

Day 1 Welcome to **Istanbul**, a city with a mysterious past, which has borrowed from a myriad of cultures and blended all into an unmatched splendor. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 2 - Our full day tour of the old city begins as we visit **St. Sophia**—now a museum, the original structure was built by Constantine in 326 A.D., and for 916 years it functioned as a Christian church. With its 184' dome, mosaics and frescoes, it is considered an architectural wonder. Of it, Justinian stated, "Solomon, I have surpassed you." We know we have entered the world of royalty as we step onto the grounds of the **Topkapi Palace**, the last residence of the Ottoman Turks. Poised on the hilltop of the Golden Horn, it beckoned home the sultans of old. From here we take a short walk along the **Hippodrome** built in the times of Byzantium for horse and chariot races.

Today, on the site of the imperial box seats, is the William II Fountain, and monuments line the field where once as many as 100,000 sat or stood and cheered at athletic competitions. As we continue our walk, we reach Sultanahmet

Mosque better known as the **Blue Mosque**, a name derived from its exquisite, blue-colored tiles decorating the interior of the building, which is further distinguished by its six minarets.

Later we enter the **Yerebatan Sarayi (Underground Cisterns)** built during the time of Justinian I and probably by Christians when one considers the manner in which many of the temple columns and capitals are placed.

After a late lunch of delicious Turkish cuisine, we head to the **Grand Covered Bazaar**, a maze of streets and shops under an intricately painted, vaulted roof. You hardly know where to look. It is a fascinating world unto itself abounding in the sights, aroma and sounds of old Turkey. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 3 - Today we transfer to the airport and fly to **Adana** from which we visit ancient **Antioch (Antakya)** where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians. Once the capital of the kingdom of Syria, it was from here that Paul and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey. A grotto discovered by the Crusaders is reputed to be the cave church (**St. Peter's Grotto**) where early Christians met in secret. We visit the **Mosaic Museum in Seleucia** mentioned in the New Testament as the port from which Paul and Barnabas set out for their first missionary journey (*Acts 13:4*). Overnight in Adana.

Day 4 - Young Paul grew up in the city of **Tarsus**. He came to the well (**St. Paul's Well**) to draw water and walked the **Roman Street**. Today, we follow his steps and also view **Cleopatra's Gate**. From here we drive to Konya (ancient **Iconium**—the city of icons), a



pilgrimage site for Moslems because Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi is buried here. Set in the high, bleak plain and known for its pious inhabitants and strong Islamic leanings, the city has been populated since Hittite times. Here, we visit the **Mevlana Museum**, an enlargement of an original dervish lodge containing the tomb of Rumi, a ceremonial hall and displays of memorabilia and manuscripts of the Mevlevi order of whirling dervishes, a mystical group whose members are followers of Rumi. Overnight in Konya.



Day 5 - The history of Pisidian Antioch goes back to some time between 310-280 BC. The first Biblical reference to this city is when Paul mentions it in *Acts 13:14-16* as the synagogue from which he preached his first recorded sermon on his first missionary journey.

Colossae, an important city in its day, had a marked decline with the rise of Hierapolis. Whether Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians is still a part of scholarly debate weighing in his favor. He probably never visited the city, but it is quite apparent that he was most familiar with the church there and warned against cults of the day.

In **Hierapolis (Pamukkale)** the dazzling white hillside is a spectacular sight. The first reference to it in the New Testament associates the city and the church here with the work of Epaphras, who in prison later became acquainted with Paul. Overnight in Pamukkale.

Day 6 - Laodicea was at the crossroads of north-south traffic between Sardis and Perge and east-west traffic from the Euphrates to Ephesus. From this advantageous location, the city became wealthy. John cited very harsh warnings of the “lukewarm” attitude of the church here (*Revelation 3: 15-17*). The ruins of **Sardis** are one of the most picturesque areas of any of the Seven Churches. John admonished the Christians here to “wake up and put some strength into what was left” (*Revelation 3:1-2*). **Philadelphia** was the least distinguished of the Seven Churches; the latest to take on the importance of being a city; but it was one of the two churches about which John said nothing negative. The most interesting remains of Christian Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, are part of a Byzantine basilica and some 11th century frescoes. Overnight in Izmir.

Day 7 - Smyrna (Izmir) Old Smyrna was located just across the bay from present day Izmir. Polycarp, bishop from 115 to 156 AD, was one of the earliest members of the church at this site. There are several contemporary accounts of him and some of his own writings are still preserved. In a letter to the Philippians he warned “...the love of money is the root of all evil.” A martyr, he was important to the early church as a preserver of the purity of the gospel. John

told the Christians in Smyrna not to be afraid to suffer, but "...be faithful till death..." (*Revelation 2:10-11*).

On a tour of the ruins of **Pergamum**

(**Bergama**) on a very hot day, we take added interest in the news that the city's greatest weakness in defense was the lack of water. Impressive is its steep seventy-eight row amphitheater extending up the hillside. The letter in *Revelation* "to the angel of the church at Pergamum" was from "the One who has the sharp, two-edged sword" (*Revelation 1:12*).

Thyatira (Akhisar) has the remains of an ancient temple almost lost in the thriving, modern city around it. The early Christians here were commended for doing more than they did at first (*Revelation 2:19*), but the surrounding worship of the prophetess, Jezebel, was a cause of concern (*Revelation 2:20*). Overnight in Izmir.

Day 8 - Ephesus, site of the world's largest excavated ruins, will amaze you with how vividly you can imagine the ancient city. Close your eyes for a moment and realize here the Apostles once walked along streets lined with wonderful public buildings such as the Baths of Scholastica, the Library of Celsus, the Temple of Hadrian, the Theater and the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders. Later visit **St. John's Basilica** where the Apostle John is buried, and the **Ephesus Museum**, site of some of the best treasures of antiquity in this region. Overnight in Izmir.

Day 9 - Today we take to the sea for an excursion to the Greek Island of **Patmos**, the beautiful, rocky island where the exiled Apostle John received the revelation (*Revelation 1:9*). Overnight in Kusadasi. (Option to fly back to Istanbul and overnight there or catch an onward flight in the evening.)

Day 10 - Having walked the roads of Paul and the early Christians, we depart with a sense of wonder at all the remains from antiquity that have stood the test of time. Introduced to, or reminded of, the words of the Apostle John to the Seven Churches, leave Turkey never to be the same. Transfer to Izmir airport for the return flight.

