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ŞANLIURFA



Culture and Traditions











Şanlıurfa's Living Culture

Being home to different religions and ethnic groups throughout history has created a rich and diverse culture in Şanlıurfa. This ethnic and cultural diversity is reflected in the music, folklore and clothing of the local people and largely influenced its cuisine specialities. The crops grown on the arid Şanlıurfa plains and the sheep raised on the steppes

are the sources of delicious foods produced by the local cooks. Besides being the home of Göbekli Tepe, Şanlıurfa is also renowned as a major centre for faith and it is often referred to "the city of prophets". Abraham, considered to be the forefather of all the monotheistic religions, is believed to have been born in Şanlıurfa.





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|  | Şanlıurfa Archaeology Museum |  | Old Town |
|  | The Pool of Abraham |  | Tea Gardens |
|  | Haleplibahçe Mosaic Museum |  | Inns District |
|  | Abraham's Cave |  | Cave and Well of Prophet Job (Ayyup) |

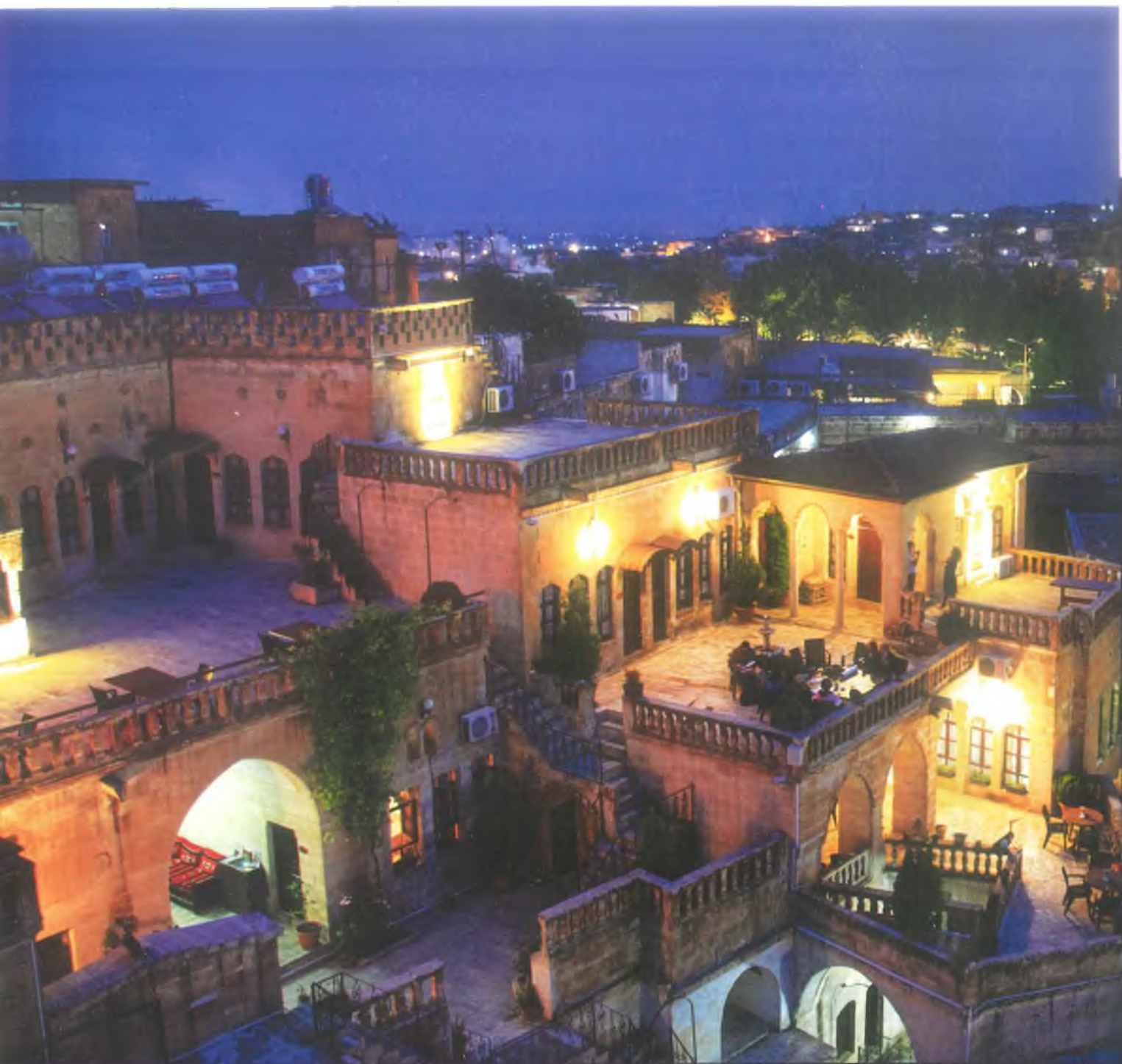




Get Lost Exploring Urfa's Historic Streets

Şanlıurfa has over 200 historic houses and mansions dating back hundreds of years ago. The main entrance of traditional Şanlıurfa houses typically opens to an inner courtyard with a fountain or basin surrounded by service rooms. The interior walls are decorated with elaborate stone carvings of plants and geometric motifs, hexagons, octagons and rosettes. Şanlıurfa houses are constructed from local limestone, using lime mortar. The exterior plaster is made from hemp mortar.











Join a 'Sıra' Night

Music is an integral aspect of cultural life in Şanlıurfa and is performed at all important occasions such as weddings, bridal henna nights and funerals.

'Sıra' night tradition is an important occasion in Şanlıurfa's social life. Typically held at nights, these occasions are performed to provide an opportunity for men to get together and discuss issues, to knead and eat *çiğköfte* (raw meatball) and to play and dance to local Urfa songs. Today, 'sıra' night has evolved into a touristic event where people enjoy delicious Urfa kebabs and play and sing local songs in the historical houses and mansions of Şanlıurfa.



Admire Traditional Clothing

Women living in some parts of Şanlıurfa wear multi-coloured clothes called şale, while men wear loose salwars with various colours. Both men and women wear silk scarves known as yamsah. In winter, the local people prefer to wear clothes made of sheepskin that keep them warm.

Tattoo is a very ancient Şanlıurfa tradition that dates back thousands of years. These tattoos are called “dak” by locals and are especially popular in the Harran and Suruç regions. According to a legend, the tattoo brings luck to its owner. Tattoos made with natural colours are applied to hands, feet and face through needles injected under the skin.











Explore Historical Covered Bazaars

Crafts remain in Şanlıurfa to this day and skilled craftsmen may be seen working at the historical bazaars. Copper work, felt making, silk weaving (kazazlık) and coat making (aba) are traditional handicrafts still being produced. Felt handicrafts are used as carpets, bags and hats. Weavers use silk as material. Today, silk weaving is in danger of disappearing with only a handful of craftsmen remaining.

Doors, windows cabinets, chests and mirror frames of traditional Şanlıurfa houses are the products of an ancient and splendid wood-carving craft which still survives in small workshops in the hands of a few masters.



Taste Şanlıurfa Specialities

Şanlıurfa, which has been home to many civilisations for thousands of years, is one of the exceptional cuisines, which has succeeded in bringing different tastes to the present day by melting them in a pot. Tavernier, one of the famous travellers of the 16th century, emphasized the unique tastes of the city by saying: "In Urfa, you can taste different food which cannot be compared with any meals in other part of Turkey". Urfa cuisine, which includes many types of kebabs (mainly lamb and liver kebabs), appeals to your stomach, eyes and heart. Recommended dishes to try include kebab, liver, çiğköfte (raw meatballs), lahmacun, pancar borani, stuffed meatballs, ağzı açık, semsek and şillik among the numerous tastes of the Urfa cuisine.

Two of the most important ingredients in Şanlıurfa cuisine are isot (a kind of red pepper grown in the region) and pomegranate syrup.

The Halfeti and Birecik districts located on the eastern bank of the Euphrates are renowned for eggplant kebab, chickpea wrap, fresh fruit foods and grill of shabout fish caught in the Euphrates.











Go Pigeon Fancying

Bird breeding, especially pigeons, comes first among the hobbies of the Şanlıurfa people. Although bird breeding is carried out as hobby, it is also a profession with peculiar attributes. Şanlıurfa is well known all round Turkey and abroad, as a special place for pigeon auctions, with the unusual auctions taking place every evening at the bird bazaar in Şanlıurfa old town.



Urfa in Pagan Times

Sanliurfa boasts the ruins of many important pagan sites such as Göbekli Tepe, Harran and Soğmatar. Göbekli Tepe is believed to be the oldest monumental temple of mankind while Harran was an important religious centre for Assyrians for its famous Sin Temple. To the northeast of Harran, another pagan religious centre Soğmatar can be found. Best known as the seat of the Babylonian pagan belief systems that worshipped the moon, sun and planets, legend says that it was here that Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, gave him the rod that he used to part the Red Sea.











Biblical Times

Şanlıurfa is the first region that was ruled by a Christian king. During the reign of King Abgar V, Christianity rapidly spread among the local people of Şanlıurfa. Edessa (name of Şanlıurfa in the ancient times) is acknowledged to be the birthplace of Syrian-Christian literature. It is possible to observe inscriptions from the reign of King Abgar inscribed on two monumental columns erected on the hill of the castle around 240-242 A.D. by Manu, King of Edessa. In the 12th century during the Crusades, Şanlıurfa hosted the County of Edessa for 48 years. County of Edessa was established by Baldwin of Boulogne and he reigned over Urfa from 1098 to 1144. The most remarkable artifact that has survived until today is a tower dating back to 1122. This tower was known as “Mahmutoğlu Tower” in the Ottoman period. The restored tower has been transformed into a museum and has taken the name of City Museum.



Islamic Urfa

In 1182, after decades of attacks by the Turks, Sultan Saladin Ayyub succeeded to take over Şanlıurfa signifying the start of the adoption of the Islamic faith. After the conquest Islamic structures such as mosques, masjids and madrasas as well as cemeteries were built mainly around the Balıklıgöl area. Some churches such as Red Church (Grand Mosque) were converted into mosques. For those interested in religion, the most important Islamic religious sites to visit are: the Balıklıgöl Area, home of Rızvaniye, Halil-ül Rahman, Mevlid-i Halil mosques, Rızvaniye madrasa and the birthplace of Abraham.

Located in the Eyyub Peygamber neighbourhood in the southern outskirts of Şanlıurfa is the cave and well of Prophet Eyyub (Ayyub). The Prophet Eyyub is known around the world as the symbol of virtue and patience. According to legend, inside the cave the well containing the holy waters from which Prophet Eyyub bathed and was healed can be found. It is also believed that the tomb of Prophet Eyyub is located in Eyyub Nebi Village near Viranşehir District, east of Şanlıurfa Province, where hundreds of people visit every day.









Festivals and Events

- **March-April-May**

Şanlıurfa Music and Culinary Festival
The Remembrance Day of Prophet Job
Halfeti Fruit Cuisine Festival

- **October**

The İsot (Pepper) Festival
Göbekli Tepe Half Marathon Run
“Her An Harran” Photo Contest

- **November**

Haleplibahçe Mosaic Art Competition
and Workshop (*once, every
two years*)

Where to Stay

Şanlıurfa offers accommodation in 3-, 4- and 5- star hotels. Traditional Urfa houses (Konak) and small Boutique Hotels are also available. For the list of the accommodation facilities, please visit our website.





Cuisine

Melting down many cultures in a pot and bringing their traces to the present, the rich cuisine of Şanlıurfa appeals to the stomach, eye and heart with its delicious taste. We recommend that you try such traditional tastes as kebab, raw meatball (çiğköfte), beet borani, stuffed meatball (içli köfte), ağzı açık (pastry), semsek (pastry) and şıllık dessert in Şanlıurfa which is known as a city of gourmet tastes.

Getting Here

National Airlines have regular flights to Şanlıurfa GAP Airport from İstanbul and Ankara on a daily basis and from İzmir three times a week. The airport is located about 35 km northeast of the city centre and is serviced by shuttle buses (HAVAS). There are scheduled intercity bus services available from several provinces to and from Şanlıurfa with the most travelled being to Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, Adıyaman, Mardin and major cities in Turkey. Car rental is available by ground handling agents at Şanlıurfa GAP Airport or in the city centre.

Climate

Şanlıurfa has a continental climate marked by very hot, dry summers and warm, rainy winters. Due to the dry climate, daily and annual temperatures vary greatly. Temperatures in the height of summer can easily reach 39°C (102°F). The best time to visit is in the spring and autumn when the weather is mild.



For Further Information

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Cultural and Natural Heritage are Fragile

We believe that Şanlıurfa is a special place; not only in Turkey but in the world. Shaped by civilisations dating back thousands of years, religious and traditional practices are strongly maintained to this day. Appreciate, respect and celebrate what makes Şanlıurfa special, including its historical, religious and natural places, and you will be sure to make your travel experience to Şanlıurfa a great one!

