

Explore Turkey!

Trip Itinerary

Travel dates: October 7 – 21, 2019

Day 1 (October 7)

- Arrive in Istanbul
- Hotel check-in
- Meet trip leader Mei-mei Engel and our guide Mert Taner

Optional dinner

Day 2 (October 8)

- Bosphorus strait, historic skyline and skyscrapers of the business district
- Blue Mosque (Tour topic: Modern Islam, and the significance of Turkey differing from all other Muslim nations, being both secular and democratic by constitution)
- Hagia Sophia Museum – one of the most extraordinary buildings in the history of architecture
- Lunch: sample various types of tasty kebabs in an authentic workman's diner
- Orientation tour and shopping at the famed Grand Bazaar, the world's largest covered market housing some 4,000 shops
- Afternoon free time
- Welcome dinner of contemporary Turkish cuisine

Breakfast, lunch and dinner includes a half bottle of wine.

Day 3 (October 9)

- Stories of the splendid Topkapi Palace
- Tour the Harem Quarters, including some of the private rooms of the imperial family
- Lunch: authentic doner restaurant
- Exquisite underground Basilica Cistern and learn about the city's sixth-century sophisticated ancient water system
- Tour the backstreets of the Grand Bazaar
- Exhilarating rooftop visit to the filming site of James Bond's Skyfall
- Afternoon free time
- Cooking demonstration and dinner of Ottoman Palace cuisine

Breakfast, lunch and dinner include wine.

Day 4 (October 10)

- Cross the Bosphorus strait - Europe to Asia on privately chartered boat with a fully narrated cruise
- Open air food market on the Asian side of Istanbul (seasonal fruits and vegetables, fish mongers, butchers, and sweet shops)
- Lunch: internationally renown restaurant specializing in the cuisine of southeastern Turkey, (Netflix featured owner chef)
- Afternoon flight to Cappadocia

Breakfast and lunch included.

Day 5 (October 11)

- Optional sunrise hot air balloon ride
- Cave breakfast
- Goreme Open Air Museum (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
- Lunch: home-cooked Turkish meal in the home of a village family (4 generations of family women)
- Afternoon nature walk – close up view of fairy chimney rock formations
- Dinner: meze plates and Turkish BBQ

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 6 (October 12)

- Village market (produce, homemade cheeses, groceries and home goods)
- Tour Kaymakli underground city
- Fairy chimney views
- Optional Whirling Dervish ceremony

Breakfast and lunch included.

Day 7 (October 13)

- Morning village exploration
- Cooking demonstration: village ladies make a comfort food clay pot casserole
- Lunch: comfort food clay pot casserole
- Pottery workshop visit
- Afternoon flight to Izmir, one hour drive to Kusadasi
- Everyone has ocean view hotel rooms

Breakfast, lunch and hotel dinner buffet included.

Day 8 (October 14)

- Ancient city of Ephesus - one of the most powerful Greco-Roman cities of the ancient world, and one of the world's best preserved archeological sites
- Walk the Sacred Way - a paved and colonnaded marble street, tracing the steps of Julius Caesar, Saint Paul, Antony and Cleopatra.
- Library of Celsus
- Terrace houses
- Ephesus Museum
- Lunch: traditional dinner specializing in Turkish grilled meatballs, Mei-mei's favorite kofte in all of Turkey
- Sophisticated wine-paired dinner overlooking the vineyards

Breakfast, lunch and wine-paired dinner included.

Day 9 (October 15)

- Traditional Turkish breakfast feast at a tranquil organic village farm
- Drive to Aphrodisias - one of the largest, best preserved archeological sites in Turkey (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
- Hotel with its own outdoor thermal pools

Breakfast, lunch and hotel dinner buffet included.

Day 10 (October 16)

- Travertine terraces of Pamukkale (health spa of the ancient world)
- Theatre of the ancient city of Hierapolis (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
- Mert leads active participants on a hike up hill to a restored ancient theatre
- Resort town of Bodrum

Breakfast included. Optional contemporary fusion dinner.

Day 11 (October 17)

- A day on a privately chartered gullet (Turkish wooden yacht)
- Swim in the Aegean Sea
- Homemade lunch onboard

Breakfast and lunch included. Optional seafood dinner arranged according to the day's catch, including local delicacies.

Day 12 (October 18)

- Tour traditional village of stone houses with garden patches and a commitment to keeping village life alive in a globalized world through the dying art of village carpet weaving and farming
- Village cooking demo and lunch
- Afternoon and evening free to explore the town and enjoy dinner on your own

Breakfast and lunch included.

Day 13 (October 19)

- Morning flight back to Istanbul
- Cross the Golden Horn to Beyoglu (modern Istanbul)
- Walking tour including a lunch of street food tastings
- Afternoon excursion via metro to explore two of countless Istanbul skyscrapers where Turkey's educated, western-minded live and work
- Glimpses of Turkey's wealth and sophistication

Breakfast and lunch included. Optional contemporary gastronomy tasting dinner menu.

Day 14 (October 20)

- Glittering golden Byzantine mosaics at Chora Church
- Süleymaniye Mosque - Istanbul's grandest, gaining appreciation for the design and engineering genius of imperial architect Sinan
- Bazaar backstreets
- Famed Egyptian spice market shopping (spices, nuts, other Turkish foods and last minute gifts)
- Share one last fabulous farewell dinner together

Breakfast and dinner with wine included.

Day 15 (October 21)

- Panoramic rooftop breakfast

Breakfast included.

Travel with Mei-mei means:

- Eat wonderful, varied meals like a local - NOT with tourists!
- Top tier historical and cultural Turkish guide.
- Experience off-the-beaten path hidden gems other group travelers don't see or do.
- Explore villages and meet local villagers.
- Make the most of your time: Travel by airplane instead of 8 – 10-hour bus trips.
- Comfortable four and five star hotels with local character, excellent location, special features and service. You will never need to take a taxi or navigate public transportation to explore during free time, nor drag your suitcase down the street or upstairs.
- Optional meals arranged for most free time meals, for your convenience and peace of mind.

