Istanbul

Sufi Music Concert and Whirling Dervishes Ceremony



Tour code: Ib-TR-029

Duration: 1 day

From €89.00 / person

Starting point: İstanbul

Languages: English

Overview

Experience the mystical world of Mevlana at the historic Hodjapasha Cultural Center in Istanbul. Discover the centuries-old Mevlevi Sema Ceremony, accompanied by traditional Sufi music, graceful movements, and a deeply spiritual atmosphere. An unforgettable journey into Türkiye’s rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

Your itinerary

Sufi Music Concert and Whirling Dervishes Ceremony

Experience the gravity and mystery of the sema. Mevlevi Dervishes perform the whirling ceremony with traditional orchestra at the 15th century structure, Hodjapasha Culture Center, restored former Ottoman hamam in Sirkeci, held each evening at 19:30 (7.30pm) since 2008. The full performance lasts roughly 1 hour.

The sema is not a show, but a religious observance. In the Islamic world the 13th century enigmatic sufi poet Jelaluddin Rumi, better known as Mevlana, is all but considered a Saint. Rumi was born in the Balkh Province in the eastern part of the former Persian Empire or present-day Afghanistan and is now one of the world's most read poets.

Everything about Rumi is absolute magic, from the story of his life to his superhuman ability of remaining in constant touch with the flow of intense creative energy for more than two decades. Followers of the great mystic are world-famous for their unique whirling dance, through which Mevlâna believed that union with God was possible. These whirling dervishes gather in Konya (former lodge), Turkey between 10 and 17 December to dance and pay homage to their master in the city where he is buried.

For Muslims and non-Muslims alike, the main reason is to understand the spritual guidance. It’s called instrospection or ‘turning inwards’. Sufism is the inner path, mystical belief and practice to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God.

An excellent exhibit in the foyer outlines in English and Turkish, the 800-year history of poet and spiritual leader of Rumi. Enjoy a drink and some Turkish delight from the bar. Take a seat in the main hall to watch your 1-hour show, consisting of a 5-minutes video introduction, 10-minutes Sufi music concert followed by a 40-minutes Mevlevi sema dance. Performed by a troupe of semazens (or whirling dervishes) – a fact that helped the dance land a spot on UNESCO’s Intangible World Heritage List. The centuries-old ceremony is a spiritual performance featuring graceful choreography, Persian chanting and traditional Turkish music, played by the on-site orchestra.

Rumi has a famous quotation: ‘Come, come, whoever you are. Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. It doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times. Come, yet again , come , come’.

Hint: Before or after watching the performance, take a look at Hocapasa Avenue. Just south of Sirkeci Station. From the station, walk south uphill on Ankara Caddesi for two short block and turn left to find the culture center and a cluster of small, simple, pleasant restaurants serving tasty

meals at moderate prices. There are artfully-decorated, ready-food steam table in some restaurants, variety of dishes prepared in advance of mealtime and kept warm in steam tables. It’s the Turkish version of a self-service cafeteria, and it’s a culinary wonder. Enter, take a tray, select the dishes you like, pay at the cash register, then dine at your leisure. Great place for a fast, easy, delicious, filling, nutritious, reasonable meal. In fine weather, tables and chairs are set out in the small square and nearby streets. The open-air dining and old-time neighborhood atmosphere are pleasant.

Good to know

The ceremony begins at 19:30 and lasts approximately one hour. Guests are kindly requested to arrive early and respect the peaceful and spiritual atmosphere throughout the ceremony.

Plan your journey

Contact our team for dates, availability and a personalised quote.

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