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Lectures & Events

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explore and enjoy the magnificent ruins of this ancient city, ending up in the grand theater, where we imagined the crowds praising (the rather hideous looking) Diana of the Ephesians (Acts 19). The other sites were less crowded, though no less evocative, and we all enjoyed the ruins of the ancient markets of Smyrna with their stone arches and the Acropolis of Pergamum towering high above the plains.

Turkey’s varied landscape was always interesting and often stunning, no more so than among the stark geological wonders found in Cappadocia. The highlands of central Turkey are not just home to geographical wonders, however. There we found evidence of centuries of Christians living in the harshest of environments, with homes, churches, and monasteries hewn out of volcanic rock formations. The frescoes in these rock-hewn churches were far simpler and less elegant than the fine urban mosaics we saw in Istanbul, but the devotion was no less obvious. Even in the Byzantine period, Christians in these regions lived precarious lives and were often forced to find refuge in large underground cities as advancing armies crossed the region heading for wealthier areas in the west. Although the Christian population of Turkey today is miniscule, the magnificent cathedral churches and humble rock-hewn monastery bear witness to centuries of earnest devotion in this other holy land. It was this personal aspect of the history of Christianity lived in rural, unstable, and harsh conditions that struck us, just as much as the steady decline and loss of plain and precious truths that we, as Latter-day Saints, see in the development of the creeds formulated in this remarkable country.

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