Ancient Turkey escorted small group history Tour

06 Sep 19 to 27 Sep 19

Ancient Turkey – cradle of civilisation.

Odyssey Traveller’s Ancient Turkey escorted small group history tour visits some of the most spectacular, varied, and historically important sites in the ancient world. This escorted program begins and ends in Istanbul – the place where east meets the west on the Bosporus. Odyssey’s Ancient Turkey escorted small group history tour is suitable for mature and senior travellers program joining as a
couple or as individual traveller.

Over 21 days our terrific local guides will share with you both the ancient and contemporary history of this incredibly diverse nation. The tour stops in nine key places that have played pivotal roles in the development of Turkey. Typically we stay at each destination between 1 to 4 nights before travelling to our next point of interest.

**This tour of Ancient Turkey visits numerous World Heritage sites**

The program takes in many of the most famous sites of the ancient world. Istanbul is one of the worlds oldest cities and has been at the centre of civilisation for centuries. You will see the Greek theatres in Pergamon, the legendary cities of Greco-Roman cities of Troy and Ephesus, and discover the cultural centres of Ankara and Izmir.

In Antalya we take time to relax. This is the major city of the Anatolian Mediterranean. In Konya, we learn about the mystic Whirling Dervishes. Our Turkey small group tour also includes a visit to the extraordinary limestone formations of Pamukkale, as well as the underground cities and cave churches in Cappadocia. We also have the opportunity to interact with the locals, and experience first-hand their culture, cuisine, and traditions.

A large part of our Turkey small group tour program is spent in Anatolia, the larger Asian part of Turkey. This tour also spends time on the Gallipoli Peninsula and in Istanbul, the European part of the country known as Thrace. During the entire program, a local English speaking guide will accompany the group alongside your Odyssey Traveller Australia Program Leader. Accommodation during the
program is be in quality 4 star hotels with private facilities.

For more details, click the ‘Top 5’ or ‘Itinerary’ buttons above! If you’re keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.

Tour Notes

- Itineraries may change if flight schedules, site availability, and other inclusions have to be amended prior to departure.
- Group size limited to 16.

Top 5

1. Experience the revered Gallipoli Peninsula.
2. Visit the legendary city of Troy, famous from the Trojan War to the Iliad.
3. Explore Istanbul, one of the world’s oldest and most intriguing cities.
4. See the cascading, calcium-coated mineral baths of Pamukkale.
5. Take a trip to the seat of Turkish culture in Ankara, which is renowned for Angora wool.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Istanbul

Overview: We will come to the hotel individually and have a welcome briefing and dinner.

Accommodation: 4 nights at Dosso Dosi Hotel or similar.
Day 2

Locations: Istanbul

Overview: Today we will take a field trip to discover the ancient treasures of Istanbul, the sprawling metropolis where Europe and Asia collide. The city has a rich and textured history that dates back over 3000 years. Originally named Lygos, it was colonised by the Greeks in the 7th century BC, and was known as Byzantium until AD 330, when it was made the new capital of the Roman Empire and renamed Constantinople. The city grew to be the largest in the western world during late antiquity. After the Muslim conquest in 1453, Constantinople became the capital of the Ottoman Empire. It was finally renamed Istanbul when the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923. Today we visit the Hippodrome Square, built by the Romans in the 2nd century AD as the site of horse racing and chariot racing. It was the centre of the city’s social life during the Byzantine period. We then visit the Hagia St Sophia Church, constructed by Byzantine Emperor Justinian I in 1532 and considered the pinnacle of Byzantine architecture. It was the world's largest cathedral for over a thousand years. Over the centuries it has served as a Greek Orthodox Church, a Roman Catholic cathedral and an imperial mosque. Finally we visit the Blue Mosque, a beautiful structure built between 1609 and 1616 by Sultan Ahmed during the Ottoman reign to house his tomb. The Mosque features six spectacular minarets, the culmination of two centuries of Ottoman mosque development. We return to our hotel in time for dinner.

Accommodation: Dosso Dossi hotel or similar.
Day 3

Locations: Istanbul

Overview: After breakfast, we will visit Topkapi Palace, a 15th century structure built not long after the Muslim conquest to house the Ottoman sultans. Next we head to the Grand Bazaar, one of the largest and oldest markets in the world. Another relic of the Ottoman conquest, the Bazaar was originally constructed as part of an initiative to stimulate economic activity in Constantinople. Its earliest trade was in textiles and jewels. Finally, before returning to our hotel, we visit the Underground Cistern Basilica, the largest of the several hundred cisterns that lie beneath the city. Originally built in the 6th century AD, the cistern was repeatedly renovated and eventually provided water to many of the city’s grand buildings, including the Great Palace of Constantinople and the Topkapi Palace.

Accommodation: Dosso Dossi hotel or similar.

Day 4

Locations: Istanbul

Overview: This morning we will take a cruise along the Bosporus, the narrow stretch of water that connects the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. Along the coast there are many beautiful waterfront houses, most of which were built during the Ottoman period. The Bosporus and the Dardanelles form the Turkish Straits, separating Asian Turkey from European Turkey. As part of the only sea route between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, the Straits have been commercially and militarily important for millennia. Their significance was one of the main reasons the Romans chose to build their new capital there in 330 AD. On this cruise we will view both the
European and Asian shores of modern day Istanbul.

**Accommodation:** Dosso Dossi hotel or similar

**Day 5**

**Locations:** Istanbul – Ankara

**Overview:** This morning we will leave Istanbul and head to Hattusa, the capital of the Hittite Empire during the late Bronze Age. Settlement on the site dates back over 6000 years. The Hittites established their empire in Anatolia around 1600 BC. They constructed huge fortifications around Hattusa, and our first stop is at the Lion’s Gate, one of only six passages into the ancient city. The gate gets its name from the two lions on either side of it, carved out of huge blocks of stone, and intended to scare away evil spirits from the city. Our next stop is at the Tunnel King’s Gate, or 'gate in the ground', a 70 metre long passageway underneath the city walls. We then visit the Citadel, which served as the seat of the Hittite kings. Situated at the highest point of the ancient city, it offers stunning views of the surrounding landscape. Finally, we visit the Grand Temple. Built in the 14th century BC, the temple stood as a dedication to the Hittite gods, and only rulers and priests were granted entry. We then drive on to Ankara to our hotel in time for dinner.

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at Movenpick hotel Ankara or similar.

**Day 6**

**Locations:** Ankara

**Overview:** Today we explore Ankara, the ancient capital of the modern day Republic of Turkey. Ankara was the headquarters of Kemal Ataturk’s Turkish nationalist movement, who sought to wrest
control of Anatolia from the victorious Allies after the First World War. After the Turkish War of Independence, Ankara replaced Constantinople as the capital of the new Republic of Turkey. The city is divided between old and new sections. The old section features many Byzantine, Roman and Ottoman buildings. We visit the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, which houses an impressive collection of Anatolian archaeology, including many gold, silver, bronze and marble works dating back to the first millennium BC. We also visit the Mausoleum of Kemal Ataturk, a spectacular structure built to house the tomb of the founder of modern Turkey. We then have the remainder of the day free to explore Ankara at our own leisure.

**Accommodation:** Movenpick hotel Ankara or similar.

**Day 7**

**Locations:** Ankara - Cappadocia

**Overview:** This morning we depart for Cappadocia, a beautiful, otherworldly region of central Turkey. It was once the homeland of the Bronze Age Hittites, who knew it as Hatti. Later it was ruled by Persian kings, Romans and Ottomans. The area contains several underground cities, once used as refuges by persecuted Christians and ancient cave dwellers. However, Cappadocia’s most arresting attractions are its ‘fairy chimneys’, large rock spires that rise from the earth like mushrooms, formed over millions of years by the erosion of volcanic rock. We arrive at our hotel in time for dinner.

**Accommodation:** 3 nights at Alfina Cave Hotel or similar
Day 8

**Locations:** Cappadocia

**Overview:** Early this morning there is an optional hot air balloon excursion. We will enjoy spectacular 360 degree views of the rugged, moon-like landscape. We visit Goreme Open Air Museum, a vast complex of ancient monasteries carved into the rocky landscape. Once a Byzantine monastic settlement, by the 17th century it had become an important pilgrimage site. We then head to Love Valley, euphemistically named for its distinctive rock structures. Finally we visit Uchisar, a natural citadel full of stairs, tunnels and passages, located at the highest point in Cappadocia. The top of Uchisar Castle provides a fantastic view of the surrounding region.

**Accommodation:** Alfina Cave Hotel or similar.

Day 9

**Locations:** Cappadocia

**Overview:** Today we visit more breathtaking Cappadocian landscapes. After breakfast we head to the Kiliclar Valley, which features some of the most beautiful rock structures in all of Cappadocia. We then move on the Pasabag, where giant pillar-like fairy chimneys rise from the earth. Sometimes known as Monks Valley, its chimneys once housed hermits who sought to distance themselves from the world. On our way back to the hotel we visit Pigeon Valley, named for the many pigeon houses carved into the rocks. Pigeons were once used in the region as message carriers, though few remain today.

**Accommodation:** Alfina Cave Hotel or similar.
Day 10

Locations: Cappadocia - Konya

Overview: This morning we drive to Asikli Hoyuk. This ancient site was first settled during the Neolithic period, at around 9000 BC. Its residents lived in semi-subterranean, oval-shaped houses made from mud brick. The site is an important example of the historical shift from nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyles to more permanent villages, which ultimately led to animal domestication and farming. After lunch we head to Ilhara Gorge, a 100m deep canyon formed over thousands of years by the Melendiz River. It is estimated that around 80 000 people once lived in the Ilhara Valley. These days it is one of the best hiking spots in Turkey. Finally, we stop in at Derinkuyu, the largest underground city in Turkey - big enough to have sheltered 20 000 people and their livestock. The city was originally constructed in prehistoric times, and completed in the Byzantine era when it was used as a refuge during the Arab-Byzantine wars. We end the day in Konya, a city in central Anatolia known as a pilgrimage destination for Sufis.

Accommodation: 1 night at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Konya – Antalya

Overview: In the morning we visit the Mevlana Museum in Konya. The museum is the mausoleum of Rumi, a 13th century Persian Sufi mystic, poet and Islamic scholar. His ‘Masnavi’, written in the city of Konya, is thought to be one the greatest poems in the Persian language. We then stop at the Karatay Museum, a madrasa built in 1251 by the Emir of Konya in honour of the Suljuk sultan. The museum is known for its Seljuk period ceramics. Next we drive via
the spectacular Lake District, featuring some of the largest freshwater lakes in Turkey. Our last stop is at the Eflatun Pinar temple (‘Plato’s spring’), an idyllic stone pool monument built by the Bronze Age Hittites. Finally we drive to Antalya and arrive at our hotel in time for dinner.

**Accommodation:** 3 nights at Alp Pasa Hotel or similar.

**Day 12**

**Locations:** Antalya

**Overview:** Today we have a full-day field trip to two ancient Anatolian cities. The first, Perge, was one of the most important cities in the premodern civilisation of Pamphylia. The earliest traces of continuous settlement in the city date back three millennia. After initially coming under Persian influence, the city fell to the armies of Alexander the Great in 334 BC. Its most famous resident was the Greek mathematician and astronomer Apollonius. In 188 BC Perge came under Roman rule, and rose to become one of the greatest cities in Asia Minor. The city’s ruins include a theatre, a temple and a palaestra. Perge’s acropolis dates back to the Bronze Age. The second city we visit is Aspendos, another Greco-Roman stronghold in ancient Pamphylia. Aspendos is famous for having one of the best preserved theatres of antiquity. Built in 155 AD by the Greek architect Zenon, it provided seating for up to 12,000 spectators. The city boasts a basilica, and 15km of a Roman aqueduct. It was one also one of the first cities to issue coins, a practice that began around 500 BC. After Aspendos we return to our hotel for dinner.

**Accommodation:** Alp Pasa Hotel or similar.
Day 13

Locations: Antalya

Overview: Today we take a morning visit to the award-winning open air Antalya Archaeological Museum. The museum is one of the largest in Turkey, displaying over 5000 pieces of art and archaeological objects. Antalya is one of the most fertile archaeological regions in the world, with many sites boasting evidence of uninterrupted occupation from earliest man to modern times. After we finish at the museum we drive south to the picturesque coastal city of Kemer, from where we will take a leisurely half-day cruise around the local bays. There will be an opportunity to go for a swim in the beautiful blue waters of the Mediterranean. We then return to our hotel for dinner.

Accommodation: Alp Pasa Hotel or similar.

Day 14

Locations: Antalya – Pamukkale

Overview: This morning we depart Antalya for the world heritage site of Hierapolis-Pamukkale. Pamukkale, meaning 'cotton castle' in English, is a remarkable natural site famous for its dazzling thermal pools. Thick white layers of travertine and limestone cascade down the hillside, the result of the mineral-laden underground hot water springs in the area. Calcium deposits from the springs' water created these white waterfalls over thousands of years. We visit the thermal spa of Hierapolis, established by the kings of Pergamon in the 2nd century BC.

Accommodation: 1 night at Pam Thermal hotel or similar.
Day 15

Locations: Pamukkale – Kusadasi

Overview: This morning we drive to Aphrodisias, named after Aphrodite (or Venus), the Greek goddess of love. In Roman times, Aphrodisias was famous for its sculptures and the sculptors who made them. White and blue grey marble was quarried in large quantities from the slopes around the city. The city was destroyed by a large earthquake in the 7th century. A highlight of the visit is the stadium, which once seated over 30,000 people and is the best-preserved of its period in the world. We will also see the Hadrian Baths, erected in honour of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, who visited the city while travelling through Anatolia. Other attractions include the theatre, the agora (Greek for ‘gathering place’ or ‘assembly’) and the Archaeological Museum - where many Aphrodite statues are on display. We arrive back at our hotel with plenty of time for dinner.

Accommodation: 2 nights at Efe Boutique Hotel or similar.

Day 16

Locations: Kusadasi

Overview: Today we visit the picturesque rural Turkish village of Sirince, nestled at the top of a mountain and surrounded by peach trees and vineyards. We will visit some local houses to gain an understanding of life in a typical Turkish village. We will watch the local women cooking their traditional cheese pastry and stroll through the small open-air bazaar. We then return to to our hotel in Kusadasi, a beach town on Turkey’s Aegean coast.

Accommodation: Efe Boutique Hotel or similar.
Day 17

Locations: Kusadasi – Izmir

Overview: This morning we head for Ephesus, the most important Greek city in Asia Minor and a cradle of early Christianity. It once housed over 200,000 residents, making it the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. There we visit ancient Ephesus with its terrace houses, the Archaeological Museum, and the Temple of Artemis - one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. We also visit the Virgin Mary’s house and St. John’s Basilica, one of the seven churches of the revelation. We continue on to our hotel in Izmir.

Accommodation: 3 nights at Blanca Hotel or similar.

Day 18

Locations: Izmir

Overview: Today we will drive to Sardis, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia and one of the most important cities of the Persian and Roman empires. We start the day with a visit to the Artemis Temple and the oldest synagogue of the ancient world, which became a gymnasium during the Roman era. In the afternoon we visit the local museum and the Agora. Dinner tonight is at individual arrangements, with many delightful restaurants within easy walking distance of our hotel.

Accommodation: Blanca Hotel or similar.

Day 19

Locations: Izmir

Overview: Today we have a free day to explore at our leisure. Our hotel is located in the heart of Izmir, a lovely seaside area with many
attractions along the coast all within walking distance. Known as Smyrna in ancient times, it boasts 4000 years of recorded human history, and has since been occupied by the Greeks, the Romans and the Ottomans. Today it is the third most populous city in Turkey, after Istanbul and Ankara.

**Accommodation:** Blanca Hotel or similar.

**Day 20**

**Locations:** Izmir - Çanakkale

**Overview:** This morning we drive to Pergamon, a city built by one of the generals of Alexander the Great. We will view the Acropolis, the steepest theatre of the ancient world. We carry on to visit Asclepion, the ancient healing centre. Today, it is possible to see the ruins of the ancient healing centre and view the sites used for techniques such as Sacred Water, Herbs and Ointments, the Sun Bath, the Theatre for Music, and those used for social events. We carry on to ancient Troy where we will take in its legendary sights and view the replica of the wooden horse. Troy was the setting for the Trojan War, described in Homer's *Iliad*. We arrive at our Çanakkale hotel in time for dinner.

**Accommodation:** 1 night at Assos Dove Hotel or similar.

**Day 21**

**Locations:** Canakkale – Istanbul

**Overview:** From our hotel in Canakkale we board a ferryboat to cross the Dardanelles Straits. From here we head to the Gallipoli (Gelibolu) Peninsula and ANZAC Cove, the site of the epic eight-month military confrontation during the First World War. Following the shoreline of the Sea of Marmara, we arrive back in cosmopolitan
Istanbul. Tonight we come together for our farewell dinner.

**Accommodation:** 1 night at Dosso Dossi Hotel or similar

**Day 22**

**Locations:** Istanbul

**Overview:** The tour ends after breakfast.

**Accommodation:**

**Inclusions / Exclusions**

**What's included in our Tour**

- 21 of nights hotel accommodation.
- 21 breakfasts, 8 lunches, and 17 dinners.
- All sightseeing and field trips as indicated.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Touring by comfortable and modern coach.
- Service charges and gratuities.
- Services of a Tour Leader for the duration of the tour.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

**What's not included in our Tour**

- International airfares and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.
- Visa fees and visa assistance service.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.