

# **In the Footsteps of the Ancient Apostles in Turkey**

## **Proposed Dates: September 24-October 8, 2026 (Land Dates only.) Tour Hosts Dann & Shirley Hone**

### **Day 1, Thursday, September 24: Antakya Arrival (50 miles)**

Arrival at **Hatay Airport** and transfer to the hotel. Take a rest in the **Hatay hotel**. Lunch in a local restaurant, afterward start our Antalya tour. **Antakya (Antioch)**, an important center of early Christianity. This is the place where the followers of Jesus Christ were first called Christians (Acts 11; 26). We will visit the **Hatay Mosaic Museum**, which is the second largest collection of classical and Roman mosaics in the world. Afterward, we will visit one of Christianity's oldest churches, **Saint Pierre Church**. This church is actually a cave carved into the side of Mount Stariis where the first Christians of Asia Minor worshipped. Saint Peter was the person to build this church in Antakya and along with St. Paul and Barnabas, he used Antioch as a center to spread Christianity. Thus, the church grew in a short time, becoming the third important Episcopacy after Jerusalem and Rome. At the end of our visit, we will check- into our hotel. Dinner and overnight in Hatay. [Some flights from USA to Antakya may require departure October 6, 1 night in Istanbul on October 7 and early morning flight to Antakya October 8.] **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

### **Day 2, Friday, September 25: Hatay, Adana, Tarsus (217 miles)**

After a delicious breakfast at our hotel, before returning to **Tarsus**, if we have time, we will see **Seleucia Pieria, the ancient port of Antioch** from which the Apostle Paul and Barnabas embarked on their first missionary journeys as chronicled by Acts (Acts:13:4). Visit Titus tunnel and Besikci cave. Afterward, we will drive to **Adana**. Arrival at **Tarsus**. Here, we will visit the **Well of St. Paul** and the **Gate of Cleopatra**. One of the 12 apostles of Jesus, Paul was born in Tarsus. According to Acts, Paul was born as "**Saul of Tarsus**", but was brought up in Jerusalem and became "**Paul the Apostle**" after his encounter with Christ (Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3). Once the capital of the province of **Cilicia**, Tarsus was also the site where Mark Antony and Cleopatra first met. At the end of our tour, we return to Adana, check-in to our hotel and, after dinner, retire to our room for a restful overnight in Adana. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

### **Day 3, Saturday, September 26: Adana - Konya - Sille Village (236 miles)**

After breakfast, departure for **Konya**. (Distance 5 Hours) Konya, known as **Iconium** during antiquity, was visited a lot by Paul the Apostle and Barnabas as a part of their missionary efforts preaching the Gospel. According to Acts, they spoke boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace enabling them to perform miracles (Acts 14:1-3). Afterward, we'll visit the **Mevlana Museum**, which houses the tomb of the great 13th-century Persian poet and founder of the Order of the Whirling Dervishes, *Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi*. Popularly known as **Rumi** in Western countries, meaning "Roman" in Arabic, his followers and Muslims like to call him "**Mevlana**", meaning "our master". We will then end our day at the **Karatay Museum**. This former madrasah, or place of learning, was founded in 1251 by the Seljuk Emir Celaleddin Karatay as an institution for Islamic studies. However, the building is now a museum showcasing the most beautiful examples of Seljuk tile work. Lunch is on our own at a local restaurant. Later, we will see the 4500-year-old Sille Village. **Sille Village** was on the way to Jerusalem during the Roman and Byzantine periods, so it became an important religious center for Christians. In the first years of Christianity, the apostles Paul and his friends came to Konya and tried to spread Christianity. In the face of pressure, the first Christians withdrew to the mountains around Sille and lived here. One of the oldest and largest monasteries in the world, Ak Monastery (*Hagios Khariton Monastery*) is in Sille Village. Dinner and accommodation in **Konya**. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

### **Day 4, Sunday, September 27: Antioch in Pisidia (Yalvaç) Antalya, Perge (242 miles)**

We depart from Konya and head to the modern town of **Yalvaç** to see the ruins of **Antioch** in Pisidia. Sitting on the southern foothills of the **Sultan Mountains**, this city was once a major Roman colony that Paul the Apostle visited on his First Missionary Journey with Barnabas. Here we will tour the archeological site and visit the **Yalvaç Archaeological Museum** to see a display of many of the unearthed artifacts from the region.

Afterward, we will continue on our way to Antalya, Turkey's famous and modern touristic resort city, and largest international sea resort on the beautiful Mediterranean coast. You will have lunch at a local restaurant on the way. Antalya which has hosted tens of civilizations for thousands of years with its mild Mediterranean climate, beautiful sea, and magnificent geography. Saint Paul set sail from Antalya on his first missionary journey. After his return to **Antakya**, he set out from Antalya again around 48 A.D. We will be visiting the **archeological site of Perge**, a chief city of Pamphylia that was visited twice by Paul the Apostle and his companion Barnabas (Acts 13:13–14 and 14:25). Saint Paul, Barnabas, and his cousin John Mark came to Perge on their first missionary journey in AD 47 or 48. (Acts 13:13, 14:25). **Perge ruins**: we will explore **Perge's extensive ruins**, including a well-preserved theatre, the Agora, Roman baths, a colonnaded street, a great gymnasium, the necropolis, memorial fountain, and the Greek and Roman gates. Dinner and overnight in Antalya. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 5, Monday, September 28: Demre, St. Nicholas Church, Myra, Antalya (186 miles)**

After breakfast visit Antalya's Old Town (Kaleiçi) where we'll see the ancient **Hadrian's Gate** with its three doors, one of the most beautiful structures of the Roman period, the **Clock Tower**, **Fluted Minaret**, and the **Ancient Harbor**. You will enjoy the narrow streets of the old city. In the Old Town, you'll have the opportunity to look for and buy souvenirs from the local shops. we'll set out on a beautiful, coastal, scenic drive to Demre. First, we'll visit the **St. Nicholas Church**. Saint Nicholas, also known as *Santa Claus*, was a bishop here before he became a legendary and historic figure all over the world. **Lycia** had big cities such as Perge, Aspendos, Side, Phaselis, Kekova, Termessos, Kuşunlu, Myra, and Demre. Saint Paul went to Roma from Myra by ship for his 4<sup>th</sup> missionary journey. We will visit ancient **Myra** to see its rock tombs, Roman theatre, and Roman ruins. Dinner and overnight in **Antalya**. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 6, Tuesday, September 29: Denizli, Colossae, Honaz, Laodicea, Pamukkale, Hierapolis (150 miles)**

We will depart for Pamukkale early in the morning. On the way, we will visit the holy land of **Colossae**, which used to be a city of the Roman province of Asia, located near Honaz today. It holds an important place in Christian history as Saint Paul's Epistle to the Colossians was addressed to a church here. This letter is estimated to have been written in around AD 60 or 65. It is possible that St. Paul was living in Ephesus when he sent the letter to Colossae (Acts 19:10). Paul had apparently not visited Colossae when he wrote his epistle, and it is likely the gospel was preached through Paul's companion, Epaphras, who was from Colossae (Col. 1:7; 4:12-13). Members of the early Colossian church included Philemon and his slave Onesimus (Col. 4:9; Philem. 10, 23). After our visit to Colossae, we will visit the ancient **Laodicea** (present name **Denizli**) yet another of the **Seven Churches of Asia Minor** [Rev. 1:11; 3:14; Col. 2:1; 4:13 - 16]. Laodicea thrived as a major center of worship for the pagan goddess Aphrodite for about 500 years after Christ. The Christians of Laodicea, one of the Seven Churches, (Rev. 3: 14-22) were chastised for being lukewarm, "You are neither cold nor hot" (Rev. 3: 15), and for being too comfortable incorporating pagan and Christian beliefs. In the famous scripture from Revelation (3: 20-21), Jesus says to the **Laodicean Church**: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock..." Today, excavations still continue in Laodicea uncovering an ancient city as beautiful as Ephesus with ancient theaters, marble paths lined with columns, basilica ruins, antique stone water pipes, temples, agora, and monumental fountains. After our arrival to **Pamukkale** city, we will have lunch and head for **Hierapolis** right away. Here, we will visit the **Martyrium of the Apostle Philip** where he was martyred during the persecutions ordered by Domitian. We will see **the Gate of Domitian**, **the Arcadian Way**, the ancient 2nd century Roman Theater, the **Nymphaeum**, the **Temple of Apollo**, the **Plutonium**, and the **Necropolis**. We will pass through the Roman Gate, admire the ancient **Pamukkale Theater**, walk around the grave monuments built to honor heroes. Each tomb is a small work of art telling a different story. We will finish our day with a relaxing walk on the travertine terraces, which were created by flowing hot thermal waters releasing carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide into the air, leaving behind the white-colored calcium carbonate. Ending our tours today, we will stay overnight in a **thermal hotel in Pamukkale**. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 7, Wednesday, September 30: Philadelphia, Sardis, Smyrna, Izmir (155 miles)**

From Pamukkale we continue our journey to Philadelphia nowadays called **Alaşehir**, **Philadelphia** one of the Seven Churches of Asia [Rev. 1:11; 3:7], and the only church that wasn't censored. There, we will see the remains of a Byzantine basilica built of brick, with a high arch and 11th-century frescoes. And we will continue to Salihli

city (Sardis). **Sardes** was the capital of the ancient Lydian kingdom of the 6th century B.C., portrayed as a dying church. We will visit the great **Temple of Artemis** and the **Temple of Cybele**, which was converted into a Byzantine Church. We will also visit the restored *Sardis Gymnasium* and reconstructed Synagogue. After lunch at a local restaurant, we will arrive in **Izmir** and visit the ruins of ancient **Smyrna**, one of the Seven Churches where the Apostle John relays the promise from God: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10). **Smyrna** is the second city of the Seven Churches in the Book of Revelation to receive the message from *St. John* (Rev. 1:11; 2:8). We will see the remains of a basilica and architectural works from the Roman period. Afterward, we will visit the oldest church of Izmir, the **Saint Polycarp Church**. Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna and a student of St. John, who was martyred here in the 2nd century. We will see what remains of the **Agora**, the ancient marketplace that was built in the 4th century B.C. You may enjoy **Kordonboyu Square** and some Izmir sights and streets during the night. Dinner and our overnight stay is in **Izmir**. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 8, Thursday, October 1: Smyrna, Agora, Şirince Village, Kusadasi (75 miles)**

We will continue our touring of Smyrna (Izmir) and visit **Kemeraltı public Bazaar** for shopping. Lunch in a local restaurant before driving to **Kusadasi**. En route we explore **Şirince village**, which is an old Greek village, famous for its 300 to 400-year-old houses and its nature and wines. Afterwards, we will watch the fashion show at the leather factory's outlet center and take a short shopping break. In Kusadasi, which is one of the most beautiful holiday centers in Turkey, you can spend a nice evening after dinner, strolling on the beach and drinking something in the stylish cafeterias. Our accommodation is in Kusadasi. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 9, Friday, October 2: Ephesus, The House of Virgin Mary, St. John Church, Kusadasi (50 miles)**

Today, our tour starts in **Ephesus** (50 miles from Izmir). Ephesus is on the World Heritage List and is one of the best-preserved ancient cities in the world. We will walk around the spectacular ruins where excavations still continue in this once great and important city, which was founded in the 10th century B.C. We will walk through history, along the marble streets lined with wonderful public buildings, including **the Baths of Scholastica**, the **Library of Celsus**, the **Temple of Hadrian**, **Curates street**, and the **Grand Theatre** with a capacity of 25,000. The Church of Ephesus is the most important of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor. It is thought that the Gospel of John was written here. Apostle Paul preached to the Ephesians and lived here for three years. The Church of Ephesus also received an epistle from him. Afterward, we will visit the **Temple of Artemis**, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and the **Basilica of St. John**. Lastly, we will see the **House of the Virgin Mary**, a small modest stone house located in the forest on the side of a mountain 6 miles from Ephesus. It is visited by Christian pilgrims from all over the world. It is believed that the Apostle John brought Mary to Ephesus, following the advice that Jesus Christ gave to his mother. (John 19:27) At the end of the tour, we will be watching the special demonstrations in **Turkish Delight and Leather Wear Factory stores** in the area and have free time. Our accommodation is in Kuşadası or Izmir. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 10, Saturday, October 3: Thyatira, Pergamon, Ayvalık (217 miles)**

After breakfast, we will set off for **Akhisar** (approx. 60 miles). The Church of Thyatira is now called Akhisar, also one of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor [Rev. 1:11; 2:18 - 24; Acts 16:14]. Paul's sermons in the Philippi city of Macedonia mention **Akhisar (Thyatira)** and the church there. He describes Thyatira as the hometown of a wealthy purple dye merchant named Lydia, who worshiped God. (Acts 16:14) We continue on our way to **Bergama (Pergamon)** (approx. 56 miles) and have lunch at a local restaurant. Pergamon is on the World Heritage List and is one of the most powerful cities in the ancient world which rose to prominence following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. Eventually, the city came under Roman control in 133 B.C. Although the city benefited from immense wealth, in the Book of Revelations, the risen Christ instructs John to convey the message that the people of Pergamon, the site of “Satan’s Throne”, needed to repent (Rev 2:13-16). Temples in **Acrapol** were the **worship centers of Dionysus, Zeus, and other pagan gods**, and the **first Christians were executed here by the Romans**. For this reason, it is defined as “The Seat of Satan” (Revelation 2: 12-16). Visit **Pergamon Acropolis** sits atop a 1000-foot windswept mountain, offers a view of the neighboring modern towns, the azure waters of the Aegean, and the ruins of Pergamon that cascade down from the ancient city center. Here, we will explore **the Temple of Trajan, the Temple of Athena, and the Altar of Zeus**, which was once

among the grandest monuments of the ancient world. The **Great Theatre of Pergamon** is among the steepest of its kind and an acoustic phenomenon, it could entertain up to 10,000 spectators. Nearby are the remains of the famous **Library of Pergamon**. We also visit **the Red Basilica**. Afterward, we will drive to **Assos or Ayvalık** for the night. Dinner and overnight stay is in Ayvalık. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 11, Sunday, October 4: Assos, Alexandria Troas, Troy, Canakkale, Bandirma (249 miles)**

**Assos** is one of the important settlements of antiquity that was founded in the Bronze Age (B.C. 3000-1200) on the slopes of a volcano, in the **Edremit Bay**, and across the **Lesbos Island**. Situated on a hill, the **Athena Temple** offers a magnificent view with its mystical atmosphere. On the last leg of his third missionary journey, Saint Paul walked from Alexandria Troas to Assos (Acts 20:5-6, 13-14), where he met his companions, who had gone ahead of him by sea. It was about a 32 miles journey, and judging from the positions of the cities, he likely entered Assos through its northwest city gate. Apostle Paul and his companions sailed to Mitylene on the island of Lesbos as they traveled to Jerusalem from Assos harbor. **Alexandria Troas** is located in the city of **Çanakkale**. It was founded in the late 4th century by Antigonos under the name **Antigone**. Alexandria Troas was mentioned several times in the *Bible*. It is an important site for the history of Christianity, as **Saint Paul** spent some time in Troas during his second missionary journey where he went to Macedonia (Acts 16.9). Also, the Gospel writer, Luke joined Paul in Troas and accompanied him on the rest of his mission. On his third missionary journey, Paul had a long address at Alexandria Troas (Acts 20:6 - 10). There are other biblical references to Troas in 2 Corinthians 2:12 and 2 Tim 4:13. Alexandria Troas remains a titular See of the Roman Catholic Church. We continue on our way to Troy and visit Troya, the city where the world's first beauty contest was held. **Troy**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the city where **the Trojan War**, described in Homer's Iliad Epic, took place in its 5000-year history. We will visit **the real-life location of the legendary Trojan War** described in Homer's Iliad. At the end of our tour day, we will have lunch in Çanakkale and continue to **Bandirma** (112 miles) where we have an overnight stay in Bandirma. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 12, Monday, October 5: Bursa, Iznik (Nicaea), Istanbul (211 miles)**

We depart from Bandirma to Bursa (71 miles). Arrive **Bursa** early to explore the **first capital of the Ottoman Empire** and the fourth most populous city in Turkey. We will first visit the **Old Silk Bazaar (Koza Han)** and **the Green Mosque**. Afterward, we will head for **İznik** (56 miles). We will have lunch at a local restaurant on our arrival at İznik. Then, we will discover the ancient city of **Nicaea**, known as İznik today, which was a religious center for Christians. Built-in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, **İznik Hagia Sophia Church**, which was later converted to a mosque, stands in the middle of the city. It is the famous site of the Second Council of Nicaea. The First Council of Nicaea was gathered in 325 AD by Emperor Constantine I to clarify some of the issues discussed in Christianity as an official religion in the Roman Empire. The main subject of the Council of Nicaea was whether or not Jesus was a true God. The Council acknowledged that Jesus Christ is the true God, who has the same essence as the Father of God, who has existed since eternity, thus, establishing the doctrine of the Trinity among Catholics. The Second Council of Nicaea was the seventh and last ecumenical council, which was convened on September 24, 787 in Hagia Sophia. It was also the last consensus adopted by the Orthodox and Catholics. We end the Iznik tour and depart to Istanbul (approx. 87 miles). Arrival and accommodation in **Istanbul**. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 13, Tuesday, October 6: Bosphorus Cruise, Chora Church, Ecumenical Patriarchate**

After breakfast, we will leave our hotel and head towards **the Golden Horn** at 8:40 am. You will see **Istanbul's Byzantine City Walls** built during the 5th century by Emperor Theodosius, stretching 5 miles along the Golden Horn. **Kariye Museum (Chora Church)** was built in AD 530 by the Byzantine emperor Justinian. It features mosaics and frescoes that are very well-preserved and of great artistic value as they offer some of the best examples of Late Byzantine period art from the 14th century. Chora Church was originally built on the site of a small chapel that stood for 500 years. Although it was damaged several times throughout its existence, Chora is still one of the most important monuments in Istanbul today. Then, we will visit **Saint George's Church**. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate Istanbul has been the spiritual center of the Greek Orthodox world since around 1600. Officially **the seat of the Patriarchate of Constantinople**, it is known locally as the *Fener Rum Patrikhanesi* (Fener Greek Patriarch), it could be considered **the Vatican of Eastern Orthodox church**, and the 18th century Aya Yorgi Kilisesi, Istanbul (Church of St. George, Istanbul), which stands in the grounds of it.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople bears the title of "Primus inter Pares" that is (First of the Equals) and he is regarded as the representative and religious leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide. **Istanbul Fener Greek Patriarchate** gained all its current freedoms and rights with the decree of Mehmed the Conqueror in 1453. His Edict regarding the church says: "No one should bully and oppress the Patriarch and the clergy, no one should be attracted to him, no matter who he is, if he and the priests in his entourage are exempt from all kinds of services forever, their churches will not be converted into mosques. Marriage and burial works, other acts and works will be done as before according to the Greek Church and customs." Afterward, we will visit **St. Stephen Church**, also known as the **Bulgarian Iron Church**. The most metal church of all time was built in the late 19th century. It was neglected and out of use for a long time but was restored by the Turkish Government in 2015 and reopened for worship. Lunch break at a selected local restaurant, then, we will be boarding a boat for a **Istanbul Bosphorus Cruise** for a short and relaxing trip along the **Bosporus Strait**, which separates Europe and Asia and connects the Black Sea with the inland Marmara Sea. Some of the important landmarks you'll see on this trip are the **Dolmabahçe Palace**, **Çırağan Palace**, **Ortaköy Mosque**, **Kuleli Military School**, **Beylerbeyi Palace**, **Rumeli Fortress**, beautiful historic wooden mansions as well as the **Maiden Tower** on the sea. At the end of the tour, return to your hotel. Dinner, and overnight stay in Istanbul. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**

#### **Day 14 Wednesday, October 7: Istanbul, Saint Sophia, Topkapi Palace, Blue Mosque, Grand Bazaar**

Continuing our tours in Istanbul, we will visit **Topkapi Palace** (home to many Ottoman sultans for 400 years during the 15th-19th centuries AD) and the **Saint Sophia Museum** (Hagia Sofia, built by the emperor Justinian in the 6th century AD as a church and was later converted into a mosque). You will see beautiful mosaics and frescos depicting Christian icons and the Byzantine Emperors. Later, we will take a lunch break at a local restaurant. We will stroll the historical **Hippodrome Square**, which was used as a meeting place and for chariot races during the Byzantine period. Here, we will see **the Serpent Column** brought from Delphi, **the Egyptian Obelisk**, and **the German Fountain of Wilhelm II**. **Basilica Cistern**, a large underground water reservoir built for the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I (AD 527-565). The cistern has a water storage capacity of 100,000 tons and is 140 meters long and 70 meters wide, and contains 336 columns, each 9 meters high. The two colossal Medusa heads made of marble, used as a support under the two columns of the cistern, were taken from another Roman-era building. **Grand Bazaar**, which has more than 4000 shops full of hidden treasures and authentic items. \*Note that the Grand Bazaar is closed on Sundays and the Topkapi Palace is closed on Tuesdays. End of the tour and return to your hotel. Accommodation in Istanbul. **Meals: Breakfast, Farewell Dinner**

#### **Day 15 Thursday, October 8: Istanbul Departure Day**

**Free time in Istanbul** until your airport transfer. Our tour concludes with your transfer to the airport for your onward flight to your country. **Meals: Breakfast, Dinner**