

## ANCIENT RUINS OF EPHESUS (Duration: 6 hours including lunch)



After arriving in Kusadasi, you will meet your guide at the port for private sightseeing in Ephesus.

First, visit the charming **House of Virgin Mary**, where the Virgin Mary is believed to have lived the last years of her life. The stone building was “rediscovered” by a French priest in 1881, then again in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Lazarist missionaries, propelled by visions by a German nun. The site has been declared a shrine by the Roman Catholic Church and has subsequently been visited by Pope Paul VI in 1967, Pope John Paul II in 1979 and by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006.

You will literally walk into history in the ancient city of **Ephesus**, which in its heyday, was the largest regional center of commerce with an estimated population of around 225,000. It was the most important city in Asia Minor, following only Constantinople. It is estimated that roughly 15% of the total city has actually been excavated. Today, you’ll visit the following sites:

The **Odeon Theatre** had a seating capacity of about 1,500 seats. Built in 150 A.D., it was primarily used for small plays, concerts and official public ceremonies. The Hadrian Temple was dedicated in 118 AD to both Hadrian and to the goddess Artemis, it underwent reconstruction in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This impressive Corinthian-style temple has beautiful reliefs on the porch. According to the belief of the Ephesians, the Medusa head on the porch would protect the city from its enemies.

Proceed to the **Celsus Library**, the library is the best preserved structure of its kind. The inscription on the side of the building's front staircase states that the library was built by Julius, in his father's honor, after his death. His father, Celsus, was the Roman governor of Asia Minor early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD; Celsus' sarcophagus is buried beneath the library.

You will make a visit to the spectacular **Terrace Houses (villas)** located on top of the hill within Ephesus. They have a fantastic view of the entire city of Ephesus. They were inhabited by wealthy Ephesians, and are finely decorated with incredible mosaics and frescoes. The Terrace Houses were discovered in excavations carried in the 1980s by a team of Austrian archeologists. Along with those in Pompeii, they constitute some of the most vivid examples of Roman domestic architecture to survive today.

Next, visit the **Great Theatre**, which dates back to the Hellenistic period. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, it was successfully reconstructed and expanded by the Romans until it reached the seating capacity of 25,000. This is also the place where it is believed that St. Paul preached. It is still used for performances today, and is believed to be the largest theatre in the ancient world.

A leisurely **lunch** will be served in a local village home, so you can experience the taste of traditional Anatolian cuisine in an authentic setting. Enjoy tasting some different local wines during lunch as well.

After lunch, visit the **Ephesus Museum**, where many artifacts are on display. Highlights include: a well-preserved fresco of Socrates, statues of Eros, crosses, Hellenistic and Roman coins and other pieces dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The famous Statue of Artemis is housed here.

At the end of your day, you will return to Kusadasi and have some time for shopping before embarking on your ship.

(NOTE: Contact us for half-day tour options.)