Savor delicious Turkish cuisine and experience incomparable Turkish hospitality.

From its importance as the western terminus of the great Silk Road to its key political and cultural influence in the Eastern Mediterranean from the time of the Ottoman’s and Byzantine world, Turkey continues to be an important player at the crossroads of civilizations. Examine the country’s ancient and modern treasures, from the magnificent Blue Mosque in Istanbul to the Greco-Roman site of Ephesus, to its exciting cosmopolitan art enclaves. Then cruise the Mediterranean’s Turquoise Coast in privately chartered gulet yachts for five nights—with swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, and a full youth program on board. *

Travelers will also have the option of a four-night post-trip extension in Cappadocia and Ankara.

*The youth program will be determined by actual ages of registered guests and may include such activities as: keeping a journey log, knot-tying lessons, felt making, ancient and modern history, sea songs, and backgammon (a favorite table game in Turkey)

SCHEDULE BY DAY

**TUESDAY, JUNE 25**

DEPART THE U.S.

Depart the United States on independent overnight flights to Istanbul, Turkey.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26**

ARRIVE ISTANBUL

Upon arrival in Istanbul in the late afternoon, proceed to the arrival area where a local representative will meet you and assist you with your airport shuttle to your hotel.

In the evening gather in the hotel lobby for introductions followed by a welcome reception.

Overnight: Grand Hyatt or similar, Istanbul

**THURSDAY, JUNE 27**

ISTANBUL OLD CITY

After breakfast at the hotel, meet in the lobby in to begin touring.

The first visit is Topkapi Palace, the principal residence of the Ottoman Sultans from the 15th to the 19th century. The palace is now a museum and has unrivaled collections of jewelry, costumes, and ceramics. Also visit the Imperial Armory, displaying centuries of Ottoman weaponry. Perhaps the loveliest feature of Topkapi Palace are its courtyards' ancient trees; it is easy to imagine the sultan strolling here far from the cares of state and empire. Also visit the Byzantine Church of St. Irene, located in the first courtyard of Topkapi Palace.

After lunch at a local restaurant, continue to the Archaeological Museum, which includes the celebrated Alexander Sarcophagus. The adjacent Museum of the Ancient Orient has a remarkable collection of artifacts. A little-known museum without parallel in Europe or
the United States, the collection includes spectacular pieces from ancient Babylon, Persia, and Mesopotamia.

A leisurely walk brings you to the Hagia Sophia ("Divine Wisdom") Mosque*. Built in the 6th Century by the Emperor Justinian, this church turned mosque stands as a testament to the sophistication of the former Byzantine capital and influenced architecture in the medieval world for centuries. Its original design was supposedly created as a mirror image of the heavens.

Complete your tour at the Grand Bazaar. The Bazaar’s first phase of construction began in 1455 under Mehmet the Conqueror, but it was added to many times over the centuries. The result is an enormous labyrinth of covered streets lined with thousands of shops selling, for example, hand-woven carpets and kilims, gold and silver jewelry, hand-painted ceramics, leather goods, fine antiques, and illuminated manuscripts.

For the final stop of the day, drive to Karakoy pier to board your private boat for a sunset cruise on the Bosphorus—the best way to take in some of the most interesting sights in Istanbul, and an unforgettable excursion between two continents (Europe & Asia). The cruise takes you along the latest palaces of Ottomans, The Dolmabahce Palace, and Beylerbeyi, as well as 19th and 20th century beautiful wooden kiosks, mansions, and modern villas, which form the elegant section of the city.

Return to the hotel.

Overnight: Grand Hyatt or similar, Istanbul (B, L, R)

FRIDAY, JUNE 28
ISTANBUL

After breakfast and a morning lecture, depart to Historical Peninsula, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1986 that has been an important witness to world history—four major empires were ruled from this point.

Participate in a felt-making workshop with a Master Craftsman. The process of felt making is amongst the oldest and most basic forms of crafting textiles, done by hand in Turkish nomadic tribes. It is still practiced by nomadic people in Central Asia and northern parts of East Asia, where rugs, tents, and clothing are regularly made. Experience each stage of the process starting from wool—until you finish an item such as a coin purse or sunglass case.

Following the class visit the Hippodrome, the stadium of ancient Byzantium that held 100,000 spectators and featured objects from all corners of the empire. Of these, an Egyptian obelisk and a bronze sculpture of three entwined serpents from Delphi survive.

Continue to the Blue Mosque, one of the most important temples of worship in the world. It is named for the blue Iznik tile work that decorates its interior and its dome can be seen from all over the Sultanahmet district.

Walk to the Nakilbent Cistern, an amazing 6th-century Byzantine underground water tank beneath what is now an authentic Turkish handicraft shop. The cistern is used today as an exhibition and performing arts space. Watch a private whirling dervish performance for the group at the cistern.

In the evening, enjoy a traditional meyhane dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Grand Hyatt or similar, Istanbul (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, JUNE 29
DALAMAN / FETHIYE / EMBARK GULETS

Enjoy time at leisure until departure time for an afternoon flight to Dalaman. Upon arrival in Dalaman, transfer to Fethiye for a walking tour in the town. Embarkation for the gulets starts at 3pm.

Tonight, anchor either at the Aquarium Bay or Turunc Pınari Bay, depending on the weather and sea conditions.

Aquarium Bay is popular due to its crystal-clear water and colorful landscapes, likening it to an aquarium, hence the name. Boats and gulets from nearby harbors often come to swim and snorkel. The Bay is also quiet as there are no roads, although there are plenty of trails great for a hike.

Turunc Pınari Bay is one of the clearest and bluest bays of Fethiye. It is only accessible by boat and is considered a hidden paradise
nestled in the valley between the hills descending steeply to the sea.

Overnight: aboard *gulets* (B, D)

**SUNDAY, JUNE 30**
**HAMAM BAY (CLEOPATRA’S BATH)**

After breakfast, sail to the spectacularly stunning Bedri Rahmi Bay, named after a famous Turkish artist and one of the most important inlets of the gulf.

Continue to Hamam Bay, also referred to as Cleopatra’s Bath. Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen, was said to bathe here twice a week, even on her honeymoon. The volcanic structure of this cove gave warm water to a crater lake. Its name comes from the ruins of the Byzantine bath it hosts. It is also possible to snorkel to explore the ruins. Here you can also see a crater lake. The area covered with carob stems, clean sea and peaceful air is the coolest and furthest bay in Gocek.

As well as providing clear, natural waters, Hamam bay is also covered with greenery and pine trees, which makes hiking and exploring irresistible. Those who wish can see Cleopatra’s Sunken Baths and Greco-Roman ruins with a three-hour trail walk full of thyme, eucalyptus, pine, and oleander bushes. These blue-green waters that Cleopatra, the Last Queen of Egypt, visited and swam with the Roman Emperor Antonius, are as clear as glass.

Overnight accommodation in Hamam Bay

Overnight: aboard *gulets* (B, L, D)

**MONDAY, JULY 1**
**AGA LIMANI**

Move from Hamam Bay to Dis Gobun. After breakfast in Gobun Bay, set sail to the hidden Aga Bay of Aga Harbor.

Today is at leisure for swimming, kayaking, hiking, and sunbathing.

There is an underwater spring feeding the area, so the waters are clean and clear... and a bit cooler. If you are feeling up for another hike, there is a trail leading to the top of the plateau. While the climb is only about one kilometer, it is entirely uphill on loose stones, and takes about 30 minutes.

Overnight: aboard *gulets* (B, L, D)

**TUESDAY, JULY 2**
**EKINCIK COVE / KAUNOS**

This morning cruise to Lydae to visit the hilltop Roman and Byzantine ruins. Make a dry landing on a rocky, gravel beach and take a very rocky path leading steadily uphill for about 1 mile to the ruins and a lovely view.

Return to the gulets for lunch on board while cruising to Ekinic Cove, the only protected anchorage on this stretch of coast. There is a long sandy beach at Ekinic, which is one of the breeding grounds of the threatened Caretta Caretta turtles.

Cruise up the Dalyan River to the ancient site of Kaunos, an important seaport that dates to the 10th century B.C. Upon arrival at Kaunos, there is a dry landing onto a wooden deck. Depart by boat and cruise to a nearby viewpoint to see the impressive Lycian tombs carved into the cliff face above.

Drop anchor tonight near the mouth of the Dalyan River.

Overnight: aboard *gulets* (B, L, D)

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 3**
**KADIRGA COVE / MARMARIS**

Cruise toward Marmaris with stops to swim, snorkel, and kayak at Kadirga and Kumlubük Bays.

In the evening, gather for a farewell dinner on board.

Overnight: aboard *gulets* (B, L, D)

**THURSDAY, JULY 4**
**MARMARIS / DISEMBARK/ BODRUM**

After breakfast, disembark the gulets in Marmaris. Then drive to Bodrum (about 2.5 hours).
After lunch at a local restaurant, visit the Castle of St. Peter, jutting far off into the sea with colorful yachts and sailing vessels of all kinds docked right outside its walls. The towers and battlements of the castle dominate the town as a reminder of its storied past. It was built in the 1400’s by the Knights of St. John, who plundered the Mausoleum, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, for the marble and stones used in the construction of the castle.

Your last visit will be the Mausoleum. One of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Mausoleum was the greatest achievement of Carian King Mausolus, who moved his capital from Mylasa to Halicarnassus.

The evening is at leisure to dine at one of the many restaurants in Bodrum.

Overnight: Magna Manastir or similar, Bodrum (B, L)

FRIDAY, JULY 5
BODRUM / EPHESUS / KUSADASI

After breakfast depart to Kusadasi (approximately 2.5 hours).

Enroute visit Ephesus, one of the most beautiful cities of the ancient world. Much has been done to restore the white marble streets, theaters, baths, gymnasium, market, and beautifully carved library.

Also visit to the House of Virgin Mary where, according to legend, she spent her last years.

After lunch at a nearby restaurant, tour the Ephesus Archeological Museum in Selcuk.

Continue to Kusadasi in time for dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Charisma Hote or similar, Kusadasi (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, JULY 6
KUSADASI

Enjoy a day in Guzelcamli National Park with options to bike, hike, or kayak. After a swim from the beach and a picnic lunch return to Kusadasi.

Celebrate with a farewell outdoor barbeque dinner with views of the sea.

Overnight: Charisma Hote or similar, Kusadasi (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, JULY 7
DEPART FOR U.S. OR OPTIONAL POST-TOUR EXTENTION TO CAPPADOCIA

After breakfast, transfer to the Izmir airport for your 1-hour flight to Istanbul.

From there, travelers either make international connections to return home or connect on a domestic flight for the optional extension to Cappadocia.

(B)

**IMPORTANT NOTES**

Regarding the Hagia Sophia: Since 2022, Hagia Sophia has been a practicing mosque. There are no special permissions for private openings. There is no entrance fee, but the line to enter is usually very long almost every day. Regardless of how long you wait in line, you are usually allowed only 15–20 minutes with no permission to visit the upper gallery, which has been kept closed since its conversion.

If the line is too long to enter Hagia Sophia, the narration will be made from the outside and you will have the option to return in the evening after the Bosphorus cruise on your own when there is less activity.

Regarding the gulet cruise: The route mentioned above is not fixed and may be changed according to the weather or circumstances. The captain reserves the right to make necessary changes to the tour itinerary to ensure the safety and comfort of our guests. Nonetheless, throughout the journey, history, nature and the crystal-clear sea will be with you.