Begin your 15-day journey in Istanbul, Turkey’s cultural and spiritual heart. The city astonishes with its legendary Blue Mosque, Hagia Sofia, and Topkapi Palace, one of the world’s richest museums. Take a private cruise on the Bosphorus, the waterway that separates Europe from Asia. Discover secluded coves and hidden sights that few visitors see, including the Sunken Baths of Cleopatra. Enjoy opportunities for swimming, snorkeling, and hiking on this “Blue Voyage.” Travel to the seaside city of Antalya, visit the acclaimed Archaeological Museum and the ruins at Perge, an ancient Greek city. Explore the bizarre rock formations and underground cities of Cappadocia and the Goreme Valley, and Ankara, Turkey’s capital on an optional 5-day/4-night post-tour extension.

STUDY LEADER: To be announced

GROUP SIZE: 12-28 guests

PRICING: Based on per person double occupancy

- $4,992 per person double occupancy from BOS, JFK, HOU
  ($4,595 air & land inclusive plus $397 airline taxes and departure fees)

- $4,195 per person double occupancy Land Only

- $995 single supplement

POST TOUR CAPPADOCIA & ANKARA OPTIONAL EXTENSION PRICING:

- $995 per person double occupancy 5 days/4 nights

- $195 single supplement
SCHEDULE BY DAY
B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner, R=Reception

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3
DEPART U.S. FOR ISTANBUL, TURKEY

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4
ARRIVE ISTANBUL

After arriving in Istanbul, meet your tour director and transfer to the hotel located near Taksim Square, the heart of modern Istanbul. Please note that as guests' arrival times may vary greatly (from midday to late afternoon), no group activities or meals have been planned for this day. You are free to explore the area around the hotel or simply relax after your overseas flights. Dinner tonight is on your own.

Overnight: Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5
ISTANBUL

It's your first full day in Istanbul, and there's much on the agenda. This legendary city, divided by the Bosphorus, separates Europe from Asia, and makes this a place where East and West meet in a fascinating melding of cultures. On this morning's tour set out for a short walk along lively, pedestrian Istiklal Street, lined with boutiques, galleries, restaurants, and late Ottoman-era buildings. Then travel across the Golden Horn to see the acclaimed mosaics and frescoes at Kariye Museum (formerly the Chora Byzantine church), having the opportunity to view Istanbul's old city walls along the way. Drive to the Spice Bazaar area, overlooking the Golden Horn, to visit Rustem Pasha, a small, intimate mosque with exquisite Iznik tiles set in beautiful floral and geometric designs. From Rustem Pasha take a short walk to Istanbul's renowned Spice Bazaar, with exotic spices, nuts, and dried fruits from around the world. After lunch on your own here, take a private cruise on the Bosphorus, the waterway that separates Europe from Asia. Late afternoon, return to the hotel; and then this evening take a short walk to a local restaurant for a welcome dinner of traditional Turkish fare.

Overnight: Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus (B, D)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6
ISTANBUL

This morning cross over Galata Bridge, which spans the Golden Horn, and tour Old Istanbul, home of splendid mosques and magnificent palaces. First stop here: the ancient Roman Hippodrome with its 3,500-year-old obelisk brought from Egypt in 390 CE, where chariot races once took place. Continue on to the marvelous Blue Mosque, topped by six slender minarets. Inside is one of the world's great collections of blue Iznik tiles (20,000 of them), along with 260 stained glass windows. You then visit the renowned Museum of Turkish & Islamic Art, housing priceless artifacts from the 8th to 20th centuries. After enjoying lunch at a local restaurant continue on to famed Hagia Sophia, which was the world's grandest cathedral when it was built in 537 CE; it was converted into a mosque in the 15th century and is now a museum. Return to the hotel late afternoon; the remainder of the evening is free. Dinner tonight is on your own.

Overnight: Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus / (B, L)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7
ISTANBUL

On this morning's tour visit splendid Topkapi Palace, dramatically set on a promontory with remarkable views over the Bosphorus. This vast palace, the home of Ottoman sultans, once housed as many as 4,000 royals, courtiers, and hangers-on. Among other magnificent artifacts on display here you see priceless paintings, jewel-encrusted swords, and delicate porcelains. Then visit the Basilica Cistern, built by Emperor Justinian in 532 CE, the marble-
columined underground chamber that provided water to Istanbul in antiquity. Fed by nearly 12 miles of aqueducts and supported by 336 columns, the cistern once held more than 21 million gallons of water. Next stop is the vast Grand Bazaar, one of the world’s largest covered markets with some 5,000 shops and stalls selling goods of all kinds, including jewelry, pottery, leather, and Turkish delicacies. The remainder of the afternoon and evening is free for independent exploration; you have your choice of many excellent restaurants for lunch and dinner on your own.

Overnight: Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus / (B)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8
ISTANBUL/GALLIPOLI/TROY/ASSOS

Rise early to begin a full day of travel to the northern Aegean Coast for a brief visit of Gallipoli, where in 1915 Allied troops faced the Turkish army led by Lieutenant-Colonel Mustafa Kemal, also known as Ataturk, the man who later became the leader of modern Turkey. Large numbers of casualties were suffered here, and pay respects to those who gave their lives as you visit ANZAC Beach Cemetery. Then travel across the Straits of the Dardanelles to Troy, once believed to have existed only in Homer’s epic poem. But Heinrich Schliemann discovered the real Troy in the 1870s; indeed, excavations have revealed the remnants of at least nine civilizations here dating back 5,000 years. After an exploration of the ruins and relics here, continue on to Behramkale, ancient Assos, where you will spend the night. Dinner tonight is at the hotel.

Please note: Because of the Nazlihan Hotel’s small rooms and limited space, in addition to your one piece of checked luggage you will need to bring a smaller, soft-sided “carry” bag for your overnight stay in Assos. This additional bag should be small and flexible enough to fit inside your checked luggage.

Overnight: Nazlihan Hotel (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9
ASSOS/PERGAMUM/IZMIR

This morning depart for Pergamum, once one of the richest small kingdoms in Asia Minor, which housed one of the world’s largest collections of books. Visit the magnificent Acropolis, which contains the ruins of Pergamum’s acclaimed 200,000-volume library, so large it challenged the world’s greatest library in Alexandria, Egypt. In fact, the Egyptians were so afraid that Pergamum would attract scholars away from Alexandria that they cut off the area’s supply of papyrus, forcing the invention of pergamen (Latin for parchment) made from animal hides rather than papyrus reed. Along with the library, the Acropolis also boasts a great theater seating 10,000 and the marble-columned Temple of Trajan.

Below the theater lie the ruins of the Temple of Dionysus along with the Altar of Zeus, in a marvelous setting shaded by evergreen trees. Much of Pergamum has been lovingly restored; it is now considered one of the premier ancient sites in Turkey. After enjoying lunch in a typical Turkish kebab restaurant, continue on to Asclepieum, a sanctuary and healing center built in the 4th century BCE in the name of Ascelepius, god of healing. Later this afternoon travel to Izmir and the hotel, where you’ll dine tonight.

Overnight: Swissôtel Grand Efes / (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10
IZMIR/EPHESUS

Today visit Ephesus, perhaps the world’s best-preserved ancient city. In Roman times, Ephesus was the provincial capital of Asia, with a population of 250,000 at the height of its glory. An important Christian community arose here, and Ephesus was visited by St. Paul, who later wrote one of his epistles to the Ephesians. Perhaps its greatest claim to fame is the fact that Ephesus once housed the Temple of Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Today the magnificently preserved ruins attract visitors from across the globe.

A full day of touring here includes the immense theater that holds 24,000 people and is still used today. You’ll walk along the Sacred Way,
where the rich once lived and where an ingenious water and sewer system was constructed beneath paving stones of marble; see the Temple of Hadrian, a Corinthian-style building with the head of Medusa on the porch to keep away evil spirits; and admire the Library of Celsus, which once held 12,000 ancient scrolls. Following your visit of Ephesus proper, see the acclaimed Terrace Houses, the “houses of the wealthy” located on the slopes of Bulbul Mountain. These hillside excavations provide a revealing look at family life during the Roman period. You'll stop for a late lunch in the beautiful, rustic village of Sirince then return to Izmir late this afternoon and enjoy an evening at leisure. From the well-located hotel, you have your choice of several local restaurants all within a short walking distance. 

Overnight: Swissôtel Grand Efes / (B, L)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11
IZMIR/GÖÇEK

Today embark on your journey south, stopping along the way to see a demonstration of the ancient art of carpet weaving at a local factory. Then stop in a local village for lunch before you continue on to Göcek, arriving late this afternoon in the serene port town set at the most inland point of the Gulf of Fethiye. Board the 14-guest gulet, a replica of a traditional Turkish fishing boat. Today’s gulets are built with modern comforts in mind, containing small but cozy cabins with private bath and shower, public areas, and broad decks in an area approximately 85 feet long and 21 feet wide. Beautiful craftsmanship combined with ancient artistry makes the gulet the perfect vessel in which to cruise the waters of the Turquoise Coast. After settling in to your cabin, you’ll enjoy your first dinner on board, prepared by the ship’s crew with fresh local ingredients.

Overnight: Gulet yacht / (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13
CRUISING-EKINCIK COVE/DALYAN RIVER

This morning disembark and drive to Dalyan, an environmentally protected area where you board a small skiff for a trip through an intriguing maze of channels. At the Lake of Koycegiz, see your first Lycian rock tombs. These relics, which stretched along the Mediterranean coast from Koycegiz in the West to Antalya in the East, are the few remaining artifacts of this great culture. After lunch in a local restaurant, drive to the gulet in Fethiye Bay and anchor for the night. Tonight dine aboard your gulet.

Overnight: Gulet yacht / (B, L, D)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12
CRUISING-AGA LIMANI/CLEOPATRA BATHS

The route for the next few days is along the coastline that Mark Antony is said to have given Cleopatra as a wedding gift. Named for the brilliant color of its waters, the Turquoise Coast is nature’s gift to all those who travel here. The swimming is glorious, in crystal clear waters that afford views into the depths. With the scent of eucalyptus perfuming the air, and forested mountains as the backdrop, begin your “Blue Voyage” by traveling this morning to the hidden cove of Aga Limani where an optional hike of approximately three hours along an herb-scented trail brings you to Lydea, a little-known Greco-Roman site. The hike concludes at the Sunken Baths of Cleopatra, built in a breathtaking inlet by Mark Antony for the last Egyptian pharaoh.

Please note that parts of this hike can be strenuous, and the trail has a fair amount of gravel and rock. Please consult with your tour director if you have concerns about your ability to participate safely on this hike. If you prefer a less strenuous day, you can choose to stay on board the gulet as it sails to the Sunken Baths to meet up with the hikers. There’s plenty on board including games, cards, or simply chatting with your fellow guests.

Overnight: Gulet yacht / (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14
CRUISING- GEMILER ISLAND/KAYAKOY

Sail today to the next anchorage, Gemiler Island, where you disembark for a tour of the
6th-century Byzantine monastery. After lunch on board, disembark and drive to the Greek “ghost town” of Kayakoy, deserted after World War I and the Turkish War of Independence. Residents abandoned approximately 2,000 stone houses that are now restored and preserved as a historical monument. Explore the town and its two churches, which still retain some of their painted decoration and mosaic floors. Later return to the gulet for dinner and remain anchored in Gemiler tonight, the last night on board.

Overnight: Gulet yacht / (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15
CRUSING-FETHIYE/ANTALYA

This morning sail to Fethiye, where you disembark, bid farewell to the gulet crew, and board a motorcoach for the drive through the Taurus Mountains to Antalya. You'll have lunch upon arrival in this seaside city and bustling hub of the “Turkish Riviera,” followed by a visit to the important Archaeological Museum, whose exhibits highlight the history of the Mediterranean and Pamphylia regions of Anatolia. Dinner tonight is on your own and the evening is at leisure.

Overnight: Akra Barut (Deluxe) / (B, L)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16
ANTALYA/PERGE

This morning set off for a tour of the once-thriving Roman city of Perge, which reached its pinnacle during the era of Alexander the Great. Among the outstanding ruins here are the ancient shopping arcade, the awe-inspiring 12,000-seat stadium, and a 15,000-seat theater. Then return to Antalya for a walking tour of the Kaleici (Old Town), with its stone walls, Old Harbor, and winding lanes. You see the impressive Hadrian's Gate with its three arches, built to honor Emperor Hadrian for his visit in 130 CE; and the Yivli Minaret, whose fluted column is a symbol of the city. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure before a farewell dinner at a local Turkish restaurant.

Overnight: Uchisar Kaya Hotel (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17
RETURN TO U.S.

If you are returning today to the United States, you will transfer early this morning to the airport for your connecting flight to the U.S. (B)

FOR GUESTS TAKING OPTIONAL POST-TOUR EXTENSION TO CAPPADOCIA & ANKARA

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17
TRANSFER TO CAPPADOCIA

Guests who are joining the optional extension to Cappadocia and Ankara will have a full-day motorcoach transfer via historic Konya, where you stop for a visit to the Mevlana Museum, home of Turkey’s renowned Whirling Dervishes – a mystic order whose members dance wildly to free themselves from earthly bondage. You’ll have lunch here before continuing on to Cappadocia in central Turkey.

Renowned for its awe-inspiring natural rock formations – which were utilized for everything from housing to churches and even complete underground villages – Cappadocia is as magical today as it was when early farmers discovered the fertile powers of the volcanic ash that covered the area thousands of years ago. Cappadocia became a haven for the first Christians, who ultimately carved more than 3,000 churches in the porous rock, painting many of them inside with splendidly preserved scenes from the Old Testament. You reach Cappadocia late this afternoon, and enjoy a buffet dinner this evening at the hotel.

Overnight: Uchisar Kaya Hotel (B, L, D)

SUNDAY & MONDAY, OCTOBER 18-19
CAPPADOCIA

For the next two days, explore more of this unique region. Tour the rock churches of the
Goreme Valley, including the open-air museum with 8th-century murals; and the refuge of Kaymakli, which was constructed over a period of centuries and provided a safe haven for Turks during times of war and conflict. A maze of tunnels reaching four stories deep, this underground city held as many as 3,000 people who were able to breathe thanks to a ventilation system that allowed fresh air into the complex structure. Also visit the vast Zelve Valley complex of caves laced with dwellings, churches, and public spaces where villagers lived until just 50 years ago; and marvel at the fairy tale chimneys at Pasabag; and the troglodyte villages of Cavusin and Uchisar.

During a stop in the charming town of Avanos watch local craftspeople as they practice their arts, which include fashioning beautiful hand colored pottery; and weaving rugs of natural colored wool, a regional specialty that has been perfected by the Turks over many hundreds of years and continues to be passed down from generation to generation. Dine both evenings at the hotel.

For those who wish, an optional early morning balloon ride is available on Monday (at additional cost). The ride offers an unparalleled view of the lunar-like landscape and may be reserved on-site during your stay. At the time of printing, the cost of the balloon ride is approximately $225 per person.

As you tour the museum, you'll bring together all you have learned about Turkey and its people during our 2½ weeks of traveling. Gather tonight one last time for a farewell dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Ankara Hilton (B, D)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21
RETURN TO U.S.

If you are returning today to the United States, you will transfer early this morning to the airport for your connecting flight to the U.S. (B)