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**SPIEKERMANN**  
TRAVEL  SERVICE



**TREASURES OF  
EASTERN TURKEY**

**May 01- 16, 2023**

Led by Dr. Barbara Porter Archaeologist and Former Director of ACOR Jordan

Can be combined with Albania tour (Apr 22-30, 2023) & South Caucasus tour (Apr 13- 30, 2023)

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

**Monday, May 01**  
**Istanbul, Turkey**



Upon arrival Istanbul; meet, assist, and transfer to your Hotel for check in and overnight.

**NB: No dinner that evening included**

**Tuesday, May 02**  
**Istanbul - Trabzon**



After breakfast, we start our old city tour 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 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)**

**Wednesday, May 03**  
**Trabzon**



After breakfast, we will have 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 we 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, we will meet the locals, interact and introduce to their way of life. After the visit ,drive back to Trabzon. Return to the **Hotel**, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Thursday, May 04**  
**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 the **Hotel** in Erzurum for check in dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Friday, May 05**  
**Erzurum - Kars**



After breakfast, we tour **Erzurum City**, 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 **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. 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. On route to Kars we will stop at the 13th century **Cobandede Bridge**, 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)**

**Saturday, May 06**  
**Kars - Dogubeyazit**



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. After breakfast, visit the **Archaeological Museum**, it 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. Visit 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)**

**Sunday, May 07**  
**Dogubeyazit - Van**



**Ishak Pasha Palace**, is One of the most spectacular sites to visit, 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 stop at the **falls** at Muradiye. Upon arrival the beautiful city of Van on the lake, we visit the 3,000-year-old **Citadel** of Van and watch the sun set over the Lake. Transfer to the **Hotel** for check in, dinner (their famous local fish) and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Monday, May 08**  
**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. Urartian 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, it 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** to visit the beautifully restored 10th century **Armenian Church** of the Holy Cross, or Sourp Khach. If time permits we will 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, May 09 Van - Mardin



After breakfast, we drive to Mesopotamia. During our drive To **Mardin**, 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, we tour **Hasankeyf**, the Greek Kiphas, a city located along the Tigris River in Batman province, densely inhabited by Kurds. It is an ancient city dates back 10,000 years. Transfer to the **Hotel** in Mardin for check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

### Wednesday, May 10 Mardin



After breakfast, we 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 we 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 principle seat of the Syrian Patriarch, **Saffron Monastery** 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, May 11 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 the **Hotel** for check in, dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

### Friday, May 12 Diyarbakir - Nemrut Dag - Adiyaman



After breakfast, drive to **Nemrut National Park**. On the way, we cross the mighty Euphrates River. Upon arrival to the park, we climb to the top of the mountain to visit an ancient funerary monument. Nemrut site was forgotten for nearly 2,000 years. It is a steep climb (you may hire one of the locals to take you up on his donkey). After the visit, transfer to the **Hotel** for check in dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

### Saturday, May 13 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, we 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 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. It is About 11,000-13,000 years old and pre-dating pottery, writing, stonehenge and the Pyramids. In the Afternoon 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 the **Hotel** to check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

### Sunday, May 14 Urfa - Gaziantep



After an early breakfast we 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. Upon arrival, visit the stunning **mosaic museum**, which houses a priceless collection of mosaics from the now sunken city of Zeugma. 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. Transfer to the **Hotel**, dinner and overnight **(B,L,D)**

### Monday, May 15 Gaziantep - Istanbul



After breakfast, visit the impressive citadel of Gaziantep built in the early centuries of the Byzantine Empire, later rebuilt by the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, the Crusaders, the Mongols, and the Mamluks of Egypt. And after lunch, transfer to the airport for your evening flight to Istanbul. Upon arrival, meet and transfer to the **Hotel** check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

### Tuesday, May 16 Istanbul - US



Transfer to Istanbul airport for your flight back home, arriving the same day. **(B)**

***"We reserve the right to change the order of activities or places visited due to unforeseen schedule conflicts or in order to make the itinerary run smoothly"***





**About your lecturer, Dr. Porter, Barbara A. Porter,**

led numerous archaeological tours from Algeria to Iran in the decade before becoming the Director of the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman in 2006, a position she held until March 2020. She presided over ACOR's 50th anniversary year in 2018 and her public lecture about ACOR is available on the website ([www.acorjordan.org](http://www.acorjordan.org)).

She received her A.B. from Bryn Mawr College and her M.A., M. Phil., and Ph.D. from Columbia University's Department of Art History & Archaeology. Her dissertation was on cylinder seals from Syria in the Middle Bronze Age. From 1978 to 1986 she was on the curatorial staff of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Egyptian Art and Ancient Near Eastern Art) in New York and afterwards lectured frequently in the museum's galleries. In the 1990s she taught in the Art History Department of New York University. She grew up in Lebanon in the 1960s and due to her service on the board of the American Community School at Beirut from 1996 to 2018 returned to Lebanon often in that period. In the 1980s, she participated in two seasons of excavations in northwestern Syria at the site of Tell Leilan. In her 14 years in Jordan, she came to know the country well and was involved in cultural heritage initiatives in many places, including Petra. She currently lives in Washington

**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 to Trabzon.
- Domestic flight Gaziantep to 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.

**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.

**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.

