

LEGENDARY MESOPOTAMIA EASTERN TURKEY

10 days

Discover the hidden gems of Eastern Turkey, from the turquoise shores of Lake Van to the golden hills of ancient Mesopotamia. Wander through stone-carved cities, marvel at Mount Nemrut's sunrise, and stand in awe at humanity's oldest temple, Göbekli Tepe.

East of Turkey is a captivating region where towering mountains meet ancient Mesopotamian plains. It's home to a rich mix of cultures – Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians, and Arabs – reflected in its languages, architecture, and cuisine. The area is generally safe for travelers, with warm hospitality and deep respect for guests being part of the local tradition.

Dress code: There is no requirement for women to cover their heads (except inside mosques or monasteries). Modest clothing is advised in rural areas; in cities, casual attire is acceptable, but very short shorts or revealing tops may draw attention.

Currency: Turkish Lira (TRY). Cash is useful, especially in smaller towns and markets. Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in major cities and tourist areas.

SIM cards: Available at airports and in most cities (Turkcell, Vodafone, Türk Telekom). eSIM options are also available.

Time Zone: GMT+3

Visa: Many nationalities — including those from the EU, US, Canada, and the UK — can enter visa-free for short stays.

Best Time to Visit: Spring and fall offer mild weather and blooming nature.

Day 1 **Arrival Day**

Arrive in **Van**, a city perched on the shores of Turkey's largest lake, steeped in history and surrounded by stunning natural beauty. After clearing immigration and collecting your luggage, you'll be welcomed by your local guide and transferred to your hotel. Depending on your arrival time, enjoy a relaxing evening or take a gentle walk around the Van Fortress area, soaking in views of the shimmering lake and vibrant local life. This peaceful start will help you adjust and prepare for an unforgettable journey through ancient sites, diverse cultures, and breathtaking landscapes.

After the transfer to the hotel and check-in, we will take a walk to the **Van Fortress**, offering a beautiful view over the lake.

For those interested – an evening stroll along the waterfront or a visit to the **Van Cat House**, home to a breed unique to this region.

Overnight in Van

Day 2 **Hosap Castle and a Kurdish Village**

After breakfast, we set off for **Hosap Castle** (approx. 70 km) – one of the most picturesquely located fortresses in Eastern Anatolia.

A walk around the area will allow us to see traditional Kurdish architecture

and local life.

Upon returning to Van – an opportunity to visit the Van Museum or enjoy a relaxing lakeside walk.

Overnight in Van

Day 3 Akdamar Island – Transfer to Tatvan

In the morning, we head to the pier in **Gevaş** (approx. 45 km), from where we will take a ferry to **Akdamar Island**, home to a well-preserved medieval Armenian church from the 10th century.

After sightseeing, we continue our journey along the scenic route by Lake Van to the town of **Tatvan** (approx. 130 km).

Overnight in Tatvan

Day 4 Hasankeyf – Transfer to Midyat

After breakfast, we leave Tatvan and head towards the legendary town of **Hasankeyf** (approx. 110 km), partially submerged after the construction of a dam.

As an option, we can visit the modern **Hasankeyf Museum** and viewing points over the **Tigris Valley**.

Then we continue to the Syrian-style stone city of **Midyat** (approx. 85 km).

Upon arrival – an evening walk through the old town.

Overnight in Midyat

Day 5 **Midyat and Mor Gabriel Monastery**

We begin the day with a walk around **Midyat** – a city known for its stone architecture, silver crafts, and atmospheric alleys. Next, we head to **Mor Gabriel Monastery** (23 km) – one of the oldest Christian monasteries in the world. On the way to **Mardin**, a short stop can be made at the ruins of ancient **Dara** (optional).

In the afternoon, transfer to Mardin (approx. 60 km), a city perched on rocky slopes.

Overnight in Mardin

Day 6 **Free Day in Mardin**

A day for independent exploration of Mardin or relaxation.

Suggestions:

- Shopping at spice and silver bazaars,
- Participating in a cooking workshop,
- Visiting old madrasas or enjoying coffee on a rooftop with a view of Mesopotamia.

Optional: visiting the Deyrulzafaran Monastery or a viewpoint near Artuklu University.

Overnight in Mardin

Day 7 **Transfer to Diyarbakır – The City of Black Basalt**

After breakfast, we head to **Diyarbakır** (approx. 95 km) – one of the oldest and most fascinating cities of Mesopotamia.

Upon arrival, we will visit:

- *The Great Mosque (Ulu Camii)* – one of the oldest mosques in Anatolia,
- *Hasan Pasha Caravanserai*,
- *The Ten-Arched Stone Bridge over the Tigris River*,
- *Hevsel Gardens* – the green lungs of the city, listed by UNESCO,
- *Monumental black city walls* that have withstood the centuries.

Overnight in Diyarbakır

Day 8 Transfer to Adiyaman

In the morning, we leave Diyarbakır and travel to **Adiyaman** (approx. 210 km). Time to rest before the early morning departure to **Mount Nemrut**.

Evening stroll or free time.

Overnight in Adiyaman

Day 9 Mount Nemrut – Sunrise Among the Gods

Early in the morning, we set off for **Mount Nemrut** (approx. 80 km) to watch the sunrise among the monumental statues from the time of King Antiochus I.

The program also includes:

- *Karakuş Tumulus*,
- *Cendere Bridge* from the Roman period,
- *The ruins of Arsameia*, the royal seat of Commagene.

In the afternoon, return to Adiyaman.

Overnight in Adiyaman.

Day 10 **Şanlıurfa and Göbekli Tepe**

Transfer to **Şanlıurfa** (approx. 180 km) – a city linked to the biblical figure of Abraham.

We will visit: *Balıklıgöl* – the Sacred Fish Lake, and *Abraham's Cave*. After that we will move to **Göbekli Tepe** (25 km) – the oldest known sanctuary of humanity (11,500 years old).

Optional: the Urfa Museum or free time at the traditional bazaar.

Transfer to the airport in Şanlıurfa and end of the tour

Additional Information

- Daily distances do not exceed 300 km.
- The program includes both natural and cultural attractions – a perfect balance for an active, curious group.
- The itinerary can be adjusted to the group's needs (e.g., extending the stay in Mardin, alternative ending in Gaziantep).