The old city of Mardin
Mardin
Mardin at a Glance

Mardin is located in Southeastern Anatolia in the Tigris and Euphrates river basins. One of the oldest cities of Upper Mesopotamia, Mardin is perched like an eagle’s nest atop a 1083-meter peak. Many written sources refer to the city as ‘Merdin’, meaning ‘fortresses’, in light of the many fortresses in the region. Mardin is set on the slopes of the mountains that form the northern Mesopotamian border. Certain areas of these mountains eroded over time to form volcanic plateaus. The province is covered in lowland plains, and its soil is clayey and limy. Mardin’s history dates back to Subarian times. In 335 BC, the city was taken by Alexander the Great, and was later ruled by many other conquerors. Mardin was annexed by the Ottoman Empire in 1517, and became a border city of the Turkish Republic in 1923. With its ancient architecture dating mostly from the 12th-15th centuries and its elegant, fairytale houses, Mardin is a veritable open-air museum.

Climate and Vegetation

Mardin’s climate is largely Mediterranean, although parts of the northern regions have a more continental climate with cool summers and wet, windy winters. In the lowland plains, summers are very hot, and winters mild but wet. Mardin and its environs are covered in steppe vegetation. The mountains are largely bare, with clumps of oak trees in the upper regions. The valleys are lined with poplar, almond, ‘butun’ (a turpentine tree), walnut and sumac trees planted by the locals.

The Mardin Plain

The old city of Mardin looks down over a wide, lowland plain that stretches south as far as the eye can see. This, the endless Mardin Plain, extends over the horizon and into Syria. Other lowlands in the province include the Nasabûn, Çizre, Kızıltepe and Silopi plains. A passage known as the Mardin Eşiği (Threshold) runs from east to west across the center of the province and serves as a corridor connecting the Diyarbakir Basin to Mesopotamia. Mount Mazı stands to the northwest of the city. Other important mountains in the region include the Alem, Dibek, Gümüşsuyu, Pirinç, Ziyaret and Karınca mountains.

Rivers and Streams

The most important river in the province is the Tigris, which forms the border between the provinces of Mardin and Batman. Other rivers and streams in the province include the Savur, Çağçağ, Bağlar, Habur, Zenî, Hınıs and Zekan. A dam has been built over the Bağlar to provide water for agricultural irrigation.
Mardin is an important center of Syriac Christianity, one of the most ancient Christian denominations in the world. Indeed, its foundations date back to the earliest days of Christendom, when it was the leading Eastern Christian church. Some believe that the term Syriac is derived from Suros, brother to Kilikos, a sometime ruler of the region. Today, the Syriac Christian churches in Mardin continue to conduct their worship in Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ.

The Local Economy

The people of Mardin largely earn their living from agriculture and breeding livestock. Transporting goods is also an important source of income. In addition to the swiftly developing tourism sector, agriculture and the manufacture of construction materials are other important sources of income in and around Mardin.

Social Fabric

The different civilizations that have passed through Mardin over the millennia have all left their stamp on the city, endowing it with a rich and cosmopolitan culture. Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic are widely spoken in the region, and there are small communities of Modern Syriac (Turoyo) and Armenian speakers. A wide range of religions are also practiced in the region, including Christianity (in the Armenian and Syriac communities), Judaism, Yazidism and Islam.

Houses and Streets

The houses of Mardin are carefully arranged in tiers on the mountain slope so that the roof of each house serves as the courtyard of the one above. Mardin houses feature intricately carved decorative stonework. The city streets are connected via a network of passages known as ‘abbara’ that sometimes pass directly under the houses. The abbara provide shelter from the hot sun in the summer and from the cold and the rain in the winter.

ID CARD

Provincial Population: 705,098 according to the 2000 census
City Center Population: 65,072
Altitude: 1083 meters above sea level
Area: 8806 square kilometers
Districts and Villages: 9 districts, 567 villages
Neighboring Provinces:
Şanlıurfa to the west; Diyarbakır and Batman to the north; Siirt to the northeast; Şırnak to the east; Syria to the south
Mardin Houses

Due to its geography, Mardin has grown in an east-west direction, and the northern stretches of the city are between 50 and 150 meters higher than those to the south. The houses are stacked like steps on a staircase, never blocking each other’s view. Mardin houses are typically two or three and sometimes even four stories high, and fill the hillside in a seamless wall of stone. Traditionally, Mardin houses face south across the Mardin Plain. As a result, the eastern, western and northern facades are usually plain and unadorned. Although the houses do not have designated summer and winter areas, the southern ‘manzara’ (view) rooms and living areas are more commonly used in the summer, while the protected areas at the rear of the house are used in the winter. In addition, platform beds known as ‘taht’ are set up on the terraces in the summer, and removed in the winter.

Levels and stories

In Mardin, houses are built on sloping plots, with the top floor to the north and the ground floor to the south. Entrances are located on the lowest level, which also feature a courtyard. The number of stories between the top and ground floor depends entirely on the gradient of the slope. Every story of the house has direct access to the street.

Mezzanine floors

In addition to the normal levels, Mardin houses occasionally feature mezzanine floors that served as pantries or larders.

Iwans and revaks

Iwans are vaulted halls or spaces with three walls that stay breezy and cool during the hot summers. The houses of wealthy families feature high-arched iwans, burbling fountains and ornamental pools that keep the air circulating, thereby keeping the houses cool even in the hottest months. Revaks are a kind of arched portico frequently found in Mardin houses.

Niches

Niches are a common feature of Mardin houses, and serve a variety of functions.
Stone

Traditional Mardin houses are constructed primarily from stone, which is worked in four different ways. The highly ornamented facades of the houses are predominantly made from yellow limestone.

Terrace (havş)

The 'havş' serves as courtyard for the upper levels of the house. Winter provisions are prepared on the terrace and top roof (istoh). In the summer months, the people of Mardin often sleep outdoors on these terraces.

Interiors

Mardin houses feature anterooms known as 'sekialtı' where the family and guests remove their shoes before entering the actual sitting rooms. The sitting rooms or 'sekiliştü' are a set a step above the anterooms and have windows looking out over the view or the terrace. Both the 'sekialtı' and 'sekiliştü' have vaulted roofs.

Courtyard

Almost every house features a ground floor courtyard that varies in size depending on the size of the plot.

Abbara

Only donkeys and mules can navigate the old city's narrow, steep streets, although porters are also used to transport goods. Lined with rows of houses, the labyrinthine streets of Mardin are connected to each other via covered passageways known as 'abbara'. The term is derived from the Arabic word for a closed or gloomy space. The abbara wind between and sometimes even under Mardin's houses, and are a special feature of Mardin architecture.
Walking through an aghara
Stonework

The art of stonework in Mardin dates back to Artukid times. The finest form of local stonework is known as Midyat work.

Uses

Doorframes, window frames, columns, arches, eaves and moldings in Mardin are decorated with highly ornate stonework. Popular stonework designs include geometric patterns and plant motifs including tulips, bunches of grapes and carnations.

Limestone

Limestone quarries around Mardin, Kızıltepe, Omerli and Midyat produce blocks of stone that are cut into various sizes and prepared to be worked. Porous, off-white limestone is used for rough stonework including gravestones and balustrades. Softer, bright white limestone is used for finer stonework. This high quality limestone is only exposed to direct sunlight after it has been carved and completed.
Mardin houses and stonework

The main construction material in traditional Mardin houses is stone, which is used in four different ways. The first kind of stonework is ashlar stone masonry. The outer walls overlooking the courtyard and terraces as well as the interior walls up to the level of the vaulted roofs are built of ashlar masonry. The second technique used in Mardin houses is rough stonework, which can be seen in the ground level courtyard walls and the sides of the houses that face away from the Mardin Plain. Rubble is also used to build lesser walls, vaulted roofs and domes. Finally, the fourth stonework technique used in Mardin is decorative carved yellow limestone. Both the interiors and exteriors of Mardin houses are decorated with intricate carvings and filigree work. The heavily adorned external structural elements, windows, doorframes and niches are all made from carved yellow limestone.

Firdevs Köskü
Beside the Governor’s Mansion, south of the Meydanbaşi-Nusaybin road
The only remaining part of what was once an Artukid palace. A lost inscription stated that it was built by the Artukid leader al-Malik al-Salih Shams ad-din Mahmud. This beautiful ashlar structure is surrounded by a garden, and features west-facing vaulted iwans, two-story spaces, and a terrace on the top floor. The largest iwan has a ‘selsebil’ fountain with a large ornamental pool in front of it.

Hacı Kermo Residence
Central Mardin

According to an inscription, the first floor of the house dates back at least 200 years. A third story was added in 1897 to accommodate the growing family. Three different types of stone were used in the structure, and the floors of the courtyard and rooms are decorated with colorful geometric patterns. The rooms are accessed by an iwan at the entrance. The niches and spaces between the windows are filled by cupboards with stone frames featuring a variety of carved motifs.

Hacı Kermo Residence
Savurkapı
The house consists of a ground floor thought to date from the mid-17th century, plus two upper levels, and features a ‘selsebil’, service areas, sitting rooms, terraces and guestrooms. There are also a number of mezzanines. The windows and doors on the ground and first floor feature simple ornamentation, while the arches of the iwans and revaks on the top two floors are beautifully decorated with a variety of motifs.

Old Tax Office
Central Mardin

Originally constructed as a cavalry barracks under Sultan Abdülhamit II, the building was later used as recruiting office and tax office. There are currently plans to restore the structure and convert it into a museum and art gallery.

PTT Building
Opposite Şehidiye Mosque
Built in 1890, this was once the residence of the Armenian Karsaslar family. The house is notable for its rich and elaborate stonework, and currently functions as a post office.
The Mardin Plain with Syria on the horizon
A detail of the Gabriel Monastery.
Much of our knowledge about prehistoric Mardin has been gleaned from the tumuli at Girnavaz and Girharrin: objects dating back some 6000 years have been uncovered at the Girnavaz Tumulus, while pieces of 5000-year-old Bronze Age pottery have been unearthed at Girharrin. The first rulers of Mardin were the Subarians, followed by the Hurrians in 3000 BC. The region was later ruled for many years by the Akkadian-Sumerian state.

In 2230, Mardin became part of the Elam state, and was subsequently ruled by the Babylonians, Hittites, Assyrians, Urartu, Meds, Persians, Seleucids, Romans, Ummayads, Abbasids, Hamdanids, Marwanids and Seljuks. After being fought over by a number of Seljuk commanders, the area was conquered by the Artukid leader Najm ad-din Ilghazi in 1106. The city became the Artukid capital and prospered under Artukid rule. Many of Mardin’s structures date from this time. Later, the area changed hands between the Mongols, Karakoyunlu and Akkoyunlu Turkish tribal clans. In 1508, Mardin and its environs were briefly ruled by the Safavids before the Ottomans annexed the region in 1517. Under the Ottomans, Mardin was under the jurisdiction of the province of Diyarbakır. With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Mardin was declared a border province.
A Brief Tour of the Mardin Museum

The Mardin Museum collection includes works dating back to the 4th millennium BC. Below are some of the most important works dating from Assyrian to Ottoman times.

The Assyrian Period

From the 8th-century BC, Mardin and its environs were ruled by the Assyrians, whose empire was centered in Northern Mesopotamia. Remains from this period have been found at the Girnavaz Tumulus.

- A Neo-Assyrian vessel dating from the 7th century BC. The base of the vessel is shaped like a female figure wearing a long skirt and holding her breasts in her hands. The upper section of the vessel is placed on top of her headdress.

The Hellenistic Period

Mardin and the surrounding area came under Hellenic rule in the second half of the 3rd century BC during Alexander the Great’s eastern expeditions. The Hellenistic Period lasted until the middle of the 1st century BC. The Seleucid Kingdom, which held Syria-Mesopotamia and the southern region of Anatolia, was the last Hellenistic kingdom to rule the area. The Seleucids frequently fought against the Romans during this period. Few Hellenistic remains survive in Mardin.

- A coin stamped with the head of Alexander the Great.
- The back of the coin features a seated figure of Athena holding Nike and leaning on her shield with her left hand.

The Roman Period

The Romans began their conquest of Anatolia in 133 BC, annexing the Eastern Mediterranean lands under Hellenic rule. The Euphrates served as the eastern border of the Roman Empire. The Romans and Sassanids continually fought over the region of Mardin in the 5th and 6th centuries. The Rahabdum-Hafemtay and Savur defensive fortresses were built during this period.

- A Late Assyrian bill of sale for a garden in the city of Nabula (Nusaybin) dating from the 7th century BC.
- A Roman statue of Pan playing the flute.
The Byzantine Period

Following the division of the Roman Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire continued to hold sway over the region for a time. The Dermetinan Fortress, Deyr-ul Umur (Mor Gabriel) Monastery and city of Dara date from this period.

A Byzantine coin stamped with the image of the emperor.  

The Byzantine emperor and his wife are depicted on the back of the coin.

The Seljuk Period

After the Marwanids, the region of Mardin was ruled by the Seljuks. The Mardin Museum displays tablets, cylindrical and stamp seals, cult vessels, figurines, jewelry, ceramic objects as well as gold, silver and copper coins and oil lamps from this period.

A rare, unglazed Seljuk vessel dating from the 13th century.

The Ottoman Period

Mardin and its environs were annexed by Sultan Selim I during his eastern campaign, and the area became an important center of trade. The Mardin Museum collection includes bows, arrows, flintlock guns, rifles, swords and yataghans, porcelain, Kütahya porcelain, Turkish calligraphy and objects from dervish lodges from the Ottoman period.

Mardin Museum

1. Cadde, Cumhuriyet Alani

The Mardin Museum opened in 1946 at the Zinciriye Madrasa but relocated to its current, larger premises in 1995. The new museum opened to visitors in 2000. The museum is housed in a building constructed in 1895 by Patriarch Ignatios Behnam Banni that belongs to the Syriac Catholic Foundation. The three-story museum displays works dating from prehistoric times through to the Ottoman period, providing an insight into the many civilizations that passed through Mardin. The museum also has a room dedicated to ethnographic works.
Artukid Mardin

The Artukid Dynasty was founded by the sons of Artuk Bey, a Seljuk Emir. The dynasty had three branches in Hısn-ı Keyfa, Mardin and Harput. The Mardin branch, also known as the Ilghazi, was founded in 1108 by Ilghazi, who waged many successful battles against the Crusaders. As the power of the Mardin Artukids began to wane, they became vassals of the Ayyubids, Anatolian Seljuks and Ilhanı Turks, and were attacked by the Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu and Tamerlane. The longest lasting of the branches of the Artukid dynasty, the Artukid’s reign over Mardin came to an end with the Karakoyunlu conquest of the city in 1408. Mardin and its environs boast many architectural works dating from this period. Artukid architecture represents the adaptation of earlier Turkish techniques and styles to the Anatolian culture and climate.

Grand (Ulu) Mosque

Among the markets to the south of the main street in Ulu Cami

Mardin’s Grand Mosque has an unusual plan and beautiful ornamentation. Three naves run parallel to the mihrab wall, two of which are cut off by a dome in front of the mihrab. The mosque predates the Grand Mosque in Kızıltepe, which is considered the finest example of this architectural style. The mosque is a typical 12th-century Artukid structure. The minaret was built in 1176 under the Artukid leader Qutb ad-din Ilghazi. Records indicate that there were originally two minarets, one of which has collapsed. The mosque saw extensive damage in the 19th century. Later restorations altered the original appearance of the structure. Nevertheless, a number of characteristic features of Islamic architecture were first seen in this mosque, including the ribbed dome above the mihrab.
Zinciriye (Sultan Isa) Madrasa

The madrasa is also known as the Sultan Isa madrasa after its patron, the Artukid leader Najm ad-din Isa. When Tamerlane conquered the city, Sultan Isa was briefly imprisoned in the madrasa that he himself had built.

Al-Jazari

Born in Cizre in 1153, Al-Jazari spent the second half of the 12th century and the first half of the 13th century in Diyarbakir serving the Artukid rulers as the chief engineer at the Artukid Palace. Al-Jazari is known as the first mechanical engineer in history to have built automatic machines, and his works are the cornerstone of current mechanical engineering and cybernetics. The vast majority of the mechanisms he designed and built were powered by pressure from water and other sources. Al-Jazari died in 1233, and is buried in the courtyard of the Mosque of the Prophet Noah in Cizre.

The madrasa is also known as the Sultan Isa madrasa after its patron, the Artukid leader Najm ad-din Isa. When Tamerlane conquered the city, Sultan Isa was briefly imprisoned in the madrasa that he himself had built.
Christianity in the Region

Christianity spread to Anatolia in the first century AD. The first to adopt Christianity were the Syriac Christians, who helped spread the new religion throughout Southeastern Anatolia. Antakya, Malatya, Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Urfa and Mardin were important centers of Christianity. Jesus’ disciples helped to disseminate Christianity throughout the lands of Anatolia. In the 4th century, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. As an important border city of the Roman and later the Byzantine Empire, Mardin became a significant center of Christianity, a status it maintained under Ottoman rule following the Islamic and Turkish incursions.

Deyr-ül Zafaran Monastery

The village of Eski Kale, 5 km east of Mardin

One of the most important centers of Syriac Christianity, the monastery is also one of the best-known historical structures in Upper Mesopotamia. For 640 years until 1932, the monastery served as the official seat of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate. Originally a sun worshippers’ sanctuary in the 4th century BC, the site was later used by the Romans as a fortress. When the Romans left the region, Saint Shleymun (Solomon) brought the remains of a number of saints here and converted it into a monastery. The monastery was also known as the Monastery of the Twelve Thousand Saints after the number of saints purported to be interred here. Throughout its long history, the monastery has been an important center of religious education for the Syriac Orthodox Church, as well as the residence of the metropolitan bishop of Mardin. The monastery boasts many structures dating from a variety of architectural periods.

Syriac Christianity

The Syriac community traces its roots back to ancient Mesopotamia, and is first referred to in Hittite tablets. Several Christian sects in and around Urfa came to Antakya in the first century AD. The Syriac liturgical language and modern Syriac are versions of Aramaic, the language spoken during the time of Jesus Christ. The Syriac church has experienced many schisms, and the seat of its patriarchate has moved on many occasions. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Mardin served as the seat of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch. In 1959, it moved to Damascus. There are some 20 million Syriac Christians in the world today belonging to many denominations, including Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Maronite, Malankara, Syro-Malankara, Nestorian, Chaldean and Protestant.
Pagan Sanctuary

The temple is located in the eastern corner of the Mor Hananyo Church. A 25-meter-square, barrel-vaulted entrance leads to a 51.5-meter-square room with a stunning ceiling. The flat stone slabs are arranged in an interlocking geometric pattern and are completely self-supporting, without the use of mortar, sand or lime to hold them together.

Saints’ burial ground

This domed building is located to the southeast of the church of Mor Hananyo (Domed Church), and is thought to date from the 5th century. The exterior was restored in 1884 by Patriarch Ignatius Peter IV. In addition to the remains of a number of saints, several patriarchs and metropolitan bishops are also buried here. The ornamentation includes a vase and bunches of grapes. The semi-circular niches in the western wall of the building are embellished with images of seashells. A cross surrounded by dolphins stands on the lintel of the main door. Legend has it that the building was once used in a medical or pharmaceutical capacity.

Church of Mor Hananyo

The church was built between 493 and 518 under the Byzantine emperor Anastasius. Its architects were the Syriac brothers Theodosius and Theodorus. The interior walls of the church are decorated with frescoes depicting stories from the Bible. The only surviving fresco is of Mor Hananyo, who was responsible for the complete renovation of the monastery in 793. Syriac inscriptions on the columns state that the apse was built by the metropolitan bishop of Mardin, Mor Hananyo. The altar was built in 1942 from yellow stone and ashlar by Syriac stonemasons from Mardin and Midyat.

Church of the Mother of God

The monastery’s earliest church is in the northeast of the main courtyard. Part of the 153-square-meter church was restored under Patriarch Ignatius George II (1686-1708). Byzantine mosaics can be seen in the brick apse, which is also in the Byzantine style. The church has three handmade wooden doors dating from 1699.
**SIGHTSEEING IN MARDIN**

**Mosques (Camii)**
1. Bab'es-Sur / Bab'üs-Sor (Melik Mahmut) Mosque
2. Latifiye (Abdüllatif) Mosque
3. Reyhaniye Mosque
4. Sheikh Çabuk Mosque
5. Hamidiye (Sheikh Zebuni) Mosque
6. Zeynel Abidin Mosque
7. Kızıltepe Grand (Ulu or Dunaysr) Mosque

**Mausoleums (Türbe) and Dervish Lodges (Zaviye)**
8. Hamza-i Kebir Dervish Lodge
9. Cihangir Bey Dervish Lodge
10. The Mausoleum of Sultan Seyhmu

**Madrasas**
11. Sitti Radviyye (Hatuniye) Madrasa
12. Şehidiye Madrasa and Mosque
13. Kasımiye (Sultan Kasım) Madrasa

**Churches (Kilise) and Monasteries**
14. Meryemana Church and Patriarchate
15. Mor Behnam Kirkılar (Kırk Şehit) Church
16. Mor Behirmiz Church
17. Surp Kevork (Kızıl) Church
18. Church of the Mother of God (Hah-Anıtlı)
19. Mor Yakup Monastery

**Fortresses (Kale)**
20. Mardin Citadel
21. Kız (Kal’a’t-ul Mara) Fortress
22. Rabbat Fortress
23. Merdis-Marin Fortress
24. Rahabdiyum-Hafemtay Fortress
25. Aynavur Fortress
26. Dermetinan Fortress

**Bazaars (Çarşı)**
27. Kayseriye (Bedesten) Bazaar
28. Revaklı (Tellallar) Bazaar

**Archeological Sites**
29. Girnavaz Tumulus
30. The Ruins and Fortress at Dara

**Midyat**
31. Deyr-ul Umur (Mor Gabriel) Monastery
32. Izozol Church
33. Mor Stefanos Church
34. Haytam (Turabdin-Dimitriyus) Fortress

**Savur**
35. Savur Fortress
36. Hacı Abdullah Bey Konağı
Bab’es-Sur / Bab’üs-Sor (Melik Mahmut) Mosque

The mosque is located on a small square on the road leading from the Mardin Citadel to the Savur Gate. According to an inscription, it was built in the third quarter of the 14th century. The main portal features ornate stonework and overlooks the square. The main space of the mosque has a central dome and is flanked by two barrel-vaulted sections. A square mausoleum belonging to Melik Mahmut stands in the courtyard; however, the tomb is said to be empty, serving purely symbolic purposes.

Latifiye (Abdüllatif) Mosque

According to the inscriptions on the main portal, the mosque was built in the Artukid period in 1371 by Abdüllatif. The large mosque has a courtyard and one of the best-preserved ornamented portals in Mardin. The minaret was destroyed during the raid of Hulagu Khan or Tamerlane and replaced with the current structure in 1845 by the Governor of Mosul, Gürçü Mehmet Pasha.

Reyhaniye Mosque

Hasan Ammer

The 15th-century mosque was heavily restored in the 18th and 19th centuries. The two-story structure is one of the largest mosques in Mardin, consisting of a square central space, a summer mihrab, an iwan with a ‘selsebil’ fountain, an additional room, a minaret, a cross-vaulted entrance and five shops below.

Sheikh Çabuk Mosque

Çabuk

The exact date of construction is not known, but legend has it that it was converted from a church known as Mor Yusuf in 1170. However, research suggests that the structure was built in the 14th century. The mausoleum of Sheikh Çabuk is located next to the mosque.

Hamidiye (Sheikh Zebuni) Mosque

On the road to Savurkapı

Thought to date no earlier than the 15th century, the mosque contains sections that could function as a dervish lodge. An inscription states that it was restored in 1882-3 by Sheikh Hamit Efendi.

Zeynel Abidin Mosque

Yıldırım, Nusaybin

Although the precise date of construction is not known, the most important mosque in Nusaybin is thought to date from the Artukid Period. The square, one-story, flat-roofed mosque is built from rough stone. The mausoleums of two of Muhammad’s grandchildren, Zeynel Abidin and his sister Zeynep, are located in the mosque.

Kızıltepe Grand (Ulu or Dunaysıır) Mosque

Construction of the mosque
began during the reign of the Artukid leader Yavuz Aslan (1184-1200) and was completed during that of his brother, Artuk Aslan (1200-1239). The mosque is the foremost example of early 13th-century Artukid grand mosque architecture and is renowned for its sturdiness. Unlike the majority of Mardin’s buildings, the mosque’s vaults are built of brick rather than stone. The mosque’s interior, mihrab and walls are adorned with elegant carved inscriptions.

3 Hamza-i Kebir Dervish Lodge
To the right of the road, near Meydanbaşı

An inscription on the mosque states that it was built in 1438 and is dedicated to Hamza Bey, son of the Akkoyunlu Kara Yünlük Osman. Today, only the cross-shaped, stone mausoleum remains standing, and is now used as a masjid. The structure was restored by the Governorship of Mardin and is open to the public.

5 Cihangir Bey Dervish Lodge
Saraçoğlu

Built by the Akkoyunlu Cihangir Bey (1444-1469), the dervish lodge is located to the southwest of the Kasımiye Madrasa. The dervish lodge is divided into two sections.

15 The Mausoleum of Sultan Şeyhmuş
The village of Yüceköy, Mazıdağ

This mosque complex consists of the mausoleum of a religious leader named Sultan Şeyhmuş plus a variety of service buildings, and is a popular site of pilgrimage for visitors from Mardin and the surrounding region.

1 Sitti Radviyye (Hatuniye) Madrasa
Gül

The madrasa was founded by Sitti Radviyye, wife of Najm ad-din Alpi and mother to Qutb ad-din Ilghazi. The typical two-story 12th-century structure was built at the same time as the Sitraziye Mosque, and has two iwans and a courtyard surrounded porticos. The mosque also boasts what is reputed to be an actual footprint of Muhammed, while its sarcophagi are among the most important Artukid works in the region.

12 Şehidiye Madrasa and Mosque
Şehidiye

The madrasa and mosque

13 Kasımiye (Sultan Kasım) Madrasa
Saraçoğlu

The madrasa is thought to date from the late Artukid Period, and was built immediately after the Zinciriye Madrasa – probably by the same architect. When only half complete, construction of the madrasa was halted due to the political instability caused by the incursions led by Tamerlane and the Akkoyunlu. It was later completed by the Akkoyunlu, and is therefore also known as the Sultan Kasım Padişah (1457-1502) madrasa. One of the largest structures in Mardin, the two-story madrasa has a central courtyard and a masjid. Together with the dervish lodge-mausoleum next door, the buildings form a sort of mosque complex.
were built in 1214 by Sultan Melik Nasruddin Artuk Aslan, who is also buried here. The mosque and madrasa are thought to have been built concurrently. The madrasa has a number of iwans, a courtyard surrounded by porticos, and a two-nave masjid to the south. The ornate minaret was built in 1916/1917 and differs in style to the rest of the structure with its ribbings, twisting pilasters and two balconies.

15 Meryemana Church and Patriarchate
Cumhuriyet Meydani
The beautifully ornamented church was constructed by Patriarch Antuan Semheri in 1860 and is supported by 21 columns. The choir gallery boasts excellent acoustics. The patriarchate was built in 1895 by the Patriarch of Antioch Ignatios Behnam Banni. Today, the building serves as the premises of the Mardin Museum.

16 Mor Behnam Kırklar (Kirk Şehit) Church
Şar
Part of the church once served as a sun worshippers’ temple, which indicates that the oldest sections of the structure predate the 6th century. One of the seven churches built during the renovation of the Mardin Citadel in 569, the church is dedicated to the Syriac saint Mor Behnam and his sister Saro. Arches and twelve huge columns support the east-west aligned ashlar ceiling. The church is still used by the Syriac Orthodox community, and is the seat of the metropolitan bishop of Mardin.

17 Surp Kevork (Kızıl) Church
Yenikapı
The church of the Armenian Orthodox community, Surp Kevork is known locally as the ‘Hamra’ church. When the building was being restored in 1780, a stone marked with the date 429 was uncovered.

18 The Church of the Mother of God (Hah-Amtlı)
The village of Hah (Amtlı), Dargeçit
According to the local Syriac community, the 6th-century church was originally established by the three Kings of the Orient. The Syriac name of the church is Yoldath (Aloho). The exterior of the dome and bell tower are 20th-century additions. The church bears a striking similarity to the large church at the Deyr-ül Zafaran Monastery, and is considered the most beautiful example of church architecture in Tur Abdin.

19 Mor Yakup Church
Çelikyurt, Nusaybin
One of the oldest monasteries in Upper Mesopotamia originally served as a fire worshippers’ temple at the time of the martyrdom of Mor Şabo and his 11 disciples. The monastery was built on the ruins of the temple in 328 following the death of Mor Yakup, and includes a mausoleum. Monastic life continued at the monastery until the 19th century. The monastery stands 500 meters above the plain on the slopes of Tur Abdin, and consists of both caves and buildings.

20 Mor Evgin (Augen) Monastery
7 km north of the small settlement of Girmelli, Nusaybin
While the precise history of the monastery is not known, legend has it that it was founded in 340 by Saint Eugenius or Eugene (Augen), an Egyptian pearl diver from the Red Sea. One of the oldest monasteries in the region, Mor Augen is known locally as ‘Deyr-Marog’. Originally a Nestorian monastery, ownership was later transferred to the Chaldean community. The monastery has a basilica plan and boasts stunning examples of decorative stonework.
Mor Mihael Church
Outside the city walls, south of Emineddin, Central Mardin
Syriac records indicate that this Syriac Orthodox church dates no earlier than the late 5th century. The bell tower stands on a 10th-century bastion, while the tombs in the vaulted crypt date from the 2nd century. While the underground chamber is pre-Christian, the church itself is thought to have been built in 495.

Mardin Citadel
There are a number theories concerning when the citadel was built. Certain historians believe that it was constructed in 975-976 by the Hamdanid leader Hamdan Bin Al-Hasan Nasr Al-Debla Bin Abdullah bin Hamdan. Others believe that it must be an older structure, as it was restored by the Byzantines. Finally, some say that it cannot predate the Islamic era. The citadel is located on a rocky outcrop above the city. Much of the walls and towers have been carved directly out of the natural rock, giving it an organic appearance. The citadel was renowned throughout history for being invincible. Today, small sections of the original foundations can still be seen. A well-preserved tower stands in the southern section of the citadel. Inside, there are a number of deserted former houses, a mosque, mausoleum, mansions and cisterns. As the citadel is located in a military zone, it is not open to the public.

Kız (Kal’at ül Mara) Fortress
5 km east of Mardin
This bow-shaped fortress played an important role in protecting the city. Inside is a stone throne thought to have belonged to a princess as well as a number of cisterns, wells, caves and architectural ruins.

Rabbat Fortress
The village of Hisaralto, 15 km of Derik
This ancient fortress was restored by the Artukids, who also made a number of additions to the structure. The fortress has 15 towers and 4 watchtowers. The towers are 15 meters tall. There are gates in the east and west. The remains of a palace are thought to lie under the fortress.

Merdis-Marin Fortress
15 km northeast of Nusaybin
Although the precise date of construction is not known, stylistically, the fortress appears to be Byzantine, and has been restored on many occasions. Perched on a high peak, the fortress measures 1500 meters around and has 12 towers and a watchtower. The south gate was secured by a second iron door. The castle of the Merdis King is located to the east. A cellar is carved into the rock foundation of the castle, with a cistern beside it.

Rhabdium-Hafemtay Fortress
20 km northeast of Nusaybin
This Roman fortress is set on a peak near the Syrian border. The Nusaybin-Midyat caravanserai route passed through the valley to the east. The Hafemtay Fortress served as a Roman outpost against Syrian incursions, and was long fought over by the Arabs and Romans. The fortress stretches from south to north and has 14 towers and two watchtowers. The fortifying walls measure 1500 meters long and 10 meters high, while the towers and watchtowers are 20 meters high. The fortress has a single gate to the south. Inside, there are cisterns, storerooms for provisions, architectural ruins and underground cellars.

Aznavur Fortress
14 km northeast of Nusaybin
The fortress stands on two hilltops above a wide valley, and was built in 970 by Hamdan Bin Al-Hasan Nasr Al-Debla Bin Abdullah bin Hamdan. The structure measures 400 meters across the north-south axis and 300 meters across the east-west axis.
Midyat
Located to the east of Mardin, the city of Midyat stands at the center of the Mardin Eşiği region, also known as Tur Abdin. Midyat flourished during the Artukid expansion in the 11th century when it stood at the junction of Mardin, Hasankeyf and Mosul. Midyat and its environs are dotted with structures and settlements dating from every period of human history. These include the Midyat Guesthouse, Deyr-ul Umur (Mor Gabriel) Monastery, Estel Community Center Inn, Grand (Ulu or Cevat Pasha) Mosque, Mor Şmuni Church, Mor Barsovmo Church, Beyaz Su, Mor Aksnoya Church, Mor Şarbel Church, Church of the Mother of God, Protestant Church, Mor Abraham Monastery and Hah Cathedral.

Deyr-ul Umur (Mor Gabriel) Monastery
18 km east of Midyat
This Syriac Orthodox monastery is one of the oldest functioning monasteries in the world.

Perched on a hilltop, the monastery was built in 397 with a financial benefaction from the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius. Various additions have been made over the years. The mosaics on the floor and ceiling of the apse of the main church are the finest surviving examples of eastern Byzantine mosaics. The octagonal Dome...
of Theodora was built with a benefaction from the wife of Justinian, who visited the monastery. Built in the first half of the 5th century, the domed structure is thought to have originally served as a baptistery. In addition to the main church, the monastery has three other churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the Kirk Şehitler (Forty Martyrs) and Mor Simeon, one of the founders of the monastery. The Mor Simeon Church houses an octagonal mausoleum known as the Tomb of the Egyptian Monks as well as three burial chambers. The monastery was restored to its original condition in 1997.

2 Izzoel Church
On a hilltop north of the village of Altıntaş
The beautiful stonework on the bell tower of the church of Mor Izzoel is some of the finest in Midyat. According to tradition, the church was built near the beginning of the 6th century by architects Theodosius and Theodorus, the sons of the architect of Mor Gabriel. However, another story has it that it was built in the 8th century during the region’s heyday.

3 Mor Stefanos Church
The village of Güngören
Closed off to the east by the altar, the inner courtyard to the south of the main church serves as a summer worship area. The baptistery of Mor Yuhanon the Baptist lies north of the church, to which it is connected by high vaults. The interior of the church is very elegant with a long, central nave aligned on an east-west axis. This is considered one of the most beautiful village churches in the region.

4 Haytam (Turabdin-Dimitriyus) Fortress
East of Mount Bagok (İzlo), between the villages of Gümüşrudu and Dibek
Built in 351 by Constantius II, the son of the Roman Emperor Constantine I, the fortress changed hands many times as a result of the political upheavals in the region. The fortress is located very near to the Deyr-ul Umur Monastery.
East of the Çağçağ Stream, 4 km north of Nusaybin
The tumulus measures 24 meters high and around 300 meters across. Excavations have revealed that the site was continuously settled from 4000 BC to the 7th century BC. There are traces of Uruk, Hurri-Mitanni and Assyrian cultures. A large Islamic cemetery is located on top of the tumulus.

Savur
A district of the province of Mardin, Savur is one of the most important cities in the region, boasting traditional houses and beautiful architecture. Like Mardin, Savur is built on a mountain slope, and features stunning stonework.

1 Savur (Sauras) Fortress

Savur
The fortress stands on the flat top of the peak on which the city is built. Built by the Romans, the fortress changed hands many times between the Romans and the Arabs, and was of great strategic importance for an extensive period of time.

2 Hacı Abdullah Bey Konaği
When the nomadic clans of the region gave up their itinerant lifestyle, they began to build mansions immediately below Savur Fortress. Built in line with the families’ means and needs, the number of houses and mansions quickly grew. One such mansion, the Hacı Abdullah Bey Konaği, has been converted into a hotel whose interior is decorated in accordance with local customs and style.
A panoramic view of Savur (top). Inside the Hacı Abdullah Bey Konaği.
Mardin Culture

Over thousands of years, countless civilizations have passed through Mardin, endowing it with a rich and unique cultural heritage. As a result, the region produces many ancient traditional handcrafts, including pottery, ironwork, copper work, silverwork (telkari), lace embroidery, leather, kilims, carpets, saddles and stonework.

Saddle making

The narrow streets of Mardin can only be navigated by donkeys and mules. As a result, saddle making has always been an important local industry. The saddles are packed with a material known locally as ‘çil’. Soft layers of felt and haircloth are then placed on top of the stuffing material so that the saddle does not hurt the animal’s back.

Telkari

Telkari is a kind of filigree work made from silver and gold wire. The art of telkari was developed and practiced by the Syriac community in and around Mardin and Midyat. Thin strands of gold and silver are woven like lace into ornate jewelry and accessories including necklaces, earrings, belt buckles, chokers and rings. The art of telkari has suffered in recent years due to the fact that many telkari craftsmen left the region in the 1980s, and the turmoil in the region. Nevertheless, the improving economy and increase in tourism has resulted in an upsurge in the market for telkari.
Folk dances

Mardin folk dances bear the influence of the many cultures and civilizations that have passed through the city. Most are accompanied by Turkish folk songs known as ‘türkü’, and instruments including ‘davul’ (drums), ‘zurna’ (a shrill pipe), clarinet, ‘tulum’ (bagpipes), tambourine, ‘tepsi’, ‘kaval’, ‘dilsiz kaval’, ‘erbana’ and ‘bağlama’.

- Berivan The story of a milkmaid.
- Cirane The story of two neighbors in love.
- Keçikani Performed by young girls, it symbolizes love, friendship and unity.
- Mamır A lover’s lament.
- Bişaro A dance about the grape harvest, performed by men and women either together or separately.
- Cenbil Ağa An expression of sadness and lament.
- Bablekan Portrays drawing water from a well.

Music

Mardin music is very similar to that of its neighbors, Şanluaf, Kirkuk, Elazığ and Diyarbakır. The tradition of musical gatherings remains popular throughout the region, including Mardin. These gatherings are often segregated, with events attended only by women known as ‘Sabahiye’, and as ‘Sera Gezmesi’ when attended by men. Local instruments such as ‘bağlama’ (a plucked instrument with three double strings and a long neck), ‘rebap’ (lyre), ‘kemanca’ and ‘kaval’ (reed pipe) are played in addition to traditional instruments such as violins, ‘kanun’ (zither-like plucked instrument), ‘çimbaş’ (a mandolin with a metal body), lutes, tambourines and ‘darbuka’ (a cylindrical drum beaten with the hands).

For hundreds of years, traditional handmade copper work has been sold at the special copper market in central Mardin.
Mardin Cuisine

Mardin cuisine reflects the lifestyle and climate of the region, and makes ample use of local ingredients. Like the rest of Southern and Eastern Anatolian cuisine, Mardin fare is spicy, cooked with plenty of oil, and largely meat-based. Two of the most popular dishes are ‘çiğ köfte’ (spicy raw meatballs) and rice. Cracked bulgur wheat also plays an important role in the Mardin kitchen. Mardin dishes are not only delicious but also beautifully presented. Wild greens with curative properties such as mahaleb, ‘ıkşut’, wild cucumber, arborvitae, licorice, ‘gözdaşı’, ‘ıbzor’, fenugreek, lemon balm, malva and ‘gıbzara’ grow in and around Mardin, and feature prominently in both sweet and savory dishes.

Meatballs (Köfte)

Mardin çiğ köfte, içli köfte, mercimekli köfte, cevizli içli köfte, aya köfte, güneş köfte

Kebaps

Onion kebab, potato kebab

Stuffed Dolmas

Rami dolma, eggplant dolma, pepper dolma, tripe dolma, rib dolma, zucchini dolma, stuffed malva, stuffed vine leaves, stuffed mulberry leaves, stuffed cabbage leaves

Meat Dishes

Kibbe, firkiye, güveç, havuç türülü, eksi erik yahnisı

Rice (Pilav)

Liver pilav, bulgur wheat and chick pea pilav, bulgur wheat and vermicelli pilav, lentil pilav, çoban pilav

Pomegranate salad (top) and ‘içli pilav’
Mardin CUISINE

Soup (Çorba)
Lebeniye, un çorba, lentil soup, kelle paça, chick pea soup, dövme çorba, tomato soup, kışkek, yoghurt and onion soup

Spices
Mardin cuisine uses many spices including cinnamon, coriander, mahaleb, ginger, allspice, sumac and crushed red pepper.

Desserts
Sütlaç, peynir helvası, havuç tatlısı, tarçınlı tatlı, un helvası, ceviz tatlısı, cevizli helva, mahlep kurabiyesi.

A plate of mixed dolma (top). A wild turpentine tree called ‘bıttım’ grows in Mardin and is used as rootstock for pistachio trees. ‘Bıttım’ seeds are roasted, ground and cooked like coffee (right). Mahaleb cherries have medicinal properties and can also serve as rootstock for cherry trees (far right).

Mardin Roasted Chickpeas and Candied Almonds
Mardin is famous for its roasted chickpeas (leblebi). The local variety of ‘leblebi’ is made from sweet, unsalted chickpeas that are flavored with a variety of spices and roasted five times. A variety of halva as well as cinnamon, almond, walnut and sesame candies are made in the winter. Mardin is renowned for its candied ‘leblebi’, candied almonds and aniseed candy.