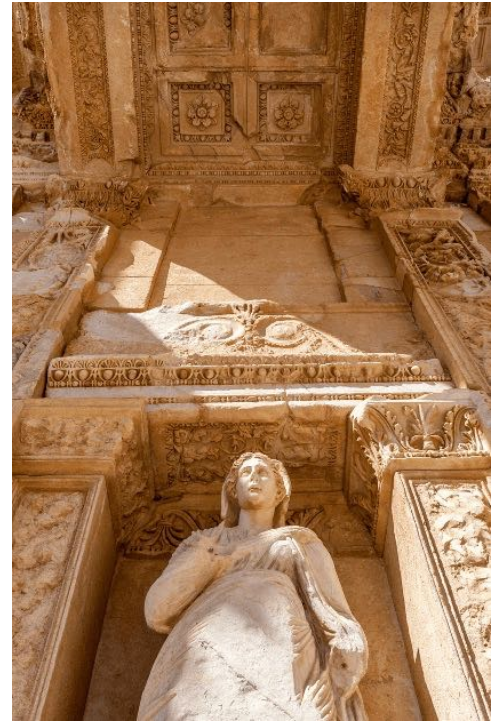


# TÜRKIYE

## ANATOLIAN MYSTERIES TOUR

*Goddess Sites along the Ancient Silk Road in Turkey*

April 6 - 22, 2025

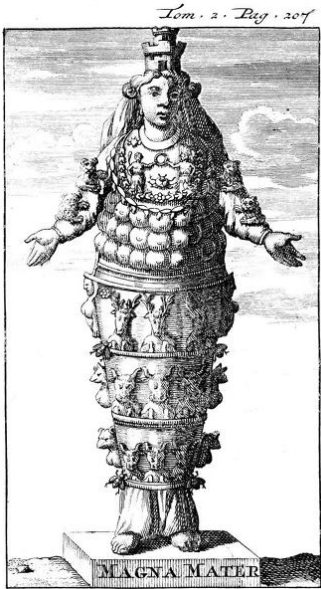


From Istanbul to the Sanctuary of Asclepius at Pergamon, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, Cleopatra's thermal pools at Pamukkale, the Temple of Cybele and the Nymphaeum at Hierapolis, the Sema (whirling dervish) ceremonies of Konya, the neolithic goddess shrines of Çatalhöyük, and the hidden underground cities and fairy chimneys of the Hellenistic and Byzantine kingdom of Cappadocia, this exploratory seventeen-day journey traces the sacred sites and enduring presence of the Great Goddess along the Western Silk Road, where multiple civilizations and religions intermingled for millennia. Each day will include cultural experiences and activities amidst spectacular landscapes and world-renowned archeological sites. Highlights include the ancient wellness and dream incubation center of Pergamon, sanctuaries connected with Kibele (Greek: Cybele) – the primordial mother of the gods, the earth, nature, and human beings – and hiking and horse riding amidst the volcanic landscapes and rock-hewn monasteries of Cappadocia. Accommodations will be at specially selected boutique hotels and expert guides will accompany the group throughout the trip. The journey will be personally led by Nithya Ekata, Ian Baker, and Tiffani Gyatso, and offers an opportunity to reconnect with ancient traditions at the interface of Pagan Mysteries, Byzantine-era Christianity, and Sufi mysticism that flourished along the Silk Road amidst the legacy of primordial goddesses embodying the creativity and transformational and regenerative powers of Earth and Heaven.

*“Imbued with supernatural power  
And wise in using skillful means,  
In every corner of the world  
She manifests her countless forms.”*

– The Lotus Sutra 25

## AN INVITATION



Embark on a transformative and exploratory journey in Anatolia, Turkey, a cradle of ancient civilization where the echoes of history resonate through sun-drenched landscapes and mystical ruins. This enchanting region of Asia Minor, known as the land of gods and goddesses, invites you to explore its profound spiritual heritage and breathtaking scenery. As you traverse the hills and valleys, you will uncover remnants of ancient cultures that revered powerful, goddesses such as Hygieia, Cybele, Ishtar, Inanna, and Aphrodite—each symbolizing different aspects of life, fertility, love, and wisdom. Feel the energy surge through you at the lion-flanked sanctuaries of Cybele, an Anatolian mountain goddess of ecstatic and regenerative mysteries that celebrants venerated with wild music, dancing, potent wine, and the ‘howling of wolves and sparkle-eyed lions’ (Homeric hymn).

Each sacred site holds secrets of the past, inviting you to connect with intangible ancestors who shaped the world around them through ritual, art, and celebration. Re-ignite your own spiritual path and innate creativity in places where the archetypal Divine Feminine flourished in unison with humankind’s deepest intuitions, rhythms, and imagination.

Stand amidst the towering columns of ancient cities, meditate in primeval sanctuaries, engage with Mevlevi dervishes, and witness the stunning rock formations of Cappadocia where Byzantine-era Christians embellished cave hermitages with intricate frescoes. Join us as we delve into the myths, legends, and sacred dreaming that weave through this ancient land, celebrating the transformational power of the goddesses who have inspired countless generations and civilizations. As you explore sumptuous landscapes and timeless architecture, you will not only learn about the past but also forge a deeper connection with the transformational powers of your innermost nature.

The Anatolian Mysteries Tour is more than just a journey; it’s a pilgrimage to the heart of the human condition and empowering female wisdom as expressed in art, ritual, and nature. Experience the magic of Asia Minor and let its ancient traditions light your path. Your journey awaits!

*“What you seek is seeking you.”*

— Mawlana Jalal-al-Din Rumi



## DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

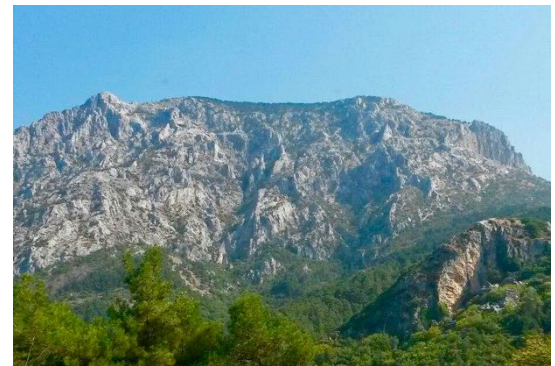
*The itinerary below outlines our daily travel plan and is subject to change as circumstances determine.*

**April 6** – The group will meet at Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport for a midday flight to Izmir, a city on Turkey’s Aegean coast known as Smyrna in antiquity and founded by the Greeks, taken over by the Romans, and rebuilt by Alexander the Great before becoming part of the Ottoman Empire in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. After arriving at Izmir Adnan Mendeseres Airport we will drive one hour to our hotel in Manisa. Time allowing, an optional visit can be arranged at the Manisa Museum, which houses artifacts from the ancient civilizations of Lydia and Phrygia, including statues and inscriptions related to the worship of Cybele, the ancient Anatolian Mother Goddess. We will meet as a group at 6:00 pm for program orientation before a traditional Turkish dinner at 7:00 pm. Overnight at Giritligil Museum Hotel.



**April 7** – After breakfast, drive approximately one hour to the Agai Ancient City (Aeolis), an ancient, mountain-top Greek and later Roman city renowned for its important Sanctuary of Apollo. After visiting the archeological site, we will continue driving for another hour to Pergamon. After lunch, we will explore the temples and healing Sanctuary of Pergamon, one of the major cultural and wellness centers of the ancient Greek world. Return drive to Manisa in time for dinner. Overnight at Giritligil Museum Hotel.

**April 8** – After visiting nearby Mount Sipylus, a 4,964-foot peak featuring a rock-cut statue of Cybele, the Mother of the Gods, we will continue for another 45 minutes to Kimiz Çiftliği, at the foot of Nif Mountain. After a lunch of Central Asian Turkish cuisine amidst the traditional tent culture of Asian Turkish tribes, we will continue one more hour to Ephesus, an



ancient city that was first built in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC by Attic and Ionian Greeks and later became one of the most important cultural and religious centers in the Roman Empire. Ephesus’s Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was a major site of worship for Cybele. Time allowing, we will also visit the House of the Virgin Mary, an important Christian pilgrimage site near Ephesus. After dinner in either Selçuk or Şirince Village, we will return to Manisa. Overnight at Giritligil Museum Hotel.

**April 9** – Depart Manisa and drive one hour to the Temple of Artemis at Sardis, the ancient capital of Lydia and a once thriving center of trade and religion. The Temple of Artemis at Sardis is the fourth largest Ionic temple in the world and is situated dramatically below Turkey’s Tmolus Mountains. After exploring the goddess temple and the ancient gymnasium, “school for naked exercise,” we will continue for another hour to the town of Kuladokya. After checking in at our hotel, we will enjoy lunch at Zeytinli Konak Restaurant and, afterwards,



explore the nearby Kuladokya Fairy Chimneys, as well as the Tasyaran and Ulubey Canyons, noted for their striking rock formations. Overnight at Anemon Kula Hotel.

**April 10** – After breakfast, we will drive one hour to the ancient site of Blandus, a Greek city surrounded by vast plains, deep valleys, and canyons and often referred to as Anatolia's 'Stonehenge'. After exploring this site, we will continue for another one and half hours to Hierapolis, a Hellenistic Greek city built on

the site of a Phrygian cult center of the Anatolian mother goddess Cybele. Hierapolis was also the birthplace of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus.



From the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, Hierapolis became renowned as a healing center with extensive mineral-rich thermal springs flowing over stunning travertine terraces in neighboring Pamukkale. After experiencing the medicinal waters, we will drive two hours back to Kula. Overnight at Anemon Kula Hotel.

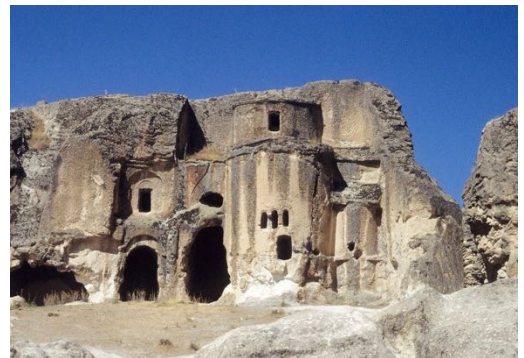


and half hours to the spectacular site of Afyonkarahisar Kalesi, literally the 'Black Opium Castle'. After lunch in the historical Tashan Spice Market, we will visit the Afyon Archeological Museum and the wooden Afyonkarahisar Ulu Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Anatolia and an architectural and artistic masterpiece. We will then drive approximately forty minutes to our hotel in Ayazini. Overnight at Inn Hotel Ayazini.

**April 11** – In the morning, we will drive approximately two

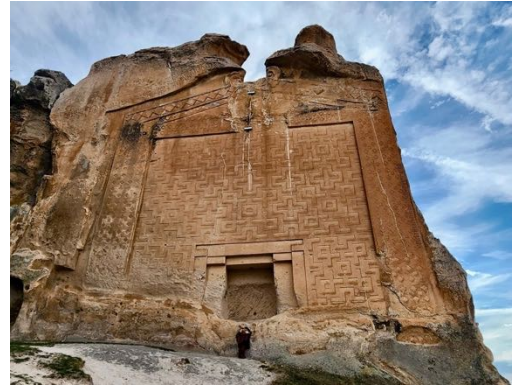


**April 12** – From our hotel, we will spend the day exploring the ancient Metropolis of Ayazini, in the historic heartland of the Phrygian culture that developed in the Bronze Age and then flowered in the early Iron Age following the collapse of the Hittite Empire in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Many civilizations converged in Ayazini, including Phrygians, Ancient Romans, Medieval Greeks and Seljuks. A traditional fire ceremony will be conducted after dinner. Overnight at Inn Hotel Ayazini.



**April 13** – Today, we will drive thirty minutes to Lake Emre and the nearby archeological sites of Üçler Kayası and the Ottoman-era Döğer Caravanserai, a type of fortress-inn built to protect travelers and caravans along ancient trade routes. In the afternoon, we will continue to Aizanoi to visit a hilltop Temple of Zeus, one of the best-preserved classical temples in the entire Greco-Roman world. The site also features a prominent stone carving of Cybele, as well as sculptures of Aphrodite and Dionysus. We will return to our hotel for dinner. Overnight at Inn Hotel Ayazini.

**April 14** – After breakfast, we will visit the nearby Göynüş Valley, famed for its Phrygian monuments including Göynüş Castle, the renowned ‘Lions Rock’ and ‘Snakes Rock’, and an ancient open-air temple to Cybele. In the afternoon, we will proceed forty minutes to our hotel in Yazilikaya, a village renowned for its extensive Phrygian ruins that is also known as Midas City. Overnight at Midas Han Hotel.



**April 15** – Today, we will explore the monuments of the Yazilikaya Valley, including the spectacular Midas Monument, the largest Phrygian rock-cut structure ever discovered, located at the base of an open-air temple built by the Phrygians in the name of Kibebe (Greek: Cybele),



the Phrygian Mother Goddess. We will follow a walking path through the valley for two to three hours and then return to our hotel. Overnight at Midas Han Hotel.

**April 16** – We will depart Midas after breakfast and drive one and half hours to Pessinus (Ballihisar), which, according to ancient tradition, was the principal cult center of Goddess Cybele, established in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. After visiting the temple site, we will continue driving for another three hours to Konya, where the poet-saint Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi established the Sufi Mevlevi order, known for the Whirling Dervishes, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We will visit his turquoise-

domed tomb as well as experience a Sema, or Whirling Dervish Ceremony. We will stay in the ancient town of Sille (Sylata), which was once a stopping point on the Royal Road from Ephesus to the East. Overnight at Sillehan Boutique Hotel.



**April 17** – Today begins with a visit to the Mevlâna Museum, which was once a dervish lodge and is dedicated to the teachings of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Sufi poet, Rumi. We will then continue to the Neolithic City of Çatalhöyük, famous for its extensive archeological evidence of humanity’s transition from villages to urban life. We will also explore the remains of Binbirkilise, the ‘One Thousand and One Churches’ that once thrived in the central crater of an extinct volcano known as Mount Karadag, the ‘Black Mountain’. The area was once renowned for the many Christian pilgrims who traveled here on their way from Europe to Jerusalem. We will drive back two hours to our hotel near Konya. Overnight at Sillehan Boutique Hotel.



**April 18** – After a three-hour drive from Konya to Cappadocia, we will check into our hotel and then have lunch in the ancient town of Göreme. After lunch, we will explore the Göreme Open-Air Museum, a UNESCO World Heritage site showcasing fresco-laden, rock-cut monasteries and churches, including the Dark Church, the Yilani Snake Church, and the Mirror Church. Overnight at Stone Cave House, Local Cave House, or Roma Cave House.



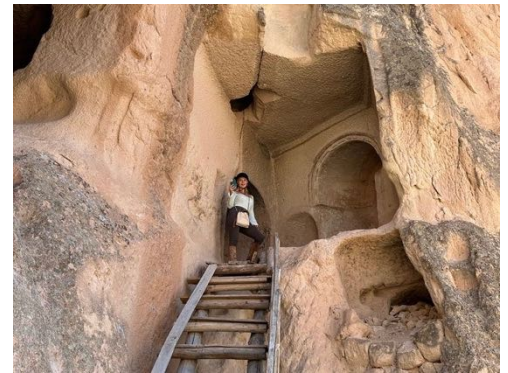
**April 19** – In the morning, we will visit Kaymakli Underground City, within the Citadel of Kaymakli, and Derinkuyu Underground City, also known as Elengubu, a subterranean urban complex carved from soft

volcanic stone that extends eighteen stories below the ground was large enough to have sheltered as many as 20,000 people together with their livestock and food stores. After lunch, we will proceed to the beautifully preserved Gümüşler Monastery, renowned for its sumptuous, religiously themed frescos. Overnight at Stone Cave House, or similar.

**April 20** – After breakfast, we will visit Çavuşin, a Byzantine-era settlement in the heart of Cappadocia with historic dwellings carved into soft volcanic rock formations. Afterwards, we will ride horses and enjoy a picnic lunch amidst the world-renowned Fairy Chimneys of Pasabag, the ‘Valley of the Monks’, while also visiting monuments in the Red Valley, Devrant Valley, and Rose Valley, where multiple faiths converged. Overnight at Stone Cave House, or similar.



**April 21** – On our final day exploring the ancient cultural and spiritual centers of Cappadocia we will drive ten minutes and then hike for an hour through Love Valley to Uçhisar Castle, perched on a tall volcanic outcrop with spectacular views of Uçhisar Valley. We will then drive another hour to Selimiye Monastery, Cappadocia’s largest religious structure. After lunch at Karakaya Restaurant, we will hike amidst the ancient, rock-hewn churches of the Ihlara Valley, once the cradle of Byzantine Christianity. We will enjoy a final farewell dinner together in Göreme. Overnight at Stone Cave House, or similar.



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**April 22** – Morning flight from Cappadocia’s Kayseri Eriklet Airport to Istanbul, arriving before 12:00 pm for onward flights or an extended stay in Turkey.



## TRAVEL WITH

### **Nithya Ekata – Yoga Instructor & Designer**



Nithya Ekata is a dedicated yoga practitioner, researcher, and teacher specializing in ancient yogini practices that activate and unite the inner and outer dimensions of body, mind, and Nature. Her interdisciplinary studies and nomadic spirit have taken her around the world—from the jungles of India and the high Himalayas to deepest Amazonia—where she has engaged with diverse wisdom traditions and ceremonial practices. A native of Istanbul, one of her primary areas of study has been the shared goddess ideologies of ancient Anatolia, the Indus Valley, and India and their manifestation of divine feminine power. Ekata is also a multidimensional designer whose ethnically inspired jewelry and clothing designs aim to expand awareness and empower deeper levels of creativity and wellbeing.

### **Ian Baker – Anthropologist & Writer**



Ian Baker, PhD holds degrees in English Literature, History, Anthropology, and Buddhist Studies. He is the author of seven critically acclaimed books, including *Tibetan Yoga: Principles and Practices*, *Buddhas of the Celestial Gallery*, *The Tibetan Art of Healing*, *The Dalai Lama's Secret Temple*, and *The Heart of the World: A Journey to the Last Secret Place*. He was designated by National Geographic Society as one of seven 'Explorers for the Millennium' for his field research concerning 'hidden lands' (*beyul*) in the Buddhist Himalayas. He currently leads study tours and travel seminars around the world that explore the interface of diverse philosophical, spiritual, and yogic traditions. Visit [www.ianbaker.com](http://www.ianbaker.com) for further information.

### **Tiffani Gyatso – Sacred Iconography Artist**



Tiffani Gyatso is an artist from Brazil who specializes in traditional Tibetan Thangka painting, which she studied at Norbulingka Institute in India from 2003 to 2006. She undertook subsequent studies at the Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London in the field of Sacred Geometry. She later graduated from Dulcina de Moraes University in Brasilia with an advanced degree in Visual Arts. She currently runs her own art retreat center at the Atelier YabYum in the mountains of Brazil where she integrates contemporary and traditional techniques. She leads contemplative art programs in India, Bhutan, Morocco, and Turkey, and is also a prominent member of the Danza Duende Network in Portugal. She is the author of *Life and Thangka: In Search of Knowledge through Tibetan Sacred Arts*. For further information about her life and work, please visit [www.tiffanigyatso.com](http://www.tiffanigyatso.com).

## TERMS & CONDITIONS

To ensure the highest possible experience, this exploratory journey will be limited to twelve participants. The cost of domestic airfare and all transportation, accommodations, monument fees, and guides in Turkey are included in the comprehensive trip fee. The cost of lunches and dinners at carefully selected restaurants throughout the trip are not included to allow greater room for individual culinary preferences. To register, or for more information, please contact us at: [hiddenlandstravel@gmail.com](mailto:hiddenlandstravel@gmail.com). Please also see the website for the journey at [www.tiffanigyatso.co/turkey](http://www.tiffanigyatso.co/turkey).

### COST

**Early-Bird Special**, until February 1<sup>st</sup>:  
U.S.\$ 3,900 (on shared twin room basis)

**After February 1<sup>st</sup>:**  
U.S. \$ 4,200 (on shared twin room basis)

Payment is via bank deposit only. For single accommodations, please add \$800 to the comprehensive trip fee.

For banking details, please e-mail us at: [hiddenlandstravel@gmail.com](mailto:hiddenlandstravel@gmail.com)

### **Cancelation Policy**

Before March 1<sup>st</sup>, 50% reimbursement. After March 1<sup>st</sup>, no reimbursement is possible.

### **INCLUDED IN THE TRIP PRICE**

- Flights from Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport to Izmir and Nevşehir Kapadokya Airport to Istanbul
- Ground transportation via air-conditioned van
- 16 nights in selected boutique hotels
- All breakfasts
- Horse riding in Cappadocia
- Traditional picnic lunch in Cappadocia
- Farewell dinner
- Monument fees
- Local guides
- International specialists

### **NOT INCLUDED IN THE TRIP PRICE**

- International flights to and from Istanbul
- Travel insurance
- Visa fees (if required)
- Lunches and dinners except when indicated above

