



OPTIONAL SHORE EXCURSIONS – 7 DAY 3 CONTINENTS CRUISE

SATURDAY

ISTANBUL - Highlights of Istanbul / Lunch On-Board - 8.5 Hours

Begin the excursion with a sightseeing drive through the business centre of the modern city, across the Galata Bridge, along the banks of the Golden Horn and under the Byzantine Aqueduct of Valens. On the way, you can see the Süleymaniye Mosque, dedicated to Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. Continue around the mighty city walls, which once protected Constantinople from the many invasions and attacks it suffered over the centuries. In the Old City, the first visit will be to the Byzantine Hippodrome, which was once one of the largest chariot race arenas in the Byzantine Empire. Visit the Sultanahmet Mosque, where large groups of pilgrims start their pilgrimage to Mecca. It is decorated with 21.000 blue Iznik tiles from where it gets its name, the “Blue Mosque”. Walk to the world famous monument of Hagia Sophia, the Byzantine Church of Divine Wisdom, where you can see the superb mosaics and the marble decorations. Return to the ship for lunch on board. After lunch continue the tour with a visit to the Topkapi Palace, the official residence of the Ottoman Sultans. See the famous treasury and the “Spoonmaker’s Diamond”, the 7th biggest diamond in the world. Visit the kitchen buildings, displaying the third richest collection in the world of Chinese and Japanese porcelain. During the tour you will also have the opportunity to get a cultural taste of Turkey by enjoying an exhibition of oriental carpets and jewelry.

ISTANBUL - Highlights of Istanbul with Lunch – 9 Hours

Begin the excursion with a drive through the business centre of the modern city, across the Galata Bridge, along the banks of the Golden Horn and under the Byzantine Aqueduct of Valens. On the way, you can see the Süleymaniye Mosque, dedicated to Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. Continue around the mighty city walls, which once protected Constantinople from the many invasions and attacks it suffered over the centuries. In the Old City, the first visit will be to the Byzantine Hippodrome, which was once one of the largest chariot race arenas in the Byzantine Empire. Visit the Sultanahmet Mosque, where large groups of pilgrims start their pilgrimage to Mecca. It is decorated with 21.000 blue Iznik tiles from where it gets its name, the “Blue Mosque”. Walk to the famous Hagia Sophia, the Byzantine Church of Divine Wisdom, where you can admire the superb mosaics and the marble decorations. Walk through the large gardens to Konyali Restaurant and experience typical Turkish cuisine. After lunch, the tour continues with a visit to the magnificent Topkapi Palace, the official residence of the Ottoman Sultans. See the famous treasury and the “Spoonmaker’s Diamond”, the 7th biggest diamond in the world. Visit the kitchen buildings, displaying the third richest collection in the world of Chinese and Japanese porcelain. During the tour you will also have the opportunity to get a cultural taste of Turkey by enjoying an exhibition of oriental carpets and jewelry.

*REMARKS: The restaurant venue can be substituted with another one of the same level.

ISTANBUL - Scenic Bosphorus Cruise – 4.5 Hours

Start the tour with a short drive through the modern city of Istanbul, crossing the Galata Bridge en route to the Golden Horn. The impressive Süleymaniye Mosque, built by Turkish architect Sinan and dedicated to Sultan Süleyman The Magnificent, can be seen on the way. At the Golden Horn, take a short walk to the Cruise Boat Station where your private boat will be waiting for your exciting trip on the Bosphorus. You will sail past Dolmabahce and Ciragan Palaces built on the European shore, glide under the Bosphorus Bridge and past Beylerbeyi Palace, Anatolian Fortress and Kanlica on the Asian shore. You will have the chance to take amazing photographs sailing between these two continents.

USA OFFICE:
Star International Group Inc. DBA Travelive
C/O Fiducial Business Services
248 Lorraine Ave, Upper Montclair NJ 07043
Tel: +1 (973) 783 3610 - Fax: +1 (973) 215 2725
USA Toll FREE: 888-377-LIVE(5483)

TRAVELIVE S.A.
102-104 Vas. Pavlou Str., Voula Center
Athens 16673, GREECE
Tel: +30 210 96 89460 (61) - Fax: +30 211 268 6577
UK TOLL FREE: 0-808-120-7605
AUSTRALIA TOLL FREE: 1-800-885-924

E-mail: travel@travelive.com Web: www.travelive.com



ISTANBUL - Secret Treasures of Istanbul with Lunch – 8.5 Hours

This tour is designed to give you a glimpse of the best and the most famous monuments in Istanbul remaining from the Byzantine Empire era. Depart from the pier for an interesting tour of Istanbul with a city sightseeing drive through the business centre of the modern city, across the Galata Bridge, along the banks of the Golden Horn and under the Byzantine Aqueduct of Valens. On the way, you can see the Süleymaniye Mosque dedicated to Sultan Süleyman The Magnificent, built by the famous Turkish Architect, Sinan. Arrive at Chora Museum. This 11th century church of St. Savior in Chora is the most important Byzantine monument in Istanbul after St. Sophia museum. There is a collection of fourteenth century frescoes, gold-inlaid mosaics and some of the World's finest Byzantine paintings. Continue with a drive along the ancient Byzantine city walls to the Byzantine Hippodrome where the chariot races and celebrations in honor of the emperors, once took place during the Byzantine era. Visit the ancient church of St.Sergius and Bachus which belonged to the monastery of Hormisdas and was built as the result of a vow made by Justinian when he was on the point of being executed for conspiring against his predecessor. The tour continues with a visit to an Underground Cistern, consisting of a network of waterways built as far back as the third century B.C., to protect the city against long sieges. Continue to Balat area, another historical part of Istanbul, for lunch at the restaurant. After lunch, visit The Patriarchate which is located just 50 meters away from the restaurant or just relax strolling along the Golden Horn. Drive to Rustem Pasha Mosque, located at Eminonu close to the Spice Market. This Mosque was built by Sinan in 1550 for Rustem Pasha, a grand vizier who married one of the daughters of Süleyman the Magnificent. Inside and on the façade you can see some beautiful Iznik faience. The mihrab, completely covered with faience tiles and the mimbar are particularly striking.

SUNDAY

MYKONOS - Delos Apollo Sanctuary – 3.5 Hours

Delos, once a Sacred Island, is the legendary birthplace of the Sun God Apollo and his twin sister Artemis. For 500 years, tiny Delos was the religious & commercial hub of the entire Aegean. Today, the only remaining inhabitants are the keepers of its treasured ruins. Depart from the port of Mykonos by boat, and sail along the western coast of the island, through Diles & Rhenia Islands, to the ancient harbor of Delos where you begin the guided walking tour. First you see Agora and beyond it, the Sacred Way, which leads to the Temple of Apollo. Next, you see the remains of a Hellenistic Quarter with its harbor, water house and luxurious villas, such as the House of Cleopatra, the House of the Dolphins, the House of the Masks, the House of Dionysos, and many other interesting buildings. Note the architecture and the mosaic floors, which have survived over 2.500 years. Continue and admire the spectacular Avenue of the Lions, where five Naxian marble Lions from the 7th century B.C. crouch, vigilantly guarding the now dry sacred lake. Re-board the boat for the return journey to Mykonos Town. Here you will have the chance to walk along the cobblestone streets of this famous island with its numerous shops, cafes and restaurants before you return to the port to re-join the ship.

*REMARKS: Please note that the cruise from Mykonos to Delos is approximately 45 minutes. Tour not suitable for passengers with walking difficulties.

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TUESDAY

ASHDOD - Jerusalem & Bethlehem (with lunch)

A panoramic drive of approx. 1.30 hrs will bring you to Jerusalem, giving you the chance of catching a glimpse of Israel, old and new. Upon your arrival in town, your motor coach will drive through West Jerusalem, passing by the Knesset - Israel Parliament, the Supreme Court and the Museum of Israel with the Shrine of the Book. You will be amazed by the heartbreaking panorama from the Mount of Olives, where you will have a photo stop. The second visit will be the Gethsemane Garden and the Church of all Nations. Gethsemane garden is at the foot of the Mount of Olives, famous as the place where Jesus and his disciples prayed the night before Jesus' crucifixion. According to Orthodox tradition, Gethsemane is the garden where the Apostles buried the Virgin Mary. The Church of All Nations, also known as the Church or Basilica of the Agony is a Roman Catholic church which enshrines a section of bedrock where Jesus is said to have prayed before his arrest. Afterwards you will have a guided tour in the old city of Jerusalem starting with a stroll through the famous quarters of the old city. Until the 1860s this area constituted the entire city of Jerusalem. The Old City is home to several sites of key religious importance: the Temple Mount and its Western Wall for Jews, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Christians, and the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims. Traditionally, the Old City has been divided into four quarters, although the current designations were introduced only in the 19th century. Today, the Old City is roughly divided into the Muslim Quarter, the Christian Quarter, the Jewish Quarter and the Armenian Quarter. The Jewish Quarter of the Old City was largely destroyed by Jordan following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. In 1980, Jordan proposed the Old City to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site List. It was added to the List in 1981. The Wailing Wall, sometimes referred to as the Kotel and as al-Buraaq Wall by Muslims, is one of the most important Jewish religious site. Just over half the wall, including its 17 courses located below street level, dates from the end of the Second Temple period, being constructed around 19 BCE by Herod the Great, while the remaining layers were added from the 7th century onwards. The tour will continue to Bethlehem, where you will have lunch in an oriental restaurant, followed by free time to stroll around and get some souvenirs from the Holy Land. The main site you will visit in will be the Church of the Nativity, one of the oldest continuously operating churches in the world. The structure is built over the cave that tradition marks as the birthplace of Christ, and it is considered sacred by followers of both Christianity and Islam. Return to Port said where you will join the ship.

ASHDOD - Nazareth Galilee (with lunch) – 10 Hours

A pleasant drive will bring you from the port to the picturesque hills of Nazareth by highway. Upon your arrival to Nazareth, you will Visit St. Gabriel Church and Mary's Spring. The church, also known as St. Gabriel's Greek Orthodox Church or the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, is located over an underground spring that according to Eastern Orthodox belief is where the Virgin Mary was drawing water at the time of the Annunciation. Water from the spring still runs inside the apse of the church and also feeds the adjacent site of Mary's Well, located 140 m away. The spring was the village of Nazareth's only water supply at the time the church was constructed, and served as a local watering hole for some three thousand years.

The spring inside the church is located at the end of a low vaulted cavern built by the Crusaders in the twelfth century. Ancient Armenian tile work decorates the walls of the cavern and there is a small recess with a shaft leading down to the spring where one can lower a metal cup to draw water. Free time for shopping and souvenirs. Your second stop will be Jardenit, place of baptizing of the first Christians, where you will have a guided visit.

Lunch break in a typical restaurant. A panoramic drive through ancient Tiberias with its modern hotels and restaurants will bring you to Capernaum, a settlement on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The site is a

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ruin today, but was inhabited from 150 BC to about AD 750. Here where you will see the ancient synagogue and the House of St. Peter. Following site will be Tabgha, with the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes. You will visit the interior of the church with the mosaic of the fish and loaves laid next to a large rock, which has caused some New Testament scholars to speculate that the builders of the original church believed that Jesus stood on this rock when he blessed the fish and loaves just before the feeding of the crowd who had come to hear him. The Mount of the Beatitudes will be your next stop with the Byzantine church which was erected near the current site in the 4th century, and it was used until the 7th century. Remains of a cistern and a monastery are still visible. The current Roman Catholic Franciscan chapel was built in 1938. Return back to the vessel.

WEDNESDAY

PORTSAID - Cairo, Giza Pyramids & Nile Cruise (with lunch) – 12.5 Hours

Depart from the city of Port Said in luxury a/c motor coaches en route to Africa's largest city, the teeming metropolis of Cairo. Your first stop will be at Tahrir (Liberty) Square, the heart of downtown Cairo. Visit the National Archaeological Museum and acquaint yourself with Egypt's ancient history, spanning a period of over 50 centuries. The Museum is the repository of the world's largest and richest collection of Egyptian Antiquities amongst them the priceless collection of King Tutankhamen. At the banks of the River Nile downtown a luxurious cruise boat awaits to sail you on the same timeless waterway traversed by Pharaohs, Queens and Nobles thousands of years ago. Sit back, relax and enjoy a sumptuous buffet lunch in elaborate interiors as you glide past Cairo's waterfront landmarks. For your entertainment, a folkloric presentation and belly dancing will take place during lunch. After lunch drive to the Giza Plateau, where the only remaining Wonder of the Ancient World, the Pyramids of Giza still stand. Visit the Pyramids and enjoy panoramic views from the Western Plateau. Your coach will park at the base of Chephren's pyramid and time will be allocated to explore the site on your own. Continue down the valley where the guardian of this mortuary complex, the mighty Sphinx lies watching the passage of time and men in eons of silence its expression an enigma yet to be unraveled. Visit a Papyrus Institute where the art of paper making from reeds discovered by the Ancient Egyptians will be demonstrated for you. Limited time for souvenir shopping will also be allocated before you commence the return drive to Alexandria.

*REMARKS: The journey from Port Said to Cairo is approx. 3 hours. At the museum passengers go through 2 security checks before they enter. No cameras and videos allowed in the museum. The museum is not a/c but natural ventilation produces cooling breezes. Only the hall of the Tutankhamen collection and the Royal Mummies are a/c. Entering the hall of Mummies requires an extra fee of 100 L.E. and it is not part of the guided tour. Ticket purchasable within the museum at the entrance to the mummies. No video, camera or guiding allowed inside. The mummies are viewed as you walk past them and it does not take longer than 10 minutes. There is an elevator in the museum but at times is not in operation. However, museum personnel help carry confined and assistance requiring visitors upstairs. Visit inside a Pyramid is not included in the program neither recommended for persons suffering from claustrophobia, breathing, knee or back problems. Only 15 people each time are allowed inside the Pyramid of Cheops, maximum 150 for the day on a first come basis. The corridor is dark and low and at most of the time visitors have to stoop or bend their knees while they walk. The main chamber is totally empty. Very humid and dark inside. Cameras and videos not allowed inside.

PORTSAID - Saladin Citadel, Sakkara & Bazaar (with lunch) – 12.5 Hours

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Depart Port Said in a convoy of luxury air conditioned motor coaches for Africa's largest city, the teeming metropolis of Cairo. Your first stop will be at the Citadel of Saladin and the Alabaster Mosque of Mohamed Ali. Admire the exquisite interiors of the Mosque and view the fascinating skyline of Old Cairo from the top of the hill. Drive southwards to Egypt's first capital Memphis with its ancient cemetery of Sakkara. Here, the world's first monumental stone building, the Step Pyramid of King Zoser built by the engineer Imhotep almost 5,000 years ago still stands. After visiting the complex continue to one of the Mastabas (funerary chambers) built nearby, such as those of Ptah-Hotep, Mereruca, Idut or Ti for an inside visit. Enjoy a set menu lunch at the restaurant.

Visit a Papyrus Institute where the process of paper making from reeds, an art discovered by the Ancient Egyptians will be demonstrated. The exotic and colorful Khan El Khalili Bazaar is a shopper's paradise and a photographer's dream come true. Bargaining is an art and expected when you are negotiating a purchase. Gold and silver, precious stones and gems, bronze and copper, the smell of exotic spices, leather goods, the aroma of brewed coffee sifting through elaborately carved wooden doors and coffee shops, the captivating sound of music and a plethora of an unbelievable display of merchandise, together with a multitude of colorfully dressed crowds bring to life scenes from "A Thousand And One Arabian Nights". Enjoy free time to purchase souvenirs before you commence the return drive to Alexandria.

*REMARKS: Tour not suitable for passengers on wheelchair.

The journey from Port Said to Cairo is approx. 3 hours.

Shoulders and knees must be covered while visiting the Mosque and shoes must be removed. We supply each person with a plastic bag to store and carry their shoes.

A flight of 30 stone stairs lead to the entrance grounds of the mosque at the citadel. No cameras or video fees at the Citadel but no professional videos allowed.

No camera or video fees for Step Pyramid and Mastabas. No flash inside the Mastabas.

THURSDAY

HERAKLION - A Taste of Crete – 4 Hours

The tour begins from the Venetian lion-guarded port of Heraklion with a drive through the city to the famous wine producing area of Peza, south of Heraklion. The drive is through breathtaking landscape of countryside and vineyards as old as Minoan times. The first stop is a modern winery, where you will see the updated methods of wine making and sample some of the delicious Cretan wines. The drive continues through rural villages to the village of Archanes, the municipality in the area. On the way, a photo stop is made at Vathypetro to view one of the oldest farmhouses in Crete, dating to the Minoan period 16th century B.C.. The tour continues through the island's hilly countryside where olive groves and vineyards existed from as far back as 4.000 years. Arriving at the village of Archanes, which is situated 10km south of the Palace of Knossos, the quaint market town of Archanes has many restored sandstone houses dating from the Turkish period. At a taverna in the villages' tree-shaded square, you can sample an assortment of Cretan snacks and locally produced wine, and have a chance to mingle with many of the locals themselves while listening to typical Greek live music. You will have free time to browse before the return drive to the port of Heraklion and the ship.

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