



Focus on TURKEY School Program

"This year has been a year of changes for me. It wasn't my choice to come to Turkey, but now that I look back it was the best choice for me (best, not most fun). The way I see the world has changed considerably, and I feel that I have a new list of responsibilities. I've gained a new self-confidence and stronger tolerance of different beliefs. My definitions of success, priorities and limits have broadened also. To sum it up, my year in Turkey is an experience I'll never forget."

Matthew Teeters, participant from the United States, 1989-1990

The Turks say that their country is like a man running west on a train heading east. For example, Istanbul, Turkey's crowded sprawling capital, straddles two continents, connected by bridges, with mosques throughout the European side and western-style suburbs expanding on the Asian side. Meanwhile, Turkey's secular government is among the most successful of all Muslim nations at applying western economics to an Islamic society. Yet even while Turkey furthers its dynamic industrialization, it also preserves historic buildings and neighborhoods dating from its Byzantine and Ottoman past, and it protects more ancient Greek and Roman architectural ruins than remain in Greece and Italy. The Turks themselves are renowned for their generous hospitality and friendliness to visitors as well as for their wide-ranging cultural interests. Every year, Turkey stages numerous international arts festivals.

AFS & Your Experience

AFS Turkey has been in existence since 1952. With a network of local chapters comprising about 300 AFS volunteers, AFS Turkey hosts approximately 25 AFS students every year coming from 11 countries that vary from Colombia to Norway.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

Landing in Turkey

You will arrive in Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey. You will be met by AFS Turkey volunteers who will take you to your first Turkish orientation.

Arrival Orientation

The Arrival Orientation will last two days. Here you will have a brief introduction to Turkey's rich culture, learn about AFS Turkey, receive some safety and culture tips and, of course, meet other AFS students with whom you will share your time abroad.

Living in Turkey

Lifestyle and Family Living

Many aspects of Turkish culture are a blend of traditional and modern ways, of conservative courtly customs and cheerful expressions of friendship. Manners are generally formal—especially in the presence of older people—but Turks do not hesitate to express their feelings; they generally use their hands a lot, adding meaning and emphasis to their conversations. They also love to laugh. Family members and friends often shake hands and kiss on both cheeks when meeting.

The family is an important institution in Turkish society and is usually close-knit. Especially in rural areas, traditional family values prevail with the father being the leader of the family. Members of large Turkish families, often living as an extended family, are loyal to the family unit. Supervising the children and managing the household is generally the responsibility of the wife, while the husband is more occupied with work outside the home. Parental authority is respected and families are generally protective of teenagers, especially girls. Parents expect to be informed about when their teenagers are going out, where they are going and when they will be returning. Children are expected to share in the housework. Although your host parents may smoke, young people generally do not. Turkish host families, like all AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family lives.

Turkish customs generally have a lot to do with social courtesies that are highly valued and deeply bound with the Islamic conventions observed by many. Hospitality, for example, is an integral part of Turkish culture. Friends, relatives, and neighbors often visit each other, sometimes without notice. Tradition dictates that visitors are always offered tea or coffee and invited to share a meal. It is impolite to decline the offer and a Turk will do everything possible to make his guest feel comfortable.

Although this respect of tradition may seem very formal, Turkish people are truly friendly and curious about others.

You will be placed in or near one of three main cities: Izmir, Istanbul or Ankara.

Dress and Appearance

Dressing habits may vary a lot depending on the environment. Turkish people, especially in the cities, are more attuned to the latest fashions and styles from Europe and the U.S., and Turkish teenagers dress casually: T-shirts, jeans, and sweaters. A more conservative and traditional style is followed in rural areas.

Heavier clothing is necessary if you stay in inland where winters are cooler.

You should bring one or two nice outfits for special occasions: jacket and tie for boys, dress or skirt and blouse for girls.

All schools require a uniform, which will cost you about US\$150. Your host family can provide you with details of the requirements for your school uniform so that you can bring with you as many elements of the uniform as possible and avoid any unnecessary cost.

Diet and Meals

Turkish cuisine is among the finest in the world. There is a saying: *Bring your belly to Turkey - it will thank you*. It combines Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisines. It is quite rich and varied—although eggplant is the number one vegetable—and with particular dishes—notably *Shish kebab* (skewer-grilled lamb), a Turkish invention.

Food is cooked mostly with olive oil, and can be very spicy in the eastern part of Turkey. Lamb and rice are common dishes and seafood is abundant on the coast. Vegetarianism is rare in Turkish culture, but you can have an entire vegetarian meal from magnificent traditional Turkish *meze*, a tray or table of small dishes, including stuffed grape leaves, salads and a variety of other items, as well as shish kebab grilled on a skewer. Soups are also frequently prepared.

Eating habits vary according to the region and the food being eaten.

For their usually light breakfast, Turks will eat bread with white cheese, butter, eggs, marmalade or honey, and olives, all accompanied by tea or yogurt. Lunch is an important meal at midday, but the main meal of the day is eaten in the evening when the family generally expects to sit down together. Dinner may consist of several courses.

Desserts are sweet (often honey-soaked) and tend to combine fruit, nuts and pastry in tempting combinations. It also may include *muhallebi* (milk pudding).

Çay (tea) is considered the national drink and is served anytime, although Turkish coffee (*kahve*), a thick brew served in small cups, is served with nearly every meal.

Table manners require that young people wait until the older people start eating, and no one leaves the table until the eldest gets up. It is considered inappropriate for individuals to request special foods, to prepare separate food for themselves or to raid the refrigerator.

To begin or end a meal, one might say *Afiyet olsun* ("May what you eat bring you well-being"). One may compliment the cook on the meal by saying *Elinize saglik* (roughly, "Bless your hand").

School

The school system in Turkey is composed of two main stages: eight years of mandatory primary school and three years of high school, which may be public or private.

High school students in Turkey specialize in either mathematics and sciences or social studies. The science curriculum requires Turkish language and literature, history, geography, math, physics, chemistry, foreign language and physical education, with art and music optional. The social studies curriculum offers literature, philosophy, logic,

history, geography, history of art and foreign languages as well as math, physics and chemistry. You will be placed according to what is available in your community and your academic background.

Students in the senior year of high school take their studies very seriously because they are in competition to get into state-run universities. They take an exam to determine entry to university. Turkey has more than 29 government-funded universities, the oldest of which was founded in Istanbul in 1453.

You will be expected to take active part in school studies including tests homework and exams: AFS is able to have school programs through direct agreements with the schools and the Ministry of Education. Therefore your positive approach to school is very important.

You will probably attend the second to last year of high school, as the last would be extremely demanding and you would have fewer chances to bond with your classmates with whom you will share a classroom while the teachers change rooms for different subjects. School is a great place to make friends and improve your language skills.

You will take 12 to 15 courses per semester; most of the subjects are compulsory with a few optional ones. There are 30 to 35 hours of school per week, from Monday to Friday.

School runs from mid-September to mid-June with a two-week holiday from the end of January to early February.

While at school you will be required to wear a uniform that you will have to buy. However, the expensive textbooks will be provided by AFS.

A transcript or certificate of attendance can be obtained if you attend class regularly, complete course work and pass exams. Participants need to advise AFS Turkey in advance if these documents are needed.

Teen Life

Many schools offer extracurricular activities and this is a great way for you to meet people and make friends. Soccer is the most popular sport, both to watch and to play. Turks also enjoy volleyball, basketball, bicycling, swimming and picnics. Young people like to get together at friends' homes or go to the movies.

Many customs are respected among young people such as deference towards older people and those with higher status and avoiding public displays of affection.

AFS Activities

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Turkey will provide you with several others. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet (often for a weekend or for a few days) and talk about expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational; bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experience.

About a month after your arrival, you will participate to a seven-to-nine day orientation in Istanbul. During this time, you will discuss Turkey's varied customs as well as attend intensive language training.

During your stay you will participate to two other main orientations, both in Istanbul, to which you will travel by bus or train. Each lasts two-to-three days. They will deal with different topics depending on how far along you are in your program. The last one, the so-called End-of-Stay, will be held a little before your departure.

Besides these orientations, you will participate in other activities that will be organized either by your local chapter or your host family.

Language

Turkish is an elegant and simple language, but word order and verb formation rules differ substantially from Indo-European languages. This sometimes results in difficulties for AFSers. AFS Turkey places high importance on AFSers learning Turkish.

Beside the intensive orientation language lessons, local volunteers in your chapter will arrange Turkish language classes for you. These may be taken at school or at an independent institution for the first three months, two-to-three hours a week.

English, French, German and Italian are spoken by many people around the country. Turks are very talkative and curious; therefore you will often find people that speak one or more of these languages.

Travel

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in Turkey, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, local chapter or AFS Turkey. We strongly discourage traveling on your own or with friends.

Spending Money

Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which you are expected to participate. When you do such things as shopping for yourself or going out with friends, the expenses are your responsibility.

AFS recommends that US\$1,200 in traveler's checks should be sufficient for an entire year of spending. Young Turks are not accustomed to carrying or spending large amounts of money. Spending more than your peers and family may create a distance between you and them. It is wise to learn to spend as they do.

Safety and Support

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Turk. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Turkey may have additional rules.

Health Precautions

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Turkey (which you can get from your government or easily find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant, your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

Documents

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices of your host country, and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate. Once in Turkey, you will need a residence permit that will cost about US\$30.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. AFS will help you obtain the visa and provide you with instructions regarding the required documents.

Program Prices

Please [contact the AFS office in your home country](#) for information about program price and scholarship possibilities and what the program price covers for the various program offerings. In most cases the program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

Country Information

Geography and Climate

About the size of Chile, Turkey is a geographical bridge between Europe and Asia.

Its landscapes range from Mediterranean coasts to jagged mountains, with distinctive places such as the natural hot spring of Pamuccale or the caved cities of Cappadocia.

Turkey is surrounded by water on three sides: the Black Sea to the north and the Aegean Sea (part of the Mediterranean Sea) to the west and south. Enclosed on the northwest is the Sea of Marmara, which separates Europe from Asia. European Turkey is called Thrace; Asian Turkey is called Anatolia. Anatolia is quite mountainous with an average altitude of 800 m. (3,700 feet).

The North Sea coast tends to have hot dry summers and mild rainy winters with the summer temperature in Istanbul around 28-30°C (82-86°F). The Mediterranean coast features dry mild winters and very hot summers with temperatures above 45°C (113°F). The Anatolian plateau is cooler especially in winter. Further in the mountainous east temperatures drop with cold snowy winters.

Population

Turkey's population is about 67 million. Eighty percent is Turkish—originally from central Asia and converted to Islam on their way to Anatolia. Other officially recognized minorities are Greek, Armenian and Jewish.

Language

Turkish is the national language, but English, French, German and Italian are spoken.

Government

Turkey is a democratic republic with Ankara as a capital. The president is elected by the Grand National Assembly for a seven-year term. The prime minister and his cabinet hold executive power in the government.

Religion

Nearly all Turks are Muslim (98%), but the Turkish government makes it very clear that Turkey is a secular state and is very proud of its religious freedom. The role of Islam as state religion was abolished in 1924. The other religions represented are Jewish, Greek Orthodox and Armenian.

Launching Your AFS Experience

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that those students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experience. In order to get ready, first make every effort to learn some key Turkish words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language.

To familiarize yourself further with life in Turkey, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about Turkey and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Turkey. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living as a Turk. If you do not know any alumni, please contact your local volunteer or national AFS office. In addition, AFS Turkey will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information.

Turkish people will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

If you have not already received a full AFS application packet, please contact your local AFS volunteer or national office to request one. We wish you a wonderful experience!

Curiously Turkish

- Noah's ark landed on Mt. Ararat in Turkey.
- Coins were invented by the Lydians, whose land is now Turkey, in the 7th Century B.C.
- St. Nicholas, otherwise known as Santa Claus, was born and lived as bishop of Myra (Kale) in Turkey.
- Turkish women received the rights to vote and to be elected to office in 1934, earlier than Swiss, Greek, Italian and French women.
- Tulips were introduced to the Netherlands by Holland's Ogier Gghiselinde Busbecq, ambassador from Holland to Suleyman the Magnificent in 1554, ruler of Anatolia (now Turkey).

How to Apply

To become a participant in this country's School Program, contact your nearest AFS office. To locate an AFS office, go to <http://www.afs.org/contact>

Student age (upon arrival)	15y 8m to 18y 2m	
Country data	Size	780,580 km ² , 304,426 m ²
	Population	67,308,928
	Official Language	Turkish
	Government	Republic
Currency	Lira, divided into 100 kuruş	
Useful websites	http://www.geocities.com/resats/culture.html http://teenturk.virtualave.net/	
AFS Turkey website	http://www.tkvafs.org.tr/	

AFS program destinations are not always available to residents of all countries. If a program interests you, please contact your nearest AFS office to find out if it is an option for you. You can locate your nearest AFS office at <http://www.afs.org/contact>