B’nai Brith International

Turkey Jewish Highlights Tour

October 18-29, 2009
Turkey Jewish Highlights Tour Group
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Day 1, Sunday, October 18, 2009 - Departure
Depart the USA for your flight to Turkey.

Day 2, Monday, October 19, 2009 - Istanbul
Arrival in Istanbul, the city that bridges two continents, Europe and Asia. Transfer to the hotel. Welcome lunch and orientation at the hotel. In the afternoon visit the Hippodrome and the Topkapi Palace. Dinner at the hotel with 2-3 members of the local BBI chapter. L/D
Overnight Mosaic Hotel, Istanbul

Day 3, Tuesday, October 20, 2009 - Istanbul
Breakfast at the hotel. This morning start with a visit to the Galata Tower. Galata was the center of the old Jewish Community. See the Neve Shalom and Ashkenazi Synagogues. Lunch at a local restaurant. In the afternoon depart from the hotel for a delightful Bosphorus cruise. No stay in Istanbul would be complete without this traditional and unforgettable cruise by a private boat along the Bosphorus, the winding strait separating Europe and Asia. The boat leaves from the Eminonu pier, and zigzags up the Bosphorus passing by the loving Ottoman villas and palaces of marble. The humble fishing villages set against the dramatic outline of the Strait of Istanbul and the Bosphorus Suspension Bridges exemplify the newest symbols of the link between East and West. In the evening, you will be invited to a home hosted dinner, and while you enjoy wholesome home-cooked specialties, you will learn about and appreciate the outlook, aspirations, and way of life of your hosts. You will enjoy a lively evening, and find that they have more in common than they ever suspected. B/L/D
Overnight Mosaic Hotel, Istanbul
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Day 4, Wednesday, October 21, 2009 - Istanbul
Breakfast at the hotel. In the morning, we drive to the Jewish Museum of Turkey. There is evidence that this synagogue existed in 1671. However, the actual building was re-erected over its original foundations presumably in the early 19th century. Zulfaris Synagogue opened its doors as a museum in 2001. Continue to the Balat section where the Star of David appears on the facades of many buildings. Visit the Ahrida and Yanbol Synagogues, and the Jewish Hospital. Finally, we visit the St. Sophia before shopping at the Grand Bazaar. This evening you will experience a Whirling Dervishes Show. Join a special meditation session of the Derwishes "Semah". The Semah is a traditional performance of the Dervishes, a mystic expression of the philosophy of the Alevi Sect, whose teachings are expressed in the movements of the three elements: music, dance, and love. Therefore, it is important for the guests to note that this is not just a performance but a ritual ceremony. B

Overnight Mosaic Hotel, Istanbul

Day 5, Thursday, October 22, 2009 - Istanbul/Canakkale
Breakfast at the hotel. After breakfast, leave the city for a drive along the coast of the Sea of Marmara to Eceabat, and we will stop in the ancient city of Tekirdag, to stretch our legs and see a museum that is located at the former house of Hungarian Prince Ferenc Rakoczy II in 1720, who lived there until his death in 1735. After visiting the museum, we continue our drive and cross the Dardanelles by ferry to Troy. Tour this 4000-year-old city and legendary center of the Trojan War, made immortal by Homer's epic poem, the Iliad. After the tour, continue to the Canakkale province, and check into your hotel in Canakkale. Visit the synagogue. The main synagogue in Canakkale is a rectangular building made of brick and fieldstone, and stands forlorn behind a high wall, with only its terra cotta tiled roof peeking out. A small Jewish community existed until around the 1980s. Dinner at the hotel. B/D

Overnight Akol Hotel, Canakkale
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Day 6, Friday, October 23, 2009 - Canakkale/Izmir  
Breakfast at the hotel. Today drive to the ancient Pergamum, situated majestically on a hilltop, with expansive views of the region. See the Temple of Trajan, built from white marble and dominating the site; the great Theater, and the remains of the impressive Library. Enjoy a home-hosted lunch with a wide selection of dishes to be tasted. The food and the villagers are authentic and you will be hosted in their village homes. After, enjoy a shopping spree at the local market. In the evening, drive to Izmir, the second largest Jewish community in Turkey and enjoy Shabbat dinner with 2-3 invited guests from the local BBI chapter. **B/L/D**

Overnight Kaya Prestige, Izmir

Day 7, Saturday, October 24, 2009 - Izmir  
Breakfast at the hotel. Spend the day at leisure. Enjoy Shabbat service at one of Izmir’s synagogues. You may choose to stroll along the gorgeous Izmir waterfront promenade, the Kordon, a long boardwalk by the Mediterranean Sea. The Kordon has shops, restaurants, and many cafes for you to enjoy. **B**

Overnight Kaya Prestige Hotel, Izmir

Day 8, Sunday, October 25, 2009 - Izmir/Ephesus/Priene/Miletus  
Breakfast at the hotel. Morning tour of Ephesus, the most complete and one of the most important ancient sites in Turkey. See the Agora, the Odeon, and the Temple of Hadrian before continuing to the Library of Celsus; walk on the marble road to the great theater of the city. After lunch, return to Izmir, and visit the Senora synagogue, built over 200 years ago by Ottoman diplomat Joseph Nasi, for the respect of his aunt Dona Grasia. Visit two ancient Ionic cities, Priene and Miletus, and visit their synagogues. Return to Izmir for overnight. Dinner at the hotel. **B/D**

Overnight Kaya Prestige Hotel, Izmir
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Day 9, Monday, October 26, 2009 - Hieropolis/Pamukkale  
Breakfast at the hotel. Depart Izmir and drive to Pamukkale. Visit the Necropolis and the ancient city of Hieropolis ("Holy City"), situated atop the Pamukkale hot springs, which together constitute a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Pamukkale hot springs have served as a thermal bath since the 2nd century B.C., primarily for the ailing and old, many of whom have retired here. Return to Izmir.  

Overnight Kaya Prestige Hotel, Izmir

Day 10, Tuesday, October 27, 2009 - Izmir/Sardes/Bursa  
Breakfast at the hotel. Visit Bikur Holim and Beth Israel Synagogues in Izmir. The community is smaller now than under the Ottoman Empire. As in Istanbul, the Jewish community was moved to more desirable residential sections. Still, the heart of Izmir's Jewish life, "La Judiera," the bazaar area on the Street of Synagogues, had nine small synagogues serving the Jewish merchants and artisans working close by, of which three are still used. After lunch at a local restaurant drive to Sardes, capital of Ancient Lydia. See the famous synagogue and the Temple of Diana. Drive to Bursa, the ancient capital of the Ottoman Empire.  

Overnight Kervansaray Hotel, Bursa
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Day 11, Wednesday, October 28, 2009 - Bursa/Istanbul  
Breakfast at the hotel. Jewish people were in Bursa 2,100 years ago, and Bursa's Jewish community dates from Byzantine times. After the Ottomans’ conquest of Bursa in 1324, Sultan Orhan permitted building of the Etz Ha-Hayyim Synagogue, used for over 600 years. Since Israel's founding in 1948, the Jewish community in Bursa has dwindled to about 140 people. Only two synagogues remain active, the more impressive being the Gerush Synagogue, which was constructed by the first Jewish group who settled in Bursa after they had been expelled from Spain in the 15th century and welcomed by Ottoman Emperor Selim II, and brought to the region. Later, continue to the Silk Bazaar. Afternoon drive to Istanbul. In the evening, enjoy a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.  B/D  
Overnight Mosaic Hotel, Istanbul

Day 12, Thursday, October 29, 2009 - Departure  
Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the airport for your departure flight.  B