

16 Days Discovery Turkey & Greece

Tour Price: C\$4,500

Pre-paid Tipping: C\$250

Estimated Airfare: C\$1,650

24th April: Vancouver to Turkey

AC9100 Vancouver departs at 4:20 pm.

Arriving Frankfurt at 11:05 am.

25th April: ISTANBUL, TURKEY

LH 1300 Frankfurt departs at 12.55 am.

Arriving Istanbul at 4.50 pm.

Group transfer to the hotel in Istanbul, the city whose historical center is considered a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, for its important monuments and historical ruins.

Overnight in Istanbul



26th April: ISTANBUL (B, L)

AM: Begin your full day tour with a visit to the Roman Hippodrome, which was the scene of chariot races and the great public occasions throughout the immensely long history of Byzantine Empire. You will then visit 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.

You will next step into the extraordinary Hagia Sophia Church. Built in the 6th Century by the Emperor Justinian, this church 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. Converted into a mosque by the Ottomans in the 15th Century under the Sultan Mehmet II, this vast edifice now includes minarets and Turkish Rococo fountains. Given its age, the church is in remarkable condition and the interiors are full of important frescoes and mosaics depicting holy subjects.

PM: Continue your guided exploration of Istanbul with a visit to the Topkapi Palace Museum, (**closed on Tuesdays**) lavish home to the Ottoman Sultans. For centuries this was the place from which the Sultans ruled over an empire that stretched from Eastern Europe to Atlantic Ocean. It contains a priceless collection of jewelry, porcelain and costumes. Legend claims that the ancient rod on display in the Treasury, is the one used by Moses to part the Red Sea. Other artifacts of similar fame include John the Baptist's gilded arm and Mohammad's beard, fingernails and foot imprint. Visit the kitchen that currently house the greatest collection of Chinese porcelain

We will complete our tour at the Grand Bazaar (closed on Sundays). 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 end 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.

Overnight: Istanbul



27th April: ISTANBUL / IZMIR BY FLIGHT (B, L)

Early in the morning meet with the guide at the hotel reception for airport pick--up service for boarding in flight bound for Izmir. Continue to our awaiting comfortable vehicle and drive to Selcuk.

Driving distance: Izmir Airport to Selcuk is approximately 45 minutes. Selcuk to Kusadasi is approximately 20 minutes.

We will visit the Ephesus, which is still the best--preserved classical city on the Mediterranean, and perhaps the best place in the world to get the feeling for what life was like in Roman times. We will see the Library of Celsus, the Roman Baths and the Gate of Hadrian.

Afternoon visits to the house where the Virgin Mary spent the last years of her life. After the death of Christ, John came with Mary to Ephesus, living most of his life in and around Ayasoluk Hill and spreading the word of Christianity as Paul did before him. John's grave was marked by a memorial, which was enclosed by a church of modest proportions in the 4th century.

Overnight: Kusadasi



28th April: KUSADASI / PAMUKKALE / KUSADASI (B, L)

Driving Distance: Kusadasi to Aphrodisias is Approx. 2,5hours / Aphrodisias to Pamukkale is Approx. 1hour / Pamukkale to Kusadasi is Approx. 3 hours
Duration: 08:30am to 19:00pm

Today we will travel to Pamukkale via Aphrodisias. We will explore the remains of Aphrodisias, the city dedicated to the goddess of love and home to a school of sculpture that made its way across the Roman world. We will visit the Temple of Aphrodite and one of the finest ancient stadiums ever built.

After lunch that will be served at a local restaurant, we drive to Pamukkale, a natural site that contains hot springs and travertines, terraces of carbonate minerals left by the flowing water. We then visit Hierapolis, the biggest cemetery in Anatolia. Later, return to Kusadasi.

Overnight: Kusadasi



29th April: IZMIR TO ANKARA BY FLIGHT / DRIVE TO CAPPADOCIA (B,L)

Today after breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to Ankara.

Ankara is the capital of Turkey and a modern city with about 5 million inhabitants. We will arrive by afternoon and drive to the restaurant for lunch. After lunch break, we will visit the Mausoleum of the founder of Modern Turkey, which stands on top of a small hill in a green park about two km west of Kızılay. Its design seeks to capture the spirit of Anatolia; monumental, spare but beautiful. Echoes of several great Anatolian empires, from the Hittite to the Roman and Seljuk, are included in its design. The final effect is modern but timeless.

After lunch that will be served at a local restaurant, we will travel to the land of wonders that is Cappadocia. Drive for approximately 3,5 hours (165 miles) through the stunning landscape of Turkey. Along the way we will stop by at a picturesque the Salt Lake, the second largest lake in Turkey.

Overnight: Cappadocia (Unique cave hotel)



30th April: CAPPADOCIA (B,L)

Optional Early Morning Balloon Program:

Early departure transfer from the hotel to the take-off field where the balloon has been prepared by fully trained staff. Following the safety briefing from the pilot, the balloon takes off and we expect to be airborne approximately 15 minutes before sunrise. 45 minutes of flying includes low level flight, following the landscape contours of Cappadocia, and flying high enough to enjoy the topography from above. Drive back to the hotel for breakfast.

Our full day sight-seeing will start with the rock formations beyond belief in Derwent Valley; then visit to Pasabag, also known as Monk's Valley, has amazing examples of hermitages hollowed out of volcanic rock formations.

Later, visit to the amazing underground city of Kaymakli. Signs of an early troglodyte lifestyle are evident in the communal kitchens blackened by smoke, stables and storage spaces carved into the rocks as need arose. The maze of living quarters hundreds of feet below ground is startling proof that tens of thousands of people existed deep within the earth.

We will visit the village of Avanos which is situated on the banks of the river Kızıl Irmak, the largest river in Turkey. The city is known mainly for the millenarian handmade confections of tapestry and red clay pottery, extracted from the banks of Kızıl Irmak.

After lunch, we will visit a ceramic cooperative, where it will be possible know the entire production process of the famous Turkish ceramics.

Then, you will visit the Goreme Open-Air Museum where icons and other figurative representations were prohibited. The 11th century represents the "golden age" of religious art in Goreme. Then, you will visit the Goreme Valley, which has been occupied since the dawn of history. It is the valley of the churches. The wonderful and primitive 11th and 12th century frescoes cover the walls of these churches.

Overnight: Cappadocia

Optional Evening Program:

Turkish Night, a beautiful show of traditional Turkish dances and rites and dinner with unlimited alcoholic beverages. Return to hotel. Enjoy the evening on your own.



1st May: CAPPADOCIA / ISTANBUL BY FLIGHT (B, L)

Check out of the hotel today and transfer to the Kayseri Airport for a flight to Istanbul.

Upon arrival, transfer to city and have lunch at a local restaurant.

PM: Later today, embark on a regular ferry and you will be treated to a Bosphorus Cruise, which will be an impressive and unforgettable experience. Bosphorus--the famously beautiful stretch of water, 32 km long with the maximum of 3.700 m width, plays central role in the history of Byzantium, later Constantinople and today's Istanbul. The Bosphorus, with the Golden Horn (an inlet of the Strait) and Maiden's Tower (Kiz Kulesi) at its southern entrance, has a definite personality. Relax and enjoy close up views including the European side, Dolmabahce Palace, Bosphorus Bridge, Asian side and more.

Last but not least visit to the Old Spice Market, where you can find a vast diversity of spices, sacks of henna, many varieties of oils and herbs, and of course the world's very best Turkish delight. Evening is at your leisure this evening.

Overnight: Istanbul.



2nd May: Istanbul / Athens (B, D)

Checkout of the hotel today and transfer to the Istanbul International Airport.

TK1843 Istanbul departs at 7:15 pm.

Arriving Athens at 8:45 pm.

Athens arrival with assistance at the airport.

Transfer to the hotel with a panoramic city tour of Athens historical center, highlighting the main sites of interest, getting an introduction to the city's history, structure, culture and vibe.

Overnight in Hotel Parthenon.

3rd MAY: Athens

Athens Full Day Tour:

Classical Athens was a powerful city – state. A centre for the arts, learning and philosophy, home of Plato’s Academy and Aristotle’s Lyceum. It is widely referred to as the “Cradle of Western Civilization” and the birthplace of democracy, largely due to the impact of its cultural and political achievements during the 5th and 4th centuries BC. In this tour, we will have the chance to visit the Acropolis, the birthplace of democracy and civilisation, the Acropolis museum, followed by lunch at traditional Plaka area and free time to enjoy the Plaka area.

Acropolis:

The greatest and finest sanctuary of ancient Athens dedicated primarily to its patron, the goddess Athena, dominates the center of the modern city from the rocky crag known as the Acropolis. The most celebrated myths of ancient Athens, its greatest religious festivals, earliest cults and several decisive events in the city's history are all connected to this sacred precinct. The monuments of the Acropolis stand in harmony with their natural setting. These unique masterpieces of ancient architecture combine different orders and styles of Classical art in a most innovative manner and have influenced art and culture for many centuries. The Acropolis of the 5th century BC is the most accurate reflection of the splendor, power and wealth of Athens at its greatest peak, the golden age of Pericles.

Acropolis Museum:

Recently named as one of the best European museums, the Acropolis museum houses the treasures of the Acropolis and copies of the missing marbles that are in the British Museum. It has a total area of 25,000 square meters, with exhibition space of over 14,000 square meters. An absolute must see, the Louvre of Athens.

Plaka area:

The area of Plaka is one of the most attractive districts in Athens. Under the slopes of the Acropolis, Plaka attracts all the visitors of Athens with its neoclassical mansions and red- tiled roof houses, its small winding alleys with their narrow steps, balconies with bougainvillea, geraniums and jasmine.

Overnight in Hotel Parthenon.



4th May:Hydra/Poros/Agina

One-day Cruise to Hydra, Poros & Agina (including lunch)

We will first sail towards the island of Hydra - a favorite of the international Jet-set. Hydra is the beloved muse of painters, craftsmen and photographers. Its unique architecture, crystal clear waters, splendid craft & jewel shops, folk art and the island's traditional means of transport – the donkey, make it one of the last examples of “living Mediterranean history”. In Hydra guests will have time at leisure for strolling, shopping or swimming.

In the early afternoon, we will sail for the island of Aegina, passing through the narrow strait separating the Peloponnesian coast from the island of Poros. Aegina, is known for its rich history, inspiring pistachio grove landscapes, Aegina Port's lively fish market and colorful floating fruit and vegetable marketplace as well as picturesque seaside villages such as St. Marina with its taverns, traditional shops and beautiful golden beaches.

We will have the opportunity to visit the majestic 5th century BC temple of the Goddess Aphaia which is regarded as the best preserved ancient temple of Greece offering a magnificent view of the whole Saronic Gulf. Following, Lunch will be served on board while sailing towards Poros - the smallest of the three islands. Poros Town rests in a narrow strait between Poros Island and the Peloponnese, quietly nestled in the embrace of deep green pine forests and mildly scented lemon groves. A climb to the town's magnificent bell tower offers an unforgettable view.

On the way back to Athens, a “Traditional Greek Folk Show” with singers and dancers in original costumes from all of Greece will entertain us before the ship docks in Piraeus.

Overnight in Hotel Parthenon.



5th May: Athens/Delphi

In Greek mythology, Zeus, king of the gods, released two eagles and where their paths would cross was to be the center of the world. The eagles crossed over Delphi. Since then, Delphi has been marked "Omphalos" (navel) not only of ancient Greece, but of the entire world. Located in the center of mainland Greece, it is the heart of Greece. Nature's beautiful mosaic continuously changing, but always filled with a magical energy. A spiritual aura permeates the area, known for the Oracle at Delphi.

Time stops in Nafpaktos. What has passed and what still exists merge as a colourful tapestry of images you cannot draw your eyes away from. It is one of a few cities in Greece that has survived for 30 centuries of turbulent history, imprinted forever on its monuments. Built at the foot of Pindos, it is embraced reassuringly by its mighty Castle, whose walls reach down to the Corinthian Gulf.

Overnight in Nafpaktos, in Nafs Hotel.



6th May: Nafpaktos/Olympic site/Nafplion

Assuming that the uniqueness of each thing is also its identity, as the sun is the brightest star in the sky, then, the uniqueness of Ancient Olympia lies in the spirit and the idea of eternal peace. Its museums depict the liveliness and sacredness of the place. The spirit of the Olympic Games is still embodied in Olympia with the lighting ceremony of the Olympic flame every 4 years before it travels the world until opening the Games to which it was assigned. Then transfer to Nafplion.

Overnight in Nafplion, in Agamemnon Hotel.



7th May: Nafplion/Mycenae/Epidaurus

Nafplion, Mycenae and Epidaurus Tour

The Peloponnese town of Nafplio is widely considered the most romantic spot in Greece. Crammed onto a narrow peninsula, the old town's Venetian architecture and friendly residents make it a delight to wander. Its tile roofs, grey stone, grand villas and a deep blue-green sea; its mystical castles of Bourtzi, Palamidi and Akronafplia; its stunning seaport with fortresses and neoclassical buildings; as well as its wide sidewalks and large squares, make up a visit to remember.

Mycenae

Mycenae 'Rich in Gold', the kingdom of mythical Agamemnon, first sung by Homer in his epics, is the most important and richest palatial centre of the Late Bronze Age in Greece. Its name was given to one of the greatest civilizations of Greek prehistory, the Mycenaean civilization, while the myths related to its history have inspired poets and writers over many centuries, from the Homeric epics and the great tragedies of the Classical period to contemporary literary and artistic creation. During the late Bronze Age the city of Mycenae was a hugely important city in ancient Greece, and this tour is an opportunity to explore this wonder of the ancient world.

Epidaurus Tour

The Great Theatre at Epidaurus is perhaps the best-preserved theatre of ancient Greece, and is still used today due to its amazing acoustics. In a canyon, in 340 BC, an Argos architect Polykleitos the Younger, built, according to Pausanias, the theatre of Epidaurus. Among all the ancient theatres, Epidaurus theatre is the most beautiful and best preserved, lending itself for an impressive and memorable experience.

Overnight in Nafplion, in Agamemnon Hotel.



8th May: Nafplion/Athens

Transfer to Athens.

Day at leisure.

Overnight in Hotel Parthenon.



9th May: Athens/Canada

Transfer to the airport and fly out of Athens.

AC1901 departing Athens at 1:05 pm.

Arriving Toronto at 5:00 pm.

AC033 departing Toronto at 8:15 pm.

Arriving Vancouver at 10:04 pm.