

TURKEY, GREECE AND HOLY LAND TOUR 2023 ITINERARY

Day 1/Monday 21st August, 2023

Arrive in Istanbul. Meet our tour representative and after passing through the passport and customs formalities, transfer to hotel to rest and refresh as well as a welcome briefing.

Day 2/Tuesday 22nd August, 2023

After breakfast, our day begins with a guided tour exploring the ancient city with highlights to include: the magnificent Topkapi Palace (main residence of Ottoman Sultans), then walk across the Byzantine Hippodrome that was the scene of chariot races. In the afternoon, we visit the Saint Sophia Basilica-historic seat of the Byzantine Church, built in 537AD and now a museum whose mosaics, stained glass windows and decorated domes have been crafted to create an environment of breath taking beauty. A short walk through gardens takes us to the Blue Mosque of Sultan Ahmet 1, built in 1616 that is famous for unequalled ceramic tiles. Our day ends with a short & quick visit to a historical location with an extraordinary atmosphere called "Grand Bazaar". Back to hotel for dinner and sleep.

Day 3/Wednesday 23rd August, 2023

Early morning flight to Izmir and our first visit of the day is Pergamum(Rev 2:12-17) and Aesculapiums. Here we will visit the fabled Acropolis, pass through the Royal Gates, view the foundations of the Alter of Zeus and visit the ruins of the library (which once held 200,000 volumes). Next we travel to Thyatira (Rev2:17-29; Acts 16:14). Thyatira was once a busy trading centre and famous as a "seller of purple". A city of artisans' guilds in St.Paul time. Next we continue to Izmir/Smyrna, a long time center for Jews and Christians. In Paul's day, Izmir was known as Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11) Homer's birthplace on the Aegean Coast. Dinner and overnight at Izmir.

Day 4/Thursday 24th August, 2023

This morning after breakfast, we explore Ephesus (the loveless church) with its expansive synthesis of Greco-Roman and Christian remains (Rev 2:1-7; Acts 18:19-28 and 19:1-4). Also see the great library of Celsus, Agora, Odeon, Trajan Fountain, Domitianus Temple, Roman Latrines, Theater and Stadium in which St.Paul preached the gospel. Also visit the Church of Virgin Mary(The Council Church) as well as her house on a wooded hilltop where it was miraculously discovered. In the evening return to Izmir for dinner and overnight.

Day 5/Friday 25th August, 2023

Today after breakfast, we visit Sardes, ancient capital of the Lydian Empire and visit the church of Sardis(the dead church Rev 3:1-6). Visit its beautiful gymnasium and marble paved synagogue and the temple of Artemis including ancient Christian Chapel of the 4th Century. Then continue to Philadelphia to visit (the faithful church Rev 3:7-13), a favorite city of Paul and John. Later, we continue on to Pamukkale, the white "Cotton Fortress" lime cascades of the Roman Spa Hierapolis. Here we will enjoy a leisurely bath in the mineral waters of our hotel pool as well as the dinner at Pamukkale.

Day 6/Saturday 26th August, 2023

After breakfast, depart to Laodicea to visit "the lukewarm church". The Christians of Laodicea were chastised for being lukewarm (Rev 3:14-22). Today, there are many acres of ruins to see, including the stadium and columned streets. Next drive to Colossae to visit the ancient city mentioned in the Bible. They were the receiver of St.Paul's letter to the Colossians. Our last visit of the day is to Hierapolis—meaning "Sacred City". It was an ancient center for pagan cults until it was transformed into a Christian Center in the first century. This was Philip the Evangelist's home and was martyred here as well. It was likely the hot springs of Hierapolis(in contrast to the cold mountain springs near Colossae) that combined to bring application to the "Lukewarm" Laodiceans. Dinner and overnight at Kusadasi.

Day 7/Sunday 27th August, 2023

After breakfast, we travel to the beautiful Isle of Patmos, which is under statutory protection as a historic monument. Here we will tour to see the fortified monastery of St. John and the cave claimed to be where John received the Revelation. After the memorable visit of Patmos, return to our hotel for dinner and rest in Kusadasi.

Day 8/Monday 28th August, 2023

Breakfast and transfer to Izmir airport for our flight to Thessaloniki in Greece. After arrival, we will visit Veria(Berea), another town evangelized by Paul (Acts 17:10-14) in AD50. This is where Paul met Sopatros, who later became a valuable comrade who followed him on his return journey to Asia. Next, we will visit the ancient Synagogue where we will see Byzantine mosaic in the monument commemorating his preaching. We will continue the trip exploring the city of Thessalonica, where St. Paul preached the gospel in the 2nd & 3rd missionary journey. For the early Christians of this city, he wrote the epistle to the Thessalonians. Then, we will visit the cathedral of St. Demetrius, the protector Saint of the city, the Agora, the Galerius Arch, the Rotonda and the church of Saint Sofia, the White Tower and the Byzantine fortress of the city. Finally we will visit the monastery of Vlatadon founded in 1360. Next we go to our hotel for dinner and overnight stay in Thessalonica.

Day 9/Tuesday 29th August, 2023

After breakfast, we go to Philippi, the town where Paul delivered his first sermon in Europe, sowing the seeds of Christianity (Acts 16:12-18).Paul arrived here with Silas and Luke in the winter of AD49-AD50.The events mentioned in Acts 16:11-34, took place here. Next visit will be the Roman Theatre, then will continue towards the city of Kavala and the ancient city of Neapolis (Acts 16:11) where Paul landed with his disciples-Timothy & Silas. This city was later renamed Christoupolis, meaning city of God. Lastly, we will visit the Roman Aqueduct and the ruins of the Acropolis. Dinner and overnight in Thessalonica.

Day 10/Wednesday 30th August, 2023

After breakfast take a flight to Athens, the foundation of democracy. Before going to hotel, we will visit the main places of interest in the city: the Acropolis, the Parthenon and Mars' Hill (Areopagus), where Paul preached the truth to the Gentile nations. From atop Mars Hill, we view the Agora below, the ancient market place and center of Athenian public life. Next on our way to hotel, we view the House of Parliament, Olympic Stadium and Presidential Palace. Dinner and overnight in Athens.

Day 11/Thursday 31st August, 2023

After breakfast, we head towards the ancient city of Corinth (Acts 18:1-18). It was here where Paul came and worked, established a thriving church and wrote two of the epistles. Next we will see the sites associated with his ministry: the Agora, the temple of Apollo, the Roman Odeon, the Bema & Gallio's seat, the pillars, stairs and the place of public worship, where Paul preached. Before returning to Athens, we will visit the ancient Greek port of Cenchreae (Acts 17:15), where Paul was during his 2nd missionary journey and the ruins of early Christian 5th Century basilica. Dinner and overnight at Athens.

Day 12/Friday 1st September, 2023

After an early breakfast, we take our flight to Israel. After visa formalities and greeted by our Israeli guide, we drive to Caesarea- capital of Judea under the Romans and visit the excavations, Roman theatre and aqueduct. Continue to Mount Carmel- site of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal. Drive to Nazareth where we visit Mary's well, church of Annunciation and famous Nazareth Village. Viewing the Jezreel Valley, we proceed stopping at Cana, where Jesus performed the 1st miracle. Dinner and overnight at Sea of Galilee.

Day 13/ Saturday 2nd September 2023

After breakfast, we go to Magdala and see the first century Synagogue where Jesus no doubt taught. Next, we take the boat ride to Capernaum and visit the 2nd century Synagogue. Upon landing, we also see a "boat" from the 1st century found in 1986. Next proceed to Tabgha—the site of the miracle of Fish & Loaves and visit the church of multiplication. Continue to Mount of Beatitudes where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. We end the day by visiting Mount Arbel to view from here the whole of Sea of Galilee below. Dinner and overnight Sea of Galilee.

Day 14/ Sunday 3rd September 2023

Today we go to Qaser-El-Yahud, the original Baptismal site of Jesus for Baptism. Then we visit Qanawat where the Dead-Sea Scroll were found. Our next stop is Ein Gedi, where David hid from King Saul. We also enjoy some of the water falls as we walk back. Later take a chance to swim and float at Dead Sea. Dinner and overnight at Dead Sea.

Day 15/ Monday 4th September 2023

We begin our day at Masada, the last stronghold of Jews after the destruction of the 2nd Temple in 70 AD. We ascend high upon the wilderness mountain by cable car and visit the food storeroom, water works and Herod's palace. After this, we go to South through the Arava (Rift Valley) to Timna. There we see and walk through a full-size replica of the Old Testament Tabernacle. Dinner and overnight at Arava in famous Kibbutz Lotan.

Day 16/Tuesday 5th September 2023

After breakfast, we drive back north. Visit Emmous, Beit Shemesh and the Elah Valley where David fought with Goliath. Later we proceed to Bethlehem and visit the church of Nativity and Shepherd's field. Time for shopping at an Olive wood store. Dinner and overnight at Jerusalem.

Day 17/Wednesday 6th September 2023

After breakfast, we start the day with the visit to Mount of Olive, follow the Palm Sunday route to the Garden of Gethsemane. Next we go to the old city, visit pool of Bethesda and St. Anne's Church. We then follow the way of the Cross (Via Dolorosa) to the Holy Sepulcher. We end the day by visiting King David's Tomb and the Upper Room of the last supper on Mount Zion before returning to the hotel for dinner and rest.

Day 18/Thursday 7th September 2023

Today after breakfast, we start our day by visiting Western (Wailing) Wall, the most holy place in Judaism. After personal prayers and reflection, we take a 400 yards walk in WWTunnel or visit the city of David and Hezekiah's tunnel. Next we go to Temple Institute to see preparations for the 3rd Temple. Next, we see the model of Jerusalem (1:50 scale) as it would have appeared in Jesus' time. We end the day with visit Shrine of the Book, Yad Vashem and Children's Memorial.

Day 19/Friday 8th September 2023

On this last day after breakfast, we visit Garden Tomb and Golgotha for a Communion Service. Return to hotel via Ein Karim and visit to the church of visitation. If time permits visit Tel Aviv and Jafa before departing to airport for our flight home at 1935.