Toms Kusadasi Cruise Port Guide: Turkey

You can explore the port area via a self-guided walking tour, but you'll need transportation (and I recommend a tour guide to explain the history) to visit the House of Virgin Mary, Ephesus, Terrace Houses, Basilica of St John, Priene, Miletus, Didyma, and Bafa Lake.

Compared with Istanbul's residential population of 8.8 million, Kusadasi is a small resort town of 65,000. The population grows to a half million in the summer because it is a very popular vacation and tourist area.

The port provides access to seaside resorts and historic sites. At the port, you'll find shops, restaurants, a bookstore, and a nice bazaar offering carpets, jewelry, souvenirs, etc.

Unless shopping is your priority, visit tourist sites in the morning and spend the last part of your day exploring the port area.

There are many tourist sites, the most famous of which is the ancient city of Ephesus, the second largest city in the world in Roman times. There is a lot more to see and do than you can accomplish in one visit. This guide covers ten tourist sites to help you “plan ahead” for your visit.

This website is excellent to help plan your vacation http://www.kusadasi.biz/info/introduction
Kusadasi has two piers (photo above). The cruise terminal has an internet cafe and international phone service on the second floor. Scala Nuova is an upscale shopping center inside the port, next to cruise ships. It's has 50 stores, a few restaurants, and a nightclub. Products include apparel, beauty, books & music, coffee, pastry, accessory gifts, home decoration, carpets, jewelry, leather, optical, photo, watches, sports & swimwear.

A reference landmark for the port area is Club Caravanserail Hotel. It's an impressive structure. See the photo gallery of the hotel at this website [http://www.kusadasihotelcaravanserail.com/galeri.html](http://www.kusadasihotelcaravanserail.com/galeri.html) The main shopping areas are all around the hotel shown as shown in the photo above.

I prefer shopping in Kusadasi rather than the Istanbul Grand Bazaar because Kusadasi is more open, less crowded, and less claustrophobic. And, unlike Istanbul shopping 1.5 miles from the ship, Kusadasi shopping is very close to the ship. We were amazed by the selection and had not seen some of the products elsewhere.
Scala Nuova is a shopping complex with over 50 stores inside the port. Ephesus taxi stands are inside the port. On the other side of the port entrance, you'll find every conceivable type of store on the streets around the Caravanserail Hotel. And there are many restaurants.

One of the many jewelry and carpet stores in Scala Nuova shopping center (photo below-left)

A real sleeping cat outside the store window with fake sleeping cats and dogs (photo-right)

Use this street address for the port **Liman Caddesi, 16, Kuşadası, Aydın, Turkey** or use 37.86137,27.255331 coordinates in Google Maps to pinpoint the port gate entrance.
As you approach the Caravanserail Hotel (photo below-left) you'll see signs pointing to turn right for the Grand Bazaar and Orient Bazaar.

The framed tapestries are very attractive (photo right)

The Grand Bazaar and Orient Bazaar are covered for protection from the sun and weather (photo above).

Shops offer an incredible range of products such as this wood marquetry chess set (photo right).

This website lists stores in Kusadasi by type of product with a description of products, photos, email contact, and address for the store. It can be useful to plan your shopping. See [http://www.kusadasishopshops.com/](http://www.kusadasishopshops.com/)

Most shops cater to tourists and accept Euros, US$, credit cards, etc. For information on Turkish Lira, see my port guide for Istanbul.
Many stores feature leather jackets and handbags (photos below- left). There is also a wide section of ceramics (photo below right). The wide variety of products for sale should cover almost any conceivable product you may be interested in. We enjoy walking the shopping area in Kusadasi and always find a special product to purchase.

NOTE: The priority for most cruisers is to leave the port early to visit world famous historic sites returning in the afternoon to explore and shop in Kusadasi.
Self-Guided Touring

Kusadasi is good for self-guided touring near the port. But I do not recommend self-guided touring of most tourist sites outside of Kusadasi. It is not simply a matter of transportation to the sites, many of which are only a half hour from the port, think of what you are going to do when you get to the historic sites.

Ancient ruins have little or no signage so it can be difficult to find your way. It's not obvious which artifacts are important; you'll want an explanation of the site. Ephesus is huge. To see the entire site, you'll want to be dropped off at the Magnesia Gate to walk 1.5 miles to the bus pick-up point. A guide will help you find the way, point out important artifacts, and tell the story of the rich history of the sites.

Ship's Excursion Vs. Private Tours

We've toured twice in Kusadasi area on ship's excursions. The tours were fine. We also toured twice with a private company, Helliantus Anadolu Tours. It's important that the tour company and guide are licensed to conduct tours. This is an outstanding, licensed tour company run by Fatma Acar. I highly recommend it.

Mrs. Fatma Acar
Helliantus Anadolu Tours
GSM: +90 533 249 58 39
TEL: +90 256 612 70 34
FAX: +90 256 614 58 99
fatmaacarguide@hotmail.com
fatmaacar@ttmail.com
www.ephesuskusadasi.com

Kusadasi Area Tourist Sites

I have organized tourist sites by location; namely, North of Kusadasi and South of Kusadasi.

It is difficult to find historic sites on Google Maps, because ancient ruins do NOT have a current street address. I've listed Google Map coordinates for all the historic sites. Enter the coordinates in the search string for Google Maps. For example, the map below shows the coordinates for the Magnesia Gate entrance to Ephesus. The down pointing green arrow is the exact location of the gate map.

Ephesus is 24 Km (14.4 mi) and 32 minutes from the cruise ship dock. It is close to the city of Selcuk.

Tour buses usually drop passengers off at the Magnesia Gate entrance. This is at the side of the road across from a souvenir stand.

The bus parking lot and pick up has souvenir stands, snack food, etc. at the North end of Ephesus.

Use 37.935465,27.345357 as the search string in Google Maps. A down-pointing green arrow shows the gate location. (See map at left).

I have also included aerial photos of some of the sites, to show relative position of important ruins and the walking distances.
Tourist Sites North of Kusadasi

Ephesus is about a 32 minute ride from the ship. The map below is for orientation. A detailed map is on the next page.

A “typical” full day tour leaves the ship at 8 AM and drives 35 minutes to the first stop:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>“TYPICAL” Time at Site</th>
<th>Google Map Coordinates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kusadasi cruise ship port gate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37.86137,27.255331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>House of Virgin Mary</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>37.910245,27.3351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ephesus – drop off at Magnesia Gate</td>
<td>2 hours + 1 hour Terrace Houses</td>
<td>37.935465,27.345357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bus pick up at North end of site</td>
<td>37.944265,27.341194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Temple of Artemis</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>37.949798,27.363988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Basilica of St. John</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>37.952493,27.367426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Selcuk Archeological Museum</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>37.948732,27.367716</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sirince Village is an optional tour with 1-2 hours at the site. Search for “Sirince, Turkey” on Google Maps.

An easy way to use these map coordinates is to open this port guide in one window and Google Maps in a second window on your computer. Copy and paste the coordinates from this port guide into Google Maps to see the precise location of the tourist site i.e., a green arrow. Adjust the map scale and move it as desired.
Detailed Map (below) Showing Tourist Sites Near Ephesus

For more guides, see www.TomsPortGuides.com
House of the Virgin Mary

Tour buses often stop here first for one hour and then continue on to Ephesus. It's 4.9 Km (3 miles) and a 7 minute ride from the House of the Virgin Mary to the Ephesus Magnesia Gate.

The site is attractive and peaceful with many trees, flowers, and plants. Mass is celebrated outside, next to the House of the Virgin Mary. The shrine is an important pilgrimage for a million people a year. Muslims visit the shrine because the Mother of Jesus is the most frequently mentioned woman in the Koran. When you visit the site, look for water from the spring. It is believed to have curative properties.

The main Christian tradition has held that Mary ended her earthly life in Jerusalem. But that view changed after a bedridden German nun, Blessed Emmerich, had a vision of the location of the house of Mary - high on a rocky hill above Ephesus, partially hidden in a grove of trees. Her vision was published in "The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary" in 1824. Since that time, Catholics and Muslims began making pilgrimages to the House of the Virgin Mary near Ephesus. The nun's vision is also supported because the Gospel says that, from the cross, Jesus entrusted his mother to the Apostle John's care. It is generally accepted that John lived and died near Ephesus and that he would not have traveled without Mary to fulfill his responsibility to care for her. Hence, the belief is that Mary spent the last nine years of her life near Ephesus.

Photo above left – House of Virgin Mary

Photo above right – inside House

Photo left – water from the spring is believed to have curative properties. People write their wishes for cures and other help from Mary and post it on the wall near the spring water.
Aerial Photo of Ephesus

It's 1.5 mile from the Magnesia Gate to the bus pick-up point. We spent 2 hrs walking the site plus 1 hour at the Terrace Houses. The site is huge and there is a lot to see. You could spend all day exploring Ephesus. The walk is fairly easy, but take care, the surface can be irregular.

Tour buses usually drop you off near the Magnesia Gate at the South end of the site. It is called the “Upper Gate” because you will be walking downhill. If you take a cab or public bus, you might be dropped off at Magnesia Gate. But it is more likely a taxi will drop you off at the large parking lot at the North end of the site. The parking lot (Bus Pick-up exit on the map) is called the “Lower Gate” because it’s at the bottom of the hill.
Ephesus – the Most Popular Tourist Site

Ephesus is world famous for many reasons:

- In Roman times, Ephesus was second in importance and size to Rome. It was capital of Asia Minor with a population of 250,000.
- It was one of the wealthiest cities in Asia Minor with one of the largest ports.
- St. Paul preached at the theater in Ephesus and wrote his letters to the Ephesians.
- Ephesus is one of the Seven Churches of Revelation mentioned in the New Testament Book of Revelation.
- The Ephesus Temple of Artemis (called Diana by Romans) is one of the seven wonders of the world.

I highly recommend the following websites for information on Ephesus:
This website has great photos and descriptive information  http://www.kusadasi.biz/ephesus/intro.html
This website has excellent historical information  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus

Ephesus is a HUGE site. To photograph it from every angle, you'll have to expend considerable energy walking and climbing.

If you want to avoid all that strenuous work, as I do, borrow photos from an energetic photographer like Carol Mills. She climbed to the top of the Odeon small theater to take this photo back toward the Magnesia Gate entrance. Then she was kind enough to give the photo to me. Thanks Carol!

The Terrace/Hillside Houses are 4 floors, but the steps are wide, there are handrails, and there are many landings to stop for photos. The roof is covered to protect the antiques, workers, and visitors from the hot sun. These homes were occupied by elite, wealthy Romans. It is well worth a visit to see these beautiful “museum homes” and witness the restoration process. Imagine how time consuming this work is!

If you're meticulous, patient, and great with puzzles, you might work on the restoration.
Terrace houses are shielded from the sun. Note the large platforms to view the site.

The Library of Celsus
Temple of Artemis
It's 2.8 Km (1.7 miles) and a 7 minute ride from the bus pick-up point at the North end of Ephesus to the Temple of Artemis. It is “billed” as one of the Seven Wonders of the World which sounds nice on a tour itinerary. But there is NOTHING at the Temple of Artemis site except for a single column and a few piles of rocks. Tour buses stop for 15 minutes.
The temple was built in 650 BC, then burned to the ground by an arsonist in 356 BC. The temple was rebuilt. Then it was destroyed by Nero and later by the Goths around 263 BC. It was rebuilt around the 4th century but then abandoned; the marble was removed for other buildings. The site was discovered by British explorers in 1869 who moved the important artifacts to the British Museum.

Basilica of St John (St. Jean Aniti)
It's 1.8 Km (1.1 mile) and a 7 minute ride from Temple of Artemis to the Basilica of St. John.
John, and his brother James, were apostles of Jesus. He is generally regarded as a writer of works of the New Testament, Gospels, Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.
John died of natural causes near Ephesus. In the 6th Century a huge church, the 7th largest in the world, was built at the site believed to hold the tomb of St. John. The church is in the shape of a cross.

Photo of entrance (above left)
Photo of restored walls (above right)
Photo of St John's tomb (left)
These three photos are used with permission of Matthew Long
Editor-in-Chief
www.LandLopers.com
Museum (Ephesus Museum, Selcuk Archaeological Museum)

It's 1500 feet and only a minute ride from Basilica of St John to the museum.

There is no museum at the Ephesus site, although I regard the Terrace/Hillside Houses as museums. Artifacts from Ephesus have been placed in this museum located in Selcuk.

We've been there twice; I like this museum. It's in a nice area with little traffic or noise because the road is closed to vehicles. The museum is small with a good display inside including two different statues of the Goddess Artemis. The courtyard contains partial facades of buildings, statues, a sarcophagus, etc.

Even if you don't know the history of all the objects, you'll find them interesting to view and photograph. Your guide plays an important role at this site calling your attention to fine details and explaining the history. When you are done visiting the museum, you'll find some small shops on the other side of the street.

![Courtyard display at museum](photo above)

Technically, Artemis was a virgin Greek goddess known as a hunter, Apollo's twin, and the Goddess of the Moon.

The Greeks venerated a goddess at Ephesus and associated her with Artemis. There are two theories about this goddess. One is the statue has many breasts to emphasize fertility. Another theory is the protuberances are bull testicles. Bulls were slaughtered on Mother's Day.

This Ephesian Goddess Artemis (photo at right) is famous; her image was on coins minted in Ephesus.

For photos and more information on the museum, see [http://www.sacred-destinations.com/turkey/ephesus-museum.htm](http://www.sacred-destinations.com/turkey/ephesus-museum.htm)
Sirince Village

It's about 30 KM (18 miles) and a 42 minute ride from the ship to Sirince or 8 Km (5 miles) and 15 minutes from the Ephesus Museum in Selcuk. Our tour to Sirince included a stop at the Museum and a ride around the countryside. I think it was a half-day tour.

Şirince is a small, old village settled by the Greeks. It has restaurants, small shops, stalls and mini-bazaars selling all sorts of products, and about 800 houses. The shopping is better in Kusadasi in terms of selection, but the merchants in Sirince are more friendly, less aggressive.

A specialty is locally produced fruit wine in a multitude of flavors. We tasted cherry wines. They are more like desert wines than dinner wines, not the type of wine we like. Although we did not eat in Sirince, friends report the food is good and many tourists recommend the Turkish pancake, Gozleme.

Sirince is not in the same league as the world famous, historic tourist sites. Don't set your expectations too high. It's probably what you would expect of an old village that caters to tourists. It's a pleasant, relaxed, friendly environment to visit, shop, and walk along the streets. And the bus ride is through a scenic area to the village perched along the mountains.

Tour buses sometimes stop at this leather shop on the way back to the ship

Photo above left

Photo above right
Tourist Sites South of Kusadasi

You'll need a full day to visit these sites. I used the “Get Directions” function of Google Maps to create the map below. The name of the site, map coordinates, and travel time between sites is shown below.

Sites shown on the map (left)

A = Cruise port gate, map coordinates 37.86137,27.255331
It's 41 Km 50 minutes to B

B = Priene, map coordinates 37.660144,27.301036
It's 21 Km, 24 minutes to C

C = Miletus, map coordinates 37.529451,27.274911
It's 20 Km, 26 minutes to D

D = Didyma, map coordinates 37.384975,27.256522
It's 33 Km, 38 minutes to E

E = Bafa Lake, map coordinates 37.474858,27.424622

Priene

It's 41 Km (25 miles) and a 50 minute ride from the cruise port.
Note: The site is built on a steep hill. The walk from the parking lot involves some fairly steep stairs without handrails. Take care as there are missing stones on the old stairs. Some of us were huffing and puffing as we ascended the stairs. There is no signage to show you which way to go. You can get turned around.

Priene is one of the best historic sites to view an entire, ancient Greek city. The visible remains date back to the 4th Century BC. The city was divided into 80 blocks with streets evenly spaced and crossing at right angles. The ruins are well preserved. It is obvious the city had been laid out in a grid pattern because you can see remains of building foundations, streets, water, and drainage systems.

The city is built on a steep hill with the Temple of Athena Polias near the top. Five of the original columns still stand. The temple was built by Alexander the Great. The site also has a council chamber, stadiums, markets, temples, etc. The theater is unusual because it has a few seats with arms. Queen Tamara in Royal Seat at Theater (photo right)
Aerial photo of Priene (below). Note the 300 foot scale.

Temple of Athena (above)

Note the steep hills at this site.

Pathways between building ruins

Theater
Miletus (Miletos, Milet)

It's 21 Km (12 miles) and a 24 minute ride from Priene to Miletus. Unlike Priene which is a complex, entire city on a hill, Miletus is on flat land. Miletus could be a good site for self-guided touring. I recommend this website for practical travel tips in Turkey and detailed information on self-guided touring:

http://www.turkeytravelplanner.com/go/Aegean/Ephesus/prien_milet_didim/miletus.html

It's important to note the landscape has changed dramatically over the last 3000 years. Miletus was once connected to the sea via the Meander River. It had four harbors in 1400 BC making it strategically important for commerce. It predates Ephesus as a wealthy, important city. The River silted over by the 6th century closing access to the sea.

Today, the most striking feature is the great theater. It's an easy walk, on level ground, from the tour bus drop off point to the theater. You can't get lost.

This aerial photo (right) shows the site.

Didyma (Didim)
It's 20 Km (12 miles) and 26 minutes from Miletus to Didyma. Didyma is one of my favorite historic sites. It's below street level so you can see the entire site from the entrance as you walk down a flight of stairs. There are many “neat” statues, columns, building facade elements, carved stones, stairs, etc. to view and photograph. If you did some research on the history of this site, it would be perfect for self-guided touring. This website is helpful:

http://www.turkeytravelplanner.com/go/Aegean/Ephesus/prien_milet_didim/didim.html

Didyma has the beautiful 6th century BC temple of Apollo, called Didymaion. It was the largest temple in Ionia, made famous by the oracle ceremonies where priests would predict the future.

The foundation, walls, a few columns, and many parts of the structure are standing today making it easy to envision the original structure.

Unlike most historical sites which are in remote, rural areas, Didyma is located in the city as shown by this aerial photo (left).

One of the first statues you'll see as you enter the site is Medusa. She was a beautiful woman. The myth is that she was seen with Poseidon at Athena's temple. Athena was so angry, she changed Medusa's hair to serpents and disfigured her face so that anyone looking at her face would be turned into stone.

Medusa Photo at right. Don't look into her eyes!
Bafa Lake

It's 33 Km (19.8 miles) and 38 minutes from Didyma to Bafa Lake. We drove past the lake on our scenic ride through the mountains on our way back to the ship.

Thousands of years ago, it was part of the Aegean Sea. When the Meander River silted over and cut the area off from the sea, Bafa Lake was formed as a salt water lake. It's 90 feet deep surrounded by steep mountains. The lake attracts over 250 species of birds and has many types of fish and plants. The National Park draws visitors from around the world for camping, walking, mountain climbing, bird watching, fishing, etc.

US Department of State Travel Advisory

SAFETY AND SECURITY:

There is an overall increase in violence and a continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout Turkey. Terrorist bombings over the past several years – some causing significant numbers of casualties – have hit various targets in Turkey. Some targeted U.S. interests.

CRIME: While the rate of street crime remains relatively low in Turkey, it has increased in large urban centers such as Istanbul and Izmir. In Istanbul, petty street crime is most common in tourist areas such as Taksim Square, Sultanahmet, and in the areas around the Grand Bazaar and Spice (Egyptian) Bazaar.

You should carry a copy of your passport and visa with you and leave your U.S. passport in your hotel safe. Carry only what you need when in these areas. As in other large metropolitan areas throughout the world, common street crimes include pick pocketing, purse snatching, and mugging.

Often the crime is preceded by some sort of diversion such as an argument, a fight, or someone bumping you. Residential crime is an issue in major cities, with criminals targeting ground floor apartments for theft. Do not be complacent regarding your personal safety. You should use same precautions you would in the United States.

The embassy and consulates have received reports of crimes against women. Female travelers are urged to exercise caution and use common sense. Female travelers should request a female attendant in the "mixed" Turkish baths, or hamams. Incidents involving the use of "date rape" drugs (Nembutal and Benzodiazepine) have been reported.

Do not buy counterfeit or pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal to bring back into the United States, you may be breaking local law too.

For the full text, see this website http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1046.
User Feedback Is Welcome

Goal
My guides are designed to help you plan a great cruise vacation by providing information such as where the ship docks, location of tourist sites, public transit, walking tour maps, things to see and do, travel issues unique to the port, etc. Knowledge of ports is important when planning shore excursions because you have to make many decisions and commitments long before your ship docks. I believe the information in this guide is accurate, however you are responsible to verify accuracy of the information that you use to plan your vacation.

Information on cruise ports frequently changes such as bus routes, admission fees to sites, rental car locations, etc. Cruise Critic is the best source for up-to-date, detailed information on travel details for shore excursions, reviews of cruise ships, etc. There are many knowledgeable people on Cruise Critic who are willing to share their expertise and travel experience. I highly recommend www.CruiseCritic.com; it's free to join.

Why feedback is important
User feedback helps me make corrections and improve the format and content in my quest to produce the “ultimate” port guides. I welcome offers to collaborate with me or provide materials for use in my guides.

PLEASE Help “spread the word” about my website
The only negative feedback I get is, “I wish I knew about your port guides before my vacation”. Please tell your friends and post a reference to my guides and website on the blogs. To receive email notification when new guides are available, send your email address to me at TomsPortGuides@gmail.com

Copyright Notice & Terms and Conditions for Use of My Guides
My port guides and everything on my website www.TomsPortGuides.com is copyrighted by Thomas Sheridan with all rights reserved, and protected by international copyright laws.

PERMITTED USE: Personal, non-commercial use of my port guides and/or material from my website.
I allow individuals to take my guides apart for personal, non-commercial use. Many cruisers carry a map or a few pages from my guide on a shore excursion. That's OK. I also allow people to post my guides on websites they set up for fellow travelers to share information on shore excursions such as the websites set up by Cruise Critic members for the Roll Calls. That's OK. My guides are for use and enjoyment of individual travelers.

PROHIBITED USE of my port guides and/or material from my website.
NO person, company, organization, website, etc. is permitted to use material from my website for a commercial purpose, to sell, require a membership to download my port guides, or use my copyrighted material for a commercial purpose.

NO person, company, organization, website, etc. is permitted to distribute excerpts from my guides or material from my website as electronic, digital, or paper copies. My Port Guides must be kept intact, as downloaded from my website, with this copyright notice.

NO Cruise Ship employee, representative, contractor, port lecturer, etc. is permitted to distribute excerpts from my guides or material from my website as electronic, digital or paper copies. My Port Guides must be kept intact, as downloaded from my website, with this copyright notice. A blatant example of violation of my copyright was a cruise ship docked in Copenhagen where the shore excursion desk personnel removed maps from my guide, removed my name as the copyright owner, and copied/distributed my maps.

Fortunately, a friend of mine on that ship complained to the purser and the ship stopped violating my copyright.

If there is any question about use of my guides, contact me at TomsPortGuides@Gmail.com

Tom Sheridan