

Istanbul Extension

An Optional Add-On to Any Greece Itinerary

Day 1: Welcome to Istanbul, or Byzantium, or Constantinople!

(Day 1 of the Istanbul Extension corresponds with Day 11 of Iconic Greece)

After bidding farewell to our fellow travelers who are returning home from Athens today, we will depart for our morning flight to Istanbul, the vibrant & exciting cultural capital of Turkey, a unique & friendly nation where East & West meet.

Following our arrival into Istanbul's modern Ataturk Airport we will then take a private transfer into the city, stopping en-route to visit the mosaic-filled Chora Church & to view the City Walls. After visiting the beautiful church lunch will be in a shady square nearby.

When we check-in to our centrally-located hotel there will be time for you to freshen-up before our afternoon walking tour of Istanbul's Old City.

For our tour we will be in the company of our expert local guide. Amongst the iconic sights we will see are the Blue Mosque, the Hippodrome, & the superb Hagia Sofia - one of the most important buildings in world architecture.

Dinner tonight will be taken at hotel, allowing you to relax after a full day or perhaps venture out to see the city by night.

Day 2: Istanbul, Indoors & Out

We will explore the famed Grand Bazaar this morning, home to over 4,000 shops selling everything from carpets to jewelry.

The bazaar is a literal labyrinth, easily to get lost in but always fun. Your tour leader will help you navigate through the narrow alleyways, introducing you to some of the exotic goods still sold in this historic trading center. There will be plenty of time for you to stop & shop, whether for a fez, t-shirts, Turkish delight or even a carpet. Later you'll also visit the Egyptian Spice Market, a photographer's delight with piles of brightly-colored spices & herbs displayed outside the stores.

After free time for lunch, an included afternoon boat trip across the Bosphorus will take us across to the Asian side of the city, a unique experience that only Istanbul can offer. In the small village-like atmosphere you can stroll, enjoy a drink, or take in the views. And for those with enough energy there will be a chance to hike to the top of a nearby hill for views to the Black Sea.

Upon our return to Istanbul's center we'll climb the Galata Tower for panoramic views over the city, our final sightseeing of a fun-filled day.

Dinner this evening will be by the Golden Horn, once home to Istanbul's Ottoman fleet & now the bustling departure point for the city's ferries.

Day 3: Topkapi

This morning we will make the short walk from our hotel to the nearby Topkapi Palace, the legendary former home of the Ottoman emperors, where we will learn how they lived in luxury & administered the huge Ottoman empire from here.

In order to allow everyone to tour at their own pace you will be able to stay in the palace as long as you want, with a totally free final afternoon in Istanbul afterwards.

This city has so much to see & do that you'll have to choose, whether to visit one of the city's excellent museums, take a walk along the city walls, or perhaps return to the bazaar to barter for a carpet...?

This evening we will enjoy a final farewell dinner in another colorful restaurant in the heart of Istanbul.

Day 4: Farewell to Istanbul

This morning our return flight from Istanbul will connect in Athens with the return flight back to the USA, arriving home later today.