
Optional Extension to Israel Tour

5-Day Turkey Tour

Day 1 - After a short flight from Tel Aviv to Istanbul Ataturk Airport, we will meet our tour guide and begin our adventure through Turkey. We begin at one of the oldest standing church in the world, Basilica of St. Sophia, which was built 300 years before the Coliseum in Rome. This beautiful church has inspired architects and religious leaders for over fifteen hundred years. Here we will also see the remains of an ancient Hippodrome. Next, enjoy a cruise on the Bosphorus before arriving at our hotel for free time to relax or shop at the famous Grand Bazaar or Spice Bazaar in Istanbul. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 2 - Today we visit the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul which includes the Siloam Inscription, the stone inscription removed from Hezekiah's tunnel in Jerusalem. It records the construction of the tunnel in the 8th century BCE. It is among the oldest extant records of its kind written in Hebrew using the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet. Here we will also see the Gezer Calendar, discovered in the Gezer excavations just northwest of Jerusalem in about 1908. The calendar is one of the oldest examples of Hebrew writing, dating to the 10th century BCE. It describes monthly or bi-monthly periods and attributes to each a duty such as harvest and planting. In the afternoon take a short flight to Izmir where we still stay for our remaining time in Turkey.

Day 3 - We begin today with an early departure to drive to Pergamum, the ancient city where the Apostle Paul encouraged faithfulness under persecution. Pergamum is built on a conical hill rising 1,000 feet above the surrounding valley. Impressive temples, library, medical facilities and the spectacularly sited hillside theatre made Pergamum a renowned cultural centre. In the early Christian era, Pergamum's church was a major centre of Christianity and was one of the Seven Churches of Revelation. Next we drive to Sardis which was part of the Roman province of Asia in New Testament times. We will explore the ancient ruins that are scattered throughout the valley. Ancient Sardis had a very large and prosperous Jewish community, which produced the largest ancient synagogue outside of Israel. Christianity arrived in the 1st century AD and was one of the Seven Churches of Revelation. Return to Izmir for overnight.

Day 4 - Today we explore Ephesus, the crown jewel of the Seven Churches, where Paul warned against the evil men. Ephesus is one of the most impressive archaeological sites in the world and was famous throughout the ancient world for its Temple of Artemis. See the Celsius Library, the best preserved structure of its kind, explore terrace houses, a beautiful example of Roman domestic architecture, the 24,000 seat theatre and Odeon, the marble street where Paul held daily discussions. Then we explore ancient Smyrna, the second city of the Seven Churches of Revelation to receive the message from the Apostle John. The ruins are located in Izmir, the 2nd largest city in modern Turkey which continues to be an important commercial port city. You will visit the Church of St. Polycarp, the oldest church in Smyrna and a memorial to Polycarp, student of the Apostle John that was martyred in the city in 155AD. Return to your hotel in Izmir for overnight.

Day 5 - After a farewell breakfast, we will transfer to Izmir Airport for the short flight back to Istanbul and connect to our international flight back to Denver.