

## TURKEY: GROUP TRAVEL PROGRAMS - 4

### THE BEST OF TURKEY

*14 nights: Arrive Istanbul, 5 nights (visit Ephesus and return to Istanbul on Day 3); fly to Kayseri (Cappadocia), 2 nights; drive to Ankara, 1 night; fly to Kars, 1 night; drive to Dagubayazit, 2 nights; drive to Van, 2 nights; 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 - Izmir - Istanbul**

Transfer to airport. Flight to Izmir, TK 314, 8:30-9:30AM. Visit the ruin 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 the ambience of 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 airport. Return flight to Istanbul, TK 333, 7:20-8:20 PM. Transfer to hotel.

**B, L**

#### **Day 4, Wednesday: Istanbul**

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

**B**

#### **Day 5, Thursday: 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 6, Friday: Istanbul-Kayseri (Urgup, Cappadocia)**

Flight to Kayseri, TK 260, 8:35-10:00 AM. Transfer to Urgup in Cappadocia and stay at Yunak Evleri hotel in picturesque rooms with windows, styled as rock caves. 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.

**B, L**

#### **Day 7, Saturday: Urgup, Cappadocia**

Full day excursion: Visit Pigeon Valley, Kaymakli underground city, 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 8, Sunday: Urgup, Cappadocia – Ankara**

Take a pleasant drive to Ankara, and stay at the Ankara Hilton. Afternoon, visit the Temple of Augustus, citadel, museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Roman baths and column of Justinian.

**B**

**Day 9, Monday: Ankara - Kars**

Take the morning flight to Kars in the beautiful mountains of north eastern Turkey, TK 712, 9:45-11:25 AM. Stay at Sim-Er hotel. Visit the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Kars Kalesi castle built by the Seljuks. Also visit the Havariler museum (Church of the Apostles) and Kars museum.

**B**

**Day 10, Tuesday: Kars – Dogubayazit**

Drive through pretty landscapes to Dogubayazit via Idgir. Visit Mount Ararat and Noah’s Ark National Park where it is believed that Noah’s Ark rested after the flood. Continue to Dogubayazit, and stay at the Golden Hill hotel.

**B**

**Day 11, Wednesday: Dogubayazit**

Morning, visit the Ishak Pasha Palace at Dogubayazit, one of the most distinguished and magnificent examples of 18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman architecture. Afternoon, visit a strange giant meteor site at Meteora, with some free time afterwards.

**B**

**Day 12, Thursday: Dogubayazit – Van**

Morning, drive to Van via Muaradiye waterfalls. Stay at the Merit Sahmaran hotel. Afternoon, visit the archaeological museum, 8<sup>th</sup> Century Urartian citadel and Van castle.

**B**

**Day 13, Friday: Van**

Drive along Lake Van to Gevas and take a boat cruise across the lake to Akdamar Island. Here, see the 10<sup>th</sup> Century Armenian Church of the Holy Cross with Biblical frescoes and a restored museum. Also visit Carpanak Island to see an inspiring medieval church.

**B**

**Day 14, Saturday: Van – Istanbul**

This morning, enjoy a traditional breakfast at a restaurant on the shores of Lake Van. Flight to Istanbul, TK 807, 11:10 AM-1:20 PM. Transfer to Swissotel The Bosphorus/Hyatt Regency Istanbul. Evening free time.

**B**

**Day 15, Sunday: Depart Istanbul**

Morning transfer to Istanbul airport for international departure.

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