

ITINERARY for Thompsons Tours

Day 1

Erzurum

D

Arrival in *Istanbul Ataturk Airport at 06:05 AM*. Meet and greet by your guide. Then transfer to domestic airport for flight to Erzurum departing at 09:05.

Arrive in Erzurum and visit city. Erzurum is the largest province in Eastern Anatolia and is located on a high plateau (1950 m). The province has always been a transportation junction and is now the transfer point for air, rail or bus connections for travelers coming to Eastern Turkey.

The history of the city extends back to 4000 BC and it has seen many civilizations in Anatolia. One of the most important remains from this periods is the well preserved Byzantine city walls. Most of the historical finds are kept in the collections of the Archaeological Museum, which is a part of the Erzurum Museum.



The modern city, with wide tree lined boulevards and university buildings, is intertwined with the historical district. The Seljuk buildings in the town are remarkable. The Ulu (Grand) Mosque built in 1179 is interesting, with its many columns and seven wide naves. Next door to Ulu Mosque is the Cifte Minareli (Double Minaret) Menderes Medrese (theological school), which is the most famous feature of the city. It is a perfect example of Seljuk architecture, the carved portal being particularly fine.

Dinner and overnight in Erzurum

Day 2

Mountain Ararat and Dogubeyazit

B/D

After breakfast drive to Mountain Ararat, rising up to a height of 5165 m, is the main peak of Turkey and the symbol of Agri. This snowcapped dormant volcano is the famous biblical Mountain Ararat, the legendary site of the second beginning of the world. It is believed that Noah's Ark rested on its summit during the big flood, and the wide plain of Igdır



at the foot of the mountain is the first place where Noah set foot after the disaster. A geological hollow near Uzengili village has the shape allegedly of the ark, and it is a place often visited by tourists, being also a beautiful resting spot. 95 kms east of Agri, is the town Dogubayazit, comprising spectacular ruins from earlier periods. Ishak Pasha Palace, 6 kms outside the town center, is the most important sight, and was constructed by the Ottoman governor, Ishak Pasha, in the 17th century. It has been restored

many since, and has become an original building of mixed architectural design. An Urartian king relief and a rock tomb dating to the 9th century BC, are other historical remains near the palace, while ruins from the same period are also to be found near Patnos, another important town of Agri province.

Drive back to Erzurum for dinner and overnight.

Day 3**Malatya****B/D**

After breakfast, drive to Malatya is a medium sized city in the South-East of Turkey.

Malatya and its surroundings have been the host to various civilizations from the first ages of history. The city of Malatya, which is located in the middle of a fertile plateau, the surroundings of which are irrigated by many large and small streams, is where various fruits are grown, including the world famous apricots. Fruit orchards, grain fields and animal husbandry in the pastures are the main assets of Malatya. The city with its planned urbanization, is today the main Eastern Anatolian city, it has industry, medical facilities and a university. The most frequently visited places in the city are the **Archaeological Museum** and the New Mosque of the last Ottoman Period, which was built in 1912. Battalgazi, to the north of the city, is an important historical center. The citadel in Battalgazi was first constructed by Titus, the Roman Emperor, in the first century A.D. and then restored extensively by the Seljuks in the twelfth century. **The Battalgazi Grand Mosque** is the only example of a mosque plan with iwans in Anatolia. Aslantepe archaeological excavation site is at a distance of 4 km from Malatya on the road to Battalgazi. The excavations are continuing at **Aslantepe**, which is a Late Hittite City where there are ruins of Hittite palaces remaining from the thirteenth century B.C.

Dinner and overnight in Malatya.

Day 4**Mountain Nemrut****B/D**

After breakfast, drive to Mountain Nemrut. Topping the karts limestone mountain of Nemrut Dagı (2150m/7056ft) in the south-eastern Taurus 90km/56 miles north-east of Adiyaman is the Hierothosion of the Kommagene King Antiochus I (69-38 B.C.), dedicated to his own glory and that of the gods.

Antiochus' tomb is concealed somewhere inside the 50m/164ft high man-made burial mound, with its spectacular terraces on three sides (east, north and west). The 80m/260ft long north terrace, lined with (collapsed) columns, served as a place of assembly and arena for processions and other rituals.

On either side of the east terrace stand relieves of the King's ancestors, paternal (Persian) to the north, maternal (Seleucid) to the south, framing the colossal figures of the gods (heads standing on the ground) facing the main altar. These include, in addition to eagles and lions, the Greco-Persian mixed deities Zeus - Oromasdes, Hercules - Verethragna - Artagnes - Ares, Apollo - Mithras - Helios - hermes and Kommagene - Tyche, as well as Antiochus I himself.

A similar arrangement is repeated on the west terrace, which is some 10m/33ft lower than the east. Here the heads of the colossal statues are better preserved and there are also more of them. The "Lion Horoscope" with its astral motifs symbolizes the deification of Antiochus I through the metamorphosis of king into star.

After visits drive to Urfa for dinner and overnight.

Day 5**Harran****B/D**

Morning drive to Harran - South of Urfa, the landscape once more flattens into the Mesopotamian plain, broken only by the ancient mounds and obscure, mud brick villages. All of the villages are connected to electrical grids, and, with the prospect of greater wealth thanks to irrigation, many locals are investing in such "luxury" objects as refrigerators and televisions. Here lies a part of Turkey experiencing extremely rapid change, especially as it was formerly one of the poorest and least

developed of any area in the country.

Some nine miles (15 km) off the main tarmac road leading to Syria, turn left and ask for Sultantepe, apparently a major site in ancient Carrhae, where tablets inscribed with the legends of Gilgamesh (Gilgamiš) have been unearthed. Farther down the dirt road are the ruins of Sumurtar, a large mound with a labyrinth of passages and underground chambers used by the Sabians, worshippers of the sun, moon and planets. The grottos were clearly used for ceremonial purposes; some seem to have been later converted into subterranean mosques replete with mihrab facing the direction of Mecca.

Back toward the main road is the village of Harran itself, with its beehive-like dwellings. Here was the site of the Temple of Sin (known also as the first university), famous throughout the ancient world for its star readers and savants. It was in Harran where Rebecca drew water for Jacob, from whence Abraham decided to make his move into the land of Canaan. This was also where the Roman Emperor Crassus was defeated by the Parthians, with the Legion standards captured and brought back to Ctesiphon to the undying shame of the Romans; Crassus himself reportedly died by having liquid gold poured down his mouth. Later, the Emperor Julian the Apostate worshipped the moon here on the way to his fateful encounter with Shapur I farther east. Harran was also the last hold out of the Sabians, the pagans who had managed to survive through to the 11th century. Standing atop the ruins of the ancient citadel, one overlooks the scattered bits of rock and material - history stretching back to the very dawn of time: the very potsherds crunching underfoot have an immediacy here, the broken vessels having surely been used by some long forgotten ancestor from the land of Ur, an acquaintance of Abraham, or a Roman legionnaire from Gaul, whose memory now swirls with the dust devils across the oblate horizon.

Dinner and overnight in Urfa

Day 6**Antioch****B/D**

Morning drive to Antakya, the biblical Antioch, is situated on the Asi River (Orontes) in a fertile surrounding. Antakya was once the capital of the Seleucid kings and the life they lead in Antakya was renowned for its luxury and pleasures during Roman times. The city was the center of Christianity and had been visited by St. Barnabas and St. Peter. The city was also famous as a center of artistic, scientific and commercial activities.

The Hatay Museum deserves a particular interest because it houses one of the richest collections of Roman mosaics in the world.

A little outside the city is the holy site where St. Peter's Grotto is situated. The cave church is the place where St. Peter preached and founded the Christian community. It was declared as a holy

place by Vatican in 1983. The Iron Gate of Antioch is to the south of the grotto among the ruins of the city. One can sense these far off times since little has changed since that time. The Castle of Antioch will give you a panoramic view over the city.

After tour, drive to Adana for diner and overngiht

Day 7	Tarsus – Cappadocia	B/D
--------------	----------------------------	------------



After breakfast, drive to Tarsus was the capital of the Roman Province of Cilicia, situated between the Taurus Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. The Province of Cilicia varied between 30 to 60 miles wide and was about 300 miles long. The city of Tarsus was about 10 miles inland of the Mediterranean on the alluvial plain, watered by the Cydnus and may have had as many as one half million inhabitants in the time of Paul. Ramsey

described the city as about 70 feet above sea level on a level plain. The lower Cydnus was made navigable and a port had been built to carry goods to and from the sea. A major road lead to the north where the famous mountain pass known as the Cilician Gates lay less than 29 miles inland. Sir William Ramsey described the pass as one of the most famous and important passes in history.

The origins of the city are shrouded in mystery, but it appears the city was a native Cilician town taken over by Ionian settlers of antiquity. Josephus attributes the city to the Tarshish of Genesis 10:4, but this is by no means certain. It is mentioned several places in historical record with certainty. The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser says this city was taken by the Assyrians (mid C9 BCE). Xenophon passed through in 401 BCE, and found the ruler to be a local. Alexander found the rulership in the hands of the Persians, and he replaced the ruler (334 BCE).

Coins found in excavations of the region make no claim of autonomy until after the defeat of Antiochus the Great at the hands of the Romans (189 BCE). Syria appears to have undergone some reorganization at this time, allowing autonomy in some of the regions. Tarsus appears to have grown into autonomy at this time establishing a constitution as a free city. The city became part of the Roman Empire with the arrival of Pompey the Roman General and the defeat of the pirates that often harassed the city by about 64 BCE.

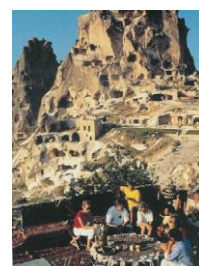
Autonomy meant that Tarsus was able to govern itself under its own laws, impose import taxation and a variety of other freedoms. Strabo mentions that the city was excited by education, and was home to the third largest university, after Athens and Alexandria. One teacher or note that came from Tarsus was the famous Athenodorus, a Stoic Philosopher that tutored Augustus at Apollonia, and later became his advisor from 44 to 15 BCE. This probably accounts for August’s favor on the city. Athenodorus returned to Tarsus and established a reform to the city in 15 BCE. Along with the reforms, he established a patrician class that probably included the family of Paul, who boasts of his association with the city (Acts 21:39).

Dinner and overnight in Cappadocia.

Day 8	Cappadocia	B/D
--------------	-------------------	------------

Full day tour of Cappadocia the land of unique landscapes and unusual rock formations called fairy chimneys” and troglodyte dwellings built by Christian monks to seek refuge.

Visit Goreme Valley a complex of rock chapels and churches covered with frescoes depicting the lives of Jesus Christ and some of the early



Christian Fathers such as St. Basil, St. George, Gregory of the Nissa etc..

Continue to visit the villages of *Avanos, Zelve and Natural Citadel of Uchisar*. Then, drive to an *underground city* made to accommodate several thousands of people with seven subterranean floors.

Dinner and overnight Cappadocia

Day 9

Pamukkale

B/D



Morning drive to *Pamukkale*, translates as “COTTON CASTLE” as it seems as you approach across the valley where calcareous hot springs descending over hundred meters have created fascinating travertine in the form of white terraces and basins. Visit the ancient city of Hierapolis, founded by Eumenes II in the 2nd century BC. Visit the theater and famous Necropolis which is the largest one in the Asia Minor.

Dinner and O/N Pamukkale.

Day 10

Kusadasi

B/D



Today, we are going to visit four of the “*Seven Churches Of Apocalypse*”;

Laodicea; founded around 260 BC and after Christianity, the city hosted an important Ecumenical Council in the 4th century. For St. John, in Revelation, the Christians of Laodicea were neither hot nor cold and because of their indifference he wanted to spew them out of his mouth. This reference has made scholars wonder if John was thinking about the hot springs of Pamukkale only 7 km farther away. His promise to the Laodiceans who would respond to his lesson was that they would join the Spirit in the great feast.

Sardis; the capital of ancient Kingdom of Lydia with its gymnasium and marble-paved synagogue. In the Book of Revelation (Rev. 3:1-6), St. John stated Sardis needed to wake up. He complaint that their acts their needs did not live up to their reputation, they did not finish what they started. But, he held out the hope to those who were not polluted that they should have robes of white. White was the color then of righteousness and immortality.



Philadelphia; the city of brotherly love was founded by King Attalus II of Pergamum in the 1st Century BC. Although one of the Seven Churches (Rev. 3:7-13), Philadelphia was the least distinguished; it was the only one about which St. John had no real criticism. He characterized it as having been given an open door.



Thyatira; an ancient Lydian city and one of the Seven Churches (Rev. 2:18-29). St. John’s criticism of Thyatira in revelation was related to the prophetess Jezebel. Whether she was a real woman of that name or whether he intended her as a symbol of licentiousness, John saw the challenge to Christianity which Thyatira represented as a moral decay among the members. To those who refused to compromise with their ideas he promised “the star of dawn” and “authority over the nations”.



Dinner and overnight Kusadasi.

Day 11	Ephesus	B/D
---------------	----------------	------------



Early morning departure from the hotel to the ancient city of **Ephesus**, the Roman capital of Asia minor which remains to be the best preserved ancient city in the world and one of the Seven Churches of apocalypse.

During the golden age of the Roman Empire (2nd century AD), Ephesus was an important commercial and cultural center. The protector of the city was Artemis, the Goddess whose temple was one of the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World”.

Today, the majority of the ruins are beautifully restored and one can visit a complete city including the Arcadian Way, the Great Theater (for 125,000 people), the Marble Road, the Celsius Library, the Temple of Hadrian, the Trojan Fountain, and the Gymnasium.

The Ephesians were still worshipping Artemis when St. Paul came to the city to win converts. St. John brought Virgin Mary to Ephesus after the death of Jesus Christ and she lived until the age of 101 in a small house built for her on Mt. Koressos. Now, popular place of pilgrimage for Catholics and Muslims, the house has received the official sanction of the Vatican and a commemoration ceremony is held every year on August 15th.



The third church council in 431 was held in the Basilica of Virgin Mary in Ephesus. The foundations of the house are old; they may date back to the 1st century; the rest of the building is from the 6th century. The setting is beautifully peaceful, encouraging reverence and contemplation.



Then visit the **Basilica of St. John** which was built in 6th century. The building was in the shape of a cross and was covered by 6 domes. Under the central dome was the tomb of St. John; that has a marble marker today. When Christianity became the state religion, the crowds who once flocked to the Temple of Diana turned their attention to this cathedral.

Dinner and overnight in Kusadasi.

Day 12	Pergamum-Troy	B/D
---------------	----------------------	------------

After breakfast, drive to **Pergamum, via Smyrna (Izmir)** one of the Seven Churches (Rev. 2:8-11). St. John tells to the Christians that they are about to suffer for their faith, but he also says that those who are faithful unto death will gain a crown of life. While there are no record of any visit by St. Paul to Smyrna, probably he was in the city at least once or twice because he was resident in Ephesus for over two years.

Early in the afternoon, arrival to Pergamum, the capital of large and powerful pre-Roman Kingdom and one of the Seven Churches of Revelation.



Visit the **Acropolis of Pergamum**, built by the Greeks and later expended by the Romans boasted one of the largest libraries in the ancient world. Visit includes the Theater, the Altar of Zeus, and the temples of Tragion & Athena.



Then continue to **ancient Troy** famous for the legendary Trojan Horse from the times of an equally legendary couple Helen & Paris. The remains of the city were excavated by Heinrich Schliemann, the pioneer in the field of archaeology, who used Homer's Illiad to locate the site, and who also took many of the valuable treasures he found there back to Germany with him.

Homer had immortalized Troy with his immortal narration of the stories of King Priam, Hector, Paris and the beautiful Helen.

Excavations revealed nine separate periods (layers) of settlement. The ruins include a temple a temple, theater, and foundations. Today, recent wooden copy of the famous Trojan Horse symbolically stands on the site to recall its legendary original since long vanished.

Dinner and overnight in Canakkale.

Day 13	Istanbul	B/D
---------------	-----------------	------------

Morning drive to Istanbul via Dardanel.



Afternoon, arrive in Istanbul and drive to Eminonu area for a short visit to historical **Spice Market (Egyptian Bazaar)**. This bazaar was built in 1664 as a part of Yeni Mosque complex situated nearby and named Egyptian Bazaar because spices and herbs brought from or via Egypt were sold in it.

Then, board a **private boat for the cruise along the Bosphorus**, a narrow strait between the continents of Europe and Asia connecting Black Sea in the north to the Sea of Marmara in the South. In the Byzantine and early Ottoman days, there was little settlement on either sides of the Bosphorus but as of the 18th century, it became a favorite place for the sultans and their entourage where they built their kiosks and waterside residence.

Disembark near Black Sea for the dinner at sea food restaurant.

Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 14	Full day tour	B/D
---------------	----------------------	------------

Morning drive to Asian side via Bosphorus Bridge and visit ***Beylerbeyi Palace***, Situated on the shore at the Asian end of the Bosphorus Bridge and built between 1861 and 1864 by Sultan Abdulaziz, the palace is a three-storey structure set on terraced grounds planted with trees brought from the entire world. The interior was decorated in a style typical of the 19th century-Europe and the original furniture is still in display. The building itself, constructed in the French Baroque style, is made of stone and marble. It was used by the Ottoman sultans as a summer residence.



Then drive to old town ***Hippodrome Square***, the scene of Chariot races and the center of Byzantine civic life which was originally built by Roman Emperor Septimus in 203 AD. Then visit ***Blue Mosque***, built in early 17th century and know as Blue Mosque because of its magnificent interior decoration with blue Iznik tiles. It is also unique in the world to have 6 minarets.

Continue to ***St. Sophia Museum***, built by Emperor Constantius in 360 AD. St. Sophia was for many centuries the world's largest church and today is the fourth largest one after St. Paul's in London, St. Peter's in Rome and Duomo in Milan. Throughout its Byzantine history, St. Sophia served as the cathedral of the city where emperors were crowned and victories celebrated. After his conquest of the city in 1453, Sultan Mehmet II ordered for the building to be converted into a mosque by the addition of Islamic elements such as a mihrab, a mimber, minarets etc.

After having served this time as a mosque for 481 years, the building become a museum in 1934 by the order of Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey.



Then, visit the famous historical ***Grand Bazaar***, the largest "souk" covered oriental shopping mall in the world, where you will find 4,400 shops under one roof where each trade has its own street. There is a wide selection of leather, jewelry, antiques, copperware, souvenirs, and famous hand-made Turkish carpets displayed in this historical shopping center.

Farewell dinner in a local restaurant and overnight in Istanbul.

Day 15	Departure	B
---------------	------------------	----------

Transfer to airport.