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## **BYZANTINE RELICS**

### **FULL DAY CITY TOUR PROGRAMME**

Our full day tour begins with a visit to the depths of Istanbul, to **Yerebatan Sarnıcı**, called the **Sunken Palace Cistern**. Beneath Istanbul lie hundreds of gloomy Byzantine cisterns. They are left from the days of Constantinople. The grandest of all is **Yerebatan Saray Sarnıcı**, called the **Sunken Palace Cistern** because of its size (70 x 140 meters, or 2.4 acres), its capacity (80,000 cubic meters--over 21 million US gallons) and its 336 marble columns. Walkways and atmospheric lighting were installed during the 1990s so you can see all its curious corners. There's even a little cafe for drinks and snacks. You will be lost in the voice of each drop coming from the cisterns.

We will continue with **Saint Sophia**. Built by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century AD, this church is one of the marvels of world architecture. Its massive dome dominates the skyline of old Istanbul. It is famed for its mosaics, including glittering portraits of emperors and empresses. Many of the architectures accept the building as the star of the Christianity. A beautiful example of the beginning of Byzantine renaissance with its mosaics frescoes depicting the scenes from the lives of the mother of God and Christ. The church **Saint Sophia** of Byzantine was re-established as a mosque after the Conquest of Istanbul in 1453. In our present day it is used as a museum for humanity to come and witness the history. No matter how Ottomans tried to change it, **Saint Sophia** still keeps the soul of Christianity in it. As you found the Ottoman soul in our Ottoman Heritages tour, with this tour you will be able to feel and learn more about Christianity, starting with a major point like Saint Sophia.

Our next stop will be a visit through **The Great Palace Mosaic Museum**. The Museum houses mosaics from the Byzantine period, unearthed at the site of the **Great Palace of Constantinople**. It is believed that the Great Palace of Constantinople was constructed during the reign of **Justinian I (527-565)**. The Great Palace mosaic was the largest and the most beautiful landscape in antiquity (6th century A.D). Nowhere in the world of late antiquity can we find a building with a tessellated pavement of similar size and perfection of workmanship. It was probably made by an imperial workshop that must surely have employed the best craftsmen gathered from all corners of the Byzantine Empire, guided by a master artist. Depending on your interest in mosaics, you could spend between one and three hours here. Now it is time to stop and have a lunch! Lunch will be served at Sarnıcı Restaurant [www.sarnicrestaurant.com](http://www.sarnicrestaurant.com)

#### Meal Plan

- Byzantium style soup
- Seasonal Salad
- Soy sauced chicken sauteed pieces with cooked rice and mached potatoes
- Sweet samolina pastry with ice cream
- 1 soft drink
- Coffee / Tea

The overpowering presence of the past is one of the things that makes Istanbul such a great city for the traveller. For those who love it, Istanbul remains, as in its days as the capital of empires, the city at the centre of the world. This is obviously seen with **Yedikule** which is a embodiment of the past. **The Yedikule (Seven Towers)** city gate is located along the 5,632 meter-long land walls, which start at the end of the sea walls. It is one of the main entrances to the city. Over the gate, there is the double-headed eagle of Byzantium. Inside **Yedikule** is

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another imposing gate, built in 390 by Theodosius I as the arch of victory for the commanders returning home from victorious battle. It was later turned into one of the fortress gates after Theodosius II added the new city walls to the old ones. The Byzantines called this gate **Porta Aurea** (golden gate). After the conquest, the Turks added new fortress which formed an independent castle and gave it the name **Yedikule**. The Ottoman Treasury was kept in this tower for a while, and it was turned into a prison for political prisoners in later times. Only the ruins of the minaret of the mosque which was built for the guardians can be seen today. The ruins of the amphitheater also remain. The best view of the city walls and fortress is from the Tower of Sultan Ahmet III, and in some places it's even possible to walk along the land walls.

**Our next and final stop will be The Chora Museum** (Turkish Kariye Müzesi, Kariye Camii, or Kariye Kilisesi — the Chora Museum, Mosque or Church) is considered to be one of the most beautiful examples of a Byzantine church. The church is situated in the western, Edirnekapı district of Istanbul. In the 16th century, the church was converted into a mosque by the Ottoman rulers, and it became a secularised museum in 1948. The interior of the building is covered with fine mosaics and frescoes.

Our tour ends here. We hope you enjoyed it!

Tours run everyday *except* Mondays (**Saint Sophia** and **Great Palace Mosaic Museums** are closed) and Wednesdays (**Yedikule** is closed)

Program inclusions

- Full day Transportation by A/C coach
- Guiding services in English
- Sites and Museum Entrances ( Saint Sophia, Great Palace Mosaics Museum, Chora Museum, Sunken Palace Cistern )
- Parking fees, tips to the restaurants
- Meal as per given plan
- VAT of %18

Net Non Commissionable

Valid for min 25 full paying pax

**Price per person: 115,00 USD**