



Treasures of Travel

Treasures of Armenian Heritage in Turkey, 2023 ~ 21 days/19 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 Armenian 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.

Imagine walking through Anatolia, modern Turkey with ever-changing landscape of 2,800 years Armenian heritage and history. Walk in the footsteps of their most famous kings, religious leaders, craftsmen, architects to see their most holy places, cities such as Ani, Sourp Khatch Cathedral in Aghtamar, the site where St. Gregory baptized King Dertad on the Aradzai River, near Diyadin, Palu fortress where St. Mesrob Mashtots created the Armenain Alphabet. These are just a few treasures you are going to see and experience.

Day 1

Depart the USA. Overnight flight to Istanbul.

Day 2 ~ Adiyaman (Kahta)

After arrival in Istanbul you will proceed to domestic terminal to take connecting flight to Adiyaman. Once in Adiyaman you will be met and **transferred** to your hotel.

Day 3 ~ Kahta (Kiahta)

We will spend the day visiting the **Commagene Kingdom; Mt. Nemrut**, a peak in the Anti-Taurus range rising to the height of 7,000 feet. This archaeological site, famous for its magnificent gigantic heads, was constructed by the pre-Roman King, Armenian King Antiochus I, who thought of himself to be related to the gods. We will also visit **Arsameia**, the ancient capital of Commagene; the **Roman bridge** at Cendere; and **Karakus** with its tumulus (ancient graveyard) and its impressive funeral columns. We will return to Kahta for overnight.

Day 4 ~ Kahraman Maras (Maras, Gremanicia)

Today we will head to **Maras** to explore the old city which has traces of Armenian architecture and culture. We will stroll through the copper and spice markets and visit some Armenian churches converted into mosques and buildings restored to use as the museums. We will overnight in Maras.

Day 5 ~ Antakya (Antiocheia)

This morning we'll drive to Antakya, ancient Antioch to visit Antakya's **Archaeological Museum**, famous for its mythological themes beautifully displayed in natural light. We will also stop at the **Grotto of St. Peter** where the word "Christians" was used for the first time. Then we will visit Armenian village **Vakif** and still have time explore the **old city** of Antakya.

Day 6 ~ Adana

On the way to Tarsus we will stop at **Ayas**, a famous harbor city for trade and commerce. Our second stop will be in **Yakapinar** (Misis, Mopsouestia), once Armenian capital of Kilika, famous for its mosaic museum, citadel and Roman bridge over Ceyhan (Pyramos) river. Finally we will drive west of Adana to visit Cilician **Tarsus** (Tarsos-Darson) where the famous **Mary's Cathedral** is located in which Levon II was crowned as the king of Armenia. We will visit this Cathedral which is converted into a mosque. Tarsus is also the city where St. Paul was born, while here we will tour Cleopatra Gate, Roman Arcadia, and St. Paul Church as well as his Well. We will return to Adana for overnight.

Day 7 ~ Kozan (Sis)

Today our first destination to visit will be Yilankale (Levonipert castle) with a majestic location and view, followed by picturesque fortress and extensive ruins of **Anavarza**. **Kozan** (Sis) once was the seat of Armenian Catholicos and the capital of Armenia. Here we will tour the splendid fortress overlooking the valley and old city, as well as feel and experience Armenian footprint everywhere. We will overnight in Kozan.

Day 8 ~ Malatya (Melitene)

We will be driving up through the Taurus Mountains following one of the main roads connecting Cappadocia and Cilicia. This beautiful region has been known for Armenian towns, such as Feka (Vahka), Saimbeyli (Hacin), Goksun (Gogison), Elbistan (Albistan), Darende and finally Gurun (Gaurene).

We will stop at certain locations for magnificent views and cities for Armenian treasures. In the evening we will arrive in Malatya for overnight.

Day 9 ~ Malatya (Melitene)

We will spend the day visiting **Armenian cemetery**, churches converted to mosques including Armenian Church under restoration right now, **archaeological and ethnographic museums**, and **old town** with copper and spice markets.

Day 10 ~ Elazig (Harpur, Kharpert)

This morning we will head to **Arapgir** which was mostly Armenian since 11th century until 20th century, it has Armenian footprint wherever you look. Next we'll drive through Keban (Gaban) to Keban dam where we take a short ferry ride to the other side of the dam to visit Cemisgezek (Cemisgadzak), once a very important Armenian city, still the home to the traces of Armenian Churches and houses. We will return the same way and head to **Elazig** for overnight.

Day 11 ~ Elazig (Mamuret-ul Aziz)

Our today's sightseeing will start with **Palu** and its fortress where Armenian Alphabet was founded by Mesrob Mashdots; there are still the remains of Armenian Churches and settlement around. Next we will return to Elazig to tour the **Harput** (Kharpert), once a very important Armenian stronghold with its splendid fortress overlooking the city of Elazig down below; as well as visit beautifully restored Elazig **archaeological and ethnographic museum** which offers the rich collection from the region.

Day 12 ~ Diyarbakir (Amida, Dikranagerd)

On the way to Diyarbakir (ancient Amidiya) we will stop at Hazar Golu (Lake Covk). At the south shore of Lake Covk once there was a very impressive castle called Hromkla, where a great monastery and the seat of the Catholicos of Armenia was established and functioned until 1293. We will continue to drive through another very important Armenian city called Egani (Arhni, Arzni, Arghana) to Diyarbakir, which is located on the Tigris (Dijle) River. This traditional city is at least 5,000 years old, with a colorful mixture of people and interesting Armenian, Syrian Orthodox, Kurdish, Arabic and Turkish architecture.

Once we arrive in Diyarbakir we will visit **Surp Giragos Church** which goes back to 1376; it was the biggest Armenian Church in the Middle East, it has been just restored and opened for service. We will also visit **Armenian Museum House** to learn about their culture and architecture that has been around for millenniums here.

The **ancient wall** surrounding the city was built by Constantine II in the fourth century; still mostly intact today, it is comparable in many aspects to the Great Wall of China. We overnight in Diyarbakir.

Day 13 ~ Mus (Mush, Daron)

Today we will head to Mus driving by Silvan, ancient Tigranakert, following the Bitlis River, a tributary of the Tigris (Arax), through a gorge so deep you will see only blue sky. Once we arrive in **Bitlis**, a charming provincial town with Armenian-Kurdish origins, we will see an impressive Fortress and buildings with Armenian traces. We will continue to Mus for overnight.

Day 14 ~ Van (Vasporagan)

This morning we will visit **the old city of Mus and Armenian Church** in ruins, as well as stop shortly in the **town of Haskoy** which had an Armenian School, nowadays still used as Turkish school; and Armenian Church converted to a mosque.

Our next stop will be at **Akdamar (Akhtamar, Aghtamar) Island**. We will take a **boat** across Lake Van (Lake Arjish) to reach the island which is the home to the most beautiful 10th century **Armenian Church of the Holy Cross**; it is the best example of classic Armenian architecture, where wonderful relief carvings of Bible stories, birds, and animals decorate the walls. We will drive to Van for overnight.

Day 15 ~ Kars (Ghars)

We will start the day with a stop in **Diyadin** (Diadin, Dzaggodin) where Murat (Aradzani) river starts and where according to the tradition King Dertad was baptized. Next we will head to **Dogubeyazit** for a breathtaking view of **Mt. Ararat (Mt. Masist)**, the highest mountain in Turkey at 18,000 feet. Covered with snow and ice, it is thought to be the final resting place of Noah's Ark. We will visit the impressive **Palace of Ishak Pasha**, which is a great mixture of Ottoman, Seljuk, Persian, Georgian, and Armenian architectural styles.

Kars, once Armenian capital with its magnificent citadel overlooking the city below, is a typical eastern Turkish town with a magnificent fortress. Surrounding high plateaus here create excellent conditions for the production of yogurt, milk, cheese, honey, and meat. There are also carpets and kilims known for their special color combinations and unique designs.

Here we will visit the **Holy Apostle Church** which is converted to a mosque and **Archaeological museum** with rich collections from the region including Ani.

Day 16 ~ Erzurum (Karín, Teodupolis)

This morning we will visit **Ani**, the ancient capital of Armenia in the XI and XII century, which had 100,000 inhabitants in its glorious times and was a rival to Constantinople. Many of the ruins of its close to 1,000 churches and cathedrals can be still seen. Beyond the city walls there is a deep gorge separating Turkey from Armenia. We will visit some of the ancient ruins including Armenian churches and cathedrals.

Erzurum is the largest city on the high plateau of Eastern Turkey. While in Erzurum we will tour the old city to see remains of Armenian architecture.

Day 17 ~ Kemaliye (Agn, Egin)

We follow the Murat River, a powerful tributary of Euphrates River westwards through Erzincan (Yerzinga), Kemah (Gamakh), Ilic (Lic, Lick) and Kemaliye (Ang, Egin).

Kemaliye was a very important center of Armenian jewelry production; many of the local businessmen involved in it, were able to sell all kinds of jewelries to the Ottoman Palace in Istanbul, and became very influential in commerce and finance.

Day 18 ~ Sivas (Sevas, Sepastia)

This morning we will leave Kemaliye for Sivas and stop in Divrigi (Divrig) to visit the magnificent **Selcuk Monastery (Medressa)** which was built by Armenian builders and craftsmen.

Sivas has a long and rich history of many different civilizations especially the Armenian. The proof is the old city with its interesting Armenian architecture we will see.

Day 19~ Istanbul

Today we will take a **flight to Istanbul**; with everything else, this ever fascinating, magical city has a very rich and vibrant Armenian culture. Once we arrive in Istanbul we will be **transferred** to our hotel in old city, after some rest we will visit **St. Sophia**, the largest Christian Cathedral in the world for more than 1,000 years.

Day 20 ~ Istanbul

Today we will spend the full day visiting Armenian sites in Istanbul such as **Kumkapi and Samatya** districts. Then we will have a **Bosphorus cruise** between the continents to see some of the interesting historical buildings, as well as the fabulous palaces and villas that hug the shoreline.

Day 21

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

Best time to travel:

Spring or fall.