



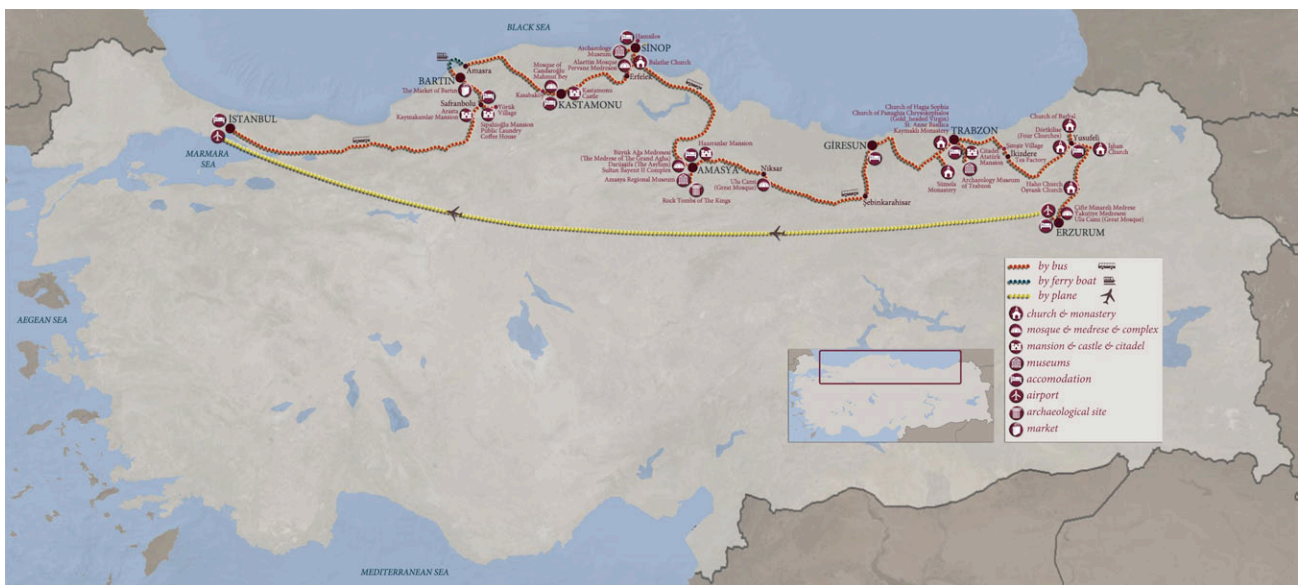
PETÉN TRAVELS

TRAVEL BEYOND THE ORDINARY

THE WONDERS OF THE BLACK SEA REGION

The Glory of East Byzantium, Georgian Art, Architecture and Culture

Sunday, June 7th - Monday, June 22nd
(15 Nights, 16 Days)



“At this, Homeric time, the Sea was not navigable and was called ‘Axenos’, meaning inhospitable because of its wintry storms and the ferocity of the tribes that lived around it, particularly the Scythians, in that they sacrificed strangers...but later it was called ‘Euxeinos,’ meaning friendly to strangers when the Ionians founded cities on the seaboard” Strabo, *Geography*

Wildly beautiful and steeped in history, art and culture, Turkey’s Black Sea Region remains “an undiscovered paradise.” With this unique itinerary Petén Travels will lead you off the beaten tourist track, taking you to natural sites that are simply breathtaking! For the whole journey you will be lead under the tutelage of expert guides who will reveal unforgettable cultural and historical remnants and artifacts. This is also a journey allowing you to witness Black Sea life and customs, much of which are very different from the traditional “Anatolian.”

Day 1 Istanbul

Special category hotel

Participants in the small group are met by a Peten Travels staff member upon their arrival and are transferred and checked into their hotel. Guests meet one another and key staff members while enjoying a welcome drink before sitting down to dinner. **(D)**

Day 2 Safranbolu

Gül Evi (Rose House) or similar special category hotel

Travelling distance: 425 km ~ 264 miles

After breakfast we drive along the highway via Bolu to **Safranbolu** where we will stay two nights. Safranbolu is one of the most attractive little towns at the entrance to the Black Sea region. UNESCO placed it on the World Cultural Heritage list in appreciation for the very successful efforts undertaken towards preserving its heritage. Its houses are perfect examples of civil Ottoman architecture, reflecting the Turkish social life of the 18th and 19th centuries. We stroll through the cobbled streets and enjoy its traditional fountains, the historical mansions (Konaklar), mosques and baths and then pause for a moment to watch the craftsmen at work in the **Arasta**. We visit the 18th century **Kaymakamlar Konağı** (Mansion of officials) and drive up to the **Citadel**. **(B, D)**

Day 3 Safranbolu

Gül Evi (Rose House)

Travelling distance: 85 km ~ 53 miles

A short drive brings us to the **Yörük** (“nomad”) **Village**, where many prosperous Muslim businessmen and farmers once had their *konaks*. A typical mansion rests on a stone basement with the rooms on the upper floors reaching out over the narrow lanes of the town or into their private gardens. We then examine the architectural texture of the **Sipahioğlu Mansion**, the socio-cultural characteristics of Yörük Village, and then visit the **public laundry** and **coffee house**. We stop at the colorful market of **Bartın**, and then to **Amasra**, a picturesque port that crowns the coast with a perfect castle sitting on top of a tiny rock peninsula, the place was a Genoese colony until 1461. We take a private boat to explore the hidden beauty of the nature before we return to Safranbolu. **(B, D)**

Day 4 Kastamonu

Uğurlu Konakları (renovated Ottoman mansions)

Travelling distance: 230 km ~143 miles

After breakfast we drive northeast to the charming village of **Kasabaköy** where we visit the wooden **Mosque of Candaroğlu Mahmut Bey** dating from 1336. This is a masterpiece building dating from the Emirates period. The impressively ribbed roof and several of the 12-meter tall pillars of carved timber are all original and no nails were used in the construction. We continue on to Kastamonu and view the city from its 112-meter high **castle**. We end the day at the weaving school and traditional woodcarving center. Don't forget to taste or purchase Kastamonu's rose jam. **(B, D)**

Day 5 Sinop

Antik or Vira hotel

Travelling distance: 194 km ~120 miles (winding road)

Journey into the north east point of Turkey, Sinop

Sinop was the first, and for a long time the most important, Greek colony of the Pontic basin, built at the narrowest point of a peninsula with a seaport on each side. The city was first settled as a colony of the distant Miletus on the southern Aegean, and true to the philosophical traditions of its mother-city, it produced **Diogenes**, the founder of the School of Cynicism. A splendid mantle of forest, mostly of fir and larch, covers

the mountains south of Sinop. This forest once supplied the wood for the ships of the Ottoman navy. After we check into our hotel, we walk through the ancient Sinop, first visit the **Archaeology Museum**, houses an excellent collection of pottery, glass, architectural elements and some Roman mosaics and continue to **Balatlar Church**, built in 660 A.D, an excellent example of brick and stone masonry. From there we walk to the 13th century Seljuk **Alaattin Mosque**. Adjoining the Alaattin Cami is the **Pervane Medresesi** built by the Selçuk vizier, Süleyman Pervane. **(B, D)**

Day 6 Sinop

Antik or Vira Hotel

Today we explore the surroundings of Sinop and ahead off to **Erfelek** to see the daily life and selling power of the village women in the local market and have a shopping experience for the picnic lunch. All fresh fruits, vegetables, cheese, bread, honey, yogurt are so inexpensive, continue to the attractive cove, **Hamsilos**, one of the three in the whole south shore of the Black Sea and stop at **Ak Limanı** to have our picnic lunch and drive up to the Ince Burnu for photography before we return to Sinop. **(B, D)**

Day 7 Amasya

Apple Palace Hotel (4-star hotel)

Travelling distance: 253 km ~157 miles

“Ottoman Classics” /“The city of Shahzadahs”

We follow the Yeşilırmak, “Green River”, inland to Amasya, the loveliest town in the Anatolian interior. The river bisects the town, its banks lined with the stately houses of the 19th century with rich massive rock tombs of the kings of Pontus looming overhead. The town was an important center through Hellenistic, Byzantine and Turkish times. This city was the birthplace of a couple of Byzantine and Ottoman monarchs, as well as the geographer, **Strabo**. Today it houses a rich complement of monuments from the Danishmend, Seljuk, Mongol and Ottoman periods. The most pleasant way to explore this beautiful city is on foot. We first visit the **Medrese of the Grandağa**: the octagonal plan of this building is rare in Ottoman architecture. We finally visit the **Darüşşifa (The Asylum)**, built between the years 1308-1309 in the name of the ruler of İlhanlı, Sultan Mehmet Olcaytu and his wife Ilduz Hatun. **(B, D)**

Day 8 Amasya

Apple Palace

Walking day

After breakfast we continue with our exploration of this interesting city by foot. We cross the old bridges over the Green River to see the traditional Amasya houses and visit the **Hazeranlar Konağı** (Mansion) that lies on the shores of the Yeşilırmak, located within the Roman castle walls. This mansion occupies a place of great importance and value among the examples of 19th century civil architecture. We next stop at the **Sultan Beyazit II Complex (Küllüye)** dating from 1486. Then we pause for a photo stop at the **Rock Tombs of the Kings** from the Hellenistic Period. We last visit the Amasya regional museum where we have the chance to examine some of the gravestones from several periods which are exhibited in the **Museum’s garden**. Then we visit the **Mummies** (the National Geography TV Channel has made a documentary film about these Mummies) from the 14th century. In terms of their mummifying technique, they are different from other examples of mummies found else where around the world. We spend a leisurely afternoon. **(B, D)**

Day 9 Giresun

New Jasmine (4-star hotel)

Travelling distance: 330 km ~ 206 miles

We leave Amasya to travel a scenic route through to the heart of the coastline, to **Giresun**. We stop at **Niksar**, which served as the capital of the Danishmend dynasty in the 12th century. Its **Ulu Cami** (Grand Mosque) built in 1145, is one of the earliest Turkish mosques in the country. We take the route of

Şebinkarahisar through the Black Sea Mountain range into deep Black Sea country. The mountains get higher, the climate wetter, the music wilder, and the *hamsi* (anchovy) more abundant. We will stop at several points for brief walks and several photo opportunities. Giresun is famous for its hazelnuts, which are grown in vast quantities along the stretch of the coast between Ünye and Trabzon. Upon our arrival in Giresun we check into our hotel. **(B, D)**

Day 10 Trabzon

Grand Zorlu or Nov Hotel (4-star)

Travelling distance: 137 km ~ 86 miles

“The Glory of East Byzantium”

In the 7th century B.C, colonies from Sinop settled a short distance drive along the coastline in a place that was later to become the capital city of the Pontus Empire, Trapezus. This city experienced a time of great splendor as the seat of a breakaway Byzantine court between 1204 and 1261. Our visit lets us examine the art and culture of the Middle Byzantine Era. We first visit the imperial **Church of Hagia Sophia** from the period of Emperor Manuel I and then the **Church of Panaghia Chrysokephalos** (Gold-headed Virgin) built in the basilica style in the 10th century, and converted into a cross shape in the 12th century. Then it is on to the 8th century **St. Anne Basilica**. We enjoy the panoramic view of the city from the **Citadel** while appreciating the elegant nouveau residence called the **Atatürk Mansion** that was built in 1903 for Constantine Kapagiannidis, a prominent Greek who was mentioned as a possible president for the would-be Pontic Republic. We drive 1km further to visit the **Kaymaklı Monastery**. Now a farm, this complex housed a community of Armenian monks until 1923. Fortunately, the fine 17th century wall paintings of its chapel have been preserved from the weather. **(B, D)**

Day 11 Trabzon

Grand Zorlu or Nov Hotel (4-star)

Travelling distance: 40 km ~ 25 miles

This morning we have a short drive via the town of Maçka to the **Sumela Monastery**. Perched improbably on a cliff that rises 500 meters from a forest valley, the deserted monastery forms a breathtaking sight. The core of the compound is a cave church built beside a holy spring in a natural hollow. The frescoes, which cover the cave church inside and out, as well as some of the natural rock and the walls of a smaller chapel, come in four layers dating from the 14th century. The environment is as enchanting as the monastery itself. We then visit the **Archaeology Museum of Trabzon**, recently opened after decades of restoration. Originally the residence of a local Greek banker, it was built at the turn of the 20th century and displays of its conspicuous wealth are dazzling even by late-Victorian standards. The archaeological collection housed in the basement contains a beautiful Roman statue of Hermes. *(Today you will need a pair of good grip soled shoes for there are steep steps and slippery stones at the Sumela monastery.)* **(B, D)**

Day 12 Yusufeli

Barcelona Hotel (3-star, acceptable base for exploring beautiful region)

Travelling distance: 194 km ~122 miles

“Georgian Art, Architecture and Culture”

Georgians have inhabited the southern Caucasian, the Kura and Çoruh valleys for as long as anyone can recall. Their non Indo-European language suggests that they may even have been here before the Hittites and the Urartu. During the centuries of Greek and Roman expansion a Georgian kingdom held sway in Caucasia, while the ancestors of today’s Laz, a close relative of the Georgians, ruled in the lesser kingdom of Colchis by the Black Sea. The king of Georgia adopted Christianity shortly after his Armenian counterpart did, but unlike Armenians, Georgians never broke with the Eastern Orthodox Church, and managed to maintain their independence, in the face of Roman, Byzantine, Persian, Arab and Turkish incursions. More than a dozen major churches of the medieval Georgian kingdom hide in the remote valleys and villages of the mountainous Artvin province. Today we stop at a **tea factory** in Rize followed by a very scenic drive through the lush tea

plantations. After İkizdere we have a very steep 2.4 km ride to the **Şimşir village** in order to visit the delightful gem of a mosque that was built entirely of chestnut and carved with great virtuosity in 1848-49. It hides behind a jungle of bean fields and maize stalks in a beautiful village.

We drive into the wilderness of the Coruh Valley to visit the **Dörtkilise** “Four Churches”, or “Otkhta Eklesia” in Georgian, that is a bare and magnificent church of cathedral-like size that stands all alone in a beautiful meadow encircled by walnut and cherry groves.

At the close of the tour we settle into our very basic, while very clean, accommodation. **(B, D)**

Day 13 Yusufeli

Barcelona Hotel

Travelling distance: 38 km ~ 23 miles

After breakfast, we take the local mini bus along a bumpy road straight out of Camel Trophy. Climbing along the ever-wilder cascades of the Barhal stream, we reach the charming, well-watered village of Barhal at an altitude of 1000 m. The 10th century **Church of Barhal** (Parkhali in Georgian) presents a strikingly modern appearance with its starkly angular mass and sloping “Nordic” roof. It is put to good use as a mosque for it thus remains in a near-perfect state of preservation. Our group enjoys a homemade lunch on the terrace of a family run pension in the village of Barhal. We return to Yusufeli and explore the town, before driving on to one of Artvin’s most fascinating Georgian churches, **the Işhan Church**. In location and effect, as well as sheer size, maket this church truly memorable. A drive from the naked desert of the Oltu gorge brings us, very surprisingly, to a storybook village full of ancient timber houses set in a lush oasis of apples, walnuts and mulberries. The church rests quietly in the backyard of the village school. The inscription names 1032 as the date of construction, although the horseshoe shaped colonnade of the choir may date from 828 or even earlier. **(B, D)**

Day 14 Erzurum

Polat Renaissance (5-star hotel at Palandöken Mountain)

Travelling distance: 130 km ~ 82 miles

“Masterpieces of Seljuks in Erzurum”

After breakfast we continue the journey along the Tortum Lake to the **Öşvank** and **Haho churches** dating from 973. They are considered the final architectural culmination of the Çoruh “renaissance”. Then we continue to **Erzurum**-the ancient **Theodosiopolis**. In the afternoon we visit the architectural masterpiece of **the Çifte Minareli Medrese** which was built under the Seljuk ruler, Alaeddin Keykubat II. The Mongols, in their turn, built the **Yakutiye Medrese** in 1310, named after the local governor of Ogeday, a grandson of Gengiz Khan who held court in Tabriz. We end the day at the **Ulu Cami** built in 1179 by Melik Mehmet, grandson of Ali Ibn Saltık, the founder of the Saltuk rulers of Erzurum. **(B, D)**

Day 15 Istanbul

Special category hotel

We spend a leisurely morning before boarding our direct flight to Istanbul. We bid our farewells at a dinner at an exclusive local restaurant. **(B, D)**

Day 16 Return flight

After breakfast, participants are transferred to the International Atatürk airport to make their return flights. **(B)**

PLEASE NOTE: The itinerary involves a good deal of walking. Good comfortable footwear is therefore essential. It should be pointed out that the tour might not be suitable for passengers who require assistance or

who have difficulties with mobility. Please make sure you enjoy walking, hiking, rough driving to remote Georgian churches, good local food and cultural interaction.

Trip limited to a maximum of 10 participants

Tour price

€6080 Euro per person based on double occupancy (twin /double bedded room)

€485 Euro single room supplement

What's included in this price?

- Specialist leadership
- Best available hotels and meals as noted in the itinerary (B=Breakfast D=Dinner). Special category boutique hotels are the renovated mansions or Ottoman houses.
- Bottled mineral water during transportation
- All ground transportation by a/c, deluxe vehicle. Local mini bus, without a/c, to the remote churches will be used.
- Arrival and departure transfers
- All entrance fees to the museums and sites in the itinerary
- Domestic flight fare from Erzurum to Istanbul
- Meticulously prepared tour folder with maps and information to the participant get the most from the tour
- Parking fares, local taxes, all gratuities to hotel & restaurant staffs and baggage handling
- Private boat trip

What's not included?

- International outbound & return flight fare
- Cost of obtaining passport and visa, airport taxes, excess baggage fees
- Lunch
- Personal expenses such as laundry, room service, beverages, communication charges...
- Discretionary gratuities to your guide and driver.

AN ISTANBUL EXTENSION TOUR TO PRECEDE THIS TOUR IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.