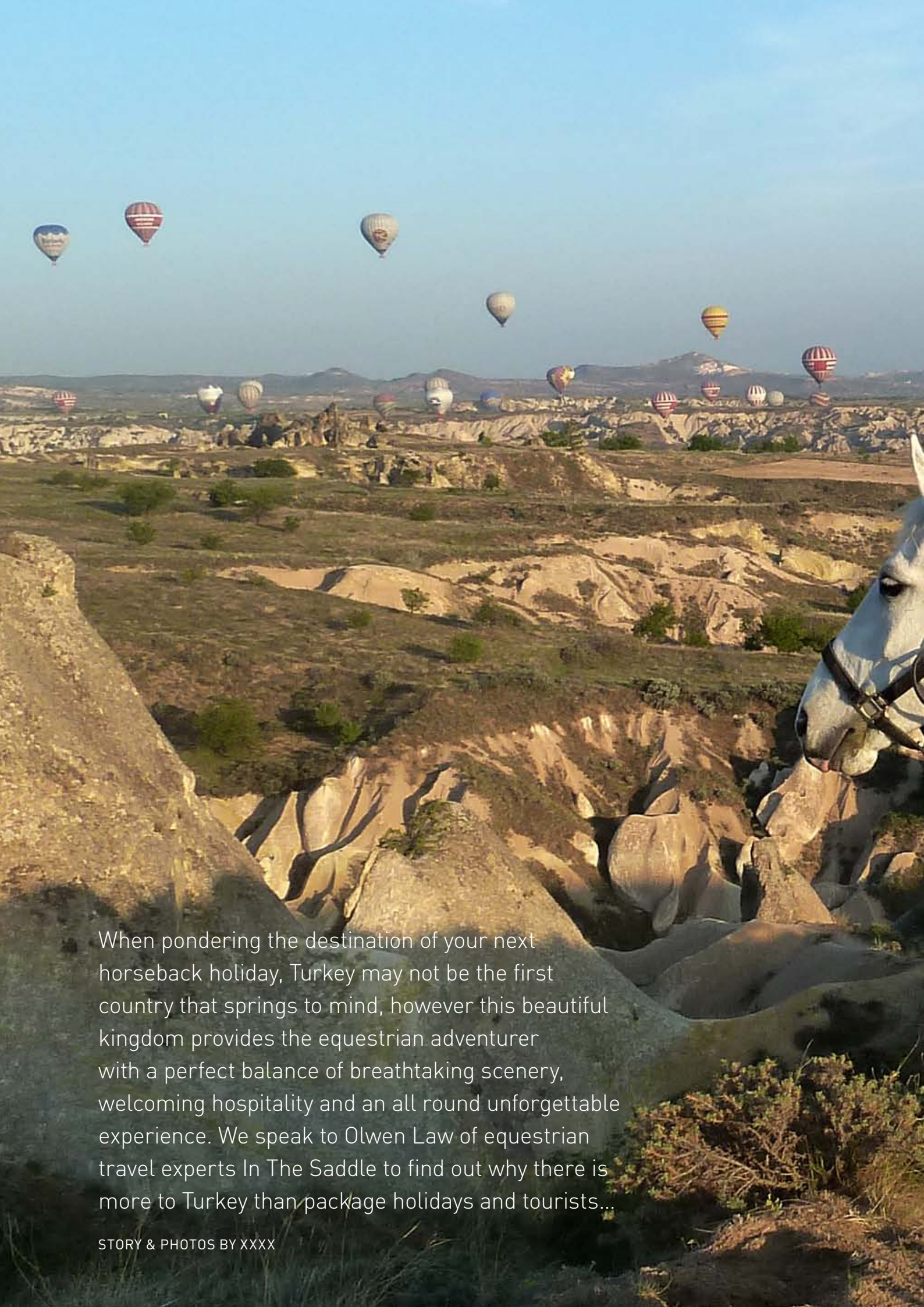
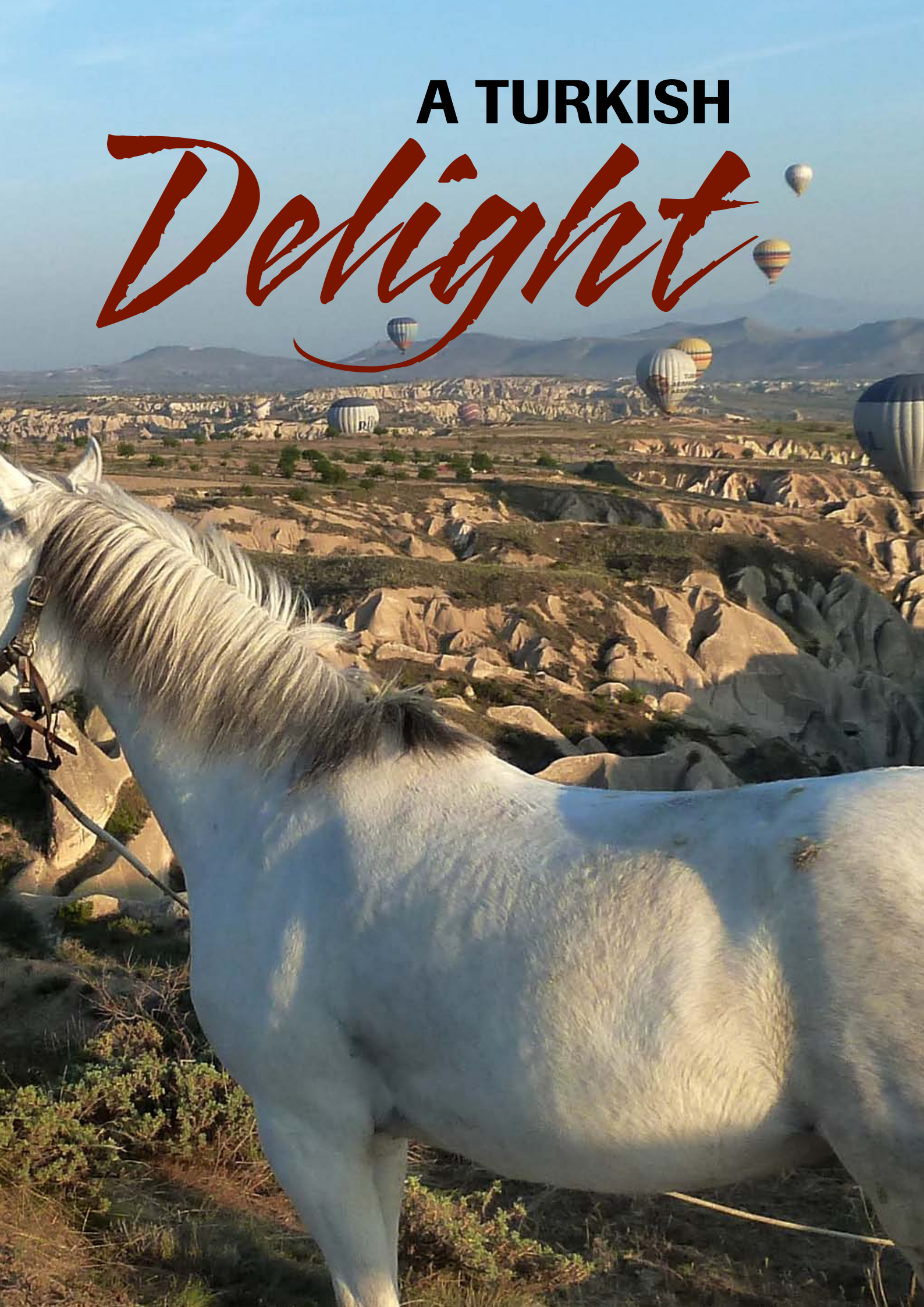


When pondering the destination of your next horseback holiday, Turkey may not be the first country that springs to mind, however this beautiful kingdom provides the equestrian adventurer with a perfect balance of breathtaking scenery, welcoming hospitality and an all round unforgettable experience. We speak to Olwen Law of equestrian travel experts In The Saddle to find out why there is more to Turkey than package holidays and tourists...

STORY & PHOTOS BY XXXX

A TURKISH Delight



Turkey plays host to the spectacular Cappadocia region, situated in Central Anatolia, in the middle of the country. A short journey from Nevsehir or Kayseri airports, Cappadocia is visually unique and famous for three things, all related to the underlying geology; the fairy chimneys, underground towns and the Christian churches carved out of rock. The name Cappadocia comes from the phrase 'the land of the beautiful horses' and visitors to the region can fully expect their trip to live up to the name.

Cappadocia is famous for the distinctive rock chimneys that have evolved over many years due to erosion of hard volcanic rock overlying a much softer layer. The result is a breathtaking setting which is unique to the area and unlike anywhere else in the world. This geological oddity is also responsible for the many caves and underground houses of the area and helps explain why the site has been continuously inhabited since the Bronze Age. Not only is the area of Cappadocia a haven for horse lovers, but it also provides enough inspiration to fuel the most inquisitive of historical and geological enthusiasts.

The climate in Cappadocia is typical of the area with dry hot summers and cold winters, so for travellers wishing to enjoy long hot days this destination is perfect.

RIDING IN CAPPADOCIA

There are a number of different itineraries in Cappadocia, giving a variety of options depending on the kind of trip you wish to take. Riders should be confident in all paces; walk, trot and canter, and be prepared to ride spirited horses on open terrain. Fitness is also important as some days involve up to six hours in the saddle which is perfect for travellers wishing to spend long periods with their trusty mounts and experience some really exciting long distance trail riding.

The terrain is mountainous and rocky, and although there is plenty of walking, your riding ability will still be tested with some steep ascents and descents. During this slower pace you also have the chance to take in the scenery, and peruse the local area. Don't be put off if you want to indulge your inner speed demon though as you will also get to experience lovely long canters and even some gallops when the ground allows. In The Saddle's Turkey expert recommends taking a compact camera and keeping it close to hand at all times because there are so many visual treats to capture!

Your equine partners will predominantly be pure Arabians, Anatolian-Arab crosses and Akhal-Teke crosses which are all forward going and used to climbing mountains, going down

steep slopes and offering a little speed when it is asked for.

CHOOSING YOUR TURKISH HOLIDAY

Whether you like home comforts and a touch of luxury, or are prepared to embrace nature and camp, Cappadocia offers a range of different means of viewing the spectacular region.

CAPPADOCIA FAIRY CHIMNEY RIDE

Beginning in the historic town of Cavusin near the equestrian centre, the Cappadocia Fairy Chimney Ride is an 8-night trip that gives holidaymakers the opportunity to truly explore the local area, including the underground cities and famed fairy chimneys. This unique experience on horseback also allows you to visit some of the less touristy areas to experience true rural life in Cappadocia. Visit tiny fishing villages, breathtaking valleys, apricot groves and lakes, stop for lunch in historical taverns and enjoy local culture. Combining four nights of home comforts with four nights of camping the Cappadocia Fairy Chimney Ride provides the perfect balance of exploration and extravagance. On the final day you will have the opportunity to visit the Goreme Open Air Museum to see the awe-inspiring painted churches built by exiled Christians during the Roman era. This trip is perfect for the rider who wishes to combine Turkish lifestyle with an exciting equestrian adventure!

VALLEYS, LAKES & RIVERS

After a one-night stay in beautiful accommodation close to the equestrian centre, you will begin your 6-night, Valleys, Lakes & Rivers tour to experience some of Turkey's most unique scenery. Setting off on the initial morning you can be sure to feel the excitement of a real adventure as you prepare to camp for four nights in the countryside. Ride through villages such as Bahceli – where the hills have been carved like beehives - take a dip with your horse in Lake Damsabaraji, journey up the Akkoy plateau to see the spectacular views across the landscape and even try your hand at fishing, Turkish style. Mix your horseback riding with cultural experiences such as trips to ancient mosques and monasteries for the ideal Turkish escape.

CAPPADOCIA HIGHLIGHTS

If you are not prepared to fully embrace the outdoors then the Cappadocia Highlights trip enables you to experience all the excitement of a Turkish

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THE NAME CAPPADOCIA COMES FROM THE PHRASE ‘THE LAND OF THE BEAUTIFUL HORSES’ AND VISITORS TO THE REGION CAN FULLY EXPECT THEIR TRIP TO LIVE UP TO THE NAME.

adventure without the alfresco living! The 6-night excursion offers adventurous days trailing through the famed fairy chimneys and tranquil valleys, together with excursions to see the underground cities. Enjoy gastronomic meals in local restaurants, celebrate true Turkish nightlife and enjoy leisurely trips to the local shops where you can buy beautiful carpets, jewellery and pottery.

THE GREAT ANATOLIAN RIDE

For an unforgettable experience the Great Anatolian Ride is a 14 night journey through the northwest of the country involving 10 nights of camping under the beautiful Turkish skies and 4 nights indulging in home comforts at hotels. The Great Anatolian Ride follows, as closely as possible, the early stages of the final journey of the adventurous seventeenth-century Ottoman Turkish traveller Evliya Celebi. After a lifetime spent wandering the world – from Vienna to Sudan, from the steppes of Muscovy to the deserts of north Africa – Evliya set out from Istanbul in 1671 to make the pilgrimage to Mecca that is required of all Muslims. You will embark upon this adventure starting from the hamlet of Hersek, outside of Istanbul, and progress your voyage through medieval forts, along rivers, amongst beautiful valleys and past walled cities, until you arrive at your final destination, the historic city of Küthaya-Isaköy. The various elements that this wonderful trip encompasses bring a distinctive outlook over the breathtaking Turkish country. The landscape is awe-inspiring but ultimately it is the very kind and hospitable people that you will meet and interact with each day that make this ride so remarkable.

A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPTIONAL EXTRA

No matter which one of the trips you choose to see Turkey via horseback, you will get a chance to view the exceptional countryside and the marvelous architectural, cultural and geological sites that will undoubtedly take your breath away. However one of the recommendations is to capture the essence of this magical kingdom via a hot air balloon flight.

Flying at dawn you soar high above the landscape and view the spectacular scenery from a very different angle. If you want to make your Turkish equestrian expedition even more memorable, floating in the tranquil skies will leave a lasting impression.