

REGULAR TOURING ITINERARY WITH CAPPADOCIA

Day 1 :

Upon arrival at Istanbul International Airport, you will be met, assisted and transferred to your hotel, situated at the Taksim district of Istanbul. Taksim is the center of modern Istanbul where most hotels are built. Rest of day is free.

Day 2 :

Meeting at the hotel with your guide for a full day sightseeing tour. Sail up the Bosphorus, the waterway dividing Europe and Asia, as far as the Black Sea; pass under the Bosphorus Bridges and enjoy the scenic view of Ottoman summer palaces, waterside mansions and modern villas which line the European and Asian shores, amid gardens and woods. Also pass by the 15th century **Rumeli Hisar and Anadolu Hisar fortresses** built by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror. Disembark at Saryer, a small fishing town on the European shores of the Bosphorus.

After lunch time, you will be driven to the old part of city to visit the fabulous **Topkapi Palace**. Built by Mehmet the Conqueror in 1453 and later a residence of sultans for three centuries. Highlights of the museum include the unique Chinese Ming Dynasty porcelain collections, the wonderful treasury section and the famed harem which you will tour. The views of Istanbul from the different terraces of the Palace are spectacular. We recommend dinner at **Beyti Restaurant** (Optional).

Day 3 :

Departure from the hotel for a full day sightseeing tour. Your tour will start from the **Hippodrome**, once the center of Byzantine life, which houses the impressive granite obelisk of Emperor Theodosius. Carved in Egypt in 1500 B.C. , the obelisk is covered with hieroglyphs. Theodosius brought the obelisk to Constantinople in 390 A.D. and added military engravings of his likeness. Your tour will continue with a visit of **Sultan Ahmet Mosque (a.n.a. Blue Mosque)** built by Sultan Ahmet I (1603 – 1617) and the only mosque in Turkey to have six minarets, a style borrowed from the sacred mosque of Kaaba in Mecca.

Upon entering the mosque, participants must remove their footwear and cover their heads and shoulders (if bare) since this area is an active holy site. Once inside, you will view the wonders of the Blue Mosque – its enormous domes, beautiful stained glass window and magnificent Blue Iznik tiles. Next visit will be the **Hagia Sophia** (*a.n.a. Saint Sophia*), which for many is highlight of the Istanbul visit. It was started in 527 and completed in 535 by Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles. It reigned as the greatest church of Christendom until 1453, when Sultan Muhammed the Conqueror converted it into a mosque. Gold mosaics, lofty domes, Arabic calligraphy and a sense of history envelop visitor. Byzantine emperors, as well as Ottoman Sultans worshipped at Hagia Sophia. Now a museum, the public is free to visit her and admire...

Today's last visit is to the **Grand Covered Bazaar** (Kapalı Çarşı) , in the old city. The Grand Covered Bazaar was originally built as horse-stables to the Ottoman cavalry during the 18th century. After two centuries, she is now a " Hyper-Market" style shopping mall with more than 4000 shops housing jewelers, silversmiths, furniture shops, leather boutiques, shoe shops, garment and cloth shops and a 1001 other trades.

We recommend dinner at Leander's Tower (description attached).

Day 4 :

Transfer to Istanbul Airport. Flight to Kayseri by THY jet morning flight. Meeting at Kayseri airport and transfer to hotel. After lunch, visit the *Kaymakli* underground city which is a huge refuge carved by early Christians which served as a hideout from persecutors. The natural citadel of *Uchisar* is the next stop. This spot will enable you to get a panoramic view of the area. The unique lunar landscape of the region has been processed by nature, the soft volcanic rock eroded through wind and weather, leaving behind pillars, cones and the famous "fairy chimneys!" Dinner and overnight at the hotel in Cappadocia.

Day 5 :

After breakfast, the day's touring will start with a visit to *Goreme Valley*, which is the highlight of the day. This valley houses the Goreme open air museum, with its churches hewn out of rock and the colourful frescoes which decorate them. The next stop is *Zelve* and the caves of this ancient

village. After lunch at a typical restaurant carved in the rock, continue to *Ortahisar* which is one of the highest points in the area and provides a fantastic panoramic view of the rock and “fairy chimney” formations. The days touring will end with visit to *Urgup and Avanos*. Dinner and overnight at the hotel in Cappadocia.

Day 6 :

Alternative A : After breakfast, visit *Derinkuyu* Underground city. Continue to *Ihlara valley* via *Soganli Valley* where you will see the authentic life of a small Cappadocian village. *Ihlara valley* is famous with the fascinating landscape of the canyon and its rock churches with colourful frescoes. In the evening, drive to Kayseri Airport for return flight to Istanbul by THY jet. In Istanbul transfer to the hotel.

Alternative B : After breakfast, drive to *Derinkuyu* underground city. Continue to *Aksaray*, en route to *Ankara* via the Salt lake shores. In *Aksaray*, visit the 13th century Seldjukian caravanserai of *Agzikarahan*, on the ancient silk route. In *Ankara* visit the Museum of Ancient Anatolian Civilizations (a.n.a. Hittite Museum) and *Ataturk's Mausoleum*. Transfer to *Esenboga* airport for flight to Istanbul by jet THY flight. In Istanbul, transfer to hotel.

Day 7 :

After breakfast, transfer to airport for return flight to home country.