



# MEJDI TOURS

## MEJDI Tours Group Departure

- Tour:** Discover Turkey: Istanbul, Cappadocia, & The Turquoise Coast
- Included:** 9 nights' accommodation at the following 4- & 5- star hotels or similar (double occupancy): Elite World Istanbul, Yunak Evleri Cave Hotel Cappadocia, Charisma Deluxe Hotel Kuşadası  
1 local guide for 9 days  
8 days of private bus transportation  
Arrival and departure airport transfers  
Internal flight (Istanbul - Cappadocia - İzmir)  
Meals listed in the itinerary: 9 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 6 dinners  
Entrances, sites, and honorariums for speakers<sup>1</sup>  
Water on the bus throughout the tour  
US-based customer service representatives
- Not included:** International airfare (US-Istanbul; İzmir-Istanbul-US)  
Travel insurance-**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**  
Single Supplement-\$715  
Optional Hot Air Balloon in Cappadocia  
Drinks at included meals  
Meals not mentioned in the itinerary  
Gratuities  
Anything not explicitly mentioned in the included section
- Pricing<sup>2</sup>:** 10+ Paying Participants - \$2,995 Per Person

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to confirmation based on availability

<sup>2</sup> Subject to change based on confirmation. This quote is valid for 2 weeks.

## Overview:

Poised at the crossroads between East and West, Turkey never fails to fascinate. Gain unique insight into the country's rich heritage, shaped by the influences of myriad cultures and empires. Immerse yourself in the cosmopolitan city of Istanbul, which straddles the Bosphorus, separating the continents of Europe and Asia. Sit down with a local refugee for a discussion about immigration. Discover the social expectations and adaptations of Turkish women throughout history and in Istanbul today. Visit the Hagia Sophia, which reigned as the grandest church in Christianity before being converted into a mosque and the Blue Mosque, so named for the 20,000 blue Ottoman-era Iznik tiles lining its interior. Visit the Grand Bazaar, the world's largest covered marketplace, and wander miles of intricately displayed leather, tiles, jewelry, copper, and authentic Turkish kilims. Enter the harem of Topkapı Palace for a glimpse into the lives of harem women in the Ottoman world and sit down with a local women's NGO to discuss the role of women in Turkey today. Journey to Cappadocia, known for its distinctive "fairy chimneys," cave dwellings, and dry, arid landscape. Take a boat ride on the sparkling waters of the Turkish Riviera, known as the "Turquoise Coast," wonder at the excavated remains of ancient cities reflecting centuries of history, from classical Greece to the Roman Empire, and discuss the relationship between Turkey and Greece throughout history and into the present day.

## Itinerary:

### Day 1: Arrival - Istanbul, Turkey

Arrive in Istanbul. Meet your guide and transfer to your hotel. Afternoon at leisure. Enjoy a group **welcome dinner** at your hotel this evening.

*Hotel: Elite World Istanbul (D)*

### Day 2: Istanbul

This morning, depart on a full day guided exploration of Istanbul. Start at the **Hippodrome**, one of Istanbul's oldest sites and the center of Byzantine civic life for 1,000 years, including coronations, Roman chariot races, and more than one imperial execution. Then, visit the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed I, or the "Blue Mosque," with its billowing domes and six minarets. Built in the early 17th century, it is called the **Blue Mosque** because of the 20,000 predominantly blue Iznik tiles lining the interior walls. Visit **Topkapı Palace**, the magnificent palace that served as the residence of the imperial family of the Ottoman Empire, as well as a political center for the Ottoman world. **Enter the harem**, once supposed to be the home of close to 1,000 women, chosen from various nationalities and ethnicities to attend school and live in the harem. **Discuss the role of women in Turkey throughout history and in modern day.** Later this afternoon at your hotel, **meet with a representative from a local NGO for the support of women suffering from parental, sexual, ethnic, political, and social issues.** Enjoy dinner on your own this evening.

*Hotel: Elite World Istanbul (B, L)*

### Day 3: Istanbul

Begin today with a **visit to the Hagia Sophia**, the Church of Divine Wisdom, built by orders of Constantine the Great, the founder of Constantinople and the first Christian Emperor of the city. Formerly a museum and now a re-converted mosque, the Hagia Sophia, built by the

Byzantine Emperor Justinian between 532 and 537, reigned as the grandest church in Christianity until its conversion into a mosque by Sultan Mehmet II after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. See the exquisite medallions bearing Ottoman calligraphy as well as several restored Byzantine mosaics. From here, **venture into a beautifully restored ancient underground cistern**, dating back to the 4th century, when it was an important source of water for the city. Next, explore the vast collection of marble statues from Archaic, Classic, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Eras, at the **Istanbul Archaeology Museums**. Stroll through the **Spice Market**, and let the aromas and vibrant colors seduce your senses. Stop for a chat with a vendor, sample some spices, and learn the secrets behind the spice trade and its role in legendary Turkish cuisine. Visit the **Rüstem Pasha Mosque**, famous for its large quantities of İznik tiles displayed in stunning designs. Return to your hotel for a **meeting with a refugee currently living in Istanbul**.

*Hotel: Elite World Istanbul (B, L)*

#### **Day 4: Istanbul**

Transfer to the world famous **Grand Bazaar**, the largest covered marketplace in the world, where a dazzling array of goods, from intricately inlaid furniture and Turkish kilims, to gold jewelry and spices, are sold in the bazaar's 4,000 plus shops. Enjoy time on your own to peruse and visit with artists, craftsmen, weavers, and jewelers, for a glimpse into their unique crafts, and a taste of daily life in the bazaar. Enjoy a **private boat ride on the Bosphorus** and take in stunning views of Turkish seaside mansions, or yalı, and minarets dotting the hillside of this bustling waterway. Disembark on the **Asian side of Istanbul**, and explore the historical neighborhoods of Üsküdar and Kuzguncuk. Return to the European side and wander through the down-to-earth **Balat neighborhood**, a traditional Jewish quarter in the Fatih district of Istanbul known for its narrow cobblestone streets and brightly colored houses. Enjoy dinner on your own this evening.

*Hotel: Elite World Istanbul (B, L)*

#### **Day 5: Istanbul - Cappadocia**

Transfer to the airport early this morning for a flight to **Cappadocia**, a region known for its distinctive "fairy chimneys," cave dwellings, and dry, arid lunar-like landscape. Upon arrival, **explore an underground cave city**, excavated as early as the time of the Hittites, and expanded over the centuries as various marauding armies invaded Central Anatolia. **Visit a pottery cooperative for a traditional Turkish pottery demonstration** and learn how this traditional handicraft has been passed down from generation to generation for centuries. Transfer to your hotel and get settled in, then meet up with the group to **attend a ceremony of the Semazen, or whirling dervishes—mystical Sufi dancers who spin themselves into a spiritual trance**.

*Hotel: Yunak Evleri Cave Hotel Cappadocia (B, L, D)*

#### **Day 6: Cappadocia**

Arise before the sun for an **optional hot air balloon ride** and watch the sun come up over the mystical valleys and fairy chimneys of Cappadocia as you glide above this surreal landscape. Visit **Göreme Open Air Museum**, an open air monastic complex of underground chapels and restored frescoes. Continue exploring the natural rock settlements and towns

of Cappadocia, including **Uçhisar**, home of Uçhisar Castle, the region's highest point and historic defense citadel and **Çavuşin**, an old Greek village and home of Saint John's Church. **Enjoy lunch in a local home with a local family.** This afternoon, visit a Turkish kilim (rug) cooperative for a rug weaving demonstration and some time at leisure for shopping. Enjoy an evening at leisure or an **optional sunset horseback ride.**

*Hotel: Yunak Evleri Cave Hotel Cappadocia (B, L, D)*

### **Day 7: Cappadocia - İzmir - Selçuk - Şirince - Kuşadası**

Transfer to the airport this morning and fly to Izmir. Upon arrival, drive to Selçuk (~1.75 hour drive) and **visit the ruins of the Basilica of Saint John**, believed to be the burial site of Saint John the Apostle and home of the letters of St. John to seven churches. Ascend into the hills surrounding Selçuk and **enjoy fruit wine tasting and a scenic walk through a vineyard, and spend time exploring the quaint, cobblestone streets of Şirince, a quintessential combination of a traditional Turkish and Greek village. Discuss the relationship between Turkey and Greece throughout history and in the present day.** Transfer to your hotel in the seaside town of Kuşadası and get settled in.

*Hotel: Charisma Deluxe Hotel Kuşadası (B, D)*

### **Day 8: Ephesus**

This morning, **visit the House of the Virgin Mary**, a famous pilgrimage chapel venerated by Christians and Muslims alike, said to be the home where Mary lived at the end of her life. From there, **continue on to the ancient city of Ephesus**, a religious center of early Christianity where Paul ministered to the disciples, once the trade center of the ancient world, and one of the largest and best excavated Greco-Roman cities in Turkey. Take a **guided tour of the Ephesus Archaeological Museum** and enjoy some time to explore on your own. Return to your hotel for an evening at leisure.

*Hotel: Charisma Deluxe Hotel Kuşadası (B, L, D)*

### **Day 9: Kuşadası**

Today, **set out on a day sail along the Turquoise Coast onboard a *gulet*, or traditional Turkish sailing vessel.** Swim or snorkel in the crystal blue waters of the Icarian Sea, explore inlets and coves along the coast, and enjoy lunch onboard. En route back to the hotel, **visit a local center for leather production.** This evening, **join the group for a farewell dinner** as you toast to your final night in Turkey.

*Hotel: Charisma Deluxe Hotel Kuşadası (B, L, D)*

### **Day 10 - Departure**

Transfer to the airport in İzmir (~1 hour drive) and depart for your flight home to the US today, via Istanbul. (B)