TOUR CODE

TW4

ADVENTURESABROAD

WESTERN TURKEY

featuring the Coast & Cappadocia

18 days

Updated 06/01/2013

Day 1 ***Arrive in Istanbul***

Today we arrive in Istanbul and transfer to our hotel.

"If one had but a single glance to give the world, one should gaze on Constantinople," marvelled Alphonse de Lamartine, the 19th century French writer and politician. New Rome, Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul; the legendary city has served as the capital of the legendary Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. Though no longer a capital, Istanbul is the largest city and the cosmopolitan heart of Turkey, full of marvels and startling contrasts.

Overnight in Istanbul. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***Istanbul: Hippodrome & Agia Sophia***

We start our day with a panoramic drive around the Golden Horn and the great walls of Constantinople. The first recorded bridge over the Golden Horn was built during the reign of Justinian the Great in the 6th century at the western end of the city, and today we will pass the famous Galata Bridge and the Ataturk Bridge. As we drive along the Byzantine city gates and walls we will view the towering minarets of Suleyman's Mosque and the Galata Tower before arriving in Sultanahmet Square.

We'll begin the walking component of today's tour at the legendary Blue Mosque, built between 1609 and 1616 by Mehmet Aga. The inside is covered by more than 20,000 Iznik tiles. At the adjacent Hippodrome you will see the remains of the great sports stadium where chariot races were held in Roman and Byzantine times. We will also see an Egyptian obelisk, a giant needle of stone carved for the Pharaoh Tutmoses III around 1500 BC and brought to Constantinople by the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius in AD 390.

We continue to the church of Agia Sophia (St Sophia), built by the Emperor Justinian in 548 BC. It was the largest church in the Christian world for nearly 1,000 years. When the Ottoman Turks conquered the city in 1435 one of the first things they did was to convert St Sophia into a mosque. Today it is a museum featuring many beautiful Christian mosaics.

Outside Agia Sophia we descend underground to the gigantic cisterns that contained the vast water supply that allowed Constantinople to withstand so many long sieges. Here the many columns are reflected in the water while classical music plays quietly.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Istanbul. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Istanbul - Gallipoli - Troy - Canakkale***

After breakfast we drive along the Sea of Marmara through the small European part of Turkey known as Thrace. Only 3% of Turkey is in Europe, the other 97% known as Anatolia, is in Asia. One of the fascinations of Turkey is the huge number of peoples and empires that have occupied this land.

Before leaving Europe we visit Gallipoli, Gelibolu in Turkish. This narrow, mountainous peninsula on the northwestern side of the Dardanelles has seen more than its share of history with countless civilizations having battled for control over these straits for over 3,000 years. This is the historic World War I battleground where Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, father of the Turkish Republic, first rose to prominence. Under the direction of Winston Churchill, an unsuccessful naval and land campaign failed in its attempt to capture Gallipoli, open up the Dardanelles, and seize Constantinople. This battleground is now marked with over 30 memorials.

We then cross the Dardanelles waterway by ferry from Europe to Asia where we visit the ruins of Troy where Greek and Trojan heroes fought for the beautiful Helen. Troy had been accepted as a lengendary city for ages, but very few people believed in its true existence. Heinrich Schliemann excavated here at this own expense in the 1870s and discovered the spot where a sophisticated settlement had existed for centuries. As you stand on the ancient hilltop you can look out over the plain of Troy and feel the famous cool north wind blowing from the Dardanelles.

Overnight in Canakkale. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Canakkale - Pergamon - Kusadasi*

We have an early start today, travelling down the rugged Aegean coast and inland to the typically Turkish rural town of Bergama. Here we visit the Akropolis and Asklepion of the Roman city of Pergamon, said to be one of the first hospitals in the world. We see a carving of two snakes wrapped around a drinking cup (a modern symbol of the medical profession), and a theatre where the mentally disturbed would allegedly act out their emotions (a forerunner of today's psychoanalysis?).

Later we travel through Izmir, Turkey's most important port. Here the blind poet Homer was born when the city was known as Smyrna. Also here in 1922 the Turks expelled the invading Greeks from Turkish soil during the Turkish War of Independence.

We continue to Kusadasi, a beautiful port city with a small island fortress. The island, attached to the mainland, gives the city its name: Kusadasi, "The Island of Birds."

Overnight in Kusadasi. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Kusadasi: Ephesus*

Today we visit Ephesus, one of the highlights of any visit to Turkey. During its Golden Age, the city was adorned with splendid monuments, theatres, agoras and libraries. The protectress of the city was the goddess Artemis whose temple, dating back to 1300 BC, was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. As a prosperous trade and banking centre, Ephesus had a cosmopolitan population. It has been recorded that St John brought the Virgin Mary to Ephesus where she spent her last days after the death of Christ. On our tour of Ephesus we see a 24,000 seat amphitheatre, the Library of Celsus, and the marble-paved Arcadian Way. We also include the special Terrace Houses section, which provides fascinating insight into family life during the Roman period.

In addition to the main site of Ephesus we will visit the superb Ephesus Museum. We also visit the traditional town of Selcuk with its many beautiful buildings, including the Isa Bey Mosque (built in 1307), remains of old Turkish baths, and a hill crowned by the Ayasoluk Fortress.

Overnight in Kusadasi. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Kusadasi - Didyma - Bodrum: Crusader Castle of St Peter*

Today we travel southward along the Aegean coast on winding roads through fields and olive groves to Bodrum. En route we stop at Didyma, an ancient Ionian shrine and the most renowned oracle of the Hellenic world, containing a temple and an oracle of Apollo.

Bodrum is the site of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the Mausoleum. This was also the birthplace of the Greek historian Herodotus. Today Bodrum's whitewashed houses scattered on the hillside overlook the perfect natural harbour.

This afternoon we visit the Crusader Castle of St Peter which dominates Bodrum Bay. The castle was built by the Knights Hospitaller in the early 15th century. Today the castle houses an excellent museum, mainly dedicated to the artifacts retrieved from the many ancient shipwrecks discovered off the Turkish coast. Many of the pieces in the museum have been excavated from below the sea bed by teams of archaeologists from Texas A&M University.

Overnight in Bodrum. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Bodrum: Day at Leisure*

Today is free to enjoy the ambience of this beautiful town.

Overnight in Bodrum. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Bodrum - Kas*

Leaving Bodrum we head over the coastal fringes of the Taurus Mountains to the warm Mediterranean coast, called the 'Turquoise Coast' because of the exquisite blueness of the sea. The picturesque fishing village of Kas has a quaint harbour, carved tombs in the mountain behind, an ancient Lycian amphitheatre, a Lycian tomb, and the Greek island of Kastellorizo just off shore.

Overnight in Kas. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Kas - Gulet Cruise - Kas*

Today we cruise the Mediterranean on a wooden yacht, relaxing, sun bathing and stopping to swim at leisure. Our itinerary is open-ended today in order to account for local weather conditions, though our likely itinerary will include Tersane, Kekova submerged ruins, and the fortress at Simena. At some of these sites, foundations of houses and rock hewn staircases with outlines of buildings can be seen almost at the water's surface. There are several excellent places to moor for swimming and sightseeing.

Overnight in Kas. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Kas - Antalya*

Today we travel along the Lycian Coast visiting the rock tombs of Myra and the Church of St Nicholas -- the original Father Christmas -- on the way to Antalya. Before reaching Antalya we stop at Phaselis, one of the mst spectacular Roman cities on the coast, located on a narrow peninsula between pine forests and three natural harbours.

Overnight in Antalya. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Antalya - Perge - Aspendos - Antalya*

We visit the vast Roman site of Perge where St Paul is said to have preached his first sermon. Here are the ruins of a huge theatre with impressive marble relief work, fountains, a colonnaded steam bath and basilica. Nearby is the well preserved amphitheatre at Aspendos, which the Romans designed so brilliantly that natural acoustics allow someone sitting in the furthest seats to hear a person speaking in a normal voice down in the orchestra area. We will also see the aqueduct that brought water from the mountains to the city.

We return to Antalya and visit the excellent museum containing early Christian icons and Roman tombs with some of the best examples of Roman sculpture of Asia Minor.

Overnight in Antalya. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Antalya - Side - Konya*

We climb inland through dramatic scenery to the Anatolian Plateau.

Agriculturally, Turkey is one of the richest countries in the world. As we drive past villages and farms we see an abundance of wheat fields and orchards. Turkey is a huge exporter of dried fruits such as apricots and figs as well as nuts, lentils and beans.

We take a scenic route to Konya through the Taurus Mountains via Side. Once the trysting place of Anthony and Cleopatra, Side stands on a promontory flanked by two excellent beaches of golden sand. The ruins of the ancient city mingle with the new, and despite its development as a resort, it retains its own very special atmosphere and charm.

Later we arrive in Konya, a very traditional town and a religious centre where Mevlana Rumi founded the Whirling Dervishes in the 13th century. Here he taught a mystical branch of Islam which still has a strong influence around the world today. We visit the museum and tomb of the Mevlana, one of the holiest places in Turkey for Muslim pilgrims. Konya was the centre of Sultanate of Rum from AD 1150 until 1300. Many of the great buildings of Konya are Seljuk in design and date from this 'Golden Age'. We will see the ruins of the Seljuk Palace, the Karatay Museum and the delicate stone carving of the Slender Minaret.

Overnight in Konya. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Konya - Cappadocia*

Today we drive across the flat Anatolian Plateau to Cappadocia. Along the way we visit the caravanserai of Sultanhani. Caravanserai were fortified, medieval inns located one day's journey apart, for the protection of travelling merchants. This encouraged merchants and their caravans of silks and spices travelling the "Silk Route" to trade in Turkish lands,

thus promoting commerce.

Overnight near Cappadocia. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Cappadocia Area*

Today we will spend a full day exploring this unique and fascinating lunar landscape with its fairy chimneys and conical towers topped with huge, delicately balanced rocks. Here the elements have weathered layers of volcanic dust into giant cones and mushrooms 9m (30 feet) high! Most of the chapels date from the Byzantine period of the 10th and 11th centuries.

In the Goreme Valley we will see the many churches carved into this landscape with their wonderful paintings and frescoes. This monastic complex of rock chapels covered with frescoes is one of the best known sites in Central Anatolia. We will visit the underground city of Kaymakli one of the many cities dug into the soft rock of Cappadocia. At Kaymakli there are at least eight levels in the underground city, four of which are currently open to the public. The city is an elaborate network of tunnels, stairways and chambers hollowed out of the rock. It served as a safe haven during times of unrest and protected its citizens from marauding armies.

This evening, those who wish may attend a performance of Turkish traditional dances from Turkey's many regions (optional).

Overnight near Cappadocia. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Cappadocia - Tuz Golu - Ankara & Museum of Anatolian Civilizations*

Our drive today takes us to a salt lake called Tuz Golu. We travel through the village of Uchisar, clustered around the Uchisar Fortress, and the village of Urgup which was, according to documents found in the Middle Ages, a bishop's residence.

We continue to Ankara, Turkey's modern capital. Ankara was an ancient trading town before the Romans arrived; its name is derived from the angora wool of the goats sold here. Ataturk, founder of the Turkish Republic, made Ankara the capital rather than Istanbul to break with the discredited Ottoman Empire after World War I.

We visit the Mausoleum of Ataturk before our visit to one of the best museums in the world -- the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. The museum contains a superb collection dating back to the settlement at Catal Huyuk in 7500 BC and includes pieces from the Phrygian, Urartian, Assyrian and mighty Hittite Empires.

Overnight in Ankara. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *Ankara - Istanbul*

Today we travel by road to Istanbul (an early start will provide some free time in the city upon arrival).

Istanbul straddles the confluence of two waterways, the Golden Horn and the Bosphorous. The city is divided by these waterways into three parts. Two parts are in Europe and one part is in Asia, making Istanbul the only city in the world spread over two continents! The city is crowded with beautiful mosques, churches and palaces. You can stroll through the Grand Bazaar, one of the oldest covered marketplaces in the world containing over 4,000 shops where virtually anything can be bought.

Overnight in Istanbul. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Istanbul: Topkapi Palace*

Today we visit Topkapi Palace, the great palace of the Ottoman sultans from the mid-fifteenth to the early nineteenth century. It was from this vast complex of buildings that the mighty Ottoman Empire was organised. Today it is a huge museum containing ceremonial robes in silk and gold thread, Japanese and Chinese porcelain, European clocks, miniature paintings depicting Ottoman courtly life and one of the largest jewelry collections in the world. You may choose to end your visit with a look at the Topkapi Harem, where the sultans' many "wives" were kept in isolated splendour, before leaving the palace (optional approx +/-9 USD entrance fee).

Overnight in Istanbul. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 18 *Departure*

Departure from Istanbul.

IYI YOLCULUKLAR! Meal plan: Breakfast.