

The Early Church & Future Glory: Walking in the Footsteps of St. Paul

13 days / 11 nights

John was instructed to write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea (Rev. 1:11). We embark on an unforgettable spiritual adventure as we visit these and other sites of early Christendom in our pilgrimage through Greece and Turkey, where we begin to imagine what Paul and John and other saints must have experienced as they established the Church in these ancient lands. We will renew our commitment to the roots of our Catholic faith as the masses and meditations we celebrate along the way draw us together as a community, and remind us of our blessings and the call to stewardship as followers of Jesus Christ.

Day 1: Depart for Greece

Enclose in your soul Greece (or something equal) and you shall feel every kind of grandeur (Dionysios Solomos; Note to "Free Besieged").

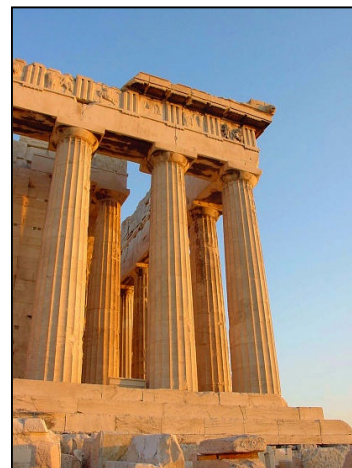
We leave the US on an overnight flight to Greece. Dinner and breakfast will be served on board the aircraft.



Day 2: Athens

O bright and violet-crowned and famed in song, bulwark of Greece, famous Athens, divine city! (Pindar (518-438 B.C.) Fragment 76).

Welcome to a place aptly called the "divine city." Upon arrival at the Athens International Airport, we meet our Faith Journeys' Tour Manager who will assist us through the customs and baggage claim. We'll then transfer to our hotel and have the remainder of the day at leisure. This evening we'll meet for a Welcome Dinner and enjoy our first overnight stay in Athens.



Day 3: Athens & Corinth

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:24-25).

We enjoy a panoramic tour of Athens to see the House of Parliament on Syntagma Square (with the Evzones or guards in uniform guarding the Presidential Palace and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier), the Library, University and Panathenaic Stadium where the first modern-day Olympics was held. We'll also see the Olympieion (constructed in the 6th century BC), a colossal ruined temple that was dedicated to Zeus, king of the Olympian gods, and see Adrian's Arch and other main landmarks before exploring the Parthenon, a temple dedicated to the Greek goddess, Athena. The Parthenon, truly one of the world's greatest monuments, is considered to be the most enduring symbol and important surviving building of Ancient Greece. We will also visit the Areopagus or *Areios Pagos* (in Greek *pagos* means big piece of rock) north-west of the Acropolis, which in classical times functioned as the high court of Appeal for criminal and civil cases in Athens and from which the Apostle Paul gave his famous sermon about "The Unknown God." From here we have an excellent view of the ancient agora; former center of the Athenian public life. After some free time in Plaka for lunch, we follow the coastal road along the Saronic Gulf and continue to Corinth, one of the oldest towns in Greece, which, in classical times rivaled Athens and Thebes in wealth. Paul lived in Corinth for 18 months



working as a tentmaker and establishing a church (“... and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” – The Acts 18:8) but as we know, the Corinthians caused Paul much grief as evidenced by the four letters he wrote to them. We’ll visit the ruins of this ancient city including the remnants of the first-century shops, the agora (where Paul’s trial by Gallio took place), the Fountain of Peirene, and Temple of Apollo, one of the oldest stone temples in Greece and built on a hill overlooking the remains of the Roman marketplace (where Paul preached to the Corinthians). We’ll make a short drive to Lechaion and Cechrae the ancient port from where Paul sailed away from Corinth, before returning to Athens for dinner and another overnight stay.

Day 4: Athens, Meteora & Larissa

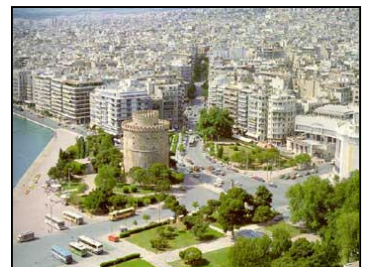
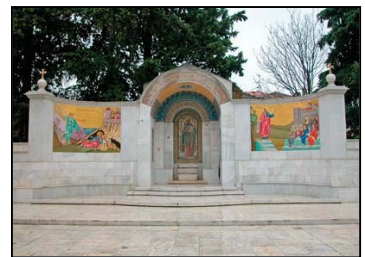
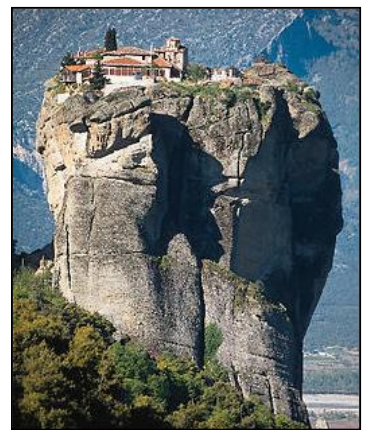
“And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2).

Today we’ll make our way to Kalambaka, home of the breathtaking Meteora Monasteries. The Metéora which means “suspended in the air” or “in the heavens above”, is one of the largest and most important complexes of Eastern Orthodox monasteries in Greece (which began when an ascetic group of hermit monks moved up to the ancient pinnacles as early as the 9th century). Access to the monasteries (only six remain, five of which are inhabited by men, and one by women; each monastery has fewer than 10 inhabitants) was originally and deliberately difficult, requiring either long ladders lashed together or large nets used to haul up both goods and people. Going up required quite a leap of faith! The ropes were only replaced, so the story goes, “when the Lord let them break” but eventually steps were cut into the rock. Today we’ll visit the Monasteries starting with the Meteora Monastery, then the Grand Meteoron Monastery (Transfiguration of Christ) which is built upon the highest rock and considered one of the most beautiful Byzantine monasteries. After spending the day “in the heavens above”, we’ll continue on to the town of Larissa for dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 5: Larissa, Thessalonika & Kavala

“Now...they came to Thessalonica...And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures. Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:1-3).

En route to Thessaloniki, celebrated as “the city whose praises are sung,” we stop in beautiful Veria where we’ll see Paul’s Bema where both he and Silas preached in AD 54 or 55 to a Jewish settlement after leaving the Thessalonians (Acts 17: 10-15) and where a Byzantine mosaic commemorates his preaching. In Thessaloniki (where Paul preached; and as we know, wrote letters to the Thessalonians), our panoramic tour will reveal the massive walls of Theodosius. We will see the ancient Agora, and the Church of St. Demetrius (*Hagios Demetrios*) constructed on the site of an ancient Roman bath. The basilica, the most beautiful in the city, is famous for six extant mosaic panels (depicting St. Demetrius with the founders of the restoration and with children) that represent a rare example of art surviving from the Dark Ages. The crypt where the Saint was buried is also on site. After seeing the ramparts of the city and the Triumphal Arch of Galerius and the Rotunda (oldest of Thessaloniki’s churches, and some



claim that it is the oldest Christian church in the world although there are a number of other claimants to that title). Depart east to Kavala for dinner and an overnight stay. Before we arrive in Kavala, we'll stop in Amphipolis (visited by Paul) and see the impressive Lion statue.

Day 6: Kavala, Phillipi, Greece-Turkey Border & Canakkale

"And from there [he went] to Phillipi, which is the leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman Colony. We remained in the city some days..." (Acts 16:12-18).

After breakfast, we make our way to nearby Philippi, where Paul, accompanied by Silas, Luke and Timothy, first preached on European soil to sow the seeds of Christianity. Paul and Silas were arrested and beaten while in Philippi, but an earthquake caused their prison to be opened. It is said that when their jailer awoke, he prepared to kill himself, thinking all the prisoners had escaped and knowing that he would be severely punished, but Paul stopped him, convincing him that all the prisoners were still there. The jailer became one of the first Christians in Europe (Acts 16: 12-40). It was in Philippi that Paul met with a woman named Lydia, a purple-dye merchant (Rev. 2:18-29 and Acts 16: 14-15) who became the first Christian convert. We continue our drive east to the Greek-Turkish border where we'll board our Turkish motorcoach and continue on to Gallipoli (name derives from a Greek term meaning "Beautiful City") to explore battlefields including Anzac Cove, Kabatepe Museum, Lone Pine Australian Memorial, Johnston's Jolly (Turkish and Allied trenches and tunnels), and the Nek and Chunuk Bair New Zealand Memorial. After a full day and much to think about, we'll drive to Canakkale for dinner and an overnight stay. Canakkale is the nearest major town to the site of ancient Troy; the "wooden horse" from the 2004 movie *Troy* is exhibited on the seafront.



Day 7: Canakkale, Pergamos & Ayvalik

The fates have given mankind a patient soul (Homer, Iliad, XXIV, l. 49).

On our way to Ayvalik, which lies on the Aegean Sea, we'll see Troy, an ancient city, both factual and legendary and best known for being the focus of the Trojan War described in the *Iliad* one of the two epic poems attributed to Homer; Alexandria Troas, also an ancient city situated on the Aegean Sea and visited at least twice by St. Paul; and the small historically rich town of Assos where Paul visited after he left Alexandria Troas (Acts 20:13-14). We will also visit the other Church of Asia Minor in Pergamos as well as explore the Acropolis of this Hellenistic city. For dinner and an overnight stay, we'll continue to Ayvalik, situated on a narrow coastal plain surrounded by low hills to the east that are covered with pine and olive trees. Ayvalik also has two of the longest sandy beaches of Turkey.



Day 8: Bergama, Sardis, Philadelphia & Pamukkale

Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea (Rev 1:11).

Sardis is an ancient city whose importance was threefold: first to its military strength, secondly to its situation on an important highway leading from the interior to the Aegean coast, and thirdly to its commanding the wide and fertile plain of the Hermus. As important as Sardis may have been, the city was berated

by John for its facade of strength and its notoriously soft and fainthearted population (Rev. 3:1-6). Today in Sardis, we will explore the massive scale of the Temple of Artemis, the white marble royal road, the impressive gymnasium, and the synagogue, where, since 1958, both Harvard and Cornell Universities have sponsored annual archeological expeditions. These excavations unearthed perhaps the most impressive synagogue in the western diaspora yet discovered from antiquity, yielding over eighty Greek and seven Hebrew inscriptions as well as numerous mosaic floors. Along the way to Pamukkale (meaning "cotton castle" as the city contains hot springs and white terraces of carbonate minerals left by the flowing water), our stops will include Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13) with its several mosques and ancient Christian churches, and Hierapolis (another famous site of hot springs) where Paul brought Christianity (Colossians 4:13). Tonight we'll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in Pamukkale.

Day 9: Pamukkale, Laodicia & Kusadasi

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth... As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Rev 3:15 – 16, 19 – 20).

After breakfast, we'll visit Laodicia, one of the Seven Churches ("Churches" in this context refers to the community of Christians living in each city, and not merely to the building or buildings in which they gathered for worship) which was chastised for being lukewarm. Laodicea is situated on the long spur of a hill between the narrow valleys of the small rivers Asopus and Caprus. Archeological remains near Laodicia still attest to its former greatness as evidenced by the relatively well preserved stadium, gymnasium, and theatres (one of which is in a state of great preservation, with its seats still perfectly horizontal, though merely laid upon the gravel). There are other buildings atop the hill and to the east the line of the ancient wall may be distinctly traced, with the remains of a gateway, colonnade and numerous pedestals. We'll drive to Kusadasi (whose name comes from words meaning "bird" and "island" because the peninsula upon which it sits has the shape of a bird's head as seen from the sea), a resort town on Turkey's Aegean coast, for dinner and overnight. The stunningly beautiful area has been a center of art and culture since the earliest times and its residential population of 50,000 rises to over half a million during the summer.

Day 10: Kusadasi & Ephesus

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.... Having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness... taking the shield of faith... the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Eph 6: 11 – 17)

Today we visit Ephesus one of the Seven Churches in Revelation (Rev. 1:11), and for many years the second largest city of the Roman Empire ranking second only to Rome. While in the ancient city of Ephesus, we'll look with wonder on many historically rich sights including the Temple of Artemis (Diana), the fountain of Trajan, the Baths of Scolaстика, the Temple of Hadrian, the Library of Celsus and the Great Theatre capable of holding 25,000 spectators (used initially



for drama, but during later Roman times for gladiatorial combats) where Paul preached and where the riot of the silversmiths occurred. We will walk along Arcadian Way where Mark Anthony and Cleopatra once rode in procession. We'll return this evening to Kusadasi for dinner and another overnight stay.

Day 11: Kusadasi, Smyrna, Thyatira & Istanbul

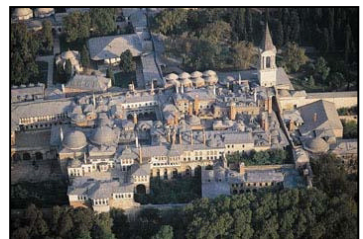
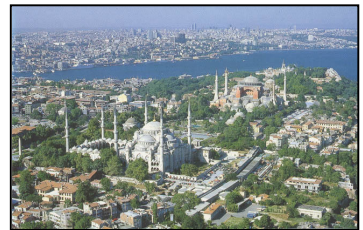
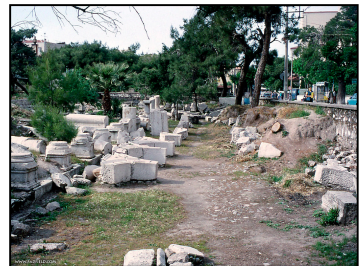
[T]he heresies are at best novelties, and have no continuity with the teaching of Christ. Perhaps some heretics may claim Apostolic antiquity: we reply: Let them publish the origins of their churches and unroll the catalogue of their bishops... as the Smyrnaeans count from Polycarp and John, and the Romans from Clement and Peter; let heretics invent something to match this (Tertullian, circa 208 A.D).

As one of the principal cities of Roman Asia, Smyrna vied with Ephesus and Pergamum for the title "First City of Asia." Today we'll drive to Smyrna, rich in history and archeology, to visit Mount Pagus once called the crown of Smyrna where temples ran along the lower slopes like a necklace on a statue (to use the terms of Aristides the orator). Here we'll see the Church of St. Polycarp, the oldest church in what is now called the city of Izmir. The Church represents ancient Smyrna's role as one of the Seven Churches of Revelation. Saint Polycarp (after whom the church was named), was converted by John the Apostle, became Bishop of Smyrna, and was martyred by the Romans at age 86 in 155 AD at Kadifkale, which was atop the hill near modern-day Izmir. According to tradition, when they tried to burn Polycarp at the stake, the flames wouldn't touch him so they finally stabbed him to death. Our next stop is Thyatira, in far west Turkey almost due east of Athens, and one of the Seven Churches of Revelation (Rev. 1:11; 2:18-29). Paul and Silas might have visited Thyatira during Paul's second or third journey, although the evidence is entirely circumstantial as they visited several small unnamed towns in the general vicinity during the second journey. Finally, we'll drive to Bandýrma, a central harbor and transit point between Istanbul and Izmir, to catch the Fast Ferry to Istanbul where we'll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 12: Istanbul (Constantinople)

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7).

Our sightseeing tour of Istanbul, cultural, spiritual and economic hub of Turkey (and called "The City of Seven Hills" (like Rome!) because the oldest part of the city is alleged to have been built on seven hills), begins with a visit to the magnificent Topkapi Palace, home to the Ottoman Sultans for approximately 400 years (1465-1856) of their 624-year reign. The palace is a major tourist attraction containing the most holy relics of the Muslim world such as the Prophet Muhammed's cloak and sword among many other treasures and antiquities including twelve thousand pieces of fine Chinese porcelain. The sight of cascading domes and six minarets of the Blue Mosque built in 1609 by Sultan Ahmet, will undoubtedly thrill us. These still dominate the skyline of Istanbul and the interior walls are covered with twenty thousand blue iznik tiles. We'll also visit St. Savior in Chora, presently dating from the 11th century; but the first church on this site was built in the 4th century as part of a monastery complex outside the city walls of Constantinople which is the reason for the "in Chora" part of its name - meaning "in the country" in Greek. Inside, there are about 50



mosaic panels deriving from the New Testament and dating from about 1310, and most in excellent condition. We won't miss the Hippodrome of Constantinople (which had a capacity to accommodate more than 100,000 spectators for sporting events such as the quadriga chariot races during the Roman and Byzantine periods) and the Basilica of St. Sophia. Unfortunately nothing remains of the original Hagia Sophia, which was built on this site in the 4th century by Constantine the Great who was the first Christian emperor and the founder of Constantinople, a city he called "the New Rome." The Hagia Sophia was one of several great churches he built in cities throughout his empire which have inspired architects and religious leaders for over fifteen hundred years. We'll enjoy dinner and another overnight in Istanbul.



Day 13: Istanbul & Return to the USA

Watch ye, stand fast in faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity (1 Cor. 16: 13-14).

After breakfast, we transfer to the airport for our return flight home.



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