

PILGRIMAGE BRIEFING

SJEC Pilgrimage

Discovering the Roots of Our Faith

Led by Rev. Josh Walters

Constantinople, Nicaea and the ancient cities of Asia Minor

Itinerary begins April 5

NIGHTS

10

April 4–14 · 5 hotels

Where we stay

1. **Pera Palace Hotel**
   April 4–7 · Istanbul · 3 nights
2. **Izmir Marriott Hotel**
   April 7–11 · Izmir · 4 nights
3. **Doğa Thermal Health & Spa or Wyndham**
   April 11–12 · Pamukkale / Laodicea · 1 night
4. **Izmir Marriott Hotel**
   April 12–13 · Izmir · 1 night
5. **Hilton Istanbul Airport**
   April 13–14 · Istanbul Airport · 1 night

Pera Palais Hotel





APRIL

5

Istanbul · 5 stops

Byzantine & Christian Constantinople

1. **Chora Church**
   Renowned Byzantine mosaics and frescoes
2. **Church of St. George**
   Ecumenical Patriarchate in Fener
3. **Fener historic district**
   Old quarter on the Golden Horn
4. **Crimea Memorial Church**
   Anglican church in Beyoğlu
5. **Galata / Beyoğlu**
   Historic district on the European side



Chora Church

Byzantium's Final Masterpiece

Mosaics and Frescoes
Early 14th-century works, widely considered the finest of their era.

Lives of Christ and the Virgin
Mosaic cycles trace both lives, from the Nativity to the miracles.

Anastasis Fresco
The Resurrection scene in the side chapel, one of Byzantine art's best-known images.

PRACTICAL TIP

Reopened as a mosque in 2024; the mosaics remain on view. Near the old city walls, about 20 minutes by taxi from Sultanahmet.

Historic Constantinople

APRIL 6

1. **Hagia Sophia**
   Justinian's great church, 6th century
2. **St. Irene**
   Early Byzantine church
3. **Blue Mosque**
   Sultan Ahmed Mosque
4. **Hippodrome**
   Byzantine chariot-racing arena
5. **Basilica Cistern**
   Underground Byzantine reservoir
6. **St. Sergius & St. Bacchus**
   Little Hagia Sophia
7. **Grand Bazaar**
   Historic covered market
8. **Rüstem Pasha Mosque**
   Known for its İznik tilework



Hagia Sophia

Justinian's Great Church

The Great Dome
Completed in 537; the world's largest dome for nearly a thousand years.

Cathedral, Mosque, Museum
Served all three roles and has been a working mosque again since 2020.

Byzantine Mosaics
Gallery mosaics, including the Deësis, rank among Byzantium's finest.

PRACTICAL TIP

Visitors enter by paid ticket outside prayer times. Dress modestly; women cover their hair. Book ahead to skip the queue.

Blue Mosque

The Mosque of Sultan Ahmed

İznik Tiles
Over 20,000 handmade blue tiles inside give the mosque its nickname.

Six Minarets
Built 1609–1616; the only mosque in Istanbul with six minarets.

Facing Hagia Sophia
Set across the square from Hagia Sophia, in deliberate dialogue with it.

PRACTICAL TIP

Free to enter but closed to visitors during the five daily prayers. Cover shoulders and knees, women cover hair, shoes off.





Basilica Cistern

The Sunken Palace

336 Columns
A forest of marble columns rising from shallow water, built under Justinian.

Medusa Heads
Two carved Medusa heads, one sideways and one upside down, serve as column bases.

Weeping Column
Carved with teardrop patterns; tradition links it to the laborers who built it.

PRACTICAL TIP

Steps from Hagia Sophia. Buy tickets online and allow 30–45 minutes; lighting is dim and walkways can be damp.

APRIL

7

Istanbul → Iznik → Izmir

Istanbul to Iznik, onward to Izmir

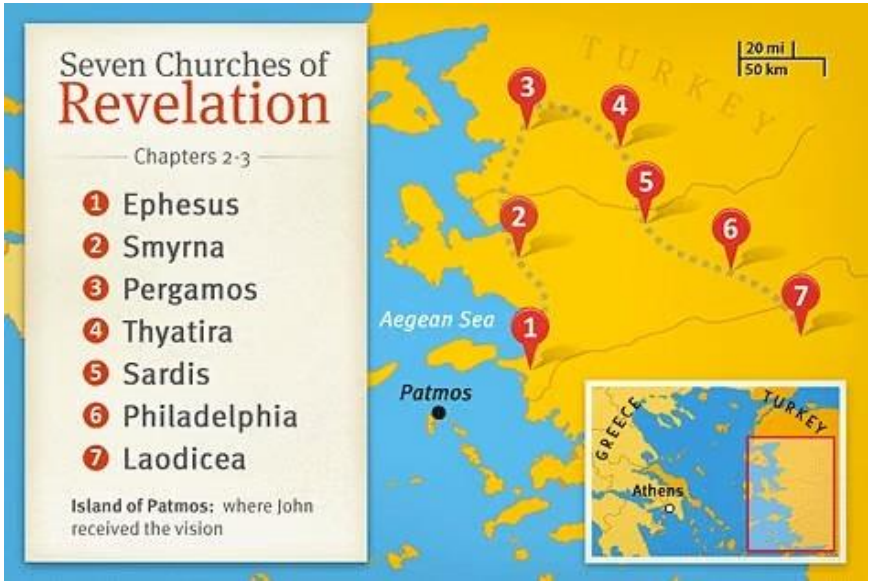
Morning Depart Istanbul and drive to Iznik

Iznik, ancient Nicaea

- First Council of Nicaea (325) and the Nicene Creed
- Second Council of Nicaea (787)
- Ancient walls and gates
- Early Christian and Byzantine remains

After the visit Continue toward Izmir

Route at a glance



The Seven Churches of Revelation (Rev. 2–3)

APR 5 — Byzantine & Christian Constantinople

APR 6 — Historic Constantinople

APR 7 — Istanbul → Iznik → Izmir

THEN — Ephesus, Sardis, Laodicea, Pergamon



Ephesus

The Grand Metropolis

Library of Celsus
Two-story facade built to hold 12,000+ scrolls; also a monumental tomb.

Great Theatre
Carved into the hillside, seats 25,000; famed for its acoustics and biblical ties.

Terrace Houses
Roman elite homes with floor mosaics, frescoes and private heating.

PRACTICAL TIP
Arrive at opening or late afternoon to beat crowds and heat. Pair with the Temple of Artemis and the House of the Virgin Mary in Selçuk.

Sardis

Capital of the Lydian Kingdom

Bath-Gymnasium Complex
Restored court with soaring marble columns and vast athletic grounds.

Sardis Synagogue
One of the largest ancient synagogues found, with floor mosaics and inscriptions.

Temple of Artemis
Colossal Ionic columns against mountain scenery, a short walk away.

PRACTICAL TIP
Near Salihli, an easy stop between İzmir and Pamukkale, and quieter than Ephesus.





Laodicea

The Resurgent Crossroads

Syrian Street & Colonnades
Paved main street lined with restored columns, shopfronts and water channels.

Laodicea Church
Early Christian basilica with glass walkways over original mosaic floors.

Dual Theaters
Two ancient theaters side by side, with views across the valley.

PRACTICAL TIP
Pair with Pamukkale and Hierapolis, about a 15-minute drive away.

Pergamon

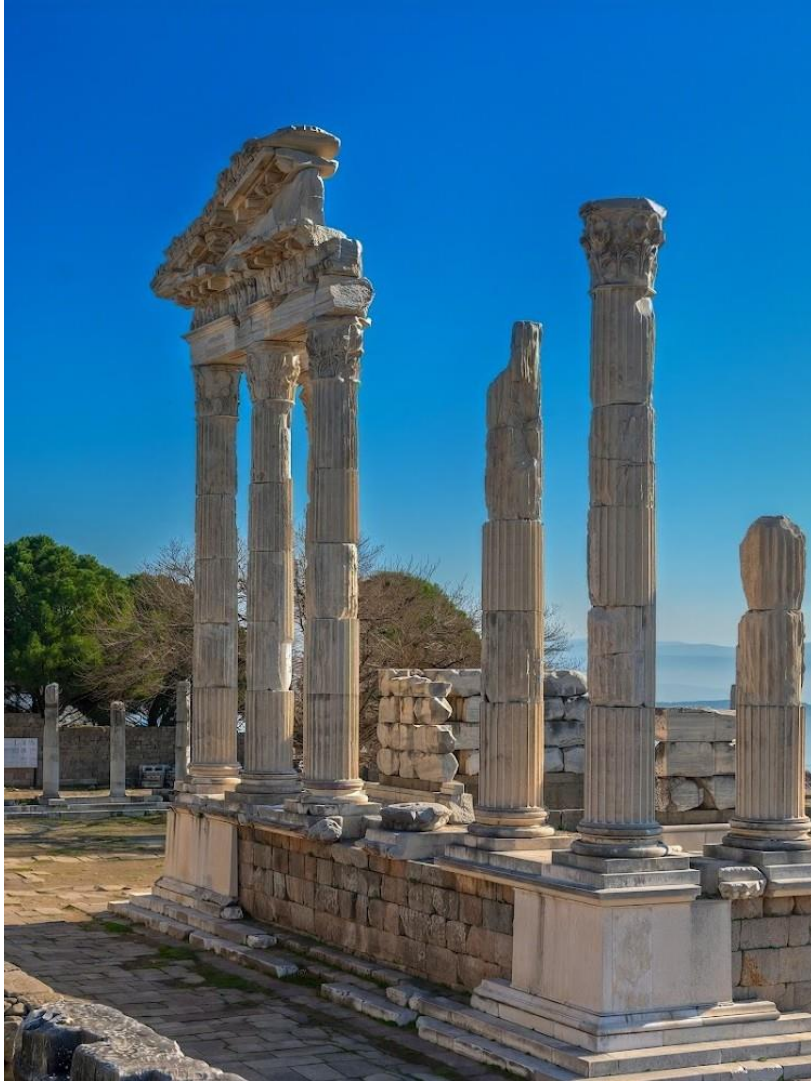
The Citadel in the Clouds

Steepest Theater of the Ancient World
Seats 10,000 on an impossibly steep hillside.

Temple of Trajan
White marble imperial temple on the acropolis summit.

Asklepion (Healing Center)
Ancient medical sanctuary with underground treatment tunnels.

PRACTICAL TIP
Take the cable car (Teleferik) up to the Acropolis, and allow extra time for the Red Hall in Bergama town.



What the tour includes

PER PERSON

- **Accommodation**
  10 nights with breakfast
- **Private coach**
  Transportation throughout the program
- **Travel expenses**
  Fuel, tolls, parking and transportation
- **Licensed guide**
  Professional guiding throughout the pilgrimage
- **Domestic flight**
  Izmir to Istanbul
- **Entrance fees · Istanbul**
  Topkapi Palace, Harem and Hagia Irene; Hagia Sophia; Chora Church; Basilica Cistern
- **Entrance fees · Western Türkiye**
  Pergamum, Sardis, Laodicea, Hierapolis/Pamukkale
- **Entrance fees · Ephesus & Nicaea**
  Ephesus, Terrace Houses and Basilica of St. John; Nicaea/Iznik and other program sites

Lunches and dinners are not included. Prices are per person sharing a double/twin room; a single-room supplement applies. Preliminary figures only: the final price will be confirmed once 2027 hotel, flight and supplier costs are set. Current estimated cost = $6800.

Words for the road (for now)



A man's got to know his limitations.

Inspector Harry Callahan, San Francisco Police Department



Make the crooked places straight.

Isaiah 45:2



When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance