

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 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 and today it has that same magnetic appeal. Just around the corner we will 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." Across the street we enter the **Yerebatan Sarayı (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. 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.

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. It is a world unto itself abounding in the sights, aroma and sounds of old Turkey. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 3 – Transfer to the Istanbul airport for a short flight to **Antalya (Attalia)**, winner of a Golden Apple award for tourism. Within the city are reminders of the Romans' presence such as Hadrian's Gate and Hidirlik Tower as well as the Byzantine Panagia Basilica. We travel to **Perge**, which has one of the best-preserved stadiums in Turkey, and the ruins here are quite notable. Paul and Barnabas passed through the city on their way to Antioch on the first missionary journey. From Perge we drive a short way to **Aspendos**, site of the best-preserved antique theater with the best acoustics in the world. Often groups visiting the area select to have services in this location. Overnight in Antalya.

Day 4 - 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 of it in *Acts 13:14-16* as the synagogue from which he preached his first recorded sermon during 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, but he probably never visited the city. However, 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 major tourist site today and probably even in ancient times. The first reference to it 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 5 - 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 Minoans and later the Mycenaeans established **Miletus**. Today we can climb to the top of the Greco-Roman theater or visit the Baths of Faustina.

Paul's visit here came at the end of his third missionary journey and it was here the elders met with him. Addressing the group, he cautioned them to keep watch over their flocks (*Acts 20:35*). The parting later was a very emotional one as the elders realized they probably would never see him again.

Transfer to the hotel in **Kusadasi**, a picturesque market town where you can spend hours browsing and shopping. It is also the starting point for excursions to Patmos as well as the site of Ephesus. Overnight in Kusadasi.

Day 6 - 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.

Day 7 - 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 and the Theater and the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders. Later we visit **St. John's Basilica** where the Apostle John is buried and the **Ephesus Museum**, site of some of the best treasures of antiquity found in this region. Overnight in Kusadasi.

Day 8 - 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. **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 still preserved. In a letter to the Philippians he warned them “...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*) Transfer to the hotel in Izmir for overnight.



Day 9 - If we tour 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 side of 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*). From the mountainside descend to the valley and tour the ancient medical center, the **Asclepion**, established by the great physician Galen. **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 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, we leave Turkey never to be the same. Transfer to Izmir airport for the return flight.