

To Türkiye and Beyond
The Value of Turkish Tourism
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I was walking through one of the small villages we visited while in Cappadocia/ Kapadokya, a region in central Türkiye known for its “fairy chimneys,” tall intricate natural rock formations, and its hot air ballooned covered valleys, when I heard the individuals walking alongside me conversing in an accented Spanish. The family in question was from Zaragoza Spain, and they were visiting Türkiye not for professional or even familiar reasons, but simply as tourists eager to experience and learn. Upon conversing with the group, I discovered that their journey was motivated by various personal interests ranging from Turkish archeology, historical religious concepts, and of course the lure of nature and travel itself, which is particularly relevant in a place like Cappadocia. Istanbul, one of the country’s most popular cities for visitors, is known as the magical city where two continents meet. Türkiye is essentially a bridge of many sorts and as such, its tourism has become a focal point of conversation and of course foreign policy action.

Türkiye’s tourism is heavily promoted by the country’s government and focuses on diversity and multi-culturalism as a cultural richness. Tourism has witnessed exceptional growth in locations like Istanbul, with its culture and vibrant environment and of course Cappadocia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular has highlighted cultural heritage and heritage preservation as one of its principal public diplomacy priorities. Concepts like the nation brand of Türkiye (Tulip as a Turkish/Ottoman national flower rather than simply Dutch), promoting pottery as a cultural artform in Cappadocia, and accentuating its diversity by featuring Christian heritage sights, all play a role in its overall PD messaging. Yet, it is also worthwhile to note some of the complications the country is facing with regards to its touristic endeavors. The tourist infrastructure, for example, is significantly different in each city and region. Taxi and metro usage can present challenges even in such heavily visited and populous locations like the Turkish capital Ankara and Istanbul. In Cappadocia, particularly, rideshare consist of taxis which are often only accessible to Turkish language speakers.

The conversations I had with these Spanish visitors as well as other Latin American, European, and America tourists, were enlightening because they provided a first-hand look at the ever-developing role of tourism in Türkiye. Arriving as a visitor myself, I had the rare opportunity to deeply reflect on and experience the aspects of Turkish tourism with my own eyes. With that said, Türkiye is in a favorable position to advance and perhaps even surpass its touristic endeavors.