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**12**  
**DAYS**

# Eastern Turkey

## Ancient Landscapes



## AIRBORNE SDN BHD

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<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Depart for Istanbul, Turkey</b>
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<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Arrive Istanbul – Kars</b>	<b>(L, D)</b>
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Arrive Istanbul and **domestic flight to Kars**, situated on a high plateau in Northeastern Turkey, near the Armenian border where you'll realize buildings featuring Russian architecture and that the city's climate and geography are similar to that of Russian cities. The hilltop **Kars Castle** overlooks the meandering Kars River.

<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Kars – Ani – Dogubeyazit – Ishakpasa Palace – Van (2N)</b>	<b>(B, L, D)</b>
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Visit the eerily stunning medieval ruins of **Ani**. Built on the edge of a dramatic gorge (which now forms the border between Turkey and Armenia), Ani was a major Armenian trading post that straddled the Silk Road. At its peak, it is estimated that there were 5,000 churches in the city. Wander amongst the numerous cathedrals, palaces, homes, churches & fortress.

Continue to **Doğubayazit**, enjoy the beautiful landscapes of Eastern Anatolia and see the ruins left by ancient civilizations. Visit the beautiful **Ishak Pasha Palace ruins**, perched on a small hill overlooking the city. The palace, built in the 17th century, is one of the most magnificent and lavish examples of Ottoman architecture. The elaborate stone carvings on the portals and walls are exquisite.

We then continue to the **Noah's Ark mound** situated on a hillside and is one of the few possible ark sites around Mt. Ararat. Continue to **Van** for overnight.

<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Tuspa Castle, Akdamar Church, Lake Van</b>	<b>(B, L, D)</b>
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Devote the day exploring the wonderful sights around Lake Van, Turkey's largest body of water, surrounded by snow capped mountains.

Start with **Van Castle**, known as Tuspa Castle in the olden days. The castle, which overlooks Lake Van, was built by the Urartu King Sarduri 2,800 years ago.

The highlight of Lake Van would have to be the spectacular 10<sup>th</sup> century **Cathedral of the Holy Cross on Akdamar Island** accessed by a boat ride.

Visit the well preserved ruins of the **Monastery of St. Thomas of Gandzak** overlooking the lake.

<b>Day 5</b>	<b>Van – Ahlat – Tatvan – Bitlis – Mardin</b>	<b>(B, L, D)</b>
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Visit **Ahlat**, the largest Turkish-Islamic cemetery in the world, founded in 1200 by the Seljuks, has 8,169 tombstones. What makes the tombstones special is the inscriptions and decorations on them.

We pass by the beautiful town of **Tatvan** before arriving in **Bitlis**, one of the oldest settlements in Anatolia.

Pass by **Hasankeyfi**, one of the ancient settlements of the ancient world and now under the waters of the **Ilisu Dam** before reaching **Mardin**.

<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Mardin – Dara – Mardin</b>	<b>(B, L, D)</b>
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Visit the ancient Roman ruins of **Dara**, where Mesopotamia's first dam and irrigation canals were built. Discover the ancient stairways, underground aqueducts and cisterns of one of south-eastern Anatolia's forgotten gems, which were only recently opened to public.

En-route back to Mardin, we visit the **Deyrul Zafaran Monastery**, once the seat of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchate, and built on the site of a temple dedicated to the sun. Church services are still held in Aramaic, the language of Jesus.

The beautiful town of **Mardin** is perched on a mountaintop and commands magnificent views of the immense plain below. The town is filled with narrow pedestrian-only streets – in fact, the only form of transport in the town centre is by mules, which carry everything from groceries to garbage! Explore on foot the labyrinthine alleys of the Old Town and soak in the atmosphere and architecture. You will have free time for shopping local products, natural soaps, nuts, and Mardin-specialities like almond candies, dried fruits, sweets, rosary, and similar handmade accessories and souvenirs.

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<b>Day 7</b>	<b>Mardin – Diyarbakir – Adiyaman</b>	<b>(B, L, D)</b>
Depart for <b>Diyarbakir</b> , visit Diyarbakir Castle and Fortress, city walls, three-legged Minaret Hasan Pasha Inn, and the Ulu Mosque. Continue to <b>Adiyaman</b> for overnight.		
<b>Day 8</b>	<b>Adiyaman – Mt Nemrut – Adiyaman</b>	<b>(B, L, D)</b>
The early start today is well worth it – catching a sunrise at one of the most fascinating archaeological sites; the colossal statues of the Kingdom of Commagene, on the summit of <b>Nemrut Dagı</b> . Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this is one of the finest ancient treasures of Turkey. See the <b>Karakuş Tumulus</b> and <b>Cendere Bridge</b> in the Arsaemia ancient city. After some climbing, we will see the Zeus, Apollon, Heracles, Antiochhos, Commagene, Eagle, and Lion sculptures on the eastern terrace of the Nemrut summit. The tumulus of the <b>Commagene King Antiochus I</b> is at the top. It is impossible not to be impressed by the magnificent view and the beauty of the colossal statues at the top of Mount Nemrut. Next, visit the medieval ruins of <b>Yeni Kale (Castle)</b> situated above the village of <b>Kocahisar</b> and built on a narrow mountain spur high above a Seljuk bridge spanning the Kahta Cayi gorge. Continue to the ancient city of <b>Perre</b> – synonymous for its burial caves and cities built into the hills. Dating back to 162BC, the <b>Pirin Caves</b> is a stunning collection of rock tombs in striking resemblance to Cappadocia.		
<b>Day 9</b>	<b>Adiyaman – Göbeklitepe – Sanliurfa</b>	<b>(B, L, D)</b>
Visit <b>Göbeklitepe</b> – predating Stonehenge by more than 6,000 years and is now recognized as the world's first & oldest temple. Göbeklitepe started a new era in the history of world archaeology, and even changed the world's human history. Continue to <b>Sanliurfa</b> where according to the Bible and Quran, is the birthplace of Abraham – the biblical patriarch of Israel whose story is told in the Book of Genesis. Visit <b>Abraham's Pool</b> (Balikli Gol), the <b>Great Mosque</b> and <b>Abraham's Cave</b> to discover the ancient city's association of the great patriarch. Visit <b>Urfa Archaeological Museum</b> , where many historical artifacts from Anatolian civilizations are exhibited, and the Mosaic Museum.		
<b>Day 10</b>	<b>Salinurfa – Halfeti – Zeguma Mosaic Museum – Gaziantep</b>	<b>(B, L, D)</b>
Proceed to the stunning village of <b>Halfeti</b> on the banks of the Euphrates River. Much of Halfeti is submerged due to the building of the Birecik Dam and the new village was moved to Karaotlak. <b>Enjoy a boat tour in "Old Halfeti"</b> as you learn about its fate. Admire the <b>Rum Kale</b> from your boat– an ancient fortress first built by Assyrians. Architectural ruins in Rumkale have Late Roman and Medieval characteristics, and the Greek castle has the ruins of structures such as old water cisterns. Visit the <b>Zeguma Mosaic Museum</b> , the second-largest mosaic museum in the world. Continue to <b>Gaziantep</b> , famous for its copperware, pistachio nuts and baklava.		
<b>Day 11</b>	<b>Gaziantep – Istanbul</b>	<b>(B, L, D)</b>
Free time for shopping at Gaziantep's <b>Bakırcılar Bazaar &amp; Zincirli Bedesten</b> . Flight to Istanbul and free time before flight home.		
<b>Day 12</b>	<b>Depart Istanbul – Home</b>	