



EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
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Pamukkale

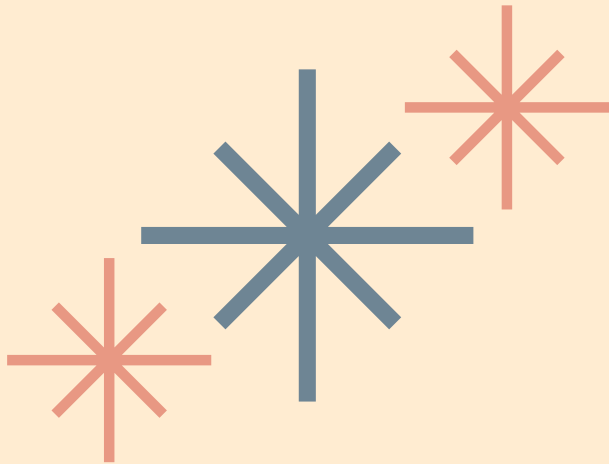
The White Heaven

Pamukkale, meaning "cotton castle" in Turkish, is a natural site in Denizli in southwestern Turkey. The area is famous for a carbonate mineral left by the flowing water. It is located in Turkey's Inner Aegean region, in the River Menderes valley, which has a temperate climate for most of the year.





Known as Pamukkale or ancient Hierapolis (Holy City), this area has been drawing the weary to its thermal springs since the time of Classical antiquity. The Turkish name refers to the surface of the shimmering, snow-white limestone, shaped over millennia by calcium-rich springs. Dripping slowly down the vast mountainside, mineral-rich waters foam and collect in terraces, spilling over cascades of stalactites into milky pools below. Legend has it that the formations are solidified cotton that giants left out to dry.





Tourism is and has been a major industry in the area for thousands of years, due to the attraction of the thermal pools. As recently as the mid-20th century, hotels were built over the ruins of Hierapolis, causing considerable damage. An approach road was built from the valley over the terraces, and motor bikes were allowed to go up and down the slopes. When the area was declared a World Heritage Site, the hotels were demolished and the road removed and replaced with artificial pools.





Aside from a small footpath running up the mountain face, the terraces are all currently off-limits, having suffered erosion and water pollution at the feet of tourists.





Pamukkale's terraces are made of travertine, a sedimentary rock deposited by water from the hot springs. In this area, there are 17 hot water springs in which the temperature ranges from 35 °C to 100 °C. When the water, supersaturated with calcium carbonate, reaches the surface, carbon dioxide de-gasses from it, and calcium carbonate is deposited. Calcium carbonate is deposited by the water as a soft gel which eventually crystallizes into travertine.





Pamukkale is a tourist attraction. It is recognized as a World Heritage Site together with Hierapolis. The underground volcanic activity which causes the hot springs also forced carbon dioxide into a cave, which was called the Plutonium, which here means "place of the god Pluto". Hotels built in the 1960s were demolished as they were draining the thermal waters into their swimming pools and caused damage to the terraces. The water supply to the hotels is restricted in an effort to preserve the overall site and to allow deposits to regenerate.





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