FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST PAUL

It is sometimes said that if it was not for St Paul there would have been no Christianity. It was through his missionary journeys, from about 44 AD to 60 AD that the Christian message was spread to the gentile world. St Paul made three journeys from Antioch across the Eastern Mediterranean and Anatolia, now modern day Turkey, to Thrace and finally onto Rome and in the process he founded some of the earliest Christian churches.

St Paul was born in Tarsus, around 5 AD, a time when the Eastern Mediterranean was under Roman Rule. In 33 AD, on his way to Damascus in Syria he had a religious experience, or revelation, which he believed to be of the resurrected Christ. From this moment on he became a Christian and was later known as Paul rather than Saul, his Hebrew name. As a Jew, Paul was familiar with the Jewish Diaspora across the Eastern Mediterranean and while on his travels he visited and preached to these Jewish communities. As a Roman citizen he was also able to make use of the excellent communication links of the Roman Empire.

During this cruise and from the comfort of the all-suite MS Island Sky we will have an opportunity to follow in the footsteps of St Paul, visiting Alexandria-Troas, Patmos, Perge and Tarsus. We will also visit Ephesus, which at the time of St Paul was second only to Rome in size and importance. During St Paul’s three-year stay in Ephesus he frequently preached on the steps of the Library, and whilst there wrote four letters, or Epistles; to the Galatians, Corinthians, Philemon and Philippians. It is also believed that St John the Apostle, author of the Fourth Gospel, possibly brought Mary the Mother of Jesus to Ephesus towards the end of her life. We also visit the island of Patmos where St John the Divine wrote the Book of Revelation to the Seven Churches of Asia, some of which we will be visiting.
The life of St Paul and the early Church was set within the context of the Roman Empire, which in turn succeeded the ancient Greek Empire. During our visits to the ancient sites we will see evidence of Greek, Roman and also Byzantium history and culture. The Ottomans followed the Byzantines and ever since the region has been predominantly Muslim.

Our journey takes us through an area steeped in history; a history of great empires of conquest and in conflict, a history rich in cultural and religious diversity. It is an area that can lay claim to the foundation of the early Christian Church; a place where not only churches were built but where Christian doctrine was first formulated at the great Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople and Ephesus. While many of these early churches no longer exist, the sense of place remains and the legacy of St Paul lives on.

ITINERARY

Day 1 - London to Istanbul, Turkey.
Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival transfer to the MS Island Sky and sail.

Day 2 - Cannakale.
After breakfast join a full day tour to Troy which is associated with the sagas of Trojan War and its description by Homer (750 B.C.) in his two epic poems The Iliad and The Odyssey. Archaeological digs have revealed nine cities and various ruins of the city walls, typical house foundations, a temple and a theatre. En-route we will visit the Archaeological museum. After a local lunch drive towards Alexandria Troas which has a large unexcavated ancient site. It was founded by Antigonos, one of the commanders of Alexander the Great, in 310 B.C. During the time of St. Paul it was known as Alexandeia-Troas and Paul stayed and sailed from here.

Day 3 - Pergamon.
On a full day tour, drive inland, past fertile fields and olive trees, to the present day modern town of Bergama, once known as Pergamon, a great centre of culture. Today Pergamon is one of Turkey’s finest archaeological sites. We will visit the Asclepion, a healing centre from the 4th century B.C. as well as the Temple of Asclepios and the amphitheatre. Walk through the sacred corridor and down the ancient, arcaded, marble paved boulevard. Continue into the town of Bergama where we will have some free time to explore. En-route we will see the Basilica which was one of the earliest of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor. Take a cable car up to the Acropolis to explore the remains of the citadel and the city walls, the foundations of the Zeus Altar, and the Royal Palace. A local lunch will be served ashore.

Day 4 - Kusadasi & Ephesus.
Arriving at Kusadasi at breakfast time we drive to the nearby ancient city of Ephesus, a stunning and partially excavated site where digging has been taking place for over a century. Broad streets are lined by impressive buildings including the library of Celsus and the temples of Serapis and Hadrian. Once the capital of Ionia, St Paul preached here on his second missionary journey and we will see the Church of the Virgin Mary, the most important Christian monument in Ephesus. We will see the spectacular Grand Theatre, originally built in the
Day 5 - Patmos, Greece.

Of all the Greek islands, Patmos, is the most sacred to Christians both Orthodox and Western; it was here that St John received his revelation. This morning we will make our way to the grotto of St John. This small cave, now converted into the beautiful chapel, is where the Saint lived, had his revelation and wrote Book of the Apocalypse. From here continue to the village of Chora, with its simple houses and Byzantine churches and climb to the Monastery of St John the Theologian. Upon entering into the courtyard, admire the intricate pebbled laid floor, decorated arches and frescoes adorning the entrance to the chapel of Christodoulos. Return to the MS Island Sky for lunch. This afternoon and evening is free to explore the picturesque town of Skala or maybe enjoy a swim at a nearby beach.

Day 6 - Didim, Miletus & Priene, Turkey.

From the port of Didim we will drive to Priene an ancient Greek holy city and the home of an important temple of Athena. Prienes picturesque ruins include several columns of the Temple of Athena, much of the city wall, a well-preserved theatre and a council chamber. We will continue to Miletus one of the most important cities in ancient Greek world and visited by St Paul on his third missionary journey. Here is a fine theatre, well laid out chessboard street plans, two agoras (market places), baths, a council chamber, fortifications, a stadium and harbour workings. After lunch onboard we will have time to explore the colossal temple and oracle to Apollo in Didim. Please note that we may be at anchor today in which instance the vessels Zodiacs will be used to access the shore.

Day 7 - Xanthos & Patara.

From our berth at Fethiye we travel to the south east to discover the rich Lycian towns of the past. Drive along Esme River to the ancient city of Xanthos which was Lycias prominent capital city built on a great cliff overlooking the river. Continue to Letoon, a city named after Leto, mother Goddess of Lycians. See the ruins of the temples dedicated to Leto, Artemis and Apollo and the amphitheatre. Enjoy a local lunch before visiting Patara located amidst sand dunes and by a long sandy beach. The city was conquered by Alexander the Great and St Paul stopped here on his way to Rome in A.D 60. It was also the birthplace of St. Nicholas. See the Grand Theatre and the ruins of the temples. Please note that we may be at anchor today in which instance the vessels Zodiacs will be used to access the shore.

Day 8 - Aspendos & Perge.

Over breakfast we arrive in Antalya from where we explore the principal Roman ruins along Turkeys southern coast. We pass the modern city of Antalya en-route to the ancient city of Aspendos, whose amphitheatre, built in the 2nd century A.D., is considered the best preserved in the Mediterranean. Dating from 1000 B.C., the city of Aspendos was a major port and the most important centre in the region during the 5th century B.C. We will also visit Perge which dates back to 1000 B.C. and was founded by Mopsus and Calchas after their retreat from Troy. St Paul visited here on at least two occasions mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. See the Basilica of Perge, which played an important role in the spread of Christianity, the 2nd century A.D.
stadium, the baths complex and two magnificent round towers of the Greek Gate. After a local lunch continue to Antalya to visit the excellent Archaeological Museum.

Day 9 - Alanya & Side.
On a morning excursion, drive through the town, with views of the Taurus Mountains in the east, then towards Incekum along the Turkish Riviera to the west, where we pass citrus and banana plantations and visit Damlatas Cave which is a masterpiece of nature, known for its curative effect on asthma. Drive along the beautiful Turkish Riviera towards the ancient city of Side which was one of the leading Pamphylian cities on the south coast of Anatolia. We will enter the ancient city through the large main gate built during the Hellenistic period. Visit the Grand Theatre, a perfect example of a Roman theatre built on vaults on flat land. Walk through the town, view the old harbour and see the remains of the Apollo Temple. From the MS Island Skys central berth, you can enjoy a free afternoon and evening to explore the town of Alanya.

Mersin, the capital of Icel province borrows its name from Myrtle, the evergreen vegetation which grows in the area. From here it is a short drive to Tarsus, the birth place of St Paul which was an important part of the trade route to the interiors of Asia Minor. See the well dedicated to St Paul and the church built in 1862 to his name. Walk through the narrow streets of old Tarsus with typical stone and wooden built houses, see the Roman road in the north of the city and visit the Tarsus Museum where we see the relics from Gozlukule excavations. We end at the Ulu Mosque and Makami-sherif Mosque both converted from ancient churches. Return to the MS Island Sky for lunch and this afternoon enjoy some free time in Mersin before we sail this evening.

Day 10 - Tasucu.
Drive up into the Taurus Mountains to Uzuncaberc, a typical village built amongst the ruins of the ancient temple city of Olba, its main temple dedicated to Zeus. After lunch onboard we drive to Silifke, once ancient Seleucia founded between 296 and 280 B.C by one of Alexander the Greats generals. Here we visit the underground church of Aya Tekla, founded by Thecla, a disciple of St Paul’s teaching. Continue along the shore to Corycos where, in 191 B.C, the fleet of Antiochus the Great was defeated by the Romans. See the ancient tombs and view the castle of Kız Kalesi from the shore.

Day 11 - Mersin & Tarsus.
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Day 12 - Larnaca, Cyprus to London.
Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for your scheduled flight to London.
YOUR SHIP: ISLAND SKY

YOUR SHIP: Island Sky
VESSEL TYPE: Luxury Small Ship
LENGTH: 90 metres
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 116
BUILT/REFURBISHED: 1992 / refurbished 2018

With a maximum passenger capacity of only 116, a vessel of her size is capable of carrying many more but instead the MS Island Sky has the benefit of unusually large suites, luxuriously appointed public areas and spacious outside decks. There is a high ratio of crew to passengers- the friendly crew of 75 crew and Scandinavian captains are experienced mariners, having been in service aboard large 2000 plus passenger vessels and who now prefer a less frantic life aboard a small ship. If, like them and us, you prefer a more peaceful life at sea, you will find the MS Island Sky the perfect ship. When choosing the vessel for your next voyage of discovery, you can select a ship with endless entertainment and impersonal service or come with us where peace, high quality service and attention to detail are the order of the day. We promise there will be no organised entertainment, fancy dress, deck games or any of the usual big ship experiences. The atmosphere on board is more akin to a private yacht or country hotel. A little music in the lounge or bar after dinner, guest speakers, informative port briefings from our cruise director and of course good food which may be enjoyed leisurely in the attractive dining room. After a day ashore you will return to the comfort and peace of a well run and exceedingly comfortable ship.

_Onboard there are 57 exceptionally spacious and well designed suites. All feature a sitting room area and some have private balconies. The feeling of luxury is enhanced by the wood panelling and brass, which predominates throughout the vessel conveying the atmosphere of a private yacht. The passenger accommodation is arranged over five decks and all suites have outside views. Each affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring marble-topped vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower, large wardrobes, dressing table with large mirror and stool and excellent storage. There is a mini-fridge, flat screen television with inbuilt DVD player which can also play CDs and a telephone in each suite. Bottled water, towelling dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a programmable electronic safe, hairdryer, assorted toiletries and individually controlled air-conditioning and heating. The suites on each deck have their_
own colour theme. Soft hues and blended tones enhance the traditional maritime style making the passenger accommodation an inviting and relaxing place to be.

_Your Space_ The spacious and finely decorated public rooms include a large lounge where daily briefings and talks will be provided throughout the voyage and an elegant bar where a pianist plays periodically throughout the day. The bar also features a 24-hour tea and coffee station. The onboard library is the perfect place to relax with a book and is stocked with reference books pertaining to the places the vessel is visiting along with a selection of games and two computers with internet access. Daily newspapers and magazines are also placed in the library depending on local availability. There is also Wi-Fi access throughout the vessel. Outside there is a rear sun deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade, a bar and comfortable deck furniture for sun bathing or relaxing with a book. On the top deck there is a Jacuzzi and further observation and sun deck. There is also a small hairdressers on board with appointments made on request.

_Your Dining_ Another benefit of a small ship is the quality of the cuisine. With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the galley is able to provide delicious meals. Where possible and when it meets his high standards, the chef will obtain local produce in markets or buy the catch of the day from a passing fishing boat. Such purchases enhance the well stocked larders and bring a local touch to the varied menus.

Standard cabin
Balcony suite, Erikson Deck
Pricing