

Stepping Into the Jordan

Turkey Study Trip June 2021

Trip Dates: June 6-17, 2021

Preliminary Itinerary:

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| June 6 | 2:30pm | Depart Westover Hills Church via Coach Bus to Houston IAH Airport |
| | 5:30pm | Arrive at Houston Intercontinental Airport |
| | 8:50pm | Depart on Turkish Airlines Flight 34 to Istanbul |
| June 7 | 4:55pm | Arrive in Istanbul |
| | 7:25pm | Depart on Turkish Airlines Flight 2438 to Antalya |
| | 8:50pm | Arrive in Antalya. Dinner & Overnight at Crowne Plaza, Antalya |
| June 8 | | Southern Coast - Overnight at Pisidia Hotel |
| June 9 | | Central Turkey - Overnight at Richmond Pamukkale Thermal |
| June 10 | | West Central Turkey - Overnight at Richmond Pamukkale Thermal |
| June 11 | | West Central Turkey - Overnight at Lidya Sardes Thermal |
| June 12 | | West Central Turkey - Overnight at Berksoy Hotel, Pergamum |
| June 13 | | Western Coast - Overnight at Ramada Resort Kusadasi |
| June 14 | | Western Coast - Overnight at Ramada Resort Kusadasi |
| June 15 | | Western Coast - Overnight at Ramada Resort Kusadasi |
| June 16 | 8:35am | Depart Izmir on Turkish Airlines Flight 2309 |
| | 9:50am | Arrive Istanbul |
| | | Istanbul - Overnight at Kent Hotel |
| June 17 | 2:00pm | Depart on Turkish Airlines Flight 33 to Houston IAH |
| | 7:05pm | Arrive in Houston |
| | 8:30pm | Depart IAH via Coach Bus to Westover |
| | 11:30pm | Arrive at Westover Hills Church |

What to Expect:

After the Gospels, the New Testament describes the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Greco-Roman world. A focal point of this story was the region of Asia Minor. Understanding the culture and circumstances of this time and place can help us better understand the biblical text and how we spread the Good News today.

This is a Biblical study tour. Our goal is to dive into God's word and the spread of the Good News to the Gentile world. How did this Jewish sect known as "The Way" spread throughout the Roman empire to the point that it was the formal religion of the empire in less than 300 years?

The model I use for my trips has been called a "rabbinic" style. In a sense, you will be experiencing the land as the disciple of a rabbi. You won't necessarily know where we are going (or why). Sometimes you might even be asked to do something that seems strange or odd at the time. Yet, in time, it should all come together.

For this reason, the itinerary is purposefully vague. It has been my experience that you will get the most from a site if you don't know what is coming next. This enables you to shed any pre-conceived ideas and biases and simply experience the land and the text with fresh eyes and an open heart.

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Turkey Study Trip June 2021

Typical Day

As we will only be “on the ground” for 9 days, we will make sure that each day is packed with as much as we can reasonably accomplish. Our buffet breakfast will be served at 6:30 am. At 7:00 am, we will meet outside the bus for a brief devotional. By 7:15 am, we will be headed out on the bus to our first site of the day. The bus will drop us off, and we will hike to a site—often not through the front entrance.

We will typically visit several sites each day. At times we will have long drives between locations. At each location, we will examine the physical surroundings and cultural context before diving into the biblical text. We will walk roughly 2-4 miles each day, with some stops and rest periods along the way.

We will return to our hotel each evening between 5:30 and 6:30. Our buffet dinner will be served around 7 pm. This will give you time each evening to shower, relax, reflect on the day, and get a good night’s sleep before we do it all again the next day.

Weather

Compared to Texas, Turkey may seem like a welcome relief. Average morning temperatures will start in the mid-60s, climbing into the 80s by late afternoon. The weather may be slightly cooler on the days when we are away from the coast and at higher elevations. At this time of year, we are pretty much guaranteed sunny days with virtually no chance of rain.

Is Travel to Turkey Safe?

I have already had several people ask me how safe is it to travel in Turkey. It's an excellent question. While travel to any place (even within the USA) is not 100% safe, the risk in Turkey is very low. I have found the people to be very friendly and hospitable. I am partnering with GTI Tours for this trip. Since 1992 they have facilitated more than 500 tours to Israel, Turkey, Greece, Jordan, and Egypt. We will be accompanied by one of their local guides, who will act as my assistant and facilitator. He will always be aware of what is going on. I can assure you that we will not take risks. We will not go to any place that I would not take my own family.

Trip Preparation:

The more preparation you do before the trip, the more you will get out of it. This preparation will include some physical conditioning, Biblical study, and memorization. If you start early, it won't be a substantial time commitment.

Physical Fitness

I will do my best to adjust the rigor of the trip to the physical capabilities of the group. However, **Turkey is a pretty hilly country.** We will walk roughly 2-4 miles each day, with multiple stops along the way. However, those will often be hilly miles. If you do not walk or run regularly, I would strongly encourage you to start a regular regimen at least 6 months before the trip. If you have access to stairs, I would also recommend getting some frequent practice climbing (and descending) them. A little preparation goes a long way.

Stepping Into the Jordan

Turkey Study Trip June 2021

Reading

I have found that having familiarity with the biblical text is essential to get the most from a study trip. I also realize that everyone may have constraints that impact how much they can read, so I have broken this down into levels. Again, the more you can do, the better.

Required Reading:

New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, Revelation (try to memorize Rev 2-3)
Across the Wine Dark Sea by Thomas Cahill

Good to Read:

New Testament: Gospel of John, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, 1-3 John

Optional Reading:

The New Testament World by Bruce Malina
The Lost Letters of Pergamum by Bruce Longnecker
A Week in the Life of Ephesus by David DeSilva

Even if you regularly study your Bible, I would encourage you to reread these texts, so they are fresh in your mind for the trip.

Memorization

An essential element of Jewish liturgy for thousands of years has been the Sh'ma. You might say that this is the foundational creed of Judaism from the time of Moses through today. I am very confident that Jesus said the Sh'ma every morning and evening of his teenage and adult life. In keeping with this tradition, we will recite an amended version of the Sh'ma at the start and end of each day—in both Hebrew and English (taken from Matthew 22:34-40). I encourage you to memorize the Hebrew and English versions below. As the trip departure date gets closer, I will e-mail all participants an audio file to help you better pronounce the Hebrew.

The Sh'ma

Hebrew

Sh'ma Yisrael
Adonai Eloheinu
Adonai Echad
Ve Ahavta et Adonai Eloheikha
B'khol Le Vavkha
Uv'khol Nafshekha
Uv'khol Meodekha
Ve Ahavta Le Reakha Kamokha

English

Hear, O Israel
The LORD is our God,
The LORD alone.
Love the LORD, your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your might.
And love your neighbor as yourself.

Stepping Into the Jordan

Turkey Study Trip June 2021

What to Bring:

The GTI webpage for the trip has detailed information about what you should pack. I encourage you to read that information carefully. I will mention a few specific things here that I think are especially important.

Hiking Shoes

The most essential item for you to bring is a pair of good-fitting, well broken-in hiking shoes. I would recommend that they be well ventilated and **NOT** waterproof. There are times when we may need to walk through water. Having proper ventilation ensures that they will dry quickly, minimizing the risk of blisters.

If you already have a pair of hiking boots that you are comfortable with, that's great! If not, I would strongly suggest that you go to a reputable store, like REI, to get professionally fit. Please make sure that you test them out, walking **DOWN** an incline. It's the downhill walking where you really find out if they are a good fit.

I know some people like to hike in Chaco's (hiking sandals). If you have experience with them, then I think they are fine. However, I'd recommend hiking shoes as the better option. There will be times when we will be off the beaten path. There may be thorns or prickly weeds. The best protection is a good pair of hiking boots. Anything that might injure your foot could ruin your trip.

Modesty Kits

Turkey sits at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Culturally it is like many Middle Eastern countries. As such, there are times when it will be important for us to respect the culture when it comes to dress. Some sites require modest dress. You will need to have a "Modesty Kit" to either wear all day or be able to change into before entering those sites.

Modesty Kit:

- Long pants or skirt that covers your ankles
- A Shirt that covers your shoulders
- Scarf for head covering (women only)

A good option is a pair of zip-off hiking pants for those days where a modesty kit may be necessary.

Stepping Into the Jordan

Turkey Study Trip June 2021

Trip Price:

A trip of this nature is an investment. For many people, it's a once-in-a-lifetime event. I have worked hard with GTI to minimize the price as best we can, while also ensuring the quality of the experience. Turkey is generally a good value in-country.

I will share something that was told to me on my first trip biblical study trip. Consider this trip as an investment that God is making in you. How will you take that investment and generate even greater returns for the Kingdom of God?

The all-inclusive price for this trip is \$4,310. The GTI trip page outlines the payment plan. This price includes the following:

- Round Trip Coach Bus Transportation between Austin & Houston IAH
- Round Trip Airfare from Houston to Istanbul and internal flights
- Option to upgrade to Business Class for an additional fee, subject to availability.
- Hotel Accommodations in Turkey
- Buffet Breakfast and Dinner each day
- Lunches served onsite
- Deluxe Coach Transportation in Turkey
- All necessary entrance fees
- Porterage Fees and Taxes
- Tips for Guide and Bus Driver
- Study Guide, Bible, Flashlight, Plug Adapter & Journal
- Osprey Hydration Pack with Bottled Water on Tour

If you register before December 14, 2020, there is a \$100 discount off the list price.

The price does not include the following:

- Turkish Visa
- Drinks with meals (other than water)
- Souvenirs
- An optional "Love Offering" that we will collect for our local Guide and Bus Driver above and beyond the tips included in the price.

How To Register:

To register for the trip, you can go to my website, www.SteppingIntoTheJordan.com. At the top right of the page, there is a link to Study Trips.

Have Additional Questions?

I am excited to be leading this trip and sharing my love for the land and the Bible with you. My prayer is that it will impact you as much as it has affected me.

Feel free to e-mail me at rob.kranz@steppingintothejordan.com with any other questions you might have.