



TARSUS





Our promise to you is a journey of visual and intellectual discoveries full of unforgettable memories and experiences.

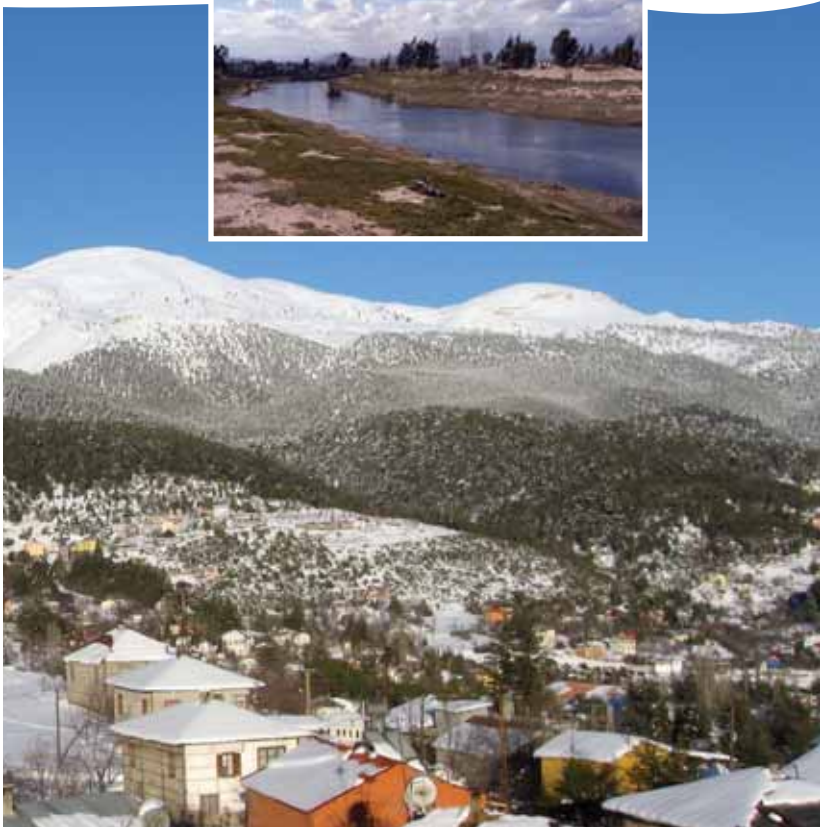
And for you there will be many incentives to explore Tarsus.



Get closer to the geography of Tarsus

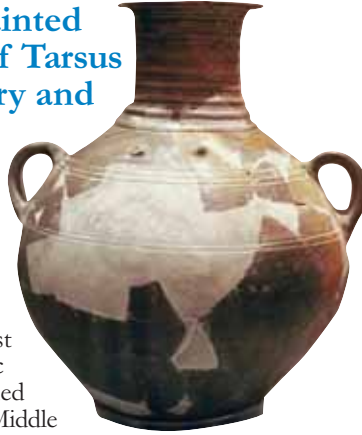
Tarsus is the biggest district of the tourism centre of Mersin in the Mediterranean region of Turkey, a country that is located both in Europe and in Asia. It is located at the historical crossroads of the Sertavul Pass that connects Cilicia with inner Anatolia, via the Middle Taurus, and the Gülek Pass on the Silk Road in what has always been, since ancient times, a strategically important region. Also located to the south are Rhegma Lagoon and the Tarsus River (Cydnus) that links it to the Mediterranean. The river ran through the city centre in the Ancient Period which meant that the port of the city was open to sea trade in Early Times (until the Late Ancient Period). The advantages of its geographical position and the rich fertility of the soil mean it has been place where various civilisations and cultures have come together since time immemorial.





Become acquainted with the story of Tarsus from pre-history and throughout all periods of history

The excavations at Gözlükule Mound in Tarsus have revealed that the region was first settled in the Neolithic Period and was occupied continuously until the Middle Bronze Age.



The first inhabitants of Tarsus were the Luwians, a people indigenous to Anatolia. The name of the city Tarsus is first encountered in Hittite texts dating from the middle of the second millennium B.C. where there is mention of a city called Tar-sha. Tar-sha was the capital city of the Kizzuwatna Kingdom, founded by the Hurrians from northern Mesopotamia and which covered the whole of the Çukurova. Writing found on a seal discovered at the Gözlükule excavations has been deciphered as stating “Ishputahshu, son of the great king Pariyavatr”. The name of Ishputahshu on the seal, who was king of Kizzuwatna (at the end of the 16th C. B.C. approximately) proves that Tarsus was the capital. It is known the city came under Hittite sovereignty in the second half of the second millennium B.C. but was destroyed during the mass migrations of tribes and that there was a period during which the city was not occupied. A new period started when the Assyrians and Phoenicians settled in the city in the 9th C. B.C. The Phoenician traders saw the worth of the ore mines and the cedar forests and founded a



trading centre in the city. With the emergence of Persian dominance Tarsus became the centre of the Satrapy of Cilicia. The rulers changed during Asian Campaign (333 B.C.) of Alexander the Great and after his death it came under the control of the Seleucids. The importance of the city during this period is demonstrated by the fact it was once more allowed to mint its own coin. With the advent of the state system introduced by the Roman General Pompey in 63 B.C. Tarsus became the capital of the state of Cilicia and was honoured by the visits of many emperors. The city was started to be administrated by the governors appointed by the Roman Senate; one notable example being the famous orator Cicero who governed in 51-50 B.C.



Julius Caesar, one of the most important names in history, came to Tarsus in 48 B.C. where he gave various decrees and because of this the city was for a while named Juliopolis. After the death of Caesar, Mark Anthony, who was in charge of the Eastern territories and Queen Cleopatra of Egypt met here in 41 B.C. in order to discuss some political issues and Tarsus passed into history as the place where their decisions were made and fate was changed.

After Augustus had defeated Mark Anthony at Aktun in 31 B.C. Rome became an Empire under the control of Augustus; Tarsus was brought back to its former glory by the philosophers Athenodoros and Nestor who served the city in the capacity of governor. For this period Tarsus is well-known as the city where philosophers flourished. In the Christian world it is further renowned as being where St. Paul was born and lived and thus being where his philosophy took shape.

During the Roman period Tarsus experienced particular growth and many new buildings after the visit of the Emperor Hadrian in 123 A.D. Tarsus remained important during the last period of the Roman Empire (4th and 5th C. A.D.) and during the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire but suffered increasingly from Arab incursions during the 7th C. and decreased in importance due to the resultant damage. Tarsus came under the control of the Great Seljuk State in 1085, followed by invasions and wars. After being under the control of the Crusaders and the Byzantines it became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1517 during the reign of Padishah Yavuz Sultan Selim and in this period Çukurova took its place as an important city in terms of trade, industry and culture. During the War of Independence Tarsus was, for a while, occupied by the French. It was liberated from occupation on December 27th 1921 and after the establishment of the Republic it was recognised as district of the province of Mersin.



*Objects from
the Tarsus Museum*





Find yourself in magnificent historical places and buildings that have survived until the present day

Gözlükule Mound

The Gözlükule Mound is formed of two distinct peaks and is 300m in length with a width of 22m. The excavations at the site, which began in 1935, reveal a continuous habitation here from the Early Neolithic period until Ottoman times. Included in the archaeological finds from amongst 33 strata of established settlement found here can be numbered: Cilicia, Mesopotamia and Mycenae ceramics, houses and narrow passages, and stone-based adobe walls belonging to the Early Bronze Age, finds relating to the remains of a great temple resembling the temple at Hattusha, Early Period building complexes. The archaeological discoveries amongst the strata of the mound, especially the level between the Early Bronze Age to Hittite Period, have provided a lot of information regarding the relationships between the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus and Egypt. Amongst the strata belonging to Hittite Civilisation is a building which has much importance because it is documented as being “the first time supporting beams were used in Anatolia”.

Amongst the items of note to have been found at the mound are remains from a workshop for the production and working of bronze, seals with hieroglyphs and cuneiform writing, ceramic vases originating from Cyprus, Assyrian tablets and clay seals.



Ancient Road (Batı Caddesi)

The Ancient Road, which came to light during an excavation in 1993, has become a great and enduring symbol of the grandeur of the Tarsus of nearly 2,000 years ago. It is clear that this road served the city for a long time in the Ancient Period, and is all the more impressive because, in its day, it was used by many famous names amongst which can be counted: St. Paul, Cicero, Julius Caesar (Augustus), Athenodoros, Nestor, Cleopatra, Mark Anthony, Augustus and Hadrian. The Ancient Road, found at the very heart of the modern city, was constructed of polygonal basalt stones; to date a section of 60 m has been brought to light. The first thing that grabs one's attention is the herringbone design and the sewer system directly beneath it which makes it rather different, in architectural terms, from the other roads found in Anatolia. Also just to the west of the road there is a colonnaded platform with a Roman house on its east side. The mosaic-covered courtyard of the house, which probably dates from the 4th or 5th C. A.D., is testament to the length of time that the street was in use.



The Cleopatra Gate

The only remaining gate of the rampart walls is the main entrance which was on the west of the historical city. It is known as either the “Sea Gate” due to its proximity to the port or as the “Silifke Gate” because in its time it was the entrance that started journeys to the most important cities of Seleucia. In travel guides of the 19th C. it is referred to as “St. Paul’s Gate”. Studies into the period in which it was built have revealed that the materials employed come from the end of the Byzantine Period or from the Abbasids. There is evidence that that was also an earlier gate on the site of the present day gate. It is a single-arched structure with a height of 8.50 m and a width at its centre of 5.60 m. Starting with the arch it has been partly restored in recent years.

Modern day visitors to the Cleopatra Gate should be aware of the historical facts and various stories associated with it; amongst them can be found: “In order to improve Tarsus the young candidate for emperor, Mark Anthony, undertook in the years after 41 B.C. many great construction projects. The arrival in the Port of Tarsus of the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra in her magnificent vessel enamoured her of the local people and, in that moment, Tarsus became the centre and heartbeat of the world. Cleopatra and Mark Anthony immediately fell in love with one another”.





Roman Baths (Kemeraltı)

The Roman Baths built in Tarsus during the Roman Period are almost an exact contemporary of the Donuktaş Temple and the two were built using the same techniques. Because the baths are so large, it was necessary to open a passage, without damaging the interior, to give easy access to the parts of district behind. The remains that can be seen today formed the two main parts. There are two walls, with a thickness of 3 m and a height of approximately 9 m, one of which runs east to west and the other intersects it on a south-north axis. There was a dome sitting on a vaulted roof over the north -west intersection of these walls. The building was constructed with rubble stone in the Roman concrete technique. Archaeological excavations have revealed a pool in a vaulted room and, beneath it, a heating (hypocaust) system.



Donuktaş (Roman Temple)

This is the largest place of worship in the region and on first view it resembles a massive rock. The result of archaeological research has been to date the temple to the 2nd C. A.D (Hadrian-Septimus Severus). New finds have related it the theatre at Side (temples N1 –N2, building M) and the Tyche Temple in its architectural style in the time of Antonius Pius or slightly later in the reign of Commodus and it is thought it might be related to the emperor cult.

This massive outcrop has dimensions of 100 m x 43 m and the use of conglomerate pieces in making this interesting building is another peculiarity. The result of archaeological research into this outcrop is that it is constructed of Roman concrete that was poured into moulds to construct the 8 m high walls. The limestone blocks seen in various places formed supporting walls.



Roman Road (Sağlıklı)

This road is one of the most important that have survived to the present day and in terms of its historical interest one of the roads most worth seeing. The limestone paved road runs for around 2km in the hills above the village of Sağlıklı which is about 15 km from Tarsus and is very interesting for tourists. Never reaching a height of more than 200 m above sea-level it turns north after the hills leaving the Taurus Mountains behind and in history must have been one of the most important routes linking the Mediterranean to Central Anatolia. The road was

most probably constructed in the 1st C. A.D. and was used until the middle of the 4th C. In the best-preserved sections can be distinguished lime stone blocks and, on both sides of the road, there are high pavements to stop vehicles coming off the road. Furthermore there are interesting sections such as the curves which utilise the natural geography to facilitate the exit of vehicles and places where the road is wider to allow 2 vehicles to pass. There is a monumental gate at the point of the road overlooking the Tarsus Plain to the sea, but it is not known when and why it was built.



Roman Road

Yeni Hamam (The New Bath-House)

Built in 1785 the edifice consists of sections for changing, a temperate room, hot room and boiler house. It is entered from the west through an entrance that resembles a maze. The section for changing is topped by a rather high dome and two-storied. The temperate section is rectangular and is topped by two small domes. The hot section, just to the north, is square with a single dome. In the corners there are four cell-like rooms topped by small domes which are used as bathing places. In the centre there is an octagonal heated marble slab (göbek taşı) with marble basins around the perimeter in four small vaulted open rooms. With its architectural beauty and all the traditional characteristics of Turkish bath culture is interesting for visitors who really want to experience a bath-house from the olden days.



Nusrat Minelayer (Ship)

The Nusrat Minelayer is one of the world's most important and famous warships. After having been restored to its original condition it is on display in the park at the entrance to Tarsus in memory of the victory against the Allied Powers on March 18th, 1915 at the Çanakkale Battle of the World War I.

The Nusrat Minelayer was constructed in the Germania Shipyard at the city of Kiel in Germany in 1912 and was delivered to the Ottoman Army in 1914. With a width of 7.4 m and a length of 40 m the ship could travel at 15 knots. Because of its ability



to manoeuvre in narrow area it was deployed in the Çanakkale Strait. It served until 1955 after which it was decommissioned. Many years later the dilapidated sinking vessel was brought in 3 pieces by Tarsus Council from Mersin to Tarsus where it was re-assembled and the process of restoring it to its former glory began. Today it is admired and respected by local and foreign tourists alike in its park setting as a memorial to the hundreds of thousands who lost their lives for the cause.



*Nasrat
Minelayer*

View rare works from a rich cultural heritage

Tarsus Museum

The Tarsus Museum opened in 1971 in the Kubat Paşa Madrasa and moved to a new building in 2000. The new museum has on display objects that were found or purchased from archaeological excavations in and around Tarsus and is spread over three floors. The upper salon has ethnographical pieces and a Tarsus House Corner which brings to life the culture of the Türkmen nomads in Çukurova. Pieces from the Chalcolithic, Early Bronze ages, Hittite, Urartian, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods bring to light the pre-history and the wealth of historical ages in Tarsus. In the first section of the exhibition salon of the museum's lower floor are displayed items recovered from the excavations at the Gözlükule Mound, the Cumhuriyet Alanı (lit. Republic Square), the Donuktaş, the Well of St. Paul and the Roman Monumental Tomb. Together with the displays in the chronology section, the museum has a remarkable collection with the stone works

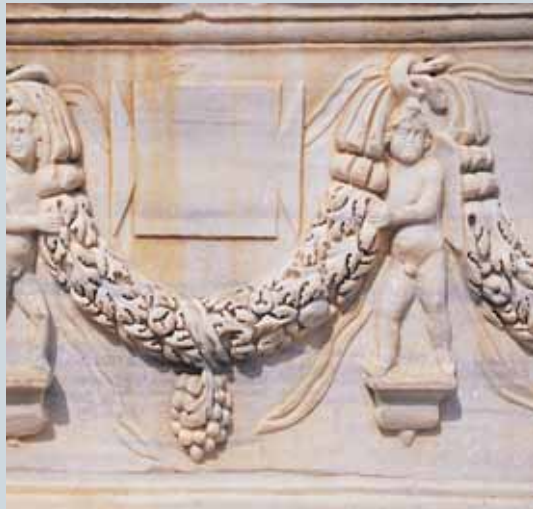


Museum garden





including: statues, tomb ornaments, marble sarcophagi, and architectural fragments retrieved from the Donuktaş Excavation plus a striking “Coin Collection” with pieces from the 6th C. B.C. right through to the late Ottoman Period.



*Marble sarcophagus,
Tarsus Museum*



Immerse yourself in many historical places of worship and pilgrimage preserved in these tolerant and open-minded lands

Well of St. Paul



St. Paul, famous for his contribution to the spreading of the Christian religion and one of the first theologians, was born in Tarsus. The Well of St. Paul, as it is known, is in the courtyard of an old building where it is widely believed that St. Paul had lived. The well named after St. Paul is situated at around 200 m to the northeast of the Ancient Road and it is known that visitors have used the remains of an old building here for centuries. During the period when Christianity was prevalent in Tarsus it was believed that the water in the well was holy and that it had the power to cure those who drank it. The 30 metre deep well and its environs have a rich history: archaeological digs have revealed signs of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman culture here. The site which has been restored and is protected is today visited by many interested in its history and is a site of pilgrimage.







St. Paul Monument Museum (The Church of St. Paul)

The adoption of Christianity as the official religion in the 4th C. A.D. by the Emperor Constantine meant the end of religious suppression and that churches started to be built. From the 5th C. many churches were built that were dedicated to St. Paul. Several of these churches, according to the European travellers that came here, were built in Tarsus, the birthplace of St. Paul. Nowadays only one survives and this is the reason that the Church of St. Paul is held in such high importance. The building covers an area of 460 m² with the main monumental entrance to the north. Directly to the right of the entrance is a garden where the water well of the church is located.

The generally rectangular building has a relatively simple layout; on the west there is sloping vaulted roof supported by four columns, with the inside of the vaults painted sky-blue and decorated in the corners with stylised nature motifs. The main entrance is arched with a window on either side. The capitals of the columns are in Corinthian style. The floor of the church is made up of black and white marble tiles with a small area in front of the praying area behind done with a simple arrangement of triangular black and white marble. At the intersection of the



central nave and the apse there is a decorated marble screen separating the holy area. The niches of the interior walls are decorated with religious icons and representations of saints. There are similar niches in the smaller side apses. To the east of the central nave, next to the window above the central apse, there are depicted two angels amongst clouds. Below the window there is a landscape painting. Above the angel motifs, there is an eye motif in a triangle on the central vault. In the next scene the Evangelists (the writers of the Bible) are represented alongside Jesus in the centre. The figures are represented as wearing clothes of red and blue. The right hand of Jesus is extended outwards and the apostles are writing the Bible.

To the side, front and left, are depicted Luke and a bull with Matthew behind him. The upper section of this figure, from the shoulders, has been destroyed; only the name can be made out in one place. Right and forward are depicted Mark and a lion with John and an eagle behind him. There are two more small doors on the north and south sides of the church. On the side of the door to the south there is an external double staircase which gives access to the gallery of the church. In the gallery (overlooking the central nave), made of wood in the shape of a balcony, there are landscape paintings on the balustrade.

There are symmetrical windows in the apses and sides which provide light for the interior. The windows above the small doors on the sides are in the shape of a cross. To the right side of the northeast of the building there is a bell tower supported by a small column.

The current condition of the church is the result of major renovation and architectural works undertaken in 1862. The church was abandoned when the Christian population of Tarsus left in 1923 and it was later partly converted and used for various purposes. In 1994 it was adopted as a protected building by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and was designated as a monument museum. It went under a major restoration for protecting its architectural characteristics and frescoes.



Eshab-ı Khef Cave (Cave of the Seven Sleepers)

The story of the Seven Sleepers is found in several places in the world, the most important example in Anatolia is the Eshab-ı Khef Cave at Tarsus. This historical location is located in the foothills of Mount Encülü 12 km to the north of Tarsus. The cave is an enclosed space of around 200m² in a natural depression and is accessed by a downhill walk then a 15-rung ladder. There is a mosque directly above the cave. The mosque was built in 1872 and a later date a minaret with three balconies was added. A lot of information and much documentation concerning Eshab-ı Khef have survived until the present day. That there is a Sura in the Holy Koran named Eshab-ı Khef is indicative of its enduring importance.



Although the tale is told in various ways nowadays there are intrinsic facts common to each. A long time after St. Paul had spread the laws of Christianity the Roman Emperor came to Tarsus. In a period of polytheism these believers in a single god were an obstacle. It was said that they would rather kill themselves rather than submit to the Roman religion. The youths, not wanting to give up their belief in a single god, used the few days time they were given to change their minds by the Emperor to hide themselves in a cave nearby Tarsus, where by a miracle, they fell into a sleep which lasted 309 years.

The first of them to awake (called Yemliha) went into town to buy something to eat and saw that everything had changed. The money he had was out of date and the townsfolk, not believing what he had to say, went with him to the cave. However the only thing that they could see was a nest in which there were 7 young birds. In the Islamic version those that came to the cave saw six people inside at prayer. Yemliha left those outside to go into the cave and thereafter none of the seven are seen again. Nowadays the site has become an important tourism centre on tours arranged as faith and culture tours.



The Ulu Mosque

It was built in 1579 on the behest of İbrahim Bey, the son of Piri Mehmet Pasha who was the ruler of the Ramazanoğulları Principality. Today it is surrounded by a tomb and a poor-house and there is a clock tower to the northeast that was added in 1895 all that go to give it the appearance of a large mosque complex. Close inspection of the construction reveals that it was built on the site of an earlier large temple of which some pieces have been re-used. In the tomb, where the east wall of the mosque ends, are the honorary sarcophagi of the Blessed Seth, Lokman Hekim (the Physician) and Caliphate Me'mun.

The mosque has 3 sections parallel to the mihrab. Where the north section ends there is a large vaulted courtyard with a fountain in the middle. There are minarets on the northeast and northwest corners of the courtyard. An inscription of the minaret on the northwest states that it was built in 1363 and belonged to a different mosque. The second minaret was converted into a clock tower in 1895 by Ziya Pasha.



The Makam-ı Şerif Mosque and the Burial Place of the Prophet Daniel

The main building of the mosque is rectangular with arches and vaults and was built in 1857; 10 years later a minaret and new building were added. The new building opens onto the old section with three apertures. Three steps lead down to the main section which is covered with a low dome. The mihrab is rather plain. To the east is located the tomb of the Prophet Daniel. The importance of the mosque stems from the fact that it is the place where the tomb of the Prophet Daniel is located. In a year of famine Daniel was invited to Tarsus: his arrival coincided with an abundant crop and for this reason he was never sent back to Babylon. When he died he was buried in what is now the Makam Mosque.



When, in the Caliphate Ömer Period, Tarsus was conquered (638 -639 A.D.) the tomb of Daniel the Prophet was opened. Inside a large sarcophagus they found a tall corpse wrapped in gold-threaded silk material. When they inspected the seal on the ring of the finger they saw a representation of a young child between a lion and lioness, with the lioness licking the child. In order that the Jews should not retrieve the corpse Caliphate Ömer decreed that it be re-buried deeply where it had lain before and that a small tributary of the River Berdan should be diverted to run over the site. Thus the tomb would be both physically hidden and protected. During the most recent restoration works at the mosque there were discovered rather thick and orderly iron rings where the water ran in, to the rear and beneath the mosque. It is thought that the corpse of the Prophet Daniel is well beneath the water that runs below these metal loops.

Old Church Mosque

It is one of the oldest places of worship in Tarsus. Historians are not certain of the date of its construction but think that it may be one of the churches dedicated to St. Paul and it may have been built in the first half of the 14th century. Of particular interest are the thick and high walls built in the Roman style, the wide interior, the outside facing narrow deep windows and the thick columns. It started to serve as a mosque in 1415 in the time of Ramazanoğulları Principality. The southern door was replaced with a mihrab and the north was converted into an assembly division. Both sides of the apse were converted into rooms and later a minaret was added to the southwest corner.

The garden is entered by a highly ornate gate on the west. The building is inside this garden and encloses a space of around 460 m². The salon which is entered by the main door on the west is 19.30 m wide and 17.50 m long. On the ceiling of the middle salon, where it meets the centre, there are frescoes that depict Jesus with John and Matthew on the east and Mark and Luke to the west. On the northwest corner of the building there is a bell tower. The building has undergone much restoration and the grounds have been tidied up.

Bilal-i Habeşi Masjid

This is the historical masjid where the muezzin of the Prophet Mohammed, Bilal-i Habeşi read the call to prayer. Although the exact date of its construction is not known it is mentioned in Ottoman records dating from the year 1519. The main space of the rather plain looking mosque is entered by an assembly porch with three columns. Whilst the assembly porch is topped by three oval domes the main space is covered by a single dome on a drum. The place of worship is accessed through a simple entrance. Just on the right of the entrance in the main room is the symbolic sarcophagus of Bilal-i Habeşi.





Find yourself in the meeting place of famous historical figures and philosophers

The Prophet Daniel

The Prophet Daniel lived during the reign of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II (605 – 562 B.C.) and was renowned for his powers of soothsaying. According to the story Nebuchadnezzar was unsettled by a dream in which he learnt that a Jewish boy would dethrone him, and so decreed that all males born to the Jews should be killed. When Daniel was born, his family left him in a cave where he was brought up by a lion and lioness. In his youth there was another period where the minorities were persecuted and he saved the Jews from being enslaved by his scholarliness and predictions. He is revered as a prophet who bestows many blessings. He is counted amongst the Jewish Prophets of the Torah and as being a descendant of the Prophet David.



St. Paul



Born to an aristocratic Jewish family in Tarsus at the beginning of the 1st C. A.D. and given the name “Saul”, he had one of the biggest advantages possible for that age in that he was a Roman Citizen. He grew up in a period of prosperity and advancement when the city had a rich cultural life: one of the most important philosophy schools of the day had been founded in Tarsus. Having had his early education in Tarsus he went to Jerusalem to complete his studies. During this time he came across Christianity and at first he was amongst those who persecuted Christianity and tried to dissuade its followers from their beliefs. Whilst pursuing Christians that were trying to escape to Damascus he saw Jesus in a dream and that is where the story of St. Paul begins and doubtless explains why he has a place in the Bible until today. Because of his great efforts he has an important place in the Christian religion and along with St. Peter is considered the founder of the church.





St. Paul in Anatolia

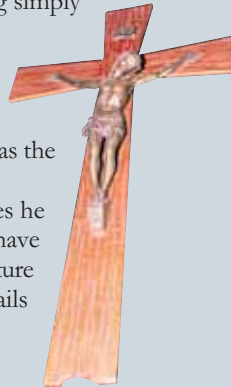
Until his death in Rome St. Paul worked tirelessly to spread his religion and to this end he embarked on three journeys. The first of these journeys was mostly in western Anatolia: he travelled by sea from Samandağ-Seleucia Pieria to Cyprus and from the Port of Baf embarked for Perge. He then continued by road to firstly Yalvaç (Pisidia Antiocheia) and from there went to Konya (Iconium) and later went via Hatunsaray (Lystra) to Derbe. After a short while he re-visited some of these cities on his way back to Perge. From here he returned to Samandağ by ship and then went via Antakya (Antioch) to Jerusalem where he completed his first journey.

His second journey took place between the years 50-53 A.D. when he set out together with Silas, a Roman citizen from Antakya and also Timothy joined them in the journey to Troy via Anatolia from where they reached Macedonia. During this period there were new churches established at Philippi, Thessalonica and Beroea. As dangers increased they travelled via Athens to Corinth where they spent two years.



The third journey started in 53 A.D. when he went via Efes (Ephesus) to the islands of the Aegean and from Greece onto Macedonia. Because of his efforts St. Paul is best known as a “messenger” of the “Good News” of the Bible. Because he added much to the good education that he had in Tarsus and Jerusalem and because of the work he did for the Christian faith he was celebrated as “Paul of Tarsus”. Moreover because of the courage and determination he had together with Peter in the establishment of churches and in spreading the Bible he is often called the “Apostle of Tarsus” even though he was not one of the 12 Disciples that accompanied Jesus. Beginning in the middle of the first century he developed the first Christian communities in the region; beginning in Cilicia and going through Lycaonia, Pisidia and Pamphylia to Cappadocia. Despite all the difficulties he encountered within the lands of the Roman Empire the sermons of St. Paul were so effective that in a short time he had many converts and many synagogues were turned into important churches. However his mission to spread the word annoyed the Romans and they had him arrested. He was transported to Rome in order to be tried, and, according to sources, he died there around 60 A.D.

Today St. Paul is widely considered as one of the most important figures in Christianity, his immortality guaranteed by the place his life and works are afforded in the Bible. The man from Tarsus, or more importantly from Anatolia, is counted amongst the greatest saints in Christian history for his role in preventing Christianity becoming simply a sect of Judaism, for giving form and rules to the religion, for founding the early churches and for being a theologian and philosopher. He is often referred to as the “Apostle of Tarsus” by those who appreciate his efforts and the epistles he wrote during his journeys not only have an important place in Christian literature but are also worthy sources for details of the age and are considered important by archaeologists.



Discover the mysteries of the land of legends

The Baths of Shahmeran (Old Bath-House)

The Baths of Shahmeran, that have a major place in legend, were built on the foundations of the old Roman Baths by the Ramazanoğulları Principality. The historical building, which has been renovated at various points in history, has all the characteristics, in terms of its plan and dimensions, of a traditional Turkish Baths. The complex is made up of changing rooms in the entrance, a section for washing that is topped by a dome and a boiler house. The sections with marble basins and marble floors are especially interesting. The building is the main location for the legend of Shahmeran and it is mentioned in other accounts. It is believed that Shahmeran died in this bath-house. For modern day visitors the tales told about the bath-house are just as interesting as its architecture.



The Legend of Shahmeran; the Queen of Snakes

Of all the interesting tales told about Tarsus the story of Shahmeran is perhaps the most interesting. Known as the queen of snakes Shahmeran had the head of a human and the body of a snake. The story of her and a young man called Cansab is a well-known tale in and around Tarsus and is oft-repeated. In it the

serpent becomes friendly with the boy and asks him to keep her secret; his inability to do so triggers a sequence of events that end with her betrayal and death.



The story begins with Cansab and some friends out collecting wood, Cansab climbs into a well to collect honey and ends up descending into the underground realm of Shahmeran. Abandoning his friends Cansab stays in Shahmeran's world. Afterwards, the snakes catch him and take him to Shahmeran. Whilst Cansab explains what has befallen him, Shahmeran tells her own secrets to Cansab. Not wanting these secrets to be known on the surface she compels him to be her guest. After a long time living there Shahmeran can finally no longer stand his constant entreaties and is ready to let him free. But he is not to tell of what he has seen and advises him not to go to the bath-house. If he does his skin will become snake-like and thus it will be apparent that he has seen Shahmeran.

Cansab returns from the way he came and for many years doesn't talk about what he experienced. The situation changes later when the sovereign becomes ill and it is thought that Shahmeran could be the cure. Soldiers start to scour the country for anyone who has seen Shahmeran. And because they know that it will become clear who has seen her whilst washing in the bath-house the shah's men take all the people one by one to the bath-house to wash. Cansab is successful in keeping his secret for a while by hiding but is eventually caught and taken to the city. Whilst washing the whole secret comes out and all at once his body becomes covered with the scales of a snake. He is then persuaded to reveal where Shahmeran hides. After a short while the queen of the snakes is captured then killed in the Tarsus Shahmeran Bath-House. She is presented to the Shah in three pieces. The Shah gets better and as a reward to Cansab makes him vizier. According to the legend there is not a snake that doesn't know this and this is the reason that they attack humans.

Lokman Hekim

Believed to have been from Tarsus Lokman Hekim is regarded, by those who believe in him, as a prophet, poet, and, sometimes, a physician. For this reason there are many legends and stories concerning him.



Moreover there is a sura in the Holy Koran that bears his name (Lokman) the subject of which is renowned for the advice that he gives to his son: the folktales are believed to be about the same physician. His life span was to be equal to that of seven eagles, and it is said that when the seventh eagle that he cared for died he too passed away. Amongst the other interesting stories relating to him was that he was a relative of Job the prophet and of Abraham, that he lived in the 7th-6th C. A.D., that he was in fact Aesop known for his animal stories, and that he was close to David the prophet.

However the belief in Tarsus and its environs is that he was a physician. He is regarded as the person who knew the secrets of health, who was able to produce remedies for every ailment and who had discovered the secret of immortality. He wrote the secret of everlasting life on a piece of paper that was taken out of his hand by the wind and fell into either the Berdan or Ceyhan River. It is widely believed that the secret of everlasting life was lost in the deep water.





Traditional architecture that resists modern influences

Tarsus Houses

It is true to say that the civil architecture in Tarsus was shaped by the cultural varieties during the last century. The houses of Tarsus are one of the rare types of traditional residence in Çukurova that have been preserved in large numbers.



Almost all the Tarsus houses are crowded into the quarters that are within the old city walls. Those that have survived to the present day have been converted to modern needs in recent years by the addition of kitchens, toilets, bathrooms and the like. The appearance of having being built from stone is preserved in many of them; the sections made from earth have been covered with brick tiles or zinc cladding.

The houses, which line both sides of narrow streets, display great architectural harmony in the way stone, adobe bricks and timber have been employed. They are laid in two ways, either perpendicular or parallel to the street and in general the lower floors of Tarsus houses are employed as workshops. Every house has a small or large courtyard. As a large part of life was spent in them they are spacious usually with a small garden even though they stand behind high walls. The most striking thing about the traditional Tarsus houses is the side doors; although the inner sides are plain the outer faces of the entrances are richly decorated with geometrical and floral designs inspired by nature.





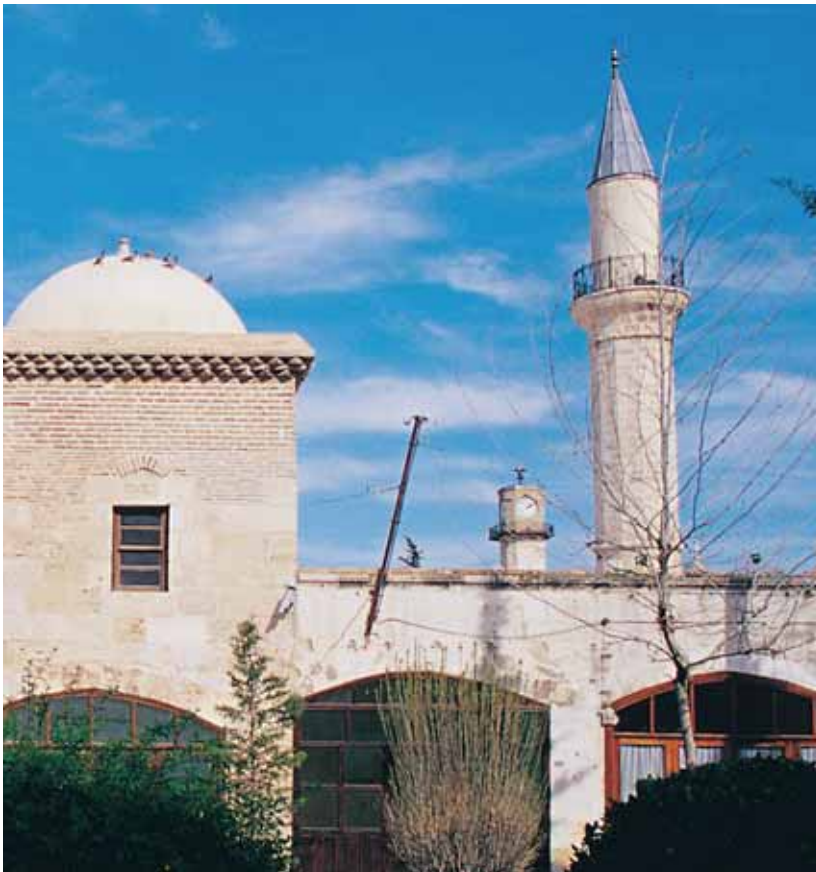
Kırkkaşık Bedesten

The Bedesten, built in 1579 in the time of the Ramazanoğulları Principality, got its name, Kırkkaşık (lit. forty spoons) on account of the spoon designs found on the outer walls. The historical building was used in earlier times as a “soup kitchen and madrasa” and was converted to a “covered market” after the establishment of the republic. It is built of cut stone to a rectangular plan. The building is entered by two doors on the east and west facades. Inside there are 25 rooms and seven domes. The Kırkkaşık Bedesten won the “Project Competition Award” from the Union of Historical Cities, and the shops and offices inside were altered before they went back into service. There are shops selling regional handicrafts including ceramics, wood, copper, silver, leather and similar gifts and there are restaurants serving specialities of Tarsus cuisine. The cafes offering local Turkish coffee (Tarsusi) are much liked by tourists.



Kubat Paşa Madrasa (Old Museum)

This building, which is a rare example of the traditional architectural style of the Seljuks, was originally built by Kubat Pasha, the ruler of the Ramazanoğulları Principality. It has come down to us as a centre of historical education and teaching. Built of square-cut stone it is architecturally typical of a madrasa with an open courtyard. The studded door is especially interesting. The single-storey building is entered by way of a porch and the entrance vaulted porch gives onto the courtyard. The main vaulted porch is directly opposite the one at the entrance. Each vaulted porch is topped by a dome. The courtyard is in the middle of the building and there are 16 rooms coming off it. The rooms have wooden doors and windows and the metal grating on the windows are in the style of the interconnecting polygonal shapes found on Ottoman mosques and madrasas. The building has been used as museum since its restoration and its inspirational architecture make it a must-see on any cultural tour.



A rich variety of flora and fauna in glorious surroundings

The Tarsus River (Cydnus-Berdan), Waterfall and Roman Tombs

Known in Ancient Times as Cydnus the Tarsus River was later given the name “Berdan” which means cold water. The Berdan River, which has an important role in carrying away the alluvium of the Çukurova Delta, begins life as streams on the southeast slopes of Middle Taurus Mountains (The Bolkar). With a total length of 142 km the river takes great sweeps through the Tarsus plain before emptying into the Mediterranean and throughout history its banks have been favoured places for the establishment of settlements.

When the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (527- 565 A.D.) had the course of the river changed, it came through the necropolis where it turned into a great cascade. The purpose of this work was originally to protect the city from river floods and has resulted in waterfall of around 15 m in height with the water cascading over rocks. Situated 4 km north of the city, it is an especially impressive sight in winter and spring when the melting spring waters mean there is the greatest volume of water. Nowadays the waterfall and its environs are top of the list of the places for





local and foreign tourists to visit on account of its visual beauty and the Roman Tombs sheltered therein. To see the sunset here in spring when the waters have the greatest volume is a wonderful sight and it has be a favourite spot for nature lovers and those on photo safaris.

Recreation Spaces and Picnic Grounds

There are recommended picnic grounds for nature lovers in the Karabucak Eucalyptus Forest which is the location of the Forestry Research Institute because of the rich variety of species here. There are also camping grounds. White Sand Beach is an ideal location for those who want to enjoy a picnic in the sunshine close to the sea.

Check out some tourism activities

Trekking

Nature has bestowed enough on Tarsus to give it lots of choice in terms of tourism pursuits. Amongst the local favourites for trekking routes in the district are: Papazın Bahçesi (lit. priest's garden) in the Taurus, Cehennem (lit. hell) Stream, Su Çatısı (lit. water attic), Pamuklu (lit. cotton) Valley, and Çamlıyayla. The Haçıkırı Region, above the Hicaz Railway, with its Taurus tunnels and bridges, is another good place to fill your lungs with mountain air.

Rafting

The canyons of Çakıt, to the east of Tarsus, Ulaş, to the north and Taşobası, to the northeast are important geological formations from the Mesolithic Age. Çakıt and Ulaş canyons are especially suited to alternative tourism pursuits due to the volume of water that flows down them. Also the Papazın Bahçesi (lit. priest's garden) and Cehennem (lit. hell) Stream are locations in the region that have an important rafting potential.



Plateau Tourism

The mountain plateaux around Tarsus are the ideal place to escape the stress and noise of the city. The peaceful co-existence with nature to be found by staying in mountain houses is a fun thing for visitors to try.

Photo Safari

The immortal natural beauty of Tarsus can be experienced by taking part in a photo safari on which you can also explore the local flora and fauna. The trekking routes present the best possibilities for a photo safari. The vast cedar and pine forests found at altitude are visually very impressive. There are pistes on the Eshab-ı Kehf Peak, the Kartal Peak at Dadalı, the Çanak Peak and elsewhere from where you can paraglide or mountain-bike. Also you can take part in Off Road Races in Baharlı. Or there is a “Summit Climb” possible at Medetsiz.



Amateur Angling

Seafood holds an important place in the cuisine of Tarsus. There are boats and caiques for rent that assist professional fishermen in their pursuit of traditional angling. Or amateurs can try their hand at line fishing for freshwater fish at the dam. Other recommended places include: Lake Dipsiz in the Seyhan Delta, Lake Çinili in the Taurus, Berdan Dam Lakes and the 142 km long Berdan River and the waterwall on this river.



Try out restaurants that serve tasty examples of Turkish Cuisine, one of the world's three great cuisines

Tarsus, because of the mixed influences of Mediterranean, Turkish and Middle Eastern Cuisine bestowed on it by its geographical position, is home to an extremely rich gastronomic tradition. This is also the reason that meat, pulses, dairy and yoghurt dishes are all found together here. Tarsus recipes depend heavily on meat from which the staple kebab dishes are made. As for houmos, here it is spicy and made with lots of butter which is contrary to the way it is done in the Middle East. Small thin pizza, içli köfte (burghul balls filled with seasoned minced meat), dutmaç, trotters, vertabit and the local lentil soup mahluta are all recommended dishes commonly found on Tarsus menus. Other specialities worth looking out for include: çandır eyası, stuffed ribs, mumbar and şırdan. The salads served with local sea foods are a feast for the eyes just as much as they for the palate. As for desserts amongst the best-loved types, there are: Tarsus baklava, mamül, sweet dough-balls, pumpkin sweet, shredded pastry, karakuş and cezerye. In the streets reflecting the traditional architecture of the city we recommend that you try drinks offered by vendors in authentic costume such as: turnip juice, liquorice-flavoured drinks and fruit-flavoured drinks made from mountain snow.





*Sun-dried
vegetables*



*Cezerye
(local dessert)*



Turnip juice



*Kayakoruğu
turşusu (pickles)*



Künefe (local dessert)

Enjoy shopping

In Tarsus, with its well preserved history, there are gift-shops and stores around the Well of St. Paul and Eshab-ı Khef besides the Old Bedesten and Kırkkışık Bedesten. The selection of products at Kırkkışık Bedesten and at the stores in the Eshab-ı Khef Complex is especially good. Of particular interest are the traditional Tarsus embroidered pieces, hand woven carpets and rugs, Shahmeran figures, glass ornaments and hand-carved wooden pieces.

In the Large Bedesten and the Old Covered Market, where the locals still shop, it is possible to find traditional pieces that you may be after in a historical setting. Also, in the Historical Olive Market, you can find natural produce including carob syrup and similar syrups, thyme oil, liquorice, olives, olive oil and a wide range of local herbs.





Your journey isn't complete unless you have:

- Seen the Bilal-i Habeşi Masjid and Kubat Paşa Madrasa;
- Visited the St. Paul Monument Museum and the Well of St. Paul;
- Walked on the two-thousand year old basalt path once trodden by St. Paul, Cleopatra and Cicero;
- Seen the Eshab-ı Kehf Cave, the setting for the story of the Seven Sleepers;
- Visited the tombs of Lokman, Seth and Caliphate Me'mun in the Ulu Mosque;
- Seen the Mosque where the tomb of Daniel, the only prophet to be buried on Turkish soil, is to be found;
- Visited the Baths of Shahmeran;
- Seen the beauty of Tarsus Houses;
- Experienced the traditional pleasure of Turkish Baths in the Yeni Hamam (New Bath-House);
- Gone shopping in the historical setting of Kırkkışık Bedesten;
- Watched the 3-D film of the role of the original Nusrat Minelayer Ship;
- Tried the restorative powers of the local grape "Tarsus White" which was the inspiration for Lokman Hekim;
- Visited the shoreline where Cleopatra and Mark Anthony met;
- Experienced the fun of photo safari, rafting and trekking;
- Tried the great taste of traditional Tarsus cuisine next to the waterfall vista.

Or, better still, don't leave Tarsus at all!









How to get there?

By Air: Adana Şakirpaşa Airport is located 42 km to the east of Tarsus.

By Sea: Mersin Port, 27 km from the central district of the city, provides ferryboat services to Famagusta (Cyprus).

By Road: There are bus services from Mersin to every part of the country. Also there is a continuous service between Mersin and Adana with a vehicle passing approximately every 10 minutes.

By Rail: There is a station (40 km from Mersin, 13 km from Tarsus) at Yenice Beldesi to the east of Tarsus with domestic and international connections.





Climate

Tarsus has a typical Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers while the winters are mild and rainy.

Annual Average Temperature: 18.5 °C,

In summer the temperature ranges between 25 °C and 33 °C.





Notable Dates and Festivals and

Local Activities

Every year “Hidirellez Days” (beginning of summer, May 6th) are celebrated with various activities (races, concerts etc) in which scientists, writers and clerics take part at Eshab-ı Khef, which has importance for the Christian and Islamic World.



Every July, there is the traditional Tarsus Grape Festival in which panels and competitions are held. The promotion of the local grape ‘Tarsus White’ which has become the symbol of Tarsus is the purpose of the festival. The festival is memorable and fun for tourists.



The 27th of December is celebrated as “Liberation Day” in Tarsus. On this day regional folk dances are performed.





Every April, the International Tarsus Half Marathon runs through the historical sites.

Every year on March 18th, there are commemoration ceremonies at the park where the Nusrat Minelayer is open to visitors.



Every September there are Karacaoğlan Poetry Evenings in the waterfall area in which foreign and local poets read.





Important Addresses and Telephone Numbers

Tarsus District Governorship	: (+90 324) 613 98 27 613 16 16
Municipality	: (+90 324) 613 36 88-95 624 12 50
Cultural Centre	: (+90 324) 614 10 44
Tourism Information Office	: (+90 324) 614 10 44
State Hospital	: (+90 324) 613 81 84 614 33 93
Regional Traffic Control HQ	: (+90 324) 624 20 18
Yenice Municipality	: (+90 324) 651 30 05
Turkish Railways Mersin Station	: (+90 324) 231 12 67
Turkish Railways Yenice Station	: (+90 324) 651 24 84
Tarsus Mersin Hotel	: (+90 324) 614 06 00
Museum Directorate	: (+90 324) 613 18 65 613 10 43
Tarsus Industry & Trade Office	: (+90 324) 613 55 50
District Military Police HQ	: (+90 324) 613 32 67 613 29 93
Tarsus Bus Station	: (+90 324) 624 69 32

Emergency Telephone Numbers

Fire	110
Medical Emergency	112
Police	155





TECHNICAL INFO

Electricity

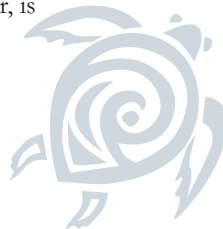
The electricity current in Turkey is 220 V AC, 50 Hz. Standard continental two plugs (earthed) are used.

Mobile or Cell Phones

There are two bandwidths for mobile phones in Turkey: 900 and 1800 MHz. Please get information on which bandwidth to use and on roaming charges from your service supplier. Pay-as-you-go type SIM cards are available from local GSM operators. Credits for these phones are available from markets and newsstands.

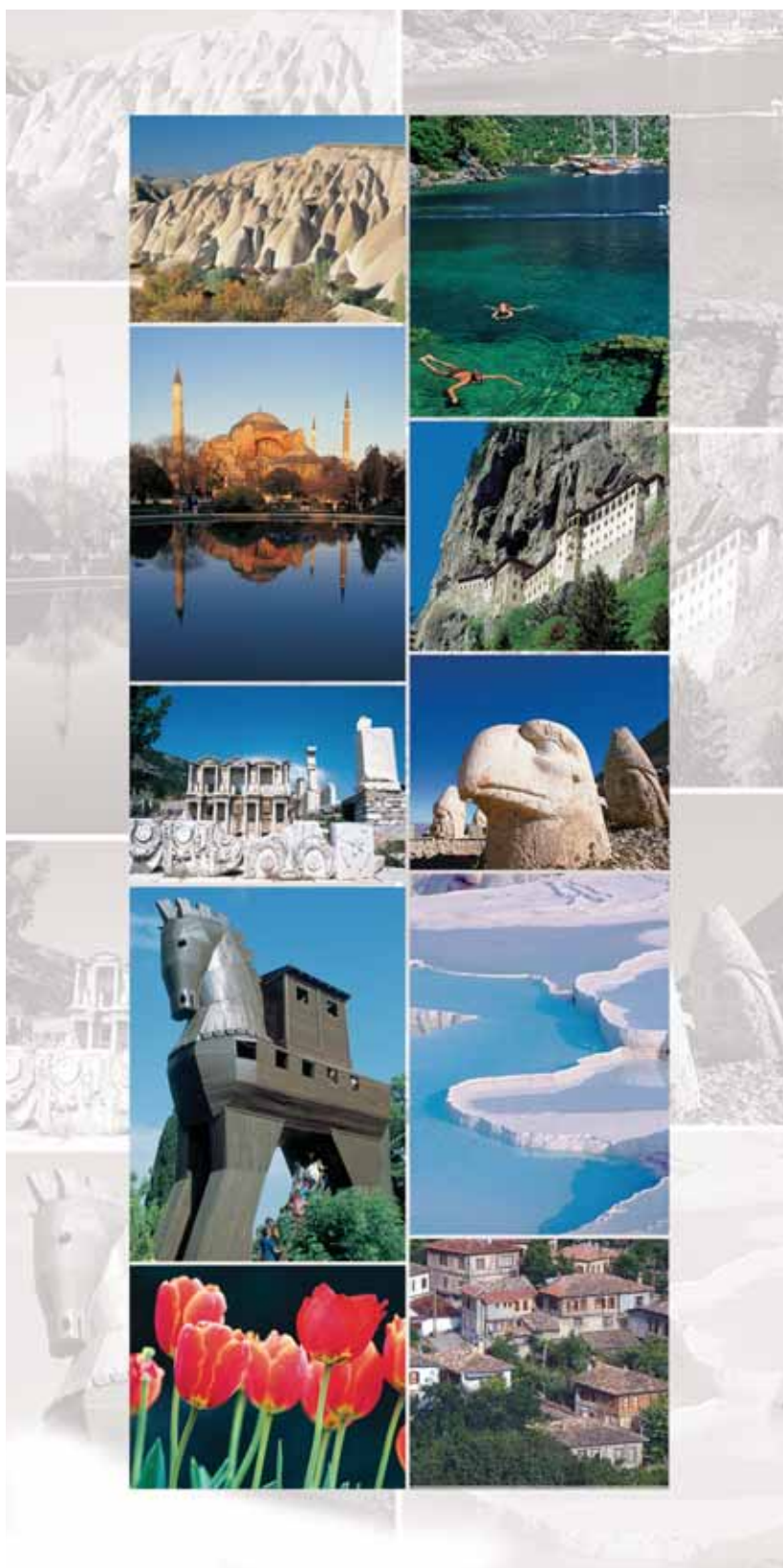
Time Zone

The time in Turkey during the winter, from October to March, is: GMT+2; CET+1 and EST (US) +7. Summer time, from April to October, is GMT+3.









Cultural Heritage is Fragile

The world's cultural heritage is like a big puzzle. Each monument, each object, is an irreplaceable part of the overall Picture which gives us insight into our origins, our development and our lives today. It helps us to understand and appreciate other cultures. Each discovery, each new interpretation adds to the puzzle and makes the picture clearer. We must ensure the protection of every single piece today, so that future generations may have the opportunities to enjoy the puzzle.

Many people are not aware that our cultural heritage is under stress from natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, and from slower acting processes such as pollution or human actions. Even the most innocent gestures such as collecting ancient pieces of pottery or mosaics as souvenirs have a destructive impact if repeated by thousands. Touching an object of stone, metal or textile leaves traces of grease, acid or sweat on its surface. Climbing a monument wears down the structure underneath and can dismantle it. Writing or engraving names inflicts permanent damage. Strolling around narrow crowded places with bulky bags or backpacks might knock over an object or scratch a mural painting and ruin it. There are countless ways in which one can unknowingly contribute to the destruction of cultural heritage.

In 2020 there will be 1.6 billion visitors per year worldwide. Let us raise awareness of this issue so that we may join together to protect and enjoy the diversity and richness of our cultural heritage.

**International Organization for Conservation of
Cultural Heritage (ICCROM)**



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The rising star of tourism,
Tarsus, is a fascinating place
that has a great deal to offer
visitors.

★ A land renowned for its tolerance which is home to many historical places of worship and pilgrimage including St. Paul Monument Museum, Well of St. Paul, Eshab-ı Kehf Cave, Makam-ı Şerif Mosque, Bilal-i Habeş Masjid, Ulu Mosque and Roman Temple;

★ A land of legends, as mentioned in the stories of Shahmeran, the Seven Sleepers and Lokman Hekim;

★ A meeting place of famous historical figures: the Prophet Daniel, St. Paul, Bilal-i Habeşi - the muezzin of Prophet Mohammed, and philosophers: Aristotle, Cicero, Athenodoros Cananites;

★ Traditional architecture and handicrafts that have survived modern influences;

★ An important stop on the Silk Road, full of mystique and charm;

★ Buildings and locations that have survived to the present day as historical symbols; the Cleopatra Gate, the Tarsus Inscription, Republic Square and the Ancient Road;

★ A rich variety of flora and fauna in glorious surroundings;

★ Adrenalin-filled outdoor pursuits;

★ Restaurants that serve tasty examples of Turkish Cuisine, one of the world's three great cuisines;

