



Treasures of Eastern Turkey

September 16 - October 01, 2024
Led by Local Guide

Can be combined with Lebanon tour (October 01 - October 09, 2024)

Eastern Turkey is the true cradle of civilization, encompassing the earliest farmers, the great Hittite and Urartian empires of antiquity, the conquering Romans, early Christian churches, and medieval fortresses. Bordering Georgia, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, this seldom-visited region offers travelers simply incredible sights. See the earliest "temple" at Göbekli Tepe with its 12,000-year-old carvings. Visit Hittite sites with carved reliefs, and cuneiform inscriptions on the Urartian capital at Tushpa. Explore the Biblical connections of Urfa and Harran (where Abraham once lived), and Mount Ararat, claimed to be the final resting place of Noah's Ark. Eastern Turkey is a fantastic repository of ancient Roman, biblical, Seljuk, Armenian and Crusader relics. See the magnificent carvings in the Armenian Church on Akdamar Island in Lake Van, and an entire ghostly ruined Armenian city at Ani. And you will not forget the stunningly situated sculptured heads of Nemrut Dag, or Ishak Pasha Palace, the Taj Mahal of Turkey.

Ihab Zaki
Managing Director

Monday, September 16

Arrive in Istanbul (Turkey)



Upon arrival in Istanbul, meet and transfer to *Sultanhan Hotel or similar* for check-in and overnight.

Note: Standard check-in time is 3:00 pm. if you arrive on September 15 or early morning of September 16 an extra hotel night needs to be booked.

Tuesday, September 17

Istanbul - Trabzon



After breakfast, start the day with a tour of the old city by visiting the **Archaeological Museum** that houses the sarcophagus of Alexander the Great, and the Museum of the Ancient Near East. Continue to **Topkapi Palace** overlooking the Golden Horn. Transfer to the airport for our evening flight to the Black Sea coastal city of **Trabzon**, and upon arrival meet and transfer to *Grand Zorlu Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, September 18

Trabzon



After breakfast, begin the city tour of Trabzon. Visit the church of **Hagia Sophia** now converted to a mosque, beautifully situated in the western suburb outside the city walls and overlooking the Black sea and visit **Ataturk Villa** overlooking the Black Sea. In the Afternoon, drive to **Kuskoy village** via Gorele and Canakci town. Kuskoy means whistle language. The people in the village living upland pastoral life communicate each other with whistle. The village also has been in **UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage** in Need of Immediate Protection. Upon arrival to the village, meet the locals, interact, and be introduced to their way of life. After the visit, drive back to Trabzon and return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, September 19

Trabzon - Erzurum



After breakfast, head to **Sumela Monastery** nestled in a breathtaking setting as it is built on the face of a cliff. This splendid Christian school dates back to the 4th century AD is decorated with Byzantine frescoes that reflect the three principles of Byzantine liturgical art. After lunch, transfer to *Zade Hotel Or similar* in Erzurum for check-in, free afternoon at leisure, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, September 20

Erzurum - Kars



After breakfast, tour Erzurum City, the largest city in eastern Anatolia, built on a high plateau at an altitude of approx. 6,000 feet. As we enter the city, the large **Aziziye monument** commemorating the Turkish-Russian War will catch your eye. The city has an immensely rich past and a unique architectural style. The city walls and fortress are reminiscent of the period of Byzantine rule. Visit **the Great Mosque**, as well as the remaining Seljuk buildings; the madrasa is of particular importance (Double Minaret and Yakutiye) and other central sites including the bazaar. While wandering around the city, notice the local black stone (**Erzurum Oltu Tasi**), which is used in jewelry. On route to Kars, stop at the 13th century **Cobandede Bridge**, and then continue up the Arras river valley stopping briefly at the **First World War memorial** at Sarikamis. Upon arrival in **Kars**, transfer to *Beylerbeyi Vilayetleri Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, September 21

Kars - Dogubeyazit



The city of Kars played an important role in Turkish history; it was at the center of the Turkish-Russian War. The Russian legacy can still be seen in much of the town's architecture. The lower city unfolds at the foot of an impressive Seljuk fortress from the 12th century. Visit the

Archaeological Museum as it houses beautiful woodcarvings, an excellent collection of coins found in the surrounding region, as well as many ethnographic items relating to eastern Turkey. Visit the ghostly and picturesque **remains of Ani**, the capital of an Armenian kingdom taken over by the Byzantines and sacked by the Mongols in the 13th century. The majestic ruins of eight churches and a cathedral, poetically dominate a grassy plateau on the Armenian border. Transfer to *Tehran Hotel or similar* in Dogubeyazit for check-in, dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, September 22

Dogubeyazit - Van

After breakfast, head to visit **Ishak Pasha Palace**, one of the most spectacular sites, built in the 17th century with a mixture of architectural styles by Ishak Pasha, the Ottoman governor of the province. Catch glimpses (weather permitting) of Turkey's most scenic natural monument, **Mt. Ararat** rising to a height of approx. 16,695 feet. Along the route to Van, stop at the **falls** at Muradiye and upon arrival in the beautiful city of **Van** on the lake, head to visit the 3,000-year-old **Citadel** and watch the sunset over the Lake. Then transfer to *Ramada Wyndhan Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner (their famous local fish) & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, September 23

Van

Van is an important city set in a verdant oasis, at the foot of a rocky peak, on the shores of Lake Van the largest lake in Turkey. Visit **Tushpa**, an imposing 9th Century B.C. Uartian citadel overlooks the new and the old parts of town. Later we drive south along a branch of the Silk Road (Ipek Yol) to visit **Hosap Castle**. The main castle structure of Hosap, built straddling the Silk Road, served as both a mean of protecting the road and as a point of charging tolls to travellers. Drive to **Gevas** to visit **Akdamar Island** and see the beautifully restored 10th century **Armenian Church** of the Holy Cross, or Sourp Khach. If time permits we may have the chance to be introduced to one of the most interesting weaving tradition kept by the women of Van. They still produce beautiful kilims woven in blue, red and white patterns. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, September 24

Van - Mardin

After breakfast, begin the day with a drive to the **Mardin**, where we see many small towns that still have their own structure, we see **Malabadi**, a splendid 11th century bridge built by Seljuk Artukids on one of the tributaries

of the Tigris River. Then, tour **Hasankeyf**, the Greek Kiphas, a city located along the Tigris River in Batman province, densely inhabited by Kurds. It is an ancient city that dates back 10,000 years. Transfer to *Gazi Konagi Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, September 25

Mardin

After breakfast, head to visit an old theological school, **Sultan Isa Medrese**, with spectacular views over the barren desert. Continue to **Kasimiye Medrese** with its remarkable architecture and stonework. Later visit some of the churches in the town and explore the shops along the main street. Drive outside Mardin to visit the **Saffron Monastery**, once it was the principal seat of the Syrian Patriarchy, and now is an active religious community stands on the site of an ancient Sun Temple, which dated back to 1,000 BC. it is an integral part of the current building's foundation. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, September 26

Mardin-Diyarbakir

After breakfast, drive to **Diyarbakir**, located at the shores of the Tigris River. The basalt walls of Diyarbakir, Roman in origin, are more than 3 miles in length and have the distinction of being the longest city walls in the country. Visit the **Harpur Gate**, the **Ulu Mosque**, another fascinating sight in the city center and one of the oldest mosques in Turkey. Transfer to *Dies Hotel or similar* for check in, dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, September 27

Diyarbakir - Nemrut Dag - Adiyaman

After breakfast, depart and cross the mighty Euphrates, arriving at **Nemrut National Park**. We'll climb to the top of Mt. Nemrut to see the **tumulus and colossal statue of Antiochus I** of Commagene and his gods. It is a steep climb requires. (You can hire one of the locals with their donkey to take you up a big part of the Mount,). This ancient funerary monument at the peak of Mt. Nemrut was forgotten and lost for nearly 2,000 years. Transfer to *Euphrat Hotel or similar* for check in dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, September 28

Adiyaman - Urfa

After breakfast, drive to **Urfa**, thought by the locals for thousands of years to be the birthplace of the Prophet Abraham. Upon arrival, head to visit the on-going archaeological dig at **Gobekli Tepe**. Although this site is

not widely known, it is one of the most important archaeological digs currently undertaken anywhere. This site represents a major shift in our understanding of man's early history. Here lie the remains of the earliest religious structures built by man yet discovered. About 11,000-13,000 years' old and pre-dating pottery, writing, stonehenge and the Pyramids. In the afternoon, head to visit the on-going **archaeological museum in Urfa** and the stunning **Halebli Bahce Mosaics**. Then visit the **Abdurrahman Mosque**, and the **Pool of Abraham** containing sacred carp fish. Transfer to *El Ruha Hotel or similar* for check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, September 29

Urfa - Gaziantep



After breakfast, drive to **Harran** near the Syrian border, where Abraham is said to have spent a few years. Harran is also known for its beehive shaped mud-brick buildings. Then depart to **Halfeti**. Halfeti sunken city (with boat excursion on Euphrates) As a place where history lives, the ancient city of Halfeti was founded in the 9th century B.C. by the **Assyrian king Salmanassar III** and later hosted the Hittite, Persian, Macedonian and Seleucid civilizations. The historical richness of Halfeti also bears traces of the Abbasid, Umayyad, Seljuk, Zengi and Ayyubid cultures. After the visit continue to Gaziantep, upon arrival transfer to *Sirehan Hotel or similar*, check dinner and Overnight **(B,L,D)**

Monday, September 30

Gaziantep



After breakfast, head to visit the impressive **citadel of Gaziantep**, built in the early centuries of the Byzantine Empire and, later, rebuilt by the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, the Crusaders, the Mongols, and the Mamluks of Egypt. After lunch, head to visit of **Zugma Musik Muzesi**, which is the largest Mosaic Museum in the world then have a walk in the **old quarter** of the city dotted with mosques and hammams and madrassas. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, October 01

Gaziantep - Istanbul- US



Transfer to the airport for your flight to Istanbul and then transfer to your international terminal for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients".

Special Trip remarks:

Moderately Vigorous Touring - You will be covering a lot during this journey. The roads are good and the bus very comfortable. Some driving days are long. There will be several restroom stops along the way. It is important to recognize the exhausting nature of some of the long sightseeing days as well as some of the site visits where you April have to climb on uneven terrain, steps, rocks and sand as well as up inclines and stairs. Some of the sites involve more strenuous walking (uphill on uneven ground) in order to view the sights. Not easily done if you are not in good physical condition. Be prepared with comfortable shoes. You do have the option of staying with the vehicle if some sites seem difficult for you.



Tour Cost (Land Only):

4 - 8 travelers \$4,995.00

9 - 12 travelers \$4,495.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$900.00

Price based on group size minimum of 4 participants and maximum of 12 participants

Trip Grade: II Lodging Level: *-******



Tour Includes:

- Transfers from/to airports with assistance.
- Airport / Hotel / Airport transfers.
- Domestic flights within Turkey.
- Accommodation at Superior (4*) & Boutique Hotels.
- Local English-speaking licensed guide.
- Entrance fees to all mentioned sites.
- All meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch, D: Dinner).
- Travel by modern a/c minivan/bus.
- Mineral Water during the tour.
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

Trip Grade:

II Active – Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides and extensive drives.

Lodging Level:

*** **Superior:** Lodges and Hotels with additional amenities, refined service and comfort level acceptable to western standards. (3 or 4 stars)

**** **Luxury:** Regular style- usually large- hotels, typical western standard with ample venues, and full amenities. (4 or 5 stars)



Tour does not include:

- International air USA-Istanbul-USA.
- Turkey Visa (can be obtained online - Currently \$50.00 - subject to change).
- Beverages and drinks with or without meals.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or misconnections.
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Travel protection insurance (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED).

