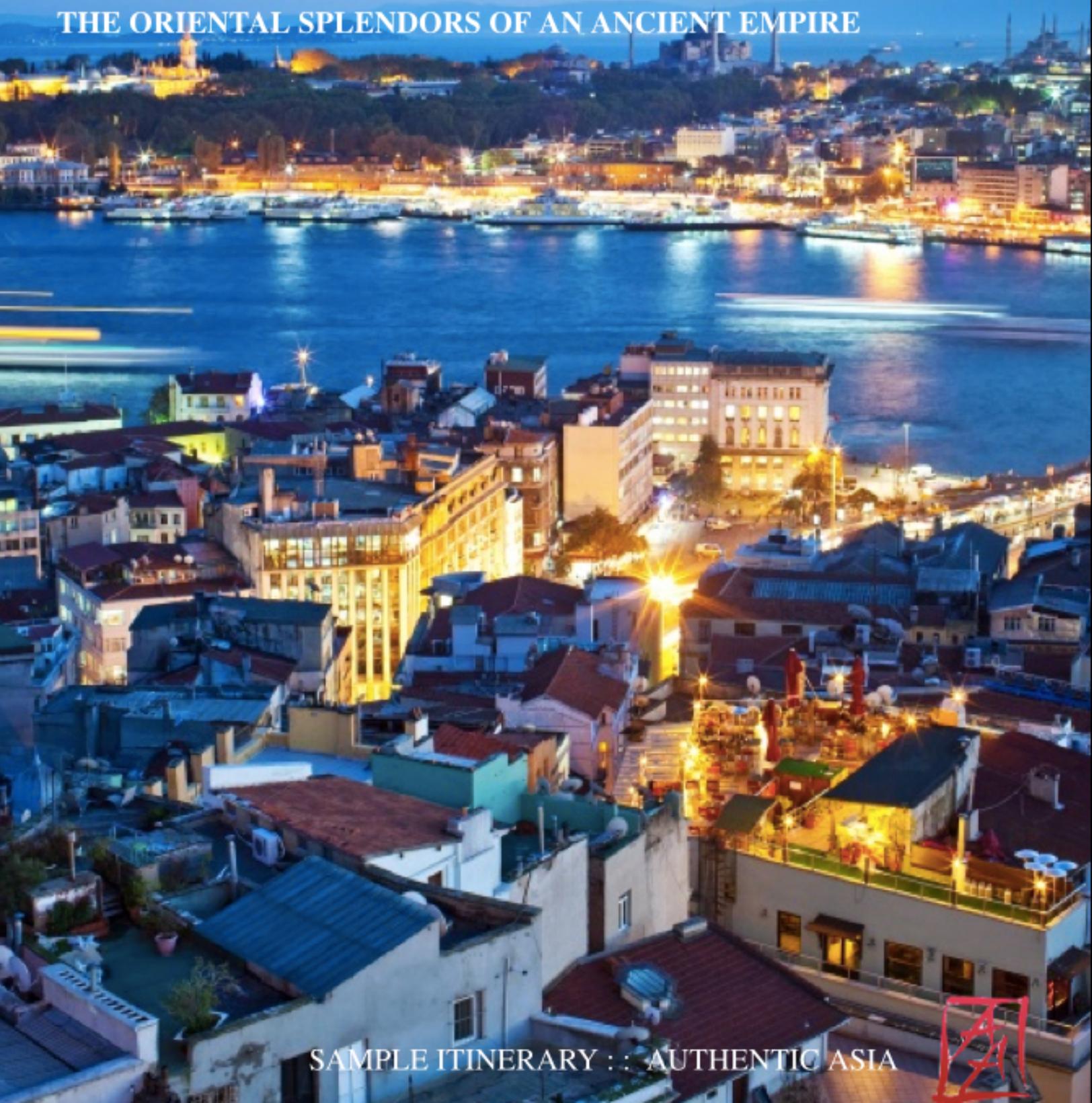


Turkey

THE ORIENTAL SPLENDORS OF AN ANCIENT EMPIRE



SAMPLE ITINERARY : : AUTHENTIC ASIA



Bridging two continents, Turkey is a fascinating cultural mosaic, rich in treasures from famed empires spanning over 5,000 years. Here you can savor it all, from visiting arresting ruins to sailing on a marvelous traditional gullet, and from Cappadocia's geologic splendor to immersing yourself in the incredible cultural energy of Istanbul.

Day 1 | Istanbul

Upon arrival in Istanbul you will be transferred to your hotel.

Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel

Day 2 | Istanbul

Your guided exploration of Istanbul begins today at the Hippodrome Square, once the scene of chariot races and the center of Byzantine civic life dates back to 203 A.D. when it was built by the Roman Emperor Septimus with the capacity to accommodate 100,000 spectators. At that time it was one quarter of the city's population.

From here continue on to the famous St. Sophia Church built in 360 A.D. For many centuries, St. Sophia was the world's largest church. Throughout its Byzantine history, it served as the city's main cathedral and after the conquest of Istanbul by Sultan Mehmet II, it was converted to a mosque by adding Islamic elements such as minarets.

The last morning stop will be at the Underground Cisterns, built for wartime use by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century.

In the afternoon spend time at the Blue Mosque, built in the early 17th century and appropriately named for the magnificent interior decoration made up mostly of blue Iznik tiles. It is the only mosque in the world that was originally built with six minarets. The mosque's architect, Mehmet Aga was a student of Sinan, the great architect of classical Ottoman architecture.

Then drive to the Topkapi Palace, also known as the palace of the Sultans, it was once a city in itself. The palace occupies the first of Constantinople's seven hills, and was the site of the Acropolis and the original nucleus of the Great Town of Byzantium.

The Topkapi Palace remained the residence of the Sultans for centuries until Abdul Mecit moved his home to the Dolmabache Palace in 1855. The extensive complex of buildings, set in carefully tended gardens, is surrounded by battlement walls and towers and has a marvelous collection of art.



Finally you will reach Istanbul’s most famous landmark – the Grand Bazaar with its incredible labyrinth of stalls and shops. It contains 3,500 shops employing more than 20,000 people, all under one roof. Everything imaginable is for sale: gold and silver, rugs, carpets, antiques, leather, and more. The Grand Bazaar was built in 1461 and has been in operation ever since. One can spend a whole day in the bazaar without covering all of it.

Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel

“We travel not to escape life, but for life not to escape us.”

- Anonymous

Day 3 | Istanbul

This morning meet your guide and set out for a drive to the Asian side of Istanbul across the transcontinental Bosphorus Bridge, unique as it connects two continents – Asia and Europe. It is the fourth longest suspension bridge in the world.

Your first stop upon reaching the other side will be at Beylerbeyi Palace, situated on the shore of the Asian end of the bridge and built between 1861 and 1864 by Sultan Abdulaziz. The

palace is a three story structure set on terraced grounds planted with trees imported from different countries.

Head to Camlica Hill for a quick photo op, it is the highest point in Istanbul and the panoramic views of the city are quite spectacular.

Then drive to Kadikoy, one of the larger cosmopolitan districts of Istanbul. Kadikoy is also the name of the most prominent neighborhood of the district, a residential and commercial area with restaurants, shops, patisseries, bars, and bookshops. It is the cultural center of the Anatolian side.

The final excursion for the day will be a visit to the Egyptian Spice Bazaar built in 1664 as a part of the Yeni Mosque complex. Its name is derived from the wide array of spices and herbs once brought from Egypt. Today there are still a few merchants that sell colorful spices and herbs. Others sell dried fruit, basket work, jewelry, and more.

On the way back to the hotel you will drive through the “Golden Horn” where you can take a cable car to Pierre Loti Hill. It was named after the famous French writer. The scenery here is quite beautiful and it is a lovely spot to have a coffee or drink in one of the outdoor cafes before you head back to your hotel.

Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel

*“The world is a book and those who do not travel
read only one page.”*

- St. Augustine

Day 4 | Istanbul

After breakfast, depart for the royal residence of Ottoman Sultans, the sumptuous Dolmabahce Palace. During the 19th century, westernization of the Ottoman Empire, which became an important trend, was also felt in the architecture of the time. Dolmabahce Palace was built under such an influence between 1843 and 1856 by Sultan Abdulmecit. The site of the palace was obtained by filling a small bay on the Bosphorus, thus giving the palace its name which means “filled garden.” Its interior decoration is known as a great collection of European antiques including its furniture and a Turkish bath in alabaster. Covering an area of 25 hectares, the palace consists of 285 rooms and 46 halls among which figures a large reception hall supported by 56 columns. Approximately 600 paintings adorn the walls and specially woven, very beautiful Hereke carpets of huge dimensions cover the palace floors.

Continue on to Galata Tower. Although it is not completely certain as to when the Galata Tower was built, it took its present shape during the Genoese period. The Tower was heavily damaged during an earthquake in 1509, and it was renewed by the architect, Hayrettin, who was famous during that period. During the reign of Süleiman the Magnificent (1520-66), it was used as a jail for prisoners who were sentenced to work at the Kasımpaşa Naval Dockyard.

Then drive to old town and visit Kariye Museum; Kariye is the Turkish adaptation of the ancient Greek word “chora” which refers to “countryside.”

The church was built in the 4th century during the Byzantine days outside the city walls. First converted into a mosque during the 16th century, it was finally made a museum in 1948, leaving no Islamic element in the building except the minaret. The walls are decorated with superb 14th century-frescoes, and mosaics on a gold ground.

After lunch take some time to stroll along “Beyoglu & Istikla Street”. Istiklal Street is one of the most famous avenues in Istanbul, visited by nearly 3 million people in a single day over the course of weekends. Located in the historic Beyoglu (Pera) district, it is an elegant pedestrian street, 1.4 kilometers long, which houses exquisite boutiques, music stores, bookstores, art galleries, cinemas, theatres, libraries, cafés, pubs, night clubs with live music, historical patisseries, chocolateries, and restaurants.

Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel

*“One’s destination is never a place, but a new way
of seeing things.”*

- Henry Miller

Day 5 | Cappadocia

Take a morning flight to Kayseri. The flight takes only a little over an hour, but you might as well be landing in Middle-earth. Welcome to Cappadocia! High on a central Anatolian plateau, Cappadocia is a surreal landscape of volcanic ash eroded into fantastic formations—ocher fields of giant mushrooms and craggy cones stretch for miles amid vineyards and orchards. As if the wild beauty alone weren't enough to make this a must-see destination, hundreds of beehive homes and once-secret churches are carved into the soft rock.

You will be met by your local guide and will continue straight to the underground city of Kaymakli. The Hittites were likely the first to build these subterranean shelters as far back as 2000 B.C., but it was the early Christians fleeing persecution who made them into small homesteads, complete with interconnected kitchens, stables, cemeteries, chapels, and wineries.

In all, Cappadocia has some 30 such underground labyrinths, the vast majority of them still under excavation. Of those open to the public, Derinkuyu, which extends nearly 300 feet below ground, is the most extensive and most popular, but since the only thing worse than a tight underground space is a tight underground space crammed with people, you'll be touring less-trafficked Kaymakli. You can easily visit all five levels—all well lit and well ventilated—in 30 minutes, but keep in mind that the ceilings are low, so you'll be stooped over most of the time.

After the morning visit to Cappadocia check-in at the hotel and depart for lunch to the riverside town of Avanos. The region's pottery center, Avanos is where generations of artisans have been crafting the same shapes and designs for millennia. Take a walk around the town's ancient backstreets, where it isn't unusual to see old women in floral head scarves chopping wood, and where master ceramists have their tiny workshops.

Your last stop of the day will be the Sarihan Caravanserai, which must have been a welcome sight for all those merchants traveling with their camel caravans from Persia and China (a major junction along the Silk Road, Cappadocia was rife with bandits). Surrounded by nothing but undulating hills and poplar trees, the ancient inn stands well fortified behind hulking volcanic-stone walls.

There are several hotels in Cappadocia that are carved into the rock with amazing rock exposed rooms! We recommend the Yunakevleri Hotel which is built into the rockside.

Accommodations: Yunakevleri Hotel



Day 6 | Cappadocia

One of the best ways to take in Cappadocia's otherworldly landscape is by floating above it in a hot-air balloon if you like and if you are not afraid of heights! By daybreak you'll be wide awake, standing in a wicker basket floating about 800 feet above the ground, watching the sun slowly illuminate the Gaudí-esque landscape.

Return to the hotel for breakfast and start your second day of sightseeing at Zelve Open-Air Museum where you will find the field of "fairy chimneys," the towering rock pinnacles that feature prominently on Cappadocia postcards. At Zelve you will finally get your chance to climb into the rock caves. Christian monks retreated here, in Zelve's three valleys, between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, and there's certainly a spartan beauty to the rock-hewn chapels—even in their humble names: Fish Church, Grape Church, Deer Church. Muslim villagers lived here too, until the 1950s, when erosion forced them to move.

A gorgeous drive past apricot orchards and pumpkin patches brings you to Aravan Evi a small restaurant in a small home in a small village, where you'll be having one of the best meals of the trip.

After lunch, walk around the former Greek village of Sinasos, renamed Mustafapaşa in the 1920s in honor of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey. The graceful homes with their ornate stonework and wood carvings, a striking contrast to the jumble of medieval caves in the hills just above, are the main attraction here. But equally appealing is the glimpse you'll get of Anatolian village life: packs of men in wool caps and blazers playing backgammon at the outdoor teahouses, students rushing into the handsome Ottoman madrasa in the town square (now a coed secular university), women in harem pants leading donkeys through the backstreets.

Save the biggest sight for last: the Göreme Open-Air Museum with its dozens of fresco-decorated caves. The last entry is at a 6:15 p.m. Tour groups usually hit Göreme Valley much earlier in the day, but you're visiting now for two key reasons: First, the late-afternoon light makes for much better landscape photos, and second, you won't have to queue up to see the highlights, including the lushly painted Karanlık Church, where the depictions of Christ look just as crisp as they must have in the eleventh century, when they were first painted.

Accommodations: [Yunakevleri Hotel](#)

Day 7 | Bodrum

Take a morning flight to Bodrum via Istanbul.

After all those dusty walks in Cappadocia, you might enjoy an afternoon devoted to strolling and dozing on the Turkish Riviera. The town of Bodrum is both louche and luxe, with Irish pubs and fancy jewelry shops now outnumbering the döner kebab stands.

You will be transferred to your hotel but the afternoon is free.

Accommodations: Salmakis Hotel



Day 8 | Bodrum

Everyone who's anyone in western Turkey has his or her own fully crewed gullet, the Aegean Sea's trademark wooden sailing yacht. Your private cruise leaves from the harbor at 10 a.m. Traditionally, gulets, with their rounded sterns and broad beams, were built to haul citrus and olives to the Aegean's major trading ports.

Today will inevitably be a highlight of the trip: hours of unstructured time—splashing around in a series of translucent coves, interrupted only by the occasional nap. Lunch will be served aboard the boat.

Time permitting you might go directly to Bodrum Castle of the Knights of St. John after the cruise. This crusader fortress dominates the waterfront.

Accommodations: Salmakis Hotel

Day 9 | Sirince

Today set out on a drive to Izmir to explore ancient Ionian ruins that are among the finest remnants of the Classical Age in the Mediterranean. Century-old ruins are scattered up and down this stretch of the Aegean coast, predating even Alexander the Great's youthful romp (and conquest) in 334 B.C. Begin at the Temple of Zeus at Euromos, which is tucked amid olive groves into a well-concealed gorge, and then proceed to the ornate Temple of Apollo at Didyma. Continue up the coast to the well-preserved ruins of Priene, which overlook the fertile delta-plains of the Meander River. Across this former gulf lie the remnants of the once-mighty city of Miletus, ancient home to great philosophers.

Spend the night in the village of Sirince in a setting so bucolic that Oprah once called it the Tuscany of Turkey when she visited here.

Accommodations: Sirince Hotel Markiz Konaklari

Day 10 | Sirince

A highlight of any trip to Turkey is a visit to Ephesus, one of the best-preserved ancient cities on the planet. Alexander swept through there, liberating the once Greek city from the Persians. But most of what stands today dates to those compulsive property developers of antiquity, the Romans. Between the first and the fourth centuries, Ephesus was the Roman Empire's Asian metropolis. It's a massive site, and it won't take long before you can in front of you imagine a city filled with 250,000 Romans going about their daily life.

Accommodations: Sirince Hotel Markiz Konaklari

Day 11 | Istanbul

A morning flight takes you back to Istanbul for a final afternoon in the city. We have not included any guide services for the afternoon. Transfer back to the Radisson Blu Hotel on the Bosphorus.

Accommodations: Radisson Blu Hotel

Day 12 | Departure

You will be transferred to the airport for your departure flight.

End of services.

The above is a sample itinerary which covers the highlights and also takes you off the beaten path. We would be happy to discuss your individual travel preferences and amend the itinerary accordingly.

Pricing is dependent on your choice of accommodations, time of the year that you will be traveling, the final itinerary, and the number of people in your group.

Should you wish to discuss your individual travel plans to Turkey please do feel free to reach to us via e-mail at info@authenticasia.net or by phone at 1. 888.586.9958.

