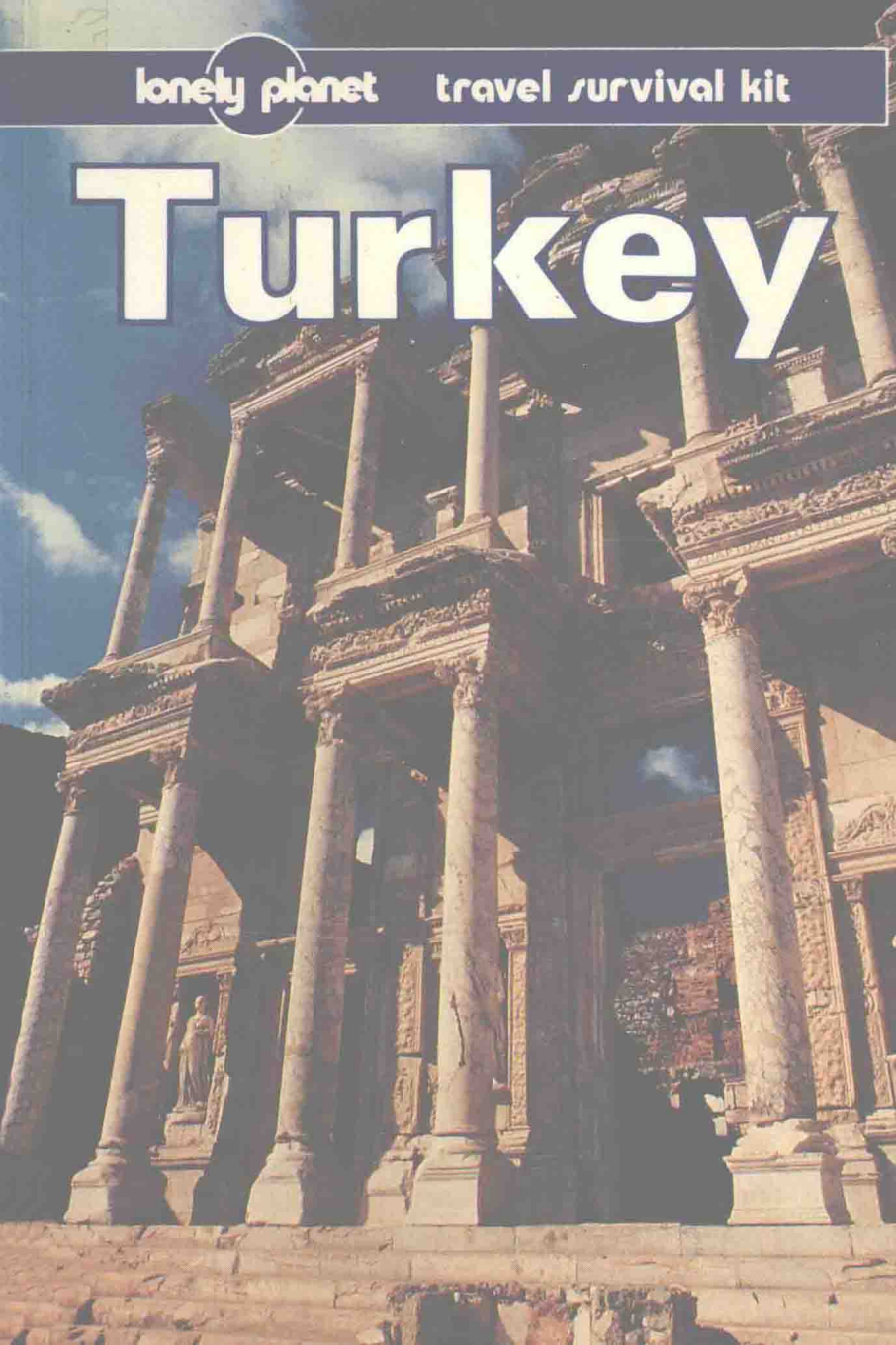


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Turkey



Turkey

a travel survival kit

Tom Brosnahan



Turkey – a travel survival kit

4th edition

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Tom Brosnahan

Tom Brosnahan was born and raised in Pennsylvania, went to college in Boston, then set out on the road. His first two years in Turkey, during which he learned to speak fluent Turkish, were spent as a US Peace Corps Volunteer. He studied Middle Eastern history and the Ottoman Turkish language for eight years, but abandoned the writing of his PhD dissertation in favour of travelling and writing guidebooks.

So far his 25 books for various publishers have sold over two million copies in twelve languages. *Turkey – a travel survival kit* is the result of over a decade of experience and travel in the country.

Tom Brosnahan is also the author of Lonely Planet's *La Ruta Maya – a travel survival kit* and the *Turkish Phrasebook*, as well as co-author of *Mexico – a travel survival kit*, *Central America on a Shoestring* and other Lonely Planet guides.

Dedication

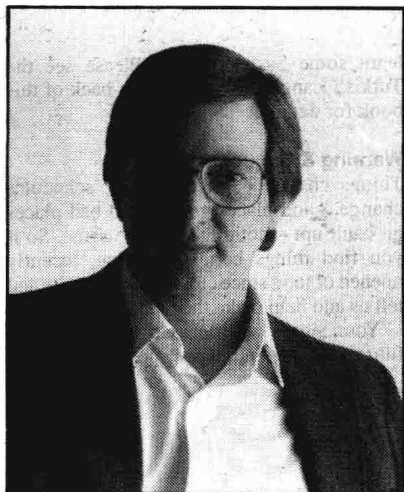
For Josephine and John – who else?

From the Publisher

This edition of *Turkey – a travel survival kit* was edited by Frith Pike in Melbourne, Australia. Cartography, illustrations and design were coordinated by Matt King. Thanks to Dan Levin for creating the Turkish fonts and climate charts, and for computer assistance. Glenn Beanland and Louise Keppie assisted with the maps; Trudi Canavan, Graham Imeson, and Valerie Telleni assisted with the illustrations and Jane Hart advised on the design. Margaret Jung designed the cover with assistance from Matt King. Thanks also to Sharon Wertheim for her help with the index.

This Edition

From Tom Brosnahan In the 1980s, Turkey underwent a tourism boom as millions of travellers from many countries discovered its natural and historical attractions. The boom has calmed down now, but Turkey is still changing rapidly. If you find new things



of interest to travellers, please let me know so I can include them in the next edition.

I'm very grateful for letters, I read each one, and I reply if I can. Send your letter to Lonely Planet Publications, PO Box 617, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122, Australia. If you have access to electronic mail, that's even better. Contact me on CompuServe at 76400,3110, on America Online at TBros, or on the Internet at 76400.3110@compuserve.com.

If you have a computer and modem, you can obtain the latest news and tips on travel to Turkey by calling my electronic information service in the USA on (508) 287 0660. (This number is for computer access only; it will not work for voice communication).

A note on money: during the past decade, the Turkish lira has been subject to high inflation (80 to 100%). Daily small devaluations of the Turkish lira keep your costs down, and the Turkish government trumpets inflation reduction as a priority. In any case, given the volatility of the economy, it is impossible to predict whether the prices given in this book will remain the same, change slightly, or change significantly.

Audio cassettes are available to help you

learn some basic Turkish. Please see the Turkish Language Guide at the back of this book for details.

Warning & Request

Things change – prices go up, schedules change, good places go bad and bad places go bankrupt – nothing stays the same. So if you find things better or worse, recently opened or long since closed, please write and tell us and help make the next edition better!

Your letters will be used to help update future editions and, where possible, import-

ant changes will also be included as a Stop Press section in reprints.

We greatly appreciate all information that is sent to us by travellers. Back at Lonely Planet we employ a hard-working readers' letters team to sort through the many letters we receive. The best ones will be rewarded with a free copy of the next edition or another Lonely Planet guide if you prefer. We give away lots of books, but, unfortunately, not every letter/postcard receives one.

(A list of thanks to readers is on pages 747-748.)






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















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Map Legend











BOUNDARIES

 International Boundary
 Internal Boundary
 National Park or Reserve
	..... The Equator
	..... The Tropics








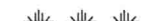

SYMBOLS

	NATIONAL	National Capital
	PROVINCIAL	Provincial or State Capital
	Major	Major Town
	Minor	Minor Town
	.....	Places to Stay
	.....	Places to Eat
	.....	Post Office
	.....	Airport
	.....	Tourist Information
	.....	Bus Station or Terminal
	.....	Highway Route Number
	.....	Mosque, Church, Cathedral
	.....	Temple or Ruin
	.....	Hospital
	.....	Lookout
	.....	Camping Area
	.....	Picnic Area
	.....	Hut or Chalet
	.....	Mountain or Hill
	.....	Railway Station
	.....	Road Bridge
	.....	Railway Bridge
	.....	Road Tunnel
	.....	Railway Tunnel
	.....	Escarpment or Cliff
	.....	Pass
	.....	Ancient or Historic Wall





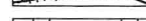
ROUTES

	.....	Major Road or Highway
	.....	Unsealed Major Road
	.....	Sealed Road
	.....	Unsealed Road or Track
	.....	City Street
	.....	Railway
	.....	Subway
	.....	Walking Track
	.....	Ferry Route
	.....	Cable Car or Chair Lift

HYDROGRAPHIC FEATURES

	.....	River or Creek
	.....	Intermittent Stream
	.....	Lake, Intermittent Lake
	.....	Coast Line
	.....	Spring
	.....	Waterfall
	.....	Swamp
	.....	Salt Lake or Reef
	.....	Glacier

OTHER FEATURES

	.....	Park, Garden or National Park
	.....	Built Up Area
	.....	Market or Pedestrian Mall
	.....	Plaza or Town Square
	.....	Cemetery

Introduction

The history of Anatolia, the Turkish homeland, is simply incredible. The world's oldest 'city' was discovered here, at Çatal Höyük in 7500 BC. The Hittite Empire, little known in the west, rivalled that of ancient Egypt, and left behind captivating works of art. The heartland of classical Hellenic culture is actually in Turkey, including cities such as Troy, Pergamum, Ephesus, Miletus and Halicarnassus. Most modern Turkish cities have a Roman past, and all have a Byzantine one. The Seljuk Turkish Empire could boast of people like Omar Khayyam and Celaleddin Rumi, the poet, mystic and founder of the order of Whirling Dervishes.

The mention of Turkey conjures up vague, stereotypical visions of Oriental splendour and decadence, of mystery and intrigue, of sultans and harems, of luxury and wickedness in the minds of most Western visitors. These outdated stereotypes quickly evaporate once the visitor arrives in the country. The Turkish Republic is democratic, rapidly modernising, secular and Western-oriented with a vigorous economy.

The Turks are mostly friendly to foreign visitors, the cuisine is often excellent, the cities are dotted with majestic old buildings, and the countryside is often beautiful like a national park. The old stereotype of Oriental decadence originated in the Ottoman Empire, when the entire Middle East and much of North Africa was ruled by the

Turkish sultan. The great powers of Western Europe coveted the sultan's lands, and put pressure on him by portraying him in the Western press as little better than a monster. This negative image built easily on the notion of the 'terrible Turk' left from the days, in the 1600s, when Ottoman armies threatened Vienna and central Europe.

The Turks are proud of their imperial past (not the last centuries) but the times of Mehmet the Conqueror and Süleyman the Magnificent, when the Turkish Empire was rich, powerful and envied by the West. Turks are also fascinated by the depth of history in their homeland, by the progression of kingdoms and empires which fostered a dozen great cultures: Hittite, Hellenic, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk, Ottoman and more.

Turks harbour no romantic visions of once again ruling the sultan's vast domains. But with the independence of the Turkic republics of Central Asia, Turkey has gained important influence in that region. It is seen as the model for these new countries: a democratic, secular nation-state with a free market economy.

Turkey is a big country, and the variety of things to see and do is enormous – ranging from water sports to mountain trekking, archaeology to night-clubbing, river rafting to raki drinking, Turkey can easily keep you happy for weeks or even months.



Facts about the Country

HISTORY

Turkey's history is astoundingly long – extending for almost 10,000 years. Before giving a summary, here is a table so you can keep the various periods in the right order:

7500 BC Earliest known inhabitants; earliest human community at Çatal Höyük

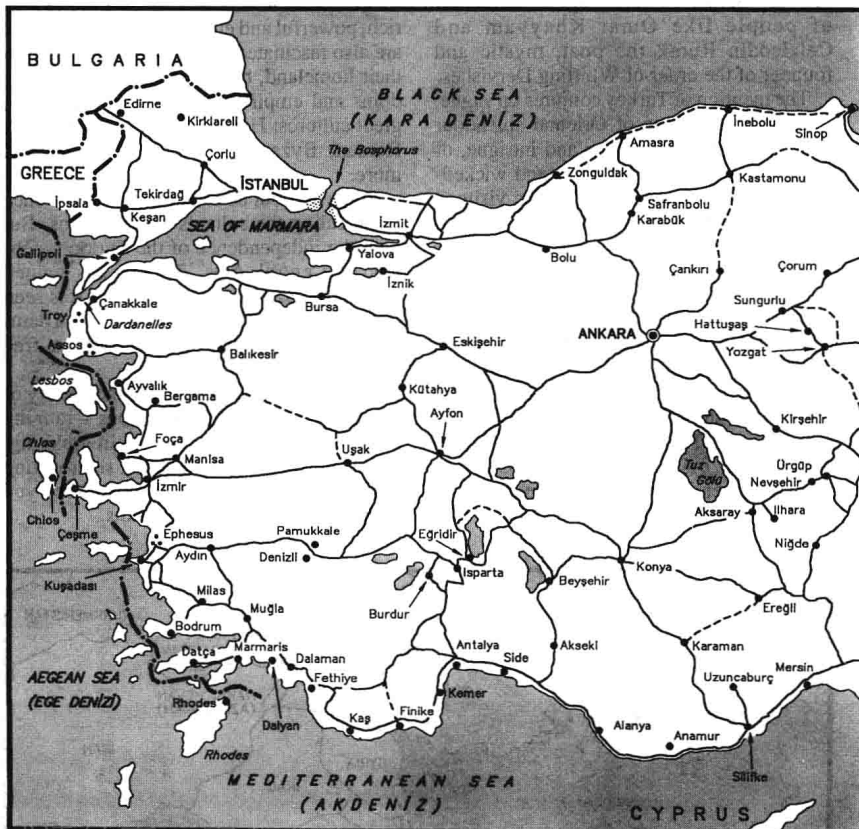
5000 BC Stone and Copper Age; settlement at Hacilar

2600-1900 BC Old Bronze Age; Proto-Hittite Empire in central and south-eastern Anatolia

1900-1300 BC Hittite Empire, wars with Egypt; the Patriarch Abraham departs from Harran, near Şanlıurfa, for Canaan

1250 BC Trojan War

1200-600 BC Phrygian and Mysian invasions, followed by the great period of Hellenic civilisation; Yassi Höyük settlement flourishes; King Midas and King Croesus reign; coinage is invented; kingdoms of Ionia, Lycia, Lydia, Caria, Pamphylia; Empire of Urartu



- 550 BC** Cyrus of Persia invades Anatolia
- 334 BC** Conquest of simply everything and everybody by Alexander the Great from Macedon
- 279 BC** Celts (or Gauls) invade and set up Galatia near Ankara
- 250 BC** Rise of the Kingdom of Pergamum (Bergama)
- 129 BC** Rome establishes the Province of Asia ('Asia Minor'), with its capital at Ephesus (near İzmir)
- 47-57 AD** St Paul's trips in Anatolia
- 330 AD** Constantine dedicates the 'New Rome' of Constantinople, and the centre of the Roman Empire moves from Rome to the Bosphorus
- 527-65** Reign of Justinian, greatest Byzantine emperor; construction of Sancta Sophia, greatest church in the world

- 570-622** Muhammed's birth; revelation of the Koran; flight (*hijra*) to Medina
- 1037-1109** Empire of the Great Seljuk Turks, based in Iran
- 1071-1243** Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, based in Konya; life and work of Celaleddin Rumi ('Mevlana'), founder of the Whirling Dervishes
- 1000s to 1200s** Age of the crusades
- 1288** Birth of the Ottoman Empire, near Bursa
- 1453** Conquest of Constantinople by Mehmet II
- 1520-66** Reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, the great age of the Ottoman Empire; most of North Africa, most of Eastern Europe and all of the Middle East controlled from İstanbul; Ottoman navies patrol the Mediterranean and Red seas and the Indian Ocean
- 1876-1909** Reign of Sultan Abdülhamid, last of the powerful sultans; the 'Eastern Question' arises: which



12 Facts about the Country

European nations will be able to grab Ottoman territory when the empire topples?

1923 Proclamation of the Turkish Republic

1938 Death of Atatürk

Earliest Times

The Mediterranean region was inhabited as early as 7500 BC, during Palaeolithic, or Old Stone Age, times. By 7000 BC a Neolithic (New Stone Age) city had grown up at what's now called Çatal Höyük, 60 km south-east of Konya. These early Anatolians developed fine wall paintings, statuettes, domestic architecture and pottery. Artefacts from the site, including the wall paintings, are displayed in Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilisations.

The Chalcolithic (Stone and Copper Age) period saw the building of a city at Hacilar, near Burdur, in about 5000 BC. The pottery here was of finer quality, and copper implements rather than stone or clay ones were used.

Hittites – The Bronze Age

The Old Bronze Age (2600-1900 BC) was when Anatolians first developed cities of substantial size. An indigenous people now named the Proto-Hittites, or Hatti, built cities at Nesa or Kanesh (today's Kültepe), and Alacahöyük. The first known ruler of Kanesh was King Zipani (circa 2300 BC), according to Akkadian texts. You can visit the archaeological site near Kültepe, 21 km north-east of Kayseri. As for Alacahöyük, 36 km from Boğazkale (bo-AHZ-kahl-eh), it was perhaps the most important pre-Hittite city and may have been the first Hittite capital.

The Hittites, a people who spoke an Indo-European language, overran this area and established themselves as a ruling class over the local people during the Middle Bronze Age (1900-1600 BC). The Hittites took over existing cities and built a magnificent capital at Hattuşaş (Boğazkale), 212 km east of Ankara near Sungurlu. The early Hittite Kingdom (1600-1500 BC) was replaced by the greater Hittite Empire (1450-1200 BC).



The Hittites captured Syria from the Egyptians (1380-1316), clashed with the great Rameses II (1298), and meanwhile developed a wonderful culture.

Their graceful pottery, ironwork ornaments and implements, gold jewellery and figurines now fill a large section of the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations in Ankara. The striking site of Boğazkale, set in dramatic countryside, is worth a visit, as is the religious centre of Yazılıkaya nearby. The Hittite religion was based upon worship of a sun goddess and a storm god.

The Hittite Empire was weakened in its final period by the cities of Assuwa ('Asia'), subject principalities along the Aegean coast, which included the city of Troy. The Trojans were attacked by Achaean Greeks in 1250 – the Trojan War – which gave the Hittites a break. But the *coup de grâce* came with a massive invasion of 'sea peoples' from various Greek islands and city-states. Driven from their homelands by the invading Dorians, the sea peoples flocked into Anatolia by way of the Aegean coast. The Hittite state survived for a few centuries longer in the south-eastern Taurus (Toros) Mountains, but the great empire was dead.

Phrygians, Urartians, Lydians & Others

With the Hittite decline, smaller states filled the power vacuum. Around 1200 BC the Phrygians and Mysians, of Indo-European stock, invaded Anatolia from Thrace and settled at Gordium (Yassı Höyük), 106 km south-west of Ankara. This Hittite city became the Phrygian capital (circa 800 BC). A huge Hittite cemetery and a royal Phrygian tomb still exist at the site. King Midas (circa 715 BC), he of the golden touch, is Phrygia's most famous son.

At the same time (after 1200 BC), the Aegean coast was populated with a mixture of native peoples and Greek invaders. The region around İzmir became Ionia, with numerous cities. To the south was Caria, between modern Milas and Fethiye, a mountainous region whose people were great traders. The Carians sided with the Trojans during the Trojan War. When the Dorians arrived they brought some Greek culture to Caria, which the great Carian king Mausolus developed even further. His tomb, the Mausoleum, was among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Of his capital city, Halicarnassus (modern Bodrum), little remains.

Further east from Caria was Lycia, a kingdom stretching from Fethiye to Antalya; and Pamphylia, the land east of Antalya.

As the centuries passed, a great city grew up at Sardis, 60 km east of İzmir. Called Lydia, it dominated most of Ionia and clashed with Phrygia. Lydia is famous not only for Sardis, but for a great invention: coinage. It's also famous for King Croesus, the world's first great coin collector. Lydia's primacy lasted only from 680 to 547 BC, when Persian invaders overran it.

Meanwhile, out east on the shores of salty Lake Van (Van Gölü), yet another kingdom and culture arose. Not much is known about the Urartians who founded the Kingdom of Van (860-612 BC), except that they left interesting ruins and vast, bewildering cuneiform inscriptions in the massive Rock of Van just outside the modern town.

The Cimmerians invaded Anatolia from the west, conquered Phrygia and challenged

Lydia, then settled down to take their place amongst the great jumble of Anatolian peoples. In 547 BC the Persians invaded and jumbled the situation even more. Though the Ionian cities survived the invasion and lived on under Persian rule, the great period of Hellenic culture was winding down. Ionia, with its important cities of Phocaea (Foça, north of İzmir), Teos, Ephesus, Priene and Miletus, and Aeolia centred on Smyrna (İzmir), had contributed a great deal to ancient culture, from the graceful scrolled capitals of Ionic columns to the ideas of Thales of Miletus, the first recorded philosopher in the West.

While the great city of Athens was relatively unimportant, the Ionian cities were laying the foundations of Hellenic civilisation. It is ironic that the Persian invasion which curtailed Ionia's culture caused that of Athens to flourish. On reaching Athens, the Persians were overextended. By meeting the Persian challenge, Athens grew powerful and influential, taking the lead in the further progress of Hellenic culture.

Cyrus & Alexander

Cyrus, emperor of Persia (550-530 BC), swept into Anatolia from the east, conquering everybody and everything. Though he subjected the cities of the Aegean coast to his rule, this was not easy. The independent-minded citizens gave him and his successors trouble for the next two centuries.

The Persian conquerors were defeated by Alexander the Great, who stormed out of Macedon, crossed the Hellespont (Dardanelles) in 334 BC, and within a few years had conquered the entire Middle East from Greece to India. Alexander, so it is said, was frustrated in untying the Gordian knot at Gordium, so he cut it with his sword. It seems he did the right thing, as the domination of Asia – which he was supposed to gain by untying the knot – came to be his in record time. His sword-blow proved that he was an impetuous young man.

Alexander's effects on Anatolia were profound. He was the first of many rulers who would attempt to meld Western and Eastern



Alexander the Great

Aegean cities to their rule. The foundations of parts of the citadel in Ankara date from Galatian times.

While the Galatians ruled western Anatolia, Mithridates I had become king of Pontus, a state based in Trebizond (Trabzon) on the eastern Black Sea coast. At its height, the Pontic Kingdom extended all the way to Cappadocia in central Anatolia.

Still other small kingdoms flourished at this time, between 300 and 200 BC. A leader named Prusias founded the Kingdom of Bithynia, and gave his name to the chief city: Prusa (Bursa). Nicaea (İznik, near Bursa) was also of great importance. And in south-eastern Anatolia an Armenian kingdom grew up, centred on the town of Van. The Armenians, a Phrygian tribe, settled around Lake Van after the decline of Urartian power.

A fellow named Ardvates who ruled from 317 to 284 BC and was a Persian satrap (provincial governor) under the Seleucids, broke away from the Seleucid Kingdom to found the short-lived Kingdom of Armenia. The Seleucids later regained control, but lost it again as Armenia was split into two kingdoms, Greater and Lesser Armenia. Reunited in 94 BC under Tigranes I, the Kingdom of Armenia became very powerful for a short period (83-69 BC). Armenia finally fell to the Roman legions not long afterwards.

But the most impressive and powerful of Anatolia's many kingdoms at this time was Pergamum. Gaining tremendous power around 250 BC, the Pergamene king picked the right side to be on, siding with Rome early in the game. With Roman help, Pergamum threw off Seleucid rule and went on to challenge both King Prusias of Bithynia (186 BC) and King Pharnaces I of Pontus (183 BC).

The kings of Pergamum were great warriors, governors and also mad patrons of the arts, assembling an enormous library which rivalled that Alexandria's. The Asclepion, or medical centre, at Pergamum was flourishing at this time, and continued to flourish for centuries under Roman rule. Greatest of the Pergamene kings was Eumenes II (197-159 BC), who ruled an enormous empire stretch-

cultures (the Byzantines and the Ottomans followed suit). Upon his death in 323 BC, in Babylon, Alexander's empire was divided among his generals in a flurry of civil wars. Lysimachus claimed western and central Anatolia after winning the Battle of Ipsus in 301 BC, and he set his mark on the Ionian cities. Many Hellenistic buildings went up on his orders. Ancient Smyrna was abandoned and a brand-new city was built several km away, where the modern city stands.

But the civil wars continued, and Lysimachus was slain by Seleucus (king of Seleucid lands from 305 to 280 BC), another of Alexander's generals, at the Battle of Corupedium in 281 BC. Though Seleucus was in turn slain by Ptolemy Ceraunus, the kingdom of the Seleucids, based in Antioch (Antakya), was to rule a great part of the Middle East for the next century.

Meanwhile, the next invaders, the Celts (or Gauls) this time, were storming through Macedonia on their way to Anatolia (in 279 BC) where they established the Kingdom of Galatia. The Galatians made Ancyra (Ankara) their capital, and subjected the

ing from the Dardanelles to the Taurus Mountains near Syria. He was responsible for building much of what's left on Pergamum's acropolis, including the grand library.

Roman Times

The Romans took Anatolia almost by default. The various Anatolian kings couldn't refrain from picking away at Roman holdings and causing other sorts of irritation, so finally the legions marched in and took over. Defeating King Antiochus III of Seleucia at Magnesia (Manisa, near İzmir) in 190 BC, the Romans were content for the time being to leave 'Asia' (Anatolia) in the hands of the kings of Pergamum. But the last king, dying without an heir, bequeathed his kingdom to Rome (133 BC). In 129 BC, the Romans established the province of Asia, with its capital at Ephesus.

An interesting postscript to this period is the story of Commagene. This small and rather unimportant little kingdom in east-central Anatolia, near Adıyaman, left few marks on history. But the one notable reminder of Commagene is very notable indeed: on top of Nemrut Dağı (NEHM-root dah-uh, Mt Nimrod), Antiochus I (62-32 BC) built a mammoth, cone-shaped funerary mound framed by twin temples filled with huge stone statues portraying himself and the gods and goddesses who were his 'peers'. A visit to Nemrut Dağı, from the nearby town of Kahta, is one of the high points of a visit to Turkey.

Roman rule brought relative peace and prosperity to Anatolia for almost three centuries, and provided the perfect conditions for the spread of a brand-new, world-class religion.

Early Christianity

Christianity began in Roman Palestine (Judaea), but its foremost proponent, St Paul, came from Tarsus in Cilicia, in what is now southern Turkey. Paul took advantage of the excellent Roman road system to spread the teachings of Jesus. When the Romans drove the Jews out of Judaea in 70 AD, Christian

members of this Diaspora may have made their way to the numerous small Christian congregations in the Roman province of Asia (Anatolia).

On his first journey in about 47-49 AD, Paul went to Antioch, Seleucia (Silifke), and along the southern coast through Pamphylia (Side, Antalya) and up into the mountains. First stop was Antioch-in-Pisidia, today called Yalvaç, near Akşehir. Next he went to Iconium (Konya), the chief city in Galatia; Paul wrote an important 'Letter to the Galatians' which is now the ninth book of the New Testament.

From Iconium, Paul tramped to Lystra, 40 km south, and to Derbe nearby. Then it was back to Attaleia (Antalya) to catch a boat for Antioch. His second journey took him to some of these same cities, and later north-west to the district of Mysia where Troy (Truva) is located; then into Macedonia.

Paul's third trip (53-57) took in many of these same places, including Ancyra, Smyrna and Adramyttium (Edremit). On the way back he stopped in Ephesus, capital of Roman Asia and one of the greatest cities of the time. Here he ran into trouble because his teachings were ruining the market for silver effigies of the local favourite goddess, Cybele/Diana. The silversmiths led a riot, and Paul's companions were hustled into the great theatre for a sort of kangaroo court. Luckily, the authorities kept order: there was free speech in Ephesus; Paul and his companions had broken no laws; they were permitted to go freely. Later on this third journey Paul stopped in Miletus.

Paul got his last glimpses of Anatolia as he was being taken to Rome as a prisoner, for trial on charges of inciting a riot in Jerusalem (59-60). He changed ships at Myra (Demre); further west, he was supposed to land at Cnidos, at the tip of the peninsula west of Marmaris, but stormy seas prevented this.

Other saints played a role in the life of Roman Asia as well. Tradition has it that St John retired to Ephesus to write the fourth gospel near the end of his life, and that he brought Jesus' mother Mary with him. John was buried on top of a hill in what is now the

town of Selçuk, near Ephesus. The great, now ruined basilica of St John marks the site. As for Mary, she is said to have retired to a mountaintop cottage near Ephesus. The small chapel at Meryemana ('Mother Mary') is the site of a mass to celebrate her Assumption on 15 August.

The Seven Churches of the Revelation were the Seven Churches of Asia: Ephesus (Efes), Smyrna (İzmir), Pergamum (Bergama), Sardis (Sart, east of İzmir), Philadelphia (Alaşehir), Laodicea (Goncali, between Denizli and Pamukkale) and Thyatira (Akhisar). 'Church' of course meant 'congregation', so don't go to these sites looking for the ruins of seven buildings.

The New Rome

Christianity was a struggling faith during the centuries of Roman rule. By 250 AD, the faith had grown strong enough and Roman rule so unsteady that the Roman emperor Decius decreed a general persecution of Christians. Not only this, but the empire was falling to pieces. Goths attacked the Aegean cities with fleets, and later invaded Anatolia. The Persian Empire again threatened from the east. Diocletian (284-305) restored the empire somewhat, but continued the persecutions.

When Diocletian abdicated, Constantine battled for succession, which he won in 324. He united the empire, declared equal rights for all religions, and called the first ecumenical council to meet in Nicaea in 325.

Meanwhile, Constantine was building a great city on the site of Hellenic Byzantium. In 330 he dedicated it as New Rome, his capital city; it came to be called Constantinople. The emperor died seven years later in Nicomedia (İzmit), east of his capital. On his deathbed he adopted Christianity.

Justinian

While the barbarians of Europe were sweeping down on weakened Rome, the eastern capital grew in wealth and strength. Emperor Justinian (527-65) brought the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine, Empire to its greatest strength. He reconquered Italy, the Balkans,

Anatolia, Egypt and North Africa, and further embellished Constantinople with great buildings. His personal triumph was the Church of the Holy Wisdom, or Sancta Sophia, which remained the most splendid church in Christendom for almost 1000 years, after which it became the most splendid mosque.

Justinian's successors were generally good, but not good enough, and the empire's conquests couldn't be maintained. Besides, something quite momentous was happening in Arabia.

Birth of Islam

Five years after the death of Justinian, Muhammed was born in Mecca. In 612 or so, while meditating, he heard the voice of God command him to 'recite'. Muhammed was to become the Messenger of God, communicating His holy word to people. The written record of these recitations, collected after Muhammed's death into a book by his family and followers, is the Koran.

The people of Mecca didn't take to Muhammed's preaching all at once. In fact, they forced him to leave Mecca, which he did, according to tradition, in the year 622. This 'flight' (hijra or hegira) is the starting-point for the Muslim lunar calendar.

Setting up house in Medina, Muhammed organised a religious commonwealth which over 10 years became so powerful that it could challenge and conquer Mecca (624-30). Before Muhammed died two years later, the Muslims (adherents of Islam, 'submission to God's will') had begun the conquest of other Arab tribes.

The story of militant Islam is one of history's most astounding tales. Fifty years after the Prophet's ignominious flight from Mecca, the armies of Islam were threatening the walls of Constantinople (669-78), having conquered everything and everybody from there to Mecca, plus Persia and Egypt. The Arabic Muslim empires that followed these conquests were among the world's greatest political, social and cultural achievements.

Muhammed was succeeded by caliphs or deputies, whose job was to oversee the