



Digital Representations of Intangible Cultural Heritage: New Experiences in Festival Tours

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Abstract

This study examines how leading Turkish tour companies such as Tatilbudur, Jolly, and Tatilsepeti digitally present festival tours within the framework of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Using a content analysis method, the research evaluates the role of digital tools—such as virtual tours, augmented reality, and digital guides—not only in marketing but also in the transmission of cultural experiences. From a folklore perspective, festival tours are not merely tourist activities; they serve as cultural stages where rituals, beliefs, oral narratives, music, and everyday practices are reproduced and performed. Analyzing how these elements are represented on digital platforms is crucial for understanding how cultural memory is transmitted, how local identities are made visible, and how social belonging is reinforced. The findings reveal that specific tours inadequately reflect elements of intangible cultural heritage. However, these shortcomings may be addressed by expanding the scope of the tours and integrating folkloric narratives and localized knowledge systems into digital content through a more holistic approach. In this way, digitalization can become not only a tool for promotion and marketing but also a functional medium for the sustainability and intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage.

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage constitutes the totality of values transmitted from the past to the present, shaping the identity of societies. However, cultural heritage is not limited to physical structures, historical artifacts, or tangible elements. There also exists a form of heritage grounded in people's daily lives, collective memory, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, skills, and belief systems. This intangible heritage is a dynamic structure that nourishes the collective consciousness of societies, linking them with both the past and the future. The preservation and continuity of cultural elements, despite changing socio-economic conditions, are directly related to how individuals and communities safeguard and sustain their heritage. At this very point, the concept of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) gains significance.

UNESCO defines intangible cultural heritage as: "...the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity" (UNESCO, 2003).

The term intangible cultural heritage emerged as a natural extension of studies on tangible cultural heritage, particularly within the scope of UNESCO's efforts to protect cultural properties. The origin of this term reflects a long "period of exploration" spanning over 60 years of UNESCO's history, which was founded in 1946 by 20 countries, including Turkey. One of the significant milestones in this trajectory is the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference on 16 November 1972. Turkey became a party to this convention in 1983. This agreement, in terms of its aims and principles, focused on the preservation of historical structures, heritage sites, and natural environments, and defined the physical constructs created by humanity over millennia and their natural settings as cultural heritage in need of protection (Oğuz, 2009, p. 53).

Over time, UNESCO's initiatives to safeguard cultural heritage expanded beyond tangible elements to include a wide array of living practices such as oral traditions and rituals, bringing intangible cultural heritage into sharper focus. Within this scope, festivals hold particular importance as key carriers of this heritage. Festivals are cultural events, often rich in ritual and entertainment, celebrated on specific calendar dates and rooted in religious, seasonal, social, or historical themes. As Helgadóttir (2018) notes, festivals are generally intertwined with culture; they may revolve around high culture and the arts, local traditions and heritage, or popular and ethnic expressions. Thus, festivals are not only sites of entertainment but also serve as arenas for expressing, reconstructing, and sharing cultural identity. Especially when local participation and representation increase, festivals evolve into spaces of cultural transmission and belonging.

Festivals are defined as recurring occasions marked by celebration and special significance (Smith, 1972). They are held periodically in various regions to commemorate particular values, events, or figures through cultural, artistic, and social activities (Small et al., 2005, p. 66). These events function not merely as practices of entertainment or socialization, but also as critical cultural transmitters where traditional knowledge, beliefs, skills, and values passed down through generations are performed and made visible. Through elements such as oral narratives, traditional

music, folk dances, handicrafts, and ritual practices, festivals provide dynamic platforms for the expression of intangible cultural heritage. In this respect, festivals play a vital role in reinforcing community identities and sustaining cultural diversity. They are not merely performative events, but also function as mechanisms that strengthen the social fabric.

However, in the age of global tourism, the representation of such heritage is frequently reshaped and recontextualized, often repackaged as “manufactured heritage” to align with market dynamics (AlSayyad, 2001). This leads to a complex interplay between the authenticity of traditions and their outward presentation, blurring the boundaries between genuine cultural expressions and staged performances.

Celebratory events deeply rooted in social life serve multifaceted functions beyond their immediate objectives. Similar to national holidays, festivals foster social cohesion by bringing individuals together, nurturing an environment of mutual respect and affection, and creating social spaces where such values are internalized (Gündüz Alptürker & Alptürker, 2021, p. 1410).

In this context, festivals organized in different regions of Turkey at various times of the year serve a dual purpose: preserving and revitalizing intangible cultural heritage while simultaneously contributing to the stimulation of local economies. Celebrations such as the grape harvest festivals in Nevşehir and Bozcaada, the Tekirdağ Cherry Festival, the Alaçatı Herb Festival, the Adana Orange Blossom Carnival, the Olive Harvest events in the Ayvalık–Kazdağı region, and the Şeb-i Arûs ceremonies in Konya are only a few examples that reflect this diversity. These examples are not presented as an exhaustive list but rather as representative cases, chosen because of their cultural and geographical diversity, their high public visibility, and their recognition in both public discourse and the scholarly literature.

To ensure analytical focus, specific selection criteria were applied. Drawing also on classifications in the festival studies literature (Getz, 2010), the festivals were selected according to four key criteria: (i) high levels of public participation, (ii) strong cultural representativeness, (iii) regional diversity reflecting different parts of Turkey, and (iv) thematic variation, including religious, seasonal, culinary, and nature-based traditions. Based on these criteria, a total of seven festivals were chosen. The relatively small number was intentional, as qualitative research prioritizes depth of meaning and rich interpretation over statistical generalization, allowing for more detailed analysis of cultural practices.

These selected festivals were examined in terms of their role in sustaining cultural memory, maintaining traditional practices, and integrating cultural heritage into touristic experiences. Accordingly, the study does not aim to produce generalizable findings, but rather to provide an in-depth analysis of culturally representative cases that illustrate the ways in which festivals simultaneously safeguard intangible cultural heritage and shape contemporary cultural and touristic practices.

Methodology

This study was designed within the framework of a descriptive content analysis based on a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena in their natural context in a holistic manner through techniques such as observation, interview, and document analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p. 39). In this study, document analysis and content analysis methods were employed together to reveal the digital representations of

festival-themed tours.

Document analysis is defined as the systematic evaluation of written or electronic materials (Bowen, 2009), while content analysis is described as the careful, detailed, and systematic examination of a body of material to uncover patterns, themes, and meanings (Neuendorf, 2002). The combined use of these methods enabled the research to address discursive, visual, and technological dimensions simultaneously.

The primary data set of the study consists of the festival-themed tour contents featured on the websites of leading Turkish tour operators, namely Tatilbudur, Jolly, and Tatilsepeti. The sample was determined through purposeful sampling, focusing on festival tours with high digital visibility, strong user interaction, and promotional materials enriched with innovative technologies. In line with these criteria, a total of seven festival tours were examined.

The selected web pages were systematically reviewed, and promotional texts, images, videos, digital guides, and augmented reality elements were utilized as data sources. The data were analyzed through open coding; each text was examined line by line and segmented into meaning units. Similar codes were then grouped to form categories and themes, with particular attention given to promotional language, visual aesthetics, technological innovations, and cultural references.

To ensure the reliability of the analysis, the coding process was independently reviewed by a second researcher. Inter-coder agreement was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula, yielding a consistency rate of over 85%. This level of agreement is considered acceptable in content analysis research.

The scope of the study is limited to the festival-themed tour contents of three major tour operators. The relatively small number of tours examined (seven in total) and the reliance on popularity and digital visibility as selection criteria restrict the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, this limitation also allowed for a more in-depth and detailed analysis of the available data.

Examples of Festival Tours in Turkey

Cultural festivals held throughout Turkey at various times of the year not only revitalize the collective memory of local communities but also enhance cultural tourism by offering visitors unique experiences. In this study, a selection of prominent festivals in Turkey has been examined as a sample to analyze the digital representations of intangible cultural heritage. Each of these selected festivals encompasses social practices shaped around a particular product, belief, or ritual, and is thus regarded as a carrier of intangible cultural heritage.

Within this scope, the Adana Orange Blossom Carnival, Alaçatı Herb Festival, Bodrum Bitter Herb Festival, Ayvalık Kazdağı Villages Olive Harvest, Bozcaada Grape Harvest Festival, Şeb-i Arûs Ceremonies, and Edirne Kakava Festivities have been analyzed in terms of how they are represented on digital platforms and the extent to which these representations contribute to the transmission of cultural heritage. Each festival is evaluated not merely as a cultural event, but as a significant communicative space through which local identity is made visible.

Adana Orange Blossom Carnival Tour

The Adana Orange Blossom Carnival is a vibrant and lively event held annually in April, known as Turkey's first and only street carnival. Initiated in 2013 through a civil initiative, the carnival aims to promote the beauty and cultural richness of Adana during the blooming period of orange blossoms. Known by the slogan "In April, in

Adana,” the carnival hosts a wide variety of activities including concerts, exhibitions, street performances, costume parades, and gastronomic events. Attracting millions of visitors each year, the event significantly contributes to both the promotion and economy of Adana (URL-1).

Tours organized within the scope of the Adana Orange Blossom Carnival serve as a notable example for understanding how intangible cultural heritage is represented in the tourism sector. The tour program offered by Jollytur (Appendix 1) provides a comprehensive experience that incorporates the city’s architectural heritage and culinary culture. The tour begins with visits to the city’s symbolic landmarks in Adana, followed by a focus on the city’s gastronomic heritage, which introduces participants to the local food culture. The program’s inclusion of direct participation in festival events and live performances of local music reflects a meaningful approach to the transmission of intangible cultural heritage.

Research on the Adana Orange Blossom Carnival indicates that visitor satisfaction is notably high. Participants, through both social media and word-of-mouth, have expressed positive feedback, highlighting the carnival’s role as a form of cultural ambassadorship. This satisfaction is largely attributed to the absence of negative experiences with locals and businesses, while the tendency of many participants to return in subsequent years is considered a strong indicator of the event’s sustainability (Karaca et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies focusing on the development of the carnival emphasize the need to enhance organizational quality, diversify activities, and incorporate artistic performances such as theater, folk dances, modern dance, drama, and exhibitions. Promotional efforts have also been deemed insufficient, with suggestions to make more effective use of social media, press, and billboard advertising. Additionally, diversifying souvenir options and offering local culinary products are recommended, as these measures would not only enhance visitor satisfaction but also provide economic benefits to local businesses, thereby strengthening the carnival’s cultural and touristic value (Sahilli Birdir et al., 2018, p. 455).

Rather than being used solely as a branding element, festivals should be promoted alongside their content to contribute to the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. Thus, tourism activities should move beyond superficial representations and adopt approaches that allow participants to engage in authentic experiences. Nevertheless, it remains essential to critically assess the extent to which such touristic organizations truly reflect cultural heritage in depth. As a large-scale festival, the Orange Blossom Carnival should not be presented merely as a “touristic brand.” Failure to emphasize its origins, meanings among the local people, and ritualistic elements may limit visitors’ ability to engage meaningfully and consciously with the cultural heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage is more than an observable event; it is a vital element embedded in the memory and identity of a community that must be sustained. For this reason, festivals should not be approached solely as visual or entertainment-oriented spectacles, but rather presented in an integrated manner with local narratives, rituals, and traditions. The tourism sector should shift toward participatory models that enable visitors not only to observe, but also to become active carriers of heritage, offering a more sustainable approach to cultural preservation.

Although Jollytur’s program reflects certain aspects of intangible cultural heritage, more in-depth and authentic methods must be developed to ensure its effective transmission. To protect and sustain cultural heritage within the context of tourism, collaboration with local communities should be prioritized, authentic narratives should be highlighted, and opportunities should be created for visitors to participate actively rather than remain passive observers.

Alaçatı Herb Festival Tours

The Alaçatı Herb Festival is held annually during the spring months in the Alaçatı neighborhood of Çeşme, a district of İzmir. It celebrates the rich herb culture of the Aegean Region. First organized in 2010, the festival has quickly become one of Turkey's most prominent gastronomy festivals. Its primary aim is to promote Alaçatı's wild herbs and local cuisine, support local producers, and raise awareness about healthy eating. During the festival, a wide array of dishes prepared with regional herbs are offered for tasting, and local chefs present creative recipes centered around herbs. The event also features herb foraging and cooking workshops, market areas with stands by local producers, concerts, exhibitions, and activities for children. Each year, a different herb is chosen as the festival's theme, allowing both locals and visitors to experience a deeper connection to nature. By offering an opportunity to discover the natural beauty and cultural richness of Alaçatı, the festival also makes a significant contribution to the local economy (URL-2).

The one-night Alaçatı Herb Festival tour, organized by Jolly Tur and departing from Istanbul (Appendix 2), is noteworthy for promoting and disseminating cultural heritage through tourism. However, when evaluated from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), the program exhibits both strengths and limitations. Including a local event such as the Alaçatı Herb Festival in the itinerary makes traditional botanical knowledge, gastronomic practices, and women's labor—core elements of folk culture—visible within a tourism context. The festival offers a public space where the relationship between people and nature is expressed, as well as a platform for plant knowledge systems passed down through generations to be performed. In this sense, it contributes to the transmission of knowledge, skills, and rituals, as defined by UNESCO's concept of ICH.

A study examining visitor satisfaction at the Alaçatı Herb Festival indicated that tour companies successfully managed promotional and marketing activities through social media platforms. However, it was also noted that local authorities failed to implement sufficient strategies aimed at increasing festival loyalty. For example, the presence of only a commemorative tree placed at the center of the festival site suggests limited experiential diversity. Incorporating more recreational activities into the festival program could positively impact visitor engagement. To strengthen loyalty, the festival should be enriched with experiences designed to increase overall satisfaction. In addition, expanding the festival area and integrating interactive applications that provide information about Aegean cuisine are expected to improve visitor satisfaction and contribute to the destination's sustainability. Solely relying on local market stands may not generate enough appeal to encourage repeat visits. In contrast, participatory activities such as competitions, blind tasting events, knowledge-sharing sessions, and food-and-beverage pairings may enhance both overall satisfaction and future attendance intentions (Kızılcıoğlu et al., 2020).

During their free time, participants have the opportunity to explore the streets of Alaçatı, observe its stone architecture, and enjoy a visually rich experience. As they walk through the streets, they also come into contact with the daily practices of local residents. Similarly, visiting landmarks such as the Hasan Tahsin Monument in Konak Square, Dario Moreno Street, or historical figures commemorated in Urla creates a spatial bond through narratives that keep collective memory alive. These connections facilitate the circulation of folk narratives, heroic tales, and musical heritage in a touristic form. The visit to the ancient city of Klazomenai, home to Anatolia's first olive oil production facility, points not only to an archaeological site but also symbolizes the continuity between past production practices and present-day olive oil culture, thereby linking the tangible and intangible dimensions of

cultural heritage.

However, free time granted to participants does not always result in meaningful cultural engagement. One of the key reasons is that the experiences remain observational rather than participatory. While herbs gathered by local producers or foragers are sold on the streets of Alaçatı, the absence of hands-on workshops where participants can learn to cook with these herbs constitutes a missed opportunity. Arranging short, structured conversations with local producers, women, healers, or market vendors would also align with oral history methods, a core research technique in folklore studies.

As with many festivals, challenges such as commercialization, the reduction of folkloric elements to mere decoration, and the transformation of residents into photographic subjects are potential issues within this tour. Moreover, the emphasis on architectural and historical sites suggests that the program primarily focuses on tangible cultural heritage, while intangible elements are treated as secondary.

Although the tour is functional in terms of introducing certain visible aspects of folk culture, it falls short in fostering the active transmission and lived experience of intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, future programs should aim to more explicitly incorporate structured interactions with locals, hands-on workshops, oral storytelling, traditional crafts, and culinary practices. In doing so, such culture tours can evolve from being mere observation platforms into ethnographic practices that contribute meaningfully to cultural sustainability.

Bodrum Bitter Herb Festival Tour

The Bodrum Bitter Herb Festival is held annually in March or April in the district of Bodrum, Muğla, to promote the region's rich flora. First launched in 2019, the festival takes place in the Ortakent Yahşi neighborhood of Bodrum. It features the introduction of local herbs, including bitter herb, hemlock, wild artichoke, wild radish, asparagus, and island lettuce. The event also includes cooking workshops, talks, concerts, and folk dance performances. It not only promotes regional cuisine but also supports local producers (URL-3).

The one-day tour organized by Meis Tourism, departing from Ayvalık (Appendix 3), offers a route shaped around the natural beauty and cultural appeal of Bodrum. However, when evaluated through the lens of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), the program presents both commendable aspects and notable shortcomings. The inclusion of elements related to Zeki Müren's life is significant in terms of Turkey's modern folk music and popular culture memory. Müren's songs, stage language, connection with the public, and iconic persona reflect a rich cultural accumulation that contributes to identity formation. However, the museum's focus on physical artifacts without a dynamic representation of the living aspects of his legacy fails to convey this heritage fully.

Bodrum Castle and the Museum of Underwater Archaeology primarily serve as sites focused on tangible cultural heritage. While these locations provide valuable insights into military architecture, archaeological findings, and Mediterranean cultural exchanges, the lack of integration of ICH narratives into the tour design is evident. Local legends, stories formed around the castle, maritime folklore, and memory-based narratives of the local population could have added depth to the tour's folkloric dimension. In this way, folk culture could be revitalized not merely through architectural heritage but also oral traditions.

The strongest connection to ICH within the tour program lies in participation in the Bitter Herb Festival. This festival represents a significant traditional event where the historical relationship between Aegean coastal

communities and nature, folk botany, culinary practices, and women's labor converge. Visitors' engagement through tasting herb-based dishes and interacting with plant sellers creates experiences that are not only gastronomic but also valuable in terms of ecological and cultural memory. Nevertheless, the absence of core ICH components in the tour—such as workshops, cooking demonstrations, presentations on medicinal herbs, or oral narratives by local people—limits the potential for deeper engagement. Transforming the festival from a site to be merely visited into a practice to be experienced could have contributed significantly to cultural sustainability.

Gümbet, often renowned for its lively nightlife, offers an opportunity to explore local entertainment practices. However, this potential remains underutilized as the tour does not address elements directly related to ICH such as local music, dance, oral storytelling traditions, or tavern culture. In fact, Bodrum still hosts many living oral traditions, superstitions related to seafaring, folk knowledge about healing plants gathered by women, and rituals associated with weddings and funerals—all of which could be effectively integrated into the tour with appropriate methods.

In light of these evaluations, the tour program presents a structure that engages with ICH only on a limited and mostly observational level. Experiences, narratives, and direct communication with local communities that would facilitate meaningful interaction with folk culture are largely absent. For a tourism approach that prioritizes the sustainability and intergenerational transmission of intangible cultural heritage, a holistic understanding is required—one that goes beyond festival participation and offers opportunities to experience and understand living folk practices directly. Accordingly, restructuring similar tours in the future to include more participatory, locally focused, and folklorically rich content would enhance both tourist satisfaction and awareness of cultural heritage.

Ayvalık Kazdağı Villages Olive Harvest Tour

The Ayvalık Kazdağı Villages Olive Harvest is an event held every October in the district of Ayvalık, Balıkesir, celebrating the region's olive and olive oil culture. This harvest event offers participants the opportunity to experience olive picking, provides information about the olive oil production process, and introduces the flavors of the local cuisine. Additionally, talks are held on the history of olives and olive oil, and local producers showcase their products. The event aims to sustain the region's agricultural heritage and contribute to sustainable tourism (URL-4).

The tour program (Appendix 4) presents a rich itinerary shaped around the olive culture of the Aegean and combines various cultural stops across Western Anatolia. The program begins with a traditional breakfast in Mutluköy village of Ayvalık, offering participants a direct encounter with local food practices. The tasting of products such as olives and olive jam goes beyond a gastronomic experience and can be considered a folkloric indicator of the Aegean people's historical relationship with nature. Traditional breakfasts are deeply rooted in intangible cultural heritage elements such as daily rituals, seasonal production cycles, and communal dining culture.

The walking tours and coffee breaks on Cunda Island are not only visual engagements with stone architecture but also immersive experiences in public spaces where spatial memory and oral narratives are shared. Iconic places such as Taş Kahve (Stone Coffeehouse) reflect not only architectural heritage but also the everyday communicative practices of local residents, coffeehouse culture, and micro social spaces where oral storytelling is performed. These walks offer a visual and atmospheric folkloric experience; however, if these experiences remain limited to passive observation and are not deepened by guided interpretation, there is a risk of reducing folkloric content to superficial

tourist impressions.

The visit to the Olive Harvest Festival represents one of the strongest connections to intangible cultural heritage within this program. The festival activities encompass living and continuously reproduced examples of the Aegean's ancient olive-growing tradition. The entire process—from harvesting to processing olives—constitutes not only an agricultural but also a ritualistic, ecological, and cultural knowledge system passed down through generations. The festival's social atmosphere facilitates the transmission of this knowledge within the framework of a public celebration, directly aligning with UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage as “cultural practices continually recreated by communities.” Nevertheless, presenting the festival as merely a spectacle and offering limited interaction with local people may weaken the effectiveness of cultural transmission.

The second day's excursion to Mount Ida (Kazdağları) presents a layered and culturally rich experience in terms of folk heritage. The Alibey Kudar Ethnography Museum, located in the village of Tahtakuşlar, houses significant materials related to Turkmen culture, nomadic life, handicraft production, and folk beliefs. Visiting this museum provides a valuable example of how material culture elements collected in the field are preserved and exhibited for folkloristic purposes. The museum serves not only as an exhibition space but also as a site of memory where narratives and oral history practices are preserved. Items such as carpets, tools, tents, clothing, and artistic objects serve as material carriers of intangible cultural heritage.

The visit to Adatepe Village and the Altar of Zeus provides a glimpse into a multilayered cultural memory that spans from antiquity to the present. The integration of mythological narratives, oral folk literature, geographic memory, and traditional architecture reflects a complex structure. The preservation of Adatepe's architecture contributes to the sustainability of vernacular culture, and the village's history, extending from Troy to the Ottoman period, underscores cultural continuity. During the walks through the village, sharing narratives with folkloric depth helps activate the concept of spatial folklore.

The Olive Oil Museum visit is a notable example in terms of raising awareness about the cultural value of this product. It facilitates a multidimensional representation of olive culture by showcasing not only production techniques but also ethnographic materials such as traditional soap-making processes, transport containers, and harvesting tools. The restoration of the former soap factory into a museum can be interpreted as a bridge of continuity between tangible and intangible heritage.

Yeşilyurt Village presents a culturally rich background shaped by its founding mythology and shared Greek-Turkish memories. The transition of nomadic Turkmens into a settled lifestyle, their collaboration with stonemasons, and the resulting architectural synthesis reflect traces of multicultural folk life embedded in architecture. Products offered during free time, such as herb-infused ice cream, mountain thyme, and pomegranate molasses, are not merely items of consumption but also expressions of local knowledge systems and women's labor. In this context, interacting with local residents and hearing the stories behind these products can transform the tour into an Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) experience.

In conclusion, this tour program presents a more comprehensive and diverse structure with stronger connections to intangible cultural heritage compared to previously evaluated tours. Through ethnographic museum visits, olive oil production experiences, traditional architecture, festivals, and encounters with local people, folk culture is made

visible in a many ways. However, to elevate these tours in terms of ICH awareness, the potential must not remain at the level of observation; it should be structured around active experiences, engagement with local stories, and participant interaction. Only then can such tours evolve into genuine folkloric practices that contribute to the sustainability of cultural heritage.

Bozcaada Grape Harvest Festival Tour

Grape harvest festivals constitute an important cultural phenomenon observed across diverse geographies, reflecting both the cyclical rhythm of agricultural life and the symbolic meanings attributed to viticulture and winemaking. In Europe, examples from Bordeaux (France), Tuscany (Italy), and La Rioja (Spain), as well as Mendoza (Argentina) in South America, demonstrate how harvest celebrations have evolved into complex cultural events that integrate ritual practices, communal festivities, gastronomy, and heritage tourism. Such festivals function not merely as seasonal entertainments but as mechanisms for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, reinforcing collective identity, and sustaining local economies. In the Turkish context, grape harvest celebrations in regions such as Cappadocia, Thrace, Denizli, and most notably Bozcaada, illustrate how viticultural practices and winemaking traditions are interwoven with folklore, communal memory, and cultural sustainability.

Building on this broader perspective, it has been suggested that grape harvest festivities could also be developed in rural contexts, particularly in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions, where villages with vineyards may join forces to create attractive cultural tourism products. Through competitions, entertainment, artistic performances, and tasting tours, such events could transform traditional harvest practices into dynamic touristic experiences. To achieve this, villages need to be prepared with adequate accommodation facilities and contemporary yet authentic infrastructures, while food and beverage services should highlight local culinary traditions (Tekin, 2000, p. 79).

Within this framework, the Bozcaada Grape Harvest Festival stands out as one of Turkey's most prominent examples. Held annually during the first week of September in Bozcaada, a district of Çanakkale, the festival celebrates the island's grape harvesting and winemaking traditions. It begins with a symbolic grape harvest and continues with parades accompanied by drums and zurna, as well as concerts, exhibitions, and displays of local products. Beyond its festive atmosphere, the event plays a significant role in safeguarding Bozcaada's cultural heritage, supporting local producers, and enhancing the island's touristic appeal.

The tour program (Appendix 5) offers a rich itinerary focused on visiting historical, religious, architectural, and natural landmarks along the Aegean coastal settlements. The first-day visit to Assos has the potential to go beyond a simple archaeological excursion. Structures like the ancient Temple of Athena and the theater are not only significant in architectural and historical terms but also serve as carriers of intangible cultural heritage through the layers of meaning they hold in local legends, folk narratives, and beliefs related to nature. However, the program does not explore this potential from an ICH perspective, thus presenting antiquity as a checklist item rather than a living cultural space.

With the transition to Bozcaada, the tour begins to engage more directly with an area rich in cultural heritage. The island's Turkish and Greek quarters, the Church of the Virgin Mary, the Alaybey Mosque, and the Genoese Castle are not just architectural sites but lively spaces that carry the history of multicultural coexistence. The preservation of these neighborhoods shows how vernacular architecture and public space culture are connected. From

the perspective of ICH, these spaces clearly help build collective identity. Events like the Miss Grape contest and the Çavuş Grape competition have during the festival carry folkloric depth, reflecting themes of folk celebrations, agricultural rituals, beauty mythology, and modes of social representation. The participation of visitors in the harvest process—traveling to the vineyards by tractor and engaging directly in the activity—offers a valuable ICH experience. However, when these opportunities are offered merely as “optional extras,” the sharing of heritage becomes fragmented and performative culture takes over.

Walking through the streets of Bozcaada is not only a visual or touristic activity but also a process that uncovers silent narratives embedded in the place, spaces for rites of passage, and public squares associated with festivals and religious ceremonies. This experience could be enriched through detailed guided storytelling, yet the program risks remaining within the limits of generic tour commentary rather than offering folklorically enriched narratives. The promotion of locally made tomato jam by island women and local wines includes many ICH components such as traditional production methods, women’s labor, seasonal harvest rituals, and domestic knowledge transmission. However, presenting these products only as purchasable good ideas their cultural and symbolic significance.

The second-day morning visit to the site known as the Devil’s Table (Şeytan Sofrası) is especially notable in terms of folk beliefs. The site is centered around a lava formation called the “Devil’s footprint,” and local stories are shaped by local mythology, superstitions, and folk tales, giving the place with meaning. These beliefs are valuable for folkloristic research as they represent local symbols and the culture’s connection to nature. However, here too, the stories tend to be treated as superficial tourist curiosities rather than being understood as parts of folk memory.

The boat tour in Ayvalık and the free time at Sarımsaklı Beach provide nature-based recreational experiences but offer limited opportunities for engaging with ICH. However, the second visit to Cunda Island offers a deeper connection with folk culture compared to the first day. The island showcases a multidimensional folkloric landscape with its traditional Greek architecture, former religious ritual sites, artisan streets, and fishermen’s daily practices. Elements such as fishing culture, net-making techniques, maritime superstitions, and tavern traditions can be seen in this setting. Nonetheless, the program presents these areas mainly as walking routes, and the lack of narrative depth and connection to folk culture.

In general, this tour program offers a wide range of spatial diversity and cultural contact, but it lacks activities that enable participants to engage with intangible cultural heritage actively. All the sites visited possess strong potential to convey the oral, ritualistic, gastronomic, and architectural aspects of folk culture. However, the fact that these elements are limited to observation, consumption, or sightseeing, it diminishes the core ICH principles of preservation, experience, and transmission. Therefore, future iterations of such tours should be structured in a way that establishes a more comprehensive connection relationship with folkloristics, transforming them into not only touristic ventures but also participatory, educational, and culturally sustainable experiences.

Şeb-i Arûs Festival Tour

Religious festivals, observed across different cultures and belief systems, are among the most enduring forms of intangible cultural heritage, embodying processes of ritualization, collective memory, and symbolic representation. Globally, events such as Easter in Christian traditions, the Hajj pilgrimage in Islam, and Diwali in Hinduism illustrate how sacred rituals transform into communal performances that reinforce collective identity and transmit cultural

values across generations. These festivals not only sustain religious devotion but also provide fertile ground for folkloristic inquiry, as they encompass oral traditions, mythological narratives, music, dance, and ritual practices that reflect the dynamic interplay between the sacred and the communal. In Turkey, the Hacı Bektaş Veli Commemoration Ceremonies in Nevşehir, pilgrimages to Eyüp Sultan in Istanbul, and especially the Şeb-i Arûs ceremonies in Konya exemplify how religious gatherings function simultaneously as acts of worship, spaces of social memory, and performative expressions of heritage.

Within this broader framework, the Şeb-i Arûs ceremonies occupy a particularly distinctive position as one of Turkey's most renowned religious-themed events. Rooted in Mevlâna's understanding of death as a spiritual reunion, Şeb-i Arûs has evolved into a commemorative ritual where his values and teachings are revitalized. As a "culturally institutionalized form of remembrance," the ceremonies were first organized in the late 1940s and gained greater public visibility in the 1950s (Aksüt Çobanoğlu, 2022, p. 448). This historical trajectory demonstrates how the ceremonies gradually transformed from local commemorations into nationally and internationally recognized heritage events.

UNESCO has played a pivotal role in enhancing the global visibility of the Şeb-i Arûs ceremonies. The organization's first major initiative to draw international attention to Mevlâna took place in 1973, when the 700th anniversary of his death was declared the "Year of Mevlâna" (Ersoy & Baysal, 2024, p. 18). This designation marked a turning point, situating the ceremonies within a global heritage discourse and paving the way for their recognition as a cultural phenomenon beyond Turkey's borders.

Today, the Şeb-i Arûs ceremonies are held annually on December 17 in Konya, commemorating the death anniversary of Mevlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî. Literally meaning "Wedding Night," Şeb-i Arûs symbolizes Rûmî's reunion with God, interpreted as a moment of spiritual union. The week-long program encompasses Sema performances, ney recitals, conferences, and exhibitions, thereby creating a multi-layered cultural event that blends spirituality, art, and heritage. Since 2008, the Mevlevi Sema Ceremonies have also been inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List (URL-5), further affirming their significance not only for Turkey but also within the global cultural heritage landscape.

This event stands out among religious-themed tours in Turkey. The lasting appeal of Mevlânâ's teachings continues to attract significant interest from both domestic and international visitors seeking spiritual and cultural experiences. Tours organized around the Şeb-i Arûs ceremonies are influenced not only by cultural not only by cultural motives but also by religious intent. Many participants view these events as acts of worship and spiritual purification, distinguishing this tour from others that are mainly cultural character. Therefore, the Şeb-i Arûs tour represents one of the most prominent and sought-after religious tours included in this study.

The tour program (Appendix 6), covering Konya and its surroundings, focuses on a layered cultural space centered around Anatolian Islamic mysticism, the Mevlevi tradition, and Seljuk architecture. The program begins with a tea break in the Meram Vineyards and a visit to the Tomb of Tavus Baba, At this significant stop, visitors can observe local beliefs and pilgrimage practices. The figure of Tavus Baba, often associated with the Mevlevi tradition, serves as a living example of intangible cultural heritage within the context of Islamic folk beliefs. The narratives, vow offerings, and devotional practices surrounding the tomb are not only religious in nature but also constitute ritualistic practices that should be examined through a folkloristic lens.

The tour of Alaeddin Hill includes a mosque, madrasa, and other Seljuk-era structures, offering insight not only of urban aesthetics and public architecture but also into period-specific education systems, waqf (charitable foundation) culture, and traditional stone craftsmanship. Structures like the Karatay and İnce Minareli madrasas offer important insights into Islamic tile art and ornamental stonework, while also reflecting how artisanal knowledge, craft practices, and aesthetic traditions were cultivated. However, if these visits are limited to architectural explanations, deeper folkloric dimensions—such as the knowledge of craftsmen, the chain of apprenticeship, and traditional education systems—may be overlooked.

The main highlight of the tour is visiting the Mevlânâ Museum and Mausoleum, a place where mystical folk culture and Anatolian Sufism are most vividly experienced. The practices surrounding Mevlânâ's life, teachings, and tomb form a multi-layered cultural world shaped by folk legends, sayings, narratives, and ritual forms. Phrases like “Come, come, whoever you are” and “I was raw, I cooked, I burned” have been passed down through generations, becoming common expressions within the collective memory and turning Mevlânâ into a deeply internalized folkloric symbol in both personal and communal awareness.

The Şeb-i Arûs ceremony, held at the end of the day, can be seen as an ICH practice where ritual dance, music, and symbolic storytelling come together. Recognized by UNESCO as a heritage element passed down, the Mevlevi Sema rituals are performed regularly for the public, ensuring the reproduction and transmission of this culture. The whirling of the semazens, the sound of the ney, the ritual structure, and the symbolism of their attire all provide opportunities for religious, aesthetic, and symbolic interpretations of folk culture. The participants' presence not only as spectators but also as witnesses of heritage deepens the emotional bond to the cultural legacy.

The first stop on the second day is the village of Sille, which shows layers of cultural history through its settlement pattern, architectural features, rock-carved structures, and the Church of Saint Helena. Once a Greek settlement, Sille is a cultural mosaic where Christian and Muslim communities lived together, making it one of Anatolia's rare examples of multiculturalism. The churches, bathhouses, stone buildings, and rock tombs have not only visual but also storytelling importance. The traditions, pilgrimage patterns, religious ceremonies, and folk narratives surrounding these religious structures are living oral heritage rituals that continue to circulate in the collective memory of local communities.

Although the visit to the Tropical Butterfly Garden may not directly fall under the scope of ICH, it provides a sensorial experience with nature that can trigger local beliefs, symbols, and folk medicine practices. Such spaces can also be examined within the context of nature-related folklore if they support alternative ways of observing the natural world.

The visit to the Tomb of Nasreddin Hoca in Akşehir offers a direct connection to one of the most powerful expressions of the oral narrative tradition. Nasreddin Hoca is not only a symbol of folk humor but also conveys moral lessons, metaphorical language, social criticism, and folk wisdom. The stories, votive rituals, and pilgrimage practices that persist around his tomb strengthen his place in Anatolian oral culture. This visit serves not just as a form of entertainment for both children and adults, but also as an opportunity to engage with the narrative tradition and preserve cultural memory.

Overall, this tour program offers a more comprehensive and diverse approach to engaging with intangible cultural

heritage compared to others. It covers many folkloric elements, including the Mevlevi tradition, shrine visitation practices, Seljuk stone craftsmanship, multicultural settlement patterns, vernacular architecture, oral storytelling traditions, and religious rituals. However, to avoid superficial treatment of these elements, it is recommended that guided explanations be enriched, opportunities for interaction with local people be expanded, and participatory experiences be included. In this way, cultural heritage can be transformed from something merely observed into something internalized and co-created by participants.

Edirne Kakava Festival

Across the world, Romani communities sustain rich cultural traditions closely intertwined with the cycles of nature and the transitional phases of social life, most visibly expressed through seasonal festivals and collective celebrations. Events such as Herdelezi in the Balkans, Las Mayas in Spain, and spring rituals in Eastern Europe exemplify how agricultural cycles, fertility beliefs, and collective memory are transformed into festive performances. These events are not merely occasions of joy and renewal; they also constitute living expressions of intangible cultural heritage, where music, dance, narrative, and ritual practices converge. Within this broader framework, the Kakava Festivities in Edirne stand out as one of the most prominent manifestations of this tradition, reflecting the deep interconnection between Romani cultural heritage, the arrival of spring, and the shared folkloric fabric of Anatolia.

The celebration of spring and the renewal of nature through ritual practices is a common feature across societies, and over centuries these seasonal festivities have evolved into a rich cultural reservoir among both Turks and the diverse ethnic groups with whom they have long coexisted. Within this context, the Kakava Festival—celebrated annually on May 5–6 by the Romani community of Edirne—occupies a distinctive position. Both its timing and ritual practices reveal its close association with Hıdırellez celebrations (Sol, 2010, p. 65). Yet Kakava also differs significantly: as an ancient tradition rooted in Romani mythology and believed to date back nearly six millennia, it has, in recent years, made a substantial contribution to the development of event tourism in Edirne. The festival consists of a series of rituals beginning on the evening of May 5 and continuing into the morning of May 6. While in Thrace it is known by the name Kakava and shares many features with Anatolia’s Hıdırellez tradition (Kaleli, 2021, p. 239), its distinctiveness lies in its mythical foundation, linked to the era of the Coptic Pharaohs in ancient Egypt and the legend of “Baba Fingo.” Today, the Romani community of Edirne keeps this belief alive through purification rituals performed in the Tunca River at dawn on Hıdırellez and through symbolic practices around the Kakava Bonfire in the Sarayıçi district on the evening of May 5—rituals that embody renewal and the embrace of new beginnings (Karaçam, 2017).

In contrast to Hıdırellez, which is celebrated almost everywhere in Anatolia on May 5–6 primarily through local gatherings, Kakava distinguishes itself with national and even international participation. This wider reach has been facilitated in large part by the organization of cultural tours, which have integrated the festival into broader heritage itineraries. From the outset, such tours establish a strong engagement with Edirne’s multilayered historical landscape. The route itself symbolizes a cultural journey extending from the ancient Thracian settlement of Orestia, to the city’s period as the Ottoman imperial capital, and finally to the Karaağaç district, which acquired symbolic significance through the Treaty of Lausanne (Özüçetin, 2001). Visits to sites such as the Lausanne Monument and the Meriç Bridge not only highlight architectural and political landmarks but also reveal how narratives of national

independence and spatial belonging are preserved in collective memory. These places thus function as living sites of social remembrance, continually sustained through local legends, oral histories, and coffeehouse conversations (Appendix 7).

The visit to the Sarayıçi district highlights the historical continuity of the Kırkpınar Oil Wrestling Festival, the most striking expression of the Turkish wrestling tradition. Sources indicate that until the 1940s, these competitions began three days before Hidirellez and concluded on the eve of the festival (Küçük & Silik, 2018, p. 87). Today, the Kırkpınar Wrestling Field, together with the Justice Pavilion and the remains of the Ottoman palace complex, reflects not only Edirne's past role as an imperial capital but also its enduring significance as a center of ceremony, sport, and symbolic folk culture. Particularly significant is the site's global recognition: in 2010, the Kırkpınar Oil Wrestling Festival was inscribed by Turkey on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, affirming its status as a living heritage. Oil wrestling is not merely a sport; it constitutes a multilayered form of performance folklore that encompasses the tradition of pehlivanlık (wrestling heroism), epic narratives, prayers, ceremonial processions, the use of the kispet (leather trousers), and the rhythmic accompaniment of drum and zurna. Direct engagement with this heritage through the tour is highly significant; however, to move beyond spatial representation, it must also be enriched through ritual dimensions and narrative frameworks.

The visit to the Sultan Bayezid II Complex Health Museum offers a comprehensive insight into Anatolian folk medicine, traditional healing practices, and the philosophical foundations of Islamic medicine. The şifahane (hospital), incorporated into the complex, was converted into a Health Museum in 1997, while the medical school (medrese) was reorganized in 2008 as a museum reflecting its original educational function. This transformation is thought to have been influenced by the considerable interest shown in the Health Museum (Benian & Mısırlı, 2022, p. 108). Similarly, the restoration and reopening of the imaret in 2020 as a museum reflecting its original function supports this approach. Within the museum, treatments based on sound, water, and scent are displayed, emphasizing the profound relationship between folk beliefs and architectural space.

Monumental structures such as the Selimiye Mosque, the Old Mosque, and the Üç Şerefeli Mosque should be regarded not merely as architectural achievements but also as focal points of folk belief, religious ritual, Islamic calligraphy, shrine visitation, and community life. Construction of the Selimiye Mosque officially began in the summer of 976/1568, and the structure is considered the crowning masterpiece of Mimar Sinan (Kuban, 2017, p. 132). Beyond its architectural grandeur, Selimiye embodies a deep connection with folk arts through its aesthetic consciousness, master-apprentice hierarchies, guild structures, and artisanal traditions. The inverted tulip motif, around which local legends circulate, stands as a unique example where oral tradition and symbolism intersect.

The free time allocated to shopping in the Arasta Bazaar provides an ethnographic field of observation, where Edirne's traditional craft culture, the symbolic meanings of souvenirs, and popular consumption practices can be experienced firsthand. Products such as the "Aynalı Gelin" broom, fruit soaps, and Edirne cheese are not simply commodities; they represent localized knowledge systems, women's labor, seasonal production cycles, and domestic culture. In this sense, the bazaar becomes a practical site where everyday expressions of folklore can be observed.

The culmination of the tour is undoubtedly the Kakava and Hidirellez celebrations, which offer direct engagement with ritualistic, seasonal, and belief-based folk practices. Kakava is one of the rare events through which Romani communities honor the cycle of the year, reconfigure collective hopes, and express the spirit of spring through

embodied rhythms. These celebrations are not merely spectacles; they constitute vibrant and enduring cultural practices that weave together collective memory, ethnic identity, religious syncretism, and local belief systems. Ritual acts such as leaping over fire, making wishes, dancing, and playing music exemplify an intangible cultural heritage practice that is simultaneously performative and participatory. The physical involvement of participants in these rituals represents a direct interaction with cultural memory, aligning closely with the core principles of intangible cultural heritage.

In conclusion, this Edirne tour provides a more immersive, participatory, and diverse folkloric experience than many others, encompassing ritual, belief, craft, oral tradition, culinary culture, and collective memory. Experiencing a living folk practice such as Kakava transforms the tour from a mere historical excursion into a dynamic cultural stage that foregrounds continuity and participation. Nevertheless, to enhance their effectiveness, such tours should not be limited to the narration of historical facts; they must also incorporate folk legends, myths, narrative traditions, and belief systems. In this way, participants become not only observers of cultural heritage but also active agents who internalize and co-create it through lived experience.

Conclusion

This study has examined how festival tours represent intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and how they are digitally mediated within the scope of cultural tourism, with a particular focus on their implications for folklore research. The findings reveal that while certain dimensions of folk culture—such as gastronomy, craft traditions, ritual representations, and partial participation in festivals—are made visible, the essential layers of intangible heritage, including oral narratives, belief practices, chains of apprenticeship, and collective memory, are often relegated to the background. This situation blurs the line between authenticity and staged performance, raising the risk of reducing living culture to commodified spectacles.

From a folkloristic standpoint, festivals are not merely occasions of entertainment; they constitute living arenas where rituals, narratives, music, dance, and local knowledge systems are enacted and transmitted across generations. Yet in digital promotional materials, these dimensions are frequently presented through visual aesthetics alone, neglecting the experiential and participatory core of ICH. UNESCO's definition underscores that intangible heritage survives only through the continual re-creation of practices by communities themselves, which is only possible when active participation and embodied experience are prioritized.

Two key issues thus emerge in the discussion. The first concerns the ritual and performative dimensions of festivals: practices such as fire-jumping, the sema ritual, harvest celebrations, or traditional healing ceremonies are not merely spectacles but deeply rooted folkloric expressions of identity, belief, and communal memory. The second pertains to the right of narration: in folklore, cultural bearers—storytellers, women producers, artisans, musicians—are not peripheral but central actors. They are not simply performers for tourist consumption, but living transmitters of knowledge and memory.

Within this framework, the foremost recommendation is to place experiential engagement at the heart of festival tours. Visitors should not remain passive observers but become active participants in rituals, production processes, storytelling, and communal practices, thereby co-creating the heritage they encounter. Digital representations, in turn, should move beyond surface-level imagery and integrate origin myths, folk legends, belief systems, and symbolic

practices. Gastronomic or craft-related experiences must be presented not solely as commodities but as embodiments of labor, ecological cycles, and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

In conclusion, from a folklore perspective, festivals must be approached not as static touristic attractions but as dynamic cultural stages where continuity, identity, and collective memory are actively reproduced. The ultimate goal of festival tours should be to make culture experiential and participatory. Only through such embodied practices can festival tours transcend passive observation, enabling intangible cultural heritage to be internalized, sustained, and transmitted across generations as a living folkloric reality.

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Appendix 1: Adana Orange Blossom Festival Tour

We arrive in Adana in the early morning hours. After a breakfast break, our first stop will be the Sabancı Central Mosque, which is a synthesis of the architectural features of the Sultanahmet and Selimiye Mosques. After our guide's explanations, we move on to photograph the Stone Bridge, a symbol of Adana from the Roman period, and then go to Ciğerci Bedo, the most famous liver kebab restaurant in Adana, to eat liver. (Waiting times may vary due to crowd.) After our meal, we have dessert at Tatlıcı Gönül Kardeşler. (Waiting times may vary due to crowd.) Following our tasting breaks, we proceed to the festival area. We join the carnival that turns into a street festivity. The restaurants offering Adana's wonderful delicacies entertain visitors with special programs and menus, while local businesses and national festival sponsors also contribute to the fun with various games and events. On the other hand, famous performers participate voluntarily in events held by local and foreign music groups. Additionally, amateur music groups also get the chance to share their music with the carnival crowd on many street stages throughout the city. After enjoying the festival area until late at night, we head to our hotel. (URL-7)

Appendix 2: Alaçatı Herb Festival Tour

With the comfortable buses of Jolly Tur, we reach Çeşme—one of the twelve Ionian colonies in history and the pearl of Turkish tourism—via Balıkesir and Manisa in the early hours of the morning, and we begin our Çeşme tour. Our first stop in Çeşme will be the magnificent sea-viewed Çeşme Castle, which was built by Sultan Bayezid II in 1508. After some free time in the bazaar, we move on to the charming town of Alaçatı, historically known as Agrillia in antiquity, where the 9th Herb Festival will be held this year. In this beautiful town, famous for its unique stone architecture, windmills, and wind, during the free time we provide, those who wish can shop at Pazaryeri Square, where locals dressed in various traditional clothes display herbs they have gathered from nature. You can walk around the narrow cobblestone streets of Alaçatı, take lots of photos, and taste the local delicacies. Later, we check into our hotel in İzmir. Those who wish to experience the nightlife of İzmir can meet in the lobby.

On the second day, after breakfast at the hotel, we proceed to Konak Square to see İzmir's famous Clock Tower and the monument of journalist Hasan Tahsin, who fired the first bullet in the War of Independence. After a short photo break, we board the bus again and reach the Historical Elevator and Dario Moreno Street, where the house of Dario Moreno—who marked an era with his voice and films—is located. Those who wish can take the elevator up and enjoy İzmir's breathtaking view. After the free time we provide, we reach Urla, the hometown of Yorgo Seferis, Neyzen Tevfik, Necati Cumalı, and Tanju Okan. During the free time here, you can take a walk by the sea and sip your tea or coffee. After our tea and coffee break, we will visit the ruins of the ancient city of Klazomenai. Among the places we will see here are the remains of city walls, house structures, ovens, and the first known olive oil production facility in Anatolia. After our trip in Urla, we begin our return journey and arrive in Istanbul via Balıkesir and Bursa, and drop you, our esteemed guests, at the points where we picked you up, hoping to meet again on another Jolly Tur organization. (URL-8)

Appendix 3: Bodrum Acı Ot Festival Tour

We begin our journey by picking up our valued guests from Ayvalık at 04:00 in the early morning. After making a few stops along the way, we arrive in Bodrum via the İzmir route. The land of blues, which has been the subject of many poems, sayings, and songs, is now before us. Our first stop is the Zeki Müren Museum. Visited by nearly

100,000 tourists annually, the museum showcases Zeki Müren's belongings, stage costumes, his own paintings, awards, and all aspects of his life.

We then continue our tour with Bodrum Castle. The symbol of Bodrum, this castle now serves as the "Underwater Archaeology Museum." The castle is built on a rocky area between two harbors and features towers named after different countries. After completing our visit, we head to Gümbet, one of Bodrum's popular destinations, especially in recent years, known for its lively nightlife.

After lunch, we join the Bitter Herb Festival, held annually in Bodrum's Ortakent neighborhood. As we stroll among the stands showcasing various types of bitter herbs in all shades of green, the festival's warm atmosphere reveals itself not only on the stages or in the workshops but also in every sincere smile. These flower-adorned moments bring us closer together. After enjoying our free time at the festival, we depart with wonderful memories and return via the Aydın-Söke road route. (URL-9)

Appendix 4: Ayvalık Kazdağı Villages Olive Harvest Tour

We arrive at Mutluköy, one of the villages of Ayvalık, in the early hours of the day via İzmit – Bursa – Balıkesir, and begin the day with a delightful village breakfast where we can taste olives and olive jam produced locally (Extra). After breakfast, we move on to Cunda. We begin exploring the streets of Cunda. Our trip continues with a coffee break at the historic Taş Kahve, and while wandering through the narrow old streets, we come across the Taksiyarhis Church, restored by Rahmi Koç. In addition to its natural beauty, Cunda (Alibey Island) impresses us with its old stone architecture. After our tour, we take free time to enjoy the delicious Aegean olive oil dishes, appetizers, and fish (Extra). Afterwards, we complete our Cunda tour and head to the Olive Harvest Festival area. After participating in various events at the festival, we head to the Devil's Table (Şeytan Sofrası) to watch the sunset. From this point, we will witness the sun setting into the sea with a panoramic view of dozens of small islands around Ayvalık. After this breathtaking sunset (Note: Devil's Table visit may be rescheduled during the day depending on the program and festival schedule, and sunset may not be visible), we proceed to our hotel. Dinner and accommodation will be at our hotel.

After breakfast at the hotel's open buffet, we depart and set out for Kazdağları (Mount Ida). Along the way, we enjoy a pleasant journey with commentary from our guide. Our first stop in Kazdağları is the Ethnography Museum in Tahtakuşlar village, established by Alibey Kudar. (Artifacts reflecting the unique and original cultural heritage of Turkish tribes—clothing, household items, tools, rugs, tents, and various works of art—are exhibited throughout the year.) Our next stop in Kazdağları is Narlıköy, and we will have lunch (Extra) at our restaurant overlooking the Edremit Gulf. After the meal, our Kazdağları tour continues with Adatepe Village, located on the slopes of Mount Ida. Upon arrival in Adatepe Village, we first take a 1-kilometer walk to visit the Altar of Zeus, and while our guide shares information about the site, we enjoy the view of the Edremit Gulf. After visiting the Altar of Zeus, we move on to the village for a tour. Adatepe Village, which has been inhabited since ancient times and was referred to as "Gargaros" in the Iliad, continues to be settled today. The area has seen the rule of Troy, Leleges, Lesbos, Persia, Athens, Rome, Seljuks, and Ottomans, all of which have left their marks. Examples of centuries-old stone craftsmanship can be seen in the village's buildings. Due to increasing concrete development in the surrounding area, the village was declared a protected site in 1989. Today, no new houses are permitted, and existing houses are restored in line with the village's traditional architecture; any ruins are rebuilt according to this style.

After Adatepe Village, we visit the Olive Oil Museum, which is the first of its kind in Turkey, known as the Olive Oil “Factory-Museum,” and has welcomed tens of thousands of domestic and foreign visitors since 2001. Olive and olive oil culture runs so deep that it is referenced in various forms in all sacred texts. Despite its deep roots in our country, the scarcity of written and visual materials about this product led to the founding of the Adatepe Olive Oil Museum. A historic soap factory building in Küçükkuyu was restored for this purpose. While continuing to produce olive oil using the cold-press method, various tools and accessories related to olive, olive oil, and soap production collected from nearby villages are exhibited in the factory building. Visitors can see old olive oil presses, olive-picking tools, storage and transportation containers, and various folkloric objects. The traditional technique of olive oil soap making is also explained in detail.

Our final stop today is Yeşilyurt Village. Located on the southwest side of Mount Ida, Yeşilyurt Village was established in 1355 by the Çepni tribe of the Oghuz Turks and was originally named Büyük Çetmi. The village’s first founders, transitioning from a nomadic to a settled lifestyle, brought in Greek stonemasons from Marmara Island and nearby areas to build their homes. Over time, the Greek population in the village increased and they established a neighborhood. For centuries, Turks and Greeks lived in peace, love, and friendship. Today, Yeşilyurt Village has preserved its traditional architectural texture through local initiative and has become a new tourism center. During our guided walk through the village, we receive information about its history, and in the free time that follows, you can purchase many local products such as goat cheese, mountain thyme, pomegranate molasses, village tomato paste, olives, and olive oil. You may also try herb-infused ice cream, perhaps for the first time. You can enjoy tea or coffee at local cafes. We conclude our tour in Yeşilyurt Village and return to Istanbul in the late evening, dropping you off at the points where you were picked up, and look forward to seeing you again on another TatilBudur.com trip. (URL-10)

Appendix 5: Bozcaada Vintage Festival Tour

After having our optional breakfast in the morning, we head towards the ancient city of Assos. In Assos, we visit the Assos Ruins, Athena Temple, and the Ancient Theatre. After the Assos tour, we move on to our hotel in Çanakkale and then head to Geyikli pier at 11:00 a.m. to take the ferry to Bozcaada. After a half-hour ferry ride, we arrive in Bozcaada. Accompanied by our guide, we visit the Genoese Castle, Alaybey Mosque, Turkish and Greek neighborhoods, and the Church of Virgin Mary, and take plenty of photos in the magnificent cobblestone streets of the island. As part of the festival, you can watch the Grape Beauty Contest among the girls of the island and the Best Çavuş Grape competition. Also, grape harvesting is done by tractors as part of the festival, and you may participate in these activities (optional). During the free time, our guests may take a walk enjoying the island’s mild breeze or spend their free time by seeing the Windmills, Mermer Cape, or swimming and sunbathing at Ayazma Beach. Guests may also shop for the famous tomato jam made by local village women and the wines produced from various grape types grown on the island.

After having our inclusive breakfast at the hotel in the morning, we head towards Ayvalık. Our first stop here is Şeytan Sofrası (Devil’s Table). At this amazing spot, where you can see all of Ayvalık and the island of Lesbos, we take lots of photos and photograph the ancient lava deposit believed to bear the Devil’s footprint, where coins are thrown. After our visit to Şeytan Sofrası, we go to Ayvalık port to join the Ayvalık Boat and Swimming Tour. This amazing boat tour will last until the evening and include stops at unique coves such as Incirli Island, Aquarium Bay,

Ortunç Island, and Cunda Island. You will swim a lot and have great fun in these coves. Guests who do not wish to join the boat tour are dropped off at Sarımsaklı Beach, where they can enjoy the sea, sun, and sand. Later, we bring our guests from Sarımsaklı Beach to Cunda Island by our vehicle. Our boat will drop us off at its final stop on Cunda Island. As you walk through the streets of this old Greek island, see the old Greek houses and churches, and visit the seaside fishermen, you will not get enough of this beautiful island, Cunda Island. After our Cunda Island tour, we depart for Istanbul around 19:30 in the evening. We drop you, our valued guests, at the points where we picked you up and bid farewell, hoping to meet you again on another Ritim Travel organization. (URL-11)

Appendix 6: Şeb-i Aruz Festival Tour

After having our breakfast at a convenient location, we proceed to the famous Meram Vineyards, one of the most elegant districts of the city. Here, we visit the tomb of Tavus Baba, who is considered one of the Mevlevi dervishes, and take a tea break at the tea gardens next to the Historical Meram Bridge. Then, we visit Alaeddin Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Anatolia, located on Alaeddin Hill, and the Karatay Madrasa, built in 1251 by Vizier Celaleddin and referred to as the Museum of Tile Works, accompanied by our guide's information. Continuing our tour, we are enchanted by the magnificent portal of İnce Minareli Madrasa, one of the finest examples of Seljuk stone workmanship (we see it from outside due to restoration). We then visit the Mevlana Museum and Mausoleum, which has become world-renowned with the phrase "Come, come, whoever you are," and was the rose garden of the palace during the Seljuk period.

We have lunch with local delicacies and then give free time for shopping for Konya-specific souvenirs. After meeting again at the time determined by our guide, we visit Şerafettin Mosque and the tomb of Shams Tabrizi, whom Mevlana called his friend with the phrase "I was raw, I was cooked, I was burned," and thus complete our tour for the day. In the evening, we check into our hotel in Konya and after dinner, we go to watch the Şeb-i Aruz ceremonies held on the anniversary of the reunion of Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi, the Sultan of Hearts and the symbol of love, affection, and tolerance.

We watch the ceremonies in the mystical atmosphere of Sufi music and whirling dervish performances, and then return to our hotel. After having breakfast at our hotel, we start our tour with Sille, an ancient Greek village affiliated with the Selçuklu Municipality, 7 km from the center of Konya, with a history dating back 6,000 years. The stone houses commonly seen in Greek settlements, rock-carved houses and churches similar to those we are used to seeing in the Cappadocia region offer very beautiful views. We will have the chance to see Hacı Ağa Bath, Ottoman bridges, rock tombs dating back thousands of years, and the Aya-Elena Church built 1,500 years ago.

Then, we go to visit the Konya Tropical Butterfly Garden. In this specially designed tropical garden, which is the first and only one in Turkey and the largest in Europe, you will be able to see more than 15 species and over a thousand colorful butterflies flying, all kinds of tropical plants, small waterfalls, and have pleasant moments that will make you feel like you are in the Amazon Forest. On our return journey, we end this wonderful tour by visiting the tomb of Nasreddin Hodja in Akşehir, who is known for his timeless jokes, thought-provoking stories, and wise sayings. With the appropriate breaks we will take along the way, we reach İzmir in the evening via Afyon - Kula. We bid farewell to you, hoping to meet on another Academic Tour trip. (URL-12)

Appendix 7: Edirne Kakava Festival

After a journey of approximately 2.5 hours covering 232 km, we arrive in Edirne, whose ancient name in antiquity was the Thracian village of Orestia, later known as Hadrianapolis in the Roman period, and which served as the capital of the Ottoman Empire for 92 years, now a museum city with its architectural monuments. In Edirne, we pass by the Great Synagogue of Edirne and during our trip to the Karaağaç region, located 4 kilometers from Edirne and added to Turkish territory with the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923, we see the Historical Meriç Bridge, the Lausanne Monument, and the Historical Train Station and take a break at the countryside café. After this break, we return to Edirne city center and begin our city tour.

We visit Sarayıçi, the historical Kırkpınar oil wrestling field, the Justice Pavilion, the Fatih and Saray Bridges, the remnants of the Edirne Palace where Fatih Sultan Mehmet and Cem Sultan were born and reigned (Palace kitchens, Cihannüma Pavilion, Kum Pavilion and Bath), and the Balkan Martyrs' Cemetery. We go to the Edirne Balkan History Museum, an important point for the defense of Edirne during the Balkan Wars.

After seeing this site, we visit the II. Bayezid Complex Health Museum, which was used in the 16th century to treat mental illnesses with the sound of water, music, and pleasant scents, and which received the European Museum Award from the Council of Europe in 2004. Here you will be amazed at how Ahmet Kutsi Tecer's poem "Tree and Vine" gains meaning in this context. After our visit to Sarayıçi, we proceed to visit the Üç Şerefeli Mosque, known for its gate; the Eski (Grand) Mosque, known for its inscriptions; and the famous Selimiye Mosque, which Mimar Sinan called his "masterpiece" and where we can also see the famous Upside-Down Tulip motif.

We then give free time and a shopping break at the Arasta Bazaar to buy Edirne Cheese, the traditional Aynalı Gelin Broom, and local fruit soaps. After this free time, we stop by a place where we can taste and buy many local delicacies such as the famous Deva-i Misk dessert, almond paste, and Kavala cookies (Keçecizade).

After discovering Edirne's historical fabric and local delicacies, we now say it's time for fun and head to Sarayıçi where the Kakava Festivals are held and attend the Hıdırellez (Hz. Hızır and Hz. İlyas) Spring Welcoming Ceremony. According to an Islamic belief, Hz. Hızır and Hz. İlyas meet on May 5th, and the world becomes green. Winter ends and the preparation period for summer begins with spring. Together with you, we will welcome spring in the atmosphere of this different culture through the joyful "Kakava Festivals" of the Roma people and make wishes.

We will see the biggest Kakava fire and jump over it three times according to belief, and after experiencing this moment together, we begin our return journey to Istanbul during the free time we give. We leave our valued guests at their departure points in Istanbul and bid you farewell with the hope of meeting you in another Jolly Tour organization. (URL-13)