer to the 4 star Hotel with high QoS and for a welcome drink, dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 2: Ankara-Hattusas (Hattusha)- Amasya (336 km)

After breakfast, visit to the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, where the 1995 World Fair took place. We continue with the visit in the old part of Ankara to the beautiful wooden palaces

dated from the Ottoman period, to the Ethnographical Museum Zeger Pacha's Kanagi and to the Spices Market. We don't forget to take some pictures of the Atatürk Mausoleum. Lunch will be taken in the Hacibey restaurant, the most famous Döner Kebab in Ankara, next to the Deputies Quarter. In the afternoon, we head towards Hattusas, the Hittite Capital with its city-walls, its Lion Gate, its underground Gate, its King Gate and its Hittite Pantheon. We finally reach Yazilikaya. Let's admire the sunset on the city of the Amesis Amazons, place of birth of the famous architect-geographer Strabon: Amasya. Let's walk along the Green River, admiring the wooden houses and the graves cut in the rock and the castle. We end our day at our hotel **** with a welcome drink and a very nice delicious dinner. [i](#)

Day 3: Amasya-Niksar-Ordu-Giresun (320 km)

After breakfast, we leave our hotel for a new visit of Amasya, where we can admire the Mosque of the Beyazit Sultan, the Burmali Minare Mosque , Darüssifa-Bimarhabe, the Mosque of the Blue Medrese Gök, the Archaeological Museum, a few other museums, the Ethnographical Museum of Hazeranlar Konagi. Why not a few pictures of the graves cut in the rock, of the historical bridges, of the fountains, of the wooden houses along the Green River and of the Torumtay Mausoleum, built in 1266. Lunch in Amasya.

Then we drive along the Green River up to Niksar, admiring this amazing landscape through a winding road across the Bridge Mountains. In Ordu starts the region of the nuts cultivation and we can admire nice views on the fields and the sea.

Overnight is planned in the "**** Hotel in Giresun, where numerous cherry trees grow. Their sweet cherries are also named 'Birds Cherries'. Following the legend, the Roman General Lucullus taking over the city in 69 before JC, would have introduced the cherrytrees cultivation in Europe. [i](#)

Day 4: Giresun-Trabzon (130 km)

After breakfast, head towards Trabzon admiring on the way the coast of the Euxine Sea.

In Trabzon, we visit one of the main interesting parts of Trebizonde: the Church of Aya Sofia with its bright frescos. Aya Sofia was at first a church in a form of a cross transformed into a basilica with 3 naves built during the domination of the Manuel Commene I dynasty in the 13th century. Thereafter it was enlarged and lifted several times.

The Southern side of the church has a very beautiful portal embellished with wonderful sculptures, mainly friezes depicting Adam and Eve, mythological figures and flower patterns. The most beautiful frescos can be found in the narthex (entrance portal). Here are depicted miracles of the New Testament such as the Christ walking on the waters, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and the healing of the Blinds. End of day we arrive at our hotel "**** for dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 5: Trabzon-Macka-Gümüşhane-Bayburt-Erzurum (342 km)

After breakfast, we first visit the Sumela Monastery, cling to the hill and located next to the Altindere Park and to the Golden River with the same name. The name Sumela is a deformation with shortening of the Greek 'Panagia Theotokos toumelas', the very Holy Mother of God from the black mountain.

That Monastery, now deserted and difficult of access, is located at 1,200 meters high. The last 250 meters have to be done by foot or with a van. It is remarkable by its impressive frescos of the Church built in the rocks and is part of the list of monuments of UNESCO.

We continue our trip through the Bridge Mountains, driving up via Torul towards Gümüşhane (1,250 m) and Bayburt (1,600 m) across the Kop-Gecidi (2,302 m) towards Erzurum, at 1,950m.

Lunch in a typical restaurant in Bayburt, at the foot of the Bayburt Burch, on the Coruh River.

In the late afternoon, in Erzurum-Karin named 'the Roman Country' by the Seldjoukids, we visit the Great Mosque with the three Kumbets, the School of Astronomy and Medicine of the Koran with its twin minarets. This one is representative of the

oriental art: patterns and tiles made of turquoise earthenware. It was built by the daughter of the Seldjoukide Sultan Aladdin Kaykubat. We still are in Central Asia...

We finally arrive in our hotel ****, wintersports resort on the Palandöken Mountain for our dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 6: Erzurum – Ani – Kars – Dogubayazit (434 km)

In the morning, after breakfast, we head towards the Transcaucasian to Ani.

Between Pasinler and Horasan, we make a stop to admire the Cobandebe Bridge, the most beautiful bridge in the world, built by Mimar Sinan, contemporary and friend of Michel-Angelo, and Master-Architect of Suleiman the Magnificent.

We follow the Aras River for about 140 km. Ani is located 45km east from Kars and 248km from Erzurum on the border between Turkey and the Armenian Republic. This city is located on an important commercial road and has expanded to finally become the capital of Armenia in 961.

At that time, there were more than 100,000 inhabitants and thousands of churches.

The earthquakes and wars against the Byzantine, the Turks and the Mongols put an end to this prosperity age. The earthquake of 1319 was the end of the city. The ruins of the deserted city were found back just after the end of the 19th century. We can still find many ruins of Armenian and Seldjoukide monuments gathered in a limited area: the big Cathedral, the Church of the Savior, the Church of St Gregory, the Mosque of Honentz, the Seldjoukide Palace with its harem and selam, the Turkish bath (hammam) and the Seldjoukide market.

After lunch in the restaurant Ocakbasi in Kars, known for its oriental specialties, we have the possibility to take pictures of the Cathedral of the Apostles and the Castle of Kars.

We follow our trip towards Agri (or Dogubayazit) admiring on the way the impressive landscape of the Ararat Mountain (5,165m) and of the small Ararat Mountain (3,896m). This name 'Ararat' is mentioned several times in the Old Testament: the Book of Genesis (8,4) mentions the episode of the

grounding of the Noah's Ark after the flood on the Ararat Mount.

In the Book of Kings, we can read how the murderers of the Assyrian King Sanherib, the administrator of Jerusalem, ran away towards the Ararat Mount. In addition, in the Book of Jeremiah, during the campaign against Babylon, the name 'Ararat' is mentioned as an ally of the Israelites.

Ararat is another form of the Acadian name 'Urartu'.

Everything is impressive in this landscape: land tortoises, eagles, partridges, hawks, numerous species of flowers and plants, foxes and sheep make up an animal and floral richness on the hillsides of the Ararat Mount. End of day, we arrive at our 4 star hotel for dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 7: Dogubayazit – Van (152km)

After breakfast, visit to the spectacular Ishak Pacha Palace, located 7km far from the city, at the foot of the Ararat Mount. At that place, a monument Urartu already existed in 1,000 before JC, which was restored in 1784 and embellished to become a palace fortified by the Ottoman Empire Ishak Pacha. This palace was built in different styles, the most important being Osman Baroque from the 17th century. Once built, Ishak Pacha made cut off the hands of the architect to prevent him from building such beautiful palace for another person. Without the terraces, this palace is 115m long and 50m largen, includes 336 rooms distributed on 2 floors and reminds you of the Tales from the Turkish Nights.

Lunch in Dogubayazit and start to Van (1,750m) via the Tendurek Pass (2,644m).

Before arriving in Van-Tuspan, we make a stop at the Muradiye waterfalls, a patch of paradise next to Van, located at 1,700m high on the shore of the largest lake in the country, where we can admire many Armenian churches. The old city of Tuspa was founded by the Ourarit in the 9th century before JC. The Kingdom of Urartu included a large part of the Middle-East and that civilization reached its apogee between 900 and 600 before JC.

This period was followed by a decline, provoked by the war against the Assyrians and the invasion of the Scythians and the Medes. Alexander the Great ruled this area for some time

Then, after a Persian period, this territory was ruled by the Armenians. Van became a Byzantine city and was destroyed by the Mongols in 1387. Persians and Osmans fought to get the domination on this territory. Finally, the Osmans developed the town.

Arriving in Van, we visit the fortress, accessible via a stair with 1,000 steps from which we can admire the lake at sunset.

The founder of Urartu, Sardur I, built here in the 9th century, a fortress on a chalky crest of 1,000 m long and 100m high, to protect himself from the Assyrians. A grave with several urns were found during excavations at the foot of the northern side. On the southern hillside of the fortress, we can discover funeral rooms cut in the rock for Ourart Kings. In those graves, we can find Rupestrian inscriptions engraved in cuneiform characters by the Ourart Kings and trilingual inscriptions (in Babylonian, in Persian, Achemenide and in Media) done in the 5th century by the Persian King Xerxes, who says: "Xerxes, the Great King of the Kings".

We dine and overnight at our high QoS Hotel (4 star) in Van or Urfa depending upon the conditions at the time of concern. [i](#)

Day 8: Van (100 km)

After breakfast we make a stop in a leather cooperative to get to know the art of Eastern Turkey. The Kilims of Van are famous for the Turkish-Kurdish patterns and for the Armenian and Persian drawings.

We continue to the Citadel of Cavustepe located on a hill at 28km south of Van, which is a good example of the architectural art of the Ourart civilization. Two different fortresses can be distinguished: the upper fortress and the lower fortress. In the upper part, we can find the remains of a temple, while in the lower part are the ruins of a palace, a complex of temples, graves of priests and a stock of provisions with 30 barrels on which we can still see the measures in cuneiform characters. This whole would have been the fortress 'Sardurihurda' of the King Sargon II in the 8th century before JC.

Lunch will be taken on the island of Akdamar, 4 km far from the shore. This now desolated island was a religious centre 1,000 years ago and was the seat of the Armenian patriarchate

for centuries. We can also admire the Church of the Holy Cross, one of the most beautiful Armenian churches we could see. This Church was founded by the King of Vaspourakan Gaguig Ardzrouni (904-937) and is particularly well-known for the sculptures of the outdoor walls, where we can find mostly representations of the Old and New Testament such as: Adam and Eve, the Noah history, the Sacrifice of Abraham, Samson, David against Goliath, the Hebrews in the blazing fire, Mary with Jesus and the Christ on his throne.

The reliefs of the abbassid Calif Muktadir show us an exceptional mix of Christian and Islamic art. That church was widened several times over the centuries, with for example a chapel on the North, a large porch and a church tower. Today, the restaurant Deniz from Gevas has prepared us an unforgettable picnic.

At the end of the day, at sunset, we make a stop to visit the Seldjoukide necropolis and to admire the charms of a Turkish princess. Eventually we go back to our hotel in Van for dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 9: Van – Tatvan – Bitlis – Silvan – Tigris – Hassuni – Diyarbakir – Mardin (451km)

After breakfast we leave Van for a diversified day and we drive to the south of the lake via the Kuskunkiran pass (2,234m) towards Tatvan at about 145km far away. By going along the valley of the river watering Bitlis, capital of the Turkish tobacco located in the middle of a fresh oasis, we reach the famous Bridge of Malabadi built in 1146 by the Artukides on the Batman Suyu, one of the affluents of the Tigris, love of Euphrates.

Lunch is planned to be taken in Silvan-Tigranokerta, built during the Assyrian period and visited by Alexander the Great. This city was developed by the King Tigran the Great and is built on the old site of Martyropolis, founded by the Bishop Marutha in the late 4th century. This name was given in memory of the 40 Christian martyrs executed during the second period of the Persian Kingdom. Constantine the Great restored the Silvan Castle to use it as a military garrison.

Euphrates pursues Tigris

Worth to note also that during World War I, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was the commander against the war with the Russians and captured the cities of Mus and Bitlis back from the Russians.

After the lunch taken with the burgomaster of Silvan, we visit the Mosque of Selhattin Eyyoubi, the destroyed minaret, the Church of Kildan, the Museum of Atatürk, the Caves of Temtemburg, Hamido, the numerous troglodyte houses (+/- 300), the Castle of Hassuni as well as fountains and watermills. The restoration of this site was paid by the EC included in the protection of monuments.

Arriving in Diyarbakir, we can admire the impressive walls built with black basalt, which are one of the most beautiful types of military architecture of the Middle Age. The foundation of those walls, 5,5 km long having a fish shape, date back from the Roman period (349 after JC). We don't forget to take pictures of the Tigris Delta and of the bridge over it.

This bridge was built by the metropolite Jean Slara in 512. From there the Tigris was only navigable at that time with "keleks" (small boats made of pumped up animal skins). Our 4 star hotel is at your service in Diyarbakir or in Mardin for dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 10: Mesopotamia: Mardin – Urfa – Harran – Kahta (408 km)

After breakfast we walk around the town of Mardin, which is a poetic city located at 1,300 m high on a hill topped by a citadel. It was known at first as Marida and built on the rocks. But it has since then lost its population of Catholic Armenians. According to the English historian Arnold Toynbee, this would be the most beautiful town in the world thanks to its typical Arab architecture. The small streets of Mardin display highly decorated houses with chalky stones with a typical arab style. The medrese of the Sultan Isa Bey (1385) is one of the most important sites of Mardin. This medrese is a mosque with a school of astronomy, medicine, Coranic containing a door decorated with wonderful bas-relief.

From the Medrese roof, we have a beautiful view on the city and on the plains of Mesopotamia. After the visit to the Big

Mosque, we head towards Deir-Az-Zafaran or Deyrulzaferan, which is located in the middle of vines and gardens in an inhospitable landscape.

The majority of the Syrian-Orthodox patriarchs is buried here. Until 1933, this monastery was also the siege of the patriarchate, now transferred to Damas. It was founded at the time of the ancestors of Mary and Ananie in the 6th century. Lunch in Urfa, the old Edesse, historical city of the bible where Abraham, Job, Jacob and even St Gregory lived. The most well-known restaurant of Edesse, named Göl, with its typical Mesopotamian dishes, is in the Abraham garden.

We visit the houses of Abraham in Urfa named Ursu, Orkai and Edesse. It is said that the Assyrian King Nemrut had a dream in which it was mentioned that he would have to give his kingdom to a person born during the year. Therefore he ordered to kill all newborn childs of the year as well as pregnant women.

Harran Emevi Mosque Mardin Ulu Camii, Grand Mosque Urfa
Halil Ibrahim Mosque

Nona concealed her pregnancy and hid her son Abraham in a cave, where he lived in until he was 7. Once grown up, Abraham fought against Nemrut but was trapped and condemned to be burnt at the stake. Then God intervened and transformed fire into water, sparks and ashes into carps. This water now flows in 2 ponds where Holy carps are swimming. Edesse played also an important role during the first Christianity centuries as it was named the 'City of Apostle St Thomas' and was the centre of the Armenian Christendom as well as the home of the oriental Syrian Church.

We know also the legend of the King Abgar from Edesse and of 'Mandylion', a Jesus icon created miraculously: when Abgar was suffering from leprosy, an ambassador was sent to Jesus to ask for healing. Jesus dried his forehead with a cloth (mandylion) which was given to the ambassador. This cloth, found back in 544, was hidden in a wall of the city and became the priceless possession of Edesse. In 944, this relic was transferred to Constantinople and was then stolen by the Crusaders in 1204 to be brought back to the West, where it disappeared. For the orthodox Christians, this icon represents the real face of Jesus.

At the end of the day, we arrive in Harran, the warmest spot in Turkey but also one of the most picturesque villages in the

region. This city, where Abraham lived during his trip towards Canaan, is also considered traditionally as the place where the old Testament was written. This village, located at the crossroads of the caravans, was an important trading place with a large international traffic and had also a significant religious activity.

The Mesopotamian, Greek and Roman divinities were venerated over there. This era ended in the 13th century when the Mongols razed the city. We can admire there the typical houses (Trulli) ant-hill shaped and built with clay, with a roof as a painted dome. They were barns permitting to keep foodstuffs in a cool place in the summer and in a hot place in the winter. Harran was surrounded by a wall, which is now in ruins but which is still recognizable with its 7 doors to get into the city.

After that visit, we head towards our final destination Kahta at the foot of Nemrut Dagi and towards our hotel Nemrut ***, for a welcome drink, dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 11: Kahta – Nemrut Dagi – Kahta – Antioche (351 km)

Today we leave early with the bus, warmly dressed to visit one of the most outstanding sites of our trip: Nemrut Dagi. The sculptors of the Sovereign of Commagen, Antiochos, built an impressive sanctuary on this huge plateau. And as Antiochos was seeing himself as a god, he added his own effigy to the unity.

It is better to contemplate this place at sunrise, when the statues are well lighted up.

The funeral monument of Antiochos I (69-36 before JC), at the top of the mountain Nemrut (2,150m), was built by this King for himself and his close family.

Antiochos was descended by his father Mithridate from the King of Persia Darius and by his mother Laodike from Alexander the Great.

Commagen was a buffer region between the Greek, the Roman and the Persian properties, which explains the multi-cultural character of religious expressions.

Excavations were carried out on this mountain by the German engineer Sester in 1881, which enabled to bring to light the huge statues.

This tumulus, 160 m high and 150m diameter is made of 2 terraces:

The Eastern Terrace: we can find statues of gods, from 8 to 9 meters high, in a sitting position with the back turned towards the tumulus. They are very well preserved, except the majority of the heads, which are missing. However, 2 heads are still intact. The representation, from left to the right, is as follows: Apollo, Mithras, Helios, Hermes (light), Tychne (fertility), Zeus, Oromasdes (creator), Antiochus I, Heracles, Verathragna, Artagnes (power and courage), every statue with a lion and an eagle as protective animal.

The Western Terrace: the statues of the gods are placed in the same order as on the eastern terrace but their state of preservation is worse. Only heads lying down on the ground are still intact. This terrace has no altar. The two lions on the terraces are the oldest representations of the horoscope in the world: they wear a half-moon and 19 stars around their neck, including the 3 largest in conjunction symbolizing the planets Jupiter, Mars and Mercury.

Then, we leave towards Antioch, where we will appreciate Arab specialties during lunch.

In 307 before JC, Antigone founded Antigonia, which was supplanted seven years later by another city founded by order of Seleucus I Nicator, general of Alexander the Great. This city named Antioch expanded very rapidly, so as to become one of the most prosperous and powerful cities in Asia Minor. It was even the 3rd city in the Roman Empire and then became the centre of Christendom at the time of Apostles Peter and Paul. In Antioch we visit the Caves of Peter, an old cult centre in the rocks, used by the Christians as a prayer place. The Archaeological Museum displays interesting architectural achievements, exceptional Roman sculptures and mosaics famous throughout the world.

Dinner and overnight is our 4 star hotel.

Possibility to do evening activities in the typical streets of Antioch along the Orante River. [i](#)

Day 12: Antioch – Alexandrette – Tarse – Gülek – Tyana – Nigde – Nevsehir (479km)

After breakfast, we leave Antioch towards Daphne, where the nymph Daphne pursued by Apollon, was transformed into a bay tree. We finally arrive in Tarsus, birth place of St Paul, going through Issos, where Alexander the Great and Darius III met. We visit the Well and House of St Paul before having lunch in the surroundings and walking to discover this Holy place.

Then we head towards Cappadocia going through Gülek, Tyana and Nigde, garrison place of Alexander the Great. We visit the Tyana aqueduct, the Roman swimming pool, the Great Mosque of Nigde, a very delicate city dated from the Seljuks period with the Princess Mausoleum.

We continue towards Nevsehir. At the 4 star hotel of high QoS we have buffet dinner and overnight.

Possibility to do a tour in hot-air balloon in the morning upon reservation. [i](#)

Day 13: Cappadocia (80km)

The whole day is dedicated to the discovery of this unique region. The wind and the violent climatic forces have carved curious characters out of tuff. Seeing the "Fairies" chimneys looks like a lunar plateau.

We visit the open-air museum in Göreme, with its churches in the rocks, the Pigeons Valley and Uchisar. We follow by the visit to a carpets school and store as well as to onyx and leather workshops. Lunch will be taken during those visits. Dinner and overnight at our hotel ***.

Possibility to attend an evening with traditional dances. [i](#)

Day 14: Cappadocia: Roses Valley – Pasabaga – Underground city of Saratli – Pizze Tower in Aksaray – Acemhöyük – Salty Lake – Ankara (330km)

After buffet breakfast, we leave to discover another aspect of Cappadocia with the Roses Valley, the Camel Valley, the Virgin Mary Valley, Pasabag, a part of the Zelve Valley, the impressive underground city of Saratli, dedicated to Simone and Jean Vandelft, the Minaret Egri of Aksaray, Pizze of Turkey and we finally arrive in Acemhöyük, the main capital of the Hittite civilization.

Lunch with local inhabitants in Acemhöyük.

Back to Ankara, we drive along the Salty lake with its salt crystal, its ducks, its wild geese and its rose flamingos. Dinner and overnight at our 4 star hotels. [i](#)

Day 15: Ankara – Departure

After breakfast, transfer to the airport. [i](#)

Pricing

- For Pricing Click [List of TransAnatolie Turkey Tours, Services and Pricing](#) or
- Contac Us: [Contact Information for TransAnatolie Tour](#) [i](#)

Inclusive

- 15 days, 14 nights, full pension in 4* charming hotels, (dinner on the 1st evening, breakfast on the last day)
- Minibus for Sumela, and Nemroud Dag, cruise on the Van Lake,
- All admission fees to the visits planned,
- Services of TransAnatolie Tour Professional Guide,
- Transportation in Turkey (403 Mercedes bus or minibus, or a Mercedes Sprinter/WW Wolt,
- and lunches in restaurants. [i](#)

Exclusive

- Drinks in hotels and restaurants
- Optional visits, tips
- Flights Europe/Turkey/Europe
- Insurance,
- Airport taxes. [i](#)

TransAnatolie Tour: Multilingual Cultural Tour Provider and Operator.

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