



Central Anatolia

Cappadocia & the civilisations at the heart of Turkey

8–20 October 2026 (MM 198)

13 days • £5,640

Lecturer: Jeremy Seal

Endlessly fascinating journey through an extraordinary variety of landscapes and civilizations in Central Anatolia.

From the ancient capital of the Hittites to Turkey's modern capital, Ankara.

Some of the finest examples of Seljuk architecture including the UNESCO listed complex at Divriği.

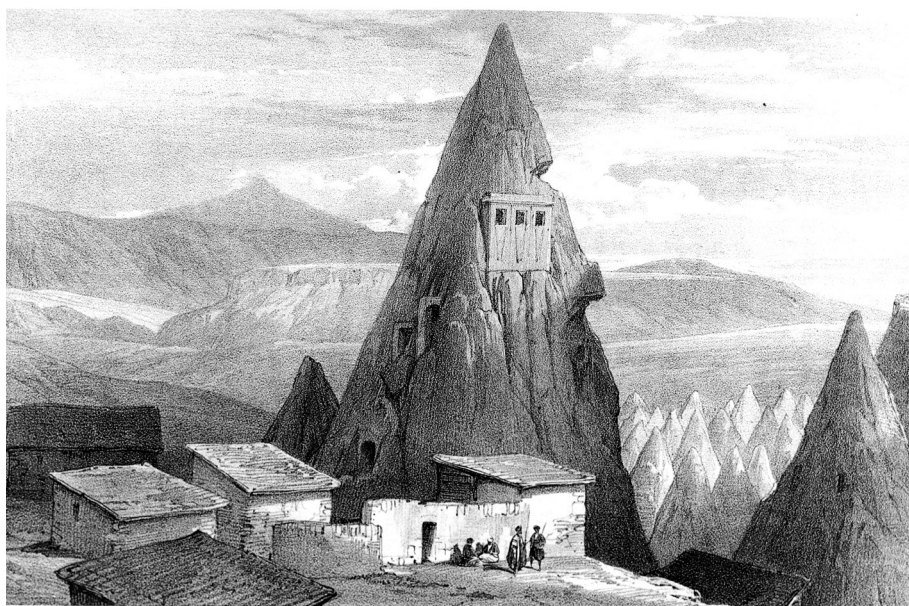
Turkey is changing rapidly, but many aspects of traditional life continue.

At the centre of Anatolia lies a limestone plateau, crumpled and eroded, with mountainous barriers at the rim. A land-bridge between Asia and Europe, this unpromising terrain has perhaps been traversed by a greater variety of peoples and cultures than any comparable part of the world.

Diversity is the hallmark of Central Anatolia. There is land blessed with exceptional fertility, emblazoned with a patchwork of greens and golds; and there are vast vistas of inhospitable rolling hills, parched and bereft of topsoil. Forests sprout around turbulent valley streams; elsewhere desolate, dead-flat, arid plains stretch to distant horizons. In Cappadocia the volcanic tufa has been whipped by wind and rain into clusters of billowing cones, cascades of frolicking rock and other bizarre geomorphic contortions.

Equally diverse are the civilisations which have made their mark. Here can be found the site of what is generally held to be the world's oldest town, Çatal Höyük. Vast towns were built by the Hittites—a people strangely little-known in the English-speaking world but, for periods during the second millennium BC, second only to the Egyptians as a power in the lands around the eastern Mediterranean. They were succeeded by Phrygians, the people of King Midas. Greeks and Persians followed, and fought; the brief rule of Alexander and his Macedonians was continued under the Seleucids.

Invaded variously by migrants, conquerors, adventurers and traders, Anatolia was progressively part orientalised and part Hellenised, but indigenous characteristics remained. The Pontic kingdom was a native kingdom, which under Mithridates valiantly



Rock carvings in Uçhisar, lithograph by William J. Hamilton 1842

if cruelly resisted Roman might, but by 50 BC Central Anatolia was under Roman rule as the province of Asia Minor. When five centuries later Europe ceased to be Roman and the eastern half of the empire was ruled from Constantinople (formerly Byzantium), Anatolia found itself to be the home counties of the Roman world, a world which was now Christian. Monks and hermits cut dwellings and churches in the pliable rock of Cappadocia, and Christian communities continued there into the last century.

Islam encroached when the Seljuk Turks from the Central Asian steppes rapidly extended their empire and wrested part of Anatolia from the Byzantines after their victory of 1071. Among their legacy is the mosque and hospital in Divriği, a masterpiece of Islamic architecture. The Turkish advance continued under the Ottomans until Byzantium finally fell in 1453.

Traditional ways of life continue in central Turkey, seemingly oblivious to the encroachments of the modern world and the thoroughly westernised sectors of society—another instance of diversity.

The best finds from sites visited are now in the excellent Museum of Anatolian Civilisations in Ankara. More than mere witnesses to lost civilisations, many of the objects are endowed with compelling sculptural force and decorative beauty; the

museum is as much a collection of great art as of archaeology. Few journeys in the Old World are as stimulating or as varied as this survey of the Turkish heartlands.

Itinerary

Day 1: Fly at c. 11.30am (Turkish Airlines) from London Heathrow to Ankara (via Istanbul). First of three nights in Ankara.

Day 2: Ankara. Installed in a 15th-century market hall and recently renovated, the Museum of Anatolian Civilization has a wonderful collection of art and artefacts from many of the sites on the tour. After lunch visit the Atatürk Mausoleum, a revered shrine to the creator of modern Turkey.

Day 3: Gordion, Ankara. Morning drive to Gordion, site of the Phrygian capital where Alexander cut the knot and where Midas is reputedly buried. The afternoon is free to walk up to the massive Byzantine and Seljuk walls of the citadel; here survives a traditional village apparently oblivious to the seething modern city spread over the surrounding hills.

Day 4: Boghazköy (Hattusas, Yazılıkaya), Alaca Höyük. In remote hill country to the east of Ankara, commanding an immense landscape, lies the site of Hattusas, the Hittite capital of the 2nd millennium BC. Of staggering size (the perimeter wall is 7 km), it retains

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the main gateways and figurative carvings in a temple of Yazılıkaya across a gorge just outside the city. The Bronze Age site (c. 2300 bc) of Alaca Höyük has an imposing Sphinx gateway and has yielded a collection of precious objects of highly accomplished workmanship. Overnight in Çorum.

Day 5: Amasya, Sivas. Nestling in a deep valley and with old Ottoman houses overhanging the River Yesilirmak, Amasya is one of the loveliest towns in Anatolia. Capital of the Pontic kingdom, there are remains of the hilltop palace and rock-cut royal tombs in the cliffs overlooking the town. Continue to Sivas with traditional architecture, Seljuk and Ottoman monuments. First of two nights in Sivas.

Day 6: Divriği. A beautiful drive through the Anatolian plains with snow capped mountains to the Great Mosque and Hospital at Divriği. Built in the early 13th century, the building is famed for its three unique decorated doorways carved with vegetal, geometrical, star and knotted motifs, the quality of which are unrivalled in the region. Largely unknown to visitors to Turkey it is one of unesco's least visited world heritage sites but one of Turkey's most splendid.

Day 7: Sivas, Kayseri. Sivas, which preceded Konya as the regional Seljuk capital, has some of the finest remaining architecture of the 13th century including a complex of colleges and minarets and an attractive old quarter and Ottoman structures. Drive through mountainous terrain to Kayseri. Overnight Kayseri.

Day 8: Kayseri, Cappadocia. Kayseri (formerly Caesarea), was the capital of Roman Cappadocia and includes a Byzantine fortress, Islamic buildings including the Great Mosque with re-used Corinthian columns, and an intriguing ethnographic museum. The archaeological site of Kültepe was a settlement of 1800 bc with a colony of Assyrians. Continue to Cappadocia for the first of three nights in Ürgüp.

Day 9: Soganli, Eski Gümüs. Drive through a gorge which in addition to geological oddities has tumble-down villages, orchards and small holdings. The Soganli valley has many dwellings and churches cut into the rock, the finest of all remnants of Byzantine Cappadocia is the monastery at Eski Gümüs.

Day 10: Goreme. Morning visit of the spectacular Goreme open-air museum. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore the landscape on foot (there are several walking trails).

Day 11: Ihlara Valley, Sultanhanı. Whole morning walking through the deep Ihlara Gorge with abundant flora, fauna and rock-cut Byzantine churches including Güzelyurt, birthplace of St Gregory. Drive westwards across a plain to Sultanhanı, a splendid 13th-cent. caravanserai, with a cathedral-like five-aisled main hall. Continue to Konya, where two nights are spent.

Day 12: Konya, Çatal Höyük. The capital of the 13th-cent. Seljuk empire and home of Sufism, Konya remains the religious centre of Turkey. Visit the Mevlana Tekke, monastery of the Whirling Dervishes, with its turquoise dome and collection of Islamic art. The Karatay Madrasa with its marvellous Seljuk tiles is now a museum of ceramics. Afternoon excursion to Çatal Höyük, the most important Neolithic site in Turkey and probably the earliest town in the world (c. 6000 bc).

Day 13: Morning flight (c. 8.45am) from Konya to Istanbul, and on to London Heathrow, arriving at c. 3.00pm.

Lecturer

Jeremy Seal. Travel writer and tour leader specialising in Turkey. His award-winning books include *A Fez of the Heart*, *Santa: A Life*, a portrait of the extraordinary posthumous life of the Byzantine bishop who was to become Santa Claus, and *Meander*, which tells of the solo canoe journey he made down Turkey's eponymous river. His most recent book, *A Coup in Turkey*, was published by Chatto in 2021. He has written about Turkey for a wide range of publications. He also teaches, most notably on creative non-fiction writing for the Institute of Continuing Education in Cambridge.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £5,640 or £5,290 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £6,340 or £5,990 without flights.

Included: international air travel (economy class) with Turkish Airlines: London to Ankara (via Istanbul) and Konya to London (via Istanbul); travel by private air-conditioned coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 12 lunches and 12 dinners with wine (where available), water and coffee; all admissions to museums and sites; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and national guide.

Visas: British, New Zealand, and American ordinary passport holders can travel to Turkey without a visa for visits of up to 90 days. Most other nationals require individual electronic visas, which are not included in the tour price. You will need to apply online in advance.

Accommodation. **Divan Çukurhan, Ankara** (divan.com.tr): a restored 17th century caravanserai located opposite to the main entrance of the Ankara Citadel. **Anitta Hotel, Çorum** (anittahotel.com): small 5-star hotel, in a central location and with good facilities. **Behram Pasha Hotel, Sivas** (behrampasa.com): a charming hotel housed in a historic Ottoman-era building. **Radisson Blu, Kayseri** (radissonhotels.com): a 5-star hotel conveniently located near the city center. **Yunak Evleri, Ürgüp** (yunak.com): a unique cave hotel carved into a mountain cliff. **Hich Hotel, Konya** (hichhotel.com): a restored Konak building with views of the Mevlana. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

How strenuous? This is a demanding tour with early starts and some days involving long coach journeys (however, the roads are good and we will make regular refreshment stops along the way). Participants should be comfortable with daily walking and stair climbing. Visits to some sites require navigating uneven terrain, so good mobility and sure-footedness are essential. Average distance by coach per day: 103 miles.

Group size: 10 to 22 participants.

Combining tours: it is possible to combine *Central Anatolia* with *Istanbul Revealed 22–29 October 2026*. We are happy to advise on linking accommodation and transport.