

# Epic Journey Across Time: Cyprus, Rhodes & the Turquoise Coast Aboard *Emerald Azzurra*

## OPTIONAL CAPPADOCIA & ISTANBUL POSTLUDE

April 18 – 23, 2025



### FRIDAY, APRIL 18: IZMIR / KAYSERI (CAPPADOCIA) / KAYMAKLI / UÇHISAR

Take a flight to **Kayseri**, Cappadocia's ancient capital. Upon arrival, transfer to the awe-inspiring **Kaymakli**, an underground city carved into volcanic rock starting in the sixth century A.D. Navigate tunnels and chambers up to 300 feet deep, exploring living spaces, stables, and even a church. Before transferring to your hotel, visit **Pigeon Valley** for its panoramic views.

Arrive in **Uçhisar**, a town dominated by a rock-hewn citadel that crowns the highest peak in the region. Check into the **Argos in Cappadocia Hotel**, your home for three nights. As the sun sets, dine on a terrace overlooking the Cappadocian landscape with Mount Argeus's snow-capped peak in the distance. B,L,D

### SATURDAY, APRIL 19: UÇHISAR / GÖREME / ÖZKONAK / AVANOS

As dawn breaks over Cappadocia, early risers may enjoy an **optional hot-air balloon ride**. Gain an exciting bird's-eye view as you float above the region's fairy chimneys and rock-cut churches, watching the sun paint the landscape gold and pink. Firmly back on solid ground, return to the hotel for breakfast.

Later, explore the wonders of **Göreme Open Air Museum**, where Orthodox monks carved churches, chapels, and monasteries directly into the rock formations between 900 and 1200 A.D. With your expert guide, marvel at the vivid biblical frescoes that adorn the interiors of these cave churches, their colors still brilliant after centuries.

Continue to the underground city of **Özkonak**, built on the northern slopes of Mt. Idis. The city's layers consist of volcanic granite and are linked by tunnels. This underground network provided refuge and living space during conflicts, shielding residents from raids and invasions.

Following lunch, make your way to the village of **Avanos**, and spend the rest of the afternoon visiting this ancient village where pottery-making dates back to the Hittites in the 18th century B.C. Feel the smooth red clay shaped by skilled hands, the craft passed down for generations. Return to the hotel in Uçhisar with dinner at leisure. B,L



Hot-air balloons, Cappadocia



### SUNDAY, APRIL 20: UÇHISAR / LOVE VALLEY / ZELVE VALLEY / PASABAG VALLEY

After breakfast, drive to the **Love Valley** in the very heart of modern-day Turkey. This landscape is dotted with tall, cylindrical fairy chimneys. Following lunch, transfer to Zelve Valley, home to some of the region's oldest religious sites, including cave churches and a mosque, direct evidence of Christian and Muslim coexistence here throughout history.

As you return to the hotel, see the distinctive fairy chimneys of the **Pasabag Valley**. These towering rock spires have chapels and hermit cells carved into their bases, highlighting the area's monastic heritage. Return to the hotel and before dinner, gather for a sacred spectacle at **Saruhan Caravanserai**, a restored 13th-century *caravanserai* (roadside inn) that once welcomed weary travelers along the Silk Road.

There, **witness the mesmerizing ritual of the whirling dervishes**, followers of the Melevi order founded by the 13th-century Sufi mystic Rumi. Watch as the dervishes spin, their white skirts billowing like sails caught in the wind, their movements a sacred dance symbolizing the soul's journey towards the Divine. Savor Anatolian specialties at dinner this evening. B,L,D

### MONDAY, APRIL 21: UÇHISAR / KAYSERI / ISTANBUL

After breakfast, transfer to Kayseri Airport for a flight to Istanbul. Upon arrival, join an expert guide for a tour of the **Sultan Ahmed Mosque**, an early 17th-century masterpiece of Ottoman architecture commonly known as "the Blue Mosque." Its cascading domes and six slender minarets rise above the city skyline. Inside, more than 20,000 hand-painted blue and green Iznik tiles cover the walls, their intricate patterns mesmerizing in the soft light that filters through 260 windows.

Make your way to the **Hippodrome**, now known as Sultanahmet Square. In this space, the social and sporting center of Byzantine Constantinople, thousands gathered under the watchful gaze of emperors for chariot races and other spectacles. Return to the hotel for check-in and gather this evening for dinner. B,D

### TUESDAY, APRIL 22: ISTANBUL

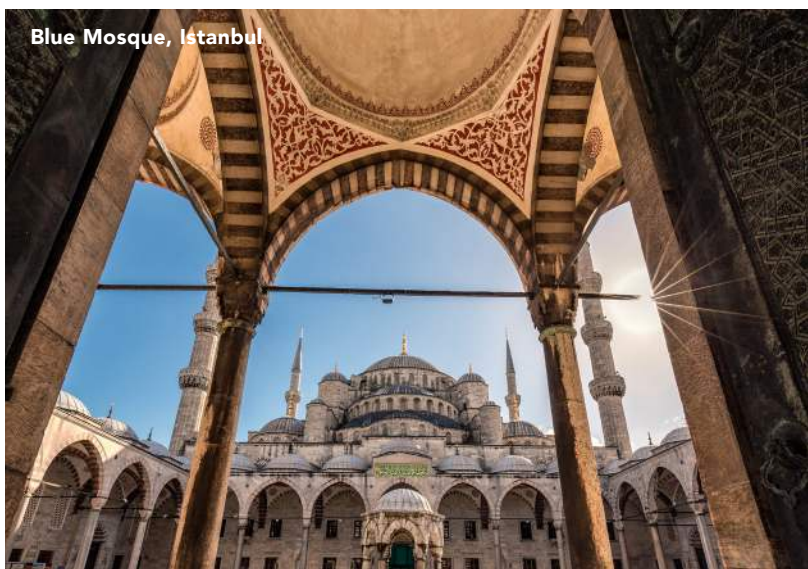
After breakfast, explore the legendary **Topkapi Palace**, once the residence of the Ottoman sultans for over 400 years. Take a guided tour of what is now an excellent museum of holy relics and treasures that dazzle the eye—emerald-studded swords, ruby-encrusted thrones, and robes threaded with gold. Then visit the extraordinary **Hagia Sophia**, built in the sixth century A.D. by Justinian.

After lunch, uncover the sixth-century **Basilica Cistern**, the largest surviving Byzantine cistern in the city. Return to the hotel, or opt to visit the **Spice Bazaar**, where you can find a variety of spices, dried fruits, oils, *henna*, nuts, and sweets.

In the late afternoon, take a two-hour private boat cruise on the Bosphorus, taking in panoramic views of the city and the surrounding area. Disembark on the Asian Side of the city for a farewell dinner at **Del Mare**, one of Istanbul's most celebrated seafood restaurants. After dinner, cross the Bosphorus Bridge and transfer to your hotel. B,L,D

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23: ISTANBUL / RETURN

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your return flight home. B



## ACCOMMODATIONS

### ARGOS IN CAPPADOCIA HOTEL, UÇHISAR

This luxurious retreat is set within an ancient monastery, featuring meticulously restored rooms and suites that blend historical charm with modern comfort. Guests can choose from unique accommodations, including traditional cave rooms and splendid suites with private terraces offering stunning views of Pigeon Valley and Mount Erciyes. The hotel boasts an array of amenities, such as an exquisite restaurant serving gourmet Turkish cuisine, a wine cellar housed in a former monastery chapel, an outdoor pool, and beautiful gardens.



Pool, Argos in Cappadocia Hotel, Uçhisar



Seki Lounge, Argos in Cappadocia Hotel, Uçhisar

### THE PENINSULA ISTANBUL HOTEL

On the Bosphorus waterfront in Istanbul's historic Karaköy district, this hotel offers rooms and suites with floor-to-ceiling windows and private balconies or terraces with stunning Bosphorus views. Custom furnishings seamlessly blend modern style with traditional Turkish design, complemented by state-of-the-art technology like bedside touchscreen controls and PenChat e-concierge access. Savor all-day Mediterranean-inspired cuisine at the Lobby restaurant, or indulge in sophisticated Turk-Asian fusion dishes at Gallada, the rooftop restaurant with an expansive outdoor terrace overlooking the Bosphorus and lush gardens.



The Peninsula Istanbul Hotel



Restaurant, The Peninsula Istanbul Hotel

**POSTLUDE RATE**  
**\$5,299 per person, double rate**  
**\$6,999 single rate**

**RATE INCLUDES** Three nights at the Argos in Cappadocia Hotel in Uçhisar; two nights accommodations at the Peninsula Hotel in Istanbul; meals as per itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner); sightseeing as per itinerary; one-way, economy-class internal flights (Izmir-Kayseri / Kayseri-Istanbul).

**Note: The lecturer is scheduled on the main program only.**



Executive Bosphorus Suite, The Peninsula Istanbul Hotel