

BIG FIVE[®]

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

Destination Information Guide

Turkey



Big Five Tours & Expeditions, USA
1551 SE Palm Court, Stuart, FL 34994
Tel: 772-287-7995 / Fax: 772-287-5990
800 BIG FIVE (800-244-3483)
www.bigfive.com & www.galapagos.com
Email: info@bigfive.com

Big Five Tours & Expeditions Ltd. Canada
80 Corporate Drive Unit 311
Scarborough, Ontario M1H 3G5 Canada
Tel: +416-640-7802 / Fax: 1-647-463-8181
Toll Free: 888- 244-3483
www.bigfivetours.ca Email: info@bigfivetours.ca

Welcome to the World of Big Five!

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



Istanbul, Turkey Elevation: 121 feet Latitude: 40 58N Longitude: 028 49E

Average High Temperature Years on Record: 21

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	64	46	47	51	60	69	78	82	82	76	67	57	50

Average Low Temperature Years on Record: 21

	YEAR	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
°F	51	37	37	40	47	54	62	66	67	61	55	47	42

Average Precipitation Years on Record: 40

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
in.	25.2	3.7	2.8	2.3	1.7	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.6	1.1	2.1	3.5	4

WEATHER

Temperate with hot, dry summers with mild, wet winters; harsher in interior. The coasts have typical Mediterranean climate with hot summers and mild winters. Farther north, the swimming season becomes shorter. The Black Sea coast has a temperate climate with warm summers, mild winters, and a relatively high rainfall. Swimming season is from June to September. Central and Eastern Anatolia have a steppe climate with hot, dry summer, mild winters, and a relatively high rainfall. Temperatures in Ankara vary between 25°F and 86°F.

TIME ZONE

GMT + 2 (GMT + 3 from last Sunday in March to Saturday before last Sunday in October).

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passports: For international travel, a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least **3** blank pages are necessary.

Visas: VISAS: Many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Trivisa to process required visas for our passengers. You can find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: www.trivisa.com. Please use account code JP1551, and follow the directions.

Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. You may want to exchange a small amount of money bank windows located in the airport. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage and escort you to your hotel. They will assist with check-in formalities.

TURKEY CUSTOMS

Tourists may bring in 200 cigarettes or 2 cartons of local cigarettes, and 50 cigars, or 200 grams of tobacco and 200 leaves of cigarette paper, or 200 grams of Tumbeki; 5 (100 cc) or 7 (70 cc) bottles of wines and/or spirits; and for personal use, reasonable amount of perfume; 1.5kg. coffee, 1.5kg. instant coffee, 500 grams of tea ; 1 kilo chocolate and 1 kilo sweets, one camera with 5 rolls of film; necessary medical items; gifts, and electronics. Valuable items and all items with a value of over \$15,000 must be registered in the owner's passport upon entering Turkey for control upon exit. Visitors may export, free of duty, 2 cartons of local tobacco products, two bottle of alcoholic beverages, foodstuffs up to a total value of 100 Lira each.

Prohibited Items: All narcotics (hemp, opium, cocaine, morphine, heroin, etc.), obscene literature, pictures, or articles. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. It is prohibited to import more than one set of playing cards. ***Prohibited for export – Antiques, grain products, tea, cocoa, coffee and spices.***

U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

HEALTH

Travelers should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date.

Yellow Fever: There is no risk for yellow fever in the Middle East. A certificate of yellow fever vaccination may be required for entry into certain of countries if you are coming from countries in South America or sub-Saharan Africa.

The following vaccines may be recommended for your travel to the Middle East. **Hepatitis A** Transmission of hepatitis A virus can occur through direct person-to-person contact; through

exposure to contaminated water, ice, or shellfish; fruits, vegetables, or other uncooked foods. **Hepatitis B**, if you might be exposed to blood or body fluids (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, or be exposed through medical treatment. Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all infants and for children ages 11–12 years who did not receive the series as infants.

Malaria: not a risk in Turkey.

Rabies, pre-exposure vaccination, if you might have extensive unprotected outdoor exposure in rural areas, such as might occur during camping, hiking, or bicycling, or engaging in certain occupational activities.

Typhoid vaccine. Typhoid fever can be contracted through contaminated drinking water or food, or by eating food or drinking beverages that have been handled by a person who is infected. Large outbreaks are most often related to fecal contamination of water supplies or foods sold by street vendors. Risk is greater if you are visiting developing countries in this region.

As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria, measles, and a one-time dose of polio vaccine for adults.

Please note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

Remember to pack light! Take lightweight cotton summer clothing and sweater for evenings. At the Black Sea, Central and Eastern Anatolia, summer-wear should be brought along as well as warmer clothing for cool evenings at high altitudes.

Comfortable shoes are necessary to visit archaeological and historical sites. Sunglasses and hats are advisable. Head scarves should be taken by women to use when visiting mosques.

Laundry: Laundry service is available and reliable at major hotels.

LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffle bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations. Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights.

MONEY

Currency: Turkish Lira (TL). Notes are in denominations of TL5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200.

Coins are in denominations of TL1 and Kuruş (KRS) 50, 25, 10 and 5.

There is no restriction on the import of local or foreign currency, though visitors bringing in a large amount of foreign currency should obtain a written declaration from the Turkish authorities. No more than the equivalent of US\$5000 in local currency may be exported. Foreign currency may be exported up to US\$5000, but no more than the amount imported and declared.

Changing money can be done at most Change offices, banks and hotels. Best place to change small amounts of money is in the bank at the airport upon arrival. While it is convenient to change money at hotels, the rate may not be as favorable as at a bank or at a change offices. **All exchange certificates and purchase receipts must be retained to prove that legally exchanged currency was used.** The exchange slips for conversion of foreign currency into Turkish Lira should be kept. You may be required to show these when changing Turkish Lira back into foreign currency and when taking souvenirs out of the country.

Credit Cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa – are accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services that may be available.

Traveler's checks can be problematic and can only be exchanged in banks. Credit cards are far more convenient.

COMMUNICATION

Languages: Turkish. Kurdish is also spoken by a minority in the southeast. French, German and English are widely spoken in cities and tourist areas.

ELECTRICITY

In cities, voltage is 220 volts. It may be different in rural areas. Please check voltage before plugging in any electrical appliance.

FOOD & DRINK

Drink: Tap water is usually chlorinated in larger towns and cities, but should not be assumed to have been so treated. Use boiled, sterilized water or bottled water (make sure the seal is intact) for drinking, ice, brushing teeth, cleaning contacts.

NOTE: A water source with the word ıçılmaz is NOT for drinking. Sources labeled ıçılır, ıçme suyu or ıçilebilir are safe to drink. Bottled spring water is widely available. Milk is pasteurized. Ayran (a refreshing yogurt drink), tea, and strong black Turkish coffee are widely available.

Turkey is a secular state and alcohol is permitted, although during Ramadan, it is considered polite for visitors to avoid alcohol. Turkish beer, red and white wines are reasonable. The national drink is raki (anise) which clouds when water is added. It is also known as 'lion's milk' and should be taken in moderation. Visitors who are not familiar with Turkish cuisine have a delightful surprise in store for them partly from the spectacular variety of ingredients and partly from the influence of the numerous civilizations throughout history. As you visit different areas of Turkey, you'll discover local specialties such as Kanlıca in Istanbul is famous for its yogurt, Bursa for its Iskender Kebab, Gaziantep for its pistachio nuts, the Black Sea for hamsi (fried anchovies) and corn bread; and Syrian borderlands (Urfa and Adana) for spicy shish kebabs. **Note:** If you have food allergies or special/restricted dietary requests, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your

needs. Also, please advise your travel agent or our office if you have any mobility restrictions, so that we may inform our representatives accordingly. They will always strive to accommodate you to the best of their ability.

TIPPING

A service charge is included in hotel and restaurant bills. Tipping is at your discretion and is optional if a service charge is not included in the services provided. It also depends on the kind of services rendered, however, it has come to be expected when anyone performs any kind of service to you. In first class restaurants, a 10 to 15% tip on the pre-tax total is adequate.

SHOPPING

Shopping is one of the great pleasures of Turkey. Traditional handicrafts from villages and provinces and practical things for the home and kitchen can be found alongside many decorative items crafted in traditional Turkish style. Istanbul's Kapalı Carsi Bazaar has jewelry, carpets, and antiques for sale. Handicrafts include a wide variety of textiles and embroideries as well as copper, onyx, tile, and mother-of-pearl inlaid articles. Craftsmen also make leather, suede and jewelry items. And, of course, carpets and kilims. **Be prepared for hard-sell tactics** of those who will employ any ruse to get you into a shop, restaurant, etc. Also, be aware that not every shop sporting the tourist office logo is reputable. Ask your guide.

Before you start talking price with a shopkeeper, make sure that you are really interested in the item first. It is considered extremely rude not to buy something after stating or accepting a price. When trying to buy a rug, you should offer 20%-30% of the asking price. If a tout or guide accompanies you, he usually gets 10% of the price so you will pay 10% more).

CUSTOMS & MANNERS IN TURKEY

Hospitality is very important and visitors should respect Islamic customs.

- Shaking hands is the normal form of greeting.
- Informal wear is acceptable, but beachwear should be confined to the beach or poolside.
- Smoking is widely acceptable but prohibited in cinemas, theatres, city buses and dolmuses (collective taxis).

- Outside hotels and resorts, women should dress very conservatively, covering shoulders, arms, and legs.
- Remove shoes before entering mosques and observe a respectful silence.
- Again, wear clothing that covers your legs and upper arms, and women should carry scarves to cover their heads.

ENTERTAINMENT

Modern Turkish cultural life dates from the 1923 founding of the republic and early efforts to Westernize Turkish society. As a result, the arts, literature, drama, and classical and contemporary music have flourished. State support of cultural activities is extensive and encompasses a national network of theaters, orchestras, opera and ballet companies, university fine arts academies, and various conservatories.

Underwater diving in Turkish waters is permitted with amateur equipment in certain areas for leisure purposes and under the guidance of local authorities. Foreigners can only hunt in parties organized by Turkish travel agencies which have been authorized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs. Tourists may fish for sporting purposes, except in prohibited regions, without obtaining licenses. Amateur equipment and non-commercial, multi-hooked lines should be used, and nets should not weigh more than 5 kg. Commercial fishing by foreigners carries heavy penalties. Winter sport resorts in Turkey are generally located in forested mountains of average

height. Most of the ski centers are easily accessible by road.

NOTES ON THE TURKISH BATH

One of the truly unique experiences of a trip to Turkey is a visit to the hamam. Like the harem, this Roman and Byzantine tradition was adopted and then perfected by the Selcuk Turks, for whom the public bath took on an important role. It was not merely a place where believers could fulfill the Islamic precept of cleanliness. It was a place in which to mingle, socialize and gossip.

Women would proceed from their harem to the hamam with great ceremony, accompanied by servants heavily-laden with delicacies for the ladies while they spent hours lounging in the steam. The young women used this as an opportunity to show off their ornately embroidered towels and ivory inlaid slippers, but especially their youthful figures, while older women would spot potential wives for their sons.

Men would discuss the latest court scandal or talk business and politics. Contrary to popular ideas, hamams have always been either permanently designated for one of the sexes, or have a separate schedule for men and women.

Hamams have largely gone out of fashion in Turkey. But many historical hamams survive, and a visit is highly recommended. In Istanbul the most popular are the historic Galatasaray Hamam in Beyoglu, and Cagaloglu Hamam in Sultanahmet, though local baths are often just as good and much cheaper. Bursa is famed for its baths and spas.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc., many books relating to East Africa. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. Longitude Books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has an extensive collection of books, searchable by country.

ATATURK: THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE FOUNDER OF MODERN TURKEY

by **Andrew Mango**

In this major new biography of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and the first to appear in English based on Turkish sources, Andrew Mango strips away the myth, to show the complexities of one of the most visionary, influential, and enigmatic statesmen of the century. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was virtually unknown until 1919, when he took the lead in thwarting the victorious Allies' plan to partition the Turkish core of the Ottoman Empire. He divided the Allies, defeated the last Sultan, and secured the territory of the Turkish national state, becoming the first president of the new republic in 1923, fast creating his own legend.

Andrew Mango's revealing portrait of Ataturk throws light on matters of great importance today—resurgent nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and the reality of democracy.

HALIDE'S GIFT

by **Frances Kazan**

Set in magical, mystical Constantinople in the closing years of the nineteenth century, Halide's Gift is the story of a family with a secret, and a society in turbulent transition. At the heart of this beguiling novel are two sisters—one flamboyant and mischievous, the other shy and full of dreams—bound by extraordinary friendship, who will be torn apart by their love of radically different men.

TURKISH REFLECTIONS: A BIOGRAPHY OF A PLACE

by **Mary Lee Settle, Jan Morris**

After a twenty-year absence, Mary Lee Settle returns to the land she calls the happiest home she has ever known. A land of intersecting continents, cultures, and contradictions, Turkey beckons her on a cross-country journey, in search of the country's soul—a personal odyssey into history, legend, rumor, and myth.

THE STONE WOMAN

by **Tariq Ali**

Each year, when the weather in Istanbul becomes unbearable, the family of Iskender Pasha, a retired Ottoman notable, retires to its summer palace overlooking the Sea of Marmara. It is 1899 and the last great Islamic empire is in serious trouble. A former tutor poses a question which the family has been refusing to confront for almost a century: "Your Ottoman Empire is like a drunken prostitute, neither knowing nor caring who will take her next. Do I exaggerate, Memed?" "The history of Iskender Pasha's family mirrors the growing degeneration of the Empire they have served for the last five hundred years. This passionate story of masters and servants, school-teachers and painters, is marked by jealousies, vendettas and, with the decay of the Empire, a new generation which is deeply hostile to the half-truths and myths of the "golden days." The Stone Woman is the third novel of Tariq Ali's "Islam Quartet." Like its predecessors - Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree and The Book of Saladin - its power lies both in the story-telling and the challenge it poses to stereotyped images of life under Islam.

TURKEY UNVEILED: A HISTORY OF MODERN TURKEY

by **Hugh Pope, Nicole Pope**

Turkey today -- very likely the world's fastest growing tourist destination -- defies easy categorization: European? Western? Islamic? Anarchic? Friends speak of the Turks as blunt yet hospitable, inhabiting a land rich in history and culture, a strategic ally of NATO. Detractors cite "Midnight Express," military coups, Islamic Fundamentalism. The Turks themselves, with characteristic indifference, simply say: "All is Turkey." Hugh and Nicole Pope in this timely account attempt to fill a gap in perception. Throughout the last generation, Turkey has opened up to the outside world, revealing a pluralistic and dynamic society. The authors, who have reported from Turkey for a decade, provide a rich mosaic of contemporary Turkey and its formative past. The strengths and weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian tragedy, the ongoing Kurdish struggle, and the controversial legacy of the brilliant but

autocratic founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk are all here. They also provide portraits of new leaders who have broken taboos and ushered in new freedoms at a time when other forces attempt to pull Turkey back into the Middle Eastern vortex.

TALES FROM THE EXPAT HAREM: FOREIGN WOMEN IN MODERN TURKEY

Editors: Anastasia M. Ashman and Jennifer Eaton Gokmen

As the Western world struggles to comprehend the paradoxes of modern Turkey, a country both European and Asian, forward-looking yet rooted in ancient empire, *Tales from the Expat Harem* reveals its most personal nuances. This anthology provides a window into the country from the perspective of 30 expatriates from six different nations, who established lives in Turkey for work, love, or adventure. Through narrative essays covering the last four decades, these diverse women unveil the mystique of the "Orient," describe religious conflict, embrace cultural discovery, and maneuver familial traditions, customs, and responsibilities. Poignant, humorous, and transcendent, the essays take readers to weddings and workplaces, down cobbled Byzantine streets, into boisterous bazaars along the Silk Road, and deep into the feminine stronghold of Ottoman bathhouses.

SONS OF THE CONQUERORS: THE RISE OF THE TURKIC WORLD

Hugh Pope

Definitive, world-encompassing account of the history and culture of the Turkish people by one of the world's most acclaimed experts. Hugh Pope has traveled the world to encounter and assimilate the many facets of this complex and fascinating ethnic group, distilling the essential qualities shared by all people of Turkish descent. Rich with stories and legends stretching back centuries - from the pre-Ottoman days of tribal militarism to the era of the Great Game and beyond - *Sons of the Conquerors* is a compellingly readable account of a profoundly neglected subject that brings readers into closer contact with a culture that has shaped history.

CRESCENT & STAR: TURKEY BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Stephen Kinzer

Veteran foreign correspondent Stephen Kinzer takes a look at the enigma that is modern Turkey, a country both exotic and dangerous. Looking behind the myths, he shows how this now-modern state has progressed from its former status as part of the Ottoman Empire to its current embrace of democracy. Kinzer, who has spent years living and working in Turkey, is the perfect tour guide for this look at a country striving to become "the most audaciously successful nation of the twenty-first century."

A TREASURY OF TURKISH FOLKTALES FOR CHILDREN

by Barbara K. Walker

This collection of 34 Turkish folk tales is about jinns and giants, padishahs and peasants, and beloved heroes such as Keloglan the bald boy. Age range: 8