

# EMPIRE: ISTANBUL + ROME + VENICE

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We begin our journey in the ancient city of Byzantium, modern day Istanbul, a city chosen by Emperor Constantine as the perfect "Nova Roma," and capitol of the Eastern Roman Empire. Built, like Rome, on seven hills but with the advantage of being surrounded by water, Constantinople survived its western counterpart by over 1.000 years.

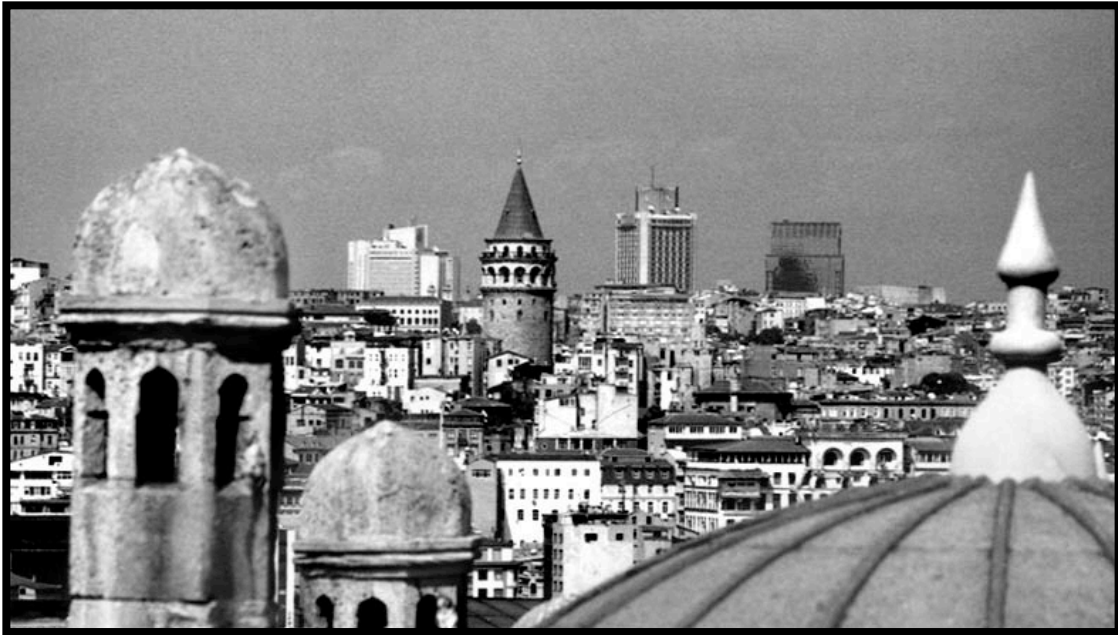




## EMPIRE: ISTANBUL ROME + VENICE

### DAY 1

### ISTANBUL



Enjoy the perfect welcome to Istanbul: On arrival at the airport, please collect your luggage and make your way through customs and into the Arrivals hall. Your Byzantine History Expert/English speaking private guide will await you with a sign indicating your surname. You will then be escorted to your private transfer to the Hotel Pera Palace, where along the way you will glimpse the Sea of Marmara, ride along the Bosphorus Straight and see the old city walls of Constantinople before crossing over the Golden Horn.

*Step back in time and discover the glory of Istanbul's 'belle epoque' days at the timeless Pera Palace Hotel, Jumeirah. Overlooking the magnificent Golden Horn, this stylish hotel offers all the romance of old Istanbul and all the luxury of the modern city.*

Your home for the next four nights, please enjoy! Amenities:

- Daily buffet Breakfast for Two
- Upgrade to Next Room Category based on availability at time of arrival
- \$100.00 F&B Credit or Spa Credit, once per room, per stay
- Early Check-in based on availability at time of arrival
- 4:00 PM Late Check-out based on availability on day of departure
- Complimentary WiFi.

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Owner

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## EMPIRE: ISTANBUL ROME + VENICE

### DAY 2

### ISTANBUL



Your guide will meet you after breakfast at 9am in the hotel lobby.

Amidst a schism between the Catholic and Orthodox churches and a clash of cultures between East and West, 20,000 Venetian sailors and warriors descended on Constantinople in 1204...the Fourth Crusade. After a nine-month siege on Constantinople, the Crusader army pillaged the city for three days and occupied the eastern capital for 57 years, dismantling much of its treasure.

Today you will start with a visit **the Roman Hippodrome and Egyptian Obelisk**. It is from the Hippodrome that the spectacular four Golden Horses were removed, and later placed on the façade of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice.

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Next, you will proceed to one of the great monumental buildings of the world **Haghia Sophia** - the most famous of all the Byzantine monuments. It's the first Church to incorporate the ancient Basilica (rectangular with 107 columns with carved capitals) and the Circular dome. The current version of the church was built by Justinian in the 6th century. It is a treasure of ancient architecture even though all the treasure that was once inside was looted during the 4th Crusade.

***Historical Note:** There is a grave marker of Enrico Dandolo at the Museum section of St. Sophia - the Venetian Doge who masterminded the 1204 Sack of Constantinople and declared it at the St. Marco Cathedral. He was blind and around 85 years old when he led the 4th Crusade. He died in 1205 and was buried in the great church of Saint Sophia. In 1261 when the Byzantines reclaimed the city, the soldiers of Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos dug up the grave and threw his remains to the street dogs. Somehow the grave marker was rediscovered and put back into the church as a historical reference.*



You will continue to the **Underground Cistern (Basilica Cistern)**, which is the most unusual structure in the city. The Basilica Cistern of Justinian is another of the great Roman ruins. It was once a great Basilica (legal hall) surrounded by lush gardens at the foot of the Palace Hill. The Basilica eventually became a cistern and water filtration system that provided water to the Great Palace (now buried under Sultanamet Square) and later to the Topkapi Palace.

En route, you will be given information about the **City Walls** - or Yedikule, being one of important architectural arts of Istanbul is on the south of city land water.

The land part of city walls (Hisar) was built during reign of Theodosios II (408-450) as the most important entrance of the city walls and also an additional construction was made behind Porta Aurea having an important place in Byzantine history. 4 years after conquer of Istanbul, an inner castle was built by Sultan Mehmet II in 1457-1458. Thus Byzantine and Ottoman Period buildings combined.

You will then visit the **Church of St. Saviour in Chora Museum** that has the second best preserved mosaics in the world from Byzantine Renaissance.





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Next, your guide will take you to ruins of **Blachernae Palace**, This was once the largest Palace Fortress on the walls and the main residence of the Byzantine Emperors from the 10th to the 15th century.

The great defense wall system had two points of vulnerability, the water gates by the Golden Horn where the Venetian forces broke through in 1204 and the 5th Military Gate

built on top of the Lycus River bed. The river entered the city through a large culvert so a moat wasn't built in this location. It proved to be the soft point in 1453 and the spot where Mehmet II concentrated his canon fire. It finally broke on May 29th 1453.

Lastly, a visit to the **Anemas Dungeons** built by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in the first half of the 7th century AD, the famous Anemas Dungeons were part of the Blachernae Palace, a huge complex of royal residences and administrative buildings at the western end of Constantinople, close to the Walls of Theodosius II.

At the end of your tour, transfer back to the hotel.



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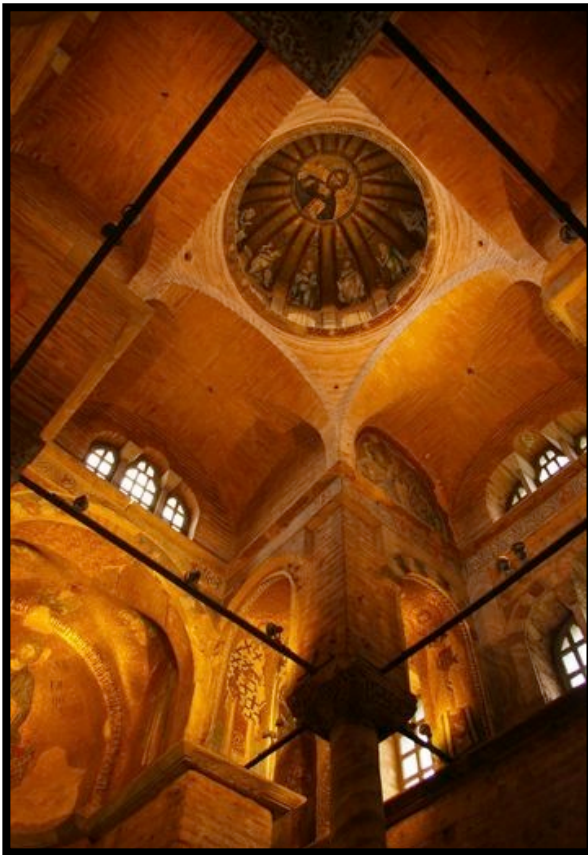


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### DAY 3

### ISTANBUL

The same guide will meet you at 09:00am at the lobby of your hotel for today's sightseeing tour of Istanbul.



Today's tour will start with a walk through Galata District. See the highest watchtower of the city **Galata Tower**, which was built in 1303 by immigrants from Genoa, Italy. A medieval stone tower in the heart of Pera quarter just to the north of the Golden Horn. One of the city's most striking landmarks, it is a high, cone-capped cylinder that dominates the skyline and affords a panoramic vista of Old Istanbul and its environs. You will enjoy the spectacular view of the city.

During your walk at the Galata district, you will see the ruins of old Genovese fortress. A quick visit to **Arab Mosque**. It was built in 1325 by the friars of the Dominican Order near or above a former 13th century Roman Catholic chapel devoted to Saint Paul (Italian: San Paolo) in 1233.[1] Although the structure was altered during the Ottoman period, it represents the only

example of religious Gothic Architecture remaining in Istanbul and one of the oldest mosques in town.

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Drive across the Golden Horn to go back to within the walls of Constantinople to see the **Church of Theotokos Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii)**. The church of The Joyous Mother of God, as it translates, was constructed during the 12th century and was the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. In 1586, it was recalibrated as a mosque and given a new title, Fethiye Camii, or Mosque of Conquest by Sultan Mehmet II.

Your tour will continue with a visit to the official residence of Eastern Orthodox of Patriarchate where ecumenical leader of the Orthodox Church lives. You will also visit the church of **Aya Yorgi**.

See the **Spice Market** located in the old commercial harbor of Constantinopolis. In this centuries old market area, you can see the old market buildings from the time of the Byzantines.

Your private tour will end with a visit to the **Istanbul Archaeological Museum**, which is considered to have one of the biggest byzantine collections and is housing various artifacts from civilizations that had left their traces to different periods of the city's history. It is one of the 10 most important world-class museums designed and used as a museum building. Additionally, it is the first institution in Turkey arranged as a museum. Besides its spectacular collections, the architectural aspects of its buildings and its garden are of historical and natural importance.

At the end of your tour, transfer back to the hotel.

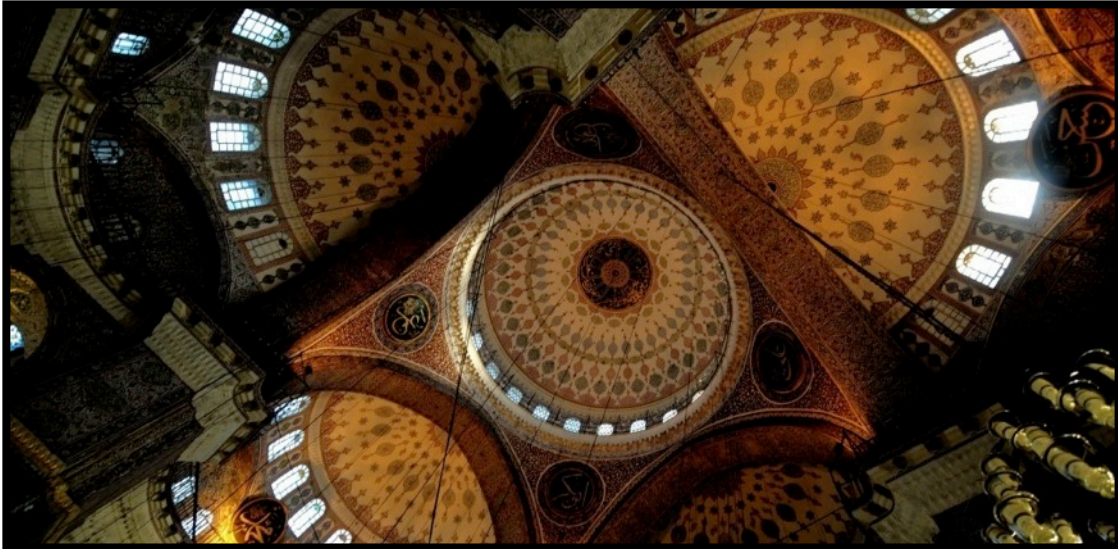
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DAY 4

ISTANBUL



Your guide will meet you at 09:00am at the lobby of your hotel for your last day sightseeing tour.

Your first visit will be to the **Suleymaniye Mosque**, which is undoubtedly the most dignified monument in Istanbul. It was built by Suleyman the Magnificent and designed by Sinan the Architect who has been acclaimed as "Master Builder of all times" by Frank Lloyd Wright.



Proceed to the magnificent **Topkapı Palace**, which was the residence of the Ottoman Sultans for almost four centuries. Besides being the residence of the Sultan and his family, Topkapı was also the seat of the Ottoman Divan. 5000 people lived in the palace. You will see the Sultan's Treasury and the Holy Relics exhibition.

Continue to the famous **Grand Bazaar**, the largest and the oldest covered Bazaar in this part of the world with more than 4000 small shops. You will see a great variety of Turkish handicrafts, handmade oriental carpets, jewelry and many souvenirs within the old market.

At the end of your tour, transfer back to the hotel.

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## EMPIRE: ISTANBUL ROME + VENICE

### DAY 5

### ISTANBUL - ROME

Departure transfer to the airport. Arrival in Rome.

Enjoy the perfect welcome to Rome, with an introductory overview tour of the ancient rule of Constantine and the Byzantine Empire in the city.

On arrival at Rome Airport please collect your luggage and make your way through customs and into the Arrivals hall where your English speaking driver will await you with a sign indicating your surname. You will then be escorted on a leisurely transfer to Barocco Hotel. On route to your hotel, your professional guide will take you to many historical spots in the eternal city, which shaped the Byzantine Empire. During your time in the Rome, you will absorb a lasting knowledge of how influential the Byzantine Empire was in Rome, as well as the political and social influence that remains today.

Among the first significant sites you will visit on your journey to uncover the Byzantine Empire's impact on the city of Rome, are the Roman Empire Amphitheatre, the Coliseum, the ancient Roman chariot racing stadium of Circus Maximus, the Arch of Constantine the remains of the Roman forum which formed the political heart of the Roman Empire, the marvelous Venice Square and the beautiful baths of Caracalla. You will be fascinated to discover that it was Constantine himself who erected the Arch of Constantine to celebrate his victory over Maxentius, and Diocletian built the greatest baths of all. Constantine was also the first patron of official Christian buildings in the city of Rome. Your local driver will also happily point out additional relevant sights that will be of interest to you as you make your way through the city to the hotel. Above all, this introductory overview tour of Rome is the perfect reminder of Byzantine civilization in the city and forms another step to ensuring that you will take home with you a wealth of knowledge on your specific historical subject.



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*Check into the Hotel Barocco where you have a double deluxe room reserved for two nights. Breakfast, services and taxes included.*

*This wonderful, small hotel has the excellent service and facilities of a larger hotel, yet offers the intimacy of a small, charming, boutique property. The location is fabulous too. Bedrooms are well furnished, bathrooms are spacious, the staff is extremely helpful and the views from some of the rooms over the square are really something special.*

### Amenities

- Welcome drink on arrival day
- Upgrade depending on availability on arrival
- Fresh fruit basket in room on arrival;
- Robe and fresh flowers
- Bottle of wine in room the day before departure

Enjoy the most fascinating Monuments of the Byzantine Empire and Constantine Rule in Rome this evening with your local expert guide and driver.

Byzantine architecture can be summed up in one word: Justinian. As you will know, Justinian's aim was to restore the Roman Empire to its former glory within a Christian context. So, today you will discover the key Byzantine monuments in the city and be able to draw many parallels between the sights that you have viewed in Istanbul and the ones that you will admire today. These monuments shaped the social heart of the Byzantine Empire. First, you will head



directly from Piazza Venezia to the marvelous hills of Campidoglio—the Piazza del Campidoglio where many Roman divinities were once praised. One of the most remarkable buildings in the square is the Palazzo Senatorio, built in the XII century on the remains of the ancient Tabularium utilizing pre-existing fortifications built by powerful baronial families.

From the beautiful panoramic terrace of the Campidoglio we can enjoy a visual tour of the Roman Forum which is even more impressive and spectacular in the evenings. Following the Via dei Fori Imperiali you will arrive at another one of Rome's wonders—the Colosseum. Commissioned by the Emperor Vespasian in AD 72, this was the location where victims encountered the Romans' thirst for blood, and many were sentenced to battle to the death.

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From the Colosseum you will head along the Tevere River to the Piazza San Pietro, one of Rome's most impressive and spectacular monuments. Our tour ends with a viewing of the Santa Maria and Flavius Belisarius inscription around the corner from the Trevi Fountain. Flavius Belisarius is often described as one of the greatest generals of the Byzantine Empire. He was instrumental to Emperor Justinian I's ambitious project of reconquering much of the Western Roman Empire, which had been lost just under a century previously. One of the defining features of Belisarius' career was his operating under conditions of little or no support from his emperor Justinian and Byzantium, and nonetheless succeeding through military genius. He is also among a select group of men considered to be the "Last of the Romans".

### DAY 6

### ROME



Breakfast in the hotel.

In the morning we will enjoy a very special introduction to the Papal State of the Vatican City and its significance to the Roman and Byzantine Empires.

Your Vatican experience will take you on the most amazing journey through the Vatican Museums, entrances into which have been prearranged, and into the most beautiful and famous chapels in the world, the Sistine Chapel. You will be intrigued to discover how it was not until after the decline of the Roman Empire and the diminishing of Byzantine power in Italy that the Vatican City became an independent state and the

residence of the pope in the 16th century. Explore how much of the architecture and art within Vatican City is the result of centuries of construction and collection, making the city-state an immensely important repository of culture. First, visit the important Greek Roman Sistine Chapel, which features some beautiful Byzantine

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mosaics. From the Sistine Chapel, continue your voyage through the Vatican' by entering the ever majestic St. Peters and discovering the secrets of one of the world's most beautiful Basilicas before heading out into the Piazza to discover one of the Vatican city's most magical places. St Peter's Basilica was constructed on the site of St Peter's tomb over 300 years after his death (69 AD) under the order of Byzantine Emperor Constantine. The ancient basilica of Old St. Peter's in what is today Vatican City was one of the earliest churches built by Constantine during the early Christian period in the 4th century AD. The site was originally the location of Nero's Circus and part of the Roman Empire. Constantine began his replacement in 324 AD. (Taxi to Vatican not included.)

### NOT on Sundays, Wednesday Morning or Church Holidays

This afternoon enjoy a wonderful introduction to one the most beautiful Archbasilica of St. John Lateran (320) that was built in Rome during the reign of Constantine and the Monastery of Ss. Quattro Coronati.

The archbasilica stands over the remains of the Castra Nova equitum singularium, the 'new fort' of the imperial cavalry bodyguard. The fort was established by Septimius Severus in AD 193. Following the victory of Constantine I over Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, the guard were abolished and the fort demolished. The rest of the site was occupied during the early Roman Empire by the palace of the gens Laterani. Sextius Lateranus was the first plebeian to attain the rank of consul, and the Laterani served as administrators for several emperors. One of the Laterani, Consul-designate Plautius Lateranus, became famous for being accused by Nero of conspiracy against the emperor. The accusation resulted in the confiscation and redistribution of his properties. The Lateran Palace fell into the hands of the emperor when Constantine I married his second wife Fausta, sister of Maxentius. Known by that time as the "Domus Faustae" or "House of Fausta," the Lateran Palace was eventually given to the Bishop of Rome by Constantine.

Next, visit to the Ss. Quattro Coronati (four crowned martyrs). This Monastery stands on the north side of the Coelian hill (Celio) in Rome, and is made up of several buildings grouped around the basilica. The buildings around the basilica underwent major restructuring in the 13th century. In particular, the cardinal's residence was enlarged by Cardinal Stefano Conti, a nephew of Pope Innocent III. He built a massive fortified structure on the north side of the basilica, on the ground floor of which is the chapel of St Sylvester that was consecrated in 1247 and contains interesting frescoes depicting the story of Pope Sylvester and the Emperor Constantine.

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## EMPIRE: ISTANBUL ROME + VENICE

### DAY 7

### ROME - VENICE

Breakfast in the hotel, check out and settle incidental accounts

After a private transfer from Rome Hotel to Rome Train Station, take the Eurostar Train (First Class Tickets and Seat Reservations) to Venice. An English speaking assistant will direct you to your water taxi transfer to Hotel Saturnia.

Check into the Hotel Saturnia International where you have a standard double room reserved for 2 nights. Breakfast, services and taxes included.

This well positioned hotel just a stone's throw literally from St. Marks Square (located in Via XXII Marzo the main shopping street in Venice, only a few steps from la Fenice Theatre and all the most important attractions in the city) is partially located in an ancient building which dates back to the 14th century (one of the oldest buildings in Venice) which was once owned by the Pisani Family, whose most illustrious representative, Vittor Pisani (who lived from 1324 – 1380) was appointed Great Admiral of the Serrenissima Republic of Venice during the various wars against the Genoese Fleet, waged to retain control of the merchant trading in the East Mediterranean Sea. The Hotel offers a very friendly atmosphere and you feel most welcome from the minute you enter the property.



Whether you choose to relax in the upstairs lounge where you can also hire a PC for Internet use or enjoy your pleasantly furnished room the choice is yours.

#### Amenities

- Free entrance in the gym close to the hotel
- A copy of "il Quotidiano"
- A pack of homemade pasta produced by an historical venetian "pastificio"

Enjoy the perfect introduction to the St. Mark's square area of Venice, discovering its importance to the Roman/Byzantine Empire with your private English speaking local expert guide. Meeting our guide in the hotel lobby enjoy a stroll to the very heart of the Venetian/Byzantine Empire, the St. Marks Area of Venice. During the short walk to the unmistakably Byzantine St. Mark's Square we will not only experience the atmosphere

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of Venice and wonders of this unique city, but we will also start to understand the role that this square would have played during its time under Byzantine rule. As the Piazza of St. Mark's was the political center of the Byzantine Empire in Venice, you will come to realize the substantial power change that the Byzantine reign had on Venice as an emerging city. During the decades following the reign of Justinian in Constantinople, Venice saw a growing unity amongst its many subparts as well as an increasing role as the northern cultural center. During your time in St. Mark's Square, enjoy both the Square including the Basilica and Doges' Palace as well as the area surrounding the square. At the hub of St. Mark's Square is the Basilica of San Marco, known to be one of the greatest examples of Byzantine architecture in the world.

Built over several centuries, the Basilica has been frequently transformed and enriched with precious treasures, often from the Far East. Its architecture, a mixture of Byzantine, Roman and Venetian, is the work of artists and craftsmen coming from all over. It can be considered a real laboratory, a living organism, developing and transforming over the centuries. Here, we will locate the Tetrarchs on St. Marks Basilica. Originally in Constantinople, this sculpture was taken during the 4th Crusade and put outside St. Mark's and as you would have seen during your time in Istanbul, the missing foot on one of the figures was found in Istanbul in the 1960s where it still is on display today. The second main focus of our tour today is our sighting of the Pala D'Oro (Golden Altar Piece) in St. Mark's Basilica and the Four Horses. The Pala D'Oro is universally recognized as one of the most refined and accomplished works of Byzantine craftsmanship, with both front and rear sides decorated while the Triumphal Quadriga or Horses of St. Mark's is a set of bronze statues of four horses that were placed on the facade, on the balcony above the porch, of St. Mark's Basilica, after the sack of Constantinople in 1204. They remained there until looted by Napoleon in 1797 but were returned in 1815. The Quadriga has been removed from the facade and placed in the interior of St. Mark's for conservation purposes, with replicas in their position on the balcony.

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## EMPIRE: ISTANBUL ROME + VENICE

### DAY 8

### VENICE

Breakfast in the hotel

Today we will enjoy a gentle stroll from St. Mark's Square to the territory of Rialto with its beautiful palazzos, bridges, the market, the quaint alleyways, which were at the heart of life under the Roman and Byzantine Empires.

Discover the zone between the St. Mark's Square and Rialto Bridge and the market area and its surrounding streets, canals and Churches. Under the rule of the Roman Empire and later of the Byzantine Empire, the Rialto lagoon became a populated and important territory. It was one of the key locations for trade in the era of the Byzantium people as the Grand Canal formed a safe and accessible port for ships. You will discover that under the Byzantine Empire,, goods arrived together with sculptures, friezes, columns and capitals to decorate the houses of patrician families. As a result of this, The Byzantine art arriving soon began to merge with existing Venetian traditions to create a whole new fascinating Venetian-Byzantine style of art.

This style can be realized, even today, particularly along the Grand Canal, where you will come across the well preserved Ca' Farsetti, Ca' Loredan (both municipal seats) and Ca' da Mosto, all dating back to the 12th or 13th century. It is particularly, intriguing to see that the Fourth Crusade, with the loot obtained from the sack of Constantinople (1204), and other historical situations, gave Venice an Eastern influence until the late 14th



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century. Through this experience, we are sure you will find many connections between this market and the suk of Istanbul as the market of Rialto is one of the most ancient and picturesque food markets in Europe.

A stop at the spice window is definitely a must. From the 8th and until the 15th century, the Republic of Venice and the other maritime republics held the monopoly of European trade with the Middle East. The silk and spice trade, involving spices, incense, herbs, drugs and opium, made these Mediterranean city-states phenomenally rich. Spices were among the most expensive and in-demand products of the Middle Ages, used in medicine. They were all imported from Asia and Africa. Venetian merchants distributed then the goods through Europe until the rise of the Ottoman Empire, that eventually led to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, barring Europeans from important combined land-sea routes. [

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Enjoy a Very Special Introduction to the history of the Islands of Murano, Burano and Torcello under the Roman/Byzantine Empire and visit the Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta with your local expert guide and private water taxi.

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From the portside, along with our local expert guide and private water taxi, our journey will take us to the three principle islands of Venice Lagoon: Murano, Burano and Torcello, each uniquely Byzantine.



During your journey across the Lagoon to these islands, take time to read about the stronghold that these islands were for the Byzantine Empire in Venice, its people and their culture. We will explore all three of the islands, meeting the locals and learning about their way of life, their industries (primarily glass and lace), and the effect the islands have on 'mainland Venice.' We will also be able to visit some of the factories and places where the lace and glass are produced to learn more about these age-old technologies. By the reign of the Eastern Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (905--59) Torcello had become the principal hinge in Byzantine trade into Europe, at a time when struggle for control of both the Eastern and the Western Empire by the Emperor and the Papacy was at its highest. Today the island can count no more than 11 inhabitants, a generous natural environment and, incomparable child of Torcello's foundation and rise to greatness, the Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, founded in 639 AD.

Today's main attraction is the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, founded in 639 and with much 11th and 12th century Byzantine work, including mosaics (e.g. a vivid version of the Last Judgement), surviving. Following your tour of the islands, you will head over to the San Marco District of Venice to bid fond farewells to our guide who will give us some great shopping and dinner suggestions.

### DAY 9

### DEPARTURE

Breakfast in the hotel, check out and settle incidental accounts

Departure Transfer from Venice Hotel to Venice Airport for departure flight with your Private English Speaking Assistant.

Enjoy a leisurely way water taxi transfer from your hotel to the airport boat house. From the boat house to the airport you will enjoy a short road transfer.

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