



MYSTAKIDIS TOURS

ORTHODOX PILGRIMAGES SINCE 1959

Turkey, the Seven Churches of Revelation

From the see of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the cities of the Apocalypse, with the letters of the Lord read in each.

DURATION

8 Days · 7 Nights

ROUTE

Constantinople · Ephesus · Smyrna

SEASON

Year-round departures

MYSTAKIDISTOURS.COM

WHY THIS PILGRIMAGE

The Apocalypse, read to its own addresses

The Seven Churches pilgrimage joins Constantinople and the cities of the Apocalypse in a single eight-day journey. You will pray at the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, stand under the dome of the Great Church of Holy Wisdom, and then follow Saint John down the Aegean coast, from city to city, as the letters of the Book of Revelation are read aloud in the places to which they were written.

In the City you will venerate the relics of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Gregory the Theologian at the Phanar, stand before the Deesis mosaic in Hagia Sophia, and see the Anastasis fresco at Chora, the finest image of Pascha ever painted. Then a short flight opens the second half: the tomb of Saint John the Theologian above Ephesus, the theatre of the silversmiths' riot, Smyrna of Saint Polycarp, Pergamon where Satan's throne is, Thyatira of Lydia, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea of the lukewarm water.

Asia Minor is the lost heartland of the Orthodox Church, the soil of the Councils and the Fathers, and American pilgrims consistently tell us it is the journey that most exceeded what they imagined. This is the direct, one-week form of it.

WHO THIS PILGRIMAGE IS FOR

Pilgrims drawn to the Apocalypse and the apostolic age, clergy who want Revelation taught on its own ground, and Greek-American families returning to the lands of their people. Moderate walking on ancient streets; one internal flight keeps the coach days honest.

THE JOURNEY

- **CONSTANTINOPLE**
3 nights: Hagia Sophia, Chora, the Phanar
- **FLIGHT TO IZMIR**
One hour south to the Aegean
- **KUSADASI**
1 night: the tomb of Saint John
- **IZMIR (SMYRNA)**
3 nights: base for the Seven Churches

Three nights in the City, four on the Aegean: five of the Seven Churches walked, with the letters read in each.

THE PILGRIMAGE, DAY BY DAY

The Seven Churches: the days

DAY 1 Arrival in Constantinople

Arrival in the City, as the Orthodox world has called Constantinople for seventeen centuries. Our pilgrimage director meets the group at Istanbul Airport, and the coach runs in along the old Theodosian land walls, breached only once in a thousand years, with the domes and minarets of the old city rising beyond them. After check-in near the historic quarter and time to rest, an evening orientation walk crosses the Hippodrome, where the chariot factions once roared and the obelisk of Theodosius still stands on its carved base, with Hagia Sophia floodlit at the square's end, the first sight of the Great Church that no pilgrim forgets. Over dinner your director explains the days ahead, including the etiquette of visiting the Patriarchate and the churches that now stand as mosques. Dinner at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Constantinople (Istanbul)

MEALS D · 4-star hotel

DAY 2 Hagia Sophia and Chora, the Byzantine Mosaics

The day of the Great Church. We enter Hagia Sophia, raised by Justinian in five years and dedicated in 537, when he is said to have whispered, Solomon, I have surpassed thee. Under the dome that held Christendom's breath for nine hundred years your guide traces the building's Orthodox life: the imperial door, the omphalion where emperors were crowned, the great Deesis mosaic in the south gallery, Christ between the Theotokos and the Forerunner, among the summits of all Byzantine art. The church stands today as a mosque; headscarves for women and quiet veneration are the custom, and your guide will prepare the group. In the afternoon we go out along the land walls to Chora, the Church of the Holy Saviour in the Country, whose Anastasis fresco, Christ hauling Adam and Eve bodily from the tombs, is the finest image of Pascha ever made. Dinner at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Constantinople (Istanbul)

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 3 The Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Bosphorus

Morning at the Phanar, the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople since 1601. In the Patriarchal Church of Saint George we venerate the relics of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Gregory the Theologian, returned from Rome in 2004, the column of the flagellation, and the patriarchal throne; when the schedule allows, the group receives a blessing in the church, and pilgrims may light candles where the Great Church of Christ has endured through every century of captivity. We continue to the Monastery of the Life-Giving Spring at Baloukli outside the walls, with the sacred spring and its fish of legend, and the tombs of the Patriarchs in the courtyard. In the afternoon a cruise up the Bosphorus passes the waterfront palaces, the fortress of Rumeli Hisari, and the shores of two continents. Dinner at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Constantinople (Istanbul)

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY BY DAY, CONTINUED

DAY 4 Flight to Izmir, the Tomb of Saint John

A morning flight south from Istanbul to Izmir, the ancient Smyrna, one hour in the air, and the coach continues south past Ayasuluk hill to Selcuk. Here we climb to the Basilica of Saint John, built by Justinian over the tomb of the Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, who wrote his Gospel in this city and was buried here at a great age; the tomb site is marked beneath the ruined crossing, and we read the opening of the Fourth Gospel beside it. From the basilica terrace the view runs from the fortress down to the single remaining column of the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders, a lesson in what endures. In the late afternoon we settle into Kusadasi on the coast, with dinner at the hotel and the Aegean below the windows.

OVERNIGHT Kusadasi**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 5 Ephesus and Smyrna, Two of the Seven

The great day of Ephesus. We walk the marble street from the upper gate: the odeon, the terrace houses, the library of Celsus with its two-storey facade, and the great theatre where the silversmiths' riot of Acts 19 cried Great is Artemis of the Ephesians for two hours against the preaching of Paul. At the Church of the Theotokos, the long double basilica by the harbour, your guide tells the story of the Third Ecumenical Council of 431, which met in this building and proclaimed the Virgin Theotokos against Nestorius. We also visit the cave of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus on the hill's far side. In the afternoon, north to Smyrna, the second of the Seven Churches, faithful unto death: at the Church of Saint Polycarp we honour the bishop burned in the stadium in 155, eighty and six years his Lord's servant. Overnight in Izmir.

OVERNIGHT Izmir (Smyrna)**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 6 Pergamon and Thyatira

North along the Aegean to Pergamon, where Satan's throne is, as the Apocalypse says of its great altar. The cable car lifts us to the acropolis: the foundations of the altar of Zeus, the steepest theatre of the ancient world dropping ten thousand seats down the hillside, and the temple of Trajan on the summit. Below in the city stands the Red Basilica, the temple of the Egyptian gods that became the church of Saint John, one of the Seven, its brick shell still overwhelming the modern street. We remember Saint Antipas, my faithful martyr, bishop of this city, burned in the brazen bull. In the afternoon, inland to Thyatira, the modern Akhisar, church of Lydia the purple seller whom Paul baptised at Philippi; the excavated arcade sits quietly in the town square. Return to Izmir for dinner.

OVERNIGHT Izmir (Smyrna)**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY BY DAY, CONTINUED

DAY 7 Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea

The three inland churches in one long, rich day. At Sardis, thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead: the colossal gymnasium facade, the best preserved ancient synagogue in the world beside it, and the temple of Artemis below the acropolis needle. At Philadelphia, the church of brotherly love that kept the word and was promised an open door, the massive piers of the Byzantine church of Saint John still stand in a quiet neighbourhood of Alasehir. We end at Laodicea, neither cold nor hot: the aqueduct towers that carried its lukewarm water are the sermon made stone, and the excavated church, council chamber, and twin theatres show the wealth that said, I have need of nothing. The white travertine terraces of Pamukkale shine across the valley. Return to Izmir in the evening; the farewell dinner is at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Izmir (Smyrna)**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 8 Departure from Izmir

After breakfast, transfer to Izmir Airport with your pilgrimage director, who remains with the group through check-in for the flight home or the connection through Istanbul. In eight days you will have prayed at the see of the Ecumenical Throne, stood under the dome of the Great Church, venerated the relics of Chrysostom and the Theologian, and walked five of the Seven Churches of the Apocalypse with the letters of the Lord read in each. Pilgrims who wish to complete the seven should ask about the twelve-day itinerary with Cappadocia, which reaches Hierapolis and Laodicea at leisure and adds the cave churches of the Cappadocian Fathers. Group air from your nearest US gateway and an Istanbul stopover night are quoted on request.

OVERNIGHT None, departure day**MEALS** B**PRACTICAL NOTES FOR PILGRIMS**

Hagia Sophia and Chora currently stand as mosques: headscarves for women, shoulders and knees covered for all, and shoes carried at the door; veneration is quiet and unobtrusive, and your guide will prepare the group each time. Visits to the Patriarchate are confirmed with the Phanar in the final weeks before departure.

The Seven Churches days involve real walking on ancient streets, and summer on the Aegean coast is hot; hats, water, and sturdy shoes matter more than fitness. Groups travelling with their own priest should tell us at booking so services may be arranged where local conditions allow.

YOUR PILGRIMAGE, PLAINLY STATED

What is included, and what is not

INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- ◆ Seven nights in 4-star hotels: three in Constantinople, one in Kusadasi, three in Izmir
- ◆ Domestic flight Istanbul to Izmir, one checked bag included
- ◆ The Bosphorus cruise in Constantinople
- ◆ Half-board throughout: breakfast and dinner at the hotel daily
- ◆ All land transportation in a modern air-conditioned coach
- ◆ Licensed English-speaking guide, briefed in the Orthodox tradition, throughout, as required by Turkish law
- ◆ Entry fees to every site and museum named in the itinerary
- ◆ Veneration arrangements at the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Baloukli, confirmed with the Phanar
- ◆ Airport transfers on the group arrival and departure days

NOT INCLUDED

- ◆ International airfare to and from Turkey; group air quoted separately on request
- ◆ Single room supplement, quoted on request
- ◆ Travel insurance, strongly advised
- ◆ Tips to guides and drivers; we suggest \$8 to \$10 per day for the guide and \$4 to \$5 per day for the driver
- ◆ Turkey e-visa where required by your nationality, obtained online in advance; US citizens currently enter visa-free for tourism
- ◆ Lunches, taken at leisure on the road
- ◆ Alcoholic beverages with dinner
- ◆ Optional excursions offered locally, including the Cappadocia balloon flight
- ◆ Passport fees and items of a personal nature: laundry, telephone, minibar

Hotels are named in your final documents; we contract 4-star houses throughout, with cave-style boutique hotels available in Cappadocia on request. Prices are per person, twin share, land only, in US dollars.

BOOKING YOUR PILGRIMAGE

Terms, plainly stated

RESERVING YOUR PLACE

A deposit of \$400 per pilgrim confirms your reservation. Places are assigned in the order deposits are received, and each departure is limited to forty pilgrims.

BALANCE OF PAYMENT

The balance of the pilgrimage price is due 90 days before departure. Prices are per person in US dollars, sharing a twin or double room. A single room is available for a supplement, quoted on request.

CANCELLATION

More than 90 days before departure	Deposit only
89 to 60 days before departure	50% of the price
59 to 30 days before departure	75% of the price
Inside 30 days of departure	No refund

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is not included and is strongly advised. We recommend a policy covering trip cancellation, medical care abroad, and baggage, purchased within days of paying your deposit.

GROUP SIZE

A minimum of 15 pilgrims is required for the pilgrimage to operate. Maximum 40 pilgrims per departure, so that veneration at the holy places is never rushed.

A FAMILY COMPANY

Mystakidis Tours has led pilgrims to the holy places since 1959, a family company in its third generation. Your group travels with one experienced pilgrimage director from arrival to departure.



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ON THE WEB

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Every itinerary can be adjusted for your parish. Ask us about preferred dates, group air from your nearest gateway, and a visit from our team to present the pilgrimage to your community.