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South Cappadocia Tour Underground City And Ihlara Valley

8 hrs 30 min · Private · from Istanbul

Check availability & book online »



At a glance

Start	8:00 AM, 8:30 AM, 9:00 AM, 9:30 AM, 10:00 AM
Duration	8 hrs 30 min
Pickup	Pickup is included from the listed pickup points — choose yours when you book. Pickup is up to 45 minutes before the start time; we confirm your exact pickup time before the tour.
Cancellation	Free cancellation up to 24 hours before the tour starts.

Itinerary

> **Start**

Istanbul
Starts at 8:00 AM, 8:30 AM, 9:00 AM, 9:30 AM · pickup up to 45 min earlier

1 **Goreme Panorama**

Standing at this spectacular vantage point, treat your eyes to an unmatched, expansive vista of the entire Göreme Valley, looking out over an endless sea of ancient rock-cut cave dwellings, towering fairy chimneys, and dramatic volcanic ridges stretching across the horizon. This unusual landscape is the result of a process that began millions of years ago, when volcanic eruptions rained ash across the region, hardening into tuff rock and later covered by a layer of basalt — all sculpted over millennia by wind and water erosion into the surreal world you see before you today. Sunrise and sunset are especially magical here, when the soft light illuminates the landscape and colorful hot air balloons drift silently across the sky. Your expert guide will explain the geological layers that give the landscape its unique multi-colored hues, while a nearby café offers the perfect spot to relax with a fresh Turkish tea and capture unforgettable panoramic photos.

2 **Kaymakli Underground City**

Leaving the expansive vistas of the Göreme Panorama behind, your private tour plunges deep into the fascinating history of Cappadocia as you visit one of the region's legendary Underground Cities (such as Kaymakli or Derinkuyu). Carved thousands of years ago out of soft volcanic tuff rock, first built during the Hittite period and significantly expanded by early Christians hiding from invading armies, these massive subterranean complexes served as multi-level sanctuaries for entire communities seeking safety beneath the earth. Your guide will navigate you through a fascinating maze of low stone tunnels, revealing how ancient families lived completely self-sufficient lives underground. You will explore rock-cut kitchens, ventilation shafts, storage cellars, communal stables, and early churches, while marveling at the massive rolling stone doors — weighing up to 500 kilograms — used to seal off the complex from outside dangers, making it an unforgettable journey into ancient ingenuity.

3 **Ihlara**

Leaving the subterranean wonders of the underground city behind, your private tour transitions into the breathtaking natural beauty of the Ihlara Valley. This magnificent 14-kilometer-long volcanic canyon was carved over millennia by the Melendiz River, with walls rising up to 150 meters high, creating a lush green oasis hidden within the arid Cappadocian plains. Descend into the heart of the canyon via more than 300 stone steps for a peaceful walk alongside the rushing river, shaded by towering volcanic cliffs. Your expert guide will lead you to over 100 ancient Byzantine cave churches carved into the cliff walls between the 4th and 13th centuries. Highlights include the remarkable A?açalt? Church — also known as Daniel's Church — featuring vivid frescoes of the Ascension, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and the Dormition of the Virgin, painted in a unique Eastern and Persian-influenced style rarely seen elsewhere in Cappadocia.

4

Belis?rma

After exploring the lush trails and ancient cave churches of the Ihlara Valley, it is time to relax and recharge with a memorable dining experience in the charming riverside village of Belis?rma, nestled right in the heart of the canyon. Here, you will enjoy a delicious, authentic Turkish lunch at one of the valley's famous riverside restaurants — rustic wooden platforms built just a foot or two above the rushing currents of the Melendiz River, where you can sit with your feet almost touching the water. Savor fresh local specialties including alabal?k (fresh river trout), gözleme (traditional Turkish flatbread), lentil soup, and traditional mezes, all while soaking in the soothing sounds of flowing water and the dramatic canyon views surrounding you.

5

Selime Monastery

After enjoying a wonderful, relaxed lunch in the riverside village of Belisirma, your private tour continues down the canyon to the spectacular Selime Monastery. As the largest rock-cut religious structure in the entire Cappadocia region, this massive 13th-century Byzantine cathedral and monastic complex is a true architectural marvel carved directly into the towering volcanic cliffside. Your expert guide will lead you as you climb up through ancient, wind-swept stone passageways to explore giant columned halls, a historic missionary school, living quarters, stables, and a massive kitchen blackened by ancient fires. You will marvel at the sheer scale of the rock-cut rooms and learn about its dual history as both a sacred spiritual sanctuary and a fortified caravan stop (caravanserai) along the historic Silk Road.

6

Pigeon Valley

After exploring the towering heights and historical rock-cut chambers of Selime Monastery, the journey concludes at the scenic beauty of Pigeon Valley (Güvercinlik Vadisi). Stretching between Göreme and Uçhisar, this spectacular green valley is renowned for the thousands of historic pigeon houses (columbaria) carved directly into the soft volcanic cliffs. Your expert guide will explain how generations of local farmers painstakingly created these multi-tiered dovecotes and collected the birds' droppings as nutrient-rich fertilizer for Cappadocia's vineyards and orchards. As the golden afternoon sun bathes the white cliffs in warm light, you can stroll around the viewpoint, admire the magnificent panorama with Uçhisar Castle rising in the distance, and capture final postcard-perfect photographs to complete your magical journey through Cappadocia.

7

Cappadocia

After a day filled with dramatic canyon hikes, ancient history, and spectacular panoramic views, your unforgettable journey through the highlights of Southern Cappadocia comes to a close. Your private vehicle will comfortably drive you back through the scenic landscape, dropping you off directly at your hotel with memories and photos to last a lifetime.

o

Drop-off

Back in Istanbul
About 8 hrs 30 min in total

For reference only – the order and timings can change on the day. Your confirmed details come with your booking.

What's included

+ Air-conditioned Vehicle
+ Private transportation
+ Expert guide
+ Pick up and Drop off
+ Lunch
+ Entrance fees

Not included

- Tips & Gratuities

Know before you go

- Infant seats available
- Public transportation is nearby
- Stroller / pram accessible

Custom pickup & drop-off

We can arrange a custom pickup and drop-off location. Pickup and drop-off at most downtown hotels and the cruise terminal are free. Pickup or drop-off at the airport, or outside the city limits, costs extra – contact us to arrange airport pickup and drop-off.

Contact us for airport pickup »

Rated 4.6 out of 5 by 794 travelers **Read reviews ›**

Ready to book?

Pick your date online: theatlantictours.com/tour/south-cappadocia-underground-city-ihlara-valle...

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