

Day 1 - Welcome to **Izmir** and the coast of Aegean Turkey—look for your Rainbow representative as you exit the airport and begin the adventure of a lifetime. After dinner, your guide will hold a short briefing on the tour. Overnight in Izmir.

Day 2 - Today, we take a short tour of **Smyrna (Izmir)**, which is located just across the bay from present day Izmir. The ancient city of Smyrna has Hittite remains still visible today. Despite natural disasters and marauding armies amid shifting 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. John told the Christians in Smyrna not to be afraid to suffer but “...be faithful till death” (*Revelation 2:10-11*).

This afternoon we visit the ruins of **Pergamum** and **Thyatira**. Pergamum, perched on the hilltop above the modern city of Bergama, is one of the most dramatic sites in Turkey. Standing on the **Acropolis** and looking over the picturesque valley, one can imagine the armies of Alexander the Great marching through the valley. Stroll through the significant unearthed remnants of marble temples, and wonder at the technology that made the construction possible.

From the mountainside we descend to the valley and tour the ancient medical center, the **Asclepion**, established by the great physician, Galen.

The ancient city of Thyatira is now occupied by the modern town of Akhisar. Here the few ancient ruins are merged into the town around it, so close your eyes and imagine the once thriving commercial city. Overnight in Izmir.

Day 3 - Sardis, an ancient political and cultural center in Anatolia, was the capital of the Lydian Kingdom. The expression “rich as Croesus” comes from the fact that the Lydian ruler was extremely rich in his day. In the 6th century BC, Persians built a royal road beginning in Sardis and extending 1600 miles into southwest Iran. The ruins at Sardis are quite impressive, divided by a highway that extends from Izmir to Ankara. To the north of the highway are the public toilets, gymnasium and its excavated synagogue—the size and grandeur attesting to the influence of Jews in Roman times. In the Pactolos Valley stands the **Artemis Temple**, one of the largest of the ancient world. Ruins of a small building at the southeastern corner of the temple belonged to 4th 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 some arches indicate from workmanship, materials and style that it dates from the late Byzantine era. It is notable that John had nothing negative to say of this church in his letter.

Our last tours of the day are **Hierapolis** and **Laodicea**. In Hierapolis (**Pamukkale**) there are the thermal springs that made the city a popular spa. Visitors came to swim in the mineral-rich waters and view the startling white travertine terraces. Here we associate Philip the Evangelist with the early church. Paul mentions Hierapolis along with Laodicea as the center of Epaphras' ministry. Overnight in Pamukkale.

Day 4 - Our trip, which follows the prophecies of John, continues with a drive onto **Selcuk** to visit **Ephesus**, one of the greatest ruined cities in the western world. Stroll the streets; imagine the sounds of the people—merchants declaring wares for sale; scholars holding philosophical discussions; servants tending to the needs of masters; and then Paul proclaiming the gospel in the theater. 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 tour includes a visit to **St. John's Basilica** built by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century. Under the central dome, the grave of the Apostle John is believed to be located. The **Ephesus Museum** is one of Turkey's best. The two greatest exhibits are the marble statues of Artemis. One is from the 1st century AD and the other 2nd 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.)

