



Treasures of Travel

Treasures of Jewish Heritage in Turkey, 2022 *~ 17 days/15 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 treasures of Jewish Heritage in Turkey, or change and custom design one working around the offered itinerary according to your special interest and desire to make it unforgettable experience of your own.

This tour offers a wonderful combination of past and present Jewish Heritage in Turkey going back to the Roman times; the rich history of this nation's culture is imprinted and evident in almost every corner of Turkey. The splendid architecture of the synagogues is inspiring and ready for you to be explored. This adventure will take you to the southeastern Turkey, Central Anatolia, Aegean, Thrace and Marmara regions for unforgettable lifetime memory!

Day 1 ~ Depart Hometown

Depart your home town today for an overnight flight to Istanbul.

Day 2 ~ Gaziantep

Upon arrive in Istanbul, and going through immigration and customs formalities, you will proceed to the domestic terminal for your **flight to Gaziantep**. As you arrive in Gaziantep you will be met and **transferred** to your hotel for overnight.

Day 3 ~ Gaziantep

We will start our sightseeing with a visit to the **Gaziantep Synagogue** built in the 10th century which was completely burnt and rebuilt in the 19th century to serve the community who had moved mostly from Aleppo. The city of Gaziantep restored the Synagogue and opened as a museum in 2013.

Next we will explore the **copper and spice market**, the most interesting market in Turkey. Gaziantep (ancient Antep), is the pistachio capital of Turkey, and the city where the traditional Turkish dishes, such as baklava and kebab originated. We will also visit the **Museum**, where the beautiful mosaics rescued from Zeugma are on display- the best Roman Mosaics in Turkey.

Day 4 ~ Antakya

This morning we will drive to visit one of the most interesting and still active **Antakya Synagogue** in the old city that is a pivot of several religions and nationalities living side by side in peace and harmony. This synagogue may have been built in 1870 and continues to be in regular use. We will also tour the **Archaeological Museum**, famous for its mythological themes, Roman fishing and hunting mosaics beautifully displayed in natural light.

Day 5 ~ Adana

En route to Adana we will stop at the **Iskenderun (City of Alexander) Synagogue** and walk around to see the diverse architecture of this once glorious city, where Alexander the Great and Darius the Great had their final battle which ended with Alexander's victory. We will continue to Adana to visit the **Adana Synagogue**. Jews established an independent community as early as the 4th century here. After 1915 immigration from other Turkish cities and the Russian Revolution, the first synagogue was opened. Since 1987 the synagogue has been converted into a two story house with a courtyard.

Day 6 ~ Izmir

Our final destination today is Izmir, ancient Smyrna, the birthplace of Homer. The city has had a large, prosperous Jewish community since the 15th century and there are several Jewish synagogues still in use.

Day 7 ~ Izmir

This morning we will drive to **Asansor** (elevator) which is on, once very famous singer, Dario Moreno Street from where you will experience a splendid view over the bay of Izmir. It was built in 1907, with the intention to serve the public, by a wealthy Jewish banker and trader of that period, Nesim Levi Bayraklioglu. It was invented in order to ease passage from the narrow coastline of Karata to the hillside, the elevator within the building served to carry people and goods through the steep cliff between the two parts of the settlement. Here we will visit still active **Bet (Beth) Israel Synagogue**, built in 1907 after a petition to the Sultan. In the afternoon we will stroll in the old part of Izmir to explore this charming and sophisticated city on Aegean coast of Turkey.

Day 8 ~ Izmir

We'll start our day with touring the **Old Jewish quarter** to visit several Synagogues. First stop of our sightseeing will be at **Etz Ahayim Synagogue** (Tree of life), its history goes back to Byzantine era. Next will be **La Sinyora Synagogue** which was most probably dedicated to a Jewish lady of Dutch origin, Sinyora Osbio. Next, we will head to the **Bikur Halim Synagogue**, build in 1724 by Salomon De Ciaves, a rich Jewish merchant of Portuguese origin who emigrated from Holland to Izmir. Our final stop today is **Shalom Synagogue** known as the Kal Abasho; it is one of the six synagogues existing in Izmir in 1610.

Day 9 ~ Bergama

Today we will carry on with our journey to Sardis where **Synagogue ruins** date back to Roman times, 2nd century AD. The remains of one of the largest ancient synagogues still offer the sight of beautiful geometric wall designs and floor mosaics. Next we will head to Bergama, ancient Pergamon, which has long Jewish history going back to 3rd century BC. The Bergama Synagogue has been restored and opened to public as a museum.

Day 10 ~ Bursa

Bursa, ancient Prusa and the first capital of the Ottoman Empire where the silk trade flourished during Byzantine and Ottoman times, has some fine Ottoman architecture. Once we arrive in Bursa we will have a stroll through **the old city** followed by a visit to the famous **Green Mosque – Green Tomb** as well as **the silk market**.

Day 11 ~ Bursa

Bursa synagogues are among the most beautiful synagogues in Turkey. We will visit **Gerush Synagogue**, built in the 16th century, and restored after the 1855 earthquake, as well as **Mayor Synagogue**, built by Sephardic Jews in the late 16th century; damaged in 1855 by the earthquake, it was restored and reopened in 2001.

Day 12 ~ Canakkale

This morning we will head to Canakkale, beautifully located on the Dardanelles. In Canakkale we will visit old city which houses **Mekor Hayim Synagogue**, recently restored and opened in 2005.

Day 13 ~ Edirne

Today we will take a **ferry** to cross the Dardanelles for Gallipoli Peninsula, for Edirne, ancient Hadrianopolis- home to beautiful Ottoman buildings including mosque, bridges, Caravanserais and Bedestans. Once we arrive in Edirne we'll start sightseeing tour of the old city which also includes the **Kal Kadosh Agadol Synagogue** built in 1907, later destroyed by fire, is now restored and serves as a museum. It consists of three buildings: the Great Synagogue, small places of worship, a school and administration combined. Because of snow and other natural causes, it is in need of restoration.

Day 14 ~ Istanbul via Kirklareli and Corlu

Our first goal in the morning is to reach **Kirklareli**, ancient Verissa to visit the **Musa Synagogue** going back to the 17th century. It is believed that the first Jewish settlers were Ashkenazi in the 14th century. The current synagogue was built on the site of the former structure.

Our next stop will be in **Corlu** to visit probably the most interesting **synagogue-mosque** combination built as a synagogue in 1906 which has beautifully decorated ceiling done by Italian craftsmen, it was converted into a mosque in about 1970, and is still in use. In the evening we'll arrive in Istanbul.

Day 15 ~ Istanbul

We'll spend most of our day exploring Istanbul, this ever fascinating, magical city, starting with crossing the Bosphorus Bridge to the Asian side of Istanbul for **Kuzguncuk synagogue**, one of the most beautiful Istanbul synagogues. Nearby is a still active **cemetery** going back to 1500 AD. We will cross the bridge again back to European side of the city to visit **Ortakoy synagogue** along the Bosphorus before we end our sightseeing.

Day 16 ~ Istanbul

Our vehicle will follow the city walls to **Balat**. The first Jewish immigrants from Spain settled near **Balat** on the Golden Horn. We'll start our tour with a visit to the **Ahrida Synagogue**, the oldest in town, rebuilt in 1694 after the fire in 1660. Next we will explore the main Jewish quarter of **Galata** with the opportunity to experience the footprints of ancient Spanish (Toledo, etc.) architecture and style, as well as Hebrew inscriptions and signs of Jewish culture present all around. We will also visit the **Neve Shalom Synagogue**.

Day 17

We will **transfer** you to the airport for your flight home.

Best time to travel:

Spring ~ fall.