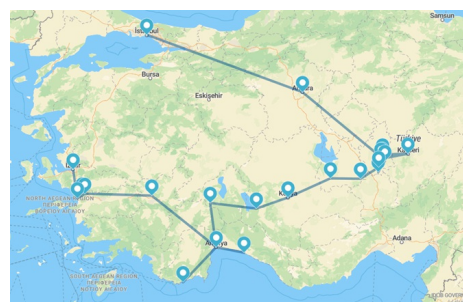




Turkey, 16 Days · Tailor-made by car

## The Grand Route of Turkey

Commanding a strategic position, between two continents and three seas, there stands a country whose present is enriched by a long and imperial past. With the fusion of Asian and European cultures, physically divided by the Bosphorus Strait, and lapped by the Black, Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, Turkey is proud of its history reflected by the legacy of great civilisations, but keeps a keen eye towards an open and promising future. Join us and discover the heritage and culture of this nation through its main cities: its capital, Ankara, with its Hitita museum and the Mausoleum of Atatürk, father of the Republic; Istanbul, with its magical palaces, mosques and bazaars and its legacy of ancient Byzantium, later Constantinople; and Izmir, the Pearl of the Aegean and birthplace of the great Homer. A tour that ends in the incredible Cappadocia, with a fairytale landscape like no other in the world and where nature has been especially generous. You'll also get to see Pamukkale and its famous cotton pools and waterfalls; the ancient Simena, with the mystery of a city now submerged underwater; and Ephesus, one of the best-preserved ancient cities of the Mediterranean basin. And, of course, the surreal coincidence of discovering Demre, origin of the story of Santa Claus, and Meryemana, said to be the location of the Virgin Mary's house. A journey of unforgettable memories...



ARCHAEOLOGICAL

**Departure date:** Departures from June 2026 till May 2027

**From:** Cork, Shannon, Dublin

### Travel details

#### DAY 1 · CITY OF ORIGIN - ISTANBUL

Flight departure from the city of origin to Istanbul. Arrival at airport and transfer to hotel in Istanbul. You can take advantage of today to get an initial insight into incredible city with a vibrant nightlife, where you can feel an atmosphere of tradition mixed with the different cultures that tourism brings. You'll find countless restaurants where you can savour typical food. Turkish cuisine is very diverse. End the day cross-legged on a rug sipping a Turkish coffee or tea with a hookah pipe inhaling herbs of multiple flavours and aromas. Overnight stay in Istanbul.

## DAY 2 · ISTANBUL

Day spent exploring this fabulous city. Its Old Town cherishes some extraordinary religious buildings, such as Hagia Sophia, a former Greek Orthodox basilica, later an imperial mosque, and now a museum. Hagia Sophia was a church for 916 years and a mosque for 477 years, until being converted into a museum in 1936. And don't miss the city's two wonderful mosques. Süleymaniye is the largest, with its magnificent blue domes, and stands in a complex of 70,000 square metres. It was built in the 16th century and the original mosque was destroyed by fire in the year 1660. It was rebuilt, but misfortune in the form of fire hit it again in the First World War. In 1956, it was fully rebuilt again. The Blue Mosque (aka the Sultan Ahmed Mosque), built on the site of the Great Palace of Constantinople, features six minarets the same number as at the Kaaba Mosque in Mecca. The sultan was criticised for this, so a seventh minaret was built at Kaaba to make it different. The interior of this imposing building is a partly covered with more than 20,000 handmade ceramic tiles. The Topkapi Palace retains all the splendour of the sultans' lavish lifestyle. Make sure you visit Istanbul's bazaars, especially the Grand Bazaar, where you can buy all the souvenirs you'd ever want, because there are wonderful handmade products and imitations of international labels at really low prices. Also stop by the Spice Bazaar, a kaleidoscope of colours and scents that you'll always remember. As well as spices to season delicious culinary creations, you can find teas of all flavours under the sun. Afterwards, stroll through the elegant neighbourhood of Pera, unwind with a classic Turkish bath at one of the city's hammams, or visit the churches and the legendary walls of Byzantium... For dinner, you'll find an array of options in the city centre, all with mouthwatering menus. The most typical dishes are soup, pita bread, salad and kebab. Overnight stay in Istanbul.

## DAY 3 · ISTANBUL (OPTIONAL FERRY TRIP ALONG THE BOSPHORUS STRAIT AND THE GOLDEN HORN)

Day at your leisure to continue exploring the city and its surroundings. Taking the ferry across the Bosphorus is an unforgettable experience. We wholeheartedly recommend crossing the waters of the 30-kilometre strait that divides the city into two parts, joining the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea and physically separating Asia from Europe. Some of the boats have become floating restaurants, where you can enjoy a fantastic dinner. You can also sail around the Golden Horn, a historic estuary located at the entrance to the strait and where the construction is planned for a bridge that was designed by Leonardo Da Vinci way back in 1502. (Note: Boat trips not included). There are many tours available, all at very affordable prices. You usually get picked up at your hotel and there are options with or without food for just over 10 euros. On the tour, you'll get the chance to see several palaces, such as Beylerbeyi, Ciragan, Dolmabahçe and the Rumeli Hisar fortress. Two bridges span the strait: the Bosphorus, to the south, and the Fatih Sultan Mehmet, to the north. Short cruises last an hour and a half, but you can also opt for a three-hour trip out to the town of Bogaz Iskelesi and have lunch at one of its restaurants. There's also the option of night cruises, when a magical aura eclipses a lit-up Istanbul showing off her majestic culture-rich buildings. Overnight stay in Istanbul.

## DAY 4 · ISTANBUL - ANKARA

At the prearranged time, transfer to airport and flight to Ankara. Arrival and rental car pick-up. Head to the capital of the country, Turkey's second largest city, where tradition and modernity fuse together. There's lots of life both day and night. Ankara is an important cultural hub, venue for several international festivals dedicated to cinema, art, childhood... The centre, packed with shops, is very lively. You can take a stroll through its old town (Hisar), dotted with numerous landmarks and historic buildings with Byzantine, Roman and Ottoman remains. There are some outstanding mosques that are well worth visiting. Their profiles, with minarets that defy the sky, are mind-blowing. Yeni Cami (aka the New Mosque), made of stone from Ankara, is one of the most stunning. It'll be easy to find a good restaurant serving typical Turkish dishes and some wine from the region, famous for its vineyards. Overnight stay in Ankara.

## ● DAY 5 · ANKARA - CAPPADOCIA

After breakfast, tour of Ankara, with a major highlight being the Mausoleum of Atatürk, founder of the Democratic Republic of Turkey. It's a majestic building perched on a hill that fuses ancient and modern architectural styles. (Note: Admission not included. It's open every day, except on Mondays). Also very interesting is the fabulous Museum of Anatolian Civilisations, housing some unique collections and located in a former bazaar at the entrance to Ankara Castle. If you want to delve further into this culture, there are many more museums you can visit: the Ethnography Museum, the State Museum of Painting and Sculpture, the War of Independence Museum, or the Natural History... Midday departure to Hattusas, two and a half hours from Ankara, to see the ancient Hittite capital, surrounded by a six-kilometre wall and in a fantastic rugged setting. Nearby, in Yazilikaya, is a wonderful rock sanctuary with the famous reliefs of Hittite deities. Then head south to Kayseri, 2 hours and 45 minutes by car, to spend the night in Cappadocia, a place that seems to have been plucked out of a fairytale. Try the local yoghurt drink (ayran) and a kunefe, a dessert made with cheese and shredded Kadayif dough steeped in sweet syrup. Overnight stay in the Cappadocia region.

## ● DAY 6 · CAPPADOCIA (OPTIONAL VISIT TO KAYSERI - AVANOS - ZELVE - GÖREME - UCHISAR)

Full day to visit Cappadocia, a fabulous region of lunar landscapes, which are the result of volcanic activity from millions of years ago. This area of Central Anatolia boasts a geological formation like no other in the world and is the cradle of valuable historical, cultural and natural heritage, so much so that it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985. Rain, wind, rivers and temperature variations have contributed to an erosion that has sculpted out fascinating scenarios. (Note: Thanks to the freedom of your rental car, you can leisurely explore this magnificent region at your own pace. We've prepared a couple of itineraries so you can tailor them to wherever you choose to stay. If you have time during your stay in Cappadocia, we suggest having a go at the many activities available in the area, such as a hot air balloon flight. The views of this region from above are truly spectacular). Then back on the road! A good starting point could be in Avanos, on the banks of the Red River, famous for its pottery. Just ten minutes away is the Zelve Valley, an open-air museum. There are three valleys with impressive cave dwellings. The absence of vegetation in the first valley gives off an image that evokes another planet, perhaps Mars, due to its reddish tones. That's why it's called the Red Valley. Here there are several churches, but they don't have frescoes as you can see in Göreme, because its inhabitants are said to be against the images. Zelve was inhabited until the mid-twentieth century, when the government ordered its evacuation due to the risk of the caves collapsing. Onward journey to the Göreme Valley, an open-air museum with the well-known rock churches decorated with frescoes. It's located just twelve minutes away, in the National Park of the same name, the most famous in Cappadocia. This site was the settlement of Christians in the 3rd and 4th centuries, who founded several monasteries excavated in the rock as artificial caves which later, in the 11th and 12th centuries, were decorated with surprising frescoes. Some of these caves are still inhabited and have even been converted into boutique hotels. You can visit the Church of the Sandal, with hollows in the ground that resemble footprints; the Dark Church, with very well-preserved frescoes thanks to the absence of light, and the churches of the Serpent and the Apple, with all their wonderful paintings. Also the so-called Monastery of the Nuns, with remains of four churches in its interior, and the chapels of Saint Basil and Saint Barbara. However, one of its most spectacular corners is Love Valley, where the 'fairy chimneys' stand, a true marvel of nature. Ten minutes away by car is another place of interest, Uchisar, a citadel with cave dwellings but especially famous for its Kale, a structure known as Uchisar Castle, which crowns a rock outcrop shaped like two triangular peaks. In this area, make sure you try the stewed meats in ceramic bowls. Return to hotel. Overnight stay in the Cappadocia region.

## ● DAY 7 · CAPPADOCIA (OPTIONAL VISIT TO MUSTAFAPASA - SOGANLI - DERINKUYU - KAYMAKLI - IHLARA)

Today can also be spent discovering the many attractions of Cappadocia. Head southwards to Mustafapasa, twenty-five minutes away, a stunning village with typical houses in the purest Greek style. After this stop, continue further south and fifty minutes later you'll get to the Soganli Valley, famous for its rock churches containing frescoes from the 9th to 13th centuries. Next on the route are the fabulous underground cities of Derinkuyu and Kaymakli, about forty minutes away, which at the peak of their splendour could house more than 30,000 people at a time. The city of Kaymakli has nine underground levels, of which four can be visited. Stables, bakeries, water wells and even temples can be seen inside. Fifty minutes away is Ihlara Valley, a surprising gorge fourteen kilometres long and a hundred metres deep where you'll find ancient cave churches. There are more than 60 churches here carved into the stone. Return to hotel. Overnight stay in the Cappadocia region.

## DAY 8 · CAPPADOCIA (SULTANHANI - KONYA)

Our suggestion for today is to continue discovering this fascinating region. You can start the day off by heading to Sultanhanı. This place is home to the largest caravanserai in Anatolia, which stretches over 4,500 square metres and was commissioned by the Sultan. Caravanserais were roadside inns for merchants, soldiers and pilgrims. This one was the most important on the famous thirteenth-century Silk Road, a trade route between Asia and Europe. Its purpose was to ensure the safety of travellers, hence its fortress-like construction with soaring towers, thick walls and just two entrance gates. It's now located inside a town, but occupies a third of it. A lunchtime menu is offered inside the caravanserai. After this fascinating visit, head back on the road to Konya, an hour and a half away. This is a holy city; a destination of pilgrimages and centre of Sufi mysticism with the enigmatic dervishes. To find out more, a visit to the Mevlana Museum is a riveting experience. Near the museum, on Saturday nights there's a free dervish show with typical religious dances. Overnight stay in Konya.

## DAY 9 · KONYA - BEYSEHIR - ISPARTA - ANTALYA

There's quite a bit of driving ahead today, so we recommend setting off early. The first destination will be Beyşehir, an hour and a quarter away, where you can visit its spectacular mosque. Then it's time to venture into a beautiful region of lakes and mountains until you reach Antalya, about four hours away, where you'll set up base for the next couple of days. During the journey, you'll come across fabulous landscapes and enchanting villages, such as Isparta, famous for its production of rose water and its rugs, and a well-known place of pilgrimage, where there are some interesting mosques. Continue on the road to Antalya, perched upon a cliff on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey. Before arriving, about forty kilometres outside the city, you can make a brief stop in Termesö, an ancient city with the remains of an agora and a theatre. And then you get to today's destination, Antalya, which the founder of the Republic defined as "the most beautiful place in the world". Here there are countless mosques, churches, madrasas and hammams. Stroll around the port and the old town (Kaleiçi), brimming with historical buildings and guarded by two minarets. The restoration of Kaleiçi earned it an Golden Apple award, akin to an Oscar in the world of tourism. In fact, this is a very touristy and lively town, where many fairs and festivals are held. The old quarter is packed with hotels, bars, restaurants and shops. Access is restricted to traffic, except for residents and hotel guests, many of whom have free parking. The typical dish of Antalya is the piyaz, made with tahini (crushed sesame seeds), garlic, walnuts and cooked white beans. You can also try out the appetiser known as tirmis, a local speciality made from boiled lupin beans. Overnight stay in Antalya.

## DAY 10 · ANTALYA - PERGE - ASPENDOS - SIDE - ANTALYA

Enjoy the sunrise in this welcoming city, and if you want to further explore its culture and history, then pop into the Archaeological Museum of Antalya before setting off on a road trip that will bring you back to this city at dusk. Only twenty-five minutes away is Perge, a Greco-Roman city, famous for its ancient stadium and column-lined streets. The ruins straddle two hills, with an amphitheatre on one and an acropolis on another. Legend has it that the city was built by three heroes of Troy. Just half an hour away is Aspendos, site of a very well-preserved second-century amphitheatre. You can then drive for an hour over to Side, a coastal resort with a beautiful old town, stunning beaches and the Temple of Athena, a truly privileged place to admire the sunset. If you prefer to make the most of your time to further explore the area, we suggest an optional excursion inland, setting off from Aspendos towards the Koprulu Canyon National Park, an hour and a half away, and then rounding off the afternoon in Side, after another hour on the road. It has a wonderful natural environment with waterfalls, where you can have a go at rafting. After enjoying the last few hours of the day in Side, set off for Antalya, an hour's drive away. Overnight stay in Antalya.

## ● DAY 11 · ANTALYA - KEKOVA BAY - DEMRE - PHASELIS - ANTALYA (OPTIONAL BOAT TRIP TO KEKOVA ISLAND)

Early morning departure to Demre, 2 hours and 40 minutes away. Driving along the coast is a true pleasure, skirting cliffs with steps that lead down to rocky coves lapped by turquoise waters. You can park on the road and head down to the waterfront. Demre is famous for its St Nicholas Church, origin of the Santa Claus story, and very close to the town of Myra, with its Lycian tombs reminiscent of a miniature Petra. Then, set off towards Kekova Bay, three and a half hours away. If you fancy, you can hop on a boat (ticket not included) over to the uninhabited island of Kekova (just 4.5 square kilometres in area) to visit the magical Lycian ruins of a now sunken city and the stone coffins of the ancient Simena. You have two options: charter a guided trip from Demre, with bus transfer, lunch and cruise (all day), or continue in your rental car to the quaint harbour of Uçagiz Kekova, another 50 minutes away, and catch the boat there. (Note: you also have the option to charter a private boat for a couple of hours. There's parking in the harbour, which you'll have to pay when you leave). This island, of turquoise waters and unspoilt nature, was home to three ancient towns: Simena, Teimussa and Tersane. Simena was submerged in the second century following an earthquake. It attracts many visitors, but you can't dive around the underwater ruins without a permit. You can climb up to the fortress, if the heat isn't too much, or simply wander around the maze-like streets, full of cute shops. And, of course, don't miss the famous sarcophagus that juts out over the sea. Back on the mainland, and en route back to Antalya, stop off at Demre and visit its St Nicholas Church, origin of the Santa Claus story. Round the day off in Phaselis, an ancient city nestled in a stunning location, surrounded by pine trees and heavenly beaches. Return to hotel and overnight stay in Antalya.

## ● DAY 12 · ANTALYA - PAMUKKALE

After breakfast, you can pay a visit to Termessos, an ancient fortress city seemingly hanging off the mountains way above Antalya. You can then head over to Pamukkale, three hours away. Here you'll find the Cotton Castle (the literal translation of Pamukkale from Turkish), a site of jaw-dropping natural beauty. You'll find calcium-rich formations where thermal waters have forged out a series of natural pools on stepped terraces of white travertine rock. The water comes from seventeen springs and is high in calcium and bicarbonate. Every second, 250 litres of water spurt out of these springs. This is one of Turkey's iconic tourist attractions and also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Nearby are the fascinating ruins of the Roman city of Hierapolis, an ancient spa town founded in 190 BC. You can visit its theatre and a necropolis with sarcophagi, as well as its thermal pool famous for its Roman columns that were submerged after an earthquake. Overnight stay in Pamukkale.

## ● DAY 13 · PAMUKKALE - APHRODISIAS - SELCUK

Get up early and take the opportunity to bathe in the thermal pools of Pamukkale without too many crowds. This area usually gets quite busy as the day goes on. But the experience will be unforgettable. Then stop off to visit Aphrodisias, 1 hour and 20 minutes away. This is an ancient Roman city that was named after the Greek goddess of Love. It is considered one of the most beautiful archaeological sites in the whole country. In the afternoon, drive over to Selcuk, 2 hours and 20 minutes away, where you'll be spending the night. Here you can admire ruins from three periods of the town's history: the Temple of Artemis, the Isa Bey Mosque, and the Ottoman castle. Overnight stay in Selcuk.

## ● DAY 14 · SELCUK - MERYEMANA - EPHEBUS - SIRINCE - KUSADASI

More time to explore this fascinating area. In Selcuk, there's a great museum and a basilica where Saint John is buried. It was constructed by Justinian I in the 6th century and stands over the believed burial site of John the Apostle. In his heyday, pilgrims arriving in Ephesus believed that the dust around the church was "manna" and had miraculous healing properties. Nearby, in Meryemana, is what's believed to be the house of the Virgin Mary, where John the Apostle took her after the crucifixion of Christ, fleeing from the persecution of Jerusalem. Many Catholics consider this humble stone house the place where the Virgin Mary spent her final years. Several popes have visited the shrine, as in 1896 Pope Leo XIII decreed it a monument for Christians. We don't know if this is scientifically correct, but the building is definitely very old! There's no evidence of its apostolic dating, but there is of its later construction as a small Byzantine church of the thirteenth century. And then back on the road. Awaiting you is Ephesus, one of the most beautiful towns in the ancient world and a major highlight of this trip. Attractions include the Agora, the Odeon, the Fountain of Trajan, the Library of Celsius, the Theatre and the ruins of the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and the first to be destroyed. End the day by strolling through the charming mountain village of Sirince, just fifteen minutes away. And then drive a further forty minutes to today's final destination. Overnight stay in Kusadasi.

## ● DAY 15 · KUSADASI - IZMIR

Spend the morning exploring Kusadasi, a port town on the Turkish Aegean coast that is fast becoming one of the go-to resorts for anyone in search of sunny beaches, historical monuments, a lively nightlife and some great retail therapy. Then, set off to Izmir, less than an hour and a half's drive away. This is the third largest city in Turkey and the second busiest port in the country. The Turkish army led by Atatürk entered the city on 9 September 1922, ending more than three years of Greek occupation. Also known as the Pearl of the Aegean or Beautiful Izmir, it is currently the most westernised and modern city in the country. Something else also makes it special: it was the birthplace of the great poet Homer, author of The Iliad and The Odyssey. Make sure you visit the ruins of the Kadifekale Castle, perched on a hill of the same name (also known as Pagus), built during the reign of Alexander the Great. There are many more attractions in this fascinating city: Saint Polycarp Church, one of the seven churches of the Apocalypse, restored in 1620; Hisar Mosque, built in the sixteenth century; the Clock Tower, in Konak Square; the Agora, a market located in the Namazgah neighbourhood, built under the rule of Alexander the Great and later reconstructed by Marcus Aurelius after an earthquake; and the Kemeralti Market, where you can buy jewellery and accessories, as well as traditional foods, including the dried figs and raisins that have made Izmir famous. It's also worth taking a stroll through several of the city's neighbourhoods: the Jewish district of Asansör, which has a 51-metre lift that links the upper and lower streets; Havra Sokak, also Jewish, with original buildings and synagogues, as well as pedestrian streets packed with restaurants; and Alsancak, with traditional Turkish houses converted into bars and coffee shops. Round the day off with a delicious typical dinner in one of these vibrant neighbourhoods. Overnight stay in Izmir.

## ● DAY 16 · IZMIR- CITY OF ORIGIN

Arrival at the airport with enough time to drop off your rental car and flight back to the city of origin.

Arrival. End of the trip and our services.

## Your trip includes

### Your trip includes

- |   |   |                                       |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| ✓ Return flight.                        | ✓ Transfer from the airport to the hotel in Istanbul. | ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Istanbul. |
| ✓ Selected meal plan in Istanbul.       | ✓ Transfer from the hotel in Istanbul to the airport. |                                       |
| ✓ Flight from Istanbul to Ankara.       | ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Ankara.                   | ✓ Selected meal plan in Ankara.       |
| ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Cappadocia. | ✓ Selected meal plan in Cappadocia.                   |                                       |
| ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Konya.      | ✓ Selected meal plan in Konya.                        | ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Antalya.  |

- ✓ Selected meal plan in Antalya.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Pamukkale.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Kusadasi.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Smyrna.
- ✓ Amount of the supplement for collection and return of the vehicle in a different office.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Pamukkale.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Selcuk.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Kusadasi.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Smyrna.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Selcuk.
- ✓ Rent-a-car.

### Your trip doesn't include

- ✗ Electronic Visa to enter in Turkey.
- ✗ Hot air balloon flight over Cappadocia.
- ✗ Boat trip to the island of Kekova.
- ✗ Possible toll charges.
- ✗ Ferry trip along the Bosphorus Strait and/or the Golden Horn.
- ✗ Insolvency protection.

## Destinations Visited

Istanbul



Ankara



Cappadocia



Kayseri/Kayseri Province



Avanos/Nevşehir Province



Göreme/Nevşehir Province



Uçhisar/Nevşehir Province



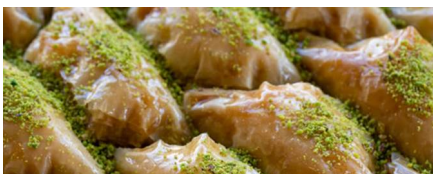
Mustafapaşa/Nevşehir



Derinkuyu/Nevşehir



Kaymaklı/Nevşehir Province



Ihlara/Aksaray Province



Sultanhanı/Aksaray Province





Konya



Isparta/Isparta Province



Side



Pamukkale



Şirince/Izmir



Smyrna



Beyşehir/Konya Province



Antalya



Kekovaa



Selcuk



Kusadasi





## Important remarks

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- Istanbul has an excellent multimodal transport network, with buses, minibuses, metrobus, underground trains, trams, funiculars, cable cars, ferries and taxis. Most means of transport are interconnected, which is great for hopping on and off. The best idea is to buy the rechargeable Istanbulkart card for public transport, with a range of multi-trip options. It's valid for up to five people and includes interesting discounts. There are numerous recharging points and the cost per trip is very low.
- The Grand Bazaar and the Egyptian Bazaar will remain closed on religious holidays, Sundays and national holidays. Please consult.
- Driving through Turkey: 1. In Turkey, the roads are in a good condition and you won't come across too much traffic, so driving is pretty straightforward. 2. Pay attention in rural areas, as you might be sharing the road with horse-drawn carts and animals on the loose. 3. The minimum age to rent a car is 21. 4. The police usually control street parking and charge directly for it.
- Triple rooms in Europe are generally rooms with twin beds or a double, in which a folding bed is installed to accommodate the third person. Due to the inconvenience this causes, we advise against using this option as far the possible.
- Check-in time at the hotel on the day of arrival depends on each establishment, but in no case will it be before 3:00 p.m., unless otherwise indicated.
- The proposed excursions and tours for each day are purely suggestions, as you can tailor the trip to suit your times, tastes and needs.
- A credit card is considered a guarantee, so sometimes you will need one for check-in at hotels.
- Hotels usually have cots available. Otherwise, babies will have to share a bed with an adult.
- To pick up your rental car, you'll need a credit (not debit) card in the name of the person who made the booking, who must also be the named driver of the vehicle.
- Consult the necessary documentation to enter the destinations visited and for transit in the countries where air stopovers are made.