

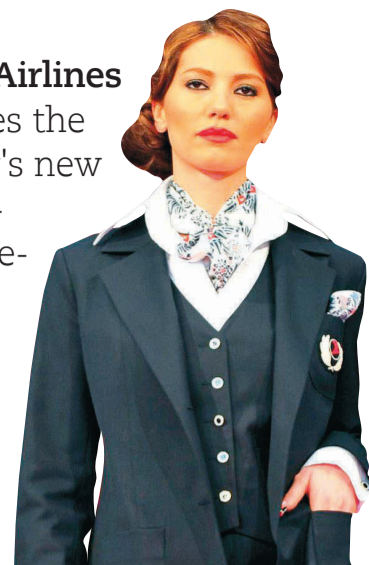


12 Turkey's most sophisticated winter sports resort is but a skip and a jump away on the outskirts of Bursa



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Turkish Airlines introduces the company's new crew uniforms, prepared by fashion designer Faruk Saraç. **07**



A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT FOR ITB BERLIN

MARCH 11-15, 2009 WWW.TODAYSZAMAN.COM



TURKISH TOURISM **SHINES** DURING CRISIS

M. EDİB YILMAZ, İSTANBUL

➤ A center of attraction for many seeking a fun-filled holiday, Turkey is only becoming more enticing at a time when most developed economies are struggling amidst the global financial crisis, a recent international travel and tourism report indicates.

The World Travel Monitor Forum, commonly known as the Pisa Forum, an annual convention of international tourism industry authorities, gathered in Italy in November of last year to track trends in outbound travel demand for the first three quarters of 2008, provide annual estimates and draft preliminary forecasts for 2009. CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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The innovative power of Turkey

From the Editor

After posting growth of almost 13 percent in the number of visitors last year over 2007, reaching a record 26.3 million people, the Turkish travel and hospitality industry has started to feel the squeeze of the ongoing global economic slow-down. Figures released by Turkey's Ministry of Tourism and Culture showed that close to 752,000 people visited the country in January -- a 3.96 percent decrease over the same month of 2008. The drop was not severe and is indicative of the travel industry's resilience despite a bleak outlook for the sector.

The International Tourism Bourse (ITB) Berlin travel and hospitality fair, the world's largest tourism convention, comes at this critical juncture. It is the leading business-to-business exhibition, with 10,000 exhibitors from 180 countries. The ITB is projected to attract more than 180,000 visitors, with more than half of them trade visitors. Turkey is participating with all its colors -- government agencies, tour operators, travel agents, airlines and hotels -- to promote what Turkey offers leisure seekers, business travelers and vacationers.

Abdullah Bozkurt / Executive Editor

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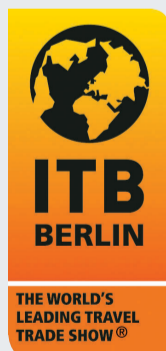
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COVER STORY: Turkish tourism sector shines amidst financial turmoil. A center of attraction for many seeking a fun-filled holiday, Turkey is only becoming more enticing at a time when most developed economies are struggling amidst the global financial crisis, a recent international travel and tourism report indicates.



04

PRONTOTOUR: A market leader in organizing package tours, travel agency Prontotour grew 18 percent in the first month of 2009. Over the past three years, the company has had a growth rate of about 58 percent, and since 2007 its total turnover has amounted to \$100 million.

06



İSTANBUL: A visual feast awaits enthusiasts at İstanbul's Panorama 1453 History Museum, Turkey's first panoramic museum, which tells the story of the conquest of İstanbul by the Ottomans. The museum, where almost 10,000 Ottoman and Byzantine soldiers are pictured, allows visitors to experience the excitement of the conquest of İstanbul. Portraying the conquest in a three-dimensional way the museum enables visitors to feel as if they were traveling back in time.

08

BURSA: The weather may be unseasonably mild, but that's no reason not to be able to head out to the ski slopes in search of snow. If you live in İstanbul, things could hardly be easier. Turkey's most sophisticated winter sports resort is but a skip and a jump away at Uludağ (Great Mountain) on the outskirts of Bursa, where snow can be guaranteed regardless of how warm it may be elsewhere.

12

YACHTING: The Blue Cruise stops by a number of coves and provides tourists with an opportunity to relax and enjoy the sun. Recommendations have been put forward to extend the Blue Cruise, a voyage along Turkey's Mediterranean and Aegean coasts, to cover the whole year, in an effort to extend the tourism season.



23

URFA: Ancient Urfa, huddled amongst the very last limestone folds of the Toros Mountains as they peter out into the vast sweep of the Mesopotamian plain, is one of Turkey's most atmospheric cities. In the bazaar, Arabic-speaking village men from the Syrian borderlands, a little over 50 kilometers to the south, trawl the stalls for impossibly shiny and colorful swatches of cloth for their daughters' wedding trousseaus.

24



PHOTO © CIHAN

Bridging Europe and Asia, Turkey was one of only two European countries to see an increase in visits by more than 10 percent for the first three quarters of 2008.

TURKISH TOURISM SECTOR SHINES AMIDST FINANCIAL TURMOIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The participants, a multi-national and multi-disciplinary group of experts from approximately 30 countries -- representing all regions on both sides of the Atlantic, plus East Asia -- contributed to the fruitful discussion held during the two-day event, which resulted in the "ITB World Travel Trends Report," which was commissioned by ITB Berlin from IPK International, the organizers of the 16th World Travel Monitor Forum.

The Pisa forum, after annual gatherings for the last 15 years, has earned a significant reputation within the tourism sector due to its rich array of participants and the reports issued after the conventions. This year's report analyzes once again the ups and downs of the industry, together with its opportunities and challenges. The findings of the report indicated how the Turkish tourism sector has expanded, particularly compared to the economies of the developed world.

The pace of growth in tourist numbers worldwide slowed dramatically in 2008 from 8.3 percent in the first quarter to slightly more than 1 percent in the

third quarter. What is more striking is the fact that experts say the decline has continued for the last three months and that 2009 could be significantly worse. However, the total revenue from tourism worldwide was believed to be affected less dramatically, although it is still not the appropriate time to speak reliably about turnover. After the recent turmoil in global financial markets, the uncertainty has started to dominate the outlook for the tourism industry. There is certainty about the recession the entire world will face; the question is only how deep it will be and how long it will last. However, emerging and developing economies seem to be putting up the best resistance.

Europeans, the world's most enthusiastic travelers, have increased their vacations to sun and beach resorts, and their average length of stay remained unchanged for the period examined by the report. Total spending on travel rose by 6 percent, on pace with inflation, although increases in spending per trip and per night are positive. Fading financial confidence and a growing sense of economic unease seem to have mostly affected the French tourism industry, while the

German and British markets have proven slightly more resilient but are also missing their past competitiveness. A strong euro is primarily blamed for the slackening demand for visits to countries in the eurozone, which in turn has helped other countries draw the attention of travelers looking for cheaper rates. Japan, however, did not succeed in preserving its share in the industry, either, and has met the fate of the developed world, despite the low value of the yen.

Bridging Europe and Asia, Turkey, with its countryside, magnificent beaches and many other opportunities available to its guests, was one of only two European countries that saw an increase in visits by more than 10 percent for the first three quarters of 2008. Experts do not expect much of a change in the country's attractiveness to tourists in the year ahead. Without question, being strikingly price-competitive compared to the economies of the eurozone and many of its other European counterparts as well, Turkey enjoyed a brilliant year for its tourism industry, and it is believed that this will continue into the foreseeable future.

Turkey receives 13 percent more foreign visitors in 2008

The number of visitors from abroad rose 12.83 percent last year over 2007, reaching 26.34 million, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced on Monday.

The ministry's figures also indicated that foreign visitor numbers have started to decline in 2009, as 751,817 people crossed the Turkish border in January, a 3.96 percent decrease over the same month of 2008.

In a written statement the ministry disclosed that 4.4 million (16.77 percent) of the foreign visitors last year hailed from Germany and that 2.88 million (10.93 percent) arrived in Turkey from Russia. Britons ranked third in preferring Turkey as a tourism destination as 2.17 million people visited Turkey from Britain. Bulgarians followed Britons

with 1.26 million and constituted 4.77 percent of the total foreign visitors in Turkey last year.

The numbers also indicated that 8.56 million, or 32.52 percent, entered Turkey via Antalya, the tourism capital of the country. A total of 26.77 percent of visitors, or 7.05 million people, entered the country at Istanbul. **Istanbul** Today's Zaman with wires

ITB Berlin counting down to open doors

The world's largest travel and trade fair, ITB Berlin, is set to start hosting representatives from 180 countries on March 11.

With the slogan "A perfect holiday starts here," this year the fair again offers an excellent opportunity for business partners to come together with others and do business. ITB Berlin 2009 will feature 11,147 exhibitors comprising 8,540 foreign and 2,607 German entities. This huge meeting will be held in 160,000 square meters of floor space at the Messedamm in Berlin, where almost 180,000 visitors have already registered to come see the fair, which will run through March 15. In order to provide visitors with the most convenience possible, organizers have thematically ordered all market segments so that no visitor faces any difficulty finding his way within this enormous fair space. Market segments of particular interest include culture tourism, travel technology, wellness and cruises, among others.

From the developed to the developing and to the less developed world, participants from 180 countries, the number of which almost



PHOTO: REUTERS

ITB Berlin 2009 will feature 11,147 exhibitors comprising 8,540 foreign and 2,607 German participants.

mounts to the number of United Nations' member countries, have a very good reason to come to Berlin. What began with a modest overseas-import trade show in 1966 is now the world's leading gathering of this kind.

With its sheer number of exhibitors and visitors, the German capital's fair draws the attention of professionals from all sectors within

the tourism and travel industry worldwide. Despite the adverse effects of the ongoing global financial crisis and most consequently the diminished demand in each and every sector, a diverse array of businesses, including but not limited to, tour operators, booking engines, destinations, airlines, hotels and car rentals, will all compete for the attention of

attendees during the fair.

Turkey has registered as one of the many sponsors of the event this year in line with the initiative taken by the Turkish Culture and Tourism Ministry. The main sponsor of the fair is the region of Ruhr, the European Capital of Culture in 2010. İstanbul and Pecs, Hungary, will also carry this title in 2010. **İstanbul** Today's Zaman



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CHALLENGING THE CRISIS, PRONTOTOUR CONTINUES TO ATTRACT ATTENTION

A market leader in organizing package tours, travel agency Prontotour grew 18 percent in the first month of 2009. Over the past three years, the company has had a growth rate of about 58 percent, and since 2007 its total turnover has amounted to \$100 million.

In addition to trips and tours within Turkey, Prontotour organizes package tours to 65 countries throughout the year, serving both individual and institutional needs. When a vast majority of other companies in the same industry were trying to minimize the effects of the 2001 Turkish economic crisis through reducing expenses, contracting their business and other defensive actions, Prontotour chose to invest and grow even during the most difficult of times. Along with continuous investments since then, it has started to earmark financial resources for research and development as well.

From many destinations all over Europe to the islands of the Pacific and from the Far East to Latin America and into the heart of Africa, Prontotour is exactly the agency to turn to if you want to explore the wonders and beauty of the

world. Another reason why many people contact Prontotour is to find and attend a suitable fair in which they and their companies can obtain invaluable experience, make business connections and benefit hugely. For foreigners interested in organizing incentive trips, client entertainment or conference travel, Prontotour is a focus of attention as well.

"To provide our clients with high quality service at a reasonable price through the long-lasting cooperation we have built with our partners," reads the agency's work principle.

In the latter case, the agency can organize a program specifically tailored to the company's individual needs and requirements. "To provide our clients with high quality service at a reasonable price through the long-lasting cooperation we have built with our partners," reads travel agency's fundamental work principle.

Established in 1993, the company now employs 80 people at its central office in İstanbul. With its accumulated expertise and expanded network of connections all over the world, Prontotour continues to challenge the ongoing global financial crisis and attract attention from both Turkey and the rest of the world. **İstanbul Today's Zaman**



Ali Onaran



A theater group set up by German tourists vacationing in Turkey for the winter performed a skit based on the fairytale Cinderella at their hotel in Antalya.

German tourists set up theater group in Antalya

A group of German tourists has set up a theater club at an Antalya hotel, while taking advantage of cheap hotel prices in Turkey during the winter season.

The group recently performed a comedy skit based on the fairytale Cinderella. The group of tourists from Germany are staying at Antalya's Majesty Mirage Park resort, which operates during the winter season, and set up a theater club to entertain themselves and other guests at the hotel. Uschi Poburski, Anne Brzoza, Lorenz Fischer, Sybille Pages and Helga Renner said they wanted to have an active vacation, not a quiet one, and that they plan to further expand their activities.

Hotel manager Engin Öner said the hotel offered various opportunities for their guests to have a good time even in the off-season. Noting that most guests in the winter are German, Öner said: "We are organizing a Nordic hiking trip headed by German experts for our German tourists. We are also going to organize a barbecue and hiking tour along 10 different routes in the Göynük area." **Antalya Today's Zaman**



Kaplıca suyunun şifası teknolojiyle ve alternatif tıpla birleştire, ortaya sağlık dolu günler geçirebileceğiniz, yorgunluğunuzu atıp tüm stresinizden arınabileceğiniz bir merkez çıktı. Maksimum hijyenin sağlandığı iç açıcı ortamıyla İllisi Sağlık ve Güzellik Merkezi, bedeninize ve ruhunuza iyi gelecek. Gelin, kendinizi Asya Termal'deki İllisi Sağlık ve Güzellik Merkezi'nin uzmanlığına bırakın. SPA ile arının, masaj ile rahatlayın, spor ile enerji kazanın.

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THY INTRODUCES NEW UNIFORMS AT FASHION SHOW

Turkish Airlines (THY) Chairman Temel Kotil introduced the company's new crew uniforms, prepared by fashion designer Faruk Saraç, on Feb. 18 at a fashion show.

The new uniforms consist of navy blue suits, white shirts and red buttons and badges. The uniforms were introduced by a number of famous models, including Tugba Karaca, Sedef Avci and Özge Ulusoy.

Kotil presented Saraç with a plaque, thanking him for his contributions. "These uniforms will be used by 4,600 THY staff members in 110 locations around the world. I'd like to extend my thanks to everyone who helped make THY a star," Kotil said.

Istanbul Today's Zaman with wires



PHOTO: MUSTAFA KIRAZLI

FASHION07





PHOTOS □ HALİL İBRAHİM ZENGİN

İSTANBUL'S PANORAMIC MUSEUM ENCHANTS VISITORS WITH VISUAL FEAST

BETÜL AKKAYA DEMİRBAŞ İSTANBUL

A visual feast awaits enthusiasts at İstanbul's Panorama 1453 History Museum, Turkey's first panoramic museum, which tells the story of the conquest of İstanbul by the Ottoman Empire in 1453.

The museum, where almost 10,000 Ottoman and Byzantine soldiers are pictured in detail, allows visitors to experience the excitement of the conquest of İstanbul. Portraying the conquest, which marked the end of the Middle Ages, in a three-dimensional way with authentic materials, the museum enables visitors to feel as if they were traveling back in time.

The inauguration ceremony of the museum was held on Jan. 31 with the participation of a number of high-level state officials, including Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, State Minister and chief EU negotiator Egemen Bağış, Culture and Tourism Minister Ertugrul Günay, İstanbul Gov. Muammer Güler and İstanbul Mayor Kadir Topbaş. The museum stands as the first of its kind in Turkey and the only full panoramic museum in the world built in a closed space.

As soon as you enter the platform, you experience a short period of amazement as if you have come out to a supernatural open-air landscape. Before you lies the clothing of the 15th century, prepared meticulously by a group of designers, historians and many others to recreate the period in detail.

The three-dimensional picture is supported by impressive sound and visual effects. The ceremonial military music from the famous Ottoman Janissary Band and the sounds of gunfire and cannons make one feel as if they are in the middle of the battle. To enjoy the best view of the picture, watchers are advised to observe it at a minimum distance of 14 meters, the distance at which the three-dimensional optical illusion works best.

The picture depicts what İstanbul looked like on May 29, 1453, the date the city was conquered by the Ottomans. The dome on top of the three-dimensional panoramic picture creates the illusion of a real sky, which makes it seemingly endless both vertically and



At the museum, the three-dimensional picture is supported by impressive sound and visual effects.

horizontally though it is actually a circle of 38 meters in diameter. If you look carefully, you can see the silhouette of Sultan Mehmet II, also known as the Conqueror, bedecked with clouds. Some 3,000 square meters of pictures are exhibited in the museum. In the museum, there are also imitations of cannons and powder barrels used during the battle to make viewers feel that the picture is a whole within itself.

There is also a small model of the picture at the entrance of the museum, where viewers are provided with the opportunity to examine the details of the picture on a smaller surface. The corridor taking visitors to the museum to the floor where the panoramic picture is situated is bedecked with paintings and tableaus which offer broader information on the conquest of İstanbul.

There are currently 30 partial panoramic museums around the world, but the Panorama 1453 History Museum provides a full panorama in a closed area. Among other panoramic museums are the panorama of Napoleon's War in Waterloo, the panorama of Napoleon's War in Moscow and the panorama of the Turkish-Russian Plevne War.

The Panorama 1453 History Museum is the work

of a team of eight artists. Among them are project manager Haşim Vatanbaş, Ramazan Erkurt (background), Yaşar Zeykanov and Oksana Legka (figures), Ahmet Kaya (storyboard), Hasan H. Dinçer and Murat Efe (computer application) and Atilla Tunca (models).

Project manager Haşim Vatanbaş said in one of his previous interviews that they created the 3-D museum with the aim of capturing what the city looked like on May 29, 1453. Vatanbaş noted that the city fell to the Ottomans at Topkapı, where the biggest battle took place, where the biggest cannons were placed and where Mehmet the Conqueror established his headquarters. The Ottomans did not draw any pictures depicting the exact moment of the conquest, so the project was particularly difficult, he emphasized.

The project was completed after three years of work and preparation with a budget of TL 2.1 million. The entrance fee is TL 5. Student are allowed to enter the museum for TL 3 and tourists for 10 euros.

The İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality's Kültür A.Ş. believes the Panorama 1453 History Museum will help boost İstanbul's image as a European Capital of Culture (ECOC). The Panorama 1453 History Museum is the most outstanding project to be noted when talking about İstanbul 2010 ECOC, according to museum General Manager Nevzat Bayhan. İstanbul, Turkey's largest city, will host a number of major events next year as part of the İstanbul 2010 ECOC project.

Zaman columnist Abdullah Aymaz dedicated one of his recent columns to the Panorama 1453 History Museum, in which he noted his great appreciation of the work by the project group. "I had visited in the past the panoramic museum depicting the Battle of Waterloo in Belgium, but having visited our new museum in İstanbul, I realized that this one is 10 times better than the one in Belgium," he remarked.

Aymaz stressed that the museum is a great work, adding that İstanbul needed such artwork to depict its conquest. "I believe those who feel the atmosphere in the museum will be brought to tears. You should absolutely experience this excitement," he noted.

ŞAH INN PARADISE, THE LARGEST ALTERNATIVE HOTEL IN TURKEY

Şah Inn Paradise, the first and largest five-star hotel in the Turkish alternative tourism market, had no vacant rooms last summer. Located on the Aegean coast, it was the number-one choice among "alternative" hotels for June, July and August last year, and many people are taking advantage of early reservation promotions for this summer. The hotel is also offering different payment options for guests who make early reservations. For those who don't want to leave their vacation plans to chance and would like to enjoy a summer stay at a five-star hotel for a reasonable price, you're not too late to take advantage of the deals at Şah Inn Paradise.



The hotel offers five separate swimming pools for women and children in a 6,000-square-meter private complex. The length of the hotel's beach is 400 meters. The hotel has four king suites, five handicap-accessible rooms, 100 family rooms and 295 standard rooms. There are separate swimming pools for men, a children's activities club, an open buffet restaurant with 1,500 seats, an a la carte restaurant with 150 seats, two 450-person capacity conference halls and two workshop rooms.


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PHOTO: FARUK AKKAN

Turkish and Russian children pose with the flags of their respective countries following a Russian-Turkish Association of Friendship and Business meeting in Moscow last year.

RUSSIA AND TURKEY: NEW COUNTRY, NEW NEIGHBOR

E. BARIŞ ALTINTAŞ İSTANBUL

Turkey had to live through its own "red scare" during the Cold War era, with the average person on the street having an exaggerated fear of communism and, of course, Russians. Not well understood by Turkish people, Russians were seen as communist drunkards doomed to live in poverty. But a series of economic and social dynamics that were set into action with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 completely changed the way Turks perceive Russians.

"First there was fear of communism, in the early years after the Soviet collapse; people here associated Russia with mafia and dangerous liaisons. Businessmen visiting the region would be worried they'd get robbed or attacked. These worries are now in the past, as nearly 2 million come and go annually between the two countries," says İsmail Tas, the secretary-general of the Diyalog Avrasya Platform, which publishes the monthly journal DA (Diyalog Avrasya), which means "yes" in Russian.

The possibility of travel both ways and increasing commercial activity after the fall of the communist regime led to bicultural marriages. Today, the number of Russian-Turkish couples is estimated to be 100,000. "There are also kids now. The child born to a Russian-Turkish couple would need to learn the aspects of both cultures. This is why we need special

schools delivering education targeting the children of such couples," Tas says, explaining how intense interaction between the two nations has brought about new demands.

The Russian perception of Turkey also changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. "After the collapse of the Soviets, they came to Turkey first, as their closest neighbor. They came here and saw a rich country, as opposed to a poor one, which was what they were expecting. Relationships turned into marriages, people started trading and commercial activity," Talha Balık tells Today's Zaman. Balık is the editor-in-chief of the Russian-language quarterly Bosfor, which is sold at newsstands in Russian populated areas of İstanbul and in the south, and also distributed for free in the country's airports, planes and hotels.

Balık notes that the Russian press remained negative toward Turkey until the 2000s. "Then they changed, too," he says. "Also, the two states had to get closer whether they wanted to or not as the increasing proximity between the people forced them to. Turkey's exports to Russia are at \$10 billion, only about \$4 billion of this being recorded economic activity."

The state's attitude in Russia has changed greatly. Balık remembers that in the late '90s, if a Turkish prime minister visited Russia, the news would barely get any coverage in the press. "But every second of Prime

Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visits has been covered, from his arrival at the airport to the minute he leaves," Balık said.

Turkey's establishment has also been more receptive to Russia. "There were only two Russian language departments in Turkish universities in the mid-'90s. Currently, there are at least 12 such departments. Some private schools offer Russian classes as a third language for primary and secondary schoolers. There are also children of bicultural couples," Balık explains. "We will feel the influence of these much more strongly within the next 10 years."

But how does the Turkish public view Russian people now? "The general view is positive," says Tas, though he admits that certain negative stereotypes about Russian women persist. In Turkey, most people still refer to Russian women "Natashas," a word used to describe women from the former Soviet countries who engaged in prostitution, a phrase that emerged at the time of the initial influx of migrants from former Soviet countries in the '90s. "Turkish women have this worry. They see Russian women as potential home wreckers, perhaps due to some of the things that were seen in the Black Sea region in earlier times," he said. But Tas believes Russian women have done a lot to reverse that image. "Many come here to work or for internships in tourism agencies in Antalya. There are a lot of Russian women holding proper jobs," Tas says. "I think the problem is the way we see them as a nation."

Tas, who lived in Russia from 1993 to 2007, points out the common attitudes and ways of thinking between the two nations. "You make a lot of friends and start to see after a while that we show the same reactions to most things and discover traditions common to both nations, such as hospitality."



DAVOS INCIDENT EXPECTED TO BOOST MIDDLE EASTERN TOURISM TO TURKEY

ESRA MADEN İSTANBUL

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's walkout at the World Economic Forum in Davos has boosted Turks' popularity in the Middle East and is expected to increase the number of Middle Eastern tourists choosing to travel to Turkey.

In a move widely welcomed by people throughout the Muslim world, Erdoğan walked off the stage in the middle of a debate at the forum after an exchange with Israeli President Shimon Peres over Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip in January.

"It is clear that Erdoğan's Davos walkout increased Turkey's status in the Middle East. We expect an increase in the number of tourists from Arab countries," Turkish Hoteliers' Association (TUROB) President Timur Bayındır told Today's Zaman. He added, however, that it was still too early to collect any figures on this increase.

Enis Hakman, an official from Mercan Tourism, which brings nearly 60,000 tourists from Middle Eastern countries to Turkey each year, said they also expect Davos to boost tourist numbers. He said his firm was "very optimistic" that Turkey would attract more tourists from the Middle East this year.

Noting that the full effect of Erdoğan's walkout has not yet been felt, Hakman said: "Reservations from the Arab world and the Middle East begin in



PHOTOTODAY'S ZAMAN

March. This year, they will end in August due to the coming of Ramadan. Therefore, we cannot talk about concrete numbers now. But we can say that we expect an increase of 10 to 15 percent."

In addition to political developments, Turkish soap operas broadcasted in Arab countries, such as the popular show "Gümüş," have also increased Turkey's popularity as a tourist destination.

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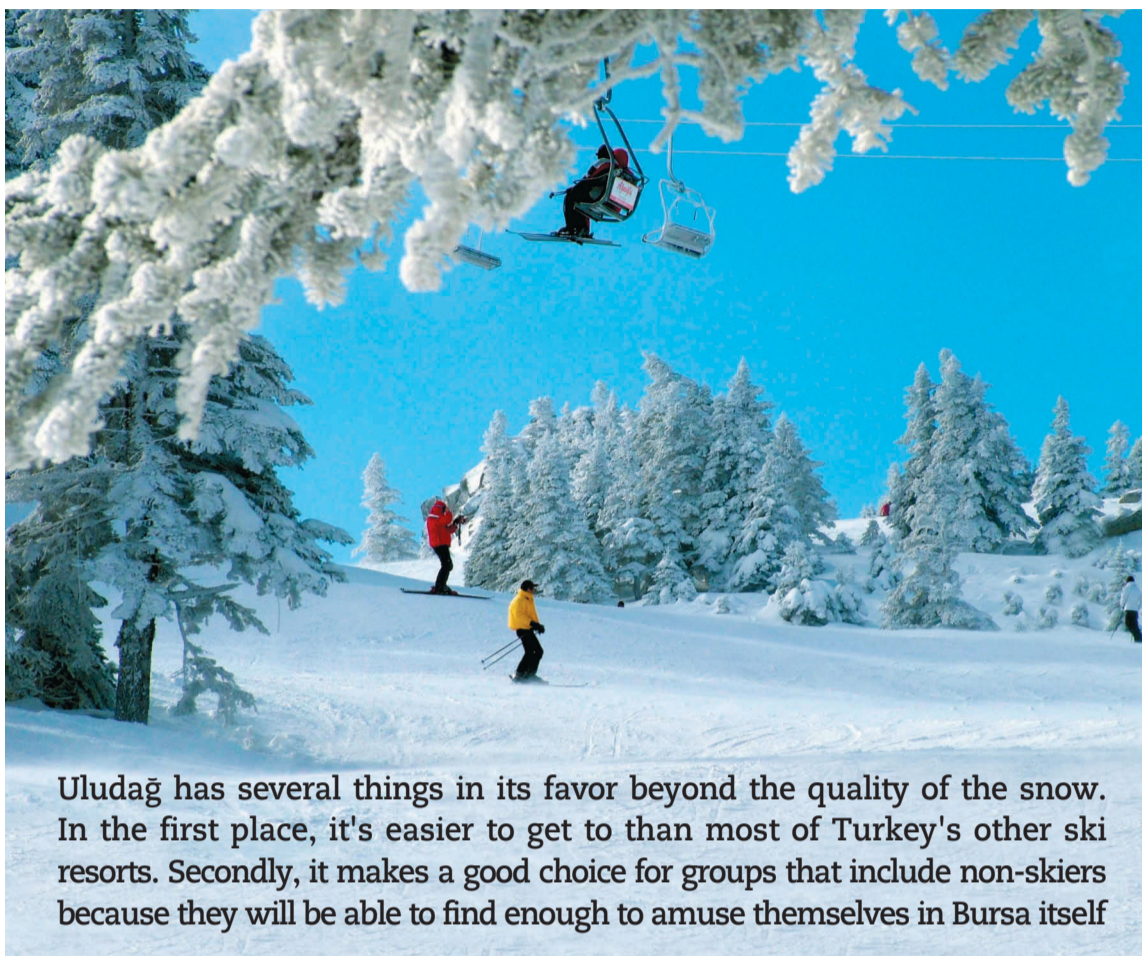
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BURSA AND THE GREAT MOUNTAIN



Uludağ has several things in its favor beyond the quality of the snow. In the first place, it's easier to get to than most of Turkey's other ski resorts. Secondly, it makes a good choice for groups that include non-skiers because they will be able to find enough to amuse themselves in Bursa itself

PAT YALE İSTANBUL

The weather may be unseasonably mild, but that's no reason not to be able to head out to the ski slopes in search of snow. If you live in İstanbul, things could hardly be easier. Turkey's most sophisticated winter sports resort is but a skip and a jump away at Uludağ (Great Mountain) on the outskirts of Bursa, where snow can be guaranteed regardless of how warm it may be elsewhere.

At 2,453 meters, Uludağ is the highest point of a national park that is actually at its most beautiful in spring and autumn, the times of year when heavy mists are least likely to descend without warning. But of course most visitors tend to come here in winter to take advantage of the 10 ski slopes and the many hotels that provide the après-ski fun. Most of them cater to the better-heeled part of the market; to save money you may need to put up in Bursa itself and travel to the slopes on a daily basis, taking advantage of the cable car that whisks visitors up to the snowline.

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Koza Han



The Muradiye complex



Turkey's other ski resorts. From İstanbul, for example, you need only hop on the İDO ferry from Yenikapı to Güzelyalı, and then transit Bursa to reach the slopes. Secondly, Uludağ makes a good choice for groups that include non-skiers because they will be able to find more than enough to amuse them in Bursa itself.

These days Bursa is a fast-growing industrial town with flourishing textile and automobile industries. However, beyond the initially off-putting modern development there lurk many reminders of the days when it was the first Ottoman capital, and a town that the later sultans tended to look on with a favorable eye. For those with an interest in Ottoman history, the first place to start exploring is Timurtaş Paşa Parkı, the ridge of land high up above the main road that rips through the town center. It's here that you will be able to inspect the tombs of Osman and Orhan, the father and son who started the Ottomans on their path to supremacy in the 13th and 14th centuries. The original tombs fell victim to a 19th-century earthquake; what you see today are the replacements ordered by Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861-76), who could not have known at the time that he would one of the last half-dozen men to govern the empire.

The city walls that used to surround the tombs have long since disappeared, although sections still survive in nearby Tophane and have recently been restored to form the centerpiece of an increasingly trendy part of town. Buses from Tophane trundle out to the suburb called Çekirge ("Grasshopper"), which is best known for its many thermal baths. You can try the waters at the Eski Kaplıca ("Old Hot Spring") or its rival the Yeni Kaplıca ("New Hot Spring"), which actually dates back to the 16th century. Better still, book into one of the many thermal hotels which offer either mineral water in the bathrooms or access to private hamams. Most impressive is the Hotel Çelik Palas, whose beautiful bathing facilities come courtesy of Atatürk, who built a private home right next door.

The baths are great places to chill out after a long day on the ski slopes, but there are plenty of other corners of Bursa that repay exploration, too. If you love bazaars but find the full-on attentions of some of the shopkeepers at the Kapalı Çarşı (Covered Bazaar) in İstanbul a bit hard to take, then Bursa's partially covered bazaar will come as a welcome surprise. For visitors, the main items to look out for are the lovely fluffy bathrobes (bornoz) and towels for which Bursa is famous. Alternatively, you may want to track down the Aynalı Çarşı (Mirrored Market), a good place to shop for Karagöz shadow puppets inside what was once a 14th-century bathhouse.

The bazaar spreads out from behind the austere late 14th-century Ulu Cami, which stands right beside the main road. Just a little way to the east is the Koza Han, where merchants used to come to sell silkworms. It's still a great place to shop for a silk scarf, or, if shopping's not your thing, just to have tea in the shade of some of Bursa's venerable plane trees.

Within walking distance of the Koza Han,

behind the statue in Heykel of Atatürk that is an important landmark, is the City Museum, where you can find out about the Ottoman emperors and about some of the picturesque local trades that no longer exist. A bit further away is the Tofaş Museum of Anatolian Carriages, a fine collection of all things mobile housed inside an old silk factory. It's the perfect place to bring older children who are desperate for distraction after overdosing on all the history.

Bursa's other sites are more spread out although an efficient network of dolmu?es will get you to most of them in no time at all. Best known is the Yeşil Türbe, the so-called "green" but actually blue-tiled tomb of Sultan Mehmet I (r. 1413-21), which stands right beside the Yeşil Cami, a mosque that marked a step change in Turkish mosque architecture away from Persian prototypes. This is an especially pleasant area to wan-

der around, with panoramic views back over the city and a number of fine old wooden houses.

It's also well worth seeking out the Muradiye area, which centers on the fine Muradiye complex, a collection of 12 tombs gathered in a box-scented garden behind the early 15th-century Sultan II. Murat Cami. Most of the tombs house the remains of crown princes who fell victim to a system of inheritance that left the succession up to the strongest son rather than the first-born; the results were inevitably bloody as relatives turned on each other to ensure their own supremacy. Nearby are a couple more small museums that may or may not be open: The Ottoman House Museum offers the chance to see what a typical home might have looked like in the 19th century, while the Hüsnü Züher Evi contains some interesting collections, including a set of wooden spoons whose delicacy will cast all those you'll see on sale today into the shade.

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BUSINESS-CLASS AIR TRAVEL DROPS IN DECEMBER

Airlines sold far fewer business and first class seats in December, though economy travel in the Christmas period was buoyed somewhat by tickets bought before economic gloom set in, a global industry body said.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) said "premium" traffic was 13.3 percent lower in December than the same month in 2007, following the 11.5 year-on-year drop seen in November.

"This precipitous fall has been driven by the abrupt decline in business activity and international trade around the world," IATA said in its latest Premium Traffic Monitor.

Asia had the largest drop, with Far East flights filling 25.1 percent fewer top-tier seats compared to the year before, said the Geneva-based IATA, which represents 230 airlines including British Airways, Cathay Pacific and United Airlines. Singapore Airlines, the biggest airline by market value, said on



PHOTOGRAPH

ing January and consumer confidence falling further it seems that the bottom has not been reached for air travel and even weaker numbers may become evidence in the first few months of this year." For 2008 as a whole, IATA said premium travel fell 2.8 percent while economy travel rose 0.9 percent.

Because economy tickets represent more than 90 percent of all tickets sold, overall passenger numbers on international markets flown by IATA airlines grew 0.5 percent last year. Although sliding oil and jet fuel prices have given airlines some respite, IATA said weakening passenger and cargo demand has created new problems, causing both fares and yields to drop. Premium tickets normally make up about 8 percent of total passenger numbers but 15 to 20 percent of revenues. IATA said airlines saw a 20 percent drop in premium revenues in December, which if sustained could cut 3 percent or \$15 billion from the airline industry's annual revenues. **Geneva** Reuters

Monday it was cutting capacity by 11 percent in the year from April due to waning travel and cargo demand.

Overall, December premium traffic fell 8.8 percent in the North Atlantic region, 16.3 percent in Europe and 4.2 percent in the Middle East, according to IATA's data that excludes domestic flights. Africa was an exception, with 11.8 percent year-on-year premium traffic growth in December.

In economy class, the picture was less bleak. Some 5.3 percent fewer people took cross-border flights in December compared to the year before.

"Leisure trips at this time of the year may well have been pre-booked before the full extent of the recession was apparent, so an accelerated fall in economy travel numbers should be expected in January," IATA said. "With jobs being lost at an increasing rate dur-

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Tulip Süites

There are 4 rooms, facing to the winter garden, and in which all details are handled with fine points, in this floor, in which main entrance gate of the residence is located. This floor has 360 cm storey height and it has the highest storey height. Bronze bedsteads and bedstead headers are used in all rooms. There are wireless internet access, dressing table, mini-bar, digital cash for putting notebook, central heating and cooling system, TV in Pasha Rooms and shower cabinets with light and vapor massage in all bathrooms.

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Pasha Suites

There are 4 rooms, facing to Sultanahmet Mosque and Tulip Garden, and which are opened into a large hall, designed to be used as rest, reading, and exhibition hall and decorated with ceiling ornaments. Each room is decorated differently. Ceiling height is 337 cm in the rooms and it is the floor, in which biggest rooms of the mansion are located. 18th and 19th Century brass bedsteads are used in all rooms, gold leaf ornaments are made on the doors and ceilings, curtains are hidden with wooden wainscot with leaf engravings due to height of the ceilings. Curtains in different color and designs are used in each room. Furthermore, walls, on which bed headers and wardrobes are placed, are decorated with wallpapers in each room.



Winter Garden

Winter garden is located in the back part of the residence, shadowed with two buildings, and it has floor heating and it serves as breakfast hall and cafe-snack bar during the daytime. Winter garden is covered with a mulberry tree and pleasant coffee rituals of old periods are experienced with the illuminations at nights.



**ERTEN
KONAK**

ECJ UPHOLDS RIGHT TO ENTER EU WITHOUT VISA



PHOTO: TODAY'S ZAMAN

The ECJ recently ruled that two Turkish truck drivers had the right to enter Germany without a visa under a past agreement signed between Turkey and the EU.

A top European court recently cleared the way for Turkish businesspeople providing services in European Union member states to enter the EU without having to obtain visas first, a decision that experts say is a step toward removing many other restrictions EU countries currently impose on Turkish nationals.

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled on Feb. 19 that two Turkish truck drivers working for a Turkish company engaged in the international transport of goods had the right to enter Germany without a visa under a past agreement signed between Turkey and the European Union, known as the European Economic Community (EEC) at the time.

A protocol signed between Turkey and the EEC in 1970 and approved by the EEC in 1972 states that EEC states and Turkey will refrain from introducing any new restrictions on the freedom of establishment or the freedom to provide services from the time of entry into force of the protocol in the signatory countries.

The protocol, titled the "Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement between Turkey and the EEC," entered into force in January 1973 in Germany. This means Germany was not allowed to introduce any new restrictions curbing Turks' freedom of establishment or freedom to provide services in its territory. But restrictions began to mount in the coming decades, as Germany toughened its immigration laws. New immigration laws implemented in the 1980s and toughened further in recent years made the acquisition of visas a requirement for Turkish nationals, together with other non-EU citizens, in order to enter German territory for business or other purposes.

The Turkish complainants in the case, Mehmet Soysal and İbrahim Savatlı, argued that the visa requirement was in violation of Article 41

The implications of the verdict are not known yet, but some say it will mean a free pass for up to 50 million Turks to enter EU countries. 'This decision paves the way for 48 million Turkish people who provide services; our employers, academics, journalists and everyone working in the services sector,' says Professor Harun Gümrükçü.

of the Additional Protocol of the Association Agreement between Turkey and the EEC. Germany denied that it was required to allow the two Turkish nationals to enter its territory without visas to transport goods, but the court ruled otherwise.

"It must be concluded that legislation such as that at issue in the main proceedings constitutes a 'new restriction,' within the meaning of Article 41(1) of the Additional Protocol, of the right of Turkish nationals resident in Turkey to freely provide services in Germany," the ECJ said in its verdict.

Turkish Exporters Assembly (TİM) President Mehmet Büyükeksi welcomed the decision and said the court decision paved the way for Turkish businessmen and exporters to freely travel to EU countries. He said,

"Pursuant to the Customs Union agreement [between Turkey and the EU] signed in 1996, Turkish goods started to move freely within EU territory while the businessmen that produced those goods have been restricted in their freedom of movement." Stressing that business visits are paramount to promoting trade relations, Büyükeksi said, "A major problem facing our exporters and businessmen who want to travel to EU states for exhibitions and business meetings has been removed."

Another business leader, Murat Saraylı, chairman of the Young Businessmen's Association of Turkey (TÜGİAD) and president of Young Entrepreneurs for Europe (YES), said the ruling meant that the ECJ agreed that the restrictions imposed on Turkish entrepreneurs by EU countries up until now have been unfair and infringe upon the rights given by the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement. "There is no need to negotiate with the EU for easing up the visa application process," he said, "Because it is our natural right to enter EU territory to provide services."

The implications of the verdict are not known yet, but some say it will mean a free pass for up to 50 million Turks to enter EU countries. "This decision paves the way for 48 million Turkish people who provide services; our employers, academics, journalists and everyone working in the services sector, ranging from barbers to belly dancers," said Professor Harun Gümrükçü of Akdeniz University at a press conference. Contrary to others who argue that the decision will only concern the applicants, Gümrükçü said the ruling would have wide-ranging implications for almost all of Turkish society.

The Turkish government has been cautious and avoided comment on possible ramifications, with officials privately advising Turkish entrepreneurs to pursue their individual cases at the relevant European courts. But business circles want more government involve-

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ment to pressure EU countries to extend the rights endorsed by the ECJ for all Turkish citizens concerned.

Can Baydarol, International Freighters Association (UND) expert on EU affairs, hailed the ECJ decision as very positive. He said the decision has a binding effect on all 27 EU member states and asked for a speedy implementation of the decision at the bureaucratic level. "Both Turkish and EU representatives should come together to hammer out the technical details in implementing this ruling and should lay out a clear policy on how to put the decision into effect," he added. Baydarol also raised the possibility of compensating truck drivers who have already paid visa fees.

Serdar Yeşilyurt, the head of the Brussels Office of the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON), the largest business interest group in Turkey, also welcomed the decision, but cautioned about political implications that might circumvent the court's decision. "Visa problems confronting Turkish entrepreneurs and service providers

need to be addressed at political meetings between Turkey and EU," he told Today's Zaman. "Otherwise, we might end up facing new bureaucratic impediments to visa applicants from Turkey."

Gümrükçü said the government should immediately create a commission to coordinate efforts for the restoration of Turks' rights under the Association Agreement and its Additional Protocol. "This commission should determine what restrictions on the freedom of establishment and providing services have been introduced since the 1970s up to today. Then the government should apply to the European Commission, asking for the removal of these unlawful restrictions," he said. Gümrükçü added that the ECJ decision would particularly undermine most of the restrictions Germany has imposed on Turks as part of its toughened immigration laws.

Germany has a Turkish population of nearly 3 million. Turks have been complaining of increased restrictions by the German government in recent years as part

of the country's new immigration laws.

Criticizing the Turkish government for not putting the visa issue at the forefront of Turkish foreign policy, Bahadır Kaleağası, the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association's (TÜSİAD) permanent representative to the EU, said the right to visa waivers was long overdue. Speaking to Today's Zaman via phone from TÜSİAD's Brussels office, he described the visa practices the EU has applied to Turkish citizens as "a scandal" and said they "amount to racism." "For a long time now, the EU has been issuing short-term visas to Turkish citizens, including businessmen, only after long, painstaking application processes," he added.

In a similar case, the ECJ ruled in September 2008 that two self-employed Turkish citizens, Mehmet Dan and Veli Tüm, must be given residence permits in Britain even though their presence in the country was deemed illegal. The court again cited the Association Agreement, which gives Turks the freedom to establish businesses in any EU country. **Istanbul** Today's Zaman



PHOTO: TODAY'S ZAMAN

ATATÜRK AIRPORT REGISTERS HIGHEST FLIGHT INCREASE

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URBAN TREKKING IN THE NEW İSTANBUL

JOHN CROFOOT İSTANBUL

To build a mental map that encompasses the vast expanse of greater İstanbul, there is no substitute for following step by step the twists and turns of the city's newer neighborhoods.

To this end, a meandering trek from Alibeyköy to Pierre Loti offers the chance both to observe the evolution of small neighborhoods and to take in the urban landscape from a distance.

The course passes through three main shopping districts: Alibeyköy, Yeşil Pınar and Bağlarbaşı Street in the center of Gaziosmanpaşa. Shiny new buildings on Namık Kemal Caddesi in downtown Alibeyköy are evidence of new prosperity. The mood in Yeşil Pınar's commercial center, a maze of narrow streets reminiscent of Damascus, is less hopeful. Gaziosmanpaşa Merkez, with its pedestrian-friendly central plaza, smart-looking municipal building, Ottoman-style mosque and large commercial district, is a major hub of İstanbul's social and economic life.

Residential architecture along the route is diverse, ranging from small dwellings to multistory houses to large apartment blocks. Many of the apartment blocks in Çırcır and Yeşil Pınar (west of Alibeyköy on Atatürk Caddesi), while simple in design, are separated by gardens planted with grass, shrubs and trees. There is room for children to play in small parks, gardens, basketball courts and soccer fields. Boys play ball and ride bikes in the quiet streets. The older, more crowded neighborhoods of Bağlarbaşı and İslambey (near the center of Gaziosmanpaşa) offer less space for play.

Alibeyköy, Çırcır, Karadolap and Yeşil Pınar also differ from the neighborhoods to the south in the number of athletic facilities and empty lots. In Alibeyköy, there is the Öz Alibeyköy Sports Club (www.ozalibeykoyspor.com), founded in 1990 by volunteers who wanted to provide youth with alternatives to cigarettes, drugs and computer games. The club has 300 members, 120 licensed athletes and six soccer teams for athletes ages 8-20. Çırcır boasts the Tevfik Aydeniz Sports Center, a small sports complex run by Spor A.Ş. Yeşil Pınar has a new 25-meter swimming pool, also run by Spor A.Ş. Furthermore, Atatürk Bulvarı and Gazi

Without twists and turns, the walk from Alibeyköy to Pierre Loti by way of Yeşil Pınar and Gaziosmanpaşa Merkez is 10 kilometers. But to enjoy the neighborhoods, the views and a taste of southern Turkish cuisine in Gaziosmanpaşa Merkez, set aside five hours for the walk

Osman Paşa Caddesi have, in places, adequate empty space for the addition of pedestrian and bicycle paths set away from automobile traffic. Eventually, such paths could link Alibeyköy with Yunus Emre to the west and Zeytinburnu and the Marmara Sea to the south.

Some parks are more successful than others. Sancaklılar Park in the center of Alibeyköy has a swing set and basketball court, the latter of which is used as a car park. What had been a park in Yeşil Pınar (on Semerkant Street) has been filled with later stage multistory gecekondus, many of which are still under construction. While many parks appear to have definite boundaries and are well maintained, the numerous empty lots could be used either as parks or for residential or commercial construction.

Urban trekkers, be they walkers or runners, should make a point of finding the four main vantage points along this route. The first is the park (marked by a large Turkish flag) above Alibeyköy's commercial district. From here you observe the new development along the Alibeyköy River and the business towers of Levent reaching up behind the tightly packed residences of Kağıthane.

The park at the southwest corner of Karadolap (south of Atatürk Bulvarı) offers a panoramic view of İstanbul's residential development: small gecekondus on the steep hillside below the park contrast

with the newer, generously spaced apartment blocks of Yeşil Pınar. The Gaziosmanpaşa municipal building (distinguished by its curved roof) and Çamlıca (on the Asian side) are also visible from here.

The third major vantage point is from Şelale Street, across Atatürk Bulvarı from the Veysel Karani Camii in Yeşil Pınar. The forest stretches northward, its eastern limit marked by the skyscrapers of Levent and Maslak. A large complex of residential towers rises at the western end of Atatürk Bulvarı. Except for the forest, all the eye can see is very new, as if one is looking at the future.

Finally, from Pierre Loti, you have a famous, nostalgic view of İstanbul, which is all the more pleasing as the pieces of the mental map fall into place.

To get to Alibeyköy, take a minibus from Şişhane, Eyüp or Gaziosmanpaşa Merkez. If you decide not to complete the full distance, there are minibuses from Yeşil Pınar on Atatürk Bulvarı or from Yağlıdere Park at the lower end of Yeşil Pınar. Transportation to every corner of İstanbul is available from Gaziosmanpaşa Merkez.

Without twists and turns, the walk from Alibeyköy to Pierre Loti by way of Yeşil Pınar and Gaziosmanpaşa Merkez is 10 kilometers. But to enjoy the neighborhoods, the views and a taste of southern Turkish cuisine in Gaziosmanpaşa Merkez, set aside five hours for the walk. This walk provides a good workout, as there are several steep climbs and descents. Here are the thoroughfares to use as a general guide: Follow Atatürk Bulvarı west from Alibeyköy to Yeşil Pınar; Semerkant and Gıme Streets will take you south through the center of Yeşil Pınar and down to Gazi Osman Paşa Caddesi. From here follow Bağlarbaşı Caddesi two kilometers uphill to Gaziosmanpaşa Merkez. Göçmenler Street parallels Gazi Muhtar Paşa Caddesi, and from there head down Saya Street, turn left at the bottom of the street and then take Gümüş Street uphill, then continue up Hüsam Efendi Street (it's a staircase) toward Pierre Loti.

These are pleasant neighborhoods for walking and running, as the backstreets of Çırcır and Karadolap are quiet, there's little traffic and few pedestrians, but you'll have to dodge the occasional soccer ball. And be prepared for steep hills!



PHOTO: KÜRSAT BAYHAN

YACHT OWNERS PROPOSE MAKING BLUE CRUISE TOURS YEAR-ROUND

Recommendations have been put forward to extend the Blue Cruise, a voyage along Turkey's Mediterranean and Aegean coasts, to cover the whole year, in an effort to extend the tourism season.

Arif Yılmaz, chairman of the Bodrum Chamber of Commerce Yacht Committee, believes providing the Blue Cruise year-round could help the tourism sector. The climate is warm along the coast all year long, and there are many historical sites and wildlife to see both on land and underwater.

The Blue Cruise also stops by a number of coves and provides tourists with an opportunity to relax and enjoy the sun. The clarity of the water makes stops ideal locations for snorkeling, diving, amateur sponge hunting and underwater photography.

In addition, cruise-goers can enjoy nature, visit historical places and villages in the coves and take culinary, ecological or bird-watching tours, Yılmaz said, adding that yachts sailing the Blue Cruise can follow custom itineraries throughout the year.

He also emphasized that all coves between Baba Burnu, Çanakkale and Antalya's Phaselis can be visited while on the cruise and noted that they need to be protected from industrial development.

Greece and Croatia compete with Turkey

Most Blue Cruise passengers come from the mid-

The Blue Cruise stops by a number of coves and provides tourists with an opportunity to relax and enjoy the sun.



PHOTO TODAY'S ZAMAN

dle and upper classes, Yılmaz said, adding that the financial crisis has yet to affect cruise-goers.

Greece and Croatia also provides cruises along the coast, Yılmaz said, but added that the two countries use wooden sailboats that are much smaller than Turkish yachts and therefore have a smaller fleet. Furthermore, Turkey's summer season is longer and the climate much warmer in the coves, giving it an upper hand in the Blue Cruise competition.

Murat Süslü, president of the Mugla Culture and Tourism Association, said they have accelerated work to promote the Blue Cruise routes as well as 24 marinas in Bodrum, Marmaris and Fethiye. Brochures are being prepared in four languages and will include information about the region and rules that need to be followed in Turkish territorial waters as well as numbers tourists can contact to learn more about the cruise, he said.

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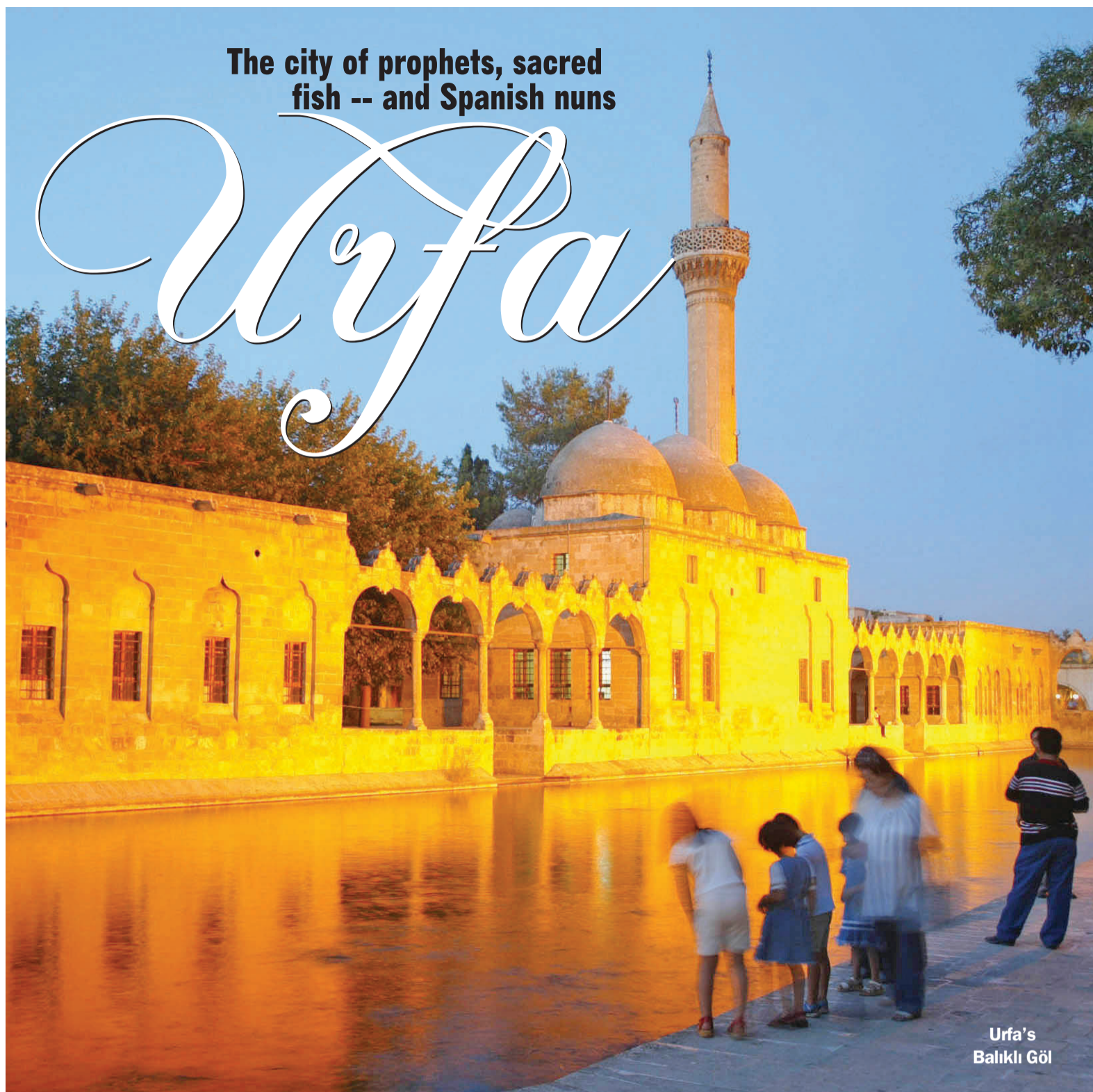


PHOTO: KURSAT BAYHAN

The city of prophets, sacred fish -- and Spanish nuns

Urfa

Urfa's
Balıklı Göl

TERRY RICHARDSON URFA

Ancient Urfa, huddled amongst the very last limestone folds of the Toros Mountains as they peter out into the vast sweep of the Mesopotamian plain, is one of Turkey's most atmospheric cities. In the bazaar, Arabic-speaking village men from the Syrian borderlands, a little over 50 kilometers to the south, trawl the stalls for impossibly shiny and colorful swatches of cloth for their daughters' wedding trousseaus. Their womenfolk, the faces of many of the more elderly sporting tribal henna tattoos, haggle over the prices of copper pots -- still hand beaten and tinned in this most traditional of bazaars. Farmers from the austere hill country to the north, their heads adorned with the rather incongruous lilac headscarves peculiar to the region, stop to sniff handfuls of the rich green tobacco displayed in open sacks and discuss its merits in guttural Kurdish. In the shadow of the citadel rock, pious pilgrims from all over the Muslim world queue patiently outside a small cave shrine, according to legend the birthplace of the Prophet Abraham. In the city's Archaeological Museum, gaggles of blue-smocked Turkish schoolchildren file uncomprehendingly past the statue of a human found in what is now the city center. So naive

in execution a child could have done it, the figure was, in fact, hewn by early man some 11,000 years ago.

Urfa's long, fascinating history and surprisingly cosmopolitan, multilingual present make it an essential stop in any trip to Turkey's Southeast -- or even just for a weekend city break. By far the best way to see the compact, historic heart of the city (except in the scorching heat of the summer, when temperatures rise to 40 degrees Celsius and above) is on foot. The most obvious spot to begin is Balıklı Göl at the western end of a delightfully green and shady park area beneath the north face of Urfa's impressive citadel rock. Bordered by the elegant arches of the 18th century Rizvaniye Mosque to the north and by the older Abdürrahman Mosque to the south, the pale green waters of the spring-fed pool are thick with carp. According to legend, the origins of both the pool and the fish are tied to Abraham. The prophet, railing against the tyranny of the local dynast Nimrod, was captured, carried to the peak of the citadel rock and hurled down toward a massive bonfire below. God interceded and turned the flames into water (Balıklı Göl) and the burning logs into fish (the carp).

The fish, sacred to local Muslims, are never eaten, and itinerant vendors sell little trays of fish food to visitors. When the food is scattered across the lake

surface, the water positively boils with a writhing, wriggling mass of hungry carp. The fish were not always quite so lucky. When British Anglican missionary Percy Badger was traveling through Urfa in 1824 (when there was still a considerable Christian population in the city) he noted that "the Christians often partake of the forbidden dainty, the fish being easily secured in the streams which flow from the pond through the gardens. They generally cook them with a wine sauce, and declare them excellent." A Spanish nun named Egeria, visiting the city in A.D. 384, saw the fish on the grounds of what was then the palace of the Christian King Abgar and commented: "I have never seen fish like them; they were so big, so brightly colored and tasted so good." The fish you see today are clearly revered by Muslims and were important to Christians, but the origin of the fish pools goes back much further, to the cult of the Syrian goddess of love and fertility, Attargatis. Then, the altar of the goddess lay in the center of the pool, and her followers would swim and indulge in erotic ceremonies in the cool waters.

From Balıklı Göl, it's just a short stroll south, beneath the shade of willow, mulberry and cypress trees and past the tea gardens ringing a second pool, to the foot of the citadel. Spectacularly perched on a

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slim ridge, the citadel dates back to the time of Byzantine emperor Justinian (A.D. 527-565), but has been much rebuilt since, mainly in the Mamluk, Akkoyunlu and Ottoman eras. It's a steep climb, with over 200 steps zigzagging up the cliff face, but on the bright side, the steps are both broad and shallow. Apart from a pair of very impressive and monumental Corinthian columns (according to some versions of local lore, the stanchions of the catapult used to launch Abraham down into the flames, but more likely the remnants of King Abgar's palace) there's little to see within the citadel. The main reason for the clamber is to admire the fine views over Urfa and really appreciate its setting at the very edge of the Mesopotamian plain. If you don't mind uneven steps and are not claustrophobic, you can descend through a tunnel once used by defenders of the citadel to get water from the pools below.

From the foot of the citadel, head east along the base of the cliff, past the Yeni Camii (New Mosque) to the İbrahim Halilulla Dergahi, or cave of Abraham, set in the grounds of the Mevlid-i-Halil Camii. There's nearly always a line of pilgrims here, the majority of them women, hoping a coin cast into the small pool inside the cave shrine will help make their wish (invariably to become pregnant) come true.

It's now just a 10-minute stroll northeast to Urfa's bustling bazaar, a warren of narrow alleys radiating out from the central Gümrük Han. This delightful late 16th century Ottoman building comprises a spacious courtyard bounded on all four sides by a double-tier of small rooms. Originally, these would have been used as workshops, retail outlets and accommodation for travelers heading along the camel routes between Mesopotamia and Anatolia, and some are still used by watch repairers, tailors and the like to this day. For those on a walking tour of the city, the Gümrük Han has two important functions -- as a reference point if you get lost in the twisting alleys of the bazaar and as an atmospheric pit stop. Grab one of the small stools in the shade of the courtyard's giant plane tree and order a sweet black tea -- or even the local specialty, mirra, a bitter coffee drunk from cups so tiny they make Turkish coffee cups look like giant beakers. You'll be surrounded by Urfa's sage old men, often sporting checkered Arab-style headdresses and clicking prayer beads -- or clattering down tavla (backgammon) pieces. In the bazaar itself, look out for pistachios (half the price they are in İstanbul and other cities in western Turkey), the nearly black and fiery-hot isot pepper flakes and the bazaar-made copper-

ware. If you have more money to burn, the range of traditional gold and silver jewelry is particularly good.

Another 10-minute walk leads you to the city's most important mosque, the Ulu Camii. Built in the 12th century, it is typically Arab in style, with a rectangular prayer hall built on a west-east axis, allowing the maximum number of faithful close proximity to the all-important south, Mecca-facing kibra wall. It's not the most beautiful of mosques, with the low, cross-vaulted ceiling and heavy supporting piers making it rather gloomy, but it certainly has atmosphere -- particularly at midday prayer time.

Outside in the spacious courtyard and quite separate from the prayer hall is a striking octagonal minaret. Almost certainly once the bell tower of St. Stephen's Church, which stood on this site, it's a real landmark in the city and a reminder that Urfa was once an important Christian center. Indeed, it was the second region in the world (after Palestine) to accept the Christian faith. According to local lore, King Abgar heard that a man called Jesus was performing great miracles in Palestine. Intrigued, Abgar wrote a letter inviting him to Urfa (then known, as it had been since its re-foundation by Macedonian king Seleucus I Nicator in 303 B.C., as Edessa). Jesus turned down Abgar's offer, but as a token of good faith, sent him a letter and a handkerchief bearing an imprint of his face -- the so-called Mandylion. This holy relic still carries great significance for followers of the Syrian Orthodox faith, though the Mandylion itself, subsequently taken to Constantinople by a Byzantine king, was destroyed when the Crusaders looted the city in 1204.

If you have time, it's worth walking another half an hour or so north to the Archaeological Museum, set in a pleasant park area on a hill overlooking the city. The finds on display here give a striking visual reminder of the peoples who have contributed to the city over the millennia. Starting with the anthropomorphic statue dating back to the 10th millennium B.C., through the Hurrians, Hittites, Assyrians and Neo-Hittites, Urfa was an important but relatively small settlement overshadowed by the much larger town of Harran to the south. Re-founded by a Seleucid king, one of the successors of Alexander the Great, it grew in size and importance over the coming centuries, with the Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamluks and Ottomans all having a hand in its development. Following the resolve of the Urfalılar (inhabitants of Urfa) battling against the French in the aftermath of World War I, Urfa was given the honorary prefix "Şanlı" or "glorious" for its part in paving the way for modern Turkey's independence.

On her fourth century visit to Edessa (Urfa), Spanish nun Egeria commented, "In this city there was so much to see that I had to stay there for three days." The same holds true for the traveler visiting Urfa today, for few Turkish cities have the depth of history and culture of "Glorious" Urfa.



Historic cupola homes in Harran



Remnants of Urfa's ancient university



Urfa's citadel rock

TRAVEL TIPS

How to get here: Daily flights from İstanbul and Ankara or buses from all major cities in Turkey.

Accommodation:

Expensive: Hotel Harran Tel: (414) 313 2860.

Mid-range/boutique: Beyazade Konak Tel: (414) 216 3535, www.beyzadekonak.com

Budget: Bakay Hotel Tel: (414) 215 8975.

Eating: Kebabistan, Yıldız Meydanı 23 for excellent kebabs and lahmacun.

Gülhan, Atatürk Bulvarı, Akbak Bitişiği for lunchtime sulu yemek.

Gülizar Konak Evi, an atmospheric old konak house serving traditional Urfa delicacies.

Guides and books: The Rough, Lonely Planet and Blue guides to Turkey; "From the Holy Mountain" by William Dalrymple; "The Nestorians and Their Rituals" by George Percy Badger; "Egeria's Travels" translated by John Wilkinson.



Harran's famous beehive houses

THE UNIQUE COOKING METHODS OF A TURKISH KITCHEN

NEVIN HALICI İSTANBUL

Food is an integral part of human life. Primitive humans first ate their food raw and whole. Over time they began cutting their food. Then they began processing their food with grinding stones and, finally, man discovered fire and began cooking. Similarly, eating and drinking etiquette has changed over time, eventually developing into today's level of courtesy and elegance.

As for cooking techniques in Turkey, methods in the traditional and contemporary kitchen are similar. The first is cooking with water. This method is for cooking foods by boiling or steaming. All kinds of food, including meat, vegetables and legumes, can be boiled in water. Bain-marie cooking is rare, but not unheard of in the Turkish kitchen. In the Ali Eşref Dede cookbook there is a reference to steamed rice. A similar method is used in Çorum and İkiliip for cooking rice.

The second method is frying. Foods can be deep fried or pan fried. Many foods are often cooked by frying, especially vegetable patties, vegetables and Turkish doughnuts.

The third method is dry-heat cooking. Roasting, grilling, broiling and sautéing are classified as dry-heat cooking methods. Tandoori is another dry-heat cooking method that is common in Anatolian kitchens. Almost anything can be cooked in a tandoori oven. Konya, Siirt and Kastamonu are known for all kinds of tandoori lamb meals.

The fourth method is water-oil cooking. This is the most common method used in the Turkish kitchen and is used for making stuffed foods, moussaka, stew and any other dish cooked in a saucepan. You can be certain that you are making Turkish-style food if your chopping up some onions, frying them in a saucepan, adding some ground meat, tomato and pepper paste, stirring it a little, adding washed and chopped vegetables, one or two chopped tomatoes and some green peppers and then topping it off with some salt and pepper.

The last method we can call combo-cooking. This method is a combination of all of the above, such as karniyarik (slashed eggplant), where the eggplant is fried and the ground meat is sautéed.



Saç kebab (Iron plate kebab)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 kilogram semi-lean lamb thigh
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 tomatoes (peeled and chopped) or 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- Half teaspoon black pepper
- Half teaspoon ground red pepper
- Half teaspoon thyme
- Half teaspoon cumin
- Half teaspoon cinnamon
- 5 onions (finely chopped)
- 5 green peppers (Finely chopped)
- ½ bundle of chopped dill
- 1 cup hot water

Note: And don't forget the rice on the side.

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BANANA CAKE ROLL



Cake ingredients: 4 tablespoons sugar, 4 eggs (separate whites and yolks), 4 tablespoons flour, 1 packet baking powder

Filling: 1 liter milk, 3 tablespoons flour, 4.5 tablespoons sugar, 2 eggs, 1.5-2 bananas, 1-2 teaspoons cocoa powder (optional), coconut flakes or chopped walnuts make good toppings for the cake.

Cake directions: Mix 4 tablespoons sugar and 4 egg yolks. In separate bowl, mix 4 tablespoons flour and 1 packet baking powder. Beat 4 egg whites in small bowl until fluffy. Slowly add egg whites to mixed egg yolks and sugar; then beat in flour. Spread cake batter evenly onto wax paper. Bake at 170 degrees Celsius in preheated oven until cake is light golden brown. Cake will bake very quickly. Gently roll up cake into a loose roll. Place a damp towel over the cake and let rest.

Filling directions: Mix 3 tablespoons flour, 4.5 tablespoons sugar, 2 eggs and 1 or 2 teaspoons of cocoa powder in a medium-size saucepan.

APRICOT COOKIES



Ingredients: 1 cup of chopped dried apricots, 5 tablespoons confectioners' sugar, 250 grams of margarine at room temperature, 3 cups flour, 1 packet baking powder, 2 eggs and coconut flakes.

Directions: Beat margarine, egg yolks and apricots. Sift confectioners' sugar into mixture. Lastly, sift flour and baking powder to make dough. Take small pieces of the dough and roll into a cookie. Dip cookies into egg whites and then into coconut flakes. Place on greased tray and cook until light brown at 180 degrees Celsius.

ROLLED PASTRY



Ingredients: 4 sheets of phyllo dough, 1.5 cup milk, 1 egg, 3 tablespoons olive oil, feta cheese, chopped parsley, 1 egg yolk, black sesame

Note: Cheese and parsley filling can be substituted with mashed potatoes or ground meat.

Directions: Beat milk, eggs and olive oil in bowl. Mix mashed feta cheese and chopped parsley in separate bowl. Place one sheet of phyllo dough on table and spread milk mixture over half of it. Fold over other half to cover three fourths of phyllo dough and spread same mixture on folded part. Spread cheese filling on top. Roll up dough starting from the edges. Cut roll in half and place on greased tray. Follow the same directions for remaining three sheets. Spread any leftover milk mixture over rolls. Beat egg yolk and brush it on top of rolls. Decorate with black sesame and bake in oven until golden brown.

SESAME STICKS



Ingredients: 125 grams margarine, 1 egg yolk, 1 egg white, 1 packet baking powder, 100 milliliters (the size of a traditional Turkish tea glass) vegetable oil, 3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar, 4 table spoons yogurt, 1 teaspoon salt, about 5 tablespoons of sesame and flour and 1 teaspoon of mahlab.

Directions: Mahlab is essential because that is what gives flavor to the sticks. Mix all ingredients, excluding the sesame, to form soft dough. Take walnut-size pieces of dough and shape into a stick. Fold dough in half and twist edges. Place on greased tray. Spread egg whites and sesame. Cook in preheated oven at 170 degrees Celsius.

EXPEDIA POSTS NET LOSS ON GOODWILL IMPAIRMENT

Expedia, Inc. has posted a fourth-quarter net loss as the online travel agency took a \$3 billion charge for goodwill impairment stemming from a decline in its market capitalization. The loss came to \$2.76 billion, or \$9.60 per share, compared with a year-earlier profit of \$65.4 million, or 22 cents per share. Excluding the charge, the company said earnings fell to 22 cents per share from 32 cents a year earlier, also excluding special items. "While we have taken a substantial write-down

of the accounting value of our goodwill largely due to significant stock market declines, we believe that the core value of the Expedia brands and marketplace are considerable and lasting," Chief Executive Dara Khosrowshahi said in a statement. The online travel business is grappling with sagging travel demand as the economic recession takes its toll on budgets. The company said the total value of its fourth-quarter bookings was \$4 billion, down 11 percent from a year earlier. **Chicago Reuters**



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ORIENT EXPRESSIONS OFFERS THE 'ORIENT BEYOND THE ORIENT'

FULYA ÖZLEM İSTANBUL

There is an "orient beyond the orient" which has a bit of it all -- of nostalgia and futurism, of the clichés of the East and the West, as well as things that make those clichés true -- and the band Orient Expressions seems to have captured it all in their latest album, "Kırık Kalpler Albümü" (The Album of Broken Hearts).

This album, although at the cost of sounding uniquely awkward at times due to the extensive nature of its "blend," offers a brilliant "ortaya karışık" in its own right. It has the spirit of Turkish films of the 1970s, which is an intended aspect, as stated by the band. But much more than that, "Kırık Kalpler Albümü" has the correct degree of being a mishmash of everything: An Orient that encompasses much more than solely Turkey -- one that reaches as far as India and the club scene in European cities -- with the quintessential "everything non-



Western with a Western dub" sound.

Orient Expressions is made up of Can Utkan (a.k.a. DJ Yakuza); Cem Yıldız on vocals and two traditional Turkish instruments, cümbüş and bağlama; Richard Hammer on clarinet, tenor sax, flute and duduk; and DJ Murat Uncuoğlu. Vocalists Berrin Koç and Jhelissa play a great role in shaping the overall sound of the album.

Apart from the core band members, the tracks on the album feature a diverse range of instruments, such as percussion by Levent Güzel, violin by Adnan Karaduman, Azeri violin by Arslan Hazreti, guitar by Donovan Mixon, keyboards by Emre Dünder, cello by Sedef Erçetin and trombone by Elvan Aracı. Hence the range of combinations and permutations of sounds

throughout the album truly demonstrates a wide array of different tastes and genres of music.

Exemplifying this diversity, there is the ultimate beauty and sensuality of the album's 11th track, "Başka Bir Aşk" (Another Love), an original instrumental piece composed by Orient Expressions, in which wind instruments and rhythmic arrangements are in perfect harmony, signaling the birth of a new sound.

The 12th track, "Boş Pavyon" (Empty Tavern), stands at the crossroads of a number of genres, although flirting mostly with a funky Arabesque style while being surprising at times because of the band's harmonic choices and arrangements. Koç's vocals in "Boş Pavyon" do give the song a twist of the '70s, although the pitch of her voice is not as high as that of the era's milestone singer, Gülden Karaböcek, and has a less agitating and rather soothing way of expressing what the song conveys to the audience.

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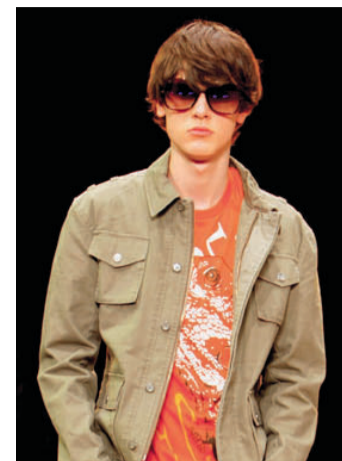
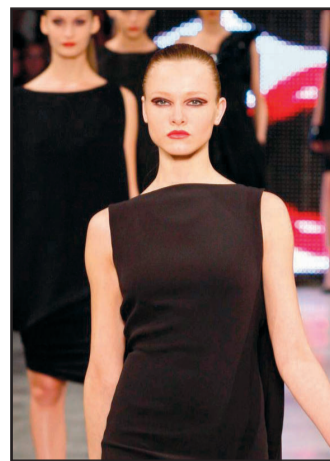


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THE DOS AND DON'TS OF SALE SHOPPING

REYHAN YAZICI*

This shopping season abounds with endless sales -- New Year's sales, holiday sales, special day clearances and so on. Even the financial crisis hasn't been able to alter this wild drive for shopping. It seems that everywhere shopping centers, stores, streets, plazas and even bazaars have been designed to promote shopping.

But mindless shopping can turn into a problem, while proper sale shopping allows you to spiff up your wardrobe and save money at the same time. Here is a list of items to buy during the sale season.

A leather jacket is a must

Leather jackets, loved by both men and women but usually deemed too pricey to actually buy, top the list of items to buy during the sale season. Black or brown leather jackets are better because they go well with many outfits. Soft and cleanable leather is preferred. Blazer-like jackets are ideal for women and classic-cut jackets with multiple pockets are ideal for men.

A white shirt never goes out of style

Buying a white shirt on sale would be a very wise purchase because a white button-down is fundamental to any outfit. Tunic blouses with mini pleats and ruffles will be in style in the new season for women and charismatic Italian-collar shirts with wide cuffs and stylish cufflinks will be in style for men.

Still don't have a black dress?

No matter how old or tall you are or how much you weigh, the proper black dress will make you look amazing. Loose-cut dresses are trendy these days. Combining a pleated classic-cut black dress with accessories will create a fashionable new style. Reflect elegance with a pearl necklace or femininity with a mini sweater.

Dark, wide-leg jeans

The most popular garment in everyone's wardrobe, regardless of age group, is a good pair of jeans. Jeans occupy the most space in

our closets not because of their size but because of their quantity. Jeans are not limited to any season, time, place, age or trend. The key is to buy a pair that goes with your style. Masculine cut jeans for women will be popular next season.

Sunglasses will burn a hole in your pocket next month

Now is the perfect time to buy a pair of sunglasses, as their prices will skyrocket next month. If you're thinking you won't be able to find a stylish pair in the winter, you're wrong, because wearing sunglasses in the winter has become stylish. Opt for sunglasses with thick, plastic frames and ultraviolet protection. Jeweled sunglasses and frames are also in style.

Accessories sell in every season

Accessories sell even at the beginning of the season when prices are still high. Why? Because accessories have extraordinary powers and can change any outfit. Therefore, try to buy accessories when they are on sale. Necklaces of different lengths, colorful bracelets, belts, shoes in different colors and sparkling earrings are high-priority items.

Sweats for every occasion

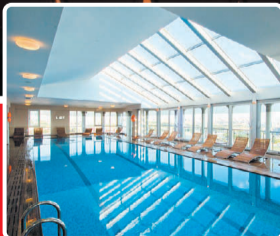
Sweat suits are no longer just for exercising. Now there is a rich variety of sweatshirts and sweatpants suitable for almost every occasion, from hanging out with friends to going out to brunch. There are classic sporty sweat suits and more fancy ones. Sequined sweats are perfect for ladies who like to be adorned with sparkles and hooded tops for both men and women combine a chic weekend style with the comfort of a sporty outfit.

*Reyhan Yazıcı is a fashion designer.



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