USASK ALUMNI



Duration
10 days

Activity Level
Active Travel

Journey Type
Land

Istanbul & the Turquoise Coast

May 16-26, 2027

Featuring Cappadocia and a Gulet Cruise | Starting from $7,945/pp

Vibrant, beautiful Turkey beckons you on this exhilarating, nine-night journey! Take in Istanbul's extraordinary Byzantine and Ottoman masterpieces and dive into a colorful bazaar. Head next to Cappadocia, famous for its astonishing formations, and explore its rock-cut, frescoed churches while staying at a cave hotel for two nights. Then, cruise the sensational Turquoise Coast for three nights aboard an exclusively chartered gulet yacht. Relish this relaxed small-ship experience as you dock in picturesque port towns and secluded coves. You'll also tour the magnificent ruins of Ephesus , admire the cliffside tombs of Kaunos, and enjoy lunch in a private home!





Day-by-Day Itinerary

Istanbul & the Turquoise Coast

Featuring Cappadocia and a Gulet Cruise

Air Program: 11 days/ 10 nights (includes 1 air night)

Land/Cruise Program: 10 days/ 9 nights

Breakfasts: 9 | Lunches: 8 | Receptions: 2 | Dinners: 5

B | L | D denotes included breakfasts, lunches, receptions and dinners.

A special note about air: If you have purchased only the Land/Cruise Program, please book flights that arrive on Day 2, the first day of the Land/Cruise Program. The date is listed at the top of your Reservation Confirmation.

This itinerary is subject to change due to operational conditions.

This ACTIVE program is designed for people who are in good health and can comfortably participate in a demanding daily schedule of physical activities. The itinerary may feature full days of ongoing activities. Excursions on this program require:

- walking on cobblestones, unpaved paths and/or uneven and slippery surfaces
- getting on/off gulet yacht and motor coaches
- walking up steep inclines/declines and up and down stairs
- moving about a small yacht while it is in motion
- ducking and bending while navigating narrow, uneven tunnels in Ozkonak Underground City

Depending on the excursion, more leisurely alternatives may be available.

Day 1 | Depart gateway city

AHI FlexAir passengers depart for Istanbul, Turkey. Please check your luggage from your gateway city to your arrival city. Your claim checks should have the following airport code: IST.

Day 2 | Istanbul, Turkey

Barceló Istanbul Hotel

R | D

Arrive at Istanbul International Airport. Proceed through immigration to the baggage claim area and retrieve your luggage. After completing customs, AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for the group arrival transfer and Land/Cruise Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer should exit the baggage claim area and proceed to the designated meeting spot, where an AHI Travel representative will meet you. The meeting location will be provided with your final documents.

Transfer to the Barceló Istanbul Hotel. Please note, if you arrive before check-in time, your room may not be immediately available.

Tonight, get acquainted with your fellow travelers at a Welcome Reception and Dinner in the hotel.

Day 3 | Istanbul

Barceló Istanbul Hotel

B | L

Enrichment: Istanbul, The Crossroads of the World. S traddling the Bosphorus Strait, the geographic boundary between Europe and Asia, this charismatic city boasts a remarkable history at the intersection of East and West. Gain a deeper understanding from a local expert.

Istanbul: Part 1. This morning, head into one of Istanbul's celebrated bazaars, the lively M1s1r Çar_1s1, or Spice Bazaar, a covered market with arched ceilings built as part of the Yeni Cami Mosque (New Mosque) complex in 1664. M1s1r, which means Egypt in Turkish, alludes to the spices that arrived here along historic trading routes from Egypt. As you meander past the buzzing stalls with your guide, check out the fragrant, colorful piles of spices like chili, curry, saffron, paprika and cinnamon, along with tempting displays of teas, dried fruits, nuts, seeds and traditional sweet treats.

After a delicious lunch with your group, continue to the majestic Süleymaniye Mosque on one of the seven hills of ancient Istanbul. It's one of the city's many historic treasures recognized together as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, who ruled the Ottoman Empire for 46 years, commissioned his acclaimed architect, Mimar Sinan, to create a mosque to rival the Byzantine-era Hagia Sophia. Inspired by that structure, Sinan designed what is regarded as his finest achievement, an enormous yet graceful mosque with a central dome surrounded by smaller domes and four towering minarets. Completed in 1557, it included schools, a hospital and a kitchen to serve the poor. On a guided tour, admire its beautiful dome, the light-filled interior and the mausoleums of Suleiman the Magnificent and his wife, Hürrem Sultan, ornamented with intricate Iznik ceramic tiles.

After your tour, enjoy a scenic cruise along the Bosphorus Strait and its famous waterway, the Golden Horn. The Golden Horn separates old Istanbul, located on the historic peninsula that was home to ancient Byzantium and Constantinople, from Beyo lu, a picturesque district of the city that developed on the other bank.

Free Time: Make dinner plans of your own this evening. Your Travel Director can offer recommendations and help with reservations.

Day 4 | Istanbul

Barceló Istanbul Hotel

B | L

Istanbul: Part 2. Founded around 667 B.C. by Greek settlers as Byzantium, the city was later renamed Constantinople in 330 B.C. by Emperor Constantine I, who moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to this eastern site. With its excellent harbor and strategic location between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, Constantinople thrived for nine centuries as one of the world's most prestigious cities, the cultural, economic and spiritual epicenter of what became known as the Byzantine Empire. By the 13th century, after being sacked during the Fourth Crusade, Constantinople had fallen into a deep decline and in 1453, it was captured by Ottoman forces led by Sultan Mehmed II.

Today, take a guided tour of stunning Topkapi Palace, commissioned by Sultan Mehmed II six years after the conquest. From the 15th to the 19th centuries, it served as the imperial residence and court of the Ottoman sultans, housing their numerous courtiers and family members. Get an intriguing glimpse into the sultans' opulent lifestyle as you walk through the lush courtyards and ornately tiled chambers. In the Imperial Treasury, study jewel-encrusted artifacts from the Ottoman dynasty, including jaw-dropping pieces like the Topkapi Dagger with three huge emeralds on the hilt and the 86-carat Spoonmaker's Diamond.

Then, stand at the site of the Hippodrome of Constantinople, a third-century arena that Constantine I rebuilt on a grander scale for his new capital. Thousands once gathered here to watch thrilling chariot races in which contestants would circle at breakneck speed around a center island of monuments called the spina. It also hosted parades and festivals as well as public executions and punishments. A few of the Hippodrome's original monuments remain today, including the imposing Egyptian obelisk of Thutmose III taken from Karnak that dates from the 15th century B.C.

Afterward, descend into the atmospheric Basilica Cistern, the city's largest surviving underground reservoir. Historians believe that the Byzantine emperor Justinian I enlarged an existing cistern in the sixth century to create this astonishing subterranean chamber. Used as a source of water for centuries, it features 336 marble and granite columns that give the space a cathedral-like ambience. A special highlight are the two immense Medusa heads made into column bases.

After lunch with your group, visit the extraordinary Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque. In the sixth century, Justinian I directed his architects to create the greatest Christian cathedral in the eastern Roman Empire. Regarded as the pinnacle of Byzantine architecture, the Hagia Sophia dazzles with a colossal, soaring dome and an awe-inspiring interior. For nine centuries, it was the heart of the Eastern Orthodox Church until the Ottoman conquest in 1453 when it was converted into a mosque. After the Republic of Turkey was founded, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, its first president, secularized the building in 1934, repurposing it as a museum. In 2020, President Recep Tayyip Erdo an reopened it as a mosque.

Free Time: Enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure. If you would like to visit other popular landmarks such as the Sultan Ahmed (Blue) Mosque or the Grand Bazaar, please consult with your Travel Director for assistance.

Day 5 | Istanbul | Kayseri | Göreme National Park | Cavusin | Ürgüp (Cappadocia)

Yunak Evleri Cave Hotel

B | L | D

After breakfast, check out of the hotel and depart for the airport for your flight to Kayseri. Upon arrival, transfer by deluxe motor coach to the Cappadocia region in central Anatolia.

Göreme National Park. With its astounding landscape of sculptural rock formations, Cappadocia is a spectacular sight to behold. Millions of years ago, volcanic eruptions blanketed its terrain with ash, which hardened into a porous rock known as tuff, and another layer of harder volcanic rock, basalt, eventually covered that. Over the ensuing millennia, the force of erosion began to shape Cappadocia's otherworldly features, wearing away the softer tuff and leaving behind the tougher basalt. Evidence of this can be seen in the whimsical fairy chimneys with their tall pillars of tuff topped by basalt caps.

Centuries later, these craggy rocks would provide refuge for the people of Cappadocia, who were under constant threat from different empires seeking this valuable territory along the historic Silk Road trading route. Taking advantage of the region's soft rock, its inhabitants enlarged ancient cave dwellings into huge underground cities that could shelter and protect thousands from invaders.

Christians escaping religious persecution under Roman rule also sought safety here, establishing a monastic community in the fourth century that followed the teachings of Basil the Great, a prominent Cappadocia bishop and theologian. The monks carved small churches within the rock formations, which were later embellished with splendid Byzantine frescoes in the medieval period. Admire some of these marvelous rock-hewn churches on a guided tour of Göreme Historical National Park, a captivating open-air museum recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Following a break for lunch at a nearby restaurant, soak up more of Cappadocia's surreal scenery in Love Valley dotted with fairy chimneys. Then, take a walk with your guide through Cavusin, a charming village filled with cave houses cut into the surrounding rock formations.

Head next to the Yunak Evleri Cave Hotel in Ürgüp and check in. This evening, meet for drinks on the terrace and take in the sunset over Cappadocia before dinner at the hotel.

Day 6 | Devrent Valley | Ozkonak | Avanos

Yunak Evleri Cave Hotel

B | L

Elective Activity | Cappadocia Hot Air Balloon Ride. Rise early and float over the incredible, multicolored panorama of fairy chimneys and cave dwellings on an unforgettable sunrise journey by hot air balloon. (You will reserve this Elective Activity through AHI Travel and pay on site upon arrival. Please note: Flights are dependent upon the weather and are sometimes cancelled at the last minute. If your balloon flight should be cancelled due to operating conditions, you will receive a refund on site.) Available at an additional cost.

Devrent Valley. Discover what you "see" within Imagination Valley (as it's also called), which is known for its weathered rock formations that resemble animals and objects. Visits to other valleys will be included during your time in Cappadocia; the schedule is dependent upon local conditions.

AHI Connects | Lunch in a Cappadocia Home. Be welcomed warmly at a private home in the Cappadocia area for a wonderful meal of authentic Turkish dishes prepared by your local hosts. Learn about family traditions and the regional culture during this intimate experience.

Ozkonak Underground City. One of several underground cities in the region, this multilevel subterranean complex features a maze-like network of living spaces and communal chambers. Thought to have been first carved during the Bronze Age, Ozkonak was gradually expanded to a total of ten floors, and by the sixth and seventh centuries, it could offer sanctuary to thousands during enemy raids. Unlike the other cities, it was built with a communication system and defensive elements designed to thwart those who tried to gain access. It was also outfitted with a ventilation shaft, wine presses and a well. Follow your guide on a tour through the four floors open to the public.

Avanos Pottery Workshop. Avanos has a longstanding reputation for creating lovely pottery from the red clay of the Kizilirmak River that winds through town. At a ceramics manufacturing shop, watch a skilled potter shaping pieces at the wheel and discover the techniques used to craft a variety of designs.

Free Time: Select a nice spot for dinner this evening.

Day 7 | Ürgüp | Kayseri | Izmir | Ephesus | Bodrum | Embark gulet

Love Boat

B | L | D

After breakfast this morning, check out of the hotel. Depart for the airport in Kayseri for your flight to Izmir. (While this flight is planned as a direct flight, schedules are subject to change by the airline. Your final flight details will be provided on site.) Upon arrival, travel to the renowned archaeological site of Ephesus.

Ephesus. Step back in time as you stroll through the outstanding ruins of one of the most important ancient cities in the Mediterranean. Ephesus, a major trading port for the Greeks and later the Roman Empire, offers delightful insights into ancient city living. On a guided walk, gaze up at the glorious, two-tiered façade of the second-century Library of Celsus, one of the largest libraries of its time. Appreciate the dramatic Great Theater along the slope of Mount Pion that could seat 25,000 spectators. Get a close-up look at the many elegant architectural remains, such as the Temple of Hadrian, built in the second century in honor of the emperor's visit to Ephesus. Inside the Terrace Houses, see the fine mosaics and frescoes that adorned these luxurious villas inhabited by wealthy families from the first to the seventh centuries.

After lunch with your group, proceed to Bodrum by deluxe motor coach. Arrive at the harbor and embark the Love Boat. After getting settled, savor your first dinner on board and toast to your upcoming voyage along the Turquoise Coast!

Day 8 | Cruising | Yaliciftlik | Etrim | Çati Bay

Love Boat

B | L | D

Relish the blue-green waters and breathtaking coastal scenery as the yacht cruises this morning to the port of Yaliciftlik. Disembark and travel by motor coach to Etrim, an Anatolian mountain village.

Etrim. Stroll with your guide through this peaceful, traditional community with a long, rich heritage of carpet and kilim weaving. Learn about Etrim's history and the process the weavers follow to craft their vibrant pieces by hand. During your time there, enjoy a light lunch prepared with fresh, local ingredients.

Free Time: Return to the ship for a laid-back, scenic afternoon of cruising to Çati Bay, where the ship overnights.

Day 9 | Cruising | Cleopatra Island | English Harbor

Love Boat

B | L | R | D

Cleopatra Island & English Harbor. The ship sails today to Cleopatra Island, or Sedir Adas1 in Turkish, a gorgeous spot along the Gulf of Gokova. According to legend, Cleopatra so loved the beauty of this secluded island that Mark Antony had shiploads of sand transported here from Egypt as a present to her. Relax and revel in the crystal-clear waters and golden sand of the beach. Later this afternoon, this ship drops anchor in one of the quiet bays near pristine English Harbor (0ngiliz Liman1), where British ships reportedly sheltered during World War II. Enjoy this picture-perfect, tranquil setting and free time for swimming, paddle boarding and other activities on the water.

This evening, celebrate your Turkish adventure together at a Farewell Reception before your final dinner on board.

Day 10 | Karacasö üt | Disembark gulet | Dalyan | Dalaman | Istanbul

Barceló Istanbul Hotel

B | L

After breakfast this morning, disembark the yacht in Karacasö üt and transfer to Dalyan. Board a small boat that will transport you along the Dalyan Strait to Kaunos.

Ancient City of Kaunos. A settlement of ancient Caria, Kaunos was founded along the border between Caria and the region of Lycia most likely around the ninth century B.C. In its heyday, it was a thriving maritime center, ruled for periods by the Persians and later strongly influenced by the Greeks before being annexed by the Roman Empire. As you cruise along, take in the ancient city's most striking feature, the beautiful, Grecian-inspired temple tombs cut high into the limestone of the mountainside. Then, disembark and board a wagon pulled by a tractor that transports you up a hillside to the Kaunos archaeological site. With your guide, see the ruins of the city's theater, baths, walls and other structures. After your tour, reboard the boat and travel to the restaurant where you'll enjoy lunch with the group.

Next, continue to the Dalaman airport for your flight to Istanbul. Arrive and check in to the Barceló Istanbul Hotel.

Free Time: Make dinner plans of your own on your last night in Turkey.

Day 11 | Depart for gateway city

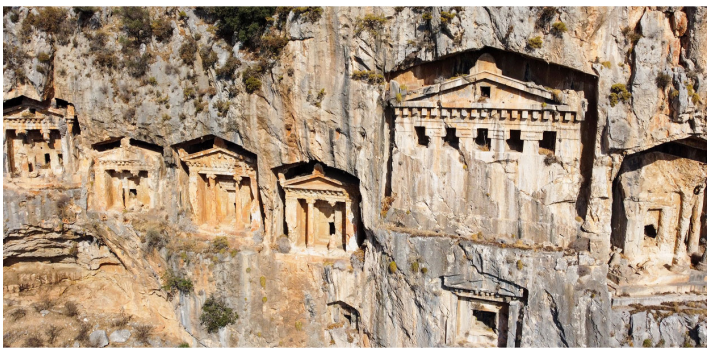
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After breakfast, AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for a group transfer and Land/Cruise Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer depart for Istanbul International Airport for your return flights home. Your Travel Director will provide the details.









What's Included

Program Overview

- Small group: Sized just right at 24 guests.
- 3 nights in Istanbul, Turkey, at the first-class Barceló Istanbul Hotel.
- 2 nights in Ürgüp (Cappadocia), at the first-class Yunak Evleri Cave Hotel.
- 3 nights aboard the exclusively chartered, first-class Love Boat, a Turkish gulet yacht.
- 1 night in Istanbul at the first-class Barceló Istanbul Hotel.
- AHI Connects: Local immersion.
- AHI Sustainability Promise: We strive to make a positive, purposeful impact in the communities we visit.
- Complimentary travel mementos.

Meal Program

- 9 breakfasts, 8 lunches and 5 dinners.
- Welcome and Farewell Receptions and Dinners to mingle with fellow travelers.
- Tea or coffee with all meals, plus wine with dinner.

On-site Features

- Flights and deluxe motor coach transfers during the Land | Cruise Program with baggage handling.
- Enrichment by expert speakers enhances your insight into the region.
- Engaging excursions showcase the local culture, heritage and history.
- Elective activities to pursue your individual interests.
- Free time to pursue your individual interests.
- Tipping of guides and drivers.
- A personal VOX headset to hear your English-speaking guide clearly.

FlexAir Travel Program

Need assistance booking your travel arrangements? Our experts are here to help. Our air program offers the following benefits.

Trip Transportation

- Assistance in the event of schedule changes or delays
- Arrival and departure transfers on group dates

Price Guarantee

- Price guarantee to protect you from fuel surcharge increases after ticket purchase

Travel and Hotel Accommodations

Yunak Evleri Cave Hotel

Feel truly immersed in enchanting Cappadocia at this stunning cave hotel brimming with remarkable character. Tucked into a limestone hillside, the Yunak Evleri offers a cozy, village-like atmosphere with historic cave houses and private cave rooms that surround a main building in a 19th-century Greek mansion. Enjoy the unique ambience of your spacious, comfortable cave room decorated with elegant furnishings and outfitted with modern amenities. Unwind at the pool and spa, or socialize with friends on the terrace and savor the gorgeous Cappadocia scenery. Wi-Fi is complimentary.



Barceló Istanbul Hotel

Ideally located in the heart of the lively Beyo lu district close to Takcim Square, this sophisticated, contemporary property offers exceptional comfort and convenience during your stay in Istanbul. Delight in attentive service from the professional staff, comfortable, roomy guest rooms with complimentary Wi-Fi, and excellent dining options on site, including the Chadir Restaurant and the Sports Bar. Feel revitalized with a visit to the well-equipped gym or the Wellness Center featuring a sauna and hammam. Close out an exciting day with drinks and conversation at the chic rooftop terrace.



Love Boat

Delight in a crewed yacht experience along Turkey's breathtaking Turquoise Coast, where your laidback days are filled with beautiful scenery, intriguing ports of call and fun on the water. Refitted in 2021, this elegant, 16-cabin, wooden gulet offers a winning combination of style, luxury and comfort, perfect for a carefree journey on the sparkling Aegean Sea. The friendly, accommodating professional crew of seven to ten members extends their warm hospitality to make your stay on board exceptional.



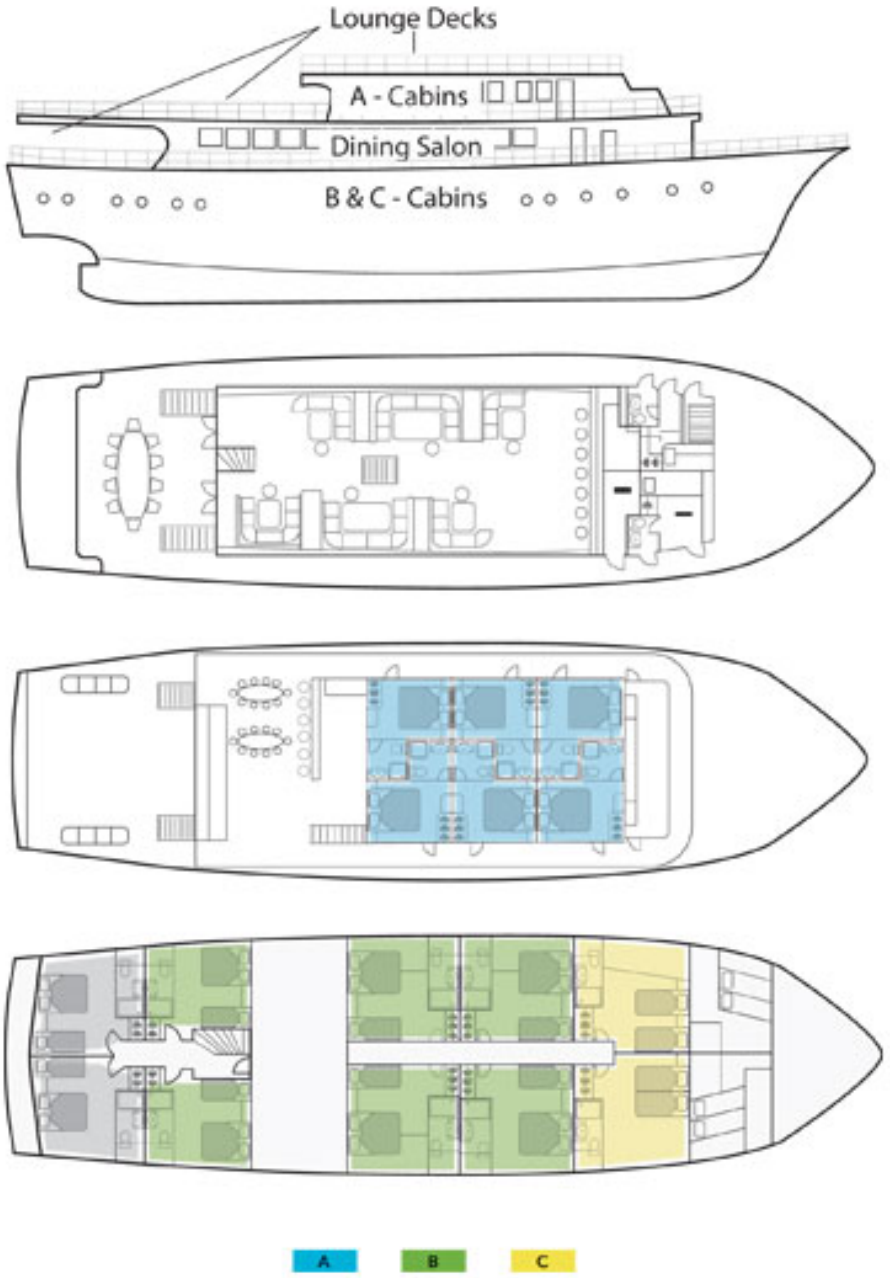
Pricing

$500 Full Payment Discount expires December 17, 2026

Category/Deck	Base Price	Full Payment Discount*	Special Price
AL-Upper Deck	$8,745	**-$500**	$8,245
BL-Lower Deck Mid (WAIT LIST)	$8,145	**-$500**	$7,645
CL-Lower Deck Forward (WAIT LIST)	$7,945	**-$500**	$7,445

Package rates are per person based on Double occupancy from Land Only. Prices include all service charges; port charges when applicable; US government taxes and fees. The minimum deposit is $1000.00 per person. Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to check any baggage. Please contact your airline or refer to its website for detailed information regarding your airline's checked baggage policies. To view Program Terms and Conditions, close this window and scroll to the bottom of the page.

** Full Payment Discounts are only available at the time of booking with initial payment 150+ days prior to departure. This offer only applies to full payment at the time of reservation. Details on how to qualify for this savings will be included when your reservation request is confirmed.


Lounge Decks
A - Cabins
Dining Salon
B & C - Cabins
A
B
C


Istanbul
TURKEY
Avanos
Cavusin
Ürgüp
(Cappadocia)
Ozkonak
Kayseri
Izmir
Ephesus
Etrim
Yaliciftlik
Bodrum
Cleopatra Island
English Harbor
Karacasögüt
Dalyan
Dalaman
Mediterranean Sea



