

**Original Article**

## **SAVORING SERENITY: EXPLORING CITTASLOW ROUTES IN TURKEY FOR FOOD ENTHUSIASTS**

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**Abstract:** The diversity of gastronomic regions across the world gives rise to distinct culinary traditions, with local food playing a pivotal role in enhancing the tourist experience. This has led to a growing fascination with local food markets, food festivals, and indigenous food and beverages. The utilization of these local products holds the potential to stimulate economic growth within the tourism sector and bolster the well-being of local communities in destination areas. In 1999, the innovative concept of Cittaslow was introduced in Italy, aimed at promoting sustainability. The Cittaslow International Charter emphasizes the cultivation of a slower-paced lifestyle through innovative applications. Both Cittaslow and sustainable tourism share a common goal of preserving the natural and cultural heritage of destinations. Cittaslow endeavors to elevate living standards for both local residents and visitors alike, placing a strong emphasis on ecological and infrastructural policies, as well as agricultural quality. Cities that receive Cittaslow certification are granted the privilege of showcasing their commitment through an emblem, symbolizing an orange snail. These cities are resolute in safeguarding their unique identity, local customs, hospitality, scenic allure, and infrastructure strategies. Cittaslow stands in stark contrast to the frantic pace of modern life, instead advocating for a serene existence characterized by appreciation and accountability. Travelers who adopt the Cittaslow approach seek destinations that offer respite from stress, promote well-being, and radiate contentment. This philosophy not only paves the way for a new perspective on life but also maximizes the pursuit of happiness.

**Keywords:** Gastronomy, Local Food, Cittaslow, Sustainable Tourism, Cultural Heritage.

### **Introduction**

The world is divided into various gastronomic regions where food, cuisine, and traditions of gastronomy vary between countries (Hall et al., 2003). Local food plays a major role within the tourist's experiences. There is an increased interest in local food markets, food festivals, and local food and drinks. These local products can improve the economic development of the tourism industry and the local people at the destination. In 1999, Cittaslow was launched as a new sustainable concept in Italy. According to the Cittaslow International Charter, the objectives are to encourage and support the culture of slow life through new applications. Both Cittaslow and sustainable tourism have a similar aim of preserving the natural and cultural resources of a destination.

## **Original Article**

The concept of Cittaslow tries to ensure better living standards for the local people and for the visitors. Furthermore, these cities must support the ecological and infrastructure policies and must design at their agricultural quality (Mayer & Knox, 2006). As Cittaslow certificated cities, they can promote themselves with an emblem which illustrates an orange snail (Cittaslow International, 2015). The participating cities want to preserve their own identity, local traditions, hospitality, scenic quality, and their infrastructure policy (Semmens & Freeman, 2012). Cittaslow is the opposite concept of fast paced lifestyles. Living in tranquility, enjoying life with respect and responsibility are the choices of travelers preferring Cittaslow approach. It may encourage tourists to travel to destinations where they feel stress-free, healthy, and happy. With this concept a new life philosophy is created with the thought that happiness is at maximum.

It has also been stated by many studies that the Slow Food and Cittaslow concepts are alternative approaches to other rapid growth models ([www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)). Local production with traditional methods provides the sustainability of cultural heritage while contributing to local development. The production of local food by farmers will improve the local economy and create new jobs for the local population in Slow Cities. The Cittaslow movement has important advantages for small town residents by helping them to earn income through local production. For this reason, within the context of this movement, it is rather important that the local food culture is preserved (Cengiz et al., 2017). Experiencing the local food of a region, and local products are important pull factors for Slow Cities as gourmand tourism destinations. The local products of these cities must be protected from negative impacts of mass tourism (Kuhn, 2007).

There are many traditional recipes in Slow Cities in Turkey that offer authentic Turkish cuisine. The restaurants in these cities offer dishes to visitors made with the local produce of farmers, fishermen, and other citizens engaged in agriculture.

As a destination with an exciting culture, varied scenery, and long history, Turkey and its cuisine could be a highlight for gourmand tourists, who will want to hear the stories of restaurant owners and chefs and to enjoy a dining experience with locals.

In this paper, the qualitative research method is used to introduce Cittaslow routes in Turkey as gourmand tourism destinations. Systematic observations were made in 18 Slow Cities, a literature search was done, and related websites were examined. Six Cittaslow routes were designed as gourmand tourism destinations in Turkey.

### **Slow Cities (Cittaslow) Philosophy**

According to Kienesberger et al. (2020) the definition of slow travel was formulated as follows: Slow travel is a lifestyle and way of travelling more sustainably where travelers stay in a destination for a longer period of time and accept a slower pace as a part of discovering local culture and enjoying nature. Slow living not only improves people's quality of life, but it also makes it easier for us to cope with countless vital problems, like today's changing trends in Corona times. The application of the Cittaslow approach to tourism industry, and the creation of new Slow Cities where this movement will be applied, contribute to the development of natural and original living spaces, which also attracts gourmand tourists. Slow City approach will be a sign of quality for cities whose population does not exceed 50.000 ([www.cittaslow.org/content/philosophy](http://www.cittaslow.org/content/philosophy)).

Slow Food and Cittaslow are working together, and they introduce a new direction for production and consumption ([Cittaslow.org](http://Cittaslow.org), 2019). The goal of the Slow Cities movement is to sustain the identity of each city with its local values. With the globalization many cities are losing their identity and their local culture, foods, and their environment (Özmen et al., 2017). This movement also takes the local cultures, a relaxed life, healthy environment, and sustainability into consideration (Knox, 2005). It also attempts to preserve the local food and the cultural heritage (Pietrykowski, 2004).

The Cittaslow philosophy is more sensitive to local values and benefits. The growth in gastronomy tourism brings opportunities for destinations seeking to keep their local values that are also applicable to the gourmand tourism industry. An unspoiled countryside is today recognized as proof of a quality and worthwhile vacation (Kristges, 2003). Mayer and Knox (2009) mention that the Cittaslow philosophy could improve the quality of life.

## **Original Article**

According to Heitmann et al. (2011) the concept of Cittaslow primarily attracts tourists, who are looking for quality and individual tour experiences. To introduce new gastronomic tours will improve the economics of the destinations (Nilsson et al., 2010). Regional food is becoming more important and there is a growing interest in slow food in recent years. Food plays a central role in tourist's experiences, in sustainable tourism development and to establish a sustainable food and eating culture.

### **Gourmand Tourism Destinations**

According to Lacy and Douglas (2002) tourists visit specific destinations to experience local food of the region. Food plays an important role on travelers' destination choices (Sarioglan & Avcikurt, 2016). Travelers want to taste regional food and local produce (Sidali et al., 2011). Every community has idiosyncratic food traditions that are central to their folklore (Slocum & Curtis, 2018). Gourmand travelers who have a special interest in the local food culture are extremely involved in gaining food experiences. When traveling to local destinations or to another country, they want to experience local gastronomy, learn how the farmers make their products and more about the food of the region.

Cittaslow philosophy has been influenced by the "slow food" movement (Radstrom, 2005). To make Slow Cities more interesting for gourmand travelers, culinary richness of these cities must be considered. For this reason, a good cooperation between tourism and agriculture is needed. Agricultural products will be produced in a manner that is sold directly to gourmand travelers with boutique production and care. In this philosophy, like production of traditional Modena balsamic in Italy, branding in agriculture and branding in tourism will lead together. Cittaslow philosophy can be achieved in destinations, especially by combining the concepts of slow food and ecogastronomy. All cultural issues related to food are also included in this concept (Scarpato, 2002). According to a research on food tourism, local food as a tourist product can foster the economic development at the regional level (Boyd, 2015).

Slow Cities also can profit from in their promotion as gourmand destinations, like Levanto in Italy. These cities must rely on quality, local heritage, and social networks (Nilsson et al., 2010). In a Slow City, gourmand travelers will feel themselves as guests rather than tourists and feel the spirit that are offered to them by the locals (Dündar Arian, 2019).

In Goolwa (Australia), "Cittaslow Food and Wine Group" tries to develop ideas to promote Cittaslow and Slow Food philosophy and supports new Cittaslow projects (Cittaslow International, 2019).

In Cittaslow Goolwa Farmers Market, which is held twice each month, a wide variety of fresh local food are on show at the market; cherries and youngberries, strawberries, fish and a wide range of top quality seafood, olive oil, coffee, bread, home crafted gifts including cushions, serving boards and more (Cittaslow International, 2019a).

In Cittaslow Katoomba Blue Mountains (Australia), cooking and growing workshops, stalls at festivals and exhibitions are organized. A slow shopping guide combining Cittaslow/Slow Food for finding pre-loved fashion and cafes across the Blue Mountains is published (Cittaslow International, 2019b). Cittaslow Yea (Australia) area is renowned for producing some great culinary products. Cittaslow Yea is proud to support and be supported by many of the local producers. Food producers are invited to submit a brief description of their products (Cittaslow International, 2019c).

In Enns (Austria) there are home-style cooking of Mediterranean delights, stylish cafes, and bars, that characterize the atmosphere of the city with its people (Cittaslow International, 2019d). Slow Food restaurants in Brussels, Belgium, operate with good, clean, and fair principles ([www.cheeseweb.eu](http://www.cheeseweb.eu)). In French Mirande, local traditions and diversity of local products are preserved (Cittaslow International, 2019e). In Djupivogur cooking and food traditions are celebrated during the international food festival (Cittaslow International, 2019f). The Cittaslow market in Trentino hosts local and non-local companies, hobbyists and associations that deal with tourism, agriculture, and handicrafts in a sustainable perspective, safeguarding the territory and paying attention to the community (Cittaslow International, 2019g).

## **Original Article**

In Midden-Delfland (Nederland) every year an event is organized where visitors consuming local food become aware of a healthy lifestyle (Cittaslow International, 2019h). In Italy, home of Slow Food and Cittaslow, Chianti wine is produced in Tuscany and the famous Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese in north-central Italy (Broadway, 2015). As shown in the examples mentioned above, Cittaslow philosophy is important for the protection and conservation of the local food. On the other hand, local food can be used as a tool to market a Cittaslow as a tourist destination (Dündar Arikan, 2019). Taking all these practices into consideration, the Slow Cities in Turkey also could promote themselves as gourmand destinations.

### **Cittaslow Routes in Turkey**

Turkey has a rich culture and natural attractions that will interest most travelers. Coastal areas, mountains, forests, farmlands, flora, fauna, antique sites, historical buildings, and a rich cuisine provide Turkey with a broad range of natural and cultural resources that attract tourists from all over the world. Rich natural resources are protected and preserved in the country. Turkey with good weather conditions is home of many different types of fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, tea, and cotton. The country has a rich flora and fauna. Various types of fish, meat from sheep, goat, lamb, beef, chicken, and turkey are used in Turkish cuisine.

There are 268 Slow Cities in 30 countries in the world, and 18 of these Slow Cities are in Turkey (Cittaslow.org, 2019a) : Ahlat, Akyaka, Egirdir, Gerze, Gökceada, Göynük, Güzöl, Halfeti, Köyceğiz, Mudurnu, Persembek, Savsat, Seferihisar, Taraklı, Uzundere, Vize, Yalvac, Yenipazar which could best offer and support unique tourism products on Cittaslow routes, could attract the gourmand tourists who are looking for new destinations. Throughout the year the gourmand travelers can visit the producers, taste their products to get some hands-on experience or observe the production process and the cuisine, harvesting of vegetables, honey and aromatic plants, walnut and chestnut picking, cheese, jam and tomato paste making, olive oil production, grape harvest, production of wine, mushroom collection and fruit picking.

In this paper there are six Cittaslow routes that are introduced as new tour products. They should not be seen as tour programs but more as a series of suggested visits and activities that can be included in the tour programs of the tour operators and travel agents. These tour programs could be marketed to the gourmand travelers. For each route, a brief description of the itinerary could be given, and visits and activities for each day could be suggested with a brief presentation of sights. For each route detailed information could be given by the travel intermediaries like: “where and what to eat”, “where to accommodate”, “which places to visit”, “local food markets and events such as the wine harvest, olive picking, collecting honey or aromatic herbs”.

Taking the distances between the Slow Cities and distances to the airports into consideration, six different routes are designed each for seven overnights. These routes could be determined in less; however, the routes have been created by taking into consideration that they are compatible with the Cittaslow philosophy and are suitable for slow life. To communicate with the local people and to experience the slow tourism, less time for accessibility to the destination and more time at the destination has been planned.

Route 1-Marmara Cittaslow Route: arrival and departure in Istanbul.

Route 2-West Anatolia Cittaslow Route: arrival in Izmir and departure in Dalaman. The travelers who attend this tour will have the opportunity after this tour to spend one week in a resort in Antalya region.

Route 3-Middle Anatolia Cittaslow Route: arrival and departure in Ankara.

Route 4-South Anatolia Cittaslow Route: arrival and departure in Antalya. The travelers who attend this tour will have the opportunity after this tour to spend one week in a resort in Antalya region.

Route 5-North Anatolia Cittaslow Route: arrival in Erzurum and departure in Sinop. Both cities are accessible daily via air transportation from Istanbul and Ankara.

Route 6- East Anatolia Cittaslow Route: arrival in Gaziantep and departure in Van. Both cities are accessible daily via air transportation from Istanbul and Ankara.

### **Route 1: Marmara Cittaslow Route (885 Km.)**

Day 1: Arrival in Istanbul Airport

## **Original Article**

- City tour in Istanbul (Bosporus)
- Dinner and Overnight in Istanbul
- Day 2: Breakfast in Istanbul
- Visit and Lunch in Istanbul
- Dinner and Overnight in Istanbul
- Day 3: Breakfast in Istanbul
- Drive to Vize (Istanbul-Vize:153 km.)
- Lunch in Vize
- Dinner and Overnight in Vize
- Day 4: Breakfast in Vize
- Drive to Gökçeada (Vize-Çanakkale: 288 km. and ferryboat to Gökçeada:1,5 hrs.)
- Lunch in Çanakkale
- Dinner and Overnight in Gökçeada
- Day 5: Breakfast in Gökçeada
- Visit and Lunch in Gökçeada
- Dinner and Overnight in Gökçeada
- Day 6: Breakfast in Gökçeada
- Ferryboat to Çanakkale: 1,5 hrs.
- Visits in Troya and Canakkale
- Drive to Bursa (Canakkale-Bursa: 276 km.)
- Dinner and Overnight in Cumalikazik (Bursa)
- Day 7: Breakfast in Bursa
- Visit and Lunch in Bursa
- Dinner and Overnight in Cumalikazik (Bursa)
- Day 8: Breakfast in Bursa
- Transfer to Istanbul Airport (Bursa-Istanbul: 168 km.)

### **Route 2: West Anatolia Cittaslow Route (452 Km.)**

- Day 1: Arrival in Izmir
- City tour in Izmir
- Dinner and Overnight in Izmir
- Day 2: Breakfast in Izmir
- Visit and Lunch in Izmir
- Drive to Seferihisar (Izmir-Seferihisar: 48 km.)
- Dinner and Overnight in Seferihisar
- Day 3: Breakfast in Seferihisar
- Visit and Lunch in Seferihisar
- Dinner and Overnight in Seferihisar
- Day 4: Breakfast in Seferihisar
- Drive to Ephesus (Seferihisar-Ephesus: 70 km.)
- Visit in Ephesus and Lunch in Selçuk
- Drive to Yenipazar (Ephesus-Yenipazar: 104 km.)
- Dinner and Overnight in Yenipazar
- Day 5: Breakfast in Yenipazar
- Visit and Lunch in Yenipazar
- Drive to Akyaka (Yenipazar-Akyaka: 180 km.)



## **Original Article**

Dinner and Overnight in Akyaka

Day 6: Breakfast in Akyaka

Visit and Lunch in Akyaka

Dinner and Overnight in Akyaka

Day 7: Breakfast in Akyaka

Drive to Köyceğiz (Akyaka-Köyceğiz: 20 km.)

Visit and Lunch in Köyceğiz

Dinner and Overnight in Köyceğiz

Day 8: Breakfast in Köyceğiz

Transfer to Dalaman Airport (Köyceğiz-Dalaman: 30 km.)

### **Route 3: Middle Anatolia Cittaslow Route (702 Km.)**

Day 1: Arrival in Ankara

City tour in Ankara

Dinner and Overnight in Ankara

Day 2: Breakfast in Ankara

Drive to Gündül (Ankara-Gündül: 106 km.)

Lunch in Gündül

Dinner and Overnight in Gündül

Day 3: Breakfast in Gündül

Drive to Mudurnu (Gündül-Mudurnu: 138 km.)

Visit and Lunch in Mudurnu

Dinner and Overnight in Mudurnu

Day 4: Breakfast in Mudurnu

Drive to Yedigöller (Mudurnu-Yedigöller: 103 km.)

Visit Yedigöller and Lunch in Abant

Dinner and Overnight in Mudurnu

Day 5: Breakfast in Mudurnu

Drive to Göynük (Mudurnu-Göynük: 53 km.)

Lunch in Göynük

Dinner and Overnight in Göynük

Day 6: Breakfast in Göynük

Drive to Taraklı (Göynük-Taraklı: 45 km.)

Lunch in Taraklı

Dinner and Overnight in Taraklı

Day 7: Breakfast in Taraklı

Lunch in Taraklı

Drive to Ankara (Taraklı-Ankara: 257 km.)

Dinner and Overnight in Ankara

Day 8: Breakfast in Ankara

Transfer to Ankara Airport

### **Route 4: South Anatolia Cittaslow Route (481 Km.)**

Day 1: Arrival in Antalya

City tour in Antalya

Dinner and Overnight in Antalya

Day 2: Breakfast in Antalya

Visit and Lunch in Antalya

## **Original Article**

Drive to Eğirdir (Antalya-Eğirdir: 140 km.)

Dinner and Overnight in Eğırdır Day 3: Breakfast in Eğırdır

Visit and Lunch in Eğırdır

Dinner and Overnight in Eğırdır

Day 4: Breakfast in Eğırdır

Visit and Lunch in Eğırdır

Dinner and Overnight in Eğırdır

Day 5: Breakfast in Eğırdır

Lunch in Eğırdır

Drive to Yalvaç (Eğırdır-Yalvaç:75 km.)

Dinner and Overnight in Yalvaç

Day 6: Breakfast in Yalvaç

Visit and Lunch in Yalvaç

Dinner and Overnight in Yalvaç

Day 7: Breakfast in Yalvaç

Drive to Antalya (Yalvaç-Antalya: 266 km.)

Visit and Lunch in Termessos

Dinner and Overnight in Antalya

Day 8: Breakfast in Antalya

Transfer to Antalya Airport

### **Route 5: North Anatolia Cittaslow Route (1078 Km.)**

Day 1: Arrival in Erzurum

City tour in Erzurum

Dinner and Overnight in Erzurum

Day 2: Breakfast in Erzurum

Drive to Uzundere (Erzurum-Uzundere: 86 km.)

Lunch in Uzundere

Dinner and Overnight in Uzundere

Day 3: Breakfast in Uzundere

Drive to Şavşat (Uzundere-Şavşat: 170 km.)

Lunch in Şavşat

Dinner and Overnight in Şavşat

Day 4: Breakfast in Şavşat

Drive to Trabzon (Şavşat-Trabzon: 290 km.)

Lunch in Rize

Dinner and Overnight in Trabzon

Day 5: Breakfast in Trabzon

Drive to Perşembe (Trabzon-Perşembe: 192 km.)

Lunch in Perşembe

Dinner and Overnight in Perşembe

Day 6: Breakfast in Perşembe

Lunch in Perşembe

Dinner and Overnight in Perşembe

Day 7: Breakfast in Perşembe

Drive to Gerze (Perşembe-Gerze: 280 km.)

Lunch in Gerze

## **Original Article**

Dinner and Overnight in Gerze

Day 8: Breakfast in Gerze

Transfer to Sinop Airport (Gerze-Sinop: 60 km.)

### **Route 6: East Anatolia Cittaslow Route (793 Km.)**

Day 1: Arrival in Gaziantep

City tour in Gaziantep

Dinner and Overnight in Gaziantep

Day 2: Breakfast in Gaziantep

Lunch in Gaziantep

Drive to Halfeti (Gaziantep-Halfeti: 100 km.)

Dinner and Overnight in Halfeti

Day 3: Breakfast in Halfeti

Visit and Lunch in Halfeti

Dinner and Overnight in Halfeti

Day 4: Breakfast in Halfeti

Drive to Diyarbakir (Halfeti-Diyarbakir: 248 km.)

Lunch in Diyarbakir

Dinner and Overnight in Diyarbakir

Day 5: Breakfast in Diyarbakir

Drive to Ahlat (Diyarbakir-Ahlat: 267 km.)

Lunch in Tatvan

Dinner and Overnight in Ahlat

Day 6: Breakfast in Ahlat

Visit and Lunch in Ahlat

Dinner and Overnight in Ahlat

Day 7: Breakfast in Ahlat

Drive to Van (Ahlat-Van: 178 km.)

Visit and Lunch in Van

Dinner and Overnight in Van

Day 8: Breakfast in Van

Transfer to Van Airport

## **Conclusion**

The proposed six Cittaslow routes in Turkey as new tour products would generally increase the gourmand travelers' awareness to Turkey. These individual cities on these routes offer regional food, that are made of seasonal ingredients of local production. Especially, the authenticity and the genuine local food culture of the locals could be significant pull factors for visitors. Therefore, the Slow Cities should seek to protect their unique food and drink heritage. Projects that focus on and emphasize the economic and social benefits should be undertaken to protect these local values (Arikan et al., 2013).

The Slow Cities on these routes that offer local food can become attraction centers for gourmand travelers. To achieve this aim, the locals should be educated (Edgell, 2006), and the awareness of the locals should be raised for regional food production using innovations in food with the help of local cooking techniques and ingredients.

For cities that want to preserve their identity and cultural heritage and transfer it to future generations, the adoption of Cittaslow philosophy is inevitable. Gourmand travelers tend to prefer quantity over quality and want to travel to a destination after the other. They rather count on have been at a destination than exploring it. Those aspects and preferences of tourists could challenge the attractiveness of the Slow Cities, which is focused on local



## **Original Article**

diversity and encourages a slow, relaxed pace of life at high quality (Presenza et al., 2015) as gourmand destinations. Cittaslow routes could be a motivator for gourmand travelers to visit Turkey.

These routes as new tour products can foster the rural development in Turkey. Increasing gourmand travelers „visits to Slow Cities will help to the promotion of local culture. Local food becomes an important factor in tourism destination marketing, furthermore it can be a key reason for traveling to a specific destination. Small restaurants and shops in the Slow Cities on these routes could try to sell local culinary products. These small-scale businesses could promote local food through a connection between local producers and retailers (Sims, 2009).

The food and beverage businesses on these routes could offer dishes to gourmand tourists made with local produce by farmers, fishermen and other agricultural families. Food cooked from local ingredients could be served at restaurants. The local food culture will be offered directly by the producers or by chefs who use local ingredients. These practices could be provided by the adoption of local production and consumption on these routes.

Tour operators should focus more on the Slow Cities as a product and create attractive routes to let gourmand travelers know that there are such alternative tourism products. Professional marketing techniques could be used to capture domestic and international gourmand travelers. Cittaslow route maps and other applications could be produced for gourmand travelers. Turkey could be promoted with these proposed six Cittaslow routes, which will increase both the awareness of Turkey as a gourmand tourism destination and the promotion of the Slow Cities in Turkey. Exchange of experience with other Slow Cities in other countries will help the active advertising, promotion and marketing of these Cittaslow routes.

This paper presents a broad basis for further research on Cittaslow routes in Turkey as gourmand tourism destinations. Detailed tour programs can be prepared for each route and it can be planned which local food will be served in each Slow City. A quantitative research also could be done into what motivates the gourmand travelers to visit the Slow Cities.

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