



Kars Castle: Photo by John Hurd

Kars, Turkey

Turkey's Ottoman Heritage in Eastern Anatolia

Site Significance

The ancient city of Kars, controlled in turn by Urartians, Persians, Armenians, Byzantines, Seljuk Turks, the Ottoman Empire, Imperial Russia and the Turkish Republic, lies in the heart of the southern Caucasus region, a strategic location in northeastern Turkey just 60 kilometers from the borders with Armenia and Georgia. Although the area is struggling with a depressed, largely agrarian economy and a high level of out-migration, Kars has significant potential for economic, social and cultural development.

Preservation by Design®

Project Accomplishments

GHF's project objective was the preservation of Kars' existing cultural heritage and revitalization of living cultures, art, music, nature and bio-industries in the Caucasus region around Kars to create a new magnet for trade, international and national tourism, and for long-term, sustainable economic and cultural development in eastern Turkey.

Planning

The Kars Master Conservation Plan initiated and funded by GHF was developed in partnership with the Kars Municipality and Anadolu Kültür, a regional NGO supporting cultural programs and artistic production across Anatolia. This plan has now been approved by both the Erzurum Conservation Board and Kars Municipality, and the entire Kars Heritage District is now a formally-registered Class A Archaeological Area by the National Government of the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Project Partnerships

- Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- Kars Municipality
- Anadolu Kültür
- Turkish Cultural Foundation



Threats
Neglect
Vandalism
Flooding

Completed Date
2007

Conservation Science

Ottoman-era houses situated at the base of the citadel mound and in varying states of neglect and disrepair were renovated or stabilized to arrest further deterioration and inappropriate concrete buildings were removed as part of the historic district revitalization and improvement. In addition, two Turkish bath houses, Mazlumağa Hamamı and Topcuoğlu Hamamı, were cleaned and their domed roofs were repaired.



Namik Kemal Community Center before (top) and after (bottom). Photo by © Global Heritage Fund

Community

The house in which famed Turkish poet, Namik Kemal, lived received the most attention and was ultimately rebuilt and turned into a community center complete with offices, workspace and meeting rooms.

Recent Accomplishments

- The entire area is seeing a revitalization and improved protection and preservation due to the model conservation work of the NKCC and adjacent hammams, bridges, historic buildings and streetscapes, under the enhanced legal, zoning and planning protection given by the Class A Archaeological Status of the Kars Heritage District.

Through 2007 and 2008, an active program of festivals, meetings, presentations, donor visits, crafts and art workshops, music recitals and other activities took place in this wonderfully restored historic building.



Local community workers. Photo by Stefaan Poortman



Namik Kemal Community Center in use after restoration for the Altın Kaz Film Festival.

Photo by © Anatolian Artisans

Conflict in the region, the Cold War, and political divisions have left much of this rich heritage stranded in remote and under-developed areas



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