

**Day 1** - Welcome to sunny Turkey—a world of minarets and domed cathedrals; of ancient civilization and modern, bustling cities.

**Istanbul**—spanning two continents, is also a city of many contrasts. Look for your Rainbow representative as you exit the airport and begin the adventure of a lifetime. Overnight in Istanbul.

**Day 2** - Our day will include a tour of the old city as our guide leads us to the **Topkapi Palace**, the last official residence of the Ottoman rulers. It is situated on the hillside of the Golden Horn and reaches out to the Bosphorus. Around the corner we visit the **St. Sofia (Hagia or Aya Sophia)**, one of the world's greatest architectural wonders, the fourth largest church in the world and the capital of the Christian church for nearly 1,000 years. Across the way is the **Blue Mosque**—time to remove our shoes as we mix with Islamic worshippers. This magnificent edifice is easily identified by its six minarets, the only one in Turkey structured in such a way. On our walk we pass along the **Hippodrome** where once chariots raced and end up at the **Yerebatan Sarayi (Underground Cisterns)**.

The underground cistern dates to the Byzantine period and scenes from the film “From Russia with Love” were shot here.

After a lunch (on your own) of pide, iskender or any other of the fantastic Turkish cuisine, we make our way to the **Grand Bazaar**—a shopper's paradise featuring 4,000 shops under one Covered Roof—a world unto itself where one can easily get lost in the labyrinth of streets and shops. Overnight in Istanbul.

**Day 3** - On the **Bosphorus Cruise** we have a fantastic view of both sides of the city and its skyline. Oh, to have been a sultan and lived along the sea in one of the many palaces lining the straits or a modern day dweller in some of the lovely villas! In the afternoon we visit the Church of St. Savior in **Chora** (meaning in the country), evidence that originally it stood in a rural setting. The present church dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century and houses some of the finest Byzantine mosaics and frescoes. At the **Egyptian (Spice) Bazaar** our senses are overwhelmed with the conflicting aroma of the spices and the sounds of the merchants hawking their wares. Overnight in Istanbul.

**Day 4** - Our brief flight to **Izmir** brings us to the ancient city of Smyrna where even today one may visit Hittite remains. Despite earthquakes, conquering armies and the shifting of ruling powers, Izmir (ancient **Smyrna**) is one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities of the world. Its early Christian influence rest primarily on the work of Polycarp, a bishop here from 115-156 AD and ultimately a martyr for his faith. One of the most impressive of the Seven Churches of Revelation is **Pergamum (Bergama)**. Sitting in the temple literally hanging on the side of the mountain gives the spectator a perfect view of the valley below and



the **Asclepion**, the medical center of the ancient community. In Revelation John warned the church here that the vision he saw threatened to make “war upon them with the sword that comes out of my mouth” (*Revelation 2:16*). Nearby **Thyatira** was noted in history as a city of many guilds. A member of one of these, Lydia, a seller of purple, met Paul outside the city of Philippi (*Acts 16:14*). Overnight in Izmir.

**Day 5** - The ruins of **Sardis** are one of the most picturesque areas of any of the Seven Churches. John admonished that the outward appearance of prosperity and activity did not tally with the finished work—“though you have the name of being alive, you are dead...” (*Revelation 3:1-2*). **Philadelphia** was one of the two churches about which John said nothing negative. The most interesting remains of Christian Philadelphia are part of a Byzantine basilica and some 11<sup>th</sup> century frescoes. **Hierapolis (Pamukkale)** features a spectacular sight of calcified, cascading white terraces resembling snow, the result of the calcium deposits developed over time as water flowed over the area. Here we associate Philip the Evangelist with the early church. Paul mentions Hierapolis along with **Laodicea** as the center of Epaphras’ ministry. Another less known resident of the city was Papias, a disciple of the Apostle John. Overnight in Pamukkale.

**Day 6** - Our drive to Selcuk and onto **Ephesus** brings us to the most impressive archeological site in Turkey. Ephesus gives the visitor the fullest sense of a bustling complex at the time of the Christian era. As we stroll the streets, it is easy to imagine the city in ancient times. Undoubtedly one of the most beautiful cities of the ancient world, Ephesus has special significance for Christians. From here Paul preached, Timothy taught, while later, John warned the church at Ephesus “...you have abandoned the love (you had) at first.” (*Revelation 2:4*). The troubles Paul encountered are a vivid example of how commercial interests can be affected by religious beliefs. The sale of the silver images of Artemis declined as Paul preached that “gods made by human hands are not gods at all” (*Acts 19:26*). We will also visit **St. John’s Basilica** built by Emperor Justinian in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and believed to contain the remains of the Apostle John.

The **Ephesus Museum** is one of Turkey’s best. Marble and bronze statues are displayed along with jewelry, coins and other artifacts of the Ancient World. Overnight in Izmir. (Option to fly back to Istanbul and overnight there or catch an onward flight in the evening.)

**Day 7** - Our journey has taken us back to the times of Paul and John and as we approach the Izmir airport, we say goodbye to this world of antiquity.

