

Christmas Turkey

12 days | Starts/Ends: Istanbul



CHRISTMAS TOUR: There's no stuffing birds or entertaining aunts! Enjoy snowflakes on fairy chimneys, legendary sites at Ephesus, Troy and Aspendos, thermal springs at Pamukkale and Christmas Eve at St Nic's!

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Istanbul - Sultanahmet (Old Istanbul), Hippodrome, Blue Mosque, Hagia Sofia, Underground Cistern and Topkapi Palace
- Gallipoli Peninsular - ANZAC Cove, memorials, trenches and battlefields
- Troy - Trojan horse and ancient ruins
- Aegean Coast
- Roman ruins of Pergamum and Ephesus
- Pamukkale - Thermal pools and Roman Hierapolis
- Demre - Home of the original St Nicholas
- Ancient ruins of Perge and Aspendos
- Konya - Silk Road and Mevlana Whirling Dervish Museum and Ancient caravanserais en route
- A jolly red suited man flying overhead... calling on Dasher and Dancer and Prancer!
- Cappadocia region - UNESCO World Heritage listed Goreme Valley, Kaymakli Underground City and Uchisar Castle

- Leather and carpet manufacturing houses

What's Included

- Breakfast daily and 6 dinners inclusive of a special Christmas Eve Dinner in Antalya overlooking the Mediterranean Sea
- 10 nights 4 star and special class hotels, 1 night 5 star hotel
- Guided sightseeing - Istanbul including the Blue Mosque, Underground Cistern, Topkapi Palace, Hippodrome and Hagia Sofia
- Guided sightseeing - Gallipoli, Troy, Ruins of Ephesus and Pergamum, Pamukkale and Roman Hierapolis, Perge, Aspendos, Konya and Cappadocia
- Escorted by an English speaking, degree qualified Turkish tour guide
- Airport arrival transfer on day 1 and departure transfer (to Istanbul International Airport) on day 12
- Relevant transfers and transportation in private modern air-conditioned vehicles

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: USD\$40pp, paid in local currency
- Entrance Fees: USD\$115-130pp, paid in local currency
- International flights and visa
- Tip for your tour guide and driver. We recommend you allow USD\$5 - 7 per day, per traveller as a tip for your guide and

USD\$2 per day for your driver. Tipping your guide and driver is an entirely personal gesture

COVID SAFE GUIDE

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Welcome to Istanbul

18 December. Arrive Istanbul and included transfer to our hotel. Spend the afternoon at leisure or head out to explore the city. At 8 o'clock this evening our tip filled welcome meeting takes place. Take the opportunity to meet your tour guide and travel companions then maybe head out for some dinner or a chat in the bar afterward. **Overnight - Istanbul**

Day 2 : Old City Sights



Istanbul. Enjoy a tour of old Istanbul. The only city to span two continents sits on the Bosphorus - the strait of water that divides the continents of Europe and Asia. Its illustrious past leaves a rich legacy of

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churches, mosques, palaces and museums, complemented by the behemoth Grand Bazaar and colourful street life.

Sultanahmet, the compact old city of Istanbul, is full of parks, gardens and stunning sights. The Blue Mosque is famed for its blue Iznik tiles and unique 6 minarets. The Hagia Sofia, constructed in the 6th century, reigned as the grandest and biggest church in Christendom until the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, when it became a mosque.

Just around the corner is the stunning Topkapi Palace and the Underground Cistern. Rest of day free. Tonight, we are free to explore or relax in our hotel. **Overnight - Istanbul (B)**

Day 3 : Gallipoli



Istanbul – Gallipoli. Today, we travel to the WW1 battlefields of Gallipoli. Here, we'll embark upon a guided tour of the region, once the site of fierce fighting and today almost hauntingly beautiful, with its wooded landscape dotted with understated memorials to the war dead.

Our guided tour of the region will take in sights such as Lone Pine Australian War Memorial and cemetery, Chunuk Bair New Zealand War Memorial and cemetery, the Nek, Johnston's Jolly and the many fortified trenches still clearly visible amongst the scrub after all these years. Roughly 3 feet deep, the system of trenches provided much needed safe cover for troops as they desperately fought the enemy. **Overnight - Canakkale (B, D)**

Days 4-5 : Troy & legendary Ephesus

Gallipoli - Kusadasi. This morning after breakfast, we depart Gallipoli, travelling across the Dardanelles from Eceabat to Canakkale by ferry from where we continue to

Troy. If you've seen the movie – 'Troy' based on poet Homer's – 'The Iliad' you'll be familiar with Paris – Prince of Troy, his prized Helen and Hector – Prince of Troy on the Trojan side and Agamemnon and Achilles (he of the heel) on the Achaean (Greek) side. The legend of the lost city of Troy and Homer's poetry was brought alive by its rediscovery in 1863. Subsequent excavations revealed 9 ancient cities, one on top of the other, dating back to 3000 BC! We enjoy a tour of the ruins and see the replica of the stoic Trojan wooden horse that as the story goes – was filled to the gunnels with Achaean soldiers who helped sack Troy.

Driving further south to explore the ancient ruins of Pergamum. Home to one of the steepest, vertigo - inducing amphitheatres in the classical world, Pergamum was also famous for its asclepion (medical centre). See the Temple of Trajan and of course the Library, which in its time was said to rival the library in ancient Alexandria.

On day five we enjoy a guided tour of the Roman ruins of Ephesus. Positively the best-preserved classical city in the eastern Mediterranean, and among the best places in the world to get a feel for what Roman life must have been like. Ephesus, under the Romans was a vast city with a population nearing 250,000. We'll also visit a leather goods manufacturer. Turkey produces some of the finest leather goods in the world and many are made here before branding. Day 4 - dinner included. Day 5 - you may wish to consider heading out for dinner. Downtown Kusadasi is the place to go with a varied choice of restaurants, pubs and cafes. **Overnight - Kusadasi (B:2, D:1)**

Day 6 : Pamukkale



Kusadasi – Pamukkale. Today we visit the famous gleaming white calcium terraced pools of Pamukkale. Known locally as the Cotton Castles, they are a natural phenomena and gift of Mother Nature. Pamukkale was formed when warm, calcium rich mineral water cascaded over the cliff edge, cooling and depositing in the process. The calcium built natural shelves and pools on the cliffs, known as travertines. Today, many of the pools are closed to tourists. However, areas of the travertines can be walked upon, albeit in bare feet. We can also opt to enjoy a unique and very pleasant dip in the warm waters at the Pamukkale Thermal with its submerged fragments of fluted marble columns near the centre of the ruined spa town of Hierapolis, which was a Roman curative centre.

Overnight - Pamukkale (B, D)

Day 7 : Xmas Eve at St Nic's

Pammukale - Demre - Antalya. The legend of Saint Nicholas (aka Santa Claus) began in Turkey! St Nicholas - a 4th century bishop gave anonymous gifts to dowryless village girls. He would drop bags of coins down the chimneys of their houses and this 'gift from heaven' would allow them to marry. We visit the church and tomb of St Nicholas in Demre before continuing to coastal Antalya for a fantastic Christmas Eve dinner on a hilltop restaurant overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. **Overnight - Antalya (B, D)**

Day 8 : Christmas Day & Roman Ruins



Antalya - Konya. Merry Xmas! Enjoy a lazy morning in Antalya before travelling onward to Konya, stopping en route to visit the Roman ruins of Perge and Aspendos. Settled first by the Hittites around 1500 BC, Perge was an important city in Pamphylia (today's Mediterranean region). The ruins of

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the ancient theatre (capacity 12,000 people) boasting marble reliefs depicting the life and times of Dionysos along with the remains of the first church built in Perge, and various temples can be seen. Perge produced some famous notables of the day including Varius - the philosopher, the physician Asklepiades, the mathematician Apollonius and female Roman ruler of the city - Plancia Magna.

Nearby Aspendos is famous for its well-preserved theatre of antiquity. Built in the 2nd c. AD with a capacity for 15,000 people, it is still used today for performances and festivals today. Nearby the theatre are the remains of a basilica, agora and one of the largest aqueducts in Anatolia. We then continue to Konya - a town on the edge of the vast Anatolian Steppe. **Overnight - Konya (B, D)**

Days 9-10 : Cappadocia



Konya - Cappadocia. This morning we visit the Mevlana Whirling Dervish Museum - Konya is the birthplace of the Turkish Mevlana. Continuing on to Cappadocia we stop en route to visit an ancient Silk Road Caravanserai and take a short walk through the beautiful Ihlara Valley. Tonight (day 9) why not join us on an optional and fun Turkish evening out.

On day 10, we explore the stunning lunar landscapes of Cappadocia and enjoy a guided tour of the Goreme Valley - one of Turkey's most extraordinary national treasures. The utter improbability of the seemingly surreal landscape has to be seen to be believed with its 'stuff of fables' cave dwellings and phallic 'fairy chimneys' landscape. Whole troglodyte villages, subterranean churches and fortresses have been hewn from the soft, porous, eerily eroded rock of Cappadocia.

Stopping on the outskirts of Goreme Village we have the opportunity to see Pigeon Valley where century's old pigeon houses are carved into the surrounding cliffs, the pigeon droppings that litter the area have been used as fertilizer on crops for generations. Here you will also have the opportunity to visit an Onyx shop, specialising in historic jewellery designs unique to Turkey and using local materials and craftsmen. For those not interested in shopping spend a little time relaxing and grab a drink from the local cafe. Dinner on day 10.

Overnight - Cappadocia (B:2, D:1)

Day 11 : Back to Istanbul



Cappadocia - Istanbul. Today we head back to Istanbul, stopping en route for lunch (payable locally). **Overnight - Istanbul (B)**

Day 12 : Istanbul

29 December. After breakfast our tour concludes with an onward departure transfer to the airport. We hope you had a wonderful Christmas in Turkey!(B)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Kent Hotel

The charming Kent Hotel is a great example of contemporary design and a friendly atmosphere. Guest rooms are superbly equipped with modern facilities including Wi-Fi connectivity, state of the art technology and bright marbled bathrooms. Enjoying a delicious Turkish meal at the in house

Calcedoine Restaurant after a hard days sightseeing is highly recommended. The hotel is also fantastically located within a 10-minute walk of the Grand Bazaar and Old Town in the Bayazit area in the European side of Istanbul.



Kolin Hotel

Looking out across the Dardanelles, the modern and bright Kolin Hotel offers well appointed rooms with hard wood flooring and tasteful decor. The hotel also boasts a luxury spa, wellness centre and a number of mouth watering restaurants all set within perfectly manicured lawns. Sipping a sundowner on the roof bar, overlooking the beautiful strait, is the perfect way to end the day. The hotel is located on the water's edge a short drive from the town centre with beautiful views out to sea.



Charisma Hotel

The Charisma is a modern and elegant hotel with spacious rooms. The rooms are equipped with jacuzzi, LCD screen television, split air conditioning, mini-bar, electronic safe box, hairdryer and free internet connection. Towering over the Aegean Sea's outstanding view, the Hotel is just 15 minutes by walk from Kuşadası's shopping and entertainment area.



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Pamukkale Doga Thermal Hotel

Complete with both indoor and outdoor pools, the Doga Thermal Hotel is a modern hotel with excellent amenities. Guest rooms are bright and spacious with wonderful en suite facilities. There is complimentary Wi-Fi offered throughout and a sumptuous buffet served for breakfast and dinner. The spa facilities on offer include sauna, Turkish bath, hot spring bath, massage treatments and a fitness centre.



Best Western Khan Hotel

Modern and elegant, the Best Western Khan has good sized rooms with en suites and a range of modern amenities, and free transportation to Konyaaltı, one of the most beautiful beaches in Antalya. A breakfast buffet is served in the hotel's restaurant on a daily basis and various Turkish delicacies can be found here as well. The hotel also has a pool and fitness centre. The hotel is located in the city centre, within easy walking distance of the Old Town and Marina.



Hilton Garden Inn

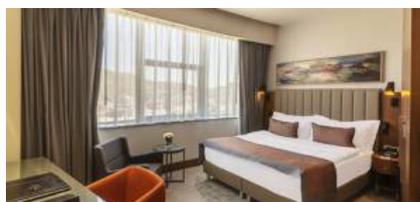
Centrally located with excellent facilities, the Hilton Garden Inn is modern and right next door to the Mevlana Culture Centre - home to the famous Whirling Dervishes. Rooms are spacious and benefit from 24 hour high speed internet and the renowned Garden Sleep System mattresses - guaranteed to provide a great nights sleep. Discover traditionally brewed Turkish coffee and refreshing tea every morning before breakfast at the mouthwatering Sumac Grill. The hotel is located within

walking distance of a range of shopping and business districts.



Crowne Plaza Nevsehir

Situated only 15 minutes from the UNESCO World Heritage-listed site of Goreme, this modern hotel boasts an excellent location in Cappadocia. Its guestrooms are located in quiet zones to ensure you have a restful sleep and offer modern amenities including free WiFi so you can stay connected to friends and family back home. Guests can unwind in the indoor pool or book a revitalizing treatment at the onsite spa centre. A rich breakfast is served in the Gurme Restaurant, then for dinner head to the a la carte Manzara Roof Restaurant on the top floor for some delicious international cuisine.



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Welcome to Turkey - Pre accom & arrival transfer

If you would like to arrive into Turkey prior to your tour or stay on longer, we can arrange pre or post tour accommodation for you. Pre/post tour accommodation is located at the hotel your tour commences/ends and is inclusive of breakfast.

If arriving on day 1 of a holiday or booking pre-tour accommodation with us on a tour that includes an airport arrival transfer (as indicated in the 'What's Included' section of these trip notes) we will be at the airport (Istanbul or Sahiba Gokcen), ready to transfer you to your hotel.

If arriving prior to 8am on day 1 (essentially on a flight that arrives very, very early in the morning) you will need to purchase a night of pre-tour accommodation to save you waiting until standard hotel check in time, which is generally 2pm.

ARRIVING INTO ISTANBUL AIRPORT

Upon arrival to Istanbul International Airport please proceed to the Arrival Hall. Upon entering the Arrival Hall turn LEFT. Here, you will need to look for your name on one of the electronic screens located in the arrivals hall. Our representative will be located near to the screen with your name on. Please present your tour voucher to our representative when you meet them.

SABIHA GOKCEN AIRPORT

If arriving into Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport, an additional 50km from the Istanbul city centre. Please be timely in exiting customs and in meeting our awaiting representative, who will be holding an On The Go tours sign.

If, for any reason you have trouble locating our representative (after waiting 20 minutes in the arrival hall) or your flight to Turkey is delayed, please call or send a text message (standard text message, not Messenger or WhatsApp) to the emergency contact number as stated on your Tour Voucher.

Entrance fees

On group tours, entrance fees to tourist sites are not included in our tour price. Funds will be collected in Turkey (and Egypt if travelling on one of our combo tours) for your entrance fees, that are payable in local currency - Turkish Lira and Egyptian Pounds and will be collected by your tour guide. You will find the cost of entrance fees noted under 'What's Not Included' on page 1 of this document. Entrance fee amounts do change, therefore upon arrival in Turkey your tour leader will outline the exact total of your entrance fees and collect this amount in Turkish Lira on day 2 of your tour. A breakdown of these costs is available upon request from your guide.

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Tipping kitty

It is customary to tip in Turkey. At the start of your tour we collect a small tipping kitty from all tour participants (the amount is noted under exclusions on page 1 of this document) to cover tips en-route (to be paid in Turkish Lira). This saves you the hassle of when and how much to tip bellhops, luggage handlers, waiters, your airport representative and other support staff throughout your tour.

This tipping kitty does not include a tip for your tour guide - for a job well done! We recommend you allow USD\$5 - 7 per day, per traveller as a tip for your guide and \$2 USD per day for your driver. Tipping your guide and driver is an entirely personal gesture.

Groups & time keeping

Some of our group tours are sectors of a larger tour. Some travellers on your trip may only travel with you for part of your tour. It also might be that you end your holiday part way through a longer tour and others in the group continue on.

In order that we show the best of Turkey in a non-hurried fashion to you, it is imperative you are ready for departure each day. Please do not delay and inconvenience fellow travellers. It is your responsibility to be at the proposed meeting point for the group in time. We will depart at our specified times.

Departure transfer

We offer complimentary departure transfers to Istanbul Airport at 9am and 1pm on the final day of the following tours: Turkey Discovered, Turkey Unplugged, Turkey and Tutankhamun (day 7 for our Turkey & Tutankhamun tour).

Christmas Turkey: A departure transfer is offered on the final day of your tour at any time.

Should you require a departure transfer at any other time or to Sabiha Gokcen Airport, this can be booked in advance or locally.

Turkey Country Guide

Visas and passports

Visa requirements are subject to change and visa procurement is the responsibility of the

traveller and not On The Go Tours. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of departure from Turkey.

After booking your holiday, please provide us with your passport details as soon as possible so that we can proceed to book all services. Please be advised visa requirements are subject to change, therefore it is essential that you check current visa requirements with the embassy before travel. For information about visas, head to www.onthegotours.com/Turkey/Visas

Turkey health requirements and water

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Turkey from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all the appropriate vaccinations. The tap water in Turkey is generally considered safe to drink, but as a precaution against stomach upsets you may want to drink bottled mineral water, which is readily available from shops, hotels and restaurants.

Essential packing

Please check local temperatures so you can pack accordingly. Visit www.worldclimate.com

- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs
- Tour Voucher and a copy of your travel insurance policy, spare passport photos and a photocopy of your passport
- Universal travel adaptor
- Spare camera batteries/memory card so you can go snap happy
- Take out some Turkish Lira from the ATM facilities at the airport upon arrival
- Buy a phrasebook and practice locally
- Keep a supply of small Turkish Lira notes for local transactions

It's not like home

Travelling to far-flung corners of the earth often involves encountering lifestyles and conditions that are very different from what you are used to back home. As such it is important to come prepared for unusual situations, local inadequacies and

unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is definitely not suitable for people who expect everything to go exactly as planned, as things can and do change in foreign countries. The people, customs, creed and languages are different from one region to the next.

Please visit www.onthegotours.com/Turkey/Travel-tips-and-useful-info for local customs, currency, WiFi and other helpful information to prepare you for an enjoyable holiday.

Shopping

Turkey is a virtual Aladdin's Cave. The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul is cavernous and full of unusual and everyday objects. Known locally as Kapali Carsi – the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul's Old City is a massive conglomeration of shops (some 4000) divided into areas specialising in gold, carpets, leather, souvenirs and clothing. Turkish handicrafts include a rich variety of textiles and embroideries, articles of copper, onyx and tile, mother-of-pearl, inlaid articles, leather and suede products. Jewellery, carpets and kilims represent top buys at the bazaar. Opening hours: Mon to Sat 0900 – 1900hrs (closed Sunday).

Carpet Buying

Turkey is justly famous for its carpets and kilims (a napless woven rug) and you'll be spoilt for choice. To ensure you get a good buy, spend time visiting several shops to compare price, pattern-type and quality. A good quality, long-lasting carpet should be 100% wool. Check the quality of the weave for possible holes. A wool carpet will have fine, frizzy fibres if you turn the carpet on its back. Cheaper carpets are made of cotton and most often the fringe will be too. If you want a wool carpet and the fringe is of cotton, it's likely the carpet won't be a woollen one! The lies can be bigger than the fall of Ottoman Empire. Don't make the mistake of buying a cotton carpet at the price of a wool one! Many carpets are made to look like antiques at prices to match.

In the tourism industry it's common practice for commission to be offered in exchange for recommending particular shops or suppliers. This can become an issue when clients feel obliged to purchase. We do our best to avoid

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this by monitoring all shopping experiences offered.

All shopping experiences on your tour have been noted in the itinerary and they have been carefully selected based upon positive feedback from On The Go travellers. You are under no obligation to partake in a listed shopping experience and you are most welcome to wait inside or outside the premises.

Although we only visit reputable retailers, please note that we cannot explicitly guarantee the quality of their products. All purchases made whilst on holiday with us are at your own discretion. Please make sure that you are completely happy with your purchase. On The Go cannot be held responsible for any items that you buy if they fail to meet expectation, or any shipping arrangements. Proceed with caution.

What to expect and Ramadan

Ramazan dates: 13 April - 12 May 2021 (approx). The month of Ramazan (Ramadan), the ninth of the Islamic calendar, is a great time to travel in the region as you get a real insight into the Muslim faith. It is a time for spiritual reflection, prayer, doing good deeds and spending time with family and friends. The fasting is intended to help teach Muslims self-discipline, self-restraint and generosity. It also reminds them of the suffering of the poor, who may rarely get to eat well. During the day, people must refrain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual activity, so if you encounter someone who is a bit grumpy please be understanding, flexible and sympathetic. As tourists you will be generally unaffected although some places may close early, but your tour leader will do their best to plan around this. Most hotels bars and tourist restaurants will remain open. In the evening you will experience a celebratory atmosphere at iftar, when people break their fast. To witness Ramazan is a real highlight making your tour in the region that bit more interesting. Each year it begins roughly ten days earlier than the year before, according to the Gregorian calendar.

Please visit www.onthegotours.com/Turkey/Travel-tips-and-useful-info for local customs,

currency, WiFi and other helpful information to prepare you for an enjoyable holiday.

Turkey site opening times

Popular sightseeing spot in Istanbul are closed on specific days. Please plan your visit accordingly.

- Topkapi Palace - Closed Tuesdays
- Grand Bazaar - Closed Sundays
- Blue Mosque - Closed during all prayer times and Friday's until 3pm
- All museums in Turkey will open at 1pm, on the 13th of May and 20th of July 2021
- The Spice Bazaar and Grand Bazaar are closed as follows:

2020: 1, 2, 3 Aug / 29 Oct

2021: 1 Jan / 13, 14, 15 May / 20, 21, 22, 23 Jul / 29 Oct

Blue Mosque renovations

The Blue Mosque (also known as Sultanahmet Camii in Turkish) is currently undergoing renovations and for the foreseeable future there will be scaffolding erected inside and other construction works will be taking place. Whilst we will visit the inside of the Blue Mosque when included on a tour, please be aware that some parts of the Mosque may be off limits to tourists.

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