

TURKEY – ISTANBUL AND REMARKABLE CAPPADOCIA



10 DAYS, 9 NIGHTS

5 MORNING BALLOON FLIGHTS SCHEDULED IN CAPPADOCIA

Cappadocia, in central Turkey, is an astonishing landscape of surrealistic beauty. Over 60 million years of erosion has transformed its compacted volcanic ash into thousands of bizarre rock cones and hundreds of weirdly textured canyons. From the 4th to the 13th centuries, Christians escaping religious persecution carved cave dwellings, monasteries and churches into the soft canyon walls. About 150 of the approximately 900 churches that remain are still richly decorated with precious frescoes. Starting in the 7th century, subterranean cities were cut as deep as seven stories straight down into the rock, housing 5,000 people and their animals escaping the Arab invasions of the 7th and 8th centuries. By the 10th century there were some 30,000 people living in the rock.

These cave dwellers are now gone, and centuries of erosion has exposed many of the intricate apartments they created. Our unique ability to fly slowly in our balloons, just a few feet from these ruins and geological formations, is due to the gentle winds that are normal for this area. This allows us to treat you to a remarkable, close-up view of this strange and eerie wonderland.



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Day 1 – Our trip begins at 7:00 p.m. at Istanbul's 5-Star Ciragan Palace Hotel, formerly the palace of Sultans and our home for 3 nights. Meet our wonderful Trip Director who will be with us throughout our stay in Turkey. Elegant dinner party in our lovely hotel.

Day 2 – After breakfast we'll visit Dolmabahce Palace, the last residence of the Ottoman Sultans. The 600 yard long palace with 362 rooms and 22 salons is noted for its extensive gold interior, major collection of European antiques, priceless paintings, a four and a half ton crystal chandelier, and major harem. We'll board our privately chartered 90 foot yacht for a lavish luncheon cruise on the Bosphorous, sailing by rows of historical Yalis, the beautiful wooden waterside residences of the 19th century, small fishing villages, ancient marble palaces, graceful 15th century Rumelihisar fortress, the giant bridges connecting Europe to Asia, and coves filled with yachts. We'll be guided through the most beautiful of all the imperial mosques in Istanbul, 16th century mosque of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, and 6th century St. Sophia's Basilica. Dinner at the Kervansaray Nightclub with a traditional Turkish floor show and dancing girls.

Day 3 – Morning visit to the Golden Horn, Istanbul's famous harbor with old wooden houses and Byzantine churches. Our guide will take us to the Spice Bazaar, the 5th century Roman aqueduct, the site of the famous Hippodrome where gladiators fought and chariots raced, and the Blue Mosque of Sultan Ahmet, built in 1616 and renowned for its 22,000 blue Iznik tiles. Lunch will be at the Rami restaurant followed by exploration of Topkapi Palace, the Imperial residence of the Ottoman Sultans from the 15th to the 19th centuries. The 6 million square foot palace, the oldest and largest remaining in the world, housed more than 10,000

people and is loaded with extraordinary gold, silver and gem collections, a jeweled throne room and the remains of a 400-room harem pavilion. We'll visit the Basilica cistern, a remarkable underground reservoir built in 532 with 236 Corinthian columns standing in 3 feet of water. Our last stop will be the Grand Bazaar, with 65 streets, 18 gates and 4000 shops all under one roof. "Farewell to Istanbul" dinner at the Korfez Restaurant on the Asian shore of the Bosphorous, arriving by private motor launch.

Day 4 – Istanbul to Cappadocia-Fly to Kayseri for lunch and coach to Cappadocia, checking into the new 5 star Tourist Hotel for 5 nights. Dinner party in our exotic setting.

Day 5 – Morning balloon adventure through the extraordinary landscape of Cappadocia. Our guide will escort us to The Open Air Museum in Goreme with 16 frescoed monastic churches carved into the rock dating from the 3rd to the 10th centuries. Visit a local carpet maker then a catered picnic lunch in the rock valley of Uchisar followed by a guided visit to the 7th century rock cave dwellings. Dinner will be in a fine restaurant in Urgup.

Day 6 – Our morning balloon adventure in Cappadocia will be followed by a visit to a ceramic workshop in the caves of Avanos. Catered picnic lunch will be among the amazing rock formations of White Valley, called "Fairy Chimneys". Our guide will lead us into the ancient underground city of Kaymakli, the maze of tunnels and dwelling chambers for 5,000 inhabitants and their animals dug during the 7th and 8th centuries and descending 7 storeys underground. Our spectacular private dinner and evening at the Outdoor Museum is an elaborate catered affair by lantern-light, including a mesmerizing performance of Whirling Dervishes.



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Day 7 – Morning balloon adventure in spectacular Cappadocia, followed by a guided visit to the National Park of Zelve and the ruined cave dwellings of approximately 8,000 early Christians. Catered picnic lunch in the ancient hand hewn cave church called Gomedede. Time for shopping in the colorful old markets of Urgup. Dinner this evening will be, with special permission, privately catered and served to us in the exotic hand-hewn rock chambers of the 10th century Christian church, Avnali.

Day 8 – Morning balloon adventure across Cappadocia and guided visit to the town of Ortahisar and its incredible 10-storey tall rock fortress. Catered picnic lunch among the most unlikely eroded rock formations of Pasabag followed by a leisurely stroll through this wonderland of shapes. Dinner will be on the terrace of the Ataman restaurant amid the other-worldly erosion formations of Goreme.

Day 9 – Morning balloon adventure and our last exploration of compelling Cappadocia. Time to pack and explore or shop on your own before lunch and mid afternoon coach to Kayseri. Dinner in Kayseri and flight to Istanbul, arriving 9:55 p.m. Overnight at 4 star Polat Renaissance Hotel near Istanbul Airport.

Day 10 – Depart on your own after breakfast.

NOTE: Each lunch in Cappadocia will be served in a different and truly spectacular setting, among strange and wonderfully exotic rock formations and ruined cave dwellings of the early Christians. Our delicious mid-day meals are totally private, catered affairs served in our very unique “movable cafe” of tables, chairs, giant umbrellas, Turkish carpets and charcoal grills. Each interesting setting was selected by Buddy Bombard many years ago, after much exploration by jeep and on foot.

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\$16,996 per person, double.
Single supplement \$2,275.

TRIP COMBINATIONS
Salzburg & Istanbul/Cappadocia
Connected by 1 Day transfer by plane

Istanbul/Cappadocia & Florence/Siena
Connected by 1 Day transfer by plane