



# MEJDI TOURS

## **Helping Syrian Refugee Children in Turkey: A Powerful Volunteer Experience**

July 31 – August 9, 2015

It has been more than four years since the Syrian uprising began and has gone from being a nonviolent revolution to one of the bloodiest and most tragic conflicts the Middle East has known in modern times. As the war between the Syrian government forces and the Syrian opposition continues, the refugee situation worsens daily, military measures become even more extreme, and the most precious jewels of Syrian culture and history are daily being reduced to rubble.

This trip will take the traveler from the bustling streets of Istanbul to the southern cities of Hatay and Gaziantep. Learn about the worsening Syrian crisis from multiple perspectives as you meet with Syrian activists, listen to humanitarian aid workers, and volunteer with refugee children.

### **Day 1: Friday, July 31 – Arrival**

Arrive at Istanbul Ataturk Airport in Turkey and transfer to your hotel in Istanbul on your own for check-in. Meet other travelers and your MEJDI tour guide for a welcome dinner starting at 6:00pm.

*Hotel:* Istanbul

### **Day 2: Saturday, August 1 – Istanbul**

Begin the morning with a visit to the Hagia Sophia, once the seat of the Orthodox church in Turkey. Later visit the Blue Mosque, which functioned for centuries as the Ottoman imperial mosque. Then tour the Basilica Cistern, the largest surviving Byzantine cistern in the city. In the evening, participate in a discussion about the history of modern Turkey and the challenges it currently faces.

*Hotel:* Istanbul

### **Day 3: Sunday, August 2 – Istanbul**

Start the day by learning about the history of the Syrian conflict from Syrian peace and human rights activists. After lunch, visit a refugee school to hear about the challenges of education for Syrian children in Istanbul before spending time doing educational activities with the kids.

*Hotel:* Istanbul

### **Day 4: Monday, August 3 – Istanbul**

In the morning visit the Jewish Museum and learn about the different minority groups in Turkey. Then visit the Chora Church to see some of the best mosaics in Turkey. After lunch, meet with the Syrian Coalition and have a discussion with Abdul Jaleel al-Shaqqi, a Syrian artist and human rights activist. Attend a dervish ceremony at night.

*Hotel:* Istanbul

**Day 5: Tuesday, August 4 – Gaziantep**

Take an early morning flight from Istanbul to Gaziantep. After your flight arrives in the ancient city of Gaziantep, you'll meet with representatives of local NGOs to learn about their work on humanitarian aid for Syria. After lunch, meet with a panel of women to learn about women's initiatives for refugees in Syria and Turkey, and then visit the Assistance Coordination Unit, where you'll learn about their humanitarian work in Syria.

*Hotel:* Gaziantep

**Day 6: Wednesday, August 5 – Gaziantep**

Visit the Zeugma Mosaic Museum, then meet with journalists and learn about their experience of the Syrian revolution and war in Aleppo, a northern city currently under siege. In the afternoon, visit the old city and enjoy coffee or tea with Syrian activists in the city.

*Hotel:* Gaziantep

**Day 7: Thursday, August 6 – Gaziantep**

Visit a local school to volunteer with a non-profit, running workshops with the children. After lunch, meet with Dr. Khaled, a physician who has worked in Syria on immunization campaigns during the war.

*Hotel:* Gaziantep

**Day 8: Friday, August 7 – Hatay**

On your way to Antakya, you'll visit an orphanage in Rihaniyeh and spend time playing with the kids there. Then visit a hospital and rehabilitation center to meet some of the victims of war and their families who make the journey from Syria into Turkey on a regular basis.

*Hotel:* Hatay

**Day 9: Saturday, August 8 – Hatay**

Start the day with a tour of the ancient biblical city of Hatay/Antakya and then travel to work with refugee kids outside of the city. In the evening, enjoy a farewell dinner with music and entertainment at Antikhan Restaurant.

*Hotel:* Hatay

**Day 10: Sunday, August 9 – Departure**

Take an early morning flight from Hatay to Istanbul. Depart from Istanbul Ataturk Airport for the United States.