

# CAPPADOCIA

THE LAND of FAIRYTALES



# CAPPADOCIA

THE LAND of FAIRYTALES

## Cappadocia in Early Christianity

### Rocky wonderland that housed Early Christians

Cappadocia... A dream of a land, gracefully sparkling its texture: extraordinary landscapes bestowed by the nature itself, mesmerizing vistas dusk till dawn, wondrous architecture carved into the soft rocks, colored balloons greeting fairy chimneys with every chance they get, and traces of history taking guests to travel in time.

The sublime story of the land dates back millions of years ago to the eruption of the two volcanic mountains of Central Anatolia, the Erciyes and Hasan mountains. The tuff and basalt layering itself throughout the region then gets formed by the wind, and hot and cold air, turning amorphous into the mystic fairy chimneys for miles to flaunt. As the reinvention of nature has completed, earthlings began to show their faces and added invasions, riots, and migrations to its history being written.



In the rugged landscapes of Cappadocia, enveloped by the undulating hills of Kayseri and the valleys of Nevşehir, and Aksaray, the early Christians etched their sacred legacy into the very rock that sheltered them. This region, became the sanctuary for the faithful, and played a pivotal role in the development of early Christian thought and practice. As the Roman Empire cast a shadow of persecution, the caves and cliffs of Cappadocia became a canvas for an enduring spiritual community.

First Christians who fled away from oppression and violence made the fairy chimneys their home. After settling down, carved their churches inside these very same rocks. They built complete underground cities, with ventilated living areas and everything. Today, those ancient structures seem to require permission from the present time in order to take you on a magical journey in both time and dimension. Are you ready to shift the nature of reality into something extraordinary?



### Echoes of Faith

Here, amidst the labyrinthine underground cities and soaring fairy chimneys, devout Christians established an unparalleled network of chapels, monasteries, and living quarters. The intricate frescoes and carvings that adorn these sanctuaries tell a story of resilience, devotion, and a profound quest for the divine. Cappadocia's spiritual heritage is intricately linked to influential theologians like Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus—collectively known as the Cappadocian Fathers—who laid down doctrinal foundations that resonate through Christianity to this day. We take you on a journey through the heart of this historic terrain, where each stone whispers tales of faith that have echoed through millennia.

## In the Footsteps of Monks: Cappadocia's Rock-Cut Wonders

Our journey starts from Göreme where the monastic rules of St. Basil set an example for monastic life all over the world. The Göreme Open Air Museum, a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985, is only a 20-minute walk from the town center. The museum is home to numerous rock-cut churches, chapels, and monasteries, each adorned with intricate frescoes that depict biblical scenes and saints. As you explore the maze-like corridors and hidden chambers, you can't help but marvel at the skill and dedication of the artists who created these masterpieces centuries ago. The most essential structures of the Göreme Open Air Museum are, without a doubt, the Dark (Karanlık) Church and Tokalı Church. Dark Church's lack of light has made this church keep its treasures alive, letting the frescoes resist the ruthless nature of time. Small yet significant, El Nazar Church in Göreme is a cross-shaped marvel, inviting contemplation within its quiet, frescoed walls.



Your next destination may not radiate its allure from afar but once in, you will leave in awe for sure. Çavuşin village lies within minutes from Göreme. Once you are through this seemingly ordinary village, your path will take you to ancient ruins and fairy chimneys, just follow the tracks and you will find yourself in an area famous for its churches and clergy houses. You can access the oldest churches, built in first millennium, through this path. Extending your walk half an hour, you can reach the churches in Güllüdere and Kızılçukur though the most enticing site inviting you just near the slope of a cliff: one of the oldest and the largest in Cappadocia, the Church of St John the Baptist.



Paşabağ, also known as Monk's Vineyard, is about a km off the Göreme-Avanos road to Zelve. Here in Paşabağ, a chapel dedicated to St. Simeon and a hermit's shelter are built into one fairy chimney with three heads. The entrance of the cell, which can be reached with a chimney-like narrow tunnel, is decorated with crosses. They hollowed out the chimneys from top to bottom, creating rooms 10-15 m high. They slept on beds made from rocks and were fed by locals via buckets on ropes lowered down from their lofty perches.

Consisting of three valleys, Zelve, which was a residential area, has the most intensity in terms of fairy chimneys. The important churches in the valley are Balıklı and Üzümlü, all hauntingly captivating, illustrating the ancient monastic life.

## Ürgüp: The Heart of Cappadocia's Cultural and Religious Tapestry

Moving from Göreme to the east, Ürgüp welcomes you to its ceaseless wonders. Aside from it being the largest settlement in Cappadocia, it's also a magnificent source for its immersive sights. These two elements combined bring out one of the most unique pictures.

Ürgüp, once known as Osiana, provided a crucial intersection for cultural and religious exchange. The landscape around Ürgüp is marked by soft volcanic rock formations where an intricate network of rock-cut churches as early as 4th century, adorned with ancient frescoes, stands as a testament to the vibrant early Christian community.

Explore the serene environs of Keşlik Monastery, where monks once lived and worshipped away from the world's eyes. Delve into its modest chapels and refectory, adorned with timeworn frescoes.

In Mustafapaşa, one of the Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism, the Church of Saint Basil stands as a testament to one of Cappadocia's great theologians, its walls a canvas of vibrant frescoes. Saint Basil was "the Great Basil of Kayseri", is the oldest and most well-known of the "Cappadocian Fathers".



Nearby, the Soğanlı Valley offers a peaceful retreat, where ancient rock-cut dwellings and chapels blend harmoniously with the landscape, providing a quiet space for contemplation and exploration. You can detour your journey to the Gümüşler Monastery, a hidden gem tucked away in the peaceful landscape. The monastery's ancient halls and impressive frescoes stand as a testament to the devotion of those who once sought refuge here.

## One of the Largest Canyons in the World: Ihlara Valley

If you wish to travel beyond time and explore a world you have never stepped foot on, Ihlara Valley is the place you are searching for.

Due to its unique geological characteristics, this 14-kilometre-long valley boasts churches adorned with frescoes that have been sculpted into the rocks, reflecting a monastic ethos. Of the 105 churches, 14 are accessible to the public, including Ağaçalı, Sümbüllü, Yılanlı, Kokar, Prenliseki, Eğritaş, Direkli, Saint Georgeus, Karagedik, Ala, Bezirhane, Bahattin Samanlığı, and Batkın Churches. Churches near Ihlara display Eastern influences, while those near Belisırma Village are known for their Eastern Roman (Byzantine) wall paintings.

At the end of this canyon, Selime Cathedral, the largest in Cappadocia and dating back to the 8th and 9th centuries, will welcome you. This cathedral and monastery complex, strategically located on a caravan route. Not only a place for rest and worship, Selime also served as a training ground for regional clergy and hosted the first loud ritual. The architecture, predominantly carved from rock and influenced by Eastern Roman art, incorporates a castle on the upper level.



## WORTH A DETOUR

- Start your day in Cappadocia by rising with the sun in a hot air balloon, then, have a rich organic-friendly Turkish breakfast with a view of Fairy Chimneys

- Visit Underground Cities: There are many underground settlements across Cappadocia and they are our next stop. The route takes you to the underground cities of Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu. During their peak, these cities sheltered thousands of people, including the early Christians.

- Stay in a Cave Hotel: Cappadocia is a land of natural wonders; as such, there are some unique experiences every traveller should try. One of the most rewarding experiences is staying at one of Cappadocia's world-famous "cave hotels".

- Horseback Riding: One of the most significant ways to discover Cappadocia is horseback riding. There are daily horseback tours and multi-day rides around Cappadocia besides full moon rides where you can explore this enchanting region at night.

- Hiking/Trekking: Hiking around Cappadocia is a unique experience offering some of the most surreal scenery in the world. There are several popular trails, like the Valley of Pigeons, the Love Valley, the Rose Valley and the Sword Valley, all of which make you feel like a time traveler and an adventurer through historic churches, necropolises, and beautiful nature.

- Cycling: The mountain and road cycling routes that pass through the valleys offer all types of cyclists a great variety of options to choose from.

- Pottery Making: Another stop you'd want to make would be Avanos, the cultural epicenter of Cappadocia. Avanos is the home of pottery tradition dating way back to the Hittites. Today, Avanos proudly stands as a member of the European Route of Ceramics, keeping its heritage alive through lively workshops and colorful bazaars. Visitors can try their hand at the potter's wheel, guided by local masters.

- Skiing: Mount Erciyes, nearby Cappadocia region, is one of Türkiye's top destinations for skiing and snowboarding. The mountain is an extinct volcano with dramatic angles and plenty of snow, which create excellent slopes and perfect conditions for skiers.

- After such a dense journey, it's time to enjoy dinner with local wines during the sunset. Do not miss the chance to try the delicious Cappadocian wines. This region, holding a well-established winemaking tradition for thousands of years, owes its famous vineyards to the tuff formed by the volcanic activities. Recognized for its outstanding winemaking culture, Cappadocia proudly belongs to the Iler Vitis Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.



# CAPPADOCIA

THE LAND of FAIRYTALES

1. Göreme Open Air Museum
2. Çavuşin
3. Paşabağ
4. Zelve
5. Ürgüp
6. Mustafapaşa
7. Ihlara



● Lake Tuz

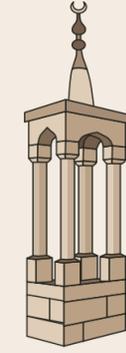
● Acıgöl

● NEVŞEHİR

● Avanos



Kızılırmak River



02

● Çavuşin

Paşabağ Valley



● Zelve



Zelve Open Air Museum  
Balıklı and Üzümlü Church

● Paşabağ

03



St. Symeon's Hermitage



● Uçhisar

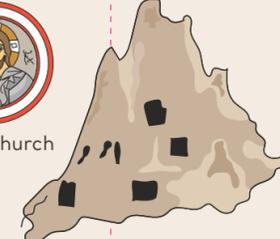
● Göreme

01

● Göreme Open Air Museum



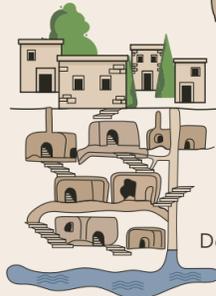
Dark Church



Güvercinlik Valley



● Kaymaklı

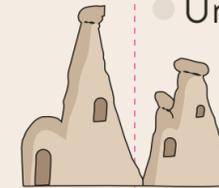


Derinkuyu



● Ürgüp

05



Three Beauties

● Ihlara Valley

07



● Mustafapaşa Village



● Damsa Dam



goturkiye.com

© f x t d /GoTurkiye

