



Istanbul in Depth: Your “Most Pleasant and Lasting Dream” 2026

22 SEP – 5 OCT 2026

Code: 22631

Tour Leaders **Dr Adrian Jones, OAM**

Fitness Level 

Level 2 - Intermediate

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

Spend 2-weeks exploring the city's grand monuments, local neighbourhoods and specialist museums that tell the long story of Byzantium, Constantinople and Istanbul.

Overview

Experience this extraordinary and evocative city in depth with retired Associate Professor of European History, [Dr Adrian Jones OAM](#), a historian with a special interest in the comparative history of eastern and south-eastern Europe – the Ottoman Empire, Russia and the Balkans – places where Islam and Orthodox Christianity intersect, and where Slavs, Turks and Greeks interact. Adrian has been a regular visitor to Turkey since he started learning Turkish and teaching Ottoman history in 1990.

- Spend two weeks in the historic 5-star [Pera Palace Hotel](#) and fall into the city's daily rhythm using its extensive network of tram, ferry and public bus to explore this city in depth.
- Trace the two and a half millennia of evolution of the great city of Byzantium – Constantinople – Istanbul through the enduring evidence of its palaces, religious sites, material culture and its mercantile links with Central Asia and the Crimea, and with Venice and Genoa.
- Immerse yourself in Istanbul's outstanding museums including: the Archaeological Museum and Çinili Kiosk, the new Istanbul Modern designed by Renzo Piano, and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts that showcases beautiful Turkish carpets.
- Journey by ferry along the Bosphorus to visit the Sadberk Hanım Museum containing a fine collection of domestic interiors, apparel, ceramics and jewellery; and enjoy a guided tour of the Pera Museum displaying a world-class collection of Turkish Orientalist paintings.
- Study Istanbul's Roman and Byzantine legacy visiting the Walls of Constantinople, the Palace of the Porphyrogenitus, the Roman Hippodrome, the Golden Gate, the *Milion* mile post, and the mosaics of Justinian's great 6th-century basilica Hagia Sophia. We also view the fine Byzantine mosaics and frescoes in the Church of the Holy Saviour in Chora which re-opened its doors as a mosque after a four-year renovation in May 2024.
- Consider Ottoman re-invention of the city in the neighbourhoods of Sultanahmet, Beyazit, Taksim, Galatasaray and Pera. We visit the Blue Mosque decorated with Blue İznik tiles and the Süleymaniye Mosque which retains many of its original *küllîye* (mosque complex) buildings.
- Visit the great Topkapı Palace to explore the world of sultans and courtiers, Janissaries and Viziers, slaves and eunuchs, and the hidden and fabled realm of the harem.
- Enjoy privileged access to two private libraries: the Greek Orthodox Hagia Triada Monastery containing many old and rare manuscripts; and the Research Library & Walled Garden of the French Research Institute.
- Delight in the lively mercantile worlds of the Grand Bazaar and Spice Bazaar, where merchants ply their wares and the tradition of haggling over a cup of apple tea persists.
- Explore the unique, sometimes hidden, character of the many neighbourhoods (*mahalles*) of Istanbul, products of different eras.
- Sample and savour Istanbul's famed cuisine and hospitality on walking tours through neighbourhood markets, and at acclaimed restaurants and atmospheric teahouses.
- Limited to 16 participants.

Historical Overview

From Another Hill

*I looked at you yesterday from a hill, dear Istanbul!
I saw no place I haven't wandered, nowhere I didn't love.
As long as I live, toy with my heart!
Just loving one neighbourhood is worth a lifetime.
Many splendid cities are to be seen in the world,
But you created bewitching beauties.
Those who've lived many years in you, died in you, lie buried,*

in you, they have lived a most pleasant and lasting dream.

By Yahya Kemal from his book, *Aziz Istanbul* (Precious Istanbul, 1989, p. 4)

Istanbul is an amazing global city of 15.5 million people with layers of archaeology and architecture that have evolved over 25 centuries. The enviable and astounding site of this city, with plenty of fresh water, astride a key sea-trade route, was first settled in the 7th-century BCE by Greek colonists from Megara, a tiny city-state near Athens. The small trading city of Byzantium became the key political and religious centre of the Eastern Mediterranean in the 4th century, when Constantine made the city capital of the Roman Empire in 330 and renamed it 'Constantinople'.

Emperors Theodosius I & II added the mighty fortification walls between the 380s and the 440s, and Justinian bestowed the great domed basilica of Hagia Sophia, the 'Church of Holy Wisdom'. Completed in 537, it was the world's largest cathedral, a domed architectural masterpiece that gave inspiration world-wide.

The city's population approached a half-million in the 6th-to-10th centuries. However, it then became all but destitute, declining to about a sixth of that after Seljuk Turks seized most of Anatolia in 1071, and after its sack in the Venetian-led 4th crusade in 1204 leading to its loss of most of what's now Bulgaria, Romania and Greece. Though the city was recovered for Orthodoxy in 1261, most of its empire in the Balkans remained lost and its trade routes were seized by Catalans, Venetians or Genoese, or just ruined by banditry. In 1453, the Ottoman Sultan II Mehmet 'the Conqueror' (r. 1451-1481) stormed its ancient defence walls. The once-great city was now subject to Islam. Sultan Mehmed II then began the process of transforming the stricken city into Istanbul, the third and last of the Ottoman capitals, he and his successors re-populating it and embellishing it with one of the most distinctive skylines in the world.

Istanbul became a great multicultural city, with significant populations of Jews, Christians and Muslims, a magnet for peoples from Anatolia, Egypt, the Maghreb, the Holy Lands, the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Eurasian steppe. Modern Istanbul is a vibrant metropolis, with fascinating street life, beguiling bazaars, lively restaurants and fast-evolving architecture, design and contemporary art.

Leaders



Dr Adrian Jones, OAM

A retired Associate Professor of History, and a frequent contributor to ABC local radio, Adrian is a Harvard graduate and expert in Greek and Russian, Ottoman and Balkan history: ancient, medieval, modern.

Recently retired, Dr Adrian Jones, OAM was Associate Professor of European History at La Trobe University. Adrian loves to combine travel, cuisine and history, which he also reprises on segments on ABC local radio and on ABC Radio National. He enjoys the challenges of connecting epochs, cultures, languages and places. He graduated with a BA from the University of Melbourne, an MA from La Trobe University and an MA and PhD from Harvard University, eventually specialising in Russian, Turkish, French and Balkan history. His publications include a scholarly monograph, *Late-Imperial Russia: An Interpretation* (1997) and a local history, *Follow the Gleam* (2000), which won the prize for the best book on Victorian history in 2001. Adrian has published scholarly articles on the philosophy of history, historiography, educational theory, comparative revolutions, and French, Balkan, Russian and Turkish social and intellectual history. Adrian is currently finishing one book about Mustafa Kemal and the ANZACs and starting another on Russian-Romanian-Ottoman relations in the early-eighteenth-century: the era of "Tulip Age" Sultan, Ahmet III, of a Moldavian prince, Dimitrie Cantemir, who should be famous, and of the greatest of the Russian Tsars, Peter the Great. A foundation Director of the [Australian] *National Centre for History Education* and a former Chair of *The History Council of Victoria*, Adrian was awarded a national Teaching Council award in 2008, and an *Order of Australia Medal* in 2009 for his teaching and professional activities. He currently leads ASA tours to Romania, along the Via Egnatia in Macedonia (Greek and Slav) through Albania to Corfu, an in-depth program to Istanbul, and to Slovenia-and-inland Croatia.

Combine this tour with

Slovenia: Villages, Castles, Vineyards, Scenic Valleys and the Julian Alps 2026

3 SEP – 20 SEP 2026

Crossroads of the Caucasus: Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia 2026

2 SEP – 22 SEP 2026

From Belgian Art Nouveau to Dutch Modern 2026

7 OCT – 17 OCT 2026

Cyprus, Kos & Rhodes: Civilisations of the Eastern Mediterranean 2026

8 OCT – 25 OCT 2026

Sicily and the Aeolian Islands 2026

9 OCT – 23 OCT 2026



Itinerary

The following itinerary lists a range of museums and other sites we plan to visit. Many are accessible to the public, but some require special permission which may only be confirmed closer to the tour's departure. The daily activities described in this itinerary may change or be rotated and/or modified to accommodate alterations in opening hours, public transport schedules and confirmation of private visits. The tour includes breakfast daily, lunches and dinners featuring the best of Turkey's cuisine, indicated in the itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner.

Istanbul - 13 nights

Day 1: Tuesday 22 September, Arrive Istanbul & Orientation

- Tour commences at 2.30pm in the foyer of the Divan Istanbul
- Welcome Meeting & Introductory Talk
- Orientation Walk: Independence Street (since 1923), yesterday's La Grande Rue de Péra, or Grand Avenue: Cadde-i Kebir in old Turkish (*Osmanlica*)
- Welcome Dinner at *Haci Abudullah Lokantasi*

Meeting Point: The tour commences at 2.30pm in the foyer of the [Divan Istanbul Hotel](#). Note: check-in time is 2.00pm.

Following a welcome meeting and introductory talk, we stroll through one of the most beautiful areas of the city – Pera or Beyoglu – with a focus on the mid-to-late-19th-century's Ottoman *belle époque*. We walk down Independence Street to discover an earlier Ottoman era of reform, an era of liberal constitutions opening to the West, a secularising world of self-expression and display, where men and women were licensed to shop, flirt and stroll, accessing arcades and scores of elegant businesses. In side streets we encounter a fish market, bakeries, boutiques, bookshops and bars (*meyhanes*).

This evening we dine in an old Ottoman-Turkish guild (*ahi*) restaurant, where alcohol is not served, but

where you imbibe traditional Turkish sherbets, yoghurt drink (*ayran*), black tea, coffee (*Türk kahvesi*) and juices (*suyu*). (Overnight Istanbul) D

Day 2: Wednesday 23 September, Istanbul: Constantine's and Justinian's Imperial Capitals of Romans 4th & 6th centuries CE

- Hippodrome
- Emperor Justinian's Basilica Cistern (Yerebetan Sarnic)
- Hagia Sophia (Aya Sofya), the 'Church of Holy Wisdom' incl. Upper Gallery
- Hagia Sophia History & Experience Museum
- Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts (Ibrahim Pasha Sarayi)

Our focus today is the built heritage of two great Roman Emperors who turned this trading city into an imperial capital. Emperor Constantine began his rule as a co-Emperor in 306 and then as sole Emperor from 324 until his death in 337 CE. After establishing the city as his new capital in 330, he built a forum and a Hippodrome, embellishing it with monumental objects brought from elsewhere in the empire, notably the Serpent Column from the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, and the Obelisk of Thutmose III from Egypt. As the first Emperor to embrace and to encourage Christianity, Constantine also founded great churches including the Church of Holy Wisdom.

After visiting the Hippodrome, we turn our attention to the Emperor Justinian (b. 482, r. 527-65) who, with his wife Theodora, restored and enlarged the Byzantine Empire. In 532 a deadly riot began in the Hippodrome between rival supporters of the city's horse-racing teams, and spread through the city, resulting in the destruction of many buildings, including the royal palace and the church built by Theodosius II.

We visit the fascinating Basilica Cistern (Yerebetan Sarnic), a huge underground reservoir fed by aqueducts and built using repurposed columns and masonry blocks from earlier Roman buildings. Every stone heads of gorgons emerge from the water to support the columns in an incredible feat of engineering.

We then cross to Hagia Sophia. The building we see today was completed in 537 and is an architectural masterpiece that uses vast domes to create light and space, a design that greatly influenced the builders of the city's mosques centuries later. Following the Ottoman conquest of the city, the glittering, golden mosaics which once fully adorned the building were covered over with plaster and paint, and the building was transformed into a mosque. Our visit to the Upper Gallery will allow us to see some of the beautiful mosaics which have been recovered from under the paint.

After lunchtime at leisure in Sultanahmet, we return to the Hippodrome where we encounter a multimedia re-creation of the era of Justinian and Theodora and then enter the adjacent museum complex known as the Ibrahim Pasha Sarayi, named for its first owner, a 16th-century Ottoman Grand Vizier. This museum gives us our first glimpse of the history and culture of Islam and especially of the culture of the Ottoman Turks. We enter a world of sofas, divans, exquisite ceramics, metalwork, coffee, carpets, calligraphy and woodwork, and we also glimpse the differences between sedentary and nomadic Turks.

This evening, you may wish to make an optional visit to a traditional Turkish bath at the historic *Cağaloglu Hamamı* (1741) in Sultanahmet. (Overnight Istanbul) B

Day 3: Thursday 24 September, The Bosphorus, and its northern suburbs: Besiktas, İstinye, Sariyer

- Ferry along the Bosphorus from Besiktas Quay to Sariyer Quay

- Sadberk Hanım Museum
- Time at leisure in İstinye
- Ferry along the Bosphorus from İstinye to Beşiktaş Quay

Today we travel by ferry along the Bosphorus to appreciate the grand waterway which shapes the city. Our route takes us past the Ottoman fortresses known as “Byzantine Bosphorus Throat-Cutter” castles: Sultan II Mehmed’s *Rumeli Hisar* (1452) and Sultan I Bayezit’s *Anadolu Hisar* (1394). We also view the amazing quay-side mansions (*yalıs*) of the Ottoman and now Turkish élite. Late-Ottoman 19th-century “European-style” palaces (*sarays*) glide by, including Sultan II Mahmud’s sprawling *Dolmabahçe Sarayı*, Sultans Abdulmecid and Abdulaziz’s *Cıran Sarayı*, and Sultan II Abdulhamid’s *Yıldız*.

Between Europe’s Ortaköy and Asia’s Beylerbeyi, we pass under the first of three mighty Bosphorus Bridges (1973). Between Hisarustu and Kavacık, we pass a second bridge (1988), named for Sultan II Mehmed, conqueror of Constantinople in 1453. When we are almost at the entrance to the Black Sea, we disembark at Sarıyer, just short of the third bridge (2016), named for Yavuz Sultan I Selim, conqueror of Egypt and of the Islamic holy places, Mecca and Medina, in 1516-17.

We stroll along the shore to Sadberk Hanım Museum, a wealthy Turkish woman’s tasteful collection of ancient and Islamic art. This small museum offers a fresh opportunity to enjoy the spectrum of ancient and Ottoman culture, with a focus on domestic interiors, apparel, ceramics and jewellery.

A short trip by public bus takes us to İstinye, famous for its seashore location with cafés and seafood restaurants. There will be time at leisure for lunch and to explore this neighbourhood, before taking the 2-hour ferry ride back to Beşiktaş. (Overnight Istanbul) B

Day 4: Friday 25 September, Contemporary Art and Food in Neighbourhoods in Istanbul’s Europe & Asia

- Walking tour of Çukurcuma & Tophane Districts
- Istanbul Modern: Istanbul Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art
- Return Ferry from Karaköy to Kadıköy
- Kadıköy Produce Market: Culinary Walking Tour Exploring Different Tastes of Türkiye

We begin the day with a stroll through the Çukurcuma & Tophane (cannon-factory) neighbourhoods. The local districts are known for antiques, galleries and cafés.

Reaching the Karaköy waterfront, we visit the new Istanbul Modern – Türkiye’s first museum of modern and contemporary art designed by Renzo Piano – where a curator will introduce us to this impressive collection. The design of the building was inspired by the glittering waters of the Bosphorus and echoes the history of the site that has been used as a harbour for millennia.

Next, we take a 20-minute ferry to Kadıköy (ancient Chalcedon) in Istanbul’s Asian shore. The ancients mocked the Megarans who first settled Kadıköy as a “city of the blind”; the opposite site of Byzantium/Constantinople/Istanbul had a far better harbour and water supply. The neighbourhood is famed for its bustling fish and produce market. On arrival we take a culinary walking tour around this lively neighbourhood, introducing us to all kinds of popular Turkish foods and cooking styles.

At the conclusion of the tour you may choose to return directly to the hotel on one of the regular ferries or linger to further explore Istanbul’s Asia. (Overnight Istanbul) BL

Day 5: Saturday 26 September, Istanbul: Byzantine Twilight, Ottoman Onset: 13th to 15th centuries

- Yedikule Fortress
- Church of Mary of Blachernae and the Maphorion
- Lunch at *Kofteci Sami Usta*
- Palace of the Porphyrogenitus (Tekfur Saray)
- Kariye Camii (Church of the Holy Saviour in Chora)

Today we explore more aspects of a millennium of Byzantine culture. Whereas our visit to Sultanahmet focussed on the 4th and 6th centuries and the eras of Constantine and Justinian, today's excursion mostly explores late-Constantinople from the 13th to 15th centuries.

While the Venetian-led 4th Crusade of 1204 sacked the city and dismembered its empire in Greece, Byzantine Orthodox states survived in Nicaea, Trebizond, Epirus, Thrace-Macedonia and Mistra. Eventually two key capitals were reconquered, Salonika in 1224 and Constantinople in 1261. This difficult era witnessed an unusual late-flowering of Byzantine Orthodox culture, even as the empire overall was still in decline. The old city of Constantinople we visited in Sultanahmet was, by then, a ruin. A new Palaiologan dynasty of emperors (1259-1453) built a new palace complex near the Edirne gate in the north-western walls of the city.

We shall encounter the mighty sea walls and western walls of Constantinople, built by the Emperors Theodosius I and II (r. 379-95, 402-50). We travel to the Ottoman Yedikule Fortress where we see subsumed by the castle the famous Byzantine Golden Gate. This was one end of the *Via Egnatia* to Rome, and the start of the most important street in Constantinople, the military-religious processional main street to Europe. Byzantines called it their "Middle Street". Ottomans called it their "*Divan Yolu*" (Road to Governmental Power).

From the Yedikule Fortress we transfer to the most popular church in Byzantine Constantinople, the Blachernae Church of the Virgin Mary. This misleadingly modest church, much rebuilt over the centuries, was founded in 435 CE. It is known for its holy spring, and for its wonder-working icon emphasising "a palladium": in this case, the Holy Virgin's protective belt or scarf-veil, seen as safeguarding a community's city, nation and faith.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, we stroll along the walls to the modest and last Byzantine Palace (*Tekfur Sarayı*, 13th-to-15th centuries), recently opened after restoration. Built adjacent to the land walls, this 2-storey building with a courtyard is the only surviving part of the vast Blachernae Palace.

Next, we visit the Church of the Holy Saviour in Chora which has now been converted into a mosque (for the second time). The Chora Church or Kariye Camii reopened its doors as a mosque in May 2024 after a four year-long renovation. It was originally built in the early 4th century by Constantine the Great, however when Theodosius II built his city walls in 413-414 the church was incorporated with the city's defences. This beautiful late-Byzantine shrine was later rebuilt in 1077, restored between 1315 and 1321 and converted into a mosque following the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans. It contains one of the greatest of all Byzantine decorative cycles of mosaics and frescoes; instances of the last flowering of Greek visual culture before the fall of Constantinople. Of particular note are the rich frescoes in the paracclousion by Theodore Metochite, which rival the works of Duccio and Giotto in their grandeur and dramatic power. Greatest amongst these is the dramatic image of the 'Harrowing of Hell' in which an ethereal, yet powerful, Christ strains across the apsidal dome to deliver Adam and Eve from purgatory. **Note:** mosaics in the building's prayer section are covered with curtains in accordance with Muslim traditions. This includes three mosaics depicting Jesus and Mary.

This evening you may take an optional evening stroll with Adrian through the inner-Golden Horn neighbourhoods (*mahalles*) of Fener or Balat, once Greek and Jewish centres in Constantinople. (Overnight Istanbul) BL

Day 6: Sunday 27 September, Istanbul: Day at leisure with optional excursion to Üsküdar & Ortaköy

- Ferry from Karaköy to Üsküdar
- Mihrimah Sultan Mosque & Üsküdar's Sunday Grand Bazaar
- Ferry from Üsküdar to Ortaköy
- Ortaköy's Sunday markets

Today is at leisure to explore the city as you wish. For those interested, Adrian will offer a relaxing excursion exploring Üsküdar in Istanbul's "Asia" and Ortaköy in Istanbul's "Europe".

A short ferry ride takes us to Üsküdar where we visit the shore mosque of Mihrimah *Hanim Sultan* (1522-78), the privileged and cultured daughter of *Kanuni Sultan II Suleyman* and Roxelana, who became the wife (1539) of an important Croatian-born Ottoman Grand Vizier, *Rustem Pasha*, whose wonderfully tiled mosque we visit later in the program. We also explore the Üsküdar community market (*pazar*) and antique shops.

Following a cafeteria-style lunch at *Kanaat Lokantasi* (1933), we take the ferry to Ortaköy at the foot of the first Bosphorus bridge. This is a popular spot on Sundays for a craft, artisan and jewellery market adjacent to cafés on the shore and the Etz Ahayim Synagogue. (Overnight Istanbul) B

Day 7: Monday 28 September, Ottoman "Tent" and Harem Palace Culture

- Topkapi Palace Museum and Harem (*Topkapi Sarayi* 1459-1856)
- Lunch at Yesil Ev Restaurant
- Hagia Irene Museum
- Time at leisure
- Lecture at hotel: Suleyman and Roxelana

Today we continue to explore the development of the Ottoman city and its architecture with a visit to the Topkapi Palace Museum and Harem. The Topkapi Palace, once the centre of Ottoman power, was planned in a series of zones, each more private than its predecessor. A number of its pavilions constitute faint echoes of the tents of nomadic camps. The palace also houses a museum of miniatures, precious jewels and other masterpieces from the Ottoman period. The great complex includes a vast kitchen (now a porcelain museum), a library and Harem. In the Harem, which was the family residence of the sultans, the workings of the Ottoman court and the functions of living spaces such as baths and reception rooms will be explained. The Harem is decorated with some of the highest quality Iznik tiles (15th century) in existence.

After our visit we enjoy a late lunch at Yesil Ev, a distinguished restaurant in a renovated Ottoman mansion. We then pay a brief visit to *Haghia Eirene*. This was the site of an ancient pagan temple, overbuilt by the first Patriarchal church. *Haghia Eirene* is the second-oldest Byzantine church still standing in Istanbul, and now serves as a concert and exhibition venue.

Following some time at leisure we come together at the hotel for an evening lecture. (Overnight Istanbul) BL

Day 8: Tuesday 29 September, Ottoman Munificence: Süleyman the Magnificent (b. 1494, r. 1520-66)

- Süleymaniye Mosque incl. tombs of Süleyman and his wife, Roxelana
- Time at leisure to visit Grand Bazaar
- Rüstem Pasha Mosque
- Spice Bazaar (Mısır Çarşısı) & surrounds
- Dinner at *Hamdi Lokantasi*

Today we explore the golden era of *Kanuni* Sultan II Süleyman ("Lawgiver" in Turkish, "*Il Magnifico*" in Renaissance Italian). Following a late breakfast we make our way to the Süleymaniye Mosque (1550-57). This magnificent building was funded from the spoils of Süleyman's military conquests and designed by Koca Sinan Aga (ca 1488-1588). The array of buildings associated with this complex show its important public purpose: hospital, medical school, caravansarai, public bathhouse, asylum, travellers' accommodation, free soup kitchen, and Koran schools at every educational level.

Then we walk a short distance to the Grand "Covered" Bazaar (begun in 1456) where we first walk to its heart, the Antique Bazaar, to give a sense of the products available. We then enjoy time at leisure for lunch at one of the many cafés, and to browse the many carpet, clothes, leather and souvenir shops that fill the main thoroughfares and tiny alleys of this bustling market.

Nearby, lies the Egyptian Spice Bazaar (1664-66) and the adjacent and exquisite Iznik-tile mosque (1583) of Rüstem Pasha. Rüstem was a Bosniak Croatian exalted slave-servitor of *Kanuni* Sultan II Süleyman, twice in the position of Grand Vizier. Rüstem married Süleyman's daughter, Mihrimah, whose mosque we visited earlier in the program.

This evening we dine at another celebrated restaurant, *Hamdi Lokantasi*, offering magical views over the Golden Horn. (Overnight Istanbul) BD

Day 9: Wednesday 30 September, Ottoman Cultural Consolidation

- The Mosque of Ahmet I ('Blue Mosque') & precinct
- Mehmet Çetinkaya Gallery
- Afternoon at leisure to explore the Arasta Bazaar
- Optional visit to Great Palace Mosaic Museum (if reopened by 2026)

Today we dwell on the era of Ottoman cultural consolidation: the 17th-century, when Ottoman civilisation was wealthy and self-assured. This was the era when a young Sultan I Ahmed (b. 1590, r. 1603-17) built the Blue Mosque, and erected its lovely sub-floor Arasta Bazaar as an income source. Sitting adjacent to the Hippodrome and Hagia Sophia and built over ruined foundations of the Byzantine Emperors' Great Palace, this grand mosque was a carefully composed message to convey the Sultan's power and piety. It has 6 soaring minarets, instead of the 4 typical for a Sultan's mosque, a grand statement from a teenaged ruler who had yet to achieve any form of military victory that might have earned him such status.

After exploring Sultan I Ahmed's glorious mosque, we visit Mehmet Çetinkaya Gallery to learn more about Ottoman and Islamic carpets, couture and fabrics.

The remainder of the day is at leisure for you to explore the Arasta Bazaar lined with stores selling pottery, rugs and spices. Note: An optional visit to the Great Palace Mosaic Museum will be available, subject to the museum reopening by 2025. (Overnight Istanbul) B

Day 10: Thursday 1 October, Sultan II Mehmed, Universal Emperor, Archaeologist of Power

- Archaeological Museum and the Çinili Kiosk (Tiled Pavilion)
- Lunch at *Pandeli Lokantasi*
- Eyüp Sultan Mosque
- Optional excursion by funicular to Pierre Loti Café for afternoon tea, followed by tour of Eyüp Cemetery

During the 15th century the Ottomans adopted the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial idea of Universal Empire and of a Universal Emperor. Sultan II Mehmed insisted on conquering this great city in 1452-53. Many of his Turkic *beys* doubted its worth: "We are Muslims; who needs yesterday's imperial Christian city?" Sultan II Mehmed disagreed; he wanted an Ottoman-Turkic version of the Hellenistic-Roman-Byzantine Empire. This yearning prompted him to build the first and last places we visit today.

We first visit his Tiled Kiosk (1472). Sultan II Mehmed built this on Mongol-Turk models of tents, tiles and kiosks reminiscent of Samarkand or Tabriz and sited it in a garden in the old Christian city he had conquered. The Kiosk now forms part of the Archaeological Museum which contains one of the great collections of pre-classical and classical works, including the famous so-called 'Alexander sarcophagus', a fourth-century BCE tomb of a Seleucid prince found in Sidon (Syria). Its carved faces constitute some of the most refined carved images of the Greek world.

We enjoy lunch at an elegant and classic Ottoman restaurant, *Pandeli Lokantasi* which is renowned for its tiled décor and its location above the Egyptian Spice Bazaar.

Next, we visit the second of Sultan II Mehmed's commissions, the Eyüp Sultan Mosque, which presents an alternative version of the universal empire idea. This is the fourth-holiest site in all Islam. First in esteem comes Mecca and Medina (the two key centres of the *Hajj*); then the "Dome of the Rock" in Jerusalem. A mosque complex at Eyüp was first built in 1458 by Sultan II Mehmed, as advised by his tutor Aksemseddin, to mark the grave the Ottomans had just discovered in 1452-53. The grave was identified as the Prophet's Muhammad's standard-bearer's, Eyüp. Eyüp died besieging Constantinople in the 670s. Aksemseddin and Sultan II Mehmed framed their auspicious "discovery" of Eyüp's long-lost tomb as indicating Sultan II Mehmed would be a universal emperor. The current Eyüp mosque and its exquisite tiles were re-built in the 18th and 19th centuries. Accession ceremonies for every Ottoman Sultan since took place here. Respectful dressing is important in the Eyüp Sultan Mosque.

The remainder of the day is at leisure. You may wish to join Adrian and take the funicular to the historic Pierre Loti Café which offers fine views of the Golden Horn. The café is named after French naval officer and author, Pierre Loti, who came here regularly between 1876 and 1919. During his time in Istanbul he observed the daily life of its people, the politics and economics of the time. These observations gave fruit to two novels: *Aziyadé* (1879), a love story between Istanbul and Thessaloniki, and *Les Désenchantées* (1906), a book about harem life and women whose freedom was restricted in the Ottoman State. From the café we may descend through the historic Eyüp Cemetery whose graves include those of Ottoman sultans, court members, grand viziers, intellectuals, artists and poets. (Overnight Istanbul) BL

Day 11: Friday 2 October, Istanbul: 19th-century Era of Ottoman Westernisation & "Reform"

- Lecture at the Hotel
- Walking tour of Galatasary and Pera Districts
- French Research Library & Walled Garden of the French Research Institute in Türkiye
- Pera Museum
- Afternoon Tea in the Kubbeli Lounge at the Pera Palas Hotel

We with a short talk on the 19th-century reform era of the Ottoman constitutions, and then take a walking tour through Galatasaray and Pera/Beyoglu, the most European quarter of this great Ottoman city. We encounter the grand European Consulates, mostly from the 18th century, which served as embassies until the nation's capital moved to Ankara in 1923. These neighbourhoods were always special. Genoese resided and traded here since 1267, and built a merchant stronghold castle (the Galata Tower) in 1348 when the Byzantines were weakened by theological disputes and internal division. We will visit the library and walled garden of the French Research Institute in Türkiye, the site of the Palais de France since 1535.

Following some time at leisure for lunch we enjoy a guided tour of the Pera Museum which contains three collections: Turkish Orientalist Painting, Anatolian Weights and Measures, and Kütahya Tiles and Ceramics. Drawn from Suna and Nisan Kiraç's world-class private collection, the Turkish orientalist paintings provide fascinating glimpses into the Ottoman world from the 17th to 20th centuries and include the most beloved painting in the Turkish canon – Osman Hamdi Bey's *The Tortoise Trainer* (1906).

Our program concludes with afternoon tea in Kubbeli Lounge of the elegant Ottoman *Belle Époque*-era Pera Palas Hotel. This was the preferred partner hotel of *The Orient Express*, the hotel favoured by Mustafa Kemal and by Agatha Christie. The rest of the day is at leisure to continue enjoying this dynamic quarter of the city, to wander streets teaming with bars, cafés and bookshops. (Overnight Istanbul) B

Day 12: Saturday 3 October, Istanbul: A Relaxing Journey to Heybeliada in the Sea of Marmara

- Return ferry from Kabatas Quay to Heybeliada, Prince's Islands
- Hagia Triada Monastery and Library (by special appointment, to be confirmed in 2026)
- Time at leisure in Heybeliada

Today we follow a typical family-weekend ritual in Istanbul: we take a ferry ride, departing Kabatas, sailing and sipping tea to venture to the island of Heybeliada (Saddle-Bag Island) in the Sea of Marmara. Here we visit the 9th-century Orthodox Monastery of the Holy Trinity (re-built in 1844 and 1894), now a newly re-opened training seminary for Orthodox priests working in the Oecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Here we hope to meet the Chaplin, for a guided tour of the garden, church and extensive library which includes valuable books and manuscripts dating from the early 16th century. Following this visit there will be time at leisure for lunch and to explore Heybeliada before returning by ferry to Kabatas. (Overnight Istanbul) B

Day 13: Sunday 4 October, Istanbul: Armenian-European Ottoman Style: Dolmabahçe Sarayı (1842-56)

- Lecture at hotel
- Dolmabahçe Palace
- Afternoon at leisure
- Farewell Dinner at local restaurant

Following a morning lecture, we enjoy a leisurely walk to *Dolmabahçe Sarayı*, the grandest of the famous Balyan palaces built in the 19th century for the Ottoman Sultans of the era of Reform. The main architect was Garabet Balyan (1800-66), working beside his son, Nigogos (1826-58). The eclectic and dazzling décor reflects new interests in all manner of European designs and furnishings. Mustafa Kemal maintained he loathed Constantinople in general, and this Palace in particular! He met the nervous new Sultan, *Vahidettin* Sultan VI Mehmed (1861-1926, r. 1918-22) in *Dolmabahçe Sarayı* in November 1918 and during his audience, Kemal remembered pointing with disdain to the several British, French, Italian and Australian battleships anchored outside the palace. We walk the corridors and extravagant rooms of the Men's Palace (*Selamlık*), the Reception Rooms, the Painting Museum and the exuberant Women's Palace (*Haremlik*). The

official reception sections of this palace were smaller than the private sections (*Harem*). An elaborate Ceremonial Hall (*Muayede Salonu*) separates private from public spheres. Having visited *Topkapi Sarayi*, we can see how much the central Ottoman state institutions of the harem, of government and of governmental display had changed.

The rest of this day is at leisure, until we gather again in the evening for our farewell dinner at a local restaurant. (Overnight Istanbul) BD

Day 14: Monday 5 October, Depart Istanbul

- At leisure/Check out

Our tour ends in Istanbul after breakfast. In the morning you will be required to check out of the hotel. Please contact ASA if you require assistance with a transfer to the airport. B

Accommodation

5-star Pera Palace Hotel

Evliya Çelebi, Meşrutiyet Caddesi, Tepebaşı Cd. No:52, 34430 Beyoglu/Istanbul, Türkiye

Established in 1892 by the French-Ottoman architect Alexander Vallaury, the Pera Palace is a special category museum hotel designed in neoclassical, art nouveau and oriental styles. Built for hosting passengers of the Orient Express, Agatha Christie allegedly wrote her 1934 novel *Murder on the Orient Express* here. The lively Istiklal Avenue is just a 250m walk away with numerous restaurants, cafés, bars, shops and art galleries. Havatas Airport Shuttle is within walking distance.

Room Category: Deluxe Pera Side Room.

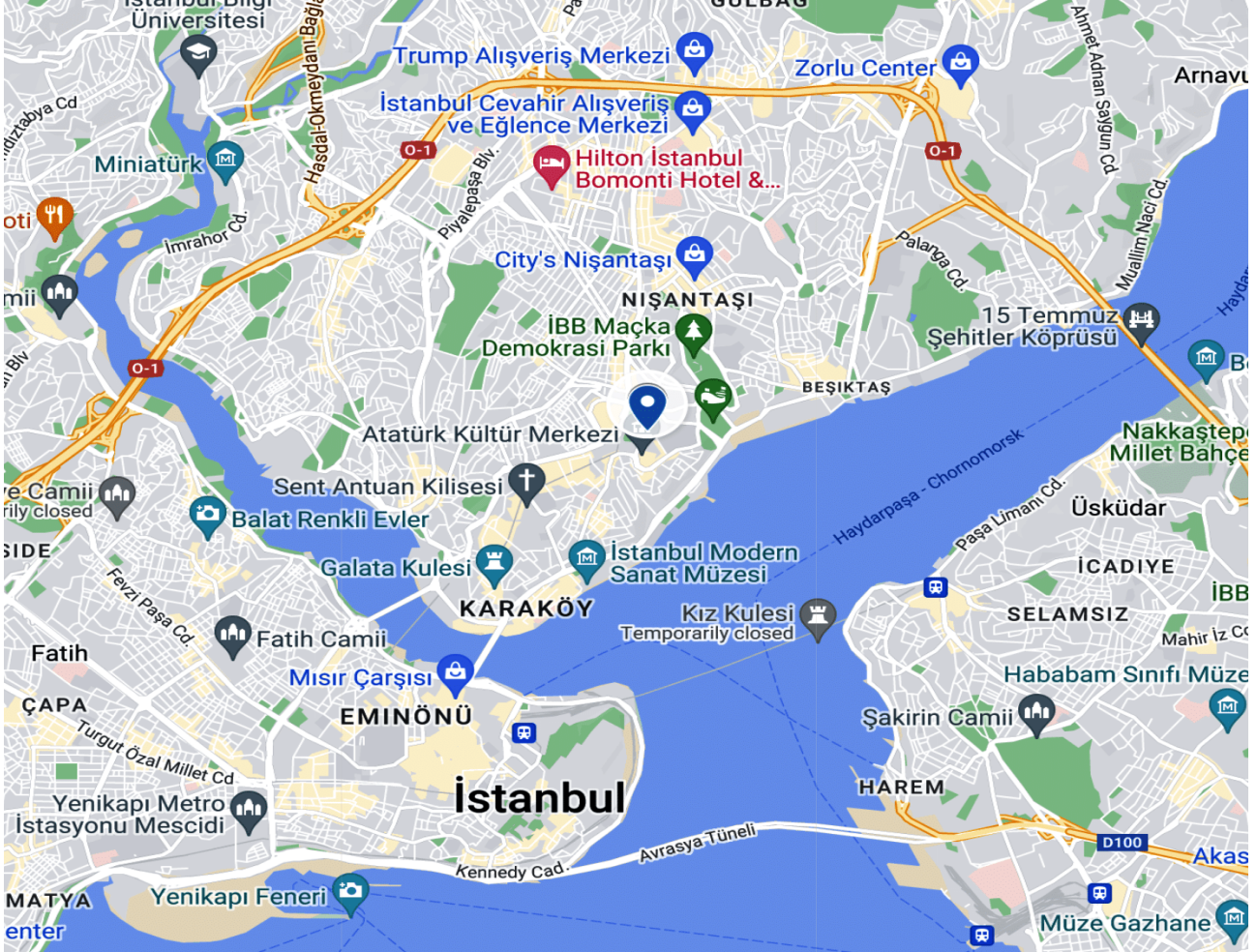
Note: Upgrade to Deluxe Room with view of the Golden Horn available on request and payment of applicable supplement.



Single Supplement

Double rooms for single occupancy may be requested – and are subject to availability and payment of the Single Supplement. The number of rooms available for single occupancy is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Tour Map



Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$9480.00 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 Sep 2025

AUD \$9880.00 Land Content Only

AUD \$2495 Single Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with en suite bathroom in the Pera Palace Hotel; Category: Deluxe Pera Side Room
- Breakfast daily, lunches and evening meals as indicated in the itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner
- Drinks at the farewell meal. Other meals may not have drinks included.
- Public Transport Pass applicable for trams, ferries, metro and public bus.
- Full Day private coach Day 4
- Lecture and site visit program conducted by Adrian and your Turkish National Guide
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person
- Entrance fees
- Use of audio headsets during site visits
- Tips for the coach driver, local guides and restaurants for included meals

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Istanbul, Istanbul-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance



Fitness Criteria & Practical Information

Fitness Level



Level 2 - Intermediate

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

You must be able to:

- manage at least five to six hours of physical activity per day with ease.
- walk at a regular to moderate pace to explore Istanbul extensively on foot, walking at least 5-7km per day.
- keep up with the group at all times.
- board/alight public transport including trams, ferries, funiculars and local buses unassisted.
- negotiate challenging historic sites which may include several flights of stairs, steep slopes or uneven terrain.
- stand for one to two hours during visits to galleries and museums without the need to sit.
- withstand variable climatic conditions including heat and humidity.

Fitness Levels

Please also view the fitness criteria required for our tours, graded from Level 1 to Level 3, at www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/

All ASA tours are active programs suitable for people with a good level of mental and physical fitness and good mobility. They are not suitable for people who lack stamina, have difficulty walking at the group's pace or who have mobility issues. An unavoidable aspect of every tour is the need to manage walking, stair-climbing and standing for long periods of time.

It is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour

participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. Before enrolling on an ASA tour please read the fitness requirements carefully.

Booking Conditions

Making a Tentative Reservation before the tour price has been published

ASA INTENTION TO TRAVEL APPLICATION FORM

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD \$200.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD \$800.00 per person. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your deposit of AUD \$1000.00 is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

Or

- CANCEL your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD \$200.00 per person deposit, less a \$66.00 service fee (including GST).



Intention to Travel Application

TOUR NAME _____

TOUR DATES _____

Booking before the tour price is available

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD\$200.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD\$800.00 per person applicable for International tours OR AUD\$300.00 per person applicable for Australian tours. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your full deposit is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

OR

- Cancel your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD\$200.00 per person deposit, less a \$66.00 service fee (including GST).

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ Other _____

FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____

MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____

POSTAL ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____

TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

Date of birth ____ / ____ / ____ GENDER Male ☐ Female ☐

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: ☐ a twin-bedded room ☐ a double-bedded room ☐ a room for sole occupancy

I am travelling: ☐ on my own ☐ with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

☐ I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

☐ fish ☐ poultry ☐ red meat ☐ dairy products

☐ eggs ☐ pork ☐ nuts

☐ Other _____

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence ☐ Postal Mail ☐ Email Address _____

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour.

ASA's ability to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs, your health and safety and the health and safety of other tour members, is of paramount importance to us. For this reason the ASA Reservation Application includes a Medical Information section. As a general guideline, you must be able to accomplish each of these activities *without assistance or support*:-

- walk & stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions
- walk confidently on and over uneven surfaces
- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1 km every 15 - 20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication.

Applicant's Signature _____

Dated _____

Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1 _____

Name of Traveller 2 _____

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$ _____ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

Payment by (please indicate): ☐ Cheque ☐ Direct Debit (see below) ☐ Credit Card (see below)

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. _____

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended _____

Date Money Transferred _____

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____

Security Code (CVC) _____

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) _____

Cardholders Name _____

Cardholders Billing Address _____

Postcode _____

State _____

Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Cardholders Signature _____

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