

# THE 7 CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR

**DAY 1: THE BEGINNING OF OUR EXPLORING TOUR** Depart JFK International Airport to Istanbul Turkey. Meals will be served on Board.

**DAY 2: INTO THE LAND OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS** Upon arrival in Istanbul you will be met and transferred to your hotel, balance of the day at leisure. Dinner and overnight at your hotel.

**DAY 3: ISTANBUL – DENIZLY** Transfer to the airport to take a short flight to Denizly TK 236 @ 7:00AM Arriving at 8:10AM. Upon arrival at the airport you will be met and start your tour.

**PAMUKKALE- HIERAPOLIS- LAODICEA- MILETUS- KUSADASI. HIERAPOLIS, THE SACRED CITY:** In the first century it was part of the tri-city area of Laodicea, Colossae, and Hierapolis. Visit the Byzantine street and Gate, The Apollo Temple with its foundations that date to the Hellenistic period, but the structure itself was built in the 3rd century A.D. Visit the Necropolis that contains sarcophagi, many different types of tombs, and funeral monuments dating from the Hellenistic until the early Christian times and they are the best preserved. Continue to Laodicea located in the Lycus River Valley The city was founded by the Seleucid king Antiochus II and named for his wife Laodice about 260 B.C. Visit the Aqueduct that piped water to Laodicea, visit the stadium, one of the well preserved from the ancient world, built by Nicostratus and dedicated to Vespasian. Visit the "Ephesian Gate" This triple-arched gateway. In the afternoon drive to Miletus, to sylvated Meander valley and reach to Miletus once had three ports and it was a sea port. The city is known as the home the Great mathematicians and civil engineers. Paul had visited Miletus at the end of his third journey and met with the elders of the Ephesus church. Visit the Roman Baths, Roman fountains, grand theater building. Proceed to your hotel in Kusadasi for dinner and overnight.

**DAY 4 KUSADASI- EPHESUS- KUSADASI** The highlight of our day will be our visit to Ephesus, an ancient city of Christian significance that is particularly well preserved (Revelation 1:11): visit the theater, the Odeon, the library and the Roman Baths. Our scenic drive from Kusadasi brings us to the basilica of St. John, built on the hilltop site of the house and tomb of St. John the Apostle. The basilica is now in ruins, but in its glory was a huge, cross-shaped building with a wide nave and two narrower aisles, a building with six domes, marble pillars and open galleries. Here lies the crypt with the tomb of St. John: it was believed by pilgrims during the Middle Ages that the dust rising from his grave had curative powers and was diligently gathered up. St. Paul visited Ephesus between AD 55-58, where his ministry included preaching, conversion, and the baptizing of the twelve disciples (Acts 19: 5-8). St. Paul was imprisoned for several years in Ephesus and is believed to have written portions of the Epistles during his confinement. Ephesus eventually became one of the cradles of Christianity due to his efforts. In addition to saints John and Paul, Ephesus was also the home to the mother of Christ, Mary who was entrusted to John's care after the Crucifixion and moved with John to Ephesus, where both are believed to have lived the remainder of their lives and are buried. We'll make a visit to the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, the most important Christian shrine in Ephesus, before returning to Kusadasi for dinner and overnight hotel stay.

**DAY 5:KUSADASI- PHILADELPHIA - SARDES- IZMIR** Drive thru plateau to Philadelphia (Alasehir) (Rev 3:7-13) which meant "brotherly love". The church of Philadelphia had used the open doors. See the remains of one of the Seven Churches here. Continue to Sardes (Rev 3:1-6), the former capital city of Lydia of King Croesus. See the temple of Artemis, the gate of the Byzantine church, the restored synagogues, gymnasium. Following the visit drive to Smyrna (Izmir) Rev 2:8-11, another one of the Seven Churches was here. Drive thru the city, dinner and overnight in Izmir.

**DAY 6: IZMIR- THATIRA- PERGAMUM- AYVALIK** Continue inlands to Akhisar (Thyatira). On Paul's second journey, he received lodging and hospitality at the home of Lydia, she gave the purple cloth to Paul. See the remains of the church here. Drive thru plateau to Pergamum.

Pergamum was the capital city of the province. Here parchment paper was invented, the treasury of the Alexander Great had enriched the city, it was the center of art of culture. First visit the Acropol view the city from Citadel see the city walls, Trajan Temple, the most steep Theater, the remains of Zeus Altar which was known the Throne of Satans,the Library. Visit the Red Church, which is a brick construction here was once one of the seven churches. The church needed to repent in order to receive the "the white stone" (Rev 2:17).

**DAY 7: AYVALIK- ASSOS- TROAS- CANAKKALE** Drive north to Assos along the ancient path where Paul walked with his companions. See the remains of the ancient Roman Road, which is stretching from Troas to Assos. Visit Assos where St. Paul met Barnabas, See the ancient city and view the Greek Isle of Lesbos (Mittilini) at a distance. See the theater and Doric columns and the ruins of town and the citadel. Following your visit, drive further south, thru the pine forests and hills covered with olive trees. Continue to Alexander Troas where Paul had sailed to Philippi. See the old harbor and the city walls and the ruins of huge. Dinner and overnight in Canakkale

**DAY 8 CANAKKALE- TROY- ISTANBUL** Canakkale is located at the strait of Dardanelles where Asia meets Europe. In 334 BC Alexander the Great crossed the strait and had a victory against Persians in Granicos and conquered the whole Asia Minor peninsula. In 1915 Allied and Anzac troops had forced to land and fierce battles had taken place in Gallipoli and Canakkale. View the war memorials and drive to the legendary city of Troy of Homeros. See the wooden horse and discover the ancient city with 9 layers of settlements of the ages and re-live the Trojan War and Mythology. Continue to Dardannels, ferry to the European side and drive to Istanbul for Dinner and overnight.

**DAY 9: ISTANBUL** Istanbul, also known as Byzantium and Constantinople, the city reflects two cultures: at one time, it was the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and a site of Christianity. Seven Ecumenical councils were held in Turkey between the 3rd – 8th centuries, three of them in Istanbul. At another time it was the stronghold of the Ottoman Empire, embracing Islamic ideals. Our day of sightseeing will include visits to the famed Topkapi Palace, with the dazzling displays of the treasures of the Ottoman sultans. Visit St. Sophia (which was for 1000 years the largest Church in Christendom and now a museum), the Blue Mosque (so-named from its decorative blue-shaded tiles, glass and gemstones) and the Church of St. Savior in Chora. Our final stop will be the Grand Bazaar with its 4000 shops. Dinner and overnight at your hotel.

**DAY 10: ISTANBUL – NEW YORK** Transfer to the airport in time to connect with your flight to new York, arrive JFK in the afternoon local time.