

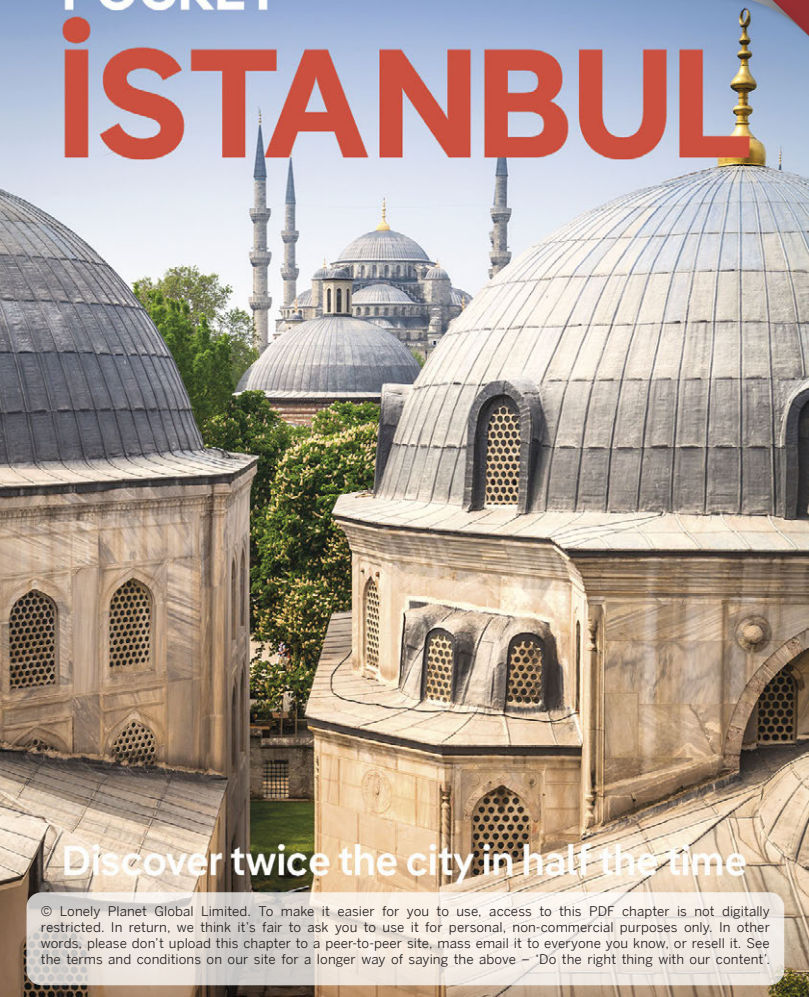
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POCKET

İSTANBUL

PDF



Discover twice the city in half the time

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POCKET
İSTANBUL

Virginia Maxwell

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The Journey Begins Here

Why do I love İstanbul? Let me count the ways. I love the locals and their endless supply of hospitality and humour. I love the fact that as I walk down Old City streets layers of a millennia-old history unfold before me. I love listening to *müezzins* duelling from their minarets and viewing the world's most beautiful skyline from the deck of a commuter ferry. I love the restaurants, bars and tea gardens. But most of all, I love that here extraordinary cultural experiences lie around every corner.



Virginia Maxwell

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Based in Australia, Virginia has authored Lonely Planet guidebooks to numerous global destinations. A regular visitor to Türkiye, she has worked on multiple editions of the *İstanbul* and *Türkiye* guidebooks and written about İstanbul for a host of newspapers and magazines.







THE BEST

Food Experiences

In İstanbul, there are tempting eating options for every budget, predilection and occasion – all made memorable by the use of the fresh seasonal produce that is one of Türkiye's greatest bounties.



Feast like a sultan at a Sultanahmet restaurant specialising in dishes first served in the **imperial palace kitchens**. (p66)

Scoff *lahmacun* (Arabic-style pizza; pictured above left) served from stone ovens on Güneşlibahçe Sokak in the food-focused **Kadıköy Çarşı**. (p166)

Enjoy a treat at **Karaköy Güllüoğlu**, serving the city's best baklava (pictured above right) since 1949. (p128)



Savour the creations of Modern Turkish chefs at Beyoğlu's pre-eminent fine-dining establishments, **Neolokal** and **Aheste**. (p125)

Choose delectable dishes from regional Türkiye at acclaimed **Çiya Sofrası**, the best *lokanta* in the city. (p170)

Make your choice from the lavish meze spreads on offer at Beyoğlu's famed **meyhanes** (taverns). (p129)

Right: Çiya Sofrası (p170)



ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ

Çiya
SOFRASI

FRASI

ΜΕΛΕΤΗ
ΤΡΑΠΕΖΑΣ



THE BEST

Drinking Experiences

On weekends and at the end of the working day, İstanbullus love to make their way to a bar or cafe to relax and catch up with friends. Many of these venues benefit from their atmospheric or picturesque settings.



Watch the ferries dock and depart from an *iskele* (dock) at one of the city's **vapur kafes** (ferry cafes) – our favourites are in Beşiktaş, Moda and Karaköy. (p156)

Join groups of young İstanbullus catching up with friends at the bars on Sofyalı Sokak in **Asmalımescit**. (p124)

Marvel at the stupendous view available from the summer-only **Mikla** terrace bar in Beyoğlu. (p123)



Head to **Hasırcılar Caddesi** near the Spice Bazaar to source an expertly made Turkish coffee (pictured above) at Kuru Kahveci or A'la Khave Evi. (p85)

Follow the stream of İstanbul University students heading to the **rooftop cafes** near the Süleymaniye Mosque after their lectures. (p89)

Relax in literary surrounds at one of Beyoğlu's **bookshop cafes**. (p122)

Right: Rooftop cafes





THE BEST

Shopping Experiences

The locals have perfected the practice of shopping over centuries, and many visitors to the city are quick to follow their lead, especially when it comes to the wide range of goods made by local artisans.



Make your way to **Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir** in Eminönü, a business famed for its delectable *lokum* (Turkish delight) since 1777. There are multiple other branches. (p85; pictured above)

Source wearable art designed by a local fashion designer at a **Beyoğlu boutique**. (p127)

Snaffle a designer souvenir from one of the **homeware boutiques** in Tophane and Çukurcuma. (p132)



Indulge in luxury shopping at the upmarket department stores and boutiques in the ritzy suburb of **Nişantaşı**. (p132)

Buy hand-loomed bath towels and other quality textiles from the stores in the **Arasta Bazaar** beneath the Blue Mosque. (p67; pictured above)

Practise your bargaining skills when purchasing a rug or carpet in the **Grand Bazaar**. (p74)

Right: Grand Bazaar (p74)





Spice Bazaar (p82)

THE BEST

Market & Bazaar Experiences

Visiting the city's historic bazaars is a signature tourist experience, but joining locals doing their weekly shopping in vibrant street markets is equally satisfying.

Devote a few hours to exploring the network of walkways and *hans* (caravanserais) that make up the fabled **Grand Bazaar**. (p74)

Source Türkiye's best fresh produce at the bustling **Kadıköy Çarşısı**, where shops and stalls sell delicacies from around the country. (p166)

Set aside Wednesday morning to join local shoppers at the sprawling weekly **Çarşamba Pazarı**, a street market held in the streets immediately north of the Fatih Mosque. (p106)

Head to the Sunday **street market** in the working-class district of Tarlabaşı near Beyoğlu, where noise levels are high and prices low. (p122)

Follow your nose to Eminönü's **Spice Bazaar** and the adjacent shopping strip of Hasırçılar Caddesi. (p82)



THE BEST

Tea Garden Experiences

İstanbullular prize the art of *keyif* (quiet relaxation), and practise it at every possible opportunity. *Çay bahçesisi* (tea gardens) are *keyif* central, offering pockets of tranquillity off the city's noisy and crowded streets.

Enjoy a çay in the tranquil courtyard of **Caferağa Medresesi**. (p63)

Linger over a tea or coffee at the waterfront **Bebek Kahve**. (p158)

Take a *teleferik* (cable car) to reach the panoramic terrace of **Pierre Loti Cafe**. (p103)

Smell the spring wisteria on the terrace of the **Beltur Kandil Kafe**. (p47)

Soak up Blue Mosque views from the outdoor **Derviş Cafe & Restaurant**. (p59)

Sit under shady trees and admire sea views at **Moda Çay Bahçesi**. (p169)

Pierre Loti Cafe (p103)





Istanbul Modern (p114)

THE BEST

Art Gallery Experiences

Both the Byzantine emperors and Ottoman sultans were patrons of the arts; these days Türkiye's privately owned banks and corporations support the city's vibrant visual-arts culture.

Devote at least half a day to viewing exhibitions at the city's pre-eminent art museum, **Istanbul Modern**. (p114)

Contemplate cutting-edge visual art at **ARTER**, a gallery occupying an architecturally notable building in Dolapdere, near Taksim Square. (p133)

Admire world-class collections of Orientalist paintings and Ottoman ceramics as well as stimulating

temporary exhibitions at the **Pera Museum** in Beyoğlu. (p116)

Visit **Feshane Artistanbul**, a cultural centre and exhibition space set in a recently restored fes factory on the Golden Horn. (p103)

Cruise up the Bosphorus for shows of traditional and contemporary art at the **Sakıp Sabancı Museum**, a historic waterside villa with a contemporary purpose-built annexe. (p160)



THE BEST

Museum Experiences

The rich history and culture of Constantinople and the extended Byzantine and Ottoman empires is showcased in the city's impressive museums, which are repositories of priceless artworks and fascinating artefacts.

Admire the antique carpets and rugs in the collection of the **Museum of Turkish & Islamic Arts**. (p57)

Immerse yourself in the quirky **Museum of Innocence**, Orhan Pamuk's ode to mid-20th-century Istanbul. (p118)

View carved sarcophagi from the Royal Necropolis of Sidon in the main

building of the **Istanbul Archaeology Museums**. (p64)

Learn about the city's Sephardic Jews at the **Museum of Turkish Jews** in Galata. (p125)

Pop into the **Sadberk Hanım Museum** in Büyükdere for its collection of ancient and Ottoman artefacts. (p160)

Istanbul Archaeology Museums (p64)





THE BEST

Byzantine Experiences

Known for its charismatic emperors, powerful armies, refined culture and convoluted politics, Byzantium's legacy resonates to this day, especially in the churches, cisterns, castles and monumental structures that still stand in its capital.



Visit the mosaic-adorned upper galleries of **Aya Sofya**. (p52)

Trek to the **Chora Church Building** (Kariye Mosque), home to Byzantine mosaics. (p104; pictured above)

Descend underground to visit **Basilica Cistern** with its watery base and 336 columns. (p60)



Follow in the footsteps of Emperor Justinian and his consort Theodora and visit Küçük Aya Sofya (**Little Aya Sofya**). (p65)

Walk a circuit of the **Hippodrome**, where the Byzantine emperors watched chariots race. (p55; pictured above)

Enjoy a glass of çay in the shadow of the **Aqueduct of Valens** near the Kadınlar Pazarı in Zeyrek. (p104)

Right: Aqueduct of Valens (p104)





THE BEST

Ottoman Experiences

Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II stormed into the city on 29 May 1453, bringing the Byzantine Empire to an end and kick-starting a building spree that lasted over 500 years and bequeathed monuments galore.



Explore the pavilion-studded grounds, opulent Harem complex and gem-filled Treasury at **Topkapı Palace**. (p46; pictured above)

Marvel at the **Süleymaniye Mosque**, at the centre of an intact complex of Ottoman-era buildings. (p80)

Be beguiled by the **Blue Mosque**, a structure with more minarets and pizzazz than any mosque should rightly lay claim to. (p58)



Board the ferry to Üsküdar to visit its imperial mosques, including the architecturally and historically important **Atik Valide Mosque** (p155).

Stare at the decorative excesses of the **Dolmabahçe Palace** on the shore of the Bosphorus. (p150; pictured above)

Head to the Golden Horn district of **Eyüpsultan** (p102) to admire its multiple tombs, mosques and *medreses* (seminaries).

Right: Süleymaniye Mosque (p80)





Ayasofya Hürrem Sultan Hamamı (p66)

THE BEST

Hamam Experiences

Locals have been succumbing to soapy scrubs and relaxing massages in the steam-filled interiors of magnificent hamams (bathhouses) since Ottoman times, and many modern visitors follow suit.

Emulate Haseki Hürrem Sultan, consort of Süleyman the Magnificent, by indulging in a bath experience in the palatial surrounds of the **Ayasofya Hürrem Sultan Hamamı**. (p66)

Enjoy a Turkish bath in one of the city's most historic and attractive hamams, the **Cağaloğlu Hamamı**. (p67)

Trek to the Old City district of Zeyrek for a bath treatment at the restored

Zeyrek Çinili Hamam, gifted to Constantinople by the infamous pirate Barbarossa. (p105)

Visit a modest but lovingly restored neighbourhood bath house, the **Çukurcuma Hamamı**. (p126)

Sign up for a luxury bath treatment at the **Kılıç Ali Paşa Hamamı** in Karaköy, commissioned by a chief admiral of the Ottoman fleet. (p126)



THE BEST

Entertainment Experiences

There's no excuse for boredom in this city, with festivals, nightclubs, cultural performances, music gigs and sporting events some of the many entertainments on offer.

Party at **Babylon Bomonti**, a popular live-music venue and club. (p134)

Join the jazz aficionados at the much-loved **Nardis Jazz Club**. (p131)

Catch a live gig at one of the bar/club hybrids on Kadıköy's **Kadife Sokak** (aka Barlar or Beer Street). (p173)

Dress up for opera or a concert at **Atatürk Cultural Centre**. (p123)

Watch dervishes whirl in the **Hodjapasha Cultural Centre**. (p65)

Attend match day at **Beşiktaş Park**, home of the Beşiktaş Football Club. (p156)

Atatürk Cultural Centre (p123)





Ferry dock, Büyükada (p174)

THE BEST

Ferry Trip Experiences

Climbing aboard one of the city's famous ferries is the quintessential İstanbul experience. Cross-continent trips are hard to beat, but the Bosphorus ferries manage to do so.

Cross from Europe to Asia by sailing to **Kadıköy and Moda** from Eminönü, Karaköy, Kabataş or Beşiktaş. (p163)

named **Golden Horn**, visiting the many historically rich neighbourhoods along its shores. (p98)

Embark on one of the city's signature experiences by sailing the Bosphorus on a **Long Bosphorus Tour**, admiring the many historic *yalıs* (waterfront mansions) along the way. (p142)

Spend a day criss-crossing the continents by exploring the **Bosphorus Suburbs** on commuter ferries. (p139)

Hop on and off the commuter ferry that sails up and down the evocatively

Escape from the city and head to the **Princes' Islands** (Adalar), a beloved summer playground for generations of İstanbullular. (p174)



Best for Kids

Head to **Gülhane Park**, where there is a playground, shady trees, lots of grass and a terrace cafe for parental breaks. (p178)

Press lots of buttons and climb onto many different forms of transport at the **Rahmi M Koç Museum** on the Golden Horn. (p178)

Spot the creepy upside-down Medusa head in the subterranean **Basilica Cistern**. (p60)

Take advantage of the digital exhibition tour guides available for families visiting the **İstanbul Modern**, which include quizzes and the opportunity to create digital artworks. (p184)

Take a ferry to **Moda** for a waterside promenade, a *dondurma* (Turkish ice cream) and a visit to the playground opposite the Moda Çay Bahçesi. (p168)



Best for Free

Learn about Türkiye's fascinating Ottoman bath culture at the **Turkish Hamam Culture Museum** in Beyazıt. (p89)

Visit the magnificent **imperial mosques** built during the Ottoman era, which are open to everyone regardless of their religion. (p88)

Make your way to the **Pera Museum** on Fridays from 6pm to 10pm, when entry is free. On Wednesdays, entry to the gallery and its cinema are free for students. (p116)

Admire tile-lined Imperial **türbes** (tombs) across the city; all are free to enter. (p81)

Plan to explore the European side of the Bosphorus on a Tuesday, when the **Sakıp Sabancı Museum** offers free entry. (p168)



Three Perfect Days

After enjoying a famous Turkish breakfast, it's time to hit the ground running, visiting mosques, museums, markets and the many other top-drawer attractions that this city has to offer.



Kebab stand



DAY ONE

Only Have One Day?

MORNING

Start your day in Sultanahmet Square, visiting **Aya Sofya** (p52) and the **Blue Mosque** (p58). Then move on to **Topkapı Palace** (p46), making sure not to miss its exquisite Harem.

AFTERNOON

Head to the **Grand Bazaar** (p74) and then walk downhill along bustling **Mahmutpaşa Yokuşu** (p84) to visit the **Spice Bazaar** (p82) and **Rüstem Paşa Mosque** (p84; pictured above) at Eminönü. While there, sample a Turkish coffee at **Kuru Kahveci** (p93), the cafe of famous coffee merchant Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi.

EVENING

Cross the Galata Bridge to enjoy an aperitif on the rooftop at **Mikla** (p123) followed by succulent kebabs at **Antiochia** (p136) or **Zübeyir Ocakbaşı** (p136).



DAY TWO

DAY THREE

A Weekend Trip

MORNING

On day two, be at Eminönü's Bosphorus line ferry dock at 10am to board a ferry for the **Long Bosphorus Tour** (p142) and cruise up the iconic waterway. Alight at Sarıyer and take a bus back to Taksim Square, stopping in Emirgan en route to have lunch on the panoramic terrace at **MSA'nin Restoranı** (p160) in the **Sakıp Sabancı Museum** (p160; pictured above).

AFTERNOON

Devote the rest of the afternoon to viewing the Turkish and international artworks at the **İstanbul Modern** (p184) or the Orientalist paintings at the **Pera Museum** (p116).

EVENING

Dine at **Aheste** (p125) or **Neolokal** (p125), both admirable exponents of high-end Modern Turkish cuisine.

A Short Break

MORNING

On day three, board the **Golden Horn ferry** (p98) at Karaköy and cruise up the waterway to monument-rich **Eyüpsultan** (pictured above), where you can follow our **walking tour** (p102).

AFTERNOON

Take the tram back to the Old City and submit to a scrub and lots of steam at a historic hamam – **Ayasofya Hürrem Sultan Hamamı** (p66) and **Cağaloğlu Hamamı** (p67) are both great choices.

EVENING

Spend your final evening in Karaköy, dining on the terraces at **Mürver** (p136) or **Karaköy Lokantası** (p136). Don't have dessert there, though. Instead, stop at **Karaköy Güllüoğlu** (p128) to sample the city's most famous baklava.



If You Have More Time

A few more days will give you a chance to wander off the well-worn tourist trail. Make your first stop the architecturally resplendent **Süleymaniye Mosque** (p80), after which it's worth making the trek to Edirnekapı to view the Byzantine mosaics and frescoes at the **Chora Church building** (aka Kariye Mosque; p104). If it's a Wednesday, stop at the colourful **Çarşamba Pazarı** (p106) on your way.

Also take the opportunity to cross from Europe to Asia, exploring the **Kadıköy**

Çarşı (p166), a vibrant fresh produce market; enjoying a glass of tea at the **Moda Çay Bahçesi** (p169); and visiting historical mosques in **Üsküdar** (p154).

Extra time also opens the opportunity of joining a specialist tour – good options include the **Turkish Coffee Trail walk** (p86) offered by Istanbul Walks, the **Backstreets of the Bazaar Quarter foodie tour** (p87) offered by Culinary Backstreets, or a walk on the Asian side of town guided by **Alternative City Tours** (p170).

Kadıköy Çarşı (p166)





A City Day Trip

Between mid-April and October, the **Princes' Islands** (Adalar; p174) offer a delightful retreat from the city's chaotic street life. Ferries depart from Kabataş, Eminönü or Beşiktaş, sailing across the Sea of Marmara and stopping at four of the nine islands in the group. Spend the first half of the day on the largest island, **Büyükada** (pictured above), where you can walk through the pine forests or swim at one of its beaches. Then take the ferry to the second-largest island, **Heybeliada**, where the streets are lined with pretty 19th-century timber villas. On the return trip, spectacular sunset views over the city skyline are a highlight.



On a Rainy Day

Topkapı Palace, street markets and ferry trips are some obvious examples of sights and activities to avoid when it's raining. Instead, head to Beyoğlu to spend time at the **İstanbul Modern** (p184), which has a convenient and excellent on-site restaurant where visitors can dine after or between viewing the stimulating exhibits. The **Grand Bazaar** (p74) is also a good option, having enough within its walls to keep visitors occupied for hours. Other tempting indoor activities include afternoon tea at the **Pera Palace** (p125; pictured above), a hands-on Turkish cooking class at **Cooking Alaturka** (p67) or an indulgent bath treatment at one of İstanbul's magnificent Ottoman-era **hamams**.



Get Prepared

BOOK AHEAD

Three months before

If you're travelling in spring, autumn or over Christmas, make your hotel booking as far in advance as possible.

Two months before

İstanbul's big-ticket festivals and concerts sell out fast. Book ahead for these and for tours.

One week before

Make restaurant bookings online where possible or ask your hotel to make reservations for you.

Manners Matter

When entering someone's home, remove your shoes unless directed otherwise.

Always remove your shoes before entering a mosque. Women should also cover their heads with a scarf or shawl.

Avoid eating and drinking on the street during daylight hours in Ramazan (Ramadan), when Muslims fast.

Avoid pointing at people with your finger, as this can be considered impolite. The same applies to blowing your nose in public.

Visas & Passports

Although visas are not necessary for some nationalities (including Russia, the UK, the USA, New Zealand and many European nations), many others must obtain a visa before entering Türkiye. Check whether this is neces-

sary at mfa.gov.tr. If you do need a visa, organise this electronically at evisa.gov.tr before arriving.

Your passport must have at least six months' validity remaining, or you may not be admitted into Türkiye.

Things to Know

Hospitality If you invite friends or business contacts to join you at a bar, cafe or restaurant, you will be expected to pay the bill.

Some desserts are interesting Sold in most traditional sweets shops, *tavuk göğsü* is a pudding made with chicken, milk and sugar.

Shoe safety Many visitors choose to carry their shoes in a plastic bag when they visit mosques rather than leaving them on the shoe racks at the door. This is because expensive shoes have been known to go missing while their owners are inside the mosque.

TIPPING

Tipping is the exception rather than the rule.

10%

Restaurants

(unless service charge is included)

unusual

**Bars, pubs,
cafes & simple
eateries**

up to
you

**Tour guides &
drivers**

€1-2

Hotel staff
(per bag for bellboys)

DAILY BUDGET

Budget: Less than €90

- Dorm bed: **from €18**
- Döner wrap: **€5**
- Beer at a neighbourhood bar: **€4**
- Tram, bus or ferry ride: **€0.50**

Midrange: €90–200

- Double room: **from €140**
- Cafe lunch: **€12**
- Kebap dinner with wine: **€35**
- Bosphorus ferry trip: **€3.50**

Top end: More than €200

- Double room: **from €250**
- Gourmet restaurant dinner with wine: **€90**
- Cocktail in a rooftop bar: **€12**
- Hamam experience: **from €50**



Currency
Turkish lira (₺)



Language
Turkish



Time
Eastern European
Time (GMT/UTC
plus three hours).

TIP

BT1976/GETTY IMAGES ©



Sky-high inflation has made the lira extremely volatile in recent years, making stable foreign currencies desirable commodities. Visitors will be able to exchange US dollars or euros for liras at a *döviz bürosu* (exchange office) for good rates.



When to Go

Istanbul is a year-round destination. Bargain hunters may like to visit in high summer or in winter, when accommodation prices are lowest.

Spring and autumn are the best times to visit, as the weather is kind and festivals are in full swing. It can be hot in summer and many locals decamp to the coast for their annual holidays as a result, prompting some businesses (especially clubs) to close for the season. In winter, which can be bone-chillingly cold, weather conditions can cause ferry cancellations.

Ramazan & Ramazan Bayramı

Islamic religious holidays and events are celebrated according to the Muslim lunar Hejira calendar, so their dates change every year. The most important event of the year is the holy month of Ramazan (called Ramadan in other countries), when Muslims fast from dawn until dusk and then sit with friends, family and community members to enjoy *iftar* (the meal that breaks the fast). A three-day festival called Ramazan Bayramı (known as Eid al-Fitr elsewhere) celebrates the completion of Ramazan.

The Major Festivals

May & June: The major event on the city's cultural calendar, the **Istanbul Music Festival** (muzik.iksv.org/en) includes performances of opera, orchestral concerts and chamber recitals.

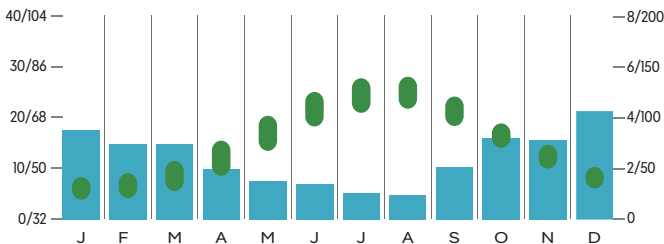
July: Featuring a line-up of Turkish and international musicians, the **Istanbul Jazz Festival** (p130) kicks off its two-week program each year.

Mid-September to mid-November: A major event on the global visual-arts calendar, the **Istanbul Biennale** (biental.iksv.org/en) is staged in venues around the city every two years. After being

Istanbul

Temperature °C/°F

Rainfall inches/mm





İstanbul Tulip Festival

cancelled in 2024 due to controversy surrounding its curation, it will return in 2025 with a new director and approach.

Outdoor Events

April: The tulip (*lâle* in Turkish) is one of the city's traditional symbols, and the local government celebrates this by planting over 10 million annually to bloom in parks during the **İstanbul Tulip Festival** (p64).

May: Held at the Garden Fiesta

venue in Sarıyer, the **Chill-Out Festival** welcomes in the summer season with a one-day event featuring big-name global and local music acts.

November: Marketed as the world's only intercontinental marathon, the **İstanbul Marathon** (maraton.istanbul) features 15km and 42km routes that cross the Martyrs of July 15 (Bosphorus) Bridge.

ACCOMMODATION LOWDOWN

Accommodation is heavily booked and high-season pricing applies from Easter to June and from September to October. The Christmas–New Year week is also a peak period.



Getting There

The vast majority of visitors arrive at one of İstanbul's two international airports. İstanbul Airport is on the European side of the city and Sabiha Gökçen is on the Asian side.

From the Airport to the City Centre

From İstanbul Airport

Regular Havaist buses travel from the airport to Taksim in Beyoğlu, where passengers can connect with a funicular and connecting tram to Sultanahmet. Other buses head to the Kadıköy İskelesi (ferry dock), where passengers can connect with ferries to Eminönü, Karaköy and Beşiktaş. Tickets cost ₺204 to Taksim and ₺223 to Kadıköy. The trip times vary, but average 90 minutes to Taksim and two hours to Kadıköy.

The M11 metro travels from the airport to Gayrettepe, where passengers can change to the M2 heading to Taksim and Şişhane in Beyoğlu, Haliç near Eminönü, and Vezneciler in the Bazaar

District. The trip takes about one hour, and the two rides total ₺41.

From Sabiha Gökçen International Airport

Havabüs buses connect the airport with both Taksim and the Kadıköy İskelesi. Tickets cost ₺121 to Taksim and ₺91 to Kadıköy. The trip times vary according to traffic conditions but average 90 minutes to Taksim and one hour to Kadıköy.

The M4 metro travels from the airport to Ayrılık Çeşmesi metro station, from where the connecting Marmaray metro line travels to Sirkeci near Eminönü and Sultanahmet. The trip takes about one hour, and the two rides total ₺57.

Other Points of Entry

From Esenler Coach Terminal

The M1 metro line travels from this terminal to Aksaray, from where passengers can transfer to the nearby T1 tramline travelling to Sultanahmet, Eminönü and Beyoğlu.

From the Alibeyköy Cep Bus Terminal

The T4 tramline connects this terminal with Eminönü.



Getting Around

İstanbul is a sprawling city with multiple neighbourhoods and waterways. Fortunately, it also has an excellent public-transport system that includes trams, metro lines, ferries and buses. Services are frequent and fares are relatively inexpensive, with metro, tram, funicular and bus trips cheaper than ferry or Marmaray trips.

Tram

Trams and metros are operated by Metro İstanbul. Most visitors will board the T1 tram connecting Cevizlibağ and Bağcılar in the Old City with Kabataş in Beyoğlu at some stage. There are conveniently located stops at Beyazıt-Grand Bazaar, Çemberlitaş, Sultanahmet, Sirkeci and Eminönü. A new tramline, the T5, connects Eminönü with the long-distance bus station at Alibeyköy, stopping at Fener, Balat, Ayvansaray, Feshane and the Eyüpsultan Teleferik en route. Trams operate around 6am to midnight.



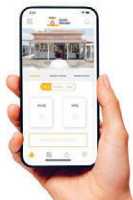
Horn and Bosphorus, and over to

Ferry

The most enjoyable way to get around town is by ferry. Crossing between the Asian and European shores, up and down the Golden

the Adalar (Princes' Islands; ₺58 return), these vessels are efficient and popular. Some are operated by government-owned İstanbul Şehir

ABOVE: ALEXEY PEVNEV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



ESSENTIAL APP

Download the Şehir Hatları app for ferry routes, timetables and prices. English option in settings.



Hatları (sehirhatlari.istanbul); others by private companies, including Dentur Avrasya (denturavrasya.com). Timetables are available online and at *iskeles* (ferry docks). The most popular routes usually function between 7am and 9pm or 10pm.

Metro

Metro services operate between 6am and midnight. Some lines function throughout the night on Friday and Saturday nights. Two lines are particularly useful for visitors. The first is the M2 connecting Yenikapı with Hacıosman, which stops at five stations along the way: Vezneciler, near the Grand Bazaar; on the bridge across the Golden Horn (Haliç); at Şişhane, near Tünel Meydanı in Beyoğlu; at Taksim Square; and at Osmanbey near Nişantaşı. The second, the Marmaray line, connects the European and Asian sides of the city, running from Halkalı to Gebze, stopping at Sirkeci near Eminönü, at Üsküdar and at Ayrılık Çeşmesi, from where passengers can transfer to the M4 travelling to Kadıköy in one direction and to Sabiha Gökçen Airport in the other.

Bus

Operated by İstanbul Elektrik Tramvay ve Tünel (İETT; iett.istanbul), the bus system in İstanbul is extremely efficient, though traffic congestion means bus trips can be long. The major bus stands are underneath Taksim Square and at Beşiktaş, Kabataş, Eminönü, Kadıköy and Üsküdar, with most services running between 6am and 11pm. The most useful bus lines for travellers are those running along both sides of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn, those in the Western Districts and those between Üsküdar and Kadıköy.

Funicular

There are three funiculars (*funiküleri*) and two cable cars (*teleferik*) in the city. All are short trips. One of the funiculars, the Tünel, carries passengers between Karaköy, at the base of the Galata Bridge (Galata Köprüsü), to Tünel Meydanı, at one end of İstiklal Caddesi. It operates between 7am and 10.45pm. The other carries passengers from Kabataş, at the end of the tramline, to Taksim Meydanı. It operates from 6am to midnight. A cable car runs between the water-side at Eyüpsultan and the hilltop Pierre Loti Cafe from 8am to 11pm.

Public Transport Essentials

İstanbulkart

To travel on public transport you'll need an İstanbulkart. These

rechargeable smart cards are simple to use. As you enter a bus or pass through the turnstile at a ferry

dock, tram stop or funicular, cable car or metro station, swipe your card for entry and the fare will automatically be deducted from your balance. The cards can be used to pay for up to five travellers (one swipe per person per ride).

At the same time as purchasing your card (₺70), you will also need to charge it with credit. The maximum recharge amount is ₺500. Allowing for an expenditure of ₺100 per passenger per day is a good guide. Just remember that your card (and any credit on it) will not be refundable when you leave İstanbul. An *anonim* (anonymous) card can be purchased from yellow *biletmatik* machines at airports, at tram stops and at metro and funicular stations. Look for machines that have a tab on the screen that says 'İstanbulkart - 70TL'. İstanbulkarts can also be used to pay for use of public toilets operated by İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality.

TRAVEL COSTS



Tram/metro/city buses

₺17.70 per ride



City ferry trip

₺20-30 per ride



Long Bosphorus ferry trip

₺480 (return)

QUEUING

Queuing to board public transport is honoured in principle rather than in reality. Be proactive but not pushy.

TAXIS

If you choose to flag a taxi down in the street, make sure your driver intends to use the meter before hopping in. Some drivers refuse to do so and charge tourists exorbitant fares. Using Uber is much better – you'll still be in a yellow taxi, but the fare will be clearly stated before you book your trip.

TRAVELLING ON THE MARMARAY

Trips on the Marmaray metro line linking Asia and Europe via a 13.6km tunnel under the Bosphorus Strait can be more expensive (up to ₺40 per trip) than trips on the city's other metro lines. This reflects the project's massive (US\$8 billion) construction cost and the longer distances travelled.



A Few Surprises

It pays to emulate the locals when in İstanbul, as the city's 16 million inhabitants are well versed in seeking out surprises.

Ferry Docks

Catching a ferry isn't the only reason to head to an *iskele* (ferry dock). Many docks host *vapur kafes*, inexpensive spots to enjoy a coffee or tea while enjoying water and dockside views. The most central of these, the İstanbul Kitapçısı Karaköy Şubesi on the 1st floor of the **Karaköy İskelesi**, incorporates a bookshop. The docks are also popular spots for street-food stands and carts, the most famous of which are the **balık ekmek (fish sandwich) stands** (p86) near the *iskeles* at Eminönü.

Mosque Terraces

Some of the best city views can be enjoyed from the terraces of Ottoman mosques. The panoramic views from the hilltop terraces at the rear of the **Süleymaniye Mosque** (p80) in the Bazaar District, the **Yavuz Sultan Selim Mosque** (p107) in Çarşamba in the Western Districts and the Cihangir Mosque in Beyoğlu are all spectacular, but the waterside vistas that can be enjoyed from the steps and terraces of the **New Mosque** (p88) at Eminönü, the **Bebek Mosque** (p145), **Ortaköy**

Mosque (p158) and **Dolmabahçe Mosque** (p152) on the Bosphorus and the **Şemsi Ahmed Paşa Mosque** in Üsküdar definitely give them a run for their money.

Khavaltı

A chance for friends and extended families to come together over an inexpensive meal on weekends, *khavaltı* (breakfast) is a beloved ritual that visitors should embrace. Set Turkish breakfasts are famously generous and delicious, incorporating treats such as crusty bread and *simits* (sesame-encrusted bread rings), *kaymak* (clotted cream), *bal* (honey), home-made jams, *gözleme* (savoury pancakes), *börek* (savoury pastry), olives, cucumber, tomatoes, cheese and other treats. Glasses of çay are the ubiquitous accompaniment. Popular *khavaltı* destinations are **Van Kahvaltı Evi** (p136), **Cuma** (p135) and **Cafe Privato** (p136) in Beyoğlu; **Forno** (p109) and the **Velvet Cafe** (p109) in Balat; **Mihmandar Pastahanesi & Restaurant** (p109) in Eyüpsultan; **Sade Kahve** (p161) in Rumeli Hisarı; and **Lokanta Feriye** (p161) in Ortaköy.



Bosphorus River and the Süleymaniye Mosque (p80)



Cafe Privato (p136)



NEJDET DUZEN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Hatice Turhan Sultan Tomb (p88)



PAUL CZ/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Galataport development (p126)

Tombs

Türbes (tombs) are ubiquitous elements in the grand mosque complexes commissioned by the Ottoman sultans, imperial family members and powerful courtiers. Often set in a small cemetery, these tombs are showcases of tilework and other decorative arts and can be visited by both Muslims and non-Muslims. When visiting the **Süleymaniye** (p80), **Blue Mosque** (p58) and **Şehzade Mehmet Mosque** (p91) in the Old City, look for their *türbes* – most will be close to the mosque, but others, like the **Hatice Turhan Sultan Tomb** (p88) associated with the New Mosque, can be found in nearby streets. Other important *türbes* were built as stand-alone structures not associated with a particular mosque; many can be found along Divan Yolu, the boulevard linking Sultanahmet and the Grand Bazaar, and also in Eyüpsultan.

Waterside Promenades

A cherished weekend activity, promenading along the waterside is among the most accessible and pleasant forms of exercise in the city. Accordingly, the İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi (İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality) has initiated a number of projects to open up sections of waterside that were previously off-limits for parks and promenades. The promenade at the **Galataport development** (p126) opened in 2021 and offers wonderful views over the Bosphorus

to the Old City. Sections of HaliçPort in Kasimpaşa, a restoration of the historic 15th-century Haliç Tersanesi (Golden Horn Shipyard), opened in 2024 and the remaining works will open in stages over following years. And this isn't the only opening up of Golden Horn waterfront, as a promenade near the **Haliç Metro Bridge** (p129) has been constructed and much of the western shore is now lined with parks.

The most popular promenades of all are at Moda; between the *iskele* and Salacak in Üsküdar; and along the upper Bosphorus on the European shore.

OFFBEAT İSTANBUL

- Head to the street-food stands in Kılıçcılar Sokak next to the **Grand Bazaar** (p74) to try *kokoreç*, a popular local snack of grilled lamb intestines stuffed with sweetbreads.
- View religious relics including John the Baptist's skull bone in the Sacred Safekeeping Rooms at **Topkapı Palace** (p46).
- Ponder an installation featuring 4213 cigarette butts at the **Museum of Innocence** (p118).
- Laugh at Şener Özmen and Erkan Özmen's Road to Tate Modern video, a witty riff on Don Quixote, at the **İstanbul Modern** (p184).
- Visit a Bosphorus mansion that many locals believe to be haunted at **Borusan Contemporary** (p158).



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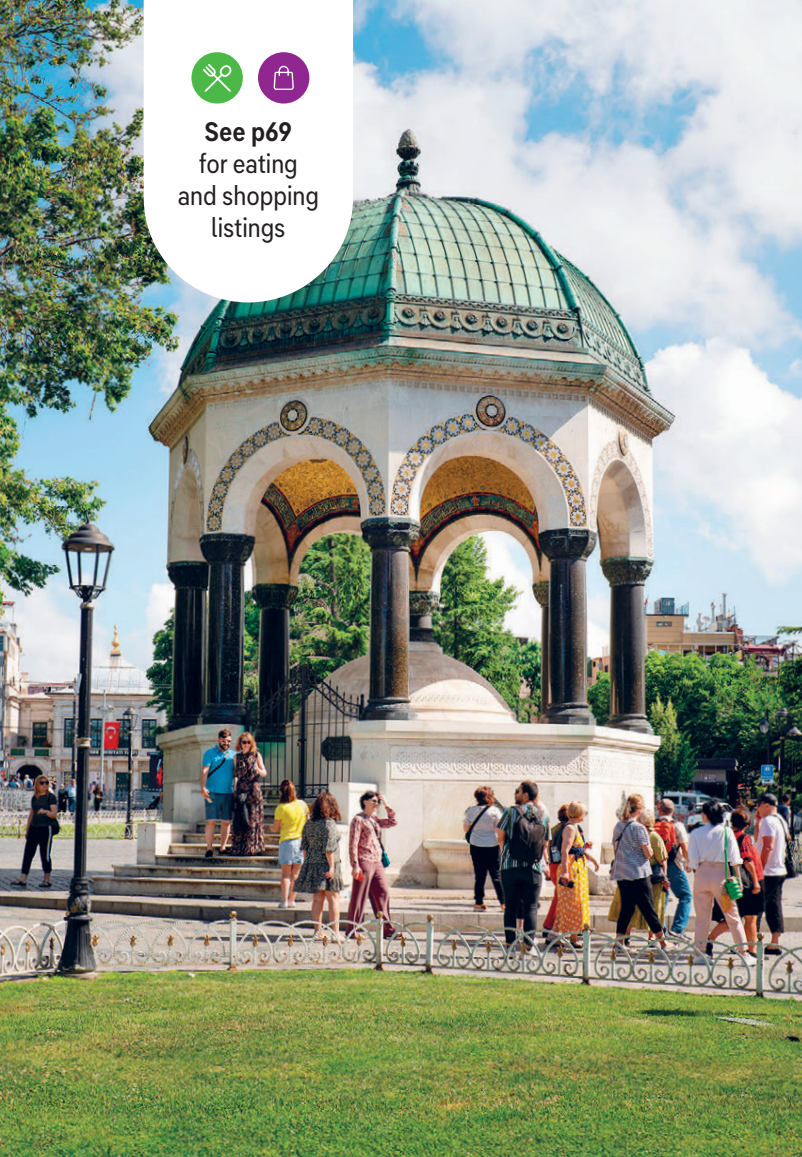
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See p69
for eating
and shopping
listings



Explore

Sultanahmet & Sirkeci

Many visitors to İstanbul never make it out of Sultanahmet. And while this is a shame, it's hardly surprising. The heart of Byzantium and Constantinople, this is the area where emperors and sultans built monuments; where court officials lived and schemed; and where conquering armies declared their victories. Today, armies of tourists congregate around Sultanahmet Square, their only battles being with the long entry queues at Aya Sofya and Topkapı Palace.

Sirkeci, a short downhill walk towards the Golden Horn, has a vastly different ambience but is equally historic. A bustling district where İstanbullular shop and conduct business, it's also a popular eating destination, predominantly for the cheap eateries clustered around the landmark Sirkeci Gar (Railway Station).

Getting Around

Tram

To get to Sultanahmet from Beyoğlu, walk across the Galata Bridge or take the Kabataş-Bağcılar/Cevizlibağ tram to the Sultanahmet stop on Divan Yolu. The tram also stops outside Sirkeci Railway Station and at Gülhane, near the entrance to the park of the same name.

Metro

The Marmaray line connecting Europe and Asia stops at Sirkeci. The metro entrances are just south of the historic railway station building, and on Ebussuud Caddesi in Hocapaşa.



THE BEST

BYZANTINE BUILDING Aya Sofya (p52)

MOSQUE Blue Mosque (p58)

PALACE Topkapı Palace (p46)

CISTERN Basilica Cistern (p60)

SHOPPING PRECINCT Arasta Bazaar (p59)



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- Top Experiences ★ p46
- Experiences ★ p64
- Eating ✪ p69
- Shopping 🛍️ p69

Sea of Marmara
(Marmara Denizi)

EXPLORE

SULTANAHMET & SIRKECI

Topkapı Palace

Libidinous sultans, ambitious courtiers, beautiful concubines and scheming eunuchs lived and worked in this Ottoman compound between the 15th and 19th centuries. Visiting its opulent pavilions, jewel-filled Treasury, sprawling Harem, dormitories and massive kitchens gives a fascinating glimpse into their privileged but sequestered lives.

MAP P44 F3



PLANNING TIP

A free audioguide is included in the ticket price – download this with the QR code provided or use one of the devices available at the audio booth (ID needed).



Scan for full opening hours and ticket prices.

First Court

Before you enter Topkapı's **Imperial Gate**, take a look at the ornate structure in the cobbled square just outside. This is the rococo-style **Fountain of Sultan Ahmet III**, built in 1728. As you pass through the Imperial Gate, you enter the First Court. On your left is the Byzantine church of Hagia Eirene, more commonly known as **Aya İrini**.

Second Court

The **Middle Gate** (Ortakapı or Bab-üs Selâm) led to the palace's Second Court, which has a beautiful park-like setting. The great **Palace Kitchens** are on the right (east) as you enter.

On the left (west) side of the Second Court is the ornate **Imperial Council Chamber** (Dîvân-ı Hümâyûn). The council met here to discuss matters of state, and the sultan sometimes eavesdropped through the gold grille high in the wall.

Harem

The entrance to the Harem, where the imperial family lived, is on the western side of the Second Court. The earliest of the 300-odd rooms in the sprawling complex were constructed during the reign of Murat III (r 1574–95).



NEKOMURA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

The visitor route starts at the **Dormitory of the Corps of the Tressed Halberdiers**, a two-storey structure featuring swaths of magnificent 16th- and 17th-century İznik tiles. From the dormitory, the route continues through a courtyard and past a glass-encased waiting room, summer coffee house, mosque, music room and hamam used by the palace eunuchs before arriving at the **Dome with Cupboards**, where financial records were kept. Beyond this is the **Hall with the Fountain**, lined with fine Kütahya tiles from the 17th century. Adjoining this is the **Mosque of the Black Eunuchs**, which features depictions of Mt Arafat, Mecca and Medina on its 17th-century tiles.

Beyond this room is the **Courtyard of the Black Eunuchs**, also decorated with Kütahya tiles. Behind the marble colonnade on the left



QUICK BREAK

There's a simple refreshment kiosk near the Palace Kitchens, but a better option is the Beltur Kandil Kafe in Gülhane Park, accessed downhill from Topkapı's First Court.



PAVILION ARCHITECTURE

Topkapı is a series of pavilions, kitchens, barracks, audience chambers, kiosks and sleeping quarters built around a central enclosure.

are the Black Eunuchs' Dormitories. As many as 200 eunuchs lived here, guarding the doors and waiting on the women of the Harem. At the far end of the courtyard is a guard room featuring frescoes of fruit trees. From here, a corridor leads left to a courtyard surrounded by baths, a laundry fountain, a laundry, dormitories and private apartments.

Across from the courtyard is a room decorated with a tiled chimney, followed by the apartments of the *valide sultan* (mother of the reigning sultan). Of particular note is the **Salon of the Valide Sultan** with its lovely 19th-century murals featuring bucolic views of İstanbul. The **Hamam**

ERMAN GUNES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©





THE SULTAN'S CONCUBINE

Islam forbade enslaving Muslims, so the concubines in Topkapı's Harem were foreigners or infidels. The most famous was Haseki Hürrem Sultan (aka Roxelana), who had been kidnapped from Ruthenia (now part of Ukraine), brought to Constantinople and sold to the palace as an enslaved person. Incredibly, Roxelana became the wife and consort of Süleyman the Magnificent and mother to Selim II.

of the Valide Sultan is just past this. Next, a splendid reception room leads to an antechamber covered in Kütahya and İznik tiles dating from the 17th century. This is where the princes, *valide sultan* and senior concubines waited before entering the handsome **Imperial Hall** (pictured p47) for an audience with the sultan.

Nearby is the **Privy Chamber of Murat III**, one of the most sumptuous rooms in the palace. Its restored three-tiered marble fountain was designed to give the sound of cascading water and to make it difficult to eavesdrop on the sultan's conversations. The **Privy Chamber of Ahmet III** and adjoining **dining room** built in 1705 are accessed off this. On the opposite side of the Privy Chamber are two of the most beautiful rooms in the Harem – the **Twin Kiosk/Apartments of the Crown Prince**.

Past these rooms is the **Courtyard of the Favourites**, the **Harem Mosque** and a passageway leading to the exit.

Third Court

The Third Court was the sultan's private domain, staffed and guarded by white eunuchs. Inside is the 16th-century **Audience Chamber**. Important officials and foreign ambassadors were brought to this little kiosk to conduct the high business of state. The sultan, seated on a huge divan, inspected the ambassadors' gifts and offerings as they were passed through the doorway on the left. Right behind the Audience Chamber is the pretty **Library of Ahmet III**, built in 1719.

Located on the eastern edge of the Third Court, Topkapı's **Imperial Treasury** features an incredible collection of objects made from or decorated with precious metals and jewels (pictured left). The building itself was constructed between 1462 and 1463 during Mehmet the Conqueror's reign and was used originally as reception rooms.



TREASURY HIGHLIGHTS

The Imperial Treasury's most famous exhibit is the *Kasıkçı* (Spoonmaker's) Diamond, a teardrop-shaped 86-carat rock. According to legend, this was found in a rubbish dump and purchased by a wily street peddler for three spoons before its eventual purchase by a grand vizier on behalf of the sultan. Other notable exhibits include the emerald-encrusted *Topkapı Dagger*, object of the criminal heist in Jules Dassin's 1964 film *Topkapı*.

Also on the eastern edge of the Third Court is the **Dormitory of the Campaigners**, built during Mehmet II's reign and converted into a dormitory by Ahmet III in 1719. 'Campaigners' were those servants in charge of preparing garments for the sultans to wear during battles. The dormitory now houses the palace's wonderful collection of imperial robes, kaftans, uniforms and talismanic shirts.

On the other side of the Third Court are the **Sacred Safekeeping Rooms**. These rooms, sumptuously decorated with İznik tiles, house many important religious relics.

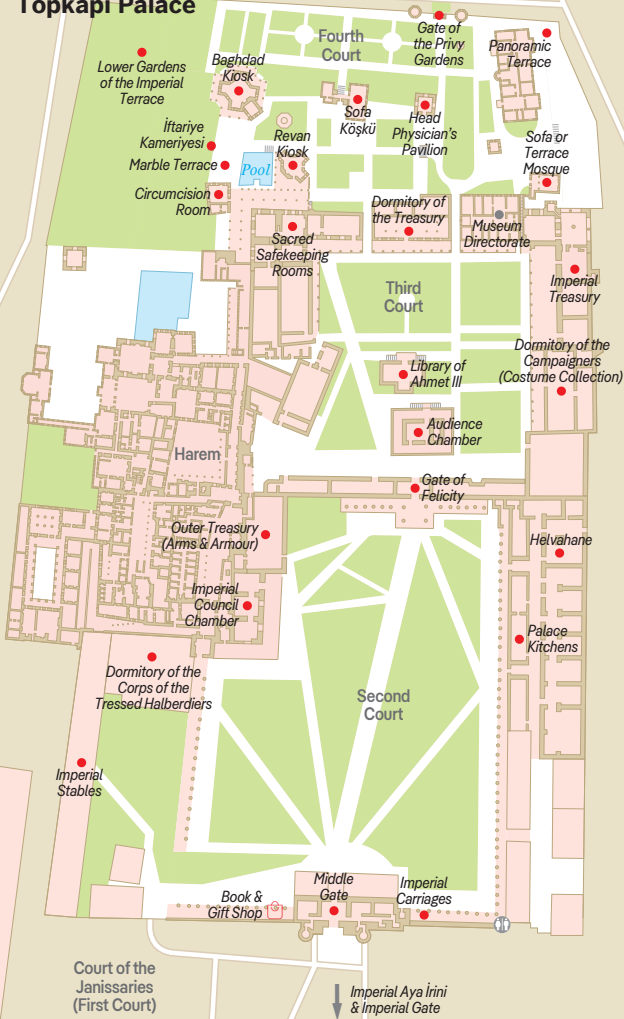
Fourth Court

Pleasure pavilions occupy the palace's Fourth Court. These include the **Mecidiye Kiosk**, which was commissioned by Abdül Mecit (r 1839–61). On this terrace you will also find the Kiosk of Mustafa Pasha, sometimes called the **Sofa Köşkü**.

Up the stairs at the end of the garden is the **Marble Terrace**, a platform with a decorative pool, three pavilions and the whimsical **İftariye Kameriyesi**, a small structure commissioned by İbrahim I in 1640 as a picturesque place to break the fast of Ramazan.

Murat IV built the **Revan Kiosk** in 1636 after reclaiming the city of Yerevan (now in Armenia) from Persia. In 1639 he constructed the **Baghdad Kiosk**, one of the last examples of classical palace architecture, to commemorate his victory over that city. The small **Circumcision Room** (Sünnet Odası) was built by İbrahim I in 1640 and has outer walls graced by particularly beautiful tile panels.

Topkapı Palace



★ TOP EXPERIENCE

Aya Sofya

There are many important monuments in İstanbul, but this venerable structure – commissioned by Justinian the Great, consecrated as a church in 537 and converted to a mosque by Mehmet the Conqueror in 1453 – surpasses the rest due to its innovative architectural form, rich history and extraordinary beauty.

MAP P44 D5



PLANNING TIPS

Women must wear a headscarf (bring your own or available for purchase).

Access free multi-language commentaries via mobile phones and tablets using a QR code app (bring headphones).



Scan for opening hours and ticket prices.

The Visitor Experience

New visiting rules were introduced at Aya Sofya in early 2024. These decreed that only Turks and worshipping foreign-national Muslims can enter the inner narthex and nave. All other visitors have their visits restricted to the upstairs galleries and all visitors aged eight years or over must pay a hefty entrance fee in euros. The ticket office for non-Muslims is at the rear, opposite the Fountain of Sultan Ahmet III, and the entrance is nearby, in the building's northeast corner.

Access to the upstairs galleries is not possible for visitors with mobility impairments, and be warned that the 'skip the line tickets' on offer include compulsory purchase of a ticket to the overpriced 3D display at the Aya Sofya History and Experience Museum on the Hippodrome.

Upstairs Galleries

The galleries are accessed via a switchback ramp, and the visiting route follows a one-way loop. In the south gallery are the remnants of a magnificent **Deesis** (Last Judgement). This 13th-century mosaic depicts Christ with the Virgin Mary on his left and John the Baptist on his right.

Further on, at the eastern (apse) end of the gallery, is an 11th-century mosaic depicting **Christ**



NEJDET DUZEN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Enthroned with Empress Zoe and Constantine IX Monomachos. When this portrait was started, Zoe (r 1028–50) was 50 years old and newly married (for the first time) to the aged Romanus III Argyrus. Upon Romanus' death in 1034, she had his face excised from the mosaic and replaced it with that of her virile new husband and consort, Michael IV. Michael died eight years later and Zoe, aged 64, wed the eminent senator Constantine IX Monomachos (r 1042–55), whose portrait was added here and remains only because he outlived the empress.

To the right of Zoe and Constantine is a 12th-century mosaic depicting the **Virgin Mary, Emperor John Comnenus II and Empress Eirene.** The emperor, who was known as 'John the Good', is on the Virgin's left and the empress, who was known for her charitable works, is to



QUICK BREAK

Located in the repurposed Cedid Mehmed Efendi Madrasa (now home to the Istanbul Crafts Centre), İstanbul Kahvehanesi has a secluded courtyard and a book-lined salon where guests can enjoy a çay or coffee.



LEAVING THEIR MARKS

Two unusual features can be found in the upstairs south gallery. On the balustrade, look for the graffiti thought to have been carved by a 9th-century Viking mercenary serving in the Byzantine army. Nearby, opposite the Deesis, is the tomb of Enrico Dandolo, a blind Venetian doge (chief magistrate) who led the Sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade (1202–04).

her right; both are giving money to Aya Sofya. Their son Alexios is depicted next to Eirene; he died soon after this portrait was made.

The Dome

Looking up, you should be able to see three mosaics at the base of the northern tympanum (semicircle) beneath the dome. These are 9th-century portraits of **St Ignatius the Younger, St John Chrysostom and St Ignatius Theodorus of Antioch**. The pendentives (concave triangular segments below the dome) are adorned with mosaics and paintings of **seraphs** (six-winged angels charged with the caretaking of God's throne).

Looking Down on the Nave

Sadly, many of the original features in the nave have been covered by screens or are obscured when looking down from the galleries. What can be seen includes Ottoman additions to the building such as a *mimber* (pulpit) and *mihrab* (prayer niche indicating the direction of Mecca) and large 19th-century medallions inscribed with gilt Arabic letters.

Exiting the Building

Exit the galleries via stairs that finish in the building's southwest vestibule. Visitors then exit the building through the so-called **Beautiful Gate**, a magnificent bronze gate dating from the 2nd century BCE.

As you reach the gate, look back to admire the 10th-century mosaic of **Constantine the Great, the Virgin Mary and the Emperor Justinian** on the lunette of the inner doorway. Constantine (right) is offering the Virgin, who holds the Christ Child, the city of İstanbul; Justinian (left) is offering her Aya Sofya.

Hippodrome

The Byzantine emperors loved nothing more than an afternoon at the chariot races, and the rectangular arena on the western side of the Blue Mosque was their venue of choice. Known as the Hippodrome, the arena originally consisted of two levels of galleries, a central spine and starting boxes.

MAP P44 B6

History

The Hippodrome was the centre of Byzantium's life for 1000 years and of Ottoman life for another 400 years, and has been the scene of countless political dramas. In Byzantine times, the rival chariot teams of 'Greens' and 'Blues' had separate sectarian connections. Support for a team was akin to membership of a political party, and a team victory had important effects on policy. Occasionally, Greens and Blues joined forces against the emperor, as was the case in 532 CE when a chariot race was disturbed by protests against Justinian's high tax regime. This escalated into the Nika riots, which led to tens of thousands of protesters being massacred in the Hippodrome by imperial forces. Not surprisingly, chariot races were banned for some time afterwards.

Ottoman sultans also kept an eye on activities in the Hippodrome. If things were going badly in the empire, a surly crowd gathering here could signal the start of a disturbance, then a riot, then a revolution. In 1826 the slaughter of the corrupt janissary corps (the sultan's personal bodyguards) was carried out here by the reformer Sultan Mahmut II. In 1909 riots here caused the downfall of Abdül Hamit II.



PLANNING TIP

Be warned that the privately operated Aya Sofya History and Experience Museum on the western edge of the Hippodrome has few artefacts. Its sole draw is a 3D 'immersive' presentation.



Scan for visitor info on the Museum of Turkish & Islamic Arts.



HALIT SADIK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



QUICK BREAK

The excellent coffee shop in the inner courtyard of the Museum of Turkish & Islamic Arts has pleasant courtyard seating.

Despite the ever-present threat of the Hippodrome being the scene of their downfall, emperors and sultans sought to outdo one another in beautifying it, and adorned the centre with statues from the far reaches of their empires.

Hippodrome Features

Presented to Sultan Abdül Hamit II by the German emperor in 1901, the little gazebo at the northern end of the Hippodrome is known as **Kaiser Wilhelm's Fountain**. Other monuments include the pink granite **Obelisk of Theodosius** (pictured above) in the centre, which was brought



THE SPHENDONE

The southern end of the Hippodrome was home to the semicircular Sphendone structure, remnants of which still stand. The spectator galleries that once topped this stone structure were damaged during the Fourth Crusade and ended up being totally dismantled in the Ottoman period; many of the original columns were used in the construction of the Süleymaniye Mosque.

here from its home in Karnak, Egypt by Theodosius the Great. The marble podium below the obelisk features carvings of Theodosius, his wife, his sons, state officials and bodyguards watching the chariot-race action from the *kathisma* (imperial box).

South of the obelisk is a strange column coming up out of a hole in the ground. Known as the **Spiral Column**, this stood in front of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (Greece) from 478 BCE until Constantine the Great had it brought to his new capital city around 330 CE.

After sacking Aya Sofya in 1204, the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade tore all the plates from the **Rough-Stone Obelisk**, at the Hippodrome's southern end, in the mistaken belief that they were solid gold (in fact, they were gold-covered bronze).

Museum of Turkish & Islamic Arts

On the western edge of the Hippodrome, this museum is housed in an Ottoman palace built in 1524 for İbrahim Paşa, grand vizier to Süleyman the Magnificent. Its small but select array of exhibits includes a stellar collection of antique carpets, which is displayed in a dedicated hall. Spending an hour or so here gives an excellent grounding in the history and art of the Turkish carpet. Interesting interpretative panels and displays explain that certain types of Turkish carpets become known by the names of painters who portrayed them in their works (Holbein, Lotto, Crivelli, Memling, Bellini) and others took the names of the places where they were produced (Uşhak, Konya and Bergama). The art is generally said to have reached its apogee in the 16th century, and a number of the Uşhak and Konya examples from this period prove the point.

Blue Mosque

Officially known as the Sultanahmet Camii (Sultanahmet Mosque), İstanbul's most photogenic building has a wonderfully curvaceous exterior featuring a cascade of domes and six slender minarets. Blue İznik tiles adorn the interior and give the building its unofficial but commonly used name.

MAP P44 C7



PLANNING TIP

Women visitors must wear a headscarf and those who are considered to be too scantily dressed will be loaned a robe to wear when inside the building.



Scan for information including visiting hours.

The Mosque

Everything about this landmark building is monumental. Its curves are voluptuous, its courtyard is the biggest of all the Ottoman mosques and, when built, it had more minarets than any other İstanbul mosque – a record only recently equalled by the colossal new Çamlıca Mosque on the city's Asian side. The interior has a similarly grand scale: the central prayer space is huge and there are more than 21,000 İznik tiles and 260 windows. Fittings include a *mihrab* that features a piece of the sacred Black Stone from the Kaaba in Mecca.

Enter the complex via the Hippodrome rather than from Sultanahmet Park. Once you're inside the courtyard, which is the same size as the mosque's interior, you'll appreciate the building's perfect proportions. The mosque is closed to non-worshippers for 30 minutes or so during the daily prayer times – two hours before dawn, dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and right before the last light of the day – and is also closed for cleaning on Friday mornings. Note that the Friday noon prayers are longer than the usual to accommodate a weekly sermon.



DOTMILLER1986/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Sultan Ahmet's Tomb

The mosque was the grand project of Sultan Ahmet I (r 1603–17). Ahmet, who had ascended the imperial throne aged 13, died at just 27, one year after construction of his mosque was completed. His **tomb** is on the north side of the mosque facing Sultanahmet Park. Buried with him are his wife, Kösem, and his sons, Sultan Osman II (r 1618–22), Sultan Murat IV (r 1623–40) and Prince Beyazıt.

The Arasta

Built as part of the *külliye* (mosque complex) of the Blue Mosque, the row of shops known as the **Arasta Bazaar** is now home to a *çay bahçesi* (tea garden) and boutiques selling good textiles.



QUICK BREAK

With its superb view of the mosque and shaded seating, outdoor Derviş Cafe & Restaurant is a great spot to enjoy a glass of çay or coffee.

Basilica Cistern

In their inimitable style, the Romans bequeathed İstanbul an impressive array of water-related infrastructure, including massive aqueducts and cisterns (water storage facilities). Constructed by order of the emperors Theodosius I and Justinian, these cisterns are truly extraordinary and visually magnificent feats of engineering.

MAP P44 C5



PLANNING TIP

The Basilica Cistern is one of the city's most popular tourist attractions – be prepared to queue for entry.



Scan for visitor info on the Basilica Cistern.

Rediscovered in 1545

The largest surviving Byzantine cistern in İstanbul, the subterranean structure known as the Yerebatan Sarnıcı (Sunken Cistern) or **Basilica Cistern** was commissioned by Emperor Justinian and built in 532. It features 336 columns, many of which were salvaged from ruined temples and feature fine carved capitals. Its symmetry and grandeur of conception are breathtaking, and its cavernous and cool depths make a great retreat on summer days.

Like most sites in İstanbul, the cistern has an unusual history. It was originally known as the Basilica Cistern because it lay underneath the Stoa Basilica, one of the great squares on the first hill. Closed and forgotten sometime before the Conquest, it wasn't rediscovered until 1545, when scholar Petrus Gyllius was researching Byzantine antiquities in the city and was told by local residents that they were able to obtain water by lowering buckets into a dark space below their basement floors. Some were even catching fish this way. Intrigued, Gyllius explored the neighbourhood and accessed the cistern through one of the basements. Even after his discovery, the Ottomans didn't treat the structure with the respect it deserved – it became a dumping ground for junk and even corpses.



STEVE BARZE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

The cistern was cleaned, renovated and opened to the public in 1987. A second restoration added additional walkways and atmospheric lighting.

Other Cisterns

A number of other Byzantine cisterns can be found in and around Sultanahmet. The **Şerefiye Cistern** (serefiyesarnici.istanbul), discovered when an unremarkable 1950s municipal building near the Hippodrome was demolished in 2010, was constructed during the reign of Theodosius I (r 379–395). It features a vaulted brick ceiling and 32 massive marble columns (unfortunately marred with modern metal braces).

Other restored cisterns include the large Cistern of Philoxenos (aka **Binbirdirek Cistern**) built during Justinian's reign.



QUICK BREAK

Close to the Basilica Cistern, Hafız Mustafa on Divan Yolu is a handy stop for those craving a hot drink accompanied by a sweet treat.

Walk Sultanahmet

Traces of past empires can be seen everywhere, from remnants of a Byzantine palace to repurposed churches and magnificent mosques. This walk visits significant Byzantine and Ottoman buildings, passes through an arena where chariots raced and ends in an arcade that has tempted shoppers for centuries.

START	END	LENGTH
Fountain of Sultan Ahmet III	Arasta Bazaar	2.3km; two hours



1 Rococo Kiosk

This walk starts at the **Fountain of Sultan Ahmet III** in front of the main gate to Topkapı Palace. A gorgeous example of Turkish rococo-style architecture, the fountain was built in 1728 and once dispensed cold drinks of water or *şerbet* (sweet fruit drink) to thirsty Ottoman travellers.

2 Hidden Treasure

Turn left into cobbled Soğukçeşme Sokak and then left again into Caferiye Sokak to visit the **Cafer- ağa Medresesi**, a lovely little building nestled in the shadow of Aya Sofya. Designed by Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan on the orders of Cafer Ağa, Süleyman the Magnificent's chief black eunuch, it was built in 1560 and now houses a cultural organisation and *çay bahçesi* (tea garden).

3 Historical Landmark

Back on Caferiye Sokak, continue until you reach the busy thoroughfare of Alemdar Caddesi and then walk alongside Sultanahmet Park to the **Hippodrome**, where horse-drawn chariots stormed around the perimeter in Byzantine times.

4 Triumph of Tile Art

Walk down Şehit Mehmetpaşa Yokuşu and continue down Katip Sinan Camii Sokak to reach the **Sokullu Şehit Mehmet Paşa**

Mosque. Another Sinan-designed building, the mosque was commissioned by Esmahan, daughter of Sultan Selim II, and built in 1571. The interior walls and *mimber* are decorated with spectacular red-and-blue İznik tiles – some of the best ever made.

5 Justinian & Theodora's Little Church

Veer left into Şehit Mehmetpaşa Sokak and walk downhill to the residential neighbourhood of Küçük Ayasofya. Turn left at Kadırga Limanı Caddesi and continue to the sadly dilapidated Çardaklı Hamam, built in 1503. Turn right to visit **Little Aya Sofya**, one of the most beautiful Byzantine buildings in the city.

6 Historical Traces

Continue east along Küçük Ayasofya Caddesi and walk left up the hill at Aksakal Caddesi. At the crest is the **Sphendone**, all that's left of the Hippodrome's original southern stadium.

7 Ottoman Shopping Arcade

Continue along Nakilbent Sokak and then veer right, walking down Şifa Hamamı Sokak, turning left into Küçük Ayasofya Caddesi and continuing straight ahead to visit the **Arasta Bazaar**, Sultanahmet's pre-eminent shopping strip.

EXPERIENCES

Admire Ancient Statuary & Sarcophagi

MUSEUM

MAP: 1 P44 E3

Comprising three buildings located just below Topkapı Palace, the **İstanbul Archaeology Museums** complex was undergoing a massive renovation at the time of research, with only the main building open to visitors. Inside, there is an extensive collection of sarcophagi on the ground floor (to the left as you enter). The most notable displays are the sarcophagi from the Royal Necropolis of Sidon. Don't miss the extraordinary Alexander Sarcophagus and Mourning Women Sarcophagus, both created in the 4th century BCE.

The southern wing houses exquisite Hellenistic and Roman statuary on the ground floor. Upstairs exhibits include the Troy Hall with its audiovisual presentation about documenting and cleaning artefacts from the site. Further on, in the north wing, is the so-called Treasure Hall.

When it reopens, the Museum of the Ancient Orient is sure to display its greatest treasure, a series of large blue-and-yellow glazed-

brick panels that once lined the processional street and Ishtar gate of ancient Babylon. The remaining building, the Tiled Pavilion (Çinili Köşk), is likely to showcase Turkish ceramics.

Tiptoe Through the Tulips

PARK

MAP: 2 P44 D2

Gülhane Park was once part of the grounds of Topkapı Palace, accessible only to the royal court. These days crowds of locals come here to promenade past the formally planted flowerbeds, picnic under the many trees and enjoy a simple meal, tea or coffee on the terrace at Beltur Kandil Kafe. During the İstanbul Tulip Festival in April, when millions of tulips planted by the İstanbul municipality bloom in parks and gardens across the city, the park is a riot of colour, with tulips lining every path and filling every flowerbed.

Visit a Byzantine Gem

SIGNIFICANT BUILDING

MAP: 3 P44 A8

Like many of İstanbul's working-class neighbourhoods, Küçük Ayasofya on Sultanahmet's

**CLOSING DAYS**

Plan your Old City sightseeing around the weekly closing times of its major attractions. Monday: Tomb of Sultan Ahmet I. Tuesday: Topkapı Palace and Harem, and Aya İrini. Friday: Blue Mosque (morning to mid-afternoon), Little Aya Sofya (morning to mid-afternoon), Aya Sofya Gallery (12.30pm to 2.30pm). Sunday: Grand Bazaar.

southwestern edge is slowly being gentrified, with hotels and other tourism-related businesses now occupying many of its old wooden houses. That said, the area retains a residential neighbourhood feel and those wishing to get a flavour of real day-to-day life in the city will find exploration here rewarding. Added incentive is provided by the presence of **Little Aya Sofya**, a Byzantine church built by order of the Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora sometime between 527 and 536, just before Justinian built Aya Sofya. You can still see the con-sorts' monogram worked into some of the frilly white capitals. The building is one of the most beautiful Byzantine structures in the city despite being converted into a mosque in the early 16th century and having many of its original features obscured during an extensive restoration in 2007. The cells of the 16th-century *medrese* (seminary) next to the church are now used by secondhand booksellers and bookbinders.

Saunter down Soğukçeşme Sokak

STREET

MAP: 4 P44 D4

Walking from Sultanahmet Square to Sirkeci or Eminönü, or heading across the bridge to Beyoğlu? If so, we recommend avoiding the route that follows the tramline down Alamdardar Caddesi and instead walking down **Soğukçeşme Sokak**, a cobbled pedestrian path

that runs from just left of Topkapı Palace's main gate down to the main entrance of Güllhane Park. Named after the Soğuk Çeşme (Cold Fountain) located near the Topkapı entrance, the street is lined with pretty houses that are recreations of traditional Ottoman timber homes.

More authentic Ottoman structures can be spotted when the route rejoins Alamdardar Caddesi outside Güllhane Park. Look for the 19th-century **Alay Köşkü** (MAP: 5 P44 C3), or Parade Kiosk, a polygonal building built into the wall of the park. This is where sultans would watch the parades of troops and trade guilds that commemorated holidays and military victories. On the opposite road is a rococo-style ceremonial gate traditionally known as the **Sublime Porte** (MAP: 6 P44 C3). This once led to the headquarters of the grand vizierate, or Ottoman prime ministry.

Watch the Dervishes Whirl

PERFORMANCE

Until recently, the Galata Mevlevi House Museum and its *semahane* (whirling-dervish hall) was the most convenient and authentic place to observe a whirling-dervish performance in the city. The complex was indefinitely closed for renovation at the time of research, leaving one tourist-friendly *sema* (whirling-dervish ceremony) in the city. This is held at the **Hodjapasha Cultural**



OTTOMAN PALACE CUISINE

These two restaurants specialise in dishes once served in the imperial palaces:

Deraliye

MAP: **7** P44 C5

Featuring sumptuous palace cuisine, Deraliye offers delights such as the goose kebab served to Süleyman the Magnificent. Chef Necati Yılmaz also offers daily cooking classes in which participants learn to cook three dishes that are then enjoyed over lunch. Indoor or roof terrace seating. *noon-11.30pm*

Matbah

MAP: **8** P44 D4

The menu at this restaurant in the Ottoman Imperial Hotel changes with the season and features unusual ingredients such as goose, quail, quince and molasses. Sit indoors or outdoors. *11.30am-10.30pm*

Centre (MAP: **9** P44 B1), a beautifully converted 550-year-old hamam in Sirkeci. More of a cultural performance than a religious ceremony, the centre's 60-minute 'Dervish Experience' is staged at 7pm most days. Note that children under seven years are not admitted and photography is not allowed. Bookings essential (hodjapasha.com).

Satisfy Your Stomach in Sirkeci

EATING STRIP

Decent eating options in Sultanahmet are few and far between, so many visitors choose to instead join the locals and eat in Sirkeci's popular Hocapaşa enclave. Located a short walk from the Sirkeci Railway Station, Hocapaşa Sokak hosts simple eateries such as **Şehzade Cağ Kebabı** (MAP: **10** P44 B2), which is known for its tender Erzurum-style lamb kebab; **Kasap Osman** (MAP: **11** P44 B2), which serves a tasty döner kebab; and the super-simple **Hocapaşa Pidecisi** (MAP: **12** P44 B2), which serves piping-hot pide straight from its oven. Nearby streets are also home to excellent eateries – check out **Bitlisli** (MAP: **13** P44 B2), known for its tasty dishes from Türkiye's southeast, and **Güvenç Konyalı** (MAP: **14** P44 B1), which serves specialities from Konya in Central Anatolia (try the spicy *bamya çorbaşı*, a sour soup featuring lamb and chickpeas).

Succumb to the Steam

HAMAM

MAP: **15** P44 D6

In life, there aren't too many opportunities to wander seminaked through a 16th-century Ottoman monument. In Sultanahmet, the meticulously restored **Ayasofya Hürrem Sultan Hamamı**, which dates from 1556, allows visitors to do just this. Designed by Mimar Sinan, the hamam was built just across the road from Aya Sofya by order of Süleyman the Magnificent

and named in honour of his wife Haseki Hürrem Sultan, commonly known as Roxelana. There are separate baths for males and females, both with a handsome *soğukluk* (entrance vestibule) surrounded by wooden change cubicles. Treatments here are expert and the surrounds are exceptionally beautiful and clean. Book yourself in for the standard 45-minute bath treatment and you'll receive a full body scrub, a soap-bubble massage and a rose-scented hairwash.

Indulge Yourself at the Çağaloğlu Hamam

HAMAM

MAP: 16 P44 B4

Another Old City hamam, the **Çağaloğlu Hamamı**, was built in 1741 by order of Sultan Mahmut I, who determined that profits from the hamam would be used to fund construction of a library at Aya Sofya. One of the most beautiful hamams in the city, it also has separate baths for men and women. The standard treatment here is

cheaper than the Ayasofya Hürrem Sultan Hamamı but devotes the same amount of time. It includes a full body scrub and a soap-bubble massage. After your treatment, continue indulging yourself in the hamam's atmospheric restaurant, **Lokanta 1741**, which is open for both lunch and dinner.

Learn to Cook a Turkish Meal

COOKING CLASS

MAP: 17 P44 D7

The first English-language cookery school to open in İstanbul, **Cooking Alaturka** runs convivial morning and afternoon classes suitable for all enthusiastic cooks, including novices and teenagers. Focusing on home-style Turkish cuisine, the classes are conducted in English and involve participants cooking a set menu as a group over a period of two or three hours. The results are then enjoyed over a meal with wine.

The school also offers food tours visiting produce and spice markets,



TURKISH TEXTILE ARTS

Türkiye has long been known for its distinctive rugs and textiles, which often showcase motifs and designs introduced to the Ottoman Empire courtesy of products traded along the Silk Road. The art of Turkish carpets, for instance, has its genesis in the tents and saddlebags woven by Turkic nomads in Central Asia. Similarly, local textile designs have long been influenced by *suzanis*, a type of embroidered and decorative tribal textile made in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries. To source good-quality rugs and textiles in Sultanahmet, head to **Mehmet Çetinkaya Gallery**, which has a pricey but exceptionally fine range. Its main store is in Tavukhane Sokak, with a smaller branch in the Arasta Bazaar.

sampling street food and even visiting a historic brewery. One popular offering includes a tour to the Spice Bazaar followed by a cooking class.

Relax Over a Rooftop Cocktail

COCKTAIL BAR

MAP: 18 P44 D6

Though there are plenty of rooftops in Sultanahmet, few offer drinks that match the quality of their views. Open on fine days in summer, the Four Seasons'

Süreyya Teras Lounge bucks the trend, with a full view of Aya Sofya, Ayasofya Hürrem Sultan Hamamı and the Bosphorus, as well as a partial view of the Blue Mosque. Order a well-made cocktail or glass of quality Turkish wine, then sit back and watch the sun set over a vista of minarets and domes. Magical!

Spot Traces of Byzantium's Great Palace

RUINS

Constantine the Great built the Great Palace soon after he declared Constantinople to be the capital

of the Roman Empire in 330 CE. Successive emperors added to it, and the complex eventually consisted of a series of buildings set in terraced parklands stretching from the Hippodrome over to Hagia Sophia (Aya Sofya) and down the slope, ending at the sea walls on the Sea of Marmara. The palace was abandoned after the Fourth Crusade sacked the city in 1204, and its ruins were pillaged and filled in after the Conquest, becoming the foundations of much of Sultanahmet.

Remnants of the Great Palace have been uncovered, including the mosaic floors in the Museum of Great Palace Mosaics (closed for renovations at the time of research). There are also sections of masonry scattered among the hotels and restaurants in the district of Cankurtaran between the Blue Mosque and the historic sea walls. For more information, check out byzantium1200.com, which has computer-generated images that bring ancient Byzantium to life.



MUSEUMS PASS İSTANBUL: POOR VALUE

Visitors considering purchasing a Museums Pass İstanbul should know that it offers very poor value. Costing a whopping €105, the card advertises that it covers entry to 12 museums, but at the time of research five of these were closed for full restorations and no re-opening dates were available. Of the museums that were open, only three – the Museum of Turkish & Islamic Arts, the İstanbul Archaeology Museums and Topkapı Palace (including the Harem and Aya İrini) – are of general interest. The combined entrance fee for these three venues when tickets are purchased separately will cost around €75.



See page 44 for map
of locations

LISTINGS

Best Places for...

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End



Eating

Cheap Eats

Hafız Mustafa €

19 B1

Historic *şekerlemeleri* (sweets shop) serving milk puddings, baklava, *künefe* and other treats in its elegant upstairs tea salon. Branches in Sultanahmet and Sirkeci. 8am-2am

KD Karadeniz Aile Pide ve Kebap Salonu €

20 B5

Serving tasty pides, soups and kebaps since 1985, this Karadeniz pide joint off Divan Yolu is deservedly popular. No alcohol. 8am-11pm

Çiğdem Pastanesi €

21 B5

In business since 1961, this bustling patisserie is a safe bet for a quick tea or coffee accompanied by a sandwich, *börek* (filled pastry) or sweet treat. 7am-11pm

Restaurant Meals

Galeyan Restaurant €€

€€

22 B5

The restaurant at the Sura Hotel off Divan Yolu serves better-than-average Turkish standards (dips, kebaps etc). 11.30am-midnight

Khorasani €€

23 B5

Located just off Divan Yolu, this contemporary *ocakbaşı* (grill house) specialises in mezes and classic kebaps. 11am-2am

Balıkçı Sabahattin €€€

€€€

24 D7

Sultanahmet's most prestigious restaurant, serving mezes and ultra-fresh fish. Sit in the garden or in the historic *konak* (house). noon-midnight



Shopping

Stylish Souvenirs

İznik Classics

25 D6

Owner Tahir Eğinci sells traditionally produced

hand-painted ceramic pieces (plates, tiles, vases etc) featuring both classic and contemporary motifs. 9am-7pm

Khaftan

26 B7

This boutique just off the Hippodrome sells art and antiques including embroidered Ottoman-era fabrics, ceramics, paintings, miniatures and sculptures. 9am-5.30pm

Textiles

Jennifer's Hamam

27 C7

Owned by Canadian Jennifer Gaudet, this Arasta Bazaar business stocks top-quality hand-woven towels, *peştemals* (traditional bath wraps) and robes in a huge variety of colours. 8.30am-8pm

ATA Textiles

28 C7

Another recommended Arasta Bazaar business, ATA sells colourful robes, towels and *peştemals* in attractive styles. 8.30am-8pm



See p92
for eating,
drinking and
shopping
listings



Explore

Bazaar District

This beguiling district is home to both the Grand Bazaar and the Spice Bazaar. Amid the thousands of shops that surround these centuries-old marketplaces are Ottoman-era hamams and caravanserais that once sheltered Silk Road traders transporting exotic goods. The streets between the bazaars are a popular stamping ground for İstanbullus, and seem to crackle with a good-humoured and infectious energy – exploring here is a multi-sensory and enormously satisfying experience, especially if you sample some of the delectable street food. There's a surfeit of magnificent Ottoman monuments, too, including the landmark Süleymaniye, Yeni Camii and Beyazıt Mosques. Put simply, this is the most vibrant and diverse district on the historical peninsula, one that rewards visitors who explore off the well-trodden tourist track.

Getting Around



Tram

To get here from Sultanahmet or Beyoğlu, walk or take the tram (direction: Bağcılar/Cevizlibağ). The route stops at Eminönü (for the Spice Bazaar and Yeni Cami), Çemberlitaş (for the Nuruosmaniye and east entrance of the Grand Bazaar) and Beyazıt-Kapalı Çarşı (for the west entrance of the Grand Bazaar and Beyazıt Meydanı).



Metro

The Süleymaniye and Şehzade Mehmet Mosques are near the Vezneciler metro stop (M2 line from Taksim Square and Şişhane).

Grand Bazaar (p74)

EVRENKALINBACAK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



THE BEST

MARKET Grand Bazaar (p74)






IMPERIAL MOSQUE
Süleymaniye Mosque (p80)

HIDDEN TREASURE Rüstem
Paşa Mosque (p84)





FOOD TOUR 'Backstreets of
the Bazaar Quarter' (p88)

SHOP Ali Muhiddin Hacı
Bekir (p85)

For more see

- Top Experiences  p74
 Experiences  p84
 Eating  p92
 Drinking  p93
 Shopping  p93

1

- Top Experiences  p74
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 Drinking  p93
 Shopping  p93

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VEFA

MOLLA
HÜSREV

Kayserili
Ahmet Paşa
Konağı



23

Saraçhane
Park

KALENDERHANE

Şehzade
Mehmet
Mosque



26

BALABAN
AĞA

Laleli
Mosque



13

Laleli-
Üniversite

Turkish Hamam
Culture
Museum



20

BEYAZIT

Beyazıt
Mosque



19

Beyazıt
Tower



18

Beyazıt
State
Library



17

İstanbul
University

Süleymaniye
Mosque



33

Mimar Sinan
Teras Cafe



21

Altan
Şekerleme

7

Bâb-ı Âli
Kahvesi



22

Golden Horn
Metro Bridge



9

Küçükpazar



9

Küçük Pazar
Yokuşu

9

Regin Gümüşpala
Cad

9

Kibrit Çeşme
Cad

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Hayriye Hanım
Sk

9

Mimar Sinan
Cad

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Felva
Yokuşu

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Mimar Sinan
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Döğmeçler Hanımı
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K. esefoğlu
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Prof. Sıddık
Sami Onar
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★ TOP EXPERIENCE

Grand Bazaar

When exploring this sprawling, labyrinthine marketplace, be sure to peep through doorways to discover hidden *hans* (caravanserais), veer down narrow lanes to watch artisans at work, enjoy a drink in a traditional coffeehouse, banter with shopkeepers and wander the picturesque main thoroughfares.

MAP P72 E5



PLANNING TIPS

The bazaar is closed on Sunday. Avoid visiting in the late afternoon, when the main thoroughfares (Kalpakçılar Caddesi, Sipahi Sokak, Yağlıkçılar Caddesi) can be crowded.



Scan for opening hours.

History

Starting as a small vaulted *bedesten* (warehouse) built by order of Mehmet the Conqueror in 1461, the Kapalıçarşı (Covered Market) grew to cover a vast area as more than 60 lanes between the *bedesten*, neighbouring shops and *hans* were roofed. The explorer and writer Evliya Çelebi (1611–82), who travelled throughout the extended Ottoman Empire for over four decades in the 17th century, wrote about the bazaar in the first volume of his renowned *Seyahatnâme* (Book of Travel), recording that there were 3000 shops at the Grand Bazaar in 1630, plus 300 located in surrounding *hans*. When he wrote, the market wasn't the huge covered bazaar we see today – it comprised the 15th-century İç (Inner) and Yeni (New) Bedesten, with shopping streets clustered between and around the two. By 1880, the bazaar contained 4399 shops, 2195 workshops, 12 *hans* and nearly 500 shops. Today, there are approximately 400 shops in the bazaar and it attracts up to 400,000 visitors every day.

Notable Features

The two oldest parts of the bazaar are the **İç (Inner) Bedesten**, which is also known as the Eski (Old) Bedesten; and the **Yeni (New) Bedesten**, which is now called the Sandal Bedestanı. The İç



SEBASTIAN INTELISANO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Bedesten is in the centre of the bazaar and home to many antique shops. The atmospheric Sandal Bedestanı was recently – and controversially – leased to the global restaurant chain Nusr-Et, which has opened a steakhouse in it.

Major thoroughfares are Kalpakçılar Caddesi, which runs east–west, and Sipahi Sokak/Yağlıkçılar Sokak, which runs north–south. The streets at the heart of the bazaar are particularly attractive, featuring colourfully painted vaulted ceilings, marble floors and decorative *sebils* (public drinking fountains).

Perhaps the most interesting areas here are the *hans*, which were built as workshops and storage space for local traders. Because the foot traffic in the *hans* is infinitesimal compared with the



QUICK BREAK

There are plenty of eateries inside the bazaar, but the tastiest food in the district is available on or around Kılıççılar Sokak, just outside the bazaar's Kılıççılar Gate.



STREET NAMES

Streets in the bazaar retain their Ottoman-era names, and most of these reference the trades or shops that were traditionally based there.

Kalpakçılar Caddesi was named for the makers of fur hats; Kuyumcular Caddesi for jewellers; Perdahçılar Sokak for polishers; Takkeçiler Sokak for skullcap makers; Sipahi Sokak for cavalry soldiers; and İnciciler Sokağı for pearl merchants.

The Art of Bargaining

The elaborate etiquette of the Ottoman Empire lingers in many day-to-day rituals still observed in its greatest creation, İstanbul. Until recently, the art of bargaining was one of these. Times have changed, though, and these days the non-negotiable price tag reigns supreme in most of the city's retail outlets, including here at the Grand Bazaar. Perhaps the only exception to this rule can be found in the bazaar's carpet shops. If you are tempted to buy a carpet or rug here, keep the following tips in mind:

The 'official' prices have almost always been artificially inflated to allow for a bargaining margin, with 20% to 30% the rule of thumb.

Never feel pressured to buy something. Tea and conversation are gratis. If you accept them, you don't need to buy anything in exchange.

Before starting to bargain, decide how much you like the carpet or rug and how much you are prepared to pay for it.

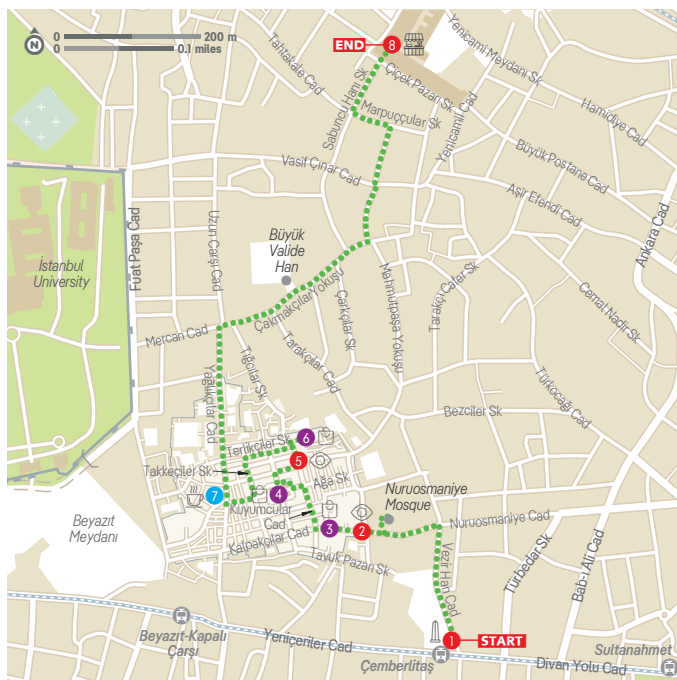
Your first offer should be around 60% of the initial asking price. The shopkeeper will laugh, look offended or profess to be puzzled, which is all part of the ritual. He will then make a counter offer of 80% to 90%. You should then say that you are not prepared to pay that amount and instead offer around 70%. By this stage you and the shopkeeper should have sized each other up. He will cite the price at which he is prepared to sell and, if it corresponds with what you were initially happy to pay, you can agree to the deal. If not, you should smile, shake hands and walk away.



Walk the Grand Bazaar

The Grand Bazaar is the heart of İstanbul's Old City and has been so for centuries. This walk outlines a route through the bazaar and surrounding streets, introducing visitors to its major thoroughfares and interesting architectural features. Visit any day except Sunday, when the bazaar is closed.

START	END	LENGTH
Çemberlitaş tram stop	Spice Bazaar	1.5km; 40 minutes



1 Ancient Monument

Start at the **Çemberlitaş** column next to the tram stop of the same name. This was erected by order of the Emperor Constantine to celebrate the dedication of New Rome (Constantinople) as capital of the Roman Empire in 330 CE.

2 Imperial Entrance

Walk down Vezir Han Caddesi until you come to a cobbled pedestrianised street on your left. Walk along this until you reach the Nuruosmaniye Mosque. Next to the mosque is one of the major entrances to the Grand Bazaar, the **Nuruosmaniye Kapısı** (Nuruosmaniye Gate), which is adorned by an imperial *tuğra* (calligraphic signature).

3 Street of Jewellers

Head through the gate into brightly lit **Kalpakçılar Caddesi**, which is lined with jewellery shops. This is where much of the day-to-day business of the bazaar occurs, with locals coming here to bargain for gold bars, coins and jewellery.

4 Heart of the Bazaar

Veer right into Kuyumcular Caddesi and then left into İnciciler Sokak to reach the oldest part of the bazaar, the domed **İç (Inner) Bedesten**. A number of antique stores are located here.

5 Oriental Kiosk

Exiting the İç Bedesten from its north door, head to the first cross

street, Halıcılar Sokak. Turn right and then left, re-entering Kuyumcular Caddesi (now Acı Çeşme Sokak). The little **kiosk** in the middle of the street was built in the early 19th century as a pudding shop.

6 Historic Caravanserai

A little further down Acı Çeşme Sokak is the entrance to the pretty **Zincirli Han**, home to jewellery shops and a well-known carpet merchant.

7 Coffee Stop

From Acı Çeşme Sokak, turn left into Perdahçılar Sokak and left again into Takkeçiler Sokak, home to lovely marble *sebils*. Turn right into Zenneciler Sokak and you'll soon come to a junction with Sipahi Sokak. **Şark Kahvesi**, the bazaar's best coffeehouse, is on the nearby corner.

8 Shopping District

Turn right into Sipahi Sokak and continue straight, exiting the bazaar through the Örucüler Kapısı (Knitters Gate) and continuing along Yağlıkçılar Sokak until you reach the junction with Mercan Caddesi. Veer right into Çakmakçılar Yokuşu, passing the 17th-century Büyük Valide Han on the left and veering into **Mahmutpaşa Yokuşu** (p84), which runs downhill to the Spice Bazaar.

Süleymaniye Mosque

Commissioned by Süleyman I, known as ‘the Magnificent’, this was the fourth imperial mosque built in İstanbul and it certainly lives up to its patron’s nickname. Though not the largest Ottoman mosque in the city, it is certainly one of the grandest and most beautiful.

MAP P72 C3



PLANNING TIPS

General visiting hours are 8.30am to 4.45pm.

Tourists should not enter the mosque during prayer times or on Fridays before 1.30pm. Women must wear a headscarf.



Scan for the mosque's Turkish-only website.

The Mosque

Mimar Sinan, the most famous and talented of all imperial architects, designed the mosque, which was built between 1550 and 1557. The four minarets with their 10 beautiful *şerefes* (balconies) are said to represent the fact that Süleyman was the fourth of the Osmanlı sultans to rule the city and the 10th sultan after the establishment of the empire.

Inside, four buttresses are built into the walls of the building – the result is wonderfully open and airy. The *mihrab* is covered in fine İznik tiles. Other interior decoration includes window shutters inlaid with mother-of-pearl, stained-glass windows and medallions featuring fine calligraphy.

The Külliye

Each Ottoman imperial mosque had an associated *külliye*. These are philanthropic complexes including a *medrese* (seminary), hamam, *darüşşifa* (hospital), *imaret* (soup kitchen), *kütüphane* (library), *tabhane* (inn for travelling dervishes) and cemetery with *türbes* (tombs). Over time many *külliyes* were demolished; fortunately, a number of the buildings here remain intact. The *imaret* and *tabhane* are on the northwestern edge of the mosque and the buildings on Professor Sıddık Sami Onar Caddesi opposite the main entrance once housed three *medreses* and a primary school. The *darüşşifa* is on the corner of Professor Sıddık Sami Onar Caddesi



TAHA ELMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

and Şifahane Sokak and the still-functioning Süleymaniye Hamamı is east of the mosque. The *külliyeye's arasta* (row of shops) and two other *medreses* are located on Mimar Sinan Caddesi, below the mosque's scenic terrace.

Türbes

To the right (southeast) of the main entrance is the cemetery, home to five *türbes*, including those of Süleyman and his wife Haseki Hürrem Sultan (Roxelana). Süleyman is interred alongside their daughter Mihrimah and two later sultans: Süleyman II and Ahmet II.

Although architect Mimar Sinan described the smaller Selimiye Mosque in Edirne as his best work, he chose to be interred in the Süleymaniye complex. His modest tomb is just outside the mosque's walled garden, next to a *medrese* building.



QUICK BREAK

The former *medreses* on Professor Sıddık Sami Onar Caddesi are now home to a raft of eateries serving tasty *kuru fasulye* (white beans cooked in a spicy tomato sauce).

★ TOP EXPERIENCE

Spice Bazaar

Vividly coloured spices are displayed alongside jewel-like *lokum* (Turkish delight), aromatic dried herbs and luscious combs of local honey at this Ottoman-era marketplace in bustling Eminönü, providing eye candy for the thousands of tourists and local shoppers who make their way here every day.

MAP P72 F3



PLANNING TIP

Prices of spices and other products are cheaper in the shops surrounding the bazaar (especially Hasırcılar Caddesi) than they are in the bazaar itself. The quality is often better there, too.

The bazaar is open from 8am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday, and from 9am Sunday.

History

The bazaar building was constructed in the 1660s as part of the *küllüye* of the Yemı Cami (New Mosque), with rent from the shops supporting the upkeep of the mosque as well as its charitable activities, which included a school, hamam and hospital. Its architect was Koca Kasım Ağa (1570–1659), chief architect to the imperial court, who died just before construction commenced.

The market's Turkish name, Mısır Çarşısı (Egyptian Market), references the fact that the building was initially endowed with taxes levied on goods imported from Egypt. In its heyday the bazaar was the final stop for camel caravans that travelled the Silk Road from China, India and Persia.

Shopping

In need of a herbal love potion or 'natural' Turkish Viagra? This is the place to source them, although we wouldn't vouch for their efficacy! As well as spices (*baharat*), dried herbs, nuts, honey in the comb and caviar, the bazaar's 80-plus shops sell dried fruit, *lokum* and fruit pressed into sheets and dried (*pestil*). The number of stalls selling tourist trinkets increases annually, yet this remains a great place to stock up on edible souvenirs while admiring a well-preserved building. Quality stalls here include **Malatya Pazarı** (for dried fruit),



LAPAS77/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Cankurtaran Gıda (deli items) and **Arifoğlu Baharat** (spices). Don't purchase *lokum* here – head to nearby **Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir** (p85), **Hafız Mustafa** (p93) or **Altan Şekerleme** (p86) instead.

Associated Businesses

In the domed rooms above the bazaar's arched front entrance is **Pandeli**, a restaurant in operation since 1901. Its three salons are encrusted with stunning turquoise-coloured İznik tiles and feature painted ceilings and chandeliers. Sadly, the food doesn't live up to the magnificence of the surrounds.

On the west side of the market, there are outdoor produce stalls selling fresh foodstuffs from all over Anatolia, including a wonderful selection of cheeses. On the eastern side of the bazaar are stalls selling plants. There are also public toilets there.



QUICK BREAK

Head to Hasircılar Caddesi to source an expertly made Turkish coffee at Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi's Kuru Kahveci cafe or A'la Khave Evi in the Beta Yeni Han.

EXPERIENCES

Find a Hidden Jewel

MOSQUE

MAP: 1 P72 E2

Nestled in the middle of the busy Tahtakale shopping district surrounding the Spice Bazaar, the diminutive **Rüstem Paşa Mosque** is an absolute gem. Dating from 1560, it was designed by Mimar Sinan for Rüstem Paşa, son-in-law and grand vizier of Süleyman the Magnificent. A showpiece of the best Ottoman architecture and tile art, it is thought to have been the prototype for Sinan's greatest work, the Selimiye Camii in Edirne.

The mosque is easy to miss because it's not at street level. There's a set of access stairs on Hasırcılar Caddesi and another on the small street that runs right (north) off Hasırcılar Caddesi towards the Golden Horn. At the top of the stairs, there's a terrace and the mosque's colonnaded porch. Inside the porch, exquisite panels of İznik tiles are set into the mosque's facade. The interior is covered in more tiles and features a lovely dome, supported by four tiled pillars.

Follow the Local Lead

SHOPPING PRECINCT

The shopping thoroughfare of **Mahmutpaşa Yokuşu** links the Grand Bazaar with the Spice Bazaar at Eminönü. This is where locals come to shop on every day except Sunday, jostling their way through a throng of street vendors

and porters. It's a great place to see the real mercantile city at work and offers an enjoyable contrast to the tourist-focused bazaars. From the Grand Bazaar, leave through the Mahmutpaşa Kapısı (Mahmutpaşa Gate; Gate 18) and walk downhill. Along the way you will pass historic but dilapidated *hans* and one of the oldest hamams in the city, the 1476 **Mahmutpaşa Hamamı** (MAP: 2 P72 F5). Long decommissioned, this is in dire need of restoration. At the bottom of the street you will reach a junction with Hacı Kuçuk Sk, where you should turn left and then immediately right. Continue straight ahead and then turn left at Marpuççular Caddesi, which takes you to the frantically busy streets of Tahtakale around the Spice Bazaar.

Sip & Savour a Türk Kahve

SHOP & CAFE

When in Eminönü, follow your nose to Hasırcılar Caddesi to enjoy a traditional Turkish coffee at the most famous coffee supplier in İstanbul, **Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi** (p93). Established over a century ago, the company roasts coffee beans in its distinctive art deco headquarters immediately west of the Spice Bazaar, scenting the entire district and selling the coffee through a retail window whose presence is signalled by ever-present queues of customers.

Behind the retail window is the company's **Kuru Kahveci** (p93) cafe and bookshop – access this via a small laneway off Hasırçılar Caddesi. Above the cafe there's a small museum with exhibits about the company's history and Türkiye's venerable coffee tradition.

When enjoying a coffee here, check the Fortune Telling page on the company's website (mehmetefendi.com/eng/turkish-coffee/fortune-telling) for a guide to the art of reading the coffee grounds left on the bottom of your cup!

Join Local Shoppers

SHOPPING DISTRICT

One of the busiest shopping strips in the Old City, **Hasırçılar Caddesi** and its western extension **Kutucular Caddesi** run from the western side of the Spice Bazaar to the eastern edge of the Küçük Pazar (Little Bazaar) district located below the Süleymaniye Mosque. Homeware and hardware stores, sweets shops and multiple spice, nut and coffee traders ply bustling trades here, and a walk along the strip's noisy and aromatic length

is a sensory delight almost unmatched in the city.

This part of Eminönü has long been a hub for coffee trading, and a number of *hans* around the Spice Bazaar were built for the storage and preparation of coffee beans. These days the unrestored early-20th-century Kourou Kahvedji Han immediately south of Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi is home to well-regarded coffee retailer **İhsan Kurukahvecioğlu** (MAP: 3 P72 F3); and the 17th-century **Beta Yeni Han** (MAP: 4 P72 F3) on Hasırçılar Caddesi is the base of a long-established tea and coffee importer that operates a retail coffee store, a tea store and the pleasant **A'la Kahve Evi** (p93) coffeehouse here.

Source Authentic Turkish Delight

SHOPPING

The city's most famous *lokum* shops are located in the streets surrounding the Spice Bazaar. The oldest of these is **Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir** (MAP: 6 P72 G3), which was established in 1777 and continues to sell its products from the original shop on Hamidiye



TURKISH COFFEE

A thick and powerful brew, *Türk kahve* (Turkish coffee) is drunk in a couple of short sips. If you order a cup, you will be asked how sweet you like it – *çok şekerli* means 'very sweet'; *orta şekerli*, 'middling'; *az şekerli*, 'slightly sweet' and *şekersiz* or *sade*, 'not at all'. In the Bazaar District, good *Türk kahve* can be enjoyed at atmospheric **Erenler Nargile ve Çay Bahçesi** (MAP: 5 P72 E6) near the Grand Bazaar and at Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi and A'la Khave Evi near the Spice Bazaar.

Caddesi. **Hafız Mustafa** (p93), established in 1864, has a shop across the road and **Altan Şekerleme** (MAP: 7 P72 D2), established in 1865, is located in the Küçük Pazar on the other side of the Spice Bazaar. Many people think that the *lokum* sold at Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir is the best, but why not decide for yourself by purchasing and sampling from all three? Favours include *cevizli* (walnut), *fıstıklı* (pistachio), *badem* (almond) and *roze* (rose water). Ask for a *çeşitli* if you want an assortment.

Satisfy Coffee Cravings TOUR

Coffee aficionados should consider signing up for the 'Turkish Coffee Trail' walk offered by **Istanbul Walks** (istanbulwalks.com), a local tour company specialising in cultural tourism. This three-hour experience includes coffee tastings at four atmospheric venues: one in Sultanahmet, one near the Grand Bazaar, another inside the bazaar, and the last at a coffee trader in one of *hans* near the Spice Bazaar. Participants are given the opportunity to make their own coffee at the last stop.

Scoff a Signature Snack

FOOD STANDS

MAP: 8 P72 F2

İstanbul's most distinctive fast food is the *balık ekmek* (fish sandwich), and the most atmospheric place to try one of these is from one of the **balık ekmek stands** alongside the gaudily decorated boats moored next to the Golden Horn at Eminönü. Here, vendors grill mackerel fillets and then cram the fish and salad into fresh bread. A generous squeeze of bottled lemon juice is optional but recommended. The sandwiches are particularly delicious accompanied by a glass of *şalgam* (a blend of water, boiled bulgar and pickled carrot and turnip juice), which can be purchased from a dedicated cart next to the *balık ekmek* stands.

Walk Across the Golden Horn

BRIDGE

MAP: 9 P72 D1

Most visitors walk over the Galata Bridge at some point during their visit to İstanbul, but few know that there is a second, equally enjoyable, way of walking between the Old City and Beyoğlu. The modern **Golden Horn Metro**



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The name İstanbul probably derives from 'eis ten polin' (Greek for 'to the city'). Though the Turks kept the name Constantinople after the Conquest, they also used other names, including İstanbul and Dersaadet (City of Peace and/or Happiness). The city's name was officially changed to İstanbul by Atatürk in the early republican years.

Bridge (Haliç Metro Köprüsü), which opened in 2014, connects the Küçük Pazar near the Spice Bazaar with Karaköy and has two pedestrian walkways. The metro station is located in the middle of the bridge. On the Karaköy side of the water, a landscaped park offers wonderful views across to the Süleymaniye Mosque.

Track 007 Through the City

CINEMATIC İSTANBUL

Three James Bond films have been set in İstanbul: *From Russia with Love* (1963), *The World Is Not Enough* (1999) and *Skyfall* (2012). The last of these filmed much of its opening sequence in the Bazaar District. In these scenes, Bond and Moneypenny pursue the villain, Patrice, through Eminönü and uphill to the Grand Bazaar, where Bond rides a motorcycle on the roof. Other locations included the **Deutsche Orient Bank Building** (MAP: 10 P72 63) in Eminönü, the square in front of the Yeni Cami (New Mosque; p88) and the

Büyük Valide Han (MAP: 11 P72 E4) near the Grand Bazaar.

The Bazaar also features in *From Russia with Love* (the head of Station T, Kerim Bey, takes Bond there). Its other locations include **Sirkeci Railway Station** (MAP: 12 P72 H3; where Bond and Tatiana board the *Orient Express*), the Basilica Cistern (p60; which Bond and Kerim explore by rowboat) and Aya Sofya (p52; where the Russian agent is killed).

The World Is Not Enough includes scenes filmed on Kız Kulesi (p142) in Üsküdar and at Küçüksu Kasrı (p158) on the Bosphorus.

Explore Culinary Backstreets

FOOD TOUR

Lunch is an important part of the day for the shopkeepers, artisans and porters who work in the Bazaar District. As well as providing an excuse for a welcome break, it's also a chance to chat with fellow workers and catch up with the local gossip. As a result there are hundreds of food stands and



TULIP MANIA

In the early 18th century a craze for tulips took Ottoman society by storm. For members of the imperial court and their high-society acolytes, the flower was a symbol of refinement, one that was highly prized and thus extraordinarily expensive. It also signified a European sensibility, as the tulip trade was based in Holland. Sultan Ahmet III (r 1703–30) was a fervent admirer of both the flower and European architecture and his successor, Mustafa III, continued the tradition, commissioning the pretty Laleli ('with Tulips') Mosque (MAP: 13 P72 A6), which was built between 1759 and 1763 and is located a short walk from the Grand Bazaar.

eateries in the streets and lanes here, many of which are known for the quality of their food but can be hard to find. Fortunately, foodie tour outfit **Culinary Backstreets** (culinarybackstreets.com) offers a highly recommended six-hour 'Backstreets of the Bazaar Quarter' walking tour that explores the *hans* and streets around the Spice and Grand Bazaars, offering participants the chance to sample many delicious local foods (hint: don't eat breakfast on the day of the tour).

Admire a Once-New Mosque

MOSQUE

Only in İstanbul would a 400-year-old mosque be called 'new'. Constructed between 1597 and 1665 in a prominent location next to the mouth of the Golden Horn, the **New Mosque** (MAP: 14 P72 G3; Yenî Cami) was originally commissioned by Safiye Sultan, mother of Sultan Mehmet III. The building project

was completed six sultans later by order of Hatice Turhan Sultan (c 1628–83), mother of Sultan Mehmet IV. Turhan's **tomb** (MAP: 15 P72 G3) is nearby. The mosque features a large forecourt and a square sanctuary surmounted by a series of semidomes crowned by a grand dome. The interior is richly decorated with gold leaf, İznik tiles and carved marble.

If it is open, be sure to visit the exquisitely decorated **Hünkar Kasrı** (MAP: 16 P72 G3), once the sultan's waiting room, which is located above the grand archway on the eastern side of the mosque. Art exhibitions are sporadically staged here.

Visit a Seat of Imperial Power

SQUARE

In Byzantine times, **Beyazıt Square** (aka Hürriyet Meydanı) was called the Forum of Theodosius. Today it's home to students from the adjoining İstanbul University and plenty



IMPERIAL MOSQUES

After the Conquest, the Ottoman sultans wasted no time in putting their architectural stamp on the city. Mehmet kicked off this centuries-long building spree by demolishing the 4th-century Church of the Apostles, burial place of Byzantine emperors, and building the original Fatih Mosque in its place. Mehmet's son Süleyman I ('the Magnificent') embarked on an ambitious building programme when he ascended to the throne, commissioning the Süleymaniye, Şehzade Mehmet and Yavuz Sultan Selim mosques. His daughter Mihrimah commissioned mosques in Edirnekapı and Üsküdar. Later sultans and their consorts commissioned major structures including the Blue, Nuruosmaniye and Atik Valide Mosques.

of pigeons. The main structures on the square are the Beyazıt Mosque and the various buildings that originally formed part of its *külliye*.

These include a *medrese* that was being restored when this book was being researched, a double hamam and a caravanserai and *imaret* (soup kitchen) that have together

been transformed into the **Beyazıt State Library** (MAP: 17 P72 D5). Over-looking the square is the 85m-tall **Beyazıt Tower** (MAP: 18 P72 D4), in the grounds of the university.

The second imperial mosque built in İstanbul (after the Fatih Mosque), **Beyazıt Mosque** (MAP: 19 P72 D6) was constructed between 1501 and 1506 by order of Beyazıt II, son of Mehmet the Conqueror. The mosque's exceptional use of fine stone is noteworthy, with marble, porphyry, verd antique and rare granite all employed. The enclosed courtyard features 24 small domes and a central ablutions fountain. Beyazıt's *türbe* is behind the mosque.

Learn About Hamam Culture

MUSEUM

MAP: 20 P72 C6

Constructed by order of two powerful women (the mother of Selim I and one of the wives of Beyazıt II), the now decommissioned early-16th-century Beyazıt Hamam is one of the largest Ottoman bathhouses in the city. Also known as the Hamam-ı Kebir (Old Bathhouse), the square-planned



BEST ROOFTOP CAFES

The streets immediately below the Süleymaniye Mosque are home to a number of rooftop cafes popular with students at nearby İstanbul University, including the following:

Mimar Sinan Teras Cafe

MAP: 21 P72 D2

A magnificent panorama of the city can be enjoyed from the spacious outdoor terrace of this popular cafe in a ramshackle building located in the shadow of the Süleymaniye Mosque. Good for a coffee or çay. Service can be slow. *9am-12.30am*

Bâb-ı Âli Kahvesi

MAP: 22 P72 D3

Another cafe with a panoramic outdoor roof terrace. Views encompass Beyoğlu, the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus. *8am-2am*

building with its original male and female domed sections now houses the **Turkish Hamam Culture Museum**, with displays explaining the rituals and practicalities associated with this much-loved Turkish tradition. The interpretative panels here are replete with interesting information, including accounts of hamam visits left by European travellers in the 18th and 19th centuries. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, an English aristocrat who lived in Constantinople between 1716 and 1718, was one of these,

describing hamams as the women's equivalent of a coffee house 'where all of the news of the town is told, scandal invented etc'. Entry to the museum, which is operated by İstanbul University, is free.

Explore an Ottoman Heartland

HISTORIC DISTRICT

The streets surrounding the Süleymaniye Mosque are home to a number of Ottoman timber houses that have been restored as part of the Süleymaniye Urban Regeneration Project. To admire these, take a walk through the **Molla Hüsrev** district on the southwest-ern side of the mosque. From the *fasulye* (bean) restaurants and souvenir shops on Professor Sıddık Sami Onar Caddesi in front of the mosque, enter narrow Ayşekadın Hamamı Sokak (it's opposite the main gate to the mosque) and follow it and Kayserili Ahmetpaşa Sokak downhill. There are a number of pretty timber houses built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries here. Towards the bottom of the hill, on the right-hand side

of the street, look out for the most impressive of these, the **Kayserili Ahmet Paşa Konağı** (MAP: 23 P72 B4), a three-storey mansion that was once home to a minister of the Ottoman navy and is now the headquarters of the city's Directorate of Inspection of Conservation Implementation.

Try a Traditional Pick-Me-Up

TURKISH SPECIALITY

MAP: 24 P72 A3

Since opening for business in 1876, **Vefa Bozacısı** has been supplying locals with *boza*, a viscous non-alcoholic tonic made from water, sugar and fermented barley. Topped with dried chickpeas and a sprinkle of cinnamon, the drink has a slight lemony tang and a reputation for building up strength and virility. Be warned, though – it tends to be an acquired taste. The atmospheric interior of the bar has changed little over its long history. In summer, the bar also serves *şıra* (fermented grape juice), *limonata* and *Osmanlı şerbeti* (Ottoman cordials).



THE SEVEN HILLS

İstanbul's Old City is built on seven hills, and each of these is crowned with a major monument. The first hill is topped by Aya Sofya and the Blue Mosque and the second by the Nuruosmaniye Mosque. The Beyazıt and Süleymaniye mosques are on the third hill. Moving west, the Fatih Mosque is on the fourth hill, the Yavuz Sultan Selim Mosque is on the fifth and the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque is on the sixth. The seventh hill, near the Sea of Marmara, is home to the Cerrah Paşa and Haseki Sultan Mosques and the monumental Yedikule Fortress.

Pause on the Bazaar's Doorstep

MOSQUE

MAP: 25 P72 F6

Facing one of the major gateways into the Grand Bazaar, the **Nuru-osmaniye Mosque** was built in Ottoman baroque style between 1748 and 1755. Construction was started by order of Mahmut I and finished during the reign of his successor, Osman III. Meticulously restored in recent years, it has a central prayer hall topped by a huge dome, a unique polygonal rear courtyard and a *küllüye* comprising a *medrese*, *imaret*, *kütüphane* and *türbe* containing Şehsuvar Sultan, mother of Osman III. Despite its prominent position on the busy pedestrian route from Cağaloğlu Meydanı to the bazaar, the mosque is surprisingly peaceful and contemplative inside. Visitor entry is via the rear courtyard.

Pay Respects at a Father's Tribute

MOSQUE

MAP: 26 P72 A4

Süleyman the Magnificent had the square-shaped **Şehzade Mehmet Mosque** built between 1543 and 1548 as a memorial to his son Mehmet, who died of smallpox in 1543 at the age of 22. It was the first important mosque to be designed by Mimar Sinan and has a lovely garden setting, two double-balconied minarets and a large colonnaded courtyard with a *şadırvan* (ablution fountain) at its centre. Inside, the central dome is supported by four semidomes (one on each side of the square). Among the many important people buried in the five tile-encrusted tombs on the mosque's eastern side are Prince Mehmet, Süleyman's grand vizier Rüstem Paşa, and the son and daughter of Mehmed III (the son killed by order of his father). Other still-surviving parts of the *küllüye* include a *medrese* and a *tabhane* now used as a laboratory by the neighbouring Vefa Lycée.



THE GREAT SINAN

None of today's star architects come close to having the influence over a city that Mimar Koca Sinan had over Constantinople during his 50-year career. Born in 1497, Sinan was a recruit to the *devşirme*, the annual intake of Christian youths into the janissaries. He became a Muslim (as all such recruits did) and eventually took up a post as a military engineer in the corps. Süleyman the Magnificent appointed him chief of the imperial architects in 1538. Sinan designed a total of 321 buildings, 85 of which are still standing in İstanbul. He died in 1588.

LISTINGS

Best Places for...

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End



Eating

Tasty Kebabs

Dürümcü Raif Usta €

27 F5

Specialises in Adana and Urfa kebabs served with raw onion and parsley and wrapped in *lavaş* bread. The Adana is spicy. *8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat*

Dönerci Şahin Usta €

28 F5

Ask any Grand Bazaar shopkeeper about who makes the best döner in the area, and you'll likely get the same answer: 'Şahin Usta, of course!' *11am-4pm Mon-Sat*

Kokoreççi Erdinç Usta €

29 F5

Devotees of offal flock here for the *kokoreç*, stuffed and spiced lamb intestines grilled over charcoal and served in bread. *9am-6pm Mon-Sat*

Aynen Dürüm €

30 F5

Choose your kebab meat and then garnish the perfectly grilled result with pickles and herbs. *9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat*

Dürümcü Mehmet €

see 29 F5

Hole-in-the-wall serving excellent kebabs wrapped in *lavaş* bread. Intrepid eaters order the *kuzu ciğer* (lamb liver) and *kuzu yürek* (lamb heart) versions. *11am-7pm Mon-Sat*

Meşhur Dönerci Hacı Osman'ın Yeri €

31 D4

Popular döner stand occupying an elegant Ottoman *sebil* (fountain) near the bazaar. *10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat*

Casual Eats

Sefa Restaurant €

32 H6

Located between Sultanahmet and the Grand Bazaar, this clean and popular place offers *hazır yemek* (ready-made dishes). *7am-5pm Mon-Sat*

Kuru Fasulyeci Erzincanlı Ali Baba €

33 C3

Opposite the Süleymaniye Mosque and famous for its tasty *kuru fasulye* accompanied by *pilaf* (rice) and *turşu* (pickles). *11am-9pm*

Restaurants

Hamdi Restaurant €€

34 F3

The best-loved eatery in the Old City, this multi-floored restaurant serves excellent kebabs. Book a table on the rooftop terrace. *noon-11pm*

OCAK €€€

35 G3

Notable for its vegetarian set menus, this upmarket hotel restaurant serves refined rifts on traditional Anatolian specialities. *6.30pm-midnight*

Olden 1772 €€€

36 G4

A spectacular setting in the covered courtyard of a historic caravanserai makes this upmarket Anatolian restaurant in Eminönü worthy of consideration. *9am-1am*



See page 72 for map of locations



Drinking

Best Grand Bazaar Cafes

Ethem Tezçakar Kahveci

37 E5

Cupboard-like *kahveci* (coffee house) with low tables and stools from which customers can watch the passing parade of shoppers. 9am-6pm Mon-Sat

Şark Kahvesi

38 E5

This historic *kahveci* is the best coffee and tea stop in the bazaar. 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat

Best Cafes near the Spice Bazaar

Kuru Kahveci

see 4 F3

The cafe of İstanbul's most famous coffee company is a tranquil haven amid the shopping mayhem on Hasircılar Caddesi. 9am-6pm Mon-Sat

A'la Khave Evi

see 4 F3

In the restored Beta Yeni Han on Hasircılar Caddesi, this courtyard cafe serves freshly roasted coffee (Turkish,

espresso and filter) tea and snacks. 9am-6pm Mon-Sat

Hafız Mustafa

39 G3

The Eminönü branch of the city-wide chain of sweets shops has a small cafe with upstairs and street seating. 6am-late



Shopping

Textile Shops

Yazmacı Necdet Danış

40 E5

Crammed with countless bolts of fabric, this place is patronised by fashion designers and buyers from every corner of the globe. 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat

Semo Halıcılık

41 E5

Owner Aziz Ozcan sells quality *suzanis* (embroidered and decorative tribal textiles from Central Asia) from his shop in the İç Çebeci Han. 9am-7pm Mon-Sat

Samerkand Textiles

42 E5

Excellent *suzanis* and *khafans* can be found in this shop down a hallway in the Astarçı Han. 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat

Other Grand Bazaar Shops

Lonca

43 E5

Located in the heart of the bazaar, this boutique sells soaps, towels, *peştemals* (bath wraps) and throws. 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat

Dhoku

44 E6

Artfully designed wool kilims (pileless rugs) in modernist designs are sold at two shops on the Grand Bazaar's Takkeciler Sokak. 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat

Epoque

45 F6

One of the few antique stores left in the bazaar, Epoque (aka Epok) sells silverware, jewellery, icons and other collectables. 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat

Coffee & Tea

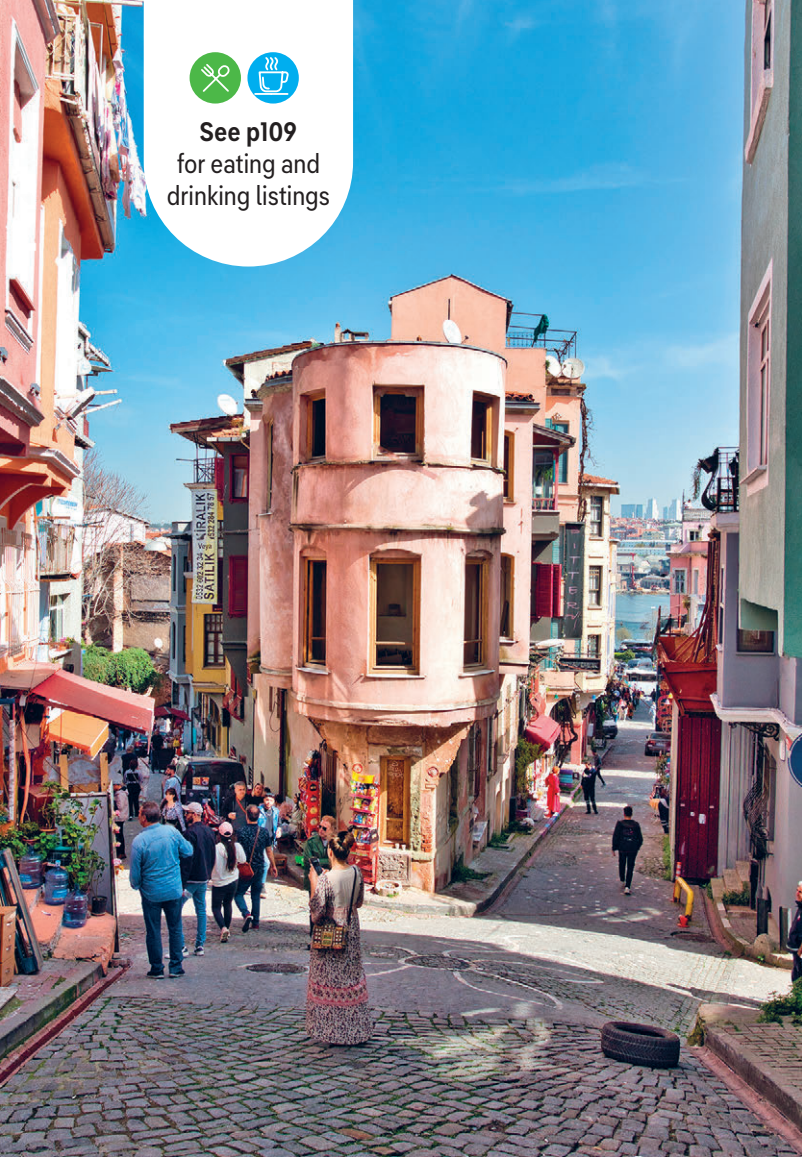
Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi

see 4 F3

For a great souvenir, purchase a Turkish coffee set comprising a coffee pot, two cups and a can of coffee from the retail window or associated Kuru Kahveci cafe. 9am-6pm Mon-Sat



See p109
for eating and
drinking listings



Explore

Golden Horn & Western Districts

As Constantinople grew, a succession of city walls were built to protect the city. The Haliç (Golden Horn) neighbourhoods within these walls showcased İstanbul's ethnic diversity, with the Jewish community congregating in Balat, and Rûm (Greek Orthodox) İstanbullular in Fener. Although the largest district here, Fatih, is now named after Mehmet the Conqueror, the area itself is much older, having hosted the 4th-century Church of the Holy Apostles (demolished by Mehmet). Eyüpsultan, outside the walls, is home to the most important Muslim shrine in Türkiye and a host of significant Ottoman religious structures.

Getting Around



Ferry

The ferry (Haliç line) collects most passengers at the Karaköy İskelesi, then stops at Fener, Balat and Ayvansaray before reaching Eyüpsultan.



Tram

From Sultanahmet, trams travel to Fatih (direction: Bağcılar/Cevizlibağ). Alight at Yusufpaşa, Haseki or Fındıkzade. From Eminönü, the T5 tram travels to Alibeyköy. Alight at Fener, Balat, Ayvansaray, Feshane and Eyüpsultan Teleferik.



Metro

From Beyoğlu, the M2 (direction: Yenikapı) travels to Vezneciler, from where it's an easy walk to Zeyrek and Fatih.

Balat (p107)

DOTMILLER1986/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



THE BEST

FERRY TRIP Golden Horn Ferry Trip (p98)

WALKING TOUR Walk Eyüpsultan (p102)

HAMAM Zeyrek Çinili Hamam (p105)

STREET MARKET Çarşamba Pazarı (p106)

CAFE CULTURE Balat (p107)

For more see

- Top Experiences p98
 Experiences p104
 Eating p109
 Drinking p109



★ TOP EXPERIENCE

Golden Horn Ferry Trip

Not many visitors are aware of the ferry route up and down the length of the Haliç (meaning ‘estuary’). This is a shame, as this easy and cheap trip passes districts that have undergone an exciting transformation in recent decades and that are home to many historic monuments.



PLANNING TIPS

You'll need a charged İstanbulkart to travel on the Haliç Hattı (Haliç Line). Devote at least half a day to exploring the Golden Horn neighbourhoods – a full day is better.



Scan for ferry times and frequencies.

Karaköy to Kasımpaşa

The trip starts at Üsküdar, but most passengers board at the Karaköy İskelesi before the ferry sails under three bridges – the Galata Bridge, the Haliç Metro Bridge and the Atatürk Bridge – to **Kasımpaşa**. The Ottoman imperial naval yards were located here from the 16th century and some of the original building stock remains. The recently renovated palace-like building next to the ferry dock is the 19th-century **Bahriye Nezareti**, built as a residence by wealthy banker Abraham Camondo. On the hill above is an 18th-century building with a clock tower. This was originally built to house the imperial naval academy but was converted to a hospital in the 1850s. The waterside here is currently being redeveloped as part of the HaliçPort project, which will see the historic dry docks and buildings repurposed and a scenic promenade and marina constructed.

Kasımpaşa to Balat

In the first of a number of shore-to-shore crossings, the ferry crosses the Golden Horn to **Fener**, traditional home of the city's Greek population (p107). The prominent red-brick building with a domed tower on the hill above the *iskele* (ferry dock) is the **Phanar Greek Orthodox College**, built between 1881 and 1883. Above it, crowning one of the city's seven hills, is the **Yavuz Sultan Selim**



NICK N A/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Mosque (p107), built in the early 16th century by Süleyman the Magnificent to memorialise his father, Selim I. On the waterfront is the **Church of St Stephen of the Bulgars** (p107) with its distinctive gilded cupolas.

The boat then follows the western shoreline to the rapidly gentrifying suburb of **Balat** (p107), a short distance away. Once home to a large proportion of İstanbul's Jewish population (it retains two historic synagogues), this district is now known for its thriving cafe culture.

Balat to Hasköy

Continuing its voyage, the ferry crosses the Golden Horn to **Hasköy**. For centuries a small, predominantly Jewish village, Hasköy became home to a naval shipyard and a sultan's hunting ground in the Ottoman period. The city's major



QUICK BREAK

Vodina Caddesi and Yıldırım Caddesi in Balat are the epicentre of Balat's bohemian cafe scene. Head to Velvet Cafe or Kaffa Miro for a coffee, tea or simple meal.

transport and technology museum, the **Rahmi M Koç Museum** (p178), is located directly to the left of the *iskele*. A number of historic cemeteries are spread across the hills behind.

Hasköy to Sütlüce

After another water crossing, the ferry stops at **Ayvansaray**, from where passengers can choose to alight and walk up the hill alongside remnants of the historic city walls (you'll also see these from the ferry) to the **Chora Church building** (Kariye Camii; p104) and the beautiful **Mihrimah Sultan Mosque** (p108).

From Ayvansaray, the boat sails under the Haliç Köprüsü (Haliç Bridge) to **Sütlüce**. The large waterside complex to the left of the Sütlüce İşkesesi with turquoise tiles on its exterior is a modern convention centre.





GOLDEN HORN REVITALISATION

The Haliç has provided safe harbour for ships for millennia. After its Byzantine and Ottoman heyday, its desirability as a residential area deteriorated in the 20th century and its districts became dishevelled through neglect.

The waterway suffered, too, becoming increasingly polluted.

Fortunately, recent initiatives have improved water quality and seen waterside parks and a tramway along the western shore opened.



TANER MUHLIS KARAGUZEL/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

The last sailing stage crosses the short distance between Sötlüce and Eyüpsultan on the western shore.

Eyüpsultan

The ferry's final stop is **Eyüpsultan**, a fascinating suburb built around the **Eyüp Sultan Mosque** (p103), one of the most important religious sites in Türkiye. Alighting here, you can choose to go straight to visit the mosque or follow the walking tour on p102, which starts at the recently opened **Feshane Artıstanbul** (p103; pictured above), an impressive cultural centre with gallery spaces, a library and a pleasant cafe.

From Eyüpsultan, it's possible to take a ferry back to Karaköy. Alternatively, a tram departs from a stop in front of the Feshane and stops at Ayvansaray, Balat, Cıbalı and Küçükpazar before terminating at Eminönü.



Walk Eyüpsultan

Although Eyüpsultan was settled in Byzantine times, few traces of its early history remain. Instead, the district is a showcase of mosques, tombs and public buildings built by the Ottoman sultans, their families and courtiers. This walk passes important sights and ends at the Golden Horn's most famous cafe.

START	END	LENGTH
Feshane Artistanbul	Pierre Loti Cafe	2km; one hour



1 Repurposed Fes Factory

Start at the **Feshane Artİstanbul** cultural centre located in the 19th-century Feshane-i Amire, an imperial factory that manufactured uniforms for the Ottoman army. The uniforms included the fes, adopted as military headdress in 1827, hence the building's name.

2 Mosque Complex

Cross Yavedut Caddesi to reach the **Zal Mahmut Paşa Mosque Complex**. Commissioned by an important courtier and his wife Şah Sultan, the daughter of Selim II, this important late-16th-century complex designed by Mimar Sinan comprises a mosque, two *medreses*, a *şadırvan* and a *türbe*.

3 Bustling Square

Leave the *küllİye* through the (rear) gate to access Zalpaşa Caddesi and turn right, passing the Tomb of Nakkaş Hasan Paşa, a famous Ottoman *nakkaş* (painter of miniatures), before crossing Hz Halid Bulvarı and continuing to **Eyüp Sultan Square**. Groups of pilgrims congregate around the fountains here, surrounded by street vendors selling souvenirs and sweets.

4 Important Islamic Shrine

On the edge of the square is the **Eyüp Sultan Mosque & Tomb**,

built on the supposed burial place of Ebu Eyüp el-Ensari, a friend of the Prophet who fell in battle outside the walls of Constantinople while carrying the banner of Islam during the Arab assault on the city (674 to 678 CE).

5 Twin Tombs

Backtrack to the square; the next stop is on the southwest corner of Cami Kebir Sokak, where two 16th-century *türbes* designed by Mimar Sinan are located: the **Tomb of Sokullu Mehmet Paşa** and the **Tomb of Siyavuş Paşa**.

6 Baroque Magnificence

Continue along Cami Kebir Sokak and turn left into Beybaba Sokak. When you reach the junction of Sultan Reşat Caddesi (aka Cülus Yolu), you'll see a pretty marble *sebil* (water fountain) that is part of the magnificent baroque-style **Mihrişah Valide Sultan Complex**, commissioned by the mother of Sultan Selim III in the late 18th century. Veer left.

7 Tea with a View

Walk to the junction with Balaban Yolu Sokak. Turn left to access a path going uphill into the Eyüp Sultan Mezarlığı (Cemetery of the Great Eyüp) or right to access a *teleferik* (cable car). The popular **Pierre Loti Café** is on a terrace at the top of the hill.

EXPERIENCES

Snack in Little Urfa

DISTRICT

In recent decades, the Laleli and Aksaray neighbourhoods west of the Bazaar District have developed a reputation as the centre of İstanbul's main red-light district. However, Aksaray possesses a more palatable claim to fame.

For decades it has been home to immigrants from southeast Türkiye, some of whom have opened businesses serving dishes popular in their home region. This has led to the streets immediately north of the Aksaray metro station becoming known as **Little Urfa**, after the city on the Turkish–Syrian border. Explore the block bounded by Simitçi Şakir Sokak, Sofular Sokak, Ragıp Bey Sokak and Horhor Caddesi and you'll see numerous simple eateries selling *ciğer* (liver) kebab, *lahmacun* (Arabic-style pizza), *beyran çorbası* (spicy lamb-based soup), *dürüm* (wrap filled with döner) and *künefe* (layers of dough bonded with sweet cheese, doused in syrup and served hot with a sprinkling of pistachio).

Sample Fatih's Sweet Treats

DISTRICT

The neighbourhood of **Fatih** is a haven for the many Syrian refugees who have fled the troubles in their homeland, and a number of eateries serving Syrian cuisine can be found here. Head to busy Turgut Özal Millet Caddesi (Yusufpaşa and Fındıkzade tram stops) to

grab a cheap and tasty snack at one of these. As well as falafel and shawarma joints, there are a number of excellent traditional sweets shops – **Zaitoune Sweets** (MAP: 1 P96 E6) and **Salloura Oğlu** (MAP: 2 P96 E6) are our favourites.

While Away Time with the Locals

MONUMENT

Rising majestically over the traffic on busy Atatürk Bulvarı, the limestone **Aqueduct of Valens** (MAP: 3 P96 C6) is one of the city's most distinctive landmarks. Commissioned by Emperor Valens and completed in AD 378, it linked the third and fourth hills and transported water from the north of the city to more than 100 cisterns within the city walls. Though no longer functioning, it supplies a regal backdrop for the **Dostlar Çay Evi** (MAP: 4 P96 C6) and **Sirelli Baklava** (MAP: 5 P96 C6) on Serdab Sokak in Zeyrek, both of which set out low stools and tables so that customers can relax in the afternoon sun while enjoying çay, baklava and games of *tavla* (backgammon).

Marvel at Byzantine Mosaics & Frescoes

SIGNIFICANT BUILDING

MAP: 6 P6 C3

İstanbul has more than its fair share of Byzantine monuments, but few are as drop-dead gorgeous as the mosaic- and fresco-laden **Chora Church** building (aka Kariye Camii or Kariye Müzesi).

Nestled in the shadow of Theodosius II's monumental land walls, the church was converted into a mosque during the Ottoman era, designated a museum in 1945 and turned back into a working mosque in 2020. The building was originally known as the Church of the Holy Saviour Outside the Walls (Chora literally means 'country'), reflecting the fact that when it was first built it was located outside the original city walls constructed by Constantine the Great. Virtually all of the interior decoration – the famous mosaics and the less renowned but equally striking frescoes – dates from c 1320. The building re-opened after a long restoration in 2024. The three mosaics in the nave (now a prayer hall that can only be accessed by male Muslim worshippers) have been covered but the mosaics in the inner and outer narthaxes and the frescoes in the side chapel can still be viewed.

Note that non-Muslims must pay a pricey entrance fee to visit and that on Fridays, access is restricted to Muslim worshippers.

Relax in Barbarossa's Bathhouse

HAMAM

MAP: **7** P96 D5

Closed for so many decades that locals had almost forgotten its existence, the **Zeyrek Çinili Hamam** underwent a painstaking restoration between 2010 and 2023 before reopening as a functioning twin hamam in 2024. The building dates from the early 16th century and was designed by Mimar Sinan for Barbaros Hayreddin Pasha (aka the pirate Barbarossa), admiral of the Ottoman navy. It is now owned by the Marmara hotel group, which has ensured that the restoration is as splendid as this historically significant building deserves. The *hararet* (steam room) spaces are particularly beautiful, featuring star-shaped apertures in the domed ceilings and ornate plaster *muqarnas* (three-dimensional decorations) in corners. In the men's section, the *soğukluk* (cold room) features a painted ceiling and marble fountain. Though once lined with İznik tiles (Çinili means 'tiles'), these were taken from the hamam in the 19th century and



BYZANTINE HERITAGE AT RISK

Many of İstanbul's Ottoman mosques have undergone major restorations to ensure their futures, but sadly the same attention hasn't been given to the city's venerable Byzantine buildings and monuments. A number of these are falling into a deplorable state of disrepair (the state of Aya İrini and the Theodosian Walls being good examples), and others have been converted from museums or churches into mosques, with important features such as mosaics covered, damaged or even destroyed as a consequence.

sold. An on-site museum displays remnant tiles and other artefacts unearthed during the restoration.

Visit Mehmet the Conqueror's Mosque MOSQUE

MAP: **8** P96 A4

The **Fatih Mosque** was the first great imperial mosque built in İstanbul following the Conquest. Mehmet the Conqueror (Fatih Sultan Mehmed in Turkish) located it on the hilltop site of the ruined Church of the Apostles, burial place of Constantine and other Byzantine emperors. Mehmet chose to be buried here too; his *türbe*, behind the mosque, is inevitably filled with worshippers.

The original *küllüye*, finished in 1470, was enormous. Set in extensive grounds, it included 15 charitable establishments such as *medreses*, a hospice for travellers and a caravanserai. Many still stand; the most interesting is the multidomed *tabhane* to the south-east of the mosque, the columns of which are said to have been from the Church of the Apostles. The

present-day mosque is not the one Mehmet built. The original stood for nearly 300 years before toppling in an earthquake in 1766. The current Ottoman Baroque-style mosque was constructed between 1767 and 1771.

Shop at the Wednesday Market STREET MARKET

On Wednesday mornings, the streets northwest of the Fatih Mosque host the sprawling street market known as the **Çarşamba Pazarı** (*Çarşamba* is the Turkish word for Wednesday, as well as the name of this district). Hundreds of stalls sell cheap items, including clothing, footwear and homewares – the quality of the goods on offer can be dubious, but mingling with the crowds is fun. From the mosque, exit the walled forecourt to find a line of stalls where fresh juice and freshly cooked *gözleme* (savory pancakes) are sold. Then plunge into the mercantile mayhem, heading north to reach the fresh-produce stalls located in the streets linking Darıüşşafa-



SPECIALITIES FROM SİİRT

Located in the southeastern corner of Türkiye, the province and city of Siirt has a mixed cultural heritage, with Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians and Armenians having lived there over the centuries. These influences have shaped the local cuisine, which is as distinctive as it is tasty. Two Siirt specialties are served at eateries around

the atmospheric **Women's Bazaar** (Kadınlar Pazarı; MAP: **9** P96 C6) in Zeyrek: *büryan* (slow-cooked lamb) and *perde pılavı* (rice, chicken, almonds and currants encased in thin pastry and then baked until golden). Both are best enjoyed with a glass of frothy homemade *ayran* (salty yoghurt drink).

ka and Favzi Paşa Caddesi. The market's northern boundary is at Yavuz Selim Caddesi, which takes its name from the nearby **Yavuz Sultan Selim Mosque** (MAP: 10 P96 H5), constructed between 1522 and 1529 on the crown of the Old City's fifth hill. Its terrace has panoramic Golden Horn views.

Wander Balat's Multicoloured Streets DISTRICT

Easily accessed by tram from Eminönü or ferry from Karaköy, the Golden Horn neighbourhood of **Balat** has been undergoing a transformation over the past two decades. In Byzantine times, this was a prestigious location, with the Great Palace of Blachernae and Palace of the Porphyrogenitus (aka the Tekfur Sarayı) located nearby. After the Conquest, the area lost its imperial lustre and immigrants from across Europe began to base themselves here, including a large community of Jews who had been expelled from Spain during the Inquisition. In the 20th century, the

neighbourhood became the first port of call for many poor migrants from Türkiye's east. Now revitalised, Balat's streets are lined with restored Ottoman timber houses painted in bright colours, making the district a magnet for weekend Instagrammers. There are cafes galore on Vodina and Yıldırım Caddesi, so it's a great spot for a daytime wander.

Jewel on the Golden Horn CHURCH

MAP: 11 P96 G2
These days we're accustomed to kit homes and self-assembled furniture. But back in 1871, when the **Church of St Stephen of the Bulgars** was constructed from cast-iron pieces shipped down the Danube and across the Black Sea from Vienna on 100 barges, the idea was extremely novel. Known as the 'Iron Church', the building was constructed on the shore of the Golden Horn and delighted worshippers with its beautiful interior featuring gilded iron screens,



GREEK İSTANBUL

Prior to the establishment of the Republic, at least 260,000 İstanbullus (30% of the city's population) identified as being of Greek heritage. Collectively referred to as Rûm, these residents spoke a distinctive Greek dialect and worshipped in Greek Orthodox churches. Today, only 0.1% of the population (around 2000 people) identify as Rûm. These families, many of which have roots in the city stretching back to Byzantine times, survived the forced population exchange of 1923 and violent anti-Greek riots in 1955. The symbolic heart of their community is the **Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople** (MAP: 12 P96 H3) in Fener, established in 330 CE.

balcony and columns. The congregation comprises members of the Bulgarian Orthodox Exarchate (Bulgarian Orthodox Church), which broke away from the Greek Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarchate in 1872.

Admire Sinan's Labour of Love

MOSQUE

MAP: 13 P6 B3

The great Mimar Sinan put his stamp on the entire city. The elegant **Mihrimah Sultan Mosque**, constructed in the 1560s next to the Edirnekapi section of the historic land walls, is one of his best works. The mosque, which was built on the highest point of the Old City, was commissioned by Süleyman the Magnificent's daughter Mihrimah and features a wonderfully light and airy interior with delicate stained-glass windows and an unusual 'birdcage' chandelier. Remnants of the *küllüye* include a still-functioning hamam.

Walk Beside Constantinople's Land Walls

CITY WALLS

Constantinople's monumental land walls were completed in two phases during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II (408–50 CE) and protected what we now know as the Old City from invading armies for a millennium before being finally breached by the army of Mehmet II in 1453. These days, much of the wall structure that has survived is in a sorry state, but it is still possible to gain an idea of what this massive engineering project must have originally looked like by heading to Edirnekapi, where a section of the walls has been retained and restored. From Edirnekapi, walk alongside the stretch of walls leading downhill to the restored shell of the Palace of the Porphyrogenitus, aka the **Tekfur Sarayı** (MAP: 14 P96 D2), a 13th-century Byzantine Palace. From the palace, it's an easy walk downhill to the Ayvansaray tram stop and *iskele*, or to Balat.



MIHRIMAH SULTAN

Many of the mothers, wives and daughters of Ottoman sultans were notable philanthropists, gifting the city buildings that adorn the skyline to this day. One of these was Mihrimah, daughter of Süleyman the Magnificent, who is remembered for her endowments of two landmark buildings: the Mihrimah Sultan mosques in Edirnekapi and Usküdar. Both mosques were designed by Mimar Sinan, who is said to have demonstrated his unrequited love for Mihrimah through a design trick – as the sun sets behind the mosque in Edirnekapi, the moon rises behind the other, referencing Mihrimah's name, which means 'sun and moon' in Farsi.



See page 96 for map
of locations

LISTINGS

Best Places for...

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End



Eating

Regional Eateries

Akdeniz Hatay Sofrası

€€

15 E6

Huge Syrian restaurant known for its mezes, metre-long kebaps and *tuzda tavuk* and *tuzda kuzu* (chicken or lamb slow-cooked in a salt crust). No alcohol. 10am-11.30pm

Siirt Şeref Büryan Kebap €€

16 C6

Near the Women's Bazaar in Zeyrek, this joint specialises in the Siirt specialities *büryan* and *perde pilavı*. No alcohol. 10am-10.30pm Tue-Sun

Sur Ocakbaşı €€

17 C6

Enjoy the kebaps while people-watching at this popular place in the Women's Bazaar. No alcohol. 10am-midnight Sun & Mon, to 1am Tue-Sat

Balat Eateries

Falafel Köy €

18 F1

Popular place in Ayvan-saray serving cheap and delicious falafel wraps and plates. 1-8.30pm Mon, to 10pm Tue-Sun

Forno €€

19 G3

Smart cafe serving *lahmacun*, pides and pizzas cooked in a stone oven. The weekend buffet brunch is deservedly popular. 9am-10pm

Primi €€

20 H3

This stylish place has a cafe ambience but a serious focus on food, including excellent pastas and salads. 9.30am-9pm Thur-Tue

Agora 1890 Meyhanesi €€

21 F2

A convivial *meyhane* (Turkish tavern) on Mürselpaşa Caddesi serving mezes and seafood. 1pm-midnight



Drinking

Coffee Department

22 F2

The best coffee on the Golden Horn; this Balat cafe roasts and blends its own beans. 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun

Velvet Cafe

23 G3

Quirky Balat cafe furnished with thrift-shop finds. Leisurely breakfasts in the hidden courtyard are a treat. 10am-5pm Tue, from 9.30am Wed-Sun

Kaffa Miro

24 G3

Cute Vodina Caddesi cafe with arty vibe, upstairs gallery and rear courtyard. 9am-8pm Tue-Sun

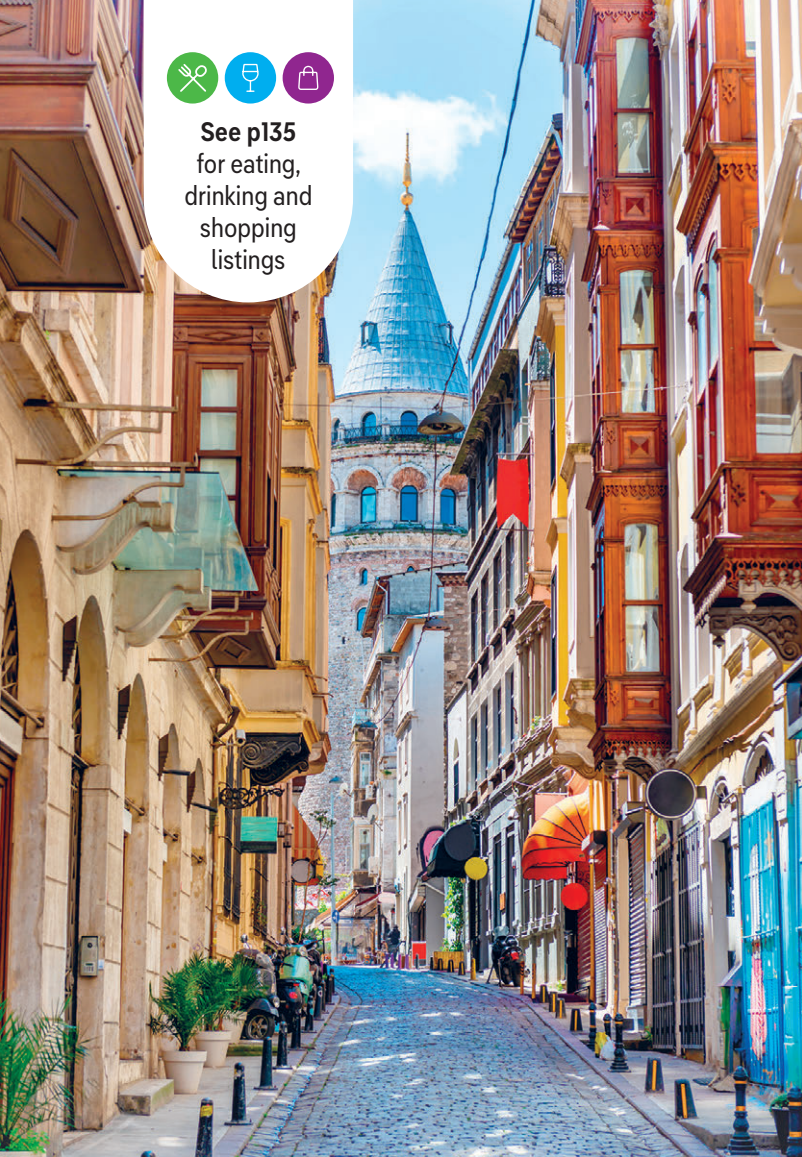
Mihmandar Pasthanesi & Restaurant

25 C1

Near Eyüp Sultan mosque, this pavilion-like patisserie and restaurant is a super tea, coffee or lunch spot. 8am-10pm Tue & Wed, from 6am Thu-Sun



See p135
for eating,
drinking and
shopping
listings



Explore

Beyoğlu & Around

The high-octane hub of eating, drinking and entertainment in the city, Beyoğlu is where visitors and locals come in search of good cafes, restaurants and bars, as well as live-music venues and nightclubs. Built around the major boulevard of İstiklal Caddesi, it incorporates a mix of bohemian residential districts such as Galata, Çukurcuma and Cihangir; bustling entertainment enclaves such as Asmalımescit; and historically rich pockets such as Karaköy, where the formerly unkempt port area has been revitalised courtesy of the Galataport development. Though short on historic monuments, this part of the city has a rich trove of art galleries and cultural centres, most of which have been established and endowed by major Turkish banks and corporations.

Getting Around



Tram

The best way to get to Beyoğlu from the Old City is by tram (direction: Kabataş). Alight at Karaköy for Galata, Tünel and Asmalımescit; at Tophane for Çukurcuma and Galatasaray; and at Kabataş for Taksim and Cihangir. It's a steep walk from the tram stops to İstiklal Caddesi and Taksim Square – fortunately, funiculars at Karaköy and Kabataş carry passengers up and down the hill.



Metro

The M2 metro connects Şişhane near Tünel and Galata with Taksim Square and continues further north, stopping at Osmanbey (for Bomonti and Nişantaşı).



THE BEST

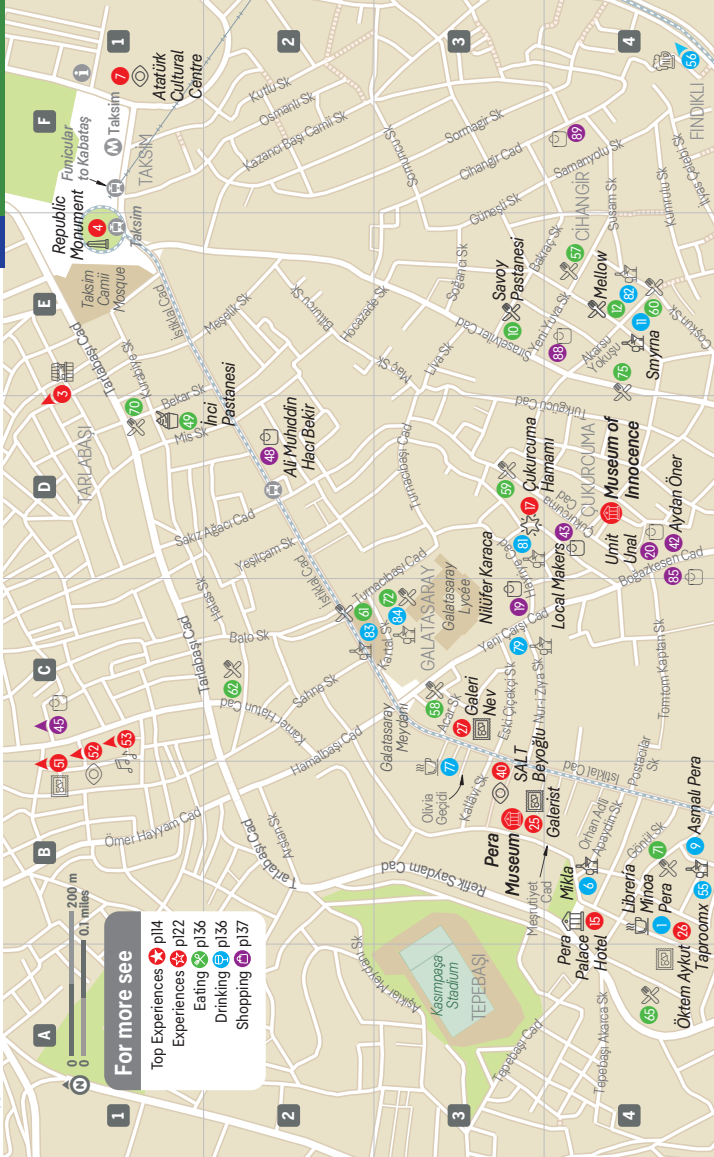
ART GALLERY İstanbul
Modern (p114)

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Çukurcuma (p124)

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Istanbul Modern

Türkiye's first museum of modern and contemporary art reopened in 2023 in a spectacularly designed building next to the Bosphorus. Home to an extensive collection of Turkish art, the museum also stages a constantly refreshed program of expertly curated exhibitions by high-profile local and international artists.

MAP P112 E6



PLANNING TIP

Admission is free for residents of Türkiye on Thursdays and the museum can be busy as a consequence.



Scan for full opening hours and ticket prices.

The Building

Built in Karaköy's historic port precinct, the building was designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano. Inspired by the light that glitters on the Bosphorus and reflects so magically on its waterside buildings, Piano's design features huge swaths of glass that allow light into every floor of the gallery. The ground floor is totally transparent, allowing an uninterrupted connection between the water and Tophane Park in front of the building. Reinforcing the light and airy atmosphere that the generous use of glass imparts is a wide staircase in the centre of the building, which is suspended in a large void.

Piano's *pièce de résistance* is a rooftop viewing terrace hovering above a shallow reflective pool covering the entire roof. There are wonderful views from this – don't miss it.

Permanent Collection

Located in multiple spaces on the 2nd floor, the museum's permanent collection has a strong focus on painting, photography and mixed-media and digital art. Videos to look out for include Hale Tunger's *Beyrut* (2005), Ferhat Özgür's *Şarkı Söyleyebilirim* (2008) and Şener Özmen and Erkan Özgen's *Road to Tate Modern* (2003).

The collection of paintings and photographs includes major works from notable Turkish artists, including İhsan Cemal Karaburçak (1897–1970),



BERK OZDEMIR/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Nuri İyem (1915–2005), Cihat Burak (1915–94), Avni Arbaş (1919–2003), Orhan Peker (1927–78), Ara Güler (1928–2018), Erol Akyavaş (1932–99) and Selma Gürbüz (1960–2021). Contemporary painters and photographers are well represented – look out for works by Azade Köker (b 1949), Murat Akagündüz (b 1970), İhya Bozkurt (b1977), Ardan Özmenoğlu (b 1979) and Tunca (b 1982).

Other Draws

Multiple spaces in the building are devoted to temporary exhibitions, and a **photography gallery** on the 1st floor hosts regularly refreshed exhibitions.

An auditorium in the basement hosts the gallery's **cinema**, which showcases contemporary short and feature films made by Turkish and international directors. The **design shop** on the gallery's ground floor is an excellent place to source quality souvenirs and gifts. As well as an impressive range of books and posters, it stocks locally designed stationery, jigsaws, toys, homewares, T-shirts, accessories and jewellery.



QUICK BREAK

The gallery's Restaurant Modern is an excellent lunch choice, especially as its terrace has a magnificent view over the water to the Old City. There's also a cafe on site.

Pera Museum

Located in a grand neoclassical building that once housed a luxury hotel, this privately endowed art gallery is predominantly known for its superb collection of Orientalist Paintings, romanticised artistic representations of Türkiye and the East created by artists in the 18th and 19th centuries.

MAP P112 B3



PLANNING TIPS

Free entry for students every Wednesday, and for all visitors 6pm to 10pm on Friday. The museum is associated with nearby İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, which has a research library and exhibition space.



Scan for full opening hours and ticket prices.

Permanent Collections

There's plenty to see at this impressive museum, but the major draw is undoubtedly its **Orientalist Painting Collection**. Providing fascinating glimpses into the Ottoman world from the 17th to the 20th centuries, these works are showcased in regularly refreshed exhibitions curated according to theme – subjects include everything from depictions of Old Stamboul, portraits of courtiers at the Ottoman court, and scenes of daily life in the imperial harem.

Other galleries house permanent exhibitions – don't miss the room devoted to the life and work of the painter, archaeologist and museum director Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910), creator of the most beloved painting in the Turkish canon, *The Tortoise Trainer* (1906), which is part of the collection here. Also fascinating is the Intersecting Worlds exhibition, which focuses on ambassadors' portraits and works by visiting artists between the 17th and 19th centuries. Many of these works showcase the exoticisation of Turkish fashion and culture that was prevalent in the west at this time.

Dedicated galleries are also devoted to the museum's extensive and impressive **Kütahya Tiles and Ceramics Collection** and to its equally impressive albeit somewhat esoteric **Anatolian Weight and Measures Collection**. The permanent Coffee



THEENDUP/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Break exhibition, which displays ceramic accessories used in the preparation of coffee in the Ottoman Empire, is particularly engaging.

Other Exhibits

The museum's upstairs floors host high-profile temporary exhibitions of Turkish and international artists. Past artists to feature in dedicated shows include Paula Rego, Etel Adnan, José Sancho, Giorgio de Chirico, Katherine Behar, Cecil Beaton, Alberto Giacometti and Grayson Perry.

The museum is also a venue for the high-profile İstanbul Art and Design Biennales.

Pera Film

The museum's auditorium hosts monthly programs featuring Turkish and international classic and experimental cinema, animation, documentaries, short films and video art. Check the website for details.



QUICK BREAK

On the ground floor, the popular Pera Café is a comfortable space decorated in art deco style to reflect the fact that the building originally housed the swish Hôtel Bristol.

Museum of Innocence

More a conceptual artwork than a museum, this singular project was curated, realised and funded by Nobel Prize-winning novelist Orhan Pamuk as an extension of his 2009 novel of the same name. Familiarity with the novel is not essential, although it will enrich the visitor experience.

MAP P112 D4



PLANNING TIPS

The museum has multiple floors and no lift, so isn't accessible for those with mobility challenges. Visitors who bring a printed copy of the *Museum of Innocence* novel get free entry.



Scan for full opening hours and ticket prices.

The Museum

The museum is located in a 19th-century house in Çukurcuma and features vitrines displaying a quirky collection of objects that evoke the minutiae of İstanbul life in the mid- to late 20th century, when Pamuk's novel is set. Reminiscent of the work of American artist Joseph Cornell, the vitrines are populated with clothes, accessories, crockery, photographs and many other items, forming a beautiful and moving visual narrative of the eight-year love affair of Kemal and Füsün, the novel's protagonists. The museum's narrative conceit is that the objects have all been touched by Füsün at some stage and that Kemal has obsessively collected them as reminders of his lost love. Some of the displays – in particular the installation using 4213 cigarette butts – are as strange as they are powerful.

Pamuk's 'Modest Manifesto for Museums' is reproduced on a panel on the ground floor. In it he asserts: 'The resources that are channelled into monumental, symbolic museums should be diverted to smaller museums that tell the stories of individuals'. The individuals in this case are fictional, of course, and their story is evoked in a highly nostalgic fashion, but in this project Pamuk has successfully investigated the psychological meaning of the collecting process and the role of material



ATTICA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

objects as metaphors for intangible qualities such as emotions and memories. It's an extraordinary and fascinating achievement.

Orhan Pamuk

Winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature, Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk (b 1952) has written 11 novels to date. These include *My Name Is Red* (1998), *Snow* (2002), *A Strangeness in His Mind* (2015), *The Red-Haired Woman* (2016) and *Nights of Plague* (2022). In 2005 he published a memoir, *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, about the city he loves.

Grant Gee's 2015 documentary film *Innocence of Memories: Orhan Pamuk's Museum and Istanbul*, which is narrated by Pamuk, is set in the museum and at locations featured in the novel.



QUICK BREAK

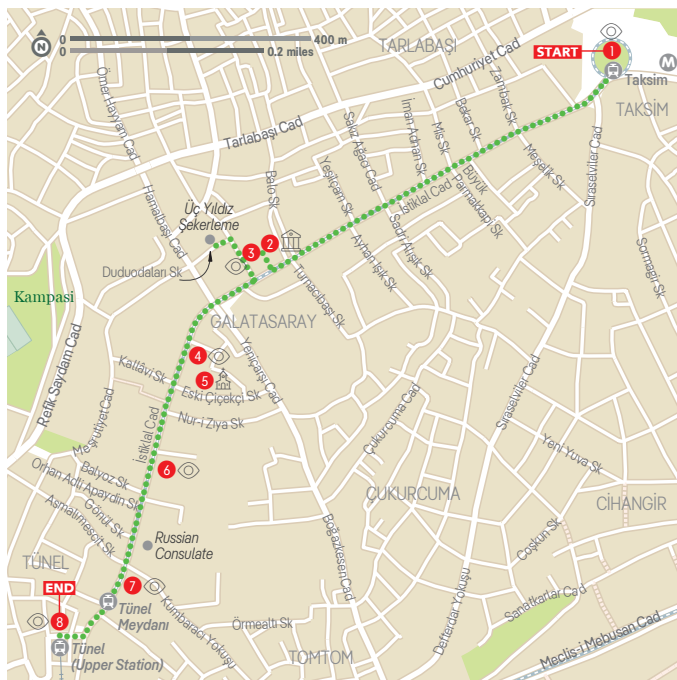
One of the city's best cafes, Cuma, is nearby. Head there for a coffee and slice of home-made cake, or for a casual but delectable lunch. Dinners are more formal.



Walk İstiklal Caddesi

Once called the Grand Rue de Pera, Beyoğlu's premier boulevard is a perfect metaphor for 21st-century Türkiye, being an exciting mix of modernity and tradition. This walk starts at Taksim Square, the symbolic heart of the modern city, and passes by İstiklal's major landmarks.

START	END	LENGTH
Taksim Square	Tünel Square	1.5km; 30 minutes



1 Gathering Place

Start at **Taksim Square** (p122), home to the Atatürk Cultural Centre, the recently built Taksim Mosque and the Cumhuriyet Anıtı (Republic Monument). Gezi Park, hub of the 2013 anti-government protests, edges the square to the north.

2 Historic Arcade

Follow the tram tracks heading down İstiklal until you reach the lovely **Çiçek Pasajı** (Flower Passage) on your right, which is on the ground floor of the 1876 Cité de Pera building. Built as a shopping arcade, it's one of many grand 19th-century *pasaj*s that grace the boulevard. It's now home to *meyhanes* (Turkish taverns).

3 Fish Market

Next to the Çiçek Pasajı is the historic **Balık Pazarı** (Fish Market). Though most of the fish stalls have disappeared in recent years, there are still some long-established shops in Duduodaları Sokak on the left (southern) side, including Üç Yıldız Şekerleme, a sweets shop, at number 7.

4 Revitalised Apartment Building

After crossing Yeniçarşı Caddesi you'll soon pass the grand **Mısır Apartmanı** (Egyptian Apartment) at number 163, built in 1910 and

now home to a number of highly regarded commercial art galleries and renowned rooftop bar 360.

5 Catholic Church

Further on is the neo-Gothic **St Anthony's Catholic Basilica**, built between 1906 and 1911 to service members of İstanbul's Italian community. It has the largest Catholic congregation in the city.

6 Dutch Consulate

Further south is the **Netherlands Consulate General**, a handsome building renovated in 1854 by the Swiss-born Fossati brothers, who designed many buildings for Sultan Abdülmecit I. The next major building is the **Russian Consulate**, a grand 1837 building also designed by Fossatis.

7 Art Nouveau Gem

The next stop is **Casa Botter**, an art nouveau building that was designed by the Italian architect Raimondo D'Aronco for M Jean Botter, a Dutch tailor to the sultans. Recently renovated, it now houses a cultural centre.

8 Atmospheric Passage

İstiklal ends a short distance away, at Tünel Square, where the **Tünel Geçidi**, an apartment building and atmospheric *pasajı* dating from 1886, is home to a variety of bars and cafes.

EXPERIENCES

Retreat to a Literary Bolthole BOOKSHOP CAFES

İstanbulers are passionate readers, as evidenced by the number of bookshops in the city, and they're also longstanding devotees of cafe culture. So it makes perfect sense that local entrepreneurs have combined the two, opening a spate of bookshop cafes across the city. These include **Librería Minoa**

Pera (MAP: 1 P112 B4) in Asmalımescit and the **Türk-Alman Kitabevi Cafe** (Turkish-German Bookshop Cafe; MAP: 2 P112 B5) on İstiklal Caddesi.

Minoa has two floors of books (some in English), a glass-encased kitchen and two cafe spaces. The interior is striking, with the most eye-catching feature being a staircase with steps decorated as shelves full of books. It and other features such as the book-adorned light fitting are both quirky and stylish.

The Türk-Alman Bookshop Cafe has been operating since 1955, but its cafe is a more recent feature. Students, expats and İstanbulers with a literary bent are fixtures at the 1st-floor space, particularly in the cooler months, when the open fire, couches and jazz-dominated sound system beckon.

Street Shop in Tarlabaşı STREET MARKET

MAP: 3 P112 E1

The **Tarlabaşı** district runs downhill from the traffic-choked

boulevard of the same name, which forms the western border of Beyoğlu, to another busy boulevard, İrmak Caddesi in Dolapdere. Traditionally a working-class Roma or Rom (Romany) neighbourhood, it became a popular place for poor Kurdish immigrants from Türkiye's southeast to settle in the 1990s. These days, developers have started to eye the potential of this district, and many long-term residents are being evicted from their homes. One thing here that fortunately isn't changing is the neighbourhood's **Sunday Street Market**, a sprawling, noisy and crowded event where prices are low and a diverse array of produce and products is on offer. The market operates from around 8am, with stalls packing up in the late afternoon. Head to Turan Caddesi from Taksim and follow the crowds of shoppers to reach the centre of the market action.

Head to the Heart of Modern Türkiye SQUARE

MAP: 4 P112 E1

Named after the 18th-century stone *taksim* (water storage unit) on its western side, Taksim Square has been closed to traffic in recent years and covered in unsightly concrete pavers. The location of the 2013 Gezi protests, the square is closely patrolled by police and is best avoided during demonstrations. Its major structures include

a 1928 **monument** commemorating the Turkish War of Independence and the founding of the Turkish Republic, an ugly modern mosque located behind the taksim and the considerably more attractive Atatürk Cultural Centre.

Enjoy a Fireside Feast RESTAURANTS

Overall, Turks are huge meat eaters. Beef, lamb, mutton, liver and chicken are prepared in a number of ways and eaten at home, in a *kebabçı* (kebab restaurant) or in a *köfteci* (meatball restaurant). The most popular type of *kebabçı* is the *ocakbaşı*, an eatery where a hooded barbecue is given pride of place in the indoor dining space and where customers can watch their meats being expertly grilled over coals. There are many *ocakbaşıs* in and around Beyoğlu, with our favourites including **Zübeyir** (p136) in Taksim and **Adana Ocakbaşı** (MAP: 5 P112 E7) in Kurtuluş. And although it's not strictly an *ocakbaşı* because diners cannot sit

around the grill, **Antiochia** (p136) in Asmalımescit gets our vote for serving the best grilled meats of all. Its *şiş et* (beef tenderloin kebab) is particularly succulent.

Relax at a Rooftop Bar

BARS

MAP: 6 P112 B4

Once rare, rooftop bars are now ubiquitous in Beyoğlu. This isn't surprising, as few locations in the world command such spectacular views. Multistorey buildings on slopes and ridges across the district are home to venues ranging from sleek cocktail bars to dishevelled nargile cafes. Perhaps the best view of all can be enjoyed at **Mikla**, a summer-only bar on the rooftop of the Maramara Hotel Pera in Asmalımescit. This is one of many hotel bars and restaurants with panoramic views in the district, the general rule being that higher locations are better because views from waterside buildings can be obscured when gigantic cruise ships are moored in the Bosphorus.



ATATÜRK CULTURAL CENTRE

A much-admired modernist building designed by architect Hayati Tabanlıoğlu and constructed in 1969, this landmark **cultural centre** (MAP: 7 P112 F1) on Taksim Square was threatened with demolition in 2013. Saved due to a public outcry, it has recently been renovated and extended according to a design by acclaimed architect Murat Tabanlıoğlu, the original architect's son. The iconic facade, which features full-length glass encased by a metal grille, was retained, and new elements include a 2000-seat opera hall entered via a tumulus-shaped globe clad in bright red tiles. Also here are a spectacular library, a cinema, cafes and a rooftop restaurant.

Browse Çukurcuma Antiques Shops

DISTRICT

Çukurcuma is one of the most attractive districts in Beyoğlu, with cafes and shops scattered among the 19th-century houses that line its narrow winding streets. To investigate the antique stores that the district is known for, head to Faik Paşa Caddesi and the upper stretch of Çukurcuma Caddesi. Design boutiques are on the lower stretch, heading downhill towards Tophane.

Bar Hop in Beyoğlu

BAR STRIPS

There are hundreds of bars in Beyoğlu, with the major bar strips off İstiklal Caddesi being Nevzade and Sofyalı Sokaks. These streets host a mix of *meyhanes* and street-level bars and are particularly busy on Friday and Saturday nights. Crowds spill out onto pedestrianised streets, music blares and a party atmosphere prevails. On Sofyalı Sokak, head to **Parantez** (MAP: 8 P112 B5) or **Asmalı Pera** (MAP: 9 P112 B4) if you're drinking beer or **Beyoğlu Şaraphanesi** (MAP: see 9 B4) if wine

is your preferred tipple. In Nevzade, the bars are better options than the *meyhanes*, which serve average food.

Frequent a Cihangir Institution

CAFE

MAP: 10 P112 E3

İstanbul has many businesses that have attained iconic status and the **Savoy Pastanesi** is undoubtedly one of them. Down the hill from Taksim Square, this bakery and cafe was established in 1950 and is known for its delicious cakes (especially the decadently creamy millefeuille), milk puddings, biscuits and *börek*s (filled savoury pastries). Sit upstairs or on the streetside terrace, where you will be able to watch the bustling action on the street.

Savour Modern Turkish Cuisine

RESTAURANTS

Eating in the Old City can be disappointing at best, which is why it pays to eat in Beyoğlu even if staying in Sultanahmet. The huge array of eateries on this side



EXPAT ENCLAVE

There is a large expat community in İstanbul, and many of its members live in the Beyoğlu district of Cihangir. Drawn by the area's reputation as an entertainment district as well as its elevated topography, which gives many of its apartment blocks magnificent Bosphorus views, they make Cihangir one of the most cosmopolitan areas in the city. The centre of the action is Akarsu Yokuşu, which is lined with bars, cafes and casual eateries. Long-standing favourites on this stretch include **Journey** (p137), **Geyik** (p139), **Smyrna** (MAP: 11 P112 E4) and **Mellow** (MAP: 12 P112 E4).

of Galata Bridge cater for every taste and budget – it's as easy to source a tasty kebab or pide here as it is to indulge in a gourmet tasting menu created by a top chef. When in this part of town, serious foodies should make their way to two restaurants – **Neolokal** (MAP: 13 PII2 B7) and **Aheste** (MAP: 14 PII2 B5) – that have built reputations as exemplars of Modern Turkish cuisine. Aheste offers affordable tasting and à la carte menus with a mix of vegetarian, seafood and meat options; Neolokal offers a choice of two pricey tasting menus, one of which is vegetarian. Both restaurants have stylish interiors – Aheste's atmospherically lit and Neolokal's with spectacular Golden Horn and Old City views.

Take Tea at the Pera Palace

HISTORIC HOTEL

MAP: 15 PII2 B4

The most storied hotel in Türkiye, the **Pera Palace** has had many notable guests since opening in 1892, including Agatha Christie,

who wrote *Murder on the Orient Express* in room 411. Other guests have included seductive WWI spy Mata Hari, who no doubt frequented the elegant bar with its lovely stained-glass windows and excellent eavesdropping opportunities. To join their ranks without booking a room, reserve a table for the hotel's daily afternoon tea, which is offered in the Moorish-style Kubbelli Lounge, the largest and most elegant space in the building. Guests are serenaded by a pianist and graze on buffet treats, including sandwiches, cakes, biscuits and scones. A glass of prosecco is an optional extra.

Learn About Local Jewish Culture

MUSEUM

MAP: 16 PII2 A6

Housed in a building attached to the Neve Shalom synagogue near the Galata Tower, the **Museum of Turkish Jews** was established in 2001 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman



JEWISH İSTANBUL

From a small base, İstanbul's Jewish community was augmented by many thousands of Jews who found haven here after being expelled from Spain at the end of the 15th century. By the end of the Ottoman Empire, there were tens of thousands of Turkish Jews living in the city. But after racially motivated 'wealth taxes' in the 1940s and violence against Jews and other minorities in the 1950s, many emigrated to Israel. These days, approximately 14,500 Jews live in Türkiye, with most residing in İstanbul. There are 16 functioning synagogues in the city; to visit these, see jewish-europe.net/turkey/en/synagogue.

Empire. The imaginatively curated and chronologically arranged interactive collection comprises photographs, video, sound recordings and objects that document the history, language and culture of the Jewish people in Türkiye. Fascinating objects in the museum's collection include an array of Jewish ceremonial regalia with Turkish Ottoman influence, including a 19th-century hanukiah (menorah made just for Hanukkah) in the shape of a minaret. Other highlights include a section about the Ladino (aka Judeo-Espanyol) language that includes musical recordings.

Security is taken seriously here, and all visitors must show a passport to enter.

Frequent a Neighbourhood Bathhouse

HAMAM

MAP: 17 P112 D3

Beyoğlu's residential neighbourhoods have always been home to working hamams. Essential tools for hygiene in the days when household bathrooms were the exception rather than the rule, these facilities weren't as grand as the imperial bathhouses in the Old City but still possessed features such as domes, fountains and marble-lined bathing spaces. One good example of this neighbourhood type is the recently restored 1831 **Çukurcuma Hamamı**. There is one mixed bath here, as well as a small *camekan* (entrance hall) and upstairs massage rooms.

The hamam is unusual in that it functions as a mixed bath, with males and females using the space at the same time. Swimsuits (top and bottom for females, bottom for males) are mandatory.

Head to an Admiral's Hamam

HAMAM

MAP: 18 P112 D6

As grand as the Çukurcuma Hamamı is modest, the marvellous 1580 Mimar Sinan-designed **Kılıç Ali Paşa Hamamı** in Karaköy was commissioned by the Ottoman admiral of the same name. Born in Italy, Kılıç Ali Paşa was captured by the Ottoman navy at an early age and forced to work as an enslaved person in a galley. After taking part in several battles, he converted to Islam, changed his name to Uluç ('the Great') and was soon commanding his own galley. One of the boldest pirates in the Mediterranean, he was given the honorary title of Kılıç ('the Sword') and made chief admiral of the Ottoman fleet after distinguishing himself at the 1571 Battle of Lepanto. Treatments here are distinctive in that you sit rather than lie down when being given a massage. The hamam is open to women from 8am to 4pm and men from 4.45pm to 11.30pm.

Promenade at Galataport

PRECINCT

One of the largest urban-renewal projects undertaken in İstanbul in recent decades, the mixed-use Gal-

ataport development has garnered both support and criticism from locals since its inception. Encompassing a large tract of land on the Bosphorus shore in Karaköy, it includes a cruise-ship terminal with underground passenger-processing facilities, the İstanbul Modern (p114) art gallery, the İstanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture (İRHM), a public square backdropped by the 19th-century **Nusretiye (Victory) Mosque**

(MAP: 22 P112 E5) and incorporating the **Tophane-i Amire** (MAP: 23 P112 E6) clocktower, multi-storey office blocks, shops, restaurants and cafes. Associated works on Ke-mankeş Caddesi have seen historic buildings including the old passenger terminal building restored (this now houses the Peninsula Hotel).

The project's critics lament its privatisation of public buildings (particularly the old passenger terminal), the increased number of cruise-ship arrivals and the pre-dominance of pricey global brands among the eating and shopping offerings. Supporters praise the wide waterside walkway, which has wonderful views and is home to Ahmet Güneşkin's visually arresting *City of Names* sculpture (2022).

Appreciate Turkish Art ART GALLERY

MAP: 24 P112 E5

Housed in a distinctive Galataport building designed by local architect Emre Arolat, the collection of the **İstanbul Museum of**



BEYOĞLU CLOTHING BOUTIQUES

Nilüfer Karaca

MAP: 19 P112 C3

This local designer's sculptural pieces in quality fabrics can be purchased off the rack or made to measure. Also stocks tempting jewellery and accessories. *9am-7pm*

Umit Unal

MAP: 20 P112 D4

İstanbul-based designer who has been lauded for his avant-garde women's clothes since launching his brand in 1992. *10am-7pm Mon-Sun, from noon Sun*

Bey

MAP: 21 P112 D6

Stylish men's clothing and accessories store in Karaköy. *11am-8pm*

Painting and Sculpture (İRHM) provides an excellent overview of post-19th-century Turkish painting, sculpture, ceramics and calligraphy. Three floors of galleries are organised chronologically and thematically, starting with the Ottoman paintings collection on level one. Standout works in the collection include *Woman Reclining on the Couch* and *Morning at Sea* by Namık İsmail (1890-1935); *Magnolias* and *Woman in a Green Dress* by İbrahim Çallı (1882-1960); *Self Portrait* by Mihri Rasim (1886-1954); and *Dolmabahçe*



COMMERCIAL ART GALLERIES

Galerist

MAP: 25 P112 B3

In the handsome Petits-Champs Pasajı on Meşrutiyet Caddesi in Asmalımescit, this is the best-known of the city's commercial contemporary-art galleries.

Öktem Aykut

MAP: 26 P112 B4

Another Asmalımescit gallery, Öktem Aykut is known for its focus on exciting new local talent working in a variety of media.

Galeri Nev

MAP: 27 P112 C3

In the Mısır Apartmanı on İstiklal Caddesi, this gallery represents major artists such as Murat Akagündüz, Murat Morova and Sevinç Altan.

Gates by Cihat Burak (1915–94). On the 3rd floor, a gallery devoted to Orientalist works by Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910) displays major oils including *Believer Counting His Prayer Beads* and *Woman with Mimosa*.

Sample Istanbul's Best Baklava

SWEETS SHOP

MAP: 28 P112 D7

A much-loved *baklavacı* (baklava shop), **Karaköy Güllüoğlu** opened in 1949 and was the first

İstanbul branch of a business established in Gaziantep in the 1820s. There are other Güllüoğlu offshoots around town, but this remains the best. Relocated to new premises with a rear garden courtyard in recent years, its popularity has if anything grown, and it's an essential stop when exploring Karaköy. Service is cafeteria style – customers pay for a *porsiyon* (portion) of whatever takes their fancy at the register, order at the counters and then take their snack to a table. The most popular baklava flavours are *fıstıklı* (pistachio) and *cevizli* (walnut), but it's also possible to order a *karışık* (mixed) *porsiyon*. Many regulars order a serve of *kaymak* (clotted cream) on the side. A glass of tea (ordered and collected in the same way) will take the edge off the sweetness.

Around Galata Tower

DISTRICT

MAP: 29 P112 B6

A bustling port area in Byzantine and Ottoman times, Galata has a fascinating history. Granted to Genoese traders as part of a defence pact with the Byzantine Empire in 1261, the enclave was walled and a tower was erected on its highest point. Although most of these defensive walls no longer exist, **Galata Tower** still stands (it was closed for restoration at the time of research). The area was a magnet for sailors, merchants and fugitives from across the globe and over the centuries became the city's

cosmopolitan heart, with Armenians, Greeks, Catalans, Spanish Sephardic Jews, White Russians and Venetians settling here in large numbers. Never genteel (it had been home to brothels and seedy taverns since Byzantine times), Galata became extremely rundown in the 20th century and effectively split in two – the area on the hill leading up to Pera keeping the name Galata and the less salubrious port district becoming known as Karaköy.

Explore the Perşembe Pazarı

DISTRICT

The opening of the İstanbul Modern (p114) art gallery in 2004 transformed the section of Karaköy located on the Bosphorus east of the Galata Bridge. The section alongside the Golden Horn west of the Galata Bridge, which is known as the **Perşembe Pazarı** (Thursday Bazaar), has been slower to change, although the construction of the Haliç Metro Bridge and

beautification works along the shore of the Golden Horn have started the process of transformation here, too. It's worth exploring this area to get a feel for what this part of the city looked like before the developers descended. Some changes here are apparent (the ramshackle fish market on the waterfront has been cleaned up, for instance), but the rest of the bazaar is largely untouched. One of the most important structures here is the Sinan-designed **Rüstem Paşa Han** (aka Kurşunlu Han; MAP: 30 P112 A8), which dates from c 1550 and is currently in a state of serious disrepair. Access it off Kardeşim Sokak.

Seek Out Less-Visited Mosques

MOSQUES

As well as being home to a number of historic synagogues, historic Galata (now Galata and Karaköy) was home to Christian churches and imperial mosques. Of the churches, the most interesting is



MEYHANES

In Türkiye, mezes aren't just a type of dish, they're a whole eating experience – one that İstanbullular adore. In the city's many *meyhanes* (Turkish taverns), waiters heave around enormous trays full of cold meze dishes that customers can choose from. Alternatively, customers choose their selection from refrigerated cabinets filled to the brim with tasty cold treats (these places are sometimes referred to as '*lokantasis*'). Mezes are commonly vegetable based, though seafood also features. Hot meze dishes are usually chosen from the menu. Recommended *meyhanes* and *lokantasis* in Beyoğlu include Asmalı Cavit, Karaköy Lokantası and Mahkeme Lokantası (p138).

a fortress-like Dominican Church built by the Genoese in 1337 and converted to a mosque after the Conquest. When this happened it was dubbed the **Arab Mosque** (Arab Camii; MAP: 31 P112 A7), supposedly because it became a place of worship for a colony of North African immigrants who had settled here after being expelled from Spain.

Now sadly diminished by the Atatürk/Unkapanı Bridge, which looms over it, the **Sokol-İlu Mehmet Paşa Mosque** (aka Azapkapı Mosque; MAP: 32 P112 A5) on the shore of the Golden Horn was designed by Sinan and built in 1577–78. It has an unusual detached minaret and features a particularly fine carved marble *minber* (pulpit) and *mihrab* (niche indicating the direction of Mecca). The baroque *çeşme* (fountain) next to the mosque was commissioned by Saliha Valide Sultan, mother of Mahmut I, and constructed in 1732–33.

Climb Galata's Sinuous Staircase

STREET ARCHITECTURE

MAP: 35 P112 B7

Gifted to the city by the banker Abraham Camondo in the 19th century, the curvaceous **Camondo Staircase** (Kamondo Merdivenleri) is one of Beyoğlu's most distinctive pieces of urban design. Connecting the major thoroughfare of Bankalar Caddesi with Bereketzade Medresesi Sokak, one of the streets that leads up to Galata Tower, the staircase was famously photographed by Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1964, an act emulated by amateur photographers ever since.

Jazz Up Your Holiday

JAZZ CLUB

Now in its fourth decade, the annual İstanbul Jazz Festival staged by the İstanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSVA) programs an exhilarating mix of conventional jazz, electronica, drum 'n' bass, world music and rock. For two weeks in July, Turkish and international acts perform in venues in-



LOVIN' THOSE LOKANTAS

Casual eateries serving *hazır yemek* (readymade food) kept warm in bains-marie, *lokantas* usually offer a range of vegetable dishes alongside meat options; some also offer *lahmacun* (Arabic-style pizza) and pides. When eating at a *lokanta*, check out what's in the bain-marie and tell the waiter or cook behind the counter what you'd like to eat. You can order *bir porsiyon* (one portion), a *yarım porsiyon* (half portion) or a plate with a few different choices. You'll be charged by the portion. Excellent *lokantas* on this side of town include Hayvora (p137), off İstiklal Caddesi in Galatasaray; **Mahir Lokantası** (MAP: 33 P112 E7) in Kurtuluş, next to the Osmanbey metro station; and **Hünkar** (MAP: 34 P112 F7) in Nişantaşı.

cluding foreign consulates, **Salon İKSV** (MAP: 36 P112 A5) in Şişhane and the **Cemil Topuzlu Open Air Theatre** (MAP: 37 P112 F8) in Harbiye. Advance bookings essential (caz.iksv.org). Outside festival time, the best place to hear live jazz is the intimate **Nardis Jazz Club** (MAP: 38 P112 B7), run by jazz guitarist Önder Focan and his wife Zuhal. The club is open every night except Sunday.

Sample Some SALT CULTURAL CENTRE

The descriptor 'cultural centre' is used a lot in İstanbul, but it's often a misnomer. However, at SALT Galata it really does apply. Housed in a magnificent 1892 bank building designed by French architect Alexandre Vallaury of Pera Palace fame and cleverly adapted by local architectural firm Mimarlar Tasarım, this cutting-edge institution offers an exhibition space, auditorium, arts research library, bookshop, cafe and glamorous restaurant Neolokal (p125).

Funded by the Garanti Bank, **SALT** (MAP: 39 P112 B7) aims to be a centre of learning and debate in the city and hosts regular conferences, lectures and workshops. There is a second SALT venue nearby (MAP: 40 P112 B3), on İstiklal Caddesi, that hosts exhibitions and film screenings. Check the programs of both centres at saltonline.org.

Cross the City's Best-Loved Bridge

BRIDGE

MAP: 41 P112 B8

To experience İstanbul at its most magical, walk across the **Galata Bridge** at sunset. At this time, the historic Galata Tower is surrounded by shrieking seagulls, the mosques atop the seven hills of the city are often silhouetted against a soft red-pink sky and the evocative scent of apple tobacco wafts out of the nargile cafes under the bridge. During the day, the bridge carries a constant flow of İstanbullular crossing between



THE CAMONDO FAMILY

A prominent family of Sephardic Jews that had settled in Italy and Türkiye after being expelled from Spain in the late 15th century, the Camondos were initially merchants but took up banking in the early 19th century and were so successful that their bank soon became the largest in the Ottoman empire. Though predominantly remembered in the city for the Galata staircase that bears their name, their other contributions to the fabric of the city included the family mansion in Kasımpaşa, built in the 1860s and designed by fashionable architect Sarkis Balyan. This subsequently became the headquarters of the Turkish navy and has recently been restored as part of the HaliçPort development.



BEYOĞLU DESIGN BOUTIQUES

Aydan Öner

MAP: 42 P112 D4

Many of the decorative items and homewares sold in this stylish store feature Turkish motifs – we particularly like the Nazarlık range featuring *nazar boncuks* (evil-eye charms). *10am-7pm Mon-Sat*

Local Makers

MAP: 43 P112 D4

Showcase of wares made by local artisans, including jewellery, candles, stationery, ceramics and bags. *11am-7pm*

Özlem Tuna

MAP: 44 P112 D5

Super-stylish ceramics featuring forms and colours that reference İstanbul's history and culture (eg tulips, seagulls, Byzantine mosaics). *9.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun*

Beyoğlu and Eminönü, as well as a clutch of hopeful anglers trailing their lines into the waters below. Underneath, restaurants and cafes serve drinks and food all day and night. Come here to enjoy a beer and nargile while watching the ferries making their way to and from the Eminönü and Karaköy ferry docks.

Source Organic Produce

PRODUCE MARKET

MAP: 45 P112 C1

Held on Saturdays in the Bomonti neighbourhood, the bustling **Feriköy Organic Market** (Feriköy Ekolojik Pazar) was established in 2006 as Türkiye's first '100% ecological bazaar' and is still going strong. A stroll through the market offers plenty for photographers to snap and self-caterers to buy – stalls are piled high with certified organic produce, including fruit, vegetables, cheeses, bread, dried fruits and nuts, preserves, yoghurt, honey and olive oil. Stalls near the entrance offer tasty baked goods and made-to-order village-style *gözleme* (savoury pancakes) that can be scooped on the spot. The same location, a covered parking garage about 10 minutes' walk from the Osmanbey metro station, also hosts a flea market on Sundays.

Indulge in Upmarket Shopping

SHOPPING DISTRICT

It's a sad but true fact that the two places that once hosted the city's best shopping, namely the Grand Bazaar and İstiklal Caddesi, no longer do so. These days, most locals shop in modern malls, the most popular of which are İstinye Park, Cevahir and Zorlu. There is, though, one shopping destination that has withstood the mall assault – **Nişantaşı**. A short walk north of Taksim Square, this suburb is

littered with bars, restaurants, high-end hotels and boutiques. Most of these are found in the streets surrounding the main artery, Teşvikiye Caddesi, prompting some locals to refer to that area as Teşvikiye. Upmarket department stores **Beymen** (MAP: 46 P112 F7) and **Vakko** (MAP: 47 P112 F7) are located here, as are many international and Turkish designer stores.

Admire Contemporary Art & Architecture

ART GALLERY

MAP: 51 P112 B1

ARTER, the Dolopdere home of the Vehbi Koç Foundation's collection of contemporary art, was designed by London-based Grimshaw Architects and features a shimmering facade of glass-fibre concrete reinforced with pearlescent handmade mosaics. The gallery's location is strange (Dolopdere is an unattractive district 1km northwest of Taksim Square), but ARTER's presence is driving change, with commercial art galleries and other design-related businesses now starting to open in this part of town.

The building incorporates six exhibition spaces, a terrace, performance halls, a library, an arts bookstore and a bistro. The collection includes paintings, drawings, sculptures, prints, photographs, film, video and mixed-media installations from the 1960s to the present. Exhibitions include work



SWEET STOPS

Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir

MAP: 48 P112 D2

The İstiklal Caddesi branch of Türkiye's famous purveyor of Turkish delight also produces delectable cakes and pastries, which can be enjoyed in the upstairs tea room. The sushi train-like dessert bar in the basement must be seen to be believed. *8am-9pm Mon-Sat, from 9am Sun*

İnci Pastanesi

MAP: 49 P112 D1

Beyoğlu institution known for its decadent profiteroles covered in chocolate sauce. *7am-11pm*

Mabel Çikolata

MAP: 50 P112 C8

Selling chocolate at its flagship Karaköy shop since 1947, Mabel is known for its milk and dark chocolates. Some of its retro packaging is endearing – shame about the logo. *9am-7pm*

by Turkish and international artists. The gallery's events program showcases performing arts, music, film, performance and digital arts.

Free shuttle buses run from the Taksim metro station and Pera Museum in Tepebaşı during visiting hours; check the website for details (arter.org.tr).

Party at Bomontiada ENTERTAINMENT PRECINCT

Bomonti beer was once produced in the Bomontiada factory, located in the suburb of the same name (the beer is now an Efes brand produced elsewhere). Now reimagined as the **Bomontiada** (MAP: **52** P112 **c1**) arts, music and entertainment hub, the complex houses a number of bars and an arts space, but its most famous tenant is the much-loved **Babylon Bomonti** (MAP: **53** P112 **c1**; babylon.com.tr), İstanbul's pre-eminent live-music venue. Also here is a small museum dedicated to the life and works of beloved İstanbullu photographer Ara Güler (1928–2018), famed for his evocative photographs of the city. To get here, take the M2 metro to Osmanbey (direction: Hacıosman).



TAPROOMS

Populist

MAP: **54** P112 **F5**

This Galataport taproom is run by Torch Brewery, which produces a huge range of beers, including IPAs and an English-style ale. It also has a taproom in Bomontiada. *noon-midnight Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat*

Taproomx

MAP: **55** P112 **B4**

Taproom in Asmalımescit pouring the house SOMX brews, including two IPAs, a wheat beer and a pilsener. *2pm-midnight Tue-Sun*

Craft Beer Lab

MAP: **56** P112 **F4**

Pub and beer garden in Beşiktaş serving draft and bottles from Türkiye and elsewhere, including brews from local outfit Knidos. *noon-1.30am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat*

Best Places for...

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End



Eating

Cafes

Cuppa €

57 E4

Cihangir cafe offering tempting pastries, wraps and *tosts* (toasted sandwiches) made with house-baked sourdough. Great breakfast choice. 8am-5pm

Kafe Ara €

58 C3

Occupying a converted garage in a lane opposite the Galatasaray Lycée, this cafe has laneway seating and a menu of simple cafe food. No alcohol. 9am-11.30pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun

Cuma €€

59 D3

Laid-back foodie oasis in the heart of Çukurcuma serving good coffee and excellent, seasonally driven food. 9am-midnight

Journey €€

60 E4

Laid-back lounge cafe in the expat enclave of Cihangir offering a menu of Mediterranean comfort foods, including sandwiches, soups and pastas. 9am-2am

Casual Eats

Hayvone €

61 C2

Specialising in Black Sea cuisine, this *lokanta* serves excellent soups, pides, pilafs and other simple fare. Go at lunch, when everything is at its freshest. 8.30am-11pm

Dürümzade €

62 C2

A staple for Beyoğlu night-owls, this tiny grill shop serves excellent kebabs – try the Adana kebab (spiced mince-meat). 11.30am-9.30pm Mon-Sat

Miss Pizza €€

63 A5

The best pizzeria in Beyoğlu, this always-bustling joint in Şişhane serves Italian-style pies and delicious antipasti. noon-10.30pm

Karaköy Gümrük €€

64 B8

Casually stylish bistro and cafe in Karaköy that changes its menu each day according to what's fresh at the market. 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun

Rooftop Views

Hamdi Restaurant

Pera €€€

65 A4

The Beyoğlu branch of İstanbul's famous kebab restaurant is located in the Radisson Blu Hotel and has spectacular Golden Horn views. 3.30-11pm Tue-Sun

Simone €€€

66 B5

Rooftop bar and restaurant in the Ruz Hotel in Asmalimescit offering a global menu, a dining room with retractable roof and a small terrace with views over the Golden Horn. 8am-midnight

Eleos €€€€

67 B5

Be transported to the Greek Islands at this upstairs *meyhane* serving



See page 112 for map of locations

excellent mezes and seafood. Knockout Bosphorus view. *2.30pm-midnight*

Mürver €€€

68 D7

On the rooftop of the Novotel in Karaköy, this restaurant and cocktail bar offers a sophisticated menu and Bosphorus views. *5pm-12.30am*

Kebaps

Antiochia €€

69 B5

Delicious dishes from the southeastern city of Antakya (Hatay) are served in an attractive space in Asmalımescit. *noon-midnight Mon-Sat*

Zübeyir Ocakbaşı €€

70 D1

Popular Taksim *ocakbaşı* (grill house) serving spicy chicken wings, flavour-some ribs and a variety of succulent kebaps. *noon-midnight Mon-Fri, from 11am Sat & Sun*

Meyhanes

Asmalı Cavit €€

71 B4

Cavit Saatçı's place is an old-style *meyhane* (tavern) that has stood the test of time and retained a loyal local following. *5pm-midnight Mon-Sat*

Çukur Meyhane €€

72 C3

Basement restaurant off İstiklal with a convivial cafeteria-style atmosphere, good food and relatively cheap prices. No English spoken. *11am-1am*

Terrace Seating

Karaköy Lokantası €€

73 D7

Functioning as a *lokanta* during the day and a *meyhane* at night, this much-loved place offers a particularly tasty meze spread. *noon-4pm & 5pm-midnight Mon-Sat, 4pm-midnight Sun*

Mahkeme Lokantası

€€

74 A7

In a quiet pocket of Galata, this *meyhane* in a historic court house offers an excellent choice of mezes from its refrigerated display cabinet. *noon-4pm & 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat, 6pm-midnight Sun*

Breakfasts

Van Kahvaltı Evi €

75 E4

Türkiye is known for its lavish breakfast spreads, and the best *kahvaltılar* (breakfasts) of all are served in the eastern Turkish city of Van. The versions here are

authentic and delicious. *8am-5pm*

Cafe Privato €

76 B6

Located in an enclave off Galipdede Caddesi in Galata, this friendly, slightly ramshackle cafe is much loved for its delicious and huge *köy kahvaltısı* (village breakfast). *8.30am-11pm Mon-Sat, from 9am Sun*



Drinking

Beyoğlu Institutions

Manda Batmaz

77 B3

Serving Beyoğlu's best Turkish coffee since 1967, this cafe off İstiklal is renowned for its ultra-thick and aromatic brew. *9.30am-11.30pm*

Galata Simitçisi

78 D7

Enjoy a glass of *çay* accompanied by a *simit* (sesame-encrusted bread ring) fresh from the oven at this historic bakery in Karaköy. *5am-9pm*

Wine Bars

Solera

79 C3

Atmospherically lit cavern stocking more than 300 Turkish wines

and pouring many by the glass. Good food, too.

noon-1.30am

Comedus

see 14 B5

Stylish spot serving wine, beer, cheese and cured meats. There's a second branch around the corner. *3-11pm Mon-Sat*

Le Fumoir

80 B6

Glamorous French restaurant and bar on the rooftop of the Georges Hotel in Galata pouring quality wines by the glass. *8am-1am*

Bars & Clubs

NOH Radio Pub

81 D3

Tiny pub and basement radio station hosting popular dance and drinking sessions on weekends. *noon-2.30am*

Geyik

82 E4

The bartenders at this Cihangir bar really know their mixology. Sit inside or join the street action. *4pm-2am*

Urban

83 C2

Tranquil bolthole just off İstiklal with an arty interior and delightful street seating under a wisteria vine. A bohemian hub. *9am-2am*

Sendika

84 C3

Stylish restaurant, bar and club in Galatasaray with a downstairs lounge and upstairs dance floor. *Thu-Sat 6pm-3am*



Shopping

Homewares

Turkish Modern

85 D4

Leather slippers and bags, rugs and hand-loomed towels are some of the locally designed and made items on sale here. *10.30am-8pm*

Hiç

86 C6

Contemporary crafts shop in Tophane stocking artisan-made cushions, bags, silk scarves, lamps, glassware, porcelain and felt crafts. *11am-7pm Mon-Sat*

Boutiques

Misela

see 14 B5

Local luxury accessory brand known for its distinctive tote, clutch and cross-body bags. *11am-6.30pm Mon-Sat*

Eyüp Sabri Tuncer

87 C7

Turks of every age adore the colognes and beauty products produced by this local company, which was established in 1923. *9am-8pm*

Wine

La Cave Wine Shop

88 E4

Its enormous selection of local and imported wine makes this Cihangir bottle shop a good stop for wine buffs. *10.30am-8.30pm*

Books & Music

Opus3a

89 F4

Knowledgeable English-speaking staff at this Cihangir shop can recommend local classical, jazz, alternative and pop recordings. *11am-7pm Mon-Sat, from noon Sun*

Homer Kitabevi

see 79 C3

Long-standing bookshop in Galatasaray with a diverse stock in multiple languages, though English titles dominate. *10am-7.30pm*



See p161
for eating
listings



Explore

Bosphorus Suburbs

Linking the Sea of Marmara (Marmara Denizi) with the Black Sea (Karadeniz), the Bosphorus Strait is the geographical spine of the city, and also its greatest asset. Over the centuries it has been traversed by conquering armies, intrepid merchants and many an adventurous spirit. These days, thousands of İstanbullular commute along its shores; tankers and container ships make their way down its central channel; and both locals and tourists board ferries to travel up and down its length. On one side is Europe, on the other Asia – both shores are lined with former fishing villages that have been transformed into ritzy residential suburbs that are home to multi-million-lira apartments and even more valuable Ottoman-era *yahs* (waterfront mansions).

Getting Around



Ferry

The most enjoyable way to access the Bosphorus suburbs is by ferry. Check *sehirhatlari.istanbul* for routes and timetables.

Regular *Şehir Hatları* ferries travel from Eminönü and Karaköy to Üsküdar. Dentur ferries connect Üsküdar with Beşiktaş and Kabataş.



Bus

Buses travel along roads on both shores of the Bosphorus but can be very slow.



Metro

The Marmaray metro connects Kazlıçeşme in the Old City to Ayrılık Çeşmesi, stopping at Sirkeci and Üsküdar en route.



THE BEST

FERRY TRIP Long Bosphorus Tour (p144)

MUSEUM İstanbul Naval Museum (p157)

PALACE Dolmabahçe Palace (p150)

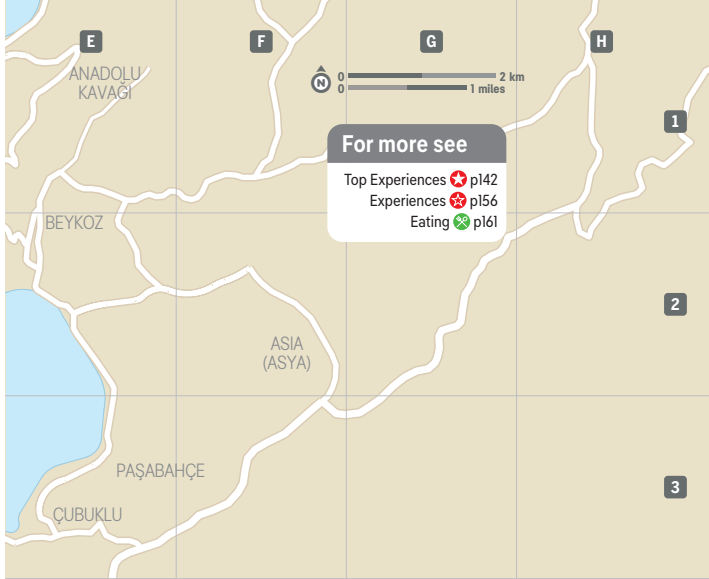
TEA GARDEN Bebek Kahve (p158)

MOSQUE COMPLEX Atik Valide Mosque (p155)



See Beşiktaş & Yıldız
Enlargement

Martyrs of
July 15
(Bosphorus)
Bridge



Bosphorus Ferry Trip

The *Uzun Boğaz Turu* (Long Bosphorus Tour) operated by Şehir Hatları departs from the Boğaz İskelesi (Bosphorus Ferry Dock) at Eminönü every day at 10.35am, cruising up the Bosphorus for two hours before arriving at Anadolu Kavağı at the mouth of the Black Sea. This description follows the route up the strait.



PLANNING TIP

Arrive 30 minutes or so before the scheduled departure time and manoeuvre your way to the front of the boarding queue. When doors open, move fast to score a seat with a good view.



Scan for ferry timetables and ticket prices.

Eminönü to Beşiktaş

Board at Eminönü. The Asian shore is to the right side of the boat as it cruises up the strait; Europe is to the left. When you start your trip, watch out for **Kız Kulesi** (the Maiden's Tower) just off the Asian shore near Üsküdar. One of the city's most distinctive landmarks, this 18th-century structure has functioned as a lighthouse, quarantine station and film set (it featured in the 1999 James Bond film *The World Is Not Enough*).

Just before the first stop at **Beşiktaş**, you'll pass the 19th-century **Dolmabahçe Palace** (p150), built on the European shore of the Bosphorus for Sultan Abdül Mecit. When they lived here, the major forms of transport used by members of the imperial household were *caïques* (wooden rowboats) that docked in front of the ornate wrought-iron gates on the shoreline. A number of the Dolmabahçe *caïques* are now exhibited in the **İstanbul Naval Museum** (p157) in Beşiktaş.

Beşiktaş to Üsküdar

The ferry crosses the strait from Beşiktaş, offering excellent views of the Old City skyline and also of the **Mihrimah Sultan** and **Yeni Valide** Mosques in **Üsküdar** (p156), where the ferry makes its second stop.



ALEKSA ZIVKOVIC/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Üsküdar to Kanlıca

From Üsküdar, the ferry sails past what 19th-century French writer Pierre Loti described as ‘a line of palaces white as snow, placed at the edge of the sea on marble docks’. These ornaments to the European shore include **Çırağan Palace**, built for Sultan Abdül Aziz in the second half of the 19th century. It’s now a luxury hotel. The green slope above the palace is **Yıldız Park**, once an imperial hunting ground.

Across the strait on the Asian shore is the **Fethi Ahmed Paşa Yalı**, a wide white building with a red-tiled roof that was built in the pretty village of **Kuzguncuk** in the late 18th century.

A little further along on your left is the Ottoman Baroque-styled **Ortaköy Mosque** (p158; pictured above), built between 1853 and 1855. The dome and two minarets are dwarfed by the adjacent **Martyrs of July 15 (Bosphorus)**



QUICK BREAK

Kiosks on the ferry serve çay, coffee, fresh juice and simple snacks that passengers can enjoy while the ferry makes its way up the strait.

YALIS

Yalis are the grand summer residences along the Bosphorus built by foreign ambassadors, wealthy merchants and members of the Ottoman court in the 18th and 19th centuries. There are now 667 *yalis* on the Bosphorus.

Bridge, opened in 1973 on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Turkish Republic. Just before the bridge are two *yalis* on the European shore: these were the homes of Sultan Murat V's daughters **Fehime** and **Hatice**. On the Asian shore is **Beylerbeyi Palace** (p153). Behind it, high on Çamlıca Tepesi (Çamlıca Hill), are the modern **Çamlıca Mosque** and **Çamlıca Telecommunications Tower** (aka 'The Tulip').

Past the small village of **Çengelköy** on the Asian side is the imposing **Kuleli Military High School**, built in 1860. Look out for its two 'witch hat' towers. Almost opposite Kuleli on the European shore is **Arnavutköy** (Albanian Village; pictured below), which boasts a number of gabled Ottoman-era wooden houses.

HALIT SADIK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©





RETURNING ALONG THE EUROPEAN SHORE

The easiest way to visit the museums on the European shore is to alight at Sarıyer, walk to Büyükdere to visit the Sadberk Hanım Museum and then take bus number 40 back to Taksim along the coastal road, alighting at Emirgan for the Sakıp Sabancı Museum and Rumeli Hisarı for Borusan Contemporary. This bus also stops at Bebek and Ortaköy.

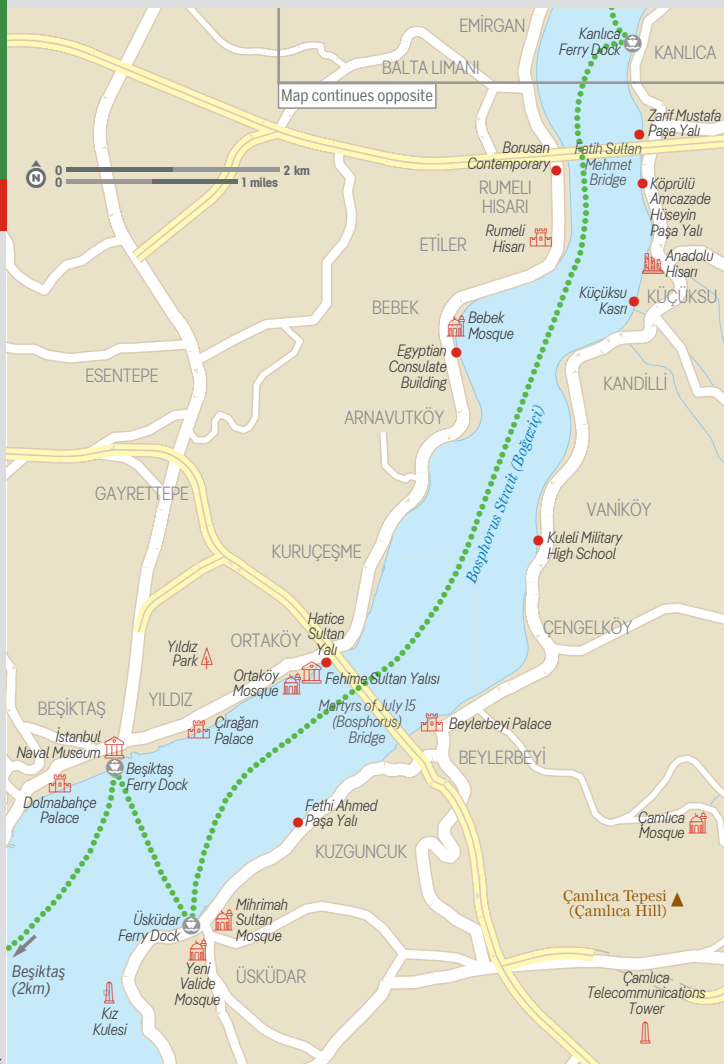
Arnavutköy runs straight into the glamorous suburb of **Bebek** (p158). The small park on Bebek Bay houses the Ottoman Revivalist-style **Bebek Mosque**; south of this is the **Egyptian Consulate Building**, an art nouveau mini-palace built for Emine Hanım, mother of the last *khedive* (viceroy) of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi II (p159). It's the white building with two mansard towers and an ornate wrought-iron fence. Opposite, on the Asian shore, is **Küçüksu Kasrı** (p158), an ornate hunting lodge built in 1856–57 for Sultan Abdül Mecit.

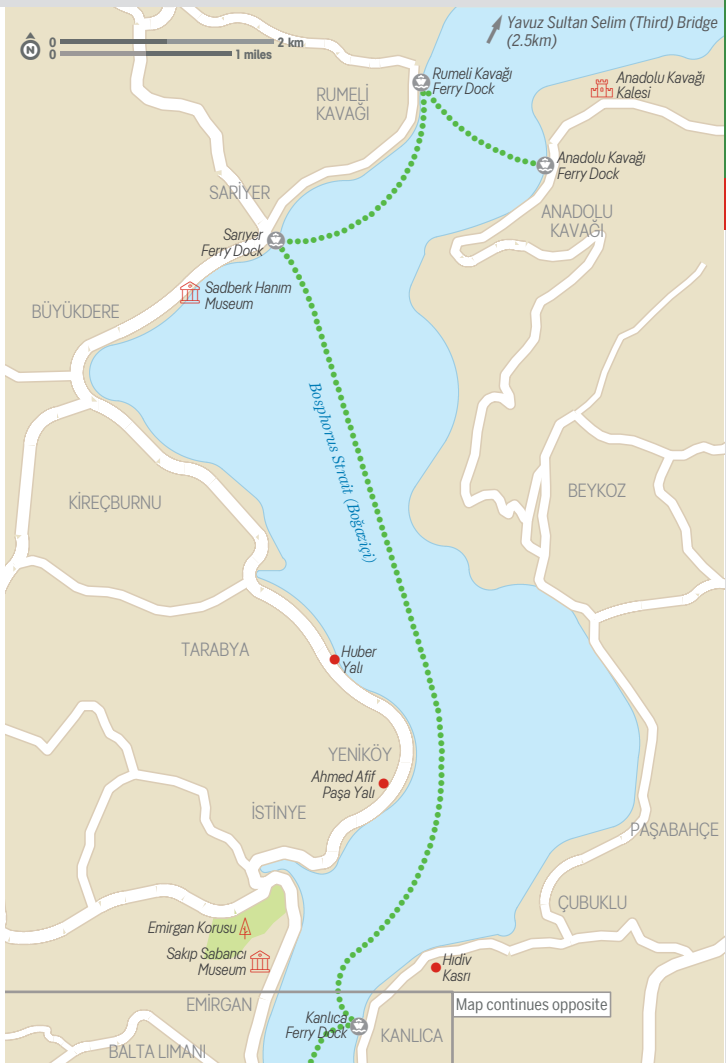
The ferry now approaches the **Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge**, passing **Rumeli Hisarı** (p159) (Fortress of Europe) and **Anadolu Hisarı** (p159) (Fortress of Asia) on opposite sides of the strait. There are many architecturally and historically important *yahıs* in and around Anadolu Hisarı. These include the **Köprülü Amcazade Hüseyin Paşa Yalı**, a cantilevered box-like structure built for one of Mustafa II's grand viziers in 1698. The nearby **Zarif Mustafa Paşa Yalı** was built in the early 19th century by the official coffee-maker to Sultan Mahmut II. Look for its upstairs salon, which juts out over the water and is supported by unusual curved timber struts.

Just before the bridge, on the European shore, is an eccentric-looking turreted building known locally as the Perili Köşk (Haunted Mansion), but properly referred to as the Yusuf Ziya Pasha Mansion. Built in 1910, it's now the home of **Borusan Contemporary** (p158).

Kanlıca to Sarıyer

The ferry's third stop is **Kanlıca**, a village built around a small cove. High on a promontory above this is **Hıdiv Kasrı** (p159), a gorgeous art nouveau villa built by the last *khedive* of Egypt as a summer residence for use during his family's annual visits to İstanbul. You can see its square tower from the ferry.







RETURNING ALONG THE ASIAN SHORE

To visit Küçüksu

Kasrı and Beylerbeyi Palace, alight at Anadolu Kavağı and take the number 15A bus to Beykoz, from where you will be able to transfer to bus 15, which travels to Üsküdar via Küçüksu and Beylerbeyi Sarayı.

On the European shore opposite Kanlıca is the wealthy suburb of **Emirgan**, backdropped by **Emirgan Korusu** (Woods; p159), a huge public reserve that is particularly beautiful in April, when it is carpeted with thousands of tulips. Emirgan's major attraction is the impressive **Sakıp Sabancı Museum** (p160).

North of Emirgan, past **İstinye**, is the suburb of **Yeniköy**. Located on a point jutting out from the European shore, this was a favourite summer resort for wealthy Ottomans, as indicated by the cluster of lavish 18th- and 19th-century *yalıs* around the ferry dock. The most notable of these is the frilly white **Ahmed Afif Paşa Yalı**, designed by Alexandre Vallaury, architect of the Pera Palace Hotel in Beyoğlu, and built in the late 19th century.

The ferry follows the Asian shore for a stretch, passing a number of coves on its way to its next stop, **Sarıyer**. These coves include **Çubuklu** on the Asian side and **Tarabya** on the European side. Just before Tarabya is the **Huber Yalı**, now Türkiye's Presidential Palace – it has frilly gables and delicate Russian-style cupolas.

Sarıyer to Rumeli Kavağı

Some passengers chose to alight at the former fishing village of **Sarıyer** rather than continue to the ferry's final stop, Anadolu Kavağı. The reasons for this are twofold: a number of good restaurants here serve lunch, and regular buses travel back to town via the coastal road.

From Sarıyer, it's a short trip to the penultimate stop, **Rumeli Kavağı** (pictured right), a sleepy place where the only excitement comes courtesy of the arrival and departure of the ferry. Just before arriving in this village, the new **Yavuz Sultan Selim** (Third) Bridge, which opened in 2016, comes into view.



YONCAEVREN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Rumeli Kavağı to Anadolu Kavağı

Anadolu Kavağı, on the Asian shore, is where the ferry finishes its journey. Once a fishing village, its local economy now relies on the tourism trade. Perched above the village are the ruins of **Anadolu Kavağı Kalesi**, a medieval castle overlooking both the Black Sea and the Bosphorus. The ferry stops in Anadolu Kavağı for two and a half hours before returning to Eminönü, leaving passengers with little to do except have lunch at one of the mediocre fish restaurants near the *iskele*. The alternative is to return by bus.



A BUSY WATERWAY

Under the terms of the 1936 Montreux Convention, the Bosphorus is a recognised international shipping lane. Over 40,000 ships sail along it every year.

Dolmabahçe Palace

Magnificently located on the Bosphorus shore, this grandiose building was home to the imperial family between 1856 and 1924. The wedding-cake exterior is a good indicator of what visitors see when touring the building – 258 rooms and 46 halls decorated in the most ostentatious fashion imaginable.

MAP P140 E5



PLANNING TIPS

There is a daily limit on visitations, and this is often reached on weekends and holidays – come midweek if possible. All photography is prohibited inside the palace building.



Scan for ticket prices
and opening hours.

History

The palace was built for Sultan Abdül Mecit I (r 1839–61), who decided to move his imperial court from Topkapı to a modern residence away from the Old City. For a site he chose the *dolma bahçe* (filled-in garden) where his predecessors Sultans Ahmet I and Osman II had filled in a little cove in order to create a royal park complete with wooden pleasure kiosks and pavilions.

Abdül Mecit commissioned imperial architects Nikoğos and Garabed Balyan to construct an Ottoman-European palace that would impress everyone who set eyes on it. Traditional Ottoman palace architecture was eschewed – there are no pavilions here, and the palace turns its back to the splendid view rather than celebrating it. The designer of the Paris Opera was brought in to do the interiors, which perhaps explains their exaggerated theatricality – there are multiple showy chandeliers and gilt on every available surface. The building was completed in 1854, and the sultan and his family moved in two years later. All was not rosy after the move, though, as Abdül Mecit's extravagant project precipitated the empire's bankruptcy and signalled the beginning of the end for the Ottoman dynasty.



GELIA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Selamlık

The Selamlık is where the sultans conducted the business of the empire. It features a series of ornately furnished reception halls, the most spectacular of which is the columned **Muayede** (Ceremonial Hall) where important visitors were entertained and ceremonial events were staged. This huge space features a massive chandelier made of Irish glass that was a gift from Queen Victoria. Another notable decorative feature in this part of the palace is a spectacular **staircase** with a French crystal balustrade made by Baccarat.

The Selamlık's smaller salons include the **Red Room**, where day-to-day business was conducted, and the frescoed **Blue Room**, where sultans met with their subjects. The **Zulvecheyn Hall**, which connects the Selamlık with the Harem, has



QUICK BREAK

In the grounds of the palace but accessible without a museum ticket, the simple Dolmabahçe Kafeterya benefits from its Bosphorus-edge location.



AN ARCHITECTURAL DYNASTY

Three generations of an Armenian family, the Balyans, designed imperial buildings in Constantinople in the 19th century. The clan's patriarch was Krikor, chief of the imperial architects under Mahmud II. His son Garabed and grandson Nikoğos designed Dolmabahçe for Abdül Mecit I, and Nikoğos went on to design the Ortaköy Camii and Küçükso Kasrı. His brother Sarkis designed Beylerbeyi Palace for Sultan Abdül Aziz.

windows overlooking the Bosphorus and is where the sultans relaxed.

Harem

The Harem is arranged as it was when the imperial families lived here. Far less ostentatious than the Selamlık, its major salon is the **Valide Sultan Divanhanesi** (Queen Mother's Reception Room), an extravaganza of pink where the ladies of the Harem entertained female visitors. The **Blue Hall** benefits from Bosphorus views.

During the early years of the republic, Atatürk used the palace as his İstanbul base. He died in his room in the Harem at 9:05am on 10 November 1938 and the clock in this room remains set to that exact hour and minute.

Painting Collection

The Veliht Dairesi (Apartments of the Crown Prince) in Dolmabahçe Palace are home to the palace's collection of paintings. Highlights include the downstairs 'Turkish Painters 1870–1890' room, which includes two Osman Hamdi Bey works, and the upstairs 'İstanbul views' room, which is home to 19th-century street scenes by Germain Fabius Brest. Access the gallery from the palace grounds (turn left when exiting the Selamlık) or from Dolmabahçe Caddesi.

Other Buildings

The landscaped grounds of the palace are home to a variety of structures including a neo-baroque **clock tower** designed by Sarkis Balyan for Abdül Hamit II (r 1876–1909).

Just outside the palace compound is the 1855 **Dolmabahçe Mosque**, commissioned by Abdül Mecid's mother Bezm-i Alem Valide Sultan and designed by Nikoğos Balyan.

Beylerbeyi Palace

Small but opulently furnished, this 1865 waterside palace in Beylerbeyi is nestled under the Bosphorus Bridge a short distance north of Üsküdar. It attracts relatively few visitors, meaning those who do venture here often end up having the place to themselves.

MAP P140 H5

The Main Building

Designed by Sarkis Balyan, brother of Nikoğos (architect of Dolmabahçe Palace), the palace delighted both Sultan Abdül Aziz (r 1861–76), who commissioned it, and the many foreign dignitaries who stayed here as the sultan's houseguests. Its last imperial 'guest' was former sultan Abdül Hamit II, who spent the last five years of his life under house arrest here.

An informative audio tour is included in the ticket price, but you'll need to leave ID as surety. As you explore the grand *selamlık* (ceremonial quarters) and the small but opulent harem in the main building, you'll pass through rooms decorated with frescoes of naval scenes, Bohemian crystal chandeliers, Ming vases and sumptuous Hereke carpets. Highlights include the downstairs hall with the huge marble pool used for cooling during summer, the elaborately painted and gilded sultan's apartment, and the wood-panelled sultan's audience room with its Baccarat chandelier, Hereke carpet and magnificent Bosphorus view. The other buildings in the palace compound, including the whimsical tent-like marble bathing pavilions by the water's edge, are closed to the public.



PLANNING TIPS

All photography is prohibited inside the building. The most enjoyable way to get here is to take a ferry to Üsküdar and connect with the Üsküdar-Anadolu Kavağı ferry, which has Beylerbeyi as its first stop.



Scan for ticket prices
and opening hours.



Walk Üsküdar

A working-class suburb with a conservative population, Üsküdar isn't blessed with many good cafes, bars and restaurants, but it does have an array of magnificent imperial mosques. This walk visits the most important of these monuments, some of which retain their original *küllüye* (mosque complex) buildings.

START

Şemsî Paşa Mosque

END

Çinîli Mosque

LENGTH

3.7km; one hour



1 A Vizier's Bequest

From the *iskele*, walk south to the charming **Şemsi Ahmed Paşa Mosque** on the waterfront. This was designed by Mimar Sinan and built in 1580 for one of Süleyman the Magnificent's grand viziers. The cafe and *çay bahçesi* on the waterfront between the mosque and the tomb has wonderful views.

2 Mihrimah's Mosque

Head back to the paved *meydan* (square) in front of the *iskele*, which features the Ottoman Baroque-style Ahmet III Çeşme (Fountain). Behind the fountain is another Sinan design, the distinctive **Mihrimah Sultan Mosque**. Sometimes called the İskele Camii, this was commissioned by Süleyman the Magnificent's daughter Mihrimah and built between 1547 and 1548.

3 Unusual Mosque Feature

Cross busy Hakimiyeti Milliye Caddesi to reach the **Yeni Valide Mosque**, which has an unusual 'birdcage' tomb in its garden. The mosque was built by Sultan Ahmet III between 1708 and 1710 for his mother, Gülnuş Emetullah, who had been the favourite concubine of Mehmet IV.

4 Imperial Soup Kitchen

Walk up Hakimiyeti Milliye Caddesi until you reach a roundabout, where you should veer into Dr

Fahri Atabey Caddesi. Continue uphill and turn into Sarı Mehmet Sokak after you pass the Sokullu Mehmet Paşa Elementary School. Then turn right into Eski Topkaşı Caddesi and left again into **Valide İmareti Sokak**, where a huge 16th-century *imaret* (soup kitchen) is located.

5 Adorning the Skyline

The *imaret* is part of the *külliye* of one of the city's most important buildings, the **Atik Valide Mosque**. Designed by Sinan and built on Üsküdar's highest hill in 1583 for Valide Sultan Nurbanu, wife of Selim II and mother of Murat III, the *külliye* includes a decommissioned hamam, a *medrese* (Islamic school of higher studies), *dariüşşifa* (hospital) and *han* (caravanserai).

6 Showcase of Tile Art

From the mosque, backtrack slightly and walk up Kartal Baba Caddesi and turn left into Çinili Hamam Sokak to reach the **Çinili Mosque**. Though unprepossessing from the outside, its interior is totally different, featuring gorgeous 17th-century İznik tiles that were the bequest of Mahpeyker Kösem, wife of Sultan Ahmet I and mother of sultans Murat IV and İbrahim I.

EXPERIENCES

Wander Through
Beşiktaş Bazaar

MARKET DISTRICT

The beating heart of Beşiktaş, the bustling backstreet area known as **Çarşı** (Bazaar) is packed with shops, restaurants, bars and cafes. Its hubs are the fish market, covered by a distinctive steel canopy and lined at the back by *meyhanes* (Turkish taverns); and the small square centred around a statue of a black eagle, the symbol of the Beşiktaş football club and a rallying point on match nights.

After exploring, consider pausing at one of the market's many cafes – we like **Çakmak Kahvaltı Salonu** (MAP: ① P140 E5) for breakfast and **Minoa** (MAP: ② P140 E5) at other times of the day.

Join the Black Eagles
Supporters

FOOTBALL

Beşiktaş Park is the home of Beşiktaş (the Black Eagles), one of the three top football clubs in

Türkiye's Süper Lig (Super League). The other two are Galatasaray (the Lions) and Fenerbahçe (the Golden Canaries). All three clubs are based in İstanbul and locals are extravagantly proud of them. Five other İstanbul-based teams (Başakşehir, Fatih Karagümrük, İstanbulspor, Kasımpaşa and Pendikspor) made it into the Süper Lig in 2024.

Each year, 20 teams from across the country compete in the league from August to May. Three clubs move up from the second league (confusingly known as the 1st League) to the Süper Lig each year and three get demoted. The top two teams play in the UEFA Champions League.

Football matches are usually held on the weekend. To attend a match at Beşiktaş Park or at the home grounds of the other İstanbul teams, purchase your tickets ahead of time through Passo (passo.com.tr).



TEA ON THE İSKELE

Catching a ferry isn't the only reason why İstanbullular head to the *iskele* (ferry dock). There are usually street-food stands plying a busy trade around the docks and a number of the *iskele* buildings have cafes where it's possible to enjoy an inexpensive coffee or tea while watching the boats dock and depart. You'll find *vapur kafes* (ferry cafes) on the 2nd floor of the main Beşiktaş İskelesi (MAP: ③ P140 F5) and at the Kuzuncuk, Moda, Kadıköy and Çubuklu Arabalı *iskeles*. There's also a cafe and branch of the İstanbul Kitapçısı bookshop upstairs at the Karaköy İskelesi (MAP: ④ P140 E6).

Learn about Turkish Naval History

MUSEUM

Established over a century ago to celebrate and commemorate Turkish naval history and now housed in an architecturally noteworthy copper-clad exhibition hall, the **İstanbul Naval Museum** (Deniz Müzesi; MAP: **5** P140 **E5**) showcases a spectacular collection of 19th-century imperial *caïques* on its 1st and 2nd floors. These ornately decorated wooden rowboats were used by the royal household and were regular sights on the Bosphorus and Golden Horn until the early 20th century. Exhibits in the basement space include sections of the massive Byzantine chain that was used to block the entrance of the Golden Horn and that temporarily stalled Mehmet II's campaign to conquer the city.

In the square opposite the museum is the **tomb** (MAP: **6** P140 **F5**) of the admiral of Süleyman the Magnificent's fleet, Barbaros Heyrettin Paşa (1483–1546), better known as Barbarossa.

Set Sail on the Bosphorus

FERRY TRIP

There are a number of options available to visitors who are keen to take a Bosphorus cruise while in the city. The best known is the long daily cruise between Eminönü and Anadolu Kavağı (see our tour on p142), but those who are strapped for time may wish to instead hop aboard one of the Dentur Avrasya ferries that depart from Kabataş five times daily, taking on extra passengers in Beşiktaş before sailing to the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge and back in a non-stop one-hour loop. To take this inexpensive and easy option from Beşiktaş, head to the *iskele* located at the end of Çiğdem Sokak, off Çırağan Caddesi.

Make a Weekend Visit to Ortaköy

STREET MARKET

The former fishing village of **Ortaköy** is a popular destination on weekends, when locals head here to browse the stalls at the open-air market on İskele Meydanı, enjoy



BEAT THE TRAFFIC JAMS

Constant traffic jams along the main Bosphorus coast roads make car and bus trips excruciating slow. The solution is to take ferries wherever possible. Multiple ferry lines connect suburbs on both sides of the upper Bosphorus and lines also travel up each shore. Ferries from Eminönü head up the European shore 12 times daily, stopping at Ortaköy, Bebek, Emirgan and five other *iskeles* before finishing at Rumeli Kavağı and returning on the same route. On the Asian shore, eight ferries per day depart Üsküdar for Anadolu Kavağı, stopping at seven *iskeles* including Beylerbeyi. Check ferry times at sehirhatlari.istanbul.

the Bosphorus view and snack on the *kümpir* (stuffed baked potatoes) and sweet-smelling waffles sold at stalls on the pedestrianised street running inland from the 19th-century **Ortaköy Mosque** (MAP: 7 P140 G5). The modern Bridge of the Martyrs of July 15 (Bosphorus Bridge) looms behind this baroque-style building, providing a fabulous photo opportunity for those wanting to illustrate İstanbul's 'old meets new' character.

Join the Smart Set in Bebek

DISTRICT

Located on the pretty Bosphorus bay of the same name, the ritzy residential suburb of Bebek is known for its high property prices, upmarket boutiques and sleek eateries and bars. Most of the local action takes place on the main waterside road, Cevdet Paşa Caddesi. The shopping strip here is home to a number of cafes, bars and restaurants, many of which have terraces with water

views (even the Starbucks has a waterside terrace). Popular choices include **Baylan** (MAP: 8 P140 C5) and **Divan Pastanesi** (MAP: 9 P140 C5). On the opposite side of the street is ever-popular **Lucca** (MAP: 10 P140 C4), a bar and cafe with a street terrace that is packed on weekend evenings. The most popular destination of all is **Bebek Kahve** (MAP: 11 P140 C4), a waterside *çay bahçesi* behind the shops (it's opposite the mosque).

Serious shoppers should head to the junction of Küçük Bebek Caddesi and Cevdet Paşa Caddesi, where tempting boutiques including **Midnight Express** (MAP: 12 P140 C4), **Ebru Günay** (see 12 C5) and **Ceremony in Bloom** (see 8 C5) are located.

Venture Into a Haunted Mansion

CULTURAL CENTRE

Housed in a turreted building known locally as the *Perili Köşk* (Haunted Mansion), the **Borusan Contemporary** (MAP: 14 P140 D4)



SWEET WATERS OF ASIA

In Ottoman times, two streams – the Büyük Göksu Deresi (Great Heavenly Stream) and Küçük Göksu Deresi (Small Heavenly Stream) – descended from the Asian hills into the Bosphorus near Anadolu Hisari. Between them was a green delta that the Ottoman elite thought perfect for picnics. Foreign residents referred to it as 'The Sweet Waters of Asia'. If the weather was good, the sultan joined the picnic, and did so in style. Sultan Abdül Mecit's answer to a simple picnic blanket was the rococo-style **Küçüksu Kasrı** (MAP: 13 P140 D5), an ornate hunting lodge built in 1856–57. You'll see its ornate cast-iron fence, boat dock and exterior from the ferry.

gallery and cultural centre is home to a contemporary-art collection owned by Borusan Holding, a local steel, energy and logistics conglomerate. The centre hosts a program of art exhibitions, events and site-specific installations, with a particular focus on digital arts. It also has a terrace cafe with magnificent Bosphorus views. Properly referred to as the Yusuf Ziya Pasha mansion, the building's construction kicked off around 1910 but was halted in 1914 when the Ottoman Empire was drawn into WWI and its construction workers were forced to enlist in the army. Work on the 10-storey building came to a standstill and it remained empty, leading to its 'Haunted Mansion' tag. Eighty years later work finally resumed and the finished building, now tucked under the western approach to the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, became the home of Borusan Holding. Check the website for exhibition details before visiting (borusancontemporary.com).

Admire the Fortress of Europe

CASTLE

The massive **Rumeli Hisari** (Fortress of Europe; MAP: 15 P140 D4) was built by order of Mehmet the Conqueror in 1452 at the narrowest point of the Bosphorus. The presence of it and **Anadolu Hisari** (Fortress of Asia; MAP: 16 P140 D4), a castle built on the opposite shore in 1393–1395, enabled the Ottomans to control all water traffic, cutting Constantinople off from resupply by sea and contributing significantly to the Ottoman defeat of the Byzantines. The useful military life of the fortress lasted less than one year.

After the Conquest, the fortress was used as a glorified Bosphorus toll booth, then a military barracks, a prison and finally an open-air theatre. It was closed for a long-overdue restoration when this book was being researched.



EGYPT ON THE BOSPHORUS

The *khedives* (rulers) of Egypt in the 19th and early 20th centuries had close ties with the Ottoman Empire and many spent considerable amounts of time on the upper Bosphorus. Ismail Pasha settled in Emirgan, building a *yalı* on the water and three pavilions on the hill; the pavilions still stand in **Emirgan Korusu** (Grove; MAP: 17 P140 C3). His grandson Abbas II built a palatial art nouveau villa high on a hill in Çubuklu, near Kanlıca. Known as **Hıdiv Kasrı** (the Khedive's Pavilion; MAP: 18 P140 D3), the garden cafe here is worth visiting. Abbas' Turkish-born mother, Emine İlhami, built her own art nouveau villa in Bebek. This now houses the Egyptian consulate.

View Blockbuster Exhibitions

ART GALLERY

MAP: 19 P140 D3

Located in the wealthy suburb of Emirgan, the **Sakıp Sabancı Museum** has a permanent collection showcasing Turkish calligraphy and art, but is best known for its blockbuster temporary exhibitions. The permanent collection occupies a 1925 mansion designed by Italian architect Edoardo De Nari and the temporary exhibitions are staged in an impressive modern extension designed by local firm Savaş, Erkel and Çırakoğlu. The setting here – a magnificent garden on a hill overlooking the Bosphorus – is quite spectacular and the presence of a popular restaurant makes the place a popular destination, particularly on weekends in fine weather. The museum offers free admission on Tuesdays.

Enjoy a Meal with a View

RESTAURANT

A training restaurant for Türkiye's leading professional culinary school, the **MSA'nin Restoranı** (see 19 D3) in the Sakıp Sabancı Museum is well worth a stop when exploring the upper Bosphorus. Its extensive global menu includes

pizzas, pastas, sushi, burgers and curries, and there's a strong drinks list featuring local and imported wines. The biggest draw is, however, the large terrace, which has a wonderful Bosphorus view – book in advance for a table (msa.com.tr).

View the Bounty of a Collector's Passion

MUSEUM

MAP: 20 P140 C1

Named after the wife of the late Vehbi Koç, founder of Türkiye's foremost commercial empire, the **Sadberk Hanım Museum** is housed in two late-19th-century *yahs* in Büyükdere, near Sarıyer. A showcase of Turkish-Islamic artefacts collected by Mrs Koç and antiquities from the noted Hüseyin Kocabaş collection, its collection includes Chinese, İznik and Kütahya ceramics; Ottoman and Balkan silk textiles and costumes; glass from the early Greek, Hellenistic and Roman periods; and an exquisite collection of jewellery and diadems from the Mycenaean, Archaic and Classical periods. At the time of research, the museum had announced a move to Kasımpaşa on the Golden Horn when the HaliçPort project there is completed; no official date has been announced.



CLOSING DAYS

Most of the museums on the Bosphorus are closed on at least one day per week. Plan your visit accordingly. Monday: Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Beylerbeyi Palace, Deniz Müzesi, Dolmabahçe Palace, Küçüksu Kasrı. Wednesday: Sadberk Hanım Museum. All weekdays: Borusan Contemporary



See page 140 for
map
of locations

LISTINGS

Best Places for...

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End



Eating

Modern Turkish

Apartıman €€€

21 D3

Upmarket brasserie-cafe-bar on Yeniköy's fashionable main strip where the food is as impressive as the surrounds. *noon-1am Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun*

Lokanta Feriye €€€

22 G5

Excellent modern Turkish cuisine can be enjoyed on the waterside terrace at this restaurant in a restored Ottoman palace in Ortaköy. *noon-midnight Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun*

Fish Restaurants

İsmet Baba €€€

23 G5

Servicing the Kuzguncuk community since 1951, this restaurant is known for its fresh fish, water views and occasionally abrupt service. *noon-midnight*

Kıyı €€€

24 D2

Serving excellent seafood to locals since the '60s, this restaurant in Tarabya has a lovely upstairs terrace. *noon-11pm*

Global Eats

Arada Blue City €€

25 G6

In Üsküdar, this family-style Lebanese restaurant above a shop and *nargile* cafe offers a good range of mezes and grills but no alcohol. *8.30am-midnight*

Inari Omakase €€€

26 C5

On Kuruçeşme's main drag, this Japanese eatery is known for its ultra-fresh nigiri sushi and hand rolls. *4pm-midnight Tue-Sun*

Outdoor Eating

Sade Kahve €

27 D4

Seats on the outdoor terrace are hotly contested on sunny weekends at this Rumeli Hisarı institution, known for its all-day breakfasts. *7am-midnight*

Ninda €

see 9 C5

This Bebek bakery sells delicious sourdough sandwiches that can be eaten at its street tables or in the nearby waterside park. *7am-9pm*

Ice Cream

Girandola €

28 C5

On the breezy Bebek edge of Arnavutköy; classic Italian flavours and unusual choices such as *güllaç* (rice pudding). *10.30am-12.30am Tue-Sat, from 1.30pm Mon*

Bebek Mini

Dondurma €

29 C5

House-churned *dondurma* (Turkish icecream) in flavours including *fıstık* (pistachio), *vişne* (cherry) and *tahin ceviz* (walnut and tahini). *9am-2am*

Muà €

see 10 C4

The owners of this Bebek *gelateria* learned their craft in Rimini, and the results are delectable. Try the nut-based flavours. *10am-12.30am Sun-Thu, to 1.30am Fri & Sat*



See p172
for eating,
drinking and
shopping
listings



Explore

Kadıköy & Moda

Bustling Kadıköy and its upmarket annex Moda are residential suburbs on the Asian shore with plenty to interest visitors, being home to İstanbul's best produce market, convivial cafes, world-class street art, popular grunge bars and a progressive vibe. It's easy to spend a full day in this part of town, particularly as the neighbourhoods can be easily and enjoyably explored on foot. Best of all is the ferry trip to get here, which allows passengers to admire the domes and minarets studding the skylines of both shores as the ferry sails across the northern tip of the Sea of Marmara. Returning at sunset, when seagulls shriek and swoop and the sun sets over these monuments is one of the greatest experiences the city has to offer.

Getting Around



Ferry

Regular Şehir Hatları ferries travel from Eminönü, Karaköy, Kabataş and Beşiktaş to Kadıköy; services to Moda from Kabataş are infrequent. Dentur ferries connect Kadıköy with Beşiktaş.



Metro

The Marmaray line running from Halkalı to Gebze stops at Sirkeci near Eminönü, at Üsküdar and at Ayrılık Çeşmesi, from where passengers can transfer to the M4 travelling to Kadıköy.



Tram

The T3 tram line connects Kadıköy and Moda, but it's easy to walk between the two.



THE BEST

STREET MARKET Kadıköy
Çarşı (p166)

STREET ART PRECINCT
Yeldeğirmeni (p170)

ANATOLIAN CUISINE Çiya
Sofrası (p170)

TEA GARDEN Moda Çay
Bahçesi (p169)

TOUR Alternative City Tours
(p170)

Kadıköy Çarşı

An alluring showcase of Türkiye's best produce, the Kadıköy Çarşı (Bazaar) is foodie central on the Asian shore. Equally rewarding to explore independently or on a guided culinary walk, the bazaar is small enough to retain a local feel yet large enough to support a variety of specialist traders.

MAP P164 C4



PLANNING TIP

Most of the bazaar's shops open every day of the week from 9am to 8pm, but some storeholders delay their opening until mid-morning on Sundays.

Produce Shops

After arriving by ferry, cross Rihtim Caddesi in front of the main *iskele* (ferry dock) and walk up Muvakkithane Caddesi or Yasa Caddesi to reach the centre of the market action. The best produce shops are in Güneşlibahçe Sokak – you'll see fish glistening on beds of crushed ice, displays of seasonal fruits and vegetables, combs of amber-hued honey, tubs of tangy pickles, bins of freshly roasted nuts and much, much more.

Long-standing businesses on Güneşlibahçe Sokak include **Brezilya Kurukahve ve Kuruyemiş**, which has been selling coffee beans, nuts, dried fruit and a range of teas since 1920. Its original owner was the first business person in the city to begin importing coffee from Latin America, hence its name ('Brezilya Kurukahve' means Brazilian Coffee Shop). Nearby **Ecevitler Gurme Şarküteri**, which is known throughout the city for its excellent takeaway mezes, is another local institution.

Cafes & Eateries

As well as produce shops and stalls, there are plenty of places to eat and drink in the bazaar. To enjoy a Turkish coffee, head to **Fazıl Bey**, which İstanbullular have been patronising since the 1920s. Sipping a cup of its fragrant and rich brew while



MARCOPACHIEGA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

watching the passing parade of shoppers on Serasker Caddesi is a popular local pastime.

For different styles of coffee, **Coffee Manifesto** (p173) on Güneşlibahçe Sokak and **Baylan Pastanesi** on Muvakkithane Caddesi are popular choices.

Lahmacun (Arabic-style pizza) and *pides* are also bazaar staples. On Güneşlibahçe Sokak, **Borsam Taş Fırın** (p172) and **Halil Lahmacun** (p172) serve particularly tasty versions straight out of their stone ovens. Nearby is the most popular bazaar eatery of all, **Çiya Sofrası** (p170).

The bazaar's most famous *şekerçi* (sweets shop) is **Cafer Erol** on the corner of Yasa and Mühürdar Caddesi, opposite the historic Ayia Efimia Greek Orthodox Church. This *şekerçi* is known across the city for the extravagance of its annual Christmas display.



QUICK BREAK

For a respite from the bazaar's bustle, retreat to Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir, which has a lovely cafe where patrons can enjoy a cake, pastry, coffee or çay.

Walk Moda

The enclave of Moda lives up to its name ('Fashion' in Turkish), being one of the city's most glamorous residential addresses. An easy walk from the Kadıköy Çarşı, its cafe culture and waterside parks make it a tempting spot to explore on foot.

START	END	LENGTH
Kadıköy Çarşı	Moda İskelesi	2.5km; 45 minutes



1 Moda Mosque

From Kadıköy Çarşısı, walk down busy Moda Caddesi. Turn left into Cem Sokak, where murals have been painted on walls around the Vocational and Technical High School. Pass the Meryem Ana Catholic Church and turn right into Şair Nefi Sokak to reach the 1960s **Moda Mosque**.

2 Musical Tribute

Turn right into Yusuf Kamil Paşa Sokak. The brightly painted villa here houses a **museum** dedicated to its former resident, Barış Manço, a musician who established the Anatolian rock genre in the 1960s and 1970s.

3 Dondurma Stop

Continue to Moda Bostancı Sokak and turn left, walking until you re-join Moda Caddesi. Turn right and walk uphill until you come to **Meshur Dondurmacı Ali Usta** (p173), a popular local *dondurma* (Turkish ice cream) parlour.

4 The Physician's Mansion

Opposite Ali Usta is a grand but decrepit six-storey **mansion**. Built in 1903 for Arif Sarıca, physician to Sultan Abdulhamid II, it is still owned by his descendants.

5 Waterside Tea Garden

Turn right into Ferit Tek Sokak, which will take you to Moda Park. On the water side of the park is the

Moda Çay Bahçesi, with tables set under shady mastic trees and million-lira views over the Sea of Marmara.

6 Mid-Century Housing

From the tea garden, follow the southern extension of Ferit Tek Sokak. This is one of the most prestigious residential streets in Moda, lined on one side with mid-century modern **apartment buildings** with panoramic water views. You'll eventually come to a set of stairs; continue down these.

7 Sacred Spring

You're now back on Moda Caddesi. On the opposite side of the road is century-old Koço, a much-loved neighbourhood *meyhane* (Turkish tavern) with a spacious water-view terrace. At the rear of the restaurant is the **Ayazma de Santa Catalina**, a subterranean chapel built around a sacred *ayazma* (spring).

8 Set Sail

Down the hill from Koço is the **Moda İskelesi**, a Turkish Revivalist-style kiosk at the end of Moda Pier. This now houses a library and cafe. From here, you can take an afternoon ferry back to Kabataş – check *sehirhatlari.istanbul* for departure times, which are infrequent.

EXPERIENCES

Investigate Alternative Parts of the City

TOURS

Having lived in İstanbul for three decades, New York-born photographer Monica Fritz now shares, during private guided tours, many of the secrets she has learned about the city. Monica is familiar with all the city's districts, but particularly loves those on the Asian shore, which is the part of the city she calls home. Her **Alternative City Tours** (alternativecitytours.com) portfolio includes two half-day tours investigating Asian districts. The first tour starts in Kadıköy's photogenic bazaar, then explores bohemian Yeldeğirmeni before heading to the Bosphorus suburbs of Kuzguncuk and Üsküdar. The second tour also starts in the market, then explores the streets of Kadıköy and Moda. Participants can choose to focus on photography, but the tours are also perfectly geared towards the needs of those without cameras.

Rediscover Culinary Treasures

RESTAURANT

MAP: 1 P164 C4

Musa Dağdeviren's **Çiya Sofrası** showcases dishes from regional Türkiye and is an essential stop for visiting foodies. Since opening the *lokanta* in Kadıköy Çarşı in 1998, Dağdeviren has devoted himself to resurrecting long-lost dishes from Anatolia and surrounding countries. The chefs behind the counter

are happy to explain what's in the bains-marie, so feel free to ask about ingredients and cooking methods. There are multiple vegetable and meat options on offer (make your choice at the counter) as well as excellent *lahmacun* and desserts (order these at your table). Though alcohol isn't available, the homemade *şerbet* (sweet fruit drink) is a delicious substitute. There are three branches of Çiya on Güneşlibahçe Sokak: the original sofrası ('table' in Turkish) at number 43 and two eateries where kebaps are also available on the opposite side of the street.

Spot Sensational Street Art

MURALS

Kadıköy is one of the city's street-art hotspots and the streets of the Yeldeğirmeni district near the *iskele* are where many huge and impressive murals by local and international artists are located. These were created for the now-defunct Mural Istanbul Festival. Head to Reşit Efendi Sokak to see murals by Italian artist Pixel Pancho (pixelpancho_studio) and Turkish artist Davamını Gör; Tayyareci Sami Sokak for a mural by German artist Dome (dome_street_art); Kırmızı Kuşak Sokak for a mural by Croatian artist Lonac ([@lonacpot](http://lonacpot)); Nakil Sokak for a mural by Australian artist Fintan Magee ([@fintan_magee](http://fintan_magee)); and Talimhane Sokak for a mural by

Polish artists Sepe (@s_e_p_e_)

and Chazme (@chazme718).

Local artists whose work is worth looking out for include No More Lies (@nomoreliesart), Ömeria (@omeriaworks), Max on Duty (@maxonduty), Schenki (@schenki_wf) and Cins (@cins3000). The @istanbulstreetart feed gives a good overview of the local scene.

Head to Kadıköy's Hipsterville

DISTRICT

Street art isn't the only thing that draws young İstanbulus to Yeldeğirmeni. There's also a thriving cafe scene and a good range of alternative shopping, including vintage boutiques and independent bookshops – check out **Flaneur Kitabevi** (MAP: 2 P164 E1), which specialises in art books, and **Kuzgun Çizgi** (MAP: 3 P164 E1), which stocks comics, manga and zines. Cafes include **Küff** (MAP: 4 P164 E1), which is spread over three spaces on Karakolhane Caddesi and is so popular it often has queues, particularly on



HAYDERPAŞA STATION

Travelling to Kadıköy by ferry, passengers will see this historic railway station before arrival. Built in the first decade of the 20th century, the station building was designed by German architects and opened in 1908. It functioned as the main terminus for Asian railway services until it was badly damaged by fire in 2010. In 2016, after much public discussion, the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality announced that the building would be restored and remain a train station, becoming the terminus of the İstanbul–Ankara fast-train line. Restoration was scheduled to be completed in 2024.

weekends. Nearby **Benazio Coffee** (MAP: 5 P164 E1) is almost as popular and is known for its delicious and affordable breakfasts.



CITY OF THE BLIND

Although the historical peninsula in İstanbul is called 'the Old City', the first settlement was at Kadıköy. The Megarians settled there in the 7th century BCE, calling it Chalcedon. Not too long after they did so, another Megarian settler arrived – Byzas. Sent by his father, the king of Megara, he had been counselled by the Oracle at Delphi to establish another settlement 'opposite the blind'. When Byzas arrived, legend tells us that he immediately saw that Seraglio Point on the European shore was a vastly preferable location on which to build, a fact that his predecessors had been 'blind' not to realise.

LISTINGS

Best Places for...

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End



Eating

Fine Dining

Aralık €€

6 D6

Stylish wine and cocktail bar with a Modern Turkish menu including vegetarian and vegan options. *5pm-12.30am Mon-Fri, from noon Sat & Sun*

Aida Vino e Cucina

€€€

7 D6

Italian restaurant in Moda with a refined menu and a good wine list featuring Italian and Turkish labels. *5pm-midnight Mon-Fri, from 3pm Sat*

Cibalikapı €€€

8 C8

Generally acknowledged as one of the city's best fish restaurants, this Moda institution has a pleasant garden terrace. *12.30pm-1am*

Casual Eats

Ali Muhiddin Hacı Bekir €

9 C4

As well as selling its famous *lokum*, the Kadıköy Çarşı branch of this famous business has a lovely cafe. *8am-9pm Mon-Sat, from 9am Sun*

700 Gram €€

10 D6

Bakery and cafe known for its excellent homemade croissants, sourdough bread and cakes. Good salads, too. *9am-10pm*

Pizzeria Il Pellicano

€€

11 E5

Operated by an Italian *pizzaiolo*, the Pellicano serves Neapolitan-style pizzas that devotees travel across town for. *noon-9.45pm Tue-Sun*

Dün €€

12 C8

Popular eatery offering global dishes including burgers; there's a decent number of vegetarian and vegan choices. *10am-11pm*



See page 164 for map of locations

Market Snacks

Halil Lahmacun €

13 C4

Serving what is quite possibly the best *lahmacun* in the city, Halil has upstairs and streetside seating. The menu is limited to classic *lahmacun* and *peynirli* (cheese) pide, both served piping hot. *11.30am-8.30pm Tue-Sun*

Borsam Taş Fırın €

14 C4

Another highly recommended *lahmacun* and pide joint, Borsam has a few stools on the street but most customers order their snacks to go. *11am-10pm*

Kadıköy Midyecisi €

15 C5

Delicious fresh mussels served steamed by the bowl or stuffed with spiced rice by the piece. *11am-3am Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat*

Basta! Street Food Bar

16 D5

Good-quality burgers and *dürüms* (grilled meat in a flatbread wrap).

noon-10pm Mon-Sat, to 9pm Sun

Ice Cream

Meshur Dondurmacı Ali Usta

17 C8

Established in 1969, this *dondurmacı* offers more than 30 flavours. In winter, scoops enrich warm mugs of *sahlep* (milky drink made with orchid root) – delicious! *10am-3am*

Dondurmacı Yaşar Usta

18 D6

Known for its vegan-friendly sorbets, Yaşar Usta has a number of branches on the Asian side of town, including one on the border of Kadıköy and Moda. *noon-midnight*



Drinking

Coffee

Walter's Coffee Roastery

19 D6

A popular coworking space, Walter's serves espresso, Aeropress, chemex, cold brew and drip versions in its stylish Moda premises. *10am-11pm*

Coffee Manifesto

20 C4

Third-wave coffee lab that attracts serious coffee drinkers; branches in the Kadıköy market, Yeldeğirmeni and Moda. *8.30am-9pm*

Kronotrop

21 C7

There are two branches of the Cihangir micro-roaster here: the one on Moda Caddesi has a spacious streetside terrace. *7am-11.30pm Mon-Fri, from 8am Sat & Sun*

Bars

Karga Bar

22 D5

Kadıköy's bar scene centers on Kadife Sokak – often referred to as Barlar Sokak (Bar Street) – and Karga is the best-loved bar on the strip, offering cheap drinks and alternative music (DJs downstairs, live acts upstairs). *11am-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat*

Bina

23 D5

Regulars love the rear garden here, and there's also an upstairs arts and performance space. *1pm-2am*

Arkaoda

see 23 D5

A hub of indie music and art, this relaxed place hosts regular DJ sets and has a rear courtyard. *noon-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat*

Stereogun

see 22 D5

Known for its roof terrace. *3.30pm-2am Sun-Wed & Fri, from 4.30pm Thu, from 2pm Sat*

★ WORTH A TRIP

Visit the Princes' Islands

Most İstanbullus refer to the Princes' Islands as 'Adalar' (The Islands). Lying 20km southeast of the city in the Sea of Marmara, there are nine islands in the group but only five are populated; the ferry stops at four of these, including the two largest, Büyükada and Heybeliada.



PLANNING TIP

The Adalar are best visited on weekdays between mid-April and October, being overcrowded on summer weekends and all but deserted in the cooler months, when many island businesses close.

Hike & Swim on Büyükada

Büyükada (Great Island; pictured) is impressive viewed from the ferry: gingerbread villas climb up the slopes of the hill and the bulbous twin cupolas of the Splendid Palas Hotel provide an unmistakable landmark. Streets are dotted with handsome 19th-century timber villas and hills are covered with pine forests laced with walking tracks and picnic spots. The island's major tourism drawcard is the **Church & Monastery of St George (Aya Yorgi)**, located on a 203m-high hill known as Yüceetepe.

Many İstanbullus visit the Adalar to swim at its rocky beaches. You'll need to pay to join them (entrance fees to beach clubs include use of a sun lounger and umbrella). On Büyükada, try the Nakibey, Yörükali or Viranbağ clubs.

Fast-food joints and ice-cream stands cluster around the *iskele*; restaurants tend to be next to the water and are closed outside summer.

Wander Heybeliada's Villa-Lined Streets

Heybeliada (Heybeli for short) is the prettiest island in the Adalar group, replete with ornate 19th-century timber villas. The island's major landmark is the hilltop **Hagia Triada Monastery**, which is perched above a picturesque line of poplar trees in a spot occupied by a Greek monastery since Byzantine times. A delightful walk from the *iskele* up Refah Şehitleri



IZZET KERIBAR/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Caddesi passes a host of large wooden villas set in lovingly tended gardens.

As on Büyükkada, 50% of the landscape is covered in protected pine-scented forests that are popular with hikers. For swimming, try the Ada or Aqua Green clubs. The best eateries are on the waterside promenade; most are closed for the winter season. No-frills cafes, *pideçis* and *kebabçis* can be found one street inland, on Ayıldız Caddesi.

Getting There & Around

Şehir Hatları (sehirhatlari.istanbul) ferries travel to the Adalar from Kabataş. Dentur (denturavrasya.com) travels from Beşiktaş, picking up passengers at both Kabataş and Eminönü en route. On summer weekends, arrive at least half an hour before departure. The trip takes 1¾ hours and you'll need a charged İstanbulkart to travel. Electric shuttles accepting İstanbulkarts travel around Heybeliada and Büyükkada. Bicycles are available for rent.



QUICK BREAK

Al fresco eating is popular on the Adalar. On Büyükkada, picnic supplies can be purchased at the shops on Çınar Caddesi; on Heybeli, head to Ayıldız Caddesi.





İstanbul Toolkit

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Family Travel

Istanbul is a great destination for a family-friendly break. Children might moan about the number of mosques and museums on the itinerary, but they're sure to be appeased by the parks, ferry trips and tasty foods on offer.

Entrance Fees

Children aged 12 and under receive free entry to many museums. Sadly, this doesn't apply at Aya Sofya (children aged nine and over pay full admission), Topkapı Place (nine or over) or Dolmabahçe Palace (seven and over). All non-Turkish children pay the full price at the Basilica Cistern.



Eating Out

Children are usually welcome in restaurants, although high chairs and kids menus are rare. Traditional eateries can normally supply a *yarım porsiyon* (half portion). Pide, the local version of pizza, is widely available and fries (*kızarmış patates*) feature on most menus. These go well with *izgara köfte* (grilled meatballs). *Ketçap* (ketchup) is usually available on request.



Public Transport

Children under the age of seven travel free on most public transport.



Little Ones

Disposable *bebek bezi* (diapers or nappies) and *bebek maması* (formula) are easy to purchase. Sidewalks are often not stroller-friendly; consider bringing a backpack instead. Breastfeeding in public is rare.



CHILD-FRIENDLY MUSEUM

Rahmi M Koç Museum in Hasköy has interactive transport and technology exhibits, including planes, boats, trains and submarines. Take the Haliç ferry from Karaköy.

Scan the QR code for visitor info:



Parks & Playgrounds

Parks with playgrounds include Gülhane Park, Cundi Park in Küçük Aya Sofya and Tophane Park in front of the Istanbul Modern.



Accommodation

Istanbul provides choices for every taste and budget. Book ahead during peak periods, such as spring, autumn and Christmas.

Where to stay if you love...



Ancient monuments

Sultanahmet & Sirkeci (p43) The big-hitting historical monuments are located in Sultanahmet, as is the largest concentration of hotels, *pansiyons* (pensions) and hostels. The downside is the lack of nightlife, including decent eating and drinking options. Sirkeci has more eating options, but fewer accommodation choices.

OUR PICK



We love to stay in...

Beyoğlu (p111)

Beyoğlu is the epicentre of eating, drinking and contemporary culture in the city. There are accommodation options of every type and style here. The Old City is an easy walk, tram trip or metro ride away, and the rest of the city can be accessed via ferries or metro.



Neighbourhood life

Bazaar District (p69) A bustling shopping hub during the day, this district is all but dead at night, so we don't recommend staying here. That said, there's a growing number of reasonably priced hotels in residential Küçük Ayasofya. Avoid seedy Aksaray and Laleli.



Luxury stays and water views

Bosphorus Suburbs (p139) Luxury hotels on the Bosphorus shore in Beşiktaş and Ortaköy offer lavish facilities such as infinity pools, spas and gourmet restaurants. The lack of convenient public transport to Beyoğlu and the Old City is an issue, though it will be somewhat alleviated when the Kabataş stage of the new M7 metro line opens at the end of 2025.

HOW MUCH FOR A NIGHT IN



Hostel dorm bed from **€18**



Boutique midrange hotel from **€140**



Luxury hotel from **€250**



Food, Drink & Nightlife



Allergies & Intolerances

Turkish menus don't commonly specify potential allergens in dishes and this, combined with language challenges, can make life complicated for people with food allergies and intolerances. If in doubt about the safety of a dish, err on the side of caution.

HOW TO SAY

I'm allergic to... *Alerjim var...*

nuts *fındık*

seafood *deniz ürünleri*

dairy products *süt ürünleri*

gluten *glüten*



HOW TO ASK...

Is this gluten free?

Bu glutensiz mi?

Does this contain nuts?

Bunun içinde fındık var mı?

Is there a vegan option?

Vegan seçeneği var mı?

FISHY PRACTICES

In a *balk restoran* (fish restaurant), customers usually choose their fish from an iced cabinet. Before confirming your choice, ask the waiter to weigh it and tell you the cost. Diners who don't do this may get a nasty surprise when the bill arrives, as fish can be extremely expensive.



Street Food

Popular and cheap snacks sold by the city's street vendors include freshly baked *simits* (bread rings studded with sesame seeds), *balık ekmek* (fish sandwich), golden roasted *mısır* (corn on the cob), *kestane* (roasted chestnuts) and *midye dolma* (stuffed mussels).

HOW TO...

Pay the Bill

To ask for the bill, say '*hesap, lütfen*' (bill, please).

Splitting the bill: Türks don't split bills (it's considered rude). The person who invited the others to join them for a meal usually pays.

Tippling: In restaurants, bistros and *meyhanes*, a 10% *servis ücreti* (service charge) is sometimes levied. If this isn't on the bill, it is usual to add a 10% tip if you have been satisfied with the service. There's no expectation that customers will tip at cafes, *lokantas*, *kebabçıs*, *köfteçis* and *pidecis*.



PRICE RANGES

The following price ranges refer to the average cost of a main course:

€ less than €7

€€ €7-21

€€€ more than €21



OPENING HOURS

Opening hours can vary depending on the neighbourhood and business. The following is a general guide:

Cafes 9am to 10pm

Restaurants & meyhanes 5pm to midnight

Lokantas 9am to 4pm



Going Out

Bars There are thriving bar scenes in Beyoğlu, its neighbouring districts and Kadıkoy. Venues include wine bars, cocktail bars and grunge bars.

Pubs and taprooms

There are plenty of pubs and taprooms in Beyoğlu, Beşiktaş and Kadıkoy where punters can enjoy a pint and watch sport (especially football) on big screens.

Nargile cafes Many Turks don't drink alcohol. They tend instead to congregate in restaurants, cafes or venues where *nargiles* (water pipes) are enjoyed.

Clubs Venues in and around Beyoğlu and in Kadıkoy are generally welcoming and attitude free. Smoking is officially illegal indoors, but this rule isn't always followed in Beyoğlu. Bosphorus super-clubs such as Sortie and Ruby are notoriously difficult to get into – dress to the nines and don't expect to gain entry without

HOW MUCH FOR A



Döner wrap

€5



Pide

€8



Efes (330mL)

€4



Cocktail

€11



Glass of wine

€7



Turkish coffee

€2



Cappuccino

€3

women in your group. For live acts, head to Kadife Sokak in Kadıkoy or to Babylon in Bomonti.



Responsible Travel

Follow these tips to leave a lighter footprint, support local and have a positive impact on communities.

Recycling

In 2023, the Turkish government introduced a Zero Waste initiative (zerowaste.gov.tr), which aims to encourage waste minimisation. However, no significant impacts are evident yet and the separation of waste for recycling is not common. Some efforts have been made to reduce single-use plastic, with supermarkets charging for plastic bags – carry a reusable shopping bag with you if you're grocery shopping.



Sustainable Hotels

The Turkish Government's official tourism portal GoTürkiye (goturkiye.com) has a section listing hotels that have been awarded sustainable tourism accreditation. There were over 100 in Istanbul at the time of research.



OUR PICK



Organic Markets & Shops

Held every Saturday, the long-standing **Feriköy Organic Market** (p132) sells certified organic fruit and vegetables.



Climate Change & Travel

It's impossible to ignore the impact we have when travelling, and the importance of making changes where we can. Lonely Planet urges all travellers to engage with their travel carbon footprint. Many airlines and booking sites offer travellers the option of offsetting the impact of greenhouse gas emissions by contributing to climate-friendly initiatives around the world.



There are many carbon calculators online that allow travellers to estimate the carbon emissions generated by their journey; try resurgence.org using the QR code, left.



Health & Safe Travel

Istanbul is generally a safe destination for travellers, with serious incidents and health issues being uncommon.



EARTHQUAKES

Türkiye is on active fault lines. Earthquakes here can be devastating, as demonstrated in the country's southeast in 2023. If indoors during an earthquake, take cover under sturdy furniture away from windows. If outdoors, move away from buildings, streetlights and powerlines.



Personal Safety

Be careful if strangers invite you to join them at a bar or club, as this has been known to end in travellers being left to pay large bar tabs or being subjected to violent extortion.

Don't use or carry illegal drugs. Penalties for drug offences include long prison sentences.

Some dogs carry the potentially fatal rabies virus; if bitten, seek immediate medical attention.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Cars often don't give way to pedestrians – be careful crossing streets. Many footpaths are poorly maintained and some shops have basements accessed from the footpath via dangerous, unprotected steps.



LGBTIQ+ Travellers

Homosexuality is not a criminal offence in Türkiye, and people have been legally permitted to change gender since 1988, but there are no laws protecting LGBTIQ+ people from discrimination, same-sex marriage is not recognised, the dating app Grindr is banned and violence towards members of the LGBTIQ+ community has been recorded. That said, same-gender couples will have no problem booking a double room in Istanbul and most restaurants, bars and clubs in the city are LGBTIQ+ friendly.



Tap Water

Tap water is safe to drink, though heavily chlorinated; many locals prefer to drink bottled water.

QUICK INFO



Health Providers

The [healthturkiye.com](https://www.healthturkiye.com) website lists medical providers authorised by the Turkish Ministry of Health.



ID

Everyone must carry a photo ID. Consider carrying your passport.



Theft

Beware of pickpockets on public transport and in bazaars.



Accessible Travel



Women Travellers

All travellers should tailor their behaviour and clothing to their surrounds – outfits that are appropriate for neighbourhoods such as Beyoğlu and along the Bosphorus (eg, skimpy tops and shorts) are not appropriate in conservative suburbs such as Fatih or Üsküdar, for instance. Bring a shawl to cover your head when visiting mosques.



Public Transport

Public transport is free for people in wheelchairs. The metro, Bağcılar-Kabataş tramline and funiculars are accessible, but ferries are not. Metro stations have elevators and wide turnstiles. Many stops and platforms are equipped with notched yellow bands to assist individuals with visual impairments.



İSTANBUL AIRPORT

Arrival and departure gates at İstanbul airport are far from check-in and immigration counters, so elderly passengers and those with mobility impairments may need a wheelchair. These must be organised with airlines at least 48 hours in advance.



Accommodation

Most four- and five-star hotels have wheelchair access and at least one room for guests using wheelchairs. Many apartments, hostels and budget-hotel rooms have stair access only.

OUR PICK



The city's museums are a mixed bag when it comes to accessibility. Most give free access to visitors with a disability and their carer companion, but not all have wheelchair (tekerlekli sandalye) access and accessible toilets. The best is **İstanbul Modern**, which has accessible toilets, ramps and elevators, a 'Descriptive Exhibition Tour' program for visually impaired adults, and tours and workshops for visually impaired and/or deaf children.

MOBILITY CHALLENGE

The elderly and those with mobility challenges may have difficulty traversing İstanbul's footpaths (sidewalks) and pedestrian crossings, as many of these are potholed and unevenly surfaced.

Resources

accessibleturkey.org Package and day tours for wheelchair users plus accessible hotel bookings, transport services and equipment hire.





Nuts & Bolts



Opening Hours

Opening hours vary. The following is a very general guide.

Bars Afternoon to early morning

Nightclubs 11pm to late

Banks 9am–12.30pm and 1.30–5pm Monday–Friday

Restaurants & Cafes

Breakfast 7.30–10.30am, lunch noon–.30pm, dinner 6–10pm

Shops 10am–7pm Monday–Saturday

QUICK INFO

Time zone Eastern European Time (GMT/UTC plus three hours).

City codes European İstanbul 0212, Asian İstanbul 0216

Emergency number 112

Population 16.04 million



Smoking

Smoking is prohibited on public transport and in enclosed public spaces, including restaurants, cafes and shopping malls. It is allowed in special areas reserved for smoking, on the street and in outdoor sections at entertainment venues. Vaping is not illegal, but the sale or trade of vapes is.

ELECTRICITY



Type C
220V/50Hz



Type F
230V/50Hz



Public Holidays

Banks, offices and government services close for the day on the following secular public holidays.

Yılbaşı (New Year's Day) 1 January

Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı (National Sovereignty & Children's Day) 23 April

Emek ve Dayanışma Günü (Labour & Solidarity Day) 1 May

Atatürk'ü Anma, Gençlik ve Spor Bayramı (Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth & Sports Day) 19 May

Demokrasi ve Milli Birlik Günü (Democracy & National Unity Day) 15 July

Zafer Bayramı (Victory Day) 30 August

Cumhuriyet Bayramı (Republic Day) 29 October

The **Şeker Bayramı** religious festival runs for three days at the end of Ramadan, and **Kurban Bayramı** is a four-day religious festival whose date changes each year.



Language

Turkish Basics

Hello.

Merhaba. *mer-ha-ba*

Goodbye.

Hoşçakal.
hosh-cha-kal

Yes.

Evet. *e-vet*

No.

Hayır. *ha-yuhr*

Excuse me.

Pardon or **Bakar**
mısınız. *ba-kar*
muh-suh-nuhz

Sorry.

Özür dilerim. *er-zewr*
dee-le-reem

Please.

Lütfen. *lewt-fen*

Thank you.

Teşekkür ederim.
te-shek-kewr e-de-reem



Fast Phrases

Do you speak English?

İngilizce konuşuyor musunuz? *een-gee-leez-je*
ko-noo-shoo-yor moo-soo-nooz

I don't understand

Anlamıyorum. *an-la-muh-yo-room*

I'd like istiyorum. ... *ees-tee-yo-room*

a beer **bir** *bee-ra*

a coffee **bir kahve** *beer kah-ve*

a tea **bir çay** *beer chai*

Please bring the bill

Hesap lütfen. *hes-ap lewt-fen*

How much is it?

Ne kadar? *ney ka-dar*

Where is the toilet?

Tuvalet nerede? *too-va-let ne-re-de*

Where is an ATM?

Bankmatik nerede? *ban-ka-ma-teek ne-re-de*

What's the address?

Adresi nedir? *ad-re-see ne-deer*

I'd like a receipt, please.

Fiş lütfen. *fish lewt-fen*

Numbers

1

bir beer

2

iki ee-kee

3

üç ewch

4

dört dert

5

beş besh



Yes & No

When you look in the English-Turkish dictionary, you'll find that **evet** means 'yes' and **hayır** means 'no'. But it's not always that straightforward ...

When answering questions, Turks sometimes say **var** (literally 'it exists') instead of **evet** for 'yes'. They show this with body language by nodding their heads once, forward and down.

Wagging your head from side to side doesn't mean 'no' in Turkish, it means 'I don't understand'. To show 'no' Turks nod their heads up and back, lifting their eyebrows at the same time – simply raising the eyebrows means the same thing. They may also say **tsk**.

TEXT ME

Abbreviations Turkish friends might use to *sohbet etmek* (chat) in SMS:

ii (*iyi*) good

mrb (*merhaba*) hello

nbr (*naber?*)

how's it going?

slm (*selam*) hi

opt (*öptüm*)

'I kiss' (a farewell)



Signs

Açık Open

Bay Male

Bayan Female

Çıkışı Exit

Giriş Entrance

Kapalı Closed

Sigara İçilmez

No Smoking

Tuvaletler Toilets

Yasak Prohibited



Listen for

aile *a-ee-le* family

pasaport *pa-sa-port* passport

vize *vee-ze* visa

yalnız *yal-nuhz* alone

LISTEN OUT WHEN EATING OUT

Afiyet olsun. *a-fee-yet ol-soon* Enjoy your meal.

Buyurun! *boo-yoo-roon* Here you go!

Ne arzu edersiniz? *ne ar-zoo e-der-see-nee-z* What can I get for you?

... tavsiye ederim. *... tav-see-ye e-de-reem* I suggest the ...

6

altı *al-tuh*

7

yedi *ye-dee*

8

sekiz *se-keez*

9

dokuz
do-kooz

10

on *on*

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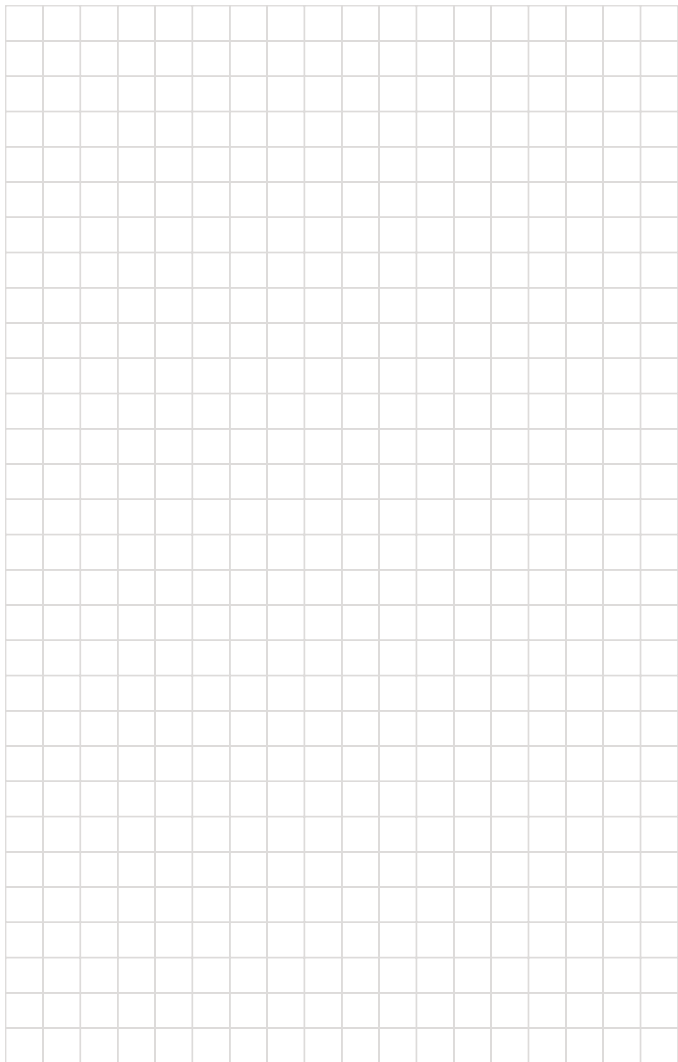
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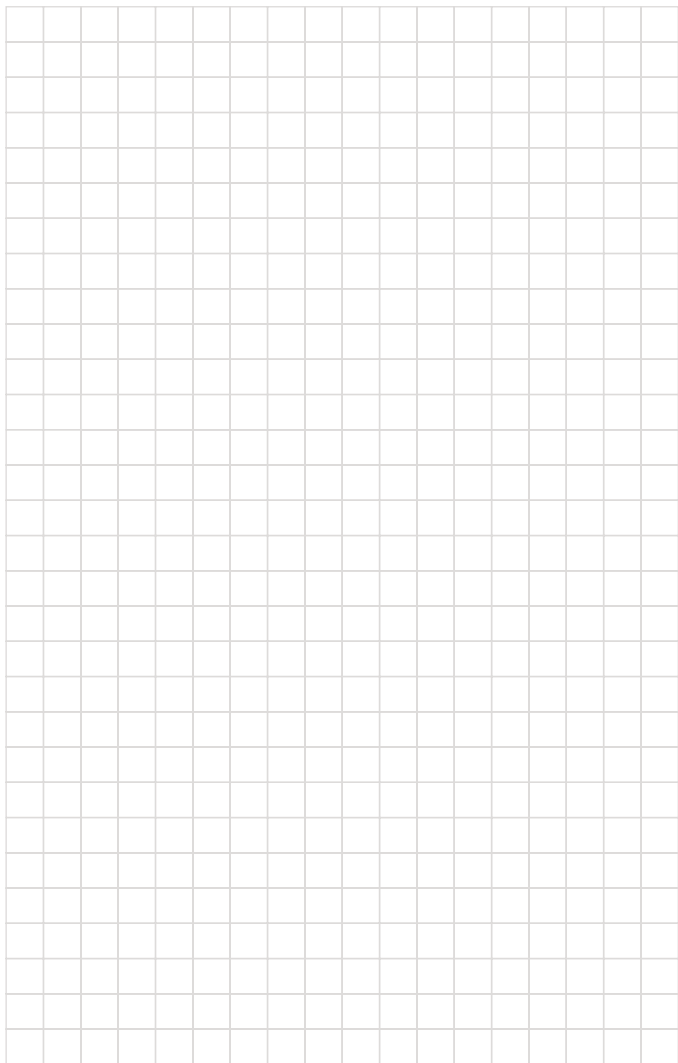
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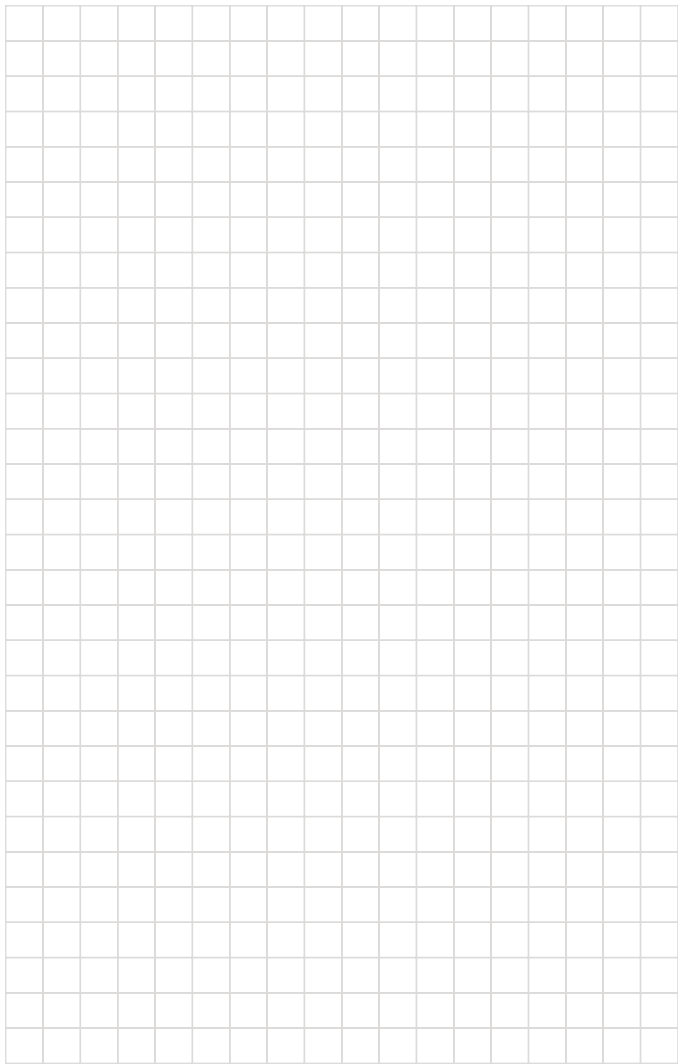
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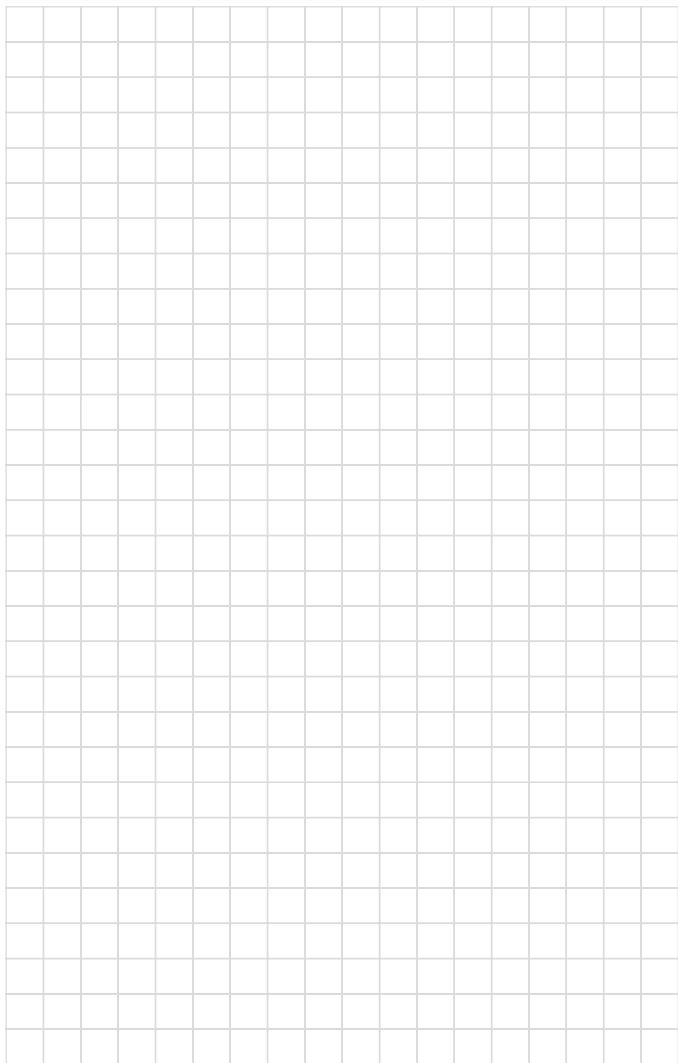
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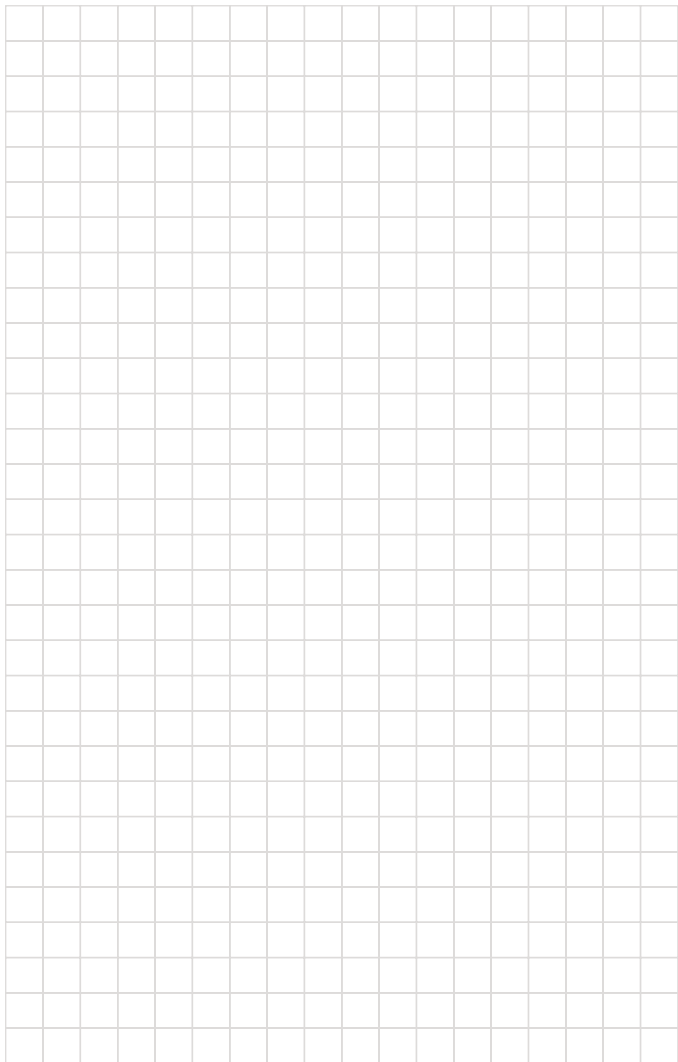
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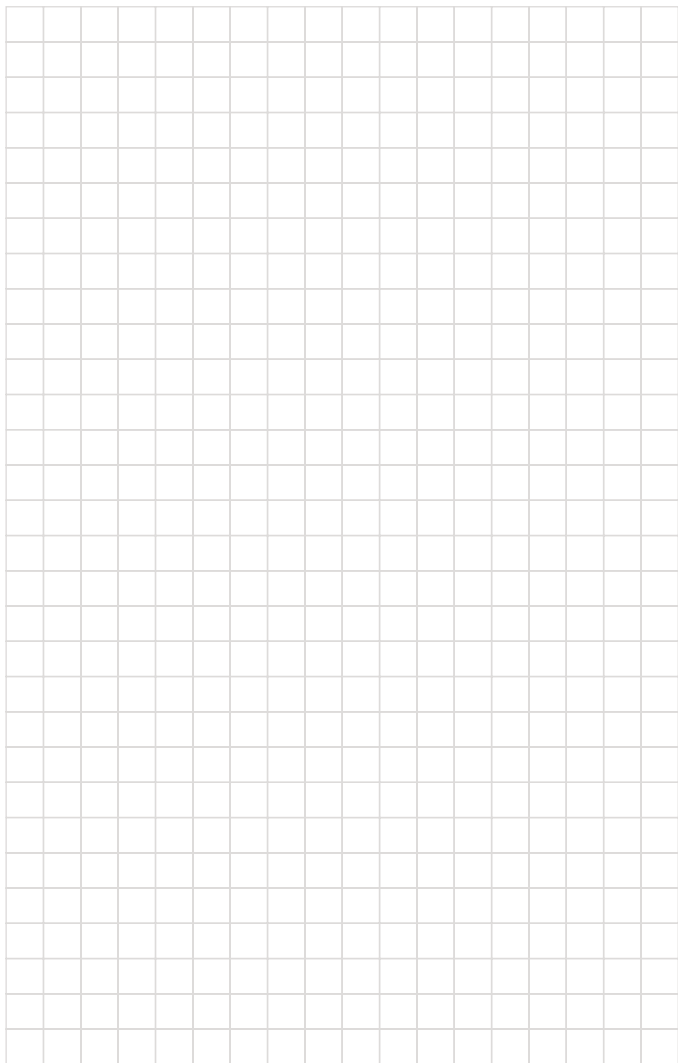












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