

14th Annual Advisory Forum on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

The Cultural and Tourism Programme in Türkiye

Please note that the cultural and tourism activities listed below are optional. They will be subject to participation fees, which will be communicated at a later stage.

The local Forum Secretariat will contact registered participants who have expressed interest in the optional cultural and tourism programme, in order to provide them with the relevant registration form.



Cappadocia 25 October 2025

Hot Air Balloon Experience Half Day

With its glamorous volcanic formations and breathtaking sunrise views, Cappadocia's panorama is complemented by the colorful hot air balloons that fly above the rock formations! Taking a hot air balloon ride in Cappadocia will add to your exceptional and thrilling travel experiences.

As dawn breaks, you will float in air with great calmness... Rock formations dating back millions of years, unimaginable landforms unique to this geography lying beneath. Valleys offering majestic sceneries, high altitudes painting a multi-hued topography down below, slopes weaved in velvety texture...

The land of fairy chimneys has become the center for hot air ballooning gradually over the past 20 years and the intoxicating morning cruises have been attracting more and more travelers from all over the world with each passing day. The balloons, which go up to 500 meters high, depart from the trails around Göreme early in the morning.

<https://goturkiye.com/cappadocia-hot-air-balloons-things-to-know-before-you-fly>



Horseback Riding Experience Half Day

A great way to discover Cappadocia, is horseback riding. You can navigate through Valley stretches on footpaths where vehicles cannot enter, around fairy chimneys and among lush village vineyards by horses. You will get the chance to see the most beautiful valleys of Cappadocia such as Meskendir and Güllüdere.

<https://adventure.goturkiye.com/horseback-riding>



Ihlara Valley

Full Day

This 14-kilometre-long valley is known for its rock-carved churches decorated with frescoes, offering a glimpse into early monastic life. Out of 105 churches, 14 are open to visitors, such as Ağaçalı, Yılanlı, and Saint Georgeus. Churches near Ihlara show Eastern influences, while those around Belisırma display Eastern Roman (Byzantine) art.

At the far end of the valley stands Selime Cathedral, Cappadocia's largest, dating back to the 8th–9th centuries. Once used for religious ceremonies and clergy training, it is decorated with scenes of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, carved into rock like a fortress.

Nearby in Güzelyurt, the Gelveri Houses showcase Cappadocia's unique architecture. Built around the Church of St. Gregorios Theologos, these stone homes blend into the rocky landscape, with arched roofs that have stood for over a century—quietly telling stories of the region's artistry and resilience.

<https://culturaljourneys.goturkiye.com/cappadocia-in-early-christianity>



Gümüşler Monastery

Full Day

Gümüşler Monastery is one of Cappadocia's best-kept secrets—hidden in a quiet town and carved entirely into rock.

Believed to date between the 8th and 12th centuries, this underground complex features a rare cross-planned church with vivid frescoes created by multiple artists. The walls depict scenes from the Bible, apostles, and figures like Basil the Great, offering a deep look into the region's spiritual past.

Restored in the 1960s, Gümüşler Monastery is a peaceful site where art, faith, and history come together—making it a meaningful stop for those exploring the cultural landscape of Cappadocia.

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJZgR__t39U/



Avanos Pottery Workshop

Half Day

Flowing gently through Avanos, the Kızılırmak River has given more than just beautiful scenery—it has provided the soft, rich clay that has defined the town's pottery tradition for centuries. This clay, once part of the riverbed, has been the heart of Avanos pottery since Hittite times. Each handmade piece still carries this timeless spirit, featuring earthy tones and vibrant turquoise highlights.

Today, Avanos proudly stands as a member of the European Route of Ceramics, keeping its heritage alive through lively workshops and colorful bazaars. Visitors can try their hand at the potter's wheel, guided by local masters, and perhaps discover the joy of creating a "happy accident."

Just 18 km from Nevşehir, Avanos is the perfect place to slow down, get your hands dirty, and bring home a unique piece of tradition shaped by your own imagination.

<https://culture.goturkiye.com/european-route-of-ceramics>



Cappadocian Vineyards & Wine Tasting

Full Day

Cappadocia boasts a rich viticulture tradition, famous especially for its white wines made from the local Emir grape. The region's unique volcanic rock formations create a breathtaking backdrop, making wine tasting among the magical fairy chimneys an unforgettable experience.

The volcanic tuff soil, rich in minerals, plays a vital role in nurturing Anatolian grapes like Öküzgözü, Kalecik Karası, Boğazkere, Narince, Emir, as well as European varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, resulting in wines full of character and depth.

The region's soft volcanic rock also offers natural wine cellars carved into the landscape, perfectly suited for aging wines. Many Cappadocian wineries welcome visitors year-round, sharing both their heritage and their craft. Recognized for its outstanding winemaking culture, Cappadocia proudly belongs to the Iter Vitis Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.



<https://goturkiye.com/uncorking-cappadocia-a-journey-through-vineyards-and-wineries>

Romantic Cappadocia: A Journey of Love and Magic

Full Day

Cappadocia is not only a land of unique geological formations, rich historical heritage, and vibrant cultural traditions but also a romantic landscape that captivates the soul. Here, you can soar above fairy chimneys in hot air balloons, engage with centuries-old pottery traditions by crafting your own piece, and savor exquisite wines grown in volcanic soils. As the day fades, enjoy a peaceful picnic in Love Valley, surrounded by nature and history intertwined. Cappadocia offers a rare blend of history, nature, and romance—a cultural landscape where unforgettable memories are made.

If you wish to experience a full day embracing Cappadocia from this unique perspective, this crafted itinerary awaits you.



Beyond Cappadocia: Discovering Türkiye's Cultural Routes

Türkiye's cultural landscape extends far beyond its iconic destinations. Through these specially designed itineraries, we invite you to discover a deeper Anatolia—where ancient belief systems, layered histories, and living traditions come together across time and place.

Several of these journeys align with the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, including Türkiye's own Aeneas Route and sites that form part of larger European networks such as the Iter Vitis and the Megalithic Cultural Route. From the archaeological marvels of Göbeklitepe to the Sufi heritage of Konya, from the culinary artistry of Gaziantep to the ancient synagogues of Izmir, each experience offers a distinct window into Anatolia's plural and enduring identity.

These routes are designed as one- or two-night programs, each thoughtfully curated to balance historical depth with cultural richness. Along the way, you'll encounter not only UNESCO World Heritage Sites and unique museums, but also vibrant local traditions that continue to shape community life.

This is an invitation to engage with Türkiye's heritage in a meaningful, informed, and inspiring way—through places where history is not only remembered, but still lived.



Istanbul: A Timeless Meeting Point

20-22 October 2025

2 nights 3 days

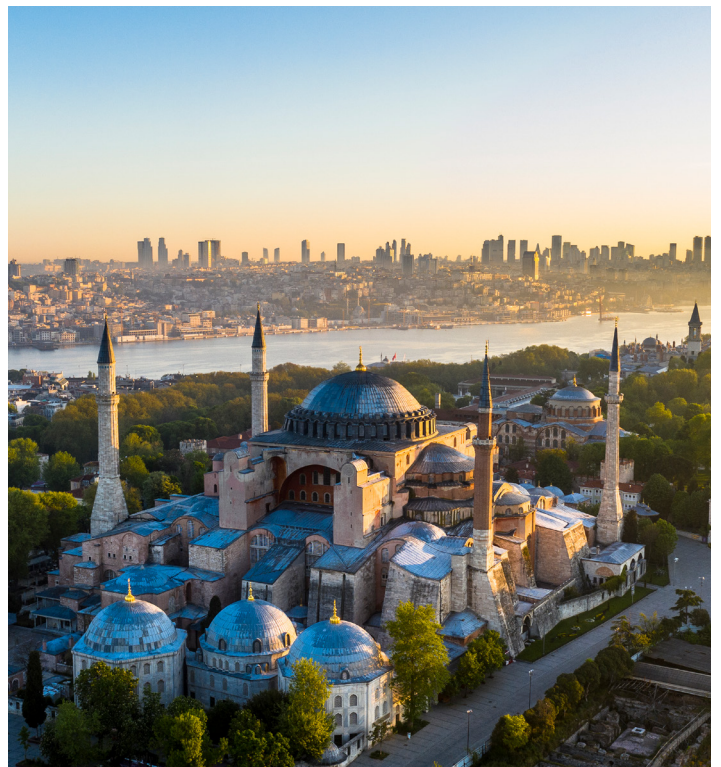
Straddling two continents, İstanbul is a vibrant crossroads where history and modernity coexist in perfect harmony. Once the heart of two great empires—the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) and Ottoman—it offers a living tapestry of cultural richness and architectural grandeur. Iconic landmarks like Hagia Sophia, Topkapı Palace, and the Basilica Cistern are more than monuments; they are gateways into stories that shaped civilizations.

The UNESCO-listed Historical Peninsula invites you to wander ancient city walls, explore bustling bazaars rich with timeless traditions, and descend into mysterious subterranean cisterns. The Grand Bazaar's maze-like alleys echo with the chatter of centuries, while the Bosphorus offers breathtaking views that unite Europe and Asia in a single horizon.

In this carefully crafted two-day itinerary, you will live the magic of İstanbul's rich past and vibrant present—walking through imperial palaces, admiring masterpieces of architecture, savoring local flavors, and cruising along the iconic strait that connects worlds. Every moment promises to deepen your understanding of a city that endlessly inspires.

Istanbul is not just a destination—it's an enduring narrative, where every visit becomes a chapter in your own story.

<https://istanbul.goturkiye.com/>



Aeneas Route in Türkiye

25 - 27 October 2025

2 nights 3 days

Explore the Aeneas Route, Türkiye's first and only Council of Europe accredited cultural route. Rooted in the legendary journey of Aeneas, this route links five countries across Europe and the Mediterranean, inviting travelers to experience a rich tapestry of history, myth, and archaeology.

Often regarded as the first road to Rome, the Aeneas Route traces the footsteps of the Trojan hero from Anatolia to Italy, inspired by Virgil's epic tale. This journey offers not only breathtaking landscapes but also a deep immersion into the ancient world, retracing the path of one of Western literature's most enduring figures.

In this program, you will explore vineyards, ancient cities, and sacred sites along the route. Highlights include visits to Troy — a UNESCO World Heritage Site — with its impressive museum, and historically significant places such as Antandros (Altınoluk), Ezine, and Ayvacık. You will also cross the sacred Mount Ida, where Aeneas received Cybele's blessings to build his ships, experiencing a unique blend of natural beauty and layered cultural heritage.

<https://culturaljourneys.goturkiye.com/aeneas-route>



Discovering the Layers of İzmir

25 - 27 October 2025

2 nights 3 days

Shaped by millennia of cultural exchange, İzmir stands as a living testament to the layered history of the Aegean. From the ancient city of Smyrna to today's vibrant coastal metropolis, İzmir embodies a tradition of coexistence rooted in diversity and resilience.

Among its most celebrated heritage sites are Ephesus and Pergamon—both UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Ephesus mesmerizes with its grand Roman architecture, including the Library of Celsus, while Pergamon's acropolis reveals the intellectual and political might of a once-great Hellenistic capital.

İzmir also holds a special place in the European Route of Jewish Heritage, with one of the world's rarest ensembles of Sephardic synagogues concentrated in the Kemeraltı district. Synagogues like Bikur Holim and Algazi reflect a once-thriving Jewish presence, preserved in quiet courtyards and shared memory. Nearby, the elegant neoclassical facades and Orthodox churches of Basmane and Karataş recall the Anatolian Greek (Rum) communities that shaped the city's social and architectural fabric.

From Hellenistic temples to Ottoman bazaars, Sephardic cortijos to Rum mansions, İzmir is not just a mosaic of heritage—it is a city where memory is lived, not archived.

This journey invites you to explore a place where identities have long intertwined, and where the echoes of the past continue to shape a vibrant, plural present.

<https://aegean.goturkiye.com/sephardic-heritage>

<https://izmir.goturkiye.com/>



Pamukkale & Hierapolis: A Journey into Türkiye's Thermal Heritage

25 - 27 October 2025

2 nights 3 days

Pamukkale, meaning "cotton castle" in Turkish, is one of Türkiye's most unique natural and historical treasures. Its stunning white travertine terraces, formed by mineral-rich thermal waters, have captivated visitors for thousands of years.

Just above these terraces lies the ancient city of Hierapolis, a significant spiritual and healing center during the Phrygian and Eastern Roman (Byzantine) periods. The well-preserved ruins—including a grand theater, Roman baths, a cathedral, and the remarkable octagonal Martyrium of St. Philip—reflect the deep cultural heritage embedded in this landscape.

Today, Pamukkale is a UNESCO World Heritage site, celebrated not only for its breathtaking scenery but also for its thermal waters, like Cleopatra's Pool, believed to offer healing benefits for the heart, skin, and joints. This tour invites you to immerse yourself in these ancient, healing waters and experience firsthand the timeless charm of this extraordinary cultural landscape.

<https://pamukkale.goturkiye.com/>





Şanlıurfa: Dawn of Humankind

25 - 27 October 2025

2 nights 3 days

Beneath the golden skies of Mesopotamia, Şanlıurfa stands as a living bridge between the dawn of civilization and today's vibrant life. Göbeklitepe, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is also a proud member of the European Route of Megalithic Culture. This connection invites travelers to explore the earliest spiritual sites in a broader context, tracing humanity's first monumental expressions of belief across Europe and Anatolia.

At Göbeklitepe and nearby Karahantepe, you witness a journey into prehistoric times, where ritual and community shaped the dawn of human culture.

The Şanlıurfa Archaeological Museum, housing one of the world's largest Neolithic collections, brings these ancient stories to life through its rich artifacts.

Balıkligöl reflects centuries of legend and faith, where sacred waters hold timeless tales. As night falls, Şanlıurfa's soul awakens in the Sıra Gecesi—UNESCO-listed traditional sohbet meetings—where music, poetry, and fellowship celebrate the region's enduring culture.

This tour promises an unforgettable voyage into the origins of belief, culture, and human connection across millennia.

<https://tastepeler.goturkiye.com/>

<https://sanliurfa.goturkiye.com/homepage>





Chasing the Sun Among Eternal Stones (Adıyaman, Diyarbakır)

25 - 27 October 2025

2 nights 3 days

The sun has long been more than just a source of light—it is a guide, a witness, and a silent storyteller of ancient civilizations that thrived under its glow. In Mesopotamia's sacred lands, history was etched into stone, faith took root, and legends came to life. Following the sun's path here is a journey through time itself.

At Mount Nemrut, the morning light bathes the colossal stone heads of gods and kings in a divine glow. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is the final resting place of Antiochos I, a ruler who sought to unite East and West beneath the heavens. Along this solar route, Zerzevan Castle stands tall, sheltering the remarkable Mithraeum—a place where rituals to the sun god once illuminated the shadows. Listed on UNESCO's Tentative List, Zerzevan holds mysteries still waiting to be uncovered.

Nearby, the imposing Diyarbakır Fortress and the lush Hevsel Gardens—both UNESCO-listed—tell stories of resilience and continuity. Within the historic Suriçi district, layers of human history unfold, inviting visitors to walk through an ancient manuscript written in stone and soil.

This journey promises chasing the sun through humankind's incredible works of art—where ancient stone monuments and sacred rituals illuminate the mysteries of past civilizations under the same golden sky.

<https://goturkiye.com/blog/mount-nemrut-the-secrets-of-the-commagene-kingdom>

<https://diyarbakir.goturkiye.com/>



Gaziantep: The City of Culinary & Cultural Mosaic

25 - 27 October 2025

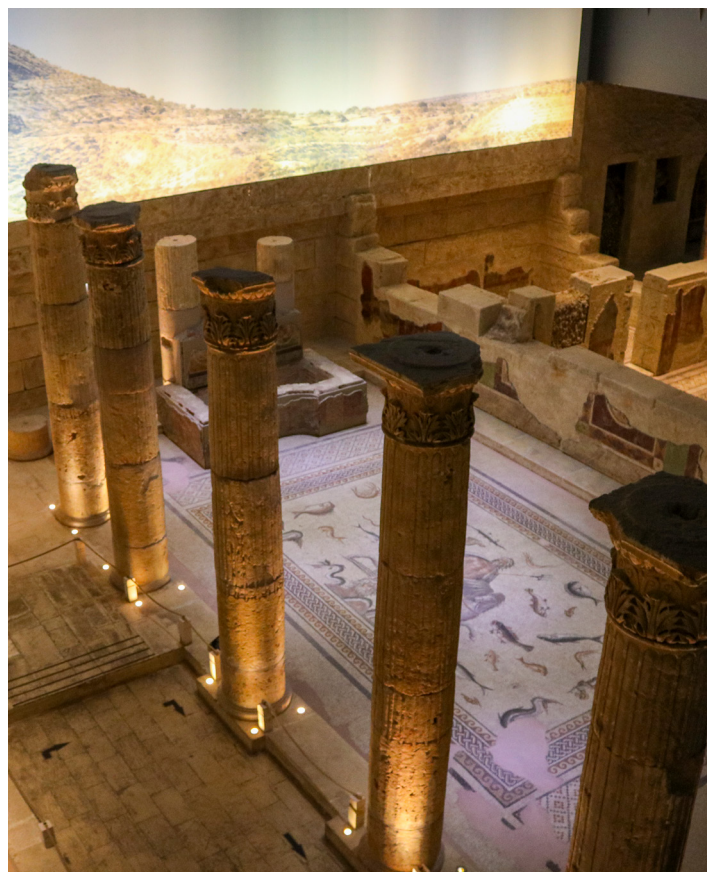
2 nights 3 days

Gaziantep, where history and flavor intertwine, invites you on an unforgettable journey through art, craftsmanship, and exquisite cuisine. At the Zeugma Mosaic Museum, the past comes to life in mesmerizing detail, showcasing the legendary Gypsy Girl and the rich heritage of ancient civilizations. In the heart of the city, the rhythmic sound of hammers fills the Coppersmith Bazaar, where artisans continue centuries-old traditions, crafting masterpieces from gleaming copper.

Beyond the city, the tranquil waters of the Euphrates lead to the mystical lands of Halfeti and Rumkale. A boat tour reveals the submerged secrets of this timeless region, where history whispers from beneath the waves. No journey to Gaziantep is complete without indulging in its legendary flavors—after all, this city proudly holds a place in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network for Gastronomy. From rich pistachio baklava to fiery kebabs, every bite is a taste of tradition, passion, and cultural heritage.

This journey offers a chance to experience Gaziantep's rich culture firsthand—through its historic sites, traditional crafts, and world-famous cuisine that have shaped the city's unique identity.

<https://gaziantep.goturkiye.com/>





Early Christian Monasteries: Echoes of Faith in Mardin

25 - 27 October 2025

2 nights 3 days

Perched on Mardin's golden hills, the Deyrulzafaran Monastery stands as a symbol of centuries-old spiritual devotion. Honored as an honorary member of the Iler Vitis Cultural Route, it reflects the deep connection between the region's viniculture and sacred traditions. Nearby, the ruins of Dara Ancient City whisper stories of a once-thriving Roman stronghold, while the elegant architecture of Kasimiye Medrese reveals the harmony of faith and knowledge.

In Midyat, the sacred aura deepens at Mor Gabriel Monastery, —the world's oldest active Syriac Orthodox monastery—, where prayers have resonated since the 4th century. The journey culminates with a tasting of Syriac wines, celebrating Mardin's rich heritage of winemaking and culture.

This journey offers a unique experience of Mardin's rich history, its living faith, and the enduring tradition of winemaking—where culture, spirituality, and heritage come together in perfect harmony.

<https://mardin.goturkiye.com/>





Konya – The Sufi Path of Love

25 - 27 October 2025

2 nights 3 days

In the heart of Anatolia, Konya offers a profound encounter with the spiritual philosophy of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi. At the Mevlana Museum—once the center of the Mevlevi dervish order—visitors are introduced to a world shaped by poetry, music, and contemplative devotion. Beneath the iconic turquoise dome lies the tomb of Rumi, whose teachings on love, unity, and surrender continue to resonate across centuries and cultures.

A visit to Konya is also a journey through the deep companionship between Rumi and Shams of Tabriz, whose transformative presence ignited one of the most powerful intellectual and spiritual legacies of the Islamic world. To further immerse yourself in this tradition, you may take part in a Sema workshop: an introduction to the whirling ceremony recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage—a ritual that transcends motion and becomes meditation.

This experience offers not only a glimpse into Sufi practice, but also a deeper reflection on the universal longing for connection, transcendence, and inner harmony.

<https://konya.goturkiye.com/>

<https://mevlanarumi.goturkiye.com/>



Tracing the Footsteps of St. Paul in Tarsus

25 - 27 October 2025

2 nights 3 days

In Tarsus, history and faith meet in quiet harmony. As the birthplace of St. Paul—one of Christianity's most influential figures—the city holds a special place in the spiritual and cultural memory of the world. A visit to St. Paul's Well, believed to mark his family home, offers a tangible connection to the early Christian era.

Nearby, St. Paul's Church stands as a serene reflection of his enduring legacy. Its timeless architecture and sacred atmosphere invite contemplation on the life and teachings of a man whose journey helped shape the course of global belief.

This journey promises more than a visit to sacred landmarks—it offers space for reflection on the roots of belief and the lasting influence of one man's ideas across civilizations.

<https://mersin.goturkiye.com/>



goturkiye.com

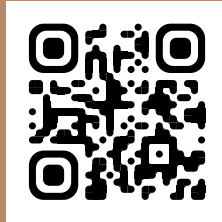


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