



European
Joint
Support Unit

Vehicles & Travel

Istanbul





CARS & MOTORING

Awareness:

Turkish driving is different. Cars will stop arbitrarily in either lane, change lanes recklessly, reverse because they have missed a motorway exit, etc. In essence, expect the unexpected. Additionally, road maintenance teams will often cut off lanes without any notice, while you may come across large holes with little or no warning. Road markings are not always present and are certainly not always heeded. Defensive driving and a good all round look out is advised. However, having said that, everyone manages to drive successfully out here!

Current families' choice of vehicle:

All of the 5 UK families have 2 cars. Of the 10 cars in total, 5 are 4x4 of some genre, not so much for the off-road ability but for the on road presence. While Turkey drives on the right, the GBR team have a mix of LHD and RHD vehicles without issue. No families have bought new tax-free cars recently. 5 cars were bought in country either from NATO personnel or through an agency; at least 3 were shipped by MoD or driven out.

OWNING A CAR IN TURKEY

Choice of car:

When considering suitable cars and the procurement of them, it is worth bearing in mind:

- a. An air-conditioned car is an advantage in for at least 4 months of the year in Istanbul. If you are intending to drive to the coast it becomes essential.
- b. In Zekeriyaköy you can expect snow bad enough to prevent all but 4WD vehicles safely climbing or descending the hill into the village at least 2 or 3 times each winter. It is apparently compulsory to carry snow chains in the winter and these can be obtained locally (although most people do not appear to do so). If you have winter tyres, bring them.
- c. Reliability is the most important asset of any car you drive in Turkey, but Turkish mechanics are adept at fixing almost anything quickly and effectively. Vehicle recovery is also cheaper than in the UK, although there is no equivalent of the AA or RAC. Labour charges are cheap and there are many garages that carry out the less technical labour-intensive work (e.g. panel work, preparation and painting). Imported spares are expensive, i.e. UK prices, but the standard of local workmanship is generally excellent.
- d. Not all marques have Dealer networks. Check first. Small volume cars will have high priced parts.
- e. Diesel and petrol are equally widely available. Diesel is 10-12% cheaper than petrol, both at pump and as a tax-free price (see below).



Supply of car: There are a number of options:

- a. Bring a car you already own with you. Either drive it yourself across Europe, or MoD may cover the cost of shipping one car to and from Turkey (see Para 3.18.c), but you will have to bear the cost of importing, registering and insuring it.
- b. Buy a new tax-free car. You can buy it tax free in EU and drive it to Turkey yourself, or buy it tax-free and have it delivered to Istanbul.
- c. Buy a 2nd hand tax-free car on arrival. This is not as easy as it seems. Turkish citizens pay huge tax on their cars which NATO is exempt from. But we can therefore only buy / sell tax exempt cars from / to other entitled personnel (basically other NATO military or diplomatic staff) and so the supply is very tight and even if there is a car you like, the price may be high. There are specialist garages that comply with this niche, eg see the stocks at <http://www.blueplatecars.com/>. Within the HQ (and indeed the Land Command HQ in Izmir) cars do get handed down and there may be a good chance to buy from a Brit (or other foreign national) posted out as you are posted in which saves you both an import/ export hassle.
- d. Following arrival, buy a 2nd hand car from outside Turkey and have it imported free of Turkish duty. Similar to purchasing a second-hand car within Turkey from a tax-free specialist – except they will identify the car for you (usually in Germany) and then transport and temporarily import it in your name. See <http://www.9ekim.com>. More expensive than other options, but this offers a wider choice.

Fuel: Tax-free fuel is available on a monthly allowance (approx. 300-400 litres per month depending on engine size - you are very unlikely to exceed this allowance). An electronic chip is installed on your car filler which talks to another one on the petrol pump nozzle allowing your account to be automatically debited, cashlessly. This is always and only through the 'OPET' chain of filling stations which are countrywide; the closest to Zekeriyaköy is near work. (Very slick, but it does mean you cannot fill e.g. jerrycans, or borrow fuel from someone else if you are short). You will need a bank account with 'İşBank' to pay for the fuel – your bill will be debited automatically once a month (which is why we recommend İşBank as your primary Turkish bank). Obtaining your chip will take 4-6 weeks to set up once your car is registered, during which time you will be paying full pump price similar to UK. The tax free price for petrol is less than half the UK pump price (~60p per litre), and diesel is approx. 50p per litre (Sep 14), so MPG becomes less of an issue.

Roads and Parking: Road surfaces are often below the standard you will have come to expect in Europe. Surfaces are often uneven, with little, no (or even adverse!) camber and most roads have potholes in places. Most main roads are tarmac surfaced (but very slippery when wet); rural roads are frequently surfaced with dirt or loose stones. Heavy-duty springs/shock absorbers and sump guards are useful if you intend to go off-road. Only some of the houses in Zekeriyaköy have useable garages although all have sufficient outside space for 2 cars. Street parking in Istanbul is very difficult and the choice is generally between one of the few multi storey car parks or hotels, or parking in one of the many car lots (Otopark) in which often your car may be shuffled about whilst you are away (you leave the keys with the attendants). You risk accidental scratches and knocks virtually wherever you park. Valet parking is quite common. However you choose to park, it is reasonably cheap – think Andover not Westminster!



Road Tolls: There is a motorway toll system (HGS) which also applies to the Bosphorus bridges etc. HGS is a cashless process that works solely off a windscreen mounted sticker chip system which is bought in larger post offices (PTT). The purchase of these chips is linked to the car number plates (for the automatic detection systems), and to your car registration documents, and to your mobile phone. You buy credit on your HGS account, one per vehicle, through the PTT or via online banking. Tolls are very cheap, but the fine for not paying is irritatingly high.

CAR REGISTRATION

It is essential that all vehicles brought into Turkey, or bought on arrival, are registered in the name of the NATO member in the country of departure otherwise you cannot import the vehicle. Spouses have no entitlement to a vehicle, but their presence allows the NATO member to register a second car. If you do bring a new car, be sure to register it in the UK before leaving. Otherwise, you will have problems at the end of your tour returning with an unlicensed vehicle - the Turkish authorities issue an export plate on departure but retain the original TU plates on your final departure. If you buy a new car tax free, remember that Turkey is currently a non-EU country and you will have to keep the car in the UK for a year after your return there before you may sell it free of tax.

You may import 2 cars per family (i.e. one for self and a second one if accompanied) free of UK duty during your tour in Turkey. This will not double if you are retoured.

The import and registration of your car is a long and time-consuming experience. It could take you a few weeks and cost ~1600TL. If you have driven your car into Turkey, the car will still be available for your use while the paper chase goes on, whereas if the car is shipped these formalities must be completed before you get to drive away. The UK NSE will guide you through the process, but to import and register your car in Turkey, the following information will be required:

- a. Log book. Please note that, for Turkish tax and customs reasons, the vehicle log book must name the service person as the registered keeper.
- b. Clearly visible engine and chassis numbers (the engine number must be on the engine block, the chassis number must be on the chassis. The plate with engine and chassis number attached to the bodywork is not recognised or accepted by the Turkish MOT and registration inspectors). If in any doubt at all, get a UK garage to find the engine number on the block and show you where it is. If your car does not have an engine number on the block or a visible chassis number, then arrange to have it put on before you get here. You should also ensure that the numbers recorded in your documentation correspond with those on the vehicle.
- c. Details and serial numbers of fitted radio/cassette players if they are fancy and new and removable.
- d. Gross and axle weights of car in Kilograms (likely to be on a plate in the engine compartment).



- e. Receipt showing the cost of the car if brand new
- f. Manufacturer's certificate of origin. (helpful, not essential)
- g. List of all special options like heated rear window, power brakes, electric windows, electric sunroof, tow bar etc. This list is required so that it can be entered on your Beyaname after you arrive (especially tow bars which are now fully accountable items).

INSURANCE

Irrespective of any other more comprehensive policy which may have a 3rd party element to it, each vehicle you have will require mandatory Turkish 3rd Party insurance. Advice on which Turkish broker to use will come from UK NSE, and generally cover is a few hundred lira. You may also then wish to buy additional insurance (fully comprehensive) for your own peace of mind. Here you can choose a Turkish broker or use a UK based one. Turkish insurance can be cheaper but is dependent entirely on the value of the car. The advantage of using a local company is that you have local representation. The disadvantage is that in the event of a write-off they will pay out in Turkish Lira, which might make it difficult to finance a replacement vehicle from the UK. Insuring a car through the UK can be an advantage and you can opt for fully comprehensive cover. Currently, the only UK underwriter which seems to be willing to cover Turkey is Clements Europe Limited, although it can be easier to deal with a local insurer through Irfan. Premiums charged by the UK based companies are higher than in UK or EU, commensurate with the additional risk (case study: 2 x 51yr old, clean licences, max no claims, 2 x 10yr old RHD 4x4 with total value 12k GBP, fully comp, Turkey and mainland Europe, for a premium of 480GBP). The Company can be reached on:

Email asaunders@clements.com
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7397 4967
Direct Fax +44(0) 20 7397 4961
Website www.clementseurope.com

TAX

There is no road tax for foreigners in Turkey. Police-approved number plates have to be purchased on first registration (costs included in the registration process).

TUV Test (MOT)

All vehicles are now tested to TUV standards every two years. This includes an emissions test. The total cost is ~200TL.



MOTORING ACCESSORIES

Under Turkish traffic law all private motor vehicles must always carry the following:

- a. Complete jack and wheel-brace.
- b. First aid kit.
- c. Two triangle reflectors.
- d. Torch.
- e. Spare bulbs, for each type of light.
- f. Screwdrivers (Philips and regular).
- g. Pliers.
- h. Tow rope.
- i. Snow chains (from Dec to March, and only in certain areas, but incl Istanbul).
- j. Fire extinguisher.
- k. Wheel chock (a block of wood the size of a small brick is fine)
- l. Seat belts.

DEPARTURE

You will receive a full brief on the procedure for getting your car out of Turkey once you are here. For now, note that if you receive any Turkish Police fines you will have to show proof that you have paid them all as you try to depart at the end of your tour. Thus if you are fined on your journey to Istanbul, get and keep a receipt. You can check any outstanding fines by going to <http://www.gib.gov.tr/index.php?id=40> and typing in your Turkish registration plate, date of registration and the tax number issued on your arrival in Turkey. It will then give you the offence code, the fine applicable and the Area Office to contact.

CAR JOURNEYS OUT OF TURKEY

Once in Turkey, if you decide to go on holiday outside Turkey by car you need to apply for a Karne and Green Card Insurance. You do this via a company called Turing (www.turing.org.tr) which is located less than 2 km from the HQ, or you can arrange it through the Turkish company which provides your main car insurance.