

# Marvels of Ancient Empires and Ottoman Turkey

March 23 – April 3, 2026

*Arrangements by Classical Excursions*



## Overview of the Itinerary

### March 23, Monday – Istanbul

Arrival to Istanbul and four-night stay at the **Çırağan Palace Kempinski Hotel**.

### March 24–26, Tuesday to Thursday – Istanbul

Three days of touring the historic and private sites of Istanbul including **Hagia Sophia**, **Topkapi Palace**, **Dolmabahçe Palace**, the **Blue Mosque**, and the **Basilica Cistern**, along with a selection of private residences curated by Cosmo Brockway.

### March 27–28, Friday and Saturday – Ida Mountains

Travel from Istanbul to the ancient site of **Troy** and continue to the **Manici Çiftlik Farm Hotel** for two nights. Visit **Troy** and **Assos**.

### March 29–30, Sunday and Monday – Alaçatı (Izmir):

Two-night stay at the **Alavya Design Hotel**. Full-day excursion to the ancient city of **Ephesus** and the **Library of Celsus**.

### March 31–April 1, Tuesday and Wednesday – Cappadocia:

Fly from Izmir to **Cappadocia** for a two-night stay at the **Argos Hotel**. Optional sunrise **hot air balloon ride** and touring of the region's cave dwellings and rock-hewn monasteries.

### April 2, Thursday – Istanbul:

Return flight to **Istanbul** for a final overnight at the **Çırağan Palace Kempinski Hotel**.

### April 3, Friday – Departures:

Independent departures from **Istanbul**.

Bridging two continents and countless civilizations, Turkey is a land where history and art converge in dazzling layers—from the domes of Byzantine churches to the marble colonnades of ancient cities, and the surreal landscapes of Cappadocia.

Join Classical Excursions founder Lani Summerville and travel writer Cosmo Brockway on this extraordinary journey tracing the course of classical civilization through Istanbul, Troy, Assos, Ephesus, and Cappadocia, guided by experts in art, architecture, and archaeology. This exclusive tour combines private access, refined accommodations, and immersive experiences across some of the most storied sites of the ancient world.

We begin in the imperial capital of Istanbul, where East and West have intertwined for millennia; continue along the Aegean coast to Troy and Assos, where myth and philosophy were born; explore the magnificent ruins of Ephesus, among the finest surviving cities of antiquity; and conclude amid the dreamlike volcanic formations of Cappadocia.

## Overview *of our* Days



### March 23 – Arrival in Istanbul

Arrive in the legendary city of **Istanbul**, straddling Europe and Asia. Transfer to **Çırağan Palace Kempinski Hotel**, a restored 19th-century Ottoman imperial palace on the Bosphorus, renowned for its marble colonnades, sweeping terraces, and views of the strait.

This evening, enjoy a **welcome dinner at a private club**, where we gather with our hosts and fellow travelers.

### March 24–26 – Istanbul: The Crossroads of Civilizations

Three full days are devoted to exploring Istanbul's rich architectural and cultural heritage. Our visits include the **Hagia Sophia**, built by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century; the **Blue Mosque**; the **Ancient Hippodrome of Constantine the Great**; and the **Basilica Cistern**, a haunting underground reservoir supported by a forest of marble columns.

We will also visit the **Topkapi Palace**, home of Ottoman sultans for nearly four centuries, and the 19th-century **Dolmabahçe Palace**, whose grandeur reflects the empire's final flourish.



Throughout our stay, we will enjoy access to **a selection of private homes and collections**, offering intimate perspectives on Istanbul's living traditions of art and design.

A few evenings are free for independent dining.



## March 27 – Istanbul to Troy and the Ida Mountains



Depart Istanbul by luxury coach, crossing the Dardanelles Strait into the storied region of Troad. En route, we visit the fabled **archaeological site of Troy**, immortalized in Homer's Iliad. Here we will explore layers of settlement spanning more than 4,000 years—citadel walls, gates, and temples that speak to both myth and archaeology.

Continue to the **Manici Çiftlik Farm Hotel**, a tranquil rural retreat nestled in the **Ida Mountains**, known in antiquity as Mount Ida, the mythical setting of the Judgement of Paris.

Overnight and dinner at the Manici Çiftlik Farm Hotel.

## March 28 – Assos and the Aegean Coast

A day devoted to the **ancient city of Assos**, perched high above the Aegean. Founded between 1000 and 900 BC, this Ionian city flourished under the patronage of philosophers and kings. Aristotle himself resided here, marrying the niece of Hermias, ruler of Assos.

We will explore the remains of the **Doric Temple of Athena**, the **ancient theatre**, and fortifications commanding stunning views over the sea. Return to our hotel in the Ida Mountains for dinner and overnight.



## March 29 – Toward the Aegean: Arrival in Alaçatı

We make our way south along the coast toward **Izmir**, arriving in the seaside town of **Alaçatı** for a two-night stay at the **Alavya Design Hotel**—a serene collection of stone houses set around gardens, pools, and courtyards. The hotel embodies the relaxed elegance of the Turkish Aegean, blending contemporary comfort with local craftsmanship.

Evening at leisure.



## March 30 – The Ancient Splendor of Ephesus

A full-day excursion to **Ephesus**, one of the best-preserved ancient cities of the classical world. Once a major port of the Roman Empire, Ephesus boasts monumental architecture: the **Library of Celsus**, the **Great Theatre**, the **Temple of Hadrian**, and the **Marble Street** that once thronged with merchants, pilgrims, and philosophers.

Lunch in a local restaurant. Return to **Alaçatı** for our final evening on the coast and a seaside dinner.

## March 31 – Flight to Cappadocia

This morning, we fly from Izmir to **Cappadocia**, a region of extraordinary natural and cultural wonder. Check into the **Argos in Cappadocia**, a historic complex of ancient dwellings and stone mansions carved into the hillside. The property offers panoramic views over the valley and a timeless sense of serenity.

Afternoon for relaxation or independent exploration. Dinner at the hotel.



## April 1 – Cappadocia: Land of Fairy Chimneys

At dawn, take an optional **hot air balloon flight** over Cappadocia's surreal landscape of “fairy chimneys”—tall, conical rock formations sculpted by volcanic erosion over millennia.

Later we explore the **underground cities and rock-carved monasteries of the region**, where early Christian communities sought refuge and expression. Visits include Göreme, Uçhisar, and local artisan workshops.

Evening at leisure and farewell dinner at a local restaurant.





## April 2 – Return to Istanbul

Morning flight to Istanbul. Check in again to the **Çırağan Palace Kempinski Hotel** for a final night on the Bosphorus. Afternoon free for shopping or additional sightseeing.



## April 3 – Departures

Independent departures from Istanbul.

### *Accommodations*

#### **Çırağan Palace Kempinski Hotel, Istanbul**

Originally built in the mid-19th century for Sultan Abdülaziz, the Çırağan Palace Kempinski stands as a masterpiece of Ottoman architecture. Its marble façade, grand staircases, and Bosphorus-front terraces have hosted emperors, sultans, and dignitaries for over a century. Modern luxury complements imperial grandeur throughout this palatial hotel.

[www.kempinski.com/tr/ciragan-palace](http://www.kempinski.com/tr/ciragan-palace)

#### **Manici Çiftlik Farm Hotel, Ida Mountains**

A hidden gem on the slopes of Mount Ida, this boutique farm hotel combines rustic charm with refined hospitality. Surrounded by olive groves and forests, it offers a peaceful retreat with farm-to-table dining and traditional Turkish interiors.

[www.maniciciftlik.com](http://www.maniciciftlik.com)

#### **Alavya Design Hotel, Alaçatı**

An award-winning property blending contemporary design with Aegean warmth. Each of its six stone houses surrounds a fragrant garden filled with citrus trees, bougainvillea, and pools.

[www.alavya.com](http://www.alavya.com)

#### **Argos in Cappadocia, Uçhisar**

Once a monastery complex, the Argos hotel is carved into the rocky landscape and connected by underground tunnels. Its serene courtyards, cave suites, and views over the Pigeon Valley make it one of the most distinctive stays in Turkey.

[www.argosincappadocia.com](http://www.argosincappadocia.com)

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Please contact the Office of Classical Excursions to register  
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*Updated as of November 2025 | Itinerary subject to change without notice*