

21 Day Eastern Turkey Tour Itinerary and Trip Notes



Day 1

Arrive in **Istanbul** airport & transfer to the hotel. Istanbul is Turkey's largest city, with an estimated population of around 17 million. You'll be blown away by the beauty and grandeur of its architecture and history. Welcome Dinner & Night in Istanbul. (*Dinner*)

Day 2

After breakfast we will drive for 5 hours, stopping for lunch at a restaurant in the picturesque **Bolu** Mountains, and then continuing on to Safranbolu, famous for its wonderful collection of old Ottoman Houses. We arrive in charming **Safranbolu** in the afternoon in time for a stroll through the streets of this quaint World Heritage town. We will stay in a traditional Ottoman style house. Dinner and night in Safranbolu. (*Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*)

Day 3

This morning, we will visit some of the traditional old homes unique in Turkey for their design and construction. They include **Kaymakamlar Evi** (the Governor's House and **Cinci Inn** (Caravanserai).

After this, you will have free time to wander around the town and check out the local scene, especially the local artisans' shops and shops selling Turkish delight. Make sure you try Turkish delight with saffron, which is a specialty of the town.

In late morning, we set off for **Amasya**, the historic capital of the Pontic Empire, on the banks of **Yesilirmak River** with lunch on the way. Amasya is a lovely town with a dramatic setting – river, rock tombs and a castle, all flood lit at night. Night in Amasya. *(Breakfast, Dinner)*



Day 4

Amasya has a rich historical and cultural heritage. Many civilizations flourished here, and it was once the capital of the Pontic kingdom. We spend the morning here, visiting the museum and taking a closer look at the Pontic tombs, the historic **Beyazit II Mosque**, the **Hazeranlar Konagi** (a restored Ottoman mansion) and other notable city sites. Your afternoon is free. Night in Amasya. *(Breakfast)*



Day 5

After breakfast, we set off for the Black Sea coast, traveling along the picturesque **Yesil Irmak River** valley and stopping at historical **Niksar** for lunch. We then cross the mist-covered Pontic Mountain range to **Giresun** on the Black Sea coast. Dinner and night in Giresun. *(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)*

Day 6

This morning we visit Kale Park (Castle Park), before travelling along the coastal road to **Trabzon**. Our first stop in **Trabzon** is at the **Ayasofya Museum**, the 13th Century Byzantine church (below). After lunch we visit **Ataturk's Mansion**. The rest of the day is free. Dinner and night in Trabzon. *(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)*



Day 7

In the morning, we drive to the **Sumela National Park**, 45km inland. With the lush green countryside, fast flowing clean rivers and charming people, this drive is a real treat. The sight of **Sumela Monastery** on the mountainside is just breathtaking. We have lunch in a nearby restaurant before returning to **Trabzon** in early afternoon.

The remainder of the day is free to do as you please. You may visit the local bazaars, which have lots of interesting shops, but unlike the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, not a lot of overseas tourists about. You could wander through the countless traders' and artisans' shops, visit a **Hamam** (Turkish Bath) or just relax in one of many tea gardens and restaurants. Night in Trabzon.

(Breakfast, Lunch)

Day 8

Today we drive along the Black Sea coast, visiting the picturesque **Uzun Lake** and stopping at **Rize** for lunch. **Rize** is the '**Capital of Tea Country**' in Turkey. We recommend that you try some freshly brewed local tea, which is very flavoursome. After lunch, we set off for **Ayder** where the main attractions are **thermal springs**, alpine scenery and highland villages. You will be amazed by the five-star scenery on the way there. There will be time to swim in the thermal springs.

Dinner & night in Ayder. *(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)*

Day 9

In the morning, we drive towards the Georgian border and then inland through hilly tea-country before reaching the roaring **Çoruh River**. With major dam works, the drive along the **Çoruh Valley** is fascinating. We arrive at the city of **Artvin** in time for lunch, a cold drink and breathtaking views. After lunch, we continue to Erzurum, the largest city in Eastern Turkey and a provincial capital..

Night & dinner in Erzurum. *(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)*

Day 10

In the morning, you will go on a tour to see some of the notable city sites, including **Çifte Minareli Medrese** (Twin Minareted religious university), **Ulu Cami** (the Grand Mosque) and the **Yakutiye Medresesi**. The rest of the day is free.

Night in Erzurum. *(Breakfast)*

Day 11

After breakfast, the group will drive through highland country with splendid scenery to **Kars** which stands at an altitude of 1,750 metres. On the way, we will stop to take a close look at the **Çobandere Bridge** dating back to the 13th Century and the monument to the victims of **Sarikamis** siege.

On arrival in Kars, we will have lunch at a local restaurant before visiting the major city sites, including the 12th century **Selçuk Citadel** and the 10th century Armenian **Church of 12 Apostles**. We will then check into our hotel and the rest of the day is free. When you stroll through the town, you will see many reminders of 40 years of Russian rule between 1878 and 1918. These include streets in a grid pattern of and elegant buildings.

Night in Kars. *(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)*

Day 12

This morning, we set off to visit the nearby ruins of the 10th century Armenian capital of **Ani** close to the border. Even though earth quakes and Mongol invasions destroyed much of the city, fortified walls and well-preserved ruins of churches are well worth seeing.

After visiting Ani, we will return to Kars for lunch (not included) and then drive on to the town of Doğubayazit, stopping to take in the views of magnificent Mt Ararat (Agri Dağı in Turkish) on the way. Mt Ararat which is Turkey's most famous natural landmark is an enormous volcano, rising 5,137 metres high, always capped with snow and often shrouded in dark clouds. It is believed that Noah's Ark came to rest here.

Night in Dogubayazit. *(Breakfast, Dinner)*

Day 13

After breakfast, we set off to explore the spectacular Ishak Pasha Palace, once used to control the Silk Road. Built between 1685 and 1784, the palace incorporates a blend of Ottoman, Persian and Selcuk architectural styles and is a "must see" site. It is reputed to have contained 366 rooms, one for each day of a leap year.

Today we continue on to the lakeside city of Van (pronounced vun as in 'run'), the ancient Urartian capital. Lake Van is Turkey's largest inland body of water. At 1720 metres above sea level, it is also one of the world's highest lakes. At the 'Rock of Van' near the lake shore are Cuneiform inscriptions documenting the life and work of Menua, an important Urartian king. Today we see the imposing **Van Castle** and the nearby ruins of old Van.

Night in Van. (*Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*)



Day 14

A full day to explore the ancient remains and monuments of the Van Region. In the morning we see the 10th Century Armenian Church of the Holy Cross on Akdamar Island in Lake Van. Its outer stonewalls, richly decorated with Old Testament scenes and characters, are nothing short of amazing.

After lunch, we visit the imposing 9th century Hosap citadel some 50km away. With a little luck, we may catch sight of the famous cats of Van during our stay here. These cats are pure white and have one blue and one yellow or green eye. We will have free time in Van during late afternoon and evening.

Night in Van. (*Breakfast, Lunch*)

Day 15

We set off for Diyarbakir, stopping for lunch in Tatvan. In Diyarbakir, the River Tigris flows past the mighty black basalt city walls. Second only to the Great Wall of China, they are between 5.5 and 6 kms in length, and, with 82 watchtowers and 4 gates, they give the city an ominous appearance.

Night in Diyarbakir. (*Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*)

Day 16

In the morning we explore this fascinating old city with its maze of cobbled streets and alleys peppered with beautiful mosques, imposing huns (Caravanserais), stately Köşks (mansions) and intriguing churches. It has a lively energetic atmosphere and the residents are open, helpful and friendly.

Our journey then takes us to Mardin where we have lunch in the centre of this beautiful town. With its ancient citadel and unique stone buildings, Mardin is an architectural 'treasure chest'. From a distance, the golden stone of the houses blend into the rock on which the city is built. We shall visit the active Syriac-Jacobite "saffron monastery", so named for the yellowish rock from which it is built. Views of the Mesopotamian Plain will entrance you. Our journey then takes us on to the Old Testament town of Şanlıurfa, which was known as Ur in ancient times. Reputedly the birthplace of Prophet Abraham, Şanlıurfa is also known as the city of prophets. The name Şanlıurfa means "Glorious Urfa" commemorating the town's resistance to the French invasion and occupation of 1918-20. We will spend three nights in Şanlıurfa.



(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 17

This morning, we depart for Mount Nemrut (Nemrut Dağı in Turkish), to see the spectacular stone heads and god statues built in honour of King Antiochus, a Commegene ruler. Erected in the first century BC, the engineering involved continues to baffle and amaze archeologists and visitors alike. On the way to Mount Nemrut, we visit the mighty Atatürk Dam, which harnesses the waters of Euphrates River providing hydroelectric power and irrigation, as well as holiday and recreation facilities for the region. Night in Şanlıurfa.

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 18

In the morning, we visit the beehive-style mud houses of Harran. This is one of the most ancient continuously inhabited sites on Earth and is where Abraham and his wife Sarah reputedly spent some years.

After lunch in Urfa, we explore the fascinating sites of this Old Testament town, including the Sacred Carp Pools of Abraham, his birth cave and an ancient citadel, as well as the exquisite mosque complex and the most traditional covered bazaar. Rest of the day is free to spend as you please. Night in Şanlıurfa. *(Breakfast, Lunch)*

Day 19

After breakfast, we set off for Gaziantep where we will have lunch and the largest mosaic museum in the world. The museum holds the exquisite mosaics from the ancient Roman City of Zeugma, as well as artifacts from the area belonging to every period. Our journey continues on to Tarsus, where we will spend the night.

Dinner & night in Tarsus. *(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)*

Day 20

After breakfast we will visit Tarsus. This was the birth place of St Paul, born almost 2000 years ago. Then continue on to Kizkalesi where we will enjoy a farewell dinner. Night in Kizkalesi.

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 21

Drive to Adana airport, for morning flight to Istanbul.

Please note: this itinerary is correct at the time of printing. Occasionally our itineraries are updated to reflect improvements. It is important that you check back to our website at www.goholidayturkey.com to review the itinerary and trip notes closer to your departure date to ensure you have the most up-to-date information.

Inclusions:

- 20 nights in comfortable hotel
- All entrance fees
- 20 breakfasts
- 15 lunches
- 15 dinners
- 1 domestic flight to Istanbul
- Full transport in air-conditioned, non smoking bus
- Turkish Registered Professional English Speaking tour guide

Price:

\$3200 per person twin share

\$ 3600 per person single

Price does not include Flights. If you would like to fly with the group, and have a group transfer from airport to hotel in Istanbul, please ask us for more information.

Dates:

Tour starts in Istanbul 31 May 2012

Tour finishes in Istanbul 20 June 2012

Useful Information

Airport / Transfers

Ataturk International airport is approximately 25km west of Istanbul's city centre. The easiest way to get to Sultanahmet is by taxi. The day time fare will cost approximately 30TL, but after midnight it will cost around 50-55TL. Airport buses to Aksaray leave every 30 minutes from 6am-11pm. You will need to catch a tram from Aksaray to Sultanahmet or a taxi.

Sabiha Gokcen is on the Asian shore of Istanbul and is much further from the hotel. We advise that you avoid flying into this airport if possible. If you do fly to Sabiha Gokcen airport, you can catch a Havas airport bus to Taksim, and then a taxi to Sultanahmet (approximately 10TL-20TL depending on the time of day).

Accommodation

We can book additional accommodation for you in Istanbul either before or after the tour. Contact us for prices.

Clothing

We suggest light, easily washable T shirts or shirts with sleeves. Slacks, shorts, jeans for tourist areas only. If you are travelling on to more conservative areas in Turkey, we recommend slacks (not jeans or shorts) for men and for women, clothing that covers the knees and shoulders.

Meals

As a guide, it is possible to buy a filling lunch for 10TL or dinner for approximately 15TL.

Breakfast in Turkey is generally very simple, consisting of bread, jam, cheese, tomato, cucumber, olives and tea and coffee.

Mobile Phones

We are unsure whether Mobile Phones will work in Turkey. Contact your provider if you want to know more. We do know that if the phone does work it will be very expensive. Email is probably the easiest way to keep in contact with your friends & family. There are internet cafes at nearly all the towns that we will be staying in.

Money matters

From January 1, 2005 until December 31, 2008, Turkey's currency was called the New Turkish Lira (*Yeni Türk Lirası*, YTL or TRY). On 1 January 2009, Turkey introduced a new series of banknotes called "E9" which have strengthened anti-counterfeiting measures. At this time, Turkey dropped the "New" from the currency name, and so the currency is again called the **Turkish Lira**. Notes are in denominations of TL1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 liras. The lira is divided into 100 **Kurus** (pronounced kooROOSH), with **coins** in denominations of 5, 10, 25 and 50 (Kurus) and TL1 and TL2. The easy way to convert to AUD\$ is AUD\$1 = 1YTL approximately.

Visa, MasterCard & American express credit cards are accepted in Turkey. Cirrus and Plus are also available. There are ATMs in nearly every town or you can get cash from inside the bank. We recommend that you try to use cash when purchasing goods as paying with credit cards or travellers cheques incurs high costs. There are money exchanges in most towns for cash or traveller cheques. Every town has different rate for money

exchange, ask Adem or your tour guide before you change money & he will advise you on the best rate or best exchange to visit.

Packing

Other items to pack:

- Head Scarf if you have one (if not there are very pretty ones you can buy in Turkey that are quite inexpensive) to visit Mosques
- One slightly more dressy change of clothes for dinner in the hotel or restaurant
- Comfortable walking shoes or sneakers
- Swimsuit and towel
- Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, insect repellent
- Personal toiletries and underwear
- Rain jacket and cardigan or jacket for cool nights or change in the weather
- Alarm Clock

Tips

Please note, it is customary in Turkey to give a tip to the tour guide and bus driver if you are happy with their service. Because wages are so low in Turkey it is also nice to leave a tip for waiters.

Valuables

Please ensure that you keep your passport, tickets & money in a very safe place. We recommend that you wear a money belt or bum bag. Make copies of your passport and tickets & note the numbers of your traveller's cheques and keep these in your luggage.

Visas

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. Requirements vary depending on where you are from, and where you are going next. It is important to check this information prior to your departure. As a guide, visas for Australian citizens are obtained on arrival in Turkey and cost 20USD per person (note that prices are subject to change without notice). It is critical that you pay for this in cash in USD as Turkish Lira are not accepted for visa payments. Make sure you have some USD with you to avoid any hassles at the visa window.

Water

It is best not to drink tap water while you are in Turkey, so make sure that every evening you stock up on enough bottled water to see you through the night. Bottled water is reasonably inexpensive.

Weather Conditions

We will be travelling in spring, this is a great time to travel as it has not yet warmed up to very high temperatures but can still be quite cool in some areas especially at night. There is still some rain around but mostly it should be fine. We are hoping for temperatures ranging between 20 – 30°C. Try to keep your luggage as light as possible, as heavy luggage becomes a burden once you have been on the road for a few weeks!

We have put a great deal of thought into planning this itinerary for your enjoyment.

Please remember that group excursions require the co-operation of the whole group to make this trip the success we envision.

WELCOME ABOARD!