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EPHESUS ITINERARY

You will depart early in the morning for an excursion to what is undoubtedly one of the most impressive and most beautiful ancient cities on Earth, **Ephesus**. You should notice that there is an underlying theme of female divinity running throughout the day, which will begin at the first stop, at the **House of the Virgin Mary**.

It is recorded that St. John brought the Virgin Mary to Ephesus after the death of Christ and that she spent her last days in a small house (Meryemana Evi) built for her here on Bulbuldagi (Mt. Koressos). The remains of the basement, found next to a sacred spring still believed to have healing powers, have been excavated and carbon dated to the first century AD. This, combined with historical evidence and artifacts from the site, give proof that the Virgin Mary did in fact live here. In the 20th century, the house received the official sanction of the Vatican, and it has become a place of pilgrimage for both Christians and Muslims, who honor Mary as the mother of a great prophet. Stand for a moment and appreciate the great serenity of this divine place, looking out from the hill on which the house stands, and across the countryside.

A visit to **Ephesus** is a highlight of any visit to Turkey. The city, whose wealth and patronage supported its splendid architectural program, was dedicated to the goddess **Artemis**. Her enormous temple that once stood here was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, making Ephesus a cult center attracting thousands of pilgrims for traditional worship of the female goddess, first **Cybele**, goddess of the moon, then **Artemis**, and finally **the Virgin Mary**. It is a remarkable, engagingly beautiful place.

You will be absolutely stunned by this ancient city, rivaling even Rome in its scope of history, architecture, and beautiful works made by the hand of man. Today Ephesus' landlocked position hides the fact that it was once the foremost commercial city of a coastal region that also included the cities of **Miletus, Smyrna and Pergamon**. The silting of the harbor gradually pushed the city away from the sea, but did nothing to destroy its magnificence, preserved wonderfully to this day. The city has been excavated for over 100 years, and the extensive remains you will see date mostly from the later Roman period.

Walking through the city, you will see a **Grand Amphitheater**, one of the most impressive buildings in Ephesus, first built in the Hellenistic period in the third century BC, and

expanded by the Romans to hold over 24,000 people. You can almost hear the roar of the ancient crowd reverberating through the hollow emptiness of the theatre. Continue on to **the Library of Celsus** at the intersection of Curetes and Marble Street, which was built in the 2nd century AD by a Roman consul in memory of his father, and which has been perfectly reconstructed by archaeologists who were able to find almost all of its pieces scattered by the ravages of winds and time. You will pass a uniquely decorated **Corinthian Temple** adorned by decorative reliefs depicting various scenes, including one of the legendary founder of the city, Androklos, and his many works. Before lunch you will pass through city streets rutted by chariot wheels to **the Scholastic Baths, the Lower Agora, and the State agora.**

Lunch will be served with local drinks, and followed by a visit to the Ephesus Archaeological Museum, housing the collection of statues and other finds uncovered during the excavations at Ephesus. You will see many beautiful works on display here, including gorgeous statues of the gods and goddesses who did much to inspire the heavenly city you have just seen.

Euro 55 per person

Including;

- Entrance fees to the sites and museums mentioned in the program
- Service of an English speaking tour guide
- Service of an A/C vehicle
- Lunch at a local restaurant
- Parking fees