

MennoJerusalem BIBLE LANDS Tour
The Journeys of St. Paul:
Turkey, Greece & Italy
August 31-September 16, 2012



DAY 1 August 31, Fri. Depart for Istanbul, Turkey

DAY 2 September 01, Sat: Arrive in Istanbul

Reaching Istanbul you will be met by your guide at Istanbul International Airport and will be transferred to your hotel, then have the remaining afternoon for a delightful visit to the **Grand Bazaar and Nuru Osmaniye District** where you can find opportunities of fine shopping especially for jewelry, leather products, and many other handcrafted souvenirs... 4000 shops under one ancient roof! Overnight in our Istanbul hotel.

DAY 3 Sept. 02, Sun: ISTANBUL

After breakfast, there will be a worship option at an ecumenical or Catholic English-language church service. After lunch we move to the famed **Hippodrome Square**,



once the sporting and social centre of Constantinople (the city's name for many centuries). Istanbul

boasts its monumental shrines of different faiths and **Blue Mosque** is probably one of the most famed masterpieces of Ottoman religious architecture. Standing right across the Blue Mosque is the **Basilica of Saint Sophia** that was built by Justinian the Great during 6th century. This massive structure will embrace you with

surprise with its gigantic dome. In the Afternoon visit the home of the Ottoman Sultans; **Topkapi Palace!** Located on the very cape of the peninsula where Constantinople was founded, Topkapi Palace was built as the center of administration of Ottoman Empire.

DAY 4 Sept. 03, Mon: ISTANBUL / IZMIR

After breakfast, Continue to the old city and you will visit the **Spice Market** of 17th century, where you can still feel the profusion of the oriental herbs and spices. After lunch break, you will be boarding your private boat that will be waiting for you at Kabatas Pier and enjoy your **cruise on the waters of the Bosphorus** running between Asia and Europe! As well as seeing historical mansions and palaces, you will be overwhelmed by the skyline of Istanbul adorned with domes and minarets of numerous edifices.



We leave the old city and drive to Istanbul Airport for our flight to Izmir. Upon arrival, transfer to hotel.

DAY 5 Sept. 04, Tue: IZMIR / PERGAMON / SARDIS / IZMIR

After breakfast, drive to **Pergamon**, the church that John both affirmed and chastised (Rev. 2:12-17) by his famous statement "where Satan has its throne". Pergamon was the capital of a Hellenistic Kingdom

of that name, which ruled western Asia Minor. Here parchment was invented, and Galen practiced medicine.



Then continue to **Sardis**: “You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead” (Rev. 3:1-6). The ruins of Sardis, dating from the Roman period, still convey its wealth. We visit

the Roman gymnasium, the synagogue and the Temple of Artemis. Then we drive to Izmir (**Smyrna**), whose story goes back 5000 years. Two of its churches won high praise in Revelation 2:8-11. Among the first martyrs of Asia Minor was its bishop, Polycarp, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

Dinner and overnight in Izmir.

DAY 6 Sept. 05, Wed: IZMIR / EPHESUS / KUSADASI

After breakfast, drive to Seljuk Village and reach the city of **Ephesus** (Acts 19) where biblical history and archaeology will offer you their majesty with incredible richness. It was one of Paul’s most important and longest missionary stops. You will be walking on the Marble Road that runs through the city, having various structures resting on it: **Temple of Hadrian** is a unique beauty with its articulate facade while **Library of Celsus** has all the expression of the grandeur of “good old days” of the Roman Period, and the **Great Theater** where the riot opposing Paul’s teaching against worship the goddess Artemis (*photo*) occurred. We also visit **the Basilica of John**, built in the 6th century on the traditional **tomb of John the Evangelist**. One of the



greatest Christian shrines, it was constructed using stones from the Temple of Artemis, visible from its outer gardens. Dinner and overnight at Hotel.

DAY 7 Sept. 06, Thu: KUSADASI / SAMOS / KUSADASI

Today, it is complete for relax. We will embark **Samos** boat at 8:30am and cruise about 45 minutes to the Greek island to spend a leisurely time of refreshment.



Return to Kusadasi at 5:00pm. Dinner and overnight.

DAY 8 Sept. 07, Fri: KUSADASI / PAMUKKALE

Depart from the hotel to drive to the village of Geyre to visit **Aphrodisias**. Then continue to **Laodicea**: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'" (Rev. 3:15-17).

In the afternoon we continue to Hierapolis, mentioned in the Bible when

St. Paul writes that Epaphras "has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis"

(Colossians 4:12-13). Today it is

called **Pamukkale**, the Cotton Fortress, because of its white calcium pools and cascades. This evening you can enjoy the thermal facilities in the hotel.

Dinner and overnight in Pamukkale.



DAY 9 Sept. 08, Sat: PAMUKKALE / KONYA / CAPPADOCIA

This morning we leave our hotel for **Konya** (ancient Iconium, Acts 14:1-6). Iconium became a center of theology and philosophy for many centuries. In the afternoon we shall visit the **Mevlana Museum**, which houses the tomb of the great 13th-century Persian poet



Rumi, who founded the Order of the Whirling Dervishes. Continue our drive on to Cappadocia.

DAY 10 Sept. 09, Sun: CAPPADOCIA

Early in the morning, we will have an experience of hot-air ballooning over the weird formations of ancient lava erosions—*fairy chimneys* that became cave homes for Christians hiding from persecution. Then we will visit



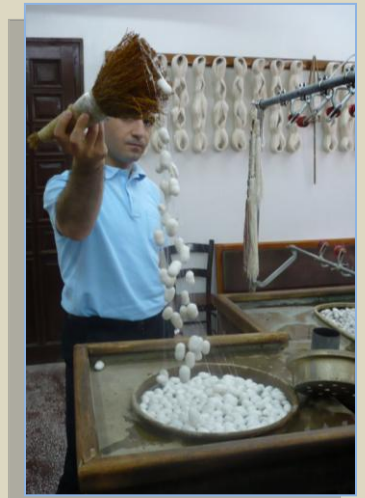
the **Goreme Open Air Museum** in the same valley, containing rock-carved caves with Byzantine churches, decorated with frescoes depicting the life of Jesus. We descend into **an underground city**, composed of tunnels and grottos hewn by Christians when the region was invaded in the 7th century. There are also fascinating

examples of **earthenware pottery**, as we shall see in a family-owned workshop. We will also visit one of the **local weaving schools**, where Turkish women compose poetry while sitting at their looms. Wool, cotton and silk are used for magnificent designs in traditional rugs and hangings.

(Photo of silkworm cocoons being unwound.)

In the evening we share a deeply moving and inspirational experience of watching a liturgical performance of the Whirling Dervishes in an

ancient Silk Road khan (a rest stop for camel caravans for centuries). Dinner and overnight at Cappadocia.



DAY 11 Sept. 10, Mon: CAPPADOCIA / KAYSERI / ISTANBUL airport, THESSALONIKI / VERIA / KALAMBAKA

Early in the morning, we will drive to Kayseri Airport and fly to **Thessaloniki**, Greece, via Istanbul.

On arrival in Thessaloniki (Acts 17:1) our bus and guide will begin with an overview drive for a panoramic tour of the 2nd largest city in Greece. We will see the famous **White Tower**, the churches of **St. Sophia and St. Dimitrios**, and the **Arch of Galerius**. Then we continue through the large and productive farmlands of the region to the city of **Veria / Berea** (Acts 17:10) where St. Paul ran to in order to escape the hostility he encountered at Thessaloniki. We will stop for reflection at the monument built to the Apostle at the southern part of the city, also known as the *bema*.

From there we continue the journey to Kalambaka (Meteora) for dinner and overnight.

DAY 12 Sept. 11, Tues: KALAMBAKA / DELPHI / ATHENS

Today we will visit the unique **hanging Byzantine monasteries** from the medieval centuries (*photo*). There



are 24 of them but only six are inhabited, and we will visit two of them. Then we continue to **Delphi** where the ancient leaders worldwide came to see the Oracle and ask for advice. We will visit the **Temple of Apollo, Athenian Treasury, the Theater and the Archeological**

Museum. We continue our panoramic drive through the mountains of Greece to Athens for dinner and overnight.

DAY 13 Sept. 12, Wed: ATHENS

After breakfast, we will tour **Athens**, its famous **Acropolis, the Parthenon, Areopagus, and Mars Hill** where the Apostle Paul delivered his well-known

sermon (Acts 17:10-34). Afterwards we undertake a panoramic tour through Athens: the library, the university, the parliament house and



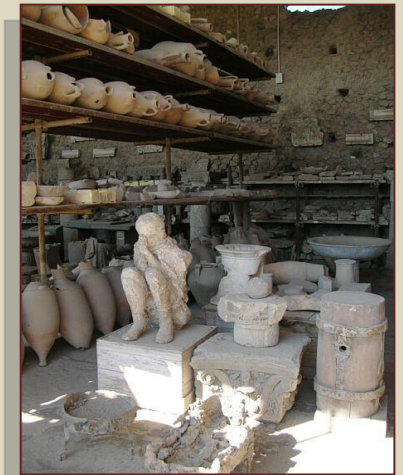
famous square, and many other important city sites. You will have free time in the *plaka* area to explore the small narrow streets, shops, and cafés just at the foot of Acropolis. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.



DAY 14 Sept. 13, Thurs: ATHENS / CORINTH / Airport / NAPLES, Italy

After breakfast we will depart our hotel to visit one of the most important locations in the Apostle Paul's itinerary: **ancient Corinth**, where he lived and preached. We will see also the archeological museum and the temples. This is the site where Paul established the first church made entirely of Gentiles. En route back to Athens we stop to

visit the two famous landmarks: the ancient port of **Cenchrea** where Paul docked, and the **Corinth Canal**. Then continue to the airport for our flight to Naples, Italy. There we transfer by bus to **Pompeii** for a tour of this unequalled example of a Roman city and daily life in the first century CE, preserved for 1900 years under the ash of the volcano Vesuvius.



(*Photo: plaster cast of person buried in ash*)
To Pozzuoli, to our hotel for overnight.

DAY 15 Sept. 14, Fri: POZZUOLI, ROME

Pozzuoli, called *Puteoli* when the Romans conquered the area, also gives its name to the bay and port where St. Paul landed on his voyage to Rome. There he met some *brothers* (Acts 28:13-14), and among these Jews

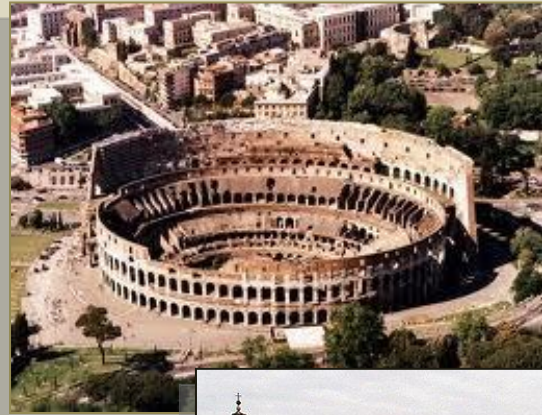


there may have been Christians. We then drive north to Rome on part of the Appian Way... as we approach Rome we will descend into the famous **catacombs** for a tour, then move on to **St. Paul's house** on the Tiber (Acts 28:16), then end the afternoon at the **Basilica of St. John Lateran**. This is a stunning masterpiece of architecture and sculptures, the first Christian church in Rome, and the seat of five ecumenical councils. St. Francis and Martin Luther both defended their causes to the popes based here.

DAY 16

Sept. 15, Sat: ROME

Our pre-booked tickets let us bypass the long lineups waiting to enter the **Vatican Museums**, among the greatest museums in the world. They display works from the immense collection built up by the Roman Catholic Church throughout the centuries, including the most renowned classical sculptures and important masterpieces of Renaissance art in the world: Bernini, Michelangelo, Raphael, and so many more. We conclude that tour with an awe-inspiring time inside the **Sistine Chapel**, gazing upward at Michelangelo's masterful ceiling artistry. From there we enter **St. Peter's Basilica** and see, among other treasures of art and architecture, the moving sculpture of **La Pieta**. In the afternoon we will enjoy the classical walkabout of the **Roman Coliseum and Forum**, before ending our



tour where Paul's life also ended, at the site of his beheading at **Three Fountains**, and his tomb in the grand and solemn **Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls**.



DAY 17 Sept. 16, Sun: ROME, Leonardo da Vinci Airport. Departure for home.



(There are options for walkabouts each evening in Rome to enjoy the city's most popular venues: the Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon, and the many sculpture-centered piazzas, etc.)

Subject to change: This program of activities represents the scope and intent of our tour; some adjustments may be needed during the program. Complete and correct as of November 25, 2011.