

Paul, John and the Early Church (sample itinerary)



In Antioch, where Paul preached his first sermon and introduced Christianity in Asia

Minor, examine the ruins of St. Paul's Basilica, the impressive stadium, the Roman baths, and the aqueducts and theater. Travel to Perge, a true outdoor archaeological museum with its 250-meter columned street, agora, triumphal arch, 12,000-seat theater, and Hellenistic Gate. Visit Laodicea where Mark, Timothy, and Epaphras brought the Gospel and established the first church – the church condemned in Revelation for its lukewarm attitude. Relax in the "Cotton Castle" of Pamukkale, distinctive for its fantastic calcium formations and pools of natural warm water.

Explore Philadelphia and Sardis, two of Revelation's Seven Churches, and discover the wonders of Ephesus where Paul spent two years. Sail to the former Roman prison island of Patmos where John received the Revelation, and continue on to Smyrna, Thyatira, and Pergamum, others of the Seven Churches. See Troy, ancient city from Homer's Iliad; Troas, where Paul restored the young man Eutychus to life; and Nicea, where two important ecumenical councils were held that figured greatly in the development of Christian orthodoxy. Conclude in Istanbul, admiring its colorful mosques, museums, and mosaics.

The sequence of touring and days may be altered to adjust to religious holidays, special closings of sites, air schedule changes, etc. Hotels listed subject to availability. Meal inclusions

may vary by departure.

Day

1, USA/VIENNA

Depart Dallas this morning for Washington where we connect with our transatlantic flight to Vienna. (meals aloft)

Day 2, VIENNA/ISTANBUL/ANTALYA

After arrival Vienna, we connect with our flight to Istanbul, and then on to Antalya. On arrival we transfer to our hotel and have the balance of the day at leisure. Dinner and overnight at the Dedeman Hotel in Antalya. (meals aloft, D)

Day 3, PERGE/ANTIOCH/PAMUKKALE

Today we have a full-day excursion to Perge, where Paul visited on his first missionary journey after his mission in Cyprus. A true outdoor museum, Perge is a major archaeological site boasting a 250-meter columned street, agora (shopping center), triumphal arch, monumental fountain, graveyard, basilica, bath, 12-thousand-person theater and a Hellenistic Gate with round tower. From Perge, we travel to Antioch in Pisidia, where Paul preached his first sermon and successfully introduced Christianity in Asia Minor. Among the ruins, you will see St. Paul's basilica, the impressive stadium, the Roman baths, and the aqueducts and theater. We proceed to Pamukkale, known as the "Cotton Castle" because of its fantastic calcium formations and pools of natural warm water to the Colossae Hotel for dinner and overnight. (B,D)

Day 4, HIERAPOLIS/LAODICEA/COLOSSAE/PAMUKKALE

This morning we travel to Hierapolis, where we see its well-preserved baths, the basilica (dating back to the 6th century AD), the Temple of Apollo, and the theater. From here, we journey to Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22). Mark, Timothy and Epaphras brought the Gospel here and established the first church (Col. 1:7, 4:12-13). In Revelation the church members were condemned for their "lukewarm attitude" toward Christianity. However, they must have repented, because Laodicea became the seat of a bishopric and hosted an important Ecumenical Council in the fourth century AD. Highlights will be the Nymphaeum, the Amphitheater, and the Council Chamber. We also visit the site of Colossae (Paul's epistle to the Colossians) where we will see the ancient church and other remnants of this once bustling city. From here we return to Pamukkale for dinner and overnight. (B,D)

Day 5, PHILADELPHIA/SARDIS/KUSADASI

Today we begin our touring at Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13), another of the seven churches of Revelation, and an important Christian center during Byzantine times. The modern town of Alasehir is built over ancient Philadelphia, although the ruins of a Byzantine basilica built of brick with a high arch and frescoes are still visible. The city was destroyed in 17 and 23 AD by earthquakes. From here we drive to Sardis, set upon a steep hill surrounded by an impregnable citadel and one of the most picturesque areas of the Seven Churches. We will visit its famous third-century Jewish synagogue, the largest synagogue ever excavated, with a seating capacity of a thousand persons. Other highlights include the Gymnasium, House of Bronzes, Temple of Artemis, and the ancient Church. We proceed to Kusadasi to the Pine Bay Marina Hotel for dinner and overnight. (B,D)

Day 6, EPHESUS

We journey to Ephesus where Paul spent two years and which had become the capital city of the Roman Province of Asia by the time John wrote the Book of Revelation to the churches there. We walk through history in a city founded as early as the 10th century B.C. In the magnificent excavations we see streets lined with wonderful public buildings such as the Baths of Scholastica, the Library of Celsus, the Temple of Hadrian, the Basilica of St. John and the great Theatre where the Ephesians screamed against Paul (Acts 19:28). Following our full day here, we return to Kusadasi for dinner and overnight. (B,D)

**Day 7, PATMOS**

Today we sail by charter boat to the former Roman prison island of Patmos where John received his "Revelation," visiting the Grotto named for his book and the Monastery of St. John which houses ancient manuscripts including an early one of the Gospel. This afternoon we have some free time in Skala (the capital of the island of Patmos), where you may explore on your own and shop for items such as ceramics, small sculptures and hand-woven fabrics with traditional designs. We return to Kusadasi for dinner and overnight. (B,D)

Day 8, IZMIR/THYATIRA/PERGAMUM/ASSOS

We travel to Izmir (biblical Smyrna, Rev. 2:8-11) where we visit the ancient Agora and the Church of St. Polycarp, who was Smyrna's first bishop. From here we continue to Thyatira, another of the Seven Churches of Revelation as well as a major commercial center of ancient Asia Minor, from which Lydia a seller of purple came (Acts 16:14). We continue to Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17), capital of Asia Minor and site of one of the seven churches. Here we visit the parchment library that contained over 200,000 volumes, the site of the famous altar to Zeus, and the amphitheater, which is the steepest ever built. Our dinner and overnight are at the Eden Gardens Hotel in Assos. (B,D)

Day 9, ASSOS/TROY/ALEXANDER TROAS/BURSA

After breakfast we tour Assos, which Paul visited by foot after visiting Troas (Acts 20:13). Aristotle, Plato's most famous student, was invited to Assos and spent over three years living and teaching here. The acropolis of Assos is 238 meters above sea-level, and the Temple of Athena was constructed on this site in the 6th century B.C. Below lies a tiny and idyllic ancient harbour. Next we drive to the ancient city of Troy, long thought to be simply an imaginary city from Homer's Iliad. However, Troy was excavated in the 1870s by Heinrich Schliemann, a German amateur archaeologist who also found the remains of nine successive civilizations, one on top of the other, dating back 5,000 years. We also visit Alexander Troas where St. Paul saw a vision calling him to come over into Macedonia (Acts 16:8-11). Paul later established a church at Troas and also restored the young man Eutychus to life there (Acts 20:5-12). Dinner and overnight are at the Kervansaray Thermal Hotel in Bursa, first capital of the Ottoman Empire. The city is known as Yesil – (Green) Bursa, because of its many trees and parks and also because of its Yesil Cami (Green Mosque) and Yesil Turbe (Green Mausoleum). Both mosque and mausoleum derive their names from the green tiles that line their interiors. (B,D)



“Everything about this trip was outstanding. We now have a greater understanding about Christianity, our heritage, and the politics of the modern world” Dehoney Traveler, S. Tackett, Georgia

Day 10, NICEA/ISTANBUL

Today we visit Iznik, ancient Nicea, located in the northeast of Bursa on the side of Iznik Lake. Under Constantine I when Christianity became the state religion, Nicea became an important religious center where two ecumenical councils were held, in 325 and 787 AD. The first one, under Constantine I, formulated the dogmatic statements of Christian orthodoxy (the Nicene Creed) and defined the role of the emperor both as head of the Church and head of the State. The second one was convoked by Irene and his son Emperor Constantin VI to rule on the use of saints, images and icons, after the period of a strong movement called Iconoclasm. In the 16th century, which was the golden age period of the Ottoman Empire, the workshops of enamelled ceramics made Iznik very prosperous. From here we travel on to Istanbul — Constantinople of history, Byzantium of the New Testament era — for our dinner and overnight at the Elite Hotel. (B,D)

Day 11, ISTANBUL

Today we visit the spectacular Blue Mosque, the 17th century Ottoman Mosque famous for its six minarets. After leaving your shoes at the door, step inside to see the brightly-colored interior decorated with at least 20,000 shimmering blue Iznik tiles and stained-glass windows. We stroll around the historical Hippodrome, where chariot races and athletic events took place during the Roman period. We will see St. Sophia, an early Christian church later converted into a mosque and now a museum famous for its mosaics. Also included is Topkapi Palace, the former residence of the legendary Ottoman sultans, now converted into a museum. It consists of several exhibition halls, such as the treasury and the ceramics section. We also see the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts (where we will see a collection of art crafts from different civilizations of Asia Minor) and the Grand Bazaar, a market of over 3,000 tiny shops. Dinner and overnight in our hotel. (B,D)

Day 12, ISTANBUL

Today we have a half day cruise on the Bosphorus, a 20-mile natural waterway that links the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara and the Mediterranean. The Golden Horn is a small inlet of the Bosphorus that creates Istanbul’s harbor. During the cruise we enjoy the views of the old wooden villas, marble palaces, and ancient fortresses. This afternoon is at leisure for you to sightsee and explore on your own, shop for last-minute souvenirs, or just relax at the hotel. (B,D)

DAY 13, ISTANBUL/VIENNA

We transfer to the airport this morning for our flight to Vienna. The afternoon is at leisure with overnight at an airport-area hotel. (B)

DAY 14, VIENNA/USA

We return to the airport this morning for our transatlantic flight to the States, returning to Dallas this evening. (B,meals aloft)