

In the Footsteps of Apostles & Saints: Early Christianity in Turkey

September 22 - October 06, 2025



Pilgrimage Leader:
Msgr. Eric R. Barr, STL

\$6,742 per person
from Chicago (ORD)

**All pricing based on double occupancy.
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Your Pilgrimage Includes:

- Round-trip airfare
- Airport taxes and fuel surcharges
- 13 nights accommodation at centrally located first class hotels as follows: (or similar)
 - 4 nights: Sep 23 - 27: Titanic City Taksim, Istanbul, Turkey
 - 3 nights: Sep 27 - 30: Cappadocia Cave Suites, Göreme, Turkey
 - 1 night: Sep 30 - Oct 1: Hilton Garden Inn Konya, Konya, Turkey
 - 2 nights: Oct 1 - 3: Spa Hotel Colossae Thermal, Pamukkale, Turkey
 - 3 nights: Oct 3 - 6: Mövenpick Hotel Izmir, Izmir, Turkey
- Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner daily

- Wine and mineral water with dinners
- Transfers as per itinerary
- Transportation by air-conditioned motor coach
- Free Wi-fi on motor coach
- Whisper headsets where needed
- Assistance of a professional local Catholic Guide(s)
- Sightseeing and admissions fees as per itinerary
- Mass daily & Spiritual activities
- Luggage handling (1 piece per person)
- Tips to hotel staff, restaurants, luggage handlers
- Flight bag & Digital confirmation of all travel documents

Sample Daily Itinerary

Day 1 | Monday, September 22: Depart USA

Depart USA for your overnight flight to Istanbul. Dinner and breakfast will be served on board. Be sure to take some time to meditate about the life-changing journey upon which you are embarking.

Day 2 | Tuesday, September 23: Istanbul

Upon arrival in Istanbul Airport you will find your luggage and exit the baggage claim into the arrivals hall where you will be greeted by our tour escort and/or driver. You will be transferred to your hotel in Istanbul. Attend a welcome briefing. Dinner and a restful overnight.

Day 3 | Wednesday, September 24: Istanbul

Following breakfast, we begin our full day of the old City with a guided tour exploring the ancient city including the magnificent Topkapi Palace (main residences of Ottoman Sultans) and the Byzantine Hippodrome that was the scene of chariot races. Visit St. Sophia Basilica, historic seat of the Byzantine church, built in 360 AD and now a museum whose mosaics, stained glass windows and decorated domes have been crafted to create an environment of breathtaking beauty. Enjoy a short walk-through garden and proceed to the Blue Mosque of Sultan Ahmet 1 built in 1616, famous for its unparalleled ceramic tile work. Dinner and overnight.

Day 4 | Thursday, September 25: Istanbul – Iznik (Nicaea)

Following breakfast, and Mass we will travel to the ancient sites of Iznik town. Nicaea, famous as the host of the First and Second Councils of Nicaea, and location of the 1st and 7th Ecumenical Councils. Iznik also served as the capital of "Empire of Nicaea", as a political and cultural center for 50 years during the Sack of Constantinople when Constantinople was in the hands of the Fourth Crusade. Upon arrival in Nicaea, you will visit Hagia Sophia Nicaea, the Iznik Tile Kilns, the Amphitheatre of Nicaea and the ruins of the church of Koimesis. 2025 will be the 1700th Anniversary of the world's first ecumenical council! Meet with a faculty member from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, professor Haluk Cetinkaya who has published a book on Iznik. Dinner and overnight in Istanbul.

Day 5 | Friday, September 26: Istanbul

Following breakfast, we will visit the Galata Tower and Bridge. In the Galata district many Catholic Churches are located. We will visit The Basilica of St Anthony of Padua, the most prestigious Catholic Church in Istanbul, originally built on this site in 1725, but was demolished in the early 20th Century. The church was rebuilt by the architect, Giulio Mongeri and completed in 1912. Celebrate Mass. Following lunch visit The Church of Our Lady of Lourdes is a historic parish of the Georgian Greek Catholic Church in the district of Bomonti of the Istanbul district of Şişli. Stop by SS Peter and Paul is a Catholic church in Istanbul, important for historical reasons. The church owns an icon of the Virgin of the Hodegetria type, which originally lay in a Dominican church in Caffa, Crimea. Ending our day with a visit of the Grand Covered Bazaar, a maze of streets and shops aroma and sounds of old Turkey. Dinner and overnight in Istanbul.

Day 6 | Saturday, September 27: Istanbul - Cappadocia

This morning, we will embark on a short flight to Kayseri, where the journey unfolds in the enchanting region of Cappadocia, renowned for its "moon-like" topography and breathtaking landscapes. Our first stop is Derinkuyu Underground City, an extraordinary complex used by early Christians as a refuge, offering a glimpse into their resourcefulness and enduring faith. From there, we will continue to Cavusin Village to visit the Church of St. John the Baptist, one of the oldest and most historically significant churches in Cappadocia. Marvel at its scenic rock formations and explore other small, charming churches nestled within its unique terrain.

Day 7 | Sunday, September 28: Cappadocia – Hot Air Ballooning

Begin your day in Cappadocia with an unforgettable hot air balloon ride, soaring above the region's otherworldly landscape of fairy chimneys, valleys, and rock formations as the sun rises. After breakfast, head to Göreme to explore its famed churches, starting with the Dark Church (Karanlık Kilise), celebrated for its stunningly preserved frescoes. Continue to the Buckle Church (Tokalı Kilise), where intricate biblical depictions offer a window into early Christian art. Visit the Apple Church (Elmalı Kilise) to admire its vibrant frescoes and the Church of St. Barbara, known for its unique blend of Christian and Central Asian influences. Walk to the El Nazar Church, housed in a fairy chimney with distinct frescoes, and end your exploration with St. Basil's Church in the Göreme Open-Air Museum, a simpler yet historically significant site dedicated to St. Basil. Watch a breathtaking sunset from one of Cappadocia's grand overlooks, as the sky fills with colorful hot air balloons.

Day 8 | Monday, September 29: In Cappadocia

Start your day with a visit to the serene Ihlara Valley, a lush canyon carved by the Melendiz River, perfect for a reflective nature walk. Explore the valley's hidden churches, beginning with the St. George Church (Kirk Dam Altı Kilise). Next, visit the Snake Church (Yılanlı Kilise), where you'll find a captivating fresco of St. George and the dragon, followed by the Agacalti Church (Church Under the Tree), notable for its poignant depiction of the Ascension. Continue to the Sumbullu Church (Hyacinth Church), which offers both striking frescoes and panoramic views of the canyon. Travel to the Monastery of St. Nicholas near Guzelyurt. End with a peaceful visit to one of Cappadocia's grand overlooks, where you can watch hot air balloons gracefully ascend.

Day 9 | Tuesday, September 30: Cappadocia - Konya

Begin with a visit to Uchisar Castle, a towering rock fortress that offers panoramic views of Cappadocia's unique landscape. Embark on a scenic drive to Konya, a city deeply connected to the missionary journeys of St. Paul and Barnabas. Along the way, reflect on their courageous ministry in Iconium, as described in Acts 13:51-14:7, where they preached the Gospel amidst both welcome and opposition. Upon arriving in Konya, visit the Church of St. Paul, a Catholic church built in 1910 atop the ancient hill of Iconium, a testament to the enduring faith of the region's Christian community. Conclude the day with dinner and restful overnight accommodations in Konya.

Day 10 | Wednesday, October 1: Konya - Pisidian Antioch - Pamukkale

After breakfast we drive to Pisidian Antioch. The history of Pisidian Antioch goes back to sometime between 310-280 BC. The first Biblical reference to this city is Paul's mention of it in Acts 13:14-16 as the synagogue from which he preached his first recorded sermon during his first missionary journey. We continued to Pamukkale, the white Cotton Castle formed by lime cascades. Enjoy a leisurely bath in the warm mineral waters of your hotel's thermal pools before dinner and have a restful night's sleep.

Day 11 | Thursday, October 2: Pamukkale – Hierapoli – Laodicea – Collosae – Pamukkale

Today we will enjoy a full day excursion and visit the ancient City of Hierapolis meaning "Sacred City," Philip the Evangelist's home. Tour the extensive necropolis, churches and baths. We continue with a scenic drive to Laodicea located in the Lycus River Valley of western Asia Minor, a primary trade route between the cultures of the West and East. Continue to nearby Colossae, which is well-known throughout Christian circles as the receiver of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Today, the town has fallen into obscurity, and nothing remains. Return to Pamukkale for dinner and overnight.

Day 12 | Friday, October 3: Pamukkale - Ephesus - Izmir

After breakfast at the hotel, we will depart for Ephesus, which is the most influential capital city of Asia Minor on the Aegean Sea. "Ephesus receives praise for its perseverance" (Rev. 2:1-7). You will explore some of the best-preserved theatres, fountains and buildings in the world. Visit the House of the Virgin Mary which was miraculously discovered hidden on a wooded hilltop. A pilgrimage site for many which has also been accepted by the Vatican. Visit the Basilica of St. John which stands over the believed burial site of St. John, who is identified as the apostle, evangelist (author of the Fourth Gospel) and prophet (author of Revelation). Continue on to Izmir for dinner and overnight.

Day 13 | Saturday, October 4: Izmir - Philadelphia - Sardis - Thyatira - Izmir

Visit the site of Philadelphia also one of the Seven Churches of Revelation. Continue onto Then Sardis, another of the Seven Churches of Revelation. Sardis, located on the banks of the Pactolus River in western Asia Minor. We continue on to Thyatira, known for its textiles and dyeing trade, now known as the Turkish city of Akhisar. Return to Izmir for dinner and overnight.

Day 14 | Sunday, October 5: Izmir - Smyrna - Pergamum - Izmir

We wake up in the modern Turkish city of Izmir. In ancient times "Smyrna", as it was called, was in a powerful trading position on the Aegean Sea. Visit the archeological remains of the Agora. The Agora in Izmir is an ancient Roman marketplace located in the heart of the city. It was originally built in the 4th century BCE and later expanded by the Romans. The site features impressive ruins. Continue to Pergamum, located on the plains and foothills along the Caicus River in Western Turkey. The city, is "praised for its martyrdom and perseverance but those who hold false teachings are criticized" (Rev. 2:12-17). Here you will see the Acropolis famous for Greek & Roman Temples as well as the unique Greek theatre. Visit the Asclepion, the ancient medical center for the Greeks. Return to Izmir for dinner and overnight.

Day 15 | Monday, October 6: Izmir - USA

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your return flight home to the USA.

***206 Tours Disclaimer:** *Though every effort will be made to follow the itinerary, it should be considered as an indication, rather than a contract of places to be visited. Occasionally local religious holidays, national days, weather, traffic conditions and other events may necessitate changes in the sequence of visits or the missing of certain visits.*