



KARS



KARS: CULTURAL CAPITAL OF EAST

Maintaining its importance on a crossroad on the old trade roads in all stages of history, Kars is regarded as a gateway of Turkey opening to Caucasus and Middle East. In The region on which the first settlements date back to 4000 B.C., it is possible to see traces of Hurrian, Urartian, Kimmerian, Scythian, Persian, Araks, Tigranes, Sassanian, Safavid, Umayyad, Abbasid, Bagradian, Byzantian, Seljukian, Karakoyunlu, Aqqoyunlu, Mongolian, Georgian, Ottoman, Russian and Turkish civilizations. Historical artifacts left by these ancient civilizations are among the most significant details that reflect the cultural mosaic of the city.



Kars mostly consists of uplands. Among its most significant elevations are Allahuekber, Akbaba, Aşağıdağ and Aladağ. Embodying the vastest plain of Eastern Anatolia, Kars also hosts several lakes in various sizes. These lakes can be listed as Çıldır, the biggest one, Aygır, Karzak, Çenklice, Erhan, Turna, Çenekçi, Kuyucuk, Çalı, Deniz and Lavaşın. Aras, Arpaçay, Kura and Kars streams are among remarkable rivers within the provincial borders. Woodland texture mostly consists of yellow pine (*pinus sylvestris*) which has widely spread around the district of Sarıkamış



CITY TOUR

The best and most efficient way to explore a city is to walk around all the streets and you can achieve an inner beauty as you observe the details. You can visit all historical places with 11 km of long and 7 km of short city walking routes that include Kars city center with its vertically intersecting streets designed as a grid and make a deep journey between past and present by viewing historical and cultural values inherited from rooted civilizations that inhabited Kars. The map and required information is available on www.sarikamistrekking.com webpage.



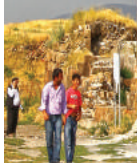


HISTORY TOURS

Ancient City of Ani

As one of the most significant ruins of our country, Ani is located on the west coast of Arpaçay Valley, which defines the border between Turkey and Armenia. The archaeological site in Ocaklı Village, 41 km away from provincial center, has always maintained its importance due to its location on historical Silk Road; and revealed by archaeological digs, this magnificent city which hosted several ancient civilizations, proved to have a history of 5000 years. One needs to spend a day to properly visit Ani Ruins which is surrounded by 4,5 kilometers of fortification walls. Prominent structures within the site are the walls, Kars Gate, Aslanlı Gate, Hıdırellez Gate, Ateşgede, Seljukian Palace, King Gagik's Church, Cathedral of Ani, Church of Abukhamrents, Ebu Mencehr Mosque, Tignan Horents Church, Halaskar (Kecel) Church, Pigeon (Genç Kızlar) Church, Silk Road (İpek Yolu) Bridge, Inner Castle (İç Kale), The Maiden's Castle and Monastery of the Virgins.





Castles

The castles within the provincial borders can be listed as Castle of Kars in city center, Keçivan(Tunçkaya) in the district of Keçivan, Artakers and Koroglu (Morpet) Castles; Zivin, Micingirt, Koroglu and Kızlar (Toprakkale) in district of Sarıkamış, Tignis Castle in district of Akyaka.





Bastions

Regarded as "The City of Border", Kars has always maintained its strategic importance. Many bastions were built around the castle, which is known as heart of the old settlement. First of the bastions, built in an attempt to withstand against Russian and Iranian attacks, was built by the order of Lala Mustafa Pasha and bears the name of Temur Pasha. 46 bastions were built between 1734 and 1848 in total, however only 22 of them have survived until today. These important actors of positional defence can be listed as Arap, Karadağ, Gaziler, Gemli, İnönü, Yusuf Pasha, Muhlis Pasha, Cebup, Fevzi Pasha, Hafız Pasha, Suvari, Kerim Pasha, Kanlı, Simendifer, Çim, Thomson, Çukur, Çifte Göğüs, Hüseyin Pasha, Zohrab, Dik, Veli Pasha, Churchill and Williams.





Martyrdoms of Sarıkamış

Many martyrdoms were built in Erzurum (Horasan, Pasinler, Köprüköy and Şenkaya Districts), and Kars (Sarıkamış and Selim Districts) in the form of monuments, memorials and sculptures in memory of the tragedy undergone in the eastern front during the Battle of Sarıkamış in 1915 against Russia. Most of the martyrdoms are located about the borders of Sarıkamış District, on which the battle was most intense.

The martyrdoms that are spread on a vast area from the ridges of Allahuekber Mountains to village and district centers are partially in the form of monuments and partially sculptures. You can visit the martyrdoms of Allahuekber Dağı, Allahuekber Dağı Meçhul Asker (Unknown Soldier), Batı Kışla, Yukarı Sarıkamış, Millet Bahçesi Meçhul Asker, Makineli Tüfek, Dikenli Tabya, Turnagöl, Ağababa, Yayıklı Köyü Kırklar, Divik Yayla, Tekçam, Soğanlı Dağı, Hamamlı, Mescitli (Deliklitaş), Yağbasan, Bardız and Çakırbaba along "Sarıkamış Martyrdoms Route".

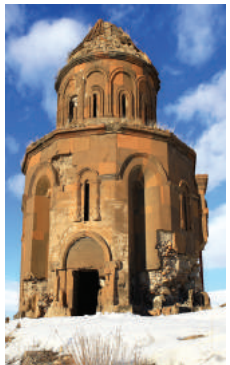
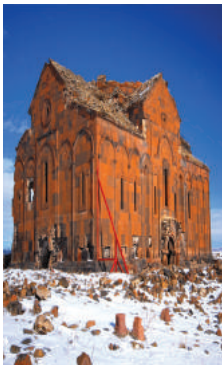
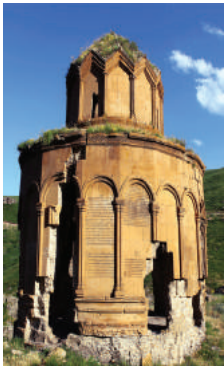




Churches

The churches of Kars inherited from various civilizations are remarkable with their architectural forms and aesthetical appearances. The Church of Twelve Apostles (Kümbet Mosque) in Kars city center, Fethiye Mosque (Alexander Nevski- Russian Military Church), Beşik, Oğuzlu and Yağikesen churches, Yanık, Küp, Aşağı Sallıpınar and Karakurt churches in Sarıkamış, Doğruyol Church in Arpaçay, Beşiklise (Five Churches), Kozluca, Varlı, Kilittaşı and Mreni churches in Digor are among the most significant samples.







A TRIP INTO THE PAST

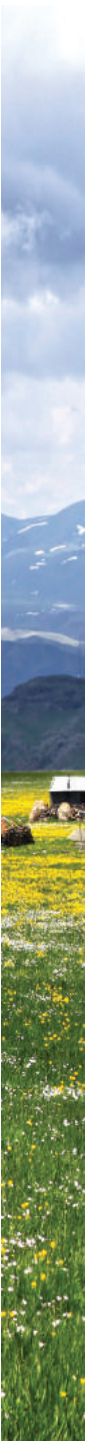
This tour, which involves the monumental scriptures that belong to ancient periods of human history, includes scriptures and stone settlements in Borluk in Kars city center, Camuşlu, Çallı, Purun in the district of Kağızman, and Cilavuz in the district of Susuz.





KARS FLORA AND BOTANIC TOURS

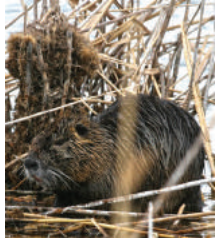
It is estimated that over two thousand flowering plants spread across provincial boundaries of Kars, and a hundred of them are endemic. Çıldır Lake, Allahuekber Mountains and Sarıkamış Forests within the provincial boundaries are determined as Important Plant Areas (IPA). Botanic tours are made in IPAs which are natural or semi-natural areas with a very rich plant diversity that involves the populations of endangered or rare endemic plant species.

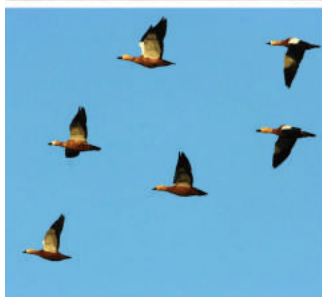
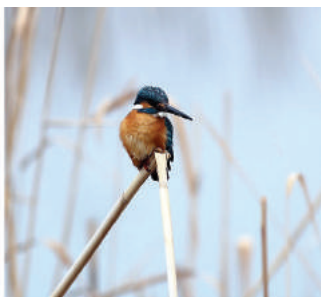
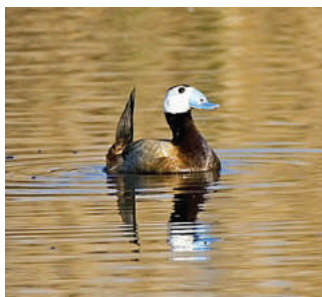




KARS FAUNA AND BIRDWATCHING TOURS

Laying on the intersection of Caucasian and Iran-Anatolia warm lands which are two of 34 important biological diversity areas in the world, with its location, altitude, wetlands, yellow pine forests, pasturelands and being on the route of migratory birds, Kars is regarded as one of the most valuable territories in our country. With its secret edens that embody various natural sites, Kars offers several options to nature lovers to observe the wildlife of various living creatures including wolves and insects. Kars region which hosts 308 of 465 bird species in Turkey, provides an excellent opportunity of bird-watching with its important wetlands such as Çıldır, Kuyucuk, Turna, Aygır, Çalı and Çengilli (Deniz) Lakes.





CULTURE TOURS

The Route of Snow

The events in the Kar (Snow) novel of Orhan Pamuk, who was entitled to take 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature, take part within the city center of Kars. Our route, inspired by this opus, takes its fanciers to a cultural journey among the avenues and buildings in the city center. "The Route of Kar" can be properly travelled with the map which is available at www.sarikamistrekking.com webpage.



Malakan Route

Malakans with their Russian origins are especially known for their stance against war. This community that opposes the authority of the church and reverends and who still try to sustain their lives without any device as was in the emerging years of Christianity, was compelled to migrate earlier. Thus, Malakans, who migrated to Kars as well as many other countries, have conveyed their cultural background to these lands. The trails of the Malakan community, who live in the countryside of Kars, can be seen in many village and tomb. Çakmak Village 6 kms away from city center with old Malakan houses and the milk treats that reflect the traditional culture of the community, is the focal point of the tour. İncesu, Çamçavuş, Yolboyu (Zaim), Boğazköy (Meli), Susuz (Cilavuz), Zöhrab, Selim, Dikme and Paşaçayırı are prominent ones among other Malakan settlements.



Boğatepe Ecotourism Village

Striving to improve traditional production methods via dealing with nature and earth, understanding and conceiving them, Boğatepe Village stands to be a benchmark for ecotourism activities in Kars. Peynirevi (Cheesehouse) Exhibition Gallery provides tourism activities to Kars in general and to the village settlement in local, with its production of 13 kinds of cheese, medicinal plants, trekking activities, and family boarding house. 45 km away from Kars city center, Boğatepe has also given its name to the hill nearby.

Fresh kasseri, aged kasseri, gruyere, curd, cecil cheese, skin tulum cheese, heriye tulum cheese, Malakan wine cheese, Malakan pickled cheese or tulum (from lamb's tripe), string cheese, kelle cheese, curuk, otlu and canak cheese are among the kinds of cheese produced in Boğatepe.



TREKKING ROUTES

You can make delightful hikes in spring and summer months in Kars region. Especially deep valleys and verdant yellow pine forests distinguished with their visual beauties, offer rich options to nature lovers. Trekking routes mainly pass through Sarıkamış and Susuz districts. Sarıkamış trekking routes add up to 256 kilometers with 21 different courses. Along with its yellowpine forest texture, the tracks that pass through Keklikdere, Komdere and Inkaya Valleys provide convenient trekking opportunities for every nature lover. It is almost impossible to get lost on the routes determined by red-white signs with 50 meter intervals on pathways and 200 meter intervals on earth roads. Defined by GPS coordinates, Susuz Valley trekking routes add up to 60 km length with 6 different sections.



The signboards on the junction points of trekking courses guide the trekkers.

There's also 498 km of a cycling route and 490 km of a jeep safari and scenic vehicle road available in the region.

GPS data of all courses can be obtained from **www.sarikamistrekking.com**. Kars Tourism Expedition Guide and Sarikamış Trekking Routes guide can be requested from **info@sarikamistrekking.com** e-mail addresses as well.



SARIKAMIŞ SKI RESORT

Located on the foothills of Bayraktepe with 2.634m altitude, Sarıkamış Ski Resort serves to ski lovers with its long ski tracks, qualified rest facilities, natural yellow-pine forests that prevent avalanches and large crystal snow flakes which are indigenous to this area except the Alps. The snow preserves its initial form, although it is sunny for most of the year. Various national and international ski activities are carried on in Sarıkamış, which is undoubtedly among the most significant ski centers in our country. Alpine discipline and northern discipline skiing can be performed on about 1m snow-covered areas between November 15 and April 15, also tracks for touring ski and sledge tours. There's a 5 km of "cross country" track as well, which is registered by International Ski Federation.

The ski slopes on Bayraktepe are located on a plateau ascending from a 2200 to 2900 m altitude. Total length of the tracks adds up to 25 km along with two new tracks. There are five tracks between summit and the first leg, and two tracks downwards from here. Also two additional tracks descend from the summit to Karanlıkdere. There's also a 200 meters of snowboard track in this area. 2400 m long track has been prepared for the beginners. Tracks of the second leg vary in terms of difficulty levels. Karanlıkdere Track on 1610 m altitude has an inclination of 28%. The track referred to as 'The Track for Crazies' by people of Sarıkamış is only available for the professionals.

Transportation to the tracks is provided by chairlifts with 2400 people per hour carrying capacity. Computer controlled bottom heating chairlifts with capacity of four people per compartment ascend through two legs in company with the view of yellow-pine forests. The first leg, surrounded with yellow-pine forests, is slightly inclined and convenient for beginners. Chairlift is again used to reach to the summit for second leg. Four track options are available on the summit with Allahuekber and Aladağ as well as Sarıkamış settlement views. Note that cafes are available for resting breaks at each track.



WHAT TO BUY ?

The main reason for the prominence of carpet and rug weaving and dairy products in the region is the livestock as being the main income source of the region. Another important souvenir of Kars is the obsidian, which is acquired from the deposits in Keklik Stream Valley. This valuable mineral which is available in green and black colors in the nature is used to make jewelries and ornaments. We recommend carpets and rugs, obsidian jewelries, honey and cheese kinds as souvenirs and local products.



DON'T RETURN WITHOUT

- Visiting Ani Ruins,
- Enjoying skiing in Sarıkamış Ski Resort in winters
- Fishing on the frozen surface of Çıldır Lake in winter months.
- Witnessing how cheese is made in Boğatepe Village
- Trekking in Komdere, Keklik, Susuz and Inkaya Valleys
- Taking photos of fairy chimney formations in Komdere and Aras River Valley
- Taking photos of Çengilli Church and Deniz Lake
- Visiting Keçivan, Micingirt and Zivin Castles on the old trade road.
- Eating dried goose meat in winter months,
- Tasting the fruits of Kağızman.



LOCAL FLAVORS

This diversity of Kars that has a rich cultural mosaic, on which people from several ethnicities dwell, is inevitably reflected on its cuisine culture. You can come across cafes and restaurants that offer local tastes.

Undoubtedly, the most significant element of Kars cuisine is the goose culture, which is lived as a ritual. Goose, which is preserved after drying especially in winter months as a consequence of harsh geographic and climatic conditions, has been an indispensable nutritional source for the region's inhabitants for hundreds of years. Beside dried goose, we can list other local tastes of the region as dried nettle soup, strained rice with raisin, nezik, feselli, umaç halva, evelik food, piti kebab (bozbaş), loaf food, stuffed apple, lentil noodle with potato, soup of butter flour and tomato paste, pisi, gatig food (buttermilk food), kuymak, hengel (Turkish ravioli), hasıl and water heurek.





TRANSPORTATION

Kars is 1.424 km away from İstanbul, 1.076 km away from Ankara, 1.655 km away from İzmir, 1.449 km away from Antalya, 436 km away from Trabzon and 202 km away from Erzurum. Kars Airport is located 8 km away from city center. Various airway companies have daily flights to and from İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir.

CAMPING SITES

Boğatepe Village, Susuz, Keklik and Komdere Valleys, Aygır, Kuyucuk, Turna and Çıldır Lakes, Kars Stream Municipal Camping Area and Soğucak Camping Area are among the places you can camp in the region.

INFORMATION and LOCAL GUIDANCE

Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate of Kars

Phone : 0474 2122179 – 2126864

Webpage : www.karskulturturizm.gov.tr

Tourism Information Office

Phone : 0474 2126817

GPS coordinates and info

Web : www.sarikamistrekking.com

E-mail : info@sarikamistrekking.com

Kuzey Doğa (Northern Nature) Society

Web : www.kuzeydoga.org

E-mail : emrah@kuzeydoga.org

Boğatepe Village (İlhan Koçulu)

GSM : +90-532 5016213

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