



Fact file
Brompton oratory

Distance: 632km from Kayseri in central Anatolia to Erzincan in eastern Anatolia.

Route: Leaving Kayseri and travelling north-east, past the blinding-white salt pan of Lake Tuzla, we passed through Şarkışla, Sivas and carried on to Erzincan. Jacob's final destination in Turkey was Erzurum.

Conditions: Late October (in 2024) was ideal. Dry and bright, daytime temperatures were 15–20°. Nights sometimes dropped below zero.

Bike used: Brompton C Line with 6-speed gearing, standard (but robust) Schwalbe Marathon tyres and dynamo lighting.

Navigation: Komoot. **I'm glad I had...** A large Brompton Borough bag, which I bought. Unlike the rest of the trip's expenses, this wasn't cheap (currently £145). But it easily slotted on and off the front block and carried nearly all I needed for a week's adventure. It even passed as a cabin bag for the flights.

Next time I would... Take a dog whistle. The ferocious Anatolian farm dogs are said to be mildly confused by one, giving you valuable seconds to make your getaway.

from his TV production job he took this as a sign to cut loose and see the world on two wheels. While he set about repurposing my old Genesis Croix de Fer, and assembling in our kitchen a body of kit that even Shackleton would have balked at, I looked on, outwardly admiring but inside green with envy. My huffing and puffing finally solicited an invitation to join him for part of the way.

I intended to ride with Jacob on his first, day-long leg from London to the ferry at Dover, then join him for a week later on. Unable to get my bike on any train going south from Newcastle for his departure, I discovered I could pick up a hired Brompton from a locker at King's Cross for just £5 for 24 hours. I now regard the Brompton Bike Hire arrangement as my gateway drug. Because I then got one for a whole month and took it to Turkey.

Needing to squeeze the trip into the October half-term (I'm a teacher), I wanted maximum flexibility and easy transfers on planes, trains and buses, without it becoming financially ruinous. Taking a so-called proper bike would turn a week's budget bikepacking into something costing more than a car-and-Campari trip around the Italian lakes.

So, no sooner had I opened the box of my subscription Brompton, I was packing it away again into two IKEA Dimpa bags. Then I set off from Newcastle by train to catch my flight from Edinburgh – no bike reservation required. Only a few hours later, to audible gasps from Kayseri Airport security, I was unfolding it and wheeling it straight out of the airport (no taxi or transfer needed). Shortly after, I was catching up with the boy over spicy mercimek soup.

A full-sized adventure

We rolled out of Kayseri the next day, knowing only that we would head north-east for as far as we could in the time that we had. One unforeseen consequence of my miserliness

was that I had booked the cheapest possible flight, with no option to change the return departure airport. Not so clever now, eh, cheapskate?

Actually it wasn't a problem. While most buses and some trains won't take a normal bike, they will take a folded Brompton. When we reached Erzincan, more than 500km away, all I had to do was pick up some cardboard, zip the bike into its bags and stow it away next to the backpacks and suitcases on a bus bound to back where we'd come from. You'd never even know there was a bike in there.

Admittedly, next to the boy's round-the-world setup, the Brompton looked diminutive. Indeed, a leather-skinned old man at a service station eyed me warily and asked me why I was riding a 'çocuk bisikleti', a child's bike. Yet despite

“I wanted maximum flexibility and easy transfers on planes, trains and buses”

its small wheels, it doesn't ride like a child's bike. There was no place my folding friend wouldn't go, from the comfortably broad shoulders of the D-road dual-carriageways to the snaking, single-lane roads through plains

and rolling hillsides, and even, occasionally, the cinder tracks and trails by the shores of lakes and reservoirs.



Anatolian Shepherd Dog: sometimes friendly, sometimes very much not

