

Thrace: European Turkey with Fikret Yegül, Diane Favro, and Stephen Harby

September 29 to October 13, 2025 (exclusive of travel from and to USA) (organized by Serhat Paktas and Pakero Travel, Istanbul)

Thrace is the region between the Balkans, the Sea of Marmara, Aegean and Black Seas and incorporates parts of the modern-day countries of Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. European Turkey lies completely within Thrace, and Eastern Thrace is that portion within Turkish territory and will be the primary focus of this trip. Indeed, “Europe”, before it referred to the continental landmass as we know it today, denoted only this region (from the ancient Greek, Εὐρώπη). From Istanbul to Edirne, the region offers beautiful landscapes and towns richly endowed with the architectural splendors of the golden age of the Ottoman Empire. Under the rule of Suleyman the Magnificent (1494-1566) and his son, Selim II (1524-1574), their architect Mimar Sinan (1488-1588) created a treasure trove of splendid buildings, comprising mosques, schools, caravanserais, bridges, and baths as well as the sophisticated urban planning that organized them into coherent districts. Thrace represents the early period in the development of Ottoman rule and architecture from its base in Constantinople. During the first two centuries of their history Ottoman expansion was towards the West, not towards Anatolia and the East. The conquest of Egypt, Syria and Palestine and the Holy Lands and much of what we know as Iran happened during the short reign of Selim I (“grim”) 1512-1520. We will see some of the best early (“pre-Sinan”) examples of Ottoman architecture as well as the important precedents from Greek, Roman and Byzantine periods—not to mention the influences that have carried on to the present modern contemporary Turkey—during this trip. Our explorations will also incorporate two wineries, the museum of Troy, and perhaps the most dramatic of Turkey’s ancient Greek sites, Pergamon. But no regime of intensive sightseeing should go unrewarded, and thus we will spend the final days of the trip at a mid-twentieth century beach resort on the Sea of Marmara, which has recently undergone an impressive refurbishment.

Below: Selimiye Mosque; view of interior. This and all watercolors by Stephen Harby



Our fourteen-day trip starts with four nights in Istanbul, where guests will be able to choose between a four-star hotel within view of Hagia Sofia and the Blue Mosque, or the five-star Four Seasons Hotel, a much-lauded renovation of a former prison. The next four nights will take us in the direction of Edirne, with a two-night stay at a winery, and then, in Edirne, two nights in a restored Sinan designed Caravanserai (1561). The next night will take us to another winery, and then a stay in the vicinity of Assos, Troy and Pergamon. The final four nights in the seaside Pinar Hotel built by Vehbi Koç, the founder of the famous Turkish industrial conglomerate, for his own enjoyment (and his escape from the likes of the newly built Istanbul Hilton!), will offer chances to relax by the sea or make a series of excursions to various classical sites nearby.

It is our good fortune to be collaborating now for the third time with dear friends and colleagues Diane Favro and Fikret Yegül. Both are distinguished scholars of the architecture and urban planning of the ancient world, and have published numerous award winning books in the field: *The Temple of Artemis at Sardis: The Hellenistic Temple Tradition in Asia Minor* (co-authors, 2025), *Roman Architecture and Urbanism* (co-authors, 2019), *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (1996, Diane Favro), *Baths and Bathing in the Roman World* (2010, Fikret Yegül, winner of the Alice Davis Hitchcock Award, Society of Architectural



Hagia Sofia, entrance; Below, skyline of Istanbul with old and new.

Historians). Diane is professor emerita at UCLA School of Architecture and Urban Planning, and former president of the Society of Architectural Historians. Fikret, whose country of origin is Turkey, is distinguished professor emeritus at UC Santa Barbara.

We will be joined by long term collaborator (for five previous trips), Serhat Paktas of Istanbul and Stockholm based Pakero Travel. They will make all detailed arrangements and provide an expert local guide, who is himself a gourmet chef, and will be able to steer us to some of Turkey's best tables! Our meals will range from the best of locals only modest fare to

the kitchens of the most celebrated, and enjoying one of the world's finest cuisines will be an integral part of our experience!

Detailed Itinerary

Sunday, September 28, 2025 Departure from home

Depart for Istanbul (IST), served by non-stop flights from most major US air hubs.

Day 1, Monday, September 29, 2025 Arrival Istanbul-I

Arrive in Istanbul. Transfer to Hotel(s). You will be met at Istanbul's huge new airport and transferred to your chosen hotel. We are offering the option of spending the next four nights in either of two hotels, both of which are conveniently located in Sultanahmet, near the Topkapi, Hagia Sophia, and Blue Mosque. The four-star Armada Hotel is located on the shore of the Sea of Marmara and has a rooftop terrace with views of Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque. The Four Seasons Sultanahmet won architectural distinction for its sensitive renovation of an Ottoman prison built in 1918.

You will be free to relax and settle in today; a gathering for welcome drinks and dinner will take place at 6:30 pm.

The following three days in Istanbul are not intended to serve as a comprehensive survey of all this layered city has to offer; that would take many more days, and indeed many who will join this trip we hope will have participated in earlier trips with this cohort. Rather, the idea



is to focus on a few key monuments and places which will serve as a foundation for what we will see later on in the trip or may be new discoveries. Those who have not been to Istanbul before are also encouraged to come early or stay on at the end of the trip, and we can provide a customized touring itinerary under the aegis of our local experts Pakero travel and our local guide.

Day 2, Tuesday, September 30 Istanbul-2

Today's focus will be on the Roman and Byzantine antecedents that paved the way for the evolution of Constantinople from capital of the Eastern Roman Empire (nine centuries) to its role as crown jewel of the Ottoman Empire for the next five centuries. Since our hotels will be centrally placed in the Old Ottoman and Byzantine city between Hagia Sophia and the so-called 'Blue Mosque' in the Sultanahmet district we will see other nearby sites as time permits and may include the Byzantine Hippodrome, Topkapi Palace, Museum of Islamic Art and other monuments in Sultanahmet. In preparation for the next day's focus on the work of architect Mimar Sinan, at the end of the afternoon as prelude, we will visit Hagia Sophia. Its many transformations through time best embodies that evolution of the city and country in which it is the most celebrated monument. It was completed in 537 under Justinian as cathedral, indeed the largest in the world for a millennium, then converted to a mosque in 1453 when the Byzantine empire fell to Islam and the Ottomans, and when Ataturk secularized Turkey in the early twentieth century, it became a museum to honor its history and importance to all religions. Recently the move to return it to status as a functioning mosque has proven controversial; the magnificent figural mosaics of the Byzantine period have been covered over, and visits for touristic purposes

have been severely curtailed. That said, its significance to us is to understand its role as a prototype of inspiration for the domical mosques of the Ottoman period, as it was inspired by the great vaulted architecture of Romans. It was the first major dome supported on pendentives, and the world's largest interior space at the time of its construction.

Day 3, Wednesday, October 1 Istanbul - 3

Today our focus on the great achievements of Ottoman urban Planning and architecture will explore how Sinan's understanding of the principles established



THRACE AND TURKEY

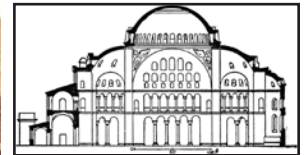
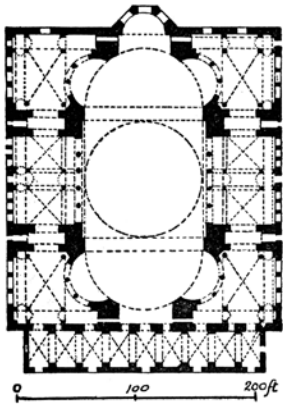
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★ START/END JOURNEY

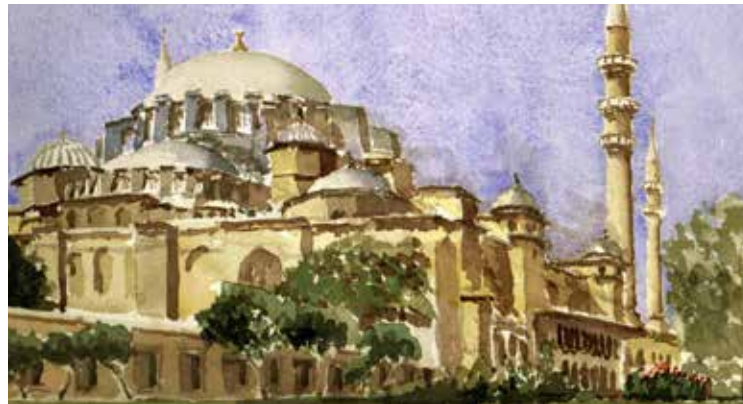
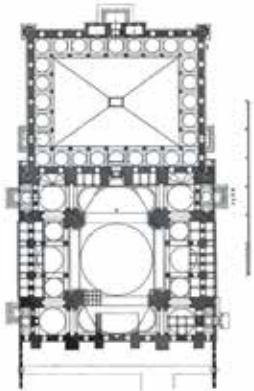
● OVERNIGHT

◆ SITE

The Domed Mosque: from Aya Sofia to Sinan (c 500-1500)



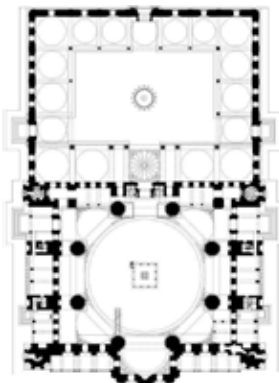
Aya Sofia, Istanbul, (537). became the prototype for the central domed mosque. It was built during the time of Justinian and was a derivation of the most famous domed structure in the Roman world at the time, the Pantheon.



Suleyman Mosque, Istanbul, Mimar Sinan (1550-1557)



Below: Selimiye Mosque, Edirne, Mimar Sinan (1568-1574)





Above, left: Interior of Hagia Sofia; right: analogous view in Suleymaniye Mosque, Istanbul. Below, left and right: Sancaklar Mosque, Buyukcekmece, by Emre Arolat, 2011-13.

in Hagia Sofia took root in the fledgling early design of the Sehzade Mosque, a small gem just down the hill from the Hippodrome to the grand evocation of the domical model in the Suleimaniye mosque, which represents the height of his career. We will have lunch in the tile covered Pandelli Restaurant near the Spice Bazaar, and the Rustem Pasha Mosque (1563, also Sinan) and famous for

its interior decoration of Iznik tiles. We will see the mosque and take a short stroll through the Spice Bazaar—still one of the best places to buy Beluga caviar! In the late afternoon we plan to take a private boat trip along the Bosphorus, the best way for viewing the historic wooden mansions (yalis) of a bygone era.

Day 4, Thursday, October 2 Istanbul – 4

Our final day in Istanbul will serve to introduce the extraordinary geographic setting of the city and country by taking us to some historic neighborhoods across the Golden Horn, including an amazing all-iron church (Bulgarian community) which was brought from Vienna over the Danube and the Black Sea in crates and assembled in Istanbul. We plan to visit a semi-private Sadberk Hanım Museum on the European side of the Bosphorus (with a “women’s art” core collection) as well as a private Ottoman mansion housing its original owners’ collections, or we may venture out to the Prinkipio Island, where many wooden Ottoman mansions still remain and have tea at the massive Victorian Hotel Splendid where Elia Kazan also took tea.

Day 5, Friday, October 3, Istanbul – Bakucha -I

Today we will begin our journey venturing beyond Istanbul and in a north westerly direction into the heart of Eastern Thrace. Our first stop, still within greater Istanbul amid upscale gated communities, will be Buyukcekmece Lake, with an impressive Sinan bridge. At a nearby housing community, we will visit



Sancaklar Mosque, constructed in 2011–13 designed by Emre Arolat for a private family foundation. This is a rare example of a contemporary mosque design that attempts to both address the longstanding traditions of mosque design as well as to respond to current needs and the natural setting.

We will continue to the town of Corlu, where we will have lunch and visit the Süleymaniye Mosque and complex (c. 1520) Another hour will bring us to the Bakucha Winery, where will be staying for the next two nights.

Day 6, Saturday, October 4 Bakucha - 2

We will travel east today reaching the shores of the Black Sea, and the focus will be two Byzantine era churches, Kucuk Aya Sofya in Vize and the St. Nikolas Monastery in Kiyikoy. On the way, we will stop at the picturesque town of Kırklareli, whose original name meant “40 churches” in the 14th century, but then was secularized to become “the place of the forties” in 1923. Küçük Aya Sofya (meaning “Little Hagia Sophia”) was originally a Byzantine style basilica church that was later converted to a mosque, possibly by Sinan. In Kiyikoy,



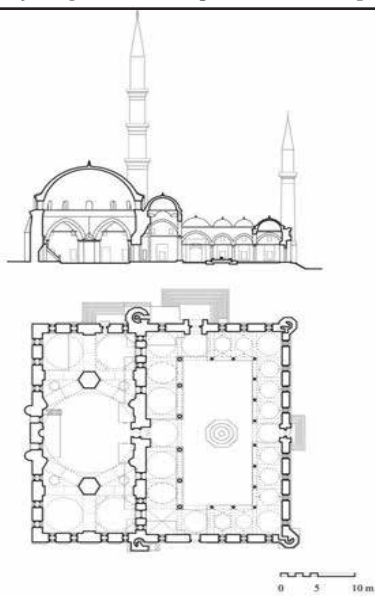
on the Black Sea, we find have lunch and see the ruins of a rock cut St. Nikolas Monastery and church.

Day 7, Sunday, October 5 Bakucha - Edirne

Today we will check-out from our Winery Hotel and see two sites developed during the Ottoman period, illustrating the reach and sophistication of infrastructure and planning in this provincial region. Our first stop, in Babaeski, will be to visit the Cedid Semiz Ali Pasa Mosque, the one remaining building from what was an extensive complex consisting of Caravanserai, Hammam and Medrese, all to serve the local community and travelers alike. The mosque completed in the late 1560s, has been attributed to Sinan. “Semiz” “the fat” is a reference to the commissioning Pasha’s heft! At

Luleburgaz, where we will have lunch, is another Sinan complex, the Sokollu Mehmed Pasha Mosque, designed and built between 1565 and 1570. Here there is a complete complex of mosque, school, hospice, and caravanserai, as well as a nearby bridge, also by Sinan. From here we will continue to Edirne, the seat of its province and district and close to the Greek (4.3 miles) and Bulgarian (12 miles) borders. It has a long history and importance, starting with its foundation during the reign of Roman emperor Hadrian when it was named Hadrianopolis (Adrianople in English), a name it kept until 1928, when the Turkish “Edrine” also derived from Hadrian became Edirne. It was also the second capital of the Ottoman Empire (1369–1453), following Bursa, and prior to Constantinople assuming that role. The resulting and remaining splendid Ottoman buildings will more than occupy our next day here into the following morning, and Edirne is arguably the architectural Mecca of our tour—A Sinan city! We will spend the next two nights in a renovated Caravanserai, attributed to Sinan.

Above: Grapes ready for harvest at the Bakucha Winery. Below: Üç Şerefeli Mosque in Edirne (1438–1447). This mosque presents an intriguing geometry with a central dome flanked by twin domes on either side. Left: arcade of entry court; middle: plan and section; right: the junction between main and side domes.



Day 8, Monday, October 6, Edirne - 2

Today will be devoted to the rich collection of buildings from the golden age of Ottoman influence. Of these, the Selimiye Mosque by Sinan is the glorious culmination of the development of his architectural expression from its origins in Hagia Sofya. In referring to this work, quoting the Danish scholar Dick Osseman: “[the] Princes’ (Şehzade) Mosque in Istanbul (was) his apprentice work, the Süleymaniye his journeyman’s work, and the Selimiye in Edirne his masterpiece. He was 85 when he finished it.”.

Day 9, Tuesday, October 7 Edirne - Caeli

Our exploration of the architectural treasures of Edirne will continue this morning before we leave for the short drive to Uzunkopru, where we will see an Ottoman era bridge and have lunch in a roadside restaurant. As for the “Long Bridge” (the translation of the bridge’s, hence the town’s name), it is said to be the longest masonry bridge in the world, and was built between 1427 and 1443 to span the river and its broad flood plain of marshy land, and has withstood many floods, thanks to its design pairing arches with smaller relief openings reducing the resistance to the water flow by its



Above: the “Long Bridge” in Uzunkopru; Below, left: watercolor view of the greek theater and site at Pergamon; right: view of the Temple of Athena at Assos.

structure. We will continue to the Caeli Winery Hotel, where we have now passed to the Gallipoli Peninsula and the very edge of the Dardanelles, the narrow strait that gives passage from the Aegean to the Sea of Marmara, a passage of strategic importance throughout history.

Day 10, Wednesday, October 8, Caeli Hotel-Troy-Assos

This morning is free to enjoy the setting of our hotel and winery (or possibly to make the half hour drive to the Gallipoli Battle Memorial site and War Cemetery).

After an early lunch/brunch, we will cross the Dardanelles by ferry, leaving Europe for Asia, to visit the Troy Museum (little to see remains of the site of the famous city). From there, we will visit the ancient site of Assos whose Doric temple of Athena, built during the city’s heyday in the 6th century BCE, sits majestically on its promontory, with a view the sea not far away. We will continue to our next night’s stop at a simple motel on the beach on the Aegean Sea.



Day 11, Thursday, October 9 Assos - Erdek

This morning, we will continue south to Pergamon, which was a major Hellenistic city, the head of an empire, and in the third and second century BCE, a major cultural center of the Greek world. The setting and terrain of the acropolis site is its most remarkable and memorable feature, and the way the built elements such as the theater, several temples, (including a fully restored Roman-era Temple of Deified Trajan), and the famous altar (now in Berlin) are incorporated into the landscape epitomizes the way the Greeks sought out challenging terrain and used it for maximum dramatic and symbolic effect. After spending most of the day on this spectacular site and the uniquely designed Sanctuary of Asclepius on the flats, we will continue to the Pinar Hotel beside the sea of Marmara in Erdek. This hotel, which was built in the 1962 to impeccable standards by a wealthy Turkish industrial family (Koç Family)

whose members became embroiled in an inheritance fight, had fallen on hard times until it was bought by another important family and totally renovated in 2003, while retaining all its best features. We will be here for the next four nights with a relaxed and flexible program offering some daily excursions or the chance to enjoy the setting, the swimming (private beach and pool), spa and forays nearby. The hotel's restaurant is justly famous for its seafood and other offerings

Day 12, Friday, October 10, Erdek - 2

Today's excursion will be to the archaeological site of Cyzicus, where the remains of the Temple of Hadrian represents one of the largest temples from antiquity. We are fortunate also, that at this site as well as Parion, our proposed destination on Sunday, we will have special tours given to us by the local archaeological teams. This is a rare privilege, and one not encountered at any

of the larger sites in Turkey or anywhere else in the ancient world.

Day 13, Saturday, October 11, Erdek - 3

Today's optional excursion is to take a small boat trip to see the nearby coastline and islands. picnic al fresco – weather permitting.

Day 14, Sunday, October 12, Erdek - 4

Today's options are to take the day off for one's own personal activities, to hike to one or more nearby villages or to visit the site of Parion, an ancient Greek city

Day 15, Monday, October 13, Erdek-Home or Onward

Today the trip will conclude with transfers to be organized in groups or individually (depending on flights chosen) to the Istanbul Airport (IST). This entails travel by ferry and car to reach the airport, 3-3 1/2 hours from hotel to airport.

Below: Selimiye Mosque, Edirne, watercolor of exterior, Selimiye Mosque; Page 1: view of interior



For Pricing and Registration Information

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