



THE LAST MILLIONAIRE

Istanbul

BBC



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Istanbul City Guide

Old Istanbul is the crowded streets of the Grand Bazaar, magnificent mosques, hamams (bathouses), and grand palaces of the Ottoman Empire. Headscarved women walk down the cobbled lanes and men smoke apple tobacco from a nargileh (water pipe) to a soundtrack of the Muezzin's call to prayer. New Istanbul was voted 2007 design capital by Wallpaper* magazine.

It's boutiques selling one-offs by globally recognised Turkish designers and the Cihangir districts' clubs, bars and restaurants rival Soho. The "Istanbul Modern" – showcases Turkey's contemporary art. In Istanbul both these worlds co-exist. It's a vital, ever changing city, charged with energy, creativity and commerce.



Other cities claim to be at the crossroads of Europe and Asia – but only Istanbul can legitimately claim to straddle both continents. Split by the Bosphorus the western bank of the city is in Europe whilst the eastern side is in Asia. Istanbul is surrounded on 3 sides by water – as well as the Bosphorus there is the Sea of Marmara to the south of the city, and a narrow inlet known as the Golden Horn splits the European side.

Istanbul is one of the biggest cities in Europe – home to a population of approximately 12 million. Its numbers are swelled daily by newcomers from the provinces, travelling to the city for work. Turkey has a very young population – the average age is 29. The average age in Istanbul is even younger at 23 and some unofficial sources put it at 16. It's also a university city, with over 150,000 students attending the 3 big universities and dozens of colleges.

Since 1923 Ankara has been the capital of Turkey, but Istanbul has always been and continues to be the financial and commercial capital. The country's economy is one of the fastest growing in the world and the city has quadrupled in size over the last few decades.

History

Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul – the names which the city has been called during its 28 centuries of existence. Relics from all these periods still exist in Istanbul. During the Constantinople era which began in 330AD, many stunning palaces, fountains and monumental churches were constructed.

The city was the first Christian capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and over 900 years grew to become the wealthiest most splendid city in Europe, whilst Paris and London were still squalid towns. In 1453 Ottoman Sultan Mehmet 11 brought an end to Constantinople, bringing Islam to the city, changing churches into mosques and renaming the city Istanbul. Mehmet the Conqueror was responsible for the Topaki Palace and the Grand Bazaar and other grand mosques. The Ottoman Empire reached its zenith under Sultanate of Suleyman the Magnificent 1522-66.



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- 666BC Greek king Byzas establishes Byzantium.
 - 179BC Byzantium becomes part of the Roman Empire
 - 330AD Roman Emperor Constantine builds his new capital in the city and renames it Constantinople.
 - 1453 Ottoman Turks conquer Constantinople and name it Istanbul.
 - 1914 Ottoman Empire sides with Germany and Austria-Hungary during World War 1.
 - 1923 The Independent Republic of Turkey is established, with a new capital in Ankara.
-

Although over 95% of the population are Muslim, Istanbul has a long history of tolerance and multi-culturism with Jewish and Christian traditions present in the city. Islamic fundamentalists targeted the city in 2003 with Al-Qaeda bombs aimed at Jewish synagogues, the British Consulate and HSBC Bank, killing 78 people. In 2005 Turkey entered formal talks to become a member of the European Union but whilst Turkey's dispute with Greece over Cyprus remains unresolved many believe it can't happen.

Neighbourhood Districts

European side

Sultanahmet

Sultanahmet is the district that all tourists head for. This is ancient Istanbul with all the sightseeing heavyweights packed together with must-see mosques, palaces and the Grand Bazaar. Compact and relatively traffic free compared to the rest of the city and easy to navigate around on foot.



Blue Mosque

Eminonu and Cagaloglu

Eminonu is the transport hub of Istanbul. Cagaloglu is a warren of trade shops.

Tunel and Karakoy

Karakoy houses the city's docks and harbour. Steep alleyways and the Genoese Galata Tower is the area's towering landmark. Karakoy is the location for the "Istanbul Modern" contemporary art museum. Tunel takes its name from the tunnel that runs down to the sea from Istikal Caddesi (Independence Avenue) – the first municipal underground in Europe and still in operation.

Beyoglu and Taksim

The city's heartland. Istiklal Caddesi (Independence Avenue) is a mile long pedestrianised grand boulevard cutting through Beyoglu. An ancient looking tram runs the length of Istiklal Caddesi. Lined with nineteenth century former palaces and embassies which are now home to High Street brands. The Avenue is just as busy at night with pavement bars and restaurants serving the tourists. It's said that up to a million people walk up or down Istiklal Caddesi every day. The streets off Istiklal Caddesi retain their Bohemian past and are home to many interesting independent shops, cafes, bars, restaurants and clubs. Taksim square is at the heart of modern Istanbul but it's large, busy and on the whole unappealing. Crossing the road here requires pedestrians take their life in their hands as traffic comes from every direction and doesn't always stop at the traffic lights.

Cihangir and Cukurcuma

Bohemian area of the city – more Soho than Istanbul. The fashionistas have moved in on the area and it's now riding high on a property boom. Despite this the area has a friendly small-town vibe and a thriving café society.

Nisantasi and Macka

Nisantasi is the upscale, upmarket, expensive area of town. Designer and luxury boutiques – Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Armani etc ; smart apartment blocks, good restaurants and people watching cafes. Abdi Ipekci Caddesi is a leafier version of Bond Street. The area doesn't attract many tourists – rather it's Istanbul's super rich who come to shop.

Ortakoy and Besiktas

Besiktas is the grander of these 2 Bosphorus-based Suburbs, with a concentration of shoreline Ottoman palaces and pavilions. In the summer the waterfront of Ortakoy becomes party central, crowded with locals enjoying the bars, restaurants and super-clubbing venues.

Levent and Etiler

The financial heartland – lined with corporate skyscrapers and large financial institutions. Wealthy, with imposing villas glimpsed behind security fencing. Levent is the stomping ground of Istanbul's rich and famous. This is the location of Turkey's largest shopping mall – the Akmerkey, which was named best shopping centre in Europe in the mid 90s.

Asian side

Uskudar and Kadikoy

Residential suburbs for those who work mainly on the European side, and make the daily commute by ferry across the Bosphorus. Not many tourists visit but locals flock to the bazaar in Kadikoy and to one of the city's best street markets on KUSDILI Sokak on Tuesdays for food and clothes, and on Sundays for the flea market.



The Big Sights

The top 5 are all in Sultanahmet – the ancient quarter of Istanbul.

Aya Sofya – (also known as Hagia Sophia
- The Church of the Divine Wisdom)

This originally Christian basilica, is Istanbul's finest site. Vast interior, stunning mosaics and a towering dome. The present building is the third to stand on the site. The first was built in AD360 during the reign of Constantius, but after flood and earthquake damage it was rebuilt many times until this final structure was completed in 537. For a thousand years this was the largest building in the world. When Ottoman Mehmet II conquered the city in 1453 his first act was to declare Aya Sofya a mosque. Apart from removing some of the marble crosses and whitewashing the mosaic icons he left the church as it was. The 4 Islamic minarets which now stand at the corners were added after the Turkish conquest. In 1935 Aya Sofya was declared a museum and is the most visited site in the country with more than 2 million visitors a year.

Aya Sofya
Aya Sofya Mydani
Sultanahmet
Tel: (0212) 522 1750
Opening: 9am-7.30pm Closed Tue
Admission: Charge

Topkapi Palace

For 400 years this pavilion palace was the residence of the Ottoman sultans who were the most powerful empire rulers in the world. Built by Mehmet the Conqueror shortly after his conquest in 1453, both as his command centre and as his indulgent home. The Palace is a city within a city consisting of interconnecting courts and between 5,000 and 7,000 people worked and lived inside to serve the sultan household. The Harem alone had 300 rooms – just 40 are open to the public.

Topkapi Palace
Bab-I Humayun Caddesi
Gulhane, Sultanahmet
Tel: (0212) 512 0480
www.topkapisarayi.gov.tr
Opening: 9am -7pm closed Tue
Admission: Charge



Topkapi Palace

The Blue Mosque

One of the most magnificent mosques in the Muslim world it takes its name from the blue iznik tiles which line its walls. Built during the reign of Sultan Ahmet (1603 – 1617) with 6 minarets, which at the time was a cause of controversy as only Mecca – the holiest site in Islam also had six. There is a stunning vast central dome.

The Blue Mosque
Sultanahmet Camii
At Meydam Sokak 17
Tel: (0212) 518 1319

Opening hours: 5.30am - 7pm 7 days a week but closed during Prayer times
Admission: Free but donations welcomed

The Grand Bazaar (also know as Covered Bazaar)

Istanbul's famed emporium. The heart of the Bazaar dates from the Ottoman conquest of 1456-61 and is a labyrinth of passageways and corridors with 64 streets, 3,000 shops, 22 entrances and 25,000 employees. It's tourists who shop and barter here rather than locals. There is a huge range of goods including jewellery, antiques, leather goods, ceramics – and of course the infamous carpets.

The Grand Bazaar
Kapali Carsi,
Beyazit
Tel: (0212) 522 3173
www.kapalicarsi.org.tr

Opening: 8.30am – 7pm closed Sunday
Admission: Free

Suleymaniye Mosque

This mosque dominates the ancient city skyline – standing on the highest hill. The mosque was the crowning achievement of the Ottoman superstar chief architect - Mimar Sinan, who designed a vast number of buildings in Istanbul. Commissioned by Suleyman the Magnificent and completed in 1557 when the Ottoman Empire was at its height, as an Islamic answer to the Byzantine Aya Sofya. It's the interior which is most impressive with a vast central dome and tiered domes surrounding it.

Suleymaniye Mosque
Tiryakiler Carsisi, Off Prof Siddik Sami Onar Caddesi
Suleymaniye
Opening: 9am-7pm daily
Admission: Free

Eating/drinking

There is never a problem finding somewhere to eat and drink in Istanbul – from the street vendors selling grilled corn on the cob, simit – savoury bread with sesame seeds - and fresh grilled fish on the harbour – to the cafes and restaurants on almost every corner.

Low-cost traditional Turkish “meyhanes” (tavernas) serve “mezes” – small dishes of starters and dips– usually cold. Boreks are another traditional Turkish snack – a savoury pastry filled with anything from cheese or vegetables or meat. Dolmas are stuffed – usually peppers or vine leaves. And of course there are grilled meat kebabs. The district of Kumkapi on the Sea of Marmara, close to Sultanahmet is packed with lively harbourside seafood restaurants and meyhanes.



Traditional non-alcoholic drinking can be tea – herbal or straight – served in small tulip-shaped glasses – never with milk but always with sugar. Everyone you visit offers you a glass and it’s considered rude to refuse. Turkish coffee is black and very strong in tiny cups. Turkish wines are fine – but wine is generally expensive in restaurants. The stronger stuff is raki – an aniseed-flavour clear spirit that turns cloudy when water is added. The centuries old tradition of smoking apple flavoured tobacco through a narghile (a waterpipe) is kept alive in coffee houses. One guide-book fixture is Erenler Narghile – one of the oldest and most famous located in a Ottoman building in Sultanahmet, packed with students from the nearby university. Narghile smoking has fairly recently had a revival and become popular with young Istanbulites – male and female.

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There is no shortage of uber-stylish restaurants and bars serving international and fusion cuisine to Istanbul’s style conscious.

Some highlights;-

360

360 is a modern glass sided penthouse sitting on the roof of a 19th century building on Istiklal Caddesi - which does what it says on the tin – stunning 360 degree views of the surrounding Beyoglu district and the Bosphorus. Popular with both visitors and locals it’s a bar, restaurant and lounging spot serving up a global fusion menu to beautiful people.

360, Misir Apartmenti, Istiklal Caddesi 311, Beyoglu

Tel: (0212) 251 1042

Opening: Lunch Mon-Fri, Dinner daily

Changa

One of the pioneers of south-east Asian and European fusion Changa is still top dog. Despite being on an unlovely street – Siraselviler Caddesi – it has an imposing entrance into a beautiful art nouveau building. The owners have also more recently opened Muzedechanga on Istiklal Caddesi – an equally stylish sequel with 60s and 70s interior.

Changa, Siraselviler Caddesi 87, Taksim

Tel: (0212) 249 1348

Opening: 6pm-1am Mon-Sat

Vogue

This bar/restaurant has been going for 10 years and is now an Istanbul cool institution. Drinks are served on the 13th floor terrace overlooking Besiktas Plazai, and there's a top-notch sushi bar.

Vogue, Spor Caddesi 92, BJK Plaza A Blok 13, Akaretler, Besiktas

Tel: (0212) 227 4404

Opening: Mon-Sat 12-3am, Sun 11-11

Kiyi

Eating out at the fish restaurants that line both sides of the Bosphorus is a summer-time must for Istanbulites. Kiki is the five star pick, with pavement tables and views over a picturesque mini harbour in Tarabya.

Kiyi, Kefelikoy, Caddesi 126, Tarabya

Tel: (0212) 262 0002 / 269 6920

Opening: noon-midnight

Ulus 29

On a hill overlooking the Bosphorus in the leafy surroundings of Ulus Park – great location – but a fair taxi ride from the centre. The 29 in the name refers to the 29 traditional Ottoman and east Mediterranean dishes on the menu. Cocktails are served on the terrace with great sea views. Next door is Club 29.

Ulus 29, 1 Kireçhane Sokak, Adnan Saygun Caddesi, Ulus Park. I

Tel: (0212) 265 6181

Bars/Clubs

The district of Beyoglu is heaven for bar hopping. Avoid the main Avenue – Istiklal Caddesi and head for the side streets off the main drag which are packed with watering holes. In the summer Istanbul is party central and the club scene is booming. The waterfront district of Ortakoy is the place for “superclubs” which party until dawn.

Europe’s most celebrated dance djs stop off in Istanbul. Partying doesn’t get started until after midnight and the best time to be there is between 1am and 4am.

Weekends are the busiest – but some clubs have special nights on Wednesdays and Thursdays. New venues surface all the time - these are some of the established clubs :-

Crystal

Electronic and techno. Weekends packed, Thursdays are relaxed with house sounds.

Crystal, Muallim Naci Caddesi 65, Ortakoy

Tel: (0212) 278 4578

Opening: Midnight-5.30am Thur-Sat

Cahide On5

Kitsch interior and transvestite staff. Cocktails are served up to a camp pop soundtrack.

Cahide On5, 193 Mesrutiyet Caddesi, Beyoglu

Tel: (0212) 292 7368

Opening: 9.30pm-4am Tue-Sat

Reina

Istanbul’s most famous club. A swanky “superclub” with paparazzi lined up outside to snap the c-list celebs and playboys and girls who arrive in sports cars or speedboats. Turkish and euromed pop soundtrack. Drinks are very expensive.

Reina, Muallim Naci Caddesi 44

Tel: (0212) 259 5918

Opening: Mon-Sun

Anjelique

Another chic "superclub" – but not as exclusive as Reina. Resident and guest djs and stunning views of the Bosphorus.

Anjelique, Muallim Naci Cad, Salhane sok, No:5, Ortakoy

Tel: (0212) 327 2844

Opening: 6pm-4am

Blackk

Is Istanbul's Euro trash 5 star nightclub with black banquettes, huge glitter balls and gold chain mail curtains.

Blackk, Muallim Naci Cad, No: 71, Ortakoy

Tel: (0212) 236 7256

One off raves and festivals are popular throughout the summer and are held at the Maslak Venue in the Maslak district, or at Yeni Melek – a concert and party venue in Beyoglu. During the summer parties move out of town to Solar Beach or Burc Beach on the Black Sea coast.

Arts/Entertainment

Turkish pop and rock is popular and can be heard on radio station Power FM and in bars and clubs. Istanbul will be one of 3 European Cities of Culture in 2010.

Music

- Many of Istanbul's live music venues are on the back streets which run off Istiklal Caddesi in Beyoglu.

Babylon

An underground brick vault, this is Istanbul's best live music venue. Electronica, jazz, international and world music can be heard here.

Babylon, Sehbender Sokak 3, Tunel

Tel: (0212) 292 7368

Opening: Tue-Sat

Mojo

The place for head-banging rock. Cover bands play rock classics from midnight.

Mojo, Buyukparmakkapi Sokak 26 off Istiklal Caddesi

Tel: (0212) 243 2927 / 243 2991

Opening: 10pm-4am daily

Peyote

Alternative sounds. Spread over several floors – with a small performance area for live local bands.

Peyote, Kalyoncu Kullugu Caddesi 42, off Nevizade Sokak, Beyoglu

Tel: (0212) 251 4398

Opening: Midnight-4am daily

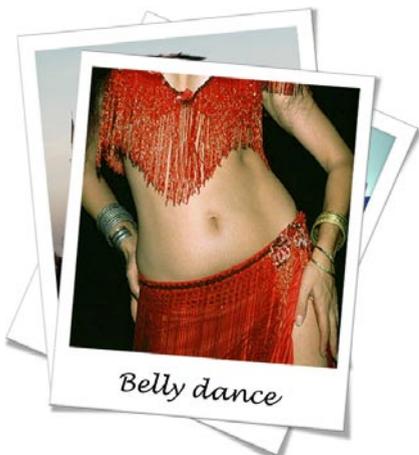
Riddim

A mix of genres – one floor is hip hop, one rock and another R&B.

Riddim, Siraselviler Caddesi 69/1, Taksim

Tel: (0212) 251 2723

Opening: 9pm-4am daily



Belly Dancing

Beloved of package tourists a belly dancing and harem show can be booked at the Galata tower. Belly dancing originated in Egypt rather than Turkey, but can be traced back to the days of the Sultans, when both men and women danced for the Sultan's entertainment. Male belly dancers still perform in Istanbul. There is a thriving transvestite and transsexual community in Istanbul and drag queens work in clubs like Cahide On5 in Beyoglu.

Galata Tower, Galata Square

Tel: (0212) 293 8180

Opening: 9am-8pm

Admission: Charge

Shopping/Fashion

With dozens of independent stores, state of the art shopping malls and bazaars and markets there is plenty of choice and competition. Big names are Mavi Jeans – the equivalent of Levis, and Beyman Department stores. Fashion is a big deal in Istanbul and Turkey is the 4th largest exporter of ready made garments in the world. Turkish furniture designers such as Derin Design and Gaia & Gino are already stars.



The Grand Bazaar

Deli Kizin Yeri, 82 Halicilar Cad, Grand Bazaar, Tel: (0212) 526 1251
Deli Kiz means “crazy lady” – the name given to this shop in the Grand Bazaar by owner American Linda Caldwell. The shop has built a thriving business by re-inventing traditional Turkish handicrafts. Linda sells place mats, handbags, pillows and dolls all with Turkish motifs to both tourists and locals.

Ethicon, Kapalycarsy Takkeciler Sok 58-60, Grand Bazaar
Short for ethnic contemporary. The owner creates “fusion” carpets created from bits of rugs and other materials. The rugs and kilims are ethically produced using environmentally friendly processes.

Beyoglu District

Many American and European brands manufacture their clothing in Turkey and Istanbul now has a thriving market in seconds and overruns which can be bought at shops in Beyoglu. Off Istiklal Caddesi are several pasajs – covered arcades - stacked with knock-down clothes in bins or on rails. This is also the place to track down fake copies of well known brands.

Atlas Pasaji, Off Istiklal Caddesi, Beyoglu
Similar to Camden Market in London – with a grungy vibe. As well as clothes it sells jewellery and kitsch collectibles.

Beyoglu Is Merkezi, Beyoglu is Merkezi 365, off Istiklal Caddesi, Beyoglu
A large pasaji with 3 underground floors. Bargains here are sporty lines and denim.

Cihangir and Cukurcuma District

These are the original Bohemian districts with a Soho feel.

Evihan, Altıpatlar Sokak 8, Cukurcuma, Tel: (0212) 227 2216

The owner combines fragments of Iznik tile and silver to produce hand-made accessories, beaded glass ornaments, delicate one-off clothes, handbags and shoes.

Suzanne Simon, Faikpasa Yokusu 1, Cukurcuma, Tel: (0212) 244 9663

Suzanne Simon is an American textile designer inspired the embroidered Ottoman textiles. Previously she worked for Turkish fashion house Vakko – now her products are sold to high end designer stores like Barneys in New York.

Mine Kerse, Faik Pasa Yokusu Tel: (0212) 249 3561

Former assistant to well known Turkish designer Umit Unal, Mine Kerse produces beautifully crafted hats and handbags from felt and leather from her studio above the shop.

Pied de Poule, Faik Pasa Yokusu 19/1, Tel: (0212) 245 8116

Vintage fashion from the 30s – including gloves, hats, handbags as well as furniture.

Bis Wear, Aznavur Pasaji 212-213, Galatasaray, Cukurcuma, Tel: (0212) 292 9700

Owned by 2 sisters – who started making hats from unusual fabrics and who branched out into matching shoes, handbags and belts.

Nisantasi District

This is the upmarket designer exclusive shopping district.

Ayca, Atiye Sokak 7/8, Tesvikiye 34367, Tel: (0212) 219 2511

Ayca is a showroom on the 2nd floor of an apartment building – but that doesn't deter those who wish to snap up Ayca's colourful surreal designs. Ayca is a fashion designer who has studied at St Martins in London. She designs jewellery and paints her dreams on canvas. Instead of curtains the windows are covered with white painted Barbie dolls.

Ottoman Empire, Sakayik Sokak 59/1, Tesvikiye, Tel: (0212) 296 5619

The owners produce t-shirts by taking Ottoman motifs and adding English phrases and pop designs. Tiny shop on the ground floor of an apartment building.

City's, Tesvikiye Street, Nisantasi Tel: (0212) 373 3333

This is one of Istanbul's newest malls – with liveried door staff and a huge screen outside which blasts Fashion TV into the street below.

Etelier and Ulus Districts

These districts are home to some of Istanbul's biggest and best malls and a great clothing bazaar.

Akmerkez, Alisyeris Merkezi, Nispetive Caddesi, Etiler
Upmarket slick mall with 250 shops.

Cevahir, Buyukdere Cad no.22, Sisli
Over 6 floors this is Europe's biggest mall. The most popular of Istanbul's 40 or so malls and always crowded.

Levant District

Kanyon, Buyukdere Cad, Kanyon Alybverib Merkezi
The Kanyon mall – designed – to be like a canyon! A sophisticated up market mall with Harvey Nicks, and Wagamama.

Sport/Leisure

Football

Only one sport counts in Istanbul and that's football. There are 3 teams who play in the city – Besiktas, Fenerbahce and Galatasaray who dominate the Turkish league season (Aug – May).

Almost every male in Turkey supports one of the big Istanbul 3 – no matter where he lives – with his local team coming second choice. Basketball is also popular.

Turkish Baths

Taking to the water in a Turkish bath (hamam) is a century old tradition in Istanbul. Cemberlitas Hamami is right in the heart of the ancient quarter in Sultanahmet. Its been a baths since the 16th century and is now mostly visited by tourists rather than locals, but it's an architectural treasure.

Full of marble domes the baths were designed by Ottoman architect superstar Mimar Sinan. Clients are soaped, scrubbed, massaged and washed down by attendants in single sex sections of the baths. None of the hamams are officially gay but there are several unofficial male only gay local hamam across Istanbul.

Cemberlitas Hamami, Vezirhan Caddesi 8, Cemberlitas
Tel: (0212) 522 7974
Opening: 6am –midnight daily

Media

The daily English language newspaper is Turkish Daily News and there is a monthly Turkish Business World. The monthly Time Out Istanbul is good for reviews and up-to-date listings. There is also a bi-monthly listings guide called Istanbul: The Guide.

Radio

The airwaves in the city are crammed with radio stations. Stations usually offer Turkish or English language music. For dance and pop there's Kiss FM, Metro FM or Power FM. For Turkish music there's Kral FM, Lokum FM and Best FM.

TV

There are over 100 channels and Turkey has its own music channel - Power Turk – which plays exclusively Turkish music. There is also MTV Turkey.

Practical Stuff

Safety and Scams

Pickpockets operate in the areas around Taksim and other busy tourist areas. Care should be taken with wallets, bags and mobile phones.

If approached by anyone asking you for money – in particular young men, who can be glue or thinner addicts – be careful if you revoke them – don't be aggressive or shout or push them as this can provoke retaliation. Instead, either give them small change, without letting them see that you have more money, or refuse politely.

Passports

Your passport should be valid for at least six months on entry into Turkey.

A visa is required for British nationals to enter Turkey which can be bought by British citizens at the airport on entry to Turkey for ten pounds. Do this before you join the long queue for passport control – otherwise you'll have to queue up twice!

Local Laws and Customs

- Turkey has strict laws against the use, possession or trafficking of illegal drugs. If you are convicted of any of these offences, you can expect to receive a heavy fine or a prison sentence of four to 24 years.
- It is illegal not to carry some form of photographic ID in Turkey. It is therefore advisable to carry a photocopy of your passport with you at all times, storing the original in a safe place.
- Do not take photographs near military or official installations.
- Dress modestly if visiting a mosque or a religious shrine. Visitors should remove their shoes and women should cover their heads and arms, and not wear shorts or miniskirts.
- If offered a glass of tea it is considered rude to refuse.
- It is an offence to insult the Turkish nation or the national flag, or to deface or tear up currency.
- The export of antiquities is prohibited and carries a prison sentence from five to ten years.

Tipping

In cheaper restaurants it's not necessary to leave more than a few coins in the change plate. In an average restaurant although tipping is not compulsory, people leave around 5%. In more expensive restaurants, 10 % is usual. Taxis don't expect a tip but it's usual to round up the change to the nearest lira.

Water

It is recommended that you drink bottled water.

Money

Turkey's currency is the Turkish Lira.

Exchange rate:

Great Britain Pounds

1 GBP = 2.31 Lira

5 GBP = 11.55 Lira

10 GBP = 23.10 Lira

Turkey New Lira

1 Lira = 0.41GBP

5 Lira = 2.05 GBP

10 Lira = 4.10 BP

The New Turkish Lira comes in notes of 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100. The New Kuruş comes in coins of 5, 10, 25, 50 and one New Turkish Lira. One hundred New Kuruş equals one New Turkish Lira.

With a credit or debit card you can withdraw local currency from cash machines. There are also cash machines in the arrivals halls at most airports. Credit cards are widely accepted in hotels, restaurants and shops.

The Euro is highly valued as a form of payment (far more than the dollar), and can be used to pay for large purchases or services - e.g. of a tour guide.

Cost of Living

Minimum wage in Turkey is TL608 a month – approximately £260 a month

Blue collar average is £350 -£500 a month

White collar average is £450 - £750 a month

Professional/highly skilled is £900 - £3000 a month

Sample price guide

Prices in TL

Small bottle of water 1.30

Movie ticket 4.00- 10.00

Night club entry 5.00-30.00

Hamam bath and massage 10.00-60.00

Bosphorus ferry ride 1.5 (one way)

Café latte 4.00

Local information

Time: GMT+2hours (summer)

Sunrise and sunset

Mid June: Sunrise, 05:30. Sunset, 20:35

Weather

In summer the weather in Istanbul is hot and humid, the temperature between June and September averaging 82 °F (28°C). Summers are relatively dry, but rain does occur all year round. During winter it is cold, wet and often snowy. Snowfalls tend to be heavy, but temperatures rarely drop as low as freezing point. Istanbul also tends to be a windy city.

Dialling codes

The international country dialling code dialling from the UK for Turkey is +90.

The outgoing code is from Turkey to the UK is 00, followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0044 for the United Kingdom).

Within Istanbul the Europe side and the Asia side of the city have different codes.

To dial between them use ;

Asya (Asia side) 0216

Avrupa (Europe side) 0212.

If dialling within the European side to a European number from a land line drop the 0212 code. If dialling within the Asian side to an Asian number from a land line drop the 0216 code.

To dial an Istanbul number from a mobile then use the prefixs 0212 for Europe and 0216 for Asia.

Electricity

220 Volt, 50 Hz

2 prong round pin plugs.

Working hours

Government offices: 8:30 am - 12:30 pm; 1:30 pm-5:30 pm (Closed Saturday and Sundays)

Banks: 8:30 am - 12:00 pm; 1:30 pm-5:00 pm (Closed Saturday and Sundays)

Shops: 9:30 am - 7:00 pm (In busy tourist areas some close around midnight)

Public Transport

- Istanbul traffic is a major problem and often experiences gridlock particularly on the bridges. Fortunately the 2 busiest areas for visitors – Sultanahmet and Beyoglu are easy to get round on foot.
- There are numerous private and state-owned city buses but because of the traffic jams in the city they can be slow and uncomfortable with services coming to a virtual halt at 11pm. Buses are useful for heading up the Bosphor coast to Ortakoy. To travel from the European side to the Asian side it's best to travel by ferry. There are numerous docks along Eminönü Quay. To travel to the shopping and business districts of Nisantasi, Etilier and Levent the best way is via the metro line that runs north from Taksim.
- There are two tramways on the European side. A quick, modern commuter tram runs from Kabatas, then over the Galata bridge through Eminönü, Sultanahmet, Beyazit (for the Grand Bazaar) and onto outlying suburbs.
- Bus, metro, ferry and tram tickets are cheap and usually available near the main stops, either from a kiosk, all main bus and metro stops and ferry terminals or a private seller, who adds about 25% to the price. An akbil (electronic token) is available for purchase in advance, with a small returnable deposit. This is valid for a number of journeys, slightly cheaper and more convenient for buses, ferries, the Tünel, and the metro.

Taxis

It's easy to find a yellow taxi – which can be hailed almost anywhere in the street. Insist on the meter always being used. The night rate (2400-0600) is 50% more than the day rate, so visitors should check the correct rate is on the meter - 'Gündüz' means day and 'Gece' night, which should be digitally displayed. Alternatively, one light indicates the day meter and two lights the night meter. Taxis are cheap compared to European levels, with the day rate of TL1.50 a mile. Sultanahmet to Taksim Sq costs around TL6. Taxi drivers can overcharge tourists, so if possible try to take a cab from an official stand or from outside a hotel.

The dolmus is a large, yellow shared minibus taxi, which runs a fixed short, circular route, such as Taksim-Besiktas with the starting points and final destination displayed in the window. With no set stops – flag down the driver to get on and shout to get off. For local journeys there is a fixed fare, which is around TL 1.50. There are smaller, blue minibus dolmus, which do longer journeys within the city and suburbs and cram as many standing passengers as it can possibly fit. Payment is in cash, upon boarding, costing a little more than the bus, especially for longer journeys.

Driving in the City

Hire cars are not recommended because of terrible traffic jams, worse driving and a shortage of parking.

Useful Words and Phrases

Sg = singular; Pl = plural; frm = formal; inf = informal

Welcome	Hoş geldin (sg) Hoş geldiniz (pl/frm)	Hosh geldin Hosh geldiniz	-o as in top -g as in get -o as in top -g as in get
Hello	Merhaba,	Mairhubba	-air as in hair
How are you?	Nasılsınız? (frm)	NAHS-suhl-suh-nuhz	
I'm fine, thanks. And you?	İyiyim teşekkür ederim, siz nasılsınız (frm)	ee-yeem teshek-kur edderrim	-ee as in meet -e as in get -u as in French Vu -err as in merry
	İyiyim sağol, sen nasılsın (inf)	Seez nussilssiniz ee-yeem saa-ol	-ee as in meet -aa as in father -g is silent -ol as in olive
What's your name?	Adın ne? (inf)	Udden ne	-e as in get
My name is...	Adım	Uddem	-e as in the
Where are you from?	Nerelisin? (inf)	Nerelisseen	-err as in merry
Pleased to meet you	Taniştığımızıza memnun oldum /	Tuneshte-emezzaa memnoon oldoom	-e as in the -g as in silent -ol as in olive -ol as in olive
	Memnun oldum	Memnoon oldoom	
Good morning	Günaydın	Guni-denn	-u as in Fr. Vu -l as in high -e as in the
Good afternoon	Tünaydın, İyi günler	Tuni-denn ee-yee gunlair	-u as in Fr. Vu -l as in high -ee as in meet -air as in hair

Good evening	İyi akşamlar	ee-yee uckshumlaar	-u as in luck
Good night	İyi geceler	ee-yee gejjelair	-g as in get -j as in jack -air as in hair
Goodbye	Allaha ısmarladık	Ulla-haa essmaar luddek	-u as in cup
Good luck	İyi şanslar!	ee-yee shunsslaar	-u as in cup
Yes	Evet	Evveıt	
No	hayır	Hi-yur	l as in high Ur as in fur
Please	Lütfen	Lutfen	-u as in fr. Vu
Have a nice day	İyi günler!	ee- yee gunlair	-g as in get -u as in fr. Vu -air as in hair
I don't understand	Anlamıyorum, Anlamadım	Unlumme-yawroom Unlummedem	-u as in cup -u as in cup
Please speak more slowly	Lütfen daha yavaş konuşun	Luften daa-haa yuvvush konnooshoon	-u as in Fr. Vu -u as in cup -o as in top
Please write it down for me	Lütfen yazınız	Luften yezzenez	-u as in Fr. Vu
How much/many?	Kaç/ kaç tane?	Kutch Kutch taane	-u as in cup
Sorry	Özür dilerim (frm), Pardon (inf)	Ozur deelerrim paardonn	-o as in Fr. Peu -u as in Fr. Vu -err as in merry
Thanks	Teşekkürler. Sağ ol. Mersi.	Teshek- kurlair saa-ol Mairssee	-u as in French Vu -g is silent -air as in hair
Where's the toilet?	Tuvalet nerede?	Toovulleıt nerede	-u as in cup -err as in merry -e as in get

How do you say ... in Turkish?	Türkçe'de ... nasıl denir?	Turktchede nussil deneer	-u as in Fr. Vu -tch as in church -e as in get -u as in cup
Help! Fire!	İmdat! Yangın!	Eemdaat Yung-gen	-u as in cup -g as in get -e as in the
Stop!	Dur!	Door	-oo as in poor
Call the police!	Polis çağırın!	Poleess chaaren	-o as in olive -ch as in church -aa as in father -e as in the
Receipt	fiş	Feesh	
Please can I have a receipt	Lütfen mabuz alabilir miyim?	Lutfen muckbooz ullubileer mee-yim	-u as in French Vu -u as in cup -ee as in street

1	<i>bir</i>	BEER
2	<i>iki</i>	ee-KEE
3	<i>üç</i>	EWCH
4	<i>dört</i>	DURRT
5	<i>beş</i>	BEHSH
6	<i>altı</i>	ahl-TUH
7	<i>yedi</i>	yeh-DEE
8	<i>sekiz</i>	seh-KEEZ
9	<i>dokuz</i>	doh-KOOZ
10	<i>on</i>	OHN
11	<i>on bir</i>	ohn BEER
12	<i>on iki</i>	ohn ee-KEE
13	<i>on üç</i>	ohn EWCH
20	<i>yirmi</i>	yeer-MEE
30	<i>otuz</i>	oh-TOOZ
40	<i>kirk</i>	KUHRK
50	<i>elli</i>	ehl-LEE
60	<i>altmış</i>	ahlT-MUSH
70	<i>yetmiş</i>	yeht-MEESH
80	<i>seksen</i>	sehk-SEHN
90	<i>doksan</i>	dohk-SAHN
100	<i>yüz</i>	YEWZ
200	<i>iki yüz</i>	ee-KEE yewz
1000	<i>bin</i>	BEEN
2000	<i>iki bin</i>	ee-KEE been
10,000	<i>on bin</i>	OHN been