

# Eastern Turkey Tour Notes

## **A**

### **ATMs**

ATMs are widely available in the larger towns/cities.  
Contact your card provider before departure and advise of your destination.  
Ensure you have a 4 digit.

## **B**

### **Baggage**

A Packing List will be provided to give you some guidance on what to pack but as far as what to pack it in.... Generally speaking, we recommend you pack as lightly as possible and make sure that you are able to carry and lift your own luggage, and walk with it for short distances.

Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags or backpacks with wheels are convenient although we recommend your bag has carry straps. You'll also need a day pack/bag to carry water and a camera etc for day trips.

Given our small group size, we will not have a great deal of room on the mini-bus to transport large bags or large volumes.

### **Bargaining**

It is fun and joy to bargain so long as you know where and how to bargain.  
Local stores, supermarkets or department stores are NOT places to bargain.  
Only touristic items may be purchased with some bargaining power which may vary from 10% to 25% depending on what you buy and how you pay. Such touristic items are carpets, leather goods, jewellery and a variety of souvenir items.

**DO NOT BARGAIN for every item you show interest in. Only bargain for those items you wish to purchase.**

### **Business Hours**

Government offices are usually from 08.30 am to 4.30 pm with a lunch break for one hour, usually 12.00 am – 01.00 pm Monday through Friday. Turkey is a secular state and follows Gregorian calendar; ie Saturday and Sunday are weekends.

Banks are open from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. Most banks are open during lunch break, otherwise 12.30 pm – 1.30 pm is lunch break.

Shops are usually open from 9.00 am to 8.00 pm whilst department stores open from 10.00am to 10.00 pm. Money exchange offices are open from 8.30 am to 6.30 pm. Museums are closed on MONDAYS as a general rule with few exceptions.

## **C**

### **Climate**

Turkey has a subtropical climate; hence, variations do occur depending on the place and the season.

Istanbul and surroundings: Summer hot and some humidity. Average temperature 27C (80F). Winter rainy and chilly. Average temperature 8C (46F), though sometimes very mild and warm. Occasional rain between September and April, hardly any snow.

Western and Southern Turkey: Enjoy warm Mediterranean climate where winters are warm with a lot of rain and summers are hot and humid. Average temperature in winter is 15C (60F) and 35C (95F) in summer. A lot of rain between September and April, though not every day.



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Central and Eastern Turkey: Winters are cold and considerable snow precipitates whereas summers are hot and dry. Temperature in winter 0C (32F) or even minus and in summer 35C (95F). Average altitude 1000 m. (3500ft) and above.

Turkey's climate shows similarities throughout the country between April-May and September - November in each region.

[In general, weather is warmer along the sea coasts, in the west and south; and cooler in central Turkey and at higher elevations.](#)

## **Clothing**

In spring (March, April & May) and autumn (September, October & November), bring a light jacket or top/windbreaker. In summer (June, July & August), wear cool light coloured cotton clothing, sunglasses, a hat and apply sun block lotion, but have a light top or shawl (pashmina) for cooler evenings. In winter, you will need warm woollen, waterproof and thermal clothing and rain gear.

Bring comfortable and informal clothing and sturdy, non-skid, comfortable walking shoes for sightseeing.

Dress at dinner is informal or "smart casual".

## **Communications**

Normal air-mail postal service between Turkey and North America, Asia or Oceania/Pacific can take up to 10 days; courier services (APS, DHL, FedEx, UPS, SkyNet) take only a few days.

Telephoning to a foreign country from Turkey can be expensive. Best option if you need to call home is to use internet-based services such as Skype, Viber, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or the like.

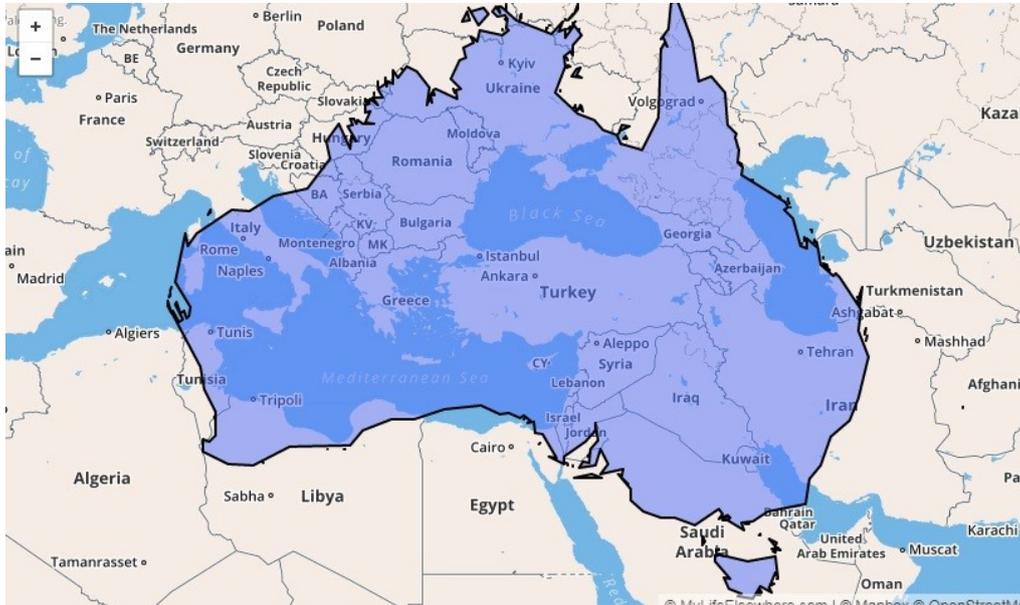
Wi-Fi is readily available in Turkey and MK1 Travel provides access to a high-speed, secure mobile Wi-Fi hotspot for the duration of the Tour.

## **Country**

With the exception of Russia, Turkey is the largest country in Europe (37<sup>th</sup> largest in the world). It has lush valleys filled with fruit orchards, snow-capped mountains, rolling grasslands, and 8000 km of pine fringed coastline. Graceful mosque domes and minarets define its cities' skylines. The countryside harbours hundreds of splendid remains from the Hittite, Urartian, Phrygian, Classical Greek, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk Turkish and Ottoman civilizations.

At its widest points, Turkey is 1745km East to West & 610km North to South. To put these figures relative to Australia.....

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## Crime (safety & security)

Turkey is generally a very safe country to travel around. Crime is mainly looked upon by most Turks as the most shameful behaviour to commit. Like any other cosmopolitan city around the world, there is a limited level of pick pocketing in major metropolitan cities (ie Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir) where you have to be more careful!

A money belt or an over shoulder sling bag are easy and safe ways to carry your money and personal items while on tour and it also enables you to leave your hands free in order to take pictures. You need to be comfortable yourself with where you secure your valuables so that you are aware of them at all times.

Excess amount of money, passport and other valuable items should be kept at the safety deposit boxes or safes provided by hotels.

## Cuisine

A traditional Turkish breakfast includes boiled eggs, varieties of cheese, olives, sliced tomatoes and cucumbers, fresh bread with butter and jam or honey, fruit juice and coffee or tea.

Lunch or dinner may begin with meze (Turkish appetizers), including a variety of salads, vegetable purees and pickles, stuffed vine leaves, crisp fritters filled with cheese or mashed potatoes, and succulent olives.

Turkish meat is delicious - grilled lamb predominates although beef and chicken are also frequently served. As a general rule, pork or pork-products are not served. Fish from the surrounding seas is succulent when grilled, fried or poached. Wonderful fresh vegetables accompany everything; eggplant alone is served in 40 different ways!

Turkish desserts include luscious puddings, rich baklava with a lot of sugar and nuts and very rich pastries.

The best hot drink is hearty Turkish tea grown on the Black Sea coast. The annual consumption of tea for Turks is nearly 20kg/person – equating to 20-30 cups/day.



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Also justly famous is Turkish coffee, which can be very strong and may be flavoured with cardamom or other spices. Fruit juices are refreshing. Turkish wines are palatable, and the beer is great. The favourite strong drink is rakı - grape brandy flavoured with aniseed, customarily mixed half and half with water.

Imported alcoholic beverages are often available as well. Pure bottled spring water is available everywhere and the tap water is safe to drink. Water refills will be supplied on Tour.

Turkish cuisine is not demanding on the palate, but it is delicious and serves are generous.

## **Currency & Credit Cards**

Turkey's currency is Turkish Lira (TRY or TL). Banknotes are available in denominations of TL 200, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5 and coins are of 1 TL and Kurush (cents) 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1.

Probably the best, cheapest and easiest option is to plan on using Automatic Teller Machines/ Cash machines (ATM) connected to international banking networks (Cirrus/MasterCard, Plus Systems/VISA) which can be found in all airports and larger towns/cities. Look for them at banks, on major shopping streets, and in bazaars and shopping malls. You may use your bank ATM card or major credit card to receive Turkish Lira or at some ATM's, Euro or US\$ in cash. ATM exchange rates are good, and instructions for use are provided in English, French, German and Turkish.

If you are planning on using your credit or debit card (and there are many that don't charge for overseas transactions or charge minimal withdrawal fees) ensure that you contact the card provider to advise of your travel plans and also ensure that you have a 4 digit PIN – signatures are not widely accepted.

If you are planning on exchanging foreign currency, wait until you arrive in Turkey to buy Turkish Liras to get the best rate. Whilst most hotels will exchange major foreign currencies (Euro, US\$, JY, UK), currency exchange bureaus (Döviz Bürosu) definitely give a better rate of exchange as they have competitive rates and give faster service but may accept only cash.

Traveller's Cheques are not a recommended form of handling your money and they may attract commissions of between 6-10%.

Most shops accept cash and many also accept major credit cards. The larger hotels and shops, car rental companies, airlines, and restaurants accept Visa & MasterCard and, to a lesser extent, American Express & Diners Club.

Definitely plan on using cash more than cards!

## **Customs**

It is illegal to buy, sell or export antiquities (usually defined as carpets, coins, icons, coloured tiles and ceramics, paintings, statues and sculptures, metal objects, etc.) more than 100 years old (ie, older than antiques.). Customs officer may check your luggage at departure. Punishment is severe, including fines and imprisonment.

Drug trafficking or carrying any illegal drugs is severely punished where you may end up in prison.

The current restriction on the import of personal goods is 600 cigarettes and 10 cigars, 1L of alcohol over 22% and 2L of alcohol under 22%, 1kg or tea and coffee and 1kg of chocolate. (Source: IATA).

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## E

### Electricity

Turkey operates on 220 volts, 50 Hz, with round prong European style plugs. Luxury hotels often provide 110 volts, but only for electric razors in bathroom. You should bring a plug adapter and/or travel transformer (available at Big W, Officeworks etc) for appliances just in case. Hotels may not be able to provide more than a few at a time!



### Entertainment

The large cities like Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, all cater for a wide variety of tastes, including movie theatres, where most films are shown in their original languages with Turkish subtitles; night clubs, ranging from the exclusive (with restaurants, bars and discos in the 5-star hotels and along the Bosphorus), to the more traditional variety featuring live shows, Turkish music and belly dance.

## G

### Getting Around

If you know your way around you can hop on city buses and trams in Old Town. A Subway is available in certain parts of the city only but is expanding. Buses and trams have fixed prices and you should buy tickets/tokens before you get on. Istanbul has introduced the *Istanbulkart* a prepaid and rechargeable card that is able to be used on buses, metros, ferries, funiculars, and trams – read more here:

<https://theistanbulinsider.com/how-to-get-an-istanbul-kart-and-is-it-worth-it/>

Taxis all have meters, but beware that some may take you on a longer route claiming the jammed traffic or rush hour. Taxis apply 50% surcharge between midnight and 6.00 a.m. Round up the fare to the nearest last digit of 5 or 10 or 20 etc. for tipping.

Turkey is a large country and airplanes have largely taken over from the long-distance buses as a cheapest (and safest) travel option. Turkish Airlines and Pegasus Airlines are the major carriers.

## H

### Health

A general level of health and fitness is recommended for our Eastern Turkey Tour.

To stay in the best of health, be careful not to overdo it. Eat and drink in moderation and get plenty of rest.

Sun & Heat: Use sun block lotion regularly and wear a hat to avoid sunburn. Drink liquids regularly in hot and dry weather even if you don't feel thirsty to avoid dehydration. Hydralite tablets can be of benefit in this regard.

Food: Consult your doctor concerning Travellers' Diarrhoea. Changes in food can disturb digestion, so go easy on spicy food. Be careful not to overeat.

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## Hotels

Most Turkish hotels follow the European standard, with twin beds, two chairs and a small table, direct telephone, TV, small bathroom with a combination of bath tub/shower and WC (toilet). Don't plan on there always being a minibar/fridge or tea/coffee making facilities.

## L

### Language

Turkish, an Ural-Altaic language with links to the Finno – Hungarian, Japanese and Korean languages, is spoken by 250 million people.

English, German and French (one out of three) are taught in every Turkish public school, and most tourism personnel can speak at least one. Many also speak Spanish or Italian, some Japanese, Korean and Arabic.

Turkish is a phonetic language which uses the Latin alphabet with special pronunciation for a few letters. Turkish 'c' is pronounced like English 'j'; 'ç' like 'ch'; 'ş' like 'sh'; 'ö' like 'ur' (German 'ö'); 'ü' is like French 'u'; shape your lips to say 'oo', but say 'ee'. Undotted 'ı' ( ) is pronounced 'uh'. Soft 'g' (ğ) is not pronounced at all; it lengthens the previous vowel slightly.

**Hello** – Merhaba

**How are you?** – Nasılsınız?

**I'm fine, thank you** – İyiyim, teşekkür ederim

**Good morning** – Günaydın

**Good evening** – İyi akşamlar

**Please** – Lütfen

**Thank you** – Teşekkür ederim

**Yes** – Evet

**No** – Hayır

**Water** – Su

**Money** – Para

**Toilet** – Tuvalet

## Laundry

We have a number of 2-night+ stops, so there will be opportunities for washing/laundry to be done. More updates on this as we travel.

## M

### Medical Care (see also under Health)

All Turkish cities have hospitals and towns have clinics, often with staff who speak at least some English.

## Mosques

For visiting mosques, dress neatly as you would visit a church. It is a MUST for everyone to remove shoes at the entrance of a mosque before stepping on the carpet and equally important NOT to wear shorts or short sleeves. Women should normally cover their head with a scarf.

## P

### People & Population

The Turks came from Central Asia to the Anatolian peninsula a thousand years ago. Within a few centuries they had built a small kingdom into a great empire which ruled all of the eastern Mediterranean, much of Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia. Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566) was the envy of the other enlightened Renaissance monarchs of Europe. In later centuries the empire declined.

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After World War I, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded the Turkish Republic (1923). You will notice photos or pictures of Atatürk in hotels, restaurants, businesses and private homes. He is nothing short of deified in Turkey (Atatürk, in fact, meaning “Father of the Turks” a title granted to him by the Parliament in 1934) and the Turks show utmost respect to his image.

Today Turkey is a democracy with a population of 80 million and has a fast-growing free-enterprise economy that has been very much in the news during 2019.

## **Political Structure**

The Turkish Republic is a unitarian, democratic and secular state. Turkey belongs to NATO, OECD, the Council of Europe and is an associate member of the EU. Turkey has not been granted full membership of the EU, ergo, no use of the Euro etc.

## **R**

### **Religion**

The Turkish population is 99% Muslim, yet Turkey is a secular state which grants total and complete freedom of worship for non-Muslims, including Christians, Greeks, Jews, Armenians and other religious sects.

### **Road Signs**

All the road signs are in blue and white and written in Turkish except the signs to historical sightseeing spots being brown or yellow. City centres are usually signed with “Centrum” in Latin. All the major national roads are numbered, in good condition and usually have 2-4 lanes. There are some toll roads in certain areas.

## **S**

### **Safety (see also under Crime)**

Turkish cities enjoy crime rates much lower than European or other cities of comparable size, though the wise traveller will take normal precautions against pickpockets and other petty street crime.

It is strongly recommended that you register your travel plans with the Australian Government’s [Smartraveller](#) service and subscribe to country-specific travel updates. The Tour Notes provided immediately before the Tour will have the latest travel advisings.

Only reputable, government registered tour operators or providers are used in Australia and Turkey and all guides are government accredited to ensure the safest and best possible experience for you.

### **Shopping**

The essence of shopping in Turkey is not shopping in western style shopping malls or department stores although very good examples of these do exist. The real excitement in shopping is getting lost in historic bazaars which can date back more than five hundred years; of bargaining with shop-keepers whose great-grand fathers have kept the same trade and sold the same wares; to be surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the hawkers, merchants and the salesmen at every corner; and ultimately to obtain some authentic Turkish souvenirs.

Favourite souvenirs include hand-woven Turkish carpets to last a lifetime; good quality of leatherware and accessories, fine embroidery and jewellery, folk costumes and fashion in cotton, leather, silk and wool; craft items made of brass, copper, wood inlaid with ebony and mother-of-pearl, evil eyes, precious metals and stones.



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Coloured tiles and pottery are a Turkish specialty, as is carved meerschaum, often made into cool-smoking pipes.

Do not buy old Greek or Roman coins, statuary or pottery as it is illegal to buy and/or export antiquities; penalties are severe. Goods up to 100 years old are usually not considered antiquities. If you buy a carpet, you may be provided with a certificate from a museum attesting to the carpets "non-antiquity" status and ensure you keep the receipt to show to the customs officer upon departure.

Regarding payments; besides cash, hotels, shops, car rental companies, airlines and most restaurants accept major credit cards such as VISA, MasterCard, American Express, JCB and Diners Club.

## **Smoking**

Smoking is banned in all public places in Turkey including airports, hotels, restaurants, buses, minivans etc. Exemptions occur for outdoor dining areas or other, open spaces.

## **Swimming**

It is always advisable to bring swimwear as you may have a chance to swim at the hotel pool, thermal baths or by the seaside depending on your itinerary and the season. In many instances, do not judge Turkish beaches by those in Australia – the comparison is not relevant given their land-bound seas and geography. A day cruise from Kaş, incorporating a BBQ, snorkelling, backgammon etc is not to be missed and the swimming is simply extraordinary for the clarity and warmth of the water.

## **T**

### **Terms and Conditions**

Check the [mk1travel.com.au](http://mk1travel.com.au) website for Terms and Conditions.

### **Ticket/ing**

Ensure that your tickets are issued in the same name as displayed in your passport. Your middle name is not required on ticketing.

### **Time zones**

Turkey is on Eastern European time (Universal Time Coordinated +2). Turkish clocks are turned ahead one hour (UTC +3) from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in September for daylight saving (summer) time.

During this period Turkish time is  
5 hours behind Bangkok, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Manila, Singapore, Indonesia, Taipei  
7 hours behind Sydney (AEST)  
2 hours ahead of London  
7 hours ahead of New York  
10 hours ahead of Los Angeles

From late October to late March, the time difference is the same in countries which observe daylight saving (summer) time, but one more hour behind those which do not.

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## **Tipping**

Tipping has gradually become a necessity on any tour for guides and drivers. On regular bus tours TL5.00 per person per day for guide and TL 3.00 per person per day for driver should be anticipated.

## **Travel Documents & Visas**

### Passport:

An international passport, which should be valid for at least 6 months from the date of arrival in Turkey, is required for immigration at airport and hotel check-in.

### Visa:

- No visas are required for nationals of Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Luxemburg, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Vatican,
- Visas must be applied for online prior to arrival for nationals of USA, Canada, Australia, Austria, Belgium, England, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain. MK1 Travel will apply for any necessary Turkish visa on your behalf. E-visas are generally issued for multiple entries over a 90 day period for tourism or commerce purposes.
- Length of stay and number of entries vary depending on nationality.
- Visitors who need visas must also hold documents and tickets required for return/onward travel.

## **Travel Insurance**

MK1 Travel provides comprehensive travel insurance with all our Tours for Australian residents. Details of the group policy will be supplied upon confirmation of bookings/arrangements.

## **V**

### **Vaccinations**

Check with your GP at least 6 weeks prior to departure to determine if vaccinations are required. Useful sites include the [Department of Health](#), [Travel Doctor](#), [Travel Vaccination Clinic](#) or the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) which are all great sources of information for travellers.

### **Valuables**

Keep your passports, money and other valuables in the hotel safe deposit boxes that are usually provided free of charge.

## **W**

### **Water**

Although local people drink the water out of tap travellers are recommended to use bottled water only for drinking purposes.

Washing and brushing your teeth with tap water is no problem as the water is purified and chlorinated.

Purified water is supplied on Tour together with a reusable water bottle.