



## *Treasures of Travel*

### *Footsteps of St. Paul and Seven Churches of Revelation (Turkey & Greece), 2023 ~ 19 days/17 nights ~*

**Please note: This tour is not offered as a pre-planned group tour.**

**We would be delighted to meet the expectation of the interested individuals and/or groups with the below example outline of the trip, based on the highlights of the country, or custom design one working around the offered itinerary according to your special interest and desire to make it unforgettable experience.**

This is a Christian religious journey through Turkey and Greece covering many sites which Paul the Apostle visited during his missionary journeys; as well as the Seven Churches which St. John mentioned in the Book of Revelation; besides taking you to many interesting ancient and modern cities and harbors of that part of the world which boast long eventful history and charm.

#### *Day 1 ~ Depart the USA*

#### *Day 2 ~ Antakya (ancient Antioch)*

Upon arrival in Istanbul and going through airport formalities, you will need to proceed to domestic flight terminal to take a short **flight to Antakya**. Once in Antakya you will be met and transferred to your hotel for overnight.

Antioch-on-the-Orontes, once called "the fair crown of the Orient", is just 12 miles from Syrian border. Antioch was a city of great religious importance and home to several Roman temples and its suburbs.

#### *Day 3 ~ Antakya*

Antioch has great historical significance for Christianity; as it was the base for St. Paul's missionary journeys, as well as the place where followers of Jesus Christ were called "Christians" for the first time (Acts 11:26) and where the Gospel of Matthew was probably written. Antioch hosted a number of church councils, developed its own characteristic school of biblical interpretation, and produced such influential Christian figures as the martyr-bishop Ignatius of Antioch, the pillar-saint Simeon, and the "golden-mouthed" preacher John Chrysostom.

Our sightseeing in Antakya will include visits to: **the Cave Church of St. Peter**, where followers of Jesus were first called "Christians"; the **Archaeological Museum**, famous for its extensive collection of Roman and Byzantine Era impressive mythological mosaics beautifully displayed in natural light; and **Samandag**, located close to ancient site of Seleucia Pieria- major Mediterranean port of the Hellenistic and Roman eras- the port of Antioch, where Paul, Silas, Barnabas, John, and Mark set out on their missionaries.

### *Day 4 ~ Konya (ancient Iconium)*

Today we'll depart for Konya via ancient Cilicia and the Cilician Gates, making a stop in **Tarsus**, which was the capital of the province of Cilicia during the Roman Empire, the scene of the first meeting between Mark Antony and Cleopatra, and the birthplace of Paul the Apostle. With a history going back over 6,000 years, Tarsus has long been an important stop for traders and a focal point of many civilizations. The **Apostle Paul** seemed to be proud of his birthplace, as in Jerusalem, when he was arrested, he told the tribune: "I am a Jew and a citizen of a well-known city of Tarsus in Cilicia." We will visit ancient spring in the center of Tarsus called **St. Paul's Well** for reportedly the saint often drank water from there; as well as **St. Paul's Church**.

After driving through the Cilician Gates we will be in ancient Roman province of Galatia to visit **Derbe and Lystra**, which are mentioned five times in the New Testament, as Paul and Barnabas fled there on their first missionary journey when city officials of Iconium plotted to stone them.

In the evening we'll arrive in Konya, also visited by Paul and Barnabas during their first missionary journey, according to Acts 14: 1-6.

### *Day 5 ~ Pamukkale (ancient Hierapolis)*

This morning we'll leave for ancient **Yalvac, Antioch in Pisidia**, major Roman colony that was visited by St. Paul on his first missionary journey. Pisidian Antioch marked an important turning point in Paul's ministry, as it became the first city to have fully gentile Christian community.

According to Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas came to Pisidian Antioch at the dawn of their first missionary journey. Their message was received with great interest, and on the following sabbath "almost the whole city gathered" to listen to them. Here we will visit **Septimus Severus's Triumphal Gate, Augustus Temple, the Roman baths, Theatre and St. Paul church**. We'll continue our drive to Pamukkale around the beautiful lake of Egirdir.

### *Day 6 ~ Pamukkale*

We will spend the whole day exploring **Hierapolis**, an important ancient religious center for pagan cults until it was transformed into Christian worship place in the 1st century AD. According to the tradition, the Apostle Philip resided and was martyred here. This unique site, whose cliffs are covered with white mineral deposits, was a health spa in Roman times and its thermal baths are still in use today. The ruins of Hierapolis contain an intriguing **Theater, Temple of Apollo, and Necropolis**. Next we'll head to **Laodicea**, home to one of the Seven Churches in Asia Minor mentioned in the Book of Revelation, Rev. 3: 14-22. Our final site to visit today is **Colossae** which is well-known throughout Christian world as the receiver of the **Epistle of Paul to the Colossians**. Col 4:13.

### *Day 7 ~ Ephesus*

Continuing west today, we will visit **Philadelphia**, now known as Alasehir, the site of the sixth of the Seven Churches, and the recipient of the letter not only from St. John, but also St. Ignatius and referred to as "New Jerusalem", Rev. 3: 7-13. Next, we'll stop in **Sardis**, also home to one of the Seven Churches and the residence of King Croesus (of "rich as Croesus" fame). It was during his reign that the metallurgists of Sardis discovered the secret of separating gold from silver, thereby producing both metals of a purity never known before. This revolution made Sardis rich and Croesus' name synonymous with wealth itself. Sardis was an early convert to Christianity but apparently a little bit of a disappointment to St. John, who admonished its citizens in the Book of Revelations, Rev. 3: 1-6. We will also stop in **Thyatira**, which in early Christian times, was home to a significant Christian church, mentioned as one of the seven Churches of the Book of Revelation. The city might as well have been visited by the Apostle Paul and Silas during Paul's second or third journey. Thyatira was also famous for its costly dye, highly prized by royalty, a center of the indigo trade. In the evening we'll arrive in Ephesus.

### *Day 8 ~ Ephesus*

We'll spend the whole day exploring the fascinating Hellenistic and Roman city of Ephesus and its surroundings. Ephesus was one of the seven churches of Asia that are cited in the Book of Revelation, the place where St. Paul condemned idolatry and set up a Christian community. The Gospel of John may have been written here as St. John lived in Ephesus, as well as the Virgin Mary who spent the latter part of her life in its environs. The city was the site of several 5th century Christian Councils. It is also the site of a large gladiators' graveyard. First we will visit **Ephesus museum** with a large collection of the artifacts from the ancient site of Ephesus nearby. Then we will head to explore the spectacular ruins of **Ephesus**, which include magnificent **Roman streets, Library, Agora, impressive Theatre with 25,000 seats, Mother Mary Church**, colorful mosaics and terrace houses.

We will also visit the **Basilica of St. John** with his tomb and the baptismal font where new believers were immersed. From here we will be able to see the location of the Temple of Artemis down below, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

### *Day 9 ~ Pergamon*

In the morning we'll start our journey to Pergamon, with several stops on the way. First, we'll reach Izmir, ancient **Smyrna**, birthplace of the poet Homer and third largest city in Turkey. Izmir is also the home to one of the Seven Churches, Rev. 2: 8-1. Here we will visit **Polycarp's church and the ancient agora**. Next we'll drive further along the Aegean coast to explore **Pergamon**, another site of the Seven Churches, the most favored of all of them, the church of Pergamon was praised for its forbearance, Rev. 2: 12-17. Once a beautiful city, Pergamon had the most dramatic acropolis in Asia Minor, and the library second in size only after the one in Alexandria, Egypt. Its ancient medical center performed research that laid the foundation for modern Western medicine.

Here we will visit the fabled **Acropolis**, pass through **the Royal Gates, Temple of Zeus and the Library**, which once held 200,000 volumes.

### *Day 10 ~ Canakkale (Assos & Alexandria Troas)*

Today we'll continue our journey from Pergamon to **Assos**, an important center for the study of philosophy and natural sciences, as well as the place where St. Paul and Luke sailed to Lesbos during their third missionary journey.

Next we'll stop in **Alexandria Troas** for more sightseeing, which was once a city with tall buildings and a major port on the Aegean coast from where Christianity spread to Europe, as St. Paul of Tarsus sailed for Europe for the first time from Alexandria Troas and returned back (it was here that the episode of the raising of Eutychus later occurred). Ignatius of Antioch also paused in this city before continuing to his martyrdom at Rome.

### *Day 11 ~ Kavala (Greece)*

We will cross the famous **Dardanelles by ferry**, traveling through Thrace (European part of Turkey) to the Greek city of **Kavala**, the country's prettiest mainland port with the most elegant harbor. The Apostle Paul landed here with his disciples, Timothy and Silas, on his first voyage to Europe. Luke the Evangelist, also came here from Troas. Originally known as Neapolis in ancient times, the city was renamed Christoupolis in later Byzantine period, because it accepted Christianity. We will visit the **Roman aqueduct and the Acropolis** which offers a splendid view over the city and harbor down below.

### *Day 12 ~ Thessaloníkí (Philippi)*

We'll have an excursion to **Philippi** on our agenda today. Philippi holds the distinction of being the first European city to accept Christianity. St. Paul is believed to have preached for the first time on European soil in Philippi and founded the early Christian community here. We will visit the baptismal site where Lydia dedicated her life to Christ and see a crypt dating from the Roman period which is thought to have served as a prison for St. Paul and Silas, as while in Philippi, his exorcism of a demon from a slave girl caused a great uproar in the city, which led to their arrest and public beating. We will also tour **the Acropolis, the Market place, Basilica, and the Theatre**, before carrying on with our trip to Thessaloniki.

### *Day 13 ~ Kalambaka*

We will spend the morning exploring the beautiful city of **Thessaloniki** and enjoy its white tower, acropolis, wide boulevards and many attractive sites, which tell about the city's importance throughout its long and eventful history. Here the New Testament books of the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians will come alive as we tour the old city ramparts; the newly excavated **Forum, St. George Church**- an ancient Roman monument which was transformed into a church and **the Galerius Arch** which rises over the famous **Via Egnatia**. We will visit **St. Demetrius basilica**, dedicated to a distinguished member of the Roman army and **St. Sophia**.

In the afternoon we will drive to Veria, ancient **Berea** to visit the old synagogue where St. Paul preached, and where the people examined the scriptures to see if his preaching was true. In the evening we'll arrive in Kalambaka.

### *Day 14 ~ Delphi*

We'll start our day with touring Meteora, the most unique site in Greece, with its incredible architecture and the location of the monasteries, which is included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The rock landscape of the area itself is unusual, creating wonderful retreat for the clusters of monasteries with their chapels, courtyards, and monks' cells. Here we will visit two of the most interesting **monasteries** before we leave for Delphi for overnight.

### *Day 15 ~ Athens*

Before heading to Athens we will tour **Delphi**, which in ancient times was thought of by the Greeks as the middle of the entire earth. The home to Delphic Oracle according to earlier myths, the site was rededicated and served as the major worship place of the god Apollo during classical times, after he slew Python, "a dragon" who lived there and protected the navel of the Earth. We'll visit **Delphi archaeological site**, including **Temple of Apollo**, as well as **the archeological museum**. Our next stop will be at **Hosios Loukas Church** renowned for its magnificent 11<sup>th</sup> century mosaics. By evening we'll reach the bustling Greek capital of Athens.

### *Day 16 ~ Samos*

This morning we'll make a trip to sightsee **ancient Corinth**. Corinth is mentioned many times in the New Testament, largely in connection with Paul the Apostle's mission here, where he spent many months establishing new Christian communities. Traditionally, the Church of Corinth is believed to have been founded by Paul, making it an Apostolic See. At the center of the city there is ancient spring which gave Corinth the reputation for being a place of pure waters and healing baths. We'll return to Athens to take a flight from Athens to the Greek island of **Samos**, birthplace of the mathematician Pythagoras.

### *Day 17 ~ Samos*

Today we'll board a ferry for an excursion to **Patmos**, the island where St. John was exiled by the Emperor Domitian, and where he wrote the Book of Revelation. We will visit UNESCO World Heritage Site- the **Cave of the Apocalypse** and **Monastery of St. John**, founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by the Blessed John Christodoulos. We will return to Samos to stroll and enjoy this beautiful island before dinner.

### *Day 18 ~ Athens*

We'll take an early flight back to Athens, where upon arrival we'll have a full day sightseeing tour of the ancient capital. We will explore some of the intriguing sites, which include: **the Acropolis, Agora, and Mars Hill**, where St. Paul met with the philosophers of the day. Next will be the **Athens Archaeological Museum**. In the evening you will have some free time to wander in the streets of Athens and stroll through the flea market.

### *Day 19*

Today you will be **transferred** to the airport for your flight home.

### *Best time to travel:*

April ~ May

September ~ October