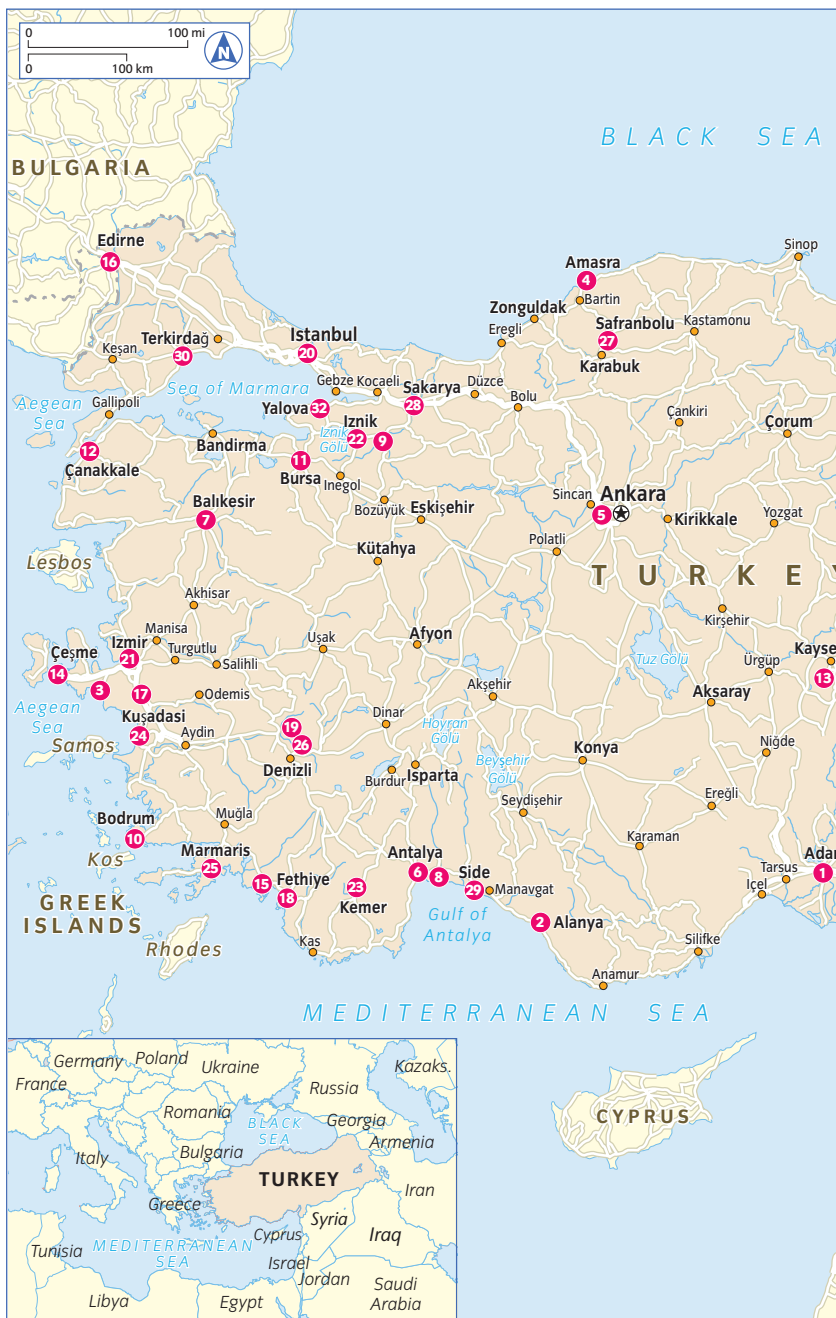
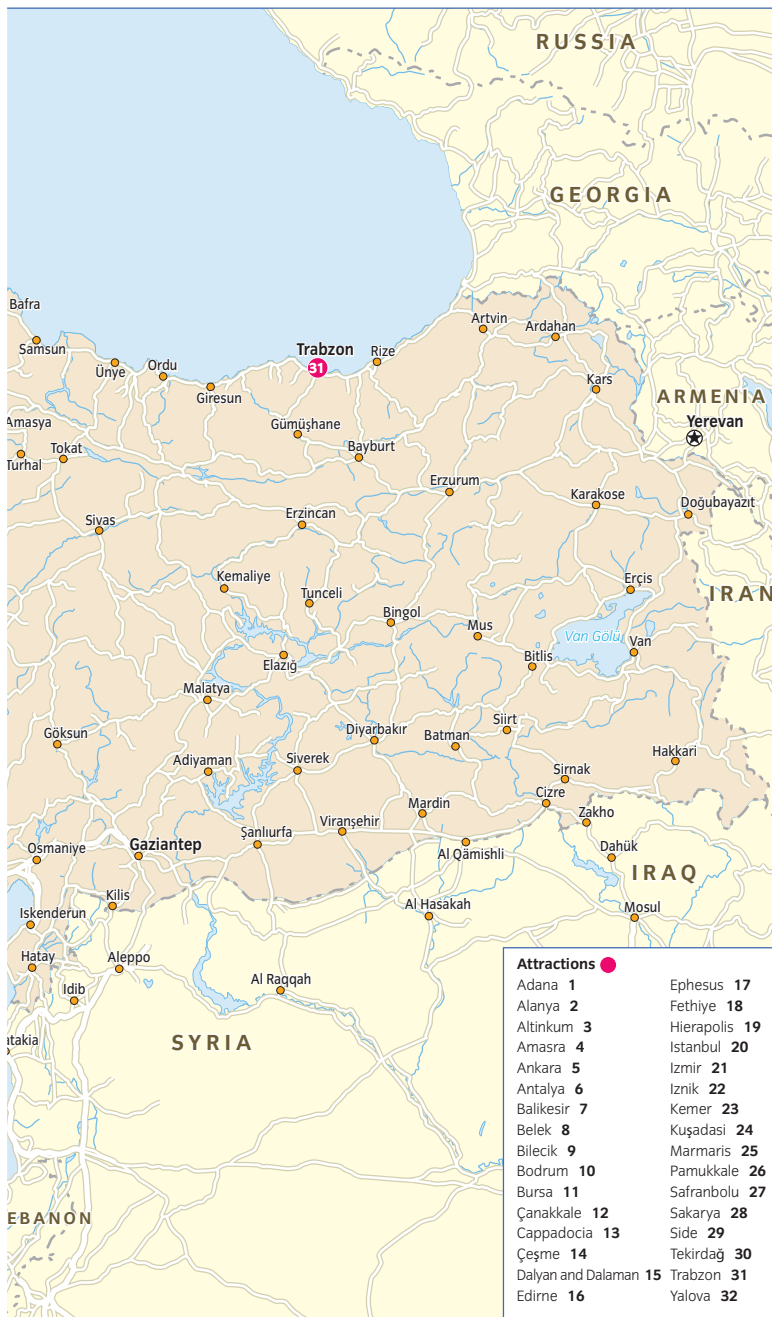


# 1 Family Highlights of Turkey



# TURKEY





**T**urkey has long been a popular holiday destination, but in recent years it has emerged as a favourite for family fun too. Children are especially welcomed in Turkey, even admired. A walk through a bazaar or around an historic site will almost inevitably prompt passers-by to talk to, pick up or maybe stroke the hair of the youngsters in the family. For many of us, this can be more than a tad alarming in these safety-conscious times, but providing the usual precautions are observed and the practice of admiring children acknowledged as being part of the local culture, such over-zealousness by complete strangers shouldn't spoil a trip.

However, with this in mind, there aren't as many dedicated attractions for children as you would expect, although more and more theme parks, children's zoos and playgrounds are starting to emerge, especially along the coastlines of the Aegean and the Mediterranean. One of the top theme parks is **Miniaturk** in Istanbul, where many of Turkey's most historic sights can be seen in miniature. There are also several aquaparks, such as the sprawling **Atlantis Waterpark** in Marmaris in the Aegean region, and sealife parks like **Dolphinarium** at Kemer in the Mediterranean region, where children can swim with dolphins. Many hotels and accommodation complexes have their own theme parks and playgrounds tucked away within their grounds, too, along with a full programme of supervised events.

Turkey is a diverse country with high mountains and valleys, coastal regions and inland forests, traditional villages and cosmopolitan cities, such as Ankara and Istanbul. Along the **Mediterranean coast** holiday hotspots include Antalya, Side, Dalyan and Adana, all bustling resorts, along with the sophisticated Bodrum on **the Aegean**, which has its own airport and is especially popular with families that like to sail. To the north of the country, the **Black Sea** has the resorts of Amasra, Trabzon and Sinop, among many others. All have their own characters, and offer much for adults and children of all ages to see and do. Inland, there is the lively city of **Ankara** and the extraordinary 'Fairy Chimney' landscape of **Cappadocia**.

Other family favourites are visiting some of the outstanding historic buildings that Turkey is especially proud of, such as the great **Topkapi Palace** or the **Blue Mosque** in Istanbul, and ancient sites like those at **Çanakkale**, **Ephesus**, **Pergamum**, **Hierapolis**, **Safranbolu** and **Trabzon**, or heading off to the coast and spending time on the country's fine beaches. The beaches on the Mediterranean and Aegean are ideal for young children.

There are seemingly endless opportunities to sail and follow nature trails, dinghy sail, ski, whitewater raft, play golf, horse-ride and even dive. In fact, Turkey has some of the best diving waters in the eastern Mediterranean.

Families can also enjoy the lively street theatre found in some of the larger towns, along with music and dance festivals often held



around the country. Traditional music and dance are an important part of the Turkish culture.

Turkey is a fascinating country and wherever you stay on a family holiday it should be a truly memorable experience for you and your children.

## TURKEY FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS

### Istanbul

**Attending some** of the events that take place in Istanbul on 23rd April to mark International Children's Day, a celebration that is recognised by UNICEF. The emphasis is on the fact that children are the future of the nation and, as such, they replace the parliamentarians, including the President and Prime Minister, in the Grand National Assembly for the day to discuss issues that concern youngsters. When the serious business is over, festivals and street events are held, to which everyone is invited. Towns and cities throughout Turkey hold similar events to those in Istanbul. See p. 61.

**Looking for** unusual souvenirs and haggling in the Grand Bazaar, and then stopping in the lively courtyard between the Blue Mosque and the Aya Sofia for a refreshing drink and ice cream. See p. 64.

**Enjoying the** Children's Summer Festival held in the Feshane Children's Entertainment Park, just off the Golden Horn at Eyüp. There are fairground rides and competitions, plus special events during festival time. See p. 61.

**Visiting the** Topkapi Sarayı (Topkapi Palace), the Yerebatan Sarayı (the Basilica Cistern) and the site of the ancient Hippodrome stadium, all of which lie around the Sultanahmet Square area. See p. 72.

**Taking part** in the weekly workshops at the Istanbul Toy Museum. Subjects such as archaeology are covered in a fun, playful way, with workshops tailored to different age groups, from young tots through to teenagers. See p. 62.

**Getting into** the rhythm at the International Istanbul Music and Dance Festival. Held at venues throughout the city, there's a programme of events to suit all age groups, and music and dance tastes. See p. 62.

**Catching an** open-top bus sightseeing tour from Taksim Square and seeing the sights like the Dolmabahçe Palace, the mosques, city walls and the waters of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn in style. See p. 96.

**Dancing to** the Spirit of Anatolia, a show by the Istanbul Dance Ensemble held at the Turkish Cultural Dance Theatre most days of the week. It's colourful, invigorating and ideal for all the family. See p. 62.

**Exploring the** centuries-old artefacts of Istanbul's Archaeological Museum, near the Topkapi Palace, and chilling in the children's section on the ground floor – the pretend castle offers plenty of fun. See p. 73.

**Browsing around** the books in Istanbul's Book Bazaar. The courtyard of booksellers and paper merchants, found just off Beyazıt Square, or entered via the Grand Bazaar, is both atmospheric and practical – you can find many bargains to take home, but haggling is a must. See p. 64.

**Exploring the** ruins of the city walls in Istanbul or climbing over its fortresses. See p. 66.

**Taking a** boat trip along the Bosphorus and seeing the sights of Istanbul from the water. Some trips even offer stopping-off points for you and your children to go ashore. See p. 67.

## The Marmara Region

**Having fun** at the Troy Festival, Troy, Çanakkale, by climbing up the stairs and reaching the inside of the huge wooden horse – a reconstruction of the giant Trojan Horse – and then dancing to the festival music. See p. 90.

**Seeing the** wonderful pelicans and brightly coloured flamingos at the International Bird Sanctuary Culture and Tourism Festival at the Kuş Cenneti National Park near Balıkesir. See p. 90.

**Exploring the** tiny streets of the Kaleiçi district (the old quarter) of Edirne. See p. 95.

**Having fun** with the family in a horse-drawn carriage around the Büyük Ada (Büyükada), one of the Princes' Islands in the Sea of Marmara, and seeing the colourful wooden homes that look like

Boat trip along the Bosphorus





Trojan Horse, Troy

they should be dolls' houses. See p. 100.

**Taking a boat trip** along the Dardanelle Straits, seeing the fortresses that line the coastline and looking out for the colourful fish in the waters. See p. 94.

**Visiting the** Kaz Dağı National Park and gazing at the massive Kaz Dağı mountain range while tucking into a picnic of local Turkish cuisine. See p. 99.

**Getting covered** in sticky sugar as you try to eat *pişmaniye*, the local delicacy of Iznik. It's a sweet snack made of thin layers of sugar that melt in the mouth and really should be tried, albeit in small quantities. See p. 96.

**Making sandcastles** on any one of a dozen or more soft sandy beaches that line the coastline of the Sea of Marmara, and then splashing in its cool, safe waters. See p. 98.

**Gazing up** at the Old Mosque in Edirne and counting the little domes to see how many there are. See p. 103.

## The Aegean Region

**Tucking into** an authentic Turkish family meal – a meze is a good bet as lots of small dishes of local delicacies are served so if some members of the family aren't quite so keen on certain flavours there are plenty of alternatives. See p. 145.

**Having fun** in the play areas on the water's edge at Kuşadası – the brightly coloured slides and swings offer hours of fun. See p. 126.

**Taking the** chance to 'play' with a full-size fort on Pigeon Island reached via a causeway from Kuşadası seafront. See p. 137.

**Seeing the** yachts come and go from the marina on Marmaris seafront, and taking a trip out to see the fish. See p. 126.

**Adding a** stitch to one of the bold-patterned carpets as it is being made in the tiny village of Mazi, and wondering where in the world it will eventually end up. See p. 141.

**Going** inside a 'shipwreck' at the Museum of Underwater Archaeology in Bodrum. See p. 141.

**Exploring the** Castle of St Peter, which was built by the Knights of

St John right on the quayside at Bodrum, and playing at being knights or keeping a look out for pirates. Alternatively there's the chance to see pretty jewellery in the Princess Ada Hall. See p. 138.

**Playing 'I-spy'** for windmills around the countryside near Yalıkavak in the south of the Aegean region. See p. 131.

**Heading off** to Rabbit Island and looking out for families of rabbits. You can get there from Gümüşlük by walking in the shallow waters of the seas. See p. 131.

**Visiting Bodrum's** ancient Antique Theatre, singing your favourite song out loud and hearing your voice echo back to you. You can do this at several amphitheatres around Turkey, and it's always fun. See p. 135.

**Playing in** the mud baths and swimming in the natural warm waters near the Roman ruins at Pamukkale. It is a bit of a trek up the hill but taking it slowly with plenty of stops, and then spending some time swimming at the top, is a wonderful experience. See p. 132.

## The Mediterranean

**Seeing the** ballerinas on stage at the Aspendos International Opera and Ballet Festival held at the ancient open-air Aspendos Theatre. See p. 153.





Castle of St Peter, Bodrum

**Enjoying** a game of pirates in Alanya. Its 9th-century fortress right by the harbour saw plenty of action over the centuries as the town and its dockyard were magnets for pirates. See the ruins of the dockyard jutting out of the sea. See p. 154.

**Gazing in** wonder at Turkey's largest mosque, the Sabanci Central Mosque in Adana, built along the same lines as the great Blue Mosque in Istanbul. It is simply huge. See p. 154.

**Visiting** Belek so the boys can have a golf lesson or a game, while mum and the girls can go off shopping around the town's collection of designer fashion shops or hot foot it down to a health spa for some pampering. See p. 155.

**Visiting Side's** 'Sand Village' where there is, literally, something for all the family, from sailing trips and playgrounds to

discos, plus a spot of heritage too. See p. 157.

**Finding unusual** crafts to take home as a gift or souvenir in the little streets of Kaleiçi, the old quarter of Antalya. You'll find wooden inlaid boxes, trinkets and jewellery, all made in the area, plus lots of pastry goodies. See p. 172.

**Snorkelling in** the crystal-clear waters of the Aegean and Mediterranean seas off the southern, southwestern and southeastern coastlines. See p. 171.

## The Black Sea Region

**Horse-riding** in the countryside around Kastamonu on one of the super horses available at the International Equestrian Tourism Centre at Daday. See p. 194.

**Skiing with** the family on the slopes of the Ilgaz Mountains in

the Ilgaz National Park near Kastamonu or whitewater rafting in one of its many rivers. See p. 194.

**Learning how** to barter and securing a bargain souvenir to take home in the Arasta, the Old Bazaar, in Safranbolu. See p. 194.

**Exploring the** rock caves and the remains of two fortresses at Amasra, and then stopping off at its small castle to play soldiers. See p. 184.

**Getting sticky** as you eat the gorgeous chocolate-nut candy made in Ordu around the time of the hazelnut harvest, and dancing with the locals as part of its Golden Hazelnut Festival. See p. 183.

**Heading out** to Akçakoca to cycle and explore its lanes surrounded by hazelnut orchards, and stopping at the nearest market or local shop to buy some. See p. 184.

**Taking part** in the *dernek* festivities around Trabzon, and trying to learn the steps of the traditional dances that have been handed down through the generations. See p. 183.

**Gazing in** wonder at the ghostly Sümela Monastery, near Trabzon, which sits high up on the side of a sheer rock face, and then going inside to see the frescos. See p. 191.

**Going out** for the day onboard one of the little boats that leave the harbour at Sinop and gazing

at the coves and forests that face the sea, and then stopping awhile to jump overboard and enjoy a swim in the cool waters. See p. 186.

## Ankara & the Anatolia Region

**Going up** in a hot-air balloon over Cappadocia and seeing the extraordinary rock formations from above, and then landing and gazing at them in wonder up close. See p. 220.

**Enjoying the** slides and wave pools of Ankara's Aquapark and trying your hand at whitewater rafting, albeit in the safety of the complex. See p. 211.

**Visiting the** underground city of Derinkuyu, and making your way through the eerie tunnels to see where thousands of people once lived. See p. 215.

**Taking a** tour of the gardens at the Museum of Anatolian Civilization in Ankara and discovering statues and pots at every turn. See p. 219.

**Skiing** in the lively resort of Palandöken, and then taking a trip out to see the remains of the ancient city of Erzurum. See p. 215.

**Exploring the** Soğanlı Valley, home of the traditional cloth doll, and buying one as a keepsake. See p. 210.

**Gazing in** wonder at the huge vintage steam trains at the open-air Turkish Railways Steam



The rock formations at Cappadocia

Locomotive Museum in Ankara. See p. 217.

**Having a go** at ice-skating at the Olympic-size rink in Belpa. See p. 221.

**Seeing a show** by the Whirling Dervishes who perform one of the age-old dances of the Anatolia region. Shows are held throughout the country, but particularly in central Turkey. See p. 204.

## BEST BEACHES & WATERSPORTS

### Istanbul

**Marmarcik Cove**, which lies a short hop from the city in the village of Rumeli Feneri, offers a great place to relax as a family but there are also cycling routes and a lighthouse to explore. See p. 65.

**Solar Beach** at Kilyos is great for sports-minded children with everything from windsurfing and jet skiing to basketball, soccer, go-karting and rollerboarding to enjoy. See p. 65.

**The Princes' Islands** of Kinaliada, Heybeliada, Büyükada and Burgazada, which lie within an easy ferry ride from Istanbul, have some of the finest beaches and watersport opportunities in Turkey. See p. 67.

### The Marmara Region

**Erdek Beach** at the busy resort of Erdek is long and sandy, and lies next to lots of restaurants with children's menus. Ideal for a day on the beach. See p. 98.

**Kumla Beach** in the Gulf of Gemlik, one of the little coves of the Sea of Marmara, is beautifully soft and sandy, and great for building sandcastles. See p. 98.

**Marble Beach** on Marmara Island that lies off Erdek and Bandırma is a gem. Famous for its marble, you can see lots of chunks of it on the water's edge. It may be a good idea to ensure your children wear shoes on the beach just in case there are any jagged edges on the marble pieces. See p. 99.

**The Gulf of Edremit** is another of the sea's coves and has a whole string of beaches in places like Akçay, Edremit, Ören and Burhaniye that are lined by olive trees. See p. 98.

## The Aegean Region

**Aktur Beach and Halikarya Beach** are just two of the many beaches around the Bitez area of Bodrum. Both Blue Flag beaches, they are good for children as they are clean and are safe for swimming as the water is very shallow. See p. 128.

**Bardakçı Beach in Bardakçı** According to legend, the beach was given its name in ancient times by the male fairy Hermafrodit, who liked it so much he spent many days there. Then it was known as Salmakis. See p. 129.

**Gümbet Beach** is the liveliest and most popular beach for families. No visit to the Bodrum area of the Aegean region would be complete without spending a few hours building sandcastles in its soft sand. See p. 129.

**Ilica Beach** in Çeşme attracts families with children because of its soft, white sand, clean and shallow waters and its eateries catering for small appetites. See p. 130.

**Iztuzu Beach at Dalyan** is a nesting ground for the endangered caretta caretta turtle. It is a government-protected beach with little nearby development. The area's famous mud baths are nearby. See p. 130.

**Kadikale Resort beach in Turgutreis** is the place if you wish to see some of the 14 islands of the Sporad Group. They lie just off its quayside. See p. 130.

**Kargi Koyu Beach**, Kargi Koyu Cove is one of the area's best-kept secrets, but you can get a boat trip to it. See p. 130.

**Ortakent Beach** at Ortakent is the second longest beach in Bodrum, and the best option that like a quieter beach. See p. 131.

## The Mediterranean

**Konyaalti Beach** at Antalya is one of the largest stretches of beach imaginable – you can barely see one end from the other. Although pebbly, it has super-safe waters and lots of watersports on offer. See p. 159.

**Lara Beach** is just one of numerous glorious beaches and coves that dot the coastline beside the Mediterranean. It is pretty and quiet, and its sand is great for sandcastles. See p. 159.





Ölü Deniz beach

**Moonlight Park Beach** at Kemer is wonderful for lively families. With a sandy beach, a children's club, dolphinarium with bottlenose dolphins and open-air amphitheatre, there's always lots happening. See p. 159.

**Ölü Deniz**, with its lagoon of turquoise sea and white beaches, is arguably the prettiest place in Turkey. Its waters are safe for swimming. See p. 159.

**Olymbos Beach** is worth visiting if only to see its outstanding backdrop of trees and the nearby ancient site of Olymbos. See p. 159.

## The Black Sea Region

**The Beaches at Rize** are clean and sandy, and lie next to hotels and restaurants in this popular holiday resort town. See p. 188.

**The Giresun Beaches** are some of the best beaches in the

Black Sea region, with soft sand and safe waters in which to swim. See p. 188.

**The Karagöl Kumluğu Beach and Bahçeler Beach** in Sinop are private and relaxing with their coves and mountain backdrop. See p. 188.

## BEST PARKS & ZOOS

### Istanbul

**Gülhane Park**, located a stone's throw from the Topkapi Palace in what was once part of its grounds, is a place to relax, walk a little and escape the hustle and bustle of central Istanbul. The aquarium, off to one side of the park, is especially popular with youngsters. See p. 68.

**Miniaturk** in Istanbul is a large area of rivers, lakes and gardens that contain hundreds of the most

famous historical monuments in Turkey – all in miniature; it is a favourite with children. See the landmark buildings of Istanbul that sit alongside those found in the Anatolia, Aegean and Black Sea regions. See p. 68.

**The Feshane Children's Entertainment Park** is a perfect place to spend a few hours as a family. There are rides and playground games, plus a regular programme of events and festivals aimed at children. See p. 68.

## The Marmara Region

**Koza Park** in Bursa is one of a few areas that could be considered a themed park in the Marmara region. It is famed as being in the area known for Bursa's silk trade. See p. 101.

**The Kuş Cenneti National Park** in Balıkesir is a great place to visit if you and your family are lovers of wildlife and birds. There are flamingos, pelicans and spoonbills to see. See p. 101.

**The Uludağ National Park** is a winter sport themed area. Ski slopes for beginners and children have been created in the Uludağ Mountains and are offered alongside runs for the more advanced. See p. 102.

**Yıldız Park** in Bursa is a great place for children to unwind. There's a boating lake for water activities and the famous Yıldız Park Tea Gardens with goodies for little appetites. See p. 102.

## The Aegean Region

**Adaland Aquapark, Dolphinpark and Seapark** in Kuşadası are perfect for children who love wave pools, swimming with dolphins or seeing brightly coloured fish. All run by the same company and located within walking distance of each other, they offer great days out for children of all ages. See p. 132.

**Atlantis Waterpark** in Marmaris is another aquapark with swimming pools galore, plus an amusement arcade and an Internet café for older children and teenagers. It lies beside the Atlantis Beach in the heart of this popular tourist spot. See p. 133.

**Kültürpark** in İzmir offers family fun of a different sort. The largest park in İzmir, it has a children's playground, zoo and an amusement park amongst its amenities. See p. 134.

## The Mediterranean

**Aqualand and Dolphinland** are two theme parks that are interconnected and offer hours of fun for children from tots through to teenagers. There are water flumes and slides, pools and watersports, while at Dolphinland your children can swim with dolphins. See p. 162.

**Düzlerçami Park** in Antalya has been created to provide a natural habitat for many types of animals such as deer and mountain goats. There are hands-on exhibits for children too. See p. 164.

**Waterplanet Aquapark** near Alanya and Side offers everything from 23 slides designed for children of all ages, pools and the chance to raft on an artificial river to a children's disco and a programme of fun events. See p. 164.

## The Black Sea Region

**The Karagöl National Park** in Artvin has cycle routes and nature trails that meander past forest areas and alpine lakes. It is a wonderful space for walks. See p. 188.

## Ankara & the Anatolia Region

**Atatürk Farm and Zoo** in Ankara has acres of parkland and orchards to explore. Its zoo contains many species of animals and mammals, and is ideal for a day out to see how they live in special environmentally controlled enclosures. A farm sells the great ice cream made on site. See p. 212.

**Youth Park** in central Ankara is one of the most popular with residents and visitors to the city. Among the activities offered are boating on the lake, tennis, swimming and al fresco dining in one of its outside cafes. See p. 212.

## BEST NATURAL WONDERS

### Istanbul

**Take a little pleasure craft** up the Golden Horn, under the

Galata Bridge, and see the city from another angle. You could even stop off at one of the children's playground parks that line its water's edge, or take a walk to see the nearby remains of the city walls. See p. 66.

**The Bosphorus** splits the city in two and a boat trip is a must when in Istanbul. One side is the European Istanbul, while the other is Asian. The two sides are linked by two bridges, the Bosphorus Bridge and the Faith Sultan Mehmet Bridge, otherwise known as the Bosphorus II Bridge. See p. 67.

**The Sea of Marmara** links the Aegean Sea with the Black Sea via the Bosphorus strait. Your children will love looking out to see the dozens of freight ships that pass by this stretch of water. See p. 66.

## The Marmara Region

**Marmara Island** can be reached by boat from Erdek or Bandırma. See the fish and go ashore to see the marble for which the island is famed. There are lots of restaurants that welcome children so make a day of it. See p. 66.

**The Arifiye Forest** around Lake Sapanca, which lies in a basin-like area created within the Saman Mountain range, is a lovely place to go boating, cycling, picnicking and walking. See p. 99.

**The Kaz Dağı National Park** at Çanakkale is known for its hot springs, parklands and landscape,

including the Kaz Dağı mountain range. You can ride a horse and picnic here. See p. 99.

## The Aegean Region

**Dilek National Park**, Kuşadası, is one of the largest natural parks in Turkey. See wild horses galloping among forest, parkland and along beaches. See p. 133.

**Karaada Island** at Karaada is one of the prettiest areas with lots of coves and caves to explore. Its mud and thermal springs are fun as well as healthy. See p. 131.

**The Village of Gümüşlük** is a gem. It stands on the site of the ancient city of Myndos and its ruins can still be seen just under the water's surface if you snorkel out a way. You will be able to see an ancient theatre and some mosaics. See p. 131.

## The Mediterranean

**Güver Canyon** near the famous Düzlerçami Park is an amazingly deep crevice that you can walk beside. It makes an unusual day out and is a popular spot for family picnics. See p. 164.

**The Kelebeklar Vadisi**, The Valley of Butterflies, near Fethiye is an absolute essential activity to do on a family holiday. Close by is, arguably, the most photographed bay in Europe, the lagoon at Ölü Deniz. See p. 160.

**The Upper Düden Waterfalls** are not to be missed – you can actually walk behind the cascade

of water. Close by are the Lower Düden Waterfalls, which drop straight down to the sea. See p. 161.

**Tlos**, which has a rock face that looks as though it should come straight out of a Harry Potter novel, will captivate children of all ages – mums and dads too. It's also said to be the home of the mythological winged horse Pegasus. See p. 160.

## The Black Sea Region

**Uzungöl**, known as Long Lake, is an alpine lake not far from Trabzon. It makes a great day out for families that like to go rambling or enjoy river watersports like whitewater rafting. See p. 189.

## Ankara & the Anatolia Region

**Mount Ararat**, or Ağrı Dağı as it is known, is a massive extinct volcano that rises alarmingly above the plains of central Turkey. It is the country's highest peak and said to be the resting place of Noah's Ark when the waters subsided. See p. 210.

**Soğuksu National Park**, a few kilometres north of Ankara, is a sprawling area of parkland, forest and picnic areas. It is great for trekking trips, following nature trails, cycling and spending relaxing days with the family in a natural environment. See p. 211.

**The Cappadocian Landscape** surrounding the village of Göreme and a few other villages





Mount Ararat

in the Cappadocia region of central Turkey is astonishing. Tall rock formations have been created over time and are known as the 'Fairy Chimneys'. See p. 209.

## BEST MUSEUMS & HISTORIC SITES

### Istanbul

**Deniz Muzesi** (the Naval Museum) will give **your children** a chance to see artefacts from Turkey's seafaring days of the past, including cannons and anchors, pictures, bells and even the remains of ships. See p. 73.

**Istanbul Toy Museum** is a delight – see dolls that date from the 19th century and a tiny French violin from 1817. The displays are housed in rooms that follow a theme – for example a collection of toy trains sits in a space that resembles a

Pullman carriage. You have to pass through a 'submarine' to get to the toilets, which is great fun. See p. 74.

**Suleymaniye Mosque** is one of Istanbul's great buildings. Founded by the Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent in the 1500s, it shows how life would have been in the city in times gone by. A former school, kitchen and a bath house are within its walls. See p. 71.

**The Archaeological Museum** in Istanbul is both educational and fun. With a children's museum and play area, plus galleries of classical archaeology, Turkish ceramics, Byzantine artefacts and tiles, and exhibitions telling the story of Istanbul through the ages, the museum has something for everyone. See p. 73.

**The Blue Mosque**, along with the magnificent Hagia Sophia



Topkapi Palace, Istanbul

church, both Istanbul's 'must-see' landmarks, stand in Sultanahmet Square. They tower over all the other buildings, especially the Blue Mosque with its six minarets that can be seen for miles. Adults and children alike will be enchanted by the sheer size of these outstanding buildings. See p. 71.

**The Yerebatan Sarayı** (the Basilica Cistern) will either fascinate your children or scare them – so be warned. You take steps down to an underground complex of cisterns that are dark, subtly lit and really quite spooky, but well worth visiting. It's an extraordinary experience. See p. 72.

**Topkapi Palace** in Istanbul is well worth a visit. Made up of a series of pavilions, it has separate exhibitions of miniatures and Imperial costumes, a collection of arms and armoury, a treasury where valuable gems and sultans' treasures can be seen, and numerous courtyards and gardens. See p. 72.

## The Marmara Region

**The Archaeological Museum in Kültür Park**, Bursa, is a must if your family loves ceremonial armour. On display are weaponry, statues and tools, as well as armour, from the Ottoman, Byzantine and Roman periods. See p. 106.

**The Atatürk and Ethnography Museum** in Adapazari, Sakarya, is a fascinating museum that tells the story of Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. It is both interesting and educational. See p. 108.

**The Çanakkale Archaeological Museum** in Çanakkale is a must to visit, with displays ranging from fossils, children's toys, tools, weapons to household items from past civilisations up to more recent times. See p. 107.

**The Iznik Museum** in Iznik celebrates the craft of producing the blue-and-white tiles, plates and pots seen throughout Turkey and known as Iznik ceramics. Children will love the collection of miniatures. See p. 108.

**The Söğüt Museum** in Bilecik, in the Sakarya Valley, tells how residents lived during the Ottoman Empire. There's also a collection of life-size busts of famous figures from Turkey's history. See p. 108.

**The Turkish Islamic Art Museum** is located within its great Selimiye Mosque in Edirne. Your boys will love the shields used in various battles. See p. 109.

## The Aegean Region

When it comes to astonishingly historic sites, the Aegean offers the best, including three of the Ancient Wonders of the World at Ephesus, Hierapolis and Pergamum.

**Ephesus** is one of the most famous and best-preserved ancient cities in the world and should not be missed. The Temple of Artemis is one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. See p. 136.

**Hierapolis** is an early version of a spa town dating from before the time of Christ. See p. 137.

**Pergamum**, is an important and once-beautiful ancient city and site of the famous Temple of Trajan. See p. 137.

**Çeşme Kalesi** in Çeşme is a remarkably intact 16th-century castles that your children will love to explore. It was built to protect the town from pirates. Inside, there's a good nautical museum. See p. 135.

**King Mausoleus's Tomb** in Bodrum is considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It's great for families that like history and archaeology. See p. 137.

**The Kuşadası Train Museum** in Kuşadası has around 30 locomotives dating back decades in its sprawling open-air display. Your children will be delighted to see, touch and climb aboard them. See p. 140.

## The Mediterranean

**Fethiye Archaeological Museum** has some quite outstanding exhibits found locally, dating from the Ottoman, Byzantine and Persian periods. Although not strictly speaking

tailored to children, the museum should interest older members of the family. See p. 167.

**Side Museum** is a gem. Housed in what was at one time a functional Roman Baths, it tells how residents of the past would spend their leisure time in Frigidariums, Tepidariums and Caldariums. See p. 167.

**Suna-Inan Kirac Museum** in Antalya offers displays covering the 19th and 20th centuries, with areas dedicated to specific issues in the Turkish culture. One room, for example, tells the story of Turkish coffee, which is fascinating. See p. 168.

**The Archaeological Museum** in Antalya gives a wonderful insight to the region's rich history. Highlights include finds from the ancient city of Perge. A children's section has interactive exhibits that will help to keep the youngest members of the family interested, plus there are gardens if they need to burn off some energy. See p. 168.

## The Black Sea Region

**Kastamonu Castle** dates from the time when the town was a powerful trading centre. It was built by the family who ruled Trabzon in the 12th century, and is open for your children to explore. See p. 190.

**The Giresun Fortress** sits like a crown at the top of a hill overlooking the beaches at Giresun.

Climbing the hill and exploring the fortress is great fun for youngsters and adults. See p. 190.

**The Haghia Sophia**, or the Aya Sofya as it is known locally, in Trabzon is one of the best churches-turned-museums in the Black Sea region. Step inside and see some of the best wall paintings in Turkey. See p. 193.

**Trabzon Castle** is an impressive sight and, being on the top of a hill, dominates the city. It is from the Byzantine, Commagene and Ottoman periods. See p. 192.

## Ankara & the Anatolia Region

**Kaymakli and Derinkuyu** are two underground cities in the heart of Turkey that once housed thousands of Christians fleeing persecution. You can see bedrooms, kitchens and living areas way underground. It's quite eerie. See p. 215.

**The Ancient City of Konya** is worth a visit, if only to see the old Ottoman-style houses that still exist today, its important mosques, such as the Alaeddin Mosque, and its park. See p. 207.

**The Citadel at Ankara** is pretty impressive and dates from well before Roman and Byzantine times, but it is the collection of traditional wooden houses within the walls that makes it an interesting part of the city to visit. See p. 213.





Colourful lamps at Fethiye Bazaar

## BEST COASTAL TOWNS

**Akçakoca** is a pretty town surrounded by hazelnut orchards to the west of the Black Sea region. It has some good hotels and restaurants beside its beaches, a castle to explore and a harbour from which little boats can be hired for watersports. See p. 184.

**Altinkum** has some of the longest and sandiest beaches in the whole of Turkey and, as such, is guaranteed its reputation as a holiday hotspot. There are boat trips, attractions and restaurants with special menus for children to keep you hooked. See p. 122.

**Amasra** is a harbourside town that can trace its history back many centuries. Your children will love the chance to explore

its small castle, the ruins of two fortresses and a few rock caves. See p. 184.

**Antalya** is the largest coastal town on the Mediterranean coastline. It is elegant with tree-lined avenues and has developed around its gloriously quaint old quarter known as Kaleiçi. Children will love to wander down the old town's little streets. There's an aquapark, zoo and a couple of good beaches. See p. 155.

**Belek** is the Mediterranean's premier golf resort. Children as well as mums and dads can learn how to play at the various clubs, or indulge in a round at one of several top-notch courses. There are children's clubs, restaurants and shopping malls too. See p. 155.

**Bodrum** is very popular with holidaying families from

throughout Europe in the summer months. It is large, lively and characterised by its mass of white low-level buildings that snake around its coves and its fairytale castle. It is the location of the mausoleum of King Mausolos, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. See p. 123.

**Çanakkale, which** lies alongside the Dardanelle Straits in the Marmara region, is famous for its links with the Trojan Horse and the battles of Troy. See a reconstruction model at Hisarlik. It also has some fascinating fortresses, including the 15th-century Çimenlik Fortress, Bigali Castle, Kilitbahir Castle and Seddul Bahir Castle, all of which your children will love. There's a particularly good archaeological museum too. See p. 92.

**Çeşme is** famed for its spectacular beaches and safe waters for swimming. Its Castle of St Peter perches on its quayside, and the town seems to radiate from its gardens. Attractive and relatively compact, Çeşme has a cultural edge and hosts several international music and art festivals during the year. See p. 125.

**Dalyan and Dalaman** are in the stretch of coastline famed for its thermal mud baths, rock tombs that date back centuries and the pretty, protected Iztuzu Beach, a nesting ground to the endangered caretta caretta turtle. It has a good choice of hotels too. See p. 125.

**Fethiye lies** where the Mediterranean and the Aegean coastal regions meet. It is close to the mighty Saklikent gorge and the ancient site of Xanthos, both of which offer a good day out. It has a lively bazaar in the Paspatur district, along with good beaches and safe waters that nestle in a wide bay. Look out for the Lycian tombs in the cliffs. This place is ideal for a family excursion. See p. 155.

**Kemer is** a sophisticated Mediterranean resort, noted for its fine restaurants, marina and its glorious Kemer Beach. While pebbly, its waters are safe for children to swim and have fun in. The smaller resorts of Beldibi and Tekirova are nearby. See p. 157.

**Kuşadası is** a popular tourist hotspot that revolves around its marina and cruise-ship port. It is known for its outstanding diving facilities, along with its Blue Flag beaches, coves and the island that rests just a walk away from the quayside over a causeway: Pigeon Island is pretty and home to hundreds of birds and a fort that looks as if a miniature version should be in a playroom. See p. 126.

**Marmaris** was an important Dorian city in ancient times. Today it has a modern, cosmopolitan feel and attracts holiday-makers by the plane-load. It is known for its lively nightlife, beaches and its good choice of hotels and holiday complexes. See p. 126.



Pigeon Island, Kuşadası

**Ordu lies** on the coast in the Black Sea region surrounded by hazelnut orchards and is a sleepy holiday resort at most times of the year, except in September when it bursts into life for the Golden Hazelnut Festival. See p. 186.

**Side is** a gorgeous town full of character. It sits, primarily, within historic city walls that stand on a headland overlooking the sea. Along with glorious sandy beaches, it offers one of the most memorable sights along the Mediterranean coast – a massive Hellenistic theatre and its Temple of Apollo, a landmark attraction. See p. 157.

**Sinop, famous** for being the birthplace of Sinope, the mythological leader of the Amazon warriors, stands in a little natural harbour with rows of fishing and leisure boats. It has some good beaches and forest areas to enjoy. See p. 186.

**Tekirdağ lies** on the banks of the Sea of Marmara in the Marmara region. It is famous for its seemingly endless fields of bright yellow sunflowers that

your children will love to be photographed with. There are also some interesting Ottoman buildings and mosques, and long sandy beaches to visit. See p. 96.

**Trabzon is** one of the busiest and most historic coastal cities in the Black Sea region. It offers every amenity for holidaying families, including Trabzon Castle, mosques and museums such as the great Aya Sofya (Haghia Sophia) and landmarks like the Zağnos Bridge. See p. 186.

## BEST INLAND EXPERIENCES

**Ankara is** a bustling city, but offers several good museums such as the Painting and Sculpture Museum, the Ethnography Museum and the impressive Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. See p. 205.

**Cappadocia**, an extraordinary volcanic landscape, is where you can see the rock formations known as the 'Fairy Chimneys'. Some were hollowed out and

inhabited for many years. Some are over 40 metres (130 ft) in height. See p. 205.

**Köprülü Canyon**, not far from Antalya in the Mediterranean region, is the place to head if your older children and teenagers love to go water rafting and kayaking. There are other water-sports too, and the immediate area is good for picnics and jeep safaris. See p. 160.

**Pamukkale**, which lies a little inland from Marmaris, is an astonishing site, where you can bathe in hot thermal waters and rest your body against ancient columns and frescos that lie under the surface. The remains belong to the ancient city of Hierapolis that lies behind it. You can also see the astonishing Travertine Cascades, or steps, created over centuries as hot springs fell, leaving deposits of limestone. See p. 132.

**Saklıkent Gorge** is an outstanding sight. Icy waters have cut a narrow, exceptionally deep gorge in the mountainside high above Fethiye on the Mediterranean region's coast. It is now a popular tourist attraction and picnic spot. Families spend the whole day here exploring. See p. 170.

**Selçuk Castle**, which stands on the top of Ayasuluk Hill near Selçuk, is said to be where St John the Evangelist lived during the time of Christ. Nearby is the site where the Virgin Mary was believed to have died. The Pope has visited the site. See p. 138.

**The Beşköprü Bridge** at Adapazari should feature in your agenda if you and your children are keen on photography. The Beşköprü Bridge has eight arches and spans the Sangarios River, or the Sakarya River as it is often known. It is located in the Marmara region and was built around the year 553AD. See p. 105.

**The City of Safranbolu** is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a 'must' on any visit to the Black Sea region of Turkey. It has beautifully preserved wooden Ottoman mansions, mosques and bazaars. See p. 186.

**The Great Saman Mountains** in the Marmara region and exploring the Arifye Forest that lies at its foot form a popular family outing. There are picnic areas and nature trails to enjoy, plus water activities on the huge Lake Sapanca. See p. 99.

**The Karain Cave**, with its interconnecting chambers, may not be everyone's choice, and certainly it's not suitable for young children, but for older members of the family, exploring it is a great experience. Some of the oldest archaeological finds in the Mediterranean region have been found here. See p. 169.

**The Locomotive Museum in Ankara** has a great collection of vintage steam trains that include models used during World War II. An exhibition area and café are family-friendly. See p. 217.

**The Uludağ National Park**, near Bursa in the Marmara region, is great for families. In summer there are lots of countryside activities to enjoy like rambling, swimming, birdwatching, cycling, outdoor games and picnics, while in the winter it is transformed into one of Turkey's premier skiing resorts. The slopes are on the side of the Uludağ Mountain. Whatever time of year you visit there's always something to do. See p. 102.

## BEST ACCOMMODATION

### Istanbul

**The Mövenpick Hotel**, a modern hotel in the Levent district of the city, has a great selection of pizzas and its famous ice cream on its children's menu, so

your youngsters will be spoilt for choice. It also has a children's play facility among its amenities. See p. 80.

**The Ritz-Carlton** in Elmadag offers lots of safety and security extras to help make your stay in the city stress-free. Children are given crayons, drawing paper and stuffed toys to make their stay special, plus parents are given suggested itineraries with details of attractions that might interest youngsters of all ages. See p. 80.

### The Marmara Region

**The Grand Yazici Hotel** in the Uludağ National Park near Bursa, welcomes children and as such provides lots of amenities for them. In summer months there are play areas, swimming pools and sports such as

Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Istanbul





basketball for them to enjoy, while in winter it provides transport to the ski slopes for which the area is known. Your children will also love the fact that the hotel resembles an alpine chalet, albeit on a grand scale. See p. 112.

**The Merit Halki Palace**, an historic, colourful chateau-style building, has a wonderful location just a hop from the quay-side on Heybeliada, one of the Princes' Islands. Cots, high chairs and buggies are all provided on request, plus the hotel has restaurants with special children's menus and a patisserie on site. See p. 112.

## The Aegean Region

**The Babaylon Hotel** overlooks Sakiz Island from its Çiftlikköy Bay, Çeşme location. A large complex, it offers all sorts of amenities from a children's club with a programme of workshops and special events to children's play areas, gardens and pools. There's a discothèque for older children and teenagers too. See p. 144.

**The Hilton Izmir** in the busy city of Izmir offers many services for families. Among them are special family package rates, a video hire service, a babysitting service and children's menus. The hotel is located a short walk from the Kültürpark, a large sprawl of parkland with a zoo, amusements and a children's playground. See p. 144.

## The Mediterranean

**The Concorde Resort and Spa** stands right beside Lara Beach in the Mediterranean region and is ideal for a family break. There are play amenities for young children, sports for older children and teenagers, lots of swimming pools, and a great health and fitness suite for mums and dads. Cuisine from around the world is served in adult- and child-sized portions. See p. 175.

**The Hotel Alp Pasa in Kaleiçi**, the old quarter of Antalya in the Mediterranean region, is a characterful hotel housed in an 18th-century Ottoman-style mansion. Its guest rooms, including a family room, offer traditional décor with wooden features and lots of stonework. Families can dine al fresco around a pool in the summer, and choose from several menus, including one tailored for small appetites. See p. 173.

## The Black Sea Region

**The Cinci Han Hotel** in Safranbolu is famous for being housed in the former caravansaray for passing merchants centuries ago. A luxurious hotel, it offers services such as a children's club, babysitting and a playground, special menus and a central location in the very heart of Safranbolu. See p. 195.

**The Demirkol Turkish Hotel** is a traditional-style hotel in the centre of Artvin, close to the



Traditional Turkish tea set

town's little Georgian museum. It welcomes children and offers a swimming pool for your little ones, special menus and trekking and cycling in the nearby Karagöl National Park. See p. 194.

## Ankara & the Anatolia Region

**Büyükhanlı Park Hotel** in Ankara is a beautiful hotel in the centre of the city that offers everything you need for a family holiday with children – good location, good facilities and good accommodation. See p. 222.

**The Serinn Hotel**, a boutique hotel created within a natural cave at Ürgüp, Cappadocia, will really capture children's imaginations. The views as well as the facilities are high quality. Lots of special amenities are offered for children. See p. 223.

## BEST EATING OUT OPTIONS

### Istanbul

**Geziistanbul** is a stylish, more upmarket style of restaurant that overlooks Taksim Square, and despite appearances it welcomes children with open arms. The staff is friendly and helpful. There's a special children's menu, and it has an in-house chocolaterie and patisserie too. See p. 82.

**The Beyaz Restaurant** overlooks the Marmara Sea and is right by the fish market. Your children will love the chance to pick out their own fish and see it being cooked and then follow this up with a rather delicious home-made crème brûlée. See p. 82.

### The Marmara Region

**Kenan Çorba ve Izgara Salonu** in Iznik will delight your children if genuine kebabs are a favourite. The bright and lively restaurant in the heart of the town serves *Döner* kebabs (sliced meat) and *çiğ* kebabs (cubes of meat on skewers), along with local dishes such as *bamya bastisi*, a type of stew made with lamb and tomatoes. See p. 113.

**The Yusuf Restoran** in the cultural park, the Kültür Park, in Bursa offers mezes comprising 20 to 25 little dishes of local delicacies – even your fussiest child should find something that suits their taste. Other dishes include salads, vegetables and

grills, which can be eaten inside or al fresco style. See p. 113.

## The Aegean Region

**The Gemibaşı Restaurant**, just off the harbourside at Bodrum, is a good place for a great family meze of traditional Turkish cuisine. Grilled meats and fish are served with authentic sauces, and local dishes like *Levrek pilakisi* are a speciality. Kebabs and delicious desserts are on the menu too. See p. 146.

**The Mona Titti Restaurant** on the seafront at Marmaris is elegant, serves gourmet-style cuisine and is a great place to dine for a special evening out, for your eldest's birthday for example. Its dishes are pure Turkish, albeit with an à la carte twist, and its team is happy to prepare versions of the main meals for children. See p. 146.

## The Mediterranean

**La Luna Restaurant** in the harbour at Alanya is a fun restaurant with cartoons showing on its big screen, dancing, music and a menu that includes tacos from Mexico, pizzas from Italy, kebabs from Turkey and a hearty selection of vegetarian dishes. See p. 175.

**The Moonlight Restaurant** is situated overlooking the beach and sea at Side, so it's convenient for a family outing and watching the sun go down. The cuisine is

largely fish-based, and your children will love the choice of ice creams in, it seems, every flavour. See p. 176.

## The Black Sea Region

**Tad Pizza and Burger Restaurant** in Trabzon offers, some of the best fast food in the area. Pizza toppings include anchovy, a staple of the area. Bright and welcoming, it should suit your children a treat. See p. 196.

**The Kadioğlu Sehzade Sofrasi**, located right near the bazaar in Safranbolu, has grills and fish, vegetarian, à la carte and authentic Turkish dishes on the menu. It particularly welcomes children. See p. 196.

## Ankara & the Anatolia Region

**Elai Restaurant** in Göreme is located in the centre of the village, which is always buzzing with people who have travelled miles to see the rock formations. They usually stay a while in the Elai, an elegant eaterie serving top-notch French cuisine. It welcomes children. See p. 224.

**Selcuklu Beykonagi Restaurant** in Konya is an elegant yet informal restaurant housed in an historic house where grills and kebabs, plus its own meze selection, provide a pleasing and wholesome meal option for families. See p. 223.