
ANKARA: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

By

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During the past 3,000 years, the hilly plain surrounding Ankara has been home to many peoples, including Hittites, Phrygians, Persians, Galatians, Romans, and Turks. King Midas' tomb is thirty kilometers away; there is a half-uncovered Roman amphitheater in the old part of town; and nomads in camel caravans can still be seen in the vicinity. Now it is your turn, your time to experience Ankara.

Hoş Geldiniz, effendim. Welcome, friends. Ankara is a delightful assignment, with a culture that is far different than that of the United States; but it is an exciting difference--a blend of the old and the new, with many opportunities for exploration and discovery.

Upon arrival in Ankara, newcomers are met at Esenboga Airport by their sponsors. Armed Turkish soldiers make security measures at the airport and in Ankara far more visible than one is accustomed to in the United States. New families generally spend their first few weeks in Ankara at the Merhaba Palas (Hello Hotel) awaiting quarters. The hotel provides furnished apartments, complete with TV, VCR, and a kitchen with everything from a microwave oven to a can opener. Within the hotel, there is a small exchange/grocery store which sells necessities. The busy shopping area around the Merhaba Palas is a great place to try out your Turkish language ability, and to buy fresh fruits, vegetables, and the wonderful Turkish bread. Or try your first doner kabob--delicious sliced and grilled lamb on flat pide bread. The muezzin calls the faithful to prayer from the minaret in the mosque across the street; the vendors wail their sing-song cries as they display their wares; and an occasional veiled woman silently strolls by a group of teenagers wearing the latest western fashions. The stay at the Merhaba serves as a transition period, allowing you to recover from jet lag and attune your senses to the new sights, sounds, and bustling activity of Ankara. The weather is similar to that of Denver, so light sweaters or jackets are in order, even for summer travelling.

Permanent quarters in Ankara are in Embassy-leased apartment buildings. Embassy housing is located in areas of higher elevation in Ankara which are less subject to the winter-time air pollution. Apartments are completely furnished, including furniture, rugs, curtains, washer, dryer, freezer, fans, air purifiers, bedspreads, pillows and lamps. Another attractive feature of Embassy housing is that it is maintenance free. Every week a maintenance team visits the apartments to make minor repairs, and the kapaci (the building "super") maintains the hallways and the exterior of the building.

It can take up to three months for private automobiles to arrive, but there is alternative public transportation. Taxis are relatively inexpensive: it costs \$1.50 to get downtown from the various housing areas, around \$2.00 to get to Ankara Air Station, and some \$.75 to go to the Officers' Club. There are also Air Force "Route Buses" available that travel a set path between the Air Station, JUSMMAT, the housing areas, and the Merhaba Palas. For braver souls, there are city buses, affectionately known as "Big Reds," and for less than 15 cents you can ride anywhere in Ankara.

The Ankara Air Station is a small, self-contained facility. On "The Base" are the school, the Base Exchange, the Commissary, chapel, theater, medical clinic, a new dental clinic (scheduled to open in the summer, 1985), bowling alley, craft shop, auto shop, gas station, tennis courts, library, baseball field, snack bar, picnic area, playground, pool, stables, and gym. Video and tape rentals, beauty shop, tailor, and laundry are also available. There are video tape clubs at the Base, JUSMMAT, and the Embassy. These offer a wide variety of movies, TV, and sports shows.

The American School at Ankara Air Station is fully accredited, with classes from kindergarten through the 12th grade. The school offers students a variety of extracurricular activities and a complete sports program. Another option for American elementary students is the British School, located on the grounds of the British Embassy. University level classes are offered through both the University of Maryland and the City Colleges of Chicago at the Air Station.

There are many activities for students during the summer. For older children, aged fourteen and above, there is a Summer Hire Program at both the Base and the Embassy. Teens are employed in a multitude of places, from the Base Pool to the JUSMMAT switchboard. The swim team also has an active summer program and has three meets every season--one each in Ankara, Izmir, and Incirlik. American Youth Activities (A.Y.A.) sponsors baseball, T-ball, and soccer teams, and conducts two two-week summer camps for children six to ten years old. The scouting program also has several summer activities. There are also stables on Base and an active Hunt and Saddle Club for the entire family.

Ankara offers an entire spectrum of activities for women. There are active ladies' clubs, such as the Officers' Wives Club, Enlisted Wives Club, chapel groups, thrift shop, Family Services, Turkish-American Association, Archeological Research, theater, and bridge groups. Due to the availability of efficient yet inexpensive household help, many women in the community work outside the home. Many jobs are available at the Base, JUSMMAT, and the Embassy, although the scope is somewhat limited. Secretarial positions abound, and the American School has a continuous need for substitute teachers. Full-time teaching positions, however, are few and far between. The Turkish-American Association always needs native English speakers to teach on a part-time basis. They provide the training needed to teach English as a foreign language.

There are many opportunities for travel and sightseeing in Turkey. Turkey's rich past and geographical location have made it the crossroads of many civilizations and cultures. Whether your interests are historical, religious, or archeological, Turkey has something for everyone. You can visit a

Sultan's palace in Istanbul, explore the ancient ruins of Ephesus, go snorkeling in "sunken cities," go rummaging through the rug bazaars, or trace the route of Alexander the Great through the Taurus mountains. For sun worshippers, Turkey offers miles and miles of sunny beach on the Aegean Sea, Black Sea, and Mediterranean coastline, including rental yachts for island hopping. Also, a military recreation center is planned for the area near Izmir. Many daily, weekend, and longer tours are arranged by community organizations and tour companies, and summer-time picnic excursions are a delight.

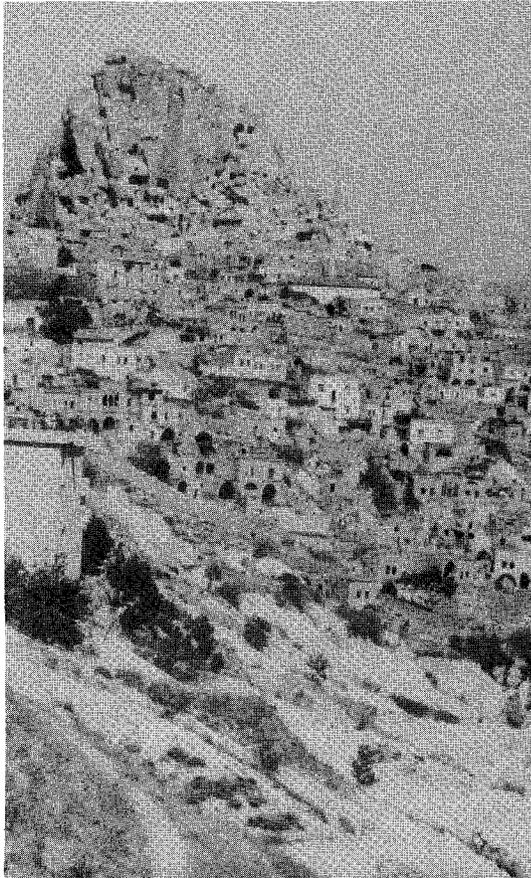


Picturesque ruins, such as the Gates of Hadrian at Ephesus, abound throughout Turkey.

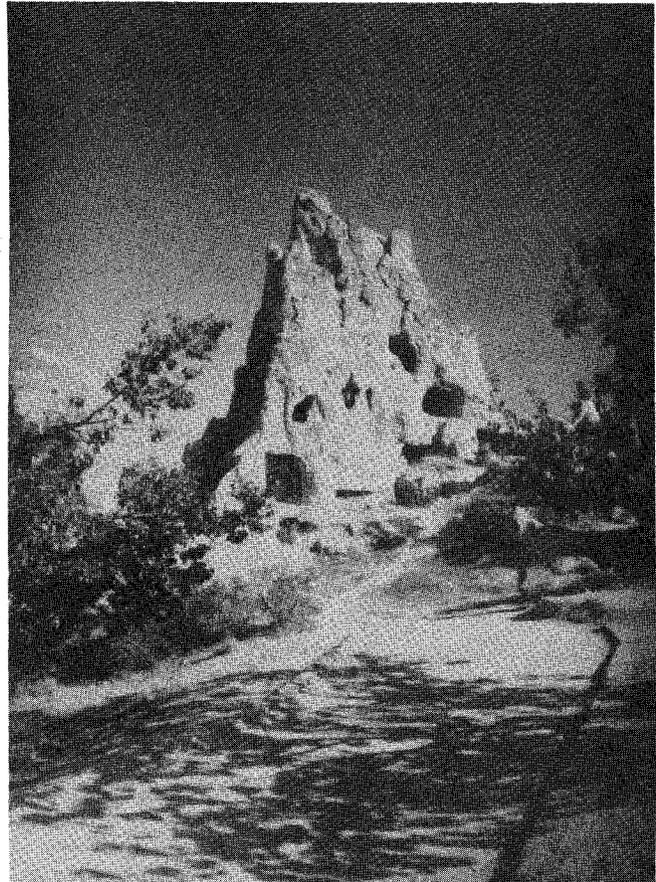
Shopping in Ankara is remarkable for the bargains and for the sheer fun of the purchasing process. All you need is an explorer's instincts, a pocket dictionary, good walking shoes, some money, and plenty of time. Many merchants, especially in the smaller shops, offer you *çay* (tea) and conversation, which is often punctuated by a smattering of English. The shopkeepers are just being polite, and your acceptance of their hospitality does not obligate you in the slightest. Relax and enjoy. There is no such thing as a "quick trip to the store."

Ankara has many shopping areas and you can find just about anything you need. The dress stores feature the latest European styles, and there are many tailors and dressmakers whose prices are very reasonable. Fabrics, furs, jewelry, leather goods, and children's clothing are all nominally priced and easily obtained. Turkish carpets are beautiful: each color and design has a unique meaning, and each region of Turkey is represented by varying styles of rugs and flat-woven kilims. They are wonderful and comparatively inexpensive. Another shopping treasure in Ankara is copper. Whether you

are seeking new or old items, either functional or strictly decorative, you can have a grand time searching the old shops, up and down the twisting, cobblestone alleys of Ulus (the old part of town), or shopping in modern department stores for matched sets of copper pots and pans. Also, all that glitters in Ankara is usually close to pure gold--18 to 22 karat. Gold is priced by weight, with very little added for craftsmanship, and jewelers will copy any design you furnish.



A hillside near Goreme supports an entire city.



The Fairy Chimneys of Cappadocia conceal a hidden city of caves occupied to escape ancient invaders.

Turkey, especially Ankara, is an excellent experience. The Turkish people are warm, friendly, honest, and very gracious hosts. Come with great expectations. You will not be disappointed.