We begin our tour of the Sultanahmet district, the heart of old Istanbul, at Saint Sophia*. Built by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century AD, this church is one of the marvels of world architecture. Its massive dome dominates the skyline of old Istanbul. It is famed for its mosaics, including glittering portraits of emperors and empresses. Next we visit the Blue Mosque, which owes its name to the exquisite tiles adorning its interior. Dating from the 17th century, it is the only imperial mosque with six minarets. The Hippodrome, the stadium of ancient Byzantium, held 100,000 spectators and featured objects from all corners of the empire. Of these, an Egyptian obelisk and a bronze sculpture of three entwined serpents from Delphi survive. The Grand Bazaar, was the commercial heart of the old city and its 4,000 shops are full of treasures including carpets and kilims, silk, jewelry, ceramics, icons, and leather goods. Wandering through the Grand Bazaar, indulge in some shopping. Ottoman style.

*On Mondays, when Saint Sophia is closed, we visit the Chora Church, famed for its mosaics and frescoes.
We begin with a brief visit to the 17th century Spice Bazaar one of Istanbul’s most colourful and bustling attractions. Next, we take an unforgettable cruise along the Bosphorus, the majestic strait that runs through Istanbul, linking Europe and Asia.

From our cruise boat, we view the dramatic sights lining the Bosphorus’ wooded shores: mosques, a bridge that for a time was the world’s longest and the massive Rumeli Hisari, a fortress built by Fatih the Conqueror in just three months as he prepared to take Istanbul.

Also noteworthy are the 19th century mansions of the Ottoman elite and the Sultan’s fanciful gingerbread palaces and hunting lodges.
Bosphorus Cruise (daily afternoon halfday)

We cruise the Bosphorus and spices. From the deck of our cruise boat, take in the sights and sounds of this legendary waterway, that is lined with historic villages, grand wooden mansions, imposing fortresses, like Anadolu Hisari and the Baroque palaces of the late Ottoman sultans.

After our cruise, we visit the Spice Bazaar, a thrilling riot of colors, sounds and the rich smells of exotic spices.
We begin our tour at Topkapi Palace, which, from the 15th to the 19th century, was the principle residence of the Ottoman Sultans. We will visit the fabulous Imperial Treasury and the Baghdad Kiosk. Topkapi Palace is now a museum and has unrivalled collections of jewelry, including the Spoonmaker’s Diamond, the 3rd largest in the world, Ottoman court costumes and ceramics, notably one of the world’s finest collection of early Chinese ceramics, much of it gifts from other rulers. Interestingly, some of the ceramics have a special glaze that was said to change color in the presence of poison. We also visit the Imperial Armory, displaying centuries of Ottoman weaponry. But perhaps the loveliest features of Topkapi Palace are its courtyards with their ancient trees, and it is easy to imagine the sultan strolling here far from the cares of state and empire. The Süleymaniye Mosque is the largest and grandest of Istanbul’s imperial mosque. It dates from the 16th century heyday of the Ottoman Empire, and was designed by Sinan, the greatest architect of his day and originator of the Classical Ottoman style of architecture. Of the 2,000 structures Sinan designed, Süleymaniye Mosque and its complex of charitable institutions rank among the most important. (Every day except Tuesdays)
We begin by driving across the first Bosphorus Bridge and head for the summit of Çamlıca Hill, which affords panoramic views of Istanbul, the Sea of Marmara and the Princes’ Islands. From here a short ride brings us to the Palace of Beylerbeyi on the shore of the Bosphorus.

Perhaps the most elegant of the late Ottoman palaces, Beylerbeyi boasts six sumptuously furnished reception halls.

(everyday except Monday and Thursday)
Highlights of Istanbul (daily fullday tour)

Combining Imperial Tour

and

Ottoman Splendours Tour

as a special Fullday Tour
Bosphorus Cruise & Asia (daily full day tour)

Combining
Morning Bosphorus Cruise

and

Asian Side of Istanbul Tour

as a Full day Tour

THE QUARTERS OF ORTAKÖY, BEBEK AND ARNAVUTKÖY ON THE BOSPHORUS.
We visit an exclusive nightclub where we will enjoy authentic Turkish cuisine, including the delicious array of appetizers known as meze. The Turks are justly proud of their food.

Following the dinner folk musicians from different regions of Anatolia will perform for us.

No night out in Istanbul would be complete without Turkish belly-dancers. We will be entertained by some of the city’s finest.
If you feel the need to escape from the bustle of Istanbul for a day, nothing could be easier. You simply join us aboard a ferry bound for the charming Princes’ Islands.

Our destination is Büyükada, the largest of the island chain, but we will pass by four other islands on the way. All are famous for their mild climates, lush vegetation and ornate Ottoman houses, and on all of them cars are banned. The preferred means of transportation is the charming horse-drawn carriage known as the phaeton, which we will use on our circular tour of Büyükada, passing elegant mansions draped in brilliant purple bougainvillea. You will feel as though you have stepped back into a more leisured and gracious age, almost expecting grand 19th century ladies and gentlemen to come strolling down to the waterfront on an afternoon promenade.

Lunch will be at one of the many excellent traditional fish restaurants on the waterfront, gazing across the water at the Asian shore of Istanbul, so close though it feels worlds away.
ISTANBUL DAILY CITY TOURS

Included services:

- Hotel Pick-up & drop-off
- English Speaking Guide
- Air-conditioned chauffeur driven private vehicle
- Entrance fees
- Lunch during the full day tour

For your bookings, please contact

IDEE TRAVEL

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