

TÜRKIYE

TEXTILES & HANDCRAFTS

31 August - 15 September 2026

retreat|recreate is delighted to offer this exciting 16 day/15 night women's tour exploring Türkiye through the lens of its textiles and handcrafts.

Visit specialist textile museums, artisan workshops, handcraft villages, women's co-operatives, a women's handcraft market, colourful bazaars and iconic sites.

Participate in **FIVE** hands-on handcraft activities: paint your own Turkish tile, learn carpet knotting, wrapping and weaving techniques with a designer to create a traditional motif, enjoy an oya embroidery and lacework workshop with talented women artisans in their village, dive into traditional felting during a workshop with a master felt-maker and dyer, and create your own marbled silk scarf using ancient ebru techniques. Observe skilled artisans as they paint Iznik tiles, produce and weave silk, knot carpets, weave kilims, dye yarn, crochet lace trims, weave peshtemal (Turkish towels), embroider village scarves and create beautiful ceramics.

Engage with local artisans and craftspeople, be inspired by traditional designs and motifs, marvel at superb craftsmanship, be in awe of ancient sites, incredible architecture and stunning landscapes and experience wonderful traditional culture and generous Turkish hospitality. Plus much, much more!

This exciting textile adventure is not to be missed!
We'd love you to join us!

www.retreatrecreate.com

ITINERARY

as at JUNE 2026



Day 1

Monday 31 August

ISTANBUL

The Haze Hotel

Hoşgeldiniz! Welcome to Istanbul, the only city in the world to straddle two continents. It's no surprise that this vast metropolis is home to a beguiling mix of different cultures and traditions, blending the influences of both east and west!

Upon your arrival at either of Istanbul's two airports you will be collected and transferred to our starting point hotel.

To begin our adventure, we'll gather for a **welcome meeting at 1pm** at our hotel. You'll be introduced to your fellow travellers, retreat|recreate host and local tour leader.

Together we'll take a guided walk of the Old City, including a visit to the iconic **Blue Mosque** with its 6 minarets and interior adorned with more than 20,000 handmade Iznik tiles. A visit to the **Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts** will provide a wonderful introduction to Türkiye's incredible arts and culture through its superb displays of ancient ceramics, carpets, calligraphy, costumes and artefacts.

This evening, we'll enjoy our **first group dinner** to kick-start our amazing trip ahead!

Meals: Dinner



Day 2

Tuesday 1 September

ISTANBUL

The Haze Hotel

This morning we'll set out on a guided **walking tour** exploring the **artisan ateliers and shops** of the vibrant **Bazaar District of the Old City**.

The hans (warehouses) and courtyards of the **15th Century Grand Bazaar** have hosted hundreds of artisan guilds over the centuries. Wandering through the maze of backstreets we'll see a treasure trove of **artisan studios, handcrafted goods** and the **best crafts and supplies** on offer including: fibre arts (yarns, felting, embroidery), carpets, kilims, jewellery-making, shoe-making, ceramics, vintage and antique clothing and jewellery, wood-carving, hammam (Turkish bath) items, calligraphy, ebru (marbling), traditional foods (sweets, spices, mezes, cheese etc) and more!

During our afternoon **workshop** we'll visit the studio of a delightful family to learn about **traditional Turkish tile painting** and each create our own hand painted plate - the perfect souvenir to take home.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 3 Wednesday 2 September



Day 4 Thursday 3 September



Day 5 Friday 4 September



Day 6 Saturday 5 September



Day 7 Sunday 6 September

ISTANBUL The Haze Hotel

Hagia Sofia is certainly one of Istanbul's most incredible monuments. It was commissioned by a great Byzantine Emperor and consecrated as a church in 537, converted to a mosque in 1453, declared a museum in 1935 and reclaimed as a mosque in 2020. We'll take a tour through this beautiful masterpiece to learn about its innovative architecture, religious significance and rich 1500+ year history.

Afterwards we'll visit the showroom of **Jennifer's Hamam**, a business which supports **traditional weavers** to continue to earn their living by producing **high quality peshtemal (Turkish towels)** which are famous, both locally and abroad.

Türkiye is also famous for its carpets and kilims. This afternoon we'll meet a visionary designer whose passion is to blend traditional techniques, skilled artistry, timeless design and contemporary aesthetics. We'll learn about traditional **carpet hand knotting, kilim weaving, and soumak (wrapping) techniques** and explore **traditional motifs** and their meanings. **During our weaving workshop we'll each create a small panel with a traditional motif.**

Meals: Breakfast

BURSA Celik Palas

Leaving Istanbul, we'll travel by commuter ferry and private coach to the city of **Iznik**, famous for the production of beautiful tiles and ceramics with unique thermal properties.

We'll visit the **Iznik Foundation** for a tour of the complex and to learn more about the history and techniques involved in the making process. At the Foundation's ateliers, we will meet the talented designers - all are women - and watch them at work.

After lunch we will continue travelling to the city of Bursa. Since early Ottoman times, **Bursa** has been Türkiye's centre for raw silk trade and its silk textile industry.

This evening, we are privileged to be guests at a **Dervish Lodge** where followers of the Sufi poet, philosopher, mystic and religious leader, Mevlana (also known as Rumi) will perform the mesmerising whirling, sema ritual. The ritual was devised based on Mevlana's belief that music and dance could induce a state of love and divine union.

Meals: Breakfast

BURSA Celik Palas

To gain an insight into Ottoman culture, we'll visit a small, informative, and charming **ethnographic museum**. The fabulous collection of traditional Ottoman costumes including bridalwear, shoes, socks, jewellery, household items and crafts is housed in a 14th century Ottoman Madrasa (educational institution).

At an interesting **silk production centre and museum** we'll see silk being extracted from cocoons, spun and then woven into spectacular carpets and fabric.

We'll visit the beautiful, must-see **Yesil Camii and its famous tombs**, also known as the Green Mosque due to the stunning green interior tiles.

Built in 1490, **Koza Han** was where silk cocoons were once sold. The upper level of the 'han' is now home to numerous shops selling silk products in myriad colours and textures. We'll have some free time to browse the shops.

As we explore Bursa's fascinating warren of streets with our local guide, we'll see old Ottoman hans (warehouses), shops selling local produce and tea shops filled with locals.

Meals: Breakfast

SELÇUK Saint John Hotel

Today's adventure will take us into Izmir province. We'll stop for lunch in a picturesque village with restored historic buildings and cobbled streets.

Nearby is a **women's handicrafts market** where all of the stalls are run by women and sell products made by women. We'll take time to browse the stalls, connect with local women and see (and possibly purchase) a range of textiles, knitted socks, embroidery, needle lace and hand-made items.

Afterwards, we'll learn about the art of **oya**, a term which refers generally to handmade trimming. **Oya** is made with a crochet hook, needle, shuttle or hairpin. Contemporary crocheted oya is often used as jewellery. During our workshop, we're privileged to be tutored by the local women artisans. We'll each **try our hand at traditional Turkish lacework and embroidery**. You're sure to be impressed at the talent and dexterity of the oya artisans. They make it look easy!

In the late afternoon we'll continue to Selcuk where we'll check into our boutique hotel for the next two nights.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

SELÇUK Saint John Hotel

Today we'll explore the ruins of the ancient city of **Ephesus**, once the capital city of Roman Asia Minor and one of the best-preserved Greco-Roman classical cities in the world. We'll tour around the amphitheatre, stroll the marble streets once walked by Cleopatra and Mark Antony, and marvel at the gymnasium, baths, and beautifully restored **Library of Celsus**.

We'll also stop at the ruins of the **Temple of Artemis**, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

After lunch we'll visit at an organisation which provides training and employment for local women while also protecting and developing the ancient tradition of carpet weaving. We'll have the opportunity to watch the women at work, learn about the materials used for dyeing the yarn and see some stunning carpets and kilims.

We'll return to our hotel for the evening.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 8 **Monday 7 September** **Day 9** **Tuesday 8 September** **Day 10** **Wednesday 9 September** **Day 11** **Thursday 10 September** **Day 12** **Friday 11 September**

PAMUKKALE **Anya Resort** **KAS** **Kaş Mahal** **KAS** **Kaş Mahal** **ANTALYA** **Aspen Hotel** **KONYA** **Think Hotel**

Leaving Selcuk early, we'll drive towards Pamukkale. On the way, we'll stop for lunch in a small **weaving village** - one of the few towns in Türkiye where wooden hand looms are still used. Many of the homes function as weaving workshops where every family member has a job to do. Men are often the **weavers**, while women **spin** yarn, **embroider** and **create lacework trims**. We'll visit the **atelier of a master weaver** of **peshtemal (Turkish towels)** and learn about his life as the creator of beautiful hand-loomed textiles.

At **Pamukkale** (which translates as 'cotton castle'), the natural thermal springs have a high calcium content. As they flow down the mountain-side, stunning pools and terraces are created. Nearby is the fascinating ancient city of **Hieropolis** which was founded by the King of Pergamon in 190 BCE.

There's the **option (at extra cost TRY 600 per person) to take a dip in the thermal waters with supposed healing properties of Cleopatra's pool** (a gift from Mark Antony) before we enjoy the sunset from the **magical travertines**.

Today we drive to **Kas**. The southernmost of all the Turkish turquoise coast resorts is known for its picturesque whitewashed buildings covered in bougainvillea, cobbled streets and the ruins of Lycian tombs.

Following our afternoon orientation walking tour, we'll have free time to head to the beach, relax, sit back with a pomegranate cocktail or explore the **shops** selling handmade wares, **peshtemal**, **carpets**, **embroidery**, **ceramics** and even some vintage traditional clothing.

The town's ancient theatre is the perfect spot from which to view a spectacular Mediterranean sunset.

We take a short drive to a quaint fishing and farming coastal village before boarding our gulet (traditional wooden boat). During our day on the **Mediterranean**, we'll cruise around islands and peninsulas, have the chance to swim and snorkel in crystal clear, turquoise waters, feast on a fabulous home-made lunch and drift past the **sunken ruins of an ancient city**.

Our hosts are people of the Mediterranean. Hailing from a small coastal village, they married young, bought a boat and went fishing!

In addition to being adept at steering the gulet and cooking delicious local cuisine, our hostess is also accomplished with a needle and thread. She'll demonstrate her needle and lace work (oya) skills and show us some of the traditional **embroidered scarves**, **crocheted trims and motifs** for which her village is famous.

At the end of the day, we'll return to Kas for the evening.

This morning we'll travel by road to **Antalya**, the jewel in the Turkish Mediterranean.

After settling in to our hotel in the late afternoon, there's the option to take a brief orientation walk. The cobblestone streets of the old city stretch outward from **Hadrian's Gate** and are lined with handcraft and carpet shops, cafes and restaurants. This picturesque city is framed by the marina on one side and the Taurus Mountains on the other.

*Optional: Visit Antalya Archaeological Museum (at extra cost). **Highly recommended.** This impressive museum is one of the best in the country and houses exquisite statues and artefacts from the civilisations of Lycia, Perge, Rome, Byzantium and more. Anyone with an interest in history and archaeology will find plenty to admire. The ability of the sculptors to recreate lifelike faces and musculature and the drape of fabric from stone so accurately is mind blowing!*

Leaving the coast and crossing the Taurus Mountains, we'll make an early start and travel to **Konya**. The city is closely linked with the whirling dervish sect of Islam. The conical caps (sikke) worn by the Semazins are made of felted camel hair.

Felt making (kece) is one of the oldest crafts, dating back to the 4th and 5th centuries BCE. In Türkiye, felt was traditionally used to make tents, shepherds' cloaks, saddle cloths, saddle bags, rugs, prayer mats, shoes and caps.

Today we are privileged to meet **one of Turkey's master dyers and felt makers** and his equally talented wife. We'll spend the day in the studio of Mehmet and Theresa Girgiç, learn about traditional felting techniques, enjoy a **hands-on felting workshop** and make our own felted souvenir (a bag, hat or similar) – a very special memento of our time in Konya and Türkiye.

We'll also join the family for a traditional lunch. Weather permitting, we'll dine with them in their superb, beautiful, productive garden.

Meals: Breakfast Meals: Breakfast Meals: Breakfast, Lunch Meals: Breakfast Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 13 Saturday 12 September

CAPPADOCIA Empire Cave

The **Mevlana Museum complex** houses original manuscripts, artefacts and the tomb of Celaleddin Rumi (Mevlana). We'll visit the museum to learn more about the 13th century founder of the whirling dervish sect of Sufism.

This afternoon's journey takes us into the heart of **Cappadocia**, one of Türkiye's must-see destinations. The soaring rock formations, unique rippled landscapes, splendid walking trails, mysterious underground cities and rock-cut churches are unlike any other. In times of peace, the people in this region lived on the land, but in times of war or persecution they took to living underground.

Optional: visit Goreme Open Air Museum, Kaymakli Underground city and/or experience an evening of Traditional Turkish dances with dinner (all at additional cost).

Meals: Breakfast



Day 14 Sunday 13 September

CAPPADOCIA Empire Cave

Optional: sunrise hot air balloon flight over Cappadocia's majestic, spectacular landscape (approx. EUR300 per person (TBC) & subject to weather conditions).

We'll take a walk to explore some of Cappadocia's distinctive rock formations, caves, and pigeonaries.

Local women in this area are known for crafting **kitre dolls** as a source of income. We'll watch as some of the women demonstrate their skills and create their Anatolian rag dolls from local fabric.

For this evening's dinner we are privileged to be welcomed into the home of **a local family**. Our hosts have been able to provide better opportunities and education for their family by cooking and sharing delicious Anatolian dishes with visitors. We'll **enjoy a delicious home-cooked meal with our hosts**.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 15 Monday 14 September

CAPPADOCIA Empire Cave

After breakfast we'll take a short drive to **Avanos** where ceramics have been made for hundreds of years using mud collected from the Red River. We'll **visit an atelier, watch a master potter at work** and learn more about the history of ceramics in this area.

Ebru (marbling) is believed to have been invented in the thirteenth century in Turkistan. The process and techniques developed over time, and Türkiye remained the centre of marbling for many centuries. During our **ebru workshop** this afternoon, we'll experiment with colour and design and each produce our own beautiful, marbled, silk scarf to take home.

Carpets and kilims are the passion of a New Zealand woman who has lived in Goreme for the last 30 years. She prides herself on hand-selecting each item and paying fair prices to suppliers. At her beautiful shop **we'll benefit from her vast knowledge and learn more about Türkiye's superb carpets and kilims**.

Our **final dinner** together will be an opportunity to share our favourite memories, take stock of our textile souvenirs and say farewell to each other and this very special part of the world.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 16 Tuesday 15 September

CAPPADOCIA - ISTANBUL

This morning our group transfer takes us to one of the region's airports for our group flight back to Istanbul.

Our tour concludes upon arrival at Istanbul airport at approximately 14:30. Our flight arrival time at Istanbul International Airport (IST) is yet to be confirmed as tickets may only be booked within 60 days of departure.

If you intend to fly homeward or onward from Istanbul airport (IST) on 15 September, your flight should not depart before 20:00 hours.

Should you require additional post-tour accommodation at our Istanbul hotel and/or airport transfers we'd be happy to assist you with this (subject to availability and at additional cost). Please email your requests by completing the Travel Details Form.

Meals: Breakfast

Inclusions:

- 16 days/15 nights accommodation in hotels
- Arrival airport transfer
- 15 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners (drinks not included)
- Transport: private coach, boat, commuter ferry, domestic flight, taxi
- Hands-on handcraft workshops (**in red**) and activities as per the itinerary
- Entrance to museums, galleries, studios and excursion venues as per the itinerary
- The tour will be fully escorted by retreat|recreate host, Susan Keeble and our delightful local guide, Kübra Kagöz

Exclusions:

- International airfares
- Travel insurance
- Early check in or late check out
- Departure transfers
- Personal spending (souvenirs, phone, laundry, hammam etc)
- Meals and drinks not specified in the itinerary
- Activities marked as optional (**in blue**).
- Tips. Please refer to the 'Money' section of the Trip Notes regarding tips and the group tipping kitty. We'll establish the group tipping kitty on day 1 with a contribution of ~EUR200 per person. Our local guide will tip from the kitty on behalf of the group as we travel.

Notes:

- Türkiye is often misjudged when it comes to the cost of goods and services and prices can vary considerably between regions. Budgets are a personal choice but please bear in mind that **you should NOT expect Türkiye to be a budget destination**.
- Please refer to the **Trip Notes** and **Booking Conditions** for more details.