

Treasures of Turkey – AAA Tour

Engaging Experiences These special places and experiences are considered tour highlights. Look for them in the daily itineraries.

Day 1 - Overnight Flight

You're on your way to Turkey, a country straddling two continents (Europe and Asia) and brimming with rich culture, diverse people, and sublime landscapes. From the vast Greek and Roman archeological sites dotting the countryside to the modern cultural hub and historic city of Istanbul, Turkey is a confluence of past, present, and future and its customs, traditions, and values. Born out of the Silk Road trade and its nomadic path, Turkey's heritage is layered like an intricately woven carpet.

Day 2 - Istanbul, Turkey

Elite World Hotel, Istanbul

Welcome to Istanbul, the bridge between east and west, and a hub of intermingling cultures, complex history, and legendary architecture. Settle into your hotel for the next three nights, and then meet your fellow travelers at a welcome briefing before taking the rest of the evening to relax as you please.

Day 3 - Istanbul

Visit Hagia Sophia and the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul's Golden Horn (UNESCO) district.

Elite World Hotel, Istanbul

Breakfast, Dinner Included

Today, sample some of Istanbul's most iconic sites, which connect Greek-Roman heritage with Ottoman-Islamic Art. First is the 17th-century Blue Mosque with its impressive domes and minarets, followed by Hippodrome, the former sporting and social center of the Roman Empire. Visit Hagia Sophia (UNESCO), a church-turned-mosque and a true embodiment of Byzantine Architecture, and then Topkapi Palace and Harem, former home to the Ottoman Sultans. While exploring the city's legendary history and architecture, please know that Istanbul is also known for its legendary traffic, which is also an iconic experience — one that requires great patience! This evening, gather at a local restaurant where the chef will delight you with Ottoman-inspired cuisine. Today breakfast and dinner will be included.

Day 4 - Istanbul

Taste your way around Istanbul's Golden Horn district and Spice Market.

Elite World Hotel, Istanbul

Breakfast, Lunch Included

Explore Turkey's culinary heritage as you taste your way around Istanbul's Golden Horn district during a walking tour that includes a visit to the city's famous Spice Market and multiple tastings of Turkish specialties sampled from local street vendors. This afternoon, take in Istanbul's majestic skyline as you sail between two continents during a cruise of the Bosphorus Strait, which divides Europe from Asia. The rest of the afternoon is yours to explore. Perhaps you'll visit the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, home to rare artifacts, sculptures, and one of the most important collections of woven carpets in the world, some dating back to the Ottoman Empire. Or, choose to go on an optional excursion to an historic Hammam, where you'll enjoy an authentic Turkish scrub and foam bath. Today breakfast and lunch will be included.

Day 5 - Istanbul - Izmir

En Hotel, Izmir

Breakfast, Lunch Included

Early this morning, leave the bustle of Istanbul behind and take a flight to Izmir (known as Smyrna in antiquity), Turkey's third most populous city and your home for the next two nights. Enjoy free time this evening to explore the seafront promenade with its shops and restaurants, just a short walk from your centrally located hotel. Today breakfast and lunch will be included.

Day 6 - Izmir - Ancient Ephesus - Sirince - Izmir

Walk through the ruins of Ancient Ephesus in the footsteps of Paul the Apostle.

En Hotel, Izmir

Breakfast, Dinner Included

This morning, your in-depth tour of Ancient Ephesus (UNESCO) takes you to the Terrace Houses for a walking tour of these impressive residential villas. See the imposing Library of Celsus, the ruins of the Temple of Artemis, and walk the paths that Paul the Apostle once walked. Conclude the morning with a visit to the Archeological Museum. This afternoon, travel to charming Sirince, a hilltop village once inhabited by the Greek community and abandoned during the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in 1923. The

village today is a rare and protected example of Ottoman Christian architecture, known for its locally produced olive oil, wine, and peaches. Here, relax at a local café, taste a traditional Turkish coffee, and meet with locals who offer Turkish coffee ground readings for those who want to get their fortunes told! Afterwards, return to your hotel for some time to relax, and this evening, sample the cuisine of Izmir with Diner's Choice – choosing from a variety of local restaurants for an included dinner. Today breakfast and dinner will be included.

Day 7 - Izmir - Pamukkale - Dalyan

Arp Hotel, Dalyan

Breakfast Included

Start the day by learning about the folklore of the nazar boncuk (evil eye) at a workshop where these traditional talismans are crafted using a process passed down through generations. Next, continue your journey inland to Pamukkale (UNESCO) to visit the famous Cotton Castle* — named for its natural cascading thermal pools and white limestone — as well as the ruins of the Greco-Roman period. While here, take a guided tour of the archeological site via golf cart and visit the local museum followed by some free time to visit the site's "Cotton Candy" pools. This evening, arrive in the quaint riverbank town of Dalyan and check into your home for the next two nights at a small, family-run bed & breakfast with simple accommodations and a deck overlooking the river. The evening is yours. Perhaps you'll stroll the streets of Dalyan browsing the local shops or find your favorite café and soak in the local life. Today breakfast will be included.

Day 8 - Dalyan

Cruise the Dalyan River to the Aegean Coast.

Arp Hotel, Dalyan

Breakfast, Dinner Included

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast this morning before setting off for a relaxing boat trip along the river that connects Dalyan to the Mediterranean Sea. Enjoy the unique environment as you pass through the marshland that is home to birds, fish, and turtles. Take in views of the Aegean coastline and make some stops (weather permitting) along the way for swimming.** After lunch in a local restaurant, get ready for your Impact Moment at a loggerhead turtle rescue and conservation center. Return to Dalyan for an evening at leisure. Today breakfast and lunch will be included.

****Swimming stops will be made weather-permitting. Water temperatures in this part of the Aegean Sea average 63F (17.2C) in April, 68F (19.8C) in May, 73-81F (23-27C) between June and October, and 69F (20.6C) in November. Be sure to bring adequate sun protection. Swimming stops from the boat require the use of a pool ladder to enter and exit the water.**

Day 9 - Dalyan - Burdur - Konya

Bayir Diamond Hotel, Konya

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner Included

Prepare for a full day of travel, beginning early and following the path of the ancient Silk Road trading route that once led from China all the way to Istanbul. Take some time to explore the downtown of Burdur during a quick lunch stop. Continue on to Konya, arriving in the early evening, where dinner is included at the hotel. Today breakfast, lunch and dinner will be included.

Day 10 - Konya - Sultanhanı Caravanserai - Cappadocia

Explore the towering rock formations of Cappadocia and underground cities of past civilizations.

Vigor Hotel, Cappadocia

Breakfast Included

Begin the morning in Konya with a visit to the Mevlâna Museum, the world center of the Whirling Dervishes. Next, visit Sultanhanı Caravanserai, one of the largest surviving caravanserais along the Silk Road. After viewing the soaring vaults of this fortified road stop, travel on, arriving in Cappadocia in the early afternoon for a tour of one of the region's famous underground cities. These subterranean towns, some built almost 3000 years ago, provided refuge for their inhabitants during times of war and invasions. As you head towards your hotel, take in the ethereal scenery and mesmerizing rock formations created by thousands of years of volcanic activity and erosion. This evening, check in to your home for the next three nights. Today breakfast will be included.

Day 11 - Cappadocia

Vigor Hotel, Cappadocia

Breakfast, Lunch Included

Get an early start with an optional balloon ride*** that takes you soaring above the "fairy chimneys" and rock dwellings dotting the hills and valleys below you. After reconvening with your fellow travelers, immerse yourself in Cappadocia's lunar landscape. Visit

Göreme's Open-Air Museum (UNESCO), a vast site comprising of 11 early Christian rock-cut churches and monasteries often adorned with colorful frescoes. For lunch, join a local family at their home for a taste of home-cooked burek (a savory pastry filled with cheese or potatoes), accompanied by tea. This evening, come together for a Whirling Dervishes ceremony.**** Today breakfast and lunch will be included.

***If joining the optional hot air balloon ride, you will depart the hotel around 5:00 a.m. and return in time for breakfast, prior to joining the tour group for your included activities. Agility is required for climbing into and out of the balloon's basket. The burner that powers the hot air balloon is positioned above the travelers' heads and is noisy as well as hot. The balloon ride is subject to wind and weather conditions and may be cancelled last minute, in which case you will be refunded. The option must be purchased in advance, no later than 30 days prior to departure date. While every effort is made to secure space for your balloon ride, space is extremely limited and when demand exceeds availability, the hot air balloon operators retain the right to cancel reservations even when previously confirmed. If this situation should occur, you will be refunded. This tour is not exclusive to our travelers; therefore, you may be with travelers from other tour companies.

Day 12 - Cappadocia

Learn family recipes during a hands-on cooking class at a restaurant in Cappadocia.

Vigor Hotel, Cappadocia

Breakfast, Dinner Included

Start the day with a countryside walk in Love Valley, famous for its conspicuous rock formations. Follow the winding path among the fairy chimneys and contemplate the otherworldly view. Then, visit a pottery workshop and learn how locals make use of the area's natural resources by extracting clay from the surrounding soil and developing pottery into an art form. This afternoon, participate in a hands-on cooking class learning how to make traditional Cappadocia dishes, like slow-roasted testi kebab, before enjoying the results for dinner. Today breakfast and dinner will be included.

Day 13 - Cappadocia - Istanbul

Elite World Hotel, Istanbul

Breakfast, Dinner Included

Head to the airport in Kayseri this morning for a short flight back to Istanbul. After a drive back to the city, stop at the colorful Grand Bazaar. This intricate complex of covered streets and shops has been in operation for over 600 years and is one of the largest and oldest

covered markets in the world. Later this afternoon, check in to the hotel before regrouping for a farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Today breakfast and dinner will be included.

Day 14 - Istanbul - Tour Ends

Breakfast Included

Your exploration of Turkey comes to a close today. Today breakfast will be included.