

DISCOVER THE WONDERS
SPIEKERMANN
TRAVEL  SERVICE



TREASURES OF EASTERN TURKEY

October 11 - 26, 2022

Led by Local Guide/Tour Manager

Can be combined with Kurdistan Tour (Oct 26 – Nov 03, 2022)

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, Spiekermann Travel

Tuesday Oct 11
Istanbul (Turkey)



Arrival from your USA gateway city to Istanbul; and transfer to your hotel for check in and overnight.

NB: No dinner that evening included

Wednesday, Oct 12
Istanbul - Trabzon



Depart after breakfast on a full day tour of the old city beginning with a visit to 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 your evening flight to the Black Sea coastal **city of Trabzon**, upon arrival meet and transfer to the hotel for check in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, Oct 13
Trabzon



In the morning we will have city tour of Trabzon, will begin with 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 then visit **Ataturk Villa** overlooking the Black Sea. Afternoon we will 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. We will visit the village and meet with local people then drive back to Trabzon. Return to the hotel for your overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, Oct 14
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 that 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 the hotel in Erzurum for check in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, Oct 15
Erzurum - Kars



Begin your day with a tour in the city of **Erzurum**, the largest city in eastern Anatolia, built on a high plateau at an altitude of approx.

6,000 feet. As you enter the city, the large **Aziyiye 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. Among the remaining Seljuk buildings, the **madrassa** is of particular importance. While wandering around the city, notice the local black stone (**Erzurum Oltu Tasi**), which is used in jewelry. After seeing some of the sites and on route to Kars we will 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 the hotel for check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, Oct 16
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. **The Archaeological Museum** houses beautiful wood carvings, 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 the hotel in Dogubeyazit for check in, dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, Oct 17
Dogubeyazit - Van



One of the most spectacular sites to visit is the **Ishak Pasha Palace**, constructed 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 approximately 16,695 feet. Along the route to Van, we will stop at the **falls** at Muradiye. Upon arrival at the beautiful city of Van on the lake, we end the day with a visit to the 3,000-year-old **Citadel** of Van to watch the sun set over the Lake. Transfer to the hotel for check in, dinner (their famous local fish) and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, Oct 18

Van



Van is an important city set in a verdant oasis at the foot of a rocky peak, and on the shores of Lake Van, the largest lake in Turkey. **Tushpa**, an imposing 9th Century B.C. Urartian citadel overlooks the new and the old parts of town. From Van we travel 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 it served as both a mean of protecting the road and as a point of charging tolls to travellers. We will drive to Gevas to visit **Akdamar Island**, where we visit the beautifully restored 10th century **Armenian Church** of the Holy Cross, or Sourp Khach, before continuing to the eastern city of Van. Still very much part of a traditional life-style, the women of Van produce beautiful kilims woven in blue, red and white patterns. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, Oct 19

Van - Mardin



Leave the high eastern plateau and journey into Mesopotamia. Enjoy the simplicity of life in the many small towns along the way to Mardin. View **Malabadi**, a splendid 11th century bridge built by Seljuk Artukids on one of the tributaries of the Tigris River. Tour **Hasankeyf**, the Greek Kiphas, a city located along the Tigris River in Batman province, densely inhabited by Kurds. It is an ancient city with roots going back 10,000 years. Transfer to the hotel in Mardin for check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, Oct 20

Mardin



You'll begin your day with a visit to an old theological school, **Sultan Isa Medrese**, with spectacular views over the barren desert. Tour **Kasimiye Medrese** with its remarkable architecture and stonework. Visit some of the churches in the town and explore the shops along the main street. We can visit the **Saffron Monastery** just outside Mardin. Once the principle seat of the Syriac Patriarchy, Saffron Monastery is an active religious community that stands on the site of an ancient Sun Temple, which is dated at about 1,000 BC and can be visited as it is an integral part of the current building's foundation. It boasts a unique ceiling that is, in effect, a flat arch. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, Oct 21

Mardin-Diyarbakir



Travel to **Diyarbakir**, located on 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. You will have the opportunity to visit the **Harput Gate**; and the **Ulu Mosque**, another fascinating sight in the city center and one of the oldest mosques in Turkey. Transfer to the hotel for check in, dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, Oct 22

Diyarbakir - Nemrut Dag - Adiyaman



Depart and cross the mighty Euphrates, arriving at **Nemrut National Park**. We'll climb to the top of Mt. Nemrut to see the tumu-

lus and colossal statue of **Antiochus I** of Commagene and his gods. The climb requires a steep hike, or you can hire one of the locals with their donkey to take you up a big part of the Mount, after which you'll still need to walk the last stretch before being reaching the top to see the magnificent view. This ancient funerary monument at the peak of Mt. Nemrut was forgotten and lost for nearly 2,000 years. Transfer to **Adiyaman hotel** for check in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, Oct 23

Adiyaman - Urfa



Drive to **Urfa**, thought by the locals for thousands of years to be the birthplace of the Prophet Abraham. Upon arrival, we will head to visit the on-going archaeological dig at **Gobekli Tepe**. Although this site is not widely known but it is one of the most important archaeological digs currently being 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 head to visit the **Abdurrahman Mosque**, and the **Pool of Abraham** containing sacred carp fish. Transfer to **Sanliurfa hotel** for check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, Oct 24

Urfa - Gaziantep



Early morning drive to **Harran** near the Syrian border, where Abraham spent few years. Harran is also known for its beehive shaped mud-brick buildings. Then depart to **Gaziantep**, most famous for its pistachio baklava, considered to be the best in all of Turkey. When you arrive, visit the stunning **mosaic museum**, which houses a priceless collection of mosaics from the now sunken city of Zeugma. We will have a walk in the **old city** which was one of the bastions of Armenians who populated this town till their departure in the 1915-1916 pogrom. Dinner and overnight **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, Oct 25

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. And after lunch, you enjoy the rest of the day at your leisure in Gaziantep. Dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, Oct 26

Gaziantep - Istanbul - US



Transfer to Gaziantep airport for your flight to Istanbul and then your flight back home. **(B)**

"We (STS) reserve the right to change hotels, restaurants, sequence of sites or the order of activities if/as needed due to any unforeseen changes or conditions"

Trip cost (Land only):

4-5 travelers: \$5,595.00
per person sharing in double occupancy

6-8 travelers: \$4,995.00
per person sharing in double occupancy

9-12 travelers: \$4,750.00
per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$795.00

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

Trip Grade: II Lodging Level: * _******



Tour includes:

- Domestic flight Istanbul - Trabzon
- Domestic flight Gaziantep - Istanbul
- Accommodation at Superior (4*) hotels.
- Local English-speaking licensed guide during the entire tour.
- Entrance fees to all mentioned sites as per the itinerary.
- All meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch, D: Dinner).
- Transportation throughout the trip in an air-conditioned minivan/bus.
- Mineral Water during the tour.
- Transfers from/to airports with assistance.

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)

Special Trip Remark: 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 may 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 does not include:

- International air USA-Istanbul-USA.
- Turkey Visa (can be obtained online - Currently \$50.00).
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Expenses of personal nature: alcoholic beverages, camera fees, telephone, email, laundry bills, etc.
- Dayroom or extra hotel nights necessitated by airline flight schedule changes.
- Travel Insurance (**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**).
- Tips to the local guide, driver and porters.

