

TURKEY: GROUP TRAVEL PROGRAMS - 2

TURKEY - THE EARLY CHURCH

14 nights: Arrive Istanbul, 4 nights; fly to Izmir, 3 nights; drive to Pamukkale, 2 nights; drive to Antalya, 2 nights; fly to Ankara and drive to Urgup (Cappadocia), 2 nights; drive to Kayseri and fly to Istanbul, 1 night.

Day 1, Sunday: Arrive Istanbul

Arrive Istanbul airport. Transfer to Swissotel The Bosphorus/Hyatt Regency Istanbul, both deluxe luxury hotels with first class facilities and service, very central. Take the rest of the day at leisure.

Day 2, Monday: Istanbul

Morning, take a driving tour of the European section of Istanbul city. Visit the spice markets and New Mosque, the grand Blue Mosque of Sultan Ahmet, a triumph of harmony, proportion and elegance; and the hippodrome and obelisk of Theodosius brought in from Egypt. In the afternoon, explore the underground Roman cisterns and Grand bazaar.

B

Day 3, Tuesday: Istanbul

Morning, take a boat cruise on the Bosphorus waterway that connects the Black and Marmara Seas, visiting en route the Beylerbeyi Palace, Goksu Pavilion and Rumeli Hisari fortress. Lunch at a restaurant in Ortakoy. Then, visit the Dolmabahce Palace, where elegance and grandeur are richly preserved.

B, L

Day 4, Wednesday: Istanbul

Morning, visit the magnificent Topkapi Palace, including treasure rooms and harem room. Also see costumed palace guards and band performance. Afternoon, visit Hagia Sofia, an architectural marvel and beautiful Byzantine church-turned-mosque now museum, with some free time afterwards to explore the city on your own.

B

Day 5, Thursday: Istanbul - Izmir - Ephesus

Transfer to airport to get a flight to Izmir, TK 314, 8:30-9:30 AM. Drive to Ephesus, the first of John's seven churches in the book of Revelations. The order of the seven churches - Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea - follows a route that a messenger would follow, and represent other churches that were in Asia at the time. The style of the seven messages is similar, with the heart of each focused on commendation and correction concluding with a promise of victory. First, trace the footsteps of St. Paul in the church city of Ephesus, including Hadrian's Temple, library, agora and amphitheater. Visit the small but well displayed archaeological museum at Selcuk, followed by lunch in a local restaurant. Then, visit St. John's Church and tomb, Temple of Artemis, and Mary's home and chapel. Also visit a carpet weaving center and pottery workshop. Return to Izmir. Stay at Izmir Palas hotel.

B, L

Day 6, Friday: Izmir

Morning, visit St. Polycarp Church, the old Jewish Quarter at Asanor and historic elevator, and Ben Israel synagogue. Afternoon, explore some sites of Smyrna, the second church of Revelations. Visit St Polycarp Church, Roman agora, archaeological museum, ruins at Kadeifekale on Mount Pagos, Temple of Athena, and other ruins at Bayrakli (Tepekule).

B

Day 7, Saturday: Izmir - Pergamum - Thyatira - Izmir

Take a full day excursion to recount the third and fourth churches in St John's Revelations. At Pergamum, visit the acropolis and Altar of Zeus, remains of the great library, temple of Trajan and Asclepieum medical center. Lunch at a local restaurant. Drive on to Thyatira to see the ruins of an ancient temple, colonnaded road and a large church. Return to Izmir.

B, L

Day 8, Sunday: Izmir - Sardis - Philadelphia - Pamukkale

Drive to Sardis (fifth church) and see the citadel, Temple of Artemis, a small Byzantine church, acropolis, synagogue, royal road, shops and gymnasium. Lunch. Drive to Philadelphia (sixth church) and see a ruined Byzantine basilica. Continue to Pamukkale. Stay at Richmond Pamukkale Thermal hotel.

B, L

Day 9, Monday: Pamukkale

Drive to the ruined site of Laodicea, the last and seventh church. At Pamukkale, visit the ancient city of Hierapolis, the Temple of Apollo, theater, necropolis and baths. Also visit Colossae.

B

Day 10, Tuesday: Pamukkale - Antalya

Drive to Antalya. Stay at Antalya Hotel. Afternoon, visit the old part of Antalya called Kaleici, the archaeological museum, with some free time to enjoy the beach at your hotel.

B

Day 11, Wednesday: Antalya

This will be a full day's excursion to visit three ancient sites near Antalya. Visit Aspendos to see a magnificent theater, agora, basilica, nymphaeum and aqueducts. Then, visit Sillyon on a high plateau with views of the Mediterranean and see the stadium, gymnasium, turrets, theater and sports arena. Lunch. Then, visit Perge to see its 15,000 spectator theater, Hellenist gate, agora, nymphaeum, colonnaded streets, sarcophagi, basilica and acropolis. Return to Antalya late evening.

B, L

Day 12, Thursday: Antalya - Ankara - Cappadocia

Take the morning flight to Ankara, TK 407, 7:10-8:15 AM. At Ankara, visit the Temple of Augustus, citadel, museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Roman baths and column of Justinian. Lunch in a city restaurant. Then, drive to Urgup in Cappadocia and stay at Yunak Evleri hotel in picturesque rooms with windows, styled as rock caves.

B, L

Day 13, Friday: Urgup, Cappadocia

Full day excursion: Visit Pigeon Valley, Kaymakli underground city of early Christians, Ihlara Valley and churches along the Melendiz River gorge to Belisirma (lunch) and Selime. Then, visit a caravan serai at Agzikarahan, fort at Nevsehir, and rock castle at Ortahisar before returning to Urgup.

B, L

Day 14, Saturday: Urgup, Cappadocia - Istanbul

See nature's surreal fairy chimneys at Devrent and Pasabaglari, and then visit St. Simon's cave and church. Lunch at Avanos. Then, visit a winery and Uchisar rock castle. Finally, explore the amazing Goreme open air museum and church caves. Take a late evening flight from Kayseri to Istanbul, TK265, 8:30-9:45 PM. Transfer to Swissotel The Bosphorus/Hyatt Regency Istanbul.

B, L

Day 15, Sunday: Depart Istanbul

Morning transfer to Istanbul airport for international departure.

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