

ISTANBUL AND THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION

Day 1 Arrival at Istanbul. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 2 Morning cruise on the Bosphorus, from the Sea of Marmara to the entrance of the Black Sea, passing the summer palaces of the Ottoman Sultans and Vezirs, as well as modern residences, and the Fortress of Rumeli Hisar, erected in 1452 by Mehmet the Conqueror. In the afternoon, visit Topkapı Palace, including the Harem, the treasury, and the rich collection of porcelain. Continue to the Covered Bazaar to explore the thousands of tiny shops in a maze of arched alleys. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 3 Sightseeing in the morning, including Kariye Museum (St. Saviour in Chora) with its fabulous mosaics and frescoes; the great basilica of Hagia Sophia, and the Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmet). Afternoon free for optional sightseeing. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 4 Morning flight to Izmir (Smyrna), the first of the Seven Churches, and transfer to the hotel. In the afternoon, visit Mt.Pagos, known as "Velvet Castle", the Roman Agora and the Archaeological Museum in the International Fair grounds. Overnight in Izmir.

Day 5 Full day excursion to Pergamum, second of the churches, to see the Altar of Zeus, referred to as the "Throne of Satan" in the Book of Revelations, the precipitous theatre, the library and the gymnasium. In the afternoon, the Aesculepium, medical centre of the ancient world, will be visited. Here patients underwent an amazingly advanced blend of psychosomatic cures. Also visit the Archaeological Museum in the town of Bergama nearby. On the way back visit Thyatira (Akhisar) to see the remains of a basilica and some architectural fragments from the Roman period. Overnight in Izmir.

Day 6 Full day visit to Ephesus, to see the Basilica of St.John, and the extensive ruins of the city – colonnaded marble streets, temples, baths, gymnasium, the theatre where silversmiths rioted against St.Paul, the site of the Third Ecumenical Council, and the site of the Temple of Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. In the afternoon, visit the Ephesus Archaeological Museum and see the statue of Diana of the Ephesians. Then continue through the Meander Valley to Pamukkale , "Cotton Castle", with its fantastic calcareous formations and pools of natural warm water. Overnight in Pamukkale.

Day 7 Morning sightseeing at Hierapolis before visiting Laodicea, another of the Seven Churches, with the remains of a basilica. Then drive to Philadelphia (Alaşehir) to see the remains of a church, and continue to Sardis, the last of the Churches, capital of the Lydian kingdom. Here at the remains of the Temple of Artemis, a Byzantine church, a reconstructed synagogue and a large gymnasium. Return to Izmir. Overnight in Izmir.

Day 8 Transfer to the airport for departure.