

Eastern Mediterranean



Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean means different things to different people. For holidaying Europeans, it's a radiant and razzle-dazzle beach paradise, with the calm ocean and high-rise resorts around Side and Alanya stretching further than the eye can see. Sometimes referred to as the Turkish Riviera, this part of the Eastern Med tends to fill up to an almost unbearable degree during the high season. But arrive just before or after the crowds, and you'll find largely empty beaches and discounted guesthouses. To get a feel for how the Turks themselves holiday, make your way through the rugged and twisting mountain range to the east and head towards the resort areas of Anamur and Kizkalesi. Visiting Turks – and Western archaeology students – treat this part of the country as an open-air museum, because of the massive amount of impressive ruins scattered about.

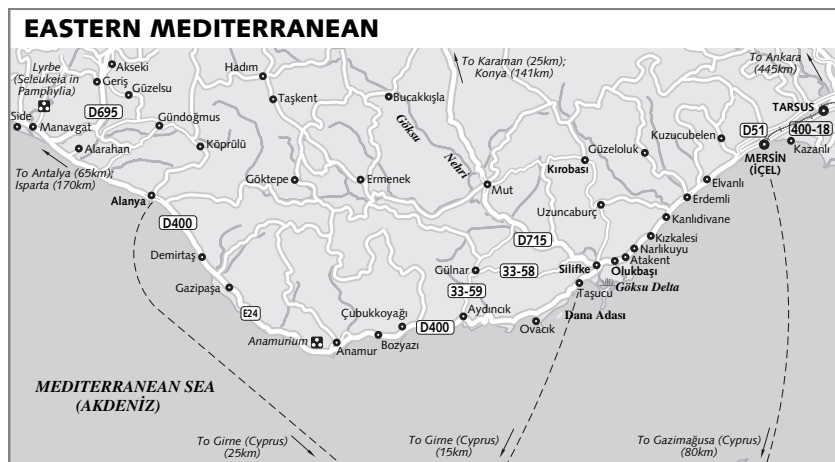
Once the craggy mountain range flattens out into the wide-open Cukurova Plain to the east, the cities become much larger, more metropolitan and more imposing. Tourists are almost nonexistent in the large industrial cities of Merlin, Adana and İskenderun. However, those who do choose to brave the urban hustle are rewarded with rarely visited nearby sites, such as the Roman fortress city of Anazarbus, just northeast of Adana. The Armenian retreat of Yilankale is also close, as are a number of important Hittite and Christian sites.

The vibe and energy of the Eastern Mediterranean takes on a considerable change south of İskenderun, due to the area's proximity to the Syrian border. Here is one of Turkey's most fascinating mixes of cultures, religions and languages. In towns such as Antakya you'll find Sunnis, Alevis and Orthodox Christians living side by side, and spoken Arabic can still be heard on the streets.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit Side's romantic **Temple of Apollo** (p399) at sunset
- Descend the 452 steps into the massive **Chasm of Heaven** (p421), where the monster Typhon was said to have held Zeus captive
- Swim or take a ferry ride out to **Maiden's Castle** (p422) at Kizkalesi
- Visit Adana's extravagantly beautiful **Sabancı Merkez Cami** (p427), the country's second-largest mosque
- Enjoy the first syrupy bite of an oven-hot piece of *künefe* with a *çay* (tea) and a chat with the locals in **Antakya** (p436)





SIDE

☎ 0242 / pop 18,000

If it were possible for a town to have an identity crisis, the small city of Side (*see-deh*) would undoubtedly be among the afflicted. After all, it wasn't long ago that Side was essentially thought of as a worn-out fishing village, with little more to boast about than a passable stretch of beach and a decent collection of Hellenistic ruins. But things have changed, big-time. Side today is the sort of flash Mediterranean resort town that many intrepid travellers love to hate.

Having long ago deserted its principle industry, fishing, Side has embraced tourist harvesting with a vengeance. An astoundingly large number of souvenir shops have monopolised the city's main drag, as well as each and every alley intersecting it. You may assume that in-your-face capitalism is the name of the game here, 24 hours a day.

Yet the experience of entering Side by car or bus, and watching from the window as Roman ruins nearly 2000 years old fly by, is simply unforgettable. So is the almost indescribable feeling you'll get in the pit of your stomach as you approach the Temple of Apollo around dusk, with waves crashing just a stone's throw away.

History

No-one knows how Side got its name, though it probably means 'pomegranate' in some ancient Anatolian language. The site was colonised by Aeolians around 600 BC, but by

the time Alexander the Great swept through, the inhabitants had abandoned much of their Greek culture and language.

Many of Side's great buildings were built from the profits of piracy and slavery, which flourished under the Greeks, only to be stopped when the city came under Roman control. After that, Side managed to prosper from legitimate commerce; under the Byzantines it was still large enough to rate a bishop. The 7th-century Arab raids diminished the town, which was dead within two centuries. During the late 19th century it had a brief flowering under Ottoman rule when it was settled by Muslims from Crete.

Orientation

Side is set on a promontory, 3km south of the east-west coastal highway. Vehicular access is tightly controlled; if you're driving you'll almost certainly have to use the car park outside the village.

The main street, Liman Caddesi, cuts through the village to the harbour, which is fronted by a bust of Atatürk. On either side of the promontory are small beaches, although the main beach is in the north of town.

The otogar (bus station) is east of the archaeological zone. Follow signs for the tramway and you'll find the main road. Turn left if you want to walk, or board the tram (€0.30).

Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 753 1265; 🕒 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) is about 800m from the village centre,



on the road in from Manavgat. The **Side Internet Café** (€2 per half-hour) is located on Nergis Caddesi. Much better is the **Internet café** (Zambak Caddesi) located upstairs in Ömür Restaurant & Bar. There are ATMs on Liman Caddesi.

Sights

The town's most impressive site is easily its **theatre** (admission €6; 🕒 8am-7pm). Built in the 2nd century AD and Roman in design (with the exception of a few barely noticeable Greek details), it's one of the largest Greco-Roman ruins in Asia Minor, and can seat well over 15,000 spectators.

Next to the theatre and across the road from the museum are the remains of an **agora**. You'll find a good number of columns, although a chain-link fence restricts access. The **museum** (admission €3; 🕒 9am-7pm) is a ruin itself; its rather impressive, if small, collection of statues and sarcophagi resides inside the old Roman baths.

Take a left as you exit the museum for Side's spectacular field of ruins, among them a **library**, an **agora** and a **Byzantine basilica**. All warrant some exploration, but be forewarned that this area gets scorching hot during the height of summer.

At the southwestern tip of Side Harbour are the ruins of the **Temples of Apollo and Athena**, which date from the 2nd century. A number of columns from the Temple of Apollo have been preserved and placed upright in their original locations, and after dark a spotlight outlines their form dramatically against the

night sky. Although the site is relatively small, it's also one of the most romantic and moving ruined sites you're likely to encounter in Turkey.

Festivals & Events

Tickets for the **Aspendos Opera & Ballet Festival** (☎ 753 4061) can be bought at the Side museum or at the **ticket office** (☎ 753 4061) outside the Roman theatre. For more information see p395.

Sleeping

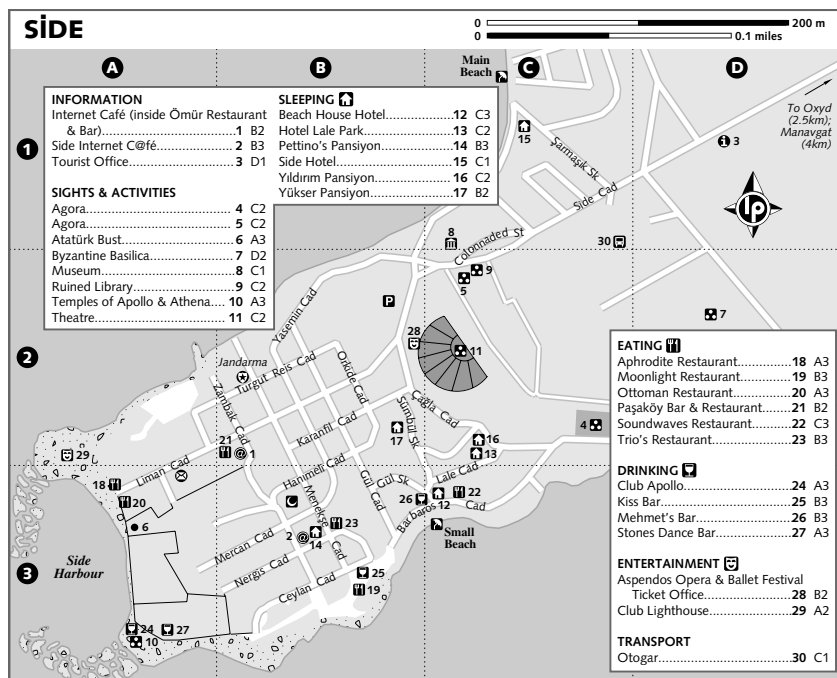
Many of the hotels and pensions in Side are not operated and managed by their actual owners, but rather are sublet for the tourist season. You can probably guess what effect this has on customer service. Try to find a place where the employees have been around for a while. Also note that if you're staying in a hotel some distance from town, you'll need to round up transport in order to reach Side's ruins.

Pettino's Pansiyon (☎ 753 3608; pettinio@superonline.com; Cami Sokak 9; s/d €17/23; 🕒) Aside from its intimate outdoor courtyard where travellers often congregate around a small fire at night, Pettino's doesn't have a whole lot going for it. The common areas are something of a shabby mess; the same could be said for the pension's dog-eared rooms. Backpackers do flock here during the high season however, so book ahead.

Beach House Hotel (☎ 753 1607; www.beachhouse-hotel.com; Barbaros Caddesi; s/d €17/36; 🕒) Unless you're dead-set on staying in a smaller and slightly more intimate pension, this is without a doubt the most relaxing and atmospheric budget hotel in Side. Readers consistently sing its praises: a perfect location right on the beach, ocean-front rooms (some with decent-sized balconies), and free sun-beds for guests.

Yıldırım Pansiyon (☎ 753 3209; yildirimpansiyon@yahoo.com; Lale Sokak; s & d €19) Located just steps from the theatre, this exceptionally laid-back pension is conveniently located across the street from a car park. Expect plain but shipshape rooms, and a beautiful silence after dark.

Yükser Pansiyon (☎ 753 2010; www.yukser-pansiyon.com; Sumbul Sokak 8; s/d €19/25; 🕒) Tucked away from the noise of the main drag but still just steps from the beach, this traditional stone-and-timber house offers average but



well-maintained rooms and a rather large back patio and garden.

Hotel Lale Park (☎ 753 1131; www.hotellalepark.com; Lale Caddesi 17; s/d €30/45; 🚗 🚿 🚰) One of Side's largest gardens acts as a sort of commons area here. Roman columns and stone walkways are scattered about; there's also an abundance of conversation areas and an outdoor bar.

Side Hotel (☎ 753 3824; Sarmasik Sokak 25; s/d €31/39; 🚗 🚿 🚰) With over 80 rooms, this concrete block of a hotel is definitely lacking in atmosphere, although many rooms boast spacious balconies overlooking a pristine stretch of beach. Skip the indoor restaurant and instead dine downstairs on the sand.

Eating

Regulars recommend taking care when ordering at the harbourside restaurants. Things such as vegetables or chips that you might have thought were included turn out to come with steep price tags. A portion of grilled fish should cost between €9 and €12.

Trio's Restaurant (☎ 753 1309; Cami Sokak; meals €9) Directly across the street from Pettino's Pension, this is a good choice for standard Turkish

fare. International fast foods, such as spaghetti and American-style pizza, are also available. Show up any Friday evening throughout the summer for Turkish folk dancing.

Ottoman Restaurant (☎ 753 1434; Liman Caddesi; meals €12) A decent selection of typical Indian dishes are among the offerings at this otherwise traditional seafood and grilled meat spot. There's no harbour view, but locals contend that this is one of the very few good-value eateries in the area.

Soundwaves Restaurant (☎ 753 1059; Barbaros Caddesi; meals about €16) Owned by the same folks who operate the adjacent Beach House Hotel, this eatery offers the standard seafood and grilled meat menu. Presumably in homage to Side's looting and pillaging past, the servers here are attired in pirate costumes; the restaurant itself is designed to resemble a life-size ship.

Aphrodite Restaurant (☎ 753 1171; İskele Caddesi; meals €15-20) Dozens of tables sit outdoors – mere steps from the water – at this meat and seafood standby. Not only is this an ideal spot to soak in the harbourside drama at eye level, it's also a recommended location for grills and *köfte* (meatballs).

Paşaköy Bar & Restaurant (☎ 753 3622; Liman Caddesi 98; meals €15-20) Essentially Side's interpretation of a theme restaurant, stepping into this curious place feels not unlike entering a plastic rainforest with not-so-subtle Palaeolithic undertones. Plants and massive tree leaves droop every which way, and a stream flowing with real water runs through the centre of the restaurant. The relatively sizeable menu contains standard Turkish grills and seafood, most of acceptable quality.

Moonlight Restaurant (☎ 753 1400; Barbaros Caddesi 49; meals €15-20) With its decidedly romantic setting and mood-enhancing soft rock – not to mention the lapping sounds of the sea, which sits just feet away from the back patio – you can expect to see happy couples dining here *en masse*. The menu is fairly standard stuff, with passable seafood and some international dishes. Fittingly, there's a wonderfully long list of Turkish wines.

Drinking

Kiss Bar (☎ 753 3482; Barbaros Caddesi 23) Expect the fun-loving staff to join your group for at least one round of drinks at this small shack of a bar, which looks as if it might have recently escaped from a forgotten Caribbean cay.

Stones Dance Bar (☎ 512 1498; Barbaros Caddesi 67) Brit culture and karaoke are both celebrated with equal fervour at this seaside bar.

Mehmet's Bar (Barbaros Caddesi) Ideal for quietly sipping a beer while listening to the crashing waves nearby.

Entertainment

Oxyd (☎ 753 4040; Denizbuku Mevkii; cover charge €8) Located about 3km outside the city, this open-air club is well worth a visit for the gawking opportunities alone. With its stately mosque-like façade and futuristic interior (swimming pool included), the level of extravagance at Oxyd is on par with some of the clubs you'll find in Turkey's biggest cities.

Club Lighthouse (☎ 753 3588; Liman Caddesi) Fishing boats docked alongside the outdoor patio here lend a much-needed aura of elegance to an otherwise Bacchanalian discotheque. House and techno DJs are among the usual offerings here, as is the occasional bubble party.

Club Apollo (☎ 753 4092) The entrance to this open-air club sits just a few metres from the Temples of Apollo and Athena. Expensive cocktails, a killer light show and packs of

beautiful people are some of what you'll find here. Women get discounted drinks every Sunday night.

Getting There & Away

In summer, Side has direct bus services to Ankara, İzmir and Istanbul. Otherwise, frequent minibuses connect Side otogar with the Manavgat otogar (€0.80), 4km away, from where buses go to Antalya (€4, 1¼ hours, 65km), Alanya (€4, 1¼ hours, 63km) and Konya (€14, 5½ hours, 296km). Coming into Side, most buses either drop you at the Manavgat otogar, or stop on the highway so you can transfer onto a free *servis* (shuttle bus) into Side.

AROUND SIDE

About 12km east of Manavgat (50km west of Alanya) the excellent D695 highway heads northwest up to the Anatolian plateau and Konya (280km) via Akseki, curving through some beautiful mountain scenery. The road is the preferred route to Konya from this part of the coast. Along the coastal road, it's a seven hour drive from Side to Isparta (via Antalya).

Manavgat

If your beach holiday in Side has you suspecting you're not getting a true taste of the 'real' Turkey, consider hopping on a dolmuş to Manavgat (€0.80), a commercial town with a large covered bazaar. It sits about 4km to the north and east of Side.

The otogar is on the outskirts of town, on the bypass. Except at the height of summer, you'll have to come here from Side to connect with bus services to Antalya, Alanya, Konya and the lakes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Frequent *servises* connect Side with Manavgat otogar (€0.50), where there are onward buses to Antalya (€4, 1¼ hours, 65km) and Alanya (€4, one hour, 63km). 'Şehiriçi' dolmuşes from outside the otogar will run you into the town centre (€0.80). A taxi from Side to Manavgat otogar costs €8.

Manavgat Waterfall

About 4km north of Manavgat on the Manavgat River is the appropriately named **Manavgat Waterfall** (Manavgat Şelalesi; admission €1), a colossally popular tourist attraction filled with souvenir vendors and restaurants, some of which sit

mere metres from the falls. Manavgat is well known for its trout, which is on the menu at some of the eateries here.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

A dolmuş from Manavgat costs €0.90. In the town centre you'll find boats waiting to run you upriver to the waterfalls. An 80-minute round trip costs €9 per person, providing there are at least four people.

Lyrbe (Seleukeia in Pamphylia)

Shortly after passing the Roman aqueduct, look for a sign on the left marked 'Lyrbe (Seleukeia)'; 7km). Continue on through the village of Şihlar, and note the small bits of columns built into the walls of the village's stone houses. Take the road to the right opposite the minaret, which winds another 3km uphill to the ruins.

The **ruins**, some quite crumbled and others in rather well-preserved condition, are particularly appealing due to their hilltop location. Situated among an expanse of pine trees, the site is shaded and somewhat forested, and can be cool even on hot summer days. Many of the buildings are difficult to identify, although you can clearly make out a bathhouse, an agora and a necropolis.

For years, archaeologists believed this site to be the Seleukeia in Pamphylia, founded by Seleucus I Nicator, a presumably egocentric officer of Alexander the Great who founded a total of nine cities in his own honour. However a fairly recent discovery of an inscription found in the city, written in the language of ancient Side, has convinced researchers that this site is more likely the ruined city of Lyrbe.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

If you don't have your own transport, taxi drivers wait across the bridge in Manavgat to run you to Seleukeia, with a stop at Manavgat waterfall thrown in (€18 return).

ALANYA

☎ 0242 / pop 110,100

Much like Side, its smaller cousin to the west, Alanya has, in the past couple of decades, been discovered – and subsequently conquered – by European package tourism, especially from Germany and Scandinavia. There's good reason for this, of course: Alanya's silky sand beach stretches for more than 20km to the

east, where a parade of all-inclusive five-star resorts now sit practically side-by-side.

Understandably, most of those staying within the city limits seem to have arrived with relatively simple to-do lists: sunbathe during the day, dine in the evening and party well into the night. Should you happen to be interested in exploring the ancient culture of this newly modern town, pay a visit to the fascinating fortress district, which sits high above the harbour. There you'll find a number of hillside cafés and a wonderful mess of ruins, all well worth investigating.

If you want to stay for more than a day or so, check the package-holiday brochures first, since tours inclusive of flights and transfers may well be cheaper than booking privately.

Orientation

Having gone from a small town to a 20km-long city almost overnight, Alanya has no real main square or civic centre. The centre – such as it is – lies inland (north) from the promontory on which the fortress walls sit. The closest thing to a main square is Hürriyet Meydanı, a nondescript traffic junction at the northern end of İskele Caddesi.

Information

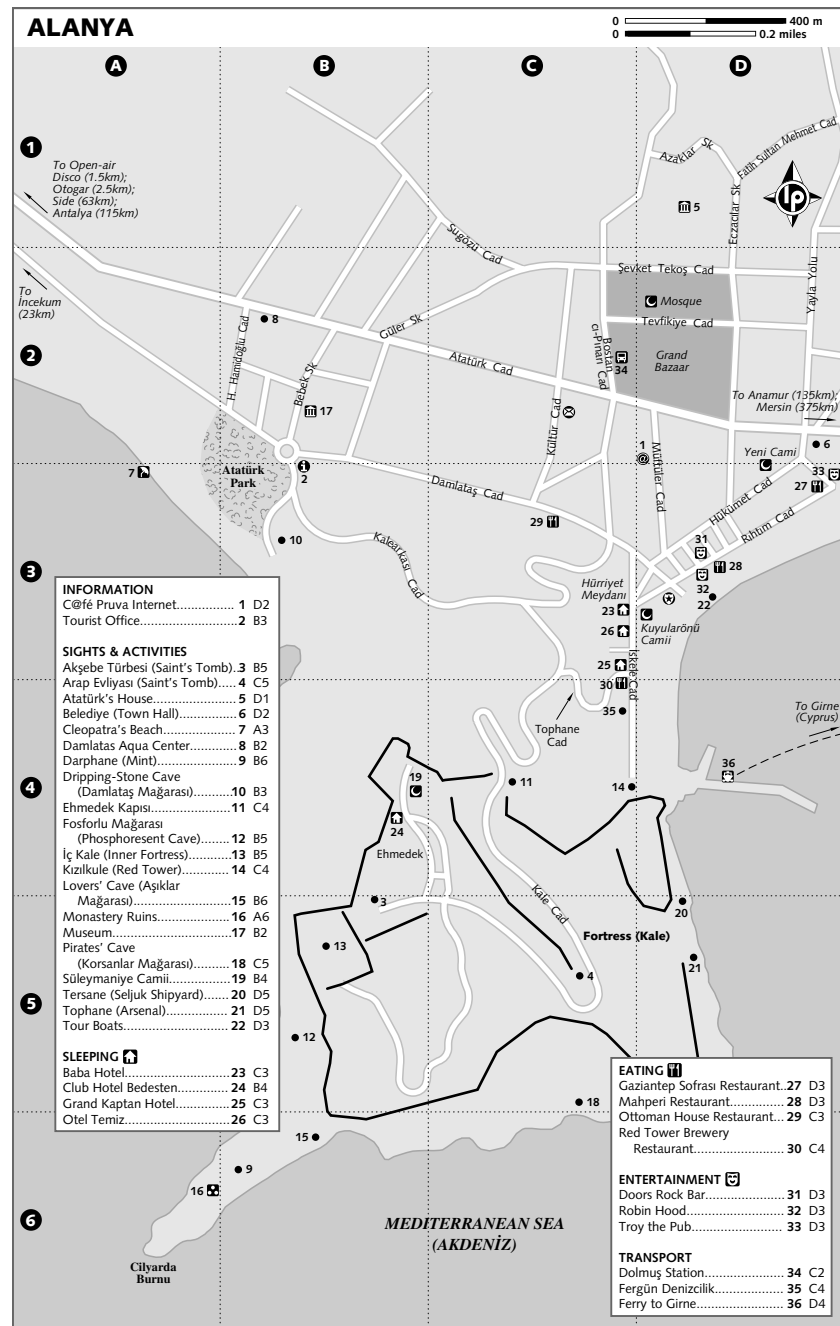
The **tourist office** (☎ 513 1240; Kalearkası Caddesi; ☹ 8.30am-5.30pm) is opposite the Alanya Museum. **Café Pruva Internet** (☎ 519 2306; ☹ 8am-midnight) is off Müftüler Caddesi, just south of Atatürk Caddesi.

Sights

FORTRESS

Alanya's most popular ancient site by far is its Seljuk **fortress (kale)**, which overlooks the city as well as the Pamphylian plain and the Cilician mountains. The winding road to the fortress is 3km. If you don't want to walk, catch a city bus from Hürriyet Meydanı (€0.50, hourly from 9am to 7pm) or opposite the tourist office (10 minutes past the hour). Taxis wait at the bottom of the hill (€8).

Before reaching the entrance to the fort, the road passes through the old inner citadel; this was the Turkish quarter during Ottoman and Seljuk times, and a number of old wooden houses are still standing. At the top is the **Ehmedek Kapısı**, the gateway to the fort. Enter the **İç Kale** (Inner Fortress; admission €3; ☹ 9am-7.15pm), where you'll find poorly preserved ruins including cisterns and an 11th-century



THE ASTHMA-CURING CAVES OF TURKEY

Sufferers of asthma have good reason to holiday in the Eastern Mediterranean. Two caves in the area are said to produce a certain kind of air that, if inhaled and exhaled for long enough stretches of time, has the ability to relieve the afflicted of their ailment.

The more famous of the two is Alanya's Dripping-Stone Cave (Damlataş Mağarası; below), where the 95% humidity is believed to have something to do with the cave's impressive powers. Many locals are confident the caves actually work, and in the area doctors have even been known to send patients here.

North of Narlıkuyu, at the Caves of Heaven and Hell, is the site known as Astım Mağarası (Asthma Cave; p421). This cave is much less touristy, although the jury remains out as to whether you get a better cure in heaven or in hell.

Byzantine church. It's worth the long walk down to explore the village of **Ehmedek**, which includes a former Ottoman **bedesten** (vaulted market enclosure), which has been turned into a hotel (right).

KIZILKULE & TERSANE

Overlooking the harbour at the far lower end of İskele Caddesi is the octagonal **Kızilkule** (Red Tower; admission €1; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), a five-storey structure measuring nearly 30m in diameter and more than 30m high. Constructed in 1226, it was very likely the first structure erected after the then-Armenian controlled town surrendered to the Seljuk Sultan Alaettin Keykubat I. Keykubat I was also responsible for the construction of the hilltop fortress.

Across the harbour from the tower are the remains of the only Seljuk-built **tersane** (shipyard) remaining in Turkey.

ATATÜRK'S HOUSE

When Atatürk visited Alanya on 18 February 1935, he slept in a house on Azaklar Sokak, off Fatih Sultan Mehmet Caddesi. The owner of the house left it to the Ministry of Culture, which has turned it into a small **museum** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun).

MUSEUM

Alanya's small **museum** (☎ 513 1228; Bebek Sokak; admission €1; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.30-7.30pm) is worth a visit. Artefacts from various regions of Anatolia include tools, jugs and jewellery. Also on display is a life-sized recreation of a traditional 19th-century Alanya home.

DRIPPING-STONE CAVE (DAMLATAŞ MAĞARASI)

About 100m towards the sea from the tourist office and near the souvenir booths of

Cleopatra's Beach is the entrance to this **cave** (admission €2; ☎ 10am-7pm). Filled with hanging stalactites and heavy with 95% humidity, it is said to cure asthma sufferers.

Activities BEACHES AND WATERPARKS

Alanya's beaches are perfectly decent, although if you're staying east of the centre they're fronted by a busy main road. **Cleopatra's Beach** (Kleopatra Plajı) is sandy and quite secluded – at least outside high summer – and has fine views of the fortress.

Alanya boasts a rather impressive waterslide park. **Damlataş Aqua Centre** (☎ 512 5944, 512 6044; www.alanyaaquacenter.com; İsmet Hillmi Balci Caddesi 62; adult/child €11/7; ☎ 9am-6pm) is packed with tube slides, pools and other amusements.

TOURS

Every day at around 10.30am **boats** (per person €25, incl lunch) leave from near Gazipaşa Caddesi for a six-hour voyage around the promontory, visiting several caves and Cleopatra's Beach.

Many local operators organise tours to the ruins along the coast west of Alanya and to Anamur. A typical tour to Aspendos, Side and Manavgat will cost around €28 per person, while a village-visiting 4WD safari into the Taurus Mountains will cost about €20 per person.

Sleeping

Alanya has hundreds of hotels and pensions, almost all of them designed for groups and those in search of *apart-hotels* (self-catering flats).

Baba Hotel (☎ 513 1032; İskele Caddesi 6; s/d €17/19) It's a bit grungy and slightly frightening, but it's certainly İskele Caddesi's cheapest digs.

(Continued from page 404)

The front entrance is located on the left side of a cement stairway just off the street.

Otel Temiz (☎ 513 1016; fax 519 1560; İskele Caddesi 12; s/d €28/44; ☎) Rooms here have TVs, minibars and perfectly clean bathrooms, but the real draw are the balconies, which offer a bird's-eye view of the thumping club and bar action down below.

Club Hotel Bedesten (☎ 512 1234; bedestenhotel@hotmail.com; s/d €36/61; ☎) Located high above the city in the old Turkish village of Ehmedek, and just down the road from the fortress, this creatively designed hotel was built right on the site of an old Ottoman *bedesten* (covered market). The cavern-like rooms are comfortable and smartly detailed. You'll need transportation to get to and from the main township.

Grand Kaptan Hotel (☎ 513 4900; www.kaptanhoteles.com; İskele Caddesi 70; s/d €39/67; ☎) This three-star hotel has a large and somewhat opulent lobby with a nautical theme and a bar. The perfectly clean and tidy rooms have all mod cons but are rather characterless.

Eating

Although they're vanishing fast, there are still a few cheap places to eat in the narrow streets of Alanya's bazaar, in the town centre. Look for signs saying '*İnegöl köftecisi*', and snap up *köfte* (meatballs) and salad for around €5.

Gaziantep Sofrası Restaurant (☎ 513 4570; İzzet Azakoğlu Caddesi; meals €8) For something more adventurous than the standard grills and seafood, this is one of central Alanya's best options. Traditional food from Gaziantep is on offer; try the *patlıcan kebab* (fried egg-

plants) or the *beyti sarma* (spicy meatballs and flat bread).

Mahperi Restaurant (☎ 512 5491; www.mahperi.com; Rıhtım Caddesi; meals €15-25) A much-loved fish and steak restaurant that's been in operation since 1947 (a fairly astonishing feat in Alanya), this place is quite the class act, offering a good selection of international dishes. If you're feeling the need to escape the tourism glitz, this is certainly your best choice in the town centre.

Red Tower Brewery Restaurant (☎ 513 6664; info@redtowerbrewery.com; İskele Caddesi 80; meals €10-15) An honest-to-goodness brewpub in Alanya? Believe it. In fact, this is the first on the entire so-called Turkish Riviera. The majority of patrons show up for the food, however. International dishes and fish specialities are offered on the restaurant's 1st floor, where the massive beer tanks are stored. There's also seating across the street that overlooks the harbour; this is the perfect place to try Turkish-brewed Marzen, Weizen, Helles and Pilsen.

Entertainment

Although the widespread city of Alanya is home to an enormous parade of bars and clubs, the most popular are those found smack dab in the centre. You won't have any trouble finding the most popular – some discos are three and four storeys high, others have laser lights flashing from their rooftops, and nearly all crank rock or pop music so loud it can easily be heard from blocks away.

Robin Hood (☎ 535 7923; Rıhtım Caddesi 24; ☎ 9pm-3am) Supposedly the biggest club in Alanya, the first two floors of this monstrosity are decked out in (you guessed it) a Sherwood Forest theme. The Hawaiian Beach Club is on the

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Ottoman House Restaurant (☎ 511 1421; Damlataş Caddesi 31; €15-20) Constructed inside what was once Alanya's very first hotel, built over a century ago, the Ottoman House Restaurant is known nationally as being one of Turkey's finest eateries. It's also well-regarded internationally: just take a look at the restaurant's wall of fame, where kind words from scores of guidebooks and periodicals are posted. But don't take their word for it (or ours, for that matter). Settle into a chair on the 2nd floor of this traditional Mediterranean-style stone-and-timber structure, where the house specialities are an expertly prepared blend of standard Turkish grills, seafood and Ottoman dishes.

Especially popular is the *beğendili kebab*, a traditional Ottoman entrée of lamb with aubergine puree. During the busy summer season, live musicians perform nightly in the front garden, while diners are seated underneath a canopy of trees. Outdoor barbecues happen occasionally, and if you happen to be in town during one of the restaurant's fresh tuna barbecues (€14 per person), don't miss out on the rare opportunity to see a carving in action. Call to request a free bus pickup from your hotel.

(Continued on page 413)

third floor, and above that is the Latino Club. Beers are around €5.

Troy the Pub (☎ 511 4718; Ziraat Bankası Karşısı 67; ☎ 24hr) A restaurant during the day and a bar at night, this pub changes its attitude drastically as the clock slowly turns. Breakfasts here are quiet and relaxing; show up in the afternoon or evening to hear reggae, jazz and hip-hop.

Doors Rock Bar (☎ 519 2573; www.thedoorsrockbar.com; Karakol Karşısı 9; ☎ 7pm-4am) Celebrate the memory of the Lizard King at this rather rough-around-the-edges club, which seems to play more oldies than actual classic rock.

Alanya is also home to a number of large open-air discos that are relatively far from the centre. During the summer, free buses drive down İskele Caddesi about every half-hour; they depart from the harbour. Should you miss the bus back, a taxi will cost about €10.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

There are services to Girne (Kyrenia) in Northern Cyprus from Alanya harbour, operated by **Fergün Denizcilik** (☎ 511 5565, 511 5358; www.fergun.net; İskele Caddesi 84). Boats leave at noon on Mondays and Thursdays. They return to Alanya at 11am on Wednesdays and Sundays.

You must buy a ticket and present your passport a day before departure so they can handle the immigration formalities. Not included in the €32/64 one-way/return ticket prices is a €6 Alanya harbour tax. Returning from Girne, there is a €9 departure tax.

BUS

The otogar is on the coastal highway (Atatürk Caddesi), 3km west of the centre. It is served

by city buses (€0.20, every half-hour). Most services are less frequent outside summer, but buses generally leave hourly for Antalya (€5, two hours, 115km) and eight times daily to Adana (€12, 10 hours, 440km), stopping at a number of towns along the way. Buses to Konya (€9.50, 6½ hours, 320km) take the Akseki-Beyşehir route.

Getting Around

Frequent dolmuşes shuttle along the coast, transporting passengers from the outlying hotel areas to the centre.

Dolmuşes to the otogar (€0.60) can be picked up in the bazaar, north of Atatürk Caddesi. From the otogar, you walk out towards the coast road and the dolmuş stand is on the right.

AROUND ALANYA

About 23km west of Alanya is **İncekum** and **Avsallar**, these days virtual extensions of Alanya with little to recommend them. At İncekum the **İncekum Orman İçi Dinlenme Yeri** (Fine Sand Forest Rest Area; ☎ 345 1448) has a camping ground (no facilities) in a pine grove near the beach.

About 13km west of Alanya, notice the **Şarapsa Hanı**, a Seljuk *han* (caravanserai) built in the mid-12th century, which is occasionally reinvented as a function centre. Further west towards Side, there's another *han*, the **Alarahan**, accessible by a side road heading north for 9km.

Heading east towards Silifke (275km), the twisting road is cut into the cliffs. Every now and then it passes through the fertile delta of a stream, planted with bananas (as at Demirtaş) or crowded with greenhouses. It's a long drive

with few places to stop until you get to Anamur, but the sea views and the cool pine forests are extremely beautiful. On a clear day you can see the mountains of Cyprus across the sea.

This region was ancient Cilicia Tracheia ('Rough' Cilicia), a somewhat forbidding part of the world because of the mountains. Pirates preyed on ships from the hidden coves along this stretch of the coast. In the late 1960s the government completed the good road running east from Alanya, and since then tourism has grown rapidly.

ANAMUR

☎ 0324 / pop 50,000

If ruins are your bag, this is a convenient (if unexciting) base for exploring the massive Byzantine city of Anamurium (right), just west of Anamur. It's also close to the impressive Mamure Castle (Mamure Kalesi; p416), a must-see site that sits directly on the highway to the east.

Orientation & Information

Anamur town centre lies to the north of the highway, 1km from the main square. Mamure

Kalesi is 7km east of the town centre, the ruins of Anamurium 8.5km west of the centre. The otogar is on the intersection of the highway and Anamur's main street (see p417 for information about getting around). The **tourist office** (☎ 814 3529; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) is in the otogar complex behind the police station; note though that it keeps irregular hours.

Around 2.5km from the otogar, the waterfront district, İskele, is where most of Anamur's hotels and restaurants are located.

Anamurium

Approaching Anamur from the west or down from the Cilician mountains, just before you reach Anamur itself, a sign on the right points south towards the **ruins** (admission €1; ☎ 8am-8pm). This road bumps 3km past fields – when you reach a fork in the road go to the right – and through the ruins to a dead end at the beach. A good way of exploring the area is on bicycle, which can be arranged at Hotel Dedehan (p416).

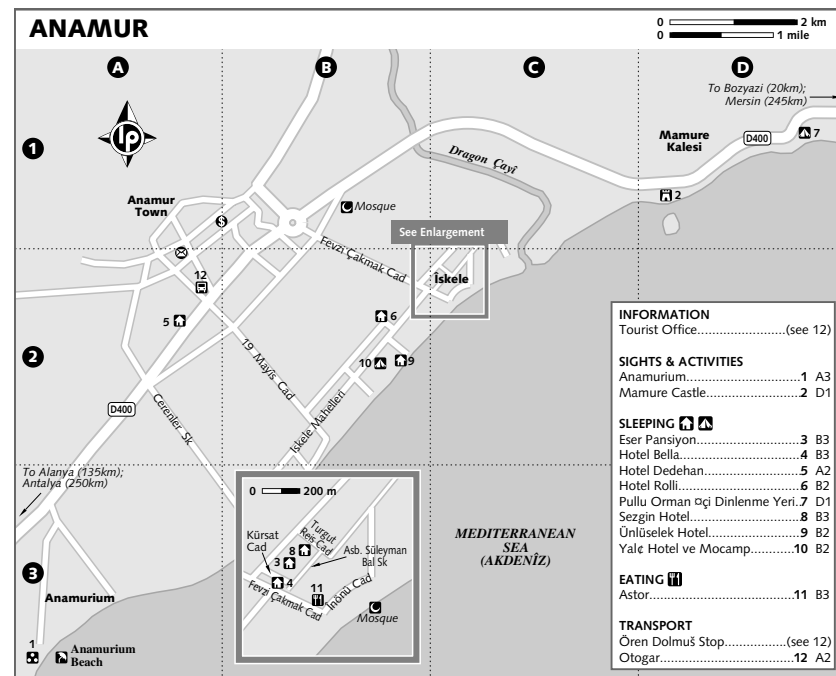
Although founded by the Phoenicians, the ruins visible at Anamurium today date from the tail end of the Roman period through to

BEHOLD THE ANAMUR BANANA

Nearly every city and town along Turkey's eastern Mediterranean coast seems to be known for its proficiency in growing a certain type of fruit, and Anamur is no different. Here, the banana reigns supreme.

Until the mid-1980s, Anamur bananas were the only sort of banana available anywhere in the country. That certainly wasn't a bad thing. It's true the bananas are especially small, but their smell, and especially their taste, is outstanding. Anamur bananas are much sweeter and more flavourful than those common in Europe and North America. Unfortunately for local growers though, Turkey began importing cheaper (but less tasty) bananas from other countries; large numbers of Anamur banana growers were driven out of business.

Happily, if you're in Anamur the local bananas can still be bought more cheaply than imported varieties. Keep your eyes peeled when driving through the mountainous regions surrounding town, where you're certain to spot dozens of farmers along the highway hawking great bunches of bananas from wooden fruit stands.



the medieval Byzantine era. The site is both sprawling and inspiring, with ruined structures stretching from the beach to the peak of the mountainside. It's primarily the sheer size of the city, rather than simply the ruins themselves, that impress.

Historians and archaeologists are still debating exactly how and why Anamurium eventually fell. The city suffered a number of devastating setbacks throughout its active existence, including an attack in AD 52 by a Cilician tribe known as the Cetae. However it was long believed that corsairs from Arabia were the last straw for Anamurium, plundering and pillaging it to the point of no return sometime in the mid-7th century. Recently, however, archaeologists working at Anamurium claim to have uncovered evidence suggesting that a massive earthquake destroyed the city sometime in the late 6th century.

The best-preserved structure here is the **public bath**; look for the coloured mosaic tiles that still decorate portions of the floor. Other ruins of interest include a 900-seat **theatre** dating from the 2nd century AD, a **stadium**, and a rather large **necropolis**. There are also the remains of numerous private houses.

Much of the beach is pebbly and rocky, although it's a decent place to catch a cool breeze on a hot summer day.

Mamure Castle (Mamure Kalesi)

By far the biggest and best-preserved fortification on either Mediterranean coast, this **castle** (admission €1.50; ☎ 8am-6pm) still retains all its original 36 towers. Its front end sits almost directly on the main highway, making it impossible to miss. As if attempting to mimic Maiden's Castle to the east, the rear end of Mamure sits directly on the beach, and water reaches the castle walls at high tide.

Mamure dates from the 12th century – it was constructed by the Christian leaders of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia – although references exist to suggest there was some sort of fortress at this exact location as far back as the 3rd century BC. It's known that a Roman castle was built here in the 3rd century AD, although no remains of that structure exist. Mamure was briefly held by the Ottomans in the middle of the 14th century.

Climbing to the castle's peak is something of an adventure, although some stairs are a bit crumbled so use extreme caution. Your reward is an astounding view of the sea.

Sleeping ANAMUR

Pullu Orman İçi Dinlenme Yeri (☎ 827 1151; camp sites or caravans €5) Just under 2km east of Mamure Castle is this large, hilly and forested camp ground. It's especially popular with Turkish families and school groups who arrive for picnics by the sea (where pious Muslim women swim fully clothed).

Hotel Dedehan (☎ 814 7522; D400 Hwy; s/d €11/22; 🏠) This rather pleasant place can be found next to the otogar. With its friendly owner and clean, decent-sized rooms, it's a good choice if you're stuck in town overnight. It's also a good base for excursions to Anamurium or Mamure Castle, as guests are allowed free use of a bicycle. Motorbikes can be rented for about €14 a day.

İSKELE

In the fast-growing İskele (harbour) district, there are numerous pensions and hotels along İnönü Caddesi, the main waterfront street. The dolmuş drops you off at the main intersection.

Camping

Yalı Hotel ve Mocamp (☎ 814 3474; camp sites €4, caravans €8, bungalows €17-22) Conveniently located close to the sea, this somewhat rugged camp site has spots for both tents and caravans, and has bungalows available.

Pensions & Hotels

The pensions and hotels cater largely to Turkish families, so while they may not be fancy they do offer good value. There are several hotels in the Yalhevleri district, a treeless expanse of apartment blocks about 2km along the coast towards Anamurium from İskele. Catch the local bus that passes every 20 minutes through the main intersection.

Eser Pansiyon (☎ 814 2322, 814 9130; www.eserpan.siyon.com; İnönü Caddesi 6; s/d/tr €14/22/28, 5-person flat €39; 🏠) Catering primarily to backpackers and families, this truly accommodating pension has recently remodelled to include satellite TV in every room, a self-catering kitchen and a barbeque pit in the shaded back garden. Run by an ultra-energetic and accommodating English speaker, the flats and suites here come complete with real bathtubs.

Sezgin Hotel (☎ 814 9421; İskele Mahallesi 11; s/d/tr €17/28/36; 🏠) Formerly known as the Sevgi Hotel, this newly remodelled spot features

an interesting collection of kilims on its lobby walls. The rooms are quite sparse but clean; 10 out of the 24 have sea-views, and all have TVs.

Hotel Bella (☎ 816 4751; bilg@eserpansiyon.com; Kursat Caddesi 5; s/d/tr €17/28/36; 🏠) Operated by the same owner as Eser Pansiyon, this more upscale locale features perfectly tidy rooms – all with satellite TV – and a tastefully decorated dining area. By no means should you miss trying a meal here; ask for one of their authentic Turkish specials.

Ünlüselek Hotel (☎ 814 1973; www.hotelunluselek.com; Fahri Görülü Caddesi; s/d €19/33; 🏠 🏠) This family-oriented hotel has proved so popular that a new wing was recently constructed. Along with live music at night and free wi-fi, films are occasionally screened on a projector outside, where there's also a playground area for kids. Located just steps from the sea, a beach-volleyball court is usually set up in the summer. The owner also loans his small boat to guests.

Hotel Rolli (☎ 814 4978; www.hotel-rolli.de; Yahevleri Mahallesi; s/d €33; 🏠 🏠) Specially designed for wheelchair-bound tourists, this recently renovated hotel has wheelchair-accessible rooms, a wheelchair-accessible lift, and a device that gingerly moves guests from their chair to the hotel pool. The majority of guests here are German, and the very polite staff all speak the language. And talk about astounding customer service: guests can request a free pickup from as far away as the Antalya airport.

Eating

In the warmer months the İskele waterfront is filled with large open-air cafés, serving kebabs, *gözleme* (savoury pancake) and other snacks.

Astor (☎ 816 8016; İnönü Caddesi; meals €11) A fish and steak house on İskele's main intersection, this is one of Anamur's most atmospheric restaurants.

Getting There & Away

There are several buses daily to Alanya (€8, three hours, 135km) and Silifke (€8, 3½ hours, 160km).

Getting Around

Anamur is quite spread out, but easy to get around on public transport. Buses and dolmuşes to İskele depart from next to the mosque, over the road from the otogar (€0.60,

every 30 minutes). A taxi between İskele and the otogar costs about €6.

Dolmuşes to Ören also leave from next to the mosque, over the road from the otogar, and can drop you off at the Anamurium turn-off on the main highway. Alternatively, you'll need to take a taxi from Anamur otogar or from İskele. Expect to pay about €15 to go there and back, with an hour's waiting time – but this is barely enough time to see the highlights.

Frequent dolmuşes to Bozyazı (€0.50) travel past Mamure Kalesi.

AROUND ANAMUR

About 20km east of Anamur, you'll come to the town of **Bozyazı**, spread across a fertile plain backed by rugged mountains. East across the plain, and clearly visible for miles around, is **Softa Castle** (Softa Kalesi), impossibly perched on the rocks above the hamlet of Çubukköy yağı. Like Mamure Castle (opposite) to the west, Softa was built by the Armenian kings who ruled Cilicia for a short while during the Crusades. It is now pretty ruinous, but the walls and location are mightily impressive. As you leave Bozyazı, a sign on the left points inland to the castle, but the road doesn't go all the way to the top.

If you'd like to climb into the mountains and see yet another medieval castle, turn left at Siphahili 3km southwest of Aydıncık and head up towards Gülnar (25km) for a look at **Meydancık Castle** (Meydancık Kalesi), which has stood here in one form or another since Hittite times.

TAŞUCU

☎ 0324

Taşucu, the port of Silifke, is a pleasant mix of working port and low-key tourist resort with a quiet beach. The town lives for the ferries to Girne (Kyrenia) in Northern Cyprus. Hotels put up travellers, while car ferries and hydrofoils take them across the sea.

Orientation & Information

The main square by the ferry dock, one block south of the highway, has a PTT, banks, a customs house, assorted shipping offices and several restaurants. The beach is fronted by Sahil Yolu, which stretches east of the docks and has several good pensions. There is an internet café in the plaza opposite the pier.

Sleeping

Meltem Pansiyon (☎ 741 4391; Sahil Caddesi 75; s/d €14/19; P ☎) Sitting just a few steps from the small, sandy beach, this family-run pension has a few sea-facing rooms; breakfast is served on the back patio. Rooms are modest but clean. If you're looking for small, intimate and affordable, this is it.

Holmi Pansiyon (☎ 741 5378; holmi.pansiyon.kafeterya@hotmail.com; Sahil Caddesi 23; s/d €16/21; ☎) The covered front porch here is particularly nice for relaxing on a hot day. The rooms have small desks and balconies, although not much of a sea view.

Olba Otel (☎ 741 4222; Sahil Caddesi; s/d €25/44; P ☎) Next door to Meltem Pansiyon and directly on the sea, Olba is tidy, professional and well run. The 2nd-floor balcony (where breakfast is served) offers wonderful sea views. The rooms are clad in cosy, kitschy wood-panelling.

Lades Motel (☎ 741 4008; www.ladesmotel.com; Atatürk Caddesi 89; s/d €31/44; P ☎) One of the prettiest hotels in town, the rather large Lades boasts an Olympic-sized pool and wonderful harbour views from the bedroom balconies. The lobby and sitting areas are tastefully decorated. The hotel is a favourite of bird watchers who come to visit the nearby Gökusu Delta (p420).

Taşucu Best Resort Hotel (☎ 741 6300; www.best-resorthotel.com; Atatürk Caddesi 97; s/d €47/72; P ☎) A five-star hotel that has absolutely earned its ranking. A restaurant, hairdresser and *hamam* are all onsite, as is a lovely pool featuring a bridge and waterslide. Some of the (large) rooms even come with portholes!

Eating & Drinking

Alo Dürüm (☎ 741 2464, 741 2463; Atatürk Caddesi 17; meals about €3) Right in the middle of the main drag and close to the ferry terminal, this is an open-air *döner* (spit roast) and pide (Turkish pizza) place popular with locals and travellers coming from – or going to – the Cyprus ferry. A 24-hour delivery service is available, should you get a hankering for *lahmacun* (Arabic pizza) at 3am.

Baba Restaurant (☎ 741 5991; Atatürk Caddesi 87; meals €5-10) Locals regard it as Silifke's best eatery, and for good reason. Portions are generous and artfully prepared, as is the meze cart, which will tempt you from its perch on the veranda all evening long. Cool breezes blowing in from the harbour complete the picture

perfectly. Don't miss the updated selection of fresh fish on the chalkboard.

Getting There & Away

Akgünler Denizcilik (☎ 741 4033; fax 741 4324; www.akgunler.com.tr; Taşucu Atatürk Caddesi) runs *feribotlar* (car ferries) and/or *ekspresler* (hydrofoils) between Taşucu and Girne (Kyrenia) in Northern Cyprus. It has a daily hydrofoil at 11.30am (one way/return €32/56) and a car ferry (one way/return €33/56; car one way/return €56/100) leaving at midnight (although they don't actually sail until 2am), Sunday to Thursday. The hydrofoil leaves Girne at 9.30am daily while the car ferry leaves at noon Monday to Friday.

Hydrofoils are faster (two hours) but the ride can be stomach-churning on choppy seas. Passenger tickets cost less on the car ferry, but the trip is longer (anything from four to 10 hours depending on the weather). Provided your visa allows for multiple entries within its period of validity, you shouldn't have to pay for a new one when you come back into Turkey.

There are frequent dolmuş between Taşucu and Silifke (€0.50), where you can connect with long-distance services to major destinations.

SİLİFKE

☎ 0324 / pop 85,100

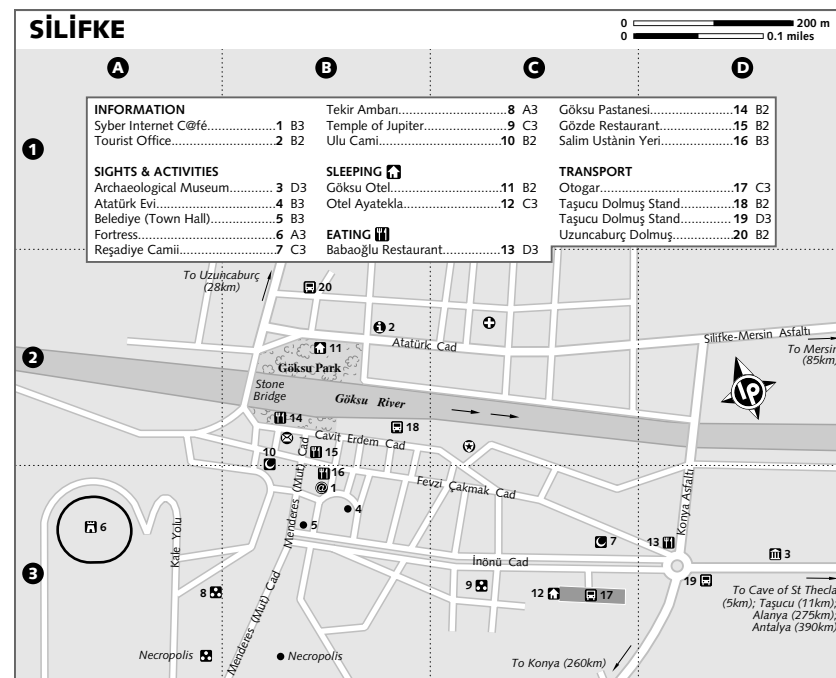
Silifke is a down-to-earth country town with some handsome parks along the Gökusu River. A striking castle dominates the town, and there are some fascinating archaeological relics in the vicinity.

Seleucia, as it was known, was founded by Seleucus I Nicator in the 3rd century BC. Seleucus was one of Alexander the Great's most able generals and founder of the Seleucid dynasty that ruled Syria after Alexander's death.

The town's other claim to fame is that Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (r 1152-90) drowned in the river near here while leading his troops on the Third Crusade.

Orientation & Information

The otogar is near the junction of the highways to Alanya, Mersin and Konya, 800m along İnönü Caddesi from the town centre. Halfway between the otogar and the town centre you pass the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter.



The town is divided by the Gökusu River, called the Calycadnus in ancient times. Most of the services, including the otogar, are on the southern bank of the river. Exceptions are the tourist office and the dolmuş stop for Uzuncaburç.

The **tourist office** (☎ 714 1151; Veli Gürten Bozbey Caddesi 6; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri), just north of Atatürk Caddesi, sells an excellent guidebook, *Silifke (Seleucia on Calycadnus) and Environs*, for €10.

The **Syber Internet C@fé** (☎ 714 6884; Sanatçılar 2 Sokak 10; per hr €0.50; ☎ 10am-10:30pm) is around the corner from Salim Ustânın Yeri.

Sights & Activities

Silifke's most impressive sight is the medieval **fortress** that overlooks the city from a high hill. The Byzantine castle, which has 23 towers and underground storage rooms that can still be seen, was used by both the Byzantines and the Knights of St John. From the fortress it's possible to see the **Tekir Ambarı** down below, an ancient cistern carved from rock. To reach the cistern, first head to the junction of İnönü and Mendereç Caddesi, then walk up the steep

road to the left of the Küçük Hacı Kaşaplar supermarket. Providing a very pleasant alternative to a dreadful walk up the hill to the castle are the motorcycle drivers who wait at this corner. Expect to pay around €5.50 per person for a round-trip journey; you'll be riding in the small wooden box up front.

The Roman **Temple of Jupiter** is especially striking if you're not expecting to see it; it literally sits right along the side of the very busy İnönü Caddesi. The temple dates from the 2nd century AD, but was turned into a Christian Basilica sometime in the 5th century.

The **Archaeological Museum** (Arkeoloji Müzesi; İnönü Caddesi; admission €1; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) located about halfway between the otogar and Taşucu proper, has a decent collection of Roman statues and busts, as well as an archaeological hall filled with pottery, tools and weapons from the Roman and Hellenistic eras.

The **Ulu Camii** (Great Mosque; Fevzi Çakmak Caddesi) is a Seljuk-built mosque, although it's seen renovations over the years. At the **Reşadiye Camii** (İnönü Caddesi), take note of the Roman

columns standing on the back porch and at the entrance.

The **Atatürk Evi** (admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4.30pm) is an old Silifke house with an interesting photo gallery of Mustafa Kemal. Be prepared to show your passport at the door.

The **stone bridge** over the Göksu dates back to AD 78, and has been restored many times.

Sleeping

Otel Ayatekal (☎ 715 1081; fax 715 1085; Otogar Cıvırı; s/d €14/25; 🏠) A quite nice two-star hotel next to the otogar with a large restaurant on the ground floor. Some rooms come with decent views of the city and mountains, and all have TVs. A suite with balcony is available.

Göksu Otel (☎ 712 1021; fax 712 1024; Atatürk Caddesi 20; s/d €22/33; 🏠 🍷) Popular with travelling Turkish businessmen, this hotel in the centre doesn't have much in the way of character, but Westerners will feel right at home in the large and modern rooms, as well as in the ground-floor restaurant, which is worth a try even if you're not staying the night.

Eating

Göksu Pastanesi (Cavit Erdem Caddesi) A large and shaded terrace perched atop the rumbling river below. Close to the stone bridge, this modest eatery sells çay and snacks.

Salim Ustânin Yeri (☎ 712 1121; Adliye Karşıışı Caddesi 72; meals €3) Turkish fast food – mostly kebabs, çorba (soup) and fish – served in an antiseptic setting.

Babaoğlu Restaurant (☎ 714 2041; meals €5) The 2nd-floor seating here overlooks the traffic roundabout near the otogar. Along with the expertly-done kebabs and pide, there's a decent selection of fish, lamb and grilled chicken. A touch on the upscale side, at least by Silifke standards.

Gozde Restaurant (☎ 714 2764; Menderes (Mut) Caddesi; meals €5) A döner kebab and lahmacun joint with a shaded outdoor dining area and English-speaking waitstaff. Surprisingly delicious food, considering the price.

Getting There & Away

At the junction of the coastal highway and the road into the mountains, Silifke is an important transit point with good bus services.

Buses depart for Adana along the highway east of Silifke (€7, two hours, 155km, hourly) throughout the morning and afternoon, and

will stop to pick up those who've been visiting one of the many archaeological sites east of town.

Dolmuşes to Taşucu (€0.50) depart about every 20 minutes from opposite Babaoğlu Restaurant – across the highway from the otogar – or from a stand on the south bank of the Göksu.

Other services from Silifke include to Antalya (€16.50, nine hours, 390km, 10 per day) and to Mersin (€3, two hours, 85km, three per hour).

AROUND SİLİFKE

Cave of St Thecla

The **Cave of St Thecla** (Ayatekla; admission €1; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri), a small rock shelter hidden underneath the remains of a Byzantine church, is a site of great significance to many Christians. St Thecla (Ayatekla in Turkish) was the first person to be converted by St Paul. A religious outcast, Thecla spent her last few years in the cave living a pious life. The church was built in her honour in AD 480.

To reach the cave when driving from Taşucu to Silifke, look for the Alpet petrol station on your left. Next to it is Ayatekla Sokak, which leads directly up a hill and to the site. The entrance to the cave is directly behind the basilica ruins.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

To get to the cave from Silifke take a Taşucu Dolmuş (€0.50) and ask to be dropped off at the Ayatekla junction, 1km from the site.

Göksu Delta & Around

Immediately south of Silifke is the Göksu Delta (above), a renowned wetland area that is rich in birdlife.

East of Silifke, the slopes of the maquis-covered Olbian Plateau, one of Turkey's richest areas for archaeological sites, stretch along the coast for about 60km before the Cilician Plain opens into an ever-widening swathe of fertile land.

Narlıkuyu

About 3km east of Atakent, Narlıkuyu is a pretty village set around a rocky harbour ringed with fish restaurants. An underground stream flows into the little cove, making some areas of the sea refreshingly cool.

Inside the village's tiny **museum** (admission €1), which is actually a 4th-century Roman

bath, you'll find a wonderful mosaic of the goddesses of fertility, also known as the Three Graces – Aglaia, Thalia and Euphrosyne.

Although all the eateries wrapped around the cove here are highly regarded (and offer essentially the same menu), a perennial favourite is **Kerim Restaurant** (☎ 723 3295; meals about €10), which is just across the street from the museum. The sea bass is recommended.

Frequent dolmuşes run between Narlıkuyu, Ertur, Kızkalesi and Silifke (€0.50).

Caves of Heaven & Hell (Cennet ve Cehennem)

In the mountainous area above Narlıkuyu, the road winds 2km up to these fascinating **caves** (admission €1; ☎ 8am-5pm).

To enter the **Chasm of Heaven** (Cennet Cöküğü), which is 250m across, make your way down its 452 steps. Along the way you'll pass through a gorgeously leafy expanse where the faithful have tied hundreds of small strips cloth to various tree branches, a ritual somewhat similar to the lighting of candles in a Catholic church.

At the mouth of the cave is the 5th-century Byzantine **Chapel of Virgin Mary**, which for a short time in the 19th century was used as a mosque.

Continue following the path down and into the cave itself, where you'll find the **Cave-Gorge to Hell** (Cehennem Çukuru), which does in fact look frighteningly similar to the image of hell we're given in popular culture. Indeed, locals believe this cave to be one of the entrances to the infernal regions. Should you hear a certain roaring sound, though, fear not: it's simply the sound of an underground stream (which can be seen in the winter but not summer). Legend had it that the roaring stream connects at some point with Styx, the river which in Greek mythology is the border between our world and the underworld.

You'll need a separate ticket to view the nearby **Pit of Hell** (Cehennem Çukuru; €1), which can only be seen from a small viewing platform above. There's not much to see in the charred-looking pit, though it's accounted to be the spot where Zeus imprisoned the hundred-headed monster Typhon after defeating him in battle.

When leaving the car park, turn right and then make a quick left into another car park, where you'll find the **Astım Mağarası** (Asthma Cave). Sufferers of asthma who spend time

here are said to be able to find relief from their affliction.

Uzuncaburç

About 30km north of Silifke, the mountain village of **Uzuncaburç** (admission €1; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) sits within the ancient Roman city of Diocaesarea, originally a Hellenistic city known as Olbia. This area is thought to have been home to a zealous cult that worshipped Zeus Olbius.

The **Temple of Zeus Olbius** is just inside the site and on the left, but first visit the Roman **theatre** which can be found before the car park, also on the left. The theatre is easy to miss; it's half-sunken into the ground, and is covered with a beautiful bed of wildflowers. Some of the site's most important structures were Roman-built, including the **fountain** (2nd or 3rd century), the **Temple of Tyche** (1st century), and the **city gate**.

To view a Hellenistic structure built before the Romans sacked Olbia, leave the site and turn left through the village. On the right, a road leads to a massive **burç** (tower), which seems to pop out of the roadside. Continue on and you'll discover a path to the left that winds down 500m to a **necropolis**.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibuses to Uzuncaburç (€2) leave from a side street near the tourist office. Look for the parked minibus with an 'Uzuncaburç' sign in the front window. They leave Silifke at 9am, 11am, 1pm and 3pm, and return an hour later.

Hiring a taxi costs about €24 return, waiting time included, which would allow you to inspect some tombs along the way.

Göksu Valley

From Uzuncaburç the road continues via Kirobasi to Mut and then to Karaman and Konya. Winding up into the forests you may pass huge stacks of logs cut by the Tahtaclar, the Alevi mountain woodcutters who live a secluded life in the forest.

About 40km before Mut the road skirts a fantastic limestone **canyon** that extends for several kilometres. High above in the limestone cliffs are **caves**, which were probably once inhabited. The land in the valleys is rich and well watered. About 20km north of Mut a turn-off on the right leads 5km to the ruins of another **medieval castle** at Alahan.

KIZKALESİ

☎ 0324

Kızkalesi, which pushes right up against the main D400 highway, is the sort of place that seems garish and crude upon arrival. But stick around for a while, and this small village, which today is part open-air museum of antiquated ruins and part tacky tourism epicentre, will almost certainly grow on you.

It's no secret how this very small town, 26km east of Silifke, became so popular. The impressively long beach here is one of the loveliest in this region, and that's to say nothing of the fact that a medieval fortress – the eponymous Kızkalesi – sits 200m out in the sea.

The presence of so many American archaeology students in Kızkalesi should tell you something about the importance and abundance of the nearby ruins, and the frequent sight of American soldiers from the nearby military base speaks volumes – quite often it shouts volumes – about the fun to be had here.

Undoubtedly because of the presence of so many Americans, the locals seem adept at dealing with foreigners. For a visitor, the scene here is more inclusive and relaxed than you'd expect of a typical Turkish village of this size.

Information

There is an ATM in the municipality building, and several internet cafés.

Sights & Activities

Not much can prepare you for the astounding sight of **Kızkalesi** (Maiden's Castle), which lies 200m in the sea, and looks from a distance as

if it's literally suspended on top of the water, or possibly floating on air. It is possible to swim to the castle; however, most people choose to pay around €3 for a lift on a boat.

To its left and on the shore is **Korykos Castle** (admission €1), an antiquated fortress that was either built or rebuilt by the Byzantines, and was briefly occupied by the kings of Lesser Armenia. It's a bit of a rough-and-ready site, so be sure to wear proper footwear.

Across the highway from Korykos Castle is a **necropolis** that's well worth exploring. There are sarcophagi and rock carvings scattered about as well.

Sleeping

Hotel Hantur (☎ 523 2367; hotelhantur@tnn.net.tr; s/d €22/33; 🏠) Located right on the beach, you'll be surprised by the large size of the rooms. And while all rooms have balconies, not all face the sea – so be sure to speak up if that's what you want. Room 201 is probably the hotel's best – it has a gorgeous view of the castle. The sea-facing front garden is another plus.

Hotel Rain (☎ 523 2782; www.rainhotel.com; s/d €25/39; 🏠) Family-owned and family-friendly, this relaxing hotel is only 60m from the beach, and is run by the same folks responsible for the popular Café Rain. The owners shuttle guests to local archaeological sites for rates much lower than that of a taxi tour, and the lounge here, complete with satellite TV, is a perfect place to kick back and meet other travellers in the evening. Scuba-diving trips can be arranged for about €33.

Club Hotel Barbarossa (☎ 523 2364; info@hotelbarbarossa.com.tr; s/d €33/50; 🏠 🍷) If it's luxury and pampering you're after, this is the place to find it. Spotless rooms have all the usual

amenities, including minibar and TV, but the real treat is the sprawling back garden, where bits of Roman columns – illuminated at night – are scattered about. Swimmers can choose to be out-of-doors or in, and massages are available.

Eating & Drinking

Many pensions have their own restaurants and there are some decent pide and *lahmacun* salons on the highway, but unfortunately there is nowhere spectacular to eat in Kızkalesi. For a more atmospheric dinner, pay a €0.50 bus fare for the 10-minute hop to Narlıkuyu (p420) and eat at one of the fish restaurants there.

Honey Restaurant & Bar (☎ 523 2430; İnci Plaj Yolu 1; meals around €3) Right on the highway, this cosy little place nevertheless manages to give off a rather pleasant vibe; it's not unlike a dim-lit British pub. Try the *saç kavurma* (€3), an Anatolian speciality of meat and veggies, or the *patlıcan kebab* (€3), which is meat wrapped in eggplant.

Café Rain (☎ 523 2234; meals around €5) Featuring an extensive cocktail menu and snack foods geared towards travellers, such as burgers, omelettes and vegetarian dishes.

Paşa Restaurant (☎ 523 1389; İnci Plaj Yolu; meals around €5) A large open-air spot for grills, mezés, and light Turkish snacks with agreeable prices.

Getting There & Away

There are frequent buses to Silifke (€1, 30 minutes) and to Mersin.

AROUND KIZKALESİ

The limestone coast of the Olbian Plateau is littered with ruins. From Kızkalesi a sign points 7km north to the **Adamkayalar** (Men's Rocks). The 17 reliefs from the Roman era immortalise warriors wielding axes, swords and lances, sometimes accompanied by their wives and children. There are more ruins and tombs scattered around at the top of the cliff.

These tombs are cut into a rather perilous cliff-face in a gorge, so we advise you to take a guide (which can be arranged from a tourist agency in Kızkalesi).

About 25km further along the road (which deteriorates rapidly and makes for a slow, rattling journey) are the ruins of **Çambazlı**, which feature a necropolis and a Byzantine-era church in remarkably good condition.

About 3km east of Kızkalesi are the extensive but badly ruined remains of ancient **Elaiussa-Sebaste**, a city with foundations dating back to at least the early Roman period, and perhaps even to the Hittite era.

About 8.5km east of Kızkalesi at Kumkuyu is the road to **Kanlıdivane** (admission €1; ☎ 8am-7pm), the ancient city of Kanytelis. The site lies about 4km north of Kumkuyu. The first structure to come into view upon entering the car park is a **Hellenistic Tower**, which was built by the son of a priest-king in Olba (today known as Uzuncaburç) to honour Zeus. It became the location of an ancient Zeus-worshipping cult (see p421).

The name Kanlıdivane translates to 'Blood-stained Place of Madness'. Take a stroll around the 90m-deep chasm; this is where condemned criminals were said to have been tossed to their deaths. Indeed, the charred-looking pit has all the appearance of an evil place; rather resembling the Pit of Hell site north of Narlıkuyu (p421). Various ruins dramatically ring the pit – most from the Roman and Byzantine eras.

Follow the footpath behind the Roman road to discover the splendidly preserved mausoleum perched atop the hill.

MERSİN (İÇEL)

☎ 0324 / pop 750,000

Although this port city has been officially renamed İçel, everyone seems to be sticking with Mersin. The capital of the province of İçel, Mersin is a sprawling modern city built half a century ago to give Anatolia a port close to Adana and its rich agricultural hinterland. Until the 1991 Gulf War, the city was a major port for goods going to and from Iraq. It has several good hotels and makes a decent stopping point on your way through to Kızkalesi, Anamur or Antakya.

Orientation

The town centre is Gümrük Meydanı, the plaza occupied by the Ulu Cami. On the western side is Atatürk Caddesi, a pedestrianised shopping street, while two blocks north is İstiklal Caddesi, the main thoroughfare.

To get to the centre from the otogar, leave by the main exit, turn right and walk up to the main road. Cross to the far side and catch a bus travelling west (€0.50). Make sure you ask if it is going to the train station or you will have a fine tour of Mersin's suburbs.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE:

Yaka Hotel (☎ 523 2444; yakahotel@yakahotel.com; s/d €17/28; 🏠) Of all the possible explanations as to why this two-star hotel is such a wonderfully relaxing place to stay, at the top of the list would have to be Yakup Kahveci, the Yaka Hotel's multilingual and quick-witted owner.

Yakup has worked in the hospitality business for ages, and it's clear he enjoys his profession; he dotes upon guests as if they were members of his own family. Lodgers can dine in the attractive garden area, where the hotel mascot – a scruffy little dog belonging to Yakup's daughter – can often be found lounging about.

Rooms are impeccably tidy, and while there's no official car park, you can safely leave your car outside the front entrance.

Should you care to take a tour of the nearby archaeological wonders, that can be arranged as well. In fact, the Yaka Hotel is one of Kızkalesi's favourite resting spots for archaeology students completing research in this area during their summer break.

Information**INTERNET ACCESS**

Bilgi İnternet (Soğuksu Caddesi 30) Large place with super-fast connections and computer stations with privacy shields.

MONEY

Exchange offices and ATMs are clustered around Gümrük Meydanı and the Ulu Cami. Look for signs for Kanarya Döviz, Kiraz Döviz and many others, all keen to change dollars and euros. Many ATMs in the commercial district behind the Ulu Cami run out of money on weekends and other busy shopping days, so you may be forced to try several before securing your cash.

POST

PTT (☎ 237 3237; İsmet İnönü Bulvarı)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ 238 3271; fax 238 3272; İsmet İnönü Bulvarı; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm)

Sights

Much of the attraction of Mersin comes from wandering through the pedestrian streets

between Uray Caddesi and İstiklal Caddesi. There is a small fish market and a covered bazaar with stores selling dried goods and piles of spices. At the eastern end of Atatürk Caddesi is the fine stone **Atatürk Evi** (admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4.30pm Mon-Sat), a museum in a house where Atatürk once stayed.

A little further west, beside the Kültür Merkezi (Cultural Centre; not open for tourists), is Mersin's small **museum** (admission €1; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm). This has a reasonably good archaeological collection with many Roman artefacts on the ground floor, including a small, headless statue of Eros, and the usual ethnographical bibs and bobs on the 1st floor.

Next to the museum, the modest **Orthodox church** has some fine icons. To gain entry, go to the left side of the church, on 4302 Sokak, and look for the entry door. You may have to shout for the caretaker (who will expect a tip to show you around) if no-one is in sight.

A possibly inspiring activity for early morning risers is a stroll on the 12km-long **pathway** that runs parallel to the sea. The path starts behind the Mersin Hilton, and continues west.

Or, to discover a working-class neighbourhood where *döner* kebabs can be had for €0.50 and vendors sell strawberries and nuts from wooden carts, leave the guidebook at your hotel and stroll the length of **Çakmak Caddesi**.

Archaeology buffs might want to check out **Viranşehir**, the ancient Soles or Pompeiopolis. Buses depart from outside the tourist office.

Sleeping

Many cheap and medium-priced hotels are in Soğuksu Caddesi, just north of the Ulu Cami. If you arrive late at night and are leaving again early in the morning, it's worth noting that there are a number of hotels immediately facing the otogar, some of them decent.

Hotel Savran (☎ 232 4472; Soğuksu Caddesi 14; s/d €14/22; ☎) The staff at this rugged hotel don't seem the least bit ashamed of their torn hallway carpets and stained bathroom floors, although that may be because you can't easily find prices this cheap anywhere else in the centre. What's more, the management here is happy to consider discounts.

Hotel Gökhan (☎ 232 4665; fax 237 4462; Soğuksu Caddesi 22; s/d €19.50/33; ☎) This two-star hotel in the centre offers satellite TV and minibars in the rooms, which look a bit ragged but are certainly clean enough. Guests can leave their cars in the car park across the street at no charge.

Mersin Hilton (☎ 326 5000; www.mersin.hilton.com; Adnan Menderes Bulvarı; s/d €137/152; ☎) Not just the rooms, but even the hallways at this luxury hotel have amazing views, with the sea on one side and the city on the other. Enjoying two Asian-fusion restaurants, guests here are rather well taken care of. Tennis courts and a health club are both onsite.

Mersin Oteli (☎ 238 1040; www.mersinoteli.com.tr; Gümrük Meydanı 112; s/d €39/60; ☎) This relatively fancy if not entirely up-to-date four-star hotel in the centre offers bland but nice-enough rooms, some with sea-view balconies. Prices are a touch steep, but discounts are possible.

Eating & Drinking

Gündoğdu (☎ 231 9677; Silifke Caddesi 22; meals €3) This especially toothsome fast-food joint seems to be permanently heaving. It has no menu, so simply order one of the house specialties: *İskender döner*, *börek* (flaky pastry with cheese or meat) or *salata* (salad).

Hoş Sohbet Et Lokanta (☎ 237 0077; Uray Caddesi 34/D; meals €5-10) Popular with besuited busi-

nessmen and families, expect the usual grills and seafood here, yet prepared according to a much-higher-than-street-food standard, and with agreeable portions to boot.

Taşhan Antik Gallerya is a collection of bars and outdoor cafés set around a courtyard, popular with young locals. Also popular with locals, and Greek sailors who've arrived from the nearby port, is the unfortunately named **Sea Man's Claps** (☎ 407 3586; Antikhan Sokak), where you'll get live music most nights, but hopefully nothing else.

Soğuksu Caddesi boasts several small fish restaurants, such as **Deniz Yıldızı** (meals €3). These are popular places, although portions won't go far if you're very hungry.

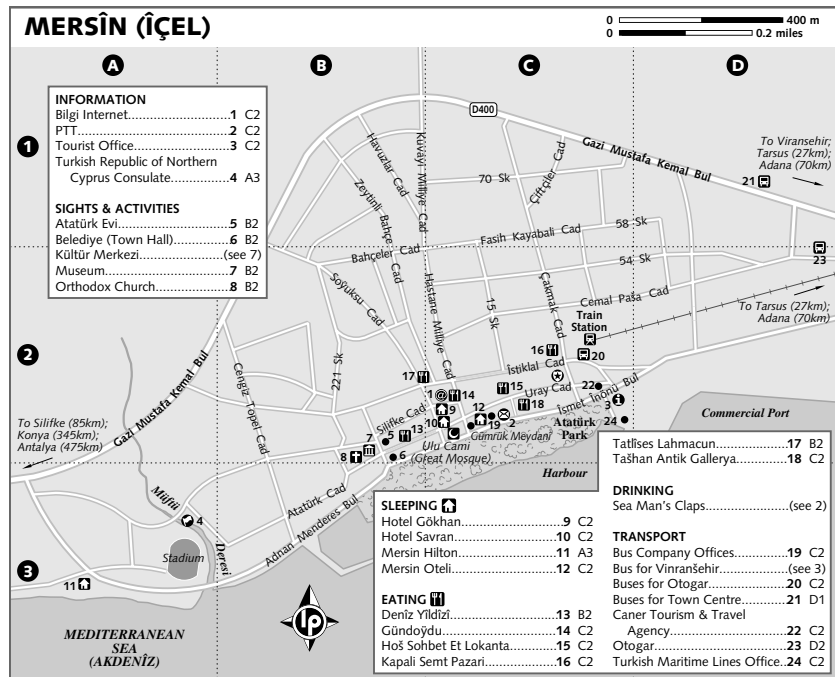
If you're just passing through, there are lots of restaurants mixed in with the hotels outside the otogar. There's something to suit most budgets, and several beer halls. The western reaches of İstiklal Caddesi have a number of *lahmacun* places, including a branch of Tatlıs Lahmacun where people queue up for *ayran* (yogurt drink) and *lahmacun*. Self-caterers can try **Kapalı Semt Pazarı** (Çakmak Caddesi), a small fruit and vegetable market.

Getting There & Away**BOAT**

The **Turkish Maritime Lines** (☎ 231 2688, 237 0726) ticket office can be found on the 2nd floor of a seemingly empty building right next to the dock entrance, where the ferries depart. Ferries travel from Mersin to Gazimağusa (Famagusta) on the east coast of Northern Cyprus every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8pm. The ferry travels from Gazimağusa to Mersin every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday at 8pm. Tickets (one way/return €25.50/47, per car one way/return €50/100, 10 hours) must be bought a day in advance.

BUS

From Mersin's otogar, on the city's eastern outskirts, buses depart for all points, including up to the Anatolian plateau through the Cilician Gates (p428). Distances, travel times and prices are similar to those from Adana, 70km to the east on a fast, four-lane highway – see p430. From Mersin to Alanya costs €11 (8½ hours, 375km, eight per day) and to Silifke €4 (two hours, 85km, three per hour). Several of the main companies serving İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir have offices on İsmet İnönü Bulvarı.



Buses from town to the otogar (€0.50) leave regularly from outside the train station, as well as from the stop opposite the Mersin Oteli.

CAR

If you want to explore the coast by car, rentals can be arranged at **Caner Tourism & Travel Agency** (İsmet İnönü Bulvarı 88A), opposite the tourist office.

TRAIN

There are frequent services to Tarsus (€0.90), Adana (€1.50) and İskenderun (€3).

TARSUS

☎ 0324 / pop 216,000

Tarsus is one of those towns with a name inextricably linked with one man: St Paul, born here 2000 years ago. One reader wrote that Tarsus 'might have done for Saul/Paul, but it's down in the world since then', and at first sight, few people would disagree with that assessment. Much of the city is a sprawl of concrete apartment blocks. However, this is also one of those towns that repays perseverance.

Information

The new otogar is some way out of town. A taxi from there will cost you €4 to the city centre; or you can walk out the front exit and hop on a bus (€0.50) on the same side of the street. Detailed maps of Tarsus and its attractions are available at the tourist information booth in the town centre.

Sights & Activities

Buses drop you off beside **Cleopatra's Gate**, a Roman city gate that has little to do with the famous lady, although she is thought to have met Mark Antony in Tarsus. In any case, restoration carried out in 1994 has robbed it of any sense of antiquity.

Walk straight ahead, and just before the *hükümet konağı* (government house) you'll see a sign pointing left to **St Paul's Well** (Senpol Kuyusu; see boxed text right). The ruins of Paul's house can be viewed underneath plates of glass.

At the same road junction a second sign to the left points to the **Old City** (Antik Şehir). Follow it and you'll come to Cumhuriyet Alanı, where excavations have uncovered a wonderful stretch of **Roman road**, with heavy basalt paving slabs covering a lengthy drain.

BIRTHPLACE OF ST PAUL

Jewish by birth, Paul (born Saul) was one of Christianity's most zealous proselytisers; during his lifetime he converted scores of pagans and Jews to Christianity throughout much of the ancient world. After dying in Rome, sometime after AD 60, the location of his birthplace became sacred to his followers. Today pilgrims still flock to the site of his ruined house in Tarsus to take a small drink from the well (note that we can't vouch for its cleanliness!).

Return to the *hükümet konağı* and continue northwards until you come to the 19th-century **Makam Camii** on the right. Directly across the street is **Eski Cami** (Old Mosque), a medieval structure which may originally have been a church dedicated to St Paul. Right beside it looms the barely recognisable brick-work of a huge old **Roman bath**.

Beside the Eski Cami you can catch a dolmuş (€0.50) to Tarsus' other main sight, the **waterfall** (*şelale*) on the Tarsus Nehri (Cydnus River) which cascades over the rocks right inside the town, providing the perfect setting for tea gardens and restaurants.

To reach the 16th-century **Ulu Cami** (Great Mosque), which sports a curious 19th-century clock tower, turn right beside the Makam Camii and continue along the side street. Behind it and one street over on the right are the ruins of **St Paul's Church**.

The **Tarsus Museum** (Tarsus Müzesi; admission €1; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) has recently moved. It's now located near the corner of Muvaffak Uygur and Cumhuriyet Caddesi, close to the stadium.

Sleeping & Eating

Cihan Palas Oteli (☎ 624 1623; fax 624 7334; Mersin Caddesi 21; s/d €11/16.50; 🍴) Very spartan rooms in a rather frightening hotel, although the price is right, and the location – within walking distance of Cleopatra's Gate – is convenient. Acceptable in a pinch, but if you can manage it, sleep in Adana instead.

Tarsus Mersin Oteli (☎ 614 0600; fax 614 0033; Şelale Mewkii; s/d €33/50; 🍴) This four-star hotel looms above the waterfall, and although the rooms are rather lovely and most conveniences are available, the décor and interior design could have used an update some 30 years ago.

Getting There & Away

There are plenty of buses and dolmuşes connecting Tarsus with Mersin (27km) and Adana (43km), so you could take a break here while travelling between the two.

ADANA

☎ 0322 / pop 1.1 million

Turkey's fourth-largest city, Adana, is a big, brash commercial city with a distinct social and physical divide. North of the D400 (also called the Turan Cemal Beriker Bulvarı) new cars cruise the leafy streets, lined with upmarket apartment blocks. The further south of the highway you go, the poorer the city becomes, until the modern city dissolves into a sprawl of unplanned houses crammed together, with lottery-ticket sellers on every corner.

Adana's wealth comes from three sources: local industry (especially the Sabancı conglomerate, Turkey's second-largest); from the traffic passing through the Cilician Gates (p428); and from the intensely fertile Çukurova, the ancient Cilician plain deposited as silt by the Seyhan and Ceyhan Rivers.

Most likely you'll only wind up in Adana because it has an airport, a train station, a large otogar and hotels. There may be few sights, but there are lots of bars and some great restaurants. A night here will give you a glimpse into a real Turkish city that's young, secular and thoroughly modern.

Orientation

The Seyhan River skirts the city centre to the east. Adana's airport (Şakirpaşa Havaalanı) is 4km west of the centre on the D400. The otogar is 2km further west on the north side of the D400. The train station is at the northern end of Ziyapaşa Bulvarı, 1.5km north of İnönü Caddesi, the main commercial and hotel street.

The E90 expressway skirts the city to the north. If you approach by car from the north

or west, take the Adana Küzey (Adana North) exit to reach the city centre.

At the western end of İnönü Caddesi is Kuruköprü Meydanı, marked by the high-rise Çetinkaya shopping centre. There are several hotels on Özler Caddesi between Kuruköprü Meydanı and Küçüksaat Meydanı to the southeast.

Information

There's a **tourist office** (☎ 359 1994; Atatürk Caddesi 13) one block north of İnönü Caddesi, in the town centre, and a smaller **office** (☎ 436 9214) at the airport. Internet cafés are on İnönü Caddesi north of the hotels.

Sights

MOSQUES

The attractive 16th-century **Ulu Cami** (Great Mosque; Abidin Paşa Caddesi) is reminiscent of the Mamluk mosques of Cairo, with black-and-white banded marble and elaborate window surrounds. The tiles in the *mihrab* (niche indicating the direction of Mecca) came from Kütahya and İznik.

The 1724 **Yeni Cami** (New Mosque) follows the general square plan of the Ulu Cami, with 10 domes, while the **Yağ Camii** (1501), with its imposing portal, started life as the church of St James. Both are on Özler Caddesi.

More conspicuous than either of these is the six-minaret **Sabancı Merkez Cami**, right beside the Girne Bridge and the bank of Ceyhan River. The biggest mosque between İstanbul and Saudi Arabia, it was built by the late industrial magnate Sakıp Sabancı, a wildly successful businessman, generous philanthropist, and, when he passed away in 2004 at the age of 71, the richest man in all of Turkey. Take one look at the mosque he left behind, and it's very obvious that Sabancı was also a devoutly religious man. Which isn't to say he was unapproachable: having grown up

TURNIP JUICE, ANYONE?

A once-tried, never-forgotten local drink made by boiling turnips and carrots and adding vinegar, is the crimson-coloured *şalgam*, sold at stalls around town. It's often drunk with a kebab meal or as an accompaniment to rakı (aniseed-flavoured grape brandy). The juice carries an especially strong tang, and tastes as if it were freshly squeezed. You'll probably do a good bit of puckering and funny-face making while you drink your first glass – as with coffee, cigarettes and beer, *şalgam* is an acquired taste. However you may find yourself hankering for more after the initial shock has worn off. Locals drink the juice to relieve an upset stomach, so you might give it a shot the next time you experience a particularly painful dose of Traveller's D.

in the central Anatolian village of Akcakaya, it's said he purposely spoke in a country accent so as to assure his fellow Turks – and certainly his shareholders – that big business hadn't ruined him. Nonetheless, the Sabancı Merkez Cami is certainly a conspicuous monument. Roughly 20,000 worshippers can fit inside, and one of the minarets even conceals a small elevator. Fittingly, the marble and gold-leaf inlaid mosque has quite an influence in the surrounding areas: Prayers originating here are broadcast to nearly 300 other mosques within a 60km radius.

MUSEUMS

Adana's two main museums are a cut above most of Turkey's provincial museums. The

Adana Ethnography Museum (Adana Etnografya Müzesi; admission €1; ☎ 8.30am–noon & 1-4.30pm Tue–Sun), on a side street off İnönü Caddesi, is housed in a nicely restored Crusader church. It now holds a display of carpets and kilims, weapons, manuscripts and funeral monuments.

The **Adana Regional Museum** (Adana Bölge Müze; admission €1; ☎ 8.30am–noon & 1-4.30pm Tue–Sun) is rich in Roman statuary from the **Cilician Gates**, north of Tarsus. The 'Gates', the main passage through the Taurus Mountains, were an important transit point as far back as Roman times. Note especially the 2nd-century Achilles sarcophagus, decorated with scenes from the *Iliad*. Hittite and Urartian artefacts are also on display.

The small **Atatürk Museum** (Atatürk Müze; Seyhan Caddesi; admission free; ☎ 8am–noon & 1.30–5pm), on a

riverside street, is one of the city's few remaining traditional houses. It is a mansion that once belonged to the Ramazanoğulları family. Atatürk stayed here for a few nights in 1923.

OTHER SIGHTS

Have a look at the 16-arched Roman **stone bridge** (*taş köprü*) over the Seyhan, at the eastern end of Abidin Paşa Caddesi. Built by Hadrian (r 117–138), repaired by Justinian (r 527–565), and now sullied by modern traffic, it's still an impressive sight.

The **Great Clock Tower** (Büyük Saat Kulesi) dates back to 1881. Around it you'll find Adana's **kapalı çarşı** (covered market).

Sleeping

Though Adana has lodgings in all price ranges, there are no hotels near the airport, otogar or train station. All but the cheapest places post high prices as required by the city council, and slash them to far more manageable levels at the first sign of interest.

Selibra Oteli (☎ 363 3676; fax 363 4283; İnönü Caddesi 50; s/d €19.50/28; ☎) A two-star hotel with fairly uninspiring rooms and tacky 1970's décor, but certainly clean and welcoming enough for the price. The rooms are agreeably decent-sized, and should you need to call home during your morning constitutional, there's even a phone next to the toilet.

Akdeniz Oteli (☎ 363 1510; fax 363 0905; İnönü Caddesi 14/1; s/d €35/61; ☎) This is a clean and smartly-decorated two-star place with glassed-in shower stalls. Don't miss the psychedelic mirrored staircase leading from the lobby to the 2nd-floor bar, which we don't recommend for a nightcap, as prostitutes generally outnumber actual guests by a ratio of two-to-one.

Hotel Mavi Sürmeli (☎ 363 3437; www.mavisurmeli.com.tr; İnönü Caddesi 109; s/d €55.50/83; ☎) The main reason to lodge here instead of at the Hilton is the hotel's central location; unless they actually want to, guests at the Mavi won't need to hop in a cab every time they feel the need to grab a quick bite. That said, this is a truly luxurious four-star choice.

Hotel Princess Maya (☎ 459 0966; fax 459 7710; Turhan Cemal Beriker Bulvarı; s/d €58/75; ☎) The rooms here aren't terribly exciting – nor is the overall aura – but you will be within easy walking distance of the Sabancı Mosque and the Hilton. Bathrooms are absolutely spotless, and management seems eager to knock about 25% off the price of a room.

Adana Hilton (☎ 355 5000; www.adana.hilton.com; 1 Sokak; Sinanpaşa Mahallesi; s/d €110/185; ☎) Everything you could possibly hope for in one of the region's finest hotels, and probably quite a bit more. Imagine a riverside location with an unreal view of the Sabancı Mosque, out-of-this-world dining options, a fitness centre, and rock-star sized rooms. A little FYI: you'd be wise not to let inquiring locals on the opposite side of the river know that you're staying here.

Eating & Drinking

Adana is famous Turkey-wide for its kebab: minced lamb mixed with hot pepper, squeezed on a flat skewer then charcoal-grilled. It's served with sliced purple onions dusted with fiery paprika, handfuls of parsley, a lemon wedge and flat bread.

Yüzevler (☎ 454 7513; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı, Yüzevler Apt Zemin Kat 25/A; meals €5) If the restaurant's framed photos of Turkish celebs dining here doesn't convince you that this is some of the best Adana kebab the country has to offer, the food itself certainly will.

Sun Patisserie (☎ 458 2134; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 15/A; ☎ 9am–midnight) Cakes, puddings and a delightfully delicious assortment of chocolates and ice cream have been served up at this Adana standby for over three decades. Don't have a sweet tooth? Come anyway, and join the city's trendiest sidewalk seating scene.

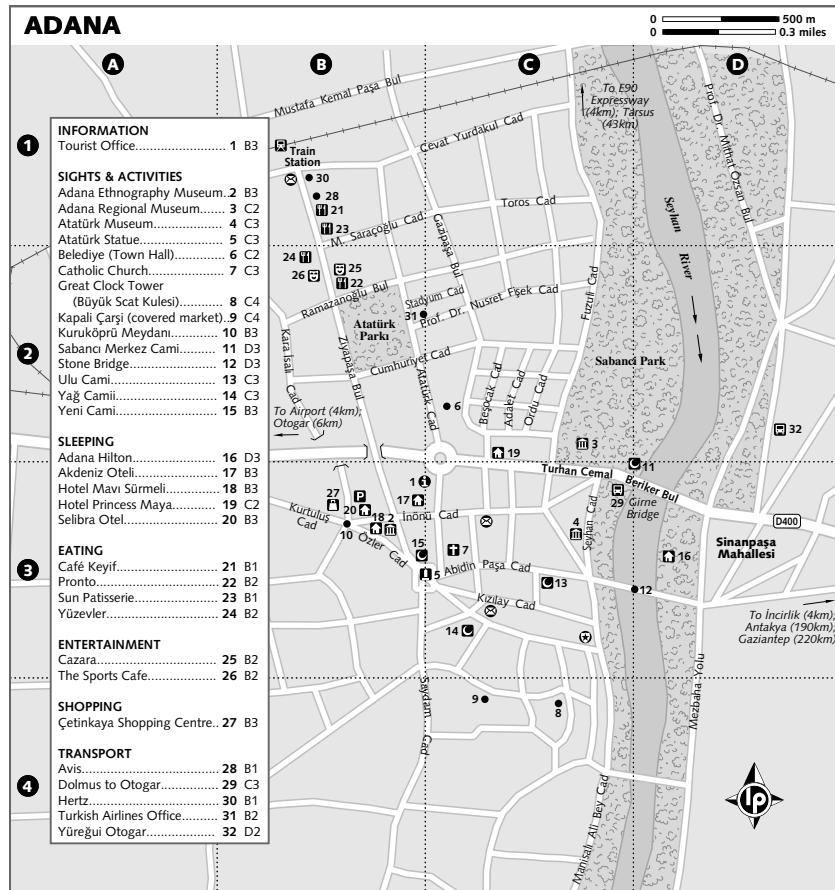
Pronto (☎ 458 4748; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 27/A; meals €5; ☎ 11am–3am) Tuck into chicken, steak, pasta – even cheesecake – at this intimate restaurant and bar with an extensive wine list. Live music nightly, with the exception of Sunday and Monday.

Café Keyif (☎ 457 7820; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 17/A; meals €5) You might think Turkey had finally joined the EU after spending an hour or two at this wood-panelled, faux-British pub, where nine-to-fivers politely munch on the chef's salads and quietly sip glasses of Efes Pilsen. Sidewalk booths are available for prime people-watching.

Entertainment

Sports Café (☎ 457 3281; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 26/C) Just like a Western sports bar, but cleaner, less smoky, and way classier. Extreme sports are shown on five TVs above the bar, and snack foods are of the pizza and burger variety.

Cazara (☎ 459 3305; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 27/B; ☎ 11am–3am Mon–Sat) Something like a clubhouse for



fans of late-80s metal bands and alternative rock. Guitar bands jam every Saturday night; burnouts pound Efes and nod their heads to Skid Row throughout the remainder of the week.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Turkish Airlines (☎ 457 0222; Prof Dr Nusret Fisek Caddesi 22) has daily nonstop flights between Adana and Ankara (one hour), İzmir (1½ hours) and İstanbul (1½ hours). **Onur Air** (☎ 436 6766) flies between Adana and İstanbul.

BUS

Adana's large otogar offers direct buses or dolmuşes to pretty well anywhere. Some useful daily services are listed in the table below. Dolmuşes to Kadirli (€3, one hour, 75km) and Kozan (€3, one hour, 72km) leave from the Yüreği otogar, on the west bank of the Seyhan River.

SERVICES FROM ADANA'S OTOGAR

Destination Fare Duration Distance Frequency (per day)

Adıyaman (for Nemrut Dağı)	€14	6hr	370km	7 buses
Alanya	€19.50	10hr	440km	8 buses (in summer)
Ankara	€14	10hr	490km	hourly
Antakya	€5.50	3½hr	190km	hourly
Antalya	€16.50	10hr	555km	2 or 3
Diyarbakır	€19.50	10hr	550km	several
Gaziantep	€8	4hr	220km	several
Kayseri	€14	6½hr	335km	several
Konya	€16.50	6½hr	350km	frequent
Şanlıurfa	€16.50	6hr	365km	several
Silifke	€11	2hr	155km	14 buses
Van	€22	18hr	950km	at least one

CAR

Avis city (☎ 453 3045; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı); airport (☎ 453 0476)

Hertz (☎ 458 5062; Ziyapaşa Bulvarı 9)

TRAIN

The façade of the Adana **train station** (☎ 453 3172), at the northern end of Ziyapaşa Bulvarı, is decorated with lovely tiles. The *Toros Ekspres* and the *İç Anadolu Mavi* train both travel to İstanbul's Haydarpaşa Station (€18, 19 hours) via Konya (€8, seven hours). Departures are at 2.10pm daily and at 9.10pm on

Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. The *Toros Ekspres* departs for Gaziantep (€5.50, 5½ hours) at 5.05am every Wednesday, Friday and Monday. There are many trains to Mersin via Taurus.

Getting Around

A taxi from the airport into town costs about €5; it's about €7 to the main otogar. Make sure the meter is switched on. A taxi from the city centre to the Yüreği otogar will cost €4.

AROUND ADANA

The far eastern end of the Turkish Mediterranean coast swoops around the Bay of İskenderun (İskenderun Körfezi) to the cities of İskenderun and Antakya, in the province of Hatay. Inland from the bay are ruins of an ancient Hittite city at Karatepe (p432), and of a later Roman one, Anazarbus (Anavarza; opposite). Along the road stand assorted medieval fortresses. The cotton-growing Çukurova plain south of Adana is the landscape used by Turkey's famous author Yaşar Kemal (p55) in his powerful novels about working-class and rural people.



Yılankale

If you're driving, keep an eye out for the hilltop **Yılankale** (Snake Castle), 35km east of Adana and 2.5km south of the highway. Built when this area was part of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, it's said to have taken its name from a serpent that was once entwined in the coat of arms above the main entrance. It's about a 10-minute climb over the rocks to the fort's highest point.

To continue on to Anazarbus (Anavarza) and Karatepe, head north and east just after the Yılankale turn-off. About 37km east of Adana an intersection is signed on the left (north) for Kozan and Kadirli, on the right (south) for Ceyhan. Take the Kozan-Kadirli road.

Anazarbus (Anavarza)

When the Romans moved into this area in 19 BC they built this fortress city on top of a hill dominating the fertile plain and called it Caesarea-ad-Anazarbus. Later, when Cilicia was divided in two, Tarsus remained the capital of the west and Anazarbus became capital of the east. In the 3rd century AD, Persian invaders destroyed the city. The Byzantine emperors rebuilt it, as they were to do over and over again when later earthquakes destroyed it.

The Arab raids of the 8th century gave Anazarbus new rulers and a new Arabic name, Ain Zarba. The Byzantines reconquered and

held it for a brief period, but Anazarbus was an important city at a strategic nexus, and other armies came and snatched it away, including those of the Hamdanid princes of Aleppo, the Crusaders, a local Armenian king, the Byzantines again, the Turks and the Mamluks. The last owners didn't care about it much and it fell into decline in the 15th century. Today it's called Anavarza.

After 5km you reach a road junction and a large **gateway** set in the city walls. Through this gate was the ancient city, now given over to crops and pasture but strewn with ancient stones. Turn left through a village where every other gatepost reuses a Roman column and, after walking 650m, you'll reach the remains of an **aqueduct** with several arches that are still standing.

The village of Anavarza has a couple of simple tea houses and a shop with cold drinks, but that's it. If you have camping equipment you'll probably find a place to pitch a tent.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From the D400 highway follow the Kozan/Kadirli road north to the village of Ayşehoca, where a road on the right is marked for Anavarza/Anazarbus, 5km to the east. If you're in a dolmuş or bus you can get out here and hitch a ride pretty easily in the morning. Heading on towards Kadirli, hitch back the 5km to Ayşehoca and take the 817 road north

ARMENIAN CILICIA

During the early 10th century the Seljuk Turks from Central Asia came hurtling through the continent. Meeting with little resistance from a weak Byzantium, they invaded Asia Minor as well as the Armenian highlands. Thousands of Armenians fled south, taking refuge in the rugged Taurus Mountains and along the Mediterranean coast, where in 1080 they founded the kingdom of Cilicia (or Lesser Armenia) under the young Prince Reuben. The town of Sis (now Kozan; p432) became their capital.

While Greater Armenia struggled against foreign invaders and the subsequent loss of their statehood, the Cilician Armenians lived in wealth and prosperity. Geographically, they were in the ideal place for trade and they quickly embraced Western European ideas, including its feudal class structure. Cilicia became a country of barons, knights and serfs, the court at Sis even adopting European clothes. Latin and French became the national languages. During the Crusades the Christian armies used the kingdom as a safe haven on their way to Jerusalem.

This period of Armenian history is regarded as the most exciting for science and culture, as schools and monasteries flourished, teaching theology, philosophy, medicine and mathematics. It was also the golden age of Armenian ecclesiastical manuscript painting, noted for its lavish decoration and Western influences.

The Cilician kingdom thrived for nearly 300 years before it fell to the Mamluks of Egypt. The last Armenian ruler, Leo IV, spent his final years wandering Europe trying to raise support to recapture his kingdom, before dying in Paris in 1393.

to Naşıdiye/Çukurköprü, where the road divides. The left fork is marked for Kozan and Feke, the right for Kadirli.

Kozan

The market town of Kozan (formerly Sis; see p431) was the capital of the kingdom of Cilicia, and the lynchpin of a series of castles overlooking the Çukurova plain. A stunning fortress built by Leo II (r 1187–1219) stretches along a narrow ridge 300m above the town. The view from the top has to be seen to be believed.

Climbing up the road to the castle you pass a pair of towers and then the main gate itself. Inside is a mess of ruined buildings, but if you climb up a narrow ridge (not good if you don't like heights) you can see a many-towered keep on your right, and on your left a massive tower, which once held the royal apartments.

Between the first set of towers and the main gates are the ruins of a church, locally called the *manastir* (monastery). Up until 1921 this was the cathedral of the Catholicos of Sis, one of the two senior patriarchs of the Armenian Church.

Kozan itself has some fine old houses and several cheap eateries and tea houses, and makes a good day trip. There are frequent buses between it and Adana (€1.80, one hour).

OSMANIYE

☎ 0322

Osmaniye lies on the E90, linking Adana and Gaziantep. An uninspiring town, it nevertheless makes a useful base for getting to Hierapolis-Castabala and Karatepe-Aslantaş National Park.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Kervansaray (☎ 814 1310; Palalı Süleyman Caddesi; s/d €5/10) This is a basic place – and we do mean basic – with decent rooms. To find it, turn left from the otogar. When you reach the BP garage turn right and the hotel is on the left past the mosque.

Şahin Otel (☎ 812 4444; Dr. Ahmet Alkan Caddesi 27; s/d €22/33) This new hotel, opposite the park on the main street, is the best place to stay in town. The rooms are large and inviting with everything you would expect in a three-star hotel.

This is a town where people eat early. **Uğrak Lokantası** (☎ 813 4990; meals around €2), a few doors down from the Şahin Otel, is a bustling joint

serving up delicious *pilav* (rice) meals as well as hearty *şiş* (spit roast) for around €1.80.

Getting There & Away

Without your own transport your best bet for seeing Hierapolis-Castabala and Karatepe in one day is to organise a taxi. There's a handy taxi rank beside the otogar; to go to Hierapolis for an hour, then to Karatepe for two hours, and either on to Kadirli or back to Osmaniye, should cost about €18.

From the centre of Osmaniye, road 01-08 is signposted northwest for both Hierapolis-Castabala and the Karatepe-Aslantaş Museum. Follow the road until you come to a sign on the right for Hierapolis-Castabala which is 6km along a bumpy road. About 10km beyond Hierapolis-Castabala, a road on the left is marked for Karatepe (9km).

Heading south, there are dolmuşes from Osmaniye to İskenderun (€1.40, one hour). There are also frequent connections west to Adana and east to Gaziantep.

AROUND OSMANIYE

Karatepe-Aslantaş National Park

The **Karatepe-Aslantaş National Park** (Karatepe-Aslantaş Milli Parkı; admission per person/car €0.75/1) incorporates the open-air **Karatepe-Aslantaş Museum**, a site which has been inhabited for almost 4000 years. The ruins date from the 13th century BC, when this was a summer retreat for the neo-Hittite kings of Kizzuwatna (Cilicia), the greatest of whom was named Azitawatas.

From its beautiful, forested hilltop site, the park overlooks **Lake Ceyhan** (Ceyhan Gölü), an artificial lake used for hydroelectric power and recreation.

There is a charge for entrance to the **Hittite ruins** (admission €0.65; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm) in addition to the park admission fee. Be warned that on top of the difficulty of getting to Karatepe without your own transport, the opening hours are rigorously adhered to, and the custodians will only take you around in a group, which can involve hanging about waiting for other people to arrive. Nor are you allowed to take any photographs.

The Hittite remains here are certainly significant, although you shouldn't come expecting something on the scale of Hattuşa (p464). The city was defended by 1km-long **walls**, traces of which are still evident. Its **southern entrance** is protected by four lions and two

sphinxes, and lined with fine reliefs showing a coronation or feast complete with sacrificial bull, musicians and chariots.

Hierapolis-Castabala

Set in the midst of cotton fields about 19km south of Karatepe and 15km north of Osmaniye are the ruins of **Hierapolis-Castabala** (admission €1.25; ☎ 8am-7pm). A *kale* (castle) tops a rocky outcrop above the plain about 1km east of the road. The ticket seller will lend you a leaflet in English, and you can see everything in about an hour.

From the ticket-seller's shed, walk along a **colonnaded street** that once boasted 78 paired columns; some still bear their fine Corinthian capitals. You pass a badly ruined **temple** and **baths** on the right. Keeping the castle on your left, walk past the rock outcrop to the theatre, also badly ruined. Beyond it to the south in the fields is a ruined Byzantine **basilica**. Further along the same path is a *çeşme* (spring) and, in the ridge of rocks further on, some **rock-cut tombs**.

For information on getting to Hierapolis-Castabala, see opposite.

İSKENDERUN

☎ 0326 / pop 160,000

İskenderun, 130km east of Adana, was founded by Alexander the Great in 333 BC; İskenderun is a translation of its original name, Alexandretta.

İskenderun was occupied by the English in 1918, turned over to the French in 1919, and incorporated into the French Protectorate of Syria as the Sanjak of Alexandretta. In 1938 Atatürk reclaimed it for the Turkish Republic. There's nothing to detain you in this modern shipping town but if you have to stop, there are several places to stay near the waterfront, the one attractive area.

Orientation & Information

Assuming you arrive by bus, come out of the otogar and head due south, passing the minibus station before you reach the main highway. To find the sea you'll need to cross the highway and take a right turn towards Şehit Pamir Caddesi. Once on this road, head north until you come to Atatürk Bulvarı and the sea. The main square at the top of Şehit Pamir Caddesi is marked by a huge monument on the waterfront. Most hotels are within a few blocks of this monument.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 614 1620; 49 Atatürk Bulvarı; ☎ 8am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri) has local maps and information on the Adana to Antakya region.

Sleeping

Hotel Altındış (☎ 617 1011; hotelaltindis@mynet.com; Şehir Pamir Caddesi 11; s/d €19.50/25; ☎) The unintentional kitsch factor has been cranked up to 10 at this otherwise unexciting hotel, save for its 2nd-floor lobby, which is ideal for spying on the activity below.

Hotel İmrenay (☎ 613 2117; fax 613 5984; Şehir Pamir Caddesi 5; s/d €22/33; ☎) A pinch rugged and run-down, although the lobby is rather classy and complete with a flat-screen TV. The owner and his father enjoy having a chat with guests.

Grand Hotel Ontur (☎ 616 2400; Dr Muammer Aksoy Caddesi 8; s/d €67/97; ☎) İskenderun's poshest hotel has spacious if somewhat dully decorated rooms. Bathrooms are spotless, but considering the outdated state of the place, discounts are definitely in order.

Eating

Saray Restaurant (☎ 617 1383; Atatürk Bulvarı 53) A few doors down from the tourist office, this wonderfully satisfying restaurant has an almost endless menu of mezes, grills and vegetable dishes.

Hasan Baba (☎ 613 2725; Ulucami Caddesi 35; meals around €5) This pide and *lahmacun* joint is sprawling and consistently packed with satisfied diners. Sit in the backyard and enjoy the fountain. City maps are generally available at the front counter.

Getting There & Away

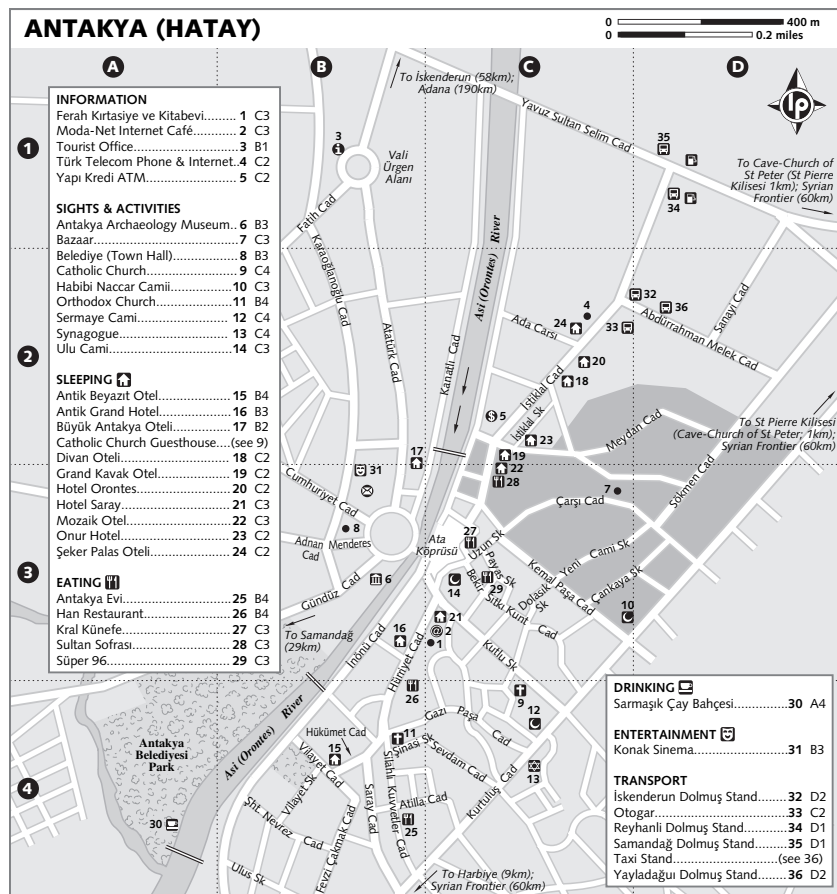
There are frequent minibus and dolmuş connections to Adana (€2.80, 2½ hours, 135km), Antakya (€1, one hour, 58km) and Osmaniye (€1.40, one hour, 63km). Regular dolmuşes scoot down the coast to Uluçınar (Arsuz; €0.80, 30 minutes, 33km).

ANTAKYA (HATAY)

☎ 0326 / pop 140,700

Until its unification with Turkey in 1939, Antakya (Hatay) was Arabic in culture and language. Indeed, many locals still speak Arabic, and the city boasts a mix of Sunni, Alevi and Orthodox Christian faiths.

Modern Antakya is hardly a beautiful place, but its museum is one of Turkey's finest, justifying a lengthy detour. In the cave-church



of St Peter, Antakya can also lay claim to possessing 'the world's first cathedral', where the apostle is said to have preached and where the term 'Christian' was first used (Acts 11, verse 26). The city is still the titular seat of five Christian Patriarchs – three Catholic (Syrian Catholic, Maronite and Greco-Melchite), one Greek Orthodox and one Syrian-Tacobite – although none are based here any longer.

Throughout Antakya's long history, violent earthquakes have repeatedly shattered the town, most notably in AD 526 when around 250,000 people were killed. This explains why so little remains of the old city.

Antakya is backed by the Altınözü Mountains, with the peak of Mt Silpius dominating the area.

History

Antakya is the ancient Antioch-or-Orontes, which was founded by Seleucus I Nicator in 300 BC and soon became a city of half a million people. Under the Romans an important Christian community developed out of the already large Jewish one. At one time this was headed by St Paul.

Persians, Byzantines, Arabs, Armenians and Seljuks all fought over Antioch, as did the Crusaders and Saracens. In 1268 the Mamluks of Egypt sacked the city. The Ottomans held onto it until Mohammed Ali of Egypt captured it in 1831, but with European help they eventually drove their rebellious vassal back.

Antakya was part of the French protectorate of Syria until 1938, after which it enjoyed

a brief existence as the independent Republic of Hatay. But when Atatürk saw WWII approaching, he wanted the city rejoined to the republic as a defensive measure. Parliament voted for union with Turkey, and on 23 July 1939 Hatay became Turkish. The Syrian government never accepted this, and some Syrian maps still show it as part of Syria.

Orientation

The Asi (Orontes) River divides the town. The modern district is on the west bank, with the PTT, government buildings and museum circling the Cumhuriyet Alanı traffic roundabout.

The older Ottoman town on the east bank is the commercial centre, with most of the hotels, restaurants and services, especially along Hüriyet Caddesi. The otogar is a few blocks northeast of the centre. Continue northeast along İstiklal Caddesi for dolmuşes to Samandağ.

Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 216 0610; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm) is adept at changing homes. It was last sited on a roundabout on Atatürk Caddesi, a good 10-minute walk from town.

There are several ATMs close to the otogar as well as across the Asi River next to the Büyük Antakya Oteli. The **Ferah Kırtasiye ve Kitabevi** (Hüriyet Caddesi 17/D) stocks English-language newspapers.

The Moda-Net Internet C@fé is upstairs in an arcade off Hüriyet Caddesi, between the Saray Hotel and the Ferah Kırtasiye ve Kitabevi.

Sights

ANTAKYA ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUM

The prime reason for journeying all the way to Antakya is this **museum** (Antakya Arkeoloji Müzesi; ☎ 214 6168; Gündüz Caddesi; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun). Here you'll see as fine a collection of Roman/Byzantine mosaics as graces any museum in the world, covering a period from the 1st century AD to the 5th century. While some are inevitably fragmentary, others were recovered almost intact. Most labels are in English and Turkish.

Salons I to IV are tall, naturally lit rooms, perfect for displaying mosaics so fine that at first glance you may mistake some of them for paintings. Be sure to see the **Oceanus and Thetis mosaic** (2nd century) and the **Buffet Mosaic**

(3rd century). As well as the standard scenes of hunting and fishing there are stories from mythology. Other mosaics have quirkier subjects: Don't miss the happy hunchback, the black fisherman or the mysterious portrayal of a raven, a scorpion and a pitchfork attacking the 'evil eye'. Many of the mosaics came from Roman seaside villas or from the suburban resort of Daphne (Harbiye), although some are from Tarsus.

BAZAAR DISTRICT

A sprawling **bazaar** fills the back streets between the otogar, Kemal Paşa Caddesi and Kurtulus Caddesi. Around Habibi Naccar Camii you'll find most of Antakya's remaining **old houses**, with carved stone lintels or wooden overhangs. It's one of the most interesting old neighbourhoods in Turkey to wander around; you might catch a glimpse of the courtyards within the compounds. The Italian priests at the Catholic Church believe St Peter would have lived in this area between 42 and 48 AD, as it was then the Jewish neighbourhood.

CAVE-CHURCH OF ST PETER

About 3km from the centre in the northeastern outskirts of town, you'll find this **cave-church** (St Pierre Kilisesi; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-4.30pm Tue-Sun) cut into the slopes of Mt Staurin (Mountain of the Cross). This is said to be the earliest place where Christians met and prayed secretly. Tradition has it that this cave was the property of St Luke the Evangelist, who was from Antioch, and that he donated it to the burgeoning Christian congregation as a place of worship. Peter and Paul lived in Antioch for a few years and are thought to have preached here. When the Crusaders marched through in 1098, they constructed the wall at the front and a narthex.

To the right of the altar faint traces of fresco can still be seen, and some of the simple mosaic floor survives. The water dripping in the corner is said to cure sickness.

You can easily walk to the church in about half an hour, heading northeast along Kurtulus Caddesi.

RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

Most of Antakya's 1200-odd Christians worship at the fine **Orthodox Church** (Hüriyet Caddesi; ☎ prayers 8.15am & 6pm). Rebuilt in the 19th century with Russian assistance, the church contains some beautiful icons.

The **Catholic Church** (Kurtuluş Caddesi, Kutlu Sokak 6; ☎ mass 8.30am daily & 6pm Sun) occupies two houses in the city's old quarter, with the chapel in the former living room of one house. Next door is the **Sermaye Cami**, with a wonderfully ornate minaret (you'll see it on posters of Antakya), and nearby at Kurtuluş 56 is a **synagogue**.

Sleeping BUDGET

Şeker Palas Oteli (☎ 215 1603; İstiklal Caddesi 79; s/d €11/16.50) If you're looking for scary, you've found it. This hotel across from the otogar is the true epitome of rugged lodging. Squatter toilets down the hall, a curious smell throughout, and no breakfast included. But take the manager up on his offer to discount a room rate, and you've got one of the cheapest sleeps in town.

Divan Oteli (☎ 215 1518; İstiklal Caddesi 62; s/d €11/16.50; ☎) Certainly the best of Antakya's budget options, some rooms here have balconies and small desks. There's also a quite comfortable lobby.

Hotel Saray (☎ 214 9001; fax 214 9002; Hüriyet Caddesi; s/d €16.50/25; ☎) Definitely a little rugged and musty, although the rooms (with TV included) are certainly large enough, and some have decent mountain views.

Assuming a tour group hasn't already beat you to it, you may be able to stay at one of the eight rooms of the Catholic Church's **guest-house** (domecobertoglu@hotmail.com; Kurtuluş Caddesi; Kutlu Sokak 6; per person €8). Note though that you will be expected to attend daily mass.

MIDRANGE

Grand Kavak Oteli (☎ 214 3530; www.kavakotel.com; İstiklal Caddesi 16; s/d €20/31; ☎) A fantastic choice with plain but very comfortable and clean rooms with satellite TV included. This place also gets good marks for its free wi-fi, free use of an internet terminal, impressive breakfast spread, and especially helpful staff.

Hotel Orontes (☎ 214 5931; fax 214 5933; İstiklal Caddesi 58; s/d €25/39; ☎) This two-star hotel near the otogar is somewhat plainly decorated, although rooms are quite large and satellite TV is included.

Onur Hotel (☎ 216 2210; onurhotel@hotmail.com; İstiklal Caddesi 16; s/d €28/39; ☎) The rooms are a bit shabby and the showers are due for a serious scrubbing, but management is willing to cut rates by about €10. Rooms, such as they are, come complete with TV and minibar.

Antik Grand Hotel (☎ 215 7575; www.antikgrand.com; Hüriyet Caddesi 18; s/d €33/50; ☎) Attached to the Antik Grand Restaurant next door, this new hotel offers tasteful rooms in a beautiful faux-antique style. All rooms have TV and minibar, and discounts are available for the asking.

TOP END

Büyük Antakya Oteli (☎ 213 5858; fax 213 5869; Atatürk Caddesi 8; s/d €54.50/78; ☎) A fairly standard four-star spot with a hairdresser and travel agent onsite. Morning breakfast spreads are lavish, and some rooms have decent city and river views. Certainly large and comfortable enough, yet slightly overpriced.

Antik Beyazıt Oteli (☎ 216 2900; beyazit@antikbeyazitoteli.com; Hükümet Caddesi 4; s/d €69.50/86; ☎) A warmly decorated French colonial structure filled with antique furniture and antique details. Expect Turkish carpets on the floors, European paintings and prints in the rooms, and an elegant lobby complete with drapery and an ornate chandelier.

Eating & Drinking

Syrian influences permeate Antakya's cuisine. Handfuls of mint and wedges of lemon accompany many kebabs. Hummus, rare elsewhere in Turkey, is readily available here. Many main courses and salads are dusted with fiery pepper; if this isn't to your taste, ask for yours *acısız* (without hot pepper).

For dessert, try the local speciality, *künefe*, a cake of fine shredded wheat laid over a dollop of fresh, mild cheese, on a layer of sugar syrup, topped with chopped walnuts and baked. Try and get it hot, straight from the oven. Shops at the northern end of Hüriyet Caddesi sell it. Kral Künefe near the Ulu Cami is the most popular of these, and has seating upstairs and outside.

A good place to hang out is the riverside Antakya Belediyesi Park, a few blocks southwest of the museum. Here you'll find tea gardens, such as the Sarmaşık Çay Bahçesi, as well as shady promenades.

Süper 96 (Kutlu Sokak; meals €2-3) A fast-food and *lahmacun* joint popular with teenagers.

Sultan Sofrası (☎ 213 8759; İstiklal Caddesi 20; meals around €5) Right next door to the Mosaic Hotel, this is a cheap eatery that packs in the locals at lunchtime. Try the *İskender döner* or a kebab. The *sütlaç* (rice pudding) is also quite good.

Han Restaurant (☎ 215 8538; Hüriyet Caddesi 17/1; meals €5-7) One of the city's most enjoyable

eateries, with a fantastic *İskender döner*, wonderful *künefe*, and an almost comically attentive staff. The outdoor terrace is an absolute delight on a cool evening.

Antakya Evi (☎ 214 1350; Silahlı Kuvvetler Caddesi 3; meals €6-9) With a name like Antakya Evi (*evi* means home), it's little wonder that dining here feels much like eating at a friend's place. Tastefully decorated with photos and antique furniture, and serving toothsome kebabs and standard grills.

Entertainment

Konak Sinema (Karaoğlanoğlu Caddesi; admission €2.50) English-language blockbusters subtitled in Turkish are screened here.

Getting There & Away BUS

To & From Syria

Everyone needs a visa to enter Syria (see the boxed text p674).

The Jet bus company at Antakya otogar has direct buses to Aleppo (€3, four hours, 105km) at 9am and noon daily, and to Damascus (€5.50, eight hours) at noon daily. These buses follow the route that all cross-border buses and trucks take, the Reyhanlı-Bab al-Hawa border, so you'll need to brace yourself for waits of two to four hours. To avoid hanging about at the border, ensure you are passing through before 8am or take a shared or private taxi, which can negotiate a path through the stationary buses and trucks. A taxi from Antakya (Turkey) to Aleppo (Syria) costs around €25.

If you want to tackle the border in stages, local buses to Reyhanlı (€1, 45 minutes) leave from in front of the petrol station on the corner of Yavuz Sultan Selim and İstiklal Caddesi. From Reyhanlı you can catch a dolmuş to the Turkish border. Then you have to walk a couple of kilometres to the Syrian border.

Alternatively, catch a dolmuş south to Yayladağı (from behind the taxi rank across the road from the entrance to the otogar), from where you pick up a taxi or hitch a few kilometres further to the border. Once across (and crossing takes all of 15 minutes here), you're just 2km from the Syrian mountain village of Kassab, from where regular minibuses make the 45-minute run to Lattakia (S€25).

Within Turkey

The otogar has direct buses to most western and northern points (Ankara, Antalya, İstanbul,

İzmir, Kayseri and Konya), usually travelling via Adana (€5.50, 3½ hours) and through the Cilician Gates (p428). There are frequent services to Gaziantep (€6.50, four hours) and Şanlıurfa (€11, seven hours, 345km), either direct or via Gaziantep. Minibuses and dolmuşes for İskenderun (€1.50, one hour) leave from a stand just north of the otogar.

AROUND ANTAKYA Harbiye (Daphne)

The hill suburb of Harbiye, 9km to the south of Antakya, is the ancient Daphne where, according to classical mythology, the virgin Daphne prayed to be rescued from the attentions of the god Apollo and was turned into a laurel tree. There are no laurels to be seen nowadays, although pine trees ring a large pool of water, very popular as a picnic place. The best approach is to get off the dolmuş opposite Hotel Çağlayan and walk down into the wooded valley on the left, which is usually full of Antakyalı holidaymakers enjoying the tea gardens and the pools and rivulets of cooling water.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Antakya, frequent dolmuşes and city buses run along Kurtuluş Caddesi to Harbiye (€0.50, 15 minutes), where they stop (briefly) to pick up passengers.

Monastery of St Simeon

The remains of this 6th century monastery sit on a mountain 7km from the village of Karaçay, about 18km from Antakya, on the way to Samandağ. There was no ticket office when we visited.

The cross-shaped monastery contains the ruins of three churches. The remains of mosaics can be seen in the first, but the central church is the most beautiful, with rich carvings. The third church is more austere and was probably once used by the monks. The monastery and pillar were carved out of the mountain with an octagonal area around the pillar (the base of it remains) where pilgrims could listen to St Simeon preaching against the iniquities of Antioch. There are also the remains of a stepped structure next to the pillar, which pilgrims might have been able to climb to address the saint personally.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The turn-off to the monastery is just past the village of Karaçay, reachable by a Samandağ

dolmuş (€0.50, 20 minutes) from Antakya. The dolmuş stand is on İstiklal Caddesi at the junction with Yavuz Sultan Selim Caddesi.

You can take a taxi from the monastery for about €17 return, plus an hour at the site, or you could walk. A sign points up a road just past Karaçay. After 4km the road branches. The monastery lies about 2.5km down the track leading to the right.

Vakıflı

About 35km west of Antakya, on the slopes of Mt Musa, is Vakıflı, the last ethnic Armenian village in Turkey, home to a community of about 130 Turkish-Armenians. Until 1939 there were six Armenian villages in the vicinity, but when the Hatay joined Turkey most of the local Armenians were resettled in Lebanon. The residents of Vakıflı are mostly elderly, but the village seems to be fairly prosperous, making a living from the attractive orchards around it. Turkish Armenians from İstanbul visit in summer. The local church is worth visiting, if it's open.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Dolmuşes from Antakya to Samandağ (€0.50, 35 minutes, 29km) leave from an unmarked stand on Yavuz Sultan Selim Caddesi, near the corner with İstiklal Caddesi. From Samandağ a few dolmuşes journey to Vakıflı every day, but you might have better luck hitching.

Çevlik

If you continue 6km west towards the sea from Samandağ you'll come to Çevlik and

the scant ruins of **Seleucia-in-Pieria**, the port of Antioch in ancient times. Çevlik itself is pretty dejected, but what you come here for is the **Titus & Vespasian Tunnel** (Titüs ve Vespasiyanüs Tüneli; admission €1), an astonishing feat of Roman engineering. During its heyday, Seleucia lived with the constant threat of inundation from a stream that descended from the mountains and flowed through the town. To counter this threat, the Roman emperors Titus and Vespasian ordered their engineers to dig a diversion channel around the town.

From the Çevlik car park, ascend the steps to the gate. If there's somebody in the booth you'll have to pay the admission fee, after which a guide will accompany you up the hillside, along the channel and through a great gorge. The walk is over rocks – definitely sturdy-shoe rather than sandal terrain.

If you're not up to it, follow the channel until you come to a metal arch on the right. Then take the path behind the arch (right fork) which follows an irrigation canal past some rock-cut shelters, finally arriving at a humpback Roman bridge across the gorge. Here, steps lead down to the tunnel. Bring a torch since the path is still pretty treacherous. At the far end of the channel an inscription provides a date for the work.

The slopes above the Roman bridge provide a perfect picnic spot.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Dolmuşes run between Samandağ and Çevlik (€0.50) every 30 minutes or so during daylight hours.