TOUR CODE

TQ1

ADVENTURESABROAD

TURKEY'S TURQUOISE COAST

Featuring a Gulet Cruise

12 days

Updated 06/01/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Istanbul*

Today we arrive in Istanbul and transfer to our hotel.

"If one had but a single glance to give the world, one should gaze on Constantinople," marvelled Alphonse de Lamartine, the 19th century French writer and politician. New Rome, Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul; the legendary city has served as the capital of the legendary Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. Though no longer a capital, Istanbul is the largest city and the cosmopolitan heart of Turkey, full of marvels and startling contrasts.

Overnight in Istanbul. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Istanbul - Antalya*

A morning flight (75 min) takes us south to Antalya, located in the region called Pamphylia and founded by Attalus II, King of Pergamum in the 2nd century BC.

On arrival we will visit the excellent Antalya Archaeology Museum, then continue to Perge. Built around 1000 BC, Perge boasts a beautiful theater and the largest stadium in all Asia Minor. Alexander spent time here, as did the mathematician Appolonius. The city was by turns Pamphilian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Selcuk. We then visit Aspendos and the best-preserved theater in Asia Minor which is still used for performances. We arrive at our hotel in Antalya in the early evening.

Overnight in Antalya. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Antalya - Myra - Demre: Gulet Cruise*

Today we drive southwest toward Finike via the ruins of Myra and the Church of St. Nicholas (3rd century). Myra boasts one of the most colossal and well-preserved Roman amphitheaters in the world, complete with stone masks of the performers lying about. We explore 4th century BC Lycian house-tombs with richly-decorated facades carved out of the rock.

At nearby Demre we board our gulet and head west skirting the indented coast. As a point of interest, Demre is where the legend of Father Christmas ("Noel Baba" in Turkish) is said to have originated with a Christian bishop who gave dowries to penniless girls. The bishop became known as St. Nicholas.

OUR BOAT: Gulets are wooden boats, traditionally hand made by master craftsmen from the Bodrum area of Turkey. This classic gulet was once used by fisherman and sponge divers to transport their catch. Today they are purpose-built for the charter market with fittings and equipment designed for guests' comfort. A gulet is typically built of pine wood and styled with a pointed fore and round aft. The major difference between the Turkish and Western boats is that the Turkish boats are designed to allow passengers more space on the deck. The Bodrum built boats take as much

advantage as they can of the pleasant climate of the south. An aft deck for dining and lounging in the shade of a sun awning and a forward deck with numerous sunbeds. Large living areas, air-conditioned twin-berth cabins (with WC, shower) and a sun deck furnished lounge area are typical. On deck there are sun lounges for sunbathing and relaxing as well as dining areas under sun awnings. Our gulet will rage in size, depending on number of group participants.

NOTE: single cabins are limited in number. Late single supplement requests may need to double up on the gulet portion of the tour. The actual order of places visited may vary due to variables such as weather and other considerations.

The pace is, of course, relaxed with plenty of time for swimming, snorkelling and sunbathing on deck. During the day our gulet navigates for about 4 hours at most, stopping in the bays and isolated islands for swimming breaks or short visits to the shore. In some places where the gulet can dock close to the shore, you will be able to travel by smaller boat (dinghy) to the shore for a walk or to visit a place. Most of the places you visit are of historical and natural importance.

Overnight on Gulet. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Kekova - Kas*

The Gulf of Kekova is one of the most picturesque stretches of the coast and has several bays. On Kekova, there is no trace of the city which once dominated the island -- its ruins and foundations can now only be seen under the surface of the clear water on the northern side of the island. The name "Kekova" is Turkish for "plain of thyme" and describes the region encompassing the island of Kekova, the villages of Kalekoy and Ucagiz and the three ancient town of Simena. We will have a chance to hike to Kalekoy, a pastoral village crowned by a Crusader castle with dozens of impressive Roman sarcophagi strewn around its base.

Kas is just a little further on, and is slightly larger and more developed than its neighbours but still very charming, with streets and shops leading down to the sea. Kas was one of the earliest settlements of the Lycian era, when it was called Antiphellos. A large sarcophagus dominates the centre of town, and the sheer rock face overlooking Kas is dotted with Lycian rock tombs. After touring the village on foot (1 hr) we reach our anchorage for the night.

Overnight on gulet. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 5 *Aga Bay - Lydea*

This morning we can hike from Aga Bay to Lydea (3 hrs, optional), an ancient Lycian Oracle reached only by foot. This is one of the most spectacular hikes of the trip -- high, rocky ridge tops with pine forests, shepherds' homesteads, and the aroma of natural herb gardens of oregano, thyme and sage lingering in the air.

Overnight on gulet. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 6 *Aga Bay - Hamam Cove - Kalekoy*

Hamam Cove heads the list of primary stopovers of the boots on the coast, with its unbelievably beautiful sea and coastal scenery. In a typical Mediterranean fashion, local people are convinced that Cleopatra once swam here and so the site is often called Cleopatra Cove.

We can swim and snorkel, searching for sponges, octopus and fish. An easy walk takes us along the cove. Then we sail towards our anchoring point for the evening.

Overnight on gulet. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 7 *Gemiler Island - Fethiye: Disembark*

Oludeniz remains one of the most photographed beaches on the Mediterranean. It has a secluded sandy bay at the mouth of Oludeniz, on a blue lagoon. The lagoon is a national nature reserve and building is strictly prohibited.

We sail to Gemiler Island where we can hike to the 6th C. ruins of a Byzantine monastic society.

We then bid our gulet crew farewell and retire to a hotel in Fethiye.

Overnight in Fethiye. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Fethiye - Bodrum*

After breakfast we drive to Bodrum, site of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the Mausoleum. This was also the birthplace of the Greek historian Herodotus. Today Bodrum's whitewashed houses scattered on the hillside overlook the perfect natural harbour. It's delightful to wander along the palm-lined marina in the evening and marvel at the yachts from all over the world.

This afternoon we visit the Crusader Castle of St Peter which dominates Bodrum Bay. The castle was built by the Knights Hospitaller in the early 15th century. Today the castle houses an excellent museum, mainly dedicated to the artifacts retrieved from the many ancient shipwrecks discovered off the Turkish coast. Many of the pieces in the museum have been excavated from below the sea bed by teams of archaeologists from Texas's A&M University.

Overnight in Bodrum. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Bodrum - Didyma - Kusadasi*

After a free morning in Bodrum, we travel northward along the Aegean coast, on winding roads through fields and olive groves, toward Kusadasi, a beautiful port city with a small island fortress. En route we stop at Didyma, an ancient Ionian shrine and the most renowned oracle of the Hellenic world, containing a temple and an oracle of Apollo.

Kusadasi has rapidly developed into one of the most popular seaside resorts of the coast and was most probably founded on the ancient site of Neopolis. Because of its beautiful location and its excellent hotels, it is an ideal base for Ephesus.

Overnight in Kusadasi. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Kusadasi - Ephesus - Istanbul*

Today we visit Ephesus, one of the highlights of any visit to Turkey. During its Golden Age, the city was adorned with splendid monuments, theatres, agoras and libraries. The protectress of the city was the goddess Artemis whose temple, dating back to 1300 BC, was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. As a prosperous trade and banking centre, Ephesus had a cosmopolitan population. It has been recorded that St John brought the Virgin Mary to Ephesus where she spent her last days after the death of Christ. On our tour of Ephesus we see a 24,000 seat amphitheatre, the Library of Celsus, and the marble-paved Arcadian Way. We also include the special Terrace Houses section, which

provides fascinating insight into family life during the Roman period.

In addition to the main site of Ephesus we will visit the superb Ephesus Museum. We also visit the traditional town of Selcuk with its many beautiful buildings, including the Isa Bey Mosque (built in 1307), remains of old Turkish baths, and a hill crowned by the Ayasoluk Fortress.

We proceed to Izmir for a late afternoon flight to Istanbul.

Overnight in Istanbul. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Istanbul: Hippodrome & Agia Sophia*

We start our day with a panoramic drive around the Golden Horn and the great walls of Constantinople. The first recorded bridge over the Golden Horn was built during the reign of Justinian the Great in the 6th century at the western end of the city, and today we will pass the famous Galata Bridge and the Ataturk Bridge. As we drive along the Byzantine city gates and walls we will view the towering minarets of Suleyman's Mosque and the Galata Tower before arriving in Sultanahmet Square.

We'll begin the walking component of today's tour at the legendary Blue Mosque, built between 1609 and 1616 by Mehmet Aga. The inside is covered by more than 20,000 Iznik tiles. At the adjacent Hippodrome you will see the remains of the great sports stadium where chariot races were held in Roman and Byzantine times. We will also see an Egyptian obelisk, a giant needle of stone carved for the Pharaoh Tutmoses III around 1500 BC and brought to Constantinople by the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius in AD 390.

We continue to the church of Agia Sophia (St Sophia), built by the Emperor Justinian in 548 BC. It was the largest church in the Christian world for nearly 1,000 years. When the Ottoman Turks conquered the city in 1435 one of the first things they did was to convert St Sophia into a mosque. Today it is a museum featuring many beautiful Christian mosaics.

Outside Agia Sophia we descend underground to the gigantic cisterns that contained the vast water supply that allowed Constantinople to withstand so many long sieges. Here the many columns are reflected in the water while classical music plays quietly.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Istanbul. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Departure*

Departure from Istanbul.

IYI YOLCULUKLAR! Meal plan: Breakfast.