



Signed photograph of Mustafa Kemal.

ANITKABIR MAUSOLEUM AND MUSEUM, ANKARA, TURKEY

THE ENDURING LEGACY OF MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK, FATHER OF THE TURKS

In 1999 *Time* magazine published its list of the 100 most important people of the twentieth century. Every Turk who knew about the competition voted for the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Some people, I was told, voted ten times a day for weeks. Unlike Sir Winston Churchill, he didn't make the roll.

I'm sure that the taxi driver who drove me along the wide boulevards of the city that Atatürk chose for his capital in 1923 would have been shocked to hear this. When I tell him my destination is Anıtkabir (the Memorial Tomb) where Atatürk is buried, he looks pleased. When he realises that I can speak some Turkish, he launches into a description

of the site with a very accurate account of Atatürk's life including, of course, his part in the Gallipoli campaign.

On arrival the driver gives a respectful nod to the soldier on duty, gives me a look of approval and takes his leave. My bags are X-rayed and I'm waved forward up a white paved road flanked on either side by stone lions. Access to the site is via this 262-metre-long Road of Lions. Anıtkabir is built on high ground overlooking the city and attracts 12 million visitors annually. Although Ankara appears to be a new city, it has layers of history. It was a Hittite settlement (c1600 BCE to 1100 BCE) and the lions, which symbolise Anatolia, are Hittite inspired, as is the architecture of the whole 60-hectare site.

Anıtkabir was designed by Professor Emin Onat and Assistant Professor Orhan Arda, and work began in 1941 three years after the death of the first President. It is also the final resting place of İsmet İnönü, first Prime Minister and second President of Turkey.

The Atatürk legacy is another layer of history in Turkey and details of his life are known by heart by every Turk. The



The Hall of Honour. Photos: Cindy Davies



Soldier, villager and intellectual at Anıtkabir.

country abounds in statues and busts of him. He was born in 1881 in the declining years of the Ottoman Empire. As a child he was known as Mustafa Kemal and in 1934, in keeping with his own legislation which required all Turks to take a surname, he called himself Atatürk – 'father of the Turks'. It was an appropriate title for the man who oversaw the founding of the Turkish Republic.

During his distinguished army career, he came to the attention of the Allied forces in 1915 as a talented officer who had played a major role in repelling the invasion of his country at Gallipoli. By 1920 the Sultanate had been abolished and the Allies had divided up the Ottoman Empire among themselves with the Treaty of Sèvres. Atatürk led the Turks in the War of Independence (1919–1921), ensuring that Turkey remained an independent country. On 29 October 1923 Turkey was proclaimed a republic, with Mustafa Kemal as its first President.

From 1923 to his death in 1938 Atatürk and his government instituted reforms which brought Turkey into the twentieth century as a secular state with Islam as its main religion. Legislation ensured both men and women had equal rights. The fez, turban and eventually the veil for women disappeared. He boosted literacy levels by changing the alphabet from Arabic script to Roman, an enormous undertaking. He died in November 1938 at the age of 57 in the former Sultan's residence, Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul. The palace is now a museum and all the clocks are stopped at 9.05, the time he died.

After the completion of Anıtkabir in 1953 his body was disinterred, wrapped in a shroud and, according to Islamic rites, buried directly in the soil below the Mausoleum, facing the K'aaba (the holy centre of Islam in Mecca). It was covered with earth brought from the 64 provinces of Turkey.

Anıtkabir is a huge complex divided into four main parts: the Road of Lions, the Ceremonial Plaza, the Hall of Honour – the location of Atatürk's tomb – and the Peace Park which surrounds the monument. There is also a five-room museum, opened in 1960, dedicated to Atatürk's achievements.

A five-centimetre gap separates the paving stones on the Road of Lions to ensure that visitors take their time and observe respectful behaviour on their way to the tomb. In spite of the formality Turks can't overcome their love of children and I saw a young soldier remove his helmet to kiss a baby. The Turkish Army, Navy and Air Force are on ceremonial duty at the tomb, and as National Service is compulsory in Turkey there is no larrikin behaviour from the young male visitors. They know that it's an enormous honour to be chosen for duty at Anıtkabir.

The Road of Lions opens onto a huge ceremonial plaza (129 metres long by 84 metres wide) designed to accommodate 15,000 people. Travertine – a form of limestone found in Turkey – was used for the floor. It is decorated with 373 Turkish carpet patterns in various muted colours. Ahead, the Monument dominates the horizon; a large rectangular building with ten columns approached by 33 marble steps, each 40.2m wide. In common with many of the ancient temple sites of Turkey, the grandeur of the building is designed to inspire reverence in those who approach it. On either side of the steps are bas-reliefs depicting Atatürk's victories and statues representing grieving Turkish women on one side and Turkish men depicted as soldier, villager and intellectual on the other.

Soldiers are positioned at the main entrance, sometimes standing to attention, at other times with heads bowed. Behind the soldiers on the wall of the Mausoleum are inscriptions from Atatürk's speeches. One of the inscriptions



Museum mural showing Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal at Gallipoli.



Grandparents with their grandson on the Lion Road.

reads: *Ne mütlü Türküm diyen! – Happy is he who says "I am a Turk!"* Ahead is the vaulted room containing the 42.5 tonne sarcophagus carved from a single block of multicoloured marble. The only light in the room comes from a huge wrought-iron window. Most of the people who stand reverently staring at the sarcophagus are Turkish, children are hushed and men occasionally cough to hide their emotion. There is a palpable air of grief, even 72 years after the death of the first President. Only high-ranking military officers and some visiting dignitaries are allowed into the crypt below the sarcophagus.

Outside there is a bit of a show: the changing of the guard. They receive a round of applause from the admiring crowd when they've completed their manoeuvres, hardly imaginable at Buckingham Palace.

After the solemnity a walk around the Peace Park is a pleasant relief. Its name honours Atatürk's famous expression, 'Peace at home, peace in the world', and is said to contain over 50,000 trees and shrubs, many donated from other countries. There are several varieties of gum trees that flourish in Ankara's hot dry summers.

The final section of the complex consists of long barrack-style buildings, part of a group of ten towers symbolising the ideals that influenced the Turkish nation and the creation of the Republic of Turkey. The National Pact Tower is the entry to the Anıtkabir Atatürk Museum.

There are three rooms dedicated to Atatürk memorabilia and a further two galleries with panoramas of famous battles when he led his troops to victory. One of them shows the sinking of the Allied warships in the Dardanelles on 18 March 1915, prior to the Anzac landings.

The museum shows the public and private face of Atatürk. A gold and black rectangle showing all 29 letters of the new

Turkish alphabet presented to Atatürk by Parliament in 1928 has pride of place. Atatürk himself toured the country visiting schools and demonstrating the new writing. A mother stands behind her son and asks him to recite it. Next to it are Atatürk's ID cards, one in Osmanlija (the Arabic-based script) and another in Roman script.

There are gifts of jewelled swords and daggers from Heads of State who came to visit 'the sick man of Europe' to find he had recovered and been pulled into the twentieth century by this remarkable man. There are photos of Atatürk with the crowned heads of Japan, Iran and England, Afghan generals and a Jordanian sheik.

The photos range from Colonel Mustafa Kemal in uniform in 1917 to one of the last pictures taken of him in 1938, the year he died. He is wearing his trademark Homburg hat. In a photo circa 1924 he is surrounded by women in short 1920s-style dresses.

Examples of early coins and banknotes with his face and printed in the Romanised script are located near the models of houses he had lived in and the military school he had attended. A recording of his tenth anniversary speech in 1933 plays loudly in the background. His voice sounds strangely high pitched and scratchy.

The final room contains assorted clothing which had belonged to Atatürk: he was a stylish dresser as well as a fan of the foxtrot. As a mother hangs over her child, she writes carefully in the visitors' book. A life-size wax model of the man himself, wearing a lounge suite and seated at his desk, watches the departing visitors as they walk into the souvenir shop, where gold-framed portraits of him abound, to be added to those already on walls in houses, schools and public buildings throughout Turkey.