

## Custom Travel Plan Created for Runaway Tours The Istanbul Marathon 2012

Kusadasi (2 nights) / Cappadocia (2 nights) / Istanbul (4 nights)

*depart the US on Sunday, November 4*

### **Day 01: Monday, November 5** **Istanbul/Kusadasi**

Meet your private local guide upon arrival in Istanbul and transfer to a flight to Izmir (there are flights almost hourly). Upon arrival in Izmir, you will be driven to your hotel in Kusadasi.

Kusadasi, which means “bird island” is set in a superb gulf and is known for its sparkling water, broad sandy beaches and large marina with the capacity for 600 boats. We will check-in at the Charisma hotel in late afternoon.

**Charisma Hotel:** Opened in 2006, the Charisma looks quite large from the outside but there are only 133 rooms, all of them with balcony and sea-view. It is located on a hillside, overlooking the Aegean coast. Standard rooms feature Jacuzzi tubs, individually controlled air conditioning, LCD screen TV, internet access, satellite TV system, pay TV, mini-bar, electronic safety box, hair dryer, telephone.



After check-in – time at leisure. A buffet dinner

is included at the hotel tonight.

**Overnight:** at Charisma Hotel in Kusadasi

**Included meals:** D

**DAY 02: Tuesday, November 6**

**Kusadasi – Ephesus sites**



After breakfast at the hotel, meet your guide and start a full day tour of the famous Ephesus sites. During the tour, you will visit the **Ephesus ancient site, Sirince village and the Museum of Archeology in Selcuk.**

**Ephesus Ancient Site:** As the capital of Roman Asia Minor, Ephesus is still richly endowed with marble temples, mosaics and a 25,000-seat Great Theater. The city, whose wealth and patronage supported its splendid architectural program, was

dedicated to the goddess Artemis, and her enormous temple was once considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

After the tour of the site, we will continue our journey with a visit to authentic Sirince village.

**Sirince Greek village:** This pretty old Orthodox village is a perfect synthesis of Turkish and Greek culture as of the 1920s: after the Independence War, people exchange between Greek and Turks has occurred and all those typical Greek houses, though they kept their original outside characteristics, have received the local layout inside. The most beautiful specimens are open to visitors. And even in the courtyard of one of them, one will discover a nicely restored Orthodox Church. All the narrow streets of



the village belong to the women, selling handcrafts of all kinds and olive oil. We will have chance to socialize with locals and taste the simple but delicious meals of Aegean cuisine at home-hosted included lunch.

Our final stop of the day will be in the town of Selcuk where we visit the **Museum of Archaeology**. Almost all of the exhibits are findings from Ephesus, the most spectacular being two beautiful statues of Artemis Ephesia, both dating from the Roman Imperial era.

At the end of the tour, we will return to the hotel and have the remainder of the day at leisure.

**Overnight:** at Charisma Hotel in Kusadasi

**Included meals:** B, L & D

**Day 03: Wednesday, November 7**

**Kusadasi / Cappadocia**

After breakfast we transfer to Izmir Airport where we board a flight to Cappadocia.



This area is renowned for its awe-inspiring natural rock formations that were utilized for everything from housing and churches to even complete underground villages. The valleys here are carved by erosion in tuff, a soft rock formed by volcanic ash accumulation over millions of years, and create a fertile pocket in an otherwise prairie-like Central Anatolian Plateau. Against this beautiful background Cappadocia's traditional rural life still goes on providing unique opportunities to observe a life style which is rapidly changing. Along with the specific sites mentioned in the following program, we visit a vinery to taste the local wine, stop at many vantage points to enjoy the beautiful scenery around us, or better still, walk in the remote valleys to see more. In our flexibility the choice is always yours.

In the region we first visit **Uchisar** where we visit the so-called fortress. With a breathtaking view of the surrounding Cappadocian formations, this 60-meter high settlement was not built but carved out of a natural hill dominating the area. After this visit, we check into our hotel and spend some time at leisure. We have our dinner at the hotel.

Our hotel for the next 2 nights is a magical place:

### **Yunak Evleri Hotel**

Yunak Mahallesi 50400 Urgup / Cappadocia / Turkey  
Tel: + 90 384 341 6920 - Fax: + 90 384 341 6924  
[www.yunak.com](http://www.yunak.com)

Yunak Evleri is a combination of six cave houses with a total of 17 private cave rooms dating back to the 5th and 6th centuries and crowned with a 19th century Greek Mansion. The name of the neighborhood "YUNAK" comes from the old days when women used to do all their washing and of course, socializing by the fountain located at the village square. Being by the fountain and at the Yunak was the center of daily life. These exceptional cave houses are renovated and decorated with care and in their own distinct style with strictly respecting the local character. The decor is elegant and personalized with beautiful hand-crafted furnishings and antiques. With 17 rooms, Yunak Evleri is small enough to be intimate, yet large enough to offer you privacy. Yunak Evleri has created a peaceful balance between modern comfort and tradition. With its convenient location in the center of Ürgüp, Yunak Evleri is a perfect base for daily excursions within Cappadocia.



**Overnight:** at Yunak House Cave Hotel in Cappadocia

**Included meals:** B & D

**Day 04: Thursday, November 8**

**Cappadocia**

Today, early in the morning you have a chance to join an optional **ballooning** tour of the region, probably the best ballooning in the world.



After breakfast we will start an included sightseeing tour of **Cappadocia**. The biblical realm of Cappadocia is a wonderland of unusual geographic formations sprinkled with green vineyards, fruit orchards and frescoed

churches. Wind and rain have eroded the brittle volcanic rock and formed rock cones, capped pinnacles and fretted ravines in colors that range from warm reds and gold to cool greens and grays. We will visit the underground cities of Kaymakli, Pasabag and Zelve as well as Goreme and the Avanos hand-craft center. During our tour we can stop to have lunch on our own in a local village.

**Goreme:** The open air museum of Goreme consist of steep cliffs and many hidden churches dating from the second half of the 9C and afterwards.

**Kaymakli Underground City:** Beginning in the second century AD, as successive armies swept across Asia Minor, the residents of Cappadocia created uniquely defensible communities by digging approximately eight stories down into the volcanic tufa stone.



**Pasabag and Zelve:** These nature sites are the perfect places to take photos of a remarkable landscape of tufa cones.



**Avanos Hand-craft Center:** Avanos is a small town famous for its pottery and carpets. It is built along the banks of Kizilirmak (Halys) River, the longest river originating and ending within the borders of Turkey.

If you like you can also spend some time hiking. The **Rose Valley** is a large area located between Goreme and Cavusin, and it is divided into many small valleys. It covers the valleys of **Gulludere**, **Kizilcukur**, **Meskendir** and **Zindanonu**. There are some cave churches, cave tunnels, cave houses in the valley

which are visited during the hike. Rose Valley has paths for easy, medium and difficult levels. The most common path in the valley takes around 2 hours for 3.5 km.

Return to the hotel in the early evening and have time at leisure.

**Overnight:** at Yunak House Cave Hotel in Cappadocia

**Included meals:** B & D

**OPTIONAL PROGRAM:** Early in this morning you can choose to enjoy an unforgettable balloon flight. A hot air balloon flight is unique from all other experiences of flight as there is no sensation of motion. Traveling at heights of up to 1500 ft, the



feeling is one of peace and tranquility. The earth slowly descends and rotates below you. Within moments after lifting off you become at ease while you effortlessly drift over the treetops and the spectacular Cappadocian landscape. It is like a dream to gently float over the countryside in complete harmony with your surroundings.

This tour includes: transfer, short (45 min – 1 hour) balloon ride, glass of champagne, flight certificate.



(Approximately \$200 per person and can be booked on site.)

### Day 05: Friday, November 9 Cappadocia/Istanbul

Today, we transfer to the airport and fly to Istanbul.

Upon arrival, we can go to the airport to pick up our race packages before our hotel located in the city center.

Marathon Expo proceeding to

**The Central**  
Lamartin  
heart of  
culture, art,  
center of



the hotel's exterior has been preserved with Late Ottoman style detail while the interior offers luxurious rooms with modern touches.

**Palace Hotel** is located in Taksim Square, in the heart of Istanbul, which is known as the entertainment and shopping center of Turkey. The historical character of

After check-in we can have a walking tour of nearby Istiklal Street. This pedestrian street is the heart of Istanbul's city center, where one can feel the dynamic vibe of metropolitan life. Perhaps every resident of Istanbul had a date starting at Istiklal. On both sides of Istiklal Street there are many shops, restaurants, bars and night clubs which are the most favored entertainment options for locals and guests in the city. We will walk through Istiklal to its other end – the Tünel area. The small side streets of this area are filled with bohemian pubs and cafes, preferred by local intelligencia.

From Canadian Globe & Mail: On Istanbul's **Istiklal Avenue** — the name means "independence" in Turkish — the beat goes on. It's a distinctly global rhythm. About two million locals come to this three-kilometre pedestrian strip every weekend. And while there's still a historic tram and the odd Turkish ice cream or kebab vendor here, a new generation eager to embrace Western culture is turning a once run-down district into a buzzing cosmopolitan hub. "It's a place where you see a girl wearing an Islamic head scarf walking arm-in-arm with a girl with a nose ring and the latest Levi's jeans.

If you like, end the day with dinner on your own at the historic Flower Passage. **The Flower Passage** has this name because it once was one of the great flower markets of Istanbul (remember,



the Turks invented tulips). An inscription above the entrance reads "Cite de Pera". During the Ottoman Empire, this district of Pera was the home of foreign embassies, and there remain many examples of typically French architecture to delight those who avert their gaze from street level to the buildings' upper stories and roofs. The Flower Passage itself is a small L-shaped galleria, four stories high with a glass roof. One end of the L opens on Istiklal Street, the other on a long covered alley which is one of the great delights of Istanbul. It is both market and dining area: first there is about 100 feet of traditional fast food, then comes a glorious fruit and vegetable market which is open till midnight, and finally about 60 busy restaurants, with gypsy bands performing in many of the restaurants in a raucous cacophony. Here we suggest that you have a typical Istanbul dinner and then return to your hotel for overnight.

**Overnight:** The Central Palace Hotel

**Day 06: Saturday, November 10**



**Istanbul**

After breakfast at the hotel, depart at 9 am for a full-day sightseeing tour of the Old City. We have two days to explore Istanbul, capital of three legendary empires. While we go from one site to the other, we stroll in the streets of this old town enjoying its different moods and sentiments. If you feel energetic and enthusiastic enough, we are happy to expand the tour to include other interesting sights hidden in the less touristy areas of the district.

**Hippodrome:** The public entertainment 100,000 zealous fans



ancient Hippodrome, an enormous arena that once seated as many as witnessing chariot races, executions, and mock battles. Once the center of Byzantine civic life, it is still decorated by the Egyptian Obelisk, the Bronze Serpentine Column, and the Column of Constantine.



**Blue Mosque:** With its massive central dome flanked by six slender minarets, the Blue Mosque stands as the single most recognizable monument on the Istanbul skyline. Built between 1609 and 1616, during the reign of Ottoman Sultan

Ahmet I, the enormous complex also included a hospital, caravansary, public kitchen, marketplace, schools and the Mausoleum of Sultan Ahmet I. The mosque's immense interior,

flooded with sunlight streaming through 260 windows, is decorated with more than 20,000 precious Iznik tiles detailing traditional flowers of Ottoman design. In fact, it is the deep blue glow of the tiles in sunlight that gives the building its name.

**Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia):** This famous basilica was constructed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It is often described as the greatest work of Byzantine architecture. Once the Church of Holy Wisdom, Christendom's crowning glory, and now a museum, the church once glittered with mosaics, and art treasures filled every corner. Today, Hagia Sophia is the fourth largest building constructed as a church in the world. It was dedicated to Hagia Sophia which means Divine Wisdom, an attribute of Christ.



After this visit stop for lunch on your own at one of Sultanahmet's many local restaurants, and then continue to

the Basilica Cistern.

**Basilica Cistern or Underground Palace:** Istanbul was one of the most often besieged cities in the world and has always needed permanent water supplies. As a result, many underground cisterns were built during the Byzantine Empire. Water was brought to these big reservoirs from far away sources through aqueducts. The largest and most ornate of these cisterns is Yerebatan Sarayı. In its construction, columns and capitals of earlier temples were used and this provides a very decorative appearance.



**Grand Bazaar:** The area of the Grand Bazaar was a trade center during the Byzantine period. Two bedestens (domed masonry structures) were built by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror to enrich the economic life in the city. Later on as people needed more places for trade, they added other buildings outside these structures. Today, the atmosphere of the Grand Bazaar is very interesting and has consequently become a very popular place for visitors to explore a labyrinth of streets and passages housing eighteen entrances and more than 4,000 shops.

In late afternoon, return to the hotel for some time at leisure.

**Overnight:** at The Central Palace Hotel in Istanbul

**Included meals:** B



**DAY 07: Sunday, \_\_\_\_\_ November  
11  
Istanbul**

Marathon Day! Transportation included to the start/from the finish.

**Overnight:** at The Central Palace Hotel in Istanbul

**Included meals:** B

**DAY 08: Monday, November 12**

**Istanbul**

This morning we meet again for another full day of sightseeing. Our first visit is to **Topkapi Palace**, a pleasant and cozy oriental style palace, once home of the Ottoman Sultans who ruled their vast empire spread across three continents from this very place. This complex is a museum today, housing the spectacular artifacts found in the palace, such as the famous treasury of the sultans, their exquisite robes (kaftans), beautifully ornamented weapons and huge collection of Chinese and Japanese porcelain. After several hours exploring the extensive grounds, we continue to the Spice Market.



Next, we will visit the **Spice Market** which was built as part of the Yeni Cami complex and has since been an exciting covered market filled with the fragrant scent of spices from the Orient. This is a great place to buy nuts and other edible gifts. After this visit, you can have lunch on your own at one of the near-by restaurants, overlooking **Golden Horn Bay**, which separates the old

city from the modern city center.

Our day continues as we embark on a local boat and start a one and a half hour **cruise on the Bosphorus Strait**. The Bosphorus is a narrow, navigable strait between Europe and Asia connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. This boat ride takes us past late Ottoman palaces as well as beautiful wooden mansions and modern villas of the 19th and 20th centuries which form this elegant section of the city. In a very relaxing and enjoyable way we have an insight to the past, present and the future of Istanbul. The silhouette of the old city at distance summarizes what we have already seen in this tour. The solemn and subtle beauty of the old mansions which once belonged to the Ottoman pashas can be seen side by side with the loudly decorated ones owned by rich industrialists of today. We observe the details of a 15<sup>th</sup> C fortress from the shadow of a very modern suspension bridge connecting two continents.....another view of the bridge you ran across yesterday!!

After the cruise we transfer to the hotel for an evening at leisure.

**Overnight:** at The Central Palace Hotel in Istanbul  
**Included meals:** B

**DAY 09:** Tuesday, November 13 Istanbul/home

Private transfer to the airport for your flight home today.

**Included meals:** B

### ***PRICES AND GENERAL CONDITIONS***

Prices (in USD and per person) double:

\$2,780.00 (does not include international flight from LA to Istanbul) Airfare will be arranged for you prices not yet available.

Single rooms: add \$595 single supplement

#### **Price of the package includes:**

Accommodation:

- 2 nights Kusadasi: Charisma Hotel
- 2 nights Cappadocia: Yunak House Cave Hotel
- 4 nights Istanbul: Central Palace Hotel
- Domestic flights within the itinerary (Istanbul-Izmir, Izmir-Kayseri/Nevsehir & Kayseri/Nevsehir-Istanbul)
- 13 Meals: 8 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 4 dinners
- Services of a licensed professional tour guide throughout
- Transportation with comfortable, modern, air conditioned, chauffeur driven motorcoaches throughout the trip
- Admission fees to sites and museums as listed
- Parking, ferry, and toll road fees

#### **Price of the package excludes:**

- Air and departure taxes for international flights
- Bottled beverages or alcohol
- Optional gratuities to trip leaders, drivers.
- Travel insurance
- Visas, laundry, and personal items