



De Luxe Turkey 14 Nights

This itinerary is for the in-depth traveller. Taste, experience, and enjoy the country at its best. Immerse yourself in the culture and visit all the highlights as well as sights off the beaten track.

(Istanbul / Cappadocia / Konya / Antalya / Pamukkale / Bodrum / Kusadasi)

Day 1 Fly / Istanbul (-)

Arrive in Istanbul this morning or afternoon. After clearing customs and immigration, our representative meets you at the airport and helps you transfer to your hotel. You have the rest of the day at leisure to settle in and relax after your overseas flight. Later in the afternoon, meet your guide and have a short walking tour to get acquainted with the neighborhood around your hotel. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 2 Istanbul (B, D)

Full Day Istanbul sightseeing tour including Topkapi Palace, St. Sophia, Blue Mosque, Hippodrome and Grand Bazaar.

THE TOUR DETAILS:

Hagia Sophia, the most influential church of Byzantium. Originally built by Emperor Constantine in the 4th century, reconstructed by Emperor Justinian in 6th century and converted into a mosque by the Ottomans in the 15th century, it still stands today as one of the world's greatest architectural marvels. The magnificent interior is testament to the unique east-west synthesis that is manifest in Istanbul. Shimmering biblical mosaics juxtapose huge plaques bearing the names of Islamic caliphs. Blue Mosque, another of the world's most important religious buildings. Built in the 16th century the mosque is unique for its 6 minarets and its celestial interior decorated with the famous blue Iznik tiles.

The Hippodrome, scene of chariot races. Although little remains of the great stadium which, in its hey day, is thought to have held 100'000 people, the Obelisk of Theodosius, the Serpentine Column and the Column of Constantine are highlights.

Grand Topkapi Palace, residence of Ottoman Sultan's from the 15th to the 19th century. With its impressive treasury, exquisite harem, attractive courtyards and pavilions housing huge collections of antiquities, Topkapi Palace offers a true insight into the heart of the Ottoman Empire. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 3 Istanbul (B)

In the afternoon, depart for a half-day Bosphorus Cruise. Take in the sights and sounds of this legendary waterway lined with historic villages, grand wooden mansions, imposing fortresses, and the Baroque summer palaces of the late Ottoman sultans. After the cruise, visit the Spice Bazaar, a thrilling riot of colours, sounds, and the rich smells of exotic spices. In the afternoon your tour rep. Will take you on a walking tour through Istaiklal Street. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 4 Istanbul / Cappadocia (B/L/D)

After breakfast transfer to the airport to catch the Kayseri flight. Upon arrival transfer to Cappadocia area after 1 hour drive and start Cappadocia sightseeing tour including underground city of Kaymakli, Goreme Open Air museum, Zelve, Pasabaglari, Uchisar. The area consists of valleys with the world-famous rock formations of Cappadocia, the conical shaped rocks shaped over centuries out of eroded volcanic stone, and known as Fairy Chimneys.

In addition to the fascinating landscape formed by the volcanic tuff and cave dwellings, there are also important Byzantine churches, which reflect the history of religious art in that period. Because of the geological characteristics of the area, and the fact that it was secluded, people living here could hide themselves away from the various battles taking place, as well as from the authority of the central administration. Monastery life in the area began in the 3rd and 4th centuries, and grew quickly. There are the remains of monuments, churches, chapels, dining halls, monk cell alcoves, depots, and wine production places all decorated with frescos.

The nearby villages of Urgup, Uchisar, Cavusini and Yeni Zelve still reflect traditional life and agricultural practices of Goreme's past. That, and the unique morphological structure of Goreme, is the main attraction to the area.

There is an underground city called Kaymakli nearby which is also included in your program. Overnight in Cappadocia.

Day 5 Cappadocia (B/L/D)

Optional Balloon Ride early in the morning to watch the sunset. You can rise early with us this morning (weather permitting) and get a new perspective on the intriguing tufa landscapes while gliding smoothly above them on our optional hot air balloon excursion. Sip a cup of hot coffee or tea as the crew prepares the balloon, then climb aboard. See the soft light of dawn spread over Cappadocia, as the balloon flight varies from low contour to get a good look at the sculpted tufa, to a somewhat higher altitude to give you a panoramic view of this strangely shaped landscape of eroded pillars and cones. It is said there is little or no feeling of motion while suspended from a hot air balloon.

Come along with us and satisfy your curiosity. Your vantage point enables you to see the range of colors displayed by these rock formations, shading from pinks to russet browns and yellows. You float with the gentle morning breeze over deeply scored rockscapes that could not be reached by foot or land vehicle, and drift along valleys and past "fairy chimneys" of unusual natural beauty. After a gentle landing, enjoy a light breakfast onsite and celebrate your adventure with a glass of champagne. You will receive a flight certificate to acknowledge your airborne experience. Remember to bring your camera and plenty of film for this excursion. (Please note: Between November and March, this optional ballooning excursion may not be available due to weather conditions.) After breakfast complete the area sightseeing.

Optional Whirling Dervishes (Sema Show) in the evening to witness a ritual dance performance by the Whirling Dervishes, monks of the Mevlevi sect of Islam founded in the 13th century. During the dance, called a sema, the dervishes believe that their souls are released from their earthly ties and are free to joyfully commune with the divine.

The dervishes spin shoulder to shoulder, both around their own axis and around one other, representing the Earth revolving on its own axis while orbiting the sun. The dancers are silent while performing the sema, accompanied by drums and chanting, as the ritual gradually transforms itself into rapid, spinning ecstasy. Overnight in Cappadocia.

Day 6 Cappadocia / Konya / Antalya (B, D)

This morning, depart Cappadocia for Antalya. You stop along the way to visit a caravansarai. This old inn was a gathering spot for the traders and camel caravans in the 13th century that made their way along this legendary Silk Road between Asia and Europe, setting up trading for their goods.

A little further along our route, visit the historic holy city of Konya. Once known as Iconium, Konya is one of Turkey's oldest continually inhabited cities, and is home of the Mevlevi Tekkesi Whirling Dervishes. This Moslem ascetic order performs vigorous chanting and whirling dances as acts of ecstatic devotion, as demonstrated earlier on your trip. Here, you visit the Mevlana Museum, containing the mausoleum of the founder of the Whirling Dervishes. Each year in December, the Dervishes mark the death of their founder, the great poet Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi, selected "Mystic of the [13th] Century" in Time Magazine's December 1999 Millennium issue. Though not of the orthodox Moslem faith (a follower of Mohammed), he preached tolerance towards all peoples and religions. Rumi is revered in the world of Islam and studied widely by those of other religions—his beautifully lyrical poems have a wide appeal, and he is one of the best-selling poets in the United States. There is time for you to have lunch in Konya. Then continue your drive (about four hours) on a scenic route over the Taurus Mountains. You arrive in Antalya in the early evening, and have some time to relax before dinner at your hotel. Overnight in Antalya.

Day 7 Antalya (B/D)

After breakfast, enjoy a walking tour through the winding streets of the old harbor quarter of Antalya, the jewel of Turkey's Mediterranean Turquoise Coast. Set on a crescent-shaped bay, it is bounded by citrus groves, valleys, and the Taurus Mountains.

On your tour, you'll see the ramparts, Hadrian's Gate, slender minarets, and restored harbor area. Then visit the Archaeological Museum of Antalya. The artifacts here trace the path from the Stone and Bronze Ages, through the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and up to the Ottoman empire. You'll also see Ottoman ethnographic exhibits. The museum is one of Turkey's largest, and has nearly 5,000 works of art on exhibit.

After your morning tour of Antalya, you'll enjoy the afternoon at leisure, Or take the optional tour of Aspendos, an ancient city dating to the fourth and fifth centuries B.C. Here is the stunning and best-preserved ancient theater in Turkey, so well preserved, in fact, that you can see the names of Roman spectators carved into the backs of the seats—a bit of ancient graffiti. Not far from the theater are the remains of a basilica and a large aqueduct from ancient times.

You'll also visit Perge, where St. Paul gave some of his first sermons. Originally settled by the Hittites in 1500 B.C., Perge thrived during the Roman Empire. The ruins here, which include an ancient theater and stadium, create an excellent impression of the look and feel of an ancient city. Overnight in Antalya.

Day 8 Antalya (B/D)

Free day at leisure or take one of the optional tours such as the day cruise, or jeep safari. Overnight in Antalya.

Day 9 Antalya / Pamukkale (B/D)

After the breakfast drive to Pamukkale to visit the cotton fortress, which rises above the fertile Menderes Valley. Hot mineral waters burst from the earth and cascade over steep cliffs forming pools, channels and stalactites. The therapeutic waters here were known to founders of the cure city of Hierapolis in 190 BC. Overnight in Pamukkale.

Day 10 Pamukkale / Bodrum (B)

After late breakfast at the hotel drive to Bodrum. Check-in upon arrival and free at leisure for the rest of the day. Enjoy the dinner and nightlife in the town on your own. Overnight in Bodrum.

Day 11 Bodrum (B)

After late breakfast half day city tour in the morning and free for the rest of the day to relax and enjoy this hip resort town.

Day 12 Bodrum / Kusadasi (B/L/D)

Drive to Kusadasi via Didym & Miletus sightseeing. Didyma, near the town of Didim, it was the center of prophetic oracles in antiquity. The Temple of Apollon in Didim was planned as a dipteros (having two rows of columns) but was never finished. Visit Miletus, located north of Didim, Miletus was a coastal city with 4 ports and one of the most important Ionian settlements. Its golden age was the 7th and 6th centuries BC. During this period thinkers in Miletus were putting down what would become the foundation of Western science and culture. The 5300 person theater built in the Hellenistic era was later added on to by the Romans and had a final seating capacity of 15,000.

Priene, an important episcopal see in the Byzantine era, the ancient city Priene north of Miletus was given a very geometric design of intersecting right angles. The most important structure in the city is the Temple of Athena on top of the hill. In addition, northeast of the city is a 5000 person theater constructed in the Hellenistic era which is definitely worth seeing. Overnight in Kusadasi.

Day 13 Kusadasi (B/L/D)

After breakfast drive to Ephesus, home of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus and later the capital of Roman Asia Minor. When St. Paul arrived here he was so awestruck that he asked: "Is there a greater city?" See one of the best-preserved ancient AMPHITHEATERS, the marble road, and the library. Then drive up a pine-clad mountain to the CHAPEL marking the site where the Virgin Mary is believed to have spent her last days. Overnight in Kusadasi.

Day 14 Istanbul / Fly (B)

After late breakfast transfer to Izmir airport to catch the flight to Istanbul. Upon arrival free at leisure for last minute shopping. Overnight in Kusadasi.

Day 15 Istanbul / Fly (B)

After breakfast free till check-out (latest check-out time is 1200 hours) and departure transfer to the airport to catch your flight onwards.