



Çamlıhemşin, Rize



# THE BLACK SEA COAST

The vibrant green of Turkey's lush, humid Black Sea Coast surprises those who imagine the country to be nothing but barren steppe.

From the European border with Bulgaria to the Georgian border, dense pine forests cover the mountaintops while lush vegetation and bountiful crops grow in the lower elevations and valleys. Along the coastline, mile after mile of beautiful uncrowded beaches offer sun, swimming and relaxation. In the springtime, delicate wild-flower blossoms carpet the rolling meadows of the eastern hills. The wooden houses in fishing villages and mountain hamlets alike preserve indigenous and traditional architectural styles. The humid climate and fertile soil encourage cultivation of a variety of crops including tea, tobacco, corn and hazelnuts. The magic of such a diverse landscape proves irresistible to any friend of nature, whether hiker or mountain climber or canoe enthusiast; whether you



Safranbolu, Karabük

go in by mountain bike or by jeep safari. Archeological excavations from the Late Chalcolithic Age settlements at İkiztepe in Samsun Province have uncovered evidence of the region's earliest inhabitants between 5000-4000 BC. The Hittites, Miletians, Phrygians and, according to Homer, the Amazons all colonized parts of the coast. Alexander the Great in his world conquest also brought the region under his sovereignty. Eventually, it was incorporated into the Roman and then the Byzantine Empire. The 15th century saw the greater part of the area come under the Ottoman rule of Sultan Mehmet II.

The Black Sea is easily accessible to tourists and provides a wide range of hotels and restaurants at a variety of prices.



# THE WESTERN BLACK SEA COAST

The **Yıldız (Istranca)** Mountains bisect the province of **Kırklareli**. Lush mountainous landscape dotted with quaint houses transport you to an idyllic and tranquil reverie. In the city of Kırklareli the oldest mosque is the Hızırbey Mosque, built in 1383. The mosque complex includes a bazaar. Nearby stands a hamam (bath) also built under the patronage of Hızır Bey. The 14th-century Kırklar Memorial with its impressive 18 columns stands on Kırklar Hill honoring the site where 40 soldiers lost their lives when the Ottomans conquered this area under the command of Murat I. The Archeology Museum exhibits finds from local excavations.

The Sokollu Mosque in **Lüleburgaz**, on the Edirne-Istanbul road, is an exquisite work of the famous architect Sinan that dates from 1570. The neighboring town of **Bağcıbaşı** also boasts a Sinan building in the Cedit Ali Paşa Mosque.

**Vize (Byzlia)**, an important Byzantine center, houses the Küçük Ayasofya church and a castle, both dating from the Byzantine period.

If you are travelling north to Bulgaria, lin-



**Kerpe, Sakarya**

ger for a few hours in the peaceful and green town of **Dereköy**, the last stop before the border.

Kırklareli's Black Sea Coast is another place to enjoy beaches and good fish restaurants. **İğneada**, 98 km east of Kırklareli, lies sandwiched between sandy shores and the Yıldız Mountains. **Kıyıköy (Midye)** is another holiday resort town with good accommodation and picturesque dwellings from the Middle Ages. The town and its walls date from the Byzantine period. The best site to visit in Midye is the historic St. Nicholas Rock Monastery. Also on the European Black Sea coast, only 35 km from Istanbul, are the sandy beaches, and hotels, motels and camping facilities of **Kilyos**.

Across the Bosphorus, 71 km from Istanbul on the Asian shore, **Şile's** long sandy beaches, overlooked by the remains of a Genoese Castle, attract many visitors. The excellent restaurants and night life make it a popular weekend retreat for Istanbul residents. Cotton blouses and shirts (**Şile Bezi**) are sewn and embroidered here.

Originally founded by a Polish prince as a





Kilyos, İstanbul





Lake Gölçük, Bolu

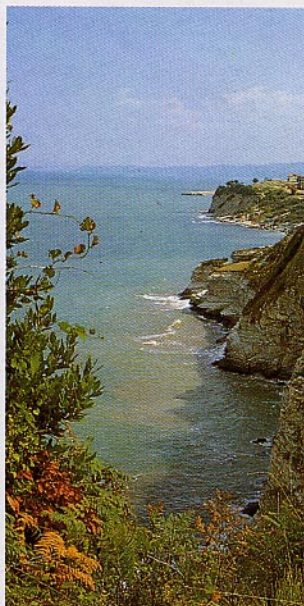


home for Polish exiles, **Polonezköy** (25 km from Istanbul) has been transformed into a relaxing resort with guest houses and restaurants serving a delicious selection of fresh local produce. Inland from the coast, the rolling hills and peaceful woods make an excellent area for horseback riding.

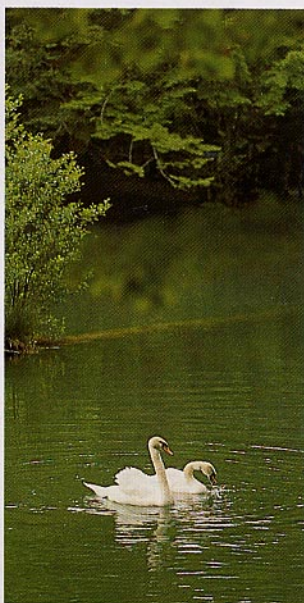
**Ağva** (50 km east of Şile), on the banks of a river as well as on the shores of the Black Sea, is surrounded by lovely scenery, ideal for a camping holiday. **Kerpe**, **Kefken** and **Karasu** are three quaint fishing villages east of Ağva. Delightful restaurants and limpid water draw a constant stream of visitors.

Inland, between Ankara and Istanbul, is **Bolu** (262 km from Istanbul and 192 km from Ankara), an important provincial center with an impressive 14th-century Ulu Mosque and modern thermal facilities close at hand. The Bolu Archeology and Ethnography Museum has artifacts from the Hittite, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman periods. Southwest of Bolu is the popular and relaxing **Lake Abant** resort, set in lovely alpine surroundings at an altitude of 1,500 meters. Istanbul dwellers often escape to the lake for a weekend of fresh air and exercise. Houses carved out of rock may be seen in the Solaklar, Muslar, and Alpağut villages of Seben County 52 km south of Bolu.

**Kartalkaya**, one of Turkey's major ski resorts, is in the **Köroğlu Mountains**. In the summer you can stop for a picnic at



**Akçakoca, Düzce**



**Yedigöller National Park, Bolu**

**Gölcük Lake**. The breathtakingly beautiful **Yedi Goller (Seven Lakes) National Park** lies north of Bolu. Nearby, the town of **Mengen** has a reputation for its good cooks and holds the annual Chefs' Festival in August, featuring traditional Turkish specialties.

The sites around **Konuralp** (45 km west of Bolu, 5 km north of Düzce), the ancient **Prusa ad Hypium**, continue to yield artifacts from both the Roman and Byzantine periods, which are on display in the local museum. Among the ruins, the Roman theater is not to be missed. The Samandere waterfall is in Düzce County's Kaynaşlı-Samandere village 25 km south of the D100 highway. Lake Efteni, 14 km southwest of Düzce, housing many species of birds in a pristine setting is a wonderful, relaxing spot for bird watchers.

The Byzantine Asar Castle is located 50 km east of Bolu near Örencik in Gerede County. Plateaus at an elevation above 1000 meters are favorite spots for locals and tourists to relax, away from the heat of summer. Some of the best in Bolu province are Aladağ, Kızık, and At. Back on the coast, the lovely beach and comfortable guest houses and hotels at Akçakoca ensure that it remains a popular holiday resort. Twenty-seven km east of **Akçakoca**, you can explore the remains of a Genoese castle now set amid hazelnut groves.

**Alağ** is an ideal place for water sports, especially sailing and surfing. Long sandy





**Zonguldak**

beaches stretch both east and west on both sides of the town.

**Ereğli**, whose ancient name was **Herakleia Pontika**, stands on a hill adjacent to a Byzantine castle. In the spring the aroma of strawberries, some of the sweetest grown in Turkey, fills the air, making a visit a mouthwatering experience. Ereğli derives its name from the mythological demi-god, Hercules, who, in the 11th century caught the three-headed dog, Cerberus, guardian of the gates of hell. According to Xenophon, Cerberus resided in the cave **Cehennemagzı** (Entrance to Hell), outside of Ereğli near **Kavakderesi**. Ereğli was Turkey's first important mining town..



**Kurucaşile, Bartın**

**Zonguldak**, called Sandra or Sandraka in ancient times, is a major center of coal production and an important Black Sea port. The ancient history of this region including Paflagonia and Bithynia was influenced by the cultures of the Hittites, Phrygians, Assyrians, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, and Byzantines. Later the various Turkish cultures left their influence on the area. The scenic road on the east side of town leads to the areas of **Kopuz** and **Uzunkum**, where tea gardens and restaurants beckon tourists to spend a leisurely afternoon. Plateaus, the highest of which is Bacaklı at 1,637 m, offer many opportunities to enjoy nature along hiking trails. Zonguldak also contains interesting



caves including Kızılelma, Sofular, and Çökgöl. Mineral dyes have been used since ancient times to dye cloth, thread, and even furniture.

Connoisseurs of fine handcrafted wood, travel to **Devrek**, a pretty town 50 km southeast of Zonguldak, to purchase its renowned wooden canes which have been made there for a hundred years.

**Karabük**, situated 10 km northeast of Safranbolu is the most important industrial center in Turkey, known for its iron and steel industry. Not far from Karabük lies the charming park of **Çamlık**, the perfect place for rest and relaxation. The entire area is dotted with pine forests and there is a lovely tea garden and restaurant in a nice place to enjoy nature. Parachuting may be done from the Sorgun cliff.

Also inland and further to the east is charming **Safranbolu**. Step back in time in the lovely "old world" style of the town to see some of the most beautiful traditional old homes, unique in Turkey for their outstanding design and construction. The most interesting of these include Kaymaklar House, Aygıroğlu House, and Asmazlar Havuzlu Konak which has been restored and is now used as a hotel operated by the Turkish Touring Automobile Club. The Mektepçiler House is also noteworthy as is the Hacı Memişler House. Paşa House is also restored and has been converted into a lovely cafe and pension as well. The castle on the hill offers a vista of the town. Be sure to see the Cinci



**Safranbolu Houses, Karabük**

Inn and Hamam (17th-century Turkish bath), the İzzet Mehmet Paşa Mosque and Library (18th-century), and the Köprülü Mosque which also dates from the 17th century. Also worth seeing are the Dağdelen Mosque (18th-century) and Kaçak Lütfiye Mosque (19th-century). UNESCO has named Safranbolu as an international cultural area and one of the world's heritages.

Safranbolu originally takes its name from the saffron fields that dotted the area in the 19th century. Today, saffron fields



**Saddle Construction, Safranbolu, Karabük**



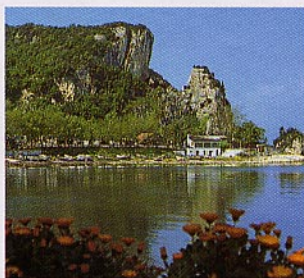
abound in the village of **Davutobası**, 20 km away, where a thriving saffron business continues. Before leaving, be sure not to miss the **Arasta (Old Bazaar)** where you can watch craftsmen at work and bargain with them for their goods.

"Lokum" (Turkish Delight) is also a special treat, unique among lokum connoisseurs and a must to sample.

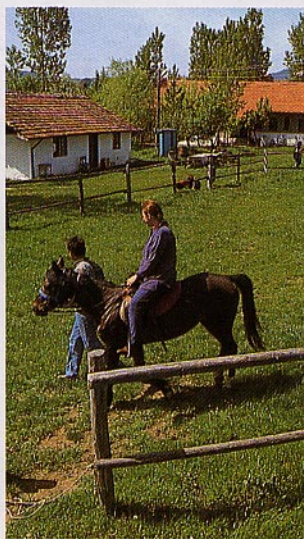
About 36 km south of Karabük is **Eskipazar**, where the old Ömer Beyler mansion is located. It is now restored and famous for its ornately decorated ceilings. Eskipazar also contains ruins from the Miletian colonists who founded Kotyara in 800 BC.

**Bartın**, called Parthenios in ancient times, is a pretty city of timbered houses 80 km east of Zonguldak that holds a strawberry festival every year in the spring. Homer records that warriors from Bartın helped Troy in the Trojan war. The remains of a five meter wide Roman road dating back to the reign of the Emperor Claudius can still be seen. A boat trip on the Bartın River makes for a delightful excursion. Nearby, **Inkum** has been developed into a holiday village with a sandy beach, restaurant and guest houses.

**Amasra** (17 km from Bartın), one of the most beautiful towns on the Black Sea coast, was called **Sesamos** in ancient times, when it was founded by the Miletians in the sixth century BC. It stands on a peninsula made by two inlets. The eastern side enjoys a reputation for good swimming. On a rocky promontory rise the ramparts



Amasra, Bartın



Daday, Kastamonu

of a Byzantine citadel, inside of which is an old church, now the Fatih Mosque. The necropolis dates from the Roman period. Remnants from Amasra's entire history are displayed in the Archeology Museum. You can purchase a lovely handcarved wooden souvenir on Çekiciler street. Continuing eastward along the coast, you arrive at **Çakraz** (15 km east of Amasra) a typical fishing village with excellent beaches, friendly accommodation and fine restaurants. The winding road between Çakraz and İnebolu has steep mountainsides and offers a spectacular panoramic view.

Beyond Çakraz and 44 km east of Amasra is **Kurucaşile**, a town known for its fishing boat manufacturing. **Cide**, 28 km farther, has good hotels and a pleasant beach providing comfort and relaxation. **Gideros Bay** will make you think a dream has come true.

**İnebolu** (100 km east of Cide) is a typical Black Sea town set in lush greenery displaying many fine examples of traditional Turkish architecture. East of İnebolu is **Abana**, another good holiday center.

Situated inland amid beautiful forests, the provincial center of **Kastamonu** (90 km south of İnebolu) also boasts several important monuments: the 12th-century Byzantine castle built by the Comnenes, the 13th-century Atabey Mosque and the 14th-century İbni Neccar Mosque. The Archeology and Ethnography Museum



displays artifacts found in the region, and the Liva Paşa Mansion Museum also has local ethnographical artifacts. Near the town is **Evkaya**, a rock tomb dating from the 6th century BC. In the village of **Kasaba**, the 14th-century Mahmut Bey Mosque retains some of the finest wood carvings found anywhere in Turkey. About 41 km west of Kastamonu and 9 km west of **Daday**, **Çömlekçiler** village has traditional timber houses and farms offering country horseback riding tours. Then, 63 km south of Kastamonu is **Ilgaz National Park**, a delightful protected area in the Ilgaz Mountains with a ski center and good accommodations. East of the park by the **Devrez** and **Kızılırmak Rivers**, is **Tosya** where extensive rice fields cover the landscape.

**Ilgarini Cave**, in the region of **Pınarbaşı** (northwest of Kastamonu), is one of the largest caves in Turkey. It is a wonderful place for trekking and exploration off the beaten path.



Ilgarini Cave, Kastamonu



Mahmutbey Mosque, Kastamonu





Fishing Boats, Sinop



# THE EASTERN BLACK SEA COAST

**Sinop** (192 km northeast of Kastamonu) is one of the most beautiful natural harbors of the Black Sea. The first evidences of civilization date from 4500 BC. It was founded as a major colony in the seventh century BC by Miletian colonists and was the birthplace of the third century BC philosopher, Diogenes the Cynic. The town's citadel and the foundations of a temple dedicated to the god Serapis, who was supposedly born in Sinop, date from that period. Serapis was worshipped in the Roman world as far away as Egypt. After the Miletians, subsequent rulers included the Phrygians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Selçuks, and beginning in 1461, the Ottomans. The Archeology Museum exhibits several beautiful golden icons, and the 18th-century Aslan Torunlar Mansion Museum displays ethnographical artifacts. Other important monuments include the 13th-century Alaeddin Mosque and the Alaiye Medrese. Excellent fish restaurants along the charming fishermen's wharf serve tasty meals while brightly colored boats bobbing in the water complete the pictur-



Icon in the Sinop  
Archeology Museum

esque setting. Sinop is also known for its traditional nautical wooden carvings. Seaside hotels and holiday villages provide accommodation in all price ranges. Some 35 km to the southwest, high in the mountains, lie the yaylas (mountain plateaus) of **Guzfindık** and **Bozarmut**. At an elevation of 1,350 meters, these green pastures with their summer residents offer a glimpse into a traditional way of life.

Gerze is situated on a peninsula 40 km east along the coast and is surrounded by parks and beaches. After Akkum beach you can see Turkey's only fjord, the Hamsaros. Farther along the coastal road, 44 km east of Gerze, you arrive at **Yakakent**, a fishing village with clean, sandy beaches: **Çamgölü**, a large forest which slopes to the sea, has camping sites, guest facilities and restaurants.

Turning inland, the road takes you to Bafra (30 km east of Yakakent) a town famous for its tobacco.

Its 13th-century hamam and 15th-century mosque-medrese complex are sights worth seeing. İkiztepe, 7 km



northeast of Bafra is an archeological site including over 600 graves from the early Bronze Age (2300-2100 BC) that uncovers much of Black Sea regional history. The site shows evidence of continual inhabitation from around 4000 BC until the time of the Hittites in 1700 BC. The artifacts, including jewelry, which is especially important, can be seen in the Samsun museum. The Kızılırmak River delta area has also been inhabited since ancient times. The Paflagonia graves date from 380 BC and the castle is dated at 1000 BC. The Bafra Kızılırmak Delta Marsh provides refuge to over 300 species of birds with a total of 100,000 birds wintering there.

Samsun (418 km northeast of Ankara and 168 km southeast of Sinop) is a modern industrial city that has served as a major port for centuries. Products from all over the region are exported from this city, which annually hosts the Samsun Trade and Industrial Fair. Samsun found itself at the center of the Turkish War of Independence on May 19, 1919, when Atatürk landed here to organize the defense of Anatolia. The Atatürk Museum houses many objects and documents relating to the war. An equestrian statue honoring the founder of the Republic stands in a prominent place in the city park. The 14th-century Pazar Mosque and the 19th-century Büyük Mosque reflect two different Turkish architectural styles and are interesting to compare.



**Atatürk Memorial, Samsun**

The Archeology Museum not only displays the finds from **İkiztepe** but also artifacts from **Dündartepe** and **Amisos**, as Samsun was known in ancient times. Amisos, excavated in 1955, contained a treasury that was found in a square-shaped grave with 5 rooms carved out of conglomerate rock. Three of the five rooms had skeletons; two were empty. Pottery, glass, metal, and marble artifacts were dated in the 14th century BC. The golden jewelry was dated at 100 BC. Other sites which have been excavated include Akalan, Tekkeköy, and Kaledoruğu. About 69 other sites remain unexcavated.

**Çarşamba** is the location of the beautiful wooden Gökçeli Mosque, built in 1206 without using any metal nails. **Terme** is ancient Themiskyra, founded in 1200 BC by Amazon warrior women. It has natural beaches and lakes. The charming little port of Ünye (93 km east of Samsun) is one of the nicest holiday towns on the eastern Black Sea and justly boasts of its excellent beaches and camping facilities. Do not miss the extraordinary 18th-century town hall. Within easy reach of Ünye is the beautiful **Çamlık Beach**.

After **Fatsa** (22 km east of Ünye), another holiday town on the road to Ordu, the ruins of the **Byzantine Jason Church**, now a museum, stand on the **Çamburnu** promontory. Legend has it that the Argonauts landed here on their quest for



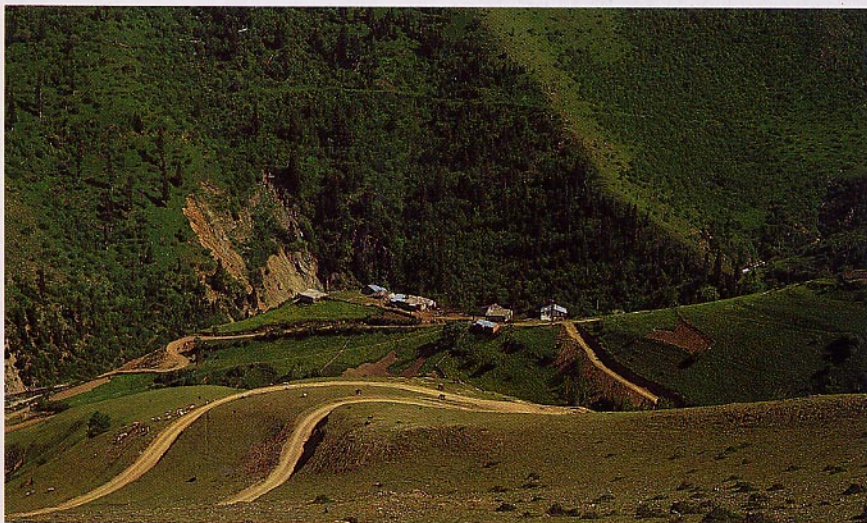
the Golden Fleece. Fish restaurants serving the finest tea found in the region dot the 50 km of scenic road to Ordu. Sea snails, a regional speciality, are particularly delicious at **Yahk y**.

Returning from the Babylonian campaign, the survivors of "Xenophon's Ten Thousand" left Anatolia from Ordu in their retreat to the west. Evidence of habitation in **Ordu** dates as early as 3000 BC. Today, Ordu is a beautiful port situated at the foot of a forested hill. In the Pa a-o lu Konak (mansion), now the Ethnographical Museum, see how a rich and influential 19th-century family lived. Hazelnut production centers around Ordu and every September the town hosts the Golden Hazelnut Festival. Be sure to sample the delicious chocolate nut candy. An 18th-century church two km from town and the pretty beach of **G zel-yalı** are worth visiting. The yayla (plateau) of ** amba ı** offering beautiful mountain views lies 58 km further south, at an altitude of 1,250 meters. The plateau of **Keyfalan**, at 2,000 meters, is another popular summer destination for local residents.

The ruins of the Giresun Fortress offer a wonderful panorama of **Giresun**, 52 km east of Ordu. The fortress is located on the peninsula which divides the city in two. It is claimed that there is a cave under the castle facing the sea which was used as a church and shelter for as many as 1500 people. It was from Giresun, ancient **Cerasos**, that the Roman general



**Tobacco in Samsun**



** akrak Plateau, Giresun**



**Regional Headress**

Lucullus exported the first cherry trees to Europe. An 18th-century church (now a museum) makes a short visit worthwhile. **Giresun Island**, the only inhabitable island in the eastern Black Sea, is said to have once belonged to the Amazons. A ruined temple supports this theory. Other historical remains include two

large wine barrels, castle walls, and a watchtower. The island was called Aretia, Aretias, or Areos. The **Aksu Art and Culture Festival** is a yearly event in May. To get off the beaten track, take an excursion to the high mountain plateaus of **Bekta ** or **K mbet**. It is possible to enjoy walking, hiking, or bicycling in clean mountain air amidst lush green surroundings.

Between Giresun and Trabzon are the quaint coastal towns of **Ke ap**, **Tirebolu**, **G rele**, **Vakfikebir** and **Ak aabat**



squeezed between wooded mountains and the Black Sea waters. Stop at Görele for delicious, submarine-shaped meat and cheese pide, at Vakfikebir for the best butter, and at Akçaabat to sample the best köfte (meat rolls).

**Trabzon**, a provincial capital 346 km east of Samsun, has a long history. The earliest evidences of civilization are dated at 7000 BC. In 1200 BC, warriors from Trabzon reportedly participated in the Trojan war. The area has been ruled by Assyrians, Miletians, Persians, Romans, Goths, Comnenes, and Ottomans. The Miletian colonists came in the 7th century BC, and Alexander the Great in 334 BC. The Romans engaged in an extensive building program from 110 to 118 AD. The Goths conquered the area in 258. The jewel of Trabzon's monuments is the restored 13th-century Byzantine church, used for centuries as a mosque and now as the Ayasofya Museum. Splendid frescoes, some of the finest examples of Byzantine painting, cover every one of the interior church walls. It was built between 1250 and 1260 during the time of Manuel I, one of the Comnene kings in Trabzon. Several other churches were converted to mosques, two becoming the Fatih Mosque and the Yeni Cuma Mosque. The Ottoman Gülbahar Hatun Mosque, a typical provincial style building, is set in a lovely tea garden. Wooden houses fill the old quarter nestled in the ancient fortifications,



**Akçaabat, Trabzon**



**Uzungöl, Trabzon**



**Karaca Cave, Gümüşhane**

which still retain the spirit of a medieval town. The house in which Atatürk stayed has been made into a museum.

On the hills above Trabzon, **Boztepe** Park offers a beautiful view of the city and coastline. On the western slopes of Boztepe Hill stands the Irene Tower, built by Empress Irene of Trabzon in 1340. Just east of the city, the village of **Sürmene** has an impressive 19th-century mansion known as the Kastel. Near Trabzon, south of Akçaabat, the lovely highland meadows of **Karadağ**, **Hıdırnebi** and **Erikbeli** are ideal for hiking and picnics. Nearby, the new Mt. Zarha vacation center has been opened. The road inland from Trabzon winds through spectacular mountain landscape before reaching the **Zigana Tunnel**, the longest in Turkey. Nearby **Hamsiköy** is a charming mountain village, that has gained a national reputation for its excellent cuisine (including the best rice pudding), and is also conveniently near the Zigana Ski Center. The beautiful meadows and highland plateaus of **Gürgenagaç Yaylası**, **Kirazlı Yaylası** and **Şolma Yaylası** are ideal sites for outdoor activities. The traditional Kadirga Festival celebrates the annual summer migration to the high mountain pastures.

**Altındere National Park** in Maçka County provides a magnificent setting for the 14th-century **Sumela (Virgin Mary) Monastery**, perched high on a cliff face 270 meters above a deep gorge.



Surrounded by the ruins of the monks' quarters, is a church covered inside and out with brilliant frescoes. Southeast of Trabzon is **Lake Uzungöl**, a lovely alpine lake surrounded by mountains and meadows, excellent for camping, hiking and fishing. The restaurants there also make it the best place for eating river trout.

**Gümüşhane** (88 km east of Trabzon), on the ancient trade route between Trabzon and Iran was once of considerable importance. Many elegant buildings still remain. Set amid fruit groves and wild roses, the town is a natural stopping point between Trabzon and Erzurum. Take the opportunity to try the local rosehip syrup and marmalade.

**Bayburt** (77 km from Gümüşhane), is situated on both banks of the Çoruh River and lies on what was once known as the Silk Road. Marco Polo and the inveterate Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi both



Lesser Ayasofya Museum, Trabzon



Sumela Monastery, Altındere National Park, Trabzon



passed through this city. The remains of a Byzantine castle, as well as major mosques, Turkish baths and fascinating carved tombstones are among the significant sites. The castle survived many civilizations. It was controlled at various times by Romans, Byzantines, and Arabs before being captured by the Turks. Bayburt castle, one of the most well preserved castles of Anatolia, is one of the most beautiful examples of Seljuk architecture. Two other important monuments in Bayburt are Ulu Mosque (18th-century) and the Clock Tower in the city center which dates from the republican period. Also worth seeing are the twin mausoleums of Şehit Osman and his sister which are situated on the hillsides at the southern entrance to the city. Osman Park on the Çoruh River has wonderful scenery and is a lovely place to relax.

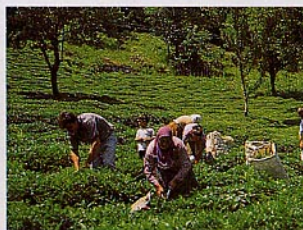
**Rize** (75 km east of Trabzon) is built on a mountain slope covered with tea bushes that look like puffy green pillows. Be sure to see this typical Black Sea city's 16th-century İslam Paşa Mosque and the remains of a Genoese castle. From Ziraat Park you can take in a splendid panorama of the whole area. A lightweight summer cloth of good quality and printed with colorful patterns comes from the Rize area. During the Summer Tea Festival you can purchase the best blend of Black Sea tea. Mehmet Mataracı Mansion is now an Atatürk Museum that



**Zil Castle, Rize**



**Hiking in the Kaçkar Mountains, Rize**



**Harvesting Tea in Rize**

displays his personal belongings as well as ethnographical artifacts from the region.

Turning inland after **Ardeşen** off the road going east from Rize, you come to the beautiful little town of **Çamlıhemşin** straddling a rushing stream. Nearby is the **Fırtına Vadisi** (Valley of Storms) - ideal for canoeing, and the beautiful **Zil Castle** (**Kale-i Zir**), and an old stone bridge. After walking around **Ayder's** rolling meadows, you can relax in one of the many hot springs. For those who like mountain climbing, this is the best starting point for scaling the Kaçkar Mountains. This emerald range is one of the best and the most challenging for climbers in Turkey. The whole of the Kaçkar Range constitutes the beautiful **Kaçkar Dağları National Park**. In the mountains south of Rize, Anzer village offers the world-famous and nutritious **Anzer** honey and is a nice area for hiking and for its botany. **İkizdere Canyon**, between **Anzer** and **İkizdere Plateaus**, is a great spot for hang-gliding. At the same time you get a bird's-eye view of the area. Near Rize, the towns of **Çayeli**, **Pazar**, **Ardeşen**, **Of** and **Fındıklı** all enjoy a subtropical climate, lush green settings and boast traditional chalets. The **Çamburnu** coast is covered with golden pine trees where many species of migrating birds stop, and it is a lovely area for resting and picture taking.

**Hopa**, an attractive town at the foot of a



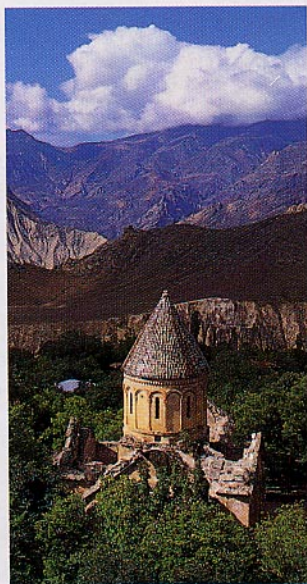


Elevit - Rize and Kaçkar Mountains - Rize



forested mountain, is the last port before the Turkish-Georgian border. The international boundary actually divides the village of **Sarp**. The wonderful alpine lake of **Karagöl**, with various pine trees, as well as other flora and fauna is 27 km northeast of the town of **Borçka** on the way to Artvin. The road to Artvin traverses the **Cankurtaran** mountain pass, where verdant landscape changes to barren rocks. **Hatilla Valley National Park**, about 25 km in length, is 10 km from **Artvin**, between the confluence of the **Çoruh River** and the Hatilla stream in the east, and **Mt. Nathali** (2,923 m) in the west. Canyons with sheer cliffs and vertical drops can be seen throughout the park. Both Mediterranean and Black Sea flora flourish together in the park along with bears, deer, wolves, foxes and eagles. Special houses on top of wooden stilts are home to the park bees who produce the famous regional honey.

A winding drive midway up a mountain-side takes you to **Artvin**, the capital of the province. At the foot of the escarpment, a ruined 16th-century castle crowns a rocky outcrop. Artvin is a charming city with beautiful old Turkish houses, typical of the region. The area's mild climate makes summer visits delightfully refreshing and every June, crowds of tourists, as well as brightly-clad locals, throng to the **Kafkasör** festival, where the spectacle of fighting bulls highlights the celebration. The adventurous might like to attempt



**Işhan Church, Yusufeli, Artvin**



**Şavşat, Artvin**

white-water rafting on the wild, romantic **Çoruh River**.

During the Middle Ages the Artvin area came under Georgian sovereignty, which makes it the best place for touring remains of the Georgian past. Its wonderfully scenic roads lead to the ruined churches and settlements that stand as a legacy of this period. The best-preserved of these are at **Barhal** and **Işhan**, in the majestic Kaçkar Mountains. Barhal also offers some of the best country horseback riding. Several other churches in **Bağbaşı** and **Çamlıyamaç** are just off the road to Erzurum, passing by the Tortum Waterfalls and the pristine **Tortum Lake**. Other Georgian churches and settlements near Yusufeli are **Dörtkilise**, **Köprügören**, and **Tekkale**. **Yusufeli** itself boasts wonderful possibilities for nature lovers and hiking at 4000 meters. East of Artvin is the former Georgian capital **Ardanuç**, with its famous castle, which overlooks the longest canyon in the region.

Şavşat is 71 km east of Artvin. It is an alpine village surrounded by meadows of wild flowers and butterflies, rushing streams and quaint chalets. The local women's organization has established a training center for weaving in an attempt to keep the indigenous carpet and kilim traditions alive. **Karagöl-Sahara National Park**, 17 km from Şavşat on the way to Ardahan, has one of the most beautiful Karagöl alpine lakes as well as the widely-known **Sahara Plateau**. The lake is 25 km northeast of Şavşat via **Veliköy**





Karagöl National Park, Artvin

Village, another typical authentic village. The area around the lake is covered with a variety of pine trees and also has picnic facilities. Wildlife, including bears, is plentiful. The Sahara plateau itself is also covered with beautiful mineral and fresh springs. On the plateau is **Kocabey Kışlağı Village** where you can see traditional wooden houses with their friendly residents. Another important plateau and popular summer residence in the region is Bilbilan whose people are also excep-



Rafting on the Çoruh River, Artvin

tionally welcoming and helpful. Generally, in all the national parks you can see wonderful examples of birds and butterflies.







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**ADAPAZARI (SAKARYA)** - Adnan Menderes Cad. Orman Bölge Müdürlüğü Binası Kat : 4,  
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(Info.) Tel : (378) 227 61 16  
E-Mail : kulturizm@bartin.gov.tr; www.bartin.gov.tr

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