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11 DAYS

I ♥ D a m a s c u s



Syria



DAY 1 DEPART FOR DAMASCUS, SYRIA

TK61 Kuala Lumpur (KUL) – Istanbul (IST) 2345 – 0605+1D

Depart for **Damascus**, the capital of Syria.

DAY 2 ARRIVE DAMASCUS (2N)

(L, D)

TK846 Istanbul (IST) – Damascus (DAM) 0820 – 1030

On arrival in Damascus, transfer to the **Old Town**. Wander through the alleys, bazaars and shopping area of Old Damascus

Boutique Hotel 4 or similar*

DAY 3 DAMASCUS TOUR

(B, L, D)

Damascus founded in the 3rd millennium B.C., is one of the oldest cities in the Middle East. Damascus boasts some 125 monuments from different periods of its history. The **National Museum** which houses the finest collection of archaeological artifacts from around the country. The **Umayyad Mosque**, which is named for Islam's first ruling dynasty, and is one of the great monuments to the ingenuity of early Islam, the **Azem Palace**, the luxurious home of the Ottoman governor; **Souq Al Hamidiyeh**, the bustling covered bazaar that fills the senses with colours and life; the legendary Street Called Straight mentioned in the Bible, which spans the old city's length from East to West; the **Chapel of St. Ananias** and **St. Paul's Window**, from which Paul the evangelist was lowered to escape the Romans; and **Bab Touma**, the Christian quarter with its charming alleyways and handicraft shops.

Boutique Hotel 4 or similar*

DAY 4 DAMASCUS – MAALLOULA – HOMS – HAMA – ALEPPO (2N)

(B, L, D)

Maaloula, attracts visitors both for its charm, and for its importance in the history of Syrian Christianity. Homes in Maalula are gaily painted in violet and blue pastels and perched abreast an imposing gorge between two mountains. It is also home to a population that still speaks a dialect of Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ, and to two historic Christian monasteries: one Greek Orthodox dedicated to St. Thekla, the other Greek Catholic dedicated to Saint Sergius.

Continue to **Homs**, where the echoes of conflict are intertwined with the ongoing efforts of reconstruction.

Pass by **Hama** which lays on both sides of the Orontes's banks, adorned by its enormous wooden 'Norias' or waterwheels, which have creaked and churned since Roman times.

Overnight in **Aleppo**.

Aleppo Palace Hotel 4 or similar*

DAY 5 ALEPPO

(B, L, D)

Aleppo, Syria's 2nd largest city looks back on an impressive history of nearly 8,000 years. The city is slowly rebuilding from the ruins of the recent conflict. **Aleppo city tour** covers the outside of the **Umayyad Mosque**, old souks and bazaars, the magnificent Citadel and the **Church of Saint Simeone Stylites**.

Aleppo Palace Hotel 4 or similar*

DAY 6 ALEPPO – AFAMIA – UGARIT – LATAKIA (1N)

(B, L, D)

Afamia, the ancient Greek & Roman city distinguished by its main street, which stands on both sides of the magnificent spiral columns along the street, in addition to the theater, the valleys, the cathedral, churches, the palace, mosaic panels and many monuments scattered throughout the place.

Ugarit: a coastal town north of Latakia, famous thanks to the discovery of tablets of the oldest consonantal alphabet known to date. The first habitat, a large fortified village, dates back to the 8th millennium BC. The two immense palaces, later constructions, yielded archives and literary archives, attesting to an astonishing diversity of languages and five writing systems, including the consonantal alphabetical or Ugaritic script which dates from the 14th century BC AD.

Overnight in **Latakia**.

Miramar Hotel Latakia 4 or similar*

DAY 7 LATAKIA – TARTUS (1N) (B, L, D)
 Transfer to **Latakia** to visiting **Saladin castle**, then continue to visit **Ugarit (remains of the old city and the Royal Palace)**. Continue to **Tartus** (100 km).

Saladin Castle was built by the Franks on a rocky peak. The history of this stronghold is long, the Phoenicians had already fortified the place, Alexander the Great seized it, as well as the Byzantines a few centuries later. It is the Crusaders who, in the twelfth century, will give the castle its current appearance.

Al Marqab Castle was established near the coast and the border with the Emirate of Antioch. The Hospitaller Knights were assigned to the castle in 1186. Made of black volcanic rock, the castle includes a church, meeting hall, barracks, and offices.

Royal Inn Tartus 4 or similar*

DAY 8 TARTUS – SAFITA – CRAC DES CHEVALIERS – ALMESHTAYA (1N) (B, L, D)
Safita is a picturesque town of historic significance with a castle, **Castle Blanc**, built by the Knights Templar during the Crusades, offering panoramic views of the countryside. It was restored following damages due to earthquakes and still contains a chapel and a dormitory.

Crac des Chevaliers (UNESCO Site), was built by the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem from 1142 to 1271. It ranks among the best-preserved examples of Crusader castles, the most famous fortress of the Middle Ages. So vast and so impregnable that it has become the symbol of a whole era of bloody struggles between Muslims and Crusaders ...

Villa Rosa Hotel Al Meshtaya 3 or similar*

DAY 9 ALMESHTAYA – PALMYRA – DAMASCUS (1N) (B, L, D)
 Early morning drive to **Palmyra**, an oasis in the Syrian desert which contains the monumental ruins of a great city that was one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world. For a time, the so-called Islamic State or ISIS controlled the region around Palmyra, and some of the ruins at the site were destroyed. Visit the pearl of the desert with its incredible monuments (Columns Street – Remains of Victory Arch and Bel Temple – Royal Tombs – Roman Theatre.

Aleppo Palace Hotel 4 or similar*

DAY 10	DEPART DAMASCUS	(B)
TK847	Damascus (DAM) – Istanbul (IST)	1230 – 1440
TK62	Istanbul (IST) – Kuala Lumpur (KUL)	1710 – 0825+1D

DAY 11 ARRIVE HOME

Security

Trips to Syria do create dangers all of their own and whilst we want you to have as much freedom as possible we must state that the guide has the final word with regards to changes in the itinerary for safety reasons. Whilst the route we have chosen passes through areas that we consider to be stable things can change and we may have to alter the route or cancel sections of the trip at short notice. If there is an extra expense incurred due to the change of itinerary then you may be asked to bear part or all of that cost. For example, if we have to fly between cities rather than drive.