



ARDAHAN





An aerial photograph of Ardahan, Turkey, showing a dense urban area with colorful buildings in the foreground, a winding river, and vast green highlands in the background under a blue sky with light clouds.

ARDAHAN: REALM OF HIGH LANDS

Ardahan, the realm of highlands, has a distinct geography that offers the glories of the past and treasures of the nature together. It is also an undiscovered tourism center with its steep mountains, uplands covered with endemic flowers, glacial lakes on the foothills of majestic peaks, yellow pine forests, castles and towers, churches, mysterious border towns, and a cultural wealth that reflects the mosaic of its diversity. Ardahan involves the borders with Georgia and Armenia in the north and northeast, with Kars and Erzurum in the south and southeast, and with Artvin in the west. Most significant elevations are Kısır, Keldağı, Akbaba, Cin, Ilgar, Ahaşen, Uğurlu and Yalnızçam Mountains. On the foothills of these high mountains are the uplands that huddle all kinds of colors within the nature into one place and emerge as orchards. Almost all of the villages in Ardahan have upland, and their dwellers migrate to these highlands in company with their herds as of June. Certainly one of the most prominent rivers of Ardahan is Kura River. Posof, Karaçay, Değirmendere, Hanak, Kaynıkdere, Türkmençeresi and Ölçek can be listed as the other local rivers with various sizes. Lake Çıldır, which is the tenth biggest lake in the country and second biggest lake of Eastern Anatolia Region in terms of acreage, and Aktaş river on Georgia border, are among the significant lakes of the province.



HISTORY

Ardahan region, which was used as a migration way from Caucasus to Anatolia, has a rich historical and cultural background. Especially the castles and towers laying on or nearby deep, long and successive valleys created by Kura River are among the most significant details that convey the traces of the past to present. These structures built in an attempt to defend old migration and trade roads, reflect Ardahan's role in history as well. Traces of Hurrians, Urartians, Kimmerians, Scythians, Persians, Sassanian, Bagradians, Byzantians, Seljukians, Karakoyunlu, Akkoyunlu, Mongolians, Georgians, Ottomans, Russians and Turks can be seen in the region.

Akçakale island city along Lake Çıldır appears at the top of archaeological sites list in Ardahan, The remains, 27 km away from Çıldır district center, dating back to Prehistoric era, consists castles, chapels, towers and monogrammed stones. Stone settlements are very common especially along waterways and in deep valleys throughout Ardahan. One of the most significant examples is the Harosman caves located 6 km away from Ortakent (Büyük Nakala) town which is 10 km away from district of Hanak. Other stone and cave settlements within provincial borders include Övündü caves, Kurtkale caves, and Bağdeşen Konsula Taşı caves.





Castles and Towers

With its castles as the cultural memory of a magnificent history that dates back to ancient eras, Ardahan deserves the title of "The City of Castles and Towers". The castles and towers as unique examples of architecture and art, serve as monuments that convey the past to present. These monumental structures built to defend and dominate over the region due to its location on old trade and migration roads, are spread throughout the province. Yeniköy Tower, Dedeşen and Kalecik Castles in Göle district; Sarıyamaç Tower, Kinzi, Ardahan, Kazan, Ölçek and Altaş (Ur) Castles on the boundaries of central district of Ardahan; Kırnav, Sevimli and Şeytan castles in Hanak district and Mere, Cak, Savaşır (Cancak) and Kolköy castles in Çıldır District are among remarkable places

The structures of defense within the city built in Ottoman era have turned into bastions from castles. Ramazan, Ahali, Kötemelik (Kül) and Senger bastions built in an attempt to reinforce the eastern front especially during the wars against Russians, have survived until today.





Churches and Mosques

With its history variegated with a mosaic of various cultures and nations, another tourism potential of Ardahan is the churches. The churches and chapels that you can come across on the sides of the roads, settlements and on desolate hills have spread throughout the entire city. Churches of Övündü (Vaşlop), Sensop, Budaklı (Cicor), Kotanlı (Sikheref), Kurtkale, and Börk, also Mevlid Efendi, Arap (Yanık), Müderris İbrahim Efendi, Dervish Bey, Ölçek Village, Dedeşen Village, Posof central mosques and Gölbelen (Urta), Kayabeyi (Yerli Çayıs) church mosques could be visited.





TREKKING ROUTES

With its 3000 meters high summits, authentic botanic species, alpine meadowlands, Valley of River Kura, lakes and uplands Ardahan is a prominent trekking region in our country. Especially Yalnızçam and Arsiyan mountains defining the boundaries with Artvin province, involve several alternative hiking trails. Through the routes, you will walk on the paths embellished with astonishingly beautiful countless plant species that you may have never heard or seen. Experienced and confident hikers could try Kısır, Uğurlu and Arsiyan summit climbs.

With its 19 routes, the length of Ardahan trails reaches to 197 kilometers... The ones who desire to enjoy this 51 km. length journey adorned with natural and historical beauties, can complete the following courses in a 5 day activity;

1st day: Yalnızçam Ski Resorts-Yalnızçam Upland (4 km)

2nd day: Yalnızçam Upland- Yeniköy (13 km)

3rd day: Yeniköy- Bağdeşen (16 km)

4th day: Bağdeşen-Bülbülan Upland (9 km)

5th day: Bülbülan Upland –Karagöl- Geçitli Upland (9 km)

Note that accommodation is available as village houses in Yeniköy and Bağdeşen and as hotel in Bülbülan Upland.



For environmental protection no marking is applied on the courses of Kolköy-Arsiyan Upland, Gölebakan-Kısır Mountain-Lehimli Upland, Seyitören Upland- Ilgar Mountain- Çamyazı and Bülbülan Upland-Karagöl-Geçitli Upland that include summit climbs and reach 3200 meters high; instead GPS coordinates are used for trekking. All other routes are signed with red-white signboards on every 50 meters interval on pathways and every 200 meters interval on earth roads. GPS coordinates of all trekking courses stand and end points of which have routing signboards, are available at www.ardahantrekking.com webpage. Also the detailed maps that you can acquire with the guide book via sending an e-mail to info@ardahantrekking.com webpage will be useful for planning your activity.

Beside trekking courses cycling, scenic vehicle routes, jeep safari and cultural routes are also available in the region. Mostly passing through village, upland and forest roads, total length of cycling routes is 540 kilometers. Jeep safari and scenic vehicle roads that offer an opportunity for exploring hidden corners of Ardahan, add up to 519 km long.

You can find the details of these cycling and vehicle routes on www.ardahantrekking.com web address.



ARDAHAN WILDLIFE

Ardahan has a remarkable geography due to its, altitude, wetlands, yellow pine forests, its location on the intersection of Caucasia and Iran-Anatolia points which are among 34 most important biological diversity areas of the world, and for being on the most important bird migration routes. Beside the diversity of plants and birds, it is among the most important natural areas of our country in terms of big carnivores such as grizzly bear, wolf, fox and wildcat which occupy the top of food chain as ecological indicators.

There are several alternatives for observing wildlife in Ardahan. Especially ıldır, Aktaş, Lavaş and Putka (Gölbaşı) Lakes, also Ardahan and Posof Forests are rich places for bird watching.

FLORA OF ARDAHAN AND BOTANIC TOURS

Ardahan is among extraordinarily rich natural or semi-natural regions in terms of diversity of the plants that include endangered rare or endemic species. According to latest researches, there are almost 1500 species forming the vegetation cover of the province. This diversity is mostly due to the variety of the plants besides the province's relatively little acreage and 85 endemic species as well. Ardahan is the region in which Caucasian plants (80 species) are grown. Many species are named after Caucasia. E.g.: *Philadelphus caucasicus*, *Antennaria caucasica*, *Anemone caucasica*.

Lake ıldır and surrounding wetland habitats host local and rare species in terms of flora. Most plant species in Ardahan consist of herbaceous plants. In the lake water is *Eleocharis acicularis* plant, which is mostly found as locally in Turkey. 10 rare plant species are seen on the meadowlands that dry along with the withdrawal of the water in summer months. Studies for protection of rare plants such as *Ligularia Sibirica*, *Lilium Caucasicum*, *Lilium Carniolicum*, *Philadelphus* and ıldır Lily are being continued.

Ardahan region hosts 5 Important Plant Areas (IPAs) including Yalnızçam Mountains, Ilgar (iek) Mountain and Gölle - Kayınlık Stream. Beside these IPAs, foothills of Kısır Mountain (Bozyiğit Village) and slopes of Kısır Mountain that face Ardahan (Boğatepe Village) are among the places that exhibit plant diversity.



LAKE ÇILDIR

Regarded as “The Crying Lake” by locals, Lake Çıldır is 18 km long and 30 meters deep. This colossal water mass with its 18.764 hectares is approximately 2100 meters high. Fed by surrounding spring waters, the lake hosts 16 fish species. Lake Çıldır offers swimming and hand-line fishing in summer, sleigh riding and skating opportunities in winter months.







WINTER TOURISM

The region is convenient for winter sports due to lasting snowfall and its geographical structure. Partly completed Yalnızçam-Uğurludağ Ski Resorts Project, stands to be one of the prominent ski resorts which will allure the ski lovers with its nature.

DAMAL DOLL

With its tradition, caring to protect traditional values regarding handicrafts, Ardahan has a reputation for its Damal Doll, handmade carpets and rugs and ecological toy manufacturing. Damal doll which is entitled to international awards and became one of the symbols of our country, decorates the souvenir counters in the city.



WHAT IS WHERE?

Ardahan Provincial Center

Castle of Ardahan, bastions, samples of civil architecture, Yalnızçam Tourism Center, Sarıyamaç Tower, Kinzi, Kazan, Altaş, Ölçek castles, Putka (Gölbaşı) Lake, Kura River Valley, Cemal Tural recreation area, Urban Forest, Yalnızçam, Bülbülan uplands.

Çıldır

Akçakale archaeological site, Şeytan (Devil) Castle, Kurtkale, Övündü caves and church, Şensop Church, Kayabeyi and Gölbelen church mosques, Çıldır and Aktaş Lakes.

Damal

Yukarı Gündeş Atatürk silhouette, Damal doll exhibition

Göle

Kalecik Castle, Dedeşen Castle and tomb, Yeniköy Tower, Budaklı Church, churches of Uğurlutaş, Okçuoğlu Upland.

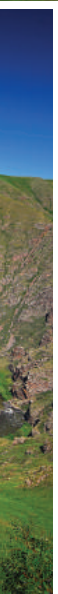
Hanak

Kırnav, Sevimli and Avcılar (Kışlahanak) castles, Ortakent - Harosman cave settlement, Dilekdere Church, Börk Church, Hanak uplands.

Posof

Mere, Cak, Savaşır (Cancak) and Kolköy castles, Arile, Sülüklü, Kamışlık, Ayaz, Kanlı, Nebahdiev, Kelorman, Kızıl, Ayı, Karagöl and Armutveren lakes.









WHAT TO BUY?

We recommend Damal Dolls, handmade carpets and rugs, honey and cheese sorts, dried apple, mulberry, plum and their marmalade from Posof which is regarded as a fruit warehouse, as souvenirs and local products.

DON'T RETURN WITHOUT

- Taking photos of Lake ıldır from the summit of Kısır Mountain, highest point of Ardahan
- Doing a sleigh ride tour on Lake ıldır in winter months
- Observing the plant diversity on Yalnızçam uplands in the spring
- Exploring the route of castles and towers along Kura River Valley
- Trekking along Baędeşen-Bülbülan Upland- Karagöl hiking trail
- Treading on the route from the uplands of Posof to Şavşat's Arsiyan Upland, embellished with lagoons.
- Watching Atatürk's silhouette that forms on the hills of Damal Yukarı Gündeş Village in June.
- Taking a Damal doll as a souvenir to your loved ones.



TRANSPORTATION

Distances of some of the provinces from Ardahan

İstanbul 1428 km.

Ankara 1110 km.

Trabzon 345 km.

Erzurum 239 km.

Artvin 119 km.

Kars 91 km.

Distances between Ardahan's districts and provincial centers.

Çıldır 55 km.

Damal 41 km.

Göle 63 km.

Hanak 26 km.

Posof 71 km.

Air Transport

Ardahan doesn't have an airport. Kars Airport, 91 km away from province center, is used for air transport. A number of airways corporations organize flights to İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir. Bus companies as well as transportation with your private vehicle are among options to take a trip to Ardahan.

CAMPING SITES

Urban Forest, Cemal Tural picnic area, Göle recreation area, Çıldır, Posof lakes, Yalnızçam forests and uplands are among the places available for camping.

INFORMATION and LOCAL GUIDANCE

Ardahan Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism

Phone : 0090 478 211 48 58

Web : www.ardahankulturturizm.gov.tr

GPS coordinates and information

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