



EXPERIENCE THE REAL TURKEY

WEST TOUR

UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES

Must see sights and a few hidden gems, this tour is the perfect tour for first time visitors to Turkey

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Day 1. ISTANBUL. Istanbul is the only city in the world built on two continents. It is a magnificent city, full of history, beauty, and a real blend of cultures. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 10.30am for a welcome meeting and a run down of the trip that lies ahead. We will then wander down the **Hippodrome**, the scene of ancient chariot races and the centre of Byzantine civic life. We will visit the elegant **Sultanahmet Mosque**, known as the blue mosque due to its magnificent interior decoration of Iznik tiles. After this you will have free time to continue walking in this lovely area of Istanbul. [L]

Day 2. ISTANBUL. Today we will visit the great palace of the Ottoman sultans [**Topkapi Palace**]. Here you will appreciate the incredible wealth of the Ottoman Empire. We will tour through the many courts and visit the fascinating harem. We will visit the **Aya Sofia**, a church built in the 6th century that has recently been turned back into a mosque. The walls are decorated with stunning Byzantine mosaics. After this we will visit the **Underground Cistern**, built in 532 a.d. This place has a magical quality about it. [B]

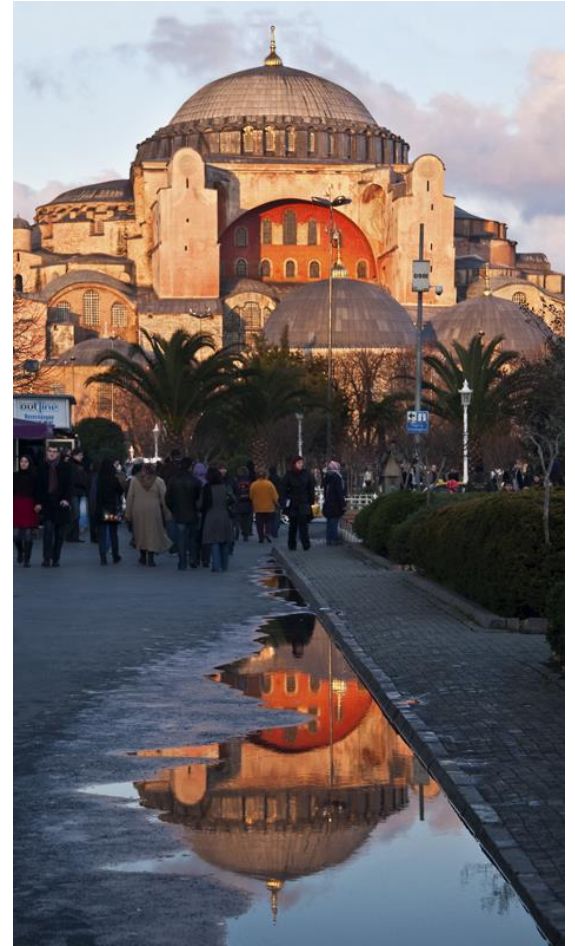
Day 3. ISTANBUL. This morning we will wander through the **Egyptian Spice Bazaar**. The sights and smells in this bazaar are a unique sensation. We will then relax on a **Bosphorus Cruise**, enjoying the magnificent buildings and scenery along the shores of both Europe and Asia. In the afternoon we will visit the labyrinth of streets and passages of the colourful **Grand Bazaar**. Kadir will give you a short tour after which you will have free time to wander around the 4000 shops if you wish. [B]

Day 4. ISTANBUL – CANAKKALE. We depart early and drive south to the **Gallipoli** peninsula. We will spend 5 hours touring the Battlefields, cemeteries, and monuments in this historic area. We will visit the Gallipoli Museum and then cross the Dardanelle's strait to **Canakkale**. A very special day for many. [BD]

Day 5. CANAKKALE – BURSA. We head east to **Bursa**. This is a very old and historically important city. It was the first capital of the Ottoman Empire and has a special meaning to most Turks. We visit the beautiful **Green Mosque and Green Tomb**. They are the best example of Turkish style architecture. We will also visit the famous **Silk Bazaar** of Bursa. The silk cocoon trade is a popular industry for the local villagers around Bursa. This is a great place to buy silk. [BD]

Day 6. BURSA – ABANT LAKE. Depart Bursa for the lakeside town of Iznik, famous for the ornate tiles that decorate many of the Turkish mosques and palaces. We will then head to the beautiful **Lake Abant**. The hotel is set in lovely alpine surroundings at an altitude of 1500m. 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]

Day 7. ABANT – SAFRANBOLU. Today we will travel a short distance north to **Safranbolu**. We will step back in time in this charming 'old world' town, which has been listed by UNESCO as an internationally significant cultural area, for its unique architecture. In the afternoon we wander through the narrow, twisting cobbled lanes amongst the well-preserved Ottoman homes. Many are now boutique hotels or cafes. [BD]



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Day 8. SAFRANBOLU – ANKARA. We depart the lovely Safranbolu, heading south to the capital of Turkey, **Ankara**. It lies in the centre of Anatolia, and it is the city of ministries, government, armies, and universities. After lunch we will visit the **Anatolian Civilisations Museum**. This museum houses a marvellous collection of early Anatolian artefacts from the Palaeolithic age to Roman works. From the museum we see the view below of the city of Ankara as well as our next destination- **the Mausoleum of Ataturk**. This is an impressive mix of modern and ancient architecture, and it dominates the city. The museum here holds a collection of memorabilia and personal effects of Ataturk, recording the important moments in his life. [BD]

Day 9. ANKARA – CAPPADOCIA. Passing south through the Anatolian plains we head to the well know area called **Cappadocia**. The unique scenery around this area is an unforgettable experience. The volcanic stone has been eroded over the years to leave the amazing formations that are present now. The first Christian population of Anatolia then carved the stone to make the houses and chapels. There are approximately 600 churches and chapels in this area, some adorned with meaningful frescos. This afternoon we will visit **Uchisar**, a dramatic volcanic rock castle, which provides a superb view of the valley. Then to finish the day we will visit a carpet-weaving centre to learn a bit about the art of Turkish hand made carpets [BD]

Day 10. CAPPADOCIA. We will continue our sightseeing in Cappadocia with a visit to the **Goreme Open Air Museum** and we will see a selection of the many fine fresco decorated chapels from the 11th and 12th centuries. The valley here is full of cave dwellings with tiny openings for windows and paths leading between them. We will also visit the beautiful valley of the '**Fairy Chimneys**' strange cone shaped rocks, formed after many years of erosion. Today is a photographer's dream day.

There will be some **free time** this afternoon. This is a fantastic day you will not easily forget. [BD]

Day 11. CAPPADOCIA. Another fantastic day, seeing more of the sights in this popular part of Turkey. Highlights of today will be visiting the underground city called **Derinkuyu**. In times of peace the people of this area would live and farm above, however, when enemies were invading them, they would retreat into these underground safe havens where they could survive for up to 6 months. The size and complexity of these multi-storied underground cities is amazing. We will travel over to **Soganli**, another interesting valley filled with churches and monasteries. [BD]



There will be an early start one morning for those who wish to try hot air ballooning over this magnificent area. This activity is highly recommended. *At an extra charge of approximately 200 € * This must be prebooked when we are in Istanbul.

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Day 12. CAPPADOCIA – KONYA. This morning we will be leaving the centre of Turkey and making our way west towards the Aegean Coast. On the way to Konya, we will have a look at a **Caravanserai**, used in Selcuk times as a resting place on the 13th century Silk Road. Once in **Konya** we will visit the **Mevlana Museum**, where you will learn about the culture of the Whirling Dervishes. We will also see the slender minaret madrasa. [BD]

Day 13. KONYA – PAMUKKALE. We leave early for our long drive further west to **Pamukkale**, one of the most unusual yet beautiful sights in the world. For thousands of years volcanic spring water has cascaded down the mountainside to form white calcium stone terraces. In previous years tourists were able to walk on the terraces and unfortunately this caused it to deteriorate, however it is now a protected area and returning to its former beauty. We are going to visit an interesting and important Roman city called **Hierapolis**. We will have enough time here in Pamukkale to explore the terraces before heading to our hotel, where we can enjoy its own thermal pool and other facilities. [BD]



Day 14. PAMUKKALE – SELCUK. We continue travelling west until we reach the coastline and the town of **Selcuk**. We will visit **Ephesus**, once the eastern capital of the Roman Empire and the commercial centre of the ancient world. As you hear about the lifestyle of the people living here centuries ago, you will soon appreciate that this will be one of the highlights of your trip. We will then go to the museum, which houses many of the findings from Ephesus. [BD]

Day 15. SELCUK – FETHIYE. This morning we drive south through the picturesque Taurus Mountains until we reach the town of **Fethiye**. After lunch, you will be given free time to wander around the quaint streets, do some shopping or wander along the waterfront. If you are interested in buying gold or leather jackets this is a good place to do so. [BD]

Day 16. FETHIYE. This morning we will visit the ruined Greek village of **Kaya**. We will walk through the deserted streets and visit two old churches. After a delicious lunch at Yaka Park we will then head off to the nearby **Saklikent Gorge**. The gorge is 18km long with very steep walls and you will have time to walk up into the gorge through the icy waters or just to relax in the shade of the gorge at a riverside café. [BLD] * There is an option to do tandem paragliding in one of the best locations in Europe.

Day 17. FETHIYE. Today we will relax on the crystal-clear turquoise waters of the southern Turkish coast. We will spend the day swimming, visiting ruins or just lying on the deck relaxing whilst we tour around the islands and coves. It is a lovely day, a great way to appreciate this beautiful coastline and a great relaxing end to the trip. [BLD]

Day 18. FETHIYE – ISTANBUL. This morning we depart for the airport for our flight to Istanbul [B].



You may choose to spend more time in Istanbul or to continue your journey to another destination.