



## Day 1: Fly To Turkey

Meet your group and travel on an overnight flight to Istanbul.

## Day 2: Istanbul

**Arrive in Istanbul:** Welcome to Istanbul (not Constantinople), Turkey's most populous city. Depending on your arrival time, you may have free time to settle in and explore the city on your own.

## Day 3: Istanbul

**Sightseeing tour of Istanbul:** Your local guide will lead you through some of Istanbul's most exciting sites. Nestled between the Black Sea and the Dardanelles, Istanbul is the world's only city spanning two continents, Europe and Asia. Discover the ancient Hippodrome, which once served as the public center of Byzantium.

**Blue Mosque:** Make your way to the breathtaking Blue Mosque, built by Sultan Ahmet and decorated with exquisite blue Iznik tiles.

**Topkapi Palace:** You'll also see the magnificent Topkapi Palace, once the residence of the Ottoman sultans. (Please note: the Topkapi Palace is closed on Tuesdays.)

**Grand Bazaar:** Your day of sightseeing concludes with a stop at Istanbul's legendary Grand Bazaar, where you can browse treasures of all kinds, from brassware to spices. (Please note: The Grand Bazaar is closed on Sundays.)

☞ **Whirling Dervishes:** See the mesmerizing ritual dances of the Mevlevi Order as they perform their Sama (or ceremony) which represents a mystical journey of mankind's spiritual ascent through mind and love.

## Day 4: Istanbul | Çanakkale Province

**Hagia Sofia:** Also known as the Church of Divine Wisdom, the Hagia Sofia is nearly 1,000 years older than St. Peter's in Rome. This breathtaking building was the pride of Christendom until the city fell to the Turks in 1453. (Please note: the Hagia Sofia is closed on Mondays.)

**Travel to Çanakkale:** Make your way to the sea town of Çanakkale for the night.

## Days 5: Troy

**Sightseeing tour of Troy:** Journey to Troy, the city from which the beautiful Helen incited the Trojan War in the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The best-remembered part of the 10-year war is its conclusion—according to the epic poet Virgil, the Greeks hid in a wooden horse that the Trojans mistakenly believed was a peace offering. The Greeks then emerged from the horse and ransacked the town. Tour the ancient site, which houses excavated remains of multiple civilizations.

**Sightseeing tour of Pergamon:** A stronghold of the Greek Attalid dynasty, Pergamon was known as one of the world's most magnificent cities. Here you'll visit the impressive Acropolis, home to one of the best ancient Greek libraries. Continue to Kusadasi for the night.

## Day 6: Ephesus | Kusadasi

**Ephesus:** Once a sacred center for the cult of Artemis, Ephesus is one of the Mediterranean region's best-preserved classical cities. See the Temple of Hadrian and the elaborate Library of Celsus. Then, travel to the House of the Virgin Mary, where the Virgin Mary is said to have spent her final days.

☞ **Sirince:** Stroll past some of the country's best-preserved 19th-century architecture and enjoy panoramic views of peach orchards and olive groves on your tour of this rural Turkish town. Those who do not join the excursion will enjoy free time exploring the ancient treasures and idyllic coastal atmosphere in Kusadasi.

## Day 7: Priene | Didyma | Pamukkale

**Travel to Priene:** Your first stop is Priene, an important site for Hellenistic art and architecture. Here, the remains of the Temple of Athena and Theatre offer a glimpse of small-town life in ancient Greece.

**Didyma:** Continue on to the once-renowned Temple of Apollo in Didyma, a site of great pilgrimage in the same ancient times. The Sacred Way to Didyma, as the journey was known, featured statues of the Branchidae priests, who famously administered the sanctuary's temple and oracle.

**Travel to Pamukkale:** Continue to Pamukkale, which was a popular destination for spa-goers during Roman times.

## Day 8: Pamukkale

**Pamukkale:** Discover why Pamukkale was a popular spa town during Roman times with a visit to its travertines—petrified waterfalls of white stone that create multilayered natural basins filled with warm mineral water. Then, visit the well-preserved ruins of the Roman baths at Hierapolis, established as a thermal spa at the end of the second century B.C. Explore the ruins of the baths, temples and other Greek monuments at the site.

## Day 9: Istanbul

**Fly to Istanbul:** Return to Istanbul from Pamukkale.

☞ **Bosphorus Cruise:** Take a half-day cruise on the Bosphorus and span the historically significant stretch of water that separates Asia from Europe.

## Day 10: Depart for home

Transfer to the airport and check in for your return flight home.