

Ankara City of Treasured Archaeological Sites

“If you are not conservative, then you cannot be a conservationist,” was a phrase quoted by Prof. Baykan Günay from Middle East Technical University (METU) in a special plenary session held during The 26th Annual Congress – AESOP 2012, which I have attended in mid of July 2012. His presentation about The Spatial History of Ankara was remarkable and provided me with an in-depth understanding about the richness of historic structures in Ankara from a variety of empires such as Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman. As a guide to the process of exploring the approaches of conservation, I decided to visit some significant archaeological heritages.

The Citadel area and old bazaars marked the beginning of my journey, where I discovered a couple of souvenir shops at the entrance of the Ankara Castle. As I walked further, it led me the inner area of the castle where it is filled with art galleries, restaurants, old houses with lively community and the valuable 12th century **Alaaddin Mosque**. The mosque recorded the Seljuk art and wood craftsmanship, but its characteristics have been altered due to the restorations by the Ottomans. Knowing that in the past, Ankara used to function as an important commercial center during the Roman period, I was not surprised to find some **Roman stones** with inscriptions on some of the buildings’ walls. Later that day, I visited the remains of **Roman Theatre**, followed by a visit to the amazing **Temple of Augustus and Rome** (built between 25 BC – 20 BC) which is situated beside the 15th century **Haci Bayram Mosque**. The notion of efforts to maintain continuity of identity could be seen from the traditional images of the area. The area is the opposite of rootlessness, as it felt really amazing to note that behind the ruins, artifacts and numerous trails left by different civilizations; there were 1001 interesting stories could be discovered.

During my stay, I have visited the **Anitkabir**, the final resting place of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the museum to understand about the nation-building of Turkey. Also, I took a chance to experience Ankara’s night life by having dinner at a modern shopping district named **Tunali Hilmi Street**. Its atmosphere is very lively and lined with many shops, cafes, bars and *al fresco* dining with people hanging out day and night, to an extent that you can never feel lonely here!



Ankara Castle



Anitkabir, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk



Lively and enjoyable dimension of dining at Tunali Hilmi Street