

STUDY TOUR – TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS:

A Study Tour: Please remember that this is a Study Tour and not an Outreach Itinerary.

When in Turkey:

- Islam is the religion of Turkey, and 99% of the population is Muslim. It is important to recognize that the country is officially a secular state. Respect its principles by not discussing religious topics in public, especially in mixed-gender settings. Also note that they have laws criminalizing blasphemy against Islam.
- Use polite language and address people with appropriate titles, such as “Bey” for men and “Hanım” for women.
- Greetings: Shake hands with each person upon arriving at an office.
- Small Talk: Turks engage in small talk before they begin business discussions.
- Physical Contact: Turks are generally quite open, tactile people. It is common for friends of the same gender to kiss during greetings or hug one another.
- Personal Space: Turks are generally warm and welcoming, but respect personal space, especially in more formal settings.
- Modesty: Wear modest clothes in conservative areas.
- Punctuality: Being on time is appreciated, but a slight delay is usually acceptable in social situations.

When in Greece:

- Greek Orthodox is the prevailing religion in Greece, representing 90% of the total population.
- “Philotimo” means “love of honor.” It is a core value that encompasses dignity, pride, honor, hospitality, and trust.
- Elders: Elders are highly respected, and children care for their elderly parents.
- Shaking Hands: Shake hands with everyone at a business or social meeting, and again when leaving.
- Kisses: Accept a greeting with two kisses on the cheek.
- Nodding: Nodding your head “yes” is not polite, say “yes” instead.
- Serving: The eldest person is usually served first.
- Eating: Don’t start eating until the host says it is time.
- Dress is more informal than in most European countries.
- Punctuality is not particularly important, but foreigners are expected to be on time for business meetings.

While Touring:

- **Photography:** Always ask for permission before taking photos of people, especially in more private or sacred settings.
- **Polite and Patient:** Show patience and politeness in your interactions. Remember that you are a guest and that cultural differences might lead to misunderstandings.
- **Respect Natural Environments:** Follow local guidelines for waste disposal and stay on designated paths when exploring.
- **Rights and Privileges:** While visiting Turkey and Greece, we are guests in their countries. The rights and privileges of our home countries are not carried with us into our host countries.

STUDY TOUR – TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

INSURANCE:

- ☐ Acquire Travel Insurance.
- ☐ Check with your medical insurance carrier to confirm if you will be covered while traveling.
- ☐ Check with your dental insurance carrier to confirm if you will be covered while traveling.

PASSPORT AND VISA INFORMATION:

Both Turkey and Greece:

- ☐ U.S. citizens need a valid passport with at least six months validity beyond their intended stay.
- ☐ Make two photocopies of your passport. Leave one copy at home and carry the other one separately from your original.

PRE-FLIGHT:

- ☐ Leave your travel information with a family member or friend, including a copy of your passport, your flight itinerary, travel itinerary, hotel names, and phone numbers. In the event of an emergency, family members may contact Pilgrim Tours at 800-322-0788.
- ☐ Check-in time for international flights is normally three hours prior to departure. Bring your passport for all international flights.
- ☐ Dress comfortably for the flight—clothes that allow freedom of movement, slip-on shoes.
- ☐ Bring along hand lotion, as the air in the plane cabin is extremely dry.

CURRENCY:

- ☐ Visa credit cards can be used at major hotels, restaurants, and tourist shops.
- ☐ Converting dollars to the Turkish Lira and the Euro will make transactions easier.
- ☐ Research and understand the exchange rates.
- ☐ Call your bank before you leave:
 - Let them know you will be out of the country and using your ATM card or credit card.
 - See if they will waive the service fees for these transactions.
 - Check for other restrictions or policies.
- ATM machines in Greece dispense money in EURO ONLY, and in Turkey they dispense TURKEY LIRA.
- Due to Turkey being labeled internationally as a high-fraud country, ATM withdrawals may be limited to \$75.00 per day.

MEDICATION:

- ☐ Ask your doctor to write an extra prescription to take with you in case your medication is lost.
- ☐ Keep medication in the original bottle with the prescription attached. If necessary, ask your pharmacist for small bottles with labels, and take only what you need plus a few days extra.
- ☐ Bring a list of the medications with the generic equivalent, as doctors in other countries may not be familiar with brand names.
- ☐ Keep medications in carry-on bags.
- ☐ Have a note from the prescribing physician for injectable medications and multiple medications.
- ☐ Check with the embassy: This is the most reliable way to confirm if your prescription is legal in Turkey or Greece.

STUDY TOUR – TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE:

Each passenger is restricted to ONE suitcase and ONE carry-on bag.

- ☐ Suitcase: May not exceed 62 inches (length x width x height) and should not weigh more than 50 lbs.
- ☐ Carry-On: May not exceed 22 x 14 x 9 inches, and should not weigh more than 20 lbs.
- Pilgrim Tours recommends your carry-on bag be a backpack, which will be most practical for use while touring.
- ☐ Due to continuing changes in the air industry, please check with your airlines for the most current baggage information.
- ☐ Be sure your luggage is clearly marked on the inside and outside. If you are traveling with a tour group, you must use the Pilgrim Tours luggage tags provided along with your own once you arrive in Turkey.

WHAT TO PACK:

Casual and Comfortable:

- ☐ Plan your wardrobe around one or two colors.
- ☐ Shoes: Comfortable walking shoes with good traction for walking around archeological places and cobblestone streets. There is a risk of slipping on wet cobblestone streets.
- ☐ Coats: A lightweight jacket or light coat for mornings and evenings.
- ☐ Raingear: A raincoat and rain hat (or poncho), rather than an umbrella.
- ☐ Clothing: Bring layers for weather comfort (warm day, cool mornings and evenings).
- ☐ Sun Protection: Wear a sunhat, long sleeves, and long trousers or dresses.
- ☐ Sunglasses: Polarized glasses (there is intense glare off shiny pavements and the ruins).
- ☐ Swimwear: If you want to swim at the hotels.
- ☐ Ladies: Pack a lightweight scarf to cover your head at any religious location that requires this.
- ☐ Men: If you choose to wear shorts, make sure they come to the knee.

Carry-On:

- ☐ Important Items: Documents, money, medications, and keys on your person or in your carry-on luggage. Never pack these items in your checked luggage.
- ☐ Money belt (worn around the waist and under the clothes).

Jewelry:

- Do not make yourself a target by wearing expensive jewelry.

Companion Packing:

- ☐ Companion packing your clothing—put half of your items in your travel companion's luggage and vice versa. This will ease the frustration of lost luggage.

Small Backpack:

- ☐ When you are touring, fill your backpack with bottled water and daily necessities. It will also come in handy for carrying souvenirs.
- ☐ Don't forget these travel-sized necessities: first-aid kit, tissues, toiletries, notebook and pen, plastic ziplock bags (for storing open bottles and containers).

Travel Converter:

- ☐ 220/110 volt with C and F plugs.

STUDY TOUR – TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

OTHER ITEMS TO NOTE:

Climate:

- ☐ Prior to departure, check the 10-day forecast on www.weather.com.

Greece:

- **Tour 1 (October):** Most of Greece has warm and sunny weather in October with low rainfall except in northern Greece, the eastern coastal islands, and places with high mountains. The moderate humidity makes it feel warmer. For more details check:
<https://www.globalhighlights.com/greece/weather-in-october>.
- **Tour 2 (April):** April's weather is warm, fresh, beautiful, and mostly sunny at low elevations. Higher elevations will have higher winds, more rain, and occasional storms. For more details check:
<https://www.globalhighlights.com/greece/weather-in-april>.
- **Tour 3 (May):** In May, southern Greece and the islands are sunny, green, and warm with little to no rainfall. It is cooler with more rain and stormy weather in northern Greece. For more details check:
<https://www.globalhighlights.com/greece/weather-in-may>.
- **Tour 4 (September):** Southern Greece has hot, bright, and sunny weather in September with low rainfall. The moderate humidity makes it feel warmer. The continental weather from Europe makes the northern parts of Greece rainier, cooler, and stormier. For more details check:
<https://www.globalhighlights.com/greece/weather-in-september>.

Turkey:

- **Tour 1 (October):** October's warm, but not hot, temperatures make it a great time of year to visit the many ancient sites in Turkey. There is also very little rainfall. For more details check:
<https://www.globalhighlights.com/turkey/weather-in-october>.
- **Tour 2 (April):** Turkey's weather in April is mild to warm, but not yet hot, throughout most of the country. Humidity levels remain muggy, with higher levels of humidity seen around the coast (Antalya, for example), as well as in Istanbul, and very little rain. For more details check:
<https://www.globalhighlights.com/turkey/weather-in-april>.
- **Tour 3 (May):** The weather in Turkey in May is warm, with higher temperatures along the coastline in Antalya and Izmir. Temperatures are also warm and pleasant in Cappadocia and Istanbul, especially during the day, and not much rainfall. For more details check:
<https://www.globalhighlights.com/turkey/weather-in-may>.
- **Tour 4 (September):** September in Turkey marks the end of the hot summer months, with warm weather still prevalent throughout the country and barely any rainfall. For more details check:
<https://www.globalhighlights.com/turkey/weather-in-september>.

Cell Phones:

- ☐ Contact your cell phone company to verify service in Turkey/Greece, and to get rates.
- ☐ Download apps, like WhatsApp, for Wi-Fi calling/texting.
- ☐ Enter the following in your cellphone address book: U.S. Consulate General Istanbul: +90 (212) 335-9000; and U.S. Embassy in Athens: +30 (210) 721-2951.

Food/Water:

- ☐ In order to avoid indigestion from eating foods that are unfamiliar to you, consider taking acidophilus or probiotic tablets before, during, and after the trip.
- ☐ As much as possible, drink only commercially produced bottled water, instead of tap water. If you order juice, ask if it was made with tap water or bottled water.
- ☐ Bring Imodium and Tums/Pepto tablets (just in case).

STUDY TOUR – TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

Laundry:

- In Greece and Turkey, laundry can be done at most hotels on a pay-per-piece basis. No self-service options are available.

Local Laws and Customs:

- ☐ Familiarize yourself with local laws, customs and etiquette to ensure respectful interactions.
- For Turkey, see: <https://www.uscisguide.com/us-travel-visa/local-laws-and-customs-tips-for-us-citizens-traveling-to-turkey/>.
- For Greece, see: <https://www.uscisguide.com/us-travel-visa/local-laws-and-customs-tips-for-us-citizens-traveling-to-greece/>.

Safety Precautions:

- ☐ Sign up for U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive helpful notifications.
- <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/step.html?sfnsn=mo>.

Shopping:

- Don't be afraid to haggle over prices—it's expected.