

Half Day Istanbul Tour

Oct 18th Tue Istanbul (5 Hours)



First day of touring: Leave the port, travel over the Golden Horn to the ancient side of Istanbul through the crowded business section reaching the ancient Hippodrome, which was for 1,000 years, the center of Byzantium's life and afterwards for another 400 years Ottoman life. The Hippodrome was the scene of countless political and military dramas, including rival chariot races. The main monument left today is the impressive granite obelisk, carved in Egypt around 1,500 BC and brought to Constantinople in 390 AD.

Afterwards, continue to the Blue Mosque, right at the edge of the Hippodrome. The Blue Mosque, also called the Mosque of Sultan Ahmed, is a triumph of harmony, proportion, elegance and the only mosque in the world with six minarets. Part of the breathtaking interior is the stained-glass windows creating a marvelous colored effect and the graceful arabesques decorating the mighty dome and series of small domes. The blue in the name stems from the famed Iznik tiles, which line the walls. Since the Mosque is still in use as a House of Worship, visitors enter through the north side door and must leave their shoes at the entrance.

Visit the St. Sophia Museum, which is across from the Blue Mosque requiring a few minutes of walking. St. Sophia Museum, originating in 326 under Constantine the Great, became Hagia Sophia and was rebuilt on a larger scale during the reign of Emperor Justinian. His intention was that the new building should surpass in splendor all others in antiquity. Marble columns were brought in from temples in minor Asia, Lebanon, Greece and Italy. It is said that 10,000 workers were employed in its construction. St. Sophia Museum was formerly known as the Church of Hagia Sophia (Divine Wisdom). In the year 325, Constantine erected the first basilica built and a fire devastated it in the year 404. In the following years, it was rebuilt many times but finally in 563, Justinian dedicated the church once again. In 1934 Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, had Hagia Sophia converted into a museum. Today, the museum is the most important Byzantine Monument in Istanbul, famous for its immense dome and beautiful frescoes and mosaics.

Conclude your first day of touring with a short drive to the exotic Grand Bazaar, which is one of the most colorful institutions of Istanbul. This covered market is a whole quarter/section on its own, surrounded by a wall and entered by eleven gates. Even after a major fire in 1954, the maze of streets and lanes are still one of the greatest sights of the city. Carpets, jewelry, leather goods and a variety of souvenirs are among the major items that are available in the Bazaar with a wide quality and value range. You will have approximately 2 hours to explore the market before returning to the pier.