

## SULTANS AND SPLENDORS

*Saturday, October 5th to Sunday, October 13th, 2002*

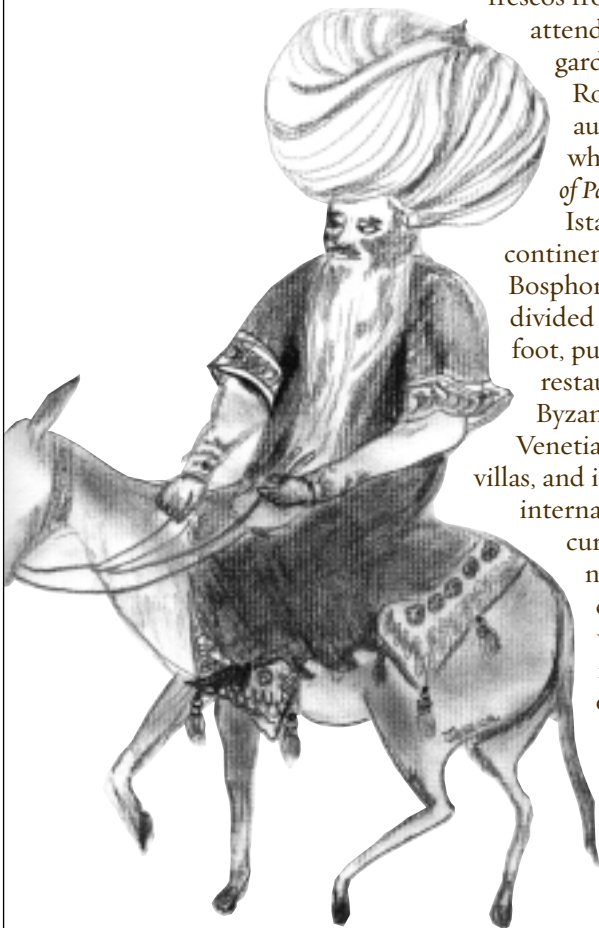
As invited guests of some of Turkey's most exclusive families, join us on a tour to one of the world's most exotic cities. Prominent Turkish collectors will take us into an Istanbul that cannot be experienced alone to see the porcelain, silver, jewelery and furniture that characterized the power and prestige of the Ottoman Empire at its peak. We will see rare Islamic art and calligraphy, mosaics and frescos from the Byzantine period, and sacred Christian relics;

attend banquets in palaces and country houses, visit private gardens and enjoy architectural tours of ancient mosques, Roman ruins and Greek temples. The tour will be led by

author and Ottoman art connoisseur **Philippa Scott**, whose books include *Turkish Delights*, *The Book of Silk*, *Reflections of Paradise*, and *India of the Rajahs*.

Istanbul is the only city in the world that stands upon two continents – Europe and Asia, divided by the waters of the Bosphorus, and the main part of the city, which is in Europe, is divided into two parts by the Golden Horn. Best explored on foot, punctuated by leisurely stops in coffee houses and restaurants, the city's architecture surprises at every turn.

Byzantine splendor is juxtaposed with Ottoman glory. Venetian and Genoese merchants left their mark in elegant villas, and in the nineteenth century, art nouveau flourished as international architects built palaces and boulevards in this curvilinear style. The extraordinary **Topkapi Palace** is a nomadic tented city cast in stone, and the city's skyline is dominated by domes and minarets of many mosques whose dark interiors shimmer with reflected glories, revealing interior banks of glorious Iznik tiles and floors of overlapping rugs. Byzantine mosaics, highlighted with gold leaf, and intricate pebble mosaic floors embellish the glorious sixth century church of **Aya Sofia** and the **Kariye Camii**, and the exquisite little church of **St. Mary of the Mongols**.



Near the Aya Sofia stands the underground **Cistern Basilica**, built to sustain the city's population in times of siege, and which has starred in many films including James Bond adventures, and a short walk from here is the elegant **Sultan Ahmet Mosque**, also known as the Blue Mosque, because of the dominant color of its interior tiles. The back of the mosque now houses an array of small shops selling carpets and ceramics, well worth investigating, while in front and opposite, across the **Hippodrome**, once used for chariot races, festivals and public displays, is the **Palace of Rustem Pasha**, which today houses the fabulous **Museum of Islamic Art**, which displays some of the world's earliest, and most beautiful carpets, a 'must' for anyone even slightly interested in the subject. All these are a short walk from Istanbul's famous covered **Grand Bazaar**, or **Kapeli Carsi**. No visit to the city is complete without visiting this fabulous market, with its many lanes and painted domes, and part of the bazaar experience is to graciously accept tea or coffee and converse when you make your purchases. On the quayside overlooking the Golden Horn is another bazaar, the **Spice Bazaar**, also known as the **Egyptian Bazaar**, because in centuries past it was on this quayside that the ships bringing spices from the Far East, via Egypt, arrived and unloaded. Inside the Spice Bazaar is every imaginable taste and smell, from caviars to a dozen different honeys, perfumes and aphrodisiacs, Mediterranean sponges, sheets of dried fruit pastes and sacks of herbs and powdered spices.

As well as the national museums, there are privately endowed institutions with collections to rival any international exhibitions. The Topkapi Palace collection includes the largest collection of Chinese blue and white and celadon porcelain to be found outside the imperial palace in Beijing. The Ottoman Sultans credited celadon with the power to reveal any poison in food. Calligraphy has always been a revered art form, and it is said that the Qu'ran, Islam's holy book, was revealed at Mecca, recited in Egypt, and written in Istanbul. Pen and ink, often scented, colored or gilded, were as revered in Constantinople as, in other cultures, were trophies of war, and many sultans were skilled calligraphers. In the Treasury vast emeralds and ropes of pearls are suspended next to thrones, cradles, weapons and objets d'art studded with gems. Ottoman court dress was structured from sumptuous velvets and brocades which reflect the motifs and embellishments of architecture and the decorative arts. The sultans' kaftans were carefully preserved throughout the centuries, and many of these are displayed, as are delicate robes worn by princesses. Both men and women wore astounding jewelery, intricately embroidered tunics and flowing silk kaftans. Men wore elaborately constructed turbans or a tasseled fez, tucking diamond-encrusted daggers into voluminous fur-trimmed robes that mirrored the very breadth of the empire's magnificence. In the women's quarters, known as the harem, the visitor will see the baths with running water, and the rooms where girls were educated and taught embroidery and music, overseen by the eunuchs who served as their palace guard. An army of gardeners worked night and day to produce extraordinary tulips, and elaborate nighttime flower festivals were held by lantern light. Sultans sat in splendor surveying 'the city of the world's desires' from wide verandas or rounded cupolas, sipping tea and smoking tobacco from gem-encrusted pipes and hookahs. At its height, the

Ottoman Empire was one of the most extensive the world has ever known, rivaling that of Rome. **The Military Museum** displays examples of the elaborate tents which so impressed Europe that fashionable country estates included Ottoman tents as garden features, or incorporated elements into their interiors.

Along the Bosphorus towards the Black Sea, the **Sadberk Hanim Museum** invites the visitor to experience life outside the confines of a palace. This private collection is displayed in a traditional Ottoman house, with a discreet modern extension to house pre-Ottoman antiquities. On the way back to the city, refreshments may be taken at one of the many fish restaurants overlooking the Bosphorus, before exploring the **Fortress of Rumeli Hisar**, from which the Ottomans launched their conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Today this is often used as the backdrop for outdoor performances of opera and theatre.

But this is a modern city too, with internationally acclaimed designers such as Rifat Ozbek, Nicole Farhi and Hussein Chalayan, and others as yet known only in Turkey, waiting to be discovered. There are boutiques with exquisitely stitched garments and suede and leather in subtle colors and textures, elegant shoes which look as if they might have walked off a Milan or Paris catwalk, which in fact they probably did. There are elegant interior design shops offered furnishing materials, garden furniture, and all manner of desirable treasures.

We will meet designers, architects, collectors, historians and museum curators, and experience the city's secret life as well as its evident beauties, and we will banquet in royal palaces on dishes devised for the pleasures of sultans and their court.

### *Saturday, October 5th*

Arrive and transfer to an Ottoman summer palace. Built as the country home for a Grand Vizier, the former royal residence is still maintained as a private mansion today in a private estate situated directly on the sea. With lush gardens, marble fountains and outdoors pavilions, the palace combines the formal structure of an English country house with the spare geometry of Middle Eastern ornamentation. A special tour today of the Aya Sofia, a masterpiece of Byzantine architecture built in the 6th century to rival King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Painted blood red, the church boasts exquisite mosaics, murals and trompe l'oeil effects underneath its massive dome. We will amble through the formal gardens and mosaic fountains of Sultan Ahmet to look inside the Blue Mosque, named for the precious Iznik ceramics that cover every inch of its walls. A short walk across the Byzantine Hippodrome will bring us to Ibrahim Pasha Palace, which now houses the Islamic Museum, and fabulous carpets, some dating from 13th century. A special reception with dinner will be given in our honor at the waterfront Ciragan Palace, constructed from fine marble and white timber inlaid with mother of pearl.

### *Sunday, October 6th*

A noted historian joins us on our tour of ancient Istanbul. Addressing 'The Seven Hills of Istanbul', he will discuss how the city's architecture, monuments and acropolis owe much to the intimacy Istanbul has with the sea, and the extent to which its maritime history impacted upon the character and diversity of its private collections. Countless civilizations enjoyed the same panoramic views of the seascape and hillsides we will see today, each further expanding the city as their empires absorbed other nations. We tour the magnificent Dolmabahce Palace, situated directly on the European shore of the Bosphorus. We will be received by a palace dignitary in the grand salon, with its marble 56 columns and four-and-a-half ton crystal chandelier illuminating the baroque frescoes and empire furnishings. In the evening we will dine in a historic Ottoman mansion originally divided to keep the women of the court separate from men who visited the palace. Different bell tones designated which gender could tour the garden or sit at the water's edge, while parallel staircases and elaborate screens assured that men and women could interact and remain invisible. Other guests tonight will include some of Turkey's leading artists.

### *Monday, October 7th*

The halls of the Mirsir Carsisi (Spice Bazaar) are an olfactory delight if not a sensory overload. Essential oils, lotions, eau de colognes and aphrodisiacs are sold alongside sweets and spices. We are given a special tour of the Topkapi Palace, the very epicenter of Ottoman architecture, which consists of many interconnected courts and fragrant gardens with uninterrupted views over the Bosphorus. The largest collection of Chinese porcelain outside China can be seen in the Topkapi, where it is housed in the kitchen wing. The Palace Treasury displays some of the most fabulous jewels in the world, and gem encrusted thrones, and in the Harem quarters we will see where the women lived and bathed. A Turkish fashion designer will guide us through the Costumes Collection, revealing the inspired heritage behind Rifat Ozbek, Nicole Farhi and Hussein Chalayan. We tour the historic gardens of the Saray with a noted author and garden specialist, who explains the significance of flowers in Turkish history. Water is a main design feature; pools built in red and pink marble and grand fountains with floral relief cool the air. Dinner in a private mansion outside Istanbul.

### *Tuesday, October 8th*

We will board a private boat for a relaxing all-day excursion in the Bosphorus, traveling to the mouth of the Black Sea. Built as summerhouses, majestic wooden villas line the water's edge where Ottoman gentlemen once enjoyed cool sherbet or sweet coffee and played backgammon as their Eastern servants fanned them with giant feathers. We will ferry past historic fishing villages and ancient

harbors still framed by neoclassical buildings and ruins. Women from local farms, whose work dress is traditional Turkish costumes, will approach the boats as we moor to sell local crafts, seasonal fruits and home baked pastries. Together with an architectural expert, we will tour Beylerbeyi Palace on the Asian side of the water, a white marble mansion set amid magnolia gardens where the beautiful Empress Eugenie of France vacationed. Noted for its fine mahogany paneling and marquetry, the palace was built as a sultan's retreat to house his entourage and harem on excursions out of the Imperial palace. In the evening, a dinner banquet in a private home.

*Wednesday, October 9th*

The labyrinthine sprawl of the Kapali Carsisi (Grand Bazaar) is the largest covered market in the world. You'll find a tantalizing array of ornaments – amber jewelry, mother of pearl, perfume bottles, lanterns, textiles and glassware. Turkish delight, rose petal honey and baklava are sold alongside antiques and textiles while perfumes and eau de cologne are distilled to individual taste. The carpets from the Anatolia region of Turkey are world famous for the vegetable dyes they use and the fine wool from animals living at high altitudes. Their 'wedding carpets' are poignant expression of a young girl's dreams. At the age of ten she starts making the dyes and stretching the warp, hoping that she will complete the carpet in six years so that it can be sold by her father to gain enough money for her dowry. Guests free in the evening.

*Thursday, October 10th*

We visit the breathtaking underground Cistern Basilica, an ancient cathedral now filled with water. The echoing sound of continuously dripping water and the muted strains of classical music will accompany our stroll across the raised walkways built to enable visitors to tour the Basilica. Its 336 columns are reflected eerily in the clear waters underfoot where fish swim between the pedestals and statuary. A Byzantine scholar leads us to the candlelit Kariye Camii, whose fantastic mosaic depict a version of Christ's life that puzzles biblical scholars. Despite having some of the best-preserved Byzantine mosaics in the world, the former church is virtually unknown outside theological circles. Afternoon tea at the Pera Palace Patisserie, built specifically for guests on the Orient Express. Rooms are named for famous guests, who include Mata Hari, Agatha Christie, author of 'Murder on the Orient Express' was a regular visitor and Jackie Onassis is reputed to have flown in by helicopter from the Greek island of Chios to enjoy its sumptuous pastries. Dinner with members of the exclusive Hillside Country Club in the wine growing region outside Istanbul, whose modern cuisine has won international awards.

*Friday, October 11th*

We travel down the coast to stay overnight in a beautiful palace built by the same family who own it today. The beauty and elegance of the rooms on the ground floor display portraits and ceramics amidst European and Eastern antiques, while the upper floors are decorated in arts and crafts style. The most interesting rooms feature stucco reliefs, painted ceilings and frescos, inscriptions and crystal lanterns. We will spend the day touring the palace and relaxing in its gardens. Our speaker will address 'Turkish Delights: The Splendor of the Ottoman Empire', followed by a banquet dinner in candlelight.

*Saturday, October 12th*

A tour of the historic fortress of Rumeli Hisar on the way back to Istanbul, and a provincial lunch of regional specialty dishes and local wine as we enjoy traditional Turkish hospitality. We visit a Russian village where White Russian nobility fled during the revolution, taking their Polish servants with them. Their descendants still live in the distinctive wooden dachas built in Baltic style. Arriving in Istanbul in the afternoon, guests are invited to an elegant dinner in a Venetian-style palace on the Golden Horn considered to be one of the most beautiful residences in Istanbul.

*Sunday, October 13th*

Transfer to airport.

*Registration*

*The fee for the program is \$8,000 per person double occupancy with a \$1,500 single supplement. This includes eight nights luxurious accommodation, most meals, wine with meals, entrée to private collections and to places not generally open to the public, private entrée to museums, private sessions with curators, expert scholars, entrée to the palaces, meals at the homes of leading Turkish families, and designers, extensive scholarly reading material prepared by Arts to Life, cocktail receptions, luxury ground transportation and boat travels. Arts to Life reserves the right to make changes to the schedule. Registration must be accompanied by a deposit of \$2,000. Half of the remaining balance is due on April 5th, 2002 and the balance of payment is due on June 5th, 2002. The balance of payment is due sixty days before the program starts. After 45 days prior to start date, no cancellations will be accepted and no refunds will be made unless the space can be filled. Any cancellation before the cancellation date will be subject to a processing fee of \$250 per person. We advise all persons to take out travel insurance and can provide information upon request. Arts to Life reserves the right to make any changes to the schedule whatsoever, should the need arise. Should any speaker or host withdraw we will endeavor to make a suitable replacement. Arts to Life does not act as a travel agent and any additional reservations at hotel, changes to scheduled airline or extensions of vacation, are to be made by the participants individually.*