



St. John's Pilgrimage to Türkiye Cumhuriyeti April 5–15, 2027

(Information Report #2 - 08/21/26)

Because you have expressed interest, intent, or commitment to participate in this Pilgrimage, this is the second in a series of Information Reports you will receive from the planning team. Feel free to share it with anyone you think might be similarly interested. **Some additional questions and answers:**

Why such a lengthy advance notice of the trip?

- Several reasons. First, we are busy people within a busy parish. We must align the church calendar with personal and professional commitments and obligations. That takes time.
- It also takes time to plan and execute a tour of a foreign country some 5,200 miles from home. Though English is widely spoken, it is not the lingua franca. That's why we will have local support every step of the way.
- Our Pilgrimage Planning Team wants to ensure a smooth and enjoyable trip for everyone. That means arranging transport to minimize long walks or rides between sites and to maximize time at each site.
- We need time to negotiate (meaning haggle) with our respective lodgings. They need to be aware that though they think we are rich Americans (and some of you are), we are simply travelers seeking to help them fill rooms during the "shoulder season" (traditionally the lightest tourist season). They are getting realistic, finally.

When do we need to make a final decision?

- We will conduct an information session at an upcoming Adult Forum, in late October or early November. By that time, many of the loose ends will be tied off.
- Currently, we anticipate issuing a call for deposits as an indication of serious intent. That notice will go out early January 2027. Well before then, you will have a final itinerary and a budget for your travel so that you can make an informed decision.
- In terms of future information, we'll need from you:
 1. Any food allergies, especially seafood.
 2. Your travel itinerary, when finalized.

You'll receive detailed information on what to bring but be prepared to have head scarves (ladies) and easily removed shoes (for entry into mosques). We would add modest clothing, but being Episcopalians, that would be unnecessary.

Tell me more about the sites, in addition to Istanbul, that we will be visiting.

First, expect one relocation during the trip. We will move to **Kuşadası**. It is 555 miles from Istanbul, and the first decision will be: drive or fly? It is a 5.5-hour drive from Istanbul. Plan on flying. The nearest airport to Kuşadası is İzmir Adnan Menderes Airport (ADB), about 47 miles away. This relocation will be our hub when we visit the spokes of Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea (and maybe Pergamon). We haven't settled on lodging yet, but it will be nice and comfortable.

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Kuşadası is a vibrant beach resort on Turkey's Aegean coast. It is special because it combines a lively modern vacation atmosphere with being the closest coastal gateway to the world-famous ancient ruins of Ephesus, stunning national parks, and rich maritime history. **From Kuşadası, we'll go to:**

- **Selçuk and Ephesus** (about a 30-minute drive).

This is widely considered the “jewel” of the seven churches cited in the Book of Revelation. It is the best-preserved and most impressive site, featuring the famous Library of Celsus, the Great Theatre (which held 25,000 spectators), and the nearby Basilica of St. John. It provides the most vivid picture of life in a Roman-era city.

- **Laodicea** (Near Denizli/Pamukkale and about a 2.5-hour drive).

Laodicea is currently one of the most exciting archaeological sites in Turkey. Recent excavations have uncovered two large theaters, stunning colonnaded streets, and early church ruins. It is highly recommended if you are interested in seeing ongoing, active historical discovery.

- **Sardis** (Near Salihli and about a 2-hour drive).

Sardis is famous for its monumental Gymnasium complex, a beautifully reconstructed ancient synagogue, and the remains of an early Christian basilica. The scale of the marble structures here is breathtaking.

- We are thinking of adding **Pergamon** (about a 2.5-hour drive).

Pergamon features an extraordinary Acropolis situated on a high hill, offering incredible views. It includes the steepest ancient theater in the world and the remains of the Red Basilica, a massive, visually striking structure.

Your Planning Team is fully aware that a 2.5-hour drive is no one's cup of tea, but the only alternative is periodic and disruptive packing and unpacking. Also, the available lodging near the other sites is, well, suboptimal and strains reaching 2-star status. We are continuing our search for suitable lodging near Pergamon (Pamukkale). If that search is unsuccessful, the Planning Team Leader is an accomplished “sleeping while riding” expert. He will be happy to give lessons.

Finally, please send any questions you may have to merhabaturkey@stjohnsmclean.org. The inbox is monitored frequently, and we'll provide answers as they become available.

Sincerely,

Your Pilgrimage Planning Team