

Pilgrimage to Constantinople and the Holy Land

September 30 – October 14, 2019
(14 Days)

Presented by:

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Highlights:

Admire the magnificent Hagia Sophia and the Byzantine frescoes and mosaics at Chora Church. Visit the seat of the Orthodox Church at the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Walk the halls of the Harem at Topkapı Palace. Cruise along the lovely Bosphorus. Venerate the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. Visit the original baptismal site of Jesus at the Jordan River. Follow the footsteps of Christ in Jerusalem, venerating the Holy Tomb, Via Dolorosa, the Mount of Olives, and many more holy sites. Enjoy an excursion to the Church of the Nativity and the Holy Cave and Manger in Bethlehem.

Itinerary:

Monday, September 30:

Depart Chicago on a direct flight to Istanbul with Fr. Jim, Fr. Apostolos, and tour leaders from Paisadventure.

Tuesday, October 1: Overnight in Istanbul

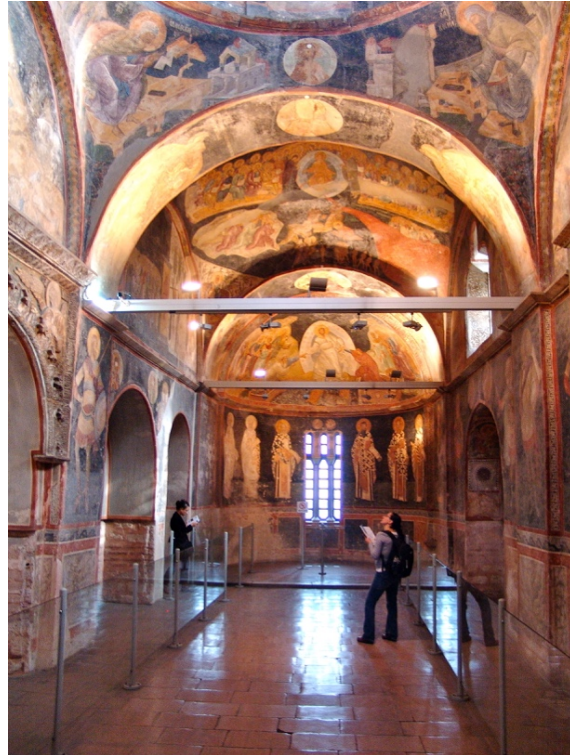
Arrive in Istanbul late afternoon. After clearing immigration, our transfer will take us to our hotel near Taksim Square. Walk to Faros for an optional dinner, or you can order from the hotel restaurant.

Wednesday, October 2: BLD, Overnight in Istanbul

Start the day with a visit to the magnificent Hagia Sophia, built by Justinian in the year 537. It was the seat of the Orthodox Church and the largest Christian church in the world for over 1000 years.



We then drive to Asitane for a special lunch, sampling recipes from the Ottoman palace kitchens. After lunch, we'll admire the ancient frescoes and mosaics at Chora Church, mostly completed in the early 14th century.



On the way back to the hotel, we'll stop at the Church of Panagia Vlacherna. While there's nothing left of the original church, it played an important role in church history. The Akathist Hymn was first chanted there in the year 626. In the evening, enjoy a fish dinner on the Bosphorus at Mavi Balık in the Kuruçeşme neighborhood.



Thursday, October 3: BLD, Overnight in Istanbul

Our first stop is the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, where we will have a chance to meet His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I. We will also enjoy a tour of the Church of St. George, where we will venerate the relics of St. Basil, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Euphemia, among others.



After lunch at Barba Vasilis, we'll make a quick stop to see the Bulgarian Orthodox Church of St. Stephen, which was prefabricated in Vienna and erected on the shores of the Golden Horn in 1898. It's one of the last surviving prefabricated cast iron churches in the world. We then take a short drive to St. Mary of the Mongols, the only Byzantine church to remain in the hands of the Orthodox community after the fall of Constantinople. An official order signed by Mehmet the Conqueror protecting the ownership rights of the church is on display.



Finally, we'll stop at the Monastery of the Life-Giving Spring, which has been one of the most important Greek Orthodox sites since the 5th century. Several Ecumenical Patriarchs are buried there along with many of the Constantinopolitan elite. For dinner, we'll walk to Hatay Medeniyetler Sofrası to sample cuisine from Hatay (Antioch), one of the country's most delicious provinces.



Friday, October 4: B, Overnight in Istanbul

This morning we will visit Topkapı Palace. Walk through the halls of the Imperial Harem at your own pace to see the personal living quarters of the Ottoman Sultans for almost 400 years. Visit the Imperial Treasury to see the famed Topkapı Dagger. See the Imperial Council Chamber where the Grand Vizier (Prime Minister) of the Ottoman Empire held meetings with other ministers – and the Audience Chamber, where Grand Viziers would report to the Sultan and wouldn't know if they would come out alive! There are a few restaurants and cafés within the palace walls to satisfy your appetite for lunch.



As we leave the palace, we'll visit Hagia Eirini, one of the few Byzantine churches never converted into a mosque. It hosted the 2nd Ecumenical Council (first in Constantinople) in the year 381. Today, it serves as a concert hall. Our final stop for the day will be souvenir shopping at the Grand Bazaar. Don't forget to bargain!



Saturday, October 5: BL, Overnight in Istanbul

Start the morning with a walk down the pedestrianized Istiklal Street, the former Grand Rue de Pera. This is the heart of modern Istanbul and the cradle of Western culture in the city during the Late Ottoman Period. Peek through the gates of the lavish former embassies to the Ottoman Empire, admire the fine architecture, and visit some of the beautiful churches that witnessed the terrible pogrom in 1955.



From there, we will walk down to the former Genoese district of Galata, where we can climb to the top of the Galata Tower to take in some of the most spectacular views of the city. The tower was rebuilt in 1348 on the Byzantine foundations of another tower. We will then have lunch in the shadow of the tower at Güney Restaurant.



After lunch, we board a bus and travel to Eminönü, where we'll finish the day with a 2-hour cruise along the beautiful Bosphorus. You'll have a chance to get off the boat for an hour and explore the picturesque village of Ortaköy.



Sunday, October 6: B, Overnight in Istanbul

This morning, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at Agia Triada on Taksim Square. The rest of the day is free to explore the city, with endless possibilities to visit attractions, museums, and historic places (ask us for suggestions!).

**Monday, October 7: BD, Overnight in Tiberias**

This morning we fly to Tel Aviv, where we meet with our representative from Tita Travel who will lead the Israel portion of the tour. After departing from the airport, we will venerate the Monastery of St. George in Lydda before arriving at our hotel in Tiberias.



Tuesday, October 8: BD, Overnight in Tiberias

First, we will visit Mt. Tabor, where the Transfiguration of Jesus took place, followed by the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. We will then venerate the Monastery of the Miracle of the Wine in Cana of Galilee, the Monastery of the 12 Apostles in Tiberias, and the Monastery of the Apostles in Capernaum.



Wednesday, October 9: BD, Overnight in Jerusalem

In the morning, we travel to the Jordan River, on the Israel-Jordan border, to bless the waters at the original baptismal site of Jesus Christ.



Next, we venerate the Church of Prophet Elijah and the Sycamore Tree of Zacchaeus in Jericho, followed by a cable car ride up to the Monastery of the Temptation. An optional lunch is offered at the restaurant under Temptation Mountain. We then visit the Monastery of St. Gerasimos before heading to our hotel in Jerusalem for dinner and a good night's sleep.



Thursday, October 10: BD, Overnight in Jerusalem

Today is a full day in Jerusalem, beginning with a visit with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III. We then venerate the Holy Calvary, the Holy Tomb, the Chapel of Mary Magdalene, the Temporary Prison of Christ, the Via Dolorosa (Way of the Cross), the Prison of Christ, and the Lithostrotos, where the judgment of Christ took place.



Friday, October 11: BD, Overnight in Jerusalem

In the morning, we venerate the Monastery of St. Theodosios. We then board special local minibuses to visit the Monastery of St. Sabbas.



Later, we travel to Bethlehem to venerate the Church of the Nativity, the Holy Cave and Manger, and the tombs of the infants killed by Herod. We finish the day venerating the Tomb of Lazarus, the Monastery of Martha and Maria in Bethany, and the Shepherds Field before returning to our hotel in Jerusalem.



Saturday, October 12: BD, Overnight in Jerusalem

Today we visit Mt. Zion followed by the Wailing Wall, an ancient limestone wall that was part of the expansion of the Second Jewish Temple begun by Herod. It's the holiest site where Jews are permitted to pray.



Next, we travel to the Monastery of the Holy Cross, the Monastery of Katamonas and Orini, and the Garden of Gethsemane and the Last Prayer. We will venerate the Tomb of the Most Holy Mother of God in Gethsemane, followed by the Mt. of Olives and the Chapel of the Ascension. We finish the day with a panorama of Jerusalem before returning to the hotel. In the evening, you can attend the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (optional).



Sunday, October 13: BD, Overnight in Jerusalem

In the morning, we visit the Monastery of Megali Panagia. The rest of the day is free to explore Jerusalem.



Monday, October 14: B

Transfer to the airport in Tel Aviv for our flight back to Chicago.

Package price: \$3999 per person (\$285 per day)

Optional private room: \$625 per person

What's Included:

- 13 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 9 dinners
- All international flights
- All transportation and airport transfers in Turkey and Israel
- Hotel in Istanbul (6 nights) with 6 breakfasts
- Hotel in Tiberias (2 nights) with 2 breakfasts and 2 dinners
- Hotel in Jerusalem (5 nights) with 5 breakfasts and 5 dinners
- Visa processing fees for Turkey
- Paisadventure tour leaders throughout the trip in Turkey
- T.I.T.A. Travel tour leader throughout the trip in Israel
- Guide in Jerusalem, Bishop Aristovoulos
- Local guides where applicable
- All entrance fees according to the itinerary
- Bosphorus cruise
- Minibuses to the Monastery of St. Sabbas in the Judean Desert

- Minivans to the top of Mt. Tabor
- Cable car up Temptation Mountain in Jericho
- Tips for drivers, local guides, hotel and restaurant employees

What's Not Included:

- Entrance fees to museums and attractions not covered in the itinerary
- 2 lunches and 4 dinners in Istanbul, 7 lunches in Israel
- Alcoholic drinks and optional items during meals included in the itinerary
- Personal expenses
- Minibar consumption and room service in hotels
- Excess checked luggage fees
- Personal travel insurance (optional but highly recommended)
- Allow \$150-\$250 for meals not included

Booking Terms:

- A limited number of spaces are available – book early!
- No bookings will be accepted after August 20.
- A 40% non-refundable deposit is required to guarantee your booking, with the balance due on August 20.
- Accepted methods of payment include major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, Amex, Discover, Diners Club), PayPal, check or money order, and Zelle
- Cancellations made before September 1 will forfeit deposit only. Cancellations made September 1 or later are not eligible for refunds.
- Your passport must have an expiration date after May 15, 2020.

Sustainable Tourism:

- We aim to minimize our impact on the environment, including conserving water, not removing flora and fauna, staying on designated trails, and not littering.
- We ask our guests to respect the cultural and religious traditions and customs of the people they meet on their tour.
- We encourage our guests to do their shopping at local markets and shops rather than large commercial stores, and to purchase locally made goods as gifts and souvenirs rather than imported items.
- Our guests are responsible for complying with our sustainable tourism policy in order to protect the natural and cultural heritage of Turkey and Israel.

Accommodation:

- Our guests will stay in comfortable 4-star hotels throughout the tour.
- All rooms are based on double occupancy, with 1 or 2 beds.

- Solo travelers have the option of being paired with another traveler or requesting a private room for the duration of the tour at an extra cost of \$625 per person.
- We understand how important it is to stay connected during your trip, whether it's for business or personal reasons. We do our best to make sure good Wi-Fi is available in each hotel.

Transportation:

The majority of the trip will be in luxury private buses. Other transportation methods will be used, including minibuses and cable cars.

Meals:

- Sampling different food is one of the most exciting parts of traveling. For the Turkey portion of the trip, we have hand-picked our favorite restaurants in order to provide you a good sample of delicious Turkish cuisine.
- Restaurants in the itinerary are based on availability. We'll confirm them a few weeks before the tour departs. If a restaurant is not available, we'll replace it with a similar restaurant.
- Alcoholic drinks are not provided during meals included in the itinerary and must be purchased separately.
- During included meals, if you wish to order anything extra, it must be purchased separately.
- We must be notified of all special meal requests before departure. This way, we can accommodate any dietary requirements.

Money:

- The currency in Turkey is liras (TL) and in Israel is shekels (NIS). Some vendors will accept US dollars but be aware you will probably get a terrible exchange rate.
- Current exchange rates (as of March 2019) are roughly 5.5 TL to US\$1 and roughly 3.5 NIS to US\$1.
- Once you arrive in Turkey, we suggest waiting to change money in Taksim Square as rates are much better outside the airport. We can take you to our preferred money exchanges if you wish.
- In Turkey, you cannot exchange money with a credit card.
- ATMs can be found in every city we visit, and credit cards are widely accepted, but keep in mind you may have to pay extra fees or currency conversion rates depending on your card issuer and bank. Have a backup if you plan to use a debit card.
- Don't forget to call your bank and credit card issuer to let them know your travel plans.

- Carry enough cash with you for souvenirs, meals not included in the itinerary, and personal expenses.

Tipping:

- All tips to drivers, guides, and hotel and restaurant employees are included in the price of the tour.
- If you venture out on your own for meals, generally, it's customary to leave a 10% tip in restaurants.
- If you take a taxi, you can round up the fare as a tip.

Clothing and Laundry:

- Bring clothing and shoes that you will be comfortable in. We will do a lot of walking!
- Don't overpack! We suggest bringing only what you need along with a small daypack.
- Some of the hotels will provide laundry service at an additional cost. If not, we can help you find a solution if you need to do laundry at any point on the trip.

Weather:

- The average October weather in Istanbul is between 60-70 °F with an increased chance of rain. There are about 10 hours of daylight.
- The average October weather in Israel is between 65-75 °F. It's typically dry with about 10 hours of daylight and a nice comfortable breeze.

Safety:

- You should take the same precautions as you would anywhere else in the world:
 - Watch your bags at all times and keep them closed. If you're at an outdoor restaurant, keep your bag on your lap or somewhere it won't get snatched.
 - Petty crime is the biggest nuisance. That doesn't mean you shouldn't wear expensive jewelry, just be cautious and be aware of distractions.
 - Don't pull out lots of cash in public, be alert while using your cell phone, and don't accept offers of meals or gifts from strangers.
 - During your free time, use your judgment to avoid areas that seem undesirable.
 - Be careful crossing the street! Pedestrians don't get the same respect as they do in the US.
- It's safe to bring your computer, smart phone, and SLR camera.

Travel Insurance:

- Personal travel insurance is optional but highly recommended. It provides medical coverage if you get sick, reimburses you if your luggage is stolen or your camera breaks, and helps you get home if you have a family emergency.
- For complete coverage, we recommend Allianz and Travelex. For budget coverage, we recommend World Nomads (under 70 years old only). You can also compare prices from several different companies at insuremytrip.com.
- If you need assistance in acquiring a travel insurance policy, we can help.

Other important information:

- Drug use, sales, and/or possession is illegal and the punishments by law enforcement are extremely strict. You don't want to end up in a Turkish or Israeli prison! Have you seen Midnight Express? Therefore, it is strictly forbidden for any travelers to use or possess illegal drugs. Anyone caught using or possessing illegal drugs will lose their place on the tour and no money will be refunded. This is a zero-tolerance policy!
- We denounce discrimination against anyone based on race, religion, gender, age, sexual preference, ethnicity, citizenship, etc.
- Prescription drugs must be properly labeled in original containers and a note from the prescribing doctor is highly recommended.

Itinerary Disclaimer:

- We will do our best to follow the itinerary provided. However, there is some flexibility built in. In some cases, it's necessary to make changes to the schedule in order to provide better service or due to circumstances beyond our control, including inclement weather, flight delays and cancellations, unexpected museum and attraction closings, vehicle issues, labor strikes, passenger illness and emergency, etc.
- Group leaders, Paisadventure, T.I.T.A. Travel, and any supplier or tour operator in connection with this program are not responsible for any injury, illness, or loss to person or property, or any delay, inconvenience, or extra costs incurred due to delay or cancellations caused by weather or events beyond anyone's control.

Suggested Packing List:

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| • Passport | • Hat |
| • Cash | • Sunscreen |
| • Credit or debit card | • Sunglasses |
| • Camera | • Swimwear (for hotel pools) |
| • Light jacket | • Comfortable walking shoes |
| • Rain gear | • Prescription medications |