

Footsteps of Saint Paul (15 nights/16 days)

Key Information Tour Duration: 15 nights / 16 days Days of Operation: Private Tour Destination(s): Turkey Hotel's Class: 5, 4, 3 Stars Hotel or Tourist Class Season: All Year Airfare Included: No Tour Customizable: No
*Overnight Place:

3 nights Istanbul, 2 nights Adana, 1 night Cappadocia, 1 night Konya, 2 nights Antalya, 1 night Pamukkale, 1 night Kusadasi, 2 night Izmir, 1 night Ayvalik, 1 night Bursa

With his vigour to spread the Gospel, St. Paul spent most of his Christian life traveling over thousands of miles by land and sea, encountering endless difficulties. Most of these journeys were done in the lands of present day Turkey for a multiple of reasons. The main reason was that Anatolia and the states therein were culturally, commercially and intellectually so advanced that, Christianity's acceptance here would mean a speedier spread throughout Anatolia. In order to reach the people, St. Paul had to travel through Anatolia extensively. Another reason may be the state of moral deterioration existing among the pagan world of ancient Anatolia, which was ripe and ready to accept new philosophies, religions and doctrines. No doubt these journeys were a great hardship for St. Paul who had to cover most of the area on foot, spending most of his nights outside in bitter cold or hot temperatures. Our journey through the same routes will not be as difficult.

Tour Itinerary:

Day 1: Istanbul. Arrival at Istanbul airport, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Overnight. (D). Day 2: Istanbul. Following the breakfast we drive to the 'Old City', we will stop by the Hippodrome before proceeding to the Blue Mosque, so called because of the impressive blue tiles lining its walls. Next on our itinerary is the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts. Then we will go into the St. Sophia Museum. Following this stop, we will go onto the Underground Cistern built by Justinian in 535, and on to the Suleymaniye Mosque built by the Master Architect Sinan during the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent, the Lawgiver. Dinner will be at a night spot which features live music and Folklore Show. Overnight in Istanbul. (B/D). Day 3: Adana.

We will take the early flight to Adana, ancient Cilicia, and drive straight to Tarsus, the birth place of St. Paul. During St. Paul's time Tarsus was a university city surpassing Athens and Alexandria. Cicero was a governor here in 51-50 BC. and the romantic meeting between Cleopatra and Mark Anthony took place in Tarsus. Highlights here will be St. Paul's well, tomb of Sardanapulus and Cleopatra's Gate. Back to Adana for dinner and overnight. (B/D). Day 4: Adana. Today we journey East to Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Daphne and Seleucia Pieria. Antioch is thought to have been founded in 300 BC. Among all the cities in the world of the first century AD. Antioch offered the most fertile ground for new ideas, philosophies and religions. First to preach here was St. Peter followed by St. Paul and Barnabas whose extensive efforts proved to be very fruitful for Christianity. Incidentally, the word Christians was first coined in Antioch. The strong and wealthy community of Antioch contributed financially to the Christian community of Jerusalem. Highlights include the museum which houses a superb collection of mosaics from Antioch, Daphne and Seleucia Pieria, St. Peter's Grotto, the cave church came to be known as the meeting place of the early Christians. According to the legend, ancient Daphne was the sacred grove where Apollo tried to rape a nymph of the same name whom Eros struck with an arrow thus making her incapable of loving neither a god nor a mortal. Apart from being dedicated to Apollo, Daphne was also a place of carnal pleasures and any soldier caught in the area was dismissed from service.

The next site we will visit today is Seleucia Pieria which was the port city of Antioch in ancient days. The most interesting monument here is the Tunnel of Titus which is a tremendous canal dug for the purpose of diverting waters of Orontes river. Another highlight here will be the rock tombs with their impressive facades pertaining to the Hellenistic period. Return to Adana for overnight. (B/D). Day 5: Cappadocia. After an early breakfast we drive north to Cappadocia and first stop at Derinkuyu. This is an underground city, carved into soft rocks resembling a huge labyrinth of tunnels, rooms, kitchens, wine cellars and passageways. A huge chimney ventilates this 8-leveled dwelling which was used by Christians hiding from their Roman and Byzantine persecutors. Their colorful frescoes remain as vibrant as when they were first made.

Further on we come to Cappadocia whose effect on the visitor is like that of a village out of Grimm's Fairy Tales. What Turks commonly call "Fairy Chimneys" are jutting pieces of volcanic rocks that have been beaten and shaped by the wind and rain. Highlights will be The Apple Church, The Church of St. John the Baptist and the Church with a Buckle in Goreme. Dinner at hotel and overnight. (B/D). Day 6: Konya. Right after breakfast, we begin our drive to Konya or ancient Uconium which became an important Christian city following St. Paul's preaching. A Phrygia legend says that Konya was the first city to be founded after the flood. St. Paul and Barnabas came here in 47 A.D. and their preaching was accompanied by many miracles. St. Paul made two more stops here on his second and third journeys. Today's Konya is quite new but the center of the city is very old. Overnight in Konya. (B/D). Day 7: Antalya. Early morning we will drive to Psidian Antioch (Yalvac) where St. Paul opened Christianity to the world. Yalvac's history goes back to 280 B.C. During St. Paul's time the population was a mixture of Jews, Romans and Greeks. Very little is left of Psidian Antioch today. There is the propylaea of the acropolis with a number of carved stones and the remains of a Byzantine church. We pass

by Egirdir Lake and arrive in Antalya for overnight. (B/D).Day 8: Antalya (Perge-Aspendos-Side).Ruins of Perge are 18 kms to the northeast of Antalya. This is where St. Paul began preaching after arriving from Cyprus. Highlights are, the Gymnasium, the Bath, the Agora, the Theater, the Stadium and the Hellenistic Gate. Another one of the Pamphilian cities is Aspendus. The Theater is the best preserved in the world with its incredible acoustics. Today's Side is built exactly on top of the ancient city. Side means "pomegranate" and this fruit has been depicted in the coinage found in the area. The highlights here will be the Temples of Athena and Apollo, the State Agora, the Theater and the Museum. Overnight in Antalya. (B/D).Day 9: Pamukkale (Laodicea-Hierapolis).

We leave our hotel early in the morning and drive to Hierapolis but before we get here we stop at Laodicea. We find here two Theaters, a large Stadium, a Water Tower and an Odeon. The city is supposed to have been named by Antiochus II in honor of his wife, Laodicea. St. Paul wrote a letter to the church here (Acts:4:16).

We arrive in Hierapolis which was founded by Pergamon king Telephos and named after his wife Hiera. Most likely, the very large Jewish element in this city was an important factor in the rapid expansion of Christianity. During the Byzantine period the city became the seat of diocese with a large Christian Church dedicated to St. Philip, martyred here in 80 A.D. Highlights include the Roman Baths, the Temple of Apollo and the Theater. Overnight at Pamukkale. (B/D).Day 10: Kusadasi.We start early as we will see four sights today. Closeby Hierapolis is the beautiful ancient site of Aphrodisias . This ancient city of learning, fine arts and sculpture has provided us with exquisite pieces of work which are on display on the site. Its Stadium is among the best-preserved in the world. The "Bishops Palace", Odeon and the Theater will be the highlights here. Our next stop Didyma served as a religious sanctuary to god Apollo. Oracular inscriptions in Didyma indicate dates as far back as 6th cent.B.C. Legend tells us that with the arrival of Alexander the Great, the sacred spring of the Temple which had dried up began to flow again. Highlights will be the Temple of Apollo. Further north we arrive at Miletus whose history dates back to 800 B.C. Famous Philosopher Thales comes from Miletus and he is credited with the theory that all things come from water. Highlights here are the Theater, Baths of Faustina and the Council Chamber. Next on our itinerary is Priene with its well planned streets and graceful buildings and temples. Highlights will be the Agora, the Ecclesiasterium and the Temple of Athena Polias. Overnight at Kusadasi. (B/D).Day 11: Izmir (Ephesus).

On our way to Izmir this morning we will stop by the famous city of Ephesus. Our tour will begin with the Basilica of St. John "the Evangelist" who came here with the Virgin Mary and wrote his Gospel in Ephesus. The Temple of Artemis, considered as on the Seven Wonders of the World, was located here.

Ephesus as you will see, is in very good state of preservation and the overall existing view of this ancient city will make it evident that she was a wealthy cultural and commercial center in the past. St. Paul's preaching in the area resulted with the uproar of the Guild of Silversmiths and eventually the whole population of Ephesus. Highlights include the Library of Celcius, the Temple of Hadrian, the Fountain of Trojan, the Brothel and the Theater. We will also stop by the House of Virgin Mary nearby, where she is reputed to have spent her last years and died. You will be able to collect some holly water from the Sacred Spring. Overnight in Izmir. (B/D).Day 12: Izmir (Sardis).We drive to Sardis whose history dates back to 12th cent. B.C. Sardis felt the influence of Christianity very early and was included in the Seven Churches of the Apocalypse. During the Byzantine times it was the seat of a bishopric. Highlights will be a Synagogue, Gymnasium, Byzantine Church and the Temple of Artemis. We will then proceed to Thyateria or Akhisar, which was another one of the towns where Christianity spread quickly. It was the site for one of the Churches of Revelation. We will see another one in Izmir, when we drive back for overnight. (B/D).Day 13: Ayvalik.On our way to Ayvalik this morning we will stop by hauntingly beautiful Pergamon which rises high on a hill as one nears the city of Bergama. Being one of the richest and most powerful of kingdoms of the ancient world, one look will tell you it still retains its past grandeur even in its shattered yet dignified present state. Highlights will include the Altar of Zeus, Temple of Trojan and the Theater. Coming down the mountain we will stop by Asclepion, a leading health center of the ancient world where methods of treatment included music therapy and barefoot walking. Overnight in Ayvalik. (B/D).Day 14: Bursa (Troas-Assos).

We leave our hotel and proceed to Troas and Assos before heading towards Bursa. Troas was a busy port situated on the north-west coast of Asia Minor. Recent excavations revealed a dozen different cities covering 3000 years of human occupation. During his stay in Troas, St. Paul had a dream in which he saw a vision of a man asking him to "Come over to Macedonia and help us" after which he decided to go to Europe. All in all, he stopped and preached here 3 times. Assos perched high on a cliff overlooking the Aegean and the Island of Lesbos is breathtaking. Its Acropolis carries the impressive Temple of Athena. Arriving at Assos on foot from Troas, St. Paul preached here and climbed down to the little port on the shore to board the boat on his return journey to Jerusalem. Overnight in Bursa. (B/D).Day 15: Istanbul (Iznic/Nicea).After the breakfast, we will visit the Yesil Cami (Green Mosque) and the Yesil Turbe (Green Tomb). The Ulu Mosque is completely Seljuk in style, a big rectangular building with immense portals and a forest of supporting columns inside. After a stop at the Ottoman House Museum, we leave Bursa behind us and drive to Nicea.

The city was founded around 1000 B.C. In 325, the First Ecumenical Council was held here for the purpose of condemning the heresy of Arianism. The Seventh Ecumenical Council was also held here in the St. Sophia Church, which we will visit first. The church was built in the 4th century and has a mosaic floor which dates to the 6th century. All gates and walls date from the Byzantine times. We proceed to Istanbul and check into our hotel. (B/D).Day 16:

Departure.Transfer following the breakfast. (B).

Notes:Airfare is not included in the tour price.

(B), (L), (D); B= Breakfast, L= Lunch, D= Dinner

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