

Recommended Reading for Your Trip to Turkey

The list includes a few of my long-time favorites, as well as some specifically chosen for our botanical tours... and there are many more titles we're happy to recommend. Some titles may be out-of-print but are available online and in public libraries --*Holly Chase*

History & Culture

The Ottoman Centuries by Lord Kinross (a.k.a Patrick Balfour)

This lucid history reads like an elegant novel, though neither PBS nor the BBC turned it into a 13-week program.

The Mediterranean in the Age of Philip II by Fernand Braudel (2 vols)

These are references I turn to again and again to remind me of the centuries of harmonious interchange between the “Countries of the Cross “ and those of “The Crescent” and how interdependent the peoples of the Mediterranean have been.

Portrait of a Turkish Family by Irfan Orga

An urban (& urbane) domestic chronicle of Istanbul in the first decades of the 20th century.

Everyday Life in Ottoman Turkey by Raphaela Lewis

Charming! Filled with notes on dress, folklore, food, & the cycle of popular celebrations in the lives of urban and rural Turks.

[Turkish Tapestry: A Traveller's Portrait of Turkey](#) (available for Amazon Kindle)

A collection of vignettes of the peoples, places, food, flora, fauna, and traditions of contemporary Turkey. A secular republic with a moderate Muslim culture and a legacy of legendary hospitality, Turkey is the only Mediterranean nation to retain no collective memory of a foreign occupation.

Historical Fiction

The Iliad—Homer's account of the Trojan War

Birds Without Wings by Louis de Bernieres (who also wrote **Corelli's Mandolin**)

This lyrical novel provides both intimate and sweeping views of the multicultural communities of the Ottoman Empire that were decimated by social upheavals in the years bracketing the First World War. I have found no better portrait of the people of rural Anatolia than this masterful work. Its primary setting is the area around Fethiye, in SW Turkey.

Practical Travel Aids & Guidebooks

Insight Guide: TURKEY As a single guide to the country's history, contemporary culture, and sights—this is my choice. Pithy commentary supplemented by clear maps, glossaries, and spectacular photos. Rather heavy to pack or carry around, it is nonetheless an excellent planning tool. Fodor, Frommer, Lonely Planet and most other guidebook series in English place more emphasis on logistics as well as hotel and restaurant ratings. INSIGHT won't always mention the latest nightclub or boutique hotel, but it will discuss the politics of Islam and Turkey's struggle with Kurdish separatism. For the intelligent, first-time traveler to Turkey, INSIGHT strikes a good balance.

Want to hear the sounds of Turkish? Put on your computer headphones and tune in the BBC in Turkish or try the **Berlitz CD & booklet: TURKISH IN 60 MINUTES**, a very basic intro with words and phrases perfectly enunciated by native speakers.

PLANTS

There aren't a lot of botanical field guides for Turkey; in fact, our Turkish study leader is writing one! Those available online or in better bookshops tend to be quite costly. But one affordable book that I've long used is:

Flowers of the Mediterranean by Oleg Polunin (illustrated & thorough, but still portable!) OUT OF PRINT but there are 2nd-hand paperback copies for sale online.

Buried Treasures; Finding and Growing the World's Choicest Bulbs by Janis Ruksans

A true-life botanical thriller with fabulous photos by the Latvian bulb authority. It has chapters on the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Turkey.

I always enjoy an afternoon's ramble through stacks of the Classics-- much plant legend and tantalizing historical gossip is to be found in translations of **Herodotus**, **Theophrastus**, and **Dioscorides**.

Try Googling "Plants of the Bible"... "Plants of the Mediterranean"... "Aegean Flora"... you'll get many scholarly studies on university websites.