

Turkey

NY DEPARTURE & RETURN DATES:
JULY 2013 | ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Twenty-First Century Turkey in Fact and Fiction

In a 2004 speech in Istanbul, former President George W. Bush praised the Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk for “creating a bridge between cultures,” by writing novels that demonstrate “that other people in other continents and civilizations” are “exactly like you.” The Swedish Academy echoed those sentiments with its 2006 announcement of Pamuk’s Nobel Prize, which honored him for peering “into the melancholic soul of his native city” and discovering “new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures.” These are big claims to make on behalf of any novelist, but Western readers make them routinely when we praise novelists who write about the Islamic world. They convey truths that we value across a border that seems dangerous, so we credit them with bridging the troubling gap between East and West.

With guest speakers and site visits, you will learn about contemporary Turkish culture and politics (e.g., minority rights; the rise of the Islamic Justice Development Party; and the significance of the headscarf to women across the political spectrum). As a witness to that living history, you will enter into a critical debate about the ways that literature makes its readers feel closer to people and places that would otherwise seem disconcertingly foreign.

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