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(From Nicomedia to Nicaia)

THE TOLERANCE WAY

IZMIT

Guidebook



www.viaeurasia.org

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VIA EURASIA



The Via Eurasia is a network of walking routes that stretches from Rome and Bari, going through the Balkans and Istanbul and reaching to Demre (Myra) on the Turkish Mediterranean coast. This international Network of trekking and cycling routes with a cultural theme follows the ancient road networks dating back to the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires as well as the Bithynian, Phrygian, Pisidian and Lycian periods. Therefore, the theme of the Eurasian Road is the ancient roads belonging to different eras and the tangible and intangible cultural heritage located on and near these roads.



The cultural routes that constitute the Via Eurasia is as follows:



The Lycian Way
The Saint Paul Trail
The Phrygian Way
Mysia Ways
The Evliya Çelebi Way

The Tolerance Way
The Sultans Trail
Via Egnatia
Via Francigena del Sud



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the project and its stakeholders

The Via Eurasia cultural route is one of the outputs of a series of European Union projects that are implemented under the leadership of the Culture Routes Society (KRD), a non-governmental organization responsible for the construction, maintenance and promotion of cultural routes in Turkey. This journey started with the 'Europe to Turkey on Foot' Project which was carried out from 2016 to 2017 as part of the 'Civil Society Dialogue IV' grant program. The Culture Routes Society carried out this one-year project in partnership with the European Association of Via Francigena (EAVF) based in Italy. Other participating institutions in the project were: Demre Municipality located on the Lycian Way, Eğirdir Municipality located on the St. Paul Trail, and İnegöl Municipality located on the Evliya Çelebi Way. The primary purposes and outcomes of the project included: establishing cooperation between the NGOs and municipalities in Turkey and Europe; integrating Turkey's and European Union's approaches about the branding, marketing and communication of cross-border cultural routes; supporting the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and other stakeholders in ensuring that cultural routes are understood, implemented and managed properly; taking the first step to extend the Via Francigena (a cultural route registered by the Council of Europe) to Turkey by through current cultural routes.

The 'Italy, Greece and Turkey on Foot' project, which is a follow-up of this project, was implemented during the fifth phase of the same EU grant programme, in 2019 - 2020. In addition to CRS and EAVF, the Greek organization Trace Your Eco (TYE) was added as the third partner organization. Nilüfer Municipality (Mysia Ways), Izmit Municipality (Tolerance Way) and Edirne Municipality (Tolerance Way) were also involved in the project.

pality (Sultans Trail) also participated in the project. The main objective of this project was to ensure the certification of the Via Eurasia by the Council of Europe Cultural Routes Program. A wide range of promotional activities, meetings and conferences on different topics were organized during the project. The files and plans prepared by The Via Eurasia Management Committee and the Academic Committee will be submitted to the Council of Europe in 2020 and, if the application is accepted, this international route extending from Rome to Antalya will take its place in the sustainable tourism market with the approval of the Council of Europe.

We continue working to strengthen the communication and cooperation between civil society and local administrations with rural this type of project which supports development. Therefore, we invite other municipalities, NGOs, clubs and individuals located on the Via Eurasia to join the newly established Via Eurasia Association to have a say in the management of this route...

Culture Routes Society

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preface

Turkey has been home to many civilizations for thousands of years. Starting from ancient times until today, many states have been established and the foundation of many civilizations has been laid in Anatolian lands.

History is hidden in every corner of Anatolia. Rich historical artifacts provide information to our day about the life and civilizations of the past. Although many historical artifacts and information dating to each historical era have been unearthed to date, a very important number of them are still waiting underground to be explored and found.

In that sense, Izmit has a very important place in the history of the world, as a city that was home to many civilizations from Astacus to Nikomedia, from Roman Empire to Byzantine Empire, and from Seljuks to the Ottoman Empire and the Republican era.

Izmit has been an important settlement and trade hub for centuries. Making the history of this important city known not only in Turkey but also all over the world will be a great gain not only for Izmit but also for the entire world.

Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk expresses the importance he attaches to our history with his following words: *“To own our country, we must learn the historical events that occurred in this land and know the civilizations that were born here”*. We will be always determined to pursue this goal.

The Culture Routes Society (KRD) is established upon the advice of The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which is the ministry responsible for the development, mainte-

nance, protection and promotion of the 21 culture routes in Turkey. We are delighted to take part in the “Europe to Turkey on Foot” project launched by the Culture Routes Society with the partnership of the European Association of Via Francigena Ways (EAVF) and the Greek Trace Your Eco (TYE) society as part of the Civil Society Dialogue Program financed by the European Union and The Republic of Turkey.

This new trekking route known as Via Eurasia, which extends from Bari in Italy to Demre in Antalya, will not only strengthen cooperation between the countries, but also create a new sustainable tourism product registered by the Council of Europe. We are pleased to be a part of this project.

I would like to extend my endless gratitude, love and respect on behalf of the dear residents of my city to all our friends who have contributed to the preparation of this book, which presents us the Via Eurasia road that will carry the past to this day and tomorrow, and which reveals the hidden jewels of our city in the most beautiful way.

Attorney Fatma KAPLAN HÜRRİYET

Mayor of Izmit

the tolerance way team

Deniz BADEM

Deniz Badem started his undergraduate studies at Kocaeli University, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Geophysical Engineering in 1996. After working as a manager in various companies in geophysics and construction industries, he founded his own company in 2014. Since early 2000s he has been involved in sports such as short- and long-distance trekking, free-diving, hiking and climbing. He walked about thirty-seven hiking trails in Kocaeli region and wrote several articles about these trails. He walked the Lycian Way, the Trans Mysia Road, the Carian Trail, the Phrygian Way, a section of the Evliya Çelebi Way in 2016. He is experienced in camping and long-distance hiking. He is interested in history, philosophy, archaeology and anthropology. In 2019, he started his undergraduate studies at Kocaeli University, Department of Archaeology. He is studying on the hiking trails in the Bithynia region.

Kadem DURAN

He graduated from the Electrical Engineering Department of the Istanbul State Academy of Engineering and Architecture in 1982. He worked as a technical officer in the Istanbul Regional Directorate of Anadolu Agency. He graduated from Istanbul University Business Economics Institute in 1986, Marmara University Statistics and Quantitative Research Institute in 1990, and Istanbul Technical University Institute of Science in 1998, and received a master's degree in computer science and electronics.

He climbed Mount Ağrı in Turkey, Mount Kazbek in Georgia, and Mount Elbrus in Russia, all of which has an elevation over five thousand meters. Having contributed to nearly twenty non-governmental organizations, Kadem Duran focused his studies on history, nature and development after his retirement. He continues his studies to support the national and

global recognition of the culture route between Izmit and Iznik - the Tolerance Way - and to document and record the flora of the Samanlı Mountains.

Murat SİPAHİOĞLU

He graduated from Ege University Faculty of Literature, Department of Turkish Language and Literature in 1997. The same year, he started working as a teacher of Turkish Language and Literature in Mardin Province. During his term of office in this city, he was among the founders of Yediveren Music Band and Nusaybin Educational Theatre. He performed in concerts and plays with this band and theatre company. He narrated his years in Mardin in his book “Mardin Düşleri” (Mardin Dreams), which is written in a fictional narrative and published in 2012. He worked as a language supervisor at Aydili Art Magazine published in Kocaeli. His poems and articles were also featured in this magazine. He also continues his concert and studio performances and accompanies various artists by playing ney, baglama and yaylı tambur (bowed long - neck lute).

Erdem ÇAKIR

Erdem Çakır started his undergraduate studies at Kocaeli University, School of Physical Education and Sports, Department of Recreation in 2000. During his university years, he worked as a rafting guide in various nature sports firms. At university, Erdem Çakır grew an interest in nature sports including short- and long-distance hiking and camping. He became a member of Kocaeli Higher Education Association (KYÖD) in 2006 and a member of the association’s Board of Directors in 2016. Since then, he has taken part in various social responsibility projects. He was a member of the Tolerance Way Founder Team. He continues to take part in the Via Eurasia activities

in Kocaeli region. He is one of the founding board members of the Association of Recreational Therapy and Recreational Therapy Experts (REKTUD), founded in 2019. He takes an active role in non-governmental organizations such as KYÖD and REKTUD to help the society in fields like art, sports and nature.

Furkan YAVUZ

He started his undergraduate education at Kocaeli University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Business Administration in 2013. He has been interested in sports and activities like short- and long-distance hiking, basketball, natural living and camping since 2014. He walked about 20 hiking trails in Kocaeli. He also walked the Trans Mysia road and part of the Evliya Çelebi Way and the Via Francigena. He is experienced in camping and long-distance hiking. He also practices blacksmithing and knife making as a hobby.

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The Tolerance Way project was launched with the contribution of many people. Many people have contributed and continues to contribute to the project in various ways.

First, we wish to extend our gratitude to Süleyman Bostanoğlu, who walked this way in 1992, and to Murat Tosun and Yusuf Mandıra, who were our companions on this way in 2012. Then, we want to thank Cengiz Dülge, president of BADOSK, for sharing our excitement and planning hiking activities; Erdoğan Uzun, the president of the Kervan Nature Club, and Nurten Aktaş, for supporting the Tolerance Way idea.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to Hüseyin Sarı who gave us inspiration to turn our Tolerance Way idea into a project and made the Phrygian Way real; Sedat Çakır, the coordinator of the Sultans Trail; Kate Clow, the founder of the Lycian Way; Hüseyin Eryurt, the project coordinator of the Lycian Way; Caroline Finkel, the organizer of the Evliya Çelebi Way and to all members of the Culture Routes Society. We are also thankful to Bursa Koza Mountaineering Club and Kadem Duran for starting the work and taking important steps with us.

We are deeply grateful to Kocaeli Nature Sports Club (KOD-OSK), Kocaeli Higher Education Association (KYÖD), Kocaeli Mountaineering ve Nature Sports Club, Zirve Mountaineering Kocaeli Office, İzmit Nature Sports Club, Başiskele Mountaineering ve Nature Sports Club, Kervan Nature Sports Club, Nikomedyia Trekking Group, Bahçecik Culture and Solidarity Association, KASK, KYÖD History Working Group ve Kocaeli Documentation Center, General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks, Gölcük Regional Directorate of Forestry, Kocaeli Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism and their personnel.

We would also like to thank all friends of nature who contributed to the determination of the trail and walked on it.

The Tolerance Way Team

via eurasia cultural route





introduction

The Tolerance Way IZMIT (Nicomedia) – IZNIK (Nicaea)

All journeys begin within one's self, and when the road ends, the final destination is ourselves again. We rediscover ourselves once more after long journeys. In fact, the road changes us. Each new step leads to a new friendship.

The Tolerance Way is the trail that we think extended from Izmit (Nicomedia) - the capital and the only metropolis of the period - to Iznik (Nicaea), after the proclamation of the Edict of Tolerance on April 30, 311 AD. The total length of the Tolerance Way is around 126 km (including hiking and cycling trails) and the entire route is marked using GPS coordinates.

The Tolerance Way starts in front of the archaeological site dating to the Eastern Roman Empire in Izmit city center and extends to the Hagia Sophia Church in Iznik city center. Its last 8 kilometers unites with the Evliya Çelebi Way.

The section starting in front of the remains of the Eastern Roman imperial palace in Izmit city center and stretching to the coast of Başiskele, which is thought to host the ruins of the ancient city of Astacus, forms the first section of the trail.

The second part starts from the Başiskele Coast - Bahçecik Soğuksu area, passes by Servetiye Cami and goes along Beşkayalar Natural Park, Menekşe Plateau

and Kırıntı villages.

The third section starts from the Kırıntı village and passes through the Haciosman, Kutluca, Çandarlı, Gürmüzlü, Elbeyli and Ömerli villages.

The last section merges with the Evliya Çelebi Way and then passes in front of the obelisk-like monument erected in memory of Gaius Cassius Philiscus, a Roman noble, in the 1st century AD. The trail then passes by a 1247-year-old cypress tree, monumental plane trees and an underground tomb (hypogeum). The Tolerance Way ends just in the middle of Iznik, in front of the Ayasofya Mosque (Hagia Sophia Church), which is located at a point where the roads leading to the four main gates in the ancient city meet.

The Tolerance Way is another route that will make the cultural richness of the Anatolian lands widely known, just like the Lycian Way, the Carian Trail, the Independence Trail, the Hittite Trail, or the Phrygian Way. In addition to its rich cultural and historical heritage, the trail also offers a chance to observe over two hundred endemic birds in the two bird sanctuary areas located in the first section of the trail. Furthermore, the waterfalls, slopes and the sea of beech trees in the Beşkayalar Natural Park are among the rare beauties that are worth seeing.

This trail was used by Charles de Peyssonnel, a French traveller and envoy, in 1745; and by Robert Chamber, a Canadian botanist, in 1906. In 1955, during the period of the Democratic Party government, the construction of a new highway started. That new highway was planned to pass through Bahçeçik in order to transport the fruits and vegetables grown in the Iznik region to Istanbul by

the shortest route. However it could not be finished due to the 1960 Turkish coup d'état. We thought it would be appropriate to name this nearly 1700 years old and 126 km long ancient trail stretching between Izmit (Nicomedia) and Iznik (Nicaea) as the "Tolerance Way".

The Tolerance Way hiking route is located in the region between Izmit (Nicomedia) and Iznik (Nicaea), which was ruled by the Romans in ancient times. The route was planned based on natural walking paths in the region, in a way to enable walkers see historical and natural beauties along the way. For detailed information about the route and its historical and cultural aspects, please visit www.toleranceway.com

This project has been prepared with the aim of preserving and promoting our recent historical heritage, so it does not aim to conduct a study on the Nicomedia-Nicaea connection or to map out ancient roads, which are subjects of academic research studies.

Fountains, campsites, historical and cultural places

Image: Kırıntı Village



part 1

worth seeing on the route are marked on the Tolerance Way map provided with this guidebook.

Have a nice walk!

REREADING ANCIENT HISTORY WITH THE “TOLERANCE WAY”

The Nicomedia Edict of Toleration and the Edict of Milan

The Roman Emperor Galerius proclaimed the world's first known edict of tolerance on April 30, 311. With this edict, the Roman Empire granted Christians the freedom to worship and rebuild their churches, provided that they abide by the Roman law. The Edict of Toleration also served as an inspiration for the Edict of Milan, which constituted a second edict of tolerance that was expanded to cover all religions and proclaimed in Milan in the year 313. These two edicts of toleration laid the foundations of the notion of tolerance all over the world.

In the late 3rd century AD, the Roman Empire was divided into four major regions and ruled by four emperors: Constantine, Licinius, Maximinus and Galerius. The first two ruled the east and the latter two ruled the west. The political agreement signed between Constantine and Licinius in Milan in January 313 and proclaimed by Licinius to the Eastern Roman Empire in June 313 gave everyone the freedom to worship the god they wished.

Thus, the christian population was entitled various rights including the right to establish a church. The edict also required the immediate return of any formerly Christian property confiscated by the state.

The Edict of Milan is attributed to Constantinus and is claimed to have established religious peace in the Roman Empire. However, it is a mere report of Licinius' and Constantinus' negotiations in Milan, and the rights given to the Christian population, like the complete freedom to worship and the compensation of their losses, rather than a legal document.

This edict demanded that "people do no wrong to each other and inhuman practices like persecution be abandoned". It was proclaimed as a "declaration of tolerance", emphasizing that "people have freedom of religion" and thus laying the foundation for today's concept of secularism.

The strife between Nicomedia and Nicaea continued for centuries and this strife has always been at the forefront in the growth and development of these two cities. Thanks to its connection to sea lanes, Nicomedia flourished faster.

Many commercial or military relations emerged between the two cities, and both were profoundly affected by each other.

The remains of imperial state premises unearthed in Nicomedia - the capital and metropolis of the period - indicates that many administrative bodies were concentrated in Izmit.

Apart from the Nicomedia Edict of Toleration, many

news was delivered by the messengers to Nicaea, using shortest route that goes across Samanlı Mountains. These routes, of course, have not survived until present day. Considering that even the ancient stone-paved roads used for military deployment and trade did not reach present day, it was impossible for a bypass road made up of footpaths to survive until today.

The Tolerance Way, which consists of natural bypass footpaths between Nicomedia and Nicaea, offers alternative routes.

Although the exploration and determination of ancient roads is a subject of academic research, it is disappointing to see that there are not enough resources and research on the period, and the studies, if any, pertaining to the issue are destroyed for short-term gains. One of our greatest aspirations is to see that the 2000-years-old historical heritage in the ancient cities of Nicomedia and Nicaea is unearthed and preserved.

Image: A map dating to the 4th century, showing the Roman roads in the Marmara region.



A Historical Journey from Astacus to Nicomedia

The independent city state of Astacus was established in the vicinity of Başiskele by the Megarians. Surrounded by walls, the economy of the city was dependant on agriculture and sea trade. The first Astacus coin dating back to 712 BC is still on display at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, as a sign of Astacus' independence and wealth at that time. According to a number of archaeologists, Astacus was founded in 680 BC by the people of Chalcedon (Kadıköy). *Archaeological finds like Roman column heads, water channel ruins and the ancient remains on the Seymen Coast dating to 5th century BC have been unearthed in the vicinity of Başiskele during the construction works for the Izmit - Gölcük Highway. All these discoveries reinforce the possibility that two separate cities named Olbia and Astacus had existed in that region.*

According to the article presented by Associate Professor Yüksel Güngör at the History Symposium held in Kocaeli: *"The city's history dating back to 8th century BC is also based on myths, apart from historical sources. It begins with the foundation of the city of Astacus in 712 BC by Megarans in the vicinity of Başiskele, right across Izmit. According to the first of these mythological sto-*



ries, Astacus, the son of Olbia, declared himself as “the child of Neptune” because of his seafaring skills. As the head of his colony, he founded a city named after himself and the gulf on that city’s shores is also given the same name.”

“In another mythological story, Astacus, the son of Olbia (the goddess of the city of Astacus) and Poseidon (the god of sea) is considered to be the heroic leader of the Megarians. This view is enhanced with a coin which bears the depiction of the city’s founding goddess Olbia on one side and a lobster - the symbol of the city - on the other side. Coin production also shows that it was a city-state. The word “astakos” means “lobster” in Greek, which used to be abundant in the Gulf. Scylax of Caryanda, the famous geographer of the ancient world, refers to Izmit Gulf as “the city of Olbia” in his logbook “Periplus” (“Voyage” in English) and this reveals that “Astacus” and “Olbia” are two names given to the ancient city founded around Izmit Gulf and its vicinity in different time periods.”

Nicomedes I, king of Bithynia, rebuilt the city in a more sheltered area on the opposite shore (262 BC). Although the fame of Astacus passed to Nicomedia, Astacus was also partially rebuilt on its ruins.

The ancient Kingdom of Bithynia continued to be the province of the Roman Empire first, and then the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire. During this period Nicomedia was a maritime and commercial hub. Nicomedia also served as the capital of the Great Roman Empire during the reign of Diocletian (280 - 306 AD).

Nicomedia and its environs were destroyed and rebuilt



“It appears that Astacus was also invaded in the 8th century BC, but was reinhabited by another Megarian colony, the Chalcedon (Kadıköy) people. The Lydian Kingdom was founded in 680 BC. Getting more powerful than Phrygians, the Lydian Kingdom begun to expand towards the Marmara Sea and the south of the Izmit Gulf. The Lydians advanced to the southern shores of the Marmara Sea by land and conquered the important trade city of Astacus. After gaining more strength by conquering the fertile lands in Kocaeli and Bursa regions, the Lydian State was attacked by the Persians in 546 BC and defeated. Astacus was conquered by the Persian army. In 435 BC, the people of Astakos resisted intense Persian pressure and joined the Delian League, which was established by the Athenians to prevent the Persian navy from gaining strength at sea. This was a period when Diodotus reunited the people of Bithynia.”

as a result of wars fought against the Kingdom of Pontus during the Roman period. A temple was built in the name of Emperor Augustus and the Goddess.

Emperor Trajan appointed Pliny the Younger as the governor of the region in 111 AD. During this period, Pliny rearranged the city plan. Pliny had a particularly powerful impact on the region's water network. The information we have about this period comes from the letters exchanged between Pliny and Trajan.

Emperor Hadrian got Nicomedia rebuilt after it was destroyed in an earthquake in 123. He was then hailed as "Restitutor Nicomedia" (The Renovator of Nicomedia) by the city council.

A hippodrome and a gymnasium were built in the city during the reign of Emperor Caracalla. During the reign of Gordian, year-long festivities were held for the 500th year of the city's establishment.

In 323, Emperor Constantine defeated his rival Licinius at Chrysopolis (Üsküdar) and sent him to exile in Nicomedia. After this victory, he built a palace and a basilica for his wife and daughter in Nicomedia. However, he chose Byzantium as the new capital of the Roman Empire and renamed it as Constantinople. Thus, the importance of Nicomedia started to decline.

On August 24, 358, a major earthquake occurred and it was followed by a fire which lasted for 50 days. After another earthquake in December, 362, the last standing buildings in Nicomedia were razed to the ground.

A Whiff of Ancient History: Nicaea

The name Iznik comes from the city's ancient name, Nicaea. Nicaea was transformed into "is-Nicaea" with the addition of the prefix is- (meaning "within the city walls" in Greek), which was a common name conversion rule in the period. This, in time, turned into the modern Turkish name of "Iznik".

The first settlement in Iznik is thought to date back to 2500 BC. The settlement established here in the 7th century BS was known as "Helicore". The city was renamed after Antigonos, a general of Alexander the Great, Emperor of Macedonia, as Antigoneia, in 316 BC. Following the death of Alexander, general Lysimakhos won the battle he fought against Antigonos and renamed the city as Nicaea after his wife, who was the daughter of Antipatros. After that, the city became known as Nicaea (Greek: Νίκαια). In 293 BC, the city came under control of the Bithynia Kingdom and was adorned with important architectural structures. Hipparchus of Nicaea, one of the most important ancient astronomers, was born in

Image: Şeytan Tepesi



part 2

Iznik during this period. After serving as the capital of the Kingdom of Bithynia for a certain period, Nicaea continued to be an important settlement in the Roman Empire.

At the beginning of the summer of 325, the First Ecumenical Council convened in Iznik, which was a very important event for Christianity. At the council which was also attended by Constantine the Great, a new church law that contained 20 canons about Christendom, known as the Nicene Creed, was accepted. Some scholars also argue that, this was the council when hundreds of different scriptures of Bible were reduced to four. The 7th Council convened in the Hagia Sophia Church in Nicaea in 787. When the Byzantine Empire lost Constantinople as a result of the Fourth Crusade, members of the Byzantine dynasty founded the Latin Empire in Nicaea, and this empire later conquered Constantinople and re-established the Byzantine Empire.

Nicaea became an art center in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. While the city was home to many civilizations, world-famous tiles and ceramics were crafted there.

INFORMATION ON THE TOLERANCE WAY ROUTE

Starting in front of the Eastern Roman Empire palace site in Izmit city center, the Tolerance Way goes along a route offering unique views of the Samanlı Mountains, the Gulf of Izmit and Lake Iznik and merges with the Evliya Çelebi Way in its last 8 kilometers. The last section of

the route passes in front of the obelisk - like monument erected in memory of Gaius Cassius Philiscus, a Roman noble, in the 1st century AD. The trail then goes by a 1247-year-old cypress tree, monumental plane trees and an underground tomb (hypogeum). The Tolerance Way ends just in the middle of Iznik, in front of the Ayasofya Mosque (Hagia Sophia Church), which is located at a point where the roads leading to the four main gates in the ancient city meet.

THE TOLERANCE WAY HIKING AND CYCLING TRAILS

First Route: From Nicomedia to Astacus
(10 km) Izmit - Başiskele

By following the Tolerance Way, you can reach the Başiskele coast with a two-hour walk, starting in front of the Eastern Roman Imperial Palace located in the Çukurbağ neighborhood of Izmit - excavation still progress - passing through the Pertev Mehmet Paşa (Yeni Cuma) Mosque and Complex and taking the coastal road to Başiskele. The route continues nearly flat along the coast to Başiskele. As the route passes through the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs Izmit Bay Wetlands, you will have the chance to observe over two hundred bird species detected in the area in various seasons. On this route, which is considered as a hiking and cycling trail, you may encounter signboards prepared by the National Parks and Nature Conservation Directorate, showing photographs and detailed information of bird species in the area. You can take a short break at the Birdwatching Station built by the Metropolitan Municipality in 2013

to observe and take photos of the birds. There are many fountains on the route. You can also take a short break at the cafeterias at the end of the coastal road to buy things you need. After the cafeteria, you will need to continue on a small path near the Yalova-Bursa motorway for a short distance by, as there is a military area on the side of the sea. The route then turns right and descends to the coastal footpath made by the Municipality of Başiskele. Via coastal road, you reach the area which is claimed to be the location of the ancient city of Astacus. Since the route going along the coast is organized as a walking route and a bicycle route, you can get to Astacus faster by renting the bikes provided along the way by Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality. You can leave your bike at another station in Izmit city centre.

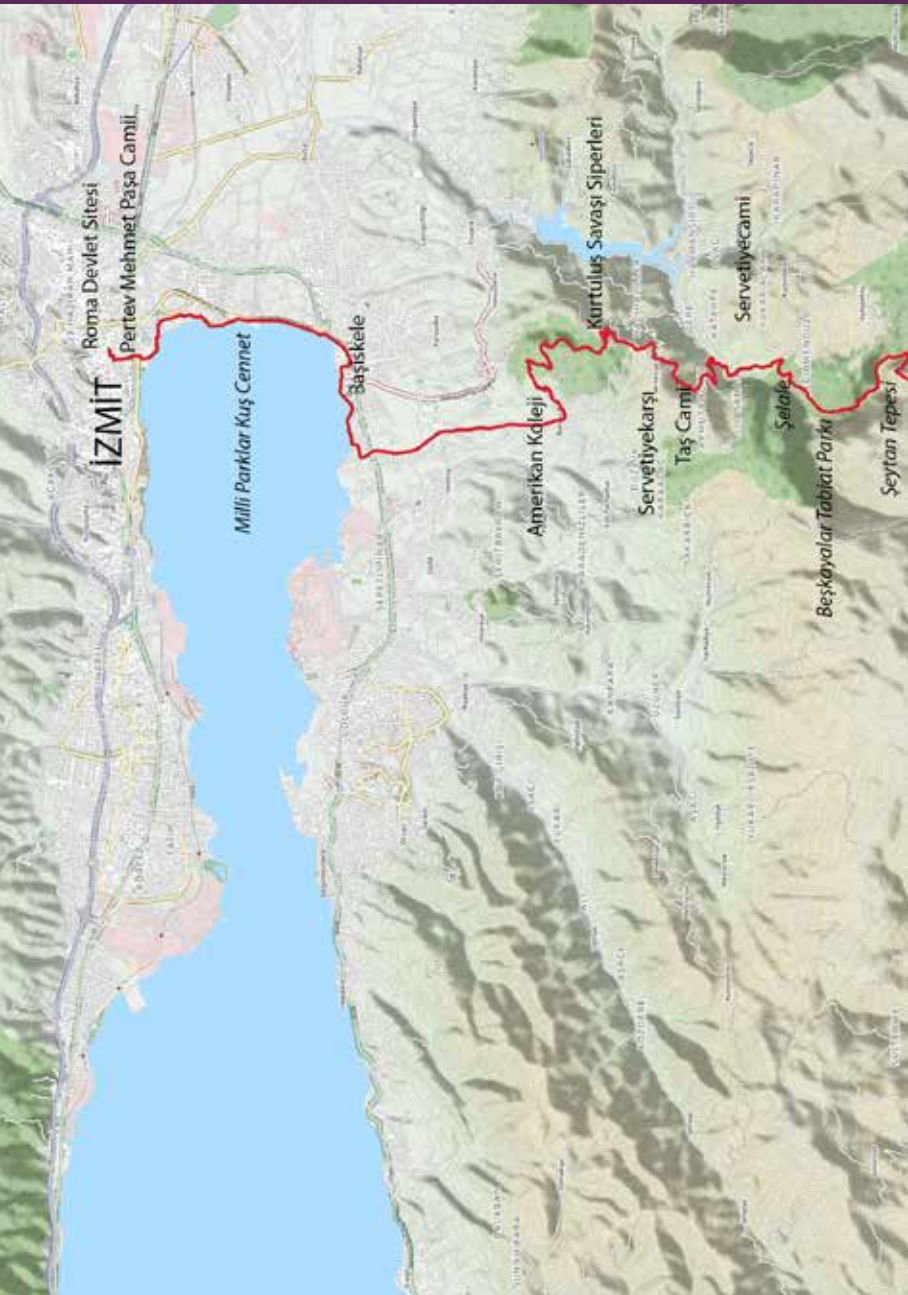
Second Route: Başiskele - Bahçecik - Servetiye Karşı (12 km)

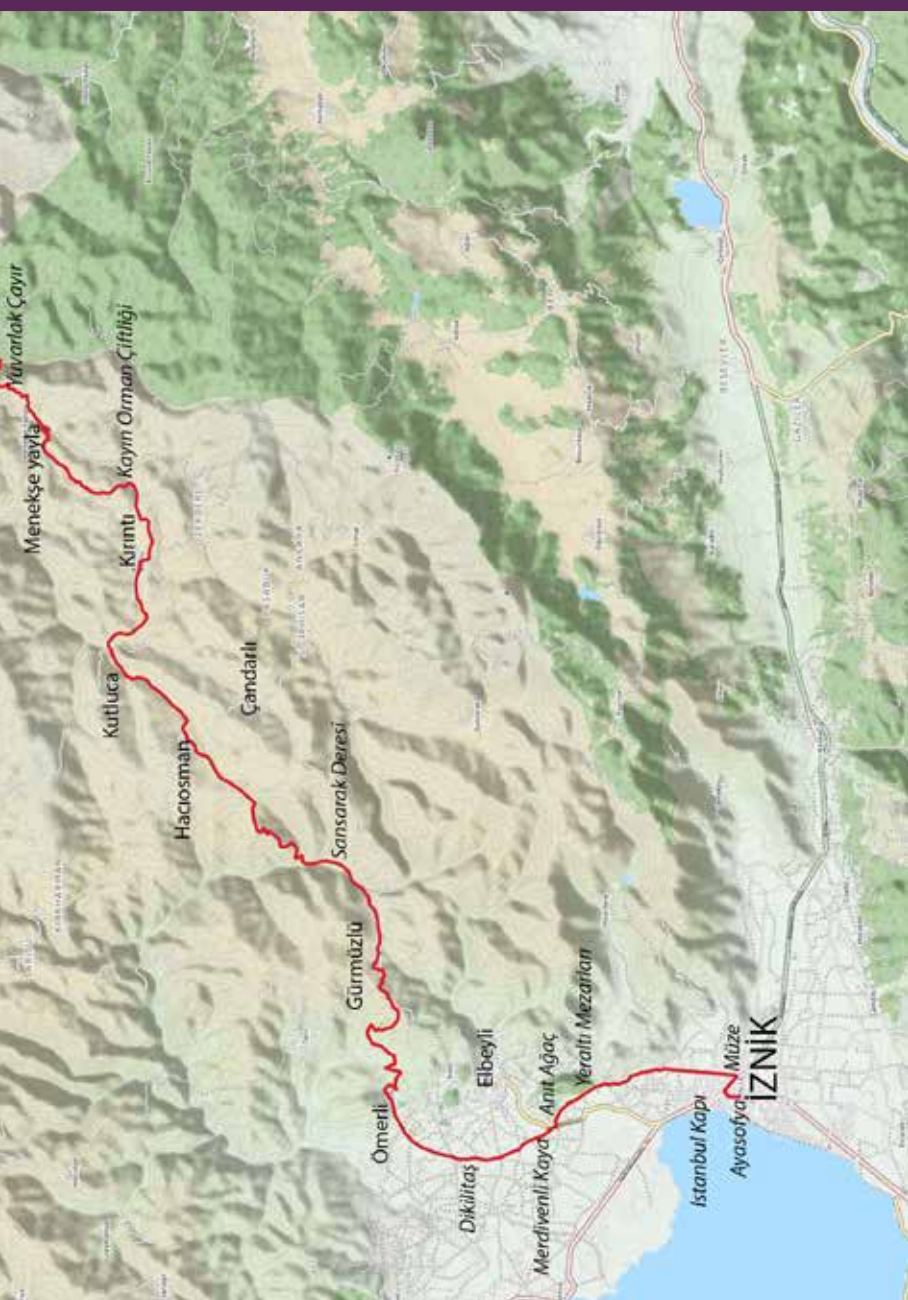
After a short walk on the coastal road, exit to the south and turn towards Bahçecik. Start hiking over the slightly

Image: Bahçecik American College



the tolerance way map





sloping main road to the centre of Bahçecik. On this road, there are shops where you can buy things for camping. You can continue following this path to Bahçecik city center.

Bahçecik is one of the oldest settlements in the region. Armenian communities who settled in the region in the 16th century brought about economic and social development in the region. In the 1860s, five silkworm factories were established and the American College (Bithynia High School) was opened to provide education in the region.

One of the places worth visiting on the route is the American College. The American College (Bithynia High School) is located on the route and is registered by the Regional Board for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Initiatives for the conservation of the school building, which was unfortunately used as a chicken farm for a period, has recently started thanks to the support of local authorities and non-governmental organizations.

Near the American High School, enter a dirt track that goes up to the Samanlı Mountains. The dirt track will start at an altitude of 250 m and take you to 570 m. The view of Izmit Bay will slowly begin to appear behind you. You will reach a point where you can see both Nicomedia and the location of the city of Astacus. Opened as a forest fire response path, the track offers various beauties in different seasons and it gradually leads you to the trenches used in the Turkish War of Independence, located on the edge of Servetiye Karşı village. You can take a short break in the trenches of the Independence War, which have been restored by the local government, and imagine the events that once took place there. In

the area where the trenches are located, there is a sign-board providing information about historical events.

Third Route: Servetiye Karşı - Beşkayalar Natural Park (13km)

When you climb to 570 m altitude, you will see a new skyline. The route will take you down via a stabilized path to the floor of the first valley. After coming out of the forest, you will see the Beşkayalar Natural Park. In



Image: Servetiye Karşı Village

the small valleys along the route, you may come across with a waterfall or an immaculate stream or a fountain flowing decisively. As you head down the stabilised road going from the Servetiye Karşı village to the Beşkayalar Valley, the beauty of the landscape may force you to take little breaks. If the season allows, you can eat fruits from the overhanging branches of the fruit trees in the gardens of small wooden highland houses, and then have

a pleasant journey into the valley. On this route you may also see the newly restored stone mosque dating to the 1880s. You can have a short break in the garden of the mosque, which is built among trees on a hill dominating the area and get a full view of the landscape. Then you will reach “Kenan’ın Yeri”, a stopover facility located by a river flowing through the Valley. When the snow melts in spring season, the river’s raging waters are especially worth seeing. You can set up a camp at Kenan’ın Yeri or take a long break. After departing from Kenan’ın Yeri, a climb deep into the Valley will await you. Before arriving at the last house of the Servetiye Cami village, there is a fountain at the foot of the small hill. When you leave the beehives after the last house behind and go on walking for a short distance, you will encounter a large waterfall deep in the valley to the left of the path. The powerful sound of the waterfall located in the Beşkayalar Natural Park can cause you difficulty hearing your friends, especially in spring and early summer months. After ascending a small ramp following the waterfall, the slope of the path will be substantially reduced. The stabilized road will continue to take you up slowly with a pleasant view on the right. When you look down from a naturally formed terrace on the edge of an old yew tree, you can see Soğukdere and Sıcakdere creeks mixing together in two different waterfalls. Both of them are two important streams that feed the Yuvacık water catchment basin. These two streams provide almost all the water supply of the Kocaeli province. Follow Soğukdere, the tributary on the left of the Beşkayalar valley and continue your ascent. You will once again realize the beauty of the Samanlı mountains when you look up and down the

edge of the cliff. The cliffs and slopes in the Beşkayalar valley is also the witness of the ancient myth of Hylas. After a continuous climb through the forest path passing through the Valley, you will arrive at Veysel Dayı'nın Yeri.

Fourth Route: Beşkayalar Natural Park - Kırıntı Village (9 km)

About an hour's climb awaits you on this route, but the views along the forest trail will take your weariness away. You can fill your flask from an icy flowing fountain and start going up hill after passing over the wooden bridge. Menekşe Plateau is 6 km, and Kırıntı village is 9 km from Veysel Amca'nın Yeri. This is a trail passing through a beech forest, where the sun rays hindered by the leaves of the trees cannot reach the ground. You will climb to an elevation of 200 meters through a forest trail where the roots of beech trees will serve you as a ladder, rhododendrons will accompany your walk and small streams will flow under leaves. After that, you will arrive at Şahin Kayası (Falcon Rock) which offers the most spectacu-

Image: Beşkayalar Natural Park



lar view of the Beşkayalar Natural Park. The valley will be left at your feet like a deep cliff. You will be able to see the Servetiye Karşı village and the route you have been walking all morning. After turning towards Menekşe Plateau and walking up on a short slope, you will pass through a footpath where the tree branches with leaves in every shade of green overhangs densely enough to close the walkway. When the path enters into the forest trail, it forks. Take the path on the right and continue going down. Now we are starting to descend. You have reached one of the highest points of the route. Before arriving at Menekşe Plateau, you will first arrive at the Kurudere Plateau, also called the Yuvarlakçayır through which a small stream flows. After crossing the creek by stepping on the stones put by hikers, you can take a short break. This plateau is one of the places frequented by day trippers or campers. You can put up a camp here or continue through the forest trail to arrive at the plain, which is a part of the Menekşe Plateau. You can find drinking water on these two plateaus. The Menekşe

Image: Beech Forest Farm (Kayın Orman Çiftliği)





Image: Kırıntı Village

(Violet) Plateau takes its name from the violet flowers that bloom in spring. There used to be a very old church on the plateau, but it was almost completely destroyed by treasure hunters. Bayraktepe, the highest point of the Tolerance Way (1075 m), is located on the Menekşe Plateau. After the Menekşe Plateau, the Tolerance Way mostly goes in downward slope. When you pass Düzlük Mevkii, the remaining route will be flat. Continue walking southward through a stony path that passes through a wide meadow. The path will go through a coppice forest area and pass over a culvert, then you will have entered the provincial borders of Bursa. At a point very close to the provincial border between Bursa and Kocaeli, you will take a forest trail that passes through large beech trees trying to reach the sun. Continue by following the forest trail that passes through the coppice site. After a certain distance, the forest trail will end and you will enter a path covered with leaves and bushes. If you have GPS tracker, you won't have much trouble; but if you do not, you can get a little confused about finding your

direction in the dense forest. Follow the waymarks which are especially frequent in this area to arrive at a small meadow. Go along the meadow's border with the forest and walk up to the stabilized road. You will see wooden houses built in a large meadow and then you will arrive at the Beech Forest Farm (Kayın Ormanı Çiftliği), where you will see a windmill in the middle of the land. You can take a short break at Beech Forest Farm and fill your flasks with the cold water flowing near it.

When you go up a short ramp after the Beech Forest Farm you will come across the Kırıntı village. All five villages in the area are inhabited by Georgian immigrants.

Fifth Route: Kırıntı - Kutluca - Hacıosman - Gürmüzlü

Continue on the stabilized road from the Kırıntı village and make a pleasant one-hour walk up to Kutluca village, passing by carefully maintained fields on the way. As you pass by fields covered with yellow, purple and white flowers on your left and right, you will notice that

Image: Kutluca Village



this is an easier route. When dense and old beech trees gradually begin to be replaced by pine trees, you will pass by a stopover facility built on a swamp in a wide plain. Don't forget to chat with the villagers as you walk through fields filled with purple flowers and the Georgian highland villages built on fertile lands covered with plum trees and other fruits. You will enter a forest trail on a steep downslope before reaching the Gürmüzlü village via the forest trail in the north of Çandarlı village. Along the way, scattered hornbeam and beech trees will be replaced by old pine trees. After walking while listening to the rustling of pine needles, you will first arrive at the Sansarak Creek, where you can take a long break before arriving at the village of Gürmüzlü. Because, it is possible that the steep downslope from the forest trail will cause a burning sensation and fatigue, especially in your feet. Take your shoes off and cross the Sansarak Creek barefoot. You will feel relaxed. Just after you cross the Sansarak Creek and take the road to Gürmüzlü village, at a 200 m distance to the road, you will see an icy fountain flowing in the shade of a large, old tree. If it is

Image: Gürmüzlü Village



the summer season, you can take a long break next to the fountain. You can arrive at the Gürmüzlü village after a half-hour walk from the village road.

Sixth Route: Gürmüzlü - Elbeyli - Dikilitaş

In the garden of the coffee house in Gürmüzlü village, you can sip your tea with a pleasant conversation around the tables made of columns dating back to the Roman Empire. After Gürmüzlü village, continue on the 2-km-long asphalt road. Before entering the stabilized forest trail, you can take another nice break within cherry orchards with a view of Lake Iznik and enjoy the relaxing breeze on the route that passes through the orchards of Gürmüzlü village on the right and the view of the Samanlı mountains on the left. Complete your descent with a steep downslope and a forest fire response path with unstable stones. Now, you must be seeing both Lake Iznik and the Obelisk Monument, which is the junction point with the Evliya Çelebi Way. With a careful look, you can even see the 800-year-old cypress tree standing alone among vast olive orchards.

Image: İznik Ayasofya Mosque



Seventh Route: Dikilitaş - Ayasofya

The Obelisk was built in the 1st century and continued to be an important monument in the Roman period and the following periods. It is also known as “Beş Taş” (Five Stones). It is claimed that the eagle figures on the sixth stone are stolen. Besides being a monument, the obelisk has much more importance. Designed in the form of a triangular prism, the monument has depictions of Nicomedia in one face, Nicaea in another face and Constantinople in the other face. This reinforces the possibility that it was also used to find direction in addition to its monumental feature. After the obelisk, our route continues parallel to the Evliya Çelebi Way. In a short walk on the route running through olive trees and orchards, you can stop by an 800-year-old cypress tree on the right. After about 1 km from the cypress tree, you can see an ancient altar area called “Merdivenli Kaya” (Stepped Rock), where funerals and weddings took place during the Roman period. Another worth-seeing spot on this route is the plane tree over 1000 years old. After the plane tree, you can visit the catacombs in the area and then you have only 6 kilometers left to finish the route.

Image: Obelisk



Along the way you can see the remains of the quarries used for the buildings constructed in the Roman and Byzantine periods. You will arrive at Iznik at a point very close to the Constantinople Gate (Istanbul Kapı) and enter Nicaea between the historic Roman and Ottoman walls, as if you go back to the ancient times.

part 3

Do not forget to walk on the Roman Road in Iznik, which was brought to light by chance in 2000. The Ayasofya Mosque (Hagia Sophia Church) is our last stop.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Signage

The Tolerance Way was created by combining existing footpaths and newly opened walking trails. In front of the Roman Empire Palace Site, which is the point where the route begins, there is an informative signage about the route. Another similar sign is placed in front of the Ayasofya Mosque, the end point of the route. In addition to signs prepared according to international standards and showing the distances to the central points, the trail is also waymarked with red and white paint. In order to make the route more obvious, the trail was also waymarked with stones placed by volunteer walkers.

Image: Waymark Work



Transportation

You can easily reach the starting point of the Tolerance Way by minibuses (dolmuş) and buses departing from the Intercity Bus Terminal. You can also reach the starting point with a short walk from the railway station next to Izmit Archaeological Museum. The route starting from the Çukurbağ neighborhood located just behind Izmit City Hall can be followed by using the signage, tables and GPS coordinates.

Accommodation

In addition to the hostels and hotels in Izmit and Iznik city centers, you can also set up camps in various areas along the route. There are camping sites also in the villages of Bahçecik, Servetiye Karşı, Servetiye Cami, Kırıntı, Kutluca, Hacıosman and Gürmüzlü. In the short term, regional Directorates of Culture and Tourism will start working on establishing small hostels in the houses of the village people. Facilities located in the Beşkayalar valley can meet your accommodation and food needs. The Yeryüzü Hotel located in the middle of the route, near Hacıosman Village, which also supports the Tolerance Way works is another option for accommodation needs.

Safety

All hikers are advised to be trained for emergency first aid. They should also carry a small first aid kit with them. It is recommended to have protective equipment such as helmets and hard hats especially in the Beşkayalar Natural Park, against the risk of rockfalls and collapses. Wearing high-cut boots that cover ankles will be really helpful while walking on unstable stone trails and foot-

paths. A low-tempo and careful walking pace should be preferred, rather than a careless and hasty pace.

Hiking Season

The Tolerance Way is suitable for hiking in all four seasons with the help of the necessary equipment. But especially in winter months, a snow cover of over 1 meter can be seen in the highest points of the route like the Menekşe Plateau and its surrounding area. For this reason, particularly in winter months, it is a great risk to go hiking without the help of necessary professional equipment. In other seasons, you can have a much more comfortable hiking experience. Temperature variances of 12 to 16 degrees can be experienced especially in autumn and spring, due to elevation. As the region is generally humid and rainy during summer, you do not have to worry about finding water and you can walk easily with the help of streams and fountains that do not dry up.

Before You Set Off

It is recommended to import the route's GPS track into Google Earth and get general information about the route, elevation and villages before setting off. The route sections generally stop at settlements at 10 km intervals. Therefore, you should be prepared in terms of your food and water supply. Besides, it is important to be more cautious while hiking on mountain and forest trails to reduce risks.

GPS data

Generally speaking, the route can be easily found with the help of signage and waymarks but we advise you to have a GPS tracker with you. You can get the GPS data

part 4

from the Culture Routes Society or on <https://culturerooutesinturkey.com/tr/> or <https://tr.wikiloc.com/gezi-yuruyus-rotalari/hosgoru-yolu-tolerance-way-25500409>

OUR HERITAGE

Eastern Roman Empire Palace Site

DAfter Diocletian (284 - 305 AD) became the Augustus of the Roman Empire, the massive lands of the empire caused him to restructure the Roman government model. Diocletian established a system of called Tetrarchy, where the ruling power is shared by four emperors, and declared himself the Augustus of the Eastern Roman Empire. He then settled in Nicomedia, making Nicomedia the capital of the Roman Empire.

He built a hippodrome, palace, temples, baths, government buildings, a mint and a shipyard in Nicomedia. Nicomedia became the fourth largest city in the empire after Rome, Antioch and Alexandria. There was a temple

Image: Eastern Roman Empire Palace Site



of Demeter in the city and on both side of it were imperial temples with eight columns each. This plaza was connected to the port with a colonnaded street.

These constructions of the Roman period could not survive to the present day, except for the ruins of the city walls, aqueducts, a monumental fountain and a water cistern.

Ancient Greek Mythology from Samanlı Mountains

The Samanlı Mountains were also home to the ancient myth of Hylas from the Greek mythology. According to the legend, Hylas, one of Herakles' favorite friends, joined the Argonauts' expedition to search for the Golden Fleece in the land of Colchis by the Black Sea. Heracles, whose paddle was broken offshore in the Gulf, goes to the Samanlı Mountains to look for trees to make a new paddle. Hylas went ashore to find water, but got lost in the woods. It is believed that nymphs fell in love with this beautiful young man and kidnapped him.

Image: Ancient Greek Mythology from Samanlı Mountains



Heracles did not believe this, and asked the Mysians to find Hylas. But all their efforts were in vain. This search evolved over time into a festival for looking for Hylas in the region. During these ceremonies, the people would go up to the mountains and call Hylas.

Pertev Mehmet Paşa (Yeni Cuma) Mosque and Complex

This mosque and complex was built in the name of Pertev Mehmet Paşa, the second vizier of Selim II, by his deputy Sinan Ağa on Pertev Mehmet Paşa's will after his death and was completed in 1579, according to the inscription in the mosque. The remains of a bathhouse still stand together with the mosque. Mimar Sinan was the architect of the mosque and the larger complex. Of the complex, only the mosque and the fountain have survived to the present day with their characteristic features.

Trenches of Turkish War of Independence

In the second half of 1920, the 16th regiment of the

Image: Trenches of Turkish War of Independence



11th division of the Greek army settled in Bahecik.

Servetiye village became the first to rise against this occupation. As other villages in the region also joined the resistance, a militia corps of 145 people between the ages of 11 and 60 was formed. Bahecik and Servetiye Karşı villages were the base of this militia force fighting against the Greek occupation armies in Bahecik.

Greek troops attacked the militia forces located here 8 times in 1920 and 1921 and were forced to retreat after being severely defeated each time.

The enemy forces, unable to pass through the hills in Bahecik, fired 305 mm and 170 mm cannons from its ships in the Gulf, but could not break the resistance line established by the people of the region.

Servetiye Stone Mosque

“A mosque built with black stones”

There is no original inscription in the Stone Mosque in Servetiye Karşı village about its construction. By look-

Image: Servetiye Stone Mosque



ing at the architectural features of the building, it can be said that it was built in the 19th century. The inscriptions of the bridge and the mosque, which are located in the same area, were recently stolen. According to the current inscription, the building dates back to 1885. No other written or visual information could be found about the mosque. Its minaret was built in 1956. Another minaret, a Qoran school and an imam's lodging were also built adjacent to the mosque from 1956 to 1960. The mosque is covered with a wooden dome. Inside the dome are decorations made with natural herbal dyes. The mosque has a rectangular plan with masonry walls made of rubble stone. The stones used here are native to the region and are known as "black stone".

Beşkayalar Natural Park

Beşkayalar Natural Park is located in within the borders of Yuvacık Forest Management Directorate, between Servetiye Cami and Servetiye Karşı villages, in the valley of Sıcakdere (originates within the borders of Bursa province) and Soğukdere (originates within the

Image: Beşkayalar Natural Park



borders of Sakarya province) tributaries of the of Kirazdere Creek.

The total area of this natural park is 921 hectares, with 854,5 hectares of woodland, 66.5 hectares of open area. Beşkayalar Natural Park is a 1st degree natural conservation site.

Approximately 2,500 hectares of woodland surrounding the creeks in the area is an important resource for researchers both in terms of its natural characteristics, vegetation, wildlife, views and outdoor recreation opportunities. Thanks to the integrity of its landscape, it also offers all beauties necessary for artworks.

The name Beşkayalar (Five Rocks) comes from five high cliffs found at the junction of the streams.

Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia) Mosque

“The Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia) Mosque in Izmit is located at a point where the roads leading to the four main gates in the ancient city meet. The seventh ecumenical

Image: Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia) Mosque



council, in which important decisions about Christianity were made, convened in this church in 787. After 1331, Orhan Gazi converted the church into a mosque. During the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566), Mi-mar Sinan added a mihrab and created large arch openings in the side nave. Restoration work started in 2007. The bell tower, which had been converted into a minaret, was ruined and in a bad condition before the restoration. In the museum built as a three-nave basilica, there are two preparation rooms.”

The building incorporates the architectural styles of the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods. When Iznik was conquered by Orhan Gazi (the second Sultan of the Ottoman Empire) on March 2, 1331, it became the first church to be converted into a mosque. It was renamed as Orhan Mosque, a mihrab was added to its south wall, adjacent to the chamber.

The Roman Theatre

It was commissioned by Roman Emperor Trajanus

Image: The Iznik Roman Theatre



(97-117) to the provincial governor Plinius Caecillius Secundus (62-113). It has a dimension of 85x55 m. It is 13 meters above the lake level. Some stones of the theatre were removed and used in the construction of fortifications to defend the city in invasions and wars. It was unearthed after archaeological excavations. Excavations led by Bedri Yalman are still ongoing and the unearthed artifacts are under preservation at the Iznik Museum. The Roman Theatre, located close to the Ayasoyfa mosque, is closed to visitors due to ongoing excavations, but it is possible to see the ruins from behind the fence.

Ancient City Walls

The ancient walls which started to be built during the Bithynian period and were improved during the Roman and Byzantine periods.

The walls were built at a height of 10 meters. The Constantinople Gate, the Lefke Gate, the Southwestern Gate and the Yenişehir Gate can be seen along the two main streets in Iznik.

Image: Ancient City Walls



The total length of the fortifications that encircle the whole city of Iznik is 4970 m.

In his travelogue called the Seyâhatnâme (“Book of Travel”), Evliya Çelebi depicts the city walls of Iznik under the heading “The Shapes of Iznik Castle” as follows:

“It is a four-corner brick building on a flat and wide area at the edge of the lake. Each brick is weighs an okka. It is built with Khorasan mortar and mudbrick.

Its walls are forty cubits in height and seven cubits in width. It has three hundred and sixty-six castles close to each other. These are ruined in time. The moat around it is filled with soil and sand. Its circumference is six thousand steps. It has four gates at its four corners. The lake-side gate faces west. The lake is also on the west side of the castle. The Yenisehir Gate faces the Qibla. The castle wall is covered in ivy. There is no imaret outside of it.

Within the castle there are eighteen neighbourhoods and a thousand, two-storey, prosperous houses with

Image: The Stepped Rock



in the bazaar, it has a crowded congregation. It has one minaret. However, Süleyman Han had Mimar Sinan repair it, when it was burned in a fire.”

The Stepped Rock

This structure was probably a ceremonial spot located within the necropolis of ancient Nicaea. Multiple steps are carved into the hard rocky surface. To the east of these steps is another five-step staircase with the same features. Dimensions of the steps are as follows: height: 0.22 m, width: 1.80 m, depth 0.30 m. Rectangular nests were carved into these natural rocks made up of crystallized limestone with blue and gray veins. Wooden posts were fixed into these nests and the participants of the ceremony would take their places in this special structure prepared for them. This area allowed for mass participation at funerals. The presence of rock tombs in the vicinity of this area could prove that this place was used for funerals.

The Obelisk

It is located on the Nicomedia-Nicaea road, amongst the olive groves of Elbeyli town, which is 5 km away from Iznik city center.

On the first stone of the monument it says “C. Cassius Philiscus, Son of Cassius Asclepiodotus, lived for 83 years”, in Greek.

Some scholars believe that it was located on the ancient Roman Road. It is estimated that there was a bronze statue of Nike, goddess of victory, or the eagle and statue of Zeus on the sixth stone at the top of the monument, which is now missing. There is a burial chamber in the lower section of the monument which is

buried under the ground.

The Hypogeum (Underground Tomb)

The underground tombs in Elbeyli are located on the Evliya Çelebi Way. It is a unique underground burial chamber, estimated to have been built in the 4th century AD. It is covered. There are paintings of vegetal and geometric motifs and animal figures on its ceiling and walls. Peacock figures were used. This underground tomb, which was unearthed during a road construction work in Iznik, is now under protection, and restoration work has started.

Monumental Trees

Plane Tree (*Platanus Orientalis*)

Bursa / Iznik / Elbeyli

Age: 1257 years

*Image: Plane Tree (*Platanus Orientalis*)*



Diameter: 4.40 m, Trunk: 11.23 m, Height: 22 m

This plane tree in Elbeyli, Iznik, was split into two after being hit by a lightning. It is located at the junction of the Evliya Çelebi Way and the Tolerance Way. It is also indicated in the Evliya Çelebi route and shown with signage.

The plane tree's trunk was divided into two, but it managed to hold on to life like two separate trees rising from a single root.

The trunk was severely damaged as people used to build fire in the hollow that formed after the lightening. However, local authorities have announced that this tree will be protected and duly maintained.

The imposing look of the plane tree and its determination to hold on to life for hundreds of years is quite inspiring. The area around the tree is organized and it hosts many visitors.

Cypress (*Cupressus*)

Bursa / Iznik / Elbeyli

Age: 865 years

Diameter: 3.80 m, Trunk: 8.30 m, Height 32 m

This monumental tree is located within the olive groves leading to the Obelisk, which is 5 km away from Iznik. So it is not easy to see.

We saw it by chance as we were strolling through the old olive trees. It does not bear any sign. Its height is approximately 32 m and circumference is 8 m.

No serious damage is observed on its trunk. Its crown

is intertwined with another cypress tree next to it.

Located at a very close distance to the Evliya Çelebi hiking trail, this is among the trees that are definitely worth being seen. You will easily notice it especially while going up to Elbeyli and watching the Lake view.

Chestnut Tree (*Castanea*)

Kocaeli/Bahçecik

Age: 200 years

Diameter: 1.80 m, Trunk: 6.20 m, Height: 10 m

This is a 200-year-old chestnut tree located in the valley going up to the Servetiye Karşı village from the Bahçecik village center.

Flora and Fauna:

The Geyve Strait separates Samanlı Mountains from Bolu Mountain in the east. The highest elevation in this section (Gökdağ section) is Keltepe (1,601 m), located in the southwest of Sapanca. Kartepe is the highest hill with an elevation of 1,699 m. Elevation declines towards west. The elevation of the Naldöken Hill located between Gölcük and Iznik is 1,330 m.

The axis of the mountains descends at two points further west. Karamürsel-Iznik motorway passes through the first one (Yalakdere Basin), Yalova-Orhangazi highway passes through the second. Further west, the mountainous axis meets with the peaks of Dumanlıtepe (870 m) and reaches an altitude of 922 m on Taz Mountain before terminating at Armutlu Peninsula.

Although the vegetation in Kocaeli bears the characteristics of the flora in Marmara region, significant differences are observed between its coastal and the mountainous regions. Furthermore, as we go from north to south, plant communities native to the Black Sea begin to be replaced by the Mediterranean flora. The territory behind the Samanlı Mountains' Black Sea coast are covered with dense and hygrophilous forests. The highest biodiversity in Kocaeli region is observed in Samanlı Mountains, which are covered with forests. Beech, hornbeam, ash, maple, linden, chestnut and oak species dominate the flora of the Samanlı Mountains range, which has a well-drained and permeable soil, a rainy climate and moderate temperature. In areas of higher elevation, coniferous trees are also included in this flora, while areas of lower altitude are covered with broad-leaf trees. However, coniferous plantations can also be observed in lower elevation. Maquis shrublands characteristic to the Mediterranean get denser as we get closer to the sea.

The section located at an elevation of 250 to 750 m

Image: Samanlı Mountains



is called the chestnut zone (castenatum). Oak species, chestnut, ash, plane and maple trees are also found in this zone. Chestnut trees increase the oaks decrease after an elevation of 700 m. At 750 m and higher, the beech zone starts. Beech trees form coppices in lower altitudes and turn into grove forests as we go higher.

The most common wild animals in forests are bears, wolves, foxes, coyotes, roe deers, and red deers.

This area is naturally dominated by leafy species like chestnut, oak, beech, hornbeam, maple, linden and walnut tress. However, natural fir trees and planted Douglas fir trees are added to this vegetation at higher altitudes. At lower altitudes, planted maritime pine, radiata and larch species are also common. Rhododendron, laurel, arbutus and cherry laurel are among common shrub and bush species.

Common couch, cistus, fern, and poppy are among common herbaceous plants.

Image: Red Deer (Kızıl Geyik)





Image: Candarli Village



Image: Sansarak Kanyonu



Image: Menekşe Yaylası (Violet Plateau)



Image: Beech Forest Farm (Kayın Orman Çiftliği)



Image: Şeytan Tepesi



Image: Beşkayalar Natural Park



Image: Haciosman Village



Image: Beech Forest Farm (Kayın Orman Çiftliği)



Image: Beşkayalar Natural Park