

# The Special Black Sea Tour

## Day 1 ISTANBUL:

Arrive in Istanbul, welcome meeting. [Overnight in Istanbul]

## Day 2 ISTANBUL TO BEYPAZARI:

Beypazarı was an important stopover on the trade route between Istanbul and Baghdad. The cobbled streets and white ottoman era buildings are the main reason why people go there today. The town is now well known for its coppersmiths, silverwork called Telkari, good local food, old fashioned lifestyle and carrots! In Beypazarı we will wander through the cobbled streets and also have lunch in a local restaurant. After reaching Ankara we will also visit a replica Ottoman town called Hamamönü. Overnight in Ankara [B L D]

## Day 3 ANKARA TO AMASYA:

On the way to Amasya we are going to visit Hattuşaş (Boğazkale). Once upon a time it was the capital of the Hittite empire. The Hittite empire was the longest living empire in the central- northern part of Anatolia. Its history goes back 2300 years. Yazılıkaya will be our next stop to see the carvings of the Hittite gods and goddesses. Overnight in Amasya [B D]

## Day 4 AMASYA TO SIVAS:

This morning we are going to visit the city of Amasya. The city was built on the banks of Yeşilirmak River. The history of Amasya goes back 7500 years. Amasya has one of the best examples of rock cut tombs of the Pontic kingdom. During the Ottoman times the city had been used as a training centre for the crown prince. We will then drive to the city of Sivas, which was a very important centre for the Seljuk Turks about 900 years ago. They built magnificent buildings to beautify the city. The Grand mosque of Sivas (Ulu Camii), Seljuk era Hospital and a Madrasah will be the places we will visit. Overnight in Sivas [BD]

## Day 5 SIVAS:

This morning we are heading south towards a small town called Kangal. This little town is famous for its giant shepherd dogs called Kangal or Karabaş (Black Head / Nose). We will visit a breeding centre and also the pool of the Dr Fish which is a local healing centre for Psoriasis. Overnight in Sivas [BD]

## Day 6 and 7 SIVAS-ERZURUM:

Today we have a longer drive [6 hours] to get to Erzurum. In Erzurum we will visit some of the best examples of Seljuk architecture. The **Yakutiye medrese**, once a Mongol seminary is now the Turkish & Islamic Arts & Ethnographic museum [closed Monday]. We will also visit the **Grand Mosque [Ulu camii]**, the **Double Minaret medrese** - built in 1253 by the sultan as a Koranic academy and the **Three tombs** adjacent to it, built for his daughters. We will also have time for a visit to the local **Rüstem Paşa market**, where they make and sell black amber prayer beads. 2 nights in ERZURUM [BD].

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### Day 8 ERZURUM-KARS:

Kars, a town famous for its cheese [Kaşar] and also the ruins of Ani. With history dating back to 5,000 B.C it was the entrance to Anatolia from the Silk Road. Within the great city walls is the medieval city of Ani. The ruined city has a cathedral, churches, market, mosques and a bath complex. Ani overlooks a deep gorge and the Arpa Çay river which forms the border with Armenia. Overnight in **KARS** [BD].

### Day 9 KARS-HOPA:

This morning we will continue through the Kaçkar Mountains until we reach the Black Sea coast. The road to **Hopa** is very scenic .We head into the Black Sea region and with this the landscape changes dramatically. Overnight in **HOPA** [BD]

### Day 10 HOPA – AYDER:

This morning we are travelling to another country! We are going to visit Batumi in Georgia. You will have free time here to wander through the shopping district and black sea Boulevard. After lunch we will travel back to Turkey, up the valley inland to Ayder, which is a yayla (plateau) village famous for its hot springs and natural beauty. Late afternoon we are going to discover this beautiful little town. Overnight in Ayder [BD]

### Day 11 AYDER:

After a lazy start to the day we are going to walk through a great forest to reach a beautiful waterfall .After lunch you will have free time to either use the hot spring or to walk in the town. Overnight in Ayder [BLD]

### Day 12 AYDER-RIZE:

We will travel on to Rize, which is well known for a cloth material known as Rize Bezi; we may visit one of the shops to see this material. There will be some free time in the local shopping area for you to find your lunch and meet some local shop owners. Rize is also the home of Turkish tea, so we will visit the **Tea Research Institute and Gardens** for a cup of local tea and in the gardens here you can see 50 different shades of green. Overnight in **RIZE** [BD]

### Day 13 RIZE:

We will travel on to my hometown of Şimşirli, driving along steep narrow roads to reach my home town. Today we will take it easy to enjoy the beauty of this area. Şimşirli hides itself behind a jungle of tea and bean fields. We will visit a delightful gem of a **mosque**, built entirely of chestnut and carved with manic mastery in 1849. There is a good chance to see local people picking tea and harvesting their crops. We may join in for a while! We will walk to **my family home** where I was born. The words are not enough to describe this day. This is Turkey's Switzerland. Overnight in **RIZE** [BLD]

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## **Day 14 RIZE-TRABZON:**

We will leave my home town Rize and travel to **TRABZON**, where we will spend the next 2 nights. On the way to Trabzon We will visit a Tea processing factory which is very interesting. This is a good chance to buy some tea from my hometown. Later we are going to drive uphill to a magical land to Uzungöl (long lake) for lunch and to walk around the lake. Overnight in Trabzon [BD]

## **Day 15 TRABZON:**

This morning we are going to travel 46 km through the windy roads of Altındere valley to reach Sumela Monastery. The monastery is the drawcard attraction of the Black Sea region. Built on a 300 m cliff edge with 72 Bishops rooms it most important historical site of this area .This afternoon we will also have time to visit the **Aya Sofia** Mosque [Church of Divine Wisdom]. The frescos and decorative sculpting on the outside are the highlight. Overnight in **TRABZON** [BD]

## **Day 16 TRABZON – ORDU-SAMSUN:**

This morning we are going to follow the coastline of the magnificent Black sea. Firstly we are going to drive to Giresun which is the Hazelnut capital of the world. Seventy percent of the world hazelnuts come from this region of Turkey. The next major town is Ordu. When in Ordu we are going to take a cable car to the highest look out of the city called Boztepe.

After lunch our second sightseeing will be Paşaoğlu Mansion which serves as the Ethnographic museum. This building will help us to understand how upper class Ottoman people enjoyed the luxury lifestyle in the past. Later that afternoon we will drive to Samsun. Overnight in Samsun [BD]

## **Day 17 SAMSUN – SINOP – ABANA:**

This morning we are heading to Sinop. It is the home of the Greek philosopher Diogenes .This city is the most northerly point in Anatolia. Sinop had an important harbour in the past. The Pontic kingdom, Romans, Byzantines, Seljuk Turks and finally the Ottomans all used it. The old prison castle, İnce Burun (pointy nose) and also Hamsilos Bay will be in our tour program today. After lunch we will follow the coastline to reach Abana which is a small coastal holiday town .The history goes back 7<sup>th</sup> C BC. This pretty town is easily walkable. The Kent ormani [town forest] is a good place to see 500 years old plane trees. Overnight in Abana (BD)

## **Day 18 ABANA TO AMASRA:**

After breakfast we are going to head to the west .Amasra is a little pretty town on the Black Sea coast well known with good sea food. Only 6,000 people live in the town. There are two islands near the town called Büyükada and Rabbit Island. A Roman era castle will give us a good view of the town and we will finish the day with a short boat trip in the Black sea. After lunch you will have free time to do your own thing in this pretty town. Overnight in Amasra (BD)

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## **Day 19 AMASRA –LAKE ABANT:**

We will head to the beautiful Lake Abant. The hotel is set in lovely alpine surroundings at an altitude of 1500 m. This area is a cool haven in the summer for the locals from both Istanbul and Ankara. Before arriving at the hotel we will visit the Yayla [mountain pastures], where families migrate with their animals each summer. [BD] You can spend the afternoon walking, bike riding or riding on a horse and cart around the lake, or alternatively enjoy the facilities of the hotel. [BD]

## **Day 20 ISTANBUL:**

After breakfast we are going to head towards Istanbul .After checking into our hotel you will have a free afternoon to do your final shopping. We will meet at the lobby to go for our last supper [ BD ]

## **Day 21**

Tour ends, transfer to the airport after breakfast. [ B ]