

## Highlights Of Western Turkey

### **Day 1 London - Istanbul**

Fly from London to Istanbul. On arrival you will be met by your guide who will accompany you to the hotel. Istanbul is a city much immortalised in art and literature in its antiquity. Once we have settled into the hotel we will visit the Grand Bazaar, one of the oldest covered market places in the world. The Bazaar's labyrinth of tunnels contains over 4,000 shops where all kinds of carpets, trinkets, jewellery and clothes can be purchased.

### **Day 2 Istanbul – Overnight Train To Ankara**

Our sightseeing will begin at the Blue Mosque, which forms an impressive skyline. We then visit the Sunken Palace, a huge 6th century Byzantine cistern, before walking to Istanbul's first and greatest mosque. Hagia Sofia, originally a Christian basilica erected in 360 AD, is a thousand years older than St. Peter's in Rome. First a church, then a mosque and now a museum, it is considered to be the supreme masterpiece of Byzantine architecture. We will continue to the Topkapi Palace, an opulent preserve that was the imperial seat of the Ottoman Empire. The palace complex is surrounded by three miles of walls and is the oldest and largest palace in the world. We will walk through the back streets of Old Istanbul and visit the elegant little Sokullu Pasa mosque and the hidden underground Theodosian Cistern (or a visit to Suleymaniye Mosque may be made).

After dinner we take the overnight train with private couchettes to Ankara.  
(A flight the next morning can be substituted with a supplement.)

### **Day 3 Ankara - Cappadocia**

Ankara was once a Hitite town, then a Roman city, and now is the capital of the modern Turkey. After breakfast we will tour the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, one of the most important museums in the world, housed in a restored caravanserai, to explore its collections of artifacts for an in-depth introduction to Hattian, Hitite and Phrygian, Assyrian Civilizations, also seeing the excellent collection of relics dating from the Paleolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age excavated in the oldest towns of Anatolia. Our next visit is to the Mausoleum of Ataturk, founder of Modern Turkey.

After lunch drive across rolling wheat lands past ancient caravanserais to Cappadocia.

### **Day 4 Cappadocia**

We will undertake a full day tour of Cappadocia to enjoy the natural beauty and the cultural depth of this unique region, known for its bizarre landscape, underground cities, churches and dwellings carved from the soft volcanic rock. The fantasy landscape of Cappadocia is probably the best-known tourist attraction in inland Turkey. It is a remarkable region and geological wonderland created by the complex interaction of natural and human forces over vast spans of time. The history of Cappadocia (the land of beautiful horses) began in prehistoric times. Hatti settled in the region and created high level of civilizations during the Bronze Age, and in about the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C., the Hittites (Indo-European immigrations) came and settled in the region. Soon the Assyrians had established their trading posts. Phrygians probably ruled Cappadocia from 1250 B.C., but the Lydians were expelled by the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> C.B.C. In AD.17 the region became a Roman province, trade and military routes were built and urban centers and settlements were encouraged. As Asia Minor came under the Christian influence, the first Christian communities appeared in Cappadocia and those persecuted for their religious beliefs elsewhere sought refuge in the region. Cappadocia thus became a melting pot of a variety of ethnic groups, all of which have influenced the culture and religious beliefs.

It is very exciting to wander through the underground galleries of Kaymakli/ Derinkuyu where the first Christians hid themselves from their enemies for months at times of danger. Among the most extraordinary phenomena of Cappadocia region are the remains of underground settlements (cave constructions), some of them are large enough to have accommodated up to 30.000 people. Then we drive to Uchisar, whose citadel commands a breathtaking view of the Goreme Valley. Uchisar is an excellent place to get a first impression of Cappadocia's extraordinary

geology. It provides panoramic views of Cappadocian valleys and countryside. We will also visit the ancient monastic site of Goreme and the Open Air Museum, the best known and most visited site of all the monastic settlements in the Cappadocia region. This steep-sided little valley once housed a thriving monastic community, living and worshipping in houses and churches cut into the surrounding cliffs. It is also the largest of the religious complexes, and its churches contain some of the most fascinating of all the frescoes in Cappadocia. The frescoes in these churches, which date from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries are true masterpieces of Byzantine art. Our next visit is to the local handcraft centre to watch a demonstration of how the colourful local kilims, rugs and carpets that incorporate to the earth tones of the region are created, then we will visit the pottery town of Avanos.

#### **Day 5 Cappadocia – Konya - Pamukkale**

This morning we drive along the old trade (silk) route to Konya, visiting en route the 13<sup>th</sup> century Seljuk caravanserai, Sultan Han. Besides being a fine example of the Seljuk royal caravan lodging (inn) for travelers, it has been beautifully restored so it is easy to appreciate the architectural fine points. We will then continue to Konya, the oldest city of Turkey, the capital of the Seljuk Empire and home to the world-renowned sect of the Whirling Dervishes. In Konya we will tour Mevlana's Mausoleum, founder of the Whirling Dervishes. We then continue to Pamukkale

#### **Day 6 Pamukkale – Aphrodisias - Kusadasi**

This morning we will explore the ancient city of Hierapolis (Pamukkale) famous for its ruins, Roman theatre, ancient city, necropolis, and its spectacular white limestone cascaded terraces formed by hot mineral spring water.

We will then drive to Aphrodisias, one of the oldest cities of ancient Anatolia founded on the old silk road. Dedicated to the Goddess of love and beauty Aphrodite, it was the second cultural centre of the ancient world after Pergamum for its worldwide renowned school of sculpture, philosophy and medicine. We will explore the best preserved Roman stadium in Anatolia, the bath, double agora, charming Odeon and outstanding archeological museum. The tour continues to Kusadasi through the Meander Valley.

#### **Day 7 Kusadasi – Ephesus - Cannakale**

Today we drive to explore the world-renowned Greco-Roman city of Ephesus and its environs. Ephesus is one of the best-preserved ancient cities in the world. During the Roman era Ephesus was known worldwide as a city of trade, art, entertainment, banking and finance and was an extremely wealthy city. It was a dream city that everybody at the time wanted to see Ephesus at least once in his/her life. It was founded at the end of the old Silk Road, where the merchants from east and west used to meet and has always been coveted by different conquerors because of its location. First built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Ephesus was occupied by Lydians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Under Emperor Augustus, Ephesus reached its peak as the capital of the Roman Province of Asia Minor. It was one of the three largest cities with a population of 250.000.000 in the Roman Empire. Many different religions were practiced in Ephesus. In 53 A.D. St. Paul preached and attempted to spread Christianity in Ephesus. You will truly feel you have traveled back in time, as you stroll along the 2.000 year old marble streets such famous sites as the Agora, the Bath, the private (terrace) houses, the gymnasium, the library of Celcius, and the theatre. We will also visit the Temple of Artemis (one of the seven wonders of the world), the Basilica of St. John and the last earthly home of the Virgin Mary.

We continue our journey to Canakkale.

#### **Day 8 Troy - Istanbul**

Today we will continue to Troy to see the remains of the city immortalised in Homer's Iliad. The 10-year war finally ended when Greeks invaded Troy using the famous wooden horse. Excavations have unearthed nine cities or settlements, dating from 3000 B.C to 400 A. D. We then drive to Istanbul for our final evening in Turkey.

#### **Day 9 Fly Istanbul, To London**

Your enjoyable and rewarding tour will come to an end as your Guide accompanies you to the airport for the flight home.