

Mediterranean Yacht Tour of Coastal Turkey

**A Cruise in the Wake of St. Paul in Ancient Anatolia
With Optional Seven Churches of Asia extension**

Departing 11 May 2013

As the Gospel of Jesus Christ began to spread St Paul took the word to Asia Minor, where there were some of the most influential cities of the Roman world. He sailed the coasts of Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, no fewer than three times during his journeys and visited many of the cities there. The scenery has changed little over the last two thousand years, and to sail these seas and visit the sites Paul visited is to experience the ambience of those heady days of the beginning of our faith. The appearance of coastal Turkey has changed little since Paul's day.

The startling geography of the region, with dramatic mountains rising straight from the shore, has ensured that the coastlines and deep-set wooded inlets are still unspoiled by the impact of the modern world. The archaeological sites here strongly reflect the atmosphere of the first century AD, the time when Paul travelled to these cities. The city gate and streets of Ephesus, the market places and theatres of Miletus and the seascapes of the Aegean are as Paul would have seen them. The cruise through this beautiful part of the Mediterranean reflects the epoch-making time in the history of Christendom, combining the milieu of the cities visited by Paul with seas and mountains little changed in two thousand years. Testimony of the importance of Asia Minor in the history of the Early Church is the fact that it was here that the first Christian state arose, the Byzantine Empire, which was to keep the light of Christianity alive for over a thousand years when Rome had been overrun by barbarians. There are powerful echoes of these ecclesiastical pioneers in the many early Byzantine remains which can still be found around these shores. We have found with our previous Christian groups that the atmosphere of the ancient sites imparts a deep spiritual dimension to the tour and allows for devotional moments at appropriate places on the way. Meanwhile, the seclusion of the cruise, while invoking a true sense of pilgrimage, also engenders a profound sense of fellowship.

ITINERARY

Day 1 London – Istanbul – Izmir

Fly from Istanbul to Izmir. On arrival meet our guide and transfer to Akbuk Marina where we join our yacht at the quayside. Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 2 Ephesus

Drive across the Meander Valley to Ephesus to visit the House of the Virgin Mary. Tradition has it that Mary spent her last days at Ephesus with St John, and there are several churches dedicated to her both outside and inside the city. Continue to visit the Roman site with its commercial and State agora, Celsus library, bath houses, temples and colonnaded streets. Parts of the city have been well reconstructed which gives a good impression of Ephesus in the Roman period. The great theatre and the commercial agora is where Demetrius harangued the crowd against St Paul. Paul twice visited Ephesus, on his second and third missionary journey (Acts 18:19. Acts 19:1). On the third, he stayed here for three months, preaching in the synagogue. The Double Church of the Virgin Mary was where the Third Ecumenical Council was held in 431. Afternoon we visit the Basilica of St John and the traditional site of Luke's Tomb. Drive back to Akbuk, where we rejoin our yacht at the quayside. Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 3 Miletus – Didyma

Morning cruise to Altinkum where we disembark to visit Miletus. St Paul sailed into Miletus on his return during his third journey (Acts 20:16) where he foretold his imprisonment before leaving for Jerusalem. The Roman theatre is especially fine and again gives a good impression of the city in St Paul's time. After lunch we visit the site of Didyma sacred to Miletus, an oracular temple to Apollo, almost as famous as Delphi and one of the largest temples ever constructed. It is still substantially intact and gives a good impression of the state of religion when Paul was there. Rejoin the yacht and sail south to the quiet inlet of Kazikli for dinner and overnight on board.

Day 4 Iassos

A quiet morning cruising and relaxing along the coast. After lunch cruise south to the ancient city of Iassos and moor in the Roman harbour. We walk in from the ancient harbour to visit remnants of the classical and Byzantine site of Iassos, beginning with its superb agora, in its present form Roman in design. Being recently excavated, this colonnaded market place is still in good condition, on the one side of which is a well preserved bouleuterion, or council chamber, of the polis of Iassos. The centre of the agora is dominated by an early Byzantine church. Dinner and overnight on board in the delightful little village of Iassos.

Day 5 Euromos - Labraunda

Disembark and drive to Euromos, with an almost complete temple of Zeus. Continue into the mountains to Labraunda, an ancient Hellenistic city high among the granite cliffs and pine forests, preserving Hellenistic houses and streets. Labraunda was the major oracular centre built by Mausolus. Picnic lunch on site. The views over the city and the mountains are quite lovely. Visit the remains of an early Byzantine church which shows the change to Christianity after centuries of classical religion, before returning to the yacht, to sail away to a quiet inlet for the night. Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 6 Ceramic Gulf - Knidos

Cruise across the Ceramic Gulf past the Greek island of Kos to the Classical site of Knidos where we moor in the ancient harbour in the lee of the Hellenistic theatre. Perhaps one of the most spectacularly sited of cities in Asia Minor, Knidos was built in 360 BC and still retains many original Hellenistic features.

St Paul attempted to put in here on his last journey to Rome (Acts 27:7). Afternoon visit through the site, visiting the harbour theatre, the temple of Apollo, the tholos temple of Aphrodite Euploia and a number of early Byzantine churches.. Dinner and overnight on board moored in the ancient harbour of Knidos.

Day 7 Bodrum

Morning sail to Bodrum, the ancient city of Halicarnasus. Afternoon visit the newly reexcavated remains of the tomb of Mausolus, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and from which we obtain the term Mausoleum. Also visit the Castle of St Peter which dominates Bodrum Harbour built by the Knights of St John of Jerusalem for their city. There will be free time for shopping and to explore this vibrant and colourful city. Farewell dinner on board in Bodrum.

Day 8 Our journey home or optional land based extension.

Transfer to Bodrum/Milas Airport for flight to Istanbul connecting with international flights or join an optional extension to the Seven Churches.

3 Day Extension to Visit the Cities of the Seven Churches of Asia

Turkey is home to all seven of the 'churches' mentioned in the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation and the locations of these early Christian communities remain some of the most interesting classical ruins in the region. One ancient city, Ephesus, we shall already have visited, and this three day extension explores the sites of five of the other six.

Written sometime between 68 and 95 AD, Revelation, also known as the Apocalypse, is the last book in the New Testament. Believed to have been written by St John the Apostle who had been exiled to the island of Patmos (now in modern day Greece) because of his Christian faith, in the opening chapter John describes a vision he had. The remainder of the book consists of his descriptions of what he saw and heard, which include specific messages from Jesus to be given to each of the seven pioneering communities of early Christians living in Asia Minor.

John relates that while he was "in the Spirit" one Sunday, he heard a voice say, "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

Having already been to the first community in the list, Ephesus, we shall now visit the sites of five of the other six. Some have the remains of physical churches built in later periods such as in Byzantine times whilst others have superb ruins of Greco-Roman pagan temples or Jewish Synagogues and sometimes a mixture of all three.

Day 8 Pergamum - St Polycarp's Church

In the morning drive to **Pergamum**, site of one of the early Christian communities mentioned in Revelation, and the city that invented parchment after Egypt cut off its supply. View the Temple of Athena, theatre and the remains the city's famous library, which housed over 200,000 volumes. In the afternoon travel to **Smyrna** (now modern day Izmir), one of the most important of the Seven Churches. Here, we hope to gain access to the Church of St Polycarp, built in 1620 in dedication to Smyrna's first Bishop, said to have been trained by St John. Not open to the general public, we hope (but cannot guarantee) to gain special permission to enter. Dinner and overnight in Izmir.

Day 9 Sardis – Philadelphia – Laodicea – Heiropolis – Pamukkale

Leaving Izmir we drive east, passing through Akhisar, formerly **Thyatira**. We shall see the few remains here then continue straight onwards to **Sardis**, capital of the Lydian King Croesus, where there are ruins of a gigantic temple to Artemis, a Byzantine church, bath house and 3rd century synagogue with a superb mosaic floor. Next, a short drive brings us to Alasehir, site of ancient **Philadelphia** where the huge columns of a Byzantine church remain, before continuing on to **Laodicea**. This was one of the chief seats of early Christianity probably because of its large Jewish community and today the remains of the stadium, baths, temples and colonnaded streets attest to its former importance. We then proceed to Heiropolis, a well preserved Roman city with hot springs. Heiropolis was where St Phillip was buried, and there is a church here with a martyrion. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore this beautiful site which is next to the famous snow-white tiered calcified terraces of Pamukkale. Dinner and overnight in Pamukkale.

Day 10 Izmir and homeward flight

Drive along the Meander valley to Izmir Airport for flight to Istanbul.

MAIN TOUR

\$3,199 per person, double occupancy

The price includes charter of the gulet Blue Cruise for 7 nights (8 cabin luxury gulet) with full board (3 meals per day) tea and coffee with meals, bottled water on demand, full crew, fuel and port fees, one group transfer from Izmir Airport to the gulet at Akbuk quay, one group transfer from Bodrum harbour to Bodrum airport, excursions as per the itinerary accompanied by our accredited Turkish guide Suleyman Gursay.

The price does not include any flights (clients must make their own way to Izmir and back from Bodrum), drinks other than water whilst on board the gulet (a full bar is available, with a tab payable at the end of the week), air-conditioning on board the gulet gratuities to guides and crew, items of a personal nature.

MAIN TOUR WITH 7 CHURCHES EXTENSION

\$3,599 per person, double occupancy

This price includes everything listed above in the Main Tour with a group transfer from Bodrum Harbor to Izmir, 1 night half board accommodation at Kordon or Palm City Hotel in Izmir, 1 night Half Board accommodation at Richmond or Lycus River Hotel in Pamukkale, guided sightseeing as detailed including entrance fees, daily lunches, all transfers. **Does not include** tips, drinks, personal items.