

# CULTURE TOURISM IN GAZIANTEP AND ITS SURROUNDING AREA

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## ABSTRACT

This study named "Culture Tourism in Gaziantep and its immediate environment", contains historical and cultural attractions that create the basis of culture tourism in Gaziantep and the presentation possibilities to the tourist with respect to gradually developing understanding of tourism. Therefore, as an alternative tourism type, culture tourism, is a kind of tourism experienced on cultural resources, and its main motivation is to see and know new places, to learn new things and the most important is that, it creates a need for gaining new experiences to participate in cultural facilities. In this study, available cultural and historical attractions in Gaziantep province in South-Eastern Anatolia region are emphasised. In this respect, historical and cultural heritage attractions, in Gaziantep province, which still continue to exist and belong to Hittite, Med, Assyria, Persian, Iskender, Seleskos, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic-Arabic and Islamic-Turkish culture are explained. Moreover, attractions are categorized under 5 different main subject areas such as historically, prehistorically, archeologically, military and religion. Later, the tourism capacity of the examination area is emphasised and in the last part of the study general suggestions on the improvement and organization of cultural tourism are given.

**KEY WORDS:** Gaziantep, Tourism, Culture Tourism, Tourists, Attractions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The research area was chosen to be Gaziantep city and its environs. The research identifies the boundary of the city as encompassing cultural structures within the settlement that can be incorporated into cultural tours of Gaziantep city in Gaziantep province, as well as individual buildings in the surrounding vicinity. Gaziantep was selected as the research

subject to raise awareness about the insufficient protection of culturally significant assets in the region. One additional rationale for selecting Gaziantep as the focus of the study is the dearth of research on cultural tourism in the region. Gaziantep is situated in the Gaziantep Region, which is part of the Middle Euphrates Section within the Southeastern Anatolia Region. The research area spans from 38° east to 36° west and from 37° north to 36° south.

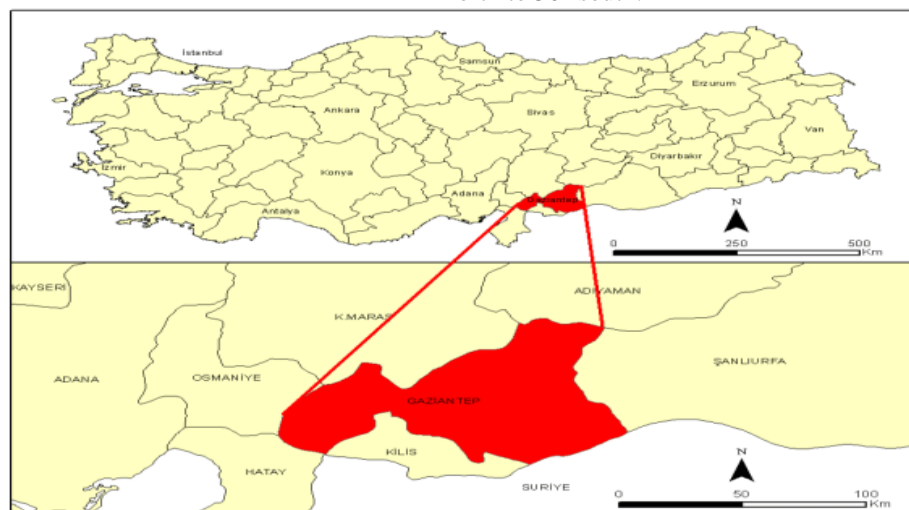


Figure 1. Location of Gaziantep Source

The study "Cultural Tourism in Gaziantep and its Surroundings" examines the tourism attractions of Gaziantep province, which has significantly contributed to Turkey's

tourism industry over the past decade. The analysis is conducted using geographical principles and research methods. The research subject comprises a total of 3 chapters. The initial



section of the analysis focuses on the examination of the cultural heritage within and surrounding Gaziantep. These categories encompass prehistoric, archaeological, historical, military, and religious heritage. The second section focuses on the spatial configurations within cultural tourism regions. This section focuses on the examination of restoration in cultural heritage sites and buildings, landscaping for the purpose of tourism, and the functional transformation of buildings and cultural heritage within museums. The third chapter focuses on the evolution of Cultural Tourism in Gaziantep and its environs. The conclusion section of the research paper presents identified issues and corresponding solutions.

## 2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF CULTURAL LAYERS IN THE STUDY AREA

Due to its strategic location at the crossroads of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt, Gaziantep has consistently served as a cultural and commercial hub throughout history. It has also played a significant role as a historical settlement, being situated at the convergence of major routes connecting Maraş, Aleppo, Urfa, and the Mediterranean.

### 2.1. Gaziantep's Settlement History During Prehistoric Periods

Gaziantep's history can be traced back to 5600 BC, making it one of the most ancient settlements in the world, as documented by historical sources. Gaziantep has traversed the Chalcolithic, Palaeolithic, and Neolithic epochs in terms of historical periods. It possesses a profoundly ancient and culturally abundant history that encompasses the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Eti, Mitanni, Persian, Assyrian, Alexander, Selefkos, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic-Arab, and Turkish Islamic, following the Bronze Age. During the Turkish-Islamic eras, various dynasties such as the Umayyads, Abbasids, Seljuks, Artukoğulları, Fatimids, Ayyubids, Dulkadiroğulları, and the Ottoman Empire had a significant influence in governing Gaziantep. Turanian, Semitic, and Indo-European tribes migrated to the region from the east, west, and south. Nevertheless, historical records indicate that a group of indigenous inhabitants known as the "Halaf" resided in the area prior to the aforementioned events.

Prior to the Republican era, the city was referred to as Ayıntap (Ayıntab). Based on certain documents, Gaziantep is regarded as the most ancient city in the world. It is widely acknowledged that human habitation in this area dates back to the Palaeolithic era. The city is surrounded by numerous natural and man-made caves made of stone. The findings from the 1956 excavations at Şehzade Höyük in Turlu village indicate that the cultural history of the region can be traced back 9000 years to the Mesopotamian civilization. Moreover, archaeological digs conducted at Coba Höyük, Zincirli Höyük, Tilmen Höyük, Gedikli Höyük, and Şehzade (Turlu) Höyük, along with investigations carried out at Yesemek, Metmenge, and Dülük (Doliche), provide insight into the historical context of the Gaziantep region.

The Old Stone Period, also known as the Paleolithic Age, encompasses the most extensive period in human history. It

holds significant historical significance as it marks the advent of the first humans and their progression towards becoming civilised through the creation of the earliest man-made tools. Surface studies and excavations in the Gaziantep region have revealed that the history of the area can be traced back to the Old Stone Age. A multitude of artefacts from the Palaeolithic era were discovered in Gaziantep and its vicinity. The initial research in the vicinity of Gaziantep commenced in 1946 in the Metmenge area of Dülük village, located in the heart of Gaziantep. The arrowhead discovered in this region has been identified as the oldest arrowhead found in Anatolia during that time period. Thirteen cultural layers were discovered in a location known as "Şarklı Cave" in the Keber hill of the Dülük region. The bottom layer here represents the ancient stone era. The Eosan limestone formations in this region harbour flint nodules utilised by ancient civilizations. The banks of the Euphrates River and the Sacir River provided favourable conditions for the initial human settlement, in addition to their abundance of raw material resources.

Anatolia experienced the Neolithic Period from 7250 to 5500 BC. Archaeological excavations conducted at Sakçagözü in the Gaziantep region have provided evidence that the Neolithic Period spanned from 6500 to 6200 BC. Painted, coarse-paste pottery samples were discovered in Sakçagözü after 6000 BC. The Neolithic Age in the Yunus region spanned from 7800 BC to 6500 BC.

The Gaziantep region is home to numerous settlement centres that are associated with the Chalcolithic Period. Research was conducted at various centres, including Sakçagözü, Tilmen, Gedikli, and Karkamış, in order to gather information about this time period. The settlement in the Gaziantep region, referred to as Sakçagözü or Coba, is a representation of the Chalcolithic Period. At Sakçagözü, four strata from the Chalcolithic Period were discovered, with a dating range of 5500-4500 BC.

Archaeological excavations at Gedikli, Tilmen Höyük, Sakçagözü, and Zincirli have uncovered artefacts from the Early Bronze Age, indicating a more developed settlement in the Gaziantep region compared to the Chalcolithic Period. Archaeological excavations initiated in 1964 have uncovered evidence indicating that Gedikli has been inhabited continuously since the Early Bronze Age. The excavations uncovered architectural remains consisting of stone foundations, mudbrick superstructures, and compacted soil bases. Graves and artefacts that indicate the burial rituals of the same era were also discovered at Gedikli Höyük. Three distinct forms of burials were documented at this location: Simple burials, cists, and chamber graves. Tilmen Höyük is another settlement in the Gaziantep region that has been excavated by the EBA. The excavations at this location commenced in 1956. The graves originating from the Early Bronze Age hold significant prominence within the excavations conducted in the region. A tomb located in the inner courtyard of Tilmen Höyük palace, dating back to the first half of 2000 BC, was constructed using moderately-sized stones and topped with a basalt slab. Human skeletal remains were discovered at both the eastern and western extremities. The burial site also



contained a significant quantity of beads, bronze bracelets, a footed vessel in the shape of a bell, three bronze pins, and two bowls. The discoveries at Tilmen Höyük suggest that it was a highly populated settlement during the approximate period of 3000 BC. In addition to Tilmen Höyük and Gedikli, evidence of the Early Bronze Age lifestyle has also been discovered at Zincirli and Sakçagözü. Nevertheless, artefacts from the period are rare in these two regions.

## 2.2. Settlement History of Gaziantep in Historical Times

The chronological epochs that commenced with the advent of written language exhibit variation across different geographical areas. Mesopotamia and Egypt achieved historical significance prior to other regions. The historical era of Gaziantep region, which began in 1800 BC, is commonly referred to as the Hittite Period. Significant cultural hubs emerged in the Gaziantep region during the Hittite Period. Among these, the most significant sites include Karkamış, Zincirli, and Sakçagözü. During excavations conducted in Şehzade (Turlu) Mound, located between Gaziantep and Nizip on the banks of the Nizip Stream, archaeological evidence of the Telhalaf culture, originating and flourishing in Mesopotamia, was discovered in 1961. In addition to the Hittites, the Assyrians, Medes, and Persians also exerted their authority in and around Gaziantep. Furthermore, the regions of the Hellenistic period were also under the dominion of Alexander, Seleucids, Roman, and Byzantine empires. Cities such as Doliche (Dülük), Kilize (Kilis), Korus, and Belkıs experienced rapid development, particularly within the secure environment established by Roman sovereignty. Saint John, also known as Johannes, was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. He actively propagated Christianity by focusing his efforts on the region called Rum Kale. Gaziantep is home to numerous Roman historical artefacts. The tombs, in the shape of stationary sarcophagi, are located on Dülükbaba hill in Dülük village of Gaziantep and Halilbaş village of Yavuzeli district. These tombs date back to the Roman period and are accessed by descending 10-15 steps.

## 2.3. Urban development from the 19th century onwards

Gaziantep experienced substantial growth in the 19th century as a result of the influence of trade. The indicators of the city's new economic growth are the proliferation of commercial edifices in the historic commercial hub. Novel inns and shops were constructed within the former commercial hub or in vacant areas nearby. Throughout the 19th century, the inner city retained significant areas of open spaces and gardens. During the 1960s, it was widely acknowledged that the location where the Kemikli Bedesten, also known as the Arasta District, would later be built, was unoccupied. In 1965, Nakıp Hanı, Kemikli Bedesten, Tuz Hanı, and other commercial establishments were constructed in this vicinity. The Kadir Pasha Bedesten, constructed by the Armenian community during the rule of Sultan Abdülleziz between 1854 and 1857, along with the adjacent Aziziye Inn (now known as Millet Inn), was unfortunately destroyed during the War of Independence. (Gaziantep Culture Inventory, 2005: 11).

## 3. CULTURAL HERITAGE ITEMS IN THE STUDY AREA

### 3.1. Prehistoric Tourism

Of all the spatial manifestations of cultural advancement, the ancient cities from the Classical Age are the primary focus of tourism. The term used to describe this in the context of cultural tourism is "archaeological tourism". The abundance of ruins in ancient cities, particularly from the Roman Period, and the ongoing discovery of new structures by archaeologists, serve as a compelling draw for individuals to visit these ruins. The meticulous display of the artefacts in spacious museum galleries, coupled with comprehensive documentation, facilitates the acquisition of significant insights into this historical era. Nevertheless, these cities only represent a brief phase in the cultural evolution of civilization. The duration of human existence on earth, as determined by scientific research, exceeds 2.8 million years. Throughout the majority of this period, humans resided in caves. However, in the 12,000s BC, they emerged from the caves and founded settlements that still exist today as mounds. The current era, known as the Stone Age, is scientifically categorised into three periods: Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age), Mesolithic (Middle and Chipped Stone Age), and Neolithic (Polished Stone Age). This classification is based on the materials used to make tools, which were primarily stone. The focal points of Stone Age existence that captivate individuals' interest encompass the dwellings of these individuals, the weaponry employed, domestic implements, sacred artefacts, and cave art. The caves and villages serve as the dwellings for these individuals, constituting the primary habitats of the original inhabitants and their immediate environment. The cultural tourism associated with visiting locations from this era is commonly referred to as "Prehistoric Tourism" or more intriguingly, "Stone Age Tourism". The Stone Age can be divided into two distinct periods based on human settlement and economic activity. During the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic eras, humans resided in caves, engaging in gathering and hunting. However, in the Neolithic period, they abandoned cave dwellings and formed settlements, incorporating agriculture and animal husbandry into their economic pursuits. In light of the impact on tourist destinations, Stone Age Tourism can be categorised into two distinct types: "Old Stone Age Tourism" (also known as Palaeolithic tourism) and "Polished Stone Age Tourism" (also referred to as Neolithic Tourism).

### 3.2. Palaeolithic Tourism

The Palaeolithic Age, spanning over 2 million years, holds the record for being the longest period in the history of civilization. Nevertheless, this era of civilization is paradoxically characterised by a scarcity of cultural artefacts. The primary cultural artefacts of the Palaeolithic era are the caves utilised as dwellings, tools, rock art, and fossil remnants. The primary location of the Palaeolithic Period is within caves. The primary evidence substantiating human habitation in such locations consists of the implements employed by individuals and the pictorial depictions adorning the walls. Nevertheless, the cave floors, which served as habitation sites during this era, remained beneath subsequent layers of culture. The evidence of the Palaeolithic Period can only be observed in the excavated





caves within the context of tourism (Doğaner, 2013: 20). Gaziantep and its environs are highly studied and possess a wealth of Palaeolithic discoveries. Oğuzeli, Metmenge, Sakçagözü, Nizip, Karkamış, and Dülük are the sites that have received the highest level of research activity in this region. The Acheulean biface tool, commonly known as a hand axe, was discovered in 1894 in Birecik, located east of Gaziantep, in the alluvium of the Euphrates. This finding holds significance as it represents the earliest evidence of the Palaeolithic Period in Anatolia. The village of Dülük, situated 12 km northwest of Gaziantep, is the most abundant Palaeolithic site. The fields both within and surrounding the village are abundant with numerous flints, chipped stone tools, as well as biface tools. Furthermore, the caves and rock shelters located in and around the village hold significant importance in relation to Palaeolithic settlements. Thirteen cultural layers were discovered at Keber Hill in the Dülük region, specifically in a location known as "Şarklı Cave". Artefacts from the Palaeolithic era were discovered in the deepest stratum. The limestone formations from the Eocene era in this area contain flint nodules that were utilised by ancient civilizations (www.antepress.com). Flint artefacts were discovered in the vicinity of the cave known as Dülük, situated at the entrance of Dülük village. Flint artefacts were discovered in the fields located north and west of the cave known as Dülük 2, which is situated adjacent to the Şarklı Cave to the east of Dülük village. Extensive research has been conducted by numerous scholars on Dülük village and its environs, leading to the discovery of Lower and Middle Palaeolithic cultures in this region (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2012: 257). In 1938, Muine Atasayan and in 1946, İ. Kılıç and Enver Bostancı gathered Chellean bifaces and Clactonien flakes and debitage from the Dülük village. In 1945, H. Bossert, conducting a survey in the area, discovered a meticulously crafted biface tool from the Lower Palaeolithic era above the village of Dülük. This discovery represented the most significant finding of biface tools in Anatolia up to that point. Enver Yaşar Bostancı conducted the most extensive and enduring surveys in and around the village of Dülük during the years 1954, 1970, 1971, and subsequent years. Bostancı conducted surface surveys and excavations in two rock shelters, namely the Dülük village rock shelter, as well as three caves known as Şarklı Cave, Büyük Cave, and Biçme Cave (blog.milliyet.com.tr). Furthermore, extensive research was conducted not only in Dülük village but also in the vicinity of Gaziantep. Archaeological artefacts from the Lower Palaeolithic Age were discovered in 1945 at Çakmaksulu locality near the Gaziantep-Narlı railway line, specifically in Incesu Village in the centre of Gaziantep. In addition, Erguvanlı discovered two additional biface tools of Chellean or Acheulean variety at Metmenge, which is located in the central region of Gaziantep. The discovered items are stored at the ITU Geological Engineering Faculty. 31 stone tools, 3 cores, and 1 hand axe were discovered during the excavations conducted in the Uzay, Kaleiçi, and Yanalak caves located in the northern valley of Göksüncük village. Upon analysis of the stone tools, a total of 13 flakes, 7 blades, 2 Levallois flakes, and 1 Levallois blade were discovered. Most of the gathered tools are crude. Lower and Middle Palaeolithic cultures are indicated by the presence of Levallois elements and one hand

axe (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2012:259). Palaeolithic chipped stone tools were collected in various locations during different years. In 1950, they were found near the Oğuzeli district. In 1954, they were discovered near the Kartal village in the Sakçagözü district. In 1961, they were found near the Almalı village in the Oğuzeli district, as well as in Mercihamış village in the Karkamış (Barak) district, and in the Sakçagözü and Nizip districts (blog.milliyet.com.tr). The abundance of archaeological findings from the Palaeolithic Period in the Gaziantep region has been further unveiled through recent, methodical surveys. The significance of the 1995 survey conducted by Andrew Garrand in Sakçagözü lies in its findings. This survey focused on the Turkish section of the Levant Rift Valley, which spans from Northern Israel to the Southern Taurus Mountains and the Anti-Taurus Mountains. The purpose was to examine the region and identify Palaeolithic and Neolithic sites in the Sakçagözü area. The Emirler Valley, situated in the northeastern region of Sakçagözü, is abundant in flint resources, as well as caves and rock shelters. Additionally, the valley floor features a sizable ancient lake basin. Artefacts from the Lower Palaeolithic Period were discovered at two open-air settlements by Flint. Thirteen sites, consisting of eleven caves and rock shelters, as well as two open-air sites, yielded Middle Palaeolithic artefacts (blog.milliyet.com.tr). The latest research on the Palaeolithic Period in the region was conducted by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harun Taşkiran in 1999 and 2000 in the vicinity of Karkamış Dam Lake, following a brief preliminary investigation in 1988. There were a total of 35 open-air discoveries from the Palaeolithic Period in the Barak region on the west bank of the Euphrates River. The Dızırtaş site is significant due to its abundant collection of biface tools. The website is blog.milliyet.com.tr. To summarise, Gaziantep and its surrounding areas possess abundant resources of suitable climate and environmental conditions during the Palaeolithic Period, as well as a wealth of flint raw materials and various types of settlements such as open air, cave, and rock shelter settlements. Based on the excavations and surveys conducted so far, it is evident that this region was densely populated by Palaeolithic individuals throughout the lower, middle, and upper Palaeolithic eras.

### 3.3. Neolithic Tourism

The Stone Age marked a pivotal period in the cultural evolution of human beings, with the most significant and rapid transformation taking place towards its conclusion, spanning over a span of 2 million years. During the period around 12,000 B.C., when the climate was favourable, humans emerged from caves and constructed dwellings using materials such as stone, mudbrick, and thatch. These houses were built near bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, and seas. Additionally, they transitioned from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to cultivating crops from seeds, domesticating animals, and establishing the basis for modern village life (Doğaner, 2013: 21-22). The Neolithic Age, lasting for 6000 years, is widely regarded as the most significant epoch in the development of human civilization. During this period, individuals who previously relied solely on hunting and gathering began to domesticate various plant and animal species, and subsequently, they adopted agricultural practises and animal



rearing. During this era, humans constructed dwellings using stone foundations, mudbrick walls, and flat roofs. In addition to utilising stone tools, they fashioned arrow and spearheads from obsidian and created pottery using clay (Doğaner, 2013: 21-22). The Neolithic villages, which still exist today as mounds, acquired a hill-like appearance through the accumulation of successive layers of settlement. Archaeological excavations conducted in Sakçagözü, located in the Gaziantep region, have uncovered Neolithic settlements that can be traced back to the period between 6500 and 6200 BC. Archaeologists discovered a limited quantity of painted, rough-textured ceramic fragments originating from 6000 BC at this location.

The Neolithic Age in the Yunus region spanned from 7800 BC to 6500 BC, as determined by gaziantep.en.gg. Gaziantep and its surrounding areas are abundant with numerous Neolithic mounds. Tilmen Höyük is situated on the eastern side of the İslâhiye district, approximately 10 kilometres away, adjacent to the Karasu Stream. It is among the largest of over fifty mounds located in and around İslâhiye, measuring 21 metres in height. The finds from the mound show the connection and mutual relationship between the ancient Mesopotamian and Syrian cultures and the ancient Anatolian cultures. 16 Photo 5. Tilmen Mound Spatial Arrangement-1 (2014) Tilmen Mound was first identified in 1958 and archaeological excavations continued intermittently until 1972. As a result of the archaeological excavations, monumental structures were excavated from the mound ([www.gaziantepturizm.gov.tr](http://www.gaziantepturizm.gov.tr)). As a result of the excavations, it was understood that the history of this place started in 4000 BC and it was a big city in 3000 BC. It lived its most glorious period in the XVIII-XV centuries BC. Tilmen Höyük was a highly impressive city in Anatolia, ranking among the most splendid cities after Hattusa. The Coba Mound, situated in the Sakçagözü Plain, is an extension of the İslâhiye Plain. It measures 140x90 metres and has a height of 12 metres. The mound is encompassed by arable farmlands that are readily tilled and nourished by flowing streams (Üngör, 2011: 144-45). The excavation of Sakçagözü (Coba) Höyük was conducted by John Garstang from 1907 to 1912, and later by Seton Lloyd in 1949. A subsequent excavation took place in 1949 at this mound, known as "Jobba Huyuk" by Garstang. The excavation was conducted by Taylor and Seton-Williams, under the supervision of Waechter on behalf of the British Archaeological Institute ([www.arkeolojiturk.com](http://www.arkeolojiturk.com)). The excavations at Coba Höyük resulted in the discovery of 12 layers. (Üngör, 2011: 144-45).

Zincirli Höyük, known in ancient times as Sam'al, is an archaeological excavation site situated 10 kilometres to the north of the İslâhiye district. The excavation of Zincirli took place over a century ago, specifically between 1888 and 1902, under the supervision of Dr. Felix Von Luschan from the German Oriental Society (Archaeology of Turkey, 2008: 268). The discovered artefacts are displayed at the Istanbul Archaeological Museums and the Berlin Museum. Scientific studies conducted in Zincirli, a prominent city during the Late Hittite Age, have revealed a continuous settlement from the Early Bronze Age to the Roman Period. According to Lehmann, the initial establishment of Zincirli is believed to

have occurred approximately in 2500 BC. This settlement was a fortified village spanning 8 hectares during the Early and Middle Bronze Age until 1500 BC. According to Üngör (2011: 141), it is known that the settlement at the village level persisted until 900 BC, during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. At Zincirli, the German team discovered stone inscriptions in Aramaic, Phoenician, and Akkadian languages, as well as remarkable stone reliefs depicting gods, kings, and animals in the styles of Late Hittite and Phoenician art. Zincirli emerged as the focal point of a modest autonomous kingdom following the collapse of the Hittite Empire circa 1200 BC. Nevertheless, the city fell under the control of the Assyrian Empire in the 8th century BC and was subsequently devastated by the Assyrians around 650 BC. The fortification wall, along with its foundations, three substantial gateways, and a hundred towers from the final phase of occupation, has been discovered by German archaeologists. The German excavation team conducted excavation work on the citadel located within the city. The citadel possesses its own city wall and entrance gate (Archaeology of Turkey, 2008:268).

### 3.4. Archaeological Tourism

The historical settlement centres in the Gaziantep region were founded along the Egypt-Syria highway that connected Anatolia to the Amanos Mountains, as well as the road route from Mesopotamia that passed through the Euphrates and extended towards the Taurus Mountains in the direction of Gaziantep Dülük, Narlı Plain, and further connecting to Anatolia. Another settlement belt comprises the cities that have been established along the course of the Euphrates River. Furthermore, the path of Alleben Stream in Oğuzeli-Barak Plain and Yavuzeli-Araban Plain also forms a distinct settlement zone. Following the invasion of Anatolia (Hittites) by external tribes in 1200 BC, the region experiences a 400-year period of detachment from advanced civilization. During this era, the region was governed by the Late Hittite kingdoms and the remnants of the Hittite civilization. Between 500 and 330 BC, the region, which was still under the control of the Assyrians and Persians, became part of the Hellenic Union through Alexander the Great's military campaign in the east. During the Hellenistic Period, the inhabitants of this region transitioned from living on mounds to settling in flat areas and began the process of building contemporary cities. During the Hellenistic Period, the region experienced a significant increase in cultural and economic prosperity, which was evident in the daily lives of its inhabitants. This period is characterised by a plethora of sculptures made from gold, silver, bronze, marble, stone, terracotta, as well as various vessels. Additionally, there are numerous seal impressions, tombstones, and inscribed stones. The Kargamesh Archaeological Site contains artefacts that will provide valuable insights into its historical significance, particularly in relation to its strategic location. Kargamesh was established alongside the Euphrates River and has been continuously inhabited since the Neolithic Era up until the present time. It served as a significant hub of artistic and cultural activities during ancient times. Tilmen Höyük, situated 10 km east of the İslâhiye district, is a significant settlement site that was occupied from the Bronze Age to the Roman Period. The Yesemek Open Air Museum, situated in



the Karatepe village of İslâhiye district, was a designated sculpture workshop during the 2nd and 1st millennia BC. The location of Ancient Dülük City encompasses elements of cave dwellings, mounds, and contemporary urban living. Dülük, a revered site since its establishment until the conclusion of the Roman Era, served as a significant hub for the veneration of Teşup and Baal. Zeugma, an ancient city situated in the present-day Nizip district within the confines of Belkis village, was established in 300 BC by the Seleucid Dynasty. This dynasty was led by one of Alexander the Great's generals, and the city was initially named Seleucid Euphrates. Subsequently, it was handed over to the Kingdom of Commagene. Under Roman rule, the city's name was changed to Zeugma. Within the Araban district of Gaziantep, there are three grave monuments from the Roman Period. These monuments are named Elif Grave Monument, Hisar Grave Monument, and Hasanoğlu Grave Monument. They are located in the villages of Elif, Hisar, and Hasanoğlu. These three monuments, situated at the intersection of two significant roads parallel to the Euphrates River, are believed to have been constructed during the Roman Period to cater to affluent, noble, and influential administrators or high-ranking military personnel in the region. The Roman Watchtower is situated around 25 km northeast of Dülük Village, on the road that links Sarayamağara and Büyükkarakuyu villages. The remains of the Saray Cave Ancient Watchtower, also known as the Roman Watchtower, can be found there. The Septimus Severus Bridge, also known as the Broken Bridge, was dedicated to the Roman Emperor Septimus Severus, who reigned from 192 to 211 AD.

### 3.5. Ancient Cities

#### 3.5.1. Zeugma Ancient City

The Zeugma Ancient City holds immense historical, archaeological, artistic, and strategic significance. It is a valuable treasure that has recently been uncovered from the depths of history. The city was established in 300 BC by Seleucus Nikator I, the ruler of the Seleucid Empire, in a

location 10 kilometres to the east of the Nizip district. The city, known as Zeugma, derived its name from its role as a bridge or passage place, and it was greatly influenced by the Latin culture during the Roman rule. Zeugma, situated on the easternmost frontier of the Roman Empire, held significant strategic value. Due to this rationale, the IVth Scythica Legion, comprising a total of 6000 soldiers, was deployed in the city as a frontier outpost (Southeastern Anatolia Guide, 2007:158). Due to its strategic position along trade routes, this city attracted influential military leaders, officers, advisors, and their families from the upper echelons of Roman society. Their presence resulted in a significant increase in commercial activity within the city. The city's strategic location as a major transit point attracted affluent merchants, resulting in a significant flow of financial transactions (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Tourism: Gaziantep, 2002: 42). The opulent and magnificent existence of Zeugma suffered a severe setback in 256 when it was ravaged and annihilated by the Sassanids. Subsequently, the city experienced a gradual decline in population and no further information was reported after the last entry in the church records in 1048 (Southeastern Anatolia Guide, 2007: 158). The archaeological excavation conducted has brought the ancient city of Zeugma, a portion of which is currently submerged beneath the Birecik Dam Lake, to the attention of contemporary society. The museums in the region have acquired a valuable collection of sculpture artefacts from the surface and from the partial excavation of the city. As a result, the Gaziantep Archaeological Museum now houses the world's largest archive of seal prints (bullas), along with hundreds of intricate mosaics, bronze figurines, coins, and numerous other artefacts. Furthermore, he also facilitated the global promotion of Gaziantep. The artefacts are currently stored in the storage facilities of the Gaziantep Museum, with a portion of them being displayed in the museum itself. This centre yields a variety of artefacts such as glass bottles, coins, figurines, 22 seal prints, inscribed stones, bronze and silver ornaments, oil lamps, and terracotta pots (Photo 1).



Photo 1. Extraordinary Roman Mosaics in Zeugma (<https://www.archaeology.org>)

### 3.5.2. Karkamış Ruins

Karkamış, an ancient city of significant importance in Near Eastern archaeology, is situated on the western bank of the Euphrates, along the Turkey-Syria border. In 2000 BC, the city was situated at a significant intersection of the roads connecting Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt (Gaziantep and Tourism, 2013: 17). Aside from prehistoric artefacts, the hill where the castle stands also yielded two prominent settlements dating back to the Early and Late Hittite periods. Karkamış, characterised by a rectangular layout comprising three distinct sections - the Outer City, Inner City, and Castle - was primarily composed of administrative and religious structures at its

centre. The buildings are adorned with black basalt and white limestone orthostats embellished with reliefs in the Hittite-Assyrian style (Southeast Anatolia Guide, 2007: 158). The majority of the reliefs discovered are attributed to the Late Hittite Period. These reliefs provide insight into the lifestyle, attire, and culture of the early 1st millennium BC. They depict soldiers, priests, individuals carrying different animals, princes wielding long and straight swords, chariots, hybrid creatures, and guardian animals participating in a procession to honour the Goddess Kupapa and her name (Photo 2). The majority of the Carchemish reliefs are presently exhibited at the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations in Ankara.



Photo 2. Karkamış Rocky Ruins of Archaeopark Home to Ancient Empires ([www.kulturportali.gov.tr](http://www.kulturportali.gov.tr))

### 3.5.3. Yesemek Open Air Museum

The site is situated on the Karatepe ridges to the southeast of Yesemek village, approximately 22 kilometres southeast of Islâhiye. From 1375 to 1335 BC, the sculpture workshop of the Hittite period held the distinction of being the largest sculpture and quarrying workshop in the Near East (Photo 3). It produced and distributed sculptures and reliefs to significant cities and castles within the empire. The Sam'al (Zincirli) Kingdom managed the operation during the Late Hittite Period, specifically from 1375 to 1335 BC, and they hired local Hurrians for the job. Following the destruction of the Sam'al

Kingdom by the Assyrians, both the quarry and the sculpture workshop ceased operations, and the workers abandoned the region (Ministry of Tourism Gaziantep, 2002: 88). The basalt blocks obtained from the quarry were initially processed in a preliminary form, and the finer details were then added at the location where they were to be shipped. Hence, preventive measures were implemented to mitigate potential damages that could arise during transportation. Only one of the sculptures, which was created on-site and subsequently completed and installed, was discovered in Zincirli (Southeastern Anatolia Guide, 2007: 156).





Photo 3. Yesemek Open Air Museum ([www.tripadvisor.com.tr](http://www.tripadvisor.com.tr))

### 3.6. Castles

#### 3.6.1. Gaziantep Castle

The castle, situated on a mound by the Alleben Stream, with a view of the city, originates from the Chalcolithic Period, approximately 6000 years ago. During the II<sup>nd</sup> and III<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, there existed a small city known as "Theba" in this location. The city's name, believed to have derived from this term, was pronounced as "Ayıntab" by Arabs, "Antaph" by Armenians, and "Hamtaph" by Latins. The castle was initially constructed as a watchtower or outpost comprising multiple towers in the Roman Period between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries

AD (Gaziantep-Halep Promotion Guide, 2008: 20). During the period of 527-565 AD, the Byzantine emperor Justinian I, who was renowned for his architectural prowess, enhanced the defensive capabilities of the castle by extending the moat and constructing 12 bastions and body walls. This was achieved by constructing galleries at ground level and vaulted galleries. The castle in its current condition has a circumference of 1200 metres and is shaped like an asymmetrical circle with a diameter of 100 metres. Suleiman the Magnificent later restored it (Gaziantep Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism; Gaziantep, 2014: 13)

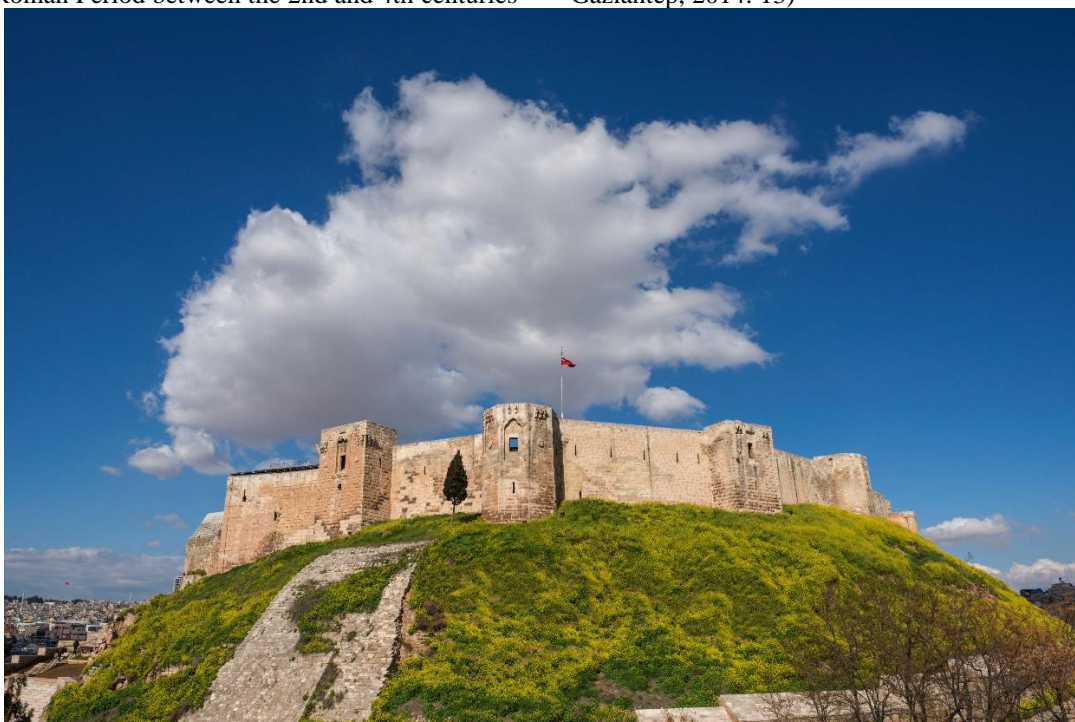


Photo 4. Gaziantep Castle ([architecturaldigest.com](http://architecturaldigest.com))



### 3.6.2. Rumkale

Rumkale is situated in the village of Kasaba, within the confines of the Yavuzeli district. The historical site is situated atop an elevated terrain adorned with towering cliffs, positioned on the western bank of the Euphrates River, at the confluence of the Euphrates River and Merziman Stream (Ministry of Tourism: Gaziantep, 2002: 60). Rumkale is thought to be the ancient fortress known as "Shitamrat", which was seized by the Assyrian ruler Salmanassar III in 855 BC because of its advantageous position. While the historical details of Rumkale remain uncertain, it is believed to have been constructed around 840 BC, specifically during the Late Hittite Period. Over the course of history, the region has been ruled by various powers including the Assyrians, Medians, Persians, Hellenistic Greeks, Romans, and Arabs. Later, Christians gained control of the

region during the Crusades (Turkish Ministry of Tourism: Gaziantep, 2002: 60). The architectural remains surviving today are of Late Roman and Medieval character (Turkish Ministry of Tourism: Gaziantep, 2002: 60). One of the most notable historical structures is a sizable cylindrical ventilation well, accompanied by a system that descends below the level of the Euphrates River. This system follows a spiral path starting from the rim of the well. Johannes (Yohenna), an apostle of Jesus Christ, resided in and around Rumkale during the Roman Period with the purpose of propagating Christianity (Turkish Ministry of Tourism: Gaziantep, 2002: 60). Yohenna is reported to have secluded himself in Rumkale, where he diligently transcribed and safeguarded the Bible manuscripts. Subsequently, the manuscripts were illicitly transported to Beirut.



Photo 4. Rumkale (Castle) <https://www.maliden.com>

## 4. DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM

As a result of the establishment of Bayazhan City Museum, the construction of the cultural road encircling the castle, street sanitization efforts, and facade improvements, the duration of visitors' stays in Gaziantep has increased. Visitors can now explore Bakircilar Bazaar, Almacı Bazaar, War Museum, Gaziantep Castle, and Panorama Museum. This has led to an increase in day trips from cities like Adana, Maraş, Urfa, Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Presently, organised excursions to Gaziantep are arranged from various locations throughout Turkey. The intermittent decline in public order in the region has a detrimental impact on the organised tours. Gaziantep experiences a higher influx of tourists during the months of April, May, September, October, and November. Tours are less frequent during the summer months due to the higher temperatures. Furthermore, due to Gaziantep's status as an industrial and commercial hub, individuals visit the city for business transactions on weekends and throughout the summer and winter seasons. Tourism is also supported by the tours arranged by Gaziantep Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Tours to Gaziantep were initially arranged from Istanbul in 1996-1997. As of now, American soldiers stationed at the Incirlik American Base have been arriving in Gaziantep. Gaziantep experiences a higher influx of tourists during the months of April, May, September, October, and November. Summer's higher temperatures result in reduced tour frequency.

Furthermore, due to Gaziantep's status as an industrial and commercial hub, individuals visit the city for the purpose of conducting trade both on weekends and weekdays, throughout the summer and winter seasons. Tours arranged by the Gaziantep Chamber of Industry and Commerce also make a valuable contribution to the tourism sector. Tours to Gaziantep were initially arranged from Istanbul in 1996-1997. As of now, American soldiers stationed at the Incirlik American Base have been arriving in Gaziantep. Since 2000, agencies from Istanbul have been organising tours under the name of GAP tours for those interested in visiting Zeugma before it was flooded. Within this particular context, tours began to disseminate throughout Gaziantep and the entire surrounding area. The exhibition of the Zeugma mosaics at the Gaziantep Archaeological Museum in 2005 led to a rise in tourism from Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Furthermore, the inauguration of Gaziantep's largest zoo in 2001 has led to a substantial surge in tourist numbers in Turkey. The year 2004 held significant importance for Gaziantep. The Cultural Inventory is prepared as a result of elections and with the support of the local administration and the Çekül Foundation. The foundation, established in 1990, focuses on five main areas: nature, culture, education, organisation, and promotion. In 2004, a meeting took place between Metin Sözen, President of Çekül, and the city officially joined the Union of Historic Cities (TKB). Through this membership, the restoration of three buildings in



the Gaziantep Culture Road Project was successfully accomplished as part of the "Utilising European Funds for Historical Heritage" initiative. The promotional activities conducted in Bey Quarter, along with the city council meetings, play a crucial role in promoting Gaziantep's cultural heritage. In 2005, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality became the pioneering municipality to establish a facility known as the "Conservation Implementation and Inspection Bureau-KUDEP". The "200 Joint 200 Works" programme commences in the same year. The growth of tourism in Gaziantep can be attributed to the collaborative efforts of the public, local, civil, and private sectors. An all-encompassing approach is being employed to develop tourism. Renovation efforts commence in the castle, Bakırcılar Bazaar, and historical neighbourhoods of Gaziantep. Maps depicting the Culture Road project have been created. The repair of the buildings on the Culture Road is given priority by the Regional Directorate of Foundations and the Special Provincial Administration. The Gaziantep branch of the Chamber of Architects actively participated in the Culture Road Project. The restoration efforts in Gaziantep prioritised the preservation of the city's historical fabric, ensuring the integrity of its architectural heritage. The buildings were collectively restored rather than individually. The Bakırcılar Bazaar Street Rehabilitation Works were conducted while maintaining the authentic essence of the bazaar. Following the restoration of Bakırcılar Bazaar, modifications were implemented within and in the vicinity of Gaziantep Castle. The Naib Bath, Kır Kahvesi, and Kale Boutique Hotel, located in the vicinity of the castle, underwent restoration and were developed for tourism purposes. This restoration project was funded by grants from the European Union. Bakırcılar Bazaar is linked to Gaziantep Castle, and a 5.5 km Cultural Road has been constructed leading up to Şire Inn. The historical Antep houses are being renovated in the Bey Quarter, which is regarded as an extension of this road. The initiation of the Project for Restoring the Lower Euphrates River Basin to Tourism took place in 2007. Consequently, restoration efforts were also commenced in Rum Kale. The establishment of Gaziantep Archaeological Museum dates back to 1944. The Medusa Glass Artefacts Museum was established in Gaziantep in 2008. The museum displays glass artefacts that are 1000 years old. The Bayazhan City Museum was inaugurated in 2009. The inauguration of the Zeugma Mosaic Museum in 2011 resulted in a twofold increase in tourist arrivals to Gaziantep. Gaziantep was awarded at the Istanbul TKB Awards Exhibition in 2007. The Hıdır Street Rehabilitation Works were executed by leveraging the opportunities provided by the TDB. The Kepkep Street Rehabilitation Works were conducted in 2009. Gaziantep was awarded the "Bakırcılar Bazaar Street Sanitisation Project and its Implementation" in 2007 for its outstanding work. The "Culture Road Project" was the recipient of the prestigious Metin Sözen Conservation Grand Prize in 2008. The Bey Quarter Street Rehabilitation Project, Bayazhan Restoration, and City Museum were awarded a continuity award in 2009. In 2004, significant measures were implemented to safeguard cultural assets in Gaziantep. The development of Gaziantep's cultural tourism has been expedited by various initiatives, including the arrangement of the castle and its surroundings, the

opening of Kır Kahvesi, Naib Bath, and Kale Boutique Hotel for tourism. Additionally, the Bakırcılar Bazaar Street Sanitisation Works, Culture Road Project, Bey Quarter Street Sanitisation Work, restoration of the inns, and the opening of Zeugma Mosaic Museum in 2011 have contributed to this acceleration.

## 5. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Gaziantep, situated in the Southeastern Anatolia Region, possesses significant tourism potential, particularly due to its rich historical and cultural assets. This research area is rich in prehistoric mounds and caves. It has also served as a hub for several civilizations, including the Hittite, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman civilizations. Throughout history, it has been home to numerous cultural sites such as castles, churches, monasteries, and mosques associated with these civilizations. Today, while the majority of these artefacts remain in existence, a few have either vanished entirely or are awaiting restoration. Gaziantep possesses significant global and national potential, particularly due to its prehistoric mounds and cave settlements. It also boasts crucial resources for faith tourism, military tourism, archaeological tourism, and historical tourism. Rumkale, situated in the research region, holds significant religious and historical importance for Christians. It is revered as a sacred site because it is believed that Johannes, one of Jesus Christ's apostles, transcribed copies of the Bible in a chamber hewn from the rock. Simultaneously, the presence of the Church of St Nerses the Poet and the Barşavma Monastery within the castle enhances the significance of Rumkale. Dülük, located in the research area, serves as the cult centre for the beliefs of Teşup, Zeus, and Jupiter Dolikhenos. Within this area, there exists a temple dedicated to Teşup, the deity associated with the sky and storms, dating back to the Hittite Empire Period. Simultaneously, the faith in Mitras was also prevalent in Dülük. The world's largest subterranean Mitras temple is situated on the southern slopes of Keber Hill in Dülük. In addition to the aforementioned religious sites, the city centre is also home to various churches, mosques from the Turkish-Islamic era, and tombs located in both the city centre and its surrounding districts. These landmarks collectively highlight the city's significant potential for faith tourism. Military tourism holds significant potential within the research field. The Panorama Museum, War Museum, Atatürk Memorial Museum, Martyrdom and Martyrs' Monument, Şahinbey, Karayılan and Şehitkâmil monuments, all of which commemorate the heroes who lost their lives in the defence of Antep, are the city's most significant attractions for military tourism. Furthermore, Republic Square, Freedom Square, and Democracy Square hold significant importance in the context of Military Tourism due to their association with Independence Day celebrations in Gaziantep. The research area of Zeugma Ancient City, Yesemek Open Air Museum, Ancient Dülük City, Kargamış Ruins, Antep Castle and Rumkale, Septimus Severus Bridge, monumental tombs, and museums exhibit archaeological artefacts, all of which contribute to the value of Archaeological Tourism. Due to its historical succession of Hittite, Med, Assyrian, Persian, Alexander, Seleucid, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic-Arab, and Islamic-Turkish rule, the region possesses a wealth of historical tourism resources. The city



exhibits a diverse range of cultural artefacts from civilizations such as Hittite, Byzantine, and Roman. It is adorned with numerous inns, baths, mosques, bedestens, castles, and fountains that date back to the Islamic-Arab and Islamic-Turkish eras. To optimise the potential mentioned above in the research field, certain factors need to be considered. Specifically, the tourism infrastructure in the region should be structured to effectively address the demands of tourists. Once again, it is imperative to conduct a thorough investigation and ascertain diverse marketing strategies to foster the growth of tourism in the region. To accomplish this, it is crucial to establish a compelling image and brand that effectively promotes the research area. Additionally, it is essential to identify the specific tourism market to target and develop comprehensive advertising and promotion initiatives. Furthermore, the city's current cultural and historical assets should be restructured in accordance with evolving tourism perspectives, imbuing them with the qualities of tourist offerings.

To enhance the recognition of Gaziantep, it is imperative to create diverse websites in both local and foreign languages that provide detailed descriptions of its historical and cultural assets. Tour operators in Gaziantep should arrange a variety of tours to explore the city's rich history, which has been influenced by civilizations such as the Hittite, Roman, and Byzantine. There are numerous cultural and historical sites in the city that are associated with these civilizations. The archaeological remnants within the research area ought to be meticulously restored to their original condition and subsequently made accessible for tourism purposes. Brochures and advertising posters ought to be produced, and both national and international publicity should be generated for globally significant sites such as the ancient Dülük City, Zeugma Mosaics, Rumkale, Kargamış Ruins, Yesemek Sculpture Workshop Open Air Museum, and Tilmen Höyük. Furthermore, it is crucial that the current infrastructure and lodging facilities in the research area adhere to traditional design and are available in ample quantity. Simultaneously, it is crucial to prominently display the requisite signage indicating the whereabouts of historical and archaeological sites in the city centre, as it will facilitate tourists' convenient navigation to their desired destinations. Furthermore, the provision of essential guidance services to visitors in protected areas and museums is a highly significant component. Foreign tourists particularly value the presence of guides who can speak their language, as it significantly contributes to their overall satisfaction with the tourist experience.

If a deliberate and comprehensive tourism policy is implemented in Gaziantep, it has the potential to become a significant tourism hub in Turkey and the region. This is due to the abundance of ancient cities, ruins, mounds, museums, and historical and cultural treasures from various civilizations such as Hittite, Byzantine, Roman, Arab-Islamic, and Turkish-Islamic. Therefore, by safeguarding and transmitting cultural heritage to future generations, the research area has the potential to generate substantial revenue for our country.

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