



## OMMRA Information Bulletin Special Issue

From Paolo Volpara on Monday, December 20, 2000

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### BIKING IN TURKEY: USEFULL TIPS FOR RIDING IN THE COUNTRY

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Riding in Turkey is one of the most exhilarating ways to visit this fantastic Country. Big spaces, good roads, interesting places and a friendly population make Turkey a real Bikers Paradise. To better enjoy it, as in any Country, the riders have to be aware of the local conditions and this note will try to provide to visitor and resident bikers few hints born out from a long riding experience in Turkey.

#### Background

Motorcycling, as known in the west, is a recent phenomenon in Turkey although the bike as transportation has been present in the Country for long time.

The wave started at the beginning of the 90's with few personal imports of the most popular brands. Today these brands have Importers and Dealers while some (Honda and MZ) started local production.

Motorcycle sports are present in Turkey with a growing number of participants and spectators: speed circuits are available in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Istanbul has a permanent Cross circuit while similar tracks are organized regularly around the Country. The Turkish Motorcycle Federation organizes Speed, Cross and Enduro championships.

#### The Market

It is difficult to obtain reliable data on sales but we estimate that the class above 500 cc. has a yearly sale of 1200 vehicles per year and the total active number of these bikes is below 5.000 units.

**Yamaha** (<http://www.beldeyama.com.tr/>) claims the leading market share position being the sole producer to cover all categories with Sport, Cross, Enduro, Touring, and Cruiser models.

**BMW** enjoy the reputation and prestige coming from the car market and it shares with Yamaha a leading position in sales. The same distributor, Borusan (<http://www.borusan.com.tr>) covers cars and bikes often relegating the last ones to the role of "small brother". Most of the police bikes in the Country come from BMW and the service, although streamlined, is present in Ankara and Istanbul.

The distribution of **KTM**, once controlled by BMW-Borusan, has now been taken over by the **Harley Davidson** distributor.

**Kawasaki**, once the market leader, has lost several positions in recent times with a reduction of the models imported (primarily Sport and Cruiser). The same Importer of Kawasaki distributes for Turkey **Aprilia** (Pegaso and Scooters).

**Harley Davidson** is the ultimate brand for affluent bikers although some of the HOG members (<http://www.hogtr.com>) clock serious mileage on their machine and sustain a rich calendar of events and rides. Good service for H-D in Istanbul (with Café') and in Ankara,

**Honda and Suzuki**, in the past sporadically present in the market are now increasing share in the Sport and Enduro segment.

A very dedicated and specialized importer, Demaks ([www.demaks.com.tr](http://www.demaks.com.tr)) deals with small quantities of exotica such as **Ducati, Triumph, Moto Guzzi and Bimota**. The quality and exclusivity of the bikes is reflected in the good service provided in Istanbul. Finally, for the lovers of Extra-exotica and strong wallets **Titan** bikes are imported and serviced in Istanbul (<http://www.customzone.com/>)

### Servicing the Bike

The distribution network covers almost exclusively the main cities and the South Coast in summer period. Service and assistance, outside Istanbul and Ankara, are in the hands of generic mechanics. Widely available in the "Sanayi" (Car Repair Center) of any small and big city they do not have a specific experience and training in motorcycle. You will get prompt, on the spot assistance, helping hands and a wide knowledge on "how to put a vehicle back on the road": do not expect state of the art maintenance and forget any intervention on the electronic area.

**Spare parts** are reserved to Istanbul (as some friend put it "We are the last chance between Athens and Singapore") but do not despair. The strong sense of hospitality, and a permanent solidarity between "people on the road", overcome in Turkey any obstacle: the large network of Busses covering all territory can deliver within 24 hours any spare part from Istanbul to a remote village.

In case of need it is easy everywhere in Turkey to find a truck for the transport of the bike, to find a willing mechanic ready to share with you the experience of repairing a machine never seen before, to have a part shipped from Ankara or Istanbul. Patience, Spirit of Adventure, Friendship and Curiosity are the essential elements for getting out of any problem.

**The recovery procedure is simple:** if your bike cannot run and you are stranded on the road, signal to stop to a Car/Bus/Truck. If space is available the bike will be loaded on the back if not you will get a lift to the nearest center where (normally around the Mosque) you can rent a Pick Up to transport your bike. The bike will be moved to the nearest Oto Sanayi a splendid invention of Turkey: in the same area of a city everybody involved in car/bike/truck repair has his own shop. Without spending time moving around

you will find located here welders, mechanics, tire repairers, electricians, exhaust experts, etc. In the Sanayi you will get prompt attention and normally you will be able to find a temporary solution to finish your ride. If a spare part is needed from Istanbul take note of the addresses listed below: call “your man in Istanbul” and ask for the part to be shipped by bus. All this in real fast time, with sincere courtesy, infinite teas and low cost.

**Tires** are widely available in Istanbul and Ankara with Metzeler (<http://www.metzeler.com/html>) being the well represented brand. Dunlop, Pirelli, Bridgestone do not bring to the Turkish market the full range of products but some types and sizes are imported and distributed. A call in advance will clarify what is at disposal at any time.

**Oil and Petrol** are distribute by a vast network of Petrol Stations: intervals between stations are very shorts never exceeding 50 km.: unleaded petrol can be difficult to find outside of main roads. 80% of Stations accept Credit card (Visa and Master/Access being the most popular). Just keep a clear note of type and characteristic of viscosity requested by your bike in case you cannot find your favorite brand (Most popular BP, Mobil, Castrol, Shell, and Total). Most of Petrol Stations offer Water and Air Service. Just be careful on **motorways**: the network being new it lacks of Service station and you can find yourself in trouble if you do not fill up before passing the gate.

#### Your Man in Istanbul

The best thing to do is to send an e-mail to OMM group announcing your arrival date and your needs for service, route, assistance or hospitality. We will do our best to answer to your questions and to locate the parts you need. Mail on the web-site or directly to some riders of the group:

Paolo Volpara at [volpara@homemail.com](mailto:volpara@homemail.com)

Selim Karadag at [selim.karadag@teklan.com.tr](mailto:selim.karadag@teklan.com.tr)

Murad Acar at [muradacar@superonline.com](mailto:muradacar@superonline.com)

Cemil Turker at [cturker@mutlu.com.tr](mailto:cturker@mutlu.com.tr)

**You may also log into the Horizon Unlimited Network for Long Distance Riders sending your message to [Istanbul@HorizonsUnlimited.com](mailto:Istanbul@HorizonsUnlimited.com) In this way you will get in contact with all riders subscribing to the Horizon Unlimited local community and normally willing to help fellow bikers.**

If you cannot anticipate your coming and you are in trouble your men in Istanbul are: **Levent Baki** is the founder and owner of Berke Motor (Kawasaki, Aprilia, BMW) at Nispetiye Cad. Bebek Yolu Sok.5 80630 Istanbul Turkey), rock singer, U2 fan, gourmet and expert of Turkish cuisine. He has one of the largest networks of bikers' friends in Turkey (and abroad) and he will stop for nothing to help a biker in need. The shop is very near to the Bosphorus University and the Second Bridge Europe-Asia. Phone: +90 (0) 212 257 70 72 Fax: (212) 257 70 4 E-mail: [leventbaki@superonline.com](mailto:leventbaki@superonline.com)

**Sinan Afyoneri** at Mototas (Suzuki, BMW ond other important brands of accessories and gears). Successful racers, master of drag sessions Sinan will always welcome you with gentleman elegance, competence and attention. Address: Intas Sitesi A Blok,30, Kiziltoprak, Istanbul, Turkey Phone: +90 (0) 216 3476171 Fax: (216) 3479400 or vivit the web site at [www.mototas.com](http://www.mototas.com)

**Suleyman Memnun** at Fan Motor sells Yamaha and a large range of off-road second hand bike. He is the current Sport/Circuit Balcan Champion and the list of his victory in circuit and of f-road is endless. In his shop, you can find the Yamaha range with plenty of off road accessories and gears. Fan Motor at Ataturk Oto Sanayi Sitesi 2 Kisim Ada 4023 N. 14-15 Maslak Istanbul Phone: +90 (0) 212 285 08 88 Fax: (212) 286 15 54  
**Bilhan Ozturk** is the Sales Manager at BMW Turkey. With perfect English and large experience not limited to Beemers is a sure address in case of need. Address: Kurucesme Cad. 72 Kurucesme Istanbul Phone: +90 (0) 212 2877250 Fax (212) 287 72 54.

### Getting Around

GSM mobile telephones operate almost everywhere in the Country: the country international code is 90, the code for international outgoing calls is 00, the one for out of city code is 0. Istanbul, because of the large population has two codes (0)212 for the European side and (0) 216 for the Asian side.

If you do not have a mobile phone almost everywhere you can buy Phone cards for National and International calls. Major operators provide "call home" and "collected call" services. (Check the number before you leave with the operator of your choice). Internet Cafe' are quite popular and Hotels/Pension can give you access to the net.

**The roads.** A network of Motorway is now spreading trough the Country: normally you pick up the ticket at the entrance and pay (small amount/no cards) at the exit.

With few exceptions (Motorway/highway Edirne - Istanbul - Ankara, Main road Istanbul – Bursa, Izmir highway to Cesme and Aydin, Adana Antakya and Gazi Antep motorway) the roads in Turkey are a source of surprises and, for the unaware, of dangers.

Roads marked red and yellow on international maps are paved but poorly maintained.

**Holes** of relevant proportions can suddenly appear. Indications are casual and "**sleeping soldiers**" (concrete bumps across the road to reduce speed) are not indicated and can make you fly high on the air. The surface is generally **slippery** for the presence of diesel from trucks and in wet residual mud can make riding quite interesting.

The **driver behavior** adds to the excitement: the venerable **age of vehicles** and the low level of experience of the majority of pilots constitute hazard for bikers. In Turkey, bikes are invisible to other vehicle and it is essential to maintain constantly an aggressive, protective riding attention. **At night** trucks, tractors and cars can move without rear (and sometime frontal) lights. Pedestrian share roads with you so keep well out of the right margins and make good use of horn and deep beam.

**In case of accident** ask for help from truck drivers or minibus drivers: wait for the police who is never far away. If you can still ride after the accident, it is recommended to reach a Police or Gendarma post to report the accident without waiting on the spot.

**Emergency Phone Numbers: Police 155, Ambulance 112**

It may be useful to print and carry with you the following note explaining that you are a Biker without knowledge of the language, who had an accident, requesting in Turkish to call the Police or an Ambulance:

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'Ülkenizde motorsiklet seyahati yapmakta olan yabancı uyruklu bir ziyaretçiyim. Türkçe bilmiyorum . Ciddi bir kaza geçirdim ve acil olarak yardıma ihtiyacım var. Lütfen polis ve ambulans çağırınız: Polis acil çağrı: 155, ambulans acil çağrı: 112 (Police and ambulance emergency call numbers)

**Speed Limits** are clearly indicated and in general a 120 Km/h on motorways and Highways, 90 on major roads and 50 on urban areas will keep you out of "blue light" attentions: recently several speed traps have been placed in operation. They consist of a plain car parked along your sense of direction monitoring your speed and radioing it to a roadblock few kilometers further down the road. If you are caught be gentle, be humble and have full documentation for you and bike. It is normally possible to get away with a low fine or a simple "do not do it again". Roadblocks managed by "Gendarma" (military police) or by the army are frequent at the entrance or exit of urban areas. In this blocks the control is on personal and vehicle documents (foreigners must have Passport or Identity Card). Insurance (mandatory and Carnet de Passage can be obtained at the Touring Club in Istanbul and Ankara or at any of the Border points.

The Touring Club of Turkey (**Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu - TTOK**) is a very efficient and well-respected organization. A visit to their Offices can solve many bureaucratic problems (Documents for the bike, International Driving License, Carnet de Passage, Insurance). Here you can also find maps and tourist information documents: always with professionalism and courtesy. Offices are based in major towns and at the important border crossing.

**Ankara** - Maresal Fevzi Cakmak Cad., No: 43, Beevler, Tel: (0-312) 2228723 - 2139761, Fax: (0-312) 2228557

**Antalya** - Milli Egemenlik Cad, Dallar Yildiz Carsisi, No: 9, Tel: (0-242) 2470699

**Gazi Antep** - A. Fuat Cebesoy Cad., 5/A, Tel: (0-342) 2325224, 2342687

**Iskenderun** - Cumhuriyet Meydani, Besim Yucel Ishani, No: 4, Tel: (0-326) 6177462

**Istanbul** - Sisli Meydani, No: 364, Sisli, Tel: (0-212) 2314631 - 36, Fax: (0-212) 2489661

**Izmir** - Alsancak, Ataturk Bulvari, No: 370/A, Tel: (0-232) 4222621-4213514, Fax: (0-232) 4226387

**Mersin** - Mucahitler Cad., No :10, Tel: (0-324) 2320492

**Tasucu** - Abdi Ipekci Cad., No: 27/B, Tel: (0-324) 7411463

**Trabzon** - Iskenderpasa Mah., Cami Sok., 17/11, Tunelcikisi, Tel: (0-462) 3217156

#### **Border Crossing Offices**

Cilvegozu -Turkish-Syrian frontier post, Tel: (0-326) 4323454

Gurbulak- Turkish-Iranian frontier post, Tel: (0-472) 3212036

Habur - Turkish-Iraqi frontier post, Tel: (0-486) 5287032

Ipsala - Turkish-Greek frontier post, Tel: (0-284) 6161574

Kapikule - Turkish-Bulgarian frontier post, Tel: (0-284) 2382034, Fax :(0-284) 2382034

### Planning a Trip

Turkey is really at the doorstep of most European Countries: the entry road can follow two directions.

**To Turkey from Europe by Road:** Due to the problems in former Yugoslavia the road recommended today moves from Vienna to Budapest, Szeged, Arad, Sibiu, Pitesti, Bucarest, Ruise, Stara Zagora, Chaskovo, Edirne. From Edirne, a modern motorway (pay-toll) brings you to Istanbul in less than two hours. This road is around 1650 Km. and it can be covered in two days. We are always interested about the status of this road and the security: pass your info to [volpara@homemail.com](mailto:volpara@homemail.com) and we will keep distributing them. If you tried alternative land roads, please mail to us for circulation.

**To Turkey from Europe by Sea:** This road involves moving to the East Coast of Italy. Ferries are available at Trieste, Venezia, Ancona, Bari and Brindisi. The ferry destinations are Igoumenitza, Patras, Pireus (Greece) or Istanbul, Izmir, Cesme, Kusadasi (Turkey).

The Greek Ferries association as a good web site at <http://www.ferries.gr>

For Ferries from Italy to Turkey you can log into [www.travel-](http://www.travel-italy.com/library/transportation/sea/other_destinations/turkey.html)

[italy.com/library/transportation/sea/other\\_destinations/turkey.html](http://www.travel-italy.com/library/transportation/sea/other_destinations/turkey.html) or into

<http://www.motorhoming.com/Ferries.htm> ViaMare offers services between Brindisi and Cesme at [www.viamare.com/medtur99.html](http://www.viamare.com/medtur99.html) while the site

[www.goEurope.about.com/travel/goEurope/library/planner/blp\\_ferries\\_south\\_intl.htm](http://www.goEurope.about.com/travel/goEurope/library/planner/blp_ferries_south_intl.htm) has a complete list of European ferries.

A relatively new service between the Port of Trieste and Istanbul offers a Roll-On/Roll-Off service for vehicles with the passenger flying from Lubjana to Istanbul Check for this service at [www.samer.com](http://www.samer.com)

OMM riders prefer the fasted connection to Europe. This one is Brindisi to Igoumenitza in an 8 hours crossing (normally during the night). Check at the Superfast Ferries web site at [www.superfast.com/english](http://www.superfast.com/english) for timetable and reservations (From Ancona, Brindisi or Bari to Igoumenitza). Disembarking in Igoumenitza in the early hours of the morning it is possible for a dedicated rider to reach Istanbul (1,100 km away) by the late evening/early night. The first 300 Km to Trikala are spectacular and twisty mountain roads, from Trikala a good road mixed with motorway leads to Thessaloniki and from there, via Kavala, a good road brings the rider to Ipsala the border crossing to Turkey. The 250 km. separating the Border at Ipsala from Istanbul are a mix bag of "heavy traffic road". Attention should be placed on the portion Tekirdag-Kinali. From Kinali 80 km of modern motorway, make the final portion an easy going.

For the riders visiting Turkey OMM designed a set of tours from 10 to 20 days covering the most important sites of this historical Country and offering some of the best riding roads. In addition to these suggested routes you can always check on OMM web site (Rides) the latest itineraries covered by our riders: you will find here detailed descriptions of the routes to follow and an overall status of the roads. Log in at [www.ommriders.com](http://www.ommriders.com). Finally in June 2000 OMM riders completed the "Four Corners of Turkey" circumnavigating the entire Country along the sea and land borders: this is a fascinating way to explore the multifaceted aspect of the Turkish Heritage and a comprehensive report with log book can be found on the site.

**For specific plans, you can always send a mail to OMM asking for suggestions.**

Turkish Web Sites for Bikers.

**GoldWing Home Page** The first motorcycle page of Turkey managed by Feza Haznedar. Feza is the Turkish Master in Gold Wing Riding and the President of the local Wing Club: the site managed by him is dedicated to the Winger elite of the Country. If motorcycling is a new and limited sport Gold Wing ownership is really a "specialty": an estimated 60/80 Gold Wings form the totality of the market growing at a rate of 2/3 bikes per year. 30 Gold Wing are in Istanbul and the owners know each other's well. Honda Turkey provides a basic but poor assistance and a handful of mechanics can put hands to the Monster without causing damages. The only choice is self-maintenance or travels to Europe. The same applies for spare parts and accessories: in most cases, the only option is direct import (with the use of Internet). Still Feza managed to group around him few Wingers for regular outings and European Trips. The site has interesting points of reference for visitors to Turkey and good reports on rides and events.

Check in at <http://haznedar.com>

**Harley Davidson Owners Group** at <http://www.hogtr.com> reports on the rich calendar of the Club with abundance of pictures and some suggestions for rides.

**Reports on travelling trough Turkey** can be found at the International Motorcycle Adventurers [www.rio.com/~tynda/index.html](http://www.rio.com/~tynda/index.html) , on [www.adventure-motorcycling.com/reports.htm](http://www.adventure-motorcycling.com/reports.htm) and on the essential Horizons Unlimited pages at [www.horizonsunlimited.com](http://www.horizonsunlimited.com)

### Rent a Bike

If **renting a Bike in Turkey** is your plan you may check at the places listed below: major tourist resorts offer during summer seasons motorcycles and scooters for rent. However, Turkey does not have a specialized Rent-a-Bike Touring Service: the Companies listed here claim to be able to provide Bike and Tour plans but we cannot report on their services.

Melitour at [www.melitour.com/biketour.htm](http://www.melitour.com/biketour.htm)

Sardunya Travel [www.sardunyatravel.com](http://www.sardunyatravel.com)

Inca at [www.incafloats.com](http://www.incafloats.com)

From Australia Ferris Wheels at [www.ferriswheels.com.au](http://www.ferriswheels.com.au) offers every year a guided tour across Turkey with the possibility to attend the Memorial Ceremony of the Gallipoli battle.

For Off Road riders Yoshimoto at [www.yoshimoto.de](http://www.yoshimoto.de) offers rides on the south coast and interior of the Country

<http://www.funduro.de/> organizes Enduro and off-road weeks in Turkey all year around.

### Turkey Information

For more about Turkey in general visit these web-sites:

<http://www.exploreturkey.com/>: a commercial site with good pictures

<http://www.focusmm.com/tanamenu.htm>: the best and among the most complete set of information on the Country.

<http://turkiyem.virtualave.net/>: full of Turkish Delights and good hints but still under construction.

<http://www.beyogluweb.com/istanbulshit/core.htm>: this is the site of the most interesting, alternative magazine for Istanbul: Istanbulshit. Go there for something different.

## Safety

Turkey is a quite safe Country: your person and your belongings will never come under risk as long as you behave correctly and kindly. The good rules of travelling mixing with the local culture and tradition will allow any rider to fully enjoy in complete safety the itinerary. Avoid any display of superiority and richness: consider the fact that your machine is worth sometime one year of earning in rural area. You will be frequently asked about the price of your bike: pretend ignorance in exchange and try to avoid the question. You will also be asked many personal questions at almost any stop. (Where do you come from? Are you married? What is your business?) This is not a sign of intrusion in your personal life and it should be accepted with good spirit. An opportunity to meet new friends and share, for a brief moment, the local life.

With the exception of big cities, there is no need in Turkey to lock the bike: just take care of small personal item left in view: kids may be attracted and tempted. For the night, ask where you can leave the bike: normally the vehicle will receive adequate accomodation (Local hotels or pension will invite you to take the bike in the lobby).

In big cities just lock the bike around a pole and, again, take care of personal item left in view (GPS, Gloves, and small accessories removable).

Do not offer rides on the bike: if something happens you will be liable for personal damages.

Take with you just the indispensable (the part you need is always the one you did not carry). Based on collective experience we recommend setting up a small bag to take always with you when travelling on Turkey. This small list of items can save troubles to you personally while helping your friends to enjoy one more mile.

- Bike and insurance documents (make a copy to leave on the bike. Originals with you)
- Spare keys (it is recommended to carry the ignition and lock spare key around the neck or on your person. Do not leave it on the bike)
- Tool box and owner manual
- Lock (chain or disk lock)
- First aid kit (check expiring date and include personal medications)
- Tires repair kit (self-inflating can or tubeless repair kit)
- Set of light bulbs and fuses
- Spare cables for trottle and clutch (already mounted in place)
- Two meters of electric cable
- Fuel bag (pliable tank for 2/5 liters of fuel)
- Flexible pipe for fuel transfer (min 2 meters)
- Battery cables
- Torch (Spare Batteries), Knife (Multi-Blades type), Set Of Spare Gloves, Spare Visor or Goggles, Pen and Paper, Matches, Toilet paper, Towel, Maps, Compass