



MYSTAKIDIS TOURS

ORTHODOX PILGRIMAGES SINCE 1959

Turkey, the Seven Churches with Cappadocia

*Twelve days: the City, the cave churches of the
Cappadocian Fathers, and all Seven Churches of the
Apocalypse.*

DURATION

12 Days · 11 Nights

ROUTE

Constantinople · Cappadocia · Ephesus

SEASON

Year-round departures

MYSTAKIDISTOURS.COM

WHY THIS PILGRIMAGE

The fullest Orthodox reading of Asia Minor

The longer Turkey pilgrimage adds Cappadocia to the Seven Churches: the painted cave churches of Goreme, the underground cities where whole Christian towns sheltered from the raids, and the country of Saint Basil the Great and the two Gregories, joined to the complete route of the Apocalypse across the western coast.

You begin in the City: the relics of Chrysostom and the Theologian at the Phanar, the Deesis of Hagia Sophia, Chora's Anastasis, Topkapi and the Grand Bazaar. A flight to Kayseri, the Caesarea of Saint Basil, opens three nights in Cappadocia. Then the road itself becomes scripture: Iconium of Acts 14, Perge and Attalia of the first missionary journey, the Martyrium of the Apostle Philip at Hierapolis, and one by one the Seven Churches, Laodicea, Ephesus, Sardis, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Smyrna, and Pergamon, until the group has stood in all seven, a thing few pilgrims ever complete.

Twelve days, one internal flight, and no ground covered twice: this is the itinerary for the parish that wants Asia Minor whole, and it is the one our own family considers the richest road we operate.

WHO THIS PILGRIMAGE IS FOR

Returning pilgrims and ambitious first-timers, clergy-led groups who want the Cappadocian Fathers and the Apocalypse in one journey, and anyone for whom the words Basil, Chrysostom, and Ephesus already ring. Steady touring pace with real walking; each long drive is broken by a major site.

THE JOURNEY

- **CONSTANTINOPLE**
3 nights: Hagia Sophia, Chora, the Phanar
- **CAPPADOCIA**
3 nights: Goreme and the underground city
- **KONYA (ICONIUM)**
1 night: Acts 14 and Saint Thecla
- **ANTALYA**
1 night: Perge and Aspendos
- **PAMUKKALE**
1 night: Hierapolis and Laodicea
- **KUSADASI**
1 night: the day of Ephesus
- **IZMIR (SMYRNA)**
1 night: the last of the Seven

A single great loop through Asia Minor: City, caves, coast, and all Seven Churches, with no backtracking.

THE PILGRIMAGE, DAY BY DAY

Seven Churches & Cappadocia: 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 Phanar, Topkapi, and the Grand Bazaar

Morning at the Phanar, the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate since 1601. In the Patriarchal Church of Saint George we venerate the relics of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Gregory the Theologian, returned in 2004, the column of the flagellation, and the patriarchal throne; when the schedule allows, the group receives a blessing in the church itself. From the Phanar we cross to Topkapi Palace, seat of the sultans, where the treasury and the chamber of holy relics hold what the conquerors gathered, including the staff of Moses by tradition and relics of the Forerunner. The afternoon ends in the Grand Bazaar, the covered city of four thousand shops built over the Byzantine markets, where the group is set loose with a meeting point and a map. Dinner at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Constantinople (Istanbul)

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY BY DAY, CONTINUED

DAY 4 Flight to Caesarea of Cappadocia

A morning flight from Istanbul to Kayseri, the ancient Caesarea of Cappadocia, the city of Saint Basil the Great, where he preached, fed the poor from his Basiliad, and wrote the Liturgy the Church still serves. From Kayseri the coach crosses the high plain beneath Mount Erciyes into the valleys of Cappadocia, a landscape of rose-coloured rock cones and cliffs that fifteen centuries of monks honeycombed with cells and churches. We stop first at a viewpoint over Goreme to let the landscape introduce itself, then settle into our hotel in the Goreme area for three nights. Before dinner your guide gives the evening's short introduction to the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil, Gregory the Theologian, and Gregory of Nyssa, whose country this is. Dinner at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Cappadocia (Goreme area)

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 5 The Painted Churches of Goreme

The painted churches of Goreme. The Open Air Museum gathers a dozen rock-cut churches of the tenth to twelfth centuries within one ravine: the Tokali church with its deep blue Gospel cycle, the Karanlik or Dark Church, whose frescoes kept their colour in the gloom, the Chapel of Saint Basil, and the refectories with tables cut whole from the stone. Your guide reads the images as they were meant to be read, a catechism in colour for a monastic valley. In the afternoon we walk among the hermit pillars of Pasabag, where stylites once lived in cells cut high in the rock cones in imitation of Saint Symeon, and visit Avanos across the red river, where potters have turned the local clay since Hittite times. Optional sunrise balloon flights over the valleys can be booked locally for the following morning. Dinner at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Cappadocia (Goreme area)

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 6 The Underground City and the Ihlara Valley

Down into the underground city. At Kaymakli, eight levels of streets, stables, kitchens, wine presses, and chapels descend into the dark, cut by generations of Christians who sheltered whole towns here during the Arab raids, rolling millstone doors across the passages behind them; the ventilation shafts still breathe. It is the most vivid lesson in the Church's endurance that any pilgrim will ever walk through. Coming up into the light we drive to the Ihlara Valley, where a green river gorge cuts through the plain, and walk a gentle stretch of the canyon floor among poplars and birdsong, past rock churches frescoed by the valley's monks, with lunch on your own at the riverside. Return through Uchisar, the castle rock, for the classic view over the whole of Cappadocia at golden hour. Dinner at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Cappadocia (Goreme area)

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY BY DAY, CONTINUED

DAY 7 **The Road to Konya, the Ancient Iconium**

South across the steppe on the old caravan road, stopping at the Sultanhanı caravanserai, the greatest of the Seljuk road inns, its portal carved like lace. By midday we reach Konya, the Iconium of the Acts, where Paul and Barnabas preached in the synagogue and a great multitude believed, and where the Apostle's disciple Saint Thecla, first woman martyr and equal to the apostles, heard him teach from her window. In the village of Silile outside the city we visit the Byzantine church of Saint Helen, kept by the Cappadocian Greeks until 1923, its iconostasis and dome restored. Konya is also the city of the whirling dervishes, and your guide will explain what pilgrims are looking at across the square at the Mevlana complex. Overnight in Konya.

OVERNIGHT **Konya (Iconium)****MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel**DAY 8** **Perge, Aspendos, and the Harbour of Attalia**

Over the Taurus mountains to the Pamphylian coast, the road dropping through cedar and pine to the warm plain. At Perge we walk the city where Paul and Barnabas first preached on entering Asia Minor from Cyprus, Acts 13: the stadium, the colonnaded street with its water channel down the middle, and the great gate whose round towers still stand to their full height. At Aspendos we sit in the finest Roman theatre in the world, its stage building complete after eighteen centuries; the acoustics are demonstrated from the orchestra floor. We end at Antalya, the ancient Attalia, from whose harbour Paul and Barnabas sailed back to Antioch at the end of the first journey, and walk the old quarter above the Roman port before dinner. Overnight in Antalya.

OVERNIGHT **Antalya****MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel**DAY 9** **Hierapolis, the Martyrium of Philip, Laodicea**

North over the mountains to the valley of the Lycus, where three cities of the New Testament sit within sight of one another: Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. At Hierapolis we walk the necropolis and the vast bath-basilica to the Martyrium of Saint Philip the Apostle, the octagonal shrine on the hill where Philip was martyred, and stand on the white travertine terraces of Pamukkale, the cotton castle of hot springs that made the city rich. Across the valley at Laodicea, neither cold nor hot, the excavated colonnaded streets, the council chamber, and the church complex show exactly the comfortable wealth the Apocalypse rebukes; the aqueduct that carried its lukewarm water still marches over the fields. The mound of unexcavated Colossae, addressee of Paul's epistle, rises quietly to the east. Overnight at Pamukkale, with the thermal pools of the hotel to end the day.

OVERNIGHT **Pamukkale (Hierapolis)****MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY BY DAY, CONTINUED

DAY 10 Ephesus, Chief of the Seven

The full day of Ephesus, chief of the Seven. From the upper gate we walk the marble street through the odeon and past the terrace houses to the library of Celsus, then into the great theatre of the silversmiths' riot, where the crowd cried Great is Artemis of the Ephesians for two hours against Paul's preaching. At the double Church of the Theotokos 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. In the afternoon we climb Ayasuluk hill to the Basilica of Saint John, built by Justinian over the tomb of the beloved disciple, and read the opening of the Fourth Gospel at the tomb of the man who wrote it. The cave of the Seven Sleepers closes the day for those with energy left. Overnight in Kusadasi on the coast.

OVERNIGHT Kusadasi**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel**DAY 11** Sardis, Thyatira, and Pergamon

The last three of the Seven in one sweeping day north. At Sardis the colossal gymnasium facade and the finest ancient synagogue in the world flank the road, with the temple of Artemis below the acropolis; thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. At Thyatira, in modern Akhisar, the excavated arcade of Lydia's city sits in the town square. We end at Pergamon, where Satan's throne is: the cable car lifts us to the acropolis, to the foundations of the great altar and the steepest theatre of antiquity, and below in the town the brick shell of the Red Basilica, the pagan temple that became the church of Saint John, still dominates its street. With Pergamon the group will have stood in all Seven Churches of the Apocalypse, a thing few pilgrims ever complete. Late arrival into Izmir; farewell dinner at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Izmir (Smyrna)**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel**DAY 12** Departure from Izmir

After breakfast, transfer to Izmir Airport with your pilgrimage director, who stays with the group through check-in for the homeward flight or the Istanbul connection. Twelve days will have carried you from the see of the Ecumenical Patriarchate through the country of the Cappadocian Fathers to all Seven Churches of the Apocalypse, with the letters of the Lord read on the ground to which each was written: to Ephesus and Smyrna, Pergamon and Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. It is, we believe, the fullest Orthodox reading of Asia Minor offered by any American operator, and the one we most often hear called the surprise of a pilgrim's life. Group air from your nearest US gateway and an Istanbul stopover night are quoted on request.

OVERNIGHT None, departure day**MEALS** B

YOUR PILGRIMAGE, PLAINLY STATED

What is included, and what is not

INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- ◆ Eleven nights in 4-star hotels along the route, Constantinople to Izmir
- ◆ Domestic flight Istanbul to Kayseri, one checked bag included
- ◆ 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, including the Goreme Open Air Museum and Kaymakli underground city
- ◆ 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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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.