

Cultural Discovery and Photography Tours with NURAN ZORLU



EASTERN TURKEY



Gobeklipe realife, Urfa. Front image Holy Cross Church, Aghtamar Island, Lake Van



**Kars , Ani, Mt Ararat, Lake Van, Mardin,
Urfa, Mt Nemrut, Gaziantep and anything between.**

26thOct - 9thNov 2027

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Discover the Treasures of Eastern and Southeastern Turkey: A Journey Through Millennia

Embark on an extraordinary 17-day odyssey through the enchanting landscapes and rich tapestry of Eastern and Southeastern Turkey. From the ancient city of Kars to the vibrant metropolis of Gaziantep, this carefully curated tour invites you to unravel the layers of history, culture, and culinary delights that have shaped this predominately Kurdish area and witnessed the flourishing of Armenian culture, though only a few cultural areas remain.

As you traverse over 1500 kilometers, each day unfolds a new chapter in your adventure, immersing you in the stories of diverse civilizations that have left an indelible mark on this land, creating a unique blend of influences. From the multicultural vibes of Kars to the mesmerizing churches and monasteries of Mardin, experience the harmonious coexistence of Kurdish and the remnants of Armenian cultural elements in the areas that have preserved this rich heritage.

Delight your senses in the food capital of Gaziantep, savoring the finest kebabs and indulging in the sweet symphony of Baklava, all while surrounded by the cultural mosaic that defines this area. Join us as we explore ancient sites, meander through colorful markets, and witness the convergence of ancient and modern life in the bustling cities and quaint villages.

This journey promises not just a tour but a profound odyssey, leaving you with memories that transcend time. Welcome to the treasures of Eastern and Southeastern Turkey, where the predominantly Kurdish influence and the echoes of Armenian culture in select cultural areas add unique layers to the rich history and cultural diversity of this region.

Trip Notes

Day 1: Kars - Exploring Unique Vibes

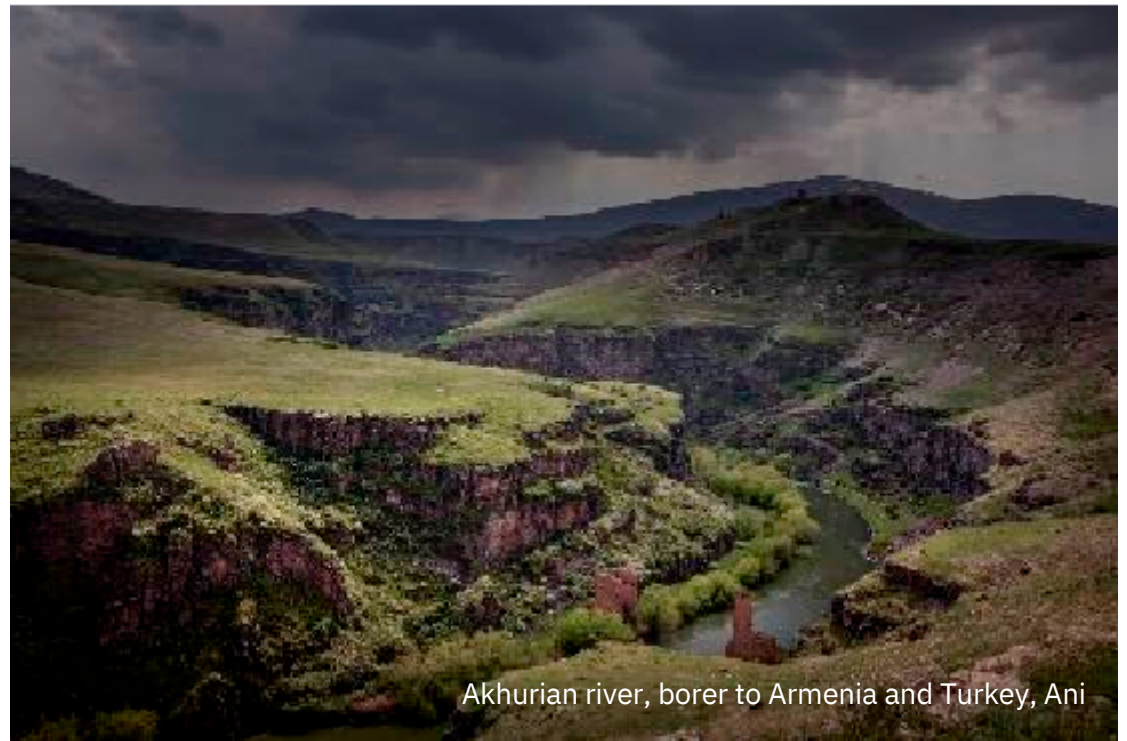
Our 17-day journey begins in Kars, one of the most easterly areas in Turkey. The city has a distinct atmosphere, especially as you wander through the old city, providing sensations unique to this region. The Russian and Armenian influences are prominently felt, particularly when visiting the castle and the 12 Apostle Church, dating back to the 10th century, now repurposed as a mosque.

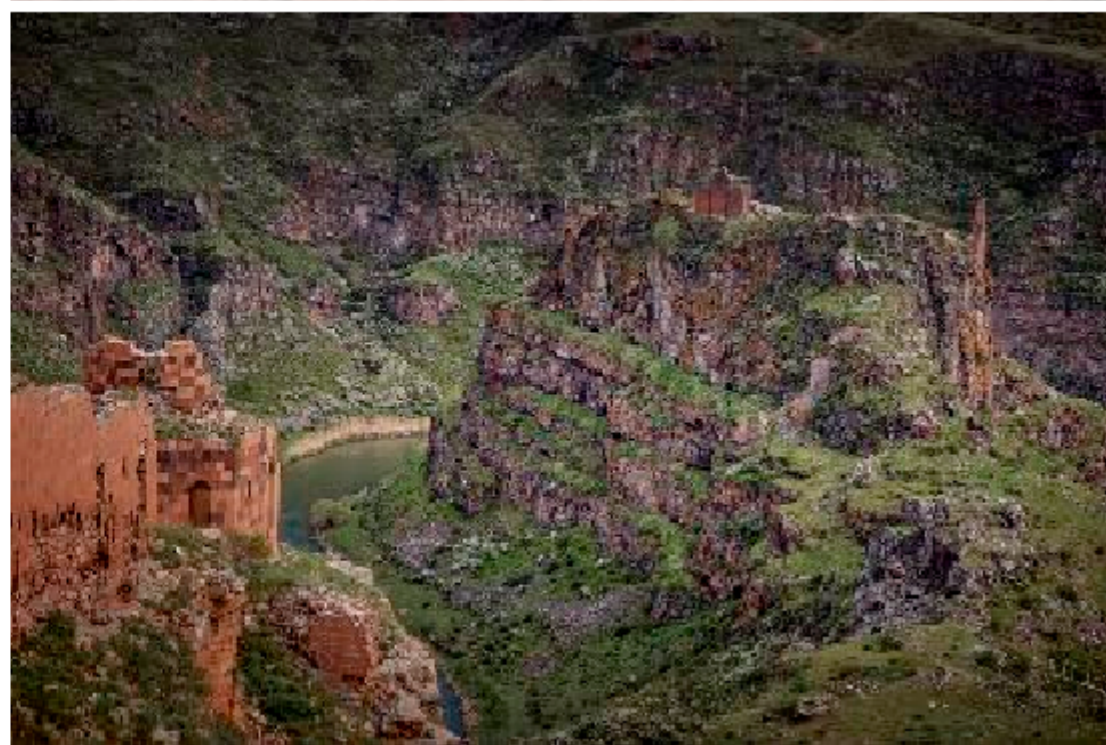
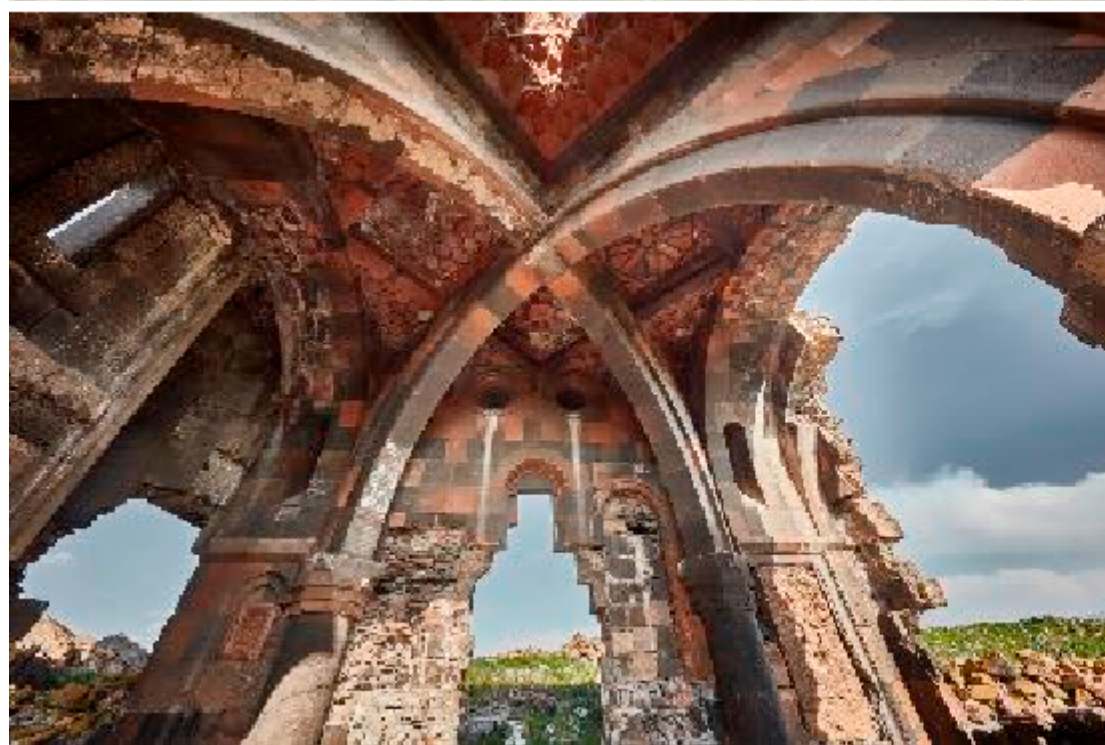
Day 2: Ani - Capital of Greater Armenia Kingdom

After exploring some vibrant neighborhoods in Kars, we'll head to Ani. Despite having visited this site six times, each visit reveals something new. Ani served as the capital of the 10th-11th-century Greater Armenia Kingdom. Once a bustling city with 100,000 residents engaged in trade with the Persians and Byzantium empires, it was hailed as the "city of 1001 churches." Although many building ruins remain, the city's splendor and grandeur provide a profound understanding of its historical significance.

Day 3: Van - Journey with Scenic Views

In the morning, our journey takes us to Van, offering breathtaking views of Mount Ararat (weather permitting) and the well-preserved 18th-century administrative center, Isak Pasha Palace. As we drive south, passing through the Tendurek mountains, we'll reach the northern shores of Lake Van. A picturesque soda lake with varying shades of blue awaits us. Our hotel on the Edremit shores will provide a tranquil retreat.





Ancient capital of Greater Armenia, Ani



ST George Chapel and Castle, Ani



Ararat, Dogubeyazit-Igdir highway



Old Beyazit Mosque, Dogubeyazit

Day 4: Urartian Castles and Vanadokya

Today's journey explores 6th-century BCE Urartian castles and old Islamic buildings, showcasing their distinctiveness compared to contemporary architecture. Our final destination is Vanadokya, known for rock formations reminiscent of Cappadocia. En route, we'll visit the ruins of St. Bartholomew Church, making it a long but enriching day that leaves you with a profound sense of geographical and historical knowledge upon returning to Van.

Day 5: Southern Shores of Lake Van - Armenian Heritage

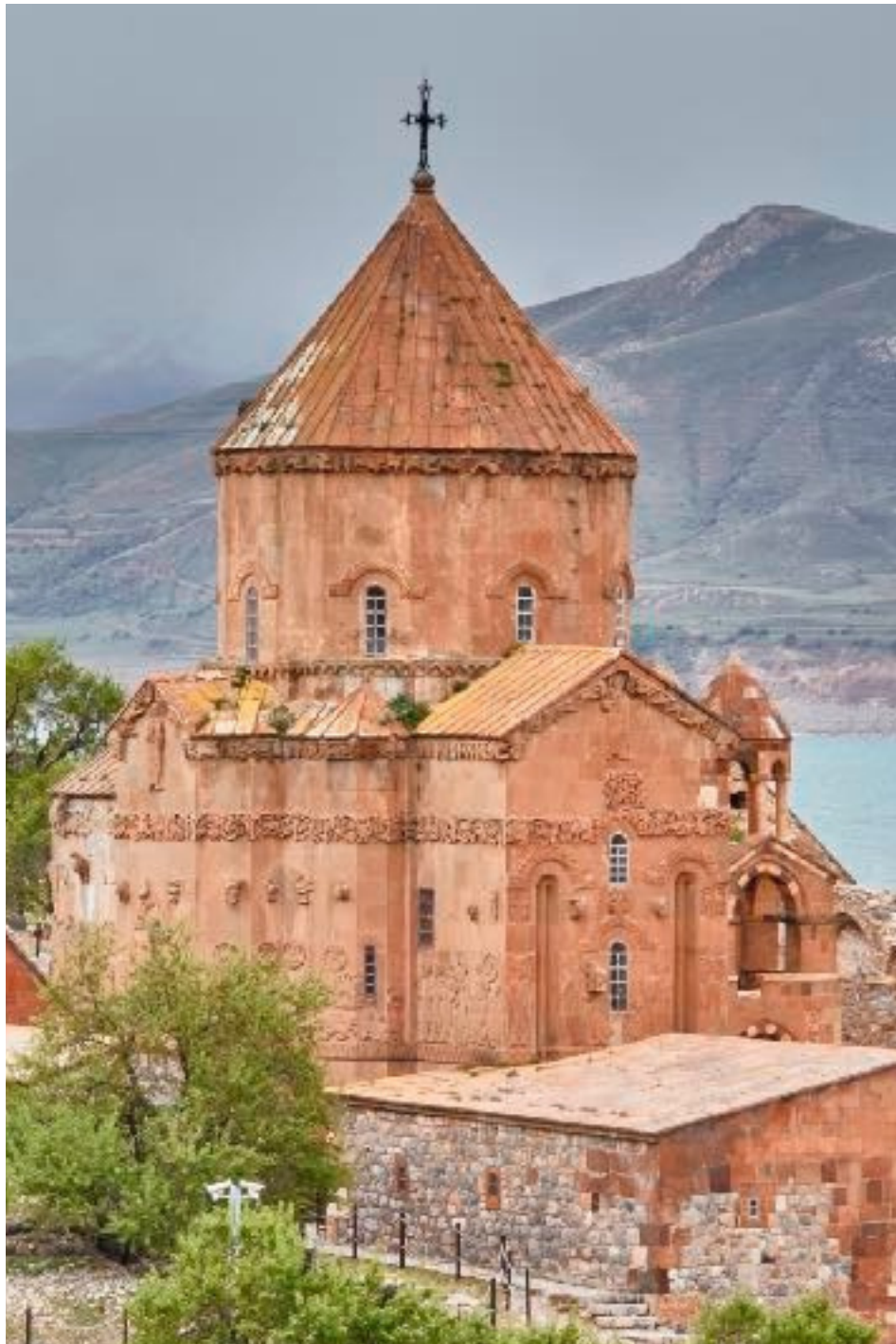
Exploration of the southern shores of Lake Van awaits us. Once an Armenian homeland, remnants of the Armenian cultural heritage from the 10th century still exist. A highlight is the Holy Cross Church on Aghtamar Island, adorned with bass reliefs depicting Old Testament scenes. Further along, the ruins of St. Thomas Monastery offer an incredible view of Lake Van, leaving visitors breathless.

Day 6: Van Castle and Surroundings - Urartian Capital

Van Castle and its surroundings are among the most intriguing sites in Van. Originally the Urartu capital of Tushba, the castle houses a new Urartu museum displaying artefacts from the 8th to 5th centuries BCE. The old Van city, mostly destroyed, retains a handful of historical remnants. The experience provides a fascinating blend of history and archaeology.

Day 7: Exploring Northern Shores of Lake Van - Ahlat and Tatvan Adventure

Leaving Van behind, we embark on a scenic journey along the northern shores of Lake Van towards Tatvan. This road trip is a perfect blend of historical marvels and natural wonders. The azure hues of Lake Van accompany us on one side, while the majestic Mt. Suphan, Turkey's third-tallest mountain, graces the other. Our first stop is the captivating Ahlat cemetery and the old city, both of which evoke a sense of time travel. Ahlat's cemetery is a fascinating repository of historical tombstones, each telling its own story. The old city, with its timeless charm, offers glimpses into bygone eras. As we venture through the countryside, absorbing the picturesque surroundings, we will reach Tatvan for an overnight stay.



Holy Cross Church, Aghtamar Island, Lake Van



Lake Van



Lake Van



Mt Suphan from Edremit shores. Lake Van



Southern Taurus Montains, near Gevas, Van

Day 8: Journey from Lake Van to Mardin - A Cultural Odyssey

On day 8, bid farewell to the enchanting Lake Van and the province of Eastern Turkey as we set out on a rewarding road trip towards Mardin. Despite the journey's length, the experience is enriched by the gradual change in climate and the evolving cultural geography along the way.

Our route will take us through the Southeastern Taurus Mountains, providing not only breathtaking views but also a transition from one climatic zone to another. As we venture towards northern Mesopotamia, anticipate the diverse landscapes that characterise this region.

Mardin, our destination, awaits with its magical allure. This city is truly unique, offering an experience unlike any other. Prepare to be captivated by the ancient charm of Mardin as we immerse ourselves in its rich cultural tapestry. Our overnight stay in a traditional stone-cut house promises a glimpse into the authentic essence of this enchanting city. Relax and soak in the atmosphere of Mardin, appreciating its distinctive blend of history, architecture, and hospitality.

Day 9: Immersing in Mardin's Multicultural Tapestry

Today unfolds within the captivating city of Mardin, a melting pot of cultures adorned with churches and mosques, some tracing their roots back over millennia. Our exploration will take us through narrow cobblestone streets, where the only mode of transportation is provided by donkeys, offering a charming throwback to traditional ways of life.

Stroll through these historic alleys, immersing yourself in the rich cultural fabric of Mardin. Marvel at the architectural wonders of churches and mosques, each telling a story of the city's diverse heritage.

As we pause for a moment to savor traditional coffee or tea, find a higher vantage point to witness the vast plains of Syrian Mesopotamia sprawling below. Mardin is not just a city; it's a living testament to cultural and culinary experiences. Engage with locals, savor the distinctive flavours of Mardin's cuisine, and let the city's ambiance leave an indelible mark on your journey. Whether exploring historical sites, sipping on traditional beverages, or simply taking in the mesmerising views, Mardin promises a day filled with enriching encounters and unforgettable moments.





Ahlat cemetery, Van



Day 10: Discovering Tur Abdin - Assyrian Heritage and Ancient Wonders

The unique charm of Mardin is further illuminated by its inhabitants, and among them, the Assyrians stand out as a defining presence. As early Christians, their profound influence on the region has shaped an area known as Tur Abdin. Today, our focus centres on exploring the churches and monasteries scattered in and around Mardin and Midyat.

Our journey begins with the remarkable stone craftsmanship at Dayrul-Zeferan, a site built atop the Sun Temple, and the awe-inspiring Mor Gabriel Monastery. These monuments bear witness to the enduring legacy of the Assyrians in this region.

Venturing to Midyat, the heart of Tur Abdin, we delve into a treasure trove of traditional Christian monuments. Amidst these historical gems, we embark on a visit to Dara, once a pivotal city in the ancient world where Persians and Romans contested for centuries. The echoes of this historical struggle still resonate in the archaeological remnants that dot the landscape.

As the day unfolds, we immerse ourselves in the rich tapestry of Tur Abdin, appreciating the spiritual and historical significance of the churches and monasteries. Our return to Mardin is marked by reflections on the unique heritage that has shaped this captivating region over the centuries.

Day 11: Mt Nemrut National Park

In the afternoon, our journey takes us to the slopes of Mt Nemrut, where we will be staying in Nemrut National Park.

Explore the historical significance of the Roman bridge on the Cendere River, marked by three columns that offer insights into political challenges and their consequences during that era. The day's adventures continue, and if energy permits, return to the mountaintop for a mesmerizing sunset, concluding the day with the enchanting hues of dusk over this ancient landscape. The sunset will be welcomed on the top of Mt Nemrut.



St Thomas monastery, Altinsac



St Bartholomew Monastery, Albayrak



Vanadokya, Yavuzlar village



Tushba, Van Castle



Old Armenian House, Gaziantep

Day 12: Journey to Urfa - A Tapestry of History and Culture

Rise early to witness the breathtaking sunrise atop the mountain, where the 1st-century Kommagene mausoleum and colossal statues of gods from the Greco-Persian religion Pantheon come to life in the morning light. The slopes of the mountain are equally impressive, adorned with surviving 1st-century artefacts, each narrating its unique story.

Our next destination unfolds as we make our way to Urfa, a city that offers an unparalleled slice of history. Once known as Edessa, this city has been ruled by Romans and early Christians, who believed it held a profound connection to the Abrahamic religions. The timeless stories of King Nemrut and Prophet Abraham have traversed thousands of years to become part of our collective memory. Abraham's Lake stands as a significant pilgrimage site, carrying the weight of historical and religious importance.

Urfa's bustling bazaar, arguably one of the most vibrant and colorful markets in the region, immerses us in the local culture. The lifestyle of the caravanserai persists, with locals gathering in the courtyards of old stone buildings to share tea and stories. Strolling through the bazaar, engaging with local life, and observing the world passing by offers an experience that is truly unique. As evening descends, witness the fusion of music and food at the Sira Geceleri, where locals come together for an enchanting cultural experience.

Day 13: Gobeklitepe and Karahan Tepe - Unraveling Ancient Narratives

Today marks a significant chapter in our journey as we explore the excavation sites of Gobeklitepe and Karahan Tepe, sites that have rewritten the narrative of history. These archaeological wonders have revealed artifacts dating back 12,000 years, crafted during the era of hunters and gatherers. The stone menhirs stand as silent witnesses to ancient rituals and cultural practices, challenging our understanding of human history.

In the afternoon, delve into the rich history further as we visit the museum showcasing the artifacts excavated from these sites. The depth and complexity of these ancient civilizations will leave you pondering the incredible human achievements of the past. It's a journey into the annals of history that reshapes our perspectives and challenges conventional narratives.

Day 14: Culinary Delights in Gaziantep - Food Capital of the Region

After two weeks of traversing over 1500km, our journey culminates in the food capital of the region, Gaziantep. This city is renowned for offering the finest kebabs and delectable sweets, including the world-famous Baklava. While I personally enjoy the food here immensely, I encourage you to explore and indulge your taste buds in the diverse culinary delights Gaziantep has to offer. Aintab, as it has been known for centuries, remains a vibrant city and a crucial center.





Dara, Antique Roman city



Karahan tepe excavation site, Urfa



Cloakwise, Ani, Zeguma museum, , Ahlat, Gobeklitepe

One of the most intriguing sites in this historic town is the Zeugma Museum. The mosaics within the museum create a portal to the magnificent world of Roman life. Despite being nearly 2000 years old, these artifacts transport you to the fauna and flora as seen by the ancient locals, providing a captivating glimpse into the past.

Day 15: Exploring Aintab's Old City - Armenian Quarter

On the penultimate day of our journey, we delve into the heart of Aintab's old city, particularly the Armenian Quarter. Walking along narrow cobblestone streets, sipping tea in the courtyards of old mansions, and immersing ourselves in local life offer a serene way to conclude our adventure. This exploration is a tribute to the land that has shaped the course of history for thousands of years. Capture the essence of this ancient city with photographs that will become cherished memories, but the profound senses awakened during our journey will remain etched in your heart forever.

Day 16: Flight Back to Istanbul

As our memorable journey comes to an end, we board our flight back to Istanbul. Reflecting on the diverse landscapes, rich history, and vibrant cultures encountered during the past two weeks, we carry with us a treasure trove of experiences and memories that will linger in our hearts for a lifetime.





Colourful Urfa Cover Bazaar

Nuran Zorlu, an Australian commercial and advertising photographer, boasts over two decades of industry expertise. A recipient of the AIPP Travel Photographer of the Year (NSW) award twice, his work has garnered acclaim in competitions like 'Head On' and 'Shoot the Chef.' As an esteemed photography teacher and judge in Australian competitions, Nuran's influence extends beyond his captivating visuals.

His travel photography, showcased in prominent exhibitions and publications, reflects his passion for exploring diverse cultures. Nuran has lectured on travel photography and history at esteemed institutions like the Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney University, Cezayir Cultural Centre in Istanbul, and the 2016 Tehran International Book Fair. His images have adorned the walls of both NSW and Victorian parliament houses.

Born in Istanbul to Armenian parents, Nuran is multilingual, fluent in English, Turkish, Armenian, and a bit of Persian. Holding a degree in philosophy and sociology from Istanbul University, he possesses a profound love for the region's history. This unique blend of cultural insight and photographic prowess ensures that Nuran's travel photography workshops transcend mere technical lessons, offering an intimate understanding of the regions and their inhabitants.

Nuran's illustrated travel journal, "Persia to Iran," garnered attention on ABC radio and featured in a BBC World Service documentary. He conducts photography workshops in Armenia, Georgia, Turkey, Central Asia and Iran, further enriching participants with his regional expertise.

Beyond photography, Nuran's passion for food adds a flavorful dimension to his tours. A connoisseur of local dishes and the best regional restaurants, he ensures participants not only capture moments but also savor the culinary delights each region has to offer. Join Nuran Zorlu on a journey where photography becomes a gateway to cultural understanding, and every frame tells a story of history, diversity, and delectable experiences



Terms and Conditions

HEALTH REQUIREMENT

The workshop is designed for people of all ages in good health and moderate fitness. Nuran Zorlu cannot accept responsibility for losses or extra expenses caused by, but not limited to, delays, changes in transportation services, weather, illness, injury, strike, quarantine, or other causes. Participants should be cautious during activities like hikes in National Parks, involving short steep descents and climbs. We will comply with National Parks' safety requirements, but participants need to be careful and inform us of any concerns about their capabilities before booking. Nuran Zorlu reserves the right to cancel any workshop, with a full refund. Participants must carry their camera equipment and water for activities.

RESERVATIONS

Workshops are limited to a maximum of 8 participants, with a minimum of 5 required. Places will be confirmed based on receipt of payment or deposit. Contact Nuran Zorlu at nuran@nuranzorlu.com or call 0413 619 292 to book.

PRICE

EASTERN TURKEY MARVELS

26th October to 9th November 2027 Tour cost EURO 5950

Single room Supplement EURO 1200

Deposit to secure your place EURO 1200

PRICE INCLUDES/EXCLUDES:

- Domestic flights Istanbul to Kars, Gaziantep to Istanbul
- Accommodation in 3 or 4star hotels or traditional homes.
- All breakfasts
- Admission fees to museums and places in the itinerary.
- Comfortable AC/van, driver, gas, parking, bottled water in the vehicle.

The price does not include international airfare, tips, gratuities, and travel insurance.

DEPOSIT & PAYMENT

- A deposit upon booking to reserve your place EURO 1200
- Final payment by 25 JUL 2027

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS

- Deposits are refundable up to 90 days prior to the event.
- If canceling more than 90 days from the tour date, we will refund your deposit in full.
If the tour is not full, and we have the minimum number of bookings, we will refund your deposit in full.
If the tour is full, and you cancel within 90 days of the workshop date, we won't refund unless your place is filled by someone else.
- No part refunds for unused portions of tour services

INSURANCE

Participants are advised to obtain their own insurance suitable for their needs.

RESPONSIBILITY

Nuran Zorlu has limited responsibility and may organise programs from various suppliers. Nuran Zorlu is not liable for any negligent or willful act or failure of any supplier. By participating, you agree that Nuran Zorlu shall not be liable for these failings.

These Terms and Conditions are governed by the laws of New South Wales, Australia. Participants must agree to the Acceptance of Risk Release before the workshop. In the absence of signing the release, attendance confirms acceptance of these Terms and Conditions.

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EASTERN TURKEY

26th Oct to 9th Nov 2027

5950 EURO

(singlepersonsup.1200EURO)

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