

CAPPADOCIA
THE LAND of FAIRYTALES

Türkiye

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NEVŞEHİR



REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
AND TOURISM



CONTENTS

2	DISCOVER NEVŞEHİR
3	STEP BY STEP THROUGH NEVŞEHİR
5	CULTURAL TREASURES
12	NATURAL WONDERS
15	LOCAL FLAVORS
19	HANDICRAFTS
22	48 HOURS IN NEVŞEHİR
31	GETTING THERE
32	ROUTES



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DISCOVER NEVŞEHİR

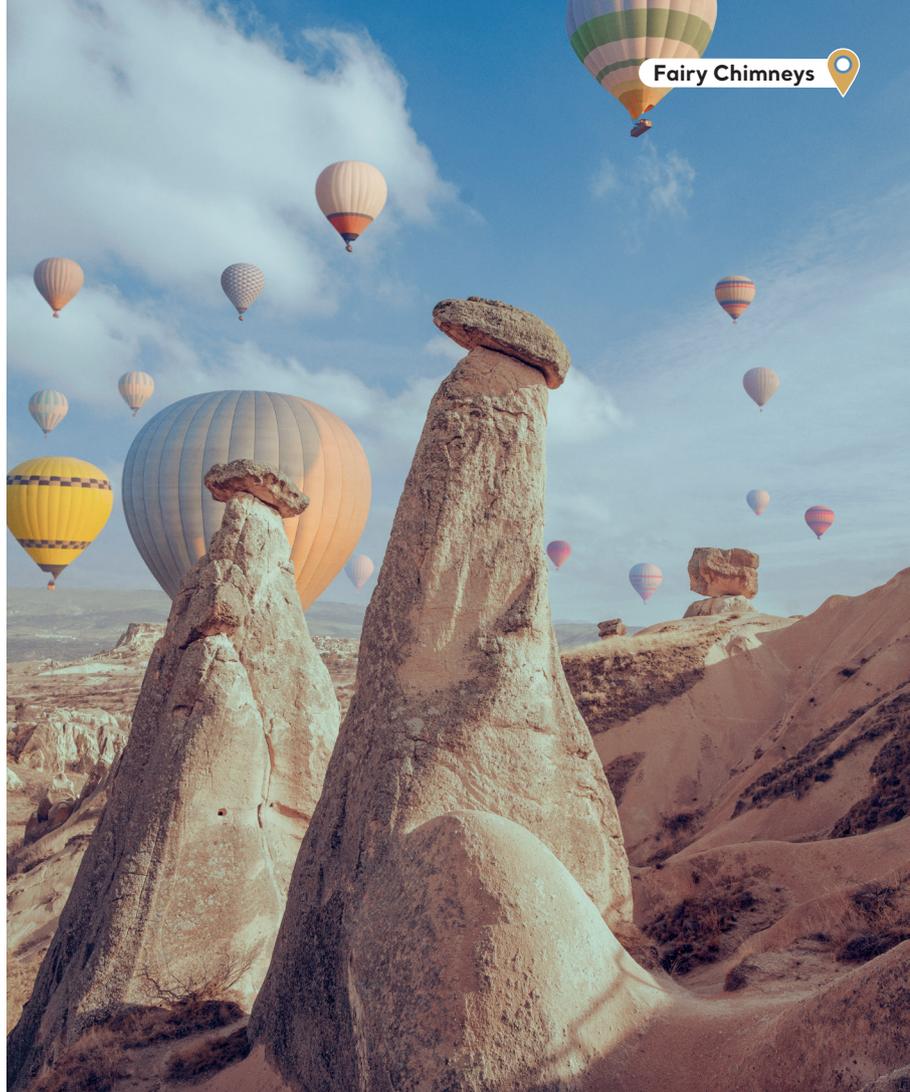
- Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Göreme was once a center of religious life and thought. At the Göreme Open-Air Museum, you can explore many sacred structures that bear traces of this period, such as the Chapel of St. Basil, the Elmalı Church, the Chapel of St. Barbara, the Snake Church, the Dark Church, the Sandals Church, and the Tokalı Church.
- The rocky caves of Cappadocia served as a canvas for religious expression. In cave churches carved into soft tuff rock, examine the stunning frescoes that depict scenes from the Bible.
- Discover panoramic viewpoints across the Cappadocia region—such as Uçhisar Castle, Pigeon Valley, Devrent, Red Valley, Ortahisar Castle, and Çat Valley—and experience the mesmerizing atmosphere of Nevşehir.
- Underground cities served as safe havens for people fleeing civil wars and religious conflict. Follow the traces of those who once lived deep beneath the earth in Derinkuyu, Kaymaklı, Özkonak, Mazı, and Tatların.
- Known as the Monks Valley, Paşabağları hosts some of the most striking fairy chimneys. Visit the Zelve Archaeological Site to explore the Churches of the Fish and Grapes, the Holy Cross Church, and the Zelve Mosque.
- Join an adventurous hike through Cappadocia's unique valleys such as Bağlıdere, Gomedalı, Üzengi, Güllüdere, Kılıçlar, and Meskendir, where nature and history merge.
- Visit the Hacibektaş Museum to connect with the legacy of Hacı Bektaş-ı Velî, a key figure in Anatolian and Ottoman culture.
- In Mustafapaşa (Sinasos), named one of the "Best Tourism Villages" by the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2021, embark on a journey through time in the heart of Cappadocia with its unique mansions and historic bridge.
- Trace the legacy of pottery in Avanos, where this ancient craft has thrived for thousands of years. As part of the European Ceramic Route, Avanos invites you to experience the art firsthand by taking lessons from skilled artisans in its traditional pottery workshops.
- Explore the enchanting valleys of Nevşehir in Cappadocia — a region historically known as the "Land of Beautiful Horses" — through horseback rides and scenic hiking trails!

NEVŞEHİR STEP BY STEP

Cappadocia is not only distinguished by its unique geological formations but also by its rock-carved settlements, valleys, historic churches, dovecotes, and the still-mysterious underground cities, making it one of the world's most exceptional natural and cultural destinations.

Millions of years ago, tectonic activity triggered vast volcanic events in the region. The ash and lava that erupted from these volcanoes accumulated into thick layers, forming various volcanic rock strata with different levels of hardness. Over time, rainwater and wind eroded these layers, creating the striking formations known today as "fairy chimneys."

These formations, shaped by erosion and the properties of the volcanic rock, transformed the landscape into plateaus and valleys, showcasing the region's remarkable geological evolution. The varying resistance of volcanic layers produced a stunning variety of landforms. The most common types of fairy chimneys include: Capped, Conical, Mushroom-shaped, Columnar, Pointed rock formations.



Discovered by chance near Şahinefendi village, about 30 km from Ürgüp on the Ürgüp-Soğanlı road, the ancient city of Sobesos is a significant Late Roman and Early Christian settlement. Although it had been mentioned in ancient sources, its exact location was previously unknown. Excavations have revealed administrative buildings, some tombs, and a complete bath complex. These structures are believed to date back to the mid-4th or 5th century.

Since the 18th century, Cappadocia has attracted the interest of Western travelers and has always maintained its sense of mystery. Visitors can witness the legacy of many civilizations—Hatti, Hittite, Phrygian, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Eastern Roman, Seljuk, and Ottoman—and discover how these cultures blended and coexisted in harmony.

One of the largest rock settlements in the region, Kayaşehir dates back to the 5th century. Visitors can explore this ancient city carved into nine terraces, featuring churches, monasteries, necropolises, living quarters, long tunnels, and monk cells.





CULTURAL TREASURES

Among the most fascinating natural and cultural legacies of Cappadocia are its underground settlements, numbering between 150 and 200. These rock-cut spaces were carved deep into soft tuff stone and vary in size. Hundreds of interconnected rooms are linked by long corridors and labyrinthine tunnels. The tunnels were intentionally designed to be low, narrow, and long, restricting enemy movement. Small niches carved into the walls held oil lamps and candles. These complexes also included living quarters and even burial spaces for prolonged emergencies.



Current findings suggest these underground settlements date back to prehistoric times. For early inhabitants skilled in stone carving, chiseling into soft tuff with simple tools was not difficult. Initially consisting of a few rooms, the complexes were expanded over centuries by new populations, gradually erasing older archaeological traces.

The use of underground cities peaked during the Eastern Rome. From the 3rd century onward, Cappadocia became a stronghold for Christian communities. Prominent theologians like St. Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus lived here. By the 4th century, Göreme had become a vital center for Christian teaching.

These subterranean shelters served as sanctuaries for early Christians fleeing persecution. Built into soft volcanic rock, the complexes provided safety and seclusion. Derinkuyu, one of the most famous underground cities, reaches eight stories deep and could accommodate thousands. Featuring ventilation shafts, wells, living spaces, and chapels, these cities allowed Christians to practice their faith in secret. The religious sites around the Göreme Open-Air Museum reflect this critical period in Christian history.



Explore the enchanting landscape of Cappadocia on horseback—one of the most memorable ways to experience the region's magic. Due to increasing popularity, local stables offer routes tailored for all experience levels. Horseback tours cover roughly 30 kilometers of scenic trails and tracks, promising thrilling adventures. Typically organized in the early morning, afternoon, and evening, these rides guide visitors through the dramatic valleys of Göreme, Uçhisar, Mustafapaşa, Ortahisar, and Avanos.

Although most dovecotes in Cappadocia date from the late 19th to early 20th centuries, some surviving examples date as far back as the 18th century. These modest birdhouses, often blending into the rocky terrain, were constructed not for the birds themselves but to collect their nutrient-rich droppings—an essential fertilizer for local vineyards and gardens passed down through generations.

The facades of these dovecotes are adorned with delicate designs painted by local artisans in harmony with social and artistic traditions of the time. Natural pigments derived from trees, flowers, wild herbs, and iron oxide-rich soils gave life to the vibrant motifs, each a unique expression of local creativity.

As you explore Pigeon Valley, take in the artistic elegance of these birdhouses, the valley's unique geological formations, Uçhisar Castle, and the characteristic architecture of traditional Cappadocia homes that dot the slopes.

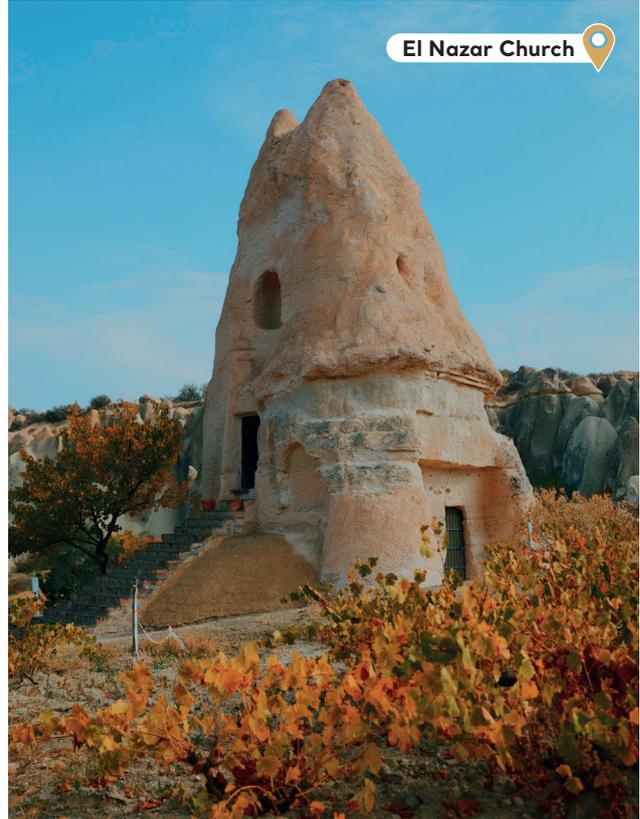


Located in the Hacibektaş district of Nevşehir, this spiritual complex now serves as a museum and houses the tombs of Hacı Bektaş Veli and Balım Sultan. The site includes three courtyards, a mosque, laundry facilities, a pantry, the ceremonial house, a public kitchen, a guesthouse, and several fountains. In the first courtyard, Nadar Courtyard, you'll find the Üçler Fountain (built in 1902), the laundry building, and a bathhouse. The Dergah Courtyard houses the Lion Fountain (built in 1554), the mosque, guest quarters, and the kitchen. Entering the inner Hazret Courtyard through the Gate of Six, you'll reach the Tomb of Hacı Bektaş Veli, the penitential cell (Çilehane), and the Kırklar Square. The tomb is covered with a green velvet pall and decorated with fine ornamentation. Here, you'll also find the graves of the Horasan Saints, the Çelebis (leaders of the Bektashi order), and Güvenç Abdal. On the right side of this sacred courtyard lies the Tomb of Balım Sultan, constructed in 1519.





Elmalı Church



El Nazar Church



NATURAL BEAUTIES

Cappadocia enchants visitors with its volcanic terrain, fairy chimneys sculpted by erosion, rock-hewn dwellings, historic churches, and mystical ambiance. Its dreamlike scenery has brought it international fame, particularly for showcasing the most spectacular examples of fairy chimneys.

One of the most popular ways to explore the enchanting landscape of Cappadocia is through hot air balloon tours. As the sun rises, balloons ascend into the sky and glide over Cappadocia's unique valleys, fairy chimneys, and rock formations, offering visitors an unforgettable experience. These tours, which provide the opportunity to view the region from thousands of meters above, have become one of the most memorable moments of any trip to Cappadocia.

At the Göreme Open-Air Museum, you can explore rock-carved churches; in Paşabağları and the Zelve Archaeological Site, you'll find unique fairy chimneys; and in Gülşehir Açksaray, you can discover mushroom-shaped formations. Additionally, you can enjoy nature-filled hikes through the Meskendir, Red, and Güllüdere Valleys, or set off on a pleasant adventure along scenic cycling routes.







Göreme Open Air Museum



Kızılırmak River



Çavuşin



Testi Kebab



Stuffed Quince

LOCAL FLAVORS

Nevşehir lies at the fertile crossroads where volcanic soil meets the life-giving Kızılırmak River. This land, cultivated since the Hittite era, has developed a distinctive food culture over thousands of years. Viticulture has long been a key aspect of the region's identity, supported by the mineral-rich tuff soils of surrounding mountains like Erciyes, Hasan, and Melendiz.

As part of viticulture and gastronomy tourism, especially during the grape harvest season, visitors are offered the experience of harvesting and tasting grapes. The preparation of local delicacies such as köftür, grape molasses (pekmez), aside, dolaz, and pickled grapes is also showcased. Pumpkin seeds grown in the region's fertile soil are soaked in milk, mixed with flour and salt, and roasted in stone ovens. The dried clotted cream unique to the Kaymaklı district of Nevşehir is traditionally served with honey.

Nevşehir cuisine is also renowned for its geographically indicated dish, testi kebabı (pottery kebab). Traditionally cooked in clay pots and jugs made in Avanos and prepared in a tandır oven, this special kebab is a must-try for visitors to the region. Other authentic flavors of Cappadocian cuisine include bitirgen, stuffed apricots, gendirme pilav (a seasoned rice dish), quince stew, tandır soup, shank kebab, and divil, a traditional bulgur and potato fritter.



Vineyards ●

For wine enthusiasts, Cappadocia offers a wide spectrum of producers—from boutique wineries to internationally recognized brands. Especially notable is Emir wine, made from the native Emir grape, which reflects the distinctive flavors of the region's unique climate and mineral-rich volcanic soil. Wine tasting tours are organized for those eager to explore Cappadocia's millennia-old winemaking heritage, offering a chance to experience the unique aroma of Emir wine and inviting visitors on an unforgettable journey.

This unique wine experience in Cappadocia becomes even more special in the region's architecturally distinct restaurants. Carved into rock or housed in structures that preserve their historical character, these venues immerse guests in the mystical atmosphere of Cappadocia, pairing local cuisine with regional specialties like Emir wine. A special dinner served among stone walls or on terraces overlooking the valleys offers an unforgettable culinary feast—one that harmonizes with the region's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage.





HANDICRAFTS

Nevşehir's rich natural, historical, and cultural heritage has elevated traditional handicrafts to new heights, making the region a prominent center for artisanal production. Crafts such as carpet weaving, ceramics, and pottery are inseparable parts of Cappadocia's deeply rooted cultural fabric. Weaving, in particular, is as old as the region's history itself. Today, carpets from Ürgüp, Uçhisar, and Avanos—renowned for their craftsmanship—are displayed in museums and private collections, continuing to showcase the region's legacy in handwoven artistry.

Avanos, with its distinctive red clay and registered pottery tradition, offers visitors a truly unique experience. Recognized internationally through its inclusion in the European Ceramics Route, Avanos pottery stands as one of the most valuable crafts reflecting Cappadocia's artistic and cultural heritage. Here, you can closely observe the ancient art of pottery shaped by millennia-old traditions and witness the region's history through the exquisite works crafted by the skilled hands of master artisans.







NEVŞEHİR IN 48 HOURS

Day One

Waking up before sunrise in Cappadocia is almost a must to witness the breathtaking landscapes you'll carry in your memory and revisit in your dreams for years to come. To catch the sunrise, be sure to arrive at the balloon launch site right on time. Among guests from all around the world, you'll find yourself lifted a thousand meters into the sky by some of the most experienced hot air balloon pilots.

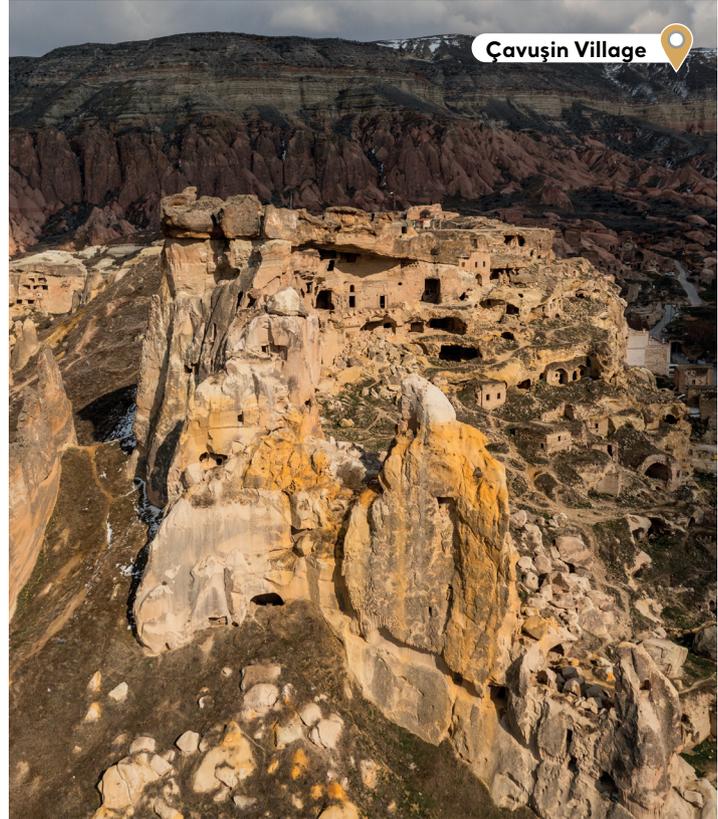
As the sun rises, imprint in your memory the silhouettes of the fairy chimneys and the mesmerizing view of Mount Erciyes and Mount Hasan adorning the horizon. Crown this extraordinary experience that begins in the sky with a delightful breakfast—perfectly suited for the start of a day full of exploration—and welcome the magic of Cappadocia in the most enchanting way.



Start your day energetically with local flavors such as Nevşehir's simit (bagel-like bread), pottery cheese, gözleme filled with walnut, pütülka (fried dough), grape molasses made from Emir grapes, and dolaz with honey. Then, to explore the enchanting natural formations of Cappadocia, choose one of Paşabağları, Zelve, or the Göreme Open-Air Museum and immerse yourself in the mystical atmosphere of the fairy chimneys. After an enjoyable walk, visit one of the underground cities—Kaymaklı, Derinkuyu, or Özkonak—for a unique journey that will take you deep into history. Touring these labyrinthine structures with a guide allows you to learn historical details while exploring the sites more safely.

After your exploration tour of the open-air museums and underground cities, don't forget to try Nevşehir's famous testi kebabı (pottery kebab). Tasting this delicacy, cooked in special clay pots, along with other regional dishes, is one of the best ways to experience the richness of Cappadocian cuisine.

While you're in Avanos, be sure to stop by one of the traditional pottery workshops and take a pottery-making lesson from the local artisans. This experience not only allows you to get a closer look at the region's cultural heritage but also gives you the chance to create a memorable souvenir with your own hands.



Whether you're looking to buy a small pottery piece as a souvenir or seeking world-class pottery training, the skilled artisans of Avanos await you in their workshops. Here, under the guidance of craftspeople who keep thousand-year-old traditions alive, you can experience the pottery-making process and create a unique keepsake for yourself.

Before sunset, you can witness the enchanting atmosphere of Cappadocia by watching the sun go down amidst the unique landscapes of Uçhisar and Ortahisar Castles, Devrent Valley, or Kızılçukur Valley. For dinner, don't miss the chance to explore the unique flavors of Nevşehir's cuisine: local specialties such as ağ pakla (broad bean stew), evelek sarma (stuffed vine leaves), biryani-style meat dishes, vegetable casseroles, kesme mantı (hand-cut Turkish dumplings), fragrant quince dessert (ıtırılı ayva tatlısı), and Ürgüp damat baklavası (a rich local baklava traditionally served at weddings) are among the finest examples reflecting the region's rich culinary heritage.

For those looking to make the most of their day, exploring the Açıksaray ruins in Gülşehir—home to monasteries carved into tuff rocks and the Church of Saint Jean—offers an unforgettable experience. Afterward, head to Hacibektaş, where you can visit the Tomb of Hacı Bektaş Veli, the House of Kadıncık Ana, and the Hacibektaş Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography. Following a lunch break where you can sample local dishes of Hacibektaş, consider stopping by the Kozaklı Thermal Springs to relax and benefit from their healing waters. Attracting visitors from across Türkiye and abroad, these thermal springs are an ideal spot to unwind and rejuvenate in a peaceful setting.





Uçhisar Castle





Day Two

You've seen Cappadocia from the sky in a hot air balloon now how about discovering it from the ground, surrounded by the magical sight of balloons drifting overhead? Before sunrise, head to one of the scenic viewpoints in Uçhisar, Göreme, Esentepe, or Kızılçukur to witness the breathtaking ascent of hot air balloons into the sky. In this enchanting region, you can join horseback riding tours and enjoy hikes through valleys where nature and history intertwine. Then, visit Kayaşehir, the highest point in Nevşehir. This remarkable settlement carved into nine terraces features a 5th-century monastery, burial chambers, and water tunnels—offering a journey deep into the past.

After recharging with a hearty breakfast, set off on a nature and history walk through the Gomed and Üzengi Valleys, near Mustafapaşa. Later, explore the traditional marketplaces in Ürgüp, Avanos, or Mustafapaşa, where you can browse local handicrafts and pick up unique souvenirs.

In the afternoon, visit the Taşkınpaşa Madrasah, a stunning example of Seljuk stonework; the Keşlik Monastery, known for its striking frescoes; and the Church of the Forty Martyrs. The final surprise of the day is the ancient city of Sobesos, famous for its mosaic-covered rooms. For dinner, savor the distinctive flavors of Nevşehir's cuisine that you may not have tried yet—and as the day comes to a close, you just might find yourself dreaming of your next journey to Cappadocia.







During your visit to Cappadocia, a balloon ride, valley hikes, cycling, and horseback tours should be at the top of your to-do list. In the early hours of the morning, the fairy chimneys and mysterious valleys viewed from hot air balloons offer a truly magical panorama. You can witness the colorful balloons rising into the sky and capture these unforgettable moments in stunning photographs.

By joining guided nature walks through Cappadocia's unique valleys, you can discover the region's endemic flora and historical remains. Horseback tours and cycling trips are also fantastic alternatives for exploring Cappadocia's captivating landscape. In particular, the cycling routes through the valleys offer a perfect opportunity to stay active while being immersed in nature.



Pottery, one of Cappadocia's traditional crafts, is an experience not to be missed in the region. In the workshops of Avanos, you can learn pottery-making from local artisans and create a unique souvenir of your own.

Cappadocia also holds an important place with its famous vineyards. By visiting these vineyards, you can learn about the local wine production process and enjoy wine tastings.

With its valleys, fairy chimneys, and historical structures, Cappadocia offers a unique setting for photographers as well. By taking advantage of the countless opportunities for exploration, you can enjoy an unforgettable experience filled with nature, history, and culture.



HOW TO GET THERE?

Nevşehir, one of Türkiye's capitals of cultural tourism, offers visitors an easy and comfortable travel experience thanks to its well-developed transportation infrastructure. Located approximately 280 km from Ankara and 740 km from İstanbul by road, the city can be reached in about 3 hours from Ankara and 8 hours from İstanbul. Numerous bus companies operating along these routes provide a comfortable and affordable alternative for transportation.

For those who prefer to travel by air, Nevşehir Kapadokya Airport (NAV), located 40 km from the city center, or Kayseri Airport (ASR), located 80 km away, are convenient options. Both airports offer taxi and shuttle services that facilitate easy access to various parts of Nevşehir.



ROUTES



Route 1: Mini Cappadocia Tour

- Pigeon Valley
- Uçhisar Castle
- Göreme Open-Air Museum
- Zelve – Paşabağlar Archaeological Site
- Avanos
- Devrent Valley
- Ürgüp's "Three Beauties" Fairy Chimneys
- Ortahisar Castle

Route 4: From Nevşehir to Hacıbektaş

- Nevşehir – Hacıbektaş
- Gülşehir Açksaray Archaeological Site
- Gülşehir Church of Saint Jean
- Hacıbektaş Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography
- Kızılırmak Riverside

Route 2: From Nevşehir to Göreme

- Nevşehir Castle and Kayaşehir
- Kaymaklı and Derinkuyu Underground Cities
- Meskendir and Kızılçukur (Red) Valleys

Route 3: Villages of Ürgüp

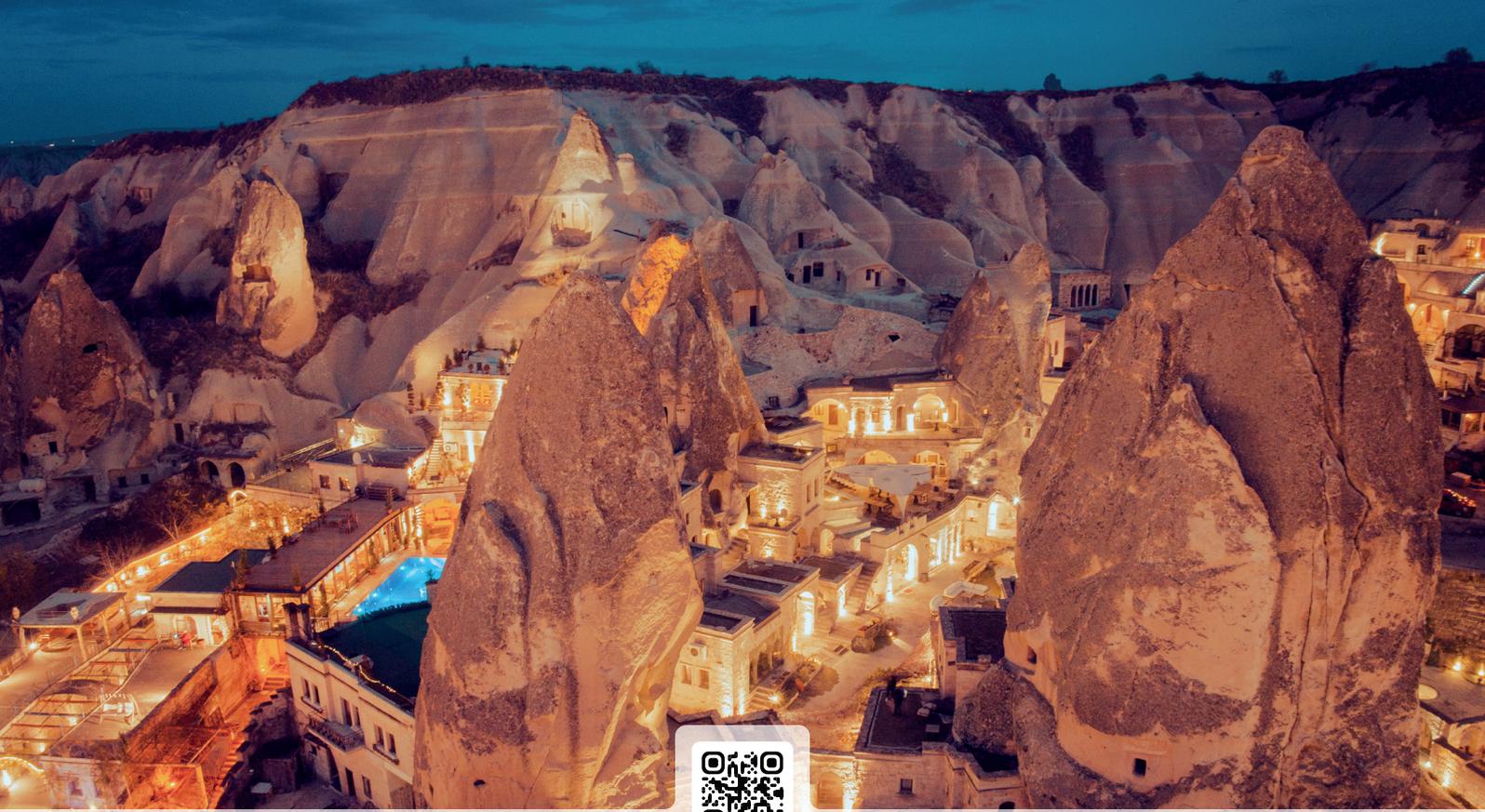
- Mustafapaşa Village
- Ayvalı Village
- Cemil Village
- İbrahimpasha Village
- Şahinefendi Village
- Taşkınpaşa Village

Route 5: Cappadocia Valleys

- Ak Valley (Uçhisar)
- Bağlıdere Love Valley (Göreme)
- Güllüdere Valley (Çavuşin)
- Kızılçukur (Red) Valley
- Meskendir Valley
- Mustafapaşa Village
- Gomed Valley
- Üzengi Valley



Scan the QR code to view the routes on the map!



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