

DESTINATION

# *the* TREASURES *of* TURKEY

FEW DESTINATIONS  
CAPTURE THE  
IMAGINATION LIKE  
THIS ANCIENT AND  
MULTIFACETED COUNTRY.

BY SANDRA MACGREGOR

Outshone by Western European destinations for decades, Turkey has only recently made its much-deserved way into the spotlight as a premium destination. Spanning the continents of both Europe and Asia, the country offers all the exoticism of the East as well as the modernity of the West. It lays claim to legendary ruins, world-class museums, sun-soaked beaches, and awe-inspiring landscapes. Although you could spend a lifetime discovering the country's sites and secrets, here is a sampling of some of Turkey's must-see treasures.



# DESTINATION



The Blue Mosque



Inside the Blue Mosque

## Harmonious Istanbul

Istanbul is a beautiful harmony of opposites. Rarely has an urban center so successfully married the past and the present as has this cosmopolitan city. Here, centuries-old mosques shoulder avant-garde art galleries, traditional markets vie for space with mega malls, and hole-in-the-wall eateries are equally

as welcome as contemporary, five-star restaurants. All have their places in this vibrant, boisterous metropolis.

Contrary to popular belief, Istanbul isn't Turkey's capital (it's Ankara), but it is the country's most populous city and home to some of its best landmarks. One of the most famous is the Grand Bazaar ([grandbazaaristanbul.org](http://grandbazaaristanbul.org)), among the

oldest and largest covered markets in the world. Once described by a guide as "a cross between *Alice in Wonderland* and *Treasure Island*," this shopping hub features carpets, jewelry, clothing, leather goods, and accessories. Running since 1461, it attracts an average of 400,000 visitors daily.

"If you can dream it, you can buy it here" is a common refrain among market vendors. And it's true as long as you're willing to indulge in some good-natured haggling and a cup of apple tea, a favorite browsing inducement among many of the market's some 5,000 shop owners. For the more adventurous, the Grand Bazaar is also a great place to try a Turkish coffee. The sweet and thick beverage packs a copious amount of caffeine that is guaranteed to revive even the most sluggish shopper.

For a slightly more sedate and spiritual experience, head a short distance to Istanbul's pair of must-see mosques. Few structures in the world could rival the Ayasofya ([hagiasophia.com](http://hagiasophia.com)), also known as the Hagia Sophia, for sheer beauty and the capacity to dazzle. Built in the sixth century B.C., Ayasofya was originally constructed as a Byzantine church. It wasn't until 1453 that the church was converted into a mosque, which it remained until 1954, when the Ayasofya was transformed into a museum. The interior offers a captivating study



Grand Bazaar

in contrasts as both masterful Christian mosaics and golden Islamic calligraphy compete for a visitor's gaze.

Nearby is the Sultan Ahmet Camii, more commonly known as the Blue Mosque because of the 20,000 beautiful, cobalt blue Iznik tiles used to adorn its interior. Opened in 1616, this striking mosque with its series of domes and minarets commands the city's skyline. It's said Sultan Ahmed I, for whom the mosque is named, built the mosque with the goal of outshining the Ayasofya. Travelers to Istanbul can compare the two architectural masterpieces firsthand and come to their own conclusions as to which is the most beautiful.

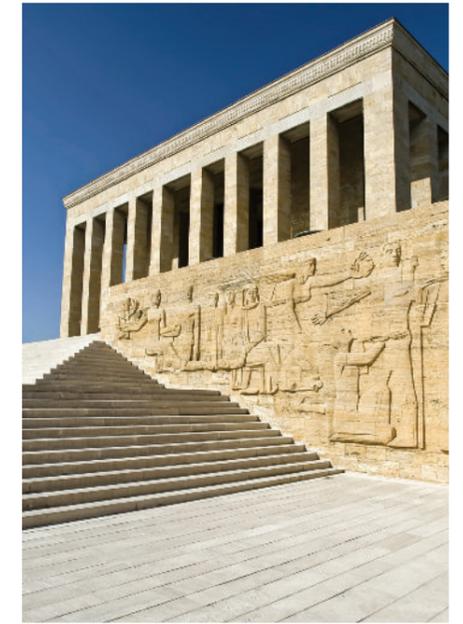
## Pastoral Bodrum

Thanks to Bodrum's azure beaches and coves, this once quiet fishing village has become the "It" place for Turks and tourists alike to carve out their own piece of paradise on the Aegean Sea. Despite its legendary nightlife and reputation as being the "St. Tropez of Turkey," the town, with its bougainvillea-draped, whitewashed homes and narrow streets, has retained its pastoral charm.

Aside from sun-tanning, chief among the area's most popular activities is sailing.



St. Peter's Castle



Ataturk Mausoleum

Many of the gulets (traditional Turkish wooden sailing boats) dotting Bodrum's harbor offer day or even weeklong tours of the nearby idyllic islands where guests can sip cocktails in a secluded bay or go snorkeling in the crystal seas. For a change of pace from Bodrum's indigo bays, head inland to the nearby hills for a horseback ride along lush, forested trails. When the sun sets, don't miss the chance to socialize with the jet-set crowd at local nightclubs like the upscale Bianca or Ship Ahoy, near the elegant boutique hotel, Divan Bodrum.

Although the abundant sun and cerulean surf remain the main attractions in Bodrum, the area features some amazing cultural and historic highlights.

Towering over the harbor is Bodrum's most celebrated historic site, St. Peter's Castle, built in the 15th century. Although the landmark provides an excellent example of a medieval castle, its most captivating feature is actually its museum. The Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology ([bodrum-museum.com](http://bodrum-museum.com)) is considered one of the best of its kind in the world and features the remains of Aegean Sea shipwrecks dating as far back as the 14th century B.C. It's impossible not to be entranced by the sight of millennia-old glassware, pottery, coins, and jewelry—including a golden scarab bearing the name of Egypt's famous

Queen Nefertiti.

The region surrounding Bodrum is also home to two of the original Seven Wonders of the World. The first is the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, built around 351 B.C. Although almost nothing remains of the fabled structure, the foundation can still be seen. The real archeological highlight is 2.5 hours away at the ruins of Ephesus ([ephesus.us](http://ephesus.us)). One of the best preserved ancient cities in the Mediterranean, this Greek, and later Roman, town once hosted Alexander the Great. Ephesus also houses the remains of the temple of Artemis, another world wonder.

## Historic Ankara

Long in the shadow of Istanbul, Ankara has recently begun to assert its personality as a sophisticated, cosmopolitan capital with great shopping and museums, historic sites and a vibrant café culture.

Chief among Ankara's highlights is the Ataturk Mausoleum (Anitkabir). Perched atop a hill overlooking the city, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the beloved leader of the Turkish War of Independence and the founder of the Turkish Republic, manages to be imposing without ostentation. Its stark, grand façade evokes both gravitas and awe, and it is especially interesting to experience the reverence Turks still show



Whirling dervish



“Fairy chimneys” of Cappadocia

their former leader.

A former winner of the “European Museum of the Year” award, Ankara’s Museum of Anatolian Civilizations ([muze.gov.tr/anatoliandcivilisations-en](http://muze.gov.tr/anatoliandcivilisations-en)) is another not-to-be-missed attraction. Its exhibits document the myriad of civilizations that have inhabited Turkey since 8,000 B.C. It’s an eye-opening opportunity to explore one of Europe’s finest archeological collections and study the relics of such august and storied empires and cities as Troy, Byzantium, Constantinople, and Ottoman.

But Ankara isn’t just a feast for the eyes and intellect; the city also offers some of the country’s best cuisine. At the moment, one of Ankara’s most thriving culinary destinations is the Gaziosmanpasa district. Known as the “diplomatic district,” this upscale area is the political powerhouse of Ankara and houses many embassies and consulates. Now it is also home to a growing number of restaurants all vying for their place in this posh neighborhood. One of the most popular is Trilye, which offers Turkish cuisine such as meze and fresh seafood.

Less than a two-hour drive east of

Ankara is another example of Turkey’s singular historic and cultural riches: Hattusha. A UNESCO World Heritage site, the 3,000-year-old ruins were once the formidable capital of the Hittite empire. The Hittites were a powerful people who defeated the Egyptians and once ruled much of the Middle East. The peace treaty signed by the Pharaoh Ramses II and the Hittites is one of the oldest surviving written treaties in the world. Although excavations are still ongoing, the ruins contain some striking remains of Hattusha’s fortification and impressive entrance gates. Be sure to check out nearby Yazilikaya, a stone sanctuary containing detailed rock carvings and art.

#### Cappadocia and Göreme

Cappadocia’s unearthly landscape is sometimes compared to the moon. Located four hours from Ankara in the Cappadocia region, lies the Göreme open-air museum, also known as the Göreme National Park ([whc.unesco.org/en/list/357](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/357)). This UNESCO World Heritage site is famous for its lunar-like landscape and “fairy chimneys.” The so-called chimneys are actually towering conical rock shapes created by volcanic eruptions. They were used in the fourth century as sanctuaries by Byzantine Christians who would carve out entire underground villages in an effort to hide from the Romans and later, the Muslims. Homes, churches, monasteries, and myriad passageways can be toured in the open-air museum.

Thanks to its inimitable landscape, Cappadocia is also widely regarded as one of the best places in the world to go ballooning. When flying conditions are good, the sky is dotted with hot air balloons that glide serenely over the fairy chimneys, rocky valleys, and fields. It is a mesmerizing experience that is also guaranteed to provide some unforgettable photos ([sultanballoons.com](http://sultanballoons.com)).

There are not enough superlatives to describe this surreal, enchanting landscape, which is a kind of microcosm of Turkey itself: ancient and beautiful, with many secrets that are yet to be revealed. **PL**

## Where to Stay

### Istanbul

Designed by famed architect Thierry Despont, the recently refurbished, five-star **Divan Istanbul** is located in the heart of the city. The hotel features spacious, well-appointed guestrooms and a spa, Pilates studio, fitness center, and a large pool. The elegant dining room features Mediterranean cuisine with an extensive international wine list.

The **Divan Istanbul Asia** is located in Istanbul’s Pendik district. The five-star hotel offers convenient access to the airport and many major corporate headquarters. Renowned for stylishly decorated, expansive suites, it also features a fitness center, luxurious spa, and outdoor and indoor pools. Another highlight is the rooftop restaurant with extensive sea views.

### Bodrum

Stylish serenity and a private beach await guests at this luxurious boutique hotel recognized by *Condé Nast Johansens* as the “most excellent charming hotel in Europe and the Mediterranean.” The **Divan Bodrum** is located in the enclave of Golturkbuku on the Bodrum peninsula. The hotel also features a pool, lush landscapes, and five-star cuisine that is as popular with locals as it is with guests.

### Ankara

Located minutes from the famous Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, the **Divan Çukurhan** is prized for its professional, personalized service. With a focus on bespoke design, no two guestrooms in the are alike in this five-star boutique hotel. Art and cultural artifacts showcase Turkey’s history throughout the hotel, and gourmet breakfasts are another famous feature of this unique accommodation.

For further information and reservations, visit [PreferredHotelGroup.com](http://PreferredHotelGroup.com)