

# Eastern Turkey Cultural Odyssey: Mount Ararat, Ani & Cappadocia

Prepared by TourGrids

Destination  
**Turkey**

Duration  
**9 Nights 10 Days**

Starting from  
**Rs. 1,55,000 / person**

## ITINERARY ROUTE

✈ Istanbul · 1N

✈ Doğubayazıt / Mount Ararat region · 2N

✈ Kars · 2N

✈ Cappadocia · 3N

✈ Istanbul · 1N

## Overview

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A 9 nights / 10 days immersive journey through Turkey's dramatic eastern highlands and the lunar landscapes of Cappadocia. This package blends natural wonders, ancient civilizations, and unique cultural encounters: witness the majestic Mount Ararat, explore the haunting ruins of Ani, and float above the fairy chimneys of Cappadocia.

### Highlights:

- Mount Ararat views & local highland culture
- Ishak Pasha Palace and Ottoman-architectural gems
- Ani Ruins (the 'City of 1001 Churches') and medieval Armenian heritage
- Göreme Open-Air Museum, hot-air balloon experience, and Cappadocia valleys
- Hands-on cultural experiences: local cuisine tastings, carpet & pottery workshops

Tip: Domestic flights in eastern Turkey can be seasonal – we recommend booking early. Mount Ararat climbs require permits and experienced guides; this itinerary focuses on viewpoints and cultural visits unless a full climb is requested in advance.

#### ✓ **What's Included**

- ✓ Domestic flights mentioned in the itinerary (subject to final bookings)
- ✓ 9 nights accommodation: standard 3-4-hotels (upgrades available)
- ✓ Daily breakfasts and select dinners (as per day-wise inclusions)
- ✓ All transfers and transportation in a private vehicle as per itinerary
- ✓ Guided visits and local entrance fees listed in the itinerary (Ishak Pasha Palace, Göreme Open-Air Museum, Ani Ruins, underground city)
- ✓ Hot air balloon booking assistance (flight cost optional / can be included on request)
- ✓ Local English-speaking guides and local cultural experiences
- ✓ Airport meet & greet and departure transfer

#### ✗ **Not Included**

- ✗ International flights to/from Turkey
- ✗ Visa fees and travel insurance
- ✗ Personal expenses, tips, and meals not specified above
- ✗ Mount Ararat technical climbs, permits & specialist guiding (available on request at extra cost)
- ✗ Balloon flight fee (unless pre-booked as an included option)
- ✗ Any optional activities not listed as included

## Day-by-Day Itinerary

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Day

1

### **Arrival in Istanbul & Transfer**

Arrive at Istanbul Airport. Meet and assist with a short orientation transfer to your centrally located hotel. Depending on arrival time, enjoy a relaxed evening stroll around Sultanahmet or Taksim to sample Turkish cuisine.

Important: International flight arrival is in Istanbul; domestic flight to Eastern Turkey departs next morning.

Day

2

### **Fly to Ağrı / Iğdır — Transfer to Doğubayazıt; Ishak Pasha Palace**

Morning domestic flight to Ağrı/Iğdır (depending on schedule). Transfer to Doğubayazıt and check into your hotel. Afternoon visit to the spectacular Ishak Pasha Palace, an 18th-century Ottoman complex perched on a hill with sweeping views of the plain and Mount Ararat. Sunset viewpoint for the first majestic views of Mount Ararat.

Note: Flight schedules vary seasonally; airport transfers are included.

Day

3

### **Mount Ararat Region: Cultural Encounters & Viewpoints**

Full day exploring the highland villages around Mount Ararat: meet local families, learn about shepherding and nomadic traditions, and enjoy panoramic stops for photos of the twin peaks. Optional short guided walk toward the lower slopes and valley viewpoints. Evening cultural dinner featuring local specialties.

Tip: For those wishing to attempt a technical climb of Mount Ararat, pre-arranged multi-day climbs with permits and specialist guides can be organized but are not included by default.

Day

4

### **Scenic Drive to Kars — En route stops**

Depart Doğubayazıt and travel toward Kars. The drive takes you across carpets of steppe and small traditional towns with opportunities to stop at regional viewpoints and small historic chapels. Arrive in Kars in the late afternoon, settle into your hotel and enjoy a relaxed evening sampling local cuisine such as Kars kaşarı cheese and hearty stews.

Day

5

### **Ani Ruins — Ancient Border City**

Full-day exploration of Ani, the medieval fortified city on the Armenian border known as the 'City of 1001 Churches'. Guided walk among dramatic ruins, churches, and necropolises overlooking the Akhurian River gorge. Afternoon return to Kars to visit the Kars Castle and the historic Russian-era town center.

Note: Border viewpoints are accessible but check local guidance; bring a valid ID/passport for cross-border border-adjacent areas.

Day

6

### **Transfer to Cappadocia (Kayseri / Nevşehir) — Arrival in Göreme**

Morning flight (or scenic transfer depending on schedule) from Kars to Kayseri or Nevşehir. Transfer to Göreme in Cappadocia. Afternoon orientation: visit panoramic viewpoints over Göreme, stroll through the village and enjoy sunset over the fairy chimneys.

Tip: We recommend an early-night for those planning the hot-air balloon experience at sunrise the next day.

Day

7

### **Hot Air Balloon & Göreme Open-Air Museum**

Pre-dawn hot-air balloon flight (optional / pre-book recommended) to watch sunrise over the surreal Cappadocian landscape — a highlight of the journey. Return to the hotel for breakfast and then visit the Göreme Open-Air Museum, with its rock-cut churches and frescoes. Afternoon visits to Uçhisar Castle and Pigeon Valley.

Important: Balloon flights are weather-dependent and subject to operational decisions; alternate sunrise viewpoints will be offered if canceled.

Day

8

### **Underground City, Avanos & Red/Rose Valley Hike**

Explore one of the subterranean marvels — Derinkuyu or Kaymaklı Underground City — to experience ancient underground life. Visit Avanos to see traditional pottery demonstrations and try a hands-on workshop. Late afternoon hike through Red and Rose Valleys to enjoy dramatic rock formations and sunset colors.

Tip: Wear comfortable shoes for valley hikes and modest clothing for heritage site visits.

Day

9

## Free Morning in Cappadocia – Fly to Istanbul

Morning at leisure: optional activities include an ATV tour, Turkish hamam, or visit to local workshops. Afternoon transfer to Kayseri/Nevşehir Airport for a domestic flight back to Istanbul. Overnight in Istanbul and final group dinner to celebrate the journey.

Note: Domestic flights subject to schedule – evening free time in Istanbul depending on arrival.

Day

10

## Departure from Istanbul

After breakfast, transfer to Istanbul Airport for your international departure flight. End of services.

Important: Check flight times and allow sufficient time for international check-in. We can arrange airport transfers and extensions on request.

## ? Frequently Asked Questions

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### ? What is the best time to visit Turkey and what weather can I expect?

The best time to visit Turkey is during the shoulder seasons: April–June and September–October, when temperatures range from 18–28°C with pleasant weather ideal for sightseeing. Summer (June–August) is perfect for coastal areas but can be hot inland, with temperatures reaching 30–38°C. Winter (December–March) is excellent for skiing and fewer crowds, but central regions like Cappadocia can be very cold (–5 to 5°C) with snow. Istanbul experiences a temperate climate year-round. Spring offers blooming tulips and mild weather, while autumn provides clear skies perfect for photography and hot-air ballooning. Coastal areas remain warm through October, making it ideal for extended beach time.

### ? How can I reach Turkey from India and what are the main airports?

Most Indian travelers reach Turkey by air, with frequent direct and one-stop flights from major Indian cities. The main gateway is Istanbul Airport (IST) on the European side, with Sabiha Gökçen (SAW) on the Asian side as an alternative. Other key airports include Antalya (AYT) for beach destinations, Izmir (ADB) for Ephesus, and Kayseri (ASR) or Nevşehir (NAV) for Cappadocia. Airlines like Turkish Airlines, Air India, and Gulf carriers offer good connections via Dubai, Doha, or direct routes. Flight time is typically 6–8 hours direct or 8–12 hours with one stop. Book in advance for better deals, especially during peak seasons (summer and festivals).

## ❓ **What are the visa requirements for Indian citizens visiting Turkey?**

Indian passport holders generally need a visa to enter Turkey. Many Indians apply through VFS Global centers in major Indian cities for a tourist visa. Some may be eligible for an e-Visa if they hold valid US, UK, or Schengen visas, but eligibility criteria change frequently. The process typically takes 5-10 working days and requires documents like passport photos, bank statements, hotel bookings, and return flight tickets. Visa fees vary based on duration and type. It's crucial to check the official Turkish Embassy website or consulate for current requirements, as policies update regularly. Apply well in advance of your travel dates to avoid any delays.

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## ❓ **What are the best local transportation options within Turkey?**

Turkey offers excellent transportation networks. In Istanbul, use the rechargeable Istanbulkart for metro, tram, buses, and ferries, including the cross-continental Marmaray train. Dolmuş (shared minibuses) are economical for short distances. For intercity travel, comfortable buses with reclining seats connect all major destinations. High-speed trains (YHT) link Istanbul-Ankara-Konya efficiently. Domestic flights are affordable for longer distances, especially to Cappadocia. Taxis are metered in cities; use official stands and ensure the meter runs. Car rental is popular for coastal drives, but requires an International Driving Permit. Ride-hailing apps operate in major cities. For scenic routes like the Turquoise Coast, consider renting a car for maximum flexibility.

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## ❓ **What are the best accommodation options and areas to stay in Turkey?**

Turkey offers diverse accommodation from luxury resorts to boutique cave hotels. In Istanbul, stay in Sultanahmet for historic sites, Beyoğlu/Galata for nightlife, or Kadıköy for local culture. Luxury options include Çırağan Palace Kempinski and Four Seasons Sultanahmet. Cappadocia is famous for unique cave hotels like Museum Hotel and Argos in Cappadocia, offering authentic experiences in Göreme or Uçhisar. Antalya's Belek area features all-inclusive beach resorts like Maxx Royal and Regnum Carya. For coastal charm, Bodrum offers boutique hotels and beach clubs. Budget travelers can find quality pensions and hostels throughout. Book cave hotels in Cappadocia well in advance, especially for balloon season (April-October).

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## 🔍 What are the must-visit attractions and places in Turkey?

Turkey's top attractions span ancient history and natural wonders. Istanbul's highlights include Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque, Topkapı Palace, Grand Bazaar, and a Bosphorus cruise. Cappadocia offers surreal landscapes, cave churches at Göreme Open-Air Museum, and hot-air balloon rides. Pamukkale's white travertine terraces and ancient Hierapolis are UNESCO-listed. Ephesus near Izmir showcases magnificent Roman ruins including the Library of Celsus. Antalya combines beach relaxation with historic Kaleiçi old town. The Turquoise Coast features Ölüdeniz's blue lagoon and Butterfly Valley. Don't miss Göbekli Tepe near Şanlıurfa, the world's oldest temple complex. Each region offers distinct experiences, from Byzantine churches to Roman theaters and Ottoman palaces.

## 🔍 What Turkish food and cuisine should I try during my visit?

Turkish cuisine offers incredible variety, especially for vegetarians. Must-try dishes include various kebabs (Adana, Iskender), pide and lahmacun flatbreads, and extensive meze platters with hummus, ezme, and stuffed vine leaves. Vegetarian favorites include gözleme (stuffed flatbread), menemen (tomato-egg scramble), mercimek çorbası (lentil soup), and imam bayıldı (stuffed eggplant). Coastal areas excel in fresh seafood like grilled sea bass. Don't miss Turkish breakfast with cheese, olives, honey, and fresh bread. Sweet treats include baklava (especially from Gaziantep), künefe, and Turkish delight. Drink strong Turkish coffee, endless çay (tea), and refreshing ayran (yogurt drink). Many dishes are naturally vegetarian, and Turkish hospitality ensures dietary needs are accommodated.

## ★ Traveller Reviews



**Nishant Narayan**

★★★★★ 5/5

### A Wonderful Culinary Exploration

The culinary exploration was fantastic! I fell in love with Turkish delights!



**Yashwant Jain**

★★★★☆ 4/5

### Art & Culture Snapshot

Great for those who want a snapshot of Turkey's arts and culture! Definitely worthwhile.



**Sakshi Verma**

★★★★★ 5/5

### Lovely Weather and Scenery

The weather during my trip was perfect. The scenery just made everything better!



**Bhupendra Singh**

★★★★★ 5/5

### Unmatched Architectural Wonders

The architectural wonders of Istanbul are simply unmatched. Each mosque tells a different story.



**Tanvi Soni**

★★★★★ 5/5

### Aleppo Pepper and Spices Tour

The spice bazaar was delightful! Came back with an assortment of spices. Can't wait to cook!

## ⚡ Why Choose TourGrids?

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