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GRAND TOUR OF TURKEY

Saturday, May 1 to Sunday, May 16, 2027

PROPOSED ITINERARY:

Day 1 – Saturday, May 1:

Departure from Toronto on Turkish Airlines direct to Istanbul. Full inflight services provided

Day 2 – Sunday, May 2:

Morning arrival in Istanbul where there will be a short delay before boarding your domestic flight to Ankara. arrive in the capital of the Republic of Türkiye: Ankara. Upon arrival at Ankara Esenboga Airport, you will be met by our representative at the arrivals hall and transferred to your hotel. During the drive, you will catch your first glimpses of this distinguished city — the political and administrative heart of the country — where modern architecture, wide boulevards, and significant national landmarks reflect the spirit of the Republic. *Overnight in Ankara.*

Day 3 – Monday, May 3:

Today, you will explore Ankara, the distinguished capital of the Republic of Türkiye, where layers of civilizations come together in remarkable harmony. Your day will begin at the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, located near Ankara Castle. Housed in beautifully restored Ottoman buildings, the museum presents an extraordinary chronological journey through the history of Anatolia. You will discover priceless artifacts from the Paleolithic era to the Hittites, Phrygians, Urartians, and beyond. Particularly impressive are the Hittite reliefs and ceremonial objects, reflecting the power and sophistication of one of Anatolia's greatest ancient civilizations. The museum offers a unique opportunity to witness how countless cultures shaped the land over thousands of years. Later, you will visit Anıtkabir, the monumental mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye. Built on a commanding hill overlooking the city, this grand complex is not only a place of remembrance but also a powerful symbol of national independence and modern statehood. As you walk along the Lion Road and enter the imposing ceremonial courtyard, you will feel the solemn and dignified atmosphere of this iconic landmark. Inside the museum section, you will gain deeper insight into Atatürk's life, the War of Independence, and the foundation of the Republic. Throughout the day, Ankara reveals itself as a city where ancient civilizations and modern history coexist — offering a meaningful and inspiring journey through time. *Overnight in Ankara*

Day 4 – Tuesday, May 4:

You will begin the day in Ankara with an early departure towards *Hattusha*, the ancient capital of the Hittite Empire and one of the most powerful kingdoms of the Bronze Age. After a scenic drive through the Anatolian countryside, you will arrive at Hattusha, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that dates back to the 17th century BC. Exploring the vast archaeological site, you will walk along the massive cyclopean city walls and pass through the monumental gates of the ancient city, including the *Lion Gate*, the King's Gate and the Sphinx Gate. These impressive fortifications once protected the royal capital of the Hittites, who established one of the earliest constitutional monarchies in history. The city flourished between the 17th and 12th centuries BC and was a

major political and religious center of the ancient Near East. You will also visit the **Great Temple**, dedicated to the Storm God and the Sun Goddess of Arinna, and see the remains of royal residences and ceremonial structures that reflect the administrative and spiritual power of the empire. A short drive will then take you to Yazılıkaya, the remarkable open-air sanctuary of the Hittites. Here, you will observe the extraordinary rock reliefs depicting a procession of gods and goddesses carved into natural rock chambers, offering valuable insight into Hittite mythology and religious beliefs. Following your exploration of the Hittite capital, you will continue your journey by road towards Cappadocia. The drive will take you across the heartland of Central Anatolia, where vast steppes and volcanic landscapes gradually replace the northern hills. Upon arrival in Cappadocia, you will check in to your hotel and prepare to discover one of Turkey's most extraordinary regions, shaped by volcanic eruptions and centuries of human ingenuity. *Overnight in Cappadocia.*

Day 5 – Wednesday, May 5:

Optional Activity: This morning you may enjoy an unforgettable memory of Cappadocia: Hot air ballooning over the nature-formed valleys. Early in the morning (pick up time TBA), you will be collected from your hotel and transferred to the open fields for a delicious breakfast before heading to the selected launch site for your hot air ballooning experience. You will much appreciate the tranquility of your morning over the colorful valleys and rock formations, gliding in your balloon. Concluding your experience, enjoy a glass of champagne to celebrate the joy of seeing Cappadocia from the air and get transferred to your hotel approximately by 8.30 am.

After a refreshing breakfast, you will be met by your private guide at the lobby of your hotel and continue your exploration with Monastic Center of Goreme. Goreme was founded by St. Basil as the first Monastic Center of Christianity during 4th century. Stopping at the Three Beauties, the conic rock formations that locals have created many legends about; enjoy taking pictures of the fairy chimneys and valleys with rustic colors. Touring Pasabag Valley, you will adore the view of the tower-shaped hermitages that look as if they have been sculptured by contemporary artists! Women of Cappadocia are known for their talent in handicrafts and have been weaving the finest rugs of Turkish folk arts in the region for many centuries. In the afternoon, you will visit the famous pottery town of Avanos where you will have the chance of visiting one of the local weaving courses where you can blend with the local Cappadocian people and see how they compose their “woven poetry”! You will visit one of the studio of a pottery artist of Cappadocia and watch the interactive presentation of creating masterpieces of pottery and ceramics. At the end of your tour, you will be transferred to your hotel. *Overnight in Cappadocia.*

Day 6 – Thursday, May 6:

After breakfast, you will be met by your private guide at the lobby of your hotel and transferred to Antalya (approx. 6,5 hours). En route, you will visit Konya, was called Iconium during the Roman period and was an important post for Roman legion and control of the trade routes of antiquity. It served as the Capital of Seljuk Turkish Kingdom during the 13th century. You will have the chance to visit the Mausoleum of Mevlana, the founder of Whirling Dervishes and tile Museum of Karatay, the old Medrese that still maintains its superb tile decoration. At the end of your tour, you will be transferred to your hotel for check-in and relaxation. *Overnight in Antalya.*

Day 7 – Friday, May 7:

After a refreshing breakfast, you will be met by your private guide in the lobby of your hotel and begin your day with a visit to the beautiful **Manavgat Waterfall**, one of the most scenic natural

attractions in the region. Surrounded by lush greenery, the wide and powerful cascade of the Manavgat River offers a refreshing and peaceful atmosphere. You will have time to enjoy the views, take memorable photographs, and relax before continuing your cultural exploration. Afterwards, you will proceed to **Aspendos**, the ancient city renowned for its magnificent Roman Theatre. Considered one of the best-preserved Roman theatres in the world, the theatre of Aspendos is still used today for classical music concerts and performances during the Antalya Festival, offering a remarkable connection between past and present. Your final stop will be **Perge**, an impressive ancient Roman city known for its well-preserved stadium, massive Roman Baths, colonnaded streets, and the monumental city gate dating back to the Hellenistic period. Perge is also a Biblical site, visited by St. Paul during his missionary journeys before traveling further north. Walking through its grand ruins provides vivid insight into daily life in antiquity. *Overnight in Antalya.*

Day 8 – Saturday, May 8:

After a refreshing breakfast, you will be met by your private guide in the lobby of your hotel and begin your day with a visit to **Aspendos**, one of the most remarkable ancient cities of Pamphylia. World-renowned for its exceptionally well-preserved Roman Theatre, Aspendos offers an extraordinary glimpse into the grandeur of the Roman era. Built in the 2nd century AD during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the theatre is still used today for concerts and cultural performances, creating a unique bridge between antiquity and the present day. As you explore the site, you will also discover the remains of the ancient aqueducts and other structures that once formed this prosperous city. Afterwards, you will continue your journey to **Phaselis**, a charming ancient Lycian city beautifully set between pine forests and the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean. Founded in the 7th century BC by Rhodian colonists, Phaselis flourished as an important trading port due to its three natural harbors. As you walk along its colonnaded main street, you will encounter the remains of the Roman baths, agora, theatre, and aqueducts, all surrounded by stunning natural scenery. The peaceful atmosphere and breathtaking coastal views make Phaselis a truly unforgettable experience. At the end of this inspiring day combining history and nature, you will return to your hotel with lasting memories of Antalya's rich cultural heritage and spectacular landscapes. *Overnight in Antalya.*

Day 9 – Sunday, May 9:

Today, you will drive from Antalya to Pamukkale (approx. 3 hours). Upon arrival in Pamukkale, you will visit the archaeological remains of **Hierapolis** that was founded during the Hellenistic period as a control point of trading routes connecting East to West. In the Roman Period, Hierapolis became a center of worship to Hades and Apollo as well as a thermal center where massive Roman Baths were built to serve the Romans that visited the city from around the ancient world. Upon arrival at the site, you will be welcomed by the spectacular views of calcium pools that have been irrigated by the spring waters of Hierapolis for thousands of years. After a short break to take pictures and enjoy the view, you will continue on to the ancient site that is still being excavated by Italian archaeologists. Today's ancient city of Hierapolis has recently been appointed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Wandering through the colossal tomb chambers of Necropolis, you will comprehend the wealth of the society that could afford such impressive graves to be buried in the grounds of the "Sacred City", as what Hierapolis meant in ancient Greek. You will keep exploring the ancient site by touring the Gate of Domitianus and the Byzantine Baths. Once you reach the lower slopes of the hills that rise behind the site, you will note one of the best-preserved Roman Theatres of the world of archaeology. Built during 2nd century, the theatre of Hierapolis was used for both theatrical activities and shows of violence. In the afternoon, you will experience the hot springs in the region by swimming in the antique pool also known as **Cleopatra's Pool** or you may choose to

stroll over the extraordinary travertine terraces irrigated by thermal springs. *Calcium cliffs* create a fairylike view in which the dominating color is white, making the region deserve its title among Turkish people as “Pamukkale” (Cotton Castle). *Overnight in Pamukkale.*

Day 10 – Monday, May 10:

This morning, after breakfast and check-out from Pamukkale, we depart for *Aphrodisias*, a hidden gem of Roman archaeology in the heart of Turkey’s Aegean region. Excavations have revealed layers of settlement dating back to the Bronze Age (c. 2800–2200 BC). Founded in the 5th century BC and flourishing during the Roman Empire (1st century BC – 4th century AD), Aphrodisias became famous for its marble quarries and its highly skilled school of sculpture. As you explore the site, you will admire the grand Temple of Aphrodite, the monumental Tetracylon gateway, the vast stadium, and the beautifully carved reliefs displayed in the on-site museum. At the end of your tour, you will be transferred to your hotel for check-in and relaxation. *Overnight in Kusadasi.*

Day 11 – Tuesday, May 11:

Today, your exploration will start with the site of you will visit the remains of *Temple of Artemis* that was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The temple was built in 6th century BC and was known to have been the very first building ever-built entirely of marble. It had 127 Ionic pillars with the famous Ionic proportion and was rebuilt by Alexander the Great right after he took over the control of the city from the Persians. When you continue a little further, you will reach the timeless city of *Ephesus* where history and archaeology will offer you their majesty with incredible richness. Ephesus was the Capital of the Province of Asia Minor famed for its flavorsome market during the Roman Era and was, therefore, the scene of many political intrigues while commanding an immense wealth due to its port and its trading activities. A city with such importance, authority and prosperity had prestigious buildings that have been able to survive up to today in a wonderful state of preservation. You will pursue the traces of the glorious past of Ephesus walking on the *Marble Road* that runs through the city with various structures resting on it: *Temple of Hadrian* is a unique beauty greeting you with its articulate façade that was built to honor the famous Roman Emperor, Hadrian during 2nd Century AD. Rising in the center of Ephesus is *Library of Celsus* built in honor of the great governor of Roman days. The façade of the Celsus Library reflects the grandeur and prestige of the Roman Period with a fabulous exposition of intricacy in its mural decoration. Later on, you will head up the hills behind Ephesus, where Virgin Mary is believed to have spent the last days of her life. Presently, there is a charming chapel, consecrated by Pope, at the very spot where the *House of Virgin Mary* stood. The local tradition suggests that Virgin Mary lived and died at this holy place with the company of St. John to whom she was entrusted by Jesus Christ before he was crucified. *Overnight in Kusadasi.*

Day 12 – Wednesday, May 12:

Today, you will depart from Sirince to *Canakkale* (approx. 4 hours). En route, you will visit the ancient city of *Pergamon* that was the Capital of Pergamon Kingdom during Hellenistic times. In the antiquity Pergamon was famed for its gigantic Zeus Altar that, actually was referred as “where Satan has its seat” in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament. During Hellenistic days, it was at Pergamon ancestor of paper, parchment, was invented and the city boasted world’s most extensive library that had most precious sources of information on medicine that were practiced at its Asclepion, the ancient medical center where father of modern doctors, Galen, saw the seeds of modern medicine. Today your first call will be to the

Acropolis to see one of the richest sites of Hellenistic period in Asian Minor followed by the *Asclepion* where ancestors of modern healing were first implemented on patients. At the end of your tour, you will be transferred to your hotel for check-in and relaxation. Upon arrival Canakkale, you will explore a very well-known Ancient City: **Troy**. Founded during 3000 BC, Troy had both strategic and commercial importance that made it a target for many assaults in history. Discovered in the 19th century, Troy was excavated by Heinrich Schliemann during 19th century and has a rich history of not only mythology but also excavations. You will be thrilled by the ancient city that witnessed the battle of heroes. While exploring the ruins of Troy, you will enjoy the intense lectures of your guide about this legendary city including both the historical facts and the mythological stories that immortalized its name. *Overnight in Canakkale*.

Day 13 – Thursday, May 13:

After breakfast, you will continue your exploration Gallipoli Peninsula. After a short break at the town of Gallipoli, you will continue on to the battle fields of the World War I. Today, you will be starting your exploration of the soil that was shed with bloods of heroism from the Cape Hellas Memorial built for the missing Australian and British soldiers. The memorial is located on one of the landing zones of Anzac in 1915. You will also visit the Anzac Cove. At this narrow cove in the early hours of the morning of April 25, troops of commonwealth forces initiated the landing which was to last for ten months. This afternoon you will explore the Shrapnel Valley that leads the slope on to the major Australian memorial, Lone Pine. It was at this spot (Kanlisirt, Bloody Ridge) there happened the worst battles on August 6 that caused thousands to get slaughtered by pouring bullets. After visiting the Lone Pine Memorial, you will lead your way up the hills on to the Conk Bayiri where Anzac and Turkish boys competed with each other to show Godly courage. Today at Conk Bayiri there rests the major New Zealand memorial called Chunuk Bair Memorial. Concluding your exploration of the battle fields, you will also visit the local War Museum and see letters written by soldiers, uniforms, bullets and artillery used by both sides. After the tour you will drive to Istanbul. *Overnight in Istanbul*.

Day 14 – Friday, May 14:

Istanbul is a magical city that boasts its edifices of both Ottoman and Byzantine cultures. Founded in 13th century BC, Greeks, Romans, and the Ottoman Turks left their traces of culture and architecture in Istanbul. After breakfast you will be meeting your private guide at the lobby of your property and start your explorations with the famed **Hippodrome Square** which was once the sporting and social center of Constantinople that hosted the chariot races until the Middle Ages. The Roman Hippodrome of the glorious past displays today the famous the Obelisk of Theodosius and the Serpentine Column dating back to 5th century BC. Afterwards, you will explore **Blue Mosque** famed for its Turquoise colored Iznik tiles decorating the interior with vivid floral motifs. With its six minarets Blue Mosque stands as a unique Islamic temple dating back to 1616. Your next call will to the **Basilica of Saint Sophia**, earliest of the largest Christian temples ever built-in history that still stands in perfect condition with its gigantic dome and gold gilded mosaics. The more you listen to the in-depth lectures of your private guide today, the more you will comprehend the priorities the administrators of Constantinople had to execute to ensure that the city continues its existence in safety against external threats. As a city that was defended by its “inaccessible” fortifications, Constantinople needed to have endless water supplies to enable its inhabitants to resist sieges. To serve this purpose, a large number of underground water reservoirs were built through various neighborhoods of the city such as the **Underground Cistern** known by the locals as the Sunken Cistern. The impressive structure built in 6th century with 336 columns erected upwards underneath the streets running through the Old City to constitute ample space to store water, is now operating as a venue for cultural activities

besides attracting visitors as a unique museum. After lunch, you will continue your exploration with **Topkapi Palace** that was built right after conquest of the city by the Ottomans. Dating back to mid-15th century Topkapi Palace expresses an oriental feel with its architecture and inner gardens that are beautifully adorned with rose bushes, daisies and carnations. Your first call will be to **Harem quarters**, the section of the palace where family of the sultan lived. As you lead your way out of the palace you will see a fascinating collection of ceramic wares, copper containers and tools in the palace kitchens that were used in the daily life of the palace when it served until mid-19th century. At the end of your tour, you will be transferred back to your hotel. *Overnight in Istanbul.*

Day 15 – Saturday, May 15:

After breakfast, you will begin your day with a visit to the **Church of Chora**, a hidden gem tucked away in the historic streets of Istanbul. Renowned for its breathtaking golden mosaics and frescoes, Chora represents the pinnacle of Byzantine art, reflecting a period when the expression of faith through art was considered a vital part of life. The intricate mosaics, depicting religious scenes and figures, are often compared to those of the Church of St. Mark in Ravenna, making Chora a must-see for art and history enthusiasts. Next, you will explore the **Grand Bazaar**, one of the largest and oldest covered markets in the world. With its maze-like streets lined with colorful shops, the bazaar offers a unique experience of Istanbul's vibrant commercial and cultural life. From traditional carpets and jewelry to spices and souvenirs, you will have the opportunity to shop, take photographs, and soak in the lively atmosphere that has defined the market for centuries. In the late afternoon, prepare to enjoy a **Sunset Bosphorus Cruise**, gliding along the waters that separate Europe and Asia. The warm hues of the setting sun reflecting on the minarets, palaces, and historic mansions along the Bosphorus create an unforgettable view. As you sail, your guide will share stories of the Bosphorus, its strategic significance, and the lives of those who have lived along its shores throughout history. To conclude this memorable day, you will be treated to a **farewell dinner** at **Angel Blue Restaurant**, overlooking the Bosphorus. Here, you can savor exquisite Turkish cuisine while reflecting on your journey, surrounded by the sparkling waters and illuminated skyline of Istanbul. *Overnight in Istanbul.*

Day 16 – Sunday, May 16:

Breakfast at the hotel before transferring to the airport for your return flight home.

WELCOME HOME!!

Tour Cost: Land only based on Double Occupancy: \$7,995.00
Single Room Supplement: \$995.00CDN

*****Please note, an air inclusive price will be offered once space is available to book, approximately 11 months prior to departure.***

Included in the land-only tour price:

- Accommodation at;
 - o Ankara, **Divan Hotel** or similar.
 - o Cappadocia, **Yunak Houses** or similar.
 - o Antalya, **The Marmara Hotel** or similar.
 - o Pamukkale, **Pam Thermal Hotel** or similar.
 - o Kusadasi, **Korumar Deluxe Hotel** or similar.
 - o Canakkale, **Doubletree by Hilton** or similar.
 - o Istanbul, **Conrad Bosphorus Hotel** or similar.
- Transportation by deluxe motor coach for transfers and touring mentioned in the itinerary.

- Service of an English-speaking professional private tour guide throughout the program.
- All entrance fees for the sightseeing mentioned in the itinerary.
- Breakfast and Dinner daily.
- Headset for each guest throughout the program.
- Bosphorus cruise by private boat (approx. 1.5 hours) in Istanbul.
- Complimentary water on vehicle throughout the journey.
- All taxes and service charges.

Not Included:

- Lunches
- Beverages except for the indicated above.
- Honorary gratuities for guide and driver.
- Personal expenses.
- **Optional Activity:** Hot air balloon flight (approx. 1 hour) in Cappadocia: per person EURO 325.-
- **Optional Travel Insurance.** Please contact the office for details.