

Cappadocia Province

Acts 2:9, I Pet. 1:1

About Cappadocia:

The region of the central Anatolia which is called Cappadocia was surrounded by Galatia (Ankara) and Lykaonia (Konya) to the west, Armenia to the east, Pontus to the north and Kilikia to the south. It shows a spectacular and surprisingly different landscape with its wind and water eroded volcanic tuff based soil. There are thousands of natural, pyramid shaped rock formations and cave-like settlement places carved by humans since the early ages throughout the region. Cappadocia is located approximately 50km. to the south of Mount Erciyes (Argaeus), a former volcano. The violent eruptions of Erciyes covered whole area with a thick layer of volcanic ash. During the following ages this hardened tuff created a bizarre landscape by the strong influence of the wind and water erosion. Some of these chimney-like rock formations were dug-in as home or sometimes a church by the local people.

They used to speak a different language than their neighbors. Famous geographer and historian Strabon mentioned about these people in his book "Geographica" with their separate culture and language. This fertile country was occupied by its stronger neighbors throughout the ages. Persians, Macedonians and Romans were among the rulers of the land and its people in different times.

During the early periods of Christianity, the first followers of Jesus and his apostles settled in the area to hide from the soldiers of Roman Empire. It is known that St. Paul was looking for a secure place after expelled from Jerusalem. He came to Cappadocia and established the first Christian colony in this region with his followers.

According to Herodotus, the people of Cappadocia were called Syrians by their neighbors in Anatolia. The name Cappadocian was first used by Persians. They called the land Cappadocia and the people living on it Cappadocian. Cappadocia was known to be a wealthy country with its fertile land and trade links with the neighbors. The first kingdom of Anatolia was founded in this region by the Hattis, 2000 years before Christ. There are various ruins in this area remained from the Hatti kingdom period.

Finally, this important region of Anatolia was conquered and ruled by the Seljuk's and Ottomans.

CHURCHES AROUND GOREME:

Apple (Elmali) Church :

This is one of the smallest and the most recent churches of the area. It was built in the 11th century. It is cross shaped in the ground plan. The church was carved into the rock with a dome ceiling and pillars. Four columns support this dome. There are some frescoes remained to current time. These wall paintings represent the raising of the Lazarus, the last supper, the crucifixion, angels and some other holy figures.

Convent :

The convent was located across the monastery. The first floor was used as a cellar, kitchen and living area. The church was on the third floor. The rest of the convent was used as refuge. It was known to be carved into the rock, during the 11th century.

Dark (Karanlik) Church :

This was built in the 11th century in the form of a monastery. It is accepted as one of the best examples of Byzantine art of that century. The art of the church was commissioned to a professional artist by four benefactors who were portrayed in the frescoes. The small opening looking out on the narthex is the only source of light into the church. This helped to keep the frescoes in good shape throughout the ages. It is considered to be the best preserved environment in the area reflecting the 11th century Byzantine art. The frescoes reflect scenes from the New Testament. The most spectacular ones are : Christ Almighty on the main dome, the baptism, the last supper, the crucifixion, the Christ's betrayal and some Saints and Evangelists.

Snake (Yilanli) Church :

It was built into the rocks in the 11th century. It has a low ceiling and long nave. As you enter you see a picture of Christ and the founder of the church. There are frescoes on the other walls, showing St. Basil , St. Thomas and St. Onouphrios. On the other wall St. Theodore is shown struggling with a snake. The pictures of emperor Constantine and his mother are also shown supporting the cross with their hands.

The Church of St. Barbara :

This 11th century church has two columns supporting the ceiling and it is carved into the rock. Its frescoes show St. George and St. Theodore.

Church with a Shield :

This 11th century church is the biggest carved-rock church in Cappadocia . It is on the main road to Avcilar, to the right. It is accessed after a long vestibule to the west. There used to be a shield hanging on the ceiling long time ago. This does not exist anymore but the place where it was connected to the ceiling is still visible. At the eastern end of the nave which is connected to the vestibule there are four arched columns supporting the structure. There is an elevated corridor behind this nave. The church with a shield is one of the most noticeable churches in the region with its size and spectacular frescoes.

Biblical Places in Turkey

Adramyttium Antioch Assos Attalia Bithniya (Nicaea) Cappadocia CarchemishCnidusColossaeDerbeEphesus
Acts Euphrates River Galatia ProvinceHarranHierapolisIconiumIstanbul LaodociaLystraMiletusMt.
AraratMyraNiceaPatara PergaPergamumPhiladelphia Pisidian Antioch SardisSeleuciaSmyrnaTarsus ThyatiraTigris
RiverTroasTroy