Cycling tour in Cappadocia and Taurus Mountains

Introduction:
This trip will take you on an exciting journey through the lands of Central Anatolian plateau and Taurus mountains. We start from Cappadocia, the land of fairy chimneys (Peri Baclari) where humanity built thousands of years old civilizations by carving houses, churches, monasteries and whole cities within the rocky pillars and volcanic tuff. We cycle southwards visiting many of the region’s historic and cultural sights, pass by vast mountainous areas and valleys with apple and vegetable gardens and herds of sheep and goat, sleep a night in the lively Niğde city and enjoy the hospitality of Turkish people and the outstanding local cuisine. Besides a fantastic cycling in Cappadocia the next step is nice “around trip” in Taurus Mountains area with peaks reaching almost 3800m. The Taurus Mountains are the Western branch of the great mountain chain that stretches across all of Asia. We spend 3 days cycling in the beautiful mountain scenery of Aladaglar and Bolkar mountains (part of Taurus) and enjoy the quiet peaceful village life. The trip ends at the blue waters of the Mediterranean sea where we can enjoy a refreshing swim and rest.

Special highlights:
Cappadocia - is derived from Katpatuka, which means “the land of beautiful horses” in the Hittite language (the first ancient settlers of the region). For millions of years, the mighty volcanoes of the Central Anatolian Plateau erupted and spayed their contents across the land that would become the cradle of civilization. Three thousand years of history await the visitor to Cappadocia in the heart of Anatolia. Eruptions of lava from the now extinct Erciyes in the distant past covered the landscape with the soft tufa rock, which the winds sculptured into tortuous valleys and pinnacles. Here, the early Christians carved out the rock churches and underground cities for which Cappadocia is so famous. Goreme – This village makes its living from agriculture and tourism. It is located in the middle of the national park. In the village, ancient or recent houses can be found along with the famous earth pillars (or fairy chimneys) that are still used as houses, warehouses, restaurants or stables. A must see is Goreme open air museum and its churches (15 min walk) with the best preserved frescos (10-12c.) in Cappadocia (Unesco World Heritage sight).

Zelve open air museum – which once housed one of the largest communities in the region is honeycombed with dwellings, religious and secular chambers. Here, the Christians and Muslims lived together in perfect harmony, until 1924. Then Christians had to leave the Valley because of the exchange of minorities between Greece and Turkey, and the Muslims were forced to evacuate the Valley in the 50’s when life became dangerous due to risk of erosion.

Mustafapasa - Mustafapasa was inhabited by Greek Orthodox families until the beginning of the 20-th century. This typical place keeps the traditional way of life, where days go on with serenity.

Keslik rock monastery - is one of the biggest monastic areas in Cappadocia with several churches carved into the rocks, and definitely the biggest refectory in the whole area.

Derinkuyu Underground City - Derinkuyu Underground City was opened to visitors in 1965; it’s approximately 85 m deep and has 8 underground floors. It contains all the usual rooms found in an underground settlement (stables, cellars, refectories, churches, wineries etc.).

Ihlara Valley - The impressive gorge of the valley is 14 km long, 100 m deep and both sides are lined with rock carved churches from 9-12 c, about 100 in all.

Guzelyurt – The village formerly known as Karballa then Gelvere, Guzelyurt means “beautiful land”. It is built on the cliffs surrounding a narrow gorge. There are over fifty rock cut churches inside The Monastery Valley which lies beyond the old village.

Niğde - is an old lively town famous for producing potatoes and apples. Among Niğde's historic buildings are the Seljuk Turkish Alaeddin Mosque (1223), and The Byzantine fortress with newly open small ethnographic museum.

Gumusler Monastery – one of the most important religious centers in Cappadocia. The monastic complex
Day 6: In the morning you start with a gradual ascent with great views to Guzelurt village and Hasan volcano. You reach a village on a saddle and start a nice and long downhill (nearby is the Red church). You pass by several small villages in a big valley and after reaching Ciftlik village start climbing to the highest point of the day and the tour – 2120 m. The road climbs in a landscape of big oval hills and treeless mountains. After picnic lunch at the top you start a nice and long descent on a winding road through the mountain valleys. Before reaching Nigde you will pass by many apple tree gardens, typical for the region. You finish cycling in Nigde where we stay in a hotel in the city center. Afternoon walk to Nigde fortress and clock tower. You can have dinner in the hotel's restaurant or out.

Cycling distance: 55 km, ascent: 900 m, descent: 1100 m /breakfast/

Day 5: You start from the hotel and today we head to the imposing Aladaglar mountains (part of Taurus mountains range). First you cycle to the wonderful Gumusler Monastery, cut into the rocks. After sightseeing the monastery you turn back and start ascending on an isolated mountain road up to 1960 m—the highest point for the day. We make picnic lunch near a big group of stones and continue with the descend. You enter a green valley with lots of apple tree and vegetable gardens. You reach Camardi town. Just in front you can enjoy the magnificent view of the rocky Aladaglar mountains and its highest peak – Demirkazik(3756m). You climb a little out of town and after a 3 km ascend you reach Cukurbag and the family pension we are staying. Optional hiking in the stunning Cimbar gorge or jeep safari in Emili valley and the Finger rock.

Cycling distance: 55km, ascent: 860 m, descent: 620 m /breakfast, dinner/

Day 4: In the morning we start with a gradual ascent with great views to Guzelurt village and Hasan volcano. You reach a village on a saddle and start a nice and long downhill (nearby is the Red church). You pass by several small villages in a big valley and after reaching Ciftlik village start climbing to the highest point of the day and the tour – 2120 m. The road climbs in a landscape of big oval hills and treeless mountains. After picnic lunch at the top you start a nice and long descent on a winding road through the mountain valleys. Before reaching Nigde you will pass by many apple tree gardens, typical for the region. You finish cycling in Nigde where we stay in a hotel in the city center. Afternoon walk to Nigde fortress and clock tower. You can have dinner in the hotel's restaurant or out.

Cycling distance: 75 km, ascent: 900m, descent: 670m
/breakfast, dinner/

Day 3: In the morning we visit the stunning 8 floors Underground city of Derinkuyu (1 hr). We start biking from the hotel on an even road and pass nearby some small villages. The altitudes vary from 1275 to 1390 m a.s.l. After a short ascend we go downhill on a cobbled road through the charming Belisirma village – 1330m (perched on the valley's slopes with its stone houses with flat roofs covered with grass) and reach the bottom of the Ihlara valley – 1175m (14 km long, famous for its rock churches and canyon). We can stop for a rest at one of the restaurants by the river (with comfy Turkish style sitting places inside the river). Option for short loop hike down the Ihlara valley. You continue with a short ascend out of the valley. Here you can visit Direkli rock church from 11 c. on the left side of the road. Soon you reach Ihlara village where you go down again to the river bed and the beginning of Ihlara canyon. After getting out from the village on a steep ascend you can walk near the edge for a spectacular view of Ihlara valley. Before reaching Guzelurt you see a sign for Yuksek Church to the right - that can be also visited. We stay overnight in old greek house in Guzelurt village with a great view to Hasan volcano (3253m). Option for short hike in the nearby Monastery valley. The first part of the route is mainly flat with some gradual ascents and descends. You bike among vast fields and agriculture lands surrounded by small mountains. The second stage includes some steep ascents and descends (in and out of Ihlara valley).

Lunch can be made as picnic or at one of the restaurant near Ihlara river.

Cycling distance: 69 km, ascent: 580 m, descent: 540 m /breakfast, dinner/

Day 2: You start cycling from Goreme (1100 m). We reach Cavusin village on a flat road with great panoramic views to Bozdog plateau and many groups of fairy chimneys. We pass by Pasabag (rock churches and interesting fairy chimneys). Next stop is the fabulous Zelve open air museum where you can spend some time walking among the cave dwellings of the first settlements of Cappadocia – the Hititlities (14 – 8 c. BC) We start a climb and reach Devrent place famous for “The Dervish rock” and “The Camel” fairy chimneys. Soon we start descending to Urgup town (the biggest in the area), cycle through the lively center and commence on a climbing to Mustafapasa village where we can have lunch in a turkish fast food restaurant. We continue with a climb and then go downhill near a big lake on the right and reach Keslik cave monastery (dug in the volcanic tuff) where we can stop for visit and explore the dwellings and churches with frescos from 12 c. t Most of the time the altitude of the road is between 1100 and 1300 m altitude. The next settlements that we pass are Taskinapa and Sahinefendi. A long uphill ride brings you to a flat plateau at 1580m with vast fields and agriculture lands (pumpkins, potatoes, etc). After a nice descend we reach Kaymakli town famous for its Underground city and after some 10 km we reach Derinkuyu, where we stay overnight. We use mainly secondary village roads with littile traffic. There might be some traffic (tourist buses and cars) on the first stage (Goreme-Mustafapasa). Later the traffic is none or lower. The last 10 km we follow the main road (traffic is low).

Cycling distance: 80 km, ascent: 1330 m, descent: 1300 m /breakfast/

Day 1: Arrival in Kayseri and transfer (1.30h) to the hotel in Goreme for overnight. If arrive early possible walk and visit of Goreme open air museum (Unesco World Heritage sight), Uchisar castle, short hike in Love valley or stroll around the charming streets of Goreme and its surroundings. Dinner in a local restaurant in town.

Itinerary:

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river. After lunch you continue cycling mainly downhill. The mountains get greener with more trees and vegetation. Soon you bike among nice coniferous forests of Red pine. You finish cycling some 15 km before Ciltehane village famous for its thermal water (53°C). Here you can relax in the hot mineral pools or get a massage.

**Cycling distance:** 60 km, ascent: 300 m, descent: 670 m

**/breakfast, dinner/**

**Day 7:** After a short transfer you start cycling some kilometers after Pozanti town. Today you follow the old road near the motorway passing through the mountains to the Mediterranean sea. You cycle among beautiful landscapes of mountain ridges and peaks and green coniferous forests passing by small mountain villages and towns. You finish cycling before Tarsus town. Short transfer brings you to Kızkalesi (Maiden’s castle), famous for Koryokos fortress from 12, the beautiful beach and castle built on an island in the sea. Here you can relax at the beach, admire the picturesque Mediterranean view and swim in the blue waters. Depending on the departure flights of the group we can spend the last night in Kızkalesi or Adana (4th biggest Turkish city). The distance between Kızkalesi and Adana airport is approximately 120 km (1.5-2h drive).

**Cycling distance:** 65.3 km, ascent: 350 m, descent: 805 m

**/breakfast/**

**Day 8:** Transfer to Adana airport for departure.

**/breakfast/**

**Accommodation & luggage transportation:** We stay in family-run hotels, guest houses or pensions with private facilities on 3 BB (day 1, 4.7) and 4 HB (rest days). Lunches can be arranged as picnics or lunchpacks from the hotels. Luggage is taken care of throughout the whole trip. A small rucksack or rear pannier (can be provided) for carrying personal items during the day is necessary. It is possible to skip some parts of the stage for the day and to take the supporting vehicle with the luggage instead.

**Tour type:** IT+/GT

**Difficulty grade:** B,C

**Best period:** April – May, September - October

**Weather:** The Anatolian plateau is cooler in summer and quite cold in winter. It is quite dry and rainfalls are not common. Temperatures could vary between 25 and 35°C during summer, and could fall down to 5-8°C during autumn. Approaching the Mediterranean coast the situation will change to moister atmosphere and higher temperature.

**Road conditions:** We use mostly two-way roads (one band per direction) with an asphalt covering. The country roads are quite peaceful, sometimes without any cars. There are few stages with more traffic (Goreme-Urgup area, getting in and out of Nigde, etc.). The asphalt roads we cycle on are relatively in a very good condition, but the asphalt covering is rough. Be careful when going downhill on a rainy day, roads gets very slippery. As for cycling security recommendation for cyclists is to watch out with Turkish drivers. They just don’t respect the traffic ordinance, especially in towns and villages. The itinerary is mostly on isolated asphalt roads, but it’s always good to watch out. Be aware of shepherd’s dogs.

**Additional tour info:** All bikers receive a map marking the route and route notes. The guide with the supporting vehicle and the luggage inside checks several times a day if everything is OK with the group, waiting by crossroads, accompanying them for breakfast, lunch and dinner and giving them talks by the most interesting sites en-route. Bikers can always skip some harder stages using the supporting vehicle.

**Equipment and clothing:** Road touring or mountain bike are provided by the company. Helmets and saddle bags are provided upon request only. Recommended items to bring along: helmet, gloves, padded cycling shorts; cycling shoes; fleece headband; fingerless biking gloves; lightweight windproof biking jacket; waterproof trousers; fleece wind stopper jacket; sunglasses with UV protection; sunscreen lotion and lip balm. For list with recommended items see “General”.

**NB!** Biking without helmet is not advisable. We strongly recommend you to bring your own helmet or rent one from us.

**Bicycles:** For our cycling tours we provide the following high quality bikes:

1. **Road bike – Drag Marathon**
   - Touring road bike excellent for long distance cycling on asphalt roads with light aluminum frame and 28” rims. 21 gears, front suspension “Zoom” (30 mm travel), “Shimano” components (shifters, crank, chain, V-brakes), back luggage carrier with double-sided rear panniers
2. **Mountain bike - RAM – HT 1**

**Group size:** Min. 6 persons

**The price includes:**
- Accommodation and boarding as per itinerary; all ground transfers and luggage transportation; airport transfers, English-speaking guide/driver; rental of bicycles

**The price does not include:**
- Entrance fees, additional meals outside the program, tips, alcohol drinks, cigarettes and other personal expenses.

**Brief about the Turkish cuisine**

It's tasty but the chilli meals are pretty common. Of course no pork meat at all (you can find pork only in some restaurants in the big cities), mainly mutton, veal and chicken. But don't expect a lot of food on your plate. Usually the meal portions in Turkey are small. A classic Turkish meal would include shepherd's salad, lentil soup, "sis kebap", and for dessert some of the many Turkish pastry stuffed flooded in sugar syrup like "baklava", "tolumba" or “kadaif”. Usually Turkish people finish their lunch or dinner with coffee or tea. They drink black tea in small glasses (flasks). And when you go out of a Turkish restaurant, at the exit, they pour some eau-de-Cologne in your hands. Alcohol is not served in every restaurant.

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**Penguin Travel DMC-Bulgaria**

Address: 9 Orfej Str., 1421 Sofia, BULGARIA; Phone: +35924001050; E-mail: info@penguin.bg
We provide different varieties of tours as regards to their goals and difficulty grades! Whether you will choose individual and group tours with a guide or combined tours with a guide for some part of the trip depends on you. We emphasize on using local experienced guides with knowledge of the local language, culture, history, art, etc. The tours are conducted in the English language. Guides in other languages are available upon request.

Tour types
Our tours are divided in different tour types, regardless of being guided or not or if someone travels alone or in a group. We have prepared your vacation so that you can concentrate on new impressions and experiences, awaiting you all the time. Here is a description of the various tours:

IT: Individual tours with a guide
The same as the individual tours, with the only difference that there is a local guide provided for some of the days. During the days with a local guide most probably you will be together with other tourists.

GT: Group tours
There is a guide accompanying you throughout the whole trip, meeting you at the airport upon arrival and leaving you at the airport again for departure. We use well-trained and experienced local people with good knowledge of English. The group size is normally 6-12 people, if not specially mentioned.

Difficulty grades
To prepare yourself for the best of your vacation we recommend that you start planning it in advance. Good physical condition is required. In order to achieve it we advise you to start walking, jogging or cycling everyday. Swimming a couple of times a week is also recommended for some time before the start of the tour. Whether you will choose individual and group tours with a guide or combined tours with a guide for some part of the trip depends on you. We emphasize on using local experienced guides with knowledge of the local language, culture, history, art, etc. The tours are conducted in the English language. Guides in other languages are available upon request.

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Equipment and clothing
Recommended items: good quality padded cycling shorts (baggy style); cycling helmet; cycling shoes; fleece headband; fingerless biking gloves; lightweight waterproof biking jacket; waterproof trousers; fleece windstopper jacket; sunglasses with UV protection; sunscreen lotion and lip balm.

Money and personal expenses
You will need some extra money to cover meals, drinks, entrance fees etc., which are not included in the tour price. Additional money for souvenirs and purchases (if any) will be at your own discretion. You will need some extra money to cover drinks, entrance fees etc., which are not included in the tour price. Additional money for souvenirs and purchases (if any) will be at your own discretion. You will need some extra money to cover meals, drinks, entrance fees etc., which are not included in the tour price. Additional money for souvenirs and purchases (if any) will be at your own discretion. You will need some extra money to cover meals, drinks, entrance fees etc., which are not included in the tour price.

The payments in Turkey are usually made in "YTL", which is the official currency. Euros and USD are largely accepted. The exchange rate with EU and USD is quite changing sometimes, but approximately it is: YTL: EU - 1,96:1; YTL: USD - 1, 4 -1. Credit Cards could be used primarily in some shops and restaurants in the biggest cities. Usually it is marked on their front doors if Credit Cards are accepted. Cash Points (ATMs) are more frequent (again in the biggest towns only!). Traveler's cheques take quite a lot of time to handle and not each bank deals with them (in many cases it takes even few days since their deposition in the bank!). Thus they are not recommended!

Here are some examples of comparative costs in Turkey (NB: prices in mid-range restaurants! /as you know it differs from place to place):
- Coffee - 1-1,3 Euro
- Tea -0,8 Euro
- Beer -2-3 Euro
- Soft drink - 1-1,2 Euro
- Bottle of water -0,8 Euro
- Bottle of mark red wine – 20 Euro
- Three-course lunch -8-15 Euro

Cell phone coverage
Please be sure to visit the web site of your carrier to get up-to-date information on coverage and options. If your carrier does not have a plan or coverage that is suitable for you, there are several other options:
- Rent a cellular phone.
- If available buy a disposable phone in the country of travel.

You may be able to purchase a compatible SIM card for your existing phone, in the country of travel (newer phones do not have SIM cards). Your phone must be unlocked for this to work so you will need to contact your service provider to find out if it is unlocked.

Electricity
In Turkey two-pin sockets are normal. Voltage is 220 watts. If you come from the U.S. or UK you need to purchase an adapter.

Vaccination
Hepatitis A & Typhoid are recommended. Check the latest requirements with your doctor/clinic prior departure.

Brief about Turkey

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>77,945 sq km</td>
<td>Ankara</td>
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</table>

Natural protection

- In an advance. Good physical condition is highly recommended. You do not need much effort to get yourself in shape. And don't forget that you will need to prepare yourself for the best of your vacation we recommend that you start planning it in advance. Good physical condition is required. In order to achieve it we advise you to start walking, jogging or cycling everyday.

Weather
Although Turkey is situated in large Mediterranean geographical location where climatic conditions are quite temperate, diverse nature of the landscape, and the existence in particular of the mountains that run parallel to the coasts, result in significant differences in climatic conditions from one region to the other. While the coastal areas enjoy milder climates, the inland Anatolian plateau experiences extremes of hot summers and cold winters with limited rainfall. In general the climate in Cappadocia is quite extreme. Temperatures can vary to a great extend (see the table bellow).

Last edited: NK, 13/10/2010

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