

God's country

Southeastern Turkey may have been where civilization began

BY TERRY BOYD

Stars and Stripes

This place is different. Even to veteran Turkey hands, the southeast is terra incognita. If you've been to Istanbul and Kusadasi, you'll find Mardin and Sanliurfa are another galaxy. You can see the difference in peoples' faces and feel it in the fatigue of the distances through the mostly empty plains of Mesopotamia.

Unlike Europeanized western Turkey, these cities are Oriental in the broadest sense: chaotic, colorful and inscrutable. Which is not the most comfortable combination for the average traveler. So I thought I'd find only the most adventurous spirits in southeastern Turkey. And I did.

But I also found lavish hotels in cities unknown to even the most sophisticated American travelers — hotels full of Turkish, European and Canadian tourists.

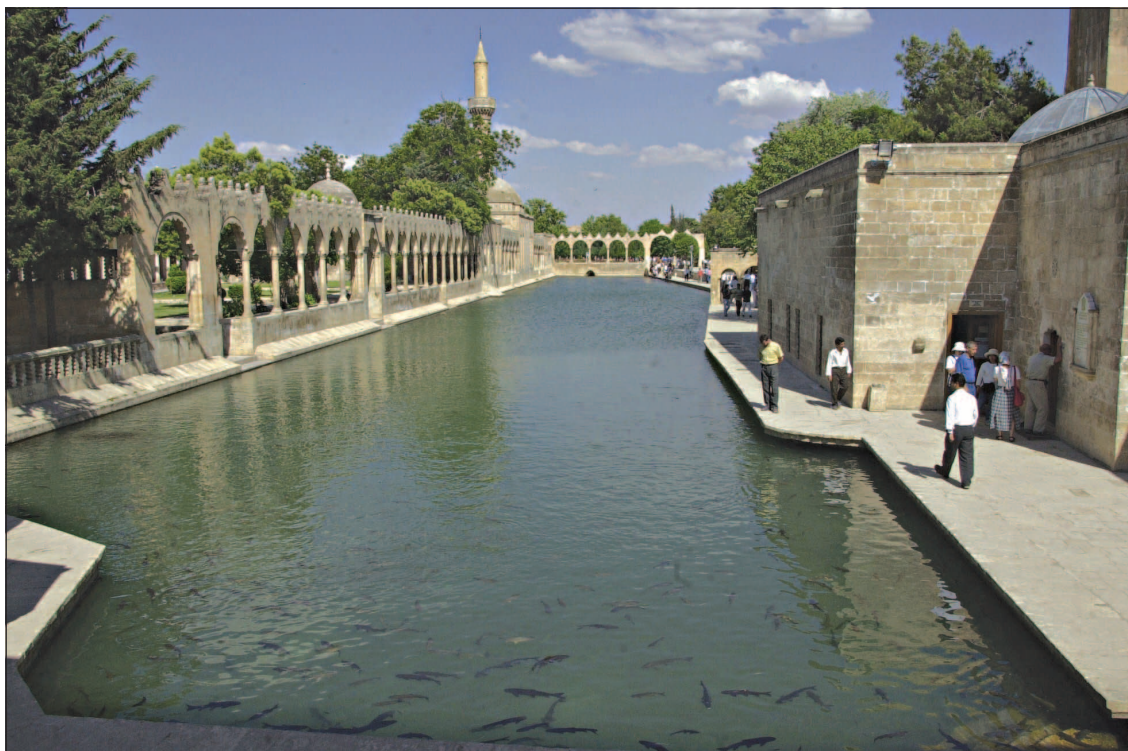
Eastern Turkey is about as adventurous as one can get on the doorstep of Europe. But it's a safe, welcoming place for families or single soldiers, sailors and airmen.

Join us, in the upcoming pages, for a trek through southeastern Turkey's exotic sands.



PHOTOS BY TERRY BOYD/Stars and Stripes

With few changes in the last 2,000 years, the oldest quarters in Mardin, Turkey, look like a set out of "Arabian Nights."



This view from the Abdurrahman mosque at the Pool of Abraham shows its ornate architecture and lush setting.



Southeastern Turkey is one of the last bastions of Syrian Orthodox Christianity. These boys at a church in Mardin display a text in Suriani, or Aramaic, which is the language Jesus probably spoke.



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