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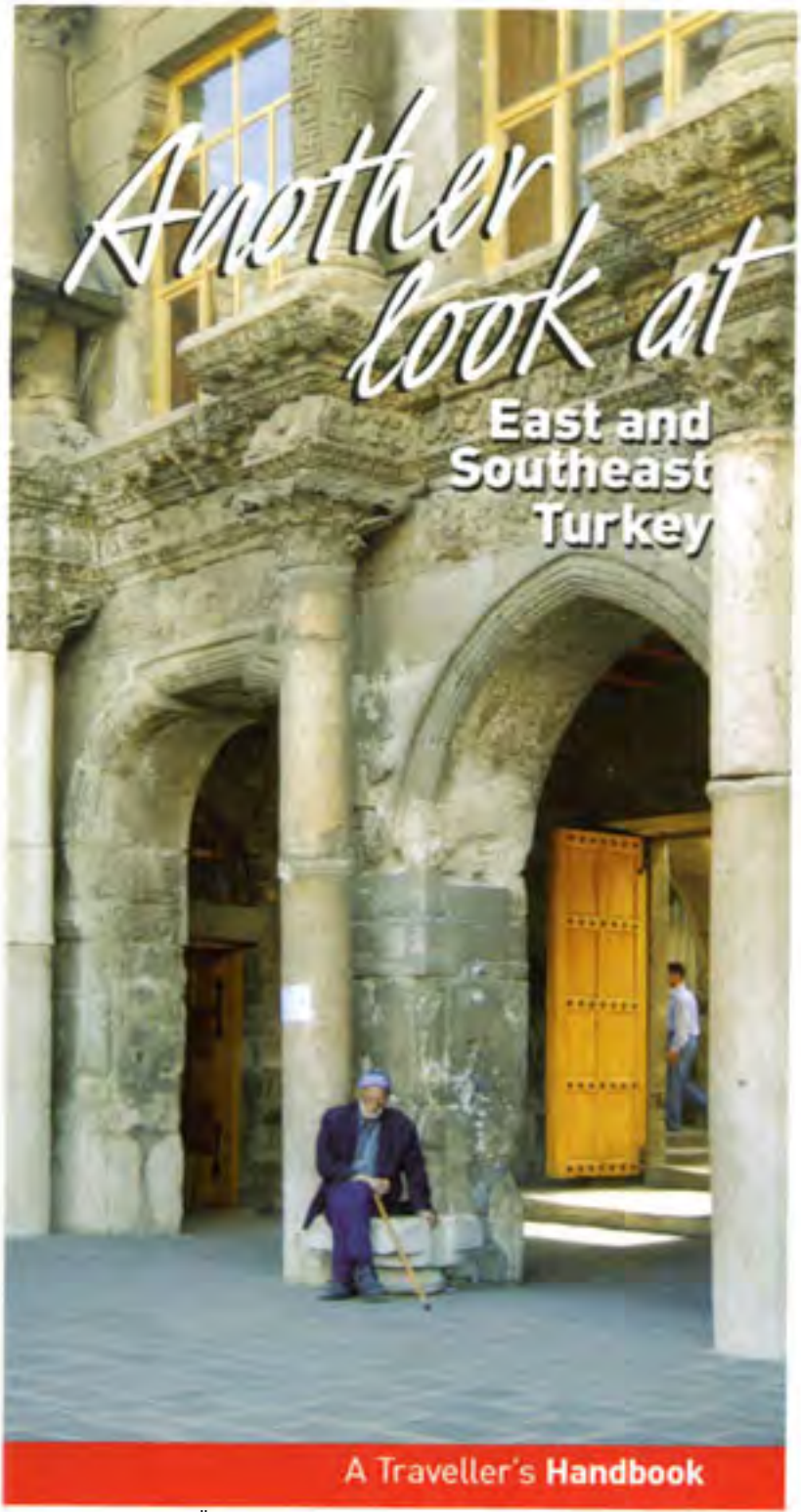
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# Another look at

## East and Southeast Turkey



A Traveller's **Handbook**

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# CONTENTS


Acknowledgements ..... 3
Contents ..... 4
Map ..... 5
Message from the Mayor ..... 6
About the project ..... 7
Introduction ..... 8

**Provinces**

Adıyaman (Semsûr) ..... 24
Şanlıurfa (Ruha) ..... 64
Elaziğ (Elezîz) ..... 108
Tunceli (Dêrsim) ..... 130
Bingöl (Çewlik) ..... 164
Muş (Mûş) ..... 180
Diyarbakır (Amed) ..... 198
Newroz ..... 248
Batman (Êlîh) ..... 314
Yezidis ..... 324
Mardin (Mêrdîn) ..... 354
Siirt (Sêrt) ..... 410
Bitlis (Bedlîs) ..... 432
Şirnak (Şirnex) ..... 464
Hakkâri (Colemêrg) ..... 502
Kurdish Weddings and Dance ..... 520
Van (Wan) ..... 538
Ağri (Agirî) ..... 590
Transport ..... 618
Accommodation ..... 620
Food ..... 622
Glossary ..... 632
Travel Dictionary ..... 634
Index ..... 660
Photo Credits ..... 670


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# A Message from the Mayor

Born and raised in Diyarbakir, and having worked in the region for all my life, I have rediscovered the unique beauty of my city and Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia through the pages of this modest but path breaking guide. I present this guide as an invitation, and wholeheartedly urge you to discover for yourself the hidden treasures of the region.

Why such a guide? Despite all that it has to offer the curious traveller, our region has been left out of much of the popular travel literature, or else mischaracterized due to insufficient information. We know how much it has to offer, so in developing this guide, we wanted not just to lead the traveller around the historical attractions, but share some of our traditions, our deep cosmopolitan culture, and our rich heritage of language, creed, nature, and culture. We wanted the reader to learn more about region's hospitable people and unique archaeological sites; about Mesopotamia, which gains life from the rivers Euphrates and Tigris; and about our diverse cultural heritage, which faces the threat of extinction by the very same waters. We wanted to show you, that is, the other face of our region.

If you are curious about the region, be ready to take an exhilarating journey with this guide. This land, bearing the imprint of so many civilisations, will tell you about its rich history and heritage, through its solemn fortresses, its modest pilgrimage sites, and much more. This ancient land will speak to those who know how to listen. Be our guest; this land will accommodate you well.

As the Union of Municipalities, we hope this guide will help contribute to the economic development of the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia by encouraging a sector whose potential has yet to be fully explored: tourism, an "industry without smokestacks".

My acknowledgements are due to all those who had a hand in writing and researching this book, but first and foremost to the gracious people of the region.

Accept our warmest welcome. Meet the new and the timeless, the past in the present. Absorb, learn, enjoy!

Osman BAYDEMİR
President, Union of Southeast Anatolia Region Municipalities
Mayor, Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality

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# About the project

The history and contemporary culture of the predominantly Kurdish regions of the Middle East holds vast riches to explore for the adventurous and seasoned traveller, but for various reasons, both practical and political, this area, centred in the ancient region known as Mesopotamia, has been obscured from the sights of travellers. This book, primarily intended as a travel guide covering east and southeast Turkey, hopes to remedy this to some extent.

The book highlights ethnographic details and paints a picture of traditions and contemporary life which goes beyond what you will find in many existing travel guides. As such, it should appeal to those with a special interest in the Kurdish regions as well as those seeking an alternative tourism experience with more direct interaction with local people, cultures and landscapes. The book takes particular care to cover less visited sites, including unusual museums and ancient ruins, many undiscovered examples of which remain to be explored by the curious visitor.

The core of the guide comprises chapters on 15 provinces. Each chapter starts with a description of the provincial capital and includes some details of how to reach the area, before covering other districts within the province. There are also additional sections giving practical advice and some historical or other background to the subjects covered.

Being a diaspora Kurd, and indeed a travelling restless one, with a special interest in the Middle East and the Kurdish heartland, I came across many difficulties when travelling in the region due to a lack of tourism infrastructure and of local and Kurdish literature written in a critical and comparative manner. This book, which relates personal and professional observation of life in the region, provides the opportunity to introduce this amazing land to both foreign and local travellers.

This book came to fruition thanks to the Mayor of Diyarbakır Mr Osman Baydemir, whose passion for tourism development in this region has driven his constant support for this project. Also thanks to GABB General Manager Mr Abdülmenaf Şeker for his practical assistance throughout, the GABB member municipalities who helped the project staff with accommodation, food and transportation, and the different departments of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality. Special thanks go to the efforts of a very dedicated team of experts and editorial staff, in particular to Richard Lim for his professional support and commitment, plus the translators, proofreaders and skilled photographers, graphic designers and especially the project assistants; in particular Şirin Gencer and İpek Taşlı whose contributions went well beyond their duties. The inspirations in shaping the project during preliminary research at the British Library came from Dr. Sarah Keeler, to whom I am truly grateful.

The team members' own experience of living in this region, I believe, helped us reflect the realities here as perceived by ordinary people, and at the very same time, the book incorporates the local writers, museums, historians, NGOs, etc. Although not perfect, this work, it can proudly be said, is the first of its kind that has been done on such a scale, and my wish is that this will be the backbone of similar future projects to promote tourism in this ignored region.

Kameel Ahmady

Project Developer and Coordinator

NOTE: Place names are predominantly given in Turkish in the text, though most places have older names in Kurdish or other languages, which are given in parentheses in headings or in the text itself at the first mention of the place. Population statistics in the text 2007 figures.

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# The east and the southeast

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For some time Southeast Turkey has been off the mainstream tourist trail, an undeserved consequence of the unrest here in the 1990s. But don't be put off: today the region is for the most part calm and easy to visit, and tourists who make it here are rewarded with a glimpse of a region quite removed from the commercialism of the resorts of western Turkey. In the southeast, you can explore an environment with a more traditional feel, a largely Kurdish flavour and historical riches as extensive and fascinating as anywhere else in the country.



**Alexander the Great**[1]

On the fringes of the Fertile Crescent, the region was the scene of some of the earliest settlements in human history, a fact reflected in the many mounds and tumuli scattered around. Of more general interest are the ruined fortresses and rock tombs dotted around the countryside, some dating back to as early as the Urartian Kingdom, which rose to prominence in the 9th century BC. Since then the region has been contested by a seemingly never-ending parade of states, kingdoms and civilisations, including the Medes, Achaemenids (defeated by Alexander the Great, who likewise left his mark on the region) and Parthians in pre-Christian times. With the rise of Byzantium, the region became home to some of the earliest Christian communities, some of whose monasteries and churches still stand today. It also became the battleground between the Byzantines and first the Persian Sassanids and, later, the Islamic dynasties, including the Umayyads, Hamdanids and in 10th and 11th centuries the Kurdish dynasty of Mervanids began to dominate large part of the region.

In the 11th century the Seljuk Turks advanced west into the region and struck a decisive blow against the Byzantines at the Battle of Malazgirt in 1071. Seljuk dominance soon weakened, however, and the region came under the control of local dynasties such as the Artukids. Later on the

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Selahaddin Eyyubi [2]

region was conquered by Kurdish Ruler Selahaddin Eyyubi (see p: 259) who also conquered Jerusalem in 1187. Fragmentation continued when the Mongols arrived in the second half of the 13th century and the region became divided into small *beyliks* under local *beys*. In the late 14th and 15th centuries, the region came under the control of the Akkoyunlu (White Sheep Turcoman) and Karakoyunlu (Black Sheep Turcoman) tribes, but meanwhile the Ottomans had been on the rise in the west. Having captured Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans eventually drove east and south into the region in the early sixteenth century. Needless to say, each of these Muslim dynasties and entities left its own interesting architectural legacy.

With the messy collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I and the unfortunate event of the Armenians, the Treaty of Sèvres between the allies and the Turks was intended to give at least some Kurds a say in their political future. The treaty was never implemented, however, and was superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne which gave rise to the modern Turkish state with a national slogan of ¨One Language. One Nation. One flag¨. Ever since, there have been tensions between the aspirations of Turkey and those of its Kurdish population, with Kurds asking for greater cultural and political rights and recognition from the central government in Ankara.

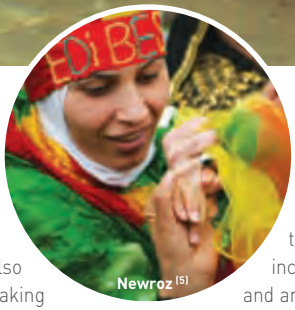
While the southeast of Turkey is mainly Kurdish, the ethnic distinctions are usually lost on tourists, for whom everyonetends to look the same (though if you can speak Turkish, you might find that the distinctive accent in the southeast gives away the fact that most people are not native speakers). You can sometimes spot Kurds by the way some men wear chequered headscarves or other traditional garb such as the *Şal û şapik* outfit of loose trousers and jacket or in places wearing Kurdish *şalvar*, while some women wear mainly white headscarves and sometimes colourful dresses called *kiras-fîstan*. In fact the


Signing of the Treaty of Sèvres [3]

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Kurdish Jewish wedding in Israel [4]



Newroz [5]

southeast is also home to other minorities, notably the ancient Syrian Orthodox community in Mardin and the surrounding area, which also has a small Arabic-speaking community close to the Syrian border. The Syrian Orthodox aside, the rest of the population is predominantly Sunni Muslim, and indeed most Kurds are Sunnis adhering to the Shafi`i School of Islamic jurisprudence also some belongs to Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. There are also groups who belong to Sufi religious orders *(tariqa)* such as the Naqshbendis , and there are also Alevis – who share some beliefs with the Shia but are essentially separate. Finally you may also come across groups of Kurdish Yezidis, a sect influenced by Sufism and Zoroastrianism.

All this ethnic and religious diversity makes for a rich cultural experience for visitors. Here you have the chance to listen to Kurdish *dengbêj* singing, or attend to Kurdish wedding, also colourful events such as Newroz and traditional religious or agricultural festivals in the countryside, or take in a huge range of traditionally styled architecture, from Ottoman mosques to mansions and monasteries decorated with incredible stonework in and around Mardin and Diyarbakır. You can also enjoy a varied and delightful range of food featuring many Kurdish and Arab dishes seldom seen in western Turkey.

The terrain of southeast Turkey is as diverse and interesting as its peoples. Here you will find seemingly never-ending chains of mountains, snowbound all winter; upland plateaus brimming with wildflowers in spring, and arid steppe that can be scrubby



Kurdish dengbêj [6]

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## Mesopotamia



Mesapotemia [7]

Known as the cradle of civilisation, Mesopotamia gave us writing along with the first literary epic and even beer.

As used in this book, the word Mesopotamia refers to the land "between two rivers" – as it translates from the ancient Greek. The rivers in question are the Tigris and Euphrates, which begin in southeast Anatolia and flow a long way through Syria and Iraq, eventually meeting in the Shatt Al-Arab Waterway in southern Iraq. The upper part of Mesopotamia is mountainous, with many tributaries nourishing the rivers; lower Mesopotamia is marshy and flat.

With its fertile plains, Mesopotamia is of course also the cradle of civilisation, and was one of the areas where settled agriculture was first practised with the help of irrigation. The region was the stomping ground of – and a zone of conflict for – the ancient Akkadians, Assyrians, Hittites, Medes, Babylonians, Persians and so on. Today, for many people Mesopotamia lives on mainly as a historical construct, the area itself being divided among the modern states of Turkey, Syria and Iraq.




Mesopotamia, Map [8]

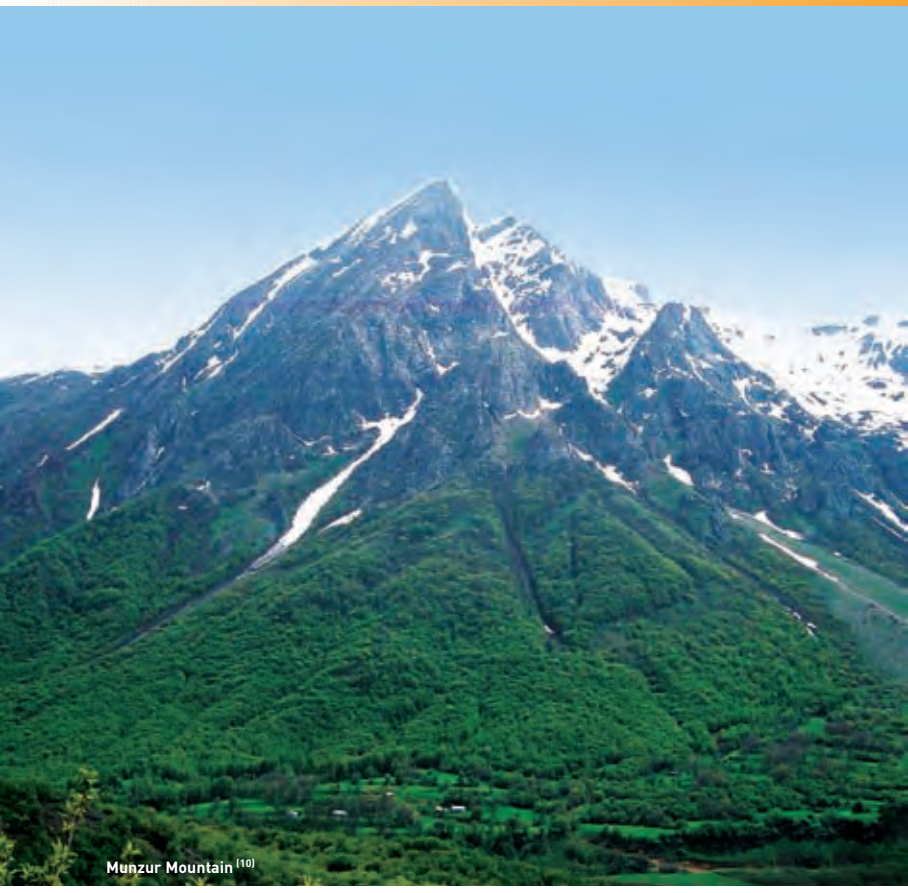


Hishepherd and Livestock [9]

and leafless much of the year. The region is also home to Turkey's largest inland body of water, the magnificent blue expanse that is Lake Van, encircled by formidable peaks. It is also home to two of the world's great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates.

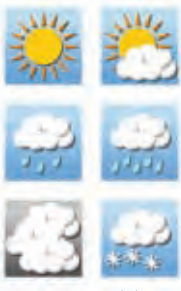
So far from the major urban centres of western Turkey, the region remains something of a rural backwater, a situation that rankles with locals as much as any issues to do with cultural and political expression. The local economy is dominated by agriculture, notably the cultivation of cereals, pulses and grapes; and by livestock farming, often practised in transhumance fashion. The area under cultivation is being extended through a massive programme of dam-

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Munzur Mountain [10]

building, which is not without controversy as it has led to historical towns being submerged under new lakes and concerns being expressed by Turkey's neighbours about the security of water flow in the Tigris and Euphrates. There is also light industry in some areas, sometimes based on local mineral resources, which include oil reserves in the Batman area.



Weather [11]

As for deciding when to visit, bear in mind that southeast Turkey is cut off by the Anatolian plateau from the moderating influence of the Mediterranean, and so features a continental climate. Summers can be searingly hot while winters are often bitterly cold, aggravated by the elevated terrain; as an example, temperatures in Diyarbakır average 31°C at the height of summer and 1.8°C in the depths of winter – though peak temperatures often exceed 40°C in summer and minimum tem peratures can plunge some way below freezing in winter. Spring and autumn are thus ideal times to travel to southeast Turkey, though you should not be put off visiting at other times of year. At least rain is not that likely to interfere with your travels as precipitation is low, at around 500mm a year.

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Diyarbakır City Walls [12]

## Attractions

For tourists, the most obvious focal points in southeast Turkey are the main cities, which offer attractions in their own right and opportunities for exploring their hinterland. Most prominent and most populous of these is Diyarbakır, right at the heart of the region and something of a standard-bearer for Kurdish aspirations, though at the same time a relaxed and welcoming place. Here you can explore the city's extensive city walls, built of black basalt, are the longest of medieval fortifications; encircling the city they are more than 5.5 km long, said to be with the Great Wall of China being the only longer, also take in a smattering of old mosques and churches. Just nearby is Mardin, with its incredibly beautiful architecture, whose rich decorations have been created by generations of expert stonecutters, close to Mardin is the town of Midyat, itself home to much splendid stone architecture as well as being the gateway to the Syrian Orthodox monasteries of the Tur Abdin Plateau. In the west of the region is Urfa (officially Şanlıurfa), an ancient city with an atmospheric mosque complex associ-



Mor Mihayel Monastery [13]

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ated with the Prophet Abraham; the mosque's pools, filled with carp, are said to have miraculously appeared in place of a pyre when Abraham was ordered to be flung into a pit of flames from the citadel above. At the other end of southeast Turkey, close to the border with Iran, is the surprisingly sophisticated city of Van, ideal for seeing nearby Lake Van and part of a region that was once an Armenian heartland, boasting several surviving Armenian churches and monasteries, including the superb Akdamar Church on a lonely island in the lake. The city also boasts one of the most extensive citadels in the region, *Van Kalesi*. From Van, you can not only visit Akdamar Church but also the Kurdish citadel of *Hoşap Kalesi*.



Akdamar Church [14]

Adıyaman is a potential base for visiting the spectacular Mount Nemrut, littered with bizarre stone heads left behind by the ancient Commagene Kingdom. As for Diyarbakır, it is just a short hop from the modern city of Batman, which is close to the magical old town of Hasankeyf, containing attractive old mosques and an extensive citadel overlooking the Tigris; sadly the town is due to be immersed when a dam is built in the vicinity in

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Malabadi Bridge [15]

the face of vehement local and international opposition, and there is not much time left in which to view its treasures. Batman is also not far from the Malabadi Bridge, a historical stone construction that is one of the most sizeable and well known of its kind.

The region also has opportunities for sports and outdoor activities. You can trek in the Munzur Valley National Park in Tunceli province and at Mount Süphan, ski at Çiftkaya and Mount Hazarbaba, and undertake a proper mountaineering expedition if you fancy tackling Mount Ararat – amongst other sites. For something much more relaxing, consider taking the waters at any of the numerous hot springs, for example at Taşlıdere *(Holê)* village near Bekirhan in Batman province and Diyadin in Ağrı.


Munzur River [16]


Munzur Valley [17]

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Diyarbakır (18)

# Top 20 highlights

Here in geographical order of provinces but no particular orders of merit are twenty things to make a special effort to see in east and southeast of Turkey:


(19)

## 01

**Mount Nemrut and Cendere Bridge (Adıyaman/Kahta)**

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Mount Nemrut is an open-air museum notable for its vast statues of the Commagene Kingdom, dating from the 1st century BC. Nearby is the elegant Roman Cendere Bridge.

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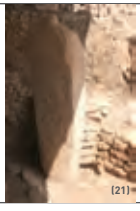
## 02
### Şanlıurfa

Regarded by many as the birthplace of Abraham, sacred to Muslims, Christians, and Jews, Urfa features many sites associated with the Prophet as well as some atmospheric bazaars, and is also a place to attend *sıra geceleri,* convivial evenings of spicy local food and traditional folk music.


(20)

## 03
### Göbekli Tepe (Şanlıurfa)

These substantial remains comprise one of the world's oldest known shrine complexes.


(21)


(22)


(23)

## 04
### Harran (Şanlıurfa)

Close to the Syrian border, the plains of Harran are best known for their unusual beehive houses – so called because of their conical roofs.

## 05
### Munzur Valley in Tunceli

The steep, snow-capped peaks leave a lasting impression, as do the province's other unspoilt natural attractions, also many historical sites. The Munzur Valley National Park, one of the biggest national parks in the country at 420 square kilometres in size, features some of the wildest and beautiful nature of the entire southeast, offers excellent opportunities for trekking and rafting.


(24)

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(25)

## 06

**Floating Island (Bingöl/Solhan)**

This "island" is really three islets which are clumps of earth held together by tree roots, as a result of which they can drift about on the surface of the surrounding lake – a most unusual natural phenomenon.


(26)

## 07

**Aydınlar (Siirt)**

Has number of attractive old houses and Abbaras, and also boasts the tombs of İbrahim Hakkı, the renowned religious scholar and astronomer, and that of his master İsmail Fakirullah. İbrahim Hakkı's remarkable optical phenomenon that once a year beam the first rays of the rising sun of March 21*(Newroz)* across the distance onto a mirror, which would illuminate the length of the tomb of İsmail Fakirullah. Also nearby is the mausoleum of Veysel Karani in Ziyaret, which is visited by thousands of pilgrims each year.

## 08

**Hasankeyf (Batman)**

Magical town and the star of this region, threatened with inundation by the lake of the proposed Ilısu Dam, Hasankeyf bristles with Islamic monuments and old cave dwellings, and also boasts an extensive citadel with excellent views over the Tigris Valley.


(27)

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## 09

**Diyarbakır**

The world's most populous Kurdish city makes a great gateway to the region and offers a mixture of sights, including extensive city walls, ancient mosques and churches, some bustling bazaars, gardens by the Tigris and off course the joyful Kurdish Newroz Festival.


[28]


[29]

## 10

**The Hilar Caves (Diyarbakır/Ergani)**

The caves at Hilar near town of Ergani feature a whole series of interesting, sometimes spectacular rock tombs.

## 11

**Malabadi Bridge (Diyarbakır/Silvan)**

One of the best-known monuments in this part, the Malabadi Bridge is considered the longest historical bridge of Anatolia.


[30]

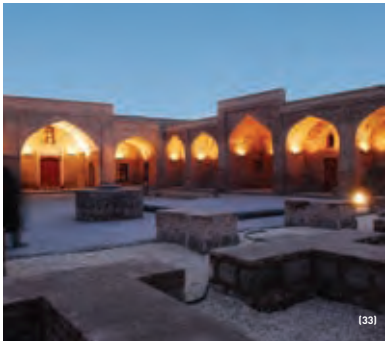
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## 12
### Mardin
Crowning a hilltop with vistas over the Mesopotamian plains, Mardin's old city is packed with houses decorated with immaculate carved stonework, and also contains several important mosques and churches.


(31)

## 13
### Deyrul Zafaran and Mor Gabriel Monasteries (Mardin)
Close to Mardin, both these sites not only feature impressive stonework but more importantly help to preserve the religious traditions of the much depleted Syrian Christian community.


(32)


(33)

## 14
### The Red Madrasah (Şırnak/Cizre)
Built of red brick; this was a distinguished centre of learning in its time and features a number of classrooms with some nicely decorated ceilings. Close by is the tomb of the 17th-century Kurdish poet Melayê Cizirî, with a dome which, unusually, bulges downwards.

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(34)

## 15

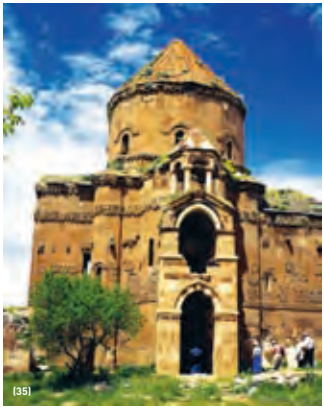
**Zap Valley (Hakkâri)**

Known for its natural beauty and also several Nestorian churches, typically perched dramatically above valleys. Bağlar *(Nehrî)* village in Şemdinli, a village redolent of associations with Kurdish history where the Nehri Clan belonging to the Neqshbendi order built elegant Kayme Palace, and set up a madrasah, and a *tekke* (dervish lodge) that would be a spiritual beacon for the Kurds.

## 16

**Akdamar Island (Van/Gevaş)**

This lonely island in the southern part of Lake Van is the site of the beautiful Akdamar Church, which once served the now-vanished Armenian community.


(35)

## 17

**Nemrut Crater Lake (Bitlis/Tatvan)**

Not to be confused with the Commagene site of Mount Nemrut, the Nemrut Crater Lake is an ideal place to camp, go on boat rides and enjoy beautiful views.


(36)

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(37)

## 18
**Ahlat (Bitlis)**
Besides an excellent archaeological museum, Ahlat boasts number of amazing tombstones of historical rulers.

## 19
**İshak Paşa Palace (Ağrı/Doğubayazıt)**
A classic example of Ottoman architecture, this palace complex deserves to be admired in the same way as İstanbul's Topkapı Palace.


(38)

## 20
**Mount Ararat (Ağrı)**
Believed by some to be the resting place of Noah's Ark, this is Turkey's highest peak at 5165m and makes a challenging climb.


(39)

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Nemrut Mountain [1]

# ADIYAMAN (Semsûr)

Adıyaman has been home to many **communities** throughout history. The province has a major historical claim to fame in that it was the seat of the **Commagene kingdom**, created in 80 BC by **Mithridates**. He brought **Persians**, **Macedonians** and other communities together to form a powerful state, whose name "**Commagene**" meant something like "**community of races**".

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The sight of the fallen heads of numerous **statues** makes a lasting impression, as does the sunrise here, which people journey through the night just to see. The other Commagene sites in the vicinity, the **Karakuş tumulus**, a burial mound where you can view a famous **eagle-topped column** and such as **Arsameia**, which was their summer Capital, are also worth to see.

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Old photo of Adıyaman locals [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
582.762 (2007)
**Average altitude**
669m
**Area**
7572 square kilometres
**Districts**
Adıyaman, Besni, Çelikhan, Gerger, Gölbaşı, Kahta, Samsat, Sincik, Tut
**Economy**
Agriculture (particularly tobacco, pistachios and pulses), Oil production, Tourism
**Neighbouring provinces**
Kahramanmaraş (west), Malatya (north), Diyarbakır (east), Şanlıurfa (southeast), Gaziantep (southwest)

According to legend, the name Adıyaman derives from the story of a father who had seven sons. They were annoyed by the fact that their father was a pagan, and one day, when he was not at home, they destroyed all the idols he worshipped. Enraged to discover this, he killed all his sons one by one. People were shocked by this and named the city *Yedi Yaman* ("seven heroes") to commemorate them. According to another tale, the name is a corruption of *Vadi-i-Leman* ("beautiful valley"), which was the name applied to a valley near the city where plenty of fruit trees grew.

With its forests providing opportunities for hunting and sources of water, Adıyaman has been home to many communities throughout history. The province of Adıyaman has a major historical claim to fame in that it was the seat of the Commagene Kingdom, created in 80 BC by Mithridates. He brought Persians, Macedonians and other communities together to form a powerful state, whose



Archeological findings from the region [3]

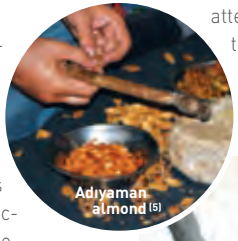
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Life in Adıyaman [4]

name "Commagene" meant something like "community of races" in Greek, in line with the fact that its rulers were of mixed Greek and Persian descent. The glories of the Kingdom are glimpsed by the thousands of tourists who come each year to see the remnants of Commagene statues on Mount Nemrut. After Romans took the area, it was ruled by, amongst others, the Byzantines, Umayyads, Abbasids, Hamdanids, Seljuks, Artukids, Mongols, Mamlukes and Ottomans.

Adıyaman province enjoys priority status for development and is expected to attract new investment in the near future, which has somewhat slowed emigration to more prosperous parts of the country. As is true of other parts of southeastern Turkey, Adıyaman remains an important centre for agriculture, which employs a large proportion of the population; pistachios and pulses are among the important crops, as is tobacco, though its production has declined since the state imposed quotas. Carpet-making is a prominent small-scale industry in the towns of Besni and Tut. The province is also a major oil-producing area within Turkey and the state oil company TPAO is undertaking surveys to discover new petroleum resources, which has attracted the interest of international companies.

Tourism is also of some importance given the presence of Mount Nemrut, one of the top attractions in Turkey, with excursions marketed to tourists as far away as İstanbul. The sight of the fallen heads of numerous statues makes a lasting impression, as does the sunrise here, which people journey through the night just to see. It's possible to combine a visit to the mountain with visits to other Commagene sites in the vicinity, the Karakuş Tumulus, a burial mound where you can view a famous eagle-topped column and such as Arsameia, which was their summer capital. Close to Adıyaman city, the ruins of the cave necropolis of Perre are worthy of attention. Tut and Besni, though small towns, offer good opportunities to shop for carpets, and other local handicrafts.


Adıyaman almond [5]


Quality Adıyaman tobbaco [6]

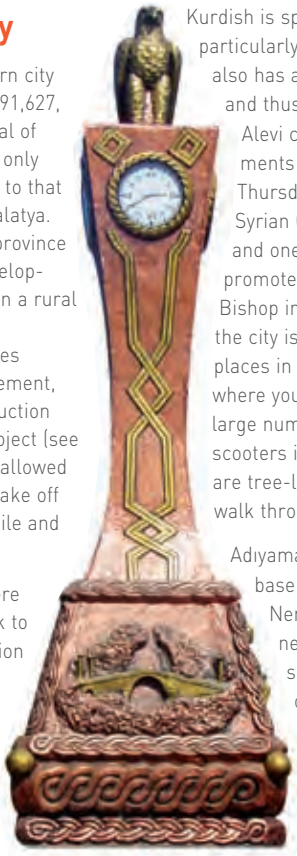
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## Adıyaman City

A fast-growing, modern city with a population of 191,627, Adıyaman is the capital of a province which was only created in 1954; prior to that it had been part of Malatya. The birth of the new province was a spur to the development of what had been a rural area; subsequently state-owned companies invested in the new cement, textile and dairy production facilities. The GAP project (see p: 67) and tax breaks allowed the private sector to take off too, mainly in the textile and livestock sectors.

Human settlement here dates all the way back to 4000 BC. The population today is a mixture of Kurds and Turks, and this is a province (along with Maraş and Malatya) where the accent with which Kurmanji Kurdish is spoken is regarded as particularly attractive. The city also has a large Alevi population and thus a number of *cemevi*, Alevi community establishments where they pray on Thursdays. The city also has Syrian Orthodox population, and one of its priests was promoted to Metropolitan Bishop in 2006. Interestingly, the city is also one of the few places in this part of the country where you will come across a large number of bicycles and scooters in the streets, which are tree-lined and pleasant to walk through.

Adıyaman is a reasonable base for visits to Mount Nemrut (see p:44) and nearby Commagene sites, and many hotels offer excursions there. The city also has a smattering of attractions, notably the cave tombs of the Perre Necropolis.



Adıyaman watch tower [7]



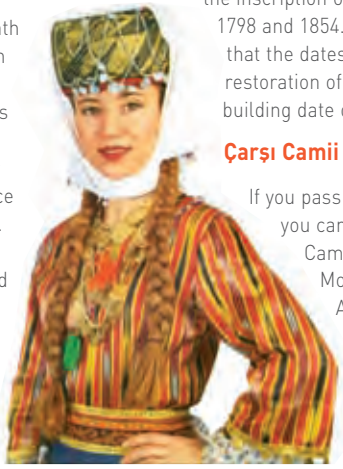
Mor Petrus/Pavlos church [8]

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For famous people of Adıyaman please see (Kahta p: 37 and Samsat p: 53)

## Hısn-i Mansur Kalesi

Dating back to the eighth century, the fortress on the mound in the centre of Adıyaman was originally built by the Umayyad ruler Mansur Bin Cavene as a defence against the Byzantines. Nowadays it is in ruins and has been converted to a park. A local tale has it that the city was once named Hısn-i Mansur because of this castle.



A local girl in traditional clothes [9]

## Ulu Cami

This is the biggest mosque in Adıyaman centre, with one large and four small domes, beautiful Ulu Cami (Great Mosque) was built at the time of Dülkadiroğulları, *beyliks* .The mosque was demolished and rebuilt in 1873 and restorated by Mehmed Fevzi Efendi in 1902. This rectangular planned building is made up of truncated stones, its minaret is located to the northeast side of the mosque, and there are two dates on the inscription of the minaret as 1798 and 1854. It is supposed that the dates are about the restoration of the mosque and building date of the minaret.

## Çarşı Camii

If you pass by the bazaar, you can visit the Çarşı Camii (Bazaar Mosque). According to the records it has been built in 1557 and restorated by Hacı Abdülgani some forty years later, built with white stones and covered with a wooden dome. It has lost most of its original appeal due to unsympathetic renovations, most recently in 1957. Some even believe that the 1902 restoration was in fact a complete rebuilding of the mosque.



Adıyaman Ulu Camii [10]



Coppersmiths [11]

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Eski Saray (İbrahim Bey) Camii [12]

## Eski Saray (İbrahim Bey) Camii

The city's most elegant mosque is the Eski Saray Camii, west of the centre in the district of Eski Saray. Built of stone, with a wooden floor and ceiling, according to the original inscription located above the portal to the east, it was constructed in the seventeenth century by İbrahim Paşa, therefore it is also called İbrahim Paşa Mosque among the locals and has a particularly attractive and highly decorated *mihrab*.

## Mor Petrus/Pavlos Church

The tiny Armenian and Syrian Orthodox communities of Adıyaman still use this church, in the central Mara district. The church was built in late 18th century (though the very first church here was built in the 11th century) and bear an inscription stating that it was renovated in 1905. There are two tombs of metropolitan bishops here, one inside the building itself while the other is at the entrance. The church also has a religious school which houses some novice nuns and students.

## Kap Camii

The mosque is located in Kap quarter of the city. According to the inscriptions on its north and southern doors, it has been built in 1768 and restorated in 1923 by Hacı Mehmet Ali. The building has been made up of truncated stones and covered with a wooden dome. The minaret located to the north side of the building has a square base and cylindrical body. The minaret was demolished by a lightning and rebuilt in 1934.


Service at Mor Petrus/Pavlos church [13]

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Adıyaman houses[14]

## Traditional Adıyaman Houses

Most of these traditional houses are double storey and made up of limestone that is special and common in the region. The rectangular planned houses are generally covered with flat earth roofs. There is a kitchen and storage room in the basement. The second floor consists of rooms used for winter and summer. The wood work and stone work is common in these houses, ceilings are decorated with different kind of plant and geometric motifs. Many of these houses are from the 19th century. Among some of the well known houses are, Kadir Aslan House and Mustafa Kuran House in the centre of the city.



Historical artifacts[15]

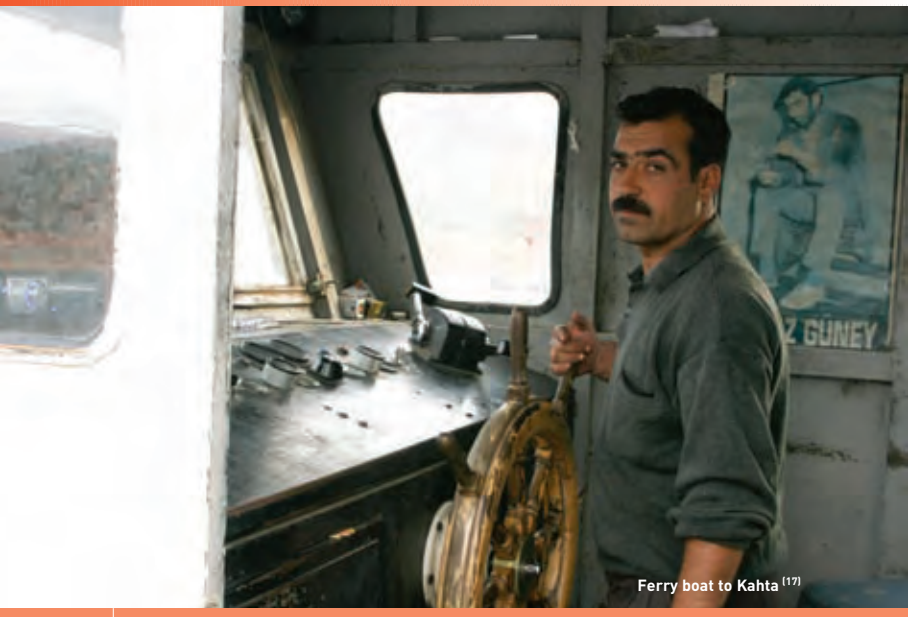
## Adıyaman Museum

The museum, in Atatürk Cad, exhibits artefacts found in and around the region from the Paleolithic Age through the Neolithic, Copper, Bronze and Iron ages, as well as Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman items. In addition, late Hittite stone steles, plus coins and mosaics from the Commagene Kingdom are on display. Ethnographic items are on show in a separate hall. The museum (0416 216 29 29) is open from 8.30am until noon and from 1pm to 5.30pm (not open Mondays).



Historical artifacts [16]

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Ferry boat to Kahta [17]

## Getting there

Adıyaman as an important provincial centre has good transport connections to the rest of the country. The airport has direct flights to Ankara and Istanbul. City of Adıyan is also reachable by air. There is daily car and passenger ferry from Kahta to the Siverek district of Urfa province, which allows you to continue east from here.

## Accommodation

There are a fair number of midrange hotels on Atatürk Bulvarı, some with views. *Bozdoğan* (0416 216 3999, www.otelbozdogan.com) was one of the city's first hotels and has decent rooms, many overlooking the swimming pool. Isias (0416 214 8800, www.grandisias.com) is more recent and a bit classier, with a sauna, *hamam* and a nice terrace restaurant, though no pool. Another possibility is the *Antiochos* (0416 225 0282), which does have a pool.

The budget hotels are more likely to be found in the centre. Near the *otogar* is the *Hotel Serdaroğlu* on Turgut Reis Cad (0416 216 4841), while you can also try the *Hotel Yoluç*, Harıkçı Cad (0416 213 5226).

## Places to eat

Adıyaman cuisine features the usual *kebabs* of the southeast and fresh fish from the lakes. The *Papatya Kebab* in front of the *Zeus Hotel* on Mustafa Kemal Cad (0416 726 2989) serves delicious good examples of both and bakes its own bread; it's open from 11am till around 11pm.

If you stay in the centre, try one of the restaurants in the Hacı Ömer quarter, like the *Süreyya* on 85 Sokak (0416 216 6902). With your own car, you can head to Baraj Yolu, where a few restaurants such as *Akropolitan* (0416 725 5132), situated on top of a hill overlooking the Atatürk Dam, serve local grilled fish and meat and alcohol.

**Municipality: 0416 216 1020 Tourist information: 0416 216 12 59**

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Perre ancient city (18)

## Perre Ancient City (Pirin)

If you are in Adıyaman, make sure to visit the ruins of Perre 5km away, accessible by *dolmuş* from the centre (Örenli–Pirin minibuses). The site (no formal hours; free) was one of the five biggest Commagene settlements and was sited so as to offer views of Nemrut Dağı. Its necropolis has 25 sepulchres which are located in a network of some 200 caves – hence the local name, Pirin Mağaraları (Pirin caves) – and linked by a network of so-called galleries. Excavations have revealed a number of bracelets, necklaces and other jewellery, now exhibited in Adıyaman's museum.



Perre mosaics (19)

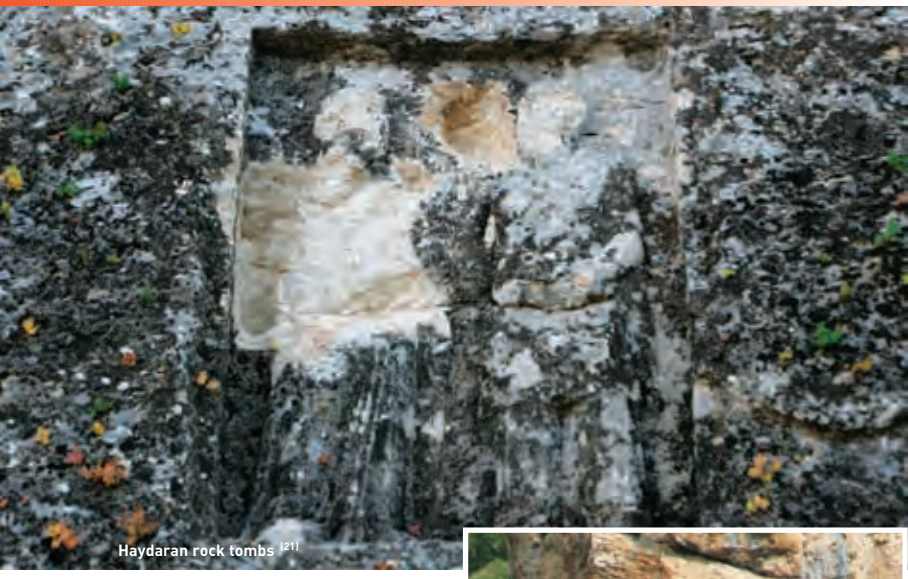
Despite the site now being declared a protected area, pieces of the remains are still finding their way into village homes, so as to support a falling wall or whatever; don't be surprised if you are invited for tea by a local and discover old columns in the stable of your host.



Roman fountain (20)

Within walking distance of the caves is an 1800-year-old spring-fed Roman fountain, often crowded with women and young girls of the village, who use it as a place to wash clothes and from which to fetch drinking water for the home. There used to be a baths complex here reached by a

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Haydaran rock tombs [21]

narrow passageway, and locals say that an underground reservoir survives.

## Abuzer Gaffari Türbesi

This tomb is located 5 km from Adıyaman in Ziyaret (Elifê) village. The date of 1136 is written on an inscription near the tomb's main door. There is also a small mosque linked to the tomb used for praying by the visitors. It's said that there is another tomb belonging to the same person in the village of Rebze near Damascus.

## Haydaran Cave Tombs

Another Commagene-era site can be seen in the upper rocky part of the village of Taşgedik (Haydaran), 12km from Adıyaman. Besides ancient tombs, you can see an interesting relief depicting King Antiochus shaking hands with the God of the Sun, Hellias.

## Alevi Tombs

There are number of Alevi tombs and pilgrimage sites in Adıyaman.


Palanlı caves [22]

Around 5km east of Adıyaman is the Mahmut-I Ensari Tomb, atop Ali Mount. It was built on the order of Sultan Murat IV. Finally, the Şeyh Abdurrahman Erzicani tomb is a late Ottoman structure in the village of İndere (Zey), 7km north of Adıyaman.

## Palanlı Caves

Cave art depicting deer and chamois dating back to 40,000 BC can be seen near the village of Palanlı, 10km

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Happy locals from Haydaran Village [23]

north of Adıyaman. They are located inside a green valley.

## Çıplak Baba (Dede) Ziyareti

Located 21km from the city centre on the way to Kahta is this tomb, reached by taking a narrow road just behind the Adıyaman air-port. The tomb belongs to Mehmet Öryan, locally known as Çıplak Baba ("Naked Baba"). He was a servant in the house of a rich lord. While his lord was in Mecca his wife cooked her husband's favourite food and said, "I wish my husband was here, he liked this meal so much." Çıplak Dede said he could take the food to his lord. The woman gave him some of the food, thinking that Çıplak Baba was hungry but was ashamed to ask for the food. Çıplak Baba returned a short while later, saying he had given the food to his lord, and when his lord returned from Mecca he told people that Çıplak Baba had delivered the food to him. This made people believe that Çıplak Baba must be a holy man to have such powers in order to fly to Mecca.



Çıplak Baba (Dede) tomb [24]

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# Kahta (Kolik)


Antiochos [25]

The small town of Kahta (population of 59,570) 40km east of Adıyaman, is flanked by the Atatürk Dam lake to the east and southeast, although you can't actually see it from the centre. Kahta has recently experienced a boom with the inception of the oil refinery; don't be surprised to see some wells in the vicinity. Most tourists who arrive here, is because of the town's location close to the foot of Mount Nemrut (see p:44).

The Kahta International Commagene Festival takes place here in summer (dates and more information on 0416 725 51 00) and features folkloric performances of music and dance as well as the usual seminars, plus a trip to the historic sites within the region. On the last day people ascend Mount Nemrut to watch the sunset and a traditional Kurdish dance performance.

## Accommodation

*Zeus Oteli* on Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı (0416 725 5694) has modern luxury rooms, international TV channels and also a large swimming pool. On the same street is the *Nemrut Tour Hotel* (0416 725 6881) with air-conditioned en-suite rooms, a restaurant and a pool. Less expensive is the *Hotel Kommagene* on Yeni Diyarbakır Yolu (0416 725 9726, kommagenem@hotmail.com), which is suited to backpackers. You can also try *Zeus Camping* on Mustafa Kemal Cad (0416 725 5695), though there are plans to transform it into a hotel. Most places to stay offer Nemrut excursions (see p:50).

## Places to eat

*Yayla Çay Bahçesi* ve Izgara is a decent restaurant on Mustafa Kemal Cad, while Neşetin Yeri, (0416 725 76 75) 5km east of the town on the Nemrut road and accessible with your own car, is a good fish restaurant with views over the lake.

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Kahta international Commagene festival[26]

## Some prominent people from Adıyaman

Kahta is the birthplace of a number of well-known intellectuals and performers. The linguist and poet, Osman Sebrî, of the well-known Mirdêsan Clan, was born here in 1905. He was imprisoned (and some of his relatives were executed) in the wake of the failed Kurdish rebellion led by Sheikh Said in 1925 (see p: 139), though he escaped to Syria four years later, where he eventually died at the age of 88. His career in literature began with a poem which appeared in 1932 in *Hawar*, a magazine published by his mentor Mir Celadet Ali Bedirxan (see p: 474). Making an impact in quite a different field is the gynaecologist İsmet Sami Turanlı, born in Kahta in 1930. A graduate of the University of Istanbul, he has worked in various European medical centres and has been won an award in Germany, where he lives part of the time, for his research contributions to his field. Much beloved in Kahta is the singer Kahtalı Mıçı (real name Mustafa Arslan), born here in 1953. Besides giving concerts, he has made TV appearances nationally and internationally and appeared in the recent award-winning Turkish movie *Beynelmilel*.



Osman Sebrî[27]



Kahtalı Mıçı[28]

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Eagle head, Karakuş tumulus [29]





Karakuş tumulus [30]

## Karakuş Tumulus

Karakuş, literally "blackbird", is 9km north of Kahta, just after you pass Erikdere (Sako) village. The site dates back to the first century BC, and artefacts found during excavations have borne inscriptions proclaiming loyalty to the Romans.

The mound was created by King Mithridates I for the graves of his mother, Isias, his sister Antiochis and his niece Aka. Excavations have revealed that the graves were looted long ago. One of the columns around the site bears the headless statue of an eagle – the "blackbird" of the site's name. A lion and a bull on the eastern column shows King Mithridates II (grandson of Mithridates I) shaking hands with his sister Laodice. It only takes a few minutes to climb the mound for views of the columns and Cendere Bridge to the north.

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Cendere Bridge [31]

## Cendere Bridge

Dating back to the Roman period, this impressive single-span bridge is situated some 10km on from the tumulus. A turning just before the bridge will take you directly to Nemrut, bypassing other sites below.

Around 120m long, 30m high and 7m wide, the bridge was built during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus around 200 AD. The arch is semicircular and has a span of 34m. The bridge spans Kahta creek at its narrowest point and is still in use by pedestrians. There are number of cafés and gift shops and a restaurant nearby.

Two pillars at each end of the bridge once commemorated Septimius Severus, his wife Julia Donna (referred to as the goddess of soldiers) and his sons Caracalla and Geta. Three pillars stand out of the initial four; it is believed that Caracalla, having ascended to the throne, killed his younger brother Geta and had the pillar representing him removed.



Derik (Heroon) Kalesi [32]

## Haroon Kalesi

A ruined Commagene Fortress, Derik (Heroon) Fortress, is located in small Datgeli village on Sincik road after Cendere Bridge. It has been built on a 1400m high slope. It is guessed that the fort was built by Romans in 70. It is though that the fortress was home to the ruined Commagene settlement of Locatena, and the remains of tombs and temples are visible.

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Yeni Kale[33]

## Yeni Kale

Yeni Kale (New Fortress) is 20km north of Kahta in the village of Kocahisar (Eski Kahta). The fortress sits on a rock 300m long, and was probably first occupied by the Arabs, though most of what is left is of Artukid and Mamluke origin. The site is 5km on from Cendere Bridge.

The fortress has three circular walls enclosing the upper ward to the east of the rock, and lower ward to the west. To the west and north is an outer circuit enclosed by the third wall. The wall around the upper ward still contains a tower built during the Arab era; the walls, towers and remains elsewhere point at Artukid and Mamluke construction.

The fortress can be accessed by the outer gate, built in 1826, on the north side of the third wall. Here also is a mosque tower built under the reign of the Mamluke Sultan al-Ashraf in 1293. Follow the outer circuit round to the south of the fortress where you will find the gate to the lower ward; the way you have just come is exactly



**Kufic writings on entrance of Yeni Kale[34]**

how hostile enemies would have had to move, giving the defenders of the fortress the chance to shoot at them before they could reach the lower ward. Also on the south side is a set of stairs, build by the Artukid, which leads all the way down to the creek and was used for bringing water up to the fortress.

From here you should also be able to see *Şeytan Köprüsü* (literally "devil's bridge"), whose construction is similar to that of Cendere.

Entering the lower ward, you will see a hall on the left with an impressive vault. In the upper ward to the east of the fortress you can see chambers that originally had multiple storeys, as well as cisterns.

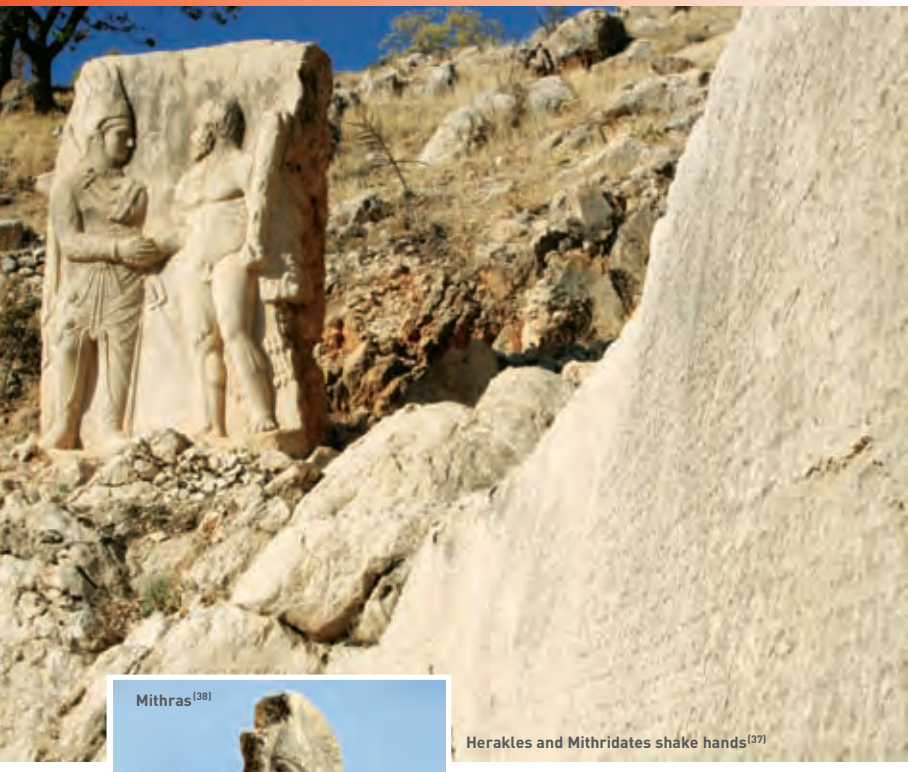
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On the road to Yeni Kale[35]

Viwe of Şeytan bridge[36]

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Herakles and Mithridates shake hands[37]



Mithras[38]

## Arsameia

Some 4km on is Arsameia, within the Mount Nemrut National Park, which you have to pay a small fee to enter; your ticket is valid for 24 hours in case you want to make use of accommodation here (see p: 43) or the villages en route to Nemrut.

The fortress might have been built during the 9th century BC under the Hittites, but it was certainly an important sanctuary in the 1st century BC for Mithridates and his son Antiochus. Excavations have demonstrated that after them there was a brief phase of Roman occupation, and that the site was occupied subsequently in the 9th and 10th centuries, and again in the 13th century.

A short walk will bring you to this highly impressive fortress on a hillside east of the gorge of the Kahta Creek, with great views over the creek and the nearby Kurdish village.

A relief to the south of site depicts Apollo. This is just part of a scene in which Apollo is shown shaking the hand of Mithridates or Antiochus (a scene also visible at Nemrut Dağı), signifying the deification of the king. To

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Tunnel to the underground palace[39]

the north of this relief is a tunnel with a Greek inscription over its entrance, stating that Antiochus had improved the fortifications of the town and beautified it. The tunnel is 158m long and does not lead to rooms or other areas; it was probably intended to provide a way for the dead Mithridates, repersonified as the God Mithras, to rise from the ground. The relief over the staircase leading to the tunnel's entrance shows Heracles shaking the hand of Mithridates. Symbols of the Mithras cult extend to the west of the site where chambers of what probably was a Mithraeum – a secret room to worship Mithras – are preserved.

## Accommodation

If you wish to stay near Arsameia, *Neşet'in Yeri* (0416 741 22 24) is a good choice. It has a number of rooms, restaurant, gift shop and a campsite (bring your own tents to use it).



Herakles and Mithridates[40]

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Statue of Antiochus (41)



Nemrut Mt tumulus (42)

## Nemrut Dağı

Is there anyone who, having heard of the giant heads on top of the Nemrut Dağı (Mount Nemrut), has not dreamt of watching the sunrise from there? This UNESCO World Heritage Site hosts the majestic tomb of King Antiochus, the Commagene ruler who declared himself the equal of gods. He had a temple/mausoleum built on top of the mountain, with giant stone depictions of himself plus an array of gods. Although successive earthquakes have caused the heads of the statues to topple, the sight of them still makes a lasting impression.

The Commagenes were one of the smallest kingdoms of antiquity, although powerful and respected. The kingdom was created in 80 BC by King Mithridates I and reached its apogee under his son Antiochus (reigned between 64–38 BC). It is thought that Antiochus had Persian ancestry on his father's side (he claimed descent from the Achaemenid King Darius) and Greek ancestry on his mother's side; his mother was in fact Laodice, the daughter of Antiochus Grypos. This is why the temple displays Greek and Persian deities together. Unfortunately much material was lost when the Romans captured Commagene and plundered the tumulus. The conical tumulus rises 50 meters above the temples, is 150 meters in diameter and is composed of countless thousand fist-sized pieces of white limestone. Archaeologists, assuming the tumulus enshrines the burial remains of Antiochus, have tunnelled into the great cone of rocks but found

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nothing to substantiate their assumptions. The purpose of this massive undertaking remains a mystery.

Helmut von Moltke, the German consultant to the Ottoman Empire, visited the site in 1838 and is thought to have been the first European to do so. But he kept quiet about his discovery. It was only in 1881 that two German scientists, Karl Puchstein and Karl Sester, climbed the peak and reported the mysterious statues. Two years later the site was explored by Karl Humann, better known as the man who excavated Pergamon (Bergama in western Turkey). Some locals believe that he carted off relics from Nemrut as he did at Pergamon. In the 1950s proper excavation work under the aegis of German archaeologists Theresa Goel and Friedrich Karl Dörner was finally undertaken. Dörner



Theresa Goel (43)



Friedrich Karl Dörner (44)

dedicated some years of his life to the study of Mount Nemrut, and interestingly, after his death his ashes were scattered on the sacred temple.

Over 2000m high, the mountain is 105km from Adıyaman and 65 from Kahta, and is now a national park. The site is best visited any time between the end of spring till and late autumn (the best period is from May through to September); at other times snowy conditions may reduce access to some areas. Even in summer the summit can be freezing cold, so bring warm clothing as well as one or two blankets if you intend to sit around for a while. Obviously, do wear shoes suitable for a hike and bring a reasonable quantity of drinking water. Organized tours will take you to the base of the mound on which the mausoleum sits, from where you can climb up in about 20 minutes. If you are a professional photographer with plenty of gear, you are likely to have to pay a small official fee.

Antiochus' tomb is believed to be somewhere in the mound, though it has not been excavated. The mound is surrounded by manmade terraces.



Cold Morning (45)

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Towards the eastern terrace [46]

## Eastern Terrace

The statues, once 10m in height, originally represented Antiochus side by side with a bevy of deities, some of which are Hellenic-Zoroastrian assimilations. These include Apollo-Mithra-Helios (Apollo being the Greek God of music, while Mithra was a Zoroastrian figure referred to as the judge of souls and Helios was the Sun God), Tyche (the Greek Goddess of fortune), Zeus-Ahura Mazda (Zeus being the supreme God in Greek mythology, while Ahura Mazda was the God of Gods in Zorastrianism) and Heracles-Ares (the Greek epitome of strength and the God of War respectively). The toppled heads are at least 2m tall. These figures are accompanied by giant statues of eagles and lions, supposedly protecting the temple-mausoleum. The inscriptions in Greek on the backs of the statues are to do with ceremonies for King Antiochus' birthday celebrations.

Allow a good 20 minutes to climb to the eastern terrace. This area is popular with those who want to watch the spectacular sunrise. The site can be gusty and you will see people sheltering behind the statues or rock columns. There is a well stocked café and gift shop for refreshments or breakfast.

Moment of Sunrise[47]



Watching the sunrise[48]

## Western Terrace

The deities above are depicted by more statues lined up on the western terrace, which can be reached via the path around the north of the tumulus. Perhaps surprisingly, the heads on the western terrace are better preserved than on the eastern terrace. Here you can see a relief depicting King Antiochus shaking hands with Apollo, Zeus and Hercules, though the most interesting thing to see is another relief of a lion; all of these are kept inside a container to protect them from snow. The star on his neck probably stands for the Commegene Kingdom, while the stars of his back stand for Mars, Mercury and Jupiter. Some believe that the lion is astronomically or astrologically linked to the stellar configuration at 7.37pm on 14 July in the year 109 BC, the exact date and time at which Mithrades declared a kingdom independent of the Seleucids.

As the eastern terrace is popular for sunrise views, so the western terrace is much used for viewing the sunset. A stone path leads here and the climb up is much easier than that to the eastern terrace.



Towards western terrace [49]



Western terrace [50]






Sun-fall at western terrace[61]



A local from Kahta [52]

## Reaching the mountain

Organized tours from Kahta, Adıyaman or Malatya will take you to Mount Nemrut; groups typically comprise around half a dozen people. The longer tours depart from Adıyaman at 2am, enabling you to see the sunrise and then visit sites such as Arsameia, Cendere Bridge and the Karakuş Tumulus (all covered under Kahta; see p.: 38). The shorter version only takes you to the summit. There are also regular tours during the day, which won't let you see the sunrise or sunset (also exceptionally beautiful).

Driving, you can simply follow the signs up the mountain. The route is on a track, so proceed slowly. You will have to park your car at the base of the summit mound and continue on foot. If you stop by Karadut village en route from Kahta, you can buy excellent local jam and nuts.

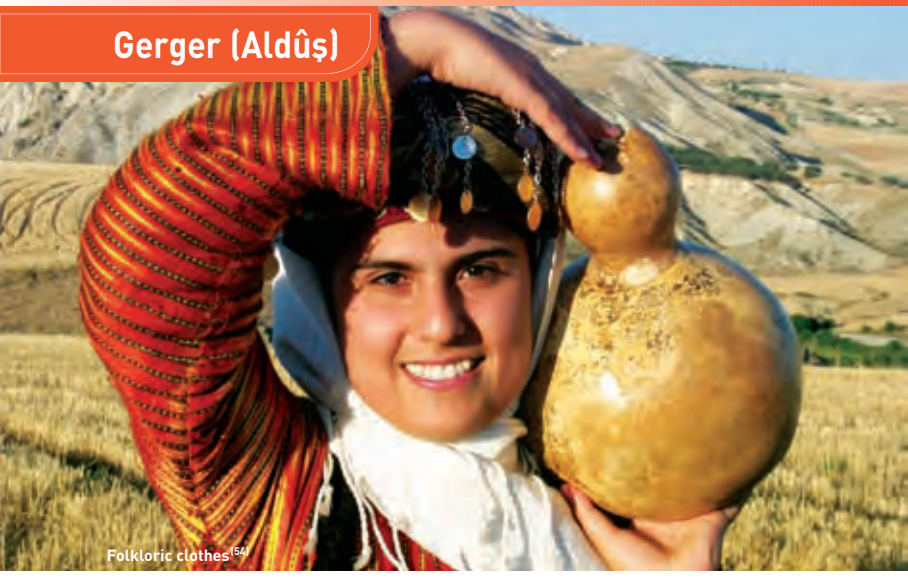


Adıyaman black mulberry [53]

### Accommodation

The family-run *Karadut* guesthouse in Karadut village (0416 737 2169) nearby has just three rooms and is adequate; it also serves excellent locally Kurdish home made food. Also in the village is the *Euphrates* Hotel (0416 737 21 75) with 52 rooms, and serving breakfast and dinner. The hotel is 9km from the mountain.

# Gerger (Aldûş)



Folkloric clothes[54]

Beyond Kahta, the small town of Gerger (population 4,059) sits on the banks of the Euphrates 105km northeast of Adıyaman. Though the river renders the surrounding area cultivable, unemployment is high and some rely on remittances from relatives in the cities or abroad.



A detail from Gerger Kalesi[55]

The sole attraction is Gerger Kalesi, believed to have been built by Arsemes, an ancestor of the Commagene rulers, in the 2nd century BC. The location of fortress atop a steep hill in the village of Oymaklı (Nefsi Gerger) on the west bank of the Euphrates, made it a great vantage point. You can reach the village by leaving Gerger in the direction of Mount Nemrut and turning after 8km. The climb up isn't easy but is manageable and is recommended for the views.

The fortress was the first administrative site of the Commagenes, who used the place as a winter residence. Armenians dwelt here in the 11th century, while under the Mamlukes the site became an important Syrian Christian centre. The only remaining building is a gatehouse with vaulted chambers and bearing a Mamluke inscription. On the west side of the cliff is a high relief showing a walking man wearing the same crown as the figures at Nemrut; an inscription identifies him as Antiochus.

If you need a place to stay, there is an *öğretmenevi* (0416 431 24 00) next to Gerger town's only high school, Gerger Lisesi.



Animal breeding[56]

# Tut (Tût)



Girls weaving rugs[57]



Traditional rug[58]

Tut means "mulberry", reflecting the fact that mulberry trees grow here in abundance. The town, with a population of 4,369, is in the Taurus range 60km northwest of Adıyaman, with the Göksu River to the south and west and the Şovak River to the east.

Tut carpets, rugs and felt cloth are generally made in villages and are well regarded in Adıyaman. The carpets and rugs can be dyed naturally with madder or with artificial colours, and are mainly exported to USA and Europe, so if you are here you may find it worthwhile to spend some time browsing examples of these in Tut's shops. Copper, woodwork and leather-wear are other local handicrafts.

Tut has an Ottoman-era Ulu Camii, built in 1634 and last restored in 1953. It has 12 columns inside, and a stone minaret. Much more recent is the Musalla Camii, built in 1913 and featuring some wood ornamentation.

## Vijne Bridge

Another example of old architecture, the Vijne Bridge, can be found in the Çamlıca quarter. The bridge was once used by caravans and is still in reasonable condition.



Wood work[59]

# Samsat (Somsat/Şemîzînan)



Historical artifacts from Samsat [60]

Samsat (population 4,654) is a small town around 47km southeast of Adıyaman. The town sits on a peninsula extending southwest into the lake of Atatürk Dam. Agriculture is the main industry here; apples, grapes, olives and pomegranates are among the main products.

The old town was one of the most ancient settlements in the region, and was strategically important as a ford on the Euphrates. It was called Semizata in the Sumerian era and was later a Hittite centre. In 708 BC it was taken by the Assyrians who built an enclosure around the mound, and after changing hands several more times it became part of the Commagene Kingdom in 69 BC. The town was an important commercial centre under the Romans, who annexed it in 71 AD. The fortress declined in importance when the area came under Muslim control, though its fortunes revived under the Hamdanids, who built another defensive wall against the Byzantines. The site was refortified when it was handed over to the Artukids of Hasankeyf in 1170.



Samsat [61]



Fishing [62]

Lucian, the satirist and philosopher, was born in what is now Samsat around AD 120. Although he is often described as Greek, he may have been an Assyrian who wrote in Greek. Besides producing learned works, Lucian was among the first sci-fi writers, and actually came up with a story involving lunar travel.



A view from Samsat [63]

A new town of Samsat was built on the newly created lakeshore in 1988 after the old town was inundated under the rising waters of the Atatürk Dam. Ankara University staff undertook eight years of archaeological excavations before the town was submerged. They discovered a Commagene palace built at the behest of Mithridates, but only had time to excavate it partially. The palace included a richly ornamented room in which heads were found that resembled the ones in Nemrut Dağı, suggesting that the room was used for worship of deities and the king. Artefacts such as gems wrapped in cloth, glass and porcelain cups, bracelets, necklaces and earthenware jars were also discovered. Most of these were handed over to the Museum of Adıyaman. Another palace dating from the 12th and 13th centuries lies to the east of the mound. It was excavated in the 1960s.



Surfing [64]

# Besni (Bêsnî)



Traditional customs [65]



Besni bazaar [66]

Besni (population 24,996), 44km south-west of Adıyaman, has modern streets and an old city that you can visit. The district's population is a mixture of Turks (mainly in the town) and Kurds.

The name of the town derives from Bethesna, meaning "a mate in paradise" in Syriac. The area was part of Malatya province until 1926, then briefly came under Gaziantep province, and was returned to Malatya again for just over 20 years before becoming part of the new Adıyaman province in 1954. As the old town was not suitable for enlargement and cars could not easily use the narrow streets, it was decided to move the town to a site in what had been the Çat area. Destructive floods in 1956 delayed the project, and the move to the new town was not completed until 1965. The old town is worth seeing if you are in the area, with assorted Ottoman buildings such as mosques and *hamams*. Further out are an assortment of older historical sites.

Besni is well known for its weaving and earns a decent reward from its carpet workshops – the backbone of the local economy – and stores. South of the main bazaar you can easily find yourself surrounded by examples of these small carpet-making enterprises.



Besni A.C. Yamazaki school [67]


Rug weaving factory [68]

Some of youths are relatively well educated and tend to have leftist views. A visiting Japanese couple decided to show solidarity with the children by building the modern Besni A.C Yamazaki Primary School in the town centre, with a large billboard at the entrance showing Japanese costume.

The town hosts a cultural festival in late September, featuring drama, poetry reading and seminars to do with the arts.

## Old Besni (Bêsnîya Kevn)

The old town is 3km from the town centre, at the entrance to town if you arrive from Adıyaman. A steep hill here is the site of Besni fortress, around which the settlement is based. The fortress can only be reached from the south side. Most of the sites are located close to each other.

## Grand Mosque

East of the fortress is the Ulu Camii, there are no other remains of this mosque except its minaret. According to a script, the mosque was restored in 1492. However, there is no document giving information about its architect and date of construction. The part between the upper point of the


Kursunlu Camii [69]


Old Besni [70]


Old photo of Kursunlu Camii [71]


Meydan Bath [72]

minaret and its gallery is ornamented with some motifs. The style is domestic with some Arabic influence.

## Kurşunlu Mosque

This mosque in Kızılcaoba quarter of İdris neighbourhood was constructed. Having a rectangular plan, the mosque was constructed with smooth cut stones. While the gate is still standing, its flat roof is now destroyed. There are three rows of windows on three of its outer walls. The square based minaret of the mosque is located in the north-eastern corner of the court-yard. The upper part of the minaret is partly destroyed. Its classical Ottoman style suggests that it dates back to the 16th or 17th century.

## Meydan Bath

Near by the Kurşunlu Camii is the remains of the Meydan Hamam, it is located on the west side of the stream which divides the town into two. Its entrance is made of black and white stones and there is a pool in the changing section which is fed by water pouring out of the mouth of a lion sculpture. The *hamam* is not in use.

## Tahta Oba (Dereli Oba) Camii

This mosque is to the east of Kurşunlu Mosque, in Tahtaoba location of Kahta neighbourhood. The mosque is completely destroyed except its standing minaret. Geometric designs can be observed between the upper


View from old Besni [73]

edge and balcony of the minaret which is located to the north-western part of the courtyard. Today, guardrails of the minaret are broken and some are missing.

### Tahta Oba Bath

The remains of this bath with rectangular plan can be found in Kahta neighbourhood. Two successive gates with a space in-between lead to the changing room. This round-shaped room is surrounded by walls with niches on. The changing room, warm and hot parts give way to each other. There is a hot platform at the centre.

### Kızılca Oba Mosque

There is no sufficient information concerning the date and constructor of this mosque located at Kızılca Oba in Besni. Presently, there are some remains of its south-eastern front and walls in other directions. The minaret could survive half to its height. Walls were constructed with wooden beams and smoothly cut stone blocks. There are three rectangular windows on the astern wall. The cylindrical minaret is square based. The style suggests that it was constructed in the 15th century.

### Keysun

Another fortress, Keysun, rests on top of a mound *(höyük)* in the plains of the Çakırhöyük district, where there has been a settlement inhabited continuously since the Paleolithic era. The age of the fortress is unknown, but it has been rebuilt and restored many times. Only the walls remain now, but the walk there is enjoyable.

### Sofraz Tumulus

This site is 15km southeast of Besni in the Üçgöz (Sofraz) area. The main



**Besni women cooking bread** [74]

## Accommodation

Next to the *otogar* is the *Ustahan Hotel* (0416 318 17 03), which has decent enough en-suite rooms with TV though breakfast is not included in the rate.

## Places to eat

Try the Şahane restaurant on Atatürk Cad (0416 318 16 66), serves local food.

entrance *(dromos)*, is 5m below the surface and is reached via the gate to the south; you will have to walk up several steps and down a flight of steps to reach it. It gives onto the main room of the mausoleum dating back to the Romans in the 2nd century.

## Sesönk Tumulus

There is another tumulus located to the south some 150 meters away, where a vaulted chamber contains three funerary rooms carved into the rock as well as sarcophagi. You can enter the chamber and may get a creepy feeling from touching the moist cream-coloured stones; torches are provided by the caretakers. Both tumuli are looked after by member of tourism office, you will be provided with a hand light to access the graves.


Obelisk [75]


Sofraz tumulus [76]

## Dikilitaş Tümülüs

Some 30km further on from the Sofraz Tumulus is a village called Zormağara on Mount Kızıldağ (Çiyayê Qizil). A tumulus lies within walking distance of the village (allow up to 45 minutes to reach it on foot) though the track there is passable with a 4x4. Obelisks 5m tall surround the tumulus.

## Kızılin Bridge

Leave Zormağara village and back on the main road some 20km further on is Kızılin Bridge built over the Göksu Stream. A bridge was built here in as long ago as the reign of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, and this was a key crossing point on the Euphrates in the Middle Ages. What you see today is a three-arched structure similar to the Cendere Bridge in Kahta (see p: 39). The site is worth seeing as there are a number of historical gravestones nearby, though its central arch has collapsed.

## Göksu Caves and Gümüşkaya (Palaş) Caves

All along the Göksu River, especially in villages like Kızılin (Hementil) and Sarıkaya, there are a number of impressive caves in the cliffs, sometimes very high up. Best are the Gümüşkaya Caves, in the southern part of the district. To see them head to the village of Göksu, 40km southwest of Adıyaman, on the banks of the Göksu River. The caves here are connected to each other by very narrow passages that lead to rooms, balconies and wells created around 150 BC by the Romans, who inhabited the caves.

## Thermal Springs

Two hot springs 13km south of Besni town, namely Kuruçay Kaplıcası and Çörmük Kaplıcası. Besides separate pools for men and women, you can also use the municipal picnic site.


Kızılin bridge [77]

# Gölbaşı (Serêgolê)



Gölbaşı, Altınlı bridge [78]

Pleasant Gölbaşı (population 26,993), with its large forest, is 63km west of Adıyaman city close to the Göksu River. This is something of a junction town, served by roads connecting Malatya, Adıyaman, Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş provinces. Gölbaşı Lake is connected to the smaller Azaplı and Yeşilova (İnekli) Lakes by channels built by DSİ (the state-run water utility company), providing water for irrigation. The lakes also supply delicious carp and catfish, and their presence lends Gölbaşı something of the air of a recreational centre.



Bazaar [79]

The area is part of the GAP project (see p: 67), and the forthcoming Çataltepe Dam on the Göksu river is expected to augment irrigation and provide new employment opportunities. The Göksu already supplies drinking water to the industrial province of Gaziantep through pipelines via Gölbaşı Lake.

Agriculture is the dominant activity in this mixed Turkish and Alevi Kurdish area, which is particularly known for its grapes and pistachios. The local grapes are so highly regarded that they are known as "prophet grapes" and celebrated at an annual festival in mid-September. At this time, not only are the best grapes awarded prizes, but cultural and sporting activities are organised.

## Altınlı Bridge and the German Rail Bridge

The main sight, such as it is, is the elegant Altınlı Bridge in Yolbağı village, 7km from Gölbaşı town. Spanning the Göksu River and still in use, it is



Local tobacco [80]

thought to date back to the Romans and comprises one large arch and three smaller ones. The bridge was constructed without use of a cementing material, instead taking advantage of the weight of the stones themselves to hold the structure together, a technique known as Cendere (meaning "the press"). The main arch has 24 layers of stones, while the smaller arches have 9 layers of stones. At the base of the bridge, note the conical structures which protect it against the water.

There is also a rail bridge across the Göksu River, used by trains running between Diyarbakır and Kahramanmaraş. It was built by the Germans between 1938 and 1940.



Altınlı bridge [81]



Sun fall [82]




MESAFE CETVELİ (KM)

| ADIYAMAN | BESNİ | ÇELİKHAN | GERGER | GÖLBAŞI | KAHTA | SAMSAT | SİNCİK | TUT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 44 | 57 | 100 | 63 | 35 | 47 | 69 | 59 |



The pool of sacred fish [1]

# ŞANLIURFA (Ruha)

Urfa (officially Şanlıurfa) is described both by **Muslim and Jewish** sources as the place where Abraham received his summons from God to move to the Promised Land. According to other stories, the Garden of Eden was located somewhere around here, other sites commemorating **Abraham.**



As with Mardin, Urfa boasts a multicultural society, dominated by Kurds but with **Arabs** and some **Turcomans** also visible. Within Urfa city as well as it other districts, you may well see people in traditional dress. The baggy Kurdish trousers men wear are much wider here than in Batman or Diyarbakır.



Local men from Urfa [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
1.523.099 (2007)
**Average altitude**
518m
**Area**
19,091 square kilometres
**Districts**
Şanlıurfa, Akçakale, Birecik, Bozova, Ceylanpınar, Halfeti, Harran, Hilvan, Siverek, Suruç, Viranşehir
**Economy**
Agriculture (cotton particularly), Fishing, Tourism
**Neighbouring provinces**
Gaziantep (west), Adıyaman (north-west), Diyarbakır (northeast), Mardin (east)

Urfa (officially Şanlıurfa) is described both by Muslim and Jewish sources as the place where Abraham received his summons from God to move to the Promised Land. According to other stories, the Garden of Eden was located somewhere around here.

Whatever your beliefs about these stories, it is certain that the area has been inhabited for thousands of years. The Hurrians built a fortress on the site of Urfa city's present citadel around 3500 BC. Thereafter the Hittites and Assyrians took control of the city, followed by the usual changing parade of rulers, including the Byzantines, Seljuks, Akkoyunlus and Ottomans. The area was strategically significant thanks to its role as a transit point on the Silk Road, and was an important site for trade in jewellery, cotton and leather. Much earlier, under the Byzantines, Urfa was already prospering as a city, and was endowed with monasteries, churches and schools.

As with Mardin, Urfa boasts a multicultural society, dominated by Kurds but with Arabs and some Turcomans also visible. Within Urfa city as well as districts such as Viranşehir, Siverek and Ceylanpınar, you may well see people in traditional dress. The baggy Kurdish trousers men wear are much wider here than in Batman or Diyarbakır. Some women in general tend to wear a purple scarf (wearing

## Southeastern Anatolia Project, often called (GAP)



Agriculture in southeast [3]

The Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi (Southeastern Anatolia Project, often called GAP) is a massive dam construction effort to generate hydroelectricity and irrigate this underdeveloped part of Turkey. It consists of 22 dams on Tigris and Euphrates, of which the Atatürk Dam on the Euphrates is the centrepiece.

Irrigation has certainly transformed the prospects for agriculture. Where farmers once struggled to produce one harvest of wheat each year, now they can grow not only wheat but also peppers and cotton (the area now produces half the cotton output of Turkey). Today fishing is of some importance, a large proportion of the freshwater fish caught here are sold on to the tourist resorts of western Turkey.

But despite the many benefits of the project, some environmentalists are concerned that it has reinforced inequalities in the region, forcing poor tenant farmers off the land while the landowning classes reap the rewards. Others say that the project has caused a rise in waterborne diseases, while yet others lament the loss of archaeological heritage that has been submerged or will one day be drowned (for example at Hasankeyf, Batman; see p: 334) by the lakes created. The project has naturally also angered the downstream countries of Syria and Iraq, worried about their continued access to the rivers' waters.

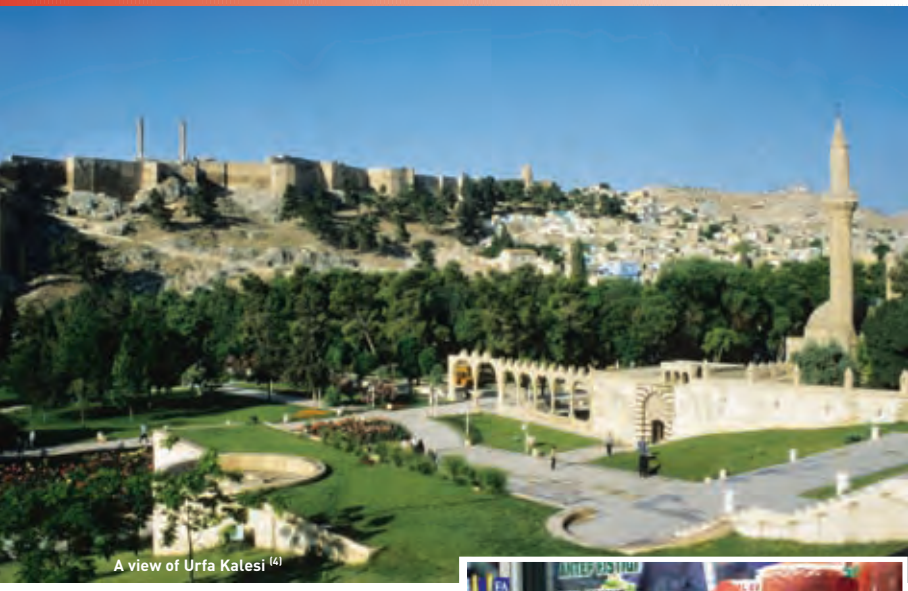
purple scarf is also very popular among men) and tie a red-and-black strip around the forehead, but some of the Zaza women in Siverek are more likely to wear a white headscarf.

The highlight of the province is obviously Urfa city itself and its sites commemorating Abraham, including a pool said to have saved the Prophet from death when he was thrown from the citadel in to the fire on the orders of King Nimrod. The city also boasts some interesting bazaars, while nearby one of the world's oldest shrine complexes can be visited. Not far from the city Göbekli Tepe, has substantial remains of one of the world's oldest known shrine or temple complexes, established by hunter-gatherers in the 9th millennium BC.

Another noteworthy attraction is Harran, not far from the Syrian border, where unusual beehive houses – so called because of their conical roofs – can still be seen. Close by in the same district lies Soğmatar, a group of ancient temples built by the Sabians for their worship of the sun, moon and planets. Elsewhere, extensive city walls in Viranşehir, and the remains of the citadel of Rumkale can be reached by boat from Halfeti, itself known for its dark-hued roses. Nature lovers can try to spot migrant ibises in Birecik, gazelles in Ceylanpınar and turtles in Bozova.

## Şanlıurfa City

With a history going back some 13,500 years, Şanlıurfa is one of the world's oldest cities. It is deservedly called "the City of Prophets", being believed to have been the home of the Prophet Abraham, and the city is on the pilgrimage route for Muslims travelling



A view of Urfa Kalesi [4]



Red pepper [5]

between Syria and Iran. As befits such a city, the place has a conservative feel. Urfa has a population of 472,238 with Arabs and Kurds forming the majority in the centre (you'll see quite a few men in Arab *jalabiya* robes and women in black gowns), while Kurds predominate in the fast-growing suburbs.

Alexander the Great gave the city the name Edessa, but it was subsequently renamed Urfa (the name by which it is still commonly known) and then officially Şanlıurfa ("Glorious Urfa") by the Turkish National Assembly in 1984, commemorating its role in resisting the occupying French army (who were themselves taking over from the occupying British in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire). The French were defeated on 11 April 1920 and forced to retreat to Syria, and nowadays the date 11 April is marked in Urfa as Liberation Day.



Urfa sıra gecesi (Nights by turn) [6]

Urfa is well known for spicy food, with many dishes featuring a red pepper called *Îsot*, which even figures in songs of praise performed at convivial social gatherings called *sıra geceleri* ("nights by turn"), which groups of male friends traditionally take turns to host at



Remains of Urfa Kalesi [7]

home. Nowadays some restaurants have picked up on the concept and put on similar evenings of music and dance for customers.

## İbrahim Halilullah Dergahı

It is believed that Abraham was born in this cave at the southern end of the Akarbaşı street, and that this is where he dwelt for the first ten years of his life, hiding from the brutal local king Nimrod, who had ordered that all newborn children be killed. The cave today is a Muslim shrine, with separate entrances for men and women. In another cave nearby a hair said to have come from the Prophet Mohammed's head is exhibited.

This large complex consists of a very large mosque with the same size courtyard which is carpeted during the pray times as there is always going to be a lack of space. The complex also has washing rooms (shower rooms) cleaning facilities and a large Islamic library. The site also used as a resting place for foreign pilgrimages such as those coming from Iran in large groups.

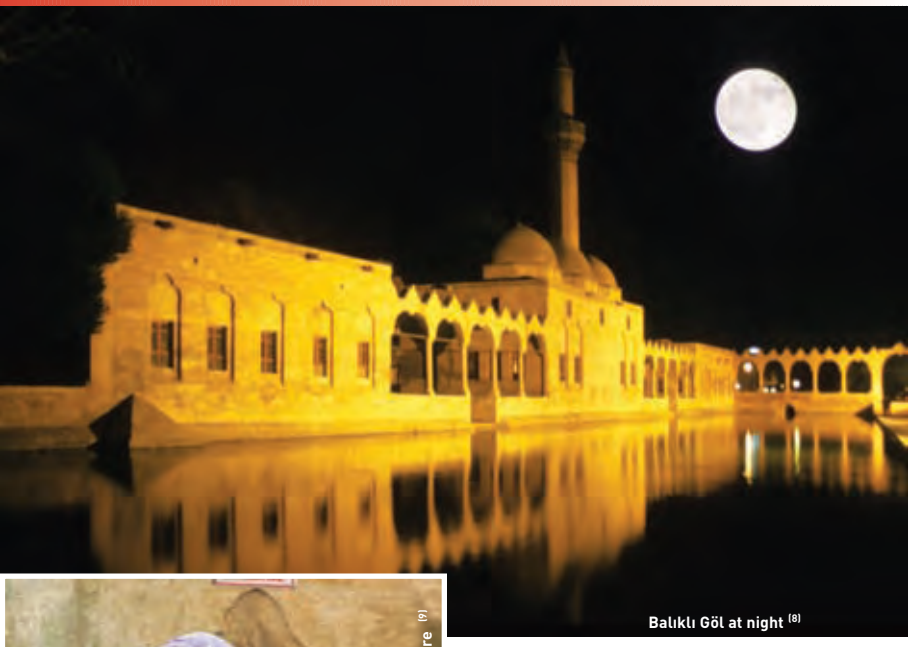
There are number of good (if slightly pricey) restaurants and a café near the pool with good views.

## Urfa Kalesi

Offering good views of the mosques and pool below, this citadel on a hill just above the cave is believed to have been built in the 12th century. Besides ruined fortifications, you can see two Corinthian columns which were part of a winter palace built here in the late 2nd or early 3rd century. The name of a queen, Shalmath, is inscribed in Syriac at the base of one of them.

## Halil-ür Rahman (Balıklı Göl), Halil Camii and İbrahim Madrasah

It is said that after Abraham emerged from his cave, he angered Nimrod by trying to smash the idols in the temple. The King ordered Abraham to be thrown from the citadel into a pyre below. Thanks to divine intervention, the fire turned to water and the firewood to fish. Another tale has it that Nimrod's daughter, Zeliha, who did not worship the idols but the true God, threw herself into the flames as



Balıklı Göl at night [8]



Where İbrahim was thrown in to fire [9]

well. The pool, close to the cave, is surrounded by stone arches, a relaxing park and several mosques, and is now filled with carp, which some regard as sacred. It is said that anyone trying to catch and eat one of the fish will go blind; large crowds of visitors concentrate on feeding the fish instead.

North of the pool is the İbrahim Madrasah, built in the 1710s, with a large courtyard. South of the pool is *Halil Camii,* which comprises a mosque and madrasah. It was rebuilt in the early 19th century, but its earliest surviving section, a square minaret, dates right back to the early 13th century. Next to the *Halil Camii* is a small room with two windows looking into the pool; this is the spot where it is believed Abraham was thrown into the fire. The site is popular with visitors, who pay a small fee to the official at the door to say a prayer here.

## Selahattin Eyyubi Camii

This building, on Vali Fuat Bey Caddesi, a little way to the north of the pool, was built by Armenians in 1860 and later on converted into a mosque. It once had 32 columns of red marble, and carvings of snakes can still be seen on the windows and birds and angels on the remaining columns.

## Ulu Cami

Some 15 minutes' walk from Balıklı Göl towards the city centre is the Ulu Cami, near the *Eski Hükümet Konağı.* Probably built on the site of what was once St. Stephen's Church (also called Kızıl Church), the Great Mosque is situated on the west side of Divan Yolu Cad. It has a large courtyard containing a graveyard, and a prayer hall dating from 1146. The octagonal

minaret in the north wall of the courtyard might at first sight seem strange in comparison with the square minaret of Halil Camii, but demonstrates that polygonal minarets were a typical feature for 12th- and 13th-century Urfa. While the cross vaults in the three naves of the prayer hall are not so common, the dome over the *mihrab* is perfectly placed in a tradition that is also recognizable in the Great Mosques of Mardin, Silvan and Kızıltepe. The minaret was once a bell tower and a large clock has been installed at the top.

To the southeast of the Ulu Cami, on Divan Yolu Cad itself, is an 18th-century reconstruction of a 12th-century madrasah.

## Eyyubi Madrasah

The madrasah, located in Camikebir quarter east of Ulu Cami, originally dates from the Ayyubid era. In 1781 it was demolished and rebuilt by one Nazikzade Hacı İbrahim Efendi, and at this time a fountain was built by Firuz Bey in the southern wall. Besides classrooms on either side of the courtyard, there is a large dome-covered room on the eastern side, which was used as a library.

## Vali Bey Hamam

In Mithat Paşa Cad in Dabbakhane Mahallesi, not far from the bazaar area, this rectangular, stone hamam was built in 1693 by the Vali Beg bin Mahmud. The warm room has three parts, two with dooms and one with a vaulted roof.



Ulu Cami [10]

### Some prominent people from Urfa

One of the city's most famous sons is the singer and actor İbrahim Tatlıses, born into a large, poor family here in 1952. When still young he started working on construction sites, and was overheard singing one day by a local who helped arrange a recording session for him. Eventually he became a well-known singer and businessman. He justifies his lack of education with the remark, "Was there an Oxford College in Urfa that we did not attend?" For more on famous people of Urfa See (Siverek page: 91)

## Bazaars

Urfa retains several magnificent and photogenic Ottoman-era bazaars which you must visit at some point. Leave a good few hours to discover the bazaars and *hans*, where you might purchase good-quality spices, traditional clothes or dried, organic foodstuffs. All the bazaars are located not far from Balıklı Göl; eight are covered while one is underground.

The Kazaz Bazaar (Bedesten), selling traditional clothes, was built in 1566 by Behram Paşa and is located opposite the Merçek Hanı and south of Gümrük Han. A document dated 1740 refers to the building as the Bezzazistan and states that it had been restored. The


Urfa Bazaar [11]

barrel-vaulted structure is aligned on an east-west direction and has four domes. The shops lining the bazaar used to stand one meter above the ground, but were lowered during a restoration in 1988. This is one of the best preserved bazaars in Anatolia.

The Sipahi Bazaar is west of the Gümrük Han near Aşağı Çarşı and has carpets, *kilims*, furs and felt goods. It was built in 1562 by Behram Paşa, and may have served as a stable for visitors to the *han*.

The Kınacı Bazaar, for jewellery, is aligned north–south and dates from the Ottoman period. The northern section is barrel-vaulted while the southern part is uncovered.

The Hüseyniye Bazaar was built in 1887 by Hüseyin Paşa and consists of two parallel buildings between the Çadırcı and Kazancı Bazaars. Restored in 1998, this is where to come for copperware. The Boyahane Bazaar is where dyers used to work. Finally, the Eski (Old) Kuyumcu Bazaar is used by a variety of tradesmen. A barrel-vaulted Ottoman bazaar, it was partly demolished in 1983 to make way for a road.

## Eski Ömeriye Camii

Located in the Kazancı Bazaar, this is thought to be one of the oldest mosques in Şanlıurfa, although the precise date of the construction is not known. The earliest inscription states that it was restored in 1301. On either side of the *mihrab* are the finest balcony-style *minbars* in the city. They are topped by half-domes made of stone and feature iron balustrades.

## Hans

The one *han* you should visit during your tour of the bazaars is Gümrük Han, located near Haşimiye Square. Built by Behram Paşa in 1562 during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, the *han* is the most impressive and monumental inn in the city. The square courtyard is surrounded by shops and the rooms on the second floor open onto porticos. The *han* was restored


Shopping at Urfa Bazaar [12]

between 2001 and 2006; today the rooms on the upper level house tailors' workshops, and the courtyard is filled with tea houses.

After the Gümrük Han, Barutçu Han is the most impressive inn in Urfa. Also known as the harem of Halil Bey of the Sakıplar, it is located in Kazancılar Bazaar and entered via a vaulted *iwan*. The western and northern sections are three storeys tall but the southern section is in ruins. Today the ground floor is occupied by felt-makers and dress shops.

Also noteworthy is the large Millet Han, currently undergoing restoration with a view to turning it into an archaeological museum. Thought to have been built in the sixteenth century, it is located near the Samsat Gate.

## Akçarlar House

Located near the pool of Prophet Abraham is this beautiful example of traditional Urfa architecture, with five courtyards. The area around the pool of Abraham was first developed in the early 18th century, and the Akçarlar House is thought to date from this period. Restorated between 1994 and 2001, it now serves as Harran University House of Culture. The house is built on tiers rising up a slope and is


Gümrük Han[13]

divided into a *selamlık* (men's section) and harem (women's section).

## Museum of Urfa

If you plan to visit historical sites around Urfa, it's not a bad idea first to check out the city's museum (0414 313 15 88), on Çamlık Cad, near Topçu Meydanı in the northern part of the city. It showcases artefacts from sites like Harran and Göbekli Tepe. Assyrian, Babylonian and Hittite relics are exhibited in the first room on the ground floor, while the second and the third rooms contain Neolithic and early Bronze Age items. The museum also has a section dedicated to ethnographic items.

The museum is open from Tuesday to Sunday between 8am and noon and from 1.30pm to 4.30pm.


Cevahir Konukevi (Cevahir Guest House)[14]

## Getting there

As an important provincial centre, Urfa has good transport connections to the rest of Turkey. The main bus station is to the west of the city centre. The airport has direct flights from Ankara and Istanbul.

## Accommodation



Cevahir Konukevi (Cevahir Guest House) (15)

Places to stay include the *Hotel Edessa*, Göl Cad (0414 215 99 11, www.hoteledessa.com), a five-star affair in a perfect location overlooking the *Balıklı Göl complex*; the three-star *Harran Hotel* on Atatürk Cad (0414 313 28 60, www.hotelharran.com.tr), which has a swimming pool, hamam and top-floor bar, though the street itself can be noisy; and *Gülizar Konuk Evi* on Göl Cad (0414 215 05 05), a beautiful Armenian courtyard mansion that houses a hotel and restaurant. It's also possible to stay at *Yıldız Konukevi* (see below).

## Places to eat and drink



Making çiğ köfte in sıra gecesi (16)

The city is well known in Turkey for its *lahmacun* (thin bread topped with spicy lamb), Urfa *kebap* (featuring îsot) and *çiğ köfte* (likewise with îsot). There are two places in Urfa that organise sıra geceleri, and it's worth booking if you want to attend: *Yıldız Sarayı Konukevi*, (0414 216 94 94) and *Yıldız*, Meydanı Yorgancı Sokak. More posh is *Cevahir Konukevi*, Büyükyol Cad (0414 215 93 77), with live music and a full menu.

**Municipality: 0414 313 16 34 Tourist information: 0414 313 10 40/0414 313 28 88**


ŞANLIURFA
MERKEZ TURİZM HARİTASI
Fuar Caddesi
Fuar Caddesi
Halep Çarşısı
SPOR ALANI
Bedüzzaman Mezarlığı
Karanlık
Park
Sağlık Ocağı
Fuar Alanı
Fevzi Çakmak Caddesi
Fevzi Çakmak
Güzel Konuk Evi
PTT
Sarayönü Caddesi
Güzel Sanatlar Galerisi
Yıldız Sarayı Konuk Evi
Eski Hükümet Konağı
Ulu Cami
12 Eylül Caddesi
1348
Güllüoğlu Akyüzler Evi
Divanyolu Caddesi
Arasa Hamamı
Hasırcı Meydanı
Meşarıkiye Caddesi
Meclis Evi
Vali Fuat Caddesi
Pınarbaşı Konuk Evi
Rasatgözü
Cevahir Konukevi
Halepbahçe Caddesi
Harran Giriş Kültür Evi
Otobüs Durağı
Harran Kültür İş Merkezi
Selahattin-i Eyyubi Camii
Eyyubi Medresesi
Topçu
Balıklıgöl Caddesi
Balıklıgöl
Halilurrahman Camii
Rızvaniye Camii
Tünel
Edessa Otel
Şükrav Çarşısı
Hasan Paşa Camii
Arazba Gölü
İbrahim Halilullahi Dergahı
Hz.İbrahim'in Doğduğu Mağara
Urfa Kalesi
Ceceriye Camii
Arabiye Camii
Harran Kapı Caddesi
Akçakale
İŞARETLER / LEGEND
ANTİKKENT
ANCIENT CITY
KALE
CASTLE
KÜMBET
TOMB
CAMİ
MOSQUE
KİLİSE
CHURCH
MEDRESE
MADRASAH
MANASTIR
MONASTRY
KAPLICA
HOT SPRING
TARİHİ ÇARŞI
HISTORICAL BAZAR
PTT
POST OFFICE
RESTORANT
RESTAURANT
MÜZE
MUSEUM
HAMAM
TURKISH BATH
KONAK
PALACE
OTEL
HOTEL
TURİZM DANIŞMA
TOURISM INFORMATION
KERVANSARAY
CARAVANSERAI
KÖPRÜ
BRIDGE
TARİHİ EV
HISTORICAL HOUSE
TARİHİ ÇEŞME
HISTORICAL FOUNTAIN

## Göbekli Tepe (Girê Navokê)

It's worth heading 15km northeast out of Urfa to the village of Örencik (Xerabreş) to see Göbekli Tepe, the substantial remains of one of the world's oldest known shrine or temple complexes. Discovered by a German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt, the site was established by hunter-gatherers who used to come together in order to hold religion ceremonies in the 11th millennium BC, and is still being excavated. The site is a jumble of large and tall beautifully carved stones featuring pictures of animals and some others with interesting figure stones and old walls, but look out also for the lone tree which grows here– regarded by locals as one which can make wishes come true. Archaeology students are able to escort visitors around the site, but it is not permitted to enter. To reach the site, drive 5km out towards Mardin and turn left just after the Şevkat Petrol Station, continuing for another 10km.


Göbekli Tepe [17]

## Atatürk Dam

Constructed between 1983 and 1992 on the Euphrates, the Atatürk Dam is 52km northwest of Urfa. One of the world's largest barrages, it generates hydroelectricity as well as providing water for irrigation, but its creation meant the inundation of 120 settlements. The dam's lake has allowed a fishing sector to arise and is surrounded by several recreational sites. Some times in September a water-sports festival is organised locally. There are no formal tours of the dam, but there is a designated viewpoint about 1km away, where it offers you a good view of the area and some seats to relax with a cup of tea and light snack from the café nearby.

Two irrigation tunnels from the lake run parallel to each other from northeast of Urfa Plain to the Harran Plain, a distance of 26.4km.

## Karaali Spa

This state-run three-star spa resort is in Karaali village, some 44km southeast from Urfa. The water, at an average temperature of 45°C, can help treat rheumatism, skin diseases, inflammatory diseases and kidney stones.

The Karaali Spa Hotel has 34 rooms and an Apart with 54 flats. The flats are consist of two rooms, a kitchen and a small privet (private) pool inside. There are two large pools (one for man and the other for women) in the hotel which can be used by the day visitors and the hotel guests. The Spa also offers you a restaurant and two cafes.


Atatürk Dam [18]




Ulu Cami [19]

# Bozova (Hewenge/Hüvek)



A local girl [20]

Bozova (population 14,450) is a district 38km northwest of Urfa, with a history going back to the Assyrians, who named the settlement here Asuranianu in 2000 BC. The town of Bozova is only 17km from the Atatürk Dam and is surrounded by terrain which has been transformed into farmland thanks to new irrigation. The proximity of the dam has allowed some water sports to take off and there is an annual international event devoted to them *(Su Sporları Festivali)*. Also here are some state-owned holiday resorts equipped with modern facilities.

The region is also home to the large Euphrates soft-shell turtle *(Rafetus Euphraticus)*, living in the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This endangered species is protected in the Bozova conservation zone.

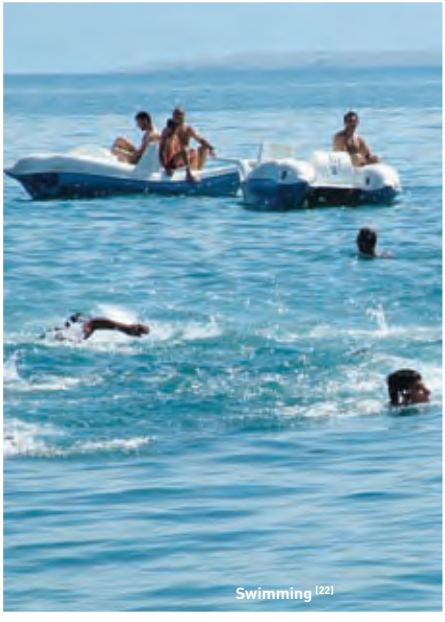
Just like the surrounding cities, Bozova is a place of great historic heritage and a considerable number of mounds indicating historical settlements *(höyük)* are located here. Some excavations are still going on, for example in the village of Göller (Söğüt Höyük) and in Sultantepe. However, some settlements dating from as far back as the Chalcolithic until the Seljuk period, such as Lidar Höyük and Kurban Höyük, were submerged by the construction of the Atatürk Dam.

## Çar Melik (Çar Melîk) Caravanserai

Believed to date from Seljuk times, this caravanserai is in the village of Büyükhan (Çarmelik), 17km west of Bozova. The traveller Evliya Çelebi refers to it in his *Seyahatname* and explains that it was built by four brothers who were princes, hence the name (which strictly translates as "four kings"). Urgently in need of restoration, it has a large courtyard surrounded by summer and winter rooms and stalls, and is similar in construction to the caravanserais in Syria. What you see today are a large number of arches, walls and inscriptions. To get to the caravanserai, take the road to Suruç at the entrance of




Water sport [21]



Swimming [22]

Bozova; the caravanserai is located in the middle of the village beside the main road.

## Titriş Caravanserai

The caravanserai in Titriş village is thought to have been built in the Ottoman era, in the 15th or 16th centuries. Some parts of the building are now clad in concrete and used as shops, but the main building still preserves something of its original appearance. Caravans heading for Birecik used to stop at the Ilgar (Mîrbi) Caravansary within the boundaries of the present district and then continue to Çarmelik Caravansary. Having reached Çarmelik, caravans either continued north for eventually reaching Siverek and Diyarbakır via Bozova (Hüvek) and Titriş Caravansary or turned south to reach Baghdad through Urfa, Harran and Han el-Ba'rür Caravansary.

## Water sports

Around 24km from Bozova town, *Devlet Su İşleri* (DSİ) *Misafirhanesi* is a state-run guest house and sport centre (0414 721 21 06, www.bozova.gov.tr) on the Atatürk Dam, offering all kinds of water sports as well as swimming classes and the chance to sail and dive. There is a day-time snack bar and a restaurant which serves alcohol in a pleasant garden.

# Halfeti (Xelfetî)



A view from Halfeti [23]

Worth considering for a weekend break, Halfeti (population 10,238) is located along the Euphrates River on a steep hillside, 105km from Urfa. The first known name for Halfeti was Ekamia. Later on it was named Kale-i Zerrin, Urumgala and Rumkale, acquiring its present name during the republican era, when it became a district of Urfa.



Minaret partly under water [24]

This ancient town was a centre for Christianity and once a way station on the main Silk Road. Thanks to a number of historical attractions, including a citadel, it is sometimes used as a location for filming. The town is also known for its swathes of so-called black roses, which grow only in the locality. The blooms are very dark in the spring and autumn, changing to a claret shade in the summer. It is sometimes said the roses are black in mourning for the town's more prosperous past.

The construction of the Birecik Dam caused Halfeti to be cut into two, with 150 houses in the middle being submerged in 2000. New settlements were built higher up in the villages of Karamezre, 7km to the south of the old town, but locals had difficulty adapting to their surroundings, where the land was much less fertile than their old plots. Old Halfeti, with its half-drowned settlements, Armenian stonework and minaret which has a blue charm against the evil eye, is worth a look, and includes some old



Rumkale (Kale-i Zerrin) [25]

stone mansions, the Kanneci, Hamdi Bey and Hamamlı Houses. One old house you will not see in Halfeti is the mansion of Feyzullah Bey, a 14-room affair built by one of the town's notables. The house was moved piece by piece to the Osman Bey Campus of the University of Harran, 18km from Urfa towards Mardin.

## Rumkale (Kale-i Zerrin)

Located on a hill overlooking the Euphrates and the main highway, this citadel dates roughly from the late Hittite period, around 900–850 BC, though the present name actually means "Roman fortress". It is a massive structure with two main entrances in the east and west, and seven towers in the east and north walls. The western entrance is reached via a bridge spanning the Menzimen River, while the eastern one is reached from the Euphrates via a twenty-minute boat ride from Halfeti (bookings on 0414 751 50 03).

It is said that John, one of Christ's apostles, may have made copies of the Bible here, which were later taken secretly to Beirut. In 1147 the widow of the last Count of Edessa sold the fortress to the Armenian Patriarch Gregorius III. He moved the head-quarters of the patriarchate here, after which it remained a major centre for Christianity for 150 years.

A view from Halfeti [26]



## Halfeti Houses



Halfeti houses [27]

Halfeti is shaped like a bowl on the steep hillsides sloping down to the Euphrates, and the houses and streets have been carefully planned to suit the topography. Halfeti's flat-roofed stone houses are built parallel to the Euphrates and often have bay windows from which residents can sit and watch the river flow by. Most of the houses are two storeys tall, although some also have a partial basement used a stable, larder, pantry or storage area. The houses are usually entered by a garden gate. The ground floors of the larger houses are reserved for servants' quarters and guestrooms. The area boasts many stone quarries; as a result, most Halfeti buildings are constructed from natural stone and *"Bağdadi"* mortar. The masonry and structure of the houses is characteristic of southeastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia.

In the north part of Rumkale is the Saint Nerses Church, built in 1173 and named for the Patriarch Nerses. The Ottomans converted it to a mosque in the 17th century.

There are subterranean stairs in the fortress going down to a reservoir, which is considered to be the quickest way to reach the Euphrates. According to legend, the lord of Rumkale, Saint Nerses, had a son called Nergis who often went down to the well to look at his reflection in the water. One day, he lost his balance while doing so and toppled into the water and was drowned. It is said that a very beautiful flower sprang up where he drowned.



Cross signs from Savaşan (Belesor) cave church [28]

### Savaşan (Belesor)

This village is located on the far side of the river from the town. Half the village was submerged in 2000 and the cultivable land has been lost, but still



A view from Savaşan (Belesor) Village [29]

there are some old people resistant to vacating their homes despite the fact that the young have abandoned the village, some for big cities and some for the new village. The older folk believe that moving from their ancestral lands will cut their links with their roots, which will lead them to some other disaster. The village was recently used as a backdrop in a Turkish horror movie.

Opposite the village there are the remains of a cave church. The sight of the ruins, with its stonework and cross still surviving, is as dramatic as the village itself. Boat tours from Halfeti to Rumkale will bring you here.

## Accommodation



A Halfeti restaurant by the river [30]

You can stay at the *Şelaleli Guest House* (0414 751 55 00) or the municipality's guest-house (0535 849 81 72). It is possible to stay in an old Halfeti house (to book, call 0414 751 00 33 or the municipality on 0414 751 10 10).

# Birecik (Bêrecûg)



A view from Birecik castle [31]



Bald İbises[32]

Birecik town (population 46,304), 76km southwest of Şanlıurfa, is well known to archaeologists because it is the place where the first Paleolithic artefact was found in 1894. Since then, the region has been widely explored and traces of Paleolithic settlements have been found all through Asia Minor.

The Euphrates is convenient for the river transport from Birecik southwards, and thus this was something of a transhipment point. In the 16th century there was a shipyard here, but Birecik lost some of its importance with the advent of rail. After the construction of the 720m-long Birecik Bridge in 1956, the city became a major crossing point over the Euphrates once again.

Birecik is known for its ibises *(kelaynak)*, which migrate there in mid-February and leave for Madagascar and Ethiopia in June. In the 1960s some 1000 pairs of ibises were migrating to Birecik, but they are now endangered and are protected within an area around Birecik.

The area is also known for the production of hemp *(kendircilik)*, which grows by the banks of the Euphrates and is used for rope-making, though these days a diminishing number of craftsmen pursue this trade.

The city centre is surrounded by beautiful city walls dating back to 1483 and the Mamluke era. Between 30m and 40m tall, the walls originally had four gates. The beautiful Urfa Gate (Urfa Kapı) still stands.

Centrally located on the southern side of the Euphrates is the Beyaz Kale


Urfa gate [33]

("white fortress"), which derives its name from the fact that it is built on top of a white limestone hill. The present version probably dates from the 13th century; though there were earlier incarnations under the Franks in the preceding century and all the way back in the Roman era.

In the city centre between İnönü Cad and Belediye Cad is the *Hürriyet Kahvesi ve Oteli,* located in the municipal cultural centre. Formerly the city hall, it was built at the start of the last century and survives as a beautiful example of Ottoman architecture. Part of it is now a public library.

The remaining attraction, though not in Birecik but in the village of Mırbi (Ilgar) 35km northeast, is a ruined caravanserai, built during the Ottoman period as a way station between Diyarbakır and Urfa. At the start of the last century, one Hartavizâde Emin Ağa built a second storey on top of the caravanserai so that he could use it as a personal residence.

## Kule Mosque

This mosque by city walls and adjacent to Urfa Gate is believed to be constructed by Mamluk Sultan Kayıtbay in 1482. The mosque has an east-to-west rectangular plan with a large cross vault at the centre. Alaburç Mosque (from the Mamluk era) is to the southwest of walls surrounding Birecik, inside Alaburç at the location called *Meydan Kapısı.*

## Accommodation

The *Mirkelam Tesisleri* is a small and pleasant hotel on the Gaziantep–Urfa highway (0414 661 05 00). There is also an *öğretmenevi* (teachers' guesthouse; 0414 652 26 73).

## Places to eat

The *Gülbaba* is centrally located on Kalealtı Cad (0414 652 48 22) and serves *kebabs* and local food. Out on the Gaziantep–Urfa road, the Kıyı Restaurant (0414 661 17 18) serves similar fare as well as excellent fish. Arriving from Urfa, turn onto the dirt track next to the *Mirkelam Tesisleri* ( 0 414 661 05 03), just before you reach Birecik Bridge, and you will find the restaurant 600m ahead in a leafy area.


Street life [34]

# Hilvan (Curnê Reş)



A local from Hilvan [35]

The agricultural town of Hilvan (population 22,181) is 56km north of Urfa and derives its name from the black stone, called *curun or curn* (reş means "black"), characteristic of the region and used in the ancient times for threshing wheat (this method is still in use in some of the villages in the region). During the Ottoman era, it was inhabited by some nomadic tribes and had the name Karacurun (*kara* also means "black"). In 1926, it became a district of Urfa and acquired its present name.



Pistachio trees [36]

The district includes Nevala Çori (Newala Çorî), an archaeological site in the village of Kantara (Qentaran) on the right bank of the Euphrates, next to the Kantara River. The site is believed to have been inhabited since the Neolithic period, and excavations have revealed the presence of human and animal figures dating back to 9000 BC. Along with Halan Çem (near Silvan in Diyarbakır) and Qotê ber Çem (at Ergani near Diyarbakır), Newala Çori is thought to have been one of the sites in northern Mesopotamia where wild wheat and barley were first cultivated and animals were domesticated.
It is also said that humans built their first shelters in this area with sundried brick.



Playing Arbane (Daf) [37]

In the last 25 years, new excavations here have shed light on the ancient societies of the region. Excavations between 1983 and 1991 showed that there were Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Bronze Age settlements, and one of the world's oldest places of worship, possibly dating to 7200 BC, is thought to have been identified. There were also many human faces carved in stone probably representing divinities, and places for storage, indicating that a period when the humans were in transition from nomadism to a more settled existence.

Tribal relations in the area are still strong and traditions and culture reflect this. Large tracts of land hereabouts belong to local lords, the *ağa*. Land reform programmes dating from the 1970s have so far failed to redistribute land to tenant farmers and now appear to have been shelved.



Handmade home design [38]



Yılmaz Güney [39]

## Siverek (Girê Sor)

With a population of 108,094, Siverek, 95km northeast of Şanlıurfa, was briefly a province in the 1920s but thanks to local rivalries, it was downgraded to become part of Urfa. Even today, however, people here still appear to have aspirations of creating a province for themselves, and civic organisations are active in promoting a distinctive agenda.

Siverek town is a place where traditions are still very much alive and people usually marry within their *aşiret* (clan). The inhabitants are mainly Kurds, with small minorities of Turks and Arabs. In terms of traditions and social relations, people here are more like Diyarbakır folk than people from Urfa. Kuyu quarter is a good area in which to observe people in traditional dress.

As an indication of the complexities of local clan politics, the influential Bucak Clan has had members who have benefited from the patronage of the state (and indeed have collaborated with it to combat Kurdish aspirations since the 1920s) while interestingly other members are supporters of Kurdish rights such as



Ulu Cami [40]

the now deceased Faik Bucak, who once established a dormitory in İstanbul for Kurdish students and went into exile in 1961 due to his involvement in Kurdish nationalist politics. He was assassinated five years later.

## Ulu Cami, Hüseyin Çeribaşı Camii and Gülabibey Camii

The town centre has three noteworthy mosques, all in the Güney quarter. The beautiful Ulu Cami was converted from a church to a mosque in 982, sundial in the middle of the courtyard cannot be missed, and you should also note the large and beautiful stone door with the words Allah and Muhammad beautifully carved, while the Hüseyin Çeribaşı Mosque has an impressively carved wooden door. Nearby is the Gülabibey Mosque, named after the Seljuk governor who built it in 1211.

## Historic architecture

In the Camikebir and Hasan Çelebi Neighborhoods, you will see Armenian houses built of the beautiful black stone for which the area is known (according to some sources, the name of the town comes from the Armenian for "black stone"). Three caravanserais, namely Gümrük Han, Hacı Yusuf Han and Kirazlar Han, offer good examples of 18th-century Ottoman architecture.



Houses in Hasan Çelebi quarter [41]

## Karacadağ and Siverek Kalesi

To the east of the centre is the extinct volcano of Karacadağ (Qerejdax), which features in traditional songs and is a peak to which shepherds bring their flocks in summer. Unusually the mountain is also one of the few sites in Turkey where rice is cultivated.

Located in the town centre at Kale quarter, is an Assyrian-era fortress which now a municipal-run tea garden, also used for weddings and concerts. It was last renovated by the Byzantine Emperor Constantin II, who not only strengthened it to improve the defence of nearby Diyarbakır but also made it one of the most beautiful fortresses in Mesopotamia. The ruins still stand 30m tall in places, and below are recently discovered structures, found when land was being excavated for new housing. In particular, you can visit the subterranean Abdalağa Hamam linked to the castle; it is believed that the *hamam* was built for royalty, who used to reach it through a secret stairway. It is a good example of Ottoman architecture though now in a ruinous state.



Local girls from Karacadağ in Kurdish outfit [42]


Shepherd and his sheep [43]

## Paşa Konağı

Formally called *Cudi Paşa Hanı*, this place is now referred to as *Paşa Konağı* after the restaurant here. The *Han* is centrally located just opposite of the library (Siverek İlçe Kütüphanesi) and also includes a café. In the back is a large courtyard which has a stage for cultural performances.

## Karacadağ Ski Resort

This ski resort is 43km from Siverek and is open for four months a year, starting from November. There is a café but no accommodation.

Try the *belediye* tourist office for more information (0414 552 12 00).

## Accommodation

Hotels include the *Karahan Turizm*, İnönü Bulvarı (0414 552 09 46), *Mercan Palas*, Hürriyet Cad (0414 552 12 36) and *Feran Palas*, also on Hürriyet Cad (0414 552 11 45).

## Places to eat


Paşa Konağı [44]

The Paşa Konağı Restaurant is based in an old beautiful house in Güney Mahallesi, Emniyet yanı (next to *Emniyet-Police*) (0414 552 22 70).

## Some prominent people from Siverek


Mehmed Uzun [45]

Siverek has spawned several prominent Kurdish figures, including **Yılmaz Güney**, the actor and film-maker. He won the Palme d'Or in Cannes in 1982 for his movie Yol, depicting the journey from Istanbul to the south-east of a group of prisoners given temporary release. After spending some years of his life in exile in Paris, he died there in 1984 at the age of 47. Another well-known local Kurdish figure from the literature is the writer **Mehmed Uzun**, born in Siverek in 1953. He started to write aged 16, beginning with poetry, though he is now mainly known as a novelist with books such best, Bîra Qederê and *Ronî Mîna Evîne* and *Tarî Mîna Mirinê*, arrested once in Diyarbakır before he went to Ankara to attend university. He was arrested for writing Kurdish poetry as well as articles and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, though he only served two. After his release he joined a Kurdish magazine, but this landed him in jail again because of the then forbidden status of the Kurdish language. Eventually he was exiled to Sweden, though he returned to Turkey after being diagnosed with cancer in 2006. Most of his life he was advocating for more united front within the Kurdish politics. He died in Diyarbakır the following year.

Another great Kurdish artistic figure, the musician and poet **Şivan Perwer,** was born İsmail Aygün here in 1955. Exiled to Germany since 1976, this singer and performer on the Saz (lute) is a musical ambassador for his people. Though banned in Turkey for many years, his recordings were always in circulation there, and he is regarded as one of the major *dengbêj,* or bards, performing in a style that combines oral history with music. A particularly well-known song of his:

**Canê Canê / Darling, darling**

*Canê, canê, canê / Darling, darling, darling*
*Were meydanê / To the meadow let's be running*
*Dilê min pir xweşe / How my heart is singing*
*Bi vê dîlanê, bi vê dîlanê / n this dance, in this dance*

*Dîlane şoreşe / All of us are fired by*
*Herkes pê serxweşe/ Dance of rebellion*
*Erd û ezman şên bûn/ Heaven and earth rejoicing*
*Bi vê dîlanê, bi vê dîlanê / In this dance, in this dance*

*Canê, canê, canê… / Darling, darling, darling…*

*Keç û jin û pîr tev / Girls and boy salike, now*
*Rabûn tev dest dan hev / Take each other's hands, now*
*Xort û mêr hstin b'rev / Friends and comrades, run now*
*Ji bo dîlanê, ji bo dîlanê/ To this dance, to this dance*

*Canê, canê, canê… / Darling, darling, darling….*

*Dîlan gellek xweş bû / Oh, how fine our dance is!*
*Dilê dostan geş bû / How our hearts are beating!*
*Dilê dijmin reş bû / Enemy hearts are smarting*
*Bi vê dîlanê, bi vê dîlanê*
*Thanks to this dance, thanks to this dance*
*Canê, canê, canê…/ Darling, darling, darling…*


Şivan Perwer [46]

# Viranşehir (Wêranşar)

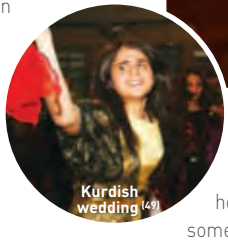


Historical remains from Viranşehir [47]

East of Urfa, Viranşehir (population 100,929) was destroyed so many times in history that it took the name *viran*, meaning "ruined". The area benefits from cross-border trade, being on the road to Nusaybin on the Syrian border (with Iraq not far away either-159km) and just a little to the north of Ceylanpınar, also on the Syrian border. The surrounding area is an important grain producer within Turkey and is also known for its red lentils *(kırmızı mercimek)* and a type of vegetable (look like melon) called *şelengo*. The terrain around is dotted with some 40 *höyük*, small mounds indicating the presence of a settlement dating back to the Neolithic Era. Some of them have been excavated and ceramics and remnants of walls found.



Local wedding [48]



Kurdish wedding [49]

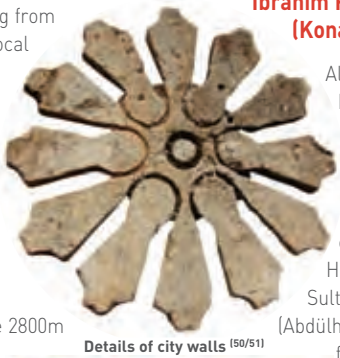
Viranşehir weddings, as elsewhere in the region, can sometimes go on for three days and nights in a row, with men and women dancing hand in hand in extended long *halay* (folk dances, in Kurdish *dilan*). The ceremony takes place in homes or wedding halls and some times big tents where people are welcomed by high-ranked members of the *aşiret* (clan).
Also see p: 520

With regional instability, the town has seen its population grow in recent years. The inhabitants include small minority of Syrian Orthodox and Arabs and majority Kurds, differentiated from each other by small variations in their traditional clothing, sometimes imperceptible to the untrained eye. There are also some ten Yezidi villages, although there are more uninhabited ones. In the village of Burç (Birc),

there is an anonymous tomb venerated by the Yezidi community. Small groups of Mirtib-Roma- locally called *Qaraçi,* settle in the Viranşehir in summer. They earn their living from music while other local group of Roma, devote themselves to crafts.

## Viranşehir Kale and City Walls

The City Walls were built by the son of Byzantine Emperor Constantine and are 2800m long (second in length to Diyarbakır's) and 15m high, with 24 watchtowers to the east and south and 23 towers to the north side and four gates (Urfa, Harran, Diyarbakır and Bağdat). Nowadays most of the *kale* and the walls are in a poor state and deserve proper restoration. The remains of the city walls has been protected by the municipality of Viranşehir. The area is called Antîn by locals.



Details of city walls (50/51)



## The Martryrium (Martyrium) (Dikmen)

In the central Gölbaşı quarter part of town you will find the martyrium. They were used to be built on basalt stone with a dome and had an octagonal plan. This is one of the biggest Byzantine Christian constructions, possibly dating from the 4th or 5th centuries, and might be the tomb of Mor Yakub, who also gave his name to one of the Syrian Orthodox monasteries in Mardin. Pictures taken by the British archaeologist Gertrude Bell at the start of the last century show the martyrium in good shape, but today it is mostly in ruins, with only one of the eight original pillars still standing. Remnants of mosaics found here indicate that the building was once richly decorated. Nowadays the has been converted into a park.

## İbrahim Paşa Konak (Konağı)

Also in Gölbaşı, this house was constructed in 1893 by the powerful İbrahim Paşa yê Milî, a Kurdish clan chief of the Hamidiye. In 1891, Sultan Abdul Hamit (Abdülhamit) decided to form an irregular force to keep the tribes under control and ward off the Russians in Eastern Anatolia, with whom some of the tribes sympathised. Members of the Hamidiye, as the force was called, were mainly selected from Kurdish horsemen and the commanding officer was a tribal chief who received military training in Istanbul. When the Hamidiye were not provided enough money from the central government, they were authorized to collect taxes from communities such as the Alevis and the Armenians. When the Young Turks took over they



The martryrium (52)


İbrahim Paşa Konak [53]

changed the name from Hamidiye to *Aşiret*, but the force's role remained unchanged. The house, now used as a library, is built of black basalt and yellow limestone. There are eight rooms, with a large hall in the middle; note the beautifully carved exteriors of the window frames. The house is managed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and open daily from 8am to 5pm.

## Traditional houses

Similar to those of Urfa, houses here have a lounge *(diwan)* which has one room at each side, screened off from the tribal meetings which would be held in the lounge. There are still many centrally located houses in this traditional style, including the Kayalar, Takdirler and İbrahim Paşa Houses, all built up of basalt and lime stones. There are Greek tablets more or less on all their walls or doors. The certainly worth to visit, the Kayalar House was recently restored by the municipality and due to be used as a cultural house. The house has a large ground level hall and a number of halls at the first and second floors. The house has a large courtyard with fountain located in the middle.

## Yolbilen (Haftemal)

This Arab village just 2km south of Viranşehir is home to a Syrian Christian tomb, 12m long and 3.5m wide. It is decorated with a large mosaic, not restored, depicting animals (some villagers have similar mosaics in their houses) and an eight-line Syriac inscription reading "This tomb was constructed in 873, during the reign of Şem, by the monks Helpidius and Yuhannun living in this monastery". The monastery in question, named Aziz Sergius or Şemnu, of which this is a relic, is


Kayalar house [54]

thought to have been substantial. To reach the village, take left at the end of town on the road to Urfa. The village is divided into three parts, with the middle part being where the tomb is located.

## Kızlar Sarayı

This "Girls' Palace", as the name translates, is in the village of Binekli (Kerik) some 28km south of Viranşehir. The palace is believed to have been built in the fourth century and was an important centre for Syrian Christians. Numerous inscriptions in Syriac and wall paintings can be seen here as well as in people's homes, materials from the palace having been re-used by the locals. There is also a subterranean bazaar under the palace, with its own ventilation system. Villagers now use parts of the palace to keep livestock or for storage.



Mosaic from Yolbilen Village[55]

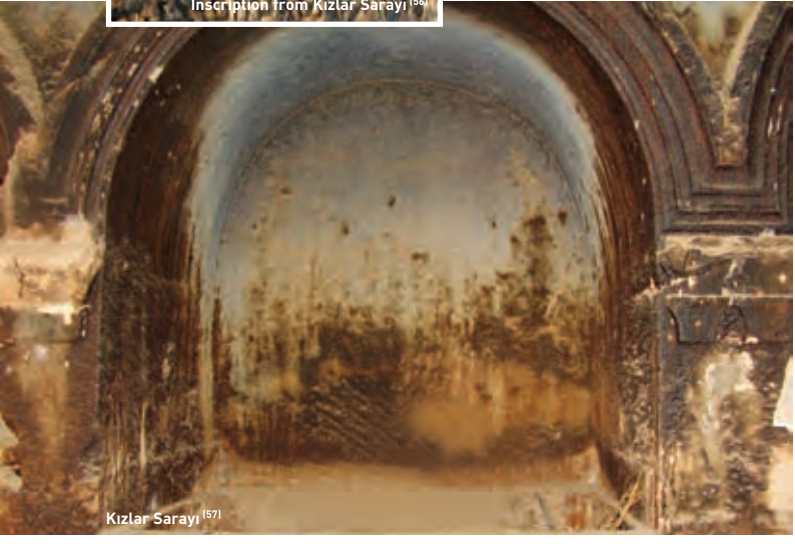


Inscription from Kızlar Sarayı[56]

## Çemdin Kalesi (Keleha Çimdîn)

This castle, around 27km southeast of Viranşehir in the village of *Eski Kale* (Çimdîn), was built during the Ayyubid period and once had 12 towers and two watchtowers. Beyond the western entrance of the castle, many large caves can be seen. According to the inscription in the fortress it has been built in 1899 by Saadeddin Muhammed. The fortress has been surrounded with defensive canals made of natural rock.

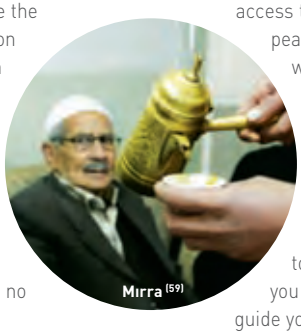
The head of the village *(muhtar),* Hacı Mustafa, is addicted to *mırra (tehl* in Kurdish), a traditional bitter coffee which he believes to have beneficial properties. Visitors will be invited to sample the coffee, but it is said that



Kızlar Sarayı[57]


Çemdin Kalesi [58]

you should not leave the cup on the floor or on the table, which can be interpreted as a sign of disrespect. Instead, give it back to the person who served you. If you do cause offence, it is said you will have no choice but to marry someone designated by your host or to fill the empty cup with gold.


Mırra [59]

## Akkese (Hanefiş) Church

Once was a rock grave date back from Roman era and it is said to have been converted into a church. This church, carved out of the rock, is situated 20km southwest of Viranşehir in the village of Kırlık (Gawir Horî). It is thought to have been built during the 2nd century as a secret place of worship, entered through a hole 2m from the ground.

Once you go in, you still have to walk some 2m stooping before you can access the church. Bas-reliefs of peacocks can be seen on the walls of the cave as well as a big cross on the domed roof. From the outside, you can only see the two entrance holes and the windows. There is nothing around to indicate the church, so you will have to ask a local to guide you to it.

## The Tomb of Eyüp

In the village of Eyüp Nebi (Caffer), 15km northwest of Viranşehir, are


Akkese (Hanefiş) Church [60]


Eyüp Peygamber Tomb [61]

tombs said to be that of Eyüp (Job), his wife Rahime Hatun and Elyesa (Elisha), which is mainly visited by pilgrims going to Mecca by road and large number of locals. To the north of the tome is the *Sabır Taşı* (ordeal stone) that represents the patient what the Prophet Eyyub was famous for. Further down you will see *şifalı su*, water that is supposed to cure ailments. To the west of the water is the tomb of Elyesa. Rahime Hatun Tomb is located some 100 meters away from the *ziyaret* complex. The tomb is composed of one single room covered with a white dome.


Eyüp Peygamber Tomb [62]

As the site receives large number of pilgrims daily, therefore it has been looked after and kept clean to the highest standard.

## Accommodation


Cooking pastry in Viranşehir street [63]

There is a decent hotel in Viranşehir, the *Yükselen* on Mardin Yolu (0414 511 79 24, www.yukselhanhotel.com). You can also find accommodation in the *öğretmenevi* (teachers' guesthouse; 0414 511 31 89).

# Akçakale (Tilebyad)



A view from Akçakale Bazaar [64]



Border Bazaar [65]

The town of Akçakale (population 26,877), also known as Tell Ebyad, is south of Urfa on the border with Syria. The town's fortunes should receive a boost from a recent decision to allow it to be used as a conduit for cross-border trade between Turkey and Syria. To cross the border here (daily 8am to 5pm), head for the end of Fevzi Çakmak quarter.

The Cudi Valley, 20km north of Akçakale, has a topography that makes its hills look like waves in a green sea. With ruins of tombs, hamams and towers visible on some areas, it is possible to see.

Just across the border is an oasis, Ayn el-Arus ("spring of the marriage"), much visited by locals. This is where Abraham is said to have rested while travelling to Damascus, and where he was married to Sarah.

Different goods from Syria can be easily found in the town market, while there it might be a good idea for quick shopping.



Local transport [66]



Ancient Harran University [67]

# Harran (Xarran/Heran)

One of the highlights of the province is the remarkable town of Harran (population 9,866), famous for its beehive-shaped houses and probably one of the most ancient settlements in the world. The town, 44km from Urfa, is easily accessible by *dolmuş*. Most of the inhabitants are Arabs, who are believed to be the descendants of semi-nomadic pastoralists and farmers who traditionally inhabited these plains. While visiting you may be approached by groups of children who will be determined to get some small change off you or sell you trinkets.

The beehive houses, about 1.5km from the new town, are not lived in any more and are mostly used to keep the livestock. The conical roofs, of which there can be up to six on an individual house, are made of *kerpiç*, a mix of clay, straw and bricks. A hole at the top allows sunlight in and aids ventilation. The houses were mostly built 150–200 years ago from bricks collected from ruins.

After the beehive houses became part of an archaeologically protected area, the municipality bought and restored a few of them. An example of such old houses is the *Harran Kültür Evi* (0414 441 2477), a museum and gift shop and with some accommodation for tourists. The owner of the house speaks several languages.

## Harran Kalesi

Harran is surrounded by walls which had six gates, only one of which survives (Halep Gate). In the southeast of the walls is an inner gate leading to a three-storey structure that was used



Harran traditional houses [68]



Harran Kalesi [69]



Ancient Harran University [70]

as a palace. It was restored in 1059 by Meni bin Şebib and again in 1192 by the Ayyubid Melik el-Adil. The fortress located in the middle of the village.

## Harran höyük (Höyüğü) and Harran University

The settlement, in the northwest of the town, appears to have been continuously inhabited from before the time of Christ until the 13th century. Excavations on the mound began in 1951, and some of the artefacts recovered are now exhibited in the Museum of Urfa.

On the northeastern side of the *höyük* are the remains of the Ulu Cami, built by the Umayyad Caliph Marwan II in the 8th century and said to be the oldest surviving example of Islamic architecture in Turkey. It was constructed on or close to the site of what had been a Sabian moon temple (see also Soğmatar, p: 102), some of whose stones were recycled in the building of the mosque. One of these stones, depicting the last king of Babylon worshipping heavenly bodies, is now exhibited in the Museum of Urfa. When reused in the mosque, it was placed facing the ground so worshippers would not see the pagan image. The mosque itself was enlarged in the 12th century by Nureddin Mahmud Zengi, who added a fourth nave to the north and probably the ablutions pool in the courtyard. In 1192 Saladin had the portal to the east of the mosque constructed. These features and the minaret survive, but the mosque is otherwise in a ruinous state.

If you happen to be at the mound in spring, you may see the flowers of *Peganum Harmala (üzerlik/ spind* in Turkish), a plant whose seeds have psychotropic effects. The site is one where little girls from the surrounding villages come to collect the flowers, which they dry for decoration and for making talismans and sell to the tourists.


Bazda caves [71]

Harran is believed to have been a prominent educational centre from the 8th to the 10th centuries, and the ruins of the once-famous Arab university can be seen near the Ulu Cami.

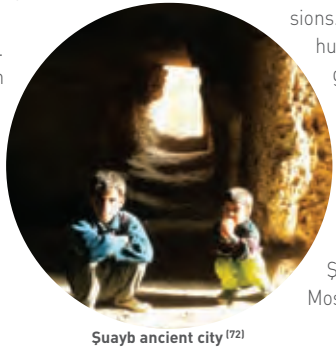
## Han El-Ba'Rur Caravanserai and the Bazda Caves

Some 19km southeast of Harran in the village of Göktaş (Han el Ba'rur) is the Han El Ba'Rur Caravanserai. Thought to have been built in 1228 by el-Hac Hüsameddin Ali bin İsa, it typifies the architecture of the Seljuk period.

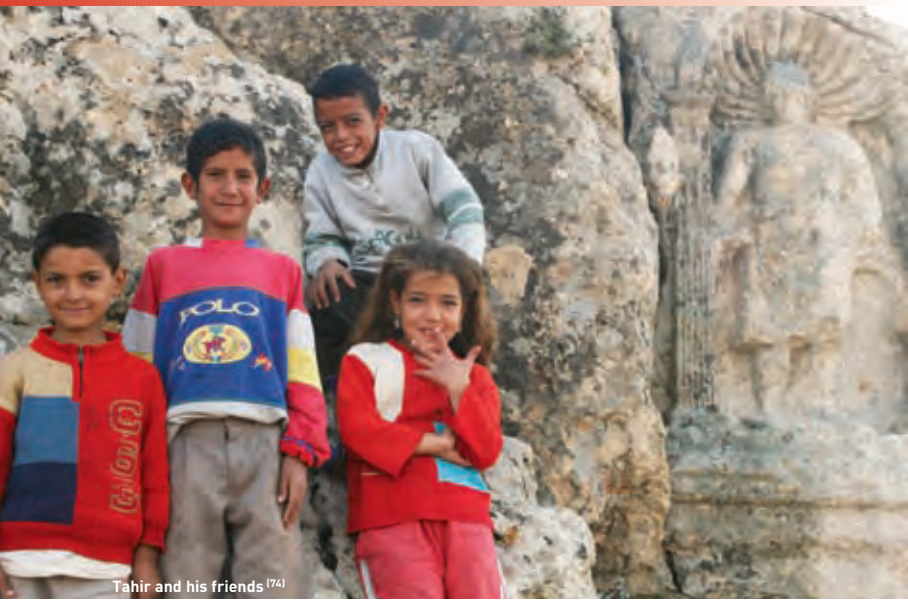
Some of the most beautiful and most impressive caves in Anatolia are situated on both sides of the road to the caravanserai from Harran. Known as the Bazda, Albazdu, Elbazde or Bozdağ Caves, they first appeared as quarrying took place to build the surrounding temples and caravanserai. The caves have numerous galleries and tunnels with ceilings up to 15m high. Within Arabic inscriptions dating back to the 13th century and naming Abdurrahman el-Hakkâri, Muhammed İbn-i Bakır and Muhammed el-Uzzar can be seen. It is a good idea to bring a torch to explore the caves.

## Şuayb Ancient City

Another 23km from the caravanserai is the ancient city of Şuayb, a large settlement inhabited from Roman times until the Mongol invasions. There are hundreds of stone graves at the site, which is sometimes known as Özkent. Local tradition associates the site with the Prophet Şuayib (Jethro), Moses' father-in-law.


Şuayb ancient city [72]


Han El Ba'Rur [73]



Tahir and his friends [74]

## Soğmatar (Eski Sumatar)

Soğmatar, a collection of ruined Sabian temples, lies 55km from Harran and 15km to the north of Şuayib in the village of Yağmurlu. The site probably dates back to the 2nd century or so and comprises nine cave-temples, each thought to be dedicated to a particular astronomical deity and surrounding a central mound. You will see the remains of sculptures of humans, representing gods, on the hilltop ruins to the north side of the village where the temple of the Moon God Sin is thought to be found. There are also Syriac inscriptions, dating back to 165, on this mound.

The Sabians worshipped the sun, moon and the planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, so they could be called polytheists, though some researchers think they also worshipped a "higher" deity, which would make their religion essentially monotheistic with the astronomical bodies as "priests". It is said that the sect acquired its name after a visit by Caliph Abdullah al Ma'mun to Harran, where Sabians also lived. When he discovered that they were not adherents of Judaism, Christianity or Islam, he announced that he could have them killed but said he would let them live if they converted to one of these faiths before his next visit. Meanwhile a Koranic scholar advised them to start calling themselves "Sabians", after a monotheistic creed mentioned in the Koran. The caliph died before he could return to Harran but it is thought that the sect changed its name as had been suggested, though they carried with their old religious beliefs and rituals (said to include human sacrifice).


Helpful children of Soğmatar [75]

## Senemağar

These caves are close to the village of Büyük Senem Mığar (Senemağar), 11km on the north of Soğmatar. The site is believed to have been an important Christian centre, especially in the early years of the religion. A three-storey building on top of the hill in the village was probably a monastery or a palace. On the north of this worship place are churches dug out of the rock.


Senemağar [76]


Soğmatar Cave [77]

## Accommodation

It's possible to stay in one of the beehive houses. At *Harran Kültür Evi* in İbnitemiye Mahallesi (0414 441 22 80 – 0542 337 85 12), you can either sleep on a mattress on the floor in one of the rooms or in a wooden bed (that) in the garden or on the roof. Excellent local food, live music and *sıra geceleri* is available. Other choices are *Kubbeli Ev* (0542 337 85 12) and *Harran Evi* (0414 441 20 20) in İbniteymiye Mahallesi. In the town centre itself, try the *Bazda Hotel* (0414 441 35 90, bazda1@ttnet.net.tr).

## Places to eat

*Çamlık* (0542 727 20 55) serves traditional and local dishes and also offers a variety of alcoholic drinks. There is also music and it is open till late. The restaurant is located 2km from Harran in Tahılalan area, on the road to Urfa. Local fare is also served at *Harran Kültür Evi*, which has live music and organises *sıra geceleri* for large groups.


Harran Kültür evi [78]



Gazelles in Ceylanpınar [79]

# Ceylanpınar (Serêkaniyê)



A gazelle in Tigem [80]

In the far southeast of the province, Ceylanpınar (population 43,890) was created to house the workers who constructed the rail line connecting Turkey to Syria. Trains still run from Ceylanpınar to Syria once a week (0414 471 40 75 for more information).

Historically the place was called Rıș Ayna. The current name dates from 1923, with the proclamation of the republic, though Ceylanpınar also has an Arabic name, Ayn al-Zuhur. According to legend, a king's daughter of that name came one spring day to Ceylanpınar and liked the view so much that she became a regular visitor, and the place eventually acquired her name.

The town was divided into two when the border with Syria was demarcated. Since 1999, the border has been open at the end of Ramadan and at *Bayram* for few days to allow people visit relatives on the other side. Recently it was decided that Ceylanpınar will become a designated port of entry for trade goods.

Interestingly Ceylanpınar has small Uzbek and Afghan minority, whom helped by the government and arrived from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the 1950s and from Afghanistan in 1986, fleeing conflict there. Wearing their traditional clothes, with high cheekbones and slanting eyes, they are easily recognised and share space in the bazaar with the locals. Some 1800 Uzbeks from Afghanistan were given 215 houses 3km in Evrenpaşa village (named after the general who


Afghan children from Ceylanpınar [81]

led Turkey's military coup in 1980), where they still live today, drinking green tea and cooking Afghan food along with basmati rice which are imported via Syria. Most of them lead a poor existence, trading leather products that they bring from İstanbul.

## Tigem

The region is home to the Ceylanpınar Agricultural Enterprise (TİGEM), the largest farm in Turkey, created in 1943 (although far before that the farm was used for similar reasons by the local Kurdish *paşa*, (İbrahim Paşayê Milî) as a model agricultural establishment. In particular, it produces cotton, sunflowers, dairy products, general fruits and vegetables and also rears livestock. Ceylan means gazelle in Turkish (Xezal in Kurdish) and this is the only part of Turkey where you will find gazelles, which are endangered and are thus have protected status within a particular zone in the area.


Tigem farm [82]

| Accommodation | Places to eat |
|---|---|
| You can stay at the *Otel Şaabin*, Cumhuriyet Cad (0414 471 49 46). | Try the *Kepez Lokantası*, Cumhuriyet Cad (0414 471 74 15), or *Şafak*, on the same street (0414 471 22 83). The restaurants serve different types of *kebabs* and dishes with rice. |



Hana handed Afghan girl [83]


ŞANLIURFA
İL HARİTASI
DİYARBAKIR
ADIYAMAN
MARDİN
GAZİANTEP
SURİYE
İŞARETLER / LEGEND
ŞANLIURFA
Siverek (Girê Sor)
Hilvan (Curnê Reş)
Karakeçi (Mizar)
Viranşehir (Wêranşar)
Bozova (Hewenge)
Halfeti (Xelfetî)
ŞANLIURFA (Ruha)
Birecik (Bêrecûg)
Suruç (Pirsûs)
Akçakale (Tilebyad)
Harran (Xarran)
Ceylanpınar (Serêkaniyê)
Ras al Ayn
Tell Tamer
Tall al Ayn
Derablus
Arslane Tach
Fırat Nehri
Birecik Barajı
Atatürk Barajı
Eyüp Nebi (Ceffer)
Eskikale (Çendîr)
Yağmurlu
Karaali
Göktaş
Yobalan (Hafîrnot)
Kanlıavşar
Karacadağ
Karacadağ (Gimgim)
Çeşmebaşı (Hefîtar)
Kuyuluçay
Bozova Barajı
Suruç Barajı
Ceylanpınar Barajı
Harran Barajı
Akçakale Barajı
Viranşehir Barajı
Siverek Barajı
Hilvan Barajı
Halfeti Barajı
Karacadağ Kaleli Tesisleri
Karacadağ Kaleli
Siverek Kalesi
Piyade Konağı
Eyüp Peygamber Türbesi
Eyüp Peygamber Camii
Viranşehir Kalesi
Yobalan (Hafîrnot)
Eskikale (Çendîr)
Birecik (Kelek)
Kale Meydanı
Kale Cami
Eyüpiye Medresesi
Ulu Cami
Ulu Cami Hamamı
Gümrük Hanı
Gümrük Camii
Gümrük Kapısı
Örencik (Kerabreş)
Güvercinlik Tepe
Kanlıavşar
Halfeti Evleri
Halfeti Kalesi
Rumkale
Rumkale Kilisesi
Birecik Kalesi
Birecik Kilisesi
Birecik Müzesi
Müşellimler
Harran Kalesi
Harran Üniversitesi
Tarihi Harran Evleri
Harran Höyüğü
Ahmet Arani Mescidi
Şeyh Ahmet Arani Türbesi
Şeyh Ahmet Arani Camii
Han El-Bâ'ir Karvansarayı
Akçakale Eski Kalesi
Akçakale Eski Camii
Tall al Ayn Höyüğü
Ceylanpınar Kalesi
Ceylanpınar Ulu Camii
Ceylanpınar Kalesi Müzesi
Tell Tamer Kalesi
Tell Tamer Höyüğü
Tell Tamer Camii
Tell Tamer Müzesi
Tell Tamer Kilis



Folk dance (çayda çıra) [1]

# ELAZIĞ

## (Elezîz Mamûret'ül Azîz)

Elazığ was the site of the **Hurrian** settlement in around 2000BC and was later invaded between Hittites and Urartians, coming under **Roman** influence between the first and third centuries. The modern **Elazığ city** is a good starting point to visit the **Euphrates** basin and affords good views **of Nemrut Mt.**



A view form Elazığ [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
541.258 (2007)
**Average altitude**
1067m.
**Area**
9181 square kilometres
**Districts**
Elazığ, Alacakaya, Arıcak, Ağın, Baskil, Karakoçan, Keban, Kovancılar, Maden, Palu, Sivrice
**Economy**
Agriculture (especially wine production), Livestock farming
**Neighbouring provinces**
Malatya (west), Erzincan (northwest), Tunceli (north), Bingöl (east), Diyarbakır (southeast)

Elazığ was the site of a Hurrian settlement in around 2000 BC, and was later invaded by Hittites and Urartians, coming under Roman influence between the first and third centuries. The Arabs occupied the region until the end of the tenth century, following which it fell under Byzantine control for a while before being regained by the Arabs. The Seljuks took over the region following the battle of Malazgirt (Manzigert) in 1071. The Artukids of Harput and then Hasankeyf ruled here briefly in the early 12th century, after which the Seljuks took control again. Subsequently the Mongols, Mamlukes, Akkoyunlus and Safavids came and went, and then, like the rest of the region, Elazığ passed into Ottoman hands in 1516. During the last years of the Ottoman Empire the area which had a considerable Armenian population, became the centre of intense American Protestant missionary activity with the establishment of a theological seminary and high school, the Euphrates College in Harput, which functioned until World War I.



Old Elazığ School [3]

The local economy is mainly based on agriculture and some mining, in

particular extraction some valuable marble stones, especially viniculture, for which Elazığ serves as a market centre. The state-run vineyards of Elazığ produce the well-known red Buzbağ. The *Öküzgözü* grape variety of Elazığ is mentioned on the labels of high-quality Turkish wines, for example Kavaklıdere and Doluca, which are popular in Turkey. Industry in the region includes lead production and some fishing around Keban and the chromium mining factory in Kovancılar.

Modern Elazığ city is a good starting point to visit the Euphrates basin, and affords good views of Adıyaman Mount Nemrut. The ancient city of Harput nearby is famous for its fortress, though there are other interesting monuments too, such as the Ulu Cami with its slanting minaret and Virgin Mary Church in Harput. If you feel like breathing some fresh air, you will enjoy a walk around the pretty Hazar Lake, 30km to the south and surrounded by smart villas and hotels, or taking a drive to the Hazarbaba Mountain. Sivrice and Gezin towns have become popular with visitors thanks to new infrastructure for picnics and water sports, winter sport as well as camping around Hazar Lake. At Palu an Urartian fortress offers views over the old town, while there is a good spa at Yoğunağaç (Golan) in the Karakoçan district. There are some ruins left from Hulvenk Monastery which founded in the 13th century in Şahinkaya (Bizmêşin) village some 6km from city centre.


Quality Öküzgözü grapes


City centre [5]

## Elazığ City

Contemporary Elazığ is an extension of the historic city of Harput. Under the reign of Mahmut II, the governor Reşid Mehmed Paşa began to expand Mezre as the location of Harput was high and not easy to reach, which lay on the plains a short distance from Harput. During the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz, military barracks, a hospital and a mansion for the governor were built to accommodate the seat of the new *vilâyet* (province). Mezre was named Mamûret'ül Azîz in 1867 on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of crowning of Sultan Abdülaziz. The city became known as Elezîz simply because it was easier to pronounce, but after Mustafa Kemal decided to rename the place once more, the government settled on Elazığ.

The city has a population of 319,381, with a majority Kurds, and minority of Syriac and some Turks, and has a youthful feel thanks to the presence of Fırat University, founded in 1975. In June participants in the university's

## Some prominent people from Elazığ

Elazığ is the hometown of **Fethiye Çetin**, the former spokeswoman of the Minorities Commission of the Istanbul Bar Association. Her poignant memoirs are contained in the book *My Grandmother*, the story of her Armenian grandmother who converted to Islam after being sheltered by a Turkish family following the events of 1920s which let to lose her own family. The book was a big success and has been translated in English and in French.

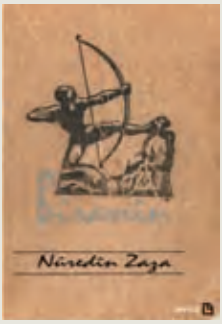


Book cover [6]

Figures from the arts who originally hailed from Elazığ include **Arif Susam**, a popular musician in the 1980s, and **Erdal Yazıcı**, a talented photo-journalist who has had his pictures published in *National Geographic*. Other natives of Elazığ include the Armenian philosopher **Shahan Natalie** and the now deceased architect **Vedat Dalokay**, who designed the head office of the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah. From the world music, **Erkan Oğur** is known a pioneer of fretless guitars; he invented the first fretless classical guitar in 1976. He was born in 1954, in Ankara, Turkey but spent his childhood in Elazığ, as composer, he has influenced many musicians with his compositions combining the sounds of folk music, classical music with the ancient traditional music. He is regarded as a master of the kopuz and *bağlama* lutes. Lastly Dr.

**Nûredîn Zaza** (Nûredîn Ûsiv/Zaza) the Kurdish short story writer, Nûredîn Zaza, was born in Maden, in 1919. In his youth he went to Syria, once there he met and worked with some important Kurdish intellectuals. His first writings were published in Hawar, the first Kurdish magazine published by Celadet Alî Bedirxan in 1932 and Ronahî (See p:474 ).

At the end of the 2nd World War, he went to Sweden and studied Pedagogy at Lausanne University. For his PhD thesis he compiled a research on the French philosopher Emanuel Monnier. On his return to Syria and involving in politics he was arrested in Syria but also in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. After his last release in 1969, he went to Sweden and continued his writings about the situation of Kurds and especially his mother tongue, Kurdish. Nûredîn Zaza was one of the installers of the Kurdish Institute in France *(http://www.institutkurde.org/en/)*. He left behind large number of books wrote in Kurdish and French such as his most known book written in French, *Ma Vie Kurde* (My Kurdish Life). He translated the famous Ehmedê Xanî's Mem û Zîn story into French. Dr. Nûredîn Zaza passed away in 1988 after a long battle with cancer, he was buried at Lausanne.



Nûredîn Zaza Book cover [7]


Çayda çıra in Elazığ [8]

folklore festival arrive by the hundreds. The vibrant and lively Kapalı Bazaar in the centre of the city is surely worth shopping and visiting.

A traditional Elazığ dance known as çayda çıra always begins in darkness, with the dancers holding little plates bearing lit candles. Some people in Elazığ believe that the roots of this dance lie in a tragic love story involving two young people living south of the town, close to Hazar Lake. They used to meet secretly in the evenings, the young man swimming across the lake to the meeting place. The girl would signal her position with lighted kindling (çıra). The girl's father came to learn about these assignations and extinguished the kindling, as a result of which the young man drowned in the lake. As soon as she heard of his death, the desperate girl committed suicide by jumping into the water.

Elazığ is a relaxed base from which to visit the historical attractions of Harput, which is the highlight of the province. One of the few attractions in town itself is the Archaeology and Ethnography Museum (9am–5pm) on the campus of Fırat University. One section exhibits historical artefacts found during the construction of Keban and Karakaya Dams, while the other section showcases ethnographic works like handmade carpets, kilims, etc. While in Elazığ, you can also easily get out into the countryside by catching a dolmuş to the Sefkar Baba Forest, northeast of town.


Elazığ's main bazaar [9]

## Getting there

Apart from the regular bus services, airlines operate flights to Elazığ from Ankara and Istanbul. There are also daily train service to Istanbul can be found in Elazığ city.

## Accommodation

A four-star hotel with a nice swimming pool is the *Akgün Elazığ*, Korgeneral Hulusi Sayin Cad (0424 248 20 00, www.akgunelazighotel.com). An alternative is the *Akar Otel*, Balak Gazi Cad (0424 218 34 89).

## Places to eat

Like Urfa, Elazığ is well known for *çiğköfte*, a specialty made with raw meat and spices. You can try it at *Eyvan* or at *Şişko'nun Yeri*. Kilis, *Altın Şiş, Havuzbaşı, Şelale* and Polatlar are recommended for kebabs also in Harput try kebabs in Halit Usta, for Harput Soup, a specialty made with chickpeas and meat.
There are also many places en route from town to Diyarbakır where you can have fish from Hazar Lake, including *Çamlık Restaurant, Mavi Göl* and *Harzo Dayı. Keban Alabalık Tesisleri* and restaurants in the Koçkale area are also very popular places for fish.

**Municipality: 0424 238 24 90 Tourist information: 0424 236 58 54**

# Harput (Xarpêt)



Harput houses [10]



Harput house [11]

Harput is only 3km from Elazığ and accessible by dolmuş or taxi. The town takes its name from the majestic Harput kalesi (*har* means "rock" and *put* "castle" in Armenian), a reminder of the glorious past when this was a regional metropolis throughout medieval and Ottoman times. On your way to the town you will see many examples of old Harput houses, some of which are planned for restoration, also can be found nearby, are some restaurants with occasional live music in the evening, and are good for views over the fortress.

Along with the ruins of the castle, the building of most interest is the Ulu Cami, founded around 1165. There are also three Ottoman caravanserais and other monuments. The historical sites are concentrated around Yakup Şevki Cad.

## Harput Kalesi

The majestic citadel on a southeastern hilltop was built by the Urartians. It is sometimes referred to as the Milk Citadel *(Süt Kalesi)* because legend says that the Urartians were so well off that they coated the whole citadel in milk and mixed milk with the building materials to reflect its status. The fortress has an inner keep and an outer keep, each of them restored many times during the course of history. During the recent excavations some tunnels and a water cistern from Urartian era were found.

## Virgin Mary (Meryem Ana) Church

South of the citadel and sharing one wall with it is the Virgin Mary Church (also referred to as the Red Church, the Assyrian Church or the Jacobin Church). One of the oldest Syriac churches, it was probably a place of pagan worship before becoming a



Harput Kalesi [12]



Ulu Camii [13]

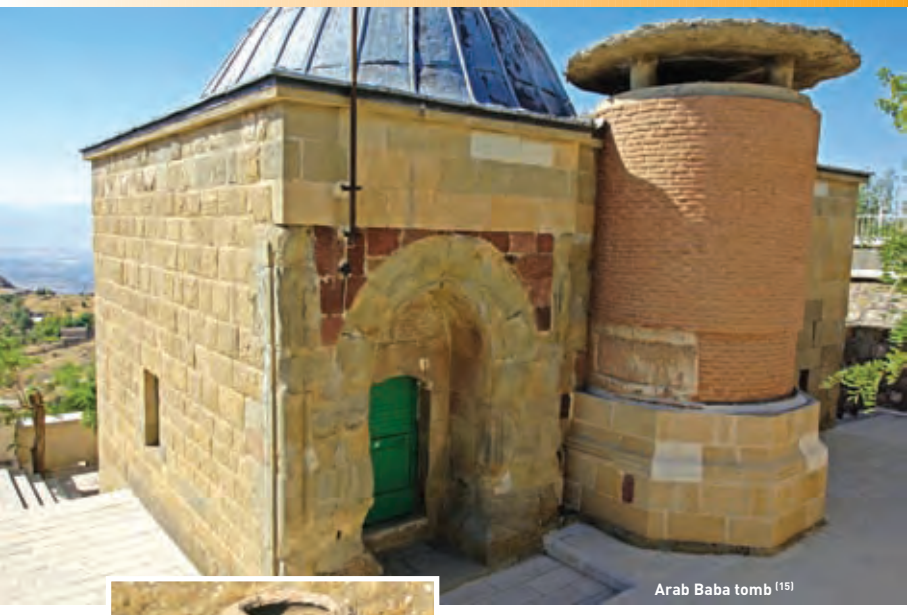
Christian place of worship during the sixth century. Rectangular in plan, the church was reconstructed in 179 and the portico was restored in 1845 according to records in Mardin, and was it used by Assyrian Christians, distinct from the Armenians of Harput. Some of the walls are actually natural rock walls, and the church is linked to the citadel by secret passages.

## Ulu Cami

The only mosque in Anatolia with a leaning minaret is on Nizamettin Cad. One of the oldest and most important mosques in Anatolia, it was built around 1156 by the Artukid ruler of Harput, Fahrettin Karaaslan. The original wooden minbar of this mosque is now to be found in the Kurşunlu Camii (see below). Inscriptions attribute the minbar to a son of Çubuk, at the end of the 11th or beginning of the 12th century. The mosque is largely of rubble stone, though the leaning minaret is made of brick and contains some wonderful brick ornamentation. A door in the west wall which leads to the interior of the mosque contains the same style of brick. Inside of the mosque is an integrated courtyard that remained invisible from the outside. The vaulted naves around the



Ulu Cami leaning minaret [14]


Arab Baba tomb [15]


Hasan Hoca Hamam [16]

courtyard are 14th or 15th century rebuilding. The areas around the minaret as well as the prayer hall to the south are probably the only remains of the 12th-century mosque.

## Ağa Camii

Thought to have been built in 1559 by Pervane Ağa, this mosque is in the eastern part of the city, at the end of the main road into Harput (Yakup Şevki Cad). Its dome was in ruins but has been restored and the mosque is still used for worship.

## Kurşunlu Camii and Hoca Hasan Hamam

Don't miss this beautiful Ottoman mosque, built in the 1730s, with its lead-covered dome. On Yakup Şevki Cad, it has a dome with four windows on top of the dome. The wooden minbar of the Ulu Cami, with beautiful inscriptions and vegetal designs, was installed in this mosque in the 1960s. West of the castle you can see the dome of the Ottoman-era Hoca Hasan Hamam, built on a rectangular plan. The Hamam is in ruins.

## Alacalı Camii

This small rectangular mosque in the southwest of town (turn right on Yakup Şevki Cad before reaching Ağa Camii) is probably Ottoman and is worth seeing for its minaret, with alternating black and white bands. The minaret and the decorations on the ceiling date from a 19th-century restoration.

## Arap Baba Tomb

At the end of Nadir Baba Cad in southern Harput is this tomb, probably from the Seljuk period. There is no reliable information on Arap Baba's identity, but it is believed that he was also known as Yusuf İbn-i Arapshah and that he built the tomb for himself in 1276. A legend says that after a year of

drought, a woman dreamt that if Arap Baba's head could be chopped off from his corpse and thrown in the river, the rains would come. Without saying a word to anyone, the woman duly accomplished this task, whereupon it rained continuously. Then the woman dreamt that if Arap Baba's head was found and replaced, the deluge would stop. The village elders recovered the head and restored it to its owner's body, whereupon the rain ceased and the weather returned to normal.

## Saray Hatun Mosque, Cimşit Bey Hamam and Mansur Baba's Tomb

Constructed by the Akkoyunlu leader Hasan Bahadır Khan's mother in 1465, and since restored many times, the Sarayhatun Mosque (it's also known as Sara Hatun) contains some beautiful examples of handworked stone. Next to the mosque and sharing a common wall with it is the beautiful Cimşit Bey Hamam, which has four domed rooms that let daylight in. It was built during the 16th century by one of Sultan Selim's military commanders, Cimşit Bey. Nowadays part of the hamam has been converted into an attractive restaurant, though you don't have to eat here to have a look at the former bathing areas.



Cimşit Bey Hamamı [17]



The gate to the Cemşit Bey Hamam [18]

To the northwest of the mosque in the same street, Nizamettin Cad, is Mansur Baba's Tomb, thought to be the resting place of various Artukids. The original building, likely to be from the mid-13th century, was probably on two storeys, with an octagonal plan, but it was subsequently completely rebuilt.

## Harput Dabakhane Spa

In Dabakhane Cad 5km from Elazığ, this spa has three pools made of marble. Clear water, neither acid nor alkaline, emerges at 50°C and is meant to be good for stomach and liver ailments.

## Harput Museum

The museum is opposite the old municipality building and contains and interesting collection of handicrafts and other local artefacts. Open between 8.30am and 5pm (closed Mondays), it was opened in 1965 and was something of a trailblazer for Elazığ's Archaeology and Ethnography Museum (0424 241 11 30).

# Keban



Keban Dam [19]



Simsimi Halayı (folk dance) [20]

Keban with the population of 5,328, hosting one of biggest dams in Turkey and generating nearly a tenth of Turkey's electricity is the Keban region, 45km to the west of Elazığ. The ruins discovered during the construction of Keban Dam show that Keban was settled as far back as the tenth century. A Seljuk captain, Çağrı Bey, entered the area with his troops in 1017, paving the way for further Turkish invasions. Keban was one of the provinces of Ottoman Empire until 1834 when Harput was designated a province.

The hydroelectric power complex was completed in 1975, and its construction required the evacuation of thirty thousand people from more than 200 settlements. The lake, which has submerged several dozen archaeological sites, is a popular picnic site and for trout fishing and water sports organised by a local-government office (0424 571 20 01). You can eat here at *Çurçır Alabalık Tesisleri,* which specialises in fish, (0424 571 23 23).

If you are invited to a wedding hereabouts, you might join a simsimi halay, a folkloric dance usually performed at the groom's house and symbolising unity, solidarity, heroism and forgiveness. Youths gather around a circle placing one of their friends in the middle, blindfolded and with hands tied behind his back. He moves around within the circle trying to touch one of his friends, who will then replace him.

## Yusuf Ziya Paşa's Complex

In the town centre is a *külliye* (Islamic religious complex) built in the 18th century by the governor of Diyarbakır, Yusuf Ziya Paşa. These buildings, including a mosque, madrasah, fountain, library and mausoleum, were once a fine example of Ottoman architecture but only the entrance and some walls are still standing.

## The two great rivers of Mesopotamia


Euphrates River [21]

The Euphrates is the western of the two great rivers (the other being the Tigris). Euphrates River is longer then Tigris, approximately 2,781km long. Its formed by the union of two branches, the Karasu rises northeast of Erzurum also in the Kargapazarı Mountains and the Murat which rises from north-east of Lake Van, about midway between Lake Van and Mount Ararat. The river flows through steep canyons and gorges, southeast across Syria, and finally through Iraq in the Persian Gulf.

Tigris joins with the Euphrates, and for the remaining 170 km to the outlet at the Persian Gulf, known as Shatt El Arab. (See for Tigris p: 239)

### Denizli Caravanserai (Vakıf Han)

Built in the 13th century, this caravanserai is in the village of Denizli, 8km from Keban. It includes a domed mosque, a courtyard pool, a hamam and guest quarters.

### Armenian Church

The Hallar area of Keban, just opposite the police station, has a dilapidated Armenian church with a basilica layout. Unusually, the remains of frescoes can still be seen. The church is used by the municipality as repairing centre for cars.


Apples [22]

# Ağın (Axîn)



Famous Ağın chickpeas [23]



Cooking chickpeas [24]

Some 80km northwest of Elazığ on the Keban Dam Lake is the small town of Ağın with population of 1.824, linked by day to Elazığ and Malatya by a ferry on the Arapkir River. Half the residents are retired, and the town is also distinguished by having an unusually high literacy rate. Plenty of officials, writers, academics and poets hail from here, a fact of which locals are proud of this fact; they like to claim that Elazığ is administered from Ağın.

A cooperative of fishing families makes a living off the lake. The town was also once reputed for its chickpeas and its *Öküzgözü*, a Turkish grape variety, and the wine made from it, but is now trying to promote tourism.

The local cuisine is excellent, with specialities such as *kaburga kebabı*, *yemlikli yemek*. The local chickpeas derive their special flavour supposedly by cooking them with some very thin kind of sand from the village of Bademli.

The old houses here are made of mudbrick and have a pleasantly rustic appearance. In the town centre is the Ekrem İspir Mansion, which belonged to the first mayor of the town. Renovation plans are on the way by the governor of Ağın and the Turkey Conservation Organisation ÇEKÜL, so the house to be used as a cultural centre and museum. The building typifies the architecture of Ağın, the houses having flat roofs.

In summer there is a local festival, the Ağın Şenlikleri, on the last weekend in July, at which time prizes are awarded to the best roasted chickpeas in the area. The event also features poetry recitations and dance performances.



Ağın local dance [25]

# Sivrice (Xox/Dzovk)

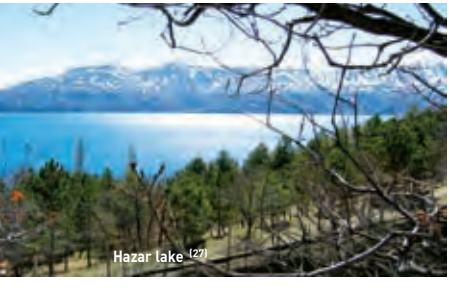


Hazar lake/sivrice [26]

Located by Hazar Lake 30km south of Elazığ, Sivrice has a population of 4,803 and was established in 1939 for Muslims emigrating from Romania and Russia under population-exchange agreements of the time. The town owes much of its appeal to the lake itself, whose name means "one thousand" in Kurdish. According to legend, there was a mining community living here, selling their ores to Mosul, Aleppo and Damascus, as well as growing the most delicious grapes and making wine. But they neglected to thank the deities for their prosperity. Angered, the gods sent storms to the region, drowning one thousand.

Given the presence of the lake, the 2347m peak of Hazarbaba and the Karaoğlan Mountains, the area is popular with visitors and has a number of summer houses, picnic areas and government recreational facilities. The lake's recreational potential is promoted at the Sivrice Göl Şenlikleri festivities in July. Besides tourism, fishing is important activity for the area.

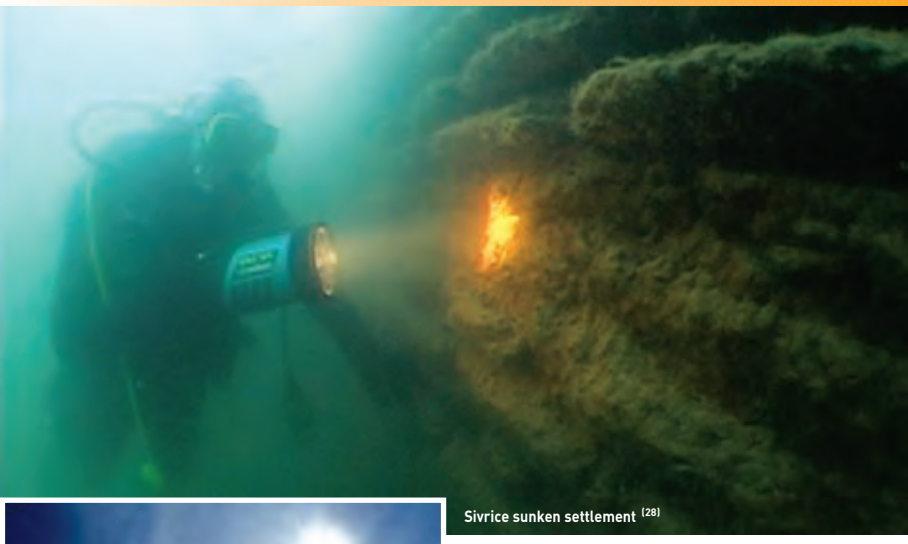
If you happen to be around in mid-June, try to attend the local cherry festival, at which the best cherries of the province are selected by the most beautiful women in the province, and there are performances of traditional music and dance.



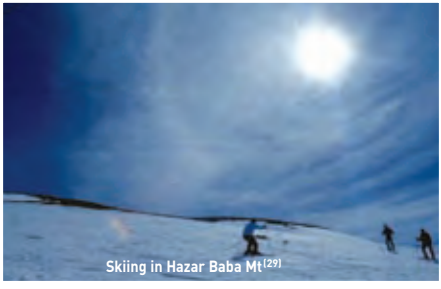
Hazar lake [27]

## Hazar Lake

The lake is situated some 25 km south-east of Elazığ and accessible by *dolmuş*. The lake has a dozen of beaches with clear water where you can windsurf. For accommodation, there are designated campsites as well as the two-star *Elazığ Mavi Göl Hotel* (0424 425 10 20), 30km out from Elazığ on the Diyarbakır road and 16km from the small lakeside town of Gezin. It has a sports centre and pool, the latter hosting some live music sessions. Another place that you may consider staying can be *Tur-Pol Tesisleri* (0 424 425 11 00)



Sivrice sunken settlement [28]



Skiing in Hazar Baba Mt [29]

The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi described a sunken settlement in the lake, and parts of it were visible when the water level fell recently. The settlement is on a small island called Gölcük Adası in the southwest of the lake. A relatively recent tale says that a pregnant woman cursed the settlement when she was refused a drink of water by its inhabitants, causing it to sink into the water, though a more rational explanation is that the settlement was on an island or peninsula which sank after earthquakes. You can make out the top of the settlement's walls from the shore, between the little island Gölcük (Kilise) Adası and the shore. The walls are 520m long and up to 6m tall.

## Hazarbaba Mountain

In the south of the province is the 2347m Hazarbaba Mountain, accessible by *dolmuş*. You can enjoy a view of both the Hazar Lake and the Keban Dam Lake from the mountaintop. The mountain also has facilities for skiing.

## Gezin Strawberry Festival

This municipally organised festival on 21 July invites the local farmers and gardeners to win prizes for their strawberries, and is a good opportunity for you to buy not just strawberries but also cherries at reasonable prices. The festival also features concerts and sports activities, including a swimming competition.



Gezin strawberries [30]

# Palu (Palo)



Palu historic hamam [31]



Sheikh Said before hanging [32]

A tranquil area, Palu is surrounded by the Taurus Mountains and traversed by the Murat River. Being a conservative place, Palu with the population of 8,894 is said to be the ideal place to grow, tobacco and sugar-beet are also grown.

Pınar Tepesi, the hill to the west of the town, has proved a rich source of archaeological finds from the Chalcolithic period (fourth millennium B.C.) right up to the Middle Ages. Palu became capital of the Urartian Empire when it was conquered by King Menau. It was from Palu that Helmuth Von Moltke (Moltke the Elder), a famous German adviser to the Ottoman army, set out on his journey downstream by *kelek* (a raft made from sixty animal skins) to investigate whether the Euphrates was navigable.

Palu was administratively attached to Diyarbakır until the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The town, for some short time was the control centre during the Kurdish rebellion of 1925 led by Sheikh Said also known as Şex Seîdê Palo, and where the insurrection had its last stand. The rebellion was crushed and Sheikh Said, who was from the Naqshibendi dervish order, and some of his followers were arrested and hanged in June of that year at Dağkapı Square in Diyarbakır (Also see p: 139). Like the Elazığ Plain, the region was very much inhabited by Armenians before the 1920s event, some scholars have documented that there were once 48 Armenian villages.



Ulu Cami in old Palu [33]

There are several historical sites within walking distance of one another in Old Palu (Eski Palu), some 8km away from the modern town.

## Merkez Mosque

Dating from 1874, this is a square construction in the centre of New Palu in Cumhuriyet quarter with a flat roof divided into three naves inside. The mihrab is beautifully decorated.

## Palu Fortress

This Urartian fortress sits on a steep hillside with views of Old Palu in Yukarı Palu (Zeve) district. Dating from the same era is an 80m tunnel with steps in the northwest side of the hill and, on the west side, a large rock bearing an inscription by King Menua. The remains of the Church of the Holy Illuminator and two ancient mosques can also be seen.

## Ulu Cami

Located in in Çarşıbaşı area the original mosque was a 12th-century Artukid construction, but what you see today is the result of rebuilding in the 15th century, and the minaret and mihrab date from the 17th and 18th centuries respectively. The mosque has a rectangular plan with a flat roof and black and white arches running north–south. Its walls are made of rubble stone, typical of the region. Nearby is Küçük Cami, of which only the minaret and some sections of wall are still standing.


On the way to old Palu [34]


Train station [35]

## Cemşit Bey's Tomb

Located near the Ulu Cami also in Çarşıbaşı area, Cemşit Bey was a cavalry officer of Sultan Selim in the 16th century, and his tomb, with beautiful stonework, survives together with the tombs of other members of his family. A cube-like domed mosque is also part of the complex.

## Palu Church and Palu Bridge

Though when it was build is unknown but it said that the Palu Church is an Byzantine master. It consists of one nave, which was originally domed, though of the dome only the octagonal drum remains. East of the nave is the apse, to either side of which you will find some frescoes of angels and biblical texts on the arches. The precise age of the church is unknown, though it might date from the early 19th century. The church is around 100 metres below the Ulu Cami and 600-700 metres away from the Bridge.

Walking towards the river from the church you will come up to the historic Palu Bridge. Palu was part of the Silk Road during the 12th century, and this bridge was an important ford over the Murat River. The bridge you see today is an Ottoman construction.


Palu church [36]



A local from Elazığ [37]

## Kovancılar (Qowanciyan)

With the population of 19,358, some 67km northeast of Elazığ is the town of Kovancılar. In 1934 three hundred Turkic families were resettled from Romania to Elazığ, by arrangement between the two countries. These families were settled around Palu temporarily and the following year they moved to a newly built village named after their place of origin in Romania – Kovancılar. It is said that it took a while for these migrants to integrate; for example, they were reluctant to allow their daughters to marry local men. Many of the migrants later left for the western cities of Sakarya and Bursa to join relatives.

Near the village of Ekinözü (Habap), on the side of Venk Mountain 7km from Kovancılar, can be seen the remains of an Armenian monastery dating back probably from 13th century with 15 rooms, though it is sometimes described as a castle. Above the entrance are chiselled two snakes, and next to the ruins are two Ottoman-era fountains.



Cooking bread [38]



Alacakaya's famous marbles [39]

## Alacakaya (Guleman)

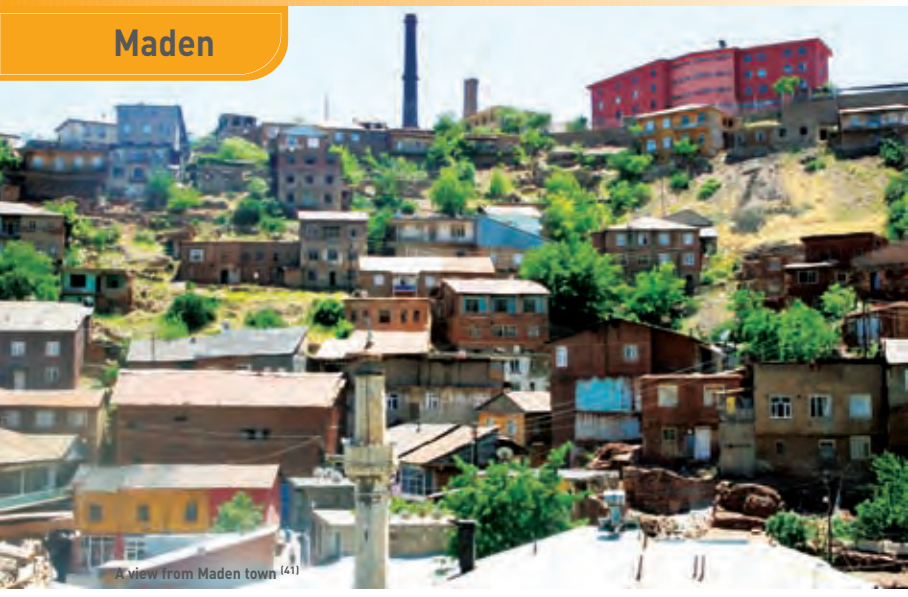
Alacakaya town with the population of 2,863, 85km from Elazığ, stands on top of a hill at high altitude. The town's modern history begins with the discovery of chromium in the vicinity in the 1930s. The story goes that a mining engineer chanced upon some rocks discarded by a villager, who had been using them to balance the load on his mule. The engineer went to the Saisi area, where the villager said he had obtained the rocks, and he discovered chromium resources. The state launched a mining company to exploit them and the town grew up around the area, which also produces marble.

Nearby is the Murat Hanı Caravanserai in the village of Çakmakkaya (Dolek), some 8km from Alacakaya. Once a stopping point on the Silk Road, the caravanserai is thought to have been built during the reign of Sultan Murat IV in the 17th century. There are waterfalls 3km further towards Elazığ.



A joyful girl [40]

# Maden



A view from Maden town [41]

On the border between Diyarbakır and Elazığ provinces some 80km away from the city of Elazığ, is the town of Maden, population 5,952, can be reached through a steep road that leads off the Diyarbakır–Elazığ highway. The town lies in a valley close to the Mihrap Mountains (an extension of the Taurus range) at an altitude of 1054m.

Maden is the only place between the Tigris and the Euphrates which produces copper. It is believed that the copper reserves were found by the Assyrians and exploited later by the Romans. Until 1889 it ruled from Diyarbakir, but became a district of Elazığ in 1927.

The town has two minor monuments, one of which is the *Camii-Kebir* mosque built in 1872 by Sultan Hamit and restored three times since. Its refined stone minaret was built in AH 1317. The other is the Clock Tower (Saat Kulesi), thought to date from 1898, which stands in the garden of the Hükümet Konağı (City Hall). Despite the typical Ottoman architecture, it was once officially registered by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture as a church. The building has also seen use as an *İmam-Hatip Lisesi*, that is to say a school for Muslim religious education. It is only eight years after that the truth came out and the ministry reclassified it a historical Ottoman city house. However, the building is still being used as a school and thus restoration has not been possible.



The old watch tower in Maden [42]

Some 25km from Maden on the way to Elazığ is Gezin beach, a popular Hazar Lake swimming spot in summer and home to some government-owned facilities and villas mostly belonging to people from Diyarbakır.

# Karakoçan (Dep)

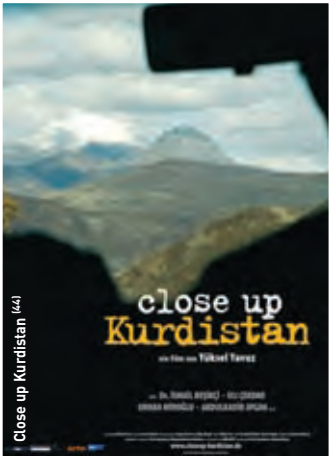


Karakoçan city centre [43]

With the population of 12,903, 104 km northeast of Elazığ is town of Karakoçan, a mountainous region with beautiful oak trees along the valley. Local people cultivate sugar beet, sunflowers and cotton and rear Karaman sheep. Remittances from Europe benefit the area a lot as more or less every family here has a relative abroad.

This was once a buffer zone between the Romans and Sassanids, and was a battleground for the Byzantines and Persians and then Byzantines and Seljuks, eventually being taken by the Seljuks in 1107, though their reign was ended by the Mongol invasion. The town played an important role during the First World War when the 2nd Ottoman Legion, well known for its exploits in Çanakkale, was moved here to counter the Russian armies which were menacing the Ottoman Empire.

Karakoçan is the hometown of Yüksel Yavuz, a Kurdish film-maker who moved to Germany in 1980. His movies deal with problems facing Turkish immigrants in Germany. One of his most recent works is a documentary




Close up Kurdistan [44]

called *Close Up Kurdistan* (2007), in which he makes a personal journey from Hamburg in Germany to Iraqi Kurdish region, through Stockholm and Turkey, and makes a connection between his personal odyssey and the current state of Turkish–Kurdish relations.

The area is largely home to Alevis, and it is possible to visit the tombs of their saints. For a taste of the countryside you can spend some time in the forest of Güzel Baba or you can go for an excursion in the Sefkar Baba forest, accessible by *dolmuş*.


Golan hot springs [45]

## Golan Thermal Spring

From the town center, dolmuş can take to you the natural thermal springs in the village of Yoğunağaç (Golan), 18km from Karakoçan. The water wells up at a temperature of up to 60°C from 400m deep, and is said to have powers to deal with gastric ailments, intestinal, liver and skin problems. The district is also famous for potable spring water especially in the villages of Kalecik and Bahçecik.

## Yücekonak (Qavuman)

The village of Yücekonak (Qawuman), 18km north of Karakoçan, is worth visiting to see the ruins of a castle and a lake named Yüzenada ("Swimming/floating Island") by the locals. Oddly, steps lead down into the depths of the lake but these are often hidden by reeds.

## Pir Cemal Abdal Tomb

This Alevi tomb in the village of Üçbudak (Delikan), 3km northwest of Karakoçan, is that of a person believed to have lived between in the late 12th and early 13th centuries, at the time of the Seljuks.

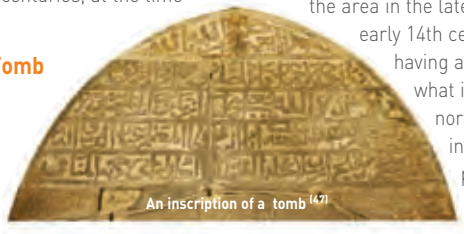
## Garip Baba Tomb

Another Alevi tomb, this is 25km north-east of Karakoçan in the village of Yeşilbelen (Gaxmud). It is thought that Garip Baba, passing through the region some 200 years ago, fell sick and had to stay for a while. The villagers realised he was an erudite mystic, and his grave subsequently became a place of pilgrimage. The shrine here was added only recently.


Tomb [46]

## Sefkar Baba (Seyyid İbrahim) Tomb

This Alevi tomb is 4km west of Karakoçan in the village of Demirdelen (Kafan). Sefkar is said to have lived in the area in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, having arrived from what is now northern Iraq in order to preach Islam.


An inscription of a tomb [47]




MESAFE CETVELİ (KM)

| ELAZIĞ | DİĞİ | ALACAKAYA | ARICAK | BASKİL | KARAKOÇAN | KEBAN | KOVANCILAR | MADEN | PALU | SİVRİCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 55 | 71 | 108 | 28 | 102 | 47 | 66 | 78 | 74 | 20 |



Spring time, Dêrsim[1]

# TUNCELİ (Dêrsim)

The breathtaking mountainous region formerly known as **Dêrsim** (meaning "**silver door**" in Persian) has historically been home to recalcitrant tribes who, up until Ottoman times, **refused to pay taxes** to the central government.



Munzur River [2]

The mountainous region formerly known as Dêrsim (meaning "silver door" in Persian, because the city of that name was said to be impregnable and so was nicknamed thus) has historically been home to recalcitrant tribes who, up until Ottoman times, refused to pay taxes to the central government.

Mesopotamian sources say that in 2000 BC, the area we now call Elazığ and Tunceli was called İşuva. It was conquered by the Hittites to the west, and then controlled by the Mushki people until it was taken by the Medes in the 7th century BC. Subsequent decades saw the Persians, Macedonians and Romans in charge. The area then came under Byzantine control, and was something of a battleground for the Byzantines and Sassanids for many years. Eventually the region came under the Seljuks after the key Battle of Malazgirt in the 11th century. Under the Ottomans, Dêrsim was at various times a province in its own right or *sanjak* linked to Erzurum and Elazığ. It finally became a province once again in 1946.

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
84,022 (2007)
**Average altitude**
1.264 m
**Area**
7.774 square kilometres
**Districts**
Tunceli, Çemişgezek, Hozat, Mazgirt, Nazimiye, Ovacık, Pertek, Pülümür
**Economy**
Beekeeping, Agriculture, Livestock Farming
**Neighbouring provinces**
Erzincan (north), Bingöl (east), Elazığ (south)

Tunceli has a special place in Kurdish collective memory, since it was home to one of the two biggest uprisings in the modern history of the region, in this case led by the Alevi tribal leader Seyid Rıza-i Zaza in the 1930s (See p:139). All along, the province had fiercely gone its own way, adopting its own laws and taxation system, and the Alevis of Dêrsim had refused to serve in the Ottoman army. In 1921, the Kurdish Rise Association (see also p: 139) decided to open branches in Koçgiri district of Sivas, further north,


Chained prisoner, Dêrsim rebellion [3]

and in Dêrsim. The government reacted by despatching a special army to the region, which put down the insurrection harshly after three and a half months. In the 1930s, new military installations here plus the Tunceli law of 1935, which amongst other things aimed to settle Turks in the area, triggered Seyid Rıza-i Zaza's uprising (also called Dêrsim Rebellion) , which was eventually put down in 1937, with Seyid Rıza and some other people including his son and brother being hanged in November that year. From 1938 to 1949, large parts of the province were declared a no-man's-land by the Turkish army, and travel restrictions persisted until the late 1960s.

Tunceli province still retains its distinctive identity and a particular flavour of nationalism. This is due to partly to the fact that most people are Zaza in origin and speak Zazaki (often called Dimili), and also the fact that the majority of the people are of the Alevi faith, a unorthodox branch of Shiite Islam that, among other things, allows women to pray with men in worship places called *cem evi,* instead of traditional mosque. The Alevis have faced persecution at various times. In the mid-16th century for example, the chief Ottoman religious official, Ebussud Efendi, circulated a fatwa to kill Alevis in parts of Turkey, which resulted in large numbers of them being murdered. The relaxed nature of the Alevi faith, perceptible in the fact that Alevi women can pray together with the men, might be due to a reaction against Sunni Islam and somehow


Alevi religious dance [4]


Pir Sultan monument, Tunceli centre [5]

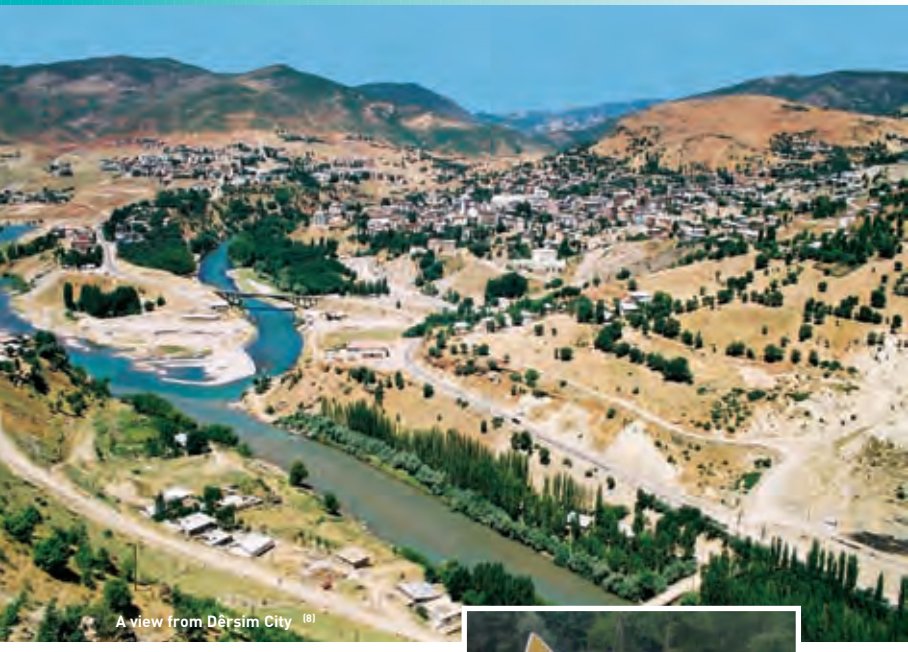

Munzur springs [6]

their relaxed way of life may originate from the influence of migrant Dêrsimis who live in western Turkey or Europe. Indeed women play a major role in the province, in business and even in frontline politics.

Also underlining this nonconformity, for example, are the stickers you may see in the streets and on windows of the shops, reading *Munzuruma Dokunma!* ("Don't touch my Munzur"). They are one small part of a local campaign against the project (not part of the wider Southeastern Anatolia Project, see p: 67) to build a series of dams on the Munzur River, a branch of the Euphrates. Ultimately these dams could mean thousands of people having to be resettled and the territory forming the Munzur Valley National Park being submerged by a lake. The economy of the province is based on livestock mainly and some agriculture. Some of the main products are wheat, tobacco, fishery vegetable and grapes.

For tourists, the steep, snow-capped peaks leave a lasting impression, as do the province's other unspoilt natural attractions – river valleys, plateaus and waterfalls. The Munzur Valley National Park, which runs from the provincial capital to Ovacık, offers excellent opportunities for trekking and rafting. Also good for excursions are the Mercan Valley in Ovacık and the Pülümür Valley. Another attraction in Tunceli are natural spring waters, such as at Dereova Waterfalls, which are actually spring-fed. The district of Pertek boasts large oak forests in the west which extend into neighbouring districts; the green forest gives an extra beauty to richness of the region. Mazgirt is worth visiting for the wonderful view from its fortress and the Bagin Thermal Spring on the Peri River. You can also stop by some cave dwellings in Çemişgezek. Wherever you go, locals will be happy to regale you with stories of Dêrsim and to give you directions to help you navigate the rural roads. You should insist from the old people to tell the stories about the holy Alevi places in Dêrsim.


A zaza woman from Dêrsim [7]



A view from Dêrsim City [8]

## Tunceli City

Tunceli city (population 27,091) is surprisingly modern in its outlook compared with other towns in south-eastern Turkey or even some of Istanbul's more conservative neighbourhoods. The city is known for having an independent-minded population, but for visitors, the main reason to make for this little-visited area is if you are big fan of nature. The city is surrounded by high mountains and steep cliffs, and the Munzur Valley nearby was one of Turkey's first fifteen national parks.

Otherwise, the city itself has a restful green space in İnönü Park, in the central Moğultay quarter. The park offers good views of the Munzur Mountains and the Munzur River, which runs through the city. A number of cafés in the area serves fresh fish, snacks and various drinks, including alcohol.

A good time to visit Tunceli is between spring until mid Autumn also during



Concert during Dêrsim festival [9]

the *Munzur Kültür ve Doğa Festivali* (Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature), an open-air four-day event organized by the municipality and some NGO organisations at the end of July or in early August. As its name suggests, the festival gathers together leading singers and other performers, but is also a time when discussion panels, film screenings and campaigns are organised in the city centre also similar smaller events held in the



Munzur Culture Festival [10]

other districts of Tunceli on the theme of nature conservation and against the damming of the Munzur River. Interestingly large number of Diaspora Kurds also attend this event. People normally camp nearby the river in the river for days and keep the whole city alive until very early hours of the mornings. Large number of street stales, exhibitions, book sellers can be found in the city centre. Take walk along the river and if you please just join one of the large or small groups of youth whom play saz and sing together



Munzur valley national park [12]



Young people by Munzur river [11]

while drinking cold beer or raki and usually discuss politics until late.

## Munzur Valley National Park

The park begins just 5km outside town and stretches all the way to Ovacık, with the road running parallel to the river along the way. For more on the park, (see p.141).

## Anafatma Natural Springs

At 27°C, these natural springs are 7km from the centre of Tunceli on the way to Ovacık. The water is mildly acidic (with soda) and the area is a good picnic spot which is popular with locals.

## Kutuderesi Picnic Site

If you are after some fresh fish and cold drinks or even some swimming in the river, then head for Kutuderesi

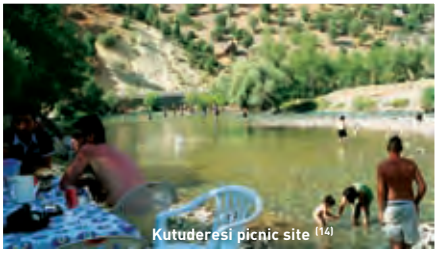

Halbori springs [13]

picnic site located some 18km from the city centre on the way to Nazımiye. Nearby there are number of other restaurants and resting places providing similar services.

## Halbori Springs

These springs, 20km from Tunceli, sit in a rocky canyon. The water which gushes out is icy cold and flows through a beautiful landscape, still untouristed, down to the Munzur River. If you do visit, do bring refreshments as there are no facilities.

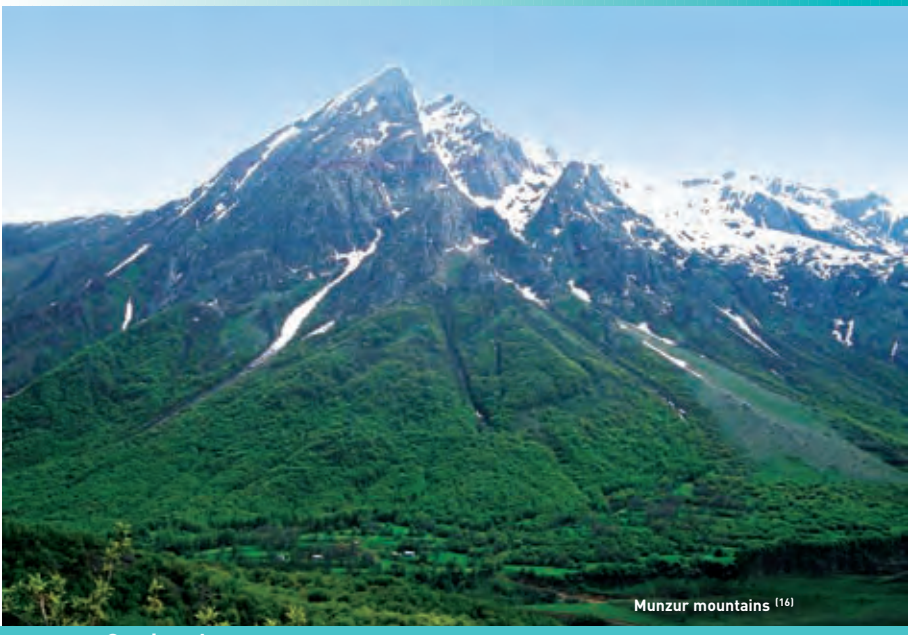

Munzur springs [15]


Kutuderesi picnic site [14]

## Munzur Mountains and Bağırpaşa Mountain

They are good excursion places with an altitude of 3000m at their highest points. The sides of the mountains are covered with oak and juniper trees. There are also a few crater lakes, at altitudes between 2000 or 3000m such as Karagöl, Koçgölü, Mercan Lakes and Buyerbaba. However, it is hard to see the crater lakes because no transportation will get you there.

There are more than 1500 different species of plants in the National Park of Munzur, some of them endemic to the region (that can only be found in the region). The province would have naturally become an attraction place for mountainous activities if there hadn't been the state of emergency for so long. The winters are especially long in the region, with snow covering the mountains until mid-April. The highest point of the province is Akbaba Tepesi, at 3,463m.



Munzur mountains [16]

## Getting there

The closest airport is in Elazığ, 120km away, while the nearest train station is in Erzincan and in Elazığ, from where you can take a *dolmuş* to Tunceli. There are also regular bus services from other parts of Turkey also Elazığ, Diyarbakır and Erzincan to city of Tunceli.

## Accommodation

Tunceli has a few decent places to stay. Centrally located options include the *Demir Otel* at Okullar Cad, Ata Sokak, No. 7 (0428 212 15 51), with 28 rooms; the pricier *Has Otel* on Boysan Cad (0428 212 1115), with 17 rooms, a restaurant and breakfast is a clean and comfortable place to stay; and the *Yüksel Otel,* also on Okullar Cad, with 21 rooms (0428 212 27 84).

## Places to eat

Tunceli will give you the opportunity to taste excellent fish and fresh fruit and vegetable produce. Do not miss the local green salad, which is prepared from fresh organic ingredients daily and is served with a pomegranate dressing.

The centrally located *Kalan* Restaurant on Cumhuriyet Cad (0428 21255 96) is a good choice, with a wide-ranging menu, as is the *Damla* Restaurant on Hürriyet Cad (0428 212 15 18) near the Has Otel. If you want to enjoy some live music while you dine, pay a visit to *Yunus Emre* in the *Gençlik Merkezi* (youth centre) in Moğultay Mahallesi (0428 212 50 93), which has nice views of the Munzur and is a relaxing place to drink a few beers. In addition to those in the city, are number of closely located restaurants in the centre by the Munzur River, also some just outside of the Tunceli also by river which they serve good quality fish with live music.

**Municipality: 0428 212 17 63 Tourist information: 0428 213 24 10**

## Dêrsimi performers



Aynur Doğan [17]

The province has been the birthplace of a number of poets, writers and musicians, among them **Sey Qajî** (or Seyîdê Qajî; 1936–1971). Despite losing his sight as a child, he began reciting poems and then singing them while playing the *tembur*. His love for Dêrsim and support for the poor and handicapped caused him some trouble with the authorities, which forced him to move elsewhere. Even today most people in Tunceli know a couple of his compositions.

*Usar Ame / Spring Came*
Binê Bîrîkano / *From the hillsides of Birikan*
Binê darikano / *From the deeper side of trees*
Çefê cenano / *It is the joy of women*
Serê no banano / *On the roofs*
Çefêna xortano / *It is the joy of youth*
Binê birikano / *Under the bush*
Çefê pîrîkano / *It is the joy of elders*
Pê kila doano / *Bringing some more Ayran*
Çefê viyvîkano / *It is the joy brides*

Sey Qajî



Metin-Kemal Kahraman [18]

Then there are the brothers **Metin and Kemal Kahraman**, who were born and brought up in the Pülümür district, blended traditional Zazaki songs with modern instruments and sounds, by which they hope to bridge old and new styles.

Also musical brothers of the province are **Mikail and Ahmed Aslan**, who now live in Germany. They have been able to spread their enthusiasm for traditional Dêrsimi musical instruments and styles to youth, among whom these had not enjoyed a particularly strong following.

Last but not least is **Aynur Doğan**, born in 1975 in Cemisgezek. She is particularly known for a song *Keçê Kurdan* ("Kurdish Girls"), which caused a stir with its message calling upon Kurdish women to resist oppression.

## Dêrsim Rebellion (Seyyid Rızai Zaza Rebellion)

Tunceli was the stage for many uprisings taking place during the more recent history of the region. Kurdish uprisings such as Koçgiri (1921) and Sheikh Said (1925) had their imprint on all areas inhabited by Kurds including Tunceli. Finally the Seyyid Rıza-i Zaza Rebellion starting in Dêrsim in 1937 is still fresh in the memory of local people. In the face of frequent uprisings in the region, there were repeated military operations while new methods were adopted to establish the authority of the central government. In one of these, the "Tunceli Law" was enacted on 25th December 1935 and remained in effect for 10 years, martial law was declared in Dêrsim, Elazığ and Bingöl, and Dêrsim was renamed as "Tunceli." (means-bronze hand) With this legislation which also envisaged settling Turkish population in the area accorded the status of both military commander and general inspector to the Governor of the area. As such the Governor was given immense authority including the following: Prosecuting, judging and sentencing persons; displacing persons or families. According to the legislation, any accused person would be denied the right to see the indictment or defend himself. Furthermore, any court decision would be definitive without the possibility of appeal to a higher court. With the implementation of the new legislation fresh unrest broke out early in 1937. Born in Dêrsim, Seyyid Rıza was the chief of one of the leading tribes of the region. Though not taking active part, he had helped insurgents during the Koçgiri Rebellion of 1921 and Sheikh Said Rebellion later in 1925. While in contact with Government authorities in the region, Seyyid Rıza opposed the Government decree requesting tribes to surrender arms and not to oppose to construction of new military bases and police stations. Instead, he asked for a new regional government that would safeguard the rights of population. The Government responded by sending new troops to the region. In September 1937, while in Erzincan to discuss the issue with Government authorities, Seyyid Rıza was arrested. After a trial of 14 days he was sentenced to death and on 18 November 1937 he was hanged at Buğday Square in Elazığ with 11 more including his son and brother. Large groups of special army were despatched to the region to deal with the unrest which led to alleged killing or disappearance including forced migration of some tribes to other parts of Turkey. Most part of the province was kept uninhabited by the Turkish Army until 1949 and travel restrictions continued up to the end of the 60s.



Send to exile, Dêrsim rebellion [19]



Seyid Rıza Zaza in court before hanging [20]

# Ovacık (Pulur)



**Munzur Baba Gözeleri spring** [21]

With a name that means "little plain" in Turkish, Ovacık (population 4,603) is well known for its natural beauty, with green forests covering the Munzur Mountains and traversed by pure streams and rivers. Over 3000m in height, the mountains lie just a few kilometres north of Ovacık town and their summits are covered with snow year round. They were the first range formed in Anatolia around 5 million years ago, and the peaks are richly abundant in flora and fauna. Amongst the many varieties of plants are health-promoting garlic, fungi, tulips and plants that can be used to make herbal teas.

The Munzur is the most important of the rivers here, rising some 17km west of the town and flowing through Ovacık and Tunceli until it gets to the Elazığ province and the lake behind the Keban Dam. The town itself, 60km northwest of Tunceli, is something of a cool oasis in area with overwhelmingly hot summers, but Ovacık also endures long winters, so you can expect to find snow here until mid-April.



**Locals from Dêrsim** [22]

Giving the beauty of this area with many of its waterfalls, Munzur River and amazing Munzur and Mercan Valleys, Ovacık is been familiar friend to host those who have an appetite for drinking alcohol while having picnic. One of the favourite drinks in Turkey which also consumed here is *rakı*, Similar to the Greek ouzo, raki is popular in the area and excellent for a picnic along with some grilled fish. There is much to say about *rakı*: for example, it is commonly said that cheese and watermelon are the partners of *rakı* because one cannot



Rafting, Munzur river [23]



A wild deer [24]

go without the two others. Some people believe that *rakı* stimulates all five senses: smell, because *rakı* is strongly flavoured with aniseed; sight, because the table at which *rakı* is drunk should be laden with all sort of meze; hearing, because conversations will be avid around the table; taste, as *rakı* with *meze* is undeniably tasty; and touch, because at the end of the meal people get closer and tend to hold each other.

## El Baba Camping Resort

The *El Baba* Resort (0428 511 31 49, fax 0428 511 25 50) http://www.discoveranatolia.org is a good place to stay if you want to enjoy the natural attractions of the area. The resort, 4km north of Ovacık in Güneykonak (Çakperi) village, has 80 beds with some tents and dorms which can accommodate up to eight people. Local dishes are prepared and served up in front of the campfire in the evening, and there are sometimes performances of music and dance too.

The resort offers tours and activities such as rafting, paragliding, cycling and of course trekking, with walks lasting up to eight hours and taking in plateaus, waterfalls and valleys. Meals can be arranged. For details of their current packages and prices, contact them directly.

## Munzur Valley National Park

Munzur Valley National Park, one of the biggest national parks in Turkey at 420 square kilometres in size, is mostly situated within the Ovacık district and features some of the wildest and beautiful nature of the entire southeast. You can enjoy a slow drive next to the river and there are many suitable places to pause for a cold beer or picnic. The park is home



Munzur Baba springs [25]

to a wide range of endemic plants, including 1500 herbs, 43 of which are endemic to Mount Munzur, as well as animals – you might even encounter a few creatures on the road.

## Munzur Baba Gözeleri

The Munzur River rises in a beautiful location near the village of Ziyaret, some 17km west of Ovacık and 80km from Tunceli. As the weekends are very popular among the locals to use this site for picnic it's recommended that you turn up early to find a place. Facilities include a children's playground and a little restaurant. If you visit you may see people lighting candles next to the water, which Alevis often do when praying or making a wish.

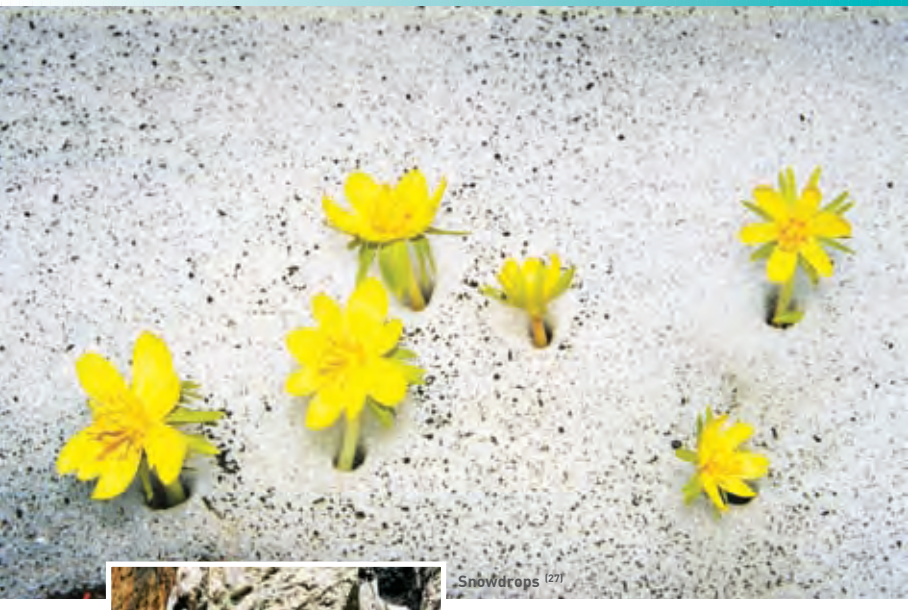


Wild bear from [26]

Right opposite the picnic spot and close to the falls is the Munzur water company, which distributes bottled drinking water to the region. Munzur water is popular among some Kurds in Turkey, who almost seem to consider it part of the national heritage.

## The Kırkmerdiven Plateau and Waterfalls

Once used to be the old route of the Silk Road to Erzincan. There are more than 40 springs that feed the amazing waterfalls. Kırkmerdiven is a small valley leading down into the depths of the Munzur Mountains. It is famous for its 4 large waterfalls. The single cloved wild garlic grows and wild mushrooms in higher points here. You be lucky to come across bears, pheasants and



Snowdrops [27]



Kirkmerdivan waterfall [28]

mountain goats. You can picnic here in the afternoon and return to the resort in the evening.

To get to this site you would need to drive for 9km and 3km on foot, closest village is Gözeler (Çımı), just 500m from the waterfalls.

## The Mercan Valley

A good excursion is to head out to Mercan Valley, 15km north of Ovacık. There are two beautiful waterfalls some 500m apart in attractive surroundings. The Turkish name for the waterfalls, *Kırk Merdiven Şelaleleri*, literally means "40 stairs waterfalls".

From Ovacık town, a 36km drive up to the end of the valley road and then an hour's walk will take you to the source of the Mercan River, on the border with Erzincan province. Like the Munzur River, the Mercan is renowned for its trout. Here you can also find walnuts and wild pears, and the area is also known for its Munzur honey. The nearest villages are Havuzlu (Hapo) and Ayayık (Solesen).

## The Kepir Plateau

Ideal for trekking, the Kepir Plateau can be reached in six hours, hiking up from the main road. You can even camp for a night or two on the plateau but note that it lies at an altitude of 3400m, so be prepared for cold conditions. There are six lakes on the Kepir Plateau or higher up.

To reach the plateau, take the road leading due north out of Ovacık and continue for around 17km.




Picnic site by the Munzur Baba Gözeleri springs [29]

## Accommodation

The Munzur Otel (0428 511 20 64) is a small centrally located place with 22 rooms in the Ovacık town centre. Otherwise, consider staying at the Elbaba Camping Resort (0428 511 31 49) just out of town (see p:141).

## Places to eat

Trout are farmed within the Munzur Valley National Park, and you can try the well-known reddish trout at the Kırmızı Benekli Alabalık Restaurant (0428 511 21 57), which also serves alcohol. You'll find the restaurant in the Kandolar quarter, near the centre of Ovacık town.



Melon, Watermelon and Rakı [30]

## The Legend of Munzur Baba

This is the tale of a shepherd called Munzur who lived around the Ziyaret ( Jarê) village in Ovacık.

One day Munzur's master made a pilgrimage to Mecca. While he was away, Munzur said to the lord's wife, "Madam, my master desires sweets. If you prepare them, I will take them to him."

At first she was surprised and then she thought Munzur might want the sweets for himself. But she prepared the sweets anyway and gave them to him. As soon as he had the sweets he was transported to Mecca in the twinkling of an eye and took them to his master, who was naturally puzzled. Munzur said, "My master, you desired sweets and so I brought them to you." His master wanted to reply but Munzur had disappeared.

When his master returned, all the peasants went to greet him, as did Munzur, who took a bucket filled with milk. While the crowd was trying to kiss the master's hand, he said to them, "This is the one whose hand must be kissed," pointing out Munzur. But Munzur ran away from the approaching throng and disappeared in the Munzur Mountains. The milk he was carrying splashed around and where it spilt, water gushed out – the springs that feed the Munzur River. However there is a different version of the shepherd story, also another Munzur Baba legend which tells of Prophet Abraham and his sheep.

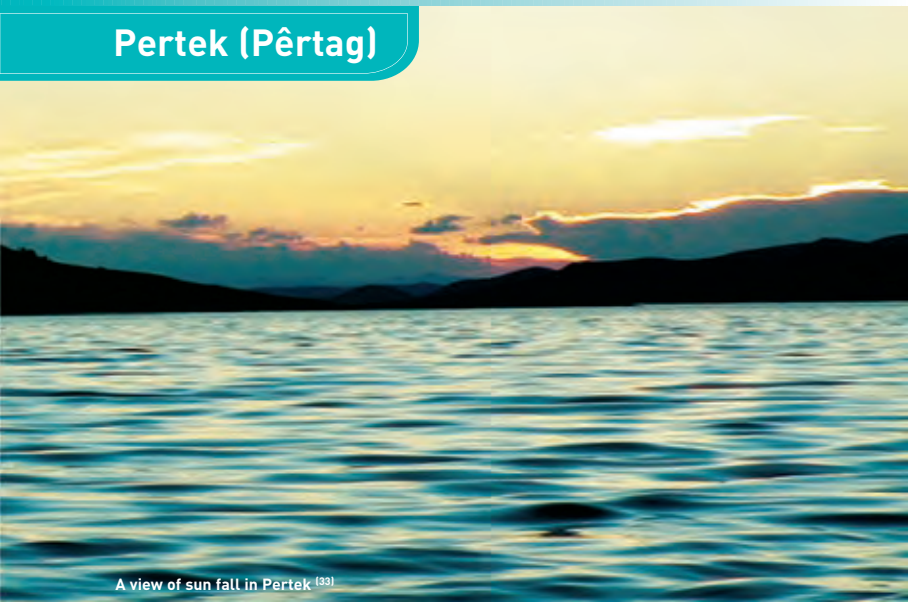


Munzur Baba Ziyaret, setting candles [31]



Handing out food at Munzur Baba Ziyaret [32]

# Pertek (Pêrtag)



A view of sun fall in Pertek [33]

Pertek (population of 6,032), is closer to and has stronger commercial ties with neighbouring Elazığ province than with Tunceli. Around 50km south of Tunceli city, the town lies on a peninsula on the edges of the lake behind the Keban Dam. The proximity of the dam has allowed the development of fishing and gives the area a lush appearance, especially in spring. Regular ferries run between Pertek and Elazığ every 30 minutes from 6.30am to 8.30pm.

During Ottoman times Pertek was a cultural centre and a number of mosques and madrasahs were built, though many monuments were submerged when the dam was built, including a 15th or 16th-century Syriac church, which was once the largest in the province and stood in the village of Korluca (Til). Most of the monuments that survive were rescued in 1975, a massive operation in which students of the Middle Eastern Technical University in Ankara transported them piece by piece to the then newly built Soğukpınar district.

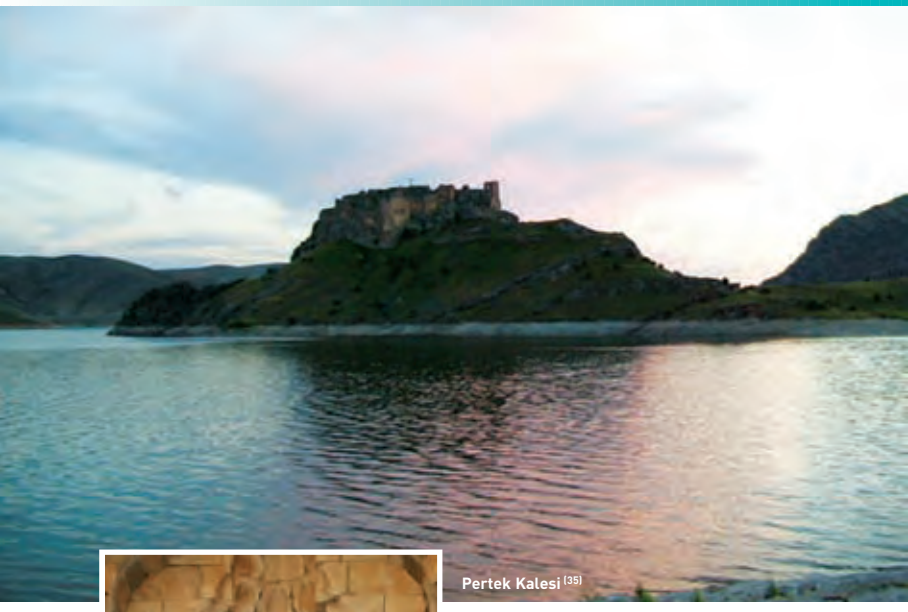
An annual one-day festival is celebrated, usually in July, in the vicinity of the dam. It is called the *Pertek Peynir ve Pekmez Festivali* (Festival of Pertek's Cheese and Pekmez, *pekmez* being a kind of sweet made of grapes) and features music and folkloric shows, as well as gold medals for the makers of the best cheese and *pekmez*.

## Çelebi Ağa Camii

Probably the most impressive of the monuments in Pertek town, this mosque was built by Koca Hacılı Ali Oğlu Çelebi around 1560, with the minaret dating to the 1570s. With three domes in the portico in front of the prayer hall, it is a gorgeous



Çelebi Ağa Camii [34]



Pertek Kalesi [35]




Yukarı (Baysungur) Camii [36]

example of Ottoman architecture. The mosque was carefully moved to its present location in the central İstiklal quarter. There are three small tombs and one large one at the back.

## Yukarı (Baysungur) Camii

Also in the İstiklal quarter is this stone mosque, nicely decorated with Koranic inscriptions and murals. The mosque was built in 1569 by Baysungur, a local lord. Note the beautiful entrance door decorated with geometrical figures on each side and a *muqarnas* canopy. There are three domes on the portico, and a minaret with a square base and cylindrical shaft, all built with stone of two different colours. Inscriptions from here are on show in the Archaeology and Ethnography Museum at Fırat University in Elazığ (see p: 112).

## Accommodation

Pertek has a decent hotel on the central Atatürk Cad, namely the Park Otel (0428 651 36 44).

## Pertek Kalesi

This fortress, 3km southwest of town on the banks of the Murat River, sits on an island in the Keban Dam Lake. The fortress was built during the 11th century by the Mengujukids, and renovated by the Ottomans. At the highest point of the *Kale* is a bird statue symbolising fertility. Two mosques and a caravanserai from the 16th century in the immediate surroundings are now underwater. The fortress is



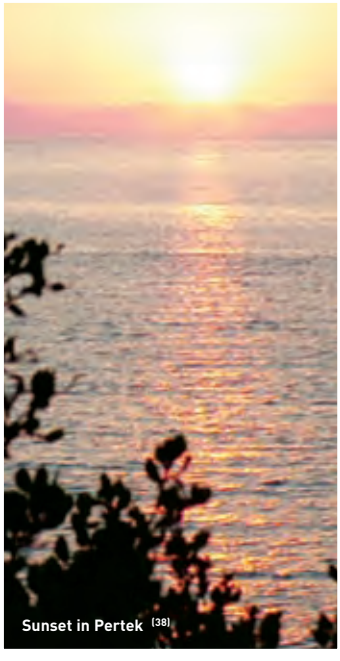
Pertek port [37]

located near the ferry stop; you can either get to the fortress by ferry boat or walk to form behind the ferry stop.

## Derun-i Hisar (Sağman) Kalesi and Sağman Mosque

In the village of Sağman, 19km north of town, is the Derun-i Hisar Kalesi. The Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi referred to it as the property of an Artukid Ruler from Diyarbakır. Only the western and southern parts of the structure are still standing.

The mosque, with its beautiful minarets and Islamic inscriptions, was built by Salih Bey in 1555. The prayer hall is domed and entered via a portal with *muqarnas* in a half-dome. The vertical inscriptions on the portal frame are worth noting, beautifully carved into the stone. The mihrab is rather simple in comparison, though it also has a half-dome with *muqarnas* and is framed by *muqarnas* ornamentation. To the east and west of the portico are rows of rooms; to the west is the tomb of Salih Bey, added around 1570.



Sunset in Pertek [38]

# Hozat (Xozat)



Woman shepherd in Hozat [39]

The small town of Hozat is some 96km away from the city of Tunceli. In the nineteenth century the district town of Hozat was the Ottoman stronghold in Dêrsim, where the troops and the officials resided. It has an old inhabited place, its history probably dating back to Urartian times when it was called Hozana. The town has a lively high street and has a population of 5,837. There are regularly connections by *dolmus* to Pertek and Elazıg, but – surprisingly – not to Tunceli center.

## The Monastery of Geçimli

10km away from the Hozat town centre, in the tiny village of Geçimli (Ergen) there are the remains of the Armenian monastery of Erkayn, probably dating back from the 10th century. This was as an important place of pilgrimage for the Armenians of the area. The monastery is seldom visited by tourists. To reach Geçimli, shortly before entering Hozat turn right and cross the bridge over the Hozat River. From here continue your journey. About halfway, just after the village, you will see some ancient graves in the form of sheep at the left of the road.



From Geçimli Monastery [40]

# Çemişgezek (Melkişî)




Çemişgezek [41]



Symbol of Ahura Mazda [42]

As a Kurmanji-speaking, Sunni Muslim stronghold in a predominantly Alevi area, Çemişgezek (population 3,327) has a strong and distinctive sense of identity. The town is a quiet sort of place 120km west of Tunceli in ruggedly beautiful surroundings, the highest point of which is the Yılan (Kırklar) Mountain at 2950m. Some of the town's population are semi-nomadic, and are commonly referred to as Şavaklar; these people leave for the plateaus in May and June, returning in September.

Çemişgezek is one of the oldest inhabited places in Turkey, with a history going back 7000 years. But despite being archaeologically important, only two-thirds of the area could be surveyed before being submerged by the waters behind the Keban Dam, which lies to the south.

The town is mentioned in Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* as being the place where an Iranian captain chose to settle here to escape a powerful Persian ruler called Çemsit (Jamshed), a corruption of whose name later became part of the town's name. The captain became so wealthy that he had a *kale* built (see below) to protect him from Çemsit.

Çemişgezek was one of the principalities influential in Dêrsim at the time, also known as *"Melkişiler"* whom were Kurdish. In the period 1202-1508, rulers from this principality controlled 32 fortresses and 16 settlements from the western part of Dêrsim to the east of Karasu and to the north of Murat River. Local rulers of Çemişgezek managed to hold control over the area even in the times of Genghis Khan, Tamerlane and his son Şahruh Mirza

and Turcoman Kara Yusuf. Kurdish historian Şerefxan, mentions the emergence of Shah İsmail who sent Nur Ali Halife, one of the *Kızılbaş Beys,* for subduing the principality of Çemişgezek, after which Hacı Rüstem Bey surrendered his land without any resistance and then went up to the palace of the Shah to proclaim his obedience. Rüstem Bey indeed fought against the Ottoman army with the Shah in the Battle of Çaldıran. However, upon the victory of the Ottoman army and subsequent march towards Tabriz, Rüstem Bey this time defected to the Ottoman side, which proved futile since Yavuz Sultan Selim ordered the execution of 40 incomers including Rüstem Bey and his family members.

To break the Safevid influence over the region, İdris-i Bitlisi had developed the policy of placing Kurdish principalities to the service of the Ottoman State. In line with this policy, Pir Hüseyin Bey, son of Rüstem Bey, met with Yavuz Sultan Selim while the latter was in Amasya declaring his obedience. Accepting this, Yavuz Sultan Selim accorded the principality of Çemişgezek to Pir Hüseyin.

The houses in Çemişgezek will probably catch your eye, with their flat roofs and timber supports, and featuring a mix of stone and adobe *(kerpiç)*. The top floor of such houses is traditionally reserved for guests, and rooms here usually have window overhanging the street, making them the focal point of the house.

The relics of a Kurdish emirate which flourished here briefly in the 16th century can still be seen mosques, tombs, stone bridges and an elegant hamam are strewn across the town and neighbouring villages. Also worth visiting today are some surprising troglodyte caves.



Çemişgezek house [43]



Old photo of a woman from Dêrsim [44]

If you are looking for local specialities, consider buying some honey or mulberry. In fact both are awarded as prizes at a municipal festival held in mid-July, at which there are also concerts and folkloric performances.

## Çemişgezek (Hieropolis) Kalesi

On the eastern bank of the Euphrates are just a few remaining walls of this *kale* that was made of truncated stones in parts only. It dates

from the Byzantine period. Byzantine Emperor Ioannes Tzimisces (969–976) who was born there is said to have given his name to the town. Nowadays a shopping centre has been built in its place.

A 20km drive west of the town, and near the east bank of the Euphrates is the original fortress of Çemişgezek, which was either built by or named for the Byzantine Emperor John Tzimisces (ruled 969–976) who was a native of this region.

## Süleymaniye Camii (Kale Camii)

This mosque, in the central Kale district, is the town's largest historical monument. It is believed to be a Seljuk construction, perhaps originally a madrasah which in the 17th century was converted into a mosque with three bays. The minaret can now be seen in its original glory, as a later plaster coat has now been removed.

## Yelmaniye Camii (Eski Camii) and Hamidiye Madrasah

Based in the central Medrese Neighbourhood, this is an interesting example of transitional architecture, reflecting both medieval and Ottoman tastes. The mosque was actually once a madrasah, built in 1274 by Emir



Yelmaniye Camii (Eski Camii) [46]



The entrance of Süleymaniye (Kale) Camii [45]

Taceddin Yelman, a Turcoman Bey (ruler) descended from Tamerlane. The building was transformed into a mosque in 1404 by the Kurdish Emir Yalman. The entrance consists of a large pointed arch, around which is a frame with different kinds of geometrical motifs. At the main entrance of the mosque there are octagon columns with ornament and when you open the door these two columns will rurn on their own. Inside, take a look at the mihrab, whose semi-dome and spandrels contain floral ornamentation, and whose niche has a frame decorated with a geometrical star design.

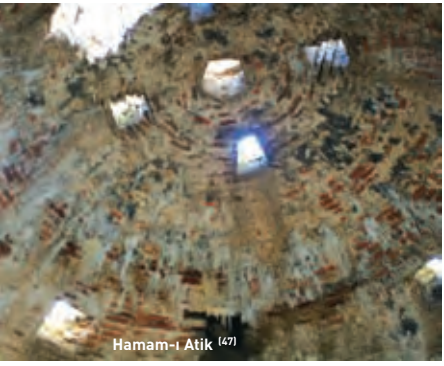
In the same area is the Hamidiye Madrasah, with quite a simple facade. Built during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, it was used as an administrative building for years and later sold into private ownership. The building is open to the public.

## Hamam-ı Atik

The ruins of an attractive 15th century Akkoyunlu Hamam, also called the Eski Hamam, can be seen in the centre of the town close to the main market. Inscriptions in both Arabic and Turkish at the entrance state that it was renovated by one Hacı Ali Ağa.

## Çemişgezek Bridge

This bridge, also known as Tagar Köprüsü or Yusuf Ziya Paşa Köprüsü,


Hamam-ı Atik [47]

is in an exceptionally beautiful setting 2km from town on the Tağar River. Built in 1807 by Yusuf Ziya Paşa, the bridge is 4m wide, 29m long and 9m tall, and was renovated in 1856 by the Diyarbakır Governorate. The bridge has one big arch and interesting carvings on both sides showing cypress trees in stone vases, which is why it is also commonly referred to as *Selvili Köprü* ("cypress bridge").

## İn Delikleri/Derviş Hücreleri

These so-called "dervish cells" are caves in the Kela quarter, just west of the town. The caves are thought to be thousands of years old were most probably hollowed out further for the purpose of inhabiting them. The resulting rooms are more than 2m wide and 2m high, and linked to each other by corridors, with the largest room lying above all the others. The caves are high up in rocks by Tağar River; a path leads up to a point just below, from where you climb to the caves by ladder.

## Ulukale and the Tomb of Ferruh-Şad Bey

The village of Ulukale, 20km southeast of town, is named after the fortress here, of which only some walls remain. The village itself features an Ottoman mosque constructed in 1793 by the former governor of Diyarbakır, Yusuf


Derviş Hücreleri [48]



Village Store [49]



Çemişgezek Bridge [50]

Paşa. Here you can also see a beautiful fountain made of stone, said to date from the 16th century.

Close to the village is the tomb of Ferruh Şad Bey, a man of power during the 16th century. The tomb, built in 1550/51, is octagonal and features an unusual belt of reddish stone.

### Pulur Höyüğü

This tumulus, 40km southwest of town in the village of Sakyol (Pulur), was excavated in 1968, revealed that the area has been inhabited since the Bronze Age. This is an interesting place for those who have interest in archaeology.

## Getting there

The town can be reached from Tunceli via Pertek or by ferry from Elazığ. One serves the Akçapınar village 10km south of Çemişgezek, with hourly departures from Çemişgezek between 6am and 6pm, and departures from Elazığ between 7am and 7pm. A new, faster ferry leaves from Yemişdere (Devdirej), taking ten minutes to complete its journey. There are sailings on this route every two hours between 8am and 10pm in summer, and between 8am and 4pm in winter.

## Accommodation

You can stay at the *ögretmentevi* (teachers' guesthouse) on Leventler Cad in Hamamat Mahallesi (0428 611 21 94).



Towards Mazgirt [51]

# Mazgirt (Mêzgir)

Mazgirt is a beautiful green town 33km east of Tunceli. The population of 2,474 is mostly Zaza Alevis, though there are some Kurmanji-speaking Alevi villages and a small Armenian minority who are mainly artisans residing in the town and in a few nearby villages. Beautiful Mazgirt has more touristic resources than neighbouring towns and equally beautiful natural landscapes. The castle and the Bağın Water Springs will be the highlights of your stay in Mazgirt.


The tomb of Elti Hatun [52]

## Mazgirt Kalesi

In the northern part of the centre, this fortress, thought to have been built by the Urartian King Rusas II, is built on top of steep rocks and is only accessible through a cave, itself reached by a series of 40 steps. Most of the walls are in ruins today; people make the climb mainly to enjoy the breathtaking panorama over the surrounding mountains and valleys.


Mazgirt Kalesi [53]

## The Tomb and Mosque of Elti Hatun

West of Mazgirt Kalesi is the Elti Hatun Mosque, named after a princess who likely was a Seljuk and on whose orders the mosque was built in 1252/53. Noteworthy here are the portal and fountain, decorated with *muqarnas* ornamentation. Further to

the west is the Elti Hatun's Tomb, though this is not where she was originally interred, as it dates perhaps to the 15th century.

## The Tomb of Çoban Baba

This 15th-century tomb can be in the cemetery in the eastern part of the town. A popular pilgrimage site, it is believed to house the grave of a shepherd who, during the Mongol invasions, was despatched here by Hacı Bektaş I to convince people not to leave the region. The site is a relaxing spot, with a nice fountain close by. Built of stone, the tomb itself is rectangular and covered with two conical domes.

### A poem by Haci Bektas

Sevgi, muhabbet kaynar,
yanan ocağımızda
Bülbüller şevke gelir,
gül açar bağımızda
Hırslar, kinler yok olur,
aşkla meydanımızda
Arslanlarla ceylanlar dosttur
kucağımızda
Hararet
nardadır,sacda
değildir
Keramet baştadır,
tacda değildir
Her ne arar isen
kendinde ara
Mekke'de kudüs'te hac'da değildir
Erkek dişi sorulmaz,
muhabbetin dilinde
Hakk'ın yarattığı her şey yerli yerinde
Bizim nazarımızda,
kadın-erkek farkı yok
Noksanlıkla eksiklik senin
görüşlerinde

*Love and talk never end*
*in our lively home,*
*Nightingales flatter to sing,*
*Roses uncover*
*Ambitiouns and hates disappear*
*on our table,*
*Lions and gazelles are friends*


Bağın Kalesi [55]


Imam Ali [54]

*in our embrace.*
*Heating is from the fire not the plate,*
*Miracle is from the brain not*
*from the crown,*
*Whatever you search for is in yourself*
*Not in Mecca or Jerusalem.*
*Regardless of being men and women ,*
*Anything God created*
*should be in its place.*
*The missing lies in your thoughts,*
*Not in gender.*

## Kaleköyü Kalesi

Another example of Urartian architecture, most probably dating to the 9th century BC, can be found in the village of Kaleköyü 10km east of town, on top of a hill. An interesting tunnel beyond the castle leads to a number of rooms of various sizes.

## Bağın Kalesi

In the village of Dedebağ (Bağın), 38km from Mazgirt, is a partly ruined Urartian citadel dating back 2800 years. This was once used as a base by the Seljuks during the reign of


Old grave stone Gelincik Village [56]



Bağın (Dedebağ) spring[57]

Alaaddin Keykybat in the 1200s, but today it is the beautiful setting rather than the history that is striking: the partly cultivated hills from a perfect backdrop around the site, with the Peri River also visible.

## Gelincik (Kupik)

Probably the most distinctive place in Mazgirt is the cemetery at the entrance to Gelincik village, 25km east of Mazgirt. Some of the tombstones here, said to date from the Akkoyunlu era, are surprisingly in the form of stylized sheep. Note also the images of swords which some tombstones have, symbolising the Alevi faith.

## Baba Mansur's Tomb

Some 30km east of from Mazgirt is the Tomb of Baba Mansur, in the large village of Darıkent (Mixundî). He is thought to have migrated here from Khorasan in Iran, and as a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad he has many followers among the Alevis. On some Thursdays people gather around his tomb to sacrifice animals and pray.



Sacrificing animals in Baba Mansur [58]

The most popular – and rather bizarre – tale surrounding him is that once upon a time his relative Baba Kureyş was riding a wild bear when he came across Baba Mansur constructing a wall. Puzzled to see Baba Kureyş riding the wild bear, Baba Mansur imitated Baba Kureyş by riding the wall he was building. Baba Kureyş looked admiringly at Baba Mansur and kissed his hand. It is believed that Baba Kureyş and his followers had become admirers of Papa Mansur since then.

## Bağın (Dedebağ) Hot Springs

With great views of steep rocky hills around, these are probably the nicest hot springs in the area. The spa is near Peri Suyu, a river whose name means "fairy water", and the spring water is as bubbly as champagne. At a balmy 35°C, the water is slightly acid, and bathing is said to be able to ameliorate rheumatism, fractures, neuralgia and gynaecological diseases. When drunk the water is said to improve liver conditions.

The thermal springs are 20km from Karakoçan, a town in Elazığ, which has free dolmuşes to the spa; dolmuşes also run from Mazgirt's bus station to the springs. There is a single-storey resort with 30 beds, a restaurant and a cafe here (0537 92127 22).

# Nazımiye (Kızılkilise) (Kislê)



Nazimiye, Alvi man praying[59]

The pleasant mountain town of Nazımiye, 37km east of Tunceli, has a population of just 2,923. Formerly known as Qızılkilise (meaning "red church"), the town takes its current name from that of the grandson of the Sultan Nazım Efendi, who was also called Nazım. This is a good place to come if you appreciate rugged natural beauty: high peaks lie in the vicinity, including Düzgün Baba Dağı (2097m), Hamit Baba Dağı (2133m) and Bedir Dağı (2614m), and the area is crossed by the Pülümür and Peri streams. The high spots of Nazımiye's natural beauties are Dereova waterfalls and Harik natural springs, the town is overall of particular beauty, especially for those who love mountains.

Believed to have been settled as long ago as the Byzantine period, in 1876 the town was a district linked to Erzurum province. Subsequently it was linked to Elazığ until becoming a district of Tunceli in 1946. Though tiny, the town has a place to stay, the *Kent Otel* on Cumhuriyet Meydanı (0428 411 24 01), with eleven rooms.




Imam Ali stone [60]



At Düzgün Baba pilgrimage [61]

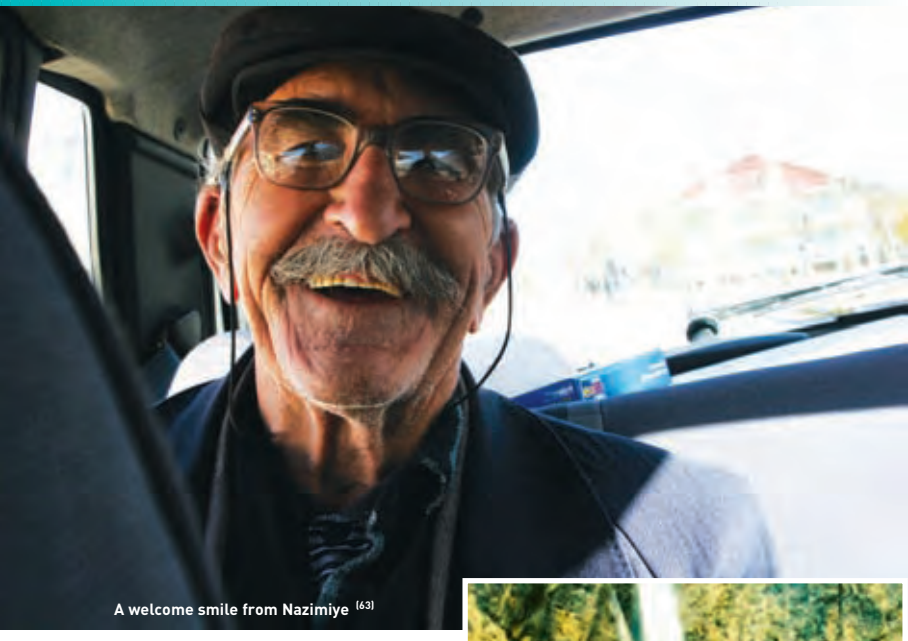
## Düzgün Baba's Tomb and the Cemevi

The tomb of Düzgün Baba is accessible by car 14km north of the town. Legend has it that Düzgün Baba, whose real name was Şah Haydar, was a shepherd on Mount Zargovit. He was the son of Kureş supposedly a descendent of the Alevi religious leader Mahmud Hayrani. One day the father, surprised that his animals were in unusually good condition despite the harsh winter, followed his son to the mountain. Concealing himself, he discovered that every touch of his son's stick made the oak leaves grow so that the animals could be fed. The animals were aware of the father and this showed in their behaviour. Düzgün asked his sheep, "What happened? Did you see my father?". Then he saw his father and realized that his father had seen his ability to work miracles. He asked him, "Father, what are you looking at?", but immediately felt ashamed of having done so and went up to the top of the mountain for a long period. After a while, his father sent men to check if his son was doing well. They reported that everything was in order (düzgün in Turkish); since then, the peak has been referred to by the name *Düzgün Baba*.

En route to Düzgün Baba Tomb, you will come across a stone called Ali Taşı, after the cousin and son in law of Prophet Muhammed. Locals believe that you should light a candle and pray here before heading for Düzgün Baba. Ali has a special significance to Alevis. Nearby is the *cem evi*, which includes



Care taker in Düzgün Baba pilgrimage [62]



A welcome smile from Nazimiye [63]

seven rooms to be used for accommodating travellers (free of charge), as well as places to eat and cook. There are also places to sacrifice animals, and you will see locals selling livestock for this purpose.

There is also another route to get to the Düzgün Baba's Tomb; you can get there from Tunceli city via Kılköy village.

## Dereova Waterfalls (Gelin Pınarı)

Dereova is an ideal place for a day-trip amid beautiful surroundings. You can get there by dolmuş from the town or by car, heading 10km south from town and following the signs for "Şelale". The beauty of the waterfalls and the calm of the area are ample reward for the steep road that you have to take from the village of Dereova (Dêriyê). The falls are fed from three different sources 20m up. The landscape takes on another dimension in winter, when the falls can freeze.

## Aşağı Doluca (Harik) Hot Spring

This spring, in a valley and close to Aşağı Doluca (Jêr Harik) village, 16km from Nazımiye, is surrounded by woods and features a spa resort with separate pools for men and women. Bathing in the water, which has a temperature of 39°C and is slightly acidic, is said to be curative for rheumatism, fractures, and gynaecological diseases. There is also a small hotel where food is served. Dolmuşes bound for the village of Dalibahçe can drop you here.



Dereova waterfall [64]

# Pülümür (Pîlemor/Pilemoriye)



Animals crossing from a bridge near Pülümür[68]



Hatun Bridge[66]

Pülümür (population 2,082) is 68km northeast of Tunceli and lies on a wide plateau surrounded by the Bağır Paşa, Mercan and Munzur Mountains. The area has natural resources including chromium, marble and lime, but these have not been exploited so far, and landscapes remain unspoilt. The beautiful landscapes of Pülümür are spotted by rivers (Pülümür, Karagöl, Kırklar) and natural sources.

You can stay in Pülümür at the *Işıklar Otel*, Erzincan Cad (0428 441 24 54).

## Hatun Bridge and Gelin Mağaraları

The name of this bridge refers to the fact that it was a woman who supposedly ordered the construction of the bridge. The story has it that she required the artisan responsible to tell her beforehand the exact quantity of stones that he would use for the construction. If he got the number exactly right, so that not one more stone should be needed or any stone left spare, then he would have the right to marry her. The story says the artisan was so gifted that he indeed managed to get the calculation exactly right, and this was the prelude to a happy marriage.

Just 3km from town, the bridge spans a narrow stretch of the Pülümür River. Close by you can see Gelin Mağaraları, some cave dwellings believed to date from the time of the Urartians, with eight rooms and two windows. It is thought that a secret passage leads from the caves down to the river.

## Salt production

Salt is still produced traditionally in the Hiver quarter of Göreli (Gonêli) village, 8km from Pülümür. Here water flows from a lake into various smaller ones, gradually evaporating as

it does so. Eventually just salt remains in the last lake, where it is collected.

## Ağlayan Rocks

A pleasant place to picnic lies on the way between Tunceli and Pülümür, close to the Kırmızı Bridge (also called the Hilbes Bridge), 10km southeast from Pülümür, where you will see these famous rocks with water flowing on either side. In winter the water usually freezes, and when the spring thaw arrives in late April, it creates an optical illusion of the rocks crying – hence the name *Ağlayan*, which means "crying".


Waterfalls [68]


Traditional salt production [67]

On the way back, you can ask locals in the village of Gökçekonak (Tahsînî) to show you Zenginpınar (Zage) Waterfalls, though you may well stumble upon them anyway.

## Kırmızı Köprü and Sağlamtaş

Some villages, such as Kırmızı Köprü (Danzik) 13km from town, and Sağlamtaş (Çırık) 17km away, offer the chance to see examples of Koç-Koyun graves dating from the Akkoyunlu period between the 15th and 16th century. The stelae-like tombstones here are decorated with stylised ram and horse motifs and are the earliest examples of these in the region.

## Buz Mağarası

If you pass by the village of Dereboyu (Danzik), near Kırmızı Köprü, you can ask the locals to show you this cave, whose floor is covered with ice *(buz)* for much of the year. The interior is divided into 12 rooms, and villagers use it as a large natural freezer for storing food.


Gelin Mağaraları [69]


TUNCELİ
İL HARİTASI
ERZİNCAN
BİNGÖL
ELAZIĞ
MERCAN DAĞLARI
SULTANBABA DAĞI
KARAOĞLAN DAĞI
KARASAKAL DAĞI
SÜPÜRGEÇ DAĞI
BAĞIR PAŞA DAĞI
Ovacık (Pulur)
Çemişgezek (Melkişî)
Hozat (Xozat)
TUNCELİ (Dêrsim)
Pertek (Pêrtag)
Sağman (Derun-i Hisar)
Mazgirt (Mazgir)
Nazimiye (Kisîk)
Pülümür (Pilemoriye)
Dereboyu (Dereyê)
Balpayam (Deşt)
Keban Barajı
İŞARETLER / LEGEND



Floating island [1]

# BİNGÖL
# (Çolig/Çewlik)

Until 1945 Bingöl was named **Çapakçur**, which means "**violent water**" in **Armenian**, but its present name **(meaning "thousand lakes")** derives from the presence of a number of volcanic lakes in the mountains. However, the area is sometimes referred to as **Çewlik**.



A view from Bingöl [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
251,552 (2007)
**Average altitude**
8.125 km
**Area**
8402 square kilometres
**Districts**
Bingöl, Adaklı, Genç, Karlıova, Kiğı, Solhan, Yayladere, Yedisu
**Economy**
Agriculture, Beekeeping and Livestock raising
**Neighboring provinces**
Elazığ (west), Tunceli (northwest), Erzurum (north), Muş (east), Diyarbakır (south)

Scenic, green Bingöl province is located in the upper Euphrates basin. Until 1945 Bingöl was named Çapakçur, which means "violent water" in Armenian, but its present name (meaning "thousand lakes") derives from the presence of a number of volcanic lakes in the mountains. However, the area is sometimes referred to as Çewlik. It became a province in its own right in 1935.

It is known that Bingöl was a part of the Urartu Kingdom in antic times. The area then came under the successive domination of various powers including Assyrians, Meds, and Persians, Alexander the Great, Seleucids, Aras Kingdom, Parts, Romans, Byzantines and the Ottoman Empire. With its sparsely distributed population and settlements, Bingöl area was used mainly for transhumance by ruling powers. It is also known that Tamerlane used this area as a military base during his Eastern Anatolia campaign in the 14th century.

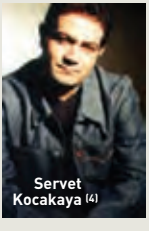
As described in holy books, Eden fits well to Bingöl or Kox mountains with its rich springs and water sources. It is said that the origin of Ab-ı- Hayat (water of eternal life) is also here and there is quite a lot of saying about it. A partridge shot down by a hunter is said to come alive and flew away after being left near one of the natural ponds here. Another saying is about a lame bear recovering while passing through these lakes. The 17th-century traveller Evliya Çelebi wrote that Çapakçur was founded and named



Bingöl Ulu Cami [3]

## Some prominent people from Bingöl

The city has produced two well-known musicians. **Mahsun Kırmızıgül** was born as Abdullah Bazencir here in 1969 into a Zazaki-speaking family with 22 children. He has recorded some well-known songs, some of which are inspired by traditional Kurdish music. **Servet Kocakaya,** was born in Bingöl in 1973, records mainly in Turkish, though his albums include some Kurdish songs.



Servet Kocakaya [4]

by Alexander the Great. According to Çelebi, Alexander was trying to cure his constant pain. Many doctors failed to cure him, and finally he decided to look for a source of healing water called *Ab-ı- Hayat*. Even though he didn't find the source itself, he found a fountain fed by the source, and recovered his health. It is said that Alexander told his doctor that God had cured him with the waters of the Paradise River, and gave instructions that a fortress be constructed in that location, named Çapakçur or "paradise water". The fortress was duly built in 315 days.

What is now Bingöl and its hinterland are mentioned in *Anabasis*, the account by the Greek historian Xenophon of a trek made around 400 BC by Greek armies from what is now Iraq to the Black Sea. The author describes the Bingöl area as containing many villages, inhabited by patriarchal families who kept livestock and produced a strong spirit from barley. Bingöl is where Tamerlane's army was encamped in the 14th century while he was occupying Erzurum.

With extensive grasslands and fertile plateaus, the province is largely dependent on agriculture and livestock farming, and is visited by traders in the summer who come to buy various dairy and agricultural products, including organic honey. Weaving is a common cottage industry, with woollen garments for men and calico clothes for women being produced on hand looms. Although there has been great improvement in the economical front but unemployment remains high and youths are often drawn to cities elsewhere in Turkey in search of work.

The area is considered one of the best places for hunting in Turkey. Game includes partridge, woodcock, hazel grouse and rabbit, which are hunted

from September through to November. In January and February, rabbits and foxes may be hunted. Periods for hunting are designated by the Ministry of Agriculture, and if you are a local tourist with a gun licence then you can visit their office in any province for more information. The mountains of Bingöl are home to wild deer, though hunting these is not permitted.

The province's chief attractions are related to its natural beauty. There are beautiful upland views, and one of the important of these is that of the sunrise witnessed from Kalatepe Mountain nearby the town of Karlıova, which is said to rival that seen from Mount Nemrut. Another interesting attraction is the "floating islands" on a pretty lake near the town of Solhan, which are really clumps of earth held together by trees and which drift about on the water. In small and delightful town of Kiğı and its nearby are many historical sites such as hamam, school and some intact Armenian churches.

## Bingöl City

Bingöl city (population 86,511) was once located on the plains near the Sağyer river, but a lack of land for expansion led to it being moved to its current location. Unfortunately the area is seismically active and the city has suffered from two quakes in recent times, the first in 1972 and more recently in 2003, when there was once again serious damage to property and many were killed. State housing constructed for victims of the quake can still be seen around the river.

A modern sort of place, with tea gardens and green parks in the centre, the city centre is dominated by the very large, newly built Ulu Cami, which has a green space from which you can take in the vibrant street life. There is a small, lively main street bazaar also, with most banks and offices nearby. Kurds are the main inhabitants of Bingöl, Kurmanji and Zazaki are spoken here.

### İsfahan Bey Mosque

Thought to date from the 16th century, this mosque is in the bazaar area of Çapakçur, the old location of Bingöl. The main minaret is original but other parts have largely been renovated with modern materials.



Dried peppers [5]

### Getting there

The nearest airport is 120km away in Muş province also Elazığ nearby, and is served by flights from Istanbul and Ankara. The nearest train station is in Genç, south of the city, on the branch line to Tatvan, with the possibility of connecting to Van and on to Tehran.

### Accommodation

The *Sarıoğlu Hotel* on Genç Cad has more than 30 rooms with TV, and its own restaurant (0426 213 17 57). On the same street is the *Atlı Hotel* (0426 213 10 37), a smaller place without a restaurant.

### Places to eat

*Saklıkent* Restaurant, in Hastane Cad (0 426 213 77 00) serves different types of *kebaps*, *döner*, fast food and meat *tava*. Also in Hastane Cad, *Yaylalı Konağı* (0 426 213 30 15) also serve similar food including lamb *büryan and pide, lahmacun*.

**Municipality: 0426 213 12 18 Tourist information: 0426 213 34 60**


Çir waterfall [6]

## Çir Waterfall

Water plummets 50m through a high rock called Çir near Uzundere (Belzer) village, 28km from Bingöl city centre. The area is surrounded by cliffs and caves, and is particularly attractive in spring.

## The old Urartian Road

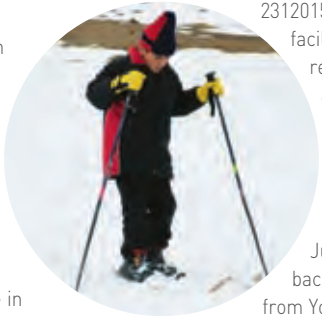
One of the oldest roads in the world, constructed in 800BC by the Urartians, is well signposted at the 20km mark on the Bingöl–Elazığ highway. The Urartians established an administrative system in Anatolia and built roads to support it. This line of this particular road can still be seen clearly. It would once have been over 5m wide and extended east to Van and west to Malatya, with rest stations every 25–30km.

## Zağ Cave

Located on a craggy rock by the Murat River, this cave is 200–300m above ground, but is easily reached by a path. It was once inhabited and has three "floors", each with over 20 rooms. It is thought that the rooms at the entrance level were living rooms, while the ones just above were for storage and the top level rooms were for the women. Circular pathways were made to go from one floor to the next, and some 17 rooms are still in reasonable condition. The site is 12km from Bingöl city between the villages of Gökçeli (Talavra) and Yenidal (Çirik).

## Yolçatı Ski Resort and Kuruca (Gazik)

From December to March it is possible to ski in Yolçatı (Şarge) village, 25km from Bingöl on the Elazığ highway. The two-storey ski resort (Tel: 0426 2312015) has fifty beds and facilities such as a restaurant, hamam and billiards. A ski lift will take up to the two pistes, one of which is for beginners.


Yolçatı skiing centre [7]

Just four kilometres back towards Bingöl from Yolçatı is Kuruca village, ideal place to pick up some delicious honey and cream sold in the local shops.



The old Urartuian road [8]

## Kös Spa

Located 20km northeast on the highway to Karlıova, Kös Spa is said to have curative properties for those with rheumatism or gynecological problems. Analysis of the water shows that it would be suitable for bottling as mineral water.


Binkap Thermal [9]

## Binkap Thermal Hotel

This popular spa complex (0426 252 50 03, info@binkap.com), 10km northeast of Bingöl city on the Erzurum highway, makes a good, relaxing spot for a weekend break. The hotel and wooden cottages linked to it are located on the both sides of the river here, and offer views of the river as well as the surrounding mountains. Each house boasts a kitchen, lounge and mini spa pool, while general facilities include a hamam, saunas and a fitness centre.

The waters are not dissimilar in composition to those at Kös Spa, and are meant to help with joint pains, ulcers and various other ailments.

## Aydıntepe Underground City

The ruins of this settlement, though to be Hittite, lie on both sides of a road and are linked by tunnels. Rooms are square and are reached by an arched entrance. There are also remains of some rooms with vaulted roofs which stand in row for 5km till Arpalı (Niv) village. Digging marks on the rocks, air holes and the fire signs still can be seen clearly. In its time the city has also been used as a prison by various powers that have controlled the region. A grave belonging to the early Byzantine era has also been found here.


A view from Bingöl countryside [10]

# Genç (Darahênî/Darayêni)


Spring flowers [11]

Threaded by the Murat River, Genç (population 18,885) is one of the most richly forested districts of the province. The district was administered as part of Bitlis during Ottoman period, but became a province in the first few years of the republic. It was proclaimed as the temporary capital of the Kurdish territory that Sheikh Said led during the brief uprising he led in 1925 (See p:276). The town of Genç become part of Muş briefly before its absorption into Bingöl in 1936.


Kurdish Cavalry July 1918-Sheik Said Piran [12]

Patriarchal family life still dominates here in what is a mostly Zazaki-speaking (also called Dimilî) community. Likewise in this region of Turkey, there is a great tradition of hospitality, and if you are invited to someone's home for a meal you may find your hosts will continue eating to give you ample time to take your fill of the food (it is considered impolite for the hosts to finish before the guests do). Weddings are celebrated with folk dances such as *gelin götürme* (escorting the bride to her new home) and *el çırpma* (hand clapping).

It is possible to stay in Genç town, which is 21km south of Bingöl city. Besides the öğretmenevi (teachers' guesthouse; 0426 411 22 08), you can also try the *Divan Hotel* (0426 411 3022).

## Sebeterias Kalesi

The signposted fortress is in ruins, though some walls survive, this fortress is located at the entrance to Genç town as you arrive from Bingöl



Girls by the fountain[13]

city nearby the local river and long old style iron bridge. It is thought that this is one of the three castles built by the Urartians to dominate the plateaus of Bingöl and monitor their frontier.

## Sürekli (Dîyarburg) Village and Kral Kızı Fortress

This village 3km east of Genç town contains two tombs of descendants of the Prophet, one of which is covered with a dome. Thought to date from the 15th century, they are visited by locals who make wishes here in the hope that they will come true. The tombs are on a hillside before you enter the village, and are signposted.

Also on a hill just before you enter the village is the Kral Kızı fortress, built between 1080 and 1200. It is believed that the fortress accounts for this area formerly being known as (Darayêni) Dara was the name of either the Persian ruler who built it or his daughter, while "yêni" (yêni) means in Zazaki "fountain". The Turkish name Kral Kızı means "daughter of the king". The site around the fortress and its nearby area is popular for weekend picnic by the locals.




Sebeterias Kale[14]

# Solhan (Bongilan)



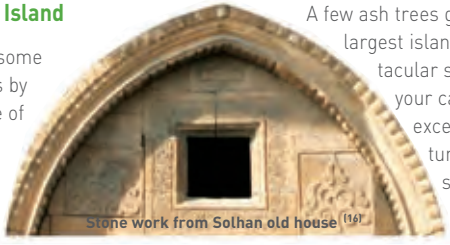
Winter in Solhan [15]

Livestock farming dominates, hilly, undulating Solhan (population 17,895), which lies some 60km east of Bingöl city. If you are in Solhan town, you might notice a house in the centre whose front wall bears some Syriac and Farsi inscriptions. The house was built by Vahdettin Sönmez Efendi in the 1950s, and incorporates intricately carved stones from a famous church called Surp Garabet located on the slopes of the Şerafettin Mountains in Yağcılar (Dêra Çengelî) village, 22km from Muş city. Two streams pass through the district and come together in a point. Murat river is also passes by the southern border of Solhan this adds a kind of natural beauty to the town.

## The Floating Island

You can enjoy some excellent views by visiting the site of Bingöl's so-called Floating Island, which is actually three small, grassy "islands" that move slowly on a small lake (really a large pond) that was discovered accidentally by the villagers of Hazarsah. The site is 45km from Bingöl city; driving up the highway to Muş, follow the signs and drive for another 1.5km off the highway to reach the site, which has a café.

The lake, which has been declared as a protected area by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, is surrounded by beautiful peaks. There is a constant deep current in the lake, whose water level varies little through the seasons. If you manage to step on any of the islands, which are actually disc-like clumps of earth held together by roots, it will feel like being on a raft. A few ash trees grow on the largest island. This spectacular site gives your camera an excellent opportunity to take some great photos.



Stone work from Solhan old house [16]


Floating Island [17]


Children on floating island [19]

## Kale (Ginç) Mosque

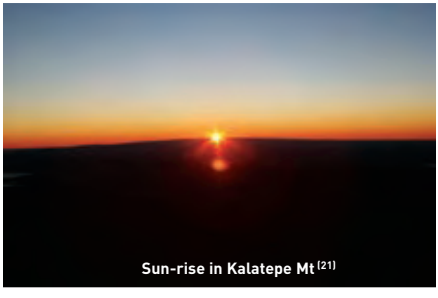
The mosque in the village of Kale, 20km from Solhan town, there is a mosque, a cave, jail and madrasah; there was once a fortress too, Oghnut, now destroyed. According to an inscription, the mosque was built by Meneşkurd Süleyman Bey in 1570. Still used for worship, the mosque is a rectangular construction consisting of grey and brown stone and with two gates. Nearby you can spot old tombs belonging to prominent people. The jail, located on the cliff, was intended for prisoners who had been sentenced to death.


Zaza woman [18]

# Karlıova (Kanîreş)



Animal Bazaar [20]



Sun-rise in Kalatepe Mt [21]

Karlıova (population 7,985) is situated on rugged terrain at an altitude of nearly 2000m. The area is situated on a fault line running through eastern Anatolia, and has witnessed many destructive earthquakes.

According to a tale, a protracted meeting of officials was unable to come up with a new name for the district when it became part of the new province of Bingöl in 1936. Eavesdropping, the impatient doorman asked if he could make a suggestion. "Look through the window," he said. "The plain is full of snow, so why don't you name it Karlıova ['snowy plain']?". The doorman's idea was accepted.

It's possible to stay in Karlıova town, which is 72km northeast of Bingöl city, at either the *Hotel Karlıdağ* (0426 511 23 56) or the *öğretmenevi* (teachers' guesthouse; 0426 511 20 84).

July sees many locals and foreigners here taking part in a festival of horsemanship, organised by the municipality.

## The sunrise from Mount Kalatepe

A peak called Kalatepe (3250m) is a popular spot for locals to observe the sunrise; you can reach it by heading 7km from Karlıova to Kargapazarı, then following the signs for the sunrise-view location and continuing for another 25km. From the car park just below the summit, it takes 25 minutes to walk all the way up. On a clear day (April to August is when the weather is best), you will see a red glow which turns to gold and finally crystallizes like a diamond on the horizon.

Fittingly, a sunrise festival is held in the town centre over four days in the third week of July. Besides cultural


Nomad Life [22]

and music performances, it features a bazaar selling handcrafts and, on the third day, horse racing with participants drawn from around the district. On the afternoon of that day people start heading to Kala peak, where they camp on the mountainside. At 3am they climb to the summit in time to watch the sunrise at 4.50am.

## Upland plateaus

Something of a natural wonder, dotted with lakes, the Bingöl Plateau lies at an average height of 2750m. It can be reached by a surfaced road 20km after Kargapazarı village.

Another pretty spot is Hırhal Plateau, 2600m up and 20 km away from Karlıova town. The plateau lies 5km from the highway to Erzurum.

Around 7km from the Erzurum highway at altitude of 2570m is the Çavreş Plateau, which boasts a rich flora and is a site where nomadic tent-dwellers spend the summer months.

## Waterfalls

You can enjoy the scenery and fish for trout at two waterfalls in the area. One is south of Devecik (Kurik) village, 30km from Karlıova town; the other is northwest of Bağlıisa (Baxlu) village, 35km from Karlıova town.

## Canyons

There are a number of canyons cut through by fast-flowing rivers around Kaynarpınar (Liçik), some 20km northwest of Karlıova town. If you have your own equipment, you will find this a great spot to surf.

## Hacılar and Çerme springs

Hacılar is a popular bathing spot with locals, and is a good spot for fishing as it's located by the Göynük River near Hacılar (Heciyan) village, 35km from Karlıova town. Similar is the Çerme spring by the Murat River 15km away from Karlıova town. Here you can catch delicious *catak* fish, which are specific to the region.


Fishing at Murat river [23]



School girls [24]

# Kigı (Kêxî)

The quiet small town of Kığı (population 3,470) is in a forested upland area 75km northwest of Bingöl town. The town and nearby villages offers you a renege of sites to visit, such as hamam, school and some intact Armenian churches. The area is populated mainly by Alevi and Sunni Kurds. Agriculture and livestock are the dominant ways of earning a living, though there is little produce left over to trade with other parts of the country. The chief river of the district is the delightfully named Peri Suyu ("fairy water"), which has been put to use generating power via the Özlüce Dam, with a second dam under construction.

In Roman times the town was ruled by Talon, the son of someone called Kiga, after whom a local fortress was named, and some historians think the town took its name from that era. In the Middle Ages and in Ottoman times, people here made a living by mining iron, and in the Mongol period coins were minted in the town, a practice which seems to have continued during the Akkoyunlu and Ottoman eras, until 1820.

Some locals in the villages believe that spring only arrives after 13 April, as per a local fable. An old lady with a kid goat was happy that she had survived a severe winter, but on 13 April a terrible snowstorm arrived. She tried to protect the kid under a basket but was shocked to see it had frozen to death the next day. Locals call the period prior to 13 April the "Old Lady Spring" (in Kurdish *(gîskê pîrê)* and say that any warm sunny days in the run-up to this date are deceptive.

## Kerek Hamam

Centrally located, this Ottoman-era hamam is no longer in use but remains in reasonable condition. It is divided into a tepid room, hot room and changing room; the first part you come to is the rectangular changing room which is in the eastern part. South of here is the vaulted tepid room, from which the hot room, also vaulted, can be accessed.


Kerek Hamam [25]

## Kiğı Kalesi

Located 2km southeast of town, this fortress is surrounded by the cliffs and thus reached by a narrow road. According to some sources, the fortress was abandoned after it was attacked, and the inhabitants settled in an area town which later became known as the Kale quarter. Some old jewellery and household items were found after archaeological digs. Just 200m away are the remains of a church is the Ottoman Kiğı School (currently used a private house), located in a private garden.

## Piltan Bey Mosque

This wooden-ceilinged mosque, also called the Balaban Mosque, is located in the Eski (old) quarter in Kiğı town not far from the Kiğı School. An inscription on the minaret mentions the Akkoyunlu Pir Ali and the year 1402. This is just after the attacks of Tamerlane, and so the reference is to a restoration of the mosque. Another restoration, probably on a larger scale, is referred to in the inscription above the *minbar*, which mentions 1413.



Piltan Bey mosque [26]

The prayer hall is rectangular and has a round arched portico on its northern side. The mosque is still used for worship.

## Güney Mahalle Church

Thought to be a Byzantine church, later on it become of the largest Armenian churches of Kiğı. This ruined structure is located in the southern part of the town in Alişan Engin Sokak, in the Eskiçarşı quarter; you'll find it on the left among the local houses. It has a rectangular plan with three naves which end in apses. Most of it is ruined, but front and side walls are still standing.

## Çanakçı Village Church

Relatively intact, this Armenian church, in Çanakçı village 44km from Kiğı town, is built on a rectangular plan and is thought to date from the Ottoman era. It shouldn't be confused with a similarly named village in the nearby Adaklı district. The church is largely intact as it was used for Islamic worship after


Çanakçı Village church [27]

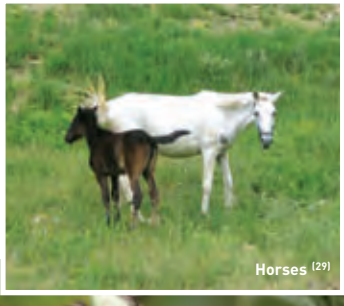


Selenk Bridge [28]

Armenians left the area. Much of it is composed of basalt but the vaulted windows and door are made of yellow limestone, and beautifully ornamented. The key to the church can be obtained from the village *mukhtar*.

## Selenk Bridge

This beautiful stone bridge still in use spans over the Peri River, which it's located 5km before you entre the town of Kığı as you are coming form Bingöl. Built during the reign of Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamit II, it's 28m long and 4m wide, and has three arches. A new Bridge was build near by the Selenk Bridge from where you can fallow the sign to reach the Selenk Bridge. The bridge is closed to main traffic.


Horses [29]


A child from Kığı [30]


BİNGÖL
İL HARİTASI
ERZİNCAN
ERZURUM
TUNCELİ
MUŞ
ELAZIĞ
DİYARBAKIR
ÇAVUŞLU DAĞI
Yedisu
(Çemrê)
Kığı
(Kîğî)
ŞEYTAN DAĞLARI
Karlıova
(Kanireş)
Yayladere
(Xorxol)
Adaklı
(Azaxpêrt)
SÖLBÜS DAĞI
KARABOĞA DAĞLARI
Sancak
Ilıcalar
(Kilakêş)
SOLHAN DAĞI
Solhan
(Bongilan)
BİNGÖL
(ÇEWLIK)
Çaytepe
(Valer)
Genç
(Darahênî)
AKÇAKARA DAĞI
Servi
(Sîvîg)
İŞARETLER / LEGEND
KISAYOL CETVELİ (KM)
BİNGÖL
ADAKLI
GENÇ
KARLIOVA
KIĞI
SOLHAN
YAYLADERE
YEDİSU



Muş tulips [1]

# MUŞ (Mûş)

According to one tale, **Muş** was named by a **Jewish** tribe who, fleeing the **Assyrians**, settled down in this area.
**The yearbook of Bitlis province for 1914** supports this, stating that the name Muş comes from Hebrew word **muşa** meaning a watery fertile field.

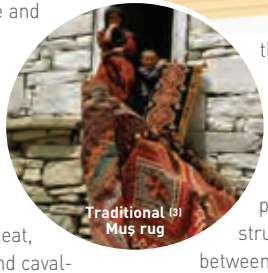


Rug weaving [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
405,509 (2007)
**Average altitude**
1250m
**Area**
8023 square kilometres
**Districts**
Muş, Bulanık, Hasköy, Korkut, Malazgirt, Varto
**Economy**
Grapes, Tobacco, Sugar beet, Wheat, Barley, Livestcok
**Neighbouring provinces**
Bingöl (west), Erzurum (north), Ağrı (northeast), Bitlis (southeast), Batman and Diyarbakır (south)

According to one tale, Muş was named by a Jewish tribe who, fleeing the Assyrians, settled down in this area. The yearbook of Bitlis province for 1914 supports this, stating that the name Muş comes from Hebrew word *muşa* meaning a watery fertile field. Another story says that one of the branches of the Mushki Tribe, who dominated central Anatolia after the overthrowing of the Hatti civilization, expanded towards the east, settled here and named the area. For the Urartu State with its large and developed transportation system, Muş was important as a centre opening to west. In his work "Anabasis" Ksenephon writes about local people in Muş and surrounding plateaus who supplied wheat, barley, vegetable, meat and cavalry horses. In 331 BC, Muş together with whole eastern Anatolia came under Macedonian rule and than taken by Persian satraps upon the demise of Alexander the Great.



Traditional [3] Muş rug

Historically the region played a key role in the struggle for dominance between the Seljuks and the Byzantines, the eventual triumph of the Seljuks being commemorated by a monument in Malazgirt town. In 1915

Varto and in 1916 Muş was captured by Russians but due to the October Revolution in 1917 Russian troops retreated.

Subsistence agriculture and livestock are, unsurprisingly, the main sources of livelihood. Some grapes, melons and cabbages are marketed in nearby provinces. Locals claim that their grapes were once well known abroad, and that the vines, inherited from the Armenians, were brought from Russia in 19th century and became the progenitors of some of the vineyards of Bordrux (Fransa). Until recently tobacco was also a significant crop, and the tobacco of the region is still well regarded locally.


Livestock [4]

Traditional family life still dominates in Muş, and some villages still hold special rituals to mark births. When the time of labour approaches, the house is completely cleaned, the mother wears nice dresses and food prepared by neighbours is offered to guests; in fact neighbours see to the needs of the new mother in the week after the birth. The baby will be named in this first week by family elders, and when it is 40 days old, the father takes mother and baby to see his father-in-law and then returns home to welcome guests, who come with presents for the baby.

The dark red Muş tulip, which flowers attractively on the plain of Muş at the end of April and the start of May, is celebrated at this time in the Muş Tulip Festival. Events include sports competitions and, of course, awards for the best tulips, which are marketed both domestically and internationally.

Another local event is the Hıdırellez Festival on 6 May, essentially a spring festival (although this festival is common in other regions of Turkey). It is mostly celebrated in green areas by rivers or lakes, and locals consume wild vegetables, lamb and liver, as these are believed to be good for health and well-being. People keep their stores and wallets open, believing they will be filled as the wishes made on the night of Hıdırellez are granted by God. Special requests are written on paper and fastened to a rose bush with a red ribbon.

The main attractions of the province are the stone-built religious complex of Alaeddin Bey in Muş city and the substantial Malazgirt Kalesi, whose massive walls are not unlike those in Diyarbakır. Also noteworthy is the Surp Garabet Monastery (Dêra Çengelî) nearby in Yağcılar village, which was once an important Armenian centre of worship and still draws some Armenian visitors today. Otherwise, the province has the usual smattering of old mosques, bridges and tombs, and some natural attractions in the two Akdoğan (Hamurpet/Xamirpêt) lakes – one blue, the other green – and the Kunav Caves near Varto town.

## Muş (Mûş) City

The provincial capital (population 70,509) is a largely modern affair, though with some older neighbourhoods and a conservative feel. In the evenings lamps in the shape of tulips, symbol of the province, lend some interesting colour to the city centre. The city has some nice tea gardens and modern cafés. The café on the top of the Muş Kalesi can be a good choice


Muş houses [5]

of visit where also fine view of the city can be observed and photographed.

## Muş Kalesi and Meryem Ana Church

Centrally located, the *kale* is one of the oldest parts of Muş, though the exact date of its construction is unknown. Most parts of it have been destroyed in various wars of the years, although the western section was restored under the Seljuks and Ottomans.

Walking down from the *kale* you will notice the large Meryem Ana Church, basically a ruin, though a fair bit still stands. No exact information exists about when it was built or by whom.

## Alaaddin Bey Complex

Located in the Minare Neighbourhood, this stone complex was constructed in 1748 by Ottoman governor Alaaddin Bey. Apart from a mosque, which is still in use, the complex also includes a *hamam*, madrasah, fountain and his


Meryen Ana Church [6]

### A Dengbêj from Muş: Huseynê Orgînosî


Huseynê Mûşî [7]

Muş is well known as the birthplace of **Huseynê Orgînosî** (appropriately also known as Huseynê Mûşî), sometimes referred to as the king of all *dengbêj* singers, who was born in nearby Orgînos village in 1936, into a family where his grandfather, father and most of his siblings were also *dengbêjs*. He passed away in 2001, a short time after one of the most important figures in his love songs, his wife Dîlber, had died. His talented nephew Delîl Dîlanar is now well known among Kurds in Europe, where he is based, as a *dengbêj* performer (For Zahiro *dengbêj* see Bulanık p: 192).



Alâeddin Bey [8]

mausoleum. The minaret, on the west side of the mosque, is square with an octagonal base and one balcony.

Built of stone and brick, the *hamam* is still in use, but it has lost some of its original character due to various additions and renovations, most recently in 1948. The *hamam* is on a rectangular plan and is divided into cold, warm and hot sections, the last of which is domed. The hot room also has bathing cubicles in all four corners, with a central message platform. The fountain sits in a circular niche and has a raised pool behind.

The graves of Alaeddin Bey, his wife and daughter lie in a domed mausoleum in the northwest corner of the complex. A marble headstone here bears the dates (AH) 1158/1171.

## İbrahim Samidi Tomb

The tomb of one İbrahim Samidi is located in the garden next to the Alaaddin Bey Hamamı. Constructed in 1888 of stone blocks as well as rubble stone, the tomb has a crypt and an upper floor with two sections, one of which contains a *mihrab*. The door in the east side of this section gives access to the tomb where the sarcophagus is located. People believe that the mental illness and malaria can be cured by visiting, and pilgrimages here are common.

## Ulu Cami

Also in the Minare Neighbourhood, west of Alaaddin Bey and Hacı Şeref Mosques, the Ulu Cami is thought to have been built by Sheikh

Muhammed in 979. It is believed that the structure on the west side might have been an annex added later, and a small *mihrab* has been placed here. The minaret is a modern addition, having been built in 1968, damaged in a quake and renovated in 1972. On a rectangular plan, it is ornamented with zigzag lines.

## Hacı Şeref Mosque

Located close to the Ulu Cami, the Hacı Şeref Mosque was built in 743 and renovated a number of times between 1036 and 1309, according to inscriptions. On a square plan, it has nine domes, though decoration is limited. The minaret, built in 1902, is a little more eye catching, with colourful stones arranged to create zigzag and geometrical patterns.

## Yıldızlı Caravanserai

Located in the city centre's upper bazaar, this two-storey stone caravanserai was built by Seyfi Bey in 1889, and survived some damage by the Russian army in 1916. There is a decorative entrance gate, through which you will find a ground floor built of stone while the upper floor consists of brick and rough stone. Jewellers, copper-



A child [9] from Muş

## Getting there

Besides the usual road and rail transport connections, Muş is served by flights operated by Turkish airways and other air lines.

## Accommodation

The *Dap Hotel*, Atatürk Bulvarı Sok 6, No 2 (0436 212 98 11) is a three-star place, terrace restaurant with views of the mountains and the Muş plains. Similar is the *Zümrüt Otel*, on İstasyon Cad (0 436 212 96 05), with some 70 rooms.

## Places to eat

The *Park Lokantası*, Belediye Önü (0436 212 27 40), does traditional meals, including kebabs and some vegetarian fare, with a seasonal menu. Next to the restaurant is a nice tea garden with two fish ponds. For kebabs and grills, try the *Altın Şiş Kebap*, on Erzurum Cad (0436 212 51 43).

**Municipality: 0 436 215 20 97 Tourist information: 0 436 212 10 15**



Murat Bridge [10]

smiths, silver shops and drapers occupied the ground floor while the upper floor, which may have been added later, was used for accommodation.

## Haspet Kalesi

This fortress is located on a hillside which forms part of the eastern extension of Ziyaret Mountain, 9km south of town. Natural disasters have destroyed all of the structure apart from some walls and two watchtowers in Soğucak (Mongok) village downhill.

The precise age of the kale is unknown, though it is associated with a tale involving Alexander the Great. On his way to capture Egypt, he instructed one of his commanders, Beatlis, to build an impregnable fortress. Upon Alexander's return he found the castle completed and tried several times to attack the castle, unsuccessfully. He sent an envoy to the fortress and this drew some people from within the fortress to talk to him. Alexander asked them, "Tell me who dares to irritate the army of a commander trying to capture the whole world." They replied, "We are the lords of Gur. You irritated us entering our land." Meanwhile Commander Beatlis went to Alexander to hand over the castle, saying, "I built this castle upon your instruction and it stopped the strongest army in the world, thus carrying out my mission. I am ready to hand over the keys of the castle." Alexander was happy with the answer and forgave the commander (similar story is told for Bitlis Castle).



Haspet Kalesi [11]

## Murat Bridge

Located 10km north of town on the Varto road, this stone bridge spans Murat River. The materials used and structure of the bridge suggest it could have been built by the Seljuks in the 13th century. With 12 sharp-pointed arches, the bridge is 143m long. The arches have large stone bases with a triangular shape that helps reduce the damaging effect of strong flows.

## Surp Garabet Monastery (Dêra Çengelî)

Surp Garabet is located on the slopes of the Şerafettin Mountains (Çiyayên Şerefdînê) in Yağcılar (Dêra Çengelî) village, 21km from Muş city. This was once a sun temple, before becoming a monastery and used as a centre of education by the Armenians in 399. Built of stone on a rectangular plan, it is in ruins, with only the arches in the eastern walls still standing, but was once a significant and substantial monastery, with 360 rooms and a domed chapel. Some bas-reliefs can still be seen and there once a huge bell here which was audible from a long distance (the old Kurdish name derives from this fact).



A motif from Surp Garabet Monastrery [12]

Tourists, mainly Armenians and Christian's missionaries, are drawn to the site today. If you walk around the village too, you may see parts of the monastery that have been recycled into the walls of local homes, and villagers may even offer to see you bits of stone or other artefacts from monastery.



Winter Tourism [13]

To reach the site, head out from Muş on the Bingöl highway. Just before you pass small town of Yaygın (Nahye), turn right to stabilised village road and follow signs for Yağcılar.

## Sironk Church (Dêra Sirongê)

Located in Kırköy (Sirong) village, 30km from the city centre, you will find this church dating back to 651. Though only the adobe walls still stand, the church still draws Christian visitors every year, mainly from Germany and other European destinations.

## Winter Tourism- Muş Ski Center

The Skier house and two baby-lift lines are located on the way of Kulp-Muş near the village of Güzeltepe (Ajmanûk) some 9km away from Muş centre. This facility was built to use in winters, however it can serve the guests in other seasons who want to stay for trekking, or mountain tourism. The ski house offers you with a café serving hot and cold drinks. The snow season starts in November and ends in April.

# Varto (Gimgim)



Koğ Festival, horse racing [14]



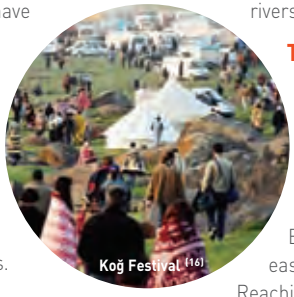
Folk dance [15]

Varto (population 10,764) is located 45km north of Muş city. There are tales surrounding both the old and new names of the town: Varto could derive from the Armenian name of Vartan, while Gimgim could be derived from the word used for the volcanic rumblings locals heard in the surrounding mountains.

The history of Varto goes back to Urartians, and indeed some Urartian artefacts were unearthed in the 1960s by archeological digs in Kayalıdere (Xinzora jêr) village. The district played a prominent role in the Kurdish uprising of the mid-1920s, with the ultimate aim of establishing a Kurdish state in the region, led by Colonel Halil Bey of Cibran (Xalid Begê Cibranî), chief of the Cibranlı tribe influential in Varto, Bulanık and Malazgirt, and also the president of the Kurdish Liberation Association (Azadî Örgütü). After this abortive uprising, Halil Bey was first exiled to Erzurum and then executed in Bitlis on 14 April 1925. Earlier in the same year, there was another Kurdish rebellion associated with Sheikh Said, starting on 13 February 1925 on a large territory comprising Muş, Elazığ, Genç and Diyarbakır. In the course of events, Sheikh Said and his company were caught by Turkish military troops near Evdirehmanpaşa (Abdulrahman) Bridge (see p: 170) in this area and they were hanged in Diyarbakır on 27 May 1925.

Varto is located on the Eastern Anatolia fault line, and there were destructive earthquakes here in 1946

and 1966. Most of the inhabitants are Sunni Kurds, but there are significant communities of Alevi Zaza speakers in Varto and nearby villages, these communities in Varto have excellent relationships with one and another, a wonderful but hidden testament to the kinds of everyday interfaith sense of camaraderie which exists in daily lives but rarely makes headlines.


Koğ Festival (16)

Interestingly Varto has large groups in diaspora who contribute to the economy; you will be surprised to see many stores, restaurant and hotels which are named after European capital cities such as Paris, Berlin...

The municipality arranges the Varto Koğ Festival in mid-July, featuring art workshops and exhibitions. On the last day of the event, people drive an hour to Mount Koğ, 15km from town, for a concert. Some choose to camp up here and next day ascend to the summit to observe the sunrise. Unusually, the area has two trout farms in addition to the usual activities of agriculture and livestock farming. Just 1km away is the Doğan Alabalık Tesisleri, serving fresh fish and alcohol in a beautiful riverside garden.

## The Tombs of Boylu (Kêrs) Village

Some Urartian tombs are dug out of the top of the highest hills east and south of Boylu village, 15km east of Varto town. Reaching the site requires ten to fifteen minutes' climb. The smaller of two caves containing the tombs is just behind the village while the larger is further south; both are now used as shelters for animals. You can enter the rock tombs and will find sarcophagi and huge graves inside. Don't leave the village without refreshing yourself with a drink from the cool village spring next to the Ulu Cami.

## Kunav Caves

These caves are located in Kayadelen (Kunav) village, some 18km east of Varto town. Reached by a path, the first cave is about 25m above ground level, and gives access to the next


Kunav Caves (17)



Hamurpet Lakes [18]

cave from its western side. Then you will see a creek flowing through, which was responsible for creating the cave itself. The dark passages and noises of bats can be a bit eerie.

## Kayalıdere Kale

Offering a good view over the Murat River, the fortress is located near Kayalıdere (Xinzora jêr) village, 22km southeast of Varto, and can be reached by a half-hour bus ride. It is thought to date back to the reign of the Urartian King Sarduri II, in the mid-8th century BC. Archaeological work on the castle and Ancient City in 1964 uncovered the ruins of a temple, a tower and a palace. There are also storage areas and rock tombs, consisting of a passageway and six burial chambers. Artifacts found, among which are a bronze lion, buttons, arrowheads and bronze needles, are exhibited in Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilizations.



Kayalıdere Kalesi [19]

The construction date of the castle was assumed to be from the Urartu King II. Sarduri period (BC 735 - 764) and is still mostly intact. The temple has a stone floored courtyard and a bronze statue of a lion in sitting position dated BC VII.

## Hamurpet Lakes (Golên Xamirpêtê)

Two volcanic lakes, both called Hamurpet, are situated west of the Akdoğan Mountains, in the east of the district. The larger of the two is 2149m and covers 13 square kilometres. Nourished with spring melt water, the lake has a greenish hue and is populated with carp, ducks, geese and beavers. Just a few hundred metres away is the smaller lake, a circular body of water which is blue because it is much deeper than its larger cousin. The lakes are popular for weekend picnics, carp- and trout-fishing and

bird-watching. The closest village to the lakes is İskender. While traveling note some section of the stone made road built by the Russian army, a reminder of the Russian occupation.

## Gadiza Waterfall

With a height of 15m, these falls are located in Ozankent (Gadiza) village on the slopes of the Bingöl Mountains. The views from here are good and the area is popular among locals for picnics, but you will need to walk up for 20 minutes from the end of the road before reaching the falls. The village itself is 15km northwest of Varto.

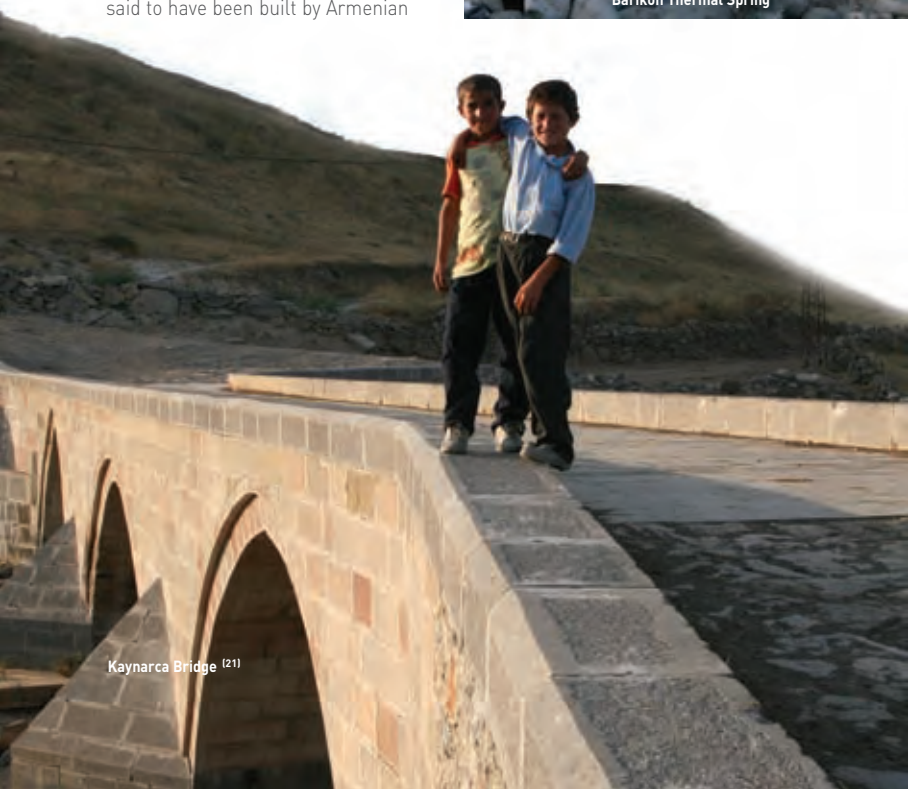
## Kaynarca Bridge and Barikon Hot String

This three-arched stone bridge is located in Kaynarca (Başkan) village, 21km west of Varto town. With a height of 4m and a length of 43m, the bridge spans the Kaynarca River (a branch of the Murat River), and is said to have been built by Armenian craftsmen; it was restored in 2007 and is in use. Unfortunately the Ottoman-era inscription on the bridge is illegible and thus no precise age can be given for the bridge.

Close to the bridge are the Barikon Springs, no more than a small pond with no formal facilities. The waters are said to cure liver and stomach ailments and are popular with youths and children.



Barikon Thermal Spring [20]



Kaynarca Bridge [21]

# Bulanık (Kop)



Stone house [22]

East of Muş city is Bulanık (population 20,727) some 105km away from Muş city; it is the largest district of the province in terms of area and population. It is bounded by Haçlı Lake to the south (a good site for fishing as well as bird-watching – pelicans, cormorants and a type of duck can be seen here) and the Murat River to the north. Melt water from the peaks is clear until it becomes muddy in the lake itself, hence the name of the district (Bulanık means "muddy"). The large prairies of the district are agriculturally productive, yielding crops such as wheat, barley and sugar beet, while some fishing on the lake is also of some importance.

Traditional two-storey houses can still be seen here, accommodating livestock below with the family above. Bulanık also has some interesting old mosques and tombs.

## Dengbêj Zahiro

Another claim to fame of the district is that it is the birthplace of one of the most well-known Kurdish *dengbêj* singers in the country, **Zahiro.** He lived here until 1993, but has since moved to Aydın province in western Turkey.

Esenlik (Abirî) Village Mosque and Sheikh İbrahim Tomb

Located 30km southwest of Bulanık town, this mosque is thought to have been built by the Artukids, and is still used for worship. The structure, last restored in 1985, has two naves, four domes and a mihrab.

On the hilltop opposite is the tomb of Sheikh İbrahim (and that of his son). The construction and materials suggest it dates from the 16th century. Rectangular in

plan, it is covered with barrel vaults. As for the sheikh, he is believed to have been the follower of the teachings of the great Sufi mystic Jalal-ud-Din Rumi. Locals make pilgrimages here in the hope of being cured of their illnesses.

## Mollakent Village

Located in Mollakent village 35km from Bulanık is a this steeply vaulted mosque which has several domes and is flanked by a graveyard, the ruins of an old mosque to the west and a dervish lodge to the north. According to inscriptions on the tablet on the door, it was built by one Sheikh İbrahim in 1878.

To the south is a simple madrasah with a room to either side of the entrance. It was built by a certain Sheikh Abdurrahman in 1818. It is now a private residence.

Also in the village you will find the tomb of Sheikh Ömer Sahubi, built of stone with a rectangular plan, and with a layered roof. Little is known about Ömer himself, but it is rumoured that he had a guesthouse and kitchen built at the site of tomb. Locals believe that staying in his tomb overnight cures people of epilepsy.



Mollakent graveyards [23]



Mollakent graveyard entrances [24]

The local cemetery has many beautifully decorated entrances made of yellow and black stone, and containing the graves of locally important religious leaders.



Esenlik mosque [25]

# Malazgirt (Milazgir



A view from Malazgirt [26]



A view from inside Malazgirt Kalesi [27]

The easternmost district of the province is 127km away from Muş city, Malazgirt (population 20,987) lies on the north shore of Lake Van. Historical tablets say that the Urartian King Menuas built a city named Menuahina after himself, a name which eventually became Malazgirt. The district was a key battleground in the conflict between the Byzantines and Seljuks in 1071. The Seljuks were triumphant and captured the Byzantine ruler who was taken into the presence of Seljuk leader. The conflict proved a turning point, shifting the balance of power completely in favour of the Seljuks and Sunni Muslims, spelling the beginning of the end for the Byzantines and opening the door to Turkish domination in Asia Minor. A large monument to the battle, called the Alpaslan Monument after the Seljuk leader of the time, has been built in Malazgirt town. 28 of August each year a formal ceremony called *Malazgirt Zaferi* held nearby the Monument to mark this victory.

Agriculture and livestock, including cattle rearing, are the main sources of livelihood, helped by a 28km irrigation pipeline which enables a good harvest of sugar beet, melons, wheat, barley and lentils.

A well-known local tale says that fire-worshippers led by a shah called Teymus once lived around Malazgirt's citadel. One of the Shah's sons, Beşir, converted to Islam and was punished by his father by having his tongue cut out. Beşir left Malazgirt and came eventually to Mecca where he met Caliph Ali and told him his story. Ali came to Malazgirt with an army and deposed the Shah, but the soldiers could not drink water from the fountain as it was full of snakes. Ali prayed the snakes to leave, and they


Malazgirt Kalesi [28]

duly went into a well in Şaneder village (nowadays it is a quarter of the town). Even today, says the tale, the well is full of snakes between 15 May and 15 June each year, though the snakes are not venomous and not aggressive even if touched.

## Malazgirt Kalesi

There are four major historical fortresses in the district, the most important of which is Malazgirt Kalesi, in the Mengüç Gazi quarter. It has double walls, with a 5m gap between each, and is in two parts: a citadel surrounding the old town, unlike Diyarbakır's city walls, with a fortress in the centre itself. Its precise age is unknown, though the seventeenth-century traveller Evliya Çelebi wrote that the castle was attacked by Tamerlane. "It has [within] two thousand houses, a mosque, two madrasahs, a small bath, an inn, fifty stores and seven schools for children," he also wrote. The walls included some bastion towers, but some parts have been destroyed by earthquakes. Nowadays part of the interior has been turned into refreshing park. Stone-paved paths lead down to the creek which once furnished the water supply.

The key to the fortress can be obtained from the security guard at the park. Good views can be had from the top of the site, while in the park afterwards you can rest over a cup of fresh tea.

## Kız Bridge

Located 2km from Malazgirt town centre of the Saftekin quarter, the simply constructed Girl Bridge (as its name translates) is comprised of two slabs that are 5m long and 1m wide. The bridge was built by order of the king for his daughter, though exactly when is unknown.

## Hatun Bridge

On the main road to Bulanık, at the end of Murat quarter, this bridge has a single arch and made up of Horasan plaster and stone. Though its age and



Hatun Bridge [29]

the name of the builder are not known, its style leads people to assume that it dates from the Seljuk era. The bridge, spanning the Şekrik River, is no longer used by vehicles as it has been superseded by a modern bridge; nowadays it's a popular spot for angling.

## Bostan Kale

Another Urartian structure, this lies 17km from Malazgirt town in the village of Bostankale. It was built by hollowing out a huge rocky mass. Steps were carved into the south side of the rock, and when you visit you will see more excavated rock used for wheat stores and water tanks. To the north there are the small ruins of a church, identifiable by stones bearing crosses.

## Tıkızlı Kale

Located in Tıkızlı (Fişva) village 44km from Malazgirt town, this fortress was built by the Urartians, probably in the 8th century BC. Large rocks were piled up to create it without any plastering materials, and it had an inner and outer keep. The 4m-thick walls in the northern section of the inner wall are reasonably well preserved and stand up to 2m high, but the outer wall has been reduced to lines of a few stones.



Kız Bridge [30]




MESAFE CETVELİ (KM)

| MUŞ | BULANIK | HASKÖY | KORKUT | MALAZGİRT | VARTO |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 101 | 18 | 28 | 127 | 56 |



Yedi Kardeş tower [1]

# DİYARBAKIR
## (Amed-Amida-Diyarbekir)

**Diyarbakır** is the northern gateway to the **Fertile Crescent** of **Mesopotamia** and, as the largest Kurdish city in the southeast of Turkey, is indeed is the place tourists naturally gravitate towards when visiting here. The substantial **city walls** are the most obvious sight along with its **mosques, churches** and distinctively **Kurdish flavour**.



Most tourists are naturally drawn to the **old city**, encircled by huge walls of **black stone**. To get some deeper insight into the region beyond what makes it into the news headlines and to understand its peoples, then this is the **ideal place** to start, particularly if you can be here during the **Kurdish Newroz Festival**.



An old picture of Diyarbakır nargile house/tea house [2]

On the west bank of the Tigris, Diyarbakır has been one of the main settlements of the region throughout history. Stone tools and other artefacts unearthed in the province reveal that the area has continuously been settled since Palaeolithic times. The Hurrians and Mitannis were the first civilisations here, and they were followed by the Hittites, Assyrians, Medes, Achaemenids, Parthians, Romans, Byzantines and so forth. In the early years of Christianity the city was an important religious centre called Amid and produced many theologians, some of whom are buried in the Virgin Mary Church. Muslim did conquest Diyarbakır in 639 by Halid bin Velid, one of the commanders of the army led by Îyâz bin Ganm who was given the mission of conquering el-Cezire.

Once Islam gained dominance in the region, Diyarbakır was ruled in the 10th and 11th centuries by Mervanids, a Kurdish dynasty. Persian traveller and literary man Nâsır-ı Hüsrev who visited Diyarbakır in late 1046 during the reign of Mervani Ruler Nasrüddevle (1021-1061) gives some information about the city in his work titled "Sefernâme". According to Hüsrev, the city is on a huge rock, surrounded by black walls; he names eastern, western, northern and south ern gates as "Tigris", "Rum", "Ermen" and "Tel", respectively. He also mentions the existence of a water right at the middle of the city whose source is unknown and then describes the Grand Mosque and city walls. The battle of Malazgirt in 1071 cemented Muslim control over Anatolia and the decline of the Byzantines, although Diyarbakır was not captured by the Muslims until 7th century. Thereafter Diyarbakır and the rest of the region came under the Seljuks, Artukids, İnaldis, Ayyubids, Karakoyunlus, Akkoyunlus and Ottomans.

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
1,460,714 (2007)
**Average altitude**
660m
**Area**
15,162 square kilometres
**Districts**
Diyarbakır, Bismil, Çermik, Çınar, Çüngüs, Dicle, Eğil, Ergani, Hani, Hazro, Kocaköy, Kulp, Lice, Silvan
**Economy**
Agriculture, Livestock farming, Light industry, Commerce, Tourism
**Neighbouring provinces**
Adıyaman, Malatya and Şanlıurfa (west), Bingöl and Elazığ (north), Muş (north-east), Batman (east), Mardin (south)

The province is not particularly green: the plains which make up much of the province are green in springtime, but otherwise vegetation amounts to patches of oak forest on the hills. Mount Kolubaba (1957m) in the Karacadağ range is as mountainous as Diyarbakır gets. The local economy is dominated by agriculture, including the cultivation of cereals, pulses, cotton and fruits. Diyarbakır is an important point for commerce, served as it is by the railway between Istanbul and Batman; Bismil also north east of Diyarbakır has some oil resources while copper is found in Ergani district, and Kulp is an important sericulture centre.

Diyarbakır is the northern gateway to the Fertile Crescent of Mesopotamia and, as the largest city in the southeast of Turkey, is indeed the place tourists naturally gravitate towards when visiting here. The substantial city walls are the most obvious sight, but even more rewarding is the introduction that the city offers to the complex religious and cultural make-up of this part of Turkey – evident in its mosques, churches and distinctively Kurdish flavour. If you have come to southeastern Turkey to get some deeper insight into the region beyond what makes it into the news headlines and to understand its peoples, then this is the ideal place to start, particularly if you can be here


Newroz in Diyarbakır [3]

during the Kurdish Newroz Festival (see p: 248).

Elsewhere in the province, Silvan town has the large and beautifully decorated Selahaddin Eyyubi Camii, while nearby is the famous Malabadi Bridge, an enormous stone structure and one of the most famous of its kind in Turkey. The province also has a popular spa resort at Çermik, where numerous hotels and guesthouses cluster around a hot-spring complex. If you have a thing for caves, head to Birkleyn, where there are inscriptions and reliefs dating back to the Assyrians, or to Sevenpınar, where the Hilar caves contain various rock tombs, also with ancient reliefs. There are yet more rock tombs near the Dicle Dam in Eğil district, and reachable by boat.


Diyarbakır old town [4] from the sky

Besides plenty of Islamic architecture, the province is also home to an old synagogue at Çermik, and several churches including a substantial one at Çüngüş. Finally, if you want to see silk being produced – unusual in Turkey – head to the Kulp district.


Diyarbakır city walls [5]


Far view of the walls [6]

## Diyarbakır City

It is the largest city of not just eastern Turkey but the whole Kurdish-speaking world, what is significant about the city's obvious pride in its Kurdish identity is that it has given Diyarbakır the confidence to blend itself into the fabric of modern Turkey, more so than some expect; these days the Diyarbakırians here are just as likely to speak Turkish as Kurdish, and they do so with a unique accent.

And as visitors soon discover, for the most part Diyarbakır (population 592,557) is a likeable and surprisingly progressive city, with some worthwhile monuments, a thriving university, lively restaurants and atmospheric old teahouses. Walking down the streets of old town, you may find students befriending you in order to practise their English and they will point out the finer points of Kurdish dress, the nuances of the Zaza and Kurmanji, and even which Kurdish cassettes are especially worth hearing.

Most tourists are naturally drawn to the old city, encircled by huge walls of black stone and overlooking the quiet Hevsel Gardens and farmlands of the Tigris Valley to the east. It's possible to ascend various sections of the wall for great views of the surrounding countryside as well as the bustling streets within the old city. Here you will also find a number of attractive old mosques as well as two fully opened churches and some ruined ones, bearing mute witness to the now largely vanished Christian community. Things seemed more multicultural to the traveller Edmund Naumann, visiting in 1890, who described seeing "dervishes in fantastic clothes, religious Keldanimen [Chaldean Christians]... Turks and Christians and still many others... An Armenian shoe shop, with red, yellow and green leathers at the front and a lot of Armenians working inside was beautiful enough to inspire one to point." Today the diversity is less obvious, though it is there in the presence of Kurmanji- and Zazaki-speaking Kurds, ethnic Turkish students and a small Arab minority. Despite a surprising amount of modern architecture, there are still districts of old houses and alleyways. Also visible are the remnants of shantytowns that sprang up after a massive influx of Kurds from the countryside caused by the troubles


Photo taken in 1873. On the right a Kurd from Cizre, Center, a Kurd of Mardin and a shepherd from Diyarbekir [7]


Dağkapı tower [8]

of recent decades, though these are now gradually being removed.

The effects of that influx are also evident in the new city, whose high-rise neighbourhoods sprawl to the west and north of the city walls. Few tourists spend much time here, but it's worth having a look around the bustling *Ofis* area, in particular the restaurants and cafés of *Sanat Sokağı* (Art Street). All in all, Diyarbakır deserves a stay of at least a couple of days, though you'll get a much better appreciation of the place if you can hang around for double that time.

After Newroz (see p.248), organised by Municipality, Diyarbakır's Culture and Art Festival is the city's main festival and attracts some international performers. Over the space of a week in late May/early June events are held at dozens of venues in the city centre – including in the open-air near Dağ Kapı – and in other towns in the province. The programme features concerts, film screenings, folkloric dances, shows involving acrobats and clowns, and so forth, and there also panel discussions and seminars on the art and literature of the region.

## Dağ Kapı to Mardin Kapı

Gazi Cad, the main north–south thoroughfare in the old city, connects Dağ Kapı (the north gate in the city walls) with Mardin Kapı (the south gate) over a distance of just under 1500m. This section covers the two gates plus attractions along, or just off, Gazi Cad.

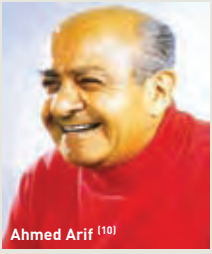
### Dağ Kapı (Derîyê Çîyê)

You're bound to pass through Dağ Kapı (called Harput Kapı in the past), the


Diyarbakır city centre, Ofis [9]

## Some prominent people from Diyarbakir

Among many figures from the arts to have come from Diyarbakır is the poet **Ahmed Arif**, born here in 1927. He studied philosophy at Ankara University and was arrested on political grounds in 1950, serving two years in prison. His fame derives from just one anthology, *Hasretinden Prangalar Eskittim,* which became highly popular after its publication in 1968. He died in 1991. Also prominent was the writer and poet **Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı** (Huseyin Cahit), born in Diyarbakır in 1910. Educated in Istanbul, he learned French in school and started to read the poems of French poets such as Baudelaire and Verlaine. Eventually he went to study politics in Paris, where he worked as an announcer on a Turkish-language station; returning to Turkey, he did some work for the state as an interpreter. His poems tended to be about death and desolation; his most well-known work is Yaş 35. He died in 1956 and is buried in Ankara.


Ahmed Arif [10]

Another of the city's literary figures is the Armenian writer **Mıgırdiç Margosyan**, born in the Hançepek quarter of the old city in 1938. He has written short stories in Armenian, published in the award-winning collection *Mer Ayt Goğmeri* ("My Hometown"), and often describes the life of Armenians in Diyarbakır and their relations with other groups. He continues to work as a columnist with national newspapers. Another Armenian writer from the city is Jaklin Çelik, born here in 1968, though she went to Istanbul as a child. She was the editor of the well-known Turkish-Armenian newspaper, Agos, and in her writing she tries to illustrate that Armenians aren't foreign to this terrain, and that all tribes and creeds face the same issues and can try to solve their problems in solidarity.


Mıgırdiç Margosyan [11]

northern gate, at some point: the area around contains numerous hotels and restaurants, and the tourist office is in the square just outside. The gate is placed between two cylindrical towers and consists of an arch with two columns bearing reliefs of various animals as well as several inscriptions including one in Latin from the time of Roman Emperor Valentinianus and one in Greek from the reign of Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II. The upper floor houses a small prayer area of Mervanian provenance, while the ground floor and the basement of this two storey structure are used as an art gallery and tourist office. On the south side of the gate is a pilgrimage site containing the graves of Sahat Bını Vakkas and Ebulmuhsin.

### Nebi Camii

This much-visited mosque is located in northern west of the crossroad where Gazi and İnönü Streets intersect in İnönü Quarter. The minaret, according to the inscription on it, was built by a local butcher named Hacı Hüseyin in 1530. This mosque has a spacious courtyard somehow larger than the mosque itself. The portico is decorated

## Some prominent people from Diyarbakir


Eyşe şan[12]

One famous face you may see in Diyarbakır in photos displayed around town is that of **Ayşe Şan**, born in 1938 into a family where the men were *dengbêjs*. She started to sing at a tea garden in 1963 and quickly made a name for herself, but restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language made it difficult for her to record commercially. A Jewish man from İstanbul, Albert Mesulum, decided to take a risk and got her to record four songs, two in Turkish and two in Kurdish so as not to attract accusations of favouring "separatism". It was an immediate success and after that she made many records, though these were banned after the military coup of March. Ayşe Şan left for Germany in 1971 where she lived for 3 years; subsequently she went to live in northern Iraq before returning to Turkey to live in İzmir. She died in 1996, but is still fondly remembered as the first female singer in Turkey to record in Kurdish.

***Bavê Şukrî***
***Şukrî's Father***
*Hawer delal,*
*hawer delal tu delal î kuro*
*Hawer delal,*
*hawer delal tu delal î kuro*
*Come, come to me*
*you the handsome man*
*Come, come to me*
*you the handsome man*
*Delal qurban migo, çem û çemê Bişêriyê*
*Wî delal qurban mi dî kelekçiya*
*kelek vala berda dû gemiyê*
*Wî delal qurban migo,koloz xweş e*
*lo li ber kofiyê*
*Wî delal qurban migo zewac xweş e*
*li zozanê jorîn li koçeriyê*
*Ax hawer delal,hawer delal,*
*hawer delal tu delal î kuro*

*I said "May I sacrifice my head for you*
*my handsome man"*
*River, the Besiri River*
*"May I sacrifice my head for you*
*my handsome man?"*
*The river drivers' empty rafts are*
*following a ship*
*I said " May I sacrifice my head for*
*you my handsome man"*
*Conical hat would be good with coif*
*I said " May I sacrifice my head for*
*you my handsome man"*
*Marriage is good at uplands, nomadic life...*
*Oh Come, come to me you the handsome man*

It is a sad song by a woman in love with a married man. To be with her beloved one, the woman is even ready to be his second wife, but she never accomplishes her wish.

with colourful mosaics. Featuring alternating bands of black and white stone, the mosque also has a hexagonal, elevated roof where you would expect the dome to be. The *mihrab* is decorated with tiles, while the minaret was built in its current spot at the start of the 20th century, partly with material from the original minaret which was demolished. The importance of the minaret is that it represents a bridge between Akkoyunlu and Ottoman styles.

By the south wall of the mosque is a tomb built by governor Köprülüzade Abdullah Paşa in 1718 for his wife Zübeyde Hanım and daughter Leyla Hanım; one Hacı Abdullah Bey is also buried here. Built of black stone, the tomb is square in plan and has arches screened by iron grilles on all four sides.

Opposite the mosque on the east side of Gazi Cad is a street which leads east to the İçkale (see p: 228).

### Vahap Ağa Hamamı

In Telgrafhane Sok. a little way south of the Nebi Mosque, this disused 16th- or 17th-century hamam is on the west

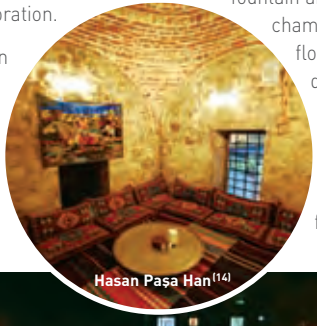

Vahap Aga Hamam [13]

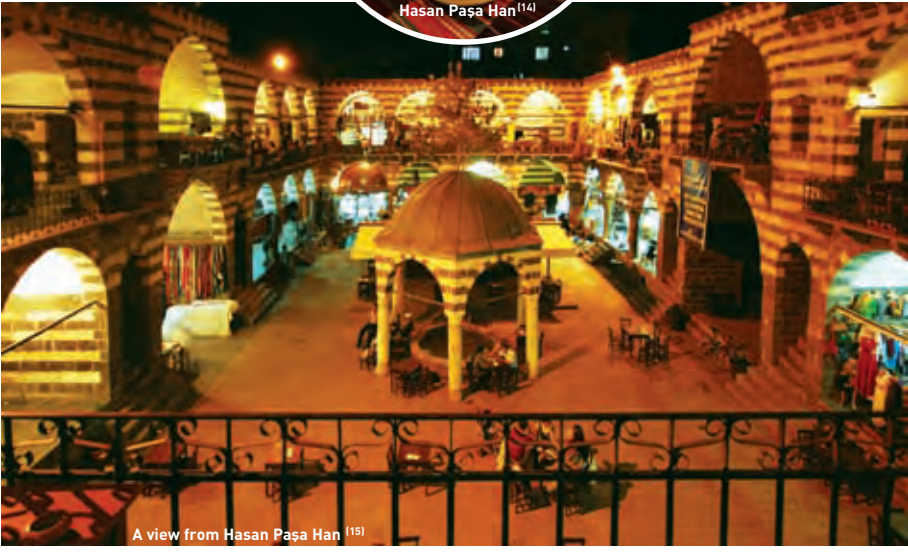
side of Gazi Cad opposite the police station. It's said that in the past, all new visitors to the city were required to take a bath in one of the hamams, and for this purpose hamams were placed close to all the four main city gates. These days, however, most of the hamams are disused, though some are due for restoration.

Stone blocks have been used for the areas close to entrance and uncut stones for the other parts. The changing room is divided into three sections, the side areas being covered with barrel vaults while there is a dome over the central section. The warm room is likewise domed. An area of private cubicles has a marble pool in its centre and a couple of iwans.

## Hasan Pasha Han

You can't miss this han, with its alternating black and white stone stripes; it's the most well known of several hans in the city which were basically caravanserais, and is located on the east side of Gazi Cad about 100m south of the Nebi Mosque. The *han* was built between 1572 and 1575 by Hasan Pasha, the son of provincial governor Sokullu Mehmet Paşa. Simeon of Poland, a traveller who visited in 1612, wrote that the *han* "had two stables for 500 horses, a gorgeous fountain and several stone chambers on three floors". He also described the upper floor as having many sleeping quarters, while adjacent to han was a bazaar for jewellers, knife-


Hasan Paşa Han [14]


A view from Hasan Paşa Han [15]

makers, shoemakers and other craftsmen.

The *han* was recently restored and is now basically a collection of souvenir shops and galleries, open till late, tucked into the various small rooms lining the aisles around the spacious courtyard. Even if you don't want to buy anything, it's worth a visit just to admire the all-pervading striped stonework and to pace up and down the numerous narrow flights of steps that give access to the upper floor. From above you get a good view over the atmospheric courtyard with its central fountain, covered with a cupola.



Gold Bazaar[16]

## The Gold Bazaar

Just south of Hasan Paşa Hanı is the gold bazaar *(Kuyumcular Çarşısı* in Turkish or *Bazara zêrfiroşan* in Kurdish), perhaps unsurprisingly the smartest bazaar in Diyarbakır. Until 1987 this was an area where meat was sold; now you'll find a number of stores selling beautiful gold and silver jewellery. The silversmiths are peerless masters in making silver jugs and goldsmiths are just as skilful at making traditional women's jewellery. Further in are more bazaars, covered on p:210.

## Çifte Han (Bursa Hanı)

Another *han* is located 50m south of Hasan Paşa Han and opposite the Ulu Cami; look for it on the east side of Gazi Cad in the Dabanoğlu quarter, specifically Çiftehan Sok, which is packed with restaurants and shops. Said to date back to the 16th century, this was once two *hans* built of basalt blocks; İnciciyan, an Armenian writer who visited Diyarbakır in the 18th century, wrote in 1804 that this was the largest han in the city. One han was demolished in 1940 for a road to be built, while the ground floor of the remaining building was converted into shops, though today it is occupied by a teahouse. The floor above comprises porticos behind which the sleeping quarters were located; now it is in state of disrepair awaiting restoration.

## Ulu Cami (Mizgefta Mezin)

On the west side of Gazi Cad opposite the two *hans* is Diyarbakır's Ulu Cami, which introduces itself with an entrance portal on which appears a depiction of a lion attacking a bull. The mosque is said to have been converted from the Mar Toma Church after the city was conquered by the Arabs in 639, in fact it was first constructed as a pagan temple. The geographer al-Muqqadasi mentioned a Great Mosque in the city at the end of the 10th century. Also the Persian traveller Nasir-i Khusraw wrote about this mosque which he saw in 1046, though his description does not match the mosque standing now. The earliest inscriptions on the mosque make clear



Ulu Cami sun clock[17]



**A view from Ulu Cami, courtyard [18]**

that it began to be rebuilt in 1091/92 during the reign of the Seljuk Melikşah. Earlier on in his reign, some additions were made to the Great Mosque of Damascus, which may be why the plan of Diyarbakır's Ulu Cami bears a striking similarity to the Great Mosque in Damascus.



**Lion and bull figure, over entrance door [19]**

Marble columns with reliefs and lavish decorations, most probably from the Roman period, the fountain with octagonal pillars and the sundial are the most striking parts of the complex, but everything is in complete harmony despite being a blend of the work of different civilisations over time (an American traveller from New York who stayed in Diyarbakır in the 1850s described the mosque as "more European than oriental"). Many Kufic inscriptions record in detail the rebuilding and various additions made to the complex throughout its long history.

The complex includes the Mesudiye and Zinciriye Madrasas and once had sections intended for followers of each of the four schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence to perform their worships separately. Once upon the time the mosque had separate prayers halls for all the four main school of Sunni Islam; these days there is a small section for the Shafi'is while a larger section is set aside for Hanafis. Next to the two main fountains is a square space with wooden benches where local men come to seek advice from the imams. Look out also for the square marble sundial in the courtyard, which is of Roman origin.

On the square opposite the mosque's main door are number of popular teahouses, where large groups of men gather to chat and street pedlars hawk perfumes and religious booklets – an especially photogenic scene. Just northwest of the mosque is the Cahit



Mesudiye madrasah[20]

Sıtkı Tarancı Museum (see p: 230), but having seen the mosque it makes sense to continue with the two adjacent madrasahs befor you visit the museum.

South of the Ulu Cami is the "Burnt Bazaar" (see p: 210).

## Mesudiye Madrasah

The construction of this two-storey stone madrasah, by the northwest corner of the mosque, started in 1194 and was completed in 1223 by the Artukid Ruler Melik Mesut; it is open in the afternoon and can be entered from the mosque courtyard or via a separate entrance, though you may need to knock. This is one of the contenders for the oldest university in Anatolia, teaching subjects including medicine, astronomy, science, literature and philosophy. The stone columns placed on either side of the mihrab can jiggle in the event of any slight tremor, giving warning of earthquakes. The columns offer a different view of the *mihrab* located in the South of the courtyard.

In the north of the structure is the gate leading to a cross-vaulted courtyard with an iwan that is different from the rest of the building in that it is built of limestone. The courtyard has two-storey porticos separated with friezes, but unusually the porticos do not have rooms behind them.



Rolling Stone columns[21]

## Zinciriye Madrasah

By the southwest corner of the mosque is the Zinciriye madrasah, which can be reached via the back door of the mosque; you will find the madrasah with its large iron grilles on your left. It is a 12th-century construction, built by either a king named Salih Necmettin or by one



Zinciriye Madrasah[22]



Inside of Zinciriye Madrasah[23]

Ebu İsa Dirhem, depending on which source you believe, and was used as a madrasah right up until World War I, when it served as a shelter for the poor. Later it was for a time the home of the Archaeology Museum; today it is a place where female students take Koranic classes, and men cannot enter the building.

Built of stone blocks, it is distinguished from other Anatolian madrasahs in that its facade is relatively plain. The courtyard has been covered with a glass dome and converted into a salon with a small pool while the yard is surrounded with student rooms. There is a domed room in the left corner of the courtyard and two barrel-vaulted rooms on either side of main *iwan*, which is the most prominent part of the structure. In front of the madrasah is a stone fountain of the same age as the building.

## The "Burnt Bazaar" (Çarşîya Şewitî)

South of the Ulu Cami is the Y*anık Çarşı (Çarşîya Şewitî* in Kurdish) or "Burnt Bazaar", which acquired this name after a fire some years ago, though it used to be called *Espahî Çarşısı* or "Soldier Bazaar". Here you will find shoes and slippers on sale, and there are also small stores selling traditional clothes, spices, tea, henna, scarves, carpets and *kilims;* at the end of the bazaar is a small section selling good quality local tobacco. You will also find people selling secondhand clothes, and some stores sell old electronic goods as well. By the wall of Ulu Mosque are some larger stores where you can find different kind of household goods and gift shops popular with tourists. Located in the square is the old Wheat Bazaar, now turned into furniture and carpet stores. Visiting in 1881, the traveller Amand Von Schwieger-Lerchenfeld mentioned that the bazaars featured plenty of European products imported from Aleppo in Syria, adding that "the best leather comes from Hamedan [in Iran], cotton from Azerbaijan, shawls from Kerman and Mashhad [in Iran],



The Burnt Bazaar (Çarsîya Şewitî)[24]



Saddler[25]

and world-famous beautiful carpets from Kermanshah [in Iran]". Today many goods you'll find are, unsurprisingly perhaps, from China, though there are still textiles and carpets from Iran, as well as clothes from İstanbul.

If you leave the bazaar by heading out to Melik Ahmet Cad (the main west–east street in the old city) you will come across some saddler's workshops. Traditionally saddle-making has been an important local industry, and the consumers are people in nearby villages. The saddles are stuffed with a material known locally as *cil*. Soft layers of felt and haircloth are then placed on top of the stuffing material so that the saddle does not hurt the animal's back.

## Deve Hamamı and the Cheese Bazaar

Beyond the major junction of Gazi Cad with Melik Ahmet Cad is the disused *Deve Hamamı*, on the south side of Gazi Cad about 300m from the junction with Melik Ahmet Cad. Said to have been built between 1520 and 1540, it was referred to as the "large hamam" on account of its size; a tale relates that a lost camel from a caravan was found here after a search of several days, causing people to name this the *deve hamamı* (deve means "camel"), now amended to *deva* ("remedy").

The hamam has four *iwans* and is accessed through a cross-vaulted gate



Spice Shops[26]

as the one on the main street is closed. On the right side of the landing is the entrance into the changing rooms plus the warm and hot rooms. The changing room contains a stone pool and is covered by a dome 14m


Cheese Bazaar [27]

across resting on an octagonal drum with eight windows. A chimney between the changing room and warm room used to vent steam. In the middle of the structure is the massage platform, which used to be made of marble though what you see now is concrete from a renovation.

Just south of the hamam is the *Peynirciler Çarşısı,* Diyarbakır's Cheese Bazaar, to which villagers bring all kinds of cheese and yogurt in the early hours. The smell of fresh cheese and yogurt is amazing, and other items suitable for breakfast, such as honey and butter, are also sold.

## Deliller Han

On the east side of the road close to Mardin gate is Deliller Han, built by the Ottoman governor Hüsref Paşa in 1527 (and also called Hüsref Paşa Han). Occupying a large area, the complex is where the *deliller,* people who led groups of pilgrims to Mecca, used to assemble. It is built of black and white stone and once comprised a one-storey building housing the stables, and a two-storey main building, whose upper floor housed the sleeping quarters. Barrel-vaulted shops lined the street, including the front part of stable, down to Mardin Gate.

Having been thoroughly refurbished, the complex is now home to the five-star *Hotel Grand Kervansaray,* with rooms on both floors. The courtyard is an open-air restaurant; the stable is a restaurant too.

## The Tomb and Fountain of Sultan Suça

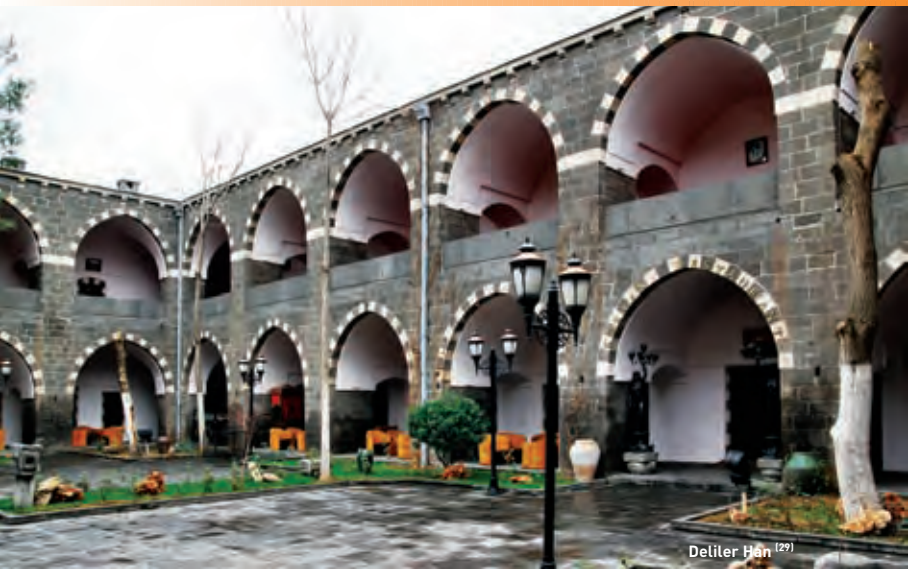
Facing the *Hotel Grand Kervansaray* is the *Sultan Şuca Türbesi,* built of stone and with a pyramidal roof. There is not an inscription on the tomb itself, but there is one on the fountain in front of the tomb, bearing his name and the date 1208–1209. The tomb has undergone several renovations and no longer contains a sarcophagus.

Opposite is a fountain made up of black basalt with three small decorative niches above the tap and some Kufic inscriptions. The cemetery just outside the Mardin Gate gets crowded on Thursday and Friday evenings, and the fountain comes in handy not only for people to quench their thirst but also to collect water for watering the plants around the tombs of their loved ones.

## Ömer Şeddad Camii

Unusually, this mosque is built inside the city walls right next to Mardin Kapı.


The tomb of Sultan Şuca [28]


Deliler Han [29]

Although this mosque is called Hazreti Ömer Camii by locals, there is no connection between the building and the Caliph Omar.

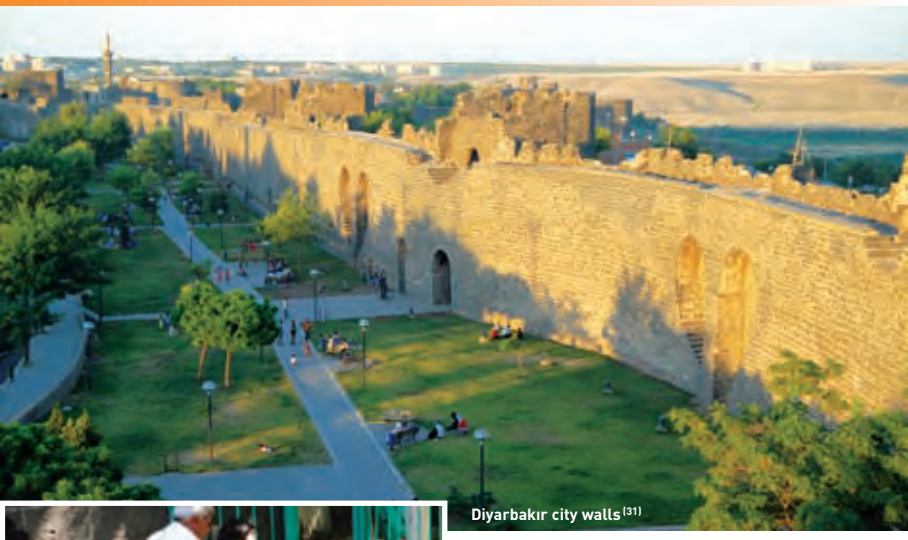
It is said that there were once several gates at this spot, but one of them was closed by Muslim armies when they conquered the city, and converted into a mosque. If you look at the back wall from the interior of the mosque, you can still see the arches of a gate. The mosque has a small green courtyard and boasts beautiful Kûfic calligraphy on its main door and right-hand-side.

## Mardin Kapı (Derîyê Mêrdînê)

This was the most strategically important of the city's gates as most attacks tended to come from the south. The section of walls in which it sits was partly destroyed after the conquest of the city by Caliph Murtezid Billah on the grounds that this area was hideout for rebels. The gate was restored by one Ahmed El Amidi, a local engineer, in 909–910 according to the inscription.

With the construction of new orbital roads, Mardin Gate no longer receives


Diyarbakır city walls [30]



Diyarbakır city walls [31]



Praying in Sarı Saltık [32]

a lot of traffic, though many villagers enter this way to sell their produce in the city. It's worth taking some time to view the enormous metal doors still kept in good condition. Note there are animal figures, stars and Kufic calligraphy on the right hand side of the gate.

Placed just outside Mardin Gate, near the cemetery, is the Hatun Fountain (sometimes called Hatun Kastalı), built of square stone blocks. The fountain is no longer used, but you can still see slots through which water once flowed. Also just outside is the gate is the *Yıldız* Tea Garden, a good spot for a refreshing cup of tea. For some sights further south from here, see the "South of the city walls" section on p: 239.

## Urfa Kapı to Yeni Kapı

The first part of the walk east from Urfa Kapı, the main west gate in the city walls, is straightforward, taking you along the main Melik Ahmet Cad to the intersection with Gazi Cad. However, the route further east to Yeni Kapı, the old city's eastern gate, involves following a narrow lane that bends slightly on its way to the old city's far wall. This section covers attractions along, or just off, this west–east route across the old city.

### Urfa Kapı (Derîyê Ruhayê)

Urfa Kapı is one of the busiest gates, as it is traversed by a busy road into the old city. Considered the best preserved of the gates, it has three portals, one of which is for pedestrians to pass through. According to the inscription on the northern portal, it was renovated by the Artukid Ruler Sultan Mehmet in 1183 and an iron gate with double doors on which human and animal figures are depicted was added. This portal is said to have been used only by imperial military expeditions only, and was otherwise closed.



Urfa Kapı (Urfa gate) [33]

The street on the right (south) of the gate as you enter from outside the walls is the so-called Turistik Cad, which curves past a park area beneath the city walls on the way to Mardin Kapı.

## The Tomb of Sarı Saltık

At the western end of Melik Ahmet Cad opposite Urfa Kapı is this octagonal tomb built of stone blocks, with a pyramidal roof. Though it doesn't contain a sarcophagus, it is a popular pilgrimage site for both men and women, and old men holding the Koran nearby may offer to read a prayer on your behalf for a small consideration. Adjacent is the lodge of the Gülşeniler Dervishes.



The iron gate of Ufa Kapı [34]

## Melik Ahmet Paşa Camii

A short walk east along Melik Ahmet Cad from the gate will bring you to this two-storey mosque on the left, which was built in the late sixteenth century and was designed by the master architect Mimar Sinan, famous for the Blue Mosque in İstanbul. The mosque is accessed via an abbara, an arched passageway. The ground-level areas facing Melik Ahmet Cad are used as shops, while the facade facing the courtyard is used as a place of prayer in winter. The balcony inside the second floor is used by women and partitioned with wooden screens called *şahnişin* in Turkish. Walls throughout the mosque have been covered with a band of blue tiles about one



A detail from Melik ahmed Paşa Camii [35]


Dicle Fırat culture and art centre[36]

metre in height. Another feature of the mosque is its minaret with double staircases inside.

## Safa (İparlı /Palo) Camii and Muslihiddin Lari Madrasah

This black basalt mosque is located more or less halfway down Melik Ahmet Cad and just north of the street in the İskender Paşa quarter. The mosque is thought to have been built in the second half of the 14th century by the Akkoyunlu Ruler Uzun Hasan. The women's section is decorated with tiles making a water-wave pattern and different designs and in East and south locateded a small cemetery. The minaret is nicely decorated with inscriptions and stonework from the base to the tip.

In the courtyard is the 14th-century Muslihiddin Lari Madrasah *(Mizgefta Palo* u *Medresa Muslihiddin* in Kurdish), which doesn't look so very different to other buildings of this type from the outside, though the interior turns out to be highly decorated: the walls are partly covered with blue tiles, while the *minbar* and *mihrab* are made of black marble. The ornate ceiling is supported by four huge columns of cubical basalt blocks. The octagonal tomb in the back belongs to Muslihiddin Lari, who taught in a madrasah and was the author of several books.


A detail from Dicle Fırat culture and art center [37]

## Dicle Fırat Culture and Arts Centre

This centre, *Navenda Çand û Hunerê ya Dîcle Firatê in Kurdish* (0412 229 0926, www.diclefirat.org), was opened with support of municipalities and NGOs several years ago in a traditional house in the Ziya Gökalp quarter, north of Melik Ahmet Cad and opposite the sign for the Mala Dengbêj (see p: 235). The house, which was used as a place where salt was stored and sold and named *Mehmetoğlu İşhanı,* is more than 400 years and typifies the old residences of Diyarbakır, with its big inner courtyard, pool and areas for summer and winter use. Besides playing host to theatre, music and dance workshops and courses, the centre is a great place to have tea in its open courtyard and chat with young locals.

## Ziya Gökalp Museum

Behind the Dicle Fırat Arts Centre is the Ziya Gökalp Museum (0412 221 27 55), another traditional house built in 1806 of basalt. The two-storey building


Ziya Gökalp Museum [38]

is where the sociologist and writer Ziya Gökalp was born in 1876, and was converted into a museum in 1956, housing a collection of the writer's personal belongings and documents. Access is through a wooden gate into the courtyard surrounded by iwans and with a pool and a black statue of Ziya Gökalp himself. Labels in Arabic and old Ottoman Turkish above the doors give some of the history behind the house. The museum is open daily (except Monday) from 7.30am until noon and from 1.30pm to 5pm.

## Aşefçiler Çarşısı (Çarşîya Eşêfçîyan)

On the south side of Melik Ahmet Cad a little closer to the intersection with Gazi Cad is another bazaar called Aşefçiler Çarşısı, in narrow Ocak Sok. Popular with villagers from the surrounding area, this sells a mixture of spices, dried foods and clothes.

## Melik Ahmet Hamam

Opposite the arcade called Avrupa Pasajı is this disused stone hamam, built between 1564 and 1567 on the south side of Melik Ahmet Cad. The main portal, of white stone, leads into the structure through a cusped vault. At the corners of the portal are pillars with geometric motifs and beautiful masonry work. The octagonal dome, whose windows and lantern illuminate the place, is enhanced by the addition of several smaller domes. The other portal leads into the changing room. The massage platform, which used to be marble, has been replaced with a concrete version.


Melik Ahmed Hamam[39]

## Four-legged Minaret and Şeyh Mutahhar Camii

Cross the busy intersection of Melik Ahmet Cad and Gazi Cad and you find yourself in a narrow street which will eventually take you to Yeni Kapı. Close to the start of this street, on the right, is this square-planned mosque in the Şavaş quarter. It was built by the Akkoyunlu Sultan Kasım in 1500, as mentioned in the inscription. The lead-coated single dome is unusual among Anatolian mosques.

The curious Four-legged Minaret *(Dört Ayaklı Minare* in Turkish, *Minara Çarling* in Kurdish) is quite separate


Spice shops [40]


Four-legged minaret[41]

## The Kırıks of Diyarbakır (Kırıklar/ Qirixên Amedê)

*Kırıks* used to be a common feature of Diyarbakır's street life. These men –ranging from youths to middle-aged– were once like vigilantes, enforcing law and order and in some cases managing to extort money from the rich to donate to the poor. They were regarded as trustworthy and were looked upon by locals with a mixture of fear and admiration. Their stronghold was the Hançepak (Xançepek) area of the old town (around the Four-legged Minaret), but these days they are on the wane, though a few can still be seen about. The classic image of *Kırık* is of men strutting about with their jackets over their left shoulder as though aping characters from a 1970s movie, and wearing shoes whose heels are deliberately folded down so that the shoes act almost like clogs and produce a loud clomp with every step. Among other stereotypical characteristics of *kırıks* are that they greet one another by putting their hands on the left side of their chest and love fiddling with rosary beads as well as keeping pigeons; liver *kebab* is meant to be their favourite food, and they use slang terms such as *anqût* (foolish), *gûndî* (illiterate/ villager – used jokingly as an insult) and *kene* (money).



Turkish in Diyarbakırian accent[42]


Cross under four legged minaret[43]

from the Şeyh Mutahhar Camii, the minaret was built by the Akkoyunlu Sultan Kasım in 1500 and is square in plan. The alternating bands of black and white stones are not surprising, but what is unusual is that the base of the minaret consists of four slender pillars in between which a person can easily walk – and it is believed that anyone who walks through the base seven times will have his or her wishes granted. The pillars are said to represent the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence, while the body of the minaret represents the unity of Islam.

### The Mar Petyun Chaldean Catholic Church (Keldani Kilisesi)

A little further east from the Four-legged Minaret, this 17th-century church in Şeftali Sok (Savaş quarter) is one of only two functioning churches in Diyarbakır (the date 1834 in an inscrip-



A view of Surp Giragos Armenian Church [44]



Surp Giragos Armenian Church [45]

tion represents a date when restoration took place). Built of black basalt, with columns painted white, it has three naves and five apses decorated with plant motifs. Some masses are held in this church by a handful of Chaldean Christians. The church is open daily from 9am to 6pm.

## Surp Giragos Armenian Church

On a narrow alleyway called Göcmen Sokak opposite the Four-legged Minaret (Savaş quarter), this church was built between 1515 and 1518, and had to be rebuilt in 1888 after being gutted by fire. Built of black basalt, the church used to have a magnificent five-storey Gothic bell tower, but it was demolished in 1916 as it was higher than the Four-legged Minaret. At the start of World War I the church was used as German army headquarters. Later it was used as a state military depot and a warehouse for the Sümerbank Textile Company until, in 1960, it was handed over to the Armenian community.



The Mar Petyun Chaldean Catholic Church [46]

Visiting in 1615, Simeon of Poland wrote: "One tradition I liked was that leaders of rites gave plenty of offerings to all priests according to their rank, and after the ceremony they invite


Esma Ocak House, living room[47]

them to dine with them at theirs. These people also offer delicious foods that I didn't see even in İstanbul or Aleppo... It's impossible to drink more than one glass of sweet and dark Ergani wine, offered with various *kebabs*, pastries or other delicacies."

The church is large but is basically derelict and roofless. The altar and the baptismal font on the right of the church can still be seen. The family who lives here acts as the caretakers and are happy to let visitors in and may even guide you around.

## Esma Ocak Köşkü

Just opposite the Surp Giragos Armenian Church is an old traditonally styled house Göçmen Sokak no. 17, Savaş quarter) which originally belonged to an Armenian named Yemenici Baboş, who made hand-printed headscarves. Researcher-writer Esma Ocak, who has written several books about Diyarbakır, bought and restored the house and then handed it over to officials so that the place could become a tourist attraction.

Fully furnished, the house is built of black basalt and boasts a courtyard with pool, common areas and guest rooms on the ground floor, a large store-room in the basement (which also has a bedroom used for naps on hot summer days) and many rooms on the upper floor. There are also four iwans, one of which is upstairs. The house is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 8am to 7pm.


Esma Ocak House[48]

## Diyarbakır Houses



Diyarbakır traditional house[49]



A door knocker from a Diyarbakır house[50]

Traditional houses in Diyarbakır are two-storey structures built of black basalt and with a courtyard. Iwans with columns are mostly placed to the south and north of the courtyard, around which are communal areas such as the kitchen, as well as some bedrooms for guests. Stone stairs lead to the upstairs rooms, which are more private. Rooms upstairs tend to have high ceilings covered with wooden roofs which are protected by roofing tiles. North-facing rooms are used in summer and south-facing ones in winter. A sloping roof prevents the snow accumulate for long in winter. The blocks of basalt are edged with a white plaster called cıs that contrasts with the dark stone. Windows have decorative niches where lamps or framed pictures can be placed, and railings *(gezemek)* that prevent children from falling out accidentally. Upstairs there are small balconies called *cumba* where flowerpots can be displayed.

## Paşa Hamam

Beyond the four-legged minaret, continue east up Yenikapı Sok and some 200m further on you will find this disused hamam on the left in the Hançepek quarter. The hamam was built under provincial governor Behram Paşa in 1564–1567, hence its name. There are entrances in the south and west, and a central conical roof of brick placed on an octagonal drum, with light furnished by a lantern as well as windows. In the middle is what would have been the massage area.

## Dicle University

Looking east from Yeni Kapı, you will see some modern buildings close to the eastern horizon, on hilly land sloping up on the far side of the Tigris. Some of these are part of Dicle University, which has its origins in a medical faculty opened in 1966. A science faculty was opened in 1974, at which time the name Diyarbakır University came to be used, and the institution was affiliated to Ankara University. In 1982 the university became independent and acquired its present name. The university has produced a number of the city's politicians and other notables, and provides an opportunity for cultural and academic exchanges with students from western Turkey. The university has an outdoor restaurant, near a large pool called *Havuzbaşı,* serving a wide range of food and alcoholic drinks.

## Yeni Kapı (Derîyê Nû)

This is the only one of the major city gates that can be a little hard to find, as it is right at the far end of the town overlooking the Tigris. If you get this far, you will have walked the narrow Yenikapı Sok east from the Four-legged Minaret through low-rise neighbourhoods quite unlike the rather bland modern architecture that dominates much of Gazi Cad. The houses here are not unlike those in rural Moroccan or Egyptian towns, with roughly plastered walls often painted brown, blue or green. When you reach the end of the lane you will need to turn left (north) and continue a short way to reach Yeni Kapı (use to be called Su Kapısı).

This gate with a single portal was originally built by the Byzantines. However according to other sources, when Marwanids took over the city of Diyarbakır in 997, the first thing they did was to fortify the walls of İçkale, which were destroyed by Büveyhis, and build up a palace on the eastern walls overlooking the Tigris. They also built up Yeni Kapı to reach the water of the Tigris. One of the inscriptions in Ulu Camii, dated 1240, refers to it as "Water Gate". Although the walls to the right of the gate are in ruins, the sections to the left are still in good shape.



Locals cooking bread near by Yeni kapı [51]



Diyarbakır city walls[52]

## The City Walls (Bedena Diyarbakır)

Deterring uninvited guests from attacking the old city, Diyarbakır's city walls never fail to arrest your gaze as you approach the city centre. Built of dark basalt, they are an impressive 5.5km long, 10–12m high and 3.5m thick, enclosing an area that stretches 1700m from west to east and 1300m from north to south. Among several gates in the walls are four main gates at the cardinal points, officially Harput Kapı (north), Rum Kapı (west), Teli Kapı (south) and Dicle Kapı (east), though everyone calls them Dağ Kapı, Urfa Kapı, Mardin Kapı and Yeni Kapı respectively. There are other gates, rather small, not far from Dağ Kapı called Çift Kapı and Tek Kapı, built in the 1960s to answer the growing city traffic.

The city was first encircled by walls in 3000 BC by the Hurrians, and the walls were renewed and enlarged partly by Romans and then by the Byzantines in 330–377. The walls in the southwest are from the time of the Seljuks and Artukids. The Harput and Mardin Gates were rebuilt by the Abbasids Caliph al-Muktadir in 909 after being demolished. The Seljuks built four towers on the western section, while the Artukids made many significant additions, including the Ulu Beden and Yedi Kardeş Towers. In the 16th century, the Ottomans extended some of the fortifications.

In the early part of the last century, the local governor planned to knock down the walls in various places so as to allow the city some breathing spacing. Fortunately Dr Albert Gabriel, a French



Local resting in the park by the walls[53]



Selling local juice celled meyan [54]

researcher who was visiting the city in 1932, sent a telegram to the Ministry of Education and managed to get this attack on the city's historical fabric stopped. The walls have since undergone a partial facelift that has included the creation of green spaces beneath the walls and the creation of large ornamental heart-shaped cavities in certain areas.

There are some interesting views of the city and the Tigris if you care to walk along the top of the walls, though you should probably avoid doing so if you don't have a head for heights, as there are no safety railings or parapets. If you do head up, it is worth bringing water and a hat in hot weather, and a torch may come in handy for the interiors of the gate-towers. The best stretch of wall to walk is that between Urfa Kapı and Mardin Kapı; it is in reasonable condition and the area abutting the inside of the wall here, bounded by Turistik Cad at ground level, has been converted into a green space popular for evening picnics in hot weather and with some play facilities for children. If you fancy glimpsing life in the oldest parts of the old city, continue beside the wall from Mardin Kapı towards Yeni Kapı and Dağ Kapı.



Diyarbakır in old days [55]

In what follows we describe the most interesting towers in the walls anti-clockwise, starting from Dağ Kapı. (The gates themselves are covered in the earlier sections "Dağ Kapı to Mardin Kapı" and "Urfa Kapı to Yeni Kapı".) You might think that the best way to see the towers is to walk through them on a circuit of the city walls, but in fact you can't see many of the details unless you are at street level. The towers can be polygonical, cylindrical or rectangular, and usually contain several storeys once used as barracks or stores.



A detail from Evli Beden Tower [56]

## Dağ Kapı Tower (Birca Derîyê Çiyê)

The powers who have ruled the city over the years have left their mark on this tower, whether in the form of an inscription, a symbol or plant and animal motifs (note the particularly striking motifs, in which pigeons are especially common). Inscriptions mentioning various renovations are mostly placed at the entrance. The iron gate, nicely adorned, was used to be closed at sunset and opened at dawn. Inside the main tower is a book shop.

## Selçuklu Tower (Birca Selçukîyan)

This Seljuk tower is south of Ulu Beden Tower and bears motifs such as deer antlers, lions and pigeons, resembling those on the Nur Tower further south.

## Evli Beden Tower (Birca Bedena Mezin)

In the southwest of the city walls, this is the largest of the towers and not a bad spot to commence a walk along the top of the walls. The tower, built by the Artukids in 1208 and also called Ulu Beden, has been at various times lived in by the homeless, hence its name, literally "refuge house".

Each of the four storeys has defensive embrasures. The walls have striking inscriptions, and just above these are two double-headed eagles with outstretched wings, and below are four griffins. Lions and griffins are particularly common on the towers, representing courage and power and acting as protective symbols.

There is a famous song about the tower:
Evli bedende kuş var,
Kanadında gümüş var
Yarim gitti gelmedi
Elbet bunda bir iş var.

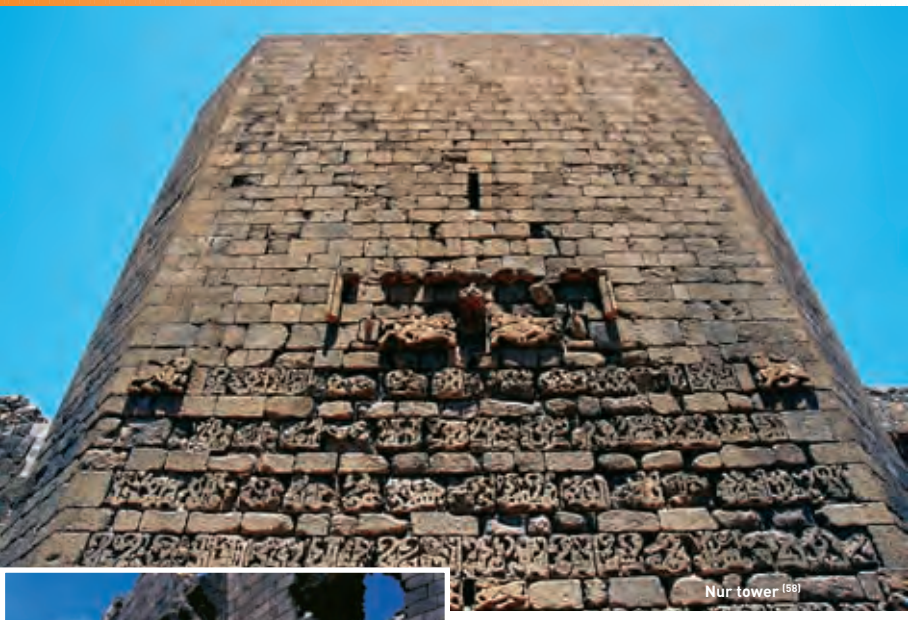
*The bird is perching on Evli Beden*
*Its wing is made of silver*
*My lover has disappeared*
*There should be something wrong.*

## Yedi Kardeş Tower (Birca Heft Birayan)

This tower, around 400m southwest of Mardin Kapı, was built by the Artukids in 1208. Architecturally it has many similarities with the Evli Beden Tower, including numerous embrasures,



Evli Beden tower [57]



Nur tower [58]



Yedi Kardeş tower [59]

winged lions and inscriptions on the upper sections and but the stonework is more detailed.

According to legend, the local ruler wanted to have two ornamented towers to be built in the south of the city walls. A craftsman was appointed and he decided to build Yedi Kardeş



A detail from Yedi Kardeş tower [60]

while appointing his apprentice to do Evli Beden. Upon completion of the towers, the emperor and his courtiers inspected them and the emperor chose Evli Beden as superior. This caused the craftsman to commit suicide by throwing himself from the tower, his death also led the apprentice to kill himself, after which it was called Ben û Sen ("Me and You") for a time.

## Nur Tower

Located next to Yedi Kardeş Tower, the Nur Tower was built at the behest of the Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah in 1089



Keçi tower [61]

and designed by Urfalı Muhammed. This is the most richly decorated of the towers, with inscriptions and reliefs including long-horned deer, running horses and a seated naked woman holding her foot with her hand. On the right of the inscription is a pigeon with open wings, below which is another naked female figure; on the left is a predatory bird. The naked women believed to represent fertility. Look out also for the smiling face of the lion on the right of the inscription.

## The Keçi Tower (Birca Bizinan)

A little way southeast of the Mardin Gate is the Keçi Tower, which sits atop a rock and offers a commanding view of the Tigris and a large part of the Mesopotamian Plain; it is also the oldest and one of largest of the towers, jutting out 60m from the walls. Said to have been used as a temple, it has been built in 367 by Roman Empire Valentius and it was restored by the Marwanids in 10th century and added as part of the tower. There are eleven bands in this magnificent tower.



Inside Keçi tower [62]

The Keçi Tower (also called Kici Burcu by the locals) is sometimes used as a site for exhibitions and poetry readings, and is a popular place with people as its offer good view of the plain and the river, also in evenings a place for couples to spend a few quiet moments together on top of the tower under the moonlight.



İçkale Artuklu Kemeri [63]

## İçkale

İçkale ("inner fortress") is located in the northeast of the walls, on a rocky crag overlooking the Tigris. It has four gates, namely *Saray Kapı, Küpeli Kapı, Oğrun Kapısı* and *Fetih Kapısı*; you're most likely to enter through the west gate, Saray Kapı. To reach it, you can either head east along İzzetpaşa Cad which starts opposite Nebi Camii (see p: 204) on Gazi Cad, or follow the city walls east from Dağ Kapı, passing a green area beneath the walls, and then head south through a gate in the walls close to İçkale.

A fortress was first built here by the Hurrians, who were the first people to settle in Diyarbakır. The inner castle separated from the rest of the city with its walls has been hosting governing units of the city since its very existence. It is one of the most significant spots where the historical fabric of the city could survive with many properties including Amida (Virankale) Tumulus, Artuklu Palace and Caravansary, the oldest church of the city dating back to 3rd century, a mosque from the 11th century and various other buildings and structures remaining from the 19th and 20th centuries. During Ottoman times, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, who made four visits to Diyarbakır, added 16 towers and two gates. Until a few years ago various government offices were housed here, but now it's due the fortress to be converted into a tourism site, which will include an exhibition centre, art gallery and museums.



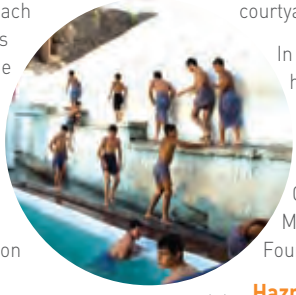
İçkale [64]

The site is like an open-air museum, housing various historical relics, including the remains of an Artukid palace. The 10m-wide vaulted entrance, Artuklu Kemeri, has an inscription mentioning the dates 1206–1207, making it contemporaneous

with the palace. A relief showing a fight between a lion and a bull, on limestone on each side of the vault, is the identical to one at the Ulu Cami.

Walking through the arch into İçkale, you see the tourism office on the right. Also on the left is a stone fountain, called Aslanlı meaning "with lion" as it bears a lion head. The water would once have run through the lion's mouth, but is now disused. Also here is the Hazreti Süleyman Camii (see below). Further on is a separate building named *Komutan Atatürk Müze Kütüphanesi,* meaning "Commander Atatürk, Library Museum", though it's just a library founded in 1973. Nearby is a large two-storey building which used to be a juvenile court. On the left of this building is another structure used for accommodating army staff. In the northeast corner is St George's Church, behind which are watchtowers at the corners of the walls. The prison is located at the left corner of the church building and facing the adult courthouse.

Stretching from the end of the church towards the gate is a long two-storeys building, which used to be army barracks. In the middle of İçkale stands a square building which was once an adult courthouse, with a green courtyard surrounded by trees.



**Dındıl hava pool** [65]

In order to protect this historically and culturally critical part of Diyarbakır, İçkale project was jointly launched by Diyarbakır Governorate, Greater Municipality and ÇEKÜL Foundation.

## Hazreti Süleyman Camii

Built by Nisanoğlu Ebu Kasım in the mid-12th century, the mosque is also known as the Kale or Nasıriye Mosque, and has entrances in the west and south, and three barrel-vaulted sections inside. The minaret, bearing an inscription with the date 1160, is square in plan and has a number of horizontal mouldings. Unlike other mosques in Diyarbakır, this one has a large number of females attending to pray in a separate section on the left.

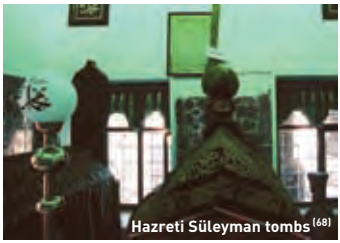
A separate entrance leads off from the courtyard to the tombs of Süleyman, the son of Arab Commander Halid bin



**İçkale, Jail**[66]



**Hazreti Süleyman Camii**[67]


Hazreti Süleyman tombs [68]

Velid, and his warriors who were martyred. Enclosed within metal grilles are the tombs itself, with beautiful decorative woodwork.

### St George's Church

St George's Church (Karapapaz) is the largest building here, facing the jail. Born in Ramleh, Palestine in the third century, St George tried to persuade the Roman Emperor Diocletian to convert to Christianity which made the emperor very furious. He is said to have been martyred after barely surviving three episodes of torture.

Most of this beautiful church is built of basalt, while the walls and the arches are of thin red bricks. The church is divided into two parts. One is a large square hall with four columns on either side and a window overlooking the Tigris; the other, larger, section has a dome with a huge ornamented hole resembling a crown, supported by eight white columns. Some sources say it was used as a hamam during the Artukid era, while others say this building was part of an Artukid palace.

### The Virantepe (Amida) Tumulus

In the northwest of İçkale is the Virantepe Tumulus, where settlement dates back to Neolithic times. Excavations in the 1960s unearthed the remains of a palace belonging to Artukid Ruler Melik Salih Nasıreddin Mahmud (1200–1222). The coloured stones, the fountain ornamented with mosaics and the pool surrounded by connected iwans are unique in Turkish architecture.

## The northwest of the Old City

### Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı Museum

Just northwest of Ulu Cami in Ziya Gökalp Sok, Cami-i Kebir quarter is a classic Diyarbakır house where the poet Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı was born in 1910 and spent his childhood. The building was constructed in 1733, and 240 years later it was converted into a museum commemorating the poet, whose personal belongings, correspondence, family photos, books and so forth are displayed here. Built of basalt contrasted with a white material called cıs, the house has 14 rooms


Saint George church [69]



Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı museum [70]



Entrance of the museum [71]

with separate sections for men and women; areas facing south were used in winter and north-facing ones in summer. Like most other houses in Diyarbakır, this building too have its basement called *"Zerzembe"*. Being cooler, food for winter used to be kept here either in earthen jugs or cupboards. The kitchen is actually an *iwan* with a single arch to the north-eastern corner of the courtyard. Inside the kitchen, there is an oven with three parts located in a niche covered by a rounded arch. Since the building is presently used as a museum, the kitchen section is covered with a wooden cage in order to protect items in the building.

Interestingly the basement of the houses has one particular room divided up by wooden screens that was used as a place where young single men and women from his family could meet potential spouses; the woman could see the man but he couldn't see her behind the screen. The museum (0412 221 27 55) is open from Tuesday to Sunday between 7.30am and noon and from 1.30pm to 5pm.

## Yeni Han (Xana Nû)

South of Ulu Camii, behind the Zinciriye Madrasah, is a two-storey *han* built by one Seyyid Hacı Abdullah in 1788–1789, according to the inscription. A vaulted gate leads into the courtyard, surrounded by porticos whose columns are linked with yet more vaults. Behind the porticos are the sleeping quarters. Unfortunately the place has lost some of its original character thanks to several renovations.

## Coppersmiths' Bazaar

Close by Yeni Han is the Coppersmiths' Bazaar *(Demirciler* or *Kazancılar*



Coppersmit's bazaar [72]



Streets of old town [73]

*Çarşısı* in Turkish) where metal items as hammers, axes and so on are produced, also similer Bazaar can be found opposite Ulu cami. Foreign travellers in the past described the place thus: "All the Armenian blacksmiths sing while fanning the fire hammering. While playing ... songs in harmony they work and sing at the same time. While hammering they work and say 'tırlaka tırlak tırtırlak' ..." Nowadays business seems to be declining and the bazaar is limited to one sokak.

## Sülüklü Han

In the Coppersmith's Bazaar is this small han, in fact one of the smallest in the city, located in Kazancılar Sok (Savaş quarter). The ground floor is the only surviving floor of what was once a three-storey building, and now serves as a teahouse. The courtyard is packed with pigeons and local chickens, landing it a homely feel. Originally there were 18 rooms on each floor with basement areas where the animals were kept.



Sülüklü Han [74]

Originally composed of a three storey, 18 rooms on each, the *han* has three depots at the basement, a cistern in the courtyard and an entrance from Kazancılar Sok. When the second and third floors were demolished in time, it became a single storey structure with the rooms placed along the *iwan*. While the people were sleeping in these rooms, their horses, camels or donkeys used the large depot rooms. Said by the officials to have been used as storage rooms after the war years, the building was also used as military barrack during the liberation war. It is also said there had been an underground tunnel extending to the jail, through which some inmates had escaped.

According to others, as there were many *sülük* (leeches) around the

## Pottery


Pottery making, old photo [75]

Pottery has been made in Diyarbakır since Neolithic times, and people believe that pottery is a holy craft as the Prophet Noah made utensils of clay when these were sorely lacking after the great flood. The raw material used here is a mixture of red earth, silt and clay from the banks of the Tigris, mixed with salt. Earthenware jugs are locally known as *bardak*. Every master potter employs a team that consists of an overseer, a potter, a glazer and an apprentice. There are two places opposite the Four-legged Minaret (see p: 217) and a few spots in the "Burnt Bazaar" (see p: 210) where you can see pottery being made the traditional way, and you can buy souvenirs including clay watermelons and models of the city walls.

fountain in the courtyard, which were used for therapeutically, the *han* was given its current name.

## The northeast of the Old City

This section covers sights in the north-east quarter of the old city away from Gazi Cad, except for İçkale, which is covered on. (see page: 228)

### The Carpentry and Yoghurt Bazaars

East of Gazi Cad and behind the Gold Bazaar (see p: 207) is a Carpentry Bazaar *(Marangozlar Çarşısı* in Turkish, *Çarşiya Xerata* in Kurdish) where a number of workshops produce traditional small chairs and tables. Behind the Gold Bazaar as you head in is the oldest and the most authentic bazaar, called *Eski Yoğurtçular Çarşısı* or *Çarşiya Mast* in Kurdish, literally the "Yoghurt Bazaar" – though oddly they don't sell yoghurt here. Instead, in the labyrinthine streets you can find butchers, spice stores, fruit and vegetable stores, quality cheese, olive and honey along with small restaurants. Located in the middle is the large *Eski Borsa Hanı*, once an agricultural exchange centre attended by villagers and traders; you can enter the large courtyard through a huge wooden-iron gate.

### Çardaklı Hamam

Located close to the Surp Giragos Church in Bıyıklı Mehmet Paşa Sok (İbrahim Bey quarter), Çardaklı Hamam is another of the city's many disused bathhouses and was built between 1520 and 1540. The changing room has two-storey *iwans*, placed in the east–west direction, one leading from the entrance area and covered with a dome. The tepid section is


Yoghurt bazaar [76]



Fatih Paşa Camii [77]

composed of three sections, one of which is domed whereas the others have barrel-vaulted ceilings.

## Fatih Paşa Camii (Kurşunlu-Bıyıklı Mehmet Paşa-Merkez)

This was the first mosque built by the Ottomans in Diyarbakır, under the first Ottoman Governor, Bıyıklı Mehmet Paşa, in 1516–1520. Some sources say that the St Teodoros Church was actually converted into the mosque, though the truth of this is unclear and the church may in fact have been merely close to the mosque, rather than occupying the same spot.



Door knock from Fatih Paşa Camii [78]

Located in Fatihpaşa quarter south of İçkale and facing an open square, it is also known as the Kurşunlu Mosque and is similar to Behram Paşa Camii (see p: 236) in structure. Having a different plan than those of the other mosques, the front hall is covered with seven domes supported by eight pillars. Unlike in other mosques, the domes of the front hall area have not been hidden. Inside the dome, the names of four rightly guided caliphs are written in Arabic script. To the contrary, the middle entrance dome has been elevated higher. Built up of black and white stones, it has a rich appearance. There are decorative medallions between the vaults, in the corners and on the pillars and corners. The *mihrab* and *minbar* are similar to those in other Ottoman mosques. The minaret is square, with black stone used at the base and white stone further up. At the back of the mosque is a shrine where passers-by like to pause for a short prayer. One of the tombs belongs to Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa. This monument is another unique work left behind from the famous architect Mimar Sinan.

Next to the mosque on the left side is a building that was once a mosque for those of the Shafi' school of Sunni Islam; nowadays it is an educational centre offering courses for women and children, run by the governorate.

## The Tomb of Fatih Paşa

Located in a small graveyard in south of Fatih Paşa Mosque, this tomb belongs to Bıyıklı Mehmet Paşa, once governor of Diyarbakır. According to information on the gravestone, it was built in first half of 16th century. The



Dewan at Dengbêj House (Mala Dengbêj)[79]


Dengbêj House [80]

tomb once had a pyramidal roof, and the remains suggest it was an octagonal structure built up of stone blocks with windows on all sides.

### The Tomb of Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa

West of Fatih Mosque is a tomb built in 1585 for Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa who was provincial governor in 1571–1575. Another work of master architect Mimar Sinan, the tomb uses alternating black and white layers and has an unorthodox design, with a square entrance unit in front of the octagonal structure.

## The southwest of the Old City

### Dengbêj House (Mala Dengbêj)

This house is signposted "Dengbêj Evi" off Melik Ahmet Cad. Down a small backstreet (Kılıççı Sok), it was opened in 2007 with the support of the Municipality, the European Union, the Dicle Fırat Culture and Arts Centre and several other arts bodies to preserve the Kurdish musical genre known as *dengbêjî*, a word which also applies to the practitioners of the art. These men (and they are almost exclusively men) sing unaccompanied ballads of love and heroism at weddings and other celebrations, and can be likened to the jongleurs of France or the bards of England. Expressing feelings of sorrow and (less often) joy, the songs *(kılams)* can last several hours or may need a few days to perform in full, and have an important educational role in that they are a form of oral history, with lyrics that cover the heroic deeds of warriors *(pêlewan),* the adventures of wanderers, battles between tribes, the tragedies and delights of loves won and lost, and struggles against natural disasters.

Visit the Mala Dengbêjan and you will find a nicely restored traditional resi-


A detail from Behram Paşa Camii [81]

dence of black basalt and decorated with traditional fabrics. The place is like an informal social club where Kurdish men gather daily to hear the *dengbêj* sing, though there are no set times for the music. As per the stereotype of folk musicians in the west, a *dengbêj* typically places his hands or fingers to his ears while singing; the music itself usually makes use of minor modes and plenty of vibratos.

The house (0412 229 20 34), which also includes a tourist office, is open daily except Monday from 9am to 5pm (6pm in summer). A celebratory *dewan,* at which *dengbêjs* sit in a line and singing together or alternately, is held on some Saturdays between 5pm and 7pm, and is usually well attended.

## Behram Paşa Camii

Adjoining the Dengbêj House is this perfectly ornamented mosque designed by Mimar Sinan and built by Behram Paşa, the provincial governor in the mid-16th century. The portico is supported by 18 columns in two lines. The walls of the women's section, including the *iwans,* are decorated with large sized blue tiles. The square plan downstairs turns into an octagonal drum upstairs, covered with a huge lead-coated dome. The *minbar* is made of white marble.

## Aynalı (Ayna) Minare Mosque

Some 100m further south of Behram Paşa Camii is this rectangular, flat-roofed mosque in the Alipaşa quarter. Also called Hoca Ahmet Camii, it was built in 1498 at the era of Akkoyunlu era by a philanthropist called Hoca Ahmet, and restored in 1992. The mosque features the usual black basalt, but the beautifully ornamented minaret is more striking.

## Ali Paşa Camii

Bearing the name of provincial governor Hadım Ali Paşa, this mosque and the adjacent madrasah were built during his tenure in 1534–1547; you'll find them on Turistik Cad (the street curling inside the city walls between Urfa and Mardin Gates) opposite the Yedi Kardeş Tower. The mosque is one of the early works of master architect Mimar Sinan, and includes a section of Shafi' Sunnis (in the east), a madrasah (west) and hamam. Considered as one of this single domed mosque's wall skirts have been adorned with hexagonal tiles up to 1m. Built up of stone


Ali Paşa Camii [82]


From Ali Paşa Camii [83]


Virgin Mary church[84]

blocks, the narthex and tambour of dome are adorned with horizontally placed black and white stones. The dome is placed on an octagonal drum and covered with pyramidal roof. The mosque's interior is adorned with Ottoman tiles produced in local ateliers. Half of the minaret is built of black basalt while the rest is white.

Leaving the mosque, you make a sort of semicircle on the left side to reach the madrasah, an unornamented affair built of stone blocks and brick. Now disused, the madrasah doesn't have porticos with columns in the courtyard; instead a barrel-vaulted section is placed in front of each room. Within the rooms themselves are fireplaces whose chimneys can be seen from outside. A structure added in the northwest corner was used as a home for the poor.


Service in Virgin Mary Church[85]

## Virgin Mary Church

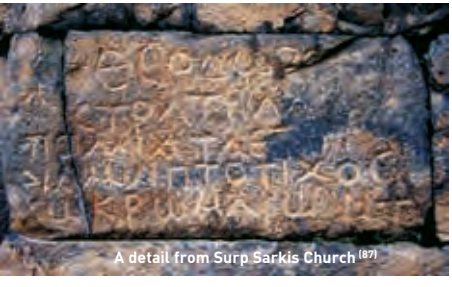
North of the Ali Paşa Mosque and southeast of Urfa Gate is the Syrian Orthodox Virgin Mary Church *(Meryem Ana Kilisesi)*. Believed to have been built in the 6th century (the site itself was previously the home of a pagan temple), the church went through several burnings, destructions, renovations and restorations. The Patriarchate of Antioch was transferred to this church in 1034 from Malatya, and the church was the centre of the episcopate of Diyarbakır until 1933.

The church, with a stunning Byzantine pulpit, is considered as one of the most beautiful examples of stonework produced by Diyarbakır's masons. On the site are the shrine of Patriarch Jacob II (who died here in 1871), four courtyards, a room for religious classes and accommodation. It has two gates, on one of which two lions have been nicely depicted; the other was meant for the use of patriarchs only and has an inscription reading,


Rem horns, Symbol of luck [86]

"Constructed by Patriarch Jacob II, 1860. Renovated by Patriarch Abdulmesih II with the help of believers in 1896." The inscription on the upper part of entrance *iwan* says "These buildings were constructed by our Syriac Christians of Amid [an old name for Diyarbakır, meaning "salvation" in Syriac] in 1881."

The plan of the upper floor has many similarities with the typical houses of Diyarbakır. Marble signs upstairs with different colours indicate the graves of different figures buried here. Also here is the Divanhane building, used for entertaining guests after the Sunday service. Through a single gate behind the church once was a former patriarch's residence nowadays used as housing.


A detail from Surp Sarkis Church [87]

## The southeast of the Old City

### Protestant Church

In Muallak Sok in the Savaş quarter, 250m east of the Cheese Bazaar (see p: 212) on Gazi Cad, the Protestant church has been abandoned since the beginning of the last century. This church has a rectangular plan and is built of black basalt; the lead dome and part of the roof are intact. Large wooden-framed windows in the walls and dome provide ample illumination for the interior. On the western side is a u-shaped area meant for women. The family who are custodians of the site will be happy to show you around. Caretaker of the church they will allow you to visit the church, whose bell tower you will probably see before you get there.

### Surp Sarkis Church

Just fifty metres east of the Protestant church is the Armenian Catholic Surp Sarkis Church, another black basalt structure, this time dating from the 16th century. The building has some similarities to the larger Surp Giragos Church (see p: 219) and is likewise roofless. While the mosaics have largely disappeared, some beautiful decorative stonework can still be seen. The church is rectangular, with five naves and four apses. The upstairs, allocated for women, is now something of a labyrinth, full of rotted wooden structures.

At either end of the aisle are large windows which might have been added later on. Stones have been used for decorations and are illuminated through the small northern window. On either side of the aisle are baptistries with windows, from where stairs lead up to the altar.

### Hüsrev Paşa Camii

Just east of Deliller Han (see p: 212) is the small Çukurlu Sok in Cemal Yılmaz quarter, leading to the madrasah with 14 rooms around a courtyard. The classrooms, arranged like the interior of a small mosque, are accessed through a plain door without portico. Only white stones have been used for *mihrab*, which has rich decorations around it like a crown.

This structure was built as a madrasah by the Ottoman governor Hüsrev Paşa in the 16th century, and subsequently used as a dormitory for a religious school. A cylindrical minaret of stone blocks was added in 1728 when the place was turned into a public mosque.

## South of the City Walls

South of Mardin Gate are several attractions that you can reach by taxi and in some cases on foot.

### Gazi Köşkü (Semanoğlu) Lodge

One kilometre south of the city walls is this lodge, styled like a traditional Diyarbakır house and overlooking the Tigris Valley. It was built in early 16th century for an *emir* and later used by the Semanoğulları Regional Dynasty. When Atatürk took the command of 16th Corps of the 2nd Army, he lived in this building which had been rented from a family for eleven months and it became the headquarters of the 16th Corps. Later on the building was renovated and gifted to Atatürk when he was made an "honorary cityman" of Diyarbakır. The building has been



Gazi (Semanoğlu) lodge [88]

## The Tigris

Rising from the Maden Mountains – extensions of the Taurus range – the Tigris (called the Dicle locally) is 1900km long, 523km of which flows inside Turkey. Marking the border of Mesopotamia Plain, the Tigris is shorter but more powerful than its rival, the Euphrates, and many people call the Tigris the "swift river" compared to Euphrates, which deposits more silt than the Tigris. East of Cizre, the Tigris becomes a natural border between Turkey and Syria for 40km. The two rivers eventually join to form the Shatt al-Arab in Iraq, emptying into the Gulf.

The main tributaries of the Tigris are the Batman, Garzan, Botan, Habur and Zap Rivers and Streams. Flowing at first through narrow, deep valleys, the river expands to up to 600m wide east of Diyarbakır. The Tigris is the source of life for Diyarbakır, making the area cultivable and also provides good fish such as carp, trout, pike and the small trout-like şebbot. (See page for Euphrates p:118



Fishing in Tigris river [89]



A view from Hevsel gardens and On gözlü Bridge [90]

called *Atatürk Köşkü* since then – or more commonly *Gazi Köşkü,* gazi (war veteran) being a term often applied to Atatürk.

The house is now effectively a museum piece, open daily, with restaurants and outdoor cafes nearby and good views of the river and the Hevsel Gardens below. This is also a good location to dance in the evenings to live music and occasional Diyarbakır-style *eyvan geceleri* and Urfa-style *sıra geceleri* sessions (see p: 68).



Erdebil Lodge [91]

## Erdebil Mansion

Unknown to most locals and indeed tourists, this is the oldest mansion in Diyarbakır and superbly sited on the same hill as the Gazi Lodge, with views of Mount Kırklar, the Tigris River, Hevsel Gardens and the City Walls. In Kurdish it is called qesra ber derê pir, or "mansion near the bridge", being close to the On *Gözlü Bridge*. The mansion is around 500m from *Gazi Köşkü* and open daily till late.

In 512 AD King Anatasias I built a bridge and a place to house the construction workers. So the first version of Erdebil was built, though it wasn't a mansion. In the 17th century, İbrahim Hafid Paşa was rewarded with the building, renovated over the centuries by various powers, as a reward for services to the Ottoman state.

The building has been restored recently and is now a cultural centre run by *Diyarbakır Kültür Tanıtma Vakfı* The rooms are fully decorated, while the courtyard and nearby gardens are occupied by a café/restaurant which hosts live music performances and serves home-made Syriac wine.



On Gözlü Bridge in winter [92]

## On Gözlü Bridge/ Dicle Köprüsü (Pira deh derî)

The name of the bridge translates as "ten arches", and there are indeed ten arches in this 178m-long bridge of black ashlar stone over the Tigris, 3km south of the city. The bridge was built in the 8th century and destroyed during the siege of the city by Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimisces, then rebuilt in 1065 by the Marwanid architect Übeyd Oğlu Yusuf. The largest arch is 14.70m wide.

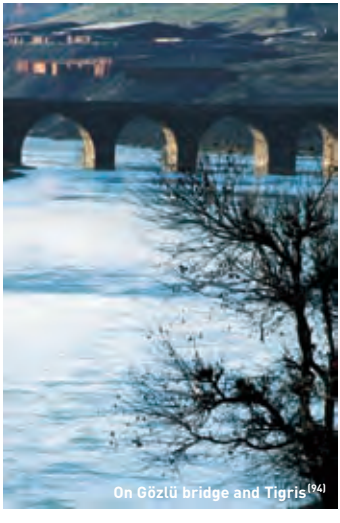
Having undergone several restorations over the centuries, the bridge remains in use by both people and traffic, and is also a popular fishing spot; there are bars, restaurants and teahouses here too. Some locals say the bridge signifies the way to God and gather here on the eve of the Bairam festival to write their wishes on small pieces of paper which they throw into the water, in the hope that God will fulfil these requests.



On Gözlü Bridge [93]

## Mount Kırklar

Mount Kırklar is a hill southwest of the city, overlooking the Tigris and the *On Gözlü Bridge*. Down the slope of the



On Gözlü bridge and Tigris [94]

# Diyarbakır's Watermelons (Zebeşê Amedê)

The large striped watermelons cultivated along the banks of the Tigris have become symbols of the city. When the waters of the river recede towards the end of spring, large holes are formed in the river bed. These are fertilised with the droppings of pigeons, goats and sheep to create favourable conditions for growing watermelons weighing up to 50 kilos. It is said that when an Ottoman governor decided to send some to the Sultan in İstanbul, the camel could carry just two watermelons.

The size and taste of the melons has been remarked upon favourably by the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi and the local poet Süleyman Nazif, who commented that the size of the melons represents the city's civilisations, the black stripes stand for dynasties, the green part of the rind stands for peace and tolerance while the red flesh represents sincerity. The melons are large enough that when hollowed out a baby can be placed inside – hence the photos depicting this feat that you may well see around the city.

Since Ottoman times, a festival has been held to mark the watermelon harvest. Celebrations took place for 15 days annually until interrupted by World War I. The tradition was revived in 1966, and now each September there are concerts by well-known singers, folk dances and other activities. The farmers display their largest watermelons and of course awards are given for the best specimen as well as the best singer, best folk dance troupe etc.



Diyabakır's watermelon[95]



Diyabakır's Famous watermelon [96]

## Quarters (Mahalle)

The old city is composed of 15 (*mahalle*) whose boundaries will probably not be apparent to tourists, but which are meaningful to locals; it can be useful to mention the names of the quarters when asking for directions, and so a few have been included in the text.

Among prominent *mahalle* is the Camii Kebir quarter, on the right side of Gazi Cad if you are walking south from Dağ Kapı. The quarter gets its name from the presence of the oldest mosque of the city and once numbered among its residents many wealthy and influential people who tended to be pro-establishment. The most prominent figures of this quarter were Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı and Ziya Gökalp, whose houses are now museums. Opposite on the east side of Gazi Cad is the Saray Kapı or İçkale area, which preserves many historical monuments and is nowadays home mainly to migrants from Bingöl and surrounding areas.

The Balıkçılarbaşı quarter, the former fish market, stretches from the junction of Melik Ahmet Cad to Mardin Kapı, and now includes plenty of shops and a couple of hotels. To the west is the Lalebey quarter, which was where Syriac Christians, including artisans producing silk scarves and silver filigree, used to live; the most important sight in this quarter is the Virgin Mary Church. Nearby is the Ali Paşa quarter where pro-establishment families such as Cemiloğulları and Zazaoğulları once lived.

On the east side from Balıkçılarbaşı till Yeni Kapı is a multicultural area including the Hançepek and Hasırlı quarters, housing churches along with mosques.



Life in old town [97]

# Pigeons



Pigeons owner in Diyarbakır [98]



Pigeons [99]

The rearing of pigeons has been practised in Diyarbakır for almost 500 years. Some of old houses had special areas where they could nest, and there were pigeon bazaars in the courtyard of Fatih Paşa Mosque. Even today there are one or two teahouses in the old city where pigeon fanciers gather. The pigeons are called *yavru* until they are two months old, then *kızma* and finally *yeke* when they reach the age of one year. Well-known breeds include *göğsüağ,* ketme, *kızılbaş* and *içağlı.*



Women working in Hevsel gardens [100]

hill from the road is a pilgrimage site, a simple tomb under a tree to which women who have not managed to conceive go in the hope of being granted a child. According to a local legend, this happened to a Christian woman who had a baby named Susan. The girl was taken to the pilgrimage site on her birthday, wearing her best clothes. When she grew up, Susan fell in love with a Muslim neighbour called Adil and managed to rendezvous with him on a visit to the pilgrimate site. This led to Susan receiving some form of divine punishment, in that she was thrown into the Tigris from the *On Gözlü Bridge*. Adil is supposed to have composed a love song for his lost love.

The down side of the hill is popular with youths who drive here in the evening to enjoy the view while having a drink or two in their cars. There are a few fish restaurants located on the main road on the Kırklar Mount.

### Hevsel Bahçeleri

These combination of farmer's plots and green areas southeast of the city were formed from silt carried by the river and have been yielding a variety of fruits and vegetables – including Diyarbakır's famous watermelons – for centuries. The area is popular for picnics, and there are some restaurants bars and cafés along the riverside which sell not only drinks but also freshly made *kebabs*.

## The New City

Until 1860s, Diyarbakır was still confined within the city walls. The first



Hevsel gardens [101]



The new city [102]

settlements outside the walls, built under the governorship of Hatunoğlu Kurt İsmail Paşa in 1869–1875, were barracks; no homes appeared here until the last century. Eventually, of course, development and migration necessitated building outside the city walls, and people also desired more spacious homes in greener areas. The city began to spread north from the Old City towards the vineyards of the Bağlar quarter. Nowadays the city has also spread west and the streets are lined with many tower blocks.

The heart of shopping and nightlife in Diyarbakır is the Ofis area, where you will find the crowded *Sanat Sokağı* (Art Street), with green spaces and lined with shops, cafés and teahouses where youths like to hang out until late. Exhibitions, concerts and other events also take place here.



Art street (Sanat Sokağı) [103]

### Diyarbakır Archaeology Museum

The main attraction in the new city is this museum, which moved here from the Zinciriye Madrasah in 1985. Located on Elazığ Cad behind the municipality building, it houses chronological displays of artefacts as well as a large collection of ethnographic material and city coins. As well as historic carvings, it contains extensive local Roman remains, some from the Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu Turcoman Dynasties that ruled much of eastern Anatolia and western Persia in Medieval Times, and ceremonial items from dervish *tekkes* (monasteries). Excavations in the region are mostly done with the guidance of the museum's archaeologists, who also provide specialist advice to researchers, scientists and students in areas relating to history and archaeology. The museum (0412 221 27 55) is open daily except Monday from 8.30am until noon and again from 1.30pm to 5pm.

## Learning Kurdish

If you're interested in learning Kurdish, pay a visit to the Kurdi Der Organisation, Huzurevleri Dr. Sıtkı Göral Cad, Kalem Sok, in the Kayapınar quarter of the new city (0412 237 38 48). This foundation has qualified teachers and offers language courses (Kurmanji and Zazaki) at various levels to foreigners as well as locals. Another organisation in the same building is the Kurdish Institute Diyarbakır, who work on Kurdish literature and culture and art and undertake some publishing and translation activities (0412 237 43 16).




**Kurdish lessons** [104]



A view from Newroz Festival[105]

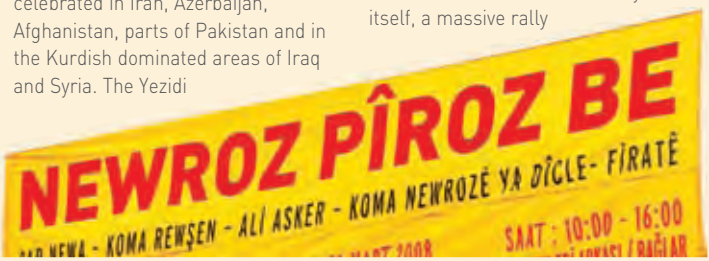
# NEWROZ

The beginning of the Kurdish New Year, better known as Newroz, is celebrated on 21 of March. Meaning "new day" in Kurdish and Farsi, Newroz commemorates the arrival of spring (the date is, of course, that of the spring equinox) and, in myth, the freeing of the people of Mesopotamia from a tyrant, *Zahhak*. The supposed date of the latter event corresponds to the fall of the Assyrian Empire and the dawn of the new empire of the Medes, to whom some historians say the Kurds are related. Besides being marked in eastern Turkey, Newroz is also widely celebrated in Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, parts of Pakistan and in the Kurdish dominated areas of Iraq and Syria. The Yezidi Kurds in Turkey, Syria and Iraq celebrate it as *Kiloça Sersalê*.



A participant in Newroz[106]

For the majority of Kurds, the festival has come to assume a nationalist significance. In Turkey, the largest-scale celebrations are organised by municipalities run by DTP (*Democratic Society Party*), in particular in Diyarbakir which is the biggest Kurdish city not just in Turkey but the whole Kurdish-speaking world. Festivities actually start about a week before Newroz, with youths in villages and towns lighting bonfires and leaping over the flames (a tradition that can also be seen in Iran). On the day itself, a massive rally




Happy Newroz[107]



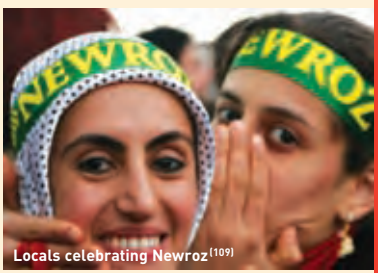


Locals celebrating Newroz[108]

and free concert takes place in Diyarbakır. People stream in from all over the city and much further afield, along with many from the European diaspora communities as well as delegates and Kurdish community leaders, to attend the event at which famous musicians from Turkey and neighbouring countries perform, and at which yet more bonfires are lit. Attendees make V for Victory signs and wave banned Kurdish flags in red, yellow and green; some even dress themselves in those colours as some others in traditional Kurdish cloths.

Tourists are welcome to attend what is in many respects just like an open-air rock concert, with a huge crowd assembled in front of the stage and with freshly homemade Kurdish food and drink stalls on sale on the periphery. Nowadays calm and safe to take part but in years gone by, Newroz events have been, somehow crushed by the Turkish army in an attempt to ban such day but since people determining efforts to celebrate Newroz have succeeded in keeping this very old Mesopotamian cultural tradition alive. Since then the Turkish state claims that Newroz was actually a Turkish celebration that the Turkish historians had only just conveniently discovered!

You should dress warmly, though, and be prepared for a long event, starting in the late morning and continuing into the early evening; you'll also need to sit or more likely stand through the speeches made by the Mayor of Diyarbakır and Kurdish MPs. The music and friendly people will keep you entertained, as will the sight of



Locals celebrating Newroz[109]



Newroz Festival[110]



The statue of Kawa[111]

small groups of people participating in impromptu folk dances in the crowd so it's always a good idea to join one this groups to get some free Kurdish dancing lesson (see p: 520). And everywhere you will be greeted with the phrase *"Newroz Pîroz Be!"*, effectively *"Happy New Year!"*.

## The Story of Newroz

In *The Meadows of Gold* by historian Masudi, and *Shahnameh,* a poetic opus written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi around 1000 AD, and *Sharafnameh* of medieval Kurdish historian Sherefxan Bidlisi (Şerefxanê Bedlîsî 1543 – 1599, 1604 also been recorded), Zahhak is an evil king who conquers Iran and who has serpents growing out of his shoulders. In the 1930s, the Kurdish poet Taufik Abdullah, wanting to instill a new Kurdish cultural revival, used a previously known modified form of the story of Kawa. He connected the myths where people felt oppressed, with Newroz, thus reviving a dying holiday and made it a symbol of Kurdish national struggle. However it should be noted that Kurds celebrated Newroz long before this, and the word Newroz has been mentioned in the Kurdish poetry of Melayê Cizîrî (1570-1640) in 16th century, also the famous Kurdish writer and poet Piramerd from Iraqi Kurdistan (1867-1950) writes in his 1948 poem *Newroz.*

According to the tale that has been passed down from generations, there once was a cruel King named Dehak who suffered the fate of having two snakes grow from his shoulders. Hoping that he could placate the serpents, he ordered that two citizens be sacrificed every day and their brains



Locals celebrating Newroz[112]

fed to the hungry snakes. One day the order came from the castle that the Kurdish blacksmith, Kawa's last child was to be killed and the brain was to be brought to the castle gate the very next day. Instead of sacrificing his own child, Kawa had sacrificed a sheep and had put the sheep's brain. And no one had noticed. Soon all the townspeople heard of this. So when Dehak demanded from them a child sacrifice, they all did the same. In this manner he saved half of the persecuted population. The people lucky enough to escape the slaughter hid in the mountains and came to constitute a large community. Finally, after much suffering, the Kurdish blacksmith killed the cruel king. In order to relay the message of the king's death to all those in the mountains he lit a large fire signaling the beginning of a new era. From that day forward Newroz has been celebrated by people in the Middle East as the dawn of hope and the birth of freedom.



Locals celebrating Newroz[113]

Newroz has been mentioned in works of many Kurdish poets and writers as well as musicians. One of the earliest records of Newroz in Kurdish literature is from **Melayê Cizîrî** (1570-1640)

*Without the light and the fire of Love,*
*Without the Designer and the power of Creator,*
*We are not able to reach Union.*
*(Light is for us and dark is the night)*

*This fire massing and washing the Heart,*
*My heart claims after it.*
*And here come Newroz and the New Year,*
*When such a light is rising.*

Also the famous Kurdish writer and poet **Cegerxwîn** (1903–1984) writes about Newroz:



Locals celebrating Newroz[114]

*NEWROZ*
*Newroz e Newroz e / It is Newroz it is Newroz*
*Sibe ye Newroz e / Today is Newroz*
*Maçek bide min yar / Give me a kiss darling*
*Cejna te pîroz e / Celebrate the feast*

*Newroz e bihar e / It is Newroz, it is spring*
*Bel bûne gul û dar e / trees covered with flowers*
*Bîna gul û lale / It smells roses and tulip*
*Destê min bi destê yar e / I am holding my darling's hand*

*Newroz û mizgîn e / It is Newroz it is good news*
*Bihara rengîn e / It is colorful spring*
*Kesk û zer û şîn e / resembling a rainbow*
*Xalîça rengîn e / in green, yellow and blue*

## Getting there


Diyarbakır Train station[115]

Diyarbakır has good bus and rail connections with major Turkish cities, and is served by flights from İstanbul and Ankara. A municipal-run bus runs regularly between the airport, 3km southwest, and Ofis/Dağ Kapı. The intercity otogar (Diyarbakır Otobüs İşletmeleri or DİŞTİ; 0412 236 18 06) is located along the Urfa highway, some 7km away from Dağ Kapı. Most bus companies provide a free shuttle service into Dağ Kapı and there are city *dolmuşs* as well between the otogar and the centre.

The city's districts terminal (*İlçe Otogarı;* 0412 236 18 06), used by transport operating within the province, is on Mardin Yolu Kavşağı, Şehitlik Mahallesi, 2.5km from Dağ Kapı. Buses and minibuses to all Diyarbakır districts do leave from this otogar. Most *dolmuşs* to the old town from elsewhere in the city stop at this otogar.

The train station is 1.5km west of the centre at the end of İstasyon Cad. *Dolmuş* into the centre can be caught on the opposite side of the main road.



Diyarbakır bus station[116]

## Accommodation



Hotel room [117]

The *Miroğlu Hotel* at Elazığ Cad, no. 13 (0412 229 60 00, www.mirogluhotel.com) is a pleasant place to stay with swimming pool, sauna, restaurants and parking. Nearby there is a similar mid-range establishment, the *Turistik Hotel* (0412 224 75 50), close to the municipality building, and near that is the upper-class chain hotel, the *Dedeman* (0412 229 00 00, www.dedeman.com), which has a restaurant serving international cuisine, a pool and a business centre, among other facilities.

Most mid-range hotels are located around Dağ Kapı. Here you can find the *Büyük Hotel* on İnönü Cad (0412 224 48 59) and opposite, the *Derya Hotel* (0412 224 25 55 www.deryaotel.com). In Kıbrıs Cad nearby the *Grand Güler Hotel* (0412 229 22 21). All offer reliable comforts. Slightly cheaper is the *Kristal Hotel* in Yoğurtçu Sok (0412 229 38 00) and even cheaper, on Kıbrıs Cad, is the *Aslan Hotel* (0412 228 92 24). *Azizoğulları Hotel* (0412 224 81 81 www.azizogluhotel.com) located near by Tek Kapı by the bussiness centres, can be another alternative for you. The rooms contain TV, wireless internet, telephone, air condition and safe box.

There are a couple of five-star places in the old city, one being the *Class Hotel*, near the junction of Melik Ahmet Cad and Gazi Cad (0412 229 50 00, www.diyarbakirclasshotel.com). A modern building somewhat at odds with the surrounding architecture, it has satellite TV in the rooms, a Turkish bath, bars and sometimes stages live music in its restaurant at the back, designed in the form of a traditional house. The other five-star establishment is the *Büyük Kervansaray Hotel* (0412 228 96 06), a magical place in a converted *han* on Gazi Cad near Mardin Kapı. The hotel has a pool, two restaurants, sauna and other facilities.

In the centre of the new city are two good four-star hotels. The Prestij on Ekinciler Cad in Ofis (0412 229 50 50 www.diyarbakirprestigehotel.com) is close to *Sanat Sokağı* (Art Street) and has rooms with good views, plus a terrace restaurant, an American-themed bar, a disco and live music every night till late. The other option is the *Malabadi Hotel* (0412 237 40 40) on Urfa yolu , which likewise has plenty of amenities, including a swimming pool, restaurants and bars.

## Places to eat

Dağ Kapı a good culinary starting point as there are plenty of restaurants located here, some open 24/7. The *Şafak* on Kıbrıs Cad (0412 223 3074) serves different types of soup, regional meals, grills, kebabs, *lahmacun* and *pide*, and is a good place to have breakfast. Another great place to try is *Doğu Mutfağı* (Ahmet Usta), on İnönü Cad (0412 223 12 61), which serves a variety of stews and sometimes unusual seasonal fare, plus fish and, of course, all types of *kebabs*. There is no doubt that you can have a good steam cooked *kaburga* in *Kaburgacı Selim Amca* (0 412 224 44 47), the restaurant has several branches in Diyarbakır and elsewhere in Turkey even one in Kurdish administered North Iraq.

In the cool basement of Hasan Pasha Han on Gazi Cad is *Kamer'in Mutfağı* (0412 224 23 33), run by a well-known national women's organisation and serving many traditional dishes such as *içli köfte, kaburga dolması, mantı* and *örok*. On the second floor of the building are two excellent places for breakfast, *Mustafa'nın Kahvaltı Dünyası* (0412 228 93 45), and opposite the *Meşhur Kahvaltıcı Kadri*. Just opposite the Ulu Camii is *Kebapçı Hacı Halit* (0412 224 97 70), serving delicious regional food plus *kebabs* and grills. Located behind Hasan Pasha Han try *Onur Ocakbaşı* (0412 224 14 05). This is a great restaurant which serves deligious kebabs and different different kind of salads. Further down on Gazi Cad, try *Güzeliş Lokantası* (0412 228 30 71), a simply decorated restaurant with good *paça* soup and other meals. Near the junction of Melik Ahmet Cad and Gazi Cad, just opposite the famous *Dört Ayaklı Minare*, try Mardin Kebab Restaurant, one of the oldest in the city (0412 228 2981).

As for the new city, next to the post office in Ofis is *Aytiti Aile Mutfağı* (0412 229 55 49), a family-run affair with a warm atmosphere and great home-cooked food, including soups, *dolma* and good breakfasts. Not far away on *Sanat Sokağı* is tiny *Penguen Balık Evi* (0412 224 13 14), serving delicious different type of fish with excellent salad. Behind *Sanat Sokağı* is *Pera Yemek Evi* on Akkoyunlu 4 Sok. No:13 (0412 223 58 15), another place serving home-made dishes such as *kavurma* and *güveç*. You can have excellent *lahmacun* and *pide* in *Diyar Tatlıses Lahmacun and Döner Salonu* on Gevran cad (0412 224 84 05), plus regional fare such as the lamb stew *haşlama*. For something of a local delicacy, try *ciğer* (grilled lung) at *Ciğerci Muharrem Usta* (0412 226 87 19) located on Gevran Cad 4. Akkoyunlu Sok.



**Diyarbakır traditional meals** [118]

## Municipality and Tourist Information

**Metropolitan Municipality Dağ Kapı Tourism Office**
This is located in the open space just outside Dağ Kapı, and has tourist literature in Kurdish, Turkish, Syriac, Armenian, English, German and French.
Hours:
Tuesday to Saturday from 9am to noon and 1pm to 6pm (closed noon to 1pm)
Tel: 412 229 20 32

**Culture and Tourism Management Tourism Office**
This is located in the Dağ Kapı tower and has literature in Turkish, English and German.
Hours: Monday to Friday 8am to noon and 1.30pm to 5pm
Tel: 0412 228 17 06

**Metropolitan Municipality Dengbêj House Tourism Office**
This is located in the Dengbêj House (see p: 235).
Tel: 0412 229 20 34
Hours: same as Dağkapı Tourism Office

**Diyarbakır Association of Introduction and Tourism**
Located in the Class Hotel in Gazi Cad, they can provide brochures and materials in different languages.
Hours: daily 8am to 7pm
Tel: 0412 224 15 00

## Local wines



Local wine [119]

The alluvial soil of Mesopotamia and the climate are ideal for growing the small dark Boğazkere Grapes of Diyarbakır, used for making red wine, for example Kocabağ and Kulüp Turasan; these wines have a dark red colour and biting taste, thanks to the thick skin and high level of tannin in the grape. A particularly good wine is produced when wine from Boğazkere is mixed with that produced from the Öküzgözü Grape; Çankaya Boğazkere, Kavaklıdere Boğazkere, Terra and Pamukkale Diamond are examples of such wines.


Kara Köprü [120]

## Anbar Çayı Bridge

Located on the 21st kilometre of the Diyarbakır–Silvan highway, this spans the Anbar Stream and was built during the reign of the Marwanid Nasruddevle Ahmed in 1040. According to the inscription, it underwent a thorough renovation in 1223 under the Artukid Ruler Mevhud; indeed nothing survives of the Marwanid structure and only the bases of the columns still exist. There is a new bridge at the same spot.

## Girikê Haciyan Tumulus

A prehistoric village was uncovered here during the excavations made by archaeologists from İstanbul University and Chicago University between 1968 and 1970; the site is a 3m-high mound 1km east of the village Ekinciler (Girikê Haciyan), 40km northwest of the city and 20km southeast of Ergani district. Among the items they uncovered were pottery, flint tools and what is believed to be a musical instrument made from bone, among those items also houses with round domes were found here similar to the same style houses as in North Iraq, Syria and southeastern Anatolia. This site, which may have been inhabited by several hundred in 5000-6000 BC, is 175m in diameter and is now used for agriculture.

## Halilviran Bridge

This bridge spans the Devegeçidi Stream on the highway to Eğil, 25km from the town centre, and is sometimes called *Artuklu* or *Devegeçidi Suyu* by the locals. As with the Devegeçidi Bridge, this bridge has part of the *Bakara* Sura of the Koran inscribed on it, and there are two inscriptions stating that it was built up by architect Cafer Bin Mahmut during the reign of the Artukid King Melik Salih Mahmud in 1218. Built up of black basalt, the bridge is 100m long and has seven arches, the largest of which is 7m wide.

## Karaköprü (Karasu Bridge)

Located on the Diyarbakır–Mardin highway, this stone bridge spans Karasu Stream and was built by Sultan Murad IV in the 17th century. With six arches, the largest 9m wide, the bridge is 74m long. The vaults underneath are circular. The bridge has lost some of its original character thanks to renovations over the years.


A shepherd near by the City [121]



# Ergani (Erxenî)



Hilar caves[122]



Making Pestil [123]

Situated 55km northwest of Diyarbakır on the highway to Elazığ, the town of Ergani sits below the southern slopes of Mount Zülküf, at the edge of the Ergani Plain. The surrounding district (population 61,973) has been part of Diyarbakır since 1923. Once many Armenians lived here, but since the 1920s the majority of population has been mixture of Kurmanji and Zazaki speakers along with some ethnic Turks, locally called Qaqo, a small community of Georgians who migrated from the Kars and Artvin provinces of northeast Turkey, and even some migrants from Bulgaria.

For years there has been a friendly rivalry between Diyarbakır and Ergani, and people from the former like to make Ergani folk the butt of light hearted jokes. There are also jokes directed at Zaza speakers, especially those who live in Diyarbakır, for example labelling them as people who love to put red onion in most of their meals; as locals think of the onion of being a stiff substance, this is an inoffensive way of alluding to what is regarded the stubbornness of Zaza speakers.

Besides agriculture and livestock, the local economy includes some light industry, producing cement, flour and milk. Local grapes are highly regarded, and in past times wine production was also undertaken by the Armenian community. Ergani town has a number of places to eat on the main street but no accommodation apart from the *öğretmenevi* (0412) 611 58 23.

## Sevenpınar (Hilar)

Located 7km southwest of Ergani town, Sevenpınar (Hilar) village is known for the spectacular Hilar caves.

Close by is an archaeological site called Çayönü which was settled as early as 9000 BC. With such historical riches, Hilar is a village that is visited by treasure hunters, and Romans, Byzantine and Artukid coins have been uncovered in the village and its surroundings. The village is also the site of a festival held at the end of April and the beginning of May. Organised by a local conservation group and the municipality, it includes seminars by historians and archaeologists on the importance of the remains here, as well as small-scale cultural performances.

Just before you enter the village you will see the caves on both sides of the main road. One of these on the right is said to have been variously used as a caravanserai and a prison, and could house 200 people; it features nine manmade rock columns (two now smashed) and a large gate.

Around 50m on your righ, you will come across some rock tombs *(kaya mezarları)*, each belonging to a different family. Note the reliefs outside one cave showing a man of apparently noble ancestry and a sitting woman covered with plain cloth, as though watching rituals that would have happened here. This particular cave also has crescent-shaped decorations to either side of the entrance, there are also some Syriac writings can be found nearby the reliefs.



Garve stone[126]



A view of the Hilar caves[124]

On the left of the road is a tower said to have been used by the watchmen of the city. Just after that stretches a line of caves. Outside the caves is a small chamber with a narrow mouth carved into the rock and believed to have contained more rock tombs. One of these is referred to as the (grave of



Figure, Hilar caves[125]

the) King's Daughter *(Kıral Kızı)* by the locals, and can be identified through carvings of a man and women and abstract symbols to its right. Just below the grave is a site locals call it Masere, where a large flat stone and a number large holes placed which once used for wine making.

Leading upward from this area towards the village is a tunnel called *Kırk Merdiven* (*Çil Pêlik* in Kurdish), with 40 steps visible taking you deep underground to a spring, now dry.

Among the tombs and caves on the right is a rectangular Sun Temple *(Güneş Tapınağı)*, with seats and steps facing the morning sun. The outline of the temple foundations can be seen clearly. Historians have contradictory


Animal fur[127]

ideas about the temple, but crescent-shaped decorations on the facade are thought by some to indicate that it was a place of solar worship.

There are several more caves south-west of the village. The cave referred to as Hamam of the King's Daughter (Kıral Kızı Hamamı) has more striking reliefs. Just at the start of the rocks is the grave of someone called Sarkis *(Kıral Sarkis Mezarı)* from which many reliefs are said to be been removed. The land is a vineyard nowadays. More archaeological excavation stared again by the Diyarbakır Museum since 2006.


Çayönü[128]

## Çayönü Tumulus

This site, on the Çayönü or Qotê Ber Çem (as local people refer to it) riverbank behind the Hilar graves is a protected archaeological area and signposted. To reach it, backtrack to the Han Cave and take the side road leading down to the river, and then carry on 1km to the site. This tumulus is the oldest-known settlement in near east, a window onto the lives of one of the earliest agricultural communities dating to approximately 7000 BC. Excavated between 1964 and 1991, it is of particular importance as settlement here spans the change from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to settled cultivation of crops such as wheat and barley, and the domestication of animals such as goats, sheep and dogs. Copper resources nearby allowed people to produce some very early hand tools made of the metal.

The settlement is 200m in diameter and at one time may have had up to 200 inhabitants in up to 50 buildings, with a plan of suggesting a central square surrounded by rectangular houses. There are several historical strata, showing a transition from simple cooking pits to dwellings of various degrees of sophistication, including houses of limestone or adobe and sometimes stone foundations. Although there are few visible remains at the site, items uncovered during the excavations can be viewed in Diyarbakır's museum.


Kırk Merdiven [129]

## Mount Zülküfil and the Virgin Mary Church

The mountain (also called *Peygamber Dağı* or *Makam Dağı* meaning "Prophet Mountain") is so named because a prophet named Zülküf (Ezekiel) is thought to have lived here once, and the peak is therefore a pilgrimage site. The magnificent summit, 5km from the town, is also the location of the Meryem Ana (Virgin Mary) Church. There was a tomb here, but some believe that the prophet is actually buried in Eğil district, and there is also a tomb in Iraq named after him. The tomb was actually


Zülküfil Mt, Prophet Enûs [130]

destroyed in 1926, after which relics from it were moved to foundations in Diyarbakır and İstanbul. A small shrine was rebuilt in the late 1950s; it is composed of three parts, namely places for men and women to pray separately and a section said to have been the tomb of Zülküf. Below are the remains of a fortress and a settlement, plus a hamam, well and dwellings. Locals like to picnic near the tomb and as ever the tomb itself is visited by the infirm and women who have difficulty conceiving, who if they manage to have children subsequently will name them Zülküf or Zülfiye.

Walking from the back of the tomb towards the cliffs you will come to the remains of the church overlooking the Tigris River and once apparently was part of a monastery. A Polish traveller named Simeon visited here in 1612 and described the structure as a magnificent building where there was a prosperous village with another church. Formerly the church was a huge two-storeyed affair with hundreds of rooms plus wells and huge ornamented columns. Artefacts found among the ruins suggest that the interior was decorated with colourful mosaics.

## The Tomb of Prophet Enûş (Ziyareta Enûş Pêxember)

Enûş (Enoch) is believed to have lived and been buried near Otluca (Qizilce) village, 14km southwest of Ergani town. To reach his tomb *(Ziyareta Enûş Pêxember)*, drive 10km along the highway to Çermik and then take the left-hand turning for the village and continue 4km.

Local people make pilgrimages here at the end of Ramadan and for the Feast of the Sacrifice *(Kurban)*, many of them slaughtering a rooster in the course of their visit. The site can be reached by driving or on a village *dolmuş* which arrives in the morning and departs in the afternoon.


A view Virgin Mary church in Ergani [131]

# Çermik (Şamkûş)



Gelin Mt [132]

Çermik town is located on the slopes of Mount Heykel 80km of northwest of Diyarbakır. The surrounding district (population 17,825) became part of Diyarbakır during the Republican Era, though previously it was part of the *sanjak* of Ergani. The town is well known for its grapes but also has some historical attractions, mainly dating back to Artukid times, as well as a popular spa, making it one of the most visited in the area. The population is a mixture of Turcomans and Zazaki- and Kurmanji-speaking.

The spa facilities attract more than 200,000 people annually and contribute significantly to the local economy, as does marble quarrying. The spa and the town's other attractions are celebrated by the annual Queen *Belkıs Thermal Waters Festival* (Melike Belkıs Kaplıcaları Festivali), held in July. A fairly diverse affair, the festival includes traditional music and dance, presentations concerning the waters, activities such as fishing and promotions offering free entrance to the spa.

It's worth trying the most well-known local food speciality, *meftune*, an oven-cooked dish consisting of lamb, aubergine, tomatoes, sumac and garlic. The area is also known for an entertainment for the ladies, which traditionally accompanies springtime. It is believed that a woman whose wishes have been granted by God should invite female neighbours for a picnic in which a goat kid is sacrificed and delicious meals are prepared by everyone; the women dress up in their best clothes and sing songs and dance. The event also gives attendant mothers whose sons are at marriageable age the possibility to choose a beautiful bride for her son.



Making Pestil [133]



Hot springs, Çermik [134]



Çermik house [135]

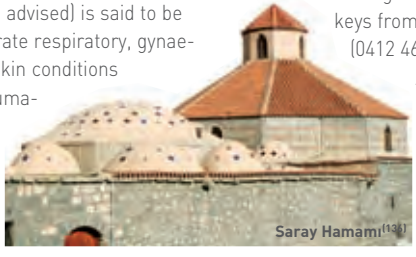
## Çermik Hot Spring

Situated 3km outside the town centre is this signposted resort with a huge choice of accommodation (see p:266), restaurants and various shops. The spa water is at 48°C and bathing in it (drinking is not advised) is said to be able to ameliorate respiratory, gynaecological and skin conditions as well as rheumatism. Some patients are officially sent here by the Medical Faculty of Dicle University in Diyarbakır, though it should be noted that people with heart conditions are recommended not to use the spa without the assent of their doctors.

Open all day till late, the spa is easily visited on a day-trip from Diyarbakır. There are two large pools for men and women respectively, and some private en-suite facilities are available.

## Saray Hamam

Located in the center of the town in the Saray quarter is this disused hamam, dating from the 16th or 17th century. The exterior of the site has been restored and when the interior is renovated, the hamam will be open to the public. Until then, visitors will need to arrange to collect the keys from the municipality (0412 461 20 01).



Saray Hamamı [136]

The changing room, with a tiled dome and containing circular windows, has a



Haburman Bridge[137]

pool in the middle. In the northwest of the changing room is a low vaulted door giving access to a rectangular area with a window and lantern. The floors are all covered with cobblestones.

## Çermik Kalesi (Kela Çêrmûkê/ Kela Şamkûşê)

On a craggy hill in the west of the town is this ancient, ruined fortress, which has yet to be excavated. Surviving parts include one complete gate, several cisterns, a well and a church wall. It is said that the fortress was inhabited until Ottomans attacked with artillery, at which point the inhabitants fled into the plains where their descendants have lived ever since.



Locals from Ergani[138]

## Ulu Cami (Mizgefta Mezin)

The Ulu Cami, also called Camii Atik and Sultan Alaaddin Selçuki Camii in historical records, is located in the Kale quarter. According to a two-line inscription in Kufic script, it was built by Abu Mansur İnallı, the Inalid ruler from Diyarbakır, in 1144/45, while an inscription in relief on the minaret states that it was built by Seljuk Sultan Alaeddin III (1297–1302) soon after the destruction wrought by the Mongols. In the east of the mosque, a four cornered structure with dome has been added by Çermik *sanjak* leader Şah Ali in 1517. In the mosque also is the piece of dark blue cloth, considered sacred and believed to have been once covered the Prophet's coffin. Preserved by the local Mütevelliler Tribe, who are believed to have migrated here from Mecca, the cloth is exhibited at mid-afternoon prayers at the Korban *(Kurban)* Festival each year. One section of the cloth is kept at Bingöl's Ulu Cami.

The figures which appear on a nearby mountain which can be seen from the mosque are a reference to a bridal procession, called *Çîyayê Bukê* in Kurmanji and *Koyê Veyvek* in Zazaki. It


Sinek Bridge [139]

is believed that people attending the ceremony were turned to stone because they were disrespectful of a blessing by one of the female guests.

## Haburman Bridge

Also in the Kale quarter is the Haburman Bridge, which takes its name from the nearby village. Spanning the Sinek Stream, this three-arched bridge has been built in 1198/1199 with funds from Zübeyde Hatun the daughter of Artukian Necmeddin Albi. Its original purpose was to form part of a connection between the Ahlat–Tabriz (Iran) road and the Urfa–Aleppo (Syria) road, which would have enabled people to bypass Diyarbakır where the rival İnallı (Inalid) and Nisanlı Dynasties were dominant.

Built up of large white stone blocks, the bridge is 106m long and 5.5m wide, and slopes upwards from both ends to reach its maximum height of 19m high in the centre. There are three inscriptions on the bridge, two of which are about its construction while the third concerns a renovation.

## Sinek (Sînak) Bridge

The remains of this bridge over the Sinek Stream are limited to just two stumps. In the Kale quarter, the bridge was probably built in the late 12th century and was once 51.8m long, with two arches. Unfortunately it was destroyed by floods in 1973; a temporary suspension bridge was used until a concrete replacement was built in 1999.

## A Synagogue and some Church Remains

The Kale quarter contains a synagogue which remains in good condition, though little about its provenance is known. Built of basalt rock and set in a large courtyard, it is now the residence of a Turcoman family, who use most of it for storage and will show you around on request. Locals found and removed a large number of books and hand-written manuscripts in the main prayer room.

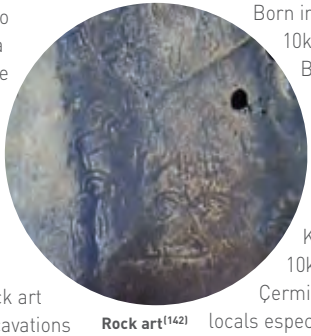

Synagogue [140]


The synagogue's care taker [141]

Some 150m away are the remains of the town's only church – just a foundation stone and a large stone bearing Armenian writing with symbols on both sides. A private home has been built on the orginal place of the church.

## Rock Art at Sinek Creek

Driving from Çermik to Çüngüş, you will see a signed waterfall on the left of the road at the 6km mark. Some 700m north of the waterfalls are caves called *Kayaaltı Sığınakları* (meaning Kayaaltı Shelters) and containing ancient rock art depicting hunting. Excavations here in 2005 uncovered 16 images of animals and one of 11 hunters with bows, which date back to 15,000 to 13,000 years ago (the Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic Ages), making the oldest examples of their kind in Anatolia. More animal images were found underneath a calcareous layer, including depictions of goats and members of the cat family.


Rock art [142]

## The Tomb of Şeyh Fevzi

Şeyh Fevzi was born in Kümtere (Kemtere) village near Derik (in Mardin) in 1931, and lost his sight as a result of an illness when he was 7. He settled in Çermik in 1946 and lived here thereafter. A member of the powerful tribe of *seyyids* called Mala Bub, he was considered the mirror of spirituality among the people, and upon his death in 1978 he was buried in a graveyard called Heykel Önü in the Tepe quarter. His tomb has no special architectural merit but is often visited by locals.

## The Tomb of Hacı Mehmet Baba

Born in Gürüz (Gûriz) village 10km from Çermik, Hacı Baba was much respected locally and performed many pilgrimages on Thursdays and Fridays. His tomb in Karataş (Çivan) village, 10km southwest of Çermik, is visited by many locals especially on holy days.

## Accommodation

All of Çermik's accommodation is in the spa area, which has a staggering large number of hotels and guesthouses. Choices include the *Kaplıca Turistik Hotel* (0412 461 23 23, a four-star place very close to the spa and with a restaurant outside; the *Büyük Akdağ Apart Hotel* (0412 461 42 46), where there is no restaurant but the rooms have catering facilities; and the *Yayla Hotel* (0412 461 20 95), a small place with a tea garden at the back.

# Çüngüş (Çîngûş)



Pestil making in Çüngüş [143]



Çüngüş house [144]

In the far west of the province, Çüngüs is a cosy little town around 80km from Diyarbakır as the crow flies. It clings to the side of the mountain at an altitude of 1000m in a rugged area, with the Karakaya Dam on the Euphrates to the west. Completed in 1987, the dam is the third largest in the GAP Project (see p: 67) and contains six generators, each with a capacity of 300 megawatts.

The town got its name after the Ottoman Pasha Kapkıran Mehmet Ali Paşa visited in 1596 and called the place "Çün Guş" meaning "incoherent". He was aiming not only to put an end to disorderly settlements but also to introduce new infrastructure, including waterworks and transport links. Of the several civilizations which held sway in the area, the Artukids were of particular benefit to the town. Under their control the town flourished and the Silk Road traffic was secure, and the Artukids left a considerable legacy in terms of hamams, fountains, bridges and mosques.

Çüngüş district (population 2,930) was a subdistrict of Siverek *Sanjak* in 1880, Çermik *Sanjak* in 1883 and downgraded to a village at the end of World War I, though in 1953 it became a district of Diyarbakır. The inhabitants of the area are migrant Turks, Turcomans and Zaza speakers. Until the 1920s the town and surrounding area also had many Armenian residents, as is clear from the Armenian names of settlements and home-made wines mentioned in



Cüngüş Monastery [145]

records. As the district is largely mountains, cultivable areas tend to be limited to those close to streams. The main crops include grapes, cotton, watermelons.

It is worth strolling uphill through the town to see some interesting old houses, nicely decorated with murals and woodwork and with doors built partly of metal, with interesting shapes; you will find the houses on your left and a few more down below the Camii Kebir quarter. Some of the houses are dilapidated but you can ask locals if you can take a photo or two of them. The town's old-fashioned mill, with animals powering the grindstone, is inside a house not far from Çünguş Church.



Old water Mil stone [146]

If you are here in September, you might be able to take part in the three-day *Üzüm, Bal, Pestil ve Nar Festivali,* organised by the municipality and celebrating the area's grapes, honey, pestil (thin sheets of sun-dried fruit) and pomegranates. Needless to say, these commodities are served to participants and the very best examples of these products are awarded prizes, but the festival also includes a concert (indeed one of the people behind it is the singer İzzet Altınmeşe).

## Monastery

At the entrance to Çüngüş town are the remains of an Armenian monastery, located on a hill near the road to the Turcoman village of Aktaş, 300–400m from the main road before you enter the town centre. The site, including its garden, occupies an area of 1500 square metres. The only part of the perimeter wall that survives is in the east, but you access the site through a low gate in the west. Just above the gate are three arches, the largest placed in the middle. In the northeast corner is a chapel accessed through a gate in the west. This basilica-planned monastery, said to have been built in the 15th

century, has three naves on each side separated with columns.

## Tomb of Hasan Dede

In a small graveyard at the entrance to the town is the tomb of Hasan Dede, about whom very little is known. The entrance is the adjacent structure in the north, called a dervish lodge and said to have been added later on. Accessed through a circular vaulted gate, the tomb is covered with a low dome and contains three graves, the large one belonging to Hasan Dede himself while the other two belong to his sons. The tomb is not decorated and has no inscription dating it, though it is thought to be from the 16th century.

## Ali Bey Camii

Opposite the municipality in the town centre in Camii Suk quarter, this mosque can be picked out from the surrounding buildings thanks to its minaret. According to inscriptions, one in Arabic and one in Turkish, the mosque was built by Yulad's son Ali in AH 1095, while the minaret was built in AH 1117. An attractive gate in the northeast gives access to the courtyard with ablution taps, a fountain in the northern part of the outer wall



Ali Bey Camii [148]


Hasan Dede tomb[147]

and a small storeroom in west. The praying area has a vaulted entrance, and to the east is a minaret with a square base. Just behind the minaret is rectangular room belonging to the *muezzin,* accessed through stairs.

Further west in the prayer area is a lower vaulted access into the women's section, with three naves linked with cusped arches. The *harem* is illuminated with the windows on all directions.

## Çüngüş Hamam

Around 100m southwest of the Ali Bey Mosque is this hamam, thought to date from the 17th century and no longer in use, though visitors can get the keys from the municipality. The structure is accessed through a western gate which gives onto a square changing room, covered with an octagonal dome from which a lantern hangs. The warm room has three sections encircled with terraces for people to sit at. In the hot room you will find a dome with holes providing illumination, while to the northwest and northeast of the same room are small rooms, themselves domed and with floors covered in cobble-like stones. The hamam has undergone several renovations in which several concrete iwans were constructed in front of the gate, while the main dome was restored in 1975.

## Merkez Ulya Camii

Prominently located on a terraced slope, this mosque appears to be



Çüngüş Church[149]

single-storeyed viewed from the north, and three-storeyed from south. Accessed through the stairs down from the courtyard, the lower floor is the residence of the *muezzin* (it is also said to have been used as a madrasah) and has been indeed designed like a home, with a long narrow corridor along which rooms are placed. The upper floor is the prayer area, though in its northern section is a women's section whose wall is soundproofed, with two naves parallel to the *mihrab*. The *minbar* is built of walnut wood and decorated with plant motifs.

The door and window jambs have been built up of stone blocks while the rest of this rectangular mosque has been built up of broken stones.

The date 1870 appears on the entrance gate, but exactly who originally built the mosque and when is unknown.

## Ulu Cami

Located on a slope in the Cami-i Kebir quarter in the west of town, the Ulu Cami is a converted 13th-century church according to some sources, though others emphasise an 1134 inscription containing the name of Mahmud bin Abdullah, although it is not clear whether this relates to construction or renovation. The only access is through a small gate in the south to the praying area extended out towards the west and encircled with a wall. In the northern side is a door leading into the trapezoidal-shaped women's section whose west wall is soundproofed. The *mihrab* is circular and undecorated, while the *minbar* is probably a more recent addition. The structure generally has been built up of uncut stones but stone blocks have been used for window jambs. The use of oil paints used in the interior has spoiled the originality of the mosque.

## Çüngüş Church (Dêra Çingûşê)

This 15th-century church is at the highest point in the Cami-i Kebir quarter on a terraced slope, with a commanding view of the whole town. The church occupies 500 square metres on an east–west axis, with 12m-high walls. The north and south facades are symmetrical and a chapel

has been placed at all four corners of the facades, though only two remain. The chapel in the west has two loopholes below and two above, while the eastern one has two illuminating windows above.

Look up to the ceiling to see clay jugs inserted in order to reflect sound downwards and reinforce the impact of the religious music.

## Çüngüş Bridge

Located at the end of the Cami-i Kebir quarter is this single-arched, vaulted bridge, which spans the Çüngüş Creek and once carried Silk Road traffic. The bridge is 17m long, 5m wide and 15.2m high, and its supporting pillars are placed natural rock on either side. The arch itself measures 8.7m and is built of stone blocks while the rest is of broken stones. The bridge, which underwent thorough restoration in 2006 is said to have been built along with Ali Bey Camii by Kapıkıran Mehmet Ali Paşa in the 17th century. If you cross the bridge, turn around and look up to your left, and you will see a beautiful residence in two sections, the smaller part of which is perched on top of a steep cliff with a wooden bridge linking it with the main house.



Çüngüş Bridge (151)



Adaş Church (150)

## Adeş Village Church

The small and beautiful village of Değirmen Suyu (Adeş), 4km from Çüngüş, contains a church placed at the edge of a cliff overlooking a deep valley by Çüngüş Creek and the Euphrates. With its high walls the church looks like a three-storey house. In the south, built as an annex to the church, is another structure currently inhabited by villagers. The church is accessed through a gate in the west. Unlike other churches in Çüngüş, it does not have large windows beside the gate, but there is a loophole at each side. Being at the soil level there aren't any windows in the north but a loophole for each nave in the east. Nearby are the ruins of an old water mill.

# Eğil (Gêl)



Assyrian rock tombs [152]



Water way near Assyrian rock tombs [153]

With some of the most impressive historical sites of Diyarbakır, a setting by the Tigris and hospitable locals (almost entirely Zazaki-speakers), the small town of Eğil has plenty to interest visitors though it has a low profile even in Turkey. The town, which lies 48km north of Diyarbakır in a valley just west of the Tigris, is also believed to have been home to the Prophets Zülküf and Elyesa, and is thus also a minor religious centre.

There are various theories as to how the town got its name. The famous Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi called it Gel, while the *Şerefname* – the historical chronicle by the Kurdish lord Şerefxané Bitlisi – mentions the tale of a holy man calling the local fortress "eğil", meaning "bend down" in Turkish. Eğil only became a district (current population 6,122) in 1987. Recently discovered oil resources and the Dicle Dam (part of the GAP Project, see p:67) have given a boost to the local economy.



Cross sign from cave church [154]

In 1997, despite protests by locals and environmental campaigners, the government went ahead with the building of a dam which submerged the entire Çarkören *Mahallesi* along with historical sites such as a bazaar and the Tekke Hamam, though a number of prophet's tombs were moved beforehand.

There are number of tea gardens and a fish restaurant called *Asur* near the municipal ferry jetty where boats to Dicle and Hani depart. The restaurant is a good place to try freshly fried fish from the Tigris.


Eğil Kalesi [155]

## Eğil Kalesi (Kela Gêl)

Placed on a massive rock, this fortress is surrounded by walls and has valleys on three sides. Before you head up to the castle, look out on the right for what is thought to be an Assyrian ruler depicted on a western rock face; the best time to identify the figure is in the afternoon.

Occupying an area larger than three football fields, the fortress functioned as a refuge during wars and also a place to store important resources. Four tunnels were dug down from the fortress to the Tigris to serve as an escape route and also so that water could be brought up to the site. Just below the largest remaining room are number of stone chairs for the king and his ministers.

Also inside the fortress and just to the west of the figure of Assyrian King is a cave church *(mağara kilisesi)*, which has many crosses marked on the rock representing different periods. It is believed to have been visited by one of Christ's apostles in the first century to establish a Christian monastery and Episcopal centre. You need to use a narrow path to ascend around 5m up a rocky cliff to get to the cave.

Another prominent figure from this monastery is one Musa, who wrote a biography of the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) and his wife. Musa was born and lived in Eğil in 6th century and lived in the region. Theodoto is another prominent figure, born in Eğil. He became well known in Diyarbakır and surroundings through curing orthopaedic diseases and comforting desperate people. Taking over responsibilities at different monasteries, he worked as a peace mediator between Arabs and Romans as well. He passed away in 698 and is considered among the saints of the 7th century.

## Deran Hamam

Located on a large creek in the Deran area is a *hamam* connected to the fortress through an underground tunnel. Functioning until recently, this structure has been submerged under the water and can be seen only when water level drops by several metres. Two large arches are the only surviving parts.

## Water Cistern

There are three water channels carved out of the rock and leading from the fortress down to the river – two channels in the north and one to the south. This surviving structure resembles the well-known Yerebatan Cistern in İstanbul. The town's water was supplied from afar using earthen pipes leading to this cistern, and from there distributed to hamams, mosques and fountains. Some of these earthen pipes have been uncovered during the excavations north of town hall.


Assyrian ruler [156]


Taciyan Camii [157]

## Taciyan Camii

Four walls and a small part of a tiled dome with Kufic inscriptions are all that survive of this Artukid mosque, on a valley slope south of Eğil Fortress.

## The Assyrian Rock Tombs

Located near the Dicle Dam northeast of the fortress are some rock tombs whose Turkish name *(Asur Kıral Kaya Mezarları)* indicates their association with the Assyrians. Ferries from the municipal jetty stop here on request and will wait for you so you can have a quick look around and take some pictures.


Stone graves [158]

The tombs have been carved into cylindrical shapes sitting side by side like rosary beads, and surrounded by a large number of caves. Within the tombs you will find some columns and paintings, while opposite the tombs on the other side of the valley are a number of stone pyramids.


Assyrian rock tombs [159]

## The Prophets' Tombs

On the road to Diyarbakır 3km out of Eğil town is a signposted road to Nebi Harun Hill on whose summit are the so-called prophets' tombs *(peygamber mezarları* in Turkish or *gorên pêxemberan* in Kurdish). The area is very popular with locals as a pilgrimage site and for weekend picnics.

A panel at the tomb of Nebi Harun reads: "This tomb belongs to Berhiya's son Harun-i Asefi who was the clerk of the Prophet Suleyman. He approximately lived in 900 BC." Nearby is another grave belonging to Harun İbn-i Pir-i Can according to the inscription.

The six-metre tomb of Elyesa (Elisha) was moved to the hill to avoid being submerged when the dam was built, and is visited mainly on Thursday evenings. A panel here says that "Elyesa is the son of Ehtub and cousin of İlyas. He approximately lived in 1200 BC."

As in Ergani, a possible tomb for the Prophet Zülküf makes an appearance on top of the hill. This particular tomb used to stand in the Hacıyan area 4km from town, and was moved here in 1995 to avoid being submerged. Zülküf is mentioned twice in the Koran as a tolerant of people in general, including those hostile to him.

## Kalkan (Şelbetin)

The village of Kalkan (Şelbetin), 12km south of Eğil on a tumulus on the Diyarbakır road, used to be of strategic importance thanks to its position at the start the fertile Diyarbakır Plains and at the junction of important trade


Prophet tombs [160]

routes. As a result, the Eğil rulers Lala Kasım Beg and his successor Murat Beg had a caravanserai, hamam, madrasah and mosque built in the village.

The caravanserai, on a small hill overlooking a tributary of the Tigris, is a long, straight, flat-roofed stone building. An Arabic inscription states that it was built in 1561–1562 by Murat Beg and named in honour of his uncle Kasım Bin Şah Mehmet Beg. Nowadays the ground floor is used as a barn.

Around 200m northwest of the caravanserai are two cupolas on a small hill, one as a tomb for Kasım Beg, the other for Cafer Beg. Said to have been built in the 16th century, the cupolas are built of basalt and have conical roofs, but are now rather worn. Each of their faces has a large window of identical size and shape. The cupolas have no ornamentation and one has been largely pillaged for building materials; there aren't any traces of graves inside either cupola.

## Selman Kalesi

The fortress near the village of Selman, 10km southeast of Eğil, is one of relatively few that are well preserved; most of the walls and gates still stand. To reach it, drive 3km south out of the village and then walk 500m to the site.


The tomb of Prophet Harun [161]


Kalkan (Şelbetin) [162]

# Dicle (Pîran)



Old houses in Dicle [163]

Some 85km north of Diyarbakır, Dicle is a Zazaki-speaking town which became a district in its own right (population 12,227) in 1938. The town has a special place in Kurdish political history as the location of the first major meeting between Sheikh Said (see p:139), leader of the Kurdish rebellion in the 1920s, and a group of Hamidiye soldiers along with Zaza tribal leaders. It was also where his armed struggle against the Turkish republic began. The old name of town "Piran" means "scholar"; the town was given its current name (which is in fact the Turkish name for the Tigris) during the republican era.

Centrally located on a hill dominating the town are some caves with the perimeter of a military base and believed to have been settled by humans in the past. Nowadays, people are allowed to make pilgrimages on Thursdays, to the Tomb of Sheikh Yusuf also within the military base. From up here you can easily observe the town's old fortress, which is in ruins.




War plan map against Sheikh Said rebellion [164]

The oldest mosque in town is the Yukarı Camii, located in the Yeşiltepe quarter (*Mahalleyi Celo* in Zazaki). Its age and builder are unknown, but it is probably late Ottoman, though the beautifully ornamented minaret was added more recently. The mosque is partitioned into two by a big wooden door. Three old graves in the small yard have headstones nicely decorated with verses from Koran. Unlike at other local mosques, the ablution area is indoors rather than outside.

Finally, there are two fountains in the Yeşiltepe quarter of Dicle district. One is called *Eyni Ceyno* (Women's Fountain), where women gather to socialise and wash large items such as carpets. Just behind is the *Ayni Comêrdo* (Men's Fountain). Both are built of yellow limestone and have an arch-shaped recess at the base.

## Pir Mansur Türbesi

This tomb, which villagers call *Pir Mansur Ziyareti*, is located in a graveyard near Kocaalan (Dîrey) village, 5km east of Dicle. This large rectangular structure has a door inscription stating: "Haza Mescid-i Mansur, date 1611". Also here are the graves of people believed to be descendants of Pir Mansur.

## The Rock of the King's Daughter (Kıral Kızı Taşı)

On the southern slope of a valley by the Maden Stream is a huge rock on which two windows have been carved, making it look vaguely like a house. It is located on the Diyarbakır road some 7km west of Dicle and 1km east of Daxon village, but is best viewed from the roadside as it is fairly inaccessible. To the right of the rock is an obelisk and further down a single-windowed stone grave, whose local name translates as "King's Daughter's Rock" by locals. According to legend, a king punished his beautiful daughter for falling in love with a shepherd by imprisoning her here. The guards, witnessing two pigeons flying out through the window, realised that the girl was not there the next day. There is said to be treasure inside, a notion supposedly based on tales of storks flying from here with a piece of carpet or *kilim* in their mouths.


Tigris river [165]


Women fountain [166]


Graves in Yukarı camii [167]

# Hani (Hênê)



Children from Hani[168]

On rugged terrain 1200m up, Hani town is 86km north of Diyarbakır and gets its name from the Zazaki word *(hênê)* ("fountain"). The area became a district of Diyarbakır province in 1958 and now has a population of 8,292. In the centre and nearby villages the inhabitants are mostly Zazaki-speakers, though there are also some Kurmanji-speaking villages. To either side of Ambar Creek vegetables and grain are grown for self-consumption, while some people also keep livestock.

Hani town is encircled by the southern Taurus Mountains to the north and slopes down gradually towards the south. At first glance the town may come across as conservative; in fact this is the only district town of Diyarbakır where there are relatively few women in the streets and most of those you do see are in black chador and wear the veil. That said, the locals are friendly and may well offer you local tea and even show you around a little.

## Ulu Cami (Hani Camii)

Centrally placed near the town hall is the Ulu Cami, which is thought to be Artukid. In the west of the mosque is a gate leading into the courtyard, in whose northwest corner are doors giving access to two different sections for women to pray, connected to each other and with a roof of clay tiles. The western and eastern parts of the mosque have three and two naves respectively, parallel to the south wall. The stone minaret nearby the mosque is rectangular and unadorned. The mosque was restored a few years ago, as well as much in 1657 and 1682 according to inscriptions, ii is where most of the locals gather at the tea houses near by the pool.



Hani Ulu Cami[169]


A local woman [170]

## Hatuniye (Zeynebiye) Madrasah

This newly restored madrasah, roughly 300m southwest of Ulu Cami, is thought to be a late-13th-century Artukid construction. On the north side is a beautiful *iwan* with a fountain, while at the opposite end is the mihrab, nicely decorated with Koranic verses, and on the right of this is a room containing a small pool. Also striking are the geometric decoration and masonry work of the *mihrab* and the two windows of the domed rooms in the main hall, the areas above which have been decorated with Arabic calligraphy and vegetal motifs.


Hatuniye (Zeynebiye) Madrasah [171]

## Aynkebir Pool

Just below the Ulu Cami and next to the Hatuniye Madrasah, this large pool dates all the way back to the Hurrians in 2000 BC, and is fed by water from the slopes of Mount Hani. The water builds up in a natural underground reservoir and then emerges through nine conduits at the base of the wall on one side of the pool. The very same water, which is clear and said to be drinkable, helps to irrigate some of the land in the area and once powered eight mills as well. The teahouses near the pool make an ideal place to relax and enjoy views of the pool and the Ulu Cami, and are popular with locals.


Aynkebir pool [172]


Tomb of Seyyid Caferi Tayyar [173]

## Sheikh Bedrettin Türbesi

This stone tomb on a rectangular plan sits within a nice garden in the Dereli quarter of the town, a few hundred meters down from the Hatuniye Madrasah. The entrance is cusp-vaulted and has an Arabic inscription indicating a date of construction of AH 1292. A small window illuminates the interior. The tomb is in two sections, one containing three graves said to be belongs to two brothers and a sister of Sheikh Bedrettin, while the Sheikh's own grave is in an open area behind. The tomb is regularly visited by locals, mostly women.

## Mosque and Tomb of Seyyid Caferi Tayyar

Located in the Zirve quarter in the upper part of town, this building is rectangular in plan and built of limestone, with a wooden roof. The minaret is rectangular in cross-section and has a conical top. Caferi Tayyar is thought to have been buried here after being martyred in a war. His tomb is visited by many locals who come to read the Koran and pray, mostly on Thursday evenings. Both mosque and tomb were renovated in 1978.

## Ankeris (Ava Sipî) Spring

Also called *Şifalı Su* ("Medical Water") by the locals, the spring is under a large mulberry tree in the Veziri quarter, 2km from the town centre on the road to the Lice district. Bathing in, and indeed drinking from, the small pool is said to cure liver complaints, and draws many people from various provinces especially in the early morning.


Sheikh Bedreddin Türbesi [174]


Aynkeris (Ava Spî) spring [175]

# Lice (Licê)



A traditional meal (kaburga dolması) [176]

Lice town (population 13,118), named Şirişa in Assurian records and Ilıca in Ottoman records, is 85km northeast of Diyarbakır at the foot of Mount Akdağ, though it used to be situated on the hillside until that settlement was hit by an earthquake in 1975, which killed 2800 and destroyed 8000 houses. The unrest of the 1990s brought a second shock as thousands migrated to Diyarbakır and the cities of western Turkey, but today the town has recovered its equilibrium. Walnuts, grapes are the main products of the district, and some employment is also provided by a marble factory built by the businessman Halis Toprak (who is originally from Lice).

## Ulu Cami

This mosque, also called Vakıf Ahmet Bey Camii, is in old Lice, abandoned since the earthquake, in the middle of a valley through which a clear water flows. The mosque was built in 1540 by Ahmet Bey, a descendant of Hasan Ezraki. After a fire in 1845, the structure was renovated and expanded by Hacı Sadullah Bey in 1875. The prayer



Ulu Cami [177]

areas have been separated with columns and large pointed vaults.

## Birkleyn Caves

These three caves extending parallel to one another into the rock are located on the Bingöl–Muş highway, 26km from Lice on the right side of the main road; bring a torch if you want to look around inside. Work led by German archaeologist, Andreas Schachner has uncovered five inscriptions and three reliefs dating to the Assyrians in 1100–850BC. According to him, the remains suggest that these places were inhabited since 6000 BC.



Birkleyn caves [178]

Remains of stone steps and walls can be seeing to the south of the cave on the left. As you enter there are two inscriptions dating from the reign of the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser I (1116–1090 BC). As the inscriptions are high up on a northern face of the cave, they haven't been defaced. This is also the cave from which the Zebene Stream, one of the main tributaries of Tigris, emerges and is sometimes called a gate to the next world by locals. In order to explore this cave you will need to walk through the shallow Zebene Stream, which is around half meter to one meter deep. The water is clear and cool, very tempting for swimming.



A detail from Birkleyn caves [179]

Turning back to your starting point, you need to climb further up to reach the second cave, which is 600m long and has a large entrance where birds seem to like sheltering. A partly destroyed inscription from the time of Assyrian King Shalmaneser III (859–825BC) can be found halfway through the cave.



Birkleyn caves[180]

The third and longest cave is another 100m up and reached via a narrow pathway. This cave has a rather small mouth but opens up further in. It is said that even after an hour of walking, villagers did not manage to reach the end of the cave, which is one of the most beautiful caves in the region. Its stalactites and stalagmites are said to have healing powers for asthma.

## Çeper Hanı (Xana Kelê)

You can visit what remains of the hilltop Zülkarneyn Kalesi in Çeper village west of the Diyarbakır–Bingöl highway, 16km west of Lice. All sources say this was a Persian settlement, though some sources say it was named after Alexander the Great stayed there, while others say this was associated with Emperor Kuroş in the 6th century, who is depicted with two horns on his head as he united the empires of the Medes and Persians and is thus called Zülkarneyn ("two-horned"). Some foundations of the walls can still be seen, as can the remains of three bastions and two gates.

Four hundred metres on from the end of the village is a large former Silk Road caravanserai, Çeper Han (Xana Qelê), which remains in good condition though some parts of the roof are

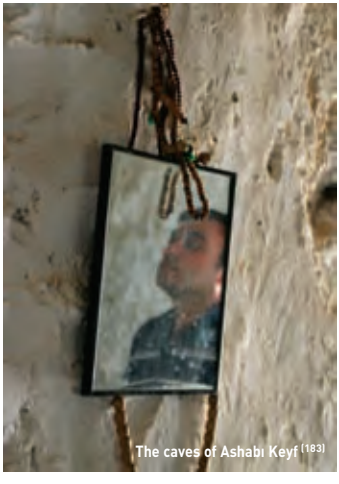

Çeper Hanı[181]

damaged. Inside is a large hall with three rows of columns, each with six large arches made of white stone. Rooms for the tired travellers are located on either side of the building. In the leftmost room is the tomb of respected Sheikh Tahir-i Keli, which is visited by many pilgrims; his father is buried nearby in the courtyard.

## The Caves of the Ashab-ı Keyf

These caves are one of a number of sites (the others are elsewhere in Turkey and in several neighbouring countries) said to have been a refuge for the Ashab-ı Keyf, a group of seven brothers and their dog, who had to flee persecution because they believed in *Allah* rather than idols. The caves are on top of the 650m Mount Rakim, close to Duru (Derkqm) village, 15km from the centre. Once you get to the parking area you need to climb up metal ladders to reach the first cave, where people pray and leave offerings. The second cave, also reached by ladder, is where the Ashab-ı Keyf are believed to have slept.


Hospitality Çeper Hanı [182]


The caves of Ashabı Keyf [183]

Their story is mentioned in one of the *suras* of the Koran, namely Al-Kahf (the Cave), though it does not give dates and places nor the number of people involved. One of the most common legends about the group mentions a brutal pagan ruler Dakyanus who had six advisors. Discovering that they believed in one god, he threatened them with execution if they would not convert to idolatry. They fled the palace for the mountains, en route to which they met a shepherd who took them to the cave. God had them sleep for 300 years in the cave, by the end of which they were in no danger as the ruler of the time had adopted the same faith as them.

A religious festival is held at the mountain on 28 May every year, when people come from around the province to visit the caves. There they touch the walls of the caves, drink water that drips down from the roof and pray. Afterwards they gather in picnic areas to eat home cooked food and perhaps sacrifice an animal to share the meat out with others, as hawkers peddle snacks, drinks and ice cream.


The caves of Ashabı Keyf [184]

## Dakyanus

This ancient settlement is on a 1000m hill on Fis Plain near the village of Fis (Deşta Fîsê), 19km west of Lice town. From the village it may take you around 20 minutes climbing to get to the site, and it may be a good idea to arrange guides by contacting the village *muhtar*. It is known that the settlement was ruled by a powerful tyrant named Dakyanus, although little is known as to when it was built and destroyed, and by whom, as excavations have yet to be undertaken. However, the features of the remains, including columns, encircling walls and some walls and vaults referred as the palace of Dakyanus, suggest it may be of Seleucids or Roman construction. As is often the case, some of the columns have been incorporated into a mosque in a nearby village.


Remains in Dakyanus [185]

# Kulp (Pasûr)



Sericulture in Kulp [186]



Sericulture [187]

Kulp district (population 11,474) is at an altitude of 1132m and around 120km northeast of Diyarbakır. The area is traversed by the Kulp Stream and the Sêqas and Sarım Streams (tributaries of the Batman River), water sources which have not only aided local agriculture but also attracted the attention of various civilisations over the centuries. Some sources say the old name of the district derives from *pasur* meaning "fortress encircled by ditches", others claim it comes from *bayê sar* meaning "cold wind", and a third group say it comes from *pa-sûr* for "the main fortress". The current name may derive from that of a local ruler called Kulpo.

Kulp is well known locally for producing a large number of qualified teachers and is a relatively populous part of the province, helped by the opening of the highway between Kulp and Muş. The inhabitants are a mixture of Kurmanji and Zazaki speakers.

Sericulture is one important source of income in the district; in fact Kulp town and the village of Ağaçlı (Cixsê) to the west account for most of the country's silk industry. With the support of Swiss Development Cooperation, Turkey Development Foundation (TKV) has made a pilot project in 1977-1995 on "integrated sericulture development" in Kulp town. The foundation has established sericulture integrated facilities and carpet workshops in Ağaçlı (Cıxsê), Narlıca (Tiyaxis) villages and central Kulp town. In the last few years with the financial support of EU, *Kulp Koza Yetiştiriciler Birliği* (Kulp Cacoon Producers Unity) and Diyarbakır Commerce Chamber, the region received a boost in its production. Furthermore the *Kulp Koza ve Kültür Festivali* (Kulp Cocoon and Culture Festival) in June includes not only the usual cultural performances but also visits to silk production facilities in Ağaçlı and other sights in the district.


Telli Ağa House [188]

## The House of Telli Ağa

This house is located on the slopes of Mount Hesandîn in the especially pretty Karabulak (Nêrçik) village, 10km east of Kulp town. To reach the house, once in the village you will need to park your car and walk for around 10 minutes east of the village, past trees of pomegranate, walnut, almond and mulberry.

The house was built of white stone from the village of Taşköprü some 25km away by Telli Ağa and his brother Abdül Ağa in 1650. There is beautiful stonework on the main door. The house has two storeys but has fallen into disrepair through neglect and the impact of landslides, though it is currently being restored. The western part of the house is still standing. From the house you get good views of Kulp town and the Kulp Stream. From a little way below you can see the Kevirê Nivîsî (literally "written stone"), a big rock bearing cuneiform inscriptions; it's located near the stream and 2km from Kulp Bridge.

## Ağaçlı (Cixsê)

Ağaçlı, 18km west of Kulp town, is the site of Ağaçlı Kalesi (Kela Cixsê), a ruined fortress on a hilltop. It is said to have been built during Byzantine times and includes the remains of two ancient churches. The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi describes the inhabitants as good ironsmiths who sold handmade swords to caravans passing through the Kevirê Dîkan area in the west.



GABB Birlik Park [189]


Locals Ağaçlı (Cixsê) [190]

This village is large, well kept and contains many mulberry trees; indeed it has two silk workshops and most household engage in sericulture as a sideline to earn some extra income. The park and spring-fed fountain at the end of the village are worth a look; some locals say that once upon a time the spring was a meeting point for lovers.

## Konuklu (Duderya)

Nearly 20km southeast of Kulp is Konuklu village, where you will find *Kefrum Kalesi* (also called *Kela Mîra* or *Kaferê Romê*), a cave site that was fortified under the Byzantines. The site takes its name from the fact that non-Muslims (*kafir*) used to rule the place; one of the rulers was Kulpo, from whom the district took its name.

The village is also home to the biggest *külliye* (a religious complex next to a mosque) in Turkey, built with funds from a retired imam Sheikh Siraceddin, plus contributions from people all over Turkey. Located at the highest point of the village, this massive white building has large number of rooms for *feqîs* (madrasah students), halls for prayers, a guest-house and a residence for the sheikh himself, who receives visitors daily.

## Surp Kevork Church (Simetaq)

Once serving the Armenian community, this church is located in the Smetak quarter of Yaylak (Eskar) village, some 22km north of Kulp town. The church consists of one large room with a smaller one to the side, but is now in ruins. Nearby are three caves inhabited in ancient times.

## İnkaya (Kanikan) Caves

These caves are located in İnkaya village, which is close to the Kulp Stream 25km south of Kulp town. It is said that a Persian ruler once lived here and that the ruins around the caves are the relics of an ancient city. Remains of water tanks, watchtowers and rooms used by soldiers can be seen, and there are still forty poles standing which horses were tied up to. There are also two mills in the caves that would have been powered by water.

## Taşköprü (Godernê)

Geliye Godernê is the largest valley in Mesopotamia and was populated by Armenians for a long time. Here, 27km southwest of Kulp town, you will find the village of Taşköprü (Godernê),


Kefrum Kalesi [191]


A local Konuklu (Dûderya) [192]


Andok Mountains[193]

which takes its name from the stone bridge spanning the Sarım Stream and connecting Kulp to Silvan. The site was inhabited by early Christians, and some ruins of the tomb of a priest called Ekso can be seen. A 200m-high gorge here contains caves where traces of Stone Age occupation have been found. Around 70m before the bridge if you approach from Kulp is a large stone cave grave located inside a pleasant garden.

Beyond the village, you can take a right down to the bottom of this amazing lush valley, containing green fields and small vegetable plots. The valley is a popular picnic site for locals, and is certainly great for swimming and fishing.

## Andok and Berbihîv

Andok and Berbihîv are two of the highest and most beautiful mountains in the district. Heading from Kulp towards Muş, drive 20km and Mount Andok (3074m) will be on your right, Mount Berbihîv (2000m) on your left. Each has the tomb of a sheikh on its summit: that of one Sheikh Mihemed on Andok and that of Sheikh Mihemed Huseyn on Berbihîv. Inhabitants of Kulp and Muş make pilgrimages to these tombs at least once a year, performing the customary slaughter animals and sharing out the meat with relatives. The Andok pilgrimage, which is the more significant and lasts three days, starts on the 14th of July (as Andok is such a high mountain, people prefer to go there in summer). As with other local pilgrimages, people wear their best clothes, prepare their best foods, sing traditional songs and read sections from Quran. The pilgrimages also attract hawkers selling a variety of wares.


Taşköprü (Godernê)[194]

## Huvde(hê) Adarê/Ser Huvdeh



Women in Ser Huvdeh ceremony [195]

Huvdê(hê) Adarê is regarded as one of oldest traditional festivals and is celebrated in a triangular area formed by Silvan, Kulp and Sason. As with most religiously based festivals, Ser Huvdeh has various legends associated with it. The festival actually commemorates Maaz bin Cebel (Muez bin Cebel), the commander of a conquering Muslim army who died just a few days before his wedding. In recognition of the Maaz bin Cebel, the caliph promised his mother that they would hold a wedding ceremony every year at the time when he would have got married. The story has it that the mother also died shortly after her son was killed, and she was buried opposite the tomb of her son.

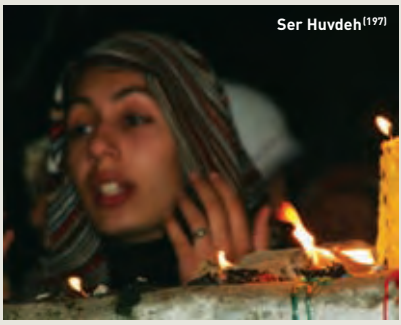
Today festival participants assemble in late March (though the name of the festival actually implies a date of 17 March, as the Kurds used an Islamic calendar -Şemsi- which is normally 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar, this event still celebrated according to the old calendar) at the site of the two tombs, near the village of Kumgölü (Emerka), about 35km south of Kulp town. Here they perform traditional dances accompanied by percussion and singing to moan the young warrior. The men consist mainly of the devout, such as *feqîs* and *imams*, and dance in the area near Maaz Bin Cebel's tomb, while the women dance to either side and also prepare henna as though for a wedding ceremony. Just as a traditional wedding reaches its height at the end of the celebration, so the last day of the festival, 30 March, is the most interesting. An elderly religious



Men in Ser Huvdeh ceremony [196]

man playing percussion circles the tomb, with women behind him holding a tray containing lighted candles and henna (everyone will rub some henna on their hands) and this continues for hours, after which the henna is distributed for people to apply to their hands. (It is believed that doing so will bring about marriage to their beloved soon, and lifelong happiness.) The women perform religious dances (*cezma ketin*), sing religious songs and may work themselves into an ecstatic trance-like state, chanting the name of *Allah* repeatedly.

A well-attended, high-spirited fair also takes place during the festival. Many people attend for three days, camping alongside the tomb or in the hills nearby. Food stalls and tea shops are set up and vendors also sell handmade items anything from percussion instruments to traditional clothes and even the traditional Kurdish chewing gum of the region, said to be good for the stomach. Competitions are organised involving a game not dissimilar to polo. The winner may even find wealthy people at the event prepared to offer a good price for his horse.



Ser Huvdeh [197]



Carpet weaving [198]

# Hazro (Hezro)

The district of Hazro (population 5,478) is located on the south side of the Hacertum Mountains, 70km northeast of Diyarbakır. Hazro gets its name from Hataro Tercil, a fortress built here by the Assyrians. Under the Ottomans it was a *sanjak* of Diyarbakır province; in the 1940s it came under the jurisdiction of Silvan district until becoming a district of Diyarbakır in 1954. The local economy is based on agriculture and livestock, with some silk production too. A carpet-weaving programme aims to provide job opportunities for young women (although low paid) and to produce high-quality silk and wool carpets for sale in Diyarbakır and further north in Erzurum.



Derebeyi palace [199]

Hazro town used to be populated by not only Kurds but also Armenians, and the Armenian legacy will be apparent if you walk through the centre, in the style of the masonry and the building facades. There is even a fountain in the centre called the "Armenian fountain", though it is no longer functional. The stream that flows through the centre once divided the Armenian and Kurdish parts of town. Besides Tercil Fortress, the town has a number of other historical sites, including the Ulu Cami and the ruined Derebeyi Palace, made of white limestone, which originaly had 40 rooms; this was where Atatürk stayed on a visit to Hazro.

## Ulu Cami (Mizgefta Hezro)

This striking mosque of white limestone, built in the 16th or 17th century, is located on a hill overlooking the whole town. The mosque has retained its character despite several renovations. The niches above the entrance and *mihrab* are nicely decorated with geometric figures. The stairs on the left of the entrance lead to a portico upstairs, which has a door into the

women's prayer area, a two-storey rectangular structure with lancet-arched stonework on the facades. The minaret, accessed through a vaulted door, is built on a pedestal with nice decorations and masonry work.

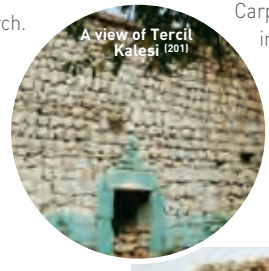

Hazro family (200)

## Hacı Abdulfettah Yazıcı Seydah Hacı Tomb

This tomb is located in the Cami quarter in the centre of Hazro district. Its occupant (1892–1975) was a teacher in a madrasah and regarded as an intellectual, and his tomb is visited by many locals. His tomb has not been ornamented though he had asked for this to be done.

## Tercil Kalesi (Kela Tercilê)

Located near Terdöken (Tercil) village 10km from the centre, the fortress resembles a church. In the past it contained a settlement under the jurisdication of Tercil Beylik.


A view of Tercil Kalesi (201)

Below the castle is a two-room structure which is now a pilgrimage site. Local people believe that mentally retarded people can be cured if they are kept here overnight, and that people who are treated thus will have specks of blood appear on their backs, representing genies which were causing the disease. There is also a fountain here whose water is believed to have a curative effect on epileptics.

## Tomb of Sheikh Hasan Ezraki

There are different legends about this holy place, in Ülgen village (Mêrenî) around 10km east of Hazro town. According to one of the most popular tales, Hasan Ezraki emigrated from Damascus in order to study science and divinity in Mardin. His influence in the region intimidated the local ruler so much so that he decided to put him in an underground dungeon. The guard was very surprised to see him materialise outside the dungeon to perform his ritual ablutions for prayers. He observed that the Sheikh appeared to be escaping and returning on a beam of light, and upon the ruler being informed of this miracle, the sheikh was released. The Artukid ruler had him brought to the palace to cure his mentally retarded daughter, and when he achieved this, he was offered her hand in marriage, but he refused. The girl's hand was then offered to his son, with control of three fortresses as a sweetener.

## Halı Atölyesi

This carpet atelier located in Elhuan quarter, north of the town centre, was originally opened in 1988 with support of governor and the Sümer Carpet Company. Three instructors teach and manage around 50 young women who make some fine carpets using original designs and materials.


Tercil Kalesi (Kela Tercilê) (202)

# Silvan (Farqîn)



Malabadi Bridge[203]



Eyyubid Burcu[204]

The district of Silvan (population 47,105) occupies an undulating area traversed by the Diyarbakır–Batman highway. Silvan town, some 75km east of Diyarbakır, is said to have been founded during Assyrian times; in the past Silvan was identified with the Hellenistic city Tigranocerta, but more recent research makes it more likely this site should be identified with Eğil. The city was subsequently named Martyropolis after 40 Byzantine troops killed by the Sassanids were buried in the town's fortress, and renamed Justinianopolis when it was fortified by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian. Under Islamic control the town had various names, including Meyafarqîn, Farqîn Silîvan, while the Armenians called it Muhargin. The town was finally renamed Silvan in the republican era, though locals still call it Farqîn.

Silvan was the seat of several dynasties including the Artukids, during which most of the historical works have been built. The city was also the seat of the Kurdish Marwanids for around hundred years , during which they reached their apogee in terms of culture, trade and science. The city was dominated by Seljuks and Artukids until 1185, after which the Ayyubids took over until 1260 when the Mongols looted the place and slaughtered many people. With the arrival of the Mongols, the town fell into obscurity.

A prosperous and at the same time conservative place, the town today has



Marwanids coins [205]



Selahaddin Eyyubi Camii (Ulu Cami) [206]

come through a period of troubles in the 1990s, when it was the scene of several assassinations by the shadowy Hezbollah which remain unsolved. The Silvan Barrage has allowed much of the surrounding land to be irrigated and the district is well known for its rice and tobacco; brick production, flour milling and cotton processing also contribute to the local economy.

## Selahaddin Eyyubi Camii (Ulu Cami)

Centrally located, this mosque is one of the largest in the region. Some sources say it was always a mosque, while others say it is a converted Byzantine church, but what is not in doubt is that this is one of the largest mosques in the region. After the city was taken over by the Ayyubids, the mosque was renovated and named after Selahaddin (Saladin), and thus bearing both Ayyubid and Artukid inscriptions. In a picture taken by the British archaeologist Gertrude Bell in 1911, the mosque seems to be partly ruined; it is said to have undergone a complete renovation by Mardin



The entrance of Selahaddin Eyyubi Camii [207]

artisans in 1913, and portals added to the north and south at the time have partly spoiled its character. Nevertheless, with its impressive masonry work, large dome of nicely decorated *mihrab* and woodwork on the doors, the building sets a standard for other Anatolian mosques to emulate.

The mosque is built of white stone while the dome has been painted white. The octagonal dome is 13.5m

## Saladin (Selahedîn Eyûbî)



Selahaddin Eyyubi (Selahedîn Eyûbî) [208]

Saladin was originally born in1138 as Yusuf in Tikrit, what is now Iraq; later he became known as Selahaddin meaning "the peace of religions". His family, the Ayyubis, was drawn from the Hezbani Kurds who settled in a town called Duvin in Azerbaijan. Led by Sazi, Saladin's grandfather, the family migrated to Tikrit during the reign of the Seljuk Muhammad Tapar at the beginning of the 12th century. The grandfather became a tutor of the Seljuk provinces and governor of Baghdad, while his son, Necmeddin Ayyubi, became the governor of Tikrit. Saladin's father had to flee for Mosul, however, after accidentally killing a man serving the Seljuk Ruler Behruz. Saladin continued his education in Mosul and then in Damascus, where he lived ten years at the court of his uncle, Nur ad Din, who was a nobleman. After finishing his first military education, he accompanied his uncle on campaigns against the Fatimid rulers of Egypt in the 1160s. Another of his uncles, Shirkuh (Şîrguh), a lieutenant of Nur ad Din, became vizier there and was succeeded by Saladin upon his death in 1169. After the death of Nur ad Din, Saladin proclaimed himself Sultan of Egypt, thus founding the Ayyubid Dynasty. Conquering western and northern shores of Africa, he also took over Mosul, Aleppo and other swathes of territory from rival Muslim rulers. In 1183, he mounted a major attack on Crusader-held Jerusalem which failed. In 1187 he declared *jihad* and drew on troops from Syria and Egypt to battle the Crusaders, taking not just Jerusalem but also other major cities in Palestine. Christian forces, led by King Richard I of England, defeated Saladin but were not able to recapture Jerusalem.

Saladin died on 4 March 1193 after twelve days of illness and is buried just outside the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.



Back door of Eyyubi Camii [209]

across and covered by a pyramidal roof. The front courtyard of the mosque has pleasant green area, popular with old men debating while drinking freshly made tea. The front entrance is packed with street stalles and religios book sellers.

## The Broken Minaret

Located on a hill southeast of the centre, this striking minaret (*Minara Qot* to locals) of white sandstone is all that remains of a mosque built between 1199 and 1210 under the Ayyubids. The minaret is 35m tall, square in cross-section and used to have five storeys, though the top section has been destroyed – hence the minaret's name. On each side of minaret are nicely decorated inscriptions. On the entrance door there is inscription from the time of Melik Evhad Eyyub (1199–1210) on the first storey, an inscription relating to Melik Eşref Musa (1210–1220) on the second, and an inscription of Melik Muzaffer Gazi on the fourth. The minaret is in the courtyard of *Yatılı İlköğretim Bölge Okulu*, a boarding school; permission to visit can be obtained from the head teacher.



The broken minaret (Minara Qot)[211]



Belediye Camii [210]

## Belediye Camii

Near the Ulu Cami is this mosque, originally a church, then converted to a cinema for public use before becoming the Belediye Camii in 1988. One wall to the right of the entrance survives from the old church and it bears some frescoes.

## The City Walls

Silvan's walls were originally built in 77 BC when it was part of the kingdom of the Armenian Tigranes the Great, and underwent various additions under the Byzantines (particularly under Justinian I), Hamdanids, Ayyubids and Marwanids. Built of local limestone, the walls enclosed an area that was roughly a 600m square and were 25m high, with 50 bastions in all spread 25m apart. Sadly most of the walls are now destroyed and in some cases people have built their homes over what is left and even scavenged some of the walls for the purpose, so don't be surprised to see residences blending in



Zembilfiroş Kalesi [212]

with what remains. There were once nine gates, some of them still have their thresholds and lintels visible with nicely decorated inscriptions. The gates which still survive in various states are Boşat Gate (in the north-east), Aşağı Mahalle *Gate* (south) and Süslü Kulfa (Qulfa) Gate (east).

## Ayyubid Burcu (Aslanlı Silvan Burcu)

Built by the Ayyubid King Evhad, this square-planned bastion on Gazi Cad in the Mescit quarter bears an image of the sun between a lion and a tiger facing each other.

## Kulfa Kapısı (Deriyê Qulfayê)

Turning into Gazi Cad from the bastion, you will come to Süslü Kulfa Kapısı located to the south side of the walls, a gate built by the Mervanians. Above the gate an Artukid turret can still be seen, with a partly obliterated inscription on the upper part.

## Zembilfiroş Kalesi

All that remains of Zembilfiroş Kalesi is a tower between the Cami and Feridun quarters. The fortress is associated with a tragic love story that locals like to relate. One day the son of an emperor was returning from a hunt when he passed a graveyard and realised that ultimately rich and poor alike will meet the same fate. Leaving the palace with his wife, he became an ascetic and a simple *zembilfiroş*, meaning "basket seller". In Silvan his good looks attracted the attention of the wife of the local ruler and she immediately fell in love with him. On the pretext of purchasing a basket, she invited him to the palace and offered herself to him, and when he refused, she followed him and discovered the tent where he lived. Having been harassed by the ruler's wife, the basket seller's wife fled, whereupon the ruler's wife wore her clothes and lay in bed waiting for the basket seller. The young man only realised that it was not his wife he was with when he heard the sound of the woman's silver bangle, instead of betraying the ruler and his wife, the basket seller throws himself down from the castle. Shocked by this event, Hatun too chooses the same way. Although this story is said to have taken place in Silvan, it is retold among Kurds all over the region and many songs and poems have been written about it.



Kulfa kapısı [213]

## Zembîlfiroş / The Basketseller


Old photo, Kurdish woman [214]

Zembîlfiroş zembîla tine /
*Basketseller brings baskets*
Kolan bi kolan digerîne /
*walks in the streets*
Gava ew zembîla tine /
*when he brings the baskets*
Xatûn li bircê dibîne / *Xatûn (The Queen) sees him from the tower*
Bi eşqa dil dihebîne /
*fells in love with him*
Aqil diçe sewda namîne /
*loses her mind and fells in love*

***She brings over him to go in the castle with the blind excuse of buying baskets and declares her love with a poem:***

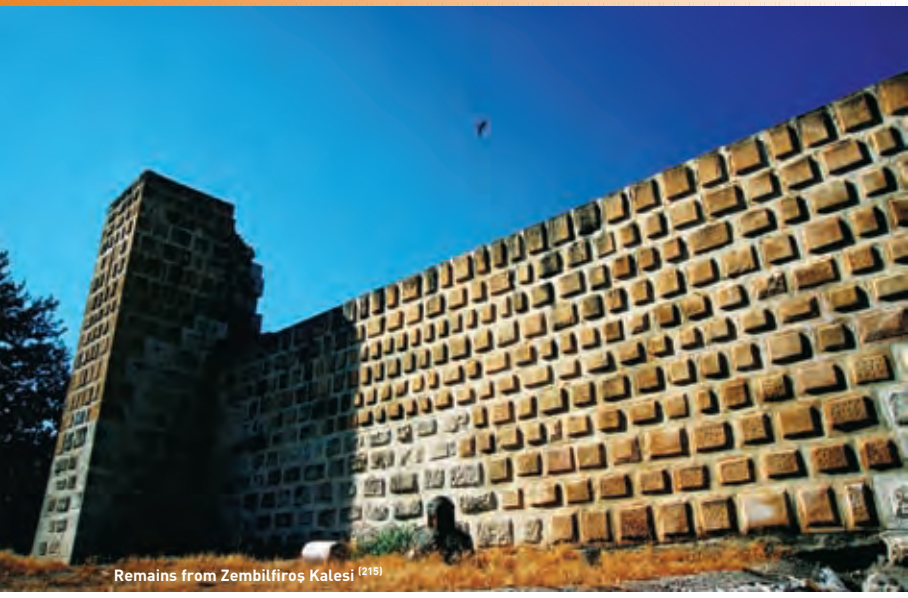
Kuro sêlka vir de bîne / *Hey! Boy bring the baskets*
Mîr dixwaze te bibîne / *myrh wants to see you*
buha buha ji te bisitîne / *he will pay you well for your baskets*
Lawiko ez evîndar im / *Ohh boy I fell in love*

***But the basketseller is married, loves his wife, he is a dervish and a repentant of any other women so he refuses the love of Xatûn....***

Xatûna min a delal e / *My beautiful lady!*
Min bîhîstî Mîr ne li mal e / *I've heard that Myrrh is not at home*
Bazara'm bi malê helal e / *I deal with permissible things*
Xatûnê ez tobedar im / *My Lady, I'm a repentant*
Tobedarê Zerdeştê Kal im / *I'm a repentant of Zerdeştê Kal*
Ji ser toba xwe qet nayêm xwarê / *I won't recant my repentance...*

***The basketseller refuses the love of Xatûn but Xatûn is insistent:***

Çavên min mîna eynan e / *I've shining eyes*
Biskê min mîna qeytan e / *I've string hairs*
Diranê min mîna mircan in / *I've coral-like teeth*
Eniya min mîna ferşan e / *I've a wide forehead*
Berê min mîna fîncan e / *I've cup-like breast*
Fîncanên mîr û paşan e / *the cups of Myrrhs and Kings*
Sîngê min mîna zozan e / *I've wold-like chest*
Zozanên haft eşîran e / *wold of seven tribes*
Zembîlfiroş, lawikê derwêş / *Basketseller! The dervish boy*
Lê bike kêf û seyran e / *Come on enjoy them*



Remains from Zembilfiroş Kalesi [215]

## Mansions

Silvan has several old mansions, called either *kasri (kasır)* (literally "palace") or *konağı (konak)* ("mansion") by the locals. One of these is the 18th-century *Üstünler Kasrı* (Sadık Bey/Mala Beg Kasrı), with decorative stonework. In Gazi quarter, Surbaşı sokak (also called Serê Surê), it dates from the reign of the Ayyubid Ruler Ul-Kamil Muzaffer, though the part of it on the historical walls is an 18th-century addition. On the west side of this building there is an inscription dating back to the time of the same Ayyubid ruler. The owners, who live in an adjacent house, are usually happy to show visitors around the mansion. The wooden ceiling of the guest room has been beautifully painted by Kurdish artistans. The house also has a relaxing garden and fountain.



Üstünler kasrı [214]

Another Silvan mansion is the *Dr Azizoğulları Konağı,* located on a hill overlooking Azizoğulları Cad in the Mescit quarter of the city centre. Dating back to 18th century, this two-storey house is built of limestone.

## Accommodation

*Silvan Öğretmenevi:* Tel (0412 711 56 94) in Selahattin Street can be a good place to stay. The *Belediye Konk (Konuk) Evi* (Guest House 0412 711 50 81) of the municipality also offers some comfortable rooms.

## Hasuni Caves

These caves, located some 8km east of Silvan on the left side of main road as you head out and close to İncesu (Tilmîn) village, are well signposted. You may need to head up for around 100 meters from the parking area to get to the caves, which was designated

## Serê Gulanê

The festival of *Serê Gulanê* (literally "1st of May", though actually held on 14th of May) is celebrated in different districts of Diyarbakır as the wedding ceremony of the last rains of May or spring. It is marked with communal picnics and barbecues especially at Kulp, Lice and Silvan. Popular spots for the festivities are the villages of Gürpınar *(Bêzwan)* 15km from Silvan towards Batman; Çatakköprü *(Mala Badê),* 25km from Silvan and the nearby village of Yeniçağlar *(Quba Zîla);* and Eskiocak (*Kaniya Navîn* or *Sextê*) 10km from Silvan and just 1km from Hasuni Caves (see p: 302). People also visit the graves of their relatives or the tombs of local sheikhs. Tours of these tombs and the caves are organised by the Silvan Municipality and the foundation of the citizens from Silvan *(Silvanlılar Derneği)*.

At Gürpınar, where some of the biggest celebrations take place, people come together to offer prayers at the tomb of Sheikh Mihemed Emin, the great-grandson of Sheikh Ebdilqadirê Geylani (the noted Sufi Sheikh who was leader of the Qadiri order) and then go to the picnic area near the Batman Dam Lake nearby. The afternoon is spent with family and friends or at gatherings where people indulge in traditional songs and dances.



**Serê Gulanê** [217]



Hasuni caves [218]

an archaeologically protected area in 1990.

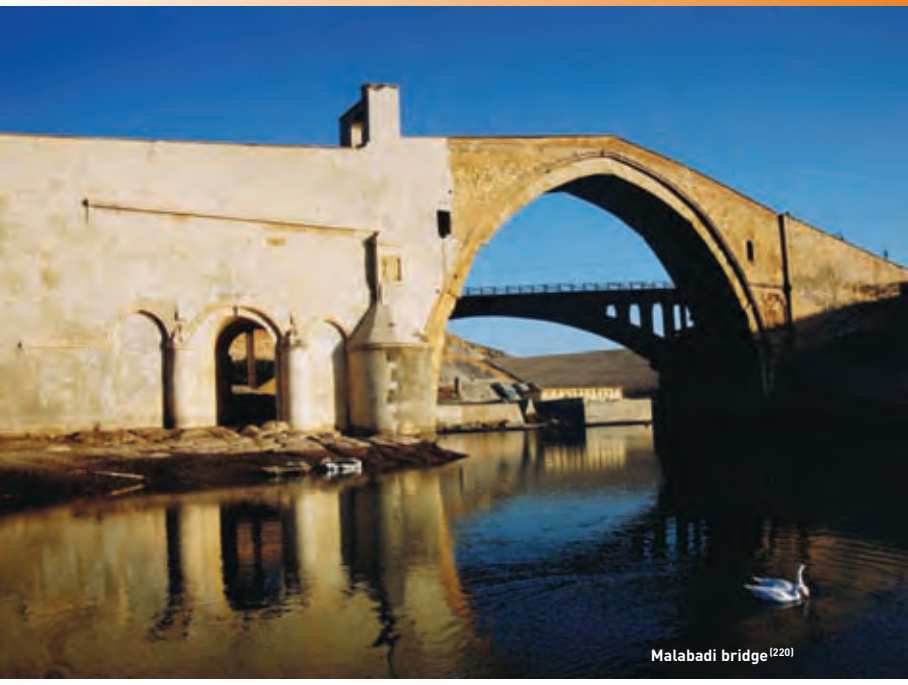
These caves are said to have been inhabited in the Mesolithic Age and during the first period of Christianity. There are actually some 300 caves and the remains of paths, stairs, cisterns and a stone church. At the entrance to the caves are the ruins of what is believed to be a Roman bath. Above this is a reservoir connected to the top of the structure with pipes through which melting snow and rain water could flow.

## Boşat Kalesi

Located in Boyunlu (Boşat) village 12km north of Silvan, the remains of this Roman and Sassanid fortress – a few stone chambers – crown a massive rock. A horse ridden by the Sassanid King Ardişir I and a woman believed to be his lover, followed by some more people and deer have been depicted on the exterior of the fortress. Inside are caves connected through secret passageways. To the north of the village there are a number of caves excavated by humans, part of a settlement most probably dating back to the Sassanids. According to the locals, there were once bazaars, a dungeon and an old monastery here.



A view from Hasuni caves [219]



Malabadi bridge[220]

## The Malabadi Bridge (Pira Mala Badê)

The Malabadi Bridge is one of the best-known monuments in this part of Turkey, and is considered the longest historical bridge of Anatolia. Built in 1147 by the Artukid Timur Taş (although some sources claim that's was built by Marwanids) , it spans the Batman River on the Diyarbakır–Batman highway, 22km east of Silvan, and is 150m long, 7m wide and 19m high; the central arch is the longest of any stone bridge. It is not surprising for the French researcher Albert Gabriel to say, "It deserves admiration to build such a bridge in a period when modern static formulas were not yet invented. The dome of the Hagia Sophia (Aya sofya) in İstanbul could easily be placed underneath the bridge. There is no other bridge in the Balkans, the Middle East and Anatolia that is the same age and that has an arch-width as wide as this one has." The Ottoman traveller



King Ardişir, Boşat Kalesi[221]

Evliya Çelebi described caravanserais accommodating travellers under the arch and many small rooms above the arch, and that he saw people chatting or fishing.

Angular breaks in the east and west approaches allowed the bridge be set at an angle to the river. To either side of the main arch is a guard room. On the facade of the bridge are the depictions of human figures and decorative stonework. On the south side of the large arch is the relief of a sitting man. Just above this, two men, both wearing cusped conical hats, are shown with the standing man offering something to the one sitting. Further down is a frame containing a depiction of a man and sunshine and an animal resembling a lion. Today the bridge takes pedestrians but not traffic. Unfortunately a hydroelectric plant and a newly built bridge to close the historical bridge is a bit of a blot on the landscape.

## Çarşema Reş



Çarşema Reş [222]

According to Islamic belief, the world was made in seven days and devilry and damnation was created on Wednesday (although the festival originates from the Zoroastrianism). The last Wednesday of February and the first two Wednesdays of March are regarded as *Çarşema Reş* ("black Wednesdays"), at which time people believe they must not harm anybody because if they do so, they will not be friends with the person they have harmed for a year. Some people leave town to avoid temptation, while people in general visit the tombs of local sheikhs and pray for forgiveness.

A place that is especially visited at this time *Ziyareta Girkûvî*, an old cemetery on a mountain at Demirkuyu (Dêrika Miqûrê) village, 20km from Silvan on the Batman road. The childless, those whose children have died in infancy, those looking for the love of their live and so forth make a pilgrimage to the site. Afterwards there are picnics and traditional dances around the site.



The oldest known lovers [223]

# Bismil

Bismil (population 57,359) is the largest district of Diyarbakır and situated on a fertile plain through which the Tigris flows; unsurprisingly agriculture dominates the local economy with cotton being the main crop. The town of Bismil is 52km east of Diyarbakır and has different stories associated with its name, one of which is that it derives from *Bistmal*, meaning "20 houses" in Kurdish, a reference to a settlement of 20 houses established by former slaves who migrated here from Persian territory 2000 years ago. The area became a district of Diyarbakır in 1936.

During the cotton harvest between September and December, the municipality organises a Harvest Festival *(Hasat Festivali)* lasting two or three days, with folkloric concerts and competitions to choose the best donkey in town (the district is known for its white donkeys) and select the best cotton, the winner of the latter contest being awarded a gold medal.

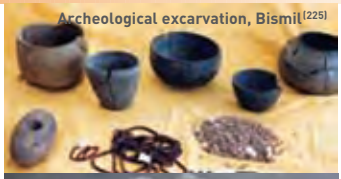


Üçtepe (Kerxê) [224]

## Üçtepe (Kerxê)

The village of Üçtepe, 12km west of Bismil town, is home to one of the most important archaeological sites in Diyarbakır. During the constant battles between the Assyrians and Hurrians to dominate the fertile lands of Mesopotamia, the Assyrian King Banibal gained the upper hand by building a fortified structure called *Tuşha* in the area now occupied by Üçtepe. This was said to have been a centre of intelligence for the Assyrians, who also built a bridge over the Tigris here to connect it to Diyarbakır, through which caravans passed. It is said that the remains of the bridge are underwater in the Tigris.

During the excavation made at Üçtepe's tumulus by British traveller Taylor in 1865, two obelisks bearing Assyrian inscriptions were uncovered. The inscription on the obelisk displayed in British Museum says this of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III: "I destroyed the beautiful plantation, wonderful vineyards, burnt and destroyed the forests and stepped on the magnificent palaces with the feet of our horses". After these items were displayed in the British Museum, the tumulus attracted the attention of many leading archaeologists who discovered some remains of *Tuşha* in 1989, several gold and bronze sculptures, coins, glass items and other artefacts, which are now on display in Diyarbakır Museum.


Archeological excarvation, Bismil[225]



Körtiktepe tumulus (Girê Kortikê)[226]

## Körtiktepe Tumulus (Girê Kortikê)

This mound is in the village of Ağıl (Encolîn) on the way to Batman at a distance of 30km to Bismil. The Upper Tigris Valley which is actually an extension of Mesopotamia to the Anatolian Peninsula has established itself as an item in scientific research agenda with excavations carried out in such mounds as *Körtik Tepe, Hallan Çemi* and *Demirköy,* which gained further importance upon impending inundation as a result of various dam constructions. Still, it is already proven that with its archaeological heritage and cultural assets, the region is actually older and richer than what was assumed previously. Körtik Tepe, for instance, stands out as a unique location where past cultural developments can be grasped well in terms of the modes of responding to vital needs, dwellings, burials, production of instruments, development of religious beliefs as well as images depicting these beliefs.

## Ziyaret Tepe Tumulus (Girê Behramkê)


Ziyaret Tepe tumulus (Girê Behramkê)[227]

This tumulus with scant remains is in Ziyaret Tepe village 11km from Bismil and 1km east of *Tepe* (Behramkê). The relics of an ancient Assyrian city, belonging to the late Iron Age (900–600 BC) was uncovered here. It is believed to have been an important urban centre on the northern edge of the Assyrian Empire, and cuneiform texts suggest it might have been Tushan, the provincial capital of Assyrians. Excavations



Hakemi Use tumulus (Hakemê Ûsê)[228]



Hakemi Use tumulus (Hakemê Ûsê) [229]

support the idea that Tushan was abandoned after the collapse of Assyrian heartland of Nineveh, sacked by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC.

## Hakemi Use Tumulus (Hakemê Ûsê)

Hakemi Use is located 10km east of the district, on the left of the road as you head from Bismil to Tepe village.

Relics uncovered at this tumulus include 5cm-sized sculptures and thirty fireplaces resembling tenur (earthen ovens). Archaeologists discovered a grave in which the skeletons of a man and woman were found as though hugging each other; they have been described as the oldest known lovers in the world. The Third Period identified at Hakemi Use denotes a specific period in Mesopotamian chronology during which ceramic works appeared and the tradition of producing painted jugs emerged. The period also stands for early farming and animal breeding rural communities. Until recently, the scientific community was rather suspicious about the early existence of this culture within the boundaries of present Turkey, assuming that it was confined to central Iraq and northern Syria. Excavations in Hakemi Use are therefore important in invalidating this assumption and demonstrating that the Upper Tigris Valley was an important part of this culture. This culture also referred to as "Hassuna/Samara Culture" is a contributing origin to the subsequent emergence and development of the great Sumerian civilization.

Finds obtained during *Hakemi Use* excavations include, beyond ceramic objects belonging to the Hassuna/Samara period, bone piercing devices denoting the practice of tanning; stone and earth balances for looms signifying the practice of weaving; bulla evidencing distant trading; and flint stone and obsidian tools suggesting farming practices. Finds also include female figurines from Iraq and Iran made of clay. Excavations at *Hakemi Use* also unearthed a rich array of small artefacts supplying Diyarbakır Museum with significant objects remaining from this specific period.

## Yedi Kızlar

There are three Turcoman villages in Bismil, namely Türkmenhacı, Seyit Hasan (Bakarak) and Ulutürk. Unusually for Diyarbakır, the inhabitants are not only Turcoman but also Alevis, who migrated from Mosul, Kerkuk and Urfa some 100 years ago. In the centre of Türkmenhacı village is a pilgrimage site called Yedi Kızlar ("Seven Girls"), comprising a number of rocks.

## Sersal


Sersal (230)

*Sersal,* meaning "start of the year" in Kurdish, is commonly celebrated on 14th of January (as the Kurds used to use Islamic calendar-Şemsi- which is normally 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar, the sersal still celebrated according to the old calendar), particular in villages in the districts of Bismil, Çınar and Silvan. Just before sunset on this day, village youth come together and dress up two boys, one as an old man with a beard of wool and a stick, and the other as his wife. With crowds behind them, they visit houses in the village and collect money, food, biscuits and soft drinks; it's customary for households to offer them something, though they must earn these gifts by being polite and telling stories or singing songs.

For a family that doesn't have children they say:
***Serê salê binê salê***
***Xwedê kurekî bide vê malê***
***(The end of a year, the beginning of a year***
***God! Give a boy/baby to this house)***

And For a family who single sons, they say:
***Serê salê binê salê***
***Xwedê bûkekê bide vê malê***
***(The end of a year,***
***the beginning of a year***
***God! Give a bride to this house***

At the end of the night, the youths come together to cook and eat the food they have been given and enjoy themselves till the early hours of the morning. The two lads who did the collecting will jokingly utter prayers for the rest, saying:
***Xwedêyo pezê me mê bîne***
***God! give female births to our animals***
***[so they can become pregnant and we would have lots of animals]***
***Xwedêyo bûkên me nêr bînin***
***God! give male births to our brides***
***[so there would be lots of men and we would be strong...***

# Çınar (Melkis)



Summer palace of Güzelşeyh[231]

Situated on a fertile plain, Çınar (population 12,725) is 35km south of Diyarbakır on the main road to Mardin. The area has been settled as far back as 3000 BC, as the Hurrian settlements of Hur-Hurik (Sırımkesen) and Besta Hurriyan in Beneklitaş village, west of Çınar town, show. Çınar was once administratively part of Diyarbakır with the name of Akpınar-Hanakpınar until becoming a district in 1937. With the migration of new settlers from Bulgaria and Jerusalem from 1939 to 1950 the town rapidly expanded into the blend of different languages and cultures. The new quarter is comprised of Turcomans and a small minority of Arabs, though the majority is Kurds. The motifs woven on *kilims* reflect the feelings and cultural heritage of the people. Popular dances have names like *esmer, delilo, tik, lorke* and *gorani,* and are performed by men and women together.

The Göksu Irrigation Dam here enables the production of vegetables for self-consumption, and other crops such as wheat, cotton and rice, sold in Diyarbakır city. The villages close to Karacadağ Mountain rear livestock, while some families also earn a living through the fishing in the dam lake.

## Pornak Tumulus

In the Murattaşı (Pornak) quarter of Beşpınar village, 7km north of Çınar town is this large, unexcavated tumulus. Some bowls and items of earthenware were uncovered accidentally while villagers were loading their trucks with soil from the area, which is a protected archaeological site.



Inside palace of Güzelşeyh[232]

## Summer Palace of Güzelşeyh

Around 7km northeast of Çınar town, near the village of Altınakar (Altuxerê) are the remains of a beautiful stone-made palace built by a local notable called Sheikh Kasım. Most of the palace is intact, including the main hall and upper floor. The stone work and design are similar to buildings in the Mardin area.

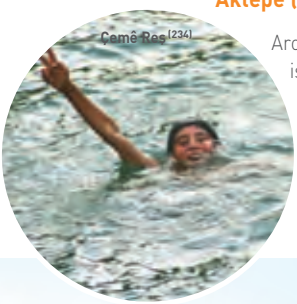
## Textê Silêman Ağa and Çemê Reş

Some 15km south of Çınar town towards Mardin is Demirölçek (Zelzevan) village. A narrow turning on the right here and a ten-minute drive will take you to Textê Silêman Ağa, a series of rock chambers in the mountainside dating back 2000 years. A notable called Süleyman Ağa, residing here, gave his name to the area, which is by the Göksu Stream in a locality called Karaçay. Down below the caves is a picnicking and swimming spot known as Çemê Reş ("Black River"), popular with locals.


Textê Silêman Ağa Caves[233]

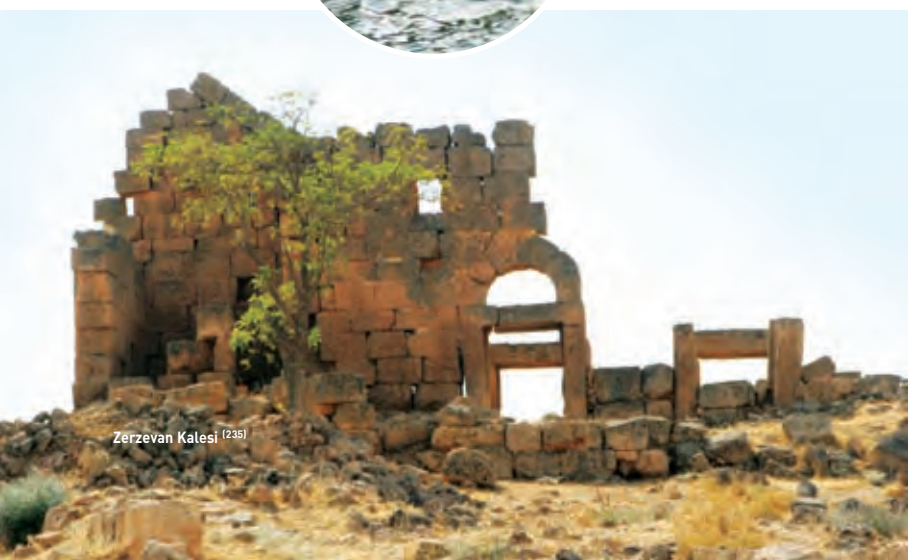
## Zerzevan Kalesi

Around 1km past Demirölçek are the remains of Zerzevan fortress, built by the Romans on the highest hill in the vicinity which might take you 15 minutes to climb up. The remains of some walls and some wells can be seen, though once there were high walls surrounding the fortress, and an underground tunnel down to the creek as at many other fortresses. The stones which remain are quite massive, at 2m long and 0.5m thick, and some have been appropriated by locals for building though the area has protected status.


Çemê Reş [234]

## Aktepe (Axtobê)

Around 18km east of Çınar is Aktepe village, in the centre of which is a beautiful 500-year-old stone minaret whose top section has disappeared. It has been


Zerzevan Kalesi [235]

declared as protected, as has the nearby Aktepe Tumulus, which is not unlike mounds in other villages in the area.

Aktepe is the centre of a pilgrimage that happens on 19th of May, attracting thousands to the white tomb of *Sheikh Evdirehmanê Axtepî*. People come to offer prayers: the unmarried ask for his help in finding them a partner, the ill for a cure for their illnesses, the childless for babies. Once their prayers are done, people like to have picnics around his tomb.


Aktepe (Axtobê) [236]


Aktepe (Axtobê), minaret [237]

## Sheikh Evdirehmanê Axtepî


Sheikh Evdirehmanê Axtepî [238]

*Evdirehmanê Axtepî* was born in Aktepe in 1854, the eldest son of *Sheikh Hesenê Nûranî* from Hakkari province. Having completed his primary education in Aktepe's madrasah, he went on to study in Iraqi and Syrian madrasah and in several other institutions in Middle Eastern countries before returning to Aktepe. There he took over the madrasah upon the death of his father. He wrote and translated many books and articles on subjects such as health, astronomy and Arabic grammar, some of his work being in Arabic though two are in Kurmanji. His epic poem *Rewdetineim,* about the life of the Prophet Muhammad, is considered an important work in Kurdish literature, comprising 4531 staves. While he used *Rûhî* or *Şemsedîn* as a nickname in his poems, in his writings he generally mentioned the problems of destitute, disabled, inoffensive people and challenged the atrocious, rich people and the administrations. He died in Diyarbakır in 1910.


Religious singing [239]



Rice in Karacadağ [240]


DİYARBAKIR
İL HARİTASI
BİNGÖL
ELAZIĞ
BATMAN
ŞANLIURFA
MARDİN
ANDOK DAĞI
BEÇERURUN DAĞLARI
Kulp (Pasûr)
Ağaçlı (Cesa)
Hani (Hênê)
Lice (Licê)
Dicle (Pîran)
Hazro (Hezro)
Kocaköy
Ergani (Erxenî)
Eğil (Gêl)
Çüngüş (Çüngûş)
Çermik (Şarmûş)
Silvan (Farqîn)
DİYARBAKIR (Amed)
Bismil
Çınar (Meliks)
Tepe (Behramkê)
Ouaiiq (Kîbarî)
İŞARETLER / LEGEND



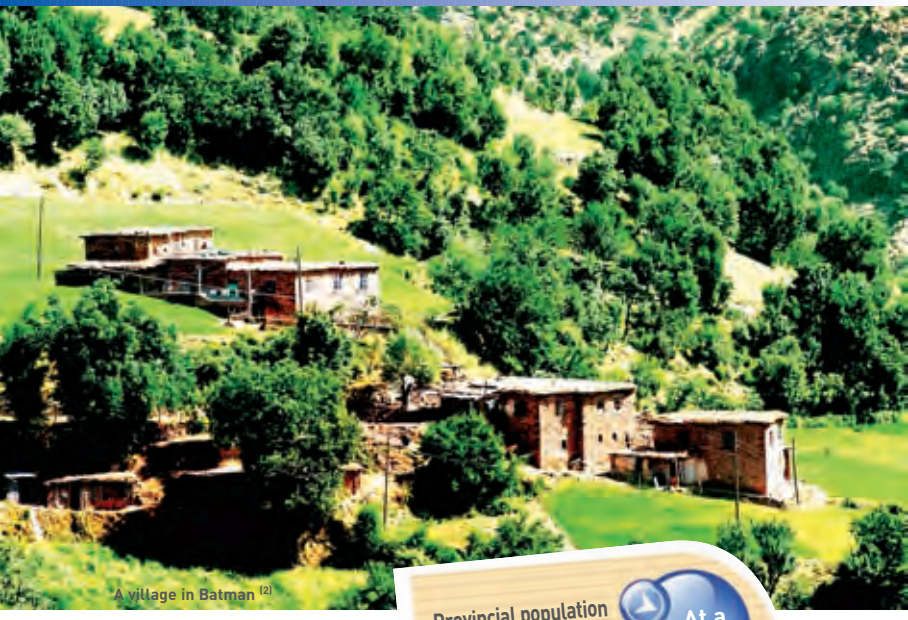
Hasankeyf [1]

# BATMAN (Êlih)

**Batman** province is an important **oil producing** area. It is the home to Turkey's one of the oldest and largest oil refinery establihed in 1955. Some of the towns and villages of Batman province is a home to small groups of **Kurdish Yezidis, Syriac** and remaining of very small **Armenians**. Yezidis have traditionally **dwelt** in the province.



**Hasankeyf** attractively sited by the **Tigris River** and surrounded by a strange topography **of cliffs**, some of which are pockmarked by old cave dwellings. The real reason to come to Hasankeyf, though, is to admire the architecture of the town's **old mosques**, and to explore the **clifftop fortress**, with magnificent overviews of the **river** and the **plains** on the opposite.



A village in Batman [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
472,487 (2007)
**Average altitude**
550m
**Area**
4671 square kilometres
**Districts**
Batman, Beşiri, Gercüş, Hasankeyf, Kozluk, Sason
**Economy**
Oil production, Agriculture, Livestock farming, Tourism
**Neighbouring provinces**
Diyarbakır (west), Muş (north), Bitlis and Siirt (east), Mardin (south)

Batman province is an important oil-producing area today, the home to Turkey's one of the oldest and largest oil refinery, established in 1955. A 500-kilometre pipeline transports crude oil from Batman to İskenderun. The province has a history similar to that of neighbouring provinces: artefacts have been found here dating back to 12000 BC, and has seen the usual series of empires and peoples come and go, including the Hurrians, Mitannis, Urartians, Persians, Romans and Byzantines. After Muslim conquest there were likewise several empires in charge at various times, including the Abbasids, Ayyubids, Marwanids, Seljukides and Artuqid.



Perde pilav [3]

Some of the towns and villages of Batman province is a home to small groups of Kurdish Yezidis, Syriac and remaining of very small Armenians. Yezidis have traditionally dwelt in the province, but their numbers have been greatly reduced due to immigration to Europe, mostly to Germany. At this time, no more than a handful of villages are inhabited by a small number of Yezidi families, most of whom are elderly and supported by their relatives in Europe.



Cooking bread in Tandır (oven) [4]

One good example of Batman cuisine is *perde pilav* ("curtain rice"). This was originally from Siirt province, but since some districts of Batman were once part of Siirt, it is no surprise that *perde pilaf* is also common in Batman nowadays. The dish is a special meal prepared with chicken and rice wrapped in a thin layer of crisp dough, which when cut spills forth a tempting, delicately spiced combination of meat, rice and raisins. *Perde pilaf* is sometimes served at weddings, and signifies that the new bride should keep the secrets of her home hidden, just as the thin sheet of dough envelopes the rice. The rice itself symbolises fertility, while almonds in the dish signify that the couple very much longs for a baby girl, whereas including pigeon (or, these days, chicken) means that a baby boy is hoped for. In the villages near Hasankeyf (like else where in the region), you can try the *nan* (bread) cooked in the ovens called *tenur* (*tenûr* in Kurdish).

The highlight of Batman is unquestionably the small town of Hasankeyf, attractively sited by the Tigris River and surrounded by a strange topography of cliffs, some of which are pockmarked by old cave dwellings. The real reason to come to Hasankeyf, though, is to admire the architecture of the town's old mosques, and to explore the clifftop fortress, with magnificent overviews of the river and the plains on the opposite. It is said that the town may be inundated by the building of the Ilısu Dam, so visit while you can. Elsewhere in Batman, consider trips to the Syrian Christian Monastery of Mor Kiryakos, the fortress of Hazzo Kalesi in Kozluk. The Karakas, Raman, Mereto and Aydınlık Mountains and the Garzan Valley are suitable places for excursions. The Sason Creek is well known for rafting possibilities, while the Batman, Tigris and Garzan Rivers are excellent for fishing. Although part of Diyarbakır, the famous Malabadi Bridge, is short drive from Batman city.



Malabadi Bridge [5]


Batman art street [6]

## Batman City

Batman (population 293,024) lies on the Batman River. The city is hilly to the north, east and south, while the modern part of the town, in the west, features the tall apartment blocks as do most cities in the region.

With summer temperatures in the region easily hitting 40°C, people have to find ways of coping with the heat now that they mostly live in concrete homes rather than in the old, cooler adobe houses. So people take their *takht* (literally "throne", in Kurdish *"text"* but actually a large bedstead made of metal or wood) up to the rooftops and sleep there during summer, as in many other towns in the region.

Batman has become a prosperous, dynamic city after the discovery of oil in the region in 1938. Today the city has some smart, well-tended streets and modern malls, and is growing quickly due to the presence of Turkey's largest oil refinery. Despite the wealth generated by the oil industry, Batman suffers from unemployment and the presence of oil refining has created some pollution locally.

It is worth getting to Sanat Sokağı (Art Street), a nice location with designer shops and smart tea shops where you can not just relax over the locally fresh made tea but also puff on a nargila.

Among other activities, Batman hosts a colourful culture and arts programme, the Batman and Hasankeyf Culture and Art Festival. It is organised by the municipality and number of NGO's, with arts exhibitions, live concerts and street-art projects (Batman-Hasankeyf Sanat ve Kültür Festivali; see p: 344).


Batman refinery [7]

### Getting there

Besides bus and *dolmuş* connections, Batman has a domestic airport with flights from İstanbul and Ankara. The rail line at the city and nearby Kurtalan town connects the city with İstanbul.

### Accommodation

Batman has several decent places to stay, the two four-star hotels of Batman are Asko at Turgut Özal Bulvarı, (0488 214 92 34), and Bozooğulları, *Bozooğulları* near *Akpet Tesisleri*, (0488 215 04 44, www.hotelbozoogullari.com ).

### Places to eat

Good young lamb is popular in Batman and you can enjoy excellent *içli köfte* and other meat specialities such as *perde pilavı* and fresh local fish in restaurants such as *Bahçevan,* on Diyarbakır Cad, opposite the Emniyet Müdürlüğü, near Sevilmez Petrol (0488 212 36 97) or *Çömçe,* on Diyarbakır Cad (0488 213 17 76).

**Municipality: 0488 213 27 59 Tourist information: 0488 212 07 18**



Batman Hasankeyf art and culture festival [8]

## Some prominent people from Batman



Atay making video art [9]

Batman has produced some talented figures in the arts, including the internationally known Kurdish artist Fikret Atay, who makes short art documentaries capturing glimpses of life in Batman. He films young local residents as they perform Kurdish dances and enact traditional scenes of combat. Also well known is Fevzi Bilge, who portrays Kurdish women in his painting work. He says he wants to represent them in a positive way because he feels that they are always depicted as oppressed; he also thinks that his art can help combat the problem of the high suicide rate among women in Batman. Selim Temo is another famous person, born in Batman. He has some poetry writings and prepared a Kurdish poetry anthology also collection of translation work from Kurdish to Turkish. Another well-known figure is Ahmet Güneştekin, who now lives in İstanbul. Inspired by the mythology and romantic legends of Mesopotamia, he has made a series of TV documentaries about art in the southeast of Turkey. (For other famous people see, Kozluk and Gercüş p: 329/349)



A detail from Mor Kiryakos monastery main entrance (10)

# Beşiri (Qubîn)

Beşiri (population 8,573) is just 16km northeast from the centre of Batman. Once a village of Diyarbakır province, it subsequently became a district of Siirt and finally of Batman in 1990.

Beşiri once had large Kurdish Yezidi population, in villages like Kurukavak (Hamdûna) and Uğrak (Texeriyê), just a couple of Yezidi families remain. But elsewhere, in Yolveren (Çinêra), Oğuz (Şimzê) and Üçkuyular (Faqîra), some families have returned from abroad to settle. These families, with support from the diaspora in Europe, have constructed a social and traditional condolence house in the village of Üçkuyular. It is used as a community place by the villagers as well as the neighbouring villages for weddings, funerals and other occasions, as well as prayer. Besides having cultural significance, the house is convenient for staying over and is fully furnished; indeed the diaspora Yezidis who funded the house usually stay there in the summer. It is hoped that the existence of the house, which has four rooms, a kitchen and prayer room, will help preserve Yezidi culture and traditions in the area.



Yezidi mourning place (11)

There is only one street going through Beşiri's town centre, with two small restaurants boasting nice gardens. While heading east to the Mor Kiryakos Monastery, the most significant point of interest, you will pass through several villages of Armenian origin, their ruins, in particular the churches, haunting reminders of their earlier inhabitants.

## Mor Kiryakos Monastery

Located in Ayrancı village (Dêra Qîrê), 18km away from Beşiri, this Syrian Christian monastery can be reached



Mor Kiryakos Monastery[12]

easily by *dolmuş*. The building was probably constructed to be a church as it consists of a courtyard and a long nave closed by an apse, typical of churches in the region. St Cyriacus, to whom the building was dedicated, died in the first half of the fourth century, and it is likely that the church dates from the same century. An important religious centre for Syrian Christians, it was reconstructed many times until the end of the 16th century, though it has been suggested that the floor could be the result of subsequent work by Hasankeyf craftsmen.

Most of the monasteries in northern Mesopotamia were built on the top of hills, and likewise Mor Kiryakos was built in the eastern part of the Kira Mountains. Most of these magnificent monasteries and churches are now in a state of ill repair, for they have not been properly cared for in recent times. Mor Kiryakos was a working monastery until the 1940s, and after its closure valuable items such as the 100kg monastery bell and handwritten books and Bibles were handed over to the Mor Gabriel Monastery in Midyat for safekeeping.

With an area of 2500 square metres, the monastery has an interior courtyard garden surrounded by rooms. At the main entrance are two stone tablets written in Syriac and containing Biblical



A detail from Mor Kiryakos Monastery[13]



Locals[14]

quotations, though they give no date for the monastery's construction.

## Zercil Church and Seyh Halid Tomb

From Ayrancı village, you can easily reach the village of Danalı (Zercîl), which has a Syriac church, though unsurprisingly it is in a state of poor repair. Near that village in Ağalcık (Kâni Rewa) is a mausoleum visited by many Muslims, containing the tombs of Seyh Halid (d.1954) and his relatives.

## Yezidi villages and Christian churches

Not far from the Mor Kiryakos Monastery is Oğuz (Şimzê), one of the 78 Yezidis villages that once existed in this area. You can see the remains of the Deyr-u Semze (Simizi) Church in a garden belonging to one of the families that lives in the village.

From here you can get local transport to the village of Yenipınar (Kevirsora Xwarê), where the remains of a church can be seen; the village was host to some 15 Armenian families in the past.


A Yezidi girl's offering water[15]

## Memikan Bridge (Pira Memikan)

This ancient bridge is about 30km from Beşiri, and the drive takes in a number of villages such as Yazihan (Mezrikê) before you get to the small village of Gedikli (Memikan). The bridge had four spans, three of which remain intact. The exact date of the bridge's construction is unknown, but given the characteristics of the stone used, which is similar to the material used for the



Beşiri plateaus [16]

bridges in Hasankeyf, Malabadi and Cizre in Şırnak province it might have been built soon after the Muslim conquest of the region in the sixth century. It is also possible that it could have been built on the skeleton of an earlier bridge.

On the Silk Road, the Memikan Bridge is strategically sited, spanning the Garzan River, and served for many years as a link between Hasankeyf and nearby settlements. Until the Middle Ages, the bridge provided a connection to northern Mesopotamia, through Hasankeyf, especially for trade.

What makes this particular bridge especially interesting is the way it was constructed. The bridge has been built like a tunnel and has two walkways and two lanes for traffic. For about 50m on either side of the bridge there are walls to protect the bridge from the force of the water when levels are high.



Memikan Bridge [17]



Yezidis paying recpect to their Sheikh [18]

# THE YEZIDIS

Around 2% of Kurds are Yezidis, members of a community with a unique religious tradition. They are heirs to a variety of cultural practices and religious beliefs, including Zoroastrianism (the religion based on the teachings of the old Iranian prophet Zoroaster) and Mithraism (the cult of Mithra, the ancient Persian god of the sun and justice, amongst other things), which became mixed with Sufi teaching. They are also known as devil-worshippers, because of their love of the Peacock Angel (see below).

Today, almost all the Yezidi clergy, together with the great majority of the Yezidi population, are still found in the region in which they originated – Iraqi Kurdistan. It is here that the Yezidis knew how best to safeguard their customs and traditions. Some communities are also found scattered in northern Syria, southeastern Turkey, Armenia and Georgia. The number of Yezidis is uncertain, but Yezidi sources claim around a figure of around 600,000 adherents.

Some scholars have suggested that the Yezidis derive their name from the Zoroastrian city of Yazd in Iran, where fire is still worshipped. Yezidis call themselves as Ezid, Ezi or Izid, names which may derive from Yazad, Yazd or Yazdan in Middle Persian and Kurdish, meaning "God". A popular idea among Yezidis themselves is that Yazdan derives from ez da, meaning "I created" in Kurdish.

**History**

The Yezidis were mentioned for the first time in a historical source in the Kitab al-Ansab written by Abd al-Kar_m al-Sam'ani (d.1167). Other Arabic sources from the 13th and 14th centuries talk about Sheikh 'Adi and his Sufi order, the Adawiyya, as well as his early successors, who played a crucial role in forming the doctrines of Yezidism. Sheikh 'Adi was an Arab from Baghdad who ensconced himself with his disciples in Lalish (near Mosul in northern Iraq), which later became the centre of the Yezidi


A Yezidi woman from Batman [19]

faith. Here he spread his own orthodox Islamic teachings, but after his death in 1162, his successors changed the direction of the sect, absorbing the influence of ancient Iranian beliefs and thus moving towards syncretism.

Between the 13th and 15th centuries, Yezidism expanded considerably in the Kurdish tribal milieux, most likely as a result of a wave of conversions which affected large sections of Kurdish society. The 14th century was the golden age of Yezidism: at this time many of the most powerful Kurdish tribes were Yezidi, and Yezidism actually became the official religion of the principality of Jazira (now Cizre in Şirnak province). The influence of Yezidism reached as far east as Suleimaniyyeh in Iraq, as far west as Antioch in Syria and as far north as Van in eastern Turkey and Khoy in Iran. This quick expansion meant that Yezidism became to be seen as a threat by Muslims; hence, from the beginning of the 15th century, Yezidis were subject to oppression and in some cases were massacred. From this time onwards the Yezidis survived as small tribal groups and as local communities who made strategic alliances with their neighbours. Some Yezidi tribes allied with the Black Sheep Turcomans (1375–1468), others with the White Sheep Turcomans (1378–1508) against Tamerlane, as did many other Kurdish emirs at this time.

In the 16th century the rise of the Safavid and Ottoman dynasties in Persia and Anatolia, in areas of Yezidi settlement, resulted in a dramatic decline in the popularity of Yezidism among the Kurdish tribes. Many Kurdish tribal groups converted to Sunni and Shia Islam.

Complex social and political changes in the 19th century led to the Yezidis becoming the targets of militant Sunnism and suffering at the hands of Ottoman governors or Muslim Kurdish tribal leaders. During the chaos of 1895 and 1915, the Yezidis had to leave their homelands, such as Kars, Iğdır, Doğubeyazit, Ağrı, Van, Bitlis and Antep en masse, and they migrated to the Armenian Republic with the Armenians. Those who remained in the Jazira and Tur Abdin (Midyat) regions left Turkey little by little from the middle of the 20th century for European countries, particularly Germany. This massive outflow was caused directly or indirectly by a number of political and religious difficulties, in addition to economic factors. In the 1980s, there were 60,000 Yezidis population in Beşiri, Kurtalan, Bismil, Midyat, İdil, Cizre, Nusaybin, Viranşehir, Suruç and Bozova, whereas there are hardly any today, though some Yezidis do return from Germany in summer to stay in their villages of origin.

**Beliefs and Traditions**

The Yezidis' cultural traditions are observably Kurdish, and almost all of them speak Kurmanji with the exception of some inhabitants



Yezidis new year, group cleaning [20]

of Behzani and Bashiqa in Iraqi Kurdistan who speak Arabic, but utilise Kurdish as the language of prayer.

The Yezidis believe in one eternal God, named Xwedê, and in divine and semi-divine creatures that are intermediaries between humans and God. They believe that God manifests himself in three different forms: in the shape of a bird, Tawûsê Melek (the Peacock Angel); as an old man, Sheikh 'Adi; and in the form of a young man, one Sultan Êzî. God has a transcendental character and is manifested only through the activities of this trinity. The Yezidis' God is interested only in heavenly affairs; he delegated his power to seven angels and appointed Tawûsê Melek responsible for worldly affairs and human fortune. The Peacock Angel is a mediator and at the same time God's alter ego; the Yezidi faithful pray in front of a figure of a peacock during rituals and ceremonies.



Symbol of Yezidis-Melek Tawûs [21]

The Peacock Angel is also identified with Satan, whom the Yezidis believe was an exemplary angel because his love for God made him refuse to submit to Adam when asked to do so by God himself.

Formalised prayer is largely a matter of personal preference rather than obligatory. Yezidis are allowed to pray privately and individually (as opposed to being encouraged to do so communally as Muslims do), anywhere (there are no special places of worship) and in any manner they wish. Thus there is no standard daily prayer, though it is common for Yezidis to pray thrice daily, turning towards the sun when they do. In addition, Yezidis fast three days a year in December, but again this is not obligatory.

Every Yezidi must observe various rituals and ceremonies, representing new phases in life, in order to be

accepted into the community. The most important of these are biska pora (the rite marking the first haircut of a boy, which used to take place at the age of forty days though nowadays it can happen when a baby is six months or a year old), mor kirin (baptism), sinet (circumcision, twenty days after mor kirin) and dawet (wedding).

Modern Yezidi society has three major castes: Sheikhs, Pîrs and Murids, the last of which makes up the majority of the Yezidi population. Members of the Sheikh caste, who are thought to descend from Sheikh 'Adi, include the Mîr, who is the social and religious leader of the community; the Baba Sheikh, also a religious leader; and the Peş Imam, responsible for arranging marriages and dowries. The Pîrs, who are believed to have existed prior to the time of Sheikh 'Adi, carry out the same duties and responsibilities as the Sheikhs. Every Yezidi has to have two birayê axretê, "brothers of the hereafter", one drawn from a Sheikh family and another from a Pîr family. These people are meant to be like guardian angels who protect and assist their charge during the major rituals described above. Membership of a caste is inherited from one's parents and cannot be changed, and people are allowed to marry only within their caste.

Yezidis have various restrictive and ritualized taboos which are observed as being markers of identity rather than as sacred beliefs. These include marrying outside the faith, disrespectfulness to men of religion and wearing blue clothing. There are also certain dietary prohibitions, including bans on eating pork, fish, gazelle, lettuce, okra and pumpkin.

The Yezidis gather together in the Valley of Lalish to perform ceremonies four times a year. Moreover, some local ceremonies are carried out in Sinjar (northwestern Iraq); Bashiqa; the Kurd Dagh in Aleppo, Syria; the Tur Abdin and Aragatsotn (Armenia) regions. The Yezidi faithful are not called upon to fulfil any strict obligations during these obligations, though it is often the case that animals are sacrificed to honour their saints and martyrs, donations are made to the men of religion, meals are distributed to the pilgrims, and religious dances (sama) are performed.

The absence of specified communal places of worship probably compelled the Yezidis to build other kinds of buildings, such as mausolea and shrines, dedicated to their saints, who are the early disciples of Sheikh 'Adi or his descendants. Mausolea constitute the greatest proportion of Yezidi monuments, serving as places where the faithful, individually or in a group, come to perform their devotions and pious duties; they are also centres of pilgrimage, where the faithful expect their prayers to be answered. Sometimes, a stone or a spring next to a plant or a house belonging to a religious man can fulfil these functions. The sanctuary of Sheikh 'Adi at Lalish is especially important, symbolising the unity of the Yezidi faith and acting as the main pilgrimage centre of the religion.



New year [22]

# Kozluk (Hezo/Hazzo)



Children from Kozluk [23]

Located on the southern side of the Muş Mountains, Kozluk (population 21,651) is 65km northeast of Batman. One of the first sources of crude oil in Turkey was discovered in a village here, called Ulaşlı (Şelmo). Until 1990, Kozluk was a district of Siirt and only became a district of Batman after Batman was declared as a province.

Kozluk is situated between pleasant green valleys. The more modern section rests in the valley bottom, where most government offices and many newly built apartments lie. The town numbers an old fortress and some old mosques as sights and elsewhere in the district are more ruined fortresses. There is also an interesting old bridge in the village of Kaletepe (Dehlik).

Local farmers grow wheat, barley, grapes, tobacco, onion, pomegranate and almond. In summer, as transhumance herders, they move to high plateaus in the mountains along with their livestock. Given that most of the land here is mountainous, agriculture takes place close to the streams and watercourses, because of problems with irrigation.



Old women [24]

Some of the goat hair used for the production of blankets for which Siirt is well known comes from Kozluk. The blankets are not dyed, taking their colour from that of the mohair wool. One advantage of mohair is that, unlike most wool, the fibres have a perfectly smooth shaft to which soil does not readily adhere. Cheese, butter and the other livestock products of Kozluk area are well regarded due to favourable conditions for the animals in the high plateaus.

## Hazzo Kalesi

Driving towards the town from Batman city, you will immediately see Hazzo Kalesi, from where there are great

## Some prominent people from Kozluk



Book cover [25]

A well-known writer from here is Mahmut Baksi (1944–2000), born in Örensu (Suphiyê), a small village. His first novel, Mezra Botan, was published in İstanbul in 1969, and was followed by "Murdered Turkish Communist" the following year. At the same time, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison and had to seek asylum in Germany. In 1971 he moved to Sweden and settled there permanently. He continued to write in exile, publishing 22 books over his entire career until his death in December 2000, after which he was buried in Diyarbakır.

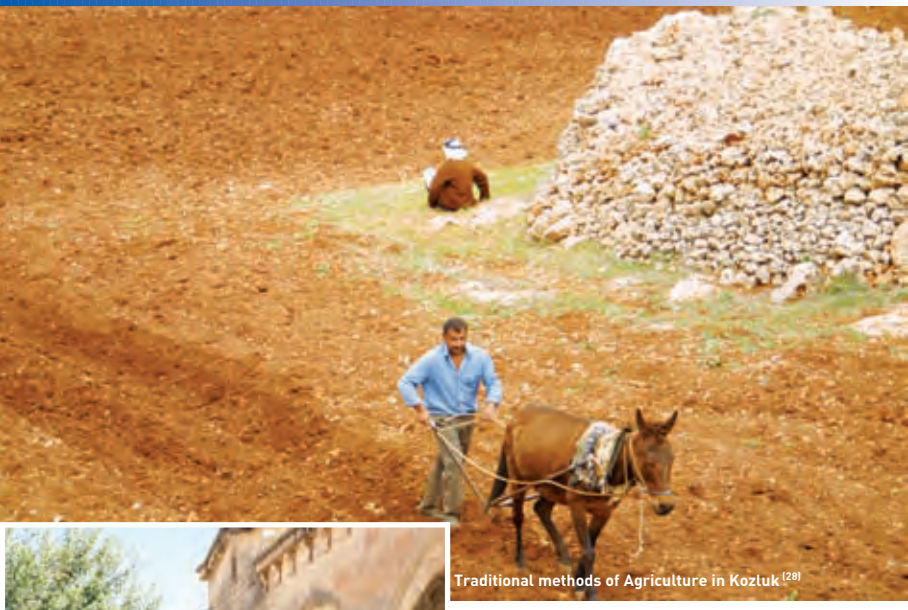

Hazo Kalesi [24]

views of the old and new towns, though much of it is ruins. According to the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi (1611–1682), the fortress was captured by Timur's (Tamerlane's) forces from the ruler of Diyarbakır, Akkoyunlu Uzun Hasan, and destroyed. It was given to Şerefxan ruler of Bitlis, after Çaldıran surge of Yavuz Sultan Selim. The fortress is in the *Kale* quarter and requires a climb of about ten minutes. A far amount of the eastern walls and one of the towers are still standing.

### Hıdır Bey Mosque

Walking downhill from the fortress through the narrow local streets you will come across on your right a historical mosque, that of Hıdır Bey (Xidir Beg), at the end of Hıdır Bey Cad. Though the minaret has been destroyed, the base of it can be seen. According to a partly erased tablet on the front wall, the mosque was constructed at the behest of Hıdır Bey, son of the ruler of Hazzo and Sason, Ebubekir Ruşti in 1485. At the main entrance can also be seen writing in Farsi; note also the Islamic decoration to the left of the door. Some mulberry trees grow in the small courtyard.


Hıdır Bey (Xidir Beg) Camii [27]



Traditional methods of Agriculture in Kozluk [28]



İbrahim Bey Camii [29]

## İbrahim Bey Camii

Back towards the old town centre you will find the İbrahim Bey Mosque in the *Kale* quarter, with its beautiful minaret still standing. Its internal artwork has been nicely preserved along with calligraphy in Arabic and Farsi. According to the locals these two mosques are named after two of a trio of respected Muslim brothers.

According to a tablet on the door, the mosque was restored in 1705 at the instruction of İbrahim Bey, son of Murtaza Bey from the well-known Garzan Tribe. It has a tall, nicely decorated high minaret, which can be climbed using either of two stairways. There is a sundial on the southern part of minaret at the level of dome. To the left of the mosque in the courtyard are a number of tombs belonging to İbrahim Bey and members of his family also a religious boarding school to accommodate 35 students.

## Hallan Çemi (Çemê Helan)

In Kaletepe village (Dehlik) you can view an ancient settlement, one of the earliest archaeological sites of Turkey, dating back to 10000–8000 BC. It was once a hunting settlement. The items found during its excavation are part of the collection at the Diyarbakır Archaeological Museum and are still being processed.

## Rabat Kalesi

Some 18km north of Kozluk town are the ruins of Rabat fortress in Yanıkkaya (Simaîlka) village. The castle was built by the Byzantines during a period of conflict with the Persians over the Erzen region in the fourth century.

## Kandil Kalesi

Six kilometres northwest of Kozluk, on the way to Sason, is this fortress in the south of the Bölükkonak (Hergemo)


Praying at Zilan tomb [30]

village. It was built by the Byzantines during the first part of the fourth century atop a hill, for them to keep an eye on fortifications further south.


Bekirhan Zilan Türbesi [31]

## Bekirhan (Kaniya Henê)

Bekirhan is a small district of Kozluk. Every year, thousands of pilgrims visit the tomb of the intellectual Sheikh Muhammed Zilan (Bavo Kalo) and his relatives, near Bekirhan. Among the others buried here are Sheikh Kasım , Sheikh Halid Zilan, Ayşeta and Anne Fatma.

People gather at the tomb every year end of May and, carrying their babies in their arms, they pray and ask to obtain the Sheikh's protection. The place is not only supposed to cure problems, but also to help unmarried youths find a partner for life and to help make dreams come true.

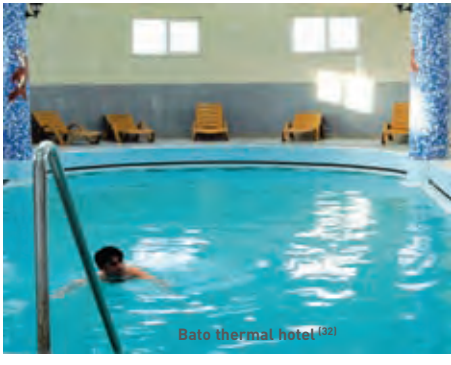
## Taşlıdere Thermal Springs

Between Batman and Bekirhan, 39km from Batman and on the way to Kozluk is the newly built *Bato Termal Hotel* (0488 426 60 41) http://www.bato.com.tr/ ), with a hot-spring complex. The hotel has 54 rooms, each with its own thermal bath. There are also separate pools for men and women and two more outdoor pools for children and adults as well as number of privet rooms in the first floor which can be rented for daily or hourly use, plus a 24-hour restaurant. The hotel also dose offer small sport centre and massage services.

The source of the spring water is in the village of Taşlıdere (Holê). The composition of the water is similar to that from the Çermik spring in Diyarbakır province, and is meant to be able to help treat rheumatism, polio, nephritis, gynaecological problems and upper respiratory and skin infections. The place is ideal to spend a night or two if you are visiting Sason or Kozluk.

## Taşlıdere Yıldız Springs

This establishment located just opposite *Bato Termal Hotel* is a more inexpensive place than the *Bato Termal Otel* (0488 426 63 20). There are also number of restaurants and shops are nearby.


Bato thermal hotel [32]



Kom Monastery [33]

# Sason (Kabil Cevz/Qabilcewz)

Given the steep topography of the town of Sason (population 10,673), 80km from Batman, there are only few parcels of land around suitable for agriculture and these are mostly used to cultivate tobacco. But it is for organic honey and walnuts that the town is well known, and this produce inspired the vibrant Honey and Walnut Festival, established in October 2001 and held annually ever since.

The main temptation for visitors is the unspoilt natural beauty of the high mountains and deep valleys, most strikingly the narrow green valley of the Batman River, which runs alongside the road until you arrive in this small and mountainous town. Sason is an ideal place to experience genuine rural hospitality and traditional life, and to explore fabulous alpine countryside.



Armenian event [34]

Most houses are still built in the traditional style, of stone supported by large wooden beams, in keeping with the alpine scenery.

Sason has historically had a strong Armenian identity. Once it was the focus of two major armed rebellions, which were harshly put down by the Ottomans rulers. According to some historians, those rebellions eventually led to the extensive Armenian events of the 1920s.



Exiled Armenians [35]

To the north of Sason, there are still some small Armenian villages. Sason also features the remains of a few Armenian religious sites, including two


Kom Monastery [36]

churches in the old part of town and a smaller church just behind the army base near the town council buildings. Some parts of the town centre and nearby villages are now home to a large Arab community. The Arabs of Sason and its environs are mostly those who have migrated from Basra in Iraq.

The town centre and main bazaar are lively, and you will find many teahouses and groups of men playing cards and chatting. Most of the restaurants and shops are on the main street, where you will also find the town's bus station.

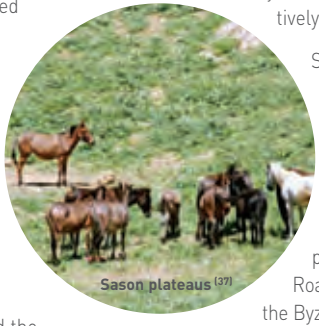
## Kom Monastery

The Monastery of St.Peter of Kom, at an altitude of 2000m on Mount Mereto, opposite to the Aydınlık Mountains (Meleto Mountain) is worth visiting although a bit difficult to access. A one-hour drive from Sason to the northeast will get you to the nearest village, Derince (Kaxik), and then it is a two-hour walk to this well kept, two-storey building which once was used to train priests.

The monastery, probably dating from the eleventh century, had 365 rooms and some parts of the complex are still well preserved, although it is now used by shepherds for keeping animals. In what once used to be an architectural jewel, you can still feel the atmosphere of seclusion and enjoy fresh air and a breathtaking view.

## Pertukan and Bozikan Fortresses near Sason

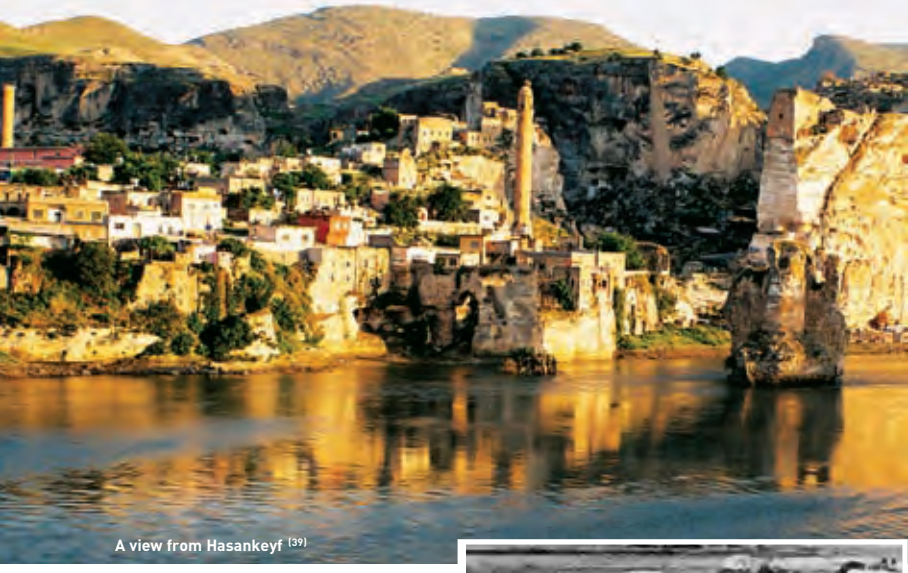
Pertukan Fortress to the east of Tekevler (Gundênû) village is approximately 4km southwest of Sason. The remains of the site can be seen from a distance and a 15-minute walk will bring you to the summit where the fortress sits. Dating from the Byzantine period, the fortress is almost entirely in ruins. There are large breaches in the walls and the fortress was captured many times over the years because of the relatively accessible terrain.


Sason plateaus [37]

Some thirty minutes further along the same route is Bozikan Fortress in Kale Yolu village (Bozikan). Once offering a vantage point over the Silk Road, it also dates from the Byzantine period, specifically the fourth century.


A view from Kom Monastery [38]

# Hasankeyf (Heskîf)



A view from Hasankeyf [39]



Silk road [40]

Hasankeyf (population 3,271) is a small and pleasant town, easily reachable by road from Batman and Midyat, and there is a daily bus connection with Van. A 35km *dolmuş* journey from Batman will bring you to this gorgeous ancient town which overlooks the Tigris River, and which was once a major intersection on the Silk Road. The town has seen a succession of civilisations come and go. Now a days faces a very active resistant campaign from the different NGO's, the local Kurdish authorities and Kurdish and Turkish intellectuals supported by the environmentalists, it is itself set to become a thing of the past, when it is inundated following the completion of the Ilısu Dam.





Eyyubid coins [41]

Hasankeyf was of strategic importance both for the Byzantines and the Sassanids, who fought for the control of the region during the third century. The Great Palace on the citadel was likely built to protect the Byzantine Empire from the Sassanids. Muslim armies probably took the region in 638. With the Artukid reign from 1101 to 1232, Hasankeyf reached its apogee and became the capital of the Artukids of Hasankeyf.

In 1232, Hasankeyf was taken over by the Kurdish Ayyubid dynasty and was ruled by al-Kamil, a nephew of Saladin. The city was captured and sacked by the Mongols in 1260. In the second half of the 15th century, Hasankeyf came under the influence of the Akkoyunlu (White

Sheep Turcomans), who constructed two tombs here. The Ottomans penetrated the region in the first quarter of the 16th century, by which time Hasankeyf was in slow decline.

According to the *Sheref Nameh*, written by the Kurdish noble Şerefxanê Bedlîsî also known as Sharaf Al Din Bitlisi, the place derives its name from a situation involving an Arab prisoner who asked for one last request before his execution. The man, named Hasan, asked for his horse to be brought into citadel so he could ride him one last time. The guards acceded, and the horse managed to leap such a distance that Hasan escaped into the waters of the Tigris, but at the cost of the life of his horse. His fellow prisoners who saw the escape shouted "Hasan, keif?" ("Hasan, how?").

Ottoman archives describe Hasankeyf as a city of cave dwellings with two caravanserais and four mosques. The cave dwellings, either natural cavities pockmarking the surrounding cliffs or dug out of the calcareous rock, have been inhabited for some 3000 years and there are no fewer than 4000 of these, some of them are still in use.

But with the advent of the Turkish Republic, the cultural heritage of Hasankeyf was forgotten and in 1954, when plans for the Ilısu Dam as part of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) were announced, most of the inhabitants left, though construction turned out to be much delayed. The town was declared a conservation area in the early 1980s. At the end of the 1990s, local civic organizations began campaigning to stop the Ilısu Dam. A new international consortium to build the dam has been formed after the first consortium collapsed due to public pressure. Meanwhile the town has been placed on the 2008 World Monuments Watch List of 100 most



Hasankeyf Kale [42]



A view of Hasankeyf old bridge [43]




Batman Hasankeyf art and culture festival [44]

endangered heritage sites, compiled by the World Monuments Fund, a leading conservation NGO.

Supporters of the dam point out that the key monuments of Hasankeyf, among them the remains of the old bridge, will be moved to a so-called "culture park" and that the drowned cave houses will become superb dive sites. The dam's opponents argue that the sandstone of which the structures are built will not survive being moved. Other opponents such as the organised and active Ilısu Dam Campaign groups are working to stop the construction of this project over the River Tigris. The group argues construction plans for the dam would lead to the flooding of about 300 square kilometers and would forcibly displace up to 78000. Visit today and locals may speak to you of the legends of the place and of their sorrow at the impending loss of this historically rich town and of the ensuing displacement of local people. They may also say that the real motive of the dam's construction is to wipe out a significant chunk of Kurdish culture and history in the region but also to control water in to Syria and Iraq.

If you arrive from Batman you will see the town appear on the east side of the modern Atatürk Bridge across the Tigris, which runs roughly northwards here. All the historical sites of Hasankeyf are within easy walking distance of one another, though you will find some of them hard to identify and you may need to ask locals for help. After the bridge, the first turning on the right off the main street will lead you past some souvenir shops and give access to the Mosque of Rızkıye, the citadel and the Koç Camii, amongst other sites.

## The Mosque of Rızkıye (Er-Rızk)

Standing prominently above the river is the double-staircased minaret of this mosque. It was built in 1409, and the date is inscribed on the beautiful three-lobed portal of the mosque, which shows similarities with the



Rızkıye (Er-Rızk) Camii[45]



A detail from Rızkıye (Er-Rızk) Mosque[46]

portal of the Zinciriye Madrasa in Mardin (see p: 365). You may well see nesting storks atop the minaret itself. The courtyard (walk around the modern mosque and enter via the door which provides access to the male toilets) is worth visiting. Here a wonderful facade has been preserved.

## The Old Bridge

This bridge, thought to have been built over the remains of a Byzantine bridge, was the largest stone bridge ever built and once had the same features as the Malabadi Bridge (see p: 303). The bridge was constructed in the early 12th century under the Artukids, and became disused in the early 14th century. It was restored by the Artukid Ruler al-Adil Ghazi (1341–1367), and glazed tiles and the use of brick suggest that the bridge was also restored by the Akkoyunlu in the second half of 15th century. In Ottoman times the bridge became ruined again. Almost nothing is left today save a few stumps. You can get good views of the bridge from the Atatürk Bridge or the citadel, or by descending to the river – take the little road down a little way beyond the Rızkıye Mosque.

## The Citadel

Continuing along the road from the Rızkıye mosque brings you after a few minutes into a ravine with cliffs to either side. A pair of drinking fountains lie at the start of the path up to the citadel, on the right. The path is made of smooth stones, so take care not to slip.

Offering excellent views over the Tigris River, the citadel (typically open from



Citadel gate [47]

dawn to dusk) might seem oddly named as it has no walls these days. It was probably built by the Byzantines in the course of their fight against the Sassanids, and augmented during the Artukid era. The Artukids came up with an ingenious system of hidden tunnels dug into the cliffs to bring water into the citadel, and the Ayyubids constructed pipelines bringing water from springs further up. The citadel was badly damaged during the Mongol invasion.

Once at the top of the path, turn right to reach the Küçük Saray (Small Palace), overlooking the Rızkıye Minaret (viewed from the Atatürk Bridge, the palace is the box-like structure clinging above a whitish precipice). It was built in 1328 by the Ayyubid prince Muciruddin Muhammed. It is believed that the doors were decorated with gold inscriptions, though they do not survive. On top of the window in the northern side of the palace are Arabic bas-reliefs.

In the opposite direction from the Küçük Saray are the Ulu Cami (Great Mosque) and



Küçük saray (small palace) [48]



Ulu cami[49]



Küçük saray (small palace)[50]

Büyük Saray (Grand Palace). Of the Great Mosque three foundation inscriptions are known: one on the iwan by which you enter the mosque (1394), one on the *minbar* (1396) which is now in the excavation house, and one on the ruined minaret (1520), and it is likely that there was a mosque here even earlier, since it is located close to the Great Palace. The mosque was still in use as recently as the 1990s. Interestingly, the palace has a detached tower facing the entrance gate, most probably used as a watch-tower. It is believed that the palace had private rooms with a secret gate leading to the *harem*. Two storeys of the palace can be seen today but excavations may reveal yet another storey.

A zigzag passageway can be seen cut into the cliff on the opposite side of the road leading to the citadel. This is an example of one of the hidden supply tunnels which used to be painstakingly dug. From the Atatürk Bridge you can see another example cut into the cliff below the citadel itself, but do not attempt to use this to access the citadel here as the steps are now too worn for safe use.

The citadel gate itself has an inscription stating that it was built by the Ayyubid Sultan Suleiman. The façade of the gate is made of ashlar masonry, while the back is made of rubble. Sadly, dangerous cracks have emerged in the gate.



The ruins of the bridge by night [51]

## Sultan Suleiman Camii, Koç Camii, and Kızlar Camii

The other prominent minaret in Hasankeyf is that of the Sultan Suleiman Mosque, another example of Ayyubid architecture; it is easily spotted as the tip of the minaret has disappeared, leaving an oddly truncated structure. The building was built in three phases which are partly recorded on the building itself. The first building inscription is found on the eastern portal, stating that the portal was built by the Ayyubid el-Adil Ghazi in 1351–52. During the reign of Suleiman, the father of al-Adil Ghazi, the mosque was partly destroyed due to an earthquake. Suleiman had parts rebuilt as the minaret in 1406–07 and a fountain to the east of the courtyard in 1416. The local chronicler of Hasankeyf, Ibn al-Munshi, wrote that al-Adil Ghazi had a madrasah built in which he was also buried, and this might have been the madrasa adjacent to the Sultan Suleiman Mosque. Besides the minaret and the portal and fountain on the east side, the western room of the mosque, by which you now reach the building, is pretty sensational, containing a dome with wonderful stucco decoration. You can reach the minaret by turning left uphill just after the Rızkıye Mosque, or by walking up the main street and taking the first turning on the right just before the PTT.

To the southeast is the Koç Camii, with a large courtyard with rooms around it. A dome accentuates the *mihrab* that was made of stucco over brick. It might have been modelled after a portal lead-



Koç Camii [52]


Sultan Süleyman Camii[53]

ing to the domed room; extensive stucco decoration of this entrance suggests that it was actually the original *mihrab* and was later enlarged.

Also near the Koç Camii is the Kızlar Camii, most probably a complex of tombs and believed to be the work of the Ayyubids. There are some beautiful examples of decorative motifs in the northern entrance to the tomb that indicate its former magnificence. Interestingly, the ruins are only 3m high, indicating the mosque was never completed.


Küçük Kale[54]

## Küçük Kale (Darphane)

The Küçük Kale, or "Small Citadel", is above the cliff opposite the main citadel. It was actually used by the Ayyubids and the Artukids for minting coins, examples of which can be seen at Mardin's museum. If you look carefully, you should be able to distinguish the remains of a pool, pipelines and a tank near the cave dwellings which are used today as cafés.

## İmam Abdullah Mausoleum

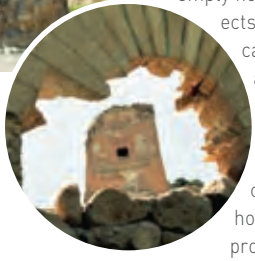
This religious complex comprising a minaret, a tomb and large rooms is situated close to the Atatürk Bridge, on the hill on the western side. On the doors of the mausoleum, now in the collection of the Diyarbakır Museum, an inscription states that the building was restored in 1474 by Khalil, the son of the Akkoyunlu Sultan Uzun Hasan, and it is believed that the complex was created a mausoleum for this Akkoyunlu Prince. The name of the mausoleum refers to a Shiite İmam, Muhammad bin Abdallah at-Taiyar,


Zeynel Bey Moseleum[55]

whose shrine used to be nearby and was the reason of the mausoleum was built in this location.

## The Zeynel Bey Mausoleum and the Ottoman Hamam

Plainly visible in the fields opposite Hasankeyf and just upriver from the Artukid Bridge is this distinctive cylindrical *türbe*, built in the Akkoyunlu era for Zeynel Bey, son of Sultan Uzun Hasan. Zeynel Bey died in 1473 in a war against the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet Fatih. The mausoleum was a distinctive structure, built in a style that can be called Iranian or central Asiatic. The closest parallels are to be found in Iran, for example at the Blue Mosque in Tabriz. The onion dome is typical of the Akkoyunlu style. The used of glazed mosaics on the exterior forming the names of Allah, Muhammad and Ali has been a feature of central Asian architecture since Timurid times. Close to the west bank and a little further downriver are the remains of a squat, circular Ottoman *Hamam*.


Imam Abdullah's Moseleum[56]

## Hasankeyf Caves

The valley of the Hasankeyf town is covered with the caves. There are around 400 thousand caves in and around the town. The caves which were inhabitant by people recently are empty now. There are some projects to about arranging the caves as boutique hotels and restaurants; however the due build dam projects which aim to submerge this ancient city for electricity put hold to most touristic project plans.

## Mor Aho Monastery (Deyr Mahar)

Located in the Ban-ı Mahar countryside 10km east of Hasankeyf, this monastery is perched some 150 meters above the Tigris on a plateau. With the gradual departure of the Christian population, the monastery slowly became deserted and is now in ruins.


Hasankeyf valley and caves[57]



**Zeynel Bey mausoleum and Otoman hamam[58]**

## The Batman and Hasankeyf Culture and Art Festival



Protest at Batman Hasankeyf art and culture festival [59]

For the five days of Batman and Hasankeyf's Culture and Art Festival, at the end of September and start of October, the towns of Batman and Hasankeyf is packed with people who come to enjoy performances of music and view art exhibitions, taking part in conference and open discussion about the impact of the dam building in the region. The festival also provides a platform for many environmental activates and campaigners to meet the people of the region and exchange ideas. Hundreds of delegates come to Hasankeyf Festival, many whom are well known foreign and national singers, actors and campaigners. On the last day of the event people along with the members of the MP's, Municipality Mayors, important cultural and political figures start a peaceful march to Hasankeyf and spend the night there. All night live music concert kicks off late afternoon, while during the sultry night the festival goers relax on the banks of the Tigris, where kebabs can be eaten and washed down with a cold drink. For more info contact Municipality: *0488 213 27 59*


Batman Hasankeyf art and culture festival [60]



Restaurants by the Tigris River [61]

## Accommodation

An overnight stay is recommended as the morning and evening light are particularly effective for photography. A few simple rooms are available at the small *Hasankeyf Motel* (0488 381 20 05), so close to the east side of the Atatürk Bridge that the floor trembles when trucks go past. Facilities are shared and basic, with no air-conditioning, but the family that runs it is friendly and speaks English. There is also the small teachers' guesthouse *(öğretmenevi)* on the hill diagonally opposite (0488 381 27 20), where the best times to seek accommodation are in the summer and at weekends, when the teachers are unlikely to be around. In summer too you can try the riverside restaurants, which put out *taht* beds that you can sleep in for a small fee; the experience of sleeping under the stars by the Tigris, in the breeze and with the sound of water rushing past, can be magical. Alternatively, use Batman or Midyat as a base for a day-trip to Hasankeyf.

## Places to eat



Yolgeçen Hanı [62]

In late spring and summer makeshift restaurants open up right by the Tigris, delightful places where you can let your feet dangle in the water or seat on the *taht* placed on the river while you enjoy grilled Tigris fish and meat specialities. The cafés in the cave dwellings, such as *Yolgeçen Hanı* (0488 381 22 87), kitted out rustically with carpets, cushions and old wooden couches, are also good options and are especially popular for a drink and local Kurdish food after people have taken in the summer sunset. Otherwise, the town's main street has a couple of restaurants, such as the *Antik Kent,* which offers good *şorbe (soup)* for breakfast and a range of dishes the rest of the day.



Küçük Saray [63]


HASANKEYF
TURİZM HARİTASI
Hasankeyf Kanyonu
Ulu Cami
Büyük Saray
Hasankeyf Kalesi
Kale Kapısı
Tarihi Mağaralar
Tarihi Vadi
Çardak Restoranlar
Sahil Yolu
Yolgeçen Hanı
Küçük Saray
Küçük Kale (Darphane)
Park Alanı
Asma Sokak
Tarihi Mağaralar
Batman
Festival Alanı
Osmanlı Hamamı
Zeynel Bey Türbesi
Dicle Nehri
İmam Abdullah Zaviyesi
El-Rızk Camii
Hasankeyf Eski Köprüsü
Tourism Information
Tarihi Çarşı
Kale Sokak
Kesmeköprü 3 Köyü
Öğretmenevi
ATATÜRK BULVARI
Hasankeyf Motel
Sultan Süleyman Camii
Tarihi Mağaralar
Koç Camii
102 Sokak
PTT
Belediye
Kızlar Camii
104 Sokak
106 Sokak
105 Sokak
103 Sokak
101 Sokak
109 Sokak
107 Sokak
Midyat Mardin
İŞARETLER / LEGEND



Children in Gercüş [64]

# Gercüş (Kercews/Kercos)

Located between Midyat and Hasankeyf, Gercüş (population 5,260) lies 60km from Batman on a plateau at an altitude of 850m, surrounded by mountains.

Some part of the region is also known as "the place of the *ağa* (minor landed gentry)", and there is a nice story about them. Four men from Gercüş were on their way to Batman in a shabby old car at the height of summer. Due to the heat, they had to keep the windows open all the way to keep themselves cool. When they got close to Batman, one of them said, "Look, we are nearly at the city centre, so we have to wind up the windows." They all did so to give the pretence of travelling in an air-conditioned car.



Cooking lady in Gercüş [65]

## Arıca

Most of Gercüs's historical sites lie outside Gercüs town and can generally be reached on day-trips from Hasankeyf or Midyat. For example, head for the beautiful village of Arica (Kefri), 20km away from the town, where enchanting cave monasteries can be found. The village has a distinctive Assyrian identity, with beautiful stone houses in the traditional style still in good shape.

In the middle of the village, Mor Yakup Church has been recently restored by an Syrian Christian local and is worth visiting. The doorman will be happy to let you in and show you around. The church was built in the fifth century,

## Some of the well known people of Gercüş



Karapêtê Xaço [66]

People from the area take pride in the accomplishments of local-born figures such as the Armenian poet **Karapêtê Xaço** his name also recorded as Karapet Khachatrian (1902–2005), a singer of traditional Kurdish *dengbêj* music, which often tells tales of romance or war. He survived the Armenian events, having been rescued by a famous local lord called Çeto Aga, and only recently passed away in the Armenian capital Yerevan. Karapêtê Xaço is much respected among Kurds for laying a musical foundation for future generations. His best-known songs include *Ay lo mîro, Adûlê, Çûme Cizîre, Xim ximê and Lê dayê.*



Cegerxwîn [67]

Another iconic figure was the Kurdish poet **Cegerxwîn** (1903–1984), whose real name was Sêxmûs Hesen. Born in a village called Hesarê in the Gercüş area, he attended madrasahs around Diyarbakır and obtained an *icaze* (a certificate qualifying him to lecture at madrasahs). He then worked as an *imam* in different villages, though this stopped when he was exiled to Syria along with other Kurdish intellectuals. Cegerxwîn's involvement in poetry began when he was a teenager, and his poems, whose themes mainly concerned rebelling, history, Kurdish intellectuals and love, were first published in a Kurdish magazine, Hawar (see p: 474) . Most of his poems became well known through being set to music. An example appears below:

***Şêr û Piling û Rovî / Lion, Tiger and Fox***

Şêr û piling tev de çûn / *Lion and tiger were walking*
Leqay seriyek penîr bûn / *They found a piece of cheese*
Vê jî xwar û wê jî xwar / *They both wanted to eat it*
Herdu li hev dane dar / *So they fought for the cheese*
Yekî ji ê dî re got / *One told the other an idea*
Herdu rabûn bûne cot / *So they agreed on it*
Go: em herin cem rovî / *One said: let's go to the fox*
Li seydayê wehş û kovî / *To the expert of the wild life*
Ew ê me li hev du bîn / *He will create the peace between us*
Çavê Şeytênî derîn / *He can find a solution*
Rovî got: de rabin zû / *Fox said: move immediately*
Ji mi re bînin terazû / *Bring me a pair of scales*
Wan terazû anî ber / *They brought a pair of scales to him*
Rovî penîr danî ser / *Fox put the cheese on the scale*
Alîk pir û yek hindik / *One scale carrying a big amount the other was smaller*
Yek bû giran yek sivik / *One scale was heavy the other was light*
Parîk ji a giran bir / *He ate some from the heavy part*
Ew j' a dî bû siviktir / *Then the other scale became heavier*
Geh ev xwar û geh ew xwar / *He ate from this part and that part*
Heta ko ma ben û dar / *Till only the scales left*

***Cegerxwîn, 31 December, 1932, 14th Hawar Magazine by C.A.B.***

The point in this fable is the dispute between a lion and a tiger over a piece of cheese, who seek the arbitration of a fox on to lose that cheese to wise fox.


Welcome grapes in Arica village [68]


Mor Yakup church [69]

and the main hall and entrance still have some original calligraphy that can be made out.

The final act of worship in the church took place in 1992, before the remaining Syrian Christians left for Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. According to the village elders, there were once a hundred families here, of which sixty were Syrian Christians and forty Kurdish Muslims. Before the Syrian Christians emigrated, they entrusted their properties to their Kurdish neighbours, since when the remaining villagers have been looking after these properties as if they were their own, a wonderful testament to the interfaith camaraderie which exists in daily life but rarely makes headlines. If you choose to tour the region extensively, you will find that most of the villages fit this description, with Syrian Christians coexisting harmoniously with their neighbours for generations.

The Syrian Christians were once renowned for growing the best grapes of the region, mainly used for wine production. There are indeed quality vineyards in Arica, although the art of vintners is dying, and there is no one left to go on with the production of wine. As a consequence, the vineyards are now essentially being used for producing *pekmez*



Habis Monastery [70]



Happy Children from Gercüş [71]

(dims in Kurdish) (a thick syrup made by boiling down grape juice) and other grape derivatives.

From the church, you can walk down for around 10 min to view the Habis Monastery, the rooms of which were dug out of the rock; in fact the monastery's name derives from the rocks. The construction date is not clear but it was believed to have been built as a sun temple by sun worshipers. Some of the walls been carved as shelves to hold books, at the main entrance you can see some stonework and statues, and some handmade sun figures can be seen in the first floor of this is double storey monastery. The first floor is consists of a large hall and six small and big rooms in which the monks slept, while on the second floor there are few rooms where once used as retirement rooms by the monks.



Visitors in Vergili [72]

The ingenious construction collects rain water for human use and the interior is filled with sunlight all day long. Look north from this point and you will see the ruins of a small church on the top of a hill.

## Vergili (Bêcirman)

Further some 23km south of Gercüş is the village of Vergili, where you can visit the mausoleum of Seyid Bilal (1132–1212). It is believed that Seyid Bilal moved here from Baghdad in 1154. Bêcirman means "the one that is exempted from paying taxes", which is most probably indicative of the prominent social position of the Seyids, to whom Muslims show great respect. Once the Turkish Republic born, as part of Turkish government policy of altering the names of 28000 villages and towns the name Bêcirman was changed to vergili meaning pay taxes to make a point about the village's history of not paying taxes.



Seyit Bilal Türbesi [73]

Local legend has it that a visit to Seyid Bilal's mausoleum can help women who wish to get pregnant. Festivities are organised each year to commemorate Seyid Bilal, and take place on the night of the first Thursday of September, when thousands of descendants of the Prophet gather here, as well as pilgrims from all around the country.

It is possible to stay at the two-storey, twenty-room guesthouse for free directly opposite the mausoleum, built with the help of the Seyid Bilal Foundation.




MESAFE CETVELİ (Km)

| | BEŞİRİ | GERCÜŞ | HASANKEYF | KOZLUK | SASON |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BATMAN | 17 | 42 | 33 | 53 | 85 |



A view from Mardin [1]

# MARDİN (Mêrdîn)

This is a city where different religions, languages and faiths coexist, with **Arabs, Syrian** Christians and Kurds rubbing shoulders. They celebrate each other's religious festivals: Muslims invite Christians to eat lamb during the Islamic Feast of the **Sacrifice** while Christians offer **Muslims** painted eggs at Easter.




In fact Mardin (the name may come from **merdo** meaning "**fortress**" in Syriac) is the only city in Turkey in which **Turkish** is not that much spoken. And Mardin is also a true historical and **cultural jewel,** one where the exquisite **stonework** of the **architecture** will leave a lasting impression.



Mardin at night [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
745,778 (2007)
**Average altitude**
1082m
**Area**
9097 square kilometres
**Districts**
Mardin, Dargeçit, Derik, Kızıltepe, Mazıdağ, Midyat, Nusaybin, Ömerli, Savur, Yeşilli
**Economy**
Agriculture, Livestock farming, Tourism, Light industry
**Neighbouring provinces**
Şanlıurfa (west), Diyarbakır (north), Siirt (northeast), Şırnak (east)

There has been settlement in the Mardin area dating as far back as 4000 BC. The Sumerian King Lugarzergiz took control of the area in 2850 BC, but this control was short-lived, with the Akkadians taking over some thirty years later. In 2500 BC, the Akkadians and Sumerians jointly established a state here. Thereafter control passed from them to the Hurrians, Babylonians, Hittites, Assyrians, Medes, Macedonians, Parthians, Sassanids and Byzantines, followed by Islamic dynasties such as the Abbasids, Hamdanids and Seljuks. Under the Artukids Mardin was an important economic and political centre. It also flourished in religious terms in the 11th and 12th centuries during the so-called Sunni Revival, when Islam made its presence tangible in Mesopotamian cities through madrasahs. All this required strong defences, which Mardin had thanks to its hillside location with a citadel above. While other Artukid centres disappeared because of Ayyubid attacks in the first part of the 13th century, Mardin's Artukids survived. During the Mongol invasion of 1260 there were major battles in Mardin but the citadel resisted conquest. It wasn't until 1401 that the Mongols were successful when Tamerlane took the citadel and destroyed the city and its fields. The Artukids were fatally weakened; the city came under the Karakoyunlu (black sheep Turcomans) and later the Akkoyunlu (white sheep Turcomans), who restored what survived of the Artukid era.

It is for the architecture that many tourists and honeymooning couples and those seeking romantic weekends in Mardin, to view the old city's beautiful houses and mosques with their



intricate stonework, as well as to admire the views of the Mesopotamian plains stretching away to the south. But Mardin is about much more than architecture. The province is also where most of Turkey's remaining Syrian Christian community resides, and their many ancient monasteries and churches can be found not only in urban areas but also in the plateau known as Tur Abdin, east of the town of Midyat. It's worth visiting at least one of the monasteries, and most tourists see either Deyrul Zafaran just outside Mardin city or Mor Gabriel near Midyat; both sites feature attractive stonework, bell towers and chapels, and more importantly they offer a glimpse of a religious tradition that is managing to survive despite considerable emigration among the Syrian Christians. Midyat itself is worth a visit, boasting architecture that is as good as Mardin's. Elsewhere, you can visit another superb example of Syrian Christian architecture in the Virgin Mary Church of Anıtlı; a substantial archaeological site at Dara, where there are ancient cisterns and strange cliffside graves to be seen; and the small town of Savur, where there are more attractive stone houses on view. And you can also taste the delicious cuisine, including various Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish specialities, washed down with the esteemed local wine (Süryani Şarabı) also not to forget picking up some of the famous Mardin sweets.

As in other provinces of eastern Turkey, the economy is dominated by agriculture, though tourism is also important here, as are some industries such as the production of materials for the construction sector.

## Some prominent people from Mardin

Mardin has produced a number of prominent figures, including the openly gay writer, poet and dramatist **Murathan Mungan,** born here in 1955. Among his best-known works are *Kadından Kentler and Paranın Cinleri* also the marathon Mesopotamia Trilogy, which is 11 hours long.

From the Syrian Christian community, one well-known individual is **Gabriel Akyuz,** born in the Alagöz (Bakisyan) village in 1959. He learned Syriac at Mor Gabriel Monastery and has published a number of books on Syrian Christian churches and culture, in particular music. He is also a known ecclesiastical figure, and has the title of horiepiskopos at Kırklar Church (for Apê Musa (Musa Anter) see, Nusaybin, p: 387)


Mardin Bazaar [3]

## Mardin City

There is saying: "You have seen nothing unless you have visited Mardin!". With a population of 82,134, this is a city where different religions, languages and faiths coexist, with Arabs, Syrian Christians and Kurds rubbing shoulders. They celebrate each other's religious festivals: Muslims invite Christians to eat lamb during the Islamic Feast of the Sacrifice while Christians offer Muslims painted eggs at Easter. In fact Mardin (the name may come from *merdo* meaning "fortress" in Syriac) is the only city in Turkey in which Turkish is not that much spoken. And Mardin is also a true historical and cultural jewel, one where the exquisite stonework of the architecture will leave a lasting impression.

The city is in two parts. The old city, with its architectural treasures, sits at an altitude of 1000m atop the south side of a steep rocky hill with amazing vistas over the plains towards Syria. This historical core was declared a conservation area in the 1960s, which meant new construction, was banned. Since then most government offices have moved down into the new city that has sprung up in the plains.

Visitors will want to spend most of their time admiring the houses and mosques of the old city, which has just two main streets running west to east: Birinci Cad and, lower down the hillside, Yeni Yol. A useful landmark from which to start is the main square, *Cumhuriyet Meydanı,* near the western end of Birinci Cad.

### Mardin Museum

The museum was opened in 1947 but only moved into its current premises in *Cumhuriyet Meydanı,* close to the western end of the old city, in 2000 after the Ministry of Culture bought and restored what had been a magnificent Syrian Catholic patriarchal residence, part of the adjacent Virgin Mary Church which was build in 1895. The museum is open daily except for Monday (0482 212 16 64).

The first floor comprises conference rooms while on the second floor are the library and ethnography displays, where Artukid and Ottoman relics can be seen. The third floor contains archaeological displays. The works uncovered in excavations at Gırnavaz (see p: 389) are displayed in the room on the left while collection of works acquired through purchasing is displayed in the other saloon.

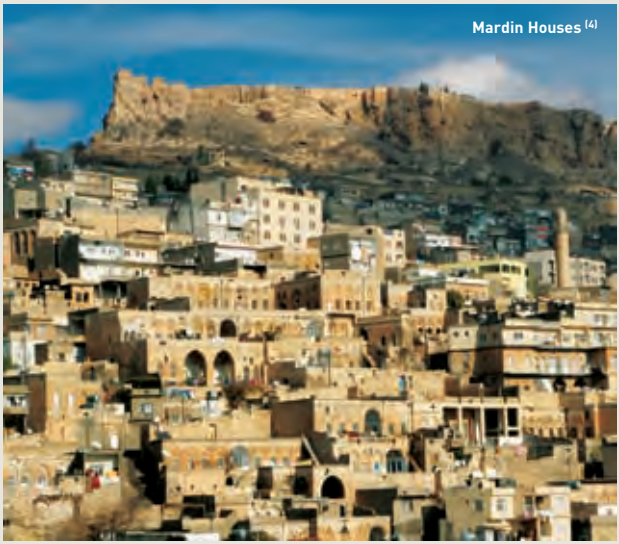
### The Virgin Mary Church

East of and behind the museum is this Syriac Catholic church, built in the 1960s and with 21 circular stone pillars. The baptism section has been nicely decorated with murals.

### Mardin Kalesi

From Cumhuriyet Meydanı and elsewhere in town, you can't fail to notice Mardin's fortress, crowning the rocky slopes of the hill above the old city. It was built around 975 by the Hamdanids, who called it El-Bez, meaning "The Falcon". Stretching some 800m, it once contained a mosque, bazaar, church, houses and palaces; the structures that remain

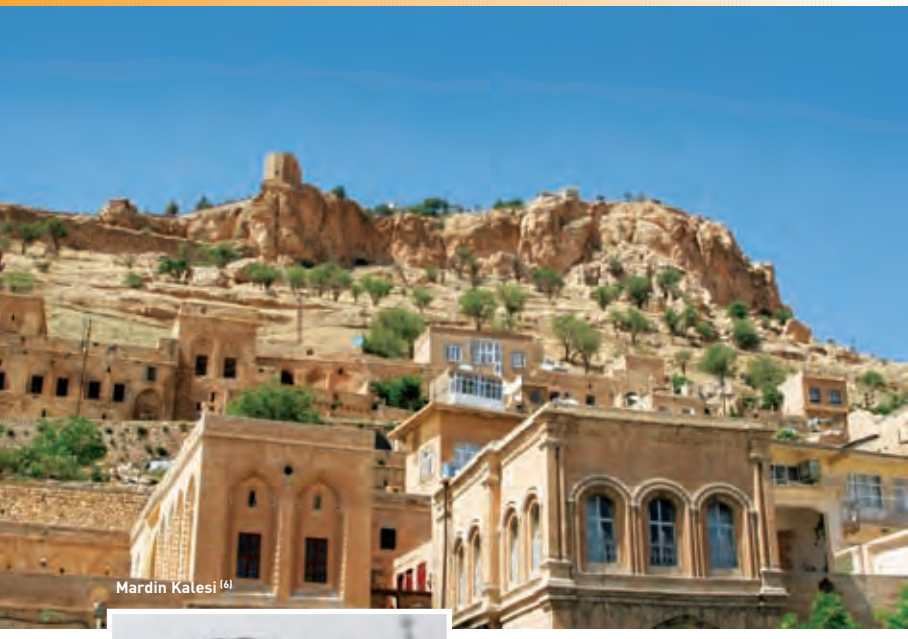
## The houses and abbara of old Mardin

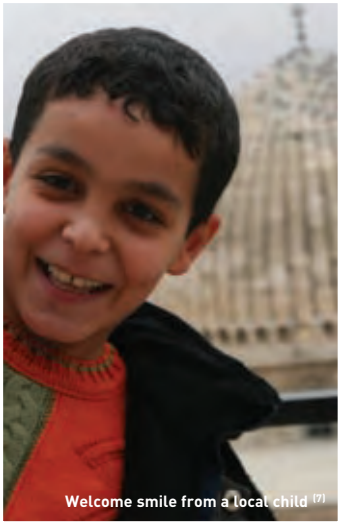

Mardin Houses [4]

Two or three storeys tall, the houses of the old city have strikingly ornamented south facades predominantly made of yellow limestone, and spill down the southern slopes on various tiers without blocking the views from adjacent houses. The windows are particularly noteworthy, as they are framed by arch-shaped stone borders with a zigzag outline. The main gate leads to a courtyard providing an open, semi-private space for the family. In summer, people move their *takhts,* or platform beds, out onto the terraces, while in winter they are moved back inside. South-facing rooms and living areas are mainly used in the winter, while the areas at the rear of the house are used in summer.

As you wander around the alleyways of old Mardin, look out also for *abbara* – covered, arched passageways formed by the linked upper storeys of the houses to either side. The Savurkapı quarter, south of the eastern part of Yeni Yol, is a particularly good place to spot *abbara.* The alleyways themselves are too narrow for cars and so you may well come across donkeys and mules being used to transport goods through them.


Abbaras in Mardin [5]


Mardin Kalesi [6]


Welcome smile from a local child [7]

date from the Artukids and Akkoyunlus. In the 12th century, the scholar and traveller Ibn Battuta described it as the most beautiful of Muslim cities, while the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi mentioned a cave beneath the fortress containing water cisterns and granaries.

The fortress had only one entrance in the south. Apart from the south tower on which flag flies, the surviving structures include the Castle Mosque, Hızır Mosque and a mansion. Unfortunately the site is, like many fortresses of this type, a military site and thus is closed to the public.

## Sor Hovsep Church

Behind the museum to the northwest of the square is this Armenian Catholic church, also known as Mor Yusuf. Built in 1894, it is still in use. Besides characteristic Mardin stonework adorning the facade, you will find precious icons, oil lamps and other religious symbols inside. The altar was made by the stonemasons Selim, Cello, Corc, Gis brothers, Corc Garzelo and Cabare Gandura in 1950, according to inscriptions. The base of the structure has been filled up with tons of salt to prevent damp in the altar.

## Kırklar Church

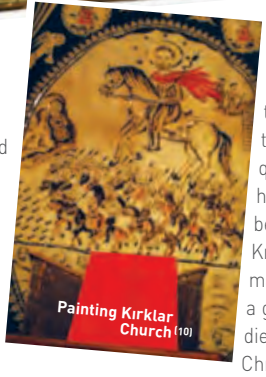
Close to Sor Hovsep is Kırklar, also known as Mor Behnam and his sister Saro's Church. The most active church



Kırklar Church [8]



A painting from Kırklar Church [9]



Painting Kırklar Church [10]

in Mardin, it is on the right side of a narrow road leading from *Cumhuriyet Meydanı* to the Diyarbakır quarter, and is entered through a heavy old iron door. The church, on a rectangular plan, acquired its current shape in 1825 and has 12 thick vaulted columns. On the east side of a long courtyard, the church contains the usual icons, an altar with handmade curtains, and a special box within which Mor Behnam's brain is preserved. Restoration of the church has recently commenced.

The church was not always called Kırklar. According to Syriac historian Harinli İsa, Kırklar was originally one of seven churches built by a Byzantine ruler called Arsus in 539. In the 1170s the church is known to have been taken by Muslims and pillaged. It is quite likely that Mardin's Şehidiye Mosque was built at this time on the site of the church, and subsequently Mor Behnam and his sister Saro's Church became known as Kırklar, meaning "forty martyrs" – a reference to a group of Roman soldiers martyred for their Christian faith in the fourth century.

## American missionary buildings

From 1852 to 1860, American missionaries opened a college and a hospital in the Diyarbakır quarter with the support of some Syrian Orthodox. When the missionary activities ended

in the 1960s, these buildings and the land were transferred to the government building.

## Abdullatif (Latifiye) Mosque

This mosque, south of *Cumhuriyet Meydanı,* gives its name to the surrounding quarter, though in the 16th century area was once named Yahudiyan (meaning "Jewish" in Turkish), Kamil and Bimaristan, the first part of the name reflecting the fact that the majority of residents were Jewish.

Inscriptions at the portal leading the courtyard say the mosque was built by the Artukid Sultan Abdullatif in 1371, though the minaret, in the northeast, was built upon the decree of Mosul Governor Gürcü Mehmet Paşa in 1845. The courtyard's eastern portal is an excellent example of this particular Mardin architectural flourish, its columns bearing interweaving bands and supporting a three-lobed arch with *muqarnas* on its interior vault. The portal has been restored and as a result it has lost some of the original limestone decoration, which detracts a little from its original beauty. As is typical for Mardin mosques and madrasahs, the courtyard has an *iwan* on its north side, containing a fountain. Inside, the *mihrab* is made of limestone alternating with black basalt; to either side is a smaller niche with *muqarnas* ornamentation. In the courtyard lies the most beautiful fountain of Mardin, restored by the mason Abdulcelil İldoğan with funds from Münir Çağlar, a well-known local businessman.

## Mor Hürmüz Church

A couple of minutes' walk east of *Cumhuriyet Meydanı* is the Mor Hürmüzd Church, on the north side of Birinci Cad. Believed to have been built in 430, it acquired its present shape in 1890. Until 1552 this was a Nestorian church, but thereafter it became a Chaldean establishment. The building comprises three naves, an octagonal dome and a courtyard, reached through a narrow corridor. The graves of two metropolitan bishops are located inside.

## Kasım Tuğmaner Camii

Built in 1960, this mosque is on the south side of Birinci Cad. 400m east of Cumhuriyet Meydanı and is certainly worth a look for its striking stone doorway, intricately decorated all around with finely cut stonework and with two star-shaped apertures to either side. Note also the minaret, cut with spiral grooves along its length. The mosque was built up on a land



**The entrance Kasım Tuğmaner Camii [11]**

belonging to a Christian foundation in return for a donation by one Kasım Tuğmaner towards the construction of a Syriac church in the Tarlabaşı quarter of İstanbul.

## Kayseriye (Bedesten) Bazaar

Located on the north side of Birinci Cad. and reached by a narrow alley next to *Kasım Tuğmaner Camii,* this covered bazaar was built during the reign of the Akkoyunlu Sultan Kasım in the 15th century. With four entrances and spaces which provide light and ventilation, in some respects it is the forerunner of Ottoman bazaars, and is still functioning today.

## Mardin's bazaars

Mardin's bazaars were originally organised such that each area was devoted to certain products or trades. That pattern still exists today but is much less strict, so you may come across a spice shop next to a drapery shop or furniture outlet.


Kayseriye Bazaar (12)

Birinci Cad is lined with jewellers' and silk shops displaying products mainly produced at their own ateliers. Some of the gold shops may also have bottles of local wine on display, which can be bought. On the south side are the bazaars containing shops selling fruit, vegetables, spices, meat and sweets, plus blacksmiths, hardware stores, saddle-makers and tailors. Down the steps on the south side of Birinci Cad east of Ulu Cami is the Hasan Ayar Bazaar, containing for wool traders, carpenters' shops and an outdoor market with many small outlets selling daily needs. In general, it's worth looking out for unusual herbs, spices, scarves and sweets, imported into Mardin from Syria or Iraq, which are also the sources of the "smuggled tea" you will find in Mardin – of reasonable quality and not expensive.

### Ulu Cami

Continue east along Birinci Cad and after a few minutes you will come to this iconic building, one of the oldest mosques in Mardin, on the south side of the road. Its minaret, visible from the bazaar, has a square base and a cylindrical stem divided into horizontal bands, each with different ornamentation; an inscription dates it to 1176. The mosque is likely to be contemporaneous with the minaret, though a Kufic inscription on the north side of the courtyard might have been part of an earlier construction, judging by its style.

The prayer hall, south of the courtyard, has three bays, only two of which are covered by the dome over the *mihrab* area. This arrangement is typical of early Artukid mosques, including the Great Mosques of Silvan and Kızıltepe, though the dome of Mardin's Ulu Cami seems to have rebuilt subsequently. There is a second *mihrab* to the west of the one under the dome, probably because the mosque was used by Hanefi and Shafi Muslims, each of which prayed in their own area.

### Ulu Cami Hamam

This hamam occupies a rectangular plot and is entered through a simple



Ulu Camii [13]

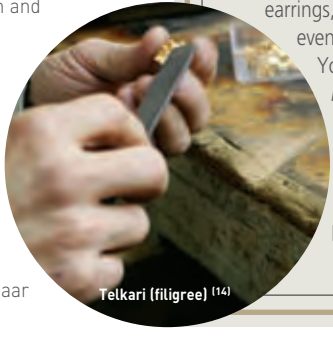
gate behind Ulu Cami. It was built by Artukian Sultan Melik Salih (1312–1363) and is no longer in use.

### Sıhhi Emir Hamam

This historical bath, which resembles the Roman baths in Diyarbakır, is entered from the street through a series of archways right next to Hasan Ayar Bazaar. The building has two large domes, while the dressing room has three verandahs. The hamam is open to men between 6.30am and noon and from 6.30pm to 10pm, and to women between noon and 5.30pm.

### The Red Church (Surp Kevork Church)

Further down close to the *Köşk* teahouse, the road leading to the right from Cumhuriyet Bazaar will take you to this



Telkari (filigree) [14]

## Telkari

Mardin is particularly known for *telkari,* filigree silver or gold jewellery made by Syriac artisans using techniques that have been passed down from father to sons for generations. Masters of the art can weave their thin strands of gold and silver into beautiful necklaces, earrings, chokers and even belt buckles. You'll find *telkari* on sale in shops along Birinci Cad and also in the Kayseriye Bazaar.

Armenian Catholic church, which locals call the Red (Hamra) Church. Its construction dates back to 420. It is no longer in use, but a project may soon be under way to at least restore it.

## Zinciriye (Sultan İsa) Madrasah

The Zinciriye Madrasah, built in 1385, can be reached after a short but steep walk using the lanes leading north from Birinci Cad, from where it is signposted. The madrasah was originally named after the last Artukid ruler Necmettin İsa bin Davut, but locals call it Zinciriye because the supposedly magic chain (*zincir* in Turkish) which spanned the two minarets Ulu Cami once had was taken here after one of them was destroyed.

The south facade of the building is pretty symmetrical, with ribbed domes to the east and west. This symmetry is interrupted by the portal in the east, which resembles that of the Abdüllatif Mosque and other Islamic buildings in Mardin and could not be more eye-catching, with its incredible array of stonework decorations, including circles and bands filled with filigree-like reliefs and bands of Arabic calligraphy. The doorway is recessed from the facade, the top part of the recess being covered by *muqarnas*, an arched honeycomb of stone carved to resemble the uneven roof of a cave.

Entering the portal, you can access to the madrasah's mosque via a corridor. The mosque has a prayer hall with a central dome in the middle and two *iwans* to the sides. The niche in the *mihrab* contains limestone, basalt and marble; around the niche's half-dome inscriptions appear, while there is geometrical star design in a band around the niche and also a band with interlocking tulip forms in alternating limestone and basalt. Across the hall, the entrance to the prayer hall copies the mihrab's layout with the exception of *muqarnas* ornamentation above the door. As is typical, the courtyard has an *iwan* to the north.

It's worth heading a little further up the rocky slopes beyond the madrasah to get fantastic views over the building and, further afield, the ornamented Ulu Cami minaret and the plains stretching out into the distance.

## Şehidiye Camii and Madrasah

Birinci Cad slopes steeply downwards to the east of the old town, bringing you eventually to the Şehidiye quarter and the Şehidiye Mosque, located opposite the post office. According to historian Abdulgani Efendi, the



Entrance door to Zinciriye (Sultan İsa) Madrasah[15]



Şehidiye Camii and Madrasah [16]

mosque and the attendant madrasah were named Şehidiye (relating to martyrs) as the graves of several martyrs were found while the foundations were being laid.

You enter through a portal which is much lower than the street level, and which boasts striking carvings in limestone and reliefs – note the three-lobed arches and interweaving bands – and inscriptions in both cursive and Kufic script. The portal gives onto the courtyard via a barrel-vaulted corridor. In the north of the courtyard lies an *iwan* (an arched recess) with an ornamental fountain and a mosque on the opposite side. Note the three different lines of decorative stone on the north facade of the mosque. The eight-pointed star-shaped holes contain Kufic calligraphy.

The madrasah here, no longer in use, was built by the Artukid leader Necmeddin İlgazi, who reigned between 1239 and 1259. The original minaret has been demolished and a new one built by the architect Lole (see below) at the mayor's behest in 1916–1917. The minaret, with two balconies, is adorned with various motifs. The mosque and madrasah have been restored with donations from businessman Reşat Cihaner. On top of the mosque are two worthwhile tea gardens.

## The post office

Mardin's grand post office (PTT), featuring the classic stone ornamentation that typifies the old town, was originally built in 1890 as the residence of the Şahtana family and designed by a member of that family, the ethnic Armenian architect Serkis Elyas Lole. Lole (also known Mimarbaşı Lole) set up his own architectural school at the start of the 20th century and was responsible for many other monuments in the Mardin area, including the Sor Hovsep Church, the minaret of the Şehidiye Madrasah (possibly his most well-known work) and the patriarch's room at Deyrul Zafaran; he also designed the



The Post Office [17]

Armenian Catholic church in Diyarbakır.

The Şahtana residence was converted to a post office in 1953, but parts of it are open to visitors and its balcony is a good spot from which to take photos of the plains and the minarets below. Opposite are two well-known teahouses.

## Reyhaniye Camii and Bazaar

This mosque lies south of Birinci Cad within the Hasan Ayar Bazaar, between the Ulu Cami and the Şehidiye Cami. Built on a rectangular plan in the 15th century, the mosque has been restored several times and expanded, and is now one of the largest mosques in Mardin.

## Hatuniyye Madrasah

In the eastern Gül quarter (turn left off Birinci Cad onto Eski Hükümet Cad), this madrasah was built by the Artukid Karaarslan in 1206, according to the inscription on the facade. It could conceivably have been built even earlier than that as the tombs of Kutbettin İlgazi (another Artukid, reigned 1176–1184) and his mother are found here.



A footprint from Prophet Mohammed [18]

The building is interesting to art historians as it exemplifies the revival and persistence of classical (Graeco-Roman) elements in Islamic art, though only the two rooms to the south of the courtyard are visitable. Both rooms have a *mihrab* and these exhibit classical elements in their shell designs, as do the dentils in the courtyard and one of the rooms. Early examples of *muqarnas* can also be seen. Also here is a footprint believed to be that of the Prophet Mohammed which brought to Mardin by Kutbettin İlgazi from Egypt.

## Savurkapı Hamam (Bab'ussor Hamamı)

South of the madrasah is this hamam (also called Sıttı Radviye Hamam), which may have been built in the 12th


Savurkapı (bab'ussor) Hamam [19]

or early 13th century, partly to provide some income to the madrasah. The warm room has barrel-vaulted *iwans* all around and a central dome. A relief of a peacock was uncovered during recent renovations. The hamam is open to women from noon to 5.30pm and to men from 6pm until 9pm.

## Melik Mahmut (Bab al-Sur) Mosque

An Artukid inscription says this mosque, on Birinci Cad next door to the *Artuklu Kervansaray Hotel*, was built by Mahmut (reigned 1313–1363). The portal is typical of the later Artukid period, though its arch is not three-lobed but pointed. If you go in, have a look up at the cross vault with an octagonal form at the top, containing vegetal designs.

## Kasimiye (Sultan Kasım) Madrasah

Once you have explored Birinci Cad, you can move downhill to explore the area surrounding the road below, Yeni Yol. Close to the western end of the road is the *Büyük Mardin Otel*, next to which a road leads to this much-visited madrasah in the Cumhuriyet quarter. Although the exact date of construction is unknown (1457 has been recorded next to the main door's sign), it is believed to have been started during the Artukid period (and features around the site bear similarities with the Zinciriye Madrasah) but not completed because of attacks by Tamerlane; it was only finished later, under the Akkoyunlu.

The building has two ribbed domes to the east while on its western side is another dome and a portal similar to that of the Zinciriye Madrasah. The


Kasimiye (Sultan Kasım) Madrasah [20]



Mor Mihayel (Burç) Monastry [21]

courtyard has a central pool and an *iwan* to the north. Take time to look around as the ornamentation is a fine example of Artukid craftsmanship. The colonnade to the south, for example, has beautiful cross vaults. To the east and west of the courtyard are classrooms, above whose doors are symbols that probably represent what classes were taught within. The western domed room has clearly been inspired by the prayer halls of the Zinciriye Madrasah, having a dome and two iwans; the *mihrab* has the same interlocking tulip forms in limestone and basalt as found at Zinciriye.

## Mor Mihayel or Burç Monastery

Also close the western end of Yeni Yol is the Saraçoğlu quarter, where you will find the Syriac Orthodox Mor Mihayel Church. The age of the foundations supports the idea that it was built before the 10th century, and indeed an inscription on the walls says "This wall has been built in 921. Whoever reads these lines and is responsible the structure should pray for Priest Maron." Other sources say the church was built in 496. The church has been restored recently by the Tahincioğlu family.

The Syriac inscription in the middle of octagonal bell tower, which was placed on the bastion in 1885, reads "Bşem Aloho", meaning "in the name of God". The eastern part of the church includes some tombs of saints dating back to the 5th century.

## The Emineddin Quarter

Close to the western end of Yeni Yol is the Emineddin quarter, named in the 19th century after the historically important Emineddin complex built here, which includes the first medical centre in Anatolia. Emineddin, who initiated the construction of the complex, was the brother of the local Artukid ruler Necmeddin İlgazi, who completed the work after Emineddin died.

Besides a hospital, the Emineddin complex comprises a mosque, madrasah, hamam and fountain. The


Firdevs Pavilion (22)

mosque, in the southernmost section, occupies a rectangular area and dates from 1093 according to the inscription at the entrance. Nearby is a stone courtyard used for prayers. The rectangular madrasah is thought to be linked with the old hospital. The fountain in west surrounds by the garden is adjacent to the hamam, which is the oldest one in Mardin. It is mostly in ruins but a huge dome survives.

## The Necmeddin Quarter

East of the Emineddin quarter, the Necmeddin quarter was once called Zarraka, at least according to in 16th-century writings. The Asfar Mosque here was built in 1093 according to the inscription at its entrance. It is said that Necmeddin İlgazi was buried in the mosque after he died in Silvan in what is now Diyarbakır province. This was also the location where the first example of a courtyard with an *iwan* is to be found, as well as the earliest surviving Artukid madrasah in Mardin.

## Firdevs Pavilion

At the eastern outskirts of the old town, the Evren quarter is located on the road leading south, down to the plains and ultimately Nusaybin. On the right side of the road here, opposite the army officers' club, is the Firdevs Pavilion, once the summer residence of Artukid rulers. According to the poet Katip Ferdi, the rulers would have "resided in his residence by Tigris in spring, Ravzayı Firdevs in summer, Rişmil in autumn and Harzam in winter." With good views across the plains, the pavilion has been used as a location in various film shoots and also features an ornamental fountain fed by a spring, and an *iwan* with a large pool.

## Mort Shmuni Church

This age of this three-gated rectangular Syriac church in Yeni Yol is not known, but similarities with the Kırklar Church suggest it may date from the 6th century. The compound contains various annexes and is surrounded by high walls. An inscription on the bell tower indicates the architect was Cabere Kanduradır, commissioned by Mousulian Metropolit Tuma Kassır on May 25, 1910. The church was skilfully restored by the Özkök brothers in 2005. You can reach the church by heading south (downhill) along the winding, narrow alleyways from the Abdullatif Mosque.

## Mesopotamian Mythology

Mesopotamia has its own rich mythology, populated by gods or demigods. The Epic of Gilgamesh is an epic poem from Ancient Mesopotamia and is one of the earliest works of literary fiction. Some scholars believe that it is part of a series of Sumerian legends and poems about the mythological hero-king Gilgamesh, which were gathered into a longer Akkadian poem later on time; which nowadays preserved on number of clay tablets in the library. It was titled "He Who Saw the Deep" (Sha naqba îmuru) or "Surpassing All Other Kings" (Shûtur eli sharrî). The story focused around the relationship between Gilgamesh, who has become preoccupied by his rule, and a friend, Enkidu, who is half-wild and who undertakes dangerous quests with Gilgamesh. The rest of the epic has emphasis on Gilgamesh's thoughts of loss following Enkidu's death. A large section of the book shows Gilgamesh's search for immortality after Enkidu's death. The epic is widely read in translation, and the hero, Gilgamesh, has become an icon of popular culture.

Another locally well-known character is Shahmeran, half woman, half snake (below the waist), in most houses her photo is hanged somewhere and while travelling in this region you may also see her image depicted on buildings, painted on mirrors, trays or kilims. She symbolises of good luck, fertility, light, feminity and wisdom. She also has horns and snakes' heads for feet. Items bearing Shahmeran's image can be found, albeit rarely, at coppersmiths' and antique shops in Mardin. They should not be passed up, serving both as a memento of Mardin and as a good luck charm.

There are also many tales concerning the Pir Abok, a creature that could take the shape of a woman or animals. It was said that anyone who saw one would run amok. And then there is the Hut, a gigantic, hairy creature with an enormous appetite. Male huts were believed to kidnap worldly women, whereas female huts would carry away worldly men and marry them. In this case try not to look at a Pir Abok, and be aware of the Hut not catching you!



Şahmaran [23]

## Getting there

Transport to and from Diyarbakır use the terminal in the Onüçmayıs quarter of *yenişehir* (the new town). Vehicles arriving in Mardin will make a circuit of the old town, dropping you in Birinci Cad if you want, but if you are leaving Mardin for Diyarbakır you need to head to the terminal. For Midyat and Nusaybin, you can pick up a departing *dolmuş* from the depot in the eastern part of the old town, on the Nusaybin road just after where Birinci Cad and Yeni Yol meet. Dolmuşes arriving from Midyat and Nusaybin can drop you at this depot on request, but will normally drop passengers in at the terminal in the new town.

The airport is located between Mardin and Nusaybin, and is served by flights from Ankara and İstanbul. Buses and taxi run between the airport and the city.

## Accommodation



Mardin in the evening [24]

It is sensible to stay in the old town as most of Mardin's attractions are here, but note that outside summer it can be a pretty quiet place at night, with not many cafés and restaurants open. If you need to travel to the new town, use the buses marked *yenişehir,* which run east along Birinci Cad and then double back to descend slowly into the plains. If you need to connect with a bus or *dolmuş* leaving Mardin from the new town, catch the bus from the old town at least 45 minutes before your transport leaves.

The best place to stay in the old town is the *Erdoba Hotel* on Birinci Cad (0482 213 77 87, www.erdoba.com.tr), just a short distance east of the Ulu Cami. The hotel is housed in a superbly restored mansion that boasts all the best features of Mardin architecture, notably intricate crinkle-cut stonework around all the windows. All rooms are comfortably furnished, with central heating and en-suite bathrooms. They also have an excellent terrace restaurant that is beautifully lit at night, and more rooms are available in an annexe called *Babil Konağı,* a few doors further east along Birinci Cad.

Also worth considering is the *Hotel Artuklu Kervansaray* on Birinci Cad (0482 213 73 53, www.artuklu.com) about 500m east of the Erdoba. It has several classes of room, including some with vaulted ceilings, and it also boasts a good terrace restaurant with views over the plains, as well as a couple of cafés.

*Büyük Mardin Otel* (482 213 10 47) located in Yeni Yol is another good place to stay in Mardin. It has 54 rooms (one disable room) offer you with a great view of the Mesopotamia plains from its top roof balcony. Weekend live music, quality local food and wine can be found there.

In the new city, the *Hotel Bilen* (0482 212 55 68) is conveniently located on the Diyarbakır road just ten minutes' walk from the transport terminal. The hotel is a modern block containing adequate rooms with TV and bathroom, and offers the usual buffet breakfast.

## Places to eat

A few minutes' walk west of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, on the south side of Birinci Cad, is a restored house that contains the *Cercis Murat Konağı* (0482 213 68 41). It offers good house wine and traditional cuisine prepared by women chefs, as well as good views over the plains. Also on the south side of Birinci Cad but just east of Cumhuriyet Meydanı is the *Turistik Et Lokantası*, which serves the usual assortment of food. There are two leafy tea gardens just opposite the PTT where you can watch the sunset across the plains and enjoy a nargile. Finally, on Birinci Cad, *Damak Sofrası* (0482 212 84 74) is a simple place serving good Mardin fare such as *baba ghanouj* (aubergine and tahini dip), *kaburga* (lamb ribs), *örok* (a type of köfte), stuffed vine leaves etc. You'll find it next to the Kasım Tuğmaner Mosque.



Local Syriac wine [25]

**Mardin municipality: 0482 212 10 49 Tourist information: 0482 212 37 76**



A wide view of Mardin [26]



Motive from Mar Yakup- Nusaybin [27]

# MARDİN
## MERKEZ TURİZM HARİTASI





Deyrul Zafaran from the rooftop [28]

## Deyrul Zafaran

Nestling in the hills east of Mardin is one of the most important monasteries in the Tur Abdin region, Deyrul Zafaran. It is said to have its origins in a citadel built in the 3rd century by the Romans on the foundations of a temple attributed to sun worshippers who were the ancestors of Syrian Orthodox. A saint called Mor Şleymun subsequently converted the place into a monastery, and the site is still sometimes called Mor Şleymun, though in the 15th century it acquired its most common name, Deyrul Zafaran, which literally means "Saffron Monastery" – perhaps because the yellow hue of its stone resembles that of saffron. The oldest parts of the monastery date from the 6th century, though by the 7th century it had already been partly rebuilt by Mor Hanayo (St Ananias) after a period of decline, hence the monastery's alternative name of Mor Hanayo.

Deyrul Zafaran has educated philosophers, bishops and poets over the years, and its renown is such that it has often been mentioned by historians and travellers. It also has great significance as the seat of Syrian Orthodox patriarchate for 766 years until this was moved to Damascus in 1932.

Today the monastery appears to be in restored health, and the stonework and chapels have been spruced up in recent years thanks to funding from the Syrian Orthodox diaspora and an EU project. Indeed the first sight that greets you at the perimeter wall is that of the new and somewhat incongruous gift shop and café. Within the compound, grand steps lead up to the grand facade of the main building, which you enter through a narrow passageway containing a doorway topped with Syriac inscriptions.

Turn right once inside to visit the Church of Beth Kadishe, also used as a burial chamber; it has a dome, an east-facing apse and niches in the walls containing graves. The saints whose remains lie here were interred in a seated position. Note the use of Corinthian columns together with an



Deyrul Zafaran entrance door [29]

entablature (a decorative band following the walls and the curved arches) above, which derives from Greek and Roman temple architecture.

The main church, and highlight of the monastery, is to the north of Beth Kadishe. It is square in plan, with its entrance in the west, an apse to the east and a niche to the north and south, together representing a cross form. Note the similarity between the altarpiece and a *mihrab* – a consequence of centuries of cultural exchange between Christians and Muslims.

From the courtyard, various stairways allow you to head to the upper levels of the building, which has walkways from where you can admire the bell towers and the immaculate ribbed dome at close quarters. The dome, which recalls those in Mardin, was added in 1884. The valley around the monastery has been planted with almond trees, bringing some income to monastery. High up in the valley you might spot a large number of disused hermits' cells, dug into the rock.


Deyrul Zafaran courtyard [30]

The monastery is some 6km from old Mardin. You can get there by taking any *"Şehir içi"* (inner city) buses from Birinci Cad to the terminal at the eastern outskirts of town, then continuing the remaining 4km on foot along the signposted road, which winds past the hamlet of Eskikale. Official visiting hours are from 9am until around noon and from 1.30pm to 4.30pm, though people may be flexible about admission if you arrive at other times.

## The Syrian Christian Community

It's confusing to hear of the various communities whose names include the word "Syrian", partly because we now think of that word as pertaining to the modern state of Syria, and partly because we also hear of "Assyrian Christians" from time to time.

In the context of Turkey, we always speak of the Syrian Christian community (Süryani in Turkish), whose heartland is Mardin province. The majority of them are Syrian Orthodox (also known as Jacobites), a denomination which has its roots in the Council of Chalcedon's decision in 451 in favour of Christ having both a human and a divine nature. Baradaeus, who helped establish the Syrian Orthodox church, was a monophysite, believing that Christ's nature is purely divine. The church's liturgy is in Syriac, a Semitic language like Aramaic, Arabic and Hebrew, written from right to left. There is also a Syrian Catholic church, established in 1872 as a breakaway from the Syrian Orthodox, and a Syrian Protestant community, who were converted by American missionaries in the 19th century.

There is also the Assyrian Christian (also called Nestorian) denomination, whose adherents live in Iraq and Iran. Some Syrian Orthodox have started calling themselves Assyrian, making a link with this tradition, though it is questionable whether this is valid.



Mor Gabriel Monastery (Midyat) [31]

## Tur Abdin

Midyat is the main town in the region known as Tur Abdin, which translates roughly as "mountain of the servants of God". With its monasteries, churches, vineyards and fertile soil, the area is the spiritual and cultural heartland of the Syrian Orthodox, and stretches from the Tigris through Midyat to the Syrian border. Of the several tens of monasteries here, the highlights are Deyrul Zafaran just outside Mardin (see p: 376) and Mor Gabriel (see p: 384), which is quite easily reached from Midyat. If you have time, consider also a visit to the superb Anıtlı Virgin Mary Church (see p: 385).

Now that a great number of Syrian Orthodox have emigrated to the west, the monasteries are much diminished in religious importance today, but funds remitted from abroad are helping to keep them going and have allowed significant restoration to take place.

If you have a particular interest in Tur Abdin, you may want to take with you a copy of *From the Holy Mountain* by the British travel writer William Dalrymple. Published in 1997, the book focuses on the decline of Christianity in the Middle East and includes several chapters recounting a journey made by the author from Urfa to Tur Abdin. Of course this was a time of serious Kurdish unrest, which had the side-effect of making the Syrian Orthodox community feel very insecure, mistrusted by both the Turkish state. Reading the book today makes evident how much things have improved since then, though it is also clear that the Syrian Orthodox community in eastern Turkey still faces challenges if it is to thrive again. Another worthwhile book for exploring the area is *Tur Abdin* by Hans Hollerweger, published in 1999 and available in a trilingual Turkish, English and German edition at Mor Gabriel.




A Syriac writing in Mor Gabriel Monastery [32]

# Midyat (Midyad)



Interfaith in Midyat [33]

Just like Mardin, Midyat, 65km to the east, is well known for its architecture. The houses here resemble those in Mardin, with intricately decorated stone facades, arches and windows, and indeed the stonework is as good as any you will find elsewhere in the province. The town, and indeed the whole district (population 56,340), is also a mosaic of religions, languages and traditions, settled by Arabs, Kurds and Syrian Christians. The prayer calls from minarets and the pealing of church bells mix here peacefully.

Midyat had a Christian majority at the start of the last century and right up until the 1960s, but today the majority is Muslim. Recently some Syrian Orthodox have been returning to Turkey, restoring their houses or building new ones in the old style.

The district is also home to a community of Kurdish Yezidis (for information on the Yezidis, see p: 324), whose main village is Çayırlı (Kefnas), 17km from Midyat on the road to Mor Gabriel. In the 1990s many Yezidis immigrated to Germany, and some of their villages were abandoned. Nowadays some of them are back, building new concrete houses in their home villages. Other Yezidi villages in the vicinity include Güven (Bacin), Yenice (Xerabiya) and Taka (Taqa).

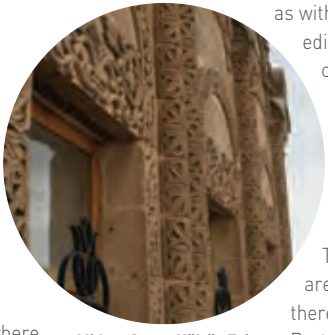
As in Mardin, the people of Midyat town are known for their *telkari* (see p: 364), and though the art is not as widespread as it once was, there are still a few experts silversmiths in the old Midyat Bazaar. Their hand-made silver jewellery makes popular gifts. Midyat is also known for its excellent wines, made from the delicious grapes of the region.

Midyat takes about an hour to reach by *dolmuş* from Mardin, and so is easily visited as a day-trip. If you want to visit Mor Gabriel however, be aware that it will probably take up most of the day, and that you should make an early

start from Mardin. Arriving from Mardin, you are likely to pass through the Arab Neighbourhood of Estel before you end up in the centre itself. To the east is the old town, where a Kurdish majority and Christian minority reside and where all the sights and churches are located.

## The churches of old Midyat

In the central Işıklar quarter you will find several Syriac churches. Mort Shmuni, next to the *Belediye Otogarı*, dates back to the 9th century and is where the patriarch or archbishop used to pray while visiting Midyat. Icons on the wall depict the execution in 164 of Mort Shmuni and her seven children by the Eastern Roman Emperor Antiakos, because of Shmuni's faith.



**Midyat Çevre Kültür Evi (Devlet Konukevi)** [34]

Behind the police station, the Mor Barsavmo Church dates back to the 5th century, but was renovated in 1910. Women worshipped here in a space under the mezzanine floor, reached by a nicely decorated door.

Mor Aksnoyo (also called Mor Philoxenos) Church, believed to have been built over the foundations of a pagan temple in the 4th century, and regarded as one of the most churches of its period. It was restored in 1960, as with other major Syriac edifices, it has a large, comfortable guesthouse, supported by remittances from the diaspora community. You will find the church next to *Nehrozlar Camii*.

The above three churches are Syrian Orthodox, but there is also a Syrian Protestant church here, built at the start of the last century. It is now closed but the building is still being looked after thanks to the Syrian Orthodox community.

## Midyat Çevre Kültür Evi (Devlet Konukevi)

Behind the Protestant church is the *Midyat Çevre Kültür Evi*, which translates as something like "Midyat



**A cross sign from a church in Midyat** [35]



Midyat Çevre Kültür Evi (Devlet Konukevi) [36]

environmental culture house". This traditionally styled mansion was restored in 2000 by a foundation called ÇEKÜL in partnership with the local authorities, and the results speak for themselves: the stonework is simply dazzling, every facade, parapet and window boasting beautiful reliefs and carvings. The house is also home to a film studio, where period dramas about the east of Turkey are made. The house was originally owned by a Syriac person whom donated the house to be used as cultural home.

## Ulu Cami

Rectangular in plan, this stone mosque dates from 1800 and can accommodate 1000 worshippers. It once had a dome but now has a flat roof after restorations, though inside the ceiling is vaulted and beautifully ornamented with colourful vegetal motifs. You will find the mosque in the Estel quarter.

## Cevat Paşa Mosque

Constructed by Cevat Paşa in 1915, this mosque boasts 18 pillars and 12 arches, and a small central dome. The windows are surrounded with glossy bluish stone. The cylindrical stone minaret is decorated with plant and geometrical motifs. The mosque is in the Gölcük quarter, close to the Silversmiths' Bazaar on the main road to Cizre.

## Mor Yakup Church

Mor Yakup is an important building with distinctive architecture located in Barıştepe (Selhê) village, 5km north-east of Midyat. The church was founded by Mor Yakup, who died in 421; it was later rebuilt or largely restored, probably in the 6th century. Made of limestone, the church exhibits a beautiful unity from outside. In the barrel vaults of the narthex and hall, note the decorative use of brick to form linear patterns. In the hall, the middle entrance to the sanctuary is accentuated by a round arch with entablature; the capitals of the columns depict acanthus leaves in a rather abstract fashion, as can also be found at Deyrul Zafaran. Partly excavated structures around the site show that additions

were made to the building, possibly comprising a monastery.

### Mercimekli and Mor Loozor Monastery

In Mercimekli (Habisnas) village 6km northwest of Midyat is the Mor Loozor (St Lazarus) monastery, on a hill among olive and fig trees; it might date from as early as the 5th century. As the door is often locked, you may have to ask the village *muhtar* for assistance in visiting. Just after the entrance stretches a courtyard with a large fig tree in the middle and a tower that can be climbed if you take the three flights of stairs. The tower in the middle of the courtyard, called *estuno* in Syriac, is a seclusion tower for monks.

There is also a church in Mercimekli village devoted to Mor Şemun Zeyti who gets his name from the fact that he planted 12,000 olive trees (olive is zeytin in Turkish) in the area. The bible with its special cover made of silver in the church is worth seeing.

### Mor Hadbsabo Church

In Gülgöze (Aynvert or Îwertê) village 8km east of Midyat, Mor Hadbsabo Church is surrounded by thick walls. The church is charming though, a small simple affair with two towers, one of which contains a room for religious classes.

### Mor Kiryakos Church

Mor Kiryakos is 13km east of Midyat in Bağlarbaşı (Arnas), which has been completely renovated and is open for worship. Kiryakos was killed in the year 304 when he was just three years old along with his mother during the reign of Diocletian. If you visit, note the beautiful ornamented bands decorating the arch of the apse at the eastern end, and the eighth-century screen, taking the form of arches across which a curtain was hung, separating the apse from the hall.

### Mor İzozoel Church

The village of Altıntaş (Keferze), 15km east of Midyat, is home to the Mor İzozoel Church. İzozoel was killed in 304 during the anti-Christian persecution instigated by the Roman Emperor Diocletian. Some sources say that the Byzantine King Anastasius had the church constructed by two architects named Theodore and Theodose in the 5th or 6th century, who built seven huge churches in Tur Abdin. They also are thought to have built the Mor Kiryakos Church, which accounts for the similarity between the two buildings.

From outside the church is boxlike and one of the walls has an unusually pattern of hexagonal marks in it. The church was renovated after the collapse of its roof in 1914 and is entered through a garden. The courtyard to the south of the church is thought to have been used for summertime worship, while the church itself was used in winter.



Mor Gabriel Monastery (37)



Inside of Mor Gabriel Monastery [38]

## Mor Gabriel Monastery (Deyrul Umur/Deyr-ul Emer)

Construction of Mor Gabriel was initiated by Mor Samuel and Mor Shemun in 397, possibly over the foundations of what had been a pagan temple. There are still some columns dating from this period, but the monastery has been built upon and extended many times since. Today the monastery is clearly something of a standard bearer for the Syrian Orthodox community: first impressions are of an almost impossibly well-kept complex, with pretty bell towers and surrounded by fields of almond, pistachio and olive trees. Indeed the buildings has been nicely renovated in recent years by Kurdish workers, and augmented with additions such as pilgrim accommodation. More importantly, the monastery remains active in religious work, and houses a small but not insignificant community of monks and nuns. There are also likely to be volunteers on hand to show you around.

The main church of the monastery, also called the Anastasius Church, has walls adorned with patterns of flowers, crosses, and geometric designs. However, it is not the oldest part of the complex: that is the church of the Virgin Mary lower down, which is older by a century. This church is rather plain to look at, though the vaulted ceiling and arches are impressive.

More striking is the Dome of Theodora, which may once have been a baptistery, though what you will probably remember is the fact that it is a tall, circular vaulted structure; in fact, being here will make you feel like you're trapped in a giant beehive. Circular whorls of brick in the roof seem to close in on a small hole right at the top of the dome, which allows sunlight to stream in. Next door is another vaulted building which may once have been a refectory.

The monastery also includes a so-called house of saints, essentially a burial chamber for various holy men over the years. A shallow hole in the stone floor here reveals some nondescript dust inside, said to be the remains of St Gabriel himself. The dust is sought after by local pilgrims, not only Syrian Orthodox, for its supposed miraculous properties.

When religious festivals occur, the monastery can be packed with Syrian Orthodox pilgrims, some of whom return from as far afield as the US and end up staying overnight in the monastery. It is worth checking to see if your visit coincides with any festivals, as you may either want to try to take part or to alter the date of your trip to avoid the crowd.

The monastery is 2km southeast of Güngören (Keferbê) village, 22km from Midyat. It is possible to get a Cizre *dolmuş* to the start of the turning for

the monastery, from where you will have to walk around 4km to reach the site. Official visiting hours are from 9.30am to 11.30am and from 1pm to 4.30pm.

### Mor Estafanos Church

In Güngören (Keferbê) village has nicely decorated church, dating back to the 5th century. The church has a *mihrab*-like structure, called a *kduşkudşin* ("Holy of holies") in Syriac, with a fresco depicting Christ.

### Anıtlı Virgin Mary and Mor Sobo Churches

Located in Anıtlı (Hah) village 25km east of Midyat is this amazing church, with some of the most intricate and attractive stonework you will see in the province. The building has a pre-Christian core dating to the 2nd century, and was converted into a church in the early 4th century, which makes it one of the world's very oldest surviving churches. The adjoining Syrian Orthodox monastery was revived in 2000 after having being abandoned for some time. Architecturally it is reminiscent of Deyrul Zafaran near Mardin, while the plan of the church is comparable to that of Mor Yakup in Barıştepe (see p:382), including a narthex, a central hall and a sanctuary with three rooms, the middle one of which forms the apse. The central brick dome has a cubical exterior with many niches on its sides, and in the half-domes of these niches decorations appear containing pigeons and crosses. The upper part of the dome and bell tower are 20th-century additions. Inside, the appearance of different types of Corinthian capitals suggests some reuse of elements from earlier constructions. Also note the brick ornamentation in the barrel vault of the narthex.

Not far away are the ruins of the 6th-century Mor Sobo Church, in plan not unlike Mor Kiryakos and Mor İzozoel nearer to Midyat. As at the latter, the remains of a courtyard with an apse can be seen; the half-dome of the apse is decorated with a cross.

To get here by public transport, take a *dolmuş* to Ortaca (Hêştirekê) village and then another *dolmuş* for the remaining 5km to Anıtlı.

### Ilısu Baths

Some 56km east of Midyat (and actually in the Dargeçit district, practically on the border with Siirt province) are these sulphurous hot spring baths in Ilısu village (Germav). Named the Belkıs Baths, or sometimes Germav (meaning "hot water" in Kurdish) by some locals, they were once visited by the Ottoman Süleyman the Magnificent who hoped to benefit from their curative properties; the baths are said to improve rheumatism and skin problems. The baths are by the Tigris and open from mid-May to mid-September. The newer building is for men and the other, older building is for women. You will need to walk a short distance along a narrow path to reach the site from the road.

## Accommodation

The four-star Matiat Hotel (0482 462 59 20, www.matiat.com.tr) is a classy place with a large swimming pool, restaurants and rooms with views of the pool or the nearby hills. The hotel is 4km from town on the Mardin road.

## Places to eat

This beautiful Han located in Eski (Old) Kuyumcular Bazaar, *Gelüşke Hanı* (0482 464 14 42 www.midyatgeluskehani.net) converted into complex of restaurants, café and live music bar. Local food can be found in the restaurant which also has culturally decorated rooms suitable for sitting on the floor.

# Nusaybin (Nisêbîn)



Historical Columns [39]

Nusaybin (population 88,296) is a vibrant border town giving a taste of the life and customs of the Kurds of both Turkey and Syria. Around 60km southeast of Mardin, the city was mentioned in Assyrian sources as (Nasibina) Naṣipina, and in Syriac Christian records as Nsibin, which might have meant "land of vineyards and gardens".

There are no forests in the area now, but locals do talk about ancient forests in the northern part of the region. According to one tale, young warriors hunted lions in these forests to extinction, but this caused a problem for warriors who had not yet killed a lion, as they were threatened with being put to death by the king if they did not achieve such a feat. Somehow the warriors began turning on each other. The queen told the king that the killing had to stop, as otherwise there would be no one around to protect her and the king. He responded by imprisoning the warriors in an underground chamber and letting horses race above the chamber all night to scare them. Somehow it had the desired effect, and the infighting ceased.

Wheat, cotton are the main products of the district, which also produces some crude oil, taken to Batman for refining. The town has been an important border trade centre since Ankara signed an agreement with France, who then had the UN mandate for Syria, in 1926. Nusaybin nowadays is also the route for transportation of petroleum trade with Iraq.

The town has a few historical attractions, and its hinterland also holds several attractive prospects for tourists, including Mor Augin (Dêr Marogê) Monastery and the ruined city of Dara.

A detail from Mor Yakup Church [40]



## Musa Anter (Apê Musa)


Musa Anter [41]

One of the district's most famous sons is the Kurdish intellectual, writer and politician Musa Anter (Apê Musa), born in Eskimağara (Ziving) village in 1917. His mother, Fasla Anter was the first female *mukhtar* (village head man) of Turkey. Graduating from İstanbul University's law faculty, he was in contact with major Kurdish intellectuals of the time. Throughout his life he worked tirelessly to promote the Kurdish literature, cultural and political rights, founding various publications, and spent many years in jail for his pains. His life was tragically brought to an end when he was gunned down in Diyarbakır in 1992.

## Mor Yakup Church

An austere-looking Syrian Orthodox church dedicated to Mor Yakup (St Jacob) survives very near to Zeynel Abidin Mosque at the centre of the town. Born in Nusaybin in 309, Mor Yakup became bishop of the city and was buried in the basement here when he died in 338. The monastery is also well known as the site of the School of Nisibis, a college of theology, philosophy and other subjects, taking hundreds of students. It was set up here by Mor Yakup in the mid-4th century and lasted until the 7th century, though for most of the fifth century it was exiled to Urfa, while the Sassanids held Nusaybin.


More Yakup Church [42]

According to the tablet on the wall, the southern part of the church was built in 359 for baptisms, and this might explain its atypical form, comprising two adjacent naves with apses to the east. The structure, which bears the customary rich decoration, was renovated in 1872 when a building for the metropolitan bishop was built. The monastery has two naves separated by a wall which was installed afterwards. The apses have been decorated with plant motifs. Excavations made by Mardin Museum in the recent years have discovered ruins along with tombs, a number of teaching rooms and houses. The surrounding area is due to be declared as protected touristic area.

## Zeynel Abidin Mosque

This square, single-storeyed, flat-roofed mosque is built from rough stone, and houses important mausoleums of Zeynel Abidin and his sister Zeynep, who were related to Prophet Muhammed. The mosque is thought to be Artukid, but some think it may have been part of Mor Yakup that was converted into a mosque.


Zeynel Abidin Mosque [43]

The mosque is an important pilgrimage site, and interestingly also includes an all-female Quran course, in which both the instructors and students are women. There are also some attractive tombstones with beautiful Islamic calligraphy located behind the *Camii*.

## Mitanni Kültür Merkezi

This impressive newly culture centre buildings on Lozan Cad in the Yeşilkent quarter houses some of the most beautiful stone art of the area. You can't miss the large stone Zoroastrian symbol at the entrance, which is believed to depict a *fravashi* (guardian spirit).

## Old Barracks

In the Kışla quarter you will find the remains of what was once substantial military barracks, with two lion sculptures at the entrance. Built on the orders of Diyarbakir Governor Hafız Mehmet Pasha, it had more than 300 rooms and housed thousands of troops during World War II, as well as housing the Hamidiye Brigades established in the late 19th century to keep order among the minorities of eastern Turkey.

## Nusaybin Station and the German Railway Bridge

The Çelikyurt quarter of Nusaybin contains the last Turkish train station before the railway enters Syria. The station was run by Germans, who built the railways (part of the famous Baghdad railway), until it was transferred to the state railway company, TCDD, in 1948. The railway tracks themselves run between Yeniturun and Abdukadir Paşa districts, dividing the town into two.

Another relic of German engineering is the simple iron railway bridge built on stone supports and spanning Çağçağ Creek. Unsurprisingly, it's known as the German Bridge (Alman Köprüsü) and is located in the Yeni Turan quarter.


Mintani Kültür Merkezi [44]



Gırnavaz from the sky [45]

## Historical columns

Also in the Yeni Turan quarter are some interesting columns close to the gates of the border post with Syria. The exact vintage of the columns is not known, but stylistic considerations make it most likely that they are Roman. The area where the columns are located is off-limits and was in fact mined in 1956, so you will have to be content with viewing them from a distance.

## Gırnavaz

Gırnavaz, an archeologically important mound, lies by the Çağçağ (Bûnisra) creek (though not near the part spanned by the German Railway Bridge) 4km from the centre of Nusaybin. Excavations done between 1982 and 1991 indicate that the mound was settled from around the 7th century BC until the 5th century BC. Four Assyrian inscriptions were uncovered, one of which refers to a garden in "Nabula" – which is thus thought to be the likely name for the mound at that time. It was also found that corpses were being buried here according to some of the Mesopotamian religious traditions, in a seated posture; the graves were then sealed after a fire was lit to dispel the sins of the deceased. Metal ornaments and ceramic cups were among artefacts found in the graves, some of which can be viewed at Mardin's museum (see p: 358).

The mound is 25m high with a diameter of 350m. A Muslim graveyard on top of it dates back to 13th or 14th century. Local people actually believe that children who are mentally challenged can be cured by being kept here until midnight. The site is visited by Muslim Kurds along with Yezidi Kurds as well as the Syriac communities.

## Kalecik (Bûnisra)

This ancient Christian village is located 8km north of Nusaybin. The interesting thing about the place is that the stone houses, some of which may be 200 years old, sometimes have no doors at ground level and are instead entered by climbing a wooden ladder leading to the roof. The village also includes the remains of a fortress and a number of manmade caves, now used to keep livestock.



Children from Kalecik village [46]



Ruins from Eskihisar (Marine) [47]



Door knock from Marine [48]

## Eskihisar (Marine) and Mor Yoret (Dêr Çepkê)

It's worth heading to the village of Eskihisar, 22km northeast of Nusaybin, on the way to the Mor Avgin and Mor Yuhanon (Dêr Xirab) Monasteries. The village was once occupied mainly by the Syriac community, who left behind many attractive stone houses, an old bazaar, a church, a small mansion and a jail nearby, all surprisingly in good shape.

The substantial remains of a fortress can also be seen high above the site, and is thought originally to have been built to guard an ancient Assyrian settlement called Merdis. What you see now comprises Roman, Byzantine and more recent constructions, including a palace and cisterns. A local legend has it that there were two sisters called Marin and Mardin, the former living here while the other lived in *Mardin Kalesi*, supposedly named after her. Every night they communicated using fiery beacons lit at their respective fortresses.



Mor Augin Monastery [49]

Leaving the village, drive 3km up the hill to the north (require walking from that point) and you will come across Mor Yorte (also known as Dêr Çepkê), which is around the same as Mor Yuhanon. Now abandoned, the monastery remains attractive and in reasonable condition, as it was built of hardwearing stone. A 50m-climb is required to reach the building.

## Mor Augin Monastery (Dêr Marogê)

This much-visited monastery, also called Dêr Marogê, clings to a steep escarpment on Mount İzlo, 7km north of Girmeli (Girêmîra) and 22km east of Nusaybin, but is surprisingly easy to reach as a newly built road will take you very close to the site. It is thought to have been built in the 3rd century by Mor Augin – and 70 of his followers from Egypt. The monastery was subsequently run by Nestorian and then Chaldean Christians, but has been abandoned for some time (the last person to occupy it was a hermit who died here in 1974 and is buried here).



Mor Augin Monastery from top [50]

There is one church in the south of the site and another in the north. In the east is a room in which Mor Augin, his sister and one of his students are buried. Elsewhere there are assortment of buildings, but what may linger with you most are the fantastic views south over the Mesopotamian plains to Syria.

## Mor Yuhanon Church (Dêr Xirabkê)

This church comprises several buildings on a rocky hillside 3km south of Mor Augin. The Mor Yuhanon (St John) who built it was a student of Mar Augin, and the church contains niches where Mor Yuhanon and his mother are buried.



Nature in Nusaybin [51]



Cave church in Günyurdu (Marbaba/Merbabê) [52]

## Günyurdu (Morbobo/ Merbabê) Village

The old name of this village, on Mount Bagok 26km from Nusaybin and a short way north of the Cizre road, derives from the presence of Mor Bobo, a church carved into the rock here in the 6th or 7th century. Mor Bobo is said to have the leader of a monastery here between 569 and 628. There are two other churches here, one of which, Mor Aho, was recently built by locals, some of whom have been returning here after emigrating to Europe. You will find this church in the north of the village along with the other church, Mor Şemun.

Remnants of cisterns and towers survive from fortifications in the vicinity, among them *Haytam Kalesi* (built originally by the Byzantine general Dimitrius in 351 and renovated by Haytam in 972) and Kalat Cedide ("new fortress"), thought to have been built by the Byzantine Emperor Constantius II in the mid-4th century along with cisterns and towers. On the top of the mount lies the Mor Abraham Monastery.

## Beyaz Su (Ava Spî)

With a few open-air restaurants, this popular picnic spot by a large stream is in Sivrice village, more or less midway between Midyat and Nusaybin. Ava Spî means "clear water" in Kurdish, and the stream water is formed through the mixing of Ava Spî



itself with dark-coloured water called Ave Reş at a place called Diavê. As ever, the water crops up in a local tale, of a shepherd in neighbouring Batman province who was playing his pipe when he dropped it into the stream. The lost pipe was found in nearby Ava Spî, meaning that the water rues long way under the ground.

This site is extremely popular in weekends with people pouring in from Nusaybin, Mardin and as far as Diyarbakır. There are benches placed over the waters of Ava Spî where you can take seat, drink freshly made tea and enjoy the test fresh Barbecues.

## Mor Melkê Monastery

This recently built monastery is located in Üçköy (Sêderî), which is the largest Syriac village in Turkey, 35km northeast of Nusaybin and about 20km south of Midyat. Arriving there, you will probably pass through Harabele (Xerabêalê) village before continuing 2km east to the monastery, which was originally established by Mor Malkê in the 4th or 5th century. What you see now was built on the original foundations in 1995, and includes a basement containing the Virgin Mary Church. Mor Malkê and other priests are said to be buried on the site, which also has a religious school for children and a number of resident monks and nuns.



Mor Melkê Monastery [53]

# Dara (Anastasiopolis)



Dara [54]

Sometimes called the Ephesus of Mesopotamia, Dara is the largest historic site in Mardin. It is located in the small Kurdish village of Oğuz at the start of a beautiful, fertile valley, midway between Mardin and Nusaybin and is clearly signposted. This ancient city was built between 505 and 507 by the Byzantines after they lost Nusaybin to the Persians in the fourth century. Dara was located at the boundary between the two empires and took on the role of a military capital as opposed to the religious capital (Silvan at this time, founded in the first quarter of the 5th century). During the Persian War (575–591) Dara and other cities were captured by the Persians, though Dara was soon handed back after peace negotiations.

Some of the ruins of ancient Dara are on the left of the road as you enter the village while the rest is located at the end of the village. Once upon a time the settlement was surrounded by 4km of walls with gates in the north and south and 28 tall towers, some of which can still be seen. Churches, bazaars and cisterns lie among the ruins, though detailed excavations have yet to be undertaken although some excavation has started since 1985.

The first part of the site you come to is basically one large stone graveyard, the graves being small chambers carved into the rock. For some reason, villagers refer to it as the "first church". Some of the graves are actually arranged neatly in rows up to three storeys high; the bodies were laid on stone slabs within the chambers.

As you enter the area you will see a rock face with Christian reliefs and a relief depicting Azrael (the angel of



Historical cisterns [55]

death) and the valley of the dead also with a tree and a house symbolising life. In the top right corner is a depiction of the hand of God. Below these large and magnificent reliefs the entrance to a cave-like hole can be seen.

As you follow the main road before you get to the village's Kale quarter, be sure to check out Dara's cistern system, built to control the flow of water from seasonal rains and stream without compromising the city's defences. The system comprises various pool-like depressions parallel to one another. One of the largest such features can be found near the south gate, where you will find eight channels cut in the rock, each around 6m deep. The flow of water was regulated by a clever system of sluice gates.

In the village there is also a 25m deep cistern underneath a private house which someone had unwittingly built over it. Any local should be able to direct you to the house if you want to view the cistern.



Dungeon [56]

Located to the left of the road at the far end of the village in the Taga Agi quarter is an underground storeroom, originally a cistern but commonly referred by villagers as a dungeon. Local children will guide you (and will expect a small tip) around the chamber, which is well lit and has steps you can walk down. The chamber has a height of around 30m, empty but for a number of columns. Left of this cistern was a Byzantine church which was converted into a mosque and madrasah during the Artukid era. All that remains are Christian reliefs on a large rock, which itself is said to have been a Zoroastrian praying site at some stage.

Finally, in the valley of Newala Hamdunî, 1km northeast of the main ruins, are the ruins of a 20m-tall barrage, built to protect the city from floods. To decrease the flow rate, the water had been channelled into the creek in the city through the loopholes. Thus the flood risk had been minimised. The ruins of it can be seen.



Dara Ancient City [57]

## The battle of Dara



Remains from Dara Ancient City [58]

The territory in the Dara area was considered the best watered land in Mesopotamia thanks to the sophisticated irrigation system which distributed water from the creek in the valley where Dara lay. The fact that water was not in short supply also contributed to making this a good candidate for a power base. Dara was also of strategic importance because of its location on the borders of Byzantium and Persia. These factors all led various rulers to try to dominate Dara, and several conflicts ensued.

The heaviest of these battles was that fought between the Sassanids and Byzantines near Dara in 530. The Persian Sassanids had been fighting with Byzantines since 527. The Sassanids King Kavadh was trying to make peace, to which end he tried to persuade Emperor Justinian to adopt his son Khosrau. This idea was rejected, and both sides then sent tens of thousands to do battle over Dara. The Sassanids were numerically superior but not well armed, while the Byzantine commander Belisarius was wily. He decided to dig some ditches to stop the Persian cavalry while stationing most of his infantry in one place, and concealing Hun and Byzantine cavalry behind the ditches. In the end many Persian soldiers were trapped and killed as the Byzantines emerged victorious; Khosrau and some of the Persians managed to ecape to Nusaybin.

# Kızıltepe (Qoser)



Xurs Valley [59]

Kızıltepe (population 127,148), 24km southwest of Mardin city, is the most densely populated provincial town in Mardin, having grown spectacularly in the recent years, thanks partly to internal displacement. As a crossing point for the Silk Road, Kızıltepe was of strategic importance for trade. The city has been variously been called Dunaysır, Tell Ermen and Koçhisar, acquiring its present name in 1931 when it became part of Mardin.

The first settlement here was in what is now Haramhaddat village, 10km south of the current town. The present police station is said to be built on top of what is the oldest mound, dating to the Chalcolithic Age (5000–3000 BC).

While agriculture – in particular the production of wheat, cotton, corn and lentils – still dominates the local economy, the presence of Mardin airport nearby and much of the province's industry on the Mardin–Kızıltepe road has been of some benefit to the town. Society and politics are still very much dominated by the tribes and their traditions.



Kızıltepe Town [60]

## Ulu Cami

Hidden away in the old town, this large and beautiful building is regarded as a magnificent example of Artukid architecture, and was built in 1204 according to inscriptions. Also known as Koçhisar or Dunaysır Mosque, it can house up to 2000 people.



Ulu Cami [61]

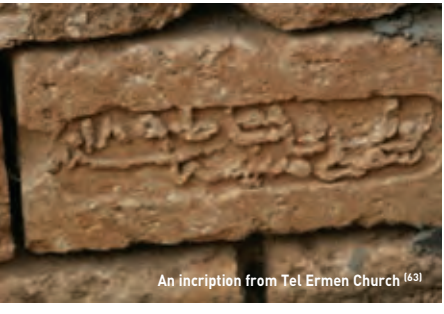
This magnificent assembly of reddish stone was restored in 2005. From the outside you can see a portal in the middle of the facade, with a lobed arch. To both sides there are three doors and a *mihrab* (people also prayed here, hence the need for *mihrabs)* containing inventive banded decoration. The mosque has a rectangular plan with three naves and a dome over the *mihrab*, which spans two naves. The *mihrab* itself, with its half-dome with a shell design and a lobed arch around it, is decorated with many vegetal and geometrical motifs as well as calligraphy.

## Dunaysır Bridge

Located in Koçhisar quarter behind the Ulu Cami, this bridge is thought to be contemporaneous with the mosque. It spans the Zergan (Gurs) Creek and was once used by caravans. Only five arches survived being plastered with cement recently.

## Tell Ermen Church

A large Armenian church, believed to date from the 19th century, survives as a reminder of the town's once thriving Armenian community. The church, also called Surp Kevork, is mostly in reasonable condition, and is in Kilise Cad in the Tepebaşı quarter. The family whose house shares a courtyard with the church will be happy to allow you access to the site.



An incription from Tel Ermen Church (63)

## Şah Kulu Bey Türbesi

Located in Şah Kulu Cad is this tomb is of a sixteenth-century local ruler, who was killed while returning from a trip to İstanbul to meet Süleyman the Magnificent.



Şah Kulu Bey Türbesi (62)

## Gire Harzem

Next to Girê Harzem, a tumulus 8km northeast of the town is the Sheikh Taceddin El Arabi Madrasah, reached by a three-arched stone Artukid bridge. Originally the madrasah had a square plan, but this has been diluted by assorted renovations, and today only side of the building still stands. The madrasah has a long narrow courtyard, accessed through a barrel-vaulted entranceway, with a mosque and tomb in the south of the courtyard. Inscriptions on the tomb's entrance indicate that it was built in 1211 by Tacettin Mesut Abdullah, who was the slave of the Artukid King Mansur Nasreddin Artukaslan. The adjacent minaret was built at the start of this century. The tumulus itself is thought to conceal an Artukid winter palace, madrasah and mosque, which have not been excavated. The area is also famous for its good quality tobacco.

# Mazıdağı (Şemrex)



Dêrmetinan Kalesi [64]



House of Ömer Ağa [65]

Mazıdağı (population 10,297), some 45km northwest of Mardin, takes its name from the fact that it is located on flat ground surrounded by mountains. This area was located on the trade route between Diyarbakır and Damascus (Sham or Şam). Locals call the area "Çiyayê Mazî" meaning "Mazi Mount" as there are plenty of these trees around. The area was a sub district of Savur and Derik until it became a district of Mardin in 1937.

The largest phosphate reserves in Turkey lie in the Mazıdağı area. A phosphate plant was established here in 1974 and provided a useful source of employment for many years, though it has now closed following privatisation. Today the main economic activities are agriculture and livestock. Çemê Reşan and Reşan Valley near Mazıdağı are home to some historical sites as well as well known fortresses such as Dêrmetînan.

## House of Ömer Ağa (Qesra Emer Axa)

A residence of a local ağa or lord is located on a hill in the Kayalar area, northwest of Mazıdağı town centre. There are three buildings in all, with terraces and two storeys; the stone facade of the main building has been adorned in the same style as you can find in Midyat and Mardin, though it is not as richly decorated. The lower floors were once used as stables and accommodation for caravans. One section has even been used as a prison.



Şamrah fortress [66]



Rock of King's Daughter [67]

## Şamrah Kalesi (Keleha Mazîdaxê)

The ruins of this fortress, variously thought to be Byzantine, Roman or Artukid depending on who you believe, lie on a rocky hill 3km southwest of town. There are rock tombs, caves, cisterns and rooms carved into the rocks. Pretty mosaics cover some of the floors.

An extension to the fortress includes a natural cave divided into three levels, with three natural stone columns on one of them. It can be entered by climbing a short but steep path. Around the fortress are vineyards and, to the north, transmitters belong to national telecom.

## Piğretap Türbesi

Located in Ömürlü (Piran) village 3 km away from Mazıdağ town. It is believed that the tomb belongs to a soldier from Islam armies who was killed here at the war while promoting Islam in the region. It's busy with visitors especially on Thursdays and Fridays when the tomb gets visit from large number of people, some believe that Pirğetap will treat their diseases.

## Arısu Caravanserai

Arısu (Gola Gulê) village, 15km northwest of Mazıdağı, contains the ruins of what was once an important caravanserai. The ceiling and vaulted entrance are decorated with plant motifs. Just after the entrance lies a fireplace. On the right, stairs lead up to a floor which was used as accommodation, while above that is another floor from where the road could be watched over.

## Sakızlı (Bankir)

Sakızlı (Bankir) village, some 20km west of Mazıdağı town and around

15km north of Derik, contains historical remains in the Upper Sisaban area of the Sisan quarter. Early Byzantine motifs and mythological scenes can be seen depicted in floor mosaics. The most remarkable part of the ruins is the temple, on a rectangular plan, with motifs of crosses on the wall. This was originally a Zoroastrian fire temple, though the Byzantines added Christian symbols later on, producing an interesting synthesis of styles. Look out here for the floor mosaic depicting a bearded man riding a horse, and animal motifs on huge stones.

### Yağmur (Avrihan)

Along with ancient caves, Yağmur village, 8km south of Mazıdağı town, contains many stone graves and traces of settlements. These lie on the same route as *Şamrah Kalesi* and Dêrmetînan (see below), possibly one used by passing caravans. Among these remains you will find the Rock of King's Daughter (Kevir Kezi), associated with a local legend: the girl in question was punished by her father by being tied by her long hair to a huge rock, which she had to carry around on her back. Today the impression left in the rock is said to resemble the body of the girl.

### Dêrmetînan Kalesi (Keleha Metîna)

The most important site in Mazıdağı is this fortress in Gümüşyuva (Dermetînan) village, 30km west of Mazıdağı and around 20km north of Derik. The area has rich silver deposits, and the structure was built to protect these deposits as well as for the more typical function of controlling trade routes. The Mongols are said to have faced stiff resistance when they tried to take the fortress. For locals, the place is known as where the hero Lawikê Metînî, famous in Kurdish song, lived.

The fortress, which has Byzantine characteristics, is on a 150m rocky hill. There are eight towers and one smaller watchtower overlooking the whole plain. The ruins of cisterns and a small church with one nave and decorated with beautiful plant motifs can also be seen. These days locals use the church as a hayloft.

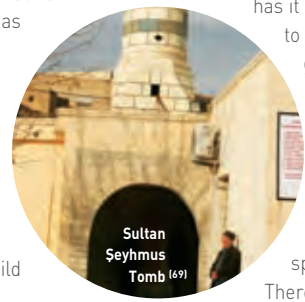
## Tattoos (Deq)


Tattoo [68]

Tattoos are popular in several parts of the province, especially among local Kurdish and Arab women and to a lesser extent among older men. Regarded as both decorative and a symbol of tribal identity, they tend to be worn between the eyebrows, on the lower lip, in middle of chin and on the cheeks, and can take very diverse forms, including scorpions, crescents, the sun, flowers and various lines and shapes. The inks for the tattoos are traditionally made by mixing a mother's milk with some ash.

## The Tomb of Sultan Şeyhmus and Kırk fountain (Çelkani)

For a relaxing excursion in the countryside, you could visit the area containing the Tomb of Sultan Şeyhmus (also known as Sultan Musa) and the nearby Kırk Fountain, though in fact the people who are really drawn to the tomb are women who are unable to conceive. If a woman subsequently has a child after having made the pilgrimage here, it will be named Şeyhmus if a boy, or Sultan if a girl. Many people who visit will also sacrifice a goat or sheep and give the meat away to others.

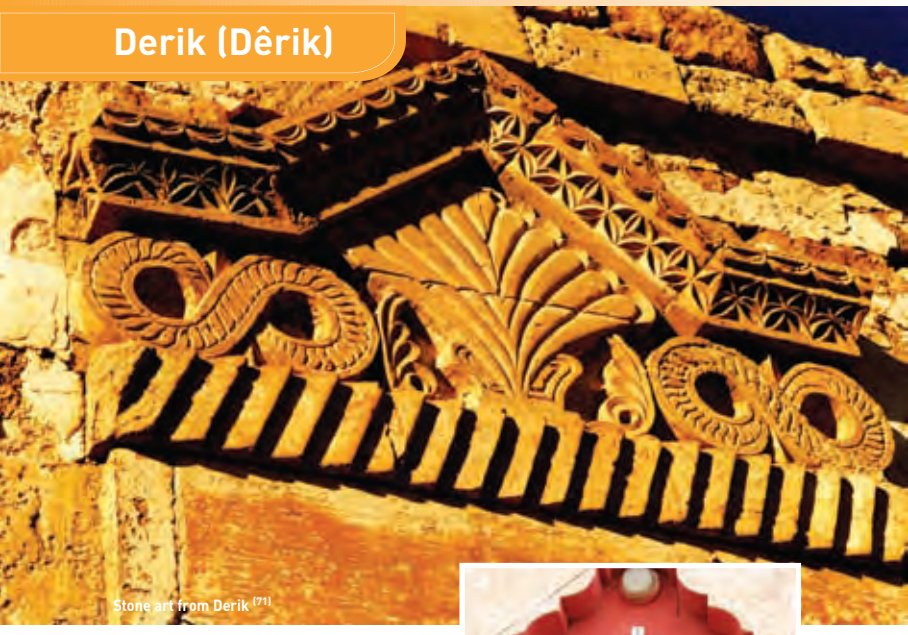

Sultan Şeyhmus Tomb (69)

Fridays are the busiest day of the week, when locals come not only to visit the tomb but also to picnic by Kırk Fountain. Şeyhmus is believed to have lived in the 12th century and was a student of the well-known teacher Abdülkadir Geylani and local legend has it that he caused water to spring from the ground whenever he touched it with his stick. A total of 40 springs were thus created and since then locals call the area Çelkani ("forty springs" in Kurdish). There is a fish restaurant here serving excellent fresh grilled trout.

The tomb is just off the Mardin–Diyarbakır road, 20km from Mardin and 25km from Mazıdağı. Dolmuşs from Mardin can drop you here.


Children from Mazıdağ (70)

# Derik (Dêrik)



Stone art from Derik [71]



Surp Kevork Church and his caretaker [72]

Surrounded by mountains on three sides, Derik (population 19,535) is situated on rugged terrain which slopes down to the south. The area has been settled since ancient times, and excavations have uncovered caves containing Neolithic and Stone Age relics in the town's Tepebağ quarter, while gold and silver of Roman and Byzantine vintage was found in the Dermetînan area.

There are different stories concerning the name of Derik town, which is some 40km west of Mardin. The town is said to have been founded when a blood feud arising from the killing of the tyrant lord called Çıplak Haso (Naked Haso) in Diyarbakir caused two clans to migrate to the area in the late 14th century, and indeed two quarters still bear the names of these clans: Gare Reze Dewid and Merga Keya. Other theories say the name comes from the Kurdish *dirrik* meaning "dense bushes", or that the name is a blend of Terki (the name of a clan who settled here). Some people also believe that, as there was a small Armenian church (*Der* means church in Kurdish) in the town that's why the town is named Derik. In 1874 the town was linked administratively to Diyarbakır province, but it became part of Mardin in 1923. As with many other parts of eastern Turkey, the town once had an Armenian majority.

Derik is well known for its green olives (Xirxalî olives can be given as example), and also produces grapes, figs and vegetables.

## Surp Kevork Church (Dera Sor)

This rectangular Armenian church is one of the oldest churches in town and was restored several years ago. The church is usually closed, but the town's sole surviving Armenian resident, Kevork, will let you in; he can be found in his blacksmith's shop in Cumhuriyet Meydanı.

The church houses a huge bell which once belonged to the church at *Dermetînan Kalesi*. Also here are an antique bible in Armenian, dating back to the mid-14th century, a pleasant garden and an old religious school.

## Rabat Kalesi

This fortress is located in Hisaraltı (Rebet) village, 13km west of Derik, which requires a drive up a road to reach. Once there you will have to walk uphill for an hour to get to the fortress, but will be rewarded with some good views.

The fortress dates back to the 4th century and has at various times been under the control of the Byzantines, Abbasids and Artukids. Not much is left of the towers which the fortress once boasted, but in the south and east are some ruined tower-like structures from the Artukid period. Also surviving are a Byzantine church and cisterns with irrigation channels.

## Kasrı Kanco (Qesra Qenco)

This massive castle-like structure, the only well-preserved building of its type in Mardin and Urfa, belongs to a powerful Kurdish family who exercised something approaching royal authority in Mardin province until 1970s. The building, which is not open to the public, is located in Atlı (Qesra Qenco)

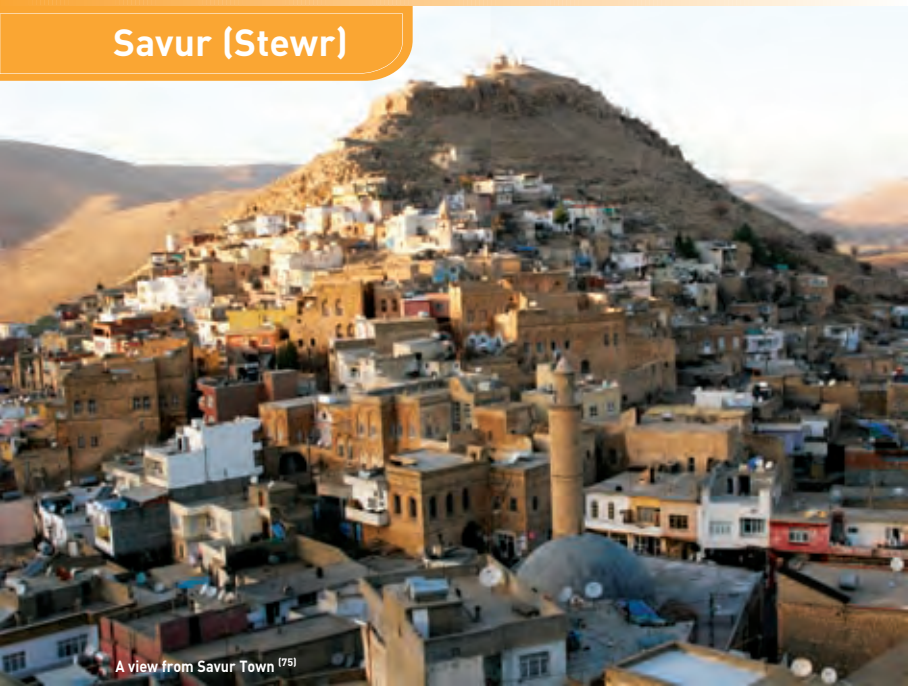

Rabat Kalesi [73]

village, 20km southwest of Derik town. From Mardin, you can head here by heading to Kızıltepe, then continuing west on the highway to Viranşehir and Urfa, turning left off the road some 67km from Mardin; the castle lies about 1km off the highway.

According to the inscription above the gate, it was built in 1705 and restored in 1905 by Huseyne Qenco. The building's original function was defensive, as it was not uncommon for local lords to attack each other's territory. The surrounding walls are 300m long and nearly 1m thick, with gates to the north and west. The building itself has four storeys, and watchtowers are positioned at the four corners of the structure. On the second floor is a room, currently used for storage, whose door is a 30cm-thick piece of basalt bearing Roman inscriptions that was removed from ruins the east of chateau.


Kasrı Kanco (Qesra Qenco) [74]

# Savur (Stewr)



A view from Savur Town [75]

The peaceful town of Savur is located 46km northeast of Mardin. The district of which it is part has a population of 8,942, many of whom belong to an Arab tribe who claim descent from a nephew of the Prophet Mohammed. The area is known for its walnuts and grapes, and settlement here is thought to date right back to 4800 BC. Historically, the area was a zone where Anatolian and Mesopotamian states clashed, and more recently has had close ties with Diyarbakır rather than Mardin, one demonstration of which was when there was local opposition to linking the area administratively to Mosul rather than Diyarbakır during Ottoman times. Locals say the name of the town derives from a Syriac word meaning "neck".

If you do come here, you can't fail to notice Savur's splendid stone houses, of which there are over 50. They are similar in style to buildings in old Mardin, and the quarter where these houses are located was declared an area of historical value by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in the 1980s. The facades of the houses have fewer decorations compared to those of Mardin, but interestingly they remain in the hands of the families who built them, which is not the case for most properties of this type in the area.

Savur also has a small Byzantine-era hilltop fortress, from where the old trade routes stretching from the Mardin plains to Hasankeyf through Midyat could be monitored as though from an eyrie. Walls and towers still survive.

## Dereiçi (Kıllıt)

This village 5km east of Savur on the way to Midyat has its roots in an ancient Syriac settlement. Even though large part of it has been abandoned, the village retains some nicely decorated houses and a minority of the villagers is still Syriac-speaking. Surprisingly, the village also has several churches and monasteries.

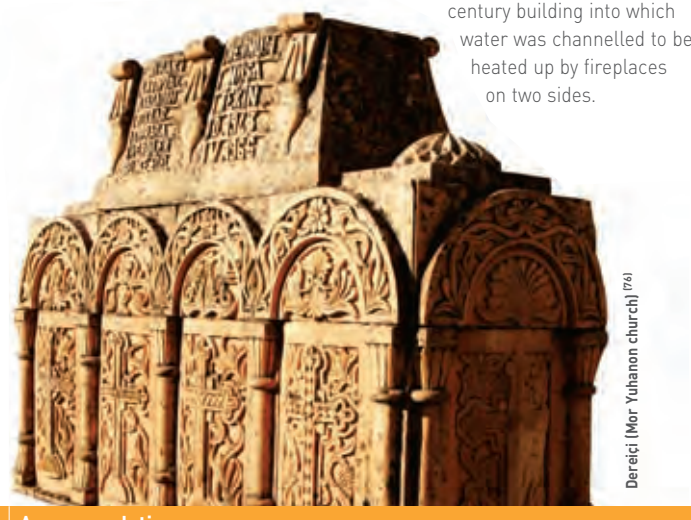
Best preserved of these is the Mor Yuhanon Church, which is still used for worship. It's worth having a look around the churchyard, where the graves feature beautiful Arabic and Turkish calligraphy. To the east of Mor Yuhanon lie a Syrian Catholic church and a Syrian Protestant church, both in ruins.

On a northern slope, 3km from the village centre, stretches the Mor Abay Monastery, built towards the end of the 7th century. The monastery housed 60 priests in the 13th century, but today it lies abandoned and in ruins. Nearby are the Mor Sabay and Mor Dimet monasteries, both abandoned though parts remain substantially intact. Mor Dimet was renovated by the bishop of Savur in the 15th century, though its precise age is unknown. Locals regard a pilgrimage here as beneficial for healing various diseases, especially rheumatism.

Last but not least, Dereiçi is well known for its wines. If you fancy of taking away a bottle or two, pay a quick visit to the village's winery, which is on the main road on the way out of the village if you're heading towards Mardin.

### Başkavak (Ahmedi) and Hisarkaya Köyü Kalesi (Keleha Pozreş)

Başkavak village, 5km northwest of Savur, has the only surviving community laundry in the region, though it is no longer in use. Near a small creek, it is a rectangular 19th-century building into which water was channelled to be heated up by fireplaces on two sides.



Dereiçi (Mor Yuhanon church) [76]

## Accommodation



Hacı Abdullah Bey Konağı [77]

In the upper part of town, *Hacı Abdullah Bey Konağı* (0482 571 28 32) is a 19th-century mansion, belonging to one of the well-known families of the area. It has now been sympathetically converted into a comfortable, attractive guesthouse. The wooden ceiling of the main reception room is sure to draw your attention with the glass mosaic integrated at its centre. Good local food is also served here.

Dereiçi Village [78]

Nowadays geese and ducks swim outside.

Some 8km beyond Başkavak is another small village, Hisarkaya, whose Kurdish name happens to translate as "black nose". Built on the top of high hill, the village is also the site of a Roman fortress which watched over the Silk Road. Walls and towers still stand, though as ever some parts have been cannibalised by the villagers to build their houses.



Keleha Pozreş [79]




MESAFE CETVELİ (KM)

| MARDİN | DARGEÇİT | DERİK | KIZILTEPE | MAZIDAĞI | MİDYAT | NUSAYBİN | ÖMERLİ | SAVUR | YEŞİLLİ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 113 | 72 | 24 | 46 | 63 | 61 | 34 | 46 | 9 |




Veysel Karani Mausoleum [1]

# SİİRT (Sêrt)

The population of the city today is a mixture of **Arabs and Kurds,** most of the inhabitants of the surrounding districts are formed of **Kurdish inhabitants.** Sheep and goats are farmed primarily for ordinary **wool and cashmere**, and Siirt is well known for its **blankets**, woven by semi-nomadic tribes for centuries and characterised by geometric patterns and **lively natural colours.**

Siirt once stood on the frontier between the Roman Empire and Persia, and was ruled by both of these as well as the Byzantines (AD 135) and Sassanids (572). The region embraced Islam during the Caliphate of Omar (582–644), becoming an important commercial and cultural centre under the Abbasids. In the 13th century the area came under Persian rule, but was taken by the Ottomans in the aftermath of the Çaldıran War (1514).


Ulu Camii [2]

The population of the city today is a mixture of Arabs and Kurds. The economy is mainly based on agriculture and livestock. Sheep and goats are farmed primarily for ordinary wool and cashmere, and Siirt is well known for its blankets, woven by semi-nomadic tribes for centuries and characterised by geometric patterns and lively natural colours. This area is also very well known for its Zivzig pomegranates, pistachios, walnuts and grapes. Other well-regarded products are organic honey from Pervari, which is thought to have curative properties, and *bıttım* soap, which is said to number Prince Charles of the UK among its fans. This handmade soap is made from oil from the nuts of a pistachio tree named *terebinthe (Pistacia atlantica)* and is meant to help combat hair loss and dandruff. Though the smell might be unpleasant at first, it contains no chemicals or additives and has a unique history going back thousands of years in Mesopotamia. Industry of a more modern variety can be found in Kurtalan, which has a cement factory employing some people.

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
291,528 (2007)
**Average altitude**
930m
**Area**
5465 square kilometres
**Districts**
Siirt, Aydınlar, Baykan, Eruh, Kurtalan, Pervari, Şirvan
**Economy**
Agriculture, Wool production, Soap-making, Livestock
**Neighbouring provinces**
Batman (west), Bitlis (north), Van (east), Şırnak (south), Mardin (southwest)


Siirt blanket [3]

One of the highlights of the province is the mausoleum of Veysel Karani in Ziyaret, which is visited by thousands of pilgrims each year. Aydınlar has a number of attractive old houses, and also boasts the tombs of İbrahim Hakkı, the


Wedding from Siirt[4]

renowned religious scholar and astronomer, and that of his master İsmail Fakirullah. Sağlarca is the most popular of a number of hot-spring spas and, remarkably, is actually inside a cave, and the ruins of Erzen near Kurtalan are also another important site. Also worth visiting are the quaint, old-fashioned villages of Eruh, where you may well see women especially in traditional dress. The province also has some old monasteries and churches, though many are in poor condition.


Bıttım soap[5]

## Siirt City

Siirt is a charming provincial city (population 117,599) with a modern centre and a hilly topography. While Siirt's city centre is a mixture of Arab and Kurds, most of the inhabitants of the surrounding districts are formed of Kurdish inhabitants. The Arabs of Siirt believe that they originally emigrated from Iraq.

Siirt has been home to many Islamic philosophers and saints, which makes the city one of the pilgrimage centres in this part of Turkey, and you should make a point of visiting the Seljuk Ulu Cami and the Asakir Çarşı Mosque.

Many houses in this region were built of locally made gypsum, called cas. Homes of this type, with domes and vaults to minimise the need for wood, can be found in the older quarters of the city; however, due to the fragility of the material, the buildings must be rebuilt and refurbished roughly every 25 years.

Thanks to the presence of the Veysel Karani Tomb in Ziyaret, *Bayram* festivities in Siirt have a more celebratory air than elsewhere. Another annual event is the Tillo Science Day at the end of September, when the work of Siirt scholars such as Hakkı and Fakirullah is commemorated.

What comes to mind first with Siirt is hastily rushing Botan Stream and the Botan Valley with its deep canyons. If you want to have a bird view sight of the stream, it is best to go up to the location called Rasıl Hacar (Taş Başı),

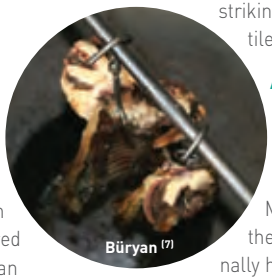
## Some prominent people from Siirt

A well-known local figure is singer **Sertap Erener**, born into a family of Yugoslavian and Arab origin. She has duetted with the famous British singer Ricky Martin, the Greek songstress Mando and Jose Carreras, and won the 2003 Eurovision Song Contest. She also covered the Bob Dylan song ***One More Cup of Coffee***, used in the Hollywood movie ***Masked and Anonymous***. Another local personage is journalist **Coşkun Aral**, born into an Arab family. He achieved a news coup in 1980 with live reportage that including interviewing hijackers on board the TWA plane in Beirut airport they had seized. It's worth mentioning **Cumhur Kılıçoğlu** who has won number of prizes for his local newspaper that has been published for almost 43 years. (for other famous people, see Tillo and Şirvan p: 423/429)

at a distance of 5 km to the province centre. Don't leave Siirt without enjoying this highly impressive view.

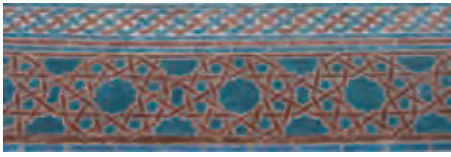
A special meat dish specific to Siirt and nearby regions is *büryan* (perive), young lamb lowered into a clay oven like a well and slow-cooked overnight. The *büryan* then taken out and hung up for sale in restaurants. A popular dish, it's not expensive and its most ardent fans have it for breakfast.

### Ulu Cami


Büryan [7]

In the centre of Siirt is this newly restored mosque, regarded as one of Turkey's oldest. In 1129 it was restored by the Seljuk Sultan Mugiziddin Mahmut, and in 1260 an extension was built on the orders of the Seljuk Judge of Cizre, El Mucahid İshak. In the 1930s the exquisite *minbar*, one of the best-preserved examples of Seljuk woodwork, was removed to the Ethnographical Museum in Ankara.

The prayer hall has three domes above the *mihrab* in the south wall. There are two naves to the north of the prayer hall. A higher traversal aisle runs from the entrance in the north to the prayer hall, which has the effect of highlighting the route to the mosque. Another striking feature is the beautiful blue-tiled minaret.


Tiles from Siirt Ulu Cami [6]

### Asakir Çarşı Mosque

This mosque in the central Ulus quarter was built in 1265 by the Mardin Artukid ruler Melik-us Salih Nasiruddin. Like the Ulu Cami, the mosque originally had three domes, though later two more domes were added on the north side of the mosque. The portico, itself with four domes, which gives access to the mosque is probably Ottoman. Unfortunately, the impressive inscriptions of this monument were lost in 1951 during construction of a new road (Cumhuriyet Cad). Next door is the *Mezopotamya* Tea Garden where you enjoy either tea or Turkish coffee.


Asakir Çarşı Mosque [8]

## Cumhuriyet Camii

The date of construction and builder of this mosque are unknown, though its current name dates from the 1920s. At that time a visiting Atatürk saw the mosque in a poor state, and several years later, in 1929, a large dome was added to the building.

The mosque is located in within a residential area in Ulus quarter. Originally it was square in plan and had a single dome, but the addition of two domes has meant the overall shape becoming rectangular. There is a historic fountain beside the mosque called Suk'ul Ayn Çeşmesi.

## Ayn Salip Fountain

Located in Batı Mahallesi quarter, a poor neighbourhood of the northern part of the city, the fountain is believed to have been built in Seljukid times. It is in poor condition but is due for restoration and was once a vital source of drinking water. Once upon a time girls would come to fetch water for home use and would have a chance to glance at their admirers in their street, though only from a distance.


Ayn Salip Fountain [9]

## Eski Siirt Evi

This beautiful three-storey traditional house was restored in 2006 and is fully furnished with antiques and old furniture. There are some fruit trees and a small decorative fountain in the middle of courtyard. As with other traditional houses here, the material consists of white stone covered with the white plaster locally called cas. The plaster sets quickly, facilitating the construction of domes, but houses which use cas are more expensive and less hardy than their concrete counterparts, and so this style is in danger of disappearing. Managed by the Siirt tourist office, the house is open daily 8am to 6pm and is free to visit. It's located in Conkbayır quarter of the city.

## Clock Tower

This large clock tower is located opposite of the Hükümet Konağı (provincial hall). Originally there was a clock tower on this site built by Alaaddin Paşa in 1905. A new clock tower was built in 1974–1975 and fitted with the old clock, which was in good condition. The replacement tower is domed and divided into four sections, each with a clock face.

## The Church of Deyri-Dara and Deyr Mir Yakup Monastery

According to the locals, this largely ruined church covering some 500 square meters was an important religious centre that hosted clergymen from the neighbouring churches. The site is 3km from north of Siirt city. The monastery,


Eski Siirt Evi (Traditional Siirt house) [10]

mostly built of stone, consisted of a church, library, cloisters, guest quarters and a refectory.

## Sağlarca (Billoris) Spa and the Cave of Ekşili Sulu

Sağlarca Spa is actually inside a cave near Botan Stream, 15km away from Siirt on the road to Eruh. The water, which is slightly acid, is comfortably warm at 33–36°C, and is meant to be of benefit in treating rheumatism, skin diseases, gynaecological diseases and muscle fatigue. The spa has clean facilities and reasonable prices. A second spring near the one which nourishes the spa discharges directly into Botan Stream.

Opposite the spa is the Cave of Ekşili Sulu. Some believe that the water dripping from the cave's ceiling can help curing renal diseases.

The pool is located in a large hall which has several men- and women-changing rooms. The spa times shifts between men and women several times a day. Other facilities include a tea garden and restaurant.

## Nasreddin Bridge and Lif Spa

The bridge, though to have been built by the Seljuks, spans the Botan Stream near Lif Spa, 17km out on the road from Siirt to Eruh. Unfortunately what was once a bridge of five stone arches has been partly transformed into a concrete-and-iron structure.

Near Kışlacık (Lêfê) village, Lif Spa (Germava Lêfê) is at 41°C and taking the waters is meant to help with a range of ailments similar to those tackled by Sağlarca Spa.

## Mir Nasreddin Madrasah

Believed to be nearly 400 years old, Mir Nasreddin Madrasah is in Kavaközü (Tanzî) village, 20km south of Siirt city and 57km from Eruh, towards Güçlükonak. The handiwork on the graves is of particular beauty.


Nasreddin Bridge [11]

### Getting there

Besides the usual road transport connections, Siirt is served by Ankara flights operated by *Atlas Jet*.

### Accommodation

Siirt has two hotels, the two-star *Erdef* in Cumhuriyet Cad (0484 223 10 81) and the *Büyük* in Aydınlar Cad (0484 223 50 58).

### Places to eat

Plenty of places serve *büryani*, for example Ali Büryani Salonu (0484 224 06 04) and *Hûnkar Et Lokantası* (0484 223 28 70) in the city centre.

**Municipality: 0484 223 22 60 Tourist information: 0484 223 57 90**



Bargaining at the animal Bazaar [12]

# Kurtalan (Misirc)

On the railway line 30km west of Siirt, the small town of Kurtalan (population 27,561) acquired its present name when the train station opened in 1945. The town is a lively place though it lacks historical sights. Interestingly, the town has a municipal park, Berfin Yaşam Parkı, for the use of women. A group of women rights activist was the prime movers behind the project. As most parks and cafés in the town were the domain of single men, they wanted to give women a convivial public place to meet one another.

## Beykent Fortress

This castle is in the village of Beykent (Bêkend), 6km south of Kurtalan. The construction materials, stone and brick, suggest it was built during the Byzantine era. Nowadays the fortress is in ruins.

## The Ancient City of Erzen

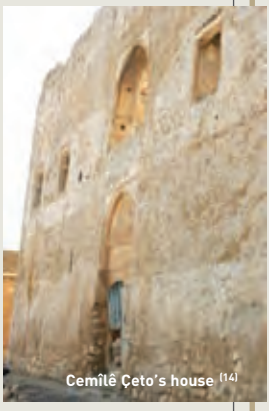
The ruins of the medieval city of Erzen can be seen a little north of the Besiri–Kurtalan road, on the border line between Batman and Siirt provinces, near the village of Yunuslar köyü (Şêx Ûnis) located 28km from Kurtalan. One of the biggest cities in



Kurtalan watch tower [13]

## Konakpınar (Eynqesir)

In the village of Konakpınar 5km from Kurtalan, on the way to Batman, is an old mansion that is said to have been home to Cemilê Çeto. He was the leader of the Pencînar Tribe in the Garzan area, one of the most crowded areas in the region. The mansion is still in good condition. In May 1920, Hüseyin Paşa, tribal leader of the Hıdranlı in Garzan, was staying here when he issued a communiqué of the Kurdish Rise Association stating that Turkish National Forces should leave the area and a homeland to be established for Kurds. He, Cemilê Ceto and other tribal leaders briefly led an uprising which was put down by the army. The famous Aga, Cemilê Çeto, along with his four sons, were arrested and hanged.



Cemîlê Çeto's house [14]

the region during ancient times, and probably to be identified with the ancient city of Tigranokert, it was revitalised when it was under Arab control. In the 16th century, it is said to have had a Christian population of 12,000. The site (open access) has only recently been discovered, and excavations should start soon.

### Avuski Bridge

Outside Kurtalan, 30km away in the village of Bozhüyük (Teliba), the historical bridge of Avuski once stood just opposite the rail bridge. The Avuski Bridge was destroyed during the 1990s conflict, but has been replaced with a structure in keeping with the shape of the original.



**Land workers in Kurtalan [15]**

# Baykan (Hewêl)



Praying at Veysel Karani Mausoleum [16]



Dört Ulular Bridge [17]

Located on a plateau at altitude of 1600m, Baykan (population 5,838) is 47km northeast of Siirt and is nicknamed *Yeşil Baykan* (Green Baykan) for its large forest of pine trees. Baykan is believed to have been under Persian rule in 550 BC. Alexander the Great took over a great part of Anatolia in 332 BC, and after his death, the district was occupied by the Seleucids and later the Parthians, Romans and Sassanids. In 927 the Byzantines took the area and it came under the rule of Philaretos, an Armenian king allied to the Byzantine Empire.

Baykan once lay on the old Silk Road and the roads here are still busy as the area connects major roads from Iran and Syria to Ankara and İstanbul. At times it gets busy with large groups of pilgrims pouring in to visit the tomb of Veysel Karani, especially during May for the Îna Gulane pilgrimage.

## Dört Ulular (Çarpiran) Bridge

Located 3km east of Baykan town, spanning the Bitlis Stream, this stone bridge is believed to have been built in the 16th or 17th centuries. Most probably part of the Silk Road, the bridge is 60m long and 4.4m wide.



Derzin Fortress [18]

## Derzin Fortress

Derzin fortress, with its well-preserved watch-towers, is near Adakale (Derzin) village, 8km east of Baykan. Built in the Middle Ages or early Ottoman era as the seat of a Kurdish Dynasty, it is sometimes referred to as Şahkulu, after the name of an Alevi opponent of the Ottoman Empire. Şahkulu was living in a cave somewhere close to Antalya when he started to spread his Alevi interpretation of the Koran, mostly among Turcoman tribes. He succeeded in convincing more than 10,000 men to revolt against the Ottoman Empire and to withhold taxes. He and his followers were confronted by an Ottoman army and retreated towards Iran, during which they plundered a caravan sponsored by the Safavid Shah İsmail. Furious, the Shah despatched his own army, forcing the followers of Şahkulu to take refuge in the fortress – hence the association between the fortress and him which continues to this day.

## Veysel Karani Mausoleum (Turba Weysel Qaranî)

The holy mausoleum is located 8km from Siirt city in the town of Ziyaret. Veysel Karani, whose original name was Üveys Bin Amir-i Kareni, is believed to have been born in Yemeni village of Karen in Yemen around 555. His father died when he was four years old and he was raised by his mother and never attended school. Eventually he went to Medina in the hope of visiting the Prophet Mohammed, but Mohammed was not at home. He took Ali's side in the struggle that split Islam in the mid-seventh century. During the conflict he was injured and later was declared a martyr.



Ziyaret near Veysel Karani Mausoleum [19]

Three clan leaders wanted to transport his body to their lands, claiming that he was member of their clan. Ali promised to find a solution and it is said that the following morning the three clan leaders all saw his body in a coffin they were presented. So one coffin was taken to Yemen, one to Damascus and one to Baykan (incidentally, in Iranian Kurdistan there is another tomb also believed to be that of Veysel Karani). His domed tomb in Baykan was constructed with the local cas plaster in 1901. The current building was constructed in 1967 when the former one collapsed. Thousands of pilgrims arrive here each year on May 16 and 17, the commemoration days of Veysel Karani.




Veysel Karani Mausoleum [20]

The town has plenty of small shops and kebab restaurants. The only hotel is the Ziyaret *Turistik Hotel* (0484 565 25 09).

# Aydınlar (Tillo)

İbrahim Hakkı's Astronomi hill [21]



Tillo house [22]

The small town of Aydınlar (population 1,930), just 10km northeast of Siirt town, is considered one of the holiest places in the province, home to a large number of old tombs and historical religious schools and mosques. It is said that once upon a time, people so respected the holiness of the place that they used to take off their shoes when entering Aydınlar. The name Tillo, which means "small hill" in Syriac, other sources say it mean high spirits, was changed to Aydınlar in 1982 as part of Turkish government policy of altering the names of 28,000 villages and towns. Besides Kurdish, Arabic is also spoken in Aydınlar, though its use may decline as the Arabs have been migrating to the cities of western Turkey. Unsurprisingly the town has a conservative feel. The children of the town take Koranic courses in the mosques, the town's madrasahs having been abolished by law in 1924.

Walking through the town's narrow alleys you will see number of beautiful old houses and *Abbaras* (also see p: 359), some of which are built as arched passageways at street level called *sabatlar*, which shaded people from the summer sun and used for contacting the alley ways with one another. These homes have attractive wooden doorways and windows and boast calligraphy in Farsi and Arabic around the window frames and above the doors. Some also have interesting door knockers, in some cases even separate ones for men and women to



A view of Botan Stream [23]

use; it is said that the door knocker which produced a deeper sound and larger was the one meant for men.

On the way to Aydınlar you will come across a small village called Bağtepe (Halenze), which is home to the tomb of Sheikh Mohammad Geylani (AH 544–615), a descendent of Sheikh Abdülkadir Geylani, a close friend of İmam Ali. Abdülkadir Geylani is highly regarded by the population of eastern Anatolia and throughout all Kurdish regions and has many followers.

## The tombs of İsmail Fakirullah and İbrahim Hakkı

On a hillside near the town centre is the tomb of İsmail Fakirullah, the great master of Sufism. Born in 1657 in Tilo, he made the pilgrimage to Mecca at the age of 48. Upon his return, he had an accident that kept him in an ecstatic state for eight years. After this experience, he dedicated his life to spiritual guidance and taught many famous scholars, one of whom was Mullah Mohammad Sorani, an ancestor of Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani, currently Iraq's president. İsmail Fakirullah also wrote books, mostly in Arabic and Farsi. He died in 1734 and was buried in Aydınlar.

When the master passed away, his devoted pupil İbrahim Hakkı, pre-eminent astronomer of the time, built his tomb and the tower next to it. İbrahim Hakkı was born in Erzurum in 1703 and came to Aydınlar to study with İsmail Fakirullah. As he was a very talented boy and showed excellent talents in literature, psychology, sociology, medicine and astronomy, he



Şeyh Muhammet Türbesi [24]

was soon renowned throughout the world. He was the first scholar to utilise European telescope in the framework of Islamic astronomy. Among his achievements, he is the author of a divan (anthology) written in 1755; *Marifetname*, an encyclopaedia; and the *İrfaniye*, a book advocating that humans could achieve total understanding of the divine and written in 1763 in Arabic, Farsi and Turkish. He died in Aydınlar at the age of 77. İbrahim Hakkı is buried at the foot of his master.

İsmail Fakirullah's tomb, a domed octagonal building, once boasted a remarkable optical phenomenon courtesy of İbrahim Hakkı, who had a wall containing a window and a prism constructed on a hilltop 3km east of Aydınlar. At the equinoxes (the spring equinox, March 21, obviously has great significance here, being the date of Newroz- also see p: 248), when the sun crosses the equator and day equals night, the prism would beam the first rays of the rising sun across the distance through a gap in the upper part of the mausoleum and onto a mirror, which would illuminate the length of the tomb of Hakkı's mentor. İbrahim Hakkı famously asked, "What use is the new year's [Newroz's] first sunrise if it doesn't illuminate my master's bedside?" However, this contrivance of Hakkı's ceased to work after restoration works in 1965, and despite all efforts is still not functional.

Near the tomb is a local museum (daily 8am to 6pm) maintained by İbrahim Hakkı's descendents and showcasing his effects, including astronomical instruments and several handwritten manuscripts.

## The tombs of Sultan Memduh and Zemzem-il Hassa

Near İbrahim Hakkı's tomb is the grave of Sultan Memduh, the grandson of İsmail Fakirullah and a student of Hakkı's. He is the author of a divan with 47,000 couplets. The tomb in which he is buried was actually constructed for his son, who died before him in 1830. Buried with him is his wife Zemzem-il Hassa (1765–1852), who was the daughter of Sheikh Mustafa Fani. She was the first woman to become an Islamic saint in the region.



**İsmail Fakirullah Türbesi** [25]

The other tombs in Aydınlar are the ones of Sheikh Hamza el Kebir, Sheikh İbrahim el Mücait, Sheikh Muhammed el Hazin. The former received his education from Sheikh Osman in Iraq and returned back to Aydınlar where he was buried.

## Places to stay

In the town centre is a guesthouse funded by an Islamic centre, *Tillo Misafirhanesi*, where you can stay free of charge for a few days.

## Famous scholars of Aydınlar

Besides İsmail Fakirullah and İbrahim Hakkı, Aydınlar has produced a couple of other famous Islamic scholars, one of whom was Mele Xelîl, born in to a Kurdish family in Gulpîk (part of Bitlis province) in 1754. He worked on fields such as Islamic law, the Hadith and Koranic commentary. After qualifying as a lecturer he helped with opening many madrasahs. When he became a sheikh of the Qadiri dervishes, he moved to Aydınlar and became known as Mele Xelîlê Sêrtî. He taught the most important well known families of Kurdish regions such as the Bedirxanîs (see p: 474). Mele Xelîl wrote more than thirty books in Kurdish, Persian and Arabic, of which Nehculenam is regarded as one of the most important books in Kurdish literature. He passed away aged 92.

Another well-known personage who visited for religious reasons was Mewlana Xalidê Bexdadî, born in 1778 into the Baban Tribe in Sehrezur town in Iraqi Kurdistan. He went to Damascus in 1805 en route to the hajj, and shared part of his journey with the well-known religious scholar Evdilahê Dehlewî, who later tutored him in India. Mewlana Xalid became a Qadiri sheikh and later the first sheikh of the Neqsibendi order in the Kurdish regions, and played a significant role in promoting the Neqsibendi order. He also wrote a large number of books in Kurdish, Persian and Arabic in his short life (he died at the age of 49).



İbrahim Fakirullah's room [26]



Wedding [27]

## Eruh (Dihê/Dih)

Eruh (population 9,450), 53km south-east of Siirt, lies at an altitude of 1125m and is surrounded by high peaks which are a continuation of the Taurus range. The town lay on the part of the Silk Road linking Cizre with Mosul in Iraq. Its Kurdish name, Dihê, means "town made up of ten villages".

Visit Eruh and you may sense the proximity of Iraq and Iranian Kurdish regions in the culture, food and music, as well as in the accent that comes through in the local Kurmanji.

The area is known for a traditional type of clothing, *şal û şapik*, made of mohair fabric woven on hand looms (also see p: 499). It was mainly produced by Armenian villagers and production declined after the Armenians were forced to leave the region. Local *kilims* made from goat hair, mainly by young women, are well known. According to some elsewhere in the province, some of the more traditional people in the region tend to be superstitious and



A local from Eruh [28]

believe some manner of things to be unlucky, such as sweeping the house after sunset, bathing on Wednesday night, cutting your nails at night or on a Friday, looking in a mirror at night and so forth.

The old town of Eruh was located where the village of Bilgili (Nivila) is now, twenty minutes from the modern town. There you can visit a madrasah, most of whose classrooms are reasonably preserved, though the sleeping quarters have been destroyed. Further up there was a church, now


Rug weaving [29]

used to keep livestock. This was once an Armenian town, though it is now inhabited by Kurds. It is said that Derwêş Ağa, a Kurdish tribesman from Erbil (Hewlêr) in northern Iraq, expelled the Armenians because they did not pay taxes owed to Cizre. Derwêş Ağa received their lands as a reward. Being already extremely rich, he constructed number of edifices such as Kızıl Mosque (Red Mosque), bridges, hamams and madrasahs.

In addition to Bilgili's madrasah, it is possible to visit the 500-year-old Mir Nasır Madrasah in the village of Kavaközü (Tanze) some 57km away from the Eruh, and the Hısta Thermal Springs nearby in Şırnak province (see p: 471).

## Üzümlük (Paris)

Pass the main checkpoint between Siirt and Eruh and you will drive through a beautiful little village whose name was changed to Üzümlük in 1963, though it was once called Paris. As befits a place of that name, it is well known for its *kahvehanes* (cafés), and there is a decent fish restaurant near the river. You can stroll through the village to see what remains of an old castle and a church.


Mir Nasır Madrasah [30]



Village of Paris [31]

# Pervari (Xisxêr/Berwarî)



A child from Pervari [32]



Famous Pervari honey [33]

The history of Pervari (population 6,607) goes all the way back to the Persian Empire, and as with most ancient places hereabouts it has changed hands numerous times, coming under the control of the Seleucids, Parthians, Romans, Sassanids and Arabs. In 927 it was taken by the Byzantines, and the following century it was ruled by an Armenian prince named Philateros.

The 90km drive here from Siirt will take you through some picturesque mountainous areas, with views of beautiful valleys and waterfalls, here is where the famous Kurdish film director, Yılmaz Güney (see p: 91), filmed parts of his well known film called *Sürü* in Çemê Karê Plateau. Do expect some tight security at the two main checkpoints which are under the control of Jandarma forces. There was once a mixed Kurdish and Armenian village called Ekindüzü (Hartivina), just down from the checkpoint on your way to Pervari. Locals may tell that the two communities were divided by the Pervari road itself, which cuts through the middle of the village. Both communities used to celebrate their festivals together until the Armenians were forced to move out.

Walking through the narrow streets of Pervari, take a look at the old town just behind the army base to see some original Armenian houses which sur-


Village road near Pervari [34]

prisingly are still standing. The last of these small Armenian communities left the town about 20 years ago for Europe. Pervari's organic honey is famous throughout Turkey, so it is a good idea to buy some while visiting the market. The town has a small hostel if you have to stay the night.

Historical sites include the remains of an old church, houses and cemetery in Aşağı Balcılar (Malki) village, 20km from Pervari, and the remains of a church called Derya Burmi, 29km south of town in the village of Keskin (Burmî).


Valley in Pervari [35]

# Şirvan (Şêrwan)



Shepherd [36]



A view from Şirvan [37]

Şirvan (population 4,785), 25km away northeast of Siirt city, looks like a large village. Old Şirvan, on the hilltop, still has a fair number of old houses, but the northern part of town is more modern. The main street is where you will find most of the shops and government buildings. There is no accommodation for visitors.

This was once a mixed Armenian and Kurdish town, and if you walk down the main street and turn left uphill, you will see the ruins of a small Armenian church, Deyr-i Dara Kilisesi. According to locals, the church became a mosque at one stage but this, too, fell into disuse. Painted crosses on the walls can still be seen. Other historical sites include the remains of another church in the middle of the town and the Salih Bey *Türbesi* in the south part of town.

## İrun Fortress

İrun Fortress is situated 40km north of Şirvan in the village of Cevizlik (Bombat) on a sharply peaked mountain, sealed off by a surrounding range and difficult to reach. Tunnels within the mountainside connect the fortress to the foothills and the waters of the river there.

## İncekaya (Kormas) Fortress

Leaving Siirt, you can drive 9km towards Pervari to the village of İncekaya (Kormas). Another formerly mixed Armenian and Kurdish village, this boasts the Byzantine-era Kormas



İncekaya (Kormas) fortress [38]

fortress on the top of hill. You may need to walk for around twenty minutes to reach the castle. The main hall, north and south towers and some of its rooms are still in good condition. During the Ottoman era, the fortress was used as a shelter for feudal lords (Derebeyleri).



Şirvan Butterfly [39]

## Budakoğlu Salih Bey (Beg) Mausoleum

Şirvan is also home to mausoleum of Salih Bey, the author of a history of the Mirs (local Kurdish leaders) of the area. The work, written in 1770, is an interesting and original description of the socioeconomic and cultural aspects of the Kurdish beyliks in the cities of Şirvan as well as Cizre, Diyarbakır, Bitlis, Muş and Hakkari. The original of this document, handwritten in Arabic, was given by Salih Bey's grandsons to the Kurdish Institute in Paris, where it is being translated into Kurdish (www.institutkurde.org/en/library/online/), the same book has been published by Istanbul Kurdish Institute (www.enstituyakurdi.org/ index.php)



A local girl from Siirt [40]


SİİRT
İL HARİTASI
BİTLİS
VAN
BATMAN
MARDİN
ŞIRNAK
Baykan
(Hewêl)
Ziyaret
Atabağı
(Çemarê)
Şirvan
(Şêrwan)
Aydınlar
(Tillo)
SİİRT
(Sêrt)
Kurtalan
(Misirc)
Pervari
(Xisxêr)
Eruh
(Dihê)
Keskin
Kayabağlar
(Zikaydî)
Yanarsu
(Dikle)
Bozhüyük
(Tetiz)
Yunustar
(Şêx Ibra)
İncekaya
(Kormas)
Taşlı
Aşağı Balcılar
(Malki)
Ummuru
Kuşlatık
Beykent
Üzümlük
(Parîs)
Kavaközü
(Tarue)
Bağgözü
(Aynê)
KULA DAĞI
YAZLICA DAĞI
KAYAÖNÜ DAĞI
ŞEYH ÖMER DAĞI
İŞARETLER / LEGEND
MESAFE CETVELİ (KM)
SİİRT
AYDINLAR
BAYKAN
ERUH
KURTALAN
PERVARİ
ŞİRVAN
10
47
53
30
90
25



İhlasiye Madrasah [1]

# BİTLİS (Bedlîs)

The narrow gorge of the **Bitlis** stream controls the only convenient route between upper Mesopotamia and the highlands of the northeast. In the past it was held by Kurdish lords of the Rojkî dynasty, who ruled as vassals of various Turkish-Iranian overlords. The **Ottoman** state ousted them out in the 1840s.

The narrow gorge of the Bitlis Stream controls the only convenient route between upper Mesopotamia and the highlands of the northeast. In the past it was held by Kurdish lords of the Rojki Dynasty, who ruled as vassals of various Turkish Iranian overlords; the Ottoman state rooted them out in the 1840s. Much further back, the province was part of the Urartian Kingdom and collapsed fortresses from that time are not uncommon in the landscape. The earliest settlements in the region date back to the Neolithic Age. From then on, the Urartians, Alexander the Great, Persians, Assyrians, Byzantines, Seljuks, Eyyubids and finally the Ottomans have been in charge. Before World War I, a sizeable portion of the population was Armenian before becoming prominently Muslim.


Bitlis City [2]

As in other provinces of southeast Turkey, the economy is underdeveloped. The mountainous terrain here lends itself to livestock farming rather than agriculture, though there is an ongoing project to create an organized industrial zone in *Rahva Düzlüğü* between Tatvan and Bitlis.

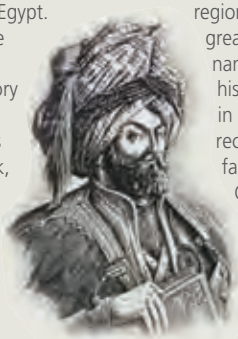
**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
327,886 (2007)
**Average altitude**
1545m
**Area**
6706 square kilometers
**Districts**
Bitlis, Adilcevaz, Ahlat, Güroymak, Hizan, Mutki, Tatvan
**Economy**
Agriculture, Livestock, Farming, Tourism
**Neighbouring provinces**
Muş (west), Ağrı (north), Van (east), Siirt (south)

For visitors, Bitlis is a delight in that mass tourism has not yet arrived to ravage the attractions. Surrounded by beautiful lakes and high hills, it is a tranquil place. The town itself boasts the fascinating *Şerefiye Külliyesi* and the surroundings are rich enough with Urartian architecture and Muslim-era edifices, such as the massive ruined *Elaman Han*, to be visited. The lakes in the larger province are of outstanding beauty and ideal places for relaxing. The towns of Ahlat and Adilcevaz will probably catch your curiosity with their cultural heritage; the former has an excellent archaeological museum and a number of amazing tombstones of historical rulers, while the latter has yet more ruins and Islamic monuments. Adilcevaz is also a base for trekking up Mount Süphan, while the province is also home to Mount Nemrut and a crater lake, with opportunities for skiing and waterskiing.

## Some prominent people from Bitlis

Bitlis has been home to many notable writers and intellectuals such as Mewlana Şêx Îdrîs el-Hakîm, also known as **Îdrîsê Bedlîsî**, who was born in Bitlis in 1452. He worked as a clerk for the Akkoyunlu (White Sheep) Sultan Yakup in 1478 and later worked as advisor to the Ottoman Sultan Selim I, writing lots of encomiums blessing Selim I during the conquest of Egypt. More importantly, he wrote an important book about the history and workings of the Ottoman *Empire.* His most important work, *Heşt Bihîşt* (Eight Paradises), consists of about 80 thousand staves in Persian. Due to his connections, he had a lot influence on Kurdish tribal leaders, and was then tasked by Selim with establishing an administrative framework for autonomous Kurdish territories, with the sultan recognizing the authority of the *beys* locally. He died in 1520 in İstanbul.



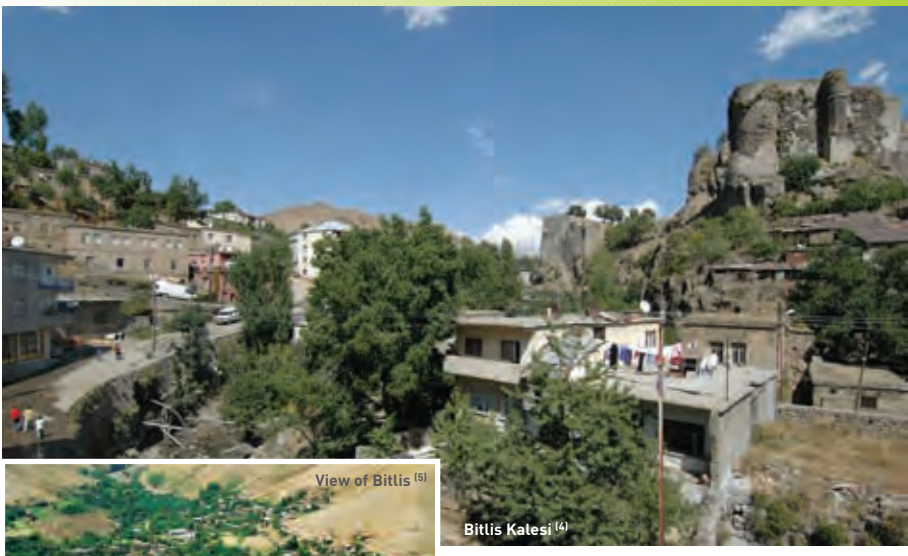
Şerefhan (Şerefxan) [3]

Those who want to know something on past history of these regions and in particulars the Kurds; they for sure come across the famous *Şerefname* of Şerefxanê Bedlîsî. Also known as Sharaf al Din Bitlisi, this great Kurdish Mir, writer and intellectual was born at Kerherud (Gurhurûd) in Iran in 1543 as son of Şemsedîn Xan (han) and the daughter of Emîr Xan. When he reached the age of 9, Shah Tahmasp (of Iran) brought Şerefxanê to his castle and educated him. Some years later he met with Prince Bayezid, the son of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, accepted Bayezid's offer of working for the Ottoman Empire. He became a commander in 1567 and after a few important successes he also became the Mir of Tingabun and Şirvan. After death of Tahmasp in 1567, his successor Ismail nominated Şeref as his undersecretary and the administrator of most local Kurdish tribes. In 1575, when Şeref was at Nakhichevan serving as governor, he was asked to turn back to Bitlis with 400 of his men as the Xan (a ruler) of that region. In 1596 he wrote his great tome in Persian with the name *Şerefname*, the very first history of the Kurds. He died in 1599 (1604 also been recorded) was buried at his family graveyard at Gökmeydan Mosque.

Bitlis was also the hometown of the interesting personage of Zaro (Zoro) Ağa, who supposedly lived 150 years (1774–1934), though according to his doctor he died aged 130. The old man worked as a docker in İstanbul and became an object of curiosity; later he was invited to the United States so that he could be examined by doctors. There are pictures of the old man posing with beautiful young ladies during his visit to the USA. He is also famous to have been married over 25 times.

Besides these figures, we can also mention William Saroyan, though not born in Bitlis, son of an Armenian family that moved from Bitlis to the US. As a well-known story writer, Saroyan reflected the sufferings of migrant Armenian children in many of his works. He was accorded the Pulitzer Prize in 1939, which he refused to accept. The UNESCO declared 2008 as the year of William Saroyan.

For short bio of writer Seîdê Kurdî (Nursî) and foremost poet, philosopher of medieval Armenian, Krikor Naregatsi, see (p: 461/462).



Bitlis Kalesi [4]



View of Bitlis [5]

## Bitlis City

The city of Bitlis (population 43,359) sits at an altitude of 1500m west of Lake Van, with a historical core and modern districts further east. The city has a dramatic setting in a gorge, a fortress, plenty of medieval Islamic monuments and a colourful marketplace.

Stone houses are typical of the city, designed to resist the long and difficult winters. They typically have two storeys, with the ground floor used to house animals. The living area is centred on the stove, giving heat to the kitchen and the rooms. The most beautiful of these houses are among others *Müftüler Evi* in İnönü District, İsa *Kalkan House* in Muştakbaba district and *Yusuf Paşa Konağı* in Zeydan district.

Driving through the one way system in Bitlis's old city can be very challenging, it's recommend you park your car nearby and take on the old city on food. Most of the city's historical sites are near to one another. While there you may want to take an advantage of picking up some quality honey and cheese.

### Bitlis Kalesi

Bitlis was a Kurdish stronghold in the 19th century, and it is often referred to by historians, including Evliya Çelebi in his *Seyahatname* of the 17th century, as the most civilised of the emirates in the region. The beautiful fortress, in the central Zeydan quarter, is well preserved and offers a good panorama over the town.

The fortress is believed to have been built by Alexander the Great's commandant Badlis in 332 BC. Strategically located between two branches of the Bitlis River, it was walled in the 1530s. The double walls were once 2800m long and had various towers, some remnants of which can still be seen on the southern side of the fortress. The exterior walls were originally 30m tall and 5m wide. Archaeological research is going on in the inner fortress.


Paşa Hamam[6]

## Paşa Hamamı

Off Nur Cad. in the town centre, this old *hamam* is close to the fortress and still in use. It was originally built in 1571 and reopened to public after recent renovations. The *hamam* is not dissimilar to others around the country. It originally had separate sections for men and women, but the one for women, which overlooked the river, did not survive. Today mornings are reserved for men and afternoons for women.


Ulu Cami [7]

## Ulu Cami

Centrally located in Gazibey quarter close to the Bitlis Stream, this mosque has a box-like prayer hall containing a restoration inscription from 1150, though it is not known exactly what was present before and what was added at this time. The restoration of 1150 is believed to have been undertaken on the orders of Ebu'l Muzaffer, the last representative of Karahanlılar Dynasty. The mosque was also renovated in 1651 according to an inscription. The mosque is built on a rectangular plan of regional Ahlat stone. Interestingly, the *mihrab* is extended to the outside of the mosque with a dome at the top, in keeping with the dominant style in the region. The minaret, added in 1492, offers an interesting contrast with the plain interior as it has been decorated with motifs such as zigzags. The area nearby is packed with locals drinking tea on the pavements.

## Hacı Behiye Camii (Hacî Begîye)

Also in the Gazibey quarter, this mosque is part of a larger complex (külliye) that once included a hamam and a tomb dedicated to one Hacı Mehmet, though both have not survived. It is sometimes referred to as Gazi Begiye or Behiye Mosque. The külliye was started during Hacı Mehmet's life and completed one year after his death, in 1544. It also includes a separate mescit (small mosque) at the southern end of the Eski Çarşı district, on the east side of the Bitlis Stream. Extremely simple in decoration, the mosque is built of reddish brown stone and unfortunately is surrounded by recently constructions that overshadow its charms. You will find the mosque in the Rus Pazarı (literally "Russian bazaar").

## Şerefiye Külliyesi

If you have time to visit only one place in Bitlis, it should definitely be *Şerefiye Külliyesi* in the central Muştakbaba quarter, on the market square. The square in front of the *külliye* is away from the traffic so it makes a good spot to rest a while. The külliye includes excellent, well-preserved 16th- century mosque, madrasah, a tomb and a hamam.

In the south of the courtyard is the Serefiye Camii, built of fine stone blocks, with corners and the entrance doors covered by little domes. The final prayer room is made of five sections covered by five domes. Look out the beautiful geometrical decorations on the entrance door. Next to the entrance door of the mosque on the east side of the courtyard is a stone tomb which, according to the inscription, was built in 1533 by Emir Şemseddin for Şeref Xan IV, a sixteenth-century Mir of Bitlis. Square in plan, the tomb has one storey covered by pyramidal roof concealing a dome.

The madrasah is on the east side of the courtyard and has its own rectangular courtyard in the middle, the north and south sides of which have arched vaults. There are five rooms, covered with domes, to the east.

North of the mosque is an imaret, once was used as soup kitchen for the poor. Made of stone blocks and red bricks, it has a central hall and a room in each corner. There is also a little pool in the hall, covered with an octagonal dome.

In front of the mosque's southern wall is a *han* or inn, made of stone blocks with a courtyard and rooms on two sides. The *iwans* to the north and south are covered with barrel vaults while the rooms east and west have domes.

The stone *hamam* nearby (sometimes referred to as Han Hamamı) in Hatuniye Cad. is a beautiful example of traditional Turkish bath. The changing room has a square plan and is covered with a dome, while the hot section has a central large dome.

## Alemdar Camii

This mosque is also the tomb of the Ayyubid Sultan Ensari's brother Feyzullah Ensari (also known as Alemdar Paşa) and as such, it is quite a popular pilgrimage site. In the Muştakbaba quarter towards the southern part of the town, next to Alemdar Bridge, the mosque is believed to have been built by Maksut Paşa in 1783/84 and is a two-storey building with the tomb in the lower floor, with the prayer hall above. The roof is simply made of earth. Recent renovation beautifully managed to restore the original character of the mosque.



Şerefiye Külliyesi [8]

## Sultaniye Camii (Sheikh Garip Tomb)

In the town centre, located in Muştakbaba quarter, look for Alamdar Sokak to discover this mosque built of stone blocks in 1632 by one Hadım Mehmet Aga. The second floor is reserved for prayers while to the north are three



Kızıl Camii [9]

rooms arranged one after the other: the one in the middle serves as a tomb, covered with a barrel vault.

## Kızıl Camii

On the road to İnönü quarter, this mosque gave its name to the surrounding neighbourhood, namely the Kızıl Mescit district. Built in 1507 by Hüseyin, son of Aleaddin, the mosque was renovated in 1864 by Ibn Kasim el Hacı Mehmet and is still in use. It is built of stone blocks and offers good views of the city, Ulu Cami and the fortress. The prayer hall has kept much of its originality, compared to recent additions.

## Bitlis Church

In the courtyard of the tobacco factory in Bitlis city centre is a church whose original name is unknown, though we known it was built in 1884–1885. Built of stone blocks with a flat roof, it is now ruined and desolate. The central nave was bigger than the two to each side, and all three naves had barrel vaults. To reach the site, take the road to Yusufiye Madrasah until you will come to the Herse quarter .You will need to get permission from the factory management to visit the church.

## Yusufiye Madrasah

It is thought that this religious school in the İnönü quarter was built by a pious person named Hacı Yusuf in the 17th century. A porch will lead you to an L-shaped building with five sections. The classroom is the one right next to the entrance door and is followed by three cells. The madrasah, which also includes a *mihrab*, is in an uphill part of the İnönü quarter and can be reached by taking a *şehiriçi* (inner city) *dolmuş*.

## Gökmeydan Camii

In the Atatürk quarter, this two-storey mosque was built in 1801 and enlarged in 1924 after a visit by Atatürk, who ordered that there should be a minaret added. The mosque is built of stone blocks and has six domes, with an east–west aisle on the lower floor. The decorations on the *mihrab* are a later addition. It is here where Şeref Xanê Bedlîsî is buried with his family in the adjacent graveyard.


A motif from Gökmeydanı Camii [10]


Gökmeydanı Camii [11]



İhlasiye Madrasah (12)

## İhlasiye Madrasah

This is a regular Seljuk-style madrasah built in 1589 by Emir Şerefxan according to the inscriptions. Built of stone blocks and oriented east–west, it has a rectangular courtyard covered by a dome. The vaulted rooms in the northern part of the court are covered with earth. There are two more vaulted rooms in the southern part. The monument is supported with 4 towers at each corner. The madrasah is located in the Mahallebaşı quarter.

At the madrasah's entrance is a small shop selling traditional handmade shoes called *harik (xarik)*. There is also a tourist office here with brochures about the province. Opposite is a pleasant municipal tea garden. Near the İhlasiye Madrasah is tomb of Sheikh Şemseddin Veli, built of stone blocks, it is in two parts, the larger of which is similar to Seljuk tombs and also has a plan recalling a cross.

## Sheikh Tahir-i Gürgi Tomb

This tomb, housing the corpses of not only Tahir-i Gürgi but also Hüsameddin-i Bitlisi, is located in a small cemetery in the Zeydan quarter. According to the inscription above the gate of the cemetery, the tomb was built in 1664 by Abdül Han, in the name of Sheikh Tahir-i Gürgi. The tomb is a twelve-sided construction with a pyramidal roof.

## Küfrevi Tomb

Opposite the Kızıl Camii is this tomb, one of the most beautiful tombs in the city, built by a Greek craftsman of Sultan Abdülhamid. The tomb houses the graves of six Sunni saints and is a popular pilgrimage site. The tomb is made of stone blocks with rich reliefs and has four domes. The exterior walls are on an octagonal plan; the interior is circular, you would need to ask for the keys from the local *Muhtar*. While you are in the locality take a few snap shot of the old but beautiful houses along with narrow roads leading to the tomb.

## Ethnography Museum

There have been many excavation works in the province, with many Assyrian and Urartian artifacts found.


Küfrevi Tomb [13]

Most of them can be seen in the Ahlat Museum, but Bitlis city has its own ethnography museum, housed in a 19th-century governorate office, and open daily from 8am to noon and 1pm to 5pm. Address: Etnografya Müzesi, Mahallebaşı (at the end of the district), Bitlis.

### Çiftkaya Ski Centre

The Çiftkaya ski centre, with four pistes and a ski lift, is located in the centre, in the Yükseliş quarter, and can be reached by public bus or take a taxi. The ski season starts in November and ends in April; equipment can be hired here. The resort is often called as *Kamp Eğitim Merkezi*, and there is a small hotel too (0434 226 87 55 or 0434 226 87 91).

### Değirmenaltı (Por)

The small village of Değirmenaltı is located some 9km northwest of the city centre. The village has a very old Armenian church (founded in the 5th or 6th century) and an amazing collection of Armenian *khatchkars*. These memorial steles have intricate decoration, dating from the 15th centuries, showing the same kind of craftsmanship observable in the Selçuklu graveyard in Ahlat (p: 454). They are among the best preserved and most interesting *khatchkars* in Turkey. 2km from the village, there are ruins of a second, monastical church.

### The Han of El-Aman (Rahva/Rehwa)

This *han* is easy to locate 12 km away from the city centre, at the intersection between the roads to Tatvan and Muş and near the point where the Bitlis Gorge comes to an abrupt end on the lava field of Mount. The site, built by

### Getting there

Bitlis has good bus connections with neighbouring cities in the region, and ferries from Van (to Tatvan). The nearest airports are in Van (68km) and Muş (83km).

### Accommodation

The centrally located *Şark Mermer Hotel* in Harmantepe mevkii (0434 228 11 66), across from the Best Sigara Fabrikası, has mountain views from its rooms and two restaurants. In the winter you can also stay at the *Dideban Hotel* on Nur Cad (0434 226 28 20, didebanotel.com), 2km from Çift Kaya Ski Centre and 20 km from Nemrut Crater.

### Places to eat

The *Beş Minare Lokantası* (0434 226 37 00) offers all kind of kebabs as well as local cuisine (if pre-ordered) such as *içli köfte* and *girar*. The restaurant is located in the Kalealtı Bazaar. Well known for its *büryan* is the *Büryancı Azmi Ustanın Yeri* restaurant in Balıkçılar Cad, open from 6am until 3pm (0434 226 13 70).

**Municaplity: 0434 226 59 00 Tourist information: 0434 226 53 02**



Arıdağ (Qutlîk ) Tobbaco [14]

the Ottoman governor of Van in 1562, is a massive ruin, as the original caravanserai measured 90m by 70m. More than 100 such caravanserais were built at convenient intervals along Anatolian highways by the Seljuk sultans and to a lesser extent by the Ottomans. Trade caravans were accommodated free as a public service, and the *hans* were fortified against attack and defended by a resident garrison

The building consists of one large courtyard and five main parts, built with using dark stone. The written sources have proved that the *han* was renovated by Murat the 4th.



The han of El Aman [15]

The beautiful *han* was designed so that it could host the caravanserai for which the place was particularly attractive because of the frequent devastating storms in the region. Only 70 years ago, you could still see horses and even camels used for transport in the region, but the han has been abandoned for the last quarter of a century.

Renovations are planned to turn the *han* into a hotel and some commercial premises, including bars, restaurants and a gallery to display of crafts.

## Tobacco at Arıdağ (Kultik/Qultîk)

Some of the best tobacco in Turkey can be bought in Arıdağ village, 18km southeast of Bitlis city on the way to Hizan. The whole of this area has a reputation for growing the best tobacco thanks to the fertile soil and experience in this field dating to past generations. The village itself is architecturally striking, and was once the important Armenian settlement of Khulting.

# Tatvan (Tetwan)



Mount Nemrut and crater lake [16]

Tatvan town lies in the southwest corner of Lake Van, some 25km northeast of Bitlis city. A natural harbour, Tatvan town was also an important transit point on the Silk Road and the district (population 55,033) is home to one of the largest caravanserais in Anatolia, as well as interesting historical cemeteries. A reminder of this past importance is the fact that the rail link between western Turkey and Van passes through Tatvan, where passengers take a ferry across the lake to Van.

Tatvan was once home to a 16th-century fortress whose remnants are thought to lie in the district of Çağlayan, right under the primary school's foundations. It was probably built in 1550 by Zal Paşa, one of Sultan Süleyman's men; legend says that the Shah of Iran himself, Tahmasp, ordered its destruction after he conquered Adilcevaz and Ahlat fortresses. It could be that this the fortress has even older, Urartian origins, and some historians claim that pottery found in the Kale Tepe district of Tatvan (where the ferry dock is), dates from 3000 BC.

The Tatvan Eastern Anatolia Fair (Tatvan Doğu Anadolu Fuarı), held in late June and July, is a big attraction for hundreds of thousands of businessmen and tourists. As a joint initiative of the municipality and the governorate, the first fair was organized in 1969; every year since then dozens of firms present their activities and this is also an occasion to promote folklore groups and regional specialties.

## Urartian Cemetery

As in many places around Lake Van, Tatvan has an Urartian cemetery, in the Kale Tepe quarter nearby the ferry dock. What can be seen are two distinct small rooms, at the entrance of which are beautifully engraved stone works. Unfortunately, some treasure hunters made their way through the cemetery, and the many holes in the tomb are probably their handiwork.

## Küçüksu (Kotum)

This village, 7km southeast of Tatvan, is home to the tomb of Abdullah bin Derare, who arrived with the Islam armies when he was already elderly,


Urartian Cemetery [17]

and died here. The tomb is dug out of rock and situated by a small mosque of the same name. The village also has two historical cemeteries on top of a hill overlooking the Tatvan–Hizan highway. The first cemetery is situated on a steep rock and contains many sarcophagi and gravestones lying around, mostly in the central and southern areas. The oldest sarcophagus dates back to 1173 according to the inscription. The second cemetery, to the north, has 12 graves with both headstones and footstones; most of these are in ruins and have no inscriptions or decorations. A pilgrimage site on a small hill nearby is visited by childless couples in the hope that this act will bring them offspring.

## The Monastery of Goms

The Göllü Plain is separated from the Lake of Van by just a small mountain range. If you climb this mountain from a point somewhat west of the village of Çanakdüzü (Komus), 48km from Tatvan centre, at the other side will await you a surprise. Down below, just at the lakeside lies the ancient monastery of Saint Gorge of Goms. This monastery still partly surrounded by walls, dates from the 10th century. It was abandoned in the first half of the 19th century.

## Dalda (Engesor) Cemetery

Around 10km west of Tatvan just before the village of Dalda (Engesor) is another historical cemetery, reached by the small pathway that leads to the village. There are 72 tombs here, 16


Dalda (Engesor) Cemetery [18]

with tombstones, the rest being sarcophagi. In the western part of the cemetery is the oldest tomb, with a decorated tombstone whose inscription mentions Ramadan, AH 723, corresponding to September in the year AD 1323. To reach the site you will have to pass through the village of Çağlayan (Tuğ), where the ruins of a church known as Tuğ Kilisesi can be found.

## St George (Anania) Monastery

The 17th-century architecture of this monastery, which used to serve as the centre of the Karçkan Bishopric, is what distinguishes it from others in the region. The place includes a little chapel as well as a *jamatun* that was added later. The monastery was originally surrounded by a thick, high wall with two towers on the southern side, both totally destroyed today though the walls are still intact. There is also a room behind which was once the priest's residence, but nowadays the whole monastery is used for storage by local people. The church is located among houses in Kıyıdüzü (Kızwak) village, 10km from Tatvan on the shores of Lake Van.


İncekaya (por) Village [19]

## Tokaçlı (Kurtkan)

13km east of Tatvan in the village of Tokaçlı is a cemetery that is believed to date from the 15th century. There are 28 graves and the oldest of the tombstones belongs to Asiye, daughter of Davut and is dated 1438. The tombstones suggest that the cemetery was used in 15th century. The tombs usually have tombstones but are mostly in ruins today. The village also has an interesting mosque, built in 1685 and renovated in 1893. There is a praying area and a barrel-vaulted prayer hall divided by an aisle perpendicular to the *mihrab*.

## İncekaya (Por)

Around 5km beyond Tokaçlı and at the end of the road is İncekaya village, containing the tomb of Hüseyin Dede and, next to it, the Hüsrev Paşa


St George (Anania) Monastery[20]


Mt Nemrut and Crater lake (21)

Mosque. Originally carved out of the rocks, the mosque has lost its uniqueness somewhat as it has been covered by plaster, a very common practice in Turkey.

Hüseyin Dede is believed to have lived between 1470 and 1550 and used to undergo periods of trial and suffering in a retreat place he developed in the rocks and accessible by a stairway. Hüseyin Dede was a good friend of Hüsrev Paşa (see p: 552), who gave him the village as a present, where his tomb located right next to the mosque. The tomb is composed of a prayer room and a sleeping room, both of which can be visited. Unsurprisingly, this is a pilgrimage site and local people do sometimes bring animals here for sacrifice. The site is also popular for picnics and swimming.

To the right of the tomb are some caves, some high up, which can be accessed using ladders; nowadays the caves are used for storage.

## Mount Nemrut and Crater Lake

Not to be confused with the Commagene site near Adıyaman, this Mount Nemrut (Nemrut Dağı) is an extinct volcano 15km from Tatvan and also reachable from Güroymak town via Oduncular (Boryan) village. The amazingly beautiful volcanic crater has not produced any lava for the past 1400 years but earlier explosions gave birth to some five crater lakes fed with snowmelt. In fact Lake Van itself was created when a huge volcanic explosion in prehistoric times blocked outflow from the area.

Crater Lake (Krater Gölü) looks like something from a fairy tale. Soğuk Göl



Goms Monastery [22]

is 600m above the level of Lake Van. Covering an area of 12 square kilometres, hidden between pinnacles, the lake is an ideal place for excursions as well as for water sports. A stabilised road will get you over the rim and into the crater, where there are two large lakes, one of them is called Ilık thermal. It is a short walk from the rim to the highest point of the mountain, which offers a spectacular view over both crater lakes and Lake Van.

There are numbers of cafes operate beside either Crater Lake, plus a small shop where good quality fish can be bought for grilling. The silence is overwhelming after nightfall.

Tours here can be arranged in Tatvan and Bitlis. It is possible to charter a speedboat and water-ski if you bring your own gear.

## Tatvan Skiing

Located some 10km northeast of town on your way to Nemrut Lakes. The Bitlis Çiftkaya Kayak Merkezi (Çiftkaya Ski Centre) has four pistes and parking space.

The ski complex has excellent ski pistes, it's one of the best in Turkey, which has recently been built by the municipality. The mountain has snow for up to five months a year, allowing the facilities to stay open



Tatvan Skiing [23]

almost half the year. The mountaintop offers exceptional views over Tatvan town and Mount Süphan to the north. A ski festival takes place every February in the Tatvan facilities.

### The Tomb of Abdülcelil Behtani

Abdülcelil Behtani came to the area as a proselytiser and built a madrasah and a small dervish lodge to spread Muslim values. Upon his death, he was buried next to the madrasah and the complex was supplemented by a mosque. The tomb is a popular pilgrimage site, located near the lake close to the beautiful village of Yelkenli (Reşadiye/Sorp) some 30km east of Tatvan. The surrounding area is popular for camping and weekend picnics and offers sunset views.

### Harmanlı Waterfalls

In the Göllü Plain (Axkîsa Golê), a waterfall appears in spring, and is worth making an excursion to see. To get there, make your way to the small village of Harmanlı village (Pînkas) 46km east of Tatvan; the falls are just 1km away from here. Once this was part of an Armenian heartland, but nowadays the whole village is populated by several generations of one large Kurdish family. The waterfall was created when a tunnel was dug in the 1950s to allow more precipitation to reach Lake Van.

**Ferry transportation between Van-Tatvan** [24]



### Getting there

Tatvan is a stop for buses heading around Lake Van to and from Van city. Ferries to and from Van city take at least 4 hours and half and operate to a schedule that is linked to rail departures, since they also take train wagons.

### Accommodation

The *Kardelen Hotel* is centrally located near the municipality building and has a patisserie, snack bar and various other facilities (0434 827 95 00, www.kardelenotel.com).

### Places to eat

*Altın Şiş Izgara Salonu* on Cumhuriyet Cad (0434 827 76 90) offers kebabs, grills and other meals.

# Güroymak (Norşîn/Norşên)



Güroymak Hot Springs [25]



Kalender Baba Tomb [26]

Güroymak (population 19,787), some 30km north of Bitlis, takes its old name Çukur (literally "hole") from the fact that it is located in a plain surrounded by two mountains. The district does offer some scenic beauty; there is one especially popular place called Yeşil Göl, easily accessible by car one hour's drive southeast of town.

Interesting to visit are the Seljukid graves indicating that the area was inhabited during the 11th century. In fact, being on the Silk Road, the area witnessed the passage of many civilizations and the history of the town goes as far as the Hittite, who were the first settlers and were followed by the Urartu, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Ottomans, Russians and Ottomans again, up until modern times when Güroymak became a town in 1988.

## Kalender Baba Tomb and Güroymak Camii

As a pilgrimage place, the tomb of Kalender Baba (who is also called Kalendar Ağa) is easily reachable in the town centre, in the Kümbet district. The two-storey construction, built in 1299

and renovated in 1970, is large enough to host a mescit (small mosque) and looks conical from the outside. If you have time to see the other tombs in the region, such as Şirin Hatun-Boğatay Aka and Alimoğlu Tombs in Ahlat, you will notice that they were all constructed following the same scheme.

Starting from the centre and heading for the Kalendar Baba Tomb, you will see the Güroymak Mosque, built in 1898 according to inscriptions.

## Red Graves in Aşağıkolbaşı (Morx)

The southern part of Aşağıkolbaşı village, 10km from Güroymak, contains interesting red graves dating from the 13th and 14th centuries. The tombstones are decorated with little daggers and sword motifs engraved in niches.

## Güroymak (Çixor) Thermal Springs

These springs, 10km north of Güroymak in Budaklı (Axacur) village, are little known and you are likely to have to ask locals to show you the way there. Slightly acidic and at a comfortable temperature of up to 39°C, the water is recommended for rheumatism as well as digestive problems and neurological conditions. Of the three springs, one is used exclusively by women, the other two by men. There is a fish restaurant nearby.



Red graves in Aşağı kolbaşı (Morx) [27]



Cooking bread [28]

# Ahlat (Xelat)



Selçuklu Graveyard [29]

The lakeshore town of Ahlat, 60km northeast of Bitlis, is a welcoming place that sprawls along a 5km-long main street, Sanayi Cad, where locals sit on small stools outside cafés and shops. Behind Ahlat town's main street are charming one and two-storey houses built of Ahlat stone –a soft volcanic stone that is easy to work– and almost buried in green foliage. Each house has a large garden planted mainly with apricot, cherry, walnut and plum trees, and surrounded by a wall of the same stone.

A tale has it that when the city fell into the hands of the Medes, the daughter of the defeated Urartian King Lat, started crying "Ah! Lat!", giving the town its name. In medieval Armenian town was called Khlad, echoing the Urartian name for themselves. The Khald established a kingdom around Lake Van in the first half of the first millennium. Much later the town flourished under a succession of Muslim dynasties. For a while their rulers had the grand title "King of Armenia", although in fact they were of Arabic and later of Turkish origin. Ahlat was destroyed in a course of an Ottoman–Persian war in 1549. Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent built a fortress at a new site 2 km north, but failed to revive the city. The modern town is of later vintage.

Ahlat is also famous for its handmade walking sticks, the crafting of which is passed down from father to son. The sticks are made of walnut wood and have handles taking the form of beautifully designed horse's heads, bird's heads etc.



Ahlat Sticks [30]

The town offers many possibilities for nice picnics along the water, either at Lake Van or the Nazik Lake further away. If you pass through Ahlat in summer, don't miss the Ahlat Culture Festival between 23 and 25 August. It features the usual concerts, folk dances and poetry readings, plus competitions to do with areas such as crafts. On the second day people head to Mount Nemrut, with free buses laid on by the municipality.

Ahlat district (population 22,699) is well known for its many cemeteries, making you feel that the bodies of hundreds of ancestors from ancient civilizations may lay right under your feet. Not only are the tombstones often richly decorated with inscriptions, but they are also extremely large, sometimes 2m tall. The oldest of the tombs belonging to rulers and notables dates from 1222, when Ahlat was held by the Kurdish rulers of neighbouring Bitlis. Just about the only medieval dynasty that is not represented are the Seljuks, although the signpost of the Directorate of Antiquities insists on calling the Meydanlık cemetery Seljuk. The tombstones are on the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Thousands of obelisks in rust-red tufa stand slanting in a vast field just outside town against the shores of Lake Van. Older tombstones from the 18th century are carved with lace-like precision; recent ones are more roughly fashioned.

## Ahlat Sahil Kalesi

The Kale district is built around the inner part of the Ottoman fortress begun by Süleyman the Magnificent and completed by Selim II in 1568. The original fortress was probably built during Roman times and had three iron gates and 13 towers. At the time, it could host 350 houses, a mosque, a hamam and many shops.


Sahil Kalesi [31]

Today, most of the fortress is in ruins. The few ramparts and walls that still stand are in private ownership and the only possessions of the people who live here are the vegetable and fruit


Ahlat Beach [32]


Keşiş Tomb [33]

gardens and two mosques where they can go for Friday prayers.

Of Ahlat stone, the Kadı Mahmut Mosque can be found in the inner fortress and is thought to have named after the man who built it in 1584. Severely damaged during World War I, the mosque was totally abandoned between 1930 and 1940. It was nicely renovated in recent years and opened again for worship in 1992; now it serves as a religious office. Built on a slope, the mosque is surrounded by a courtyard.

Also in the inner fortress, the İskender Paşa Camii was built by a local ruler, İskender Paşa, in 1584, and is a typical example of Ottoman architecture. The mosque originally was part of a külliye, a religious complex also featuring a hamam, though that has been destroyed. If you look carefully you will notice a cemetery in the southern part of the mosque.

## Kale Cemetery

This cemetery in the Kale quarter hosts Ottoman graves and is thus one of the most recent examples of tombstone work in Ahlat. It started being used after the battle of Çaldıran and was completed at the time of Sultan Süleyman. All the grave stones in this cemetery are similar to each other. Most of them are depicted with bird and lace motifs. Most of the tombstones are engraved without particular care.

## İskender Paşa Camii

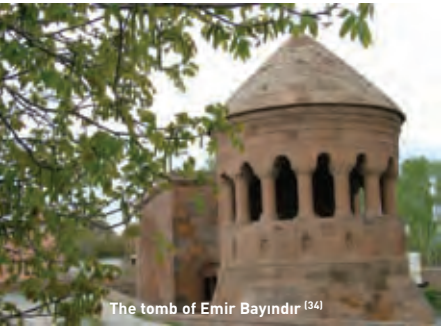
The inscriptions at the entrance of this mosque, in the Kale quarter, claim it was designed by Mimar Sinan himself in 1584 during the second Persian, Ottoman, Iran war. It was last used for worship in the late 19th century before being damaged during the Russian invasion of World War I and finally abandoned. The building is rectangular and has a single minaret.

## Ahlat Museum

The museum displays archaeological artifacts from various civilizations plus ethnographic items. It is particularly strong on Seljuk remains, which the region is littered with, including items from excavations of the hamam nearby and the Ulu Cami. There are also items from the necropolis some 15km away from the town, including 2nd-century BC ceramics. The museum is centrally located and open daily (except Monday) from 8am to noon and 1pm to 5pm.

## Ulu Kümbet

In the İkikubbe quarter, the tomb between the museum and the central cemetery is referred to as Ulu Kümbet. With its masterful stonework and rich decorations, as well as its size (it has two storeys and is much larger than similar tombs), it is regarded as the greatest tomb in the region and the perfect example of an Anatolian funerary monument. The upper floor is where the corpse is housed, and it is believed that this is Sadi Ağa's tomb. Although there is no inscription, it is believed that it was built between 1273 and 1275 given the resemblances with the nearby, minor Usta Tomb.


The tomb of Emir Bayındır [34]

## Keşiş Tomb

This tomb, also in the İkikubbe quarter, has no inscription giving any background on it, but is probably 14th century judging from its design. It is a two-storey, 12-sided building with a circular interior and a conical roof. The name keşiş translates as "priest". The tomb is in a private garden.

## The Tomb of Emir Bayındır

The tomb of Bayındır Bey ibni Rüstem (d.1481), in the İkikubbe quarter next to Meydanlık cemetery, is a masterpiece of architecture and stonework that has become a symbol of Ahlat. It was constructed under the Akkoyunlus in 1477 at a time when Ahlat was a centre of knowledge and culture; the artisans and architects of Ahlat had a special gift, especially for tombs and cemeteries. With its cylindrical body, opened to the south with arches and columns, the tomb is quiet different from other tombs in Ahlat. The inscriptions on the dome refer to Bayındır's life and qualities. Some art historians claim that there is only tomb comparable to this, and it is in Azerbaijan; both tombs are believed to have been built by an architect named Baba Can. One unusual aspect of the tomb is that it is accompanied by a *mescit*, or small mosque, to the north. Recently renovated, the mosque is believed to have been built by Bayındır ibni Rüstem, while the basic-looking artwork is that of Baba Can, a name that can be read on a white stone on the right side of the mosque.

## Emir Ali tomb

Also in the İkikubbe quarter, this tomb was built at the start of the 14th century and belongs to the category of Anatolian tombs with iwans. It has a square base and a pyramidal roof and is entered by a large arched door. The tomb was restored in 1951.

## Çifte Hamam

The remains of what seem to be a "double" *(çifte)* hamam (with sections for men and women) are to be found in the İkikubbe district. The hamam probably dates to the Seljuk era.

## Double Tombs (Çifte Kümbetler)

According to the inscription on one of these tombs, they belong to the Emir Bogatay Aka and his wife Şirin Hatun and also his son and his daughter in law, and date to 1281. Very well preserved, the two tombs in the İkikubbe quarter are two-storey constructions with square floors and twelve-sided upper sections topped with pyramidal roofs. Both tombs are made up of blocks of reddish-brown stone and are decorated with geometrical motifs. In the same field is the Merkez Cemetery, where the tombstones are mostly destroyed.


Double Tombs (Çifte Kümbetler) [35]

## Meydan Cemetery (Selçuklu Mezarlığı)

This historical cemetery, where over a thousand souls lie buried, occupies the plain between İkikubbe and Harabe Şehir (Tahtısüleyman) quarter, and is the biggest and the most important cemetery in Ahlat. Many different kinds of gravestones dating back from the 12th to the 16th century can be seen here; especially noteworthy are the huge rectangular gravestones and excavated "tumulus"-style graves that the people of the region call *akit*. The tombs bear the names of 28 different artisans.

## Hasan Padişah Tomb

This substantial tomb of reddish-brown Ahlat stones sits on a slope and can be spotted from any point in the south part of the Harabe Şehir quarter where it is located; there are regular *dolmuş* here from the centre. At 19.5m in height, this is the second biggest tomb here and is quite similar to Ulu Kümbet; indeed it is supposed



Emir Ali Tomb[36]

to have been built by the same craftsmen. According to the inscription above the entrance, the tomb was built for Hasan Ağa in 1275. The construction was renovated in 1971. The tomb is cylindrical, with two storeys and a pyramidal roof. The interior is unadorned. It is accessible by a door with steps to either side.

## Taht-ı Suleiman (Kara Şeyh) Cemetery

Southwest of the Hasan Padişah Tomb, this cemetery has interesting tombstones dating from the 14th century, as well as an interesting sheep-head sculpture and a tumulus. Craftsmen named in some inscriptions



Meydanlık Cemetery [37]


Selçuklu Hamam[38]


Hasan Padişah Tomb[39]

are also mentioned on tombstones in the Meydanlık Cemetery.

## Emir Bayındır Bridge

This footbridge over a stream flowing from the Harabe Şehir quarter to the lake is said to have been built by Bayındır Bey at the end of the 15th century. With a single arch, the bridge comprises reddish-brown Ahlat stone. The bridge is between Harabe Şehir Camii and the tomb of Hasan Padişah.

## Seljuk Hamam

This *hamam* was excavated in 1975 and probably dates to the 14th century. You can reach it 2km from the central marketplace, in the Harabe Şehir Neighbourhood. Only the hot room of the *hamam* was properly excavated.

## Sheikh Necmeddin and Erzen Hatun Tombs

Sheikh Necmeddin was a famous mystic living here in the first quarter of the 13th century, and according to the inscriptions, his tomb was built in 1222. It can be seen in the cemetery in the Kayı quarter. Renovated in the 1970s, the tomb is a square monument with a pyramidal roof. The choice of a rectangular base distinguishes it from other funeral monuments in the region such as the more attractive Erzen Hatun Tomb, next to it in the Havai Cemetery. According to the inscription, the tomb was built in 1396 for Emir Ali's daughter Erzen Hatun. The two-storey tomb is accessible through a door in the southern part with steps to either side. The construction has a twelve-sided shape and pyramidal roof from outside, however it is cylindrical and covered with a dome inside. You can see a small niche on each edge of 12 sides. It was renovated in the 1960s together with some other funerary monuments in the province, and was renovated again in 2006.


Abdurrahman Gazi Tomb [40]

## Abdurrahman Gazi Tomb

It is commonly believed that Abdurrahman Gazi was one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, and thus his tomb is a popular pilgrimage site. In the Tunus quarter on a hill with views of town and lake, the tomb has a square plan, though the upper part is hexagonal and has a pyramidal roof. Note also the large vaulted window with beautiful ornamentation. The tomb has been recently renovated.

## Kırklar Cemetery

In the Kırklar quarter, this cemetery has some 13th- and 14th-century tombstones. The smaller tombstones are not sophisticated, but they bear inscriptions and have artistic value not only because of their beauty but because they represent an art form that is now defunct. There is one sarcophagus in this cemetery which counts as one of the best decorated in all Ahlat's cemeteries. Some of the pillar-shaped gravestones are actually shaped to resemble human bodies, with a head and shoulders discernible.

## Nazik Lake

This snowmelt-fed lake is some 16km northwest of Ahlat and is a pleasant place to fish in spring and summer. In summer, you can also try to swim to the little island very close to the shore. In winter it freezes and provides an unforgettable sight; at this time people cross it on foot or in cars.


Lake Nazik [41]

# Adilcevaz (Elcewaz)



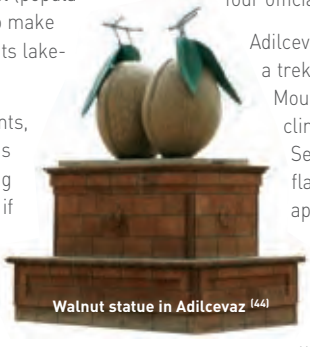
A view from Adilcevaz [42]

The attractive small town of Adilcevaz lies close to Lake Van 85km northeast from Bitlis. The town still bears some scars from the passage of Russian troops in the region between 1915 and 1918. More significant as a relic is Kef Kalesi, one of several remnants reflecting the fact that this was an Urartian stronghold in the 7th century BC. Adilcevaz district (population 24,727) will also make an impression with its lakeside beaches.



A View from Adilcevaz [43]

In Ottoman documents, the town is named as Zatul Cevaz, meaning "walnut valley", and if you are here at the right time (usually October), you can attend the Walnut Festival, at which the best walnuts are chosen and women cook meals containing walnuts and prepare walnut butter. As a souvenir, you may want to bring back a traditional *kilim* made by one of the four official ateliers.



Walnut statue in Adilcevaz [44]

Adilcevaz is a potential base for a trekking expedition up Mount Süphan, which is best climbed between July and September. The eastern flank is the most popular approach; you start your trip from the village of Aydınlar and head up for 6km until the Süphan Valley (2,500m) where you can camp. From there, it should take you between 8 and 10 hours to reach the summit (4,058m) and come back to the base.

Besides Lake Van, the district is also home to the small Arin Lake, whose water has the same peculiar composition as that in Lake Van (hence its Turkish name, Sodalı Göl). You will be surprised to find that you feel unusually buoyant in the water. The lake is located in the north of the district, 11km from town near Mount Süphan and the village of Göldüzü (Arin). Much smaller is Aygır Lake, very pleasant with its waters 5m deep; the lake is 9km north of Adilcevaz and south of Mount Süphan.

## Adilcevaz Kalesi

What remains of this fortress is located on a steep hill around 200m west of the town between the Orta and Çayır quarters, near the beach. Built of beautiful stone, it is believed to have been built by the Persian Shah Tacettin Alişan from Azerbaijan. It was later renovated by Sultan Suleiman. The castle used to have 38 towers and housed 70 households, ammunition cellars, wheat storehouses and water cisterns. Legend says that Caliph Ali spent a day in a cave in the castle, supposedly validated by horseshoe footprints in the wall. In the northeast of the castle is a tumulus where Bronze Age items were found together with Transcaucasian items. To reach the site, drive to the Kaleboyu quarter, turn left into Yenicami Sokak and follow the steep road. The town and Lake Van can be viewed from the top of the *kale.*

## Ulu Cami (Zal Paşa Camii)

The ruins include an Ulu Cami, one of the oldest mosques in Adilcevaz right in the shores of Lake Van, at the entrance of the town; it's located below the castle. Usually referred to as Paşa Camii by the locals, it is believed that it was built during the 16th century. Recently renovated in 1965, the mosque is made of regular cut stone. The minaret is placed in the northeast. The regular rectangular plan somehow gives place to a three roomed prayer place covered all together by twelve domes. The Ottoman mosque, with its multi-dome



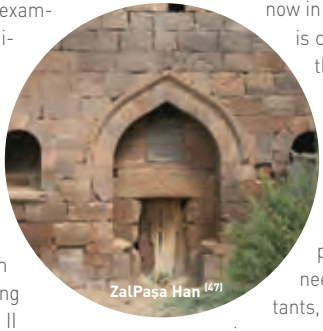
Adilcevaz Kalesi (45)


ZalPaşa Camii [46]

construction is a rare example of this kind of architecture; it does still used for religious service.

## Kef Kalesi

Dominating a hilltop 5km northwest of Adilcevaz, this Urartian fortress was built during the reign of King Rusa II (c.685-645 BC) as an offering to God Haldi. The fortress is similar in construction to the Urartian fortress in Ayanis (see p: 559), and it is believed that both were built up by the same people. Climbing the 550m hill will reward you with great lake views. The temple to Haldi is situated at the northern end at the highest point of the fortress. The blocks of stone have been beautifully worked by hand, especially the 7th century BC relief at the entrance to the temple which is now in Van's museum, and is considered to be one the finest examples of Urartian art.


ZalPaşa Han [47]

Just as impressive is the dam 2km northeast of the castle, built up to provide for the water needs on the inhabitants, and with dimensions as great as 17m wide and 57m long.

## Zal Paşa Han

This small *han*, probably 16th century, is on the Bitlis-Adilcevaz-Erçis route and is reached from the village of Yolçati (Koxuz), 7km from Adilcevaz. The entrance is in ruins but the back and sides can still be admired. Designed as a closed *han*, it is covered by a dome and was built by Zal Paşa. Locals sometimes refer to it as Kohoz Han.

# Hizan (Xîzan)



Sırmaçek (Xeyda) Village [48]



A village in Hizan Town [49]

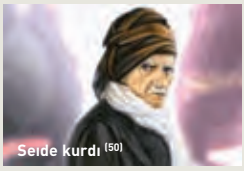
The little hilly district of Hizan (population 11,205) has a certain beauty though the land is not well forested. The economy is based on livestock farming though crops such as wheat and tobacco are grown in wheat plains are available, and hazelnuts, walnuts and honey are also produced. The highest point of the district is Avaberhan (Avaberxan) (3103m), once upon a time thousands of sheep was fed in its plateaus. Generally the district doesn't have much contact with the other districts.

Hizan became a district of Bitlis province in 1936. In the town of Hizan, 50km southeast of Bitlis city, you will find the Sheikh Hasan Camii in the Esentepe district. The present version dates from a renovation in 1985; only the minaret is original, dating back to the 19th century.

## Yemişlik (Narek)

The village of Yemişlik, 6km from the town centre on the final descent to the lake, was the site of the celebrated monastery of Narek. This was where Gregory of Narek (Krikor Naregatsi, 951–1003), the foremost poet of medieval Armenian, lived; unfortunately few traces are left of the monastery, which was partly demolished in 1951. Krikor Naregatsi was also mystical philosopher and theologian, born into a family of writers. Almost all of his life he lived in the monasteries of Narek where he taught at the monastic school. His poetry is deeply biblical and is penetrated with images, themes and realities of sacred history, distinguished with intimate, personal character. The mystical poem "Book of Lamentations" published in 1673 has been translated to many languages and has played a significant role in the development of the Armenian literary language.

## Seîdê Kurdî


Seide kurdı [50]

The great writer **Seîdê Kurdî** (1873–1960) was originally from Hizan. Also referred to as Bediüzzaman, meaning "the best of his times", he was also a leading cleric and for most of life his aim was to open a madrasah in his area. He argued that the people of the region had great potential and that they could fulfil this better if they were educated in Kurdish. He was in contact with Sultan Abdülhamid in the last days of the Ottoman Empire and also wanted Atatürk to found a Kurdish-language university in the region. In 1925, he was accused of being part of the Sheikh Said rebellion (see p: 139) and banished to southwest Turkey for several years. Although he tried to convince people that Islam can coexist with democracy, and fiercely opposed communism, he was seen as a threat by the intelligentsia. It is said that he was buried in Urfa in the very same grave as the Prophet Abraham, but his grave was desecrated by an unknown group who later buried him in an unknown place.

### Sırmaçek (Gayda/Xeyda)

The remains of Hizan Kalesi can be seen 11km southeast of Hizan town in the village of Sırmaçek, off the Hizan road on the way to Bahçesaray. There is no indication of the age of the fortress.

### Nazar Bridge

Also called Mezra Azê, this bridge is 15km southeast of Hizan near Sırmaçek village. When this bridge was built is a matter of guesswork, but the most recent renovation was probably during Ottoman times. Only a few bits of the bridge are still standing, and in fact the bridge was recently the victim of treasure seekers, who destroyed parts of it with dynamite.

### Neresin Bridge (Pira Azê)

During the glory days of the Silk Road, caravanserais had to cross this bridge on their way between Cizre, Siirt and Bitlis. The bridge is close to the Hizan–Pervari highway in the village of Otluca (Çemê Karê), some 25km away from Hizan. It is believed that the single-arched bridge was built during the 18th century. Now a new bridge stands just 300m away.

### Monastery of the Cross (Aparank)

The tiny village of Kayas (Veras), on the southwestern slope of the Pınar (Vankin) Mountain (2925m), in the extreme southeast of the Hizan district, near the border with Siirt and Van, is a veritable open air museum. You will find here three churches and a fountain. The main attraction is the Church of the Holy Cross, an impressive domed structure, which can be seen towering above the village from far away. The entrance to the


Sırmaçek (Xeyda) Village [51]


Monastery of Cross [52]

rectangular-planned church, founded in 983 is at the western side. An inscription mentions a restoration in 1629. The walls, built with truncated stones are quite high; the church has been covered with a single dome and cradle vaults, built by using red bricks. Next to St. Astuacacin there is a small old church dedicated to St.John the Baptist, somewhat higher in the village there is a parish church from the 17th century. The fountain, not far from the Holy Cross Church, also dates from the 17th century.

To reach the monastic complex you have to go down the main road from Hizan to Pervari (Siirt) and turn left some 10km south of Sağınlı for the villages of Döküktaş (Obin) and Kayaş. This makes for quite a day trip from Tatvan or Bitlis. South of Hizan there are no restaurants and petrol stations. Erroneously, some guide books locate the Aparank Monastery in Bahçesaray district (Van province). That is because before there were motorways travellers approached the place from Bahçesaray by horses or mules.

## Seyîd Ubeydullah

Also in Sırmaçek is the tomb of a celebrated Sufi saint, Sheikh Arvasi (**Seyîd Sebxetullah**/Xaws), is the successor of Seyîd Tahayê Nêhrî, father of Seyîd Ubeydulla who initiated the 1880s uprising and helped re-establish spiritual authority in a time of chaos following the abolition of the old Kurdish emirates (See p: 474-Hakkari). It is known that Seyîd Taha himself is the successor of Mewlana Xalidê Neqşîbendî, the latter being the successor of Şêx Ebdullahê Delhî. It is the location where Mewlana Xalidê Şehrezorî received the permission for the Neqşîbendıyê order to spread it all over Kurdistan. Seyîd Sebxetullan/Xaws, also having some poems in Kurdish, left Miksê and settled in Xîzanê for some reasons not known. His descendants include several important figures in today's politics.


BİTLİS
İL HARİTASI
AĞRI
MUŞ
VAN GÖLÜ
VAN
BATMAN
SİİRT
Adilcevaz
(Elcewaz)
Ahlat
(Xelat)
Ovakışla
(Pursa)
Güroymak
(Norşin)
Tatvan
(Tatwan)
Kavakbaşı
(Tap)
Mutki
(Motka)
BİTLİS
(BEDLÎS)
Meydan
Yolaalan
Ahlatağ
(Gerdik)
HİZAN
(Xizan)
Ottuca
Kayak
(Ukrak)
Cevizli
Gölbaşı
Güzeldere
Derbiş
İŞARETLER / LEGEND
MESAFE CETVELİ (KM)
BİTLİS
ADILCEVAZ
AHLAT
GÜROYMAK
HİZAN
MUTKİ
TATVAN



The red madrasah [1]

# ŞIRNAK (Şernax)

According to some sources, Şırnak is so named as Noah's ark may have landed on Mount Cudi within the province; **şır** means "city" in Farsi and nak stands for Noah, so the Şırnak means "**city** of Noah". Other sources say that şer is "**war**" and **nax** is "**refuser**", thus the combination means "**city of peace**".



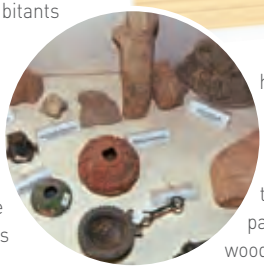
Cudi Mt [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
416,001 (2007)
**Average altitude**
1400m
**Area**
7151 square kilometres
**Districts**
Şırnak, Beytüşşebab, Cizre, Güçlükonak, İdil, Silopi, Uludere
**Economy**
Agriculture, Livestock Farming, Tourism, Oil and Coal-mining
**Neighbouring provinces**
Mardin (west), Siirt and Van (north), Hakkari (east)

According to some sources, Şırnak is so named as Noah's ark may have landed on Mount Cudi within the province; *şır* means "city" in Farsi and *nak* stands for Noah, so the Şırnak means "city of Noah". Other sources say that *şer* is "war" and *nax* is "refuser", thus the combination means "city of peace".

The prehistory of the province has not been much researched, but rock paintings in the Pîştazerê area of Beytüşşebap district suggest that the inhabitants of the area were involved in hunting, agriculture and livestock farming – as people here still are today. Of the many civilisations that have come and gone in this part of Turkey, one unusual name stands out, namely the Gutis (or Gudis), said to have been a group of nomadic farmers who may have been living around central Zagros Range and Mesopotamia. Resident here several thousand years before Christ, they had an alphabet of 29 letters, may have been the first peoples to use coins and practiced a particular way of constructing wooden ships.



From Cizre museum [3]

Some areas in the province were administrative capitals of some powerful dynasties, including the Gutis, whose capital was at Bajarıkarda what is located some 5km


Bedirxan family [4]

away from the town of Silopi nearby Girêçolya village, and the Marwanids, whose capital was Cizre. Much later, the Seljuks and Ottomans administrated the region by creating what were effectively semi-autonomous emirates, ruled by *Beys* or Begs who were referred to as *Paşa* by the Ottomans (if they were collaborating with the Ottomans) and *Mir* by the Kurds. During the republican era a new administrative body was established, in which Şırnak was linked to Siirt, Cizre, İdil and Silopi to Mardin, Uludere and Beytüşşebap to Hakkari. In 1990, Şırnak was declared as an administrative province and above mentioned districts, including Güçlükonak, were linked to it.


Old photo from Cizre [5]

The economy is mainly based on agriculture and livestock breeding. Transport of goods traded between Turkey and Iraq is also a significant sector, as is coal-mining. Tribal structures still have a strong effect on culture, tradition and customs, and people often socialise along tribal lines.

Cizre undoubtedly has some of the most significant attractions in the province, with its old city walls and its monuments associated with key figures from Kurdish history, such as the Red Madrasah (with the tomb of the poet Melayê Cizîrî close by); it also has a good museum of historical artefacts. Şırnak city has nice views of Mount Cudi but attractions are limited to a couple of old mansions and a spa; there is another spa, with proper facilities, at the Hısta hot spring. Elsewhere, a vibrant Christian establishment survives at the Virgin Mary Church in İdil. As always, there are a couple of ruined old fortresses to seek out, such as Finik Kalesi in Güçlükonak district and Said Bey Kalesi in Silopi.


Ceylan mosque and happy welcome from children [6]

## Şırnak City

A largely modern city (population 54,302) on the slopes of Mount Cudi, Şırnak has grown rapidly due to the population displacements of the last two decades. At the entrance of the town, a large sign read "Welcome to the city of Noah". Here is more likely to see some women wear especially bright traditional clothes decorated with sequins with some men wear Kurdish traditional clothes and headgears. The city centre offers you a great photo spot for the beautiful Mount Cudi and the huge elegant Ceylan Mosque. There is a security presence here, but the police and *Jandarma* have been around long enough that they feel part of normal street life.


Osman Ağa mansion [7]

### Abdurrahman Ağa Mansion (Qesra Axayê Sor)

Located in the central Gazipaşa (İsmetpaşa) quarter of town is this nineteenth-century residence which originally had one room for every day of the year. The house was built of yellow limestone, with roofs and floors made of wood and earth. Much of the main building is in ruins now, though some of its stones have been used to construct modern house in what was the courtyard. Some substantial walls, ornamented stone pillars and vaulted doorways still stand.

### Osman Ağa Mansion (Qesra Osman Axa)

The Gazipaşa quarter also contains the mansion of Osman Ağa, built some 100 years ego with 70 rooms. The two-storey house had a flat roof covered with earth. Some pillars and yellow limestone walls survive, the latter bearing some depictions of animals. The surviving rooms have vaulted doorways and are connected to one another.


The entrance of Abdurrahman mansion [8]

## Nasravan and Besta Meyremê Spas

Nasravan spa is 15km west of Şırnak city near the now vacated Kumçatı (Dêrgulê) village, which is on the Mardin road. The spa includes mud treatments as well as baths and is said to be curative for skin conditions such as eczema and acne. The village used to be inhabited by Syriac Christians and some ruins of a church can be seen by the spa.


Children from the region [9]

Likewise offering mud baths and regular spring water treatments is the Besta Meyremê Spa, 10km north of Balveren (Gundikê Melê) village, which is itself 10km east of Şırnak city. Visiting is meant to benefit skin complaints, rheumatism and gynaecological problems. The mud bath and water pool are five minutes' walk apart; the floor of the latter is covered with pebbles through which water wells up from underneath. One of the sources is cold and balances the heat of the others. The road to the spa from the village is not well surfaced, so you will have to tolerate a bumpy drive or reach it on foot.

### Getting there

The main bus station is just behind the municipality building near the city centre. Regular buses operate from there via Cizre to major cities including Diyarbakır.

### Places to eat

The *Sinan-2 Kafeterya* on Cumhuriyet Cad serves traditional local foods, including perde pilavı and different sorts of kebab; a wider range of fare is available at the *Doğan Lezzet Sofra Salonu* on Uludere Cad.


Street Kebab [10]

### Accommodation

There are two reasonable hotels on Uludere Cad in the Gazipaşa quarter. The *Menekşe* (0486 216 19 02) has rooms with TV (some also have mountain views) and a restaurant where breakfast is served; the *Murat* is similar (0486 216 28 57). Şırnak also has an *öğretmenevi* on Cumhuriyet Meydanı (0486 216 30 36) which not only has rooms but also three suites; it's opposite the *Atatürk* Tea Garden, and the rooms have good views of Mount Cudi and the huge Ceylan Mosque.

**Municipality: 0486 216 12 05 Tourist information: 0486 528 71 03**

# Güçlükonak (Basê)



Finik Kalesi [11]



Baaynas ruins [12]

The small town of Güçlükonak is 73km west of Şırnak city as the crow flies, and is near the Tigris River. The district (population 3,724) is mostly rugged and mountainous, other than in Güçlükonak town itself, which was part of Eruh district in Siirt before it became a district of Şırnak province in 1990. Livestock farming and agriculture, including the cultivation of cereals and pulses, viniculture and beekeeping, dominate the economy. Youths tend to migrate to the cities of western Turkey to find seasonal work in the summer.

## The ruins of Baaynas

The area known historically as Baaynas, includes the villages of Yarımca (Awêna) and Kırkağaç (Bênat), 15km east of Güçlükonak at the start of the 5km-long Ağaç valley along the Tigris, where figs, grapes, pomegranates, apple and pears. The western part of the site is a hilly area called Sinuber, covered with pine trees. The foot of the hill is full of caves once used as dwellings, which locals call Oliyê Şêxa ("House of Sheikhs"); this is where the events told in the well-known Kurdish saga *Sîseban* are said to have taken place.

The ruins include the Parthian House, a three-storey structure carved out of a large white rock and including sleeping chambers and rooms for animals, and the Gudi (or Guti) gate, said to have been built by one of the Guti emperors; part of it, a white vault, still stands on the road from Akdizgin (Zeve; a few kilometres south of Kırkağaç) to Yarımca and Kırkağaç village.

## Hezaran Mosque

Close to Baaynas in Hezaran village, 20km east of Güçlükonak town, is a mosque carved into a huge rock that can house 1000 people. Built up during the time of the Gutis for religious



A view from Baaynass [13]



Hand writing from Melayê Cizîrî [14]

ceremonies, it was converted into a mosque after Islamic conquest. The mosque is located on Mount Gabar overlooking the Tigris River.

## Finik Kalesi (Keleha Finikê)

Near the village of Damlarca (Kerașa), around 18km south-east of Güçlükonak (and some 22km distance northwest of Cizre) are the remains of an ancient fortress on Mount Dêra, overlooking the Tigris and opposite the villages of Düzova (Hoser) and Hendekköy (Xendek). The site is signposted close to the main road, meaning you can park and walk up.



Hand writing from Melayê Cizîrî [15]

The fortress, built by the Guti Empire around 4000 BC and named Pinaka, included a rock palace, dungeon, stone houses and a cistern 15m deep; as ever, there was also a secret tunnel descending to the river. A woman is depicted on a rock to the north while a king and princes appear on rocks to the northeast.

A large rock in the western side of the site looks from afar like a walled fortress. When you get closer, the gaps in the rock, large enough for a person to be placed in, will remind you of a sign you saw on the road: *Timur'un Pençeleri,* which roughly translates as the "paws of Tamerlane". It is said that when Tamerlane's forces faced a strong resistance from the fortress, Timur placed his army on the other side of the Tigris and aimed his artillery at the fortress; the gaps in the rocks are the relics of that bombardment.

During the Muslim era a madrasah was built nearby, and it survives in reasonable condition today,



The madrasah where Feqiyê Teyran stayed [16]

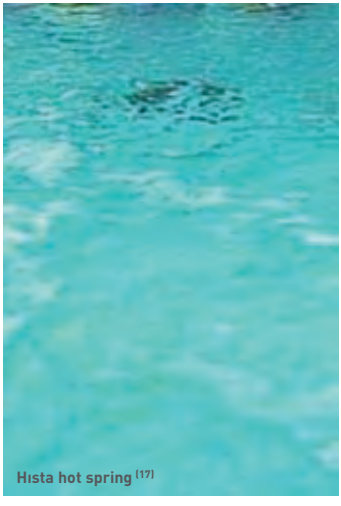
near running spring water in a delightful leafy area within a valley; it's signposted further on from the ruins. The well-known Kurdish poet Feqiyê Teyran (real name Mir Mihemed), born in 1590, taught many students there. A writer of pastoral poems, he is one of the great figures of Kurdish literature and studied under the supervision of Melayê Ciziri (see p: 478).

## Hısta Hot Spring

This medicinal spa is located on the banks of the Tigris near Düğünyurdu (Hista) village, 10km northwest of Güçlükonak. Driving here from Siirt, you pass the bridge over the Botan Stream (signed Botan Köprüsü) and then turn south and drive around 45km to reach the site.

The spring was known as Belkis (Queen of Sheba), reflecting a connection with the Prophet Süleyman (Solomon) and one of the pools is also said to have had the footprint of the prophet in it. There are two other old pools nearby used mainly by the locals. The water, which cannot be drunk as it contains some sediment, emerges from rocks at a sizzling 67°C and pours from a height of 15m into the pool; bathing in it is said to be beneficial to rheumatic and gynaecological conditions, as well as to indisposed women in general.

The *Belkıs Ana Termal Hotel* here (0486 685 21 00) has four pools, two within the compound and another two nearby. All the rooms have river and mountain views as well as TV and other facilities. Linked to the hotel are 30 two-bedroom guest apartments with bathroom and kitchen.



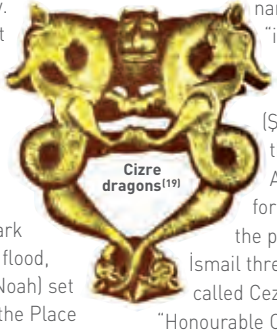
Hısta hot spring [17]

# Cizre (Cizîr/Gziro)



Cizre Belek tower [18]

Located on a plain on the banks of the Tigris and with Mount Cudi (2089m) to the northeast, Cizre town is 40km southwest of Şırnak city. The surrounding district (population 90,477) shares a long border with Syria. It's said that Cizre was founded by the Prophet Noah and his sons. Having got disembarked from the ark at Mount Cudi after the flood, eight saints (including Noah) set up homes in "Heştan" (the Place of Eight in Kurdish), reusing wood from the ship for roofing; later they settled in Cizre permanently.



Cizre dragons [19]



A view from Cizre [20]

During the Arab conquest a tributary of Tigris was drained to encircle the city with water, hence the place was named Cezire, meaning "island" in Arabic. To honour the Kurdish Emir Şeref Han (Şerefxan), who took over the town from the Akkoyunlus and held it for thirty years, defeating the powerful army of Şah İsmail three times, the city was called Ceziretuş Şeref, meaning "Honourable Cizre". Later it was known as "Cizre Botan" means "the island of Botan" after the emirate here. In the past, Cizre has been administratively linked to Mosul in northern Iraq, which was the capital of the Diyar Rabia province; in the Republican era it became a district of Mardin province and finally part of Şırnak in 1990.

The modern town of Cizre has grown spectacularly over the last two decades as a supply stop on the highway connecting Kurdish northern


The tomb of Noah [21]

Iraq with the rest of the world. This border trade through Habur Gate in Silopi district has caused the transport sector to develop, and many people own a commercial truck; the service sector, including hotels and restaurants, is also notable by its importance here compared to in neighbouring regions. As always, agriculture contributes significantly to the local economy, the main crops being cereals, pulses, cotton, fruit and vegetables.

A dusty desert town a generation ago, the city is still short on greenery but now has perhaps half a million people. The two main streets are always thronged with men and some women from the surrounding villages and quarters; hawkers are everywhere, noisily peddling candies, water, ice cream and fresh produce.

## The Mosque of Noah

Demolished and rebuilt in 1996, this mosque sits on a hill in the Dağkapı quarter, above the floodwater level of the Tigris, and contains a sarcophagus in which the body of the Prophet Noah himself is said to lie. The mosque also contains the tomb of Kurdish scholar İsmail Ebul-iz.

## Ulu Cami

Located in the central Dağkapı quarter, Cizre's Ulu Cami was converted from a church in 639, it gone through restora-


Cizre Ulu Cami [22]

## A Cizre Dynasty



Bedirxan Family [23]

Cizre was the capital of a powerful emirate, Botan, from the 14th century until the middle of the 19th century. The emirate comprised three parts, the most important being Cizre itself, while the other two contained the fortresses of Gurkel in Uludere and Finik in Güçlükonak. Under Bedirxan Beg (Bedirhan Bey) in particular, the city experienced a short period of glory, and Bedirxan and his descendants were founders of modern Kurdish nationalism as well as, interestingly, suppliers of several prominent ideologues of modern Turkish nationalism.

Bedirxan Beg (1802–1868/1870) or Mîr Bedirxan or *Bedirxan Begê Mîrê Botan*, to give him his full title, was born at Cizre in 1802 as the son of Evdilah Xan (Ebdalhan/ Abdullah Han), and became Mir when he was 18 years old. He declared himself the only independent power in the region, published money bearing his name and told the imams to read their Friday declarations in his name of him for 12 years. According to some researchers he even had his own flag on the top of Cizre Kalesi, declaring Cizre as the capital of his country.

Revolting against the central Ottoman government in 1839, Bedirxan Beg conquered a large area around Cizre, stretching to Mosul in Iraq and the Persian border. He was contacted by British and American missionaries in 1846, who found that he was not intending to break completely with the Ottomans, and thereafter they got in touch with local Nestorian Christians who were hoping for deliverance from Muslim domination. This gave the Nestorian Christians new political influence that they did not have before, which irritated the Kurds. When the Nestorians stopped paying their annual tribute, Bedirxan's forces killed



**Bedirxan brothers [24]**

some of them in response to a request from the Mir of Hakkari to punish them. The British and French exercised pressure on the Ottomans to punish Bedirxan Beg, who the same time was bidding for Kurdish independent power. He was defeated in a bloody war and sent into exile in İstanbul and then Crete with his family members. After 10 years he was pardoned by Sultan Abdülmecit and returned back to İstanbul. He finally went to Damascus, where he is buried in the Salihiye district; on his tombstone appears:

'El-Fatihe
Mîrê Cizîra Botan
Mîr Bedirxanê Azîzan
Rehmeta Xwedê li ser wî û li ser malbata wî bit'
*Whistle for*
*Lord of Cizîra Botan*
*Lord Bedirxan of Azîzan*
*May God bless him and his family.*

Is written on his gravestone.

One of his grandsons was Celadet Alî Bedirxan (1893–1951), born in İstanbul in 1893. His father, Emîn Alî Bedirxan, had a passion to preserve Kurdish culture, language, literature and employed tutors from his home town (Cizre) so that his children could be taught at home. During World War I, he fought as an army officer at Caucasus Front. Because of his political views, he was exiled to Germany in 1922 along with his brother Kamûran Alî Bedirxan; here he received master's degree. From here he went to Egypt and then Syria, where he passed away; he is buried in Damascus.

Celadet Alî Bedirxan created the Latin Kurdish alphabet that is being used by most Kurmanji-speaking Kurds in Turkey, and more recently in Syria and parts of Iraqi Kurdistan; he, his brother and collaborator Roger Lesscot also had a great input on Kurdish grammar. During his life time he published the first Kurdish magazines (in Latin Kurdish alphabet) *Hawar and Ronahi,* compiled dictionaries and wrote lots of articles and poems. Some of his poems are still being turned into songs by well-known figures such as Kurdish (Syrian national) born Ciwan Haco. His most popular poem is *Were Dotmam,* written for his cousin/wife, Rewşen Bedirxan. Once he famously said: "Foreign languages are like our clothes, we can take off them whenever we want but our mother tongue, Kurdish, is like our skin, we cannot take it off."




**Hawar newspaper in Kurdish [25]**

## Cizre dragons (Cizre Ejderhaları)

Cizre's Great Mosque once featured two bronze door-knockers designed by the Kurdish scientist and artist Ebul Iz Ismail Bin Rezzaz El Cezeri (see below). The name of the Zengid ruler Abul Qasim Mahmud Sanshar Shah (reigned 1208–1251) was written on this door, which makes it likely that the two door-knockers date to this time. The door-knockers take the form of a pair of dragons, looking not unlike sea horses with scaly skin; they also have almond eyes, forelimbs (shown touching) and heads that are depicted looking backwards. One dragon is thought to represent the Tigris, the other the Euphrates; the lion ornament placed between them symbolises the people of Cizre and Mesopotamia while the eagles close to their tails represent the power of fighting. One of the door-knockers was stolen and later wound up at the David Collection in Copenhagen, Denmark; the other is on display in Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in Istanbul.


Cizre dragons (door knock) [26]

The door-knockers resemble a design for the door-knockers in the Artukid palace in Diyarbakır, drawn by El Gezeri in his 1206 work *The Book of Knowledge and Ingenious Mechanical Devices.*

## İsmail Ebul-iz

Ismail Ebul-iz (1153–1233), or Bediuzzaman (meaning something like "unique in his time") Ismail Ebul-iz bin Rezzaz El Cezeri, to use his full title, was a true scientific pioneer. He can be said to be one of the founders of the fields of cybernetics and computation in the world; he produced detailed diagrams of contraptions including robots, automated clocks, water clocks and hourglasses, mechanical musical instruments, combination locks, kitchen tools and automated kitchen ware, faucets and automated toys. Early copies of his book are preserved in the Topkapı Museum in Istanbul as well as in Iraq, and have also made their way into western libraries and museums.


İsmail Ebul-iz Works [27]



The old red madrasah [28]

tion number of times, such as large scale restoration by local prince Emir Ali Sencer in 1156. Local basalt was used for all three gates, the main one being inscribed with verses from the Koran. Porticos, now demolished, stood in the east and west of the courtyard. The beautiful large iron door, datable to the 13th century, was replaced in 1946 and, clad in the original geometrical motifs and inscriptions, has been on display in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in İstanbul since 1983. In the northern part of the courtyard is a rectangular minaret.

## The Red Madrasah (Medresa Sor) and the Tomb of Melayê Cizîrî

The recently restored Red Madrasah is located in Dağkapı quarter, the madrasah is built of local red brick – hence its name. It was built by the emir of Cizre, Şerefxan, in 1508 to fulfil an oath that should he recapture the city from the Akkoyunlus, he would build a madrasah at the spot at which he entered the city.

Considered a distinguished centre of learning in its time, the madrasah is a one-storey structure with a large courtyard built over the remains of a section of city wall. There are classrooms on three sides and a small mosque in the south. On the north side of the courtyard are three *iwans*. A room in the south adjacent to the madrasah is said to have been for the Mir's use; it has built-in cupboards and a nicely decorated ceiling.

South of the madrasah is annex building whose basement houses the tomb of the 17th-century poet Melayê Cizîrî as well as six members of the emir's family. The walls are built of black basalt and decorated with lions and inscriptions. Unusually, the dome bulges downwards rather than upwards.

## Melayê Cizîrî


Melayê Cizîrî [29]

Born as Cizre in 1570 (although other sources state different dates), Melayê Cizîrî is a Kurdish writer, poet and mystic who used the pen-names Mela and sometimes Nîşanî (he is also referred to as Şêx Ehmed). He was educated first in Diyarbakır and received his îcazet, qualifying him to be a seyda or religious teacher. After that he went to Hasankeyf (Batman) and Baghdad where he achieved degrees in philosophy and astronomy. Returning to Cizre, he started educating students in Madrasah Sor, which was the leading school for classical poetry in Kurmanji.

Inspired by the classical Persian poets, Hafız, Mewlana Jalalad-Din Rumi and Jami, he expresses his opinions in mystical ways, which often leads the reader to ask whether he is referring to the love of God or the beautiful Selma (said to have been a prince's daughter or sister, whom he was in love with) because of the lack of a clear boundary between human and divine love. His poetry fully reflects the Kurdish culture, language, history and his relationship with the ruling Azizan Dynasty of Cizre, which was the most powerful and independent of Kurdish emirates. His main literary work is the anthology *Dîwana Melayê Cizîrî* which was first published by Martin Hartmann in 1904. He passed away in 1664.

One of his most popular poems, which appears below, has been to music:

### *Sebahul Xeyrî Ya Xanim / Good Morning My Lady*

This poem consist of 27 staves/verses

Sebahul xeyrî xanê min, şehê şîrîn zebanê min
*Good morning my lady, my candied sultan*
Tu yî ruh û rewanê min, bibit qurban te canê min
*You're my soul and heart, let me sacrifice my heart for you*
Tealellah çi zat î tu, çi wê şîrînsifat î tu
*For the sake of God, what sweety you are*
Ne wek qend û nebat î tu, yeqîn ruh û heyat î tu
*Not sugar or plant; you're certainly soul and life*
Heyat û raheta canim, sebahul xeyrî ya xanim
*Hey the soul of my soul and heart, good morning my sweetheart*
Were bêhnahiya çehvan, bibînim bejn û balayê
*Come, the heavenly light of my eyes, let me see you*

Sebahul xeyrî mesta min, letîfa cam bi desta min
*Good morning my in wine, who has a cup in her hands*
Xumar û meyperesta min, tu yî meqsûd û qesta min
*My in wine, sleepy eyed, my only wish and thought*
……

Ji wê camê dinoşim ez, seher lew ney li hoşim ez
*I'm drinking from that cup at dawn, so that I'm unconscious*
Ji amê lê dipoşim ez, bi caran her lê dipoşim ez
*I don't want anybody see me drinking, because I want to have my love*
Ku xalib mest û sukran im, sebahul xeyrî ya xanim
*I'm always enchanted and in wine, good morning my love*
Were bêhnahiya çehvan, bibînim bejn û balayê
*Come, the heavenly light of my eyes, let me see you*
Were pêşber Melayê xwe, şehîd û mubtelayê xwe
*Let Mela, your lover, martyried and addict see you*
Bi şefqet ke liqayê xwe, mela nemrit bi daê xwe
*Be kind-honey of him, do not kill Mela with your love*
Mesîhayî li bêmaran, kesên geztî du reşmaran
*You are the Messiah of lovers and the ones biten by black snakes*
Şehîdê şîr û mûkaran, kirî amancê nûbaran
*I'm wounded with swords and daggers, you made me the target*
Li dîdara te heyran im, sebahul xeyrî ya xanim
*I'm admirer of your beautu, good morning my love*
Were bêhnahiya çehvan, bibînim bejn û balayê
*Come, the heavenly light of my eyes, let me see you*
***Melayê Cizîrî***



**Cizre girl playing Arbane (Daf)** [30]


Cizre city walls [31]

## Walls of old Cizre

Originally built by the Gutis in 4000 BC, the walls surrounding the old city of Cizre underwent several renovations during the time of the Medes and Sassanids, and recently in the 1990s. Built up of black basalt, the walls were extensive and were shaped like Noah's ark, with the bow represented by the northern side of the walls and the stern by the southern section. Some parts of the walls were destroyed during conflict (for example, by Ottoman artillery responding to an uprising led by Mir Bedirxan in 1847) while others were demolished by the authorities in 1935 for the mundane purpose of improving access for buses and lorries.


Remains from Cizre city walls [32]

The walls are 2m thick and 14–15m high in places, and five towers in the south, one in the north and one in the west have partly survived. When the Seljuks took the area in 1085, they sent their troops to capture Cizre, then the capital of the Mervanians; the Seljuks were let in by one of the city's notables, Beni Vahban, who broke ranks with the Mervanians and allowed the Seljuks in through the city gate known as Babül Büveyb. Today there are three gates: Deryê Torê in the west, Deryê Deştê in the east and Deryê Çiya in the south. You can still see sections of the walls near the *otogar* and in the Kale quarter as well as elsewhere in the town; other sections have become incorporated into nearby houses.

## Abdaliye Madrasah

Located in Dağkapı quarter, the madrasah was built by Emir Abdal İbni Abdillah Seyfeddîn Botî, who was the father of Mir Zeynuddîn, mentioned in the 17th-century version of the Mem u Zîn legend (see p:481). To the right of the courtyard is a small mosque whose entrance and mihrab are nicely decorated with various motifs. The left part is offices, and in the basement here are the supposed tombs of Mem and Zîn (side by side) and, at the heads of their graves, Beko Awan. The northern parts are classrooms and accommodation. The complex underwent a European Union-funded restoration in 2007.


The tomb of Mem and Zîn [33]

### The Mehmet Ağa and Ensari Houses


Mehmet Ağa house [34]

Located in Bayırağa area of Dağkapı Quarter, this typical Cizre house was built by Fettah Ağa (a major in the Hamidiye Forces, (see p: 614), who was a relative of Mehmet Ağa. The stonemason, Merho, built the western side of this two-storey house from black basalt, while the south and southwest sections are of ornamented white calcareous stone. The courtyard surrounded by iwans has a barrel-vaulted entrance. The wall facing has rectangular windows with semicircular vaults on which triangular frontons are placed. Nearby is another historical two floor house called Ensari, built

## Mem û Zîn


Mem û Zîn [35]

*Mem û Zîn* ("Mem and Zîn") is a poetic art work written in Kurmanji by Ehmedê Xanî (Ahmede Hani) in 17th century, and based on a legendary love story said to have existed before the time of Christ. Inspired by the legend, Ehmedê Xanî produced a latter-day version of it, in which the love between Mem, the son of a royal clerk, and Zîn, the sister of Mir (emir) Zeynuddîn, is always frustrated by the actions of Beko, the emir's doorman who was spying on the couple; the tale culminates in the death of Mem while kept in a jail in the basement of Mir Zeynuddîn Palace being poisoned by Beko, the suicide of Zîn and the killing of Beko by Mem's brother (although some believe he was his best friend or cousin) Tajdîn. It is said that the women of Cizre have been in mourning ever since, which is why some women in black *hijab* are more noticeable in Cizre even nowadays than elsewhere in the province. Ehmedê Xanî's work was translated into several languages, including Turkish, Arabic, Persian, English, French and Russian (Also see p: 614).


Mehmet Ağa house [36]

some 150 years ago supposedly with stone transported from Mardin and Midyat.

### Deşt Bridge (Pira deştê)

Some 50m from Deryê Deştê is this bridge, originally built by Cizre and Mosul Ruler Zengi Atabeyi Kutbeddin Mevdut Han Bin İmadeddin Zengi (1159–1170). It has been restored by, amongst others, Fevzi Çakmak, an Ottoman commander; hence it is also called the Fevzi Çakmak Bridge. Pictures taken by the traveller C. Preusser in 1911 indicate that some animals, including young goats, were depicted on the bridge, but during renovation most of these have disappeared except for a lion shown in basalt in the southern part.

### Özel Cizre İsmail Ebul-iz El Cezeri Museum

This museum was founded in one of the classrooms of the school named after İsmail Ebul-iz El Cezeri in 1996, and moved the following year to its current building in the central Eski Belediye Cad. Apart from the historical *mihrab* of


İsmail Ebul-iz El Cezeri museum [37]

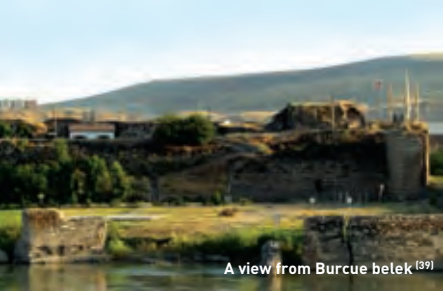
the Mosque of Noah, the museum has Babylonian, Assyrian, Medean, Guti, Umayyads, Abbasid and Ottoman artefacts; it is open from Tuesday to Saturday. The museum houses some 480 items of agrological and local ethnography.

### Cizre Kalesi

Located on the banks of the Tigris, north of the city, the fortress dates right back to the Gutis in 4000 BC, when it is said to have had 360 rooms. The site has been used as a military base for some time but the army should have vacated sometimes soon, and there are plans to restore the place and turn it into a tourist attraction.



Hamidiye barracks [38]



A view from Burcue belek [39]

The entrance, Deryê Çiya, is made up of two large upright black basalt stones which were connected with a decorative vault. Two lions are depicted on the gate. The site contains an old madrasah, hamam and cisterns, mostly ruined, plus a large caravanserai, above which is what would have been the residence of the ruling family.

The fortress is notorious for its dungeon in which Mem of the *Mem û Zîn* story is supposed to have been imprisoned. It is accessed through a door on which a deer is depicted. The walls are especially thick and strong, with melted lead used for plastering.

## Hamidiye Barracks

These barracks for the Hamidiye Forces (see p: 93) inside Cizre Fortress were built by a leader from the Miran Tribe, Mustafa Paşa (this title was bestowed during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamit II in 1897; locals call him Mistoyê Mîrî); his rule on behalf of the Ottomans was ended when he was killed by rival tribes just outside Şırnak. The three-storey building, originally intended as an office for the governor, was constructed from white calcareous stone by the stonemasons of Cizre and Midyat, in keeping with other local architecture. The building is still a military site and cannot be visited for the time being, though there are plans to return. Inside is a dining hall on the ground floor, offices and archives on the floor above, while the top floor had meeting rooms and the offices of the Paşa.

## Belek Tower (Birca Belek)

Adjacent to the fortress is the rectangular Belek Tower, built of alternating black and white stones by Mir Sharaf

Xan III in 1596 and with a strategic view over the Tigris River. In a poem to the Mir, the well-known Kurdish poet Melayê Cizîrî referred to the tower as Burja Sharaf (Birca Şeref), meaning "tower of honour", but the current name derives from the Arabic *ablaq*, meaning "piebald" and referring to the technique of using alternating stone layers in this way. Only the base and a small part of the tower remain today.



Belek Tower [40]

## Bazıbda (Yafes or Bafid) Bridge

Some sources claim there was a bridge here in Guti times, but the local historian İbnül Esir says what is seen now, 2km from Cizre on the Syrian border, dates to 1164. The pre-Islamic name for Cizre was Bazibda, and the name still applies to a quarter in town and to this bridge, though at one point the bridge was renamed Yafes (Japheth, Noah's son), maintaining the local connection with Noah. The lower sections of the bridge are built of stone blocks. Zodiacal signs, animal figures and the Ashabı Keyf (see p:284) are depicted on the bridge.

## Cizre Culture and Art Festival

Held in the last week of May each year, this four-day festival is well attended and features concerts, traditional dances, sporting activities, exhibitions and poetry readings.

## Kasrik Gorge

Containing a mixture of archaeological ruins, the Kasrik Gorge is 14km north of the town; if you are heading from Cizre to Şırnak, you will see it at the



Bazidba Bridge [41]

end of a large field on the left of the road near the Tigris. To get there, use the pedestrian bridge to cross the river and walk along the riverside pathway.

To the right side are observation posts and old houses; on the left are cisterns and depictions of kings from the Guti era. There was also a depiction of princes which was destroyed by a landslide in 1990, and survives only in pictures taken by the traveller Gertrude Bell in 1909. There is a secret tunnel of 200m carved through the rocks, descending the creek. The gorge is said to have been the summer residence of Cizre emirs and also a checkpoint where tributes could be collected from passing traders.

The village of Kasrik is right next to the site and contains the old Han Mahmut Bridge, with three arches. There are few shops and fish restaurants nearby, including the *Kasrik Boğazı Alabalık Tesisleri* (0486 259 12 52), located where the Gabar and Cudi Mountains meet. It offers fresh trout as well as kebabs and chicken.

Close by also are the ruins of the Kasrik Bridge, said to be based on a



**Cizre Culture and Art Festival** [42]



**A king figure from Guti era** [43]

bridge dating back to the Gutis. Some walls still stand but these days a new bridge has been nearby linking Cizre, Şırnak and Güçlükonak.

## The Ruins of Babil

Located in Kebeli (Babil) village, 28km southwest of Cizre near the border of Syria, this site is said to have been the seat of the first state of Babylon, which later moved its capital to Babylon in Iraq because of constant attacks by the Hittites and Assyrians. It became also the seat of the Assyrians when they took over Cizre and Babylon.

The city was surrounded by rectangular walls, built of huge basalt stones and with four gates and nearly 40 towers; the village today stands over its ruins. Excavations in 1935 uncovered a sculpture of the Assyrian King Shalmanesar I, who is depicted holding a lance in his hand while blinding a slave with a lance. The sculpture was taken to the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations. There are still rocks with depictions of humans, gravestones, ornamented stones and a tumulus to be seen.



**Han Mahmut Bridge** [44]

## Accommodation

*The Onşar Hotel* on Yafes Cad (0486 616 94 32, www.hotelonsar.com) is a three-star affair with nearly 100 rooms, most with views of the Tigris. The *Güneş Hotel* on Nusaybin Cad (0486 616 12 06) is smaller.

## Places to eat

*Sinan3 Lokantası* on Yeni Cad (0486 616 45 66) offers regional fare, including some vegetarian food. *Çamlıca Restaurant* on Yafes Cad (0 486 617 05 35) offers variety of kebabs.

# İdil (Herzex/Hezex)



Virgin Mary church and Herzex fountain[45]



Virgin Mary church[46]

İdil town is 75km in west of Şırnak city, and part of a district that is one of the most densely populated in the region (population 21,329). Some say that the King Nicator, who is said to have established Antioch, Nusaybin and Midyat, is also the founder of İdil. İdil was a village of Midyat until became a sub-district of Cizre in 1924, then a district of Mardin in 1937, and part of Şırnak in 1990. The town has previously been called Harzağ ("brave" in Farsi) during the Persian Empire, and Zarih in the 6th century, meaning "cultivator" in Arabic. Until 1970s, Christians made up the majority in the centre, but Muslims and nomadic families moved in while Christians and Yezidis migrated abroad, especially during the unrest of the late 1980s.

The town benefits greatly from cross-border trade with Iraq and Syria, and has also benefited from the oil pipeline between Iraq and the Mediterranean coast, which has led the state-owned Botaş Pipeline Company to establish some facilities near the town.

## Virgin Mary Church

İdil was one of the places where Christianity established an early foothold thanks to one Mor Aday, and the town still has a number of churches, one of which is the Virgin Mary (Meryem Ana) Church in the old town centre. Originally built in three sections in 57 AD (the construction date is disputed), the church is in Aşağı Mahalle 300m from the main road to Cizre; it has been rebuilt several times, but today one section is


Cehennem Deresi [47]

in ruins while the other two sections have been restored. In future the church will also have accommodation for visitors.

Opposite the church is a sun temple, which is believed to be associated with the Aramaens who lived in Mesopotamia in the 10th to 8th centuries BC.

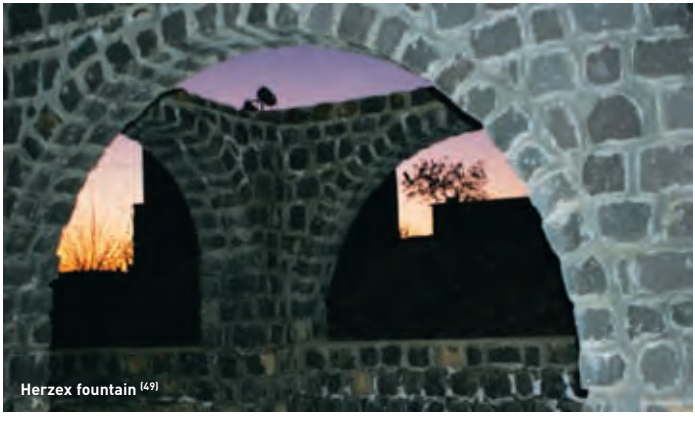
## The Fountain of Tamerlane (Kanîya Herzexê)

Tamerlane, of course, had a reputation for wrecking any towns he conquered, so it is unusually that this 15th-century fountain is credited to him; indeed it is the only structure in Anatolia bearing his name. The fountain (Timur Çeşme), just in front of the Virgin Mary Church, is square in plan and was once at a higher level than the surrounding houses. Sadly the fountain has been restored and lost many of its original features.


A detail from sun temple in İdil [48]

## Cehennem Deresi (Newala Koliyê)

Around 12km northwest of İdil, near the village of Yarbaşı (Hespist), is a valley containing the creek called Cehennem Deresi and connected to Tigris Valley. Mainly steep and narrow, the valley includes the slopes of Mount Gabar and contains hundreds of caves on both sides. The area is leafy and is excellent to visit on hot summer days and offers good fishing. The middle sections are broader and cultivable; unusually, rice can be grown here.


Herzex fountain [49]



Local Wedding [50]



Making candles for the Christmas [51]

## Mor Yakup

This church, thought to have been built in the 5th century and renovated in 15th century, is in Öğündük (Mehdê) village, 15km west of İdil town. Once this was an active theological college and acted as an overflow church for the Syrian Orthodox when Meryem Ana was filled to capacity; today the church is still in use.

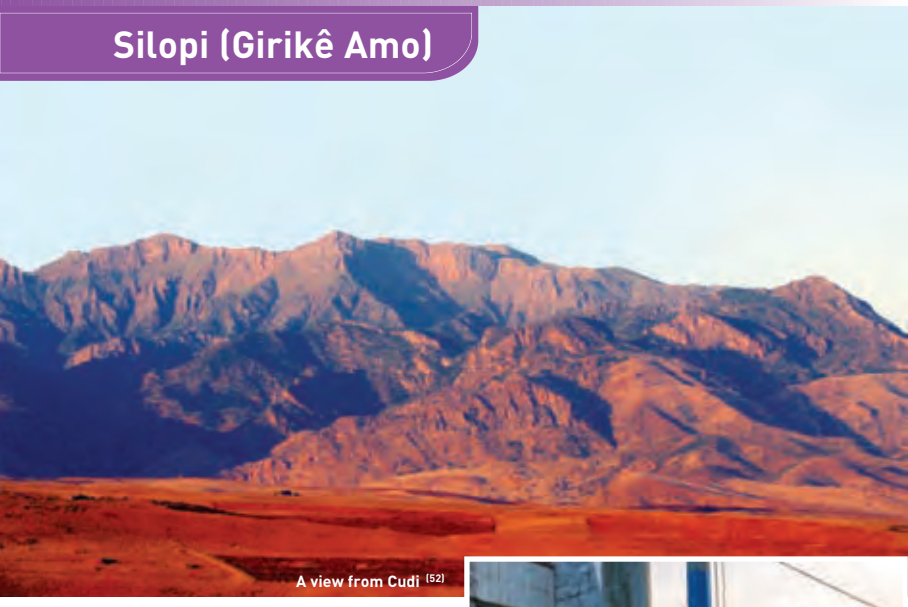
## Kela Elo Dîno

This structure, built of limestone on a large rock in the middle of the Tigris, is said to be the home of a legendary figure called Elo Dîno. When the region was being government under strict feudal rules from Cizre, the ruler was informed that a man called Elo Dîno had been standing in the middle of a trade route collecting tribute from anyone passing. The ruler had him arrested, and when he was asked under torture why he had collected money in this way, his response was, "The worst thing is not to have anything to offer to a guest at home". Upon hearing this reply, the ruler freed him. Since then, his supposed home has symbolised bravery. The site is 10km from Güçlükonak and you can get there most easily via the Cizre–Güçlükonak road; coming from Cizre, turn left at the fork just before the Kasrik Gorge and carry on past the bridge over Kızılsu River and after 15km you will reach the site.

**Kahraman Elo Dîno**

*The hero of the story Elo Dîno*
(Tu feydê nake mîrêmin,
*It is useless sir*
Şimayênte helandî ser milê min,
*The wax you have put on my shoulders*
Kezeba min şewitand
*Has burnt my livers*
Edi nîne dermanêmin
*No medicine can cure me*

# Silopi (Girikê Amo)



A view from Cudi [52]

Located in the plain south of Mount Cudi, Silopi (population 70,670) borders with northern Iraq via the Habur Gate, 15km to the south of Silopi town and open 24/7. The district, whose name is derived from Silopiya meaning "unbreakable" in Arabic, was a subdistrict of Cizre until it became part of Mardin in 1960, and thereafter part of Şırnak in 1990.

Apart from oleanders along the creeks, the area doesn't boast a lot of natural greenery despite the presence of the Tigris in the west and the Hêzil Stream in the east. At least most of the land is cultivable and agriculture dominates the economy; pistachios and greenhouse vegetable production have become popular recently. There is also some coal production and medium-scale industry, including a flour factory, and two geothermal power plants whose electricity is mostly exported to Iraq. Transport is also a key sector because of the proximity of the Habur Border crossing. A Tigris Tributary, the 24 hour habur *(Habur Çayı)*, which has basically the same name as the border crossing, crosses the district as does the Kirkuk–Ceyhan oil pipeline.




A border guard from Kurdistan (KRG) [53]



Trade in Habur border (lorry drivers) [54]

Silopi town is 80km south of Şırnak by road, though the distance as the crow flies is much less. Cheap electronic goods and other imported stuff,



A wedding in silopi [55]

including tea and cigarettes, can be found in the İkinci Cad Bazaar in the central Yeşiltepe quarter. The trading of fuel from Iraq has led many people to buy lorries with large tanks underneath. The asphaltite sources in the region are also important economic assets for the district. The Habur Gate is connected by regular *dolmuş* services and taxis leaving from the town's *otogar*.

In April or May Silopi marks its Cudi Culture and Art Festival, featuring the usual mix of concerts, dances and speeches. The festival is promoted with a different slogan every year, for example: "Art will live with the mountains".

## Kela Seîd Beg, Dêra Girê Çolya and Bajarê Karda

This limestone fortress is on a 250m hill nearby Derebaşı (Giriçolya) and Kösreli (Hesena) villages, 15km to the north of Silopi town. Built in 1800 by Said Beg, a cousin of Mir Bedixhan (see p: 474), the fortress contains traces of Said Bey's palace, a cistern covered with a partly demolished dome and a pool-like cavity, lined with asphalt.

Opposite the fortress is a church called Dêra Girê Çolya, 12m long and 5m wide and carved into a large rock. A 2m-high wall of limestone sits at the front of the church. East of the fortress and northeast of Girêçolya village are the ruins of Bajarê Karda city, which was a Guti capital; all that can be seen are the ruins of some dwellings and a cemetery with ornamented gravestones.



Remains from Said Bey's palace [56]



Girê Çolya [57]



Cudi mountain [58]

## The Noah Pilgrimage Site

On Mount Cudi at a height of 2017m is a site believed by some to be where Noah's Ark (Nuh'un Gemisi) landed after the flood. A 2m-high wall has been built here to surround a spot that is thought to have been used for prayers to Noah. Below is the tomb of one Sheikh Mustafa.

The shortest route here is via the road through Kösreli village, a 45-minute drive north from Silopi; it is 20km to the village itself and then another 15km to the site on a poor road.

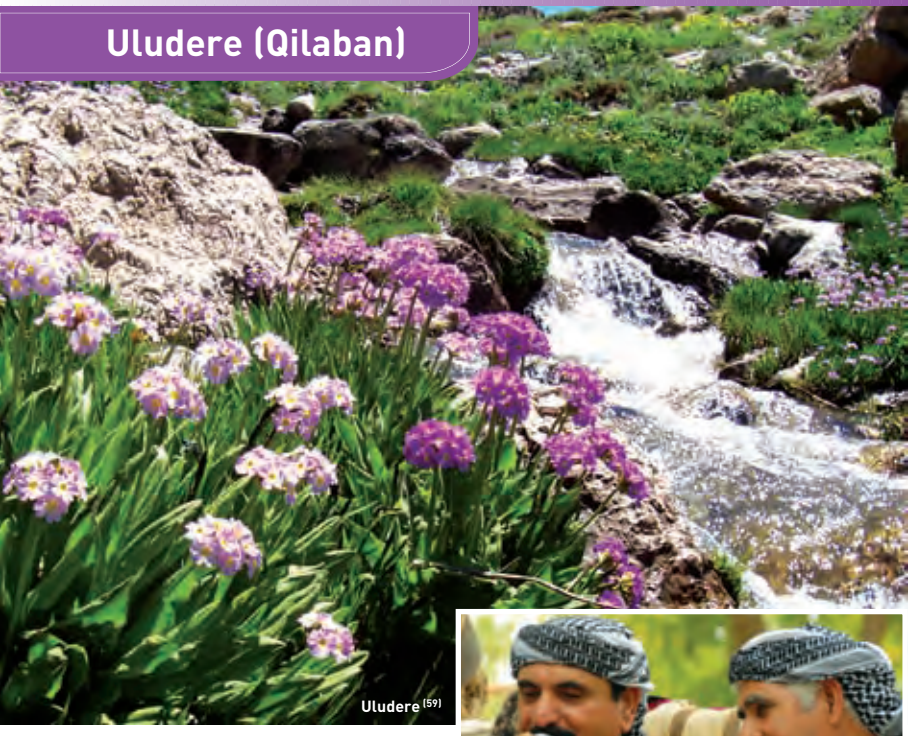
## Accommodation

The *Turistik Hotel* (0486 518 16 31) and *Habur Hotel* (0486 518 42 28) are both at the crossroad on İpek Yolu and are fairly comparable, offering air-conditioned rooms with TV and breakfast.

## Places to eat

The *İpekyolu Lokantası* on 2. Cad (0486 518 13 53), opposite Ziraat Bank, serves a variety of grills, lahmacun and pide.

# Uludere (Qilaban)



Uludere [59]



Dengbêjs [60]

On rugged land between two high mountains, Uludere town is 48km east of Şırnak city. The name of the district (population 9,228) was changed to Uludere during the Republican era. The area was a sub-district of Beytüşebap until 1957, after which it became part of Hakkari province and finally a district of Şırnak in 1990. The winding road leading here from Şırnak and on to Beytüşşebap presents seemingly never-ending views of mountains, one after the other, but is often closed from November until spring due to heavy snow. The road along the Iraqi border from Hakkari is generally more passable.

Uludere is part of a wider area called Goyîn, inhabited by a Kurdish clan whose members have the name Goyi. Until the 1980s, there were also two villages of Nestorian Christians called Doğan (Şii) and Onbudak (Bazyan), but the inhabitants left for different European countries due to political unrest.

The area is a cultural and linguistic bridge between eastern Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan; people on either side of the border speak the same kind of Kurmanji ascent, wear similar clothes and sing the same songs, and transhumance and the weaving of kilims is common. Wedding ceremonies are more protracted and a bit different from elsewhere; men wear the distinctive *şal û şapik* clothes (see p:499) and women wear colourful dresses called *kiras-fîstan*, with jewellery and


Bendy Bridge [61]

unusually folk dances generally been unaccompanied by singing, though lately musical instruments have begun to be used. Some tribes do also dance to the left, in contravention of the convention of moving to the right. In the evening dengbêj singers will come to the groom's house to sing through the night. A special meal called *hellise* is served the next morning, consisting of meat stewed all night long by two men.

Feudal, hereditary landlords mostly do not exist here. Instead, there are different small clans in each village who own the land and who are represented by a notable person, who is usually a respected elder. Representatives from different villages select one of their notables as this leader, called *Maqûl* ("chieftain"), who always attends ceremonial occasions. He is given the best place to sit and normally has the final say in meetings. Uludere town itself is a one-street affair, its few teahouses providing a lively atmosphere and social outlet for the people. There are few shoppers about, but shopkeepers keep their businesses open till sunset in the hope of making a sale.

## Kali Kalesi

Four hour's walk south, though just 3km away, are the remains of Kali Kalesi atop a 2300m mountain. The site contains a cave believed to be visited by the spirits of holy people by night. The village nearby, Kalemli (Kali), takes its name from the fortress, its advisable to seek guidance form the locals.


Cultivating land using animals [62]



Local Village transport [63]

## Memê Şivan Kalesi (Kela Memê)

At the top of the Mehrinan Plateau 10 km north of Uludere is this fortress, the site takes at least two hours to reach. It's advisable to instruct a local guide and take extra care while climbing. At an altitude of 3000m, the site does have good views of the oil-fields and city lights of Iraq, though, as well as of the Cudi and Gabar peaks.

According to legend, Memê Şivan was a shepherd whose flocks roamed between here and Dahuk in northern Iraq. One dry summer, when grass was in short supply, Memê Şivan's animals were somehow yielding plenty of milk when those of his rivals were not producing any. It turned out that Memê Şivan was able to transform himself and his animals into pigeons in the evening and fly to the grasslands at the fortress, returning at dawn. His secret was discovered by a milkmaid who discovered a blade of grass specific to the plateau on one of his goats. This spoiled his magic and changed him and his animals into stones in the middle of the plain. People arranged for a tomb for Mem to be built at the fortress and dedicated the site to him (though locals from Dahuk believe that he is buried in their area).

## Gurkel Kalesi

The remnants of this fortress is at the top of a crag encircled by cliffs, 3km south of Şenoba (Sêgirik) village and 15km west of Uludere. The local mirs were powerful and demand regular tributes from locals; when the Goyan chieftains were late with payments on one occasion, it is said they all were punished by being forced to walk barefoot on spiny acanthus plants until the plants were stained red. The humiliated chieftains decided to take their revenge, and contacted the wife of the *mir* to trap him. From the fortress where he resided, she unwound a spindle of wool until it reached the ground below, and cut the thread. With this thread, the chieftains built a ladder tall enough to reach the fortress and took their revenge on the cruel *mir*.

# Beytüşşebap (Elkê)



A view from Beytüşşebab [64]

Beytüşşebap town (population 6,622) is 112km east of Şırnak city and has only one road leading to it. It is the most remote part of the province, encircled as it is by 3000m peaks. The district, whose name is an Arabic compound meaning is "home of youth", became part of Van in 1887, then part of Siirt in 1926. When Hakkâri became a province in 1936, Beytüşşebap became one of its districts, though in 1990 it became part of Şırnak.

People cultivate wheat, barley and vegetables for self-consumption, and the area is also well known for its honey and walnuts. Carpet and rug-making are popular in villages, and some courses in these old arts are now conducted for girls in the town centre. Livestock farming is, of course, a major activity. In April and May, the herds are taken to the plateaus by shepherds. The shepherds live on the plateaus at this time. Sites called *Bêrî* are designated for milking the animals, and the milkmaids, or *bêrîvan*, are driven here from the villages in the afternoon (See p: 516).

The shepherds know the animals well and announce everybody's animals upon their arrival at the Bêrî, at which point the milkmaids get ready to milk the animals belonging to their families. In the dry summer months, the herds are moved to even higher plateaus, and are brought down once a day to a site (normally near by the tenants, in Kurdish called *Kon*) where the animals can water and the milkmaids can arrive to do their work.

Interestingly, two Christian villages nearby are still inhabited. The larger of the two is Cevizağacı (Geznax), 11km away, with about ten households who



Joking with locals [65]


Berxbir Festival [66]

reside mostly in Europe, returning back to their houses (newly built) houses only during summer. The other village is Kovankaya (Hozû Mêz), 25km west of town and actually slightly nearer to Uludere than Beytüşşebap.

## Zümrüt (Germav) Spring

Five kilometres from the town is this spring near Ilıcak (Gundê Germavê) village. To get there, turn left just before you get to the town and follow the road downhill. There is a spa here with three outdoor and one indoor pool, and separate sections for men and women; the water, which is at body temperature, is sulphurous and curative for rheumatism, heart conditions and skin problems.

## Berxbir Festival

One of the most interesting and enjoyable festivals in southeast Turkey takes place in mid-July each year, when the Municipal Berxbir Festival is held 8km east of Beytüşşebap, at Kato Marinis in the Laleşi Valley. The locals pitch both traditional black and regular tents in the plains for the festival, and


Zümrüt (Germav) spring [67]

provide food and drink to visitors from surrounding villages as well as tourists (who can stay in their own tent or, if organised through the municipality, with a family in their tent). For four days and nights there is almost non-stop folk dancing (they dance sometimes to the left rather than the more usual right), and there also concerts, local games and exhibitions of local wares, including carpets and *şal û şapik* clothes. This is also a great place to see people turned out en masse in traditional clothes unique to this province; wearing Kurdish costume has become *de rigeuer* and preferred here. Groups head up into



Lamb-shearing Berxbir Festival [68]



Chosen lambs taking part in festival [69]



Traditional tenet [70]

some especially scenic mountains for excursions each morning and there are fireworks at night.

Contests are organised to pick up the most handsome ram, the best honey and the best yogurt freshly made by *bêrîvan*, but the most interesting competition is the lamb-shearing. The lambs are washed one day before and shown to jury members; colourful ribbons (some in red, green and yellow, the colours of the banned Kurdish flag) are put on three selected lambs and they are shorn. The contestant who shears his lamb the fastest and in the most elegant and tidy way is awarded gold. If you are interested to attend, contact Beytüşşebap Municipality on 0486 311 20 06.

## Dev Evleri

On Faraoşin Plateau some 22km from Beytüşşebap are these "giant's houses", Dev Evleri; in reality they are four huge caverns dug into the rock and some remains of heavily build stone walls are thought to have been used as observation posts to guard against incursions by the Assyrians, and at the same time as a shelter during the summer transmigration.



Mountain morning sport Berxbir Festival [71]

## Şal û şapik



Şal û şapik [72]

This traditional Kurdish male two-piece outfit, comprising loose trousers and a kind of jacket, has centuries of history behind it; production in the region of the fabric used to make it is as old as the silk trade. The costume is always worn with a fine leather belt, into which a handgun or knife was slipped in times past.

The clothes, often in brown or black, are made mainly of mohair as well as other materials including wool and cotton, carefully woven by skilful women and girls who have learned the tradition from their mothers. Most motifs used have a symbolic meaning, and can be woven specifically for an individual.



Kurdish dancing at Berxbir Festivali [73]


ŞIRNAK
İL HARİTASI
VAN
SİİRT
HAKKÂRİ
MARDİN
SURİYE
(SYRIA)
IRAK (IRAQ)
(KRG)
ŞIRNAK
(Şernax)
Beytüşşebap
(Elkê)
Uludere
(Oilaban)
Güçlükonak
(Basê)
Idil
(Hêrzex)
Cizre
(Cizîr)
Silopi
(Girikê Aro)
Sırtköy
(Tilkan)
Öğündük
Karalar
(Arabarı)
Kabeli
(Gabar)
Hezarşa
Damlarca
(Kelaşa)
Kasrik
Kumçatı
(Dêrgelê)
Şemoba
(Şêgirk)
Taşlıören
(Nîrvê)
Kalemli
(Kalê)
Çığlıca
Beytüşşebap Festival Alanı
HAMAZ DAĞI
TANİNTANİN DAĞI
KÜRELİ DAĞI
CUDİ DAĞI
ALEM DAĞI
DAGGIN DAĞI
İŞARETLER / LEGEND
MESAFE CETVELİ (KM)
ŞIRNAK




A wedding in Hakkari [1]

# HAKKÂRİ (Colemêrg)

The mountainous **Hakkari** province is surrounded by **Urmia (Wirmê)** in Iran to the east, Dihok (Dahuk) in Iraq to the south, known as **Hakkari** (also called Colemerik, in Syriac **Gûtarmak**). The people of Hakkari, living as "**free tribes**" since early history ruled their area as an autonomous **Kurdish principality**.



Reserved tulip [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
246,469 (2007)
**Average altitude**
1720m
**Area**
90,521 square kilometres
**Districts**
Hakkâri, Çukurca, Şemdinli, Yüksekova
**Economy**
Livestock, Farming, Beekeeping
**Neighbouring provinces**
Şırnak (west), Van (north)

The mountainous area surrounded by Urmia (Wirmê) in Iran to the east, Dihok (Dahuk) in Iraq to the south, known as Hakkari (also called Çolemerik, in Syriac Gûlarmak). The people of Hakkari, living as "free tribes" since early history ruled their area as an autonomous Kurdish principality, however they were went under Ottoman control in the 19th century. During this period, Kurdish Beys dominating the area could issue coin and sermon on their names and establish madrasahs. Dozens of Kurdish figures receiving their education in these madrasahs had their share in the coinage of Hakkari as "land of the literary". Although local Kurdish customs have some resemblance to those in neighbouring provinces, they still strike attention for some peculiarities. In the towns and villages of Hakkari you come across more frequently with people still dressed up in traditional ways.

The area has been permeated not only by the usual list of empires and civilisations but also by a variety of religious traditions over the centuries. Zoroastrianism was common here in Median times; among Assyrians who fled from the legendary city of Ninova (Mosul) in 612 BC and found relief in the mountains of Hakkari later got acquainted with the ideas of priest Nasturius in the middle of the 5th century. The area then became an important centre for Nestorians and this community could survive in the area until the 20th century. Indeed, Nestorian churches scattered around the valleys and high mountains of the area are now striving to resist the



Kurdish dance [3]



The wedding of Nestorians [4]

obliterating effects of nature and mankind in their age-old solitude.

The area was also home to Armenians, Yezidis, Chaldean Christians and Jews, with Islam becoming significant from the 10th century onwards. In the 14th century Şir Îzedîn founded what became a dynasty of Mirs of Hakkari, who ruled from bases in Gevaş and (later) Başkale, both of which are now in Van. Nurullah Bey, the last of these Mirs, massacred some Nestorian Christians and revolted unsuccessfully against the Ottoman in the mid-19th century. During World War I it was captured briefly by Russian armies, when it was a district linked to Van, before becoming part of the new Turkish Republic and then a province in its own right in 1936.

The economy of the province is mainly based on livestock farming; the large meadows and pastures are ideal places to breed animals, but agriculture is hampered by the conditions. Beekeeping is popular in areas and Şemdinli district produces good honey and tobacco.

Hakkâri is known for its natural beauty (including its floral symbol, a kind of fritillary) and you should make an effort to reach the high mountains, valleys, glacier lakes and summer pastures, either by driving there or perhaps using village *dolmuş*. A good spot to pick, for example, is the Zap River Valley which features not only a variety of scenic beauties along its length but also several Nestorian churches, typically located above valleys. Another rich valley, Kırıkdağ (Xenanis), offers the chance to see more Nestorian relics, including the inaccessible Mar Şalita Monastery. History buffs will relish seeing a number of old fortresses and thousands of petroglyphs in the Geverok and Tirşin Plateaus (Tirşin Plateaus also linked to Çatak in Van province). Finally, there is also Bağlar (Nehrî), a village redolent of associations with Kurdish history as it was here that Seyyid Taha set up a madrasah that would be a spiritual beacon for the Kurds.

## Some prominent people from Hâkkari


Yezidis [5]

Though small, the province has produced a number of well-known figures. One of these was the poet **Melayê Bateyî or Bati** (real name Hasan Huseyin; 1689–1755), born at Bate into the Erotoş tribe. He travelled widely throughout Kurdistan, and employed different accents of Kurdish and special words in his writing. His most well-known works are *Mewlûda Bateyî* (or *Mewlûda Pêxember Eleyhî Selat û Weselam*), which is read at religious functions; an anthology full of great poems in Kurdish; and *Çîroka Zembîlfiroş* (*Legend of Zembîlfiroş*). Another poet and writer was **Şêx Adî** (1075–1162) was a respected sheikh born Şerefedîn in 1075 into the Tîrah Tribe of Hakkâri. He studied at many important madrasahs including in Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad, Mosul and Diyarbakır, he has written some books such as Mishefa Reş (book on Yezidis), Helbest and Cilwe. He wrote lots of poems with rhythm, most of who were consisting of seven syllables as in the poem *Zerdeşt.* In the contemporary arts scene, there was writer, actor, and director **Yılmaz Erdoğan**, born in Hakkâri in 1968. People throughout Turkey enjoyed his hugely successful movies *Vizontele* (2000) and *Vizontele Tuuba* (2003), depicting life in a small Kurdish village learning to appreciate TV for the first time, and also the dark days of the 1980 military coup. He was a student of engineering at İstanbul Technical University but turned his hand to drama, writing sketches for TV and working with different companies. He is from a talented family: his brother Mustafa is a choreographer who founded the first private dance company of Turkey, Sultans of the Dance, and another brother, Deniz, is a well-known musician.



A view from Hakkari City [6]

## Hakkâri City

Like many towns in Turkey, Hakkâri (population 57,954) is basically a modern place, but the way of life here is more traditional and tribal-minded, though unusually old women may not cover their hair completely, and show strands of hair dyed with henna. Locals speak Kurmanji with a pleasant, soft accent and are very hospitable, to the point that a proposal to build a hotel in one of the surrounding districts (Çukurca) was blocked by locals who feared it would damage their ability to host visitors in their own homes.

In the city centre next to *Şenler Murat* Hotel in Gazi Mahallesi, Bulver Cad is the pleasantly located *Valilik Parkı,* the park is a nice place where you can spend some time in the evenings during your stay in city of Hakkari. You will be served hot, cold drinks and ice-cream in this fresh green environment. Live music played till late hours.

Approaching the city, you will be greeted by the sight of Mount Sümbül (Çiyayê Simbil) and by the symbol of



Winter in Hakkari [7]

Hakkâri, the flowers whose Turkish name translates as "reversed tulips" (in Kurdish Şilêr/ gulnexwîn), but which are really crown imperial fritillaries *(Fritillaria imperialis).*

### Hakkâri (Colemêrg) Kalesi

What remains of this fortress in the central Dağgöl (Taxa Paganê) quarter is a section of ramparts in the north-east. The exact date of the construction is unknown. The area was a dining and picnic area until 1960, after which it became used as a military installation (and remains off-limits to visitors).

In 1998 some stelae were uncovered by chance beneath Hakkâri Kalesi. They took the form of 13 stone figurines, varying in height from under a metre to just over 3m. They are thought to have been made around 1200 BC. The rear of these figures consists of plain, uncarved rock; it is


Meydan Madrasah [8]

only from the front that it is clear they depict humans, eleven of whom are thin, long-faced and wearing helmets (thought to be male) and two are plumper, likely to be female. All are naked and many carry weapons. The stelae were kept in the Meydan Madrasah for a time but are now on show in Ahlat Museum in Bitlis also Van Museum.

## Meydan Madrasah

In the central Madrasah quarter, the Meydan Madrasah was restored in 2006 and is worth seeing. The ins cription on the door is mainly Koranic but mentions that the madrasah was built in 1700-1701 by İbrahim Bey (the son of a Hakkâri ruler, called İzzettin Bey). The madrasah, of smooth stone blocks, has a typical form with its two storeys, each within 13 rooms, and large courtyard. In the whole structure, nicely cut masonry is used. A small door with a pointed arch covered with motifs opens on the south side.

## Gulêreş Baba Tomb

In the Biçer (Bajêr) quarter is this tomb, to which many pilgrims arrive from Hakkâri and around practically every day of the year. In a fenced courtyard surrounded by oak trees, the tomb is that of Gulêreş Baba, who lived between 1074 and 1162, and it is part of a mosque with the same name, restored in 1982.

## Melik Esat Cemetery

The province has a number of historical cemeteries, mostly dating from Ottoman times and located in Hakkâri city; they are interesting as the tombstones have attractive inscriptions and are often made of serpentine, a dark green stone.

One of these graveyards is the Melik Esat Cemetery, west of the mosque of


Gulêreş Baba Tomb [9]

that name in the Biçer (Bajêr) quarter. The graveyard is surrounded with walls and wire fence. There are two dozen old tombstones with plant motifs and different symbols; the most important of these belong to the local lords of Hakkâri province.

There is another old cemetery called Kale Altı Mezarlığı east of the Hakkâri Kalesi, but there is little to see here as most of the graves are literally buried. One gravestone uncovered here, dated to 1781, is kept in the Meydan Madrasah.



A grave Stone from Melik Esat Cemetery (10)

## Zeynel Bey Madrasah

This madrasah, located in the Biçer (Bajêr) quarter next to the Katramas River (Çemê Qetremasî), was built during the era of Zeynel Bey (1560–1578), who was one of the local lords of Hakkâri region. He perished during in a war with the Persians and is buried in the courtyard of the madrasah. The madrasah, now partly ruined, originally had a rectangular form with a courtyard in the middle and rooms to the west and south.

## Kırmızı Kümbet (Red Tomb) and Cemetery

Located in a hillside cemetery in the Medrese quarter are some ruins from

## Nestorian Churches

Most of the churches in Hakkâri belonged to Nestorian Christians, who had a major presence here until the 1920s. Non-Muslims fled the area for Iraq during and after World War I, and tried to return in 1924 with the help of the British, though this was thwarted by the Turkish army. Thus the churches were abandoned; today they are often relatively well preserved. The valleys often have names corresponding to the tribe that lived there.



Nestorians of Hakkari(11)

Churches are often located high up overlooking valleys or on natural salients, while some monasteries are placed on mountain slopes. Almost all are composed of a nave and an altar. The walls are usually of cubical stone blocks and white plaster has been applied inside; roofs are usually flat and made of earth. Low doors connect the entrance area and the main hall. The lack of inscriptions means the date of construction is often unknown.

the historical Kırmızı Kümbet. Archaeological work leads us to think that the original construction was rectangular and oriented east–west. Some turquoise-coloured ceramics were found close to the surface; various items excavated here are now in the collection of the museum in Van (see p: 543). Colourful bits of cloth are tied to the trees around by people who want to make wishes.



Zeynel Bey Madrasah [12]

The graveyard itself, dating back to Ottoman times, includes many historical tombstones beautifully ornamented with plant motifs and different geometrical signs. Many of the gravestones have, however, been dug up. The valuable ones are kept in Meydan Madrasah. Most of the graves belong to the rulers of Hakkari and their families; the ones belonging to Abdullah Han and his mother Rabia Sultan are especially important. The grave of Abdullah Han, resembling a tulip, is located in the centre of the graveyard. There are Arabic inscriptions on it, giving the date as 1780 and bordered with plant and geometrical motifs, and there is also an ornamented footstone. Rabia Sultan's grave, dated to 1768, has a headstone and footstone as well and is likewise covered with calligraphy.



Children selling revas [13]

## Getting there

Hakkâri is accessible via Şırnak or Van, with bus connections from both provinces. The 24-hour border gate with Iran is situated in the village of Esendere, 40km east Yüksekova.

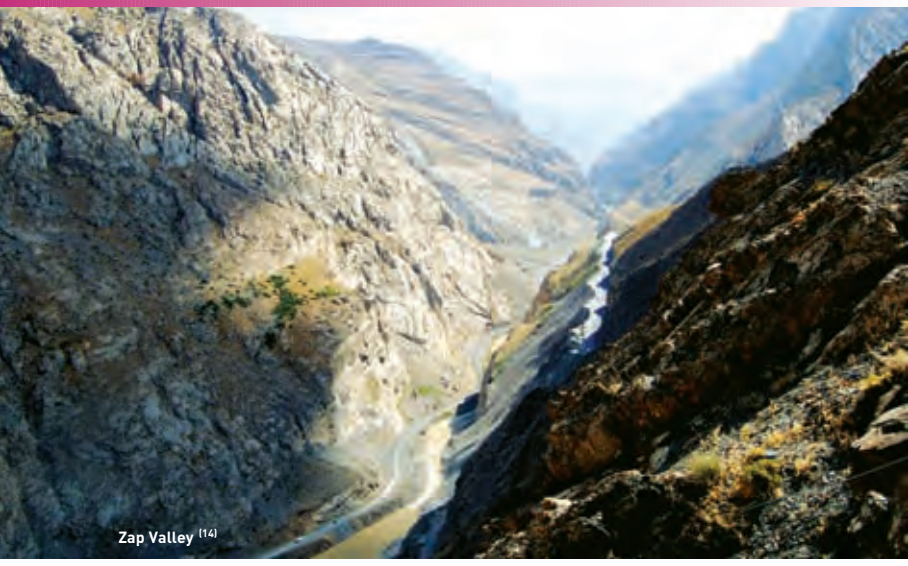
## Accommodation

There are two hotels on Altay Cad in the centre. The *Ümit* (0438 216 24 69) has rooms with TV (some also with mountain views) and a breakfast restaurant; similar is the *Şenler Murat* (0438 216 28 57).

## Places to eat

The centrally located Derya Restaurant (0438 211 65 92) on Cumhuriyet Cad, near İş Bankası, serves different types of kebabs and soups. Some 7km out of town on the road to Çukurca is *Zap Dinlenme Tesisleri* (0438 211 42 23), a riverside fish restaurant.

**Municipality: 0438 211 64 59 Tourist information: 0438 211 40 36**


Zap Valley [14]

## Bay Kalesi

About 8km south of town in Bay Village (Gundê Bayê), this fortress is placed on a precipitous rock cliff. You get close to it by road, and thereafter you can ascend to the castle from the north or south flanks using steps cut in the rock, but note that the site is yet another military installation and thus cannot be visited.

The fortress is in ruins, though it's obvious that it was built of uncut stone and Horasan plaster, which contains ingredients like egg, cheese and blood to strengthen it. Bits of coloured ceramics are dispersed in the interior of the castle, and there is an adorned tablet bearing a cross. According to some sources, plastered stone pieces decorated with fritillaries were also found. Other ceramic artefacts found on the site indicate that it has been inhabited from the Iron Age. Some historical sources add that tribal chieftains once ruled the province from this fortress.

## Zap Valley (Geliyê Zêp)

Seven kilometres east of the city is the Zap River Valley, 150km long in all.


Helil Church [15]

The Zap River has its source at Karasu to the south of Başkale. When you drive along the valley you are presented with different types of natural beauty at each point, from mountains to summer pastures and plateaus, best visited in late spring and summer if you want to see nomadic pastoral life. The valley also hosts several historical monuments and Nestorian Christian settlements. One of the churches here is Mar Sawa, 45km from Hakkâri in Geçimli (Dêra Mersua) village. If you are interested in visiting it you can take the village bus that leaves Hakkâri centre.

## Helil Church (Dêra Helêlê)

8km out of the city on the road to Van, you will see some highway facilities on


Berçelan Plateau [16]

the main road; just behind is a village called Helil (Helêlê) containing a Nestorian church of the same name. Like other Nestorian churches it is rectangular in plan, with stone walls and an earth roof, though unusually it is undecorated and has no inscriptions to give a clue to its age.

### Sheikh Nazır's Tomb (Ziyareta Şêx Nazir)

Sheikh Nazır was the commander of the first Muslim armies which came to the region and he was killed here. People make pilgrimages to his tomb, 16km west of the city in Durankaya (Silehê), on 28 July, which is supposed to be the date when he died.

### Berçelan Plateaus (Zozanên Berçelanê)

This high plateau is the most well known in the region, thanks to its greenery, fresh air, water sources, colourful flowers and magnificent Zap River view. Nomads use it as a pasture in summer, but it also hosts a number of short-stay visitors who camp here. The plateau is reached by a winding 18-kilometre road from Hakkâri city. Sleeping here under thousands of stars offers the chance to watch a beautiful sunrise, but even in summer, be sure to bring some warm clothes.

In late June a municipality-organised festival takes place on the plateau, lasting two to four days. The event adds an unusual touch to pastoral life, and its centrepiece is the lamb-shearing competition. On the first day the lambs are washed and dried, and on the second they are sheared. The aim is simple: to shear the lamb efficiently and accurately. After the awarding of the prizes, the festivities proper commence, including feasts, music and dancing. Occasionally well-known singers are invited to perform and meanwhile buyers and sellers come


Seyitan Lake [17]

Koçanis church [18]





A detail from Koçanis Church [19]



A detail from Koçanis church [20]

## Koçanis Church

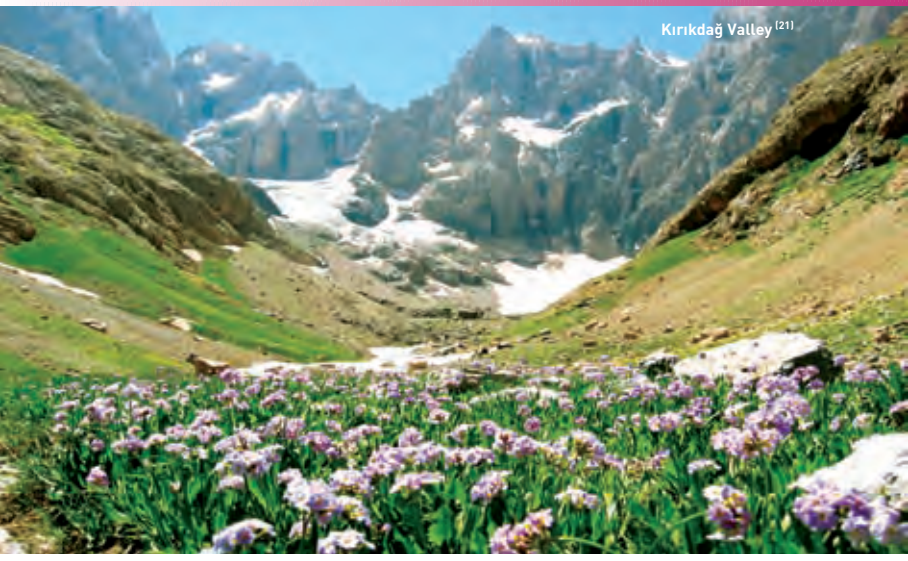
This church, 18km north of the city in Konak (Koçanis) village, is one of the most important in the region and important religious figures used to be stationed here. For these reasons, and because it is better decorated than some others, it is worth having a look at. The village, now abandoned, can be reached by road from the direction of Hakkâri city from Gazi quarter, via a pass at a height of 2800m that traverses the Berçalan Plateau.

There was a Nestorian patriarchal church here from 1662 until 1915; the present church was built in 1800. It has a vaulted nave roughly 16m x 8m in size, and is oriented east–west. The entrance is on the west side of the south facade, which has some motifs and also some sundials. A platform connects the entrance to the altar via two doorways. Construction is of stone blocks, predominantly beige in the upper parts of the walls though lower down coloured stone is used. A num-

together to bargain over animals, wool etc. For more info contact Municipality: 0438 211 64 59

## Lake Seyithan (Gola Seyîtxan)

Lake Seyithan (Seyîtxan) is a glacier lake located in the northwest of the Berçelan plateau. Watching its crystalline blue water will relax your eyes. The lake water, fed by the snowmelt, can be so cold that you dare not put your hand in it twice. It is said that the lake takes its name from Seyithan, the son of one of Hakkâri's rulers; Seyithan used to hunt around here and was always taking a break by the lake. There is no public transport here and driving here requires traversing an un-surfaced road.


Kırıkdağ Valley [21]

ber of beautiful symbols have been depicted on stones near the main entrance and also on the main exterior walls. The church is situated up on a rock, increasing its defendability.

The patriarch traditionally carried the title Mor Şemun (Mar Şimon); the 13th Mor Şemun (Mar Şimon Bünyamin), who was associated with the British, was murdered in 1915 by a Kurdish tribal leader in Iran.

## Kırıkdağ Valley (Geliyê Dêzê)

The Kırıkdağ Valley, signed "Kırıkdağ Vadisi" on the right of the Van road 20km out from Hakkâri, has high plateaus with glaciers called *Cennet Cehennem,* meaning "hell and heaven". The area boasts not only natural beauty but also 14 churches and a fortress, and is popular with locals for excursions. The ideal time to visit is between spring and mid-autumn, when willow and walnut trees will shade from the worst of the heat.

At the entrance to the valley is Dêz Kalesi, a small rectangular fortress on a 100m hill affording perfect views of the Ava Spi and Zap rivers. The fortress once had a watchtower at each corner, though the western towers are partly collapsed. A gate in the east wall gives onto a big hall inside with ruined rooms to each side. The fortress's age and builders are unknown, though the fort is mentioned in the *Şerefname* (a famous tome covering Kurdish history- Also see p: 434) and is said to have belonged to the Nestorians.

Around 1500m from Dêz village is Dikmen (Mat), an abandoned village which contains a ruined church that was converted into a mosque and sits on a plain with a few walnut trees around. Around 6km away is Allagipe village, containing another church.


Dêz Kalesi[22]



**Gelezzo church**[23]

Solingir Kalesi, not accessible by road, is located at a narrow point 7km up the Kırıkdağ Valley on a high rock as is typical. There are a few man-made walls around the castle which is carved out of natural rock, though treasure seekers have taken their toll on the site.



**A detail from Mar Şalita Monastery** [24]

Located in Öveç (Seravinis) village 8km north of Kırıkdağ Valley is Şaba Church, prominently located on a slope; the site can be reached by road. The church is made up of stone blocks and had two floors (the upper one is gone), and an apartment which housed the priest and his family. From the top of the rock on which the church sits, you can spot other churches as well as Dez Kalesi.

The small Soe Church is on a green hill in So (Soe) village, at the end of the valley; the Gelezzo (Gêlezo) Church is 1km away, with Çilkanî spring on the left. Both churches are Nestorian. Beyond are the glaciers known as *Cennet Cehennem*. The Cehennem is famous for its around a year snow as it is too deep, snow will never get melted in the valley.

## Mar Şalita Monastery

Mar Şalita Monastery is situated 6km along the Kırıkdağ Valley road in an inaccessible, precipitous area; to get close you need to pass through Allagipe and carry on for another 5km. Built by Nestorians, the church can only be picked out as you approach it. The place is also called Dêra Çiya (Mountain Church)



**Children from the village** [25]


Sheikh Ali Mosque [26]

and Dêra Keri (White Church) by locals, as well as the Sumela of Hakkâri, after the famous Greek Orthodox monastery situated on a high cliff in Trabzon by the Black Sea. It is constructed in a cavity carved out of the rock.

## Kursin Church (Dêra Kursînê)

Similar in structure is the Kursin Church, in the north side of the Gümüşlü (Kursin) village on a mountain slope in Kırıkdağ Valley, 25km from Hakkâri city. The church is in good condition. After you enter via the door in the east wall, you encounter a second door which serves as a defensive feature, preventing people from entering the church easily.

## Sheikh Ali Mosque and Tomb

This 18th-century mosque is located in Üzümcü (Dizê) village at the 27km mark on the Hakkâri–Çukurca road. It has been restored as a two-storey building but may once have an additional storey, and served not only as a mosque but also as a religious school and dervish lodge. The external facades of the walls are still original, which are made up of uncut stones. It has been covered with a pyramidal iron roof. There are 6 small vaulted windows in south and east walls. In addition the tomb of the sheikh some oil lamps, a huge wooden rosary, an old fez, a material for writing can be seen inside the mosque.

## Derav Church

Located on a hilltop above the village of Üzümcü (Dizê), 31km from Hakkâri city on the Hakkâri–Çukurca road, this small church is accessed by a door in the south side and has an interior comprising a nave and an altar. Some of the walls are partly damaged but it is still visitable.

Derav church [27]




Mar Abdişo church [28]

## Mar Abdişo and Azizan Churches

Mar Abdişo is another typical Nestorian church located near Oğul (Tal) village some 29km south of the city centre. Only some 11km of the road is asphalted. The monastery is located on a sharp cliff and reachable by walking for an hour, starting from before the fork where the road branches for the Azizan (Ezîzan) village; steps cut in the rocks will take you to the site. The single- storey features some stone walls in front of a natural cave. There are windows to the east and west, the western one having the shape of a cross. The interior of the church is plastered with lime. Some of the walls are partly destroyed, while others have been demolished by bounty hunters. Unlike other cave churches it has its own water source inside.


Mar Azizan Church [29]

Just before you reach Oğul, if you follow the vehicle road you will come to the Azizan village, which has its own church at the foot of a hill. It looks intact from the outside but the interior, which originally had two chambers, is now in ruins. The roof is flat and covered with earth.

## Life in summer pastures


Life in summer pastures [30]

Life on the plateaus sounds blissful, with plenty of fresh air and plenty of distance from the stress and pollution of the cities, but of course the reality is rather different; it isn't easy to spend half of the year on the mountains taking care of livestock (but also because of the limitation on accessing the plateaus enforced by the state army). Sharing the work out amongst the villagers keeps the community together and minimizes the toughness of the work. The men and youths take the animals away from the village to feed them with fresh grass, while others work to collect grass with which to feed them in winter. Women do the hardest work, looking after not just the animals but also their husbands and children; milkmaids called *Bêrîvan* are some of the most productive and skilful of the women (see p: 496).



Shepherds taking a break [31]

## Kaval (Qewalê) Valley (Geliyê Qewalê)

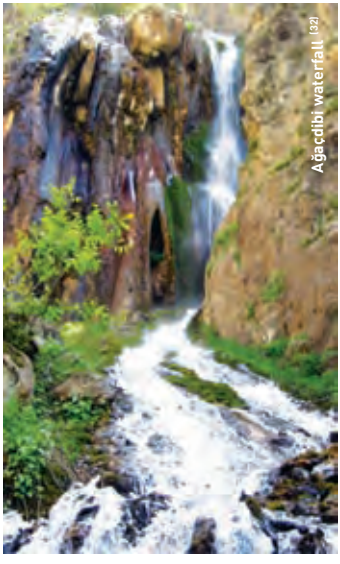
This valley is 55km away and reached via Çukurca district. The beauty of the rich summer pastures and waterfalls is such that it has become the subject of several folk songs. The sinuous Kaval river has its source at a waterfall on Mount Kato, on a slope of which is the Begir Kalesi (Kela Bêgirê), east of Kaval Kamışlı and Geçitli (Livîn) villages and some 63km south of Hakkâri city (you will have to get there by car as there is no public transport to return from here).

## Cilo-Sat Summer Pastures (Zozanê Cîlo)

The Cilo-Sat range is located in the eastern side of the Zap Valley, with the Nehil Valley (Geliyê Nihêlê) to the north and the Şemdinli (Şemzînan) and Avaşîn Streams to the South. This is a favourite place for mountain climbers with many lakes, peaks, springs and a magnificent nature. The area is also quite important in terms of transhumance for the local tribes. Rock art in the Geverok tableland indicates that the area has been inhabited up to 8000 years ago.

## Ağaçdibi Falls (Sûlava Kehê)

To reach these wonderful falls, drive the road between Hakkâri and Çukurca district; after some 13km you will reach Ağaçdibi (Kehê) village (the turning is close to the *Zap Dinlenme* Restaurant). Fifteen minutes' walk away are these high falls, especially worth seeing in spring when they are



Ağaçdibi waterfall [32]



Sat lake [33]

swelled by snowmelt. Nearby is a good, restful picnic area with a spring called Ava Ore.

## Lake Sat (Gola Geraşîn)

Blue Lake Sat is northeast of Hakkâri city, behind the Sat-Cilo Mountains which are covered with the snow half the year. In springtime they nourish the lake with melted snow, at which time the area becomes an exceptionally beautiful blend of green tones on land and blue waters. To reach the lake, make for Ağaçdibi (Kehê) village (see above) and then take the route leading north; it takes about 3 hours on foot, or you could hire a horse to ride there. Also you can reach there via the village of Veregoz (Warêgûz) some 24km away from town of Yüksekova.

## Mount Şine (Çiyayê Şînê)

This mountain resembles to huge brick with its rectangular shape. It is located 30km from Hakkâri city en route to Çukurca at the point where the Kaval and Zap rivers come together. It is easy to reach this remarkable mountain by public transport.



Revesed tulip [34]

## Kilims (Flat-weave rugs)



Traditional rugs in Hakkari [35]

Making a large kilim, work done mainly by housewives and girls, can take up to a year. The wool to be used is dyed with natural pigments made of the roots of different plants, bark and even earth. An item called şap is used to prevent the colours from fading. Kilims are woven on a horizontal loom (also called a nomadic loom) or a vertical *(istar)* one. Some off the warp threads used in kilims are *uzatma, eriş* and *argaç* and weft threads are called *atma, germe* or *masur*. The loops are tightened using an iron tool called *kerkît* (hammer comb). Motifs in kilims include geometric shapes and animals, designs symbolising the tribe and architectural symbols.



Hand made socks [36]

## The red-legged partridge (kew)

The red-legged partridge (*Alectoris rufa*, or kew in Kurdish) is no stranger to people in this part of Turkey, and is also found elsewhere in the Middle East and Europe. In southeast Turkey they are regarded as national symbols, their image turned into large posters hung up in teahouses and restaurants.



Red legged partridge (Kew) [37]

The birds are about a foot long, with red legs and bills, and their eyes are ringed with red plumage. The chin and throat are a dull white while much of the rest of the plumage is reddish brown streaked with olive grey. Wild birds like to inhabit heartland and woodland. The birds are easily tamed, and you may be lucky enough to see one caged in a teahouse in towns, villages and may get to hear them singing beautifully. Among the Kurds kew is believed to be untrustworthy bird, they are used as a lying bird to hunt other kew by singing and inviting them to the hunting spot.



Kurdish Jewish wedding in Israel [38]

## Kurdish weddings and local dances

The one thing that you must see while travelling in the east and south east regions is the amazing Kurdish weddings. Weddings are commonly held in the public, either outside villages or near the grooms' house and sometimes in the village square or in open spaces in town neighbourhoods. You won't fail to notice the existence of a wedding if you are in the vicinity, as the sound of traditional live music with young girls ululating. Serhed, as Turkey's eastern border regions are known, is one of the few parts of Turkey where Kurdish weddings are celebrated in the proper way. Women can lead the dances mainly shaking handkerchiefs in red, green and yellow, the colours of the banned Kurdish flag. During the dancing



Bride and groom receiving gifts [39]

friends and relations of the groom make *şabaş*, tipping the musicians to make them play for special guests. At almost all of ceremonies the groom and the bride do traditional dances, especially the one called *delîlo.*

The organizer of the ceremony, the *ezepçerî* or *birazava*, is an important figure. He takes money from the relatives of the groom in order to spend during the ceremony, takes the groom to the barber for a close shave, buys clothes for the groom, etc.

The most interesting parts of these ceremonies are held at the late night when the children and the elderly leave the area. The *ezepçerî* or *birazava* must always be with the groom at this time and must be very careful about late-night antics: for



**Henna night** [40]

example; the teenagers of the village may come together, steal the groom's clothes and ask the ezepçerî to pay them to have these items returned. Or another possibility is that two teams of single and married men respectively are organized, one consisting of married and the other singles, and they play some different traditional games. Another interesting part of the ceremonies is Dara Zavatiyê – hanging fruits, chocolates, clothes, ribbons, etc on a fake tree (although it's not common in all regions).

The atmosphere is friendly; no one will object to photographs and visitors will be fed and expected or asked to join in the dancing. In some of the villages you may hear or see gun shots from some of the guests to mark happiness for the newly wed couple.

As is appropriate at a Muslim event, formally there is no alcohol in evidence, although some of the old and young men sneak off for secret tipples, if you are in to it, keep your eyes open and do have a look around for small groups of men away from the crowd who act they are holding regular drinks such as cola, with exceptions it might be loaded with spirits.



Wedding from Hakkari [41]

In southeastern Turkey there are several traditional ways for marriages to take place according to local custom, not always sanctioned by state law, though comparing with the past many of these arrangements are now dying out and used rarely.

**Beşik kertmesi (sozdayî):** This could be said to be engagement at the cradle, and occurs when two families decide to have newborn babies betrothed.

**Kuma (hêwî):** If a man finds out that he cannot have any children with his wife, it was possible that the man marries an additional wife called kuma.

**Başlık paralı evlilik (qelend):** This is not actually a form of arranged mar-



Dara Zavatiyê [42]

riage, but refers to when the family of the groom has to pay a certain amount of money to the mother of the bride-to-be so she can buy something for the bride.

**Berdel (berdêlî):** This involves, for example, a man marrying the sister of his brother-in-law, or a woman marrying the brother of her sister-in-law.

**Kan bedeli evlilikleri (berdêlxwîn):** When there is a blood feud between two families, a woman can be given away as a bride in order to bring hostility to an end. Though such arrangement is now dying out in most areas.

**Akraba evliliği (zewaca di nav malbatê de):** Common marriages between cousins helped being arranged by the families and in some cases by young who simply fell in love.

## Kurdish local dances

Kurdish dances reflect samples of Kurdish life over the past thousands of years. Rhythmic and elegant movements are called *Govend* (dîlan). They may very well origin from geographical location, the Kurdish way of living, beliefs, work and struggle, war and quarrel. The older ones generally like slow dances like *Delîlo, Giranî, Axayo, Keşo,* etc. But the teens generally dance the too much active dances like *Govenda Di Cih De, Şêxanî, Eyşokê, Keçkeçikê, Lorkê, Bablekan,* etc. Dancers link little fingers in a line, before advancing in step with much shaking of shoulders and intricate footwork. The heads of the group sometimes come in the middle of the dance area; all the members of dance team stay or seat at their places and watch the personal shows of the leaders with clapping. Some of the dance leaders stage some traditional dramas like the shepherd whose sheep were eaten by a wolf or a sorrowful mother whose son has just died, etc.



Kurdish dances group [43]



Kurdish dance from Diyarbakır [44]

## Hakkâri handicrafts

Hakkari city has a few places selling local handicrafts. One of these is Soydan Kilimcilik, under the *Şenler Murat Hotel;* another is Ege Kilimcilik on Bulvar Cad.

Among handicrafts made in the province are various woollen items. Socks are made in a variety of thicknesses for different seasons and with rich, eye-catching colours. A parzûn is a kind of bag, also made with colourful wool, which milkmaids *(bêrîvan)* use. As colourful as a kilim, these bags are now being used by city women too.

Horses and mules used to be important for transport in this upland region, and halters and saddlebags *(hevsar û heqîb/xurçik)* were woven by women from mohair. Different tribes had their own designs, so that people could recognise which tribe someone was a member of from the appearance of their saddlebag.



Parzûn [45]

Finally, in Hakkâri you will also find the traditional women's costume comprising *fîstan,* a kind of long jacket, and *kiras*, a long rope worn under the *fîstan.* This costume, which can be of various fabrics, may be plain or highly decorated and colourful, but either way it looks elegant. The outfit is completed with a scarf and a silver belt.



Kiras and Fistan [46]



Kurdish dance [47]

# Çukurca (Çel)



A view near Çukurca [48]



Local man [49]

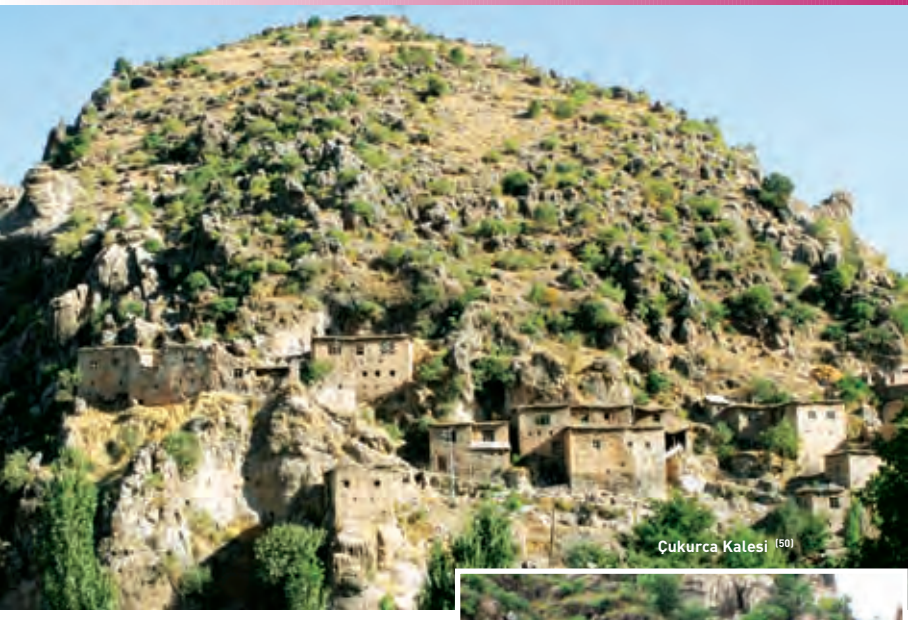
The green hilly district of Çukurca (population 7,033) is located 80km south of Hakkâri province and typically over 1000m above sea level. Çukurca town, close to the Iranian and Northern Iraqi borders, received a sudden increase boom in its population now a day inhabited in the centre of the town due to the immigration from villages in 1990s. The area is poor for agriculture because of the mountainous terrains, but it is well known for its rice, pomegranate, sesame and tahini.

The district is home to some of the earliest Urartian settlements. Çukurca became a subdistrict of Van province in 1880, and then was linked to the principality of Hakkâri, becoming a district of Hakkâri province only in 1953. Interestingly, the area had a significant Jewish community until fairly recently.

Çukurca is reached by taking the left fork at the Hakkâri-Çukurca-Şırnak crossroads (known as Köprülü Kavşağı) and continuing for 25km. The road from the crossroads to the town heads south following the well-known Zap River; if you head east from the crossroads you reach the Tiyar valley, home to various Nestorian Christian remains.

## Çukurca Kalesi

This fortress is set on a hill northeast of town overlooking the centre and can be reached using a road just opposite the PTT (post office). It's not clear when it was constructed; the similarity



Çukurca Kalesi [50]

it shares with other fortresses in the area is that it is built on a rocky outcrop, in a commanding position. There is some evidence that it was an administrative centre in the past. Inside the castle are four water cisterns, each 6m deep and 4m wide, reached by stone ladders.

## Stone houses

There are many old stone houses called Köşk (Qesir) at the foot of Cukurca Fortress, which are made up of stone blocks with flat earth roofs, and mostly two-storey. These historical houses are the symbols of the district. Some sources say the houses once belonged to Armenians and other says Syrian Christians lived here. The 18th-century Dervişoğlu Mansion in the Kale quarter is an example of one of these houses, though now partly collapsed; with three storeys, it has a shape similar to a tower and is built of smooth rubble stone. Another similar example in the same quarter is the Piruzbeyoğlu Mansion, thought to have been built at the end of the 18th century. The walls are partly ruined



Stone houses in Çukurca [51]

and there are some trees growing in the foundations. Enver Parlak House in the Cumhuriyet quarter is also probably 18th-century and has a rectangular plan, oriented east–west.

## Emir Şaban's Madrasah

It's possible to see several examples of religious architecture in the centre of the town. One of the most notable, and newly restored, is the 16th-century Emir Şaban Madrasah. The complex contains a tomb, theological school and a mosque. The madrasah is located in the town centre just opposite the municipality.


Emir Şaban's madrasah [52]

## Bet Biyya (Dêra Bé/ Dêra Bêadirê) Church

This church is located 10km away in Dutluca (Bé) village northeast of the centre, reached using an unsealed road for Kurudere (Marûfan) village. Also called Bet Biyya, this is a Nestorian church which once had the best ornamentation of any church in this region, though it has been damaged by treasure hunters. Still, the church has a beautiful setting in a green valley with orchards, though the owners of these groves now live elsewhere in the district and the village has been abandoned.

## Kesra Mir Mansion (Qesra Mîrî)

Also known as Mir Evi, this house is located on the high rocks on the south side of the Sidan Valley, which is within the Hawdikan quarter north of the centre. Built of rubble stone, it has two bastions and a watchtower, but the upper parts of the walls have collapsed. The house has perfect views with the Xaskêl rocks opposite; it's not easy to reach, but you can follow the


The entrance of Bet Biyya Church [53]


Bey Biyya church [54]


Qesra Mir mansion [55]

path towards Hawdikan and then walk down to the site.

### Hızır Peygamber Camii

To reach this mosque, you will need to get to Kazan (Tiyar) village some 28 km north of Çukurca, then head to Benekli (Sîfsîdan) village (abandoned during the unrest of the 1990s) by walking up for around twenty minutes, following the river. The rectangular planned mosque has been built in the name of Prophet Hızır and once had three storeys, though only the ground floor has survived the conflict.

### Yaylak (Mezrî)

The most significant monastery church of the region is Beruji, located on a hill in the northwest of the Yaylak (Mezrî), just before you reached Cevizli (see below). The monastery, called Rabban Petyus by Nestorians, can be reached through a pathway on foot in about half an hour. The monastery is partly ruined but the church is still intact. You may be surprised to find the trees ornamented with colourful pieces of cloth: this quarter is considered holy by both Muslims and Christians, and pilgrims come here to tie a piece a cloth to a tree and make wishes.

### Cevizli (Gûzêreş)

The village of Cevizli, 40km north of Çukurca town, is home to a couple of sights. In the Piri quarter is the Pirment (Haciment) Tomb, a one-storey affair with a place for prayer; the walls comprise large stone blocks and there is an earth roof. Some ruins of houses and a mill can be seen to the south and west. The only ornamented part of it was its wooden door, decorated with inscriptions and motifs but now kept in Van's museum. Note that the tomb is 4 km from the village itself. If you visit, you may see milkmaids, in Kurdish *bêrîvan* (see p: 496) doing their work next to the site.

A church in the centre stands next to a large walnut tree (Gûzêreş, incidentally, means "black walnut" and the village is known for its walnuts) and spring.

### The Tiyar Valley (Geliyê Tiyarê)

This deep valley has many historic remains and was home to Nestorian Christians for many centuries. As the valley climbs into the mountains it gradually becomes narrower; sometimes you can see what look like ruined watchtowers on both sides, and paths carved into the rocks are clearly visible. After climbing a long way you can see some remains of houses here and there in a wider part.

Within the valley is a village, also called Tiyar. Other villages in the valley include Kurudere (Marûfan), Kavuşak


Cevizli (Gûzêreş) village [56]


Tiyar Valley [57]

(Bilêcan) and Kavaklı (Şivişk). There is a choice of routes. One goes to a district called Ertoş and the other bears left to Cevizli (Gûzereş) and Çeltik (Tixûbê), a place where traditional dresses are woven and which once had a Syrian Christian community. There is a church in Tiyar similar to that in Cevizli village but less substantially built.

The Tiyar valley is also en route to the plateaus of Çukurca, and is the best approach to the plateaus on the west of the Cilo-Sat Mountains.

## Mar Şalita Church

This Nestorian church is in the Çeltik (Tixûbê) quarter of Kayalık village, in the Cevizli (Gûzereş) valley 18km away northeast of Çukurca town. Surprisingly still intact, the church is rectangular and has three monumental gates. Cross signs have been inscribed on a stone in the south. There is also a cemetery in the plain south of the valley.

## Geraşin Pastures (Zozanên Geraşîn)

The Geraşin Pasture, located on the Gera and Cilo-Sat Mountains some 45km away from Çukurca, gets its name from that of the huge glacier at a high point of the pasture. Geraşin is quite rich in terms of water sources and large meadows, but the land is covered with snow most of the time and it can be used just for one month in the year. To get there you will need to reach Cevizli village and continue by mule or horse, which can take six hours if done at a relaxing pace.


Geraşin plateau [58]



Young girls in Yüksekova (Gever) [59]

# Yüksekova (Gever)

The largest district of the province (population 59,410), Yüksekova is divided into plains, partly marshy and nearly 2000m above sea level, and mountains; the district town is around 70km east of Hakkâri city by road, and is reached by turning off south at the Yeniköprü Crossroads (at the beginning of the Zap Valley.

Petrolyphs found here date back to 7000 BC and show how ancient settlement in the region is. The Urartians established themselves here around 10000 BC, and have left evidence of their presence in the strategic Ordu Yolu (military road) in the centre of the town; the road actually starts close to Lake Van and heads south through the Keleşin passage in the Cilo mountains.

If you want to enjoy a bird's eye view over Yüksekova town and lively Kurdish music, head to the park called Apê Musa Aile Parkı.

The 24-hour border gate with Iran is situated in the village of Esendere (Geliyê Dilya), 40km east. The first major city on the Iranian side is



Iranian Border [60]

Orumieh. Taxi and buses go to Esendere from the town's *otogar*.

## Güçlü (Peylan)

One of three historical cemeteries in the district is in Güçlü village, 3km from town on the Şemdinli road. With many historical gravestones, it is located on a hill to the northeast side of the village. Some sheep statues have been removed from the cemetery to decorate doorsteps in the village.

## Köprücük (Kerpêl)

This village, 7km out of town on the way to Hakkâri, contains a two-roomed church on a hill in the centre. It differs from the other churches in the area as it is made from dark, smooth stone.



Yüksekova Güçlü (Peylan) village [61]

There are some decorated stones both above and to the side of the door.

## Çukurca (Pagê)

This village, 11km away on the Van road, has an old cemetery that has been divided by a road, with dug-up gravestones to either side (some have been removed by locals). Motifs of horses, chamois, swords and lances are depicted on them.

## Karabey (Serdeşt)

This village, some 20km from Yüksekova on the road to Şemdinli, has a cemetery on its western side with six old tombstones; look for motifs of guns, swords, keys and pitchforks depicted on the stones.

## Küçükdere (Orişê)

This village, 20km west of town, is home to a collection of ram statues with carvings like the Geverok Petrolgyphs on their sides. The front and back legs are separated from each other with a gap, and the horns are



Grave stones [62]

round and carved. A man rides one of the rams on one side of the collection, with a pike in his hand; on the other side there are four people carrying round objects in their hands, tree rams, a dagger and a gun. There is another statue similar to this one in the village

of Gagewran. It is thought to have come from the nearby Nestorian church.


A motive from Yüksekova [63]

## Hırvata (Muşaşir) Remains

This historical place is situated at the mouth of the Aviş Stream, 20km west of Yüksekova near a village called Büyükçiftlik (Xirwate). The remains are almost certainly those of a Urartian citadel the same time claimed to be the centre of Muşaşir Kingdom that is home to Haldi (the god of Sun), often mentioned in inscriptions. The remains have not been excavated, but if they are much of interest are sure to be found.

## Şavita Church

This is 38km from Yüksekova on the Hakkâri road in beautiful, green Kolbaşı (Şavita) village (actually closer to Hakkâri city). The road to the church requires climbing.

The church has been built on a steep cliff to the south of the village, by the Şavita Stream. You can reach it from the western side of the rock. The precipice north of the church provides a natural defence. Accessible by a vaulted door in the west, the church has a nave and an altar, and two small windows in the west wall. Though plundered by treasure seekers, it remains in largely in good condition.


Church entrance [64]

## Accommodation

On Cengiz Topel Cad in Yüksekova town there are two three-star hotels, the *Oslo* (0438 351 84 20) and the *Ufuk Zafer* (0438 351 51 61), both offering rooms with TV and a breakfast restaurant.

## Places to eat

*Şölen Lokantası* (0438 351 43 79) on Cengiz Topel Cad serves traditional local fare such as *perde pilavı*, *güveç*, *haşlama*, *lahmacun* and different kind of kebabs. Huzur Lokantası (0438 351 43 13) on Nedim Zeydan Cad also serves *güveç* and *haşlama* plus different kind of grills and kebabs.

# Şemdinli (Şemzînan)



Kelat [65]



Winter in Şemdinli [66]

Şemdinli town is 122km east of Hakkâri city, part of a small district (population 11,727) within a triangle whose borders were set by the 1936 Ankara Treaty between Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The place gets its name from that of a tribe. The terrain here is scored with deep valleys and dotted with high mountains, and the rich flora lends itself to the production of good honey which is said to be curative for stomach and liver complaints. Also produced here is excellent tobacco.

It is thought that this was an important centre at the time of the Urartians, and the district has hosted other civilisations too, including the Medes, Babylonians, Persians and Macedonians. Islam became the dominant religion after Muslim conquest, but there was a significant Christian population here until the 1900s.

A researcher, Muvaffak Uyanık, found thousands of petroglyphs carved on the rocks in the Geverok and Tirşin Plateaus, west of the Cilo-Sat Mountains. There are nearly 4000 in all of these rock carvings, covering a large area in what amounts to an open-air museum. Most of them depict mountain goats, bison, scenes of animal being trapped, magic symbols and stylised forms. The petroglyphs are only reachable after a three-hour hike from Meşelik (Herkî) village 18km from Yüksekova.

## Dêrareş Church

This Nestorian stone church is on a hill in Yayla (Bedgaruk) village some 3km away from the town centre. The church is composed of three naves, two altars and an annex in the south-east. The building is made up of uncut

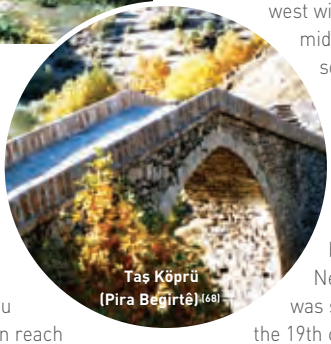
stones. Some black stone has been used in the construction, hence the church's name, meaning "black church". The church offers good views of Efkak (Kelê) and Goste (Kurê Mizgeftan) Mountains.

## The Haruna and Şapatan Passes

The Haruna pass is 22km away from Şemdinli on the road to Yüksekova,


Dêrareş church [67]

and offers some nice floral scenery if you drive up in spring and early summer, including wild roses and fritillaries. The Şepetan pass is 12km from Şemdinli. Around 10km after you leave the pass you can reach an area recently planted with grapevines. You can see Kurdish villages of Iran and Iraq from here, whose people are from the same tribes as on the Turkish side of the border.


Taş Köprü (Pira Begirtê) [68]

## Taş Köprü (Pira Begirtê)

The bridge is on Şemdinli Stream (or Ner-i Derecik) 11km away on the highway between Şemdinli and Derecik (Rûbarok), just before the turning for Bağlar (Nehrî). Made of square stone blocks, the bridge has a single arch and is 11m high and 21m long. It is thought to have been built by Seyyid Mehmed Sadık and was restored for pedestrian use in 2002. The stream eventually flows on into northern Iraq.

## Bağlar (Nehrî)

The old town centre is a village called Bağlar (Nehrî), 15km west of the present centre. Here you can visit the Kayme Palace (Kayme Sarayı), said to have been built by Seyyid Abdullah. The rectangular two-storey palace, used by the chief of the Nehrî Clan, is located on the western side of the village houses. Built of beige stone blocks, the palace was constructed between 1909 and 1911, according to the inscriptions on both sides over the main gate. Today the walls have partly crumbled and the roofing is collapsed. The two floors have the same plan, with two large halls in the middle and four rooms each in the east and west wings. Doors in the middle of north and south facades enable access.

Also here is a *tekke* or dervish lodge located in Kayme Palace belonging to the Neqshbendi order. It was set up at the start of the 19th century by Seyyid Taha, who reconciled warring Kurdish clans and later on build up a madrasah that would be a spiritual beacon for Kurdish homelands. Seyid Abdullah, the builder of the Kayme Palace, was his one of his grandsons;


A local and his children Şemdinli [69]


Remains of Nehri palace [70]

another was Seyit Abdülkadir, the last president of the Ottoman senate. He led short lived Kurdish rebellion against the Turks but arrested along with his son and was send in to exile to mainland Turkey in 1925, later on the same year the father and son were returned to Diyarbakır and hanged there. The tekke now amounts to scant ruins in a mulberry grove, though the site is green and atmospheric, with a clear brook running through it, and is much visited by pilgrims.


The dervishes [72]

## The Kelat Palace and the Graveyard of Seyid Abdullah

All that survives of the Kelat Palace, located just behind the Kayme Palace, is part of the entrance on the south side. It once had three storeys and was built by Seyit Mehmet Sıddık, a grand-son of Seyit Taha-i Hakkâri and the son of Seyit Übeydullah. The remaining fragments indicate that the walls were made of stone blocks with hand cut limestone for the outer coating.

By the Kelat Palace is a historical cemetery with interesting gravestones bearing 16 figures and Koranic verses. The most important one belongs to Seyyid Abdullah, who was an important Neqshbandi figure.


Nehri [71]


The grave of Seyid Abdullah [73]


İŞARETLER / LEGEND
HAKKÂRİ
İL HARİTASI
VAN
İRAN
IRAK (IRAQ)
(KRG)
ŞIRNAK
HAKKÂRİ DAĞLARI
HAKKÂRİ
(Colemêrg)
Yüksekova
(Gever)
Esendere
(Başnçal)
Sero
Urmia
(Wirmê)
Durankaya
(Silahlı)
Oluca
(Hasanan)
Konak
(Koçaklı)
Kolbaşı
(Gevdan)
Hoşi
(Hoşi)
Bağışlı
(Bağışlı)
HİSAR DAĞI
Köprücük
(Duruçay)
Çukurca
(Yeşil)
Büyükçiftlik
(Xirwate)
Kırıkdağ
(Dez)
CİLO DAĞI
Gülağlı
(Peyan)
Karabey
(Serdest)
Kavaklıdüz
(Qeraçi)
Üçırmık
(Sitak)
Bayıklı
(Bedi)
Oğul
(Ser)
Ağaçdibi
(Rutak)
Çarakin
(Bez)
KAVAK DAĞI
ŞİNE DAĞI
Çığlı
(Avaşin)
Dağlıca
(Dinarok)
Dikkiz
(Dikkiz)
BEYAZ DAĞI
Yayla
(Badikurek)
Şemdinli
(Şemzinan)
GAVAROK DAĞI
Bağlar
(Herbi)
Ortaklar
Durji
Nerva
Şavkar
Amadia
(Amedi)
Az Zibar
Umuslu
Çukurca
(Çeli)
Çığlı
(Avaşin)
MESAFE CETVELİ (KM)
HAKKÂRİ
ÇUKURCA
ŞEMDİNLİ
YÜKSEKOVA
79
130
77



A view from Mt Süphan and lake [1]

# **VAN** (Wan)

Formerly known as **Tushpa,** Van was the capital of the **Urartian kingdom** during the 11th century BC, which expanded into eastern Asia Minor and came up against the **Hittites.** The Urartians fell in the 7th century BC to the **Scythians** and a nomadic group called the **Cimmerians,** but their influence is still felt in the many monuments and relics they left behind in Van.



For tourists, **Van** offers a real surfeit of delights. Van city is home to the amazing **Van Kalesi**, a massive citadel perched atop a rock just east of **Lake Van**, and makes an ideal base for visiting the stunning **Akdamar** Church, sitting lonely on an island within Lake Van in mute witness to the now **vanished Armenian community.**



Muradiye Waterfalls [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
979,671 (2007)
**Average altitude**
1725m
**Area**
19,069 square kilometers
**Districts**
Van, Bahçesaray, Başkale, Çaldıran, Çatak, Edremit, Erciş, Gevaş, Gürpınar, Muradiye, Özalp, Saray
**Economy**
Livestock farming, Tourism, Commerce, Industry.
**Neighboring provinces**
Ağrı (north), Hâkkari and Şırnak (south), Bitlis and Siirt (southwest)

Formerly known as Tushpa, Van was the capital of the Urartian Kingdom during the 11th century BC, which expanded into eastern Asia Minor and came up against the Hittites. The Urartians fell in the 7th century BC to the Scythians and a nomadic group called the Cimmerians, but their influence is still felt in the many monuments and relics they left behind in Van. With the creation of the Kingdom of Armenia in the 1st century BC, Van became an Armenian centre of power, a status which persisted for ten centuries. To survive, the Armenian Kingdom established alliances with the Byzantines, Romans and Persians, though they were subjugated by the Arab invasions, and after the battle of Malazgirt in 1071, the region was decisively taken over by the Seljuks. In World War I, the Russians occupied the region briefly and Van was annexed to Armenia, but was quickly captured by the new Turkish Republic.

The province's most famous geographical feature is Lake Van, Turkey's largest lake, but almost half of the province is mountainous (the highest peak is Mount Tendürek at 3542m) and a third of it consists of plateaus. The terrain is ideal for breeding livestock, and unsurprisingly this dominates the local economy. One important crop is sugar beet, turned into sugar at a factory in Erciş. Van Lake is an important source of soda. In addition the province has

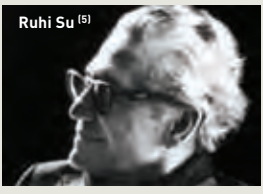
## Some prominent people from Van


Yaşar Kemal [3]

Among the famous sons of Van is the poet **Feqiyê Teyran** (1564–1632), probably born in Bahçesaray (though Hizan in Bitlis is another candidate for his birthplace). *Feqî* means "student of a madrasah" and he chose this for his pen name as he said a person is always a student and always learning. His poems use a vernacular idiom rather than any classical forms, and many have been set to music performed by important Kurdish singers. He was in contact with another great Kurdish poet, **Melayê Cizîrî** (see p: 478), and at times they came together to read their poems to each other.


Feqîyê Teyran [4]

Another well-known literary figure from Van is **Yaşar Kemal,** born Kemal Sadık Gökçeli in 1923 to a farming family from Muradiye district, though he was actually born in Adana province. In 1951, he moved to Istanbul to work at the well-known Cumhuriyet Newspaper. His most popular novel, *İnce Memed,* appeared in 1955, and over the subsequent 30 years he wrote more than 30 books, many turned into films. Nominated several times for the Nobel Prize for literature, he is in touch with his Kurdish roots and is thus able to write convincingly about the situation of the Kurds in Turkey, including themes such as destitution, the relations between people and the fields, *ağas,* life in the mountains, etc. He is also known of his role in the nationwide campaign called ''Turkey looking for its peace''.


Ruhi Su [5]

From the musical world, there is the Armenian singer **Mehmet Ruhi Su,** born in Van in 1912. His parents died in the conflicts of the time and he was sent to an orphanage in Adana. After graduating from the Ankara State Conservatory, he worked at the State Opera and sang on national radio until some of his politically tinged songs got him fired. He served five years in prison for being involved with a leftist group. Later he composed cinematic music and in 1975 he founded *Dostlar Korosu* (the Chorus of Friends) with an artist, **Genco Erkal,** to promote the popular music of Anatolia. He died in 1985. Van is also famous for its dengbêj tradition, and one of the greatest living dengbêjs was born in the province in 1950, namely **Kazo.** He was born into a family of *dengbejs;* indeed his grand- father, Ecemê Kinik, was one of the best-known *dengbejs* of his time. Kazo began singing when he was a small child and made a large number of unofficial cassettes. After the ban on Kurdish was overturned at the beginning of 1990s, he founded a band, *Koma Şîrvan,* with some of his own family members. These days he lives in Istanbul.

some iron and coal resources and profits from cross-border trade with Iran. Tourism is also not insignificant thanks to the scenic and historical attractions of Lake Van.

For tourists, Van offers a real surfeit of delights. Van city is home to the amazing Van Kalesi, a massive citadel perched atop a rock just east of Lake Van, and makes an ideal base for visiting the stunning Akdamar Church, sitting lonely on an island within Lake Van in mute witness to the now vanished Armenian community. The lake itself offers opportunities for bird watching and will have shutterbugs snapping away happily, its blue waters looking especially inviting against an encircling backdrop of snowy peaks in the winter. Elsewhere in the province are yet more impressive fortresses, including the Kurdish *Hoşap Kalesi* and the Urartian Çavuştepe, while Gevaş has a Seljuk cemetery with extraordinary gravestones. In the surroundings of Van, you can head for the nice resort of Edremit, an ideal place for swimming and camping, and with its beaches and ice-cream shops scattered along the lakeshore. If you ever get tired of the lake and the monuments surrounding it, consider going trekking up Mount Süphan (Sîpan), the second highest mountain in Turkey after Mount Ararat, or heading to the Muradiye Waterfall, a highly popular spot for excursions. And you should feel famished before you even start getting to grips with all these sights, you can fuel up for a full day's worth of sightseeing on Van's excellent breakfasts, featuring their own unusual ingredients and known throughout Turkey.

## Van City

Van (population 331,986) is the sixth largest city in Turkey and, surprisingly for such a remote outpost, a pretty sophisticated affair too, its central grid of streets boasting a fair number of smart restaurants, cafés and shops. If you've been wandering a while through the small towns of southeast Turkey, Van will seem a great place to recharge your batteries and its very modernity will feel refreshing too after constant exposure to cave dwellings, old mosques and churches elsewhere. Though the city isn't distinctive archi-



A view from Van city and Van citadel [6]

tecturally, it does boast a splendid setting in a bowl encircled by mountains except to the west, where Lake Van sparkles just a few kilometres away. The top attraction in the city itself is Van Kalesi, from where you can truly appreciate the spectacular setting of Van, but the city also has some interesting bazaars and a museum to take in. Otherwise, Van makes an excellent base for day-trips to attractions elsewhere in the province, notably Akdamar Church and *Hoşap Kalesi*.

When arriving in downtown Van, there are only a few streets to pay attention to in order to get your bearings. The main north–south street is Cumhuriyet Cad, whose northern end is near the Yeni Cami. Nearly 1km south of here is a major intersection, with Kazım Karabekir Cad leading off to the west. Many of the town's main hotels, eating places, *dolmuş* stops and so forth are located on or just off these two streets.

## Van Museum

Van's museum (0432 216 11 39) is housed in a plain-looking building one block east of Cumhuriyet Cad; to find it, head east from the main Cumhuriyet Cad/Kazım Karabekir junction, turn left into the first side road and continue a minute or so until you see the museum on your left.



Van Museum's courtyard [7]

Within the grounds you will see three ram-shaped gravestones and, on the other side, cuneiform Urartian steles.

The museum is divided into archaeological and ethnographical sections. On the lower floor you will find artefacts from the early Bronze Age and Neolithic Period, including ceramics, needles, bracelets, weapons, figurines and various gravestones are exhibited there. There are examples of cuneiform epitaphs found in Çavuştepe Kalesi (see p: 576) and children tombstones and other stone figures from the Gevaş Seljuk Cemetery (see p: 562). Upstairs are Urartian artefacts plus steles from Hakkâri.

The ethnographic section includes an area documenting the problems that ensued in the area during the chaos at the end of World War I. The rich examples of local *kilims*, silver jewellery, handwritten books, clothes, copper pots, weapons and so forth are on display. Here you can also see some old examples of samovars, highly decorated tea urns which have long been used in Van (a fact marked also by a giant samovar statue on one of the city's streets), as they have in Russia and Iran.

The museum (0432 216 11 39) is open from Tuesday to Sunday between 8am and noon and from 1.30pm to 5pm.

## Mala Dengbêj

Like Diyarbakır, Van has a centre dedicated to the preservation of the *dengbêj* tradition of singing (see p: 235). You will find it hidden away amongst the shops and internet cafés of the modern Özgür Shopping Centre on the west side Cumhuriyet Cad, more or less opposite the tourist office. From ground level, head up a couple of floors and you will find the *dengbêj* centre behind a plain facade; in fact it looks like an office from the outside and you may have to ask people to

## Lake Van and its islands

Lake of Van, called *Van Gölü/Van Denizi* (Kurdish: *Gola Wanê,* English: *Lake of Van*) by locals, is the largest body of water in Turkey and the second largest in the Middle East, with an area as large as 3,700 square kilometres. The lake was created by the explosion of the Nemrut Volcano 60,000 years ago. While the gorgeous blue lake water is most appealing, it is not recommended to swim and stay in it for long because it has high soda content. No wonder that women from the region wash their carpets in the lake without detergent! Most people also believe the reason that many children around the lake have blond hair is because they swim in lake which contains high soda.

The lake has a maximum depth of 451m, though the average depth is around 170m. It is bounded by peaks on three sides, with plains to the east; the best beaches are on the northern shores.

The lake has four islands, all of them accessible by boat. Akdamar, with its Armenian church, is by far the most famous, while the rest are Çarpanak (Gduts), Adır (Lim) and Kuşadası (Arter), also containing the remains of Armenian churches, but these are in a more advanced state of disrepair than Akdamar, which was recently restored. The islands are also on a migratory route for birds, especially gulls, and attract birdwatchers and other interested visitors in April and May.

There are also two smaller lakes in the region worth mentioning: *Erçek Gölü,* 30km east of Van, with an area of 100 square kilometres, and *Keşiş* (Turna) *Gölü,* just 4 square kilometres in size.



Van lake and Akdamar island [8]



Mala Dengbêj (dengbêj divanı) [9]

show it to you. Inside the place is plainly furnished but there are cushions and carpets to relax on and, of course, tea is available. The centre was opened in 2004 and plays host to regular *dengbêj* sessions (*divans*), like other *dengbêj* houses in the region there are some featuring female performers, though times and days can vary so you may need to pop in more than once before catching a session, or call 0432 215 20 04 in advance to check what is happening.

## Bazaars and Shopping

Van has five big bazaars worthy of a browse. One of them is called *Rus Pazarı* (Russian Bazaar) and all are located next to one another on Hastane Cad. Here you can find wares from Iran and Iraq, including wooden and ceramics goods and textile products.

There are also a number of fine carpet stores on *Kilimciler Sokağı* between the museum and *Mısır Çarşısı* (Egypt Bazaar). The carpets and rugs generally come from Iran and also neighbouring areas of Turkey, such as Hakkâri, and are available in a variety of designs and in silk, wool or a mixture of the two.

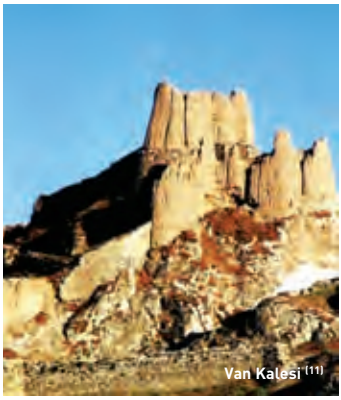
In addition there is the workshop of the Urartu Carpet Company (0432 217 97 65 or 217 97 66), at the 7km mark on the Van–Edremit road. Popular with tourists, it sells regional carpets and *kilims* in addition to ones from Iran and Afghanistan. There is also a workshop near the shoe factory *(kundura fabrikası)* which has been opened through an EU-supported project, teaching young people the art of carpet-making.



Traditional carpets[10]

## Toprakkale

A Urartian citadel lies north-east of the centre, on top of a hill within the Zimzim range; it's easily seen from the city centre if you are in a tallish building. Cuneiform inscriptions indicate that the citadel was built by King Rusa II (685–645 BC) and was known as *"Rusahinli"* meaning Rusa's town. The citadel is 400m long and 60–70m wide, and includes a temple dedicated to the God Haldi; unfortunately it is all closed to the public as it serves as a military base.


Van Kalesi [11]

## Meher Gate

Also within a closed military zone, the Meher Kapı was the entrance to a temple built during the reigns of the Urartian Kings Ishpuini and his son Menua. The temple was dedicated to the Gods Haldi, Teişeba and Şivini and the Goddesses Arubani, Huba and Tuşpea and 76 others, whose names are listed in a cuneiform inscription of 94 lines in the middle of the gate. The inscriptions also list the names and number of animals to be sacrificed for the gods, and give a list of mountains, river and towns considered to be holy places where animals should also be sacrificed. Furthemore, the inscriptions recall the names of Ishpuini (whose reign started 822 BC) and his son Menua (who reigned until 786 BC). The gate is north of the city centre in the district of Akköprü, 700m west of Toprakkale.


Urartians inscription [12]

## Van Kalesi (Van Citadel)

This jewel of Urartian architecture sprawls over an area 1200m long and 120m wide, above an 80m-high hill. The citadel is also called the Rock of Van and the Citadel of Tushpa, Tushpa being the original name of Van. There are regular *dolmuş* (signed Kale) here from Maraş Cad and Beşyol in the city centre; they will drop you at the eastern end of the site, from where you will need to make a slightly tedious 1km walk west along the northern perimeter towards the lake. Here there is a car park and a parkland area from where you start the ten-minute climb up some rough stone steps to the citadel entrance. If you tire easily or do not like heights, you may allow more time and take extra care – the steps are steep in places and sometimes in poor condition, and the drops from the citadel down to the plains below can be sheer. On a hot day, be sure to bring drinking water and a hat, and take things at a relaxed pace. The site and surrounding area contain plenty of interesting Urartian remains, though everything is a bit of a jumble and with no labelling, it can be impossible to locate things that you are interested in. Allow a half-day to do justice to the site. While descending you will be able to see some cuneiform inscriptions paying homage to Persian King Xerxes of the 5th- century BC.

The citadel is thought to have been built by King Sarduri between 840 BC


Van örnek evi (traditional Van house) [13]

and 825 BC and comprises an inner and an outer fortress. Plenty of legends are associated with the site, including this one from a book called *101 Anatolian Legends* compiled in 1915 by Mevlüt Okayer. Shah Abbas, the famous king of Persia, attacked the citadel but could not capture it no matter how hard he tried. One day one of his soldiers approached and said, "There is a man named Abdurrahman Gazi in the citadel. We cannot seize the castle without overcoming him." Shah Abbas decided to test Abdurrahman Gazi by despatching an envoy carrying a grilled dog and a grilled lamb. In Abdurrahman Gazi's presence, the envoy announced that he had a present from Shah Abbas, whereupon he offered the dog meat and kept the lamb for himself. Abdurrahman said "Hoşşt" to the dog and it suddenly came back to life. The ambassador returned and told Shah Abbas what had happened, whereupon Shah Abbas decided to end his seven-year campaign and return home.

Close to the start of the road up to the citadel is the *Tamara Kale Restaurant,* with an outdoor café and a number of gift shops where you can pick up handcrafts from the region.

## Analı Kız Temple

The "mother and daughter" temple, as the name translates, is located by the side of a local pilgrimage site at the start of the main road to the citadel. Thought to have been built by King Sarduri II (765–735BC), it is composed of two niches containing two steles of basalt pedestals with cuneiform scripts, and a platform dedicated to performing sacrifices. There are also seats for the spectators and a 20m long canal that was used to collect the blood of sacrificed animals. The belief was that young women wading in the canal would find a venerable husband. Some people today are saying that young women come here if they want to find a husband or if they have not been able to produce a male child. Locals also call the place *Hazine Kapısı.*



**Sadur Tower** [14]

## A Traditional Van House

In the same area as the restaurant is what is signed *"Van Örnek Evi"*, meaning an example of a Van house, and fully furnished in a traditional style. Next to it is a *tendur,* a clay oven used to bake bread.

## Sardur Tower (Sardur Burcu or Madırburç)

At the western end of the citadel is the Sardur Tower, built between 840 and 830 under King Sarduri. The rectangular tower is 4m high and consists of massive calcareous rocks stacked on top of one another in a way characteristic of Urartian architecture. Look out for one of the oldest surviving examples of writing, and indeed the oldest Urartian inscription known, on top of the tower. The inscription in Assyrian cuneiform praises the virtues of King Sardur, calling him "the King of Kings".

Although the tower was built early on during the Urartian civilisation, it has very refined appearance with tidy right angles and so on. Some of the blocks here were later recycled in the building of the Surp Karapet Church.



Van Kalesi [15]

## İçkale (Inner Castle)

The gate to the Inner Castle is accessed from the western part of the citadel at the highest point of the cliff. You can see the oldest temple and the first Urartian palaces in the inner castle, accessible with a little ramped way. It is believed that this was a former Urartian temple dig directly into the rocks. The castle is surrounded by walls including the part side by side with the steep hill. The walls are up to 7-8m high.

The temple is made of two different parts with the floor and the walls engraved in the rocks. The other interesting thing to see in the inner castle is believed to be the oldest Palace of Tushpa. The very straight cut stones are almost as big as the ones used in the construction of the Sardur Tower.

## The Tombs of Sarduri I, Ishpuini and Menua

The Urartians were skilled stone cutters, usually working with limestone and sometimes volcanic stone



Way to tomb of Sarduri [16]

when it came to tombs. In the lower part of İçkale is the Tomb of King Sarduri I, situated on a large platform in the cliff overlooking the south. From the platform you can access the tomb's entrance gate with a few steps. The tomb is composed of a main chamber with four side rooms. A second tomb accessible by the same platform is believed to be the Tomb of King Ishpuini and his son King Menua, who for a time governed together. This tomb has two main rooms; the one with two subordinate funerary rooms is believed to be

where King Ishpuini is buried while the other, with three side rooms, is believed to be where King Menua lies. The door giving access to the tombs is locked but the key can be obtained from the ticket office, and a member of staff can escort you on a visit.



Sarduri I, Ishpuini and meuna tombs [17]

## The Tombs of Sarduri II and Argişti

The Tomb of King Argişti (son of Menua) nearby the western end of the citadel is equipped with 34 rectangular niches which either served for cremation or for offerings to the deceased. You will have to go down the ancient steps engraved in the rocks before you reach Argişti's Tomb, believed to date to between 780 and 756 BC. The tomb bears inscriptions (sometimes called Horhor inscriptions) on each side while above the entrance there are inscriptions describing the political views of the king.

## Yeni Saray (New Palace)

*Yeni Saray* is outside the uppermost part of the citadel and extends as far as King Argişti's Tomb. The floor is made of stone platforms and the walls are carved into the rocks. Some parts are completely in ruins today and can not be seen any more.

## Cistern

A rectangular cistern was built within the rocks near the Ulu Cami in the north of the citadel. The steps carved into the rock here were left from the Urartian period and the lower structure was left from the Ottoman Empire. Its bottom part was built with smooth stone blocks and the top was covered with mud bricks.

## Binbir Merdivenler (Thousand and One Steps Stairway)

Sultan Kılıç Arslan (1092–1107) built this stairway, with twin rows of stairs, leading down to the Horhor Gardens and the lake from where soldiers would fetch water.



A view from old Van [18]



A top view of old Van from the Kale [19]

## Süleyman Hab Camii

The site of this mosque is believed to have been a place of worship ever since ancient times and some people believe that there was a building here at the time of King David (Davud in Turkish). The mosque was further renovated under the reign of Sultan Süleyman in 1533. The mosque offers superb unrestricted views over Van, the lake and the picturesque lakeside town of Edremit to the southwest.

## The eastern part of the Citadel

In the northeast of the citadel is the restored Galip Paşa Tomb, built in the 19th century for the Governor of Van, Galip Baba, while at the very eastern end of the citadel is a large hall with 78 niches, believed to have been used for cremations. The walls of the citadel become lower here and snake off into the distance like a miniature Great Wall of China; looking east you get excellent views of the modern city of Van with the mountains looming in the distance.



Van Kalesi [20]

## Van Kalesi Höyüğü (Tushpa)

Interestingly, excavations begun in 1989 revealed that this tumulus was constantly inhabited from the early Bronze Age up until the Middle Ages. Items found here included polychrome ceramics from the 2nd century BC, plus Urartian relics. The site is opposite the ticket office for the citadel.

## Old Van

From *Van Kalesi* you get superb views of the undulating plain to the south, which was the site of the town of Van until the early part of the last century. A thriving town with a significant Armenian population, it was razed during the conflicts of the 1910s and



Hüsrev Paşa Camii [21]

the current city was founded several kilometres inland; now just a handful of monuments remain at the original, rather desolate site, which serves mainly as a pasture for shepherds and their flocks. You can get to old Van by taking a Kale or İskele *dolmuş* from Beş Yol in central Van; ask for *Eski Van*. View of Old Van is perhaps is one of the most photogenic in your trip to Van.

## Ulu Cami

You will only be able to see the minaret of this 12th-century Seljuk-style mosque, situated in Old Van. The roof of the mosque, which was ruined at the start of the last century, was probably flat and was supported by pillars, some bases of which are still present. It is thought to have been built by rulers of the Ahlatşahlar Dynasty who once controlled Van.

## Abbas Ağa (Kethüda Ahmet) Camii

This mosque is in the northwest of old Van, near the Ulu Cami. Its architectural style suggests it was built some



Mosques in Old Van [22]

time between the 7th and 11th centuries. The walls of the rectangular construction, comprised of brick lower down topped with adobe, are still sturdy but the roof has disappeared. A semicircular *mihrab* sits just opposite the door.

## Kaya Celebi Camii

The mosque, with its beautiful dome, can be visited in Old Van. Originally there was an intention to build a madrasah here, which was given up when the initiator of the project, *Kaya Çelebizade Koçi Bey,* was sentenced to death in 1660. *Cem Dedemoğlu Mehmet Bey* took up the idea and completed a mosque and madrasah, of which only the former survives. Now disused, the mosque is built with stones of two colours, giving it a


Ground view of Old Van [23]


Hüsrev Paşa Camii [24]

striped appearance. Beautiful geometrical figures decorating the gates and windows on the northern side.

## Kızıl Camii (Red Mosque)

This ruined mosque is in the eastern part of Old Van. Renovated in 1534 by Sultan Süleyman, it gets it name from the fact that red bricks decorate its beautiful minaret, which can still be seen.

## Hüsrev Paşa Cami

This mosque is of such beauty that some people claim that it was built by Mimar Sinan, the master Ottoman architect. Hüsrev Paşa was one of the *Bey* (leaders) of the region who served as governor of Van for some time, and he ordered the construction of a mosque complex in 1567, including a madrasah, a fountain, a primary school, an inn for travellers and hamam; now only the mosque, its minaret and an attendant tomb survive. The mosque is also known as Hüsreviye or Kurşunlu Camii.

## Çifte Kilise

The remains of this pair of churches, wrecked by an earthquake in 1844, are southwest of Red Mosque and usually called *Çifte Kilise* ("Double Churches"). According to plans, the Surp Paulos Church was rectangular and covered with a dome, but the only parts left are the stone walls and plenty of rubble from the dome and vaults. The Surp Petros Church is linked to the south wall of Surp Paulos, but you can't see more than the apse and a wall of it.

## Surp Vartan Church

Surp Vartan is in better condition than *Çifte Kilise* and thus worth visiting. The church comprises a vaulted narthex, a noose and an apse. There are two-storey pastophorion rooms on each side of the apse.

## Miri (Arpa) Storehouse

Located on the north side of Old Van, and partly acting as a retaining wall, this rectangular construction is supposed to have been built during the 16th or 17th century, and is composed of three sections partitioned by walls. A stairway on the south part would have led up to the roof, except that the roof is now completely absent.

## Van Breakfast


Van breakfast [25]

Van is well known for its breakfast served in *kahvaltı salonu* (breakfast salons) throughout the city. The first such place was opened to cater for villagers selling their goods in the bazaar in the early hours; nowadays the salons are spreading throughout the country.

The classic Van Breakfast features honey from Hakkâri and Bitlis, cheese with herbs, cream, butter, omelettes, halva, tahini and rose jam. Van breakfast also features unusual ingredients like *javut* and *murtuğa* on the top of this list. Kavut is a kind of flour which is fried in ghee. *Kavut* can be eaten with only bread but it is also eaten with honey \or jam. *Murtuğa* is made by burning the flour with butter on egg.

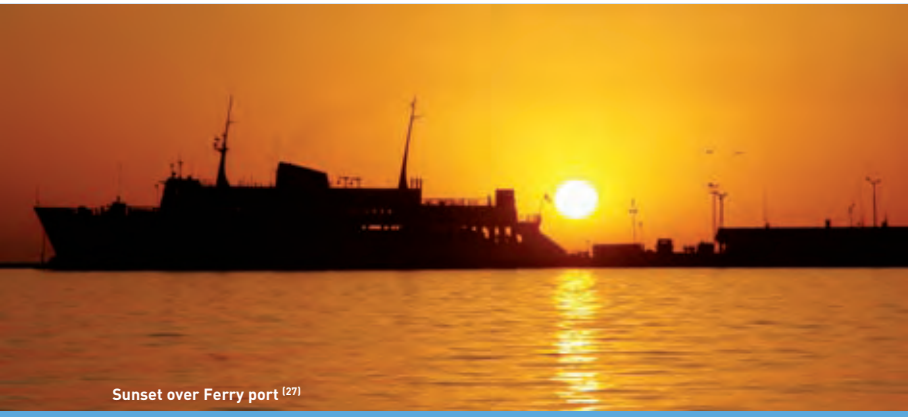
You may also find an unusual tea in Van, drunk with rose petals; the rose petals are mixed with lemon juice, sugar is added and then the mixture is added to the tea.

The saloons usually open very early in the morning and close in the afternoons. Good choices are *Bak Hele Bak Kahvaltı Salonu,* on Cumhuriyet Cad, under the Van Municipality Building, near the Van Museum and the tourism information office (0432 214 29 38), *Sütçü Fevzi Erol Kardeşler Kahvaltı Salonu,* on Cumhuriyet Cad, Eski Sümerbank Street, No:9 (0432 216 66 18) and *Sütçü Kenan Öz Erol Kardeşler,* Kahvaltıcılar Cad, off the Cumhuriyet Cad.

## Van Cats

Van is also the home of a particular breed of white cat with beautiful snow-white fur, eyes which are different colours, a long bushy tail and the ability to swim. Most of them are also deaf; though they have a keen sense of smell. Some have dark spots on their head and tails. They are friendly, like to be paid attention to and can be jealous if their owner likes children or other cats. According to legend, these cats are from Noah's Ark, and their unusual features are holy signs. The cats are facing extinction and now have protected status. In the mid-1990s the "Van Cat House", a Van Cat Breeding and Research Centre, was established within the campus of Van University *(Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi).* Large numbers of cats are cared for inside a large cage and they can be visited from 8 to 5pm everyday.


Van Cat [26]



Sunset over Ferry port [27]

## Getting there

Being right in the southeastern corner of Turkey, Van is most conveniently reached by air. Both Turkish Airlines and Pegasus operate flights from Ankara and İstanbul, while Sun Express flies from Antalya and İzmir. Van's airport is 8km southwest of the city (0432 217 02 94). There are of course buses from major Turkish cities and neighbouring countries. The otogar is in the İstasyon quarter.

Van is on the rail network, and İstanbul–Tehran, İstanbul–Tabriz and Tehran–Damascus services stop here. There are services from Tabriz in Iran and from Damascus in Syria. For details, contact the train station near the otogar (0432 223 13 80).

There are also ferries between Van and Tatvan on the western shore of Lake Van, sailing in conjunction with trains and taking around four hours; it is usually easier to travel to Tatvan by bus.

## Accommodation

A good bet is the centrally located, modern *Akdamar Otel* on Kazım Karabekir Cad (0432 214 99 23, www.otelakdamar.com), with reasonable rates. There is also the four-star *Büyük Urartu Oteli* on Cumhuriyet Cad (0432 212 06 60, www.buyukurartuotel.com), with its own swimming pool. Finally there is the budget *Güzel Paris,* simple but comfortable and popular with tourists (0432 215 93 28); it's located on İrfan Baştuğ Cad, not far from the northern end of Cumhuriyet Cad, which also offers an exceptional great choice of other middle class hotels.

## Places to eat

The *Milya Et Restaurant* on Cumhuriyet Cad (0432 216 62 10) serves different kind of *kebabs,* grills, fried vegetables, and homemade *güveç, haşlama* (meat stew) and *kavurma* (small pieces of casseroled meat). They also serve various soups in the mornings. Also on Cumhuriyet Cad is the Güven, one of several great patisseries in Van, with a luscious selection of cakes in the display cabinets downstairs. They do a range of pizzas and sandwiches too and excellent *süpangle.* The *Kebabistan Et Lokantası* on Maraş Cad, Bilal Sok (0432 214 22 73), offers many types of *kebabs* in addition to *lahmacun* and *pide.*

**Van municipality: 0432 216 73 40 Tourist information: 0432 216 36 75**


VAN
MERKEZ TURİZM HARİTASI
VAN MERKEZ
İSKELE
TUŞBA
ALTINTEPE
İSTASYON
Otogar
İskele Caddesi
Van (Tuşba) Kalesi
ALİPAŞA
HALİLAĞA
CUMHURİYET
CEVDETPAŞA
HATUNİYE
BUZHANE
EMİNPAŞA
SABANİYE
HACIBEKİR
FEVZİ ÇAKMAK
EŞENLER
SEREFİYE
Hastane Caddesi
Paris Otel
PTT
SERHAT
İŞARETLER / LEGEND
VAN GÖLÜ
(GOLA WANÊ)
İki Nisan Bulvarı
Cumhuriyet Bulvarı
İpekyolu Bulvarı
Van Havalanı
Plajlar


From Van Museum [28]


Yedi Kilise entrance door [29]

## Van Kalecik and Obelisks

You can see the obelisks lined up in the plain around the *Şahbağı ve Sığır Tepesi* , 2km north of Van and accessible by the Ağrı highway leading from Van. There were originally more than 2000 obelisks of at least 1m in height, spaced at 50cm intervals; now there are about 20 left. In the same plain, approximately 150m west, is a necropolis with 18 stone graves.

## Tilkitepe Tumulus (Girê Rovîya)

This mound is 25km from the city, beyond the airport and on the route to Hoşap Kalesi. The remnants found here go back as far as the 4th century BC and brought extremely useful information on settlements in Anatolia of the time. The first of three layers found yielded the remnants of ceramics close to the exceptionally fine ones found in the Halaf Culture from Tell Halaf in northeastern Syria. The second layer yielded handmade ceramics believed to be from the Karaz Culture or Transcaucasia. The third layer provided interesting stone remnants and obsidian, which was probably used as a raw material for the production of glass.

## Minua (Şamran) Canal

This irrigation canal, one of the miracles of Urartian ingenuity, starts from the village of Kaymaz (Mecingir), 6km southwest of Gürpınar town (see p: 574), and continues up until Van, a distance of more than 50km. It was built during King Menua's reign (810-785BC) and runs over more than 50km. There are 15 inscriptions along the canal, praising the God Haldi who allowed King Ishpuini, son of King Menua, to succeed in this ambitious constructional feat.

## Yonca Tepe Kalesi

This fortress, 9km southeast of Van city, is where archaeologists began excavating the water distribution system of the Urartians in the mid-1990s. The fortress was located at a strategic point where water from both the Varak and Erek Mountains could be tapped easily. The ruins of an old dam (labelled *Harabe Barajı* and thought to be the very first which the Urartians built in the region) lie 800m north of the fortress itself. Some stones from here bearing inscriptions about King Menua were used to build

Varak Monastery (see below). Excavations of the site yielded pottery, bones, some jewellery and many rooms and storage chambers.

## Varak Monastery and the surrounding area

This monastery, also called *Yedi Kilise,* has a beautiful setting beneath the Erek Mountains and is easily accessible 10km southeast of Van in the village of *Yukarı Bakraçlı* (Varak). The complex is composed of three churches, a jamatun (entrance hall) and a library. A story has it that the monastery was once a repository for a piece of the true cross; the churches were added successively, with St Sophia dating from the 8th century and probably the oldest. Look for beautiful murals of Jesus and the Virgin Mary and lovely stonework. Some parts of the dome are in ruins and everything is in need of restoration. The churches attract a number of Christian visitors, mainly Armenians from Armenia or the diaspora. Just 1km east is a Urartian fortress, *Yoncatepe Kalesi (Kela Girê Yoncê)*, still being excavated.

Another group of churches is believed to have been built between 1003 and 1021 and comprises the churches around Mother Mary Church, 5km away (there is no road access, but you can reach them after an hour's walk).

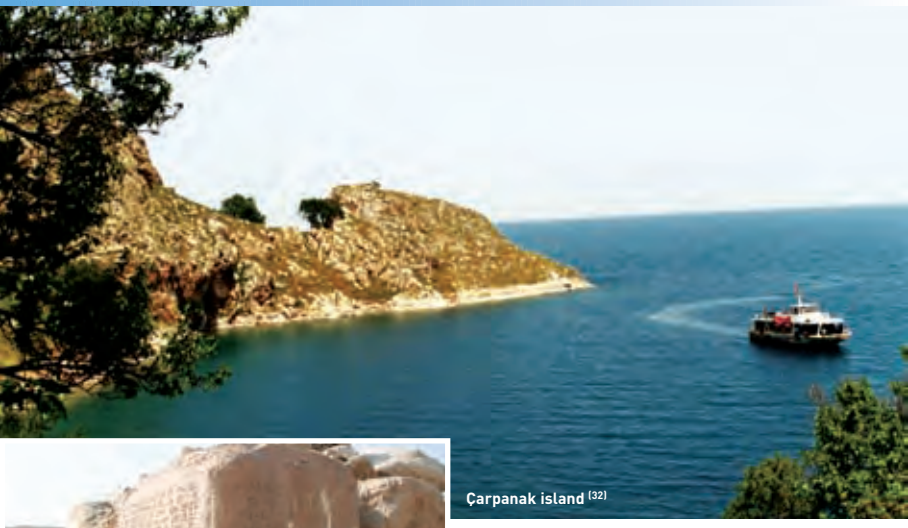

Yoncatepesi Kalesi [30]

It is believed that the churches were ordered by the Vaspurakan King Senokerin Hovhannes. It was altogether abandoned in 1915. A famous theologian of Islam in modern Turkey, Said Nursi (see p: 461), chose this place for a two-year retreat. Later on in life he was sent to jail by the government for an alleged involvement in Sheik Said's Rebellion, spreading Kurdish nationalist ideas and thoughts as well as high religious stance.

## Keşiş Gölü

Also in the same mountain as the second of group of churches *(Yedi Kilise)* near the village of Gölardı, is located *Keşiş Gölü* (also called Hermit and *Turna Gölü*). The amazingly beautiful lake is nearly 2650 meters above the sea level. Although one hour walk from the village but surely worth in taking this trip, it's more then likely that you will be invited to a cup of


Yedi Kilise [31]



Çarpanak island [32]



Inscription, Anzaf Kalesi [33]

freshly made tea and cheese by the nomadic Kurds who set camp near the lake with their herds.

## Anzaf Kalesi

Around 10km northeast of Van, accessible via the Van–Özalp highway, is this citadel which was originally found by people exploring illegally. It has an upper *(Yukarı Anzaf)* and lower *(Aşağı Anzaf)* section, the latter surrounded by walls on a rectangular plan, with a total area of 70x125m. The citadel was partly demolished during the construction of the highway. The upper part is in the village of Dereüstü *(Yukarı Anzaf)* on the right of the road if you're approaching from Van city; follow the signs after 10km and take the unsurfaced road before you reach the village. The lower part is 1km away in the village of Gölyazı *(Aşağı Anzaf)* on the left of the road from Van.

The excavations on the citadel have been going on since 1991. The lower fortress is believed to have been built by the Urartian King Ishpuini in the 9th century BC, while the upper section, some 700m further south on top of a steep hill, is thought to have been built during the reign of Ishpuini's son, Menua and used throughout the Urartian period. It has two entrance gates and walls only on its western side.

The temple dedicated to Haldi is one of the most interesting parts of the site; it's reached through a corridor from the western part of the upper fortress. The stone here has been polished smooth, and various bronze objects and arms with inscriptions that were found in the temple greatly helped to broaden scientific knowledge on the Urartians. The inscriptions found here are well preserved and can be seen in the Museum of Van.



Children near Anzaf Kalesi [34]

The Urartians were architectural pioneers and another interesting feature of the citadel is the presence of toilets at the very western end and a septic tank outside the citadel walls.

Around 150m down from the upper fortress are the ruins of a Urartian city which imparts something of what life must have been like all those centuries ago. It has not been properly excavated, while excavations elsewhere on the site only began in 1991 and are ongoing.

### Hazine Piri Gate

This gate, symbolising an Urartian temple, is accessible from the village of Elmalı (Zivistan), 12km southwest of the Citadel of Van. The temple is simply a niche, 6m by nearly 3m, engraved in calcareous rocks with a cuneiform inscription praising King Sarduri. The temple is probably not a worship place in contrast to Meher Gate.

### Çarpanak Island

This picturesque island with its almond trees is home to what is left of the Garabed Monastery, which was gradually developed during the apogee of the Armenian Kingdom of Vaspurakan. It suffered major damage in an earthquake in 1703, was largely repaired between 1712 and 1720 and was abandoned in 1918. Only the 10th-century church dedicated to the Virgin Mary still stands, and it is well preserved, with its *jamatun* (entrance hall), library, guesthouse and rooms for monks.

The island is reached by ferry from the village of Dibekdüzü (Anavank), nearly 20km northwest of Van city, with a 30min ferry trip (to be arranged privately from İskele) or by driving to Erciş, then taking a ferry. The name of the island is probably a corruption of çarkhapan, meaning something like "covering the sins".



A fisherman from Van [35]

### Adır Island

The southern part of this island has some remains of the 10th-century St George church and St Sion Chapel, reached through a pleasant area with many beautiful almond trees. There also used to be a monastery here where Krikor Narekatsi (Gregory of Narek), a religious mystic and prominent Armenian religious poet of the 10th century, grew up. His most famous work is the *Book of Lamentations*, a mystical poem considered a masterpiece of Armenian literature. The island is accessible by motorboat from the district of Döseme (Tevledi) in the village of Yaylıyaka (Adır), more than 30km north of Van.

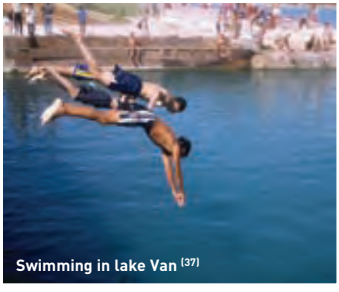
### Ayanis Kalesi

This Urartian fortress is 35km north of Van and 250m above lake level near the village of Ayanis (Ağartı). It has steep slopes to the west and northwest, and is protected by walls in the south and east. Cuneiform inscriptions no less than 14 lines long, found in the citadel, stated that it was built by King Rusa II (685–645 BC), son of Argişti. There is temple dedicated to Haldi in the eastern part of what is called *Payeli Salon* in the upper part of the site. The temple looks like a tower and has lost its roof, but look out for the 16m long inscription on the western side.

# Edremit (Erdêmed/Artemêtan)



Edremit Lake Van [36]



Swimming in lake Van [37]

If you are considering a nice and relaxing weekend then beach side town of Edremit is the place for you. The touristy town of Edremit (population 12,247), 20km southwest of Van, features some beautiful beaches and wild natural beauty, and has been deemed by some national papers as one of the nicest small towns in Turkey.

The history of the town goes back as far as the Urartians. For a time it was the Armenian town of Artemit, from which the name Edremit probably derives. The Minua Canal (see p: 556) passes through the district, and there are mosques in the villages of Harabeköy (Harabedar), Dönemeç and Bakacık as well as the remains of churches that you can visit. The tombs of Şeyh Babo and Yeşil Sultan in the Eski Camii district are pilgrimage sites.

## Taşkale Kalesi

Well signposted Taşkale is a high slope that you can observe the view of the Edremit beaches and Van Lake. Do not expect to see much of the fortress as it's in ruins. Seats are to be found there if you wish to enjoy the view of the lack. The hill also provides you with the excellent spot to photograph the lakeside.

## Accommodation

A good choice is the lakeside four-star *Otel Merit Şahmaran* (0432 312 30 60, www.merit-sahmaranotel.com), which is only 12km from Van city.



A traditional meal [38]

## Places to eat

Being something of a lakeside resort, Edremit has plenty of restaurants serves different kind of grills, homemade foods, fish and so on.

# Gevaş (Westan)



Akdamar island and Church [39]

The small, pretty town of Gevaş is 40km southwest of Van. The old Armenian name for the district (population 11,042) is Vostan, and this was an important centre of power for the Armenians in the 5th and 6th centuries.

The beautiful mountainous landscapes of Gevaş served as a natural stage for the Turkish blockbuster *Vizontele* (Yılmaz Erdogan, 2001), about how life in a small Hakkâri village is affected after one inhabitant acquires the village's first television set.

You can stay at the *Gevaş Öğretmenevi*, in the Ortaca quarter (0432 612 31 06), which has over 20 rooms with twin beds and TV, and a restaurant.

## İzzettin Şir (Şêr) Camii and Madrasah

Şir İzzettin (İzzettin the Lion or *Yezdan Şêr* in Kurdish) was a Kurdish Emir of Hakkâri, and the mosque that bears his name can be visited in the Karşıyaka (Hêşet) quarter of central Gevaş. The

## Lake Van Monster

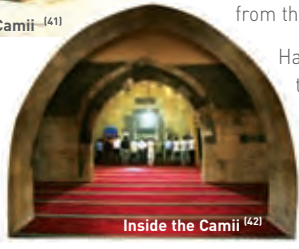


Van lake monster [40]

Since the first alleged sighting of this creature in 1995, many people – mostly locals – claim to have seen a beast in the lake, nearly 15km and with spikes on its back, not unlike a dinosaur. The Turkish government despatched a scientific team to the area but they found nothing. Then in 1997 Ünal Kozak, a teaching assistant at Van University, captured what he said was the creature on video, but his film was the object of some skepticism, as it only shows the monster moving in a straight line. Whatever the truth of the sightings, the mere talk of the monster has probably lured some tourists to Van province. Nowadays there is a four-meter-high statute of the creature on display in Gevaş at the entrance to the town.


İzzeddin Şir Camii [41]

mosque, usually called İzdişir by the locals, is typically Seljuk in style and has a madrasah next door. An inscription at the top of the main entrance indicates that the mosque was built in 1257. The courtyard of the madrasah is accessible through a door in the western side of the mosque's northern area. A damaged inscription on the west portal of the madrasah states that the madrasah was added to the mosque in 1594–1595. Several restorations have changed the original profile of the complex; for example, a minaret which cannot be seen in old pictures was added to the west side of the mosque. The mosque was most recently restored in 2005.


Inside the Camii [42]

## Hişet (Hêşet) Kalesi

A narrow road right opposite İzzettin Şir Camii leads to this fortress, situated 2.5km northeast of town on a slope overlooking the plain down to Lake Van. The fortress is in ruins and farming has obliterated most of the traces, but the style of the surviving wall and some other clues indicate that the castle has been used by the Seljuks and Ottomans. Some canals carried water from the source in the south of the fort.

## The Seljuk Cemetery and Halime Hatun Tomb

The Tomb of Halime Hatun, Şir İzzettin's daughter, is the highlight of the Seljuk Cemetery (*Selçuklu Mezarlığı*, also called Gevaş Hişet Cemetery or *Gevaş Hişet Mezarlığı*), 2km south of Gevaş town. The cemetery itself is not unlike that in Ahlat (see p: 454) in that it is full of ornamented graves, in this case dating from the 14th century; however, the white marble gravestones are different from those in Ahlat.

Halime Hatun, sometimes called Celme Hatun, who was the daughter of powerful Kurdish Emir, Şir İzzettin, the tomb is plainly visible from the main road along the shores of Lake Van, the tomb has a dodecagonal (12-sided) plan and a conical roof, making it look not unlike a gigantic stubby pencil. Note the fine decorations in the exterior stonework, in particular around the windows. An Arabic inscription on the lintel of the


Halime Hatun Tomb [43]



A detail from Halime Hatun Tomb [44]

front door states that the tomb was ordered by Melik İzzettin for Halime Hatun and completed in 1335. Another inscription over the south window names the architect, Pehlivan Havendoğlu Esed from Ahlat, and a verse from the Koran appears between two bands of floral ornamentation around the tomb.

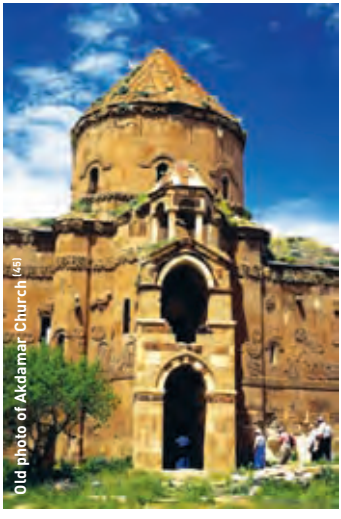
The tomb was first explored at the beginning of the 19th century when it attracted the attention of W. Bachmann, who extensively researched the Van region. Today it looks particularly appealing against the backdrop of snowy mountains in winter, but unfortunately new buildings springing up close by have seriously compromised the atmosphere of the site. In summers be aware of endless number of flying insects around the tomb.

## Akdamar Church

The Armenian Akdamar Church, marooned on a lonely island close to the southern shore of Lake Van, is the most beautiful example of Armenian architecture visible in Turkey. Even on days when the site is busy with visitors, the church's isolation and the sight of the blue waters and distant encircling mountains are awe-inspiring, and can reduce many people to a reverential hush as they wander around.

The island was initially known as *Rştunik Adası*. According to a tale, a man was longing desperately for his beloved, Tamara, who was so beautiful that she was kept isolated by her father on the island. In his desperation, her lover threw himself into the lake and was shouting "Ah, Tamara!", which later became corrupted to Akdamar. The island subsequently came under the rule of King Gagik Ardzruni (705) who decided that the island should become the capital of his kingdom. It was heavily damaged in the 16th century during the fighting between the Ottomans and the Safavids. After 1535, the island became inhabited only by monks, who left the island after the events of 1895 and 1915.

It is believed that the church was built to preserve the Holy Cross in 915–921, by a priest called Manuel on the orders of King Gagik I. First used as the church of a palace belonging to King Gagik I, it became a monastery in



Old photo of Akdamar Church [45]

1113. The church was for centuries the seat of a separate Armenian church leader, the *Katholikos* of Akdamar. It was abandoned after 1915, in the 1950s, when the country was trying to destroy the Armenian legacy on its soil, the church was earmarked for demolition but unlike Narek Monastery in the Gevaş village of Yemişlik (Narek), it survived. The novelist Yaşar Kemal relates in his memoirs how it was saved by the intervention of a local lieutenant who alerted the media. The church was then left to rot for years, before being restored and opened to visitors in 2006 with a public ceremony that attracted much media coverage.



Akdamar Port [46]

The church has a cruciform plan, two entrance portals and a single dome covered with a pyramidal roof. The exterior decorations, depict Biblical scenes, are of particular beauty. On the northern facade can be seen, amongst others, St Mark and Adam and Eve; on the eastern façade St John and St Luke, the Prophet Samuel and David (with slingshot) and Goliath appear; the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus, Abraham sacrificing his son and Daniel in the lion's den can be seen on the western facade. In contrast to the excellent condition of the exterior stonework is the church's interior, where the murals are largely obliterated; all that can be seen now are shabby patches of blue and black, though it's easy enough to pick out what look like saints and Biblical episodes depicted on the walls.

In the grounds around the church can be seen many khatchkars, blocks of stones, now often mossy, into which crosses and beautiful patterns of lines and rosettes have been carved; some look positively Celtic and would not


Details from Akdamar Church [47]


Saint Thomas monastery [48]

look out of place in an Irish monastic setting. Before leaving the island, you can have a drink at the small café or go for a walk among the island's almond trees for a majestic view of the church against the lake and mountains.

Ferries for the island depart from a small jetty a few kilometres west of Gevaş (0432 216 1505). In summer there is transport here from Van city, but at other times of year you may have to take a *dolmuş* to Gevaş, then a second *dolmuş* which can drop you at the jetty on its way further west. The fare for the ride to the island, which takes around 20 minutes, is around 5TL per person if the boat is fairly full. In the off-season you may have to wait an hour or more for enough people to show up for the boat to depart, though if you are in a large group you can always negotiate an immediate departure if you are willing to pay a higher fare.

## Mount Artos (Çadır)

In the southern part of Gevaş district is Mount Artos (3700m), the second highest peak of the Kavuşsahap range. It ranks after Mount Süphan-Sîpan- (see p: 457) in terms of its natural beauty, and interest in the peak has grown in recent years with the growth in opportunities for climbing and skiing. There are many routes with broad, straight paths to the summit, but the north side of the mountain is recommended for its wonderful views. Once at the summit you can see the rest of the mountain range to the west and in clear conditions you can also see the peaks of Ağrı to the north.

Thirty minutes' drive (there is no public transport) from the police post in Selimbey, Gevaş, you enter a broad valley. It is possible to reach the pinnacle from both sides of the valley, the route on the left being longer and steeper, though both routes have great views. It's a good idea to ascend the left side, on which route you reach the windy pinnacle after a 5-hour climb.

## Arter Island

About 4 km west of Akdamar Island there is another, smaller island. Here you will find the ruins of a small church, according to legend it was founded in the 10th century. There are no regular boat services to the island. Boats should be privately arranged at the *Akdamar İskelesi*.

## St. Thomas Monastery

About 30km from the *Akdamar İskelesi,* on the Alacabük Promontory lies the impressive monastery of St. Thomas. Still surrounded by protective walls, it is located on a hill about 250m above the Van Lake, offering a magnificent view over the lake. This is one of the best preserved Armenian churches in the Van area. To reach it follow the main road to Tatvan until you get to the village of Göründü (Muhrabit). From there follow the small road along the lake to Altınsaç (Genzek) village. The church is about 3km northwest of the village. In Altınsaç village another ancient church can be found. The Alacabük Promontory was something of an Armenian Athos, with at least 5 monasteries.

# Bahçesaray (Muskî/Miks)



Shepherd [49]



Nomads life [50]

The little-explored district of Bahçesaray is 106km southeast of Van, with a population of 3,622. Until the opening of new Hizan road in 2004, this used to be one of the most inaccessible places in Turkey. The old road to Van crosses a mountain pass at 2985 and used to be closed for more than half the year because of snow. A well-known saying, *"Mukûs [Bahçesaray] salê heşt mehan girêdayî bi Xwedê ve ye, çar mehan girêdayî bi Wanê ve ye"* reflects the climate, stating that the district is only connected to Van for four months a year and the rest of the time is connected to God.

Bahçesaray's old name was Moks or Müküs, meaning either tax or tax collecting in Arabic. The history of the town goes back to the Armenian Vaspurakan Kingdom, and the historical Armenian presence can be seen in the remains of number of monasteries and churches. In 977, the prince of Moks, Zapranik, was in conflict with the Byzantines. The area was then taken over by the son of Sultan Alparslan in 1064 and was under the successive rule of the Seljuks, Ayyubids, Karakoyunlus, Akkoyunlus and Safavids. In 1539 the Ottomans took the area temporarily from the Safavids but retired from Van because of growing problems with the king of Austria, returning permanently in 1548.

*Koçer* (Kurdish nomads) use to settle here in hot summers, but avoid the area in winter since Bahçesaray, with an altitude of more than 2900m, is notorious for its bitter winters. It is said that you can ski here until the start of summer, and indeed skiing is quite a

hobby for the locals, but serious investments would be needed for it to fulfil its commercial potential.


Kasparov[51]

Bahçesaray was something of a religious retreat for a long time and this status together with the long cold winters created a taste for chess, which was judged not damaging to faith. This was also a time when gambling was forbidden, yet betting on chess was allowed since it is a strategic game rather than one of chance. It is still a very popular pastime in the region (with a Municipal Chess Festival organised in July), and locals will be happy to challenge you to a game.

There is not much to see in Bahçesaray town itself, with its single main street lined with teahouses. The town sits in a beautiful green basin planted with walnuts and mulberries; in fact the district accounts for 4% of all the walnut trees in Turkey, a fact which has given rise to a woodcarving industry in the area, producing items for the kitchen and bathroom in particular. You can for example visit *Bahçesaray Ceviz Ahşap İşleri Atölyesi,* a grassroots crafts workshop where you will find very nice examples of local wares. This is also a socially responsible enterprise, employing disadvantaged people from the region. It is centrally located at the town's primary school *(yatılı bölge okulu).*

## Mir Hasan Veli Madrasah (Medreseya Mîr Hesenê Welî)

Located in the cemetery in the Islam quarter and close to the entrance to the town, this ruined madrasah is believed to have been built by Mir Hasan Veli during the 16th century. It was originally a *külliye* (a complex with a mosque, *hamam,* school and so on) but all that can be seen now are the remains of the mosque in the midst of walnut trees. This was a two-storey building, restored in 1737 and in 1858; now only the ground floor survives, accessible through a door in the middle of the southern section. The two large rooms on either side of the main hall were the classrooms. On the north side of the courtyard were five rectangular planned rooms in a line, covered with barrel-vaulted roofs; three of these rooms still stand. Locals refer to it as *Mir Hasan Veli Zaviyesi,* the small dervish lodge of Mir Hasan. Nearby is the Tomb of Mir Hasan himself.

## Red Mosque (Kırmızı Cami)

Located in the Kale quarter, the mosque was built on three levels by one of the Müküs leaders in the 17th century. What left now are some parts of the western wall and the *mihrab,* ornamented with Islamic motifs in blue colours. The mosque had a rectangular plan and a flat roof which is supported by the wood pillars inside. It is believed that the mosque was converted from a church. A ruined fortress can also be seen nearby.


Mir Hasan Veli Tomb [52]


Mir Hasan Veli Madrasah [53]

## St Jacques Church (Deşt Kilisesi)

This ruined church, which is known to have been in use in the 17th century, is about 500m southwest of the town centre and can be reached by a good road. A few walls and the flat roof partly survive. Look for a number of beautifully ornamented crosses and other religious symbols on the walls and the stones near the main door.

## Kızılköprü (The Red Bridge)

This bridge, built between the 14th centuries, is 4km out on the road from the town to Hizan, over the Müküs (Botan) River. Recently restored by the municipality and in use, it is a single-arched structure with two corridors for pedestrians on either side of the arch. The bridge gets its name from the red bricks used in its construction.

## Monastery of St Saviour

Locals refer to this monastery, some 7km from the town, as *Beyaz Kilise* (or *Dêra Spî* in Kurdish). You can best reach it by a one hour climb from Ünlüce (Mezraa-i Şêxan) village. The church is likely to date from the 10th or 11th century, while the monastery, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, was founded in the 10th century. The small church of John the Baptist dates to the mid-14th century. What was probably a 19th-century mill and other ruins can be found close to some large walnut trees.


A detail from St Jaques church [54]

## Abanak or Saintes Femmes Monastery (Azize Kadınlar Manastırı)

Also known locally as *Dêra Mele Şêx*, this attractive and splendid


Kızıl Köprü (The red bridge) [55]

monastery is set near the confluence of the Delan and Müküs Rivers, accessible from Bahçesaray (it's best to hire a local guide) from the village of Elmayaka (Sıpkas) some 8km away in the north of the district. The monastery has a nice large entrance hall. It was built during the 10th century with the aim of helping preserve a relic.

### Monastery of St George (Pouthkouvank)

This monastery, also known as Serivank or Horoz or *Dêra Han*, is situated 2150m up on the southern side of Mount Agirof (Axêrof), in impressive mountain scenery. The monastery was a resting place on the old caravan road to Van and was thus visited by many Muslim and Christian travellers. The monastery can only be reached on foot. You have to abandon your car about 1km north of the source of the Müküs River. From here it is a 1 hour and half mountain walk to the monastery, at first along the Sündüz River, then northwards along a small tributary. A local guide is advisable as there are no villages in this area. In summer some shepherds from Bahçesaray pitch up their tents next to the monastery.



Azize kadınlar Manastırı [57]



A detail from Keskin church [58]

It is believed that the monastery was an important cultural centre of the Vaspurakan Kingdom during the 14th century and had great influence until the 15th century thanks to its school. The monastery, which was also used as a *han* in the past, was restored by one of the local rulers, Mir Hasan, in 1548. Later it became exclusively a retreat and monastery. It was active until 1839, and was partly damaged in the 1990s.

### Şeyh Şemsettin Mosque

This historical mosque, whose age is indicated by two inscriptions, was built with two storeys in 1709 and partly destroyed in the battles of 1915, leaving only one floor. Now rebuilt, the mosque is in the village of Güneyyamaç (Taxa Berojê), 15km south of Bahçesaray, and is still used for worship.

### Keskin (Kinekas) Village Church

Simple, charming edifice with several ancient gravestones built into the walls. It is located some 5 km to the west of Bahçesaray, easily reachable by car or on foot.

### Monastery of the Cross (Aparank)

Located in Kayaş village 45km southwest and near the border with Siirt province, this monastery is composed of St Astuacacin (its main building) and St Stephanos Churches, St. Arakelok Chapel, an entrance hall, a village church and a fountain.



Keskin Church [58]



A view from Bahçesaray Valley [59]

The rectangular-planned St Astuacacin Church, founded in 983, is accessed by a gate on the western side. An inscription mentions a restoration in 1629. The walls, built with truncated stones are quite high; the church has been covered with a single dome and cradle vaults, built by using red bricks. All the sides of the church (except the western part) are surrounded with other buildings in the complex and they are inter-connected to he main church building.

## Andzghonts Monastery (Dêra Ancaxosê)

The monastery is in the southeast part of the district, on top of a hill some 500m east of the Müküs Stream. Locals also refer to it as *Meryem Kilisesi* (Mary Church) The date of construction is unknown but it is believed that it was restored in 1676; in 1805 it was severely damaged by fire and subsequently abandoned.

# Çatak (Şax)



Country life in Çatak [60]



Çatak bridge [61]

The small but lively town of Çatak is 80km southwest of Van. The surrounding district (population 6,402) contains the remains of Armenian churches and offers some nice excursions around the Botan River, such as to the popular Kanispi (Kanîspî) Waterfalls 5km from town. You can also visit three ancient bridges believed to date from the Seljuk era. You can find a better place then near the Ulu Camii in order to buy some fresh food and fruit brought by the villagers daily.

## Çatak Bridge

At the entrance to Çatak town is a bridge (locally called *Pira Eqit*) over the Sortkin River that flows through the town. The bridge was built either during the 17th or 18th century and bears inscriptions in Armenian. Still in use today, the bridge has one arch. The tea house just off the front of the bridge can be good resting place, also good spot to photograph the bridge and the town's busy street.

## Kanispi Waterfalls

Located 5km from Çatak are the Kanîspî ("white spring" in Kurdish) Waterfalls, a popular picnic spot for locals. There are good views of nearby peaks and trees afford shelter for people cooking food until late in the evening. Two restaurants serve fresh river fish.

## Hurkan and Zeril Bridges

Around 7km southwest from town on the road to Narlı (Xawêştan) is the Hurkan Bridge, probably built in the 17th century judging by its style. Restored in 1983, it is similar to the Çatak Bridge in its appearance and is now only for pedestrian use. The little alcove in the northeastern part of the bridge once was used as a shelter.


Kanîspî waterfalls (62)


Albıçak monastery (63)

Three kilometres further out on the Narlı (Xaviştan) road is this single-arched bridge over the Norduz River, sitting within a wide, deep valley. Being similar to Hurkan Bridge, it probably dates from the 17th or 18th century. The bridge was restored in 1988 and its original railings and walls are well conserved.

## Albıçak Monastery

If you have some time to spend in Çatak, you can visit this monastery in the village of Albıçak (Cunik), 16km Southwest of Çatak. You will have to leave the Çatak–Pervari highway at the 5th kilometer and take the small paved road west from town that leads you to the 3550m Mount Kepçe (Arnos). You will then have to follow the paved road 11km until you reach Seksek River's northern bank. The monastery, usually called Cunik by the locals, is well preserved and makes a good excursion.

## Surp Tigin Church

This 10th-century church is in the village of Elmacı (Sortkin), 10 km north of Çatak town on the road to Van. Its plan is that of a four-leaf clover. The main hall, accessed through a door in the west, has a large octagonal roof. The village itself is photogenic, with skilfully built stone houses and a stream.

## Rock art

Interesting painted figures can be found in the rocks of the Valley of Tirşin, 150km south of Van and between Çatak and Gürpınar. In order to get there, you need to drive to Bilgi (Alan) village some 25km northeast of Çatak, and then you may need to walk for some 20 minutes. The figures are believed to date back as far as the 6th century BC and represent stylized hunting scenes, buffalos, reindeer and human beings. Similar figures can be seen in the Narlı area of Çatak on a hill called *Huş Tepe;* here there are figures of men riding horses and geometrical figures painted on the rocks. It is believed that these figures are more recent than those at Tirşin, since the riders are shown with musical instruments in their hands.



Rock art [64]



Surp Tigin church and children [65]

# Gürpınar (Xavesor)



Hoşap Kalesi [66]

Gürpınar town is 22km south of Van (population 9,290). The largest district of Van by area, it was once called Xawesor, meaning "valley of forefathers", but because it had many water sources its name was changed to Gürpınar, "rich in sources". There are four peaks exceeding 3000m within the district, namely Gökdağ, Koçkıran (Kilespiri), Yeltepe and Çat. The district is worth visiting for the Kurdish citadel, *Hoşap Kalesi*, whose name probably comes from the Kurmancî xweş av ("nice water"), and which indeed had a system for storing water inside.



From Hoşap Kalesi's entrance [67]

## Hoşap (Xoşab) Kalesi

Very much popular with foreign and local tourist, this site should have a top place in your sightseeing list. The citadel, also called *Güzelsu Kalesi* and as Mahmudiye, referring to Kurdish leader *Sarı Süleyman Mahmut Bey* (Mahmudi Süleyman the Blond) who gave the citadel its amazing appearance overhanging the steep hills in the middle of nowhere. The citadel's history goes back as far as the Urartians, Mahmud Bey, who ruled the region during the Turkco and Persian hostility finally allied with Karakoyunlu Empire of Tabriz (Iran) and Hoşab was given to him as a grant, The fortress later was restored and enlarged in 1643 before being abandoned in the 19th century. According to local tradition, the hands



Hoşap Kalesi's defence walls [68]

of the architects who built this formidable stronghold were cut off so that they could not build another. Some sources argue that early leaders of the Mahmudi Clan whose perhaps practicing Yezidi religion of the Kurds before they converted to Islam in late 15th century.

The citadel is surrounded by triple walls and is entered through a door in the north. Note the lion shaped reliefs at the entrance together with inscriptions in Persian praising Sarı Süleyman Mahmut. The original iron door-knockers are still present. It is believed that the citadel also included a mosque, *selamlık* (men's apartments), *harem,* baths and a jail.

You can also have a look at the three-arched bridge called *Evliya Bey Köprüsü* in the northern part of the citadel, built by Evliya Bey in 1671. Recenty restored, the bridge is comprised of black and white stones.

The citadel is 60km from Van and 39km from Gürpınar, and is accessible via the highway between the two destinations. If you're on public transport, you take a *dolmuş* to Başkale (from at end of Cumhuriyet Cad and beginning of Kışla Cad in Van), and get off at the stop behind the Atakçaba Private School. The place is open everyday from 8.30am to 5pm, with an hour lunch break and a modest entrance fee.

## Güzelsu

You can combine a trip to the *Hoşap Kalesi* with a visit to the picturesque village of Güzelsu (Xoşab) nearby. In the southeastern part of the village is Gevirhan Cemetery, located at the entrance to the village off the



Süleyman Bey Tomb [69]


Çavuştepe [70]

Van–Hakkâri highway, is a cupola dedicated to Mahmudi Süleyman, and called *Süleyman Bey Kümbeti.* It is believed that the one-storey stone monument, which has an octagonal plan though the interior is circular, was built in the middle of the 17th century. Also within the cemetery are two madrasahs, one being the 17th-century Evliya Bey Madrasah. It is organized around courtyard, with cells/rooms in the east of the courtyard and an octagonal *mescit* (prayer hall minus *minbar*) in the southern part. The second madrasah is believed to have been built for Hasan Bey in 1563, and includes five rooms in the east, four in the west and a small mosque. His tomb here was constructed by his son Şir Bey in 1585, and is still well preserved. With thick walls, the one-storey tomb is built of stone blocks on a square plan

Within the village also is a caravanserai built by the tribe called Mahmudi, probably during the 16th or 17th century. It would have been a more interesting place to visit if it wasn't partly buried and partly used as a stable.

## Çavuştepe Kalesi (Kela Aspeşênê)

This Urartian fortress and royal residence is in Çavuştepe (Aspeşin) village, 3km from Gürpınar and 26km southeast of Van; it's accessible from the Van–Hakkâri highway if you take the turning 4km out of Van on the Baskale road.

The fortress was built during the reign of King Sarduri II (765–733 BC) and was referred to as Sardurihinili, meaning "City of Sarduri". Besides having a strategic position, the fortress was also of economic significance as it served as a silo for agricultural production from the plains. There is also evidence of a sophisticated plumbing system. Some say that in the blocks hidden in the soil of the fortress, researchers found 2700-year-old wheat stores.

Built on a hill dominating the plain, the fortress is composed of an upper *(Yukarı Kale)* and a lower *(Aşağı Kale)* section. The upper part is south of the entrance gate, and is accessible through the lower part by a ramped walkway. In the western end of the


Çavuştepe Kalesi [71]


Nomad children [72]

upper part you can see a temple dedicated to the God Haldi, built on a rectangular plan.

If you are interested in Urartian rites, there is another, larger, temple in the lower section, dedicated to God Irmusi. Built of basalt, the temple has a section for sacrificial rituals. In the eastern part of the temple close to the entrance are nicely preserved Urartian inscriptions. The site has been well signposted and it's quite popular with tourists. There is a tourist office where you can get extra information and even guide to tour you around the fortress.


St Marinos Monastery [73]

## St Marinos Monastery

You will reach the monastery after a little walk of 45 minutes, in the village of Arkboyu (Gêlbelesan), 6km from Gürpınar, in sides of the *Cadı Taşmış Dağı*. This was an Armenian orthodox worship place home to no less than 300 nuns until it was abandoned in the 19th century. It is believed that the Monastery takes its name from female saint Marinos whose tomb is said to be somewhere in the surroundings. In the past, women who couldn't have children would come here to pray.

## Hamurkesen (Zêrnak)

The village of Hamurkesen, nearly 20km east of Gürpınar town and accessible off the Van–Hakkâri highway, contains a 17th-century fortress on rocks to the northwest. It is believed that it was built by Beşaret Bey, a ruler of the local Zernek Tribe. The fortress is large enough to accommodate the rulers' family and also features a *harem*, a kitchen and a *hamam*. Walls survive to the east and around the entrance in the north; the


Welcome smile[74]

entrance gate is surrounded by two towers.

In the same village you can visit a mosque believed to have been built by Seyyid Muhammed in 1710. Villagers claim that it was damaged by the Armenians during World War I conflict and that the dome collapsed. The dome and the rest of this simple mosque are now being restored. Note the beautiful mosque door, decorated with geometric figures.

## Dêr Meryem Monastery (Hogeacvank Manastırı)

If you are an explorer at heart, consider hiring a local guide to take you to this monastery, which is reached by an hour's walk along the Çataksuyu (Norduz) River from the village of Özlüce (Araz), 25km due south of Gürpınar town. Özlüce, like the monastery, is deserted, and the monastery has not been much visited in past decades though it was once popular with pilgrims as it contains an icon of the Virgin Mary. The monastery suffered considerable damage in 1895 and finally was abandoned in 1915.

In a simple field, the monastery was probably built during the 9th century and restored in 1730. The gate is in the south side of the monastery; a cellar, a barn and some small rooms are set apart from the main complex.

## Cave art

Nearly 30km southeast of Gürpınar is a beautiful canyon near the village of Yedisalkım (Put) where you can visit *Gürpınar Kızların Mağarası*, caves containing painted depictions of dancing women figures. A few kilometres east is the village of Giyimli (Xirkanis) with more caves nearby containing figures representing stylized suns, crosses, animals and human beings.

## Hiris (Hêris) Churches

Two little churches by the Çatak River are called Hiris by locals, though the larger one, with a single nave, is also referred to as the Meryem Ana Church. Rectangular in plan, it is divided into three sections inside by two large vaults. Both churches are probably from the 17th century. The churches are 5km from Örmeli village (Kengewer), which is some 60km from Gürpınar.

# Erciş (Erdîş)



Erciş Kalesi [75]



Kadem Hatun paşa Tomb [76]

On the northern shore of Lake Van, the town of Erciş is around 100km from Van city, on one of the largest and prettiest plains near the lake. The town is thought to take its name from the Urartian King Argişti or the historical cities of Arsissa or Arzaşkun in the area. Such was the significance of the town that the lake itself was known as Buhayratül Erciş (Lake Erciş) to the Arabs. The town retained its prominence during Armenian times, when it was called Agantz. In the 15th century it was the base of the Karakoyunlus. Flooding caused by the lake forced the population to quit their villages in 1840, and the town once again experienced significant damage in 1915, subsequently being renamed Erciş in the Republican era. Today the town's economy is partly reliant on its sugar factory. The town centre is unusual in that it's devoid of tall modern buildings; instead, most of the centre and bazaar are appealingly comprised of one- or two-storey structures.

The surrounding district (population 77,464 mostly Kurdish) is rich with Urartian history, notably in the inscriptions praising the "King of Kings" visible on the highway leading to Van city. In the 13th century, Erciş was on the commercial road to Iran, and this is attested too by the Kortuz Fortress and the *Bend-i Mahi Bridge.*

## Kadem Paşa Hatun Tomb

This *türbe* is accessible 3km southeast of the centre and accessible via the Van–Erciş highway. It is believed to have been built in 1453 under the reign of *Karakoyunlu Cihan Şah* for *Kara Yusuf Paşa's* wife *Kadem Paşa Hatun* and their sons *Emir Ali Yar, Şah Mustafa, Şah Sevik* and *Şah Ali.*

A two-storey construction in the middle of a nice garden, the tomb is similar to that of Halime Hatun in Gevaş (see p:562). It still bears inscrip-


Urartian Inscription [77]

tions and geometrical decorations on the door and the windows. The lower level, accessed through a simple door with a small window opposite for ventilation, holds the sarcophagi and has a rectangular plan. The second floor is cylindrical on the inside but the exterior walls are dodecagonal.

## The Anonymous Tomb

Known by various names, including *Anonim Kümbet, Zortul Kümbeti* and *Erciş Kümbeti*, this tomb is in Çatakdibi (Zortul), at the 5km mark on the highway from Erciş to Patnos in Ağrı; take the first road on the right before you arrive at the end of Çelebibağı village. Given the inscriptions and decorations on the tomb, it supposedly dates from the 15th century and the reign of the Karakoyunlu leader *Kara Yusuf Paşa*, whose tomb it may actually be. It is similar to the Kadem Paşa Hatun Tomb and bears decorations symbolizing the reign and the power of the Anatolian rulers. On the northern facade are the most interesting decorations, showing two lions back to back. Their tales are shaped like dragon's heads and you see their bodies in profile though their faces are turned towards to you. Two hunting birds also appear on this facade.

## Urartian inscriptions

The Urartians took advantage of the topography of Erciş and definitely left their imprint in the region, notably on the Van–Erciş highway in the district of Karataşlar, 5km northeast of Erciş; the inscriptions are on the hillside opposite the police station. Part of a site that has been fenced off and converted into a park, the inscriptions are a metre high in size and tells the feats of Urartian King Sarduri. Another example can be seen 200m west from the highway, glorifying Sarduri (743–735 BC).

## Deliçay Port (also called Balık Bendi)

It is believed that the first ports in the region were built by the Urartians to facilitate access through the castles to military and merchandises. The ports in Edremit and Tatvan are now submerged but that at Deliçay can still be


Deliçay [78]


Fish from Deliçay [79]

visited. You will also see ancient Urartian tombs that are under protection for further archaeological exploration.

The place is also very popular in spring for the spectacle it offers of fish jumping around in the foam. The name *Balık Bendi* is actually that of a fish, the grey mullet that arrives here in thousands in April and May. If you pass by the lake at this period, you will see hundreds of them jumping against the current to head to regions where they can lay their eggs. Easily reachable by the highway, at 10km from Erciş town, the site is right next to Erciş Sugar Factory and is now a pleasant park, with a restaurant serving fresh fish.


Çelebibağı cemetery [80]

## Çelebibağı Historical Cemetery and Çelebibağı Höyüğü

The village of Çelebibağı (Eganis), 8km southwest of Erciş on a hill by the lake, contains a cemetery with historical stone graves. During excavations in the 1990s four monumental graves were found, in addition to sarcophaguses and ornamented gravestones with Kufic writings from the 14th and 15th centuries. Around half a kilometre south of the cemetery you can see the ruins of Erciş Castle in the lake.

A historical settlement, *Çelebibağı Höyüğü*, was discovered in the southern part of the village of Çelebibağı and close to the cemetery. Originally this was on a peninsula, but it became marooned on an island after the lake waters rose. It is believed that the settlement could have been a temple; diggings have uncovered bowls, pots and vases dating from as far as back as 2800 BC.

## Erciş Kalesi

Also in Çelebibağı village is this well preserved lakeside fortress, with walls 8m high. It is believed that is was originally built at the end of the 9th century BC by the Urartian King Menua. As with other Urartian fortresses, this would have accommodated the ruler and his family while most of the rest of the population would have been settled nearby, only retreating within the sanctuary of the fortress in times of war. Erciş Fortress was probably built up following the same scheme although it is not surrounded by graves.

In Akkoyunlu (White sheep Turcoman) times the fortress served as an important military base. The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi was impressed with what he saw, describing the fortress as extremely robust and, more dubiously, as built of stones "each one as big as an elephant". He also wrote that the fortress was restored by Kara Yusuf (a Karakoyunlu ruler) and comprised a thousand adobe homes, a mosque, two hundred shops and a harbour to trade with Van. The fortress was always affected by lake floods, sometimes for months at a time, and this caused some damage.

# Muradiye (Bêgirî)



Muradiye waterfalls [81]

Some 80km northeast of Van city is the district of Muradiye (population 13,816) It is one of the most populated areas in the Van province, well known for the Bend-i Mahi Waterfalls. The area has much else to offer visitors in terms of landscapes, being surrounded by extinct volcanoes (Beşparmak, Pirreşit and Pete) and crossed by the Bend-i Mahi River.

## Muradiye Bargiri Kalesi

The remains of a fortress can be visited near the *jandarma* base in the northern part of Muradiye town. Built on rocks with a view over the town, the fortress is thought to have been originally built by the Urartians and was rebuilt by the Safavid Ruler Şah İsmail in the 16th century. The walls in the northwest and the two entrances in the south are Urartian, while the walls surrounding the northern entrance are Safavid work.

## The Bend-i Mahi Bridge

This bridge on the old Erçis–Tabriz (Iran) caravan road is one of the forgotten sights of the southeast. It is usually said to be of Seljuk provenance, dating from the 13th century, though there are also claims that it was built by Argun Khan, the ruler of the Il-Khanid (one of the four sections of the Mongol Empire which arose after Genghis Khan died), between 1284 and 1291. The bridge is said to have been an important commercial conduit up until the Ottoman times.

The bridge is on the Bend-i Mahi River 11km from Muradiye. From the



Bendi Mahi bridge [82]



Muradiye waterfalls and chain bridge [B3]

## Şeytan Köprüsü and the Bend-i Mahi Waterfalls

The "devil's bridge", as the name *Şeytan Köprüsü* translates, is 3km north of Muradiye, spanning the Bend-i Mahi River. Still in good shape, the bridge is believed to date from the 19th century; it has a single arch 9.7m wide and is 22.60m long.

Continue north up the road from the bridge and around 5km on you will come to the Muradiye Waterfalls, probably the most beautiful cascades in the east of Turkey and a highly popular spot among locals. A rock separates the water into two waterfalls 15m high and about 200m wide. There is a suspension bridge for traffic opposite the Waterfalls. Cross over the footbridge in a leafy area opposite the falls is the Selale Restaurant, offering good views and, unusually, alcohol and fish.



Şeytan bridge [84]

junction where the Erçis road branches off from the road between Van and Muradiye, take the turning on the right and after 1.5km you will find the bridge. Framing the bridge is a nice panorama, with the mountains behind and the tranquil river flowing down. Consisting of black and white stone and with two arches, the bridge is 62m long and 4m wide, but has lost some of its character thanks to restorations, most recently in 2007. This is also a good spot to fish.

## St Stephanos Monastery

This monastery, in the Kandehar quarter 2.5km west of Muradiye on the slopes of the Aksorık Mountain, includes a well-preserved church 12m tall and built on a rectangular plan. The church was originally surrounded by monks' cells, but they are now in ruins. There is no road to the site, but you can reach it on foot.



Children from Muradiye [85]

## The Battle of Çaldıran



A Iranian impression of Çaldıran war [86]

The Çaldıran (Ebex) district now lies half-sandwiched between Muradiye and Özalp in the north-east of Van province, but at the start of the 16th century, it sat on the boundary between Safavid Azerbaijan and Ottoman Anatolia. Ismail, who founded the Safavid Dynasty in 1502 at Tabriz (north of Persia), when proclaimed himself shah, he had an army composed mainly of Kızılbaş tribesmen. A few years later, in 1512, Yavuz Sultan Selim became Ottoman Sultan. He attacked the Safavids in Çaldıran in 1514 with the aim of destroying the Kızılbaş Tribes and extending his domination over a region that had been neglected by the Ottomans until then.

Sultan Selim's Sunni army was superior in strength and managed to swing Çaldıran to the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan, advised by Idris Bitlisi, a high profile Kurd, decided to restore the semi-autonomy of local Kurdish tribe leaders on condition that they recognize Ottoman sovereignty. This decision lead to the creation of 16 half-independent *hükümet* (governorates) which spread over an area representing no less than 30% of the Kurdish regions. The largest of these *hükümet* were Bitlis, Bohtan (Cizre), Hâkkari, Hisnikefya (Hasankeyf), Behdinan (Dehok/ Dahuk, north Iraq) and Erdelan (city of Sanandej, province of Kurdistan in Iran) and they maintained their autonomy from the centralized power until the 1840s. Çaldıran was to stay the demarcation line between the Ottoman and Persian Empires from the Treaty of Zuhab (or the Treaty of Qasr-e-Shirin) in 1639 up until World War **I**.

# Başkale (Elbak)



Vanadokia [87]



Kelekom Bridge [88]

Around 110km southeast of Van lies the town of Başkale. The surrounding district (population 15,910) has a 138km border with Iran, a fact which, together with scarce jobs, generates an environment conducive to trafficking. Başkale was formerly known as a fortress city (the name means "chief fortress" in Turkish) but today the area is worth visiting for its churches and also a volcanic area called Vanadokya (by analogy with Cappadocia).

With a history going back to Hittite times, the town was formerly known as Elbak and was administratively linked to Hâkkari during the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Başkale was home to many Armenians and in 1915, the Armenians actually took it over for three years with Russian support; the area was then incorporated into the new Turkish Republic and acquired its present name. For centuries the town had also a small Jewish community.

## Kelekom Bridge

This two-arched bridge is believed to have been built by Hüsrev Paşa in 1655. Well preserved, it spans the Zap River, 16km out on the road from Başkale to Yüksekova.

## Örenkale (Pizan)

The village of Örenkale (Pizan), 19km away from Başkale, contains a madrasah and tomb associated with Hüsrev Paşa. The madrasah consists of a two-storey rectangular building with seven rooms at each floor and a place for prayer at ground level on the northwest side. An entrance in the northeast leads to the courtyard and bears some inscriptions but no decoration. According to the inscription above the entrance, the madrasah was built by Hüsrev Paşa – one of the Mirs of Hakkâri – in 1653, and it is believed that the part in the southwest was



Saint Bartholomew church [89]

added by his son Süleyman Paşa. Most of it comprises uncut stones, while the interior is plastered with lime.

Hüsrev Paşa's tomb, in the cemetery in the south of the village, contains six graves, including those of his son and other relatives; the one dated 1663 belongs to Hüsrev Paşa himself. The square-planned structure has walls of uncut stones and is topped with a pyramidal roof.

Örenkale also has a fortress, but this is largely ruined.

## Akçalı (Salkone)

This village, 20km southwest of Başkale off the highway between Van and Hakkari, is where you can view a landscape of travertine, a calcareous rock. The scene, reminiscent of a cushion of white clouds on the ground, is not as extensive as its Anatolian equivalent but will certainly thrill you with its beauty.

## St Bartholomew Church

This church, dating back to the end of the 13th century, would be a good



Yanal (Soradêr) church [90]

example of Armenian architecture except that it is ruined. It can be glimpsed from the main road, though the site itself is a closed military zone (permission to enter is rarely granted). The site is reached via the village of Albayrak (Dêr) in the Zap Valley, 23km northeast of Başkale.

You can only see the remains of the Saint Bartholomew Church and the *jamatun*, or entrance hall. Its appearance is probably due to renovation



A view from Vanadokia [91]



Yanal (Soradêr) church [92]

during the 19th century but the church was damaged in a big explosion in 1966. Note the beautiful reliefs on the entrance door showing two people fighting on horseback and God sitting on a throne carried by six little angels.

## Vanadokya

Close to the village of Yavuzlar (Taghik), 33km northeast of Başkale, is what the locals refer to as "Vanadokya" – a region where the eruption of the surrounding Yiğit Dağı volcanoes created interesting fairy chimneys, similar to the ones in Cappadocia in central Anatolia. The eastern versions are not as densely packed as their Anatolian counterparts, though they still offer a startling landscape. A good point to take photos of these beautiful chimneys is just behind the village houses to the east.

## Yanal (Soredêr)

One of the best preserved churches in the district, thought to have been built between the 7th and 9th centuries, can be seen in the village of Yanal, 45km northeast of town. The church, dedicated to St Ejmiacin, is built of reddish stone blocks on a four-leaf-clover plan, and features a central dome. Inside the dome is supported with two cross vaults. In the west of the building is a vaulted doorway.

# VAN
# İL HARİTASI




| VAN | |
|---|---|
| BAHÇESARAY | 116 |
| BAŞKALE | 113 |
| ÇALDIRAN | 109 |
| ÇATAK | 82 |
| EDREMİT | 15 |
| ERCİŞ | 103 |
| GEVAŞ | 40 |
| GÜRPINAR | 24 |
| MURADİYE | 98 |
| ÖZALP | 85 |
| SARAY | 79 |



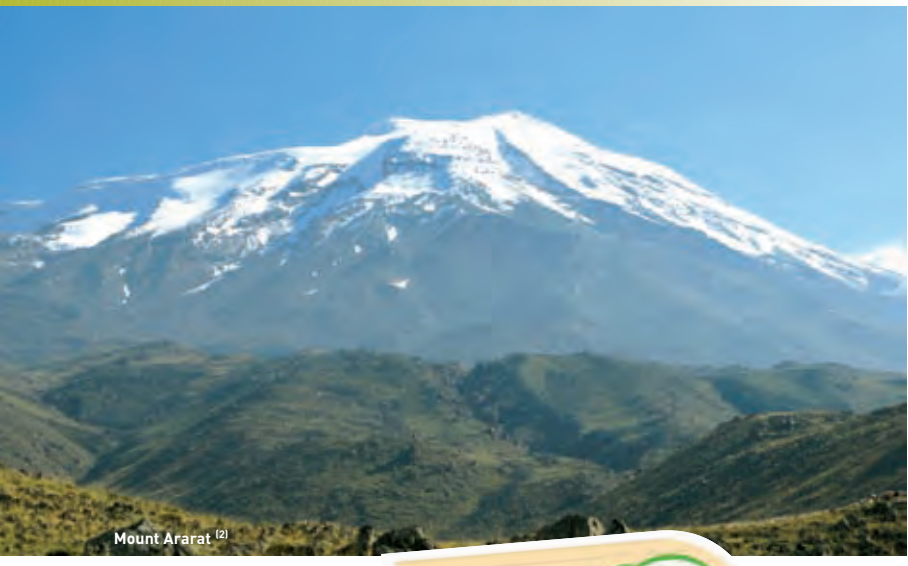
Climbing Mount Ararat [1]

# **AĞRI** (Agırî)

**Ağri** is a beautiful city on a large plain surrounded by green and **white mountains**. The name Ağri is derived from **agir,** meaning "**fire**" in **kurmancî,** due probably to the volcanic nature of nearby **Mount Ararat** (5165m), mentioned in the Old Testament as the resting place of **Noah's ark**. The city is often a transit point for accessing the **Ararat Mountain.**



The province has this special air so common to eastern towns of the country where tradition, **culture and history** are tastefully mixed with nature of **exceptional beauty**. People visiting Ağrı usually come to see the **İshak Paşa Palace**, very similar in the spirit to **Topkapı Palace** in İstanbul.



Mount Ararat [2]

**At a glance**

**Provincial population**
530,879 (2007)
**Average altitude**
1650m
**Area**
11,376 square kilometers
**Districts**
Ağrı, Doğubeyazıt, Diyadin, Eleşkirt, Hamur, Patnos, Taşlıçay, Tutak
**Economy**
Agriculture, Livestock farming, Tourism
**Neighbouring provinces**
Erzurum and Muş (west), Kars (north), Iğdır (east), Van and Bitlis (south)

Ağrı province is at the cross-roads of Asia and Anatolia, and has been the theatre of many struggles during the course of history. Ağrı was at the northern end of the Hurri-Mitani Kingdom in the 15th century BC. The Urartians ruled the region for many years, after which the region was in the grip of, amongst others, the Parthians, Safavids, Mongols and Karakoyunlus. The province was the source of conflict between the Russians and the Ottomans, so that in a relatively short period of time, it changed hands several times until the Berlin Treaty gave it finally to the Ottomans. Being mainly populated by Armenians for many years, the region contains important Christian remains.



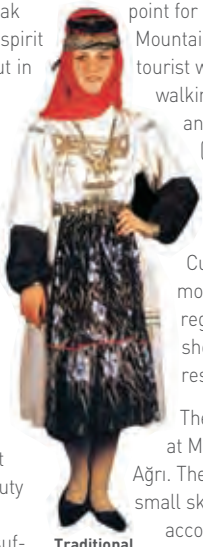
Abdigor köfte [3]

Ağrı is famous for its white honey and overall for its dairy products, producing excellent *kaşar*, a sort of *gruyère*. The most famous local dish is *saç kavurma*, little pieces of meat cooked with herbs. The meat-balls called *abdigor* are also well known; prepared with lean tendon-free beef, the meat is mixed up with eggs and spices before being tenderised and set to rest for a while. After that it is cooked in boiling water and served with rice. Simply delicious!

The province has this special air so common to eastern towns of the country where tradition, culture and


Ağrı City [4]

history are tastefully mixed with nature of exceptional beauty. People visiting Ağrı usually come to see the İshak Paşa Palace, very similar in the spirit to Topkapı Palace in İstanbul but in a way much more impressive because it is surrounded by nothing and has stunning views over the Plateau of Doğubeyazıt. In the surroundings, the tomb of famous Kurdish poet Ehmedê Xanî (Ahmad Khani) is also worth a visit. Moreover, the province is equipped with modern ski facilities as well as several thermal springs in Diyadin, while Mount Ararat – the reputed landing site of Noah's Ark and Turkey's highest peak – has its own amazing beauty which you can experience even from a distance (and if you are sufficiently skilled and prepared to make the necessary arrangements, you can embark on a climb to the top). Finally, as elsewhere in the region of Lake Van, the province is rich with Urartian remains such as Doğubeyazit Kalesi.


Traditional custom [5]

## Ağrı City

Ağrı is a beautiful city on a large plain surrounded by green and white mountains. The name Ağrı is derived from agir, meaning "fire" in Kurmanjî, due probably to the volcanic nature of nearby Mount Ararat (5165m), mentioned in the Old Testament as the resting place of Noah's Ark. The city is often a transit point for accessing the Ararat Mountain – you will see groups of tourist with huge rucksacks walking around the centre – and the surrounding district (population 97,839) has a ski resort and a fortress to visit. The city has a posh, pedestrianized Cumhuriyet Cad, similar to most "Sanat Sokağı" in region, and where most shops, banks, hotels and restaurants are located.

The ski resort in question is at Mount Bubi, 18km from Ağrı. The resort is equipped with a small ski lodge offering simple accommodation and a 1200m-long ski lift. There is also a café serving drinks and light meals.

The kale is located between Yukarı Küpkıran and Güneysu village some twenty kilometres east of the city, a fortress made of large stone blocks and its located between the village and güneysu village. An Urartian stronghold, the fortress was severely damaged by successive earthquakes and found itself in a depression in the earth so it was sometimes submerged in times of rain and snow. As a result it took the name Harabe Göl, meaning "ruins lake".

# Mount Ararat



Mt Ağrı (Ararat) [6]



Village near by Mt Ağrı [7]

## Noah's Ark

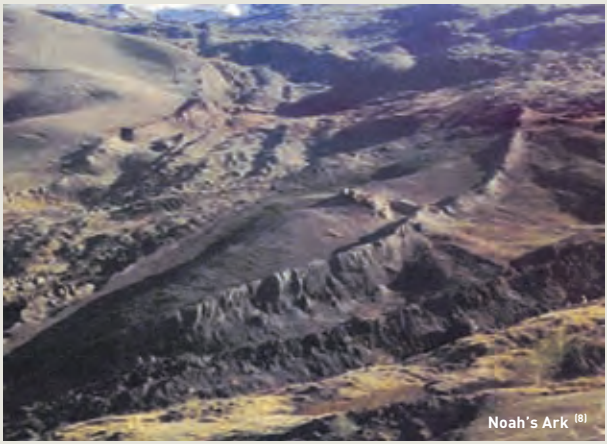
Some scientists considered their duty to research a cavity reminiscent of an ark that was found between the villages of Telçeker (Surbahan) and Mesar on the southern slopes of Mount Ararat. In 1983 American researcher James Irwin was the first scientist to work here, and as a consequence, the Ministry of Culture declared the area a "Protected Cultural Asset".

In fact it is questionable whether anyone should be looking for Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat. The Biblical reference to Ararat is in fact a misinterpretation of the text, as the word taken to mean Ararat actually refers to the Urartian Kingdom in the vicinity of Lake Van. For its part, the Koran says that the Ark landed on Mount Cudi, east of Cizre and 500km from Ararat.

## Mount Ararat

The legendary Mount Ararat, especially revered by Armenians and Turkey's highest peak at 5165m, and sits mainly in Iğdır province adjacent to Ağrı. This is a volcanic peak, consisting of basalt up to 4000m and andesite higher up. It is said that Marco Polo claimed that nobody would ever manage to climb it; the first recorded successful ascent was made in 1829 by Professor Frederik Von Parrot and his feat was later imitated by thousands of climbers during the 1980s, keen to find a piece of the Ark.

If you are an experienced climber and want to attempt the ascent,


Noah's Ark [8]

be sure to start making preparations well in advance, since it can take some time to the official paperwork done (this being a sensitive zone, you need the authorization from the Ministry of Tourism). Specialist agencies, listed at www.mountainsofturkey.org, will help you through the procedures for a steep fee. The ideal time to climb is, unsurprisingly, between June and September. Do not make the ascent without careful physical and material preparation or without hiring a guide. Equipment should include a pair of snow glasses, winter jacket, hat and gloves, winter boots, gaiters, crampons and ice axe. You will also need a pair of good sleeping bag and mat to spend the night on the peak.

**Routes**

You can reach parts of the main peak (Büyük Ağrı) lying within the district of Doğubeyazıt from the villages of Topçatan (Kanîkork) and from Eli Çiftliği. The climb to the first camp at 3200m takes up to eight hours. Some agencies arrange mules to carry your belongings and water to camp 1 where you will spend the night. The second day's takes up to six hours and will bring you to the second camp at 4200m. The final climb involves a dawn start as it will take you up to ten hours including the return to the second camp.

There is ski resort project being developed on the northern side of Mount Ararat, and in future it may also be possible to ascend on this side from Aralık, a district of Iğdır, 15km from Doğubeyazıt. This offers the chance to see ruins of Armenian monuments and a lake.

For the smaller peak (Küçük Ağrı, 3846m), east of the main peak, climbing is only authorized on the northwest side.


Towards Mt Ağrı [9]

## Some prominent people from Ağrı

Well-known figures from Ağrı include the poet **Ehmedê Xanî** (see, p: 481) and **Şakiro** (Şakir Deniz), regarded as Şahê Dengbêjan ("king of all *dengbêjs*"). Şakiro was born at Navik village, though his date of birth isn't known. He started to sing in his early childhood and became well-known for his high voice. He travelled widely in southeast Turkey, sang with almost all of the *dengbêjs* of his time especially those in Diyarbakır and made a large number of recordings. Besides singing the songs of famous *dengbejs* like Reso, he also composed lots of his own songs like *Wey Dil, Serayê, Genc Xelîl,* etc. He died destitute in İzmir in 1996.


Şakiro[10]

***WEY DIL /HEART***

Mîro mîro mîro mîro wey dil, wey dil, dil dilo hey dil.
*My God! My lord! My heart, hey the heart!*
....
Bira Xwedê xirabike dilî bê dil,
Fenanî gakî bê werîsê bê cil,
Fenanî kirasê qolê bê mil,
Fenanî dara bê şalûl û bê bilbil,
Fenanî xasbexçekî bê gul,
*Let the God dissolve/abolish the heart without love;*
*The heart that looks like an ox without packsaddles and reins*
*The heart that looks like a short dress without sleeves*
*The heart that looks like a forest without nightingales or birds*
*The heart that looks like a great garden without roses*
....
Bira dêrisê gunda da dilê meriv bi dil be, tûrê parsê li mil be,
Parsa meriv li vir nebe, li nava dozde
dêwalê ecnebî Ûris, Aleman Emrîkan gêwir be,
Bira parsa meriva birije be, tûrê merivayî qul be,
Di dêrisê gunda da meriv li ber dîwarê evda be,
Serrexa meriv gûnî be,
Binrexa meriv postê jûjî be,
Lolo gundo tu xirabî, berseriya meriv kevir be,
Xwirê meriv kerî nanê garis û gilgil be,
Di dêrisê gunda da tek bira dilê rezîl bi dil be, wey dil.
*Let your heart be full of love even if you live at shanty towns*
*Let your heart be full of love even if you are a beggar with a pouch*
*Let your heart be full of love even if you are a foreigner at countries you don't know; Russia, Germany, America…*
*Even if your pouch get perforated*
*Even if the things you'd gained be poured out*
*Even if you're a slave of slaves at shanty towns*
*Even if your quilt is a milk vetch (astragals)*
*Even if your mattress is made of the fur of a hedgehog*
*Even if your pillow is made of stone*
*Even if you don't have anything to eat*
*Just let the heart be full of love*
*Just let your heart be full of love!!*

To be the only feeling that gives life its meaning. The refrain is interesting: "If a man has a satisfied heart, it does not matter whether he has a beggar's bag on his shoulder; he may well have a hedgehog hide as his blanket, thorny bushes as his bed and a handful of corn or maize as his food." ***Şakirê Qereyaziyê***

Another well known *dengbej* was **Evdalê Zeynikê** (although some say he was more skilled then Şakiro), born in a village in the Tutak district at the beginning of 19th century. He became the head *dengbêj* in the *divan* (a saloon or hall where councils were held) of Sürmeli Memed Paşa, but at the peak of his popularity he lost his sight and couldn't participate in huge gatherings any more. He became more and more destitute and started to stroll the villages of the Serhed region with his sick adopted child Temo. At the end of his life his sight was restored by an Iranian. He died at Qanciyan village in Erzurum in 1913.

## The Legend of Mount Ararat by Yaşar Kemal



Book Cover [10]

Ararat is a land of legends and one more example is the book by Yaşar Kemal, *Ağrı Dağı Efsanesi* ("*The Legend of Mount Ararat*"). The book is about an exceptionally beautiful horse that chooses a poor young man as its master. The young man doesn't really know what to do with the horse but accepts it as a gift from the sky. Things get complicated when the real master of the horse, a rich and mighty nobleman discovers the arrangement and attacks the region, tormenting the population at the base of Mount Ararat and forcing them to flee. Then the young hero is captured, imprisoned and condemned to dead. It would be a tragic ending if a young woman wasn't in love with him…

### Getting there

Turkish Airlines operates flights between Ankara and İstanbul and Ağrı; the airport is around 3km out of town. The Trabzon–Erzurum–Tehran highway passes through Ağrı, ensuring good road transport connections.

### Accommodation

There are plenty of possibilities for a stay in Ağrı. On the central Erzurum Cad, try the *Büyük Ağrı Otel* (0472 215 48 61), with 50 rooms and serving breakfast, or the *Otel Kervansaray* (0472 218 00 41).


Camping, Ararat [12]

### Places to eat

*Damak Döner ve Kebap Salonu*, on Cumhuriyet Cad, (0472 215 77 78), serves not only kebabs but also a variety of local sweets. On Nevzat Güngör Cad, *Can Baba Kebap and Döner* (0472 216 14 10) offers home-made regional food including *kavurma*, *dolma* and *köfte*, in addition to different kind of kebabs and *döner*.

**Municipality: 0472 215 10 23 Tourist information: 0472 213 76 00**

# Eleşkirt (Zêdkan)



Toprakkale village [13]

Eleşkirt town, 34km west of Ağrı, was formerly an Armenian town, today is mainly populated by Kurds a few Caucasian Turks. Once called Zêdkan and originally a Urartian settlement, the town lies under a thick blanket of snow half of the year and is surrounded by mountains such as Hayrangöl (2850m) and Kösedağ (3433m) in the west, and Mızrak (2350m) and Kılıç (2306m) in the south. The terrain and climate have allowed the development of a ski resort nearby. The district (population 11,194) is known for its delicious white honey and also has some coal resources, with lignite mined for heating purposes in villages such as Yığıntaş (Şadîyan) and Hayrangöl.



Toprakkale mosque [14]

## Toprakkale

Toprakkale, 13km from Eleşkirt, is one of the largest archaeological sites in the province. You should head there to see not only the fortress but also the 17th-century mosque.

Toprakkale was (together with Patnos) one of the most important Urartian settlements in the area, and included a temple devoted to the God Haldi. The construction of the fortress here was most likely built by King Rusas II (c.685-645 BC). Later on, when the town was under the Parthian Arsacid dynasty, it was renovated by Vologese V, the ruler of Armenia between 180 and 191. The fortress was studied in

1879 by the British researcher Clayton, who was particularly interested in the Haldi Temple. He, along with the Chaldean Christian researcher Hormuzd Rassam, are suspected of having spirited away many valuable artefacts. The original Urartian temple and the rooms in the fortress are totally in ruins, but what remains hints clearly at how impressive it must have been.

There is an interesting mosque to visit in the village of Toprakkale (in the southern part of the tumulus here) built in 1684 by Mirza bin Abdi Paşa. The mosque is designed on a square plan with an 8m dome, steep vaults and no minaret. The walls forming the body of the mosque are made of stone blocks as well as the entrance door; the prayer room has 14 wooden columns. The inscription on the northern side of the main building states that the mosque was built by Mirza, son of Abdi and that the architect was Ağabeydin. The style of the mosque is commonly seen in Seljuk architecture. Heavily damaged after an earthquake in 1864, it was later declared protected and was restored in 1968.

## Güneykaya Ski Resorts

The ski resorts are 6km from Eleşkirt and 36km from Ağrı and easily accessible via the E-23 highway to Erzurum. The pistes are equipped with ski lift and are open from October till the end of March. There is a very pleasant restaurant at the summit.


Skiing in Eleşkirt [15]


Woman from Eleşkirt [16]


A view of Toprakkale [17]

# Hamur (Xemûr)



Berivan [18]



Sürmeli Mehmet Paşa [19]

Hamur town is the most recent town to have joined Ağrı province and sits at an altitude of 1675m, 13km south of Ağrı city. Known in antiquity as Havaran, the town dates back to the 14th century BC and was ruled by the usual series of empires, including the Akkoyunlus from 1467 and Ottomans from 1578. During World War I the area was under Russian domination from 1915 to 1918. Initially a town of the now-nonexistent Beyazıt province, it was attached to Ağrı in 1927.

The district (population 3,863) experiences severe winters with snowfall often cutting roads. With the arrival spring, whole communities go up to the plateaus (in Kurdish *zozan*). One famous plateau is Aladağlar, at the edge of the Hamur town. As usual, the economy depends on agriculture, livestock breeding and also apiculture; if you visit, you might want to buy some of the area's exquisite honey.

## Sürmeli Mehmet Paşa Tomb

This tomb is the main historical site to visit, by virtue of being the best preserved. Situated in the central Kümbet district, near the main road to Van, the tomb has uncertain origins as the inscriptions on the entrance door are largely erased, though one intelligible line states that it was built in 1802. The tomb's design differs from that of regular Seljuk or Ottoman tombs. There are interesting black stones on the rectangular floor, while the vaults comprise black and dirty white tones, similar to those in the İshak Paşa Palace in Doğubeyazıt.

A total of four graves lie here: one in the courtyard, with two small and one large grave in the mausoleum. The tombstones were decorated with inscriptions in Arabic, plus eight-point-


Mt Ağrı (Ararat) [20]

ed stars and vegetal motifs, but are mostly in ruins today. There are claims that the tomb was constructed by İshak Paşa's grandson, İbrahim Paşa, for himself, his wife and daughter and his brother Yusuf Bey.

The tomb is located at the end of the Kümbet quarter at the entrance to town. It is ringed by a fence but can be reached through a small metal door in the south.

## Havaran Kalesi

Havaran Fortress is located in the Kale district, slightly west of the centre, where it sits atop a steep-sided rock 100m above the Mandalık Creek. The fortress is known to be Seljuk though its precise age is unknown. It was originally large enough to house a mosque, residences and hans, and it is thought that many of the surrounding fortresses, including Sosik, Ceylanlı and Eleşkirt, were dependent on Havaran. Today only the western part of the fortress survives.

A canyon separates the fortress from a cave large enough to hold 100 people, which sits on the banks of the creek.

## Sosik Kalesi

This fortress is 25km from Hamur town in the village of Karlıca (Sosik). Although it is referred to in Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* as being a Seljuk site, the fortress with its large interior might well have Urartian origins. It must have been renovated and was most probably used by the Akkoyunlu tribes.

Two rooms at the sides of the fortress still survive, as well as a reasonably well-preserved hamam. Hidden stairways that lead down from the fortress; moreover, there is a prison cell (*zindan*) at the base of the fortress. A bit further east of the site, you can see a water tower as well as the remains of two towers, in the southwest and north. Finally there is a secluded spot especially dedicated to the prayer in the lower part of the fortress.

## Kız Kalesi

A smaller version of Sosik Fortress lies some 2km east and is called Kız Kalesi ("girl fortress") by locals, because they believe that the ruler of Sosik had it built for his daughter. This beautiful fortress is made of oval stones, rather unusual in the region. It is not in such bad shape and there are hopes that it will one day be restored.


Havaran Kalesi [21]

# Tutak (Tutax /Dûtax)



Tutak [22]

Tutak (population 7,172), only 40km southwest of Ağrı, has been inhabited since the time of the Hurri-Mitani Kingdom, of which it formed the north-eastern part. After 150 years of war between the Safavid (Persian) and Ottoman Empires, the border with Iran was finally and it seems forever fixed following the Treaty of Zohab (1639). In 1877 and 1878, the town was briefly under Russian domination. Weekdays the very lively town is one with unusually chaotic traffic, and people walk right down the roads themselves rather than the pavements.



Karagöz church [23]

## Karagöz Cemetery and Stone Church

There are tombs which were originally worship places in the mountains between Soğukpınar (Muşyan) village 18km southwest and its neighbourhood Kanîspî, near Dayıpınarı (Noktûlî) village 18km southwest from Tutak town. Dominating the large plateaus, the site looks more like a fortress than a cemetery. Here there are 36 Urartian tombs in the form of niches which received the cremated remains of the Urartian dead. The entrance door was carved with particular care. Part of the site was later used as a church, referred to as Karagöz ("black eye") Church. To reach it, once you pass the village of Soğukpınar, take a left near the cemetery of Kanispi and carry on till the road ends. You will need to walk up a hill and look for a small, narrow hall which can be reached through some steps. The underground church has one large hall and two smaller rooms with many niches carved into the walls.



Karagöz church [24]

# Patnos (Panos)



Animal Bazaar [25]



Wheat [26]

Patnos is the province's most populated district (population 67,121). The town of Patnos is situated 79km south of Ağrı city, and the main Ağrı–Van road runs right through the middle of town, giving the centre a busy atmosphere.

Patnos, known as Aladarı under the Urartians, has the most ancient remains of that kingdom in the province and is thought to have been a regional centre for that civilisation. The town was also known as Patisus under the Romans and Batnus during the Ottoman times. The economy very much relies on agriculture and livestock breeding.

## Aznavur Tumulus

The tumulus, 2km northwest of Patnos at Aznavur (Kop), marks the site of a Urartian city probably dating from the 8th century BC. Also the remains of an enclosing wall can be seen, though the site is in a closed military zone. In fact the site was a fortress built during the reign of King Menua, with a wall 250m long made of stone at the base with mud brick used on top; also here is a temple, due probably to King Ispuini (according to an inscription found in a village called Ortadamla (Ancîni), 19km from Patnos). The site was discovered during illegal excavations in 1959 and a couple of years later, a Turkish team arrived from Ankara to do proper research. They found a temple dedicated to Menua as well as a number of Urartian tombs. Artefacts from their digs are now displayed in museums in Van and Erzurum (north of Muş).


Nature [27]


Aart crafts [28]

## Girik Tumulus

The most impressive of the local Urartian remains are to be found 1km southeast of Patnos, once was a home to Girik town in the Çay district. Atop a hill here is an archaeological site with remains of walls and a temple reminiscent of a kind of palace. The site is thought to have been central to the Urartian regime and that the walls must have been built from 789 to 766 BC, during the reigns of King Menua and his son Argisti I. Excavations that took place at the start of the 1960s revealed an interior court, a temple, what could be called a living room as well as a kitchen. Most interestingly, a windmill was found, something quite advanced for the period, and 37 burnt skeletons with rings, bracelets, belts and many jewels made of gold.


Taşkin [29]

## Patnos Tombs

There are three anonymous tombs in the Patnos area, in the villages of Taşkin (Taşxuna), Zirekli and Köseler (Kose), respectively 38, 33 and 27km away. The tombs decorated with double eagles and interesting animal figures, date from the Karakoyunlu period and are sometimes called Üç Kümbet, meaning "three tombs". To reach the tombs, drive up the Adilcevaz highway for 13km until you see two petrol stations opposite each other. Here you can reach Taşkin and Köseler by turning right and following the signs. The tomb in Taşkin is called Qulê Reş; strangely there is also a 12m-long grave covered with large cubical stones. To get to Zirekli you should turn left at the petrol stations and continue for 7km.

# Diyadin (Giyadîn)



Diyadin thermal springs [30]

Diyadin, 60km east of Ağrı, is a little town famous for its hot springs, and the hot stones, warmed by geothermal water, and white panorama might recall the landscape in western Cappadocia. Local authorities have exploited the springs with a geothermal project that bring the hot water into town for heating purposes. The town, organized around the Murat River, also has some interesting fortresses to visit.

The historical name of the town is believed to be Daudyana. Diyadin was conquered by Russian troops three times in the 19th century and also during World War I.

The district (population 18,990) has a continental climate though summer temperatures never soar given the altitude, 1800m above sea level, with peaks such as Mount Ari in the north, Mount Rüzgar in the west and Mount Tendürek in the east.



Source of thermal springs [31]

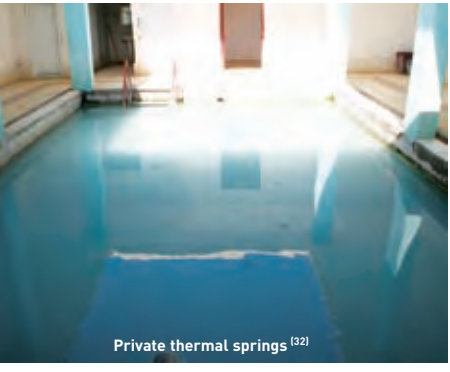
## Diyadin Kalesi

This is the most prominent Urartian relic in the district, located centrally in İsa Ağa quarter and very close to the Murat River. Evliya Çelebi refers to the castle in his *Seyahatname*, assuming that it was built by the Akkoyunlu Ziyaüddin, son of Uzun Hasan. At the time of Çelebi's travels, the fortress boasted a mosque, a *hamam* and more than 600 adobe houses. Renovated several times, the castle was severely damaged after World War I and has suffered further degradation over the years. Locals have used some of the stone to build their own dwellings.

## Diyadin Thermal Springs

The springs are east of the Murat River, 5km from town. The locals proudly claim that the thermal springs of Diyadin, also called Avagerm, are the seventh largest in the world. The water has high concentrations of calcium, sulphur, carbon dioxide, magnesium and iron, and is meant to be therapeutic for skin, gastric and kidney conditions, as well as rheumatism and sciatica. Packed in summer, the springs can be reached by *dolmuş* from the centre.

There are two main areas with hot springs. The hottest water is at Köprü Springs, which are the first set you come to. Köprü probably has the more impressive views, the scene being similar to Cappadocia's (central Turkey) white stones. Before entering the facility, the water is naturally charged with sulphur and lime, though it remains drinkable. Just 300m away and close to Davut village are the Davut Springs, with water that can hit 60°C and a large pool divided into sections for men and women. People suffering from rheumatism are recommended to envelop themselves in the mud and, once it's dried, get in the water to wash it off.



**Private thermal springs** [32]

Just 60m west of the Köprü Springs is a natural wonder, the Kudret Bridge. Sitting in the middle of surreal white stones is a hole 30m high and 30m wide. There is another natural bridge 150m further on.

You can stay at the springs at the three-star *Diyadin Jeotermal* Otel (0472 511 32 79 & 0511 25 54), with 35 rooms, its own open-air thermal pool, sauna and hamam complex. There are also various guesthouses in the village.

## Mount Tendürek

This extinct volcano, 13km east of town, is an incredible place with smoking hot stones and both cold and hot springs. The mountain takes its name from the natural stone holes, reminding of traditional tandır where women cook the bread.

## Meya Caves

These manmade caves, highly likely to be the remnants of an ancient city, are 15km south of Diyadin in the village of Günbuldu (Meya). The site can easily be reached in the rocks some 400m from the village. The caves appear all along the steep cliffs (the location was chosen to be hard to attack) and have various forms; they must have served as shelters, temples and simple homes and are amazingly large with heights of up to 50m. Some rooms are



Meya caves [33]

ornamented with balconies, and the lower parts were originally ornamented with motifs such as animals, though little is left of these today. There are also religious motifs such as a *mihrab* niche indicating the direction of Mecca in one of the caves; some stones have cross signs and there is also what probably used to serve as a Yezidi cemetery. Two ram's-head statues found here were transferred to Ağrı.

Close by, the Sahabe Cemetery is also worth a visit, with its ornamented red, black and white tombstones.

## Tokluca Kalesi

This fortress, with stones as large as 2m across, is 19km from the town centre, on top of a little hill behind Tokluca village. It stands up there over 100m with stones as large as 2m wide. A 3m entrance hole on top of the castle will lead you down a 30-step staircase to three different tunnels and staircases. It is believed that the tunnels eventually connect with the Meya caves.

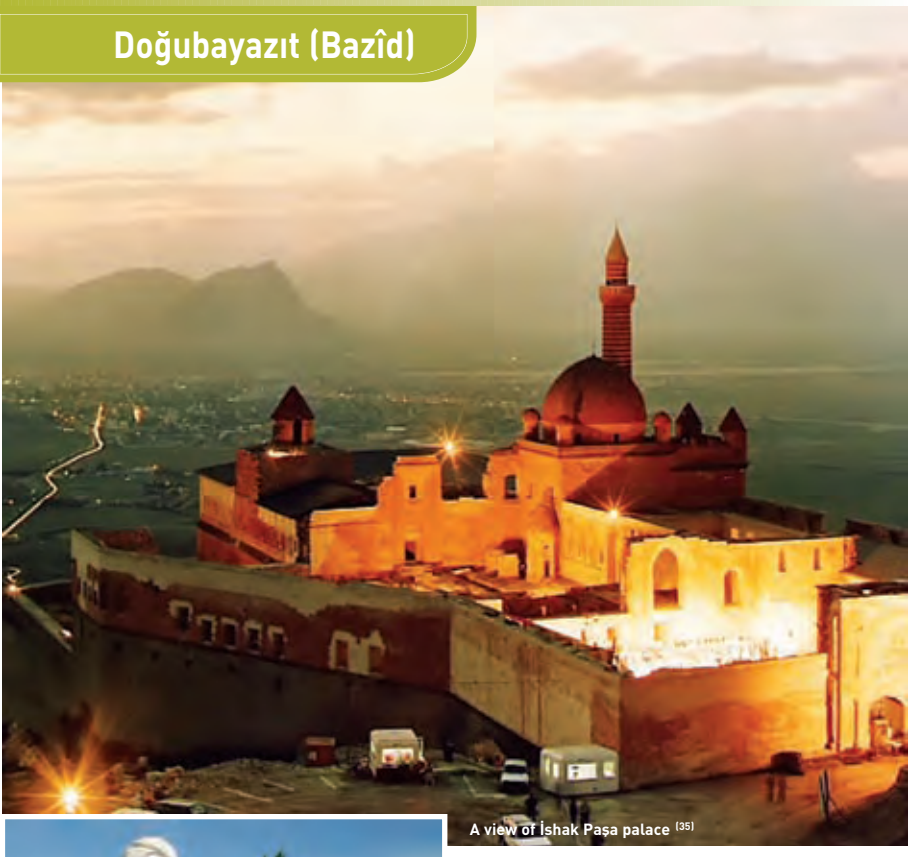
## Avnik Kalesi and Kuje Kalesi (Kela Avnîkê û Kela Kujer)

Only a little rectangular heap of stones survives of Avnik Fortress, which was mentioned by Evliya Çelebi in his *Seyahatname*. The fortress may have had its origins in Urartian times, but today the main interest is the views of Mount Aladağ and the plains. The site is 29km east of town, close to a village called Yankaya (Ali Hido). As ever, the fortress has been plundered by locals for building material. Close by are the remnants of Kuje Kalesi, called Mirase by locals.



Mill Stone [34]

# Doğubayazıt (Bazîd)



A view of İshak Paşa palace [35]



Ehmedê Xanî statue [36]

Wonderful Doğubeyazıt, with its palace like something from the *Arabian Nights*, stands on a hill 94km from Ağrı with an amazing view overlooking the Iranian border to the east. The surrounding landscape features steep contours and volcanic rocks, giving the panorama a surreal feeling. Doğubeyazit is also home to a fortress that once controlled the most dramatic passes on the Silk Road.

Being at the crossroad between Turkey and Iran, Doğubeyazıt always been central to comings and goings, ever since it was a Urartian stronghold. During the Ottoman Empire, the town was the capital of a province until 1927 when the province was replaced by Ağrı. The new town grew up in its present location after the old town was destroyed in the Kurdish unrest of 1928–30 leading to the proclamation of the so-called Republic of Ararat (see p: 609). Known as Beyazıt until 1934, the town took its present name after the word doğu (appropriately, "east") was added.

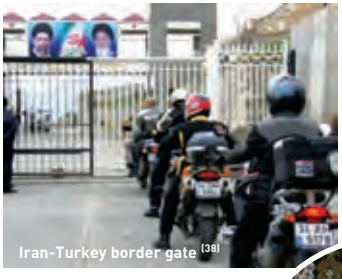
The district (Population 69,414) has volcanic soil and an economy

## The Republic of Ararat


İhsan Nuri Paşa[37]

Many Kurdish leaders fled Turkey with the arrival of Kemalist troops in 1922, but they didn't give up hope for an autonomous Kurdistan. Some of these leaders formed a new political party called Xoybûn ("Independence") in Lebanon in 1927. The headquarters of Xoybûn were in Aleppo, Syria but soon the French, who held the UN mandate for Syria at the time, proscribed the party in 1928. Despite these difficulties, a movement for liberation was begun by this party started in Mount Ararat, chosen for its proximity to the porous border with Persia. The small but experienced revolutionary army, led by Îhsan Nûrî Paşa from the Cibran Tribe, proclaimed the Republic of Ararat, which was supported not only by Kurds but also by some Armenians from Iran.

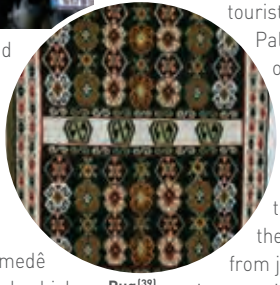
It was not until 1930 that the Turks began to gain the upper hand in suppressing the rebellion, not only because the Kurds fought fiercely but also because of the lack of cooperation from the Persians, who did not allow Turkish troops to access the border until then. By the beginning of 1932, the revolt was totally crushed.


Iran-Turkey border gate [38]

dominated by agriculture and livestock farming. Trade in carpets, made locally or imported from Iran, also contributes to the local economy.

If you are here at the end of June, you can attend the Ehmedê Xanî Culture and Arts Festival, which attempts to raise awareness of the issue of Kurdish language. There are cultural activities involving Kurdish-language readings and book fairs, competitions.

Ağrı is an important road transit point for Iran and tourists are not uncommon here, some which come to pay a visit to Doğubayazıt's top touristic site "İshak Paşa Palace". The 24 hour open Gürbülak border gate to Iran was opened in 1937, and is served regularly by transport making the 35km journey from just behind the main street in Doğubayazıt.


Rug[39]



İshak Paşa palace tomb[40]



İshak Paşa entrance[41]

## İshak Paşa Palace

The İshak Paşa Palace is like a jewel adorning the side of the mountain, standing majestic in a panorama of snowy peaks. The palace is the best example of palace architecture during the Ottoman Empire's Tulip Period. According to inscriptions in İstanbul's Topkapı Palace, İshak Paşa's construction started in 1685 and went on for no less than 99 years. This beautiful 17th/18th-century architecture is similar to the Topkapı and Edirne Palaces and in no way inferior to or less eye-catching than its more famous counterparts. The complex also includes a courtyard, mosque, a hamam and prison, and bears signs of Persian and Seljuk architecture influences. There are claims that the original golden entrance door was plundered during the Russian invasions of 1877–1878 and has ended up somewhere in Moldavia.

You can get to the palace by minibus from in front of the municipality building, or by walking around 5km, taking the only road north past the army headquarters. The palace is open daily from 8am to 5pm (until 7pm in summer). As the palace is high up, it's best to be warmly clad.

### First courtyard

The palace complex is rectangular and entered from the east. By heading west through different courtyards, you enter into the more private domains of the *Paşa*. This kind of hierarchical arrangement, regulating how far visitors could penetrate into the complex depending on their relationship with the *Paşa*, has much in common with the Topkapı Palace in İstanbul. The entrance gate here is designed in a Seljuk style and is



İshak Paşa palace, inside[42]



Entrance to 2nd courtyard[43]

enhanced by the fact that it stands between bare walls and by its nicely decorated stone. It leads to a square courtyard where to the north and south stables and servants' quarters were located.

## Second courtyard

The gate to the second courtyard is on a long path and vaulted and is rather simple in comparison to the first gate. The courtyard is rectangular and although there were structures to the south of it, only the northern structures are well preserved and identified. There is a tomb located in the courtyard. The other northern structures are entered by a long antechamber in the middle of the facade. To the left is the so-called *selamlık*, the place were men used to sit and talk. In this case the *selamlık* was subdivided in different rooms which also had administrative functions. Via the selamlık it was possible to enter the mosque on the western side. To the right or eastern side of the antechamber you enter a suite and rooms.

The tomb is almost built against the northern facade in the second courtyard. It features an interesting stylistic mixture between classical pillars on pedestals and a pyramidal dome, resembling Seljuk examples, on top. Inside stairs lead you down into an underground vault where the family's tombs were preserved.



Ornamentations [44]

The northern facade is made of cut stone and keel-shaped arches were used for the windows and portal leading to the antechamber. The portal has got a niche with *muqarnas* ornamentation. Floral ornamentation and grapes are used in the portal as well.

## Selamlık

It is worth heading to selamlık from the İshak Paşa Mosque's door; take the corridor on the right next to the library and head through what was a courtroom where, to the left, is a signposted balcony with good views. An interesting throne was set up so that someone seated or stand on it can enjoy the view over the Urartian remains. Besides ornamentations representing a human body and hand, which can be interpreted as symbolising superior intelligence, there are also figures of an eagle, signifying supremacy in the air, and a lion, symbolising for strength.

## İshak Paşa Mosque

Accessible through a masterpiece of a stone door featuring a frame with tendril and leaf ornamentation, under a keel-shaped arch and situated between *harem* and *selamlık*, the mosque was designed with care. It has a dome above its southern half and an extra section in the northern part for the use of women. Well preserved, it can be classified as exhibiting Baroque influences (Style of European architecture). Inside, the dome is plastered and decorated with tree and flower motifs. Outside the dome is surrounded with a terrace from where the dome can be admired. The minaret, with a single balcony, has Baroque ornamentations and is of beige and brown stones. Two columns were the victims of thieves



View of the palace [45]



Entrance to 2nd courtyard [46]

who managed to get away with the lead decorations.

## Living quarters

To the west of the second courtyard, the Paşa's living area is a rectangular block with two corridors. On the northern and western sides are two storeys of rooms that enclose the central area consisting of a *hamam*, kitchen and ceremonial hall.

## Entrance from the second courtyard

The living quarters and in particular the entrance leading from the second courtyard to them doesn't seem to offer much protected from armed invasions. Still, the whole building gives an impression of calm, dominating the large plain and affording views of the mountains.

The entrance is designed with different architecture styles that combine to create an impression of harmony and nicely integrate with an enhance the rest of the palace. Made of 11 columns, it bears Baroque, Rococo, Seljuk and Ottoman-style motifs with leaf reliefs on the upper part. The door opens in to a corridor with a classic Ottoman fountain on one side and gives access to the cabin of the attendant on the other side.

## Hamam

At the end of the corridor is a *hamam*, built to a classical two-part plan with one area dedicated to bathing and the second one for dressing. The two parts had domes but since the roofs collapsed, there is no indication of how the lighting system was designed.

## Harem

The portal of the *harem* is even more beautifully sculpted than the portals opening on the first and second courtyards. Although the years made their work, the two story *harem* (the side set for women) is still well preserved, especially its 2nd entrance door. It is believed that the rooms were built on two storeys and the whole *harem* probably designed as an L. The beautiful rooms are all open to the exterior with two windows with view and ornamented with one chimney between these two windows.



A detail from İshak Paşa palace [47]

## Kitchen

The palace kitchen on the second floor was connected to the *harem* and could also have been accessed via steps leading up from the corridor. The roof is an interesting construction, resting on four columns.

## Ceremonial and recreational hall

The place where the *Paşa* used to give parties and receive complaints is a total Baroque-style room divided in three parts and ornamented with rich niches all over the walls. On top of the niches are inscriptions celebrating the palace.

# Ehmedê Xanî Tomb


Ehmedê Xanî [48]

You may have to queue briefly to visit this tomb of the famous poet and philosopher Ehmedê Xanî (1651–1707/1709), just a short walk to the north of the palace. Ehmedê Xanî was born at Doğubayazıt (alternative accounts say he was born in Hakkâri), the son of Şêx Îlyas, who worked as a teacher of the Sînaniye Madrasah of Doğubayazıt. He attended his father's madrasah and several other madrasahs in the region and became fluent in Arabic, Persian and dialects of Kurdish other than his own. Returning to Doğubayazıt, he lectured at his father's madrasah. He is mostly known for his epic *Mem û Zîn* (1692), considered the epitome of the Kurdish literature. The poem is, on the face of it, about two lovers Mem and Zîn trying to meet, but some critics say Mem is in fact a Kurd and Zin is the Kurdish homeland. He also wrote an Arabic–Kurdish dictionary for children, *Nûbihara Biçûkan,* and *Eqîdeya Îmanê* ("*The Path of Faith*"), which explains the five pillars of Islam. In most of his works he pays great attention to his mother tongue and his Kurdish patriotism was incredibly powerful. His tomb is still visited by thousands every year, particularly at Newroz on 21st of March (see p: 248). The mosque next door is often packed with people saying prayers after visiting the tomb.


Ehmedê Xanî's tomb [49]

***Derdê Me/ Our Pain***

Saqî! Tu ji bo Xwedê kerem ke / *Bartender, for the love of God, please*
Yek cir'e meyê di camê Cem ke / *Pour some wine into the crystal glass.* [6]

Da cam-i bi mey cîhannuma bit / *Let the glass of wine reveal to the world.*
Herçî me îradeye xuya bit / *Let there appear here whatever we wish.*

Da keşf-i bi bit li ber me ehwal / *Let events ahead of us come to light.*
Kanê di bitin miyesser îqbal? / *Let us know if the future holds promise for us.*

Îdbare me wa giha kemalê / *Look, our misfortune has reached its peak.*
Aya bûye qabilê zewalê? / *Will conditions improve, do you think?*

Ya her wehe dê li istîwa bit, / *Or will they remain,*
Hetta weku dewrê minteha bit? / *Until upon us comes the end of time?*

Qet mimkune ev ji çerxê lewleb: / *Is it possible, I wonder, that for us, too,*
Tali' bi bitin ji bo me kewkeb, / *A star will emerge out of the firmament?*

Bextê me ji bo me re bibit yar / *Let lady luck be on our side for once.*
Carek bi bitin ji xwabê heşyar / *Let there emerge from within us, too*

## Doğubayazıt Kalesi

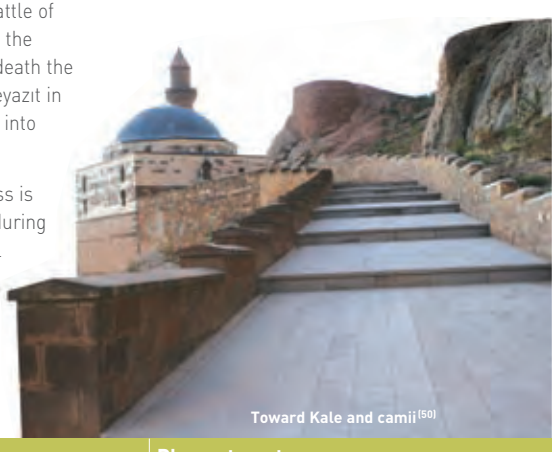
You can see traces of Urartian settlement in a place called Belleburç northeast of İshak Paşa Palace, where the walls of the original fortress still stand on the steep rocks opposite the tomb of Ehmedê Xanî and through the newly built public park the little 4th-century BC fortress was originally called Daryunk. A cemetery found here probably dates from some time between the 13th and 9th centuries BC. It is commonly believed that the Armenians and Yezidi used the inner parts of the fortress as secret worship places.

Under the Seljuks the fortress was regularly used to accommodate travellers on the Silk Road. The fortress was in good condition up until the end of the 14th century when it was under the rule of the Celayir, a Turcoman tribe related to the Akkoyunlu. When the Ottomans conquered the region after the battle of Çaldıran, Sultan Beyazıt I had the fortress renovated. After his death the fortress became known as Beyazıt in his honour, though it also fell into neglect subsequently.

In the inner part of the fortress is the Beyazıt Eski Camii, built during Sultan Selim I's reign. Typical Ottoman, the mosque has a square plan and a single dome, and is built of stone of red, yellow, brown and white. Beautifully seated on the side of the mountain, the mosque impresses with its elegant simplicity. In order to get there you need to cross to the far side of the palace from the mosque and head up the mountain path for around 200m.

## Keşişin Bahçesi (Monks' Garden)

Legend says that this garden in the lower part of old Doğubeyazıt, an oasis of green in this arid region, was the scene of a tragic love story between two young persons of different faiths. Locals will tell you that Sultan's son Kerem fell in love with a Christian monk's daughter Aslı, and that their sad story somehow ended up with suicide in this very garden. A happier version claims that the garden was the place where they used to meet secretly, though it still ends with tragic suicide here only once their affair was found out. The place is now used as a tea garden and restaurant as well as a picnic site.



Toward Kale and camii [50]

## Accommodation

The *Golden Hill Otel* (0472 312 8717) is a four-star place 1km out of the town on the beltway. One of the newest places in town, it has facilities such as restaurant, sauna and hamam.

## Places to eat

*Paraşüt Camping ve Lokanta* (0472 312 71 19), located on top of the hill above the palace, offers lovely views of the surrounding area and good local fare including kebabs and *rakı*.

## The Meteor Crater in Sarıçavuş

The huge meteor crater in Sarıçavuş village, 35km east of Doğubeyazıt and just 2km from the Iranian border, appeared in 1913. It is a substantial crater, 35m wide and 60m deep, and one of the world's largest.

## Ice Caves (Buz Mağarası)

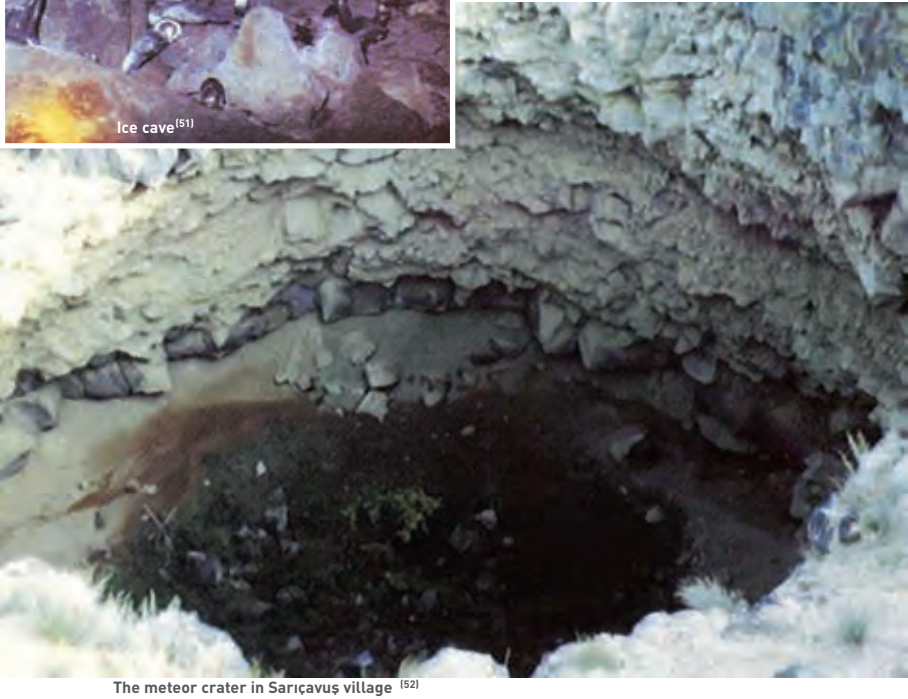
At the foot of Mount Küçük Ağrı 40km northeast of Doğubeyazıt are these natural caves. You can access an egg-shaped cave, 100m long and 9m underground, via the village of Halaç. The floor and the walls of the cave are covered with basalt and ice, changing colors according to the season; the water most probably freezes following a special chemical reaction due to the air in the cave. Some birds managed to set their nest in the cave, suggesting that the air is not harmful. Light filtering through plays on the coloured rocks and if you visit in summer, it is quite a surprise to find a place that stays frozen, whereas in winter the cave is warmer than the surroundings. To get there you can take a local *dolmuş*.

## Balık Gölü (Fish Lake)

A good spot for an excursion is this lake 60km northwest of Doğubeyazıt on the way to Ağrı. This is the highest lake in Turkey, 2200m above sea level, and has beaches and facilities on its southern shore. The lake is totally frozen in winter with ice 20cm thick, tough enough for people and cars to cross it. The red trout in the lake are endemic to it and are served up in every local restaurant.



Ice cave[51]



The meteor crater in Sarıçavuş village [52]


AĞRI
İL HARİTASI
KARS
ERZURUM
MUŞ
BİTLİS
VAN
İĞDIR
İRAN
Eleşkirt
(Zôdkan)
Güneykaya
(Etsuyo)
AĞRI
(Agirî)
Hamur
(Xemûr)
Tutak
(Tutax)
Taşlıçay
(Avkevir)
Diyadin
(Giyadîn)
Doğubayazıt
(Bazîd)
Bazargan
Maku
Shut
Patnos
(Panos)
Dedeli
KANDIL DAĞI
TOP DAĞI
TENDÜREK DAĞI
ARI DAĞI
ZOR DAĞI
İŞARETLER / LEGEND
MESAFE CETVELİ (KM)
AĞRI


Train Station [1]

# PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Travelling around in this region is largely a matter of using buses and dolmuşes, which are shared vehicles operating on set routes and functioning as buses. Trains do exist but the local rail network is slow and in need of investment. At press time there were no internal flights within the region itself, though there is talk of launching a service between Diyarbakır and Van. The main cities – Adıyaman, Ağri, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Urfa and Van – have air connections with Ankara and/or Istanbul, Izmir and Antalya with Turkish Airlines (THY) and/or some budget operators such as: Onur Air, Pegasus, Sun Expres, Atlass Jet, Anadolu Jet.

## Intercity buses and dolmuş

Intercity road transport services generally run from depots called *otogars*, sometimes centrally located but more often outside the city centre; you may well find you need to catch a city bus or dolmuş to the *otogar* to start your journey proper.

Intercity buses are run by a variety of local companies and are adequate and comfortable, older vehicles can be cramped and a little dilapidated, and the air-conditioning or heating may not be up to par but the fares are reasonable. Tickets can be booked in advance at the *otogar*, though sometimes you may find the bus companies have ticket offices in the city centre itself, in which case they may also offer free transport from their office to the *otogar*. Tickets may have assigned seating, but people may well sit where they choose or swap seats as the journey progresses, and note that a certain amount of musical chairs will take place so that women do not end up next to male strangers.

Dolmuşes are vans or minibuses that operate like buses on set routes, serving not just the major towns and cities but also many villages. While buses operate to a timetable, dolmuşes simply leave when they are full or nearly full. This makes dolmuşes a very convenient way to travel as services on



Bus Station [2]

popular routes are frequent (though village dolmuşes may run just once a day to and from the nearest large town). Tickets are not sold in advance; instead, you turn up at the *otogar*, go to the appropriate area where vehicles to your destination are clustered (look out for signs at the depot or on the dolmuşes themselves), and indicate your intention to travel to the driver or one of the workers at the office of the co-operative or company that operates the vehicles. If your destination is unusual – not a town or village but a particular spot on the highway, for example – then it can be worth having someone write down the address or location, perhaps mentioning a landmark as well in case the driver doesn't know it.

You might be asked to pay your fare before the vehicle leaves, or sometimes you only pay once on board the vehicle, in which case you may be asked to help relay not just your own cash but also that of the other passengers between the driver and the back rows of the vehicle. Provided there are spare seats, it is also possible to flag down intercity dolmuşes on the highway at certain spots, for example at turnings for villages, in which case you will pay your fare to the driver. Fares are comparable to those on buses.

Whether you travel by bus or dolmuş, note that there are hardly any intercity services at night; the last departures are usually just before sunset.

## Trains

Turkey's trains are operated by Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet Demiryollari (TCDD), or Turkish State Railways (www.tcdd.gov.tr ). Within the southeast, the rail network is limited to three lines. One runs between Malatya and Tatvan via Elazığ and Muş, another between Malatya and Kurtalan via Diyarbakır, while the third line runs from Gaziantep to Nusaybin. There are trains all the way from Haydarpaşa station in İstanbul via Ankara to Tatvan and to Kurtalan, and sleeper services are available.

## City transport

The main cities of the southeast have a mixture of local buses and/or dolmuşes which can be useful if you need to get across town or out to the *otogar* or airport; ask the tourist office or at your hotel for details. Dolmuş stops tend to be marked with a sign containing the letter D. Taxis are good ways of getting around too, the Yellow taxis easily can be found in the main streets, they are used to and from airport as well as crossing borders in to Iraq and Syria. In the large cites such as Diyarbakır recently daily and weekly travel card schemes has been introduced by the municipality. This popular system can be ideal for the tourist whom planning longer stay in the main cities.



City Bus [3]



Hotel room [1]

# ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation picture in southeast is pretty straightforward. The main cities and towns have a range of midrange hotels, and may also have a couple of pricier, plush establishments with fancy facilities. Hotels at the lower end of the midrange bracket are typically characterless modern buildings with rather plain and sometimes dated decor, but they are comfortable enough, with en-suite rooms and serving a hearty breakfast (generally included in the rate). Facilities at top-flight and the better midrange hotels extend to things like foreign channels being available on your TV, smart restaurants and cafés or perhaps something that can pass for a nightclub, a swimming pool, a gym and/or sauna. At the other end of the scale, the cheap hotels are very basically furnished and are unlikely to feature any Western-style sit-down toilets, central heating or breakfast, but the better ones are more than tolerable. Prices for all types of hotel are usually reasonable and noticeably lower than in western Turkey.

Southeastern Turkey being relatively untouristed, hostels are largely unknown here. However, in small towns you will come across the *öğretmenevi* ("teacher's house"), a kind of guesthouse which nowadays does not provide accommodation just for teachers. Fairly simple affairs, they only have dorm-style rooms but at the same time are reasonably well kept, safe for women travelers and not expensive; cheap breakfasts and lunches may also be served. Beds are probably easiest to come by outside term time, but you may well be able to get in at any time of year. Some cities also have the option of guesthouses run by the municipality *(belediye)*, which can offer a good deal. They're usually located in or close to the city centre next to or behind the municipality offices; ask at the tourist office for details.





Reception [2]


Hotel [3]


Hotel Resturant [4]



Güveç [1]

# FOOD AND DRINK

If people outside Turkey have any concept of Local food at all, it's often of *döner kebap* sandwiches of variable quality served by small, unprepossessing fast-food joints. If you have the same view, prepare to be pleasantly surprised when you come to this region: the cuisine here is simply one of the best in the world, with complexities and refinements on a par with French or Chinese food. Greek and Lebanese cooking are the closest culinary cousins, but some would argue the food in Turkey is arguably better than either of these. Main meals and snacks alike impress with their use of fresh ingredients as well as interesting herbs and spices, and there are also some tantalising sweets and desserts to choose from.

The region offers an added twist in that the food that is unsurprisingly dominated by Kurdish and to a much lesser extent Arabic cuisine, both of which have some distinctive touches that set them apart from mainstream Turkish fare. The *mezes* – spreads of hot and cold morsels, including dips and salads – that you find elsewhere in Turkey are fairly rare here, and instead there is more of an emphasis on stews, often eaten with rice. It's also the case that some of the food can be pretty spicy, particularly in the region stretching from Urfa to Diyarbakır, and occasionally you will encounter unusual ingredients that just aren't found in mainstream Turkish cooking – for example *kenger* (milk-thistle), a popular herb in Kurdish food.

## Places to eat

Just as the food is diverse, so are the different kinds of food outlets in the street, and it pays to be able to distinguish between them and what they offer. For many tourists, the most convenient places to eat, offering decent



Grilled pepper [2]


Lentil soup [3]

value for money too, are *lokantas*. These are basically simple, almost cafeteria-like restaurants which offer *hazır yemek* – a range of dishes cooked in advance, including stews (*sulu yemek*), and displayed in glass cabinets. The major southeastern cities also have a handful of posher restaurants, ranging from establishments serving fairly standard fare in plush surrounding to patisseries (*pastane*) that specialise in cakes and puddings, including many Western-style concoctions. Standards of service are good, as many staff will have been trained or have worked in more cosmopolitan western Turkey. Price is not the sole indicator of quality though – some of the cheaper restaurants


Patisserie [5]

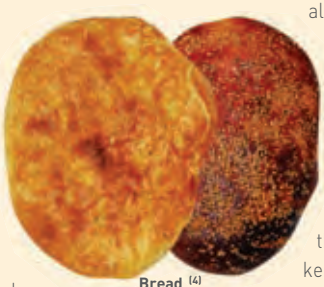

Hospitality [6]

where locals gather may serve exceptional food.

Meat lovers will find it worthwhile seeking out *ocakbaşis*, where you can watch the meat being cooked at the centrally placed grill. Other outlets specialising in particular kinds of food include *kebapçıs* and *çorbacıs*, serving respectively kebabs and soups such as *mercimek* (red lentil) and *işkembe* (tripe) also Kelle paça.

## Main meals

Walk into a typical restaurant and you will find a lot of a food available already on display – the *hazır yemek*, if available, will be sitting there in trays, and the kebabs will be skewered and ready to cook to order. Of the several types of kebab available, the most ubiquitous is Adana *kebap*, minced lamb mixed with onion, herbs and spices; it's usually spicy thanks to the use of a paste made from red peppers, but you can ask for a non-spicy (*sade*) version too. Less common are *köfte* (meatballs), which likewise come in several varieties, including *içli köfte*, fried lumps of meat, onion and rice or bulgur wheat; and *çiğ köfte,* which is meat, tomatoes, parsley, onion, herbs and spices combined and served raw, like the Lebanese *kibe*. Other meaty dishes worth investigating including *kaburga*, ribs; kuşbaşı, a kebab containing


Bread [4]



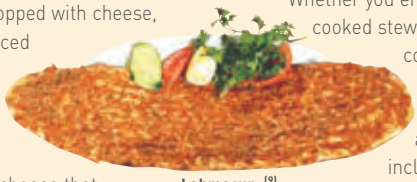
Kebap [7]

chunks of beef or lamb; *tavuk şiş*, chicken pieces cooked on skewers; and *güveç*, a combination of meat and vegetable pieces baked in a small clay casserole. Fish doesn't make that much of an appearance this far from the Mediterranean, but you will come across fresh river fish such as trout available in certain towns.

Two doughy dishes can serve as main meals. *Lahmacun*, Turkey's answer to pizza, is fairly common; it usually has a thin meat topping and a thin, round crust. Also to be found is *pide*, with a thicker rectangular crust that can be variously topped with cheese, egg or minced meat. *Gözleme* is a crepe containing herbs and cheese that is more of an accompaniment than a meal in itself; you can tell when it's available as restaurants like to have women making the stuff seated near the front window.



Making Lahmacun [8]



Lahmacun [9]

Whether you end up having a pre-cooked stew or something cooked to order, your meal will be accompanied by bread and a green salad which includes cucumber and tomatoes and comes with lemons and a pomegranate juice dressing; both the bread and salad are included in the price of the meal. You may also be given a relish made of tomatoes, cucumber, onion and garlic. The bread


Fresh Fish [10]

itself varies widely, from something like French bread to flat unleavened *yufka* similar to what is served in neighbouring Arab countries.

You may wish to supplement the bread with an order of *pilav*, fluffy rice cooked with a little oil and salt, and excellent with stews. Occasionally you will also come across fancy rice dishes like *perde pilav*, in which the rice is cooked with pieces of chicken, black-currant, yoghurt, pine nuts and almonds; it'll be displayed at the front of the restaurant if available. The other dish in which rice always makes an appearance is *dolma*, vegetables such as courgettes, aubergine and squashed stuffed with a mixture of rice and meat and perhaps also sumac, tomato paste and onion.

When ordering, note that menus are usually in Turkish only; if you know the Kurdish name of a dish, it's worth asking for it even if you don't see anything resembling it on the menu.


Perde Pilav [11]


Dolma [12]


Dolma [13]

# Vegetarian food



Traditional meals [14]

For vegetarians, the region does present more challenges than the rest of the country. Restaurant fare tends to emphasise meat – partly as a contrast to home cooked food, for which people often have to economise by focusing on vegetables – and you can't rely on vegetarian selections from mezes as these aren't common here. If you can eat out with local friends or have some ability to speak Kurdish or Turkish, you may be able to order vegetarian versions of regular dishes like güveç. As for standard fare that you can eat, in *lokantas*, *taze fasulye* (green beans stewed with tomatoes) or *kuru fasulye* (like baked beans in a watery gravy) are satisfying with rice and salad (and make sure not to just have to have the standard salad but to explore other options, as salads can be excellent). Red lentil soup is common, not just at breakfast time, and always satisfying with bread; *pide*, *gözleme* and *börek* are good for a bit of variety, but you may have difficulty finding places that serve the first two. At least in bigger towns and cities you will be able to count on finding a few Western-style pizzerias and patisseries, and you should make the most of the buffet breakfast in your hotel if it offers one, as they offer plenty for vegetarians.



Beans [15]

If you are vegan or are strict about not touching food that might contain meat stock (which can creep into many stews and soups), you may find it worth supplementing what you can find in restaurants with the excellent fresh produce available in markets and shops.



Full breakfast [16]

## Breakfast, snacks and desserts

Top-bracket and midrange hotels both offer hearty buffet breakfasts, which are the ideal way to fill up for a busy day of sightseeing. The typical spread features savoury items such as boiled eggs, a range of olives and local cheeses, sliced cucumber and tomato, sometimes soup, plus jams, honey and perhaps tahini or *helva* (a thick tahini-based spread), all accompanied by copious quantities of bread and tea. The better hotels may also serve cold meats and fruit, Western cereals such as corn flakes or muesli, plus coffee.

If you need to find breakfast on the street, common options include soup at a *çorbacı* (particularly gratifying on a cold morning), *simit* – tasty rings of bread coated with sesame seeds and often sold by street vendors – and *börek*, which is an umbrella term for a range of foods made with filo pastry. One of the most common types of börek is *su böreği* (literally "water *börek*"), in which the pastry is boiled and served up with small pieces of cheese, producing a filling dish that's not unlike a somewhat plain tagliatelle. Also available are the sweet *Kürt böreği* (Kurdish börek) is *sigara böreği*, so named because it's meant to resemble cigars, though it wouldn't be stretching it to call them elongated spring rolls, stuffed with cheese and fried till golden brown. *Börek* also make good snacks at any time of day.



Breakfast [17]

Nuts, including great pistachios, and dried cooked pulses such as chickpeas (garbanzo beans) are a popular snack food in Turkey and are sold at shops labelled *"kuru yemiş"*, which translates as "dried fruit". Needless to say they also sell dried apricots and raisins, plus dried-fruit confections such as the sheet-like pestil and the tubular *tatlı sucuk*.



Jam and Sigara böreği [18]

Sweet shops sell a variety of baklava, combinations of filo pastry with nut fillings. In areas close to the Syrian border especially, look out also for *künefe*, and *kadayıf* pastries containing a layer of shredded filo pastry as well as cheese. Of several pudding-like desserts served in restaurants and patisseries, the most common is *sütlaç*, a baked rice pudding, though it's not necessarily that exciting. Chocaholics will adore *süpangle*, a sort of chocolate blancmange containing a small portion of chocolate sponge.



Baklava [19]



Cheese bazaar [20]



Open tea house [21]



Turkish coffee [22]

## Drinks

Tea is served black ( in some region more strong), unsugared and strong – you may well find yourself needed to dilute the stuff with hot water. Other than at breakfast, it's served at all restaurants and at teahouses (*kıraathane* or *çayxane*) and open-air tea gardens (*çay bahçesi*). So-called Turkish coffee *(Türk kahvesi)*, similar to Arabic coffee and served black in small cups, is sold at more upmarket cafés and teahouses; ask for sade if you want it unsweetened, or *orta şekerli* if you like it moderately sweet in some places in the region you can also find locally made *melengiç* coffee. Posher patisseries and more upmarket cafés may have something approaching a proper cappucino or espresso.



Melengiç [23]

Fruit juices are widely available in bottles or cartons and can be more interesting than similar products in other countries; try the cranberry-like *vişne* (sour cherry), for example. Bizarrely, some places also serve hot juices and squashes, which


Ayran [24]


Süryani wine [25]

might be worth a taste on a cold evening. Another good drink to have is *ayran*, an unsweetened affair like watery buttermilk.

As for alcohol, Efes is the national beer, and *rakı*, like the Greek ouzo, the national spirit. the region also has an interesting selection of wines such as those made by Doluca. Both Diyarbakır and Elazığ are known for their Boğazkere and *Öküzgözü* grapes, used for wine-making. Whichever of these you want to drink, you will find that restaurants in general do not serve alcohol, though some in expensive hotels might. Every city has a few licensed drinking dens called *lokals*, which are large places strategically placed away from mosques and with their curtains drawn. Most have male clientele (although there are some bars which they have mixed customers); what is surprising is that these are the only places in the southeast where you can reliably order *meze* as an accompaniment to your boozing. Otherwise you can buy alcohol in liquor stores labelled *Tekel*, which also have a small space at the back where locals can consume the stuff. Some specialist stores, including jeweller's in Mardin and larger Tekel shops, may also sell Süryani (Syriac) wines made by the Syrian Orthodox community.


Mırra service [26]

# Some dishes to look out for:

Here are a few less common dishes to look out for; in some cases you will find them in restaurants, but some you will only taste if invited to someone's home.


Abdigör Köfte [27]


Büryan [28]

**Abdigor köfte:** boiled meatballs containing a little butter

**Aşure aşı:** a pudding made of cereals, dried and fresh fruits, nuts, sugar and spices, sometimes referred to as "Noah's pudding" as it is what Noah ate.


Güveç [29]

**Babakanuç:** roast aubergine is peeled and the pulp mashed with and crushed garlic

**Mantı (hıngen):** ravioli-like dumplings filled with minced meat and boiled in salted water


Meftune [30]

**Büryan (perive):** young lamb lowered into a clay oven like a well and slow-cooked overnight. The büryan then taken out and hung up for sale in restaurants. A popular dish, it's not expensive and its most ardent fans have it for breakfast.

**Keledoş:** a combination of baked stale bread, minced meat, onion, garlic and yoghurt; a good way of using leftover bread

**Kelle paça (serû pê):** calves' heads or legs, smoked in a tandır (traditional oven) then cooked in a large pot with garlic and herbs

**Kuzu dolma:** baked leg of lamb stuffed with rice, pistachios and herbs

**Meftune:** meat fried with aubergine, peppers, tomatoes and sumac

**Ayran aşı (Mehîr):** rice with yoghurt and usually chickpeas

**Mumbar (hûr û rovî):** tripe (intestine) stuff with minced meat, bulgur wheat, herbs, garlic and pepper.

**Tirşik:** the term can refer to pickles, but it is also a type of *güveç* containing tomatoes, peppers, aubergine, meat and garlic


Keledoş [31]

# GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| **Ağa:** | Lord |
| **AH:** | Denoting years according to the Islamic calendar |
| **Akkoyunlu:** | A dynasty dominated east of Anatolia in medieval age |
| **Alevi:** | A branch of Islamic belief who believe in Imam Ali |
| **Antik Kenti:** | Ancient city |
| **Bayram:** | Religious Feast |
| **Bêrîvan:** | Milkmaid/Also the name of a flower |
| **Beg, Bey:** | Local lord, sir |
| **Beylik:** | Lordship/Area controlled by a Bey |
| **Cadde(si):** | Street |
| **Çem:** | River |
| **Dengbêj:** | The Kurdish story tellers or singers who sings without any instruments |
| **Dengbêjî:** | A Kurdish musical genre featuring unac companied singing, and the practitioners of this art |
| **Dîwan:** | The concert of Dengbêjs |
| **Dolmuş:** | Minibus |
| **Feqî:** | Student in a madrasah |
| **Hamidiye forces:** | The military forces worked in Kurdish region at the last Period of Ottoman Empire |
| **Han:** | Inn |
| **Harem(lik):** | A place special for women in palaces and mansions also a part of old Houses which made just for women. |
| **Hizbullah:** | A radical Islamic group effective in 1990s in Turkey |
| **İmam:** | Prayer leader in a mosque |
| **İmaret:** | Kitchen in a mosque where foods are being distributed to the poor |
| **Iwan:** | Hall or space, walled on three sides, with one end entirely open |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Jandarma:** | Soldiers |
| **Jamatun:** | Church entrance |
| **Kale(si):** | Castle, fortress, citadel |
| **Kenger:** | A widely used local vegetable cooked as traditional dish, sometimes it's mixed with eggs |
| **Kilim:** | Rug |
| **Kiras/fîstan:** | A form of Kurdish female costume |
| **Konak:** | Large private residence or mansion; also the main government building of a province or a city |
| **Kurban:** | The Feast of the Sacrifice, celebrated at the end of the Hajj pilgrimage |
| **Kûfî:** | An early style of Arabic calligraphy |
| **Külliye(si):** | A mosque complex which usually includes a hospital and madrasah |
| **Kümbet:** | Free-standing mausoleum |
| **Madrasah:** | Religious school |
| **Mervanid:** | A Kurdish dynasty dominated in the region |
| **Meydan:** | Square |
| **Mihrab:** | Niche in a mosque wall indicating the direction of Mecca |
| **Minber:** | The imam's pulpit in a mosque |
| **Mîr:** | Local Kurdish lord |
| **Muhtar:** | Village or ward headman |
| **Muqarnas:** | A part of mosque building |
| **Şal û şapik:** | A form of Kurdish male costume |
| **Selamlık:** | The part of an Ottoman residence reserved for men or entertaining Visitors (as its meaning in book: a part of old houses which made just for men) |
| **Seyîd:** | Descent of the Prophet Muhammad |
| **Sheikh/Şeyh/ Şêx:** | Head of a group of dervishes, religious elder in general or head of tribe |
| **Sokak:** | Small street/lane |
| **Türbe(si):** | Domed tomb |
| **Ulu Cami:** | Great Mosque |
| **Village Guards:** | The government paid armed villagers (Korucu) |

# TRAVEL DICTIONARY

| English | Turkish | Kurmancî | Zazakî |
|---|---|---|---|
| **MONTHS / AYLAR** | | | |
| January | Ocak | Kanûna paşîn, çile | Kanûno peyîn.çele |
| February | Şubat | Sibat | Sibat |
| March | Mart | Adar | Edar |
| April | Nisan | Nîsan | Nîsan |
| May | Mayıs | Gulan | Gulan |
| June | Haziran | Hezîran | Hezîran |
| July | Temmuz | Tîrmeh | Temûz |
| August | Ağustos | Tebax | Tebax |
| September | Eylül | Îlon, êlûn | Hêlûn |
| October | Ekim | Çiriya pêşîn | Çileyo verîn |
| November | Kasım | Çiriya paşîn | Çileyo peyin |
| December | Aralık | Kanûna pêşîn | Kanûno verîn |
| **SEASONS / MEVSİMLER** | | | |
| Spring | İlkbahar | Bihar | Wisar |
| Summer | Yaz | Havîn | Aminan |
| Autumn | Sonbahar | Payîz | Payîz |
| Winter | Kış | Zivistan | Zimistan |
| **DAYS / GÜNLER** | | | |
| Sunday | Pazar | Yekşem | Yewşeme |
| Monday | Pazartesi | Duşem | Dişeme |
| Tuesday | Salı | Sêşem | Hîrşeme |
| Wednesday | Çarşamba | Çarşem | Çarşeme |
| Thursday | Perşembe | Pêncşem | Pancşeme |
| Friday | Cuma | În | Êne |
| Saturday | Cumartesi | Şemî | Şeme |
| **NUMBERS / SAYILAR** | | | |
| One | Bir | Yek | Yew |
| Two | İki | Du | Di |
| Three | Üç | Sê | Hire |
| Four | Dört | Çar | Char |
| Five | Beş | Pênc | Panc |
| Six | Altı | Şeş | Şeş |
| Seven | Yedi | Heft | Hewt |
| Eight | Sekiz | Heşt | Heşt |
| Nine | Dokuz | Neh | New |
| Ten | On | Deh | Des |
| Eleven | On bir | Yazdeh | Yewindes |
| Twelve | On iki | Dozdeh | Diyes |
| Thirteen | On üç | Sêzdeh | Hîryes |

## NUMBERS / SAYILAR

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Twenty | Yirmi | Bîst | Vîst |
| Thirty | Otuz | Sî | Hîris |
| Forty | Kırk | Çil | Çewres |
| Fifty | Elli | Pêncî | Pances |
| Sixty | Altmış | Şêst | Şeştî |
| Seventy | Yetmiş | Heftê | Hewtay |
| Eigth | Seksen | Heştê | Heştay |
| Ninety | Doksan | Nod | Neway |
| One hundred | Yüz | Sed | Se |
| One hundred forty | Yüz kırk | Sed û çil | Se û çewres |
| Two hundred | İki yüz | Dused | Di sey |
| First | Birinci | A yekê, yekem, yekemîn | A yewine ,yewîn |
| Second | İkinci | A duduyan, duwem, duwemîn | A diyine, diyin |
| Third | Üçüncü | A sisêyan, sêyem, sêyemîn | A hîrine, hîreyin |

## TİMES / ZAMAN

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Now | Şimdi | Niha, vêga | Nika |
| Later | Sonra | Paşê | Peyra |
| Always | Her zaman, hep | Her tim, her dem, tim | Heme gave, heme raye |
| Never | Hiç bir zaman, asla | Tu car, qet | Qet |
| Sometimes | Bazen | Carna | Carna |
| Early/late | Erken/geç | Zû/dereng | Lez/erey |
| Today | Bugün/yarın | Îro/sibê | Ewro/siba |
| Yesterday | Dün | Duh | Vizêrey |
| Tomorrow | Yarın | Sibê | Siba |
| …(two) days later | … (iki) gün sonra | Piştî … (du) rojan | Pey Di rojan |
| Morning | Sabah | Sibe, sibeh | Siba |
| Noon | Öğlen | Nîvro | Nîmroj |
| Afternoon | Öğleden sonra | Piştî nîvro | Pey nîmrojî |
| Evening | Akşam | Êvar | Şan |
| Day | Gün | Roj | Roj |
| Night | Gece | Şev | Şewe |
| Hour | Saat | Saet | Saet |
| Minute | Dakika | Deqe | Deqa |
| Week | Hafta | Hefte | Hefte |
| Month | Ay | Meh | Asmi/Aşm |
| What time is it? | Saat kaç? | Saet çend e? | Saet çenda |
| It is…(four) o'clock | Saat … (dört) | Saet (çar) e… | Saet çar a |
| It is 8.10 | Sekizi on geçiyor | Ji heştan dibihure deh deqe | Heştine ra des Deqeyî viyerena |
| It is 10.45 | On bire çeyrek var | Ji yazdehan kêm pazde deqe | Yewindesinerê kemî pancês deqeyî |
| Before/after | Önce/Sonra | Pêşî/Paşê, paşîka | Viyernî/Peynî |

| English | Turkish |
|---|---|
| **COMMON WORDS AND PHRASES / GÜNLÜK KONUŞMALAR** | |
| Good morning | Günaydın |
| Good day | İyi günler |
| Good evening | İyi akşamlar |
| Good night | İyi geceler |
| Hello | Merhaba/Selam |
| Goodbye | Güle güle |
| Welcome | Hoş geldin |
| See you | Görüşürüz |
| Have a nice journey | İyi yolculuklar |
| Yes | Evet |
| No | Hayır |
| Please | Lütfen |
| Thanks | Teşekkürler, sağ ol, mersi |
| Thank you (very much) | (Çok) Teşekkür ederim |
| You are welcome | Bir şey değil |
| Excuse me | Affedersiniz |
| I beg your pardon | Pardon, özür dilerim |
| Here you are | Buyrun |
| OK | Tamam |
| Sure | Tabii |
| Maybe | Belki |
| I don't know | Bilmiyorum |
| I don't understand | Anlamıyorum, anlamadım |
| I see | Anladım |
| One minute | Bir dakika |
| I want… | … istiyorum |
| Yes (there is…) | … var |
| No (there isn't…) | … yok |
| Welcome | Hoş geldin |
| (Reply to "welcome") | Hoş bulduk |
| Goodbye (said by the person departing) | Allahaısmarladık |
| Goodbye (said by person staying) | Güle güle |
| (Used to invite people somewhere or offer food, drinks) | Buyrun |
| In your honour, in your health | Şerefe |
| (Compliment to the person who cooks) | Elinize sağlık |
| May it be in your past (said to someone who is ill, stressed or has just overcome an accident, injury or difficulty) | Geçmiş olsun |
| May you have a good health (said to someone who has just had a bath, shower or haircut) | Sıhhatler olsun |
| Stay happy (used as an alternative to goodbye) | Hoşça kal |

| Kurmancî | Zazakî |
|---|---|
| **COMMON WORDS AND PHRASES / GÜNLÜK KONUŞMALAR** | |
| Rojbaş/Beyanîbaş, roja we bi xêr | Siba şima xêr bo |
| Rojbaş/Roja we bi xêr be | Roja şîma xêr bo / Rojebaş |
| Êvarbaş | Şan weşe bo |
| Şevbaş | Şewe weşe bo |
| Merheba/Silav | Merheba/Silam |
| Oxir be | Oxir bo |
| Tu bi xêr hatî | Ti bi xêr amey |
| Em ê hevdu bibînin | Ma yew bînî bivînim |
| Ser xêrê here/Bi xêr here /Rêya te vekirî be | Xeyrî ser şo/Bi xêr şo |
| Erê, belê | Belê |
| Na | Nê |
| Ji kerema xwe re | Keremê xo rê |
| Spas, sax bî | Spas kena weş bê |
| (Gelek) Spas | Zef spas kena |
| Spasxweş | Spas weş bo |
| Biborin, bibexşînin | Efû bike / bexş bike |
| Li min bibore, lêborîna xwe dixwazim | Uzrê xo wazena / Mîn bexş bîke |
| Kerem bikin, fermo | Kerem bike |
| Baş e | Başo |
| Helbet Bêguman | Helbet |
| Belkî / Dibe ku | Belkî |
| Ez nizanim | Ez nêzana |
| Ez fam nakim, min fam nekir | Ez fam nêkena / Min fam nêkerd |
| Min fam kir | Min fam kerd |
| Deqeyekê | Deqeyêke |
| Ez dixwazim … | Ez wazena |
| … heye | Esto / Esta |
| … nîn e | Çiniyo / Çiniya |
| Tu bi xêr hatî | Ti bi xêr ameyê /Ameya |
| Di nav xêrê de bî,/ | Miyanê xêrî de bê |
| Bi xatirê te – we / | Bi xatirê to- şima |
| Oxir be | Oxir bo |
| Fermo | Kerem biki |
| Noş | Şîfa |
| Destê we sax be/ Destê we ter bin | Dest to ternî bê/Destê şima ternî bê |
| Derbasbûyî be, Derbasî be/ | Derbasî bo |
| Sihet be | Sihet bo |
| Bimîne di nav xweşiyê de | Bimanê weşî de |

## COMMON WORDS AND PHRASES / GÜNLÜK KONUŞMALAR

| | |
|---|---|
| Bless you | Çok yaşa |
| (Reply to "bless you") | Sen de gör |
| May your soul be safe (said to someone who has just accidentally done something) | Canın sağ olsun |
| How are you? | Nasılsınız? |
| Fine, thank you. | İyiyim, teşekkürler |
| Nice to meet you | Memnun oldum |
| What is your name? | İsminiz ne? |
| Do you speak English? | İngilizce biliyor musunuz? |
| Where are you from? | Nerelisiniz? |
| How old are you? | Kaç yaşındasınız? |
| I am…years old. | … yaşındayım |
| I am English/Scottish | İngilizim/İskoçyalıyım/ |
| Enough/More | Yeter/Daha |
| Good/Bad | İyi/Kötü |
| New/Old | Yeni/Eski |
| Open/Closed | Açık/Kapalı |
| Big/Small | Büyük/Küçük |
| Hot/Cold | Sıcak/Soğuk |
| Empty/Full | Boş/Dolu |
| Cheap/Expensive | Ucuz/Pahalı |
| Fast/Slow | Hızlı/Yavaş |
| Near/Far | Yakın/Uzak |
| Comfortable/Uncomfortable | Rahat/Rahatsız |
| Clean/Dirty | Temiz/Pis |
| Noisy/Quiet | Gürültülü/Sakin |
| Not… | … değil |
| And | Ve |
| Or | Veya |
| Mr; follows the first name | Bey |
| Mrs/Miss; follows the first name | Bayan |
| Lady (polite way of addressing a woman) | Hanım |
| Master craftsman | Usta |
| Someone who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca | Hacı |
| Caretaker or warden at an archaeological site or monument | Bekçi |
| What's the weather like? | Hava nasıl? |
| Sunny/Cloudy/Rainy/Snowy/Foggy/ Windy | Güneşli/Bulutlu/Yağmurlu/Karlı/ sisli/Rüzgarlı |
| Another… | Başka bir … |
| Service charge | Servis ücreti |
| Discounted | İndirimli |
| Value added tax | Katma Değer Vergisi |
| Flat-weave rug without a pile | Kilim |

## COMMON WORDS AND PHRASES / GÜNLÜK KONUŞMALAR

| | |
|---|---|
| A xêrê be / Her bijî | Xêrî ser bo / Tim weş bê |
| Xêrê bibîne | Xêr bivînê |
| Bila canê te sax be | Canî to weş bo |
| Hûn çawan in? | Şîma seyinê/Ti seyînê? |
| Ez baş im, spas | Ez baş a- spas kena/Zaf spas kena |
| Ez kêfxweş bûm | Ez keyfweş bîya |
| Navê te çi ye? | Name to çî yo? |
| Hûn bi îngilizî dizanin? Tu bi îngilizî dizanî | Şima bi îngilîzî zanê/Ti bi îngilîzî zanê? |
| Tu ji ku derê yî? | Şina kamca ra yê?/Ti kamca ra yê? |
| Tu çend salî yî? | Ti çend serre yê? |
| Ez … salî me | Ez.....serrî ya. |
| Ez îngiliz im/ Îskoçyayî me | Ez Îngilîz a-Elman a- Fransa ra ya. |
| Bes/hê, Hîn | Bes / Hînî |
| Baş/Nebaş, Xirab | Baş /Nebaş |
| Nû/Kevn | Newe /Kan |
| Vekirî/Girtî | Akerde /Girote |
| Piçûk/Mezin | Kij/ Pîl/Gird |
| Germ/Sar | Germin/Serdin |
| Vala/Tije | Veng/Pirr |
| Erzan/Buha | Ercan/Vay |
| Zû/Hêdî | Leze/ Hêd, |
| Nêz/Dûr | Nizdî/Dûrî |
| Rihet/Nerihet, Aciz | Rihet/Nêrihet |
| Paqij/ Pak/Pîs, Bi qirêj | Baqij /Pak /Pîs /Lîşin |
| Bi şemate, bi qerebalix/Sakîn, bêdeng /Aram | Bi şemete / Bi qelebalix /Bêhes |
| … nîn e | Niyo |
| Û | Û |
| Yan | Yan |
| Beg | Beg |
| Xanim | Xanime |
| Xanim | Xanime |
| Hosta | Westa |
| Hecî | Hecî |
| Bekçî/Notirvan, dergevan | Notirvan / Dergewan |
| Hewa çawa ye? | Hewa seyino? |
| Bi tav/ Bi ewr/ Bi baran/ Bi berf/ | Tîjiya/ Hewro/ |
| Bi mij/ Bi ba | Varano/ Vewra/Mijo/Hewa esto |
| …eke din | ..êko bîn |
| Ucreta (heqê) serwîsê | Hekê serwîsî |
| Buhaşikestî/ Bi tenzîlat/Daxistî | Ercankerde |
| Baca hêjahiya lêzêdebûyî | Baco zedekerde |
| Ber/ Merş/ Gelt | Bere |



Accommodation [1]

## ACCOMMODATION / KONAKLAMA

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hotel | Otel | Otêl | Otel |
| Pension (guesthouse) | Pansiyon | Pansiyon | Pansiyone |
| Tent | Çadır | Kon/ Çadir | Xeyme çadire |
| Camping | Kamp | Kampîng, ciyê kampê | Kampîng |
| Holiday village | Tatil Köyü | Gundê betlanê | Dewa betlaneyî |
| Room | Oda | Ode, wetaq/Menzel | Wetaq |
| Single/double /triple | Tek/Çift/ üç kişilik | Ji bo kesekî/Du kesan/Sê kesan | Qabê yew di kesan |
| With an extra bed | İlave yataklı | Nivîn îlawekirî/Lêzêdekirî | Nivînozêde/ Serzêdekerde |
| With a double bed | Fransız yataklı | Bi nivînên Fransî/Cotenivîn | Nivîno fransî |
| With a shower | Duşlu | Bi dûş | Bi ava germine |

## ACCOMMODATION / KONAKLAMA

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hot water | Sıcak su | Ava germ | Awa germine |
| Cold water | Soğuk su | Ava sar | Awa serdine |
| Air-conditioned | Klimalı | Bi klîma | Bi klîma |
| Key | Anahtar | Nifte | Mefta |
| Suitcase | Bavul | Bahol/ Bawul | Bahole |
| Towel | Havlu | Xawlî | Xewlî |
| Toilet | Tuvalet | Tuwalet/ Avdestxane | Daşra |
| Toilet paper | Tuvalet kağıdı | Kaxitê tuwaletê | Kaxizê daşra |
| Shampoo | Şampuan | Şampuan | Şampûan |
| Soap | Sabun | Sabûn | Sabûn |
| Bed | Yatak | Nivîn | Nivîn |
| Sheet | Çarşaf | Çarşef | Çarşebe |
| Pillow | Yastık | Balîf, balgî, balgih | Balişna/Nazbalîve |
| Blanket | Battaniye | Betanî/ Betaniye | Betane |
| Quilt | Yorgan | Lihêf | Liheyf |
| Window | Pencere | Pencere / Pace | Pencera |
| Mosquito | Sivrisinek | Kermêş, kelmêş | Mirêşe |
| Is there a hotel nearby? | Yakınlarda bir otel var mı? | Otêlek li van derodoran heye? | Otêlike nê nizdiyan de esta? |
| Do you have a double room for one/two nights? | Bir/Iki gecelik çift kişilik bir odanız var mı? | Ji bo şevekê/Du şevan ji bo du kesan odeyeke we heye? | Qabê di kesan Şêweke di şêwan odeyeka şima esta? |
| Can I see it? | Bakabilir miyim? | Ez dikarim mêze bikim? | Ez şikena bewnî? |
| I have a booking | Reservasyonum var | Rezervasyona min heye | Cayê min esto |
| Is breakfast included? | Kahvaltı dahil mi? | Taştê jî di nav de ye? | Taşte jî tewer de esta? |
| Can we camp here? | Burada kamp yapabilir miyiz? | Em dikarin li vir kamp bikin? | Ma şikenî ewta kampe bikim |

## TROUBLE / TEHLİKE

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Help! | İmdat! | Hawar! | Hewar! |
| Stop! | Dur! | Bisekine! | Vinde! |
| Go away! | Git lütfen! | Ji kerema xwe re here! | Keremê xo ra şo! |
| Stay away from me! | Bana yaklaşma! | Nêzî min nebe! | Nizdiyê min mebe! |
| You make me uncomfortable! | Beni rahatsız ediyorsunuz! | Hûn min aciz (nerihet) dikin! | Şima min acis kenî! |
| I need a doctor! | Doktora ihtiyacım var! | Hewcedariya min bi dixtor heye! | Hewcedariyê min bi doxtorî esta! |
| Where is the hospital? | Hastane nerde? | Nexweşxane li ku ye? | Nêweşxane kam ca do? |
| Can you call the police? | Polisi arar mısınız? | Hûn dikarin li polîsan bigerin? | Şima şikenî ro polêsan bigeyrî? |




Banned Kurdish Letters[2]

| English | Turkish | Kurmancî | Zazakî |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TRANSPORT / ULAŞIM** | | | |
| Road | Yol | Rê | Raye |
| Street | Cadde | Cehde, papûr | Kuçe /sûke |
| Lane | Sokak (sokağı) | Kuçe(ya), kolan(a) | Kuçe |
| Bus | Otobüs | Otobos | Otobêz |
| Minibus (dolmuş) | Dolmuş | Dolmîş | Dolmîş |
| Plane | Uçak | Teyare, balafir | Teyare |
| Train | Tren | Trên | Tîrane |
| Car | Araba | Erebe | Maşîn |
| Ferry | Vapur, feribot | Vapûr | Wapûre |
| Harbour/jetty | İskele | Îskele, targe | Îskela |
| Bicycle | Bisiklet | Pisqilêt, bisiklêt | Pisqilête |

## TRANSPORT / ULAŞIM

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Taxi | Taksi | Texsî | Texsî |
| Motorcycle | Motorsiklet | Motorsiklêt | Motorsîklet |
| On foot | Yaya | Peya | Peya |
| Bus station | Otogar | Otogar | Otogar |
| Bus stop | Otobüs durağı | Rawestgeha otobosan | Cayê vinderdişî |
| Train station | Tren istasyonu | Îstesyona trênê | Îstesyona tîrane |
| Arrival/departure | Varış/kalkış | Gihîştin/rabûn | Werîştiş |
| Seat | Koltuk | Qoltix | Qoltix |
| Single/double | Tek/çift | Tek, fer/cot | Fere |
| Price | Ücret | Ucret /Buha | Heq |
| Ticket | Bilet | Bilêt | Bilêt |
| Return | Gidiş-dönüş | Çûn/Veger, hatin | Şiyayiş/Ageyrayiş /Amyayiş |
| Ticket window or booth | Gişe | Gîşe | Gîşe |
| Adult/Child/ Student | Tam/Çocuk/ Öğrenci | Tam/Zarok/ Xwendekar | Tam/Doman/ Wende/ Wendekar |
| A ticket to… please | …a bir bilet | Bilêtek ji … re | Bilêtêke.....rê |
| Can I make a reservation? | Rezervasyon yaptırabilir miyim? | Ez dikarim rezervasyonê bidim kirin? | Ez şikana xo rê cayêk kifşbikerî ? |
| What time does it leave? | Kaçta kalkar? | Wê di çendan de rabe? | Do çendan de werzo? |
| How long does it take? | Ne kadar sürer? | Wê çi qas bajo? | Do çendêk biramo? |
| How far is it? | Ne kadar uzaklıkta? | Çiqas dûr e? | Çendêk (zaf) dûrî yo? |
| When does the next bus/Train/Ferry leave? | Bir sonraki otobüs/Tren/Vapur ne zaman? | Otobosa/Trêna/ Vapûra piştî vê wê kîngê rabe? | Otêbisa/Tîrane/ Wapûra nay dimera do kingê şêro? |
| Where does it leave from? | Nereden kalkıyor? | Ji ku radibe? | Kam ca ra werzena? |
| What platform does it leave from? | Hangi perondan kalkıyor? | Ji kîjan peronê radibe? | Kam co perone ra werzena? |
| Which bus goes to…? | Hangi otobüs …a gider? | Kîjan otobos wê biçe …ê? | Kam co otopêze do şêro.....? |
| How long does it take? | Ne kadar sürer? | Wê çiqas bajo? | Do çendêk biramo? |
| Which road leads to…? | Hangi yol …'a çıkar? | Kîjan rê diçe …ê? | Kam co raye şina .....? |
| Map | Harita | Nexşe, xerîte | Nexşe |



Directions [3]

## DIRECTIONS/SIGNAGE / YÖNLER

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Left/right | Sol/sağ | Çep/rast | Çep/raşt |
| Turn left/right | Sola/sağa dön | Bizîvire aliyê çepê/rastê | Bifetelye pero Çep/raşt |
| Here/there | Burada/orada | Li vir/li wir | Tiya/ewta |
| North/south | Kuzey/güney | Bakur/başûr, qîble | Bakûr/başûr/qible |
| East/west | Doğu/batı | Rojhilat/rojava | Rojhelat/rojawan |
| Straight | Düz | Rast | Raşte |
| Toward | Doğru | Rast | Raşte |
| Uphill/Downhill | Yokuş yukarı/ Yokuş aşağı | Berbijêr/Berbijor | Qayme/Verbicor |
| Steep | Dik | Tîk/Çik, | Dîk |
| Wide/Narrow | Geniş/Dar | Fire/Teng | Hîra/Teng |
| From… | …dan | ji… | Ra..... |
| Until… | …a kadar | Heta …ê | Heta |
| Behind/In front of | Arkasında/Önünde | Li paş/Li pêş | Piyenî de/Viyerenî de |
| Between | Arasında | Li nav | Miyan de |
| At the opposite of… | Karşısında | Li hember/Li pêşber | Hember /Qarşî |
| At the end of | …sonunda | Di dawiya … de | Peynî de |
| Stop | Dur | Bisekine, raweste | Vinde |
| Caution | Dikkat | Dîqat | Dîqat |
| Car park | Park yeri | Ciyê parkê | Cayê parqe |
| Don't tread on the grass | Çimenlere basmayınız | Pê li çîmenan nekin | Linge menî sero |
| Military zone | Askeri bölge | Herêmaleşkerî | Cayo eskerî |
| One-way street | Tek yön | Yekalî | Yewper |
| No through road | Çıkmaz sokak | Alûle/Nabos | Xindoqe |
| Entry forbidden | Yasak bölge | Herêma qedexe | Herema qedexî |
| Entrance/Exit | Giriş/Çıkış | Têketan/Jêderan | Cikewtiş |
| Pull/Push | Çekiniz/Itiniz | Bikişînin/Tamdin | Temdayiş |
| No smoking | Sigara içilmez | Cixare nayê kişandin | Cuxara nîna antişî |
| Please take off your shoes | Lütfen ayakkabılarınızı çıkartınız | Ji kerema xwe re solên xwe derxin | Keremê xo ra solanê xo vecê |
| Drinking water | İçme suyu | Ava vexwarinê | Awa werî |
| Out of order | Arızalı | Bi arize | Xerepnaye |
| For rent | Kiralık | Bi kirê | Bi kirê |

## DESTINATIONS / PLACES / MEKANLAR

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bazaar | Çarşı(sı) | Çarşî(ya) Sûka | Sûk |
| Beach | Kumsal | Plaj, sêlxan | Sêlxan |
| Bridge | Köprü | Pir | Pird |
| Caranvanserai | Han(ı) | Xan(a) | Xan |
| Cave | Mağara | Şikeft | Şikeft |
| Cemetery | Mezarlık | Goristan | Mezel/goristan |
| Church | Kilise(si) | Dêr(a) | Kilîse(yê) |
| Citadel, fortress | Kale(si) | Keleha(ya) | Kela |
| City | Şehir | Bajar, şar | Saristan |
| Cliff | Uçurum | Hendef, dûlêr, kendal | Kendal |
| Dervish gathering place | Tekke(si) | Tekya(ya) | Tekya |
| Exchange facility | Kambiyo | Kambiyo | Kambiyo |
| Field | Tarla | Zevî | Hêga |
| Footpath | Patika | Şiverê | Şiveraye |
| Forest | Orman | Daristan | Dehle |
| Fortress/citadel | Hisar(ı)/Kale(si) | Hesar/Kela(ya) | Kela |
| Garden | Bahçe(si) | Baxçe(yê) | Bexçe |
| Gentlemen | Bayanlar | Xanimno | Xanimîno |
| Grave, tomb | Mezar(ı) | Gor(a) | Gor(ê) |
| Grocery shop | Bakkal | Beqal | Etarok |
| Hill | Tepe | Gir | Gir |
| Hot springs or thermal baths | Kaplıca | Germav/germik | Germik |
| House | Ev(i) | Mal(a) | Kêye / Ban |
| Hospital | Hastane | Nexweşxane | Nêweşxane |
| Information desk | Danışma | Şêwirdarî | Şêwirdar |
| Islamic school, madrasah | Medrese | Medrese | Medresa |
| Island | Ada(sı) | Girav(a) | Reşawî |
| Lake | Göl | Gol | Gol |
| Main square | Meydan | Meydan/Rast/Qad | Meydan/Raşte |
| Mansion | Konak | Qonax | Qonax |
| Market, bazaar | Pazar | Bazar | Bazaar |
| Military base | Asker(i) | Esker(î) Leşkerî | Esker î |
| Monastery | Manastır | Keşîşxane, xelwetxane | Keşîşxane |
| Mosque | Cami | Mizgeft | Camî |
| Mosque, small and with no minbar | Mescit | Mescîd/izgeft | Camî |
| Motorway | Otoyol(u) | Şahrê(ya), otoban(a) | Papûre |
| Mountain | Dağ | Çiya | Ko /gaze |
| Mountain pass | Geçit | Bihur | Neqev |

## DESTINATIONS / PLACES / MEKANLAR

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Municipality | Belediye | Şaredarî, belediye | Şaradarî |
| Museum | Müze | Muze, entîkexane | Muze |
| Nightclub | Gazino | Gazîno | Gazîno |
| Off-licence/Liquor store | Tekel bayii | Bayiyê tekelê | Bayiyê tekelî |
| Palace | Saray(ı) | Seray(a) | Kesre |
| Pharmacy | Eczane | Dermanxane | Eczaxane |
| Plaza or public square | Meydan(ı) | Meydan(a)/ Qad(a) | Meydan |
| Plain | Ova | Deşt | Deşte |
| Police HQ | Emniyet müdürlüğü | Midûriyeta Ewlehiyê | Muduriyeta em |
| Police station | Karakol | Qereqol | Qereqol |
| Province | İl(i) | Bajar(ê) | Şaristan |
| Provincial goverment building | Hükümet konağı | Qonaxa hikûmatê | Qonaxa hukumatî |
| Provincial goverment building | Valilik (valiliği) | Walî (Walîtiya) | Walî |
| Quarter | Mahalle(si) | Mehele(ya), tax(a) | Mehla |
| Recreation or picnic area | Dinlenme yeri | Ciyê bêhnvedanê | Cayû boye |
| River | Nehir, ırmak | Çem, robar | Çem |
| Roads/highways | Karayolları | Riyên bejahiyan | Rayê bejahî |
| Rock | Kaya | Zinar | Zinar |
| Ruins | Harabe, yıkıntı | Xirabe, Wêran, kavil | Xirabeyî |
| Shore | Kıyı | Qerax, perav | Qerax |
| Spring | Kaynak | Kanî | Êne |
| Statue | Heykel | Peyker, heykel | Hêkel |
| Storey | Kat | Qat | Qate |
| Summer community, usually in the high mountains | Yayla | Zozan | Koy |
| Temple | Mabet | Îbadetxane | Îbadetxane |
| Turkish Airlines | Türk Hava Yolları (THY) | Riyên Hewayî yên Tirk | Rayî hewayî |
| Turkish bath | Hamam(ı) | Hemam(a) | Hemem |
| Unpotable | İçilmez | Nayê vexwarin | Nînawerî |
| Valley | Vadi | Gelî | Gele |
| Villa | Köşk(ü) | Koşk(a) | Koşke |
| Village | Köy(ü) | Gund(ê) | Dew(a) |
| Waterside mansion | Yalı | Yalî | Bano baxçeyin |
| WC/Toilet | Wc/Tuvalet/ Umumi | Wc/Avdestxane/ umûmî | Daşra |



Architecture [4]

## ARCHITECTURE / MİMARİ

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ablutions fountain of a mosque | Şadırvan | Şadirvan | Çirike |
| Dates according to the Christian calendar, abbreviated "M." on inscriptions and monuments | Miladî | Zayînî, mîladî | Zayinî |
| Dome | Kubbe | Qub, qube | Quba |
| Gate or door | Kapı(sı) | Derî(yê) | Ber/e |
| Iwan | Eyvan | Eywan | Eywane |
| Mihrab (niche in a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca) | Mihrab | Mihrab | Mihrabe |
| Minaret | Minare(si) | Minare(ya) | Minara |
| Pavilion | Köşk(ü) | Koşk(a)/ Qesr(a) | Koşke |
| Public drinking fountain | Sebil | Sebîl | Sebîl |
| Tombs covered with domes | Kümbet | Kumbed/ Gumbed | Quba |
| Tower | Kule(si) | Qule(ya) | Qûla |

| English | Turkish | Kurmancî | Zazakî |
|---|---|---|---|
| **FOOD-General terms / YEMEK-Genel terimler** | | | |
| Restaurant | Lokanta | Loqante | Aşxane |
| Taverns serving alcohol and food | Meyhane | Meyxane | Meyxane |
| Bon Appetite | Afiyet olsun | Noşîcan be, efiyet be | Cayêkê to pê nêdijo |
| "Health to your hands" traditional response to bon appetite | Elinize sağlık | Destê we ter be | Destê to ternîbê |
| Cheers | Şerefe | Noş | Noş |
| Waiter | Garson | Garson/ Berkar | Garson |
| Polite way of getting waiter's attention | Bakar mısınız! | Ji kerema xwe re dinihêrî | Şima awnenî |
| Bill | Hesap | Hesab | Hesab |
| Tax | Vergi | Bac | Bac |
| Tax included | Vergi dahil | Tevî vêrgiyê, tevî bacê / Vêrgî di nav de | Tewrê bacîya |
| Service included | Servis dahil | Tevî serwîsê / Serwîs jî di nav de | Servîs jî têdir |
| Tip | Bahşiş | Bexşîş | Bexşîş |
| Breakfast | Kahvaltı | Taştê/Xurînî | Areyî |
| Lunch | Öğle yemeği | Firavîn/ Navroj | Nanê nîmrojî |
| Dinner | Akşam yemeği | Şîv | Şamî |
| With meat/ without meat | Etli/etsiz | Bi goşt/Bê goşt | Bigoşt/Bêgoşt |
| Ready-prepared dishes usually kept warm in steam trays | Hazır yemek | Xwarina hazir | Wero hadre |
| A part of a restaurant served for families and single women | Aile salonu | Salona malbatê | Salona malbatî |
| Glass | Bardak | Qedeh | Qedehe |
| Knife | Bıçak | Kêr | Kardî |
| Fork | Çatal | Çetel | Melêvî |
| Spoon | Kaşık | Kevçî | Kewçîke |
| Napkin | Peçete | Desmal | Peçete ( desmale ) |
| Plate | Tabak | Teyfik/ Temsîk | Tebeqe ( sihane) |
| Drinks | İçecekler | Vexwarin | Awiney |
| Alcoholic drinks | İçkiler | Vexurk/ Alkol | Wexuk |
| Alcohol served | İçkili | Bialkol | Bi wexurk |
| No alcohol served | İçkisiz | Bêalkol | Bê wexurk |
| Does it contain meat? | Etli mi? | Bi goşt e? | Goştino? |
| Do you have any meatless food? | Etsiz yemek var mı? | Xwarina bê goşt heye? | Wero bêgoşt esto? |



Lahmacun [5]

## FOOD-Culinary terms / YEMEK-Mutfak terimleri

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Barbecue | Mangal | Manqel/ Agirdank | Manqale |
| Boiled | Haşlama | Xaşandî | Xeşelnaye |
| Casserole | Güveç | Dîzik/Dîz | Tirşîka deyza |
| Cold | Soğuk | Sar | Serdin |
| Cooked with olive oil | Zeytinyağlı | Bi zeyt/Bi rûnê zeytê | Zeytin |
| Deep-fried | Tava, sahanda | Tawe | Tawa de |
| Fried | Kızartma | Sorkirî | Sûrkerde |
| Grilled | Izgara | Izxare | Seradir |
| Hot | Sıcak | Germ | Germin |
| Hot/cold | Sıcak/Soğuk | Germ/Sar | Germin / Serdin |
| In red sauce | Soslu, salçalı | Bi salçe/Bi merge | Bi salçe |
| Paste or purée | Ezme | Mehit | Parzon |
| Raw | Pişmemiş | Nepijyayî ye | Nêpeyşaye |
| Spicy | Acı | Tûj | Tûj |
| Steamed | Buğulama | Pijandina bi hilm û gulm | Helme |
| Well done | İyi pişmiş | Têrpijyayî | Başpewte |
| With cheese | Peynirli, kaşarlı | Bi penêr, bi qaşar | Bi penîr |
| With egg | Yumurtalı | Bi hêk | Hakin |
| With meat | Etli | Bi goşt | Goştin |
| With minced meat | Kıymalı | Bi goştê cengekirî/ Bi qiyme | Bî qime |
| With sausage | Sucuklu | Bi sicûq | Bi sicûx |
| With yoghurt | Yoğurtlu | Bi mast | Mastin |

## FOOD-General ingredients/items / YEMEK-Genel mutfak malzemeleri

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Black pepper | Karabiber | Îsota reş | Îsot / Bacik |
| Bread | Ekmek | Nan | Nan |
| Butter | Tereyağı | Rûnê nivîşk | Rûnobêsol |
| Cheese | Peynir | Penêr | Penîr |
| Corn | Mısır | Gilgil/Lazût | Gilgil |
| Cracked wheat | Bulgur | Bilxur/Savar | Bilxur |
| Dip, mashed or crushed | Ezme | Mehit | Parzone |
| Egg | Yumurta | Hêk | Hak |
| Fruit | Meyve | Fêkî | Fêkî |
| Honey | Bal | Hingiv | Hengemîn |
| Ice | Buz | Cemed/ Qerîsek | Cemed |
| Jam | Reçel | Rîçal | Rîçal |
| Milk | Süt | Şîr | Şit |
| Nuts | Çerez | Çerez | Çerez |
| Olives | Zeytin | Zeytûn | Zeytûn |
| Pasta | Makarna | Miqarne | Miqarne |
| Pickles | Turşu | Tirşî | Tirşî |
| Rice | Pilav, pirinç | Gêrmî/Birinc | Birinj |
| Rye | Çavdar | Çavdar | Şilêl |
| Salt | Tuz | Şilêl/Tarîgan/Xwê | Sole |
| Sesame covered bread rings | Simit/Gevrek | Simit/Gevrek Kulorîk/simît/Qurofek | Lole |
| Sugar | Şeker | Şekir | Şeker |
| Sweets | Tatlı | Şîranî | Şîrinayî |
| Vinegar | Sirke | Sirke/Sihik | Tirşî |
| Water | Su | Av | Awe |

## FOOD-Meat / YEMEK-Etler

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chicken | Tavuk | Mirîşk | Kerge |
| Goat | Keçi | Bizin | Bize |
| Heart | Yürek | Dil | Dil |
| Kidney | Böbrek | Gurçik | Gurçike |
| Lamb | Kuzu eti | Goştê berxan | Goşberx |
| Liver | Ciğer | Ceger, kezeb | kezebe |
| Rissoles baked with vegetables | Saray kebap | Kebaba serayê | Kebabê seraye |
| Sheep | Koyun | Pez | Mêşine |
| Spare ribs | Kaburga | Parsû/ Parxan | Parsî |
| Testicle | Koç yumurtası/Billur | Hêlikên beranan | Hêlikî beranî |
| Veal | Dana/Sığır eti | Goştê golikan/Dewaran | Goştê dewarî |

## FOOD-Some meat-based dishes / YEMEK-Etle yapılan yemekler

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lamb brain salad | Beyin salatası | Seleteya mêjî | Seleteyê mêjû |
| Pepper stuffed with rice and meat | Biber dolması | Dolmê îsotan/ Heşîna îsotan | Dolmeyê bajikan |
| Steak | Biftek/Bonfile | Bîftek/Bonfile | Bonfîle / Biftek |
| Bulgar rice sometimes cooked with a meat stock | Bulgur pilavı | Girar | Şorba |
| Döner kebab | Döner kebabı | Doner kebab | Kebabo doner |
| Meat stew | Et yemeği | Xwarina goşt | Wero goştin |
| Meat stew with vegetables | Etli türlü | Tirşika bi goşt | Tirşika goştine |
| Meat stew, sometimes with vegetables | Haşlama | Xaşandî | Xeşelnaye |
| Mince rissoles with cheese | İnegöl köftesi | Kuftika Înegolê | Kufteyî înegolî |
| Döner in yoghurt and sauce | İskender kebabı | Kebaba Îskender | Kebabî îskenderî |
| Mixed grill | Karışık ızgara | Goştê biraştî yê tevlihev | Goşto têtewerde |
| Aubergines stuffed with mince meat | Karnıyarık | Balîcanê navqelaştî/ Belezîz | Balcanê pirkerdeyî |
| Sandwich of grilled sheep's intestines with cumin | Kokoreç | Kokoreç | Kokoreç |
| Meatballs | Köfte | Kufte/ Kutilk | Kufteyî |
| Chop, cutlet | Pirzola | Pîrzole, goştê sirtê | Goştê sirte |
| Spiced meat and vegetables sizzled in a wok | Saç kavurma | Qelîsêl, goştê sêlê | Goştesûr |
| Mutton stew | Tas kebabı | Tas kebab | Kawirme |
| Side of tender, boneless lamb baked in outdoor oven | Tavuk/Piliç | Mirîşk/Varik | Kerge |
| Minced lamb grilledon a skewer | Urfa kebabı | Kebaba Ruhayê | Kebabê Riha |

## FOOD-Seafood / YEMEK-Deniz ürünleri

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aegan lobster | İstakoz | Kevjala deryayê | Kerkinc |
| Anchovy | Hamsi | Hemsî | Hemsî |
| Annular bream | İsparoz | Îsparoz | Îsparoz |
| Baby lüfer | Çinekop | Çînekop | Çînekop |
| Bass | Levrek | Sûf | Sûf |
| Black bream | Sarıgöz | Çavzer | Çimzer |
| Crab | Yengeç | Kevjal, kêfşing | Kevjale |
| Fish | Balık | Masî | Mase |
| Gilt-head bream | Çipura | Çipura | Cipûra |
| Grey mullet | Kefal | Masîpank, masîperk | Masîpank |
| Horse mackerel | İstavrit | Îstavrît | îstavrît |
| Mussel | Midye | Midye | Midya |
| Octopus | Ahtapot | Axtepot, heştpê | Axtepote |
| Prawns | Karides | Canberî, rubyan | Canber |
| Red mullet | Barbunya, tekir | Barbûnya | Barbûnya |
| Sardine | Sardalya | Masîwurk | Masîwurk |
| Squid | Kalamar | Kalamar | Kalamar |
| Swordfish | Kılıç | Masîşûr, serşûrmasî | Masîşûr |
| Trout | Alabalık | Deqsor | Şiling |
| Turbot | Kalkan | Masîkartûxk | Mertalmase |

## FOOD-Vegetables / YEMEK-Sebzeler

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Artichoke | Enginar | Artîşok | Artîşok |
| Aubergine | Patlıcan | Balîcan/ Bacana reş | Balîcane |
| Beans | Fasulye | Fasûlî | Fasûlya |
| Broad beans | Bakla | Baqil, peqle, keşol | Baqile |
| Cabbage | Lahana | Kelem | Kelem |
| Carrot | Havuç | Gêzer, gizêr | Gizêr |
| Courgette | Kabak | Kundir, gindor | Kuye |
| Cucumber | Salatalık | Xiyar | Xiyar |
| Garlic | Sarımsak | Sîr | Sîr |
| Green bean | Taze fasulye | Fasûliyê şîn | Fasûliya tezî |
| Hot peppers | Acı biber | Îsota tûj | Îsoto tûj |
| Lettuce | Marul | Xas | Xas |
| Mushroom | Mantar | Kuvarik, kufkarik, karok | Kuvarik |
| Okra | Bamya | Bamye, bamî | Bamî |
| Onion | Soğan | Pîvaz | Piyaz |
| Peas | Bezelye | Şoqil, polik | Polik |
| Peppers | Biber | Îsot | Îsot |
| Potatoes | Patates | Kartol | Kartol |
| Red beans | Barbunya | Barbûnya | Barbûnya |
| Rocket | Roka | Kûzele, roka | Roka |
| Spinach | Ispanak | Îspenax | Ispenex |
| Spring onion | Taze soğan | Pîvaza teze | Piyazo teze |
| Tomato | Domates | Firingî | Firinge |



Fresh vegetables [6]

**FOOD-Some vegetable- or egg-based dishes / YEMEK-Sebzeli ve yumurtalı yemekler**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hot chilli mash with garlic, parsley, lettuce, onion | Antep acılı ezmesi | Mehita tûj a Entabê | Parzoneyê entabî |
| Red kidney beans | Barbunya | Barbûnya | Barbûnya |
| Black-eyed peas in the pod | Börülce | Maş | Maş |
| Yoghurt dip with grated cucumber and herbs | Cacık | Cacix | Jajik |
| Chopped tomato, cucumber, parsley, pepper and salad | Çoban salatası | Seleta firingiya | Selete |
| Bulgur, nuts, vegetables and meat in a spicy crust | İçli köfte | Kutilkê binavik/ kuftê navtijî /Kutlik | Kutlika pirkerdî |
| White beans in a tomato sauce | Kuru fasulye | Tirşika fasûlyê hişk /Fasûliyên hişk | Fasulyaya wişke |
| Fried eggs with tomatoes, onions, pepper and garlic | Menemen | Mexleme, meleme, mêkle | Mexleme |
| Aubergine pate | Patlıcan ezmesi | Helîse, sogilme | Sogilme |
| “Russian” salad | Rus salatası | Seleta Ûrisan/ Rûsan | Seletê Ûrisî |
| Aubergine, tomato and other vegetable fry-up | Şakşuka | Şaqşûqa | Şaqşuka |
| Vegetable stew | Sebzeli türlü | Tirşik | Tirşîke |
| Stuffed vine leaves | Yaprak dolması yalancı dolma | Pel/Pelên pêçandî | Aprax / Pelê apraxan |
| Vegetables cooked in their own juices, spices, and olive oil | Zeytinyağlı | Bi zeyt | Zeytin |

| FOOD-Breads and pastry-based foods / YEMEK-Hamur işi | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Börek, pastry with various fillings | Börek | Borek/ Bîşî/ Totik | Boreke |
| "inflated" hollow turnowers | Çiğ börek | Boreka xav | Boreka nêpewtî |
| A spicy mix of raw lamb-mince and bulgar wrapped in a wheat pancake | Çiğ köfte | Ecîn/ Çîkufte | Kuteya kale |
| Pitta-like bread used to wrap meat for takeaway | Dürüm | Etor | Loq |
| Turkish pancakes filled with cheese, potato or mince | Gözleme | Patîle | Patîle/ Nano tantûreyin |
| Frequently called "turkish pizza" a layer of spiced lamb smeared on the thin dough base | Lahmacun | Lehmecûn | Lehmecûn |
| Meat-filled crepes topped with yoghurt | Laz böreği | Boreka Lazan | Çorekî lazan |
| Ravioli-like meat filled parcels in garlic yoghurt sauce | Mantı | Mantî | Mantî |
| Long piece of dough kneaded flat and topped with cheese, mince, chunks of meat or chicken | Pide | Pîde | Qatme |
| Round flat bread | Sade pide | Pîdeya sade | Qatmeya sade |
| Börek filled with cheese and made into "cigarettes" | Sigara böreği | Boreka başik | Çoreka paçik |
| Runny cheese between layers of filo | Su börek | Boreka avê | Boreka awine |
| Mantı-like dish served with cheese and mint | Tatar böreği | Boreka Teteran | Boreka tetareyî |
| Toasted sandwich with salami or cheese | Tost | Tost | Tost |

## FOOD-Soups / YEMEK-Çorbalar

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fish soup | Balık çorbası | Şorbeya masiyan | Şorbeya maseyine |
| Tomato soup | Domates çorbası | Şorbeya Firingiyan | Şorbeya firngeyine |
| Tomato and lentil soup flavoured with mint, may contain meat stock | Ezo gelin çorbası | Şorbeya ezo gelin | Mişewşî |
| Tribe soup | İşkembe çorbası | Hûr û rovî | Serepay vêrey |
| Lentil soup | Mercimek çorbası | Şorbeya nîskan | Şorbaya nîskan |
| Soup made from various boney parts of a sheep | Paça çorbası | Şorbeya pepikan, paçe (Serûpê) | Serepay |
| Vegetable soup | Sebze çorbası | Tutû, şorbeya bi zebze | Tirşike |
| Noodle soup | Şehriye çorbası | Şorbeya şehîran | Şorbaya şehîran |
| Yoghurt and vegetable soup | Tarhana çorbası | Şorbeya terhanayê /Şorbeya bidew | Germî / Şorbika doyine |
| Chicken soup | Tavuk çorbası | Şorbeya mirîşkan | Awa kerge |
| Yoghurt and barley soup | Yayla çorbası | Mehîr | Şorbaya doyine |

## FOOD-Cheese / YEMEK-Peynir

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| White cheese similiar to feta | Beyaz peynir | Penêrê spî | Penîro sipê |
| Mild, crumbly cheese used in börek and gözleme | Çökelek | Toraq | Tantûr |
| Yellow cheese, varies from mild to mature | Kaşar peyniri | Qaşar, penêrê qaşar | Penîro helnaye |
| Strong white cheese made from goat's milk | Keçi peyniri | Penêrê bizinan | Penîrê bizan |
| Herb-flavoured cheese found especially in eastern Anatolia | Otlu peynir | Penêrê bi sîrik | Penîro sîrin |
| Tasty, white cheese cured in aluminium containers | Teneke peyniri | Penêrê tenekeyan | Penîrê tenekeyî |



Spices [7]

## FOOD-Herbs and spices / YEMEK-Baharatlar

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Basil | Fesleğen | Rihan | Rîhan |
| Black pepper | Karabiber | Filfil/Îsota reş | îsoto siya |
| Mint | Nane | Pûjan/Anix/Nane | Pûne |
| Mustard | Hardal | Xerdel | Xerdel |
| Oregano | Kekik | Cehter/Catirî | Chentere |
| Parsley | Maydanoz | Baxdenos | Mexdanos |
| Thyme | Kekik | Cehter/ Catirî | Cehtere |

## FOOD-(Non-alcoholic) drinks / YEMEK-Alkölsüz içecekler

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A hot sweet drink made with extract of a wild orchid | Salep | Salep | Selep |
| A thick fermented millet drink | Boza | Boza/ Ahsûme | Boza |
| Camomile tea | Papatya çayı | Çaya beybûnê | Çaya beybûnî |
| Coffee | Kahve | Qehwe | Qehwa |
| Cola | Kola | Qola | Qola |
| Drinking yoghurt | Ayran | Dew | Do |
| Fermented millet drink | Boza | Boza | Boza |
| Fruit juice | Meyva suyu | Ava fêkiyan | Awa fêkiyan |
| Grape juice | Şıra | Şîre | Şîre |
| Ice | Buz | Cemed, qerîsek | Cemed |
| Instant coffee | Neskafe | Nesqafe | Nesqafe |
| Milk | Süt | Şîr | Şit |
| Mineral water | Maden suyu | Ava madenî | Şorike |
| Orange juice | Portakal suyu | Ava porteqalan | Awê pûrteqalan |
| Sage tea | Ada çayı | Giyagewrik | Vaşgewrik |
| Spring water | Memba suyu | Ava kaniyan | Awa ênî |
| Tea | Çay | Çay | Çaye |
| Turkish coffee | Türk kahvesi | Qehwe | Qehwaya Tirkan |
| Turnip juice | Şalgam | Şêlim, binerdk | Sêlim |
| Water | Su | Av | Awe |



Wine basket [8]

## FOOD-Alcoholic drinks / YEMEK-Alkollü içkiler

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Beer | Bira | Bîra | Bîra |
| Gin | Cin | Cîn | Cîn |
| Draught beer | Fıçı bira | Fiçî bîra | Bîraya elbike |
| Cocktail | Kokteyl | Kokteyl | Kokteyl |
| Cognac | Konyak | Konyak | Konyak |
| Liqueur | Likör | Lîkor | Lîkor |
| Strong aniseed spirit | Rakı | Araq, reqî | Areqe |
| Champagne | Şampanya | Şampanya | Şampanya |
| Wine | Şarap | Şerab | Şerab |
| Whiskey | Viski | Wiskî | Wiskî |
| Vodka | Votka | Votka | Wotka |

## FOOD-Nuts, seeds and dried fruit / YEMEK-Kuruyemiş

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Almond | Badem | Behîv | Vame |
| Bar nibbles, usually nuts | Çerez | Çerez | Çerez |
| Chestnut | Kestane | Şahbelot/ Kestane | Şelbûte |
| Hazelnut | Fındık | Bindeq/ Findiq | Findiq |
| Peanuts | Yer fıstığı | Zirfistiq/ Piste | Fistiqa zûrayî |
| Pistachio | Antep fıstığı | Fistiqên Entabê | Fistiqa Entabî |
| Pumpkin seeds | Kabak çekirdeği | Dendikên kundiran | Dendikê kuye |
| Raisins | Kuru üzüm | Mewij | Mewijî |
| Roasted chickpeas | Leblebî | Leblebî/ Xudam | Leblebî |
| Sheet-pressed dried fruit | Pestil | Bastêq/ Sewîk | Bastêq |
| Sunflower seeds | Çekirdek | Dendik | Dendik |
| Walnut | Ceviz | Gûz | Goze |



Dried fruit [9]


Fruits (10)

## FOOD-Fruits / YEMEK-Meyve

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Apple | Elma | Sêv | Saye |
| Apricot | Kayısı | Qeysî (Mişmiş, arûng) | Qeysiye |
| Banana | Muz | Mûz | Mûz |
| Blackberry | Böğürtlen | Tûreşk | Dirike |
| Figs | İncir | Hêjîr | Encîle |
| Grapefruit | Greyfurt | Zîbal/ Sindî/ Greyfûrt | Sindî |
| Grapes | Üzüm | Tirî | Hengure |
| Green almond | Çağla | Behîvter | Vame |
| Lemon | Limon | Lîmon | Leymûne |
| Melon | Kavun | Qawin | Qawine |
| Mulberry | Dut | Tû | Tuye |
| Orange | Portakal | Porteqal | Pûrteqale |
| Peach | Şeftali | Xox | Xewxe |
| Pear | Armut | Hermî | Miroye |
| Persimmon or date | Hurma | Xurme | Xurma |
| Plum | Erik | Alûce/ Hilû | Arûnge |
| Pomegranate | Nar | Hinar | Hinar |
| Quince | Ayva | Biyok | Beye |
| Raspberry | Ahududu | Tûşêmî | Tuyê siyayî |
| Sour cherry | Vişne | Wişne/Albalû | Wişne |
| Strawberry | Çilek | Tûfrengî | Tufrengî |
| Sweet cherry | Kiraz | Gelyaz/ Qeresî | Wişne |
| Tangerine | Mandalîn | Lalengî/ Mandalîna | Lalengiye |
| Watermelon | Karpuz | Zebeş | Zebeşe |


Local sweets (11)

## FOOD-Sweets / YEMEK-Tatlılar

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sweet stew of pulses nuts and fruits flavoured with cinamon | Aşure | Aşûre | Aşûre |
| Quince pudding | Ayva tatlısı | Şîraniya biyokan | Şîraniya beye |
| Pastry made with layers of nuts and syrup | Baklava | Peqlewe | Peqlewa |
| Ice-cream | Dondurma | Bestenî, qerîmok, Dondirme | Qerîmok |
| Semolina-based pudding with pine nuts | Helva | Helaw | Helawe |
| Semolina and nut halva | İrmik helvası | Helawa êrd | Helawa êrde |
| Shredded wheat in syrup | Kadayıf | Qedeyif | Qedeyif |
| Clotted cream | Kaymak | Kaymak, şîraniya to | Yû |
| Creamy pudding called “the bottom of the pan” on account of its caramalized topping | Kazandibi | Kazandîbî | Kazandîbî |
| Milk based pudding sprinkled with nuts, often eaten with ice-cream | Keşkül | Keşkûl | Keşkûle |
| Stewed fruit | Komposto | Xoşav | Xoşabe |
| Almond-nut biscuit dusted with powered sugar | Kurabiye | Qurabiye | Qurabiya |
| Shredded wheat with mild cheese and syrup | Künefe | Kunefe | Kunefe |
| Fried dough balls with syrup | Lokma | Loqme | Loqme |
| Turkish delight | Lokum | Loqim | Loqim |
| Rice flour and rosewater pudding | Muhallebi | Tilolik | Mehlebî |
| Any kind of pastry or cake | Pasta | Paste | Paste |
| Soft round biscuits | Poğaça | Boxaça | Boxçike |
| Rice pudding, typically baked in the oven | Sütlaç | Şorbeşîr/ Gulol | Şorbika şitî |
| Halva of sesame, plus nuts or cocoa | Tahin helvası | Helawa tehînê | Helawe |
| Saffron-laced jelly | Zerde | Zerde | Zerde |

# INDEX

If you cannot find a place listed here, try looking for it under the district in which it is located. Note that Muslim names are indexed according by first name.

Districts and provincial capitals appear in bold in this index, while provinces appear in uppercase bold. In addition, the following abbreviations have been used to indicate the province to which districts, towns and other places/events belong:

AD : Adıyaman
AĞ : Ağrı
BA : Batman
BN : Bingöl
BT : Bitlis
DI : Diyarbakır
EL : Elazığ
HA : Hakkâri
MA : Mardin
MU : Muş
SI : Siirt
ŞI : Şırnak
TU : Tunceli
UR : Urfa (Şanlıurfa)
VA : Van

## A


*abbara* ..... 359
Abuzer Gaffari Türbesi (AD) ..... 34
accommodation ..... 620
Adakale (Derzin) (SI) ..... 418
Adır Island (VA) ..... 559
**ADIYAMAN** ..... 24–63
**Adıyaman City** ..... 28
  accommodation ..... 32
  Adıyaman museum ..... 31
  Çarşı Camii ..... 29
  Eski Saray (İbrahim Bey) Camii ..... 30
  getting there ..... 32
  Hısn-i Mansur Kalesi ..... 29
  houses, traditional ..... 31
  Kap Camii ..... 30
  Mor Petrus/Pavlos Church ..... 30
  places to eat ..... 32
  Ulu Cami ..... 29
**Adilcevaz (Elcewaz) (BT)** ..... 457
  Adilcevaz Kalesi ..... 458
  Arin Lake (Sodalı Göl) ..... 458
  Kef Kalesi ..... 459
  Mount Süphan ..... 457
  Ulu Cami ..... 458
  Zal Paşa Han ..... 459
Afghan minority ..... 104
Ağaçdibi (Kehê) (HA) ..... 518
Ağalcık (Kâni Rewa) (BA) ..... 322
**Ağın (Axîn) (EL)** ..... 119
**AĞRI (AGIRÎ)** ..... 590–617
**Ağrı City** ..... 593
  accommodation ..... 597
  getting there ..... 597
  kale ..... 593
  places to eat ..... 597
  **Ahl**at (Xelat) (BT) ..... 450
  Ahlat Museum ..... 452
  Ahlat Sahil Kalesi ..... 451
  Çifte Hamam ..... 453
  Culture Festival ..... 451
  Double Tombs (Çifte Kümbetler) ..... 453
  Emir Bayındır Bridge ..... 455
  Hasan Padişah Tomb ..... 454
  İskender Paşa Camii ..... 452
  Kadı Mahmut Camii ..... 451
  Kale Cemetery ..... 452
  Keşiş Tomb ..... 453
  Kırklar Cemetery ..... 456
  Meydanlık Cemetery (Selçuklu Mezarlık) ..... 454
  Nazik Lake ..... 456
  Seljuk hamam ..... 455
  Taht-ı Suleiman (Kara Şeyh) Cemetery ..... 454
  tomb of Abdurrahman Gazi ..... 456
  Tomb of Emir Bayındır ..... 453
  tombs of Sheikh Necmeddin and Erzen Hatun ..... 455
  Ulu Kümbet ..... 452
Ahmed Arif ..... 204
Ahmet Güneştekin ..... 319
Akçakale (Tilebyad) (UR) ..... 98
Akçali (Salkone) (VA) ..... 587
Akdamar Church (VA) ..... 563
Aktaş (DI) ..... 268
Aktepe (Axtobê) (DI) ..... 310
Akyüz, Gabriel ..... 357
Alacabük Promontory (VA) ..... 565
**Alacakaya (Guleman)** ..... 125
Albayrak (Dêr) (VA) ..... 587
Albıçak (Cunik) (VA) ..... 572
Alevi Tombs (AD) ..... 34
Alevis ..... 132
Altınsaç (Genzek) (VA) ..... 565
Altıntaş (Keferze) ..... 383
Anastasiopolis (MA) ..... 394
Anbar Çayı Bridge (DI) ..... 256
Anıtlı (Hah) ..... 385
Anzaf Kalesi (VA) ..... 558
Ararat ..... 594, 597
Arıdağ (Kultik/Qultîk) (BT) ..... 441
Arısu (Gola Gulê) (MA) ..... 401
Arica (Kefri) (BA) ..... 348
Arif Susam ..... 111
Arkboyu (Gêlbelesaan) (VA) ..... 577
Arpalı (Niv) (BN) ..... 169
Ashab-ı Keyf ..... 284
Assyrian Christians ..... 378
Aşağı Balcılar (Malki) ..... 427
Aşağı Doluca (Dêr Harik) (TU) ..... 160
Aşağıkolbaşı (Morx) (BT) ..... 449
Atatürk Dam (UR) ..... 76, 79
Ayanis (Ağartı) (VA) ..... 559
Ayanis Kalesi (VA) ..... 559
Ayayık (Solesen) (TU) ..... 143
**Aydınlar (Tillo) (SI)** ..... 420
  scholars ..... 423
  tombs of İsmail Fakirullah and İbrahim Hakkı ..... 421
  tombs of Sultan Memduh and Zemzem-il Hassa ..... 422
Aydıntepe Underground City (BN) ..... 169
Aynur Doğan ..... 138
Ayşe Şan ..... 205
Azizan (Ezîzan) (HA) ..... 516
Aznavur (Kop) (AĞ) ..... 603


## B


Bağlar (Nehrî) (HA) ..... 535
Bağlıisa (Baxlu) (BN) ..... 175
**Bahçesaray (Muskî/Miks) (VA)** ..... 566
  Abanak (Azize Kadınlar Manastırı) ..... 568
  Andzghonts Monastery (Dêra Ancaxosê) ..... 570
  chess festival ..... 567
  Elmayaka (Sıpkas) ..... 569
  Keskin (Kinekas) Village Church ..... 569
  Kızılköprü ..... 568
  Mir Hasan Veli Madrasah ..... 567
  Monastery of St George (Pouthkouvank) ..... 569
  Monastery of St Saviour ..... 568
  Monastery of the Cross (Aparank) ..... 569
  Red Bridge ..... 568
  Red Mosque (Kırmızı Cami) ..... 567

Saintes Femmes Monastery ....568
Şeyh Şemsettin Mosque ....569
St Jacques Church (Deşt Kilisesi) ....568
woodcarving....567
Bakacık (VA) ....560
Balveren (Gundikê Melê) (ŞI)....468
bars ....630
**Başkale (Elbak) (VA)**....586
Akçali (Salkone)....587
Albayrak (Dêr) ....587
Kelekom Bridge ....586
Madrasah and tomb of Hüsrev Paşa....586
Örenkale (Pizan) ....586
St Bartholomew Church ....587
St Ejmiacin Church....588
Vanadokya ....588
Yanal (Soredêr)....588
Başkavak (Ahmedi) (MA) ....407
Bateyi....505
**BATMAN (ÊLIH)** ....314-353
**Batman City** ....318
accommodation....318
Batman and Hasankeyf Culture and Art Festival....318, 344
getting there ....318
places to eat ....318
Sanat Sokağı (Art Street)....318
battle of Çaldıran....585
battle of Dara....397
**Baykan (Hewêl) (SI)**....418
Adakale (Derzin) ....419
Derzin Kalesi ....419
Dört Ulular (Çarpiran) Bridge....418
Veysel Karani Mausoleum....419
Ziyaret ....419
Bedirxan Beg ....474
beer....630
*bêrîvan*....496
Berxbir Festival....497
**Besni (Bêsnî) (AD)** ....55
cultural festival....56
Dikilitaş Tumulus ....59
Göksu Caves ....59
Gümüşkaya (Palaş) Caves ....59
hot springs....59
Keysun ....58
Kızılca Oba Mosque....58
Kızılın Bridge....59
Kurşunlu Mosque....57
Meydan Bath....57
Old Besni (Bêsnîya Kevn) ....56
Sesönk Tumulus ....59
Sofraz Tumulus ....58
Tahta Oba (Dereli Oba) Camii....57
Tahta Oba Bath ....58
Ulu Cami....56
**Beşiri (Qubîn) (BA)**....320
Memikan Bridge (Pira Memikan)....322
Mor Kiryakos Monastery....320
Tomb of Şeyh Halid ....322
Yezidi villages....318, 320
Zercil Church....322
Beşpınar (DI) ....309
**Beytüşşebap (Elkê) (ŞI)**....496
Bilgi (Alan) (VA) ....573
**BINGÖL (ÇOLIG/ÇEWLIG)**....164-179
**Bingöl City**....167
Bingöl Plateau (BN)....175
Binkap Thermal Hotel (BN)....169
**Birecik (Bêrecûg) (UR)**....84
**Bismil (DI)**....305
Hakemi Use Tumulus (Hakemê Ûsê)....307
harvest festival ....305
Körtiktepe Tumulus (Girê Kortikê) ....306
Turcoman villages ....308
Üçtepe (Kerxê) ....305
Yedi Kızlar....308
Ziyaret Tepe Tumulus (Girê Behramkê) ....306
**BITLIS (BEDLÎS)**....432-463
**Bitlis City**....435
accommodation....440
Alemdar Camii ....437
Armenian church ....440
Bitlis Church ....438
Bitlis Kalesi....435
Çiftkaya Ski Centre ....440
Değirmenaltı (Por) ....440
Ethnography Museum ....439
getting there ....440
Gökmeydan Camii....438
Hacı Behiye Camii (Hacî Begîye)....436
houses, traditional....435
İhlasiye Madrasah ....438
Kızıl Camii....438
Küfrevi Tomb ....439
Paşa Hamamı ....436
places to eat ....440
Şerefiye Külliyesi....436
Sheikh Tahir-i Gürgi Tomb...439
Sultaniye Camii ....437
Ulu Cami....436
border crossings with Syria ....98
with Iran (Esendere)....531
with N.Iraq (Habur gate).490, 491
Bostankale (Bostankaya) (MU) ....196
Botan emirate....474
Boylu (Kêrs) (MU) ....189
Boyunlu (Boşat) (DI) ....302
Bozhüyük (Teliba) (SI)....417
**Bozova (Hewenge/Hüvek) (UR)** ....78
Bölükkonak (Hergemo) (BA) ....330
breakfast (Van) ....553
breakfast....627
Budaklı (Axacur) (BT) ....449
**Bulanık (Kop) (MU)** ....192
buses....619, 620
Büyük Senem Mığar (Senemağar) (UR) ....103
Büyükçiftlik (Xirwate) (HA)....533
Büyükhan (Çarmelik) (UR) ....78


## C


Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı....204
cats (Van)....553
Cegerxwîn (Sêxmûs Hesen) ....349
Cegerxwîn....251
Celadet Alî Bedirxan ....475
Cemilê Çeto ....417
Cevizağacı (Geznax) (ŞI) ....496
Cevizli (Güzereş) (HA)....529, 530
Cevizlik (Bombat) (SI)....428
**Ceylanpınar (Serêkaniyê) (UR)**....104
city transport ....619
**Cizre (Cizîr/Gziro) (ŞI)** ....472
Abdaliye Madrasah ....478
accommodation....486
Babil, ruins of....486
Bazıdba (Yafes or Bafid) Bridge....484
Belek Tower (Birca Belek)....483
city walls....478
Cizre Culture and Art Festival....484
Cizre Kalesi ....482
Deşt Bridge (Pira deştê) ....482
Ensari House ....481
Hamidiye Barracks....483
Kasrik Bridge....485
Kasrik Gorge....484
Mehmet Ağa House....481
Mosque of Noah....473
Özel Cizre İsmail Ebul-iz El Cezeri Museum ....482
places to eat ....486
Red Madrasah (Medresa Sor)....477
Tomb of Melaye Cizîrî ....477
Ulu Cami....473
Cizre dragons (door-knockers) ....476
climate....13
coffee....629
Commagenes....44
Coşkun Aral ....413
Culture and Art Festival (DI)....201
Cumhur Kılıçoğlu ....413


## Ç


Çağlayan (Tuğ) (BT) ....444
Çakmakkaya (Dolek) (EL) ....125
Çaldıran, battle of....585
Çar Melik (Çar Melîk)
Caravanserai (UR) ....78
Çarpanak Island (VA) ....559
Çarşema Reş festival ....304
**Çatak (Şax) (VA)** ....571

Albıçak Monastery.....572
Albıçak (Cunik).....572
Çatak bridge .....571
Elmacı (Sortkin).....572
Hurkan and Zeril Bridges ....571
Kanîspî Waterfalls .....571
Narlı (Xawêştan).....571
Surp Tigin Church.....572
Çavreş Plateau (BN) .....175
*çayda çıra*.....112
Çelebibağı (Eganis) (VA).....581
Çelik, Jaklin .....204
Çeltik (Tixûbê) (HA).....530
**Çemişgezek (Melkişî) (TU)**.....150
Çemişgezek (Hieropolis) Kalesi.....151
Çemişgezek Bridge .....152
Derviş Hücreleri .....153
Hamam-ı Atik.....152
Hamidiye Madrasah.....152
İn Delikleri.....153
Pulur Höyüğü.....154
Süleymaniye Camii (Kale Camii) .....152
Tomb of Ferruh-Şad Bey.....153
Ulukale .....153
Yelmaniye Camii (Eski Camii) .....152
Çeper (DI) .....283
**Çermik (Şamkûş) (DI)**.....262
Çermik Hot Spring.....263
Çermik Kalesi (Kela Çêrmûkê).....264
church remains .....265
Haburman Bridge .....265
rock art (Sinek creek) .....266
Saray Hamam .....263
synagogue.....265
Tomb of Hacı Mehmet Baba .....266
Tomb of Şeyh Fevzi.....266
Ulu Cami.....264
**Çınar (Melkis) (DI)**.....309
Aktepe (Axtobê).....310
Çemê Reş.....310
Pornak Tumulus .....309
Summer Palace of Güzelşeyh.....310
Textê Silêman Ağa .....310
Zerzevan Kalesi .....310
Çıplak Baba (Dede) Ziyareti (AD) .....35
Çiftkaya Ski Centre (BT).....446
Çir Waterfall (BN) .....168
*çorbacıs*.....623
Çukurca (Pagê) (HA).....532
**Çukurca (Çel) (HA)** .....526
Bet Biyya (Dêra Bé/ Dêra Bêadirê) Church .....528
Çeltik (Tixûbê) .....530
Çukurca Kalesi .....526
Dervişoğlu Mansion .....527
Dutluca (Bé) .....528
Emir Şaban's Madrasah.....527
Enver Parlak House.....527
Geraşin Pastures (Zozanên Geraşîn).....530
Hızır Peygamber Camii.....529
houses, traditional stone.....527
Kavaklı (Şivişk).....530
Kavuşak (Bilêcan).....530
Kayalık.....530
Kesra Mir Mansion (Qesra Mîrî) .....528
Kurudere (Marûfan).....528, 529
Mar Şalita Church.....530
Piruzbeyoğlu Mansion .....527
Tiyar Valley (Geliyê Tiyarê) ...529
Yaylak (Mezrî).....529
**Çüngüş (Çîngûş) (DI)** .....267
Ali Bey Camii .....269
Armenian Monastery.....268
Çüngüş Bridge .....271
Çüngüş Church (Dêra Çingûşê) .....270
Çüngüş Hamam .....269
Merkez Ulya Camii .....269
Tomb of Hasan Dede.....269
Ulu Cami.....270


## D


Dalda (Engesor) (BT) .....443
Dalibahçe (TU).....160
dances, Kurdish .....523
Dara (Anastasiopolis) (MA) .....394
Dara, battle of.....397
Dayıpınarı (Noktûlî) (AĞ) .....602
Dedebağ (Bağın) (TU).....156
Değirmen Suyu (Adeş) (DI) .....271
Değirmenaltı (Por) (BT).....440
Demirdelen (Kafan) (EL) .....128
Demirölçek (Zelzevan) (DI) .....310
*dengbêj* .....183, 192, 235, 541, 543, 596
Denizli (EL) .....118
Derebaşı (Giriçolya) (Şl).....491
Dereboyu (Danzik) (TU) .....162
Derecik (Rûbarok) (HA) .....535
Dereiçi (Killıt) (MA).....406
Dereova (Dêriyê) (TU).....160
Dereüstü (VA).....558
**Derik (Dêrik) (MA)** .....404
Kasrı Kanco (Qesra Qenco).....405
Rabat Kalesi.....405
Surp Kevork Church (Dera Sor).....405
Derince (Kaxik) (BA).....333
Dêrsim rebellion .....139
desserts.....627
Dev Evleri (Şl) .....498
Devecik (Kurik) (BN) .....175
Deyrul Umur (MA).....384
Deyrul Zafaran (MA) .....376
Dibekdüzü (Anavank) (VA) .....559
**Dicle (Pîran) (DI)**.....276
Pir Mansur Türbesi.....277
Rock of the King's Daughter (Kıral Kızı Taşı) .....277
Dicle Dam.....272
Dikmen (Mat) (HA).....513
**DIYARBAKIR (AMED-AMIDA-DIYARBAKER)** .....198-313
**Diyarbakır City** .....202
accommodation.....253
Ali Paşa Camii.....236
Ali Paşa quarter.....243
Archaeology Museum .....247
Art Street.....246
Aşefçiler Çarşısı (Çarşîya Eşêfçîyan).....216
Aynalı (Ayna) Minare Mosque .....236
Balıkçılarbaşı quarter .....243
Behram Paşa Camii.....236
Burnt Bazaar (Çarşîya Şewitî) .....210
Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı Museum 230
Camii Kebir quarter .....243
Çardaklı Hamam .....233
Carpentry Bazaar.....233
Cheese Bazaar .....212
Çifte Han (Bursa Hanı).....207
city walls.....223
Coppersmiths' Bazaar.....231
Dağ Kapı (Derîyê Çîyê).....203
Dağ Kapı Tower (Birca Derîyê Çiyê) .....225
Deliller Han .....212
Dengbêj House (Mala Dengbêj).....235
Deve Hamamı.....211
Dicle Fırat Culture and Arts Centre.....216
Dicle University.....222
Erdebil Mansion.....240
Esma Ocak Köşkü .....220
Evli Beden Tower (Birca Bedena Mezin).....225
Fatih Paşa Camii .....234
Four-legged Minaret .....217
Gazi Köşkü (Semanoğlu) .....239
getting there .....252
gold bazaar .....207
Hasan Pasha Han.....206
Hatun Fountain.....214
Hazreti Süleyman Camii.....229
Hevsel Bahçeleri .....245
Hotel Grand Kervanseray.....212
houses, traditional.....221
Hüsrev Paşa Camii .....239
İçkale.....228
information .....255
Keçi Tower (Birca Bizinan)...227
Keldani Kilisesi.....218
Kırıks .....218
Kurdish language institutes .....247
Lalebey quarter.....243
Mahalle.....243
Mar Petyun Chaldean Catholic Church.....218

Mardin Kapı (Derîyê Mêrdînê) ....213
Melik Ahmet Hamam....217
Melik Ahmet Paşa Camii ....215
Mesudiye Madrasah....209
Mount Kırklar....245
Muslihiddin Lari Madrasah ....216
Nebi Camii ....204
New City....246
Newroz....248
Nur Tower....226
Ömer Şeddad Camii....212
On Gözlü Bridge....241
Paşa Hamam ....222
pigeon-fancying ....244
Places to eat ....254
Protestant Church....238
Safa (İparlı /Palo) Camii ....216
Sanat Sokağı....246
Selçuklu Tower (Birca Selçukîyan)....225
St George's Church ....230
Sülüklü Han ....232
Surp Giragos Armenian Church....219
Surp Sarkis Church....238
Tomb and Fountain of Sultan Suça ....212
Tomb of Fatih Paşa....234
Tomb of Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa....235
Tomb of Sarı Saltık ....215
Ulu Cami....207
Urfa Kapı (Derîyê Ruhayê) ...214
Vahap Ağa Hamamı....205
Virantepe (Amida) Tumulus....230
Virgin Mary Church (Meryem Ana Kilisesi)....237
watermelons ....242
Wines....255
Yedi Kardeş Tower (Birca Heft Birayan)....225
Yeni Han (Xana Nû) ....231
Yeni Kapı (Derîyê Nû) ....222
Yıldız Tea Garden....214
Yoghurt Bazaar....233
Zinciriye Madrasah ....209
Ziya Gökalp Museum....216
**Diyadin (Giyadîn) (AĞ)**....605
Avnik Kalesi....607
Diyadin Kalesi....606
Günbuldu (Meya) ....606
hot springs....606
Kudret Bridge ....606
Kuje Kalesi ....607
Meya Caves....606
Mount Tendürek....606
Tokluca Kalesi ....607
Yankaya (Ali Hido) ....607
**Doğubayazıt (Bazîd) (AĞ)**....608
accommodation....615
Balık Gölü (Fish Lake) ....616
Doğubayazıt Kalesi ....615
Ehmedê Xanî Culture and Arts Festival ....609
Ehmedê Xanî Tomb....614
Ice Caves (Buz Mağarası)....616
İshak Paşa Palace ....610
Keşişin Bahçesi (Monks' Garden) ....615
meteor crater....616
places to eat ....615
Sarıçavuş....616
dolmuş....619
door-knockers, Cizre ....476
Dönemeç (HA) ....560
Dörner, Friedrich Karl....45
drinks ....629, 630
Durankaya (Silehê) (HA)....511
Duru (Dêrqam) (DI)....284
Dutluca (Bé) (HA) ....528
Düzova (Hoser) (Şİ)....470


## E


**Edremit (Erdêmed/Artemêtan) (VA)** ....560
**Eğil (Gêl) (DI)**....272
Assyrian rock tombs....274
cistern ....273
Deran Hamam....273
Eğil Kalesi (Kela Gêl)....273
Kalkan (Şelbetin) ....274
Prophets' Tombs....274
Selman Kalesi ....275
Taciyan Camii ....274
Ehmedê Xanî (Ahmede Hani)....481
Ekinözü (Habap) (EL)....124
**ELAZIĞ (ELEZÎZ/MAMURET'ÜL AZIZ)** 108-129
**Elazığ City**....110
Archaeology and Ethnography Museum ....112
Sefkar Baba Forest ....112
**Eleşkirt (Zêdkan) (AĞ)**....598
Güneykaya Ski Resorts ....599
Hayrangö ....598
Toprakkale ....598
Yığıntaş (Şadîyan) ....598
Eli Çiftliğ i (AĞ) ....595
Elmalı (Zivistan) ....559
Elmayaka (Sıpkas) ....569
Erçek Gölü (VA) ....544
**Erciş (Erdîş) (VA)**....579
Anonymous Tomb ....580
Çelebibağı (Eganis) ....581
Çelebibağı Historical Cemetery....581
Çelebibağı Höyüğü....581
Deliçay Port (Balık Bendi)....580
Erciş Kalesi ....581
Kadem Paşa Hatun Tomb....579
Urartian inscriptions....580
Erdal Yazıcı....111
**Ergani (Erxenî) (DI)**....258
Çayönü Tumulus....260
Hilar caves....258
Mount Zülküf....260
Sevenpınar festival....258
Tomb of Prophet Enûş ....261
Virgin Mary Church ....260
Erkan Oğur ....111
**Eruh (Dihê/Dih) (Sİ)** ....424
Bilgili (Nivila) ....424
Kavaközü (Tanze)....425
Mir Nasır Madrasah ....425
Üzümlük (Paris)....425
Esendere (Geliyê Dilya) (HA) ....531
Eskihisar (Marine) (MA) ....390
Esma Ocak ....220
Euphrates....118
Evdirehmanê Axtepî....311
Eyüp Nebi (Caffer) (UR) ....96


## F


Faik Bucak....89
Feqiyê Teyran ....471
Feqiyê Teyran ....541
festivals
Ağın Şenlikleri (EL)....119
Ahlat Culture Festival ....451
Ashab-ı Keyf (DI)....285
Batman and Hasankeyf Art and Culture (BA)....344
Berçelan Plateau (HA) ....511
Berxbir (Şİ) ....497
Besni (AD) ....56
cherry (EL)....120
chess (VA) ....567
chickpeas (EL)....119
Cizre Culture and Art (_İ) ....484
Cudi Culture and Art (Şİ) ....491
cultural (EL) ....112
Culture and Art (DI)....201
Çarşema Reş (DI) ....304
Ehmedê Xanî Culture and Arts (AĞ)....609
Gezin Strawberry (EL)....121
Gölbaşı grapes ....60
harvest in Bismil (DI) ....305
Hıdırellez (MU)....182
Honey and Walnut (BA) ....332
horsemanship (BN)....176
Huvde(hê) Adarê / Ser Huvdeh ....290
Kahta International Commagene (AD) ....36
Kulp Cocoon and Culture (DI) ....286
Munzur Culture and Nature (TU) ....136
Newroz....248-251
Pertek Cheese and Pekmez (TU) ....166
Serê Gulanê (DI) ....301
Sersal ....308
Sevenpınar (DI)....259
skiing (BT) ....447
sunrise (BN) ....176
tulip (MU)....182

Üzüm, Bal, Pestil ve Nar (DI) 268
Varto Koğ (MU) 189
water sports (UR) 76
water sports (UR) 78
watermelon (DI) 242
Fethiye Çetin 111
Fikret Atay 319
Fis (Deşta Fîsê) (DI) 285
food 622-631
fritillaries 506


## G


Gabriel, Albert 223
Gabriel, Albert 303
GAP project 67, 335
Garabed Monastery (VA) 559
gazelles 105
Geçimli (Dêra Mersua) (HA) 510
Geçimli (Ergen) (TU) 149
Geçitli (Livîn) (HA) 517
Gedikli (Memikan) (BA) 322
Gelincik (Kupik) (TU) 156
Genco Erkal 541
**Genç (Darahênî/Darayênî) (BN)** 170
Kral Kızı (Darayênî) Fortress 171
Sebeterias Kalesi 170
Sürekli (Diyarburg) 171
**Gercüş (Kercews/Kercos) (BA)** 348
Mor Yakup Church 348
mausoleum of Seyid Bilal 352
Vergili (Bêcirman) 352
**Gerger (Aldûş) (AD)** 51
**Gevaş (Westan) (VA)** 561
Akdamar Church 563
Alacabük Promontory 565
Arter Island 565
Halime Hatun Tomb 562
Hişet (Hêşet) Kalesi 562
İzzettin Şir (Şêr) Camii and Madrasah 561
Mount Artos (Çadır) 565
Seljuk Cemetery 562
St Thomas Monastery 565
**Gezin beach (EL)** 127
Girikê Haciyan Tumulus (DI) 256
Giyimli (Xirkanis) (VA) 578
glossary 632
Göbekli Tepe (Girê Navokê) (UR) 76
Gökçekonak (Tahsînî) (TU) 162
Gökçeli (Talavra) (BN) 168
Gölardı (VA) 557
**Gölbaşı (Serêgolê) (AD)** 60
Göldüzü (Arin) (BT) 458
Göreli (Gonêli) (TU) 161
Göründü (Muhrabit) (VA) 565
Gözeler (Çımı) (TU) 143
Gregory of Narek 460
Güçlü (Peylan) (HA) 531
**Güçlükonak (Basê) (ŞI)** 469
Ağaç valley 469
Baaynas 469
Finik Kalesi (Keleha Finikê) 470
Hezaran Camii 469
Hısta Hot Spring 471
Gülgöze (Aynvert/Îwertê) (MA) 383
Gümüşlü (Kursin) (HA) 515
Gümüşyuva (Dermetînan) (MA) 402
Günbuldu (Meya) (AĞ) 606
Güngören (Keferbê) (MA) 385
Günyurdu (Morbobo/ Merbabê) (MA) 392
**Güroymak (Norşîn/Norşên) (BT)** 448
Aşağıkolbaşı (Morx) 449
Budaklı (Axacur) 449
Güroymak (Çixor) Thermal Springs 449
Güroymak Camii 449
Kalender Baba Tomb 448
red graves 449
**Gürpınar (Xavesor) (VA)** 574
Arkboyu (Gêlbelesan) 577
cave art 578
Çavuştepe (Aspeşin) 576
Çavuştepe Kalesi (Kela Aspeşênê) 576
Dêr Meryem Monastery (Hogeacvank Kilisesi) 578
Gevirhan Cemetery 575
Giyimli (Xirkanis) 578
Güzelsu (Xoşab) 575
Hamurkesen (Zêrnak) 577
Hiris (Hêris) Churches 578
Hoşap (Xoşab) Kalesi 574
Örmeli (Kengewer) 578
St Marinos Monastery 577
Yedisalkım (Put) 578
Güzelsu (Xoşab) (VA) 575
Güzeltepe (Ajmanûk) (MU) 187


## H


Hacılar (Heciyan) (BN) 175
**HAKKÂRI (COLEMÊRG)** 502-537
**Hakkâri City** 506
accommodation 509
Ağaçdibi Falls (Sûlava Kehê) 517
Azizan Church 516
Bay Kalesi 510
Berçelan Plateau 511
Cilo-Sat summer pastures 517
Derav Church 515
Dêz Kalesi 513
Gelezzo (Gêlezo) Church 514
getting there 509
Gulêreş Baba Tomb 507
Hakkâri (Colemêrg) Kalesi 506
Helil Church (Dêra Helêlê) 510
Kaval (Qewalê) Valley 517
Kırıkdağ Valley (Geliyê Dêzê) 513
Kırmızı Kümbet (Red Tomb) and Cemetery 508
Koçanis Church 512
Kursin Church (Dêra Kursînê) 515
Lake Sat (Gola Geraşîn) 518
Lake Seyithan (Gola Seyîtxan) 512
Mar Abdişo Church 516
Mar Şalita Monastery 514
Mar Sawa Church 510
Melik Esat Cemetery 507
Meydan Madrasah 507
Mount Şine (Çiyayê Şine) 518
places to eat 509
Şaba Church 514
Sheikh Ali Mosque and Tomb 515
Sheikh Nazır's Tomb (Ziyareta Şêx Nazir) 511
Soe Church 514
Solingir Kalesi 514
Valilik Parkı 506
Zap Valley (Geliyê Zêp) (HA) 510
Zeynel Bey Madrasah 508
Halbori Springs (TU) 136
**Halfeti (Xelfetî) (UR)** 80
Rumkale 81
Houses, traditional 82
Halilviran Bridge (DI) 256
Hamidiye forces 93
**Hamur (Xemûr) (AĞ)** 600
Havaran Kalesi 601
Karlıca (Sosik) 601
Kız Kalesi 601
Sosik Kalesi 601
Sürmeli Mehmet Paşa Tomb 600
Hamurkesen (Zêrnak) (VA) 577
Han of El-Aman (Rahva/Rehwa) (BT) 440
handicrafts, Hakkâri 524
**Hani (Hênê) (DI)** 278
Ankeris (Ava Sipî) Spring 280
Hatuniye (Zeynebiye) Madrasah 278
Mosque and Tomb of Seyyid Caferi Tayyar 280
Sheikh Bedrettin Türbesi 280
Ulu Cami 278
Harabeköy (Harabedar) (VA) 560
Harmanlı (Pînkas) (BT) 447
**Harran (Xarran/Heran) (UR)** 99
ancient university 101
Bazda Caves 101
Han El-Ba'Rur Caravanserai 101
Harran höyük (Höyüğü) 100
Harran Kalesi 99
Senemağar 103
Soğmatar (Eski Sumatar) 102
Şuayb Ancient City 101

**Harput (Xarpêt) (EL)** .....113
Ağa Camii .....115
Alacalı Camii .....115
Arap Baba Tomb .....115
Cimşit Bey Hamam .....116
Harput Dabakhane Spa .....116
Harput Kalesi .....113
Harput Museum .....116
Hoca Hasan Hamam .....115
Kurşunlu Camii .....115
Mansur Baba's Tomb .....116
Saray Hatun Mosque .....116
Ulu Cami .....114
Virgin Mary
(Meryem Ana) Church .....113
**Hasankeyf (Heskîf) (BA)** .....334
accommodation .....345
Büyük Saray .....338
caves .....342
citadel .....337
Culture and Art Festival .....344
Darphane .....341
İmam Abdullah
Mausoleum .....341
Kızlar Camii .....341
Koç Camii .....340
Küçük Kale .....341
Küçük Saray .....338
Mor Aho Monastery
(Deyr Mahar) .....342
Mosque of Rızkıye
(Er-Rızk) .....336
old bridge .....337
Ottoman Hamam .....342
places to eat .....345
Sultan Suleiman Camii .....340
Ulu Cami .....338
Zeynel Bey Mausoleum .....342
Haspet Kalesi (MU) .....186
Havuzlu (Hapo) (TU) .....143
Haydaran Cave Tombs (AD) .....34
Hayrangö (AĞ) .....598
Hazine Piri Gate (VA) .....559
**Hazro (Hezro) (DI)** .....292
carpets .....293
Hacı Abdulfettah Yazıcı
Seydah Hacı Tomb .....293
Halı Atölyesi .....293
Tercil Kalesi
(Kela Tercilê) .....293
Tomb of Sheikh
Hasan Ezraki .....293
Ulu Cami
(Mizgefta Hezro) .....292
Hendekköy (Xendek) (ŞI) .....470
Hezaran (ŞI) .....469
Hıdırellez Festival (MU) .....182
Hırhal Plateau (BN) .....175
**Hilvan (Curnê Reş) (UR)** .....86
Hisaraltı (Rebet) (MA) .....405
**Hizan (Xîzan) (BT)** .....460
Hizan Kalesi .....461
Monastery of the Cross
(Aparank) .....461
Nazar Bridge .....461
Neresin Bridge (Pira Azê) .....461
Otluca (Çemê Karê) .....461
Sırmaçek (Gayda/Xeyda) .....461
Yemişlik (Narek) .....460
hostels .....620
hotels .....620
hunting .....166
Huseynê Orgînosî .....183
Huvde(hê) Adarê festival .....290
Hüsrev Paşa .....552

## I/İ

ibises .....84
İbrahim Hakkı .....421
İbrahim Tatlıses .....71
**İdil (Herzex/Hezex) (ŞI)** .....487
Cehennem Deresi
(Newala Koliyê) .....488
Fountain of Tamerlane .....488
Kela Elo Dîno .....489
Mor Yakup .....489
Öğündük (Mehdê) .....489
Virgin Mary Church .....485
Yarbaşı (Hespist) .....488
Îdrîsê Bedlîsî .....434
Ilısu (Germav) (MA) .....385
Ilısu Dam .....335
İncekaya (Kormas) (SI) .....428
İncekaya (Por) (BT) .....444
İncesu (Tilmîn) (DI) .....300
İnkaya (DI) .....288
İsmail Ebul-iz .....476
İsmail Fakirullah .....421
Ismet Sami Turanlı .....37

## J

jewellery, filigree .....364, 380

## K

**Kâhta (Kolik) (AD)** .....36
Arsameia (AD) .....42
Cendere Bridge (AD) .....39
Datgeli (AD) .....39
Erikdere (Sako) (AD) .....38
Haroon Kalesi (AD) .....39
Kâhta International
Commagene Festival .....39
Karakuş Tumulus (AD) .....38
Kocahisar
(Eski Kahta) (AD) .....40
Şeytan Köprüsü (AD) .....40
Yeni Kale (AD) .....40
Kahtalı Mıçı .....37
Kale (Ginç) (BN) .....173
Kale Yolu (Bozikan) (BA) .....333
Kalecik (Bünisra) (MA) .....389
Kaleköyü (TU) .....156
Kaletepe (Dehlik) (BA) .....330
Kalkan (Şelbetin) (DI) .....274
Karaali Spa (UR) .....76
Karabey (Serdeşt) (HA) .....532
Karacadağ (Qerejdax) (UR) .....89
**Karakoçan (Dep) (EL)** .....127
Garip Baba Tomb .....128
Golan Thermal Spring .....128
Pir Cemal Abdal Tomb .....128
Sefkar Baba
(Seyyid İbrahim) Tomb .....128
Karaköprü
(Karasu Bridge) (DI) .....256
Karlıca (Sosik) (AĞ) .....601
**Karlıova (Kanîreş) (BN)** .....174
Hacılar and Çerme
springs .....175
horsemanship festival .....176
Mount Kalatepe .....176
sunrise festival .....176
waterfalls .....175
Kavaklı (Şivişk) (HA) .....530
Kavaközü (Tanze) (SI) .....415, 425
Kaval Kamışı (HA) .....517
Kayadelen (Kunav) (MU) .....189
Kayalıdere (Xinzora jêr) (MU) .....190
Kayalık (HA) .....530
Kayas (Veras) (BT) .....461
Kaymaz (Mecingir) (VA) .....556
Kaynarca (Başkan) (MU) .....191
Kaynarpınar (Liçik) (BN) .....175
Kazan (Tiyar) (HA) .....529
Kazo .....541
kebab shops .....623
**Keban (EL)** .....117
Keban Dam (EL) .....117
*kebapçıs* .....623
Keskin (Burmî) (SI) .....427
Keşiş (Turna) Gölü (VA) .....544, 557
khatchkars .....564
Kırkağaç (Bênat) (ŞI) .....469
Kırköy (Sirong) (MU) .....187
Kırlık (Gawir Horî) .....96
Kırmızı Köprü (Danzik) (TU) .....162
Kışlacık (Lêfê) (SI) .....415
Kıyıdüzü (Kızwak) (BT) .....444
**Kızıltepe (Qoser) (MA)** .....398
Dunaysır Bridge .....399
Gire Harzem .....399
Şah Kulu Bey Türbesi .....399
Tell Ermeni Church .....399
Ulu Cami .....398
**Kiğı (Kêxî) (BN)** .....176
Çanakçı Village Church .....177
Güney Mahalle Church .....177
Kerek Hamam .....176
Kiğı Kalesi .....177
Piltan Bey Mosque .....177
Selenk Bridge .....178
kilims .....519
Kocaalan (Dîrey) (DI) .....277
Kolbaşı (Şavita) .....533
Konak (Koçanis) (HA) .....512
Konakpınar (Eynqesir) (SI) .....417
Konuklu (Duderya) (DI) .....287
**Kovancılar
(Qowanciyan) (EL)** .....124
Kovankaya (Hozû Mêz) (ŞI) .....497

**Kozluk (Hezo/Hazzo) (BA)** .....328
Bekirhan (Kaniya Henê).....331
Hallan Çemi (Çemê Helan) .....330
Hazzo Kalesi .....328
Hıdır Bey Mosque.....329
İbrahim Bey Camii .....330
Kandil Kalesi .....330
Rabat Kalesi.....330
Taşlıdere Thermal Springs...331
Taşlıdere Yıldız Springs .....331
Köprücük (Kerpê) (HA).....531
Kös Spa (BN).....168
Köseler (Kose) (AĞ) .....604
Kösreli (Hesena) (ŞI) .....491, 492
**Kulp (Pasûr) (DI)**.....286
Ağaçlı (Cixsê) .....287
Andok .....289
Berbihîv .....289
House of Telli Ağa .....287
İnkaya (Kanikan) Caves .....288
Konuklu (Duderya) .....288
Surp Kevork Church (Simetaq).....288
Taşköprü (Godernê).....288
Kumgölü (Emerka) (DI) .....290
Kurdish alphabet, creation of...475
Kurdish language courses .....247
**Kurtalan (Misirc) (SI)** .....416
Avuski Bridge .....417
Baykent Fortress.....416
Erzen .....416
Konakpınar (Eynqesir).....417
Yunuslar Köyü (Şêx Ûnis).....416
Kuruca (Gazik) (BN).....168
Kurudere (Marûfan) (HA)..528, 529
Kurukavak (Hamdûna) (BA) .....320
Küçükdere (Orişê) (HA).....532

## L

Lake Van (VA) .....544
Lake Van, monster of.....561
lamb-shearing .....498, 511
languages .....634
**Lice (Licê) (DI)** .....281
Birkleyn Caves.....281
Caves of the Ashab-ı Keyf ...284
Çeper Hanı (Xana Kelê) .....283
Dakyanus .....284
Ulu Cami.....281
liquor stores.....630
Lole, Serkis Elyas.....366
Lucian .....53

## M

Maaz bin Cebel .....290
**Maden (EL)**.....126
Mahmut Baksi .....329
Mahsun Kırmızıgül .....166
Malabadi Bridge (Pira Mala Badê) (DI).....303
**Malazgirt (Milazgir) (MU)** .....194
Bostan Kale.....196
Hatun Bridge.....195
Kız Bridge.....195
Malazgirt Kalesi.....195
Tıkızlı Kale.....196
**MARDIN (MÊRDIN)** .....354
**Mardin City**.....358
Abdullatif (Latifiye) Mosque.....362
accommodation.....371
American missionary buildings.....361
bazaars.....363
Deyrul Zafaran.....376
Emineddin Quarter.....369
Firdevs Pavilion .....370
getting there .....371
Hatuniyye Madrasah .....367
houses, traditional.....359
jewellery.....364
Kasım Tuğmaner Camii.....362
Kasimiye (Sultan Kasım) Madrasah .....368
Kayseriye (Bedesten) Bazaar.....362
Kırklar Church .....360
Mardin Kalesi .....358
Mardin Museum .....358
Melik Mahmut (Bab al-Sur) Mosque.....368
Mor Hürmüzd Church .....362
Mor Mihayel (Burç) Monastery.....369
Mort Shmuni Church.....370
Necmeddin Quarter.....370
places to eat .....372
post office.....366
Red Church .....364
restaurants .....372
Reyhaniye Camii and Bazaar.....367
Savurkapı Hamam (Bab'ussor Hamamı).....367
Şehidiye Camii and Madrasah .....365
Sıhhi Emir Hamam .....364
Sor Hovsep Church.....360
Surp Kevork Church .....364
telkari .....364
Ulu Cami.....363
Ulu Cami Hamam .....363
Virgin Mary Church .....358
Zinciriye (Sultan İsa) Madrasah .....365
Margosyan, Mıgırdiç.....204
**Mazgirt (Mêzgir) (TU)**.....155
Bağın (Dedebağ) Hot Springs .....157
Bağın Kalesi.....156
Gelincik (Kupik) (TU) .....156
Kaleköyü Kalesi.....156
Mazgirt Kalesi.....155
Tomb and Mosque of Elti Hatun.....155
Tomb of Baba Mansur.....157
Tomb of Çoban Baba .....156
**Mazıdağı (Şemrex) (MA)**.....400
Arısu Caravanserai .....401
Çelkani .....403
Dêrmetînan Kalesi (Keleha Metîna) .....402
Gümüşyuva (Dermetînan) .....402
House of Ömer Ağa (Qesra Emer Axa).....400
Kırk fountain .....403
Piğretap Türbesi .....401
Şamrah Kalesi (Keleha Mazîdaxê).....401
Tomb of Sultan Şeyhmus.....403
Yağmur (Avrihan) .....402
Mehmed Uzun .....91
Mehmet Ruhi Su.....541
Melayê Bateyî.....505
Melayê Cizîrî .....250, 251, 477-479
Mele Xelîl .....423
Mem û Zîn, legend of .....480, 481, 483
Memê Şivan, legend of .....495
Mercimekli (Habisnas) (MA).....383
Mesopotamia .....12
Mesopotamian mythology .....371
Mesulum, Albert .....205
Metin and Kemal Kahraman ....138
Mewlana Xalidê Bexdadî.....423
meze .....622
Mırbi (Ilgar) (UR).....85
**Midyat (Midyad) (MA)**.....380
accommodation.....385
Anıtlı Virgin Mary Church ....385
Cevat Paşa Mosque .....382
churches .....381
Ilısu Baths .....385
Midyat Çevre Kültür Evi (Devlet Konukevi).....381
Mor Aksnoyo .....381
Mor Barsavmo Church .....381
Mor Estafanos Church.....385
Mor Gabriel Monastery .....384
Mor Hadbsabo Church .....383
Mor İzozoel Church.....383
Mor Kiryakos Church .....383
Mor Loozor Monastery.....383
Mor Sobo Church .....385
Mor Yakup Church .....382
Mort Shmuni .....381
places to eat .....385
Ulu Cami.....382
Mikail and Ahmed Aslan.....138
milkmaids .....496
Mimar Sinan ....215, 236, 452, 552
Minua (Şamran) Canal (VA) .....556
Mîr Bedirxan .....474
Mollakent (MU).....193
monster of Lake Van.....561
Mor Gabriel Monastery (MA) .....384
Mount Ararat .....594, 597
Mount Nemrut (AD) .....44-50
Mount Nemrut (BT).....445

Mount Süphan .....457
Mungan, Murathan .....357
Munzur Baba,legend of.....145
Munzur Mountains (TU) .....136
Munzur Valley
National Park (TU) .....135, 141
**Muradiye (Bêgirî) (VA)** .....582
Bend-i Mahi Bridge.....582
Bend-i Mahi Waterfalls .....583
Muradiye Bargiri Kalesi .....582
Şeytan Köprüsü.....583
St Stephanos Monastery.....584
Murat Bridge (MU).....186
Murat Hanı
Caravanserai (EL) .....125
Musa Anter (Apê Musa) .....387
**MUŞ (MÛŞ)** .....180-197
**Muş (Mûş) City**.....182
Accommodation.....185
Alaaddin Bey Complex.....183
Getting there .....185
Hacı Şeref Mosque.....185
İbrahim Samidi Tomb .....184
Meryem Ana Church.....183
Muş Kalesi .....183
Places to eat .....185
Ulu Cami.....184
Yıldızlı Caravanserai.....185
Muş Ski Centre (MU).....187
mythology, Mesopotamian .....371


## N


Narlı (Xawêştan) (VA) .....571
Natalie, Shahan .....111
**Nazımiye**
**(Kızılkilise/Kislê) (TU)**.....158
Aşağı Doluca (Harik)
Hot Spring .....160
*cem evi*.....159
Dereova Waterfalls
(Gelin Pınarı) .....160
Düzgün Baba's Tomb.....159
Nemrut Dağı (AD).....44-50
Nestorians.....378, 474, 508, 510-516, 529, 530, 534
Nevala Çori
(Newala Çorî) (UR) .....86
Newroz .....248-251
Noah Pilgrimage Site (Şî).....492
Noah's Ark.....465, 480, 492, 594
Nûredîn Zaza .....111
**Nusaybin (Nisêbîn) (MA)**.....386
Beyaz Su (Ava Spî).....392
columns, ancient.....389
Gırnavaz .....389
Günyurdu (Morbobo / Merbabê) .....392
Haytam Kalesi .....392
Kalecik (Bünisra).....389
Mitanni Kültür Merkezi .....388
Mor Aho.....392
Mor Augin Monastery
(Dêr Marogê) .....391
Mor Bobo.....392
Mor Melkê Monastery .....393
Mor Şemun.....392
Mor Yakup Church .....387
Mor Yoret (Dêr Çepkê) .....390
Mor Yuhanon Church
(Dêr Xirabkê) .....391
old barracks.....388
railway bridge, German.....388
Sivrice.....392
station .....388
Üçköy (Sêderî) .....393
Zeynel Abidin Mosque .....388
nuts .....627


## O


Obelisks (VA) .....556
Oduncular (Boryan) (BT) .....445
off-licenses.....630
Oğul (Tal) (HA) .....516
Oğuz (Şimzê) (BA) .....320
Osman Sebrî.....37
Otluca (Çemê Karê) (BT) .....461
Otluca (Qizilce) .....259
**Ovacık (Pulur) (TU)**.....140
El Baba Camping Resort.....141
Kepir Plateau.....143
Kırkmerdiven Plateau.....142
Mercan Valley.....143
Munzur Baba Gözeleri .....142


## Ö


*öğretmenevi*.....620
Öğündük (Mehdê) (Şî).....489
*öküzgözü* grapes.....110, 119
Ömürlü (Piran) (MA) .....401
Örenkale (Pizan) (VA).....587
Örmeli (Kengewer) (VA) .....578
Öveç (Seravinis) (HA).....514
Özlüce Dam (BN).....176


## P


Palanlı Caves (AD) .....34
**Palu (Palo) (EL)** .....122
Cemşit Bey's Tomb .....123
Merkez Mosque.....123
Palu Bridge .....123
Palu Church .....123
Palu Fortress .....123
Ulu Cami.....123
partridge, red-legged .....519
*pastane*.....623
pastries.....628
patisseries.....623
**Patnos (Panos) (AĞ)** .....603
Aznavur (Kop).....603
Aznavur Tumulus.....603
Girik Tumulus.....604
Köseler (Kose).....604
Patnos Tombs.....604
Taşkin (Taşxuna) .....604
Zirekli .....604
Peacock Angel.....326
*Peganum harmala* .....100
Perre Ancient City (Pirin) (AD) ....33
**Pertek (Pêrtag) (TU)**.....146
Çelebi Ağa Camii.....146
Derun-i Hisar
(Sağman) Kalesi.....148
Monastery of Geçimli.....149
Pertek Kalesi .....147
Sağman Camii .....148
Yukarı (Baysungur) Camii ...147
**Pervari**
**(Xisxêr/Berwarî) (SI)**.....426
Aşağı Balcılar (Malki) .....427
Derya Burmi .....427
honey.....427
petroglyphs.....532
pigeon-fancying.....244
Pir Abok.....371
public transport .....618
**Pülümür**
**(Pîlemor/Pilemoriye) (TU)**.....161
Ağlayan Rocks.....162
Buz Mağarası.....162
Gelin Mağaraları.....161
Hatun Bridge.....161
Kırmızı Bridge.....162
Koç-Koyun graves .....162
Zenginpınar (Zage)
Waterfalls .....162


## Q


Queen Belkıs Thermal Waters
Festival (DI) .....262


## R


*rakı*.....140, 630
Republic of Ararat .....609
restaurants.....622
rock art (VA).....573


## S


Sabians.....102
Saglamtaş (Çırık) (TU).....162
Sağman (TU).....148
Sakızlı (Bankir) (MA).....401
Sakyol (Pulur) (TU).....154
Saladin.....296
salt production.....161
**Samsat**
**(Somsat/Şemîzînan) (AD)**.....53
Sarıçavuş (AĞ) .....616
Saroyan, William .....434
**Sason**
**(Kabil Cevz / Qabilcewz) (BA)**..332
Bozikan Kalesi .....333
Kom Monastery.....333
Pertukan Kalesi .....333
Savaşan (Belesor) (UR) .....82
**Savur (Stewr) (MA)** .....406
Başkavak (Ahmedi).....407

Dereiçi (Kıllıt) ....406
Hisarkaya Köyü Kalesi (Keleha Pozreş) ....407
Selahedîn Eyûbî ....296
Selim Temo ....319
Serê Gulanê (DI) ....301
sericulture ....286
Sersal ....308
Sertap Erener ....413
Servet Kocakaya ....166
Seven Sleepers ....284
Sevenpınar (Hilar) (DI) ....258
Sey Qajî (Seyîdê Qajî) ....138
Seyîd Ubeydullah ....462
Seyit Hasan (Bakarak) (DI) ....308
Shahmeran ....371
sheep-shearing ....498, 511
Sheikh Said rebellion ....139, 188
Sherefxan Bidlisi (Şerefxanê Bedlîsî) ....250
*sıra geceleri* ....68, 74, 240
Sırmaçek (Gayda/Xeyda) (BT) ....461
**SIIRT (SÊRT)** ....410-431
**Siirt City** ....412
accommodation ....415
Asakir Çarşı Mosque ....413
Ayn Salip Fountain ....414
Cave of Ekşili Sulu ....415
Church of Deyri-Dara ....414
clock tower ....414
Cumhuriyet Camii ....414
Deyr Mir Yakup Monastery ....414
Eski Siirt Evi ....414
getting there ....415
Kışlacık (Lêfê) ....415
Lif Spa ....415
Mir Nasreddin Madrasah ....415
Nasreddin Bridge ....415
places to eat ....415
Sağlarca (Billoris) Spa ....415
Ulu Cami ....413
silk production ....286
**Silopi (Girikê Amo) (Şİ)** ....490
accommodation ....492
Bajarê Karda ....491
Cudi Culture and Art Festival ....491
Dêra Girê Çolya ....491
Derebaşı (Giriçolya) ....491
Kela Seîd Beg ....491
Kösreli (Hesena) ....491, 492
Noah Pilgrimage Site ....492
places to eat ....492
**Silvan (Farqîn) (DI)** ....294
Ayyubid Burcu (Aslanlı Silvan Burcu) ....298
Belediye Camii ....297
Boşat Kalesi ....302
Broken Minaret ....297
city walls ....297
Hasuni Caves ....300
Kulfa Kapısı (Deriyê Qulfayê) ....298
mansions ....300
Minara Qot ....297
Selahaddin Eyyubi Camii ....295
Ulu Cami ....295
Zembilfiroş Kalesi ....298
Sironk Church (Dêra Sirongê) (MU) ....187
**Siverek (Girê Sor) (UR)** ....88
Gülabibey Camii ....89
Hüseyin Çeribaşı Camii ....89
Paşa Konağı ....90
Siverek Kalesi ....89
ski resort ....90
traditional architecture ....89
Ulu Cami ....89
Sivrice (MA) ....392
**Sivrice (Xox/Dzovk) (EL)** ....120
cherry festival ....120
Hazar Lake ....120
Hazarbaba Mountain ....121
Gezin strawberry festival ....121
skiing ....90, 121, 168, 187, 440, 446, 593, 599
snacks ....627
So (Soe) (HA) ....514
**Solhan (Bongilan) (BN)** ....172
Floating Island ....172
Kale (Ginç) Mosque ....173
Southeastern Anatolia Project ....67, 335
Surp Garabet Monastery (Dêra Çengelî) (MU) ....187
Süphan, Mount ....457
Süryani ....378
Syrian Christians ....378
Syrian Orthodox ....376, 378, 379


## Ş


Şakiro (Şakir Deniz) ....596
*şal û şapik* ....424, 499
**ŞANLIURFA (RUHA)** ....64-107
**Şemdinli (Şemzînan) (HA)** ....534
Bağlar (Nehrî) ....535
Dêrareş Church ....534
Derecik (Rûbarok) ....535
dervish lodge ....535
Graveyard of Seyid Abdullah ....536
Haruna pass ....535
Kayme Palace (Kayme Sarayı) ....535
Kelat Palace ....536
Şapatan pass ....535
Taş Köprü (Pira Begirtê) ....535
Yayla (Bedgaruk) ....534
Şenoba (Sêgirik) (Şİ) ....495
Şerefxanê Bedlîsî ....434
Şêx Adî ....505
**ŞIRNAK (ŞERNAX)** ....464-501
**Şırnak City** ....467
Abdurrahman Ağa Mansion (Qesra Axayê Sor) ....467
accommodation ....468
Balveren (Gundikê Melê) ....467
Besta Meyremê spa ....467
getting there ....468
Nasravan spa ....467
Osman Ağa Mansion (Qesra Osman Axa) ....467
places to eat ....468
**Şirvan (Şêrwan) (SI)** ....428
Budakoglu Salih Bey (Beg) Mausoleum ....429
Cevizlik (Bombat) ....428
Deyr-i Dara Kilisesi ....428
İncekaya (Kormas) Fortress ....428
İrun Fortress ....428
Salih Bey Türbesi ....428
Şivan Perwer ....91


## T


*takht* ....318
Taşkin (Taşxuna) (AĞ) ....604
Taşköprü (Godernê) (DI) ....288
tattoos ....402
**Tatvan (Tetwan) (BT)** ....442
accommodation ....447
Çiftkaya Ski Centre ....446
Crater Lake (Krater Gölü) ....445
Dalda (Engesor) Cemetery ....443
getting there ....447
Harmanlı Waterfalls ....447
Hüsrev Paşa Mosque ....444
İncekaya (Por) ....444
Kıyıdüzü (Kızwak) ....444
Küçüksu (Kotum) ....442
places to eat ....447
St George (Anania) Monastery ....444
Tokaçlı (Kurtkan) ....444
Tomb of Abdülcelil Behtani ....447
tomb of Hüseyin Dede ....444
Tuğ Kilisesi ....444
Urartian Cemetery ....442
Tatvan Eastern Anatolia Fair ....442
tea ....629
teachers' houses (accommodation) ....620
Tekel ....630
Tekevler (Gundênû) (BA) ....333
*telkari* ....364, 380
Terdöken (Tercil) (DI) ....293
Tıkızlı (Fişva) (MU) ....196
Tigem (UR) ....105
Tigris ....239
Tilkitepe Tumulus (Girê Rovîya) (VA) ....556
Titriş Caravanserai (UR) ....79
tobacco ....441
Topçatan (Kanîkork) (AĞ) ....595
transhumance ....516
transport system ....618
travel dictionary ....634
**TUNCELİ (DERSIM)** ....130-163
**Tunceli City** ....134
accommodation ....137
Anafatma Natural Springs ....135
getting there ....137
Kutuderesi Picnic Site ....135
Munzur Valley National Park (TU) ....135
places to eat ....137

Tur Abdin ..... 379
**Tut (Tût) (AD)** ..... 52
**Tutak (Tutax/Dûtax) (AĞ)** ..... 602
Türkmenhacı (DI) ..... 308

## U

Ubeydullah ..... 462
**Uludere (Qilaban) (ŞI)** ..... 493
Gurkel Kalesi ..... 495
Kali Kalesi ..... 494
Memê Şivan Kalesi (Kela Memê) ..... 495
Şenoba (Sêgirik) ..... 495
Ulukale (TU) ..... 153
Ulutürk (DI) ..... 308
Urartian road (BN) ..... 168
**URFA (RUHA)** ..... 64-107
**Urfa City** ..... 67
accommodation ..... 74
Akçarlar House ..... 73
bazaars ..... 71
Eski Ömeriye Camii ..... 72
Eyyubi Madrasah ..... 71
getting there ..... 74
Halil Camii ..... 69
Halil-ür Rahman (Balıklı Göl) 69
hans ..... 72
İbrahim Halilullah Dergahı ..... 69
İbrahim Madrasah ..... 69
Museum of Urfa ..... 73
places to eat ..... 74
Selahattin Eyyubi Camii ..... 70
Ulu Cami ..... 70
Urfa Kalesi ..... 69
Vali Bey Hamam ..... 71
Uzbek minority ..... 104
Uzundere (Belzer) (BN) ..... 168

## Ü

Üçbudak (Delikan) (EL) ..... 128
Üçköy (Sêderî) (MA) ..... 393
Üçkuyular (Faqîra) (BA) ..... 320
Üçtepe (Kerxê) (DI) ..... 305
Ülgen (Mêrenî) (DI) ..... 293
Üzüm, Bal, Pestil ve Nar Festivali (DI) ..... 268
Üzümcü (Dizê) (HA) ..... 515
Üzümlük (Paris) (SI) ..... 425

## V

**VAN (WAN)** ..... 538-559
Van cats ..... 553
**Van City** ..... 542
accommodation ..... 554
Analı Kız Temple ..... 547
bazaars ..... 545
Binbir Merdivenler (Thousand and One Steps Stairway) ..... 549
Çifte Kilise ..... 552
cistern ..... 549
Citadel ..... 546
getting there ..... 554
house, traditional ..... 547
Hüsrev Paşa Cami ..... 552
İçkale ..... 548
Kaya Celebi Camii ..... 551
Kızıl Camii (Red Mosque) ..... 552
Mala Dengbêj ..... 543
Meher Gate ..... 546
Miri (Arpa) Storehouse ..... 552
Old Van ..... 550
places to eat ..... 554
Rock of Van ..... 546
Sardur Tower (Sardur Burcu) ..... 547
Süleyman Hab Camii ..... 550
Surp Vartan Church ..... 552
Tombs of Sarduri I, Ishpuini and Menua ..... 548
Tombs of Sarduri II and Argişti ..... 549
Toprakkale ..... 545
Ulu Cami (Old Van) ..... 551
Urartu Carpet Company ..... 545
Van Kalesi ..... 546
Van Kalesi Höyüğü (Tushpa) 550
Van Museum ..... 543
Van Örnek Evi ..... 547
Yeni Saray (New Palace) ..... 549
Van Kalecik (VA) ..... 556
Varak Monastery (VA) ..... 557
**Varto (Gimgim) (MU)** ..... 188
Barikon Hot Springs ..... 191
Gadiza Waterfall ..... 191
Hamurpet Lakes (Golên Xamirpêtê) ..... 190
Kayalıdere Kale ..... 190
Kaynarca Bridge ..... 191
Koğ Festival ..... 189
Kunav Caves ..... 189
Urartian tombs ..... 189
Vedat Dalokay ..... 111
vegetarians ..... 626
Vergili (Bêcirman) (BA) ..... 352
Veysel Karani ..... 419
**Viranşehir (Wêranşar) (UR)** ..... 92
Akkese (Hanefiş) Church ..... 96
Çemdin Kalesi (Keleha Çimdîn) ..... 95
city walls ..... 93
houses, traditional ..... 94
İbrahim Paşa Konak ..... 93
Kızlar Sarayı ..... 95
Martyrium (Dikmen) ..... 93
Tomb of Eyüp ..... 96
Viranşehir Kale ..... 93
vocabulary ..... 634
von Moltke, Helmut ..... 45

## W

walking sticks ..... 450
water sports (UR) ..... 76, 79
watermelons ..... 242
weather ..... 13
weddings in Uludere (ŞI) ..... 493
weddings, Kurdish ..... 520
wines in Diyarbakır ..... 255

## X

Xaço, Karapêtê ..... 349

## Y

Yağcılar (Dêra Çengelî) (MU) ..... 187
Yağmur (Avrihan) (MA) ..... 402
Yağmurlu ..... 102
Yanal (Soredêr) (VA) ..... 588
Yanıkkaya (Simaîlka) (BA) ..... 330
Yankaya (Ali Hido) (AĞ) ..... 607
Yarımca (Awêna) (ŞI) ..... 469
Yaşar Kemal ..... 541, 597
Yaygın (Nahye) (MU) ..... 187
Yayla (Bedgaruk) (HA) ..... 534
Yaylak (Eskar) (DI) ..... 287
Yaylak (Mezrî) (HA) ..... 529
Yazihan (Mezrikê) (BA) ..... 322
Yedisalkım (Put) (VA) ..... 578
Yelkenli (Reşadiye/Sorp) (BT) ..... 447
Yemişlik (Narek) (BT) ..... 460
Yenidal (Çirik) (BN) ..... 168
Yeşilbelen (Gaxmud) (EL) ..... 128
Yezidi condolence house (BA) ..... 322
Yezidis ..... 324-327
Yığıntaş (Şadîyan) (AĞ) ..... 598
Yılmaz Erdoğan ..... 94, 561
Yılmaz Güney ..... 91, 426
Yolbilen (Haftemal) (UR) ..... 94
Yolçatı Ski Resort (BN) ..... 168
Yolçati (Koxuz) (BT) ..... 459
Yolveren (Çinêra) (BA) ..... 320
Yonca Tepe Kalesi (VA) ..... 556
Yoncatepe Kalesi (VA) ..... 557
Yunuslar köyü (Şêx Ûnis) (SI) ..... 416
Yücekonak (Qavuman) (EL) ..... 128
**Yüksekova (Gever) (HA)** ..... 531
accommodation ..... 533
Büyükçiftlik (Xirwate) ..... 533
Çukurca (Pagê) ..... 532
Esendere (Geliyê Dilya) ..... 531
Güçlü (Peylan) ..... 531
Hırvata (Muşaşir) remains ..... 533
Karabey (Serdeşt) ..... 532
Köprücük (Kerpêl) ..... 531
Küçükdere (Orişê) ..... 532
petroglyphs ..... 532
places to eat ..... 533
Şavita Church ..... 533
Yüksel Yavuz ..... 127

## Z

Zağ Cave (BN) ..... 168
Zahiro ..... 192
Zap River ..... 510, 587
Zap Valley (Geliyê Zêp) (HA) ..... 510
Zaro (Zoro) Ağa ..... 434
Zirekli (AĞ) ..... 604
Ziyaret (SI) ..... 419

# PHOTO CREDITS

**Abdi Demirtaş:** Şanlıurfa:4, 8, 11, 13, 23, 25, 27, 67, 68, 71, 72, 75, 76, 77.Intro:23. **Abdurrahman Nas:** Şırnak: 45, 47, 50. **Adem Sönmez:** Adıyaman: 29.Ağrı:35, 40.Batman:47, 56. Bingöl:1, 22.Bitlis: 8, 16, 27, 48.Diyarbakır: 84, 85, 170. Muş:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 26, 6.Siirt:1. Şanlıurfa:3, 43.Van: 45, 47.Intro: 9, 14, 36, 35, 38.
**Ağrı Culture Centre:** Ağrı:19, 20, 30, 33. **Alişan Ünlü:** Tunceli:13. **Aurelio Montanar:** Diyarbakır:203, 204, 206, 209, 210, 211, 212.Intro:30. **Aydın Batur:** Bingöl: 18, 23, 28, **Batman Municipality:** Batman:3, 7, 9, 25, 66, 67. **Besni Municipality:** Adıyaman:75, 76, 77. **Bismil Municipality:** Diyarbakır:223, 225, , 226, 227, 228, 229.Dr. **Birgül Açıkyıldız:** Batman:19, 21, 22.
**Cemal Doş:** Tunceli:7.**Ceylanpınar Municipality:** Şanlıurfa:79, 80, **Cizre Municipality:** Hakkari: 63. Şırnak:3, 5, 13, 16, 17, 19, 26, 27, 28, 30, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 43, 44, 60, 66, 68, 2, 42, 11, 29.Intro:6. **Derik Municipality:** Mardin: 74. **DİHA:** Ağrı: 22.Diyarbakır:79.Hakkari:13.Siirt: 32.Şanlıurfa: 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 35, 37, 59. Şırnak:54.Van:9, 20, 27, 37, 62. Intro: 22. Food&Drinks: 26. **Dick Osseman:** Adıyaman: 41. Batman: 46. Bingöl: 3, 5, 6. Bitlis: 4, 14, 21. Siirt: 6. Şanlıurfa:31. Elazığ:9, 12, 14, 15, 18, 37, 46, 47. Food&Drinks:6. **Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality:** Bingöl:12. Diyarbakır:2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 17, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 35, 41, 50, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 67, 68, 69, 75, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 87, 90, 94, 96, 102, 104, 120, 128, 132, 137, 106, 111. Elazığ: 32. Intro: 3, 7, 8, Transport:2, 3 **Doğubayazıt Municipality:** Ağrı: 5, 10, 11, 12, 36, 38, 48, 6.Intro:39. Dictionary: 1.**Erdoğan Çakar:** Tunceli:32. **Eleşkirt Municipality:** Ağrı:15. **Emin Bal:** Hakkari: 30, 31, 34, 41, 67, 68, 69. Şırnak:59, 62, 63, 64, 67, 70, 71. **Emin Sarı:** Elazığ: 40, Van72, 74. **Etik Ajans Archive:** Bingöl 2, 10, 11, 15, 29.Diyarbakır: 4, 116, 118.Hakkari: 2.Food&Drinks:9 , 11, 23, 24, Dictionary: 2, 9, 10, 11. **Geylani Adıyaman:** Bingöl:7.Bitlis: 23, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 38, 39, 35, 40, 41, 43.Şanlıurfa:21, 22. Intro: 37. **Hakkari Municipality:** Hakkari: 7, 8, 18, 21, 32, 35, 36, 37, 51.
**Headbani:** Adıyaman:61, 62, 64. **Hüsamettin Bahçe:** Adıyaman: 56, 57. Ağrı:18 Batman: 18, 20, Diyarbakır: 51, 53, 65, 98, 99, 100, 115, 121.240. Hakkari:5. Van:49, 50.Intro 18. Dictionary: 6, Transport:1. **Jelle Verheij:** Bitlis:, 2, 20, 22, 51, 52.Elazığ: 36.Diyarbakır: 73, 97.Mardin: 20, Van:18, 22, 23, 48, 57, 59, 67, 68, 73. **GABB /Kameel Ahmady:** Adıyaman:1, 6, 12, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82. Ağrı: 13, 14, 17, 21, 23, 24, 29, 31, 32, 34, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50. Batman: 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 44, 54, 59, 60, 62, 64, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73. Bingöl:8, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 25, 26, 27, 30. Bitlis: 6, 9, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 25, 28, 31, 37, 44, 45, 47, 26. Diyarbakır: 9, 13, 16, 25, 27, 32, 39, 40, 42, 43, 71, 74, 76, 80, 86, 88, 91, 95, 101, 103, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114.117.123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 157, 159, 160, 161, 163, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 188, 189, 191, 192, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 207, 222, 224, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237. Elazığ:10, 13, 16, 17, 30, 31, 33, 41, 42, 45. Hakkari: 9, 12, 15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29, 40, 44, 47, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 62, 64, 65, 70, 71, 73. Mardin: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32, 35, 36, 46, , 52, 53, 55, 57, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 69, 70, 72, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 34. Muş: 8, 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30. Siirt:4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 33, 35, 37, 38, 8, 10, 17. Şanlıurfa:1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 17, 18, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 33, 36, 38, 40, 46, 49, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 69, 70, 73, 74, 78, 81, 82, 83.Şırnak: 6, 7, 8, 21, 33, 46, 48, 49, 51, 53, 55, 61, 65, 69, 72, 73. Tunceli:10, 12, 14, 22, 24, 29, 30, 34, 36, 37, 41, 45, 46, 47, 49, 51, 52, 53, 56, 60, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69. Van: 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 40, 41, 42, 44, 46, 52, 53, 54, 61, 65, 69, 71, 75, 76, 77, 80, 82, 85, 88, 90, 92. Intro: 5, 17, 19, 20, 21, 26, 29, 31. Accomodation:1, 2, 3, 4. Food&Drinks: 7,

20, 25. Dictionary: 3, 7. **Kemal Özer:** Tunceli1, 2, 6, 15, 16, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 33, 35, 38, 48, 50, 59, 8, 39. Intro: 10, 24, 16 . **Lice Municipality:** 177. **Mardin Museum:** Mardin: 45. **Mamoste Kone Reş:** Şırnak:31, 32, 34, 52, 15. **Merthan Anık:** Batman:5, Diyarbakır:215, 220, 223. Intro: 15. **Mehmet Masum Süer:** Batman 45, 48, 49, 52, 53, 55, 57, 61, 63, 43. Diyarbakır: 1, 5, 14, 15, 18, 22, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 48, 64, 70. Intro 12, 27
Food&Drinks: 4, 5, 15. Dictionary: 4, 5. **Mirza Çelik:** Diyarbakır:187, 190, 193, 194. **Mustafa Karabulut:** Diyarbakır: 142. **Mustafa Avcılar:** Food&Drinks:16, 17, 18, 19, 29, 22, 28, 12, 13, 31. **Mustafa Balaban:** Elazığ:5, 11, 38. **M.Mustafa Özyaşar:** Adıyaman: 63, **Murat Sarıoğlu:** Şanlıurfa:47, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 57, 61. **M.Sezgin:** Şanlıurfa: 41, 42. 44. **M.Şerif Fırat:** Ağrı: 27, Batman:1. Siirt: 40 **Nasrullah Müezzinoğlu:** Hakkari: 3, 6, 10, 14, 16, 17, 28, 33, 45, 49, 58, 66.Van:28, 64, 70.Intro: 34. **Nusaybin Municipality:** Mardin: 41, 44. **Ömer Fidan:** Hakkari: 42. **Özgür Yarar:** Elazığ:1, 2, 4, 8, 26, 27, 29, 39, **Photoshop (Adilcevaz):** Bitlis: 42. **Photo Remzi:** Bitlis1, 7, 12, 13, 24, 46, 5. **Pier Giorgio Casotti:** Ağrı: 25, Batman:58, Bingöl 20.Hakkari:1, 39.Siirt: 12, 27, 29, 36.Şanlıurfa:48.Şırnak:10. **Ramazan İmrağ:** Şırnak: 9, 11, 12, 14, 18, 20. **Recep Kavuş:** Ağrı: 26. Batman:1, 2, 6, 8, 14, 16, 24, 28, 33. Mardin: 33. **Rıdvan Oğuz:** Siirt:2, 3, 5, 23, 34. **Richard Lim:** Food&Drinks: 1 , 3, 8. **Sabri Özdemir:** Batman:36, 39. **Sadık Kököz:** Bingöl:9, **Selim Toprak:** Batman 23, 37, 38, 42, 51, Food&Drinks: 21, **Selmet Güler:** Batman:50. Diyarbakır: 52, 19, 72, 89, 92, 122, 155, 156, 162. Mardin: 1, 2, 13, 21, 28, 31, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 56, 58, 59, 60, 71, 73, 27.Siirt: 39, Şanlıurfa:32, 34, 66.Şırnak: 1, 22, 36.Intro:13, 32, 33, **Servet Arslan:** Ağrı:1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 16, 28, 39, 51, 52. **Silopi Municipality:** Şırnak: 56, 57, 58
**Silvan Municipality:** Diyarbakır: 216, 217, 219, 221.**Solhan Municipality:** Bingöl: 19, Intro: 25.
**Şırnak Municipality:** Şırnak: 40 **Şirin Gencer:** Adıyaman:45, 5.Diyarbakır:158.
Food&Drinks:2. **Tunceli Municipality:** Tunceli: 4, 5, 18, 19, 20, 42, 44, 54, 55, 57, 58, 61, 62, 64, 9, 11.Food: 14. **Ulaş Fut:** Mardin: 65, 66, 68. **Varto Municipality:** Muş:15. **Viranşehir Municipality:** Şanlıurfa:45. **Welat Dilken:** Adıyaman: 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 25, 26, 38, 42, 53, 54, 58, 59, 60, 65, 71. **WEB: Adıyaman:** 27, tirej.net.28, 43, 44. adıyamanlı.org.55, resimler.com.Ağrı:3, bakiler.org. 37, flap.com, **Batman:** 32, bato.com. 34, 35, joshbelzman.40, silkroadfactsanddetails.com.41, mehmeti.com, **Bingöl:** 4, radiozaza.com, **Bitlis:** 3, wikipedia.com.15, kenthaber.com.50, saradistribution.com. 7, mideastimage.com.30, yahoo diyarbakır group 63, saradistribution.com.119, vinovixenz.com.164, ebarzan.com.205, mehmeti.com.212, nationalmuseumnetherlands. **Elazığ:** 3, harputkoleji.6, verso.com.7, avesta.com.19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 34, 35, 43, 44, resimler.com.22ersoyatay.23wikipedia.com.28drcigdemözkanenginaygün.com.
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**Food&Drinks:**30 diyarbakır.gov.tr, 10, vanmerkez.com.

# *Not page*
















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