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Coastal Turkey -Weekend Getaway in Çeşme

Istanbul, 4 Days

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: When the summer arrives, it is very hard to find locals in the city during the weekends. Everyone gets away to some place. Be it the islands in the Marmara Sea, Kilyos Beach by the Black Sea, Bodrum down at the south or Çeşme next to the Agean. The first of your coastal guides is going to cover the gist of Çeşme.

There are basically .. main words you need to learn:

-Kumru (special bread of İzmir, also a sandwich)

-Surf: This is what many people do during daytime.

-Gevret: How the folks of İzmir refer to Turkish bagels

-Boyoz: A pretty oily, yet delicious type of pastry.

-Fish: You have to eat some here...

-Langusta: The best of its kind is in Küçükçiftlikköy

-Keten: Means cotton, but again the best of its kind are sold all around.

With your guide you are more than ready to go...

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1

DAY NOTE: Where to stay....

One of the most fun and authentic places to stay at in Çeşme is the Alaçatı region and the hotels down below are a few recommendations. Almost all the hotels in and around Alaçatı are chic boutiques; but there are a few pensions and actual hotel like establishments as well. Other beach towns such as Ilıca, Dalyanköy and Çiftlikköy also abound with hotels and motels. To name a few are Radisson Blu Çeşme, Sheraton Çeşme, Kabasakal (budget option for motel) and Ilıca Hotel.

Day 2

DAY NOTE: Things to do.....

When you go to Çeşme there are three main things you have to do... Sea, village style breakfast and shopping. Sea, sand and surf are the three "S" s of your day and Çeşme with its many many beaches offers the best of each.

Breakfast is served at many of the hotels, but for a true village style breakfast try Orta Kahve.

Ayşe'nin Dolabı is just an example of the kind of authentic stuff you can find in Çeşme. Clothes, linens from finest cotton coming from Urla (yet a smaller town of İzmir). There are many many other authentic stuff you will see and hear about. Just be ware not to walk into a shop owned by someone from Istanbul... You will be priced the heaven for almost nothing.

Day 3 - Istanbul

DAY NOTE: Restaurants...

As Çeşme is made up of smaller towns, it is not too easy to focus all restaurants in all regions. Therefore since we have been focusing on Alaçatı most of this time, the following two are restaurants in Alaçatı and one with branches around İzmir. Sardunaki has branches. It is indeed a hotel in Alaçatı and the hotel has a beautiful restaurant, but Sardunaki also has another beautiful place in İzmir. El Beso has branches in Istanbul and Alaçatı. Very good tapas... Imren is no restaurant, but a pasty house. A place for you to buy a bag of cookies and delights before hitting the road, a cup of ice cream in the afternoon, bagers and kumru bread (a speciality of IZmir) for breakfasts. Then there is Dalyanköy... The haven of fish... There is an abundancy of fish restaurants here; and, there is indeed nothing comparable to having fish and a glass of raki at sunset for the locals at one of these restaurants.

El Beso Alacati
Tapas and fine dining in Çeşme

Day 4 - Istanbul

DAY NOTE: Nightclubs...

Public Beach
Public of Şişhane (Asmalı Mescit) not in Ilıca Çeşme

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contact:
tel: +90 (232) 716 8590
http://www.elbeso.com.tr/

location:
Yeni Mecidiyeköy Mahallesi
Çamlıkuyu Sokak No:2
Alaçatı
Çeşme, İzmir

El Beso Alacati

DESCRIPTION: Owned and managed by one of the high society foreign wives to one of the high society Turkish businessmen, El Beso is surprisingly and remarkably good. The food and the menu are delicately prepared, service is kind and polite, prices hefty; yet the price for value is well maintained. A nice option for you in-town dinner or informal get-together with friends over tapas; or a romantic dinner with a romantic partner.
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Day 4 - Istanbul

DAY NOTE: Nightclubs...

contact:
tel: +90 232 717 00 44

location:
Lemon Hotel, Ilıca Plaj Yolu - On the road to Şifne
Çeşme, İzmir

Public Beach

DESCRIPTION: As Çeşme continues to outgrow itself and attracts more and more of the Istanbul's elite travelers, it was indubitable not to expect venues to open second branches out of Istanbul and in popular destinations such as Çeşme. Bodrum experienced this trend for many years, and now that Çeşme has become the second best option for local and somewhat elitist travelers, as well as few high society members, actors and singers, it was long due for trendy places to come down south. Public has thus done that, and opened its second branch inside Lemon Hotel in Ilıca.
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Hafif Müzik

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Istanbul Snapshot

Local Info

Istanbul is such a diverse city that it's almost impossible to split it up into definable districts. The only real distinction that can be made is between the European and Asian sides, which are separated by the Bosphorus Strait. Stretching from the Black Sea, straddling across the Bosphorus, touching the Sea of Marmara, Istanbul, with an estimated population of between 10-13 million, has become a city of unlimited scope.

Sultanahmet

Most people who come to Istanbul land feet first in Sultanahmet. This peninsula(known as Sarayburnu) juts out into the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara. Rich in history, it's a natural magnet to millions of tourists every year. The home of Topkapı Sarayı(Topkapı Palace, Ayasofya(Hagia Sophia), the Blue Mosque(Sultan Ahmet Mosque), Yerebatan Sarayı(Yerebatan Basilica Cistern), and theAt Meydanı(Hippodrome), Sultanahmet is filled to the brim with hotels, restaurants, cafes, bars, rug stores and cheesy souvenir shops, as well as a plethora of fascinating museums, mosques, markets and historical sites. The main drag, Divan Yolu, is the heartbeat of the area, and there are hundreds of tiny back streets and alleyways to explore the history of the old city. The labyrinthine Kapalıçarşı(Grand Bazaar/ Covered Bazaar) near Istanbul University is also on this street. Sultanahmet can be a little intimidating as it is truly catered to only tourists.(Read: you'll have to learn quickly not to respond to"Hey! Are you American/ English/ German/ Spanish/ Italian/ French?") One impressive thing about Sultanahmet is that the businessmen each seem to speak every major European language, so if your Turkish isn't up to par, don't fret. Also keep in mind that bargaining with street vendors or the Kapali Carsi folk is always in order.

Eminönü

Eminönü is a very historical district, which as a result of its secluded location within the peninsula, led to the foundation of Byzantium on this land. The city of Byzantium expanded in all directions from here, leading to the formation of the oldest neighborhoods of Istanbul along the Golden Horn. Situated right on the waterfront on the Golden Horn, Eminönü is a tourist hub, as well as local folks' commercial district, which can easily be accessed with the tram that runs from Kabataş to Zeytinburnu or with vessels that provide public transportation between the two continents of Istanbul. Eminönü is generally buzzing with activity during the day, with street peddlers selling you things you never even knew you wanted or things you never knew existed. The vast Mısır Çarşı(Egyptian Spice Bazaar) is the main feature of Eminönü Square andMimar Sinan's Yeni Camii(New Mosque) is a familiar landmark with its minarets standing tall above the general chaos. Inside the Spice Bazaar is a well known and cherished old Turkish restaurant, thePandeli, which has been visited by great men and women of all times-including Audrey Hepburn and Queen Elizabet the Second in 1971. Ferries to the Asian side and thePrinces Islands leave from the huge docks lining the shore, where you can stop by and have a fresh fish sandwich(balıkekmek, a.k.a"fish& chips") while you wait for your vessel. The Sirkeci Train Station is also here: all trains to and from Europe, as well as the famous Orient Express, begin and end their journeys here.

Beyoğlu/ Taksim

A veritable symphony of occident and orient, Beyoğlu is the pulsating heartbeat of Istanbul's day and nightlife. İstiklal Caddesi-- a paved thoroughfare perpetually swarming with Istanbul's colorful hoi polloi-- is at the hub of the metropolis while a maze of narrow winding lanes filled with funky cafés, soulful bars, continental restaurants, historic cinemas, prominent theaters and exclusive shops shoot off in all directions around it. Taksim Square, featuring the impressive Monument of the Republic, leads the way into Beyoğlu's bohemian open-air museum, past the Greek Orthodox Aya Triada Church and the French Consulate. A quaint old tramway carries passengers past the Rumeli Han, Çiçek Pasajı, Cite de Pera, Atlas Pasajı, Galatasaray Lisesi, and several elegant consulates. Every year the International Istanbul Film Festival, International Istanbul Music Festival, International Istanbul Theatre Festival and the International Istanbul Jazz Festival are held here and in nearby districts. Beyoğlu, which has been the traditional home of Istanbul's gay community, hosts various other annual events, including the Bosphorus Festival, Roxy Music Days, Aksanat Jazz Festival and the Blues Festival.

Tünel/ Beyoğlu

The Tünel or the Tunnel District, is not far from its mainland Beyoğlu, but can be considered as a separate district given its exquisite and original character, soul and atmosphere. The Tünel is undoubtedly Istanbul's"Bohemian Quarter," which not so long ago was perceived as a bad part of town, with its dark deserted streets and creepy abandoned buildings. However, the area has undergone tremendous development in recent years. Tiny cafes, live music venues, and open-air restaurants and bars now quietly coexist with art galleries, antique bookshops and music stores, as well as many designers' boutiques and design hotels. A narrow side lane, Asmali Mescit Street, has now become the representative and popular bar scene face of the district. For many in the city, this street is the only pulsating center on any given Friday and Saturday night. With a variety of open-air bars, such asOtto, Groove, House Cafe and Lokal, people tend to hang around on the street with their coats and drinks. As such, it has also become impossible to walk casually through this bar street lately.

Karaköy

Around the first century BC, there was a tiny village situated on the mini peninsula of the Golden Horn where the modern suburb of Karaköy stands today. These days, Karaköy is a bustling port with a lively fish market, a hectic ferry terminal and a shady nightlife; an intriguing landscape at the mouth of the Golden Horn. Scores of locals fish from the Galata Bridge and an array of vendors peddle all kinds of goods along the sidewalks. A vast underground marketplace where you can buy electrical appliances and guns, among other things, provides not-so-safe passage under the busy road to the entrance of Tünel. Up the hill is Bankalar Caddesi, an historical area filled with banks, art galleries and do-it-yourself stores. All visiting international cruise ships dock in Karaköy.

Galata

The Genoese-builtGalata Tower is the most central point here. With its conical-

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capped tower head, the Tower dominates both the skyline and the entrance to the Golden Horn from the Bosphorus. The renowned Turkish filmIstanbul Beneath My Wings tells the story of Hazarfen Çelebi, who flew from this tower with a home-made pair of wings. The main street, Galip Dede Caddesi, is a hub of activity with shops selling musical instruments and antique books, and you'll also find a good dose of tiny local restaurants, most of which won't be serving alcohol and will closed for the night-nevertheless a must try for their expertise in cooking and the taste of local food. The Whirling Dervishes have a home here at the Galata Mevlevihanesi(Dervish Lodge); the Goethe Institute provides locals with a good dose of culture and art; and there are countless mosques, churches and synagogues hidden away in obscure side streets.

Golden Horn

Golden Horn is a historic inlet of the Bosphorus and a superb natural harbor that has sheltered many Greek, Byzantine, Roman and Ottoman ships for thousands of years(Wikipedia). The most interesting part of the Golden Horn district comprises of the stretch of land between Eminönü and Ayvansaray-towards the southern shores of the Horn, up as far as Eyüp. The Selimiye Mosque, the Fethiye Mosque, Sepetçiler Kasrı(the Kiosk of of Basket Weavers, now the International Press Center) and St. Steven's Church grace the shoreline while theKariye Müzesi(Chora Church) and Mihrimah Mosque are further inland. The old city walls start at Ayvansaray and snake overland to Yedikapı. During the Byzantine era, the mouth of the Horn was closed by a great chain during times of siege and threat. The great chain would extend from Sarayburnu to the Castle of Galata(which would be in Karaköy in modern times). Mehmet the Second, who conquered the city in 1453, managed to bypass this chain by using wheeled platforms hauled by oxens to pull his ships over the heights of Galata into the Horn and thus over the chain.

Beşiktaş and Ortaköy

Beşiktaş is at the center of the three-way fork that leads up the hill to Levent. It is also the first stop for public ferries going up the Bosphorus. The name means"cradle-stone" which stands for the stone brought from Jerusalem by the monk Yashka to honor his church. The Greek counterpart for the name of the village was Diplokion(Two Columns). It may have been either of these two name and stories that may have inspired the Turkish to call Beşiktaş by this name. There are several places of interest in and around Beşiktaş that can be linked to Ottoman fleets and admirals. The major ones include the türbe(tomb) of Hayrettin Paşa, the türbe of Barbarossa, Sinan Paşa Mosque and the Naval Museum. To the inland, Beşiktaş houses a little pretty palace called Ihlamur Kasrı or the Linden Pavilion within the beautiful Ihlamur Park. This palace is where the grandiose era of the tulips were once lived. Continuing up along the Bosphorus coast is yet another palace, theÇırağan Palace, now a hotel; and a few hundred meters away from Çırağan Palace is the Yıldız Sarayı(Palace of the Star) and the Yıldız Park. Ortaköy, on the other hand, is a bustling suburb of Beşiktaş on the waterfront. Bubbling over with cafés, bars, restaurants and tea houses, this area is a popular weekend hangout for locals. Ortaköy's back streets are buzzing with handicraft stalls filled with trinkets and souvenirs on summer weekends. This part of town is renowned for its mosque, church and synagogue within close quarters of one another. The Bosphorus Bridge spans the waterway overhead. Ortaköy has also recently opened itself for the night life of Istanbul. The locals' pick for a night out, theAnjelique Club sits here next to the world knownZuma Restaurant andRadisson Hotel.

Bosphorus: Arnavutköy to Sarıyer

TheBosphorus shore on the European side is lined with Ottoman-style mansions, high society hangouts and fish restaurants. There is only one main road and it follows the shoreline all the way to Zekariyeköy, a suburban residential area, which is no longer very far away from the city itself. It could well be said that the shore line starts off from where the Golden Horn ends in Karaköy, but there is a distinguishable change of air once one arrives to Arnavutköy and continues along the shore line in the direction of Yeniköy, Tarabya and Sarıyer. For this reason, when the Turkish people think of European Bosphorus or going by the Bosphorus, they usually indicate somewhere along the coast of Arnavutköy andSarıyer. The coastline here is paved for pedestrians to go jogging or for walking. Recently the municipality has also introduced somewhat primitive sports equipment and facilities for the public benefit. It is very possible to find people walking and working out along the coast early on a sunny day.

Sea of Marmara Coast: Kumkapı to Yedikule

Kumkapı is a distinctly touristy area filled with over-priced fish restaurants and not much else besides views of the sea. Until recently, it was mostly reserved to the Armenian community. There are still several of their churches and community schools in this region. The coast road heads out toward the airport past the old city walls and Yedikule Fortress. Yedikule translates itself as"Seven Walls" into English and does indicate the fortress that once surrounded and protected the city since the Byzantium era.

Asian Side& Bosphorus: Kadıköy to Anadolu Feneri

Kadıköy is a quieter version of Beyoğlu with a more subdued atmosphere. It also resemble Beşiktaş in terms of its commercial activity and daily hectic and busy life. The tiny cobbled lanes are filled with restaurants, cafés, bars, cinemas and shops, but most importantly, residents! The Asian side of town is where most of the local population lives; you'll have a harder time with no Turkish language skills here, but it's worth it to pop over on the ferry and experience a more relaxed way of life. The coast road snakes past Üsküdar, a pretty suburb with plenty of fine examples of Mimar Sinan's work, including the Mihrimah Sultan and Şemsi Paşa Mosques. Selimiye Barracks(where Florence Nightingale worked during the Crimean War) is up on the hill. Heading toward Anadolu Hisarı, the road winds along the shoreline(which is less built up than that of the European side). There are plenty of parks and trees, outdoor cafés and restaurants and a string of historical buildings to explore including Beylerbeyi Palace, Kuleli Mosque, Kuleli Naval Officer's Training School, Küçüksu Park& Kiosk and Anadolu Hisarı. The part of the shore from Kanlıca to Kuleli is streamlined with mansion like, luxury villas and neighborhoods on the hills.

Princes Islands

Princes Islands are an archipelago of six islands, where Istanbulites used to reside during the summers in the old times.

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There are especially four islands in the Sea of Marmara that still attract crowds escaping the summer heat: Büyükada, Heybeliada, Kınalıada and Burgazada. Ferries leave from Sirkeci, Kadıköy and Bostancı regularly in the summer during day and night to and fro the islands. Also, in summers, there are faster ferries leaving from Kabataş for the islands. There are no cars on the islands and the transport here is limited to horse-drawn carriages. Each island has plenty of unique offers for leisure, sports and entertainment. There are also plenty of places to eat and sleep. Atop the hills of Büyükada and Heybeliada are Greek monasteries with magnificent views of the sea and the neighboring islands.

Harbiye-Nişantaşı-Şişli-Mecidiyeköy-Levent

All of these districts are mostly business and financial centers of the city with a few residential skyscrapers, which social elites habituate in. The Military Museum in Harbiye is a good landmark from which to begin exploring Istanbul's business life. Harbiye is also filled with offices of many small and medium enterprises, most of which are dentists or tourism offices. Not far away from Harbiye isNişantaşı, which is the central shopping district-the so called 5th avenue of city. Şişli is strictly a business district that goes all the way toLevent and beyond toMaslak, both of which are strictly dominated with office buildings, shopping malls and banks. There is now an underground metro linking Taksim with Maslak.

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History

Depending on the background of its rulers, the city has been called by different names over the centuries. Byzantium, Constantinople and Stamboul are among the most commonly used and known names. In 1930, the city finally received its official name Istanbul, which is also how it is called today.

Byzantium

A settlement on Sarayburnu was established around 655 BC. The legend has it that it was founded by a Byzas from Megara, who stumbled upon this piece of land while he was sailing northeast on the Aegean Sea. Triangular in shape, with water on two sides, the land was a ready-made fortress. To the north, this peninsula later to be named the"Golden Horn"(Haliç in Turkish) formed a natural deep-water harbor. The site offered easy access to the Mediterranean, Africa and the Black Sea, and lay at the crossroads of mainland transit routes crossing Europe and Asia. The small colony's name and founding was attributed to this sailor by the name of Byzas, hence the name Byzantium.

The Persians eagerly took control of the city in 550 BC, followed by the Spartans, then the Athenians. The Byzantines developed a series of shrewd alliances and were able to keep their predatory neighbors at bay. King Philip of Macedon tested the walls and will of Byzantium for an entire year from 340-341 BC.

In 196 AD, the Byzantines backed the wrong side in the imperial Roman power struggle. After a prolonged siege, Septimius Severus had Byzantium's walls torn down, the city put to the torch, and much of the population put to death. He then rebuilt the city on a grander scale with new temples, a colonnaded avenue, and bigger, better walls enclosing an area almost twice the size of the previous city. However, nothing of Severus' city remains today.

Early in the first century AD, the Roman Empire became too unwieldy to govern from Rome, and was thus subdivided, one section's capital being Byzantium. Power struggles among the new governors of the territories of the Roman Empire led to Byzantium becoming a perpetual battleground. In AD 324, Constantine, governor of Byzantium, defeated his counterpart Licinius and set about changing the course of history. He promoted Christianity and shifted the capital from Rome to Byzantium. In AD 330, Constantine inaugurated his new seat of power asNova Roma.

Constantinople

Constantine soon renamed Nova RomaConstantinople and the new emperor was keen on development. He was aware that changing the capital of the city in a sudden whim would have been costly for his imperial power, and thus he followed a gradual route. The shift and rebuilding of the city took more than six years, and the planning of the new capital was made distinctively different from its old counterpart, Rome. For instance, the new capital did not have all the dignities of Rome and the city had a proconsul rather than an urban prefect. As part of the reconstruction of the city, Constantine commissioned the church ofHaghia Eirene(the first Christian cathedral) and rebuilt the city walls. The center square, which Constantine named Augustaeum, known as the Aya Sofya square in modern time-also where theHagia Sophia Mosque now stands, was also set out in this period. On the south of this great square, Constantine built his Great Palace(Büyük Saray) and nearby he laid out theHippodrome for chariot races. These are some of the greatest and most historical landmarks that still remain to this day and they constitute only a very small part of Constantine's work. Despite little evidence of Constantine's great works, it is for sure that he laid the foundations for an empire that was to endure for over 1,000 years.

The beginning of the Empire were not auspicious. On Constantine's death in 337 AD, achievement and stability ended. His sons quarreled over the succession, and the Byzantine Empire was divided into eastern and western segments.

Theodosius II(408-450), an Eastern Roman Emperor, reinforced the city walls and erected the massiveEgyptian Obelisk, pilfered during a campaign in Luxor. Constantinople began to move towards a new era of greatness, reaching its apex during the era of Justinian(527-565), an era of great successes in war, legal reforms and public developments.

Justinian's reign was indeed marked by great confidence, and the empire expanded to include most of the Mediterranean coast, including Italy. He embarked on a program of reconstruction, building more than 40 churches and immense water cisterns like Yerebatan Sarayı. The crowning glory was a new cathedral, Santa Sophia. Also, during Justinian's reign, theHippodrome adopted an increasing political significance. As a resemblance of the old traditions of Rome, the Hippodrome became a place where people gathered to show by acclamation their approval of disapproval of the new emperor when he was crowned. These gatherings coupled with a variety of parties and riots before chariot races; and became a serious political tension. During one of the riots, known as the riot of'Nika', Constantine's basilica St. Sophia, which lay to the north of Augustaeum was consumed totally. Justinian commissioned

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a new St. Sophia to be built. This time the church would be directly connected to the palace, so that the imperial family would not have to cross through the streets to attend ceremonies and services. The dedication of this new Orthodox Cathedral took place on 26th of December, 537. Justinian also replaced the Church of Holy Apostles built by Constantine with a new church made of five domes and beautiful mosaic ornaments. This church was demolished after the conquest of the city by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II to make room for his tomb.

Between 565 and 717, the city could only strive for survival. It was threatened both from the northwest and the south, from the Balkans and from the Persians. The religion of Islam also seized power in those years and conquered the eastern provinces of the Empire. This was followed by a centuries long Byzantine-Arab wars, during which the city had to endure several sieges. The walls of the city were fortified in the 730s by Leo III.

Byzantine fortunes were restored during the reign of Basil II(976-1025), who expanded the empire into Armenia and Georgia. Basil's most significant contribution to history came in 989 AD when his daughter Anna married Vladimir(Prince of Kiev), and the pagan prince converted to Orthodox Christianity.

At the hands of the Ducas and Comneni families, Constantinople became the most decadent city in the world, filled with intermarriage, intrigue, dethronings and murder. The empire now relied on wealth and diplomacy as opposed to military force. With the Seljuk Turks as the greater threat, Byzantium was forced to enlist the aid of Latin armies. The Seljuk Turks continued to expel more threat on the Empire by forming small states along the borders of Constantinople. Soon, the stronger state overwhelmed all the smaller ones and renamed itself as the State of Osman, after its chief officer and founder Osman Bey.

State of Osman soon became bigger to become the Ottoman Empire and by 1394 Constantinople had become a Byzantine island in an Ottoman sea. The city was confronted by the Turkish army at its walls many times before Mehmet II conquered it in 1453. Soon after becoming the Ottoman sultan in 1452, Mehmet II constructed the fortress of Rumeli Hisarı on the European shore of the Bosphorus just north of the city. The fortress was constructed in order to siege the city when the appropriate time came.

Istanbul

The conquest of the city in 1453, established the Ottomans as a preeminent Empire in Southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean. After this incident, the Empire entered a period of great expansion, expanding its borders deep into Europe and North Africa.

Inside the city, Mehmet the Conqueror encouraged craftsmen and artisans from Bursa and Edirne to move to his new city and build Topkapı Palace. Soon the new capital was well-endowed with mosques, hamams and the beginnings of what would develop into the Grand Bazaar.

After Mehmet's death in 1481, his elder son Beyazıt II won succession. Beyazıt's son Selim(known as"Selim the Grim" for his habit of having his grand viziers executed) succeeded him. During Selim's eight-year reign he presided over significant military victories, adding Syria and Egypt to the imperial portfolio. He quelled a Portuguese threat to Mecca and was rewarded with the keys to the Holy City, the sacred relics of the Prophet, and the title of Caliph, or"Champion of Islam."

Süleyman the Magnificent(1520-66) ruled an empire that covered the spread of North Africa, stretched east to India, and rolled from the Caucasus through Anatolia and the Balkans, to Budapest and most of modern-day Hungary. Modern history tells that this era was the apex of an Ottoman era of glamor and wealth. Under both Selim and Süleyman's reign, the Empire became a dominant naval power in the Mediterranean Sea. The successful Ottoman Admiral Barbarossa Hayreddin Pasha became famous in these times.

Istanbul became synonymous with grandeur under Süleyman. He married Roxelana and commissioned a promising young architect, Mimar Sinan, to construct the Haseki Hürrem Mosque complex as a birthday present. This was Sinan's first major commission in Istanbul, launching a glorious career which spanned 50 years, during which time left his indelible mark on the city and indeed on most major cities of the Ottoman Empire.

Süleyman was succeeded by Selim, beginning an era that saw weak sultans manipulated by their wives and mothers between whom there were often violent struggles for power.

In 1683 the Ottomans failed to recapture Vienna. This marked the beginning of a series of backward steps for the Ottomans. The Janissaries(once the sultan's finest troops) were out of control, threatening the sultan and killing ministers, and plagues were recurrent.

When Selim III took the throne in 1789 he had a lot on his plate: disobedient guards, ongoing and long-lasting outbreaks of disease, economic decline, military defeats, moribund culture and a restless populace. The Janissaries were finally crushed in 1826 by Sultan Mahmut II(1808-39). He implemented much-needed reforms and local government was introduced to Istanbul for the first time, together with the city's first police and fire services. Quarantine and plague hospitals were also established.

Abdülmecit(1839-61) continued his father's reform programs, namely the"Tanzimat"(Reorganization) reforms, resulting in what was to be a last blossoming of the Ottoman Empire. The sultan embraced this new era by moving out of Topkapı Palace into the imperial palace at Dolmabahçe. The Tanzimat reforms meant to start the effective modernization of Turkey in 1839 by imposing religious equality, liberty and security for all of the Sultan's citizens. Unfortunately, the reforms were not sufficient enough by themselves to halt the various nationalistic surges around the Empire, especially in the Balkan area. Beginning with Serbian and Danubian Principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia all declared their unilateral independence. They were followed by Bulgaria's virtual independence, following the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78. In the same year, Cyprus was rented to the British in exchange for a record of favors that the British granted to the Ottoman Empire in the Congress of Berlin. The British also occupied the Ottoman territory Egypt in 1882 under the pretext of bringing in order; and officially annexed both Egypt and Cyprus in 1914 during the course of World War I.

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In the interim, Armenians, who had been granted their own constitution and national assembly during the Tanzimat reforms, started to press for more rights and charges following the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78-and in tandem with the general nationalistic movement of that era. A number of Armenian uprisings and nationalistic movements took place in the following years in various cities of Anatolia. Increasing tension and instability caused the Ottoman governors to react in not-so-humanized ways. Between 1894-96 100,000 to 300,000 people were killed in what is known as the Hamidian Massacre.

In 1908, the Second Constitutional Era started, which is marked by the works of Young Turks and the politics of the Committee of Union and Progress. This era is also called as the Era of Dissolution, in which the Empire continued to lose more land, including Libya and more of the Balkans as far as its historic capital Edirne.

The Ottomans entered the First World War through the incident known as"Goeben and Breslau", when they provided refuge for two German ships that were fleeing the British fleet. Through the course of WWI, the Empire consistently lost more land. The partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, referred to as the"sick, old man" by the British, became solidified by the Treaty of Sevres in 1920.

Atatürk

Beyond debate is Atatürk's status as one of the most influential political figures of the 20th century and a military commander of unrivaled genius. A true reformist, Atatürk changed the face of the country. Elected in 1923 as the Republic of Turkey's first president, he installed a modified Latin alphabet to replace the Arabic script Turkish previously employed, and he even moved the capital from Istanbul to Ankara. Atatürk's new Turkish constitution did away with Islamic law, and instead imposed secular laws largely based on the Italian justice system. After his death in 1938, chaos ruled. Democracy was reinstated in the 1960s but there was still no real consensus on which direction to take: East, West or Soviet-style? In 1980, there was a huge army takeover. A wave of terror ensued, resulting in over 100,000 arrests, and this dark period in Turkey's history has become the subject of a great number of Turkish books and films over the years.

Atatürk's popularity is still at an unbelievable high in Turkey-- there are statues of him on nearly every block of the city, and his representations of his likeness abound in public buildings and private homes alike. His face is also imprinted on every denomination of Turkish lira-- bills and coins. Though his face itself may seem to be the most lasting impression he has left on Turkey, in fact it is his secular policies and laws that are still being studied and fought over today. There is an ongoing and significant struggle between secular and non-secular factions in Turkey. Indecisive elections in 1995 resulted in an unpopular center-right Islamic coalition. Fueled by decades of hatred for the country's secular institutions, they set about destroying everything they couldn't control, bringing the economy to the brink of collapse. In the interest of avoiding another army coup, a more stable multi-party coalition was formed.

The Future

A long-awaited metro system, promising relief from traffic congestion, is up and running. Istanbul's yearly GDP recently surpassed those of other major world cities such as Berlin, Delhi, Singapore, Vienna, Munich, Stockholm, Cairo, Bangkok and Johannesburg, among others. The mood in Istanbul at the moment is one of much optimism and hope.
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Hotel Insights

Whether you feel like staying in an Ottoman palace, a family home, a restored mansion, a traditional wooden house, a converted prison or a youth hostel, you will certainly find all of the above in Istanbul. Following a recent boom in tourism, Istanbul's hotels and guesthouses now cater to every taste as well as all budgets. There are many hotels catering to tourists clustered around the Sultanahmet area; but business people tend to prefer the more centrally-located Taksim, or the commercial district of Levent and Maslak, or they stick to hotels around Atatürk Airport. There are hundreds of hotels hroughout the city, ranging from the lowliest budget hostels offering the mere basics to luxury five-star hotels with superb facilities.

Breakfast and 18% KDV(value-added tax) are often included in the price of a room but it's always wise to check. Tipping hotel staff is very common-- a few lira in the hands of the help ensures high quality service.

Sultanahmet

Sultanahmet is overwhelming and too touristy in parts, but in other parts, it overflows with history and charm. The Four Seasons Hotel(located in an old prison) is the top choice in the area-- everyone knows this hotel, which is renowned for its service, facilities and overwhelming restaurant. Yeşil Ev is a restored Ottoman mansion with a lush garden and oodles of charm. The Empress Zoe offers its guests spectacular views of the Bosphorus from the rooftop terrace and a 15th-century Turkish bath is located in the basement. The family-run Kybele Hotel exudes eclectic eccentricity, with thousands of colored-glass lamps hanging from the ceiling. The 4 StarHotel Armada is within walking distance of many major attractions: the Archaeology Museum, the Topkapi Palace, the Church of St. Irene, Sultanahmet Square, the Cisterns, the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, the Grand Bazaar and the Spice Bazaar. The Hotel Valide Sultan Konagi offers modern facilities, Ottoman-style, while the Ayasofya Pansiyonlari are a string of replica Ottoman mansions lining a quaint cobbled street. The Hotel St Sophia is opposite Yerebatan Sarayı(Yerebatan Basilica Cistern), behind Ayasofya(Hagia Sophia), in the heart of the old city. The Turkoman Hotel overlooks the At Meydanı(Hippodrome) and the Blue Mosque(Sultan Ahmet Mosque). The centrally-located Side Hotel& Pension is popular with low-budget travelers and backpackers.

Eminönü

Eminönü, at the mouth of the Golden Horn, is a bustling market area. Most hotels here are conveniently located near the Sirkeci Train Station. The Hotel Yasmak Sultan is a short walk from Sultanahmet Square, the Grand Bazaar and the Galata Bridge. The Orient Express Hotel offers an alternative location near the old city, with excellent views of the Golden Horn. The Romance Hotel is a newer addition to the gaggle of hotels with excellent modern facilities.

Beyoğlu

Istanbul's center for culture and arts, Beyoğlu has become a busy hub for business people and tourists alike. Here,

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you'll find the Hilton, the Inter Continental Ceylan, theHyatt Regency(with its beautiful swimming pool) and one of the most famous hotels in Istanbul,the Marmara Istanbul that boasts an impressive gym with incredible views of the city and its people going on about their daily routines, as well as a variety of live pick pocket scenes. The Marmara Pera hosts the high quality, elegant and very delicious cuisine of theMikla Restaurant, as well as an incredible round view of the city and the Bosphorus. TheHotel Euro Plaza(located near the British Consulate) designed their modern rooms with business people in mind. The Hotel Yenisehir Palas is just a short walk away from a string of restaurants, cafés, bars and nightlife. The Dilson Hotel-- with dedicated staff and modern facilities-- is just a few steps away from the metro and all public transport. The charming design hotel 4 Floors Istanbul is a feel-like-at-home apartment suite complex, situated in one of the upcoming, trendy neighborhoods, near Kuledibi and Kumbaracı Yokuşu.

Tünel

This developing Bohemian quarter plays host to artists and intellectuals. The American Consulate is also in this area. Travelers from the Orient Express stayed at thePera Palas Hotel, which once played host to both Atatürk and Agatha Christie. The elegant Richmond Hotel is superbly located on the main street and there is a wonderful café(Cafe Lebon) at street level. It is also home to a well-known(yet overpriced) restaurant called Leb-i Derya. The four-star Mercure Hotel stands over the Tüyap Exhibition Centre(incidentally, probably the ugliest building in the city) nearby.

Golden Horn-Marmara Sea Coast

This is a sprawling suburban district spread out along the shore roads of each waterway and surrounding the old city walls. Out of the center, it's the preferred location for business people and tourists with time on their hands. Located in Topkapı-- between the old city and the airport-- the Barceló Eresin Topkapı Hotel is a favorite with business people. The Citadel offers guests magnificent views of the Marmara Sea, near the fish restaurants of Kumkapı. The Kariye Hotel in Edirnekapi is a restored 19th-century Ottoman mansion and the Asithane downstairs serves very fine Ottoman cuisine.

Beşiktaş-Ortaköy

An area of combined business and pleasure, Beşiktaş is laid out on a hill while Ortaköy spreads itself along the shores of the Bosphorus and plays host to thousands of day-trippers and weekenders in the warm seasons. The most notable hotel in the area is the elegant Çırağan Sarayı(Çırağan Palace)-- the luxurious home of the Ottoman sultans-- with its spectacular outdoor pool. TheConrad Hotel, also with a quite luxurious pool is perfectly situated for business meetings and conferences and the Swissôtel atop the hill combines glorious views of the Bosphorus and the city with top-quality services and facilities. Radisson Blu Bosphorus by the coast of Ortaköy offers a combined experience of the nightlife of Istanbul and relaxing atmosphere of Bosphorus.

Airport Area

For a quick getaway or those tedious middle-of-the-night flights, there are several excellent hotels situated near Atatürk International Airport(Atatürk Havalımanı). Five minutes from the airport is the five-star Polat Renaissance Istanbul Hotel with its ultra-modern décor and views of the Marmara Sea. The luxurious Radisson and Cinar hotels are also in the same area. The Ataköy Tatil Köyü is situated on the coastal road near the Ataköy train station and caters to campers and caravans.

Asian Side and Bosphorus

The Asian side of Istanbul has a less manic atmosphere than the European side. While tourists prefer to stay in the historical areas, business people prefer convenience-- much of Istanbul's business happens over here. The Harem Hotel overlooks the Bosphorus and caters to young families with its reliable childcare services. The Bosphorus Pasha in Beylerbeyi is similar to an English stately home while the Kent is a small, budget hotel located a short walk from the heart of the cobbled streets of Kadıköy and the ferry terminals. The Asian side also has plenty to offer for those seeking less business and more romantic oriented getaways.Sumahan is a boutique hotel in Çengelköy, that has been renovated from an old alcohol factory by its architect owners. Situated right next to the coast, the ancient establishment- now a service oriented, friendly hotel- has a lot to offer in terms of the sea, the sun, the food and peace. Not far from Sumahan is another boutique hotel called Aija. Owned and managed by the Doors Entertainment Group, which also manages several other trendy and cool cafes, bars and lounges in Istanbul, Aija is an old mansion that is placed literally on the sea and boasts a magnificent view of the Bosphorus.

Bebek

The small town of Bebek does not have a lot to offer in terms of lodging, but it does in terms of lifestyle and trends. The one and only hotel in Bebek, the Bebek Hotel, is therefore a must-mention for anyone wishing to enjoy the night scene, bar scene, cafe scene of the city in the way that Istanbullites do.

Princes Islands

Set in the Marmara Sea, the islands attract citysiders escaping metropolitan madness at weekends. During the week, things are much quieter and discounted hotel rates make a mid-week cruise to paradise even more attractive. Try the Merit Halki Palace on Heybeliada for nonpareil views of the surrounding sea and the city in the distance. The Splendid Palace is a historical building that offers superb facilities on the waterfront at Büyükada. Aya Nikola is another boutique hotel on the eastern side of Büyükada, offering a combination of nature, forest and the sea.

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Restaurants Insights

Dining

Turkish cuisine is a rich combination of Ottoman, Balkan, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean influences and is thus well known for its diverse range of dishes, mostly due to regional variation. For instance, the entire Mediterranean coastline is well known for their fresh fish dishes and vegetable and grass root dishes cooked with virgin olive oil; while the southeastern regions are famous with their kebab(meat) dishes. Inside the comfort of their kitchens, many Turks tend to be purists in their culinary taste: each dish is meant to highlight the flavor of the main ingredient, so you won't find your food smothered in sauces and spices. Herbs and spices are used sparingly and singularly: either mint or dill goes with zucchini, parsley goes with

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eggplant and garlic has its place in cold vegetable dishes. However, that should not be taken as a rule of thumb, as there are a variety of other Turkish dishes, that are cooked with heavy spices and oil and served with thick sauces.

Istanbul has become a melting pot of both local and international cuisines in recent years. In an effort to broaden culinary horizons, more and more western-style cafés, bars and continental restaurants are popping up all the time. Traditional Turkish fare is still by far the most popular and there are countless restaurants where you can sample local delights. The primary aspect of the local eating scene of the Turkish people is their tendency to eat slowly over a long period of time. Themeyhane(traditional tavern) experience is an epitome of long and cheerful eating and is thus a must for any visitor-- there are plenty of these to be found all over the city. For a traditional Turkish buffet-style restaurant experience, visitors should ask around for the locallokanta. Vegetarians are also reasonably well catered to by a handful of restaurants-- just say you want your foodetsiz ve balıksız, lütfen(without meat and fish, please).

Fish

The Turks are very proud of their local seafood and rarely import any. Fish is traditionally eaten atmeyhanes accompanied bymeze(small appetizers and finger foods) and the local aniseed-flavored alcoholic beverage,rakı, which is similar to Greekouzo, but more pleasing to the palate. When Turks go to a fish restaurant or ameyhane, the occasion usually lasts for hours. Normal 0 0 1 152 872 7 1 1070 11.1282 0 14 0 0If the gathering occurs for dinner, the evening usually starts around 7-7.30 P.M. with the early comers. They order theirrakı with a slice of white cheese and melon. This trio keeps the table going for at least half an hour until the rest of the diners arrive. Around 8.15 P.M. the cold appetizers' tray arrives and the diners cherry-pick the starters. The most popular cold starters include: the aubergine salad(made from mashing aubergine and mixing that with various grasses and grass roots), octopus salad with virgin olive oil, mashed peppers(could be hot), stuffed shell fish andfava(fave in Italian, made from mashed broad beans). After the cold appetizers, between 8.45 and 9.00 P.M. the hot dishes will get ordered. The most favorite hot dishes include:karides güveç(shrimps stewed with rich tomato sauce, pepper and cheese), grilled or fried calamari, fried shelled fish and sometimes Turkish pastry(paçanga böreği).

Most of the popularmeyhanes are located in and around Nevizade Street: Sanat, Gideros, Ney'le Ney'le, Boncuk, Imroz, Saki and Degüstasyon. Kumkapı is full of overpricedmeyhanes catering to tourists, so avoid them. Apart from themeyhanes, there are also some very good fish restaurants. Try the little-knownBalıkçı Sabahattin in Sultanahmet. Along the European Bosphorus shore, good picks include Marina Balık Restaurant on the dock in Kuruçeşme, RumeliİskeleIon the expensive side) right by the fortress, local favouriteAdem Baba(no alcohol service) in Arnavutköy, and Del Mare, Kordon in Çengelköy or Balıkçı in Küçükyalı on the Asian side.

International

In some restaurants, it is possible to travel the world in a meal, while others are more specialised: Udonya serves superb Japanese, or else get unlimited Chinese at Chinese Unlimited, on the expensive front Dragon serves high quality and delicious Far Eastern cuisine samples, try French at theLa Brise, Café de Paris or Cafe du Levant, Tex-Mex at Dixie Station, World cuisine atSunset Grill& Bar orMikla, and Indian at Dubb Indian Restaurant& Gallery. C Fischer serves up German fare,Mia Mensa, Rosario and Da Mario goes Italian,Rejans is Russian, and bothKathisma and Changa serve a bit of them all.

Meat and Kebabs

The word"kebab" is synonymous with Turkey, and a vast selection of kebabs and other meat dishes can easily be found everywhere you go:Ali Baba in Arnavutköy, for example, is a favorite local chow house. On the European side, Bursa İskender and Sark Sofrası in the center of Beyoğlu and Cumhuriyet İskembe Salonu in the fish market are good picks. Tarihi Selim Usta Sultanahmet Köftecisi serves up a mean plate of meatballs(köfte)and Tike is famous for tender lamb. Recently, there are also a variety of Steak Houses opening around the city. Though it is a recent and raw phenomenon, the Turkish elites seemed to have liked this new concept of raw meat. Most frequented steak houses include: Günaydın and Dükkan.

Ottoman

The Ottomans' contribution to world cuisine is magnanimous. A riot of colors, flavors, textures and tastes accompanies each Ottoman-style meal. Check outAsitane in the Kariye Museum in Edirnekapı,Amedros in Sultanahmet,Haci Abdullah in Beyoğlu, self-serve yourself inKonyalı in Sirkeci or get bewildered by the elegant decor and service in its Kanyon branch, visitPandeli in Eminönü, and sample the delights of Tuğra at the Çırağan Sarayı(Çırağan Palace) in Beşiktaş.

Turkish Fast Food

The term"fast food" in Istanbul often means ready-cooked wholesome Turkish food. Many restaurants display trays of prepared stews and vegetable dishes in the window. ThePudding Shop in Sultanahmet was the first of these in Istanbul. Also try Altin Kupa just around the corner. A La Turka, and Bol Kepce in Ortaköy are popular, Darüzziyafe near the Süleymaniye Mosque serves the genuine article, and Ela and Ficcin in Beyoğlu have some good choices too.

Vegetarian

A new trend in Turkey, vegetarianism has had a slow beginning but there has been some progress. Nuh'un Ambari, Nature and Peace, Badehane, andZencefil in Beyoğlu are just a few of the hot spots for herbivores on the European side. Also try Hercai whilst in Kadıköy on the Asian side. As for Slow Food fanatics, lunching at Kantin in Nişantaşı with the Nişantaşı ladies is a must.

Street Food

Europeans and Asians alike seem to love to feast on the streets, buying delicious snacks from vendors wheeling carts. Istanbul is no different: a midnight snack could include stuffed mussels(midye dolma), a fried mussel sandwich, meatballs made with barley(icli köfte), or even raw meat(cig köfte).Gözleme(filled pancake) is a favorite lunch-time snack, along with baked potatoes filled with anything you want(kumpir), and even plain old chicken and rice. Breakfast could consist ofsimit(bread rings with sesame seeds),poğaca(cheese- or potato-filled pastry),çatal(a cracker-like snack), or a variety of sweets dripping with syrup,

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honey, and/or rosewater. An unforgettable street food iskestane(chestnuts) found in every corner in winter.

Drinking

A nasty side effect of the rapidly changing cityscape is that drinking dens come and go with frustrating frequency, and the bar you were at last night may not be there tomorrow; but fear not, as it's not hard to find a new one! Some long standing bars includeSunset Grill& Bar, theMikla Bar, Bebek Hotel Bar and theUlus 29 Lounge and Bar. The new bar scene for the trendy, the cool and the hip-for people watching and to get seen- is happening around the Asmalı Mescit Street. Some leading bars there include: Groove, Corner, Faces,Babaylon,Otto and Otto Sofyalı. As formahalle bars(neighborhood bars),Lucca is a long-standing pick for theBebekli's(those living in Bebek), Eylülist for those in Arnavutköy and Mavra is for the Kuledibi folks. Being neighborhood bars do not make these bars lonely places for the lonely residents, these are all popular bars with local frequenters.

Sultanahmet

More famous for its historical sites and pushy salesmen, Sultanahmet has a few good cafés where you can sit and write your postcards home. Spend some time at the Rumeli Café for excellent people-watching. Try Cheers for cheap beer, Fes Cafe for a cup of coffee, snacks of lunch,Sultan Pub for terrace seating, or escape to Hotel Yeşil Ev's garden for a piece of paradise.

Beyoğlu

The café-bar scene changes faster than most people can blink."Here today, gone tomorrow" seems to be the motto. However, there are a few hangers-on like Dulcinea, Madrid, Pia, Kaktüs Cafe, and Kemanci. The distinction between"café" and"bar" has become very blurred recently and most places do a combination of both. Cafés include Yağmur Cybercafé, Lounge, Café Frappé, Kafe Cute,(a popular gay hangout), and 35mm(located in the Fitas Cinema complex). The best nightclubs-- all thumping out techno until the wee hours-- are Switch, Milk, Taxim She, and Orange. Live music venues Roxy and Babylon are the hottest hits in town at the moment. Bar Bahçe and Neo are excellent gay bars, while the best gay clubs are Prive and Club 14. Some of the finest wine bars in the world have popped up recently: check out Pano Wine Bar, Şarabı Wine Bar, Vareli, or Sappho.

Nişantaşı

Although acknowledged as a shopping venue mostly, Nişantaşı does have a lot to offer in terms of eating and drinking when winter time arrives. The historic Reasürans Pasajı is filled with box-sized bars, cafes and karoke bars. Abdi İpekçi Street is a line up of chic and posh brasseries, bars and cafes, as well as worldwide known elegant boutiques of Vuittons and Pradas. Its parallel Mim Kemal Öke Street is developing and becoming on-par with new cafes such as Den Cafe. Further below the hill of Nişantaşı, around the Akaretler district, where theW Hotel also stands, there are also many new cafes and restaurants that add more spark to the elitist lifestyle of the district.

Kadıköy

Less manic than Beyoğlu, Kadıköy has its own style of nightlife. Rock bar Karga fills up fast with students, and the Belfast Pub and Shaft do live music. If it's coffee you're after, Café Antre is mellow and **female-friendly** and Mosquito Café is fun.

Other Notable Watering Holes

The Wall in Ortaköy fills fast with leather-clad rockers and boppers, up-market Coco Pazzo is in Arnavutköy, and the Panorama Bar at the Marmara Hotel has some of the best views in town.
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Nightlife Insights

Whatever the season or the weather there is always something to do and see in Istanbul 24 hours a day. In spring and summer time, festivals follow closely on each other's heels, starting with the International Istanbul Film Festival in April. The International Istanbul Theatre Festival, Fujifilm World Music Days, the International Istanbul Puppet Festival, and Conquest Week Celebrations are held in May, and the International Istanbul Music Festival and the International Bosphorus Festival kick off in June. The three-day H2000 Festival is also held in June. The International Istanbul Jazz Festival and the Rumeli Hisarı Concerts liven up July and August, and the J&B Dance& Techno Festival rounds off the season in September. The coming of autumn brings the Istanbul International Biennial, Intercontinental Istanbul Eurasia Marathon supported by the Hash House Harriers, Akbank Jazz Festival, ARTIST: Istanbul Art Fair, and the Efes Pilsen Blues Festival.

Tickets are easily found at the Atatürk Cultural Centre(Atatürk Kültür Merkezi or simply"AKM"), Vakko or Raksotek for most cultural events. Biletix and Mydonose sell tickets for most performances over the phone and on the Internet. Bar and café windows carry fliers and posters of coming events, and there are always plenty of posters plastered all over the streets. Daily cinema listings in Turkish can be found in the newspapers.

Cinema

Although there are almost 100 movie theaters in Istanbul, Beyoğlu is the most popular place to catch a film and Cinebonus at Kanyon is the most trendy. Cinebonus Cinemas are also established in G-Mall in Maçka/ Nişantaşı, in Astoria in Zincirlikuyu/ Levent, in Bakırköy, Florya, Fatih and in various other towns on the Asian side; they tend to feature Hollywood movies most of the time. In Beyoğlu, Fitaş is the largest of eleven cinemas in the area, Emek the most elegant, AFM Theater is best for Hollywood catches and Alkazar is great for alternative films. Lale and Sinepop are newer, more modern buildings, and Beyoğlu, Atlas, and Pera cinemas are hidden in bustling shopping arcades. For arty films try Yeşilcam, Akademi İstanbul, or the Tarık Zafer Tunaya Kültür Merkezi(Tarık Zafer Tunaya Cultural Centre). Many of the cultural centers also have their own private screens, and program listings can be found in the press.

Theater

The attitude toward theater has undergone a radical transformation in recent years, and the number of theaters in the city is increasing constantly. The Istanbul State Theatre Company offers a broad program of classic and contemporary productions(including Turkish works) which are performed regularly in five theaters: try Taksim Sahnesi and the AKM for starters. More alternative performances can be found at the Istanbul Sanat Merkezi, where the co-operation of five different theater companies makes for some interesting entertainment. Look out for performances

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by Kum Pan Ya, Orta Oyuncular, Stüdyo Theatre, Tiyatro Oyunevi, and Oyuncular. It is also possible to catch a play in the shopping mall theaters as well. Profilo Mall is a leading establishment, reserving time slots for a variety of monologues, stand up shows, concerts and theater; and Mars Entertainment Group(owner of Cinebonus Cinemas) has also recently cooperated with the DOT Theater Group and has established"Dotmarsta"-an art theater inside G-Mall.

Art Galleries

The main street in Beyoğlu, İstiklal Caddesi, is packed with art galleries, most displaying contemporary works. International artists and mixed exhibitions feature regularly. Every bank has an art gallery or cultural center open to the public. Some of the better ones are the Aksanat Art Centre, Borusan Culture& Art Centre, Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, and Yapı Kredi Kazım. Check out Galata Art Gallery, Dulcinea and Galeri Apel(all private galleries) in the winding backstreets. The Maçka, Tesvikiye Nişantaşı area is also rich in modern art with Gallery Baraz, Gallery Nev, Kas Art Gallery, Milli Insurance Art Gallery, the Pamukbank Photo Gallery, Tem Art Gallery, and the Tesvikiye Art Gallery.

Live Music

Istanbulites flock in droves to live concerts at open-air venues such as the Cemal Toplu Open Air Amphitheatre in Harbiye(known asHarbiye Açık Hava by the locals), Park Orman in Maslak, and various sporting arenas where live international concerts are held. Local rock and metal bands perform live in bars like Hayal Kahvesi, Jazz Stop, Kemancı, and Mojo. Roxy hosts a wide variety of live music, and for world music head to Shaman. Jazz fans might also love Gramofon and the opulent Istanbul Jazz Center in Ortaköy.Babylon also hosts a variety of Jazz artists around the year.

Ballet and Opera

Turkey has no long tradition of Western performing arts, and opera and ballet remain the preserve of the upper classes or educated elite. The Istanbul State Opera and Ballet Company do their best to provide a full program every month despite a severe lack of funds and public support. Classics such asThe Nutcracker Suite,Swan Lake, andCarmen are performed regularly. You can afford to miss them.

Classical Music

Classical music is a less common art form in Istanbul. While the International Istanbul Music Festival brings together internationally acclaimed musicians and local musicians, large audiences are still hard to come by. For a decent dose of classical culture try the Atatürk Cultural Centre, Hacı Ömer Hall, and the Cemal Resit Rey Concert Hall where regular performances by the Istanbul State Symphony Orchestra, Akbank Chamber Orchestra, and Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra take place. The Aya İrini is also a magical location for local and international classical music performances.

Museums

Planning to visit all the museums in Istanbul can be a monumental task. Some of the best ones include the fascinating Archaeology Museum and the intriguing Rahmi Koç Industrial Museum with all its interactive displays. For history buffs, theKariye Müzesi(Chora Church), the Mosaic Museum, the Calligraphy Museum, and the Museum of Turkish& Islamic Arts would be the places to start. For modern and military history try the Atatürk Museum, the Naval Museum, and the Military Museum. The old electric power plant is now exhibited in Santral Istanbul in Eyüp, where also varied workshops regularly take place on weekends. The Sabanci Collection houses a magnificent display of Ottoman art as well as temporary exhibitions of World art, and the Vakiflar Carpet Museum is perfect for rug enthusiasts!

Sightseeing

Pretty much everywhere you turn in the city, historical sites abound. It's impossible to see all of them, but some that shouldn't be missed are the Sultan Ahmet Camii(Blue Mosque), Topkapı Palace, Yerebatan Basilica Cistern, and the Ayasofya(Hagia Sophia). The Bosphorus cruise to Anadolu Kavaği is fabulously relaxing. Çırağan Palace and Dolmabahçe Palace are both in Beşiktaş, as well as the Yıldız Palace and Park, where you may jog, walk or picnic. Some of the most beautiful mosques are theSüleymaniye Mosque, Fatih Mosque, and the picturesque Ortaköy Mosque under the Bosphorus Bridge. Stroll around theAt Meydanı(Hippodrome), Soğukçeşme Street, and Gülhane, or drink wine against the scenery of the city on Pierre Loti Hill. Visit the great fortress of Rumeli Hisarı overlooking the Bosphorus, or shop until you drop in the Grand Bazaar. Kız Kulesi and Beylerbeyi Palace can be found on the Asian side.
©

Things to Do Insights

The best way to see most of Istanbul is on foot. What seems to be a somewhat formidable task is simplified by breaking each walk down into smaller sections of the city. The most touristy but also historical part of town is the old city, Sultanahmet,where at every turn you are greeted with a museum or a mosque. The European and Asian sides of the Bosphorus shore are rich in historical treasures just waiting to be discovered. The shores are also perfect for relaxing long walks and Sunday brunches. Old Pera, or Beyoğlu, deserves its own separate tour. Galata, Tünel and Kuledibi are worth devoting another full day for a full experience of the upscale bohemian headquarters. The Bosphorus is well worth exploring by boat, as are the Princes Islands. There are also several places which can be visited on day trips out of town.

Sultanahmet to Beyazıt

The old city of Sultanahmet is one of the world's most fascinating open-air museums. At the edge of the park between the magnificentAyasofya(Hagia Sophia) and theBlue Mosque(Sultan Ahmet Mosque), the Baths of Lady Hürrem(a twin hamam-turned-carpet shop) preside over the surrounding areas. Çinili Köşk, Aya İrini, andTopkapı Palace(with its harem, massive kitchens, and relics of the prophet) are down to the right of Ayasofya whileYerebatan Sarayı(Yerebatan Basilica Cistern)-- an ancient Roman aqueduct-- is on the street to the left; the upside-down head of Medusa in this watery museum is not to be missed. The 300-year-oldCağaloğlu Hamam is also down this street. Behind Ayasofya is Soğukçeşme Sokak-- a tiny cobbled alley lined with Ottoman-style townhouses, and the Archaeology Museum is behind it on Osman Hamdi Yokusu. The busy Arasta Bazaar and the fascinating Mosaic Museum

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can be found right behind the Blue Mosque. TheAt Meydanı(Hippodrome) opposite the mosque welcomes guests with itsEgyptian Obelisk and Serpentine Column. Nearby are Kaiser Wilhelm's Fountain and İbrahim Paşa Sarayı(İbrahim Paşa Palace). The Tourist Information Office is here too. As you head down Divan Yolu towards Beyazıt, you will see the historicalÇemberlitaş Hamam beckoning you in for a good scrub. The Çemberlitaş("Burnt Column") is in the square outside the hamam. Hidden behind the walls of the Atik Ali Paşa Medresesi are a number of Ottoman cemeteries and tombs within, as well as secluded tea gardens that serve sweet tea and a choice of flavored tobaccos for your nargile(water pipe or hookah). The labyrinthineGrand Bazaar, with its 4,000 shops, needs almost a whole day dedicated to it. The Nuruosmaniye Mosque is nearby. Picturesque Istanbul University is just around the corner, as is the Calligraphy Museum and the bustling Russian Bazaar. One of the most beautiful mosques in the world, theSüleymaniye Mosque, presides over the area from the top of the hill. Down the hill from Sultanahmet Square toward Gülhane, theEgyptian Spice Bazaar and theYeni Camii(New Mosque) stand on Eminönü Square, overlooking the Golden Horn and the ferry terminals.

Beyoğlu to Karaköy

Istanbul's famous Grand Rue de Pera has long since gone. In its place isİstiklal Caddesi, the main pedestrian thoroughfare in Beyoğlu. Majestic Ottoman buildings line the street, bumping up against garish modern architecture in a wild dance manifesting the struggle between the decadent and the sublime. Taksim Square features the Monument to the Republic, and nearby is the tourist information office. The magnificent Greek Orthodox Aya Triada Church and the French Consulate are also close at hand. The historical Alkazar and Emek Cinemas hum with film lovers of all ages. This is also home to the neoclassical Cite de Rumeli, the Circle d'Orient, Anadolu Han, and the Cite d'Alep. The Surp Asdvadzadzin(an Armenian church) is on Sakiz Agaci Sokak. Further down the street are Atlas Pasajı and Beyoğlu Pasajı, Çiçek Pasajı in the Cite de Pera and the Fish Market. Riotous Nevizade Sokak is here too. The American and British Consulate buildings are on Mesrutiyet Caddesi and the elegant Russian and Swedish consulates are on İstiklal, past the cavernous Church of Saint Anthony. The famousPera Palas Hotel is behind Asmalimescit. TheTünel is the oldest metro in continental Europe, and the red Taksim tram is the only one of its kind still running. TheGalata Mevlana Evi(Dervish Lodge) is down Galip Dede Street towardGalata Tower. Much of the former glory of the little village of Karaköy has been lost, although there are still a few old bank buildings along Bankalar Caddesi. Also in the area are Kirkor Lusavoriç(the Church of St Gregory the Illuminator), Kılıç Ali Paşa Mosque and Hamam, and the Mimar Sinan University Culture and Arts Center. The dock is also home to several fish restaurants and the ferry wharves.

Outside the City

Classic Journeys offers a guided tour of Istanbul and theTurquoise Coast. Private Turkey Tours offers a variety of tour packages, including cruises to Istanbul, Ephesus, Gallipoli, Bodrum and Cappadocia. Istanbul Sightseeing also offers high quality private and group tours around the historical center with tour vans and guides who can speak foreign languages.

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Travel Tips

Getting There:

By Air:

Atatürk International Airport(IST)

Atatürk International Airport(http://www.ataturkairport.com) has numerous airline service providers including:

Air France(+90 212 663 0600/ http://www.airfrance.com)

Blue Air(+40 40 21 208 8686/ http://www.blueair-web.com)

British Airways(+90 212 663 0501/ http://www.britishairways.com)

Condor(+1 800 524 6975/ http://www7.condor.com)

Corendon Airlines(+32 2 722 94 94/ http://www.corendon.com)

Delta Airlines(+90 212 663 07 52/ http://www.delta.com)

Egyptair(+90 212 663 3301/ http://www.egyptair.com.eg)

Emirates Airlines(+90 212 663 0708/ http://www.emirates.com)

Germanwings(+44 870 252 1250/ http://www1.germanwings.com)

KLM(+90 212 465 4287/ http://www.klm.com)

Lufthansa(+90 212 663 0595/ http://www.lufthansa.com)

Qantas(+90 212 240 5032/ http://www.qantas.com.au)

Swissair(+90 212 663 6676/ http://www.swiss.com)

SA Express(+90 212 246 6075/ http://www.saexpress.co.za)

Turkish Airlines(+90+90 212 444 0849/ http://www.thy.com)

Transportation leaving the airport includes:

To Taksim Square:

Buses run daily at 6a and at every half hour between 7a and 11:30p. A stop is also made in Aksaray.

To Bakirköy& Bostancı:

A bus leaves the airport to intercept the"flying boat," which arrives at Bakirköy from Bostancı.

To Akmerkez(Etiler):

Buses run daily between 7a and 9p every hour on the hour.

To Kozyatağı:

Buses run daily between 4a and 10p. A stop is also made in Kızıltoprak.

Taxi services can be found outside the arrivals area of TAV.

Some of the major car rental companies include:

Avis(+90 212 465 4550/ http://www.avis.fr)

Budget(+90 212 663 0858/ http://www.budget.fr)

Hertz(+90 212 663 0807/ http://www.hertz.fr)

Sabiha Gökçen Airport(SAW)

Sabiha Gökçen Airport(+90 216 585 50 00/ http://www.sgairport.com/havaalani/eng/start.asp) is a tiny airport on the Asian

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side of the city that services just a few airlines, and there are just a few flights at a time. Keep in mind that flights from this airport often fly you to smaller, lesser-known airports in whatever your destination city may be; however, this is the airport you fly out of if you want a really cheap ticket!

Airlines servicing SAW include:

Germanwings(+44 870 252 1250/ http://www1.germanwings.com)

Easyjet(http://www.easyjet.com)

Turkish Airlines(+90 212 444 0849/ http://www.thy.com)

Pegasus Airlines(+90 444 0737/ http://www.flypgs.com)

Corendon Airlines(+32 2 722 9494/ http://www.corendon.com)

Montenegro Airlines(http://www.montenegro-airlines.cg.yu)

Blue Wings(+49 2 11 42 16 8060/ http://www.bluewings.com/bwg)

Hapag Fly(+49 511 2200 4713/ http://www.tuifly.com/de/index.html)

MyAir(+44 207 365 1597/ http://www.myair.com/docs/cust/en/index.shtml)

Condor(+1 800 364 1667/ http://www10.condor.com/tcf-us/index.jsp)

Air Arabia(http://www.airarabia.com)

Getting out of Sabiha Gökçen Airport:

Taxis are available outside the terminal.

The Haydarpaşa-Gebze Express shuttle regularly departs from/ arrives at Pendik Train Station(at SAW itself-- just ask at airport information). There are also regular suburban services.

Havaş: Ask at the airport information desk for the Havaş(airport shuttle) service schedule.

Bus(IETT): Ask at the airport information desk for bus schedules.

By Train:

Not as popular a mode of transport as buses, with a much smaller network, there are rail connections from Istanbul to Ankara, Izmir and Eastern Anatolian cities. Reservations are essential for these trips, and there are several classes of seats and sleepers. International services from Sirkeci(+90 212 527 0050/51)(on the European side) and Haydarpaşa(+90 216 336 0475/2063)(Asian side) stations include Vienna, Munich, Budapest, Thessaloniki, (via Eskisehir, Konya, and Gaziantep), Aleppo(via Tatvan and Van), Tehran, Moscow and Bucharest.

By Bus:

Istanbul is well-connected by bus to every part of Turkey. Buses are frequent and the main coach station, Otogar(+90 212 658 0505) is at Esenler. There are various independent bus companies, all of whom have a ticket office at the station.(The larger ones have offices dotted around town, especially in areas like Taksim, Sultanahmet, Beşiktaş and Bostancı.) Prices vary slightly depending on the quality of the vehicle.

By Car:

From the northwest, take route D020 southeast. From the southwest, follow route D100 northeast.

Getting Around:

Within the European Side: Istanbul's main bus terminal is Büyük Otogar(+90 212 658 0505) in Eminönü. There are also shared taxi-vans calleddolmuş(literally meaning"stuffed"!), which can take you anywhere around town. Other options include a tramway, a subway, a cable car from Karaköy to Beyoğlu and a tiny electric trolley from Beyoğlu to Taksim.

Within the Asian Side: The dolmuş and buses are generally the way to go for cheap; taxis are also generally easy to find.

From Europe to Asia and Back: Most Istanbulites rely on the ferries for their intercontinental travel; indeed, this is the best way to see the beautiful Haydarpaşa train station, the Kız Kulesi, and the old mansions lining the European coast. On the ferry, you are out in the open sea air that is so much a part of Istanbul's overall atmosphere. Other options for intercontinental travel are a smaller, faster seabus, or a regular bus from Büyük Otogar(Eminönü) or Bostancı(Kadıköy) over one of the bridges.
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Fun Facts

1. A historical fact about Istanbul is that it was founded on Seven Hills. An interesting fact that ties up with this is that in most local songs you hear a reference to Istanbul's seven hills.

2. A well-known, yet an important fact is that Istanbul serves the role of a bridge between two continents: Europe and Asia.

3. Istanbul is surrounded by Sea all around with the Bosphorus cutting it through. With so much water around, you may have thought that the climate would be mild year round. However, snowfall is actually common in Istanbul. The average annual snowfall is sometimes 18 inches.

4. This year(2010) Istanbul is one of three European Cities of Culture.

5. A weird fact is that Istanbul has been capital of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Latin Empire, and the Ottoman Empire; yet it isn't the capital city of modern Turkey. Ankara is the capital city of Turkey.

6. Grand Bazaar is as its name also suggests quite"grand". It is the biggest old covered bazaar in the world, with over 3.000 shops.

7. A very interesting fact about Istanbul is that Agatha Christie wrote her famous novel"Murder on the Orient Express" at Pera Palas Hotel in Istanbul.

8. Going into sacred places, such as the mosques, one would have to remove their shoes.

9. Istanbul is as large as Belgium itself with almost the same population number-could be even more crowded...

10. A fun fact about Istanbul is that every one living in this city complains about one another, the traffic, the way things get done; but yet they would not go out of here to live in another city.

11."Istanbul'un taşı toprağı altındır./ Istanbul's soil and stone are golden." This is an interesting phrase from the mid 50s that has brought many people out from their villages into Istanbul.

12. There are lots of street animals in Istanbul-not so common a trait in Europe and the US.

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