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Turkish Delight May 9th-19th, 2011



*J*ourney into the beautiful cultural oasis of Turkey. Istanbul is one of the world's most engaging and beloved cities, known for its complex, layered past. We will explore this city of the future, where east meets west, with a cruise on the Bosphorus and visits to the most famous historical attractions, including the spice bazaar near the impressive Hagia Sophia museum. We will venture to Cappadocia, a wonderland of unique landscapes like never seen before. Hiking this terrain through exquisite frescoes of Byzantine cave churches offer superb views over the valley from our unique cave hotel. Sunlight and Enlightenment await us in a hidden valley along the Lycian Way, as we hike along the unspoiled coastline of Kabak's 300-mile-long trail. It snakes along a part of Turkey's coast that was once Lycia, an important outpost of the Roman Empire. Hiking, swimming, and yoga-ing while staring out at evergreen-clad mountains and the world's bluest of seas...it doesn't get better!

May 9 - Depart USA and arrive into Istanbul on the morning of...

May 10 - From Istanbul connecting on a flight to Turkey's Mediterranean coast where we will settle into our bungalows in the stunning and remote slice of wilderness called the Kabak Valley. We will meet our wonderful hosts who built Shambala (named for the mythical Himalayan city), as an escape from their hectic life in Istanbul. In the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, Shambala is viewed as a magical place hidden high in the mountains where one can attain enlightenment. And they have certainly created their own version of it here.



May 11-14 - We will start and/or end our days with yoga in either Shanti Garden or Reflections, a collection of tents and bungalows nested on the valley floor close to the beach. All of our meals in the valley will be simple in the best Mediterranean way—prepared with fresh ingredients, many grown locally, and

requiring little embellishment. Even the soap is homemade from local organic olive oil. Nature is the main attraction, along the cascade of hiking trails winding up and down white sand beaches; we'll enjoy breaks to soak in the sea breezes and views. The people in the Kabak Valley are unique and they say it's because it's one of the only three places that didn't freeze in the last ice age.... insisting there is an energy vortex here! We will experience this portal to bliss!



May 14-17 - Onto the wonderland of Cappadocia, a region in the middle of Turkey, known for its fairy-like landscapes which are the result of seas of volcanic ash which solidified into stone. These *tufas*, as they're called, eroded magically into deep valleys, needle-like towers, and irregular cones to form among other things...our cave hotel for 3 nights. We will explore this natural and human marvel on foot, bicycle and via hot air balloon. We will visit the Goreme Valley and an open-air museum, the Zelve amphitheater, and finish with a performance of Sema, a Turkish custom. It's surreal!



Three of the most important theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Church, who lived in the fourth century hailed from this region, and were known as “The Cappadocian Fathers”. They worked to transform the military discipline of rigid monasticism into more of a family organization, and regulated monastic life into periods of prayer, study, and manual labor, but also linking it with the organization of charity. Here in Cappadocia, “The STAT Girls” will continue in this tradition of fulfilling our philanthropic endeavor with a visit to the local school with supplies in hand.

May 17 - Early morning departures to the enchanting city of Istanbul, where we will spend our days in awe of the magical sights, sounds, and smells! Our first stop, the Roman Hippodrome, was not only concerned with chariot racing and circuses, but was also where great civic events took place. It’s a magnificent open space where many celebrations, triumphs, and rituals were performed. Next we journey to the Underground Cistern, an old water reservoir used to store water for the Imperial Palace with its 336 columns supporting the roof. After lunch at Asithane (I was told it’s the best Ottoman cuisine in Istanbul), we will see the great dome of St. Sophia, a true landmark in world architecture. And we wouldn’t miss the Church of St. Savior in Chora...if nothing else it would be enough to justify Byzantine’s reputation as a center of learning, artistry and culture in the 12th century. Driving along the world’s most impressive “city walls” built in 420s AD; we will certainly have a new understanding of this place. Dinner is within walking distance of our authentic yet modern hotel.



May 18 - Turkish yoga...whatever that is... will help us get started with the day as we will end the day in the Hamman (Turkish baths)...and we know what that is! We will visit The Blue Mosque, the best known and most popular of Istanbul’s royal mosques, and The Topkapi Palace, the royal residences of the Ottoman sultans from the 15th till the 19th century. After lunch, we will experience the many bazaars and markets including the Spice Market and Egyptian Bazaar, where spices have been traded since the 15th century. It’s an amazing cornucopia of oriental spices and exotic foodstuff. Late afternoon, we will have a guided Bosphorus cruise to enlighten you to the beauties of Istanbul from the sea. There is no better way to enjoy the scenery than a cruise on the Bosphorus. The neighborhoods along the water were once villages isolated from the city and each of them still retains its distinct character. Passing close to the shore, we’ll see a royal palace or a sumptuous villa to admire; coupled with the wooded hills, the views are absolutely breathtaking. The Hamman waits to award us with an incredible Turkish massage/bath experience before our farewell dinner.



May 19 - Mid morning departures for international flights home. Another incredible journey creating memories and ever-lasting friendships.

**The Investment is \$5,000, not including airfare.
STAT will donate 100% of its profits to a local charity in Turkey.**