

Overview of Archaeological, Architectural, Historical and Cultural Heritage Turkey Tours in Turkey: Cultural Tours to Turkey: Cultural Heritage Tours in Turkey

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TransAnatolie TA0601: Kubaba: 8 Day Cultural Tour in Turkey: Ankara, Black See, Cappadocia Tour: Cultural Heritage Tour to Turkey: Kubaba & Hittites, Amazones & Black See, St. John Paul & Cappadocia

Day 1: Europe – Ankara

Arrival in Ankara. Transfer to the 4 or 5 star high QoS hotel for the welcome cocktail, dinner and overnight stay. [i](#)

Day 2: Ankara

After breakfast at the buffet, our guide will lead us to the Anatolian Civilizations Museum, prize-winning museum of the best Worldwide Museums in 1995. This visit will be preceded by a conference on the Anatolian civilisations. We then visit the old part of Ankara, the citadel, the Konak Boyacizade, the Zenger Pacha Ethnografical Museum and the Spice Bazaar. After lunch, we visit the Atatürk mausoleum and see his pictures exhibition recalling the main moments of his life and of the constitution of the Turkish Republic. We walk through the Atatürk Forest, tasting ice creams, a specialty of Atatürk Farm then go back to our 4 star hotel for dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 3: Ankara – Hattusas – Amasya (376 km)

After breakfast we head towards the Kizilirmak Valley, up to the capital of the Hittite Empire Hattusas and his pantheon Yazilikaya, now registered as a National Historical Park. The main sites to be visited date back from the last period of the great Hittite Empire. On the way to the park, we can see the big temple at Asagi Sevir (temple n°1), the city walls with the colossal doors (Gate Arsanli with its lions, Gate Poterni and YER, Royal Gate Kral). In Yukari Sevir, we can admire the 31 temples built on the edge of Nisan Hill, and the Royal Palace, the Big Castle and other buildings.

The open-air Temple of Yazilikaya, last remaining of the Hittite Empire period is located at 5 km north-east of Bogazköy. It was made of two rooms: the small and the large gallery, and was built taking advantage of the natural placing of the local rocks. Goddesses cut from the living rock are depicted on the right wall of the large gallery, while an image of gods are shown on the left wall. Those two groups bring us to the rear wall, the most important one, that shows us the meeting of the God of Time Tesup and his wife Goddess Hepatu. In a local village, breakfast will enable us to appreciate an Hittite menu, regional meal prepared with spices dried by the wind of the High Hittite Plateau.

In the afternoon, we head up to Amasya, place of birth of the famous geograph Strabon (1st century before JC) and centre of education for the Ottoman princes. Our charmed hotel in Amasya, Apple-Tusan Grubu **** is waiting for us. At sunset, hike trough Yesil Irmak Valley, taking pictures of wooden houses Yolboyu of Amasya, known for their Ottoman architecture.

Dinner and overnight in our hotel. [i](#)

Day 4: Amasya – Zile – Cekerek – Bogaziliyan – Cappadocia (330 km)

After the breakfast at the buffet, we explore the city of Ferhat and Sirin, also known under the name of ' City of the Crown', Amasya.

Turkish Houses in Amasya. We admire the old houses, Hazeranlar Konagi, the Ethnografical Museum, the royal rot-cut graves dig dating back from the Hellenistic period, without forgetting the Castle of Amasya, the Mosque with the turning

minaret Burmalı, the Bayezit II Mosque and its medrese Kulliye, and the Medrese Gök, the bridges (Caglayan, Alcak, Kus), Darussifa-Bimarhane (psychiatric hospital). The museum of Amasya, one of the richest in Turkey, displays more than 27,000 objects, remainings from 11 civilizations.

Lunch in a local restaurant.

Ottoman houses and a Pontic tomb in Amasya

In the afternoon we drive across Turhal-Zile, visiting the Zile Castle, place of wars between the Roman and the Bridge inhabitants , also known for the famous quotation of Julius Caesar: "Veni, Vidi, Vinci". Then we head towards Cekerek, Sorgun and Bogaziliyan, and one of the most spectacular landscapes in the world: Cappadocia.

Dinner and Overnight in our hotel ****: Burcu Kaya- Dinler-Tassaray- Kaymakli Prens. [i](#)

Day 5: Cappadocia

After breakfast, we visit the old houses of Ürgüp. Start towards the Rose Valley, the Camels Valley, the Valley of the Virgin Mary. Then we enjoy a relaxing programme aiming at discovering different craft industries (weaving and knotting of carpets), the nomad culture and imperial palaces.

Lunch enables us to taste the Cömlek Kebab, specialty of the region in a restaurant offering a beautiful view on the Kizilirmak River. In the afternoon, we first visit the underground city of Ozkonak or Derinkuyu, and we contemplate the strange and beautiful landscape of Cappadocia with the old small village, so quiet and so pittoresk, of Mustafapasa, known previously under the name of Sinasos. We continue by the valley of Cemil-Taskinpasa-Soganli from the two regional architects, by the Hasan and Erciyes volcanoes. Let's admire the hand-made poppies with linen in Soganli, and especially the gloves and socks with Anatolian drawings.

Dinner and overnight in our hotel. [i](#)

Day 6: Cappadocia-The Holy Land of Christianity following the Apocalypse of St. J. Paul

Hikes through the Valleys of the Three Cappadocian Graces, Üc Güzeller, the Pigeon Valley, Uchisar, Avcilar. Stop in an Onyx fabrique. Lunch at the hotel or at the buffet of the restaurant Koru.

In the afternoon, we visit the Göreme Valley, the open-air museum surrounded by churches, admiring quietly at sunset the early Christian art, the Byzantine Imperial art of those churches: Tokali-Elmalı-St Basilus, Yılanlı-Sandal along with the monasteries of priests and priestesses, a unique religious campus, the place where the apostles, the first Christians, the forty Cappadocian Great Fathers, Saint Paul, Saint John, Saint Timothy, Saint Barnabe, Saint Naziane and Saint Basilus were welcomed, took refuge and prayed.

Diner and overnight at the hotel. [i](#)

Day 7: Cappadocia – Ankara (320 km)

After breakfast we take advantage of free time to walk over Pasabag, a part of the famous Zelve Valley. We are in the country of 'Moutons retournés'. On the way to Kayseri, also known as Caesarea during the Roman time, those who wish it can visit the leather factory.

Lunch enroute. Next to the Byzantine fortress, we can admire the Huant Medrese, and its Archaeological Museum and the Mosque Honat Hatun. In the south of this complex, we find Döner Kümbet, the very simple and classic Seljukian Mausoleum ((1276), the first Seljukian school of Anatomy and the Museum of Medical History Gevher Nesibe.

Let's also admire the delicate Sahabiye Medrese and by walking across the Central Place and Bedesten, the Large Mosque Ulu, overlooked by a high minaret. We leave for Ankara, going through the High Plateau of Central Anatolia.

Dinner and overnight in our hotel. [i](#)

Day 8: Ankara

After breakfast, some free time given to enjoy the city at your own pace. Transfer to airport for return flight for a nostalgic departure but eager to live again this experience. [i](#)

Pricing

- For Pricing Click [List of TransAnatolie Turkey Tours, Services and Pricing](#) or
- Contac Us: [Contact Information for TransAnatolie Tour](#) [i](#)

Options

- During the Cappadocia tour, a Turkish evening with traditional dances and Mevlevi performance
- Discovery of Cappadocia in hot air balloons. [i](#)

Inclusive

- 8 days - 7 nights full pension
- Transportation in Turkey
- Lunches in traditional Turkish restaurants, one of the best cuisines in the world.
- All admission fees to the museums and sites mentioned
- Guide [i](#)

Exculsive

- Europe/Istanbul/Europe Flights
- Insurance, Airport Tax
- Drinks & Tips [i](#)

Kubaba

Kubaba is the chief goddess of the Neo-Hittites, she became Cybebe to the Phrygians and Cybele to the Romans. She was known as Kybele in Anatolia.

Kubaba, holding a pomegranate in her right hand and a mirror in her left Kubaba (in the Weidner "Chronicle"), also known as Kug-Baba or Kubau, is the only queen on the Sumerian king list. Before overthrowing the rule of En-Shakansha-Ana of the 2nd Uruk Dynasty and becoming monarch, the king list says she was a tavern-keeper.

"The house of Kubaba" is mentioned "in the reign of Puzur-Nirah, king of Akshak" (line 38) in the Weidner "Chronicle", a propagandistic letter attempting to predate the shrine of Marduk to an early period: "Kubaba gave bread to the fisherman and gave water, she made him offer the fish to Esagila" (line 43). Her reign as the only "king" of the 3rd Dynasty of Kish was one of peace and prosperity. Her reign is contemporary with the "Early Dynastic III" period of Sumer.

Her reign is listed to have lasted for 100 years. If she is a historical ruler, she probably lived in the 23rd to 25th century BC.

Shrines in her honour spread throughout Mesopotamia. In the Hurrian area she may be identified with Kebat, or Hapat, one title of the Hurrian Mother Goddess Hannahannah (from Hurrian hannah, "mother"). Abdi-Kheba (= the servant of Kheba), was the palace mayor, ruling Jerusalem at the time of the Amarna letters (1350 BC).

Kubaba became the tutelary goddess who protected the ancient Syrian city of Carchemish on the upper Euphrates, in the late Hurrian – Early Hittite period. Relief carvings, now at the Museum of Anatolian Antiquities, Ankara, show her seated, wearing a cylindrical headdress like the polos and holding a circular mirror in one hand and the poppy capsule or pomegranate in the other. She plays a role in Luwian texts, and a minor role in Hittite texts, mainly in Hurrian religious rituals. According to Mark Munn (Munn 2004), her cult later spread and her name was adapted for the main goddess of the Hittite successor-kingdoms in Anatolia, which later developed into the Phrygian matar (mother) or matar kubileya whose image with inscriptions appear in rock-cut sculptures. The Phrygian goddess otherwise bears little resemblance to Kubaba, who was a sovereign deity at Sardis, known to Greeks as Kybebe. [i](#)

TransAnatolie Tour: Multilingual Cultural Tour Provider and Operator.

[i](#)

TransAnatolie TA0602: 15 Day Turkey Cultural Historical Heritage Tour: Cappadocia,

Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia -Turkey Exploration Tour: Cultural, Historical and Archaeological Heritage Tour to East Anatolia Turkey: TransAnatolie East Turkey

Day 1: Europe-Ankara

Arrival in Ankara. Transfer to the 4 star Hotel with high QoS and for a welcome drink, dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 2: Ankara-Hattusas (Hattusha)- Amasya (336 km)

After breakfast, visit to the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, where the 1995 World Fair took place. We continue with the visit in the old part of Ankara to the beautiful wooden palaces dated from the Ottoman period, to the Ethnographical Museum Zeger Pacha's Kanagi and to the Spices Market. We don't forget to take some pictures of the Atatürk Mausoleum. Lunch will be taken in the Hacibey restaurant, the most famous Döner Kebab in Ankara, next to the Deputies Quarter. In the afternoon, we head towards Hattusas, the Hittite Capital with its city-walls, its Lion Gate, its underground Gate, its King Gate and its Hittite Pantheon. We finally reach Yazilikaya. Let's admire the sunset on the city of the Amesis Amazons, place of birth of the famous architect-geographer Strabon: Amasya. Let's walk along the Green River, admiring the wooden houses and the graves cut in the rock and the castle. We end our day at our hotel **** with a welcome drink and a very nice delicious dinner. [i](#)

Day 3: Amasya-Niksar-Ordu-Giresun (320 km)

After breakfast, we leave our hotel for a new visit of Amasya, where we can admire the Mosque of the Beyazit Sultan, the Burmalı Minare Mosque, Darüssifa-Bimarhabe, the Mosque of the Blue Medrese Gök, the Archaeological Museum, a few other museums, the Ethnographical Museum of Hazeranlar Konagi. Why not a few pictures of the graves cut in the rock, of the historical bridges, of the fountains, of the wooden houses along the Green River and of the Torumtay Mausoleum, built in 1266. Lunch in Amasya.

Then we drive along the Green River up to Niksar, admiring this amazing landscape through a winding road across the Bridge Mountains. In Ordu starts the region of the nuts cultivation and we can admire nice views on the fields and the sea.

Overnight is planned in the "*** Hotel in Giresun, where numerous cherry trees grow. Their sweet cherries are also named 'Birds Cherries'. Following the legend, the Roman General Lucullus taking over the city in 69 before JC, would have introduced the cherrytrees cultivation in Europe. [i](#)

Day 4: Giresun-Trabzon (130 km)

After breakfast, head towards Trabzon admiring on the way the coast of the Euxine Sea.

In Trabzon, we visit one of the main interesting parts of Trebizonde: the Church of Aya Sofia with its bright frescos. Aya Sofia was at first a church in a form of a cross transformed into a basilica with 3 naves built during the domination of the Manuel Commene I dynasty in the 13th century. Thereafter it was enlarged and lifted several times.

The Southern side of the church has a very beautiful portal embellished with wonderful sculptures, mainly friezes depicting Adam and Eve, mythological figures and flower patterns. The most beautiful frescos can be found in the narthex (entrance portal). Here are depicted miracles of the New Testament such as the Christ walking on the waters, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and the healing of the Blinds. End of day we arrive at our hotel "*** for dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 5: Trabzon-Macka-Gümüşhane-Bayburt-Erzurum (342 km)

After breakfast, we first visit the Sumela Monastery, cling to the hill and located next to the Altindere Park and to the Golden River with the same name. The name Sumela is a deformation with shortening of the Greek 'Panagia Theotokos tou melas', the very Holy Mother of God from the black mountain.

That Monastery, now deserted and difficult of access, is located at 1,200 meters high. The last 250 meters have to be done by foot or with a van. It is remarkable by its impressive frescos of the Church built in the rocks and is part of the list of monuments of UNESCO.

We continue our trip through the Bridge Mountains, driving up via Torul towards Gümüşhane (1,250 m) and Bayburt (1,600 m) across the Kop-Gecidi (2,302 m) towards Erzurum, at 1,950m.

Lunch in a typical restaurant in Bayburt, at the foot of the Bayburt Burch, on the Coruh River.

In the late afternoon, in Erzurum-Karin named 'the Roman Country' by the Seldjoukids, we visit the Great Mosque with the three Kumbets, the School of Astronomy and Medicine of the Koran with its twin minarets. This one is representative of the oriental art: patterns and tiles made of turquoise earthenware. It was built by the daughter of the Seldjoukide Sultan Aladdin Kaykubat. We still are in Central Asia...

We finally arrive in our hotel ****, wintersports resort on the Palandöken Mountain for our dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 6: Erzurum – Ani – Kars – Dogubayazit (434 km)

In the morning, after breakfast, we head towards the Transcaucasian to Ani.

Between Pasinler and Horasan, we make a stop to admire the Cobandebe Bridge, the most beautiful bridge in the world, built by Mimar Sinan, contemporary and friend of Michel-Angelo, and Master-Architect of Suleiman the Magnificent.

We follow the Aras River for about 140 km. Ani is located 45km east from Kars and 248km from Erzurum on the border between Turkey and the Armenian Republic. This city is located on an important commercial road and has expanded to finally become the capital of Armenia in 961.

At that time, there were more than 100,000 inhabitants and thousands of churches.

The earthquakes and wars against the Byzantine, the Turks and the Mongols put an end to this prosperity age. The earthquake of 1319 was the end of the city. The ruins of the deserted city were found back just after the end of the 19th century. We can still find many ruins of Armenian and Seldjoukide monuments gathered in a limited area: the big Cathedral, the Church of the Savior, the Church of St Gregory, the Mosque of Honentz, the Seldjoukide Palace with its harem and selam, the Turkish bath (hammam) and the Seldjoukide market.

After lunch in the restaurant Ocakbasi in Kars, known for its oriental specialties, we have the possibility to take pictures of the Cathedral of the Apostles and the Castle of Kars.

We follow our trip towards Agri (or Dogubayazit) admiring on the way the impressive landscape of the Ararat Mountain (5,165m) and of the small Ararat Mountain (3,896m). This name 'Ararat' is mentioned several times in the Old Testament: the Book of Genesis (8,4) mentions the episode of the grounding of the Noah's Ark after the flood on the Ararat Mount.

In the Book of Kings, we can read how the murderers of the Assyrian King Sanherib, the administrator of Jerusalem, ran away towards the Ararat Mount. In addition, in the Book of Jeremiah, during the campaign against Babylon, the name 'Ararat' is mentioned as an ally of the Israelites.

Ararat is another form of the Acadian name 'Urartu'.

Everything is impressive in this landscape: land tortoises, eagles, partridges, hawks, numerous species of flowers and plants, foxes and sheep make up an animal and floral richness on the hillsides of the Ararat Mount. End of day, we arrive at our 4 star hotel for dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 7: Dogubayazit – Van (152km)

After breakfast, visit to the spectacular Ishak Pacha Palace, located 7km far from the city, at the foot of the Ararat Mount. At that place, a monument Urartu already existed in 1,000 before JC, which was restored in 1784 and embellished to become a palace fortified by the Ottoman Empire Ishak Pacha. This palace was built in different styles, the most important being Osman Baroque from the 17th century. Once built, Ishak Pacha made cut off the hands of the architect to prevent him from building such beautiful palace for another person. Without the terraces, this palace is 115m long and 50m largen, includes 336 rooms distributed on 2 floors and reminds you of the Tales from the Turkish Nights.

Lunch in Dogubayazit and start to Van (1,750m) via the Tendurek Pass (2,644m).

Before arriving in Van-Tuspan, we make a stop at the Muradiye waterfalls, a patch of paradise next to Van, located at 1,700m high on the shore of the largest lake in the country, where we can admire many Armenian churches. The old city of Tuspa was founded by the Ourarit in the 9th century before JC. The Kingdom of Urartu included a large part of the Middle-East and that civilization reached its apogee between 900 and 600 before JC.

This period was followed by a decline, provoked by the war against the Assyrians and the invasion of the Scythians and the Medes. Alexander the Great ruled this area for some time Then, after a Persian period, this territory was rules by the Armenians. Van became a Byzantine city and was destroyed by the Mongols in 1387. Persians and Osmans fought to get the domination on this territory. Finally, the Osmans developed the town.

Arriving in Van, we visit the fortress, accessible via a stair with 1,000 steps from which we can admire the lake at sunset.

The founder of Urartu, Sardur I, built here in the 9th century, a fortress on a chalky crest of 1,000 m long and 100m high, to protect himself from the Assyrians. A grave with several urns were found during excavations at the foot of the northern side. On the southern hillside of the fortress, we can discover funeral rooms cut in the rock for Ourart Kings. In those graves, we can find Rupestrian inscriptions engraved in cuneiform characters by the Ourart Kings and trilingual inscriptions (in Babylonian, in Persian, Achemenide and in Media) done in the 5th century by

the Persian King Xerxes, who says: "Xerxes, the Great King of the Kings".

We dine and overnight at our high QoS Hotel (4 star) in Van or Urfa depending upon the conditions at the time of concern. [i](#)

Day 8: Van (100 km)

After breakfast we make a stop in a leather cooperative to get to know the art of Eastern Turkey. The Kilims of Van are famous for the Turkish-Kurdish patterns and for the Armenian and Persian drawings.

We continue to the Citadel of Cavustepe located on a hill at 28km south of Van, which is a good example of the architectural art of the Ourart civilization. Two different fortresses can be distinguished: the upper fortress and the lower fortress. In the upper part, we can find the remains of a temple, while in the lower part are the ruins of a palace, a complex of temples, graves of princes and a stock of provisions with 30 barrels on which we can still see the measures in cuneiform characters. This whole would have been the fortress 'Sardurihurda' of the King Sargon II in the 8th century before JC.

Lunch will be taken on the island of Akdamar, 4 km far from the shore. This now desolated island was a religious centre 1,000 years ago and was the seat of the Armenian patriarchate for centuries. We can also admire the Church of the Holy Cross, one of the most beautiful Armenian churches we could see. This Church was founded by the King of Vaspourakan Gagouig Ardzrouni (904-937) and is particularly well-known for the sculptures of the outdoor walls, where we can find mostly representations of the Old and New Testament such as: Adam and Eve, the Noah history, the Sacrifice of Abraham, Samson, David against Goliath, the Hebrews in the blazing fire, Mary with Jesus and the Christ on his throne.

The reliefs of the abbassid Calif Mukhtadir show us an exceptional mix of Christian and Islamic art. That church was widened several times over the centuries, with for example a chapel on the North, a large porch and a church tower.

Today, the restaurant Deniz from Gevas has prepared us an unforgettable picnic.

At the end of the day, at sunset, we make a stop to visit the Seldjoukide necropolis and to admire the charms of a Turkish princess. Eventually we go back to our hotel in Van for dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 9: Van – Tatvan – Biltis – Silvan – Tigris – Hassuni – Diyarbakir – Mardin (451km)

After breakfast we leave Van for a diversified day and we drive to the south of the lake via the Kuskunkiran pass (2,234m) towards Tatvan at about 145km far away. By going along the valley of the river watering Bitlis, capital of the Turkish tobacco located in the middle of a fresh oasis, we reach the famous Bridge of Malabadi built in 1146 by the Artukides on the Batman Suyu, one of the affluents of the Tigris, love of Euphrates.

Lunch is planned to be taken in Silvan-Tigranokerta, built during the Assyrian period and visited by Alexander the Great. This city was developed by the King Tigran the Great and is built on the old site of Martyropolis, founded by the Bishop Marutha in the late 4th century. This name was given in memory of the 40 Christian martyrs executed during the second period of the Persian Kingdom. Constantine the Great restored the Silvan Castle to use it as a military garrison.

Euphrates pursues Tigris

Worth to note also that during World War I, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was the commander against the war with the Russians and captured the cities of Mus and Bitlis back from the Russians.

After the lunch taken with the burgomaster of Silvan, we visit the Mosque of Selhattin Eyyoubi, the destroyed minaret, the Church of Kildan, the Museum of Atatürk, the Caves of Temtemburg, Hamido, the numerous troglodyte houses (+/- 300), the Castle of Hassuni as well as fountains and watermills. The restoration of this site was paid by the EC included in the protection of monuments.

Arriving in Diyarbakir, we can admire the impressive walls built with black basalt, which are one of the most beautiful types of military architecture of the Middle Age. The foundation of those

walls, 5,5 km long having a fish shape, date back from the Roman period (349 after JC). We don't forget to take pictures of the Tigris Delta and of the bridge over it.

This bridge was built by the metropolite Jean Slara in 512.

From there the Tigris was only navigable at that time with "keleks" (small boats made of pumped up animal skins).

Our 4 star hotel is at your service in Diyarbakir or in Mardin for dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 10: Mesopotamia: Mardin – Urfa – Harran – Kahta (408 km)

After breakfast we walk around the town of Mardin, which is a poetic city located at 1,300 m high on a hill topped by a citadel. It was known at first as Marida and built on the rocks. But it has since then lost its population of Catholic Armenians. According to the English historian Arnold Toynbee, this would be the most beautiful town in the world thanks to its typical Arab architecture. The small streets of Mardin display highly decorated houses with chalky stones with a typical arab style. The medrese of the Sultan Isa Bey (1385) is one of the most important sites of Mardin. This medrese is a mosque with a school of astronomy, medicine, Coranic containing a door decorated with wonderful bas-relief.

From the Medrese roof, we have a beautiful view on the city and on the plains of Mesopotamia. After the visit to the Big Mosque, we head towards Deir-Az-Zafaran or Deyrulzaferan, which is located in the middle of vines and gardens in an inhospitable landscape.

The majority of the Syrian-Orthodox patriarches is buried here. Until 1933, this monastery was also the siege of the patriarchate, now transferred to Damas. It was founded at the time of the ancestors of Mary and Ananie in the 6th century.

Lunch in Urfa, the old Edesse, historical city of the bible where Abraham, Job, Jacob and even St Gregory lived. The most well-known restaurant of Edesse, named Göl, with its typical Mesopotamian dishes, is in the Abraham garden.

We visit the houses of Abraham in Urfa named Ursu, Orkai and Edesse. It is said that the Assyrian King Nemrut had a dream in which it was mentioned that he would have to give his kingdom

to a person born during the year. Therefore he ordered to kill all newborn children of the year as well as pregnant women.
Harran Emevi Mosque Mardin Ulu Camii, Grand Mosque Urfa
Halil Ibrahim Mosque

Hagar concealed her pregnancy and hid her son Abraham in a cave, where he lived until he was 7. Once grown up, Abraham fought against Nimrod but was trapped and condemned to be burnt at the stake. Then God intervened and transformed fire into water, sparks and ashes into carps. This water now flows in 2 ponds where Holy carps are swimming. Edessa played also an important role during the first Christian centuries as it was named the 'City of Apostle St Thomas' and was the centre of the Armenian Christendom as well as the home of the oriental Syrian Church.

We know also the legend of the King Abgar from Edessa and of 'Mandylion', a Jesus icon created miraculously: when Abgar was suffering from leprosy, an ambassador was sent to Jesus to ask for healing. Jesus dried his forehead with a cloth (mandylion) which was given to the ambassador. This cloth, found back in 544, was hidden in a wall of the city and became the priceless possession of Edessa. In 944, this relic was transferred to Constantinople and was then stolen by the Crusaders in 1204 to be brought back to the West, where it disappeared. For the orthodox Christians, this icon represents the real face of Jesus.

At the end of the day, we arrive in Harran, the warmest spot in Turkey but also one of the most picturesque villages in the region. This city, where Abraham lived during his trip towards Canaan, is also considered traditionally as the place where the old Testament was written. This village, located at the crossroads of the caravans, was an important trading place with a large international traffic and had also a significant religious activity.

The Mesopotamian, Greek and Roman divinities were venerated over there. This era ended in the 13th century when the Mongols razed the city. We can admire there the typical houses (Trulli) ant-hill shaped and built with clay, with a roof as a painted dome. They were barns permitting to keep foodstuffs in a cool place in the summer and in a hot place in the winter. Harran was surrounded by a wall, which is now in

ruins but which is still recognizable with its 7 doors to get into the city.

After that visit, we head towards our final destination Kahta at the foot of Nemrut Dagi and towards our hotel Nemrut ***, for a welcome drink, dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 11: Kahta – Nemrut Dagi – Kahta – Antioche (351 km)

Today we leave early with the bus, warmly dressed to visit one of the most outstanding sites of our trip: Nemrut Dagi. The sculptors of the Sovereign of Commagen, Antiochos, built an impressive sanctuary on this huge plateau. And as Antiochos was seeing himself as a god, he added his own effigy to the unity.

It is better to contemplantz this place at sunrise, when the status are well lighted up.

The funeral monument of Antiochos I (69-36 before JC), at the top of the mountain Nemrut (2,150m), was built by this King for himself and his close family.

Antiochos was descented by his father Mithridate from the King of Persia Darius and by his mother Laodike from Alexander the Great.

Commagen was a buffer region between the Greek, the Roman and the Persian properties, which explains the multi-cultural character of religious expressions.

Excavations were carried out on this mountain by the German engineer Sester in 1881, which enabled to bring to light the huge statues.

This tumulus, 160 m high and 150m diameter is made of 2 terraces:

The Eastern Terrace: we can find statues of gods, from 8 to 9 meters high, in a sitting position with the back turned towards the tumulus. They are very well preserved, except the majority of the heads, which are missing. However, 2 heads are still intact. The representation, from left to the right, is as follows: Apollo, Mithras, Helios, Hermes (light), Tychne (fertility), Zeus, Oromasdes (creator), Antiochus I, Heracles, Verathragna, Artagnes (power and courage), every statue with a lion and an eagle as protective animal.

The Western Terrace: the statues of the gods are placed in the same order as on the eastern terrace but their state of preservation is worse. Only heads lying down on the ground are still intact. This terrace has no altar. The two lions on the terraces are the oldest representations of the horoscope in the world: they wear a half-moon and 19 stars around their neck, including the 3 largest in conjunction symbolizing the planets Jupiter, Mars and Mercury.

Then, we leave towards Antioch, where we will appreciate Arab specialties during lunch.

In 307 before JC, Antigone founded Antigonía, which was supplanted seven years later by another city founded by order of Seleucus I Nicator, general of Alexander the Great. This city named Antioch expanded very rapidly, so as to become one of the most prosperous and powerful cities in Asia Minor. It was even the 3rd city in the Roman Empire and then became the centre of Christendom at the time of Apostles Peter and Paul. In Antioch we visit the Caves of Peter, an old cult centre in the rocks, used by the Christians as a prayer place. The Archaeological Museum displays interesting architectural achievements, exceptional Roman sculptures and mosaics famous throughout the world.

Dinner and overnight is our 4 star hotel.

Possibility to do evening activities in the typical streets of Antioch along the Orante River. [i](#)

Day 12: Antioch – Alexandrette – Tarse – Gülek – Tyana – Nigde – Nevsehir (479km)

After breakfast, we leave Antioch towards Daphne, where the nymph Daphne pursued by Apollon, was transformed into a bay tree. We finally arrive in Tarsus, birth place of St Paul, going through Issos, where Alexander the Great and Darius III met. We visit the Well and House of St Paul before having lunch in the surroundings and walking to discover this Holy place. Then we head towards Cappadocia going through Gülek, Tyana and Nigde, garrison place of Alexander the Great. We visit the Tyana aqueduct, the Roman swimming pool, the Great Mosque

of Nigde, a very delicate city dated from the Seljuks period with the Princess Mausoleum.

We continue towards Nevsehir. At the 4 star hotel of high QoS we have buffet dinner and overnight.

Possibility to do a tour in hot-air balloon in the morning upon reservation. [i](#)

Day 13: Cappadocia (80km)

The whole day is dedicated to the discovery of this unique region. The wind and the violent climatic forces have carved curious characters out of tuff. Seeing the "Fairies" chimneys looks like a lunar plateau.

We visit the open-air museum in Göreme, with its churches in the rocks, the Pigeons Valley and Uchisar. We follow by the visit to a carpets school and store as well as to onyx and leather workshops. Lunch will be taken during those visits. Dinner and overnight at our hotel ****.

Possibility to attend an evening with traditional dances. [i](#)

Day 14: Cappadocia: Roses Valley – Pasabaga – Underground city of Saratli – Pizze Tower in Aksaray – Acemhöyük – Salty Lake – Ankara (330km)

After buffet breakfast, we leave to discover another aspect of Cappadocia with the Roses Valley, the Camel Valley, the Virgin Mary Valley, Pasabag, a part of the Zelve Valley, the impressive underground city of Saratli, dedicated to Simone and Jean Vandelft, the Minaret Egri of Aksaray, Pizze of Turkey and we finally arrive in Acemhöyük, the main capital of the Hittite civilization.

Lunch with local inhabitants in Acemhöyük.

Back to Ankara, we drive along the Salty lake with its salt crystal, its ducks, its wild geese and its rose flamingos. Dinner and overnight at our 4 star hotels. [i](#)

Day 15: Ankara – Departure

After breakfast, transfer to the airport. [i](#)

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Inclusive

- 15 days, 14 nights, full pension in 4* charming hotels, (dinner on the 1st evening, breakfast on the last day)
- Minibus for Sumela, and Nemroud Dag, cruise on the Van Lake,
- All admission fees to the visits planned,
- Services of TransAnatolie Tour Professional Guide,
- Transportation in Turkey (403 Mercedes bus or minibus, or a Mercedes Sprinter/WW Wolt,
- and lunches in restaurants. [i](#)

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- Drinks in hotels and restaurants
- Optional visits, tips
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TransAnatolie Tour: Multilingual Cultural Tour Provider and Operator.

[i](#)

**TransAnatolie TA3401:
Theodora: 4 Day Cultural Tour
in Turkey Istanbul: Cultural**

Heritage Tour to Turkey: Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul: The Capital-City of Byzantium

Day 1: Arrival in Istanbul

Sightseeing city tour, dinner and overnight at the 4 star Armada Hotel. [i](#)

Day 2: Istanbul

In the morning, discovery of the Golden Horn and of the Pierre Loti area. Visits to Ottoman Imperial Cemetery and Eyüp Mosque. Walks along the Roman-Byzantine city walls and visit the Chora Church and Mihrimah Sultan Mosque.

The great Mosque of Eyüp lies outside the city walls, near the Golden Horn, at the supposed place where Eyüp, the standard bearer of the Prophet Mohammed, died in the Islamic assault on Constantinople in 670 A.D. The first mosque built after the Ottoman conquest of the city, this greatly venerated shrine attracts many pilgrims.

The Kariye Museum (Chora Church), the 11th century church of "St. Savior" in Chora, is, after St. Sophia, the most important Byzantine monument in Istanbul. Unremarkable in its architecture, inside, the walls are decorated with superb 14th century frescoes and mosaics. Illustrating scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, these brilliantly coloured paintings embody the vigour of Byzantine art. Restored wooden houses in the area surrounding the church offer tea and coffee in a relaxed, atmosphere far removed from the city's hectic pace.

Walls of glass fill the four immense arches that support the central dome at the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque inside the Edirne gate of the old city walls. One hundred and sixty-one windows illuminate this mosque, built by Sinan for Mihrimah Sultana, the daughter of Süleyman the Magnificent in 1555.

Lunch is next to the Roman Circus in a well known Turkish-Greek restaurant.

In the afternoon, we visit St. Sofia (Ayasofya) and Topkapi Palace Museums, and the Grand Bazaar.

The Basilica of St. Sophia, now called the Ayasofya Museum, is unquestionably one of the finest buildings of all time. Built by Constantine the Great and reconstructed by Justinian in the 6th century, its immense dome rises 55 meters above the ground and its diameter spans 31 meters. You should linger here to absorb the building's majestic serenity and to admire the fine Byzantine mosaics.

On a spot of land at the confluence of the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn and the Marmara Sea, stands Topkapi Palace, a maze of buildings at the center of the Ottoman Empire between the 15th and 19th centuries. In these opulent surroundings the sultans and their court lived and governed. A magnificent wooded garden fills the outer, or first, court. To the right of the second court, shaded by cypress and plane trees, stand the palace kitchens, now galleries exhibiting the imperial collections of crystal, silver and Chinese porcelain. To the left, the Harem, the secluded quarters of the wives, concubines and children of the sultan, charms visitors with echoes of a centuries old intrigue.

Today, the third court holds the Hall of Audience, the Library of Ahmet III, an exhibition of imperial costumes worn by the sultans and their families, the famous jewels of the treasury and a priceless collection of miniatures from medieval manuscripts. In the center of this innermost sanctuary, the Pavilion of the Holy Mantle enshrines the relics of the Prophet Mohammed brought to Istanbul when the Ottomans assumed the caliphate of Islam

The cascading domes and four slender minarets of Süleymaniye Mosque dominate the skyline on the Golden Horn's west bank. Considered the most beautiful of all imperial mosques in Istanbul, it was built between 1550 and 1557 by Sinan, the renowned architect of the Ottoman golden age. On the crest of a hill, the building is conspicuous by its great size, which the four minarets that rise from each corner of the courtyard emphasize. Inside, the mihrab (prayer niche) and the mimber (pulpit) are of finely carved white marble; fine stained glass windows color the incoming streams of light. It was in the

gardens of this complex that Süleyman and his wife Hürrem Sultan, Roxelane, had their mausolea built, and near here also that Sinan built his own tomb. The mosque complex also includes four medrese, or theological schools, a school of medicine, a caravanserai, a Turkish bath, and a kitchen and hospice for the poor.

We dine at Istanbul By Night at Kumkapi and overnight at the 4 star hotel with high QoS. [i](#)

Day 3: Istanbul

In the morning, visit the Hippodrome, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum located at the Ibrahim Pascha Palace as well as the Ethnographical Museum in Istanbul.

The dark stone building that houses the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art was built in 1524 by Ibrahim Pasa; Grand Vizier to Süleyman the Magnificent, as his residence. It was the grandest private residence ever built in the Ottoman Empire. Today, it houses a superb collection of ceramics, metalwork miniatures, calligraphy, textiles, and woodwork as well as some of the oldest carpets in the world.

Then we visit the sixth century Byzantine cistern known as the Yerebatan Sarnici. Three hundred and thirty-six massive Corinthian columns support the immense chamber's fine brick vaulting.

Walking along the Sultan Ahmet Square we arrive in the famous Blue Mosque. Facing St. Sophia stands the supremely elegant, six-minaret, imperial Sultanahmet Mosque. Built between 1609 and 1616 by the architect Mehmet, the building is more familiarly known as the Blue Mosque because its interior gleams with a magnificent paneling of blue and white Iznik tiles. During the summer months an evening light and sound show both entertain and inform.

Before lunch we become familiar with Turkish Cultural Products: carpets and kilims, jewellery and leather. Delicious lunch is at the Mesopotamian restaurant.

In the afternoon, pay a visit to the Old Egyptian Market and Second-Hand Market. We then fully enjoy the wonderful Bosphorus Cruise between two continents Asia and Europe, A stay in Istanbul is not complete without the traditional and unforgettable boat excursion up the Bosphorus, the winding

strait that separates Europe and Asia. Its shores offer a delightful mixture of past and present, grand splendor and simple beauty. Modern hotels stand next to yali (shorefront wooden villas), marble palaces abut rustic stone fortresses, and elegant compounds neighbour small fishing villages. During the journey, you pass in front of the magnificent Dolmabahçe Palace; farther along rise the green parks and imperial pavilions of Yildiz Palace. On the edge of this park, on the coast, stands Çiragan Palace, now restored as a grand hotel. Refurbished in 1874 by Sultan Abdülaziz, it stretches for 300 meters along the Bosphorus shore, its ornate marble facades reflecting the swiftly moving water. In Ortaköy, the next stop, artists gather every Sunday to exhibit their works in a streetside gallery. The variety of people create a lively scene; sample a delicious bite from one of the street vendors. In Ortaköy, there is a church, mosque and a synagogue that have existed side by side for hundreds of years - a tribute to Turkish secularism and tolerance. Overshadowing Istanbul's traditional architecture is the Bosphorus Bridge, one of the world's largest suspension bridges linking Europe and Asia. We finally dine and enjoy the night at our 4 star hotel with high QoS. [i](#)

Day 4: Istanbul

Breakfast. Free day until the transfer to the Airport. Another TransAnatolie Tour Services end with Turkish Baklava. [i](#)

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Optional evening activities

- Special Dinner with show at the Caravanserai Night Club at Galata Tower or at the Orient House Istanbul.
- Turkish Belly Dance [i](#)

Rates include

- 4 days/3 nights in Istanbul
- 4 Star Armada Hotel (or similar) BB

- Transportation in Istanbul with Mercedes, VW mini-, midi-bus, Prices 403 (depending on the size of group).
- 2 lunches in Turkish restaurants with specialities, dinner of the 1st arrival date and breakfast of the departure date
- all admission fees to the visits planned
- services of the Professional Certified Guide [i](#)

Rates exclude

- Flights Europe/Istanbul/Europe
- Insurance
- Airport Tax
- Drinks
- Tips [i](#)

Links

- Istanbul,
- Byzantium,
- Ottoman Empire
- Museums [i](#)

Theodora (6th century)

Empress Theodora (c. 500–June 28, 548) was empress of the Byzantine Empire and the wife of Emperor Justinian I 3. Along with her husband, she is a saint in the Orthodox Church, commemorated on November 14.

Theodora was of Greek Cypriot descent, into the lowest class of Byzantine society, the daughter of Acacius, a native of Cyprus who was a bear keeper at the Hippodrome in Constantinople, while her mother, whose name is not recorded, was a dancer and an actress. Much of the information from this earliest part of her life comes from the Secret History of Procopius, published posthumously. Critics of Procopius (whose work reveals a man seriously disillusioned regarding his rulers) have dismissed his work as a severely biased source, vitriolic and pornographic, but have been unable to discredit some of its facts. For example, the sources do not dispute Theodora emerged as a comic actress in burlesque theater, and that her talents tended toward what might be called low physical comedy. While her advancement in Byzantine society was up and down, she made use of every opportunity. She had

admirers by the score. Procopius writes that she was a courtesan (and, according to other sources, firstly a prostitute) and briefly served as the mistress of Hecebolus, the governor of Pentapolis, by whom she bore her only child, a son. There was a downside to her repertoire as well; Procopius also repeatedly notes her lack of shame and cites a number of scenes to demonstrate it, and also the low regard in which she was held by respectable society.

Theodora as Empress was associated with the cause of Monophysitism, often acting as an advocate on their behalf. Scholars usually hold that Theodora was converted by Monophysites before meeting Justinian and remained a partisan to that view throughout her life. Other scholars however argue that this association was largely a role assigned to her by Justinian, who courted the Monophysites to finally reunite them to the Church. According to this view, Theodora herself was a Chalcedonian but pastorally favored the Monophysites.

In 523 Theodora married Justinian, the nephew of Emperor Justin I. On his accession to the Roman Imperial throne in 527, he made her joint ruler of the empire, and appears to have regarded her as a full partner in their rulership. This proved to be a wise decision. A strong-willed woman, she showed a notable talent for governance. In the Nika riots of 532, her advice and leadership for a strong (and militant) response caused the riot to be quelled and probably saved the empire. A contemporary official, Joannes Laurentius Lydus, remarked that she was "superior in intelligence to any man".

Some scholars believe that Theodora was Byzantium's first noted proponent — and, according to Procopius, practitioner — of abortion; she convinced Justinian to change the law that forbade noblemen to marry lower class women (like herself). Theodora also advocated the prohibition of killing adulteress women, and the rights of women to be socially serviced, helping to advance protections and delights for them; and was also something of a voice for former prostitutes and the downtrodden. She also helped to mitigate the breach in Christian sects that loomed large over her time; she probably had a large part in Justinian's efforts to reconcile the Non-Chalcedonians to the Chalcedonian party.

Other scholars (and those who venerate Theodora as a saint) instead regard Theodora's achievements for women not as a "liberation" allowing abortion or adultery but rather as a truly egalitarian drive to give women the same legal rights as men, such as establishing homes for ex-prostitutes, granting women more rights in divorce cases, allowing women to own and inherit property, giving mothers some guardianship rights over their children, and enacting the death penalty for rape, all of which raised women's status far above the status quo. There were less charitable acts as well. Rumors spoke of private dungeons in her quarters into which people she disapproved of disappeared forever, though such rumors can be found regarding nearly any royal figure. More congenial is the story of how she sheltered a deposed patriarch for 12 years without anyone knowing of it. Theodora died of an unspecified cancer before the age of 50, some 20 years before Justinian died. It should be noted that there is no documentation to suggest that she died of breast cancer as some scholars have suggested. Her body was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles, one of the splendid churches the emperor and empress had built in Constantinople. Both Theodora and Justinian are represented in beautiful mosaics that exist to this day in the Basilica of San Vitale at Ravenna in northern Italy, which was completed a year before her death. [i](#)

Justinian, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire

Justinian I or Justinian the Great (Latin: Flavius Petrus Sabbatius Iustinianus. 482/483 – November 13 or November 14, 565) was Eastern Roman Emperor from 527 until his death, and second member of the Justinian Dynasty, after his uncle Justin I. He is considered a saint amongst Eastern Orthodox Christians. He has also sometimes been considered the "Last Roman".

Justinian's rule constitutes a distinct epoch in the history of the Byzantine Empire, the impact of his administration extending far beyond the boundaries of his time and his empire. Justinian's reign is marked by the ambitious but ultimately failed *renovatio imperii*, "restoration of the empire". This

ambition was expressed in the partial recovery of the territories of the Western Roman Empire, including the city of Rome itself; a still more resonant aspect of his legacy was the uniform rewriting of Roman law, the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, which is still the basis of civil law in many modern states. His reign also marked a blossoming of Byzantine culture, and his building program yielded masterpieces such as the church of Hagia Sophia, which was to be the center of Eastern Orthodox Christianity for many centuries. The devastating Plague of Justinian in the early 540's, however, marked the end of an age of splendor; after that, the empire entered a period of decline which would not be reversed until the 9th century. Justinian is considered a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church and is also commemorated by the Lutheran Church. Procopius provides our primary source for the history of Justinian's reign. The Syriac chronicle of John of Ephesus, which does not survive, was used as a source for later chronicles, contributing many additional details of value. Both historians became very bitter towards Justinian and his empress, Theodora. Procopius also wrote the *Anekdotia* (the so-called *Secret History*), which reports on various scandals at Justinian's court. Other sources include the histories of Agathias, Menander Protector, John Malalas, the *Paschal Chronicle*, the chronicles of Marcellinus Comes and Victor of Tunnuna. [i](#)

Life

Justinian was born into a Latin-speaking peasant family in a small village called Tauresium (near Justiniana Prima, which he founded later), in what is today the Republic of Macedonia, around 482. He was born as Petrus Sabbatius; the cognomen Justinianus, which he later took, is indicative of adoption by his uncle Justin. His mother was Vigilantia, the sister of Justin, who was in the imperial guard (the Excubitors) before he became emperor. Justin adopted Justinian, brought him to Constantinople, and ensured the boy's education. As a result, Justinian was well educated in jurisprudence, theology and Roman history. Justinian served for some time with the Excubitors but the details of his early career are unknown.

When Emperor Anastasius died in 518, Justin was proclaimed the new emperor, with significant help from Justinian. During Justin's reign (518-527), Justinian was the emperor's close confidant. Justinian showed a lot of ambition, and it has been thought that he was functioning as virtual regent long before Justin made him associate emperor on April 1, 527, although there is no conclusive evidence for this. As Justin became senile near the end of his reign, Justinian became the de facto ruler. Justinian was appointed consul in 521, and later commander of the army of the east. Upon Justin I's death on August 1, 527, Justinian became the sole sovereign.

The Barberini Ivory, which is thought to portray either Justinian or Anastasius I. As a ruler, Justinian showed great energy. He was known as "the Emperor who never sleeps" on account of his work habits. Nevertheless, he seems to have been amenable and easy to approach. Justinian's family came from a lowly and provincial background, and therefore he had no power base in the traditional aristocracy of Constantinople. Instead, he surrounded himself with men and women of extraordinary talent, whom he selected not on the basis of aristocratic origin, but on the basis of merit. Around 525 he married Theodora, who was by profession a courtesan about 20 years his junior. Justinian would have, in earlier times, been unable to marry her because of her class, but his uncle Emperor Justin I had passed a law allowing intermarriage between social classes. Theodora would become very influential in the politics of the Empire, and later emperors would follow Justinian's precedent in marrying outside the aristocratic class. The marriage caused a scandal, but Theodora would prove to be very intelligent, "street smart", a good judge of character and Justinian's greatest supporter. Other talented individuals included Tribonian, his legal adviser; his finance ministers John the Cappadocian and Peter Barsymes, who managed to collect taxes more efficiently than any before, thereby funding Justinian's wars; and finally, his talented general Belisarius. Also Justinian inherited 400,000 pounds of gold in the treasury from Anastasius I and Justin I. Justinian's rule was not universally popular; early in his reign he almost lost his throne during the Nika riots, and a conspiracy against the emperor's life by dissatisfied businessmen was discovered as late as 562.

Justinian was struck by the plague in the early 540's, but recovered. Theodora died, perhaps of cancer, in 548, at a relatively young age, and Justinian outlived her by almost twenty years. Justinian, who had always had a keen interest in theological matters and actively participated in debates on Christian doctrine, became even more devoted to religion during the later years of his life. When he died, on the night of November 13-November 14, 565, he left no children. He was succeeded by Justin II, the son of his sister Vigilantia, who was married to Sophia, the niece of Empress Theodora. Justinian's body was entombed in a specially built mausoleum in the Church of the Holy Apostles. [i](#)

Legislative activities

Justinian achieved lasting fame through his judicial reforms, particularly through the complete revision of all Roman law, something that had not previously been attempted. The total of Justinian's legislature is known today as the *Corpus juris civilis*. It consists of the *Codex Justinianus*, the *Digesta* or *Pandectae*, the *Institutiones*, and the *Novellae*.

Early in his reign, Justinian appointed the quaestor Tribonian to oversee this task. The first draft of the *Codex Justinianus*, a codification of imperial constitutions from the 2nd century onward, was issued on April 7, 529. (The final version appeared in 534.) It was followed by the *Digesta* (or *Pandectae*), a compilation of older legal texts, in 533, and by the *Institutiones*, a textbook explaining the principles of law. The *Novellae*, a collection of new laws issued during Justinian's reign, supplements the *Corpus*. As opposed to the rest of the *corpus*, the *Novellae* appeared in Greek, the common language of the Eastern Empire; Latin, the traditional language of the Roman Empire, was only poorly understood by most citizens of the Eastern Empire.

The *Corpus* forms the basis of Latin jurisprudence (including ecclesiastical Canon Law) and, for historians, provides a valuable insight into the concerns and activities of the later Roman Empire. As a collection it gathers together the many sources in which the *leges* (laws) and the other rules were expressed or published: proper laws, senatorial consults

(senatusconsulta), imperial decrees, case law, and jurists' opinions and interpretations (responsa prudentum). Tribonian's law code ensured the survival of Roman law. It formed the basis of later Byzantine law, as expressed in the Basilica of Basil I and Leo VI the Wise. The only western province where the Justinianic code was introduced was Italy (after the conquest, by the so-called Pragmatic Sanction of 554), from where it was to pass to Western Europe in the 12th century and become the basis of much European law code. It eventually passed to Eastern Europe where it appeared in Slavic editions, and it also passed on to Russia. It remains influential to this day. [i](#)

Nika riots

Justinian's habit of choosing efficient, but unpopular advisors nearly cost him his throne early in his reign. In January 532, partisans of the chariot racing factions in Constantinople, normally divided among themselves, united against Justinian in a revolt that has become known as the Nika riots. They forced him to dismiss Tribonian and two of his other ministers, and then attempted to overthrow Justinian himself and replace him by the senator Hypatius, who was a nephew of the late emperor Anastasius. While the crowd was rioting in the streets, Justinian considered fleeing the capital, but he remained in the city on the advice of Theodora. Shortly thereafter he ordered the brutal suppression of the riots by his generals Belisarius and Mundus. Procopius relates that 30,000 unarmed civilians were killed in the Hippodrome. Justinian had Anastasius' nephews executed.

The destruction that had taken place during the revolt provided Justinian with an opportunity to tie his name to a series of splendid new buildings, notably the domed Hagia Sophia.

Military activities

One of the most spectacular features of Justinian's reign was the recovery of large stretches of land around the Western Mediterranean basin which had slipped out of imperial control in the 5th century. As a Christian Roman emperor, Justinian considered it his divine duty to restore the Roman Empire to its ancient boundaries. Although he never personally took part in military campaigns, he boasted of his successes in the prefaces

to his laws and had them commemorated in art. The reconquests were in large part carried out by his general Belisarius.

From his uncle, Justinian inherited ongoing hostilities with the Sassanid Empire. In 530 a Persian army was defeated at Daraa, but the next year saw the defeat of Roman forces under Belisarius near Callinicum. When king Kavadh I of Persia died (September 531), Justinian concluded an "Eternal Peace" (which cost him 11,000 pounds of gold) with his successor Khosrau I (532). Having thus secured his eastern frontier, Justinian turned his attention to the West, where Arian Germanic kingdoms had been established in the territories of the former Western Roman Empire. [i](#)

Conquest of North Africa, 533–534

The first of the western kingdoms Justinian attacked was that of the Vandals in North Africa. King Hilderic, who had maintained good relations with Justinian and the North African Catholic clergy, had been overthrown by his cousin Gelimer in 530. Imprisoned, the deposed king appealed to Justinian. In 533, Belisarius with a fleet of 92 dromons escorting 500 transports, landed at Caput Vada (modern Ras Kaboudia) in modern Tunisia with an army of about 15,000 men, as well as a number of barbarian troops. They defeated the Vandals, who were caught completely off-guard, at Ad Decimum on 14 September 533 and Tricamarum in December; Belisarius took Carthage. King Gelimer fled to Mount Pappua in Numidia, but surrendered the next spring. He was taken to Constantinople, where he was paraded in a triumph. Sardinia and Corsica, the Balearic Islands, and the stronghold Septem near Gibraltar were recovered in the same campaign.

An African prefecture was established in April 534, but it would teeter on the brink of collapse during the next 15 years, amidst warfare with the Moors and military mutinies. The area was not completely pacified until 548, but remained peaceful thereafter and enjoyed a measure of prosperity. The recovery of Africa cost the empire about 100,000 pounds of gold. [i](#)

War in Italy, first phase, 535–540

As in Africa, dynastic struggles in Ostrogothic Italy provided an opportunity for intervention. The young king Athalaric had died on 2 October 534, and a usurper, Theodahad, had imprisoned queen Amalasantha, Theodoric's daughter and mother of Athalaric, on an island in Lake Bolsena, where he had her assassinated in 535. Thereupon Belisarius with 7,500 men[27] invaded Sicily (535) and advanced into Italy, sacking Naples and capturing Rome on 9 December 536. By that time Theodahad had been deposed by the Ostrogothic army, who had elected Vitigis as their new king. He gathered a large army and besieged Rome from February 537 to March 538 without being able to retake the city. Justinian sent another general, Narses, to Italy, but tensions between Narses and Belisarius hampered the progress of the campaign. Milan was taken, but was soon recaptured and razed by the Ostrogoths. Justinian recalled Narses in 539. By then the military situation had turned in favour of the Romans, and in 540 Belisarius reached the Ostrogothic capital Ravenna. There he was offered the title of Western Roman Emperor by the Ostrogoths at the same time that envoys of Justinian were arriving to negotiate a peace which would leave the region north of the river Po in Gothic hands. Belisarius feigned to accept the offer, entered the city in May 540, and reclaimed it for the Empire. Then, having been recalled by Justinian, Belisarius returned to Constantinople, taking the captured Vitigis and his wife Matasuentha with him. [i](#)

War with the Sassanid Empire, 540–562

Modern or early modern drawing of a medallion celebrating the reconquest of Africa, c. 535
Belisarius had been recalled in the face of renewed hostilities by the Persians. Following a revolt against Byzantium in Armenia in the late 530s and possibly motivated by the pleas of Ostrogothic ambassadors, king Khosrau I broke the "Eternal Peace" and invaded Roman territory in the spring of 540.[29] He first sacked Beroea and then Antioch (allowing the garrison of 6,000 men to leave the city), besieged Daras, and then went on to attack the small but strategically significant satellite kingdom of Lazica near the Black Sea, exacting tribute from the towns he passed along his way. He forced Justinian I to pay him 5,000 pounds of gold, plus 500 pounds of gold more each year.

Belisarius arrived in the East in 541, but, after some success, was again recalled to Constantinople in 542. The reasons for his withdrawal are not known, but it may have been instigated by rumours of disloyalty on behalf of the general reaching the court. The outbreak of the plague caused a lull in the fighting during the year 543. The following year Khosrau defeated a Byzantine army of 30,000 men, but unsuccessfully besieged the major city of Edessa. Both parties made little headway, and in 545 a truce was agreed upon for the southern part of the Roman-Persian frontier. After that the Lazic War in the North continued for several years, until a second truce in 557, followed by a Fifty Years' Peace in 562. Under its terms, the Persians agreed to abandon Lazica in exchange for an annual tribute of 400 or 500 pounds of gold (30,000 solidi) to be paid by the Romans. [i](#)

War in Italy, second phase, 541–552

While military efforts were directed to the East, the situation in Italy took a turn for the worse. Under their respective kings Ildibad and Eraric (both murdered in 541) and especially Totila, the Ostrogoths made quick gains. After a victory at Faenza in 542, they reconquered the major cities of Southern Italy and soon held almost the entire peninsula. Belisarius was sent back to Italy late in 544, but lacked sufficient troops. Making no headway, he was relieved of his command in 548. Belisarius succeeded in defeating a Gothic fleet with 200 ships. During this period the city of Rome changed hands three more times, first taken and depopulated by the Ostrogoths in December 546, then reconquered by the Byzantines in 547, and then again by the Goths in January 550. Totila also plundered Sicily and attacked the Greek coastlines. Finally, Justinian dispatched a force of approximately 35,000 men (2,000 men were detached and sent to invade southern Visigothic Spain) under the command of Narses. The Byzantine Roman army reached Ravenna in June 552, and defeated the Ostrogoths decisively within a month at the battle of Busta Gallorum in the Apennines, where Totila was slain. After a second battle at Mons Lactarius in October that year, the resistance of the Ostrogoths was finally broken. In 554, a large-scale Frankish invasion was defeated at Casilinum, and Italy secured for the

Empire, even though it would take Narses several years to reduce the remaining Gothic strongholds. The recovery of Italy cost the empire about 300,000 pounds of gold.

Other campaigns

In addition to the other conquests, the Eastern Empire established a presence in Visigothic Spain, when the usurper Athanagild requested assistance in his rebellion against king Agila. In 552, Justinian dispatched a force under the octogenarian Liberius, who had served under the Ostrogoth kings of Italy since the 490s. The Byzantines took Cartagena and other cities on the southeastern coast and founded the new province of Spania before being checked by their former ally Athanagild, who had by now become king. This campaign marked the apogee of Byzantine expansion.

During Justinian's reign, the Balkans suffered from several incursions by the Turkic and Slavic peoples who lived north of the Danube. Here, Justinian resorted mainly to a combination of diplomacy and a system of defensive works. In 559 a particularly dangerous invasion of Sklavinoi and Kutrigurs under their khan Zabergan threatened Constantinople, but they were repulsed by the aged general Belisarius. [i](#)

Results

The enlargement of the Byzantine Empire's territory between the rise to power of Justinian (red, 527) and his death (orange, 565) Justinian's ambition to restore the Roman Empire to its former glory was only partly realised. In the West, the brilliant early military successes of the 530s were followed by years of stagnation. The dragging war with the Goths was a disaster for Italy, even though its long-lasting effects may have been less severe than is sometimes thought. The heavy taxes that the administration imposed upon its population were deeply resented. While the final victory in Italy and the conquest of the coast of southern Spain significantly enlarged the area over which Byzantium could project its power and influence, and while they must have contributed to the empire's prestige, most of the conquests proved ephemeral. The greater part of Italy would be lost to the invading Lombards three years after Justinian's death (568), and within a century and a half Africa and Spain were forever lost for the empire.

Events of the later years of the reign showed that Constantinople itself was not safe from barbarian incursions from the north, and even the relatively benevolent historian Menander Protector felt the need to explain the emperor's failure to protect the capital from the weakness of his body in his old age. In his efforts to renew the old Roman Empire, Justinian dangerously stretched the resources of the Eastern Empire while failing to take into account the changed realities of 6th-century Europe. Paradoxically, Justinian's military successes probably contributed to the empire's subsequent decline. [i](#)

Religious activities

Religious policy

Justinian was one of the first emperors to be depicted wielding the cross on the obverse of a coin. Justinian I, depicted on an AE Follis coin. As with his secular administration, despotism appeared also in the emperor's ecclesiastical policy. He regulated everything, both in religion and in law. At the very beginning of his reign, he deemed it proper to promulgate by law the Church's belief in the Trinity and the Incarnation; and to threaten all heretics with the appropriate penalties; whereas he subsequently declared that he intended to deprive all disturbers of orthodoxy of the opportunity for such offense by due process of law. He made the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan creed the sole symbol of the Church, and accorded legal force to the canons of the four ecumenical councils. The bishops in attendance at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 recognized that nothing could be done in the Church contrary to the emperor's will and command; while, on his side, the emperor, in the case of the Patriarch Anthimus, reinforced the ban of the Church with temporal proscription. Justinian protected the purity of the church by suppressing heretics. He neglected no opportunity for securing the rights of the Church and clergy, for protecting and extending monasticism. He granted the monks the right to inherit property from private citizens and the right to receive solemnities or annual gifts from the imperial treasury or from the taxes of

certain provinces and he prohibited lay confiscation on monastic estates.

Although the despotic character of his measures is contrary to modern sensibilities, he was indeed a "nursing father" of the Church. Both the Codex and the Novellae contain many enactments regarding donations, foundations, and the administration of ecclesiastical property; election and rights of bishops, priests and abbots; monastic life, residential obligations of the clergy, conduct of divine service, episcopal jurisdiction, etc. Justinian also rebuilt the Church of Hagia Sophia (which cost 20,000 pounds of gold), the original site having been destroyed during the Nika riots. The new Hagia Sophia, with its numerous chapels and shrines, gilded octagonal dome, and mosaics, became the centre and most visible monument of Eastern Orthodoxy in Constantinople. [i](#)

Religious relations with Rome

From the middle of the fifth century onward increasingly arduous tasks confronted the emperors of the East in ecclesiastical matters. For one thing, the radicals on all sides felt themselves constantly repelled by the creed adopted by the Council of Chalcedon to defend the biblical doctrine of the nature of Christ and bridge the gap between the dogmatic parties. The letter of Pope Leo I to Flavian of Constantinople was widely considered in the East as the work of Satan; so that nobody cared to hear of the Church of Rome. The emperors, however, had a policy of preserving the unity between Constantinople and Rome; and this remained possible only if they did not swerve from the line defined at Chalcedon. In addition, the factions in the East which had become stirred up and disaffected because of Chalcedon needed restraining and pacifying. This problem proved the more difficult because, in the East, the dissenting groups exceeded supporters of Chalcedon both in numerical strength and in intellectual ability. Tension from the incompatibility of the two aims grew: whoever chose Rome and the West must renounce the East, and vice versa.

Justinian entered the arena of ecclesiastical statecraft shortly after his uncle's accession in 518, and put an end to the Monophysite schism that had prevailed between Rome and

Byzantium since 483. The recognition of the Roman see as the highest ecclesiastical authority remained the cornerstone of his Western policy. Offensive as it was to many in the East, nonetheless Justinian felt himself entirely free to take a Despotic stance toward the popes such as Silverius and Vigilius. While no compromise could ever be accepted by the dogmatic wing of the church, his sincere efforts at reconciliation gained him the approval of the major body of the church. A signal proof was his attitude in the Theopaschite controversy. At the outset he was of the opinion that the question turned on a quibble of words. By degrees, however, Justinian came to understand that the formula at issue not only appeared orthodox, but might also serve as a conciliatory measure toward the Monophysites, and he made a vain attempt to do this in the religious conference with the followers of Severus of Antioch, in 533.

Again, Justinian moved toward compromise in the religious edict of March 15, 533, and congratulated himself that Pope John II admitted the orthodoxy of the imperial confession. The serious blunder that he had made at the beginning by abetting a severe persecution of the Monophysite bishops and monks and thereby embittering the population of vast regions and provinces, he remedied eventually. His constant aim now remained to win over the Monophysites, yet not to surrender the Chalcedonian faith. For many at court, he did not go far enough: Theodora especially would have rejoiced to see the Monophysites favoured unreservedly. Justinian, however, felt restrained by the complications that would have ensued with the West. But in the condemnation of the Three Chapters Justinian tried to satisfy both the East and the West, but succeeded in satisfying neither. Although the pope assented to the condemnation, the West believed that the emperor had acted contrary to the decrees of Chalcedon. Though many delegates emerged in the East subservient to Justinian, many, especially the Monophysites, remained unsatisfied; all the more bitter for him because during his last years he took an even greater interest in theological matters. [i](#)

Suppression of non-Christian religions

Justinian was one of the first emperors to be depicted wielding the cross on the obverse of a coin. Justinian's religious policy reflected the imperial conviction that the unity of the Empire unconditionally presupposed unity of faith; and it appeared to him obvious that this faith could be only the Orthodox (Nicaean). Those of a different belief had to recognize that the process of consolidation, which imperial legislation had effected from the time of Constantius II, would now vigorously continue. The Codex contained two statutes which decreed the total destruction of paganism, even in private life; these provisions were zealously enforced. Contemporary sources (John Malalas, Theophanes, John of Ephesus) tell of severe persecutions, even of men in high position.

Perhaps the most noteworthy event occurred in 529 when the Neoplatonic Academy of Athens was placed under state control by order of Justinian, effectively strangling this training-school for Hellenism. Paganism was actively suppressed. In Asia Minor alone, John of Ephesus claimed to have converted 70,000 pagans. Other peoples also accepted Christianity: the Heruli, the Huns dwelling near the Don, the Abasgi, and the Tzani in Caucasia.

The worship of Amun at Augila in the Libyan desert was abolished; and so were the remnants of the worship of Isis on the island of Philae, at the first cataract of the Nile. The Presbyter Julian and the Bishop Longinus conducted a mission among the Nabataeans, and Justinian attempted to strengthen Christianity in Yemen by despatching a bishop from Egypt. The Jews, too, had to suffer; for not only did the authorities restrict their civil rights, and threaten their religious privileges, but the emperor interfered in the internal affairs of the synagogue, and forbade, for instance, the use of the Hebrew language in divine worship. The recalcitrant were threatened with corporal penalties, exile, and loss of property. The Jews at Borium, not far from Syrtis Major, who resisted Belisarius in his Vandal campaign, had to embrace Christianity; their synagogue became a church.

The emperor had much trouble with the Samaritans, finding them refractory to Christianity and repeatedly in insurrection. He opposed them with rigorous edicts, but yet could not prevent hostilities towards Christians from taking place in Samaria toward the close of his reign. The consistency of

Justinian's policy meant that the Manicheans too suffered severe persecution, experiencing both exile and threat of capital punishment. At Constantinople, on one occasion, not a few Manicheans, after strict inquisition, were executed in the emperor's very presence: some by burning, others by drowning. [i](#)

Building activities, learning, art and literature

Justinian was a prolific builder; the historian Procopius bears witness to his activities in this area. Under Justinian's patronage the San Vitale in Ravenna, which features two famous mosaics representing Justinian and Theodora, was completed. Most notably, he had the Hagia Sophia, originally a basilica style church that had been burnt down during the Nika riots, splendidly rebuilt according to a completely different ground plan. This new cathedral, with its magnificent dome filled with mosaics, remained the centre of eastern Christianity for centuries. Another prominent church in the capital, the Church of the Holy Apostles, which had been in a very poor state near the end of the 5th century, was likewise rebuilt. Works of embellishment were not confined to churches alone: excavations at the site of the Great Palace of Constantinople have yielded several high-quality mosaics dating from Justinian's reign, and a column topped by a (now lost) bronze statue of Justinian on horseback and dressed in a military costume was erected in the Augustaeum in Constantinople in 543. It is possible that rivalry with other, more established patrons from the Constantinopolitan aristocracy may have enforced Justinian's building activities in the capital. Justinian also strengthened the borders of the empire through the construction of fortifications, and assured Constantinople of its water supply through construction of underground cisterns. During his reign a bridge over the river Sangarius was built, securing a major trade route. Furthermore, Justinian restored cities damaged by earthquake or war and built a new city near his place of birth called Justiniana Prima. In Justinian's era, and partly under his patronage, Byzantine culture produced noteworthy historians, including Procopius and Agathias, and poets such as Paul the Silentiary and Romanus the Melodist flourished during his reign. On the other

hand, centers of learning as the Platonic Academy in Athens and the famous law school of Beirut lost their importance during his reign. Another ancient institution, the Roman consulate, was abolished in 541. [i](#)

Economy and administration

As was the case under Justinian's predecessors, the empire's economic health rested primarily on agriculture. In addition long-distance trade flourished, reaching as far north as Cornwall where tin was exchanged for Roman corn. Within the empire, convoys sailing from Alexandria provided Constantinople with corn, and Justinian made the traffic more efficient by building a large granary on the island of Tenedos for storage and further transport to Constantinople. Justinian also tried to find new routes for the eastern trade, which was suffering badly from the wars with the Persians. One important luxury product was silk, which was imported and then processed in the empire. In order to protect the manufacture of silk products, Justinian granted a monopoly to the imperial factories in 541. In order to bypass the Persian landroute, Justinian established friendly relations with the Abyssinians, whom he wanted to act as trade mediators by transporting Indian silk to the empire; the Abyssinians, however, were unable to compete with the Persian merchants in India. Then, in the early 550s, two monks succeeded in smuggling eggs of silk worms from Central Asia back to Constantinople, and silk became an indigenous Byzantine product.

Under Justinian's rule, measures were taken to counter corruption in the provinces and to make tax collection more efficient. Greater administrative power was given to both the leaders of the prefectures and of the provinces, while power was taken away from the vicariates of the dioceses, of which a number were abolished. The overall trend was towards a simplification of administrative infrastructure. According to Brown, the increased professionalisation of tax collection did much to destroy the traditional structures of provincial life, as it weakened the autonomy of the town councils in the Greek towns.

Throughout Justinian's reign, the cities and villages of the East prospered, although Antioch was struck by two earthquakes

(526, 528) and sacked and evacuated by the Persians (540). Justinian had the city rebuilt, but on a slightly smaller scale. Despite all these measures, the empire suffered several major setbacks in the course of the 6th century. The first one was the plague, which lasted from 541 to 543 and, by decimating the empire's population, probably created a scarcity of labour and a rising of wages. The lack of manpower also led to a significant increase in the number of "barbarians" in the Byzantine armies after the early 540s. The protracted war in Italy and the wars with the Persians themselves laid a heavy burden on the empire's resources, and Justinian was criticized for curtailing the government-run post service, which he limited to only one eastern route of military importance. Also under Justinian I, the army which had once numbered 645,000 men in Roman times, shrank to 150,000 men. [i](#)

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[i](#)

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Day 1: Arrival in Istanbul.

Sightseeing city tour, dinner and overnight at the 4 star Armada Hotel. [i](#)

Day 2: Istanbul

In the morning, discovery of the Golden Horn and of the Pierre Loti area. Visits to Ottoman Imperial Cemetery and Eyüp Mosque. Walks along the Roman-Byzantine city walls and visit the Chora Church and Mihrimah Sultan Mosque.

The great Mosque of Eyüp lies outside the city walls, near the Golden Horn, at the supposed place where Eyüp, the standard bearer of the Prophet Mohammed, died in the Islamic assault on Constantinople in 670 A.D. The first mosque built after the Ottoman conquest of the city, this greatly venerated shrine attracts many pilgrims.

The Kariye Museum (Chora Church), the 11th century church of "St. Savior" in Chora, is, after St. Sophia, the most important Byzantine monument in Istanbul. Unremarkable in its architecture, inside, the walls are decorated with superb 14th century frescoes and mosaics. Illustrating scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, these brilliantly coloured paintings embody the vigour of Byzantine art. Restored wooden houses in the area surrounding the church offer tea and coffee in a relaxed, atmosphere far removed from the city's hectic pace.

Walls of glass fill the four immense arches that support the central dome at the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque inside the Edirne gate of the old city walls. One hundred and sixty-one windows illuminate this mosque, built by Sinan for Mihrimah Sultana, the daughter of Süleyman the Magnificent in 1555.

Lunch is next to the Roman Circus in a well known Turkish-Greek restaurant.

Afternoon: We visit Aya Sophia (Hagia Sophie) and Topkapi Palace Museums and end up at the Grand Bazaar. Free dinner and overnight at the hotel.

The Basilica of St. Sophia, now called the Ayasofya Museum, is unquestionably one of the finest buildings of all time. Built by Constantine the Great and reconstructed by Justinian in the 6th century, its immense dome rises 55 meters above the ground and its diameter spans 31 meters. You should linger here to

absorb the building's majestic serenity and to admire the fine Byzantine mosaics.

On a spot of land at the confluence of the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn and the Marmara Sea, stands Topkapi Palace, a maze of buildings at the center of the Ottoman Empire between the 15th and 19th centuries. In these opulent surroundings the sultans and their court lived and governed. A magnificent wooded garden fills the outer, or first, court. To the right of the second court, shaded by cypress and plane trees, stand the palace kitchens, now galleries exhibiting the imperial collections of crystal, silver and Chinese porcelain. To the left, the Harem, the secluded quarters of the wives, concubines and children of the sultan, charms visitors with echoes of a centuries old intrigue.

Today, the third court holds the Hall of Audience, the Library of Ahmet III, an exhibition of imperial costumes worn by the sultans and their families, the famous jewels of the treasury and a priceless collection of miniatures from medieval manuscripts. In the center of this innermost sanctuary, the Pavilion of the Holy Mantle enshrines the relics of the Prophet Mohammed brought to Istanbul when the Ottomans assumed the caliphate of Islam

The cascading domes and four slender minarets of Süleymaniye Mosque dominate the skyline on the Golden Horn's west bank. Considered the most beautiful of all imperial mosques in Istanbul, it was built between 1550 and 1557 by Sinan, the renowned architect of the Ottoman golden age. On the crest of a hill, the building is conspicuous by its great size, which the four minarets that rise from each corner of the courtyard emphasize. Inside, the mihrab (prayer niche) and the mimber (pulpit) are of finely carved white marble; fine stained glass windows color the incoming streams of light. It was in the gardens of this complex that Süleyman and his wife Hürrem Sultan, Roxelane, had their mausolea built, and near here also that Sinan built his own tomb. The mosque complex also includes four medrese, or theological schools, a school of medicine, a caravanserai, a Turkish bath, and a kitchen and hospice for the poor.

We dine at Istanbul By Night at Kumkapi and overnight at the 4 star hotel with high QoS. [i](#)

Day 3: Istanbul

In the morning, visit the Hippodrome, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum located at the Ibrahim Pascha Palace, as well as the Ethnographical Museum in Istanbul. Not to forget to explore the Master Piece Blue Mosque.

The dark stone building that houses the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art was built in 1524 by Ibrahim Pasa; Grand Vizier to Süleyman the Magnificent, as his residence. It was the grandest private residence ever built in the Ottoman Empire. Today, it houses a superb collection of ceramics, metalwork miniatures, calligraphy, textiles, and woodwork as well as some of the oldest carpets in the world.

Then we visit the sixth century Byzantine cistern known as the Yerebatan Sarnici. Three hundred and thirty-six massive Corinthian columns support the immense chamber's fine brick vaulting.

Walking along the Sultan Ahmet Square we arrive in the famous Blue Mosque. Facing St. Sophia stands the supremely elegant, six-minaret, imperial Sultanahmet Mosque. Built between 1609 and 1616 by the architect Mehmet, the building is more familiarly known as the Blue Mosque because its interior gleams with a magnificent paneling of blue and white Iznik tiles. During the summer months an evening light and sound show both entertain and inform.

Before lunch we become familiar with Turkish Cultural Products: carpets and kilims, jewellery and leather. Delicious lunch is at the Mesopotamian restaurant.

Afternoon: visit the Egyptian and Second-hand markets. We then fully enjoy the wonderful Bosphorus Cruise between two continents Asia and Europe,

A stay in Istanbul is not complete without the traditional and unforgettable boat excursion up the Bosphorus, the winding strait that separates Europe and Asia. Its shores offer a delightful mixture of past and present, grand splendor and simple beauty. Modern hotels stand next to yali (shorefront wooden villas), marble palaces abut rustic stone fortresses, and elegant compounds neighbour small fishing villages. During the journey, you pass in front of the magnificent Dolmabahçe Palace; farther along rise the green parks and imperial pavilions of Yildiz Palace. On the edge of this park, on the

coast, stands Çiragan Palace, now restored as a grand hotel. Refurbished in 1874 by Sultan Abdülaziz, it stretches for 300 meters along the Bosphorus shore, its ornate marble facades reflecting the swiftly moving water. In Ortaköy, the next stop, artists gather every Sunday to exhibit their works in a streetside gallery. The variety of people create a lively scene; sample a delicious bite from one of the street vendors. In Ortaköy, there is a church, mosque and a synagogue that have existed side by side for hundreds of years - a tribute to Turkish secularism and tolerance. Overshadowing Istanbul's traditional architecture is the Bosphorus Bridge, one of the world's largest suspension bridges linking Europe and Asia. We finally dine and enjoy the night at our 4 star hotel with high QoS. [i](#)

Day 4: Istanbul

Morning: visit the Cistern-Basilica, Istanbul Archaeological Museum and Oriental Antiques Museum in Çinili Köşk. Then cruise on the Bosphorus via the suspension bridge to have lunch in the Asian part of Istanbul; the Fenerbahçe area.

The Archaeological Museums are found just inside the first court of Topkapi Palace. Included among the displays are the celebrated Alexander Sarcophagus among its treasures of antiquity.

The Museum of the Ancient Orient displays artifacts from the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hatti and Hittite civilizations. Originally built as a köşk or pavilion by Mehmet the Conqueror in the 15th century, the Çinili Köşk, which houses the Museum of Turkish Ceramics, contains beautiful Iznik wares from the 16th century and fine examples of Seljuk and Ottoman pottery and tiles

Afternoon: discovery of the Beylerbeyi Ottoman Imperial Palace. Walk up to the Camlica Hill: higher point of the city: Back to Europe in the hotel. Free dinner and evening.

In the 19th century, Sultan Abdülaziz built the Beylerbeyi Palace, a fantasy in white marble amid magnolia filled gardens, on the Bosphorus's Asian Shore. Used as the Sultan's summer residence, it was offered to the most distinguished foreign dignitaries during their visits. Empress Eugenie of France was among its residents. [i](#)

Day 5: Istanbul

Breakfast. Free trade according to flights schedule. Possibility of optional visits. Transfer to the airport. [i](#)

Price

- For Pricing Click [List of TransAnatolie Turkey Tours, Services and Pricing](#) or
- Contac Us: [Contact Information for TransAnatolie Tour](#)

Optional evening activities

- Special Dinner with show at the Caravanserai Night Club at Galata Tower or at the Orient House Istanbul.
- Turkish Belly Dance [i](#)

Optional visits

- Dolmabahce Palace
- Free Lunch in Mata Hari area in Galatasaray
- Visits Beyoglu, Galatasaray [i](#)

Rates include

- 5 days/4 nights
- Accommodations in 4 star hotels, 4 nights with BB (full pension)
- Transportation in Turkey
- Lunches in traditional restaurants
- All admission fees for museums and sites mentioned
- Services of Professional Certified Guide [i](#)

Rates exclude

- Return Flights Europe/Istanbul/Europe
- Insurance, Airport tax
- Drinks and tips [i](#)

Links

- Istanbul,
- Byzantium,
- Ottoman Empire
- Museums [i](#)

Roxelana

Roxelana, Roxolana, Roxelane, Rossa, Ruziac, known also by her Turkish name of Hürrem (or Khourrem or Karima), meaning "the cheerful one", (c. 1510 - April 18, 1558) was the Ukrainian ("Ruthenian" in the terminology of the day) and only legal wife of the Ottoman sultan Süleyman the Magnificent² of the Ottoman Empire. Sixteenth century sources are silent as to her maiden name, but much later Ukrainian and Polish traditions, especially Ukrainian folk traditions first recorded in the nineteenth century, give it as Anastasia (diminutive: Nastia) or Aleksandra Lisovska. [i](#)

Early life

According to late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century sources like the famous Polish poet, Samuel Twardowski, who actually did research on the subject in Turkey, Hürrem was born to a father who was a Ukrainian, or Ruthenian, Orthodox priest, in the town of Rohatyn which is located 68 km, south east of Lviv, a major city of Galicia which was then part of the Kingdom of Poland, today in western Ukraine. She was captured by Crimean Tatars during one of their frequent raids into this region and taken as a slave, probably first to the Crimean city of Kaffa (Kefe in Turkish, Caffa in Italian), a major centre of the slave trade, then to Istanbul, and was selected for Süleyman's Harem. She quickly came to the attention of her master, and attracted the jealousy of her rivals. One day Süleyman's former favorite, the concubine Mahidevran, also called "Gul Bahar" (The Flower of Spring), got into a fight with Hürrem and beat her badly. Upset by this, Süleyman sent Mahidevran away from Istanbul to the provincial capital of Manisa together with her son, the heir apparent, Prince Mustafa. Thereafter, Hürrem became Süleyman's unrivalled favorite or Haseki. Many years later, probably at the instigation of Hurrem, the Sultan ordered Mustafa to be strangled. [i](#)

Marriage

Hürrem's influence over the Sultan soon became legendary; she was to bear Süleyman five children and, in an astonishing break with tradition, eventually was freed and became his legal wife. This strengthened her position in the palace and eventually led to one of her sons, Selim inheriting the empire. Hürrem also may have acted as Süleyman's advisor on other matters of state, and seems to have had an influence upon foreign affairs and international politics. Two of her letters to the Polish King Sigismund Augustus have been preserved and during her lifetime, the Ottoman Empire generally had peaceful relations with the Polish state. Some historians also believe that she may have intervened with her husband to control Crimean Tatar slave-raiding in her native land. [i](#)

Charities

Aside from her political concerns, Hürrem engaged in several major works of public buildings, from Mecca to Jerusalem, perhaps modeling her charitable foundations in part after the caliph Harun al-Rashid's consort Zubaida. Among her first foundations were a mosque, two koranic schools, a fountain, and a women's hospital near the "Women's Slave Market" (Avret Pazary) in Istanbul. She also commissioned a bath, the Haseki Hürrem Sultan Hamamı, to serve the community of worshipers in the nearby Hagia Sophia. As well, some of her embroidery, or at least embroidery done under her supervision, has survived, examples being given in 1547 to the Shah of Iran and in 1549 to King Sigismund Augustus. [i](#)

Death

Hürrem died on April 18, 1558. She is buried in a domed mausoleum (türbe) decorated in exquisite Iznik tiles depicting the garden of paradise, perhaps in homage to her smiling and joyful nature. Her mausoleum is adjacent to Süleyman's, a separate and more somber domed structure, at the Süleymaniye Mosque.

Hürrem, or Roxelana, as she is better known in Europe, is well-known both in modern Turkey and in the West, and is the subject of many artistic works. She has inspired paintings,

musical works (including Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 63), an opera by Denys Sichynsky, a ballet, plays, and several novels written mainly in Ukrainian, but also in English, French, and German. [i](#)

Suleiman the Magnificent

Suleyman the Magnificent (Kanuni Sultan Suleyman)Suleiman I (Ottoman Turkish: سليمان سلا Sulaymān, Turkish: Süleyman; formally Kanuni Sultan Süleyman in Turkish) (November 6, 1494 – September 5/6, 1566), was the tenth and longest-serving Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, reigning from 1520 to 1566. He is known in the West as Suleiman the Magnificent and in the Islamic world, as the Lawgiver (in Turkish Kanuni), deriving from his complete reconstruction of the Ottoman legal system. Within the empire, Suleiman was known as a fair ruler and an opponent of corruption. As well as being a capable goldsmith and distinguished poet, Suleiman was also a great patron of artists and philosophers, overseeing the golden age of the Ottoman Empire's cultural development. Suleiman was considered one of the pre-eminent rulers of 16th century Europe. Under his leadership, the Ottoman Empire became among the worlds' foremost powers. Suleiman personally led Ottoman armies to conquer Belgrade, Rhodes, and most of Hungary, laid the Siege of Vienna, and annexed most of the Middle East and huge territories in North Africa as far west as Algeria. For a short period, Ottomans achieved naval dominance in the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf. The Ottoman Empire continued to expand for a century after his death...Read more [i](#)

TransAnatolie Tour: Multilingual Cultural Tour Provider and Operator.

[i](#)

TransAnatolie TA3403: 8 Day Classic Cultural Turkey Tour: Explore Western & Central Anatolian Cities, Civilizations & Cultures: Cultural Heritage Tour Turkey: Istanbul-Ankara-Acemhoyuk-Cappadocia: The Essential 8 Days in Turkey

Day 1: Europe-Istanbul (Cultural Capital of Turkey)

Arrival in Istanbul. Welcome cocktail, sightseeing of the city, dinner and overnight at the hotel. [i](#)

Day 2: Istanbul – “This is Byzance” !

Morning: discovery of the Golden Horn and Pierre Loti area. Visit of the Ottoman Cemetery and the Eyüp Mosque. Walks on the Roman-Byzantine city-walls and visit of the Chora church. Lunch in a Turkish-Greek restaurant, next to the Roman Circus. In the afternoon we pay a visit to the Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia: "The Holy Church of Wisdom") and The Topkapi Palace Museum, and finish the day in the Grand Bazaar. Free dinner and overnight at the hotel. [i](#)

Day 3: Istanbul-The Capital of Civilisations

Morning visit to the Hippodrom, Ibrahim Pascha Palace and Ethnografical Museum. Then walk across the Sultan Ahmet Square and visit the famous Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmet

MOsque). Lunch in a Mesopotamian restaurant with a special Turkish cuisine.

Afternoon: visit to the Egyptian and 2nd hand markets.

Possibility to affect a cruise on the Bosphorus. Stop in a leather manufacturer. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [i](#)

Day 4: Istanbul–Ankara–Lake Salt (Tuz Golu)–Archelais (Aksaray)

Morning: depart from hotel to Ankra via the pittoresk road of the Black Sea – the Euxine Sea. Discovery of the deserted landscapes of Central Anatolia.

Once in Ankara, visit to the Mausoleum of Atatürk and the Museum of Turkish Revolution and Dardanelles. Lunch at the Ethnographical Museum Konak of Zenger Pascha, located at the old part of the Ankara. Afternoon: visit to the Anatolian Civilizations Museum, one of the top points of our trip. After having driven along the Salt Lake, we arrive in Aksaray-the Seljukian town from the Middle Age. Dinner and overnight. [i](#)

Day 5: Cappadocia- 'The Land of Beautiful Horses'

Morning: visit of the Seljukian town Aksaray with its Pizz Tower and Grand Mosque. We depart for Acemhöyük, the first capital of the Hittite Empire and one of the three main Assyrian trading posts. Discovery of the site through imperial palaces: Sarikaya-Hatiplar and the necropolis of Enver Aribas. Strolls in the village, chat with Acemhöyük inhabitants in typical Turkish village cafés.

Lunch by inhabitants or at the Townhouse.

Afternoon: relaxing ballad on the Melendiz Canyon through the Peristreme Valley: Selime- Belisirma- Ihlara with its early Superstring churches dated from the first period of Christianity. Agzikarahan on the Silk road welcomes us with its camels and mules. Alevit Wine-tasting with inhabitants of the underground City of Saratli. Dinner and overnight in Cappadocia. [i](#)

Day 6: Cappadocia- The Holy Land of the Christianity

Morning: discovery of Cappadocia and its valleys: Dyns, Urgup, Uchisar, Hunters and Göreme. Visit to the beautiful Church St John the Baptist in Cavusin. Lunch at the hotel or in a countryside restaurant.

Afternoon: relaxing walk in the Rose Valley and visit to a carpet-school. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [i](#)

Day 7: Cappadocia – Whirling Dervishes of Hacibektas Veli– Ankara – Istanbul

We still enjoy Cappadocia with stops to take pictures, short walks, discovery of craft industries (onyx), and Pasabag, a part of the Zelve Valley. Walk across the Red River and Venessa-Avanos to take pictures of the typical houses. We also visit the monasteries of the Whirling Dervishes in Hacibektas.

After having lunch along the route, we head towards Istanbul via motorway. Diner and overnight at the hotel. [i](#)

Day 8: Istanbul – A nostalgic day – Europa

After breakfast, some free time in Istanbul to enjoy the city at your own pace until transfer time to the airport. [i](#)

Pricing

- For Pricing Click [List of TransAnatolie Turkey Tours, Services and Pricing](#) or
- Contac Us: [Contact Information for TransAnatolie Tour i](#)

Optional evening activities

- Istanbul by Night with a 'Son et Lumière' programme (from May to September) with the visit to the Sulaymaniye Mosque
- Evening with fishermen in Kumkapı + Istanbul by Night
- Dinner with show in Cabaret Gar
- Dinner with show in Caravanserail Night Club or at the Galata towers, or by the Orient Huis [i](#)

Options

- During the Cappadocia tour, a Turkish evening with traditional dances and Mevlevi performance
- Discovery of Cappadocia in hot air balloons [i](#)

Rates Include

- 8 days-7 nights full pension
- Transportation in Turkey
- Lunches in traditional Turkish restaurants, one of the best cuisine in the world.
- All admission fees to the museums and sites mentioned
- Guide Services [i](#)

Rates Exclude

- Return Flights Europa/Istanbul/Europa
- Insurance
- Airport tax
- Drinks and tips. [i](#)

Links

- Istanbul
- Byzantium,
- Ottoman Empire
- Museums [i](#)

TransAnatolie Tour: Multilingual Cultural Tour Provider and Operator.
[i](#)

**TransAnatolie TA3404:
Western Turkey and
Cappadocia Tour: 15 Day**

Cultural Natural and Historical Heritage Tour in Turkey: Alexander The Great, Memed The Conqueror, Suleyman The Magnificent & Ataturk

Day 1: Europe - Istanbul

Arrival in Istanbul-Sightseeing tour of the city. dinner and overnight at the hotel. [i](#)

Day 2: Istanbul

Morning: Discover the Golden Horn and the Pierre Loti area. We then pay a visit to the Ottoman Cemetery, the Mosque and Mausoleum of Eyup (Mahomet's fellow) and explore ancient Roman- Byzantine city walls and the Chora Church. Lunch in a traditional Turkish-Greek restaurant next to the Roman Circus. In the afternoon: Visit St. Sofia Church (Ayasofya Mosque and Museum) and The Palace of Topkapi (Harem visit is optional). Late afternoon, the Grand Bazaar ('Oriental Souk'). Free dinner and overnight at the hotel. [i](#)

Day 3:Istanbul

Morning: Visit the Hipodrom; the Ibrahim Pascha Palace and the Ethnographical Museum; The master-piece Blue Mosque of the Ottoman Empire. Lunch at Gilgamesche. serving well-known Arab-Kurdish specialties, located next to the Citer-Basilica.

Afternoon: A cruise on the Bosphorus; discover the Old Egyptian Bazaar and Spices Market as well as the high quality Armenian jewellery shops, while observing the Galata and Marco Polo Towers. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [i](#)

Day 4: Istanbul-Edirne

After breakfast, we head towards the Second Ottoman Capital: Andrinople-Edirne and visit the Selimiye Mosque-the masterpiece of The Architect Sinan; chief architect of Suleyman The Legislator (Suleyman The Magnificent). Then the Bazaar-Caravanserai of Rustem Pacha who is the Great Vizir and Suleyman's son-in-law; the social complex of the Ottoman sultan Bayezid. We have a time-out and lunch.

Bridge from Sinan Edirne Selimiye Camii (Mosque)

Afternoon: we drive to Dardanelles via Uzunkopru (a classical Ottoman Bridge of 1392 meters). We explore Dardanelles and the small streets of Canakkale and get in touch with the local inhabitants.

Dinner and overnight in Eceabat (or in Canakkale). [i](#)

Day 5: Canakkale-Truva-Bursa

After breakfast, we get to know the love of Paris and the Beautiful Helen of Troy. One imagines Achilles running after Hector along the walls of Troy, following the Iliad and the Odyssey of Homer, native of Izmir. Lunch is on the road.

In the afternoon, Bursa-the first Ottoman capital is explored: the Green Mosque, the Green Mausoleum, the Muradiye Complex and the Imperial Tombs.

Dinner and overnight at the Thermal Center of Oylat located at the foot of the Mount Olympus or in Bursa. [i](#)

Day 6: Bursa-Oylat-Aizanoi-Emet

We visit Aizanoi and explore its well preserved Zeus temple, theater, stadium, thermal baths, Roman bridges and the 'Stock Exchange'. Later, we continue our journey with the discovery of the Borax mine pits. After a delicious lunch, pay a visit to the Town Hall and to the School of Emet.

Free afternoon to exploit local thermal hamams and to socialize with the hospitable inhabitants of Phirigia.

Dinner and overnight in one of the touristic hotels of Emet. [i](#)

Day 7: Emet-Sardes-Ephese

Drive early in the morning towards Sardes; the capital of Lydia, home-town of the rich Cresus, watered by the Pactole, in order to contemplate the Synagogue of the city, which was used as one of the first 7 churches of the Apocalypse of St John.

Lunch in Ephesus, the capital of Ionia and city of Artemis. In the afternoon, we discover the Ephesus site, the Eastern Academy, Agoras, Stoa, the street of Curetes, the Gate of Esculape, the Odeon, the market place of Domitien, the Monument of Memius, the Fountain of Trajane dated from the Pax Romana period, the Baths, the Hadrianus Temple, the House of the Worthy, the Library of Celcus, the Closed Houses, Marble Street, the Agora of Demos, the St Paul Theater, Arcadian Street, the Church of the Virgin Marry of the Ecumenical Councils, the Roman Stock Exchange and the Antique Harbour. Stop in a leather factory. (see Ephesus Museum)

Dinner and overnight in Ephesus or in Kusadasi. [i](#)

Day 8: Priene-Milet-Didyme-Pamukkale

In the morning, we head towards Priene, the city of the great city planner Hippodamus ('the Hippodamian Plan'), visit Milet of Thales and discover our future in the Apollo Oracle in Didyme, the largest temple in the world.

Lunch is in a fish restaurant in Didyme, next to the Apollo Temple. In the afternoon, the Pamukkale Castles next to the Hieropolis site are explored. Here women were committing suicide, after their husbands' deaths, to demonstrate their love and loyalty to their husbands.

Dinner and overnight in our hotel. Thermal swimming pool with Jacuzzi is at our service. [i](#)

Day 9: Pamukkale-Aphrodisiyas-Sagalassos-Antalya

Early start to take pictures in the first lights of the day of the cotton and tobacco fields. Arrival in the city of Aphrodite. Visit to the exceptional site of Aphrodisiyas and its Museum with the Statue of Aphrodite.

Lunch with nomad people. In the afternoon, we walk through some rose gardens and the birds paradise of the Burden Lake. We continue with the discovery of the hidden site of the Taurus: Sagalassos.

Dinner and overnight in Antalya, the city of Attale (cousin of Alexander the Great). [i](#)

Day 10: Antalya-Konya-Acemhoyuk-Aksaray and Cappadocia

Imaginations, admirations and confused feelings as we walk through the small streets of Antalya and see the small houses of the poor fishermen in the old harbour while also looking at the Gulets of the Turkish aristocrats and at the Hellenistico-Roman-Byzantine-Seldjoukid-Ottoman-Turkish monuments. After visiting Karpuzkaldiran waterfalls, we drive through the Taurus Mountains and enjoy the nature and beauty of landscape with poppy fields, nomads and goats and arrive Caravanserai of Horozluhan and lunch on the Silk Road. In the afternoon, in Konya, the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, the Mevlana Mausoleum and Museum of the founder of the Dancing Dervishes are explored. Here one finds a rich collection of ethnographical works, including one of the few Turkish carpets in the world dated of 16th century (each cm² contains 144 double knots). In the late afternoon, arrival in Acemhoyuk, the first capital of Ancient Hitties and visit Sarikaya and Hatiplar Palaces. Dinner and overnight in Aksaray, at Agacli Motel (4*) or at Eras Hotel (5*). [i](#)

Day 11: Cappadocia- Aksaray-Selime-Ihlara-Saratli

After a delicious Turkish breakfast, the Seljuk city of Karamanoglu, Aksaray is explored: exceptional Pizze Tower and The Great Mosque from the 13th century. Walk through the Melendiz Canyon and visit typical Anatolian villages Selime, Yaprahisar, Belisirma and arrive in the Peristrema-Ihlara Valley and discover primitive Syriaq churches dated from the 1st period of the Christian campus in Cappadocia. Possibility to walk in nature for those who love nature and birds. Lunch is at the Melendiz Canyon in Ihlara. In the late afternoon, pay a visit to the underground town of Saratli, the town of Simone and Jean van Delft. Dinner and overnight in our hotel in Cappadocia. [i](#)

Day 12: Cappadocia

After breakfast, we visit the old Troglodyte houses of Urgup, Uçuzkuyu, the Pigeons Valley, Uchisar, Avcılar, the Goreme Valley and its Rupestrian churches.

Lunch at the hotel or at the buffet Koru. In the afternoon, possibility to relax and discover different handworks (carpets). Dinner and overnight in our hotel. [i](#)

Day 13: Cappadocia-Venessa-Sezarée-Argee Erciyes-Ankara

After breakfast, we discover on foot the Rose Valley, the Camels Valley, the Dolphins Valley, the Owl Valley and the Valley of the Virgin Mary. Stop in an onyx factory. Discovery of the 1st part of the Zelve Valley: Pasabag. Drive across the Red River, take pictures of typical houses in Venessa-Avanos.

Lunch in Altinocak Restaurant in Avanos, the most famous one for Cömlek Kebab. In the afternoon, discovery of the city of Julius Sezarus-Kayseri: the Roman citywalls, the Huan Hatun Complex-the Ethnographical Museum, the Grave of the Princess: Döner Kümbet, Gevher Nesibe, the Museum of Medical History. We then drive through the High Steppes of Central Anatolia and arrive in Ankara.

Dinner and overnight in Ankara. [i](#)

Day 14: Ankara-The Pontic Chain Crossing- Lake of Sapanca- Istanbul

After breakfast, we visit Atatürk Museum and the Ataturk Mausoleum as well as the Museum of the 1st World War- the Dardanelles; the symbol of the rebirth of the Laic Republic of Turkey. Then, we explore the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, exhibiting the rich heritage of the ancient Anatolian civilizations from Hittites to Romans. Subsequently, discover the old Ankara, walk through the Spices Market and lunch at the Ethnographical Museum of Zenger Pacha, offering a beautiful view of old Ankara.

In the afternoon, drive back to the Cultural Capital of 5 civilizations: Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul.

Good-bye dinner and overnight in our hotel in Istanbul. [i](#)

Day 15: Istanbul-Europe

After breakfast, free time until transfer to the Istanbul airport. [i](#)

Pricing

- Full pension (drinks excluded) from the dinner of the 1st day until the breakfast of the 15th day:
- For Pricing Click [List of TransAnatolie Turkey Tours, Services and Pricing](#) or
- Contac Us: [Contact Information for TransAnatolie Tour](#) [i](#)

Options

- Cruise on the Bosphorus
- Istanbul by Night
- Evening with fishermen + Istanbul by Night
- Cabaret evening in Istanbul at Orient House
- Evening with typical dances in Cappadocia
- Discovery of Cappadocia in hot air balloon
- Evening with Dancing Dervishes [i](#)

Rates Include

- Transportation in Turkey: air-conditioned bus Mercedes Sprinter, WW Wolt, Mercedes 304-403, Mitsubishi Safir, Isuzu Minibus-Turquoise
- Hotels: in Istanbul 4*, in Canakkale 3 or 4*, in Boylat, Emet and Pamukkale 4*, in Selcuk-Kusadasi 4*, in Antalya 4*, in Cappadocia 4*, in Ankara 3*+.
- Bilingual certified prof. guide [i](#)

Rates Exclude

- Flights Europe/Turkey/Europe
- Airport taxes
- Drinks
- Insurance
- Tips [i](#)

TransAnatolie Tour: Multilingual Cultural Tour Provider and Operator.

[i](#)

TransAnatolie TA3408: 8 Day Cultural Tour in Turkey: Ankara-Black Sea-Cappadocia Tour: Cultural Heritage Tour to Turkey: Hittites, Roman Empire, Amasya and Holly Land Cappadocia

Day 1: Istanbul

Arrival in Istanbul, welcome cocktail and sightseeing of the city, dinner and overnight at the 4 star or 5 star high QoS hotel. [i](#)

Day 2: Istanbul-Ankara (by train)

In the morning, we visit the Golden Horn, the Pierre Loti Square, the Ottoman Imperial Cemetery and the Eyüp Mosque. We walk through the Roman-Byzantine City-Walls and visit the Chora Church. Lunch is at a well-known Turkish-Greek restaurant next to the ancient Roman Circus.

After lunch we proceed by the visit to the St. Sophia Museum and to the Ottoman Topkapi Palace Museum. After shopping (optional) at the Grand Bazaar, we enjoy the unique Bosphorus view, while driving to the Asian Continent through the high-tech Bridge of Bosphorus. We see Üsküdar and end enjoy our dinner at one of the best restaurants of Asia. After dinner, we take our places in Wagon Lits in Orient Express for a new day in Ankara. [i](#)

Day 3: Ankara – Hattusas – Amasya (376 km)

After breakfast at the Orient Express, we drive along the Kizilirmak (Red River) Valley to the Capital of Hittite Empire, Hattusas, and its pantheon Yazilikaya. Yazilikaya is registered National Historical Park.

The main sites to be visited date back from the last period of the great Hittite Empire. On the way to the park, we can see the big temple at Asagi Sevir (temple n°1), the city walls with the colossal doors (Gate Arsanli with its lions, Gate Poterni and YER, Royal Gate Kral). In Yukari Sevir, one admires the 31 temples built on the edge of Nisan Hill, and the Royal Palace, the Big Castle and other buildings.

The open-air Temple of Yazilikaya of the Hittite Empire is located at the 5 km north-east of Bogazköy. It consists of two rooms: the small and the large gallery, and is built taking advantage of the natural placing of the local rocks. Goddesses cut from the rocks are depicted on the right wall of the large gallery, while an image of gods are described on the left wall. Those two groups bring us to the rear wall, the most important one. On the rear wall the meeting of the God of Time Tesup and his wife Goddess Hepatu is depicted. In a local village, breakfast will enable us to appreciate an Hittite menu, regional meal prepared with spices dried by the wind of the High Hittite Plateau.

In the afternoon, we head up to Amasya, place of birth of the famous geographer Strabon (1st century before JC). Amasya is also the centre of education for the Ottoman Princes. At the sunset, we hike through Yesil Irmak (Halys River) Valley, take pictures of wooden houses along the roads of Amasya, known for their magnificent Ottoman architecture. Dinner and overnight is at the 4 star hotel with high QoS. The overnight hotel is in Amasya, Apple-Tusan Grubu ****. [i](#)

Day 4: Amasya – Zile – Cekerek – Bogaziliyan – Cappadocia (330 km)

After the breakfast at the buffet, we explore the city of Ferhat and Sirin, also known as 'City of the Crown', Amasya.

One admires the old houses, Hazeranlar Konagi, the Ethnographical Museum, the royal rot-cut graves dig dating back from the Hellenistic period, the Castle of Amasya, the Mosque with the turning minaret Burmali, the Bayezit II Mosque and its medrese Kulliye, and the Medrese Gök, the bridges (Caglayan, Alcak, Kus), Darussifa-Bimarhane (psychiatric hospital).

We also visit the museum of Amasya, one of the richest in Turkey. Here more than 27,000 objects, heritages from 11 civilizations are displayed. We enjoy our lunch in a local restaurant.

In the afternoon we drive across Turhal-Zile, visit the Zile Castle. Zile Castle is the place of wars between the Roman and the Bridge inhabitants. It is also known by the famous quotation of Julius Caesar: "Veni, Vidi, Vinci-I came, I saw, I won". Then we head towards Cekerek, Sorgun and Bogaziliyan and end up in Cappadocia, one of the most spectacular landscapes in the world.

Dinner and Overnight in our 4 star or 5 star hotel (depending upon availability at the time of visit). [i](#)

Day 5: Cappadocia

After the breakfast, we visit the old houses of Ürgüp, the Rose Valley, the Camels Valley, the Valley of the Virgin Maria. Then we enjoy a relaxing programme aiming at discovering different craft industries (weaving and knotting of carpets), the nomadic culture and imperial palaces. Lunch gives one the opportunity to taste the Cömlek Kebab, specialty of the region in a restaurant offering a beautiful view on the Kizilirmak (Halys) River.

In the afternoon, we first visit the underground city of Ozkonak or Derinkuyu, and contemplate the unique and beautiful landscape of Cappadocia. Then, the old, quiet small village of Mustafapasa (Sinassos), the valley of Cemil-Taskinpasa-Soganli towns of the Mt. Hasan and Mt. Erciyes volcanos.

Before dinner and overnight, on the way to the hotel, one admires the hand-made linen poppies in Soganli, and especially the gloves and socks with Anatolian drawings. [i](#)

Day 6: Cappadocia- The Holy Land of Christianity following the Apocalypse of St Johannes

Hikes through the Valleys of the Three Cappadocian Graces, Üc Güzeller, the Pigeon Valley, Uchisar, Avcilar. Stop in an Onyx atelier. Lunch at the hotel or at the buffet of the restaurant Koru.

In the afternoon, we visit Göreme Valley, the open-air museum surrounded by churches. Here, one quietly admires at the sunset the early Christian art and the Byzantine Imperial Art decorated in these churches: Tokali-Elmalı- St Basilus, Yılanlı-Sandal. This region of monasteries, priests and priestesses was a unique religious campus. It was the place where the apostles, the first Christians, the 40 Cappadocian Great Fathers, Saint Paul, Saint John, Saint Timothy, Saint Barnabe, Saint Naziane and Saint Basilus were welcomed.

Diner en overnight in our 4 star (or 5) hotel of high QoS. [i](#)

Day 7: Cappadocia – Ankara (320 km)

After breakfast, on the way to Ankara, we drive to the underground city of Saratli, take photos of Salt Lake with its rose filamingos and collect salt crystals. Lunch is at the best Doner/Iskender Kebab Restaurant, Hacibey, in Ankara.

After lunch, we visit the mausoleum built for Atatürk and Ataturk Museum. Here, one finds his pictures and other exhibitions recalling the key events of his life and of the constitution of the Republic.

Our guide will then lead us to the Anatolian Civilizations Museum, prize-winning museum of the best Worldwide Museums in 1995. This visit will be preceded by a conference on the ancient civilisations of Anatolia.

After free time in old part of Ankara, dinner is at the 4 star (or 5*) hotel. After dinner, we again take our Orient Express of Wagon Lits to go to Istanbul. [i](#)

Day 8: Istanbul-Europe

After the breakfast either at the Orient Express or at the hotel in Istanbul, the group enjoys some free time to explore the city

at his/her own pace, until to the transfer to the airport for returning to Europe. [i](#)

Pricing

- For Pricing Click [List of TransAnatolie Turkey Tours, Services and Pricing](#) or
- Contac Us: [Contact Information for TransAnatolie Tour](#) [i](#)

Inclusive

- 8 days-7 nights full pension
- Transportation in Turkey
- Lunches in traditional Turkish restaurants, one of the best cuisine in the world.
- All admission fees to the museums and sites mentioned
- Prof. Guide and his/her services [i](#)

Exclusive

- Flights Europe/Istanbul/Europe
- Insurance, Airport tax
- Drinks and tips [i](#)

Options

- Evening with Traditional Turkish Dances and Mevlevi Performance
- Cappadocia by Hot Air Balloons [i](#)

TransAnatolie Tour: Multilingual Cultural Tour Provider and Operator.

[i](#)

TransAnatolie TA3414: 16 Day Cultural Tour in Turkey:

Istanbul-Western Turkey- Central Anatolia- Mediterranean: Cultural and Natural Heritage Tour with Blue Cruise in Turkey

Day 1: Istanbul

Arrival in Istanbul. Sightseeing city tour, dinner and overnight at our 4 star hotel. [i](#)

Day 2: Istanbul

In the morning, discovery of the Golden Horn and of the Pierre Loti area. Visits to Ottoman Imperial Cemetery and Eyüp Mosque. Walks along the Roman-Byzantine city walls and visit the Chora Church and Mihrimah Sultan Mosque.

The great Mosque of Eyüp lies outside the city walls, near the Golden Horn, at the supposed place where Eyüp, the standard bearer of the Prophet Mohammed, died in the Islamic assault on Constantinople in 670 A.D. The first mosque built after the Ottoman conquest of the city, this greatly venerated shrine attracts many pilgrims.

The Kariye Museum (Chora Church), the 11th century church of "St. Savior" in Chora, is, after St. Sophia, the most important Byzantine monument in Istanbul. Unremarkable in its architecture, inside, the walls are decorated with superb 14th century frescoes and mosaics. Illustrating scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, these brilliantly coloured paintings embody the vigour of Byzantine art. Restored wooden houses in the area surrounding the church offer tea and coffee in a relaxed, atmosphere far removed from the city's hectic pace.

Walls of glass fill the four immense arches that support the central dome at the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque inside the Edirne gate of the old city walls. One hundred and sixty-one windows

illuminate this mosque, built by Sinan for Mihrimah Sultana, the daughter of Süleyman the Magnificent in 1555.

Lunch is next to the Roman Circus in a well known Turkish-Greek restaurant.

Afternoon: We visit Aya Sophia (Hagia Sophie) and Topkapi Palace Museums and end up at the Grand Bazaar. Free dinner and overnight at the hotel.

The Basilica of St. Sophia, now called the Ayasofya Museum, is unquestionably one of the finest buildings of all time. Built by Constantine the Great and reconstructed by Justinian in the 6th century, its immense dome rises 55 meters above the ground and its diameter spans 31 meters. You should linger here to absorb the building's majestic serenity and to admire the fine Byzantine mosaics.

On a spot of land at the confluence of the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn and the Marmara Sea, stands Topkapi Palace, a maze of buildings at the center of the Ottoman Empire between the 15th and 19th centuries. In these opulent surroundings the sultans and their court lived and governed. A magnificent wooded garden fills the outer, or first, court. To the right of the second court, shaded by cypress and plane trees, stand the palace kitchens, now galleries exhibiting the imperial collections of crystal, silver and Chinese porcelain. To the left, the Harem, the secluded quarters of the wives, concubines and children of the sultan, charms visitors with echoes of a centuries old intrigue.

Today, the third court holds the Hall of Audience, the Library of Ahmet III, an exhibition of imperial costumes worn by the sultans and their families, the famous jewels of the treasury and a priceless collection of miniatures from medieval manuscripts. In the center of this innermost sanctuary, the Pavilion of the Holy Mantle enshrines the relics of the Prophet Mohammed brought to Istanbul when the Ottomans assumed the caliphate of Islam

The cascading domes and four slender minarets of Süleymaniye Mosque dominate the skyline on the Golden Horn's west bank. Considered the most beautiful of all imperial mosques in Istanbul, it was built between 1550 and 1557 by Sinan, the renowned architect of the Ottoman golden age. On the crest of a hill, the building is conspicuous by its great size, which the four minarets that rise from each corner of the

courtyard emphasize. Inside, the mihrab (prayer niche) and the mimber (pulpit) are of finely carved white marble; fine stained glass windows color the incoming streams of light. It was in the gardens of this complex that Süleyman and his wife Hürrem Sultan, Roxelane, had their mausolea built, and near here also that Sinan built his own tomb. The mosque complex also includes four medrese, or theological schools, a school of medicine, a caravanserai, a Turkish bath, and a kitchen and hospice for the poor.

We dine at Istanbul By Night at Kumkapi and overnight at the 4 star hotel with high QoS. [i](#)

Day 3: Istanbul

In the morning, visit the Hippodrome, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum located at the Ibrahim Pascha Palace, as well as the Ethnographical Museum in Istanbul. Not to forget to explore the Master Piece Blue Mosque.

The dark stone building that houses the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art was built in 1524 by Ibrahim Pasa; Grand Vizier to Süleyman the Magnificent, as his residence. It was the grandest private residence ever built in the Ottoman Empire. Today, it houses a superb collection of ceramics, metalwork miniatures, calligraphy, textiles, and woodwork as well as some of the oldest carpets in the world.

Then we visit the sixth century Byzantine cistern known as the Yerebatan Sarnici. Three hundred and thirty-six massive Corinthian columns support the immense chamber's fine brick vaulting.

Walking along the Sultan Ahmet Square we arrive in the famous Blue Mosque. Facing St. Sophia stands the supremely elegant, six-minaret, imperial Sultanahmet Mosque. Built between 1609 and 1616 by the architect Mehmet, the building is more familiarly known as the Blue Mosque because its interior gleams with a magnificent paneling of blue and white Iznik tiles. During the summer months an evening light and sound show both entertain and inform.

Before lunch we become familiar with Turkish Cultural Products: carpets and kilims, jewellery and leather. Delicious lunch is at the Mesopotamian restaurant.

Afternoon: visit the Egyptian and Second-hand markets. We then fully enjoy the wonderful Bosphorus Cruise between two continents Asia and Europe,
A stay in Istanbul is not complete without the traditional and unforgettable boat excursion up the Bosphorus, the winding strait that separates Europe and Asia. Its shores offer a delightful mixture of past and present, grand splendor and simple beauty. Modern hotels stand next to yali (shorefront wooden villas), marble palaces abut rustic stone fortresses, and elegant compounds neighbour small fishing villages. During the journey, you pass in front of the magnificent Dolmabahçe Palace; farther along rise the green parks and imperial pavilions of Yildiz Palace. On the edge of this park, on the coast, stands Çiragan Palace, now restored as a grand hotel. Refurbished in 1874 by Sultan Abdülaziz, it stretches for 300 meters along the Bosphorus shore, its ornate marble facades reflecting the swiftly moving water. In Ortaköy, the next stop, artists gather every Sunday to exhibit their works in a streetside gallery. The variety of people create a lively scene; sample a delicious bite from one of the street vendors. In Ortaköy, there is a church, mosque and a synagogue that have existed side by side for hundreds of years - a tribute to Turkish secularism and tolerance. Overshadowing Istanbul's traditional architecture is the Bosphorus Bridge, one of the world's largest suspension bridges linking Europe and Asia. We finally dine and enjoy the night at our 4 star hotel with high QoS. [i](#)

Day 4: Istanbul

Morning: visit the Cistern-Basilica, Istanbul Archaeological Museum and Oriental Antiques Museum in Cinili Kosk. Then cruise on the Bosphorus via the suspension bridge to have lunch in the Asian part of Istanbul; the Fenerbahce area.

The Archaeological Museums are found just inside the first court of Topkapi Palace. Included among the displays are the celebrated Alexander Sarcophagus among its treasures of antiquity.

The Museum of the Ancient Orient displays artifacts from the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hatti and Hittite civilizations.

Originally built as a köşk or pavilion by Mehmet the Conqueror in the 15th century, the Çinili Köşk, which houses the Museum of Turkish Ceramics, contains beautiful Iznik wares from the 16th century and fine examples of Seljuk and Ottoman pottery and tiles

Afternoon: discovery of the Beylerbeyi Ottoman Imperial Palace. Walk up to the Camlica Hill: higher point of the city: Back to Europe in the hotel. Free dinner and evening.

In the 19th century, Sultan Abdülaziz built the Beylerbeyi Palace, a fantasy in white marble amid magnolia filled gardens, on the Bosphorus's Asian Shore. Used as the Sultan's summer residence, it was offered to the most distinguished foreign dignitaries during their visits. Empress Eugenie of France was among its residents. [i](#)

Day 5: Izmir-Ephesus-Pamukkale

After a rich Turkish Breakfast, transfer to Istanbul Airport to fly to Izmir (Smyrna).

Temple of Artemis Ephesus

Drive early in the morning towards Ephesus; the capital of Ionia, home-town of Heraclite. Note that Ephesus is one of the wholly places where one of the first 7 churches of the Apocalypse of St John is located.

We discover the Ephesus site, the Eastern Academy, Agoras, Stoa, the street of Curetes, the Gate of Esculape, the Odeon, the market place of Domitien, the Monument of Memius, the Fountain of Trajane dated from the Pax Romana period, the Baths, the Hadrianus Temple, the House of the Worthy, the Library of Celcus, the Closed Houses, Marble Street, the Agora of Demos, the St Paul Theater, Arcadian Street, the Church of the Virgin Marry of the Ecumenical Councils, the Roman Stock Exchange and the Antique Harbour. Stop in a leather factory. (see Ephesus Museum)

Lunch is in Ephesus, the capital of Ionia and the city of Artemis.

In the afternoon, Pamukkale Castles next to the Hieropolis site are explored. Here women were committing suicide, after their husbands' deaths, to demonstrate their love and loyalty to their husbands.

Dinner and overnight in our hotel. Thermal swimming pool with Jacuzzi is at our service. [i](#)

Day 6: Pamukkale-Konya-Cappadocia

Early in the morning drive from Pamukkale to Konya; enjoy the nature and beauty of landscape and visit Caravanserai of Horozluhan. Lunch on the Silk Road.

In the afternoon, in Konya, the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, the Mevlana Mausoleum and Museum of the founder of the Dancing Dervishes are explored. Here one finds a rich collection of ethnographical works, including one of the few Turkish carpets in the world dated of 16th century (each cm² contains 144 double knots). In the late afternoon, arrival in Acemhoyuk, the first capital of Ancient Hittites and visit Sarikaya and Hatiplar Palaces.

Dinner and overnight in Aksaray, at Agacli Motel (4*) or at Eras Hotel (5*). [i](#)

Day 7: Cappadocia: Aksaray-Selime-Ihlara-Saratli

After a delicious Turkish breakfast, the Seljuk city of Karamanoglu, Aksaray is explored: exceptional Pizze Tower and The Great Mosque from the 13th century. Walk through the Melendiz Canyon and visit typical Anatolian villages Selime, Yaprakhisar, Belisirma and arrive in the Peristrema-Ihlara Valley and discover primitive Syriaq churches dated from the 1st period of the Christian campus in Cappadocia. Possibility to walk in nature for those who love nature and birds.

Lunch is at the Melendiz Canyon in Ihlara. In the late afternoon, pay a visit to the underground town of Saratli, the town of Simone and Jean van Delft.

Dinner and overnight in our hotel in Cappadocia. [i](#)

Day 8: Cappadocia

"The land of beautiful horses..."

"The holly land of Christians..."

"The heartland of Anatolia... "

The beauty of the unique landscapes of Cappadocia (valleys, fairy chimneys with caps) carved during ages by the nature-air,

flood water and the fire of the volcanic mountains (Mt. Erciyes, Mt Hasan, Mt. Gollu) is spectacular. Light and time sensitive, continuously colour changing capped chimneys, curved paths along the trees, cultural heritages of Christians, Jews and Muslims decorated with natural coloured icons and dugout in rocks, animated by Saint Basile in Kayseri, Saint Gregoire in Nevsehir, Haci Bektas Veli in Haci Bektas...

A trip of this nature of its own unique character gives you the opportunity to discover the cultural richness of this area and enables you to interact with each other and with the hospitable local inhabitants...

After breakfast, we visit the old Troglodyte houses of Urgup, Uc Guzeller, the Pigeons Valley, Uchisar, Avcilar, the Goreme Valley and its Rupestrian churches.

Lunch at the hotel or at the buffet Koru. In the afternoon, possibility to relax and discover different handworks (carpets). Dinner and overnight in our hotel in Cappadocia. [i](#)

Day 9: Cappadocia-Lake Beysehir-Mount Taurus-Antalya

Early in the morning, after breakfast in Cappadocia, we drive towards Antalya. Time out for Turkish Tea along the Lake Beysehir and visit the Beysehir Mosque-a famous sample of Seljuk architectural heritage. Proceed through the Taurus Mountains and enjoy the nature and beauty of landscape with poppy fields, nomads and goats.

Lunch is on the way to Antalya.

Imaginations, admirations and confused feelings are interleaved as we walk through the small streets of Antalya and see the small houses of the poor fishermen in the old harbour while also looking at the Gulets of the Turkish aristocrats and at the Hellenistico-Roman-Byzantine-Seldjoukid-Ottoman-Turkish monuments.

Dinner and overnight in Antalya, the city of Attale (cousin of Alexander the Great). [i](#)

Day 10: Explore Antalya Region

Kursunlu waterfalls, Perge and Ancient Aspendos Theatre are explored. Lunch is in a restaurant along the Aspendos River.

Diner and overnight at our hotel in Antalya. [i](#)

Day 11: Blue Cruise in Antalya Region

Sailing Paradise: Turkey

The azure waters of the Mediterranean, the Aegean, and the Black Sea, as well as the Sea of Marmara, surround Turkey to the south, west and north.

Full day Blue Cruise with lunch in Antalya region. Diner and overnight at our hotel in Antalya. [i](#)

Day 12: Blue Cruise in Kemer-Phaselis

After breakfast, we enjoy full day Blue Cruise with lunch in Kemer-Phaselis region. Diner and overnight at our hotel in Antalya. [i](#)

Day 13: Blue Cruise in Antalya-Myra-Saint Nicolas-Kekova

In the morning, after breakfast at our hotel, we drive to Myra, explore Myra, Saint Nicolas and onwards Blue Cruise covering Kekova region. The cruise is around 3 hours. Subsequently, we drive back to Antalya for diner and overnight in our hotel. [i](#)

Day 14: Blue Cruise in Alanya

In the morning, after breakfast at our hotel, we drive to Alanya, explore Alanya and Alanya Castle. Afterwards Blue Cruise (with lunch on board) covering Alanya region. Diner and overnight is at our hotel in Antalya. [i](#)

Day 15: Blue Cruise Fethiye

After breakfast, the group drives to Fethiye and explores Kas, Xsantos, Letoon and Fethiye; Lunch is in Fethiye. Diner and overnight is at our hotel in Fethiye. (Or, in the evening transfer to the boat for Blue Cruise in Fethiye, Gocek and surroundings for one week, option). [i](#)

Day 16: Istanbul-Europe

After breakfast, free time until transfer to the Istanbul airport. (Or Blue Cruise in Fethiye and surroundings continued for one week). [i](#)

Pricing

- For Pricing Click [List of TransAnatolie Turkey Tours, Services and Pricing](#) or
- Contac Us: [Contact Information for TransAnatolie Tour](#) [i](#)

Options

- Cruise on the Bosphorus
- Istanbul by Night
- Evening with fishermen + Istanbul by Night
- Evening with typical dances in Cappadocia
- Discovery of Cappadocia in hot air balloon
- Evening with Dancing Dervishes
- Special Dinner with show at the Caravanserai Night Club at Galata Tower or at the Orient House Istanbul.
- Turkish Belly Dance [i](#)

Optional visits

- Dolmabahce Palace
- Free Lunch in Mata Hari area in Galatasaray
- Visits Beyoglu, Galatasaray [i](#)

Rates Include

- Transportation in Turkey: air-conditioned bus Mercedes Sprinter, WW Wolt, Mercedes 304-403, Mitsubishi Safir, Isuzu Minibus-Turquoise
- Accommodation in Hotels: in Istanbul 4*, in Canakkale 3 or 4*, in Boylat, Emet and Pamukkale 4*, in Selcuk-Kusadasi 4*, in Antalya 4*, in Cappadocia 4*, in Ankara 3*+.
- Lunches in traditional restaurants
- All admission fees for museums and sites mentioned
- Services of Professional Certified Guide [i](#)

Rates Exclude

- Flights Europe/Turkey/Europe

- Airport taxes
- Drinks
- Insurance
- Tips [i](#)

Links

- Istanbul
- Byzantium
- Ottoman Empire
- Museums
- The Marmara Region of Turkey
- The Aegean Region of Turkey
- The Mediterranean Region of Turkey
- The Central Anatolian Region of Turkey
- Read more about Yachting in Turkey (pdf)
- Turkey Videos [i](#)

Roxelana

Roxelana, Roxolana, Roxelane, Rossa, Ruziac, known also by her Turkish name of Hürrem (or Khourrem or Karima), meaning "the cheerful one", (c. 1510 - April 18, 1558) was the Ukrainian ("Ruthenian" in the terminology of the day) and only legal wife of the Ottoman sultan Süleyman the Magnificent² of the Ottoman Empire. Sixteenth century sources are silent as to her maiden name, but much later Ukrainian and Polish traditions, especially Ukrainian folk traditions first recorded in the nineteenth century, give it as Anastasia (diminutive: Nastia) or Aleksandra Lisovska. [i](#)

Early life

According to late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century sources like the famous Polish poet, Samuel Twardowski, who actually did research on the subject in Turkey, Hürrem was born to a father who was a Ukrainian, or Ruthenian, Orthodox priest, in the town of Rohatyn which is located 68 km, south east of Lviv, a major city of Galicia which was then part of the Kingdom of Poland, today in western Ukraine. She was captured by Crimean Tatars during one of their frequent raids into this region and taken as a slave,

probably first to the Crimean city of Kaffa (Kefe in Turkish, Caffa in Italian), a major centre of the slave trade, then to Istanbul, and was selected for Süleyman's Harem. She quickly came to the attention of her master, and attracted the jealousy of her rivals. One day Süleyman's former favorite, the concubine Mahidevran, also called "Gul Bahar" (The Flower of Spring), got into a fight with Hürrem and beat her badly. Upset by this, Süleyman sent Mahidevran away from Istanbul to the provincial capital of Manisa together with her son, the heir apparent, Prince Mustafa. Thereafter, Hürrem became Süleyman's unrivalled favorite or Haseki. Many years later, probably at the instigation of Hürrem, the Sultan ordered Mustafa to be strangled. [i](#)

Marriage

Hürrem's influence over the Sultan soon became legendary; she was to bear Süleyman five children and, in an astonishing break with tradition, eventually was freed and became his legal wife. This strengthened her position in the palace and eventually led to one of her sons, Selim inheriting the empire. Hürrem also may have acted as Süleyman's advisor on other matters of state, and seems to have had an influence upon foreign affairs and international politics. Two of her letters to the Polish King Sigismund Augustus have been preserved and during her lifetime, the Ottoman Empire generally had peaceful relations with the Polish state. Some historians also believe that she may have intervened with her husband to control Crimean Tatar slave-raiding in her native land. [i](#)

Charities

Aside from her political concerns, Hürrem engaged in several major works of public buildings, from Mecca to Jerusalem, perhaps modeling her charitable foundations in part after the caliph Harun al-Rashid's consort Zubaida. Among her first foundations were a mosque, two koranic schools, a fountain, and a women's hospital near the "Women's Slave Market" (Avret Pazary) in Istanbul. She also commissioned a bath, the Haseki Hürrem Sultan Hamamı, to serve the community of

worshippers in the nearby Hagia Sophia. As well, some of her embroidery, or at least embroidery done under her supervision, has survived, examples being given in 1547 to the Shah of Iran and in 1549 to King Sigismund Augustus. [i](#)

Death

Hürrem died on April 18, 1558. She is buried in a domed mausoleum (türbe) decorated in exquisite Iznik tiles depicting the garden of paradise, perhaps in homage to her smiling and joyful nature. Her mausoleum is adjacent to Süleyman's, a separate and more somber domed structure, at the Süleymaniye Mosque.

Hürrem, or Roxelana, as she is better known in Europe, is well-known both in modern Turkey and in the West, and is the subject of many artistic works. She has inspired paintings, musical works (including Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 63), an opera by Denys Sichynsky, a ballet, plays, and several novels written mainly in Ukrainian, but also in English, French, and German. [i](#)

Suleiman the Magnificent

Suleyman the Magnificent (Kanuni Sultan Suleyman)Suleiman I (Ottoman Turkish: سلايمان Sulaymān, Turkish: Süleyman; formally Kanuni Sultan Süleyman in Turkish) (November 6, 1494 – September 5/6, 1566), was the tenth and longest-serving Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, reigning from 1520 to 1566. He is known in the West as Suleiman the Magnificent and in the Islamic world, as the Lawgiver (in Turkish Kanuni), deriving from his complete reconstruction of the Ottoman legal system. Within the empire, Suleiman was known as a fair ruler and an opponent of corruption. As well as being a capable goldsmith and distinguished poet, Suleiman was also a great patron of artists and philosophers, overseeing the golden age of the Ottoman Empire's cultural development. Suleiman was considered one of the pre-eminent rulers of 16th century Europe. Under his leadership, the Ottoman Empire became among the worlds' foremost powers. Suleiman personally led Ottoman armies to conquer Belgrade, Rhodes, and most of Hungary, laid the Siege of Vienna, and annexed

most of the Middle East and huge territories in North Africa as far west as Algeria. For a short period, Ottomans achieved naval dominance in the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf. The Ottoman Empire continued to expand for a century after his death...Read more [i](#)

TransAnatolie Tour: Multilingual Cultural Tour Provider and Operator.

[i](#)