

JOURNEY AFRICA



ISTANBUL AND THE SEVEN CITIES OF REVELATION

**22ND SEPTEMBER TO
1ST OCTOBER 2026**

Join Ian Paul (theologian, author, speaker and academic consultant) as he leads a small group tour to Western Turkey. This is a study trip visiting Istanbul and the seven cities of Revelation, plus some other sites of archeological importance. This trip promises to give a superb insight into the world of the first Christians, helping you to have a deeper understanding of the world into which the book of Acts, the Epistles and Revelation spoke.



Who is this trip for?

This trip will be of interest to Christians who want to understand the book of Revelation, its context, and the world of the first century, so they can read the New Testament more effectively. It will also be of interest to anyone in Christian Ministry who wants to grow in understanding and be able to read and teach these texts better.

The group will be walking, at a steady pace, for a couple of hours each day. So you need to be comfortable with that. You should also be comfortable with climbing two flights of stairs; the ground is sometimes uneven and steps are involved.

What is the purpose of the trip?

There are three goals for the trip. First, it is a study trip, so we will be learning about the sites with Hakan Bashar, an expert on the history of the area and the sites with 38 years' experience of guiding, and I will be giving short talks on a range of issues relating to the Book of Revelation, how to read it well, and how understanding the sites helps us in this.



Secondly, it is a retreat and pilgrimage. It is always a powerful spiritual experience to visit the places mentioned in the New Testament, and to read passages from it in the places to which it was written. There will be time throughout for prayer and reflection. There is always a strong sense of fellowship with fellow travellers.

Thirdly it is a holiday. We will be staying in high quality hotels (check the links in the itinerary above), and the timing has been planned to allow you to relax and enjoy these, especially in Pamukkale (which was historically a spa resort) and in Kusadasi, where the hotel overlooks the sea and offers sea swimming as well as its own pool.

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

SEP 22

TUESDAY

ISTANBUL ARRIVAL

Arrive into Istanbul - we will welcome you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel. Overnight at the hotel in Istanbul.



SEP 23

WEDNESDAY

ISTANBUL

After breakfast, proceed for city tour of Istanbul, including Hippodrome Square, the Blue Mosque, St Sophia, Archaeological Museum and the Grand Bazaar. Overnight at the hotel in Istanbul.



SEP 24

THURSDAY

ISTANBUL TO IZMIR

A further morning exploring this exotic city, including the Spice Bazaar and Boat trip on the Bosphorus. Then in the afternoon we fly down to Izmir. Overnight at hotel in Izmir.



SEP 25

FRIDAY

PERGAMUM

This morning drive to Pergamum. There explore the Pergamum Acropolis, Askelion and Thyatira. Overnight at hotel in Izmir.

SEP 26

SATURDAY

IZMIR TO PAMUKKALE

Today the group drives to Pamukkale exploring as they go. Visiting Smyrna Agora, Sardis Gymnasion, Synagogue and the Temple of Artemis in Philadelphia. Overnight at hotel in Pamukkale.

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

SEP 27

SUNDAY

PAMUKKALE

This morning there is an optional hot air balloon flight. Then continue to explore the region, visiting Laodicea and Hierapolis. Overnight at hotel in Pamukkale.



SEP 28

MONDAY

PAMUKKALE TO KUSADASI

Today drive to Aphrodisia and Miletus site and the museum. Overnight at hotel in Kusadasi.

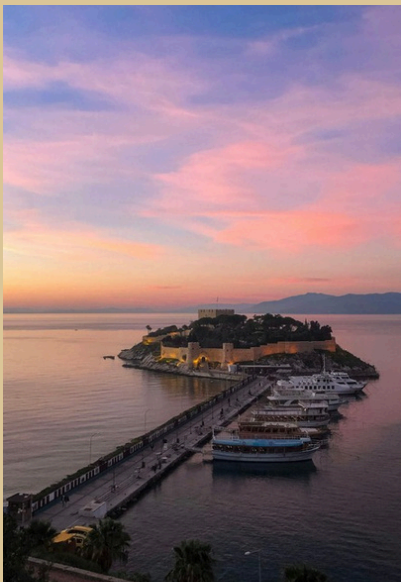


SEP 29

TUESDAY

EPHESUS

Explore Ephesus with Terrace Houses, Basilica of St John and the Selcuk Archaeological museum, plus carpet makers cooperative with lunch. Overnight at hotel in Kusadasi.



SEP 30

WEDNESDAY

KUSADASI

today is a day at leisure. An option excursion into town will be offered, otherwise a day off at your resort. Overnight at hotel in Kusadasi.

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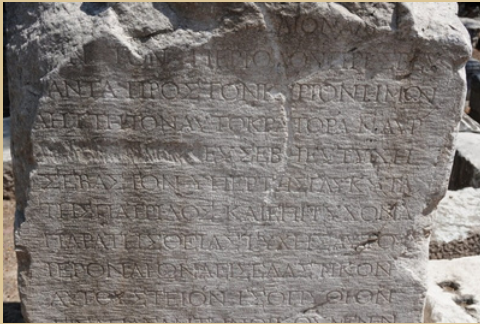
THURSDAY

FLY HOME

today the tour finishes as we drive to Izmir in time to catch your flight home.

ITINERARY DETAILS

Pergamum was a powerful ancient city, rivalling both Smyrna and Ephesus for status in the region in the first century. The upper city form a spectacular acropolis, with views over the modern city and surrounding planes, and is now reached by cablecar—saving a climb! It is notable for its remarkable theatre, the steepest in the ancient world, and the remains of the temple of Trajan, whose white limestone shines out against the natural black basalt of the area, and illustrates the dominance of the imperial cult in civic life. The Asclepion in the lower city has its own theatre, and the ruins give a powerful insight into the importance of healing cults in the ancient world.



Thyatira is the site of modern Akhisar, so the ruins of the ancient city have largely been built over. However, a number of inscriptions have been found which demonstrate the power and importance of trade guilds, and their role in pagan worship and the social fabric of the city; more guilds are known of here than in any other ancient city. This throws light on both the religious and the social pressures face by the first followers of Jesus.

Smyrna competed with Ephesus and Pergamum to be the principle city of the region, and Izmir continues to be a major city in Western Turkey today. It was known as the crown of Asia, and its coins had crowns on them to celebrate the games that were held there every other year. The modern city covers most of the ancient remains, but the agora (marketplace) remains an open space, and around it the basement walkways, and their water channels, can still be explored, along with Roman mosaics, and later Ottoman grave markers.



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ITINERARY DETAILS



In the main part of the city are shops with signs of early Christian occupation, parts of a very large gymnasium (the entrance is shown to the right here), and a substantial synagogue which has been extensively excavated and restored in recent years. It demonstrates the significant Jewish population in these areas, and the importance of the Jewish community in civic life. We can see why Paul always went first to synagogues in cities in this region whenever he could.

We visit Philadelphia on our way from Sardis to Laodicea, as would those travelling on the trade route and the person delivering copies of John's apocalyptic, prophetic letter, to complete the seven cities. There are no first-century ruins here, as the modern city of Alasehir covers any remains. But the massive columns of a Byzantine church sit within a garden area.



Laodicea is a large and impressive site, with no occupation after the ancient period, which has been significantly excavated and restored over the last 15 years. It includes an impressive main street, temples, two theatres (one restored and one yet to be restored), and a stadium. There is clear evidence, from clay pipes and the water distribution centre, of the lukewarm water that came into the city from its aqueduct (see Rev 3.16). It also includes the restored remains of an early Byzantine church with mosaics and an impressive baptistry. And there is a cafe by the entrance for the convenience of visitors!

Hierapolis was an ancient spa city, a centre of therapy and healing, from which it became very rich. It continues as a spa resort to this day, still drawing on the hot water coming up through the earth, and carrying dissolved calcium carbonate which precipitates to form the spectacular travertine terraces. There are extensive ruins of the ancient city, an impressive theatre, and a museum—and you can paddle in the hot water and enjoy the full effect in the thermal spa of our hotel! Those going on the optional early morning balloon flight will enjoy a stunning bird's eye view of the terraces.



ITINERARY DETAILS



Aphrodisias is another extensive site, well excavated, with numerous temples. It includes an enormous stadium, probably the best preserved of its kind, and a small odeon where the city council met. Most interesting for reading Revelation and the New Testament is the Sebasteion which was lined with statues personifying both imperial power (and the different emperors) and the nations that had been conquered and how submitted to Roman rule. It offers a fascinating background to reading Revelation 12 in particular.

Miletus was an important port in the first century, where Paul met the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, though now some distance from the sea due to the change in the shoreline with the silting of river mouths (though the agora is still quite boggy in the winter). It has an impressive theatre which is notable for the inscriptions in the seating setting different sections aside for different groups, including clearly marked 'For the Jews and the godfearers'. The placing of an imperial altar in the courtyard in front of the council chamber demonstrates in the civic space the way that Roman power took centre stage.



Ephesus is a spectacular site with extensive excavations—though with excavation work continuing. It is important not only in Revelation but in the ministry of Paul in Acts. It was one of the largest cities in the ancient world, with a population of 250,000, and vied with Smyrna and Pergamum to be the premier city in the province, and the most loyal subject to Rome. Its theatre could seat around 24,000 people. We will visit the usual sites, including the Basilica of St John, but also the recently excavated terrace houses which other tours often miss.

The Selcuk Museum contains many artefacts from ancient Ephesus which give further insight into the culture and life of the first century. It includes parts of the monumental statue from the agora, often thought to be of Domitian but more likely an image of Titus.

The museum is not large—but has an ice cream stall outside, Hakan's favourite in all of Turkey!



FINAL DETAILS

Hotels included in Tour:

- 22 to 24 September - Akgün Hotel Istanbul
 - 24 to 26 September - Kaya Thermal and Spa Hotel, Izmir
 - 26 to 28 September - Adem Pira Thermal Hotel, Pamukkale
 - 28 September to 01 October - Korumar Deluxe Hotel, Kusadasi
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Cost:

- £1995 per person based on two people sharing a room.
 - Deposit of £200 is due to confirm your place.
 - The remaining balance is due by 22nd July 2026
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Optional Extras

- Single Room Supplement - £450
 - Dawn Hot Air Balloon Flight over Pamukkale - Price to be confirmed locally, and bookable locally
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Rate Includes:

- 9 nights accommodation as above, with breakfast each morning at the hotel
 - Dinners each evening at the hotel, including water
 - Transportation by 44 seater deluxe motorcoach (with W/C and Wi-Fi)
 - Fully guided tours with an English Speaking Tour Director, including entrance fees as per the itinerary
 - Gratuity for the guide and driver
 - Istanbul to Izmir Flight (Flight details TBC)
 - ATOL Protection (now working with a UK based Tour Operator)
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Rate Doesn't Include:

- Any extra meals (including lunches) not mentioned in the program
 - Drinks at meals
 - Any expenses of a personal nature such as tips or laundry
 - International Flights
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FINAL DETAILS

International Flights

We are happy to book flights for you, or you can book them yourselves, but please do let us know the details.

Low Cost Carriers will need to be booked by yourself. Pegasus run a flight from Stansted on 22nd September departing at 1215. Coming back on 1st October, SunExpress run a direct flight from Izmir to Stansted at 1920.

The best standard carrier flights are the following with Turkish Airlines.

- 22 September 26 TK1980 from London Heathrow (1110) to Istanbul (1705)
- 01 October 26 TK2327 from Izmir (1555) to Istanbul (1720)
- 01 October 26 TK1983 from Istanbul (1900) to London Heathrow (2100)

The current cost of these is approximately £300 per person, including luggage.

We can also look at alternatives from London Gatwick, other UK airports and airlines, or indeed from International Airports. Please simply let Steve know and he would be happy to assist.

Extend Your Trip

- Add some R&R time at the end of your trip, extending your time at the wonderful Korumar Hotel in Kusadasi - £75 per person per night, including breakfast and dinner.
 - Perhaps explore Turkey further. Spend more time at the start exploring Istanbul, or head off to Cappadocia, Simply discuss your needs with Steve at Journey Africa, and he will tailor-make that section for you. Price dependent on hotels and length of extension.
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How to Book

Email steve@journey-africa.com and he will email back a deposit invoice and let you know the information we need, such as a copy of your passport.

