



Discover Istanbul to Ephesus in 8 Day Turkey Tour

Duration: 8 Days/7 Nights

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Tour Itinerary

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Day-by-day plan & key activities

Day 1

Arrival in Istanbul



Upon **arrival at Istanbul Airport**, proceed through **customs and immigration**, collecting your luggage before stepping into the lively atmosphere of Turkey's cultural capital. Meet your **pre-arranged transportation** for a smooth **transfer to your hotel**, where you can check in and take some time to **rest and freshen up** after your journey.

In the **afternoon**, embark on a **Bosphorus Cruise**, offering a unique perspective of **Istanbul's stunning skyline** from the water. Sail along the **Bosphorus Strait**, passing **iconic landmarks** such as the **Maiden's Tower, Dolmabahçe Palace, Ortaköy Mosque, and the Bosphorus Bridge**, which connects **Europe and Asia**. Enjoy the **cool breeze and panoramic views**, capturing **memorable photos** of this **historic and scenic waterway**.

Depending on your interests and available time, consider **optional visits** to attractions along the Bosphorus route. Explore the **Rumeli Fortress**, a grand medieval stronghold built by the Ottomans, or step inside **Beylerbeyi Palace**, a lavish summer residence of Ottoman sultans, adorned with **opulent chandeliers, intricate woodwork, and elegant furnishings**.

As the **evening** sets in, head to a **local restaurant** renowned for its **traditional Turkish cuisine**. Indulge in delicious dishes such as **succulent kebabs, flavorful mezes, fresh seafood, and the sweet delight of baklava**, all while soaking in the **vibrant atmosphere** of Istanbul's dining scene.

After dinner, enjoy a **leisurely stroll** around the neighborhood, perhaps exploring the **charming streets of Karaköy, Ortaköy, or Sultanahmet**, before returning to your **hotel for a relaxing evening**. Reflect on the day's experiences and unwind in comfort, preparing for more adventures in **Istanbul or beyond** the next day.

Day 2

Istanbul City Tour



Begin your day **early in the morning** with a visit to the **Hagia Sophia**, one of the most **architecturally and historically significant landmarks** in the world. Step inside to admire its **massive dome, intricate mosaics, and stunning blend of Byzantine and Ottoman influences**. Take your time exploring this **UNESCO-listed marvel**, appreciating its transformation from a cathedral to a mosque and now a symbol of Istanbul's diverse heritage.

Afterward, head to the **Blue Mosque**, just a short walk away. This **Ottoman-era masterpiece**, known for its **elegant domes, towering minarets, and breathtaking blue Iznik tiles**, offers a peaceful and spiritual ambiance. Ensure you dress modestly as you step inside this active place of worship, taking in the **serene atmosphere and exquisite interior design**.

As the morning transitions into midday, take a leisurely stroll to the **Hippodrome**, once the **center of Byzantine public life**. Explore **historical monuments** such as the **Serpent Column, the Obelisk of Theodosius, and the German Fountain**, all of which hold fascinating stories from Istanbul's past. Imagine the grandeur of ancient chariot races and public gatherings that once took place here.

For **lunch**, stop by a **local eatery near the Hippodrome**, where you can savor **authentic Turkish cuisine**. Choose from flavorful options like **Iskender kebab, fresh pide (Turkish flatbread), or a hearty lentil soup**, while enjoying the lively atmosphere of the historic district.

In the **afternoon**, make your way to the **Grand Bazaar**, one of the **oldest and largest covered markets** in the world. Spend time wandering through its **bustling corridors**, filled with **shops selling handmade carpets, aromatic spices, colorful ceramics, jewelry, and textiles**. Experience the art of **haggling with local vendors**, picking up unique souvenirs, and immersing yourself in the **vibrant energy of this centuries-old marketplace**.

As the **evening** approaches, return to your **accommodation for a restful overnight stay** in **Istanbul**. Reflect on the day's **historical wonders, cultural experiences, and vibrant market explorations**, preparing for more adventures ahead.

Day 3

Istanbul to Cappadocia



Start your day with an **early morning flight to Cappadocia**, departing from Istanbul and arriving in this **otherworldly region** known for its unique landscapes and ancient cave dwellings. Upon arrival, meet your guide or driver and begin your **exploration of Cappadocia's wonders**.

Your first stop is the **Göreme Open-Air Museum**, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** that houses **rock-cut churches adorned with stunning frescoes** dating back to the **Byzantine era**. Spend a couple of hours wandering through the **ancient monastic complex**, learning about the religious and cultural significance of these centuries-old structures. If available, a **knowledgeable guide** can provide deeper insights into the stories behind the frescoes and the early Christian communities that once thrived here.

After an enriching morning, enjoy a **traditional Turkish lunch in Göreme** at a local restaurant. Savor Cappadocian specialties such as **testi kebab (pottery kebab)**, **gözleme (stuffed flatbread)**, or **fresh mezes**, while taking in the **scenic surroundings** of this charming town.

In the **afternoon**, continue your journey to **Devrent Valley**, also known as **Imagination Valley**, renowned for its **surreal rock formations**. Stroll through the valley and let your imagination take over as you **spot natural rock shapes resembling animals and mythical creatures**. The unique landscape offers fantastic **photo opportunities** and a glimpse into Cappadocia's **geological history**.

Next, visit **Paşabağ (Monk's Valley)**, home to some of **the most striking fairy chimneys in Cappadocia**. These **tall, mushroom-shaped rock formations** were once used as hermitages by monks, adding a layer of historical significance to their natural beauty. Take a **leisurely walk** through the valley, admiring the dramatic formations and capturing stunning photographs of this **otherworldly terrain**.

As the **late afternoon** sets in, visit a **traditional pottery workshop** in the town of **Avanos**, a place famous for its **centuries-old pottery-making tradition**. Observe **skilled artisans shaping clay** using ancient techniques, and if you're feeling adventurous, **try your hand at pottery-making** on a traditional kick wheel. This hands-on experience offers a deeper connection to **Cappadocia's rich artistic heritage** and a chance to take home a **handcrafted souvenir**.

After an incredible day of exploration, return to your **accommodation in Cappadocia** for a **relaxing evening**. Unwind, reflect on the day's experiences, and prepare for another day of discovery in this **magical region**.

Day 4

Cappadocia Hot Air Balloon Ride and Underground City



Begin your **morning** with an **optional hot air balloon ride**, an experience that offers **breathtaking panoramic views** of Cappadocia's **surreal landscapes**. As the sun rises, glide over **fairy chimneys, valleys, and rock formations**, capturing **unforgettable moments** from above. This **once-in-a-lifetime experience** lasts approximately **1-2 hours**, providing a **magical start to the day**.

After the exhilarating balloon ride, **indulge in a hearty breakfast** at your accommodation or a **local restaurant**, savoring **traditional Turkish delights** such as **fresh pastries, local cheeses, olives, and warm bread**. This meal will **re-energize you** for the day's explorations.

In the **late morning or early afternoon**, head to one of Cappadocia's **famous underground cities**, **Kaymaklı or Derinkuyu**. These **ancient subterranean complexes**, carved into **volcanic rock**, served as **refuges for early Christians** escaping persecution. Wander through a maze of **tunnels, living quarters, chapels, and ventilation shafts**, marveling at the **ingenious engineering** of these underground fortresses. Spend **approximately 2-3 hours** immersing yourself in their **fascinating history and architecture**.

Continue your adventure with a visit to **Uçhisar Castle**, the **highest point in Cappadocia**. Climb to the top of this **natural rock fortress**, which offers **unparalleled panoramic views** of the surrounding **fairy chimneys, valleys, and rugged landscapes**. Take your time to **soak in the breathtaking vistas** and capture stunning photographs of this **iconic landmark**.

After the castle visit, enjoy **some leisure time** exploring **Cappadocia's charming villages**. Visit a **pottery workshop in Avanos**, where you can **watch skilled artisans** craft intricate ceramics or even **try your hand at pottery-making**. Alternatively, take a **relaxing stroll** through the **quaint streets lined with traditional stone houses**, or **indulge in a delicious Turkish meal** at a local restaurant, savoring flavors such as **testi kebab, mezes, and Turkish tea**.

As the **evening sets in**, return to your **accommodation in Cappadocia** for a **restful overnight stay**. Reflect on the day's **extraordinary experiences**, unwind, and prepare for another **exciting day of exploration in this magical region**.

Day 5

Cappadocia to Konya



Begin your **morning** with an **early departure to Konya**, ensuring you make the most of your time in **this spiritual and historic city**. Enjoy the scenic journey through **Turkey's heartland**, arriving in Konya, the **spiritual center of Sufism and home to the great poet and philosopher Rumi**.

Upon arrival, head directly to the **Mevlana Museum**, the **mausoleum of Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi**, where you can **immerse yourself in the teachings and legacy of this revered mystic**. Spend a couple of hours exploring the museum's **beautiful architecture, ancient manuscripts, dervish robes, and sacred relics**. Walk through its **tranquil courtyards**, take in the **serene ambiance**, and **reflect on Rumi's timeless philosophy of love and unity**.

After visiting the **Mevlana Museum**, take a short walk to the nearby **Karatay Madrasa**, a **remarkable example of Seljuk-era architecture**. Admire its **intricately designed tile work, geometric patterns, and calligraphy**, which **showcase the artistic excellence of the Seljuks**. Learn about its role as a **center for Islamic education and spiritual learning** during the **13th century**.

By **midday**, enjoy a **leisurely lunch at a local restaurant**, savoring the **unique flavors of Konya's traditional cuisine**. Try specialties such as **Etli Ekmek (Turkish flatbread with minced meat)**, **Fırın Kebabı (slow-cooked lamb)**, or **Tirit (a dish made with beef, bread, and yogurt)**. Take this time to **relax and recharge** before continuing your exploration.

In the **afternoon**, consider taking a **guided tour** or wandering through **Konya's streets**, soaking in the **rich cultural and historical atmosphere**. Visit sites such as **Alaeddin Hill**, where you can explore **Alaeddin Mosque, one of the oldest and most significant mosques of the Seljuk era**. Alternatively, stop by the **Ince Minaret Medrese**, a **13th-century theological school featuring an intricately carved minaret and museum exhibits on Seljuk-era artifacts**.

As the **evening** sets in, return to **Konya's city center** and explore its **vibrant bazaars and local markets**. Browse through **handmade crafts, textiles, and spiritual souvenirs**, interacting with local artisans and shopkeepers.

Wrap up your day with a **traditional Turkish dinner** at one of Konya's authentic restaurants. Enjoy **richly flavored dishes**, and if you're lucky, you might even **catch a live performance of traditional Turkish music or dance**, adding a **cultural touch to your evening**.

After dinner, head back to your **accommodation for a restful overnight stay**, reflecting on the **deep cultural and spiritual experiences** of the day, before continuing your journey the next morning.

Day 6

Konya to Pamukkale



Begin your **morning** with an **early departure** from your starting point, ensuring you have enough time to **fully experience Pamukkale**. Enjoy the **scenic drive** through Turkey's countryside, passing rolling hills and quaint villages along the way. Starting early not only allows you to **avoid crowds** but also ensures you have ample time to explore this **UNESCO World Heritage Site** at a relaxed pace.

Upon **arrival in Pamukkale**, head straight to the **travertine terraces and thermal pools**, often referred to as "**The Cotton Castle**." Marvel at the **breathtaking white limestone formations**, created by **mineral-rich thermal waters** flowing over thousands of years. Walk barefoot along the **calcium-rich pools**, soaking in the **serene beauty of this natural wonder**, and take **stunning photographs** of the **unique cascading terraces**.

After exploring the terraces, make your way to **Hierapolis**, an **ancient Greco-Roman city** built above the hot springs. Take a **guided tour** or explore at your own pace, discovering **historical ruins such as the grand theater, necropolis, Roman baths, and temples**. Learn about **Hierapolis' significance as a spa and healing center** during ancient times, where people once traveled to benefit from its **therapeutic waters**.

By **midday**, take a **break for lunch** at a **local restaurant near Pamukkale**, where you can **enjoy authentic Turkish cuisine**. Savor delicious dishes such as **grilled kebabs, mezes, lentil soup, or gözleme (Turkish stuffed flatbread)** while **relaxing in a peaceful setting**.

In the **afternoon**, take some **leisure time** to **unwind and fully enjoy the thermal pools**. You can take a dip in the warm, **mineral-rich waters**, believed to have **healing properties**, or simply **relax and soak in the tranquil ambiance** of Pamukkale.

For those looking for **additional activities**, consider **exploring nearby attractions** such as the **Hierapolis Archaeology Museum**, which showcases **artifacts from the ancient city**, or visiting a **nearby water park** for a refreshing break.

As the **evening approaches**, find a **perfect viewing spot to witness the sunset over the travertine terraces**. The **golden hues reflecting off the white limestone** create a **mesmerizing and almost surreal** landscape, making for an **unforgettable experience**.

After a full day of **exploration and relaxation**, check into your **accommodation in Pamukkale** for a **comfortable overnight stay**. Choose from **hotels, thermal resorts, or boutique guesthouses**, depending on your **preference and budget**, allowing you to rest and rejuvenate before continuing your journey the next day.

Day 7

Pamukkale to Ephesus



Start your day early with a **departure from your accommodation in Kuşadası or Selçuk**, heading toward the **ancient city of Ephesus**. The short journey ensures you arrive early, giving you ample time to explore this remarkable archaeological site before the midday crowds.

Upon arrival at **8:30 AM**, begin your tour at the entrance of **Ephesus**, one of the best-preserved ancient cities in the world. Walk through its **historic streets**, marveling at the grandeur of its ruins. Visit the **Library of Celsus**, an **architectural masterpiece** that once housed thousands of scrolls and served as a symbol of knowledge and learning in the Roman world. Continue to the **Temple of Artemis**, one of the **Seven Wonders of the Ancient World**—though only remnants remain, its historical significance is still profound. As you wander, explore the **Grand Theatre**, which once held **25,000 spectators** and hosted grand performances, public events, and even gladiatorial battles. Take your time to **admire other significant landmarks**, each telling a story of Ephesus' **once-thriving civilization**.

By **12:00 PM**, take a break for lunch at a **local restaurant**, where you can indulge in **traditional Turkish cuisine**. Enjoy **freshly grilled kebabs, mezes, and savory gözleme**, allowing you to recharge before the afternoon's explorations.

At **1:00 PM**, journey up **Mt. Koressos** to visit the **House of the Virgin Mary**, a **peaceful pilgrimage site** believed to be where **Mary, the mother of Jesus, spent her final days**. Walk through the **modest stone chapel**, light a candle, or pause for **quiet reflection** in this sacred space surrounded by lush greenery.

By **2:30 PM**, return to **Selçuk** to visit the **Ephesus Archaeological Museum**, which houses some of the **most important artifacts excavated from Ephesus**. Wander through its well-curated exhibits, featuring **sculptures, ancient coins, ceramics, and the famous Statue of Artemis**. The museum provides a deeper understanding of **Ephesus' daily life, artistic achievements, and religious significance**.

At **4:00 PM**, begin your **return journey to Kuşadası or Selçuk**. Depending on your plans, you can **check into your accommodation for a relaxing evening** or continue to explore the local area. Consider **strolling through the markets, enjoying a seaside sunset, or dining at a traditional Turkish restaurant**, reflecting on the **day's incredible historical and cultural experiences**.

Day 8

Departure from Izmir



Begin your **morning** with a **hearty breakfast** at your accommodation or at a nearby **café**, fueling up for a day of exploration. Enjoy a spread of **fresh bread, local cheeses, olives, honey, and traditional Turkish tea or coffee**, setting the perfect tone for the adventures ahead.

After breakfast, **arrange for a transfer to Ephesus**, one of the **most well-preserved ancient cities in the world**. Upon arrival, step back in time as you explore **Ephesus' grand ruins**, wandering through **ancient marble streets** lined with **historic temples, baths, and columns**. Visit the **Library of Celsus**, an architectural marvel that once housed thousands of scrolls, and admire its **intricately carved façade**. Continue to the **Great Theatre**, a vast amphitheater that once accommodated up to **25,000 spectators**, and imagine the **gladiator contests, theatrical performances, and political gatherings** that once filled the space. A visit to the **Temple of Artemis**, one of the **Seven Wonders of the Ancient World**, offers insight into the religious and cultural significance of **this once-flourishing Roman city**.

As the afternoon approaches, take a **break for lunch at a local restaurant near Ephesus**, where you can indulge in **authentic Turkish cuisine**. Sample **traditional dishes such as kebabs, mezés, lentil soup, or gözleme (stuffed flatbread)** while enjoying the warm hospitality of the region.

After lunch, head to the **nearby town of Selçuk**, a place rich in **historical and cultural heritage**. Visit the **Isa Bey Mosque**, a **beautiful 14th-century structure** that blends **Seljuk and Ottoman architectural styles**, and take in its **elegant courtyard and intricate calligraphy**. Continue to the **Basilica of St. John**, the **believed burial site of St. John the Apostle**, and explore its **ruins overlooking Ayasuluk Hill**, offering **stunning panoramic views of Selçuk**.

Before wrapping up your visit, take **some time to wander through Selçuk's charming streets** and explore **local shops**, where you can find **handmade ceramics, Turkish carpets, and traditional souvenirs** to take home as mementos of your trip.

As **evening approaches**, arrange for **transportation to Izmir Airport**, ensuring you allow plenty of time for check-in and security procedures. Upon arrival at the airport, **check in for your flight** and prepare for your departure, marking the **end of your day tour and an unforgettable journey through Turkey's rich history and cultural heritage**.

What's Included

Inclusions

- Boutique Style Accommodation
- All Private Transportation
- Professional Tour Guide
- Local (Non-Touristy) Lunches
- Entrance Tickets/Fees

Exclusions

- Beverages
- Tips for guides, drivers, hotel staff, and service providers
- Lunch
- Food and drinks, unless specified
- Personal expenses

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