

**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** - The morning starts at **St. Sophia**, one of the world's great buildings reflecting the sophistication of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, a site where Christians worshipped for 916 years. We move from the holy to the imperial as we visit **Topkapi Palace**, home to the Ottoman sultans. Step into a world of grandeur and opulence before moving across the way to the site of the ancient **Hippodrome**, the civil center for the people where royalty and commoners met to cheer their favorite athletes. Now we descend below the streets to the **Underground Cisterns**, built to meet the water supply for the most besieged city of ancient times. Now take off your shoes in respect as you enter the **Blue Mosque** and gaze with wonder at the thousands of blue-colored tiles covering the massive, interior dome and walls and giving the mosque its more common name.

In the afternoon we visit the **Grand Bazaar** and enter a labyrinth of streets with booth-like shops spilling their wares into the passageway. Here you banter and bargain with merchants who would just as soon chat and sip tea with you as to sell their goods. Relax to the experience and soak in the charm of Old Turkey. Overnight in Istanbul.



**Day 3** - Today's drive is along the sea to the city of **Canakkale**. Sit back and enjoy the countryside with its absence of tall buildings crowded upon each other. The drive will take us along the **Dardanelles**, which we cross by car ferry and pass through Canakkale with its movie-set Trojan horse on our way to the ruins of **Homer's Troy** recorded in his *Iliad*. Nearby is **Alexander Troas**. It was here he had a vision and saw the Macedonian asking him to come to Macedonia (*Acts 16:7-19*). On Paul's third journey he traveled the same basic route we will travel to Assos. Overnight in Assos.

**Day 4** - We have entered the world best remembered for the journeys of the Apostle Paul and the *Revelation* of the Apostle John. In the morning we visit the ruins, which sparked our interest as we entered **Assos** yesterday—the relatively intact city walls, the lookout tower, theater and agora. The Byzantine church turned mosque is no longer used. From the top of the volcanic hill we have a spectacular view (if it is clear) of Mytilene located on the sea twelve kilometers away.

**Pergamum (Bergama)** is another site to astound us. The location of much excavation, it is easy to appreciate the beauty of the ancient city. According to John the church here was in danger not only from the state but also the more subtle temptation to hold to the beliefs of

Balaam (*Revelation 2:14-15*). From the mountainside we descend to the valley and tour the ancient medical center, the **Asclepion**, established by the great physician, Galen. A short journey away, in **Thyatira (Akhisar)**, are the ruins of an ancient temple, perhaps to Apollo, parts of a colonnaded road and a church. Further excavations here are unlikely and once you visit, you will understand that decision. In Scripture we associate the city with Lydia of Thyatira, a seller of purple, whom Paul met in Philippi. The church here suffered threats from within—indulgence and lack of moral responsibility (*Revelations 2:23; 26-28*). Overnight in Izmir.



**Day 5 - Old Smyrna** was located just across the bay from present day Izmir. Polycarp, a martyr, served as bishop of the local church here from 115 to 156 AD, and was one of the earliest members of that church. 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*) **Sardis** was an ancient political and cultural center in Anatolia.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Persians built a royal road beginning in Sardis and extending 1600 miles into southwest Iran. The ruins at Sardis are quite impressive. Ruins of a small building at the southeastern corner of the temple belonged to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and are believed to be an early Christian church, subject of John’s text on the church at Sardis in *Revelation*.

**Philadelphia**, the city of Brotherly Love, is our next stop. Founded in 189 BC as part of the Pergamum Kingdom, today some ruins of the city wall and arches indicate that it is from the late Byzantine era. It is notable that John had nothing negative to say of this church in his letter. Our last tour of the day is **Laodicea**. Paul mentions Laodicea as the center of Epaphras’s ministry. Overnight in Pamukkale.

**Day 6 -** The history of **Pisidian Antioch** goes back to some time between 310-280 BC. The first Biblical reference to this city is Paul’s mention in *Acts 13:14-16* on his first missionary journey. **Colossae**, an important city in its day, had a marked decline with the rise of Hierapolis. Paul probably never visited Colossae, 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 startling as we approach the site. The first reference to Hierapolis in the New Testament associates the city and the church there with the work of Epaphras, who in prison later became acquainted with Paul. Overnight in Pamukkale.

**Day 7 -** The temple of Apollo in **Didyma (Didim)** was located at this site even though it was considered to be the largest temple of Miletus. It was the third largest building in the

Hellenistic world. At **Miletus**, climb to the top of the Greco-Roman theater and visit the Baths of Faustina. Paul's visit here came at the end of his third missionary journey. At Paul's request the elders came here to meet with him.

Addressing the group he cautioned them to keep watch over their flocks (*Acts 20:35*). Knowing they would probably never see Paul again, the elders were very emotional at the parting. We pass through Pirene, once separated by the Bay of Miletus in early times. Overnight in Kusadasi.

**Day 8** - 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. Overnight in Kusadasi.

**Day 9** - Our trip following the paths of Paul picks up with **Ephesus**, one of the greatest ruined cities in the western world. Strolling the streets, we can imagine the city alive with people. Sit in the theater and listen closely as you hear Paul proclaiming the gospel.

Undoubtedly Ephesus was one of the most beautiful and important cities of the ancient world. Ephesus is quite significant for Christians. The church in Ephesus was the leading church in the time of the apostles. Paul, Timothy and John all lived and ministered in this city. John spoke of the church's abandonment of the love it had originally possessed in his letters to the churches of *Revelation*.

The tour includes a visit to **St. John's Basilica** built by Emperor Justinian in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Under the central dome lays the grave of the Apostle John.

The **Ephesus Museum** is one of Turkey's best. The two greatest exhibits are the marble statues of Artemis. One is from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and the other 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Other marble and bronze statues are displayed along with jewelry, coins and other artifacts of the Ancient World. Overnight in Kusadasi. (Option to fly back to Istanbul and overnight there or catch an onward flight in the evening.)

**Day 10** - Yes, it is over, at least on site. Transfer to the Izmir Airport for your return having walked briefly with the ancient Christians, and awakened the desire to learn more of Paul's sojourns in this area, and John's prophecy. So long until the next time!

