

14<sup>th</sup> Annual Advisory Forum on  
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**23 October 2025 – Cultural Programmes**







REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE  
MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM



TÜRKİYE TOURISM  
PROMOTION AND  
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY





## CAPPADOCIA: A UNIQUE AND WONDROUS CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Cradled between the windswept valleys of Nevşehir, Kayseri, Aksaray, and Niğde, Cappadocia offers one of the most poetic examples of a cultural landscape—where nature's artistry and human resilience have long entwined. The region's iconic fairy chimneys and soft volcanic rock became both canvas and sanctuary for generations seeking refuge, meaning, and belonging.

As early as the 4th century, this land became a cradle for early Christianity. Here, the unique terrain offered not only shelter but spiritual inspiration—leading to the carving of hidden churches, monasteries, and entire underground cities where communities could thrive in safety. This sacred geography shaped not only daily life but also the theological thought of influential figures like the Cappadocian Fathers, three revered theologians of the 4th century—Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa. Grounded in the monastic rhythms of Cappadocia, their teachings bridged the spiritual and the intellectual, leaving a lasting legacy in Christian doctrine. Carved directly into the land, entire settlements emerged: underground cities, rock-cut dwellings, and sanctuaries shaped not only by necessity, but also by spiritual and communal life. Over centuries, this landscape absorbed layers of devotion, artistry, and adaptation—becoming a silent archive of lived experience.

Today, every carved window, frescoed wall, and worn stone path reflects a dialogue between nature and culture. To walk through Cappadocia is to witness a rare harmony between geology and humanity—a place where the earth itself tells stories of faith, creativity, and home.

***Forum participants will be offered the opportunity to experience one of the heritage elements of Cappadocia from the selection presented below.***

***Please note that registration for the cultural activities taking place on Thursday, 23 October will be carried out via a dedicated registration link, which will be shared at a later stage by the local secretariat.***



# EXPERIENCING CAPPADOCIA'S HERITAGE

## 1- Göreme Open Air Museum: A Cultural Landscape of Faith and Nature

Göreme's unique cultural landscape, shaped by millions of years of volcanic activity and erosion, became a refuge for early Christian communities from the 4th century onwards. Inspired by St. Basil's monastic rules, they carved chapels, monasteries, and homes into the soft rock, creating a harmonious cultural landscape where nature and faith unite.

This special relationship between people and place led to Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia being named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985. The Göreme Open Air Museum, at its core, houses rock-cut churches adorned with vibrant frescoes. Notable examples include the light-protected Dark Church, the richly decorated Tokalı Church, and the serene El Nazar Church.

Visiting Göreme is not only stepping into history but experiencing a living cultural landscape.



## 2- Zelve Open Air Museum and Paşabağları (Monk's Vineyard/ Valley of the Priests)

Just a kilometer from the Göreme-Avanos road lies Paşabağ, known as the Monk's Vineyard, where early Christian monks carved their humble chapels and hermit shelters into the iconic fairy chimneys. One remarkable example is the chapel dedicated to St. Simeon, built within a triple-headed fairy chimney, accessible through a narrow tunnel and marked with carved crosses. These towering rock homes, some reaching 10-15 meters high, show how humans shaped and adapted to the natural environment.

Nearby, the Zelve Valley, once a vibrant residential area, holds the densest collection of fairy chimneys. Its churches, like Balıklı and Üzümlü, reveal traces of monastic life, while the pigeonhouses carved into the cliffs add a unique layer to the archaeological richness. Together, Paşabağ and Zelve illustrate Cappadocia's extraordinary cultural landscape that earned the region its UNESCO World Heritage status.







### 3- Exploring Historic Çavuşin

Just minutes from Göreme lies Çavuşin village, a quiet place that at first seems ordinary but quickly reveals its ancient soul. Stone houses and fairy chimneys rise toward the village square, blending human settlement seamlessly with the natural terrain. Following the paths beyond the village leads you to remarkable ruins of churches and clergy houses, some dating as far back as the 1st century. This area reflects how early communities adapted to and shaped their surroundings. Exploring Çavuşin is like walking through layers of time within a living landscape that still tells stories of early Christian life in Cappadocia.

### 4- Traces of Faith in Gülşehir

Located just 3 km from Gülşehir, the Açıksaray Open-Air Site is a remarkable example of Cappadocia's cultural landscape. Once a significant episcopal center during the 9th and 10th centuries, it features Roman-era rock tombs and Eastern Roman (Byzantine) era cave churches. One standout structure—locally known as the Mosque of Hacı Bektaş Veli—preserves an Islamic mihrab, reflecting the layered cultural heritage that shaped this land. The unique mushroom-shaped fairy chimneys here further highlight the interplay between nature and culture. Just outside Gülşehir, the two-story Church of St. Jean captivates with vivid frescoes, including rare biblical scenes and a striking blue-orange palette, offering a precious window into 13th-century art within Cappadocia's living cultural landscape.







### **5- Underground Cappadocia: Kaymaklı Underground City Visit**

Cappadocia's cultural landscape is as much beneath the surface as it is above. The enchanting fairy chimneys rise from the earth, while beneath them, complex underground cities reveal centuries of human resilience and adaptation. One of the most famous of these is Kaymaklı, carved deep into the soft tuffaceous rock. This intricate subterranean city features over 100 interconnected rooms, including stables, kitchens, wineries, and even a church, all designed to support a thriving community while providing refuge from danger. Walking through Kaymaklı, you experience the rich layers of Cappadocia's heritage — a cultural landscape that stretches both above and below ground, inviting you to step into a world where history lives beneath your feet.

### **6- Underground Cappadocia: Özkonak Underground City Visit**

Another remarkable underground marvel in Cappadocia is Özkonak Underground City, carved into soft volcanic rock north of Idis Mountain. Used extensively during the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) period, it served as a refuge for early Christians fleeing persecution. The city features narrow tunnels connecting rooms, stables, wineries, and a church. Unique to Özkonak are long communication holes between levels, designed for ventilation and defense—including holes made to pour hot oil on invaders. Özkonak offers a fascinating glimpse into the ingenuity and resilience embedded deep within Cappadocia's underground heritage.





## 7- An Authentic Cappadocian Village: Mustafapaşa

Set in the heart of Cappadocia, Mustafapaşa—historically known as Sinasos—is one of the region's best-preserved villages, where the cultural landscape reflects centuries of coexistence and craftsmanship. Recognized as a UN Tourism Best Tourism Village, it sits nestled among five valleys, offering a harmonious blend of natural beauty and layered heritage. Once a prosperous Anatolian Greek (Rum) settlement, the village still echoes its cosmopolitan past through its stately stone mansions, adorned with finely carved facades, wide arched windows, ornate cornices, and enclosed courtyards—typical features of late Ottoman-era Rum architecture. Churches, mosques, and civic buildings stand side by side, telling a shared story of faith and tradition. In perfect harmony with the topography and climate, Mustafapaşa feels like an open-air museum, where the artistry of local stonemasons and the elegance of a bygone culture are etched into every detail.

## 8- Panoramic view of the land of fairytales: Uçhisar Castle Visit

Uçhisar was established around the castle as a small village, it has grown over time and made its way down the slopes. Some say there were underground roads, kilometres long, that ran from Uçhisar Castle to the Ihlara Valley way before, adding more to the unique traces of civilizations. Today, the castle's surroundings are alive with vibrant shops and stalls, offering local crafts like carpets, marble ornaments, mirrors, and flavorful dried fruits and nuts—keeping alive the traditions that have shaped this extraordinary cultural landscape over centuries.

## 9- Panoramic view of the land of fairytales: Ortahisar Castle Visit

Ortahisar Castle is considered one of the world's earliest multi-story settlements. Originally a shelter for Silk Road caravans during the Hittite period, this structure is actually a giant fairy chimney carved into the rock. Standing at one of the highest points in the region, visiting the castle feels like stepping back in time. Ortahisar and its surroundings form a unique cultural landscape offering a rich experience both above and below ground.





## 10- Pigeon Valley Hiking

Located between Uçhisar and Göreme, Pigeon Valley is a dreamy trail where nature, history, and human ingenuity blend in the soft curves of volcanic rock. Named for the countless dovecotes carved into the cliffs, these tiny pigeon homes once played a crucial role in local agriculture—pigeon droppings were collected as valuable fertilizer, enriching the soil and shaping the region's cultural landscape.

The 4-kilometer path winds through fairy chimneys, lush greenery, and a hidden waterfall tumbling from 15 meters. Along the way, cave churches and panoramic viewpoints await, while the gentle cooing of pigeons echoes across stone.

## 11- Love Valley: A Scenic Trail Through Cappadocia's Heart

Just a short walk from Göreme, Love Valley is one of Cappadocia's most unforgettable spots—perfect for couples, friends, and nature lovers alike. Famous for its tall, uniquely shaped fairy chimneys that resemble natural sculptures, the valley stretches nearly five kilometers and offers a peaceful atmosphere filled with breathtaking views. This enchanting landscape invites visitors to hike through its winding trails, discover hidden caves, and enjoy panoramic vistas of the surrounding valleys. Love Valley has become a favored place for visitors to relax, and soak in the natural beauty that defines Cappadocia's cultural landscape. The valley's combination of geology, serene environment, and accessibility makes it a special place to connect with nature and the region's unique heritage.

## 12- Living Traditions: The Story of Avanos Ceramics

As the Kızılırmak River gracefully flows through the heart of Avanos, it has shaped not only the land but also the cultural landscape, nurturing a pottery tradition deeply connected to its fertile clay soils. This unique blend of nature and craft has defined the town's identity since Hittite times. Over the centuries, the art evolved while keeping its earthy warmth and signature turquoise hues alive. Today, Avanos proudly stands as a member of the European Route of Ceramics, celebrating a living tradition shaped by both the river's gifts and the hands of skilled artisans. Visitors can wander through local workshops, where the landscape's legacy is molded into every handmade piece, each carrying a story of Cappadocia's rich cultural heritage.







### 13- From Volcanic Soil to Vineyard: The Taste of Cappadocia

Cappadocia is a proud member of the Iter Vitis – European Cultural Route of the Vine, a recognition that celebrates its deep-rooted wine culture, shaped by nature's gifts, history's layers, and enduring traditions. The mineral-rich volcanic soil, combined with centuries-old farming practices—like the use of pigeon manure as a natural fertilizer—nurtures indigenous grape varieties such as Emir. These grapes, ripened under the Anatolian sun, create wines full of character, freshness, and a true sense of place.

Wineries, nestled among the region's fairy chimneys, welcome visitors year-round with tastings that reveal the harmonious dance between earth, vine, and traditional knowledge in wine-making.

### 14- Threads of Time: Experiencing Cappadocia's Carpet Traditions

Cappadocia is renowned for its handmade silk and wool carpets, each piece reflecting centuries of tradition and artistry deeply rooted in the region's history and cultural heritage. Experiencing the rich textures and intricate patterns is a journey into the heart of this region's heritage. Visitors can also witness the miraculous process of silk thread production, where silkworm cocoons are carefully unwound to reveal the delicate silk fiber. Local silk ateliers transform this rare fabric into a stunning variety of products—from elegant scarves to exquisite carpets. These crafts not only showcase Cappadocia's cultural richness but also offer a chance to indulge in the luxury of handmade artistry. Exploring these textiles is truly an invitation to feel the warmth and beauty woven into every thread.



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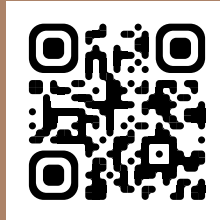
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