

CONDÉ NAST  
**Traveler**

**Kusadasi, Turkey**

One of the world's largest and best-preserved ancient Roman cities, Ephesus was home to a quarter of a million people in the first century B.C.—and when cruise ships dock at Kuşadasi, 20 minutes away, you may feel like the city's population has rebounded to its ancient peak. To get there before the tour buses barrel in, depart the pier with a guide, car, and driver, arranged through Karen Fedorko Sefer, president of Sea Song Tours, as soon as your ship pulls in. (If you want to go guideless with an Avis car and driver, have the driver greet you shipside to avoid the delay of picking up a car in town.)

Sefer's guides can get you in to **Ephesus** before it opens to the public (8 a.m. in summer, 9 a.m. in winter), and your first stop should be the Terrace Houses, which offer a rare glimpse into Roman domestic life and are not included on many cruise ship excursions. "Their frescoes and mosaics were protected from the elements for centuries," says Sefer.



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Down the road, the much-photographed Celsus Library is even more spectacular in person, even though the once-grand interior and the 12,000 scrolls it housed were destroyed by fire in the third century. Head from ancient cities to country life at your next stop, the 400-year-old mountain village of **Şirince**, its streets lined with women crocheting and stalls where you can buy

souvenirs such as locally made wine (Sefer recommends apple, strawberry, and melon) and olive oil soap. For lunch, those who go with a guide can enjoy a meal in a private home overlooking the nearby olive groves. “The lady of the house will have spent all morning rolling *dolma*, or stuffed grape leaves,” says Sefer, and the menu will likely include *kofte*, tender meatballs made using family recipes. Meals conclude with thick Turkish coffee and a visit from a local fortune-teller, who will read your future in the grounds in your cup. If you’re on your own, go for the home cooking served on the lovely terrace at Ayşe Hanim Gözleme (Yedince Sokak 13; 90-232-898-3194; entrées from \$5).

After a leisurely lunch, stop in the nearby town of **Selçuk** to see the small but treasure-filled Ephesus Museum (90-232-892-6010), then visit the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, where only a lone pillar remains.

Your final stop before the 45-minute drive back to your ship is the **House of the Virgin Mary**, a stone cottage turned chapel where it is said that Mary lived out her final days.

WITH OUR PRO \$320 for two, including guide, car and driver, all entries, and lunch; book through **Karen Fedorko Sefer**, president of Sea Song Tours, which has an office in Kuşadası (90-212-292-8555)

ON YOUR OWN Car and driver, \$76 per day; book through Avis (90-25-66-14-46-00)