



# ISTANBUL



## KNOW THE CITY

● **For over 1500 years,** Istanbul was the capital of East Roman (Byzantine) and Ottoman Empires.

● With one arm reaching out to Asia and the other to Europe, Istanbul is the only city in the world built on two continents separated by a natural strait called the **Bosphorus**.

● While not the actual capital, Istanbul is Turkey's largest city with more than 17 million people.

● As an imperial capital for 1500 years, Istanbul is rich in architectural monuments reflecting its past splendor, mostly located on 'Historical Peninsula', the region also called Sultanahmet.

● The beautiful city of Istanbul is home to **110 5-star and 136 4-star hotels with the bed capacity of 60,000 and 32,000 respectively.**

● Overall, the total number of hotels and bed capacity in Istanbul is 700 and 160,000 respectively.



(Ortakoy Mosque)

## MUST SEE SIGHTS IN ISTANBUL

● **Sultanahmet or the Old City** is where most of the well-known historic sights of Istanbul are situated. Also known as the Historical Peninsula, the area's main sites include: Hagia Sophia, Topkapi Palace, Sultanahmet (Blue) Mosque, the Hippodrome and Basilica Cistern.

● Located on the shores of the Bosphorus, **Dolmabahce Palace**, is the 19th century residence of Ottoman Sultans built in diversity of European architectural styles. This Palace is now open to visitors with the best examples of Imperial Turkish carpets and chandelier from Europe, fine wood furniture and rich decoration items such as clocks, vases.

● A 14th century Genoese tower, **Galata Tower**, is the oldest stand-



ing still tower in its original form, now offers a 360-degree observing platform of the city.

● **Suleymaniye Mosque** by Sinan, the Great Imperial Architect, is a distinctive feature of Istanbul's skyline. An Imperial mosque of 16th century is a masterpiece of Ottoman architecture. It combines tall, slender minarets with

a large dome and a vast courtyard with the best views of the city.

● One of Istanbul's most exciting and historical Bazaars, **Spice Bazaar**, comprising of 88 stores selling spices and herbs, teas, natural remedies, dried nuts and fruits, is the center of rich scents and delicacies. There are some really good souvenir shops in the Spice Bazaar.

● **Grand Bazaar** is one of the oldest and the largest covered Bazaars of the world, with over 4000 shops spread across 64 streets. It was opened in 1461, expanded to its today's size throughout centuries. Jewelry shops, carpet and leather goods stores, tiles, towels, pashminas and local fabric stores and souvenir shops can be found in this amazing labyrinth of shops.



## TOP EXPERIENCES

● **The Bosphorus Cruise:** Separating the waterway between Asia and Europe is a unique experience of enjoying the cruise, taking photographs of the city, palaces, wooden mansions from the water while cruising below the bridges of Istanbul.



● **Turkish Bath/Hammam:** As an Imperial city, Istanbul hosts several historical Turkish Baths, mostly in the Historical Peninsula, Sultanahmet area. Ottoman Turks inherited the Roman bath concept—architecture and tradition. Hammams serve men and women, either in separate sections or at separate hour.



## GO LOCAL - DISCOVER NEIGHBORHOODS

### ● TAKSIM – GALATA – KARAKOY

From the city's center, the Taksim Square, a stroll along the Istiklal Street will take you to the astonishing Galata neighborhood, a historical Genoese quarter, now a hip and artsy part of the city with artisan stores, nice cafes and restaurants and the Galata Tower.

Further down from Galata are the shores of Bosphorus where a natural inlet, the Golden Horn, mixes with the main body of water.

Karakoy is the port area right below Galata, across the historical peninsula, now housing the modern brand new



cruise port, Galataport of Istanbul. This up-and-coming Istanbul neighborhood branches out to the left of the Galata Bridge and is known for its hipster vibe and nightlife.

### ● ALONG THE BOSPHORUS

This waterfront stretch is one of the most picturesque neighborhoods of Istanbul.

### ● ASIAN SIDE: KADIKOY – USKUDAR

With a short ferry ride, the Asian side of Istanbul is worth a visit. It is mostly the residential part of the city. Colorful street market of Kadikoy, Ottoman mosques and cozy Bosphorus districts of Kuzguncuk and Cengelkoy are the prime highlights.



### GOLDEN HORN: BALAT – FENER

● Balat and Fener region was home to the old Greek Orthodox and Jewish neighbourhoods of Istanbul. Wandering around Balat-Fener region will give you a chance to witness Istanbul as a melting pot of cultures. Mihrimah Sultan Mosque and Phanar Greek Orthodox College are the prime highlights of the region.

## SHOPPING IN ISTANBUL



Istanbul is a shopper's paradise, catering to all kinds of shoppers. From covered bazaars and workshops that continue ancient traditions, to shopping malls with all major local and international brands and departmental stores, Istanbul offers a wide variety of shopping opportunities to the travellers.

- **Grand Bazaar and Spice Bazaar** are two of the most visited places in Istanbul.

- **Arasta Bazaar** situated behind the Sultan Ahmet Mosque, is yet another

place where authentic goods and handicrafts can be found and Sultanahmet and its environs are other similar areas.

- Situated between Beyazıt Mosque and Grand Bazaar is a heaven for old book enthusiasts **Sahaflar Çarşısı (Booksellers' Market)**

- **Istiklal Street** is one of the oldest streets of Istanbul. Also known as "Grand Rue de Pera" in history or Beyoğlu district, this colorful street is the hearth of entertainment and shopping with numerous alternatives of bars, restaurants, souvenir shops, interna-

tional brand stores as well as historical passages. Istiklal Street is totally pedestrianized. A historical tram operates along the street from Taksim Square to Tunel, world's second oldest funicular.

- **Nisantasi district and Rumeli Street** provide a contrast to the chaos of the bazaars. This area is where one can browse at leisure the shops selling special pieces such as home-grown designer products and top international designer brands. Exquisite jewelry, finely designed handbags and shoes can also be found here.

## WHAT TO EAT



- Istanbul is a city where you can experience the rich diversity of Turkish cuisine.

- Istanbul has a great culinary scene with variety of fusion cuisine restaurants with the breathtaking view of Bosphorus, very attractive fine dining places, steakhouses, century-old local Turkish restaurants, fish and kebab restaurants, taverns, Turkish breakfast places, modern and traditional cafés and bars.

- Turkey is also home to amazing street food outlets and traditional food shops such as confectioner's shop, pickle shop, cheese shop, traditional Turkish black tea cafés, shop and local bazaars and markets.

- In addition to the rich Turkish Cuisine, Istanbul has more than 10 different Indian restaurants where Indian visitors try local Indian dishes in Turkish style.



## ISTANBUL WITH FAMILY

Istanbul houses some of the world's most amazing museums and attractions to enjoy with the entire family such as **theme parks, aquariums, Bosphorus cruise experience, Prince Island tours, bike tours and the shopping malls.**

- A tiny Turkish adventure at **Miniaturk**; an open-air miniature park where you can see the attractions and iconic places from all over Turkey, displayed as pieces of artwork in a shrunken-down, handy size.

- **Istanbul Akvaryum** has var-

ious small aquariums within it, with themes based on 16 water bodies around the world.

- **Vialand** is a fun theme park with a number of rides and roller coasters. The adrenaline rush after a few hour on the rides here will be a nice break from sightseeing.

- **The Istanbul Toy Museum** is a one-of-a-kind place that holds a collection of toys dating back to the 18th century.

- **Rahmi M Koç Museum** is Turkey's first museum dedicated to the history of transport, industry and

communication – and is particularly geared towards kids. Here, they will get a chance to explore old trams, climb up into cockpits of small military planes, sit in vintage cars and even enter a real submarine.

- **Jurassic Land** is a theme park located inside a shopping mall. It is one of the largest themed parks in Europe where reanimation of extinct dinosaurs through several stunning models take place. It has 4D cinemas, interactive displays, excavation workshops, and many other fun activities.



## ISTANBUL BY THE NIGHT

Istanbul is one of those cities that never sleeps. Animated night life of Istanbul ranging from hip clubs to gigantic venues, partying onboard a **cruise along the Bosphorus** to live music bars on Istiklal Street. Plenty of nightlife choices are scattered around the city to serve all interests.

**Turkish Night Shows** with dinner including folkloric dances and belly dancers are also available at special

venues for tourists.

Experience a **Whirling Dervish Show**; the mystical ritual of the Mevlevi Order, whose whirling dance has been declared a UNESCO Heritage of Humanity. The Sema ceremony is a journey through man's spiritual ascent to "perfection" through mind and love.



## DAY EXCURSIONS FROM ISTANBUL



(Büyükada)

### o ISLANDS

The Prince Islands, an archipelago of nine islands in the Sea of Marmara, were places of exile for Byzantine princes.

Büyükada is the largest of the islands where you can enjoy a bike ride or a stroll among the pine trees or simply relax by the beach in one of the numerous coves that ring the island. The other popular islands are Kınalı, Sedef, Burgaz and Heybeliada.

Regular ferryboats connect the islands with both the European and Asian shores and a faster sea bus service operates from Kabataş port in the summer.

### o AGVA

Due to its proximity to Istanbul, Agva is a place of unique beauty that is frequently visited by Istanbul residents. This corner from heaven, with its green forests, blue rivers and the shores to the Black Sea, offers plenty to its visitors: **village breakfast, historical excursions, boat trip on the river, a lovely fish meal and more.**

### o ANADOLU KAVAGI

It is a historical fishing village at the northern end of the Bosphorus. Located on the Asian side this village offers an amazing view to its visitors. There are a number of **seafood restaurants where you can enjoy local food culture with fresh fish, seafood and mezze.**

### o KILYOS

On the European side of the Black Sea coast, 25 kilometers from the outskirts of Istanbul, the long, broad sandy beaches of Kilyos offers a nice getaway with local hotels and restaurants.



(Burgazada)

## WEATHER

Istanbul has a climate combining those of the Mediterranean and Black Sea climate types, with a hot dry summer and pleasantly warm spring and autumn. Winters are cold but snow is rare. Istanbul is a city where all four seasons can be experienced.

**Winter, from December to February** is quite cold. The average temperature between December to February is around 10-12 °C during the day time and around 5-7 °C during the night time.

During winters you can experience rain in Istanbul whereas snow is usually seen one or twice in a year.

**Spring, from March to May.** The average temperature between March to May is around 18-21 °C during the day time and around 11-13 °C during the night time.

**Summer, from June to August,** is hot and sunny. The heat is felt especially within the city, while a relieving breeze blows from the sea. The average temperature between June and August is around 23-25 °C during the day time and around 18-20 °C during the night time.

**Autumn, from September to November,** is warm and often sunny. Istanbul also experiences rain in November. The average temperature between September and November is around 20-23 °C during the day time and around 15-18 °C during the night time.

Although Istanbul is an year-round destination, visited by more than 15 million international tourists every year, different visitors can have different reasons to visit. Below you may find best times for visit Istanbul for various reasons.

● **Best time for enjoying warmer weather:** April to November.

● **Best time for Honeymooners:** April, May, and September.

● **Best time for experiencing Nightlife and Festivals:** April to October.

● **Best time for sightseeing:** The optimal time for sightseeing is April, May, and from mid-September to October-end. During April, the entire city is in bloom for the tulip festival, which is a treat to watch.

● **Best time for a Budget Travel:** As winter season is relatively low season for Istanbul, reasonable prices can be found between the periods of December-February.

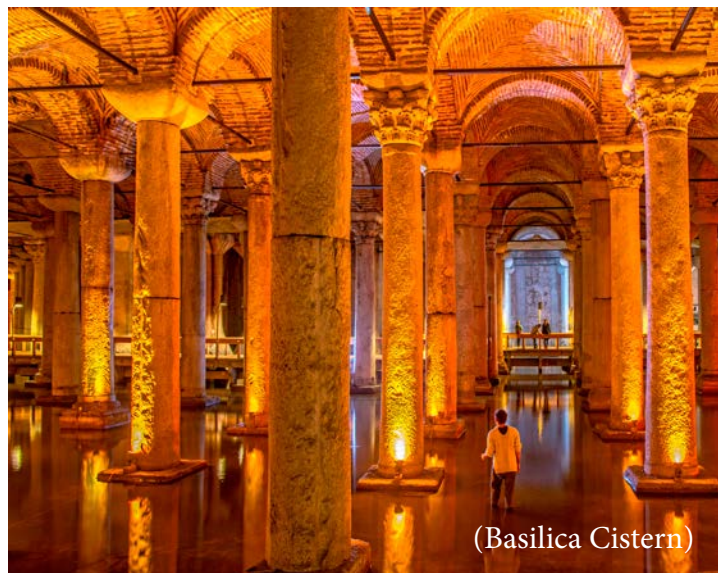
● **Best time for taking the Bosphorus Cruise:** During September, the weather is usually warm, the crowds are reduced, and the winter gusts have yet to settle in.

May is the next best option and an ideal time to look for the 3 species of dolphins that inhabit the strait. However, cruises along the Bosphorus are worthwhile at any time. Cruises might be canceled in winter because of poor weather; those in the morning will offer the best chance of sunshine.

● **Best time for shopping:** Istanbul is a popular shopping destination, offering a wide variety of world-famous brands along with high-quality local designs. Spread over 40 days in June, July, and August, the Istanbul Shopping Fest offers substantial discounts across various malls and markets, although the abundance of tourists at the Grand Bazaar at this time reduces the possibility of too many bargains.



(Rumeli Hisari)



(Basilica Cistern)

## BEYOND ISTANBUL



(Uludag Ski Resort-Bursa)

### ● BURSA

A long day trip including a one-hour ferry crossing of the Marmara sea followed by a two-hour drive will take you to the city of Bursa, situated south of Istanbul. Bursa was one of the former capitals of the Ottoman Empire.

Its Ottoman core with mosques, mausoleums, old as well as abundance of green parks, fresh air at the peaks of **Mountain Uludag (Turkey's premier ski resort)** are the major highlights of the city. Bursa is also famous with its thermal springs.

You can visit the Grand Mosque (Ulu Camii) and Historic Bazaar and buy some amazing silk products. You can also ride the teleferic (cable car) up to Mountain Uludag or enjoy city's thermal waters in one of the thermal city hotel spa or baths.



(Green Mosque-Bursa)



### ●SAPANCA

Two-hour drive on the highway will take you to Green Sapanca town where you can enjoy the cafes and restaurants along the Sapanca Lake, Masukiye Waterfall and a delicious organic lunch in Masukiye Village.

On your way back, a short stop at

the peaks of Kartepe Ski center will make your day filled with fresh air and lots of green scenery.

### ●ABANT

3.5hour drive to the east from Istanbul center will take you to a large and peaceful lake named as Abant.

This beautiful lake is surrounded by

dense forests which are home to numerous tree varieties.

This trip can be extended with a visit to Seven Lakes nearby, a National Park with 7 naturally formed lakes.

A walk along the lake and horseback riding are the popular activities in this pleasant countryside.



(Abant Lake-Bolu)

## ● CANAKKALE

A 3.5-hour drive to southwest of the Marmara Sea will take you to the city of Canakkale, along the strait called Dardanelles, a body of water which connects the inner sea of Marmara to the Aegean.

North of the strait is the peninsula called Gelibolu (Gallipoli) where the historic battle of Gallipoli of WWI took place. You can visit the memorial sites and battlefields and listen to the heartbreaking stories of Turkish, Australian and New Zealand and Indian (ANZAC) soldiers.

In 1915 some 16,000 troops of the Indian Army – including Gurkhas, Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus – served as part of the British force involved in the dramatic eight-month Gallipoli campaign in Turkey during World War I.

Crossing the strait by ferry is where another historic battle took place; ancient battle of Troy as described in Iliad by Homer. Troy is a UNESCO-listed archaeological site and home to the recently opened museum where you can learn the legendary stories of the wooden Trojan Horse and see its replica as well.

