

# Cappadocia



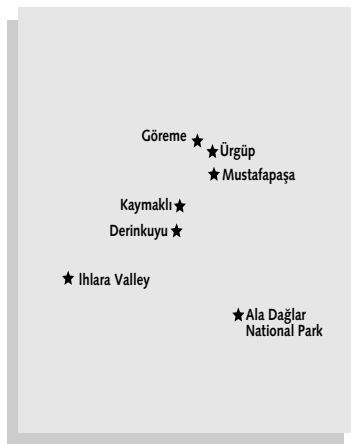
Those troglodytes sure knew what they were doing when they decided to lay down their hats and call Cappadocia home. Deep in the heart of the country, they settled within the lunar-like landscape and burrowed their houses and churches into stone cliffs and their cities underground. In so doing, they provided a still-cogent example of the simplicity and sense of living at one with nature rather than imposing upon it.

These days the cave dwellers are predominantly tourists staying in cave hotels who have been drawn to this part of Turkey by its surreal scenery, wealth of ancient churches and unparalleled opportunities for adventure activities. Where else can you float over the fairy chimneys in a hot-air balloon in the morning, admire Byzantine frescoes in the afternoon and sample fine food and wine at night? Let alone take a spectacular hike through a rose-tinted gorge, indulge in a frenzy of shopping at a covered bazaar dating from Ottoman times and see dervishes whirl in an atmospheric caravanserai. It's this mix of attractions that makes Cappadocia such a compelling tourist destination – there truly is something here for everyone.

Let's be clear, though. The true joy of Cappadocia doesn't come courtesy of its wealth of boutique hotels, its spectacular sunsets, its world-class hiking or its warm and welcoming locals. Instead, it stems from the fact that life still follows a village rhythm here, far removed from the wannabe jet-set lifestyle of the Mediterranean tourist resorts or the marvellous mayhem of İstanbul. This is a place to enjoy at your own pace.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Marvel at the luminous frescoes and rock-hewn churches at **Göreme Open-Air Museum** (p499)
- Sample the boutique hotels and local wines in **Ürgüp** (p519)
- Follow the river and explore the ancient churches in the magnificent **Ihlara Valley** (p529)
- Explore the subterranean wonders of the **underground cities** (p528) at Derinkuyu and Kaymaklı
- Brave the rapids of the Zamanti River in the magnificent **Ala Dağlar National Park** (p526)
- Float over the fairy chimneys in a **hot-air balloon** (p512)
- Spot the old Greek mansions on the streets of **Mustafapaşa** (p524)



## History

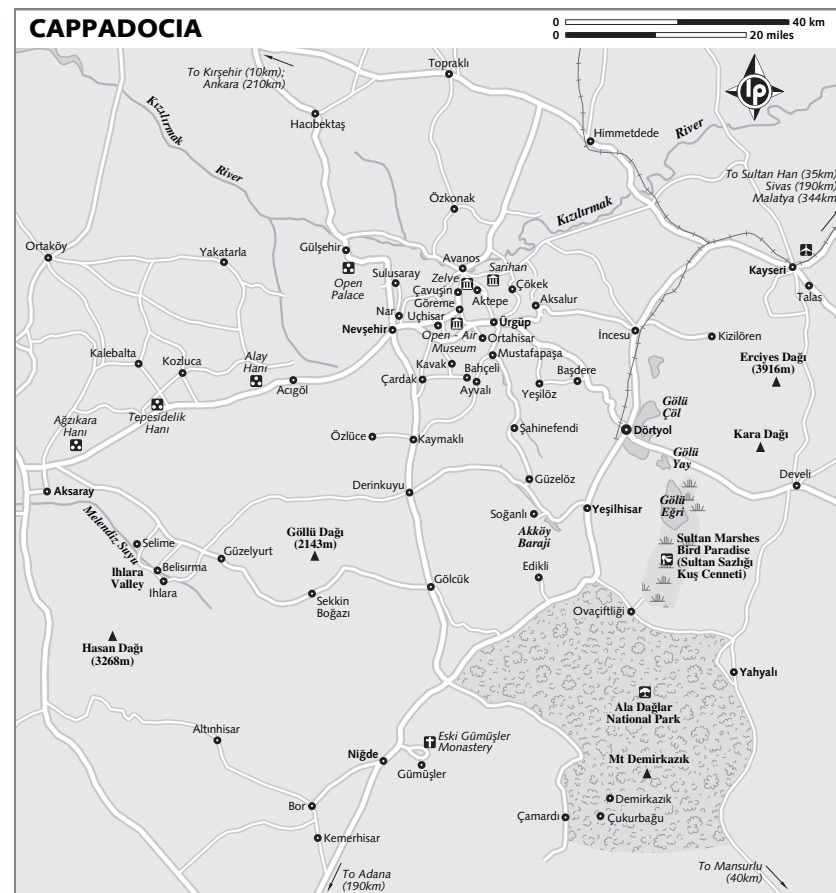
The Hittites settled Cappadocia from 1800 BC to 1200 BC, after which smaller kingdoms held power. Then came the Persians, followed by the Romans, who established the capital of Caesarea (today's Kayseri). During the Roman and Byzantine periods, Cappadocia became a refuge for early Christians and, from the 4th to the 11th century, Christianity flourished here; most churches, monasteries and underground cities date from this period. Later, under Seljuk and Ottoman rule, Christians were treated with tolerance.

Cappadocia progressively lost its importance in Anatolia. Its rich past was all but forgotten until a French priest rediscovered the rock-hewn churches in 1907. The tourist

boom in the 1980s kick-started a new era, and now Cappadocia is one of Turkey's most famous and popular destinations.

## Dangers & Annoyances

A warning is needed about bus services to Cappadocia from other parts of Turkey. Many readers have complained that although they purchased tickets to Göreme, they found themselves instead deposited at Nevşehir otogar (bus station) and were left with no alternative except to catch an overpriced taxi to Göreme. We've even heard of some unscrupulous bus companies abandoning travellers on the highway outside Avanos. In reality, many long-haul buses do terminate in Nevşehir, but the legitimate companies (including Göreme,



Metro, Nevşehir, Öncü or Kapadokya) always then transfer their passengers from Nevşehir to the surrounding villages on free *servises* (shuttle minibuses).

When you purchase your bus ticket, make absolutely sure that it clearly states that it is for Göreme; having it state 'Cappadocia' is not enough. With this proof, you will be able to insist on a free shuttle transfer (even if it means refusing to get off the bus!). It's also a good idea to confirm your final destination with your driver before you get on the bus at the start of the trip.

For more information about transport from Nevşehir otogar, see p516.

## Tours

Cappadocia is overrun with travel agents. In the past, tour prices were agreed among the agencies at the start of each season; these days, the increasingly cut-throat business environment has led to some agencies undercutting others. This means that it's well worth shopping around.

Most tour companies tend to offer the following:

**Ihlara Valley trip** A full day, including a guided hike and lunch. Costs between €30 and €50.

**Full-day tours** These often take in one of the underground cities, a stretch of the Ihlara Valley and one of the caravanserais, but others go to Soğanlı and Mustafapaşa. Most cost €50.

**Guided day hikes** Usually in the Rose, Sun, Red or Pigeon Valleys. Cost anywhere between €20-50, depending on the destination, degree of difficulty and length.

At the start and end of the season, when customers are thin on the ground, local tour companies tend to join forces rather than have a fleet of half-empty minibuses trundling back and forth. Most of the pensions either operate their own tours or work with one of the travel agencies. To save arguments, check whether any visits to carpet shops, pottery factories or onyx factories are scheduled before you sign up for the tour.

We strongly counsel you to avoid booking an expensive package tour upon arrival in İstanbul. If your time is limited and you want to take a tour, you're probably better off booking a tour directly from an agent in Cappadocia.

For listings of tour agencies, see p501 (for Göreme), p519 (Ürgüp), p511 (Çavuşin) and p513 (Avanos).

## Getting There & Away

Two airports service central Cappadocia: Kayseri and Nevşehir. For details of flights to/from İstanbul and İzmir see p498 and p516.

Turkish Airlines and Onur Air operate 14-seat transfer buses (tickets €7 to €8.50 per person) for passengers leaving or arriving at Kayseri on mid-morning and early evening flights. There is no shuttle for Sun Express or Pegasus passengers. The buses pick up from and drop off to hotels and pensions in Göreme, Uçhisar, Ortahisar, Avanos, Nevşehir and Ürgüp. If you want to use one of these shuttle services you *must* prebook through **Argeus Tours** (☎ 0384-341 4688; www.argeus.com.tr, www.cappadociaexclusive.com; İstiklal Caddesi 7; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Nov-Mar, 8.30am-6pm Apr-Oct) in Ürgüp if you fly Turkish Airlines; or through **Peerless Travel Services** (☎ 0384-341 6970; www.peerlessexcursions.com; İstiklal Caddesi 19A; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm daily), also in Ürgüp, if you fly Onur Air. Alternatively, you can easily request your hotel or pension in Cappadocia to book a seat for you. If you don't prebook you will either have to make your way to the Kayseri otogar to catch a bus to your final destination (note that this is not an option in the evening) or catch a taxi, which is an expensive proposition (eg €50 to Göreme).

It's very easy to get to Cappadocia by bus from İstanbul or Ankara. Buses from İstanbul to Cappadocia travel overnight (in high summer there may also be day buses) and bring you to Nevşehir, where there should be a *servis* to take you onto Uçhisar, Göreme, Avanos or Ürgüp. From Ankara you can travel more comfortably during the day. It's easy enough to travel back from Cappadocia to İstanbul by day bus via Ankara because there are so many buses between these two cities.

The nearest train stations are at Niğde and Kayseri. See p528 and p498 for information about services.

## Getting Around

The most convenient bases for exploring central Cappadocia are Göreme, Ürgüp and Avanos. Bus and minibus services are frequent in high summer, much less so in winter. Belediye Bus Corp minibuses (€0.80 to €1.10 depending on where you get on and off) travel between Ürgüp and Avanos via Ortahisar, the Göreme Open-Air Museum, Göreme village and Çavuşin every two hours, starting

in Ürgüp at 8am and operating until 6pm. The bus will also stop in Zelve on request. You can hop on and off anywhere around the loop. Note that Sunday services are less frequent. There's also an hourly *belediye* (municipal council) bus running from Avanos to Nevşehir via Çavuşin (10 minutes), Göreme (15 minutes) and Uçhisar (30 minutes). It operates from 7.10am to 6pm and costs between €0.40 and €1.10 depending on where you get on and off.

The Ihlara Valley in western Cappadocia can be visited on a day trip from Göreme or by bus from Aksaray.

In summer, travelling between these places by public transport is relatively easy, although on Sunday the transport slows right down. In winter, public transport is less frequent.

## KAYSERİ

☎ 0352 / pop 603,700 / elevation 1067m

Kayseri is one of Turkey's great modern success stories. Home to a vibrant and ever-expanding manufacturing industry and reaping the economic benefits that flow from this, it's a city that clearly knows its own worth. The locals here are as confident of their city's future as they are proud of its past, which is a rare thing indeed. It's also a city that has no need to rely on the vagaries of international tourism for its economic prosperity. This can be liberating – and just a wee bit frustrating – for the visitor, as the touts, tour operators and tourist infrastructure taken for granted elsewhere in Cappadocia are thin on the ground here.

Most people fly into Kayseri and are transferred by shuttle bus to central Cappadocia, but there's a lot to be said for spending a day exploring its sights and meeting its people.

## History

The first Hittite capital, Kaniş, was the chief city of the Hatti people and you can visit the remains at Kültepe, 20km northeast of Kayseri, off the Sivas road. There was probably an early settlement on the site of Kayseri as well.

Under the Roman emperor Tiberius (r AD 14–37), the town was renamed Caesarea. Later it became famous as the birthplace of St Basil the Great, who was responsible for organising the monastic life of Cappadocia. Its early Christian history was interrupted by Arab

invasions from the 7th century. The Seljuks took over in 1084 and held the city until the Mongols' arrival in 1243, except for a brief period when the Crusaders captured it on their way to the Holy Land.

After Kayseri had been part of the Mongol Empire for almost 100 years, its Mongol governor set up his own emirate (1335). This lasted a mere 45 years and was succeeded by another emirate, then captured by the Ottomans, taken by the Mamluks, and finally conquered by the Ottomans again in 1515 – all in just over 100 years.

## Orientation & Information

The basalt-walled citadel at the centre of the old town, just south of Cumhuriyet Meydanı, the huge main square, is a good landmark. Another convenient point of reference is Düvenönü Meydanı, 350m west of the citadel along Park Caddesi.

The train station is at the northern end of Atatürk Bulvarı, over 500m north of Düvenönü Meydanı. Kayseri's otogar is about 700m northwest of Düvenönü Meydanı, along Osman Kavuncu Caddesi.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) is on Cumhuriyet Meydanı.

You'll find numerous banks with ATMs in the centre. To collect your email, head to the excellent **Hollywood Internet Café** (Sivas Caddesi 15; per hr €0.55; ☎ 8am-midnight).

## Sights

The monumental walls of the **citadel** (*hisar* or *kale*) were constructed out of black volcanic stone by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century and extensively repaired by the Seljuk sultan Keykavus I around 1224. In 1486, Mehmet the Conqueror made further repairs, a practice kept up by the modern city fathers.

Just southeast of the citadel is the wonderful **Güppüpoğlu Konağı**, a fine stone mansion dating from the 18th century, now housing the city's **Ethnography Museum** (admission €1.10; ☎ 8am-5pm Tue-Sun). Also worth having a look at nearby is the modest but stylish **Atatürk Evi** (admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri), a small, originally furnished Ottoman-era house where Atatürk stayed when he visited Kayseri.

Among Kayseri's distinctive features are several important building complexes that were founded by Seljuk queens and princesses, including the austere-looking **Mahperi Hunat Hatun Complex**, east of the citadel. It

**KAYSERİ**

**1** To Yedigöller (48km);  
Avanos (60km);  
Ankara (83km);  
Adana (135km)

**2** To Sultan Han (45km);  
Sivas (200km);  
Malatya (354km)

**3** To Military Zone

**4** To Erciyes Dağı (26km)

**5** To Erciyes Dağı (26km)

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comprises the Mahperi Hunat Hatun Camii (1238), built by the wife of the Seljuk sultan Alaettin Keykubad; the Hunat Hatun Medresesi (1237); and a decent *hamam* (Turkish bathhouse), which is still in use.

Another striking monument is the **Çifte Medrese** (Twin Seminaries). These adjoining religious schools, set in Mimar Sinan Parkı north of Park Caddesi, were founded at the bequest of the Seljuk sultan Gıyasettin I Keyhüsrev and his sister Gevher Nesibe Sultan (1165–1204).

Back towards the citadel, be sure to have a look at the **Sahabiye Medresesi**, an Islamic theological school that dates from 1268 and now functions as a book bazaar. A bit west of Cumhuriyet Meydanı stands the Ottoman-style **Kurşunlu Camii** (Lead-Domed Mosque). Also called the Ahmet Paşa Camii after its founder, it was completed in 1585 possibly following plans drawn up by the great Sinan (who was born in a nearby village).

Another mosque worth inspecting is Kayseri's **Ulu Camii** (Great Mosque), immediately to the south. It was begun in 1142 by the Danişmend Turkish emirs and finished by the Seljuks in 1205. Despite all the 'restoration' over the centuries, it's still a good example of early Seljuk style.

If you have half an hour to spare, consider visiting the city's small **Archaeological Museum** (admission €1.10; ☎ 8am–5pm Tue–Sun), 800m southeast of the citadel. It houses finds from Kültepe (ancient Kaniş) including baked cuneiform tablets that told historians much about the Hittite Empire, a stunning sarcophagus illustrating the labours of Hercules, and a noteworthy collection of Roman jewellery.

Scattered about Kayseri are several conical **Seljuk tombs** dating from Seljuk times. Most famous is the so-called **Döner Kümbet** (Revolving Tomb), about 600m southeast of the citadel along Talas Caddesi, but you'll spot many others as you walk around.

**Sleeping**

It can be hard to find an available hotel room in Kayseri due to the fact that businesspeople from all over Turkey regularly visit the city.

**Hotel Çamlica** (☎ 231 4344; cnr Bankalar Caddesi, Gürcü Sokak 14; s/d incl breakfast €14/25) This grubby and depressing place is only mentioned here due to the dearth of budget options in the city. Rooms have hard beds and impossible

bathrooms; if you can possibly afford to, we'd suggest sleeping elsewhere.

**Elif Hotel** (☎ 336 1826; fax 336 5478; Osman Kavuncu Caddesi 2; s/d incl breakfast €19.50/34) This modern place has conservative Islamic management, so it frowns upon alcohol in the rooms or any other forms of hanky-panky. If you can rein yourself in, the rooms are clean and cheerful and the prices are a bargain. Ask for a room at the rear, as they are much quieter.

**Hotel Çapari** (☎ 222 5278; fax 222 5282; Gevher Nesibe Mahallesi Donanma Caddesi 12; s/d/ste incl breakfast €28/48/67; ☎) This three-star hotel in a quiet street off Atatürk Bulvarı may be old fashioned, but it's one of the best options available. Charging extremely reasonable prices (something unusual in Kayseri), it offers well-equipped rooms with satellite TV and minibar.

**Hilton** (☎ 207 5000; www.hilton.com; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; d €115–131; ☎) Slap bang in the town centre, this is Kayseri's only five-star hotel. Its futuristic design is a striking contrast to the surrounding mosques and historical buildings. Inside it's swanky, with an atrium as vast as a station, luxurious rooms and all the requisite amenities, including a fitness centre. The views from upper floors are great.

**Eating**

Kayseri boasts a few special dishes, among them *pastrıma* (salted, sun-dried veal coated with *çemen*, a spicy concoction of garlic, red peppers, parsley and water), the original *pastırma*. Few of the town's restaurants serve alcohol – if you want a drink with your meal you'll probably have to eat at the Hilton.

**Tuana** (☎ 222 0565; 2nd fl, Sivas Caddesi; mains €2.50–5) Behind the PTT, Tuana offers well-cooked dishes and wonderful views of Erciyes Dağı (Mt Erciyes). If you're on a budget, the open buffet (€4.50) is an attractive proposition; otherwise, you can opt for pides, *köfte* (meatballs), steaks or kebabs.

**Beyazsaray** (☎ 221 0444; Millet Caddesi 8; mains €3–5) Across the road from Öz Urfa Sofrası, this frantically busy place serves *İskender* kebabs that are nearly as good as those served at Elmacıoğlu İskender et Lokantası. Best of all, it has a takeaway counter at the front where you can grab an absolutely delicious chicken döner sandwich for a mere €0.55.

**Elmacıoğlu İskender et Lokantası** (☎ 222 9665; 1st & 2nd fls, Millet Caddesi 5; mains €3–5) Just near the

citadel, this busy eatery has been churning out *İskender* kebabs and other Turkish classics for several decades. It's glitzy, but the meat dishes are quite wonderful. If you don't opt for the house speciality (€7) you may want to try the enormous *karışık ızgara* (mixed grill, €7). Even the pide is good here.

**Öz Urfa Sofrası** (☎ 232 7777; 1st fl, Millet Caddesi 11) Another safe choice for a kebab feast, this busy place is always full of locals. The Öz Urfa serves local specialities such as pide with *pastırma* (€3) and the usual line-up of meat on sticks.

**Divan Pastanesi** (☎ 222 3974; Millet Caddesi) Opposite the Elmacıoğlu İskender et Lokantası, this modern pastry shop is a favourite among Kayseri's sweet tooth.

The western end of Sivas Caddesi has a strip of fast-food joints that still seem to be pumping when everything else in town is quiet.

## Shopping

Set at the intersection of age-old trade routes, Kayseri has been an important commercial centre for millennia and its Ottoman covered markets beside the citadel have been beautifully restored. Don't leave without a stroll in the small and lovely *bedesten* (vaulted market place), built in 1497. It was first dedicated to the sale of textiles, and still sells carpets and kilims. The *kapalı çarşı* (vaulted bazaar) was built in 1859, restored in 1988, and now sells mainly gold jewellery.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Turkish Airlines** (☎ 222 3858; Tekin Sokak Hukuk Plaza 6C; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) has three daily flights (€44 to €94 one way, 1¼ hours) to/from İstanbul. Sun Express, a Turkish Airlines subsidiary, offers twice-weekly morning flights from İzmir on Thursdays and Sundays (€39 to €72 one way).

There is no shuttle bus to meet Turkish Airlines or Sun Express passengers and take them into the centre of town.

**Onur Air** (☎ 231 5551; Ahmetpaşa Caddesi) has two daily flights to/from İstanbul (€38 to €77 one way). A free shuttle bus meets both flights and brings Onur Air passengers into the centre of town.

To get to the airport, a shuttle leaves from a stop near the Sahabiye Medresesi at 7.30am and 8.30pm (€2). At all other times you'll need to grab a taxi (around €8.50).

## BUS

On an important north-south and east-west crossroads, Kayseri has lots of bus services. If there's no *servis*, walk out the front of the otogar, cross the avenue and board any bus marked 'Merkez' (Centre). A ticket will cost €0.55. A taxi to the citadel should cost less than €3.

For details of some useful services from Kayseri's otogar see the table, below.

### SERVICES FROM KAYSERİ'S OTOGAR

Destination	Fare	Duration	Frequency (per day)
Adana	€8.50-11.50	5hr	frequent morning
Ankara	€8.50	5hr	frequent
Erzurum	€11.50-17	10hr	2 morning & evening
Gaziantep	€10	6hr	several morning, afternoon & evening
Göreme	€3	1½hr	hourly to 6pm, 6.30pm & 8pm
Kahramanmaraş	€8.50	5½hr	frequent
Malatya	€8.50	5hr	several morning, afternoon & evening
Neveşehir via Ürgüp	€3.50-4	1½hr	frequent to 6pm, 6.30pm & 8pm
Sivas	€7.50	3hr	frequent morning
Van	€17	14hr	1 afternoon & evening

## TRAIN

The *Vangölü/Güney Ekspresi* (between İstanbul and Tatvan or Diyarbakır, depending on the day), the *Doğu Ekspresi* (between İstanbul and Kars), the *Erzurum Ekspresi* (between Ankara and Kars) and the *4 Eylül Mavi Train* (between Ankara and Malatya) all stop at Kayseri. Departures for İstanbul (€10, 18 hours) are at 4am and 4.40am daily; departures for Kars (€12, 21 hours) are at 1.30am and 8.20pm daily; departures for Ankara (€10, 6½ hours) are at midnight and 4.19am daily; departures for Tatvan (€13, 22 hours) are at 2.48pm on Monday and Friday; departures to Kurtalan (€12, 20 hours) are at 2.48pm on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday; departures to

Diyarbakır (€12, 20 hours) are at 2.48am on Thursday; and departures to Malatya (€6, 8½ hours) are at 2.52am daily.

To reach the centre from the train station, walk out of the station, cross the big avenue (Çevre Yol) and board any bus heading down Atatürk Bulvarı to Düvenönü Meydanı.

## AROUND KAYSERİ Sultan Han

Built in the 1230s, the **Sultan Han** (admission €1.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm) is a striking old Seljuk caravanserai on the old Kayseri-Sivas highway, 45km northeast of Kayseri and visible from the new highway. Besides being a fine example of a Seljuk royal caravan lodging and the second largest in Anatolia (after the Sultanhanı near Aksaray), it has been beautifully restored.

You may arrive to find it closed even during official opening hours, but a boy will soon come running with the key and a ticket.

## GÖREME

☎ 0384 / pop 2100

Some places are magical – and Göreme is one of them. Located 70km west of Kayseri, this small village is set amid towering fairy chimneys and majestic honeycomb cliffs, with the stunning backdrops of the Rose, Honey and Pigeon Valleys surrounding it. Guidebook-speak really can't do the place justice, as its overall package is much, much greater than the sum of its parts (and those parts are all pretty damn impressive in their own right). Though some jaded travellers whinge that it 'isn't what it used to be', we think they're full of tuff. Göreme is one of Turkey's unspoiled treasures, where traditional village life manages to happily coexist with a thriving modern tourism industry and where visitors are – and always have been – made welcome by a local community as friendly as it is close-knit.

## Orientation & Information

Most of Göreme's shops and restaurants are in the streets surrounding the otogar. The Open-Air Museum is an easy walk 1km to the east of town.

## INTERNET ACCESS

**Mor-tel Telekom Call Shop/Internet Café** (per hr €1.50; ☎ 9am-midnight)

**Nese Internet Café** (per hr €1.50; ☎ 8.30am-10pm)

## MONEY

There are three ATMs in town: two in booths at the otogar (Vakıf Bank and Türkiye Bankası) and one at the Deniz Bank branch on Müze Caddesi. Some of the town's travel agencies will exchange money, although you're probably better off going to the PTT.

## POST

The **PTT** (just off Bilal Eroğlu Caddesi) has phone, fax and money-changing services.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

Considering the fact that Göreme is the centre of the Cappadocian tourist industry, it never ceases to amaze us that it has no real tourist office. There's an information booth at the otogar that is open when most long-distance buses arrive, but it's run by the **Göreme Turizmçiler Derneği** (Göreme Tourism Society; ☎ 271 2558; www.goreme.org), a coalition of hotel-, restaurant- and carpet-shop owners, and is solely aimed at directing travellers to accommodation in the village. Its staff speak little English and can't supply any meaningful information about the village or surrounding areas.

## Sights

### GÖREME OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

One of Turkey's World Heritage sites, the **Göreme Open-Air Museum** (Göreme Açık Hava Müzesi; admission €5.50, parking €1.25; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar) is an essential stop on any Cappadocian itinerary. A cluster of rock-cut Byzantine churches, chapels and monasteries 1km uphill from the centre of the village, it deserves at least a two-hour visit.

Try to arrive early in the morning in summer and space yourself between tour groups – apart from the crowds, when lots of people crowd into one of these little churches they block the doorway, which is often the only source of light. And if at all possible, avoid visiting on weekends, when the site is packed with domestic tourists.

To the left, after you enter, is the **Rahibeler Manastırı** (Nun's Convent). Although this was originally several storeys high, today you can only see what is thought to be the large plain dining hall, with steps up to a small chapel (with unremarkable frescoes). To its right is the similar Monk's Monastery.

Follow the cobbled path until you reach **Aziz Basil Şapeli** (Chapel of St Basil). It's rather dark inside because the main room is off to the left,

**GÖREME**

**CAPPADOCIA**

**INFORMATION**

Alpino Tours.....	1	C3
Information Booth.....	(see 60)	E3
Middle Earth Travel.....	2	C3
Mov-Tel Telekom Call Shop/Internet.....	3	C3
Nesje Tour.....	4	C3
Nese Internet Café.....	5	B2
Post Office (PTT).....	6	D2
Rose Tour.....	7	C3
Yama Tours.....	8	C3

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

El Nazar Kilise.....	9	E4
Göreme Balloons.....	10	D3
Kilime's Place.....	11	E3
Kapadocya Balloons.....	12	B2
Open-Air Museum.....	13	C3
Saklı Kilise.....	14	E4

**SLEEPING**

Anatolia Pension.....	15	D3
Anatolian Houses Göreme.....	16	D3
Arch Palace.....	17	C4
Canyon View Hotel.....	18	B4

**EATING**

Alaturca.....	40	C3
Cappadocia Kebap Center.....	41	C3
Cappadocia Patisserie.....	42	C3
Cappadocia Pide Salonu.....	43	B4
Dibek.....	44	C3
Firin Express.....	45	C3
Göreme Restaurant.....	46	D2
Local Restaurant.....	(see 95)	
Mercan.....	47	C3
Nazar Borek.....	48	C3
Orient Restaurant.....	49	B2
Silk Road Restaurant & Kebap House.....	50	C3
SOÇ & Sultan Restaurant & Café.....	51	D2

**DRINKING**

Fat Boys.....	52	C3
Flintstones Cave Bar.....	53	D2
Pacha Bar.....	54	C3
Red Red Wine House.....	55	C3

**ENTERTAINMENT**

Club Libra.....	56	D2
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**TRANSPORT**

Hitchhiker.....	57	C3
Local Bus Stop for Ürgüp.....	58	D2
Çavuşin, Zelve & Avanos.....	58	D2
Motorbitch.....	59	C3
Otogar.....	60	C3
Oz Cappadocia Tour.....	(see 57)	

**TOUR OPERATORS**

- To Sivaslı Valley (200m): Göreme Open-Air Museum (200m); Kaye Camping, Caravaning & Meskenir Valley (2km); Meskenir Valley (2km); Meskenir Valley (3km); Otlahisar Valley (6km); Uçup (10km)
- To Avanos (10km): Kayseri (70km)
- To Love Valley (Zemi) Valley
- To Pigeon Valley
- To Uçhisar (4km): Nevşehir (15km)
- To Sivaslı Valley (200m)

away from the door. The grate-covered holes in the floor were graves.

Back on the path, the first place you'll come to is the **Elmalı Kilise** (Apple Church), with a stunning display of frescoes, eight small domes and one large dome. Where's the apple? Some say the Angel Gabriel, above the central nave, is holding it. There's also some decoration typical of the iconoclastic period (725–842) when images were outlawed – red ochre painted on the stone without any images of people or animals.

The **Azize Barbara Şapeli** (Chapel of St Barbara) has iconoclastic decoration, beautiful in its simplicity. There's also a fairly worn fresco of Christ the Pantocrator in the apse, and frescoes of the Virgin Mary and St Barbara.

The **Yılanlı Kilise** (Snake Church or Church of St Onuphrius) has 11th-century frescoes on part of the vault. On the left wall, St George and St Theodore attack the dragon, while Constantine the Great and his mother Helena hold the True Cross. On the right wall, the naked St Onuphrius, a hermit from Egypt, hides his nudity behind a date palm frond.

A few steps from the Yılanlı Kilise, don't miss the **refectory**, with its long dining table and benches cut from the rock. At the end of the table is a trough in the floor that was probably used for pressing grapes. Attached to the refectory is a larder, where you can see storage shelves carved into the walls, and a kitchen. Another smaller, nameless church here retains a rock-cut iconostasis.

The stunning fresco-filled **Karanlık Kilise** (Dark Church; admission €3) is the most famous of the Open-Air Museum's churches. It took its name from the fact that it originally had very few windows. Luckily this lack of light preserved the vivid colour of the frescoes, which show, among other things, Christ as Pantocrator, Christ on the Cross and the Betrayal by Judas. The church was restored at great expense, which partly explains the extra fee to visit it. However, the charge is also intended to keep numbers down in an attempt to preserve the frescoes. It's worth every lira.

Just past the Karanlık Kilise, the **Azize Katarina Şapeli** (Chapel of St Catherine) has frescoes of St George, St Catherine and the Deesis.

The **Çarıklı Kilise** (Sandal Church) is named for the footprints marked in the floor opposite the doorway. One of the best frescoes (in the arch over the door to the left) shows the Betrayal by Judas.

When you exit the museum, don't forget to cross the road and visit the **Tokalı Kilise** (Buckle Church), 50m back down the hill towards Göreme on the right. This is among the biggest and finest of the Göreme churches, with fabulous frescoes in the two main chambers, and two smaller chapels (one underground). Entry is via the 10th-century 'old' Tokalı Kilise, through the barrel-vaulted chamber covered with frescoes portraying the life of Christ. The 'new' church, built less than a hundred years later, is also alive with frescoes on a similar theme.

### OTHER CHURCHES

On the road between Göreme and the Open-Air Museum, a sign points to the **El Nazar Kilise** (Church of the Evil Eye; admission €3; ☎ 8am–5pm Apr–Oct, 8am–6.30pm Nov–Mar). Carved out of a fairy chimney, the church has been restored but is of marginal interest. It's a pretty 10-minute walk from the main road.

Back towards the Open-Air Museum is another sign pointing to the **Saklı Kilise** (Hidden Church), tucked away behind the small shop Hikmet's Place. You'll have to ask Hikmet not just for the key but also to help you find it.

### GÖREME VILLAGE

Göreme village, set amid cones and pinnacles of volcanic tuff, is its own biggest attraction. At its centre is the so-called **Roman Castle** (Roma Kalesi), a fairy chimney with a rock-cut Roman tomb; you can see the remains of the column tops on the temple façade. Some think Göreme may have been a burial ground for the Romans of Venasa (now Avanos).

### Tours

See p494 for details of the types of tours offered by all of these agencies.

The following businesses have been recommended by readers or can be vouched for by us. However, the list is by no means exhaustive.

**Alpino Tours** (☎ 271 2727; www.alpino.com; Müze Caddesi 5)

**Heritage Travel** (☎ 271 2687; www.goreme.com; Aydinli Mahallesi, Yavuz Sokak 1) Based at the Kelebek Hotel & Cave Pension. Runs all of the usual tours but also one-week cuisine tours (€1050) and 15-day kilim weaving tours where you stay in a nomad village and learn all about carpet-making (€1600). Highly recommended.

**Middle Earth Travel** (☎ 271 2528; www.middleearthtravel.com; Gaferli Mahallesi Cevizler Sokak 20) Brands

## WALKS AROUND GÖREME

Göreme village is surrounded by the magnificent Göreme National Park. Valleys with gorgeous scenery and a mixture of ancient pigeon houses and even more ancient rock-cut churches fan out from all around the village.

A handful of valleys are easily explored on foot; each needs about one to three hours. Most are interconnected, so you could easily combine several in a day.

These are some of the most interesting and accessible valleys:

**Bağlıdere** (White Valley) From Uçhisar to Çavuşin.

**Ballıdere** (Honey Valley) Behind Göreme village.

**Güllüdere** (Rose Valley) Connecting Göreme and Çavuşin.

**Güvercinlik** (Pigeon Valley) Connecting Göreme and Uçhisar; colourful doves.

**Kiliçlar Vadısı** (Swords Valley) Running off the Göreme Open-Air Museum road.

**Kızıl Valley** (Red Valley) Superb doves, churches with frescoes.

**Meskendir Valley** Trail head next to Kaya Camping; tunnels and doves.

**Zemi Valley** (Love Valley) West of the Göreme Open-Air Museum, with some particularly spectacular rock formations.

A word of warning: most of the valleys have signposts directing you to them, but nothing to keep you on the straight and narrow once you get there. Nor are they all particularly easy to walk. On top of that, there's no detailed map available – you'll have to rely on very basic print-outs. **Mehmet Güngör** (☎ 0532 382 2069) is one local guide with an encyclopaedic knowledge of Göreme's highways and byways; for €38 (up to four people) he will lead you through any of the local valleys. Most pension owners will also be happy to guide you on these trails for a minimal fee (it may even be complimentary).

itself as an 'adventure travel specialist' and offers activities such as abseiling at Ortahisar (€40), climbing and treks.

**Neşe Tour** (☎ 271 2525; www.nesetour.com; Avanos Yolu 54) All the usual tours, plus 2-night, 3-day trips to Nemrut Dağı (Mt Nemrut; €159), leaving on Monday and Thursday.

**Rose Tour** (☎ 271 2708; www.rossetour.com; Müze Caddesi 11)

**Yama Tours** (☎ 271 2508; www.yamatours.com; Müze Caddesi 2) Also offers 3-day trips to Nemrut Dağı (€159).

## Sleeping

Göreme has a wealth – some might say an overindulgence – of places to stay and most of them offer extremely good value for money.

If you're visiting between October and May, be sure to pack warm clothes as it gets very cold at night and pension owners may delay putting the heating on. Ring ahead, too, to check that your choice is open. Those that do open in winter sometimes offer a low-season discount, but the prohibitive cost of heating means that this is relatively unusual.

## BUDGET

### Camping

**Kaya Camping Caravaning** (☎ 343 3983; kayacamp.ing@www.com; camp sites per person/tent/campervan €4.50/1.75/4.50; ☎ ☎) This impressive camping

ground is 2.5km from the centre of Göreme town, uphill from the Göreme Open-Air Museum. Set among fields of vines and a good sprinkling of trees, it has magnificent views and top-notch facilities such as clean bathrooms, plentiful hot water, a restaurant, supermarket, communal kitchen and washing machines. It's an excellent place for a family holiday, particularly as it has a large swimming pool complete with kiddie pool and sun lounges.

## Pensions

**Köse Pansion** (☎ 271 2294; www.kosepension.com; dm/hut per person €5/7, s with shared bathroom €6, d with private bathroom €12.50; ☎ ☎) In a slightly isolated position close to the PTT, this is – and ever has been – a popular backpacker option thanks to the tender loving care of owners Dawn and Mehmet Köse. The rooftop is home to an enormous, light-filled dorm and two simple wooden huts (mattresses on the floor, BYO sleeping bag), and there is an array of clean and neat rooms, most of which have balconies, bathrooms and uncomfortable beds. Our readers adore this place, particularly its lovely swimming pool, convivial communal meals (three-course dinner €7) and attractive gar-

den. Breakfast costs €2 and nonguests can use the pool for €4.

**Shoestring Cave Pension** (☎ 271 2450; www.shoestringcave.com; dm €3.30, d with/without bathroom €13.50/10; ☎ ☎) One of the longest-running pensions in Göreme, the Shoestring Cave isn't content to rest on its laurels. When we last visited, its owners were in the process of building a swimming pool on the roof terrace, as well as four attractive new double rooms complete with marble bathrooms. Downstairs there are musty and somewhat claustrophobic rock-cut rooms and a dorm set around a courtyard. There's a pleasant restaurant where tasty breakfasts (€2.20) and snacks such as *gözleme* (savoury pancake) and *menemen* (eggs with green peppers, tomatoes and white cheese) are served.

**Rock Valley Pension** (☎ 271 2153; www.rockvalleycappadocia.com; camping €3, dm incl breakfast €5, s/d incl breakfast €14/16; ☎) At the edge of the village just past the main mosque, Rock Valley has been around for years and its new owner is currently undertaking a staged renovation. Rooms are brightly painted, with worn carpets and scattered rugs; most have simple tiled bathrooms. Although we were impressed with how light the upstairs rooms were, the standard of cleanliness throughout the building was disappointing. The atmospheric pavilion restaurant in the rear garden overlooks the hotel's best feature, its very large swimming pool.

**Kookaburra Pension** (☎ 271 2549; kookagoreme@hotmail.com; Konak Sokak 10; dm €4.50, s/d with bathroom & breakfast €8.50/16.50; ☎) This small pension has a lot going in its favour. The five light and airy upstairs rooms have polished boards, rugs, cheerful bedcovers and tiny but clean bathrooms. There's also a slightly musty downstairs dorm in an old cave kitchen that benefits from its own bathroom. The stand-out feature here is the roof terrace, which has loads of pot plants, wonderful views and a bar/restaurant with satellite TV.

**Tabiat Pension** (☎ 271 2267; tabiatpension@yahoo.com; s/d with shared bathroom & breakfast per person €7/14, with bathroom & breakfast €8.50/16.50; ☎) Run by the friendly Ibrahim, this unassuming place near the main mosque has basic rooms arranged around a tidy central courtyard. The good news is that everything here is immaculately clean; the bad news is that the beds are so uncomfortable that they are likely to lead to the start of a prolonged relationship between you and a chiropractor.

**Traveller's Cave Pansiyon** (☎ 271 2707; www.travelerscave.com; Aydıncırağı Mevkii 28; dm €3.50, s/d with shared bathroom & breakfast €8.50/12.50, s/d with bathroom & breakfast €13.50/16.50; ☎ ☎) One of the best budget choices in town, the Traveller's Cave offers small but serviceable cave rooms that are blessedly free of the musty aroma that afflicts similar rooms in other establishments. If you can score double room number 11 or the top-floor triple, both of which have private bathrooms and terraces with great views, you'll be happy indeed. There are two dorms (one mixed, one female only) that share a very clean bathroom and there's also a roof terrace lounge-restaurant with excellent views and a satellite TV.

**Anatolia Pension** (☎ 271 2221; www.anatoliacave.com; Müze Caddesi; dm €3.50, r with shared bathroom & breakfast per person €8.50, s/d with bathroom & breakfast €11/19; ☎) At the start of the road to the Open-Air Museum, this simple place has rooms (some cave) with spectacularly ugly furniture and fittings, complete with garish plaid carpet, stalactite ceilings and bizarre toilet seats, but offset by friendly owners, a decent view and pleasant garden.

**Walnut House** (☎ 271 2235; www.cevizliev.com; Zeybek Sokak; s/d incl breakfast €14/19.50; ☎) A few steps away from the otogar, this hotel in an Ottoman mansion offers one of the best deals in this price range. In fact, the place is so popular that the owners are building a new extension in the rear garden so as to meet demand for rooms. The main building offers six upstairs rooms with traditional arched stone ceilings, hard beds and small but clean bathrooms. Downstairs there's an attractive, kilim-filled lobby-lounge that overlooks the gorgeous rose garden at the front of the building. Don't stay here if cigarette smoke bothers you, as the downstairs area absolutely reeks.

**Cappadocia Dora** (☎ 271 2874; www.doramotel.com; s/d incl breakfast €11/22; ☎) Sometimes it pays to trade atmosphere for comfort and value. Göreme is full of pensions with fairy chimney rooms full of rugs and Anatolian textiles, but all too often this goes hand in hand with grubby bathrooms and uncomfortable beds. Here at the Dora, the décor is no-nonsense and the building is functional rather than whimsical, but its light-drenched rooms are impeccably clean and exceptionally comfortable. The roof terrace has fabulous views and there's a cave lounge with satellite TV and a blizzard of floor cushions.

**Gültekin Motel** (☎ 271 2584; gultekinmotel@hotmail.com; Müdür Sokak 3; dm/s/d €5.50/14/22; 🏠) A somewhat odd place that doesn't overplay the cave or chimney-rooms card but isn't quite sure what to offer up instead, the Gültekin has three depressing cave rooms and seven much nicer upstairs rooms. These are very light and come complete with hard beds and small bathrooms. There's a comfortable and clean upstairs six-bed dorm with its own bathroom, and a roof terrace with excellent views.

**Flintstones Cave** (☎ 271 2555; www.theflintstonescavehotel.com; camp site €2.50, dm/s/d incl breakfast €5.50/11/22; 🏠 🚿) Among the fields on the edge of the village but only a short walk from the otogar, this long-standing backpackers' haunt has recently been given a well-needed facelift. The four clean dorms have decent beds and good linen; unfortunately there are only three showers and two toilets to share among the 24 beds. The clean and well-kept private rooms have a variety of features; some have sitting areas, others have balconies and one even has a Jacuzzi. With the best swimming pool in Göreme, a bar-restaurant with pool table and very friendly staff, this place is very hard to beat.

**Sarıhan Cave Hotel** (☎ 271 2216; www.sarihancavehotel.com; Gaferli Mahallesi Ünlü Sokak 20; s €16.50-19.50, d €22-33.50 all incl breakfast; 🏠) The terraces outside all rooms in this large family-run place have fabulous views over the village. Though characterless, rooms are clean and comfortable and some have satellite TVs. It's a safe if uninspired choice.

**Kemal's Guest House** (☎ 271 2234; www.kemalsguesthouse.com; Zeybek Sokak 3; dm €5.50, s/d with bathroom & breakfast €11/25) A few steps away from Walnut House, this guesthouse is run by an extremely friendly and knowledgeable Turkish-Dutch couple and has many fans. Though the flower-filled garden, laid-back atmosphere and restaurant (three-course meals €10) are strong features, the lack of views, spartan rooms and characterless décor are a bit disappointing.

**Pashahan Hotel** (☎ 271 2283; www.pashahan.com; Roma Kalesi Arkası 7; s/d incl breakfast €14/25; 🏠 🚿) What a find! This relatively new hotel is in an attractive old building just off the main strip. The owners run a nearby carpet shop, which explains the hotel's profusion of carpets, rugs and textiles. The overall impression is classy and atmospheric at the same time and the prices are so reasonable that we checked them three times just to make sure they

were correct. All eight rooms have polished floorboards, comfortable beds and excellent bathrooms – they're pretty much three-star standard. And as if this wasn't enough, there's also a fabulous roof terrace and restaurant with an excellent view.

**Güven Cave Hotel** (☎ 271 2374; www.guvencavehotel.com; Çakmaklı Sokak; dm/s/d incl breakfast €8.50/16.50/27.50; 🏠 🚿) The 10 standard rooms here are extremely attractive, with arched ceilings, plenty of light, polished boards, great views and tasteful modern décor. There are also three dorms in dark cave rooms. If the owners gave the same level of attention to the rooftop restaurant and terrace as they have to the rooms, this place would be one of Göreme's best budget options. As it is, it's still a good choice.

**Elif Star Caves** (☎ 271 2479; www.elifstar.com; Uzundere Caddesi; s €19.50-22, d €28-33.50 incl breakfast; 🏠) This homey place is run by a Turkish-English couple and offers excellent value for money. The seven cave rooms are attractive and comfortable in equal measure; they also get our vote for having the cleanest bathrooms in Cappadocia! Jacky was a chef in the UK and is known for her set three-course dinners (€8.50 to €11), which change according to guest requests and the availability of local produce. These are enjoyed in the tree-filled garden or in the downstairs lounge-restaurant.

**Arch Palace** (☎ 271 2575; www.archpalace.com; Gaferli Mahallesi Ünlü Sokak 14; s/d incl breakfast €16.50/33.50; 🏠 🚿) The Arch Palace has many fans, largely because owner Mustafa Yelkalan has a reputation for being a helpful and knowledgeable host, everything is squeaky clean and the rooftop terrace restaurant has sensational views. Unfortunately, carpets are worn, some rooms are cramped and there's not a lot of atmosphere. If prices were lower we'd be more enthusiastic in our recommendation.

**Village Cave House Hotel** (☎ 271 2182; www.villagecavehouse.com; Gaferli Mahallesi Ünlü Sokak; s/d €16.50/36.50; 🏠) Another hotel that seems to be pricing itself out of the competitive local market, the Village House offers nine impeccably clean rooms carved into the cliff. All have extremely comfortable beds and basic bathrooms (Rooms 2 and 3 are particularly attractive). There are impressive views from the terraces.

#### MIDRANGE

**Kelebek Hotel & Cave Pension** (☎ 271 2531; www.kelebekhotel.com; Aydinli Mahallesi, Yavuz Sokak 1; standard

s/d €25/30 incl breakfast, deluxe s/d €35/40, ste €60-100; 🏠) Ali Yavuz started a trend when he opened the Kelebek back in 1993. At that time Göreme was full of basic backpacker joints and had no boutique-style hotels. Setting out to change this, he adopted a winning formula that has since been copied by rivals throughout Cappadocia. It sounds simple: sympathetically restore a traditional local building (preferably with a fairy chimney or two), decorate the rooms in an attractive Anatolian style and make sure you have a roof terrace with view. In fact, it's not that simple – the reason why the Kelebek is the most successful hostelry in Göreme has more to do with its owner's local knowledge, professionalism and drive than its physical form. The rooms here are in two adjoining buildings: the attractive purpose-built hotel is set around a glorious garden and has plush suites; and the pension in the original main building offers a variety of room types and the best roof terrace in the village. Staff are extremely helpful and the prices are a real bargain.

**Local Cave House Hotel** (☎ 271 2171; www.localcavehouse.com; Gaferli Mahallesi Cevizler Sokak 11; s €25, d €30-40 incl breakfast; 🏠 🚿) Another excellent midrange choice, the Local boasts what so many hotels in Göreme cannot: a swimming pool among the fairy chimneys. The 10 good-sized cave rooms are attractively decorated with Anatolian textiles and come with comfortable beds and clean, tiled bathrooms. There are two terraces with wonderful views as well as a glass-fronted lounge-restaurant overlooking the pool.

**Canyon View Hotel** (☎ 271 2333; www.canyonviewhotel.com; s/d/ste €25/35-45/50 incl breakfast, child 6 & over/under 6 half-price/free; 🏠 🚿) The fact that its views rival (but don't quite match) those at the nearby Kelebek and Fairy Chimneys Inn means that this relatively new hotel is destined for a long and prosperous life. Occupying a converted 9th-century cave church and Byzantine houses, it offers seven rooms with attractive décor; the more expensive of these come complete with balconies and/or Jacuzzis (Rooms 3 and 6 are the nicest). The hotel's multitiered terraces are particularly impressive.

**Legend Cave Hotel** (☎ 271 2059; www.legendcavehotel.com; Aydıncı Sokak; s/d standard incl breakfast €26/52, s/d deluxe incl breakfast €38.50/77, r with terrace & breakfast €100; 🏠) The 19 rooms in this very comfortable midrange choice are well equipped,

featuring satellite TV, Jacuzzi and tea-and-coffee-making facilities. There are excellent family rooms (€78) and a few rooms with amazing views (ask for number 18, which is in the top of a fairy chimney and has a private terrace).

**Fairy Chimney Inn** (☎ 271 2655; www.fairychimney.com; Güvercinlik Sokak 3/7; s €36.50-55, d €50-83.50, ste €139; 🏠 🚿) This fairy chimney high on the Göreme hill has been converted into a comfortable hotel by its owner, a German anthropologist who has ensured that his conversion is as respectful of the original fabric as possible. With his Turkish wife, he has created a wonderfully tranquil retreat on the village's highest point and can rightly claim to have the best views in the village. Rooms are relatively simple, featuring concrete floors covered in a profusion of rugs, lovely bathrooms and comfortable beds adorned with bright textiles. Added extras are the fully functioning *hamam* in a cave, communal lounge, home-cooked meals and glorious garden terrace.

**Göreme House** (☎ 271 2060; www.goremehouse.com; Eselli Mahallesi Sokak 47; s/d standard €50/60, d deluxe €62/72, ste €95 incl breakfast; 🏠 🚿) We can't gush enough about this recently opened hotel. Owned and managed by a couple who have a long history of working in five-star boutique hotels in Europe, it offers levels of service and professionalism previously unheard of in Göreme. The attractively decorated rooms are blissfully comfortable, with great beds tea-and-coffee-making facilities and well-equipped bathrooms. Some rooms even have satellite TVs and a small sitting area. After a day's walking or sightseeing, guests can relax in the shade of a large mulberry tree in the courtyard or on the roof terrace, which has good views. Though everything here is impressive, it's the extras that make this place so great: breakfasts include fresh orange juice and *börek* (filled pastry) straight from the oven, olive oil soaps are in every bathroom, bottled water is provided at no charge in the rooms and small boutique touches such as a pillow menu have been introduced. Great stuff.

#### TOP END

**Cappadocia Cave Suites** (☎ 271 2800; www.cappadocia.cavesuites.com; Gaferli Mahallesi Ünlü Sokak 19; s/d deluxe rooms incl breakfast €128/150, s/d ste incl breakfast €178-212/209-250; 🏠) Set high among the fairy chimneys, Göreme's long-established top-end

favourite features a range of comfortable rooms, all of which come with satellite TV, large beds, attractive Anatolian-style decoration, tea-and-coffee-making facilities and minibar. Clearly spooked by the opening of the nearby and infinitely sleeker Anatolian Houses, the owners here have plans to build a pool, a *hamam* and 15 extra rooms.

**Anatolian Houses Göreme** (☎ 271 2463; www.anatolianhouses.com; Gafferli Mahallesi Ünlü Sokak; r standard €170, r deluxe €270-310, ste €390-700, all ind breakfast; 🍷 🍷) This recently opened boutique hotel is swish. Very, very swish. Occupying a group of fairy chimneys, it took six years to build and no wonder. If you're not bowled over by features such as the spa, with its indoor/outdoor swimming pool, *hamam*, sauna and wellness centre, you certainly will be by the hotel's sleek restaurant and extensive wine cellar. It's not just the common areas that are impressive here – all 19 rooms are exquisitely decorated with *objets d'art* and handmade textiles. This is as luxurious as Cappadocia gets, so if your credit card has some leverage we recommend booking the outrageously expensive Ottoman suite and living like a sultan during your stay.

## Eating

**Cappadocia Kebap Center** (☎ 271 2682; Müze Caddesi; mains €2) This tiny and very friendly joint is a great place for a cheap and fast meal. You can enjoy a chicken döner kebab sandwich for a mere €1.50 or a spicy *acılı* kebab sandwich for €2.50. A plate of chips (€2) and a cold beer (€2) or freshly squeezed orange juice (€2) are the perfect accompaniments. There are four outdoor tables under the veranda and a few more inside. Recommended.

**Cappadocia Patisserie** (Belediye Caddesi; ☎ 7.30am-midnight) Close to the otogar, this place brings in cakes, pastries, baklava and ice cream from Nevşehir and serves them with cappuccino (€2.50) or fresh orange juice (€2.50).

**Nazar Börek** (Müze Caddesi; börek €2.50, gözleme €2-3) If you're after a cheap and filling meal, you could do a lot worse than sample the *börek*, *gözleme* and *sosyete böreği* (stuffed spiral pastries served with yogurt and tomato sauce, €3) served at this simple place. Friendly staff and a pleasant outdoor eating area on the dry canal mean that this is a perennially popular option. There's often a tasty special of the day (eg chicken curry, Persian rice and a large salad, €4.50), but no alcohol is served.

**Cappadocia Pide Salonu** (☎ 271 2858; Hakkı Paşa Meydanı; pide €2.50-4) Ask any local where the best pide in town is served and they will inevitably nominate this cavernous place near the tea shop (well, they will unless a family member owns or runs one of the town's other eateries). You can also get a cold beer here (€2.50).

**Fırn Express** (☎ 271 2745; Eski Belediye Yani Sokak; pide €2-3, pizza €4-5.50, claypot dishes €3-3.50) Set slightly back from the main strip, this simple place makes the most of its large wood oven. The pides are very good, and the claypot dishes such as *tavuk güvec* (chicken stew, €3) are extremely well priced. There's no alcohol, but customers are usually offered a complimentary tea at the end of their meal.

**Silk Road Restaurant & Kebab House** (Müze Caddesi; grills €3.50-5) This ramshackle place on the main strip is known for its cheap meals and laid-back atmosphere. You can enjoy a set meal of kebab, chips and beer for €5 or grab a chicken kebab sandwich to go (€1.50).

**Dibek** (☎ 271 2209; Hakkı Paşa Meydanı 1) This restaurant in a lovingly restored village house is the only place in Göreme where travellers can sample true home-style village cooking. For instance, although most of the eateries opposite the otogar offer *testi kebab* (meat and vegetables cooked in a sealed terracotta pot, which is broken at the table to serve), this is the only place where you must give the requisite five hours' notice before eating, so that the dish can be authentically slow-cooked in a deep oven. If you can't do this, don't fear – there are other village specialties on the menu, including *kurufasulye* (white beans with sundried lamb and tomato sauce, €3) and *saç tava* (cubed lamb with tomatoes, peppers and garlic, €5.50). Seating is on cushions around brass tables and you can even sample wine made by the owners (€3.50).

**Göreme Restaurant** (☎ 271 2183; Müze Caddesi 18; meze €2-2.50, mains €4-7) The live Turkish music played here every night tends to lure diners off the comfortable floor cushions and onto the impromptu dance floor around the low brass tables. The food is nothing special, but it's well priced and the menu includes 'world kitchen' items such as green curry chicken (€5.50), stir-fried noodles with vegetables (€4) and *felafel* sandwiches (€3.50). Beer and rakı (aniseed brandy) flow freely and service is good.

**Local Restaurant** (☎ 271 2629; Müze Caddesi 38; mains €4.50-9) At the start of the road to the Open-Air Museum, the Local has recently

been renovated and now comes close to rivaling A'aturca and the Orient for the tag of Göreme's best eatery. There's an elegant dining room as well as an outdoor terrace with comfortable cane furniture. Vegetarians will be particularly enamoured of the menu here – it features delectable Turkish dishes such as zucchini with garlic yogurt (€4.50) as well as Asian favourites such as stir-fried vegetables (€5.50). All ingredients are fresh, prices are extremely reasonable and service is attentive.

**A'aturca** (☎ 271 2882; Müze Caddesi; mains €5-10) Style meets substance at this elegant eatery. The menu here has been thoughtfully and creatively designed and the food is exceptionally well prepared. We enjoyed the classic meze selection (€6.50) and were very impressed by the succulent A'aturca-style lamb *şiş kebab* (€9.50) served on a perfectly cooked ratatouille. Other visits have introduced us to the delights of the chicken *şiş kebab* and the wickedly rich *Kayseri mantısı* (ravioli with garlic yogurt and spices, €4.50). The restaurant has a number of eating areas, the most popular of which are the upstairs terrace and the quirky downstairs garden with its brightly coloured beanbag seating. Highly recommended.

**Orient Restaurant** (☎ 271 2346; Adnan Menderes Caddesi; meze €3-7, mains €12.50) One of Göreme's best eating options, the Orient has an attractive terrace and a stylish dining room, both are extremely comfortable and provide the perfect setting in which to sample outstanding meat dishes. Try the marble steak, which is theatrically served on a sizzling marble slab and is wonderfully tender, or the perfectly cooked rack of lamb. Though vegetarians won't find much joy on the mains menu, they'll be happy with the plethora of vegetarian meze on offer. Those on a budget may want to sample the fixed menu, which offers four courses for a bargain basement €8.50.

Most of Göreme's pensions provide good, cheap meals and serve wine and beer; you'll often eat as well in them as in the restaurants around town. If you're after belly food and don't really care about the quality, there's a swathe of cheapish restaurants along Müze Caddesi opposite the otogar. These include **SOS & Sultan Restaurant & Café** (☎ 271 2872; Müze Caddesi; pide €3, mains €4.50-7) and **Mercan** (☎ 271 2476; Müze Caddesi; pide €3-3.50, mains €4.50-7). All are geared to the bus-tour trade, but they have

pleasant terraces where you can sit and eat while gazing over the town.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Most of the village's watering holes are open from noon till late.

**Red Red Wine House** (☎ 0532 657 7573; Müze Caddesi; beer €3, glass of wine €3-5.50) Göreme's most atmospheric bar is a wonderful place to while away an hour or two. An intimate candlelit space with a low arched ceiling, it has mood lighting, an open fireplace for chilly evenings and an impressive Cappadocian wine list. We guarantee that you'll enjoy relaxing over a drink and a nargileh (water pipe) – free if you've bought a few drinks, €3.50 otherwise – while listening to the sounds of live guitar music.

**Flintstones Cave Bar** (Müze Caddesi; beer €2.50) At the start of the Open-Air Museum road, this long-time backpackers' favourite is cut right into the rock face and really fires up in season. It has a terrace with impressive views where you can enjoy a nargileh (€3), and hosts occasional live music.

**Pacha Bar** (Müze Caddesi; beer €2.50) We don't know whether to be amused or disapproving of the Pacha Bar's advertising slogan, which urges customers to 'get their rocks off'. Behind the otogar, it has sultry lighting, the mandatory disco ball and plenty of dark corners. It also has a pool table and big-screen TV.

**Fat Boys** (☎ 0535 386 4484; beer €2.50; 🕒 24hr) This place labours under the weight of an unfortunate name and equally unfortunate barn-like interior. It's just around the corner from the otogar, proving our theory that places so located are usually rough as guts.

**Club Libra** (☎ 271 2909; www.librabar.com; beer €2.50; 🍷) A glitzy place with three levels of dance floors and bars, Club Libra caters mainly to Turks but tries to get travellers (especially females) in by waiving the usual entrance fee. There are belly dancers on Friday and Saturday nights.

## Getting There & Away

For details of shuttle bus services between Kayseri airport and Göreme see p494.

There are daily long-distance buses to all sorts of places from Göreme's otogar, although normally you're ferried to Nevşehir otogar to pick up the main service (which can add nearly an hour to your travelling time). See p494 for the bus services that connect Göreme with nearby villages.



Details of some useful long-distance daily services from Göreme are listed in the table, below. Note that the morning bus to İstanbul goes via Ankara, so takes one hour longer than the evening bus.

#### SERVICES FROM GÖREME'S OTOGAR

Destination	Fare	Duration	Frequency (per day)
Adana	€7	5hr	several evening only
Aksaray	€4	1½hr	frequent morning & evening
Ankara	€8.50	4½hr	frequent
Antalya	€14-16.50	9hr	a few morning & evening
Çanakkale	€27.50	16hr	2 evening only
Denizli (for Pamukkale)	€14-19.50	11hr	a few evening only
Fethiye	€19.50-25	14hr	2 evening only
İstanbul	€17-22	11-12hr	several morning & evening
İzmir & Selçuk	€19.50-25	11½hr	2 evening only
Kayseri	€4	1½hr	hourly morning, afternoon & evening
Kayseri airport	€11	1½hr	2 late afternoon & early evening
Konya	€8.50	3hr	several morning & evening
Marmaris/Bodrum	€22	13hr	2 evening only

#### Getting Around

There are several places to hire mountain bikes, scooters, quads and cars, including **Hitchhiker** (☎ 271 2169; www.cappadociahitchhiker.com; T Özal Meydanı), **Öz Cappadocia Tour** (☎ 271 2159; www.ozcappadocia.com; T Özal Meydanı) and **Motodocia** (☎ 271 2517), all of which are located close to the otogar. It pays to shop around, as prices vary quite dramatically. As a rule, mountain bikes cost between €5 and €5.50 for four hours; mopeds and scooters go for €14 to €25 for four hours; and those ridiculous quads cost €55 for four hours (the agencies don't offer insurance for these). A manual Renault Clio car costs €50 per day if hired through Öz Cappadocia and a Ford Fiesta costs €42 per day if hired through Motodocia. Motodocia also has automatic cars (a Fiat Palio costs €47.50 per day). You'll need to leave your passport as a security deposit when hiring all of the bikes, scooters and quads.

Since there are no petrol stations in Göreme and the rental companies will hike petrol prices, fill up your tank in Nevşehir, Avanos or Ürgüp before returning the vehicle.

#### UÇHİSAR

☎ 0384 / pop 6350

If coming east from Nevşehir, the panorama of Cappadocia begins to unfold: across the sandy landscape, distant fairy chimneys and valleys with undulating walls of soft, volcanic ash appear. In the distance, the gigantic snow-capped summit of volcanic **Erciyes Dağı** (Mt Erciyes; 3916m) floats above a layer of cloud, providing a fantastic backdrop.

After 8km you come to the small village of Uçhisar, which is dominated by its rock castle. Especially popular with French tourists, old Uçhisar is more tranquil than Göreme and is worth considering as an alternative base for exploring Cappadocia.

There's a Türkiye Bankası ATM in a booth on the main square and a PTT close by.

Watching the sun set over the Rose and Pigeon Valleys from the wonderful vantage point of **Uçhisar Castle** (Uçhisar Kalesi; admission €1.50; ☎ 8.30am-7pm) is a popular activity. A tall volcanic rock outcrop riddled with tunnels and windows, the castle is visible for miles around. Now a tourist attraction complete with tacky souvenir stands at its entrance, it provides panoramic views of the Cappadocian valleys and countryside. Unfortunately, many of the bus groups who visit here leave their rubbish, which diminishes the experience considerably. The lack of barriers means that you should be very careful when here – a European photographer recently died when he fell over the edge after stepping back to get a good shot.

There are some excellent **hiking** possibilities around Uçhisar; see the boxed text on p502.

#### Sleeping

Uçhisar has three excellent budget pensions, at least one top-notch midrange choice and a growing number of top-end boutique hotels.

#### BUDGET

**Erciyes Pension** (☎ 219 2090; www.erciyespension.com; Ürgüp Caddesi 8; s/d incl breakfast €11/22) This friendly, family-run place is just near the PTT. It offers clean old-fashioned rooms, the best of which are at the front of the house and have balconies. The owners grow fruit and vegetables

in the large garden and use them to prepare home-cooked dinners (€8).

**Kilim Pansiyon** (☎ 219 2774; www.sisik.com in Turkish; Eski Göreme Yolu; s/d incl breakfast €12.50/25) Though there are three good budget sleeping options in Uçhisar, this is the only one with a view. And oh what a view! You'll really enjoy relaxing on the rooftop terrace here, and you'll be equally happy with the rooms, which are simply but attractively decorated. Ask for one upstairs, as these have more light than the downstairs alternatives. There's also an atmospheric dining room and a vine-shaded courtyard. Great value.

**La Maison du Réve** (☎ 219 2199; www.lamaisondureve.com; Tekelli Mahallesi 17; s/d incl breakfast €15-18/25-29; ☎ ☎) Teetering on the edge of a high cliff and enjoying spectacular views as a result, 'Dream House' is a veritable ant colony of a hotel, with 35 simple rooms over three floors. The best of these are on the top floor and have attached terraces. There's a laid-back restaurant (mains €4.50 to €5.50) and the owners rent out scooters (€22 per day) and mountain bikes (€11 per day).

**Anatolia Pension** (☎ 219 2339; www.anatoliapension.com in French; s/d incl breakfast €20/30; ☎ ☎) Occupying a sturdy stone house on the main street, this excellent pension has 30 light-filled rooms with comfortable beds, clean linen and extremely clean bathrooms. It's notable for offering midrange facilities for budget prices. Evening meals are available on request (€10).

#### MIDRANGE

**Les Terrasses d'Uçhisar** (☎ 219 2792; www.terrassespension.com; Eski Göreme Yolu; s/d/ste incl breakfast €28/32/72; ☎ ☎) The splendid location of this relaxed French-owned place is its best asset. Rooms are arched or in caves and all feature simple but stylish decoration; those upstairs have absolutely fabulous views. There's a great terrace for soaking up the views in the evening, and a well-regarded restaurant. And if that wasn't enough, the owner even offers a free hike in the valley every morning.

**Ahbap Konağı** (☎ 219 3020; www.ahbapkonagi.com; Karlık Mahallesi; s/d/ste incl breakfast €65/90/120; ☎ ☎ ☎) Owned by a friendly Turkish-French couple, the Ahbap Konağı has the best view of the citadel in town. The rooms are large and cheerful, but not at all posh; ask for one with a balcony. The terrace bar is a plus.

#### TOP END

**Villa Cappadocia** (☎ 219 3133; www.villacappadocia.com; Kayabaşı Sokak 18; s/d €50/65-75 incl breakfast; ☎ ☎) This small and immensely comfortable hotel takes good advantage of its spectacular view of Pigeon Valley. With only 10 rooms, it has a tranquil atmosphere and is designed to give guests as relaxed a holiday as possible. The pick of the rooms is the Honeymoon Room (€105), which has a Jacuzzi and a private terrace with magnificent view. There's a posh restaurant (mains €4.50 to €8.50), a garden and two splendid terraces that are perfect spots for a sunset drink.

**Museum Hotel** (☎ 219 2220; www.museum-hotel.com; Tekeli Mahallesi 1; d €94-141, ste €180-705, all incl breakfast; ☎ ☎) Ooh la la! This exquisitely decorated boutique hotel is one of Cappadocia's best, featuring 26 luxe rooms and truly magnificent common areas. Standard rooms come complete with brass beds, rich rugs and attractive textiles, and the opulent suites (some in caves) have to be seen to be believed. The mosaic-adorned infinity pool, stylish restaurant (mains €8.50 to €14) and panoramic rooftop terrace are equally impressive. In all, this is an exceptionally fine hotel that charges reasonable prices for its standard rooms and offers true luxury to those who can afford one of the suites.

**Karlık Evi** (☎ 219 2995; www.karlikevi.com; Karlık Mahallesi; s/d €100/150; ☎ ☎) Once a former hospital, this retreat offers 20 spacious rooms, some with private balcony or terrace. The atmosphere is of discreet elegance, and the overall style is best described as 'rustic chic'. Facilities are excellent: there's a restaurant, a *hamam*, a garden and a roof terrace; one suite is even set up for disabled access. Guests can also enjoy massages or book into meditation, yoga and cooking courses.

**Les Maisons de Cappadoce** (☎ 219 2813; www.cappadoce.com; Belediye Meydanı 24; studios €110-150, villas €180-320, all incl breakfast) When French architect Jacques Avizou opened his first two rental villas 14 years ago, he had no inkling that they would be the first in an empire that now numbers 12 and is still expanding. There's no secret as to why Les Maisons de Cappadoce is so successful: it offers stylish and supremely comfortable accommodation that allows maximum independence and privacy while still offering services such as daily cleaning and breakfast. Four of the properties are studios perfect for a romantic getaway, the others are well-equipped houses that can accommodate

up to seven people. The reception is in an office in the main square.

## Eating

**Sakirin Yeri Pide Salonu** (☎ 219 2576; pide €2-3) On the main street just before the main square, this simple place is a decent option if you're after a cheap and quick lunch.

**House of Memories** (☎ 219 2947; Eski Göreme Yolu 41; meze €2, mains €4-5) Despite the name, the food here isn't particularly memorable. Seating is in the kilim-strewn downstairs dining room or on the ramshackle but undeniably welcoming upstairs terrace, which enjoys a good view. The menu features Turkish staples, a beer costs €2.50 and service is very friendly.

**Le Mouton Rouge** (☎ 219 3000; Belediye Meydanı; mains €4-5.50) Living up to Uçhisar's reputation as Cappadocia's 'Petite France', this large courtyard restaurant-bar on the main square has a menu replete with French dishes and a cheerful bistro ambience.

**Center Café & Restaurant** (☎ 219 3117; Belediye Meydanı; mains €5.50) Another outdoor eatery on the main square, the Centre has tables dotted around a shady but slightly scruffy garden. Locals enjoy the kebabs and absolutely swear by the *patlican salatısı* (eggplant salad, €4.50). A beer costs €3.

**Les Terrasses d'Uçhisar** (☎ 219 2792; www.terrasses-pension.com; Eski Göreme Yolu; dinner €9) This cosy bar-restaurant in the pension of the same name is justly popular for its home-cooked meals. You can order à la carte or sign up for the well-priced set menu, which offers four courses for €9.50. The menu features Turkish dishes such as *saç tava* (€5) and classic French alternatives such as *filet de boeuf avec sauce poivre* (beef fillet with pepper sauce, €8). Nonguests are welcome, but should book ahead.

**Elai** (☎ 219 3181; www.elairestaurant.com; Eski Göreme Yolu 61; mains €10-12.50) This stylish place is owned and managed by Özgür Bozunoğulları, who worked for more than a decade for Club Med resorts around the world, and he has implemented the many secrets he learned about five-star service and dining here. Guests can kick off with a drink enjoyed on the terrace with its magnificent view before moving into the elegant restaurant to sample beautifully prepared dishes such as crispy *köfte* with a thin pastry crust and demiglace sauce (€10). Dishes travel around the world (starters include Thai beef salad, for instance) but really shine when they are Turkish in inspiration.

## RUDE BOYS

The *peribacalar* (fairy chimneys) that have made Cappadocia so famous were formed when erosion wiped out the lava covering the tuff (consolidated volcanic ash), leaving behind isolated pinnacles. They can reach a height of up to 40m, have conical shapes and are topped by caps of harder rock resting on pillars of softer rock. Depending on your perspective, they look like giant phaluses or oversized mushrooms. The villagers call them simply *kaleler* (castles).

## Getting There & Away

For details of shuttle bus services between Kayseri airport and Uçhisar see p494.

Kapadokya Bus Company has an office in the main square. You'll probably end up being taken to Göreme in a *servis* to pick up onward connections to destinations throughout Turkey. See p508 for details.

Half-hourly buses travel between Nevşehir, Uçhisar (the main highway), Göreme, Çavuşin and Avanos (€0.50, every hour from 7am to 6pm in summer, every two hours in winter). There's also an Uçhisar *belediye* (local council) dolmuş that runs between Nevşehir and a stop behind the Center Café & Restaurant (€0.80, every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday, every hour on weekends).

## ÇAVUŞIN

☎ 0384

Midway between Göreme and Avanos is sleepy little Çavuşin. If you're after an authentic village experience, this place could be for you.

On the highway you'll find the **Çavuşin Church** (Big Pigeon House Church; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), which is accessed via a steep and rickety iron stairway. The church is home to some fine frescoes. Once you've visited here, walk up the hill through the new part of the village and continue past the main square to find the old part of Çavuşin (you'll know you've found it when you see the souvenir stands). Here you can explore a steep and labyrinthine complex of abandoned houses cut into a steep rock face, as well as one of the oldest churches in Cappadocia, the **Church of John the Baptist**, which is located towards the top of the cliff here.

Çavuşin is the starting point for **scenic hikes** through the Güllüdere Vadisi (Rose Valley) and Kızılçukur (Red Gulch), to the east of the village. You can even go as far as the Zindanönü viewpoint (6.5km), then walk out to the Ürgüp-Ortahisar road and catch a dolmuş back to your base.

There is no bank or ATM in the village, but there are three internet cafés, including **Cave House Net Cafe** (per hr €0.50, ☎ 8am-midnight) in the main square.

## Tours

**Mephisto Voyage** (☎ 532 7070; www.mephistovoyage.com) is based at the In Pension and has a very good reputation. It's been operating for over a decade and offers a range of packages including eight-day treks around Cappadocia and 14-day treks around Cappadocia and the Taurus Mountains. It also offers special tours for mobility-impaired people, utilising the Joelette system.

## Sleeping & Eating

Although Çavuşin has a growing number of hotels and pensions, there are no restaurants worth recommending – you'll need to eat in your pension, subject yourself to the dodgy-looking cafés around the main square or make your way to Göreme for meals.

**Panorama Pansion** (☎ 532 7002; ozi\_rod@hotmail.com; s/d incl breakfast €8.50/17) In a family house, this basic option offers neat rooms with hard beds; two have their own (cramped) bathrooms and the others share very clean facilities. It has a *çay bahçesi* (tea garden) in its front garden.

**Green Motel** (☎ 532 7050; Mehmet@motelgreen.com; camp site €4.50, s/d incl breakfast €11/22) Our favourite of the Çavuşin accommodation options, this friendly place is set amid farmland and offers simple rooms with white walls, comfortable beds, crisp linen and very clean bathrooms. There's a dining room; an extensive garden; a large terrace; and a charming lounge with stone floor, Turkish seating and a profusion of rugs.

**In Pension** (☎ 532 7070; www.pensionincappadocia.com; d incl breakfast €15-25; ☎ ) Right on the main square, this converted village house is nothing flash but it's worth considering solely due to the fact its owner, Ahmet Kılınç, is a mine of local information and one of the most highly regarded trekking guides in Cappadocia. The rooms themselves differ in quality; we suggest

opting for one of the four upstairs rooms with private bathroom. Meals are available for €5.50.

**Village Cave Hotel** (☎ 532 7197; www.thevillagecave.com; s €40-55, d €70-120, all incl breakfast) Overlooking the old village, this is Çavuşin's only upmarket hotel. It boasts a superb location and extremely attractive rooms, some of which are arched and some rock-cut.

## Getting There & Away

See p494 for information about the bus services that connect Çavuşin with nearby villages.

## ZELVE

The road between Çavuşin and Avanos passes a turn-off to the **Zelve Open-Air Museum** (admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-5.30pm Nov-Mar), where three valleys of abandoned homes and churches converge.

Zelve was a monastic retreat from the 9th to the 13th centuries. It was inhabited until 1952, when the valley was deemed too dangerous to live in any longer and the villagers were resettled a few kilometres away in Aktepe, also known as Yeni Zelve (New Zelve). There's a small, unadorned, rock-cut **mosque** and an old *değirmen* (mill) here, remnants of Zelve village life.

Arguably the two most interesting churches are also the easiest to find – they're on the left soon after the entrance. The **Bahklı Kilise** (Fish Church) has fish figuring in one of the primitive paintings. Adjoining it is the more impressive **Üzümlü Kilise** (Grape Church), with obvious bunches of grapes. What's left of the **Geyikli Kilise** (Church with Deer) and the **Yazlılık Kilise** (Church with Scriptures) is also worth seeing.

In general, Zelve doesn't have as many impressive painted churches as Göreme's Open-Air Museum. Still, you can while away several happy hours exploring tunnels and houses and gazing on gorgeous vistas. Unfortunately, erosion continues to eat into the valley structures and some parts may be closed because of the danger of collapse, while others may require scrambling and ladders.

There are cafés and *çay bahçesi* (tea gardens) in the car park outside.

At **Paşabağı**, halfway along the turn-off road to Zelve, a cluster of fairy chimneys, one of them 'three-headed', stands within a vineyard near a mess of souvenir stalls. This highly

photogenic spot is a popular place to come to watch the sunset.

### Getting There & Away

The hourly buses running between Ürgüp, Göreme, Çavuşin and Avanos (see p494) will stop at Zelve on request. If you're coming from Ürgüp, Göreme or Çavuşin and tell the driver that you want to go to Zelve, the bus will turn off the highway past Çavuşin, pass Paşabağı, let you off at Zelve and then go up to Aktepe and on to Avanos. If no-one wants

Zelve, the bus will not make this detour. Getting a bus from Zelve is more difficult; you may have to walk the 3.5km from the site to the main highway, from where you can flag down a bus going towards either Göreme or Avanos.

### DEVRENT VALLEY

From Zelve, go about 200m back down the access road to where the road forks and take the right road marked for Ürgüp. After about 2km you'll come to the village of **Aktepe**

### CAPPADOCIA FROM ABOVE

If you've never taken a flight in a hot-air balloon, Cappadocia is one of the best places in the world to try it. Flight conditions are especially favourable here, with balloons operating most mornings from the beginning of April to the end of November. It's a truly magical experience and many travellers judge it to be the highlight of their trip.

Flights take place at dawn. The reputable companies have an unwritten agreement that they will only offer one early flight per day due to the fact that the winds can become unreliable and potentially dangerous later in the morning. Transport to and from your hotel to the balloon launch site is included in the hefty price, as is a champagne toast.

Despite the fact that there is an ever-increasing number of ballooning companies in Cappadocia, increased competition hasn't led to price discounting. This is because the balloon companies offer large commissions to the hotels and tour agencies who sell their flights, and don't want to further erode their profits by discounting flights sold direct to customers. Some companies will give a €10 discount for cash payments or a slightly larger discount for direct online bookings, but that's about as far as the reputable outfits will go.

You'll quickly realise that there's a fair amount of hot air between the operators about who is and isn't inexperienced, ill-equipped, underinsured and underlicensed. Be aware that hot-air ballooning is potentially dangerous. It's your responsibility to check the credentials of your chosen tour operator carefully and make sure that your pilot is experienced and savvy – even if it means asking to see their licences and logbooks. And don't pick the cheapest operator if it means they might be taking short cuts with safety (ie operating two flights per day).

It's important to note that the balloons travel with the wind, and that the companies can't ensure a particular flight path on a particular day. All companies try to fly over the fairy chimneys, but sometimes – albeit rarely – the wind doesn't allow this. Occasionally, unfavourable weather conditions mean that the pilot will cancel the flight for the day for safety reasons; if this happens you'll be offered a flight on the next day or will have your payment refunded.

All passengers should take a warm jumper or jacket and women should wear flat shoes and pants. Children under seven and adults over 70 will not be taken up by most companies.

The following agencies have good credentials:

**Göreme Balloons** (☎ 0384-341 5662; www.goremeballoons.com; Kayseri Caddesi Altıkapılı Mahallesi 13, Ürgüp) This long-running and highly regarded outfit is based in Ürgüp and offers a deluxe flight (€230, 1½ hours, eight to 11 passengers) and a standard flight (€160, one hour, 16 to 21 passengers).

**Kapadokya Balloons** (☎ 0384-271 2442; www.kapadokyaballoon.com; Adnan Menderes Caddesi, Göreme) The most respected company in the region, Kapadokya is run by Kaili and Lars, who have been operating hot-air balloons for over 20 years. They speak English, French, Swedish and German, and their pilots are excellent. On offer are a classic flight (€230, 1¾ hours, 10 passengers) and a sponsored balloon flight (€160, one hour, 20 passengers).

**Sultan Balloons** (☎ 0533 239 3788; www.sultanballoons.com) This new company is run by İsmail Keremoglu, who is a former chief pilot of Göreme Balloons. It offers a standard flight (€160, one hour, 12 to 18 passengers) and will discount this to €135 if you book online. Sultan is the only company to offer VIP flights for two passengers in a small balloon (€600 for two, 1¼ hours).

(Yeni Zelve). Bear right, follow the Ürgüp road uphill and, after less than 2km, you'll find yourself in the stunning Devrent Valley, sometimes known as the Valley of Fairy Chimneys.

Though many Cappadocian valleys boast collections of strange volcanic cones, these are the best formed and most thickly clustered. Most of the rosy rock cones are topped by flattish, darker stones of harder rock that sheltered the cones from the rain until all the surrounding rock was eaten away, a process known as differential erosion.

If you continue to the top of the ridge, you'll reach the Avanos-Ürgüp road, with Avanos to the left and Ürgüp to the right.

### AVANOS

☎ 0384 / pop 13,000 / elevation 910m

The red clay for which Avanos is famed comes from the Kızılırmak (Red River), which runs through its centre. For centuries, local potters have used it to make the simple pots that today still form the backbone of the local economy. Visitors have been coming here since Roman times (Avanos was once the Roman city of Venasa), but quite frankly we don't see the attraction of this place. Its setting is bland indeed when compared with those of Ürgüp, Göreme and Uçhisar, and it doesn't have any attractions other than the pottery workshops to distract attention from this fact. Some may choose to stay in Avanos as it is a convenient base for exploration.

### Orientation & Information

Most of the town is on the northern bank of the river, with Atatürk Caddesi providing the main thoroughfare. Although there is an otogar south of the river, all dolmuşes for the local area stop outside the PTT, on Atatürk Caddesi across from the main square. The **tourist office** (☎ 511 4360; Atatürk Caddesi; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar) is on the main street. It can supply a basic map of the town, but its staff members don't speak English. You'll find several banks with ATMs on or around the main square.

To check your email head to the **Hemi Internet Café** (Uğur Mumcu Caddesi; per hr €1; ☎ 8am-midnight).

Be warned that Avanos has one of the loudest (and least tuneful) muezzins we have ever heard. Early mornings can be traumatic as a result.

### Sights & Activities

Tour groups tend to find themselves shopping for pots in vast warehouses on the outskirts of town. It's much more enjoyable (and infinitely cheaper) to patronise one of the smaller **pottery workshops** right in town, most of which will happily show you how to throw a pot or two. These are located in the small streets around the main square and in the group of shops opposite the PTT.

If you fancy horse-riding, **Akhal-Teke** (☎ 511 5171; www.akhal-tekehorsecenter.com; Camikebir Mahallesi, Kadi Sokak 1) and Kirkit Voyage (below) organise guided half-day horse-riding treks in the area. These range in price from €30 per person for two hours to €40 for a full day.

Avanos is a base for rafting trips in Cappadocia. **Medraft** (☎ 213 3948; www.cappadociarafting.com) offers a variety of one-, two-, three- or four-day trips on the Kızılırmak and Zamanti Rivers (Grades 2 to 5) ranging in price from €65 to €585 per person including all equipment, guides, meals and camping.

### Tours

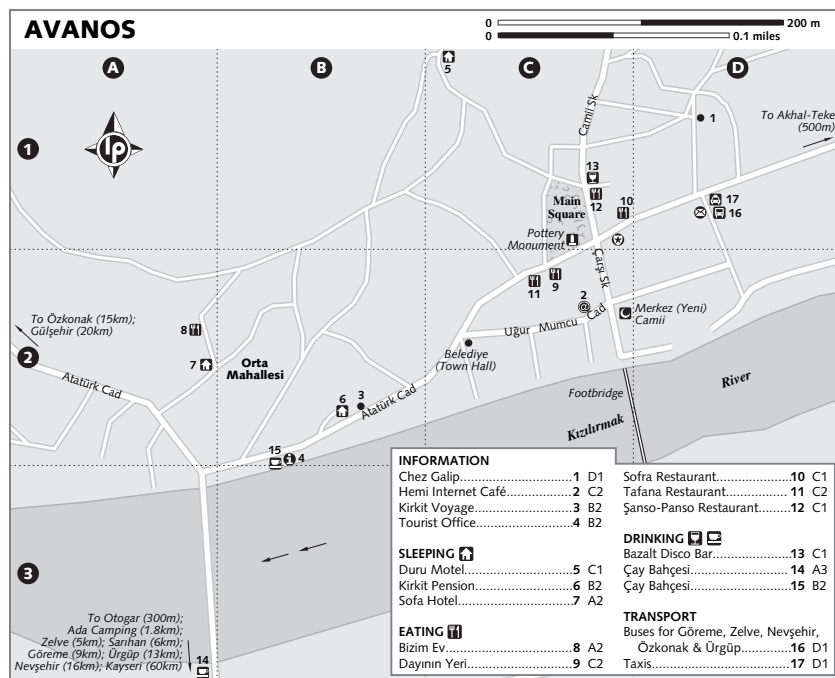
**Kirkit Voyage** (☎ 511 3259; www.kirkit.com; Atatürk Caddesi 50) has an excellent reputation. It can arrange walking, biking, canoeing, horse-riding and snowshoe trips, as well as the more-usual guided tours around Cappadocia. It's also an agency for Onur Air and Pegasus Airlines.

### Sleeping

**Ada Camping** (☎ 511 2429; www.adacampingavanos.com; Jan Zakari Caddesi 20; camp sites €5.50 per person incl electricity; 📶) This large camping ground, 1km west of the otogar, boasts a superb setting close to the river. There's lots of shade and grass, clean bathrooms, a restaurant and an enormous swimming pool.

**Kirkit Pension** (☎ 511 3148; www.kirkit.com; Atatürk Caddesi; s/d incl breakfast €19/25; 📶) Set in converted old stone houses, this long-running pension is known throughout Cappadocia for its congenial, laidback atmosphere. The simple rooms are decorated with kilims, historical photographs of the region and *suzani* (Uzbek bedspreads) – some are a bit cramped, so ask to see a few before checking in. Guests can enjoy a home-cooked local meal (€5 for dinner) in the vaulted restaurant or pleasant courtyard. Good value.

**Duru Motel** (☎ 511 2402; www.duruhotel.com; Yukarı Mahallesi; s/d incl breakfast €17/28; 📶) Perched high above the town (it's one hell of a walk), this



clean and simple place offers two types of rooms. Those in the new wing are light and comfortable, but lack atmosphere; the cheaper alternatives in the original (but still modern) building offer dodgy beds, worn carpet and basic bathrooms. The real drawbacks here are the grassy terrace and the exceptional views over Avanos.

**Sofa Hotel** (☎ 511 5186; www.sofa-hotel.com; Orta Mahallesi Baklaci Sokak 13; s/d incl breakfast €25/40; ☒) This excellent midrange choice consists of 35 rooms in 15 stone houses. The best rooms are in the new 'built-to-look-old' wing near the reception area; most of these have large modern bathrooms, satellite TV and tea-and-coffee making facilities. Though comfort is a priority here, the place has more than its fair share of charm courtesy of the many rugs, pictures, ceramics and knick-knacks scattered throughout its rooms, courtyard and restaurants.

### Eating

**Şanso-Panso Restaurant** (mains €2-4) This low-key eatery on the main square is a great spot to have a beer (€2) and people-watch. Given

Avanos' pottery trade, it's hardly surprising that the speciality is *güveç* (beef stew with potatoes, tomatoes, garlic, paprika and cumin, baked in a clay pot; €3.50). Tea costs €0.55 and a fresh orange juice will set you back a mere €1.

**Dayının Yeri** (☎ 511 6840; Atatürk Caddesi 23; mains €2-5) The shiny and modern Dayının Yeri is one of the best *ocakbaşı* (grill restaurants) in Cappadocia and should be an essential stop on any visit to Avanos. The kebabs are sensational and the pide is just as good. Don't even *think* of leaving without sampling the freshly prepared *künefe* (strands of cooked batter over a creamy sweet cheese base baked in syrup; €2). No alcohol is served.

**Tafana Restaurant** (Atatürk Caddesi; mains €2-5) This cluttered but reasonably attractive eatery on the main street is nowhere near as impressive as Dayının Yeri, but is a decent fall-back option if one is needed. It specialises in pide (€3 to €5.50), which is cooked in a wood-fired oven. The beer here is cheap (€2).

**Sofra Restaurant** (☎ 511 4324; Hükümet Konağı Karşısı; grills €3.50-4.50) A favourite with the tour groups that descend on Avanos every weekend

during summer, Sofra has a welcoming feel and its cheerful rear dining room is a pleasant place to sample good-quality grills. Best of all, you can order a beer (€2.50) to accompany your kebab.

**Bizim Ev** (Our House; ☎ 511 5525; Orta Mahallesi Baklaci Sokak 1; meze €1.50-5, mains €4-6) This welcoming family-run restaurant is about as swish as dining gets in Avanos. Local specialities such as fresh trout (€4.50) and *manti* (Turkish ravioli) (€4) are served in the elegant air-conditioned dining room or on the rooftop terrace. A beer costs €3.

### Drinking

If you're keen to linger over a tea and nargileh, try the *çay bahçesi* adjoining the tourist office, which is as welcoming to women as it is to men, or the large riverside *çay bahçesi* in front of the pottery workshops on the southwestern side of the bridge.

There are a few bars dotted along Atatürk Caddesi and around the main square, but most are geared towards locals and don't make visitors (particularly females) feel very welcome. The only one we'd really recommend is **Bazalt Disco Bar** (Yukarı Mahallesi; ☒ Tue-Sun), which hosts live music and has a friendly vibe.

### Getting There & Around

For details of shuttle bus services between Kayseri airport and Avanos see p494.

There are two bus routes from Avanos to Nevşehir: one leaves every 30 minutes and goes direct and the other leaves every hour and travels via Göreme and Çavuşın. Both services operate from 7am to 7pm and charge €1.50 per ticket. There's also an hourly *bel-diye* bus running from Avanos to Nevşehir via Çavuşın (10 minutes), Göreme (15 minutes) and Uçhisar (30 minutes). It operates from 7.10am to 6pm and costs between €0.40 and €1.10 depending on where you get on and off.

See p494 for details of the Belediye Bus Corp service between Ürgüp and Avanos.

Kirkit Voyage (p513) hires out mountain bikes for €11 per day.

### AROUND AVANOS

#### Sarihan

Built in 1249, the Sarihan (Yellow Caravan-serai), 6km east of Avanos, has an elaborate gateway with a small mosque above it –

it's one of the best of the remaining Seljuk caravanserais.

The caravanserai was restored in the late 1980s. These days it serves as a cultural centre, staging a 45-minute **whirling dervish sema** (☎ 511 3795; admission €20-25; ☒ 9.30pm Apr-Oct, 8.30pm Nov-Mar). Though the setting is extremely atmospheric, the *sema* (ceremony) here is nowhere near as impressive as those staged at the Mevlevi Monastery in Istanbul's Beyoğlu (see p119). If you've seen that one you should probably give this one a miss. You must book ahead – most of the pensions in Göreme, Ürgüp, Avanos or Uçhisar will arrange this for you. Note that the price varies according to how much commission your tour agent or pension is skimming off the top.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Getting to the Sarihan without your own transport is difficult, as there are no dolmuşes and few vehicles with which to hitch a ride. An Avanos taxi driver will probably want around €11 to take you there and back, including waiting time.

### Özkonak Underground City

About 15km north of Avanos, the village of Özkonak hosts a smaller version of the underground cities of Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu (see the boxed text, p528), with the same wine reservoirs, rolling stone doors etc. **Özkonak underground city** (admission €3; ☒ 8.30am-7pm Jun-Sep, 8.30am-5.30pm Oct-May) is neither as dramatic nor as impressive as the larger ones, but is much less crowded.

The easiest way to get there is by dolmuş from Avanos (€1, 30 minutes), but there are few services on weekends. Ask to be let off for the *yeraltı şehri* (underground city); the bus stops at the petrol station, a 500m stroll from the entrance.

### NEVŞEHİR

☎ 0384 / pop 77,060 / elevation 1260m

Nevşehir, the provincial capital, is an ugly modern town that offers travellers little incentive to linger. Basically, it's useful as a transport hub but not for much else.

### Orientation & Information

The main otogar is 1.5km north of Atatürk Bulvarı, the town's main road. To find it, look for the TC Ziraat Bankası branch on Atatürk Bulvarı and then turn into Lale Sokak, which

is directly opposite. This busy street leads to both the otogar and the Gülşehir highway. In reality, locals avoid the otogar, instead catching buses and dolmuşes to most local towns from a more central bus stop on a cross street located a short distance north of the Alibey Cami on Lale Sokak. When you reach the traffic lights a little way on from the mosque, turn right and you'll see people waiting outside a group of arcaded shops. Services to Göreme, Uçhisar and Avanos also stop on the main road outside the museum (on the same side of the road, but a bit further towards Göreme).

Nevşehir's **tourist office** (☎ 213 3659; Atatürk Bulvarı) is in a large government building on the town's main road. Staff here can supply a basic map of Nevşehir, but not much else. To check your email, head to **Step Internet Café** (Atatürk Bulvarı; per hr €0.55; ☎ 8am-midnight), just up from the tourist office. There are also a number of banks with ATMs along here.

## Sights

**Nevşehir Museum** (☎ 213 1447; Türbe Sokak 1; admission €1.10; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) is housed in the extremely ugly Kültür Merkezi (City Cultural Centre) 1km from the centre of town, on the road to Göreme. The collection includes a mildly interesting archaeological room with Phrygian, Hittite and Bronze Age pots and implements, as well as Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman articles. The upstairs ethnographic section is dusty, poorly presented and of only marginal interest.

The statue in the small park in front of the cultural centre is of Nevşehir'li Damat İbrahim Paşa (1662-1730), the Ottoman grand vizier after whom the town is named. This local luminary endowed the town's grand mosque complex, which is clearly visible on the hill to the south of Atatürk Caddesi and still has a functioning mosque, *medrese* (which is now a library), *hamam* and tea house.

## Dangers & Annoyances

The tour companies and taxi drivers based at Nevşehir's otogar have a formidable reputation for pouncing on travellers who arrive on buses from İstanbul and other long-distance destinations as soon as they get off the bus. Once cornered, the unsuspecting and tired victims are often conned into signing up for overpriced tours or agreeing to ridiculously overinflated prices for a taxi trip to their final destination (be it Göreme, Ürgüp, Uçhisar

or any of the nearby villages). We suggest that you avoid any dealings with the tour agents here and follow the advice outlined on p493 to ensure that your bus ticket includes a shuttle bus transfer to your final destination from Nevşehir. If you do decide to take a taxi from the otogar, follow the price guidelines included in the Getting There & Away section on below.

## Sleeping & Eating

We can't think of a good reason to stay in Nevşehir after checking out its hotels. These fall into two categories: bland four- and five-star places on the city fringe that are geared solely towards package groups; and horrible dingy places in the city centre where Russian prostitutes ply their trade and the sheets certainly don't bear inspection. Even if you arrive here in the middle of the night, we recommend that you make your way to nearby Göreme, where the accommodation is cheaper and infinitely superior.

**Öz Hanedan Restaurant** (☎ 213 1179; Gazhane Caddesi 18A; kebaps €2.50-3) In our opinion, noshing on the *İskender* kebaps served at this sleek modern restaurant is the only compelling reason to spend time in Nevşehir. In a side street about 150m off Atatürk Caddesi, Öz Hanedan is impeccably clean, has extremely friendly staff and serves exceptionally fine variations of döner kebab. To find it, turn left at the main crossroads just past the tourist office as you come into town from Göreme, then take the first right, and then the first left.

If you're in need of a tea and baklava stop before or after catching a bus, the Karadeniz Pastanesi just off Atatürk Caddesi on the road to Gülşehir is worth a visit.

## Getting There & Away

At the time of writing **Pegasus Airlines** ([www.pegasusairlines.com](http://www.pegasusairlines.com)) had just commenced flights between İstanbul and Nevşehir five times per week (€42 to €53 one way).

Nevşehir is the main regional transport hub. There are services to surrounding towns and villages from the otogar and from the dolmuş stop close to the centre (see p515). These go to Göreme (€1, every 30 minutes from 7am to 8pm Monday to Friday in summer and 7am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday in winter, every hour on weekends); Uçhisar (€0.80, every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday, every hour on

weekends); Ürgüp (€1, every 15 minutes from 7.30am to midnight); and Niğde (€3.30, every 30 minutes from 6.30am to 7pm). The Niğde bus stops at Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu en route. There are two bus routes from Nevşehir to Avanos: one leaves every 30 minutes and goes direct and the other leaves every hour and travels via Göreme and Çavuşin. Both services operate from 7am to 7pm and charge €1.50 per ticket. To get to Ortahisar (€0.55, every 30 minutes from 7am to 6.30pm Monday to Saturday) you'll need to make your way to the bus stop at the junction of Atatürk Caddesi and the Ürgüp road. Alternatively, you can catch a Nevşehir-Ürgüp dolmuş and ask to get off on the main highway at the turn-off to Ortahisar. It's then a 1km walk into the centre of town.

A taxi should cost no more than €10 to Göreme, €10 to Ortahisar, €15 to Ürgüp, €8 to Uçhisar or €15 to Avanos.

## AROUND NEVŞEHİR

If you're heading for Ankara, consider stopping off to see Gülşehir and Hacıbektaş along the way. While this is easily done if you have your own vehicle, it's not too hard by public transport either.

### Gülşehir

☎ 0384 / pop 9800

This small town 19km north of Nevşehir has two rocky attractions on its outskirts that are worth visiting if you're passing through.

Four kilometres before Gülşehir's town centre you'll find the **Open Palace** (Açık Saray;

admission free; ☎ 7am-7pm), a fine rock-cut monastery dating from the 6th and 7th centuries. It includes churches, refectories, dormitories and a kitchen, all of which are cut into fairy chimneys.

Two kilometres closer to town and a five-minute walk down a signed road on the left of the highway (the sign reads 'Church of St Jean/Karşı Kilise') is the splendid **Church of St John** (admission €2.75; ☎ 8.30am-5pm). This 13th-century church on two levels has marvellous frescoes, including scenes depicting the Annunciation, the Descent from the Cross, the Last Supper and the Betrayal by Judas. The frescoes are particularly well preserved due to the fact that until restoration in 1995 they were covered in a layer of black soot.

Buses and dolmuşes to Gülşehir (€0.55, 15 minutes) depart from the dolmuş and bus stop in the centre of Nevşehir (see p515). Ask to be let off at the Açık Saray or Karşı Kilise to save a walk back from town. Returning, just flag the bus down from the side of the highway. Onward buses to Hacıbektaş leave from Gülşehir's small otogar opposite the Kurşunlu Camii (€0.55, 30 minutes).

### Hacıbektaş

☎ 0384 / pop 6781

The town of Hacıbektaş is right on the edge of Cappadocia, 46km from Nevşehir. For most of the year it slumbers undisturbed, but from 16 to 18 August it bursts into life to host the annual festival in memory of Hacı Bektaş Veli (1248-1337), founder and spiritual leader of the Bektaşî order of dervishes. Up to 100,000

### HACI BEKTAŞ VELİ & THE BEKTAŞİ SECT

Born in Nishapur in Iran in the 13th century, Hacı Bektaş Veli inspired a religious and political following that blended aspects of Islam (both Sunni and Shiite) with Orthodox Christianity. During his life he is known to have travelled around Anatolia and to have lived in Kayseri, Sivas and Kırşehir, but eventually he settled in the hamlet that is now the small town of Hacıbektaş.

Although not much is known about Hacı Bektaş himself, the book he wrote, the *Makalât*, describes a mystical philosophy less austere than mainstream Islam. In it he laid out a four-stage path to enlightenment (the Four Doors). Though often scorned by mainstream Islamic clerics, Bektaşî dervishes attained considerable political and religious influence in Ottoman times. Along with all the other dervishes, they were outlawed in 1925.

The annual pilgrimage of Bektaşî dervishes is an extremely important event for the modern Alevi community. Politicians tend to hijack the first day's proceedings, but days two and three are given over to music and dance.

In town, you can visit the **Hacıbektaş Museum** (admission €1.10; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-5.30pm Tue-Sun), set up around the tomb of the great man. Several rooms are arranged as they might have been when the dervishes lived here.

believers descend on the saint's tomb during this pilgrimage.

There's a **tourist office** (☎ 8.30am-midday & 1-5.30pm Mon-Fri) in the Kültür Merkezi next to the museum. Its staff speak no English, and it is unable to supply any printed information other than a glossy booklet about Hacı Bektaş Veli. You'll find a Vakıf Bank ATM in a booth in front of the PTT on the main street.

Hacıbektaş has limited hotel options. Should you want to overnight here, the unremarkable **Hünkar Otel** (☎ 441 3344; www.hunkarotel.com.tr; s/d €11/22), on the *meydanı* (town square) between the shrine and the otogar, offers small rooms that are relatively clean and comfortable. The price should be negotiable except in August, when it's booked solid. Eating options are limited to the basic *lokantas* (restaurants), *pastanes* (patisseries) and *kebabçıs* (kebab eateries) on the main street.

Buses from the centre of Nevşehir to Hacıbektaş (€1.10, 45 minutes, nine daily between 7.45am and 5.45pm on weekdays, fewer services on weekends) depart from the 'Has Hacıbektaş' bus office just down from the Alibey Camii on the road to Gülşehir. The last bus from Hacıbektaş' otogar to Nevşehir leaves at 5pm (4.45pm on weekends).

## ORTAHISAR

☎ 0384 / pop 4800

Mainstream tourism has bypassed Ortahisar, and it remains a quaint farming village with a thriving trade in storing citrus fruits in its caves. But it has a secret or two up its sleeve in the form of charming boutique hotels located in tranquil and extremely scenic spots on the edge of town. These offer the best possible excuse for getting away from it all for a few days.

Staff at the small **tourist office** (☎ 343 3071; Tepebaşı Meydanı; ☎ 8am-5pm) near the castle are friendly, but don't speak English. You can check emails at **Kilim Net C@fe** (Huseyin Galif Efendi Caddesi; per hr €1.10; ☎ 9am-1am) near Hotel Gümüş. If you want a guide to visit Pancarlık Valley, ask 'Crazy Ali', who runs the antique shop next to the tourist office and speaks a bit of English.

## Sights

There are no monuments in the village other than the **castle**, an 18m-high rock used as a fortress in Byzantine times and now undergoing a seemingly interminable restoration.

Those keen to grasp the basics of local culture should consider visiting the **Culture Folk Museum** (Kültür Müzesi; Tepebaşı Meydanı; admission €1; ☎ 9am-9pm), on the main square near the castle. Tour groups love its twee dioramas and interpretative panels (in four languages including English).

On the road to the AlkaBris hotel, you'll find **Manzara ve Kültür Parkı**, a pleasant municipal park with grassed areas, playground equipment, fountains and a wonderful view of the castle. It's a great spot for a picnic.

From Ortahisar you can hike to little-known churches in the nearby countryside, especially in the Pancarlık Valley.

In 2006, Ortahisar acquired an unfortunate tourist attraction when the Türkbalo, a ridiculous, permanently tethered hot-air balloon, was moved here from İstanbul. Cappadocian locals were horrified that the wonderful landscape surrounding the Devrent Valley inherited the curse. Hopefully tourists will illustrate their disdain by ignoring this visually intrusive and monumentally tacky attraction.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Gümüş Hotel** (☎ 343 3127; www.gumushotel.com; Huseyin Galif Efendi Caddesi; s/d incl breakfast €8.50/16.50) On the road into the centre of town, the Gümüş is a clean and simple place offering neat rooms (some with balconies) and great views from its roof terrace.

**Hisar Evi** (☎ 343 3005; www.hisarevi.com; Kale Mahallesi Tahirebey Sokak; s/d/ste incl breakfast €39/67/84; ☎) A perfect spot for a getaway, this friendly retreat is known for its genial host, extremely comfortable rooms and excellent home cooking (dinner €11). There are terraces everywhere and the views over the valley and castle are quite wonderful. Prices are surprisingly reasonable considering the quality of the accommodation on offer.

**AlkaBris** (☎ 343 3433; www.alkabris.com; Cedit Mahallesi, Ali Reis Sokak 23; r €110-139, ste €156, all incl breakfast; ☎) An oasis of calm and luxury, this lovingly restored Cappadocian house offers five tastefully furnished rooms. Three of these boast views over the castle, the old village and Erciyes Dağı. There's also a rock-hewn restaurant (dinner €17) and two magnificent terraces where guests can relax over tea. To find it, follow the signs from the centre of town; it's a steep 1.5km walk.

**Park Restaurant** (☎ 343 3361; Tepebaşı Meydanı; pide €3-3.50, mains €4.50-5.50) The Park overlooks the

main square, with the castle as a backdrop. Its attractive garden is a perfect spot to rest over a tea (€0.50), beer (€3) or glass of 'house viagra' (fresh orange juice, €2).

**Cultural Museum Restaurant** (mains €5.50-8) This restaurant looks great, so it's a shame the food and service aren't better. Clearly gearing itself towards tour groups, its terrace and pretty dining room are a pleasant place for a tea (€0.50), but our experience would indicate that the food is best avoided.

## Getting There & Away

For details of shuttle bus services between Kayseri airport and Ortahisar see p494.

Dolmuşes make the 5km run between Ürgüp and Ortahisar every 30 minutes from 8.10am to 4.30pm Monday to Saturday (€0.90). See page p516 for details of the bus services between Ortahisar and Nevşehir. All buses stop in the main square.

## ÜRGÜP

☎ 0384 / pop 17,050

If you have a soft spot for upmarket hotels and fine dining, you need look no further – Ürgüp is the place you're looking for. The ever-growing battalion of boutique hotels in the town's honey-coloured stone buildings (left over from the pre-1923 days when the town had a large Greek population) are proving very popular with travellers. With a spectacular natural setting and a wonderful location at the very heart of central Cappadocia, this is one of the most seductive holiday spots in the whole of Turkey.

## Orientation & Information

Ürgüp is set within a steep valley about 23km east of Nevşehir and 7km east of Göreme Valley. Most of the action occurs on or around Cumhuriyet Meydanı, which has at its centre a modern shopping plaza complex. The otogar is close to Cumhuriyet Meydanı.

There are several banks with ATMs on or around the main square. The PTT is northeast of the main square.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0384 213 4260; Kayseri Caddesi 37; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr, 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri May-Sep) is helpful and well informed.

You can check your emails at **Club Café Internet** (3rd fl, Suat Hayri Caddesi 42; per hr €1.10; ☎ 9am-1am) or at **Tera@s Internet Café** (3rd fl, Suat Hayri Caddesi 42; per hr €1; ☎ 9am-1am) in the same building. To find both, enter the arcade opposite the plaza

and next to Kardeşler Restaurant and go up the grubby stairs to the 3rd floor.

## Sights & Activities

Northwest of the main square is the oldest part of town, with many fine **old houses**, reached through a stone arch. It's well worth a stroll, after which you can head up Ahmet Refik Caddesi and turn right to the **Temenni Wishing Hill** (admission €0.30; ☎ 9am-11pm), home to a saint's tomb, a café and 360-degree views over the town. Back on Ahmet Refik Caddesi, you may want to explore the town's unofficial and underwhelming 'underground city'. If you do so, you'll probably need to tip one of the guides who hang around here.

Right by the main square is the **Tarihi Şehir Hamamı** (€8.50; ☎ 7am-10pm), the local *hamam*. Partly housed in what was once a small church, it offers mixed but respectable bathing (male masseurs only).

There is an uninspiring **museum** (admission €1.10; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) next to the tourist office.

## WINERIES

The abundant sunshine and fertile volcanic soil of Cappadocia produce delicious sweet grapes, and several small local wineries carry on the Ottoman-Greek wine-making tradition. You can sample some of the local produce at the big **Turasan Winery** (Çimenli Mevkii; ☎ 7.30am-7pm).

## Tours

Several travel agents based in Ürgüp run tours around Cappadocia. Recommended agents include:

**Argeus Tours** (☎ 341 4688; www.argeus.com.tr, www.cappadociaexclusive.com; İstiklal Caddesi 7; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Nov-Mar, 8.30am-6pm Apr-Oct) Helps with cycling, walking and horse riding holidays as well as day tours and flights. Ürgüp's Turkish Airlines representative.

**Peerless Travel Services** (☎ 341 6970; www.peerless-excursions.com; İstiklal Caddesi 19A; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm) Also Ürgüp's Onur Air representative.

## Sleeping

Ürgüp is blessed with an impressive array of boutique hotels, a few good-quality midrange choices and a couple of budget pensions worth considering. Many of these close down between November and March, when Ürgüp's weather keeps locals indoors and travellers elsewhere.

**ÜRGÜP**

0 200 m  
0 0.1 miles

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**BUDGET**

**Hotel Elvan** (☎ 341 4191; [hotelerivan@superonline.com](http://hotelerivan@superonline.com); Barbaros Hayrettin Sokak 11; s/d €17/28 incl breakfast; 📺) A friendly welcome and homely atmosphere awaits you at this unpretentious but immaculate guesthouse. The rooms are arranged around a small courtyard and have midrange amenities such as satellite TVs and hairdryers. There's also a small roof terrace and comfortable dining room. Excellent value.

**Yıldız Hotel** (☎ 341 4610; [www.yildizhotel.com](http://www.yildizhotel.com); Kayseri Caddesi; s/d/bungalow incl breakfast €14/28/45) Nowhere near as impressive as the other budget options mentioned here, the Yıldız offers old-fashioned rooms that are clean but desperately in need of a paint job and new carpet. The renovated bungalows in the flowery garden

are much nicer, but carry a slightly ambitious price-tag.

**Cappadocia Palace** (☎ 341 2510; [www.hotel-cappadocia.com](http://www.hotel-cappadocia.com); Duayeri Mahallesi Mestan Sokak 2; standard s/d incl breakfast €23/34, ste incl breakfast €45-70) This large and comfortable hotel is housed in a converted Greek house that's conveniently located a stone's throw from Cumhuriyet Meydanı. It has 14 motel-style rooms with satellite TV and small bathrooms, as well as four impressive cave suites. There's a lovely arched restaurant-lounge and an attractive foyer area.

**MIDRANGE**

**Razziya Evi** (☎ 341 5089; [www.razziyaevi.com](http://www.razziyaevi.com); Cingilli Sokak 24; s/d incl breakfast €27/38-43) There aren't

many midrange options in Ürgüp, so the existence of this lovingly restored *evi* (house) should be wholeheartedly celebrated. Its seven cheerful rooms (some in slightly musty caves) are comfortable and clean; they're not at all posh, but in a town where posh boutique hotels are a dime a dozen this almost comes as a welcome relief. There's a *hamam* (€5 per person), a salon with satellite TV, a pretty courtyard and a kitchen that guests can use.

**Melis Hotel** (☎ 341 2495; [www.melishotel.com](http://www.melishotel.com); İstiklal Caddesi 34; dm/s/d incl breakfast €14/25/40; 📺 📺) On a main road right next to a mosque (pack those ear-plugs!), the Melis offers arched rooms set around a large and quite lovely swimming pool. The older main building is home to a restaurant, three atmospheric cave rooms and a pleasant four-bed dorm.

**Asia Minor Otel** (☎ 341 4960; [www.cappadociahouse.com](http://www.cappadociahouse.com); İstiklal Caddesi 38; s/d incl breakfast €28/42; 📺) The large grassed garden is the knock-out feature of this friendly but slightly shabby hotel. There's a wide choice of room styles, the best of which are the downstairs arched rooms and the light and airy upstairs rooms with balcony.

**Hotel Surban** (☎ 341 4603; [www.hotelsurban.com.tr](http://www.hotelsurban.com.tr); Yunak Mahallesi; s/d with half board €35/45; 📺 📺) The Surban's simple arched rooms are pleasantly light and have small but very clean bathrooms; all come with satellite TVs and pretty embroidered bed linen. There's a roof terrace with good views and a large restaurant-lounge. It's good value, particularly considering the fact that the price includes breakfast and dinner.

**Kemerli Evi** (☎ 341 5445; [www.kemerlievi.com](http://www.kemerlievi.com); Dutlu Camii Mahallesi Çıkma Sokak 12; s/d incl breakfast €67/90; 📺 📺 📺) The small and stylish Kemerli Evi straddles the dollar divide between midrange and top end. Located in the backstreets south-west of the main square, it has 10 attractively

decorated rooms set in two restored Greek houses. There's a small swimming pool, a cosy upstairs lounge and an unassuming roof terrace.

**TOP END**

Most top-end lodgings are on the northwest fringes of Ürgüp, high up on the Esbelli hill.

**Kayadam Cave House** (☎ 341 6623; [www.kayadam.com](http://www.kayadam.com); Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak 6; s/d €52/72, ste €120 incl breakfast; 📺 📺) The six standard rooms at this lovely boutique hotel are directly carved into the tuff cliff and front onto a cascade of terraces. All feature polished floorboards, comfortable beds and decent-sized modern bathrooms. The owners also operate the nearby Villa Bacchus, which has two deluxe rooms and one utterly fabulous suite with its own terrace, equipped kitchen and large living area.

**Elkep Evi Pansiyon 1, 2, 3 & 4** (☎ 341 6000; [www.elkepevi.com](http://www.elkepevi.com); Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak; s/d incl breakfast €55/75, ste incl breakfast €110-170; 📺 📺) The largest of the boutique hotels on Esbelli Mahallesi, Elkep Evi boasts four separate buildings set in an attractive garden. Most of the rooms are in caves, but the newest wing also has arched family rooms on its roof terrace. Space is plentiful here: all rooms are large (some are enormous and even have their own roof terraces), the restaurant is cavernous and there's a sprawling roof terrace with sensational views.

**Selçuklu Evi** (☎ 341 7460; [www.selcukluevi.com](http://www.selcukluevi.com); Yunak Mahallesi; r incl breakfast €70-90; 📺 📺) Though it's not among our favourite Ürgüp hotels, this imposing mansion hotel still has lots to offer. Its 20 individually decorated and extremely comfortable rooms sport amenities such as satellite TVs and minibars, and its pretty

**THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE**

**Esbelli Evi Pansiyon** (☎ 341 3395; [www.esbelli.com](http://www.esbelli.com); Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak 8; s/d/ste incl breakfast €80/90/200; 📺 📺 📺) It's not often that we give hotels a 10 out of 10 score, but that's what the Esbelli Evi deserves. The first of Cappadocia's boutique hotels, it has been copied by innumerable competitors but none have been able to fully emulate its unforgettable mix of comfort, style and ambience. Owner Süha Ersöz knows what makes travellers happy – the cave rooms here have comfortable beds, elegant (but never pretentious) décor and excellent bathrooms. Thoughtful touches such as bottled water and a choice of reading matter in each room provide the icing on the cake. We could go on about the fabulous breakfasts, magnificent terrace views and exemplary levels of service, but really, all we need to say is that a stay in this incredibly welcoming place will be a highlight of your trip.

courtyard garden is a perfect spot in which to relax (particularly as it has wine fountains dispensing free-of-charge product!). Our main quibble is that most of its rooms get hot in summer and it has no air-conditioning.

**40DA Cave House** (☎ 341 6080; www.4oda.com; Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak 46; s/d incl breakfast €70/90; 🍴) It may only have four rooms, but this peaceful new pension has more than its fair share of atmosphere and comfort. The infectiously cheerful and friendly owner lives on site and goes out of her way to make guests feel at home, supplying tea and home-cooked cakes in the afternoon and sharing her personal library and lounge room. The rooms are gorgeous, featuring private terraces, top-quality beds, antique *suzani* (Uzbek bedspreads) and handmade soaps. We highly recommend staying here.

**Ürgüp Evi** (☎ 341 3173; www.urgupevi.com.tr; Esbelli Mahallesi Sokak 54; s/d incl breakfast €75/100, ste incl breakfast €135-200; 🍴) This long-running favourite has recently been the subject of a chic makeover. Its gorgeous stonework has been left untouched, but its cave rooms now have extremely comfortable beds with luxe linen. The hotels' strongest selling-points are its location right at the top of the hill (the views are quite amazing), its attractive cave restaurant and its terrace garden, which is home to a scattering of gaily coloured beanbag seats.

**Sacred House** (☎ 341 7102; www.sacred-house.com; Karahandere Mahallesi Barbaros Hayrettin Sokak 25; s incl breakfast €95-125, d incl breakfast €105-145; 🍴 🍴) Hotel owners throughout Cappadocia stood up and took notice when this most boutique of all boutique hotels opened in 2006. Set in an old Greek mansion, it offers seven exquisitely decorated (and dark) rooms with large and very posh bathrooms. Antiques and *objets d'art* are scattered throughout the building, and there's a very stylish rooftop lounge/terrace. You'll either love it or find it unbearably pretentious.

**Yunak Evleri** (☎ 341 6920; www.yunak.com; Yunak Mahallesi; d €120-145, ste €180; 🍴 🍴) This swish hotel is a combination of six cave houses with 29 rooms. We were superimpressed with the main building, which occupies an old and very attractive Greek house and houses a state-of-the-art DVD room and music lounge, but not quite as taken with the general setting, which suffers from an exposed position and lack of greenery. That said, guest rooms are extremely comfortable and well appointed.

## Eating

The range of restaurants in Ürgüp is more limited than in Göreme, but the overall standard is much higher.

**Kardeşler** (☎ 341 2376; Suat Hayri Caddesi 5; mains €2.50-4) This cheap-and-cheerful place is popular for its *tandır*s (stews cooked in a clay pot with a bread crust). These come with beef and white beans or you can order a vegetarian alternative. A beer to accompany your meal costs €2.

**Ocakbaşı** (☎ 341 3277; Güllüce Caddesi 44; mains €4-5) Right above the otogar, this long-established place has a cavernous dining room and smaller roof terrace. It's low on atmosphere but has a sound reputation for its grilled meats. A beer costs €2.50 and an *ayran* (yogurt drink) €1.50.

**La Padella** (☎ 341 2068; Dumlupınar Caddesi 33; mains €4.50-6.50) La Padella's chef-owner previously worked at Göreme's well-regarded A'turca, and it shows. The menu showcases many of the same dishes, but offers them at prices that are considerably cheaper. We heartily approve! The menu (presented in Turkish and English) includes favourites such as *soğuk salata tabağı* (mixed cold meze plate, €4) and *kapaturco tavuk şiş* (chicken kebab served on a bed of eggplant, tomato, onion and peppers, €5) A beer costs a bargain-basement €2 and service is extremely friendly. Highly recommended.

**Ahra** (☎ 341 3454; Fabrika Caddesi 66; mains €4-7) This is undoubtedly the most atmospheric restaurant in town. Located on the 1st floor of a beautifully renovated old house on the road to Mustafapaşa, it has an intimate feel and simple but attractive décor. The simplicity extends to the excellent menu, which features home-cooked dishes such as *sulu köfte* (meatball stew, €4) and *Kayseri mantısı* (€4.50). You can celebrate your good fortune at being here by ordering a bottle of local wine (€17).

**Han Çırağan Restaurant** (☎ 341 2566; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; mains €5-7) The Han Çırağan is a perennial favourite thanks to its atmospheric setting and reasonable prices. In summer, the pleasant vine-shaded courtyard is a lovely spot for dinner; in winter, the intimate arched-ceiling dining room is just as welcoming. Don't expect anything special when it comes to the food – this is stock-standard Turkish fare.

**Şömine Cafe & Restaurant** (☎ 341 8442; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; salads €2-5, mains €4-7) This popular restaurant on the plaza is as sophisticated as

the Ürgüp dining scene gets. Choose a table on the outdoor terrace or in the attractive indoor dining room, sit down and admire the pristine napery and quality tableware, and then make your choice from the large menu. Most people choose a salad to start and then move on to a *kiremit* (meat dish baked on a tile in a traditional oven), accompanied by crisp, freshly baked *lavash* bread. The food is good but doesn't quite live up to the promise of the décor.

**Ehlikeyf** (☎ 341 6110; Cumhuriyet Meydanı; mains €5-8) Ehlikeyf occupies a sleek, modern dining room overlooking the plaza and is close to overtaking Şömine in the contest for the mantle of the town's best restaurant. Large, well-spaced tables and comfortable leather chairs put diners in the right mood to settle down for a big night sampling the ambitious dishes on offer. These include a fabulous *Ehlikeyf kebab* (steak served on slivered fried potatoes, garlic yogurt and a demiglace sauce; €9). Service can be frustratingly slow.

## Drinking

The two most popular bars in town are Kaya Bar and Dedikodulu Bar, which are next to each other on Cumhuriyet Meydanı. For something a bit more restrained, try **Duyurrgan Şarap Evi** (Esbelli Mahallesi), a wine house where you can sample a glass of Cappadocian wine (or three!) while listening to live music in the evening.

There are a number of cafés and patisseries on the main square where you can grab an outdoor table, order a drink and watch the world go by. If you're after coffee or alcohol, try Café Naturel or Micro Café & Restaurant. For tea, cakes and ice cream, check out Merkez Pastanesi or Şüküröğlü. All are on Cumhuriyet Meydanı.

## Getting There & Away

For details of shuttle bus services between Kayseri airport and Ürgüp see p494.

Most buses leave from the main otogar. Dolmuş travel to Nevşehir every 15 minutes from 6.55am to 11.30pm (€1). For details of the Belediye Bus Corp services running between Ürgüp and Avanos via Ortahisar, the Göreme Open-Air Museum, Göreme village and Çavuşin, see p494.

Nine buses per day (but only three on Sunday) travel between Ürgüp and Mustafapaşa between 8.15am and 6.15pm (€0.90). They

leave from the Mustafapaşa otogar, which is east of the main otogar.

Details of some useful long-distance daily services from Göreme are listed below:

## SERVICES FROM ÜRGÜP'S OTOGAR

Destination	Fare	Duration	Frequency (per day)
Adana	€11.50	5hr	3 morning & afternoon frequent morning & evening
Aksaray	€4	1½hr	at least 7 (in summer)
Ankara	€10	4½hr	2 evening only
Antalya	€17-22	10hr	1 afternoon only
Çanakkale	€25-28	16hr	at least 3 morning & evening
İstanbul	€20	11hr	1 evening only
İzmir & Selçuk	€20-25	11½hr	hourly 7am to 6pm
Kayseri	€3	1¼hr	frequent
Konya	€8.50	3hr	1 evening only
Marmaris/Bodrum/Pamukkale	€17-25	11-15hr	

## Getting Around

Ürgüp is a good base for hiring a car, with most agencies located on or around the main square. Rates hover around €35 to €40 per day for a small manual sedan such as a Fiat Palio and climb to €55 to €60 for a larger automatic. **Decar Rent A Car** (☎ 341 6760) provides good service, but you can also try **Budget Car Rental** (☎ 341 6541), **Astral Rent A Car** (☎ 341 3344), **Hertz** (☎ 341 4906) or **Avis** (☎ 341 2177). If you are planning on dropping the car off in another part of Turkey your best bet is Decar, as it doesn't charge the prohibitively large drop-off fees (eg €100 to drop off in Antalya) that the other companies levy.

Several outlets in town rent mopeds and motorcycles. Try **Alpin** (☎ 341 8008) on the main square or **Astral Rent A Car** (☎ 341 3344). Expect to pay about €25 per day.

The steep walk from the centre of town up to Esbelli Mahallesi is an absolute killer – many people instead opt to catch a taxi from the rank next to Micro Café & Restaurant on the main square (€2.50).

## AYVALI

Heading south from Ürgüp to Mustafapaşa look out for a turn-off to Ayvalı, a tiny unspoilt Cappadocian village that boasts a delightful get-away-from-it-all place to stay,



the **Gamirasu Hotel** (☎ 0384-341 7485; www.gamirasu.com; d €56-104, ste €120-560). Set in a 1000-year-old monastery, it offers slightly claustrophobic standard cave rooms and much nicer deluxe rooms and suites. All are stylish and extremely comfortable. It has an on-site restaurant, a church with frescoes and an ancient winery on the premises.

## MUSTAFAPAŞA

☎ 0384 / pop 2500

Until WWI, Mustafapaşa was called Sinasos and was a predominantly Ottoman Greek settlement. These days it greatly benefits from this Greek legacy, as its exquisitely decorated stone-carved houses and minor rock-cut churches attract the attention of a small but respectable number of foreign and domestic tourists. It's a wonderful spot to spend a day or two.

You enter Mustafapaşa at an enlarged intersection, the Sinasos Meydanı, where a signboard indicating the whereabouts of the local rock-cut churches is located. Follow the road downhill and you'll come to Cumhuriyet Meydanı, the centre of the village, which sports the ubiquitous bust of Atatürk and several tea houses.

There's no tourist office in town, and no ATMs.

## Sights

A sign pointing off Sinasos Meydanı leads 1km to the 12th-century **Ayios Vasilios Kilise** (St Basil Church; admission €3; ☞ variable), perched near the top of a ravine. Its interior features unimpressive 20th-century frescoes.

Between Sinasos Meydanı and Cumhuriyet Meydanı is a 19th-century **medrese** with a fine carved portal. The stone columns on either side of the doorway are supposed to swivel when there's movement in the foundations, thus warning of earthquake damage.

Cumhuriyet Meydanı is home to the imposing **Ayios Kostantinos-Eleni Kilise** (Church of SS Constantine & Helena; admission €3), erected in 1729 and restored in 1850. A fine stone grapevine runs around the portal but the interior is falling into ruin and the frescoes, which date from 1895, are fading fast. You'll need to pay the admission cost and get the key to the church from the uniformed council worker who should be posted outside. If not, enquire at the nearby *belediye* building.

There are other churches in the **Monastery Valley**, including **Ayios Stephanos Church** (St

Stephen's), but they're disappointing compared to others in Cappadocia. Nonetheless, it's a lovely walk.

## Sleeping & Eating

Many of Mustafapaşa's accommodation options are closed from November to March.

**Monastery Hotel** (☎ 353 5005; www.monasteryhotel.com; Mehmet Şakirpaşa Caddesi; s/d €10/20) On the road leading to Monastery Valley, this rough-as-guts place has some squalid downstairs rooms and a few much-more-bearable upstairs alternatives. We doubt that the hotel's bizarre disco-bar sees much action.

**Hotel Pacha** (☎ 353 5331; www.pachahotel.com; Sinasos Meydanı; s/d incl breakfast €15/24) Lots of Cappadocian hotels boast of the fact that theirs are family-run businesses that offer a warm welcome, but in reality this is often not the case. Fortunately, the Pacha is the real thing. A restored Ottoman-Greek house off the main roundabout, it has a great feel about it from the moment you enter the pretty vine-trellised courtyard. The rooms have a bright, modern appearance and are very clean, albeit on the smallish side. Their size doesn't really matter, though, because guests seem to spend most of their time relaxing in the simply wonderful upstairs restaurant-lounge, which overlooks the courtyard.

**Hotel Cavit** (☎ 353 5186; musti\_clb@hotmail.com; Baraj Caddesi; s/d incl breakfast €14/28) On the road to Soğanlı, the Cavit is another family-run winner. Though not as impressive as the Pacha, it also has a pleasant garden courtyard and wonderfully light and airy rooms. The owners are charming, but don't speak any English. Best of all, it has a great view from its comfortable terrace-lounge.

**Old Greek House** (☎ 353 5306; www.oldgreekhouse.com; Şahin Caddesi; s/d incl breakfast €30/40; ☞) The big drawcard here is the historic aura that shrouds this wonderful old Ottoman-Greek house. Centred on an internal courtyard that hosts an excellent restaurant, it still retains many of its original 19th-century frescoes and trimmings. The 16 large rooms have polished floorboards covered in rugs, comfortable beds with embroidered bedspreads, and simple but clean bathrooms. Most are arranged around the courtyard, which means that they can be noisy during meal times.

**Ukabeyn Pansiyon** (☎ 353 5533; www.cappadocia-pensiyon.com; s/d €40/55; ☞) What a surprise! This boutique hotel high on the hill overlooking

the town has five arched rooms furnished in an attractive modern style. There's also a swimming pool, a series of terraces and a fully equipped apartment (€75) that would make a fabulous base for an extended visit. From Cumhuriyet Meydanı, head towards Monastery Valley – it's a stiff 1km up the hill on the right.

**Lamia Pension** (☎ 353 5413; www.lamiapension.com.tr; s/d €28/56) Run by a Turkish-German artist, this homely pension has five large rooms adorned with an eclectic mix of *objets d'art*, paintings and textiles. Though it's impressively clean and very comfortable, it's overpriced for what it offers. To find the Lamia, follow the instructions for the Ukabeyn Pansiyon, opposite.

**Sinasos Gül Konakları** (Rose Mansions; ☎ 353 5486; www.rosemansions.com; Sümer Sokak; s/d incl breakfast & dinner €100/150; ☞) Occupying two heavily restored Greek mansions, this hotel has an impersonal air that no doubt stems from the fact that it is part of the Dınlar hotel chain's national portfolio. Rooms have four-star accoutrements and are extremely comfortable, though their décor won't be to everyone's taste. There's a posh restaurant (dinner €15 for nonguests), a vaguely bizarre 'Ottoman-meets-Holiday-Inn' lounge in a wooden pavilion and a lovely rose garden.

Most of the town's hotels and pensions offer meals and this is fortunate, as the other eateries in town are dreadful. We recommend Old Greek House (opposite), which serves an excellent Turkish set menu to its guests and anyone else seeking a meal (€10 per person); and Hotel Pacha (opposite), which offers a set menu for the slightly cheaper price of €6.

## Getting There & Away

Nine buses a day (fewer on Sunday) travel the route between Ürgüp and Mustafapaşa (€0.90, 20 minutes). The first leaves Mustafapaşa at 7.45am and the last leaves Ürgüp at 6.15pm. A taxi costs €5.50.

## SOĞANLI

The twin valleys of Soğanlı, about 36km south of Mustafapaşa, are much less visited than Göreme or Zelve. Indeed, in recent years the number of visitors to Soğanlı has actually diminished. Nevertheless, it's a magnificent place to explore, and unless your visit coincides with one of the day tours from Göreme, you may well have the valleys all to yourself.

To reach Soğanlı turn off the main road from Mustafapaşa to Yeşilhisar and proceed 4km to the village. Buy your ticket for the churches (adult/child €1.10/free; ☞ 7am-8.30pm) near the **Kapadokya Restaurant** (☎ 0352-653 1045; set menu €4.50; ☞ lunch only), which boasts tables set under shady trees and serves stodgy but acceptable food. The village square is backed by toilets, the modest **Soğanlı Restaurant** (mains €2-3.50; ☞ lunch only) and a line of women selling the dolls for which Soğanlı is supposedly famous. Facing the square is the village's solitary pension, the family-run **Emek** (☞/fax 0352 653 1029; d per person with half board €17), which offers clean cave dorms with between five and nine beds. Meals are cooked by the owner's wife and served on a pleasant upstairs terrace.

## Sights

The valleys of **Aşağı Soğanlı** and **Yukarı Soğanlı** were first used by the Romans as necropolises and later by the Byzantines for monastic purposes (similar to Göreme and Zelve), with ancient **rock-cut churches**.

At the point where the valleys divide, a billboard indicates all the churches. Most of the interesting ones are in the right-hand valley (to the north), easily reached by foot.

Coming from the main road, about 800m before the ticket office, signs point to the **Tokali Kilise** (Buckle Church), on the right, reached by a steep flight of worn steps, and the **Gök Kilise** (Sky Church), to the left across the valley floor. The Gök has twin naves separated by columns and ending in apses. The double frieze of saints is badly worn.

One of the most interesting churches is the **Karabaş** (Black Head), further into the valley and covered in paintings showing the life of Christ, with Gabriel and various saints. A pigeon in the fresco reflects the importance of pigeons to the monks, who wooed them with doves cut into the rock.

Also in the right-hand valley, across the valley floor and high on the far hillside, are the **Kubbeli** and **Saklı Kilisesi** (Cupola and Hidden Churches). The Kubbeli is unusual because of its Eastern-style cupola cut clean out of the rock. The Hidden Church is just that: hidden from view until you get close.

Furthest up the right-hand valley is the **Yılanlı Kilise** (Snake Church), its frescoes deliberately painted over with black paint, probably to protect them. You can still make out the serpent to the left as you enter.

In the left-hand valley, you'll first come across the **Geyikli Kilise**, where the monks' refectory is still clearly visible and, 200m further up, the **Tahtalı Kilise** (Church of Santa Barbara) with well-preserved Byzantine and Seljuk decorative patterns.

### Getting There & Away

It's basically impossible to get to Soğanlı by public transport. Your best bet is to make your way to Yeşilhisar from Kayseri (€1.50, every 30 minutes from 7am to 9pm) and then negotiate for a taxi to take you the rest of the way. Alternatively you could sign up for one of the day tours run from Ürgüp or Göreme.

### ALA DAĞLAR NATIONAL PARK

The Ala Dağlar National Park (Ala Dağlar Milli Parkı) protects the rugged middle range of the Taurus Mountains between Kayseri, Niğde and Adana. It's famous throughout the country for its extraordinary trekking routes, which make their way through craggy limestone ranges dotted with waterfalls. It's best to trek here between mid-June and late September; at other times weather conditions can be particularly hazardous, especially since the ranges have few villages or other support services. Bring warm gear and be prepared for extreme conditions.

The most popular walks start at the small villages of **Çukurbağ** and **Demirkazık**, which lie beneath Mt Demirkazık (Demirkazık Dağı, 3756m), some 40km east of Niğde.

You can also reach the mountains via Yahyalı, 70km due south of Kayseri, a short drive away from the impressive **Kapuzbaşı Waterfalls** on the Zamantı River. **Medraft** (see p513) can organise rafting trips here.

Although there are a variety of walks in the mountains, many people opt for the two-day minimum walk to the beautiful **Yedigöller** (Seven Lakes, 3100m), which starts and finishes at Demirkazık. An easier three- to four-day walk begins at Çukurbağ and leads through the forested Emli Valley, before finishing at Demirkazık. Although solo trekkers do sometimes venture into the mountains, unless you're experienced and well prepared you should consider paying for a guide or joining a guided tour. A guide should cost around €50 per day, a horse another €30. If you want to do a full trek in the range (about €200 for a week, all inclusive), ask at your pen-

sion or contact one of the following trekking agencies in Niğde:

**Demavend Travel** (☎ 0388-232 7363; www.demavendtravel.com; Şah Sülyürmsn Mahallesi Tacroğlu Sokak Birlik, Apt 5)

**Dijon Travel** (☎ 0388-232 2112; www.dijontravel.ofisi.com; 3rd fl, Mandacılar Işanı 5, Ali Paşa Mahallesi, Yeni Çarşı)

**Sobek Travel** (☎ 0388-232 1507; www.trekkingin turkeys.com; Avanoğlu Apt 70/17, Bor Caddesi)

### Sleeping & Eating

**Şafak Pension & Camping** (☎ 0388-724 7039; www.safaktravel.com; camp sites per person €5.50, d per person with half board €17; ☎) This is run by the friendly, English-speaking Hassan, who also works as a guide. The eight rooms are simple but extremely clean, with important features such as plentiful hot water, heating and comfortable beds. The terrace and garden command magnificent views overlooking Mt Demirkazık, and the lounge is equipped with a satellite TV. Camp sites are to the side of the house; they have electricity and their own bathroom facilities.

On the other side of the road, the same family has recently opened another, very similar, pension called **Öz Şafak**, which charges the same rates. You'll find both pensions off the main road, about 1.5km from the bridge and the signpost marked 'Demirkazık 4, Pinarbaşı 8'.

Çukurbağ has basic shops for supplies.

### Getting There & Away

From Niğde, take a Çamardı-bound minibus (€3, 90 minutes, every hour between 7am and 5.30pm) and ask to be let off at the Şafak Pension (it's 5km before Çamardı).

### NIĞDE

☎ 0388 / pop 93,760

Backed by the snow-capped Ala Dağlar range, Niğde, 85km south of Nevşehir, was founded by the Seljuks. It's an agricultural centre with a clutch of impressive historic buildings. You won't want to stay, but may have to if you want to visit the fabulous Eski Gümüşler Monastery, 10km to the northeast. Niğde is also a handy base for getting to and from the base-camp villages for trekking in the Ala Dağlar National Park (left).

The **tourist office** (☎ 232 3393; Belediye Sarayı 38/39; ☎) 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) is located on the 1st floor of the ugly Kültür Merkezi (City

Cultural Centre) on Bor Caddesi. There are a number of internet cafés in a small mall on İstiklal Caddesi, including **Gökkuşuğu Internet Café** (Bankalar Caddesi; per hr €0.55; ☎) 8am-11pm). ATMs are dotted along Bankalar/İstiklal/Bor Caddesi.

### Sights

The excellent **Niğde Museum** (Niğde Müzesi; admission €1.10; ☎) 8am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) houses a well-presented selection of finds from the Assyrian city of Acemhöyük near Aksaray, through the Hittite and Phrygian ages to sculptures from Tyana (now Kemerhisar), the Roman town 23km southwest of Niğde. Several mummies are exhibited too, including the 10th-century mummy of a blonde nun discovered in the 1960s in the Yılanlı church in the İhlara Valley.

The Seljuk **Alaeddin Camii** (1223), on the hill crowned with the fortress, is the town's grandest mosque but the **Süngür Bey Camii**, on a terrace at the end of the marketplace, is more interesting. Built by the Seljuks but restored by the Mongols in 1335, it is a curious blend of architectural styles.

The attractive **Ak Medrese** (1409) houses a cultural centre that may – or may not – be open.

Also take a look at the **Hüdavend Hatun Türbesi** (1312), a fine Seljuk tomb, and the Ottoman **Dış Cami**.

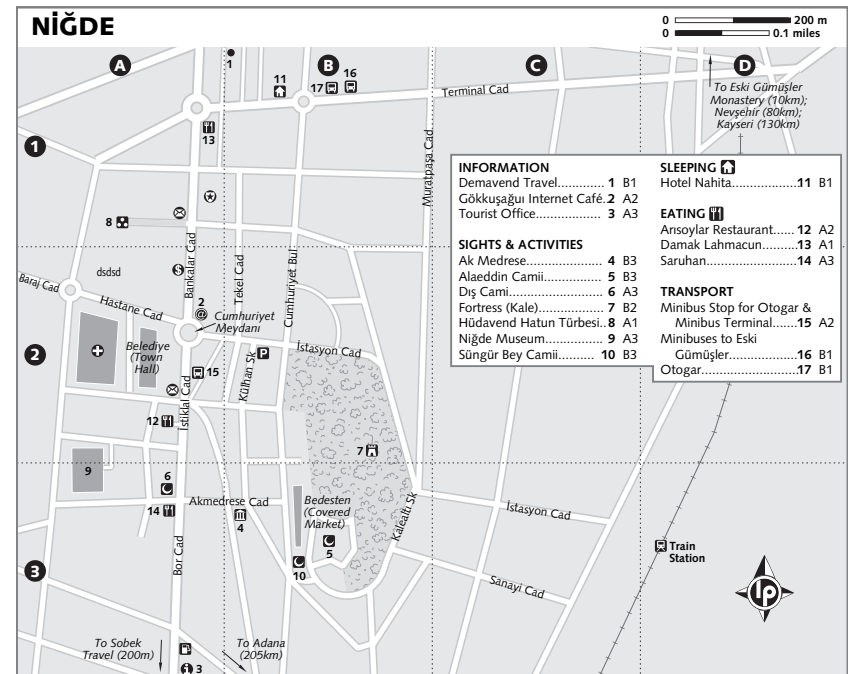
### Sleeping & Eating

Niğde has several drab concrete hotels on its main road and numerous cheap and cheerful *lokantas* and *pastanes* in its centre.

**Hotel Nahita** (☎ 232 3536; fax 232 1526; Emin Erişingil Caddesi 19; s/d €25/34) On the main road into town and close to the otogar, this three-star block is the most convenient accommodation choice if you are forced to stay in town overnight. Though it totally lacks character, it's clean and comfortable.

**Damak Lahmacun** (☎ 233 7312; İstiklal Caddesi; mains €1.50-3) This bustling place is justly popular for its excellent pide, *lahmacun* (Arabic pizza) and melt-in-the-mouth *İskender* kebab. You can eat in or take away.

**Saruhan** (☎ 232 2172; Bor Caddesi 13; mains €2-4) Occupying a restored *han* (caravanserai) dating from 1357, Saruhan is heavy on atmosphere



and no lightweight when it comes to its food. It serves an array of delicious döner and *İskender* kebabs as well as rustic dishes such as *işkembe çorbasi* (tripe soup, €1.10). We enjoyed the delicious Adana kebabs (€2) and were blown away by how cheap everything was, but quickly came back to earth when we encountered the utterly filthy toilets. No alcohol is served.

**Arissöyler Restaurant** (☎ 232 5035; Bor Caddesi 8; mains €3.50-4.50) The menu at this sleek modern

eatery focuses on classics such as *İskender* kebab, *çiğ köfte* (patties of raw spiced lamb, €1.10 per small serve) and *beyti sarma* (wrapped lamb with garlic, €4.50). Its air-conditioned dining room is a perfect place to escape the heat and noise of the town.

### Getting There & Away

Minibuses to/from the otogar (Terminal; €0.30) trundle up and down Bankalar/İstiklal/Bor and Terminal Caddesi. There are buses to

Adana (€7.50, 3½ hours, four daily), İstanbul (€14, 11 hours, morning and evening), Ankara (€8.50, five hours, five daily), Aksaray (€3.50, 1½ hour), Kayseri (€4, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes) and Konya (€8.50, 3½ hours, five daily). Buses to Nevşehir (€3.50, one hour, 85km) depart every 30 minutes from 7am to 10.30am and then every hour until 6.30pm.

Niğde is on the Ankara-Adana train line. A daily service leaves for Adana at 4.32am (€5, 3½ hours) and for Ankara at 11.32pm (€12, 8½ hours).

### AROUND NIĞDE Eski Gümüşler Monastery

The ancient rock-hewn **Eski Gümüşler Monastery** (admission €1.10; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-6pm Jun-Sep, 8am-noon & 1-5pm Oct-May), about 10km east of Niğde, has some of the best-preserved frescoes in Cappadocia and is well worth a visit.

The monastery was only rediscovered in 1963. You enter via a rock-cut passage that opens onto a large courtyard surrounded by rock-hewn dwellings, crypts, a kitchen and a refectory with deep reservoirs for wine and oil. A small hole in the ground acts as a vent for a mysterious 9m-deep shaft beneath.

The lofty main church has wonderful Byzantine frescoes painted between the 7th and 11th centuries. The charming Nativity looks as if it is set in a rock-caved structure like this one, and the striking Virgin and Child to the left of the apse has the elongated Mary giving a *Mona Lisa* smile – it's said to be the only smiling Mary in existence.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Gümüşler Belediyesi minibuses (€0.55, 15 minutes) depart on the hour from the minibus terminal beside Niğde's otogar. As you enter the town, don't worry when the bus passes a couple of signs pointing to the monastery – it eventually passes right by it. To catch a bus back to Niğde flag one down on the roundabout outside the monastery.

### IHLARA VALLEY (IHLARA VADİSİ)

☎ 0382

About 45km southeast of Aksaray is Ihlara village, at the head of the Ihlara Valley. Once called Peristrema, the valley was a favourite retreat of Byzantine monks. Dozens of painted churches carved from the rock have survived and hikers can follow the course of the stream (Melendiz Suyu) as it flows for 16km from

the wide, shallow valley at Selime to a narrow gorge at Ihlara village. It's an unforgettable experience, thanks to the sea of greenery – alive with birds – hugging the banks of the stream at the base of this beautiful canyon. Many people visit on day tours from Göreme, which allow only a few hours to walk the central part of the gorge, but to walk the whole way is likely to be a highlight of your trip to Turkey. Especially good times to visit are midweek in May or September when fewer people are about. Roughly midway along the valley, at Belisırma village, the presence of a swathe of restaurants along the riverbank means that you needn't come weighed down with provisions.

There are no ATMs in Ihlara village, Selime or Belisırma and the valley's only **internet café** (per hr €1; ☎ 9am-11pm) is in a modern shopping block opposite Akar Pansion in Ihlara village.

### Walking Ihlara Valley

There are four entrances along the **Ihlara Valley** (admission €3; ☎ 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-5pm Nov-Mar; parking per car €1.25). If, like most people, you only want to walk the short stretch with most of the churches, then enter via the 360 knee-jarring steps leading down from the **Ihlara Vadisi Turistik Tesisleri**, perched on the rim of the gorge 2km from Ihlara village. Alternatively there are entrances near the Star Otel in Ihlara village (take the path behind it), at Belisırma and at Selime.

It takes about 2½ to three hours to walk from the Ihlara Vadisi Turistik Tesisleri to Belisırma, and about three hours to walk from Belisırma to Selime. You'll need seven to eight hours if you want to walk all the way from Ihlara village to Selime, stopping in Belisırma for lunch along the way.

If you're planning to walk all the way, it's best to start early in the day, particularly in summer, when you'll need to take shelter from the fierce sun.

### Churches

Along the valley floor, signs mark the different churches. Although they're all worth visiting if you have the time, the following list includes the real must-sees:

**Kokar (Fragrant) Kilise** This church has some fabulous frescoes – the Nativity and the Crucifixion for starters – and tombs buried in the floors.

**Sümbüllü (Hyacinth) Kilise** This church is noteworthy not so much for its frescoes, or what's left of them, but for its well-preserved, simple but elegant façade.

### DEEP WITHIN THE EARTH

For sheer fascination and mystery, you can't beat the underground cities of Cappadocia. Make sure you visit one of the estimated 36 underground cities that have been identified (if not always excavated) here, but be prepared for a claustrophobic and sometimes unpleasantly crowded experience. For this reason, it's best to avoid visiting on weekends, when busloads of domestic tourists descend on the cities.

Some archaeologists date the earliest portions of these underground cities back 4000 years to Hittite times, but they were certainly occupied by the 7th century BC. The ancient Greek historian Xenophon mentioned the underground dwellings of Cappadocia in his *Anabasis*.

In times of peace the people of this region lived and farmed above ground, but when invaders threatened they took to their troglodyte dwellings where they could live safely for up to six months at a time.

As you go down inside the cities, it's as if you've entered a huge and very complex Swiss cheese: holes here, holes there, 'windows' from room to room, paths going this way and that and more levels of rooms above and below. Signs of the troglodyte lifestyle are everywhere: storage jars for oil, wine and water; troughs for pressing grapes; communal kitchens blackened by smoke; stables with mangers; and incredibly deep wells. The troglodyte dwellings functioned as fortresses as well – look out for the huge rolling-stone doors, often with a hole in the centre for attacking the enemy, and for holes in the ceilings through which hot oil could be poured.

Even if you don't normally like having a guide, it's well worth having one take you around an underground city, since they can conjure up the details of life below ground better than you can on your own. Guides charge around €13 per group for a 45-minute tour.

In **Kaymaklı**, 19km south of Nevşehir, an unimpressive little cave in a low mound leads down into the **underground city** (yeraltı şehri; admission €6; ☎ 8am-5pm 2 Oct-16 Apr, 8.30am-7pm 17 April-1 Oct), a maze of tunnels and rooms carved eight levels deep into the earth (only five are open). As this is the most convenient and popular of the underground cities, you should be here early (right on 8.30am if possible) in July and August to beat the tour groups and enjoy it properly.

To reach **Özlüce underground city** (admission free), turn right as you enter Kaymaklı from the north and you'll be heading for the small village of Özlüce, 7km further away. More modest than those of Kaymaklı or Derinkuyu, this underground city is also less developed and less crowded.

**Derinkuyu underground city** (Deep Well; admission €6; ☎ 8am-5pm Nov-Apr, 8.30am-6.30pm May-Oct), 10km south of Kaymaklı, has larger rooms arrayed on seven levels. When you get all the way down, look up the ventilation shaft to see just how far down you are – claustrophobics beware!

There are also underground cities at Güzelyurt (p531) and Özkonak (p515), near Avanos.

### Getting There & Away

Although you can visit one of the cities on a day tour from Göreme, Avanos or Ürgüp, it's also easy to visit them on your own by taking a Kaymaklı-, Derinkuyu- or Niğde-bound bus out of Nevşehir (Niğde buses transit Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu). See p516 for details of where to catch the bus. On your own, you could easily visit Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu and then continue onto Niğde the same day using the local buses.

You'll need a taxi to take you to Özlüce (about €12 from Kaymaklı, including waiting time).

**Yılanlı (Serpent) Kilise** Many of the frescoes here are badly damaged, but it's still possible to make out the fresco outlining the punishments doled out to sinners, especially the three-headed snake with a sinner in each mouth and the nipple-clamped women (ouch!) who didn't breastfeed their young.

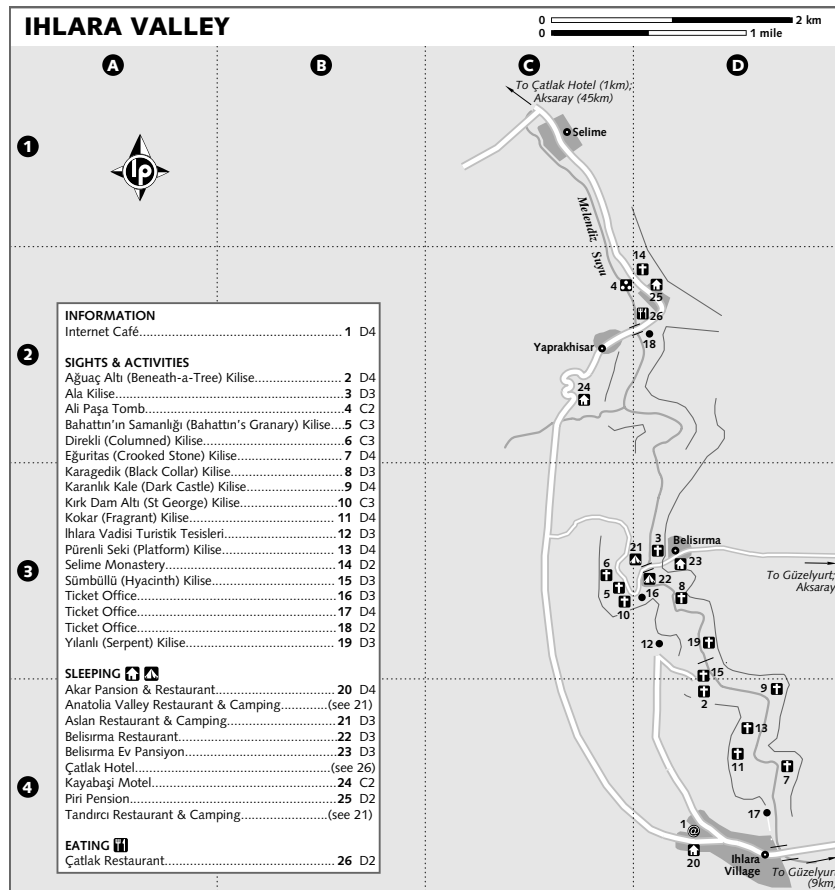
**Kırk Dam Altı (St George) Kilise** It's a scramble to get to, but the views of the valley make all the puffing worthwhile. The frescoes are quite badly graffitied, but above the entrance you can see St George on a white horse, slaying a three-headed snake.

**Bahattin'in Samanlığı (Bahattin's Granary) Kilise** This church has some of the best-preserved frescoes in the valley. It's named after a local who used to store grain here. Frescoes show scenes from the life of Christ, including the Crucifixion, Massacre of the Innocents and Baptism scenes.

**Direkli (Columned) Kilise** This cross-shaped church has six columns, hence the name. The large adjoining chamber originally had two storeys, as you can see from what's left of the steps and the holes in the walls from the supporting beams. There are burial chambers in the floor.

### Selime Monastery

The **monastery** (☞ dawn-dusk) at Selime is an astonishing rock-cut structure incorporating a vast kitchen with soaring chimney, a church with a gallery all around it, stables with rock-carved feed troughs and other evidence of the troglodyte lifestyle. The admission price is supposedly included in the Ihlara Valley ticket. The entrance is just opposite the Ali Paşa Tomb (1317).



### Tours

Travel agencies in Göreme (p501), Avanos (p513) and Ürgüp (p519) offer full-day tours to Ihlara for between €30 and €50 per day, including lunch.

### Sleeping & Eating

If you want to walk all the way along the gorge there are modest pensions handily placed at both ends (Ihlara and Selime). You can also break your journey into two parts with an overnight stay in Belisırma's camping grounds or lone pension. Note that all accommodation is closed out of season (December to March).

### IHLARA VILLAGE

**Akar Pansiyon & Restaurant** (☎ 453 7018; fax 453 7511; s/d €11.50/23) One of the only places in town, and offering 18 motel-style rooms in two buildings. These are simple, but perfectly acceptable. There's an on-site restaurant serving up local trout (€3) and a small shop that sells picnic ingredients. The owner has a minibus in which he shuttles people to Selime (€5.50) and Belisırma (€3).

### BELİSİRMA

Midway along the gorge, beside Belisırma village, there are four low-key but agreeable licensed restaurants. These benefit from their enviable position right by the river, and all serve basic meals of grilled trout, *saç tava*, kebabs, salads and soups. You can camp in the grounds for no charge if you eat in the associated restaurant – all four places have basic ablution blocks.

**Anatolia Valley Restaurant & Camping** (☎ 457 3040; mains €4-5) A good site, with a couple of vine-covered pergolas for shade. It also has a few ramshackle wooden 'tree houses' that you can sleep in (€5.50 per person). The owner will drive hikers back to Ihlara carpark if they are tired (€11.40 per carload).

**Aslan Restaurant & Camping** (☎ 457 3033; mains €4-5) The best camp site, set at the base of a cliff and with lots of trees. Its ablution block isn't too clean, though.

**Belisırma Restaurant** (☎ 457 3057; mains €3.50-4.50) On the opposite bank of the river, this is the most attractive of the four restaurants. The camp site is at the rear and doesn't have much shade.

**Tandırıcı Restaurant & Camping** (☎ 457 3110; mains €3.50) Camp sites are dotted among vegetable gardens and a small orchard.

There's also a small pension in the old village on the hill overlooking these restaurants. To

find it, cross the bridge in front of the Aslan Restaurant and ask for directions to **Belisırma Ev Pansiyon** (☎ 457 3037; dm €5.50, r per person incl breakfast €8.50), which offers basic rooms with great views and hard beds. Its bathrooms are shared and slightly grubby.

### SELİME

At the northern end of the gorge, there are three decent accommodation options if you want to stay overnight. The cheapest of these are the worn but clean **Piri Pansiyon** (☎ 454 5114; carpet\_Mustafa@yahoo.com; s/d incl breakfast €11.50/23), a tranquil and friendly place that overlooks some fairy chimneys; and the newly built **Kayabaşı Motel** (☎ 454 5565; s/d incl breakfast €11.50/23), which is 2km outside the village on the road to Belisırma and offers clean and comfortable rooms with great views. For something a bit more upmarket, try the imposing **Çatlık Hotel** (☎ 454 5006; catlakpansiyon@hotmail.com; r incl breakfast €25; ☎ ☎), about 3km from the start of the valley walk, on the Aksaray side of Selime. Its rooms are large and light, with modern fittings and simple bathrooms. The same owners run the eponymous restaurant, a few steps from the start of the walk, and can shuttle you between the two.

### Getting There & Away

There are four minibuses per day between Ihlara village and Aksaray, travelling via Selime. The first of these leaves Ihlara at 6.45am and the last at 4pm; there's only one service on Sundays (at 1pm). The fare costs €1.50.

Bus travelling between Aksaray and Güzelyurt (see p533) stop in Selime en route. The fare is €1 from Selime to Güzelyurt and the same from Selime to Aksaray.

If you want to go to Belisırma, catch the Aksaray–Güzelyurt bus or the Ihlara–Aksaray bus and ask to be dropped off in the new part of Belisırma up on the plateau; you'll then have to hike the few hundred metres down into the valley.

You'll need to catch a taxi (€11.50) to get between Ihlara and Güzelyurt.

### GÜZELYURT

☎ 0382 / pop 3735 / elevation 1485m About 9km from Ihlara village is Güzelyurt, a sleepy Cappadocian farming village filled with stone houses, rock-cut churches and its very own underground city. You may run into other tourists in July or August but most of

the time this Cappadocian gem is refreshingly undervisited.

In Ottoman times this was the town of Karballa (Gelveri), which was inhabited by 1000 Ottoman-Greek families and 50 Turkish-Muslim families. In the population exchanges between Turkey and Greece in 1924, the Greeks of Gelveri went to Nea Karvali in Greece, while Turkish families from Kozan and Kastoria in Greece moved here. The relationship between the two countries is now celebrated in an annual 'Turks & Greeks Friendship Festival' held in July.

Güzelyurt has a PTT, a branch of the T C Ziraat Bankası (but no ATM) and several shops. The extremely helpful **tourist office** (☎ 8am-5.30pm) is in the main street and can supply a wealth of information about both the town and the Ihlara Valley. The poorly signed **Arikan Internet Café** (per hr €0.55; ☎ 8am-midnight) is on the 1st floor of a *pastane* in a small square behind the bank.

## Sights

### MONASTERY VALLEY & ANTIQUE CITY

Walk downhill from the main square following the signs to the Monastery Valley & Antique City. About 300m from the square, a sign points left to a small, recently restored **underground city** (yeraltı şehri; admission €3; ☎ 8am-5.30pm), actually more of an underground village.

There are also several churches in the valley, including the **Koç** (Ram) and the **Cafarlar** (Rivulets), with its interesting frescoes. The most striking of all is the **Aşağı** or **Büyük Kilise Camii** (Lower or Big Mosque), built as the Church of St Gregory of Nazianzus in AD 385, and restored and modernised in 1896. St Gregory (AD 330-90) grew up in Güzelyurt and went on to become a theologian, patriarch and one of the Four Fathers of the Greek Church. In the garden, a subterranean stairway leads to an *ayazma* (sacred spring). Plans exist to turn the church into a museum, with the whitewash removed from the frescoes, but they are unlikely to come to fruition during the lifetime of this book.

After your visit, ask the imam to point you in the direction of the nearby **Sivışli Kilise** (Anargyros Church), a much later rock-hewn church with square pillars and an impressive cupola sporting some faded frescoes. Climb the steps behind it for fabulous valley views.

Afterwards you can continue through the **Monastery Valley** (a sort of Ihlara in miniature).

Just walking through this quiet unspoilt valley is pleasant, but there are also more rock-cut churches and dwellings to explore, including the **Kömürlü Kilisesi** (Coal Church), with an elaborate lintel carved above the entrance, and the almost adjoining **Kalburlu Kilisesi** (Church with a Screen), with a superb entrance and a carved Maltese cross inside, but no frescoes.

### YÜKSEK KİLİSE & MANASTIR

Perched high on a rock overlooking the Güzelyurt lake is the **Yüksek Kilise & Manastır** (High Church & Monastery), 1km or so west of the town off the road to Ihlara. A walled compound contains the plain church and monastery but it's more impressive when viewed from a distance.

### KIZIL KİLİSE

Set in farmland surrounded by rugged mountains, the **Kızıl Kilise** (Red Church) is about 6km east of Güzelyurt, off the road to Gölcük, just past the village of Sivrihisar. Named for the colour of its stone, it's currently undergoing an extensive restoration. Take a taxi from Güzelyurt (about €10, including waiting time).

### Sleeping & Eating

**Halil Pension** (☎ 451 2707; www.halilpension.com; Yukarı Mahallesi Amaç Sokak; s/d with half board €19.50/39; ☎) The five guest rooms in this family home would make a great base for those intending to explore the area for a few days, particularly as the friendly lady owner is an absolutely sensational cook. Rooms are in a modern extension to the original Greek house and are very pleasant, with loads of natural light, small but spotlessly clean bathrooms and a cheerful modern décor. When we visited, a roof terrace with magnificent views was under construction. As you enter town it's signposted off to the right, a short walk from the centre.

**Hotel Karvalli** (☎ 451 2736; www.karvalli.com in German; Karvalli Caddesi 4; s/d incl breakfast €22/40; ☎) Occupying a sentinel-like position on the outskirts of town and commanding stunning views of Hasan Dağı, the Karvalli is a safe choice. Its large modern rooms are comfortable and it has a convivial bar-restaurant with a pool table and satellite TV. The enthusiastic young management team will ensure that you enjoy your stay.

**Hotel Karballa** (☎ 451 2104; www.karballahotel.com; s/d standard €34/45, deluxe €45/55, incl breakfast; ☎) We

bet the monks enjoyed living and working in this 19th-century Greek monastery close to the town centre. Though now converted into a hotel, the building has retained a contemplative atmosphere and is a nice spot for a break. The standard rooms are basic, but the four deluxe rooms are bright and attractive, with cheerful kilims on the walls and elaborate Uzbeki spreads on the beds. There's a hilltop swimming pool and an atmospheric restaurant in the former refectory (dinner €7). Horse-riding, mountain biking and hiking tours can all be arranged here.

**Asrav Pansiyon** (☎ 451 2501; asravpansiyon@asrav.com.tr; s/d incl breakfast €25/50) A newcomer to Güzelyurt's limited accommodation scene, this pension is housed in an imposing building near the Hotel Karvalli. The owners have done a good job with the fit-out here – it's simple and stylish in equal measure and there has been a sensible emphasis on providing quality where it's most needed, eg excellent mattresses on the beds and hairdryers in the bathrooms.

**Gelveri Restaurant** (☎ 451 2771; mains €3-4) Nestled in the small square behind the bank, this basic eatery whips up grills, *lahmacun*, pizza and fish. It has the reputation of being the best place to eat in town, though as there is only one other place to provide competition (the Kalvari Döner Kebap and Pide Salonu on the main street), that's not saying much.

### Getting There & Away

Buses from Aksaray travel to Güzelyurt via Selime every two hours starting at 6am; the last bus returns from Güzelyurt at 5.30pm. On Sundays there are fewer services. The fare costs €1.50 from Güzelyurt to Aksaray and €1 from Selime to Güzelyurt.

You'll have to catch a taxi (€11.50) to get between Ihlara and Güzelyurt.

### AKSARAY

☎ 0382 / pop 156,900

Like Nevşehir, Aksaray is an ugly modern town with a sprinkling of old buildings and very little to attract the traveller. You may need to transit through here on your way to the Ihlara Valley, but otherwise you're best off avoiding it.

### Orientation & Information

Aksaray's main otogar is about 3km out of town. A free *servis* shuttles between it and the

small *eski otogar* (old otogar), from where it's a 200m walk to the *vilayet* (provincial government building) in the centre of town. You'll find banks with ATMs along Bankalar Caddesi, a main thoroughfare running in front of the *vilayet*. Continue straight along Bankalar Caddesi to find the Ulu Cami.

The **tourist office** (☎ 213 2474; Taşpazar Mahallesi; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri) occupies a beautifully restored mansion. To find it follow the signs along Ankara Caddesi (which runs west off Bankalar Caddesi near the *vilayet*), walk past the Zafer Okulu (school) and take the first left. The staff here are very helpful and can supply a map of the town. The grubby but cheap **VIP Net** (Ankara Caddesi 7/A; per hr €0.40; ☎ 8am-midnight) is near Kurşunlu Camii on the corner of Bankalar and Ankara Caddesi.

### Sights

The **Ulu Cami** (Bankalar Caddesi), near Otel Üçyıldız, has decoration characteristic of the post-Seljuk Beylik period and a little of the original yellow stone remains in the grand doorway. The **Aksaray Museum** (Aksaray Müzesi; admission €1.10; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) is housed in the Zinciriye Medresesi, which was built in Seljuk style in 1336. Though the collection here is underwhelming, it's worth coming here for the building alone. To find it, walk from the Ulu Cami across the main street to find Vehbibey Caddesi (the paved one with the Vakif Bank on the corner), then head 300m downhill towards the river.

The older part of town, along Nevşehir Caddesi, has the curious **Eğri Minare** (Crooked Minaret), built in 1236 and leaning at an angle of 27°. Inevitably, the locals know it as the 'Turkish Tower of Pisa'.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Otel Yuvam** (☎ 212 0024; fax 213 2875; Eski Sanayi Caddesi Kavşağı; s/d €11/22) The town's best budget option is centrally located next to the Kurşunlu Cami, so be warned that the call to prayer is ear-splitting in the morning. The overwhelming feel here is old-fashioned, with rooms sporting lino floor coverings and solid wooden furniture. Bathrooms are spotless and beds are hard but have crisp, clean linen. The friendly owners speak Turkish and German, but no English.

**Otel Vadim** (☎ 212 8200; fax 212 8232; 818 Vadi Sokak 13; s/d €19/31; ☎) This excellent midrange choice is in a side street off Büyük Kergi Caddesi,

the southern extension of Bankalar Caddesi. Blessedly quiet, it has a green-tiled façade and large and very comfortable rooms.

**Otel Üçyıldız** (☎ 212 0404; fax 212 5003; Bankalar Caddesi 6; s/d €29/38; 🚻) A modern glass-fronted high-rise near the Ulu Cami, the Üçyıldız offers rooms with satellite TV and other mod-cons. It's popular with tour groups and business travellers, who appreciate the comfortable beds, rooftop restaurant and excellent service on offer.

**Harman** (☎ 212 3311; Bankalar Caddesi 16/A) Asked to nominate the best eatery in town, most locals are quick to mention this attractive eatery opposite the *vilayet*. It offers a great selection of *ızgara* (grills, €3), döner kebabs (€4), pide (€1 to €2) and soups (€1). Those who enjoy a sweet at the end of the meal will be impressed by the excellent homemade baklava (€1) and *künefe* (€2).

**Merkez Lokantası** (☎ 212 8825; Ziraat Bankası Karşısı 37) Another local favourite, this friendly place just down from Harman has three eating areas: an airy roof terrace, a no-nonsense ground-floor *lokanta* and a rear courtyard complete with gently playing fountain. There's an array of daily specials (€2 to €2.50) on display in the *bain-maries*, or you can order specialities such as the *İskender* kebabs (€3.50) to order. Takeaway döner sandwiches are available for €1.10.

**Aksaray Pastanesi** (Bankalar Caddesi 48) This popular pastry shop opposite Merkez Lokantası has a café upstairs where you can linger over a tea and a plate of honey-drenched *fıstıklı* (pistachio) baklava (about €0.30 per piece). Tuna Pastanesi opposite is an equally pleasant choice for a mid-afternoon stop.

## Getting There & Away

From Aksaray, direct buses go to Ankara (€7.80, 3½ hours, 230km), Konya (€5.50, two hours, 140km), Nevşehir (€3.30, one hour, 65km) and Niğde (€3.90 to €4.40, 1½ hours, 115km).

Dolmuş from the old otogar go to Ihlara (€1.40, one hour, 45km, four daily), Güzelyurt (€1.40, 1¼ hours, 54km, six daily), Sultanhanı (€0.83, 45 minutes, 42km, 10 daily) and Selime (€1.40, 30 minutes, 40km, six daily); there are few Sunday services.

## AROUND AKSARAY

The road between Aksaray and Nevşehir followed one of the oldest trade routes in the world, the Uzun Yol (Long Rd). The route linked Konya, the Seljuk capital, with its other great cities (Kayseri, Sivas and Erzurum) and ultimately with Persia (Iran).

The Long Rd was formerly dotted with *han* where the traders would stop for accommodation and business. The remains of three caravanserais can be visited from Aksaray, the best preserved being the impressive **Ağzıkara Hanı** (admission €1.50; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm), 16km northeast of Aksaray, which was built between 1231 and 1239. From Aksaray a taxi will charge about €15 for the run there and back. If you'd prefer to go by bus, catch one heading to Nevşehir and jump off at the Ağzıkara Hanı. Many of the day tours from Göreme and Ürgüp also call in on the caravanserai.

Further towards Nevşehir you'll pass the scant remains of the 13th-century **Tepesidelik Hanı**, 23km northeast of Aksaray, and the 12th-century **Alay Hanı**, another 10km on.