



Turkey for Solo Travelers: Istanbul, Ephesus & Cappadocia

11 days | 13 days with Istanbul extension

Straddling the European and Asian continents across one of the planet's most vital waterways, Turkey captivates its guests with the best of both worlds. And on this Solo Tour, you and your soon-to-be best friends will shuttle from highlight to highlight—think multicultural monuments in Istanbul's Sultanahmet neighborhood, Roman ruins in Ephesus, and the desolate beauty of Cappadocia. Even more awaits on this trip's Istanbul extension, where you'll encounter pastel beauty and Christian heritage in the neighborhoods of Fener and Balat.



Your tour package includes

- 9 nights in handpicked hotels
- 9 breakfasts
- 2 lunches
- 5 dinners
- 1 food tasting
- 8 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach
- 2 on-tour flights

Included highlights

- Hagia Sophia
- Blue Mosque
- Pamukkale's travertine terraces
- Ancient City of Sagalassos
- Egirdir
- Cappadocia's fairy chimneys

Tour pace

On this guided tour, you'll walk for about 2.5 hours daily across moderately uneven terrain—including cobblestone streets, dirt paths, and wooden platforms—with some hills and steps.

Group size

15–20

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Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 1: Overnight flight

Board your overnight flight to Istanbul today.

Istanbul → 2 nights

Day 2: Arrival in Istanbul

Welcome to Turkey—or, as they say in Istanbul, merhaba! After touching down, transfer to your hotel and take some time to settle in. Then, gather with your Tour Director and fellow travelers at an evening mixer, and get to know one another over a drink.

Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Istanbul

Included meals: breakfast, welcome lunch

Istanbul's roots extend to 660 B.C., encompassing three name changes, stretching across two continents, and blossoming into one massive metropolis. Today, set off on a tour of the city's vibrant streets with your Tour Director in the lead (and get to know some of its 15.5 million inhabitants along the way).

- Make your way to the city's crown jewel: the Hagia Sophia. Originally built as an Eastern Orthodox cathedral in 360 A.D., this UNESCO World Heritage Site has also functioned as a mosque, Catholic church, and secular museum over the years—and held the title of world's largest building for close to a millennium. Step inside this beautifully ornamented structure and get lost in the moment.
 - Take a short walk to Sultanahmet Square—better known as the Hippodrome of Constantinople. Considered the athletic and social center of the Byzantine Empire's capital city, it now houses an array of historic artifacts, including a Greek sacrificial tripod and an Egyptian obelisk.
 - Sit down to an included welcome lunch at a local restaurant, served with beer or wine.
- Once you've finished dining, take off on another guided tour. Next up on the itinerary: a pair of Istanbul icons that illustrate Ottoman history and religious traditions.
- Head to the edge of Sultanahmet Square to the imposing Blue Mosque—instantly

recognizable by its six javelin-like minarets, cascading domes, and the colorful tiles that adorn its interior. Enter and admire this holy place, then sit down to learn more about Ottoman Islamic practices.

- From one UNESCO World Heritage Site, set out for another in the form of Topkapi Palace. Now a museum, this 15th-century palace served as the cradle of the Ottoman Empire, housing its sultans for almost 400 years. Tour its expansive grounds, picturing them as they were in their heyday.

Please note: When entering the Hagia Sophia, women must wear a headscarf. Travelers must also remove or cover their shoes when entering both the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque.

Ephesus Region → 2 nights

Day 4: Flight to Izmir & transfer to the Ephesus Region

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Board a flight to the western city of Izmir this morning. Then, head south, tracing the Aegean Sea, to the historic Ephesus Region. Arrive at your hotel and freshen up, then head to a local restaurant with your group for an included dinner, served with beer or wine.

Day 5: Sightseeing tour of Ephesus

Included meals: breakfast

Board your bus for a short ride to the ancient city of Ephesus. Historically significant in more ways than one, it stands as one of the best-preserved archaeological sites in all of the Mediterranean, and has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its Greek and Roman ruins. Alongside your Tour Director, you'll enter the complex for some guided sightseeing.

- Explore some of Ephesus' grandest highlights: the Library of Celsus (one of the last extant examples of the ancient world's great libraries) and the ruins of the Basilica of St. John (said to have been built over the final resting place of John the Apostle).
- View the 2,300-year-old Great Theatre, a hulking 25,000-seat arena that's used as a performance venue to this day.

- Step inside the House of the Virgin Mary, a Catholic shrine where the Virgin Mary is said to have spent her final days.

Spend your evening sipping and sampling local delicacies with your group on an optional outing to a meyhane—a traditional Turkish wine house. If you'd rather enjoy some alone time, take the night to find a meyhane of your own before returning for a restful night at your hotel.

+ Traditional Turkish Meyhane Dinner

Turkish Lakes Region → 2 nights

Day 6: Turkish Lakes Region via Pamukkale

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Depart the Ephesus Region and head further inland, trading mesmerizing ruins for monuments of a different sort. Known as the "cotton castle," Pamukkale is a collection of snow-white travertine terraces—limestone deposits left by mineral-rich hot springs, cascading down like petrified waterfalls. These flats cup turquoise waters into small pools; one look at them, and you'll realize why UNESCO named them a World Heritage Site.

Hop back on your bus and venture deeper inland into Anatolia, making your final stop at your hotel in the Turkish Lakes Region. Decompress for a bit before joining your group for an included dinner, served with beer or wine.

Day 7: Sightseeing tour of Sagalassos

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

You've gone off the beaten path to get to your hotel—now go a little further to the ancient city of Sagalassos. Located on the slopes of the Taurus Mountains some 9,000 feet above sea level, it was once one of the wealthiest cities in the old region of Pisidia. By the time Alexander the Great first conquered it in 333 B.C., Sagalassos had already accrued over 7,000 years of history, and has registered thousands more since.

- Visit the Upper Agora and view the Antonine Nymphaeum, a long structure decorated with statues of the Greek gods Dionysos, Nemesis, and Asklepios. Another surprising attraction? The Antonine Fountain: Set within a separate house, this 2,100-year-old fount still pulls water from an aquifer—thanks to some extensive reconstruction.

- View the heroön, a small shrine built to honor a legendary hero. After, pass through the remains of the Roman baths; a temple built in the Doric style; another dedicated to Apollo Klarios; and, finally, the Roman theater, one of the highest-altitude stages in the world.
- Wrap up with a visit to the nearby town of Aglasun, where you'll enjoy an included lunch at a local restaurant.

Feeling refreshed after your meal? Join your Tour Director on an optional excursion to the Isparta Province's famed lavender fields. If not, head back to your hotel in the Turkish Lake Region for some rest and relaxation.

Please note: The lavender field excursion is only available on select departures in July and August. You may book it directly through your Tour Director.

Cappadocia → 2 nights

Day 8: Cappadocia via Egridir

Included meals: breakfast, tasting, dinner

En route to Cappadocia, take a brief detour to the lakeside town of Egridir. Straddling the shores of its namesake lake, guarded by looming Mount Sivri, it's a popular holiday destination for Turkish vacationers—and understandably so.

- View Egridir Castle—supposedly built by the Lydians and then expanded by the Romans, Byzantines, and Seljuks—and the Dündar Bey Madrasa. Also known as the Stone Madrasa, this medieval Islamic school now functions as a bazaar, and is marked by a doorway ornamented with geometric carvings.
- Stop by a local shop for a tasting of Turkish delight and other local specialties. Before hitting the road again, drive up to a scenic overlook, grab your camera, and snap some pictures of the peninsular town.

Continue on to Cappadocia, disembark your bus, and sit down with your group for an included dinner, served with beer or wine.

Day 9: Sightseeing tour of Cappadocia

Included meals: breakfast

Today, pay a visit to the Göreme Open-Air Museum—a UNESCO-listed collection of fresco-adorned churches, carved into volcanic rock, which date back to the fourth century.

- See the fairy chimneys: spectacular rock formations that stretch as high as 130 feet into the sky. Then, visit a cave village and a rock-carved church, and ponder over how masons hewed them from stone.

- Stop in Avanos—a town of just under 15,000 people—to discover a craftwork that has typified the area since 1650 B.C.: red clay pottery.

Add a particularly tasty excursion and develop an appreciation for Cappadocian wine, or take the afternoon to roam the village of Göreme. (This tiny town was an important center of early Christianity, and has the highest concentration of painted churches, hermitages, and monasteries in the region.)

Please note: For an additional cost, you can book a hot air balloon ride for this morning through your Tour Director.

+ Cappadocia Valley Walk & Wine Tasting

Istanbul → 2 nights

Day 10: Flight to Istanbul, Grand Bazaar & Bosphorus cruise

Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner

Fly back to Istanbul this morning, then head to the city's Grand Bazaar. Spanning 61 streets and containing over 4,000 vendors, it's one of the oldest covered markets in the world. Navigate the sprawl with your Tour Director, getting their take on the best merchants, then take a little free time to shop to your heart's content.

This evening, cruise through the Bosphorus Strait, looking out on decadent Ottoman palaces and imposing medieval castles as you journey through the narrow waterway that separates Europe from Asia.

After returning from your cruise, sit down and celebrate your trip with your group during tonight's farewell dinner, served with beer or wine.

Flight Home

Day 11: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home or extend your stay in Istanbul to roam this continental crossroads for a while longer.

Technicolor neighborhoods? Lanes lined by lazing cats? It's all in your future (or so your coffee grounds say).

+ Istanbul extension

Istanbul is Europe's largest city, as cosmopolitan as any—and if starting your journey with a few

days there simply wasn't enough, ending it with a few more might do the trick. Go beyond Istanbul's core neighborhoods and you'll find rows of beautifully colored houses in Balat, eclectic churches in Fener, and thriving minority cultures in both, underlining the city's status as a gateway between two continents.

Istanbul → 2 nights

Day 11: Sightseeing tour of Fener & Balat

Included meals: breakfast

Further up the European side of Istanbul, right along the Golden Horn, you'll find two UNESCO-listed neighborhoods: Fener and Balat. Kick off your extended stay with a guided tour of the pair, led by your Tour Director.

- Begin by strolling along the Colored Houses of Balat, richly hued wooden structures that line both sides of narrow cobbled lanes. As you go, learn about the Jewish, Greek, Armenian, and Orthodox communities who have all left their legacies in the area.
- Cross into Fener and enter the Patriarchal Church of St. George. Designed in the Neoclassical style, it ranks as Istanbul's principal Eastern Orthodox cathedral and serves as the seat of the Patriarch of Constantinople—one of the leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church.
- Continue on to another, quirkier house of worship: the St. Stephen Bulgarian Church. Serving the Bulgarian Christian minority of Istanbul, its gold-plated accents stand in stark contrast to its slate walls. Why grey? This Neo-Byzantine, Neo-Baroque building was constructed almost entirely out of prefabricated cast iron.

If you've worked up an appetite, try your hand at crafting some popular Turkish dishes by adding this evening's optional cooking class to your itinerary. Or, take off on your own and find the best kahve—Turkish coffee—you can find. (Just drink it slow: This strong brew's meant to be savored, and is unfiltered to boot.)

+ Turkish Cooking Class & Dinner

Day 12: Free day in Istanbul

Included meals: breakfast

Named after the Arabic word for “bathhouse,” the hammam, or Turkish bath, has been imitated across the world. Start your final day in Istanbul with some well-earned relaxation by opting into this outing. To ease into free time at your own pace, stop at a cafe before one of the greenspaces that line the Golden Horn.

After a fun-filled day, toast to your trip with a farewell drink this evening.

+ Hammam Spa Visit

Flight Home

Day 13: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: goaheadtours.com/TU6 | 1-800-597-0350

Day 5: Traditional Turkish Meyhane Dinner

\$65/\$75* (3 hours, departs in the evening, dinner included)

Head to a meyhane in Izmir this evening for dinner. Meaning "wine house" in Turkish, these traditional restaurants serve various types of local food and drink in simple surroundings. You'll enjoy mezedes—shareable small plates—with your group as you sip raki, an anise-flavored brandy that's Turkey's national drink. Take in the vibe and chat with your group, listening to lively Turkish and Balkan music as you do. Then, return to your hotel a satisfied bunch.

Day 9: Cappadocia Valley Walk & Wine Tasting

\$59/\$69* (3 hours, departure time varies)

Set off with your Tour Director on a hike through one of Cappadocia's famous valleys. Set within Göreme Historical National Park, its dramatic landscapes and rock formations were sculpted by the elements over centuries. Walk through the valley, hearing the legends that explain how the rocks appeared and learning about the people who carved their homes into the stone. Afterward, head to a local winery, where you'll taste emir, narince, öküzgözü, and other wines made from Turkish grapes. Please note: Travelers should be comfortable walking along dirt paths with some steep, narrow sections. Due to the heat and a lack of shade, we recommend bringing a hat and sunscreen.

Extension excursion options

Day 11: Turkish Cooking Class & Dinner

\$119/\$129* (3 hours, departs in the afternoon, dinner included)

Dive into Turkey's culinary traditions during this evening's excursion. You'll take part in an interactive cooking class alongside a local chef to learn how to craft the types of Turkish foods that are lovingly made and served by local families. Discover the origins of the dishes you'll be cooking and try your hand at preparing them. At the end of the class, enjoy an included dinner paired with local wine.

Day 12: Hammam Spa Visit

\$115/\$125* (2 hours, departs in the morning)

Do as the Turks do and pay a visit to a hammam, or Turkish bath house. Going to a hammam has been a mainstay in Turkish culture since the times of the Ottoman empire and visiting one is seen as a time to socialize with friends and relax. Today, you'll visit a local, public bath house and admire the traditional architecture as you learn more about the roots of this cultural mainstay.

*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. GAT accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at goaheadtours.com/terms